

HYDRO-ELECTRIC SCHEME
DOLHENDRE, GWYNEDD
ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT (G1265)

REPORT NO. 132

Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Gwynedd
Gwynedd Archaeological Trust

L9 24pt HYDRO-ELECTRIC SCHEME
DOLHENDRE, GWYNEDD

20pt ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT (G1265)

15pt prepared for Shawater Ltd.

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HYDRO-ELECTRIC SCHEME, DOLHENDRE, GWYNEDD

Archaeological Assessment

1. INTRODUCTION

A hydro-electric scheme is proposed at Dolhendre, which will extract water from the Afon Lliw at SH839318 and return it to the same river at SH849311. Gwynedd Archaeological Trust (Contracts Section) have been asked by Shawater Ltd 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, or recommendations for field evaluation (to include geophysical survey and trial trenching) if there were sites which required further evaluation before appropriate mitigatory measures could be suggested.

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, Bangor and the County archives at Dolgellau. Aerial photographs were not consulted due to the heavily forested nature of the area.

3.2 Field Search

This was undertaken on the 22nd August 1994, when the proposed route of the pipeline was walked. Conditions were fine for fieldwork, with light and visibility about average for the time of year.

4. ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

A search of the Sites and Monuments Record held by the Gwynedd Archaeological Trust produced details of two sites close to the proposed pipeline: a possible Medieval motte and a possible Prehistoric cairn, both discussed below. South of the Afon Lliw lies the Medieval castle of Carndochan, and on the western slopes below the castle are the remains of a gold mine and ancillary processing buildings.

Archive material consulted at the Dolgellau Record Office produced no information of relevance to this study.

Lists supplied by Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments were consulted for information about listed buildings and scheduled ancient monuments. Castell Carndochan is the only scheduled ancient monument in the area.

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.

In the area of interest there is little definite archaeological evidence for sites dating to before the Medieval Period. A possible cairn was thought to lie at SH847310, in the middle of the north side of a field known as Bryn y garnedd, however by 1974 this feature was no longer visible. The possible Medieval motte at SH84293151 is now considered doubtful and is probably a natural feature.

Of interest, although to the south of the proposed scheme, is Castell Carndochan, a Welsh castle, situated on a rocky spur overlooking the Afon Lliw. The castle is thought to date to the mid-13th century, although there is little architectural detail and no documentary evidence to confirm this. The principle structure on the site is an apsidal tower, surviving to a height of 8 ft, which is connected by a curtain wall to a round tower at the north-east end. The southern wall incorporates a semi-circular tower, and in the centre of the enclosure are the foundations of a square building. It has been suggested that the castle may overlie an earlier hillfort.

Also to the south of the immediate area of interest are the remains of the Carn-Dochan gold mine, which was worked periodically between 1863 and 1905.

4.3 Archaeology of the Proposed Development Area

There are a number of redundant agricultural features, including several sheepfolds, within the dense forestry plantation to the south of the proposed pipeline. However these should not be affected as the pipeline is to run along the line of the existing forest track. Should the pipeline deviate, however, from the proposed route outlined in section 5.2 and fig. 1, then an archaeological presence will be required to record features prior to disturbance.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 General

The pipe will be 800 mm in diameter, and requires 300 mm cover. The trench for the pipe will therefore need to be 1,100 mm deep and some 1,100 mm wide. The working corridor will need to be some 3 - 5 m 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

It is currently proposed that the pipeline will extract water from the river Lliw, north of Craig-y-tan at approximately SH83943177, (see the accompanying plan). It will then run south east, north of and roughly parallel to the course of the river, along the line of a forestry track. At SH84933119 the pipeline will turn off the track to run south-south-east, to the proposed turbine house at SH84943115, then turn due east to the proposed outfall point located at approximately SH84973115. This route, involving the use of the forest track, will have very little impact upon the cultural heritage.

5.3 Archaeological Recommendations

The creation of the forest track and the planting of the adjacent trees will have already disturbed any archaeology which may have existed. In addition the desk-top study and fieldwork do not suggest the presence of any archaeological sites of significance. Therefore no archaeological response is recommended for the pipeline whilst it follows the forest track. The area around the turbine house and outfall, however, could contain buried archaeology, as that area has not suffered the same level of disturbance in recent years from afforestation. A watching brief during the initial stages of soil removal is therefore suggested for the area around the proposed turbine house and outfall.

6. SUMMARY

An initial archaeological assessment of the proposed pipeline and turbine house has been carried out. No sites of archaeological significance were identified along the proposed route, and no archaeological response is recommended where the pipeline follows the forest track. However a watching brief is recommended in the vicinity of the turbine house and outfall, where there is some potential for buried archaeology.

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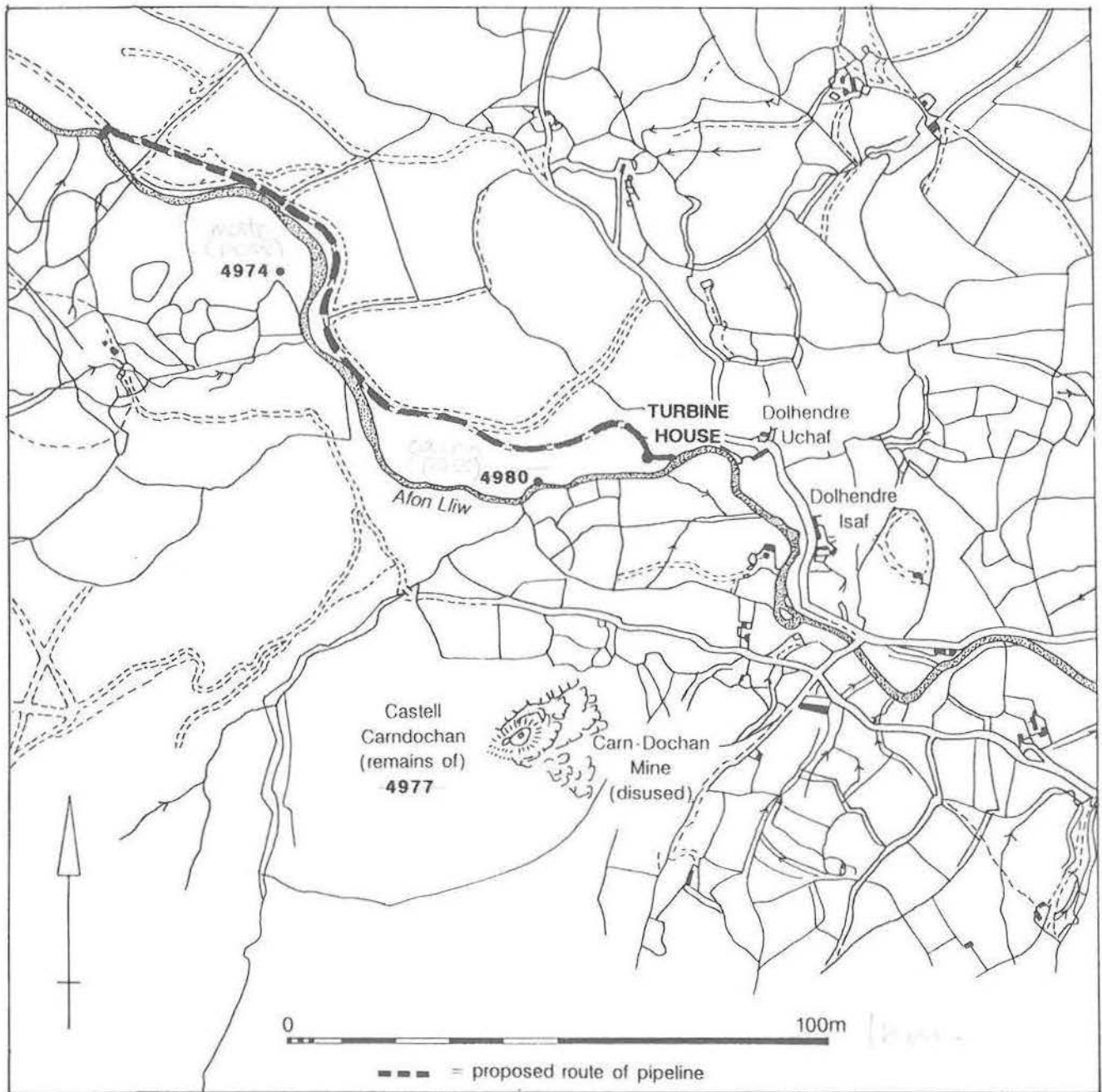


Fig 1. Location of archaeological & historical sites.

130 tunnel

132 * / 100m tunnel

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