ARGEL, JOHNSTOWN, CARMARTHEN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

(SN 4016 1907)



Prepared by Dyfed Archaeological Trust For: TRJ Construction Ltd





DYFED ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

RHIF YR ADRODDIAD / REPORT NO. 2013/38 RHIF Y PROSIECT / PROJECT RECORD NO. 105587

Ebrill 2013 April 2013

ARGEL, JOHNSTOWN, CARMARTHEN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

Gan / By

Simon Ratty

Paratowyd yr adroddiad yma at ddefnydd y cwsmer yn unig. Ni dderbynnir cyfrifoldeb gan Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Dyfed Cyf am ei ddefnyddio gan unrhyw berson na phersonau eraill a fydd yn ei ddarllen neu ddibynnu ar y gwybodaeth y mae'n ei gynnwys

The report has been prepared for the specific use of the client. Dyfed Archaeological Trust Limited can accept no responsibility for its use by any other person or persons who may read it or rely on the information it contains.



Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Dyfed Cyf Neuadd y Sir, Stryd Caerfyrddin, Llandello, Sir Gaerfyrddin SA19 6AF Ffon: Ymholiadau Cyffredinol 01558 823121 Adran Rheoli Treftadaeth 01558 823131 Ffacs: 01558 823133

Ebost: info@dyfedarchaeology.org.uk Gwefan: www.archaeolegdyfed.org.uk Dyfed Archaeological Trust Limited The Shire Hall, Carmarthen Street, Llandello, Carmarthenshire SA19 6AF Tel: General Enquiries 01558 823121 Heritage Management Section 01558 823131 Fax: 01558 823133

Email: info@dyfedarchaeology.org.uk Website: www.dyfedarchaeology.org.uk

ARGEL, JOHNSTOWN, CARMARTHEN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

CONT	ENTS		
	SUMM	IARY	1
1	INTR	DDUCTION	2
:	1.1	Project Commission	2
:	1.2	Scope of the Project	2
:	1.3	Report Outline	3
:	1.4	Abbreviations	3
:	1.5	Illustrations	3
:	1.6	Timeline	3
2	THE S	SITE	5
4	2.1	Location	6
:	2.2	Archaeological and Historical Background	6
3.	EVAL	UATION METHODOLOGY	12
	3.1	Fieldwork	12
	3.2	Post Fieldwork and Archiving	12
	3.3	Timetabling of Fieldwork	12
4.	RESU	LTS AND DISCUSSION	13
5.	CONC	LUSIONS	14
6.	BIBLI	OGRAPHY	15
	6.1	Cartographic	15
	6.2	Published	15
FIGUE	RES		
Figure	e 1:	Detail of OS map showing location of evaluation	4
Figure	e 2:	Plan of proposed development as supplied by client, with blue outline showing footprint of proposed new Extra Care Home.	5
Figure	≥ 3:	Extract of 1890 1:2500 scale OS map	9
Figure 4: Figure 5:		Extract of 1906 1:2500 scale OS map Location plan of trenches and features revealed, showing the existing building of Argel and the outline of the footprint of the proposed new extra care home in blue	
Table 1:		Archaeological and historical timeline for Wales	3
Table 2:		Known sites of archaeological interest in close proximity	6

to the development area

PHOTOGRAPHS

Photo 1:	North facing section of geological feature [1004]	16
Photo 2:	East facing pre excavation view of [1006]	16
Photo 3:	North facing section of feature [1006]	17
Photo 4:	East facing view of trench 2	17
Photo 5:	West facing view of trench 2	18
Photo 6:	North facing view of trench 2	18
Photo 7:	Pre excavation view of pipe trench [2004]	19
Photo 8:	South facing section of pipe trench [2004]	19
Photo 9:	The former Argel Care Home, viewing northeast, showing tarmac driveway	20
Photo 10:	The low dividing wall within the lawned area viewing east	20

ARGEL, JOHNSTOWN, CARMARTHEN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

SUMMARY

Dyfed Archaeological Trust Field Services were commissioned by TRJ Construction Ltd, to undertake an archaeological evaluation ahead of the construction of a new extra care home on the site of the former Argel old peoples residential care home. The site is located on the eastern side of Llansteffan Road, Johnstown, Carmarthen. A planning condition attached to planning permission for the development required an archaeological evaluation to be undertaken prior to construction works commencing. The site of the medieval Rhyd-y-Gors castle is thought to lie within the vicinity of the development, its precise location being unknown.

Two trenches were excavated within the footprint of the proposed extra care home. The archaeological evaluation revealed no evidence for the Rhyd-y-Gors but did identify four hitherto unknown archaeological features.

A spread of modern building rubble, probably relating to the construction of Argel in 1954 was revealed within Trench 1 along with a geological feature. A curvilinear feature was also revealed which may also be a result of changes in the natural geology but it was not possible to confirm this. Trench 2 was T-shaped and the larger of the two trenches. Within Trench 2 a single modern pipe trench was revealed. All the features revealed are considered to be of low archaeological interest.

Whilst the features revealed during the course of the archaeological evaluation are considered to be of low archaeological interest the potential for significant archaeological remains to be present in the vicinity of the area is high. The exact location of Rhyd-y-Gors castle still remains unknown, although the evaluation has demonstrated that it is not present within the proposed development site.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Commission

- 1.1.1 A planning application was submitted by Carmarthenshire County Council to Carmarthenshire County Council planning authority (Planning ref W/27047) for the demolition of the former Argel care home and the construction of a replacement extra care home with improved facilities for the residents (NGR SN 4016 1907; Figures 1 and 2).
- 1.1.2 The site lies in close proximity to the possible site of Rhyd-y-Gors castle, thought to be the predecessor of Carmarthen Castle. The exact location of this castle is unknown, but is thought to possibly lie on the west side of the River Towy in the vicinity of the proposed new extra care home. In light of this a condition for a scheme of appropriate archaeological works was placed upon planning permission for the development. Following discussions with the archaeological advisors to the planning authority, it was determined that an archaeological evaluation of the development site was required ahead of the start of construction works.
- 1.1.4 To comply with the planning condition Dyfed Archaeological Trust Field Services (DAT-FS) were commissioned by TRJ Construction Ltd, to undertake the archaeological evaluation ahead of the new development.
- 1.1.5 A written scheme of investigation was prepared by DAT-FS and approved by the local planning authority prior to the works commencing, as required by the planning condition.

1.2 Scope of the Project

- 1.2.1 The written scheme of investigation (WSI) prepared by DAT-FS, stated that the project objectives were:
 - Provision of a written scheme of investigation to outline the methodology by which Dyfed Archaeological Trust Field Services will address the archaeological planning condition placed on the proposed development;
 - To identify the presence/absence of any archaeological deposits;
 - To establish the character, extent and date range for any archaeological deposits to be affected by the proposed groundworks;
 - To appropriately investigate and record any archaeological deposits to be affected by the groundworks; and
 - To produce an archive and report of any results.

1.3 Report Outline

1.3.1 This report describes the location of the site along with its archaeological background, and provides a summary and discussion of the results of the watching brief.

1.4 Abbreviations

1.4.1 Sites recorded on the Regional Historic Environment Record¹ (HER) are identified by their Primary Record Number (PRN) and located by their National Grid Reference (NGR). Written Scheme of Investigation – WSI.

¹ Held and managed by Dyfed Archaeological Trust

1.5 Illustrations

1.5.1 Photographic images are to be found at the back of the report. Printed map extracts are not necessarily reproduced to their original scale.

1.6 Timeline

1.6.1 The following timeline is used within this report to give date ranges for the various archaeological periods that may be mentioned within the text (Table 1).

Period	Approximate date	100
Palaeolithic -	c.450,000 - 10,000 BC	1433
Mesolithic –	c. 10,000 - 4400 BC	Pre
Neolithic -	c.4400 - 2300 BC	his
Bronze Age –	c.2300 - 700 BC	Prehistoric
Iron Age –	c.700 BC - AD 43	n
Roman (Romano-British) Period –	AD 43 - c. AD 410	
Post-Roman / Early Medieval Period –	c. AD 410 - AD 1086	
Medieval Period -	1086 - 1536	Historic
Post-Medieval Period ² –	1536 - 1750	ori
Industrial Period –	1750 – 1899	C
Modern -	20th century onwards	

Table 1: Archaeological and Historical Timeline for Wales

² The post-medieval and industrial periods are combined as the post-medieval period on the Regional Historic Environment Record as held by Dyfed Archaeological Trust

Figure 1: Detail of Ordnance Survey Map showing location of evaluation.

Reproduced from the 2003 Ordnance Survey 1:50,000 scale Landranger Map with the permission of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, © Crown Copyright Dyfed Archaeological Trust, The Shire Hall, Carmarthen Street, Llandello, Carmarthenshire SA19 6AF. Licence No AL51842A

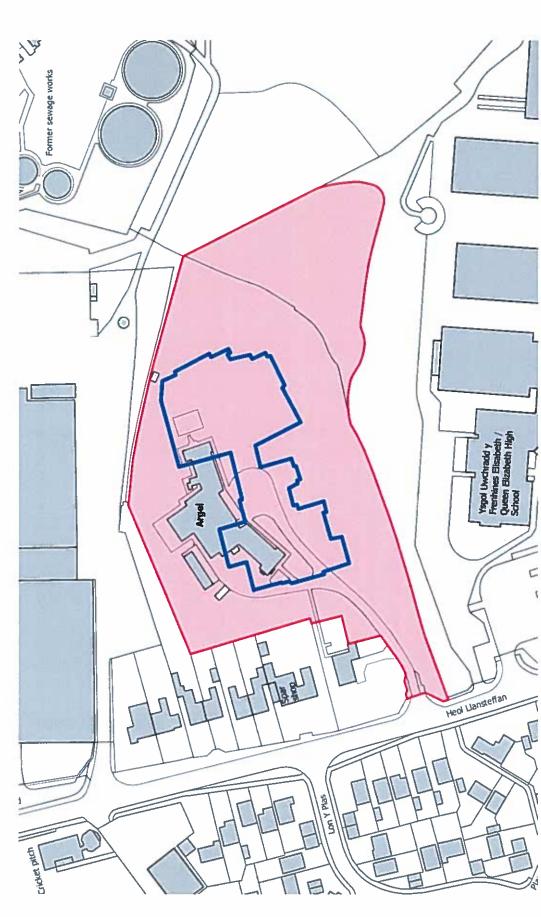


Figure 2: Plan of proposed development as supplied by client, with blue outline showing footprint of proposed new Extra Care Home.

2. THE SITE

2.1 Location

- 2.1.1 The proposed development area lies within Johnstown immediately to the east of the B4132 road leading to Llansteffan (SN 4016 1907; Figures 1 and 2). To the south lies Queen Elizabeth High School whilst to the northeast lies a redundant sewerage treatment works. The former St Ivel creamery lies to the north of the site.
- 2.1.2 Topographically the area slopes gently to the east and south. At the time of the evaluation the development site comprised the existing structure of Argel, tarmacced access roads and driveways and an area of lawns on the southern side. Trial trenching was located within the lawned area of the site, avoiding the tarmac roads and paths and the existing building. A former field boundary with mature trees runs along the south and east sides of the area.

2.2 Archaeological and Historical Background

2.2.1 The proposed development area lies within close proximity to ten known sites of archaeological interest recorded on the Dyfed Archaeological Trust Regional Historic Environment Record (Table 2).

PRN	Site Name	Description	NGR
198	Rhyd-y-Gors, Dwelling	Post-medieval or medieval building of which it has been stated that this now demolished dwelling was erected "towards the close of the Medieval period"	SN 4040 1905
7801	Rhyd-y-Gors Dwelling	Post-medieval Building Demolished in 1970s	SN 4038 1906
30025	Clay Pit	Clay pit associated with post mediaeval brickworks on the River Towy	SN 4060 1928
30028	Flood Defences and trackway	Post mediaeval flood defence bank on the east bank of the Towy. The bank carries a path around the curve of the river from Bascule Bridge to the road leading from present day Station Approach	SN 4055 1931
30080	Jennyman's Pool - Landing Point/Anchorage	A post-medieval anchorage used by ships waiting for tides to reach Carmarthen	SN 403 185
30082	Bascule Bridge	Post-medieval Bridge	SN 4052 1925
35344	Flood Defence	Short length of Post Medieval flood bank	SN 4062 1902
35345	Bridge Pier	Wooden piers from Brunel's bridge, the predecessor of the Bascule bridge. Post Medieval	SN 4052 1925
61526	White Bridge (The Bascule Railway Bridge)	Grade II* listed post-medieval bascule bridge	SN 40514 19246
61743	White Bridge (The Bascule Railway Bridge)	Grade II* post-medieval listed Building	SN 40532 19239

Table 2: Known sites of archaeological interest in close proximity to the development area

- 2.2.2 None of these known sites would be directly affected by the proposed development, although due to their proximity there was considered to be a potential for associated archaeological remains to be present within the development area.
- 2.2.3 The earliest record of the site area relates to Rhyd-y-Gors Mansion (PRN 198; NGR SN 4040 1905) which was demolished in 1972, although parts of the outbuildings survive as a dwelling along with sections of a walled garden. Rhyd-Y-Gors is considered to have medieval origins and is originally believed to have

been the residence of the Winter family who came to Carmarthen in the reign of William II (1056-1100) (Jones 1997, 173). In 1093 the Brut y Tywysogion (Chronicle of the Welsh Princes) records that a castle was built at Rhyd-y-Gors but was abandoned by 1096. The castle was rebuilt in 1103 and was finally abandoned in 1106 in favour of a more strategic site overlooking the river at Carmarthen, where the existing remains of Carmarthen Castle lie (Lodwick & Lodwick 1994, 37). The precise location of Rhyd-y-Gors Castle is unknown, but given the presence of the site of Rhyd-y-Gors House it may once have been positioned within the area of the new development.

- 2.2.4 The castle may either have been in the form of a ringwork (earthen banks surrounding a central fortified site) or a motte (a large earthen mound). No surviving earthworks have been identified, although a slight curve in the height contours in this area may indicate a remnant of a former earthwork. During the industrial and into the early modern period the area to the east was known locally as the *Domeni* which suggests the presence of mounds in the area. It is unclear whether the name refers to the now levelled earthworks of the castle or whether it refers to the domestic rubbish heaps of the town of Carmarthen which were tipped along the river bank in the vicinity of the present B&Q store, which lies to the northeast of the area of development site. In the later medieval period the land to the east of the development area was known as 'Docket' and in 1339 formed part of the Lordship of Kidwelly. It is also known that part of the Demesne lands of Carmarthen and mill, both recorded as 'Redcors', lay to the north of the area (James 1980, 42).
- 2.2.5 The river bed immediately to the east of the Rhyd-y-Gors mansion site is very shallow due to the presence of a large shingle bank and at low tide it is said that it is possible to cross the river at this point. The name of Rhyd-y-Gors can be translated as the ford across the marsh/swamp and the possibility that this possible crossing point across the Towy and that of the place name are the same. In this vicinity the river is known to local coracle fishermen as 'Pwil Stafell' and 'Gwar Stafell' (Rees MBE, pers. com). The significance of these names is not known.
- 2.2.6 In 1852 the South Wales Railway arrived in Carmarthen and was extended to Haverfordwest by 1854. The railway runs to the north and northeast of the development area and originally crossed the River Towy on a two span hydraulically powered drawbridge, designed by Brunel that could be opened to allow shipping to access the Quay. Due to it being painted white the bridge became known locally as 'White Bridge', a name which remains in use today for the present bridge. Between 1908 and 1911 Brunel's bridge was replaced by the present rolling bascule bridge and the railway slightly realigned to the north. Two of the three piers of Brunel's bridge survive on each side of the river bank. The present bridge was last opened in the 1950s to allow a private yacht to pass through.
- 2.2.7 On May 13th 1903 Buffalo Bill Cody's Wild West show was held on the field immediately to the south of the development site (now occupied by Queen Elizabeth High School) and consisted of a 20,000 seat canvas arena, stabling for 600 horses, a tipi village and a cast and crew of 800 people. In the late 1920s a farmer's co-operative creamery was established immediately to the north of the proposed development site. The creamery was bought by Cow & Gate in 1928 who ran it until 1962. The creamery was latterly operated by Unigate, The Milk Marketing Board, Dairy Crest and finally St Ivel under whose ownership the site finally closed in 2001. The creamery was partially demolished following closure but some buildings remain and are now used for light industrial purposes.
- 2.2.8 During the Second World War Ystrad Camp was constructed to the north west of the development area. This consisted of Nissen huts and was used to

house both German and Italian prisoners of war. The camp was initially under the 70th Infantry Brigade who had their headquarters at Rhyd-y-Gors where further Nissen huts were constructed. Following the end of the Second World War the camp was used to house local families who were moved out of more deprived areas of Carmarthen ahead of them being re-housed in new local authority housing.

2.2.9 Argel residential care home was constructed within the northwestern corner of the development area in 1954 and was opened on Wednesday 5th October 1955. The home operated until December 2012 when it finally closed. Late 19th and early 20th century mapping of the area show that the proposed development area lay in undeveloped agricultural land during this period (Figures 3 and 4).

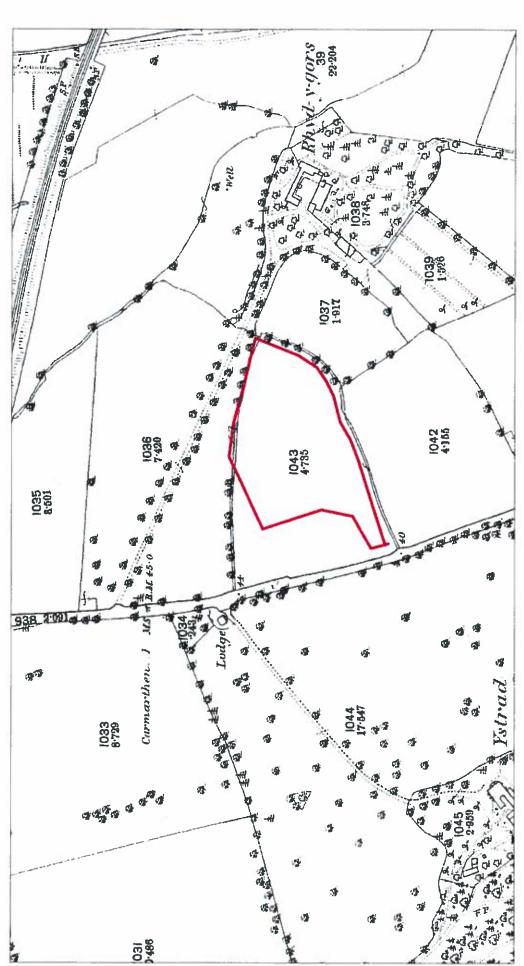


Figure 3: Extract of 1890 1:2500 scale OS map.

1039
1039
1039
1 x - 526

1043

EJ:

(J

ប៊ា

:J:

EJ:

වූ

A.

다. 1034 8·275

Ç,

نئ

g,

Ą.

TJ.

වු ලා

g,

G)

다 간

F.P.

1036

Carrianthen | M.S ->

1033 7 - 40 I

क विक्र व क्युंक

1031 11 -814

3.645

38

1

, a DQI

Argel, Johnstown, Carmarthen: Archaeological Evaluation

Figure 4: Extract of 1906 1:2500 scale OS map.

100 C

வு

(j)

ජු ජි ද

> ලා ආ භූ

(J

1042

Ø.

1044 9:313

ඌ

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The detailed methodology for the archaeological evaluation was laid out within the WSI. The relevant methodology can be summarised as follows.

3.1 Fieldwork

- 3.1.1 The archaeological evaluation consisted of the mechanical excavation of two trenches within the footprint of the proposed new extra care home. Following excavation the trenches were hand cleaned to prove the presence or absence of archaeological features and to determine their significance.
- 3.1.2 Where potential archaeological features were revealed these were partially excavated to elucidate the character, distribution, extent, date, and importance of the remains.
- 3.1.3 Recording of all archaeological features or deposits conformed to best current professional practice and was carried out in accordance with the Recording Manual³ used by Dyfed Archaeological Trust Field Services.

3.2 Post-Fieldwork Reporting and Archiving

- 3.2.1 All data recovered during the fieldwork will be collated into a site archive structured in accordance with the specifications in *Archaeological Archives: a guide to best practice in creation, compilation, transfer and curation* (Brown 2007), and the procedures recommended by the National Monuments Record, Aberystwyth.
- 3.2.2 The results of the fieldwork have been assessed in local, regional and wider contexts.
- 3.2.3 This report is fully representative of the results of the fieldwork.

3.3 Timetabling of Fieldwork

3.2.7 The archaeological evaluation was undertaken on the 10th, 11th and 12th April 2013.

³ Dyfed Archaeological Trust Field Services have adopted the Recording Manual developed by English Heritage Centre for Archaeology. A copy will be available on-site for inspection if required.

30m Trench 2 projected line of pipe manhole --97 2004 Trench 1 1006 grassed area Argei 1004

Argel, Johnstown, Carmarthen: Archaeological Evaluation

17

Figure 5: Location plan of trenches and features revealed, showing the existing building of Argel and the outline of the footprint of the proposed new extra care home in blue

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Trench 1

- 4.1.1 Trench 1 was located a little further to the east than originally intended due to the presence of a service trench. This meant that the trench lay partially outside of the footprint of the proposed new extra care centre, although still located in an area where the development would significantly disturb the ground. Trench 1 measured 20m x 1.6m and was excavated on roughly east west alignment to an average depth of 0.45m (Figure 5). Following initial removal of the turf a 0.53m deep spread of modern building rubble in the form of red bricks, cement, coal and slate fragments were revealed (1001). These were likely to relate to the construction of Argel in 1954 and are considered to be of low archaeological interest.
- 4.1.2 Underlying (1001) was a 0.21m deep subsoil horizon comprising a light pink brown silty clay containing rare charcoal flecks and occasional small pebbles (1002). This overlay natural river gravels.
- 4.1.3 Following hand cleaning of the trench two potential archaeological features were revealed [1004] and [1006]. The first feature revealed [1004] was at the far western end of the trench and appeared to continue beyond both north and west sides of the trench. On excavation it was found that the feature was of geological origin (Photo 1).
- 4.1.4 The second feature [1006] was a curvilinear gully that projected beyond the north and south sides of the trench. The feature was sealed by subsoil (1002) and was filled by a firm sterile mid brown silty clay containing small to medium sub-rounded stones (1007). Given the limited nature of the excavation it was not possible to substantiate whether [1006] was an archaeological feature or a geological anomaly (Photos 2 and 3).
- 4.1.5 No further archaeological features or deposits were revealed within Trench 1.

4.2 Trench 2

- 4.2.1 Trench 2 was aligned east west, measured 30m \times 1.6m and was excavated to an average depth of 0.47m (Figure 5; Photos 4 and 5). A 15m \times 1.6m north south aligned extension to the trench (Photo 7), with an average depth of 0.59m, was also excavated to form a 'T-shaped' trench.
- 4.2.2 A stratigraphic sequence of a 0.23m deep dark brown friable silty clay topsoil (2000) overlying a mid-brown clay silt alluvium of moderate compaction and depth of 0.4m (2001) was seen across the two parts of the trench. Layer (2001) overlay natural river gravels (2002).
- 4.2.3 A single feature was revealed within the western end of the trench. This was a linear feature [2004] aligned northwest southeast which projected beneath both sides of the trench (Photos 7 and 8). Excavation revealed that it was a modern pipe trench and is considered to be of low archaeological interest. A manhole cover was seen further to the south which is presumed to be associated with this service trench.
- 4.2.4 No further archaeological features or deposits were revealed within Trench 2.

5. CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 The archaeological evaluation undertaken at the site of the new extra care home revealed no archaeological evidence for Rhyd-y-Gors castle.
- 5.2 The trial trenches targeted the lawned area of the site and avoided the tarmacced roads and paths which are likely to have been subject to previous disturbance from levelling and construction which would have damaged or destroyed any underlying remains. It was not possible to evaluate beneath the existing building of Argel, but again it is considered that the construction of the building (levelling, foundations, service installation and the partial basements) would have destroyed any archaeological remains that may have been present (Photo 9).
- 5.3 Trench 1 revealed modern building debris (1001) and one confirmed geological feature [1004]. A second, curvilinear feature [1006] was also considered to be of likely geological nature, but this was not confirmed. Trench 2 revealed a single modern pipe trench [2004].
- 5.4 All three features revealed are considered to be of low archaeological interest.
- 5.5 No further archaeological features or deposits were revealed during the course of the archaeological evaluation.
- 5.6 It is known that the evaluated area was formerly used as gardens for the Argel care home. A low grass covered dividing wall crossed through the centre of the lawned area, with Trench 1 lying to the west and Trench 2 to the east (Photo 10). It was noted that the lawn was far neater and more level to the west. It is possible that a formal lawn was present on the western side of the grounds with flower beds and shrubs located to the east. Some levelling works to create these gardens may have occurred which could have damaged any archaeological remains if they had been present.
- 5.7 Vehicle tracks were visible in the ground surface to the east, possibly associated with a previous geotechnical works at the site. It is possible that the eastern side of the lawned area was previously laid to
- 5.9 Earlier cartographic sources show that the field was previously used as agricultural ground. These maps do not show any indications of pre-existing earthworks associated with a ringwork or motte as might be expected for Rhyd-y-Gors castle (generally earlier Ordnance Survey maps will indicate earthworks of probable historic significance). It is therefore considered that the medieval Rhyd-y-Gors castle was not located within the proposed Argel development site.

PHOTOGRAPHS



Photo 1: North facing section of geological feature [1004] in Trench 1



Photo 2: East facing pre-excavation view of [1006] in Trench 1



Photo 3: North facing section of feature [1006] in Trench 1



Photo 4: East facing view of Trench 2.



Photo 5: West facing view of Trench 2.



Photo 6: North facing view of Trench 2.



Photo 7: Pre excavation view of pipe trench [2004] in Trench 2



Photo 8: South facing section of pipe trench [2004] in Trench 2



Photo 9: The former Argel Care Home, viewing northeast, showing tarmac driveway



Photo 10: The low dividing wall within the lawned area viewing east

ARGEL, JOHNSTOWN, CARMARTHEN: ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

RHIF YR ADRODDIAD / REPORT NO. 2013/38 RHIF Y PROSIECT / PROJECT RECORD NO.105587

> Ebrill 2013 April 2013

Paratowyd yr adroddiad hwn gan / This report has been prepared by

SIMON RATTY

Swydd / Position: ARCHAEOLOGIST

Llofnod / Signature Sin Rett. Date 30/04/2013

Mae'r adroddiad hwn wedi ei gael yn gywir a derbyn sêl bendith This report has been checked and approved by

JAMES MEEK

ar ran Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Dyfed Cyf. on behalf of Dyfed Archaeological Trust Ltd.

Swydd / Position: HEAD OF FIELD SERVICES

Yn unol â'n nôd i rơddi gwasanaeth o ansawdd uchel, croesawn unrhyw sylwadau sydd gennych ar gynnwys neu strwythur yr adroddiad hwn

As part of our desire to provide a quality service we would welcome any comments you may have on the content or presentation of this report

