
A494 BALA TO GLANLLYN CYCLE PATH/FOOTWAY



ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

GAT Project No. 1975

Report No. 723

March 2008

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Prepared for Ymgynghoriaeth GWYNEDD Consultancy

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By

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

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A494 BALA TO GLANLLYN CYCLE PATH/FOOTWAY

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF (G1975)

An archaeological watching brief has been conducted during topsoil stripping associated with the construction of the Bala – Glanllyn cyclepath/footway scheme (Stage 2). The excavation area was located between Chainages 0250 and 0500 (total length: 250m) within a 2.50m wide grass verge that ran along the eastern side of the A494.

The watching brief was conducted during the initial excavation phase for the cyclepath. The topsoil was removed and the verge excavated to a depth of c.0.30m. The watching brief confirmed that the verge was constructed during the modernisation of the A494: below the topsoil was a distinctive hardcore deposit of slate fragments mixed with clay. Fragments of tarmac from an earlier road surface were also identified. No archaeological features were recorded within the confines of the excavation area and there was no evidence for suspected Roman Road activity.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Gwynedd Archaeological Trust has been asked by Ymgynghoriaeth GWYNEDD Consultancy to conduct an archaeological watching brief during the construction of a cyclepath/footway within the existing grass verge adjacent to the A494 and Llyn Tegid, Gwynedd (Between NGR SH90603390 and SH89303250).

The scheme represents Stage 2 of the Bala – Glanllyn cyclepath/footway scheme, following work previously completed between SH 92003550 – SH 90603390 in early 2007. Stage 1 commenced from the existing footway that heads southwestwards along the A494 (T) at the entrance to the Bala Watersports and Adventure Centre and terminated at the start of the third lay-by (SH 90603390). Stage 2 of the proposals commenced from the third lay-by and terminated at the entrance to Glanllyn caravan park to the south, between SH 90603390 – SH 8930 3250 (see Figure 1).

The aim of the scheme is to provide a cyclepath/footway link that members of the public can use to travel from the caravan park to Y Bala without using the A494 (T) carriageway. The work will involve excavating in the existing southbound grass verge for a width of approximately 2.0m from the A494 (T) kerb (at an approximate depth of 220mm – 300mm) and creating a shared use (cyclists/pedestrians) facility approximately 2km in length. The total area of the proposals is approximately 4000m².

No brief has been prepared for this work by Snowdonia National Park Authority (SNPA), but guidance has been given in the form of a summary of requirements and reference will also be made to the guidelines specified in Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching brief (Institute of Field Archaeologists, 1994, rev. 2001).

2.0 PROJECT BACKGROUND

The route along the present A494 at Llyn Tegid has been designated PRN 17609 and is thought to represent part of a Roman road running from the Caer Gai fort to Deva Roman road (PRN 3850: Hopewell 2007, GAT Report 668). The exact location of the Roman road within this area has not been confirmed to date and the route remains postulated.

Gwynedd Archaeological Trust has completed a desk-based archaeological assessment along the route (Roberts 2007, GAT Report 706). The assessment concluded that the existing grass verge chosen for the cyclepath/footway had been constructed during the modernisation of the A494 from imported material. Map regression analysis suggested that the road alignment in this area had been altered during the twentieth century and on-site inspection showed that the modern road was built on large embankments and along extensive rock cuttings. It was thought that, due to the shallow depth of the proposed works and the evidence of extensive modernisation, the potential impact upon suspected archaeology was limited.

Evaluation trenches were not recommended in the assessment report but a **partial watching brief** (see Appendix I for a definition) was proposed between Chainages 0250 and 0500 (length 250m) where the modernisation of the A494 is thought to have been less acute and the potential is greater for survival of the proposed Roman road.

3.0 METHODS AND TECHNIQUES

The watching brief was undertaken between the 27th of February and 5th March 2008.

The aim of the watching brief was to monitor the topsoil strip of an elongated area, between Chainages 0250 and 0500 (length 250m) (Figure 1).

A 6-tonne 360°-tracked excavator was used throughout the watching brief.

A photographic record was maintained throughout. The archive is held by GAT under the project number **G1975**.

4.0 TOPOGRAPHY

The development area is located along the northwestern side of Llyn Tegid (between NGR SH90603390 and SH89303250). Llyn Tegid, at 5.5km long, is the largest natural lake in Wales, situated in Bala cleft, a major geological fault cutting northeast to southwest across North Wales. The cleft forms a narrow valley, which is drained by the River Dee and its tributaries. The proposed development is located along an existing grass verge, attached to the current A494 trunk road. The road runs through the town of Bala, before meeting Llyn Tegid. As it does so, the road enters the Snowdonia National Park. It runs along the side of the lake for (6 km), after which it largely follows the Afon Wnion, before terminating at Dolgellau at a junction with the A470. The watching brief area is located towards the southern end of the scheme, between Chainages 0250 and 0500 (length 250m) (Figure 1).

5.0 RESULTS OF THE WATCHING BRIEF

The excavation area was located within the grass verge that ran along the eastern side of the A494 road towards the start of the scheme between Chainages 0250 and 0500 (total length: 250m) (Figure 01). The verge had an average width of 2.50m and the construction of the cyclepath involved the excavation of the topsoil to a depth of c.0.30m.

The only deposit identified below this was a compacted layer comprising clay mixed with fragments of slate and tarmac. This deposit was identified as a remnant of the road and/or verge construction phase and was most likely a “sub-base” deposit. A narrow trench (c.0.30m wide) for BT cables was identified cutting this deposit, between CH0400 and CH0500. A modern field drain (c.0.30m wide) was also identified between CH0300 and CH0400 cutting into the sub-base deposit.

No archaeological features were identified or recorded and there was no evidence for the Roman Road within this area.

6.0 BIBLIOGRAPHY

Hopewell, D., 2006. “Roman roads in North-West Wales”. GAT Report 668 Parts I & II.

IFA. 2001. *Institute of Field Archaeologists 2001 Standard and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief*.

Roberts, J., 2007. “Bala to Glanllyn Cycle Path/Footway: Archaeological Assessment. GAT Report 706

Appendix I

Definition of an archaeological watching brief

(Reproduced from IFA. 2001. *Institute of Field Archaeologists 2001 Standard and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief*)

The definition of an archaeological watching brief is a formal programme of observation and investigation conducted during any operation carried out for non-archaeological reasons. This will be within a specified area or site on land, inter-tidal zone or underwater, where there is a possibility that archaeological deposits may be disturbed or destroyed. The programme will result in the preparation of a report and ordered archive.

This definition and *Standard* do not cover chance observations, which should lead to an appropriate archaeological project being designed and implemented, nor do they apply to monitoring for preservation of remains *in situ*.

An archaeological watching brief is divided in to four categories according the IFA. 2001. *Institute of Field Archaeologists 2001 Standard and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief*:

- comprehensive (present during all ground disturbance)
- intensive (present during sensitive ground disturbance)
- intermittent (viewing the trenches after machining)
- partial (as and when seems appropriate).



Plate 01: Chainage CH0375: Shot of cyclepath during excavation



Plate 02: Chainage CH0360: Excavation area exposed. Note modern field drain along hedge line



Plate 03: Chainage CH0400: Full excavation depth - roadside



Plate 04: Chainage CH0425: Full excavation depth. Note the appearance of slate waste fragments within the section and at the base of the excavation area. This material represents the foundation layer of the modernised road and verge and was found at this depth throughout the watching brief.



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