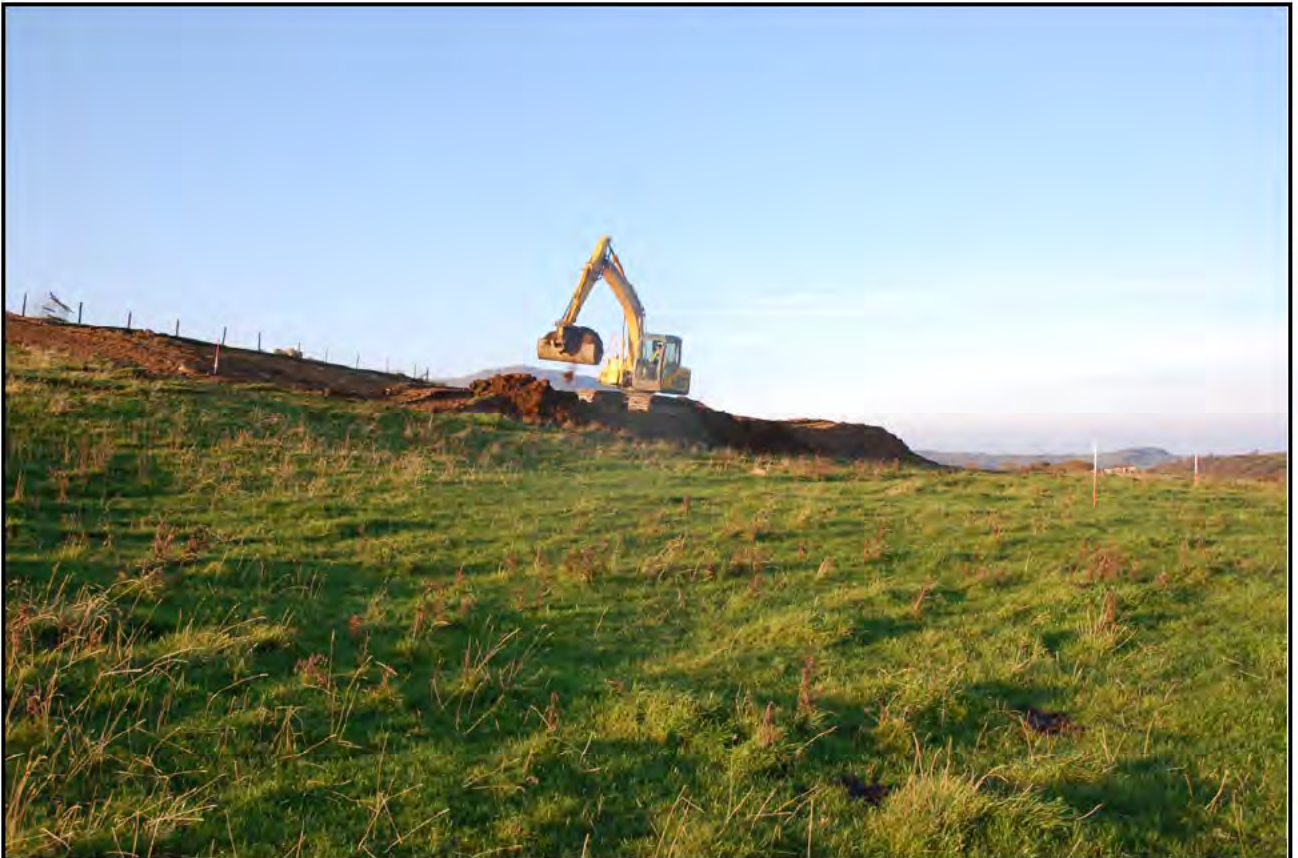


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# Cefn Graianog Quarry Extension

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## Archaeological Evaluation

GAT Project No. G1598

Report No. 724

March 2008



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# **Cefn Graianog Quarry Extension**

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## **Archaeological Evaluation**

**Report No. 724**

**Prepared for Ellesmere Sand and Gravel Ltd**

**March 2008**

**By**

**John Roberts**



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# Cefn Graianog Quarry Extension

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## ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

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## **CEFN GRAIANOG QUARRY**

*Gwynedd Archaeological Trust (GAT) was asked by Ellesmere Sand and Gravel Ltd. (ESG) to undertake an archaeological evaluation (strip/map/sample) at the location of a suspected platform house at Cefn Graianog Quarry, Gwynedd (NGR SH46164992), as part of a long-standing project monitoring the extension of a sand and gravel quarry.*

*The platform house was not identified within the strip/map/sample area, but a suspected ring barrow was identified in a truncated form, within the same area. No artefactual evidence was recovered but the size and shape of the feature suggested it was a prehistoric feature.*

*It is recommended that the palaeoenvironmental samples recovered from the sub-circular ditch be sent for further analysis it is felt that any available radiocarbon dates will assist in understanding the provenance of this feature and any potential temporal relationships between the ditch and the known prehistoric sites within the area.*

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

The original assessment of the expansion area was undertaken in 1994 by GAT for Tarmac Quarry Products Ltd. (Flook 1994 GAT Report no. 124) and this was followed by a series of watching briefs to the south and east of the current area (see GAT Reports 344, 424, 505, 530, 549 and 676). The platform house was originally identified in GAT Report 124 as Feature 09, a “possible structure of platform house type cut into the slope on the south side” (GAT 124: 5).

### **2.0 METHODS AND TECHNIQUES**

The archaeological evaluation (strip/map/sample) was undertaken between the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> of October 2007.

The aim of the strip/map/sample was to evaluate the location of a potential archaeological feature identified by aerial photography and incorporated into GAT Report 124 as Feature 09, a “possible structure of platform house type cut into the slope on the south side” (GAT 124: 5). A preliminary visit by GAT did not identify any surface features and the strip/map/sample was deemed the most suitable method for evaluating the potential site.

The strip/map/sample area was centred on NGR SH46164992 and measured 800m<sup>2</sup> in size. The area was opened as a 40.0m wide and 20.0m long trench by a 13-tonne 360°-tracked excavator. All identified features were subsequently excavated by hand.

Identified features were recorded photographically and by notes and sketches, and located by measuring from the field boundaries. The archive is held by GAT under the project number G1598.

### **3.0 TOPOGRAPHY**

The name of Cefn Graianog translates as a gravelly ridge (Mason 1998, xvi), and this accurately describes its character. The low, hummocky ridge lies at the eastern end of the Llyn Peninsula, within a basin, about 3km across, surrounded by hills. The ridge rises to a height of 160m and forms an island in an area of wetter, heavier soils and bog. The soils from the basin are derived from glacial and fluvio-glacial deposit, mostly of Snowdonian origin, which have been heavily weathered under periglacial conditions. In the poorly drained areas silty clays and peat have formed, but the soils on the ridge are well drained, if stony, brown earths of the Arfon series, with brown podsols on the steeper slopes.

### **4.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

#### ***Prehistoric and Roman activity***

The early prehistory of the ridge is far from clear. No Mesolithic artefacts have been discovered, suggesting that the area was avoided during that period, when occupation was mainly concentrated near the coast. However, there are some slight hints from the pollen record that forest clearance may have occurred before 4000BC (Chambers 1998, 57), and a patch of burnt stone under a later burnt mound

was dated to 5955-5500 cal BC (CAR-721) (Kelly 1992, 85). Kelly (*ibid.*, 86) dismisses the date as a result of dating inadequate quantities of charcoal, but a recent excavation about 1km southwest of the ridge also produced Mesolithic dates. The dates, ranging from 5310-6625 cal BC at 2 sigma, were from a deposit of charcoal within what may be a natural, periglacial formation (Kenney 2000). The evidence raises the possibility of deliberate burning of the vegetation in the Mesolithic period.

The Neolithic is almost as invisible on the ridge, although the pollen evidence is clear that there was anthropogenic forest clearance during this period (Chambers 1998, 57). The long history of farming on the ridge began during this period, although no trace of these early farmers has yet been found. The nearest Neolithic monument is the chambered tomb at Penarth (PRN 199), situated 3.25km northwest of the ridge (Kelly 1998, 161).

The earliest monument on the ridge itself is a standing stone (PRN 124) of presumed Bronze Age date. Whilst the numerous cairns on the ridge are generally undated, the two located close to the standing stone are presumably also Bronze Age, and appear to be funerary monuments rather than clearance cairns (PRN 224, 225). These three monuments are collectively scheduled as Cn98 (Mason 1998, xix). The pollen evidence shows phases of clearance and regeneration throughout the Bronze Age, and the presence of burnt mounds may indicate Bronze Age settlement in the area (Kelly 1998, 161). One of these mounds (PRN 129) was excavated (Kelly 1992), producing dates demonstrating its use between the third and early second millennium BC, and later in the late second to early first millennium (Kelly 1998, 161). There is another burnt mound site, 175m south of the excavated one, which appears to be a complex site with three conjoined mounds (PRN 3997). The chance discovery of the ring (PRN 3446), of the type known as Bronze Age ring money, by a farm worker in 1970, suggests Bronze Age activity near the summit of the ridge.

Major and sustained forest clearance started on the ridge in the mid first millennium BC, and the earliest settlement sites discovered so far date from the mid 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC. Three hut groups have been excavated on the ridge (Mason 1998). The Graianog site and Cefn Graianog II were founded in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC and continued through the end of the Roman period. The third hut group, Cefn Graianog I, was established in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD, and again continued to the end of the Roman period. There may have been a fourth hut group (PRN 118) 300m to the west of Graianog (Kelly 1998, 162) and there are similar sites about 1km away to the southwest of Caerau (PRN 108, 109). The Iron Age is further represented in the area by a small hillfort (PRN 203) on Y Foel, the rounded hill to the north of the area (Mason 1998, xix).

### ***Medieval and later periods***

Although the hut groups went out of use at the end of the Roman period the pollen record showed that ridge continued to be farmed, and the settlements had probably not moved very far away (Kelly 1998, 162). Resettlement of the ridge occurred from the 8<sup>th</sup> century AD. The Graianog hut group site was reoccupied between the 8<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries, and a medieval homestead (PRN 120), excavated by Kelly (Kelly 1982), was in use between the 11<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries. A further group of medieval platform houses (PRN 123) were located on the bog margin to the south, but they were destroyed without excavation (Kelly 1998, 162). A possible medieval farmstead (PRN 3999) and an isolated platform house (PRN 4360) are located on the northeastern slope of the ridge.

In the medieval period Graianog first appears in the written history, the confirmation of the grant of 'Grayanawt' to the *clas* of Clynnog Fawr, in the 1209 charter of Llewelyn ap Iorwerth, probably refers to the excavated medieval homestead (PRN 120) (Kelly 1998, 162). Modern Graianog was probably founded in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, when the pollen record shows intensified clearance activity. The present settlement was certainly established by the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, when a farmhouse was built. This is now a Grade II listed building (RCAHMW 1960, site 800, p44). The modern farm of Cefn Graianog was founded in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, and was demolished in 1990 in advance of quarrying (Kelly 1998, 160, 162). The existing field system probably dates to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, when fields were enlarged to open up areas for progressive farming techniques (Flook 1994, 4). Gravel extraction has taken place on the ridge for at least 100 years, with large-scale extraction started after the Second World War (Mason 1998, xvi). The quarrying activity has been the impetus for much of the archaeological work on the ridge, as sites have been excavated in advance of the gravel extraction.



## 5.0 STRIP/MAP/SAMPLE RESULTS

The strip, map and sample area was centred on NGR SH46164992, on the edge of a north-south slope. An 800m<sup>2</sup> Strip/Map/Sample was undertaken at the location of Feature 09 and was opened as a 40.0m wide, 20.0m long trench. The trench ran parallel to the fenceline denoting the current extent of the quarry, but was set 5.0m to the north (see Figure 1). A 13-tonne 360°-tracked excavator was used throughout.

The platform house was not identified at the specified location and the majority of the original strip/map/sample area was limited to glacial deposits.

A large, sub-circular ditch (Context 005) was identified at the northeastern end of the trench (Figures 1 and 2; Plate 2). The feature was cut into the glacial horizon and measured 0.80m in width and covered an area c.20.0m across. The ditch appeared to be truncated towards the eastern end.

The original trench was extended to the north to expose the full extent of the ditch and to identify any other archaeological features, both within the area encompassed by the ditch and also on the periphery. The extension measured 25.0m in width and 19.0m in length (see Figure 1) and confirmed that the ditch was truncated, with only the southern half extant. It was noted that this portion of the ditch was located across the north-south slope, whereas what would have been the northern half of the ditch, was located at the break of slope, where the topography levelled out to form a plateau. The slope was formed by a gravel bank and the plateau by Morainic drift geology. It was possible that the northern half of the ditch had been truncated by cultivation; the softer Morainic drift geology proving less resilient than the gravel bank. There were no distinct features within the area of the ditch: two patches of charcoal were recorded but they were most likely remnants of field clearance (date and provenance unknown; see Figure 2). Two small amorphous sub-circular features were identified towards the northern end of the extension (Contexts 009 and 011; see Figure 2): both contained loose, stone-rich fills. The provenance of the two features was unclear and there were no artefactual remains recovered. A larger, amorphous, sub linear feature (Context 007; Figure 2) was identified at the northeastern end of the extension. The characteristics of the feature were similar to Contexts 009 and 011. The provenance of the feature was unclear.

A series of investigative slots were cut into the sub-circular ditch (Context 005; Figure 2; Plates 3 to 5): the slots revealed that the ditch was extant to a depth of 0.40m, with a loose stone-rich fill, which contained fragments of charcoal, distributed randomly. There was no evidence to suggest a bank had surrounded the ditch.

## 6.0 CONCLUSION

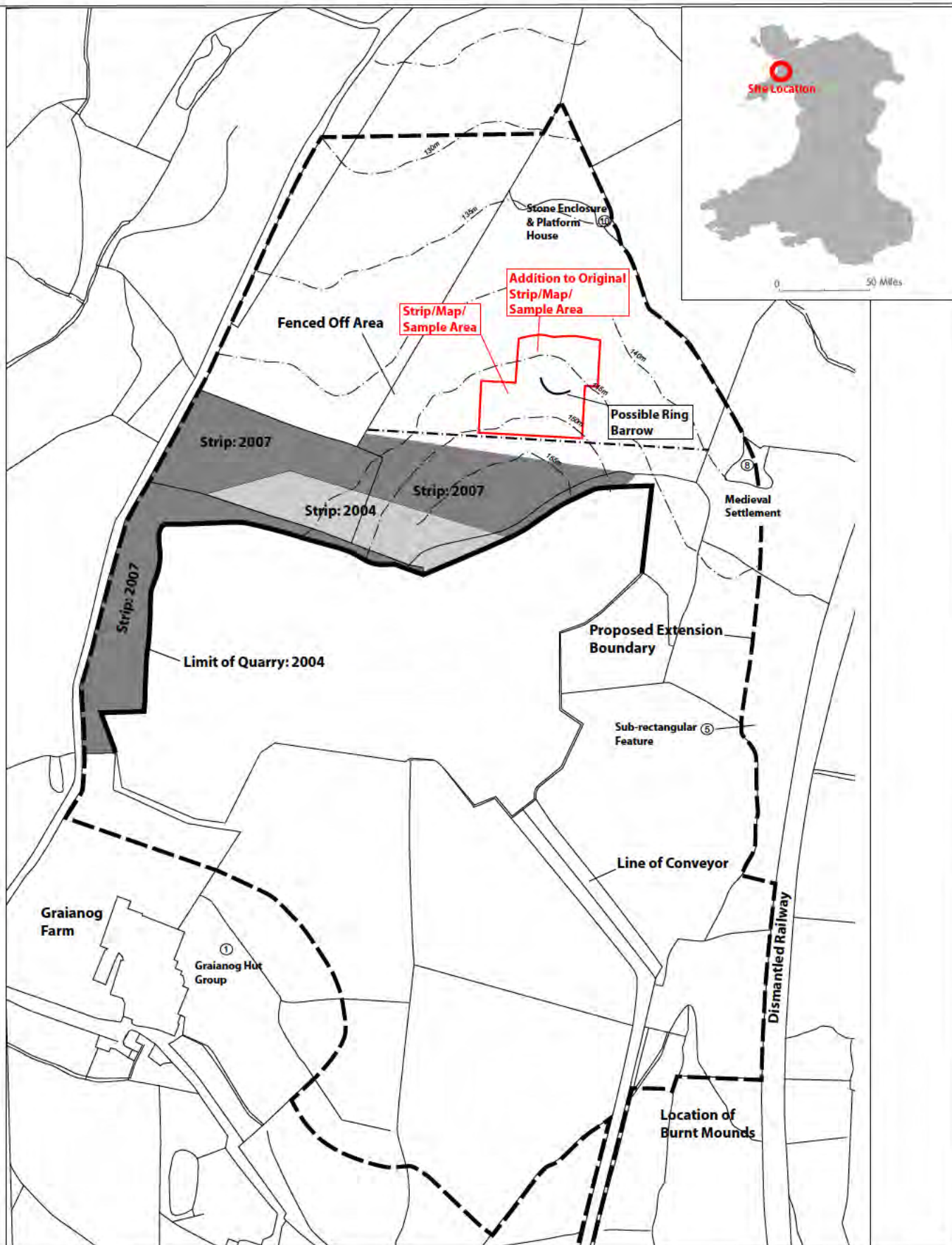
Due to the lack of artefactual evidence recovered from the trench, it was difficult to suggest any provenance for the individual features identified. The large sub-circular ditch, however, did appear to be the remains of a prehistoric barrow, which had been truncated by extensive cultivation. It did not appear to be part of a relict field system, but may have been of ritual or domestic origin. Previous work in the area by the Gwynedd Archaeological Trust (GAT Reports 344, 424, 505, 530, 549 and 676) identified a number of prehistoric sites within the area: two Bronze Age cairns and a standing stone (SAM CN098) have been identified c.0.77km to the southwest; a burnt mound site, has also been identified, 570m south of the trench, (PRN 3997); a Bronze Age “ring” (PRN 3446), of the type known as Bronze Age ring money, was identified 140m to the south, suggesting further Bronze Age activity near the summit of Graianog ridge. Iron Age and Roman period settlement sites, mainly hut groups, have also been identified within the area (GAT Report 424).

It is recommended that the palaeoenvironmental samples recovered from the sub-circular ditch (Context 004) be sent for further analysis it is felt that any available radiocarbon dates will assist in understanding the provenance of this feature and any potential temporal relationships between the ditch and the known prehistoric sites within the area.

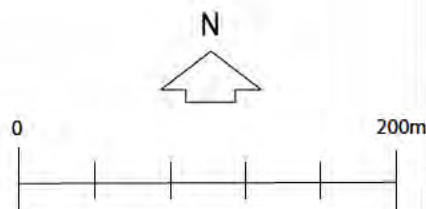
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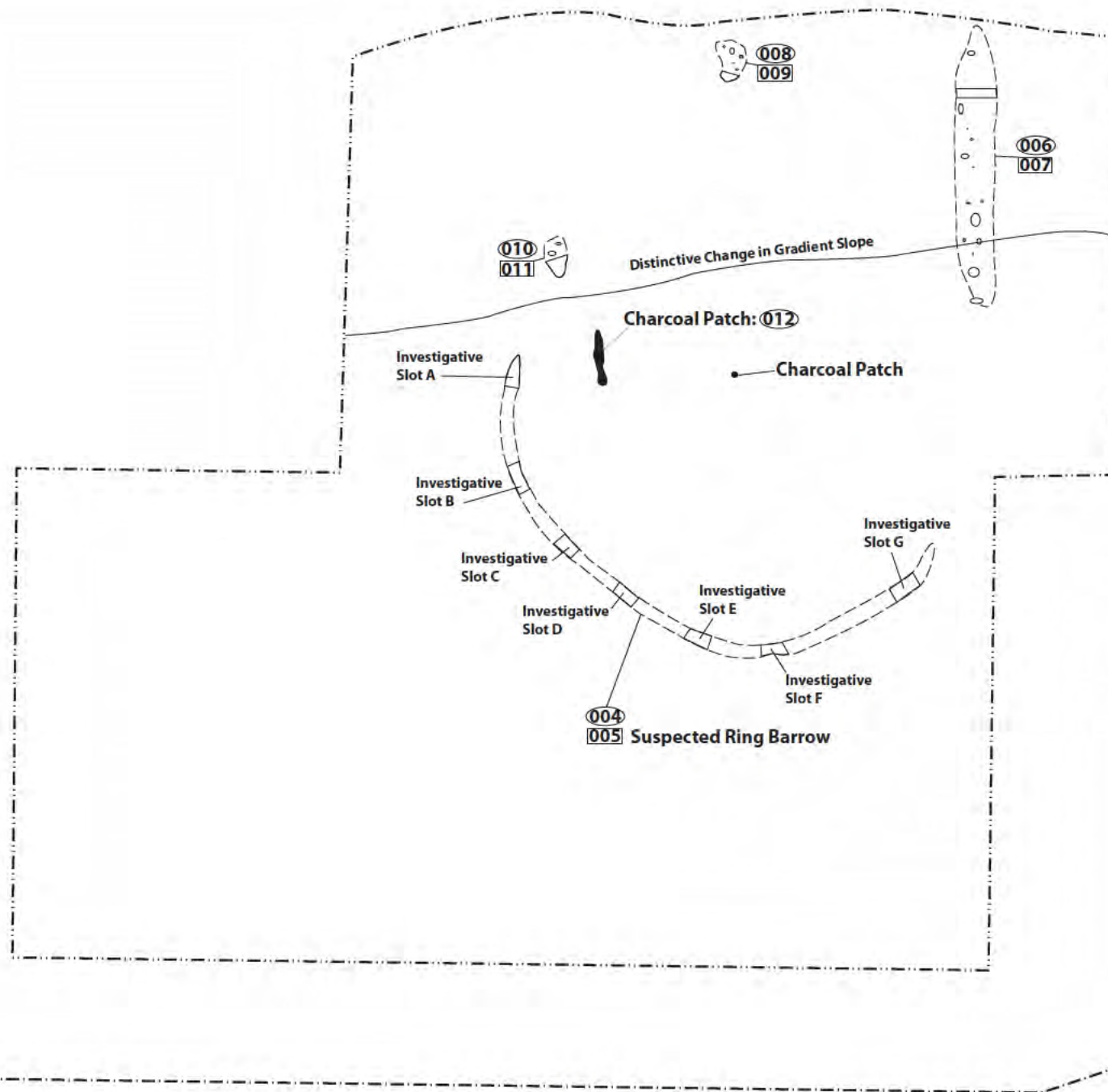
⑤ Feature Identified During Assessment (Flook 1994 GAT Report no. 124)



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**G1598 Cefn Graianog Quarry,  
Gwynedd**

**Figure 1. Site Location**  
Scale: 1:4000@A4



006 Context No.: Fill

007 Context No.: Cut

• •  
○ Stones  
\* 0

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**Figure 2: Detail of Features within Trench.**  
Scale: 1:250@A4



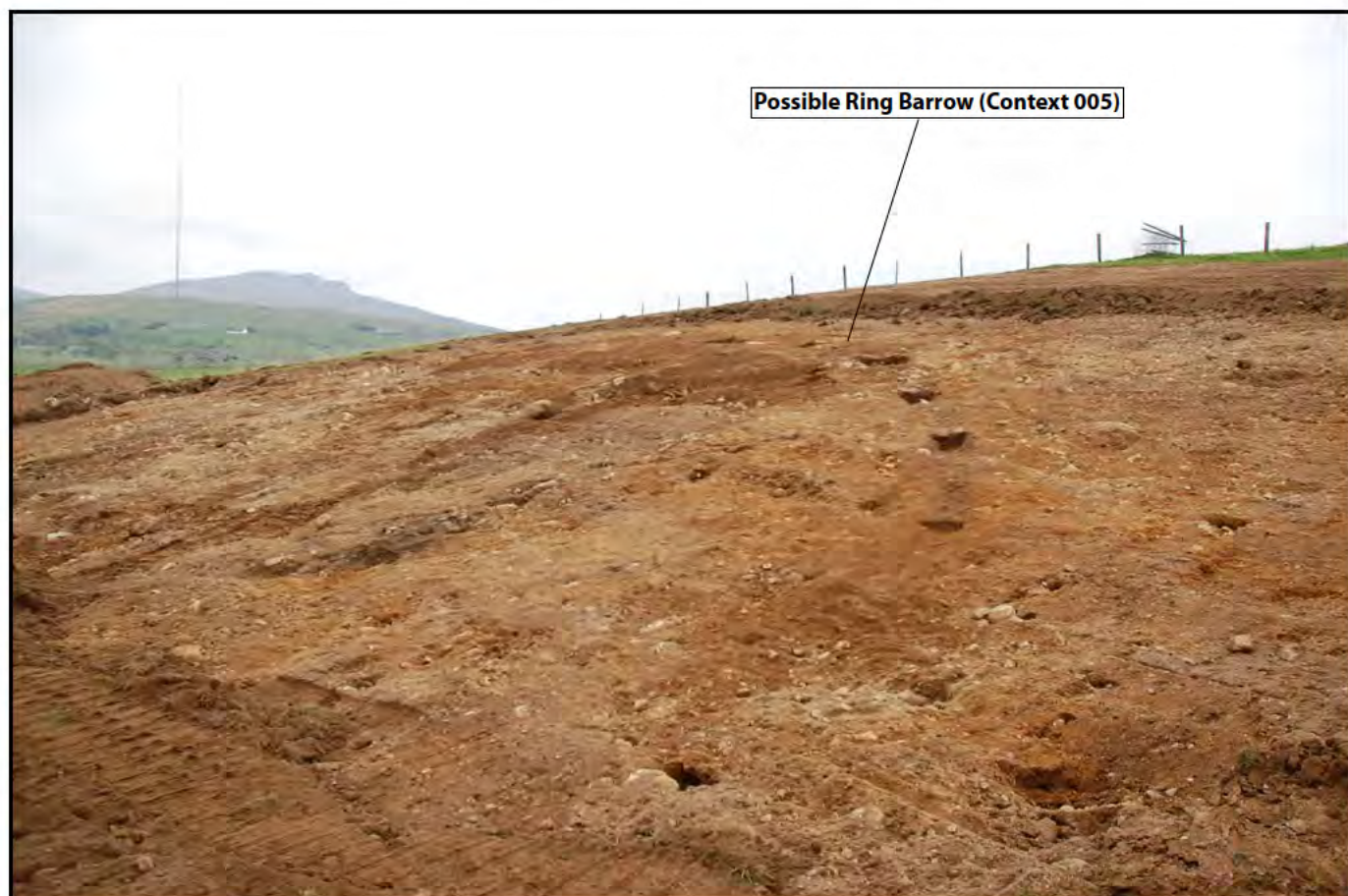


**Plate 1: Location of Strip/Map/Sample Area prior to start of works**





**Plate 2: Possible Ring Barrow (Context 005) exposed**



**Plate 3: Detail of investigative slots cut into the possible ring barrow (Context 005)**



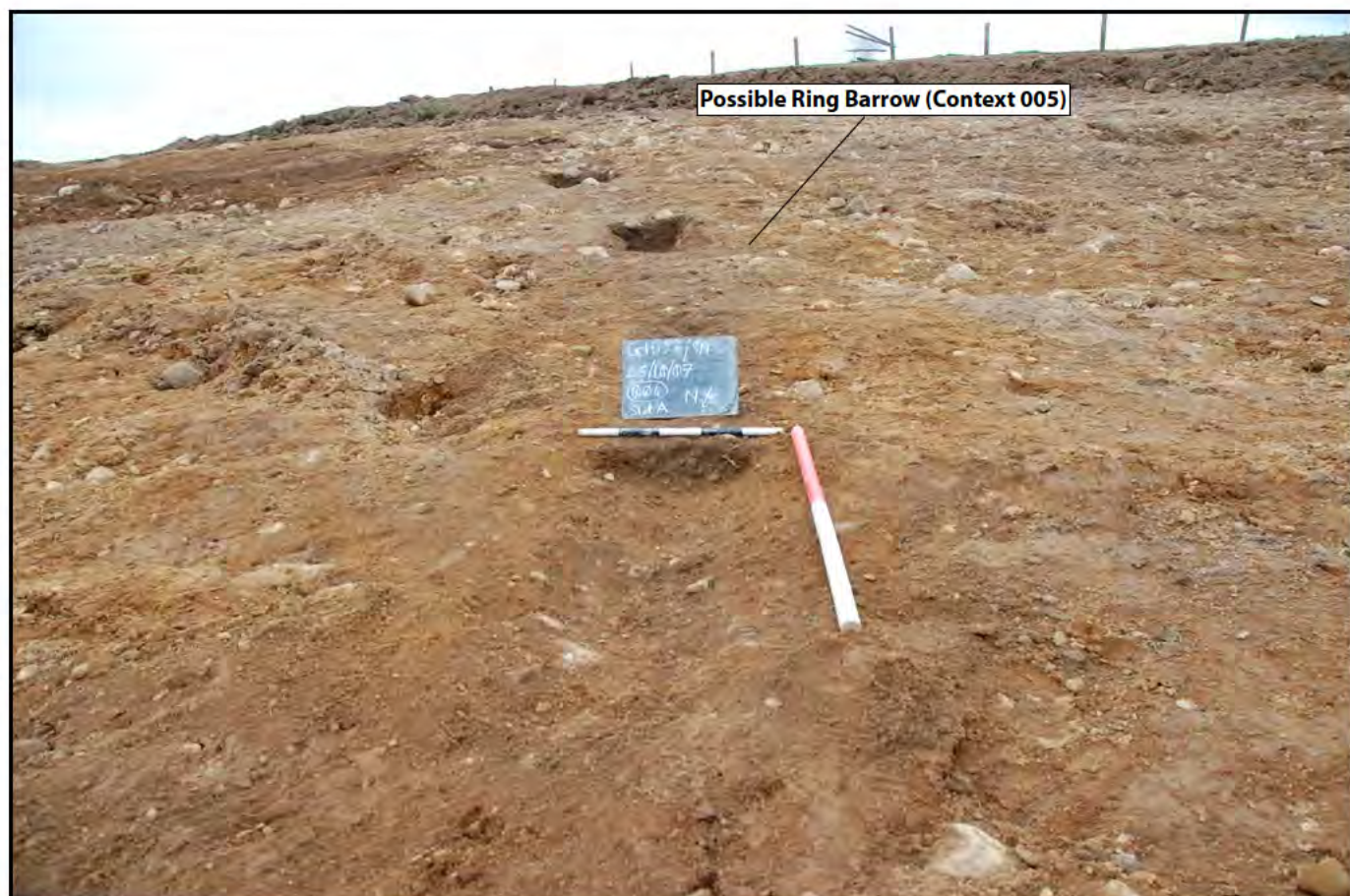


Plate 4: Close-up of investigative slot "A" (cf. Figure 2 for location)



Plate 5: Close-up of investigative slot "C" (cf. Figure 2 for location)



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