

MANWEB ELECTRICITY TRENCH:
GLASYNFRYN FARM

WATCHING BRIEF

Report No. 219

Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Gwynedd
Gwynedd Archaeological Trust

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WATCHING BRIEF (G1427)

prepared for Manweb

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1. Background

As part of a proposal to connect a new length of cable to an existing electricity pole situated on Glasynfryn Farm, Gwynedd Archaeology Planning Service was consulted by Manweb to advise on any archaeological implications arising from the proposed works. Because the route of the proposed trench cut through a linear depression associated with a rectangular enclosure, it was recommended that the work be monitored by an archaeologist. Manweb consequently engaged the services of the Contracts section of Gwynedd Archaeological Trust to carry out monitoring of the proposed works, and on the 29th July, work commenced under the observation of a member of the Trust's staff.

2. Existing Archaeology

The area of the field where the cable trench was to be excavated contained the remains of a rectangular enclosure associated with two round huts (PRN 802) situated at SH58606911. The two round huts were west of the area affected by the trench, but the north side of the enclosure, visible as a low linear depression, would be cut through by the trench. The depression was thought to mark the site of a filled ditch, or a robber trench if stones were robbed from an existing wall.

3. Observations

The trench was excavated northwards from the existing electricity pole for a length of 58 metres, using a mini excavator fitted with a 9 inch (0.23 metre) toothed bucket. The trench ran parallel to the existing eastern boundary of the field at an average distance of 3.0 metres from the boundary. The width of the trench varied between 0.40 and 0.50 of a metre, and the depth of the trench varied between 0.90 and 1.10 of a metre. The soils were sandy in nature, and consisted, from the base of the trench, of (i) the natural boulder clay, which graduated from clayey sand into a compact sandy clay as the trench advanced northwards; (ii) the subsoils (0.6-0.2 metres in depth) made up of orange-brown clayey sand within the area of the enclosure, but became at first more clayey in the region of the ditch and then more sandy again towards the north end, though also more silty; (iii) the topsoil, which was silty in nature within the confines of the enclosure, but became more clayey just before the ditch, and then more sandy and dry north of the ditch.

The ditch, situated 29m north of the telegraph pole, was visible in section as an area of sub-rounded stones 1.10m wide by 0.6m deep. The stones varied in size from 0.15m by 0.15m to 0.15m by 0.3m. The stones were contained in a mid grey brown friable sandy clay. Immediately to the north of the stones was a stoneless area of sandy clay, mid-grey/brown but with rust coloured patches.

4. Interpretation

The topsoil within the enclosure was of a higher quality than that outside, suggesting that the area inside had been more regularly cultivated and fertilised than that outside.

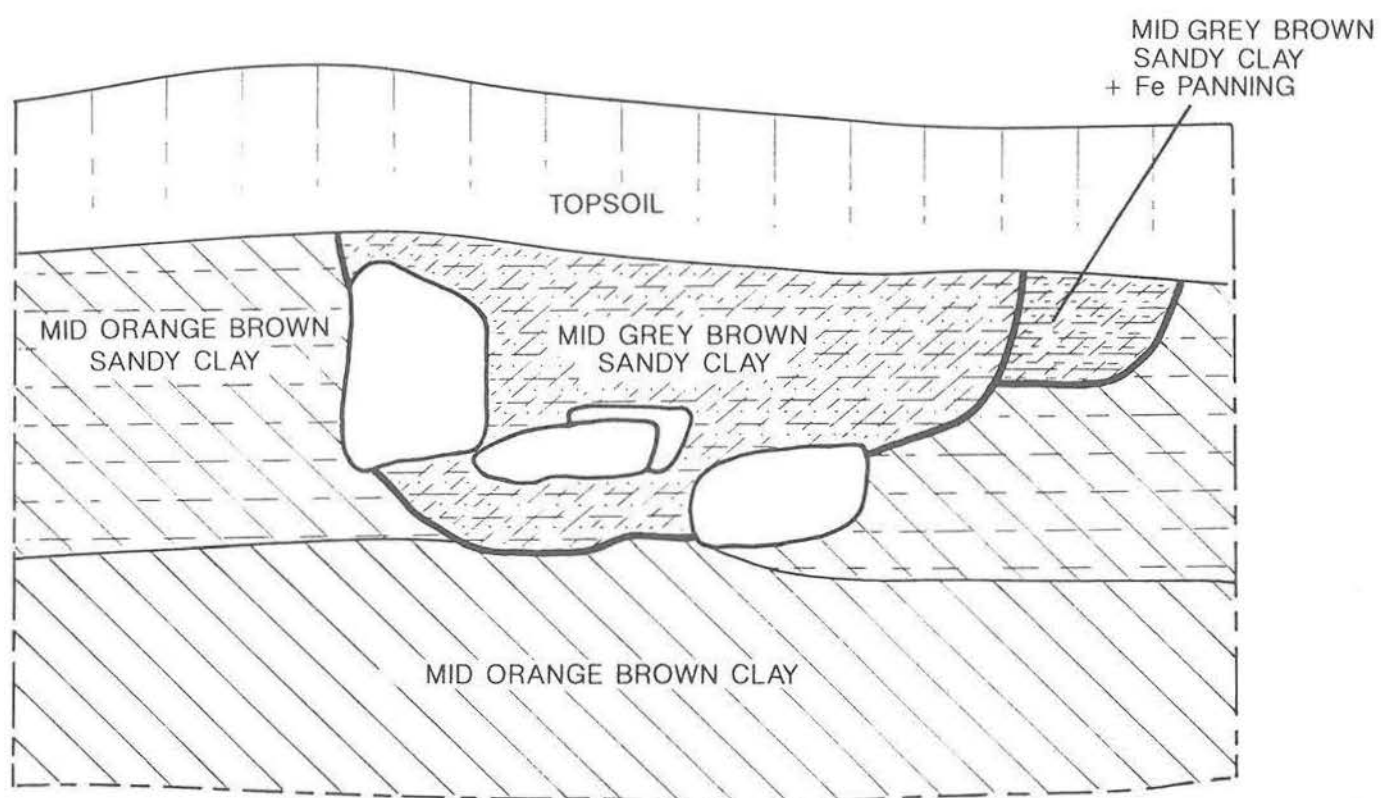
The narrow confines of the trench did not allow a clear view of the section, but a feature 1.10m wide and 0.6m deep containing stones was visible underlying the 3m wide surface depression.

The buried ditch proved to be narrower than might have been expected from its surface width: whereas the surface depression was 3.0m wide, the exposed feature beneath the surface was only 1.10m wide, situated at the south edge of the surface feature. Surface indications around the other side of the enclosure would suggest the presence of a bank inside the ditch, and the change in soils just before the ditch may indicate the former presence of the bank, although no other indications were visible within the section.

No dating evidence emerged from the feature to help ascertain its age. In fact the only dating material was spread throughout the topsoil, and consisted of late post-medieval pottery sherds.

5. Conclusions

No clear conclusions can be drawn from the observations made of the trench, because of the very limited area exposed. However the limited excavations would suggest the visible enclosure was once demarcated by a bank and ditch, and that the interior of the enclosure was farmed more intensively than the land outside.



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East facing section through ditch.

