

OLD COALYARD, STEEPLE LANE,
BEAUMARIS
ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION (GAT 1140)

REPORT NO. 85

Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Gwynedd
Gwynedd Archaeological Trust

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BEAUMARIS
ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION (GAT 1140)

Prepared for Mr & Mrs R Roberts

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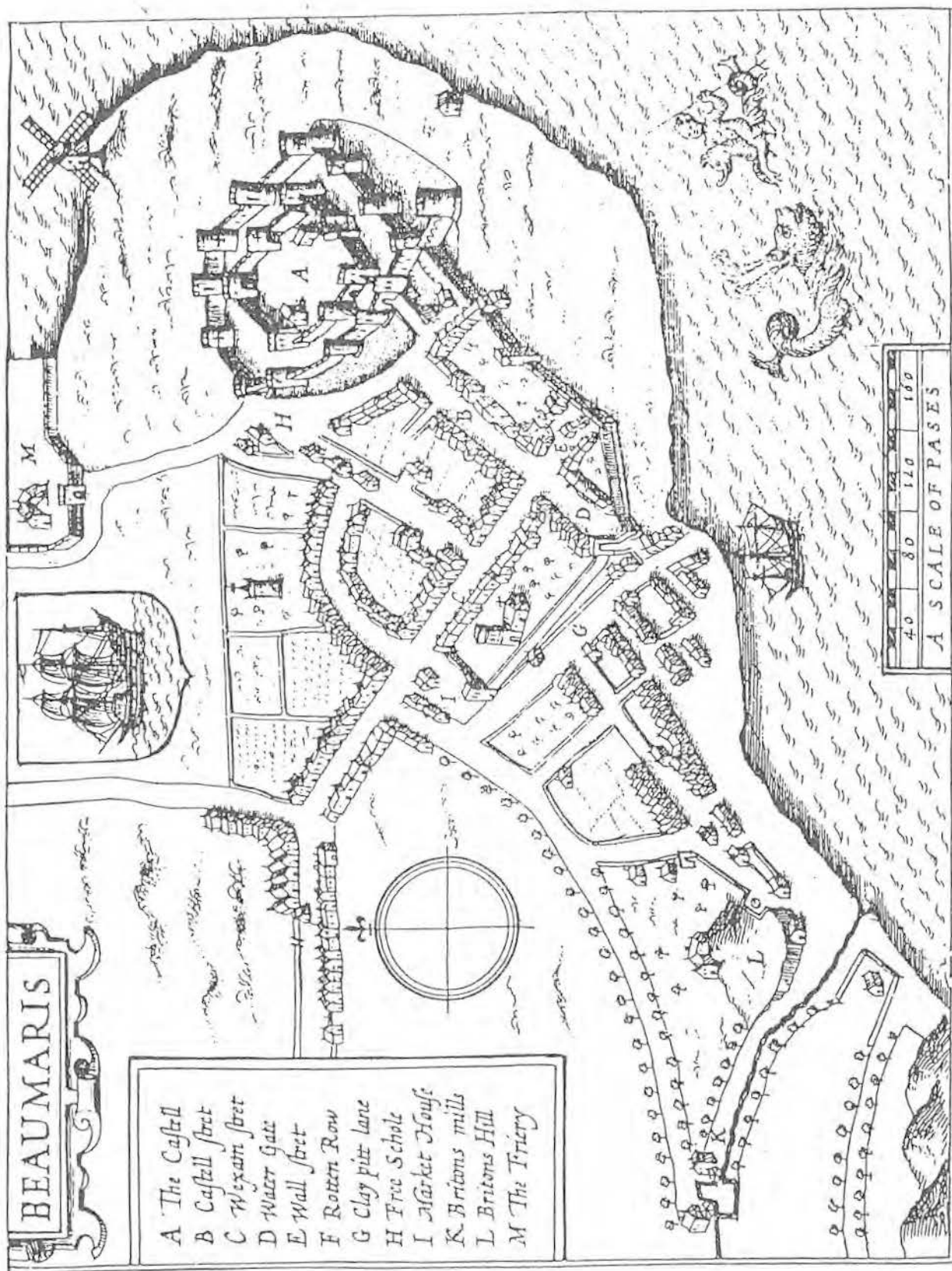


Fig. 1 Speeds plan of Beaumaris (1610).



Fig. 2 1829 plan of Beaumaris.

THE OLD COALYARD, STEEPLE LANE, BEAUMARIS.

INTRODUCTION

In response to a planning application (1/12/C/152 B & C) for the erection of four dwellings at the former coalyard, Steeple Lane, Beaumaris (NGR 6040 7645), by Gwynedd Archaeological Trust (Contracts) carried out an archaeological evaluation of the site. This was done on 10th - 11th February 1994, in accordance with the brief (below) prepared by Gwynedd County Sites and Monuments Record for Mr & Mrs R Roberts, Broadleys Cottage, Denbigh, Clwyd.

PROCEDURES AND METHODS

Desk-top survey

Ordnance Survey, Tithe and Estate maps were consulted at Gwynedd Archive Service, Llangefni, and the Department of Manuscripts and Archives, UCNW, Bangor. A photographic record of the existing buildings was made.

Field evaluation

Four trenches were excavated by machine, the concrete surface being broken up by mechanical hammer, to determine the depth, survival and extent of any archaeological deposits. Three trenches were located within the former cottages, and the fourth in the area of the coalyard, representing a total area of 18 sq. m.

RESULTS

Desk-top survey

Beaumaris, Beau Mareys, or, beautiful marsh, was founded, in 1295, in response to the Welsh revolt of 1294, led by Madog ap Llywelyn, to enable the crown to maintain greater control over Anglesey and the Menai Straits. The thriving neighbouring Welsh town of Llanfaes was destroyed, and its inhabitants moved to Newborough, to ensure the economic success of the English burgesses. The town was granted a charter in 1296 and within ten years 132 burgage plots had been taken up.

In 1403 part of the town was burnt during the revolt of Owain Glyndŵr, and the castle fell in 1404, and was not retaken by the English until 1405. The town had not been walled at this time and the experience of the Glyndŵr revolt led to funds being made available in 1407 for the digging of the town ditch. In 1414 a royal grant of ten pounds was made for the construction of a stone wall around the town. This work necessitated the destruction of thirty burgage plots. The town wall is shown on Speed's plan of 1610, and some sections are marked on the plan of the Bulkeley holdings in the town of 1829 (Baron Hill 6496). By 1862 the town walls had been largely demolished.

The proposed development area, at the corner of Rosemary Lane and Steeple Lane, can be seen on Speed's plan of 1610, where Steeple Lane is recorded as Clay Pit Lane. There was a house in the northern corner of this plot. This is now occupied by the present building, which may incorporate elements of the earlier structure. The area surrounding this house appears as curtilage.

The 1829 plan shows a house in the same corner with the addition of a terrace of six cottages, with gardens to the rear, fronting Rosemary Lane. Three of these cottages survive, and have been converted into garages. One of the cottages has a small Georgian window and doorway. The house on the corner was later the office for a coalyard, and a car inspection pit and diesel tank were sunk into the yard.

Field evaluation

Full length section drawings of the evaluation trenches were not attempted due to the lack of any archaeological features, uniformity of the stratified deposits, and health and safety considerations resulting from the depth of the trenches. As a result representative columns were recorded showing the sequence of the stratified deposits, and, are presented on the attached plan.

Trench 1

A trench, 3 m long, 1 m wide and 1.2 m deep, was excavated by machine in the eastern garage. The concrete floor overlay cobbling of large, well-worn stones, probably the survival of the original cottage floor. The cobbling overlay a deposit of yellowish-brown silty clay, 0.53 m deep, containing Post-Medieval pottery. Beneath this was a deposit of mid-brown clayey silt, 0.1 m deep, which lay above a deposit of loam, >0.6 m deep. The roughly-mortared stone rubble foundations of the cottage were noted at the north end of the trench, and were cut through deposits containing Post-Medieval pottery.

Trench 2

A trench, 3.5 m long, 1 m wide and 1.85 m deep, was excavated by machine in the middle garage. The concrete floor overlay a deposit of yellowish-brown silty clay, 0.6 m deep, containing Post-Medieval pottery. This lay above a deposit of loam, 0.9 m deep. Below the loam was a deposit of pale grey silty clay, >0.3m deep.

Trench 3

A trench, 3 m long, 1 m wide and 1.6 m deep, was excavated by machine in the western garage. The concrete floor overlay a deposit of yellowish-brown silty clay, 0.5 m deep, containing Post-Medieval pottery. This lay above a deposit of loam, 0.9 m deep.

Trench 4

A trench, 8.5 m long, 1 m wide and 1.25 - 1.65 m deep, was excavated by machine, and ran north-east to south-west from Steeple Lane. The concrete surface overlay a deposit of mid-brown silty clay, 0.2 - 0.45 m deep, containing Post-Medieval pottery. This lay above a deposit of mid-brown clayey sand which became progressively sandier with depth.

SUMMARY

No deposits or finds of archaeological significance were noted from any of the evaluation trenches. However, the deep deposit of loam, only found within the area of the garages, requires some explanation as to its origin.

The evaluation area is some distance from the line of the town wall, and it is unlikely that the loam deposit is connected with the backfilling of the town ditch. The excavations, in 1975, by R. B. White in St Mary's Graveyard were unable to find any traces of the town wall, but the town ditch was encountered, and found to be 6 m deep. It was suggested that Steeple Lane was situated on the opposite side of the ditch from the town wall, rather than above the backfilled ditch. The fact that no evidence for the western cut of a ditch was found in trench 4 of the 1994 evaluation (approximately 22 m west of the town wall) lends support to R. B. White's interpretation.

Trenches 1, 2 and 3 were too far away for the loam deposit to have any relationship to the town defences. The loam deposit was examined by a soil scientist from U.C.N.W. who confirmed that it was not of natural origin, and was probably deposited as a single event. Speed's plan of 1610 shows Steeple Lane as Clay Pit Lane suggesting that the loam deposit may be the backfill of a large shallow clay quarry pit of Late Medieval date. These pits were common features in the landscape at the outskirts of towns in the Late Middle Ages. The clay was quarried for a variety of uses, such as wall bonding and tile, pottery and brick manufacture. Clay pits became more widespread when brick became fashionable, initially for chimneys in timber buildings as protection from fire. Brick making, which was carried out on site, required large quantities of clay and there are references to local legislation in English towns in the 17th century which attempted to halt the activities of the clay diggers who even quarried the highways.

APPENDIX

Brief for the archaeological evaluation of
The old coalyard, Steeple Lane, Beaumaris.

GWYNEDD SITES AND MONUMENTS RECORD

Brief for Archaeological Evaluation of

ERECTION OF 4 DWELLINGS

COAL YARD, STEEPLE LANE, BEAUMARIS.

Prepared for Mr & Mrs R. Roberts.

Ynys Mon Borough Council Planning Application 1/12/C/152 B & C

1. INTRODUCTION

A planning application for the conversion of the existing corner building from a store into a dwelling along with the demolition of the remaining buildings and subsequent erection of 4 dwellings at Coal Yard, Steeple Lane, Beaumaris, was referred to Gwynedd Sites and Monuments Record (henceforth SMR) for its comments in mid-November, 1993.

This application follows on from an earlier application on the same site and differs essentially only in two respects, a new owner and the retention of the corner building; previously it had been proposed to demolish it. The SMR's response to the original application, in a letter dated April 5th 1991, was that as the application lay within an archaeologically sensitive area, in this instance, an area where there is cartographic evidence for post-medieval settlement (see below, section 2), an archaeological response was required. Ideally this would have taken the form of a pre-determination evaluation but events culminating in the selling of the Coal yard postponed this.

The present applicant approached the Trust in August 1993, when negotiations to buy the Coal Yard site were in progress, to enquire about the archaeological interest of the site and to secure a suitable programme of works to cater for this. This brief is the outcome and deals specifically with the latest proposal, which has recently received planning permission with a number of conditions, including

No development shall take place in the area indicated (this would be the area of archaeological interest) until the applicant 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 by the Planning Authority.

In its role as archaeological advisor to Ynys Mon Borough Council, the SMR has prepared a brief for the programme of archaeological work which is required in this instance. This is in line with current Welsh Office advice on dealing with archaeological matters in the planning process as laid out in PPG 16.

2. THE SITE AND ITS ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

Beaumaris is located in a low-lying coastal area at the south-east corner of the island of Anglesey, on the north side of the Menai Strait, centred on SH 605762. Beaumaris was the last of the Edwardian plantations in Wales with work beginning on the castle in April 1285. The small native settlement of Cerrig-y-Gwyddyl, which occupied the site, was destroyed and the inhabitants, along with those of the nearby Welsh township of Llanfaes, were moved to Newborough, at the southern tip of the island. By September 1296 work on the castle was sufficiently advanced for a borough charter to be granted, and the town grew rapidly with 132 burgages (house and garden plots) being taken up in the first 10 years. These were located west of the castle with Church and Castle Streets as the principal lines of axis. The church of SS Mary and Nicholas was probably built at the same time as the castle, though the present fabric dates from the 14th century. Although little else survives of the medieval town, its overall plan and topography were recorded by John Speed in 1610.

By this date there were sizable suburbs outside the walled town along Wexham Street and beyond the West Gate, including one or more buildings on the site of the current application

(see map 2). The record of the destruction of 30 burgages to build the town walls in 1414 suggests that the town was already significantly larger than the area subsequently enclosed, and it is thus possible that excavation of areas outside the walled town could reveal occupation of an equally early date. It is imperative, therefore, that the application site receives full and proper archaeological investigation before it is redeveloped.

Little excavation work has been carried out at Beaumaris but from archaeological investigations which have taken place, the indications are that archaeological deposits are well preserved. Documentary sources indicate that Beaumaris has been subject to flooding since earliest times and it seems likely that a process of dumping and deliberate building-up of the town ground surface has been continuously carried out to raise the level of the town above the water table and sea flood height.

The current application comprises a roughly rectangular plot of land, c. 22m x 16m aligned north-west south-east, just outside the presumed course of the medieval wall and ditch town defences, on the corner of Rosemary Lane and Steeple Lane (see map 1). Three garages, formerly cottages, face on to Rosemary Lane and adjacent to these, on the corner, is a two-storey building, currently in use as a store. To the rear of these buildings is a yard, which is unevenly concreted. A car-inspection pit and a diesel tank have been built in to the yard. The location and size of these will be a factor in deciding the final position of Trench D. The approximate location of both pits is marked on map 3. Access to the site is from Steeple Lane and spans the area from the corner building to the wall which encloses the rear of the property.

3. THE BRIEF

The applicant has indicated that she wishes to secure a programme of archaeological work which will also meet the condition of the planning consent. It is recommended that an evaluation of the site is undertaken to ascertain the nature of the archaeology and establish what, if any, further action is required to safeguard the archaeological interest of the site.

The brief has been prepared by Gwynedd Sites and Monuments Record on behalf of Ynys Mon Borough Council in order to set out a programme of archaeological work which allows a contractor to provide a cost specification for the client.

The brief is to carry out an archaeological evaluation of the area which has planning permission (see map 1). The aim of the evaluation is to gather sufficient information to establish the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of the archaeological deposits (if any) in the area, so that they can be taken into account. The preferred option, wherever possible, is the preservation in situ of significant archaeological features. The possibility of achieving this through design modifications or other mitigatory measures should be considered. Only where preservation in situ proves impracticable should a reserve option of preservation by record (i.e. rescue excavation) be considered.

The scope of the evaluation should be as follows:-

1) A full appraisal of existing data relating to the site, such as SMR information, early maps, estate surveys, local society records, geotechnical data, other accessible documents, oral evidence etc. as appropriate and available.

2) Trial trenching at an appropriate level. It is proposed that four trenches be dug, one in each of the three garages facing onto Rosemary Lane and one set parallel to the wall and perpendicular to Steeple Lane. The precise location of the trenches will be decided by the contractor (in discussion with the SMR) on site, following the establishment of what services are present, but the following model (see map 3, A - D) is suggested:

Trenches 1, 2 & 3.

These should be c. 5m x 1.5m in size, set perpendicular to Rosemary Lane, and span the full extent of the garage. The concrete and other overburden

can be removed by machine, if there is enough room to manoeuvre inside the building, but once archaeological features are encountered the trench must be cleaned by hand and inspected for features and then excavated by hand. (Should it prove difficult to use a machine the trenches will need to be totally excavated by hand. The agent is of the opinion that the floor is concrete scree and thus should be susceptible to pick and shovel working or alternatively a jack-hammer could be employed). Once archaeological deposits have been identified and planned, a representative sample of features should be half-sectioned (or otherwise sampled) and recorded to assess their depth, stratigraphy, nature, date and environmental potential.

Trench 4

This should be c. 8m by 1m in size, set parallel to the wall and perpendicular to Steeple Lane. The concrete and other overburden can be removed by machine, but once archaeological features are encountered the trench must be cleaned by hand and inspected for features and then dug by hand. A representative sample of features should be half-sectioned (or otherwise sampled) and recorded to assess their depth, stratigraphy, nature, date and environmental potential.

The combination of the four trenches should allow an assessment of the complexity, distribution and density of archaeological remains across the application area.

N.B. Trenches are to be recorded according to the normal principles of stratigraphic excavation (even where no archaeological deposits have been identified), and artefacts should be related to their contexts: any closely datable or typologically distinct items should be recorded three-dimensionally. Please refer to General Requirements for Archaeological Projects in Gwynedd - Guidelines for Contractors, a copy of which is enclosed.

- 3) The production of a report (see below).

4. REPORT

The assessment will lead to the production of a report which will present a summary analysis of all field data, incorporate this with previously available information about the archaeology of the area, and assess the archaeological resource and the implications of the proposed scheme.

The report should be produced to an adequate publication standard and should specifically include the following:

- 1) A copy of the agreed Project Brief, probably as an appendix.
- 2) A summary of the results of the field evaluation, including the archaeological features identified, along with artefactual evidence (if any).
- 3) An interpretation of results, placing them in their national and local context, and a clear statement of the potential archaeological importance of the site and associated features. This is to be separate from 2).
- 4) Plans at an appropriate scale showing the trench layout (as excavated), and the features located. Section drawings should also be included.
- 5) A full bibliography of sources consulted.

- 6) Other archaeological information which is considered relevant to the application.
- 7) Recommendations for what further work (e.g. further excavation, watching brief) is required to safeguard the archaeological interest of the area.

A copy (or copies) of the report will be submitted to the client within a mutually agreed time-scale. In addition four copies of the report should be lodged with the County Sites and Monuments Record at the same time on the understanding that this will become a public document after an appropriate period of time (generally not exceeding six months).

5. ARCHIVE

A full archive including plans, photographs, photocopies, written material and any other material resulting from the project will be prepared. All plans, photographs and descriptions will be labelled and cross-referenced, and lodged in an appropriate place (to be decided in consultation with the Sites and Monuments Record) within six months of the completion of the project.

6. TENDERING AND PROJECT DESIGN

All parts of the archaeological work outlined here should be carried out by a suitably qualified archaeological practitioner, in accordance with the By-laws of the Institute of Field Archaeologists, to an agreed timetable.

A written Project Design should be submitted to and accepted by Gwynedd Sites and Monuments Record acting for Ynys Mon Borough Council before any work commences. This should be based on the model set out in Management of Archaeological Projects 2 (English Heritage 1991), and contractors are expected to conform to the conditions set out in General Requirements for Archaeological Projects in Gwynedd - Guidelines for Contractors, a copy of which is appended. It is assumed that all potential contractors will have read and agreed to follow these guidelines.

Specifically the Project Design should detail the following:

1. The name and suitability of the Project Director.
2. The proposed staffing levels.
3. The proposed programme of work, including projected timetable on site.
4. An itemised estimate of cost under the following headings: staff time; travel and subsistence; equipment; other project costs; report preparation; overheads.

7. MONITORING

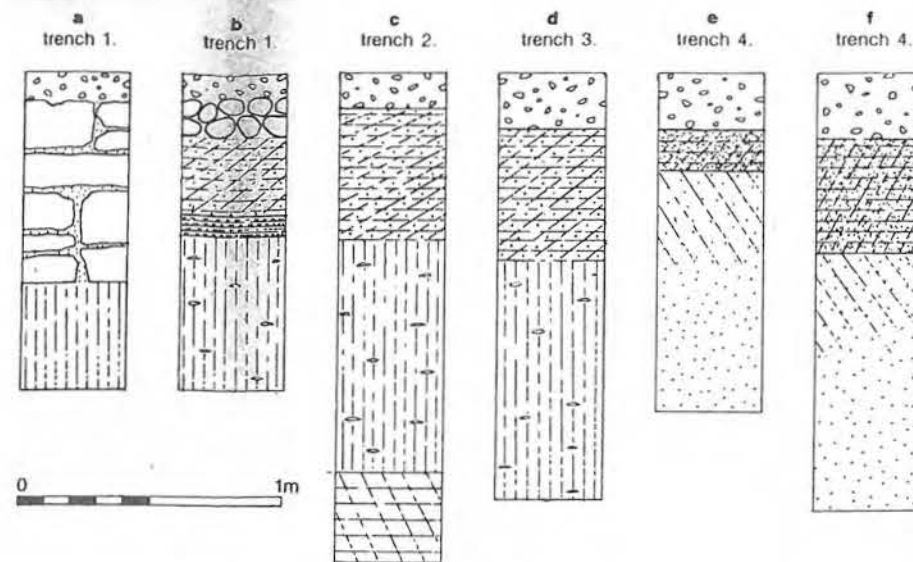
The project will be monitored by the Gwynedd Sites and Monuments Record. The contractor must ensure this by arranging monitoring meetings as follows:

1. A preliminary meeting at the start of the contract.
2. A progress meeting during the evaluation.
3. A meeting to discuss the draft before final submission.

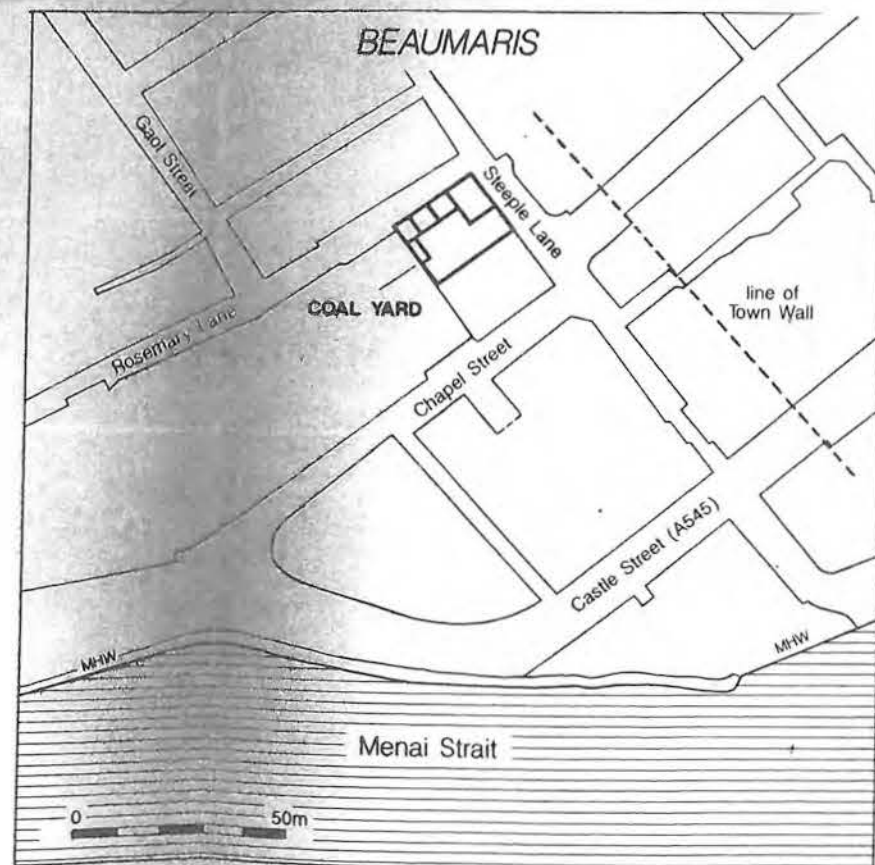
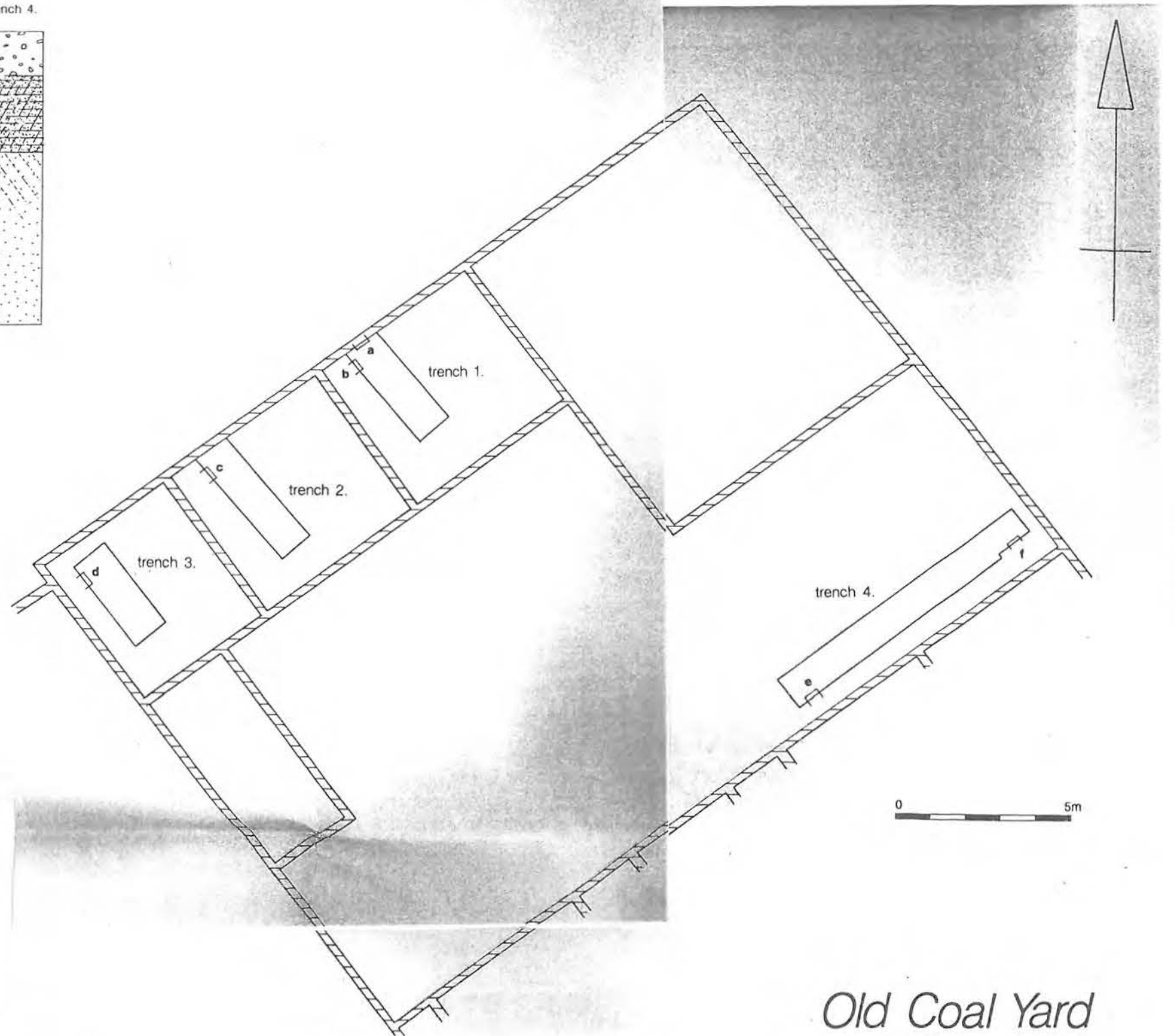
8. FURTHER INFORMATION

Before submitting a project design, it is recommended that potential contractors discuss the matter with the Gwynedd Sites and Monuments Record, from which source further details for clarification of any aspects of the brief may be obtained.

Trench stratigraphy - representative columns



- dressed, mortared stone rubble
- concrete and aggregate
- mid - brown silty clay
- yellow - brown silty clay (some shell and Post - Medieval pottery)
- dark brown clay silt
- mid - brown clayey sand, progressively sandier with depth
- pale grey silty clay
- loam (includes shell)
- stone cobbles



Old Coal Yard

Steeple Lane, Beaumaris

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