

HENLLYS HALL (LLANFAES)
GOLF COURSE EXTENSION
ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION
AND EXCAVATION



Report No. 265

Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Gwynedd
Gwynedd Archaeological Trust

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Henlllys Hall Hotel are in the process of constructing the second phase of a golf course on an area of former agricultural land north of the hotel. The area is of high archaeological potential because of the presence of the former medieval town and maerdref of Llanfaes, and so a planning condition specifying that a programme of archaeological work had to be carried out during the construction of the course was imposed. A project design to carry out an archaeological evaluation was prepared by Gwynedd Archaeological Trust (Contracts Section). This was accepted by the clients, and the Trust was contracted to carry out the work.

This was followed by the excavation of two areas of land, which were identified during the evaluation as containing features which required excavation prior to construction work starting.

The project designs was judged acceptable by Gwynedd Archaeological Planning Service, who were also responsible for monitoring the work throughout the project on behalf of Anglesey Borough County Council.

A programme of archaeological work had previously been undertaken during the first phase of the construction of the golf-course (GAT Report No. 260), and the results contained within that report affected the methodology used for the current work. It is not intended to repeat the findings of that report here, although eventually it is hoped to combine the results of both projects into a single report.

The work on the site was divided into a number of stages, although some of these ran concurrently:

1. Geophysical survey
2. Trial excavation of areas to be disturbed
3. Interim report and recommendations
4. Additional work arising from the recommendations
5. Final report.

This is the final report, which describes the work carried out throughout the five stages.

2. AIMS

The aims of the work were to evaluate the archaeological potential of the entire site of the second phase of the golf course, and to make recommendations based upon the findings of the evaluation. However, because the ground was to be disturbed in very limited areas, and because a certain amount of disturbance had already taken place, only the west end of the site was selected for evaluation *i.e.* the area considered to be of greatest archaeological potential.

Following the evaluation, the primary aim was to ensure that all the features were examined and recorded which had been identified by the evaluation work and which were to be destroyed by the development. These features lay in two discrete areas, namely the east side of the 12th green and the access area.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Geophysical survey

The geophysical survey was carried out along the side of the Llanfaes to Sling road, an area considered to of high potential because of the probable medieval origins of the road (see GAT Report No. 260), and in the vicinity of green's 12 and 13. This survey covered an area of 9,600 sq metres, and was carried out using a Geoscan Research FM36 fluxgate gradiometer. The designated areas were first assessed by generalised scanning and then surveyed in detail in 20m x 20m grids. Readings were taken at 0.50m intervals with a traverse width of 1m giving 800 readings per grid. The data was then transferred to computer for processing and display using the Geoplot 2.01 program.

3.2 Excavations

The evaluation excavations were confined to those areas which were to be disturbed by the construction of the golf course, namely the west half of the 12th green and the access point linking the existing course south of the road to the

new course on the north side of the road. In addition, the top-soil stripping of the 13th green was monitored, and the resulting surface examined for features.

Following the evaluation, additional excavations were carried out at the 12th green to investigate the features noted during the evaluation, and additional excavation and recording were carried out at the access point.

3.3 Archive

The source notes, plans, section drawings and photographs will be stored within the regional Sites and Monuments Record at Gwynedd Archaeological Trust. The finds will be fully catalogued and stored at Oriel Ynys Mon.

4.0 RESULTS

4.1 Geophysical survey

The geophysical survey revealed an array of linear features of indeterminate age criss-crossing the survey area, as well as less well defined features (a transcript of the stronger recordings is shown in fig. 1). One of these features (a possible trackway) is also visible on aerial photographs. Less strong readings which could not be easily transcribed may indicate the presence of buildings.

4.2 Excavation

4.2.1 Green 13

This green lies immediately west of the line of a possible medieval road (see plan). Construction involved stripping the topsoil to subsoil depth. Two parallel trenches were investigated, each approximately 12m by 2m. These were excavated by machine to subsoil depth (< 0.40m deep), and partly cleaned by hand. No archaeological features were recognised cutting the subsoil at this location.

4.2.2 Green 12

The siting for this green occupies the highest point of ground in the immediate area. The construction of the green was to involve mechanical excavation below subsoil depth, *ie.* below the level at which sub-surface archaeology would be recognised. The Trust monitored initial uncovering and scraping back of the ground surfaces; this was carried out by mechanical excavator using a 2m wide toothless bucket. This activity revealed the presence of archaeological features cut into the subsoil. Subsequently a small area (5m x 6m approximately) was more clearly defined by hand excavation in which discrete features were revealed and investigated (fig. 2). In the second phase this was enlarged to 12m by 8m. The variance in the definition of the features exposed in the subsoil (at an average depth of 0.5m below modern ground surface) may suggest a chronological distinction between activities to which the features relate.

The most clearly identified features are described below:

Feature 1 : a linear feature (*ditch or foundation trench*) revealed for 12.0m of its length, showing as a dark, slightly irregular, line within the investigated area. The feature was sectioned and emptied at two locations along the revealed length (*sections 1 & 2*, see fig.3). Both sections demonstrated a roughly 'U' shape profile, cut into subsoil, and filled by a uniform brown clay silt. Re-deposited clay (upcast from the digging of the feature) defined the edges at surface. Some of this material had subsequently slumped back over the feature, especially on the east side adjacent to *feature 2*. The feature survives to a maximum depth of some 0.4m and is 0.8m wide. The profile seen in section 1 (fig. 3) suggests that this feature cuts, or may cut, *feature 3*; but the ephemeral nature of *feature 3* did not allow this to be confirmed.

Feature 2 : a shallow linear feature, presumably a ditch, approximately 0.25m deep and 0.40m wide with a soft 'V' profile, as seen in *section 1*, but more irregular. This feature appeared to have been cut through the upcast material derived from *feature 1*, and contained a similar fill. The feature does not run parallel to *feature 1* and both converge close to the location of *section 2*, beyond which it either terminates, or continues cut through the fill of *feature 1*.

Feature 3 : a shallow, amorphous L' shaped feature, shown most clearly by differential drying of the surface clay, when it appeared as a lighter colour in the darker sub-soil. Attempts to section the feature were not successful, as upon excavation, the visible differences disappeared, and the feature could not be differentiated from the surrounding subsoil. The ditch (*feature 1*) appears to cut through the feature. The feature may

indicate the former presence of timbers on the surface, or it may simply be differences within the natural sub-soil.

Feature 4 : appeared at sub-soil surface as a well defined sub-circular feature (0.40m diameter and 0.45m deep), filled by a dark brown silty clay/soil. It cuts through the fill of *feature 2*.

Feature 5 : a shallow scoop (0.3m x 0.2m x 0.15m deep) adjacent to *feature 4*, and to which it may be contemporary.

Feature 6 : a shallow but well defined sub-circular feature (0.25m diameter x 0.13m deep). It cuts through the natural sub-soil, but is surrounded by upcast material.

Feature 7 : a shallow square shaped hollow (0.28m x 0.25m x 0.08m deep). It cuts through the natural sub-soil, and is surrounded by upcast material. Its square shape is indicative of having been spade dug.

Discussion

The results of the excavations at the site of No.12 green are inconclusive; features 4, 6, 7 and probably feature 5, are postholes - feature 4 contained a number of packing stones which support this interpretation - and 6 and 7, possibly spade dug from their square shape, appear to be directly on the projected course of an earlier boundary fence. Both were recognised relatively high in the stratigraphic sequence and are therefore most probably recent features.

The full extent of features 1, 2 and 3 were not seen within the excavated area and their true function could not therefore be ascertained from this project. Features 1 and 2 are probably ditches marking divisions between plots of land. Feature 1 is stratigraphically earlier than feature 2, and although they may both have served the same function, it appears that the one ditch superseded the other, and that the later ditch was dug on slightly different alignment. The similarity of the fill material did not allow a distinction to be made between the fill of feature 1 and feature 2, but the digging of the later ditch on a slightly different alignment implies the first ditch had silted up before the digging of the second. However, the silting up of a ditch can be a rapid process, and the digging of the two ditches need not be separated by any more than a single generation (i.e. some 30 years). The interpretation of the features would be greatly aided by additional geophysical survey.

A complete stratigraphical sequence for the features revealed was not clearly established; the following sequence is nonetheless offered as the most likely course of events: the earliest feature is F3, a possible early boundary, which was cut by F1, a later boundary, which was in turn superseded and cut by F2, another boundary ditch. Postholes F4 and F5 cut through F2, postholes F6 and F7 appear to cut natural or re-deposited clay (remnant from F3 ?) and are likely to indicate the latest boundary line (fence) to cross this area. The postholes were the first features to appear in the stratigraphic sequence, and are all thought to be Post-medieval in date, and possibly of the 19th or 20th century. The fill of the two ditches did not contain any modern pottery, even though there were large quantities within the ploughsoil, so it is possible these are pre-1750 in date.

4.2.3 Access point

The access point from the south to the north side of the golf course crosses the road some 50m west of the cottage called Ty Bach, where the level of the road is 1.6m below the field level. The difference in height was made up by a revetment wall alongside the road 1.20m high, and a short steep slope at the edge of the field, which was some 0.4m high. The revetment wall was surmounted by iron railings and a modern fence.

An entrance 6m wide was cut through the wall and up the slope: the new path was angled up the slope to the west, and cut into the natural sub-soil. In total, an area 18m by 6m was examined, which included the revetment wall, the features at the base of the slope, the natural slope, and the features at the top of the slope.

It was found that the original ground surface had sloped fairly steeply from the road up to the north, but that the top of the slope was some 8m north of the road i.e. at least 6m back from the present break of slope at the edge of the field. This meant that the original slope had been filled in as far as the revetment wall alongside the road. At its greatest depth this fill was 1.2m high, but within this fill, at a depth of 0.8m below the ground surface, was a layer containing 19th century material. Therefore the upper levels of fill are 19th century or later. No finds were recovered from the fill above the 19th century layer. The 19th century layer was approximately 2m wide from the revetment wall to the slope on the north.

Underlying the 19th century layer, and separated from it by a layer of clean brown clayey silt 0.4m thick, was the subsoil: a light orange/brown silty clay layer. Cut into this layer immediately to the north of the field bank was a linear feature 0.8m wide and 0.3m deep filled with rounded stones generally less than 0.1m in length. This was

interpreted as a drain running parallel to the road. South of the drain, and underlying the present field wall, were the remnants of a clay bank, which lay between the drain and the road. This clay bank was visible as a low bank of clay and small stone approximately 1m across and 0.15m high. Medieval pottery and bone was found immediately overlying the drain, and on the surface of the slope (*i.e.* on the subsoil which defined the form of the original slope) north of the drain.

At the top of the slope, a small area was scraped to subsoil level by machine, and then cleaned by hand. The subsoil lay some 0.3m below the surface, from which it was separated by a layer of brown clayey silt which was divided into two similar layers by a harder layer containing quantities of small pea gravel. This layer was interpreted as the base of ploughing operations in relatively recent years. Medieval pottery shards were found in both layers, as were six 13th century coins and a lead spindle whorl. The edge of the slope was clearly visible in plan, where the darker clay/silt met the more orange clay subsoil. The line of the natural slope was examined in two places: on the east side of the excavated area, and on the west side. On the west side a ditch had been dug just below the lip of the slope, with slight traces of a bank to the north: the bank and ditch appeared to run along the top of the slope. This feature was not present on the east side of the excavated area.

Discussion

From the above, it would appear that in medieval times the area examined consisted of a slope running from the level of the present road back into the field, and that the edge of the slope formerly lay some 6m north of the existing field boundary. At the base of the slope was a stone filled drain and a clay bank, both of which ran parallel to the present road. By the 19th century a layer of soil 0.4m thick had accumulated over the medieval surface and over the clay bank. Sometime after this date a considerably greater amount of soil had either been brought in or accumulated through heavy ploughing, so that the field level lay some 1.2m above the level of the road. This material was held in place by a revetment wall which consisted of a single line of boulders. The revetment wall could not have been built without material to build it against, so the stonework post-dates the accumulation of the soil. A possible explanation is that the revetment wall was built during a road widening scheme, when the deposits would have been cut back and the stones built into the resulting section. It is probable that the iron fence which surmounted the bank was of the same age as the revetment wall.

It has been suggested (GAT Report No. 260) that the road which runs along the south side of the field is medieval in date. These excavations do not offer conclusive proof of a medieval date for the road, but the fact that the drain and bank, which are of medieval date, both respect the alignment of the road does help confirm a similar date for the road.

4.2.4 Metal detector finds

The field was examined for metal artifacts by Mr A Gillespie. A number of coins and other lead objects of medieval date were found in the area bounded by the road to the south, on the west and north by the extant field boundaries, and on the east by greens 8 and 12. In total 7 whole coins and 6 half coins dating from the 12th and 13th century were found, with 5 lead spindle whorls, 2 lead weights and 2 bronze rings, all of similar date to the coins. In addition, six coins of 13th century date were found within the excavation area of the access point, all above the top of the slope.

All the finds were recovered from within plough soil and therefore unstratified. The finds will be fully catalogued and stored at Oriel Ynys Mon.

5.0 DISCUSSION

The geophysical survey, the excavations and the metal detector finds all indicate activity within the Medieval period, particularly at the south and east ends of the site. The geophysical results are difficult to interpret within the limited area that has been surveyed. However the majority of the clearly identifiable features show a distinct orientation from south-west to north-east, which matches the line of the possible medieval road which cuts through the site and joins on to the Llanfaes to Sling road. This latter road is also probably medieval for this part of its length (Report No. 260), although further west it may have run on a different alignment. At right-angles to these features are indistinct closely spaced linear features, not marked on the interpretation plan but visible on the print out of the survey, which are best interpreted as ploughing marks. The regularity of the linear features revealed by the geophysical survey suggests they are boundary divisions either of Medieval crofts (house sites) or of a Medieval open field system which usually involves the cultivation of strips of land. There are other features visible, and it is probable that these are of a different age to the more regular features. The ditches revealed by excavation at the 12th green run follow the same orientation, and are probably, therefore, of the same period as the features indicated on the geophysical survey. The replacing of one ditch with another after the first one had silted up implies a certain longevity of use and function.

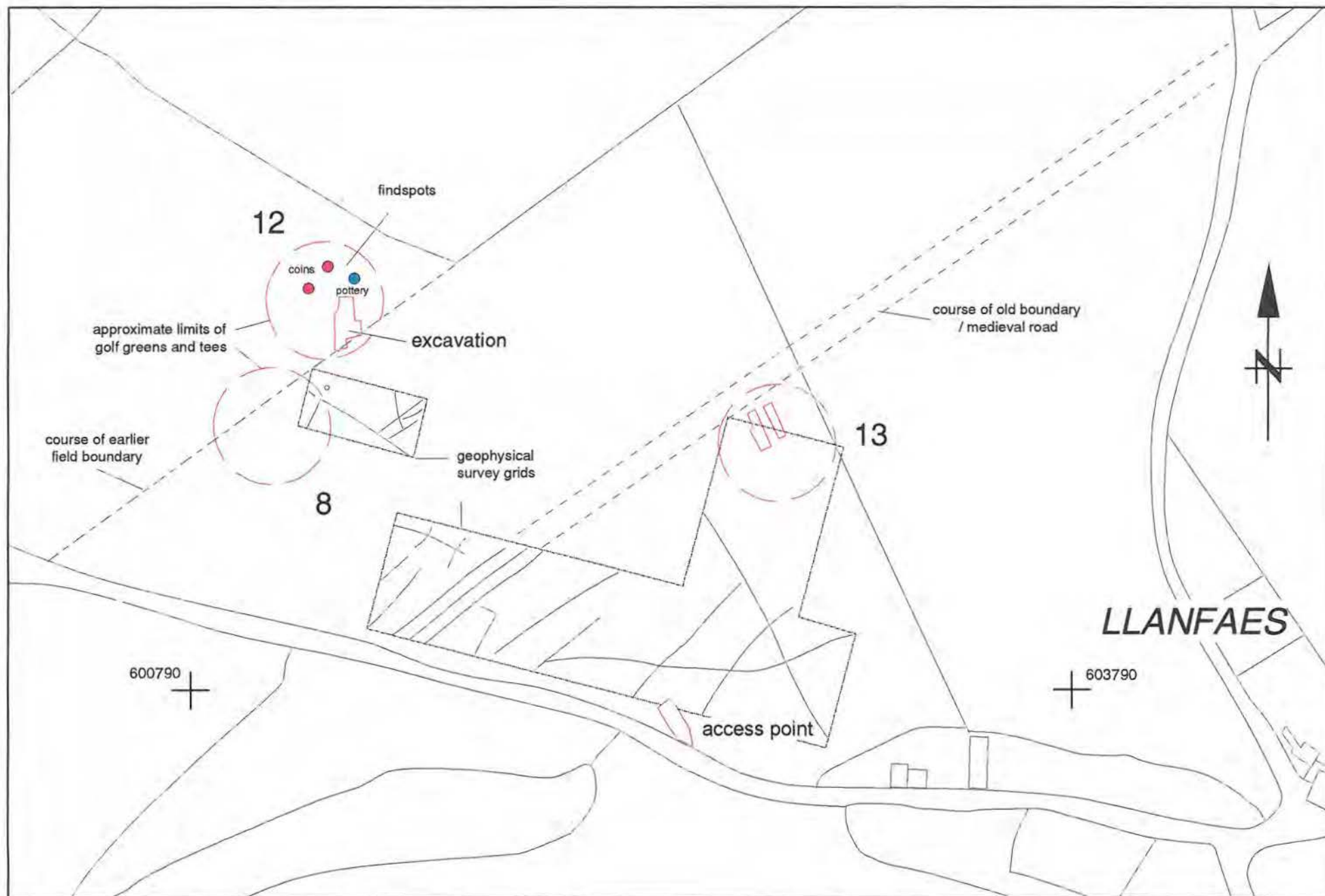
The excavations at the access point did not aid interpretation of the geophysical survey, because the area examined

was of insufficient size to examine the features located by survey. However, the identification of the original break of slope is of interest as is the probable ditch lying along the break of slope. The drain and clay bank at the bottom of the slope both suggest that the present road is Medieval.

The quantity of medieval pottery from the access point excavation and the number of coins found by metal detecting, although both are at a lower density than the area south of the road previously investigated, would suggest the presence of domestic activity. This activity is greater on the east and south sides of the area, and from this it can be deduced that archaeological remains are most likely to be found in the vicinity of Ty Bach.

6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

The extent of the Medieval town of Llanfaes has not yet been determined, but present information would suggest a concentration of activity between the church and Henllys Hall *i.e.* in the area south of the Llanfaes to Sling road, with a lower concentration of Medieval finds and geophysical features to the north of that area. However, the scale of work undertaken at Llanfaes is not yet sufficient to allow a full understanding of the site or the nature of the archaeological remains. Therefore any future ground disturbance within the area evaluated for this report should be preceded by geophysical survey and excavation.

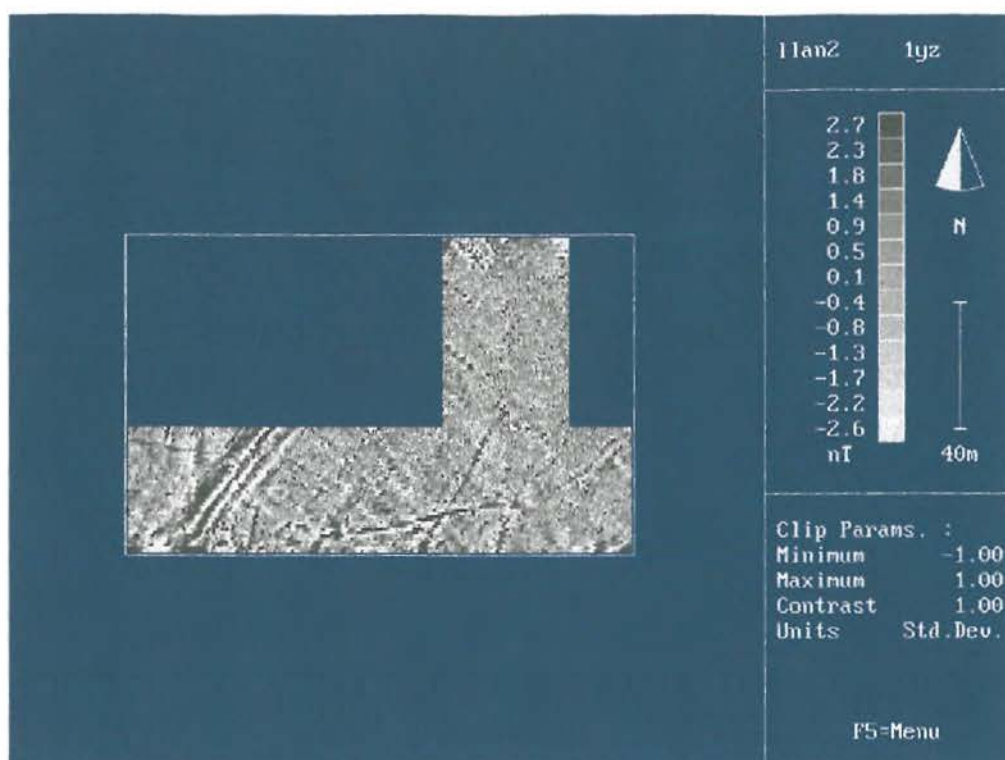


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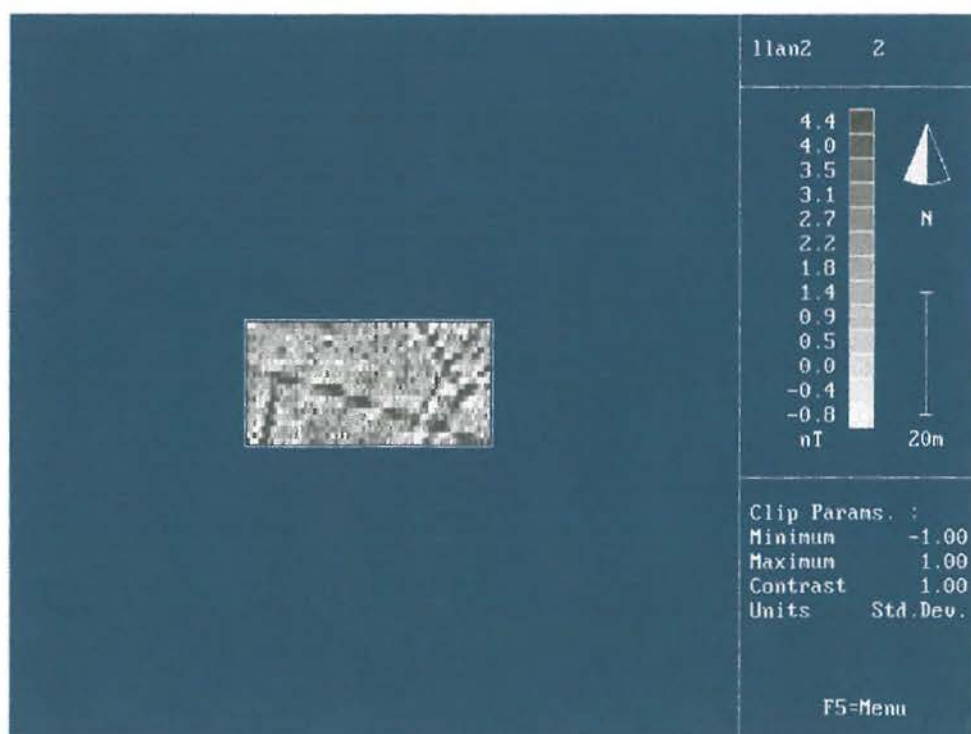
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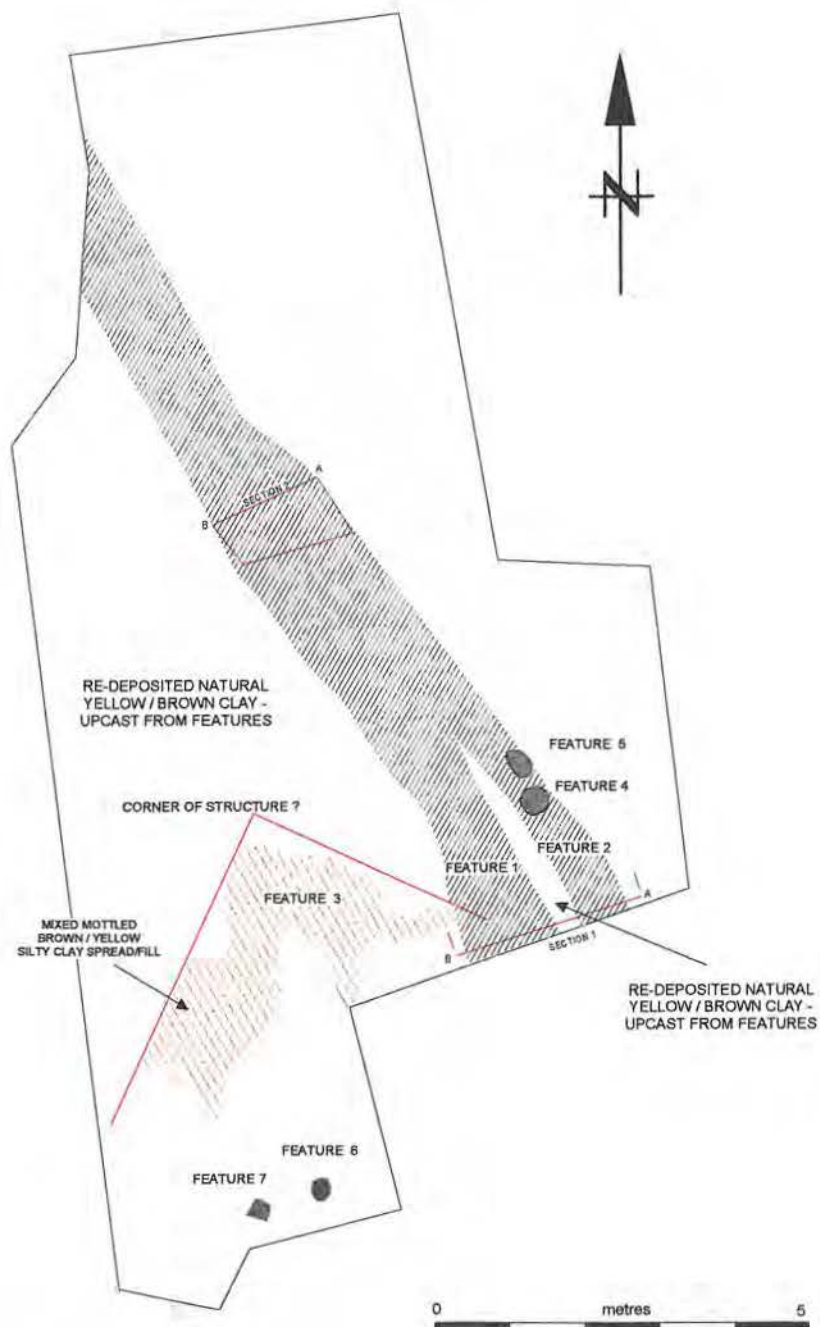
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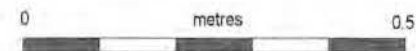
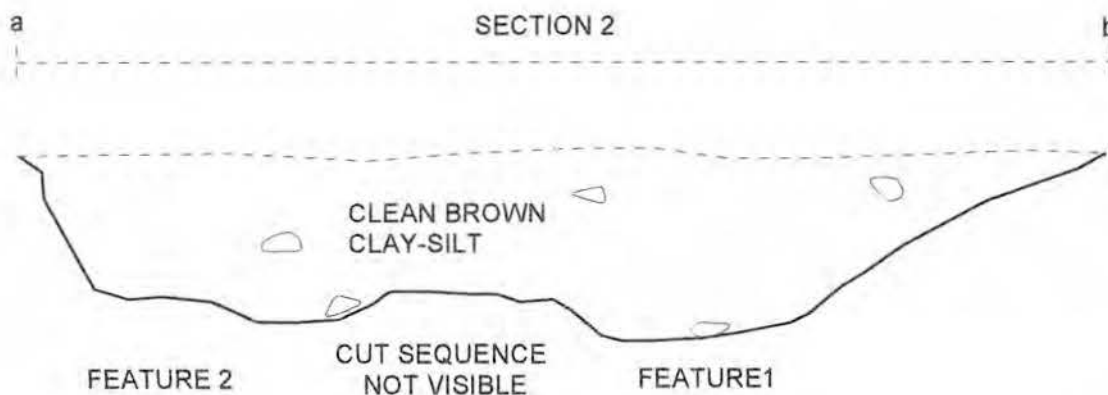
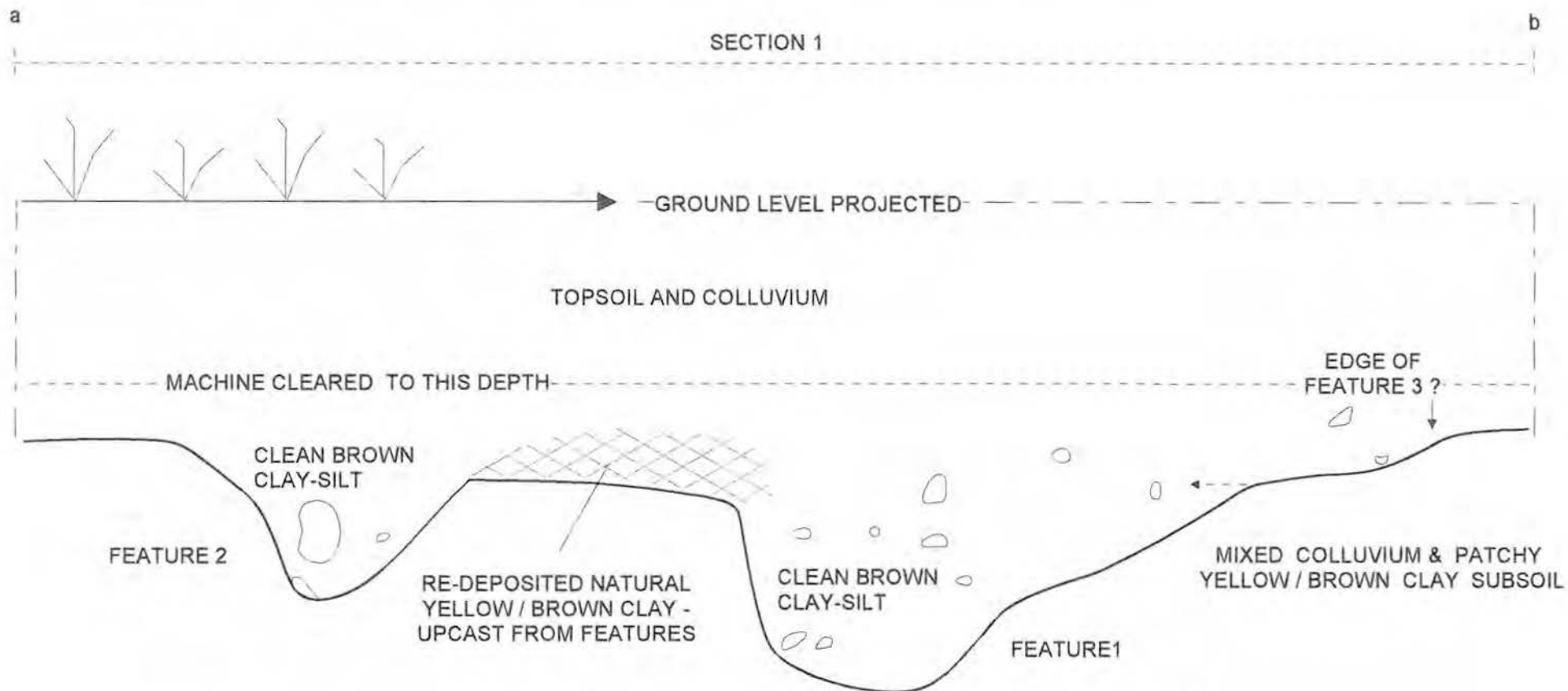
Geophysical survey: Area 1



Geophysical survey: Area 2



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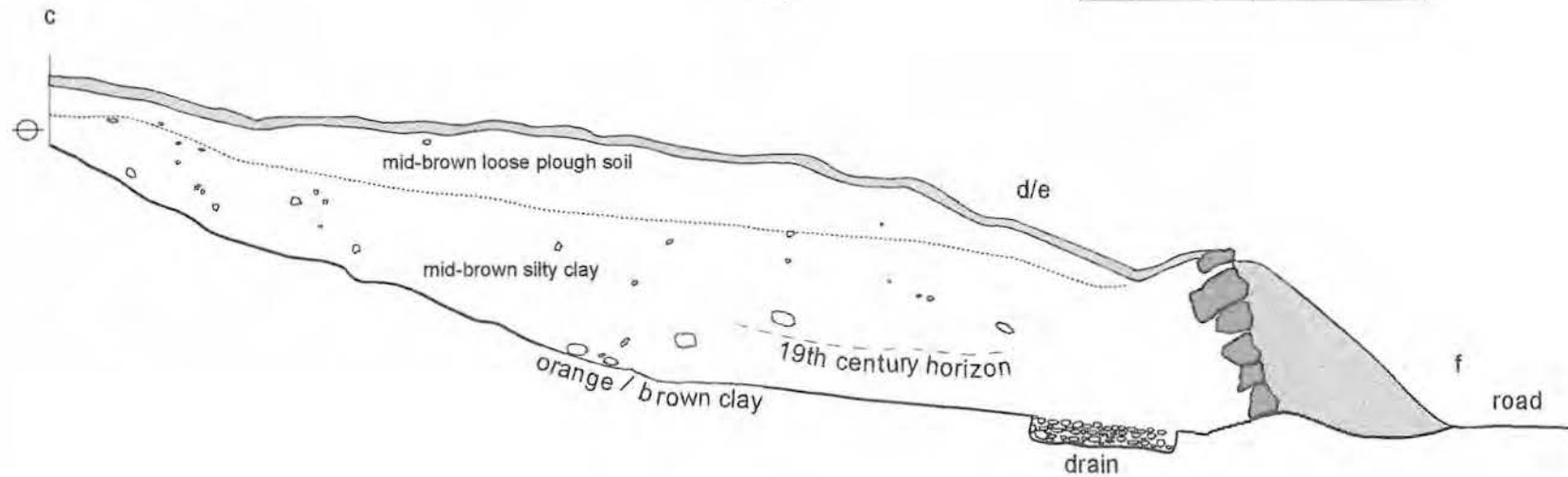
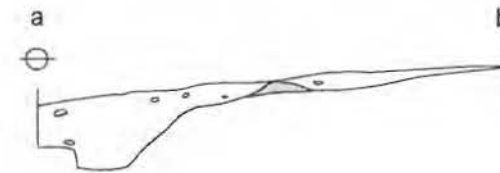
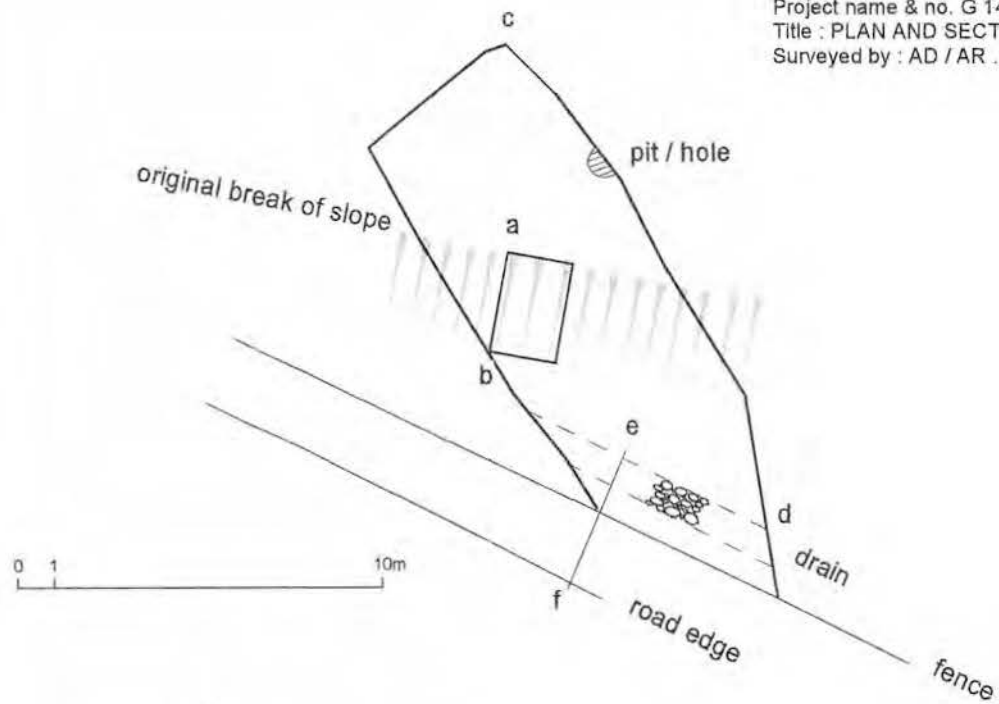


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Project name & no. G 1494 : HENLLYS GOLF COURSE
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 Surveyed by : AD / AR . Drawn by : DL. Date : 31:07:97



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View of features on Green 12 from north



View of drain at access point

