

LAND ADJACENT TO BRYN DOLAU, FFARMERS, CARMARTHENSHIRE: ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION (NGR SN 65006 44310)



Prepared by Dyfed Archaeological Trust
For: Mr Gareth Thomas



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LAND ADJACENT TO BRYN DOLAU, FFARMERS, CARMARTHENSHIRE: ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

Gan / By

Charles Enright

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LAND ADJACENT TO BRYN DOLAU, FFARMERS, CARMARTHENSIRE
ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

SUMMARY

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at Bryn Dolau, Ffarmers (NGR 65006 44310) prior to planning permission being sought for a proposed dwelling.

The site is approximately 4.3km north of Dolaucothi, the site of major Roman gold mining operations and the nearby Roman fort of Pumpsaint. Analysis of aerial photographs and LIDAR data would suggest that the site for the proposed dwelling may be located on an abandoned section of the Roman road, which runs north from Pumpsaint. In light of the archaeological potential of this site an archaeological evaluation was commissioned in order to assess the character, extent, date, state of preservation and significance of any surviving archaeological deposits in advance of a decision being made on planning permission. Mr Gareth Thomas commissioned Dyfed Archaeological Trust Field Services to undertake the evaluation in May 2013.

A single trench was excavated, 12m long and 3m wide across the footprint of the proposed dwelling, targeting the anomaly identified in aerial photographs and LIDAR data. At a depth of approximately 0.4m a stoney/gravel layer was encountered which appeared to indicate the upper layer of a road surface with possible evidence of re-surfacing. The lowest layer of the road appears to consist of material forming the agger of the road.

Associated features included flanking gully ditches either side of the road which had become silted up with a sandy material.

One other feature was recorded within the trench; a former stone drain. No small finds or other dateable evidence were discovered within the trench.

It is considered that the evaluation has created an appropriate record of the Roman road within the footprint of the building. The road is known to survive within the field to the south of the dwelling and possibly for a small stretch to the north. No further archaeological investigation would be required as part of this development.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1. Project Proposal and Commission

- 1.1.1 DAT Archaeological Services were commissioned by Mr Gareth Thomas to undertake an archaeological evaluation of the site of a proposed dwelling on land adjacent to Bryn Dolau, Ffarmers, Carmarthenshire (NGR SN 6500 4430; Figure 1).
- 1.1.2 A planning application W/27703 for the development was submitted to Carmarthenshire County Council. The application was granted consent with a condition requiring archaeological works. The condition requires that *"No development shall take place until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted by the applicant and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority."* Reason: *To protect historic environment interests whilst enabling development of the site.*
- 1.1.3 The condition was placed on the development following advice from the archaeological advisors to the local planning authority (Dyfed Archaeological Trust – Planning Services). This was required as the site lies close to the projected line of the Roman road leading north from the Roman fort at Pumpsaint.
- 1.1.4 The advice letter from Planning Services recommended a minimum of a watching brief during the development or the implementation of an evaluation prior to the development commencing. Following discussions with the applicant, it was decided that an evaluation trench excavated within the footprint of the proposed building prior to the commencement of development would be the preferred option. This was chosen as it would avoid delays to the development in the event that archaeological remains were present, of which the potential was considered high.
- 1.1.5 A written scheme of investigation, detailing the archaeological works that DAT Archaeological Services proposed was prepared and approved prior to the evaluation works commencing.

1.2 Scope of the Project

- 1.2.1 The evaluation was designed to provide information on the character, extent, date, state of preservation and significance of any surviving archaeological deposits within the site area. The evaluation would record the identified remains and make a judgement in terms of whether a more detailed programme of archaeological work should be implemented in advance of the development.
- 1.2.2 A single trial trench was proposed to be excavated across the length of the proposed new dwelling to ascertain the presence or absence of the projected Roman road.

1.3 Report Outline

- 1.3.1 This report describes the location of the site along with its archaeological background, summarises the results of the evaluation and a discussion of the archaeological evaluation results. The report also makes a judgement on the need or otherwise for further archaeological investigation at the site

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). Levels will be expressed as above Ordnance Datum (OD).

1.5 Illustrations

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

1.6 Timeline

- 1.6.1 The following table illustrates the approximate dates for archaeological periods discussed in this report.

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

Table 1: Archaeological and Historical Timeline for Wales.

¹ Held and managed by Dyfed Archaeological Trust, The Shire Hall, Llandeilo.

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: Location map of Bryn Dolau, Ffarmers, Carmarthenshire.

Reproduced from the Ordnance Survey Explorer 1:25,000 scale Landranger Map with the permission of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, © Crown Copyright Dyfed Archaeological Trust Ltd., The Shire Hall, Carmarthen Street, Llandeilo, Carmarthenshire SA19 6AF. Licence No 1000209

2 THE SITE

2.1 Location

- 2.1.1 The proposed dwelling is located in the paddock adjacent to Bryn Dolau, a modern bungalow with attached yard and industrial unit, forming part of a plant and equipment hire business.
- 2.1.2 The proposed dwelling sits within an enclosed field to the south of Bryn Dolau. To the east lies the modern highway classified as Sarn Helen.
- 2.1.3 Topographically the site is relatively flat. The underlying geology is a interbedded sandstone and conglomerate overlaid by a silty loam.

2.2 Archaeological and Historical Background

- 2.2.1 The site of the proposed dwelling lies approximately 4.3km north of Dolaucothi, the site of a major Roman gold mining operation of international importance. In the nearby village of Pumpsaint (which forms part of the Dolaucothi estate) excavations in the 1970s identified the site of a Roman fort (PRN 42781).
- 2.2.2 The modern highway that passes to the west of Bryn Dolau is known as Sarn Helen. The route of this modern highway predominantly makes use of the former Roman route that runs north from Pumpsaint to Llanfair Clydogau. However, a segment of what is believed to be an abandoned section of Roman road has been identified in aerial photographs as a cropmark in pasture fields to the south of Bryn Dolau. The cropmark occurs between SN65044412 and SN65014434, a point at which the modern road diverges slightly from the original route of the Roman road.
- 2.2.3 Analysis of LIDAR data supports evidence of a possible Roman road section diverging from the modern highway (See figure 2 and 3). At the point at which the modern road curves north westwards a subtle linear feature can be seen to continue north passing beneath the proposed development site before re-joining the modern road just to the north of Bryn Dolau.
- 2.2.4 The 1st and 2nd edition Ordnance Survey maps (1889 and 1907 respectively) show the route of Sarn Helens road following its current alignment. It has not been possible to determine when the route diverged from that of the original Roman road.
- 2.2.5 In the nearby settlement of Ffarmers there are ten non designated archaeological sites recorded. These predominantly date from the post medieval period and a summary of them can be seen in Table 2. No Prehistoric or Roman sites have been recorded within the immediate area.

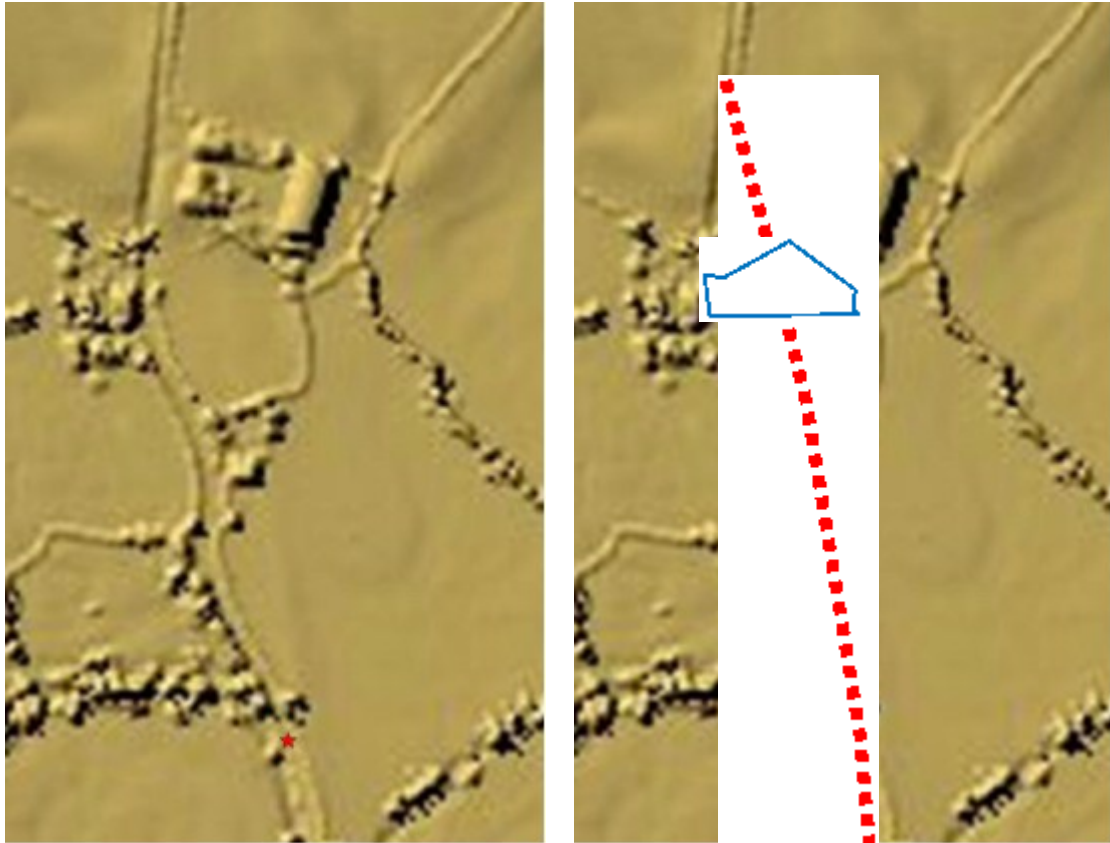


Figure 2: (Left) LIDAR data plot of site area, (right) LIDAR data plot with projected Roman road and approximate site of proposed dwelling.

Land adjacent to Bryn Dolau, Ffarmers, Carmarthenshire:
Archaeological Evaluation

PRN	Site Name	Summary	Period	NGR
12946	Kevynvays; Felin Rhos	The possible site of a 15th century fulling mill, in about the same location as Felin Rhos (PRN 5121)	Medieval	SN648447
5121	Felin Rhos corn mill	Site of a 19th century (1857) corn mill recorded on the 1840 tithe map and historic Ordnance Survey maps, possibly on the same site as Kevynways medieval fulling mill (PRN 12946) Grey stone building with internal overshot wheel and two pairs of stones. It was powered by mill-race (PRN 48054) diverted from the river to the north and linked to a mill pond (PRN 48055) just behind the mill. The mill has now been converted to a dwelling (M.Ings, 2013, from various sources)	Post Medieval	SN64804470
29663	Drovers Arms Ffarmers	Pub on Drovers road. Certainly 19th century in date possibly on tithe map. P. Sambrook Dec. 1994.	Post Medieval	SN64944475
29664	Old Post Office	First appears on 1888 1:2500 OS Map. Now closed and vacant. P. Sambrook Dec. 1994.	Post Medieval	SN64974473
29666	Neuadd Bro-Fana	Village hall with Post Office in ante-room. Open built in 1933. P. Sambrook Dec. 1994.	Post Medieval	SN64944469
18911	School	School site in Ffarmers	Post Medieval	SN64934472
29641	Bryntwrch	House/Dwelling	Post Medieval	SN649447
29403	Ffarmers Village	The village of Ffarmers developed in the post-medieval period	Post Medieval	SN650447
48054	Kevynways; Felin Rhos	Mill-race recorded on the historic Ordnance Survey maps associated with Felin Rhos (PRN 5121)It may have earlier, medieval origins as part of the 15th century Kevynways fulling mill complex (PRN 12946) (M.Ings, 2013)	Post Medieval	SN64794473
48055	Kevynways; Felin Rhos	Mill-pond associated with 19th century Felin Rhos corn mill (PRN 5121) It may have earlier origins as part of 15th century Kevynways fulling mill (PRN 12946). Recorded on the historic Ordnance Survey maps, linked to mill-race PRN 48054) (M.Ings, 2013)	Post Medieval	SN64814474

Table 2: Sites recorded on the Dyfed Historic Environment Record HER in the vicinity of the site area

3. METHODOLOGY

- 3.1 The proposed scheme of evaluation included the preparation of a written scheme of investigation, which was prepared and approved prior to the works commencing.
- 3.2 A single 12m x 3m evaluation trench aligned east to west was machined within the footprint of the proposed development (Figure 3) in order to adequately ascertain the depth at which *in situ* archaeological deposits occur below the footprint of the proposed dwelling. The trench was excavated using a tracked 360° mechanical excavator fitted with a flat bladed bucket. All non-archaeologically significant overburden was removed, and the trenches were excavated down onto archaeological levels.

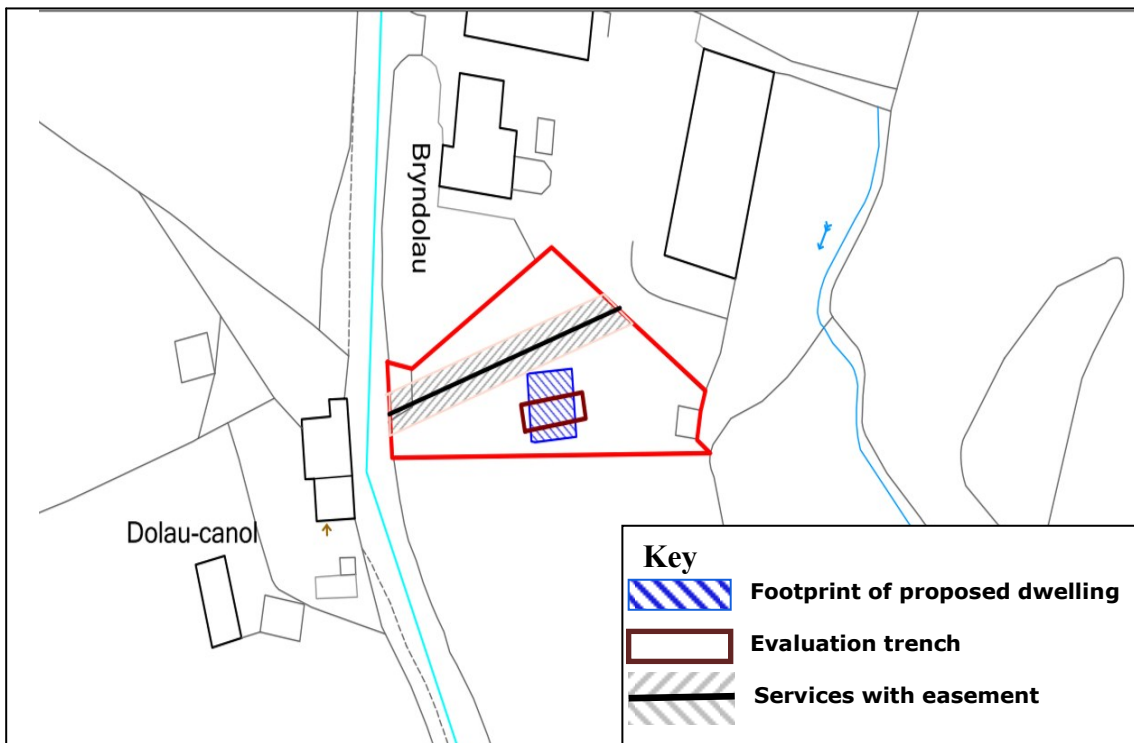


Figure 3: Location plan of trench in relation to footprint of the proposed development.

- 3.3 Following machine excavation, the trench was hand cleaned using trowels to elucidate character, distribution and extent of the archaeological remains. Certain areas were re-troweled a number of times to improve definition of the features. Sample excavation was undertaken of the archaeological features.
- 3.4 All deposits were recorded by archaeological context record sheet, scale drawing, photography and site notebooks. All individual deposits were numbered using the open-ended numbering system in accordance with Dyfed Archaeological Trust Field Services Recording Manual³. Trench plans and sections were recorded by means of measured drawings and sketches. A photographic record was maintained using digital cameras.
- 3.5 As part of the preparation of the report a short desk-based element has been undertaken to provide further information on the area and its

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

archaeological and historic background. An assessment of significance of the remains and the impact that the development proposals will have upon them is included.

- 3.7 The archaeological evaluation was undertaken on the 8th and 9th of May, 2014.

4. RESULTS OF EVALUATION

- 4.1 Descriptions of contexts recorded in the trench can be found in Table 3 and illustrated in Figure 4.
- 4.2 A 12m x 3m trench was laid out aligned east to west bisecting the footprint of the proposed dwelling and overlying the predicted route of the Roman road.
- 4.3 The topsoil/turf layer (001) covered the trench and consisted of a 0.12m thick band of clay loam, light yellow brown in colour with small stone inclusions, covered by grass. This overlay a second layer (002) that was also present consistently across the trench. This subsoil layer was greyer in colour than the topsoil with more of a gritty texture.
- 4.4 Towards the midsection of the trench (which was later revealed to be adjacent to the Roman road), layer (002) contained a lens of sands and gravels at its base. The material was the same as that of the road fabric but loose, probably a result of natural disposition of the upper layers of the road material 008 or disturbance from agricultural activities.
- 4.5 Below 002, at a depth of approximately 0.4m, a friable, grey, gritty layer (008) with small stone inclusions was encountered at the eastern end of the trench (Photo 1). In profile 008 had a convex appearance and could be seen to cover an approximately 5m length across the trench. This gravel like layer appeared to make up the upper most layer of the surviving Roman road surface. A sample excavation slot was excavated along the northern edge of the trench to obtain a profile through the road and its make-up deposits. Close inspection revealed the layer was made up of a number of micro lenses, possibly a result of re-surfacing.



Photo 1: Excavated trench looking west. 1m scales. Road visible as grey coloured feature.

- 4.6 Layer (008) overlay two other discrete layers that provide built layers for the road construction, that create its agger (raised profile) (Photo 2). The earliest of this, 010, lies at a depth of approximately 1.20m and consists of a dark red/brown organic material forming the base of the Roman road. Layer (009) was found between (010) and (008). It shared similar characteristics to (008), varying only in colour to a light brown and with slightly larger stone inclusions.



Photo 2: Representation of midsection of south facing section.

- 4.7 The exposed Roman road layers clearly continued north and south beyond the extent of the trench. A raised area could still be discerned in the field to the south of the trench, which is considered to be the agger of the Roman road running southwards.
- 4.8 Adjacent to the road on both the east and west sides, directly below (002) a fine sandy silt material (003) and (004) appears to have accumulated in former gullies flanking the road sides (Photo 3).
- 4.9 To the west of the Roman road an area of undisturbed silty clay (007) was recorded. It is possible that (007) is a former land surface, through which the Roman road was constructed (Photo 4). No archaeological features or material could be seen within or cutting through layer (007). The layer was not further excavated as it was presumed to be natural undisturbed ground.
- 4.10 Layer 007 was cut by a later linear feature, cut [005], probably a former field drain. The edges of the cut for this feature were difficult to discern and the feature was really only made observable by its stone infill (006). The top layer of this infill comprises small sub-angular stones approximately 0.05m in diameter. The base of the layer was made up of larger, sub-angular stones ranging from 0.10m to 0.30m in diameter.



Photo 3: Eastern edge of trench south facing section.
Sandy silt (003) visible forming the infill of possible roadside gully. Grey banding (008) forming upper road layer also visible at mid-section.



Photo 4: Oblique angle (northwest facing) showing road surface in the foreground (008) and natural in the background (007). South facing excavated section visible.

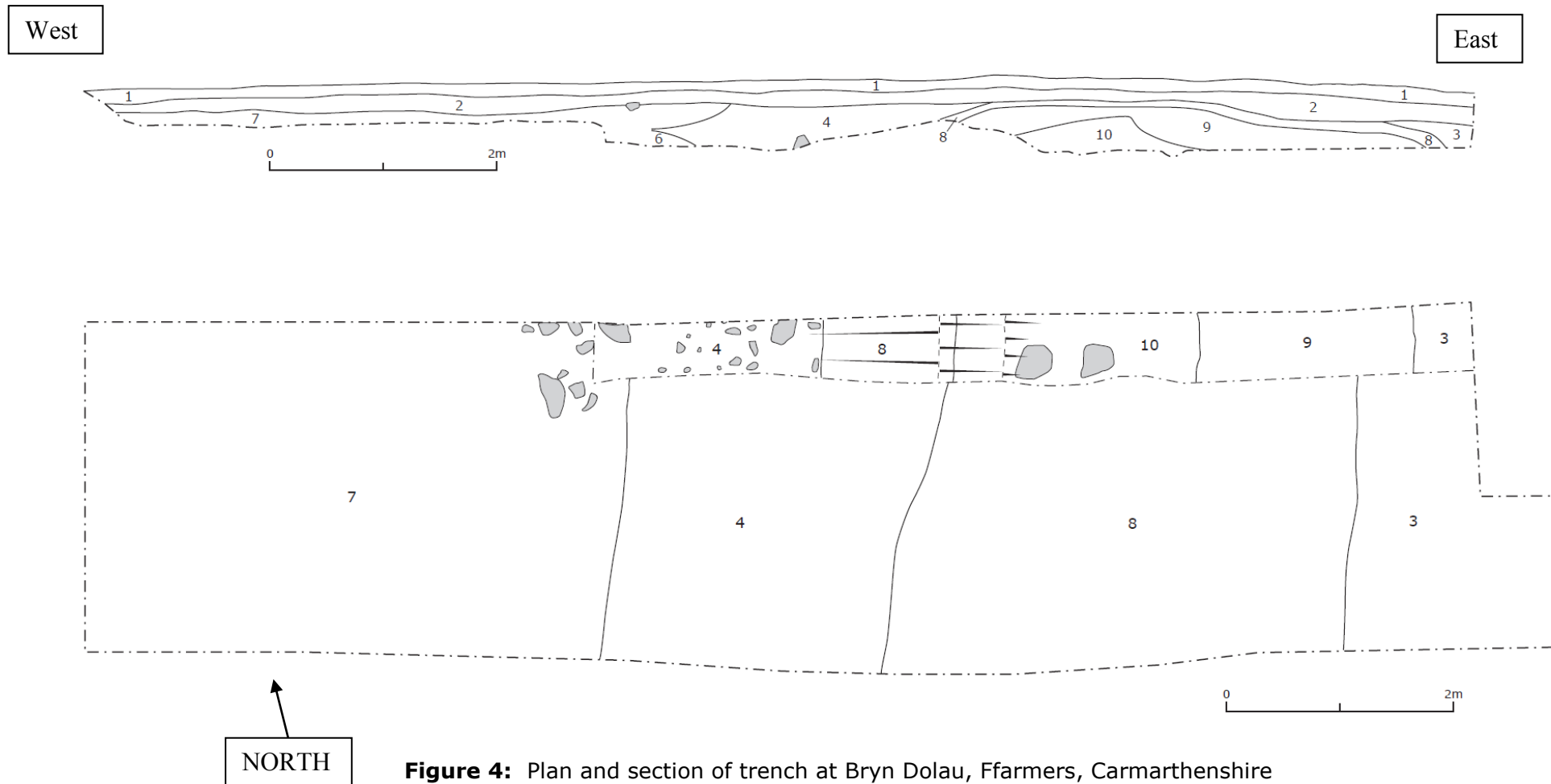


Figure 4: Plan and section of trench at Bryn Dolau, Ffarmers, Carmarthenshire

Context No.	Description	Dimensions
001	Surface layer Firm clay loam, light brown Occasional, small sub angular stones	12m long, 0.12m thick
002	Subsoil Firm, light grey/brown, grit Large grain grit	12m long, 0.25m thick
003	Gully fill (East) Hard, mottled yellow brown, sandy silt	3m long, 0.2m thick
004	Gully fill (West) Hard, light yellow sandy silt	3m long, 0.2m thick
005	Field drain cut Squared bottom, steep sided	3m long, 0.16m thick
006	Drain Fill Loose stones, medium, sub angular at base and small sub angular at top	3.0m long, 0.16m thick
007	Soil spread Firm, light brown, silty clay Occasional, small grained sand	4.5m long, ##m thick
008	Upper road surface Loose, grey, sandy loam Frequent small stones	5.0m long, 0.2m thick
009	Road layer Friable, Light brown, sand Frequent, medium sub angular stones	3.5m long, 0.4m thick
010	Road base Friable, dark red/brown, humic Frequent, small, sub angular stones	3.0m long, 0.6m thick

Table 3: Context Descriptions.

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1 This evaluation has identified substantial, in situ archaeological remains that represent a fairly well preserved section of the Roman road leading north from the Roman fort at Pumpsaint, known as Sarn Helen. Although no dateable evidence was discovered, secondary evidence (LIDAR data and aerial photographs) would also support this.
- 5.2 The line of the road was suspected to survive as a slight earthwork as noted from LIDAR data images. The evaluation has confirmed that structural remains of the road exist both below ground (within the trench) but also that the slight agger of the road survives as a visible earthwork through the field to the south of the proposed dwelling. It is likely that a further stretch of road would survive to the north of the trench between the proposed dwelling and Bryn Dolau within the pasture field.
- 5.3 The excavated section through the road identified part of a surviving upper road surface, as well as make-up layers forming the agger for the road. The agger would have made the surface of the road concave, so that water would run off its surface. Slight evidence for two roadside gullies were also identified. These were not substantial, but would have been enough to channel away any water run-off from the road surface. The gullies were both filled with fine silty material suggesting that the gullies had been allowed to fill up, presumably at a time when the road was falling into disuse, or the administrative system which organised roadside ditch clearance was no longer effective. Alternatively the slight nature of the gullies may mean that they were not necessary in this part of the road route anyway.
- 5.4 The remains of the road are located beneath the site of the proposed dwelling. The upper layers of the road lie at a depth of approximately 0.4m below the ground surface and appear to extend to at least a depth of 1m. The construction of the new dwelling will impact upon the part of the Roman road within its footprint, although the evaluation has determined its character within this area.
- 5.5 The road clearly extends well beyond the edges of the footprint of the proposed dwelling and therefore only a very small part of the surviving road line in this area will be damaged. It is considered that the evaluation trench has created an appropriate record of the road within the footprint of the building and that no further archaeological investigation will be needed. This has been discussed and agreed with the archaeological advisors to the local planning authority.

**PROPOSED DWELLING ON LAND ADJACENT TO BRYN
DOLAU, FFARMERS, CARMARTHENSHIRE:
ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION**

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**Medi 2014
September 2014**

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

Swydd / Position: **Archaeologist**

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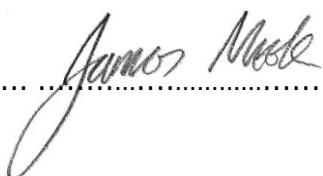
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Mae'r adroddiad hwn wedi ei gael yn gywir a derbyn sêl bendith
This report has been checked and approved by

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

Swydd / Position:

Llofnod / Signature



Dyddiad / Date 04/09/14

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

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