

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY AT MORFA-DU,
PARYS MOUNTAIN**



Gwynedd Archaeological Trust Ltd

Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Gwynedd Cyf

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY AT MORFA-DU, PARYS MOUNTAIN

Background

In May 1991 Anglesey Mining plc applied for planning permission to establish a decline portal on the site of the disused Morfa-du copper mine, on the western edge of the Parys Mountain mining complex (see Location Maps, fig. 1). The Gwynedd Archaeological Trust were consulted about the proposal, and following a brief site visit by Trust staff, the Trust indicated that features of Industrial Archaeological interest would be lost during the development and recommended that these should be recorded before their destruction. Anglesey Mining accordingly commissioned the Trust to complete an archaeological survey of the site. Fieldwork took place on 5th December 1991.

The Site

Little is known about the Morfa-du mine. It was opened in 1881 and was operated, along with the Parys Mine, by the Parys Company, producing bluestone ore. It closed in 1904.

The site is centred at SH 43079007, and the visible remains cover an area of about 0.5ha (see fig. 2). The OS 1:2500 map (1924 and subsequent editions) shows a number of buildings, spoil tips and a tank around the mine shaft. The buildings (see fig. 1) had been demolished and the shaft had been capped when the site was first visited by the Trust, but the tank and the tips survived.

Survey methodology

In accordance with the brief for the archaeological recording of the site, all visible features were described, sketch-planned, photographed (in colour transparency and black & white print) and finally plotted using an electronic total station. After examination of the waste tips it was judged that sampling would not prove worthwhile.

Description of Extant Features (see fig. 2)

The Tank

At the north edge of the site was a rectangular pool 14.5m x 9.0m, enclosed on its west and north (i.e. downhill) sides by an earthen bank. The tank was full of water, and it was not possible to examine any sediments within it, but it was probably a slime pit or settling tank.

The Quarry

At the south-east edge of the site was a small quarry, now well grassed over, and used as a rubbish dump. This may have been a backfilled trial shaft, or it may simply have been used as a source of hardcore for levelling etc. during the life of the mine.

The Pond

Immediately in front of the quarry was a small roughly circular pond. This appears on the OS 1924 map. There did not appear to be any built edge to this feature, which may simply mark the top of a backfilled trial shaft.

The Tips

To the south and west of the capped shaft were a number of spoil tips, as shown on fig. 2. These were mostly grassed over, but animal erosion of their sides showed them to be composed mainly of shale chips, with occasional large lumps of rock: all probably waste rock brought up from the shaft. It has been the Trust's experience that a study of the composition of individual spoil tips can indicate the location of particular processing activities and shed light on the methods of processing ores, but in this instance no significant differences between the tips were apparent.

The Site of the Shaft and Mine Buildings

The position of the shaft was marked only by stand pipes which will be used to dispose of mine water. No trace of the buildings shown on OS maps could be seen, and the entire area around the shaft, and southwards to the pond, had been levelled recently so that no archaeological features were visible.

Recommendation

The specification for the archaeological recording of the site stipulated that a watching brief should be maintained during development. However, the Trust's survey does not suggest that any further evidence is likely to emerge from such an exercise.

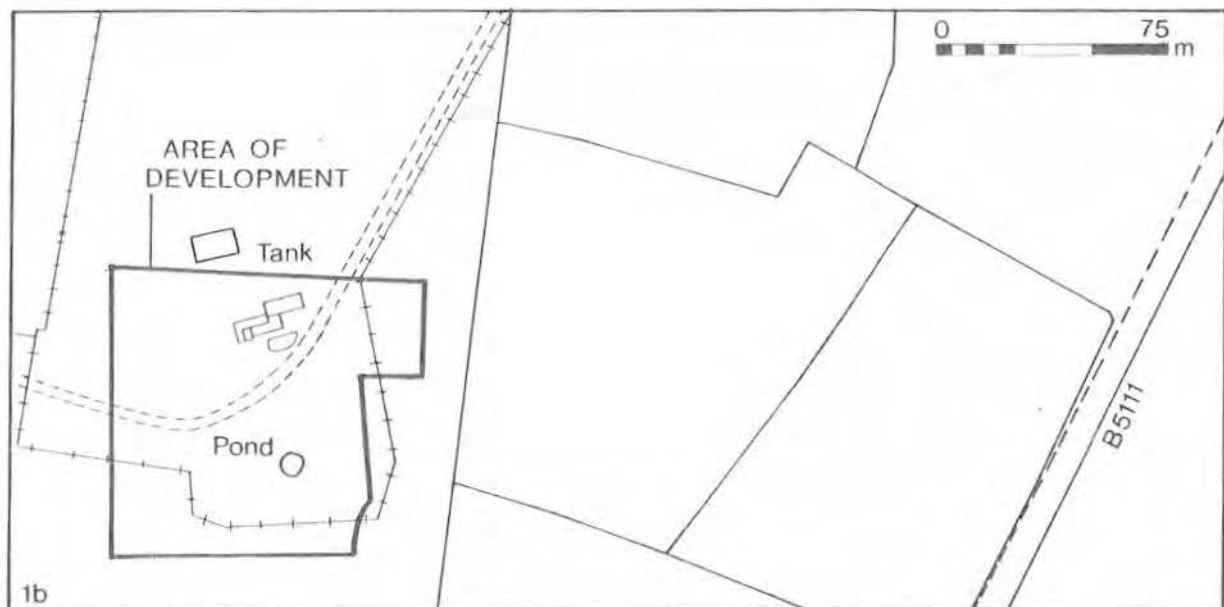
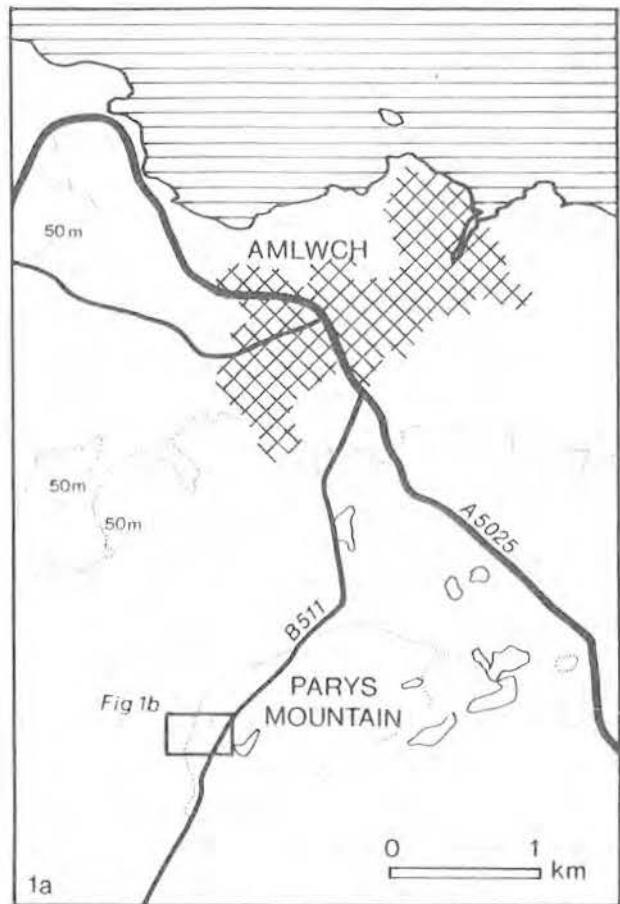
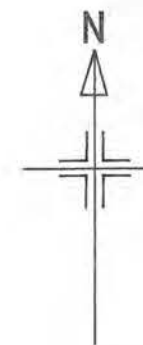


Fig. 1 Location maps



GWYNEDD ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST LTD
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BANGOR
GWYNEDD
LL57 2DG

PROJECT NO	GAT 1057	PRN
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TITLE	PARYS MOUNTAIN, WEST PORTAL SITE
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Scale	Date	Dwg No	Rev.
1 : 500	12/91	G1057A1	

Surveyor	SDB/MM	Drawn by	SB
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Notes :
GENERAL PLAN OF SITE, SHOWING PRINCIPAL VISIBLE FEATURES.
CONTOURS AT 0.5m VERTICAL INTERVALS.
CONTOUR VALUES FOR GUIDANCE ONLY; TOP OF TIP 'C' TAKEN AS 100m.
NORTH IS APPROXIMATE.

Fig. 2 Site plan

