
Tal y Cae, Tregarth, Bangor

Watching Brief

GAT Project No. G1881

Report No. 646

June 2006

Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Gwynedd

Gwynedd Archaeological Trust

Craig Beuno, Ffordd y Garth, Bangor, Gwynedd LL57 2RT

**Tal y Cae, Tregarth, Bangor
Watching Brief**

Report No. 646

Prepared for
Mr. A. Hughes

by

R. M. Flook

Illustrations by T. Berks

**Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Gwynedd
Gwynedd Archaeological Trust
June 2006**

TAL Y CAE, TREGARTH, BANGOR - G1881

A watching brief was carried out during top soil stripping preparatory to the construction of a house and garage at Tal y Cae, Tregarth. No evidence was found for surviving remains of a roundhouse (PRN 313) known to have previously existed in the N corner of the site. No associated features or finds were revealed. A terrace identified by the assessment report (GAT 597) was found to be modern. An alignment of seven large boulders at the SW end of the site may be modern landscaping.

1. Introduction

In 2005, Gwynedd Archaeological Trust was commissioned by Mr D. M. Williams to carry out an archaeological assessment of land at Tal y Cae, Tregarth, Bangor (NGR SH 6037 6850) in relation to a planning application for proposed development of the site. The report of this work (GAT 597 – August 2005) identified several areas of potential archaeological interest. These were: the former site of a roundhouse (PRN 313) previously known to have been located in the N corner of the plot, a shallow terrace noted running NW-SE across the NE end of the site and a shallow hollow located along the SE boundary adjacent to large boulders. The assessment report made the recommendation that a watching brief should be carried out during all significant periods of earth and hardcore moving which have the potential for revealing archaeological remains. Gwynedd Archaeological Trust was subsequently retained by Mr. Andrew Hughes to carry out this archaeological watching brief, monitored by Gwynedd Archaeological Planning Service.

2. Site Visit

The site was visited on Friday June 16 2006 before any ground disturbance to assess the site layout and to identify any further potential areas of archaeological interest. The development area was enclosed by stone walls on its NE, SE and SW sides and by a new wire fence along its NW side. There was a shallow terrace edge 0.3m high running NW-SE across the NE end of the site sloping down from NE-SW. This defined the extent of a raised area comprising the whole NE end of the plot. Scattered large boulders were noted particularly towards the SW, and the site was covered with scrub vegetation which had recently been cleared so visibility was good.

In June 2005, during the visit for the assessment report (GAT 597), the site had been heavily overgrown. However, with the vegetation cleared a further four areas of potential interest could now be seen. These were: a slight hump with some random protruding stone located where the NW fence meets the base of the terrace edge mentioned above, a slight circular hollow located about halfway along the NW edge of the site, a line of large boulders located at the central SW end, and a shallow irregular hollow located along the SE boundary near to the one mentioned in the assessment report. All these features were photographed and located on a sketch plan.

3. Watching Brief

On Monday June 19 2006 the watching brief was undertaken during proposed deturfing and topsoil stripping. Initially the intent was to strip the whole area of the site in order to preserve the topsoil for later landscaping. Machinery involved a single wheeled JCB with backhoe and front bulldozer bucket. The weather was overcast but dry and warm.

4. Method

Stripping was commenced from the N corner of the site in the area of PRN 313. This was undertaken with the backhoe in careful spits under close supervision. This area was stripped down to a depth of 0.3-0.4m and then extended towards the SW and to the SE in the raised area defined by the terrace edge mentioned above. Once this area was cleared, deturfing was extended towards the SW end of the site along the NW boundary. However, very little topsoil was available for salvage beyond the raised NE terrace. It was therefore decided to suspend general topsoil stripping and to concentrate on sampling the potential areas of archaeological interest identified above, and to strip the footprint of the building to assess any likely archaeological impact there. It was also decided that the SW end of the site would be made up rather than stripped to level the slight slope there.

5. Results

In the end approximately 70% of the site was stripped. Removal of the turf and topsoil revealed what appeared to be the natural subsoil (see discussion below). This consisted of a horizon of very mixed light yellowish to golden brown sandy silty clay containing frequent loose, jumbled, angular stones and what appeared to be pinnacles of protruding shale and slate bedrock planes. At the NE end of the site this was overlain by an 0.3-0.4m thick layer of brown, dry, loose, topsoil, fairly stone-free, forming a raised platform or terrace. There was occasional modern rubbish in this layer including modern glass bottles, plastic and decaying tin cans. On the remainder of the site extending towards the SW, the subsoil was sealed primarily by turf and root mat with only a very thin topsoil intermixed, altogether generally no more than 0.1m thick.

There were no features or finds identifiable in the area of PRN 313.

The mound at the junction between the terrace and the NW boundary fence appeared to be modern stone clearance and dumping.

The slight circular hollow along the NW boundary of the site was an irregularity in the top soil.

Towards the SW end of the site seven closely set large boulders were recorded forming an apparent linear alignment running NW-SE. The boulders generally measured 0.7-0.8m in length, with one 1.1m. They appeared to be sitting in topsoil rather than bedded in the subsoil, and could be fairly easily dislodged. They formed a fairly straight edge on their NE side. The whole alignment was 5.15m long and ran more or less parallel to the existing SW boundary wall. The SE end of the alignment appeared to correspond to a slight jog in the SE boundary wall. There were several other large boulders scattered around them.

The two hollows located near large boulders adjacent to the SE boundary were natural irregularities.

6. Discussion

According to the present owner (Mr Andrew Hughes), the previous owner told him that the University (U.C.N.W. Bangor) came and excavated PRN 313 in the 1970's during the original development. This may explain why there is nothing now visible: either the University completely removed the last remains or once they were finished, the owner felt that it was now OK to level the rest of the feature. He stated that the University had said that it was indeed the remains of a hut circle but that there were much better examples around.

Also, according to the present owner the raised terraced area at the NE end of the site was a garden for the previous owner. Topsoil from stripping the rest of the development site was apparently brought and dumped there to upgrade the soil quality.

The line of seven large boulders is enigmatic. It is tempting to describe them as natural considering the other large and very large boulders located on the site which are very obviously natural. However, the fact that they form such a straight alignment, and that they are parallel to the existing SW boundary wall suggests that the alignment is man-made. The fact that they are floating in the topsoil would indicate that they have not been in that position very long as one might expect large stones like that to migrate down through the topsoil. The most likely interpretation is that they represent some sort of fairly recent landscaping.

The stony subsoil surprised the machine driver who had worked on most of the earlier development. He said that he couldn't remember seeing anything like it elsewhere during work in the '70's. His explanation was that the present site is located between two hills and this deposit is scree eroded into the valley between them. The occasional large and very large boulders on the site might support its interpretation as a general glacial deposition.

7. Conclusions

There appears to be very little of archaeological interest surviving on the site. The only intangible is the nature of the sub soil layer. If this is natural, which seems most likely, then there is little chance of further archaeological remains being affected by future ground works. However, there is a slight possibility that this deposit might have been dumped to level the site during the earlier development work. This might explain why this type of deposit wasn't seen elsewhere during the 1970's work and also might explain the lack of top soil at the SW end of the site. It would be useful therefore, to inspect any deeper excavations just to confirm the origin and significance of this layer.

8. Archive

- 3 day sheets
- 14 digital copies of negatives
- 24 colour negatives and prints



Figure 1. Tal-y-Cae, Tregarth. Plan of development area (Scale 1:1000@A4).

APPENDIX

TAL Y CAE, TREGARTH

PROJECT DESIGN FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF (G1881)

1. INTRODUCTION

This project design outlines the archaeological mitigation to be undertaken during the construction of a new dwelling at Tal y Cae, Tregarth, Bangor. The design has been requested by Mr Hughes from Gwynedd Archaeological Trust.

2. BACKGROUND

An initial assessment was undertaken by Gwynedd Archaeological Trust in August 2005 (GAT Report 597). Recommendations within the report were for a watching brief during site clearance and below ground disturbance. No brief has been prepared for this work, but the design will conform to Institute of Field Archaeologist guidelines.

3. METHOD STATEMENT

3.1 Watching brief

An archaeologist will be present during all significant periods of earth and hardcore moving which have the potential for revealing archaeological remains. The watching brief is to be undertaken in a manner that allows for the immediate cessation of development for the recording of archaeological evidence. This will involve close liaison between the archaeologist and the site agent and machine operators.

All stripped areas will be examined and potential archaeological sites identified; these will then be cleaned by hand trowelling or hoeing. If the features revealed can be understood and recorded with no further work required, then they will be photographed, described and located on OS 1:2500 plans. **However if any of the features are too complex to allow this, then recommendations will be made for further work, which would be in addition to the work undertaken for the watching brief.** A continuous context numbering system will be used, with each context recorded on standard *pro-forma* sheets. Sections will be drawn if relevant.

3.2 Environmental samples

Relevant archaeological deposits will be sampled by taking bulk samples (a minimum of 10litres and maximum of 30 litres) for flotation of charred plant remains. Bulk samples will be taken from waterlogged deposits for macroscopic plant remains. Other bulk samples, for example from middens, may be taken for small animal bones and small artefacts.

3.3 Human remains

Any finds of human remains will be left *in-situ*, covered and protected, and the coroner informed. If removal is necessary it will take place under appropriate regulations and with due regard for health and safety issues.

3.4 Small finds

The vast majority of finds recovered from archaeological excavations comprise pottery fragments, bone, environmental and charcoal samples, and non-valuable metal items such as nails. Often many of these finds become unstable (ie they begin to disintegrate) when removed from the ground. All finds are the property of the land owner, however, it is Trust policy to recommend that all finds are donated to an appropriate museum where they can receive specialist treatment and study. At the very least the Trust would request access to the finds for a reasonable period to allow for study and publication. All finds would be treated according to advice provided within *First Aid for Finds* (Rescue 1999). Initial identification will be undertaken by Trust staff, but

any additional advice would be sought from a wide range of consultants used by the Trust, including National Museums and Galleries of Wales at Cardiff, ARCUS at Sheffield and BUFAU at Birmingham.

4. REPORT

Following completion of the watching brief as outlined above, a report will be produced incorporating the following:

- Non-technical summary
- Introduction
- Specification and Project Design
- Methods and techniques
- Archaeological Background
- Description of the results of the watching brief
- Summary and conclusions
- Bibliography of sources consulted.

5. ARCHIVE

A full archive including plans, photographs, written material and any other material resulting from the project will be prepared. All plans, photographs and descriptions will be labelled and cross-referenced, and lodged in an appropriate place (to be decided in consultation with the regional Historic Environment Record) within six months of the completion of the project.

6. STAFF

The project will be supervised by Andrew Davidson, Principal Archaeologist at the Trust, who has worked in various aspects of British archaeology for 18 years, and who has been responsible for managing all contract work at the Trust for the past five years, including archaeological programmes for major road contracts, pipeline construction and new development sites. The work will be carried out by fully trained archaeologists who are experienced in conducting watching briefs and working with contractors and earth moving machinery. (Full cv's are available upon request).

7. HEALTH AND SAFETY

The Trust subscribes to the SCAUM (Standing Conference of Archaeological Unit Managers) Health and Safety Policy as defined in **Health and Safety in Field Archaeology** (1999). A risk assessment will be undertaken prior to, and during, the field work programme.

8. INSURANCE

The Trust holds public liability insurance with an indemnity limit of £2,500,000 through Russell, Scanlon Limited Insurance Brokers, Wellington Circus, Nottingham NG1 5AJ (policy 01 1017386 COM), and Professional Indemnity Insurance for £2,000,000 per claim (policy No. 59A/SA11818791).

YMDDIRIEDOLAETH
ARCHAEOLEGOL
GWYNEDD



GWYNEDD
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
TRUST