

Gwbert Patch to Gwbert. Cliff Pipeline, Gwbert.

CAMBRIAN ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROJECTS LTD.

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Archaeological Watching Brief



By

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GAP Report No. 395

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

Gwbert Patch to

Gwbert Cliff Pipeline, Gwbert.

BY Richard Scott Jones (MA, BA Hons).

**Prepared for:
Cg Ms Consulting**

**On behalf of:
Dwr Cymru Welsh Water**

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THE INSTITUTE OF FIELD ARCHAEOLOGISTS (IFA)

Standard and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief

The Standard

An archaeological watching brief will record the archaeological resource during development within a specified area using appropriate methods and practices. These will satisfy the stated aims of the project, and comply with the *Code of conduct, Code of approved practice for the regulation of contractual arrangements in field archaeology*, and other relevant by-laws of the IFA.

Definition of an archaeological watching brief

The definition of an archaeological watching brief is a formal programme of observation and investigation conducted during any operation carried out for non-archaeological reasons. This will be within a specified area or site on land, inter-tidal zone or underwater, where there is a possibility that archaeological deposits may be disturbed or destroyed. The programme will result in the preparation of a report and ordered archive.

This definition and *Standard* do not cover chance observations, which should lead to an appropriate archaeological project being designed and implemented, nor do they apply to monitoring for preservation of remains *in situ*.

Purpose of a watching brief

The purpose of a watching brief is:

- ◆ to allow, within the resources available, the preservation by record of archaeological deposits, the presence and nature of which could not be established (or established with sufficient accuracy) in advance of development or other potentially disruptive works.

- ◆ to provide an opportunity, if needed, for the watching archaeologist to signal to all interested parties, before the destruction of the material in question, that an archaeological find has been made for which the resources allocated to the watching brief itself are not sufficient to support treatment to a satisfactory and proper standard.

A watching brief is not intended to reduce the requirement for excavation or preservation of known or inferred deposits, and it is intended to guide, not replace, any requirement for contingent excavation or preservation of possible deposits.

The objective of a watching brief is to establish and make available information about the archaeological resource existing on the site.

The Standard and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief was formally adopted as IFA approved practice at the Annual General Meeting of the Institute held on 14th October 1994.

Non Technical Summary

The following report is the result of an archaeological watching brief undertaken by Cambrian Archaeological Projects Ltd. on behalf of CgMs Consulting for Dwr Cymru Welsh Water's construction of a new sewerage pipeline and associated facilities between Gwbert Cliff (NGR: 217083 250126) and Gwbert Patch (NGR: 217083 246227). The Archaeological Watching Brief however was only to investigate the northern part of the pipelines route. This report follows on from a former desk-based assessment (Pugh 2005) undertaken by CgMs Consulting.

The earlier desk based assessment (Pugh 2005) established that the route of the proposed pipeline crossed some areas of moderate potential for remains from the Iron Age and Medieval periods and a possible 'hollow way'. The results from the watching brief however were insignificant in terms of archaeology of any importance along the route of the pipeline. This was because it was hindered substantially by shallow partially exposed bedrock along most of its length, especially to the far north in the areas surrounding the Cliff Hotel.

1 Introduction

The following report details the results of an archaeological watching brief undertaken by Cambrian Archaeological Projects Ltd. on behalf of CgMs Consulting for Dwr Cymru Welsh Water's construction of a new sewerage pipeline and associated facilities between Gwbert Cliff (NGR: 217083 250126) and Gwbert Patch (NGR: 217083 246227). This report follows on from a former desk-based assessment (Pugh 2005) undertaken by CgMs Consulting.

The watching brief was undertaken between the months of August – November 2005.

All works were undertaken in accordance with both the Institute of Field Archaeologist (IFA's) Standards and guidance: for an archaeological watching brief and current Health and Safety legislation.

1.1 Planning Background

The pipeline was to be constructed under the permitted development rights of Dwr Cymru Welsh Water as specified in the General Development Order. The construction of the pipeline will therefore not be the subject of planning permission nor regulated through planning conditions. However, there is a code of conduct for the exercising of statutory powers, which requires any impact or potential impact on significant archaeological remains to be appropriately mitigated. As such a watching brief was undertaken during the construction of the northern most section of pipeline.

1.2 Site Description

The route of the pipeline runs between Gwbert Cliff (NGR 216037 250126) in the north and Gwbert Patch (NGR 217083 246227) to the south (see Fig 1). The pipeline is approx. 4 km in length.

Following the details given in the former desk based assessment (Pugh 2005), the proposed pipeline runs through an area considered to have moderate potential for archaeology of the Iron Age and Medieval periods. An Iron Age Promontory Fort is situated only approx. 0.5 km north of the Cliff Hotel, at 'Craig y Gwbert' (PRN: 7735) and a further potential promontory fort *feature* (PRN: 8899), is crossed by the route of the pipeline. With regards the medieval periods, SMR records show that a medieval pit (PRN: 4997) was discovered in the sand dunes close to the route of the pipeline, just south of Gwbert. This pit contained near complete 13th century pottery vessels along with other leather and wood items. This pit is interpreted as being the remains of a former medieval settlement buried beneath the dunes.

1.3 Geology & Topography

The solid geology of the route comprises Nannet Mudstones with thinly interbedded bedded turbidite sandstones and mudstones near base. The drift geology comprises heterogeneous glacial deposits in the north, blown sand in central part and Till in the south of the route (Geological Survey of Great Britain, Sheet 193) (*from Pugh 2005*).

The northernmost part of the route, that which concerns the archaeological watching brief (FIG 1), follows the edge of the Gwbert cliff, which overlooks the Irish Sea and lies approx. 35m AOD. From the southern edge of the settlement at Gwbert, the route follows the B4548 down to the dunes near Waungelod, to a height of 5m AOD. From here the route continues south from Nant-y-ferwig along the saltings at the mouth of the Afon Telf, with the land climbing to a ridge 500m to the east. The southernmost part of the route follows the downward slope of the southern end of the ridge to the sewerage works at Gwbert Patch at 15m AOD (*from Pugh 2005*).

1.5 Archaeological Background

A fuller archaeological and historical background to the area along the proposed route of the pipeline can be found in the earlier desk based assessment (Pugh 2005). However, for the purposes of this report only a brief archaeological background summary is considered necessary. As already stated the proposed route in the northern area runs close to the Iron Age Promontory Fort of Craig y Gwbert (PRN: 7735). Although the Fort is still well north of the route and will not be directly affected, it is indicative of Iron Age activity in the area.

Just to the south of the Cliff Hotel, and crossed by the route of the proposed pipeline, the SMR records indicate the presence of another possible promontory fort or feature. This feature comprises a natural curvilinear gully on the north side with no evidence of a bank. This site was visited as part of the Dyfed Coastal Promontory Fort Assessment 1993-94 commissioned by Cadw. The report concluded however that the feature was solely a curvilinear ditch with no bank and not really a promontory fort.

With regards the medieval periods, there are no known records of any medieval date along the route of the pipeline, however, a medieval pit (PRN: 4997) was discovered in the sand dunes close to the route, just to the south of Gwbert. The feature was originally discovered due to erosion in the 1970's and was later excavated in 1975. The pit contained near complete 13th century pottery vessels, leather strips, animal bone and worked wood. It is thought that this feature was likely part of a now deserted medieval settlement buried beneath the dunes.

As to the post medieval periods, the cartographic sources indicate that the northern part of the proposed pipeline route was still agricultural land in 1839-40, with no new development in the Gwbert area.

2 Aims and Objectives

In accordance with IFA's *Standards and guidance*, the primary objective of this assessment was to ensure that any previously unrecorded archaeological features and deposits exposed during the ground disturbance works and subsequent development of the site were adequately recorded and interpreted.

3 Methodology

The ground work involved the laying of sections of 15m long x approx. 0.25cm wide plastic sewerage pipe. To undertake this, sections of trench approx. 20m in length x approx. 0.75m wide, were dug one at a time.

Once the trench was dug each section of pipe was laid individually and welded onto the former section of pipe, before the trench was back-filled. This methodology continued along the whole 4 km stretch of pipeline. Each length of trench was dug using a mechanical excavator with a 0.75m wide ditching bucket. The depth of each trench was approx. 1m. The topography for the cutting of each trench varied depending on its location along the route. At times modern tarmac road surface had to be cut through initially. At other times, especially in the field area at the far north and in the golf course area, near the Cliff Hotel, the top-soil was initially stripped to depth of approx. 20cm and a width of approx. 6m. The soil stripping in these areas gave good insight into any potentially buried archaeology prior to the trench excavation. Following each strip, the archaeological contractor 'field walked' the area looking for potential archaeological features as well as recovering any dateable material which was evident on the surface.

Limited cleaning of the dug section trenches was undertaken in order to ascertain that no archaeological features were present in the section. Where features were present, then limited excavation was undertaken to establish the date, depth, preservation, extent, function and relationship to other features.

Recording of the trenches was in three formats:

i) *Photographic record* - Photographs were taken in digital format at a minimum 5 mega-pixel resolution using JPEG file format.

ii) *Drawn record* - Site drawings, plans and sections, were produced at scales of 1:10, 1:20 or 1:50 on drafting film. Finished drawings have been related to Ordnance Survey datum and published boundaries where appropriate.

iii) *Written record* - Written records were produced using a continuous numbering sequence for all contexts.

An environmental sampling and processing strategy was in place should the archaeological deposits warrant it. However, in this instance it was not felt that the deposits encountered required sampling.

All works were undertaken in accordance with both the IFA's *Standards and guidance: for an archaeological watching brief* and current Health and Safety legislation.

4 Results of the Watching Brief *(see Plates appendix)*

The archaeological watching brief for the northern area of the Gwbert Patch to Gwbert Cliff pipeline began on 13th July 2005 and continued until November 15th 2005 (FIG 1). This northern area ran alongside the base of the slope known as 'Towyn Warren', on the west bank of the B4548 road. The watching brief was not continuous throughout this time but was instead sporadic, dependent on whether archaeological supervision was deemed necessary during times of non-groundwork or excavation.

For ease of description, the results for the watching brief have been divided into three specific characteristic topographic sections or routes along the proposed pipeline.

- i) *Viewing area* (this stretches from NGR: SN 163490 - SN 163495)
- ii) *The Field* (this stretches from NGR SN 163495-SN 162498)
- iii) *Cliff Hotel* (this stretches from NGR: SN 162498- SN 160502)

Each of these sections will be discussed individually with regards the watching brief results.

In the following, numbers contained within brackets (), refer to context numbers allocated during the watching brief. A detailed list of all contexts is given in Appendix II of this report.

4.1 Viewing Area (NGR: SN 163490 – SN 163495).

This section runs along the west side of the modern B4548 road, from the area above Gwbert Patch, approx. 100m south of the viewing area platform as marked on a modern Ordnance Survey 1:50000 map. It continues past here and terminates at the gate that enters the field south of the Gwbert.

This stretch of pipe trench ran both on the west bank of the road and also, in places, cut through the modern road surface whilst avoiding service pipes and cables. The length of this section of trenching was approx. 500m. Throughout the watching brief on the cutting of this trench, no archaeological features or dateable finds were noted apart from successive layers of road surface. Below these *transport* deposits were layers of compact and natural sands. Each of these deposits is described below.

Contexts

- (1) Top soil/overburden/ Tarmac
- (2) Former road surface – Compacted mudstone/sandstone/gravel and sand mix (depth varied from 0.50m – 0.30m).
- (3) Fine natural sand.
- (4) Compact gravel/sand. Possible earlier road surface (depth varied from 0.20m – 0.40m).
- (5) Fine natural pale beige/yellow sand.
- (6) Compact light brown sandy clay.

4.2 The Field (NGR SN 163495-SN 162498).

This section of pipeline runs through the agricultural field at the base of the northern area of the 'Towyn Warren' and alongside the area of Gwbert cliff. It was located approx. between 4-5 meters west from the side of the road/hedge line. The length of this section of trenching was again approx. 500m. Prior to cutting the trench through the field, the topsoil (7) was removed along the entire length of the field approx. 8m wide following the length of the proposed pipeline. This allowed for a working area and eased re-landscaping afterward. The depth of the stripped deposit was approx. 15-20cm. This stripping was supervised archaeologically and the area was field-walked, noting any archaeological features or dateable finds. In general, the removing of the topsoil exposed a late 19th century period. This was elementary by the presence of occasional fragments of 19th century pottery sherds, scattered highly around the exposed area of field. Most of these fragments, only 7 in total, were located within 30m of either side of the entrance gates to the field.

Other than finds, the field walk also exposed a possible archaeological feature (8) located halfway along the field (NGR: SN 1623 4971). This consisted of a series of 6-7 fairly thin mudstone slabs (approx. 0.05m thick), varying in width size from 0.30-0.50m and appearing to have been laid as if for a crude walkway down the slope. The feature only extended for approx. 2m down the slope. At the lower southwest side was an approx. 1.5m long *tail* of medium sized mudstones lying upright. At first glance this *tail* was thought to be the remains of an early mudstone wall, however on closer inspection it appeared to be natural geology. The whole feature was cleaned back and photographed. Following removal of this feature, prior to and during the cutting for this trench, each of the slabs was removed carefully and the subsurface inspected for any further features and dateable material. Neither was found under any of the slabs. Each slab had been laid onto a natural compacted beige/pale yellow/orange gravel/sand (9). Beneath this was natural bedrock (10).

Other than this curious feature, continued trench cutting only exposed one further feature in this area, the remains of a stone culvert running NE-SW across the trench. This feature was recorded photographically and its location plotted (NGR: SN 1624 4985). No further features or finds were located along this stretch of trenching. Cutting for the trench in this area was hindered greatly by the shallowness of the natural bedrock, which was surface exposed along at least 70% of this section.

Contexts

- (8) Mudstone slabs
- (9) Compact beige/pale yellow/orange gravel/sand Fine natural sand.
- (10) Bedrock.
- (11) Stone Culvert.

4.3 Cliff Hotel (NGR: SN 162498- SN 160502).

This section of trenching began at the end gate of the last section and continued across into the Cliff Hotel Golf Course and Car Park, whereupon the trench turns west down passed the northern part of the Hotel and joining up with an existing drainage pipe.

The green area within the Cliff Hotel Golf Course was initially stripped of topsoil to a width of approx. 6m across the entire length of green and at a depth of approx. 0.30m. Like the field area, this was done so as to allow room for groundwork as well as to ease final landscaping after the pipe was laid. Once stripped, the area was field walked and any finds or features noted. With this overlying deposit removed, a 19th century period was exposed. This was evident by the occasional fragment of mid-late 19th century pottery sherds. Other than these pottery fragments no new features or finds were evident.

With regards the 'gully' feature that runs across the green from east to west, which had been interpreted as a possible Iron Age promontory fort feature, this appeared to be a natural feature, as made evident from earlier field visits by Cadw. This was made fairly conclusive once the trench was dug and the natural bedrock exposed. Again, like the area of the field the golf course area was 60% surface exposed bedrock once the topsoil had been removed.

The watching brief on the continued trenching through the car park and around the hotel to the north and west revealed no significant archaeological features other than building foundation rubble and earlier 19th century landscaping. The natural bedrock throughout this length of trenching varied in height from being almost at the exposed surface to approx. 0.50m in depth.

5 Conclusion

The archaeological watching brief on the cutting for the Gwbert Patch to Gwbert Cliff pipeline revealed very little of archaeological interest, other than the curious feature exposed in the *field* section of trenching. This feature appeared to be the remains of a stone slabbed path of unknown date. As no dateable finds were recovered nor any further features to allow a better interpretation as to the features character, its purpose or function remains speculative. However as the feature lay very close to an area of natural bedrock, it may be a quarrying related feature.

With regards the potential promontory fort feature in the area of the Golf Course, this feature, as already interpreted, appears to be a natural feature and not a cultural one.

6 Acknowledgements

Thanks to; Kevin Blockley for his help and advice during the compilation of this report, Greg Pugh of CgMs Consulting for his assistance.

Also thanks to the groundwork staff at Morrissons and Youngs Engineering for being so patient.

7 References and Bibliography

Pugh, G. 2005. 'Archaeological Desk Based Assessment' – Pipeline between Gwbert Cliff and Gwbert Patch, Gwbert, Ceredigion.



Figure 1. Map showing location of pipeline from Gwbert Patch to Gwbert Cliff

Northern area of pipeline route (watching brief area).

Southern area of pipeline route

 APPENDIX I:
Photographic Plates



Plate 1: Trench section looking toward Cliff Hotel, northwards.



Plate 2. Side of trench showing section through stages of former road surfaces



Plate 3: Trench section looking toward Cliff Hotel, northwards.



Plate 4: Trench in area of field looking south from near the Cliff Hotel.

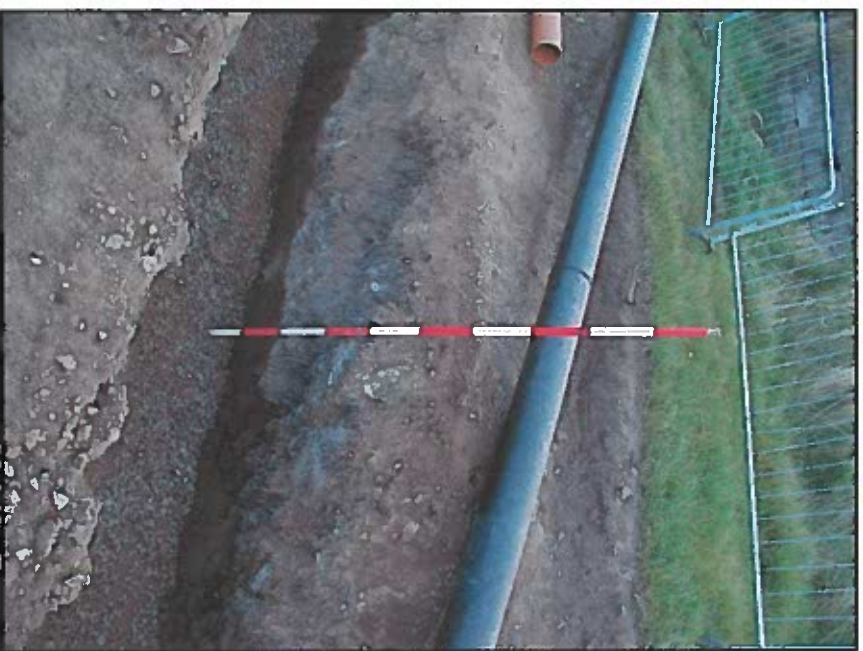


Plate 5: Section of trench showing bedrock depth in area of field. Looking eastward.



Plate 6. Mudstone slabs feature and possible early wall in area of field. Looking eastward.



Plate 7: Top soil strip through golf course. Looking north toward Cliff Hotel.



Plate 8. Open trench at end of golf course in area of Cliff Hotel car park. Looking north.



APPENDIX II: Context Register

Contexts

Viewing area

- | | |
|-------------------|---|
| (1) | Top soil/overburden/ Tarmac |
| (2) | Former road surface – Compacted mudstone/sandstone/gravel and sand mix (depth varied from 0.50m – 0.30m). |
| (3) | Fine natural sand. |
| (4) | Compact gravel/sand. Possible earlier road surface). Depth varied from 0.20m – 0.40m). |
| (5) | Fine natural pale beige/yellow sand. |
| (6) | Compact light brown sandy clay. |
| <i>Field area</i> | |
| (8) | Mudstone slabs |
| (9) | Compact beige/pale yellow/orange gravel/sand Fine natural sand. |
| (10) | Bedrock. |
| (11) | Stone Culvert. |

APPENDIX III:
Archive Cover Sheet



ARCHIVE COVER SHEET

Gwbert Patch to Gwbert Cliff Pipeline

ARCHIVE DESTINATION -

Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historic Monuments in Wales

Site Name:	Gwbert Patch to Gwbert Cliff Pipeline
Site Code:	GP/05/WB
PRN:	
NPRN :	N/A
SAM:	N/A
Other Ref No:	CAP Report No. 395
NGR:	SN 160 501 – SN 170 462
Site Type:	Various
Project Type:	Watching brief
Project Officer:	Richard Scott Jones
Project Dates:	July – Nov 2005
Categories Present:	N/A
Location of Original Archive:	Cambrian Archaeological Projects Ltd.
Location of duplicate Archives:	N/A
Number of Finds Boxes:	1
Location of Finds:	N/A
Museum Reference:	Not assigned
Copyright:	CAP Ltd
Restrictions to access:	None