



Archaeoleg Brython Archaeology

Fieldwork Report for  
Archaeological Watching Brief  
Water Main Repairs, Northgate Street, Caernarfon  
Document Number B1601.02





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Northgate Street, Caernarfon

Fieldwork Report for  
Archaeological Watching Brief

Prepared for Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water

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## Crynodeb

*Gofynnwyd i Archaeoleg Brython Archaeology gan Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water i gynnal brif gwyllo archaeolegol yn ystod gwaith i atgyweirio prif bibell ddŵr haearn fwrw 3" ar Stryd Pedwar a Chwech, Caernarfon, Gwynedd. Cynhaliwyd y gwaith ar yr 18fed o Ionawr 2016, ni ddarganfuwyd archaeoleg yn ystod y gwaith a chadarnhawyd bod y holl ddyddodion yn dyddio o'r 19eg ganrif neu hwyrach.*

## Summary

*Archaeoleg Brython Archaeology were asked by Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water to undertake an archaeological watching brief during repair works on the existing 3" cast iron water main at Northgate Street, Caernarfon, Gwynedd. The work was completed on the 18<sup>th</sup> of January 2016, no archaeology was encountered during the course of the works which confirmed that all deposits were 19<sup>th</sup> century or later in date.*





# 1 Introduction

Archaeoleg Brython Archaeology (ABA) were asked by Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water (The Client) to undertake an archaeological watching brief during repair works to a leaking 3" cast iron water main at the northern end of Northgate Street, Caernarfon (NGR SH47872 62916) – see Figures 1&2 for location). The North Gate, along with the road over the town ditch, is a 19<sup>th</sup> century addition to the 13<sup>th</sup> century town wall. The Town Wall is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (CN 034), Grade I Listed Building (ID 3185), and forms part of a UNESCO World Heritage Site (Ref. 374). The works were not located within the limits of the Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM) or the World Heritage Site (WHS) but were within the Caernarfon conservation area. The leak was located within the 19<sup>th</sup> century road over the town ditch and as such the archaeological potential was believed to be low, however the depth of the main was unknown and could potentially have been within archaeological deposits.

The watching brief was conducted on Monday the 18<sup>th</sup> of January 2016 and monitored all invasive work undertaken to locate the leak. All work was undertaken to meet the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (2014). The watching brief was also utilised as a training exercise by ABA and was attended by a senior member of staff (Laura W. Parry) and an assistant archaeologist (Jack Portwood).

No archaeology was encountered during the watching brief but it is believed that undisturbed archaeological deposits are likely to be present at a greater depth.



## 2 Background

### 2.1 Project Background

The works were required due to a leak on the existing 3" cast iron water main within the identified area. The work involved locating the main, repairing the leak and re-instating the road surface. As the precise location and depth of the main was uncertain it was believed that there was slight chance that archaeological deposits may be encountered.

The main is located within the road which crosses the 13<sup>th</sup> century town ditch at the northern end Northgate Street. The North gate of the town wall is a 19<sup>th</sup> century addition, the wall and ditch would have originally been unbroken at this point. The town ditch was partially filled to carry the road when the North Gate was installed. It is not known how much material was imported to fill the ditch and as such it is unclear at what depth undisturbed archaeological deposits may be encountered.

Due to these uncertainties it was deemed appropriate that an archaeological watching brief was implemented during all invasive groundworks associated with the repair.

### 2.2 General Historic and Archaeological Background

There is evidence of human occupation in Caernarfon during prehistory although much has probably been lost due to subsequent development. A handful of prehistoric artefacts and features have been found over the years and there appears to be a defended enclosure at Twthill although its date has never been established.

It is in the Roman period, with the establishment of the auxiliary fort of Segontium by Agricola in 77 or 78 AD, that the location becomes a significant settlement.

The town was also the site of a Welsh settlement during the medieval period which is believed to have included a motte, port and court. Evidence of the Welsh settlement appears to have been obliterated during the construction of the Edwardian castle and town, on which work began in 1283.

Caernarfon Castle is both a Scheduled Ancient Monument (CN 079) and Grade I Listed Building (ID 3184), as is the Town Wall (CN 034, ID 3185). The castle and walls are considered one of the finest 13<sup>th</sup> century sites in the world and as such, together with Beaumaris, Conwy and Harlech, form the UNESCO World Heritage Site of 'The Castles and Town Walls of Edward I in Gwynedd' (Ref. 374). Caernarfon was always intended to be the administrative centre of Edward's conquest and as such was the grandest of his castles in Wales. The castles were designed, and their construction overseen, by architect Master James of St George who Edward appointed Master of the Royal Works in Wales.

During the post-medieval period the economy of the town was largely based on shipping which led to the construction of Victoria Dock in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Slates from the quarries of the Nanlle Valley were shipped from Caernarfon to destinations all over the world.

With the decline of the slate industry the town's economy became based on tourism. Today the castle and the old town are the main attractions for tourists visiting the town.



### 3 Objectives

The main objectives of the watching brief were to:

- Identify and record any archaeological deposits encountered during the works.
- Create a comprehensive record of all identified features.
- As far as is possible, provide interpretation of all identified features and their relationship to previously identified archaeology.
- Increase understanding of the archaeology and historical development of the area.
- Inform future archaeological mitigation and management.



## 4 Methodology

An intensive watching brief was implemented during excavations to locate and repair the water main. The watching brief ended once all associated excavations were completed, back filling of the trench and reinstatement of the road was not monitored. As the town walls are a Scheduled Ancient Monument and form part of the World Heritage Site the watching brief was utilised to ensure that the structure was not damaged or adversely impacted by the repair works. All workers on site were made aware of the status of the structure.

The works were undertaken in a manner which allowed for immediate cessation in the event of the discovery of archaeological deposits, as no archaeology was present the works continued without need for intervention.

### 4.1 Archaeological Watching Brief

The scope of an intensive watching brief is defined as constant archaeological supervision during sensitive groundworks.

During the watching brief:

- An archaeologist was present during all invasive groundworks associated with the proposed work.
- During the excavation the excavator was fitted with a toothless, flat ditching bucket.
- Hand excavation by the contractor was also monitored by an archaeologist.
- A measured survey was completed to locate the position of the works.
- A photographic record of progress was made using a Nikon DSLR camera, images will be stored in .NEF/RAW format.





## 5 Results

A single trench measuring 1m x 1.5m was opened over the probable location of the leak, in order to improve access to the leak the trench was extended to the south, the final dimensions of the trench were 1m x 2.5m.

The current road surface consisted of grey bricks laid into grey cement which overlay the former road surface consisting of a 0.18m thick layer of black tarmacadam. Below the tarmacadam was a 0.23m thick layer of crushed slate hardcore which overlay the backfill of the original pipe trench which consisted of orange-brown gravel rich silt which contained general building rubble. The maximum depth of the trench was 0.87m.

No archaeological deposits or features were encountered within the trench.



1. General view of works in progress, from the North-East



2. Trench following completion of excavation, showing identified leak (scale 1m, view from the North-Northeast)

## 6 Conclusion

Prior to commencement of the works it was known that the North Gate and road leading north over the town ditch were 19<sup>th</sup> century instalments. The works revealed evidence of an earlier road surface likely to date to the later 20<sup>th</sup> century and deposits associated with the original installation of the damaged water main. No earlier features were identified during the excavations to locate the water main. It is likely that significant archaeological deposits are present at a greater depth, below the material imported to carry the road during the 19<sup>th</sup> century.



## 7 Archive

A copy of this report will be lodged with the Gwynedd Historic Environment Record, Bangor and the National Monuments Record of Wales which is the public record of the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historic Monuments of Wales, Aberystwyth.

The archive produced during the watching brief, including written record and photographs, will be lodged with the National Monuments Record of Wales, Aberystwyth.

ABA will hold a digital copy of the archive indefinitely.

The results of the project do not warrant further publication.



## 8 Bibliography and Sources Consulted

### **Client Drawing 'Caernarfon Leak' (Reproduced as Figure 2)**

Chartered Institute for Archaeologists. 2014. *Standards and guidance for an archaeological watching brief*

Chartered Institute for Archaeologists. 2014. *Standards and guidance for the collection, compilation, transfer and deposition of archaeological archives*

English Heritage. 1991. *Management of Archaeological Projects ('MAP2')*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn.

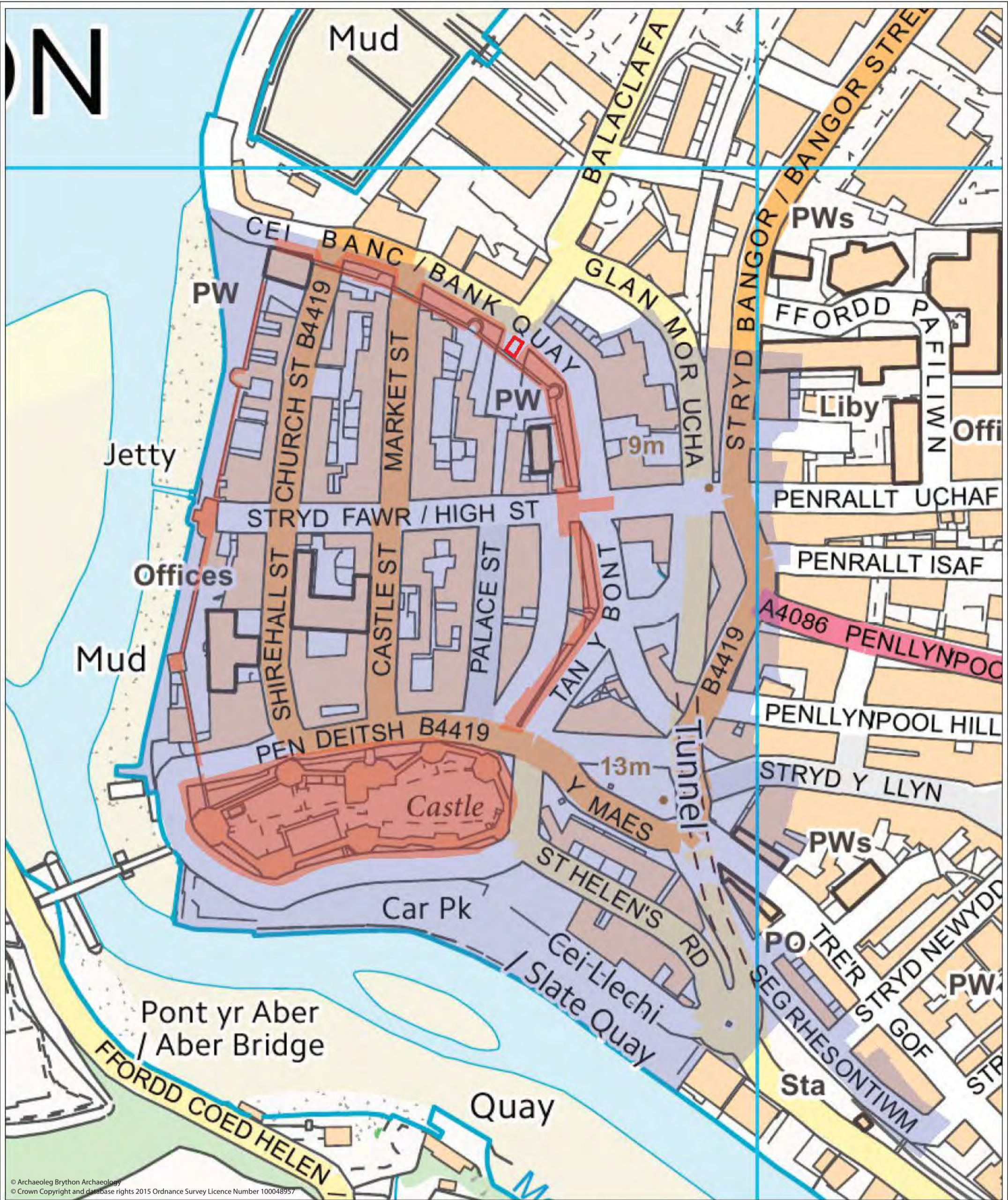
English Heritage. 2006. *Management Of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MORPHE)*

### 8.1 Websites

[www.coflein.gov.uk](http://www.coflein.gov.uk) (RCAHMW)



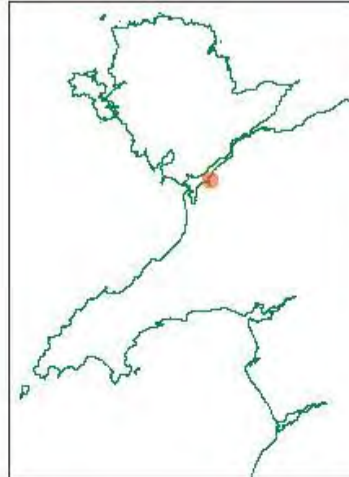




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**Figure 1**  
 Location figure for proposed repairs.

- Key**
- Location of Repair Works
  - Scheduled Ancient Monument/  
World Heritage Site
  - Conservation Area



|                 |                |
|-----------------|----------------|
| Drawn By:       | IGP            |
| Date:           | 20/01/16       |
| Location:       | SH 47872 62916 |
| Project Number: | AB1601         |









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