
Aber Falls Hotel Abergwyngregyn



Archaeological Assessment

GAT Project No. G2005
Report No. 715 (Revised)
February 2008

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Prepared for Owen Davenport Planning Consultants

February 2008

By

George Smith

**ABER FALLS HOTEL
ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT**

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ABER FALLS HOTEL ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

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1. SUMMARY

An archaeological assessment was carried out in advance of proposed development on land adjacent to the Aber Falls Hotel, Abergwyngregyn. The assessment was a requirement of the application for planning consent and involved a site visit and desktop documentary research. The area was shown to be open land at least from 1795 and possibly before. However, the possibility of the presence of some archaeological features from the Medieval period was identified and the above ground assessment indicated that if present such features would be preserved. The evaluation of the site by some trial trenches was recommended as the only way that the archaeological potential could be adequately assessed.

2. INTRODUCTION

Gwynedd Archaeological Trust (GAT) was asked by Owen Davenport Planning Consultants to carry out an archaeological assessment on land adjoining the east side of the Aber Falls Hotel, Abergwyngregyn at NGR SH 6559 7276 (Fig. 1). The assessment was required by the Snowdonia National Park Authority (SNP) as a condition of the application for planning consent.

The area affected by the development consisted of the former garden of the hotel, an area of approximately 0.1 hectare (1,000sq m). The assessment was needed because of the general archaeological potential of the immediate area, close to a scheduled ancient monument SAM C007, (a Medieval castle mound, GAT PRN 370) as well as a nearby Medieval hall (GAT PRN 5158) and surrounding enclosure as well as to the village of Aber which itself has Medieval origins.

Acknowledgements

Thanks for useful comments are due to David Longley (GAT), David Hopewell (GAT), John Griffith Roberts (SNP) and Mr. Lovesy.

3. SPECIFICATION AND PROJECT DESIGN

The work was carried out according to a brief supplied by the Snowdonia National Park Authority (Appendix 3) and according to accepted guidelines for such work (IFA 2001). The basic requirement was for a field visit and desktop study. The potential for the presence and survival of and value of any archaeological and palaeo-environmental remains were to be assessed. Recommendations for further work or for

methods to mitigate the effects of construction were to be stated and are contained in this report

The field visit took into account the visible nature of the site and statements by the applicant, Mr Lovesy, about the recent history of the site and about the type and location and extent of the proposed development. The proposed site plan by Russell-Hughes Architects (Drawing no. 1530:07:3) (Fig. 10) showed a terrace of four houses, approximately 21m long east-west and 8m wide, north-south towards the south-side of the plot, set back a little way from the existing road. The north side of the proposed plan has back gardens and parking spaces.

4. METHODS AND TECHNIQUES

Desk top study

This comprised the study of documents, maps and photographs in the Gwynedd Historic Environment Record (HER), in the archive of projects at the Gwynedd Archaeological Trust, in the Archive of the University of Bangor and the on-line catalogues of the National Library of Wales and of the Gwynedd County Council Archives. The client, Mr Lovesy, also kindly supplied copies of some early 20th century postcards that he has collected, showing the Aber Falls Hotel. The assessment also benefited from as a study of documentary resources for Aber, previously made by GAT as part of an assessment of the historic landscape of the Aber Valley (Gwyn 2001).

The databases of the Gwynedd Historic Environment Record and RCAHMW CARN on-line historic record were also consulted.

Fields in the vicinity of the development were identified on the Tithe map and apportionment for Aber along with their owners, tenants, field names and recorded land usage.

Field Visit

The land was visited on Tuesday 29th January 2008.

Report

Paper copies of this report will be given to the client (2 copies), to the SNP (3 copies) and to the Gwynedd Historic Environment Record (1 copy). A digital copy of the report on disc together with the assessment archive of papers and photographs will be filed at GAT HER as Project No. G2005.

5. GENERAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

Topographic background

The Aber Valley is a deep and steep-sided narrow valley with glacial origins, as shown by the truncated stream valleys that enter it, with waterfalls over steep valley

sides. The river has also later worn down through the glacial debris on the valley floor creating a small gorge. At the mouth of the valley, close to the Aber Falls Hotel at 25m OD, the river enters onto a narrow coastal plain. This is gently sloping, formed of the outwash delta of glacial materials from the mountains around. At its north edge it consists of fine sediments only a few metres above maximum high tide and is eroding into the sea. Three topographic areas are therefore relevant to the development site - the coastal plain, the valley and the uplands around.

Archaeological and Historical background

The proposed development site lies on the west side of the river channel at the northern edge of the village at the junction between the valley and the coastal plain. The Gwynedd Historic Environment record shows 17 features within about 500m of the proposed development (Fig. 1 and Appendix 1) but the wider area has numerous recorded features. The upland to the south and the valley floor were well used in the prehistoric period as shown by the presence of several cairns of Bronze Age type on the hill-tops and ridges as well as remains of settlements and fields. Some of the latter in the uplands may be of the Bronze Age, but most are likely to be of the Iron Age, continuing into the Roman period. These later settlements were probably associated with a hillfort, Maes-y-Gaer to the south-east, overlooking the entrance to the valley and the first indication of a territorial focus at Aber.

The Gwynedd Historic Environment Record shows that, in contrast to the uplands, the coastal plain has relatively few recorded prehistoric remains. The better-drained uplands were probably traversed by trackways and cleared and settled at an earlier period than the lowlands. Nevertheless there are some finds from the plain in this area including a Neolithic stone axe (PRN 7478), an Early Bronze Age stone axe-hammer (PRN 4071) and two mounds of burnt stone (PRNs 927 and 4092), thought to represent cooking places of the 2nd millennium BC, the nearest 550m to the east.

There is some evidence that the plain was settled and farmed in the Iron Age and Roman period indicating that most remains of such settlement have been removed by subsequent centuries of clearance and ploughing. For instance, some earthworks of roundhouses survive at Wern Newydd (PRN 257), 2km to the north-east and remains of a probable settlement enclosure have been seen on aerial photographs of crop marks in fields near Tal-y-Bont 1.5km to the west (PRN 12728).

The settlements on the coastal plain would almost certainly have continued in use during the Roman period, when agricultural settlements in the area generally seem to have flourished. At this time a road was created along the landward edge of the coastal plain, connecting the Roman forts at Caerhun and Caernarfon. Its position has been identified by the discovery of a Roman milestone (PRN 368) at Madryn Farm 1km to the north-east of Aber and by traces seen on aerial photographs as crop marks in fields near Madryn Farm to the east, as well as to the west near to Tal-y-Bont (D. Hopewell pers. com.). The alignment shown by these cropmarks suggest that close to Aber the Roman road lay on a similar line to the later Turnpike road and so has been removed or overlain by it and probably crossed the river at a similar place (Hopewell 2007, Map 4).

Possibly the earliest settlement at Aber itself is indicated by the church of St Bodfan on a rise in ground 300m to the west of the proposed development (Fig. 1, 1628). The original church was demolished and rebuilt but it lies within a sub-circular enclosure (or *llan*). Such features usually indicate an Early Medieval foundation and the earliest ecclesiastical settlement would have developed around the church (Johnstone 1995).

It was control of the crossing point at the junction of the coastal road and another taking the upland route through the valleys that was the key to Aber's importance and the reason why a small castle on a mound or motte was built there, possibly during a campaign by the Norman Earl of Chester during an unsuccessful attempt to subjugate Gwynedd between 1081-1090. Later, when Gruffudd ap Cynan re-asserted the independence of Gwynedd and established administrative control he made Aber the *llys* or court of the commote of Arllechwedd Uchaf. The hall that was built there became one of the favourite residences of the princes of Gwynedd. The valley was a sheltered place and its position facing the priory at Penmon may also have made it attractive. The earliest antiquarian description was by Leland in the 1530's who stated 'The moode in the parish of Aber otherwise Llan Boduan, wher Tussog Lluelin uab Gerwerd Trundoon had a castle or palace on a hill by the church, whereof yet parte stondith'. Excavations in 1993 revealed the foundations of a hall close to the castle mound of Ty'n y Mwd, associated with pottery of the 13th-14th and 15th century, a ring-brooch of 13th-14th century style and a coin of 1335-43 (Johnstone 1994, 1995, 1997 and 2000; Longley 1997).

The hall of the *llys* lay close to the motte and within a curvilinear enclosure believed to be the bailey or castle yard. The village grew up around the west side of this bailey enclosure. In the late 13th century 24 families were recorded as living there (Lewis 1912, 175). After the death of Llywelyn the Manor of Aber passed through various hands and although still maintained for some time the hall eventually fell into decay. However, the village continued and in 1339 was granted the right to hold a weekly market and a fair three times a year (*ibid*). It seems to have flourished because of its position on the crossroads at the junction of the valley and coastal road and the route from the coastal road across the Lavan Sands for the ferry across to Anglesey, which was the chief route across the Straits until the opening of Telford's bridge in 1826. This route was also a droving route, which took the valley road over the hills and may have therefore been associated with the Aber fairs.

The coastal road originally crossed the Aber River by a bridge close to the Aber Falls Hotel but a new bridge was built in about 1839 a little to the north with a new length of road, which then bypassed the village on that side (UB BH/6895).

The manor eventually came into the hands of the Bulkeley Estate of Baron Hill (Anglesey) in 1689. The Tithe map of 1848 (Fig. 5) shows that the area now occupied by the Aber Falls Hotel was a part of a narrow strip of land alongside the river (Field 30a), a subdivision of a larger field (30) that extended further to the north and west, the name of which was recorded in the Tithe Apportionment as 'Bulkeley Arms Inn'. The inn itself was also named on the Tithe map. It lay within the former glebe land between the church and the Rectory (Fig. 5). The inn was later to become the house called Tan-y-fynwent (Fig. 7). The Chester and Holyhead railway opened soon after and a hotel (The Aber Hotel) was built at the north side of the area, close to Aber station, presumably to take advantage of the tourist trade to the Aber Valley. The

Aber parts of the Baron Hill estate along with arable land to the north of the church, formerly Glebe or Church land, were acquired by the Penrhyn Estate in 1862. A Penrhyn Estate property list of holdings in various parishes in 1886 still records for Aber the 'Bulkeley Arms Hotel buildings and gardens. Part of Glan y Mor and former glebe.' (UB Penrhyn 274).

6. ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

Potential for survival

The hotel was built in the 1930's and the area of its gardens has been considerably disturbed over the years. The north side, adjoining the turnpike road, was terraced in to create a level car parking area and this area is probably now archaeologically sterile. The remainder of the garden was turned into a tennis court, visible on an early postcard (Fig. 8). Creation of the level tennis court meant cutting into the slope at the south side, where the garden is now about 0.80m below the base of the adjoining roadside wall. The dry-stone wall is roughly built of glacial boulders and is likely to be a field wall of clearance stone, contemporary with the pre-1839 road but at least was already in existence about 1926, when the hotel was built. The soil at the north side meanwhile had to be built up to create the tennis court. This means that an area at the south edge has been truncated and is now probably archaeologically sterile while the area at the north has been protected, with good preservation. The central area has more recently been affected by creation of a large circular pond, which has now been infilled to create a seating area and a 20th century drain runs across the garden from south to north (Fig. 9). Other garden features such as paths and flower beds have probably not affected any subsoil features.

Of the whole proposed development area it appears that 40-50% will have intact subsoil surfaces and retain any archaeological features that may be present (Fig. 10). Most of this area lies below the footprint of the proposed dwellings, rather than in their gardens or parking areas although if the development proceeds all the area will be affected.

General Archaeological Potential

In terms of prehistoric activity, any places close to water courses are frequently the site of early settlement or of cooking activity. The possibility of such activity in this area is supported by the discovery of two such sites in the vicinity, PRN 927 (Kelly 1994) and 4092 (White 1972).

River crossing or bridging points are also places where the focussing of routes creates likely conditions for activity and this would be so here for the Roman and Medieval periods. Evidence of such activity is usually limited to chance finds of single objects or occasionally caches of coins, for instance.

In terms of the Medieval period the possibility of evidence of settlement or of the markets or fairs must be assessed.

The development area lies on the north edge of the village and on the north side of the road that crossed the river close by until the new turnpike bridge was built. The old road here adjoins a triangle of land between two roads entering the valley and it seems likely that this triangle, although already occupied by houses at the time of the Tithe survey was originally a village green. This green could have been the site of the weekly market. It may also be that the village also once extended on the north side of this triangle of land as, although it lost its royal status, it still seems to have flourished after the death of Llywelyn. An account of 1333 AD records that 11 Flemish weavers were living in the village suggesting a shortage of skilled labour (Gwyn 2001, 3.2.4.2). However, there is a clear possibility that the village would have shrunk in the later Medieval period, as happened widely across Britain after the Black Death but there were no property boundaries marked on the north side of the old road at the time of the Tithe Map. The village would also have benefited from passing and probably increasing traffic. Parish births and deaths register show that the population of the village was about the same between 1682 to 1731 as it was in the 19th century, although rising somewhat in-between before falling again (Owen 1953, 81). There is, then, no clear evidence to indicate that there was more extensive settlement in the Medieval period, although, on comparative evidence, it is likely. It was probably not until the opening of the railway, which caused the end of the Beaumaris Ferry and of cattle droving that the village became more of a backwater, although benefiting somewhat from its popularity as a scenic area for early tourism.

This area on the north side of the road, part of which is now occupied by the Aber Falls Hotel, was part of a narrow strip of land alongside the river between the glebe land to the west and the river. The glebe land is described on a land survey of 1762 (Owen 1953, 84-7) and shown as plough land on a map of 1776 (Fig. 2), which also identified the Tithe Barn and Rickyard as standing on a patch of land by the road to the north-east of the rectory. One of the glebe fields lies alongside the river and is shown as rough land (Aber Glebe 1776). The land further up the river, close to the bridge, where the Aber Falls Hotel was later built, was probably of a similar nature. There must have been other plough land belonging to the village on the plain nearby but the name of the property to the north-east, Henfaes – Old field or plain, makes it a likely place for the main block of plough land. This interpretation was also that taken by Jones-Pierce (1962), who suggested that the village strip fields in this area would have been intermingled with those of the prince (demesne land), later that of the lord of the manor, the Thomas family, who built Pen-y-bryn, a large house on the east bank of the river, about 1600.

The lack of evidence for properties on the north side of the suggested village green, and its possible use as the site of the market together with the evidence that the area to the north alongside the river was rough land, make that area a possible site for the fairs, which would have required additional open space for livestock, space that was not available in the valley or to the west. If that was so, the area occupied by the Aber Falls Hotel would then have been open land, just as it was in the earliest representation in 1797, showing the road leading up to the old bridge and the smithy adjacent to it (Figs 3 and 4). However, even if markets or fairs were held in that area there is still a possibility that there were properties there before the plague that reduced rural populations in the mid-14th century. If markets and fairs were held there then traces of temporary structures and stray finds might be found.

Excavation of an area adjoining the Norman motte at Aber showed that the subsoil of the valley floor is very stony, with small boulders (Johnstone 1994). The remains of a significant Medieval building were found immediately below the topsoil, which was a cultivated agricultural soil. The building had been robbed to foundation level and only these footings remained, with no surviving floors and there were no subsoil features. Some Medieval pottery was found but only in the topsoil or at the junction of the topsoil and the subsoil. Conditions were therefore not favourable to archaeological survival and the same could also be expected for the area of the present development.

Several areas were investigated by GAT by archaeological work prior to the construction of the A55 north of Aber (Kelly 1994). One area investigated (Area A) lay on the north side of the old road immediately adjoining the present development. This was first the subject of surface collection, which was unproductive, then by a geophysical survey. This identified several anomalies so 15 trenches, each about 20m by 1m were excavated. The agricultural ploughed topsoil was removed by machine and the rest cleaned by hand. This showed that all the geophysical anomalies were either natural periglacial features, Post-medieval drains or other services and no other features or finds were identified (*ibid.* 4). Area A lay within a field of which the present development plot was a part, prior to the construction of the new bridge and road in about 1839. There was, therefore no evidence from Area A for prehistoric or Medieval activity in that area and therefore possibly the same would be the case for the present development area.

7. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

- Prehistoric cooking activity close to water courses is a fairly frequent occurrence and any evidence that might have been present here would have been greatly affected by heavy use in more recent times. However, these activities leave quite widespread evidence in the form of spread of burnt stone and these could be identified during evaluation.
- Use of the bridge and road from Roman times onward would also have been affected by later use and unlikely to leave any recordable traces and watching brief would be appropriate.
- There is however, strong potential for Medieval activity in the area of the development, particularly of markets and fairs, with the possibility of insubstantial structures and stray finds.
- There is also some potential for the presence of Medieval housing in the development area and, if present, would still be identifiable, despite modern interference, as features such as wall footings, drains or rubbish pits.
- The considerable amount of modern disturbance to the area, including drains, an iron water pipe and electric cabling circuits to garden lighting make non-destructive investigation, for example by geophysical survey, impractical.
- The possibility of features relating to Medieval markets or to houses can only be met by actually testing the presence and survival of any features by the

excavation of trial trenches. It is therefore suggested that two evaluation trenches should be excavated within the area of the proposed development. These should be 10m long by 2m wide, comprising 4% of the total area, and would be best positioned so as to sample the central and northern part of the development area (Fig. 10).

- The results would provide a sample to allow a valid and conclusive assessment to be made.

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- Tithe Apportionment Register for the Parish of Aber 1848. Handwritten copy held at GAT.
- UB BH 6895. *Plan and Section of an Alteration of Road near Aber Village 1839*, University of Bangor Archives, Baron Hill 6895.

UB Penrhyn 274. *A List of Properties held by the Penrhyn Estate*. Univ. of Bangor Archives, Penrhyn Estate Maps coll.

Pictures

Aber, Anon, c. 1880. On line Archives, Gwynedd County Council Archives XS/1491/50.

Aber, Rowlandson, c. 1797. On line Archives, National Library of Wales Archives PD 9371.

Photographs

Mr P. Lovesy coll.

Aerial photographs courtesy coll. Mr D. Longley.

Aerial photographs in coll. of RCAHMW. Copies in GAT Roman Roads in North-West Wales, Project G1632 survey archive.

APPENDIX 1

List of archaeological and Historic features within 500m of the proposed development area recorded in the Gwynedd Historic Environment Record

PRN	SITE NAME	NGR	STAT NO	SITE STAT	GLOSSARY SITE TYPE	PERIOD
370	Motte, Pen Y Mwd, Aber	SH65647266	C007	SAM	Motte	Medieval
1628	Church, Abergwyngregyn	SH65317268			Church	Early-Medieval
1645	Building Foundations, Near Pen Y Bryn	SH65727275			Building	Medieval
1704	Enclosure & Assoc. Structures, Pen Y Bryn	SH65807270	C218	SAM	Enclosure	Medieval
4071	Axe Hammer - Findspot, College Farm, Aber	SH65367267			Findspot	Prehistoric
4079	Urn Burial - Findspot, Pen Y Bryn Manor	SH65817281A			Burial	Prehistoric
5158	Excavation - Pen Y Mwd, Aber	SH65707260C			House	Medieval
5886	Pen Y Bryn House, Aber	SH65827273	GI	LB	House	Medieval
6813	Aber Medieval Township	SH65607260			Township	Medieval
6900	Aber Parish Church	SH65317268			Church	Modern
7478	Graig Lwyd Axe - Findspot, Henfaes, Aber	SH65607305			Findspot	Prehistoric
11168	Toll Road, Pen Y Bryn Farm, Aber	SH65707283			Toll Road	Post-Medieval
11404	Pen-Y-Bryn Cott., E. of Penybryn	SH65847275	GII	LB	House	Post-Medieval
11458	St. Bodfan's Rectory	SH65437262	GII	LB	Building	Post-Medieval
12598	Pen-Y-Bryn, Barn, Aber	SH65847279	GII	LB	Outbuilding	Post-Medieval
15859	Abergwyngregyn - Landscape	SH65507260			Landscape	Multi-period
19151	The Bull's Head, Aber	SH65377267			Coaching Inn	Post-Medieval

APPENDIX 2

List of archaeological and Historic features within 500m of the proposed development area recorded in the RCAHMW CARN Historic Environment Record

NPRN	NAME	NGR	TYPE	PERIOD	STATUS
32	Pen-Y-Bryn	SH65827273	House	Post Medieval	
351	Ty'n-Y-Mwd	SH656726	House	Post Medieval	
6668	Bethlehem Chapel (Welsh Calvinistic Methodist; Aber), Abergwyngregyn	SH65577266	Chapel	Post Medieval	
6669	Soar Methodist Chapel (Wesleyan), Abergwyngregyn	SH65717257	Chapel	Post Medieval	
15161	Pen-Y-Bryn	SH658729	Settlement	Medieval?	
16707	Pen-Y-Bryn Cottage East of Penybryn House	SH65847275	Dwelling	Post Medieval	LB2
16824	St. Bodfan's Rectory	SH65437262	House	Post Medieval?	LB2
23770	Bridge Abutments	SH65627278	Bridge	Post Medieval?	
31424	Pen-Y-Bryn, Barn, Aber	SH65847279	Outbuilding	Post Medieval?	LB2
43704	St Bodfari's Church; St Bodfan's Church, Aber	SH65337263	Church	Post Medieval	
54193	Mill, Aber	SH65747256	Corn Mill	Post Medieval	
54194	Bryn Hyfrid And Bro Dawel, Aber	SH65677257	Dwelling	Post Medieval	
54196	Fron And Ty'n-Y-Buarth, Aber	SH65657257	Dwelling	Post Medieval	
54197	Cottages Opposite Capel Soar	SH657725	Dwelling	Post Medieval	
54198	Ddol and Ddol Cottage, Aber	SH65637259	Dwelling	Post Medieval	
54199	Pair of Cottages to South West of Pen-Y-Mwd, Aber	SH65617264	Dwelling	Post Medieval	
54200	Tan-Y-Dderwen, Aber	SH65607266	Dwelling	Post Medieval	
93697	Enclosure & Associated Structures At Pen-Y-Bryn, A	SH65817275	Enclosure	Unknown	SAM
95692	Aber Castle Mound	SH656726	Motte	Medieval	SAM
97180	Calvinistic Methodist Chapel, Aber	SH65767249	Chapel	Post Medieval	
302903	Pen-Y-Mwd	SH65647266	Motte	Medieval	SAM
309171	Pen Y Mwd House;Aber, Llys	SH65687263	House	Medieval	

APPENDIX 3

DESIGN BRIEF FOR AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

Archaeologist, Snowdonia National Park Authority

Site: Land adjacent to Aber Falls Hotel, Abergwyngregyn, Gwynedd

Agent: Owen Davenport Ltd.

Date: 29th January 2008

National Grid Reference: 265590,372760

Planning Application: NP3/10/5J

This design brief is only valid for six months after the above date. After this period the Archaeologist, Snowdonia National Park Authority, should be contacted.

It is recommended that the contractor appointed to carry out the archaeological assessment visits the site of the proposed development and consults the Regional Historic Environment Record (HER) for north-west Wales before completing their specification. The Archaeologist, Snowdonia National Park Authority cannot guarantee the inclusion of all relevant information in the design brief.

1.0 Site Description

- 1.1. For the purposes of this brief the proposed development site comprises a 0.11ha plot of land adjoining the Aber Falls Hotel, Abergwyngregyn as shown on drawing nos. 1530:07:01 and 1530:07:03 (Russell-Hughes Cyf, Architects).
- 1.2. The site is currently a garden associated with the Aber Falls Hotel. It is shown as open ground (part of a larger field) on the Ordnance Survey 1st Edition (1891, surveyed 1877-1878). The area is bounded by public roads to the north and south, by the Aber Falls Hotel to the west and by a hedgerow and adjacent footpath to the east.
- 1.3 The village of Abergwyngregyn is located on the coastal plateau of the north Gwynedd coast, on the west bank of the *Afon* (River) Aber at the mouth of a steep sided valley which runs south eastwards into the Carneddau mountains.

2.0 Archaeological Background

- 2.1. Abergwyngregyn is famous as the site of one of the *llysoedd* (courts) of the *tywysogion* (princes) of Gwynedd in the medieval period. It is known that there were twenty-one *llysoedd* in pre-conquest Gwynedd. The administrative system which they were a part of is recorded in a variety of documents, including Welsh law books. They indicate that in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the kingdoms of Gwynedd were divided into administrative units known as *Cymydau* (commotes). Part of each *cymydau* was in royal ownership and the *llys* acted as a focal point where the prince of Gwynedd

and his entourage stayed when they came to collect dues owed throughout the *cymydau*.

- 2.2. A motte (the basal mound of an earth and timberwork castle) dating to the Norman campaigns in north Wales, lies less than 100m to the south-east of the application area. The motte is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (monument number C007). Excavation by Gwynedd Archaeological Trust in 1993 in the field immediately to the south of the motte revealed the site of a winged hall house dating to the fourteenth century AD in its final form but with earlier phases (Johnstone 2000).
- 2.3. Aber is known to have been one of the favourite *llysoedd* of the princes of Gwynedd during the thirteenth century.
- 2.4. The precise location of the *llys* is still in question. Possible locations are at the property known as Pen y Bryn (on a hillside to the east of and overlooking the present day village) and at the site of the hall house excavated by Gwynedd Archaeological Trust to the south of the motte.
- 2.5. The village retained its importance for sometime after the Edwardian conquest of 1282 and in 1338 was granted a charter to hold annual fairs and a weekly market (it is likely that the charter formalised arrangements for fairs and possibly a market dating from before the conquest). The old road through the village ran immediately to the south of the application area. Bridge abutments surviving at the Afon Aber a short distance to the east of the application area show where the present day truncated road originally continued over and beyond the river.
- 2.6. There are two key reasons why the application area is thought to be of high potential. Firstly, it is considered likely that the medieval market was held on the area of land between this road and the motte. Secondly, tenements (houses and accompanying strips of land) may have lined the north side of the road, with house frontages facing onto the street looking towards the centre of the village and the possible market place. This implies that there is potential for the presence of building remains and associated deposits within the application area.

Documentation:

- Butler, L.A.S. 1962. A long hut group in the Aber Valley. *Transactions of the Caernarfonshire Historical Society* 23: 25-36.
- Gwyn, D. 2001. Assessment of historical documentary resources. In Gwyn, D., Roberts, J.G. and Thompson, D. Coedydd Aber NNR: Historic Landscape Resource Management Survey. Gwynedd Archaeological Trust, report 419: 2-6.
- Johnstone, N. 1995. Llys and Maerdref. Gwynedd Archaeological Trust, report 167.
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- Jones-Pierce, T. 1962 Aber Gwyn Gregyn. *Transactions of the Caernarfonshire Historical Society* 23: 37-43.
- Longley, D. 1997. The royal courts of the Welsh princes in Gwynedd, AD 400-1283. In N. Edwards (ed.) *Landscape and Settlement in Medieval Wales*: 41-54. Oxford.

Owen, T.J. 1953. The records of the parish of Aber. *Transactions of the Caernarfonshire Historical Society* 14: 74-93.

3.0 The nature of the development and archaeological requirements

- 3.1 The proposed development comprises plans to construct a terrace of 4 dwellings with detached garages on the land.
- 3.2 This is a *design brief* for a staged programme of work to comprise an archaeological **assessment** and **field evaluation** to be undertaken according to guidelines set out in Welsh national planning guidance (*Planning Policy Guidance Wales 2002*) and Welsh Office Circular 60/96 (*Planning and the Historic Environment: Archaeology*). The need for a field evaluation will be determined by the Archaeologist, Snowdonia National Park Authority on the basis of the assessment.
- 3.3 The object of this programme of archaeological works is to assess the impact of the development proposals on surviving monuments or remains and to formulate an appropriate mitigation strategy where the archaeological resource is threatened.
- 3.4 This *design brief* should be used by the archaeological contractor as the basis for the preparation of a detailed written archaeological *specification*. The specification must be submitted to the Archaeologist, Snowdonia National Park Authority for approval before the work commences.
- 3.5 The *specification* should contain, as a minimum, the following elements:
- Non-technical summary.
 - Details of the proposed works as precisely as is reasonably possible, indicating clearly on a plan their location and extent.
 - A research design which sets out the site specific objectives of the archaeological works.
 - Reference to the relevant legislation.
 - Health and Safety considerations.
 - Monitoring procedures.
 - Field methodology.
 - Methods of recording, including the collection and disposal strategy for artefacts and ecofacts.
 - Arrangement for immediate conservation of artefacts.
 - Post-fieldwork methodology.
 - The level and grade of all key project staff.
 - Details of all specialists.
 - A timetable for the proposed works including contingency costs (if appropriate).
 - The intended method of publication.
 - Archive deposition.

4.0 Archaeological desk-based assessment detail

- 4.1 The purpose of the **archaeological desk-based assessment** is to make a detailed consideration of the known or potential archaeological resource within the proposed development site. It will consist of the following:
- a) Collation and assessment of all relevant information held in the Regional HER, including listed building records.
 - b) Assessment of all available excavation reports and archives including unpublished and unprocessed material affecting the site and its setting.
 - c) Assessment of all extant aerial photographic (AP) evidence and, where relevant, a re-plotting of archaeological and topographic information by a suitably qualified specialist at an appropriate scale. Many of the main archaeological aerial photographic records can be consulted at the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments in Wales (RCAHMW), Aberystwyth. However, the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW), Bangor, also holds AP collections including 1940s Luftwaffe photographs, and these may be equally suited to the requirements of the desktop study.
 - d) Assessment of records held at the RCAHMW and University of Bangor, if appropriate.
 - e) Assessment of the environmental potential of the archaeological deposits through existing data or by inference.
 - f) Assessment of the faunal potential of the archaeological deposits through existing data or by inference.
 - g) Assessment of the artefactual potential of the archaeological deposits through existing data or by inference.
 - h) Assessment of all available geotechnical information for the area including the results of test pits and boreholes.
 - i) Assessment of the present topography and land use of the area through maps and site visits.
 - j) Analysis of relevant maps and plans. Copies of the relevant section of all historic maps and plans must be included in the final report to allow full map regression for the site. Cartographic evidence is held at the County Record Offices, including Tithe Maps, Enclosure Act Plans, Estate Maps and all editions of the Ordnance Survey (place and field-name evidence from these sources should be considered).
 - k) Analysis of the historical documents (e.g. county histories, local and national journals and antiquarian sources) held in museums, libraries or other archives, in particular local history and archives library.

5.0 Archaeological field evaluation detail

- 5.1 The purpose of the **archaeological evaluation** is to determine the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains liable to be threatened by the proposed development, in order to make an assessment of their importance, leading to one or more of the following:
- the formulation of a proposal for further archaeological investigation within a programme of research;

- the formulation of a strategy to ensure the recording, preservation or management of the archaeological resource.

Or, in the case of demonstrated absence of archaeological remains or archaeological potential, no further archaeological requirements.

- 5.2 A representative sample of all areas where archaeological remains are potentially threatened should be studied.
- 5.3 Non-destructive methods of field evaluation should be considered, although the effectiveness of any technique should be established before undertaking work over the whole area. Survey techniques include geophysical survey, remote sensing, geochemical survey, earthwork survey and field scanning. The techniques adopted should be chosen in the light of:-
- local topography, geomorphology and geology,
 - size of the plot area,
 - comparison with recent work carried out in similar conditions.
- 5.4 The proportion of the proposal area subject to destructive methods of field evaluation will be agreed by the Archaeologist, Snowdonia National Park Authority in the light of the assessment. Pending the findings of the assessment, it is considered likely that this should consist of a minimum of 15 square metres of the area where archaeological remains are potentially threatened by the proposed development. Potentially sensitive ground disturbance is taken to include landscaping, excavation for services and other ancillary works, as well as excavation for foundations.
- 5.5 Destructive methods of field evaluation include the following techniques: augering, hand-excavated test pits, hand-excavated trenches, machine-stripped and manually excavated test pits, machine-stripped and manually excavated trenches. The sampling strategy should be devised in the light of:-
- local topography,
 - any non-destructive field evaluation results,
 - and recent research on archaeological decision-making processes and sampling strategies (see Hey, G. & Lacey, M. 2001. *Evaluation of Archaeological Decision-making Processes and Sampling Strategies*. Oxford: Kent County Council).
- 5.6 The evaluation should carefully consider any artefactual and environmental information and provide an assessment of the viability (for further study) of such information. It will be particularly important to provide an indication of the relative importance of such material for any subsequent decision making regarding mitigation strategies.
- 5.7 All aspects of the evaluation shall be conducted in accordance with Institute of Field Archaeologists guidance (see general requirements below). The controlled use of metal detectors on site as part of the evaluation strategy to aid the recovery of artefacts is encouraged. Recording will comprise appropriate plans, sections and/or elevations and photographs.
- 5.8 Both black-and-white and colour photography should be used where appropriate.

- 5.9 If utilising digital technology, high resolution images (preferably in tiff. format) must be produced. These should be presented within the report as a hard copy and a compact disc must be included as an archive to accompany the report.

6.0 Results

- 6.1 The results must be presented in a report and should be detailed and laid out in such a way that data and supporting text are readily cross-referenced. The Regional HER Archaeologist should be contacted to ensure that any sites or monuments not previously recorded in the HER are given a Primary Recognition Number (PRN) and that data structure is compatible with the HER. The historical development of the site must be presented in phased maps and plans comprising clearly, the outline of the site.
- 6.2 A deposit model should be presented graphically in plan and, where appropriate, in profile and at a scale that is commensurate with subsequent use as a working document.
- 6.3 Within the report an attempt should be made to indicate areas of greater or lesser archaeological significance and the sites should be ranked in level of overall archaeological importance (locally, regionally and nationally).
- 6.4 All relevant aerial photographs, re-plots and historic maps must be included and be fully referenced.
- 6.5 The archaeological contractor must ensure that sufficient resource is made available for a post-excavation programme to result in an archive report.
- 6.6 The report should specifically include the following:

- a copy of the design brief
- a location plan
- all located sites plotted on an appropriately scaled plan of the development
- a gazetteer of all located sites, including full dimensional and descriptive detail
- a full bibliography of sources consulted.
- a drawn, written and photographic record of any archaeological structures and deposits that may be revealed.
- preparation of full archive report.
- an archive compact disc

7.0 General requirements

- 7.1 The archaeological assessment and evaluation must be undertaken by an appropriately qualified individual or organisation, fully experienced in work of this character.
- 7.2 Details, including the name, qualifications and experience of the project director and all other key project personnel (including specialist staff) should be communicated to the Archaeologist, Snowdonia National Park Authority.
- 7.3 All written work should be attributed to an author(s).

- 7.4 Contractors and subcontractors are expected to conform to standard professional guidelines. The following are of particular relevance in this instance:-
- English Heritage's 1991 Management of Archaeological Projects (MAP2).
 - The Institute of Field Archaeologists 1985 (revised 2006) Code of Conduct.
 - The Institute of Field Archaeologists 1990 (revised 2002) Code of Approved Practice for the Regulation of Contractual Arrangements in Field Archaeology.
 - The Institute of Field Archaeologists 1994 (revised 2001) Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs.
 - The Institute of Field Archaeologists 1994 (revised 2001) Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation.
 - The Institute of Field Archaeologists 1995 (revised 2001) Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Excavation.
 - The Institute of Field Archaeologists 1996 (revised 2001) Standard and Guidance for the Archaeological Investigation and Recording of Standing Buildings or Structures.
 - The Institute of Field Archaeologists 2001 Standard and Guidance for the Collection, Documentation, Conservation and Research of Archaeological Materials.
 - Museum and Galleries Commission 1994 Standards in the Museum Care of Archaeological Collections.
 - Richards, J. & Robinson, D. 2000. Digital Archives from Excavation and Fieldwork: *Guide to Good Practice*. Second Edition. The Archaeology Data Service Guide to Good Practice. Oxbow Books.
<http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/project/goodguides/excavation/>
 - United Kingdom Institute for Conservation 1990 Guidelines for the Preparation of Excavation Archives for long-term storage.
- 7.5 Many people in North Wales speak Welsh as their first language, and many of the archive and documentary references are in Welsh. Contractors should therefore give due consideration to their ability to understand and converse in Welsh.
- 7.6 Care must be taken in the siting of offices and other support structures in order to minimise the impact on the environment. Extreme care must also be taken in the structure and maintenance of spoil heaps for the same reasons and to facilitate a high quality reinstatement. This is particularly important in relation to pasture land.
- 7.7 The archaeological contractor must satisfy themselves that all constraints to groundworks have been identified, including the siting of live services, Tree Preservation Orders and public footpaths. The Archaeologist, Snowdonia National Park Authority bears no responsibility for the inclusion or exclusion of such information within this brief.
- 7.8 Any changes to the specifications that the archaeological contractor may wish to make after approval should be communicated to the Archaeologist, Snowdonia National Park Authority and approved.

- 7.9 Human remains must be left *in situ*, covered and protected when discovered. No further investigation should normally be permitted and the Archaeologist, Snowdonia National Park Authority and the local Coroner must be informed immediately. If removal is essential it can only taken place under appropriate Home Office and environmental health regulations.
- 7.10 Arrangements for the long-term storage and deposition of all artefacts must be agreed with the landowner and the Archaeologist, Snowdonia National Park Authority before the commencement of investigation.
- 7.11 The involvement of the Archaeologist, Snowdonia National Park Authority should be acknowledged in any report or publication generated by this project.
- 7.12 A full archive including plans, photographs, written material and any other material resulting from the project should be prepared in accordance with standard guidance. All plans, photographs and descriptions should be labelled, cross-referenced and lodged in an appropriate place (to be agreed with the Archaeologist, Snowdonia National Park Authority) within six months of the completion of the project.
- 7.13 Three copies of the bound report must be sent to the Archaeologist, Snowdonia National Park Authority (address as below), and a further copy sent to the HER Archaeologist, at the curatorial division of Gwynedd Archaeological Trust, who will deposit the copy in the Regional HER.

8.0 Curatorial monitoring

- 8.1 The project will be monitored by The Archaeologist, Snowdonia National Park Authority to ensure the fulfilment of the brief and specifications. The Archaeologist will normally inspect site works and review the progress of excavation reports and archive preparation. The archaeological contractor must inform the Archaeologist, Snowdonia National Park Authority in writing of the proposed start dates for the project.

9.0 Glossary of terms

- 9.1 *Archaeological Contractor*
A professionally qualified individual or an organisation containing professionally qualified archaeological staff, able to offer an appropriate and satisfactory treatment of the archaeological resource, retained by the developer to carry out archaeological work either prior to the submission of a planning application or as a requirement of the planning process.
- 9.2 *Archaeological Curator*
A person, or organisation, responsible for the conservation and management of archaeological evidence by virtue of official or statutory duties. In north-west Wales the archaeological advisor to the Local Planning Authorities is the development control archaeologist, who works to the Welsh Archaeological Trust's Curators' Code of Practice.
- 9.3 *Archive*
An ordered collection of all documents and artefacts from an archaeological project, which at the conclusion of the work should be deposited at a public repository, such as the local museum.
- 9.4 *Assessment*
A desk-based archaeological assessment (also known as a *desk-top*

assessment) is a detailed consideration of the known or potential archaeological resource within a specified area or site (land-based, intertidal or underwater). It comprises the collation of existing written and graphic information in order to identify the likely character, extent, quality and worth of the known or potential archaeological resource in a local, regional or national context as appropriate.

- 9.5 *Brief*
The Association of County Archaeological Officers (1993) defines a *brief* as an outline framework of the planning and archaeological situation which has to be addressed, together with an indication of the scope of works that will be required.
- 9.6 *Evaluation*
A limited programme of non-intrusive and/or intrusive fieldwork which determines the presence or absence of archaeological features, structures, deposits, artefacts or ecofacts within a specified area or site; and, if present, defines their character and extent, relative quality and preservation. It enables an assessment of their worth in a local, regional, national or international context, as appropriate. The programme of work will result in the preparation of a report and archive.
- 9.7 *Regional Historic Environment Record (HER)*
A documentary record of known sites in a given area. In north-west Wales the Regional HER is maintained by the curatorial division of the Gwynedd Archaeological Trust.
- 9.8 *Specification*
The Association of County Archaeological Officers (1993) defines a *specification* as a schedule of works outlined in sufficient detail to be quantifiable, implemented and monitored.
- 9.9 *Watching brief*
A formal programme of observation during non-archaeological excavation works in order to identify, investigate and record any archaeological remains which may be present, in accordance with the Archaeological Standards.

10.0 Further information

- 10.1 This document outlines best practice expected of an archaeological assessment but cannot fully anticipate the conditions that will be encountered as work progresses. If requirements of the brief cannot be met they should only be excluded or altered after gaining written approval of the Archaeologist, Snowdonia National Park Authority.
- 10.2 Further details or clarification of any aspects of the brief may be obtained from the Archaeologist, Snowdonia National Park Authority.

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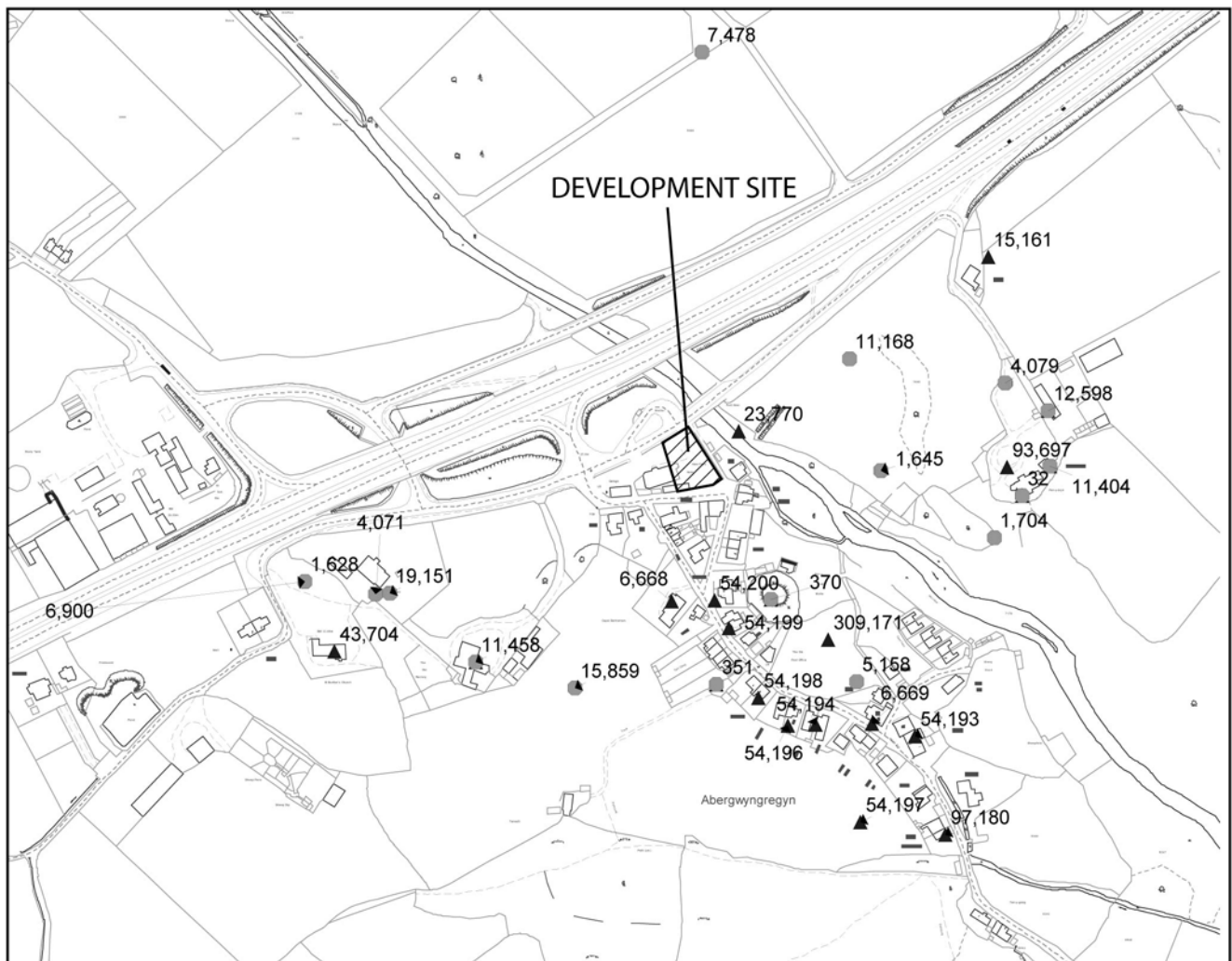


Fig.1 The location of the development site and of all recorded archaeological and historic features within 500m. Scale 1:5000

Based on OS 1:10,000 scale maps.

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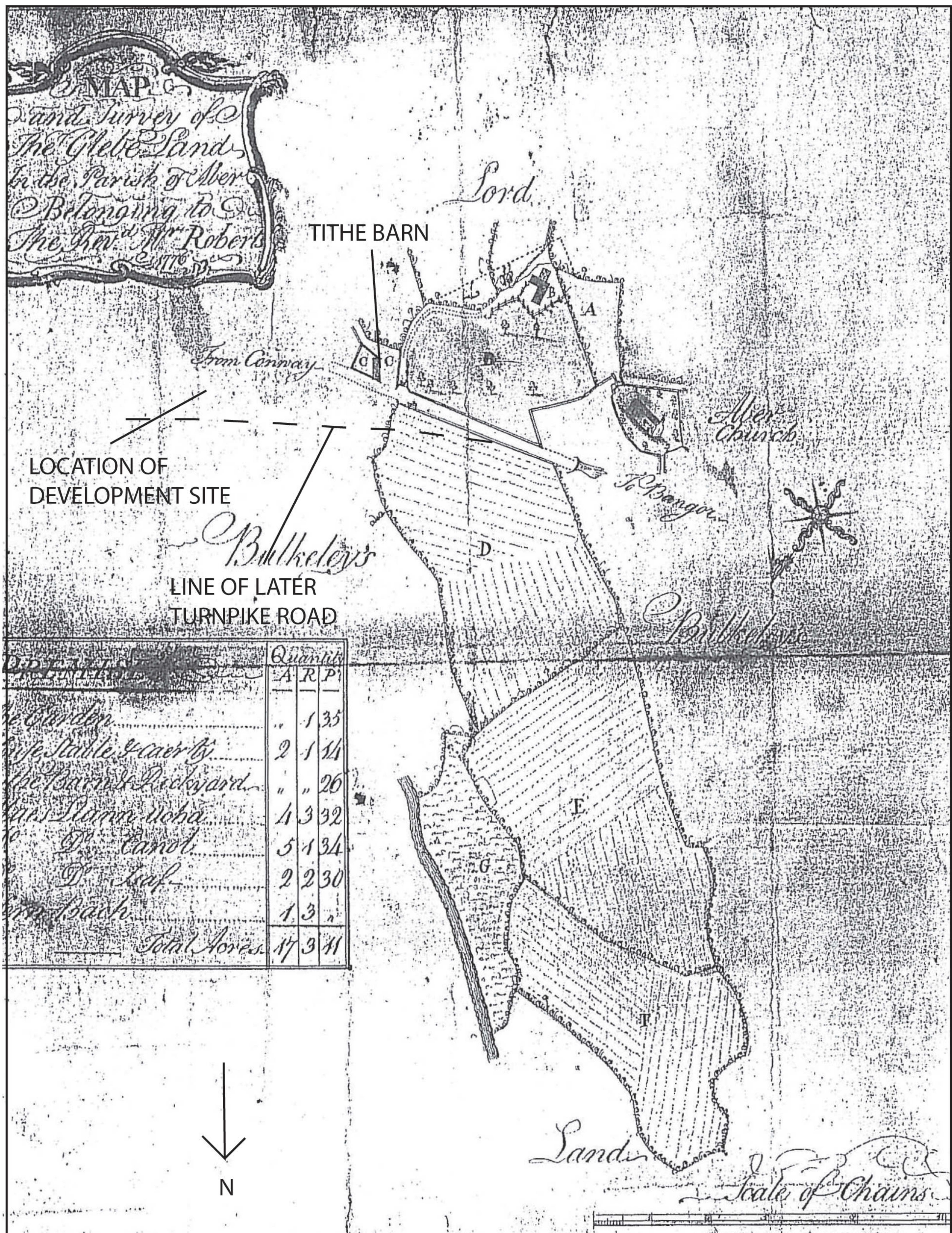


Fig.2 Map of Aber Glebe Land, 1776, annotated
 (Gwynedd County Council Archives XPE-156-106).



Fig. 3 Drawing of Penmaenmawr headland from Aber church hill by Rowlandson, 1797, showing the pre-turnpike road, bridge and smithy in the right foreground. The site of the later Aber Falls Hotel would be where the trees are in the mid-foreground. (National Library of Wales PD 9371)



Fig. 4 Aber river, old bridge and village from the north. Anon about 1831. The development site would be between the cattle in the field on the right of the bridge and the Smithy immediately to the right of the bridge. (Gwynedd County Council Archives XS/1491/50).

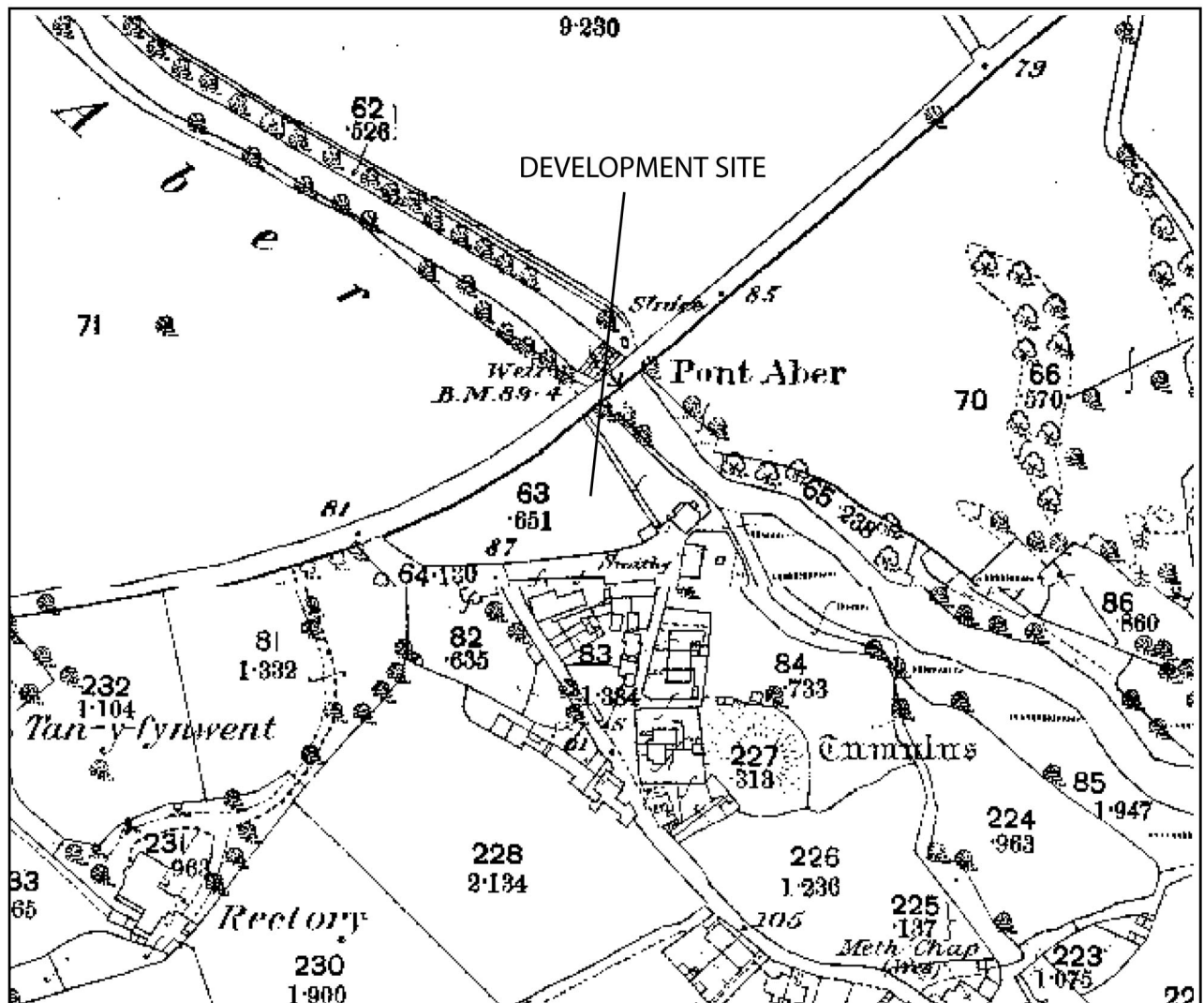


Fig. 7 Ordnance Survey First Edition 1:2500 map 1889
(Annotated, Not to scale)



Fig. 8 Postcard of Aber Falls Hotel about 1950 showing tennis court on left of picture.
(Postcard, coll. P. Lovesy)



Fig.9 Aerial photograph of development area (D.Longley)

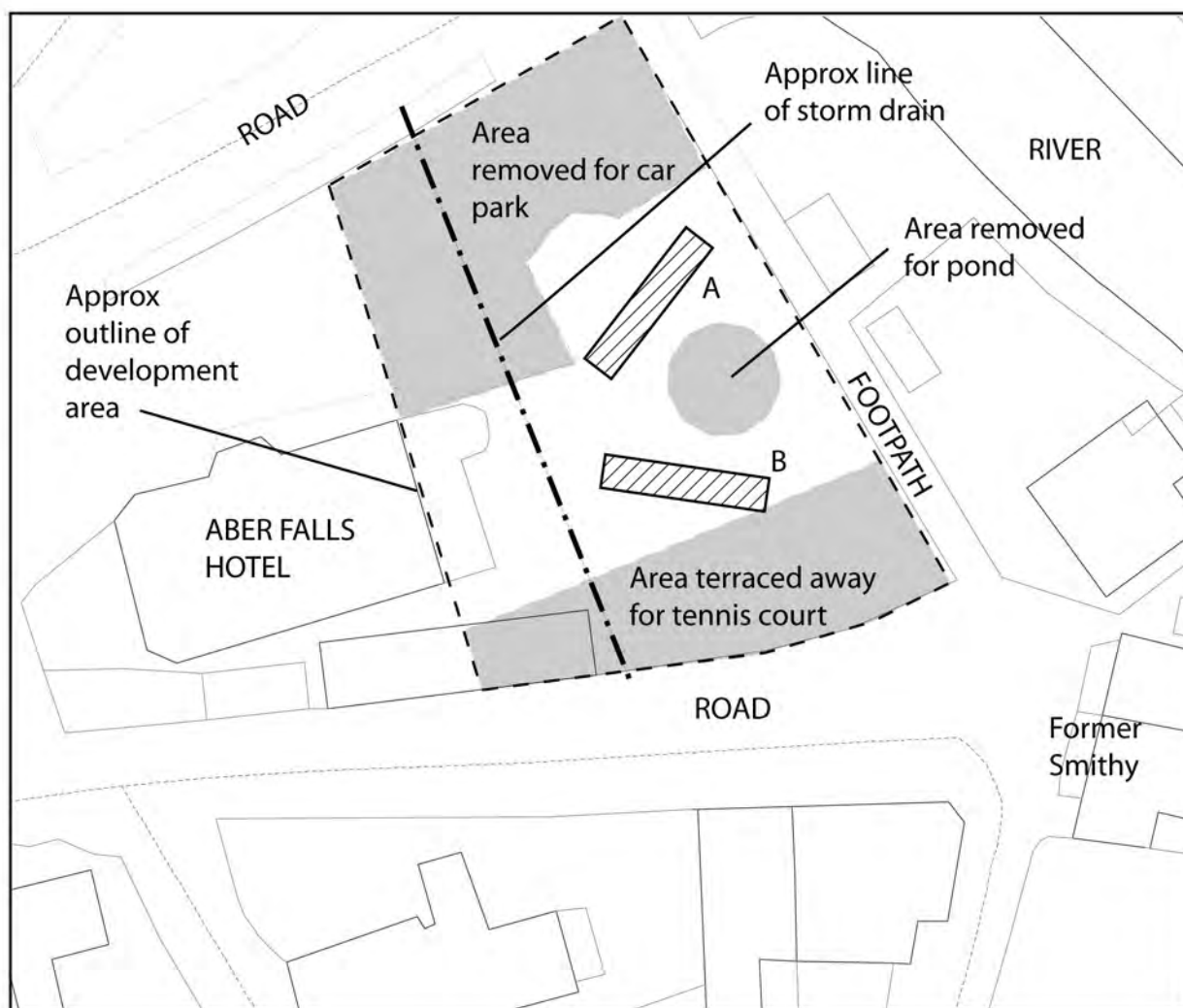


Fig.10 Plan of Hotel and garden showing outline of development area, areas of lost potential and suggested position of archaeological evaluation trenches (A and B)



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