Proposed Environmental Improvements Bro Seiont, Caernarfon

Archaeological Evaluation: Trial Trenching





Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Gwynedd Gwynedd Archaeological Trust

Proposed Environmental Improvements Bro Seiont, Caernarfon

Archaeological Evaluation: Trial Trenching

Project No. G2322

Report No. 1028

Prepared for: Wakemans Ltd.

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Summary

Gwynedd Archaeological Trust were asked by Wakemans Ltd. to carry out evaluation trenching in advance of development within the post WWII housing estate of Bro Seiont, Caernarfon, consisting of landscaping to accommodate additional car parking areas. Due to the presence of known archaeological remains in close proximity to the proposed development, including a Bronze Age cremation urn from Maes y Barcer and an early medieval cemetery and Roman ovens at the site of the new Ysgol yr Hendre, it was deemed necessary to evaluate the area to inform further mitigation. Excavation of a single 5m x 2m trench showed that the area had been landscaped down to the natural glacial subsoil during the initial development and deposits containing modern material were lying directly on the natural levels. Although no archaeology was present within the trench it is possible that landscaping may have preserved archaeological deposits in areas that may have been infilled. It is recommended that an intermittent watching brief is conducted during groundworks to assess the affected areas for archaeology.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Gwynedd Archaeological Trust (GAT) were asked by Wakemans Ltd. to conduct a programme of evaluation trial trenching at the site of a proposed development within a post WWII housing estate at Bro Seiont, Caernarfon, Centred on NGR SH49286248 (*Figure 01*). The development (Planning application ref. C12/1653/14/LL) proposes to landscape the culde-sac, providing additional parking for cars, constructing new boundary walls between properties and providing new footpath provisions.

1.1 Specification and Project Design

The programme of evaluation trial trenching initially suggested the excavation of two 5m x 2m trenches located in grassed areas which are the proposed locations of new car parking spaces. Once underground service plans were consulted it became clear that one of these areas (Centred on SH49246248) was crossed by both a high pressure gas main and water main. Upon consultation with Gwynedd Archaeological Planning Services (GAPS) it was agreed that only one 5m x 2m trench would need to be excavated, investigating the remaining area (Centred on SH49326247) which appeared to be relatively clear of services.

Although an evaluation brief was not produced, all stages of the work were monitored by GAPS who provided comments and feedback to all parties, and approved all design documents.

This document reports on the results of the evaluation trenching, assesses the results and suggests further work if necessary. It conforms to the guidelines specified in the *IFA Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluation* (Institute for Archaeologists, 1994, rev. 2001 & 2008).

2.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The site lies over 1km east of the walled town of Caernarfon but only about 650m north-east of the Roman fort of Segontium. Although now on the very edge of the urban development of Caernarfon it was in a rural setting for most of its history; with the exception of the Roman period when it was on the outer limits of the immediate hinterland of the fort.

Prehistoric sites are scarce in this area. A Bronze Age burial urn (PRN 3101) was found at Maes y Barcer to the north-west of the site, and several prehistoric finds have been recovered during excavations in the Roman fort of Segontium including three polished stone axes and two bronze axes. Two stone-axe hammers (PRN 3113) and a bronze axe (PRN 3121) were recovered from this side of Caernarfon but their provenance is not accurately known. A standing stone (PRN 3620) in a field to the south of the site seems to be rather small and may be a post medieval cattle rubbing stone rather than a prehistoric standing stone.

Segontium (PRN 3089) was a 2.27 hectare fort forming part of a network of forts in Snowdonia. Casey and Davies (1993, 10) conclude that "the balance of probability indicates that the site [Segontium] is Agricolan and dates to 77 AD or shortly after." The fort would have been built after Gnaeus Iulius Agricola suppressed a rebellion of the Ordovices and occupied Anglesey (Nash-Williams 1969, 5). Segontium would probably have been garrisoned by a 1000-strong infantry unit commanded by a senior officer, and in the early period it was the largest fort in North Wales (Casey and Davies 1993, 10). At the end of the Trajanic period (c. 117 AD) the garrison seems to have been reduced with barracks being demolished and a decline in pottery and coins (Casey and Davies 1993, 11). Although the garrison was reduced several high status buildings were constructed, possibly for a procurator overseeing mining in north Wales (Casey and Davies 1993, 13-14). In the late 3rd and 4th centuries the fort seems to have been more densely occupied. The supply of coins seems to have ended around 393 AD and Casey (1993, 132) suggests that the garrison was withdrawn by Eugenius, who briefly held the Western Empire, to help defend his position.

The larger part of the fort was excavated by REM Wheeler in 1922 (Wheeler 1922, 1923a and 1923b), with the southern corner excavated by PJ Casey and JL Davies in 1975-79 (Casey and Davies 1993)

There was a substantial *vicus* (civilian settlement) to the north-west, west and south of the fort, but there is little evidence of it continuing beyond the end of the 2nd century AD (Hopewell 2003, Hayter 1921). This included industrial activity to supply the army as well as the civilian population (White 1985). There appear to have been bath-houses outside the fort on the south-western side, as well as inside the southern corner of the fort (Nash-Williams 1969, 168). West of the fort, on the banks of the Afon Seiont, a walled enclosure known as Hen Waliau (PRN 3090), probably a storage depot, was built in the 4th century AD. This overlooked the site of an "immense wooden bridge" the remains of which were found in 1817, and were assumed to be part of a Roman bridge (PRN 5564) (Boyle 1991, 211).

Excavations at the site of the new Ysgol yr Hendre, approximately 300m south-west of the site, revealed the presence of some 18 double chambered ovens. Radiocarbon dating of these features suggests that they may be associated with the initial building of the fort (Kenney & Parry 2013).

Roman cremation burials (PRN 3092) were discovered while digging graves in the new Llanbeblig cemetery, approximately 600m south-west of the site, from about 1850 through to 1947 (RCAHMW 1960, 163). This appears to have been a major Roman cemetery located, as was usual, next to a main road; the modern Ffordd Llanbeblig being on the line of part of the Roman road leading east from the fort to Tomen y Mûr (PRN 17533) (Hopewell 2007, 12). A Roman temple to the god Mithras (PRN 3098) was also found to the east of the fort (Boon 1960). Two 1st to 2nd century sherds from earth beneath the Mithraeum suggest that it was constructed about 200 AD (Boon 1960, 144).

The cemeteries revealed during recent excavations at the site of the new Ysgol yr Hendre were first indicated by aerial photographs of the football field taken in July of 2006 by Toby Driver of RCAHMW (Driver 2006). These revealed a parchmark which he interpreted as a square barrow with a central grave pit. The same feature could be seen on the geophysical survey carried out for this project. The excavation revealed the presence of three early Medieval mortuary enclosures and 50 graves (Kenney & Parry 2013). Previously the only potential early medieval site known in the area was the church dedicated to Saint Peblig (PRN 6942). Although this is first mentioned in the 13th century (RCAHMW 1960, 119), and most of the present structure dates from the 14th century or later (Davidson 1997, 171-3), it is suggested that this church has an early foundation. This claim rests largely on the dedication to Saint Peblig, traditionally thought to have lived in the late Roman period (RCAHMW 1960, 119), and its siting alongside the Roman road close to the earlier cemetery (Davidson 2009). Peblig is the Welsh version of the Latin name Publicus or Publicius, and Casey and Davies (1993, 16) suggest this could indicate a continuation of both a Roman cult and population after Segontium was abandoned.

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In the area of the south-western gate a coin of the Northumbrian king Eanred (808-840 AD) was found (Wheeler 1922, 266). A coin of Cnut was found in the upper fill of the outer fort ditch near the north gate (Casey 1974, 71). The coins hint at early medieval use of the fort, although they could have been dropped during stone quarrying activities (Casey and Davies 1993, 16-17).

A motte and bailey castle was built by the Normans north-west of the Roman fort and settlement, at the mouth of the River Seiont. Established by 1093, this was to become the focus of a Welsh settlement and court until the conquest of Edward I in 1283. Edward replaced the Welsh settlement with an English garrison borough and a castle. Construction on the walled town and castle started in 1283 and work went on until c.1330. The borough was established by charter in 1284 and the town was the capital of the principality of Wales until 1536, and later became the county town (RCAHMW 1960, 115-118).

In 1918 the eastern spread of the town of Caernarfon had only just reached the Roman fort. Building of the surrounding housing estates started during WWII and continued through the latter half of the 20th century.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

It was initially planned that two trenches would be excavated to provide information on the ground conditions in the area and assess the likelihood of surviving archaeology. Underground service plans showed that both a high pressure gas pipeline and water main crossed the western car parking area which meant that trenching in this area was not plausible, underground services were also present in the eastern area but were avoidable. Upon consultation GAPS agreed that, although not ideal, a single trench would be sufficient to assess the area.

3.1 Specific Methodology

A 5m x 2m trench was positioned at the proposed location of the new car parking area at the eastern end of the cul-de-sac (*Plate 01*). The area had clearly been landscaped previously as a bund of earth approximately 1m high was present, the trench was positioned away from all known services in an area where the bund was lowest.

- All material above the natural glacial subsoil was gradually removed by an 8 tonne 360° rubber tracked excavator under constant archaeological guidance.
- All trenches were hand cleaned sufficiently to photographically record the natural deposits and to check for any subtle features.
- A written record of the trench and all identified deposits was completed on GAT proformas.
- The trench was recorded photographically using a digital SLR camera set to maximum resolution.
- The trench was located using a Trimble R6 GNSS GPS.
- The trench was backfilled and turf replaced to minimise visual impact.

Work was undertaken on Wednesday 10th April 2013.

4.0 RESULTS

Upon opening the trench it was instantly apparent that the bund material contained a large amount of modern rubbish including plastic piping, rubble sacks, timber, fabric, bricks and ceramic drain pipe fragments (*Plates 02 & 03*). At the eastern end of the trench, where the bund was lowest, the natural glacial subsoil was encountered at a depth of 0.3m, at the eastern end where the bund was highest it was encountered at a depth of 1.0m. The natural was found to consist of stony, mottled orange-yellow sandy, silt rich clay which was fairly level but sloped down slightly to the north. The mixed deposits above were lying directly on the natural, in one area a plastic rubble sack could be seen in direct contact with that natural suggesting that the area had been stripped down to this level at some point in time (*Plate 04*). The bund material consisted of fairly mixed deposits which included patches of redeposited natural but could generally be described as mid grey-brown clay rich silt which was 0.3m - 1.0m thick. The trench reached a maximum depth of 1.3m at its eastern end.

5.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Both the research into underground services in the area and the excavation of the trench have shown that the area of the development has been extensively disturbed down to the natural glacial subsoil layer. No evidence of archaeological activity was identified within the trench.

Although it cannot be confirmed that the entire area of the development has been affected to the same degree as was noted in the trench, it is likely that the entire area was subject to some degree of landscaping during the initial construction of the estate. Landscaping of this kind does not always result in the destruction of archaeology as certain areas may have been filled which could potentially preserve archaeological remains. Although no archaeology was identified within the trench it cannot be said with certainty, especially due to the archaeology identified in close proximity, that archaeological features are not present at the site.

6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Although no archaeology was identified during the evaluation the intensity and importance of known archaeology in the area is significant. It is recommended that limited archaeological monitoring is undertaken during the groundworks associated with the laying of the new car parking areas in the form of an intermittent watching brief. This will allow the areas to be assessed once fully stripped and in advance of the construction of the car parks.

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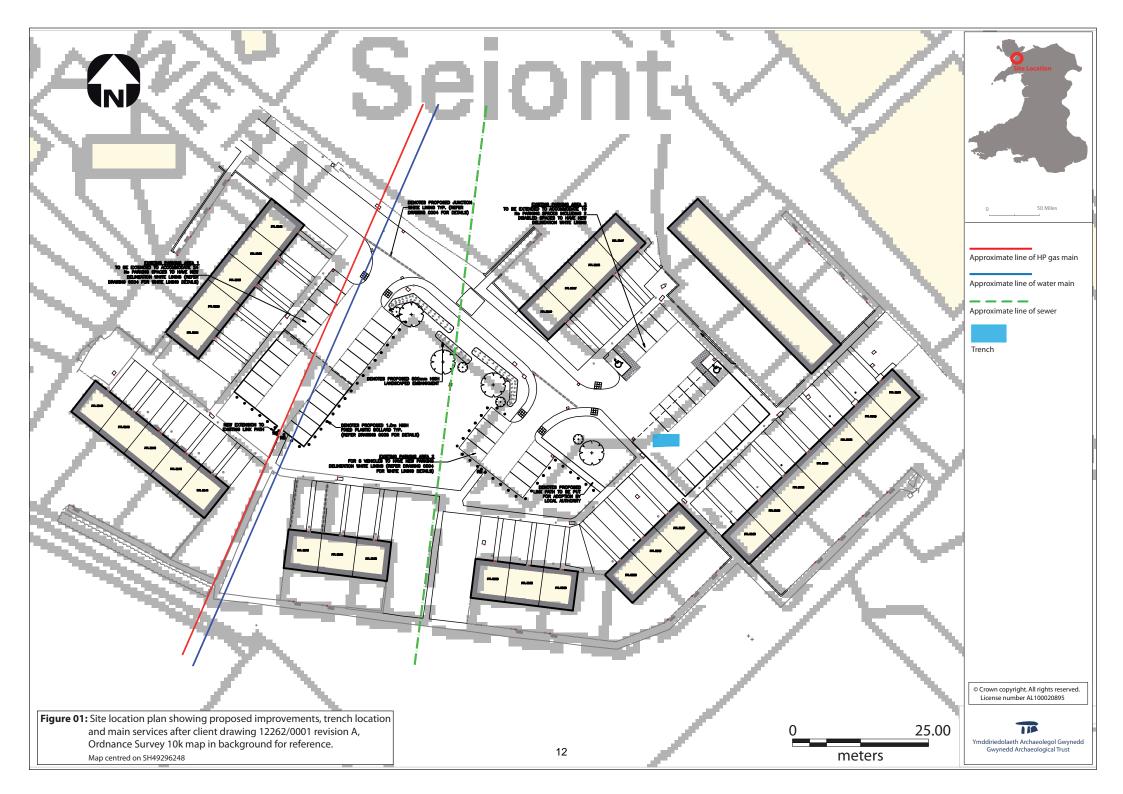




Plate 01: Pre excvation shot of evaluation trench, view from the east.



Plate 02: Post excavation shot of evaluation trench, scale 1m, view from the east.



Plate 03: North facing section of trench, scale 1m, view from north-west.



Plate 04: Detail of north facing section showing plastic rubble sack lying directly on natural glacial subsoil, scale 1m, view from north.

Appendix I

G2322 Project Design

PROPOSED ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS BRO SEIONT, CAERNARFON

PROJECT DESIGN FOR PROJECT DESIGN FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION: Trial Trenching (G2322)

Prepared for

Wakemans Ltd.

April 2013

Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Gwynedd Gwynedd Archaeological Trust

PROPOSED ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS BRO SEIONT, CAERNARFON

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Gwynedd Archaeological Trust (GAT) has been asked by Wakemans Ltd. to provide a cost and project design for completing a programme of archaeological evaluation at the location of proposed environmental improvements at Bro Seiont housing estate, Caernarfon, Gwynedd, Centred on NGR SH49286248 (*see figure 01*). The archaeological evaluation is being undertaken as part of planning application C12/1653/14/LL.

This design forms part of a larger archaeological programme of works, the results of the current phase will inform further archaeological evaluation and/or mitigation strategies.

A detailed brief has not been prepared for this stage by Gwynedd Archaeological Planning Service. However Jenny Emmet of GAPS responded to the planning application and made the following comments (GAPS letter 0211je01/D1759):

"The proposed improvement work has the potential to expose archaeological deposits... Further information is needed about the degree of preservation and nature of any archaeological deposits present in order to establish the potential impact of such works.

There is currently insufficient information to enable me to form a view on the proposed development. In accordance with national planning guidance (Planning Policy Wales 2012) and Welsh Office Circular 60/96 (Planning and the Historic Environment: Archaeology, a programme of archaeological work is required to assess the potential for surviving below ground deposits.

This should comprise archaeological evaluation, which must be carried out <u>before</u> determination of the planning application. This work should comprise a limited programme of trial trenching."

The current design conforms to the guidelines specified in the *IFA Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluation* (Institute for Archaeologists, 1994, rev. 2001 & 2008).

<u>Please Note: the project design and cost estimates are only valid for six months after</u> the date of submission. After this period Gwynedd Archaeological Trust should be <u>contacted.</u>

2.0 BACKGROUND

The site lies over 1km east of the walled town of Caernarfon but only about 650m north-east of the Roman fort of Segontium. Although now on the very edge of the urban development of Caernarfon it was in a rural setting for most of its history; with the exception of the Roman period when it was on the outer limits of the immediate hinterland of the fort.

Prehistoric sites are scarce in this area. A Bronze Age burial urn (PRN 3101) was found at Maes y Barcer to the north-west of the site, and several prehistoric finds have been recovered during excavations in the Roman fort of Segontium including three polished stone axes and two bronze axes. Two stone-axe hammers (PRN 3113) and a bronze axe (PRN 3121) were recovered from this side of Caernarfon but their provenance is not accurately known. A standing stone (PRN 3620) in a field to the south of the site seems to be rather small and may be a post medieval cattle rubbing stone rather than a prehistoric standing stone.

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There was a substantial *vicus* (civilian settlement) to the north-west, west and south of the fort, but there is little evidence of it continuing beyond the end of the 2nd century AD (Hopewell 2003, Hayter 1921). This included industrial activity to supply the army as well as the civilian population (White 1985). There appear to have been bath-houses outside the fort on the south-western side, as well as inside the southern corner of the fort (Nash-Williams 1969, 168). West of the fort, on the banks of the Afon Seiont, a walled enclosure known as Hen Waliau (PRN 3090), probably a storage depot, was built in the 4th century AD. This overlooked the site of an "immense wooden bridge" the remains of which were found in 1817, and were assumed to be part of a Roman bridge (PRN 5564) (Boyle 1991, 211).

Excavations at the site of the new Ysgol yr Hendre, approximately 300m south-west of the site, revealed the presence of some 18 double chambered ovens. Radiocarbon dating of these features suggests that they may be associated with the initial building of the fort (Kenney & Parry 2013).

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In 1918 the eastern spread of the town of Caernarfon had only just reached the Roman fort. Building of the surrounding housing estates started during WWII and continued through the latter half of the 20th century.

3.0 METHOD STATEMENT

3.1 Trial Trenching

According to client drawings two areas, where new parking provisions will be located, will be subject to landscaping that is likely to affect potentially undisturbed ground. These are located at SH49246248 (west) and SH49326247 (east). It was proposed that a single 5m x 2m trench is excavated in each of these areas to assess the impact of previous development on the underlying deposits and to check for the presence of archaeology, however due to the presence of underground services it was eventually agreed that only the eastern area was suitable.

3.1.1 Specific Methodology

- If significant archaeological deposits are identified they will be manually cleaned and examined to determine extent, function, date and relationship to adjacent features.
- Any identified archaeology will be planned to scale and trenches located via digital survey.
- A written record of the trench content and all identified features will be completed via GAT pro-formas
- Any subsurface remains will be recorded photographically, with detailed notations and a measured survey. The photographic record will be maintained, using a digital SLR camera set to maximum resolution.
- The trench will be opened with a tracked excavator fitted with a toothless bucket
- Any identified features will be temporarily cordoned with road pins/orange mesh fencing, for protection and to allow opportunity for Client/GAPS to attend/inspect.
- If the trench is to remain open overnight and/or weekends; provision for fencing
 off using Herras fencing will be sought

3.1.2 Evaluation Aims

The evaluation will aim to address the following:

- Establish the impact previous development has had on underlying deposits
- Establish the extent to which archaeological remains survive at the site
- Establish the date and nature of archaeological remains at the site and assess their implications for understanding the historical development of the area
- Establish the depth of archaeological remains and the quality, value and level of preservation of any deposits
- Assess the level of risk any surviving remains may pose to development.

NB. If significant archaeological activity is identified within the trench (e.g. extensive and/or complex features/artefacts/deposits), cf. <u>para. 4.0</u>. <u>Please note that based on the initial trench results</u>, further evaluation may be required to understand the provenance of recorded features. This may include extending existing trenches and/or trenching surrounding areas.

3.2 Report

Following completion of the stages outlined above, a report will be produced that will include:

- 1. Introduction
- 2. Project Design
- 3. Methods and techniques
- 4. Archaeological Background
- 5. Results
- 6. Proposals for further mitigation
- 7. Summary and conclusions
- 8. List of sources consulted.

The report will include the following:

a) a copy of the agreed specification

b) a site location plan based on current OS mapping

c) a trench location plan indicating trench positions relative to the site and fixed manmade or topographic features

d) all identified features plotted on an appropriately scaled plan of the development site e) appropriately scaled trench plans and sections showing identified features and significant finds

f) full dimensional and descriptive detail of all identified features

Provision will also be made for all archaeological work on site, including the post-excavation analysis, conservation of artefacts, any supplementary scientific analysis and for the subsequent publication of results in an appropriate journal.

The project will be monitored by Gwynedd Archaeological Planning Services

- A paper report plus digital report and archive on optical disc will be provided to GAPS;
- A paper report will be provided to Historic Environment Record, Gwynedd Archaeological Trust (1 set);
- A paper report plus digital report and archive on optical disc will be provided to Royal Commission on Ancient and Historic Monuments, Wales (1 set).
- A paper report and/or digital report will be provided to the client (1 set)

3.3 Archive

A full archive including plans, photographs, 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 regional Historic Environment Record) within six months of the completion of the project

4.0 FURTHER ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORKS

- <u>The identification of significant archaeological features during the evaluation</u> <u>stage may necessitate further archaeological works. This will require the</u> <u>submission of new cost estimates to the contractor and may be subject to a</u> <u>separate project design, to be agreed by the GAPS prior to implementation.</u>
- This design does not include a methodology or cost for examination of, conservation of, or archiving of finds discovered during the evaluation, nor of any radiocarbon dates required, nor of examination of palaeoenvironmental samples associated with any peat deposits. The need for these will be identified in the post-fieldwork programme (if required), and a new design will be issued for approval by GAPS.

5.0 ENVIRONMENTAL SAMPLES

If necessary, relevant archaeological deposits will be sampled by taking bulk samples (a minimum of 10.0 litres and maximum of 30.0 litres) for flotation of charred plant remains. Bulk samples will be taken from waterlogged deposits for macroscopic plant remains. Other bulk samples, for example from middens, may be taken for small animal bones and small artefacts.

Specific palaeoenvironmental strategies for any peat deposits will be discussed with the Client and GAPS if encountered in the archaeological evaluation trenches and input from a specialist will be sought during the fieldwork on an appropriate sampling strategy.

6.0 HUMAN REMAINS

Any finds of human remains will be left *in-situ*, covered and protected, and both the coroner and the GAPS Archaeologist informed. If removal is necessary it will take place under appropriate regulations and with due regard for health and safety issues. In order to excavate human remains, a licence is required under Section 25 of the Burials Act 1857 for the removal of any body or remains of any body from any place of burial. This will be applied for should human remains need to be investigated or moved.

7.0 SMALL FINDS

The vast majority of finds recovered from archaeological excavations comprise pottery fragments, bone, environmental and charcoal samples, and non-valuable metal items such as nails. Often many of these finds become unstable (i.e. they begin to disintegrate) when removed from the ground. All finds are the property of the landowner, however, it is Trust policy to recommend that all finds are donated to an appropriate museum where they can receive specialist treatment and study. Access to finds must be granted to the Trust for a reasonable period to allow for analysis and for study and publication as necessary. All finds would be treated according to advice provided within *First Aid for Finds* (Rescue 1999). Trust staff will undertake initial identification, but any additional advice would be sought from a wide range of consultants used by the Trust, including National Museums and Galleries of Wales at Cardiff, ARCUS at Sheffield and BAE at Birmingham.

7.1 Unexpected Discoveries: Treasure Trove

Treasure Trove law has been amended by the Treasure Act 1996. The following are Treasure under the Act:

- Objects other than coins any object other than a coin provided that it contains at least 10% gold or silver and is at least 300 years old when found.
- Coins all coins from the same find provided they are at least 300 years old when found (if the coins contain less than 10% gold or silver there must be at least 10. Any object or coin is part of the same find as another object or coin, if it is found in the same place as, or had previously been left together with, the other object. Finds may have become scattered since they were originally deposited in the ground. Single coin finds of gold or silver are not classed as treasure under the 1996 Treasure Act.
- Associated objects any object whatever it is made of, that is found in the same place as, or that had previously been together with, another object that is treasure.
- Objects that would have been treasure trove any object that would previously have been treasure trove, but does not fall within the specific categories given above. These objects have to be made substantially of gold or silver, they have to be buried with the intention of recovery and their owner or his heirs cannot be traced.

The following types of finds are not treasure:

- Objects whose owners can be traced.
- Unworked natural objects, including human and animal remains, even if they are found in association with treasure.
- Objects from the foreshore which are not wreck.

All finds of treasure must be reported to the coroner for the district within fourteen days of discovery or identification of the items. Items declared Treasure Trove become the property of the Crown, on whose behalf the National Museums and Galleries of Wales acts as advisor on technical matters, and may be the recipient body for the objects.

The National Museums and Galleries of Wales will decide whether they or any other museum may wish to acquire the object. If no museum wishes to acquire the object, then the Secretary of State will be able to disclaim it. When this happens, the coroner will notify the occupier and landowner that he intends to return the object to the finder after 28 days unless he receives no objection. If the coroner receives an objection, the find will be retained until the dispute has been settled.

8.0 STAFF & TIMETABLE

8.1 Staff

The project will be supervised by John Roberts, Prinicpal Archaeologist at GAT: Contracts. The work will be carried out by fully trained Project Archaeologists who are experienced in conducting project work and working with contractors and earth moving machinery. (Full CV's are available upon request).

8.2 Timetable

<u>A total of 1No site days are estimated to complete the evaluation trench (dependant on results cf. para. 4.0). It is expected that the trial trenching will be completed in April 2013 with the report completed and submitted to GAPS within two months of the fieldwork.</u>

9.0 HEALTH AND SAFETY

The Trust subscribes to the SCAUM (Standing Conference of Archaeological Unit Managers) Health and Safety Policy as defined in **Health and Safety in Field Archaeology** (1999)

10.0 INSURANCE

Liability Insurance - Aviva Policy 24765101CHC/00045

- Employers' Liability: Limit of Indemnity £10m in any one occurrence
- Public Liability: Limit of Indemnity £5m in any one occurrence
- Hire-in Plant Insurance: £50,000.00 any one item;
 - £250,000.00 any one claim

The current period expires 21/06/13

Professional Indemnity Insurance – RSA Insurance Plc P8531NAECE/1028

• Limit of Indemnity £5,000,000 any one claim

The current period expires 22/07/13

11.0 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND RESOURCES

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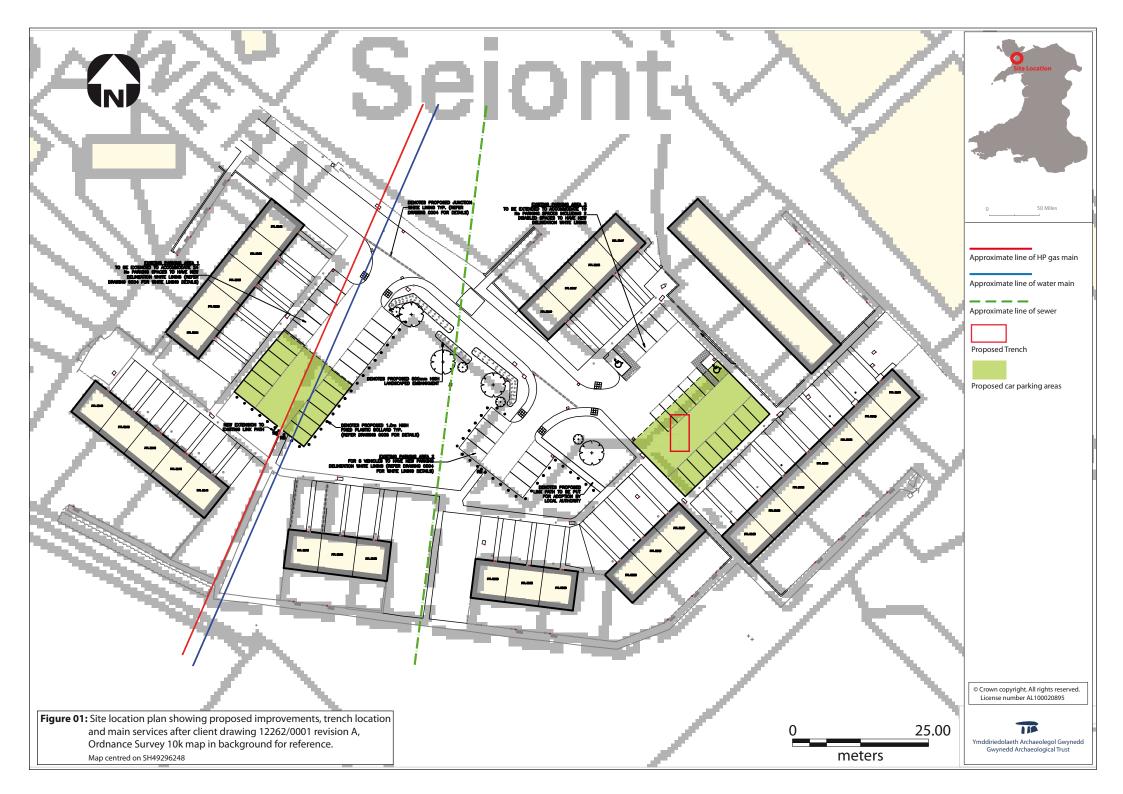
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