

HYDRO-ELECTRIC SCHEME
HAFOD YSBYTTY
ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

G1207

REPORT NO. 130

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Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Gwynedd
Gwynedd Archaeological Trust

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prepared for Shawater Ltd.

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

1. INTRODUCTION

A hydro-electric scheme is proposed which will draw water off the Afon Gamallt at Hafod-Ysbytty SH72664320, and return it to the Afon Teigl east of Teiliu-bach at approximately SH71304305. Gwynedd Archaeological Trust (Contracts Section) has been asked by Shawater Ltd to carry out an archaeological evaluation of the proposed scheme, to form part of an Environmental Assessment, leading to an Environmental Statement which is to accompany the proposal.

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, the County archives at Caernarfon and Dolgellau, and the offices of the Snowdonia National Park, Penrhyndeudraeth. Aerial photographs were inspected at the offices of the Countryside Council for Wales.

3.2 Field Search

This was undertaken on the 21st of April and 21st September 1994, when the whole of the proposed route of the pipeline was walked. Conditions were fair for fieldwork, and light and visibility were good.

Sites identified were marked on copies of 1:10,000 OS maps as accurately as possible without surveying. Forms were filled in 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 Sites and Monuments Record held by the Gwynedd Archaeological Trust produced details of a number of sites of archaeological interest within the study area, though none of these are directly affected by the proposed hydro-scheme. These sites included the late Prehistoric - Roman Settlement at Bryn y Castell, and the Roman Road known as Sarn Helen, among a host of other sites, dating from prehistoric times the early 20th century.

A number of potential sites were identified from aerial photographs, and these were checked on the ground. The linear feature (1) and the circular feature (7) were initially identified in this way.

Archive material consulted at the Caernarfon and Dolgellau Record Offices, in particular the Tithe map for Ffestiniog, and estate maps and records, were useful in indicating the farm boundaries and land owners from 16th to 19th centuries, and early Ordnance Survey maps also helped elucidate changing patterns of farm boundaries and tracks. Unfortunately, Land Tax Assessments for the area dating from before 1900 were not available.

Lists supplied by Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments were consulted for information about listed buildings and scheduled ancient monuments. There are only two sites which fall into this category: the site of Bryn y Castell, immediately south of the study area, is a Scheduled Ancient Monument; while Hafod Ysbytty, a hall house of the 15th century is Listed grade II.

Sites noted from documentary sources were identified in the field where possible, and a number of additional sites were identified. 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

The Prehistoric period is fairly well represented by settlement sites of circular houses and associated enclosures. These typically date to the Iron Age (600 BC - 0 BC) although occupation can continue into the Roman period. One such site, the enclosed settlement of Bryn y Castell (SH72824298), comprises a small defensive enclosure with a single hut built within its north west corner. Initially this site was thought to be of Dark Age date from its position near the Roman road, however, excavations by Peter Crew in 1980-1 produced evidence for iron smelting and furnished a range of dates from the Late Prehistoric period to the middle of the first century AD. A Prehistoric burial chamber is reputed to lie beneath the lawn at Hafod Ysbytty, and the name of the field ('Tan y Domen' on an estate map of 1784) immediately to the south of the house may allude to it.

Also of interest is a Bronze Age palstave, found at SH72364274, to the south of Hafod Ysbytty.

4.2.2 Roman

The Roman road of Sarn Helen between Canovium (Caerhun) and Tomen y mur passes close to the east of the area, crossing the Afon Gamallt at the ford of Rhyd yr Halen. The settlements and field systems mentioned in 4.2.1 above appear to have continued in use throughout the Roman period.

The enigmatic site known as Beddau Gwyr Ardudwy, or the Graves of the Men of Ardudwy is known to us partly through legend and partly through the reports of early antiquarians. It is thought to be the legendary burial place of the Men of Ardudwy, who the legend tells us, were killed after abducting Women from Clwyd. It is possible that the references relate to Prehistoric burial cairns, although with the Roman road of Sarn Helen nearby it is more likely that the references refer to a cemetery of Roman or immediately Post Roman date. Early accounts suggest an Early Christian cemetery of long cist burials, perhaps with 5th-6th century grave stones with debased Latin and Ogham inscriptions. Antiquarian references, including those of Robert Vaughan of Hengwrt (1592-1667), Edward Lhuyd, Pennant and Fenton all point to the site's existence in the area. Recent excavation of some of the mounds thought to be the site of Beddau Gwyr Ardudwy, has shown these remains to be fairly modern peat stacks.

4.2.3 Medieval

The study area lies within the Medieval Cantref of Ardudwy, in the Commote of Ardudwy Uwch Artro, and formed part of the Medieval township of Ffestiniog. There are a number of settlement sites probably belonging to the early part of the period nearby, notably the rectangular hut a little to the north of Bryn y Castell (SH72804320), and the platform house at Pen Tryfal (SH72344341).

The farmstead of Hafod Ysbytty is thought to lie on or near the site of a Medieval grange or hospice (c.14th century) which belonged to the Order of Knights' Hospitallers. The Order was founded during the first half of the eleventh century to offer hospitality to pilgrims on their way to the Middle East. Place name evidence (Ysbytty or hospice being a common indication of such a site) and local tradition provide the main basis for linking Hafod Ysbytty with the Knights' Hospitallers.

The building at Hafod Ysbytty (Listed Grade II) probably dates from the 15th century, with 16th century alterations. It originally comprised a single storey hall with two wings attached at right angles. Interesting features include an original moulded wooden screen, with round headed doorways dividing the kitchen from the living room, two original plain stone staircases and a massive fireplace. The roof structure is an example of cruck construction, and has pierced quatrefoil and other mouldings framed above the truss.

4.2.4 Post Medieval

The study area lies mainly within the boundaries of the farms of Hafod Ysbytty and Tryfal, and extends beyond into land once held by Teiliau-mawr and Teiliau-bach which lie in the parish of Ffestiniog. The Proceedings of the Court of the Exchequer in 1594 refer to encroachments upon 'two messuages, called Ffreeth y gamallt, and Ffreeth Havod Y Spithy', and to the grant of the encroachments by the Crown to Hafod Ysbytty in 1576-8. This suggests that the Post Medieval estate of Hafod Ysbytty was in the process of being formed during the period, perhaps from former monastic lands sequestered during the dissolution of the monasteries. The earliest known document relating to Hafod Ysbytty dates from 1591, and records the marriage settlement between Jane, daughter of Edmond Prys (1544-1623), the Archdeacon of Merioneth and Humffry, son of David Lloyd ap Robert of Hafod Ysbytty. During the 17th and 18th centuries the family of Hafod Ysbytty became linked to many other influential small estates in the region, including those of Bwlchywa, Llety Gwilym and Ty'n y

nant, Ffestiniog and those of Drws y Coed and Hafod-y-rhisgl, further afield. The early history of Methodism in the Parish of Ffestiniog is bound up with the family of Hafod Ysbytty: Elaenor Williams, Hafod Ysbytty, among others was responsible in 1784 for founding Hen Gapel, Nant yr Eneth, the first Methodist chapel in the Parish. During the 19th century the Hafod Ysbytty estate went into decline and became a tenanted holding, bought and sold by local estates.

Other interesting farmsteads, though outside the study area, include Tryfal, Teiliau-mawr, Teiliau-bach, and Hen Deiliau, all dating from the 17th century. In the uplands are a number of small rectangular structures which date from a variety of periods, some of them lying amongst the earlier Prehistoric settlements. These are assumed to be the remains of 'Hafodai' - houses used in connection with transhumance farming during the summer months. Studies from elsewhere would suggest that they date from at least the 17th century, although medieval settlement may also be represented.

A small Calvinistic Methodist chapel, Capel Horeb, dating from 1878 is situated at the western end of the study area. The chapel, rectangular in plan and constructed of roughly dressed stone under a slate roof, retains its original pointed arched windows. The building is a strong reminder of the importance of non-conformism in the area, going back at least as far as the late eighteenth century.

Industrial remains exist in abundance throughout the region, dating in the main from the nineteenth century. The nearest remains, a trial slate adit leading to a small flooded chamber is situated to the north of the study area at SH731436.

The line of the Bala & Festiniog Railway lies within the western limits of the study area. An Act of 1873, empowered Henry Robertson and Samuel Holland and others, backed by the GWR, to build a standard gauge rail connection between Llangower (Bala Junction) and the narrow gauge Festiniog & Blaenau station at Ffestiniog. The Bala & Festiniog opened on the 1st November 1882 and the Festiniog & Blaenau, under the ownership of the Bala & Festiniog was shortly afterwards converted to standard gauge. The Bala & Festiniog was constructed primarily to transport slate direct to Birmingham, the line did little to shorten the route. Following the authorisation of the new reservoir in the Trewern valley in 1957, the line was closed in early 1961.

4.2.4 Summary

The region around Hafod Ysbytty holds a number of sites of archaeological and historical interest belonging to the Prehistoric and Roman periods. The Medieval period is reasonably well chronicled, and, although they are difficult to date, it is likely that sites of this period are present. Hafod Ysbytty dates from the early 15th century, but is likely to be on the site of an older building. There are a number of the upland remains in the region of the study area, and these date from at least the 17th century.

4.3 Archaeology of proposed development area.

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

It is proposed that the pipeline will extract water from the river east of Hafod Ysbytty, from just above the waterfall and will then run down a narrow gully returning to run alongside the river Gamallt, cross the track to Hafod Ysbytty, and then follow a field track south-west to eventually cross a drystone field boundary at SH72264294. The pipeline will then run west paralleling the same boundary until it crosses the metalled lane just to the south of Capel Horeb. From here the route crosses the field behind the chapel to an outfall point and turbine house at SH71304305.

The following sites will be directly affected by the proposed development: the linear feature (1); the small stone feature (2); the curvilinear walling (6); the circular feature (7); the trackway (8); the boundary bank (12); the track (13); the bank and associated drainage ditch(16); and the track (19).

4.3.2 Gazetteer of Archaeological Sites

1. Linear feature SH72594315C Category D

A low linear feature, possibly an embanked boundary or raised path. The feature runs north east from the ford crossing at Hafod Ysbytty roughly parallelling the Afon Gamallt. The feature consists of a low, level grassed over bank, which is apparently revetted with stone for most of its length.

2. Small stone feature SH72604316 Category D

A possible small stone feature immediately to the north of linear feature (1). This site is possibly linked to a structure in the stream.

3. Ruined sheepfold SH72554316 Category D

A collapsed stone structure in the corner of a small enclosure on the north bank of the Afon Gamallt, at Hafod Ysbytty. This site is associated with a small leat and a moderately deep pool and is assumed to be a sheepfold, probably connected with dipping.

4. Large raised area SH74544315 Category E

This is a roughly level area of raised material, situated immediately north of the Afon Gamallt, just east of the track crossing to Hafod Ysbytty.

5. Slab bridge SH72514313 Category D

A single span stone slab bridge over the Afon Gamallt at Hafod Ysbytty. The span is carried between two massive drystone constructed abutments, possibly belonging to an earlier wider bridge. The bridge is shown on the 1st edition 6" Ordnance Survey map of 1889.

6. Curvilinear walling SH72474312 Category D

A short length of slightly curving drystone walling/bank which is associated with a nearby drainage ditch.

7. Circular feature SH73464308 Category D

A definite circular feature situated on north side of track, possibly modern.

8. Trackway SH74444307 Category D

This trackway is slightly scarped into the slope and is probably fairly recent. The track joins the trackway that crosses the stone slab bridge to Hafod Ysbytty.

9. Stone bank Approximately SH72304312 Category E

A linear stone bank running north along base of a fence. A drystone wall joins the bank on its west side, where the wall crosses a small stream feeding the Afon Gamallt. Further north a line of stones accompanied by a slight break in slope veers away from the bank at a right-angle.

10. Linear stone features Approximately SH72304290 *Category D*

Two linear features comprising two separate low banks of stone set at right-angles to each other. Possibly cairns of field clearance material.

11. Sheepfold SH72254295 *Category D*

A drystone sheepfold of two compartments, probably of late 19th century date, situated in the corner of the earlier 17th/18th century drystone boundary wall. The site comprises two linked rectangular enclosures: the larger formed using the angle of the boundary wall; the smaller of a separate build and lying up against the west wall of the larger.

12 & 12a. Boundary bank Approximately SH72154293 - SH71704303 *Category C*

A prominent linear earth bank running east - west and roughly parallelling the 17th/18th century drystone boundary wall. The boundary bank is likely to predate the drystone wall as it appears to be cut by it near its western limit, the feature continues on the opposite side of the wall as a slight ploughed out scarp, to eventually re-emerge (12a) south of the wall at SH71564306, near Pant-yr-ehedydd. The feature is shown partly truncated on the OS map of 1889.

13. Track Approximately SH72134290 - SH71704304+ *Category D*

An ill defined track lying to the south of, and closely parallelling the boundary bank (12). Appears sunken and almost ditch-like where it proceeds west of the junction of bank (16) with the boundary bank (12).

14. Track SH72224292 - SH71754283+ *Category D*

A track running east - west, shown on the OS map of 1901.

15. System of Linear banks SH71954215C *Category D*

Two banks running east - west to the south of the boundary bank (12) and an area of associated banks and drainage ditches to the south and west.

16. Bank and associated drainage ditch SH71864295 - SH71704267 *Category D*

A fairly substantial field/boundary bank with drainage ditch on its eastern side. This feature runs roughly north - south dividing an area of poorly drained upland to the east from a drier knoll to the west. The feature appears on an OS map of 1901.

17. Low curvilinear bank East end starts at approximately SH71834285 *Category D*

A low bank of under 1m in height, which curves around the north facing slope to the west of site 16.

18. Rectilinear feature SH71844300 *Category E*

A low sub-rectangular mound with a slight linear bank protruding from its north-west corner.

19. Track SH71834285 - SH71554304 *Category D*

A track shown on the OS map of 1901 branching north-west from track 14 to near Capel Hebron.

20. Field boundaries

The pattern and nature of field boundaries are an important part of the historic landscape. Their construction, linear plan and ecological diversity can provide valuable information about the landscape and its evolution. There are field boundaries of many different periods within the study area, some of which may have Prehistoric origins, although most are Post-Medieval in date.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 General

The pipe will be 350 mm in diameter, and requires 300 mm cover. The trench for the pipe will therefore need to be 650 mm deep and some 550 mm wide. The impact of the scheme on the cultural heritage could be minimised by the correct choice of route of the pipeline, and by using the most appropriate method to dig the trench and lay the pipe.

5.2 Route

The suggested route, shown on the accompanying plan, is designed to minimise the impact on the known archaeological features. It is recommended that where the pipeline runs close to the linear feature (1) and the small stone feature (2) care is taken to minimise damage to these features, where this is unavoidable the features should be recorded. This could be achieved by a closely supervised watching brief along the length of the pipe line in the area immediately around the stone slab footbridge (5) to Hafod Ysbytty and east of this site.

The sheepfold (11), although close to the line of the pipe, should not be directly affected. It is recommended that the pipe line is routed south of the boundary bank (12) and the adjacent track (13). The bank and associated drainage ditch (16) will be cut by the line of the proposed pipe: it is recommended that these are recorded by a watching brief once work has started. The route continues down a slope, across the minor metalled lane, west past Capel Horeb (see fig. 2), through wet pasture with a number of recently opened drains, and to the site of the proposed turbine house at SH71304305, on the Afon Teigl.

Where the pipeline cuts through any field banks or dry stone walls, such as the boundary wall next to the sheepfold (11), care should be taken that any damage is minimised, and that they are recorded in advance and reinstated afterwards. The tracks 8, 14 and 19, are all relatively recent and minor features; sufficient record would be afforded by written and photographic description.

5.3 Working method

The working corridor should be kept to the minimum needed to excavate the trench, store the soil, and reinstate. It is recommended that an archaeologist is present when the working corridor is established, to minimise the impact of the route design on the cultural remains. The possibility of working by hand should be examined where machine working may cause unnecessary damage. Care should be taken when reinstating the stored material that the original ground surface is kept as undisturbed as possible.

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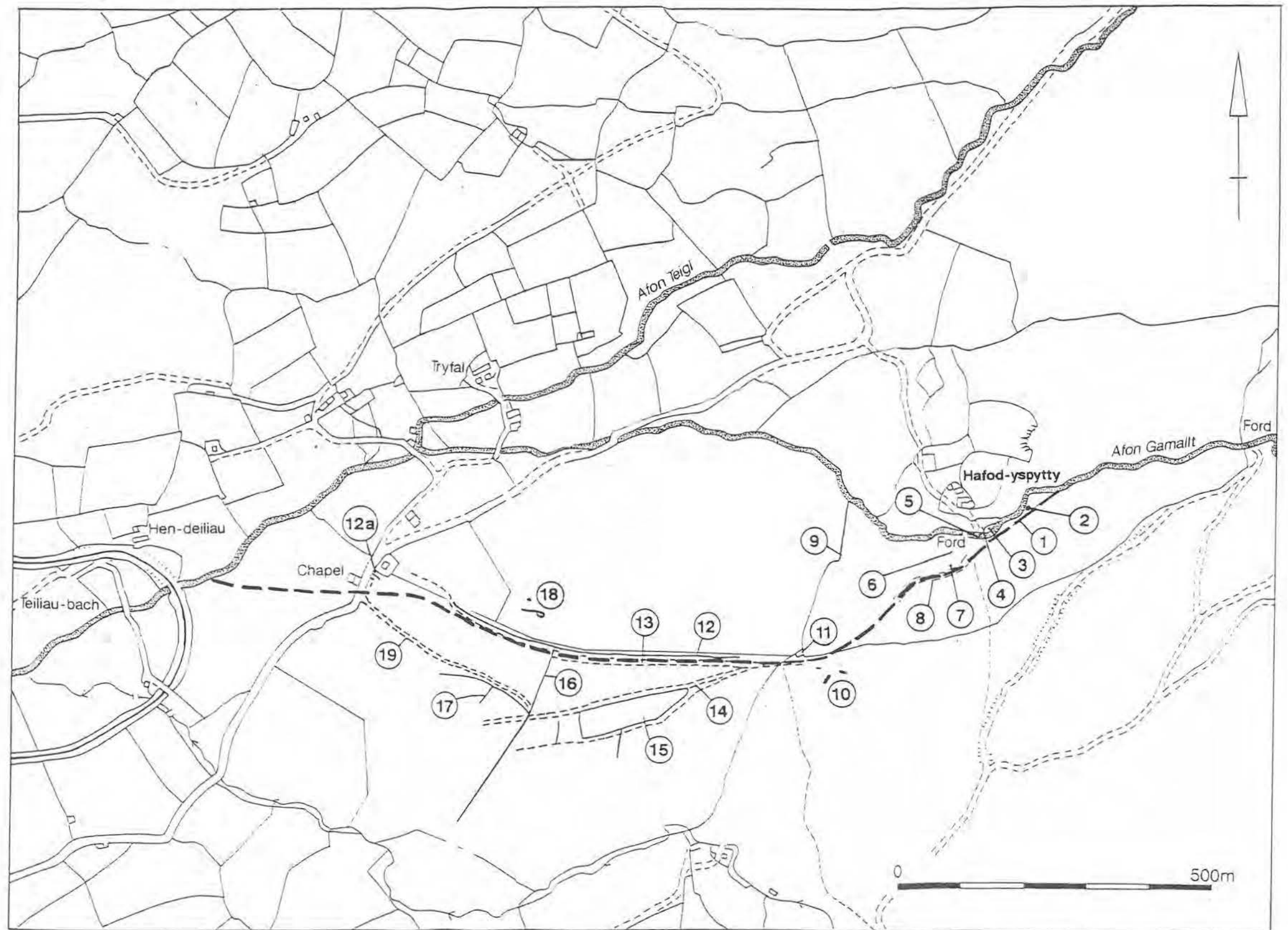


Fig. 2 Location of sites listed in the gazetteer.

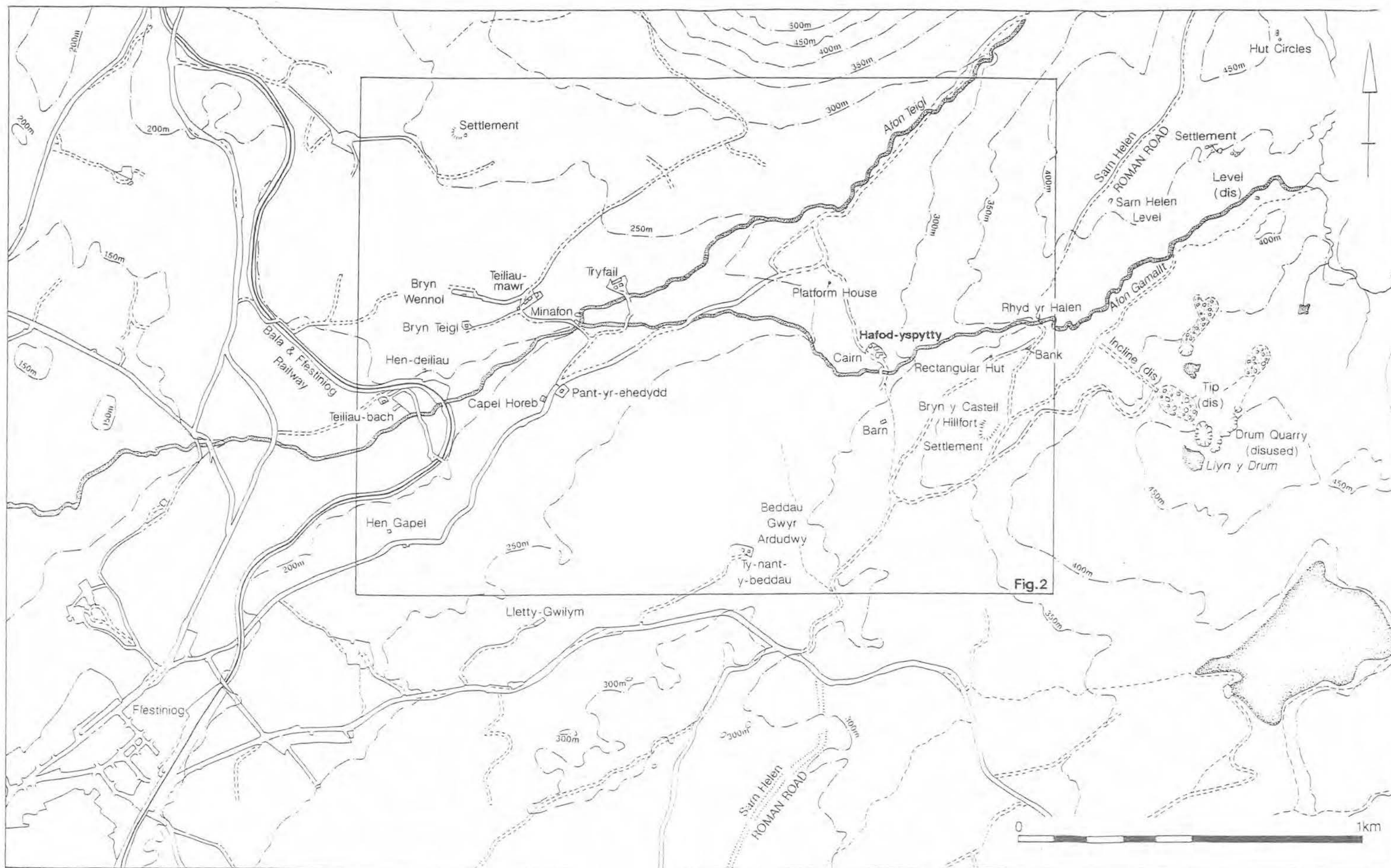


Fig. 1 Location of archaeological and historical sites in the area.