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# LAND NEAR BOD ARFRYN, MYNYTHO

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## Archaeological Watching Brief

GAT Project No. 2126

Report No. 875

July 2010



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Prepared for

Mark & Wendy Ferguson

July 2010

By

Ken Owen



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Prepared for Mark & Wendy Ferguson, March 2010

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## LAND NEAR BOD ARFRYN, MYNYTHO:

### ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

Prepared for Mark & Wendy Ferguson, March 2010

#### SUMMARY

*Gwynedd Archaeological Trust (GAT) has completed an intensive archaeological watching brief at Bod Arfryn, Mynytho, Gwynedd. The groundworks were located at Cae Arfryn, Mynytho, Pwllheli.*

*GAT monitored the excavation of a foundation trench for two pairs of semi-detached houses (total area: 372m<sup>2</sup>), located to the north of an existing property at Cae Arfryn. The excavation was conducted using a JCB with a 3-tonne dumper for the removal of the spoil. The groundworks included the separation of the topsoil from the underlying deposit (maximum depth of 0.40m). The natural lay directly below the topsoil and was removed using the same method to a maximum depth of 0.28m.*

*Foundation trenches were subsequently cut within the natural. The only archaeological feature observed was a modern pit (2.50m x 2.00m in size), located towards the south-western side of the site, which contained 19<sup>th</sup> C pottery, house brick and roof slate at the base of the pit, filled by a very large volume of stone and sealed with topsoil.*

#### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Gwynedd Archaeological Trust (GAT) was commissioned by Mark & Wendy Ferguson to complete a watching brief and project report in response to the construction of four proposed dwellings on land near Bod Arfryn, Mynytho, Gwynedd (centred on NGR SH30863116). The total extent of the ground surface of the land under investigation was a rectangular area of 372m<sup>2</sup>. The proposed development area comprised two trapezoidal shaped plots, with an existing property, *Cae Arfryn*, extant on the northernmost plot (All details based on *Dobson Owen* drawing **C1.01**).

The construction of a 40.0m long and 5.0m wide access road, running from the existing B4413 (Ffordd Pedrog) on a northwest to southeast alignment to provide access to the new dwellings was completed in advance of the watching brief and was not monitored by GAT.

A brief was prepared for this work by Gwynedd Archaeological Planning Services (GAPS; ref.: **D1227**), with recommendations for an **intensive watching brief** as a planning condition.

#### 2.0 METHODOLOGY

##### 2.1 Fieldwork

The work commenced on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2010 and was finished within one working day. The client provided the machinery for the watching brief.

The JCB 3CX worked backwards from north to south to remove the topsoil, with a 1.0m wide toothless bucket. The soil was immediately removed from site with a 3 tonne dumper truck. After the removal of the topsoil between 0.20m and 0.28m of the natural was removed using the same method.

The area of the proposed development was underlain by rhyolitic lava and tuffs of the Ordovician period and sedimentary rocks of the Ordovician Caradoc series. The surface geology consisted of glacial deposits of the Welsh ice advance that covered the southern part of the Llyn Peninsula. The surface geology was visible as a light orange-yellow sand-clay containing a moderate amount of cobble sized stone.

#### 3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

Mynytho is located within the historic parish of Llangian. There are presently no archaeological sites listed on the Regional Historic Environment Record (HER) database (HER, Gwynedd Archaeological Trust, Craig Beuno, Garth Road, Bangor, Gwynedd LL57 2RT) within the proposed development.

An examination of the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> edition 25" Ordnance Survey maps of the local area (published 1889, 1900 and 1918, respectively), suggests that the existing plots at the proposed development site, have not been altered since the 1<sup>st</sup> edition publication (Figures 02 to 04).

According to GAPS mitigation brief D1227, "the majority of the known archaeological resource in the locality comprises sites dating to the later prehistoric through to the early medieval periods, though the wider landscape is rich in archaeological remains of all periods. Within Mynytho the HER records several sites only through historical reference to a 'site of'. These include the site of a later prehistoric Cairn (Primary Record Number, PRN **1249**) and a Bronze Age cremation burial (PRN **1796**). The proposed development is within 200.0m of the site of Carnedd y Brenin Ergan, a chambered tomb destroyed around 1900 to provide stone for building material. It is also close to a site referred to in antiquarian sources as *Yr Hen Fynwent* (PRN **3657**) where, it is reported, several cists and urns containing human bones were discovered when the land was enclosed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The area is one of significant prehistoric funerary and ritual activity where the majority of the above ground evidence has been lost though the development of the village during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. A watching brief carried out during construction in 1989 of a four house development at Caer Fedwen (80.0m northwest) revealed a number of below ground archaeological features and deposits including a hearth and a gully (PRN **5543**) though little was understood about their context".

As discussed in para. 4.0, no evidence relating to prehistoric archaeological activity was identified within the development zone.

#### **4.0 RESULTS OF THE WATCHING BRIEF**

GAT monitored all the groundworks during the removal of the topsoil and the exposure of the natural ground surface.

The machinery used for the excavations were a JCB with a 3T dumper truck for the removal of the topsoil and underlying natural, and a 2T mini digger with 1m bucket for the foundation trenches.

All exposed excavations were monitored and a photographic record was completed using a Nikon D40 SLR; GAT pro-formas were used to record on-site observations. The project archive is held under GAT project number **G2126**.

The groundworks are accommodating the two trapezoid plots under investigation measured 30m x 12m, with a NW-SE orientation. The topsoil was removed with the JCB and had a depth of between 0.30m and 0.40m. The natural deposits lay directly below the topsoil and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.28m over the total extent of the trench, in the presence of the GAT archaeologist.

The only feature found within the investigative area was a modern pit (2.50m x 2.00m in size) near the SW corner of the groundworks area, cut into the natural, which was full of cobble sized stone and overlain by a soft mid greyish brown topsoil. The pit included fragments of 19<sup>th</sup> century pottery, house brick and roofing slate fragments.

#### **5.0 CONCLUSION**

The area under investigation was carefully monitored throughout with a GAT archaeologist and the only feature of any note found was a modern pit. This pit contained 19<sup>th</sup>C pottery, brick and roofing slate at the base and had been filled by very large volumes of cobble sized stone.

The excavations were completed by excavating roughly 0.28m into the underlying natural (light orangey yellow sandy clay) to provide the foundations for the proposed development. This process was partially monitored, although it was not deemed necessary to monitor the following machining of the foundation trenches which were proposed to be 1m wide.

The recommendation from this watching brief is that there were no significant archaeological remains within the investigative area and therefore no further work or investigations of an archaeological nature need to be conducted on this site.

## 6.0 SOURCES

- Gwynedd Archaeological Planning Services mitigation brief **D122**
- Historic Environment Record (Gwynedd Archaeological Trust, Craig Beuno, Bangor, Gwynedd LL57 2RT)
- First Edition 25" Ordnance Survey (1889) map of the area, detailing the development zone.
- Second Edition 25" Ordnance Survey (1900) map of the area, detailing the development zone.
- Third Edition 25" Ordnance Survey (1918) map of the area, detailing the development zone.

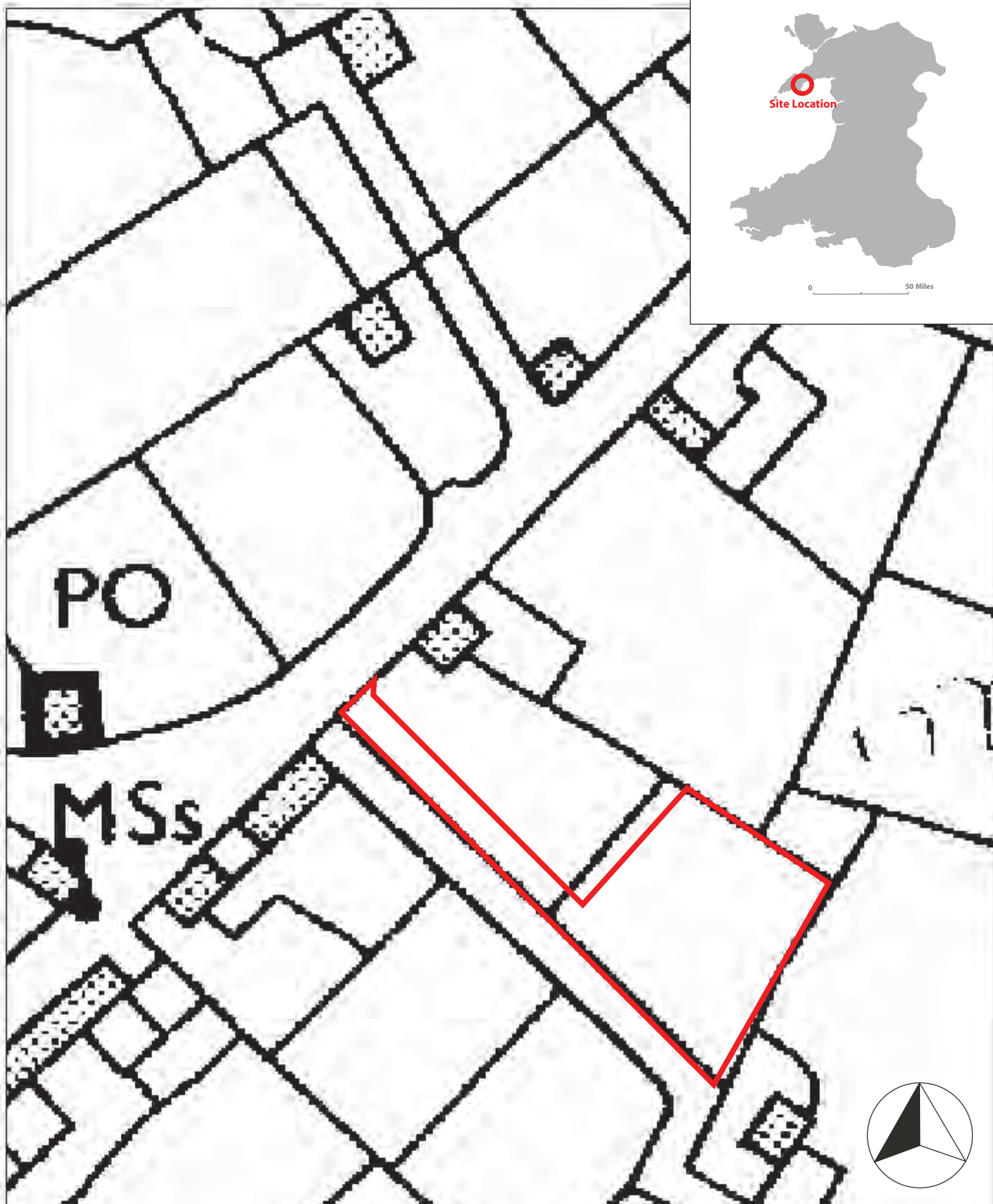


Figure 01: Location of development discussed in text (highlighted in **RED**). The trapezoidal shaped area at the eastern end of the development included the location of four housing plots, the linear portion of the development linking the trapezoid to the main road represents a new access road (40.0m long and 5.0m wide) that linked the plots to the B4413 (Ffordd Pedrog). The construction of access road was not monitored by GAT.





Figure 02: Reproduction of the First Edition 25" Ordnance Survey (1889) map of the area, detailing the development zone (superimposed in **RED**). The distribution of field plots is essentially the same as present (cf. Figure 01); with two large trapezoidal plots next to the main road through Mynytho (now the B4413 (Ffordd Pedrog)).

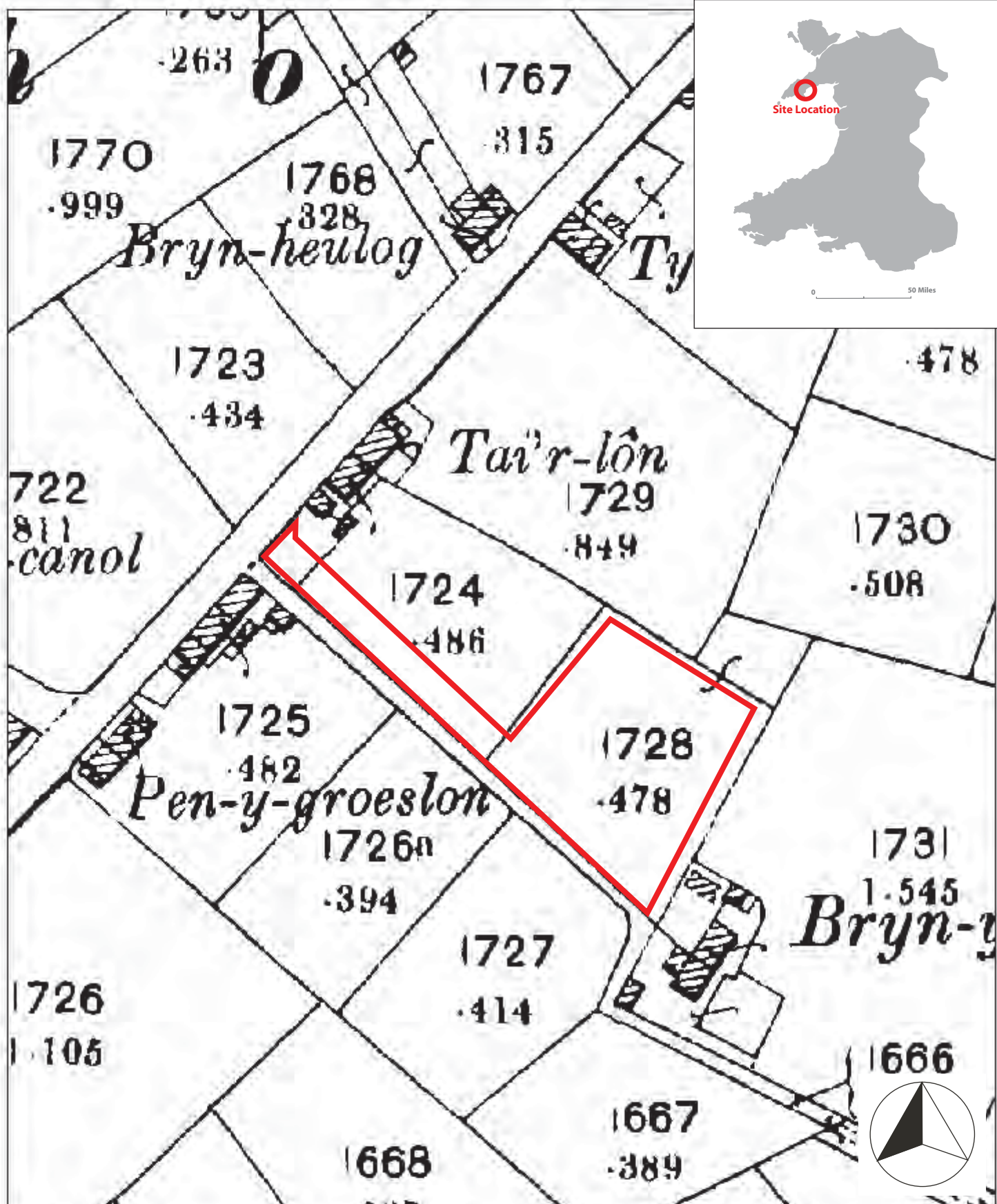


Figure 03: Reproduction of the Second Edition 25" Ordnance Survey (1900) map of the area, detailing the development zone (superimposed in **RED**). The distribution of field plots is essentially the same as present (cf. Figure 01); with two large trapezoidal plots next to the main road through Mynytho (now the B4413 (Ffordd Pedrog)).



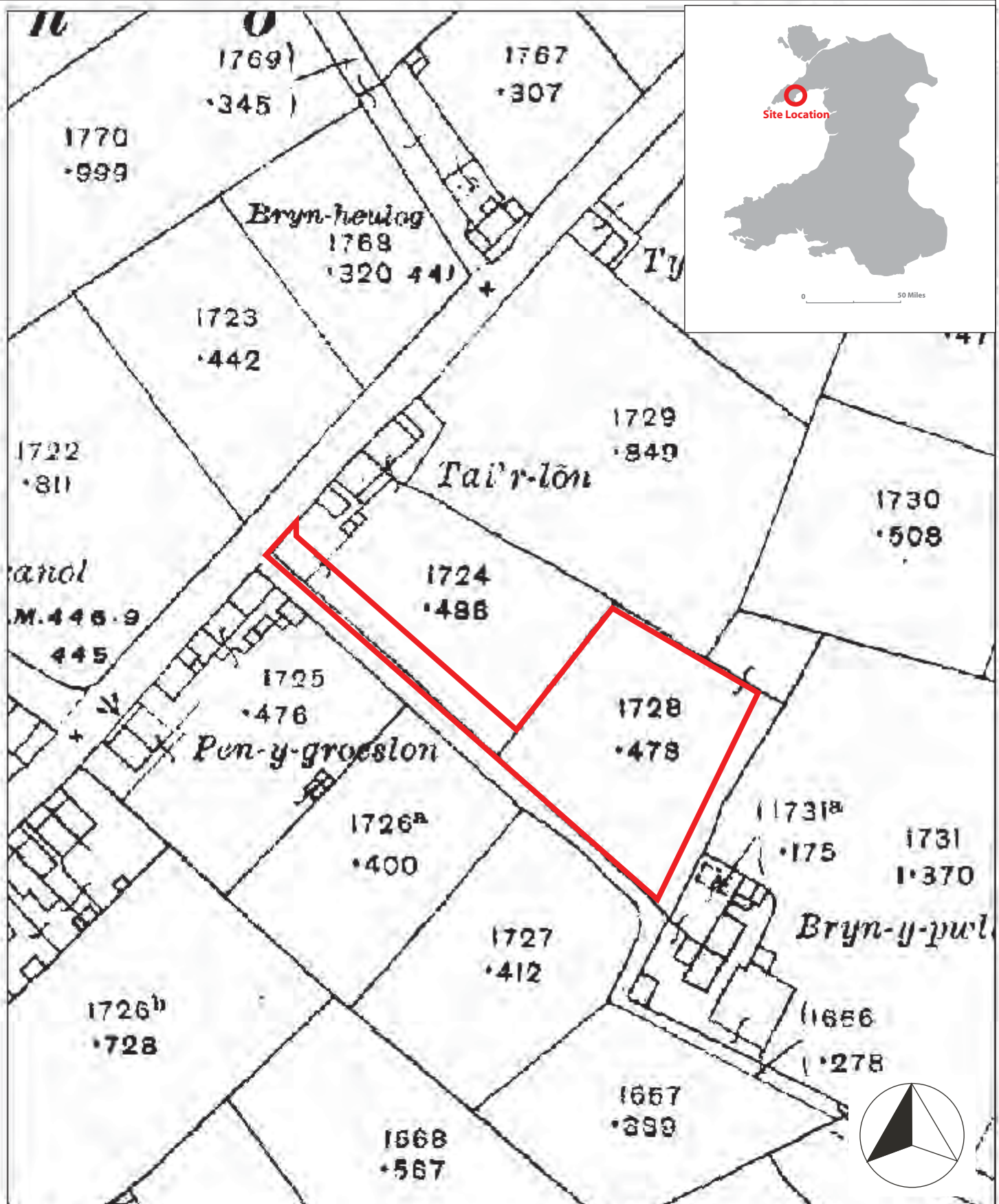


Figure 04: Reproduction of the Third Edition 25" Ordnance Survey (1918) map of the area, detailing the development zone (superimposed in **RED**). The distribution of field plots is essentially the same as present (cf. Figure 01); with two large trapezoidal plots next to the main road through Mynytho (now the B4413 (Ffordd Pedrog)).





Plate 01: view north of groundworks area during initial strip. Total area groundworks area measured 372m<sup>2</sup>. The topsoil was removed with the JCB and had a depth of between 0.30m and 0.40m. The glacial deposits lay directly below the topsoil and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.28m over the total extent of the trench, in the presence of the GAT archaeologist.



Plate 02: view northwest of groundworks during removal of topsoil and exposure of glacial deposits. The topsoil was removed with the JCB and had a depth of between 0.30m and 0.40m. The glacial deposits lay directly below the topsoil and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.28m over the total extent of the trench. The surface geology was visible as a light orange-yellow sand-clay containing a moderate amount of cobble sized stone.





Plate 03: view northeast of the site during initial groundworks. The topsoil was removed with the JCB and had a depth of between 0.30m and 0.40m. The glacial deposits lay directly below the topsoil and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.28m over the total extent of the trench. The surface geology was visible as a light orange-yellow sand-clay containing a moderate amount of cobble sized stone.

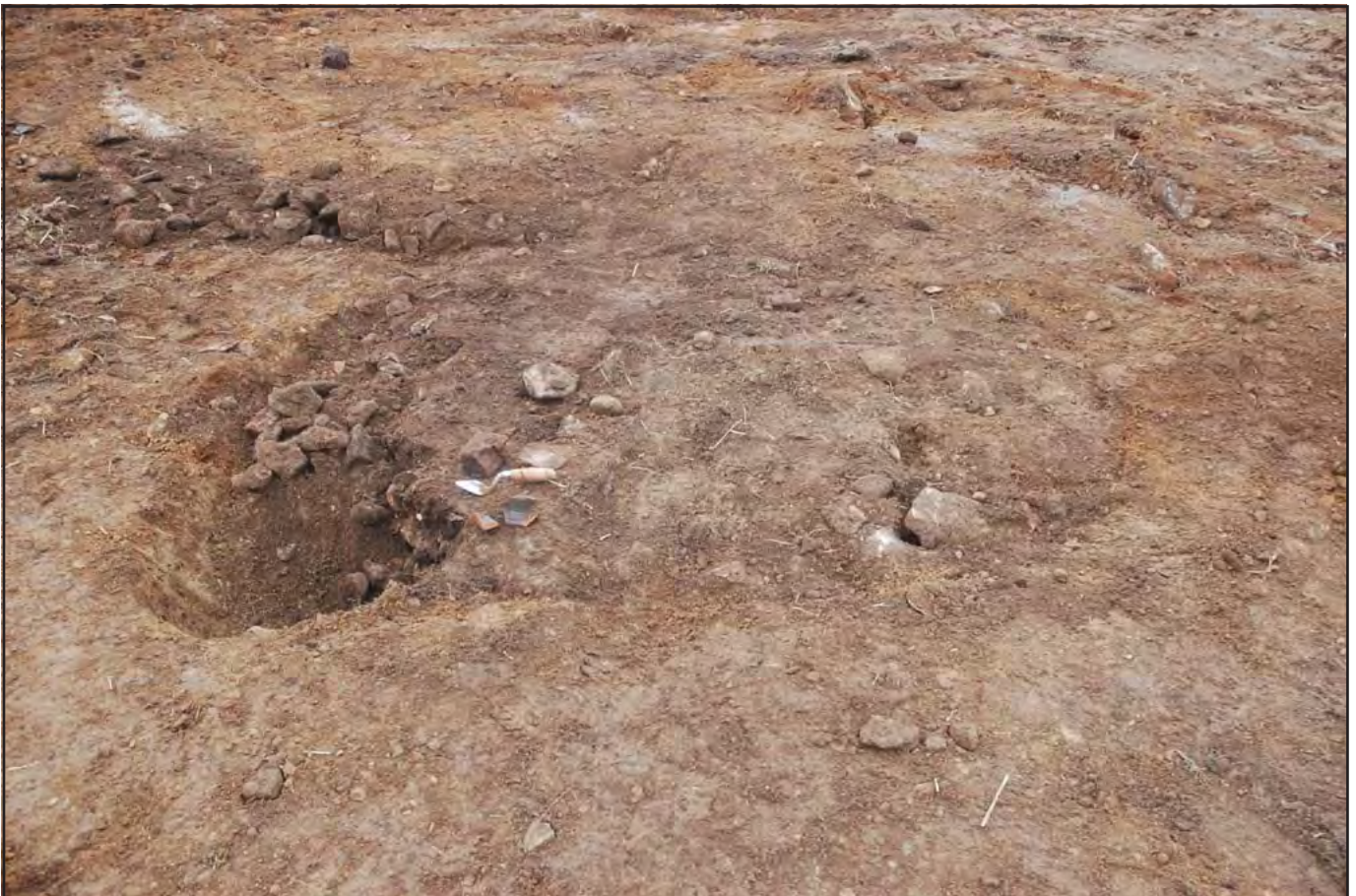


Plate 04: Close-up view of a modern pit (2.50m x 2.00m in size) located near the SW corner of the groundworks area. The pit was cut into the glacial deposit and sealed by the topsoil. The pit fill included contained cobble sized stones, fragments of 19th century pottery, house brick and roofing slate fragments.





Plate 05: view south of groundworks area detailing limit of excavation (0.75m below ground level) and orientation of footings for the new development. The topsoil was removed with the JCB and had a depth of between 0.30m and 0.40m. The natural deposits lay directly below the topsoil and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.28m over the total extent of the trench

YMDDIRIEDOLAETH  
ARCHAEOLEGOL  
GWYNEDD



GWYNEDD  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
TRUST

Craig Beuno, Ffordd y Garth, Bangor, Gwynedd. LL57 2RT  
Ffon: 01248 352535. Ffacs: 01248 370925. email: [gat@heneb.co.uk](mailto:gat@heneb.co.uk)