

# **ABERAERON, CEREDIGION: ARCHAEOLOGICAL FORESHORE SURVEY AND WATCHING BRIEF**

**SN 45421 63240**



Prepared by DAT Archaeological Services  
For: Atkins



# DYFED ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

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## ABERAERON, CEREDIGION: ARCHAEOLOGICAL FORESHORE SURVEY AND WATCHING BRIEF

By

**Luke Jenkins**



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**ABERAERON, CEREDIGION :**  
**ARCHAEOLOGICAL FORESHORE SURVEY & WATCHING BRIEF**

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**ABERAERON, CEREDIGION:**  
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**ABERAERON, CEREDIGION  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL FORESHORE SURVEY & WATCHING BRIEF**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

DAT Archaeological Services were commissioned to undertake a foreshore survey and watching brief ahead of proposed development on the Aberaeron foreshore, Aberaeron, Ceredigion (SN4542163240). Two fish traps (NPRN 518838 and 518844) were identified and characterized during the foreshore survey. No archaeological deposits were detected during the watching brief.

**CRYNODEB GWEITHREDOL**

Comisiynwyd Gwasanaethau Archeolegol YAD i gynnal arolwg blaendraeth a briff gwyllo cyn y datblygiad arfaethedig ar flaendraeth Aberaeron, Aberaeron, Ceredigion (SN4542163240). Dynodwyd a nodweddwyd dau drap pysgod (NPRN 518838 a 518844) yn ystod yr arolwg blaendraeth. Ni chanfuwyd unrhyw ddyddodion archeolegol yn ystod y briff gwyllo.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Project Proposals and Commission**

- 1.1.1 DAT Archaeological Services were commissioned by Atkins to undertake an archaeological foreshore survey and watching brief during ground works associated with a proposed new breakwater at Aberaeron harbour, Aberaeron, Ceredigion (centred on SN 45421 63240).
- 1.1.2 A foreshore survey is designed detect any visible archaeological remains present on the foreshore, and make an assessment of their character and archaeological potential.
- 1.1.3 It also makes an assessment of the potential impacts that the proposed development may have on any known or unknown archaeological features.
- 1.1.4 The survey area extended for approximately 0.72km along the foreshore and was located immediately outside of Aberaeron Harbour. The survey was undertaken by Luke Jenkins on the 1<sup>st</sup> of December 2020.
- 1.1.5 The foreshore survey involved the systematic walkover of the area, identifying, examining and recording any structures, features, layers or significant find scatters present in the area of investigation. The foreshore survey was entirely non-intrusive, with no excavation of artefacts found during the survey.
- 1.1.6 As a part of this works, a watching brief was also undertaken on three of the six geotechnical pits excavated on the day in which the archaeologist was in attendance.

### **1.2 Aims and Objectives**

- 1.2.1 The aims and objectives of the survey were:
  - To record any visible archaeological remains;
  - To assess the character and state of preservation, and record the location of any archaeological features within the survey area;
  - To collect further information on any known archaeological remains from the Historic Environment Record (HER), National Monument Record (NMR) and historic map sources.
  - To assess what impact any development might have on any archaeological remains;
  - To provide information that may be used in the formulation of an appropriate mitigation strategy.

### **1.3 Abbreviations**

- 1.3.1 All sites recorded on the regional Historic Environment Record (HER) are identified by their Primary Record Number (PRN) and located by their National Grid Reference (NGR). Sites recorded on the National Monument Record (NMR) held by the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales (RCAHMW) are identified by their National Primary Record Number (NPRN). Listed Buildings (LB). Altitude is expressed to a height above Ordnance Datum (aOD). References to cartographic and documentary evidence and published sources will be given in brackets throughout the text, with full details listed in the sources section at the rear of the report.

### **1.4 Illustrations**

- 1.4.1 Printed map extracts are not necessarily reproduced to their original scale. North is towards the top of the page unless otherwise indicated.

## 1.5 Timeline

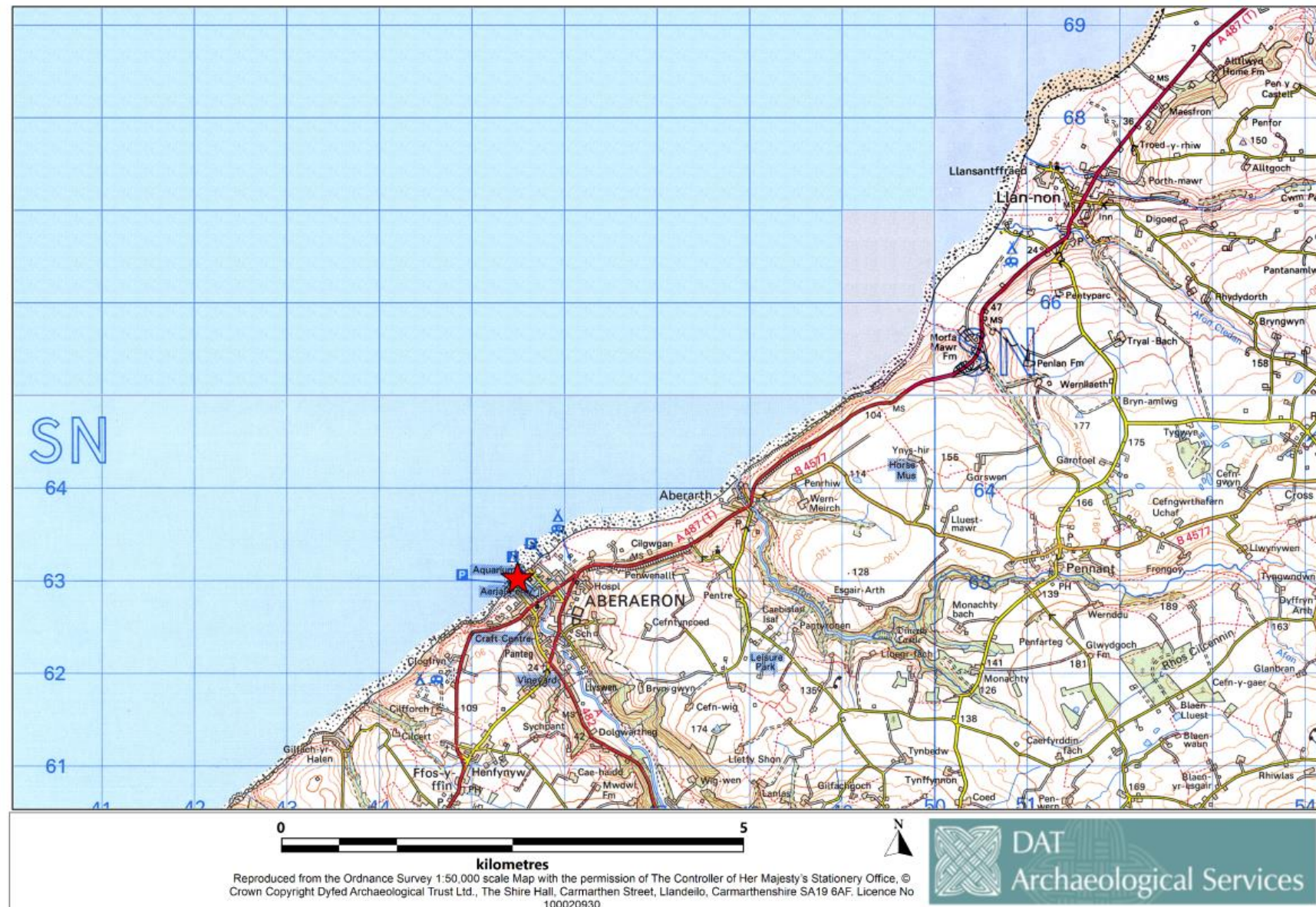
1.5.1 The following timeline gives date ranges for the various archaeological periods that may be mentioned within this report.

**Table 1:** Archaeological and Historical Timeline for Wales

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 <sup>1</sup> –	1536 – 1750	
Industrial Period –	1750 – 1899	
Modern –	20th century onwards	

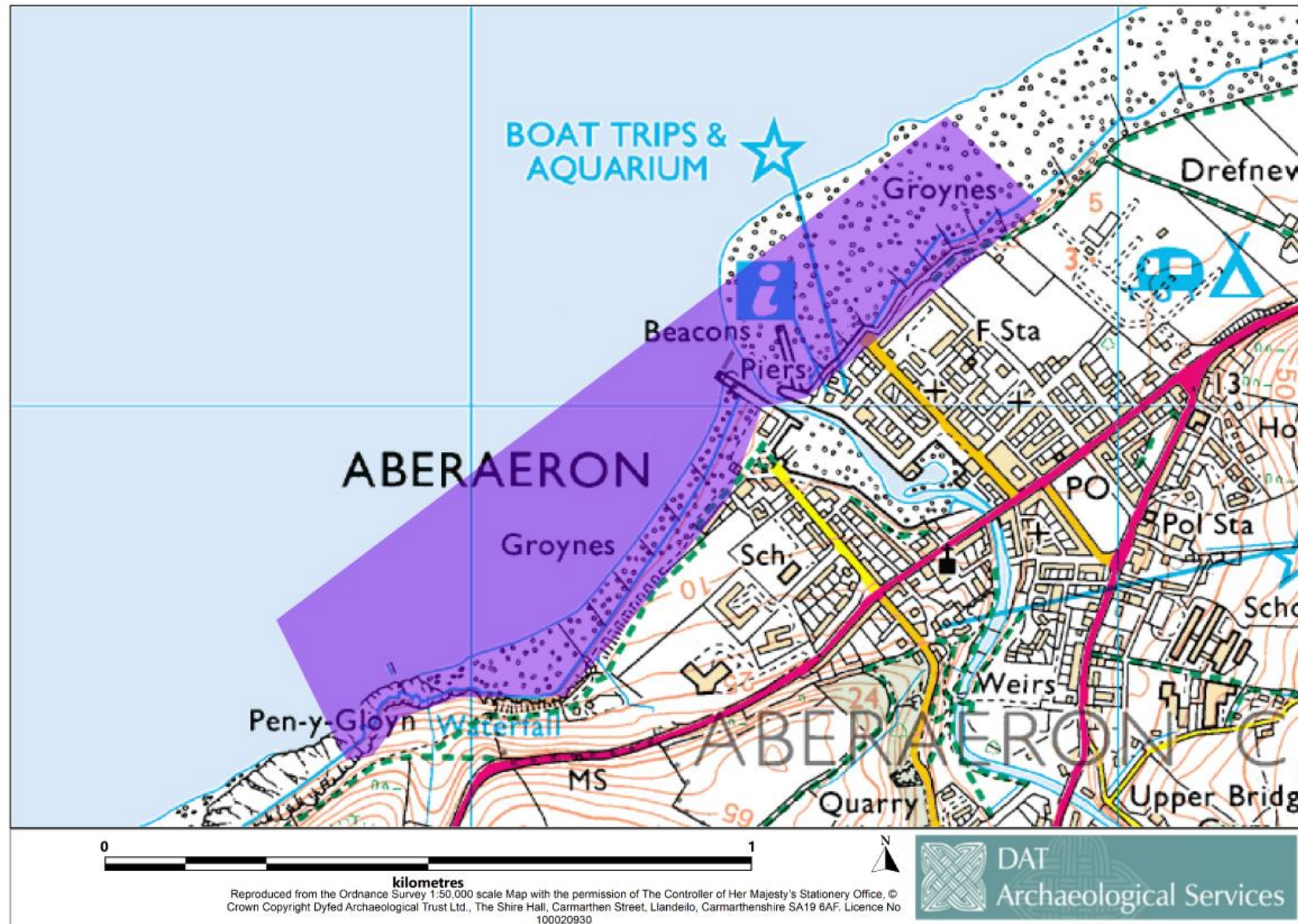
<sup>1</sup> The post-medieval and Industrial periods are combined as the post-medieval period on the Regional Historic Environment Record as held by Dyfed Archaeological Trust





**Figure 1:** Location Map.





**Figure 2:** Foreshore survey area.

## **2. LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY**

### **2.1 Site Location**

- 2.1.1 Aberaeron is a small coastal town located along the A487 23km to the southwest of Aberystwyth in Ceredigion (centred on SN 45811 63403) (Figure 1). The town is set at the mouth of the river Aeron in a naturally occurring small bay.
- 2.1.2 The settlement at Aberaeron is the result of development by Rev. Alban Thomas Jones Gwynne in 1805, which built a harbour and series of cottages. The modern town of Aberaeron was then transformed in the 1890's by Edward Haycock who reconfigured the town around a central square and introduced a Regency style throughout the town.
- 2.1.3 The foreshore survey area on which this report focuses is shown in Figure 2. The survey area has been broken down into two halves: a south-western area and a north-eastern area, which are separated by the current breakwaters, the harbour entrance and the river Aeron.
- 2.1.4 The landscape in each area varies with the south-western area consisting of a sandy beach beneath a pebble bank (Photograph 1). Above this a modern bank of boulders has been deposited to function as a sea defence. Another feature of this area is groynes, positioned approximately every 50m, designed to prevent the movement of sand. In the north-eastern area the foreshore consists of a flat, rocky, barren landscape that is constrained by modern coastal defences (Photograph 2).

### **2.2 Site Geology**

- 2.2.1 The underlying bedrock geology of the site consists of sandstone and mudstones of the Mynydd Bach Formation. Sedimentary bedrock formed approximately 433 to 444 million years ago in the Silurian Period, a local environment previously dominated by deep seas. The bedrock is overlain by superficial marine beach deposits of sand and gravel.

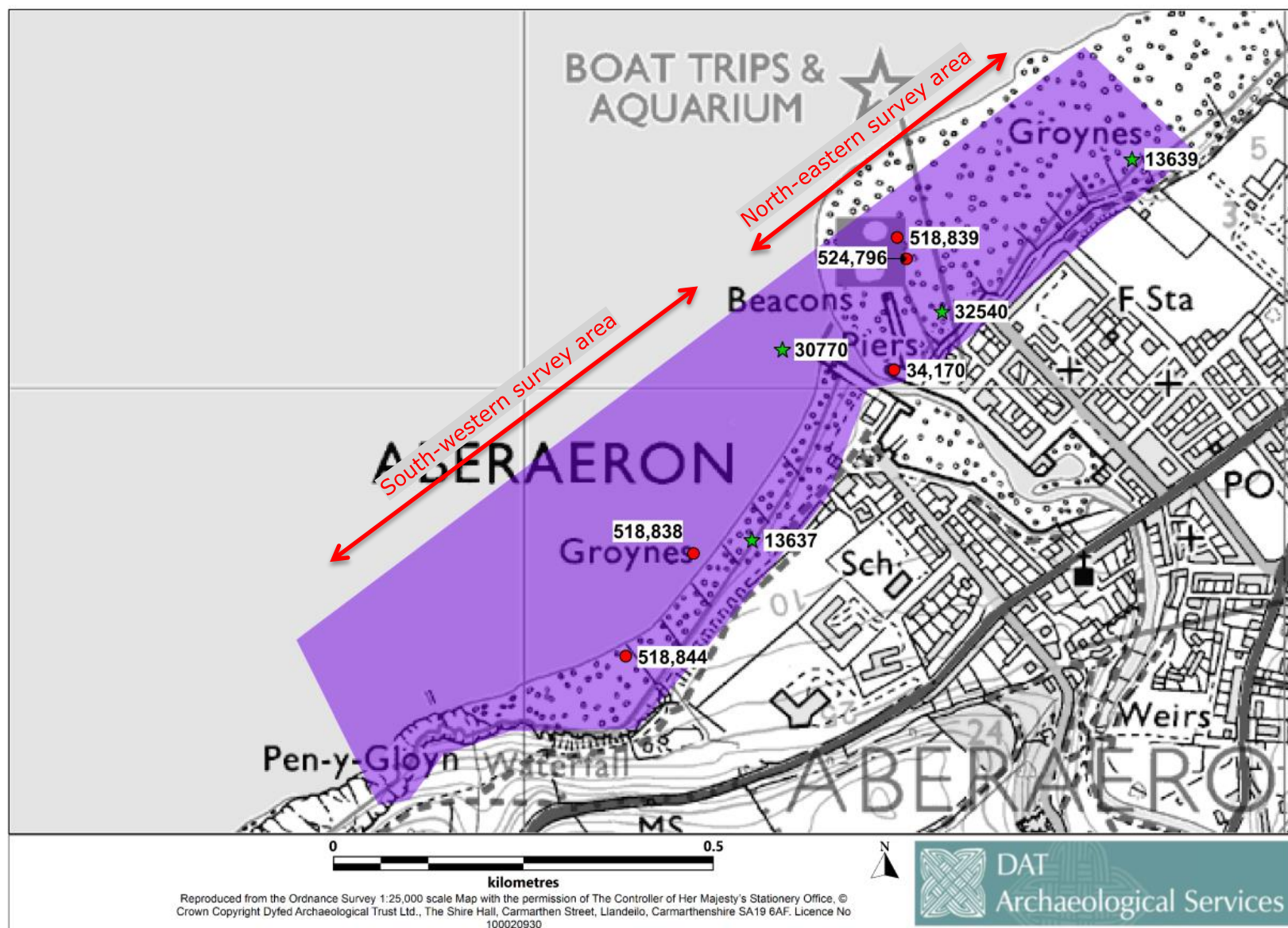


**Photograph 1:** South-western survey area. Looking south-west.



**Photograph 2:** North-eastern survey area. Looking north-east.





**Figure 3:** Non-designated heritage assets within the foreshore survey area. Green stars representing sites recorded on the HER (referenced by PRN), red dots representing sites recorded on the NMR (referenced by NPRN).

**Table 2:** Non-designated heritage assets within the foreshore survey area.

PRN	NPRN	Name	Site Description	Period	Grid Reference
30770		ABERAERON BEACH	On the 1st edition 25" map a staggered section of sea wall is shown to the north-east of the harbour. Two breakwaters project out from it. There is a further breakwater to the north-west.	Post Medieval	SN45346305
32540		LOWER BRIDGE	Plain single arch bridge.	Post Medieval	SN45556310
	34170	ABERAERON HARBOUR N E PIER	Coursed rubble pier with low rubble protective wall, a pointed projection and two cast iron mooring posts.	Post Medieval	SN4548763023
	240602	LITTLE LIZ (SHIPWRECK)	Archaeological remains associated with the loss of this vessel are not confirmed as present at this location, but may be in the vicinity. The LITTLE LIZ was a 75ton wooden schooner built in 1840 at Plymouth. In October 1870, on a passage from Glasgow to Bristol with a cargo of coal and pig iron, the vessel got into trouble, and the crew took to their boat to land safely at Aberaeron. The schooner itself went ashore there soon after to become a wreck.	Post Medieval	SN4561463326
	240653	SHIPWRECK	Archaeological remains associated with the loss of this vessel are not confirmed as present at this location, but may be in the vicinity. A herring fishing boat was overwhelmed whilst entering Aberaeron harbour on 11 November 1814 during a sudden storm.	Post Medieval	SN4545663086
	272455	SHIPWRECK	Archaeological remains associated with the loss of this vessel are not confirmed as present at this location, but may be in the vicinity. On 19 September 1852, the Aberaeron harbour ferry was carried out of the harbour and then overwhelmed by the open sea. Eight passengers were drowned.	Post Medieval	SN4533463112
	272538	PRIORY (SHIPWRECK)	Archaeological remains associated with the loss of this vessel are not confirmed as present at this location, but may be in the vicinity. The PRIORY is described as 3ton jigger. At time of loss on 20 August 1902, the vessel was owned by D Davies of Aberaeron and was engaged in the fishing. The PRIORY was caught out at the entrance to Aberaeron harbour and became stranded on the Bar.	Post Medieval	SN4541263210
	273512	LAVINIA (SHIPWRECK)	Archaeological remains associated with the loss of this vessel are not confirmed as present at this location, but may be in the vicinity. The LAVINIA was a wooden sailing vessel registered in Newcastle. On 5 September 1834 the vessel	Post Medieval	SN4539463044

			was on passage from Aberaeron to Newcastle-upon-Tyne when it struck the outside pier after leaving Aberaeron and sank.		
	273514	HARVEY (SHIPWRECK)	Archaeological remains associated with the loss of this vessel are not confirmed as present at this location, but may be in the vicinity. The HARVEY was a wooden sailing vessel. On 23 February 1837 the HARVEY was on passage from Cork to Aberaeron under the command of master M'Namara. It was stranded on Aberaeron Bar with the loss of one crewmember.		SN4551563207
	518838	ABERAERON FISH TRAP 1	This linear feature, possibly a fish trap, measures approximately 40m. It can be discerned from modern aerial photographic coverage.	Post Medieval	SN4522362782
	518839	ABERAERON FISH TRAP 2	This C shaped feature, possibly a fish trap, measures approximately 100m from end to end. It can be discerned from modern aerial photographic coverage.	Post Medieval	SN4549163197
	518844	ABERAERON FISH TRAP 3	This feature, probably a section of dry stone wall comprising part of a fish trap, is visible on historic (1946) and modern aerial photographic coverage.	Post Medieval	SN4513462647
	524796	AUGUSTA (ship)	Archaeological remains associated with the loss of this vessel are not confirmed as present at this location, but may be in the vicinity. The AUGUSTA was a wooden sloop built at Witton, Cheshire. Port of Chester Shipping Register (3 in 1858) entry is closed with the annotation 'wrecked on Aberaron Beach 20 August 1879'.	Post Medieval	SN4550363169

### 3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

#### 3.1 Designated Heritage Assets

- 3.1.1 There are two designated heritage assets within the foreshore search area, both are listed buildings (LB 9979 and 1010). These constitute the north-east and south-west breakwaters that guard the harbour entrance. Both are Grade II listed and have identical descriptions which read:

*The harbour was developed by Rev Alban Gwynne and built under the supervision of William Green between 1807 and 1811 following the Harbour Act of 1st August 1807. Extensive repairs resulting from storm damage have been made including early modifications possibly by John Rennie. Coursed rubble pier running SE from concrete reinforced rounded head to the angle by the Harbourmaster Hotel with the NE Quay. Low rubble protective wall, pointed projection, metal ladder and rubble flight of steps to water level. Flagpole and 2 cast iron mooring posts reset in concrete pier top.*

- 3.1.2 These heritage assets do not strictly lie within the 'foreshore' area, and any impacts upon them will be discussed in an archaeological desk-based assessment undertaken by Atkins, therefore they are not discussed in detail within this study. However where appropriate field observations will be included within this report.

#### 3.2 Non-designated Heritage Assets (Figure 3 and Table 2)

- 3.2.1 There are 14 known heritage assets within the foreshore survey area.
- 3.2.2 Four of these are recorded on the Historic Environment Record (HER) maintained by Dyfed Archaeological Trust. The remaining ten were recorded National Monuments Record (NMR) maintained by the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales.
- 3.2.3 All of the recorded heritage assets date to the post-medieval period. This is understandable as for the most part Aberaeron is thought to be a mostly post-medieval settlement.
- 3.2.4 Two of these assets (PRN 13637 and 13639) are general records for common land associated with the town of Aberaeron, presumably located along the foreshore. These record areas of open grazing, the limits of which are undefined and they do not reference specific features, therefore they have been discounted from further discussion.
- 3.2.5 Two of the recorded assets refer to the current Aberaeron breakwaters (NPRN 34170 / PRN 30770). These are listed buildings, discussed above (3.1).
- 3.2.6 PRN 32540 is described as being the 'lower bridge' and as having a 'plain single arch'. This is likely to be a mis-located asset, as Lower Bridge is the bridge carrying the main road through Aberaeron across the river, located some 380m to the southeast, and not within the foreshore area.
- 3.2.7 Three of the recorded heritage assets relate to fish traps (NPRN 518844 / 518839 / 518838), large, often U or V shaped sections of stone walling that often once supported a wooden fence designed to trap fish with the retreating tide. Typically these features are dated to the medieval or post-medieval periods although much earlier examples are known along the Welsh coastline.
- 3.2.8 Two of the three fish traps are located to along the beach to the south west of the harbour entrance (NPRN 518838 & 518844) whilst one is located shortly to



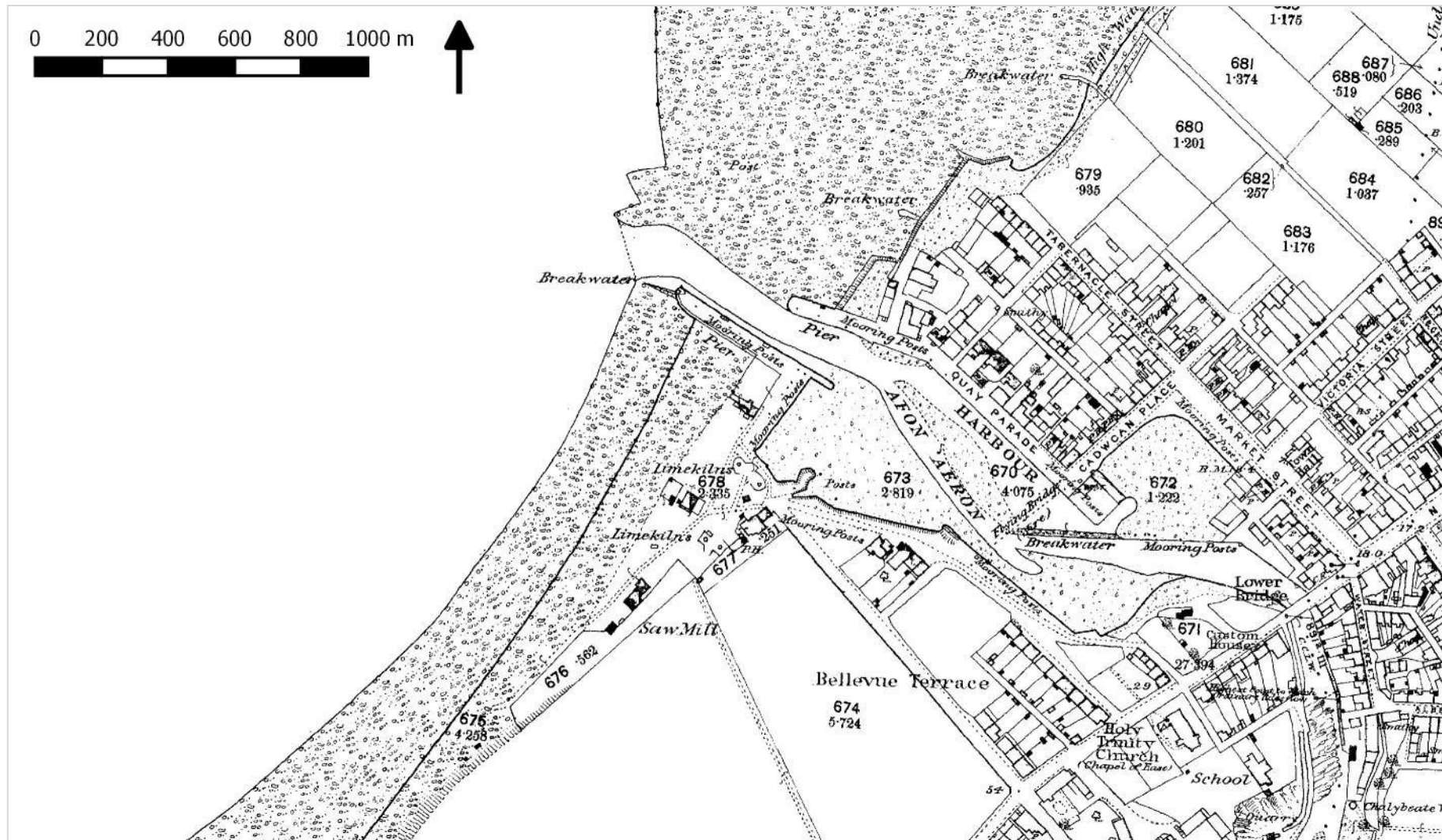
the north of the harbour mouth (NPRN 518839). These traps are described as consisting of remnant walling, identified through aerial photography.

- 3.2.9 The remaining six recorded non-designated heritage assets within the foreshore survey area all relate to shipwreck sites. These records come from documentary sources that describe wrecks around the entrance to Aberaeron Harbour, but no remains of these vessels have been identified and therefore only NPRN 524796 is marked on Figure 3 as an indicative location of potential shipwreck remains.
- 3.2.10 The earliest of these wrecks dates to 1814, when a herring boat (NPRN 240653) was lost in stormy weather as it was entering the harbour, with the loss of 5 fishermen. In 1834 the 'Lavinia' (NPRN 273512), a wooden sailing ship, hit the outside pier of the harbour and sank. In 1837 the wooden sailing vessel 'Harvey' (NPRN 273514) became stranded on Aberaeron Bar with the loss of one crewmember. In 1852 the Aberaeron harbour ferry (NPRN 272455) got carried out of the harbour where it was overwhelmed by the sea and sank, with the loss of 8 passengers. In 1870 the schooner 'Little Liz' (NPRN 240602) got into trouble as it was passing, the crew took to their boat and landed safely at Aberaeron, but the schooner became wrecked nearby. In 1879 the sloop 'Augusta' (NPRN 524796) was 'wrecked on the Aberearon beach'. Finally, in 1902 the fishing vessel 'Priory' (NPRN 272538) was caught at the entrance to the harbour and became stranded on Aberaeron Bar.

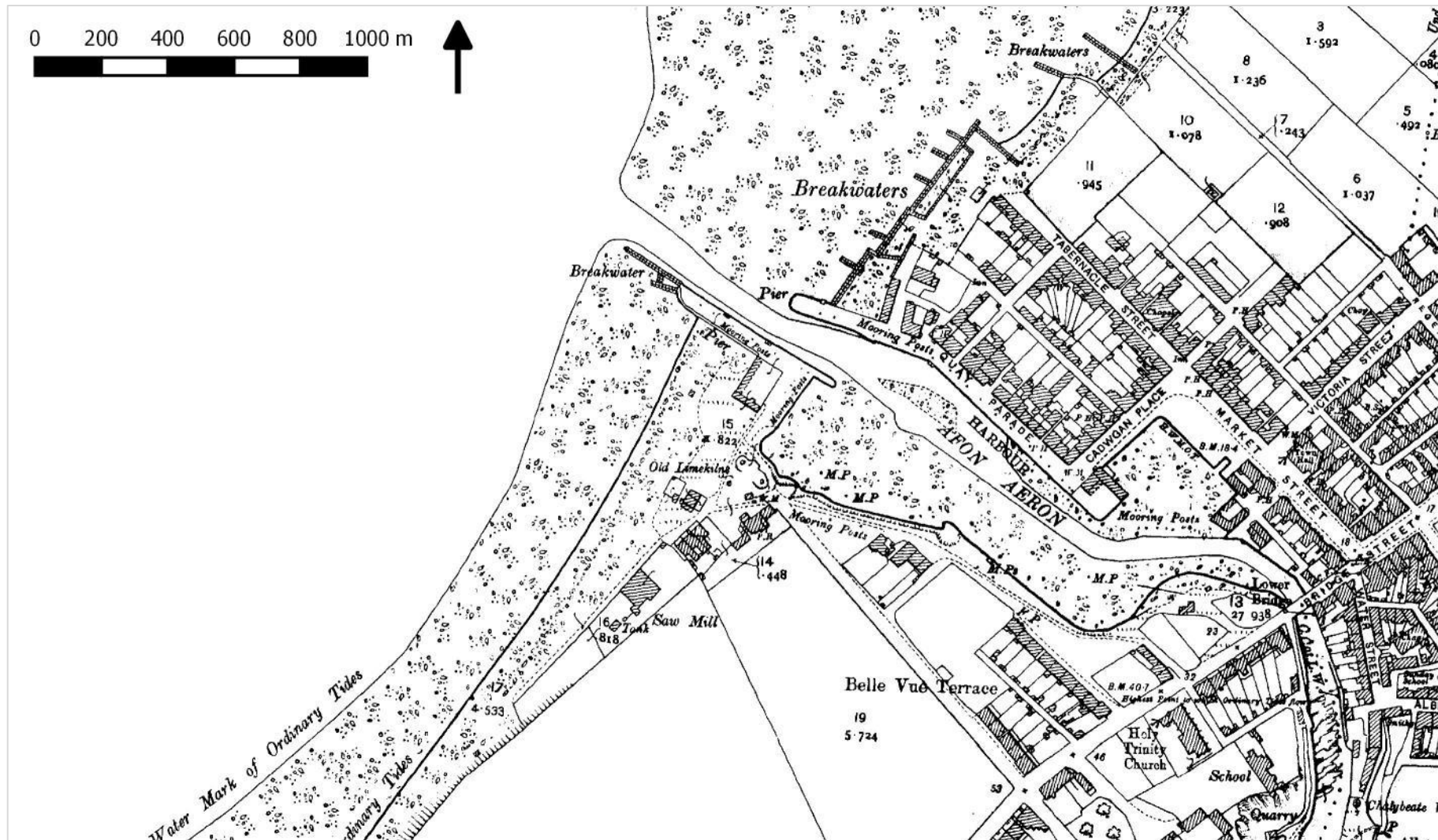
### **3.3 Historic Map Regression**

- 3.3.1 Some of the earliest maps to show detail of the area are the initial Ordnance Survey maps of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Aberaeron is included in a map of 1819 (Dawson 1819), which shows the concentration of settlement along the riverside and roadside within Aberaeron. The foreshore is marked, but no features are indicated other than 'Sarn Cadwgan', a shingle ridge that extended from the shoreline for "1 ¼ miles to sea, seen at low water". Such ridges are a feature of the Ceredigion coast, and are thought to have given rises to the stories of Cantre'r Gwaelod, the sunken kingdom. This ridge is now mostly below water, and the map suggests it may lie slightly to the north of the survey area.
- 3.3.2 The subsequent tithe map of 1846 (Henfeniw Parish) shows the layout of the settlement in clear detail, including a row of cottages along the edge of the foreshore to the north of the river, but otherwise no features are marked on the foreshore.
- 3.3.3 The detailed 1:2500 scale Ordnance Survey map of 1890 (Figure 4) gives more detail on foreshore features. Within the southwest area there are structures along the shorefront that may have had direct access to the foreshore, including a saw mill, limekilns, and other unidentified buildings, but no associated features are shown in the foreshore area other than a track that leads from the saw mill to the south. Adjacent to the end of this track lies a small structure at the head of the beach, but its function is unknown. Within the northeast area three small breakwaters protrude from the sea defences, and a single mooring post is marked within the foreshore to the north of the river mouth.
- 3.3.4 By the 1905 Ordnance Survey map (Figure 5) no change is noted to the southwest, but a series of ten new breakwaters are added to the northeast. The subsequent 1:10560 maps of 1938 and 1963 show little change, other than no longer marking the small structure to the southwest.
- 3.3.5 The next 1:2500 detailed map is from 1974. This shows a series of breakwaters in the northeast area, although on slightly differing locations and alignments to the previously marked ones, suggesting they had been replaced with new structures. A more substantial breakwater is shown at the river mouth with a

beacon at the end. These breakwaters are still apparent, and since that date it would appear further breakwaters have been added in the southwest area.



**Figure 4:** Extract from the 1:2500 Ordnance Survey map published in 1890 showing the river mouth and foreshore features.



**Figure 5:** Extract from the 1:2500 Ordnance Survey map published in 1905 showing the foreshore features.

## **4 METHODOLOGY**

### **4.1 Watching Brief Methodology**

- 4.1.1 The watching brief was undertaken in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Archaeologists' (CIfA) *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief* (2014).
- 4.1.2 Recording of all archaeological features or deposits conformed to best current professional practice and was carried out in accordance with the Recording Manual<sup>2</sup> used by DAT Archaeological Services. A written, drawn and photographic record was maintained throughout this watching brief. All contexts encountered during this watching brief were recorded.
- 4.1.3 A series of geotechnical investigation pits were planned (Figure 6), in the event due to tidal conditions three were undertaken under watching brief conditions. These comprised two investigation pits within the harbour area, and an investigation pit in the foreshore in front of the harbour mouth. The machining was undertaken using a 9 tonne Takeuchi 360 excavator fitted with large toothed bucket.

### **4.2 Foreshore Survey Methodology**

- 4.2.1 All works were undertaken in accordance with the guidelines set out by Chartered Institute for Archaeologists and were undertaken by qualified member of staff.
- 4.2.2 Recording of all archaeological features or deposits conformed to best current professional practice and was carried out in accordance with the Recording Manual<sup>3</sup> used by DAT Archaeological Services. A written, drawn and photographic record was maintained throughout this project. All features encountered during this survey were recorded.
- 4.2.3 All works were also undertaken following the site specific risk assessment prepared in advance of the fieldwork, which noted particular health and safety considerations and measures to be implemented for foreshore survey work.
- 4.2.4 The systematic walkover survey was undertaken to ensure any visible archaeological remains were recorded. This involved northeast/southwest traverses of the entire survey area at approximately 30m intervals.
- 4.2.5 Photography was undertaken using a Cannon 110D EOS SLR camera photographs taken at regular intervals and at both ends of each transect.
- 4.2.6 Where archaeological remains were identified all photography includes a 1m scale. Any identified archaeological remains were also recorded using a Garmin H300 hand held GNSS system to accurately record their position. Visual observations and measurements were also undertaken.
- 4.2.7 Known archaeological features were navigated to, with their position confirmed by using the GNSS system, and, where present, they were photographed and details of their condition were noted.

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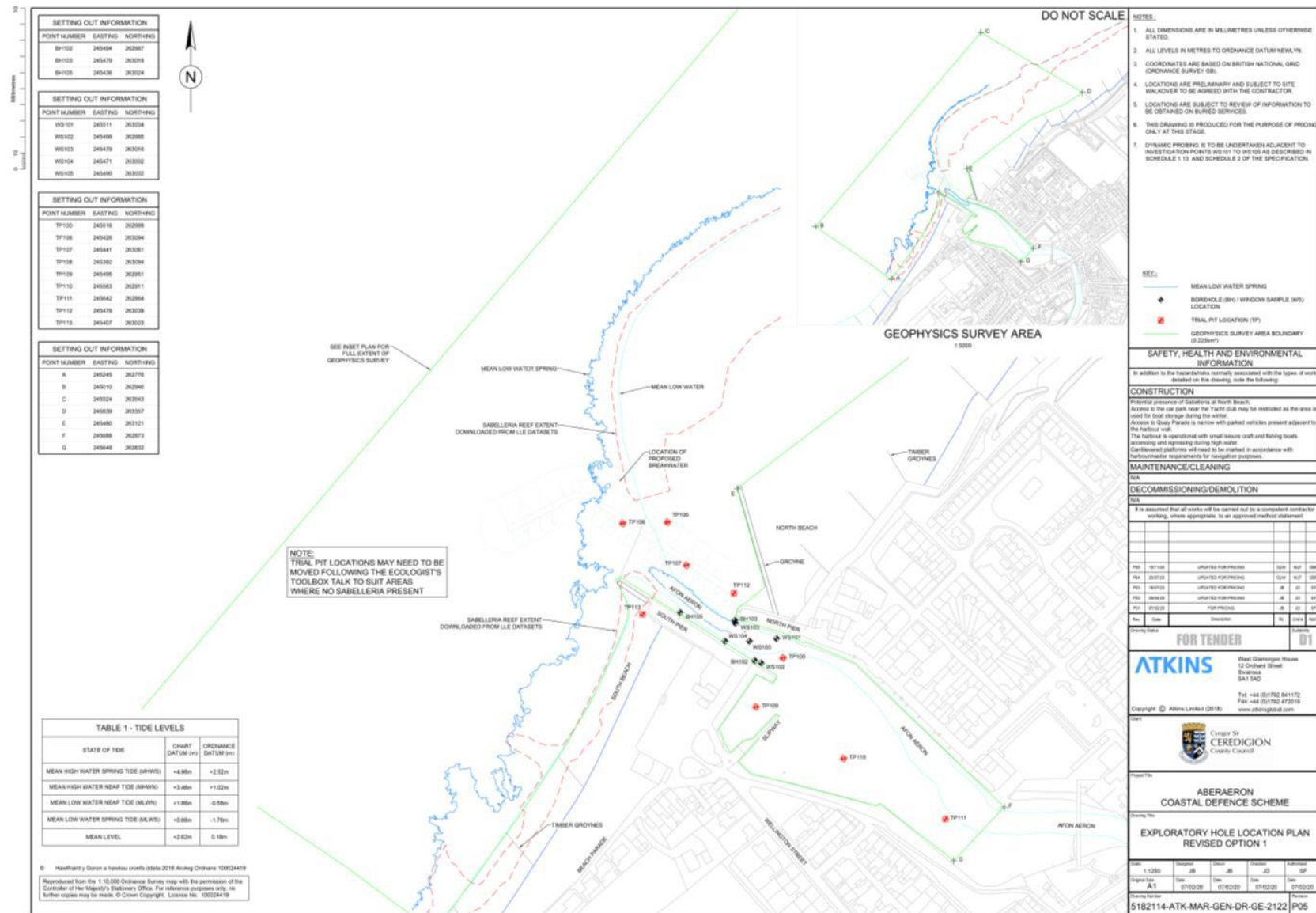
<sup>2</sup> DAT Archaeological Services have adopted the Recording Manual developed by English Heritage Centre for Archaeology. A copy will be available on-site for inspection if required.

### **4.3 Timetabling of Fieldwork**

- 4.3.1 Fieldwork was undertaken on the 1<sup>st</sup> of December 2020. The weather was overcast with occasional rain.

### **4.4 Post-Fieldwork Reporting and Archiving**

- 4.4.1 All data recovered during the fieldwork will be collated into a site archive structured in accordance with specifications in Archaeological Archives: a guide to best practice in creation, compilation, transfer and curation (Brown 2011), and the procedures recommended by the National Monuments Record, Aberystwyth.
- 4.4.2 A report fully representative of the results of the fieldwork has been prepared.



**Figure 6:** Plan of geotechnical investigation pits and proposed development areas. Plan provided by Atkins, not reproduced to scale.



## 5 WATCHING BRIEF RESULTS

- 5.1. A watching brief was undertaken on three of the six geotechnical pits required for this phase of works. Two of these pits were located within the harbour area and one on the foreshore in front of the harbour mouth (Figure 6).
- 5.2. The pits were approximately 2 metres square and aimed to reach a depth of 5 metres although a maximum of 3 metres was possible due to water inundation. Due to health and safety considerations these pits were not closely examined but were photographed from a distance and their basic depth recorded.
- 5.3. The first observed pit was located at the southeast end of the harbour area, roughly located at TP111 on Figure 6. This pit immediately filled with water during excavation, preventing any meaningful archaeological observations being made (Photograph 3). This pit produced a mix of river gravel material and silt in the excavated material, no objects of archaeological interest were observed within it.
- 5.4. A second pit was observed in the foreshore area, on the line of the proposed development, roughly located at TP106 on Figure 6. This pit also immediately filled with water during excavation preventing any close inspection (Photograph 4). The excavated material comprised finer gravels and sand, with no archaeological material observed.
- 5.5. The geotechnical pit for which archaeological observations were possible was located in the south-west part of the harbour area, roughly located at TP110 on Figure 6. This was excavated to a depth of 3.2m (Photograph 5).
- 5.6. The deposits present within this pit consisted entirely of bands of naturally deposited river gravels and silt. No archaeological deposits or features were observed.



**Photograph 3:** TP111 - filled with water, with excavated material adjacent. Looking west.





**Photograph 4:** TP106 - filled with water. Looking west.



**Photograph 5:** TP110, showing river gravels and silts, and depth of dig.

## **6. FORESHORE SURVEY RESULTS**

### **6.1 General**

- 6.1.1 Due to practical considerations the foreshore survey was undertaken in two parts: a south-western area and north-eastern area (Figure 4). Most of the survey was undertaken in the afternoon of the 1st of December, as the tide was too high in the morning.

### **6.2 South-western Area**

- 6.2.1 The foreshore area here consisted of a sandy beach behind a pebble bank. Above this stood modern sea defences constructed of large boulders and concrete (Photograph 6). At the south-western end of the survey area are large vertical sedimentary cliffs (Photograph 7) with the northern end being constrained the modern day breakwater (Photograph 8). This area measured approximately 0.49km northeast / southwest and 0.21km southeast / northwest. It was not possible to survey the most westerly part of the survey area due to tidal restrictions.
- 6.2.2 Perhaps the most obvious feature along the foreshore in the south-western area were groynes, large walls which are designed to prevent the movement of beach sand (Photograph 9). The groynes in this area were located approximately every 50 metres, orientated east / west and measured an average of 0.60m to 1m tall. These groynes were made of wood, stone and re-used lengths of railway track. These groynes are modern in date, mapping evidence suggesting they are late 20<sup>th</sup> century in origin, and are therefore considered to be of limited archaeological interest.
- 6.2.3 Two fish traps were identified in this area, thought to be the same as the previously identified NPRN 518844 / 518838 (Figure 2; Table 2). Both of these fish traps were only partially visible, as the tide did not fully expose them, but were seen to be in the same location as described as in the NMR and were constructed of roughly shaped boulders that are thought to likely be the foundations of wooden structures.
- 6.2.4 NPRN 518844 was roughly C shaped, facing inland and was located in the southern part of the area (Photograph 10). It consists of a roughly east / west wall measuring 22m in length that curved to the north at its western end. The walling measured a maximum of 0.50m in height and was ranged between 2m and 3m in width. It is thought that there was a further north / south section of walling of similar design and scale, this was only partially visible above water so was only briefly recorded, but was thought to be similar in length and height (Photograph 11).
- 6.2.5 In the mid-part of the south-western area was the second fish trap NPRN 518838 (Figure 3 and Photograph 12). Again this was constructed of roughly shaped boulders, presumed to be the foundational layers of a wooden structure. Given its location at a similar point on the foreshore to NPRN 518838 it is thought likely to be broadly contemporary, but there is little indication within the current structure to narrow the potential date range down. No wooden elements, or associated construction features were visible, and the form of the boulders is undiagnostic of a particular period.
- 6.2.6 Similarly to NPRN 518838 this fish trap was only partially exposed by the tide, and only a single section of linear walling was visible which was orientated east / west, but it is presumed likely to be similar in shape, forming a V or U shape. The visible section was approximately 17m in length, and a maximum of 0.72m in width and 0.75m in height.
- 6.2.7 Both NPRN 518844 and NPRN 518838 were well preserved and are their condition is thought likely to be relatively stable.
- 6.2.8 At the northern end of this survey area was the south-western breakwater (LB 9979) (Photograph 8). As stated above, discussion as to the impact that any development may have will be reserved for the forthcoming archaeological desk based assessment.

However a few notable observations were gathered from the foreshore survey. From the beach front three phases were identified. An early hewn stone phase, a concrete phase (Photograph 13), and an extension constructed of railways tracks constraining large stone boulders running west from its south western end (Photograph 14). It is thought possible that the stone breakwater collapsed and was subsequently placed with a modern concrete alternative, as it appears to have been significantly truncated prior to being rebuilt (Photograph 13).

6.2.9 No further heritage assets were identified in the south-western survey area.



**Photograph 6:** Sandy beach behind a pebble bank, with modern sea defences above. Looking north-west.





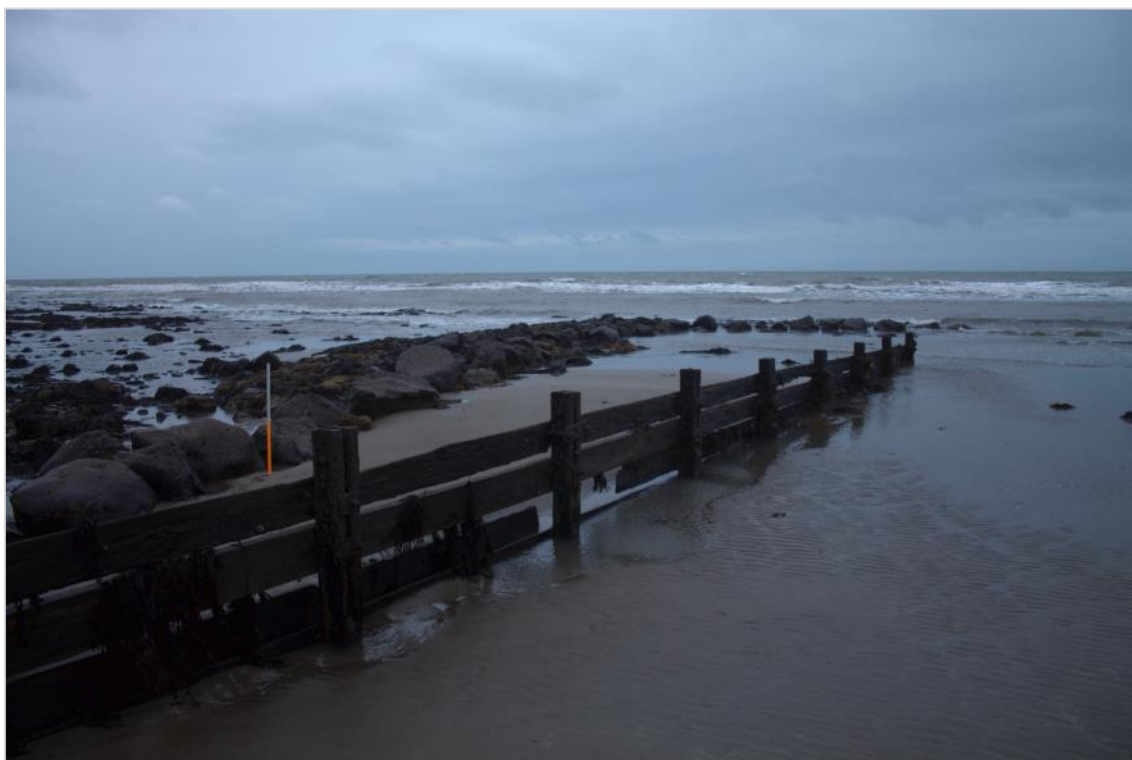
**Photograph 7:** Sedimentary cliffs at south-western end of area. Looking south-west.



**Photograph 8:** Showing current breakwater at north-eastern end of south-western area. Looking west.



**Photograph 9:** Large modern groins seen throughout south-western area. Looking east, 1m scale.



**Photograph 10:** East/west wall of fish trap NPRN 518844, curving at western end behind the modern groin. Looking west, 1m scale.





**Photograph 11:** Showing partially exposed north/south section of walling representing fish trap NPRN 518844. Looking north-west.



**Photograph 12:** Linear section of walling thought to represent fish trap NPRN 518838. Looking north-west, 1m scale.



**Photograph 13:** Showing stone phase of south-western breakwater at the lower level, rebuilt in concrete. Looking north-east.



**Photograph 14:** Showing south-western breakwater extension constructed of railway track and stone. Looking north, 1m scale.

### **6.3 North-eastern area**

- 6.3.1 This area measured approximately 0.43km northeast / southwest and 0.21km southeast / northwest (Figure 4). At the southern end of this area was the modern day north-eastern breakwater (LB 1010) and harbour entrance (Photograph 15). To the southeast were modern coastal defences constructed of concrete and large boulders (Photograph 16). This area differed significantly from the south-western survey area, consisting instead of large water-rounded sedimentary boulders overlying bedrock (Photograph 17). Rock pools and seaweed also dominated the area, making detecting archaeological remains significantly more difficult.
- 6.3.2 This area, like the south-western area, also contained groynes spaced approximately 50m apart (Photograph 18). These groynes measured a maximum of 2m tall and did not extend as far as those in the south-western area, measuring approximately 20m in length. Mapping evidence suggests these groynes are earlier in date than those in the south-western area, but they still appear to be later 20<sup>th</sup> century in date.
- 6.3.3 Within this area a possible fish trap (NPRN 518839) similar to those described in the south-western area, has been recorded using aerial photography. It is described as C-shaped, measuring approximately 100m from end to end. This was not identified during the survey, it is possible the rocky terrain may have made any identification difficult, or it may have remained below the low tide mark on the day of the survey. Another possibility is that roughly in the area of the supposed fish trap is a concrete sewerage pipe that leads directly out to sea (Photograph 19). It is possible that this, and more recent sea-defence work, has obscured remains of the fish trap.
- 6.3.4 A number of shipwreck sites are recorded within this general area on the foreshore around Aberaeron harbour. These wrecks have been recorded through documentary evidence, and have never been observed. No evidence of these, or any unrecorded shipwrecks, were observed during the survey.
- 6.3.5 There were two large lumps of concrete in the north-western part of the survey area. It is not clear what these once belonged to but they are quite obviously modern and are considered to be of limited archaeological importance.
- 6.3.6 No further heritage assets were identified in the north-eastern survey area.





**Photograph 15:** Southern end of north-eastern survey area, with the breakwater (LB 1010) visible. Looking south.



**Photograph 16:** Modern sea defences. Looking north-west across the north-eastern area.



**Photograph 17:** Rocky boulder strewn landscape of the north-eastern area.  
Looking south-east.



**Photograph 18:** Modern groins in north-eastern area. Looking south-east.





**Photograph 19:** Concrete sewerage pipe leading directly out to sea. 1m scale.



**Photograph 20:** Large lumps of concrete in south-western part of survey area.  
Looking south, 1m scale.

## **7. CONCLUSION**

- 7.1 An archaeological foreshore survey and watching brief was undertaken by DAT Archaeological Services on 1st of December 2020 at Aberaeron Harbour, Aberaeron in Ceredigion.
- 7.2 A watching brief was undertaken on three geotechnical pits; two within the harbour area and one in the harbour entrance. Two of the geotechnical pits immediately flooded preventing close examination, with no archaeological material present in the excavated material. The third, in the south-west corner of the harbour area, was seen to contain water rounded river gravels and silt. No significant archaeological deposits were detected during this watching brief.
- 7.3 An archaeological foreshore survey was also undertaken in the area surrounding the harbour mouth, in the area that may be affected by a proposed new breakwater at the harbour mouth.
- 7.4 Two previously identified fish traps (NPRN 518844 / 518838) were identified to the south of harbour mouth, consisting of linear arrangements of boulders that would have provided the base for wooden fish trap structures. These features have not been closely dated. A third recorded fish trap to the north of the harbour mouth (NPRN 518839) could not be observed.
- 7.5 A series of timber groynes lay to the south and north of the harbour entrance, all of modern date. Two concrete objects were identified to the north, all of limited archaeological interest.
- 7.6 Documentary evidence suggests a number of potential ship wrecks around the harbour area, as well as earlier groynes/breakwaters, but no evidence of these features were identified during the survey. No new significant archaeological features or deposits were identified during the course of the survey.
- 7.7 No direct impact from the proposed development upon recorded heritage assets has been identified. One exemption to this is to the current breakwaters (LB 9979 and 1010) whose potential impact will be assessed in a forthcoming archaeological desk based assessment.
- 7.8 The visible heritage assets identified during the survey would suggest the archaeological potential of the proposed development area is low. However, it is clear that the foreshore area was being utilised for fish traps, and that ship wrecks are recorded in the area, therefore there remains some potential for archaeological features to exist buried beneath foreshore deposits.

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