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# Coleg Harlech: **Harlech**

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## Archaeological Assessment

GAT Project No. 2037

Report No. 761

November, 2008

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Prepared  
Ward Associates

November 2008

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Gwynedd Archaeological Trust was asked by Ward Associates to provide an archaeological assessment in advance of proposed improvements at Coleg Harlech. The college lies at SH578308 to the south of Harlech. The proposals include new accommodation and teaching blocks to the west of the main college buildings.

## **2. AIMS AND SPECIFICATION**

A detailed brief has not been prepared for this work. This design will follow the guidelines specified in *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Desk-based Assessment* (Institute of Field Archaeologists, 1994, rev. 2004).

A desk-based assessment is defined as “a programme of assessment of the known or potential archaeological resource within a specified area or site on land, inter-tidal zone or underwater. It consists of a collation of existing written, graphic, photographic and electronic information in order to identify the likely character, extent, quality and worth of the known or potential archaeological resource in a local, regional, national or international context as appropriate” (*Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Desk-based Assessment 1994, rev. 2004*).

The aims of the assessment are:

- to identify and record the cultural heritage within the defined study area;
- to evaluate the importance of what has been identified;
- to recommend ways in which impact upon the cultural heritage can be avoided or minimised.

To comply fully with the aims expressed above it can be necessary to undertake a programme of Field Evaluation following the Desktop study and Field Visit. This is because some sites cannot be assessed by desktop or field visit alone, and additional fieldwork is therefore required. This typically takes the form of geophysical survey or trial excavation, although measured survey is also a possible option. A full programme of assessment and evaluation may therefore consist of:

- Desktop study
- Field walkover
- Initial report
- Field evaluation
- Draft report
- Final report

This assessment includes the first three phases only, and recommendations will be made for any field evaluation required.

## **3. METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Desk top study**

The desktop study comprised the consultation of maps, documents, computer records, written records and reference works, which form part of the Historic Environment Record (HER), located at Gwynedd Archaeological Trust (GAT), Bangor. The archives held by the Meirionnydd Record Office, Dolgellau and Bangor University were also consulted. Information about listed buildings was consulted by means of the CARN (Core Archaeological Index), which is the online index of the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historic Monuments, Wales. Relevant aerial photographs from the collection at RCAHM, Wales were

examined. Secondary works on George Davison and George Walton were consulted, and these are listed in section 8 below.

A set of plans held in the library at Coleg Harlech were examined. Other archives, including correspondence between George Davison and Tom Jones, held by the college was not examined.

### **3.2 Field Search**

The site and surrounding area were visited on several occasions within September 2008. Notes were taken, and a photographic record was made.

### **3.3 Report**

The available information was synthesised to give a summary of the archaeological and historic background and of the assessment and recommendations, as set out below. The separate features, their evaluation and recommendations are listed separately, and a summary of the overall assessment of the area is given at the end.

The criteria used for assessing the value of features was based upon those used by the Secretary of State for Wales when considering sites for protection as scheduled ancient monuments, as set out in the Welsh Office circular 60/96.

## **4. LOCATION AND TOPOGRAPHY**

Harlech lies at the north end of Cardigan Bay, a short distance south of the Dwyryd and Glaslyn estuaries. The castle is dramatically sited on a rock outcrop that is part of the Harlech Dome, but sits slightly seaward of the rest of the cliff edge. It overlooks Morfa Harlech, a large low-lying area now nearly all reclaimed but formerly much of it was salt marsh. Morfa Harlech forms a triangle of which the west side is the coast, the east side follows the edge of the Harlech Dome and the north side lies along the Dwyryd estuary. Harlech lies a short distance north of the southern point of the triangle. The Morfa is all very low lying, and prior to the construction of a sea wall from Llanfigangel y Traethau to Glyn Cywarch along the north edge in 1805 much of it must have been tidal. Small islands, of which the largest was at Ynys on which stands the church of Llanfihangel y Traethau, and a smaller one at Lasynys, birthplace of the writer Ellis Wynne, would always have lain above the tidal limits.

The chronological development of the Morfa is not fully understood. It is thought the spit was once quite small, and started as a shingle ridge, and grew both northwards and westwards, with much of the material coming from Cardigan Bay (Steers 1964, 132-6). It has been suggested that the Dwyryd may once have passed between Ynys and the higher lands of the Harlech Dome, and fed into the sea much further south. The Morfa, is therefore 'a fine example of a sand spit developing across an infilling estuary' (May 2003, 453). May (*ibid*), goes on to suggest that 'most of its growth appears to have occurred during the last 700 years, but, unlike many other such forms, it does not appear to have been seriously affected by the worldwide tendency for such features to be affected by erosion'. He attributes this to the large source of sediments in Cardigan Bay and the Glaslyn estuary. In conclusion, May (*ibid*, 453) states 'Morfa Harlech is the result of several phases of as yet undated spit growth, and the progressive sedimentation and land-claim of the area between the beach and the former rocky sea cliff upon which Harlech Castle stands'.

Coleg Harlech lies south of the castle and adjoining medieval borough, and closer to the southern point of the Morfa, where there is only 600m wide between the sea and the steep cliffs of the Harlech Dome. The principal college buildings lie on a narrow level terrace just above the Morfa between the 10m and 20m contours. In contrast Harlech Castle and medieval borough lie between 50m and 60m OD. The cliffs curve round slightly from the castle protruding to the west. This, combined with the height difference, means the college buildings are not inter-visible with the medieval borough, but are inter-visible with the castle.

## 5. HISTORIC BACKGROUND

### 5.1 Medieval Harlech

Though the references within the *Mabinogion* to Harlech suggest a site of some significance prior to Edward I's choice of site for a castle, there is no archaeological evidence for settlement pre-dating 1283, other than hints provided by the find of a gold torque, and find of Roman coins (Bowen and Gresham 1967, 124 and 259). There is, however, a wealth of sites within, and finds from, the marginal uplands that fringe the Harlech Dome, which reveal the presence of a flourishing population in the area from Neolithic times to the present (see Bowen and Gresham 1967).

The origins of medieval Harlech, as we recognise it today, start with the construction of the castle in 1283 as part of Edward I's conquest of Wales. The borough was founded at the same time, and lay on level ground to the south and east of the castle. The castle is based around the gatehouse, with an inner and outer ward and outer moat on the south and east sides. The rock outcrop on the north was later further protected by an outer encircling wall. On the west, a wall and stairs lay down the cliffs to end at the 'gate next the sea' or water gate. This 'way from the sea' was part of the original design, and is comparable to the steps leading down to the castle dock from the east barbican at Conwy (Taylor, 1974; Taylor 2002; Hughes 1913; Peers 1921-2).

In 1294 the castle was besieged during the revolt of Madog ap Llywelyn, and had to be eventually relieved by sea, as was Criccieth and Aberystwyth. The castle was taken by Glyndwr's forces in 1404, and held by Owain until 1409. Though the castle and borough were damaged in the Glyndwr wars, the castle was home, for a short while, to Queen Margaret of Anjou in 1460, and was held by the its Welsh constable Dafydd ab Ieuan ab Einion for the Lancastrians until the siege of 1468, when it succumbed to the Yorkists led by the Herberts of Raglan.

There is no record of any maintenance being carried out at the castle after this period, and it is likely it was never fully repaired after the damage occasioned when it was held by Glyndwr, and it saw no more military action until the Civil War. The castle was, however, used for various municipal and judicial functions (the Merioneth Assizes were held here, and it was strongly argued that keeping them at the castle would ensure the castle was, at least in part, maintained). In 1644 the castle was being held for the King by Colonel William Owen of Brogyntyn. It eventually fell to the parliamentarians in March 1647, the last royalist stronghold to be lost.

The medieval borough did not, however, flourish, and Harlech is variously described by visitors of the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and early 19<sup>th</sup> century as 'a very humble village, consisting of a few miserable looking cottages, little better than huts' (Evans 1812, 901) or 'little more than a village of inferior size and insignificant appearance' (Lewis 1833, HAR).

Development of the town occurred after the improvement in communications in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, and the rise of Harlech as a resort. Later developments subsequent to the 1806 enclosure included the construction of the present road from Ynys to Harlech in the 1830's, and the Cambrian Railway in 1867, both agents for the rise of Harlech as a fashionable resort.

Though Harlech benefited less than many communities from industrialisation, many of its population found work in quarries and mines, and Llanfair slate quarry, south of Harlech, became a relatively successful concern, and is today open as a tourist attraction (Richards 1999, 180). Another slate quarry north of Harlech, on the site of the future Coleg Harlech, is indicated on the 1889 OS maps. Little is known of this quarry, and it is not mentioned by Richards (1999), nor by Lewis (1991) in his borough history. The quarry occupied the available area between the road south and the railway for some 500m, and included the later site of the College (Plas Wernfawr) and St Davids Hotel.

## 5.2 Harlech in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries

Despite its relative lack of mineral resources, once communications via road and rail improved Harlech was able to draw upon its visual and historical assets in order to survive. In the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century the influence of the older landowning families declined, and new liberal minded business men, such as Samuael Holland, a quarry owner and MP for the county of Merionethshire, who encouraged development within the town. Self-help, through the establishment of local Friendly Societies, was also becoming commonplace, and in Harlech the local branch of the Order of the true Ivorites was particularly strong. Whilst the main purpose of the friendly societies was to provide members with financial support during times of ill-health or infirmity, the Ivorites (in Welsh 'Iforydd', named after Ifor ap Llywelyn fl. 1340-60) also promoted the Welsh language and culture (Lloyd 1972). In 1867 an annual concert was founded which became a successful event, helped in part by the opening of the railway, which allowed for considerably easier travelling.

Towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century several wealthy families moved to live, or at least to spend the summer months, in Harlech and the surrounding area. Lloyd says 'the town thus became a kind of summer hill station – a Welsh Simla by the Celtic Sea' (Lloyd 1987, 81). The newcomers came to play an influential role in the development of the physical and cultural life of the town. These included A P Graves, an enthusiastic researcher into the music and literature of Wales who published a book of translated Welsh poetry. His son, the poet Robert Graves, published an account of his childhood and holiday memories in Harlech in *Goodbye to all that* (1929). Graves was known for his sponsorship of the Harlech Historical Pageants which were held annually in the castle from the early 1920's, and he was also a leading figure in the establishment of the golf course. Also influential in this aspect was H. H. Finch-Hatton, fourth son of the earl of Winchelsea and his brother Mr Stormont Finch-Hatton, who inherited both the Earldom and property in Ardudwy (Lloyd 1977, 21). Lord and Lady Amherst, who later built Plas Amherst were members of this group, as also was W H More, who had been appointed Crown Receiver for Wales. The latter was also responsible for introducing George Davison, an old school friend, to the area.

### *George Davison, George Walton and Plas Wernfawr*

George Davison (1855-1930) was born in Suffolk, the fourth son of William Davison, a shipwright and carpenter. He joined the Civil Service, and rose to a responsible position in the Exchequer and Audit Office. He took up photography c. 1885, in which he espoused the claims of photography as an art form. He became a member of the Photographic Society of Great Britain (later the Royal Photographic Society), and was elected on to its executive Council. However his controversial views led to him resigning, with a group of ten or eleven others, and forming their own group which came to be called 'The Linked Ring' (see Harker 1979; Osman 2004). George Eastman, founder of Kodak, appointed Davison director of the British branch of his company, and by 1900 Davison had become Managing Director of the European side of the business and a major shareholder in Kodak. Davison met George Walton, an interior designer and architect from Glasgow, through photographic and artistic contacts. Walton, a contemporary of Rennie Mackintosh, was deeply immersed in the art world, and Walton's brother, Edward, was one of the artists that formed the Glasgow Boys group. Davison became an important client of Walton and subsequently almost his patron, employing Walton initially to design shops throughout Europe for Kodak Eastman. Davison, described as a 'Tolstoyan anarchist' (Allen 1985, 73), but also as a 'Christian Socialist – an ardent social reformer in terms of Christ's teachings' (Harker 1979, 150), was apt to put into practice his strong socialist beliefs, and these often clashed with the middle-class sensibilities of his friends and colleagues. This led to a falling out with his fellow Directors at Kodak, and a forced retirement in 1912. He was, however, principally because of his large share holding in Kodak, very wealthy by this stage, and in no need of employment. He visited Harlech in 1906, and decided to build a house and move there. His friend More would have helped him find a suitable site – the former slate quarry above the golf course was government land – and he asked Walton to design a house there. Davison, in conjunction with Harry More and his friends, also proposed plans for a new hotel on the same site, which Walton was asked to design. Plas Wernfawr was designed in relatively sparse solid Georgian style, with large central pediments on either side and regular rows of sash windows. A projecting half-round bay overlooked the golf-course and sea on the western side. The house was completed by 1908, but by then Davison had already commissioned Walton to design a house boat, and a second house, The White House, at Shiplake on the River Thames in Oxfordshire. The contrast

between the White House and Plas Wernfawr show the ability of Walton to design for the site, the grey rough hewn stone of the latter contrasting with the white smooth façade of the former.

The adjoining St David's hotel was erected in 1910, only to be burnt down in 1922, and subsequently rebuilt to designs by O M Roberts of Porthmadog. Here Walton's original design again made use of solid masonry blocks, though the superstructure made considerable use of reinforced concrete to ease construction problems. A mansard roof helped minimise the size and height of the building (Moon 1993, 148). At Wern Fawr Walton was busy creating the gardens, including a terraced walled garden to the south, a summer house and enclosing walls alongside the new road. Davison next requested designs for a music hall, and Walton responded with a dramatic large hall, as large as the existing house. It has been described as one of Walton's most significant and successful buildings (Moon 1993, 153), though it too was unfortunately burnt down in 1968.

### *Coleg Harlech*

Davison, partly because of the ill health of his young daughter, moved to the south of France in the 1920's. Wern Fawr was eventually sold to Henry Gethin Lewis (1872-1945), a south Wales businessman, for £7,500, a fraction of its real value. The purchase had been made at the behest of Thomas Jones (1870-1955) academic and politician, then serving as Deputy Secretary to the Cabinet under Stanley Baldwin. Lewis donated the building for use as an adult educational establishment, and Coleg Harlech was born, with its first Warden (Sir) Ben Bowen Thomas (1899-1977), who later became Permanent Secretary to the Welsh Department of the Ministry of Education (see Stead 1977 for the history of the establishment and subsequent progress of the college).

Plas Wernfawr, even with the hall adjacent, was not sufficiently large to accommodate all of the college functions. A set of plans for expansion by the architect Arthur J Plenty exist in the college archive, dated May 1930, but were never acted upon. However a new library wing was added to the south of the main house in 1939 to designs by Griffith Morris. Morris took over from Walton in many respects, and was responsible also for the construction of a new house (Cae Besi) for Alvin Langdon Coburn, the photographer and friend of Davidson (Cae Besi), and for Y Wern built for the new warden of the college, the design of both houses influenced by the Arts and Crafts style.

In 1968 catastrophe occurred when the great hall burnt down. The present theatre (opened 1974) was built on the site to designs by Sidney Colwyn Foulkes. Foulkes also designed the tower block to the south of the college and a gymnasium hall to the west. Both theatre and tower block were determinedly modern in appearance, in contrast to Walton's original design for the hall and Griffiths later library extension.

Later additions to the site include squash courts added on to the gymnasium in 1980, and an amenity centre built by the Percy Thomas Partnership in 1985.

## **6. THE STUDY AREA**

### **6.1 Statutory and non-statutory designations**

#### *Listed Buildings*

The following listed buildings lie within the study area:

25511 Coleg Harlech including terrace revetment walls to the west. Grade II\*

25512 Gateway, Forecourt and Screen Walls at Coleg Harlech. Grade II

The following listed buildings lie immediately adjacent to the study area:

25513 Y Wern. Grade II

#### *Scheduled Ancient Monuments*

There are no scheduled ancient monuments within or immediately adjacent to the study area. The setting of Harlech castle is discussed further below.

#### *Conservation Area*

The study area lies within the Conservation Area of Harlech.

#### *Landscapes of outstanding Historic Interest in Wales*

The study area lies within the Arduwy *Landscape of outstanding historic Interest in Wales* (HLW (GW) 2; Cadw *et al* 1998, 76).

#### *World Heritage Site*

Harlech forms part of the *Castles and Town Walls of Edward I in Gwynedd* World Heritage Site (Cadw 2004). The study area lies within the defined 'essential setting' and on the site-line of a significant view to the castle (Cadw 2004, map H2.4.7).

#### *National Park*

The study area lies wholly within the Snowdonia National Park.

#### *Environmental designations*

Harlech Morfa is designated a National Nature Reserve and Site of Special Scientific Interest.

### **6.2 Gazetteer of features within the study area**

The gazetteer below lists the principal features within the development area, and categorises their importance on a scale of A (National); B (Regional); C (Local); D (Other). The full definition of the categories is given in Appendix B.

The archaeology within the study area consists of the buildings designed by Walton for Davison, the later college additions and the theatre. The south side of the grounds, which includes part of the formal gardens developed by Walton and the later tower block by Colwyn Foulkes is now owned by the adjoining St David's hotel, and is due for redevelopment.

#### **1. Slate quarry                      Category D**

Little of detail is known of the origins and working of this quarry. It may be the quarry shown in an aquatint of 1798 by John Hassell. It certainly covered a large area, as shown on the 1889 OS map, but few buildings appear to be associated with it, so it may never have produced great quantities. Further details may be held within the PRO, as the land was later bought from the Government by George Davison, but an initial search has not produced any results. The quarry is shown as considerably larger than the present study area, occupying the area of St David's Hotel, and continuing east of the main road into the now wooded slopes opposite.

#### **2. Buildings shown on 1889 OS map                      Category D**

Two small buildings are shown on the 1889 OS map within the lower plateaux close to the railway. The southern building, a small simple rectangular structure lay partly under the north end of the present Amenity Centre. The northern building occupied the west part of the current Wern Fach (feature 5 below). There are no surviving remains of either building.

#### **3. Plas Wernfawr                      Category A Listed Grade II\***

Plas Wernfawr was built for George Davison to designs by George Walton in 1908. It is located part way up the steep slope from the Morfa on a level terrace, overlooking the golf course to the west. The castle is just visible around the cliffs. The building is in simple classical style, built of dressed blocks of local grey stone. The east front demonstrates strong horizontal lines, formed by two rows of sash windows (12 pane upper and 18 pane lower), a projecting dentilated string course at eaves height forming the base of a pediment, and a chamfered plinth to the height of the lower sills. The pediment contains a central oculus with flanking square lights. The central door is reached by three steps, and has a semi-circular canopy over. The west elevation, overlooking the golfcourse, is similar, but with a projecting semi-circular bow south of the central door. An extension on the north side built in 1910, lit by large round headed windows, formerly connected to the great hall. The principal west entrance opens on to a terraced garden running



almost to the edge of the rock terrace. A semi-circular bow in the centre and at each end echoes the use of the same motif in the main building. The walled gardens continue south, though the original design of these is truncated by the later library block.

#### **4. Plas Wernfawr courtyard, walls and gardens    Category A Listed Grade II**

On the east side of the house is a walled courtyard separating the house from the road, with entrance ways, high 4m stone walls, and a complex of steps and wall walks. These were designed by Walton as part of his original design. A road leads out to the south up a steep slope, to the main gateway with decorative wrought iron gates and balustrade above. Steps lead up to a wall walk, which passes over the entrance. The north side of the courtyard is formed by a round-arched arcade. A central gate with steps up to the wall walk either side opens on to the road opposite the front door of the house. The wall walk connects to a modern bridge over the road, which replaces an earlier footbridge.

#### **5. College library                    Category A Listed Grade II**

The library and a link block connecting it to Plas Wernfawr were built in 1939 to designs by Griffith Morris of Porthmadog. The building is in lighter limestone, but the link block continues the front façade of the house, though not the roof line. The library, a tall two storey building, originally relied upon the great hall at the north end to balance its appearance, though works perfectly well being balanced by the theatre. It is a large two storey building which uses many of the design motifs found in the original house, including a denticulated string course along the east side, and semi-circular projection at the south end.

#### **6. The great hall                    Category D**

The great hall, or music room, was built by Walton after Plas Wernfawr was completed in 1910. It was a striking building, based in part on the Scottish castles he knew from his younger days, with walls of 'towering masonry with small window openings' and 'unmistakably Scottish dormers along the eaves line' (Moon 1993, 151). Following the creation of Coleg Harlech the hall played a major role in the life of the college, its use as a concert hall attracting musicians, lecturers and actors, and allowed the College to offer courses in music, the only residential college to be able to do so (Stead 1977, 110). The hall was burnt down in a fire starting from an electrical fault on May 6 1968.

#### **7. Theatre Ardudwy                Category B**

The theatre, which also incorporated teaching rooms, and was seen as much as a general arts complex as a theatre, was opened in September 1974, following a period of sustained fund raising to pay for both the theatre and the new hall of residence. Both buildings were designed by S Colwyn Foulkes, and both were very modern in appearance. The dominant use of undecorated concrete and its striking appearance from the road draw the eye to it, and the courtyard and façade of Plas Wernfawr, not visible from the road, remain secret unless sought out.

#### **8. Gymnasium    Category C**

The gymnasium was built c. 1970 to designs by Colwyn Foulkes. Squash courts were subsequently added c. 1980. Neither building is used today for its original function. The gymnasium is a rectangular building with hipped roof with extended eaves, roughcast walls, and simple squared pilasters running up the eaves. The upper part of the walls contains a nearly continuous row of simple rectangular windows, broken by the pilasters. The original gable entrance was replaced with a new entrance which linked the gymnasium to the squash courts. The latter is a simple rectangular building designed to house two squash courts. Again roughcast and with a gabled slate roof, there are no windows, reflecting the original use of the building.

#### **9. Amenity Centre                Category C**

The amenity centre was built in 1985 by the Percy Thomas Partnership. It functions as a bar and social complex. The walls are of regularly coursed small limestone blocks, and it has a hipped slate roof. A semi-circular room projects out from the front of the building, echoing both a common theme of Walton's designs and the round body of the theatre above it.

### **6.3 Gazetteer of sites adjacent to the study area**

The following sites, whilst not within the immediate study area, lie adjacent and are historically associated with the site. It may be necessary to take their presence into account when discussing impact.

#### **10. Wernbach**

A stone-built cottage, renovated and inhabited. It is assumed to have been designed by George Walton, and was built for the head gardener c. 1910. The generator house lay across the lane from the cottage (Allan 1985, 78).

#### **11. Y Wern      Listed Grade II**

Built c. 1935 for the first Warden of the college Ben Bowen Thomas to designs by Griffith Morris of Porthmadog, Y Wern lies above the college on the east side of the road. Morris retained the Arts and Crafts style of Walton, and designed a house in local stone that moulds itself into the landscape, and forms an integral part of the college buildings, and is used for teaching purposes. Morris also designed the college library and the house of Cae Besi, which lies higher up the hill, for the photographer Alvin Langdon Coburn, a friend of Davison's.

#### **12. Former conservatory**

Formerly within the college grounds, this now lies outside, and is part of St David's hotel complex. It is a balustraded terrace or concrete platform supported on stone pillars, with an open shelter under. Allan draws attention to the early use of concrete by Walton, and considers this and the design of the building a link between the Arts and Crafts movement and the 'concrete modernism of the 1930's' (1985, 82).

#### **13. Accommodation Block**

Designed by S Colwyn Foulkes and opened in 1969 the tower block has twelve floors and was designed in distinctly modern style. Strong horizontal lines, defined by horizontal rectangular windows and panels of granite aggregate facing define the exterior of the building. The block is currently in use as a hall of residence, but will go out of use when new accommodation is built, and it will then form part of the St David's hotel complex. A planning application has been lodged with the National Park which provides for the demolition of this building.

#### **14. St Davids Hotel**

Designed by Walton for Davison and a group of local businessmen, the hotel was built in 1910-11, damaged by fire in 1922 and rebuilt, the architects being O M Roberts and Son of Porthmadog. This may have been the first contact that Griffith Morris had with Harlech and Walton's work, as he was working for O M Roberts and Son at the time, before setting up on his own (*pers comm.* Adam Voelcker). Much of the masonry structure of the building remained standing, and the east facing front of today bears a strong similarity to the building designed by Walton, with the vertical central entrance within four upright stone pillars, and the stone bays on either side (now painted white). The mansard roof, designed by Walton to break up the high vertical front of the building, was replaced with a simpler gable roof and gabled dormer windows. The hotel is presently empty, and, as with the aforementioned accommodation block, the hotel building would also be demolished under the recently submitted planning application.

#### **15. Cae Besi**

Alvin Langdon Coburn, the photographer, first visited Harlech in 1916 at the invitation of George Davison. They bought a plot of land there in 1918, and had a house built on it. They lived there until 1928, and whilst there Coburn published a series of photographs of the area entitled *The Book of Harlech* (Coburn 1920; Gernsheim 1966). It is claimed the house was designed by Griffith Morris (Cadw Listed Building

description), though Morris did not set up on his own until the late 1920's. The house contributes to the concentration of Arts and Crafts style buildings constructed within Harlech during this period.

#### **16. Royal St Davids Royal Golf Course**

The golf course was founded in 1894, largely through the encouragement of W H More, Crown Agent for Wales, who introduced George Davison to Harlech, and The Hon. Harold Finch-Hatton, fourth son of the Earl of Winchelsea and Nottingham. The golf club formed a significant element within the rejuvenation of Harlech in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, and is still today a principal feature within the landscape of Morfa Harlech.

#### **17. Cambrian Railway**

The Cambrian Railway through Harlech first opened to passengers in August 1867. The station lies below the castle, and the line passes along the base of the Morfa, between the college grounds and the golf course.

#### **18. Harlech Castle      Scheduled Ancient Monument; World Heritage Site**

The castle is included here because of the need to take into account any impact upon its setting. The castle dominates the town, and sits high on the edge of the rock outcrop above the flat sands of Morfa Harlech. It was started in 1283, and forms one of a significant ring of castles built by Edward I to confirm his subjugation of the Welsh following the death of Llewellyn ap Gruffydd in 1282 and his brother Dafydd in 1283.

### **7. DISCUSSION OF IMPACT**

#### **7.1 Direct Impact**

The proposed development is located along the west edge of the study area, parallel to the road and railway line which form the western boundary. The proposals will require the removal of the gymnasium and squash courts and the amenity centre. These will be replaced with a new accommodation block to the south, a link building that joins to the theatre, and a new education block on the north.

There are no known underground archaeological remains within the development area, and given the previous use of the site as a slate quarry the potential for the preservation of any remains is very low. The direct impacts are therefore upon the existing standing buildings.

The gymnasium and squash courts are identified above as being of local significance, and so is the amenity centre. All are well-designed buildings, and were built to answer a specific need at the time. The gymnasium and squash courts are now used for storage and art and craft teaching. The amenity centre still houses a social bar and associated rooms.

The link building, which joins onto the principal college buildings at the point where the theatre and Plas Wernfawr meet, will impact upon Walton's later work – his own link building between the house and music hall. Direct impact will not, however, be significant, and the issue is considered further under indirect impacts below.

#### *Recommendations*

A full photographic survey of Wernfawr and the theatre and courtyard has been undertaken. The survey does not include the lower buildings due for demolition. It is recommended that the photographic survey is extended to include the buildings on the lower level which are to be demolished, and that these are all combined in a report which describes the site and buildings. This report and the photographs would then be lodged with appropriate public archives.

## 7.2 Indirect Impact

Indirect impacts are primarily visual, and need to take into account the setting of the adjacent listed buildings and the World Heritage Site. The impact upon the Arduwy Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest also needs to be considered. The need to preserve the setting of listed buildings is discussed in Welsh Office Circular 61/96 *Planning and the Historic Environment: Historic Buildings and Conservation Areas*. The details of the setting of the World Heritage Site are given in Cadw 2004, and the guidelines for assessing historic landscapes are given in Cadw *et al* 2007.

The most significant view of the proposed new building is from the golf course west of the site, through which also runs a public footpath with direct access to the beach. The college is also visible from parts of the castle, though not from the town.

The impacts on the existing college building concern scale and height, which have the potential to impact upon views of the building from the golf course, and views of the golf course and sea out from the existing building. It is important, therefore, that the new building does not rise above the level of the terrace, and that the solid mass of the building is presented in a manner which does not detract from, but enhances, the view back towards Harlech from the golf course.

The link building which rises up the terrace from the lower level to that of the main college buildings has the difficult task of taking into account both Walton's work and the later theatre. The design again needs to be one which enhances the site without detracting from the existing solidity and classical vernacular of Walton's work, and yet pays homage to Colwyn Foulkes theatre alongside.

The study area falls within the 'essential setting' and 'arc of view' of Harlech Castle. The view of the site from the castle is dominated by the theatre, and the new development will not change this significantly. The sight-line to the castle from the beach-footpath below passes over the college, and again the façade and mass of the building should not detract from the castle.

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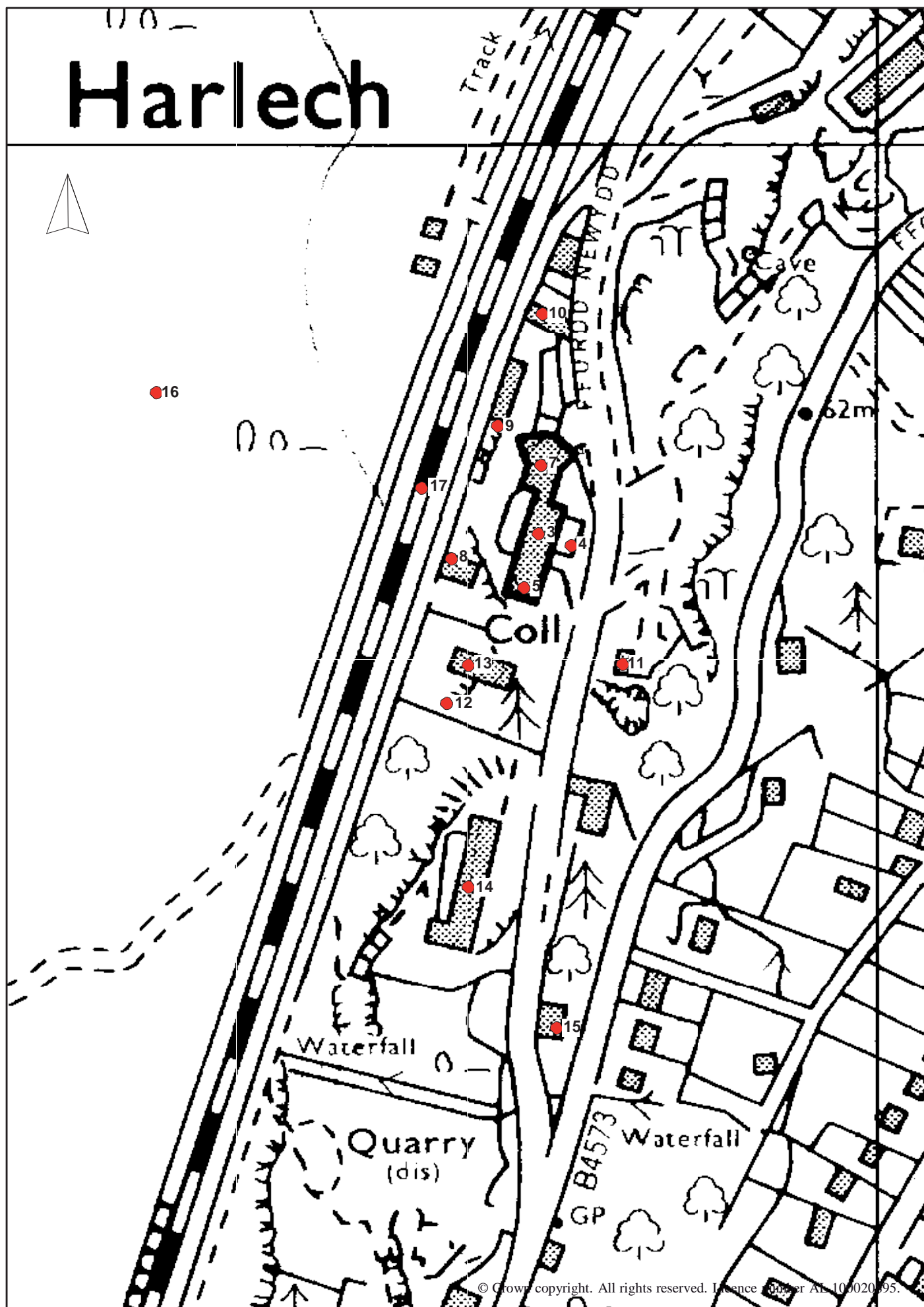


Figure 1. Study area and sites. (Based on 1:10000 Ordnance Survey 1970 sheet SH53SE) Scale 1:25000



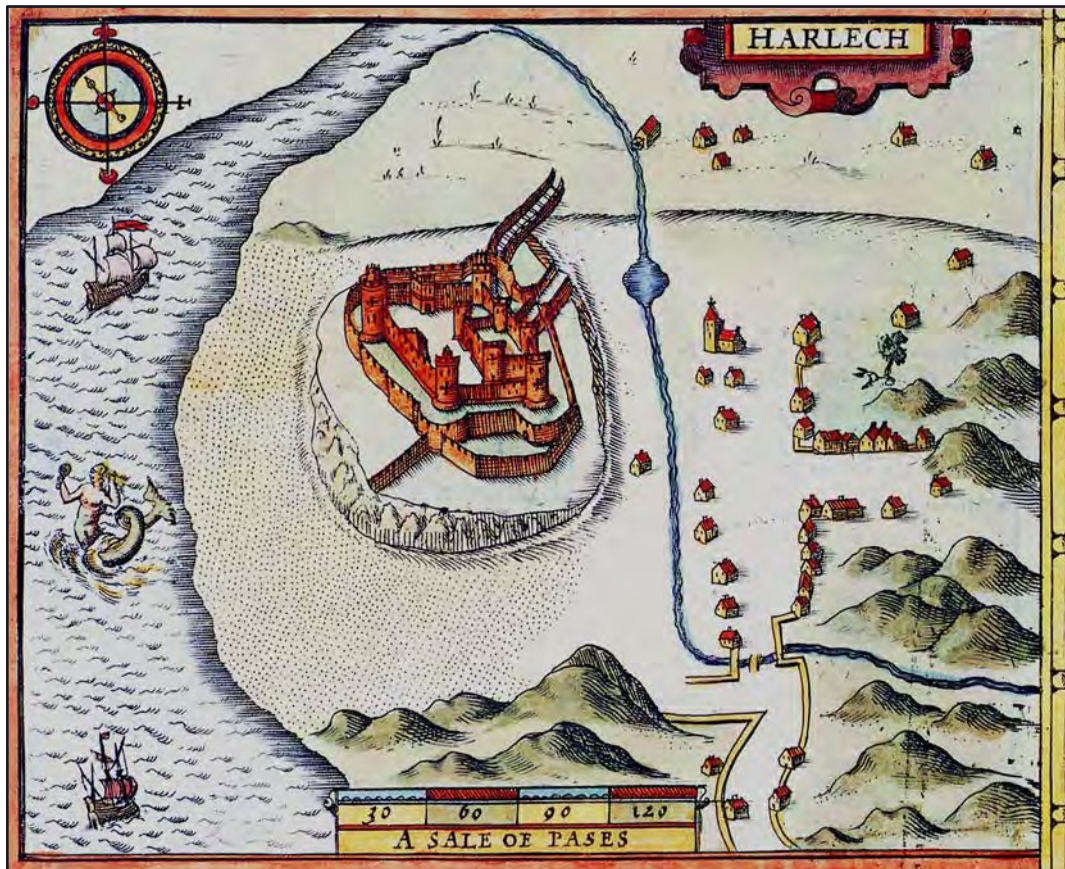


Figure 2. Map of Harlech. John Speed, 1610



Figure 3. Slate quarry at Harlech. British Library, George III Collection, 1798.



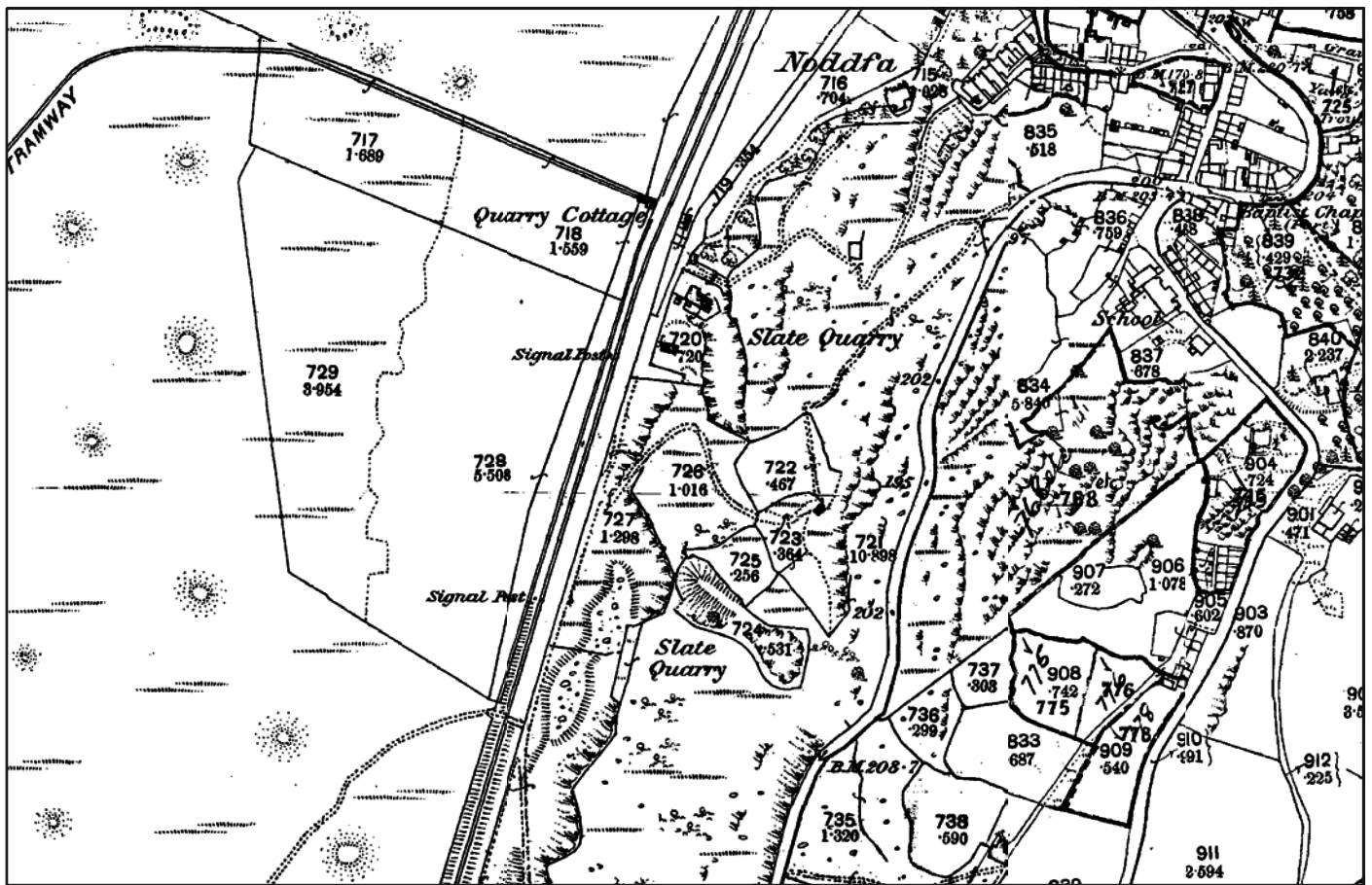


Figure 4. Ordnance Survey 1889 1st Edition 25 inch map Merionethshire LXXXI.6, XCI.3, L.4, LX.1. Scale 1:4000

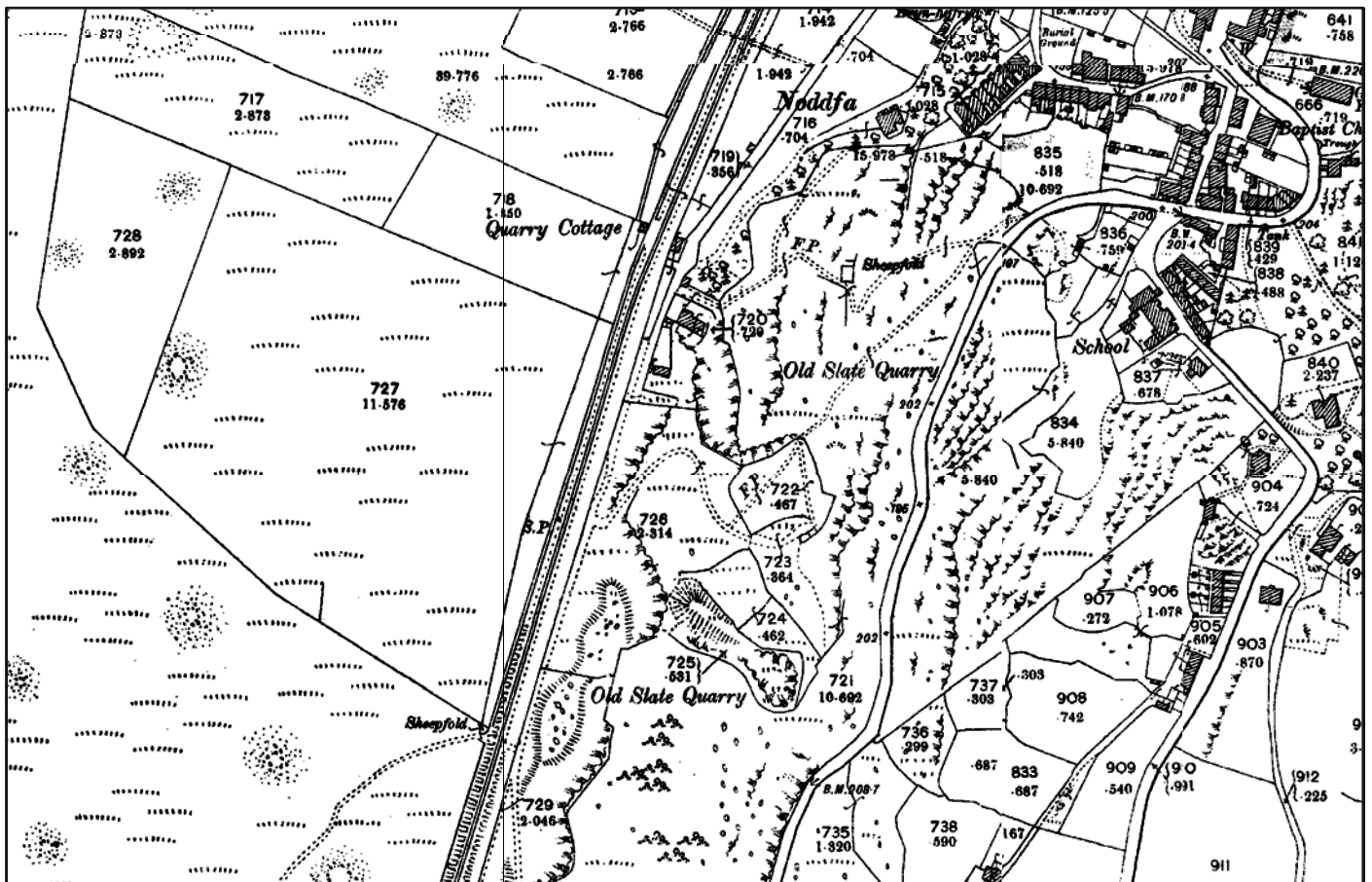


Figure 5. Ordnance Survey 1901 2nd Edition 25 inch map Merionethshire LXXXI.6, XCI.3, L.4, LX.1. Scale 1:4000





*Plate 1. Wern Fawr shortly after construction in 1908 (Source: Moon, 1993, fig 183).*



*Plate 2. Courtyard at Wern Fawr with hall beyond. (Source: Moon 1993, fig 201).*



*Plate 3. Plas Wern Fawr in 2008*



*Plate 4. The library built in 1939, by Griffith Morris*





*Plate 5. Theatr Aradudwy. Opened in 1974. Designed by S. Colwyn Foulkes*



*Plate 6. Amenity centre. Opened in 1985. Designed by Perry Thomas Partnership*





*Plate 7. The gymnasium and squash court. Opened in 1980 and 1990. Designed by S. Colwyn Foulkes*



*Plate 8. Coleg Harlech seen from the golf course with the castle beyond*



*Plate 8. Coleg Harlech as seen from Harlech Castle*



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