

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

COEDYDD ABER NNR

FOOTPATH CONSTRUCTION



Report No. 300

Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol *Gwynedd* Archaeological Trust

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Prepared for

CYNGOR CEFN GWLAD CYMRU
THE COUNTRYSIDE COUNCIL FOR WALES

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Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Gwynedd
Gwynedd Archaeological Trust

Archaeological Watching Brief at Coedydd Aber NNR (G1540)

Footpath Construction

Introduction and aims

The Countryside Council for Wales in co-operation with the landowners, the National Trust, aim to extend access for disabled visitors at the southern end of the Coedydd Aber NNR. The objective is to provide access to a position from which the waterfall of Rhaeadr-fawr would be visible. As part of this objective a new 60m length of path has been constructed by the contractors Hewden Hire of Bangor. The path extends from the boundary fence at the northern extremity of the National Trust land round a natural outcrop to rejoin the existing footpath close to the new bridge over Afon Rhaeadr-fawr. The new path will have to be further extended to achieve the overall objective when funds allow.

Gwynedd Archaeological Trust was contracted to provide a watching brief to ensure that the impact on the archaeology was minimised and that any new features or sites revealed during construction were recorded.

Archaeological background

The Aber valley contains a rich archaeological heritage, which includes Prehistoric, Medieval and later settlements with their associated field systems. In the southern part of the valley there are a number of fine Late Prehistoric settlements and fields which lie close to the existing footpath leading to the falls, one of which (PRN 7399) lies adjacent to the proposed footpath. This site consists of rough lines of walling, which form the foundations of a round hut and adjoining enclosure. A large earthfast boulder forms part of the south-west side of the feature.

Archaeological impact

There were two principal areas of potential impact, during site access, and during the path construction.

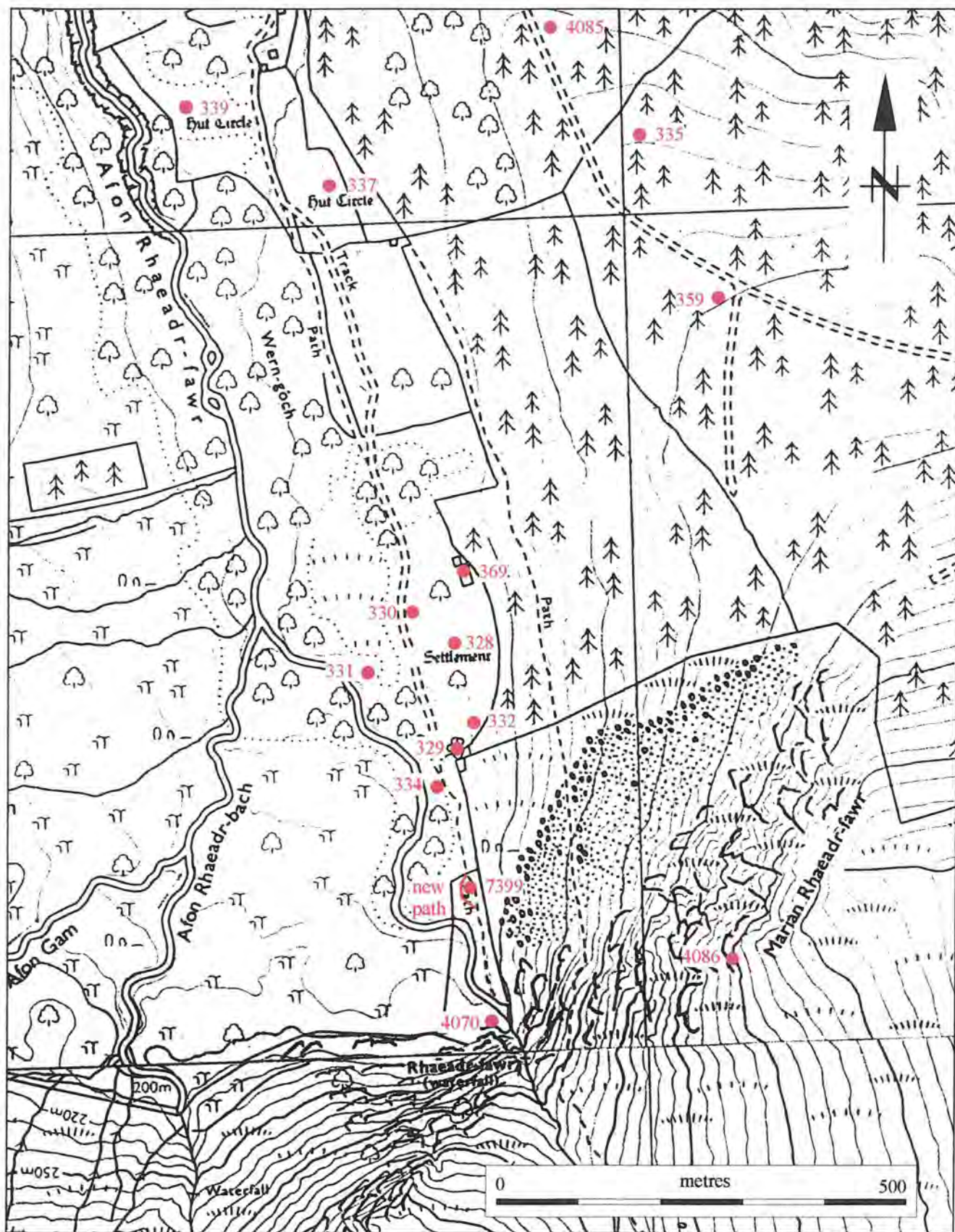
The construction work was monitored from 20th-24th April 1998. Two machines, a small 7.5 ton tracked excavator and a dumper truck, were brought up the existing vehicular track to its southernmost point, which lay some 150 m north of the site of the new path. The dumper truck was unable to travel beyond this point, and was not taken onto the construction site. It was not possible to take the excavator along the existing footpath, so it was taken uphill east of the path, and then back down to the path north of the National Trust boundary fence. This involved taking it through existing gaps in two of the Prehistoric walls, and close to an enclosed settlement (PRN 329). No damage was caused to any of the sites during this process.

The construction of the new path, 60 m long and 1 m wide, required the removal of the top soil, and partial revetment. The northern 10 m was on level ground, and close to the round hut and enclosure (PRN 7399). A route was chosen which gave the hut as much clearance as possible. Once the path reached sloping ground, it was excavated on the east side, and built up on the west side. Additional stone needed for the revetment was taken from the level area on the west side of the path opposite the round hut. Following excavation, the edges of the paths were banked with stones and compacted soil, and the bed was covered with stone chippings.

Results

The creation of the new access path at Coedydd Aber NNR was completed by 24th April 1998. No features of archaeological interest were noted during the construction work. The topsoil was a very thin red/brown sandy soil, with up to 50% stone inclusion from the scree slope.

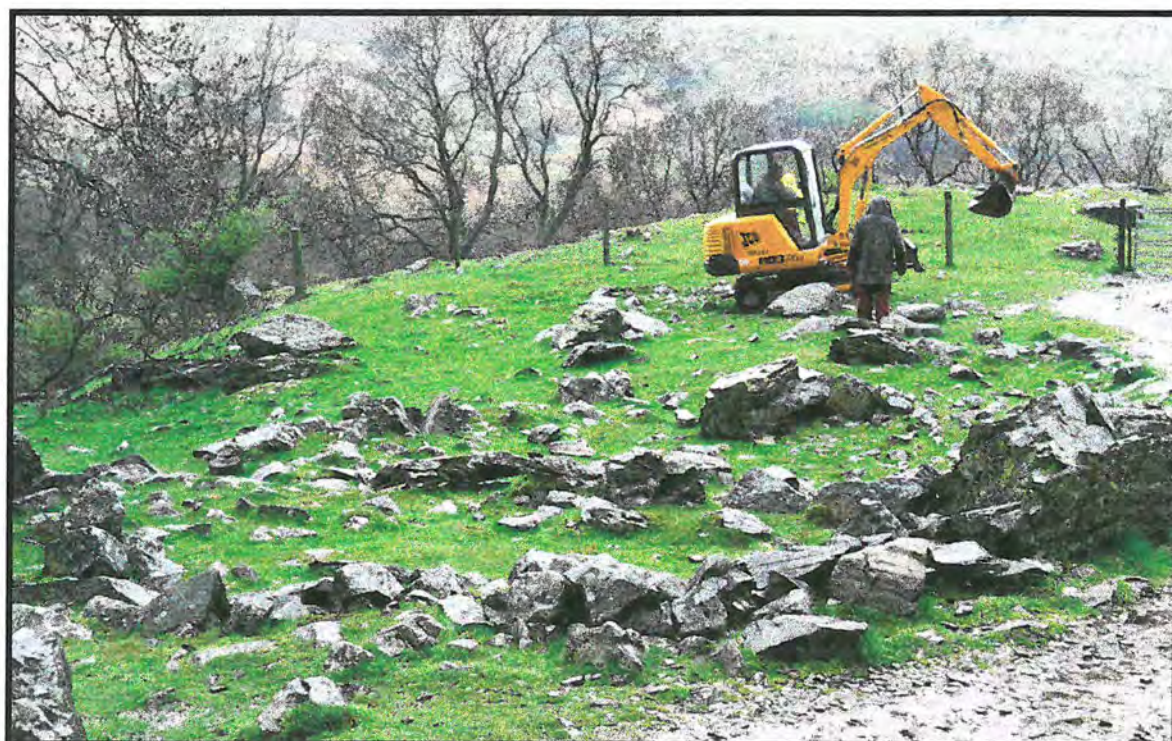
The work was accomplished with no damage to the visible archaeological remains.



Location of the new footpath and archaeological sites at Coedydd Aber



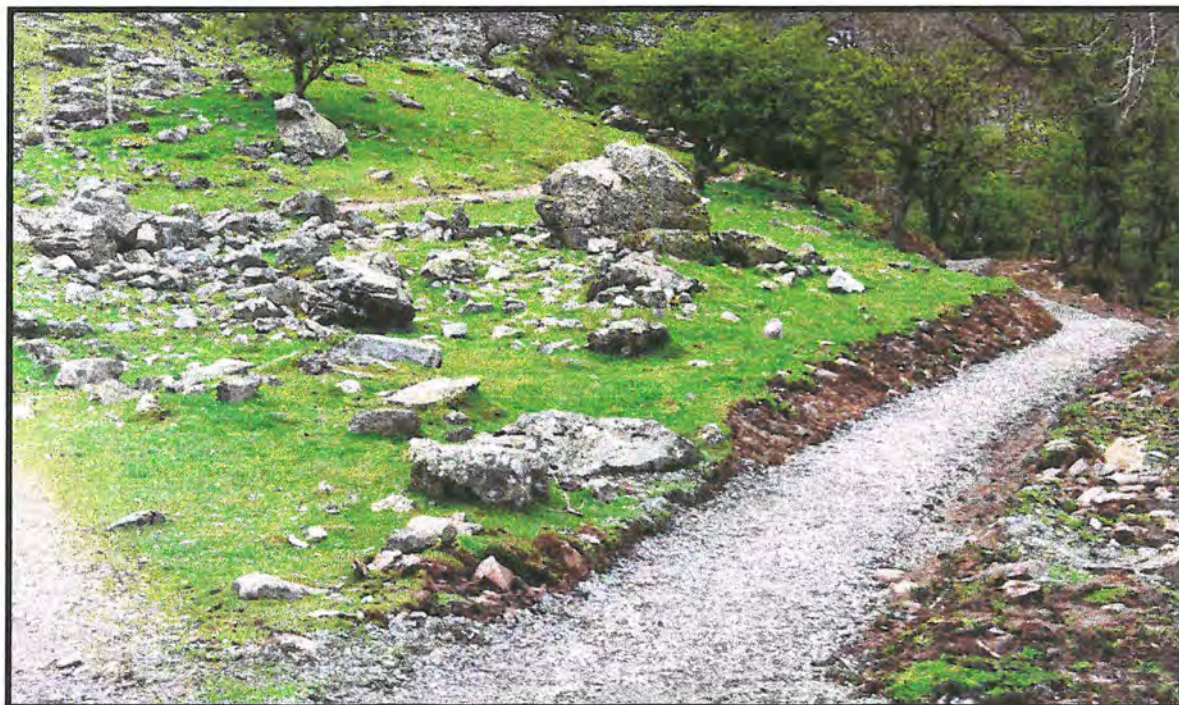
Access through settlement PRN 329



Site of new footpath looking north across hut circle PRN 7399



New footpath to the west of hut circle PRN 7399 - looking north



New footpath to the west of hut circle PRN 7399 - looking south

