

AFON TRYWERYN
LLANYCIL, NR BALA, GWYNEDD

ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT (G1439)

REPORT NO. 230

Gwynedd Archaeological Trust
Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Gwynedd

AFON TRYWERYN
LLANYCIL, NR BALA, GWYNEDD

Archaeological Assessment (G1439)

Prepared for Shawater Limited

by

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1. INTRODUCTION

The proposed hydro-electric scheme will extract water from the Afon Tryweryn at SH 8374 3986 and return it at SH 8443 4015. Gwynedd Archaeological Trust (Contracts Section) has been asked by Shawater Ltd to carry out an archaeological assessment 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 assess 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.

3. METHODS AND TECHNIQUES

3.1 Desk-top Study

This involved consultation of maps, computer records, written records and reference works, which make up the Sites and Monuments Record at Gwynedd Archaeological Trust. Records (including early Ordnance Survey maps, tithe maps, schedules, and reference works - see bibliography) were consulted in the Gwynedd Archives, Caernarfon and Dolgellau, the National Library of Wales Archives, Aberystwyth, and the University of Wales Archives, Bangor.

3.2 Field Search

This was undertaken on the 30th of September 1996, when the whole of the proposed route of the pipeline was walked. Weather conditions were good for fieldwork but about half of the length of the route was obscured by dense bracken which may have hidden features. Nevertheless, the line of the route on an easement c. 50m wide was walked and it can be considered that any features within this band would have been located by observation of the ground contours even though not visible above the bracken. However, it was not possible to

walk a more extensive easement and there could be other, as yet unrecorded features close to the route which would normally be expected to be identified as part of the assessment. If the line of the route deviates from that walked, it is recommended that additional archaeological assessment is carried out.

Nine features were identified and were marked on a copy of the 1:2,500 OS map as accurately as possible without surveying. Each site was described and assessed. Detailed notes, sketch plans and photographs were made of the more important features.

3.3 Report

All available information was collated and 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 assessment or mitigatory measures, as appropriate, are given in the relevant sections of this report.

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 assessment. By the end of the assessment there should be no sites remaining in this category.

3.5 Definition of Impact

The impact has been defined as none, slight, likely, considerable or unknown as follows:

None:

There is no construction impact on this particular site. (Sites identified as of particular importance are, where possible, avoided by the improvement proposals. Such sites have been identified in the tables.

Slight:

This has generally been used where the impact is marginal and would not by the nature of the site cause irreversible damage to the remainder of the feature, eg a track or field boundary.

Likely:

In some instances the site in question would not fall within the direct line of the proposed development but could be affected by construction works and therefore may, subject to its nature be removed or damaged.

Considerable:

The total removal of a feature or its partial removal which would effectively destroy the remainder of the site.

Unknown

This is used when the location of the site is unknown, but thought to be in the vicinity of the proposed development.

3.6 Definition of Mitigatory Recommendations

None:

No impact so no requirement for mitigation measures.

Detailed recording:

Requiring a photographic record, surveying and the production of a measured drawing prior to commencement of works.

Archaeological excavation may also be required depending on the particular feature and the extent and effect of the impact.

Basic recording:

Requiring a photographic record and full description prior to commencement of works.

Watching brief:

Requiring observation of particular identified features or areas during works in their vicinity. This may be supplemented by detailed or basic recording of exposed layers, structures or sections.

Avoidance:

Features which may be affected directly by the scheme, or during the construction of the scheme, should be avoided. Occasionally a minor change to the proposed route of the pipeline is recommended, but more usually it refers to the need for care to be taken during construction of the pipeline to avoid accidental damage to a site. This is often best achieved by clearly marking sites prior to the start of work.

Reinstatement:

The feature should be re-instated with archaeological advice and supervision.

4. ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Preliminary topographic assessment

The route as presently proposed falls into three topographic zones:

- a. The upper 200m, from the proposed intake, crosses a gently sloping, ill-drained and peat covered old floodplain. Beyond this 'hanging valley' the river drops sharply through a rocky gorge.
- b. In the central section of c. 500m length, the route crosses the medium sloping rocky valley sides, with sparse grass and outcrops at the west and bracken covered at the east.
- c. In the lower section of only c. 100m the route drops directly down the bracken and grass covered slope towards the lake edge. At the time of the survey the lake was many metres below optimum level.

In terms of potential for archaeological remains of any human settlement or agricultural activity this whole area is quite remote poor pasture and as a result sparsely populated. Nevertheless, the south facing valley side could be attractive to some settlement, if only of seasonal grazing type.

4.2 Archaeological and historic background

In the medieval period, as part of the kingdom of Gwynedd, the land here was part of the cantref of Meirionnydd in the commote of Penllyn, in the township of Gwernhefin, now part of the civil parish of Llanycil. Parts of Gwernhefin were granted to the Cistercian monks of Basingwerk Abbey in 1247 to form the grange of Boch-y-rhaeadr covering the present survey area and another small area adjoining Llyn Tegid (Bala Lake) (Williams-Jones, 1976). The latter included fishing rights in the lake while the economic basis of the Boch-y-rhaeadr land is likely to have been solely for rights to sheep pasture. As church land the area may not have been settled in an opportunistic way but may have only had seasonal shelters associated with sheep pasture. However, the lands seem to have been divided into a series of tenements at the time of the Dissolution and in the late 18th century was in estate of Richard Watkin Price of Rhiwlas, Caernarfon, High Sheriff of the County of Caernarvon (Rhiwlas ms). In the area of the survey were two tenements: Boch y Rhaeadr and Craig y Ronw. The present dwelling of Boch y Rhaeadr lies south of the survey area on the south side of the river, now at the reservoir edge, while Craig y Ronw lies north of the survey area (Drawing no. 1439/7/1).

The fields and their names on the tithe schedule of c. 1840 provide some insight into the past ownership and land use. Those relating to the survey area are four (fig. 1, 2112, 2113, 2145 and 2149). Three of these, 2112, 2113 and 2145 belonged to Bwlch Buarth (Bwlch y Buarth Cottage lay on the other side of the valley, on the south side of the Ffestiniog railway line on the 1901 25" OS map, close to what is now Pant-yr-Hedydd, fig. 1) while 2145 belonged to Craig yr enwy (now Craig-y-ronw). 2112 is Clwt y ddol (piece of meadow) actually recorded as arable. 2113 is Fawnog (peatland), turbary ie peat cutting land. 2145 is Fridd bwlch llwyn (upland pasture of Bwlch-llwyni), pasture. 2149 is Ddol Meddyg (Doctor's meadow), pasture. However, none of these provides any hints about early settlement or land use.

The Tryweryn valley was flooded in the 1960s when Llyn Celyn was constructed by Liverpool Corporation, an act which caused considerable controversy and opposition. A small village with a chapel and post office was flooded, and a number of outlying farms. A new chapel has been built on the northwest shore of the lake, designed by architect R L Gapper of Aberystwyth.

4.3 Existing archaeological record

It has been shown that in the medieval and early post-medieval period the higher land in this general area between the Arenig peaks and lying over c. 330m OD was common land or sheepwalk. Between c. 330m and 300m was a general fringe of *fridd* or seasonal sheep pasture and at the lower edge of this area, on the better-drained slopes, were a series of smallholdings, the *tyddynod* (Thomas, 1980, 165, 167). Below these were the wetter river valleys with field names showing bogs, meadows and alder woods and it is in this topographic zone that the present survey falls, suggesting poor potential for settlement. The area immediately to the north, however, and slightly higher up the slope, falls within the *fridd* zone and part of this was the subject of an archaeological survey in 1988, as part of the RCAHM (W) Upland Survey Project (GAT, 1993). This did show a considerable number of features including probable long huts of medieval date as well as other buildings, walls, enclosures, trackways and peat cuttings. It is possible that this zone of settlement spread into the present survey area although there are no sites known at present. Otherwise, the only site of archaeological interest currently known nearby is a large mound at Cae Garnedd (cairn field) (PRN 4726) which may be the remains of a robbed funerary cairn of Bronze Age or even Neolithic date.

4.4 The archaeological survey

Recommendations for further assessment are made if the site cannot be sufficiently well understood from existing knowledge to allow mitigation measures to be recommended. The mitigation measure is a product of the category of importance, the impact, and the nature of the site. Where "avoidance" is recommended, this is to include both direct avoidance by the pipeline and avoidance of construction traffic.

Features are numbered from the higher end of the route downwards. The location of all the features is shown on the accompanying map (Drawing no. 1439/7/1).

1. Drain

Category D Impact: Slight

Large drainage ditch, probably partially machine dug or re-dug.

Recommendation for further assessment: None.

Recommendation for mitigatory measures: None.

2. Rectangular hut and hut/enclosure

Category C Impact: Likely

Two small, rectangular, conjoined, drystone walled structures lying just south of and below the present road embankment. A telegraph pole has been inserted in one of them. The walls are roughly built of local surface cobbles. The smaller structure, to the north-west is c. 2m by 1.5m internally with a wall c. 0.6m wide and surviving up to 0.7m high with a possible entrance gap at the south. The larger, at the south-east, is c. 4m by 3m internally with a wall which tapers in width from about 1m at the base to 0.4m at the surviving height of c. 0.6m. The wall is robbed at the north end and there may have been an entrance at the northern end of the west side but there is another possible gap at the opposite side. Both structures have been terraced up above the slope so the floors are approximately level. This suggests that they were not just sheep pens. Both may have been roofed but the smaller is likely to have been a living shelter while the larger may have been just an enclosure or yard. The relatively good preservation and style of construction of the walls suggests the huts are of similar period to the wandering wall enclosures and sheepfolds of post-medieval date down the slope to the south. The layout, with a small hut and adjoining yard/enclosure is one which is commonly found in the uplands, assumed to be that of a shepherd's hut of the medieval or early post-medieval period.

Recommendation for further assessment: None.

Recommendation for mitigatory measures: Avoidance.

3. Sub-oval enclosure

Category C Impact: Likely

A roughly oval enclosure, open at the southern, downhill end, c. 8m wide and 12m long internally. The wall is c. 2m wide and up to 0.7m high, built of large rubble, up to 1.2m long and well spread. The interior is not terraced into the slope and there are no visible internal features to suggest settlement. The enclosure lies c. 10m south of the present road fence. The simple construction, with massive stones, shows it to be a very basic structure using nearby surface stone. To this extent it is quite different from the hut/s described above or the nearby field and sheepfold walls and thus suggests an earlier date but it is impossible to be more precise. Such small enclosures are frequently found in the uplands and taking into account the lack of evidence for any other sort of land use a connection with medieval monastic sheep pasturing seems a real possibility.

Recommendation for further assessment: None.

Recommendation for mitigatory measures: Avoidance.

4. Field wall

Category D Impact: Slight

Drystone field wall of a post-medieval enclosure, still standing to its full height of c. 1m in places. Its wandering line is explained by the incorporation of rock outcrops in its line. Tapered in section from c. 1m wide at the base to c. 0.5m at the top. Built from sub-angular stones, presumably from surface clearance.

Recommendation for further assessment: None.

Recommendation for mitigatory measures: None.

5. Sheep creep

Category D Impact: None

A low aperture through field wall 6. Of massive slab construction, c. 0.9m high and 0.5m wide. There is a funnel entrance at the west side consisting of two lines of large boulders.

Recommendation for further assessment: None.

Recommendation for mitigatory measures: Avoidance.

6. Field wall

Category D Impact: None.

Drystone wall, neatly built, mostly still standing to its full height of c. 1.5m. Tapering section, c. 1.2m at base to c. 0.5m at the top. Of estate/farm boundary type ie tall and relatively straight compared to the 'wandering' line of wall 4. However, wall 4 butts up against wall 6 so is later.

Recommendation for further assessment: None.

Recommendation for mitigatory measures: Avoidance.

7. Enclosure/pound

Category D Impact: Likely

A large scoop in the hillside defined by occasional large boulders around the edges. In plan it is ovoid, c. 16m east to west and 11m north to south. It must be a pound or holding pen related to sheep creep 5.

Recommendation for further assessment: None.

Recommendation for mitigatory measures: None.

8. Field gateway

Category D Impact: None

Gap through wall 4, defined by orthostat slab at east side. 1.5m wide with a slight 'apron' at the south of the west side.

Recommendation for further assessment: None.
Recommendation for mitigatory measures: Avoidance.

9. Field gateway

Category D Impact: None

Gap through field wall 6, neatly faced, 0.6m wide only.

Recommendation for further assessment: None.
Recommendation for mitigatory measures: Avoidance.

5. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MITIGATORY MEASURES

This lists the sites according to their perceived archaeological value.

Category A - National importance

Nil.

Category B - Regional importance

Nil.

Category C - Local importance

- 2. Rectangular huts/enclosures.
- 3. Oval enclosure.

Avoid accidental damage or disturbance.
Avoid accidental damage or disturbance.

Category D - Minor or damaged sites

- 1, 4, 7.
- 5, 6, 8, 9.

No action required.
Avoidance.

6. GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 The construction requirements

The pipeline construction would require an easement of a minimum width of c. 5m which could be reduced to 4m in places. Dumping would ideally take place alongside the trench, which would increase the width of the required easement.

6.2 Archaeological recommendations

Few features have been identified along this route which is understandable since the land is remote and of poor agricultural quality. There could be other as yet unlocated features in the vicinity of the route because of the dense bracken cover at the time of the survey. However, if there are they should not be affected if the route stays within a 50m wide easement of the proposed line. Any further alteration should be accompanied by further field survey during the winter, when the bracken has died back.

Those features identified are mainly of minor value, being walls, gates etc. relating to post-medieval use of the land. Two features, however, are of greater interest: no. 2, a probable hut with adjoining yard or shelter and no. 3, a sub-oval enclosure. The former are built of walls in a style similar to that of the sheep enclosures down the slope to the south. They could therefore be shepherds' shelters or, by their proximity to the road could be huts for construction workmen as this was a 'new' road built between 1797 (not on John Evans Map of

Wales, 1797) and 1838 (on OS 1" 1st edition). The original route to Bala followed the south side of the Tryweryn valley, crossing the pass east of Arenig Fawr. The sub-oval enclosure, no.3, has a style of construction quite different to any of the post-medieval walls and sheepfolds and seems likely to pre-date them. It is likely to be a small fold or pound. Isolated folds and pounds of a great variety of sizes and styles are to be found widely in the uplands and not easily assignable to periods. In this case, the construction style suggests a date earlier than the post-medieval period while the absence of any evidence of settlement in the Iron Age or Romano-British periods in the previous intensive survey in 1988, just to the north (GAT, 1993) suggests that the enclosure is of the medieval period. Long huts of this period were found in the previous survey and there could be others closer to the pipeline route which have yet to be located, hidden beneath the bracken.

Both features 2 and 3 are of at least local interest and lie more or less directly on the proposed route. Being small and well defined it should be possible to avoid them by suitable adjustment of the route.

The proposed inlet weir and turbine house sites are both in archaeologically non-sensitive areas and need no further action. Overall, only a minor archaeological input is required but the following recommendations are made:

6.2.1 Before construction

A. There should be an archaeologist present during the marking out and fencing of the easement to advise on the exact route. This would ensure that the specified features would be avoided.

B. Archaeological advice should be sought before and during the creation of any temporary topsoil dumping areas.

6.2.2. During construction

A. There should be a watching brief to allow monitoring of excavation near to features 2 and 3 in order to avoid damage and to record any associated features which might be uncovered since this whole hillside was obscured by bracken at the time of the survey.

6.2.3. After construction

A. There should be allowance for production of a proper level of archiving of any records and of a report if the resulting information is suitable.

7. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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7.2 Maps

Ordnance Survey maps:

1" first edition, c. 1838
1:10,000 1886 (6")
1:2,500 1901

Tithe maps and schedules c. 1840

John Evans Map of North Wales (2") 1797

7.3 Published Sources

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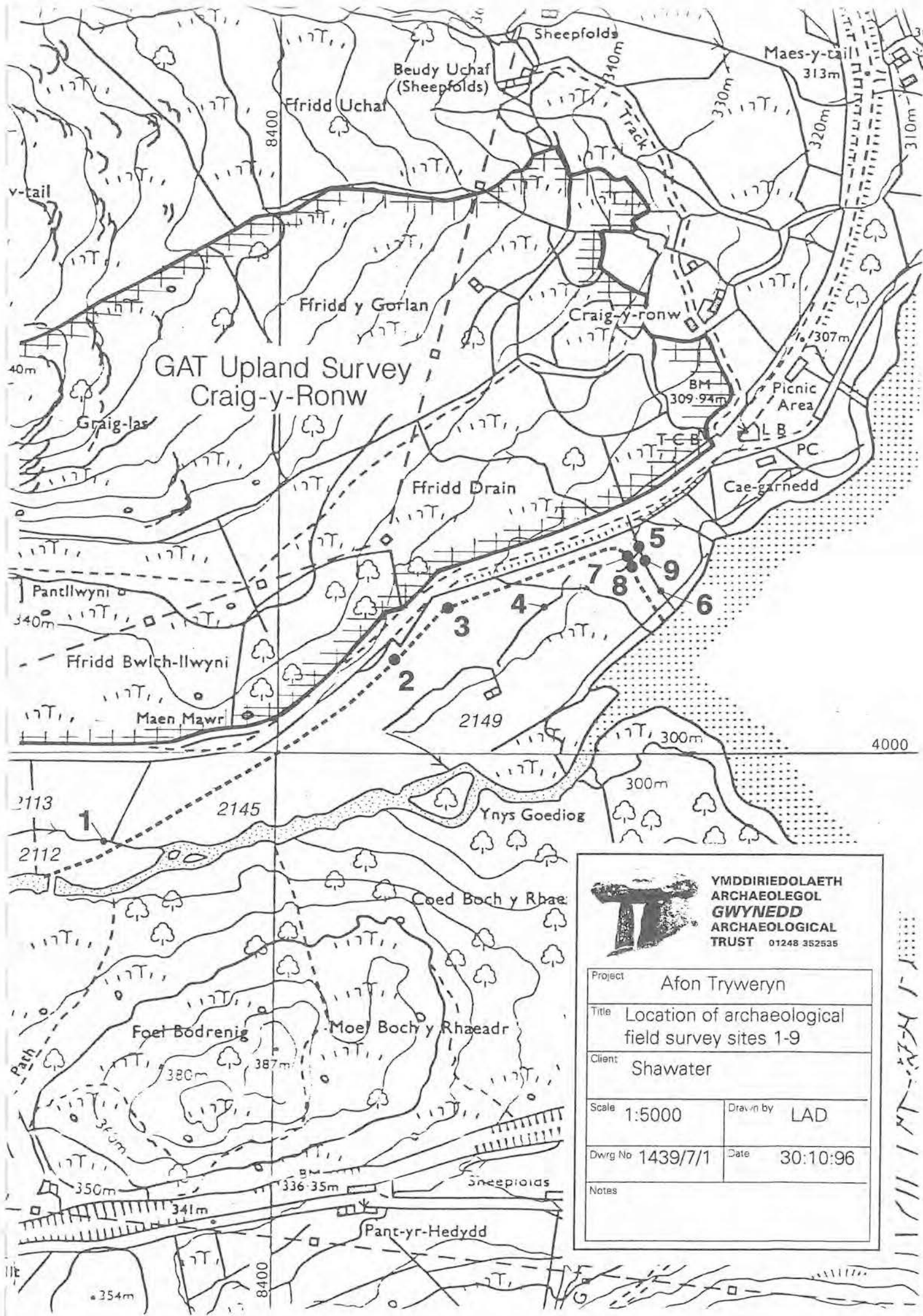
Williams-Jones, K., 1976. *The Merioneth Lay Subsidy Roll, 1292-3*.

8. NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

An archaeological assessment was carried out of the route of the proposed pipeline. The work involved a desktop study of existing records followed by a field walkover. The desktop study included examination of records held in the Gwynedd Sites and Monuments Record and searches of other records and maps in archives at Aberystwyth, Caernarfon, Dolgellau and Bangor, as well as maps and printed literature. The field work involved walking all of the route of c. 900m with observation of a corridor of approximately 100m width (except where restricted by bracken cover) with brief recording and assessment of all features.

A total of 9 features were noted over the whole route. Of these, 7 were minor features such as field walls related to post-medieval farming. The remaining two features were of greater archaeological value: an enclosure of unknown but possibly medieval date and a small rectangular post-medieval hut.

The minor features can be avoided or require no action while it is recommended that the pipeline route is designed to avoid the other two features. A recommendation is also made for an archaeological presence during the positioning of the easement and for a watching brief during excavation along the part of the hillside close to the two specified features since the bracken may have obscured other related features.



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Project Afon Tryweryn	
Title Location of archaeological field survey sites 1-9	
Client Shawater	
Scale 1:5000	Drawn by LAD
Dwrg No 1439/7/1	Date 30:10:96
Notes	

11/11/96 14:30

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