

UNMANNED SITES INTERPRETATION INSTALLATIONS - WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

CN006 SEGONTIUM ROMAN SITE

AN011 TREFIGNATH BURIAL CHAMBER

AN016 HOLYHEAD MOUNTAIN HUT CIRCLES

Fiona Grant



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Figure 1: Satellite view of Holyhead Mountain Hut Circles 2009



**Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government**

Cadw – Watching Brief Report – Unmanned Sites Interpretation Installations
CN006, AN011, AN016

This watching brief report has been produced by Fiona Grant within the Historic Environment Branch of Cadw to inform on works carried out on a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

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1. Non-Technical Summary

The work detailed in this report was undertaken on 04/10/2016 as part of the Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) granted to Fielder Green Associates in order to renew interpretation panels at the scheduled monument AN016 Holyhead Mountain Hut Circles, and install new panels at CN006 Segontium Roman Site and AN011 Trefignath Burial Chamber. The work involved supervising the installation of four panel plinth bases within the scheduled areas of the aforementioned monuments, and subsequent recording of exposed deposits and sections. No finds, features or deposits of significance were uncovered in this work.

2. Site Descriptions

CN006 Segontium Roman Site

This monument comprises the remains of a Roman auxiliary fort dating to AD 77. Overlooking the Menai Strait, the fort was named after the nearby river Seiont (Saint). Segontium was part of a network of other forts linked by a strategic road system and formed part of the Roman imperial arrangement for controlling the newly conquered Welsh tribes. Throughout the Roman period Segontium was the military and administrative centre of north-west Wales.

Segontium was set out in a typical Roman fort layout. It is shaped like a playing card, with defences of earth and timber, symmetrically placed gates and streets, and a fairly standardized arrangement of timber-framed buildings. From AD 140 – though somewhat earlier in the case of several buildings – the fort was subject to prolonged piecemeal rebuilding of both its defences and internal buildings in stone.

Visible remains include barracks, buildings with underfloor heating (hypocaust), storehouses, a bathhouse and the praetorium – the garrison commander's house. The third- to fourth-century principia (headquarters building) is situated at the centre of the fort. Beyond this is a colonnaded court with a well and the basilica (cross hall) which comprised the ceremonial heart of the fort where the unit could assemble and the commanding officer could issue orders and hold court martials. At the rear of this building is the shrine (aedes) where

statues of the god Jupiter and the emperor were kept alongside the regimental standards. In the third century a vaulted strongroom (sacellum) was built within the basilica to hold the garrison's pay-chest and savings. The flanking rooms were offices.

Archaeological excavations have shown that the fort was designed to accommodate a regiment of auxiliary infantry up to 1000 strong. The name of only one of the units that garrisoned the fort is known: the First Cohort of Sunici, a 500-strong infantry regiment originally recruited from Germany. Coins recovered from excavation show that Segontium was garrisoned until about AD 394. This extraordinarily long occupation, unique in Wales, is explicable by the fort's strategic position controlling access to the fertile and mineral-rich lands of Anglesey.

AN011 Trefignath Burial Chamber

The monument comprises the remains of a chambered tomb, dating to the Neolithic period. This ruinous megalithic monument is situated on a long and almost bare rocky ridge. It was built in three separate stages from about 3750-3500 BC and may have been active until about 2250 BC. The structure was greatly damaged in the last decade of the eighteenth century and the cairn that surrounded the stones was largely removed in 1870. It was excavated in 1977-79 before being consolidated and restored for public viewing.

The monument was built over a scatter of occupation debris including flints and pottery. This was dated to about 3100 BC by a radio carbon determination. The first stage of the monument was a small chamber set in a cairn up to 4.0m across. It opened to the north via a short passage. The second stage saw a larger chamber built on the east side of the first stage monument, whose cairn was incorporated in a much larger wedge shaped cairn defined by drystone walling. The new chamber opened onto a recessed forecourt at the eastern end. In the third stage a new chamber was built in the second stage forecourt and the cairn was extended around it. This final chamber had tall portal stones on the east standing more than 2.0m high. Fragments of bone were found in this eastern chamber.

AN016 Holyhead Mountain Hut Circles

The monument consists of an area of later prehistoric settlement features, generally stone founded roundhouses, occupying a natural shelf or terrace below the south-eastern flank of Holyhead Mountain. The scheduled area occupies some 8 ha of a 25 m-wide natural terrace which contains a series of stone-built structures. These structures are of two main types: round huts and sub-rectangular chambers. There are 13 round huts, some with entrance passages, varying in diameter from 3.8 m to 8 m. They are clearly visible and have been cleared of overlying vegetation and consolidated for public display. The walls are of dry-stone construction with few orthostats and are generally 0.5 - 1 m high and 1 - 1.25 m wide.

The rectangular structures vary between 4 m and 4.75 m long, 1.25 and 1.9 m wide, and are about 1 m deep. They are part sunken, with rounded corners, and, with one exception, are also of dry, laid stone, as opposed to orthostatic, construction. The exception (Hut L) is largely of orthostatic construction, the stones lining the inner face being 1.25 m high. One of the structures (Hut N) is 2.25 m square, the walls are 0.7 m high, and a large paving slab can be seen at the rear. The round huts have their entrances on the south east side, whereas the rectangular structures tend to have an entrance on the north-north-west side, the exception again being Hut L which faces east-north-east.

The remains of a terraced field system can be seen underlying the present fields on the slopes below the settlement. To the north, on the slopes above the settlement, is a complex of field boundaries which could also be associated with this settlement. These lie entirely outside the scheduled area.

The site has been excavated on three occasions, by W O Stanley in the 1860s, by the Office of Works in 1912-13, and by the Welsh Office during the years 1978-82. The most important results to come out of the last excavations were the dating of the settlement to the late first millennium BC, with evidence of activity on the site from the late third millennium BC and also the first century AD. It has also been shown that, rather than being an open settlement, it was a cluster of homesteads with enclosures, interspersed with isolated huts.

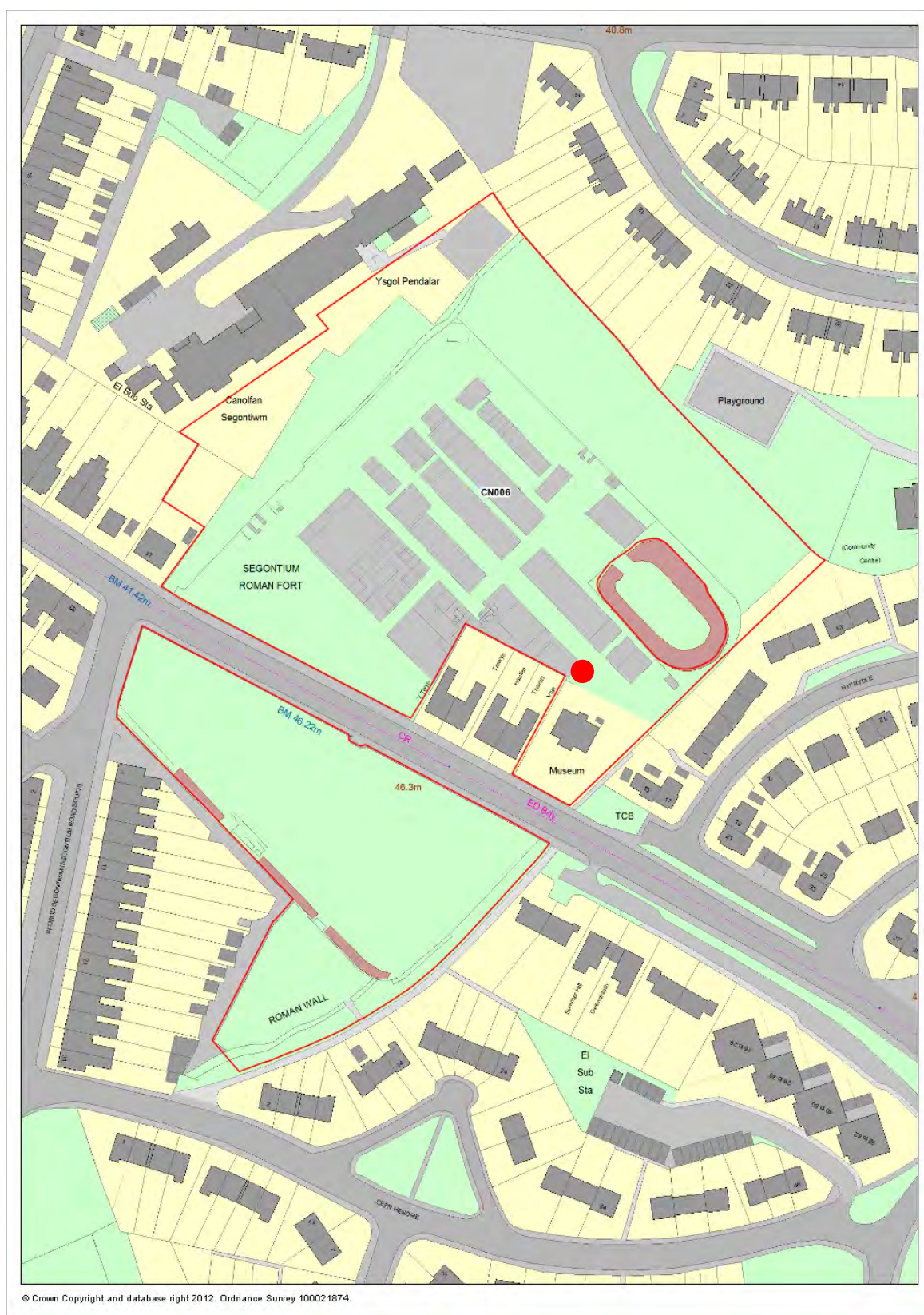


Figure 2: CN006 Segontium Roman Site - Map showing location of the scheduled area and approximate position of interpretation panel (red spot).



Figure 3: AN011 Trefignath Burial Chamber - Map showing location of the scheduled area and approximate position of interpretation panel (red spot).

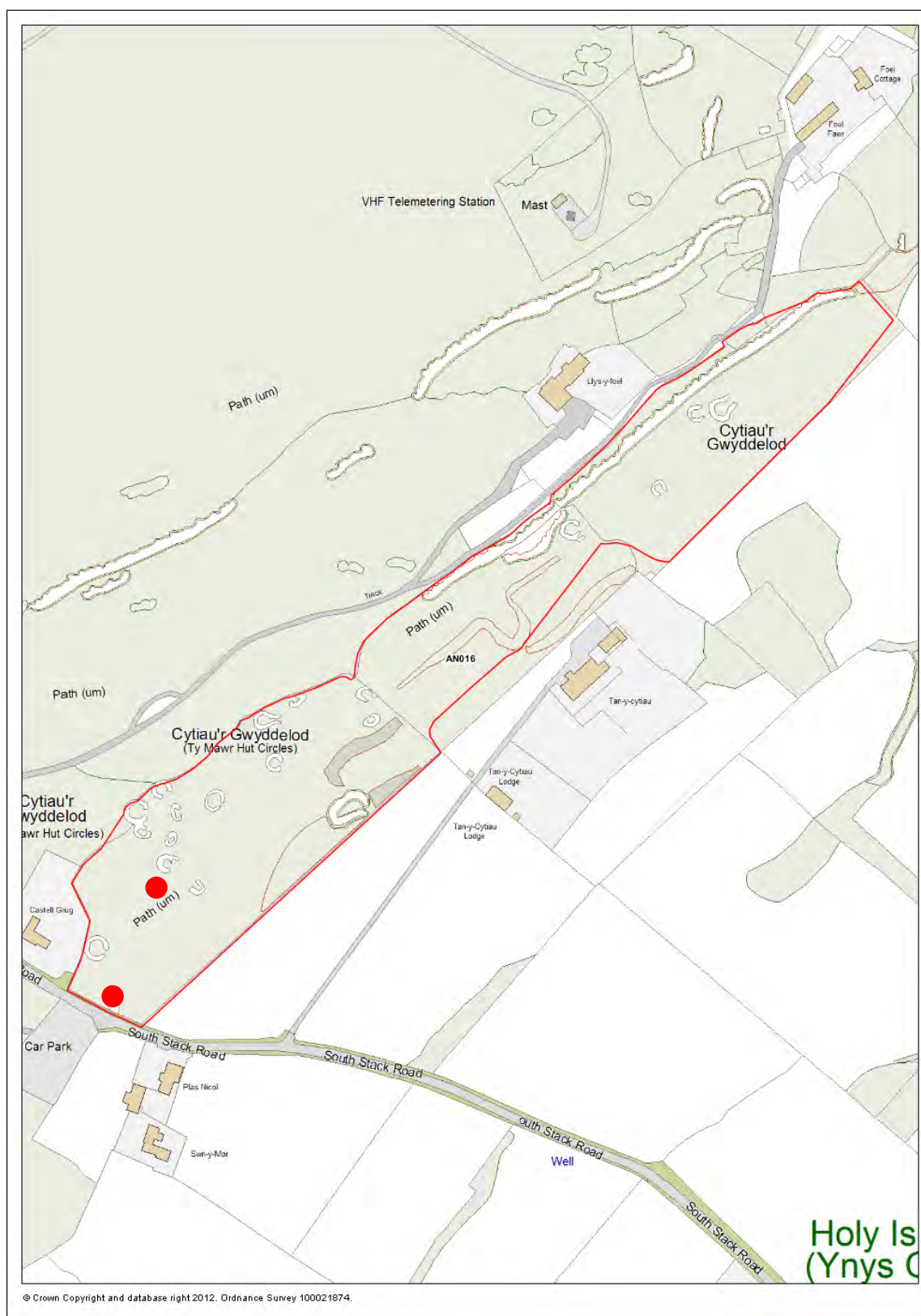


Figure 4: AN016 - Map showing location of the scheduled area and approximate position of interpretation panels (red spot).

3. Objectives

The purpose of the archaeological watching brief is: “To allow, within the resources available, the preservation by record of archaeological deposits, the presence and nature of which could not be established (or established with sufficient accuracy) in advance of development or potentially disruptive works” (Source: ClfA Standard and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief).

The primary objective of this assessment was to ensure that any previously unrecorded archaeological features and deposits exposed during the ground disturbance works were adequately recorded, interpreted and reported.

4. Methodology

The ground-works required the hand-digging of shallow (0.2m) box trenches at each of the locations in order to install a steel frame in which to mount the interpretation panel legs, as per SMC application.

Recording of the watching brief was in three formats:

- i) A digital photographic record was maintained.
- ii) Written records were produced using a continuous numbering system for all contexts.
- iii) Hand drawn plans and sections were produced if necessary.

An environmental sampling and processing strategy was in place should the archaeological deposits warrant it. However, in this instance it was not felt that the deposits encountered required sampling.

All works were conducted whilst adhering to current Health and Safety regulations.

All works were undertaken in accordance with The Institute of Field Archaeologists *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*.

5. The Watching Brief

CN006 Segontium Roman Site

The panel was to be placed in a position identified previously by Adele Thackray (Cadw) to the contractor, at SH 48579 62395. After discussion the panel was rotated to reflect the view shown on the panel with the actual view. A 1m x 0.6m x 0.2m deep hole, aligned NE-SW, was hand dug for the insertion of a steel box frame to hold the feet of the panel, which were then set into concrete contained within the box. All material was excavated onto a plastic sheet to minimise impact on the grass. The entire excavated material comprised a dark greyish-black loamy-silt topsoil (01) with c.5% slate chips and pebbles. Four sherds of 18th and 19th century ceramic and a fragment of bottle glass, and a single sherd of residual Roman ceramic were retrieved (see Appendix I). After installation of the panel, the turf was relaid over the excavated area.



Figure 5: Location for new panel, facing NW



Figure 6: Trench for new panel, after excavation, facing NW



Figure 7: New panel in situ, facing N

CN011 Trefignath Burial Chamber

The panel was to be placed in a position identified previously by Adele Thackray and Erin Lloyd-Jones (Cadw) to the contractor at SH25853 80572. A 1m x 1m hole was hand dug for the insertion of a steel box frame to hold the feet of the panel, which were then set into concrete contained within the box. The excavation revealed a dark blackish-brown clay-silt (01) with occasional schist pebbles (<10%), overlying the natural schist bed-rock (02) which falls away sharply to the north. All material was excavated onto a plastic sheet to minimise impact on the grass. The turf was then relaid over the excavated area. Six sherds of 19th and early 20th century ceramic were retrieved (see Appendix I).



Figure 8: Site for new panel before excavation, facing E



Figure 9: Site for new panel after excavation, facing S

AN016 Holyhead Mountain Hut Circles

At this site three earlier panels were to be removed, with only two being replaced with new panels.

Panel I:

This was located at SH21064 81794, adjacent to the stile and gate onto the road. A 1m x 0.6m hole, aligned NE-SW, was hand dug for the insertion of a steel box frame to hold the feet of the panel, which were then set into concrete contained within the box. As the hole was dug into a slope, it was 0.2m deep at the south-western end, but almost 0.4m deep at the upslope, north-eastern end. All material was excavated onto a plastic sheet to minimise impact on the grass. The excavation revealed an orange-brown subsoil with iron staining (03), overlain by up to 0.2m of greyish-brown sandy-silt (02). The uppermost deposit comprised a rooty, peaty brown topsoil (01) with bracken roots. There were no artefacts recovered. After installation of the panel, the turf was then relaid over the excavated area.



Figure 10: Trench for new panel, I after excavation, facing NW



Figure 11: New panel I in situ, facing NW

Panel 2:

This was located at SH21123 81953. A 1m x 0.6m x 0.2m deep hole, aligned NW – SE, was hand dug for the insertion of a steel box frame to hold the feet of the panel, which were then set into concrete contained within the box. All material was excavated onto a plastic sheet to minimise impact on the grass. The excavation revealed a firm, orange-brown clay-silt (04). It is possible that this reflects an old ground surface, related to the earlier excavations at the site, and/or to the adjacent hut circle itself. Towards the south-eastern end of the trench were two angular/sub-angular stones up to 0.25m diameter, embedded in the base of the trench. Two areas of disturbance in the SE and SW corners represented the holes for the earlier panel. The basal deposit was overlain by a 0.10-0.12m thick relatively loose, grey-brown sandy-silt (03) with frequent angular stone (c.40%), and bracken roots. This was interpreted as probable back-filling from earlier excavations of the adjacent hut circle. A leached podzol layer and associated lower iron deposit overlay this (02) with a rooty layer above (01). There were no artefacts recovered. After installation of the panel, the turf was then relaid over the excavated area.



Figure 12: Trench for panel 2, part-excavated, facing NW



Figure 13: Trench for panel 2, part-excavated, facing SW



Figure 14: New panel 2 in situ, facing N

Panel 3:

(Removal of earlier panel only). The legs of the earlier panel were cut through at ground level using an angle grinder, and sharp edges flattened. No ground disturbance took place. This was located at SH21327 82122.



Figure 15: Site of 3rd panel after removal, facing NE

6. Conclusions

All works were conducted according to the SMC stipulations, with a high degree of professionalism and attention to detail. Disturbance was kept to a minimum, and the sites left in a very tidy condition after completion of the installations.

CN006 Segontium Roman Site

No deposits of archaeological significance were disturbed by the installation of the new interpretation panel. The material excavated probably reflects late post-Medieval levelling and disturbance material, derived from earlier excavations of the main site, and local development of modern housing. This is reflected in the ceramic and glass evidence.

AN011 Trefignath Burial Chamber

No deposits of archaeological significance were disturbed by the installation of the new interpretation panel. The material excavated probably reflects late post-Medieval levelling and disturbance material, derived from earlier excavations of the main site, and local agricultural activity. This is reflected in the ceramic evidence.

AN016 Holyhead Mountain Hut Circles

No deposits of archaeological significance were disturbed by the installation of the new interpretation panels. It is possible that the deposit (04) revealed in the base of the trench for Panel 2 reflects an old ground surface, related to the earlier excavations at the site, and/or to the adjacent hut circle itself. Certainty of this interpretation would only be confirmed by further investigation.

7. Archive

A digital copy of this report will be archived with Cadw, along with the digital photographs, and digitised site records (sections, plans).

All site records (context sheets, sections, plans and elevations) will be archived with the Cadw Field Monument Warden.

A digital copy of the report will be archived with the Historic Environment Record at The Gwynedd Archaeological Trust, Bangor, and RCAHMW, Aberystwyth.

Appendix I

Finds Register

CN006 Segontium Roman Site

1 19th century colourless glass bottle neck sherd.

1 sherd 18th century mottled ware (probable tankard).

1 sherd 18th century black/brown glazed, coal measures redware (earthenware)
Buckley/Staffs.

1 sherd 19th century coal measures redware (earthenware) Buckley/Staffs.

1 sherd 19th century white stone/teaware.

1 sherd unglazed orange/red sandyware ?Roman

AN016 Trefignath Burial Chamber

4 sherds 19th century willow pattern teaware.

1 sherd white, hand-painted stoneware.

1 sherd whiteware.

Appendix II

Scheduled Monument Clearance (SMC) Advice:

Having reviewed the submission and accompanying mapping and spoken with the applicant I recommend that SMC is granted for these works subject to the following conditions:

1. The applicant will appoint a suitably qualified archaeologist (appointed through the Cadw Archaeological Recorders Framework) to undertake hand excavation of the footprint for each of the new panels – i.e. 4 panel trenches each measuring 1000x600x200mm.
2. The applicant must provide the appointed archaeologist with a precise location for panel trenches and it is essential that these locations are used for the subsequent siting of the panels;
3. The appointed archaeologist must submit a specification of works, for approval by Cadw Inspectorate, prior to the excavation being undertaken;
4. In the event that significant archaeological remains are exposed work must cease until Cadw Inspectorate have had an opportunity to visit the site and assess the significance of the archaeological remains;
5. Should significant archaeological remains be exposed it will be necessary for the applicant to review the panel location, in consultation with Cadw Inspectorate, in order to identify a more suitable alternative location;
6. that within one month of project completion the appointed archaeologist will produce a completion report. A draft of this shall be sent to Cadw Inspectorate for comments/approval. The completion report should provide an overview of the works that have been undertaken and appended to the report should be all relevant documentation – original application, plans, photographic archive, archaeological report, works specification and any amendments etc. The report should also include sufficient historical research on the monuments to enable the significance of the monuments to be appreciated and understood within a local and national context;
7. within one month of the draft report having been approved the applicant will deposit a final version of the report, incorporating any comments/editorial amendments to:
 - Cadw ian.halfpenney@wales.gsi.gov.uk
 - The Regional Historic Environment Record held by Gwynedd Archaeological Trust – her@heneb.co.uk
 - The National Monument Record held by the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales (RCAHMW) - gareth.edwards@rcahmw.gov.uk

8. that Cadw Inspectorate shall be given at least two week's advance notice, in writing (written notice via email is acceptable), of the date of the commencement of the work or of any subsequent adjustment to this date;
9. that representatives from Cadw Inspectorate shall be afforded access onto the site to monitor the progress of the works and carry out site inspections as necessary;
10. that the applicant shall ensure that all on-site contractors and staff are made fully aware that the area of works lie within Scheduled Monuments that are protected from damage under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act, 1979. The applicant shall be responsible for ensuring that no works are undertaken that could affect or disturb the Scheduled Areas, other than those works specified within the application;
11. that the applicant notifies Cadw immediately, in the event of any archaeological features, deposits or artefacts being exposed. Work on that part of the site must stop until Cadw Inspectorate have visited the site and assessed the significance of the archaeological remains;
12. that there will be no vehicle access onto or across the scheduled area, other than along pre-existing routes;
13. that the scheduled areas shall be left in a stable and tidy condition upon completion of the work and that all redundant elements and materials of the works are removed from site;
14. that Cadw Inspectorate shall be informed in writing (written notice via email is acceptable) immediately upon the completion of the works;
15. that Cadw Inspectorate are contacted immediately should there be a necessity to amend or alter the working methodology and that those amendments/alterations are agreed by Cadw Inspectorate prior to being enacted;

Signed: Ian Halfpenney
Date: Wednesday 20th July 2016