
Cross Keys Development Aberffraw



Archaeological Evaluation 2005

GAT Project No. 1894

Report No. 620

November 2005

Cross Keys Development Aberffraw

Archaeological Evaluation

Report No. 620

Prepared for Russell Hughes Architects

November 2005

By

John Roberts

Illustrations by Tanya Berks

Cross keys Development Aberffraw

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

Page

1	Summary
1	Introduction
2	Evaluation Results
3	Conclusion
4	References

Cross Keys Development Aberffraw

Figure List:

Figure 1 - Site Location Map

Figure 2 - Post Excavation Plan of Trench 1

Figure 3 - Northwest facing Section of Trench 1

Figure 4 - Post Excavation Plan of Trench 2

Figure 5 - Northeast facing Section of Trench 2

Plate List:

Plate 1 - View Looking Northeast of Evaluation Area

Plate 2 - View Looking Northeast of Trench 1

Plate 3 - Close-up of Ditch Feature in Trench 1

Plate 4 - View North of Trench 2

Plate 5 - Close-up of Modern Pipe Trench in Trench 2

Plate 6 - Close-up of Modern Sub-Circular Feature in Trench 2

Cross Keys Garage Site, Llewelyn Street, Aberffraw (G1894): Archaeological Evaluation

An archaeological evaluation has been conducted in advance of a proposed development. The evaluation did not reveal any distinctive evidence for Romano-British or Medieval activity and was limited to twentieth century rubbish tipping and pipe laying. The only possible earlier feature was a shallow ditch in Trench 1 at the eastern end of the site. A watching brief is recommended during the construction phase to investigate this feature further and to record any other buried archaeology that may be present.

1 INTRODUCTION

Russell Hughes Architects has commissioned Gwynedd Archaeological Trust to undertake an archaeological evaluation in advance of the development of the former Cross Keys garage and associated land (Figure 1). The proposed development area extends over 680m² and is bounded on the west by Llewelyn Street, on the north by Cross Keys house and on the south and east by private residences (Figure 1). The site comprises a former garage and an undeveloped plot of land 500m² in size. The garage comprises two hangar type structures with Nissen-style roofs with a forecourt and was built during the inter war years of the twentieth century, closing down in the 1970s. The plot of land to the south is enclosed by a low slung wall built from irregular shaped stone and contains a scrub of patchy grass mixed with modern rubbish (Plate 1). An archaeological assessment was undertaken in October 2005 (GAT Report No. 614), which recommended that a written and photographic record be made of the garage complex and an archaeological evaluation be undertaken within the enclosed plot of land (GAT Report No. 614, 11). It was felt that the potential was high for undisturbed Medieval remains due to the close proximity of a substantial defensive bank and ditch enclosure *c.* 75 m south of the proposed development. The alignment and extent of the enclosure has been postulated to be the remains of a Roman auxiliary fort or Early Medieval llys (*ibid.*). Moreover, a trial excavation was undertaken in 1974 in the area immediately to the south of the proposed development, which identified Medieval boundary ditches aligned north-south.

The archaeological evaluation was undertaken on the 24th November 2005 when two trenches were opened within the enclosed plot of land (Figure 1).

1.1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AIMS

The aim of the evaluation was to build upon previous assessments and findings by using trial trenching to determine the presence or absence of archaeological remains and to assess their extent and significance. The known archaeological remains were used both to help determine the likely location of, and the character of, new archaeological findings. Particular attention was paid to likelihood of Medieval settlement activity.

1.2 TOPOGRAPHY

The village of Aberffraw is located in southwest Anglesey on the west bank of Afon Ffraw. The site is located to the north of the main square on the eastern side of Llewelyn Street.

1.3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The history of Aberffraw is focused mainly on its importance as the centre of the royal estate (a *llys* and *maerdref*) of the Princes of Gwynedd in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Following the Edwardian Conquest, the former *maerdref* was leased to major landholders before being sold off in the 17th Century (GAT Report No. 614, 3). The village had begun to take shape by the 18th Century, centred on Bodorgan Square, with further development, in the form of new housing, taking place over the next two centuries. The development area was, by the late 18th Century, part of the Aberffraw Mill land that ran from Llewelyn Street to Afon Ffraw (*ibid.*). The enclosed area targeted by the evaluation can be seen in the late 18th Century as part of a quillet belonging to the landowner, Owen Williams (*ibid.*, Figure 12), with the current enclosure extant on an 1889 Ordnance Survey Map (*ibid.*).

A series of excavations were undertaken in Aberffraw by the Gwynedd Archaeological Trust between 1974 and 1979, from which the location of a Roman defensive ditch was postulated in the centre of the village (*ibid.*, Figure 1). Other excavations during this period revealed evidence of Medieval property

boundaries located at various points east of Chapel Street and Church Street, as well as at Number 1 Llewelyn Street, to the immediate south of the development area. The ditches measured between 0.50m and 0.80m in width and were up to 0.80m in depth (White and Longley, 1995, 19). The boundary ditch near the development site ran roughly north to south, and it was suggested, from 13th Century pottery recovered from one of the examples, that the boundary ditches had been laid out during this period, placing them in the context of the Edwardian Conquest (*ibid.*, 20). Further work was undertaken on different sites in the village in 1987 and 1988, with the latter, at 40 Church Street, suggesting further evidence of boundary ditches. The Medieval *llys* has not been excavated but its location has been identified as north of St. Beuno's Church and therefore at some distance to the southwest of the evaluation area.

2 EVALUATION RESULTS

2.1 Methodology

The project took place on the 24th November 2005.

Two trenches were opened using a 180° wheeled excavator. Topsoil and unwanted material overlying the archaeological remains were removed by machine. All subsequent features were excavated by hand.

Each trench is described separately. Archaeological deposits are numbered within rounded brackets and archaeological cuts within square brackets.

Trench size is expressed in square metres. The dimensions of deposits and features are expressed in metres. The dimensions of structural stonework are expressed in millimetres.

For the location and orientation of individual trenches, see Figure 1.

2.2 Recording

Identified features were recorded photographically and by notes, sketches and plans, and were located either by measuring from the field boundaries or by using a total station.

The archive is held by GAT under the project number **G1894**.

2.3 Summary site narrative by trench

Trench 1

Size: 15m²

Description:

Trench 1 was located at the eastern end of the site on a southwest to northeast alignment. The ground surface was uneven with modern rubbish material visible protruding from the grass. The trench was not positioned across any known features but was sited diagonally across the eastern end of the site to maximise the excavation area in what was a fairly limited space due to the proximity of an overhead power cable. The topsoil was removed and was recorded as a 0.30m thick deposit covered in grass and with frequent inclusions of modern rubbish. Below the topsoil was a deposit of sand-rich brown silt, similar to the topsoil. This deposit was identified as a redundant cultivation horizon of post-medieval date (as suggested by several sherds of white glazed pottery). Below this deposit was a layer of sand, identified as a natural deposit (Plate 2). The sand was uneven and undulating suggesting it had been shaped by wind and water action. Cutting the sand was a shallow ditch, c.1.60m wide and 0.20m deep (Plate 3). The ditch did not appear to be truncated and had an uneven base, which may suggest that it was created by water action rather than human activity. This was supported by the existence of iron panning at the base of the ditch. There were no other features present.

Interpretation:

The trench revealed evidence for post-medieval activity, viz., twentieth century rubbish dumping and a discrete linear feature of uncertain origin.

Trench 2

Size: 15m²

Description:

Trench 2 was located several metres to the west of Trench 1. As with the former trench, the location of Trench 2 was dictated by the close proximity of an overhead power cable that ran through the centre of the field towards the garage, so the trench was positioned diagonally across the western end of the site. As with Trench 1, the ground surface was uneven with modern rubbish material protruding from the grass. The depth of the topsoil was c.0.30m, sealing an earlier cultivation layer of similar depth, that contained fragments of white glazed ware. Cutting the cultivation layer was a wide trench that contained a redundant water pipe (Plate 5). The trench had been dug to either lay the pipe or to inspect the pipe. But, as there was no apparent evidence for re-cutting it was safe to assume that it was the former. Moreover, the large size of the pipe trench as well as the flat base suggested it was cut by a machine. The recent provenance of the trench was suggested by the existence of a crisp packet within the backfill towards the base of the cut. A similar hypothesis was proposed for a sub-circular feature at the southern end of the trench, which also cut the cultivation soil. In this instance, the feature was sub-circular in shape and contained at its base a hinged metal pipe (Plate 6). The function of the pipe was unclear as was the full extent of the cut, but as the backfill of the cut contained pieces of plastic and polystyrene it was also clear that the feature was modern. Below the cultivation layer was a deposit of mottled sand-silt, identified as a subsoil that was directly above the natural sand (Plate 4).

Interpretation:

The trench revealed evidence for post-medieval activity, *viz.*, twentieth century pipe laying activity, but no earlier activity.

3 CONCLUSION

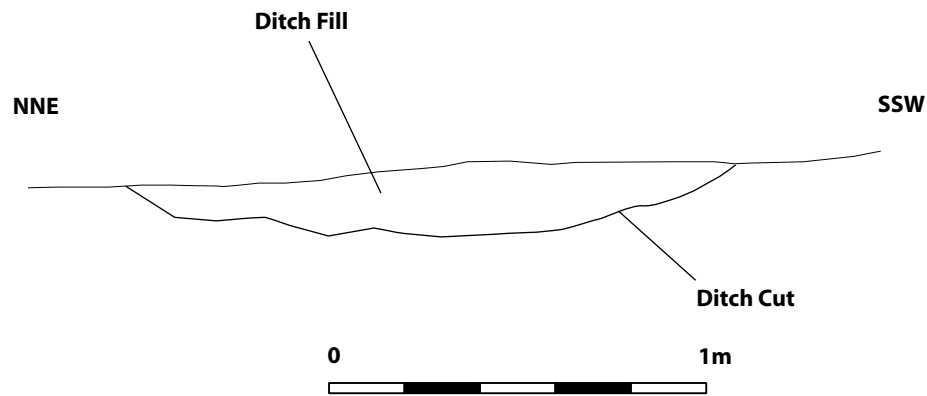
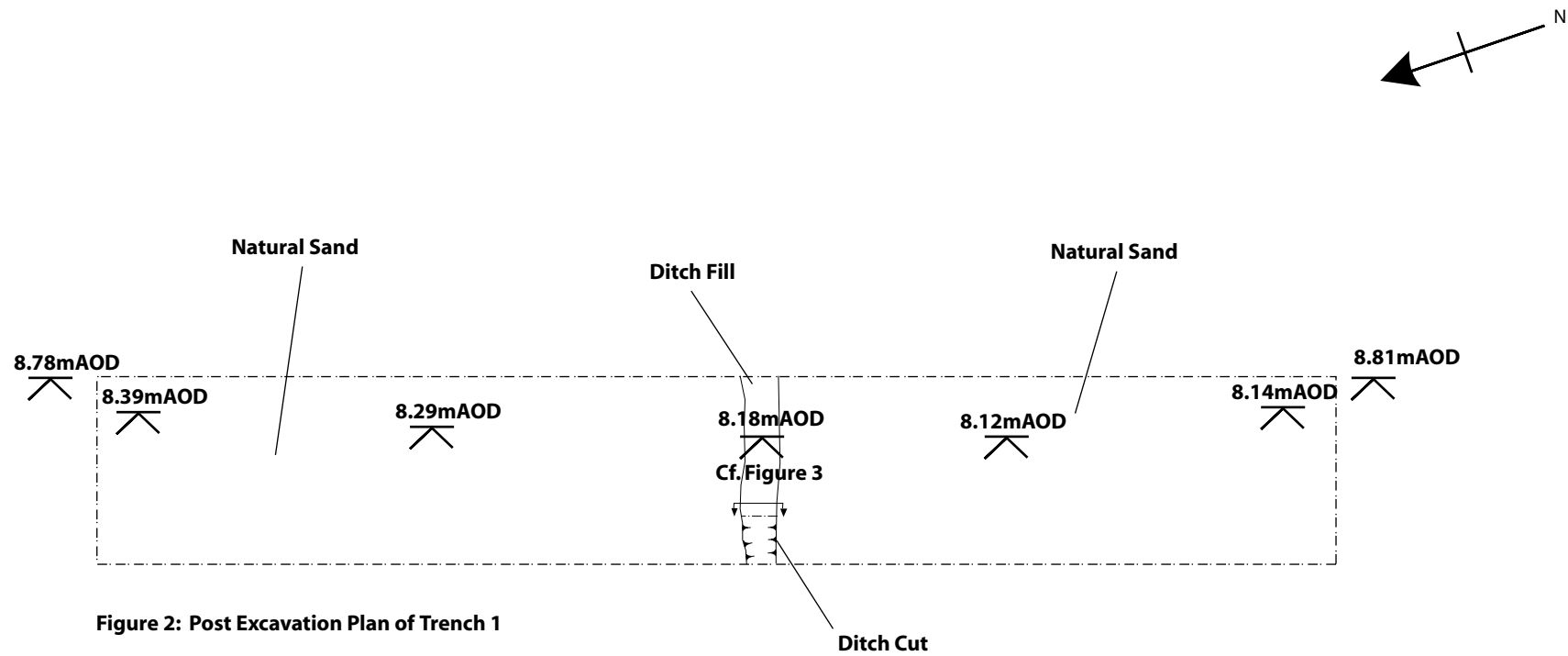
The archaeological evidence within the two trenches was limited to mainly post-medieval activity. The only feature of potentially greater antiquity was the shallow ditch in Trench 1. A watching brief during the construction phase is recommended to assist in understanding this feature in greater detail and to record any other buried archaeology that may be present.

4 REFERENCES

GAT Report: 614 Project No. G1894. 2005

White, R.B. and Longley, D. 1995. Excavations at Aberffraw. *Transactions of the Anglesey Antiquarian Society and Field Club*: 13-21.

Trench 1



Trench 2

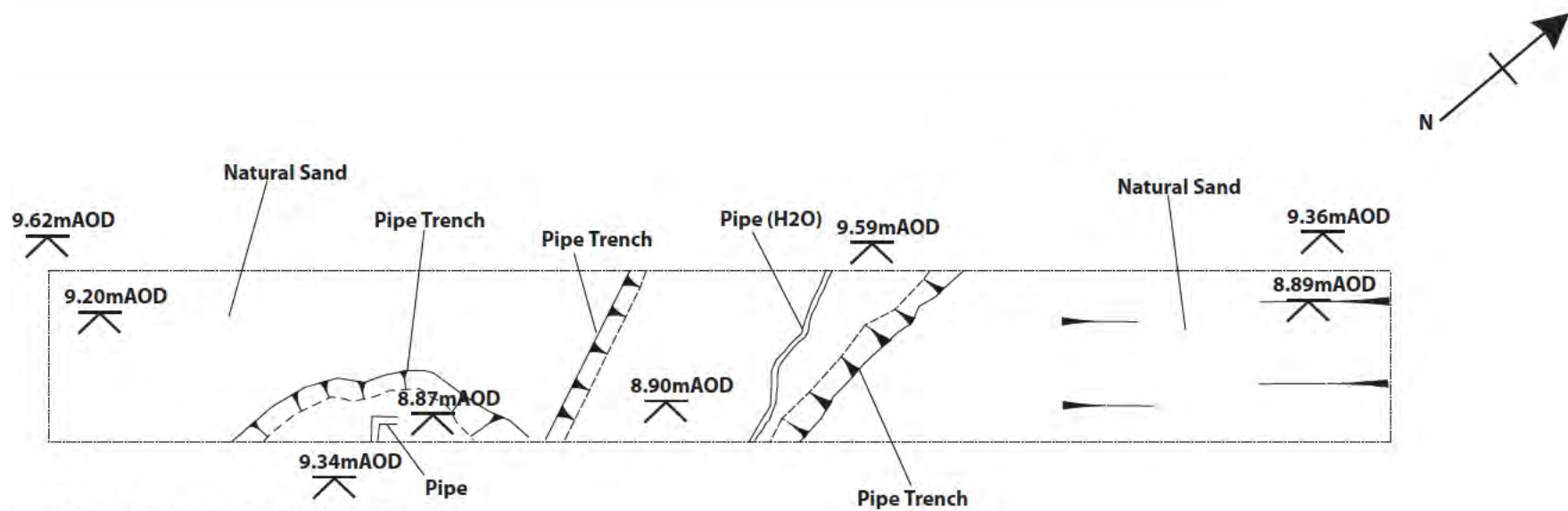


Figure 4: Post Excavation Plan of Trench 2

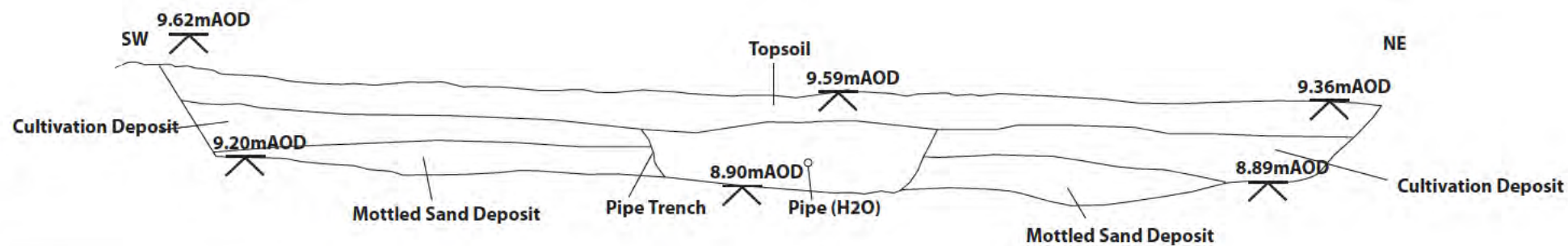


Figure 5: North-East Facing Section of Trench 2



Plate 1 View looking Northeast of Evaluation Area



Plate 2 View looking Northeast of Trench 1



Plate 3 Close-up of Ditch Feature in Trench 1



Plate 4 View North of Trench 2



Plate 5 Close-up of Modern Pipe Trench in Trench 2



Plate 6 Close-up of Modern Sub-Circular Feature in Trench 2



YMDDIRIEDOLAETH
ARCHAEOLEGOL
GWYNEDD



GWYNEDD
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
TRUST

Craig Beuno, Ffordd y Garth, Bangor, Gwynedd. LL57 2RT
Ffon: 01248 352535. Ffacs: 01248 370925. email: gat@heneb.co.uk