

A470 Cardiff to Glan Conwy Trunk
Road

Ty Nant to North of Maentwrog Road
Station Improvement

Archaeological Evaluation

Report No. 369

G1607

Prepared for
Gwynedd County Council

July 2000

Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Gwynedd
Gwynedd Archaeological Trust

A470 Cardiff to Glan Conwy Trunk Road

Ty Nant to North of Maentwrog Road Station Improvement

Archaeological Assessment (G1607)

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by

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A470 Cardiff – Glan Conwy Trunk Road Ty Nant to North of Maentwrog Road Station Improvement

Archaeological Assessment

1 Introduction

Gwynedd County Council is improving approximately 1.25 kilometres of the A470 at Maentwrog. An archaeological assessment of the proposed scheme was undertaken by Gwynedd Archaeological Trust in July 1993, and the results were compiled in a report (GAT Report No 58). This contained a number of recommendations for mitigation.

Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments issued a brief for the mitigation work, based upon the recommendations within the assessment report, and Gwynedd Archaeological Trust (Contracts) were asked by Gwynedd County Council to undertake the mitigation work.

2 Archaeological Aims

The aims of the work were to ensure that the known archaeology was fully recorded, and that any archaeological remains identified were recognised and the appropriate mitigation put in place. The aims were fulfilled by carrying out a programme of survey and evaluation work, to be followed by a watching brief along selected parts of the improvements.

3 Archaeological and Historical Background

The area of the scheme lies between 1 km and 2 km north-west of the Roman fort and associated complex of sites at Tomen-y-Mur (centred on SH 70603860). This is a major archaeological landscape, involving groups of burial mounds, both prehistoric and Roman; a Roman fort; practice camps; pottery kilns; an amphitheatre; roads and tracks; and a later, Medieval motte. Although this complex is not directly affected by the current road scheme, it is clear that there is good potential for the preservation of archaeological sites. In particular, the Roman road linking the fort at Tomen-y-Mur with that at Caer Llugwy and Caerhun must be crossed by the A470 at some location. pen 5000

The motte which is situated within the Roman fort was in use in 1090, and was said to have been used by Edward I in the course of his conquest of Wales (1282/3). The Roman road may have remained in use throughout this period, but the exact line is unknown.

The road (A470) appears on the Ordnance Survey manuscript map drawn at two inches to the mile, dated 1819 showing the road following the same route as today. It is interesting to note that, although the road must be almost 200 years old and may in fact be considerably older, it nevertheless cuts through the holdings shown on the 1842 tithe map, dividing all of them into two and in no case forming a boundary itself. This was also noticed in the field, enclosure boundaries often continuing either side of the road, and suggesting that the field pattern in the area is of considerable antiquity.

At the western end of the route is a 17th-century mill, Melin Tyn y Nant, altered in the 19th century, and alongside it a corn-drying kiln dated 1799. The Bala to Ffestiniog railway line runs alongside the route and include the former station building at Maentwrog Road Station, which dates to the first half of the 19th century. Thus a historical sequence from prehistory to the present day can be demonstrated for the area, making it of considerable interest.

4 Mitigation Measures

Trial trenching

This work was based upon that stipulated within the brief prepared by Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments. The following areas were to be examined:

Site 3 – Roman Road

The Roman road from Tomen y Mur to Caer Llugwy was thought to cross the A470 slightly to the south of Ty'r Orsaf. A footpath, marked along its north side with a stone bank, runs west from this point, but there was no evidence for continuation of this on the east side of the A470. The road is, however, clearly visible to the south-east and in 1992 a section was recorded across the possible Roman road by Cae Glas (see map) during the construction of a pipeline (GAT Report No. 49). This exposed 'a surface layer of pebbles laid on a foundation of levelled, large, flat stone blocks set into a hard bed of clay' which was interpreted as an *agger*. The width was 10 to 12 feet. A possible ditch lay on the west side of the road. However, no dating evidence was identified and the remains were described as in a 'poorly preserved state'. Time limitations and waterlogged conditions prevented detailed recording and confirmation of the presence of the Roman Road here.

In order to test the hypothesis that the Roman road crossed the A470 by Ty'r Orsaf it was recommended that a trial trench be excavated on the south (i.e. south-east) side of the road, opposite the entrance to the footpath on the north-west side. Excavation would be carried out by mechanical excavator until archaeological deposits were reached, when it would proceed by hand. Sufficient hand excavation would be carried out to confirm the nature of the deposits. All archaeological deposits encountered would be fully recorded by plan and section drawings, and colour photography. If no archaeological deposits were encountered, excavation would stop at the natural sub-soil horizon. Recommendations would be made for further work based upon the findings of the evaluation excavations.

Site 6 – Trackway

This track, which runs parallel to the A470, was noted during the assessment, although it was not possible to establish its nature and extent with certainty because of dense vegetation. It was therefore recommended that a trial trench be excavated across a well preserved section of the track in order to ascertain its nature and condition. This would involve excavation with a mechanical excavator to dig down to the track surface, which would be cleaned and recorded. A section would be excavated through the trackway by machine, and the resulting sections would be cleaned and photographed, and one drawn. A topographical survey of the remainder of the feature would be carried out, and a photographic record and written record completed.

Recording of minor structures

Site 9 – Railway bridge

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This site is to be partly dismantled and a photographic record is required prior to this. This involved recording all elevations and features of particular interest. A number of general photographs showing the site in its setting should also be taken.

Sites 2, 4, 5, 7 and 8 Field boundaries

A photographic survey (using black and white film) should be carried out at each site, and the nature and dimensions of each boundary recorded.

5 Results and recommendations

Trial Trenching

Trenches - Site 3

There were no surface indications for a trackway or road on the south-eastern side of the A470 and as works were underway on the north-western side of the A470 it was decided to open a trench on the north-western side initially. This trench was divided into two (trenches A & B) by a small stream. Both were excavated using a machine and all features identified cleaned by hand.

The first trench (A) was approximately 30m long and 2.5m wide. At the north-eastern end, where it was thought that the Roman road was located, the trench was excavated directly up to the stone and earth bank (site 3). Approximately 0.2m of topsoil was removed before a hard yellow stony clay was encountered. This was interpreted as the natural subsoil. It appeared that the footpath had been terraced into the yellow subsoil and that there had been some slumping from the slope above. Several fragments of modern bottle glass were recovered from the surface of the path amongst the slumped material. The footpath was not built up in any way and nothing was encountered to suggest that it was anything other than a post medieval footpath.

One other feature was identified in Trench A. This was a linear cut, running diagonally across the trench at the south-west end. It was 2.6m long and 0.5m wide, but terminated at the north side before it reached the side of the trench. The cut had an almost vertical southern side and a more sloping northern side. The base of the cut was flat and it was filled with a loose fill of dark brown silty clay, 50% of which consisted of angular to rounded small stones. This feature was interpreted as a field drain.

Trench B, on the northern side of the small stream, was also excavated by machine and was approximately 47m long and 2.5m wide. It was decided to open this trench to investigate a linear hollow (see plan and feature 02) visible in the field running in a east – west direction which it was thought may have been the Roman road. On excavation this was revealed to be a field drain consisting of a 1.4m wide ditch that was filled with stones.

Two other features were identified in this trench, both of which were field drains, reflecting the damp conditions in this part of the field.

A trench (C) was also excavated by machine on the south-east side of the A470, opposite the footpath (site 3) in an attempt to confirm the present of the Roman road at this location. The trench was approximately 22.5m long and 2m wide. At a depth of 0.3m there was compact yellow brown clayey silt, which consisted of 90% shattered bedrock. This was interpreted as the natural subsoil. At a depth of 0.2m there was a layer of orangey brown clayey silt, with much less stone (40%). This was overlain by topsoil. The only feature identified was a shallow depression in the orangey brown clayey silt and was located 4.4m from the northern end of the trench. It was visible in section and was 0.9m across and 0.2m deep. This feature was located where the subsoil rises to form a slight terrace and is probably natural. There were no indications of a road or trackway visible in the trench.

Recommendations: No further mitigation is required at this location.

Trench at Site 5

A trench (D) was excavated by machine, it was 14m long by 2m wide. The deepest layer encountered (0.15m) was a compact, yellowish brown clayey silt, which became more orange in colour to the top of the layer. This was interpreted as the subsoil. Overlying this in the centre of the trench was a layer of hardcore (100mm) and on top of this a layer of tarmac.

This tarmac layer was 4.8m wide and 60mm deep and was covered in a layer of topsoil and vegetation. At the north-western end of the trench the subsoil was overlain by an old ground surface (100mm deep). This was overlain by the artificial slope that leads up to the modern road (A470) and which consisted of a dark brown clayey silt. Both the artificial slope material and the old ground surface were overlain by a bank consisting of a mixture of topsoil and subsoil. At the south-eastern end of the trench the subsoil was overlain by humic, root material.

A watching brief was also carried out in the area immediately to the north-east of the exposed section of road (site 6). In the assessment it was suggested that this road or trackway continued parallel to the present A470 in this direction. However, topsoil stripping revealed that the tarmac road rejoined the present course of the A470 almost immediately and did not run parallel with it. Indeed, the 1901 OS map of the area (Merionethshire Sheet XII.9, 1:2500) clearly shows that the A470 curved sharply at this location and at some time since this date the road has been straightened at this point leaving this short section of tarmac road (the original A470) abandoned and overgrown.

A topographical survey of the area around site 6 was carried out using an EDM. This recorded two stone and earth banks located either side of the tarmac road and probably contemporary with the tarmac road during its use. A photographic record of stone revetting associated with a drainage channel that ran under the tarmac road was also made.

Recommendations: No further mitigation is required at this location.

Watching Briefs

A watching brief was carried out along the remaining route of the road. No features of archaeological interest were identified apart from the continuation of the tarmac road at site 6 (see above).

Recommendations: No further mitigation is required.

Recording of minor structures

A written description and photographic record was made for each of the following field boundaries:

Site 2

A grassed over, stone faced field boundary, 0.6m high and 0.8m wide. It runs in a south-east to north west direction and has a drainage ditch on the northern side. It is directly aligned with another field bank on the opposite side of the A470, which suggests that this boundary pre-dates the A470 and is at least 200 years old.

Site 4

A partially grassed over, stone faced field wall, which has been cut by the railway and the route of the A470.

Site 5

A short stretch of stone walling, 0.8m high and 0.7m wide. It is aligned with the old route of the A470 and is almost certainly directly associated with this.

Site 7

A slate fence consisting of large slabs of slate (0.5m high) and wire fencing. It is in relatively good condition, although it does lean to the south-east.

Site 8

An embanked stone wall, almost entirely grassed over. It is 0.6m high and 0.45m wide. The position of the bank has caused a degree of terracing on the uphill side of it. A now ruinous field barn has been built on to the bank at the northern end.

Site 9 – Railway bridge

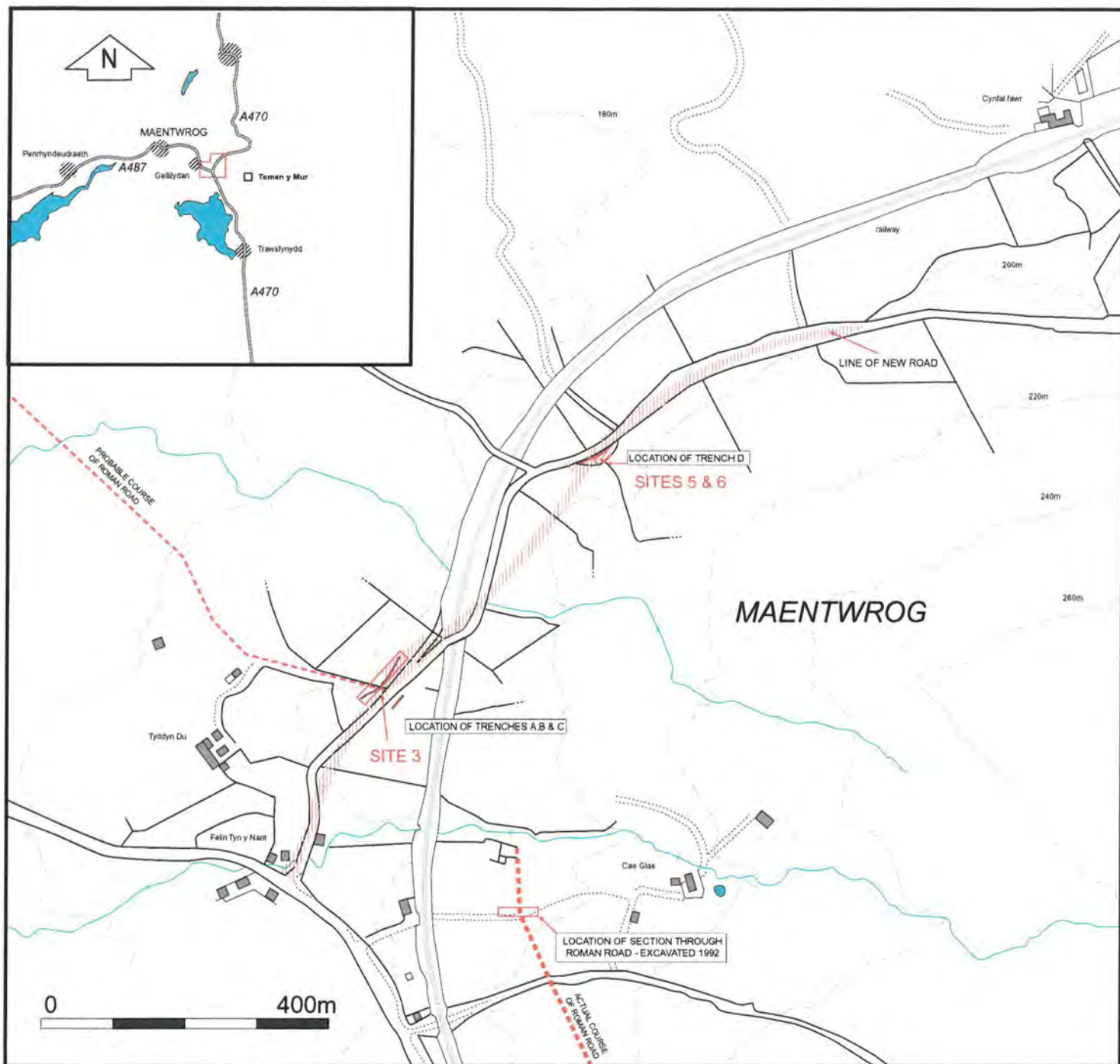
A photographic record of the structure and details (railings) of the bridge was made. Both colour and black and white films were used.

6 Summary

The three trial trenches excavated near Ty'r Orsaf did not identify the remains of any evidence for a Roman road or an obvious trackway. If the original route of the Roman road did travel this way then it has been destroyed by land improvement or erosion. The other trial excavation at site 6 revealed that the hard surface identified during the assessment work was the remains of a sharp curve in the old A470 which was probably straightened in the 1950's.

7 Bibliography

- Bowen, E.G. & Gresham, C.A. 1967. *History of Merioneth*
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- Merioneth Tithe Apportionment and map (1842)
- Ordnance Survey: 1819, manuscript map for the 1" to mile edition
1901 edition (1:2500) Merionethshire Sheet XII.9
- Royal Commission on Ancient and Historic Monuments and Constructions in Wales and Monmouthshire, 1921. *Inventory of the Ancient Monuments in Wales and Monmouthshire VI*
County of Merioneth



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Gwynedd Archaeological Trust

01248 352535 01248 370925 email: gat@heneb.co.uk

Client:



Scales:

1:8,000

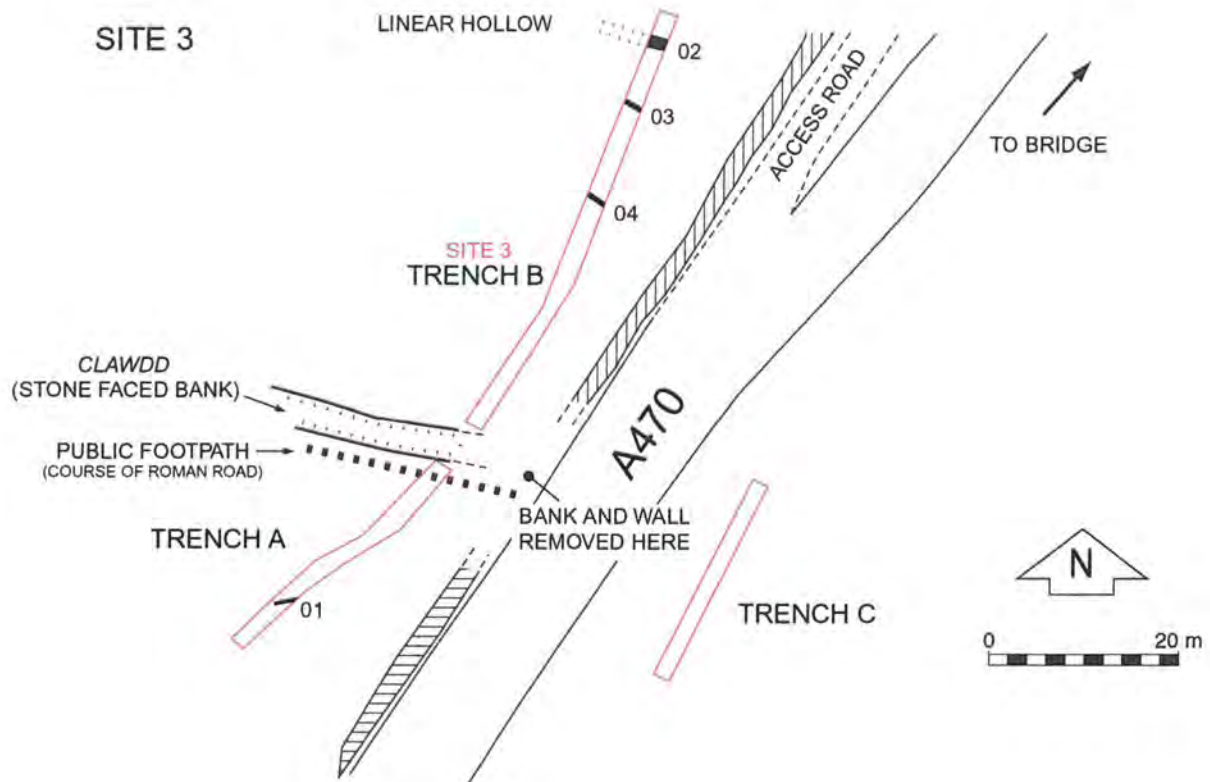
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Andrew Dutton

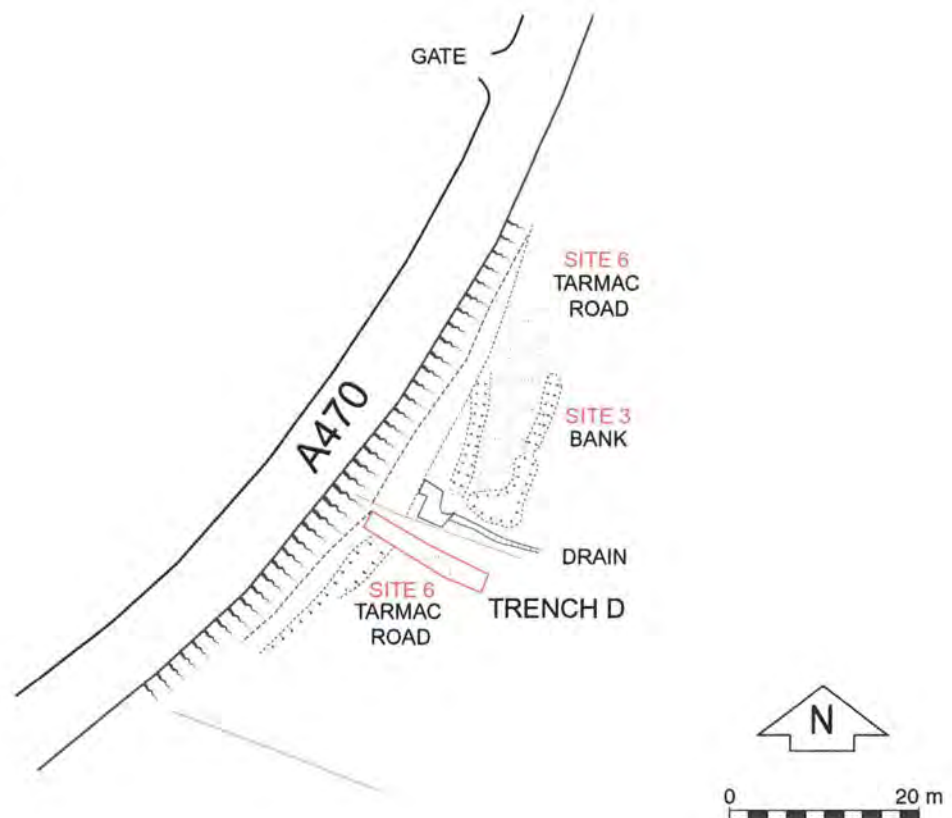
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SITES 5 & 6



Title: Assessment trench details; Sites 3, 5 & 6.



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Figure 1: Trench A, near Ty'r Orsaf.

Figure 2: Trench B, near Ty'r Orsaf.





Figure 3: Trench C, near Ty'r Orsaf.

Figure 4: Section through site 6 (tarmac road).





Figure 5: Elavation of corn-drying at Melin Tyn-y-nant.

Figure 6: Railway bridge (constructed in 1879), north of Maentwrog Road Station.



[illegible]

Film Type/ASA 200		Mono	CN yes	CT	Film No. 02		Site Name & No. A470 G1607		
Neg. No.	Site Sub-Div	Description			Scale/s	View From	Initials	Date	Archive No.
00		Melin Tyn y Nant							
0									
1		Corn-drying kiln - interior				N	AD	4/2000	26
2		Corn-drying kiln - interior				N	AD	4/2000	27
3		Corn-drying kiln - interior				N	AD	4/2000	28
4		Corn-drying kiln - interior				N	AD	4/2000	29
5		Corn-drying kiln			1*2m	S	AD	4/2000	30
6		Corn-drying kiln			1*2m	E	AD	4/2000	31
7		Corn-drying kiln			1*2m	N	AD	4/2000	32
8		Corn-drying kiln			1*2m	W	AD	4/2000	33
9		Corn-drying kiln - date stone			1*0.2m	W	AD	4/2000	34
10		Melin Tyn y Nant				E	AD	4/2000	35
11		Site 2 - bank			1*2m	N	AD	4/2000	36
12		Site 2 - bank			1*1m	W	AD	4/2000	37
13		Site 3 - Roman Road?			1*2m	SE	AD	4/2000	38
14		Site 3 - Roman Road?			1*2m	NE	AD	4/2000	39
15		Site 3 - Roman Road?			1*2m	SE	AD	4/2000	40
16		Site 3 - Roman Road?			1*2m	S	AD	4/2000	41
17		Stone revetting - site 5			1*1m	N	SJ	4/2000	42
18		Site 5/6				NE	SJ	4/2000	43
19		Site 5/6				NE	SJ	4/2000	44
20		Site 5 - stone wall			2*1m	NW	SJ	4/2000	45
21		Site 5 - stone wall			2*1m	NW	SJ	4/2000	46
22		Site 5/6 and stream			2*1m	SW	SJ	4/2000	47
23		Site 5/6 and stream			2*1m	SW	SJ	4/2000	48
24		Site 6 - trackway				N	AD	4/2000	49
25		Stone revetting and drain - site 6			2*1m	NW	AD	4/2000	50
26		Stone revetting and drain - site 6			2*1m	NW	AD	4/2000	51
27		Site 7 - slate fence			1*2m	S	AD	4/2000	52
28		Site 7 - slate fence				S	AD	4/2000	53
29		Site 7 - slate fence			1*2m	N	AD	4/2000	54
30		Site 6 - trackway?				NE	AD	4/2000	55
31		Site 6 - trackway?				NE	AD	4/2000	56
32		Site 8 - bank			2*1m	S	AD	4/2000	57
33		Site 8 - bank			2*2m	W	AD	4/2000	58
34		Site 8 - bank and ruinous field barn			1*2m	NW	AD	4/2000	59
35		Railway Bridge, Maentwrog Road Station				N	AD	4/2000	60
36		Railway Bridge				N	AD	4/2000	61
37		Railway Bridge				N	AD	4/2000	62

Film Type/ASA 200		Mono yes	CN	CT	Film No. 03		Site Name & No. A470 G1607		
Neg. No.	Site Sub-Div	Description			Scale/s	View From	Initials	Date	Archi ve No.
00		Railway Bridge, Maentwrog Road Station							
0		Bridge				N	AD	4/2000	63
1		Bridge				N	AD	4/2000	64
2		Bridge				S	AD	4/2000	65
3		Bridge				S	AD	4/2000	66
4		Bridge				S	AD	4/2000	67
5		Bridge				S	AD	4/2000	68
6		Bridge (under)				E	AD	4/2000	69
7		Bridge (brick vaulting)					AD	4/2000	70
8		Bridge (brick vaulting)					AD	4/2000	71
9		Bridge (metal supports)				E	AD	4/2000	72
10		Bridge (brick vaulting)				E	AD	4/2000	73
11		Bridge				N	AD	4/2000	74
12		Bridge			1*2m	N	AD	4/2000	75
13		Bridge			1*2m	S	AD	4/2000	76
14		Bridge (A470 leading to)			1*2m	SW	AD	4/2000	77
15		Bridge (A470 leading to)			1*2m	SW	AD	4/2000	78
16		Railings on bridge			1*2m	NE	AD	4/2000	79
17		Bridge (A470 leading to)			1*2m	NE	AD	4/2000	80
18		Bridge				SW	AD	4/2000	81
19		Bridge (A470 leading to)			1*2m	SW	AD	4/2000	82
20		Bridge (A470 leading to)			1*2m	NE	AD	4/2000	83
21		Bridge (A470 leading to)			1*2m	SW	AD	4/2000	84
22		Railings on bridge			1*2m	NE	AD	4/2000	85
23		Railings on bridge			1*2m	E	AD	4/2000	86
24		Railings on bridge			1*2m	NW	AD	4/2000	87
25		Yard by old shed				E	AD	4/2000	88
26		Old shed				SE	AD	4/2000	89
27		Old shed				S	AD	4/2000	90
28		Date on bridge				N	AD	4/2000	91
29		Bridge				N	AD	4/2000	92
30		Date on bridge				S	AD	4/2000	93
31		Bridge				S	AD	4/2000	94
32									
33									
34									

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Photographic Record

Film Type/ASA 200		Mono yes	CN	CT	Film No. 04		Site Name & No. A470 G1607		
Neg. No.	Site Sub-Div	Description			Scale/s	View From	Initials	Date	Archi ve No.
00									
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6									
7									
8		Site 2 - bank				W	AD	4/2000	95
9		Site 2 – bank				NW	AD	4/2000	96
10		Site 2 – bank				S	AD	4/2000	97
11		Site 2 – bank				S	AD	4/2000	98
12		Site 3 – Roman Road?			1*2m	SE	AD	4/2000	99
13		Site 3 – Roman Road?			1*2m	NE	AD	4/2000	100
14		Site 3 – Roman Road?			1*2m	SE	AD	4/2000	101
15		Site 3 – Roman Road?			1*2m	S	AD	4/2000	102
16		Stone revetting, site 5			1*1m	N	SJ	4/2000	103
17		Site 5 – bank				NE	SJ	4/2000	104
18		Site 5 – bank				NE	SJ	4/2000	105
19		Site 5 – walling			2*1m	NW	SJ	4/2000	106
20		Site 6 – trackway				NE	SJ	4/2000	107
21		Site 5/6			2*1m	N	SJ	4/2000	108
22		Site 5/6			2*1m	W	SJ	4/2000	109
23		Site 5 – walling			2*1m	NW	AD	4/2000	110
24		Stone revetting – site 5			2*1m	NW	AD	4/2000	111
25		Stone revetting – site 5			2*1m	NW	AD	4/2000	112
26		Site 6 – trackway				S	AD	4/2000	113
27		Site 6 – trackway				S	AD	4/2000	114
28		Site 8 – bank			2*1m	SW	AD	4/2000	115
29		Site 8 – bank			1*2m	W	AD	4/2000	116
30		Ruined barn on site 8			1*2m	NW	AD	4/2000	117
31		Ruined barn on site 8			1*2m	N	AD	4/2000	118
32		Ruined barn on site 8			1*2m	N	AD	4/2000	119
33		Railway bridge, Maentwrog Road Station				S	AD	4/2000	120
34		Railway bridge				S	AD	4/2000	121

35		Railway bridge		S	AD	4/2000	122
36		Shed near railway bridge		S	AD	4/2000	123
37		Railway bridge		N	AD	4/2000	124
38							
COMMENTS							
→ Add. Notes Over							

Film Type/ASA 200		Mono	CN yes	CT	Film No. 05		Site Name & No. A470 G1607		
Neg. No.	Site Sub-Div	Description			Scale/s	View From	Initials	Date	Archiv No.
00									
0									
1		Topsoil strip, NE of site 6			1*1m	E	SJ	4/2000	125
2		Field drain, north of site 6			1*1m	W	SJ	4/2000	126
3		Topsoil strip, north of site 6				E	SJ	4/2000	127
4		Tarmac surface – site 6			1*1m	SW	SJ	4/2000	128
5		Tarmac surface – site 6			1*1m	SW	SJ	4/2000	129
6		Drainage pipe, north of site 6			1*1m	SW	SJ	4/2000	130
7		Drainage pipe, north of site 6			1*1m	N	SJ	4/2000	131
8		Drainage pipe, north of site 6			1*1m	N	SJ	4/2000	132
9		Drainage pipe, north of site 6			1*1m	N	SJ	4/2000	133
10									
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