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Engineering Archaeological Services Ltd.

**Beaumaris Castle Visitor Centre
Archaeological Watching Brief**

I.P. Brooks

EAS Client report 2019/012

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Archaeological Watching Brief**

Survey Commissioned

by

Recclesia Ltd

Fieldwork

by

I.P. Brooks

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registered in England

No 2869678

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Introduction

NGR: Centred on SH 60661 76175

Status:

Within the UNESCO “Castles and Town Walls of King Edward in Gwynedd World Heritage site

Partly within AN001 Scheduled Ancient Monument

Listed Building 84771, Grade II Listed Gate Piers and Gates, Ticket Office, Boundary Walls and Railings at Beaumaris Castle

Within the HLW(GW)15 Penmon Historic Landscape

Location and Topography: (Figure 1)

At the time of the fieldwork (November – December 2019) Cadw were in the process of extending and improving the visitor centre attached to Beaumaris Castle. Siting between the western moat and Castle Street the existing visitor’s centre incorporates the Ticket Office originally built in 1954 (<https://cadwpublic-api.azurewebsites.net/reports/listedbuilding/FullReport?lang=&id=84771>). The Ticket Office was extended in 2007 to provide a more extensive shop and visitor’s centre. As part of this work, a new extension is being added to the north eastern side of the building (Plate 1). The work also required the re-positioning of the gas supply, to the site, and thus a small archaeological trench was dug, within the scheduled area, to act as a reception pit for the gas pipe (Plate 3) and a trench was dug in the pavement of Castle Street to extend the line of the existing gas pipe (Plate 6).

Aims of the Project

To record any archaeological deposits or remains disturbed by the works.

SUMMARY

Only post-medieval soil deposits were recorded during the works associated with the extension of the visitor centre at Beaumaris Castle and its associated gas main relocation.

Dim ond dyddodion pridd ôl-ganoloesol a gofnodwyd yn ystod y gwaith oedd yn gysylltiedig ag ymestyn y ganolfan ymwelwyr yng Nghastell Biwmaris ynghyd â'r gwaith cysylltiedig i symud pibell nwy.

Methodology

The project took place in three parts. Firstly, the digging of the trench for the extension to the building was monitored. The work here, by Recclesia, took place by hand and covered an area of 2.35 x 2.65 m dug to a depth of 0.64 m. Secondly an archaeological trench was dug, by the author, alongside the inside face of the boundary wall to act as a reception pit for the new gas supply to the site. The trench was 0.6 x 0.6 m in size and was hand dug to a depth of 0.59 m below the current ground level. Lastly an archaeological watching brief was undertaken on the, machine dug, trench for the extension to the gas pipeline on the outside of the boundary wall, within the pavement of Castle Street. This work was undertaken by Wales and West Utilities.

Features and deposits of archaeological interest were recorded with a written description, drawn record and photographed. The photographs were taken with a Nikon D5300 Digital SLR Camera at a resolution of 24.2 MP with the photographs being taken in RAW (NEF) format. These photographs were converted into JPEG format for use as illustration in this report and TIFF for archiving

Visitor's Centre Extension Watching Brief

The top 0.52 m of the trench dug for the new extension (Figure 2, Plate 2) consisted of modern deposits associated with the construction of the current visitor centre in 2007 and the use of the site thereafter. Below a layer of tarmac (Context 1) was a layer of shales chippings (Context 2), 100 mm thick that acted as a base for the tarmac. Below this was a deep deposit of crushed limestone up to 300 mm thick (Context 3). It was made up of a series of tips of material separated by bands of yellow sandy material. This layer was over a thin layer of mid brown clayey soil (Context 4) which is assumed to be a trampled layer formed during the creation of the make-up layer above. Below Context 4 was a layer of yellow/orange gravel (Context 5).

It was only at the base of the trench that any deposits not associated with the construction of the visitor's centre were revealed. This was a single layer of dark grey brown soil (Context 6) of nineteenth, or early twentieth century date, as it included fragments of blue and white transfer printed pottery and fragments of glass beer bottles stamped with the inscription that included the words "Bangor" and "Llangefni". This deposit had been near to the surface when the current visitor's centre was built as it was cut by three wooden pegs which are assumed to be part of the marking-out pens or levelling boards for the construction of the building.

Reception Pit Excavation

A very simple stratigraphy was recorded in the small trench dug as a reception pit for the gas pipe (Figure 3, Plates 4 and 5). Below 100 mm of topsoil (Context 7) was up to 180 mm of a dark grey brown clayey silt (Context 8). This layer tended to be slightly thicker in the middle of the trench, however the top of this trench was highly disturbed by the roots of the ivy which grows on the boundary wall to the site. The bottom 430 mm of the trench consists of a single layer of yellowish-brown clayey silt (Context 9) which contained the rare fragment of nineteenth or early twentieth century ceramics. There was no sign of a cut between Context 9 and the boundary wall to the site, suggesting it probably was deposited against a standing structure.

The boundary wall (Figure 3, Plate 4) appears to extend to below the level of the excavation. However, when the gas pipe was driven through the wall, no significant resistance was met. This was at a level just below the excavated level suggesting the base of the wall was at, or just below the level of the excavation.

Gas Main Watching Brief

The re-design of the visitor's centre required its gas supply to be re-located. This resulted in a trench approximately 9.7 m long and 450 mm wide being dug in the pavement to Castle Street (Plate 6). Over much of this length this trench was 500 mm deep. Through out the majority of the trench was cut through modern deposits associated with the pavement and the

underlying sewer. The exception to this was encountered at the northern end of the trench where the pipe was driven through the boundary wall (Plate 7)

Below approximately 200 mm of modern deposits was a layer of yellowish-brown clayey silt which is similar to Context 9 (see above) and it contained the rare fragment of nineteenth or early twentieth century ceramics.

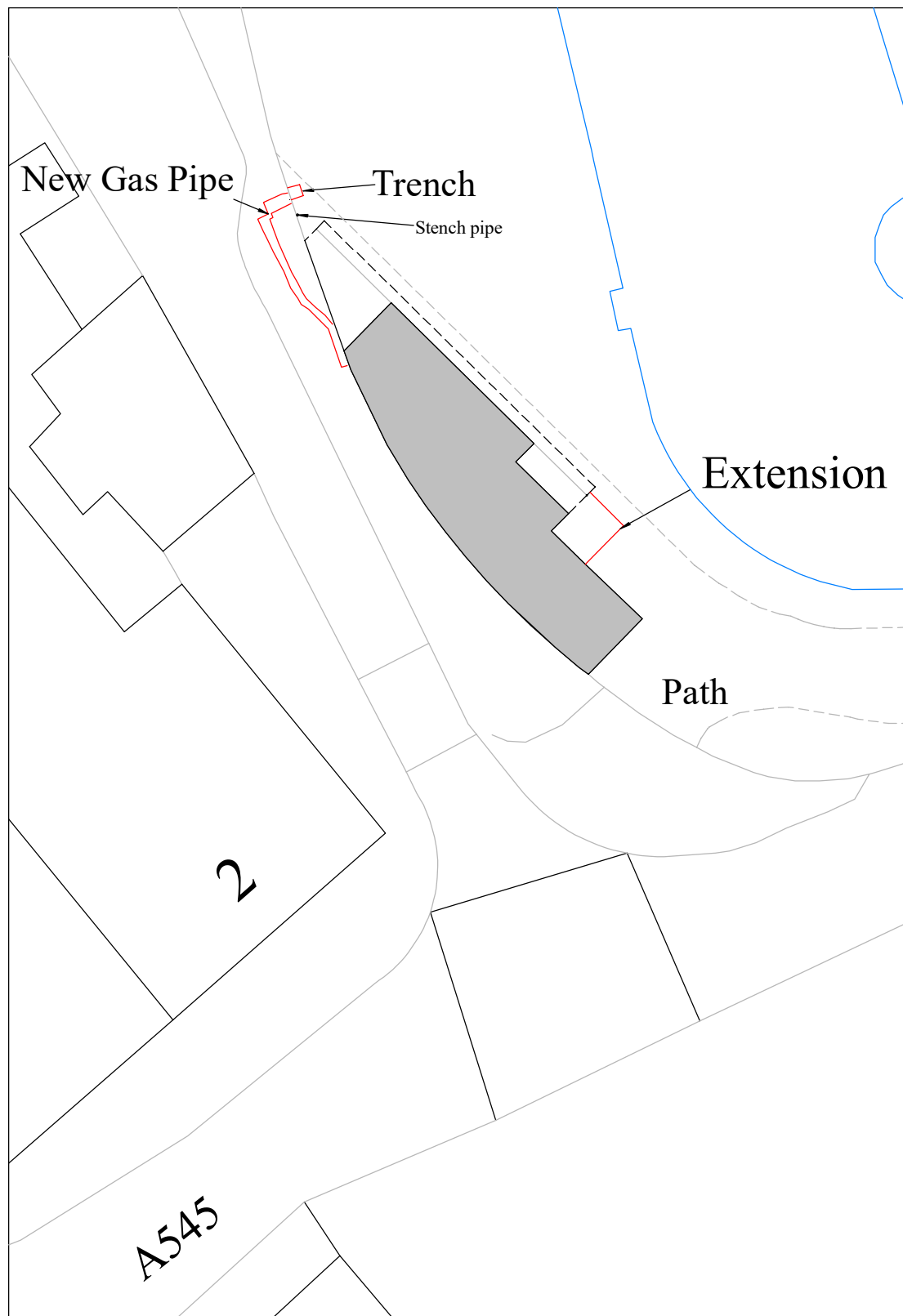
Conclusions

The works associated with the extension and improvements to the visitor's centre at Beaumaris Castle has caused minimal damage to the archaeological record of the area. Indeed, only nineteenth or early twentieth century soil layers were recorded in all of the trenches. It is curious, however, the depth of these deposits with up to 500 mm of post-medieval layers surviving in this area of the town. None of the trenches are deep enough to test whether any earlier deposits survive and it is unfortunate that no archaeological report on the works associated with the construction of the current visitor's centre could be located (J. Emmett *pers. comm.*).

One possibility of the source of the soils encountered is from the clearing of the moat to Beaumaris Castle. The moat to the castle had fully silted by the early twentieth century as it does not appear on the 1:2,500 Ordnance Survey Anglesey XV.13 map published in 1919.

Acknowledgements

The project was commissioned by Recclesia Ltd and the team help with the watching brief and excavation of the trench for the reception pit is gratefully acknowledged. The trench for the gas main was dug by a team from Wales and West Utilities. The project was monitored for Cadw by Ian Halfpenney.



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Ordnance Survey 0100031673



Figure 1: Location of the Element of the Project
Scale 1:200

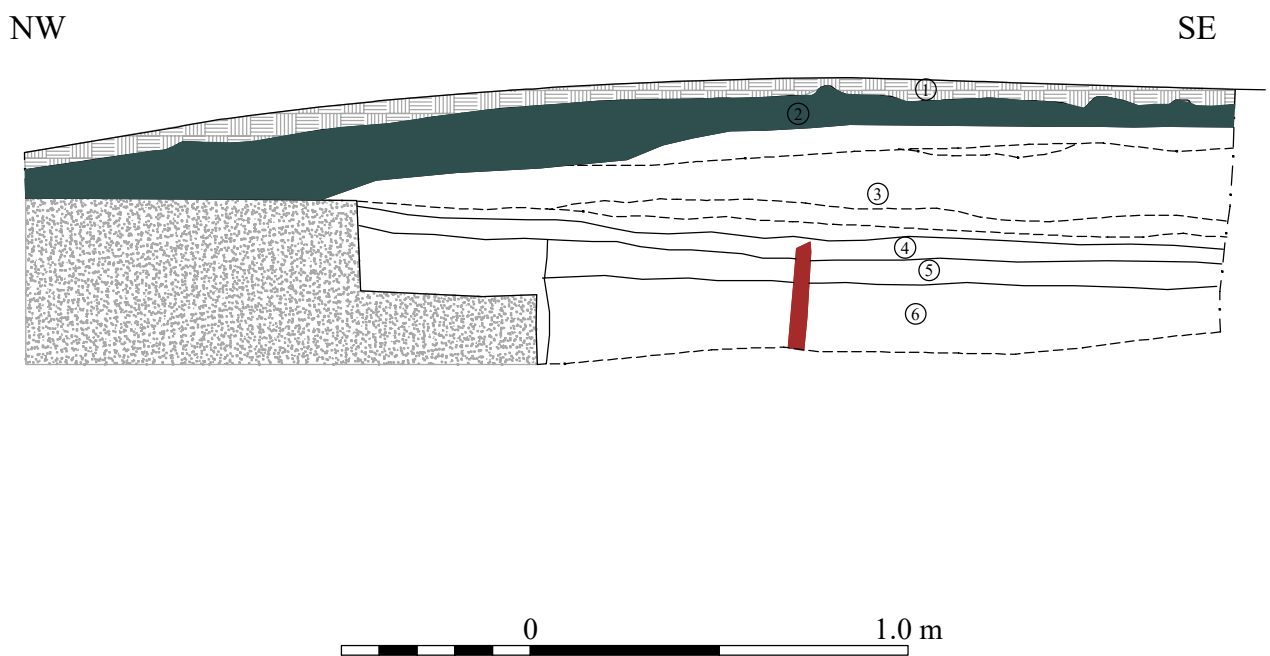


Figure 2: Extension Trench Section
Scale 1:20

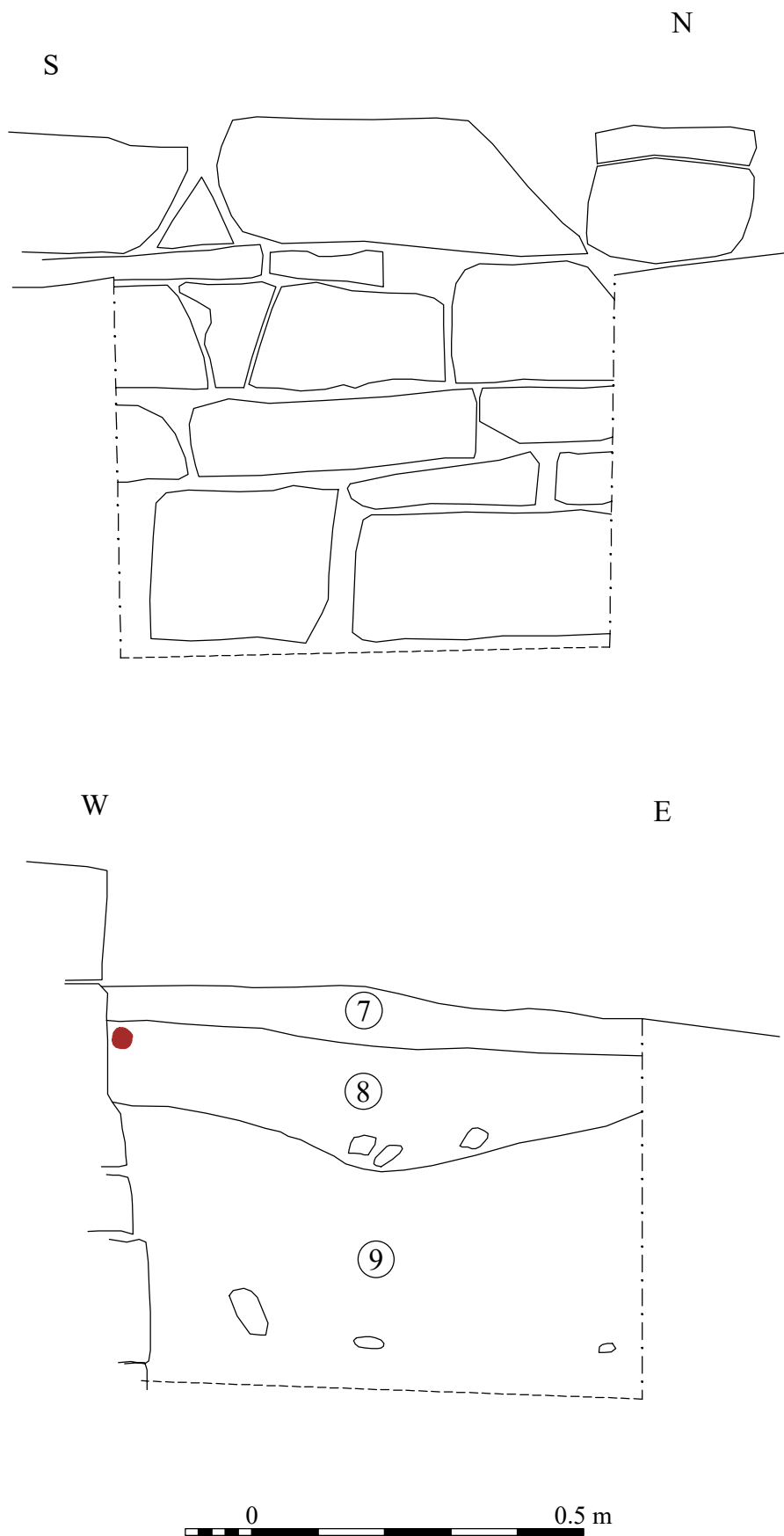


Figure 3: Reception Trench Sections
Scale 1:10



Plate 1: Location of the visitor centre extension



Plate 2: Section of the trench for the visitor centre extension



Plate 3: Location of the reception pit trench



Plate 4: Elevation of the boundary wall



Plate 5: Section of the reception pit trench



Plate 6: Trench for the gas main



Plate 7: Section of gas main trench adjacent to the boundary wall

Appendix 1: Context Summary

Context	Location	Description	Relationships
1	Extension	50 mm of tarmac	Above 2
2	Extension	100 mm shale chippings	Above 3 Below 1
3	Extension	300 mm crushed limestone make up	Above 4 Below 2
4	Extension	Mid brown clayey soil forming a layer 50 mm thick at the base of the makeup layer. Probable trampling before the make-up was deposited	Above 5 Below 3
5	Extension	Band of orange/yellow gravel	Above 6 Below 4
6	Extension	Dark grey/brown soil layer, layer quite clayey. This contains blue and white transfer printed pot. Glass bottle fragments (Bangor and Llangefni beer bottles) and a range of animal bones including chicken, sheep and probably cattle, possibly pig. Rare slate and larger stone block. Oyster shell	Below 5
7	Tr1	Topsoil, dark grey brown humid rich clayey silt with many small roots, largely from the ivy growing on the wall. Up to 100 mm thick	Above 8 Abuts boundary wall
8	Tr1	Dark grey brown clayey silt with the occasional small (up to 50 mm) sub-rounded or rounded pebble. The layer is deeper in the centre of the section where the stones tend to concentrate. Midst disturbed by ivy roots.	Above 9 Below 7 Abuts boundary wall
9	Tr1	Yellowish brown clayey silt with very few other inclusions except the rare sub-angular limestone block and a single water worn cobble up to 200 mm in size. The layer is disturbed by rotted tree roots one of which penetrated the wall. Rare post-medieval ceramic fragment at a depth of 500 mm below the topsoil level. No sign of a cut for the wall suggesting it formed against a standing structure.	Below 8 Abuts boundary wall Probably equivalent to 14
10	Gas Pipeline	80 mm slabs (pavement)	Above 11
11	Gas Pipeline	80 mm bedding, concrete	Above 12, 14 Below 10
12	Gas Pipeline	100 mm crushed tarmac	Above 13 Below 11
13	Gas Pipeline	150 mm stone chippings in the backfill for the sewage pipe	Below 12 Cuts 14
14	Gas Pipeline	300 mm yellowish brown clayey silt similar Context 9	Below 11 Cut by 13 Probably equivalent to 9