

# Pentraeth, Abersoch

## Archaeological Trial Trenching Report



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Project No. G2386

Report No. 1199

Prepared for: Teresa Batist

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## SUMMARY

*This report sets out the results of a programme of archaeological trial trenching undertaken by Gwynedd Archaeological Trust (GAT) to establish the sites significance prior to any planning decisions being made regarding development of the site. The site is located on a suspected medieval motte (PRN 1239; Castell Abersoch Motte) at Pentraeth, Abersoch (centred on SH 3135 2857). The work was carried out on behalf of Teresa Batist in July 2014.*

*One trial trench, measuring 5m by 1.5m, was excavated to the north of the existing garage. The natural geology was not encountered within the trench. A number of successive layers of compact sand, sloping gradually down from the northeast to the southwest, were uncovered, which may represent the main construction material for the medieval motte. No dating evidence was recovered within any of these layers.*

## 1 INTRODUCTION

This report was commissioned by *Teresa Batist* and forms the report for the archaeological trial trenching carried out as part of the planning process of a proposed extension to a house currently situated on top of a suspected medieval motte (PRN 1239; Castell Abersoch Motte), at Pentraeth, Abersoch (centred on SH 3135 2857) (Figure 1).

A Project Design was prepared (Appendix I) which sets out the legislation framework and planning background in detail. This report has been prepared in accordance with the *Standards and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation, and research of archaeological materials* specified by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA 2001), as well as the *standard and guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* specified by the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA 2008).

## 2 SITE LOCATION

The site is located within a 0.15ha trapezoidal shaped plot located to the west of Lon Pont Morgan (SH 3135 2857). The residence comprises an L-shaped, two storey property and is located on the site of a suspected medieval motte (PRN 1239; Castell Abersoch Motte).

## 3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

Castell Abersoch motte has largely been destroyed by the road construction to the east, the driveway to the north, and the construction of buildings and landscaping on top of, and to the west of the motte. Only the scarp slope to the east and west

survive to any extent. The top measures 110ft from southwest to northeast, and the ditch was 54ft wide, as measured in the 1960's, but these may not represent its original size (Royal Commission on Ancient and Historic Monuments, 1964).

Several stone hammers are said to have been found during the construction of the nearby turnpike in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Dutton & Gwyn, 1995).

## 4 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

As specified in the Project Design (Appendix I) the objective of the archaeological evaluation was to:

- 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

## 5 METHODOLOGY

All works were carried out in accordance with the Project Design for the works (Appendix I) and the GAT standard operating procedures as set out in the GAT fieldwork Manual (*in prep*)).

- The trench measured approximately 5m by 1.5m and was located to the north of the existing garage, within the proposed footprint of the development.
- The trench was excavated by a 1.5 tonne tracked excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket, and under the direct supervision of an archaeologist.
- The topsoil and subsoils were kept separate so that they could be re-instated at the end.
- The trench was cleaned by hand, and a written record of the excavations was completed via GAT pro-formas.
- The trench location and levels were surveyed in with the use of a Trimble TSC2 controlled GPS receiver (Trimble R6 Unit) with the results tied into the National Grid.

- A running photographic record was maintained, using a digital SLR camera set to FINE resolution in JPEG format.

## 6 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS

### 6.1 TRENCH 1

Trench 1 was located towards the northern edge of the property, directly to the north of the existing garage (Figure 1). It measured approximately 5m in length by 1.5m wide, and was aligned northeast by southwest (Plate 1). A 0.15m thick layer of topsoil, comprising of a dark greyish brown silty sand (**100**), was visible sealing a layer of light greyish brown soft sand (**101**), between 0.4m and 0.6m thick and located at approximately 18.97 AOD. A dog burial was located at the southeastern end of the trench within this layer, which relates to the previous owners occupation (*pers. comm.* Teresa Batist 30/07/14). This sealed an on average 0.2m thick layer of compact sand and gravel (**102**) at on average 18.81m AOD, which in turn sealed a light brownish grey soft sand layer (**103**) at 18.58m AOD. A number of small sea shells were visible within this layer. The northwestern end of the trench was excavated deeper, and a layer of compact greyish brown sand (**104**) was located underneath layer (**103**) at 18.48m AOD. Further excavation within this trench was stopped due to the depth and possibility of collapse of sections.

## 7 DISCUSSION

The results of the trial trenching revealed a number of successive sand deposits sloping down gradually from the southwest to the northeast (Plate 2). The upper compact sand and gravel layer (**102**) may represent a levelling/ foundation layer that was placed on top of the lower sand deposits prior to the construction of the current property located on the site. Post-medieval white ware pottery was uncovered (not retained) from above the layer above (**101**), along with the remains a dog which had been buried by the previous owners. The lower sand deposits may represent the main construction material of the medieval motte, however no dating evidence was uncovered from these layers.

## 8 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The successive sand layers uncovered within the evaluation trench may represent the main construction material of the medieval motte. Although mottes are usually construction from earth, the location of this motte close to the shore would mean an

abundance of sand for its construction. No evidence for any structures on top of the motte were uncovered during the excavation, although it is possible that remains survive outwith the trenched area. However, the presence of the probable levelling/ foundation layer (**102**) may have removed any evidence of any such structures. The presence of the levelling/ foundation layer, along with the deep layers of sand (>1.2m) and the relatively shallow foundation depths proposed (0.6m) it is unlikely that any possible archaeological remains will be disturbed by the proposed development.

The final decision as to the requirement for further work on the site rests with the Gwynedd Archaeological Planning Service.

## **9 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The author would like to thank Teresa Batist for commissioning the work and for her help on site. The work on site was carried out by Dave McNicol.

## **10 BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Dutton, L. A., & Gwyn, D. 1995 *Coastal Erosion Survey – Aberdaron to Aberdyfi*

GAT in prep Archaeological Site Manual

Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA), supplement 2001, *By-Laws, Standards and Policy Statements of the Institute of Field Archaeologists: Standards and guidance for the collection, documentation conservation and research of archaeological materials*

Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) 2008, *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation*

Royal Commission on Ancient and Historic Monuments, 1964 *Caenarfonshire*



**APPENDIX I: PROJECT DESIGN**

**PENTRAETH, ABERSOCH**

**PROJECT DESIGN FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
EVALUATION:**

**Trial Trenching (G2386)**

***Prepared for***

**Teresa Batist**

***July 2014***

**Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Gwynedd**

**Gwynedd Archaeological Trust**

# **PENTRAETH, ABERSOCH**

## **PROJECT DESIGN FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION (G2386)**

Prepared for Teresa Batist, July 2014

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## 1.0 SUMMARY & INTRODUCTION

Gwynedd Archaeological Trust (GAT) has been asked by Teresa Batist to provide a project design for completing an archaeological evaluation within the footprint of a proposed residential extension, located in Abersoch, Gwynedd.

The residential site is located within a 0.15ha trapezoidal shaped plot located to the west of the Lon Pont Morgan (**NGR SH31352857**; Figure 01). The residence comprises an L-shaped two storey property; the proposed extension works include a rear extension that will “square off” the L-shape and a detached double garage extension (replacing the existing single garage).

The property is located on the site of a suspected Medieval motte (Primary Reference Number (PRN): 1239; Castell Abersoch Motte). The motte has been truncated by modern development, with only the scarp slope on the east and south remaining. The residence is positioned on the on the top of the motte.

Due to the presence of the suspected motte, Gwynedd Archaeological Planning Services (GAPS) has requested that an archaeological evaluation is undertaken to establish the site’s significance prior to any planning decisions are made regarding development (GAPS email correspondence to Teresa Batist, 08/5/14). In response to this, GAT has proposed opening a 5.0m long and 1.5m wide trench at the location of the garage extension footprint; GAT has agreed with GAPS that an evaluation trench is not practical at this time within the rear extension zone due to presence of domestic services (*pers. comm.* Jenny Emmett 11/07/14). The proposed methodology is included in para. 3.0.

This design has been produced in accordance with the guidelines specified in the Institute for Archaeologists Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluation (1994, rev. 2001 & 2008). *GAPS will need to approve the content of this design prior to undertaking any site work, in accordance with these guidelines.*

## 2.0 METHOD STATEMENT

### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

The evaluation trench will aim to address the following:

- 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

The evaluation trench will be centred on SH31352858, located to the immediate north of the existing garage, within a lawned area beneath a tree canopy.

The trench will measure 5.0m in length and 1.5m in width. Evaluation depth will be determined by the limit of development depth, the archaeological horizon (if encountered) or the glacial horizon, whichever is encountered first. The trench will be excavated by a tracked 360° excavator (3-tonne), fitted with a toothless bucket.

**Before trial trenching commences an agreed programme of surface re-instatement and health and safety protection measures will be agreed with Teresa Batist and GAT.**

**Please note that the trench will be located beneath a tree canopy; GAT will not seek to disturb substantial tree roots and will advise all parties should the quantity of tree roots affect the scope of works. If roots are encountered, it is proposed that the trench is relocated and/or extended to the east in order to meet the objectives of the evaluation. The extension and/or relocation would measure an additional 5m in length.**

If encountered, all identified features/contexts (including deposits and surfaces) will be manually cleaned and examined to determine extent, function, date and relationship to adjacent features/contexts. Limited excavation will be undertaken to characterise any features/contexts: this strategy will be based on feature type and include an initial 50% sample of sub-circular features and 10% sample of linear features, as well as targeted investigation of encountered deposits and surfaces. Any identified archaeological features will be left in situ and covered over and an appropriate further works strategy will be proposed by GAT as a next stage and defined in a project design to be approved by GAPS.

Where appropriate, samples for specialist analyses will be taken.

All attendances and identified features/contexts will be recorded using GAT pro-formas and photographed using a digital SLR camera set to JPEG FINE format. The extent of any

identified archaeological activity including artefacts will be located using survey grade (not handheld) GPS with <10cm accuracy (model: *Trimble GNSS/R6/5800*).

- A photographic record will be maintained throughout, using a digital SLR camera set to maximum resolution in JPEG FINE format.
- Any subsurface remains will be recorded photographically, with detailed notations and a measured survey.
- All sections to be drawn at a minimum 1:10 scale
- All plans to be at a minimum 1:20 scale
- Artefacts recovered to be related to their contexts, by three-dimensional recording when closely dateable/typologically distinct items are found.

#### *2.1.1 Environmental Samples (Ecofacts)*

The identification and recovery of environmental samples will be subject to the identification of relevant archaeological deposits, including sealed charcoal-rich deposits and waterlogged deposits. Samples may also be taken for the identification of small animal bones and small artefacts. The recovery of samples will be discussed in advance with GAPS as part of the monitoring process.

#### *2.1.2 Human Remains*

Any finds of human remains will be left *in-situ*, covered and protected, and both the coroner and GAPS, the client and landowner 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.

#### *2.1.3 Collection and disposal strategy for artefacts*

The collection and disposal strategy for all recovered artefacts will be discussed in advance with GAPS as part of the monitoring process. All recovered artefacts are the property of the landowner (Teresa Batist); however, it is GAT policy to recommend that all artefacts are donated to an appropriate museum where they can receive specialist treatment and study. GAT requests that access to recovered artefacts is granted to GAT by the landowner for a reasonable period to allow for analysis and for study and publication as necessary, as part of the post-excavation programme of works. All finds would be treated according to advice

provided within *First Aid for Finds* (Rescue 1999). GAT staff will undertake initial identification on site, but additional advice will be sought from relevant specialists nominated by GAT and approved by GAPS as part of the monitoring process.

According to the *Treasure Act* 1996, 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.

According to the *Treasure Act* 1996, the following are identified as 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.

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.

## **2.2 MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS**

The GAPS Archaeologist will need to be informed of the start date and of the subsequent progress and findings. This will allow the GAPS Archaeologist time to arrange monitoring visits and attend site meetings (if required) and enable discussion about the need or otherwise for any additional phases of work if features of potential archaeological significance are encountered.

## **2.3 PROCESSING DATA, ILLUSTRATION, REPORT AND ARCHIVING**

Following the completion of the fieldwork, the data will be processed, final illustrations will be compiled and a report will be produced which will detail and synthesise the results. Location drawings and a sample of relevant photographs will be used to illustrate the report.

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 fieldwork (which is currently scheduled in July 2014). All digital data will be written to optical media and stored with the paper archive.

- A digital report will be provided to GAPS;
- A digital report and archive on optical disc will be provided to Historic Environment Record, Gwynedd Archaeological Trust; this will be submitted within six months of report completion
- A digital report and archive on optical disc will be provided to Royal Commission on Ancient and Historic Monuments, Wales.
- A paper report(s) plus digital report(s) will be provided to the client

The copyright and ownership of the paper and digital archive from archaeological work will rest with the originating body (GAT).

## **3.0 STAFF & TIMETABLE**

### **3.1 STAFF**

The project will be supervised by John Roberts, Principal Archaeologist at GAT (Contracts Section). The work will be carried out by 1No Project Archaeologist.

### **3.2 TIMETABLE**

The current GAT programme is:

- Fieldwork: w/e 18/07/14; duration – 1 site day



## 4.0 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).

The GAT Project Archaeologist will be CSCS certified. Copies of the site specific risk assessment will be supplied to the client and landowner prior to the start of fieldwork.

## **5.0 BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Institute for Archaeologists, 1994, rev. 2001 & 2008 *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluation*

## APPENDIX II: CONTEXT REGISTER

Context No	Area	Type	Description
100	Trench 1	Topsoil	Greyish brown sandy silt, 0.15m thick
101	Trench 1	Layer	Light sandy grey soft sand, 0.6m thick max.
102	Trench 1	Layer	Brownish grey compact sand and gravel, 0.2m thick
103	Trench 1	Layer	Light sandy grey soft sand, 0.1m thick
104	Trench 1	Layer	Compact greyish brown sand

## APPENDIX III: PHOTOGRAPHIC REGISTER

Frame	Description	View from
1	Trench location – pre-ex	NE
2	Trench location – pre-ex	E
3	Trench location – pre-ex	SE
4	General view of motte/ drive entrance	SE
5	General view of motte/ drive entrance	E
6	Trench 01 post-ex	SW
7	Trench 01 section	NW
8	Trench 01 oblique section	N
9	Trench 01 deeper excavation at NE end	NW
10	Trench 01 deeper excavation at NE end, section	NW

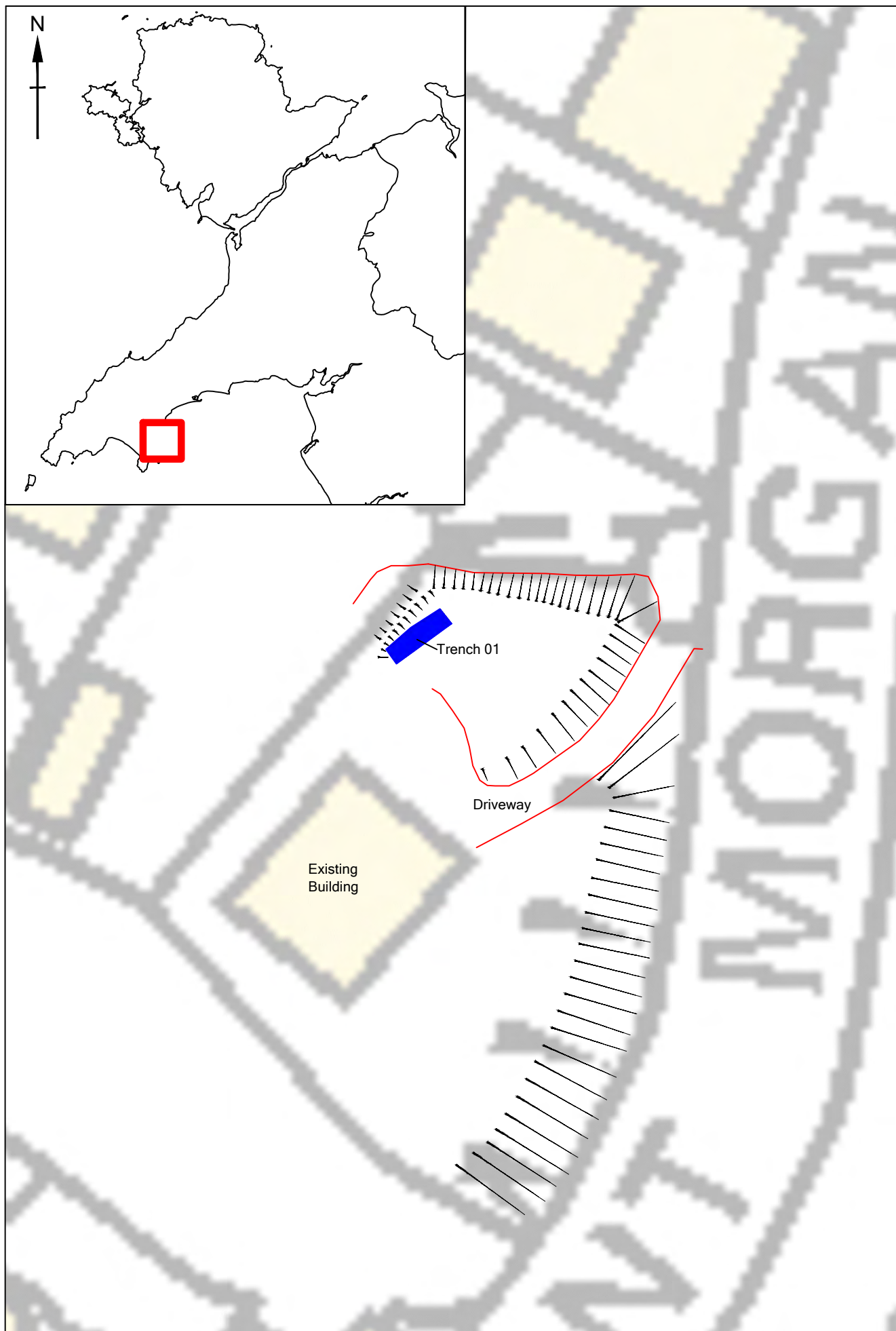




Plate 01: Trench 1 Post-Excavation. View from the southwest.



Plate 02: South Facing Section of Trench 1.





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