

MILL RACE
BEAUMARIS
ARCHAEOLOGICAL REPORT

Report number : 314

Prepared for
POSFORD DUVIVIER

JANUARY 1999



Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Gwynedd Archaeological Trust

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By
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Mill race, Beaumaris

Archaeological report (G1576)

Introduction

It is proposed to carry out environmental improvements to the plot of land called Mill Race, Beaumaris. This will involve demolition of the upper mill, creating a new focal point within the vicinity of the demolished mill, and providing an interpretation of the industrial heritage of the site. Gwynedd Archaeological Trust have been contracted by Posford Duvivier to carry out desktop research for the interpretation element of the works.

Methodology

Manuscripts have been examined at the County Record Office, Llangefni, and the archive department of the University of Wales, Bangor. Additional source material has been obtained from the Regional Sites and Monuments Record Office, held by Gwynedd Archaeological Trust, and from the county library and the University of Wales, Bangor library. A field visit was undertaken on 12 January, 1999.

History

The earliest cartographic record found is that of John Speed, 1610, which clearly shows two water mills situated within the valley of Nant Meugan (also called the Britain or Brittainne brook, and later to be called Nant y felin). Records indicate that the two mills continued in use until the early 19th century. The name "Meugan" was also used to refer to a Medieval chapel called "Capel Meugan", the exact of location of which is not known, but which is assumed to lie in the vicinity of Nant Meugan.

The mills were certainly in existence by 1528, as they appear in documentation of that year, a demise in fee farm, by John Harvy, chantry priest of Beaumaris, to William Bulkeley of the British mill (UWB Baron Hill 554) though possible developments are implied by an earlier document, an indenture of fee farm lease on two parcels of land near 'Le Brytayne Brooke' in 1491 (UWB 528). Sir Richard Bulkeley begged the Mayor and bailiffs of Beaumaris to note in 1629 that the mills were originally on chantry land (UWB Baron Hill 705); this is confirmed by a crown record of 1550, in which a 'water mill and close of land', part of the holding of the Chantry of St Mary, and as such confiscated by and to the Crown at the reformation, were leased to one Richard Ievan (*Records of the Court of Augmentations* p. 177).

The first lay proprietor of which record survives appears to have been one William Broadhead, his widow Ellen released in trust 'that water grist mill nigh unto British Brook' to Arthur Bulkeley in January 1566-7 (UWB Baron Hill 599). In 1592 Arthur Bulkeley in turn released to his kinsman Sir Richard Bulkeley 'my water mylne standinge & beinge in nantmigan within the Liberties of the borough of Bewmarris, which mylne I have by graunte from wilm Broadhead / togeyther with all myledames, mylepooles, wyndwinge (*winnowing*) places and watercourses & all the singler other thappertenances, comodyties and proffetts whatsoever there unto belonginge' (Baron Hill 654).

In the period 1758-9 one Tobias Thomas was the tenant, who also rented Llangoed mill and other properties from the Bulkeleys (and was £103 7/- in arrears) (Baron Hill 4777). In 1829 the mill was under repair, leased to one Owen Jones; the next year a cottage also appears in the rental, leased with the mill to one Owen Jones for £57 per annum (Baron Hill Further Additional 7430, fol. 24r [1829], fol. 6r [1830], 5r [1831]).

In the 1850s the Baron Hill estate resolved on the creation of a water-supply system to the town of Beaumaris, which was put into effect in February 1857. This involved the creation of a filter system at Llyn Pen y Parc, to the west of the mills, which had originally impounded their water-supply, whence water was conducted to the town in pipes (Baron Hill S.6499). This deprived the miller, Robert Parry, of much of his supply, and led to a lawsuit between himself and his landowner, which eventually went to arbitration. The arbitration papers record the machinery installed and reveal the state of the mills at

the time (see below). The mill may have ceased to function as a consequence for a number of years, since it does not appear on the surviving Bulkeley rental for 1862 (Baron Hill Further Additional 7431, ff. 12v-13r).

A report on dilapidations reveals the decayed state of the two mills in 1887. Minor repairs were needed on the upper mill, and the water trough, valves and sluices were to be repaired. New furnace bricks were required in the furnace of the drying kiln, repairs were needed to the stable, and in the lower mill the old water-wheel, cistern and trough were not worth repairing; the purchase a new wheel capable of driving two stones was recommended. Mr Jones the miller commented that there was no roof between the saw pit and the flour mill when he took over (Baron Hill 3746). A W.R. Jones was tenant of the mill from 1896 to 1917 (Baron Hill Further Additional 7625, fol. 19v).

The 1917 25" ordnance survey shows the upper mill as a slate mill; though no other documentation has emerged to confirm this, it is possible that the mill had been adapted to power a slate saw.

Summary of assets, 1858, recorded in Baron Hill 3726.

<i>Location</i>	<i>Parry's valuation</i>	<i>Arbitrator's valuation</i>
<i>Upper mill</i>		
<i>bottom floor</i>		
pit wheel and crown,	£42 15/-	£30
footstep under upright shaft	£1 10/-	£1 6/8d
three pedestals and three footsteps for stone spindles	£3 11/6d	£2 8/-
one shaft and bevel wheel and drum	£3	£2
two spouts for stones @ 18/-, segments of spur wheel	£21 18/-	£18 5/-
new gudgeon for water-wheel	£2 15/-	2/-
<i>store room</i>		
segment of bevel wheel and jack nut	£10 15/-	£4 15/-
new line shaft and two drums	£7 10/-	£7
one grey stone	£2	£2
two pairs of French stones	£62	£44
barley machine	£3	£3
two stone curbs	£6	£3
screw hoppers and face, etc	£30	£12
straps, guide pulley and frame	£5	£1 5/-
new floor and mason work	£7 10/-	-----
altering two windows and stepladder	£1 18/-	-----
best dressing machine	£30	£16
<i>top room</i>		
new floors, partition	£9 10/6d	-----
hoisting chain	15/-	10/-
<i>water cistern operator</i>		
wheel	£4	£4
water trough	£10 10/-	£6
partition, bottom floor	£1	-----
earthwork above the mill and masonwork	£4 5/-	-----
<i>lower mill</i>		
new water trough	£4	£2 10/-
cistern above water wheel	£2	-----
repairing kiln	£40	-----
new roof on stable	£3 13/-	-----
new caskhouse and hay cutting house	£5 15/-	-----

new pit and crown wheels	£30	-----
new segment of spur wheel	£14 10/-	6/-
two new stone nuts	£2 15/-	£1 6/-
two pedestals	12/-	12/-
two brasses for pedestals	£1 10/-	16/-
one shaft, one bevel wheel and pulley	£2 5/-	£1 5/-
frame for shelling oats	£4	£3
line shaft and drum	£2 10/-	£1 5/-
new brick floor	£2 8/6d	-----
store room		
one curb and hopper	£4	£3
one curb	£1	-----
one pair grey stones	£9	-----
one do	£7	£4 10/-
extra pair of French stones	£28	£16
oatmeal bin	10/-	-----
new shutters	£1	-----
two straps	15/-	-----
guide pulleys	12/-	-----
hoisting chain	3/-	-----

Gazetteer of features

Below is a list of features recorded during the field visit. Parts of the site are very overgrown, and a full description of all features is not possible at present.

1. Drive to Baron Hill. 62181

This passes over Mill Lane on a stone causeway. An open, segmented, brick arch allows passage along Mill Lane, with two blocked arches lying on either side. A flight of steps leads up to the drive on the southern side of the lane. This drive is shown on the 1829 survey of Richard Yates, and is presumably 18th century in origin.

2. Mill Lane 62182

This track is bounded to the south by the river, and to the north by a stone wall. The river is heavily culverted between two stone walls, one of which forms the boundary to the garden of the property on the south side of the river. At the western end of the property the river is bounded by a brick wall lying on the inside curve of the river. (This may have formed part of the gas works marked on the map of 1926.)

3. Upper mill 62183

The mill survives as a rectangular, roofless, stone building, consisting of three floors and standing to eaves height in places. Where lintels are visible they appear to be brick built externally, with timber inside. In the northern wall a large jagged opening exists on the ground floor and extends up into the first floor area, with all lintels missing. A doorway stands on the second floor. This northern wall forms one of the gable walls of the structure. The eastern wall stands to eaves height at the northern end, but is collapsed to the south. There are several openings in the northern end. The southern wall contains a large opening at ground floor level, with a horizontal opening above on the first floor. A further vertical opening above this on the second floor may have formed a doorway. A square-shaped iron structure, approximately 0.5m sq. is set into this wall, and may have formed casing for a timber support or a possible water chute. The western wall stands to eaves height, with no lintels apparently remaining. An adjoining structure lies on the west side, the walls of which stand above the level of the ground floor of the main building, with their footings lying at approximately first floor level. They stand to a maximum height of 1m. A former water channel, or leat, runs towards the main mill building from the west, passing directly to the north of the smaller structure and bounded to the north by a length of substantial stone wall. The leat appears to feed water through the west wall, but the exact arrangement is difficult to make out. The water wheel was hung on the exterior of the south

wall. We have been informed by Sir Richard Bulkeley that one of the quoins contains an inscribed 18th century date, but this was not seen during the site visit. The existing structure, from its layout and size, probably dates from the mid 19th century, but it is likely that, once the vegetation has been removed, it will be possible to see different phases of construction, with at least part of an 18th century building present.

4. Leat 62182

A leat, now dry, or former track, lies to the north of the present path, and north of leat (7). It runs east to west, and survives as a linear depression. It runs up to the stone wall (5), and there is slight evidence for a blocked opening low down in the wall.

5. Leat 62185

Another leat, which carries water, runs roughly north-south, and crosses both (4) and (7) to feed into the river. It is probably a supplementary feed for the mills.

6. Wall 62180

A high, stone-built revetment wall to the Baron Hill drive runs north-east to south-west across the north-western corner of the survey area. It then curves away to the west. This drive post-dates site 1, and, from map evidence, was constructed between 1829 and 1840.

7. Dam 62182

The dam is a large, stone-built structure, supported by four triangular stone buttresses and standing to approximately 12-14m. in height. Water presently enters the mill-race half-way up the dam through a brick vaulted tunnel, and then falls over a projecting stone slab. To the north is a smaller opening, supported by a broken stone lintel. Just below the dam is a stone weir which formerly diverted the water into the mill leat. The top of the dam carries the main drive to Baron Hill. Although the site of the dam is probably Medieval, the present structure is 19th century in date.

8. Leat 62188

The main leat, which is now dry, runs from a stone built weir just below the dam wall, along the north side of the valley to just west of the upper mill, where it divides into three. One of these is an overflow leat running due south to the river, another fed the upper mill, whereas the third passes the mill to the north and rejoins the river east of the site of the gas works. It is not clear how the lower mill was fed with water, and more work needs to be undertaken to establish this. The leat to the upper mill appears to carry water through the west wall, although this would imply an internal wheel, which would have been unusual. It is more likely that a timber launder fed a wheel at the south end of the mill.

9. Lower mill 62184

This consists of a rectangular structure, approximately 8 x 7m, and standing to a maximum height of 2m at the southern end. A possible axle arch is visible in the south wall, with further blocked openings also existing in this wall. A doorway stands at the southern end of the east wall. On the exterior side of the south wall the ground level reaches the top of the wall. This building is probably 18th century in its present form, although more fieldwork is required to confirm this. A leat lies to the north of this mill, running east to west, and flanked on the southern side by a stone wall and to the north by the track. The water supply to this mill is not clear, nor, at present, are the details of its layout.

Conclusions

The evidence suggests that at least one, and probably two, mills were built in Nant Meugan around 1500. There were certainly two mills by the time of Speed's map in 1610. These mills formed part of an endowment granted to the church for the founding of a chantry, possibly by Sir Richard Bulkeley, who in his will of 1490 endowed two chaplains to say mass in the church of Beaumaris (Carr 1982, 258).

A typical medieval mill, up until the 18th century, used simple gearing, which allowed a water wheel to drive only one pair of grinding stones. If more pairs of stones were required then additional water wheels were erected, either under the same roof (hence the relatively frequent term describing "two mills under one roof", or one would be downstream of the other. The latter system was used when

there was insufficient water to divide into two at the mill. Following the invention of the spur gear and the ability to drive several pairs of stones from one wheel, the two mills at Nant Meugan were rebuilt in this fashion. The upper mill was the larger, with three pairs of stones, whereas the lower mill had two pairs.

The upper mill is marked as "Slate Works (Disused)" on the 25" OS Map, but no slate waste is visible in the vicinity, so it is unlikely that slab work was undertaken. Certainly the Baron Hill manuscripts do not suggest any change from a corn mill. However, a saw pit is mentioned, and perhaps a workshop for writing slates was involved, for which the slates would have been bought ready cut.

The two structures representing the upper and lower mill are still visible, as are various leats and the main dam (built in the 19th century). However, the site is very overgrown, and a full list of features is not possible at present.

Recommendations

There are very few Medieval mill sites where there is good potential for the recovery of archaeological remains. This makes the Nant y Felin site particularly unusual and important.

There are large gaps in our interpretation and dating of the standing structures at Nant y Felin, and in our knowledge of the underground archaeology on the site. However, much of the information is still present, and would be recoverable if a programme of archaeological evaluation and recording were carried out. This would considerably enhance our interpretation of the remains, and would also make a significant contribution to the study of the development of mill sites. It is therefore considered to be of great importance that a programme of archaeological work be undertaken to elucidate and record these important remains before demolition work starts.

An appropriate programme of archaeological work would involve a photographic and measured survey of both mills and related features, and a watching brief during any clearance or earth moving operations. It is possible that evaluation excavations may be required to reveal the nature of certain features which are presently of unknown status.

Archival and bibliographic sources

Secondary works

Carr A D: *Medieval Anglesey* (Llangefni: 1982)

E.A. Lewis (ed.): *An Inventory of Early Chancery Proceedings Concerning Wales* (Cardiff: 1937)

E.A. Lewis and J. Conway Davies: *Records of the Court of Augmentations Relating to Wales and Monmouthshire* (Cardiff: 1954).

The following documents have been consulted in the course of the present project.

UWB archives

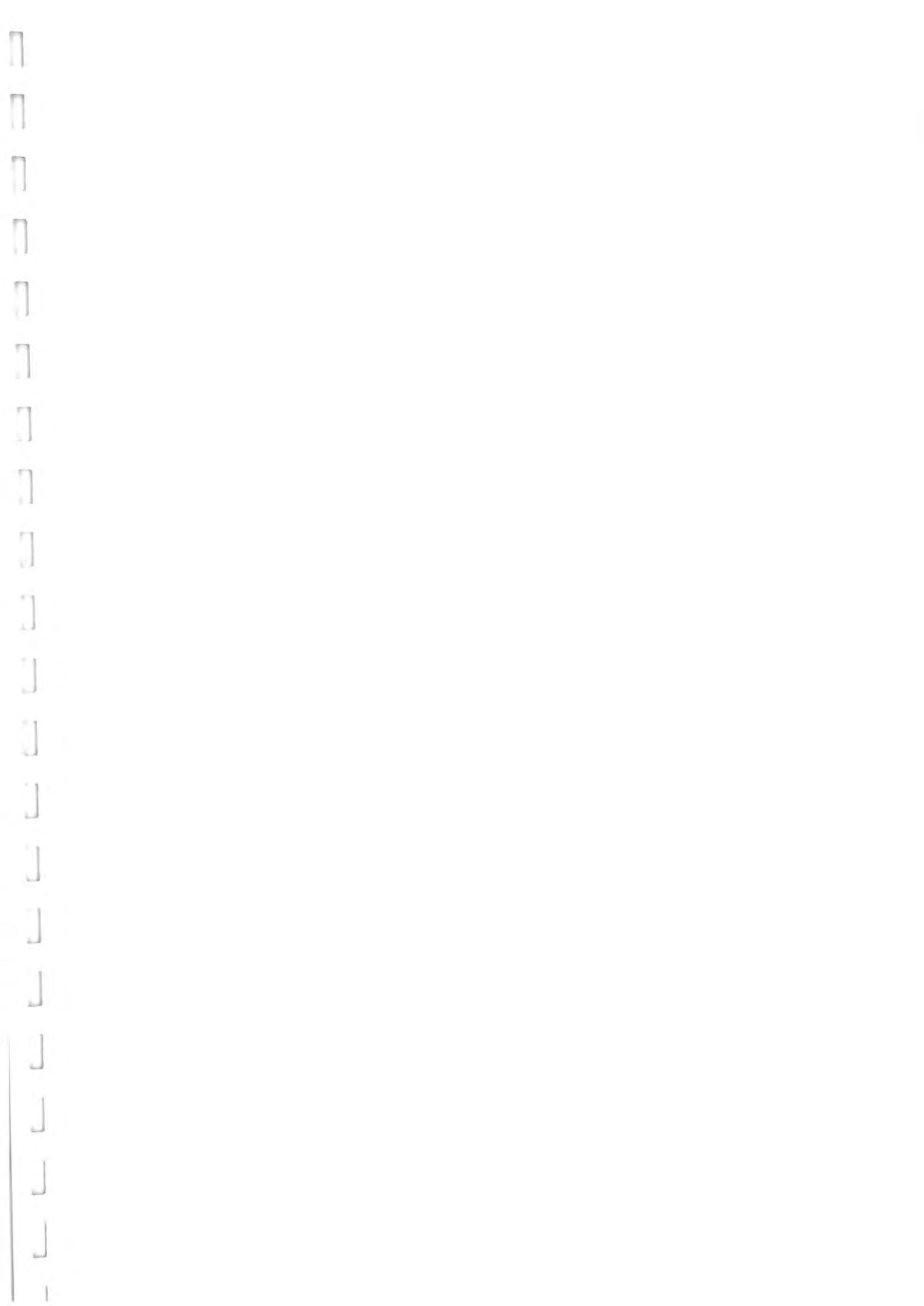
Baron Hill papers

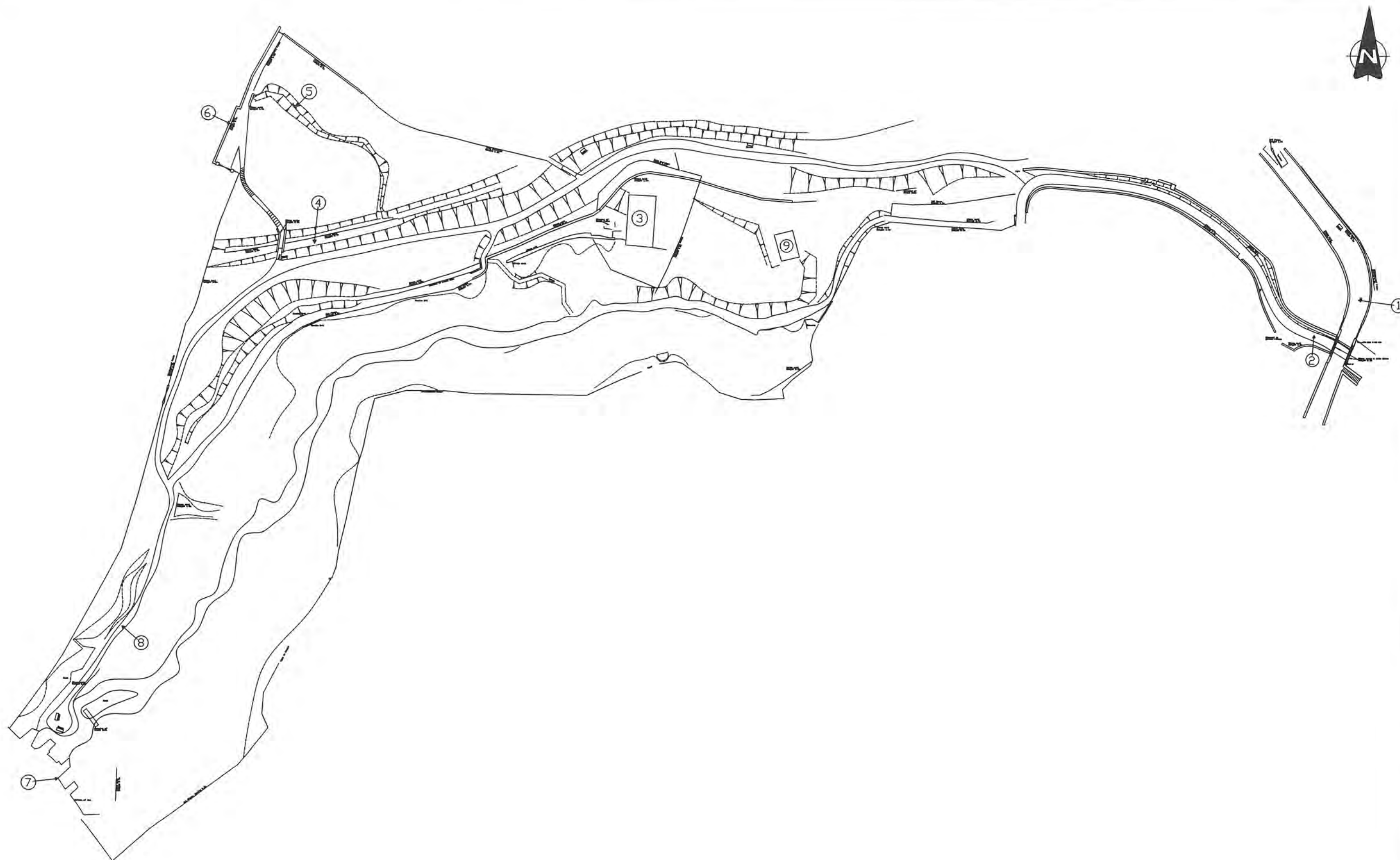
- 528: indenture of fee farm lease of two parcels near 'Le Brytayne Brooke', 1491.
- 554: demise of the British mill (north) in fee farm, 1528.
- 599: release of water grist mill on the British brook, 1566-7.
- 654: release of water mill at Nant Meigan, 1592.
- 698-705: releases of two water mills, 1628-1629.
- 715: articles of agreement relating to use of the British mill, 1655-6.
- 3726-7: letters concerning water supply to the British mills, 1857-9.
- 3746: report on the Anglesey or British mills, 1881.
- 4959-4960: map of Baron Hill estate, 1776.
- S.6496: map of Beaumaris, 1829.
- S.6499: map of Beaumaris water-works reservoir, 1859.
- S.6505-6506: map of Beaumaris. 1869.

Baron Hill Further Additional papers

7431 (ff. 12v-13r): rental 1862.

7625 (fol. 19v): lease of British mill from 1896 to 1917.





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MILL RACE, BEAUMARIS

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