

CRICCIETH SEWAGE DISPOSAL SCHEME
ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF (G1157)

REPORT NO. 116¹²²

Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Gwynedd
Gwynedd Archaeological Trust

CRICCIETH SEWAGE DISPOSAL SCHEME

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF (G1157)

prepared for Welsh Water/Dwr Cymru

by A. Shallcross

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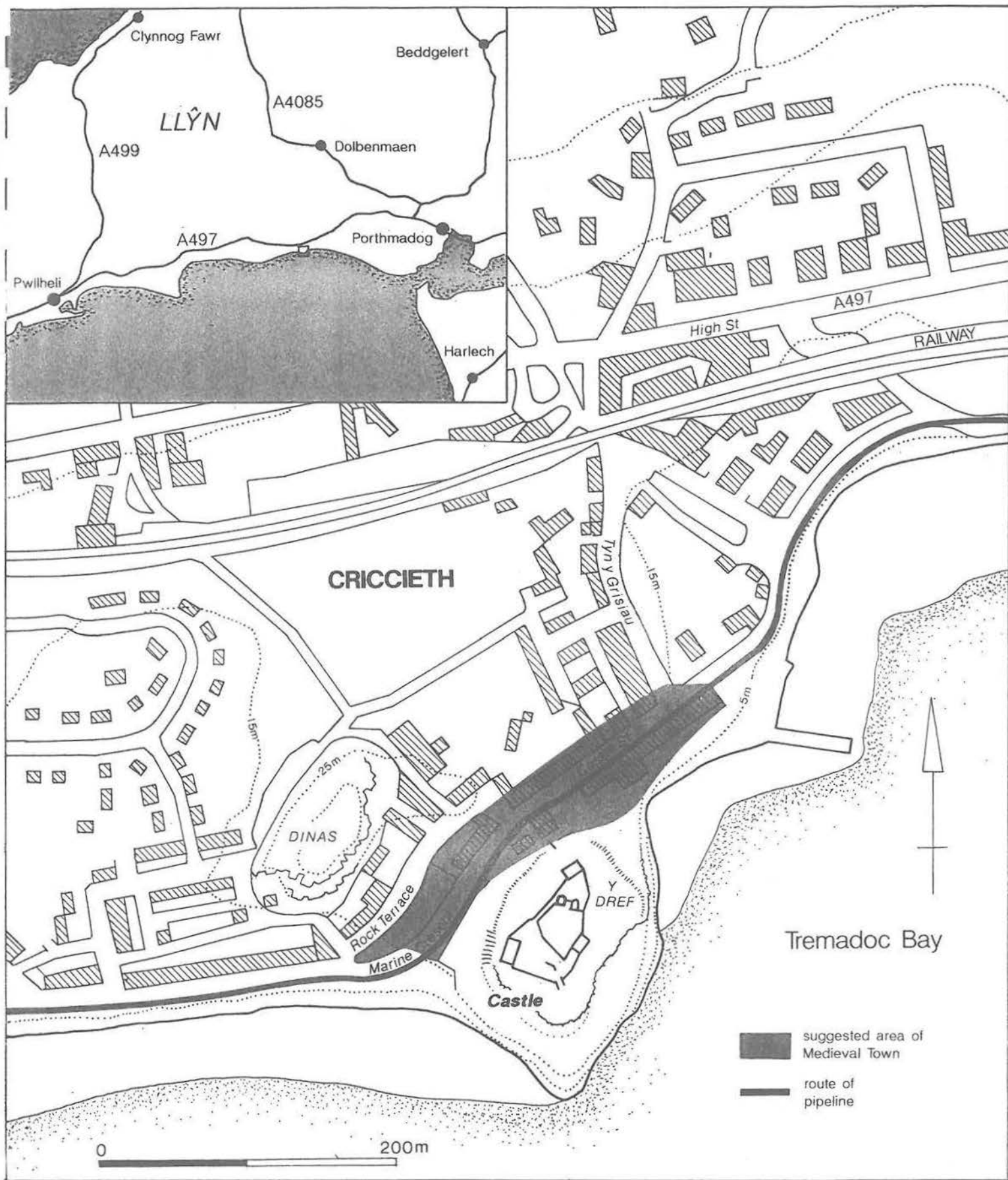


Fig. 1 Location plan.

CRICCIETH SEWAGE DISPOSAL SCHEME

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF (GAT Project G1157)

1. BRIEF SYNOPSIS OF FINDINGS

The work to be detailed in this report covers the archaeological aspects of the installation of a new sewage disposal system for Criccieth. The area of archaeological interest consisted of the rising main trench excavated by contractor's down Castle Street/Castle Terrace/Marine Crescent through the old medieval extent of Criccieth. This trench confirmed that the area of the road had been heavily disturbed by services and by the construction of the road itself. No evidence for the medieval town or earlier activity was recovered.

2. PROJECT BACKGROUND

Welsh Water proposed to construct a sewage treatment works, including a sea outfall, two pumping stations and a rising main to improve sewage disposal for Criccieth. The Gwynedd Archaeological Trust Planning Advice Section, in its role as archaeological curator, was consulted by Welsh Water to advise on the likely archaeological implications of the scheme. The Planning Advice Section produced a project brief outlining these implications and recommended a programme of archaeological work in mitigation. The Gwynedd Archaeological Trust Contracts Section was asked by Welsh Water to produce a project design (see appendix) and costing to satisfy the Project Brief and was subsequently commissioned to carry out this work.

3. CURATOR'S PROJECT BRIEF (summary)

The majority of the proposed works lie on the outskirts of the town and thus outside the archaeologically sensitive medieval area, land side of the castle. The exception is the rising main which will be laid under the road passing the Castle and thus straight through the heart of the medieval town (see figure). However, the building of the road and subsequent repairs and laying of services is likely to mean that the ground here is already disturbed, and the potential for recovering archaeological information is limited. For this reason a Grade II Watching Brief is recommended in the area of the medieval town between NGR SH49883771 and SH50103791. This will entail a part-time archaeological presence sufficient to monitor works and carry out basic recording as and when appropriate.

Detailed recording is not envisaged but should it become clear that provision needs to be made for this, then a Grade I Watching Brief will be implemented. This would involve a full-time archaeological presence sufficient to observe and record any archaeological features revealed by the works in the area of interest.

4. AIMS AND METHODS

It was decided in consultation with the Planning Advice Section that archaeological monitoring should take place initially as a series of visits of approximately a half days length each, and would be undertaken three times a week. This to be intensified if significant archaeology was struck. The work was carried out between January 14 and March 15 1994. In all sixteen visits were undertaken totalling eight man days. No necessity to increase this level of response arose.

Recording involved scaled black and white photographs and colour transparencies, scaled drawings, and a written record on standard Gwynedd Archaeological Trust forms.

5. KNOWN ARCHAEOLOGY

Criccieth is located on a promontory on the north shore of Tremadog Bay and along with Harlech served to control access to, and traffic within the Bay, as well as along the Lleyn.

There is a scatter of prehistoric activity to the north and east of Criccieth, with an alleged fort located at Cae'r Dyni to the east, though this seems somewhat doubtful. The suggestively named 'Dinas' immediately to the north-west of the town may be a more likely prospect and may conceal as yet undiscovered evidence of early settlement or activity.

There is no evidence of Roman activity in the immediate area.

The present castle is largely Welsh in origin with later additions by Edward I following the conquest in 1283. Whether there was also a native Welsh settlement here before the English town is not known, though the church is thought to have had a Welsh precursor. The English town received its charter in 1284. The town was laid out along Castle Street but was slow to expand having only nine burgesses recorded in 1294 and still only 20 taxpayers in the late 16th century.

6. OBSERVATIONS

The contractor's trench was located towards the southern side of the road and entered the edge of the known extent of medieval Criccieth at the junction of Castle Street and Ty'n-Y-Grisiau Terrace. The trench then continued along Castle Street, through Castle Terrace and Marine Crescent, leaving the medieval confines on the further side at Marine Crescent's junction with Rock Terrace (see figure). The trench dimensions were on average 0.85 metres wide and 1.6 metres deep, however two 'box' trenches were dug for the installation of manholes to provide access to the sewage pipe. The dimensions of these 'boxes' were 2.0 metres long by 2.0 metres wide by 2.0 metres deep.

Because of the periodic nature of the monitoring, not all of the trench length was observed, however, regular consultation with the work gang employed on the project confirmed that the stratigraphy remained consistent with what was observed and that no features were missed.

The findings were that the stratigraphy remained constant along the full length of the trench within the medieval extent and comprised the following sequence:

The lowest layer was a gravel streaked light brown/yellow sandy clay (004). The top of the layer was generally struck at a depth of 0.2m below the present road surface and was still present in the base of the boxes excavated for the man-holes at a depth of 2.0m. 004 contained a large amount of small (20-60mm) stones and pebbles as well as a considerable number of boulders. These boulders varied in size between 0.2 and 1.6 metres in length, and were noted to increase in number towards the apex of the hill adjacent to the castle visitor centre. They would seem to be a natural part of the deposits make-up.

Also seen in this layer were a number of pipes and cables associated with the houses on either side of the road, and the various services in general. The pipes and cables were found at all depths and judging by the lack of signs of disturbance, some of them predate the current tarmac road surface, though all are of modern manufacture.

The deposits above the base layer (004), all appeared to be associated with the road construction and consisted of a light-mid-grey sandy clay (003), very stony, and between 50 and 100mm thick, which in turn was sealed by a rubble layer contained within a mid-brown clay (002), 30-50mm thick. Above this was the tarmac road surface (001), 80-100mm thick.

The only variation to these deposits noted was the backfill of occasional trenches dug through

them to lay a cable or pipe. Also a bright orange/brown, slightly sandy clay was occasionally observed in the Marine Crescent section of the trench, lying between the lowest layer (004) and the road make-up layers. This could have been dumped here to raise the level of the road, though its lack of man-made contamination may suggest it is merely a variation in the natural deposits for the area.

7. CONCLUSIONS

It would appear from the admittedly limited evidence of the present trench, that little of archaeological significance survives beneath the road surface traversing this part of medieval Criccieth. The evidence is that the medieval street pattern here has been retained so that any structures or evidence of activity associated with the medieval English town would most likely be located to the sides of the present road. There is some likelihood of an earlier pre-conquest Welsh settlement to accompany the Welsh castle and church and it is possible that it may have been laid out to a different street pattern than the later English town. However, the evidence of the present work would suggest that if there was an earlier settlement, either any remains here were completely obliterated by later development and the road construction, or the street pattern in this part of Criccieth survived through from the Welsh to the English occupation.

No evidence for earlier road surfaces of medieval date or later was uncovered.

8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to thank the excavating crew from Mulcair, headed by Richard, and especially the machine driver John, for their assistance. Also the resident engineer, Mr Derek Star (Wallace Evans) for his valued cooperation.

9. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Soulsby, I. 1983: *The Towns of Medieval Wales* (Chichester)

APPENDIX

PROJECT DESIGN FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING & RECORDING:

CRICCIETH SEWAGE DISPOSAL SCHEME (G1157)

Prepared for Welsh Water - 22 November 1993

1. PROJECT BACKGROUND

Welsh Water are proposing to build a sewage treatment works, a sea outfall, two pumping stations and a rising main in Criccieth. The majority of the works lie on the outskirts of the town and thus, for the most part, outside the main areas of archaeological sensitivity. However, the rising main will be laid in the road which passes in front of the castle and will be cutting through the heart of the medieval town.

The Gwynedd County Sites and Monuments Record has identified the archaeological implications of the project and prepared a project brief specifying a programme of archaeological work in mitigation. The Gwynedd Archaeological Trust (Contracts Section) has been asked by Welsh Water to provide a project design and costings to satisfy the project brief.

2. KNOWN ARCHAEOLOGY

Criccieth is located on a promontory on the north shore of Tremadog Bay and along with Harlech served to control access to and traffic within the Bay as well as along the Lleyn.

There is a scatter of prehistoric activity to the north and east of Criccieth, with an alleged fort located at Cae'r Dyni to the east, though this seems somewhat doubtful. The suggestively named 'Dinas' immediately to the north-west of the town may be a more likely prospect and may conceal as yet undiscovered evidence of early settlement or activity.

There is no evidence of Roman activity in the immediate area.

The present castle is largely Welsh in origin with later additions by Edward I following the conquest in 1283. Whether there was also a native Welsh settlement here before the English town is not known, though the church is thought to have had a Welsh predecessor.

3. PROJECT BRIEF

The proposed development will involve disturbance of the ground along Castle Street, Castle Terrace and Marine Crescent immediately in front of the castle and right through the medieval town. Despite the location of these works within a prime archaeological area, the fact that the disturbance will take place within the road (which is likely to have been disturbed for levelling and foundation, as well as for service trenches) the potential for recovering archaeological information may be limited. For this reason a Grade II Watching Brief has been requested involving regular periodic monitoring of the development works and archaeological recording when appropriate. Detailed recording is not envisaged, however, should important archaeology survive along the pipeline route, the response may have to be upgraded to a Grade I Watching Brief, involving more intensive monitoring and recording.

4. METHODS AND TECHNIQUES

As recommended by the Gwynedd Sites and Monuments Record acting as the archaeological curator, this specification is designed to comprise:

- 1 Grade II Watching Brief**
- 2 Report**

STAGE 1- Grade II Watching Brief

The watching brief will involve regular, periodic, monitoring of the development works and archaeological recording when appropriate. This response is based on the assumption that any archaeology has already been heavily truncated or destroyed by the road and any service trenches.

Staff: one
Grade: Project Supervisor
Time: 8 man-days (estimate)

All recording will involve written descriptions on standard Gwynedd Archaeological Trust context forms, plans at 1:20 scale, sections at 1:10 scale, scaled black and white photographs and colour slides at 35mm format.

Any finds will be sampled and located three dimensionally if significant and environmental samples will be taken where appropriate.

5. FINAL REPORT

Following the completion of the fieldwork, a report will be produced for submission to Dwr Cymru/Welsh Water and The Gwynedd County Sites and Monuments Record. This will detail and synthesise the results of the watching briefs and any other recording. It will comprise:

- a) a copy of the agreed Project Design,
- b) a plan drawing showing the site and its location in relation to published boundaries and OS datum.
- c) plans at an appropriate scale showing trench layout (as dug) and features located as well as, where possible, predicted archaeology
- d) other illustrations as appropriate
- e) a description of the archaeology revealed including its extent and character, a provisional interpretation and date, and an assessment of its condition and importance (quality and state of preservation)
- f) a full bibliography of sources consulted

The report will be compiled using Wordstar7 software. The client will be supplied with one hard copy of the report with further copies at cost (a copy of the report can also be supplied on disc if required). A copy will also be lodged with the Gwynedd County Sites and Monuments Record on the understanding that this will become a public document after an appropriate period of time (generally not exceeding six months).

Staff: two
Grade: Project Supervisor, Illustrator
Time: 3 man-days

6. DEPOSITION OF ARCHIVES AND FINDS

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 Sites and Monuments Record) within six months of the completion of the project.

Staff: one

Grade: Project Supervisor

Time: 2 man-days

7. PERSONNEL

The work would be supervised by the Trust's Project Manager (Contracts), Mr Roland Flook. The work would be undertaken by one of the Trust's Archaeological Project Supervisors and carried out by fully trained Project Assistants.

8. MONITORING

The Gwynedd County Sites and Monuments Record are responsible for monitoring progress and standards throughout the project. Provision has been made to accommodate field visits by the SMR for monitoring during the watching briefs and once the fieldwork is complete to discuss the results.

9. TIMING

The Trust would be able to make personnel available to commence this work from November 24 1993 should the specifications and costings be judged acceptable by the client. The scheduling and duration of the archaeological recording will, of course, be dependent upon the development programme as well as, to some extent, upon the quality of any archaeology however, an allowance has been made for three half day visits a week plus one half day per week for contingencies based on four weeks duration for the development work in the area of the medieval town.

