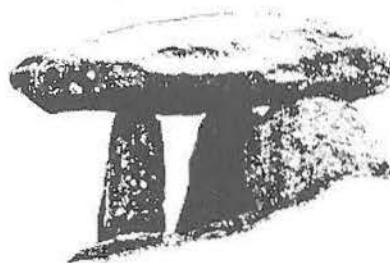


Proposed Waste Recycling Centre
Plot 29, Llandegai Industrial Estate
Archaeological Assessment (G1434)

Report No. 223



Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol
GWYNEDD
Archaeological Trust

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Archaeological Evaluation (G1434)

prepared for Watkin Jones and Son Ltd
by A. Dutton

September 1996

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Proposed Waste Recycling Centre at Plot 29, Llandegai Industrial Estate Archaeological Evaluation

Background

Watkin Jones and Son Ltd propose to construct a waste recycling centre at Plot 29, Llandegai Industrial Estate, Bangor. The site is adjacent to a once extensive archaeological landscape, the recognised extent of which lies within 200 metres of the proposed works. In view of this Gwynedd Archaeological Planning Service recommended to Gwynedd County Council that an adequate archaeological response be made in advance of construction work. Gwynedd Archaeological Trust (Contracts Section) was asked to provide a project design and costings to carry out necessary work, which were approved by Gwynedd Archaeology Planning Service. The Contracts Section (GAT) were subsequently engaged to carry out the work on behalf of Watkin Jones and Son Ltd.

Existing Archaeology

The presence of the multi-period site that once existed in this vicinity was first recognised through aerial photography in the early 1960s (St Joseph 1961). This identified a complex array of crop-marks that included the ditches of two large *henge monuments*, the larger some 90 metres in diameter, and the rounded terminus of a *cursus*, traceable for some 130 metres of its original length. This group of Neolithic and early Bronze Age monuments, extending over an area in excess of 0.5² km, are one of only two comparable sites known to exist in Wales.

Salvage excavations were carried out in 1966-67 in advance of the development of Llandegai Industrial Estate which allowed a wide range of crop-marks to be examined (Houlder 1967, 1968). These revealed evidence of burial mounds (barrows) and a cremation cemetery. There are indications that the landscape was by no means wholly 'ritual' in function as the remains of at least two domestic buildings, broadly contemporary with the larger *henge*, were also discovered.

There appears to have been an occupational hiatus in the area from early Bronze Age times until the beginning of the second century BC when Iron Age farmers settled and cultivated the fertile soils here, utilising the still extant, larger *henge* as an enclosure. From then until the present the main use of the area has been for agricultural use although part of an Early Christian cemetery, perhaps associated with the site of the chapel or church of St Tegai, was uncovered just south of the route of the Medieval road that once ran west to the centre of embryonic Bangor Fawr-yn-Arfon.

Observations

A preliminary visit to the site of Plot 29 suggested that much of the *area of interest* had already been disturbed by activity associated with the construction of the modern access road and the preparation of the adjacent ground for building . However, the north east corner of the site appeared to have remained undisturbed. This area comprises part of the gently sloping ground west of the old railway embankment and is densely vegetated with scrub and mature woodland. Any sub-surface archaeology would most likely survive in this area.

The Assessment was carried out with the assistance of a Komatsu PC150HD excavator using a two metre wide toothless bucket. Two exploratory trenches (T1 & T2) were excavated along the southern and eastern periphery of the area of interest (fig 2).

Trench 1, at right angles to the access road revealed made ground, comprised of slate ballast, for much of its length, to an average depth of 0.4m. This material was laid over a polypropylene membrane directly overlying natural pale grey and yellow clays interspersed with gravels. Within this make up the course of two modern drainage culverts could be seen cutting the natural clay. Only at the extreme east end of the trench was part of the old ground surface revealed, comprised of waterlogged colluvium deposits, truncated by the eastmost modern drain.

Trench 2 was excavated northward at right angles from the east end of Trench 1. From the waterlogged deposits revealed in Trench 1 the sub-soil surface of the undisturbed hill slope above could be followed and the entire surface of this higher ground was cleared. A single feature (feature1) was apparent in this surface appearing as a short, linear stone spread some 1.1m long by 0.4m wide, orientated NW-SE. Manual excavation revealed this feature to be very slight, being < 0.1m deep with an uneven profile. The fill comprised a compacted concentration of rounded and sub-rounded pebbles, plus two fragments of brick, in a matrix of silty, dark soil. The feature appeared to have been truncated further to the west.

Interpretation

Of the total 930m² area investigated only 90m² proved to be undisturbed ground with the potential for survival of archaeological features. This area was physically defined by the high ground in the north-east corner of the site.

The intersection of trenches 1 & 2 demonstrated the marshy nature of a previously gently undulating landscape at the foot of the hill slope along the eastern margins of the site. This former landscape has been transformed by the construction of the access road and the creation of building plots that have effectively both truncated the hill slope bounding the east side of the site and infilled originally marshy ground at the base of the slope. Any original ground surfaces west of this line have been severely truncated.

The only recognised feature (feature1) is best interpreted as the much denuded remains of a *rubble field drain*, of post-medieval date, the original extent of which has been lost to the scarping of the hillslope topography during the construction of the building plot.

Conclusions

Although the investigated area was essentially archaeologically sterile, some indication of the pre-industrial estate topography and land use was established. It may be assumed that, in the post-medieval period at least, the need for adequate, controlled, drainage along the west facing slopes of the valley has affected the role of human activity ever since. The valley on this side of the industrial estate drains a wide area and the soils will always have been too wet for productive use without adequate drainage. This probably explains the absence of early remains in this part of the valley, with the main foci for human activity lying upslope to the east on level, well drained land.

Bibliography

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Glossary

CURSUS - A ceremonial way ; an extremely long rectangular earthwork defined by a pair of banks and ditches.

HENGE - A non-defensive circular earthwork comprising of a bank and ditch, the bank usually lying outside of the ditch, and broken by one or more entrances. Apparently used for ceremonial purposes during the late neolithic period.

NEOLITHIC - 3,500 -2,000 BC

EARLY BRONZE AGE - 2,000 - 1,200 BC

IRON AGE - 600 - 1 BC

POST MEDIEVAL - 1485 on

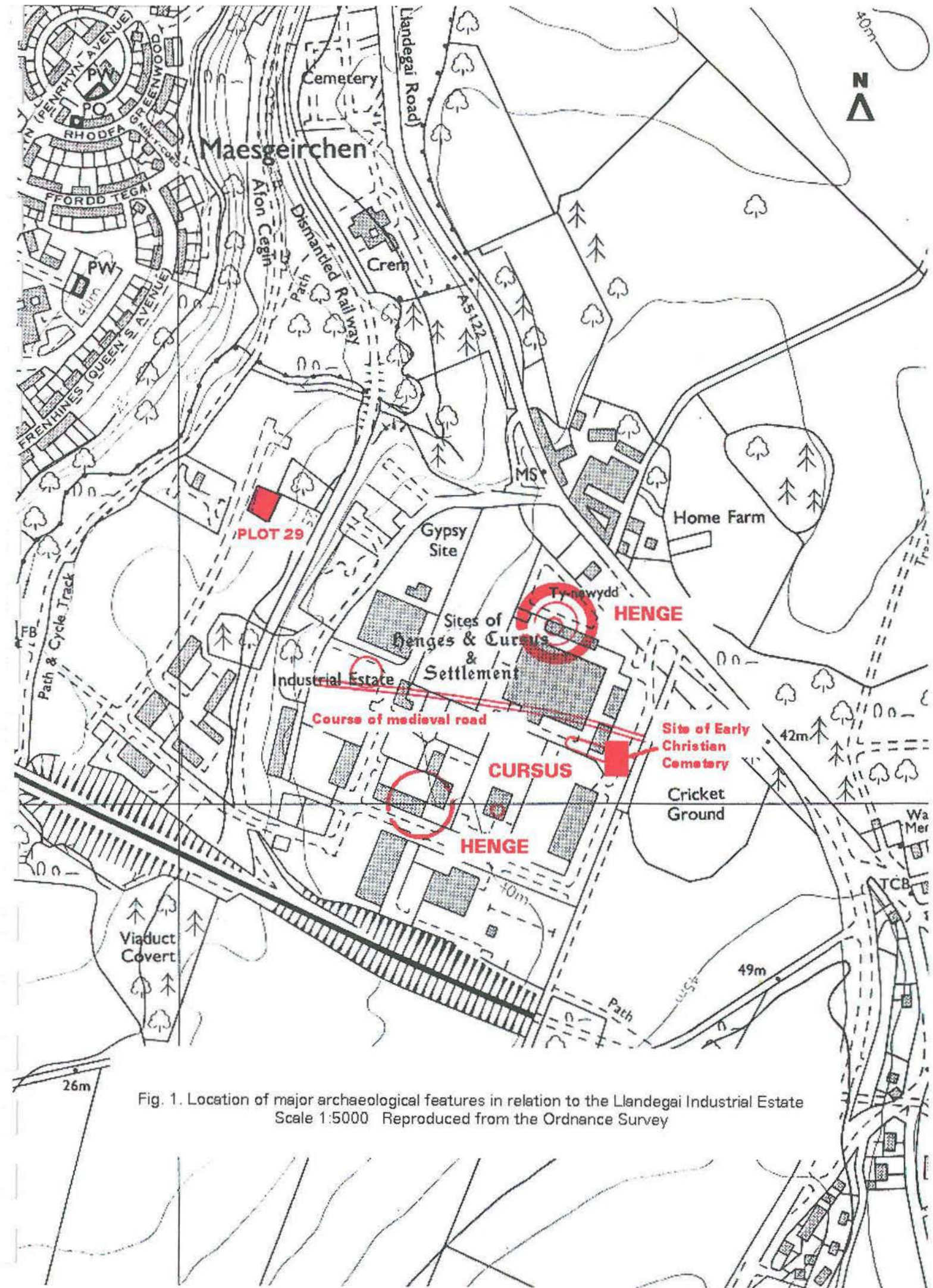


Fig. 1. Location of major archaeological features in relation to the Llandegai Industrial Estate
Scale 1:5000 Reproduced from the Ordnance Survey

0 10 20m

PLOT 34

ACCESS ROAD

BOUNDARY OF
AREA OF INTEREST

MANHOLE

BASE OF SLOPE

BREAK OF SLOPE

WOODLAND

FENCE

FEATURE 1

INTERFACE OF
REDEPOSITED
BANK MATERIAL

TRENCH 2

COURSE OF DRAIN

COURSE OF CULVERT

TRENCH 1

COURSE OF CULVERT

PLOT 29

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL
TRUST

Project	G.1434	Plot 29 Llandegai Ind. Est.
Scale	1:400	Drawn by AJS
Client	Watkin Jones and Son Ltd	

