

A470 (T) DOLWYDDELAN TO PONT-YR-AFANC IMPROVEMENT

WATCHING BRIEF ON ADVANCED TREE CLEARANCE

Report No. 435

Prepared for

The National Assembly for Wales, Halcrow,
WynThomasGordonLewis.

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A470 (T) Dolwyddelan to Pont-yr-Afanc trunk road improvement. Watching Brief on Advanced Tree Clearance.

GAT project no. G1583

Introduction

The A470 trunk road between Blaenau Ffestiniog and Betws-y-Coed, Gwynedd, is to be improved and widened. In advance of the improvement works on the section of road between Dolwyddelan and Pont-yr-Afanc trees were felled along the road corridor (the relevant stretch of road lies between grid references SH 7540 5386 and SH 7972 5425, see figure 1). An environmental statement was prepared in 1992 to describe the effects of the works, and this included an assessment of all archaeological sites to be affected. The archaeological assessment was carried out by Gwynedd Archaeological Trust (GAT) (see GAT report no. 345). The tree felling allowed access to areas previously obscured by vegetation, providing the potential to discover sites not recognised during the archaeological assessment. Gwynedd Archaeological Trust was asked by WynThomasGordonLewis Ltd to carry out a watching brief during the tree clearance programme.

Watching Brief

The aim of the watching brief was to identify archaeological sites obscured by vegetation during the original assessment project, and therefore not previously recognised. It was also required that any potential damage to the archaeology caused by the tree felling was assessed and mitigated.

Five site visits were made, by a member of staff of GAT, during the period of tree clearance, and site reports for each visit are included in appendix I. On each visit the most recently cleared advance tree clearance (ATC) areas were walked by the archaeologist, and the condition of known sites was recorded by photograph. All the ATC areas were inspected on the ground, with the exception of ATC 23, which is overgrown with scrub, but had no mature trees, so was excluded from the advance tree clearance programme. Only one new site was identified, this was recorded by photograph and notes. All photographs, notes and other field records are archived in Gwynedd Archaeological Trust under project number G1583.

The tree felling caused no significant damage to any upstanding structures or buried archaeology. Some small plant was used to remove trees in places, but this did not cause significant ground disturbance.

The removal of the trees allowed clearer photographs of site 91 to be taken, but other sites such as sites 88 and 89 had not been significantly obscured by trees. There was nothing significant to add to the sites already recorded in the assessment report.

Site 100 Small building east of Caedu.

Grid ref: SH7607 5400

Category of importance: D (minor site)

Recommended mitigatory measures: avoid, or undertake detailed recording

One previously unrecognised site was found just east of Caedu. This is the ruined remains of a small structure, composed of two rooms. The remains of a slate roof were present in the western room, but there was no trace of a roof to the eastern room, suggesting only the western part was roofed and in use recently. The structure is built against a natural rock outcrop, which forms the northern wall. The site, which is to be included in the gazetteer as site 100, lies just south of the road corridor, and so should not be impacted by the work. However, its proximity to the work means that care should be taken that it is not damaged. If disturbance of the site proves to be unavoidable it should be recorded in detail. The structure seems to be too small to be a cottage, and is probably an outbuilding related to Caedu.

Conclusion

The tree felling programme had no significant impact on the archaeology, and only new one site was identified during the watching brief. This new site (site 100) should be considered when archaeological mitigation work is being carried out.

Bibliography

Environmental Statement 1992 A470 (T) Blaenau Ffestiniog and Betws-y-Coed Road Improvement.
Sir William Halcrow and Partners Ltd.

GAT Report No. 345, November 1999 A470(T) Dolwyddelan to Pont-yr-Afanc Improvement

APPENDIX I

Site Reports

8th August

Jane Kenney had a site meeting with Karl Lee and Tristan Galletly of Forest Enterprise Wales on ATC area 20, the majority of which had been cleared. No large plant is to be used, and the felling will have a minimal impact on the archaeology. Forest Enterprise was requested to inform GAT if any previously unidentified structures are revealed during clearance. It was also recommended that they take care not to damage structures, even if these seem already severely ruined, however, the only ATC area containing significant identified features is ATC 6.

Tristan Galletly undertook to forward progress reports of the work to GAT, enabling the Trust to check newly cleared areas for archaeology not visible when with the vegetation cover. The progress report will also contain a schedule for future work, so a GAT staff member can be present when sensitive areas are cleared, i.e. ATC 6.

Karl Lee pointed out that an access route will have to be cut through the wall, site 87, in ATC 4. He will inform GAT when this is to occur, but it is unlikely that additional recording will be necessary.

Felling of the ATC areas is to occur at different times, not necessarily in order. The work is expected to be completed by Christmas.

Jane Kenney arrived on site at 11.00am and left at 12.00.

7th September

Jane Kenney arrived at ATC area 20 at 15:30, and inspected the fully cleared area. Moving on to Gethin Bungalow, she briefly met with Bruce Theobald, and inspected areas 14, 15 and 16, finishing at 16:15.

The cleared areas were inspected to identify any archaeological features that had previously been obscured by vegetation, and might now be visible. None were found. Though it was noted that the original foundations of the road are visible near the viaduct.

Forest Enterprise is keeping GAT updated on which areas are being cleared, and further inspection visits will be carried out as appropriate.

26th October

Jane Kenney arrived at Gethin Bungalow at 10:00 am, and inspected all the cleared areas to the west, photographing known sites in their cleared state, and checking for new sites. The day was dark and rainy, so some sites may need photographing again in better conditions, depending on how the photographs come out. The inspection was completed by 11:15 am. The cleared areas inspected were ATC 13, 12, 11, 10, 9, 8, 7 and 6.

In ATC 13, just east of archaeological site 91 was a concrete water tank, not noticed before. The four stone piers of site 91 were photographed. The southern end of site 89 had been cleared, but the area had not been heavily wooded previously and nothing new could be added to the quarry workings already recorded. Site 88 lies at the western boundary of ATC 6 and had not been completely cleared.

The process of tree felling had clearly had no significant impact on the upstanding structures, and had caused no ground disturbance.

11th December

Jane Kenney arrived in site at 14.00 and left at 15.30. She walked ATC areas 1-5, and photographed the known sites where they could be seen more clearly than previously. ATC areas 21-23 have not yet been felled.

One previously unrecognised site was found just E of Caedu. This is the ruined remains of a small structure, composed of two rooms. The remains of a slate roof were present in the western room, but there was no trace of a roof to the eastern room, suggesting only the western part was roofed and in use recently. The structure is built against a natural rock outcrop, which forms the northern wall. The site, which will be added to the gazetteer as site 100, lies just south of the road corridor, and so should not be impacted by the work. However, its proximity to the work means that care should be taken that it is not damaged. If disturbance of the site proves to be unavoidable it should be recorded in detail. The structure seems to be too small to be a cottage, and is probably an outbuilding related to Caedu.

No other additional features were noted, and no damage had been done to known sites by the tree felling process.

6th February 2002

Jane Kenney made a brief visit to inspect ATC areas 21 and 22 at 16.30. As these are small the visit only took c. 15mins. There are stones lining what was a garden path, now overgrown, but this is clearly modern. There is also a narrow drainage channel leading down to the river, with a small square concrete structure next to it, but again these are modern and not considered worthwhile recording. The post box on the corner of the bridge is not of current design, but is no earlier than the 1950s.

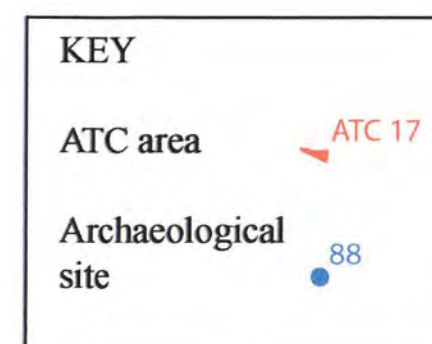
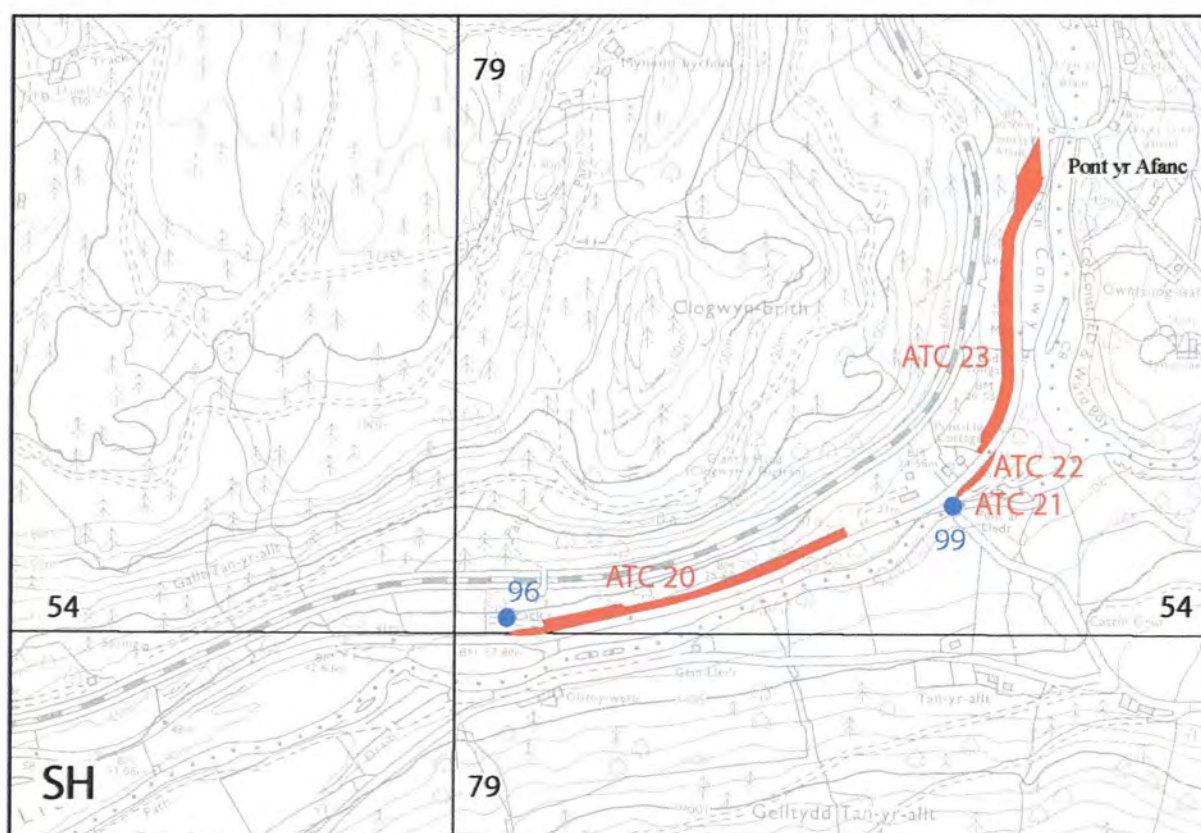
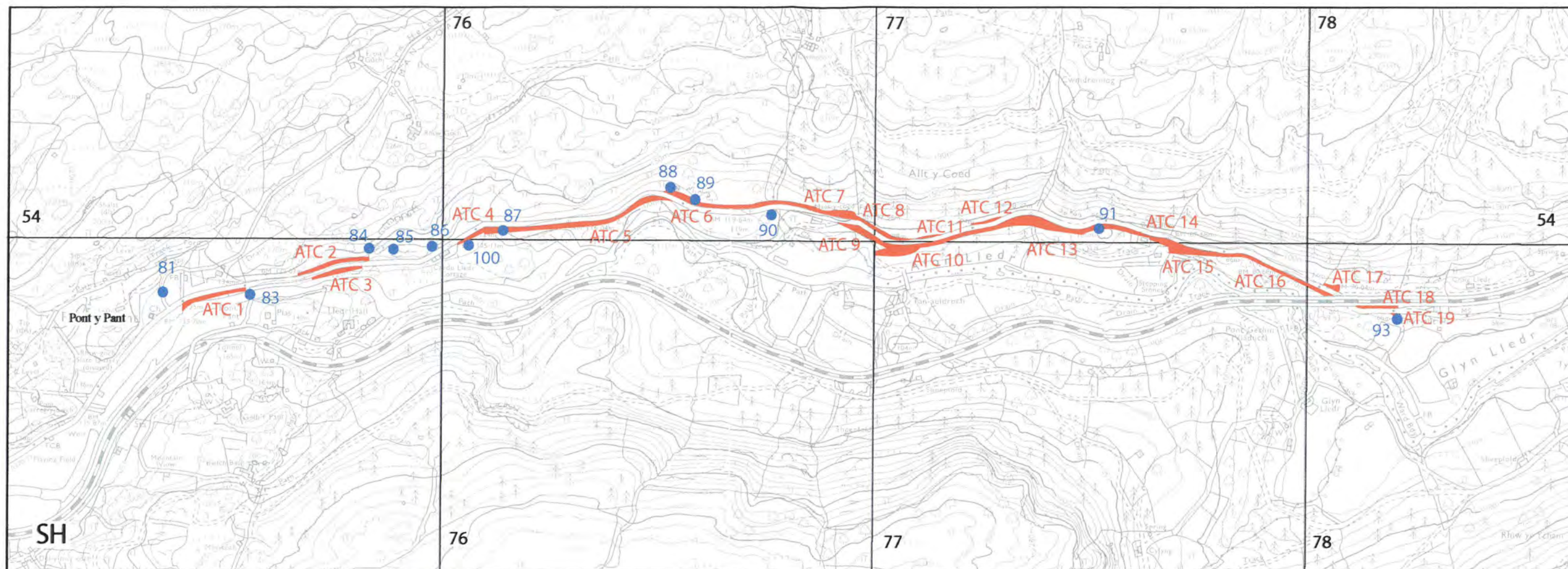


Figure 1: location of ATC areas and archaeological sites