Archaeology Wales

Tai Hen, Rhosgoch, Anglesey

Archaeological Strip, Map and Excavate and Watching Brief

By
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Report No: 1238

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Summary

An Archaeological Watching Brief was carried out during ground works associated with the construction of a single turbine on a low hill south-east of Cemaes on Anglesey. The site lies within a landscape of known archaeological significance with sites dating from the Iron Age to the twentieth century recorded within 1km of the development site.

The watching brief was undertaken as a planning condition and followed a WSI approved by Gwynedd Archaeological Planning Services (GAPS) in December 2013.

No features of archaeological significance were revealed during the works. Several features of modern date were identified, including possible field boundary ditches, circular features and small spreads of charcoal.

1. Introduction

In December 2013, Archaeology Wales was commissioned to carry out a watching brief during the excavation of a works compound, access track and turbine pad for a single turbine to be erected on a low south-facing slope at Rhosgoch, Anglesey (NGR: SH 38767 92448; fig. 1). A planning application was approved on appeal, subject to conditions, in May 2013 (application number 20C277, planning appeal reference APP/L6805/A/12/2186397). The local planning authority is Isle of Anglesey County Council.

The turbine development area lies within a landscape of known historical and archaeological significance, with sites of prehistoric, medieval and World War II date recorded within 1km of the turbine location. Consequently, GAPS, in their capacity as archaeological adviser to the local authority, recommended that a programme of 'strip, map and excavate' was carried out within the footprint of the turbine and an archaeological watching brief was undertaken during the construction of the new track and the works compound.

The work was carried out between the 30th April and 15th May 2014 by Peter Aherne, Site Archaeologist for Archaeology Wales.

2. Site Description

2.1 Location, Geology and Topography

The turbine site is located 2km south-east of the town of Cemaes at the northern end of Anglesey, on a gentle south-facing slope at around 40m AOD. The site comprises a field of improved pastute. The underlying geology is Ediacaran New harbour Mica Schist and Psammite.

2.2 Historic Background

The turbine site is located close to the northern coast of Anglesey in a landscape that contains evidence of human occupation dating from the prehistoric period to the modern day. These include the Dinas Gynfor Promotory Fort (Scheduled Ancient Monument) 2.5km to the north, the site of a Bronze Age urn cremation and finds of Roman date 1km to the north-west, and a number of 1940s wartime defensive features on the coast at Cemaes. In addition, there are standing stones, earthworks and artefact findspots recorded across the local landscape.

3. Results of the Archaeological Work

3.1 Watching Brief

The watching brief was carried out during the excavation of the works compound adjacent to the road and the access track leading from the compound to the turbine location. An area measuring approximately 15m long by 5m wide within the works compound had been stripped and covered with gravel prior to the arrival of the archaeologist on site (fig. 2).

The compound area measured 9m by 9m and was stripped of turf and topsoil to a depth of 0.1m. No features of archaeological interest were revealed.

The access track measured 400m in length by 4m wide and was excavated to a depth of 0.3m (figs. 3 and 4). Below the turf and topsoil a thin layer of brownish grey sandy silt subsoil containing frequent stones was revealed. This was up to 0.12m thick and overlay the yellow sandy clay natural. A small charcoal spread (005) was identified within a shallow depression [004] in the surface of the natural geology 50m from the southern end of the access track, but no finds were associated with the charcoal and consequently it is not possible to assess its date or archaeological significance. It was, however, an isolated feature and may be the result of modern agricultural activities.

At the northern end of the access track three linear features were identified (fig. 5). A slot was cut across each and two, [014] and [018], were identified as probable field boundaries due to their parallel orientation and similar dimensions. Both comprised shallow U-shaped linear cuts running across the width of the access track, orientated south-east/north-west. Linear feature [014] was 1.1m wide and 0.2m deep and contained a single brown clay silt fill (015). Linear feature [018] was located 15m to the east and was 1.25m wide and 0.32m deep and contained a single brown grey clay silt fill (019). No finds were recovered from either ditch. The third linear feature [016] cut across possible field boundary [014]. It was 0.7m wide and 0.12m deep and contained a single brownish grey clay silt fill (017). No finds were recovered but the relationship to linear feature [014] demonstrates that it post-dates this possible field boundary. All three linear features are likely to be relatively modern in date.

3.1 Strip, Map and Excavate

The programme of strip, map and excavate was applied to the whole of the turbine pad, an area measuring 19m by 19m (figs. 6 and 7). The area was stripped by mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless bucket, to a depth of 0.3m, and then cleaned by hand. Any features revealed were recorded on the site plan and then investigated, with half sections cut through possible pits and slots cut through ditches.

At the northern end of the turbine pad area two plough scars were identified as shallow linear cuts into the natural, filled by loose topsoil. The plough scars lay parallel to each other and had cut into the natural below the subsoil indicating that they were result of deep ploughing. Both are likely to be modern, due to the looseness of the homogenous topsoil fill and their depth in

relation to the overlying topsoil and subsoil. The field is regularly ploughed and reseeded. Neither plough scar was assigned a context number as they are modern features.

A narrow ditch ran across the southern end of the turbine area, orientated south-west/north-east. This contained a fill of loose homogenous topsoil and is probably a drainage feature of modern date (fig. 7). Due to the modern date of the feature it was not assigned any context numbers.

Two small circular features were identified towards the centre of the turbine pad area (fig. 6). Feature [010] measured 0.22m in diameter and 0.04m deep and contained a single mid grey sandy silt fill (011). The base and sides of the feature were irregular and consequently it is thought to be a small tree throw or root disturbance. Feature [012] measured 0.32m in diameter and 0.13m deep, was U-shaped in profile and contained a mid to dark grey silty clay fill (013). The fill contained no finds and consequently the feature is not dateable. Its function cannot be determined but it could be a small, heavily truncated pit or a hole left behind when a stone has been removed in the past.

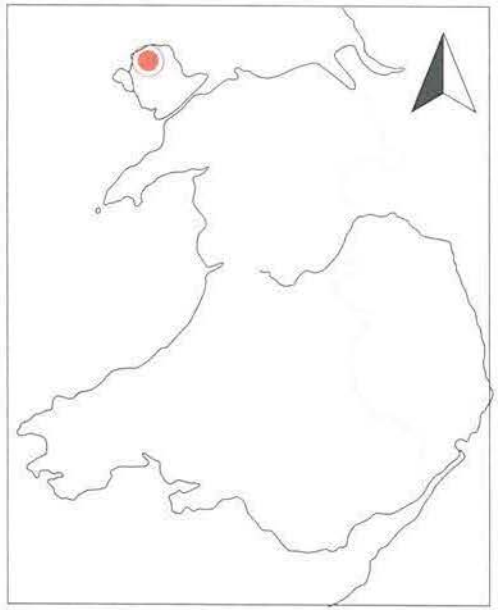
No further features of archaeological significance were identified.

4. Discussion and Conclusions

The watching brief and programme of strip, map and excavate undertaken during the groundworks associated with the construction of the single turbine at Tai Hen did not reveal any finds or features of archaeological significance. Two ditches of relatively modern date are likely to be former field boundaries, while two other linear features could be associated with drainage. One small possible tree throw was recorded, together with a small circular feature of unknown date or function.

5. Acknowledgements

Thanks to Peter Aherne for carrying out the watching brief and to the contractors for their assistance during the works on site. Thanks to Jenny Emmett of GAPS for her assistance throughout the project.



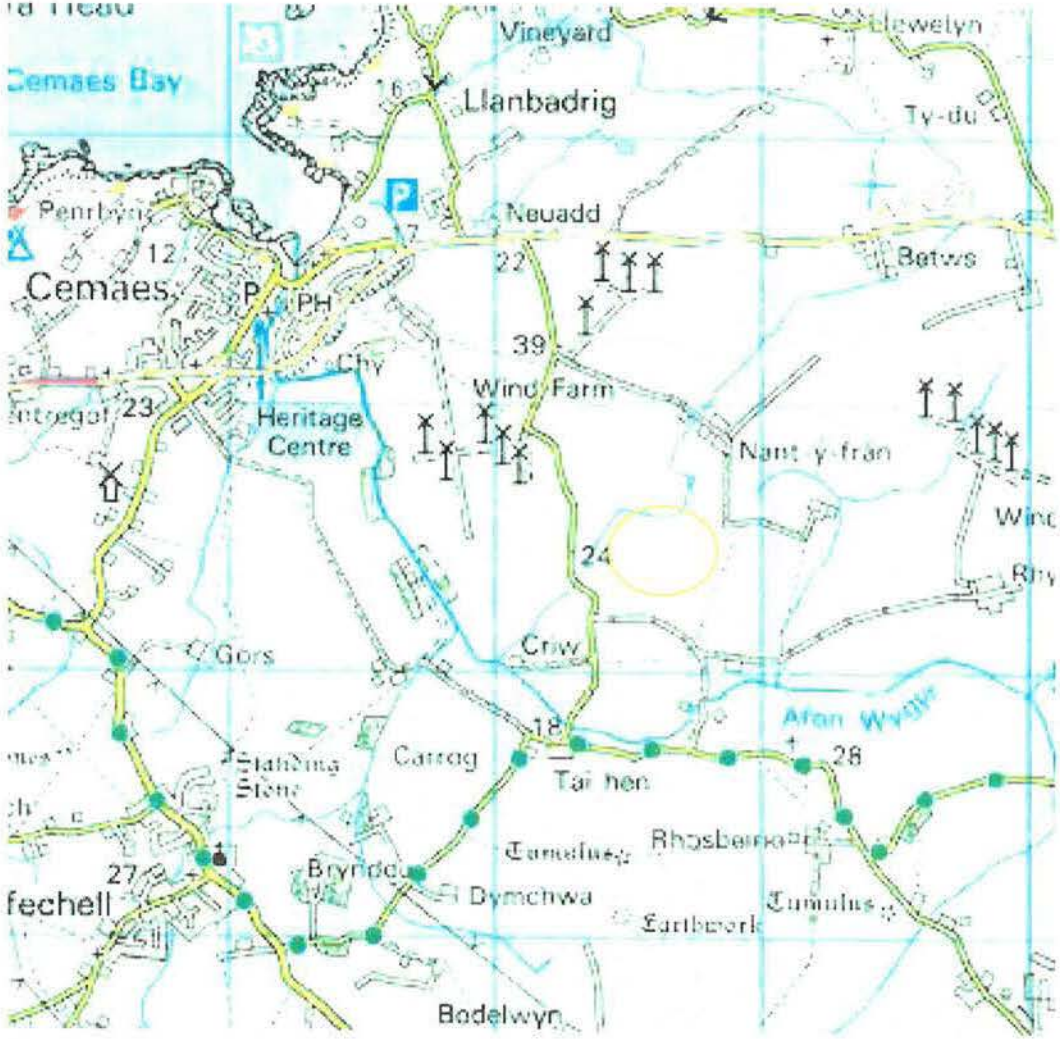


Fig. 1
Location of site

Fig. 2
View East accross compound showing section stripped and covered prior to arrival of the archaeologist

Southern end
Looking N
Scale = 1m

Northern end
Looking N
Scale = 1m

Fig. 3
Access Track
post-excavation

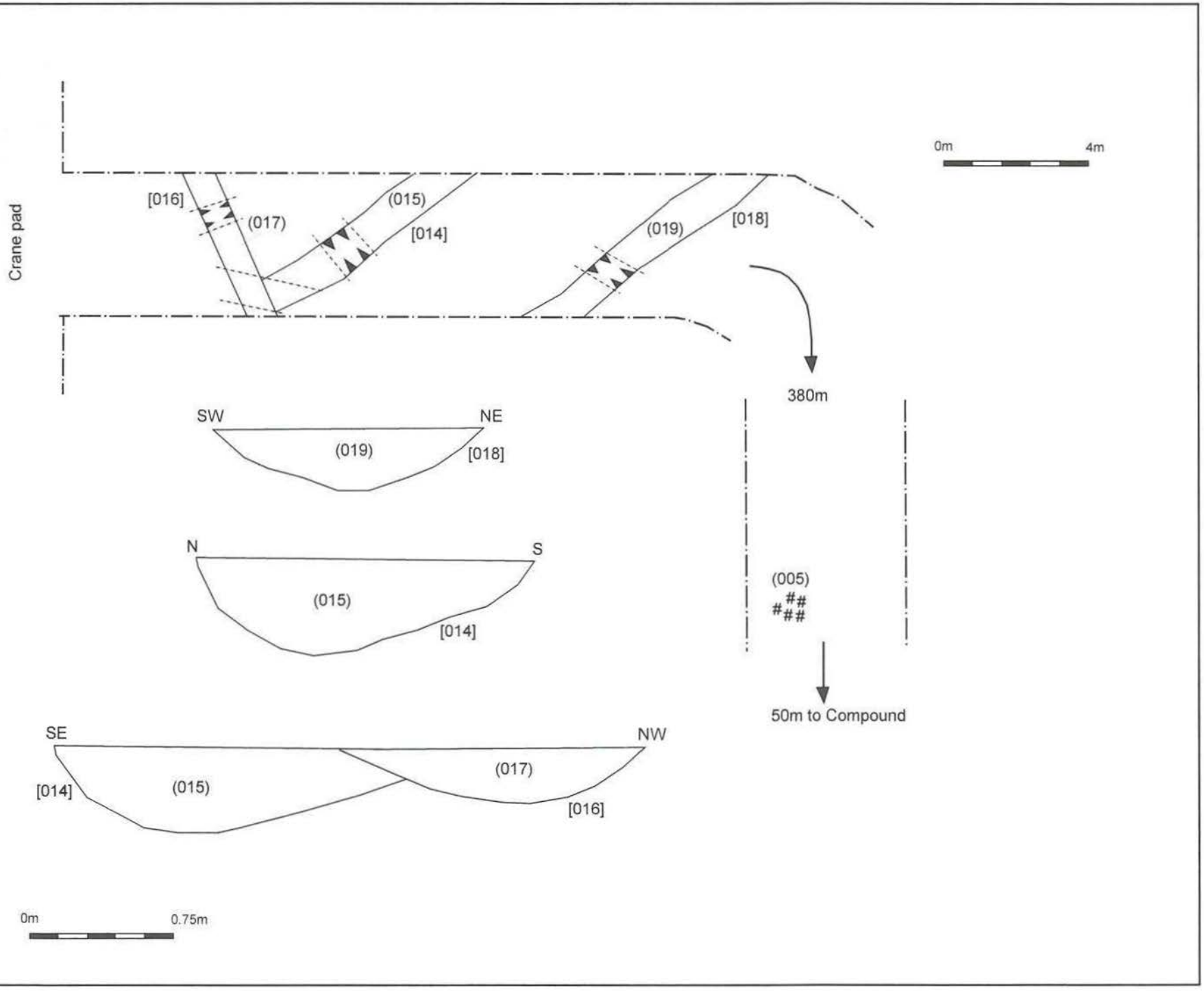


Fig. 4
Post-ex plan of access track and sections through excavated features

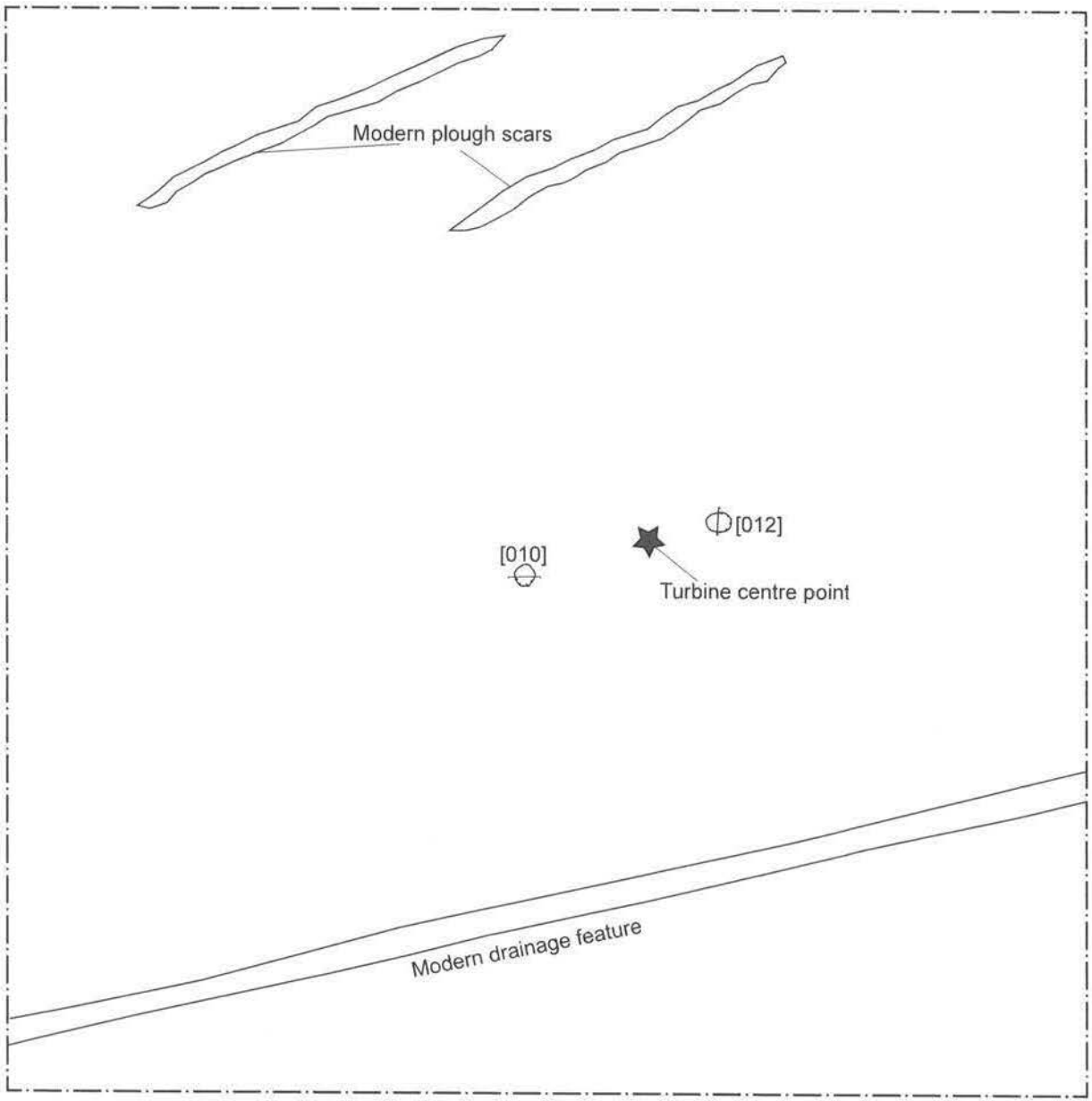
Linear Feature [016]
Looking S
Scale = 1m

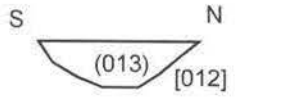
Linear Feature [014]
Looking NW
Scale = 1m

Linear Feature [018]
Looking NW
Scale = 1m and 0.3m

Fig. 5
Linear Features identified at the N end of the access track

Fig. 6
View across
Turbine Pad area





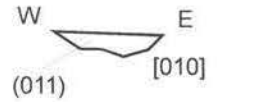
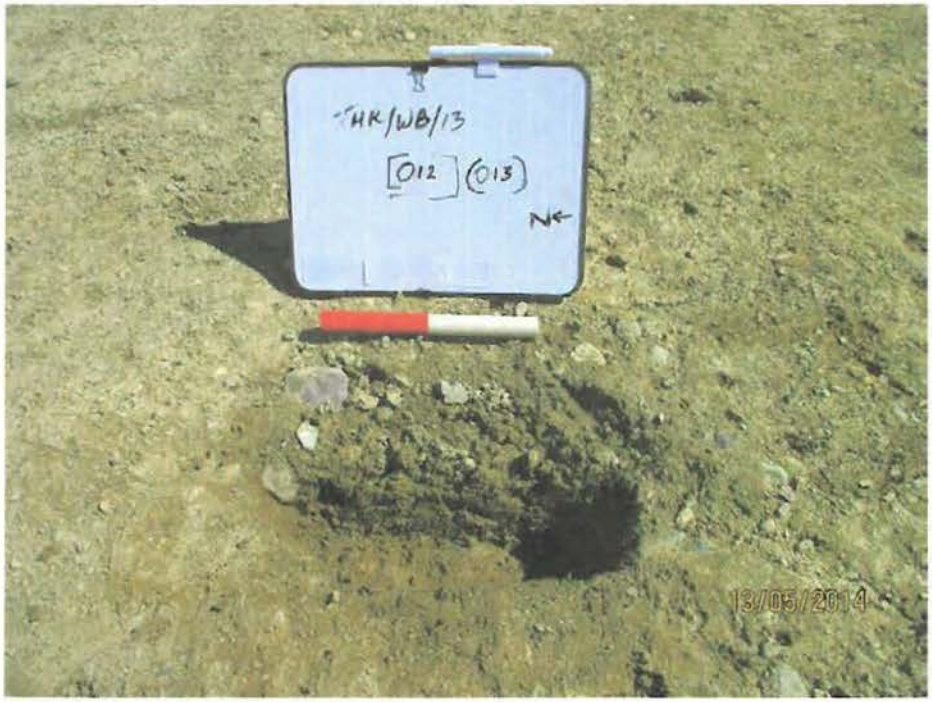
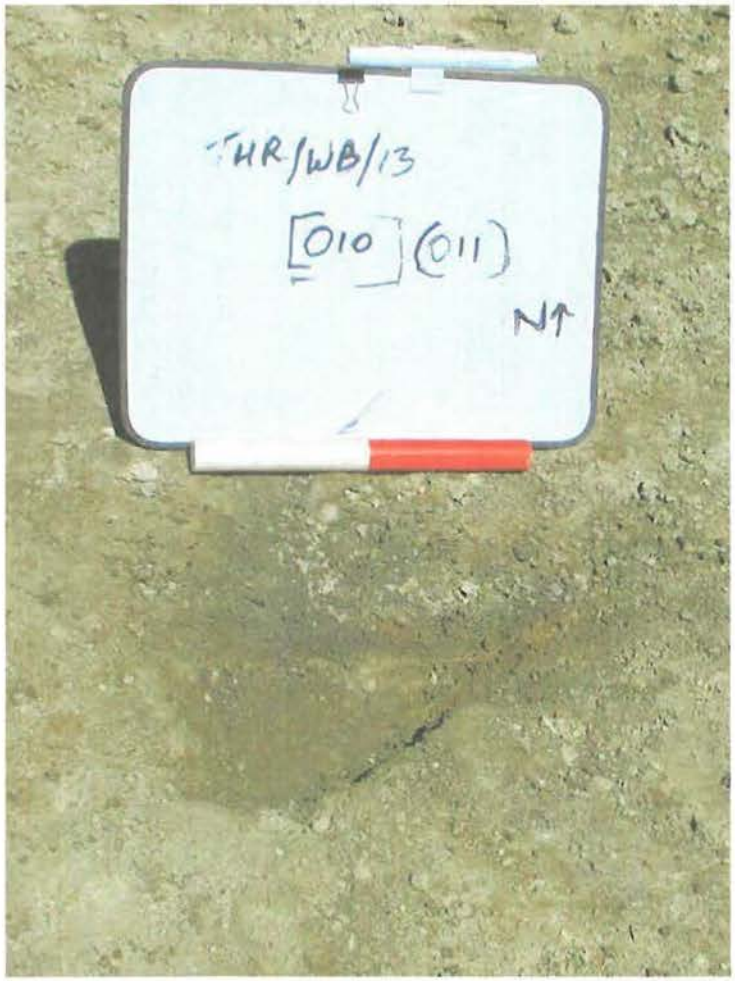


Fig. 7
Post-ex plan of turbine pad area and sections through excavated features

Modern Ditch
Looking W
Scale = 1m and 0.3m



Feature [012]
Looking E
Scale = 0.2m



Small Tree Throw [010]
Looking N
Scale = 0.2m

Fig. 8
Features within Turbine Pad area

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Written Scheme of Investigation

For Archaeological Strip, Map and Excavate and Watching Brief during Turbine Construction at Tai Hen, Rhosgoch, Anglesey

Prepared for:
David Rimmer (GL Garrad Hassan)
and
Andy Black (Belltown Power)

Project No: 2195

Date: 2nd December 2013

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NON TECHNICAL SUMMARY

This specification details the proposal for archaeological strip, map and excavate and watching brief during groundworks associated with the construction of a sin le turbine at Tai Hen, Rhosgoch, Anglesey. This Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) has been produced Archaeology Wales for David Rimmer, GL Garrad Hassan.

1. Introduction

The proposed development site is located on the north-west facing slope of a low hill south-east of Cemaes, Anglesey (NGR: SH 38767 92448; fig. 1). A planning application was approved on appeal, subject to conditions, in May 2013 (application number 20C277, planning appeal reference APP/L6805/A/12/2186397). The local planning authority is Isle of Anglesey County Council.

The proposed development area lies within a landscape of know historical and archaeological significance, with sites of prehistoric and medieval date recorded within 1km of the turbine location. Consequently, GAPS, in their capacity as archaeological adviser to the local authority, have recommended that a programme of strip, map and excavate is carried out within the footprint of the turbine and an archaeological watching brief is undertaken during the construction of the new track and area of hardstanding.

This specification has been prepared by Dr Amelia Pannett (MIfA), Project Manager, Archaeology Wales Ltd (henceforth - AW) at the request of David Rimmer. It provides information on the methodology that will be employed by AW during the archaeological work at the site.

The purpose of the strip, map and excavate investigation and the watching brief is to provide the local planning authority with sufficient information regarding the nature of archaeological remains on the site of the development, the requirements for which are set out in Planning Policy WALES 2012. The work is to ensure that all buried artefacts and deposits are fully investigated and recorded if they are disturbed or revealed as a result of activities associated with the development.

All work will conform to Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief (IfA 20011), and be undertaken by suitably qualified staff to the highest professional standards.

2 Site description and historic background

The site lies close to the northern coast of Anglesey, 2km south-east of the town of Cemaes. Within the local landscape a number of sites of historical and archaeological significance are recorded, including an Iron Age promontory fort, two possible Roman enclosures, an early medieval fortification, several medieval chapels and a number of sites relating to the WWII defence of the coast. No features of archaeological or historical significance are recorded within the proposed development area.

3 Site specific objectives

The primary objectives of the work will be to locate and describe, by means of a strip, map and excavate investigation and an archaeological watching brief, all archaeological features that may be present within the development area. The work will elucidate the presence or absence of archaeological material, its character, distribution, extent, condition and relative significance.

The work will include a comprehensive assessment of regional context within which the archaeological evidence rests and will aim to highlight any relevant research issues within national and regional research frameworks.

The work will result in a report that will provide information of sufficient detail to allow informed planning decisions to be made which can safeguard the archaeological resource.

4 The proposed archaeological work

The proposed archaeological monitoring will be carried out during all phases of groundworks on the site.

The aim of the work will be to establish and make available information about the archaeological resource existing on the site. The work will include the following elements:

- A strip, map and excavate investigation of the turbine footprint (Stage 1)
- A watching brief on the access track and area of hardstanding (Stage 2).
- The production of an illustrated report and the deposition of the site archive (Stage 3)

5 Method Statement for a Strip, Map and Excavate Investigation (Stage 1)

A strip, map and excavate investigation will be carried out within the footprint of the turbine, an area measuring approximately 10m by 10m. The aim of the investigation is to ensure that any features that are revealed within the turbine footprint are fully investigated, sampled and recorded prior to their removal.

The archaeological Project Manager in charge of the work will satisfy herself that all constraints to ground works have been identified, including the siting of live services, Tree Preservation Orders, ecological constraints and public footpaths.

The ploughsoil and subsoil will be carefully removed by mechanical excavator under archaeological supervision. Once the archaeological horizon, or the natural till, has been revealed the surface will be cleaned manually by archaeologists. All archaeological features revealed will be mapped, photographed and drawn, with each being assigned a context number. The mapping will involve the use of an EDM Total Station tied to the OS National Grid to record the precise location, form and extent of the features. Scaled high resolution digital photographs will be taken of each feature, and a site plan will be drawn at a scale of 1:50.

Each of the identified features will then be manually excavated. All features will be excavated to maximise the recovery of artefacts, dating materials and information regarding use.

- Linear ditches – all linear features will be excavated by cutting a series of slots to reveal the stratigraphic profile of the ditch fills. Where multiple fills are present the excavation will be by context, and all contexts containing charcoal will be sampled. The excavated sections will be photographed, drawn and recorded, with monolith and other samples taken where appropriate. The remainder of the ditch fills will then be removed through careful excavation.
- Pits and postholes – all pits and postholes will initially be investigated by half- section, removing one half of the feature to reveal a stratigraphic profile through the fills. Where multiple fills are present the excavation will be by context, and if charcoal is present in the fill it will be 100% sampled. Revealing the stratigraphy in section will allow for the identification of post-pipes and other multiple fill features, and enable monolith samples

to be taken where appropriate. The section through the pit fills will be photographed, drawn, recorded and sampled before the remainder of the pit fill is removed through careful excavation.

- Stakeholes – all stakeholes will be 100% excavated with the 100% of the fill sampled. The feature will be recorded and photographed, with the profile drawn.
- Other features – all other features will be excavated to a sufficient degree to allow a full understanding of their morphology and for decisions to be made regarding further investigation or sampling.

All section drawings will be undertaken at 1:10 scale, with plans at 1:20 scale. All photographs will contain a scale, a north arrow and a board displaying the context number(s). Written records will use AW's own recording system, following a continuous numbering system for contexts. All excavated features will be recorded using the EDM total station tied to the OS National Grid.

6. Method Statement for a Watching Brief (Stage 2)

A watching brief complying with the IfA Standards and Guidance on Watching Briefs (October 2008) will be completed during all ground disturbances on the route of the access track and area of hardstanding.

The watching brief is intended to identify any buried remains that exist within the development area and to ensure they are fully investigated and recorded.

As defined by the IfA (2008) 'the Watching Brief will provide an opportunity for the archaeologists present to signal to all interested parties, before the destruction of the material in question, that an archaeological find has been made for which the resources allocated to the watching brief itself are not sufficient to support treatment to a satisfactory and proper standard'.

Should archaeological remains be revealed, sufficient excavation will be carried out to determine their morphology, extent and, if possible, date. All finds will be recorded by context and a full written, drawn and photographic record made. Preservation in situ will be advocated in the first instance.

If preservation in situ is not possible representatives of GAPS and GL Garrad Hassan will be informed and a site meeting organised as appropriate. If, as a result of the meeting, GAPS recommend that further work is undertaken, for example the excavation of specific areas or features, AW will prepare a Specification for the work and an estimate of all associated costs.

7. Monitoring

GAPS will be contacted approximately two weeks prior to the commencement of the both the strip, map and excavate investigation and the watching brief, and subsequently once the work is underway.

Any changes to the specification that AW may wish to make after approval will be communicated to GAPS for approval on behalf of Planning Authority.

Representatives of GAPS will be given access to the site so that they may monitor the progress of the watching brief. GAPS will be kept regularly informed about developments, both during the site works and subsequently during the post-fieldwork programme.

8 Method statement for the production of an illustrated report and the deposition of the site archive (Stage 3)

Report preparation

The report will contain the following:

- A fully representative description of the information gained from Stages 1 and 2 above, even if there should be negative evidence.
- A concise non-technical summary of the project results. This can be presented in Welsh to meet any Welsh language policy requirements.
- At least one plan showing the site's location in respect to the local topography, as well as the position of all excavated areas.
- Suitably selected plans and sections of significant archaeological features. All plans and sections should be related to Ordnance Datum.
- Written descriptions of all features and deposits excavated and their considered interpretation.
- A summary report on the artefactual and ecofactual assemblage and an assessment of its potential for further study, prepared by suitably qualified individuals or specialists.
- A statement of the local and regional context of the archaeological remains identified.

Copies of the report will be sent to Garrad Hassan, GAPS, and for inclusion in the HER. Digital copies will be provided in pdf format if required.

A summary report of the work will be submitted for publication to a national journal (eg Archaeology in Wales) no later then one year after the completion of the work.

The site archive

A project archive will be prepared in accordance with the National Monuments Record (Wales) agreed structure and be deposited within an appropriate local museum on completion of site analysis and report production. It will also conform to the guidelines set out in 'Management of Archaeological Projects Two, Appendix 3' (English Heritage 1991).

Arrangements will be made with the local museum before work starts. Wherever the archive is deposited, this information will be relayed to the HER.

Although there may be a period during which client confidentiality will need to be maintained, the report and the archive will be deposited not later then six months after completion of the work.

Other significant digital data generated by the survey (ie AP plots, EDM surveys, CAD drawings, GIS maps, etc) will be presented as part of the report on a CD/DVD. The format of this presented data will be agreed with the curator in advance of its preparation.

7 Resources and timetable

Standards

The watching brief will be undertaken Archaeology Wales staff using current best practice.

AW is an IfA Registered Archaeological Organisation and consequently all work will be undertaken to the standards and guidelines of the IfA.

Staff

The project will be managed by Dr Amelia Pannett (a CV is available upon request) and carried out by suitably qualified AW staff.

Equipment
The project will use existing AW equipment.

Timetable of archaeological works
The work will be undertaken at the convenience of the client. No start date has yet been agreed.

Insurance
AW is an affiliated member of the CBA, and holds Insurance through the CBA insurance service.

Health and safety
All members of staff will adhere to the requirements of the *Health & Safety at Work Act*, 1974, and the Health and Safety Policy Statement of AW.

If AW has sole possession of the site, then AW will produce a detailed Risk Assessment for approval by the client before any work is undertaken. If another organisation has responsibility for site safety, then AW employees with be briefed on the contents of all existing Risk Assessments, and all other health and safety requirements that may be in place.

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