

HYDRO-ELECTRIC SCHEME,  
HAFOD-YSPYTTY

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION (GAT 1207)

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REPORT NO. 102

Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Gwynedd  
Gwynedd Archaeological Trust



**HYDRO-ELECTRIC SCHEME,  
HAFOD-YSPYTTY**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION (GAT 1207)**

prepared for Shawater Ltd

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# **HYDRO-ELECTRIC SCHEME, HAFOD-YSPTYTY**

## **INITIAL REPORT**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

A hydro-electric scheme is proposed which will draw water off the Afon Gamallt at Hafod-yspytty SH724432, and return it to the same river by Teiliau-bach at approximately SH712430. Gwynedd Archaeological Trust (Contracts Section) has been asked by Shawater Ltd to carry out an archaeological evaluation of the proposed scheme, to form part of an Environmental Assessment, leading to an Environmental Statement which is to accompany the proposal.

### **2. ASSESSMENT BRIEF**

An initial report was requested from Gwynedd Archaeological Trust, assessing the likely archaeological impact of the scheme and suggesting mitigatory measures.

The basic requirement was for a desk-top survey and field search of the proposed area in order to assess the impact of the proposals on the archaeological and heritage features within the area concerned. The importance and condition of known archaeological remains were to be assessed and areas of archaeological potential and new sites to be identified. Measures to mitigate the effects of the proposed scheme on the archaeological resource were to be suggested.

Gwynedd Archaeological Trust's proposals for fulfilling these requirements were, briefly, as follows:

- a) to identify and record the cultural heritage of the area to be affected by the proposals;
- b) to evaluate the importance of what was identified (both as a cultural landscape and as the individual items which make up that landscape); and
- c) to recommend ways in which damage to the cultural heritage can be avoided or minimised.

This report covers the work done under the first two stages of assessment, documentary research and walking the area, and includes recommendations for later stages.

### **3. METHODS AND TECHNIQUES**

#### **3.1 Desk-top Study**

Consultation of maps, computer records, written records and reference works, which make up the Sites and Monuments Record, was undertaken at Gwynedd Archaeological Trust. Records (including early Ordnance Survey maps, tithe maps and schedules, estate papers and reference works - see bibliography) were consulted in the library and the archives of the University College of North Wales, Bangor, and the County archives at Caernarfon and Dolgellau. Aerial photographs were inspected at the offices of the Countryside Council for Wales.

#### **3.2 Field Search**

This was undertaken on the 21st of April 1994, when the whole of the proposed route of the pipeline was walked. Conditions were fair for fieldwork, and light and visibility were good. Sites identified were marked on copies of 1:10,000 OS maps as accurately as possible without surveying. Forms were filled in assessing each site, and detailed notes made of the more important. Photographs were taken of all potential sites identified.

### 3.3 Report

All available information was collated, and transferred onto a single set of maps at a scale of 1:10,000. The sites were then assessed and allocated to the categories listed below. These are intended to give an idea of the importance of the site and the level of response likely to be required; descriptions of the sites and specific recommendations for further evaluation or mitigatory measures, as appropriate, are given in the relevant sections of this report.

In some cases, further investigation may result in sites being moved into different categories. The criteria used for allocating sites to categories are based on those used by the Secretary of State when considering ancient monuments for scheduling; these are set out in Annex 3 to Planning Policy Guidance 16 (Wales): Archaeology and Planning.

### 3.4 Categories

The following categories were used to define the importance of the archaeological resource.

#### *Category A - Sites of national importance.*

Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Listed Buildings and sites of schedulable or listable quality, i.e. those which would meet the requirements for scheduling (ancient monuments) or listing (buildings) or both.

Sites which are scheduled or listed have legal protection, and it is recommended that all Category A sites remain preserved and protected *in situ*.

#### *Category B - Sites of regional or county importance.*

Sites which would not fulfil the criteria for scheduling or listing, but which are nevertheless of particular importance within the region.

Preservation *in situ* is the preferred option for Category B sites, but if damage or destruction cannot be avoided, appropriate detailed recording might be an acceptable alternative.

#### *Category C - Sites of district or local importance.*

Sites which are not of sufficient importance to justify a recommendation for preservation if threatened.

Category C sites nevertheless merit adequate recording in advance of damage or destruction.

#### *Category D - Minor and damaged sites.*

Sites which are of minor importance or so badly damaged that too little remains to justify their inclusion in a higher category.

For Category D sites, rapid recording, either in advance of or during destruction, should be sufficient.

#### *Category E - Sites needing further investigation.*

Sites whose importance is as yet undetermined and which will require further work before they can be allocated to categories A - D are temporarily placed in this category, with specific recommendations for further evaluation. By the end of the assessment there should be no sites remaining in this category.

## 4. ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDINGS

### 4.1 Introduction

A search of the Sites and Monuments Record held by the Gwynedd Archaeological Trust produced details of a number of sites of archaeological interest within the study area, though

none of these are directly affected by the proposed hydro-scheme. These sites included the late Prehistoric - Roman Settlement at Bryn y Castell, and the Roman Road known as Sarn Helen, among a host of other sites, dating from prehistoric times to the early 20th century.

A number of potential sites were identified from aerial photographs, and these were checked on the ground. The linear feature (1) and the circular feature (7) were initially identified in this way.

Archive material consulted at the Caernarfon and Dolgellau Record Offices, in particular the Tithe map for Ffestiniog, and estate maps and records, were useful in indicating the farm boundaries and land owners from 16th to 19th centuries, and early Ordnance Survey maps also helped elucidate changing patterns of farm boundaries and tracks. Unfortunately, Land Tax Assessments for the area dating from before 1900 were not available.

Lists supplied by Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments were consulted for information about listed buildings and scheduled ancient monuments. There are only two sites which fall into this category: the site of Bryn y Castell, immediately south of the study area, is a Scheduled Ancient Monument; while Hafod-yspytty, a hall house of the 15th century is Listed grade II.

Sites noted from documentary sources were identified in the field where possible, and a number of additional sites were identified. These are included, with the rest of the sites, in the gazetteer.

## **4.2 The Archaeological Background**

This section provides a summary of the archaeology and history of the surrounding area so that the findings of the assessment can be put into a wider context.

### *4.2.1 Prehistoric*

The Prehistoric period is fairly well represented by settlement sites of circular houses and associated enclosures. These typically date to the Iron Age (600 BC - 0 BC) although occupation can continue into the Roman period. One such site, the enclosed settlement of Bryn y Castell (SH72824298), comprises a small defensive enclosure with a single hut built within its north west corner. Initially this site was thought to be of Dark Age date from its position near the Roman road, however, excavations by Peter Crew in 1980-1 produced evidence for iron smelting and furnished a range of dates from the Late Prehistoric period to the middle of the 1st century AD. A Prehistoric burial chamber is reputed to lie beneath the lawn at Hafod-yspytty, and the name of the field ('Tan y Domen' on an estate map of 1784) immediately to the south of the house may allude to it.

Also of interest is a Bronze Age palstave, found at SH72364274, to the south of Hafod-yspytty.

### *4.2.2 Roman*

The Roman road of Sarn Helen between Canovium (Caerhun) and Tomen y mur passes close to the east of the area, crossing the Afon Gamallt at the ford of Rhyd yr Halen. The settlements and field systems mentioned in 4.2.1 above appear to have continued in use throughout the Roman period.

The enigmatic site known as Beddau Gwyr Ardudwy, or the Graves of the Men of Ardudwy is known to us partly through legend and partly through the reports of early antiquarians. It is thought to be the legendary burial place of the Men of Ardudwy, who the legend tells us, were killed after abducting Women from Clwyd. It is possible that the references relate to Prehistoric burial cairns, although with the Roman road of Sarn Helen nearby it is more likely that the references refer to a cemetery of Roman or immediately Post Roman date. Early



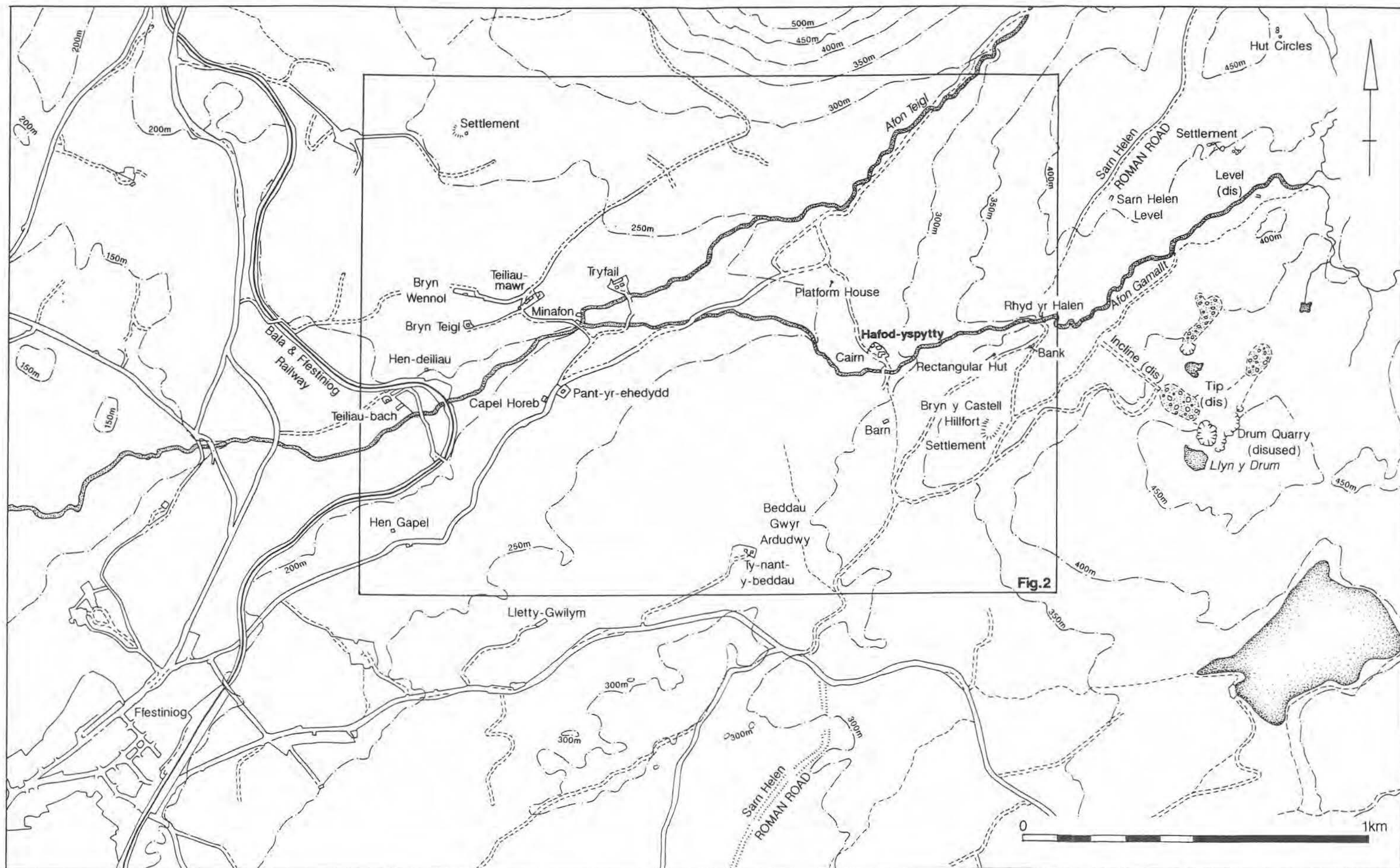


Fig. 1 Location of archaeological and historical sites in the area.



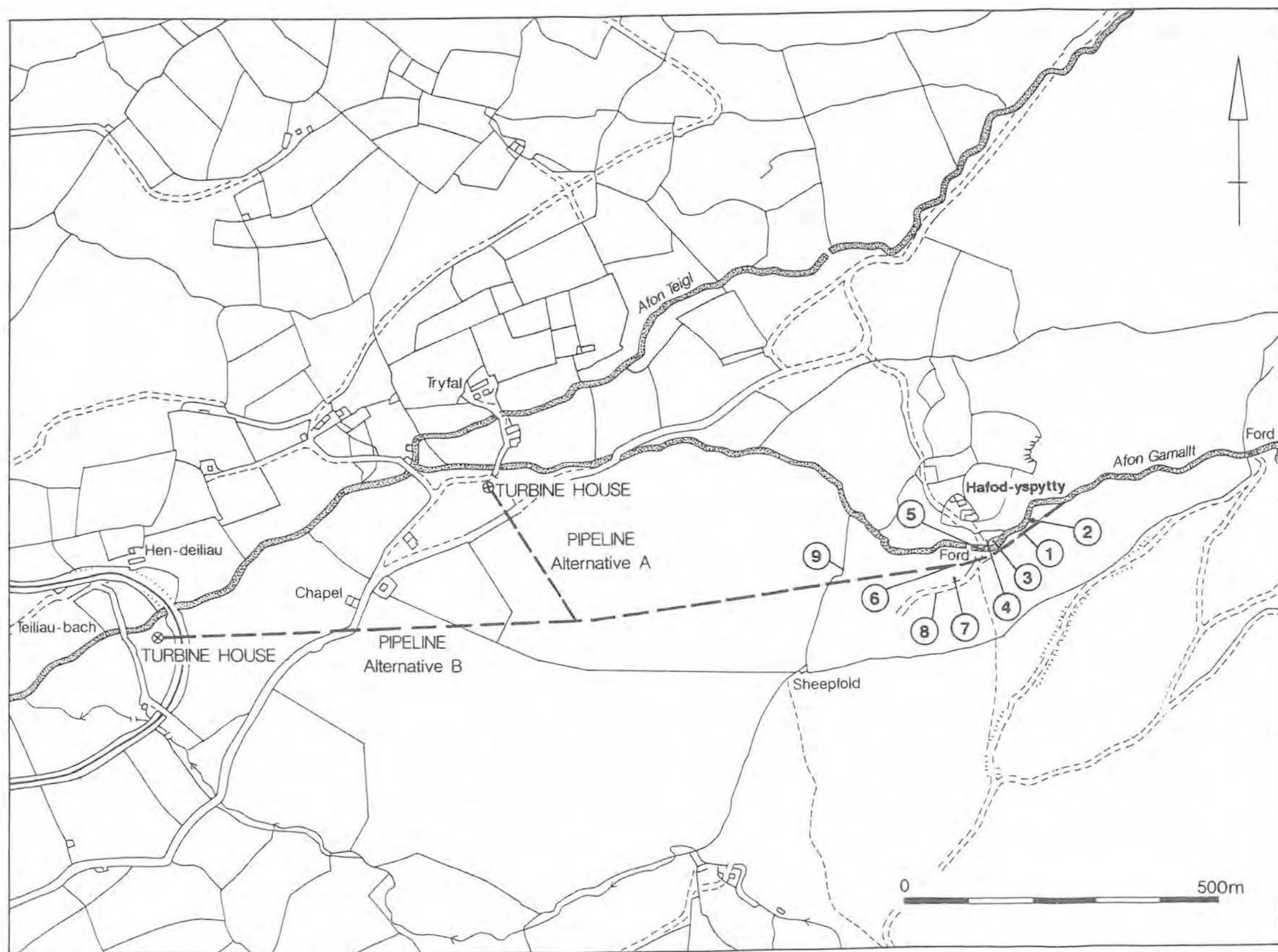


Fig. 2 Location of sites listed in the gazetteer.

accounts suggest an Early Christian cemetery of long cist burials, perhaps with 5th-6th century grave stones with debased Latin and Ogham inscriptions. Antiquarian references, including those of Robert Vaughan of Hengwrt (1592-1667), Edward Lhuyd, Pennant and Fenton all point to the site's existence in the area. Recent excavation of some of the mounds thought to be the site of Beddau Gwyr Ardudwy, has shown these remains to be fairly modern peat stacks.

#### *4.2.3 Medieval*

The study area lies within the Medieval Cantref of Ardudwy, in the Commote of Ardudwy Uwch Artro, and formed part of the Medieval township of Ffestiniog. There are a number of settlement sites probably belonging to the early part of the period nearby, notably the rectangular hut a little to the north of Bryn y Castell (SH72804320), and the platform house at Pen Tryfal (SH72344341).

The farmstead of Hafod-yspytty is thought to lie on or near the site of a Medieval grange or hospice (c.14th century) which belonged to the Order of Knights' Hospitallers. The Order was founded during the first half of the 11th century to offer hospitality to pilgrims on their way to the Middle East. Place name evidence (Yspytty (Ysbytty) or hospice being a common indication of such a site) and local tradition provide the main basis for linking Hafod-yspytty with the Knights' Hospitallers.

The building at Hafod-yspytty (Listed Grade II) probably dates from the 15th century, with 16th century alterations. It originally comprised a single storey hall with two wings attached at right angles. Interesting features include an original moulded wooden screen, with round headed doorways dividing the kitchen from the living room, two original plain stone staircases and a massive fireplace. The roof structure is an example of cruck construction, and has pierced quatrefoil and other mouldings framed above the truss.

#### *4.2.4 Post Medieval*

The study area lies mostly within the boundaries of the farms of Hafod-yspytty and Tryfal, and extends beyond into land once held by Teiliau-mawr and Teiliau-bach which lie in the parish of Ffestiniog. The Proceedings of the Court of the Exchequer in 1594 refer to encroachments upon 'two messages, called Ffreeth y gamallt, and Ffreeth Havod Y Spithy', and to the grant of the encroachments by the Crown to Hafod-yspytty in 1576-8. This suggests that the Post Medieval estate of Hafod-yspytty was in the process of being formed during the period, perhaps from former monastic lands sequestered during the dissolution of the monasteries. The earliest known document relating to Hafod-yspytty dates from 1591, and records the marriage settlement between Jane, daughter of Edmond Prys (1544-1623), the Archdeacon of Merioneth and Humffry, son of David Lloyd ap Robert of Hafod-yspytty. During the 17th and 18th centuries the family of Hafod-yspytty became linked to many other influential small estates in the region, including those of Bwlchywa, Llety Gwilym and Ty'n y nant, Ffestiniog and those of Drws y Coed and Hafod-y-rhisgl, further afield. The early history of Methodism in the Parish of Ffestiniog is bound up with the family of Hafod-yspytty: Elaenor Williams, Hafod-yspytty, among others was responsible in 1784 for founding Hen Gapel, Nant yr Eneth, the first Methodist chapel in the Parish. During the 19th century the Hafod-yspytty estate went into decline and became a tenanted holding, bought and sold by local estates.

Other interesting farmsteads, though outside the study area, include Tryfal, Teiliau-mawr, Teiliau-bach, and Hen Deiliau, all dating from the 17th century. In the uplands are a number of small rectangular structures which date from a variety of periods, some of them lying amongst the earlier Prehistoric settlements. These are assumed to be the remains of 'Hafodai' - houses used in connection with transhumance farming during the summer months. Studies from elsewhere would suggest that they date from at least the 17th century, although medieval settlement may also be represented.

A small Calvinistic Methodist chapel, Capel Horeb, dating from 1878 is situated at the western

end of the study area. The chapel, rectangular in plan and constructed of roughly dressed stone under a slate roof, retains its original pointed arched windows. The building is a strong reminder of the importance of non-conformism in the area, going back at least as far as the late 18th century.

Industrial remains exist in abundance throughout the region, dating in the main from the nineteenth century. The nearest remains, a trial slate adit leading to a small flooded chamber is situated to the north of the study area at SH731436.

The line of the Bala & Festiniog Railway lies within the western limits of the study area. An Act of 1873, empowered Henry Robertson and Samuel Holland and others, backed by the GWR, to build a standard gauge rail connection between Llangower (Bala Junction) and the narrow gauge Festiniog & Blaenau station at Ffestiniog. The Bala & Festiniog opened on the 1st November 1882 and the Festiniog & Blaenau, under the ownership of the Bala & Festiniog was shortly afterwards converted to standard gauge. The Bala & Festiniog was constructed primarily to transport slate direct to Birmingham, the line did little to shorten the route. Following the authorisation of the new reservoir in the Trewern valley in 1957, the line was closed in early 1961.

#### *4.2.4 Summary*

The region around Hafod-yspytty holds a number of sites of archaeological and historical interest belonging to the Prehistoric and Roman periods. The Medieval period is reasonably well chronicled, and, although they are difficult to date, it is likely that sites of this period are present. Hafod-yspytty dates from the early 15th century, but is likely to be on the site of an older building. There are a number of the upland remains in the region of the study area, and these date from at least the 17th century.

### **4.3 Archaeology of proposed development area.**

#### *4.3.1 Introduction* (N.B. the numbers refer to the site numbers in the gazetteer)

It is currently proposed that the pipeline will extract water from the river east of Hafod Ysbytty, from just above the waterfall and will then run down a narrow gully returning to run alongside the river Gamallt, cross the track to Hafod-yspytty, and then head due west across the open country.

At approximately SH71884308 the pipeline will follow one of two possible courses to the outfall point. The pipeline would either turn sharply down the steep hillside to the north west and a proposed turbine house at SH71754324 (alternative A, see fig. 2), or continue west, past Capel Horeb, and finally under the railway to a turbine house at SH71134302 (alternative B, see fig. 2).

The following sites are directly affected by the proposed development: the linear feature (1); the small stone feature (2); the curvilinear walling (6); and the stone bank (9).

#### *4.3.2 Gazetteer of Archaeological Sites*

##### **1. Linear feature SH72594315C Category D**

A low linear feature, possibly an embanked boundary or raised path. The feature runs north east from the ford crossing at Hafod-yspytty roughly parallelling the Afon Gamallt. The feature consists of a low, level grassed over bank, which is apparently revetted with stone for most of its length.



**2. Small stone feature SH72604316 *Category D***

A possible small stone feature immediately to the north of linear feature (1). This site is possibly linked to a structure in the stream.

**3. Ruined sheepfold SH72554316 *Category D***

A collapsed stone structure in the corner of a small enclosure on the north bank of the Afon Gamallt, at Hafod-yspytty. This site is associated with a small leat and a moderately deep pool and is assumed to be a sheepfold, probably connected with dipping.

**4. Large raised area SH74544315 *Category E***

This is a roughly level area of raised material, situated immediately north of the Afon Gamallt, just east of the track crossing to Hafod-yspytty.

**5. Slab bridge SH72514313 *Category D***

A single span stone slab bridge over the Afon Gamallt at Hafod-yspytty. The span is carried between two massive drystone constructed abutment, possibly belonging to an earlier wider bridge. The bridge is shown on the 1st edition 6" Ordinance Survey map of 1889.

**6. Curvilinear walling SH72474312 *Category D***

A short length of slightly curving drystone walling/bank which is associated with a nearby drainage ditch.

**7. Circular feature SH73464308 *Category D***

A definite circular feature situated on north side of track, possibly modern.

**8. Trackway SH74444307 *Category D***

This trackway is slightly scarped into the slope and is probably fairly recent. The track joins the trackway that crosses the stone slab bridge to Hafod-yspytty.

**9. Stone bank Approximately SH72304312 *Category E***

A linear stone bank running north along base of a fence. A drystone wall joins the bank on its west side, where the wall crosses a small stream feeding the Afon Gamallt. Further north a line of stones accompanied by a slight break in slope veres away from the bank at a right-angle.

**10. Field boundaries**

The pattern and nature of field boundaries are an important part of the historic landscape. Their construction, linear plan and ecological diversity can provide valuable information about the landscape and its evolution. There are field boundaries of many different periods within the study area, some of which may have Prehistoric origins, although most are Post-Medieval in date.

## **5. RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 General**

The pipe will be 350 mm in diameter, and requires 300 mm cover. The trench for the pipe will therefore need to be 650 mm deep and some 550 mm wide. The impact of the scheme on the cultural heritage could be minimised by the correct choice of route of the pipeline, and by using the most appropriate method to dig the trench and lay the pipe.

### **5.2 Route**

The suggested route, shown on the accompanying plan, is designed to minimise the impact on the known archaeological features. It is recommended that where the pipeline runs close to the linear feature (1) and the small stone feature (2) care is taken to minimise damage to these features, where this is unavoidable the features should be recorded. This could be achieved

by a closely supervised watching brief along the length of the pipe line in the area immediately around the stone slab footbridge (5) to Hafod-yspytty and east of this site. It is recommended that a continuous watching brief be undertaken along the length of the proposed pipeline and the associated turbine site. Also where the pipeline cuts through any field banks or dry stone walls, such as the curvilinear walling (6), care should be taken that any damage is minimised, and that they are recorded in advance and reinstated afterwards. The route, as it proceeds from Hafod-yspytty to the west, crosses the low stone bank (9) cutting across an associated drainage ditch. This bank will need recording, and this could be carried out once work has started, providing sufficient time is allowed for the recording of the remains. The route then continues down the slope, either turning to the north west (alternative A, see fig. 2), down to the site of the proposed turbine house below the farm of Tryfal at approximately SH71754324, or continuing west past Capel Horeb (alternative B, see fig. 2), through a wet pasture with recently opened drains, and finally under the railway to the site of the proposed turbine house at SH71134302.

The outfall options of both routes crosses a number of field banks and walls, these will require recording before work starts and reinstatement following completion.

### 5.3 Working method

The working corridor should be kept to the minimum needed to excavate the trench, store the soil, and reinstate. It is recommended that an archaeologist is present when the working corridor is established, to minimise the impact of the route design on the cultural remains. The possibility of working by hand should be examined where machine working may cause unnecessary damage. Care should be taken when reinstating the stored material that the original ground surface is kept as undisturbed as possible.

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