Evaluation Commissioned

by

Gwynedd County Council

Excavation

by

I.P. Brooks

Engineering Archaeological Services Ltd

Registered in England

Nº 2869678

Ysgol Hendre, Caernarfon

Evaluation

April 2015

EAS Client Report 2015/08

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List of Illustrations

Introduction

NGR

Centred on:

Trench 1: SH 48670 62073

Trench 2: SH 48704 62038

Location and Topography (Figure 1)

Two small trenches were excavated within the grounds of the disused and demolished Ysgol Hendre, Ffordd Eryri, Caernarfon. The trenches were within the playing fields (Plate 1) south of the remains of the buildings. These fields were essentially flat and under improved grass with a line of semi-mature trees along the eastern side of the playing fields.

Archaeological Background

Gwynedd County Council are investigating the potential for redeveloping the site of the disused school of Ysgol Hendre, Caernarfon. This site lies within an area of high archaeological potential. The Roman legionary fort of Segontium lies only 250 m NNE from the disused school and the area is known to have a high level of Roman activity with a vicus and possible cemetery. Indeed Roman burials have been reported to have been discovered in the modern cemetery on the opposite side of Ffordd Eryri from the school (http://www.cofiadurcahcymru.org.uk/arch/query/page.php?prn=GAT3092).

The site is also within the medieval township of Llanbeblig, being only 200 m SW of the medieval church of St. Peblig.

In February 2015 Gwynedd County Council commissioned an archaeological geophysical survey of the playing fields at Ysgol Hendre which was carried out by Engineering Archaeological Services Ltd (Brooks 2015). This revealed a limited number of feint linear anomalies which were considered to be possibly archaeological in origins.

SUMMARY

The two trenches excavated revealed a number of shallow archaeological feature. Unfortunately no dating evidence for these features were recovered. The feint linear anomalies recorded in the geophysical survey can only be correlated to one of the features excavated suggesting that the archaeological record may be more complex than previously expected.

Methodology

Two trenches, each approximately 10 x 2 m in size, were excavated in order to sample the anomalies recorded in the geophysical survey (Brooks 2015). The topsoil was removed with a JCB 3CX with a smooth faced ditching bucket. Thereafter all work was carried out by hand.

Survey Results

Two trenches were laid out to samples two of the linear anomalies recorded in the geophysical survey (Brooks 2015) (Figure 2). Trench 1 (Figure 3, Plate 2) was designed to sample Anomaly I, a feint, straight, linear anomaly, whilst Trench 2 (Figure 4, Plate 3) was designed to sample Anomaly H. The contexts recorded are summarised in Appendix 1.

Trench 1

Trench 1 was 10.13 x 1.97 m in size, with up to 350 mm of topsoil (Context 1). It was located to sample Anomaly I, a feint linear anomaly, from the geophysical survey (Brooks 2015). No sign of an archaeological feature associated with this anomaly was recorded suggesting it may be the result of local geological variability.

However, two archaeological features were recorded. In the north western corner of the trench two slight features were found (Plate 4). Feature 2 (Figures 3 and 5, Plate 5) was length of shallow gully crossing the corner of the trench. It was only 40 mm deep and 170 mm wide forming a slight curve extending beyond the extent of the trench

At its eastern end was a small feature, possibly a post-hole (Feature 4) (Figure 5, Plate 6) 240 mm in diameter and up to 70 mm deep. The relationship between these two features is uncertain, however they are probably contemporary. The two cobbles, up to 120 mm in size, in the side of this feature possibly acted as packing for a post. There is insufficient of these feature exposed to suggest a function, however the slight curve of the gully leaves open the possibility of a prehistoric round house.

Trench 2

Trench 2 was 9.90 m x 2.00 m in size with up to 370 mm of topsoil (Context 6). This layer was highly disturbed by tree roots from the line of semi-mature trees approximately 7 m to the east. The trench was placed to sample Anomaly H from the geophysical survey (Brooks 2015). Five features were recorded in this trench (Figure 4).

At the southern end of the trench were two features, a possible post-hole (Context 7) and a length of shallow gully (Context 9) (Plate 7). Context 7 (Plate 8) was 250 mm in diameter and up to 100 mm deep and was filled with Context 8. This fill contained two larger cobbles, up to 80 mm in size) which may have acted as packing for the possible post. The gulley (Context 9) (Plate 9) appears to have a slight curve, but it extends beyond the extent of the trench and thus its true form is uncertain. It was between 250 and 300 mm wide and up to 100 mm deep.

Towards the northern end of the trench a complex of two gully-like features crossed the trench (Plate 10) Contexts 11 (Plate 11) and 13 (Plate 12) appear to run roughly parallel with each other and have similar forms with irregular bases to both of the gullies. On the eastern side of the trench the two fill for these features (Contexts 12 and 14) tend to merge suggesting that the two features are probably contemporary. Both of these contexts contain areas of iron panning which possibly gave rise to the magnetic signature recorded as Anomaly H in the geophysical survey. Context 11 was between 400 and 500 mm wide, but was very shallow being only 70 mm deep, whilst Context 13 was between 280 and 320 mm wide and 60 to 90 mm deep.

Slightly to the north was a possible post-hole (Context 15). This was sub-rectangular in plan and 270 x 340 mm in size and up to 80 mm deep (Plate 13). It fill (Context 16) contained three sub-angular to rounded cobbles up to 100 mm in size which probably acted as packing.

Conclusions

This evaluation was specifically designed to test the results of the geophysical survey carried out in February 2015. It suggests that the geophysical survey did not record the totality of the archaeological record and that there is a level of archaeological activity on the site which is yet to be fully evaluated.

The topsoil of the site was rather soft in texture, even where it was not disturbed by tree roots. Given that the site was the playing fields for a school, it is possible that this was either imported onto the site as part of the construction of the school or has been heavily worked in order give a seed bed for the grass of the playing field. It is also possible that the site was prepared prior to the laying out of the playing fields leading to the truncated nature of the archaeological features.

The work did, however, record a limited number of archaeological features which suggests a level of activity on the site. It is unfortunate that no finds were recovered and thus the features could not be firmly dated. Their form, however, might suggest a possible prehistoric association, although this remains highly speculative. The slightly curved plan of Contexts 2 and 9 may be related to possible round-house type structures, although this remains to be confirmed.

The complex of Contexts 11 and 13 is somewhat curious. It is likely that the two gully like features are contemporary. The presence of iron panning, within the fills, would suggest that there was a level of moisture retention. This with the somewhat irregular plan and section of the features may suggest the presence of a hedged enclosure represented by these features.

Acknowledgements

The work was commissioned by Elfyn G. Jones for Gwynedd County Council. The topsoiling and backfilling of the trenches was organised by Trebor Thomas of Mon Fencing.

References

Brooks, I.P. 2015 *Hen Ysgol Hendre Geophysical Survey*. EAS Client report 2015/05

Plate 1: Panorama of the site between south and west

Plate 2: Trench 1 looking ENE

Plate 3: Trench 2, looking ESE

Plate 4: Features 2 and 4

Plate 5: Section through Feature 2

Plate 6: Section through Feature 4

Plate 7: Features 7 and 9

Plate 8: Section through Context 7

Plate 9: Section though Context 9

Plate 10: Contexts 11 and 13

Plate 11: Section through Context 11

Plate 12: Section through Context 13

Plate 13: Section through Context 15

Figure 1: Location
Scale 1:25,000

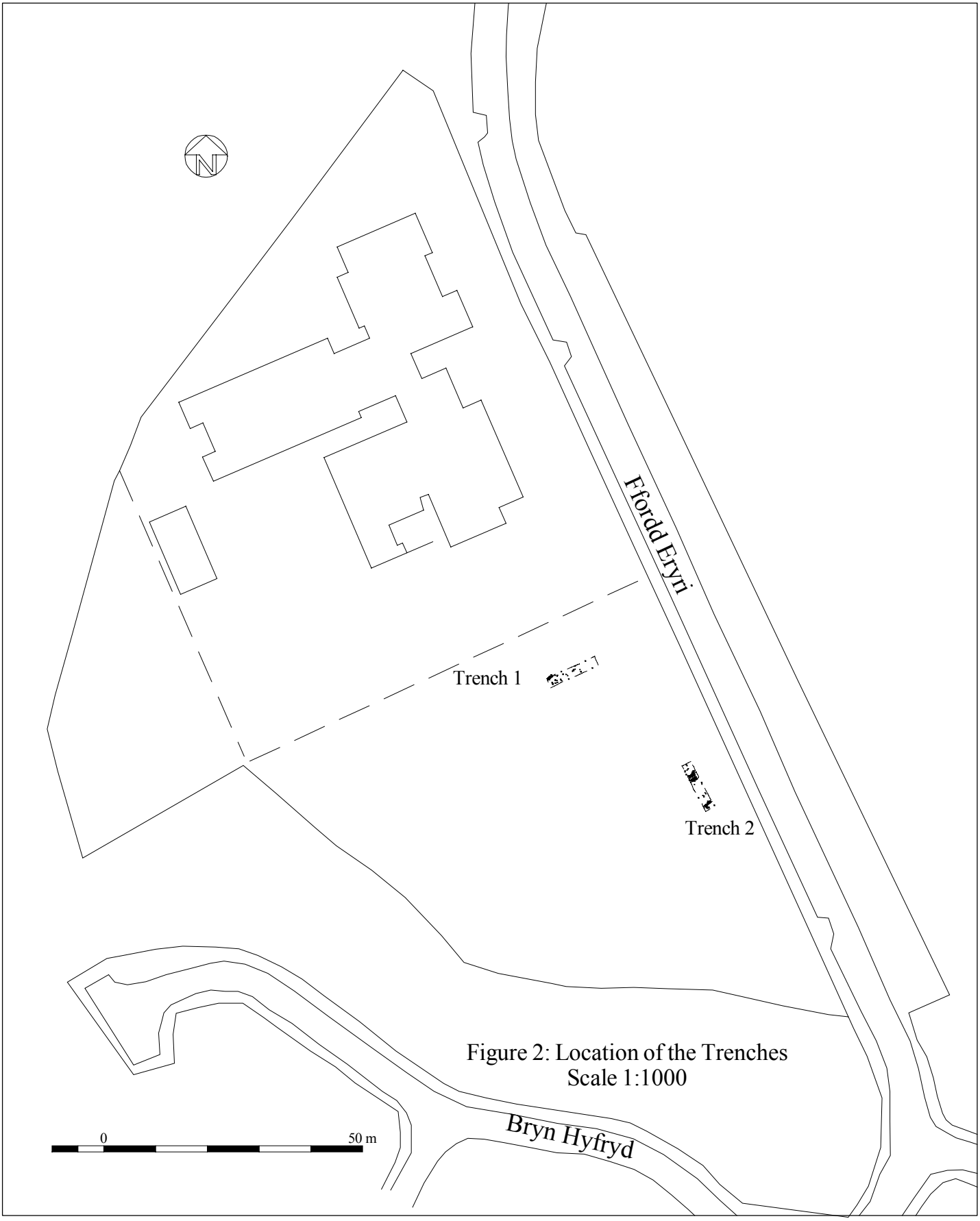

Figure 2: Location of the Trenches
Scale 1:1000

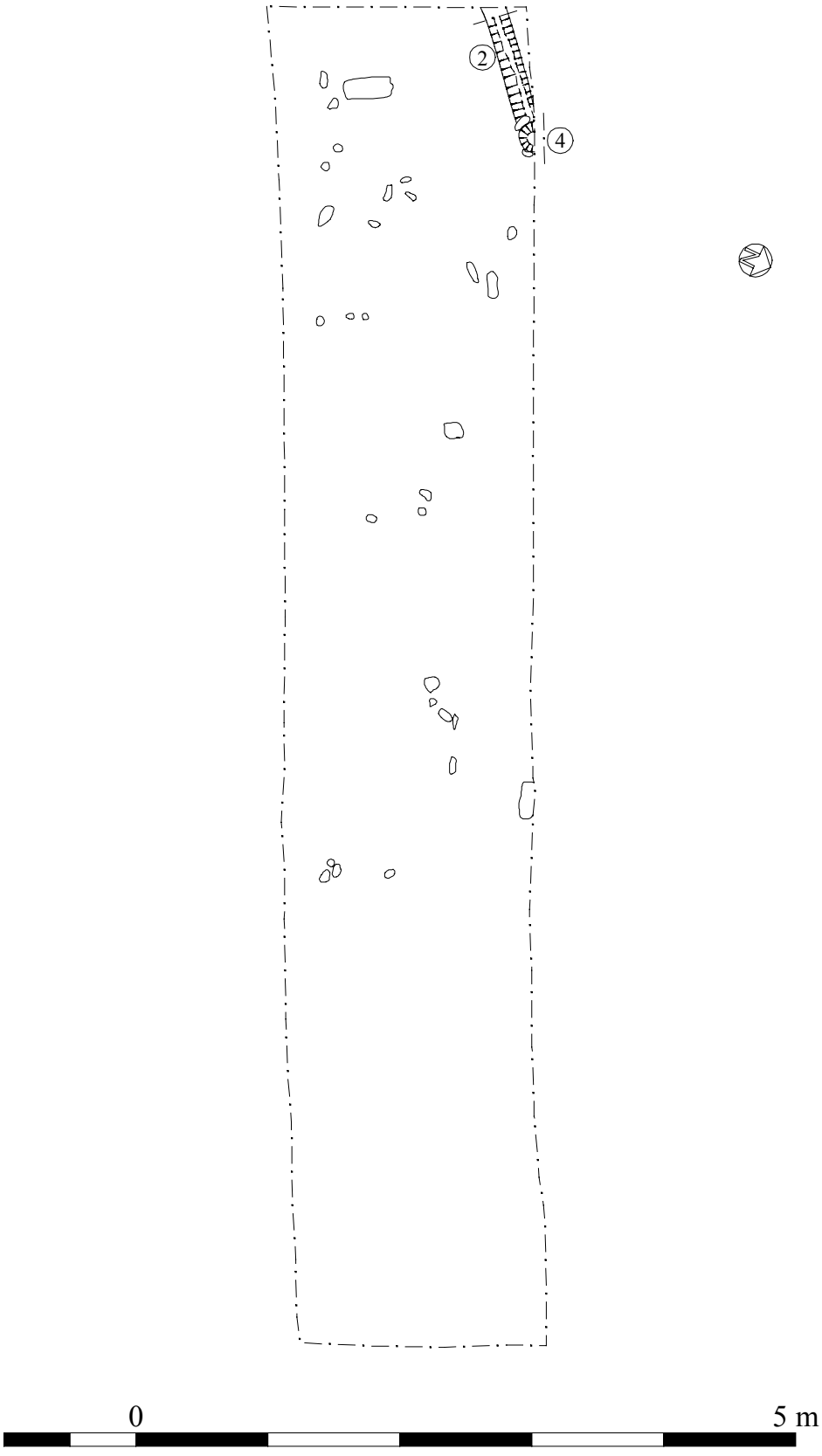

Figure 3: Trench 1
Scale 1:50

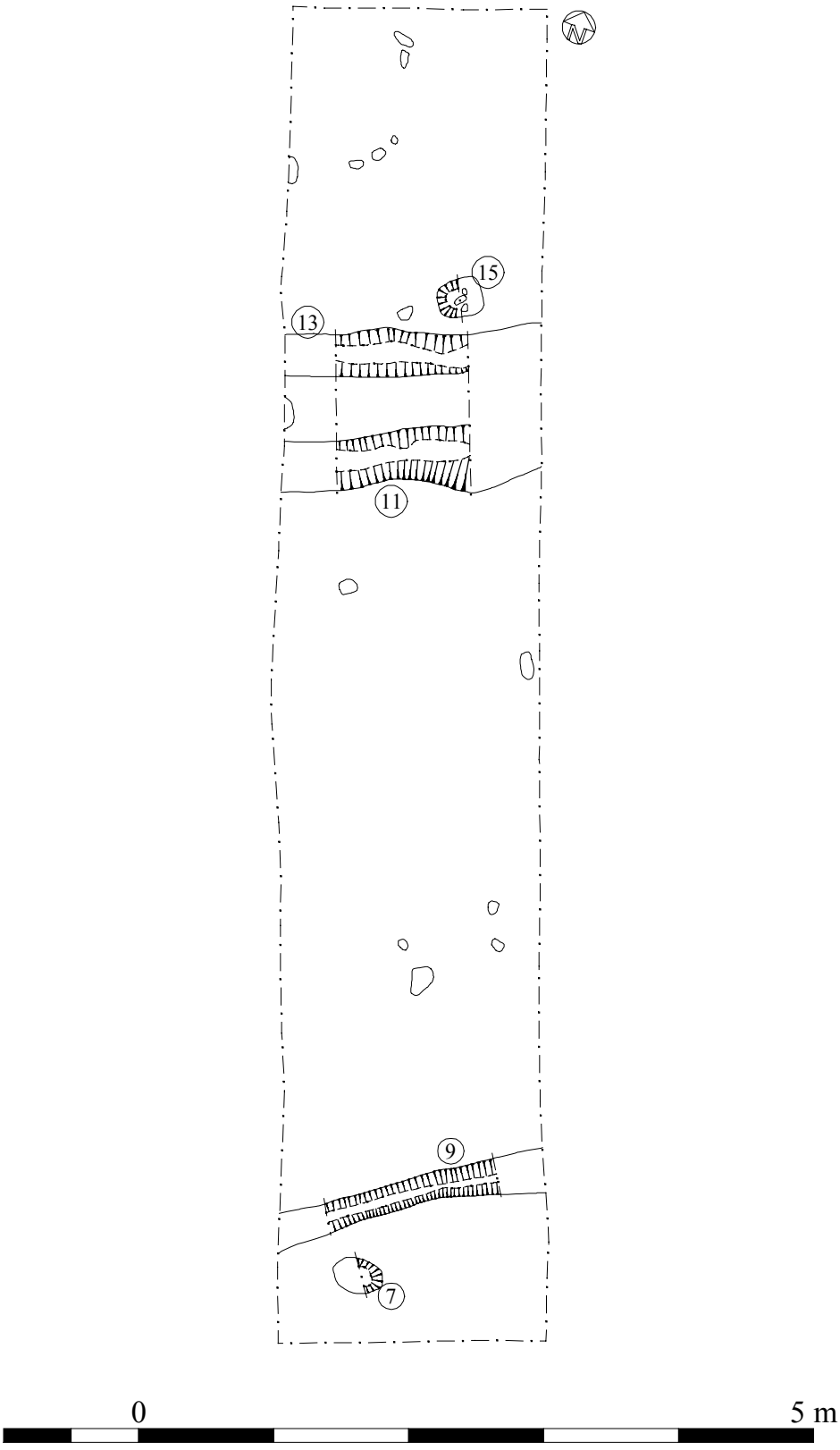

Figure 4: Trench 2
Scale 1:50

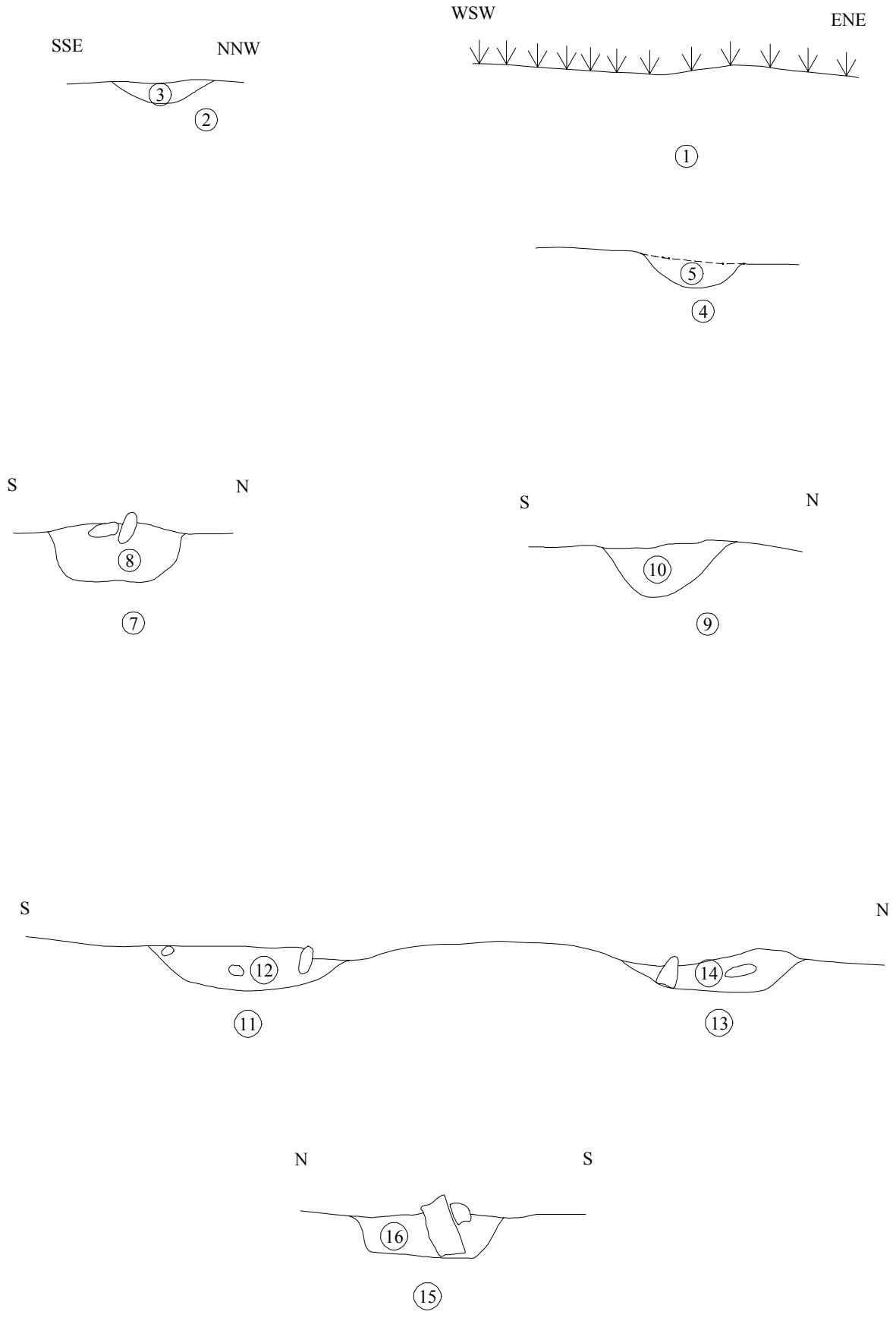

Figure 5: Sections
Scale 1:10

Appendix 1: Context Summary

Context	Trench	Context type	Description	Relationships
1	Tr 1	Layer	Topsoil. Humic rich slightly sandy loam with the rare rounded stone up to 120 mm in size, and the occasional smaller (50 mm) stone. The layer is up to 350 mm thick and appears to be well sorted. The layer was probably worked as part of the maintenance of the playing fields	Above: 2, 3, 4 and 5
2	Tr 1	Cut	Shallow gully in the north western corner of Tr 1. A short length of very shallow (40 mm) and narrow (170 mm) Gully running approximately ESE to WNW. It appears to be contemporary with feature 4. It has sloping sides and a rounded base.	Below: 1 Contains: 3 Uncertain with: 4
3	Tr 1	Fill	Yellowish brown clayey silt with the occasional small (up to 50 mm) rounded pebble.	Below: 1 Within: 2 Abuts: 5
4	Tr 1	Cut	Small, probably circular feature, possibly a post hole, extending out of Tr 1. Probably 240 mm in diameter and up to 70 mm deep. There are two natural cobbles, up to 120 mm in size which appear to be packed into the side of this feature	Below 1 Contains 5 Uncertain with 2
5	Tr 1	Fill	Mid greyish brown slightly clayey loam with the rare fleck of charcoal and rare small (up to 50 mm) rounded pebble.	Below 1 Within 4 Abuts 3
6	Tr 2	Layer	Topsoil. Mid greyish brown slightly silty loam with the occasional rounded cobble up to 120 mm in size and a slightly higher density of smaller (up to 50 mm) rounded pebbles. The layer is highly disturbed by tree root from the trees alongside the road some 7 m away. The layer has a soft texture possibly suggesting it has been at least partially imported.	Above 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15 and 16
7	Tr 2	Post-hole	Roughly circular in plan and 250 mm in diameter this feature has slightly sloping sides and a flattish base. It is 100 mm deep	Below 6 Contains 8
8	Tr 2	Layer	Fill of possible post-hole context 7. Mid yellowish brown slightly clayey loam with a low density of small (less than 20 mm) sub-angular pebbles. There are two larger (up to 80 mm) rounded pebbles in the top of this context which may have been from the packing.	Below 6 Within 7

Context	Trench	Context type	Description	Relationships
9	Tr 2	Cut	A gully, between 250 and 300 mm wide and up to 100 mm deep crossing the southern end of Tr 2 at a slight angle. The feature has sloping sides and a rounded base. It appears to be roughly parallel with the double gully complex of Contexts 11 and 13	Below 6 Contains 10
10	Tr 2	Fill	Mottled yellowish grey and greyish brown slightly clayey loam with the occasional rounded pebble up to 50 mm in size and the rare larger pebble up to 100 x 50 x 50 mm. These tended to occupy the centre of the feature	Below 6 Within 9
11	Tr 2	Cut	One of a pair of gullies running parallel and crossing Tr 2 towards its northern end at a slight angle. This feature and Context 13 gave rise to the magnetic anomaly. A gully between 400 and 500 mm wide, but very shallow being only 70 mm deep. It has sloping sides and a slightly irregular, but basically flat base. Towards the east the division between this feature and Context 13 lowers so that in planet is not possible to distinguish between the two features.	Below 6 Contain 12 Probably part of complex with 13
12	Tr 2	Fill	Yellowish brown slightly clayey loam with a low density of small (up to 25 m) rounded pebbles. The layer contains agglomerated lumps of iron panning which suggest it may have retained some water, but also gave rise to the magnetic signal of the anomaly.	Below 6 Within 11
13	Tr 2	Cut	One of a pair of parallel gullies running at a slight angle to the Tr 2 towards its northern end. Slightly irregular in form this gully is between 280 and 320 mm wide and 60 to 90 mm deep. Together with Context 11 this feature gave rise to one of the anomalies recorded in the geophysical survey.	Below 6 Contains 14
14	Tr 2	Fill	Very similar to Context 12. A Yellowish brown slightly clayey loam with a low density of small (up to 25 m) rounded pebbles. The layer contains agglomerated lumps of iron panning which suggest it may have retained some water, but also gave rise to the magnetic signal of the anomaly. The layer also contained the occasional larger, rounded pebble up to 100 mm in size. Towards the eastern end of the trench Contexts 14 and 12 tend to merge over the low "bank" between features 13 and 11.	Below 6 Within 13
15	Tr 2	Post-hole	Sub-rectangular in plan and 270 x 340 mm in size, this feature has slightly sloping sides and a flat base. It is 80 mm deep.	Below 6 Contains 16
16	Tr 2	Fill	Mid yellowish brown clayey silt with the rare, small, sub-angular stone up to 20 mm in size. The layer does include, however three medium sized (up to 100 mm) rounded and sub-rounded pebbles which may have acted as packing.	Below 6 Within 15

Appendix 2: Photographic Index

File	Scale	Looking	Subject
Ysgol Hendre_001	1m	WSW	Trench 1
Ysgol Hendre_002	1m	ENE	Trench 1
Ysgol Hendre_003	1m	ENE	Trench 1
Ysgol Hendre_004	1m	ENE	Trench 1
Ysgol Hendre_005	1m	ENE	Trench 1
Ysgol Hendre_006	1m	WSW	Trench 1
Ysgol Hendre_008	200 mm	down	Plan view of Features 2 and 4
Ysgol Hendre_009	200 mm	down	Plan view of Features 2 and 4
Ysgol Hendre_010	100 mm	WSW	Section through Feature 2
Ysgol Hendre_011	100 mm	NNW	Section though Feature 4 including topsoil (Context 1)
Ysgol Hendre_012	100 mm	NNW	Section through Feature 4
Ysgol Hendre_013	1m	SSW	Trench 2
Ysgol Hendre_014	1m	SSW	Trench 2
Ysgol Hendre_015	1m	NNE	Trench 2
Ysgol Hendre_016	1m	NNE	Trench 2
Ysgol Hendre_017	1m	WSW	Features 11 and 13 before excavation
Ysgol Hendre_018	1m	WSW	Features 7 and 9 before excavation
Ysgol Hendre_019	1m	WSW	Features 7 and 9 before excavation
Ysgol Hendre_020	1m	WSW	Features 7 and 9 after excavation
Ysgol Hendre_021	1m	NNW	Features 7 and 9 after excavation
Ysgol Hendre_022	1m	WSW	Features 11 and 13 after excavation
Ysgol Hendre_023	1m	WSW	Features 11 and 13 after excavation
Ysgol Hendre_024	1m	WSW	Features 11 and 13 after excavation
Ysgol Hendre_025	100 mm	WNE	Section through Feature 7
Ysgol Hendre_026	100 mm	WNW	Section through Feature 9
Ysgol Hendre_027	100 mm	WNW	Section through Feature 11
Ysgol Hendre_028	100 mm	WNW	Section through Feature 13
Ysgol Hendre_029	100 mm	ESE	Section through Feature 15
Ysgol Hendre_030	None	SW	Trench 1 after backfilling
Ysgol Hendre_031	None	SSE	Backfilling Trench 2
Ysgol Hendre_032	None	SW	Trench 1 after backfilling
Ysgol Hendre_033	None	SSE	Backfilling Trench 2
Ysgol Hendre_100	None	SE - SW	Panorama of the site during excavation
Ysgol Hendre_101	None	SE - SW	Panorama of the site during backfilling

Appendix 2: Specification for the Initial Archaeological Evaluation of Safle Hen Ysgol Hendre, Caernarfon, Gwynedd.

Specification written by I.P. Brooks 19/03/15

1. Background

1.1. It is intended to redevelop the site of the disused school of Ysgol Hendre, Caernarfon

1.2. .A fluxgate gradiometer survey carried out by Engineering Archaeological Services Ltd located a few feint linear anomalies which may be the result of archaeological activity. Also there are reports of Roman burials having been found in the modern cemetery opposite the disused school.

1.3. This specification is based on:

1.3.1. The geophysical survey carried out by Engineering Archaeological Services Ltd (EAS Client report 2015/05)

1.3.2. A request from Elfyn G. Jones, Client Officer – Property Development, Gwynedd County Council for a limited evaluation of the results of the geophysical survey.

2. Aims

2.1. To evaluate he geophysical survey carried out by Engineering Archaeological Services Ltd.

3. Assessment program

3.1. The programme of works shall include:

3.1.1. The excavation of two trenches to sample the magnetic anomalies recorded in the geophysical survey

3.1.2. Analysis and report preparation

4. Methodology

4.1. Evaluation Trenches

4.1.1. Two evaluation trenches will be excavated to sample two of the anomalies recorded in the geophysical survey

4.1.2. It is expected that the trenches will each be 10 x 2 m in size

4.1.3. The proposed location of the trenches is shown on the attached figure

4.1.4. The topsoil and any archaeologically inert deposits will be removed with a back acting mechanical excavator with a smooth faced bucket

4.1.4.1. It is intended to commission Xtreme Track to carry out the topsoiling.

4.1.5. Any subsequent work will be carried out by hand.

4.1.6. All features or archaeologically significant deposits revealed by the ground works will be fully recorded including:

4.1.7. A written description of deposit: type, components etc.

4.1.8. Drawn plans and elevations at suitable scales

4.1.9. Photographs will be taken with a Nikon D80 Digital SLR Camera at a resolution of 10.2 MP

4.1.10. The photographs will be taken in .RAW format and will be converted to .JPG format for the report

4.1.11. The photographs will include metric scales

4.1.12. All artefacts and ecofacts will be recorded by context.

4.1.13. Each deposit, feature or layer will be identified by a unique context number to which all other records will be related

4.1.14. Plan drawing showing extent of deposit.

4.1.15. Elevation drawing of any feature recorded to record vertical stratigraphy.

4.1.16. Where possible, features will be sampled to obtain dating and functional evidence.

4.1.17. Where possible, elevation drawings of feature half sections to record vertical stratigraphy.

4.1.18. Where appropriate, deposits will be sampled for environmental, dating or technological evidence. Samples will be fully recorded and packed appropriately for future analysis.

4.1.19. Sampling will be carried out in accordance with the procedures outlined in English Heritage. 2011. Environmental Archaeology. *A guide to the theory and practice of methods, from sampling and recovery to post-excavation*.

4.1.20. All features recorded will be tied in to the National Grid.

4.1.21. All features revealed by the ground works will be recorded as above if safe working practices and the work programme allows.

4.1.22. If human remains are encountered all works will stop until the appropriate permissions have been obtained.

4.1.23. The trenches will be backfilled at the end of the fieldwork in order to make then safe.

4.2. Finds

4.2.1. Any flint artefacts will be studied by I.P. Brooks for Engineering Archaeological Services Ltd.

4.2.2. Any pottery will be studied by an appropriate specialist to be agreed in consultation with the Gwynedd Archaeological Planning Service

4.2.3. Any metal or other special finds will be studied by an appropriate specialist to be agreed in consultation with the Gwynedd Archaeological Planning Service

4.2.4. All ceramic, bone and stone artefacts will be cleaned and processed immediately following the watching brief.

4.2.5. Metal artefacts will be stored and managed on site according to the UK Institute of Conservation Guidelines.

4.2.6. Any samples taken for environmental analysis will be assessed and studied by an appropriate specialist to be agreed in consultation with the Gwynedd Archaeological Planning Service

4.2.7. If specialist reports are required these will not be commissioned without the express permission of Gwynedd County Council.

6. Reporting

6.1. A summary report on the findings of the investigations will be prepared and completed within one month from completion of the project. This will summarise the results of the project including;

6.1.1. Results of the evaluation trenches.

6.1.2. A location plan at a suitable scale

6.1.3. Copies of reports will be sent to the client, the Gwynedd Archaeological Planning Service and the Gwynedd Historical Environment Record

6.1.4. Up to five hard copies of the report will be produced together with a digital copy in.PDF format

7. General

7.1. IFA Code of Conduct

7.1.1. All staff will abide by, and all procedures be carried out in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists' Code of Conduct.

7.2. Health and Safety

7.2.1. EAS Ltd adopt and adhere to safe working practices at all times. A copy of the company's general statement of policy is available on request.

7.2.2. A risk assessment will be carried out prior to any fieldwork

7.2.3. It is intended to fence each of the trenches with a plastic fence supported with metal steel fencing pins

7.3. Staff

7.3.1. The project will be directed by Dr I.P. Brooks MCIfA

7.3.2. Project Staff will include Dr I.P. Brooks MCIfA

7.4. Timetable

7.4.1. Topsoiling trenches: 1 man day

7.4.2. Excavation of trenches: 3 man days

7.4.3. Backfilling of the trenches 1 man day

7.4.4. Analysis and report preparation: 2 man days (this is partly dependent on the results of the excavations).

7.4.5. If appointed it is intended to carry out this work in April 2014

7.5. Insurance

7.5.1. EAS Ltd carries all necessary Public and Employee Liability Insurances.

7.5.2. EAS Ltd carries Professional Indemnity Insurance.

7.6. Copyright

7.6.1. EAS Ltd shall retain full copyright of any commissioned reports, tender documents or other project documentation, under the Copyrights, Designs and Patents Act 1988 with all rights reserved: excepting that it hereby provides an exclusive license to the client for the use of such documents by the client in all matters directly relating to the project as described in the Project Specification.

7.6.2. EAS Ltd is prepared to assign copyright at the request of the client