

FORMER GRIFFITHS PALLET SITE, HEOL Y PARC, HENDY, CARMARTHENSHIRE: ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

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Prepared by:
Dyfed Archaeological Trust Ltd.
For:
Persimmon Homes West Wales



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Gan / By

RICHARD RAMSEY

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE
BUDDSODDWR MEWN POBL

Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Dyfed Cyf
Neuadd y Sir, Stryd Caerfyrddin, Llandeilo, Sir
Gaerfyrddin SA19 6AF
Ffon: Ymholiadau Cyffredinol 01558 823121
Adran Rheoli Treftadaeth 01558 823131
Ffacs: 01558 823133
Epost: info@dyfedarchaeology.org.uk
Gwefan: www.archaeolegdyfed.org.uk

Dyfed Archaeological Trust Limited
The Shire Hall, Carmarthen Street, Llandeilo,
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

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SUMMARY

This report has been prepared by Dyfed Archaeological Trust Field Services in response to a request from Persimmon Homes West Wales to undertake an archaeological evaluation of the potential impacts of a proposed new building development at the former Griffiths Pallet Works site at Heol y Parc, Hendy, Carmarthenshire (Planning application number S/18634; centred on NGR SN 5743 0434).

The proposed development site is located some 160m to the west of a possible Bronze Age barrow cemetery site and 190m east of the stone and earthwork remains of a deserted farmstead. Due to the potential damaging impacts from the proposed development on any underlying archaeological remains, the requirement for archaeological investigation was placed on the planning application by the local planning authority's archaeological advisors. Through discussions with the developer it was considered that an archaeological trial trench evaluation would be the most appropriate way of ascertaining the presence, date, extent, state of preservation and archaeological significance of any remains that may be present on the site. The results of the evaluation would inform the scope of any further archaeological mitigation that might be required at the site ahead of or during the groundworks for the building development.

The site area was formerly used as agricultural land until after the Second World War, when it is thought a dairy was constructed. By the 1960s the site area had been converted to industrial use. Griffiths Pallets occupied the site until 1995 when a serious fire occurred at the site.

Five trenches were machine excavated across the development area. The evaluation revealed field drains, modern pits, and footings for former buildings associated with the 20th and 21st century agricultural or industrial use of the site. No archaeologically significant features or deposits were revealed on the site.

The results of the evaluation suggest that the development is very unlikely to encounter the presence of significant archaeological features or deposits on the site.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Commission

1.1.1 This report has been prepared by Dyfed Archaeological Trust Field Services in response to a request from Mr Phill Stokes of Persimmon Homes West Wales to provide an archaeological evaluation of the potential impacts of a proposed housing development (Planning application number S/18634) at the former Griffiths Pallet Works site, Heol y Parc, Hendy, Carmarthenshire (centred on NGR SN 5743 0434; Figure 1). The application is for the construction of 35 new houses on the site.

1.1.2 The proposed development site is located 160m to the east of a possible Bronze Age barrow cemetery and 190m east of a deserted farmstead. The requirement for the implementation of an appropriate archaeological investigation of the site, via a Grampian Condition, was placed on the planning permission by Dyfed Archaeological Trust Heritage Management in their role as archaeological advisors to Carmarthenshire County Council. It was decided that an archaeological evaluation was the most appropriate means by which to ascertain more information of the potential effect of the proposed development on the archaeological resource.

1.1.3 This report was produced as part of the requirement for the appropriate archaeological investigation of the site, as part of the planning condition.

1.2 Scope of the Project

1.2.1 The evaluation has been designed to provide information on the character, extent, date, state of preservation and significance of any surviving archaeological deposits within the site area, in order that an assessment of the impact from the development proposals on any remains can be determined.

1.2.2 The results of the evaluation will be used to inform the scope of any further archaeological works required as mitigation of the development impacts.

1.3 Report Outline

1.3.1 This report describes the location of the site along with its archaeological background, summarises the potential impacts of the proposed development before providing a summary and discussion of the archaeological evaluation and its results.

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 either as above Ordnance Datum (OD) or, where a temporary benchmark has been used during the excavations, as above Site Datum (SD).

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 and are for illustrative purposes only.

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

2 THE SITE

2.1 Location

2.1.1 The proposed development site is located at NGR SN 5743 0434 on the west side of Heol y Parc (the B 4306) some 0.5km northwest of Hendy and 0.75km west-southwest of Fforest, both of which lie just within Carmarthenshire at its southeast border with West Glamorgan and the town of Pontardulais. The M4 Motorway runs north-south c.100m to the west of the site, with Junction 48 about 1km to the south (Figure 1).

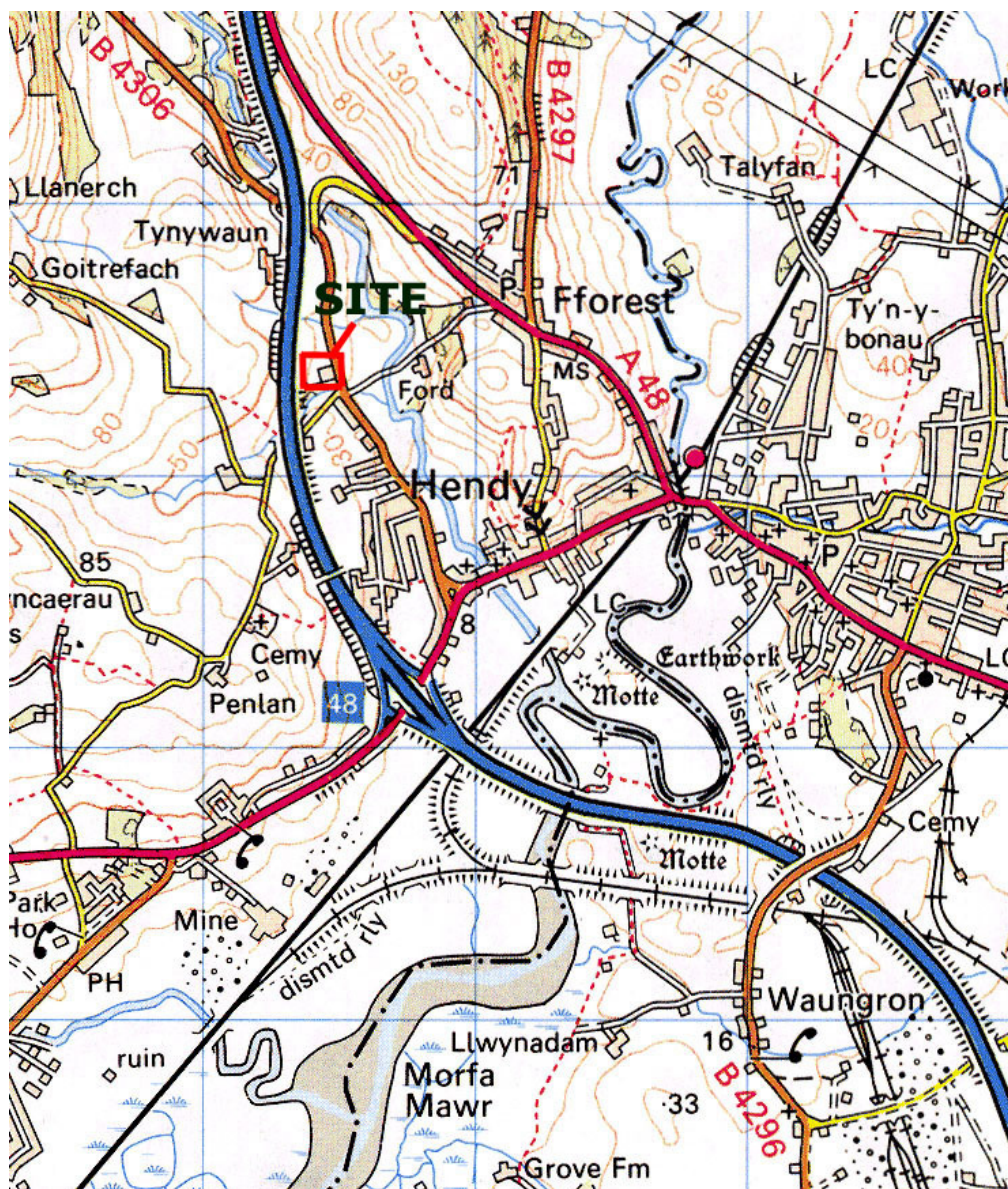


Figure 1: Location map based on the Ordnance Survey.
Red boundary centred on Griffiths Pallet site.

Reproduced from the 1987 Ordnance Survey 1:50,000 scale Landranger Map with the permission of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, © Crown Copyright Cambria Archaeology, The Shire Hall, Carmarthen Street, Llandeilo, Carmarthenshire SA19 6AF. Licence No AL51842A

2.1.2 The development area occupies a sub-rectangular plot of about 1.25 hectares (Figure 4); the eastern half of the site is flat and the west side exhibits a moderate southeast-facing slope down to the 30m OD contour. To the west and

north the development area is bounded by pasture fields, whilst to the south the land drops down steeply to a stream that is a tributary of the Afon Gwili. The east side of the site fronts onto the B4306 road, named as Heol y Parc.

2.1.3 The now demolished former pallet works buildings occupied the northeast corner of the site with a single smaller building standing on the northern edge of the southeast corner of the site. All that now remains of the buildings, above ground, is landscaped rubble, tarmac and concrete hard standing on their former footprints. A number of stockpiles of stone, wood chips, lumber and crushed building rubble were present over the hard standing areas

2.1.4 The western half of the site is separated from the east by a deeply cut drainage trench and comprises mainly badly drained scrubland characterised by the presence of much reed growth. There are, amongst the scrub, several low dumps of spread building débris in discrete areas. The western margins are planted with mature deciduous trees some of which appeared dead and scorched by fire, probably burnt during the bad fire that occurred at the former factory in September 2005 which burned for several days.

2.1.5 The southern edge of the site comprises fairly uneven ground that appears, where exposed in section close to the stream edge, to have been made up and levelled by the dumping of building débris and other discarded waste materials. Amongst these deposits, and over the whole southeast corner of the site, a weed killer-resistant highly invasive plant, Horse Tail (*Equisetum Arvense*), was present. At the time of the archaeological evaluation this was a 'no-go' area for tracked machines for fear of spreading the weed (see 3.1.1 below).

2.1.6 Geologically, the site lies on Carboniferous Westphalian Millstone grit sandstones. The soil over the whole site is an acidic peaty clay.

2.1.7 The proposed development is for the construction of 35 new houses on the site.

2.2 Archaeological Background.

2.2.1 The Historic Environment Record records 3 known archaeological sites within a 1km radius of the proposed development area. One of the recorded sites, a house platform (PRN 7338 at NGR SN 5812 0848), although still on the record, was destroyed during the construction of the stretch of M4 Motorway some 100m or so to the west of the development area.

2.2.2 No archaeological features are known to exist within the boundaries of the proposed development site itself. However, the site does lie within 200m of both a probably post-medieval deserted farmstead (PRN 7336 at NGR SN 5715 0435) and a possible Bronze Age barrow cemetery to the west (PRN 7337 centred on NGR SN 5720 0437).

2.2.3 The farmstead (PRN 7336), named as Wern Chwith after the farm lying due south, comprises the stone and earthwork remains of two rectangular buildings in the corner of a field at 65m OD. The stonework of both buildings survives to a remarkably even height suggesting that the upper parts of the buildings may have been constructed from turf, timber, or some material other than stone. This evidence and the lack of any early map evidence for the buildings (they are not marked on the tithe map from 1841 or the earliest Ordnance Survey maps) suggests that the buildings had been long abandoned and fallen from memory by the beginning of the 19th century and could therefore be of considerable antiquity.

2.2.4 The possible Bronze Age barrow cemetery (PRN 7337 and given the name Talhardd) lies in the field enclosure associated with farmstead PRN 7336. The

cemetery comprises at least 11 stone cairns scattered, in no particular pattern, just below the crest of an east facing slope between 60m OD and 50m OD. The stone mounds vary in size from c.13m by 10m to c.4.5m by 3.5m and in height between about 1m and 0.2m (Ward 1974). During a survey of such sites in 2002 a visit to the site was made by archaeologists from the Dyfed Archaeological Trust but the site was too overgrown with bracken and gorse to allow any judgement to be made regarding the cairns, however it was noted that there was a linear configuration of stones present on the site that was not mentioned by Ward in 1974. It was concluded (Cook *et al* 2003) that the features noted by Ward may have been destroyed and the stones used to manage the waterlogged ground in the field. Ward himself suggested that the features may simply be the result of field clearance but left open the possibility of their interpretation as a Bronze Age cemetery.

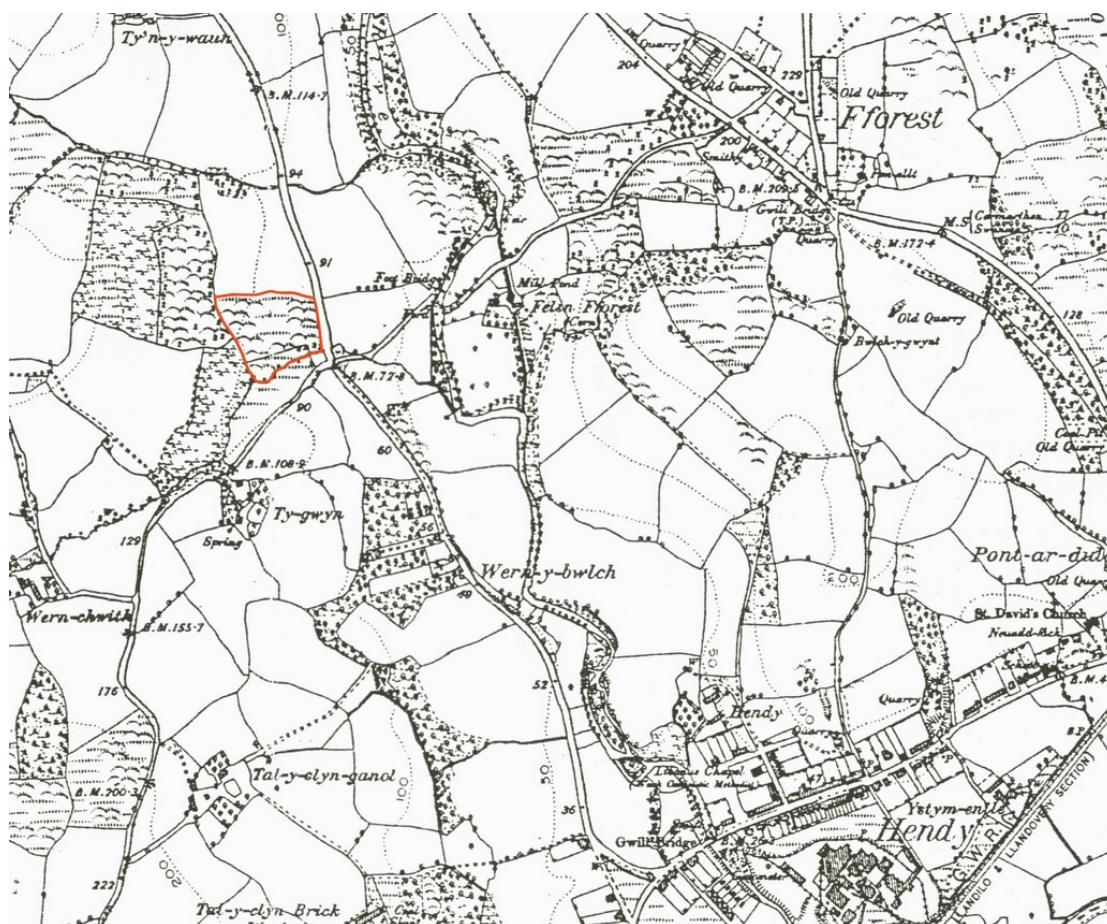


Figure 2: Extract from the first edition Ordnance Survey 6" map of 1898 with the development area bounded in red.

2.2.5 Cartographic evidence (from the Ordnance Survey 1898 first edition 6" map, Figure 2) demonstrates that in the later 19th century the development area was an enclosed field given over to rough grazing. The second edition 6" Ordnance Survey map of 1908 shows no change in the use or layout of the site (Figure 3). Some time after the Second World War a dairy was constructed on the site (*pers. comm.* an employee of Griffiths' Pallets) but when this fell into disuse the site was leased out for industrial use. The 1964 edition of the 6" Ordnance Survey map shows a single building on the site labelled as 'Works', suggesting that by that time it was no longer a dairy. The site ceased to be used

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

3.1 Methodology

3.1.1 The originally intended archaeological evaluation strategy was for the excavation of five 1.8m x 30m long trenches located in positions to test representative sample areas of the whole site. In the event it was decided, due to the presence of concrete hard standing on the northeastern part of the site (on the footprint of the former pallet factory) and the growth of Horse Tail (a vigorously growing and invasive poisonous plant) in the southeastern quarter of the site, that this was not possible. Instead, four trenches were excavated to test for the presence of archaeology on the western half of the site and only one trench was excavated on the western edge of the footprint of the former factory on the eastern part of the site.

3.1.2 The trenches were opened using a 360° tracked mechanical excavator fitted with a flat bladed grading bucket. In each trench the topsoil or overburden was removed down to the natural subsoil or archaeological features, depending upon which was reached first. In all the trenches natural geological layers were reached. Where archaeological features or deposits were revealed these were recorded and described on individual context sheets, photographed, sketched and planned to scale using an EDM electronic surveying instrument. Where it was deemed necessary, archaeological features were test excavated in order to more fully characterise them.

3.1.3 The five evaluation trench locations are shown on Figure 4, labelled T1 to T5 inclusively.

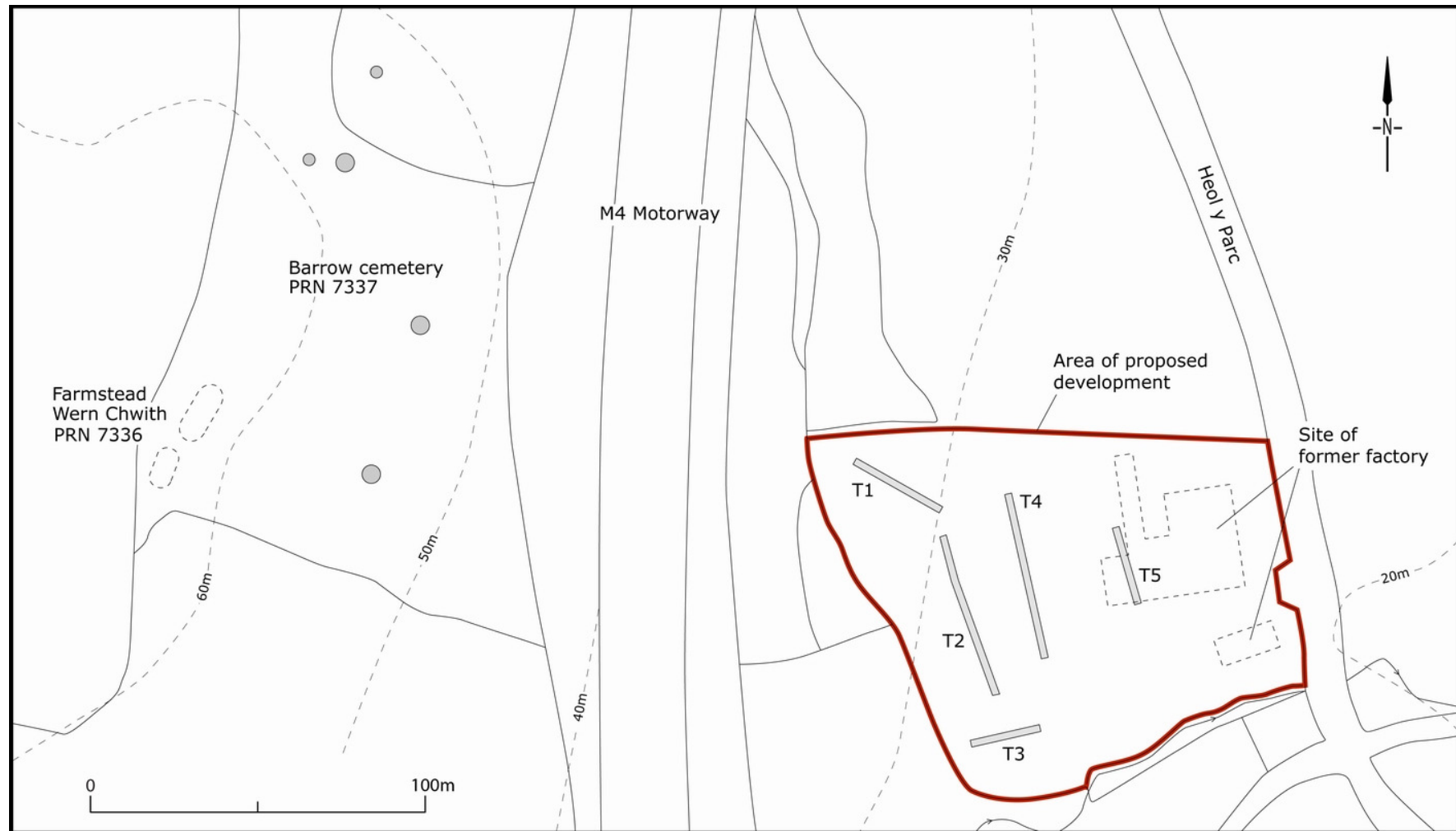


Figure 4: Map showing the location of Trenches and the relative position of the development area to the known archaeological sites.

3.2 Results of the Evaluation

Trench 1

3.2.1 Trench 1 (T1) was excavated in the northwest corner of the development area (Figure 4) and measured 30m long by 1.8m wide, with its long axis aligned down slope from northwest to southeast.

3.2.2 Removal of a dark brown peat-rich sandy clay topsoil (context 100) to an average depth of 0.20m along the length of the trench revealed the underlying stiff grey, orange mottled, natural clay subsoil (Photo 1). No archaeological features were encountered in the northern half of the trench.

3.2.3 Some 18m from the northwest end of the trench a sub-rectangular pit-like feature (104) measuring 2m long by 1.1m wide was revealed cut into the natural clay subsoil to a depth of 0.2m (Figure 5). The fill (103) of this feature was similar in composition to the peaty topsoil but contained 60% small to medium size angular and rounded stones with occasional fragments of coal. Partial excavation of this feature showed that it had vertically cut sides, a slightly less steeply cut northwestern end, and a flat base (Photo 2). The northern side of the feature continued beyond the edge of the excavation to an unknown extent.

3.2.4 About 2m to the southeast of (104) another sub-rectangular pit-like feature (108) was revealed cut into the natural clay subsoil. This feature (Figure 5) was aligned north-south and measured 1.6m long by 0.76m wide; the soil fill of (108) was identical to the peaty topsoil (100) and was relatively free of inclusions. Partial excavation revealed it to have vertically cut sides and a flat base; it was 0.2m deep on its west side and slightly shallower to the east.

3.2.5 A 0.36m wide linear feature (106), aligned NNW-SSE, was revealed cutting through both pits (104) and (108) (Figure 5) and the natural subsoil. Partial excavation showed it to have nearly vertical sides to a depth of 0.23m and following removal of its dark brown and grey/orange mottled mixed soil fill (105), revealed two connected terracotta clay drainage pipes *in situ* on its base (Photo 3). These pipes are typical of the land drain type used in late 19th to early 20th century used on badly drained ground. The land drain continued beyond both sides of the excavation trench.

3.2.6 Two other features were revealed in Trench 1, both were considered to be modern. A sub-rectangular pit (110) contained a high percentage of modern rubbish in the form of chipboard amongst its mixed dark brown peaty clay soil fill. A sand-filled 0.3m diameter circular feature, probably a soil engineer's test borehole, cut through the land drain 106 revealing the terra cotta pipe at a depth of 0.23m.

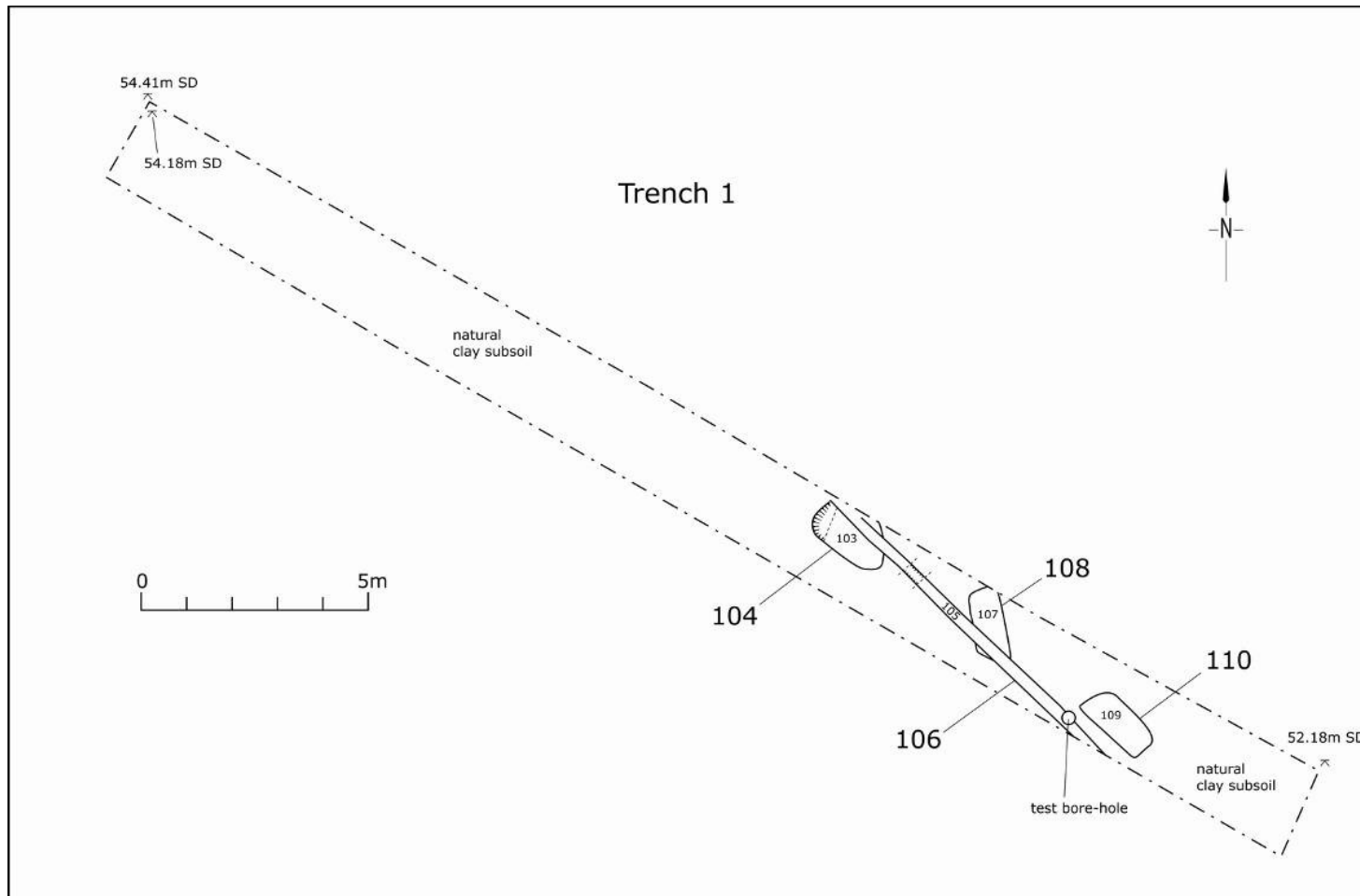


Figure 5: Plan of Trench 1 showing revealed features at the southeast end.

Trench 2

3.3.1 Trench 2 (T2) measured 50m long by 1.8m wide and was aligned approximately north-south; the trench was slightly curved to the southeast (Figure 4 and Photo 4).

3.3.2 The topsoil (200) in this trench exhibited the same peaty qualities as that in T1, but differed in that it had been disturbed along the whole length of the trench. At least 20% of its volume comprised fragments, large and small, of timber, some of which had evidently been charred by fire. It appeared that the topsoil had been graded or levelled by machine, possibly after the fire of 2005. The average depth of the topsoil was 0.25m and for the first 38m length of the trench from the north, it lay directly on the natural grey clay subsoil. Beyond the 38m mark, however, to a depth of some 0.6m below the original ground surface, the topsoil overlay a dark brown friable peaty clay soil layer (201) containing occasional medium to large size sub-angular stone and frequent pieces of laminated wood and timber pallet fragments. It is considered that the presence of this layer derives either from waste during the pallet making process or possibly from re-landscaping after the fire of 2005. Layer (201) lay directly on the natural grey clay subsoil with no intervening archaeological features or deposits.

3.3.3 At a point about 32m along T2 from its north end, a 0.34m wide linear feature (204) was revealed cutting the natural subsoil and continuing beyond both sides of trench to the northwest and southeast (Photo 5). This feature was considered to be a land drain similar to that seen in Trench 1 (106), and probably laid contemporaneously with it, so it was not excavated.

3.3.4 Some 5m to the south of the land drain (204) on the east side of the trench, part of a circular pit (206) was exposed cut into the natural clay. The dark fill (205) of this feature contained fragments of waste pallet material and some modern iron staples; due to its apparent modernity this feature was not test excavated and was left undisturbed.

3.3.5 No further archaeological features were observed in this trench.

Trench 3

3.4.1 Trench 3 (T3) measured 20m long by 1.8m wide and was positioned to test for archaeological features or deposits in the southwest corner of the development area (Figure 4 and Photo 6).

3.4.2 The dark brown peaty clay topsoil (300) in this trench, like that in T2 (200), contained about 20% charred wood and root fragments probably derived from the 2005 fire. It also contained inclusions of re-deposited natural clay subsoil suggesting further disturbance, perhaps as a result of landscaping or site clearance after the fire. The depth of the topsoil varied between 0.5m at the west end of the trench to 0.28m at the east end, with the ground sloping gently down from west to east, and directly overlay the natural grey subsoil.

3.4.3 Some 4.5m along the trench from the west end a 1.8m wide linear feature (303) was revealed aligned north-south, cut into the natural subsoil, and continuing beyond both edges of the excavation (Photo 7). The dark brown friable silty clay soil fill (302) contained a high percentage of burnt and charred wood and fragments of discarded modern laminated wood that appeared to be waste material from the pallet factory. This feature may simply have represented a deeper cut by an earth-moving machine during landscaping after the 2005 fire.

3.4.4 No other archaeological features or deposits were encountered in this trench.

Trench 4

3.5.1 Trench 4 (T4) was 50m long by 1.8m wide and was located just to the west of the centre of the site (Figure 4 and Photo 8).

3.5.2 The dark brown peaty topsoil (400) along the entire length of this trench was mixed with stones and building demolition débris; for the first 12m from the north end of the trench its average depth was 0.18m and seen to lie directly on either the natural grey clay subsoil or discrete outcrops of grey loosely bedded sandstone bedrock. The average depth of topsoil beyond the 12m point to the south was 0.4m and again it was seen to lie directly on the natural subsoil. The content of demolition débris in the removed overburden was greater at the southern end of the trench (Photo 9) where large sections of wall or concrete flooring were present (401). It was considered possible that this débris may be representative of a building demolished to make way for the later pallet factory, as it contained no evidence of burning.

3.5.3 No archaeological features were observed in Trench 4.

Trench 5

3.6.1 Trench 5 (T5), the most easterly of the evaluation trenches, measured 24m long by 1.8m wide and was positioned to establish the presence or otherwise of archaeological deposits at the western margins of the former pallet factory.

3.6.2 The dark brown peaty topsoil (500) in this trench was more compacted than in the other trenches and contained about 35% coarse components of stone and building demolition débris. The deposit varied greatly in depth from 0.05m at the northern end of the trench to 0.45m at the southern end. Again it overlay natural clay subsoil.

3.6.3 At 1m north of the southern end of the trench a single course of modern concrete breezeblocks forming a 0.25m wide wall footing (502) was revealed dug into the subsoil. The footing was aligned east to west and continued beyond both sides of the excavation trench. Some 15.4m to the north of wall footing (502) a similar single breezeblock footing (503) arrangement was revealed (Photo 10) in the subsoil. Both represented sections of wall foundations to a former building at the site (see T5 in Figure 4 and the relative position of the former building to the trench). The walls must have been fairly insubstantial, as the footings appeared slight.

3.6.4 No other archaeological features were revealed in Trench 5.

4 CONCLUSION

4.1 The archaeological evaluation undertaken within the proposed development site at the former Griffiths Pallets factory site at Heol y Parc, Hendy, identified a number of archaeological features and deposits. The revealed features or deposits appeared to be of modern date and were not associated with, or related to, the nearby sites recorded and identified in the Regional Historic Environment Record.

4.2 The land drain and two of the pits revealed in Trench 1 (contexts 106, 104 and 108 respectively) probably date to the early 20th century. This is also true of the land drain (context 204) revealed in trench 2.

4.3 The revealed features and deposits in the remaining trenches all appeared to relate to either 20th or 21st century agricultural and industrial use of the land or resulted from the post 2005 fire ground clearance.

4.4 Given the limited coverage of the evaluation trenches it is still considered possible that further archaeological features and deposits are present within the proposed development area, although these are most likely to represent either early 20th century field drainage arrangements or, at least on the east side of the development area, building footings associated with the post-war dairy or the Griffiths Pallet Works. Due to levelling and ground clearance of the site, following the fire of 2005, it is considered that there is a low potential for any earlier remains to survive within the site area.

4.5 Cartographic evidence indicates that the proposed development area was an undeveloped plot until well into the 20th century when first the dairy buildings and latterly the factory buildings were built. Prior to this, the plot had served as a marginal, badly drained, enclosed pasture field. The ceramic drains revealed during the evaluation excavations are testimony to land improvement undertaken, probably, in the early part of the 20th century.

5 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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5.2 Map

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PHOTOGRAPHS



Photo 1: View of northwest end of Trench 1 showing nature of natural subsoil.
View northwest, 1m and 0.5m scales



Photo 2: Pit 104 in Trench 1, part excavated. View NNE, 1m and 0.5m scales



Photo 3: Land drain 106 and other features at southwest end of Trench 1.
View northwest, 1m and 0.5m scales



Photo 4: Overall shot of Trench 2. View southeast, 4 x 1m scales



Photo 5: Land drain 204 in Trench 2. View west, 0.5m scale



Photo 6: Overall shot of Trench 3. View east, 5 x 1m scales



Photo 7: View of feature 303 in Trench 3. View south, 2 x 1m scales



Photo 8: Overall shot of Trench 5. View north, 4 x 1m scales



Photo 9: Demolition débris at south end of T4. View north, 1m scale



Photo 10: Breezeblock footing (503). View east, 1m scale

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RHIF YR ADRODDIAD / REPORT NUMBER 2010/27

Mai 2010

May 2010

Paratowyd yr adroddiad hwn gan /

This report has been prepared by: **Richard Ramsey**

Swydd / Position: **Archaeologist**

Llofnod / Signature Dyddiad / Date 28/5/2010

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**

Llofnod / Signature Dyddiad / Date 28/5/2010

*Yn unol â'n nôd i roddi 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*