
No.2, Manod, Llanbeblig Road **Caernarfon**



Archaeological Assessment

GAT Project No. G 40

Report No. 818

July 2009

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Caernarfon

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By
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NO. 2 MANOD, LLANBEBLIG ROAD. CAERNARFON.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT REPORT (G40)

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MANOD, NO. 2, LLANBEBLIG ROAD, CAERNARFON.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT REPORT (G40)

SUMMARY

During a proposed house extension at Manod, No. 2, Llanbeblig Road, Caernarfon, structural remains were discovered including two intersecting walls, a cobbled surface, and surface comprising two stone slabs. Due to the proximity of the Roman camp at Segontium, and the potential for archaeological deposits, an archaeological evaluation was conducted on Friday 24th July 2009 to determine the nature of the discovered features, and to identify any further deposits of archaeological value. Upon conclusion of this evaluation, it was discovered that the identified structural remains and deposits were dating to the late 19th century, and that the construction of these had destroyed any archaeological remains pre-dating this era.

1. INTRODUCTION

Gwynedd Archaeological Trust were alerted by the owner, a Mr. Gareth Jones, as to the discovery of structural remains within a foundation trench excavated in advance of a proposed house extension at Manod, No. 2, Llanbeblig Road, Caernarfon (*see figures 1 and 2*). A meeting thus ensued with Mr. Gareth Jones, the Development Control Archaeologist for Gwynedd (Mr. Ashley Batten), and the Building Control Officer (Mr. G. Davies Jones) on Thursday 23rd July 2009, at the concerned premises. A mutual agreement was reached to proceed with one day's archaeological evaluation prior to any further development, in order to ascertain the nature and thus archaeological value within the associated landscape of the said structural remains. The situation arose due to the fact that the extension was a permitted development.

The proposed development is an extension to the eastern wall of the premises, replacing an existing kitchen extension. The property is in close proximity to Segontium Roman camp, and despite preliminary assessment by the Development Control Archaeologist determining that the structural remains were not of the Roman period, there existed the potential for preserved Roman features and ancillary structures/features associated with the nearby camp beneath the deposits exposed. Thus an archaeologist from Gwynedd Archaeological Trust (GAT) conducted a day of archaeological evaluation on Friday 24th July 2009, to excavate and clean the trench and associated features/structures and assess the archaeological values of the contexts exposed.

The property extension foundation trench located to the east of the house, measured approximately 7.5m by 2.8m running north-east to south-west. Due to extensive deposits of modern demolition material across the area covered by the excavated trench, the foundation trench was required to be sunk into natural deposits to provide necessary anchorage for the building extension. This resulted in the discovery of archaeological structures in the form of two intersecting walls, a cobbled surface deposit and a stone slab surface.

2. METHODS AND TECHNIQUES

A single trench measuring approximately 7.5m x 2.8m was excavated against the eastern wall of no.2, Manod, Llanbeblig Road, Caernarfon to facilitate the construction of an extension to the current property. The trench was already excavated when archaeological staff arrived on site.

The site was planned to scale and a written record of the trench content and all identified features was completed via GAT pro-formas.

All subsurface features were recorded photographically using a Nikon D40 DSLR. Furthermore, all records, drawings, and photographs were archived within the historic environment record (HER) located at GAT.

3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 Topographic Description

The development area (SH485623) lies immediately south-west of Llanbeblig road, and on the surface the topography appears to be fairly flat, with perhaps a mild slope running south-west. However, evidence obtained from the trench excavated prior to the house extension development shows the natural deposits as being significantly deeper than the lie of the land towards the north-east and the road. It is not clear as to whether this bottoming out of deposits is due to a natural slope which has been in-filled in modern times, or whether it is indeed indicative of a terrace cut into the landscape for some earlier structure or feature. Indeed, it does seem more probable that the area had been terraced for the construction of the structural remains located in the trench.

3.2 General Archaeological and Historical Background

(reproduced from GAT report 773 with additions)

3.2.1 Prehistoric

Several prehistoric finds have been recovered during excavations in the Roman fort of Segontium. From this site the National Museum of Wales holds three polished stone axes (PRN 3101), two Neolithic and one possibly Mesolithic; a cobble with an hour-glass perforation (PRN 3114) (Burrow 2003, 133); two bronze axes (PRN 3117) and some bronze horse-gear (PRN 3118). Two stone-axe hammers (PRN 3113) and a bronze axe (PRN 3121) were recovered from somewhere on this side of Caernarfon but their provenance is not accurately known.

3.2.2 Roman

After its medieval castle Caernarfon is most famous for its Roman fort (PRN 3089). The fort, Segontium, was established by the governor Agricola, probably in about AD 77, and was the largest of the forts of this period in North Wales. It would have held an infantry unit of 1000 men, probably the most prestigious unit in the region. In the 2nd century AD there was a reduction of troops and the demolition of some barracks, but the fort maintained its status and may have been the base of a procurator, supervising the finances of Roman North Wales. By the start of the 3rd century AD the garrison seems to have been brought up to full strength again and there was increased activity in the late 3rd and 4th centuries, until the garrisons were withdrawn to counter rebellions elsewhere in the empire, probably in 393 AD (Casey and Davies 1993). There was a substantial vicus (civilian settlement) to the north-west, west and south of the fort, but there is little evidence of it continuing beyond the end of the 2nd century AD (Hopewell 2003). Excavations along Newborough Street (PRN 2942-49 and 3133) revealed a working area ancillary to the fort and possibly part of the vicus, although it may have been within a ditched enclosure (White 1985). A substantial walled enclosure, known as Hen Waliau (PRN 3090), lies to the west of the fort. It was built in the 4th century AD, probably as a storage depot, and overlies late 1st and early 2nd century activity, again possibly part of the vicus (Boyle 1991). Other traces of the vicus were discovered to the west and south of the fort by small excavations in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Casey and Davies 1993). These excavations revealed traces of timber buildings and small booths, and suggested that the vicus extended as far as the junction of Constantine Road and Vaynol Street.

The study area lies less than 30.0m east of the fort and approximately 21.0m south of the probable route of the road leading east from the fort to Tomen y Mur (PRN 17533). The modern Ffordd Llanbeblig, the A4085 to Beddgelert probably runs along the line of the Roman road at this point (Hopewell 2007, 12). To the south of this road Roman cremation burials (PRN 3092) were discovered while digging graves in the New Cemetery from about 1850 through to 1947. There were about 14 burials represented, all cremations and buried in urns and other vessels. Dated vessels belonged to the late 1st to early 2nd centuries AD (RCAHMS 1960, 163). This appears to have been a major Roman cemetery located, as was usual, next to a main road. A small number of other burials have been found elsewhere around the fort. To the north a jar

dating to c. 100 AD and containing a cremation (PRN 5558) was found while digging foundations for a house (RCAHMW 1960, 163). This is well away from projected road lines (Hopewell 2007, map 17), but its position in a prominent location overlooking the valley of the Cadnant may suggest a suitable cemetery location (Pollock 2006, 40). Perhaps more unusual is the burial found to the north-west of the fort in the fill of the ditch that might have enclosed the ancillary activity area (part of PRN 3133). This was the inhumation burial of a mature woman and dated to the second half of the 2nd century AD (White 1985, 55-56). A gold amulet, inscribed in Greek, was found close to the road running from the south-east gate of the fort in 1827. Pollock suggests that this came from a burial, and as the object dated to the 3rd/4th centuries AD the burial was probably an inhumation (Pollock 2006, 174). Pollock also found reference to two burials to the north-east of the fort not far from the road to Canovium (Caerhun in the Conwy valley). There is very little information on these burials but they were probably 1st/2nd century cremations (Pollock 2006, 174). These burials together indicate a wide distribution of cemeteries around the fort with an emphasis on major roads, but perhaps not exclusively restricted to them. Most of the burials date to the period of the vicus and the first phase of use of the fort, but the gold amulet hints at later burials.

Lying c.176.0m north-east from the study area and only 80.0m north of the church of Saint Peblig were the remains of a Roman temple to Mithras (PRN 3098). This was used in the 3rd century AD and destroyed in the later 4th century. It was a stone building with a slate roof and contained features typical of mithraea elsewhere, i.e. an antechamber, a sunken nave with benches and an alcove for the cult images. The temple was destroyed by fire and the altars of Mithras may have been deliberately broken (Boon 1960). The temple and the church lie on opposite sides of a small valley, which probably held a stream in the Roman period. (Boon 1960, 156) speculates on the connection between the 4th century destruction of the temple and Saint Peblig (Publicius). The saint is traditionally claimed to have been the son of Maxen Wledig (i.e. Magnus Maximus) and to have lived in the 4th century (Boon 1960, 156; Bowen 1977). The tradition of this late Roman saint may have influenced the location of an early medieval church near the destroyed mithraeum.

Approximately 25.0m to the east of the study area is the location of two defensive ditches (PRN 5560) to the Roman fort, 'excavations were carried out by Miss Sara Jones, of Bron Hendre, show that the two fort ditches here were wholly or largely filled in Roman times. On the filling was much burnt wattle and daub' (Wheeler, 1924, 73.) Furthermore, 'traces of a road are said to have been observed here in the garden of Bron Hendre' (Wheeler, 1924, p96).

3.2.3. Medieval

The study area lies within the parish of Llanbeblig, which was within the commote of Is Gwyrfa in the cantref of Arfon (Carr 1977). Caernarfon was already occupied by a Welsh town with a court and a port before the conquest of Edward I in 1283. Edward replaced the town with an English garrison borough and a castle. Construction on the walled town and castle started by 1287 and work went on until c.1330. The borough was established by charter in 1284 and the town was the capital of the principality of Wales until 1536, and later became the county town (RCAHMW 1960, 115-118). The parish church (PRN 6942) was dedicated to Saint Peblig, and stands in the middle of the parish rather than in the walled town. The chancel and south transept date largely to the 14th century, while the tower is 15th, and the Vaynol chapel was added in the late 16th century (RCAHMW 1960, 119). Williams-Jones (1977) indicates that the road to Beddgelert was a principal route in the 12th and 13th centuries, most probably reusing the Roman road.

3.2.4 Post-Medieval

In 1918 the eastern spread of the town of Caernarfon had only just reached the Roman fort, however to the south-east of the study area the first edition 1889 OS map depicts a farmstead labeled as *Cefn-hendre* (PRN 29718 (*see figure 2*) at SH485622. This map shows the surrounding area as being very rural, with open field systems and tree plantations, as well as depicting a moderately sized ancillary building to the farm located in very close proximity to the study area. Indeed, the structure was orientated north-east to south-

west and the north-eastern and north-western walls appear to be directly within the study area and measuring approximately 7.0m by 5.0m.

The wall comprising the north-western side of the ancillary structure is depicted as being a wall of substantial length, measuring approximately 65.0m and running from Llanbeblig road in the north-east to open fields in the south-west where it abruptly terminates. Moreover, a second wall appears to run parallel to this wall, forming a road or track way measuring approximately 4.5m in width which also curiously terminates at open fields to the south-west.

By the production of the third edition OS map in 1910, very little has changed in proximity to the study area. The farmstead *Cefn-hendre* (PRN 29718) is still in existence with the majority of land being open field systems, with perhaps a small reduction in forestry plantation. The only significant change appears to have been the construction of a second ancillary structure to the farmstead, to the immediate south-west of the aforementioned ancillary structure, and being slightly larger in dimensions approximately 7.0m by 8.0m. Furthermore, the road/track way to the north-east still appears to be in existence, and as in 1889, also runs from Llanbeblig road in the north-east to open fields in the south-west where it abruptly terminates.

During the 1950s and 1960s the study area and land in proximity was developed with the construction of a housing estate which is still present today. The farmstead *Cefn-hendre* no longer exists, neither does any of the ancillary buildings, field boundaries, or the road/track way.

4. RESULTS OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

4.1 Description

(see plates 1 to 6)

A house extension foundation trench of dimensions 7.5m by 2.8m had already been excavated by developers immediately to the east of the property upon arrival by a GAT Archaeologist. Despite the trench being an even rectangular shape, the depths at which the trench had been excavated to varied drastically. The requirement to excavate foundations through the loose rubble deposit (01) that covered the entire area, had resulted in the developers excavating as deep as 1.37m onto a natural deposit of firm, light beige-yellow silt-clay (06). The very nature of the extension meant that despite the trench being rectangular, the majority of the trench had merely had the highest concrete layer removed onto a rubble deposit (01), with only the perimeter of the trench being excavated deeper to accommodate for the walls of the extension (see figure 4).

The depth of the natural deposit (06) from the surface varied little across the trench where it had been exposed. At the north-eastern end of the trench the deposit (06) lay at approximately 1.37m beneath the surface concrete, while at the south-western end it lay at approximately 1.1m in depth. Lying chronologically above this layer was a thin deposit (07) measuring 0.09m in depth, present only at the north-eastern half of the trench. This deposit was a light grey-beige sand-silt, possibly a natural lens, upon which a cobbled surface (02) and wall (03) were constructed.

The most obvious features present within the trench were the two intersecting walls (03) and (09). The former was a single-skin wall running north-east to south-west across the trench, and being comprised of large and medium sized rounded and sub-rounded stone cobbles; the largest of these stones measuring 0.4m by 0.3m by 0.2m. The latter being a double-skinned wall running south-east to north-west across the trench, and being comprised of medium sized angular cobbles averaging 0.25m by 0.28m by 0.12m in size. Both walls were bonded by a rough, white lime mortar with a pebble and grit temper. These walls intersected in the centre of the trench, however this was in an area which had not been excavated through the core rubble layer (01), thus no relationship was determined between the two walls. No visible foundation cuts for the two walls could be observed, and it appears likely that the structures were terraced into the landscape.

In the north-eastern corner of the trench a feature was cut into the natural deposit (06). This cut [05] was rectangular in plan, with sharp corners and sharp top break of slope. The sides of this feature were steep and smooth, being nearly vertical in inclination; with a sharp bottom break of slope and a flat base. The extent of this feature was not ascertained as it carried on into the trench baulk to the south-east. However, due to a concentration of medium sized angular stones in the base of the feature, as well as a ceramic drain pipe in close proximity it appears that the feature was actually a soak-away being fed by the drain, most probably dating to the 19th century building works.

Butting up against wall (03) and thus chronologically later in the phase of construction, however most probably contemporary was a cobbled surface (02) and a stone slab surface (11). The cobbled surface comprised a medium compacted mid red-brown silt-clay, with 90% medium sized rounded cobble inclusions measuring 1.2m by 0.13m in depth, the length was unknown; while the stone slab surface (11) comprised two light grey stone slabs measuring 0.4m by >0.3m by 0.05m in dimensions. Both these surface layers physically lie above sand-silt deposit (07) and chronologically above wall (03), however despite probably being contemporary the excavated foundation trench had destroyed any relationship between the two layers.

In the north-eastern section of the trench a soft dark black-brown silt-clay deposit (04) existed between walls (03) and (09) measuring >2.8m by >0.7m by 0.7m in depth. This deposit was very mixed and contained frequent modern pottery fragments and demolition material. Curiously this deposit also filled soak-away feature [05], suggesting that the feature was open and the two walls were in existence when this layer came to be deposited.

In the south-eastern section of the trench a cobbled surface (10) existed measuring >3.8m by >0.9m by 0.1m in depth, which physically lay immediately above the natural silt-clay (06), but which butted up against wall (09) to the north-east. This layer was not present north of wall (09) and faded out at the south-western section of the trench. The deposit was a moderately firm dark red-brown silt-clay, with 80-90% rounded and sub-rounded small to medium sized cobble inclusions.

Over the entire trench there existed a loose, mixed grey and orange mottled clay-silt deposit (01) with very frequent demolition material and modern pottery fragments. This layer was as much as 1.15m deep in places, and filled the void between the surviving archaeological features and the modern concrete of the premises' driveway.

4.2 Discussion

When the location of stone walls (03) and (09) are compared with both the first and third edition OS maps, 1889 and 1910 respectively, it can be seen that they correspond with the locations of the ancillary building to the farmstead *Cefn-hendre*. It appears that the north-eastern to south-western wall (03) represents the external wall to the road/track way depicted on both maps, and the south-east to north-west wall (09) corresponds with the north-eastern wall of the ancillary building. It is not clear whether this structure was a barn, workshop, or building of some other function, however it does seem clear that the cobbled surface (10) located to the south-east of the trench does in fact represent the internal floor surface of this ancillary structure. This hypothesis is supported by the fact that the cobbled surface terminates at the face of wall (09).

The relationship between stone slabs (11) and cobbled layer (02) is not clear due to disturbance during the excavation of the trench. However, it does appear that both layers are contemporary and represent the surface of the road/track way depicted on the 1889 and 1910 OS maps. Indeed, despite there being no existing earlier deposits beneath the portion of the road/track way uncovered, it is certainly possible that the track is in fact of Roman origin and has been reused over time. This theory is supported by the fact that the OS maps depict the track as terminating in such a curious manner, however this merely stands as conjecture at present.

The low level of the natural deposit (06) when compared with the existing ground surface is somewhat unusual. It is clear from the inclusions that rubble deposit (01) is a modern dumping layer, with the intention of raising the level of the ground prior to the construction of the existing houses in the mid-20th century. Indeed, this has resulted in the preservation of the archaeological features to a good standard. The most probable explanation for the significant difference in the ground level, is that the 19th century structures were actually terraced into a natural slope.

The presence of the soak-away [05] in the north-eastern corner of the trench is almost certainly of modern descent, however it is curious as to why there are no real in-situ deposits or relict layers, especially when considering that the archaeology survives to such an impressive depth. In fact it appears that the soak-away [05] is filled by the same deposit which runs up against wall (09), of a mixed dark black-brown silt-clay (04) with frequent modern pottery fragment inclusions. This deposit is limited to the area which is assumed to be the external wall of the ancillary structure and as can be seen on the 1889 OS map (*figure 2*) this area is depicted as an open paddock. If the area had been terraced prior to construction, then it appears probable that all earlier deposits both natural and archaeological would have been destroyed, and the structures were subsequently constructed upon natural deposit (06). Moreover, if this is the case, then it appears that deposit (04) was in fact a dumping layer to raise the ground level on the external side of the outbuilding.

5. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The development area presents an opportunity to see into an area which has little archaeological understanding, but immense potential. Despite this evaluation not discovering any deposits of a pre-modern nature, the proximity of the site to the Roman camp and areas of other archaeological importance makes any further excavations in the area archaeologically sensitive.

Moreover, the discoveries made have given an insight into the land use of the area, as well as the degree to which archaeological material can survive due to the raising of the ground level prior to construction of the housing estate in the mid 20th century.

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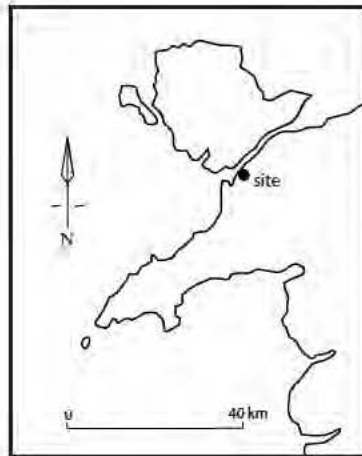


Figure 1. Location of the study area (shown in red)
 Based on OS 1:10,000 scale maps. © Crown copyright. All rights reserved. Licence number AL 100020895.



Trench Location

YMDRODDIADAU
ARCHAEOLOGOL
GWYBODAETH



GWYBODAETH
ARCHAEOLOGOL
GWYBODAETH

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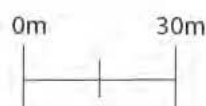
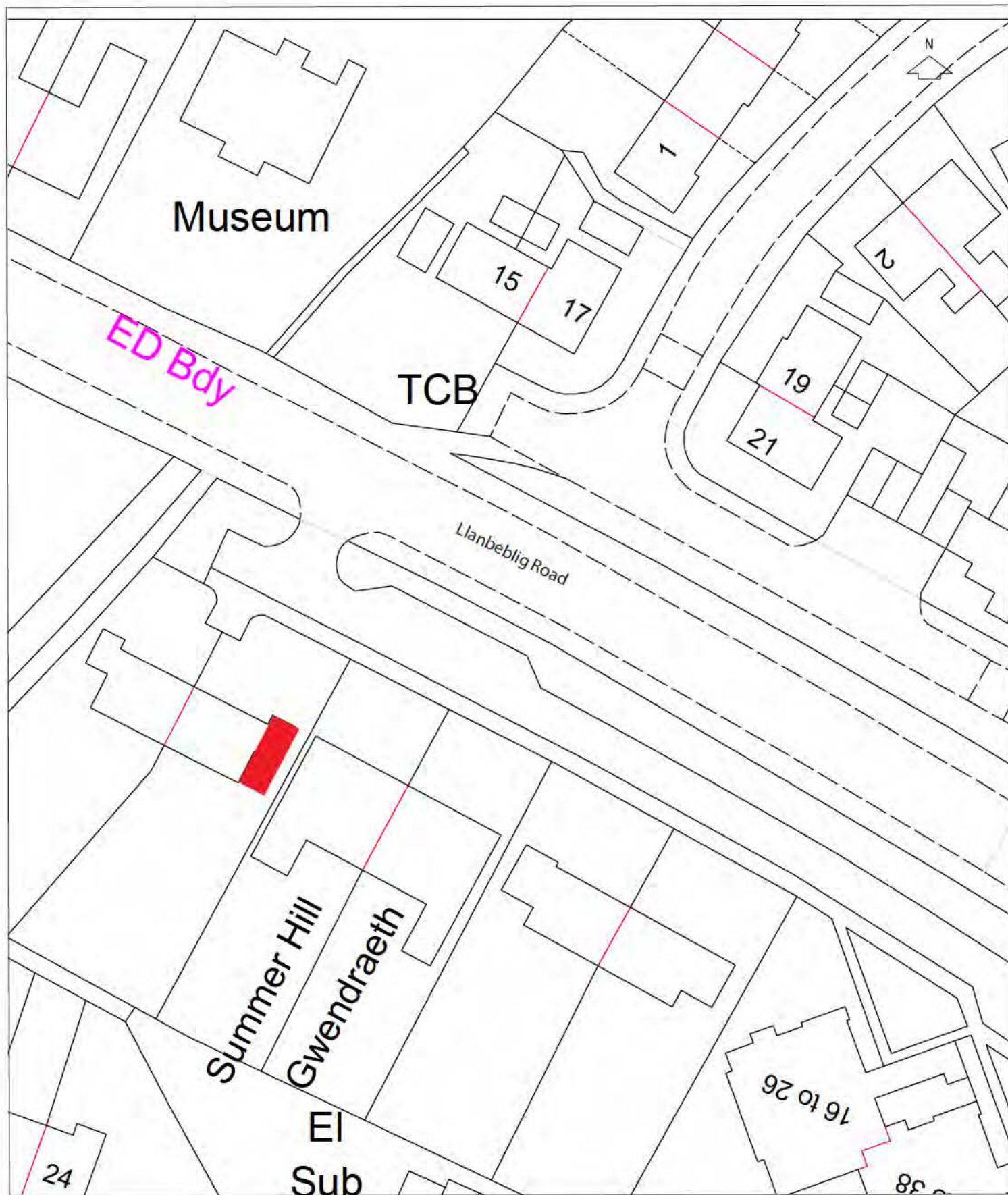


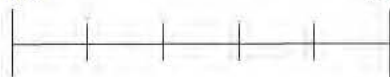
Figure 2: 1889 OS Map
Scale 1:750



 Trench Location

0m

25m



YMERODUR
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
UNIT



OWENED
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
UNIT

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Figure 3: Location of Trench
Scale 1:500

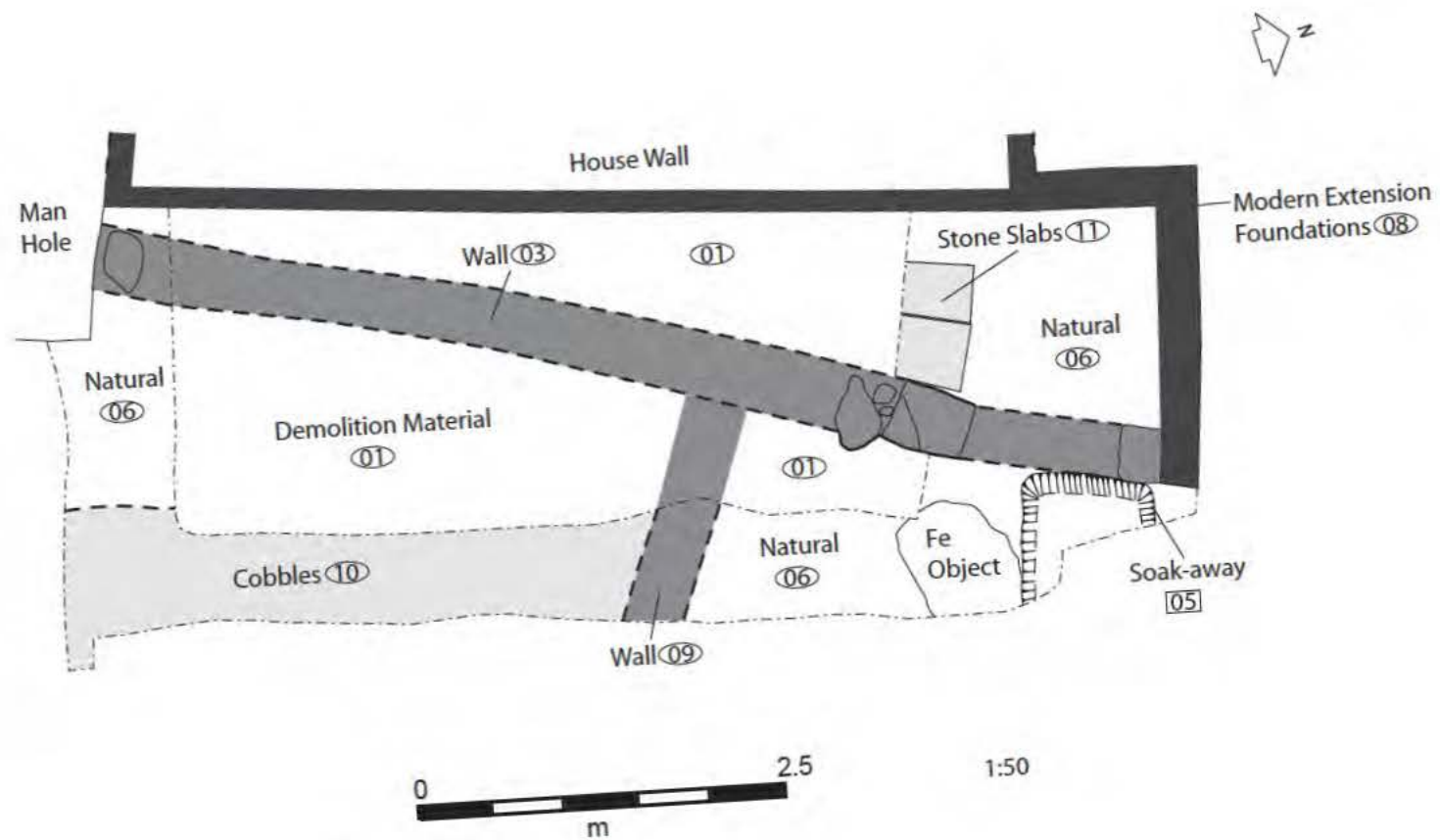


Figure 4: Plan of trench and features.

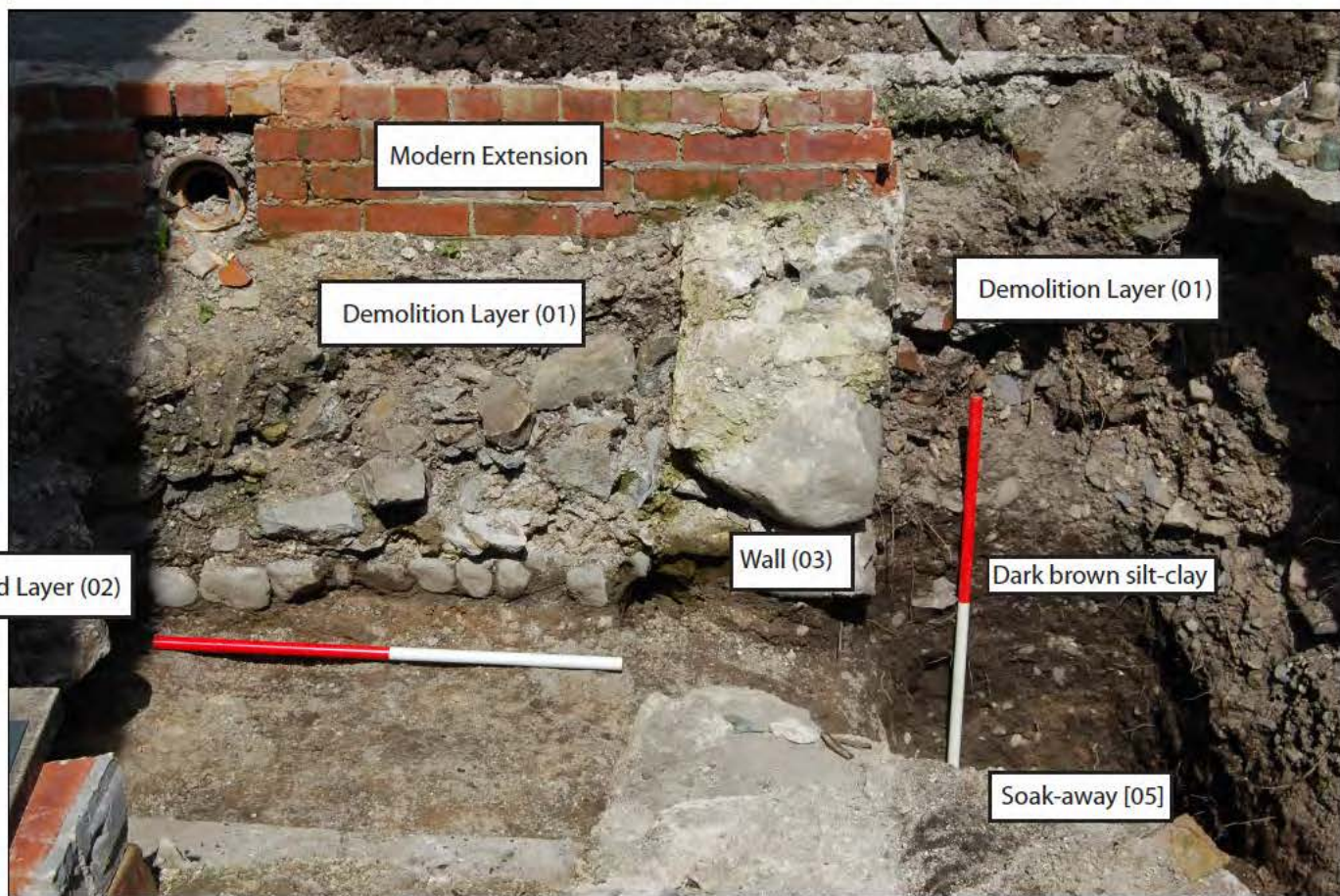


Plate 1: South facing trench section.

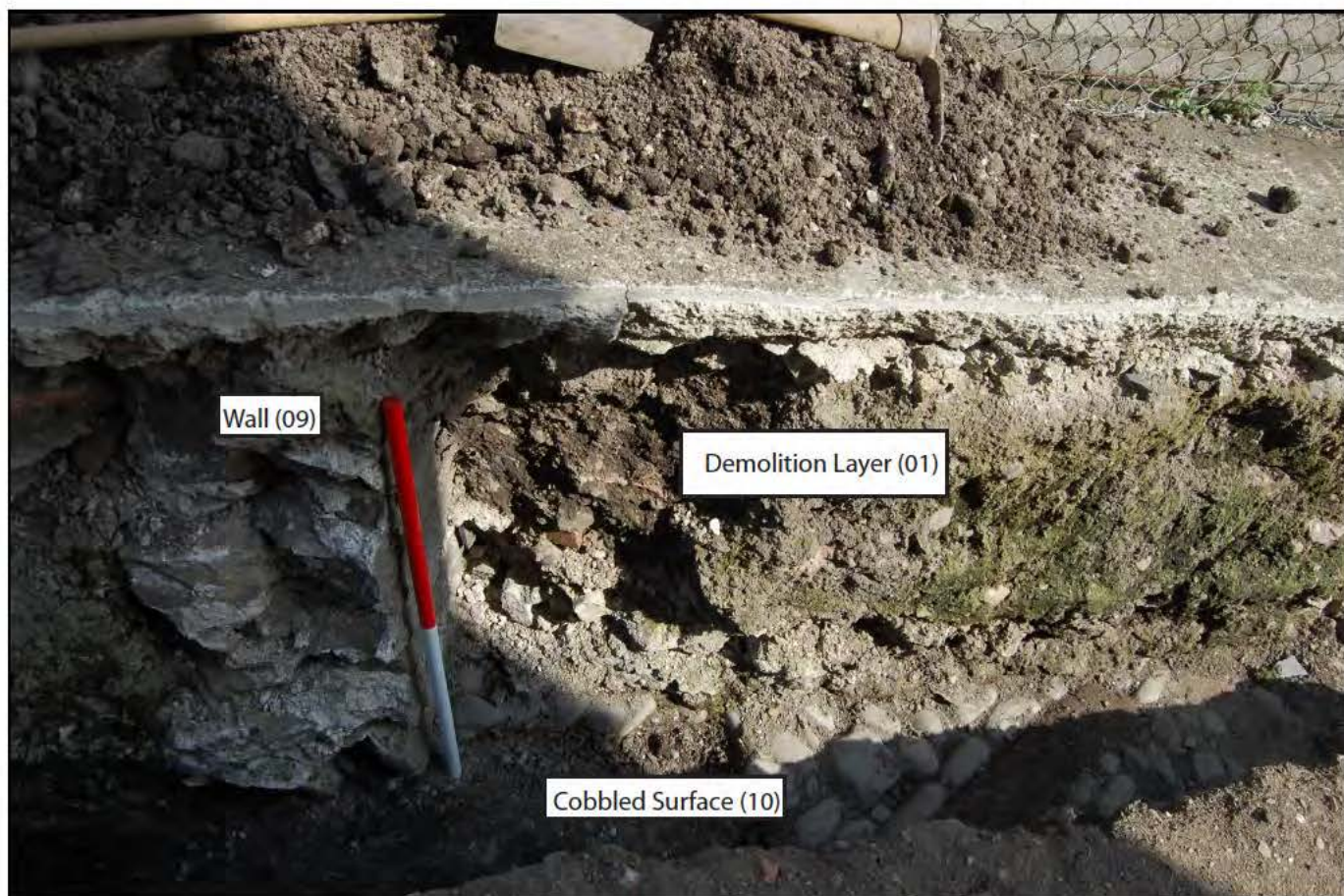


Plate 2: West facing trench section.

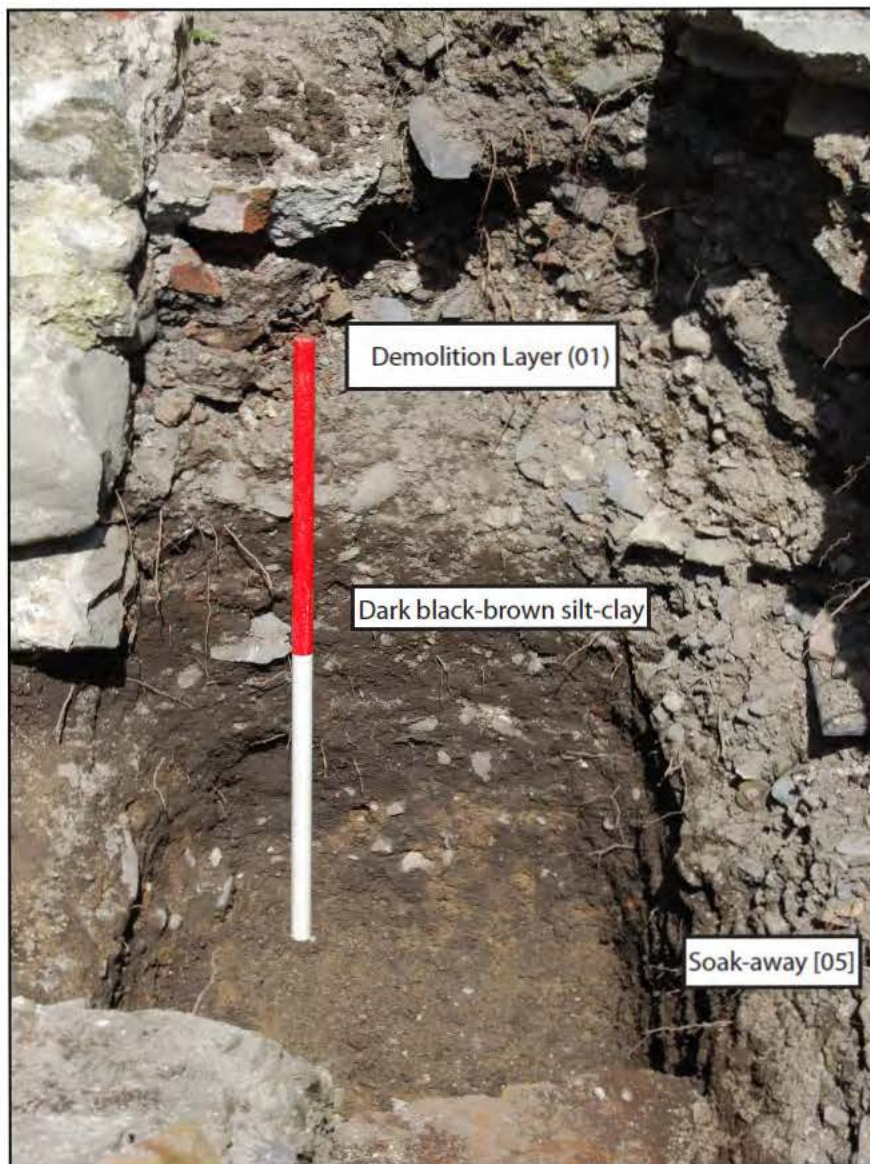


Plate 3: South facing soak-away [05].



Plate 4: South facing stone slabs (11).



Plate 5: North facing trench



Plate 6: North facing cobble Layer (10)



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