

A487 FISHGUARD TO BANGOR TRUNK ROAD IMPROVEMENT AT FFRIDD GATE, MACHYNLLETH

ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORDING

Report No. 515



Prepared for

Hyder Consulting Ltd

January, 2004

By

D. Hopewell

**Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol
Gwynedd Archaeological Trust**



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ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORDING

1 INTRODUCTION

Gwynedd Archaeological Trust was asked, by Hyder Consulting Ltd, to carry out a programme of archaeological recording in advance of improvement of the bend in the A487 at Ffridd Gate. The project fulfils the first part of the mitigatory recommendations (detailed recording and basic recording) as laid out in the assessment report (GAT report 434, 2002).

2 SPECIFICATION AND PROJECT DESIGN

The requirement was for detailed recording of Feature 10 and basic recording of Features 4, 6, 9, 12 and 13 as specified in the assessment report (GAT report 434, 2002).

3 METHODS AND TECHNIQUES

3.1 *Definition of Mitigatory Recommendations*

None:

No impact so no requirement for mitigatory measures.

Detailed recording:

Requiring a photographic record, surveying and the production of a measure 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 or structures.

Avoidance:

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

Reinstatement:

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

All photographs were taken using black and white and colour print film. They will be stored in the project archive (ref. G1816) at Gwynedd Archaeological Trust.

4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORDING

4.1 Detailed Recording

Feature 10 Parallel scarps SH 7487 0204C (Plate 1 and Fig. 2)

Running most of the length of the field are two very slight scarps, no more than 0.2m high, and between 4m and 6m apart. They are aligned roughly north-east to south-west, and run at an angle to the present road-side boundary. They are very slight and are almost invisible in flat light. It has been suggested that they can be interpreted as a feature relating to the Corris, Machynlleth and River Dovey Tramway (GAT report 434 p9). A plan of the route of the dated to 1850 (Z/CD/128) shows the route running on the western side of the road, along a very different line to that eventually used. In the field by the road, to the south of Ffridd Farm, the tramway takes exactly the same alignment as the scarps noticed on the ground. It seems probable that the scarps are related in some way to the tramway. Perhaps initial levelling of the route had started before it was decided to move the line to run next to the road.

A measured survey was produced using taped offsets from a baseline (Fig. 2). The scarps were found to be somewhat fragmentary and not quite parallel. The upper scarp petered out about 65m from the west of the field although a well defined fragment was visible adjacent to the western boundary. The lower scarp was fairly well defined towards the east of the field but was difficult to trace with any certainty at the west. An attempt to produce a photographic record of this feature proved to be largely unsuccessful (Plate 1). The scarps are very slight and all but invisible to monoscopic photography.

4.2 Basic Recording

Feature 4 Corris Railway line SH 7500 0249-7493 0198

The bed of the line still survives along the whole length of the survey area. For most of its length, it is overgrown with brambles, but parts of it have been adapted for various uses. Where the line passes to the east of Turnpike Cottage it has been made into a driveway. On the other side of the road, it has also been converted into a drive for Haulfryn, with a new gate and section of slate walling. On the east and south side of Haulfryn, the line has been incorporated into the garden. In the southern part of the study area, the line has been made into a cycle path leading to the new cycle bridge over the Dyfi. The original slate fencing is still largely intact on the eastern side to the north of Haulfryn. The southern portion is largely bounded by a hedgerow. Photographs were taken at various points during both the initial assessment and the basic recording. Plate 2 shows a recently cleared portion of the line behind Felin y Ffridd (note the slate fence). Plate 3 shows a view looking north-east along the end of the cycle path and towards Haulfryn.

Feature 6 Machynlleth to Dolgellau turnpike SH 7475 0199-7500 0249

The turnpike road ran up the western side of the Dulas valley, taking the most direct route through the hills from Machynlleth to Dolgellau. There is no firm evidence that it was turnpiked much before the Turnpike Cottage was built c.1830. There are no traces of the 19th century road visible, although its surface may be preserved under the present road surface. Plate 4 shows a view along the modern road towards the new Dovey cycle bridge.

Feature 9 Ruined structure SH 7506 0219 (Plate 5)

The remains of a very short length of drystone walling standing on what appears to be a pile of slate rubble stands on sloping ground to the west of the road. The wall is built from local poor quality slate, stands to a height of 0.6 m, and is 0.8m wide. To the west of this (i.e. uphill) is a probably natural terrace. A slight overgrown scarp above this was interpreted in the assessment report as another section of walling. This was partially cleared and found to be slate bedrock. The function of the extant walling is unclear but it could be a fragment of a field boundary or perhaps part of a lightly built sheep pen.

Features 12 a-c Tracks on Ffridd Farm

Two tracks are shown leading to Ffridd Farm on the 1844 tithe map, from the south (12a) and the east (12b). Both are also shown on the 1901 map (Fig. 3). The former is still in use as the main access to the farm (Plate 6). It is about 3m wide and runs along a 4m wide artificial terrace. This is cut into a slate outcrop on the western side. Track 12b is completely grassed over (Plate 7), and is visible as an earthwork terraced into the hillslope. The slope is revetted on the northern side by a drystone wall (feature 13c). The 1901 map also shows a track coming in from the north (12c Plate 8), which is no longer in use. Although this track is not actually marked on the tithe map, the field boundaries to the north of the farm leave a gap for a track to pass between them, suggesting that this route had been in use before 1844, if not actually at the time of the map. The track is visible as a 2.5m terrace within sloping woodland to the north of the farm.

Features 13a-d Field boundaries

The field boundaries shown on the 1844 tithe map are almost identical to the present boundaries. One boundary (13a) had gone out of use by 1901, and is now visible on the ground as a fragmentary terrace standing to a height of 1.5m in places (Plate 9).

Boundary 13b has fairly recently gone out of use, and is now just a grass covered bank 0.4m high and 2m wide, with some trees and bushes surviving on its line (Plate 10).

Boundary 13c is revets the slope above track 12b. It is faced on the southern side by rough drystone masonry constructed from small fragments of local slate (Plate 11). It has been breached about 8m from the road to form a ramp for vehicular access.

Boundary 13d is also not now maintained, but bears the remnants of a wire fence. It is defined by large coppiced hazel trees, and mature oaks, presumably the remnants of a hedge. It is cut into the slope above and terraced out onto the slope below. Plate 12 is a view along the terrace with a mature oak marking the boundary line.

7 REFERENCES

Sources held by Gwynedd Archaeological Trust

OS 1:10,000 map sheets SH 70 SW (1980) and SH 70 SE (1979)

GAT Report 434 2002, *A487 Fishguard to Bangor Trunk Road Improvement at Ffridd Gate, Machynlleth, Archaeological assessment.*

Sources in Merioneth Record Office, Dolgellau

25" County Series map, Merioneth XLVII.8 (1901)

Tithe map and schedule for Pennal parish, 1844 (poor copy held in Record Office, could not be reproduced in this report)

Z/CD/128 Corris-Machynlleth-River Dovey Tramway, plan and section with book of reference, 1850 (bound in book, not possible to obtain copy from Record Office, so not reproduced in this report)



Figure 1: location of features

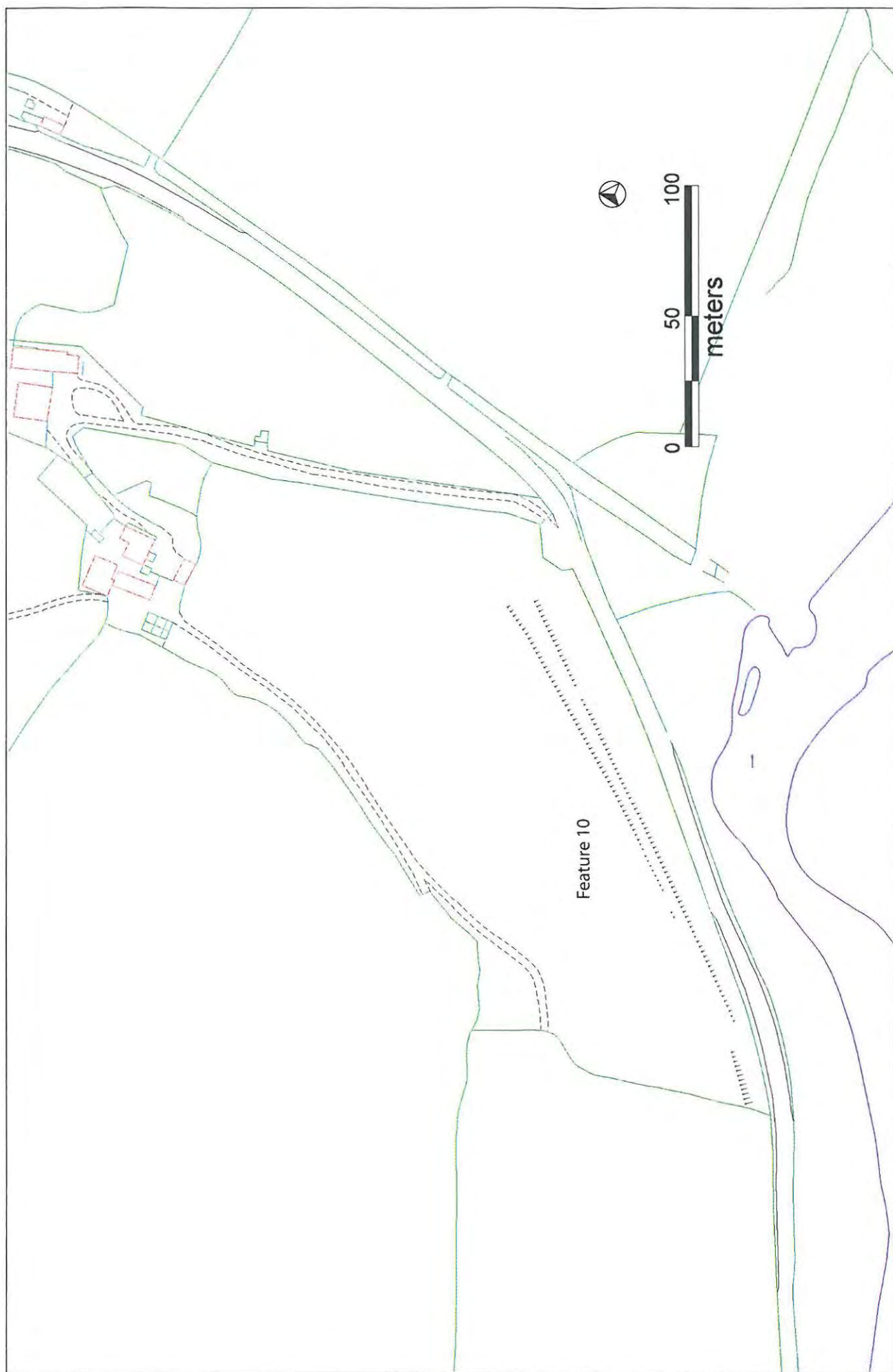


Fig. 2 Plan of Feature 10

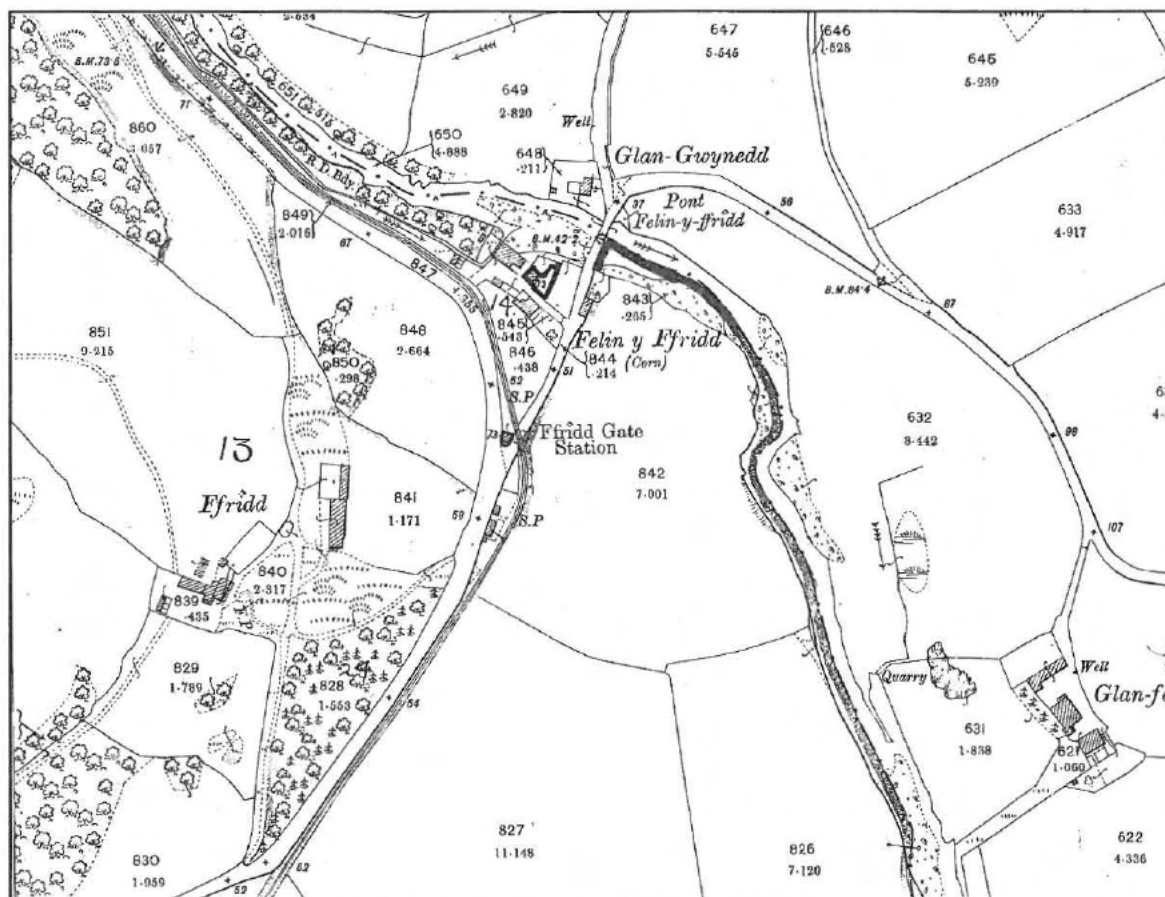


Figure 3: 25" County Series map, 1901



Plate 1 Feature 10, parallel scarps (from NE)



Plate 2 Feature 4, Corris Railway line (from SE)



Plate 3 Feature 4, Corris Railway line (from SW)



Plate 4 Feature 6, line of turnpike (from NE)



Plate 5 Feature 9, ruined structure (from NE)



Plate 6 Feature 12a, farm track (from SW)



Plate 7 Feature 12b, farm track (from E)



Plate 8 Feature 12c, farm track (from NW)



Plate 9 Feature 13a, field boundary (from NE)



Plate 10 Feature 13b, field boundary (from S)



Plate 11 Feature 13c, field boundary (from SE)



Plate 12 Feature 13d, field boundary (from N)

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