

A5 ANGLESEY IMPROVEMENT STAGE 2

A5114 NANT TURNPIKE TO WEST OF BRYNGWRAN

GROUND INVESTIGATION - TRIAL TRENCHES ARCHAEOLOGICAL ATTENDANCE (G1240)

REPORT NO. 116

Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Gwynedd
Gwynedd Archaeological Trust

A5 ANGLESEY IMPROVEMENT STAGE 2

A5114 NANT TURNPIKE TO WEST OF BRYNGWRAN

GROUND INVESTIGATION - TRIAL TRENCHES ARCHAEOLOGICAL ATTENDANCE (G1240)

prepared for Sir Alexander Gibb & Partners Ltd.

by R. Roberts

illustrations by H. Riley

2nd August 1994

Gwynedd Archaeological Trust Report No. 116

A5 ANGLESEY IMPROVEMENT STAGE 2 A5114 NANT TURNPIKE TO WEST OF BRYNGWRAN

GROUND INVESTIGATION - TRAIL TRENCHES - ARCHAEOLOGICAL ATTENDANCE

1. Introduction

The Welsh Office is proposing to upgrade the A5 trunk road across Anglesey. Stage 2 of this work extends from the proposed roundabout at the junction with the A5114 (Llangefni road) at Nant Turnpike to the junction with the road to Llanfihangel yn Nhowyn, west of Bryngwran.

The proposed route runs broadly parallel with, and south of, the existing A5 bypassing the villages of Gwalchmai and Bryngwran and some smaller settlements.

An initial Archaeological Assessment has been carried out along the line of the proposed route and the findings published in two reports (GAT Report nos. 71 and 103).

The work was commissioned by Sir Alexander Gibb & Partners Ltd acting on behalf of Welsh Office Highways Directorate. Gwynedd Archaeological Trust was contracted to monitor the excavation of trial trenches (test pits), undertaken by Holst Soil Engineering Ltd, to test the engineering character of the geology along the preferred line as part of the Ground Investigation under Sections 289 and 290 of the Highways Act 1980.

2. Aims and Methods

The main aim was to record any archaeological features, finds, or deposits which might be disturbed or revealed by the digging of the test pits, and also to provide an insight into the stratigraphy, in particular the depth and nature of the cover above the natural sub-soil/boulder clay, at strategic places along the route. The information gained from this will be used to inform future archaeological work, whilst information concerning the nature of the underlying geology will help interpret the results of any geophysical surveys.

A Grade One Watching Brief (ie. the continual presence of an archaeologist on site) was carried out between the 9th June and 4th July 1994 by a number of Trust staff, a single person in attendance at any one time. The test Pits, which were machine dug, were examined for any archaeological remains and their positions marked on copies of maps supplied by Sir Alexander Gibb and Partners. Written descriptions were made of the stratigraphy of each test pit and a photographic record made of any archaeological features together with the sections of the more informative test pits, and any interesting topographical details. The test pits were backfilled during the operation.

3. The Archaeological Findings

3.1 Introduction

The line of the preferred route crosses agricultural land mainly laid down to improved pasture, with occasional pockets of wet, low lying ground. The geology along the length of the route varies from Pre-Cambrian Gwna Green-schists, Mica green-schists and Coedana Granite overlain by boulder clays and brown earths.

Of the 76 test pits excavated, 3 were not examined (nos. 269, 275 and 276), for reasons beyond our control.

3.2 Description of the test pits

The test pits are numbered in numerical sequence following those used in the field by Holst Engineering Ltd. The location of the test pits is shown on the accompanying figures.

Test pit 201

Topsoil (depth 0.4m) mid-reddish brown slightly sandy silt overlies an orange brown natural clayey sand. No archaeological features.

Test pit 202

Topsoil (depth 0.35m) mid-brown slightly sandy clayey silt overlies a natural orange brown sandy clay. No archaeological features.

Test pit 203

Topsoil (depth 0.4m) light/mid-brown sandy silt overlies a natural light brown very sandy silt. No archaeological features.

Test pit 204

Topsoil (depth 0.35m) reddish brown clayey silt overlies an orange brown sandy clay. No archaeological features.

Test pit 205

Topsoil (depth 0.3m) reddish brown sandy silt overlies a natural orange brown very stoney sandy clay. No archaeological features.

Test pit 206

Topsoil (depth 0.2m) yellow brown fine clayey silt overlies a natural yellow grey clay. No archaeological features.

Test pit 207

Topsoil (depth 0.2m) light brown fine clayey silt overlies a natural yellow grey clay. No archaeological features.

Test pit 208

Topsoil (depth 0.25m) light brown fine clayey silt overlies a natural orange grey clay. No archaeological features.

Test pit 209

Topsoil (depth 0.2m) light brown fine silt overlies weathered bedrock. No archaeological features.

Test pit 210

Topsoil (depth 0.35m) light brown silt overlies natural orange brown clayey silty directly above boulder clay. No archaeological features.

Test pit 211

Topsoil (depth 0.5m) light brown fine silt overlies natural clay. An 18th/19th century field drain crossed the trench on a north-south alignment, running down a slight slope. This feature lay across a field entrance and is probably part of the open ditch following the field boundary further to the north and south.

Test pit 212

Topsoil (depth 0.1m) very sandy, gritty silty clay overlies a yellowy brown clay subsoil. No archaeological features.

Test pit 213

Topsoil (depth 0.3m) light grey brown clayey silt overlies a grey fluvial clay. No archaeological features.

Test pit 214

Topsoil (depth 0.25m) light grey brown clayey silt overlies a grey fluvial clay, containing organic material, mostly the remains of roots, grass and wood though a small amount of charcoal fragments were present. No definite archaeological features.

Test pit 215

Topsoil (depth 0.4m) light brown silt overlies a silty sandy clay with large sub-angular boulders. No archaeological features.

Test pit 216

Topsoil (depth 0.3m) light brown slightly clayey gritty silt with 19th century pottery and clay pipe fragment overlies a hard slightly silty orange clay. No archaeological features.

Test pit 217

Topsoil (depth 0.35m) light brown clayey silt overlies a natural yellow orange clay. No archaeological features.

Test pit 218

Topsoil (depth 0.05m) mid-brown clayey silt overlies natural yellow brown clay. No archaeological features.

Test pit 219

Topsoil (depth 0.2-0.3m) dark brown clayey silt overlies a mid-grey and orange clay. No archaeological features.

Test pit 220

Topsoil (depth 0.25m) mid/dark reddish brown clayey silt overlies a light brown clay slightly sandy clay. No archaeological features.

Test pit 221

Topsoil (depth 0.2m) mid/dark brown clayey silt overlies a band of off-white soft clay above an orange mid-grey clay with gravel. No archaeological features.

Test pit 222

Topsoil (depth 0.25m) mid brown clayey silt overlies an orange grey sandy clay. No archaeological features.

Test pit 223

Topsoil (depth 0.3m) reddish brown sandy silt overlies a very sandy slightly clayey silt directly above the weathered schist bedrock. No archaeological features.

Test pit 224

Topsoil (depth 0.25m) reddish brown sandy silt overlies a light brown clayey silty sand directly above bedrock. No archaeological features.

Test pit 225

Topsoil (depth 0.3m) dark brown silt. No archaeological features.

Test pit 226

Topsoil (depth 0.22m) reddish brown soil overlies a lighter reddish brown sub-soil above a bright red sandy gravel. No archaeological features.

Test pit 227

Topsoil (depth 0.4m) mid-brown fine silt overlies a orange mid-grey clay. No archaeological features.

Test pit 228

Topsoil (depth 0.25m) light greyish brown silty clay overlies boulder clay. No archaeological features.

Test pit 229

Topsoil (depth 0.4m) yellow brown sandy silt overlies a natural sandy sub-soil. No archaeological features.

Test pit 230

Topsoil (depth 0.3m) light brown silt (?) overlies a light greenish yellow band of sand and gravel. No archaeological features.

Test pit 231

Topsoil (depth 0.3m) light brown silt (?) overlies yellow sand and gravel. No archaeological features.

Test pit 232

Topsoil (depth 0.4m) overlies a light red orange sandy gravel. No archaeological features.

Test pit 233

Topsoil (depth 0.3-0.4m) overlies a light yellow sand with 50% medium sized rocks. No archaeological features.

Test pit 234

Topsoil (depth 0.3m) light brown in colour overlies a mixed grey orange sandy gravel. No archaeological features.

Test pit 235

Topsoil depth unknown. No archaeological features.

Test pit 236

Topsoil (depth 0.3m) overlies natural yellow silt. No archaeological features.

Test pit 237

Topsoil (depth 0.25m) sandy overlying orange yellow subsoil. No archaeological features.

Test pit 238

Topsoil (depth 0.3m) overlies orange sub-soil. No archaeological features.

Test pit 239

Topsoil (depth 0.35) very clayey with flecks of coal overlies a waterlogged blue grey clay with organic material, including wood and twigs. Stone filled cut (0.6m deep 0.4 wide), running parallel to a modern ditch. This is probably not a land drain as it runs along the contours of the slope and most likely represents the remains of a ploughed out field bank and ditch.

Test pit 240

Topsoil (depth 0.3m) overlies light orange sandy gravel. No archaeological features.

Test pit 241

Topsoil (depth 0.3m) gravelly silt(?) containing late 19th/early 20th century glass and pottery fragments overlies a loose orange grey sub-soil. No archaeological features.

Test pit 242

Topsoil (depth 0.3m) directly overlies bedrock. No archaeological features.

Test pit 243

Topsoil (depth 0.2-0.3m) recently ploughed soil directly above bedrock. No archaeological features.

Test pit 244

Topsoil (depth 0.2m) clay (?) overlies a waterlogged blue grey clay with organic material remains (wood). No archaeological features.

Test pit 245

Topsoil (depth 0.5m). Iron object (probably a broken mattock) found on the surface. No archaeological features.

Test pit 246

Topsoil (depth 0.3m) with modern pottery and glass overlies hard drift material. No archaeological features.

Test pit 247

Topsoil (depth 0.2m) overlies a sandy gravel. No archaeological features.

Test pit 248

Topsoil (depth 0.3m) clayey silt (?) overlies a waterlogged peaty clay with good organic survival. Wood fragments are present to a depth of 1.6m with large pieces of wood (c. 0.3m in length) from below 2m, (these are probably glacial deposits). No definite archaeological features.

Test pit 249

Topsoil (depth 0.3m) overlies a yellow silty clay. No archaeological features.

Test pit 250

Topsoil (depth 0.4m) overlies yellow glacial drift material of sand, gravel and stones. No archaeological features.

Test pit 251

Topsoil (depth unknown) and sub-soil contain demolition material, with occasional stones with mortar adhering down to 0.8-0.9m and wood surviving in the topsoil. This material is unlikely to be of any great age, and is thought to be the remains of a nearby field boundary, now replaced by a fence.

Test pit 252

Topsoil (depth 0.3m) light greyish brown silty clay overlies a light yellow mottled grey clay, natural drift material. No archaeological features.

Test pit 253

Topsoil (depth 0.15m) light brown silty sand (plough-soil) overlies reddish brown silty sand and fine pebbles. No archaeological features.

Test pit 254

Topsoil (depth 0.3-0.4m) light greyish brown plough-soil overlies interface of a mixed yellowish brown silty sand above a greyish brown compact clay and boulder layer. No archaeological features.

Test pit 255

Topsoil (depth 0.3m) greyish brown sandy silt overlies a compact orange gravel and clay with manganese mottling. No archaeological features.

Test pit 256

Topsoil (depth 0.5m) light brown silt (plough-soil) with 19th century pottery overlies a yellow grey natural clayey sub-soil. No archaeological features.

Test pit 257

Topsoil (depth 0.3m) mid-brown clayey silt (plough-soil) with 19th century pottery overlies a natural mottled yellow grey clay. No archaeological features.

Test pit 258

Topsoil (depth 0.4m) light brown silty plough-soil overlies a mottled yellow grey boulder clay with manganese. No archaeological features.

Test pit 259

Topsoil (depth 0.2m) light brown clayey silt (late 19th century pottery) overlies a natural light yellow grey clay. No archaeological features.

Test pit 260

Topsoil (depth 0.4m) light brown silt partly overlies narrow (0.05m) lense of reddish brown silty clay. These both overlie a natural sandy boulder clay. No definite archaeological features.

Test pit 261

Topsoil (depth 0.05m) light brown silty clay overlies a clean yellow grey natural clay. A low lying boggy area with no archaeological features.

Test pit 262

Topsoil (depth 0.3m) overlies a grey clay which directly overlies an orange boulder clay. No archaeological features.

Test pit 263

Topsoil (depth 0.4m) light brown fine clayey silt overlies a light yellow grey boulder (?) clay. No archaeological features.

Test pit 264

Topsoil (depth 0.4m) light greyish brown sandy silty clay plough-soil overlies an orange grey mottled boulder clay. No archaeological features.

Test pit 265

Topsoil (depth 0.1m) light orange brown sandy silt (and manure) overlies a layer of sand and frost shattered rock. No archaeological features.

Test pit 266

Topsoil (depth 0.3m) reddish brown sandy silt overlies a light brown clayey silty sand. No archaeological features.

Test pit 267

Topsoil (depth 0.4m) mid-brown sandy silt overlies a mid-reddish brown sandy clay. No archaeological features.

Test pit 268

Topsoil (depth 0.4m) mid-dark brown silty plough-soil overlies frost shattered bedrock. No archaeological features.

Test pit 269

Details unavailable.

Test pit 270

Topsoil (depth 0.3m) overlies a light orange brown sandy gravel. No archaeological features.

Test pit 271

Topsoil (depth unknown). A shallow (0.25m) roughly 'V' shaped slot, with a fill of topsoil.

Test pit 272

Topsoil (none ?). Possibly quarried bedrock at the edge of the road.

Test pit 273

Topsoil (depth over 1m) light brown waterlogged peat overlies a blue grey clay and schistose gravel. No archaeological features.

Test pit 274

Topsoil (depth 0.5m) light brown slightly clayey silt with corroded iron object (nail) overlies a mottled yellow grey clayey sub-soil. No archaeological features.

Test pit 275

Details unavailable

Test pit 276

Details unavailable

4. Interpretation

Of the 73 test pits investigated 4 contained archaeological features. These consisted of a late 18th/19th century stone lined field drain (test pit 211), a stone filled cut (test pit 239), a fairly recent demolition layer (test pit 251), and a 'V' shaped slot (test pit 271). There were 2 other possible archaeological features, a lense of reddish brown silty clay (test pit 260) and an area of possibly quarried bedrock (test pit 272), thought to have been levelled for a farm track.

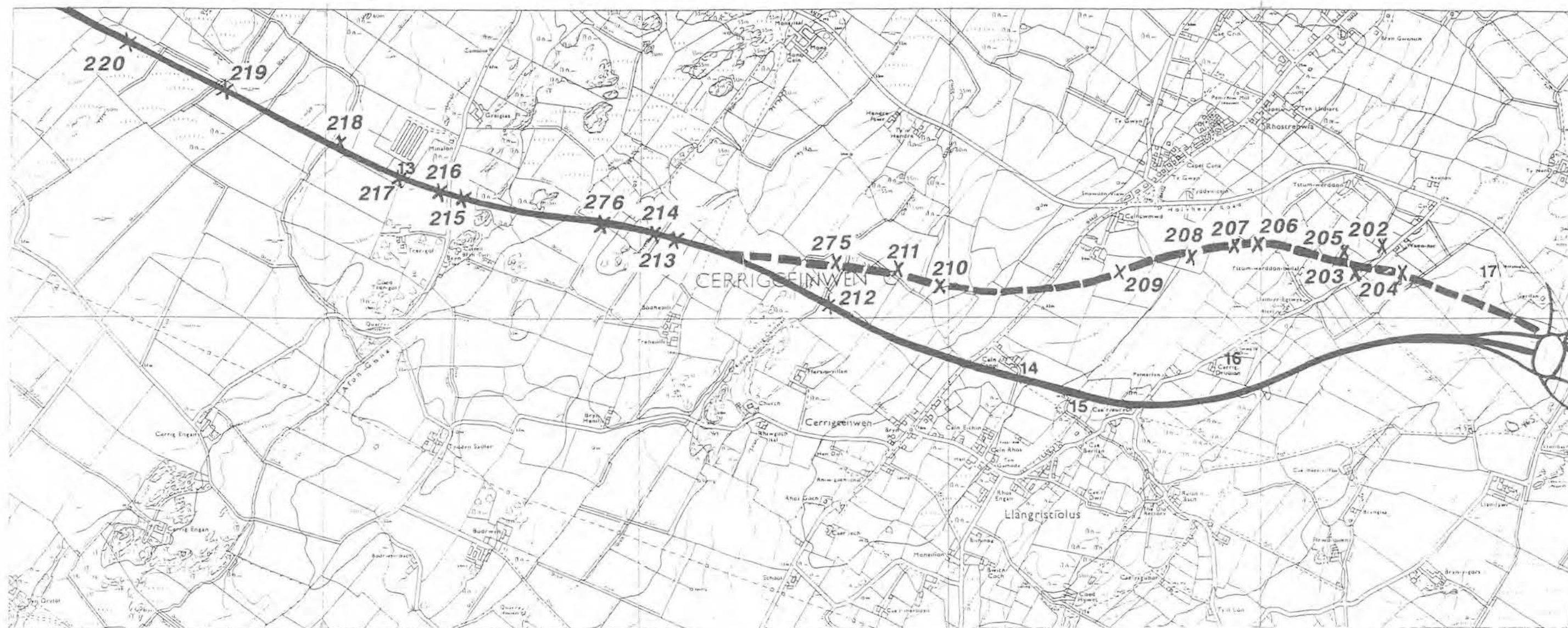
The test pits allowed a limited investigation of a number of sites originally identified during the archaeological assessments for Stage II (see GAT Report nos. 71 and 103). The possible lynchet or hollow way, site 5 (GAT Report no. 103) was found to be a natural geological feature (test pit 209). However, other test pits situated in areas considered to be of possible archaeological interest, provided inconclusive evidence. This probably reflects the small size of the sample, inappropriate orientation and/or siting of the test pits. The test pits in question were test pit 204 (possible field system SW of Waen-hir, site 9 GAT Report no. 103), test pit 244 (well and potentially interesting field, S of Holy Rood church, site 8 GAT Report no. 71), test pits 247 and 273 (potentially interesting area, with sharpening stone, near Afon Caradog, S of Bryngwran, site 7 GAT Report no. 71), and test pits 262 and 263 (possible field system, N of Caer Elen, site 3 GAT Report no. 71).

The following test pits all contained organic deposits: 214; 244; 248; and 273 in particular with over 1m of waterlogged peat which could be of environmental interest.

The information regarding topsoil depth will be of practical use during future archaeological investigation of the route, especially with regards to the siting of any future archaeological trial trenches and the methods employed in their excavation.

5. Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Holst Engineering's Ground Investigation team for their friendly co-operation.



— modified preferred route

numbers refer to test pits
described in the report

