# Dean Street and Garth Road
# BANGOR

## Archaeological Watching Brief

GAT Project No. 2027
Report No. 795
May 2009

Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Gwynedd
Gwynedd Archaeological Trust
Craig Beuno, Ffordd y Garth, Bangor, Gwynedd, LL57 2RT

# AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF AT THE CORNER OF DEAN STREET AND GARTH ROAD, BANGOR, GWYNEDD

*Project No. G2027*

*Report No. 795*

***Prepared for Watkin Jones and Son Ltd***

***By Robert T.J. Evans***

April 2009

Cover:

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**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF AT THE JUNCTION OF DEAN STREET AND GARTH ROAD, BANGOR (G2027)**

***Summary***

*An archaeological watching brief was carried out during the replacement of a culverted section of the Afon Adda, located on an irregular plot of land at the corner of Garth Road and Dean Street. The project involved the digging of a diversionary channel for the river while the original culvert was replaced. It was in this channel that most of the archaeology noted was seen, as no archaeology was observed in the disturbed ground surrounding the old culvert when it was replaced.. There was a significant amount of ground disturbance, along with active and redundant service trenches. Some evidence for 19th and early 20th century structures were noted, along with 0.7m of soil that was interpreted as being field soil from the meadows that were shown by cartographic evidence to have been on the site until the early mid 19th century. Below these soils alluvial silts were observed that relate to the course of the Afon Adda prior to the start of channelling and culverting in the 18th century.*

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Gwynedd Archaeological Trust was asked by Watkin Jones to provide a cost and project design for an intermittent watching brief to be conducted during ground works associated with the development of an irregularly shaped disused plot at the junction of Garth Road and Dean Street (Fig. 1). An intermittent watching brief was required by Gwynedd Archaeological Planning Services (GAPS) because of the potential for the survival of sub-surface medieval and post-medieval archaeological activity, particularly at the south eastern end of the development plot.

There are 3 main elements of planned below ground works:

1. Diversion of electricity cables and demolition of the existing substation at the western end with its relocation on another part of the site. This excavation is generally no deeper than 600mm below ground

2. Replacement of the existing culvert running through the site.

3. Installation of flight augered piles to the perimeter sheet piled wall along Garth road with general piling throughout the site.

The on site culvert replacement works took place from 19th August to 18th September 2009 and this report deals with the archaeological evidence encountered during this phase of the works. Twelve site visits were made during this period.

## 2.0 SPECIFICATION

No brief was prepared for this work by GAPS, but recommendation has been given for an **intermittent watching brief** of the site during works (see appendix 1 for definition). An intermittent watching brief comprises archaeological observation during non-archaeological groundworks. The regularity of attendance is determined during the course of the works and increases within areas of particular archaeological sensitivity. The guidelines and definitions are specified in *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching brief* (Institute of Field Archaeologists, 1994, rev. 2001).

## 3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The development area is an irregular shaped plot at the junction of Garth Road and Dean Street, comprising the former location of an electricity works and various other post-medieval structures. The northwestern end of the plot existed as undeveloped meadowland until the early twentieth century. This is evident on Wood's Map of Bangor of 1834 (Fig. 2) and the evidence from the tithe map of 1841 (Gwynedd Archives).

The area lay between the medieval historic core of Bangor and the Friary to the east. It lay on the south bank of the *Afon Adda* and prone to seasonal flooding, which may account for the lack of early development. In 1808 Dean John Warren bought 8.79 acres of *Cae Sgybor* from John Jones, who had inherited the Brynhir estate,

which incorporated the Bangor holdings of Richard Fletcher of Treborth Isa, Registrar to the Bishop in the 16th century. The Dean subsequently divided the area into lots, and sold them for development. The development of this distinct area of previously undeveloped Bangor preserved the historical integrity of the area around the cathedral (Page 2003, 15). Dean Street forms the principal axis through the area, and subsidiary streets were laid out on either side (Jones 1989, 149-51).

By the time of the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map of 1889 the southern end of the site contained a number of developed plots (Fig. 3). The two areas of the site were originally separated by the Afon Adda, but the river was culverted at this point during the mid-to late nineteenth century and part of the site was developed. A large flour mill, Snowdon Mill, was established to the southeast of the development area and it is possible that the southeastern area of the site formerly included structures associated with this business.

The electricity works were established during the early twentieth century and are extant on a 1914 Ordnance Survey Map of the area (reproduced in Cowell, 1994: 54), and are shown on an aerial photograph of 1910 (Gwynedd Archives XS 3910/2; Fig. 3). The buildings demolished in 2006, were all extant by at least the mid twentieth century and are visible on a 1966 Ordnance Survey map of the area, covering the majority of the development plot (1:1250; SH5771NE).

A number of previous archaeological assessments and evaluations have taken place on nearby sites, particularly to the west side of Dean Street (Smith 2007 a and b, Evans 2007), where the former gas works and workers housing have been investigated.

**4.0 RESULTS OF THE WATCHING BRIEF**

The watching brief was completed between 19th August and 18th September 2008. A photographic record was maintained using a Nikon D40 DSLR. Features and layers noted were given individual identifying context numbers, and these are referred to in the text. These are listed in appendix 2.

Initial excavations commenced behind the blocked gateway and piers at the southern end of the frontage on to Dean Street. The removal of the hardcore rubble and backfill to a depth of 0.7m revealed the Adda culvert to be of brick construction, with a diameter of 1.1m at this point (2). The culvert could be seen to have been cut through the earlier deposits with a construction trench noted 0.7m north of the culvert itself [1]. North east of the culvert a patch of dark grey brick ‘paviers’ 1.9m by 1.3m was noted (4). This must be associated either with domestic or industrial use of the area. The patch was shown to overlie a compacted rubble and cement base (5).

On the Dean Street frontage a section through the culvert (14), at this point 0.8m deep and 1.4m wide, brick arched and with a slate base was observed (Fig. 6), along with a concrete capped overflow pipe to the south of it. The backfill of the cut of the trench for the culvert [16] was backfilled with slate chippings of Penrhyn slate (15). This appears to be a 19th century section of culvert, which is in turn cut by the concrete overflow pipe cut on the southern side. 10.55m from the Dean Street frontage the culvert changes to a concrete lined one at an inspection chamber.

A diversionary trench for the Afon Adda was excavated to the north of old culvert to a depth of between 2.5m and 3m in order to channel the flow of the Adda during the construction of the replacement culvert. A brick structure at the eastern end of the route (8) was identified as a waste tank connected with the electricity works that formerly stood on the site 20.7m east of Dean Street. It had a depth greater than the depth of the diversionary trench and consequently this was not observed (Fig. 7). This cut the basic stratigraphy observed in the trench which consisted of 2.2m of deposits (Fig. 5). Below 0.3m of compacted and cemented surface was 0.9m of made ground of mixed rubble brick and tile (6), which overlay 0.7m of a mid orangy brown silty clay (7). This is interpreted as a relict field surface, which much of this area was until the early years of the 20th century. This overlay a mid blueish brown silty clay, which is probably evidence of silting early river channel prior to any canalisation (8).

In a number of places the old field surface is cut by later features, which included modern service trenches. These were of considerable complexity and resulted in considerable ground disturbance. 19.1m from Dean Street a rubble built wall was observed (9), consisting of small to medium uncoursed rubble blocks bonded with lime mortar. The construction trench for this wall (11) was backfilled with rubble. The structure with which this wall was associated was probably associated with the flour mill that was formerly located to the south. It is unlikely to date from earlier than 1841, as all maps prior to that date show the area as undeveloped meadowland.

It was overlain by a floor surface (10) consisting of a Macadamised surface 0.25m thick, associated with the early 20th century electricity works.

## 5.0 CONCLUSION

The evidence obtained from the watching brief has broadly confirmed the cartographic evidence, with good surviving evidence for the undeveloped meadow that can be shown to have been present until the mid 19th century. Of particular significance was the identification of blue grey soil at a depth of 2.2m which probably relates to the pre-channelled Afon Adda, and lies beneath the later fields. This has provided valuable information about the early topography of Bangor and the early course of the river prior to its expansion into this area in 19th century.

Evidence for the development of the area in the 19th and 20th centuries was noted, with some evidence for the structures associated with the 19th century development on the southern part of the site. The ground had been significantly truncated by the many services, both current and redundant, that crossed the site. Most of the structural evidence observed related to the electricity works built on the site in the early years of the 20th century.

## 6.0 ARCHIVE

The archive is held by Gwynedd Archaeological Trust under the project number **(G2027)**. It consists of eleven day record sheets and 144 digital images, with the photographic images stored on the JPEG Interchange Format.

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Tithe Map and Schedule of Bangor 1840
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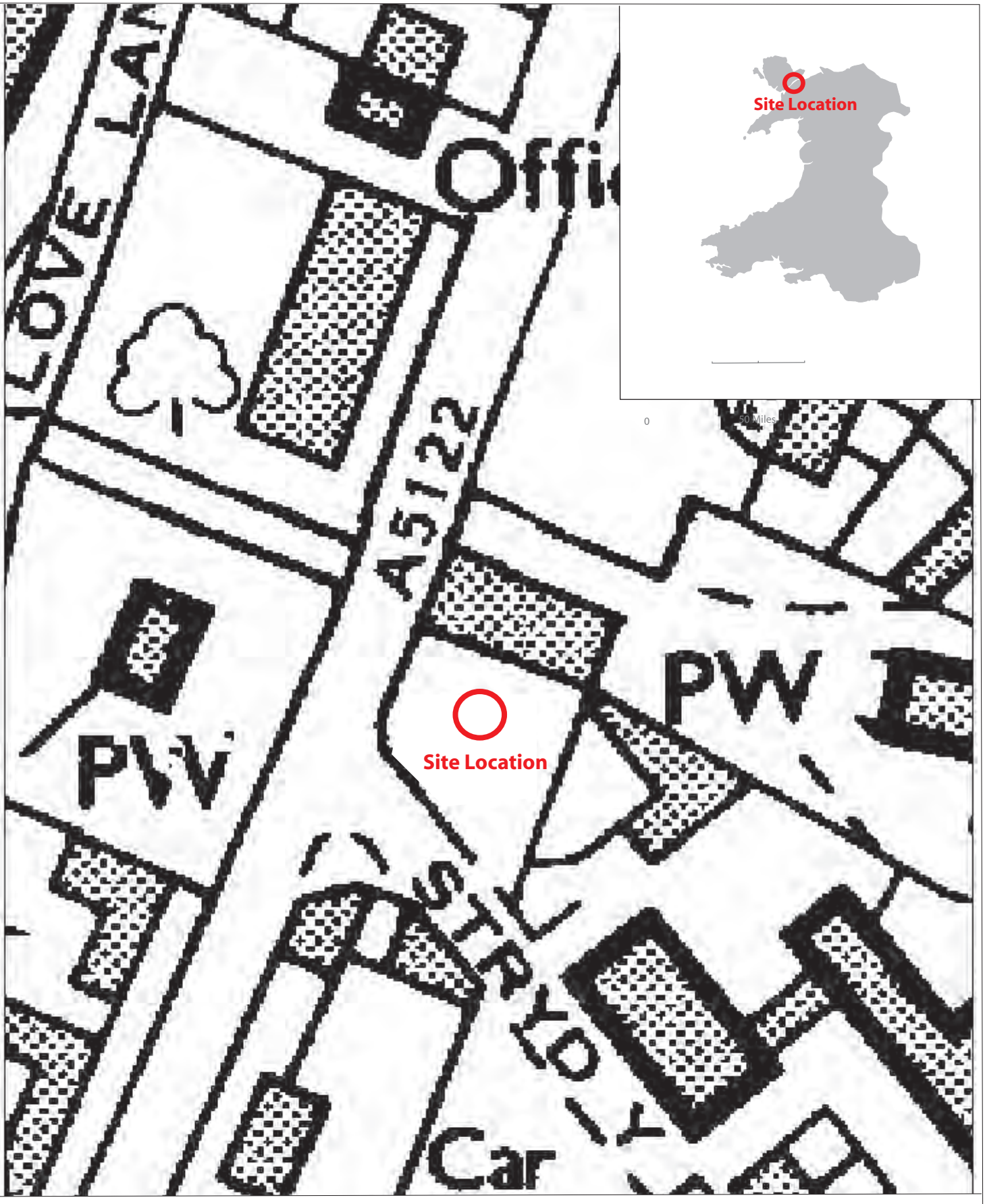
25" County Series Anglesey XIX.12 1914
OS 1:1250 map sheet SH5771NE 1966




YMDDIRIEDOLAETH ARCHAEOLEGOL GWYNEDD
GWYNEDD ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST
Craig Beuno, Ffordd y Garth, Bangor, Gwynedd. LL57 2RT
Ffon: 01248 352535. Ffacs: 01248 370925. email:gat@heneb.co.uk

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**Figure 1: Location Map**
**Scale: 1:1000@A4**

**Fig.2 Detail of Wood's Map of 1834 showing site undeveloped between the proposed road and the Afon Adda**

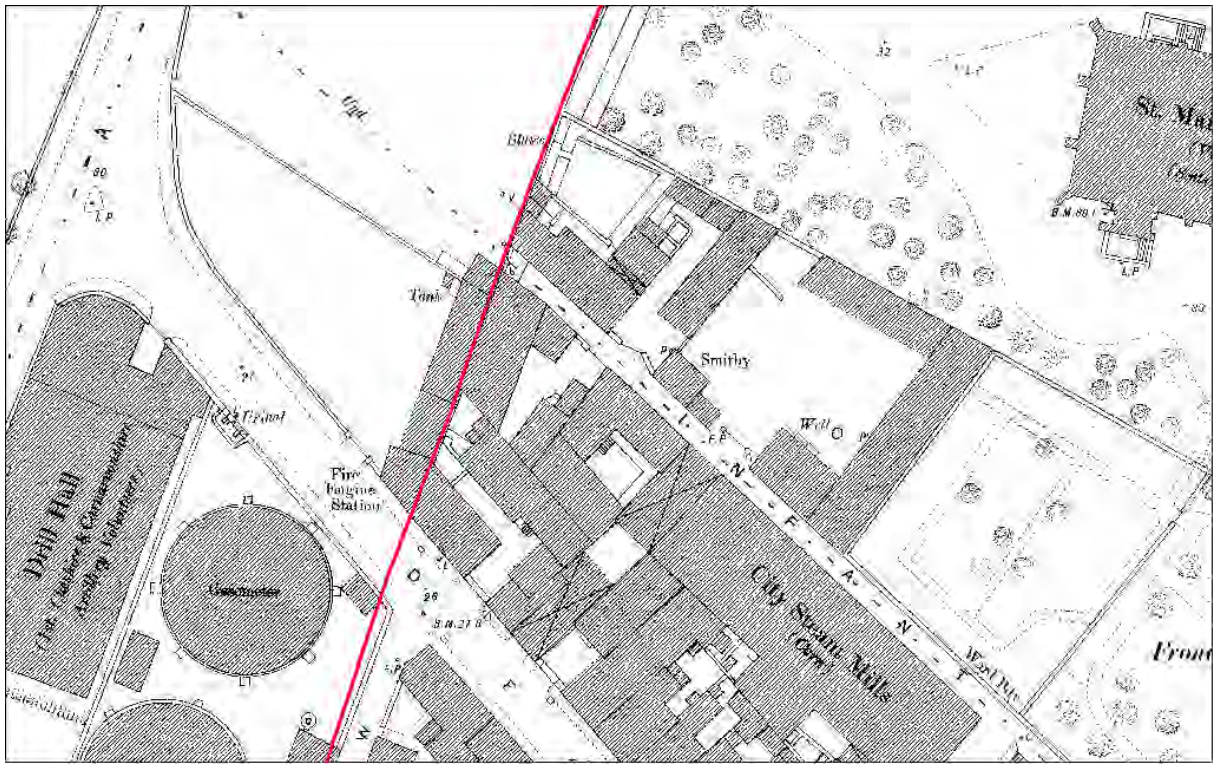


**Fig. 3 Ordnance Survey 1:500 Town Plan of Bangor 1889. Overlaid Red line indicates the Route of the Channelled Afon Adda.**

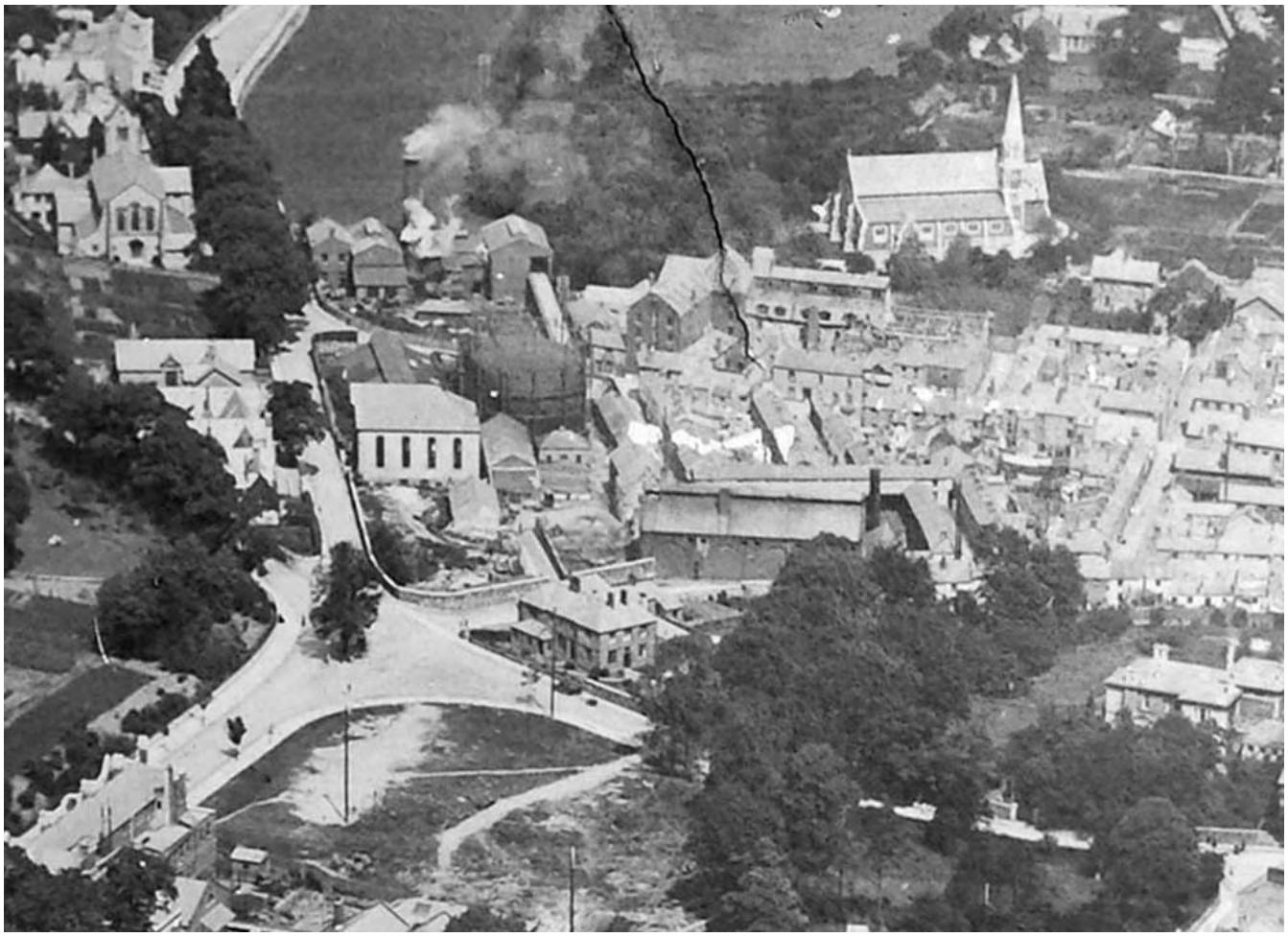

**Fig. 4 Detail from c.1910 aerial photograph of Bangor (Gwynedd Archives XS 3910/2) showing electrical works beyond the gasometer**

**Fig. 5 Alluvial Silting (8) below old field soil (7) and mixed rubble (6)**

**Fig. 6 The breached brick arched culvert (14) with concrete overflow pipe to the south. Facing South-West**

**Fig. 7 Remnant of Brick waste tank at eastern end of culvert**

## Appendix I

### Definition of an archaeological watching brief

(Reproduced from IFA. 2001. *Institute of Field Archaeologists 2001 Standard and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief)*

The definition of an archaeological watching brief is a formal programme of observation and investigation conducted during any operation carried out for non-archaeological reasons. This will be within a specified area or site on land, inter-tidal zone or underwater, where there is a possibility that archaeological deposits may be disturbed or destroyed. The programme will result in the preparation of a report and ordered archive.

This definition and *Standard* do not cover chance observations, which should lead to an appropriate archaeological project being designed and implemented, nor do they apply to monitoring for preservation of remains *in situ.*

An archaeological watching brief is divided in to four categories according the IFA. 2001. *Institute of Field Archaeologists 2001 Standard and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief:*

- comprehensive (present during all ground disturbance)
- intensive (present during sensitive ground disturbance)
- intermittent (viewing the trenches after machining)
- partial (as and when seems appropriate).

## Appendix 2

## List of Archaeological Contexts

1 Cut of Brick lined culvert construction trench

2 Fill of 1

3 Rubble backfill

4 Grey brick ‘Paviers’

5 Layer of compacted rubble

6 Mid greyish brown silty clay with brick and rubble inclusions

7 Mid orangy brown silty clay (old field soil)

8 Mid bluish grey clay

9 19th century uncoursed rubble walling

10 Macadamised surface

11 Rubble backfill

12 Redeposited blue grey clay

13 Brick floor surface

14 Brick lined arched culvert

15 Shale backfill to brick culvert cut

16 Cut for 19th century culvert

17 Mid orangy brown silty clay with gravel

18 Mid greyish brown silt backfill with rounded stones and shale

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Craig Beuno, Ffordd y Garth, Bangor, Gwynedd. LL57 2RT
Ffon: 01248 352535. Ffacs: 01248 370925. email:gat@heneb.co.uk