



Archaeoleg Brython Archaeology



AB1705 Coed Helen  
Summer House  
Archaeological Investigation Report

Document Number B1705.02.01

## AB1705 Coed Helen Summer House Archaeological Investigation Report

Prepared for Clarke Telecom Ltd

Text by Iwan G. Parry and Laura W. Parry

Illustrations by Laura W. Parry and Iwan G. Parry

August 2019

# Contents

<i>Crynodeb</i> .....	2
<i>Summary</i> .....	2
1 Introduction .....	3
<i>Figure 1: Location Plan</i> .....	4
2 Objectives .....	5
3 Background .....	6
4 Results .....	7
4.1 Investigation Trench.....	7
<i>Figure 2: Plan of Trench</i> .....	8
<i>Figure 3: Plan of Trench with LiDAR</i> .....	9
<i>Plate 1: The upper brick and stone constructed revetment [004]. View from the north east. 1x1m scale</i> .....	10
<i>Plate 2: the lower revetment consisted of a distinctive stony deposit (006). View from the north east. 1x1m scale</i> .....	11
5 Interpretation and Conclusion .....	12
<i>Plate 3: After reinstatement of the hand dug trench. View from the east</i> .....	12
6 Bibliography and Sources Consulted .....	13
6.1 Images and Data .....	13
6.2 Websites .....	13

## *Crynodeb*

*Ym mis Gorffennaf 2018 cwblhawyd ymchwiliad archaeolegol gan Archaeoleg Brython Archaeology CYF ar safle Tŷ Haf Coed Helen, ffoli sy'n dyddio i'r 18<sup>ed</sup> ganrif hwyr. Comisiynwyd y gwaith gan Clarke Telecom Ltd oherwydd bod amod cynllunio wedi ei dorri yn ystod gwaith ar wasanaethau tanddaearol ar y safle.*

*Cloddwyd un ffos â llaw, dangosodd hyn bod dau deras a dau wrthglawdd yn bresennol. Roedd y gwrthglawdd uchaf ar ffurf octagon ac wedi ei adeiladu o frics ag wyneb o gerrig. Roedd y gwrthglawdd isaf yn llai ffurfiol, nodwyd fel dyddodyn amlwg o gerrig.*

*Trwy'r ymchwiliad casglwyd gwybodaeth ar y dulliau adeiladu defnyddiwyd ar gyfer y terasau a'r gwrthgloddiau, ni amlygodd wybodaeth newydd am hanes yr adeilad na thystiolaeth am hanes cynharach y safle.*

## *Summary*

*In July 2018 Archaeoleg Brython Archaeology CYF undertook an archaeological investigation of a late 18<sup>th</sup> century folly known as the Coed Helen Summer House. The work was commissioned by Clarke Telecom Ltd due to a breach of planning conditions in which an archaeological watching brief should have been undertaken during previous invasive works around the folly.*

*A trench was excavated by hand and revealed two terraces and two revetments. The upper revetment was a well constructed two phase brick wall which formed part of the upper octagonal terrace. The revetment for the lower terrace was less formal and consisted of a distinctive stony deposit.*

*The investigation provided information on the construction of the terraces but did not provide any significant new information about the building or earlier activity at the site.*

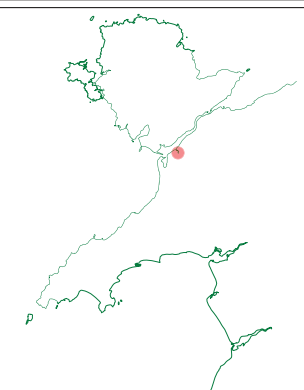
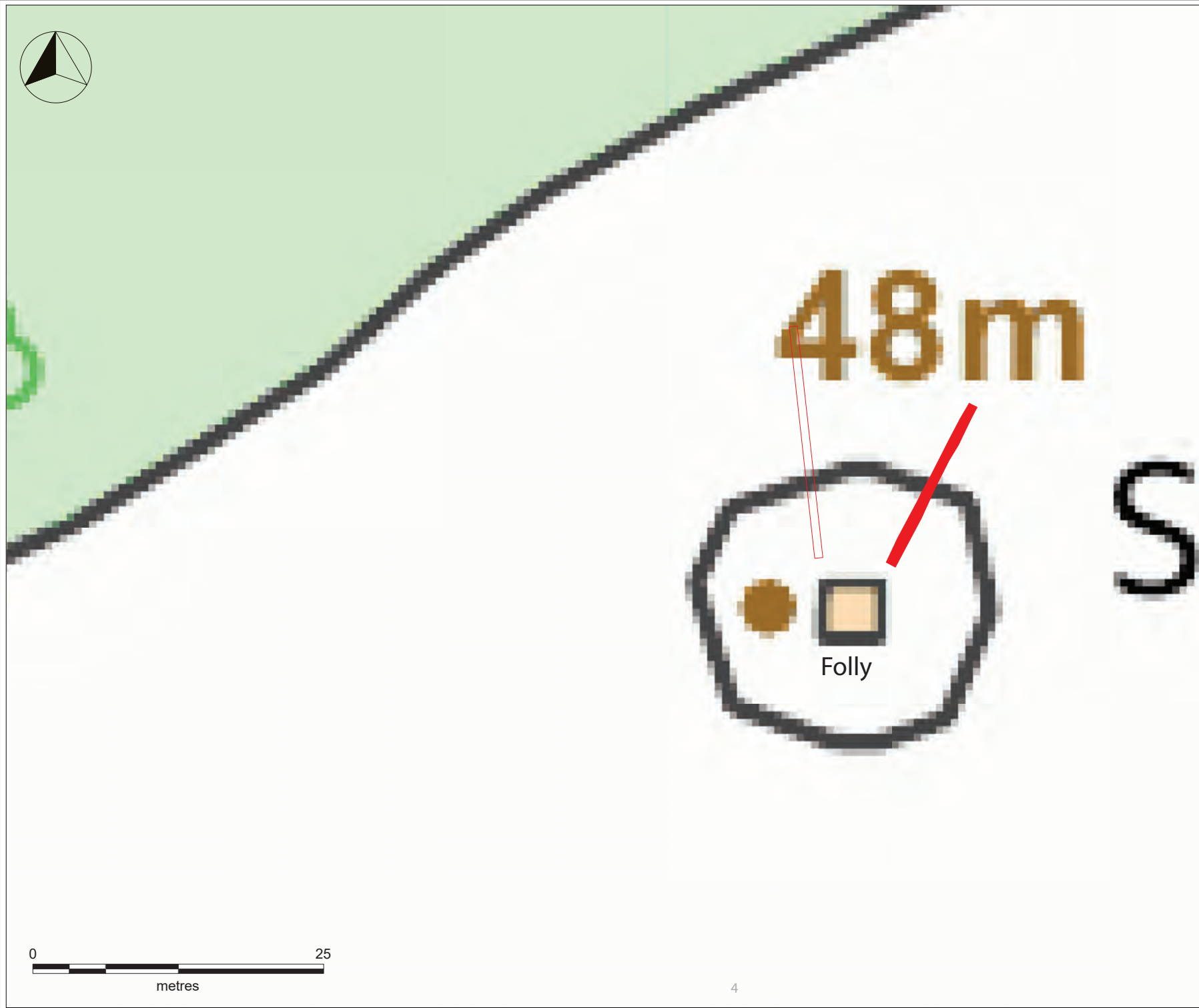
# 1 Introduction

Archaeoleg Brython Archaeology CYF. (ABA) were asked by Clarke Telecom Ltd. to undertake an archaeological investigation at a late 18<sup>th</sup> century folly to the west of Caernarfon known as the Coed Helen Summer House.

The folly, which is a Grade II Listed Building (ID 3817, PRN 11596), is associated with Coed Helen mansion, located approximately 350m to the south-west, and is a square castellated tower (see Figure 1). The folly is located within the essential setting of Caernarfon Castle World Heritage Site (Ref. 374) and is a prominent feature in the Significant View south of the castle.



The investigation was required due to works being undertaken in breach of planning conditions, which required an archaeological watching brief to be undertaken during invasive works in the vicinity of the folly. As a result it was stated by Gwynedd Archaeological Planning Service (GAPS), the curator, that a trench be excavated which will compensate for information lost during the invasive works. This document reports on the results of the investigation undertaken to satisfy the requests made by GAPS.

All works were undertaken to meet the requirements of national planning legislation and guidance, specifically *Planning Policy Wales, Edition 9, 2016, Historic Environment (Wales) Act, 2017, Technical Advice Note 24: The Historic Environment, 2017* and the standards and guidance of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA).



**Figure 1**  
Location plan showing proposed  
and excavated trench locations.

**Key**

-  Original Proposed Trench
-  Excavated Trench

© Archaeoleg Brython Archaeology CYF.  
© Crown Copyright and database rights 2018  
Ordnance Survey Licence Number 100048957

Drawn By:	LWP
Date:	06/03/19
Location:	SH4759862389
Project:	AB1705



## 2 Objectives

The objective of the investigation was to identify any archaeological features which may have been affected by the installation works undertaken previously. As the affected area could not be assessed in retrospect, the methodology was designed to provide a comparable representation of the deposits present at the site.

Therefore, the main objectives of the investigation were to:

- Create a comprehensive record of all identified features and deposits.
- Provide interpretation of all identified features and deposits and their relationship to the Summer House and previously identified archaeology.
- Increase understanding of the archaeology and historical development of the area.
- Inform future management of the site.

### 3 Background

The Summer House is believed to have been constructed during the late 18<sup>th</sup> century within the grounds of Coed Helen House which is also a Grade II Listed Building (ID 3816, PRN 12069). Construction of the house is likely to have started in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. A dated stone, inscribed with a date of 1606 and the initials of William Thomas and his wife Gaynor, is still present in the north-eastern gable of the north wing and may have originally been placed above the main entrance of the earliest incarnation of the house. The house has undergone numerous phases of extensions and alterations, the most recent between 2015 and 2016. The house is now used as offices and a restaurant for a caravan park.

The Listed Building record for the folly states the following:

*A castellated 2-stage tower of rendered walls and embattled parapet on a moulded cornice. The E and W faces have a pointed doorway in the lower storey (blocked to the E face) and pointed window above, while the N face has a blocked doorway. The tower is sited on a raised round platform with brick revetment, partly missing, on which a former perimeter wall stood.*

*Listed as a prominent summer house and eye catcher characteristic of its period, and for its contribution to the historic setting of Caernarfon Castle and town.*

Although the investigation was within the Essential Setting and a Significant View of Caernarfon Castle World Heritage Site there was no significant or lasting visual impact.

There was no physical impact to any other known historic assets.



## 4 Results

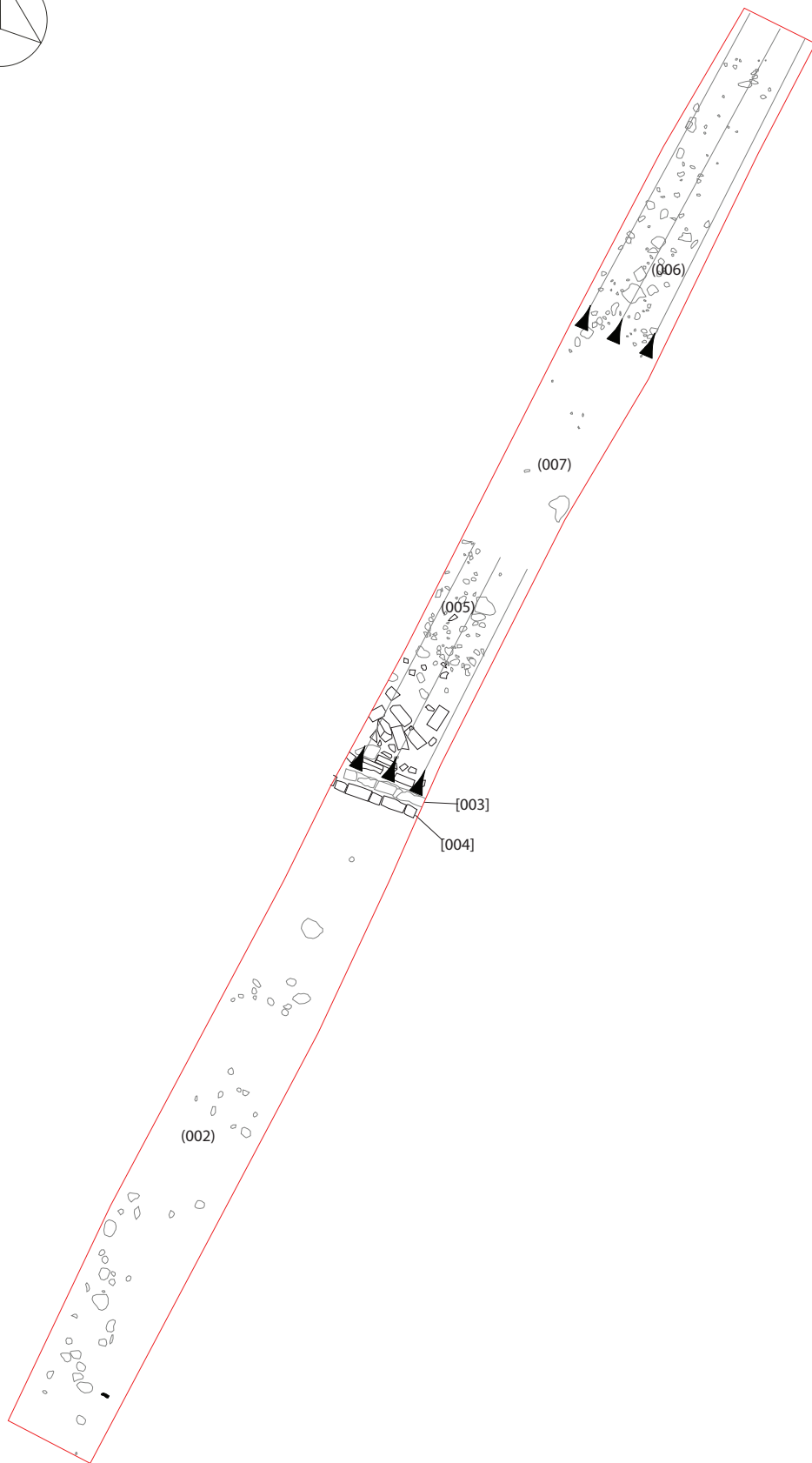
The investigation was started and completed on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of July 2018, weather conditions were hot, dry and sunny.

Upon visiting the site it was deemed that the proposed location of the trench was not suitable due to disturbance caused by the service installation works previously undertaken and the higher probability of encountering those services. The trench was re-located to the north-east corner of the building where no evidence of recent disturbance could be seen.

### 4.1 Investigation Trench

The trench measured 17.6m x 1m and was excavated from the north-east corner of the folly on a NNE-SSW orientation. The turf was cut and lifted by hand and stored on tarpaulins for reinstatement. The remaining topsoil and subsoil was excavated by hand to reveal the underlying archaeology (see Figure 2).

Evidence of the two terraces on which the folly is constructed were identified in the trench. On the upper terrace at the base of the folly a surface of compacted gravelly silt (002) with occasional inclusions of larger stones appeared to be held back by the upper revetment wall [004] (Plate. 1). This was interpreted as an intentional deposit, likely to be contemporary with the construction of the folly. The upper revetment wall [004], associated tumble (005) and tumble associated with the lower revetment (006) all correspond to the earthworks identified on LiDAR (see Figure 3).

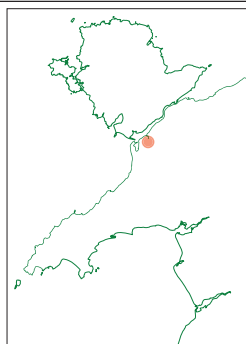


0 1m

**Figure 2**  
Plan of hand excavated trench with  
terracing and revetments.

**Key**

- Limit of excavation
- Brick
- Stone



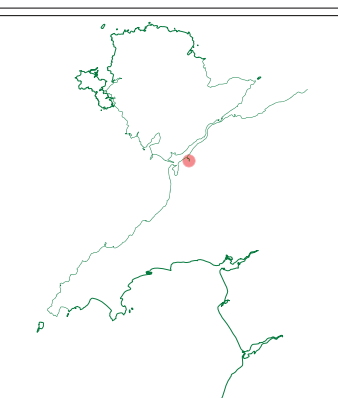
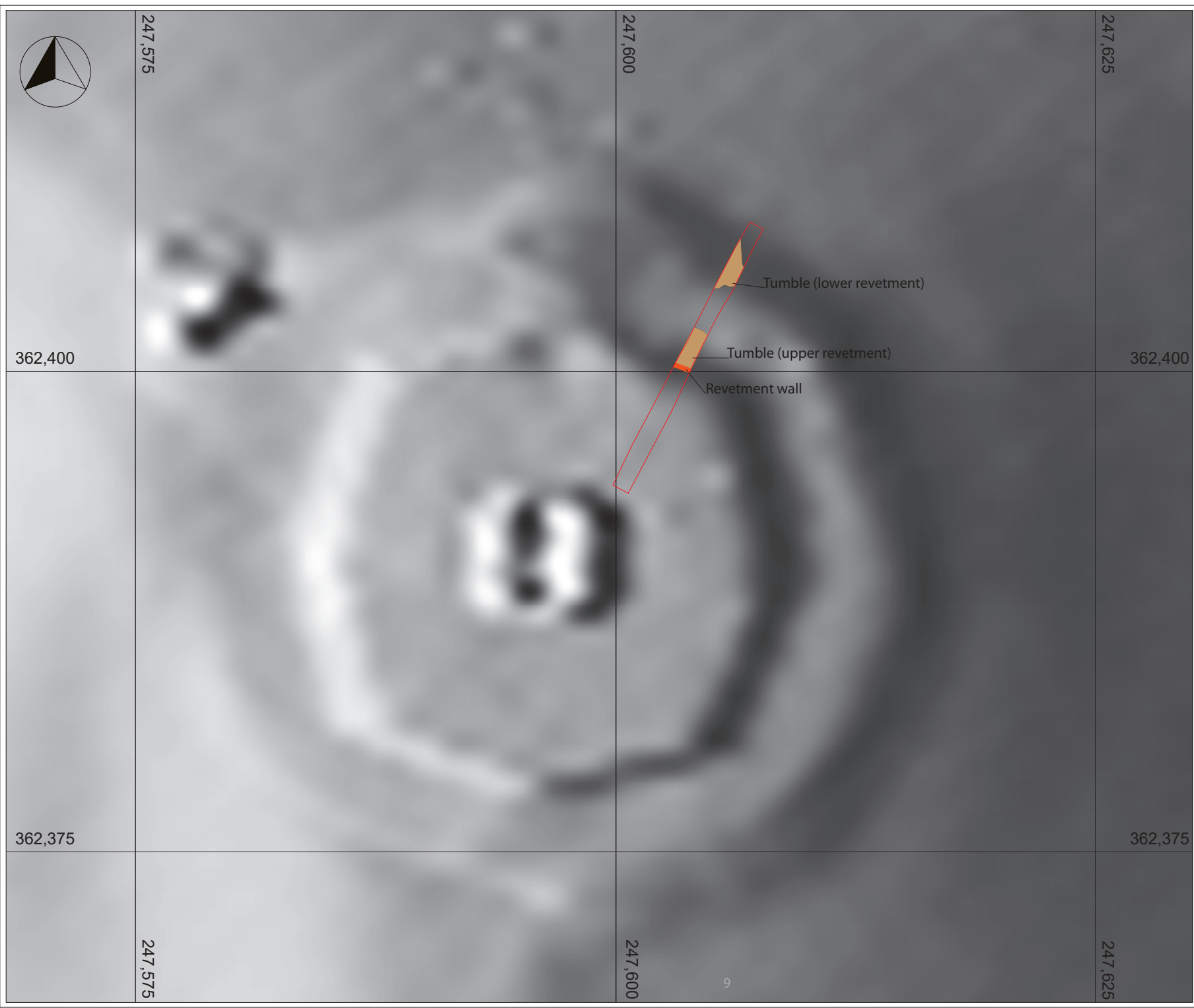
Drawn By: LWP

Date: 06/03/19

Location: SH4759862389

Project Number: AB1705





**Figure 3**  
Plan of Trench with LiDAR Data,  
DSM 1m.

**Key**

 Trench

© Archaeoleg Brython Archaeology CYF.  
Contains Natural Resources Wales information  
© Natural Resources Wales and Database Right. All rights Reserved.

Drawn By: IGP

Date: 16/08/19

Location: SH4759862389

Project: AB1705





Plate 1: The upper brick and stone constructed revetment [004]. View from the north east. 1x1m scale.

The section of revetment wall [004] within the trench, which forms part of the octagonal terrace, was constructed in two phases both of which are believed to be contemporary. A lower course of, relatively large, mortared limestone blocks [003] formed a foundation on which a single course of red, unfrogged, bricks [004] were laid. The bricks in [004] were laid in a Flemish Bond with alternate stretchers and half brick headers, their arrangement, form and size is consistent with a late 18<sup>th</sup> century date (Brunskill & Clifton-Taylor, 1977). Downslope of [003]/[004] was a layer of tumbled material (005) which suggests that the structure may have formally been higher than what remains *in situ* below ground. This tumble overlayed a dumped deposit (007) which formed a hard, compacted platform between the upper [003/004] and lower (006) revetments.



Plate 2: the lower revetment consisted of a distinctive stony deposit (006). View from the north east. 1x1m scale.

The revetment for the lower terrace was less formal and not as substantial as the upper. A distinctive stony deposit which also contained some brick (006) corresponds to the bank seen on LiDAR and is likely to be what remains of a second revetment wall. The nature of the deposit encountered in the trench could suggest that this lower revetment consisted of a stone and earth bank rather than a mortared wall.

A total of nine small finds were recorded, all found within the topsoil (001) deposit. They consisted of post medieval and modern debris, such as glass fragments, clay pipe fragments, iron objects and a swing bottle top.



## 5 Interpretation and Conclusion

The investigation provided information on the construction of the terraces on which the folly was constructed but did not provide any significant new information about the building or earlier activity at the site. It is unclear to which height the revetment walls stood but the upper revetment appears to have been constructed with a Flemish Bond pattern which was popular between 1700 and 1850 (Brunskill & Clifton-Taylor, 1977). It is likely that both the terraces and folly were constructed contemporaneously during the late 18<sup>th</sup> century.

The hand excavated trench was opened, recorded and reinstated (Plate 3) within a day, decreasing the risk of any further impact to the monument and reducing potential visual impact from Caernarfon Castle.



Plate 3: After reinstatement of the hand dug trench. View from the east.

## 6 Bibliography and Sources Consulted

Brunskill, R.W. & Clifton-Taylor, A. 1977. *English Brickwork*. London: Ward Lock.

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*

Chartered Institute for Archaeologists. 2014. *Standards and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials*

Chartered Institute for Archaeologists. 2014. *Standards and guidance for excavation*

Edwards, G., 2015. *Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historic Monuments of Wales Guidelines for Digital Archives*

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

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

Watkinson, D. & Neal, V. 2001. *First Aid for Finds*. London: Institute for Conservation of Historic & Artistic Works

### 6.1 Images and Data

Natural Resources Wales: LiDAR Data, DTM 1m

Natural Resources Wales: LiDAR Data, DSM 1m

### 6.2 Websites

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



Uned G8/12, Intec ◊ Parc Menai ◊ Bangor ◊ Gwynedd ◊ LL57 4FG  
01248 672604 ◊ 07769 746996  
[brythonarchaeology.co.uk](http://brythonarchaeology.co.uk)

Archaeoleg Brython Archaeology CYF  
Cofrestrwyd yn Lloegr a Chymru - Registered in England and Wales - 10753130