

PENYBONT, BRYNCRUG  
W.T.W. ESCUAN LINK  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT (G1266)

INITIAL REPORT NO. 128

Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Gwynedd  
Gwynedd Archaeological Trust



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ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT (G1266)

prepared for Dwr Cymru/Welsh Water

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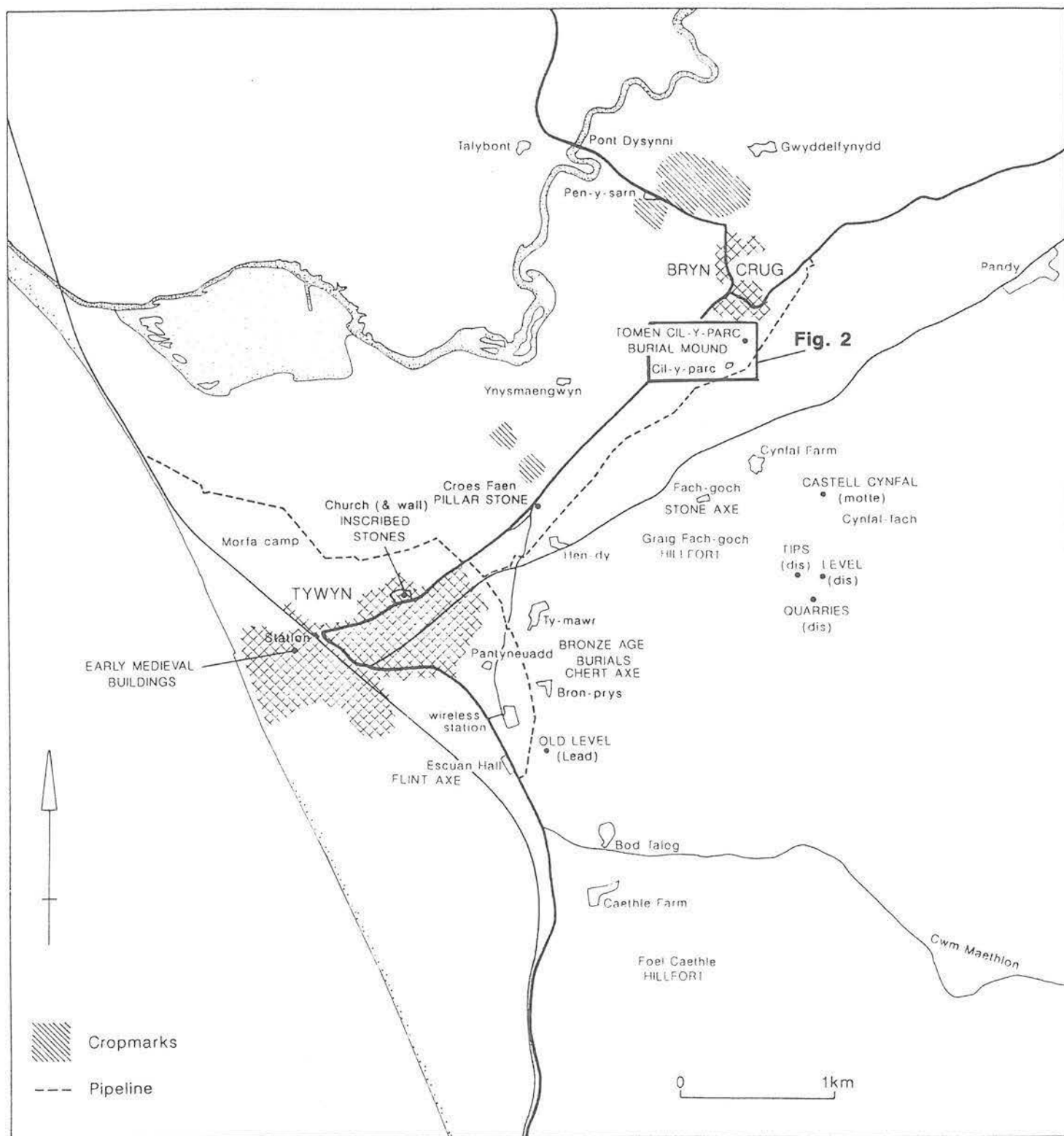


Fig. 1 Location map showing sites of archaeological and historical interest in the area.

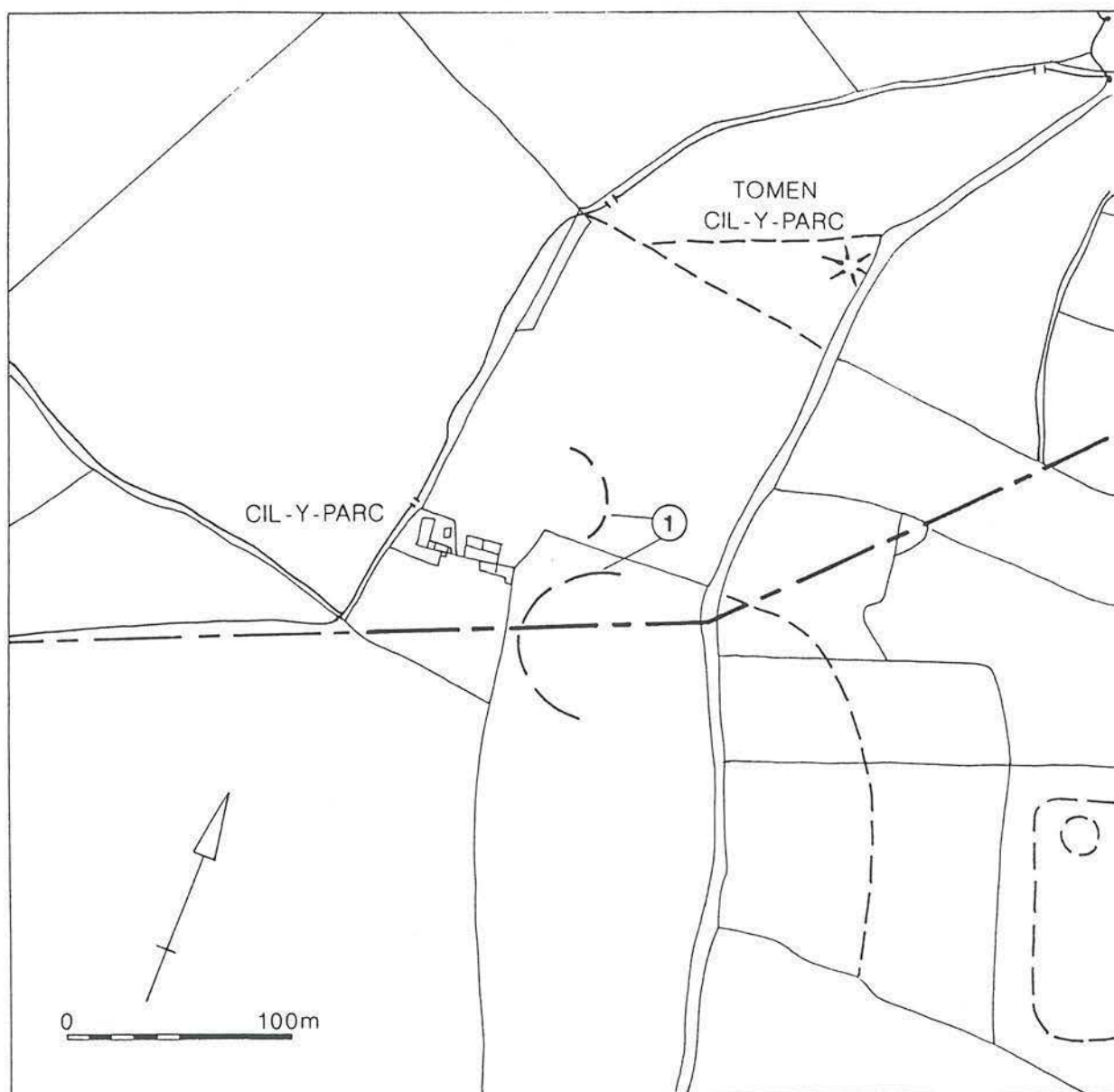


Fig. 2 Location map of Cil-y-parc area - showing archaeology and area of recommended watching brief (— —).

# **PENYBONT, BRYNCRUG W.T.W. ESCUAN LINK**

## **INITIAL REPORT**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Welsh Water are proposing to construct a raising main between Brynchrug Water Treatment Works and the Tywyn/Aberdyfi Rising Main. The proposed pipeline will affect a corridor approximately 3km in length, and 15m wide. The Gwynedd Archaeological Trust Development Control Section, in its role as archaeological curator, produced a project brief for an archaeological assessment of the likely archaeological implications. Subsequently Gwynedd Archaeological Trust (Contracts Section) was requested by Welsh Water PLC to carry out an archaeological assessment of the proposed scheme.

### **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 Dolgellau. Aerial photographs and 25" maps were inspected at the offices of the Snowdonia National Park.

### 3.2 Field Search

The Field Search was undertaken on the 6th of September 1994, when the whole of the proposed route of the pipeline was walked. Conditions were reasonable for fieldwork, with light and visibility average for the time of year.

Sites identified were marked on copies of 1:10,000 OS maps as accurately as possible without surveying. Standard GAT field survey forms were filled in recording and 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 County Sites and Monuments Record held by the Gwynedd Archaeological Trust produced details of a number of sites of archaeological interest within the study area. These sites include the Late Prehistoric hillforts of Feol Caethle and Graig Fach-goch (both unaffected by the proposed scheme), the possible route of the Roman road between Dolgellau and Pennal, inscribed stones at Tywyn, a number of cropmarks (located through aerial photographs) near Brynchrug and Ynysmaengwyn and a 12th century castle at Cynfal, among other sites dating from prehistoric times to the early 20th century.

Archive material consulted at the Dolgellau Record Office, in particular the Tithe map for the parish of Tywyn, and estate records, was useful in indicating the farm boundaries and land owners from 17th to 19th centuries, and early Ordnance Survey maps also helped elucidate changing patterns of farm boundaries and trackways.

Lists supplied by Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments were consulted for information about listed buildings and scheduled ancient monuments. There are a number of sites in the vicinity which fall into this category: the cropmark site south-east of Pen-y-sarn, Brynchrug (Scheduled Ancient Monument M106); Croes Faen cross shaft, stone east of Tywyn (Scheduled Ancient Monument M088); Castell Cynfal, south of Brynchrug (Scheduled Ancient Monument M121), and the house and associated buildings, including the dovecote, of group value (Grade II Listed Buildings). However, from the information received, no sites belonging to this category are to be affected by the proposed scheme.

Sites noted from documentary sources were identified in the field where possible, and a number of additional sites were discovered during field walking. 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 (up to 48 AD)*

The evidence of Prehistoric occupation of the area, ranges from finds associated with burial practices of the Bronze Age (1,600BC - 600BC) to hillforts usually occupied during the Iron Age (600BC - 43AD), though often continuing into the Roman period. There are two hillforts near the area, one on Foel Caethle (SH60659868), the other at Graig Fach-goch at SH60850115, little is known, however, of these two sites, both having only recently been discovered through aerial photographs.

In 1884 a number of Middle Bronze Age cremation burials were found during the removal of a hedge at Pantyneuadd (SH593-005-). These comprised several cinerary urns each containing ashes and having a smaller pygmy cups inverted over the mouth. Of similar date is an overhanging rim urn containing a quantity of burnt bone, which was found near Tywyn in unrecorded circumstances. While the tumulus known as Tomen Cil-y-Parc SH61020253, said

to have contained "swords", is likely to have been the site of another Bronze Age burial mound.

Also of interest are two axes found in the locality dating to the Neolithic period. One found at Escuan Hall (SH59509988) is of Polished flint while another, of chert, was found in a field called Y Fach-goch, near Pantyneuadd in about 1908.

#### *4.2.2 Roman (48AD - 400AD)*

The Roman road known as 'Sarn Helen', where it ran between Dolgellau and the fort at Pennal has a number of postulated routes, one of which lies just to the east of the study area. It is thought to cross the Afon Dysynni near Talybont, following the line of the present A493 to Brynchrug, continues along the narrow lane to Cynfal and eventually descends to Pennal via Cwm Maethlon.

The hillforts mentioned in 4.2.1 above are likely to have continued in use throughout the Roman period. Aerial photographs have produced evidence of a number of settlement sites immediately west of Brynchrug and to the south west of Ynysmaengwyn, these have been tentatively ascribed to the Roman period, though this still requires confirmation. The sites near Brynchrug comprise cropmarks indicating a 'rath-like' enclosure with a rectangular annexe attached (SAM Me106) at SH60400342C to the south-east of Pen-y-sarn and a large circular enclosure (SH60700360C) north-east of Pen-y-sarn. Further south cropmarks indicate the existence of at least two more circular features at SH59660181 and SH59530197.

#### *4.2.3 Medieval (400AD - 1485AD)*

The study area lies within the Medieval Cantref of Meirionydd, in the southern part of the Commote of Ystumanner, known as Ystumanner-is-Buga. The area contains land belonging to at least nine Medieval townships. These were Gwyddelfynydd, Brynchrug, Perthycytiau, Cynfal Fach, Bron-y-prys, Maenol Gadfan, Bodtalog, Caethle, and Tywyn, which also was the site of a 6th century monastic foundation. These settlement sites mainly survive as later single farmsteads, with the exception of Tywyn, Perthycytiau, and Brynchrug, which remain communities to this day, and Cynfal Fach, the site of a 12th century motte (SAM Me121). The latter site, which lies at the northern extremity of Cwm Cynfal (SH61490160), is known to have been fortified by Cadwaladr ap Gruffudd, Lord of Meirionydd in 1147 and soon after taken and demolished by Hywel and Cynan sons of Owain Gwynedd.

The physical remains of settlements of the period are poorly represented and probably underlie later buildings. However building remains, possibly connected with the township of Maenol Gadfan or Tywyn were discovered in the area between the sea wall and the station in 1879. The remains comprised a two roomed structure some 40ft long and 10ft 6" wide at each end, but only 9ft wide at the centre, with walls up to 2ft thick. Two cell like enclosures were found outside the building and human bones were found in an annexe to the north side. Fragments of Roman terracotta and possible sling stones, together with more modern finds were recovered from the site. A possible dark age date has been suggested for the occupation of the building with a later modern re-use.

There are numerous Early Medieval remains within and around Tywyn, a testament to its importance as a centre of native religious and commercial activity in the region. Tywyn's ecclesiastical origins date from the mid-6th century when Cadfan founded a monastic community there. This was eventually to develop into a 'clas', or 'mother-church', and is thought to have stood in the area of the present church.

Of particular interest is the 7th-9th century St. Cadfan's stone inscribed on all four sides in Old Welsh, proving the existence of Welsh as a language probably as early as the 7th century. The inscription states that 'the body of Cingen lies beneath', it also commemorates Egryn,

(possibly the patron saint of the neighbouring parish of Llanegryn), Malteg, Gwaddian, together with Dyfod and Marchiau. The stone was in use as a gate-post at Bodtalog until 1761, Lewis states that it originally stood erect the churchyard at Tywyn covering the remains of saint Cadfan. The stone is now located within the church. Another inscribed pillar stone (now lost) was recorded to have stood in the churchyard during the 18th century. This stone was inscribed in Latin with the name Pascentius and is thought to date from either the 5th or 6th century.

The hexagonal pillar stone or cross shaft (SAM M088), known as Croes Faen (SH59680154) to the north-east of Tywyn, was probably associated with the monastic foundation at Tywyn, and possibly marks the extent of the monastic township.

The present church of St. Cadfan is cruciform with a central tower, is likely to occupy the site of the original structure. Work dating from the 12th century survives, notably the nave, isles and a section of the north transept. The nave was originally longer, having been truncated at its west end by the construction of a tower during the 18th century, since removed. Prior to the 17th century a small chapel dedicated to St. Cadfan stood at the north-eastern end of the churchyard. The site of the saint's holy well lies immediately to the north-west (SH58600102).

Like other important Welsh monastic houses, such as Caergybi, Clynog Fawr and Llanbadarn Fawr, Tywyn retained the formal organisation of the old Celtic monastery in the modified form of a portionary church right up to its dissolution in 1536.

#### *4.2.4 Post-Medieval (1485AD - present day)*

The study area lies within the parish of Tywyn, during the Post-Medieval period the dominant land owning family was that of the Corbets of Ynysmaengwyn. The family claimed descent from Osbwrn Wyddel of Corsygedol (AD.1237). By the mid-19th century the Ynysmaengwyn estate had expanded to own a large portion of the land to the east and south of Tywyn. One member of the family stands out as a noted agricultural improver of his day, this is Athalstan Corbet (d.1820), who was responsible for the extensive land drainage schemes on the estate and the building of the road from Tywyn to Aberdyfi.

Of historical and architectural interest is the house and ancillary buildings at Ynysmaengwyn (SH598023), of which sadly little now remains. Between 1730 and 1758 three houses were built by Anne Corbet (1684-1760) to replace the earlier house, burnt down in 1645 during the Civil War. Ynysmaengwyn consisted of three linked units, which formed a 'U' shaped plan, built according to the 'unit system' prevalent in North Wales during the previous century, yet in the grand manner of country-house building of 18th century England. Also of interest is the 18th century dovecote with coursed front and rubble sides, with a tall, hipped platform slate roof, listed Grade II and of group value with the remaining servants wing of the main house.

Industrial activity within the area of interest was mainly small scale and largely associated with agriculture, including a number of mills using the Afon Fathew for the processing corn, wool and timber. To the east and south of the area are a number of levels and waste tips associated with the Lead extraction industry and local quarries supplying building stone and roofing material. The nearest, a level producing Lead, lay to the east of Escuan hall at SH59729998. Clay was also being extracted by the end of the 19th century near Bron-y-prys with the production of bricks on site.

Tywyn was associated with the early development of radio communications: the site of the operating and receiving centre for Marconi's transatlantic long wave wireless telegraph service between London and New York from 1914 -1923 was located south of the town, probably in the vicinity of the present day Marconi Bungalows (SH595-001-A).

#### 4.2.4 Summary

Numerous sites of archaeological interest dating from the Prehistoric period to the present day lie within the bounds of the study area. There is evidence for funerary sites of the Bronze Age period at a number of points. Hillforts such as Graig Fach-goch and Foel Caethle which overlook the low coastal plain are indicative of Late Prehistoric settlement and other activity in the area. Aerial photographic and cropmark evidence has indicated further settlement (or other) sites, probably of Prehistoric, or Roman date.

The Medieval period is reasonably well chronicled, allowing the location of townships, for example, though the evidence of actual domestic structures remains scant. However, early ecclesiastical sites are particularly well represented on the ground, proof of Tywyn's early importance as a religious, and administrative centre. A key feature of the Post Medieval period is the rise of the local gentry families and the consolidation of their landed estates, notably that of Ynysmaengwyn. Agrarian reform during the late 18th and 19th centuries has had a particularly marked affect on the morphology of the landscape.

### 4.3 Archaeology Of Proposed Development Area.

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

The proposed pipeline extends from the Water Treatment Works at SH61430310 in a south-westerly direction for c.3km before linking into the Tywyn/Aberdyfi Main at SH59340104, immediately north of the Talyllyn Railway.

Lowland farmland extends across the entire route, with some areas of boggy ground. A regular pattern of large fields predominates in the area to be crossed by the proposed pipeline, north of Tywyn.

The width of the working corridor will be approximately 15m wide. There are, however, no details relating to access tracks or temporary compounds, and to compensate for this, the brief suggests that this assessment covers a wider area than that designated by the working width with regard to the desk-based research and where visible sites of potential archaeological/historical interest exist outside this area on the ground, these are investigated.

The following site will be directly affected by the proposed development: the area of possible circular and linear features (1).

#### 4.3.2 Gazetteer of Archaeological Sites

##### 1. Area of possible circular and linear features SH60950242C Category D

Aerial photographic evidence points to the existence of a circular feature with linear and curvilinear protrudences to the north-west and south-east. However, this site, located immediately to the east of Cil-y-parc, was not evident on the ground and could be a geological feature.

## 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.1 General

In this section, the likely impact of the proposed scheme on the cultural heritage is assessed, and appropriate mitigatory recommendations are made. Specific recommendations are made for the sites of archaeological and historical interest, where there is sufficient information to assess their importance. Where the status of any site is not yet known (Category E sites), then recommendations are made for further assessment if the site is to be disturbed. In addition, the



high density of sites has implications for those areas of unknown archaeological potential, and recommendations are also made for assessing these areas.

## 5.2 Recommendations For Further Assessment

None

## 5.3 Recommendations For Mitigatory Measures

1. **Area of possible circular and linear features** Potential Impact: damage from the proposed pipeline and contractor's vehicles. It is recommended that a watching brief be undertaken in the area of Cil-y-parc (see figure 2) during soil stripping, with time allowed for recording features observed.

## 6. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER WORK AND MITIGATORY MEASURES

### 6.1 Further Assessment Work

This section summarises the work which is recommended to evaluate those archaeological remains whose status and extent are not yet established, i.e. sites in category E. If it is necessary to disturb these areas, then they will be reclassified and suitable mitigatory measures suggested following evaluation.

*Category E - sites needing further investigation*

None

### 6.2 Mitigatory Measures

This section lists the remaining sites according to category (as described in section 3.4 above).

*Category A - National Importance*

None

*Category B - Regional Importance*

None

*Category C - Local Importance*

None

*Category D - Minor and damaged sites*

1. **Area of possible circular and linear features**

Watching brief

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## 8. NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

Although the desk-top search identified numerous sites of archaeological interest in the area, the present plans would suggest that only one minor site will be affected by the proposed scheme. It is recommended that this site, an area of possible circular and linear features (1), is investigated as part of a watching brief undertaken in the vicinity of Cil-y-parc (see fig. 2) at the north end of the proposed pipeline.









