
GRAIANOG FARM CARAVAN AND CAMPING SITE



Archaeological Watching Brief

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GRAIANOG FARM
CARAVAN AND CAMPING SITE
ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF
(G2152)

Prepared for

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**GRAIANOG FARM CARAVAN AND CAMPING SITE:
ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF – Ground Investigation Programme**

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GRAIANOG FARM CARAVAN AND CAMPING SITE: ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

Summary

Gwynedd Archaeological Trust (GAT) was commissioned by Mr G. Hughes to complete an archaeological watching brief during the construction of four level platforms on which are to be erected wooden tents. The field is the site of a Certified Location for camping and caravanning, and is laid out with an access road and pitches. The field is located south-west of Graianog Farm centred on NGR SH495483. It is a long rectangular field some 100m long by 30m wide. The north edge of the field lies adjacent to the farm access track. Within the area to be levelled was a raised terrace or bank of unknown date which lay against the stone wall which forms the division between the field and the farm track.

In order to create the level platforms four trenches, approximately 4m x 6m were excavated using a mechanical digger, they were each 4m apart, and started approximately 0.8m away from the boundary wall (due to the subsiding nature of the boundary wall it was impossible to start the trenches any closer than this). See fig 01.

Trench 1 (the western most trench) was only dug to a depth of 0.25m, which only partially removed the subsoil, and so no archaeology was visible. Trenches 2-4 were excavated to a depth of approximately 0.75m, which cut into the natural by some 0.25. Within trenches 2-4 the raised terrace was partially shown in section, although this revealed a slight concentration of stone, there were no clear signs of deliberate construction. A ditch was discovered running parallel to the wall, 2.75m to the south. No dating evidence was obtained.

In addition, the watching brief continued whilst the ground between the four trenches was levelled off. This did not provide any further archaeological information.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The site was located in a field south-west of Graianog Farm centred on NGR SH495483
The ground works comprised:

- 4 Trenches 6m x 4m
- 3 Areas 6m x 4m Levelled

The Eastern most Trench – Trench 4 was located approximately 9m from the entrance of the field, and 0.75m away from the boundary wall, with the following trenches each spaced 4m apart running parallel.

A mitigation brief was not prepared for this work by **Gwynedd Archaeological Planning Services** (GAPS), but the GAPS archaeologist advised on the level of work required and was informed at the start of the works. Reference is made to the guidelines specified in Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Brief (Institute for Archaeologists, 1994, rev. 2001).

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 General Background

The field is the site of a Certified Location for camping and caravanning, and is laid out with an access road and pitches. The field is located west of Graianog Farm centred on NGR SH495483. It is a long rectangular field some 100m long by 30m wide. The north edge of the field lies adjacent to the farm access track. Within the area to be levelled is a raised terrace or bank of unknown date which lay against the stone wall which forms the division between the field and the farm track. No other surface features were visible. The farm of Graianog lies at the north end of a long gravel ridge (Cefn Graianog) which preserves traces of occupation

from prehistoric times to the present. The gravels have been actively quarried over several decades, and archaeological excavations have been undertaken in advance of the quarrying.

2.2 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 Lley 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. The soils in the area under recent investigation were of this latter type.

2.3 Archaeological and Historical Background

2.3.1 Prehistoric and Roman activity

The earliest monument on the ridge itself is a standing stone (PRN 124) of presumed Bronze Age date. There is virtually no evidence of activity prior to this period. 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 2nd century BC. Three hut groups have been excavated on the ridge (Mason 1998). The Graianog site and Cefn Graianog II were founded in the 2nd century BC and continued through the end of the Roman period. The third hut group, Cefn Graianog I, was established in the 2nd 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).

2.3.2 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 8th century AD. The Graianog hut group site was reoccupied between the 8th and 11th centuries, and a medieval homestead (PRN 120), excavated by Kelly (Kelly 1982), was in use between the 11th and 13th 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 15th century, when the pollen record shows intensified clearance activity. The present settlement was certainly established by the early 17th century, when a farmhouse was built. This is now a Grade II listed building (RCAHMW 1960, site 800, p44). The existing field system probably dates to the early 19th 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.

3.0 Methodology

3.1. Groundworks

- All trenches were excavated using a mechanical excavator using a 1.8m toothless ditching bucket. All relevant areas were cleaned up by hand.

3.2 Archaeological Watching Brief

- A photographic record was maintained throughout, using a digital SLR camera set to maximum resolution.
- Notations were made of all subsurface deposits.
- Two section drawings were completed at a scale of 1:10
- The archive is held by GAT under project number (**G2152**).

4.0 RESULTS

The location of the individual trenches monitored by GAT as an archaeological watching brief can be found in Figure 01.

4.1 Introduction

In order to create the level platforms for the wooden tents four trenches, each approximately 4m x 6m, were excavated using a mechanical excavator. They were each 4m apart, and each started approximately 0.8m away from the boundary wall (due to the subsiding nature of the boundary wall it was impossible to start the trenches any closer than this). This means it was not possible to record a section through the full width of the raised terrace.

4.1.1 Trench 1

Description

The westernmost trench of the four was located 33m west of the gateway, and 0.75m from the boundary wall. Its dimensions were 4m x 6m and at its deepest point was 0.25m. The depth of the trench was not sufficiently deep to extend through the subsoil (002) into the natural clay (003) beneath.

Interpretation

By this point the raised terrace or bank had virtually run out, therefore no real understanding of this feature was gained from the section. As this trench was not dug deep enough to extend through the subsoil no other archaeology was observed.

4.1.2 Trench 2

Description

This trench was located 25m away from the gate and 0.75m away from the boundary wall, it's dimensions were 4m x 6m and at its deepest point was 0.5m. A 0.4m thick deposit of silty clay with a concentration of small to medium stone (005) was observed overlying the natural clay. A 0.8m wide linear feature [006] was observed cutting through the southern edge of this stony deposit (005), this ran parallel with the wall 2.75m to the south.

Interpretation

This trench offered the clearest section through the raised terrace or bank. The bank was seen to be largely the result of a natural rise in the ground surface overlain by a stony-silty clay (005). The linear feature, most likely a drainage ditch appears to be later in date than this stony deposit.

4.1.3 Trench 3

Description

This trench was located 17m away from the gate and 0.75m away from the boundary wall, it's dimensions were 4m x 6m and at its deepest point was 0.75m. Some concentration of stone was observed in the northern end, though this was less marked than in trench 2. The ditch [006], first observed trench 2 was again clearly evident.

In this trench an investigative slot was cut through the ditch [006] against the east facing section. This revealed an overall depth of 0.5m, with two fills. The first (007) was a shallow gravely deposit, likely to be the result of natural silting up. The second fill (008), a silty-clay with some stone was not dissimilar to the subsoil (002) and may have been the result of deliberate backfilling. See fig 2.

Interpretation

No further information was gained from this trench.

4.1.4 Trench 4

Description

This trench was located 9m away from the gate and 0.75m away from the boundary wall, it's dimensions were 4m x 6m and at its deepest point was 0.5m. Again some slight concentration of stone was observed in the northern end, though this was also less marked than in slot 2. The ditch [006] first observed trench 2 was again clearly evident.

Interpretation

No further information was gained from this trench.

5.0 CONCLUSIONS

To conclude no obvious signs of construction were observed in the raised terrace or bank described in the initial specification. However anecdotal evidence from Mr Hughes suggests that this bank was once used as a pathway linking the farm house with a pigsty, so it is probable that some stone may have been laid to consolidate the surface. This would explain the concentration of small to medium sized stones observed in the section. However the majority of the mound may be attributed to a rise in the underlying natural surface. Tumble from the boundary wall is also a contributing factor.

The ditch that was discovered running parallel to the raised terrace and boundary wall is likely to be contemporary with the field wall, although it yielded no datable evidence.

6.0 BIBLIOGRAPHY and SOURCES

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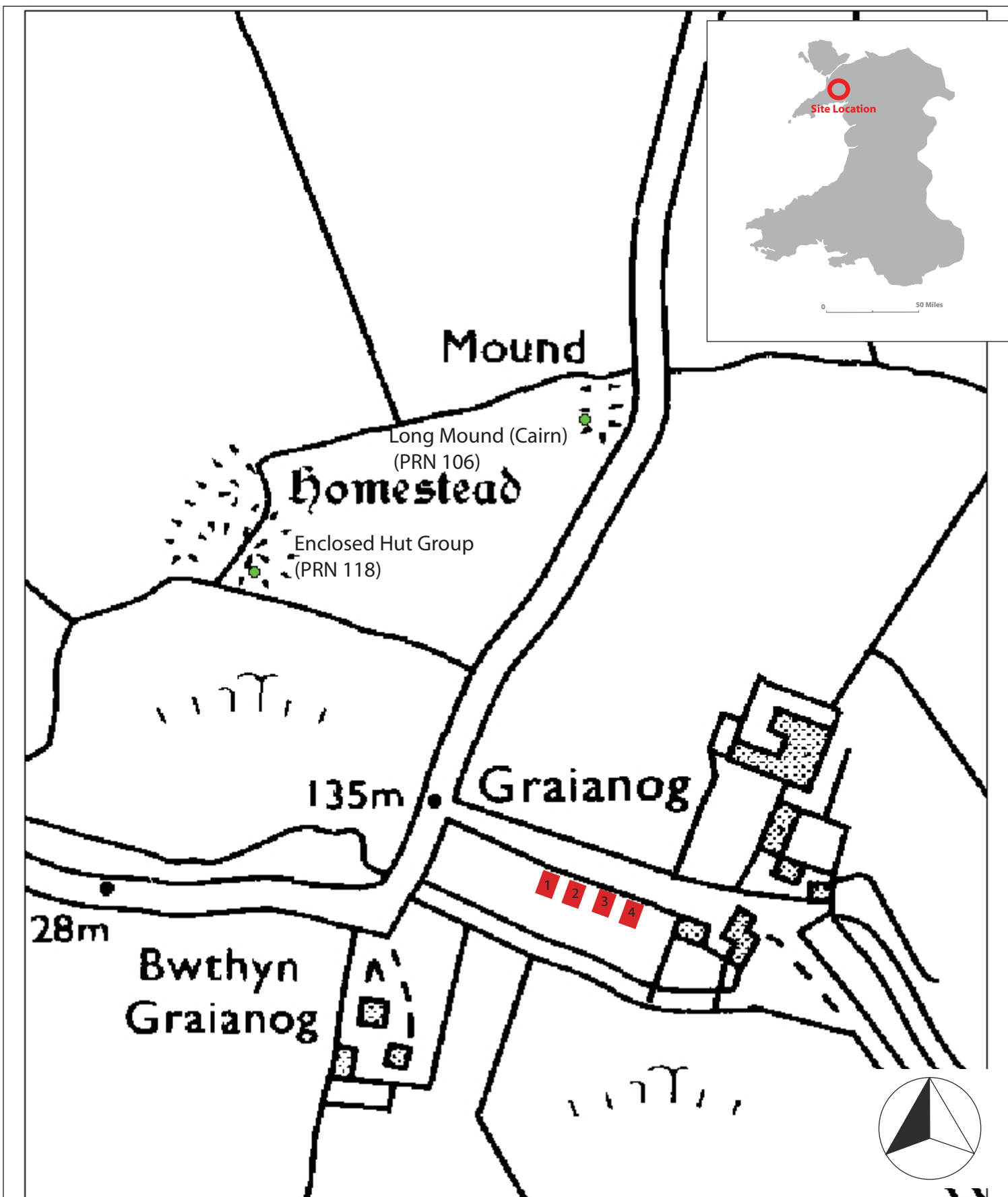


Figure 01: Map showing the location of the four 4m x 6m trenches highlighted in red, numbered 1-4. The field is located west of Graianog Farm, and is a Certified Location for camping and caravanning, and is laid out with an access road and pitches. See figure 3 for east facing section of trench 3.

NOT TO SCALE

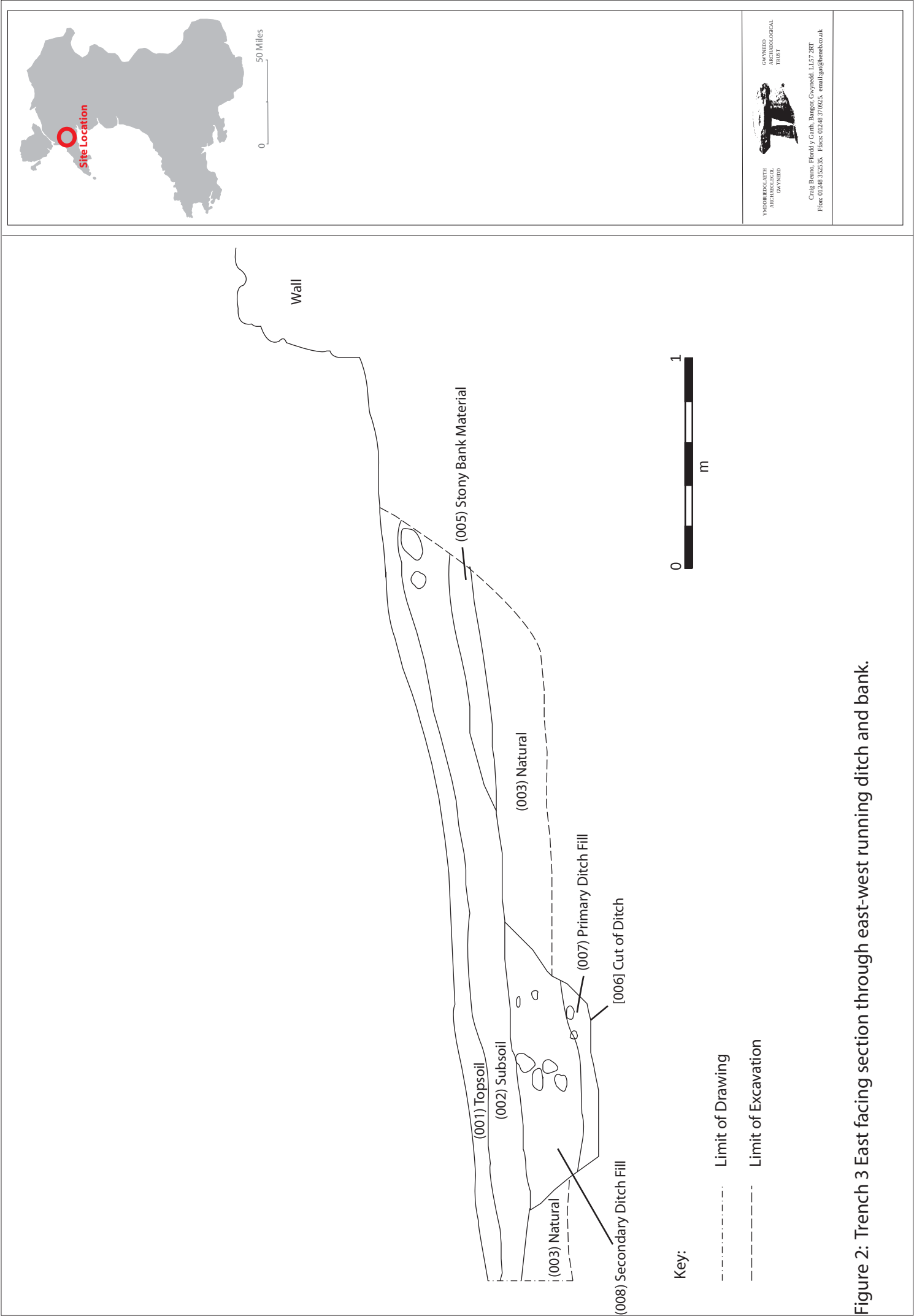


Figure 2: Trench 3 East facing section through east-west running ditch and bank.



Plate 01 - View from the north east showing the bank prior to excavation



Plate 02 - View from the south showing detail of the middle section of the bank



Plate 03 - Excavation of trench 1. View from the north-east.



Plate 04 - Trench 1 post excavation. View from the south



Plate 05 - East Facing section in Trench 2 showing the concentration of stone in the bank (005).



Plate 06 - East facing section in trench 3 showing an investigative slot through ditch [006].



Plate 07 - West facing section through the bank, trench 4



Plate 08 - General post excavation shot of the site from the south-east

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