CASTLERING ARCHAEOLOGY

REPORT NO.348

LAND ADJACENT TO THE AFON HIRAETHLYN EGLWYSBACH

CONWY

SH 8035 7012 - SH 8045 6990

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF MARCH 2011

LAND ADJACENT TO THE AFON HIRAETHLYN EGLWYSBACH

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

CONTRACTED BY: CONWY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

UNDERTAKEN BY

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SYNOPSIS

This report contains the results of an archaeological watching brief undertaken on a linear corridor of land adjacent to the Afon Hiraethlyn, south of the village of Eglwysbach, Conwy, during ground disturbing works in association with a flood alleviation scheme.

In January 2011, a desk-based study and site walk-over was undertaken by Castlering Archaeology to assess the potential impact that works in connection with a flood alleviation scheme may have on the archaeological resource and built heritage within the study area. The desk-based study gave no indication of the presence of any archaeology on the site and no archaeological features were encountered during the site walk-over. However, flood alleviation schemes are generally considered to have the potential to reveal hitherto unknown archaeological remains as well as possible artefactual evidence and it was considered that the absence of above ground archaeology should not negate the potential for sub-surface archaeological evidence.

It was considered that the proposed flood alleviation scheme may have the potential to provide an opportunity to research and record sub-surface deposits, which may otherwise have remained unknown.

The report recommended that a targetted archaeological watching brief should be carried out during the initial stages of turf and topsoil strip, excavation works and dredging in association with the construction phase, with the aim of preservation by record. The recommendation was subsequently endorsed by Gwynedd Archaeology Planning Service and the watching brief was undertaken intermittently during February and March 2011.

No archaeological features were revealed and finds recovered were entirely datable to the post-medieval period. The watching brief confirmed that no features of archaeological interest were disturbed during works associated with the flood alleviation scheme. No evidence was uncovered to indicate other than agricultural use of the land, which has remained relatively unchanged since the 1841 tithe map.

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(CD)

ABBREVIATIONS:

c. circa

GAPS Gwynedd Archaeology Planning Service

IfA Institute for Archaeologists

m OD metre over datum OS Ordnance Survey

WSI Written Scheme of Investigation

Every effort has been made to provide accurate information within this report. However Castlering Archaeology cannot be held responsible for any errors and inaccuracies contained therein.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This report comprises the results of an archaeological watching brief undertaken during excavations associated with a flood alleviation scheme sited south of the village of Eglwysbach. The scheme affects a linear corridor of land on the west bank of the Afon Hiraethlyn, extending from Eglwysbach Primary School (approximately SH 8035 7012) southeastwards through pasture land to approximately NGR SH 8045 6990 (Figs 1-3 & Plate 1 *following*).

The scheme, referred to as the 'Upper Reaches', comprises:

- excavation for the footing of a masonry flood wall along the west side of the road, immediately south of the school;
- excavation and construction of an earth bund, on part of the school play area;
- excavation and construction of an earth bund along the west riverbank of Afon Hiraethlyn upstream of the school, to reduce the likelihood of flooding on the highway adjacent to the school;
- dredging of sections of the river bed.
- 1.2. In January 2011, an archaeological desk-based assessment and site walk-over of the proposed flood alleviation scheme was undertaken by Castlering Archaeology at the request of Conwy County Borough Council (Report No. 343), following the advice of Gwynedd Archaeology Planning Service (GAPS). The report concluded that while no above ground archaeological features were encountered, flood alleviation schemes in general are considered to have the potential to reveal hitherto unknown archaeological remains as well as possible artefactual evidence.
- 1.3 Conwy County Borough Council were subsequently advised by GAPS that an archaeological watching brief would be required during ground disturbing works and river dredging in association with the scheme. A Written Scheme of Investigation (Appendix 1; WSI) was submitted to and approved by GAPS in February 2011 and the archaeological contract was carried out by Castlering Archaeology intermittently in February and March 2011, as reported on in Section 3 of this report.

2. AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

- 2.1 The aim of the programme of archaeological work is to establish the nature of the archaeology which may be present and allow for the preservation by record of any archaeological remains that are encountered during ground disturbing works in association with the development.
- 2.2 The watching brief was undertaken using proven archaeological techniques, which comply with the Guidelines and Codes of Conduct set out by the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA; revised edition October 2008); in particular the *Standard & Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* (IfA 1994, revised October 2008).

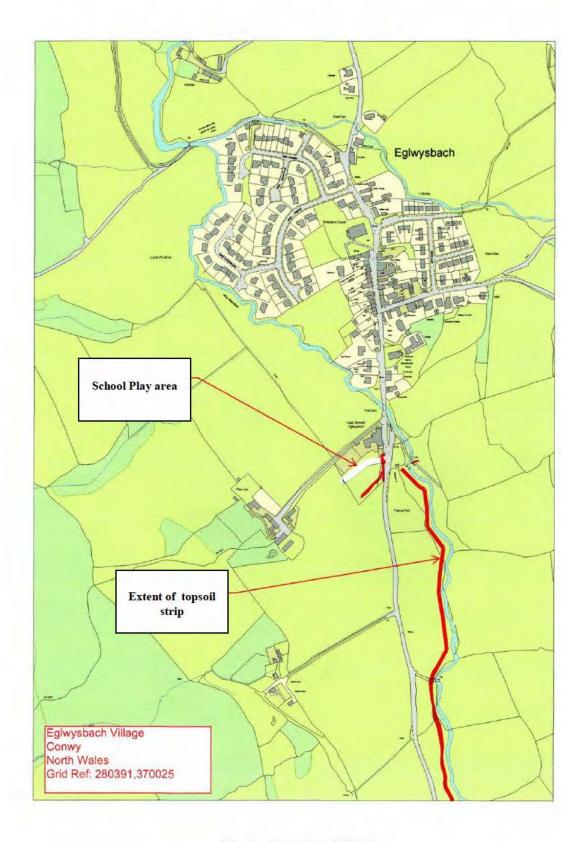


Fig. 1 Location of Works

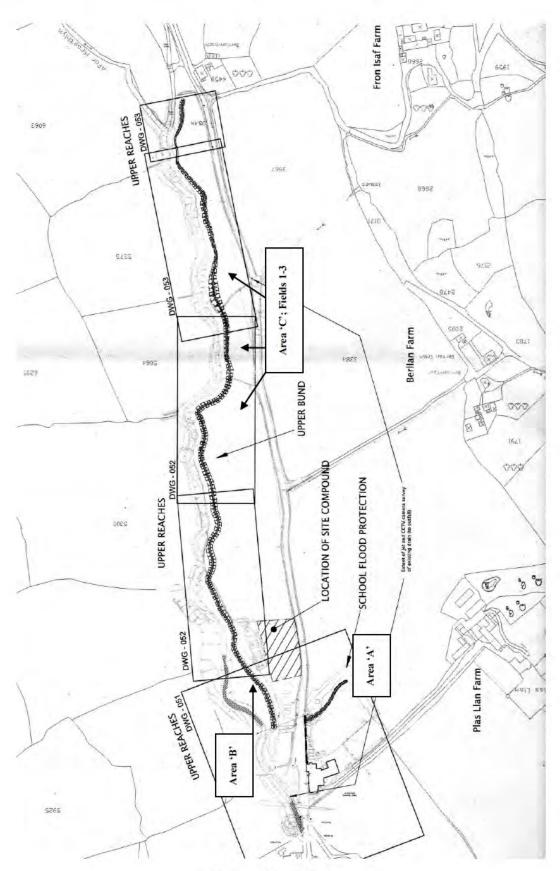


Fig. 2 Plan of Works

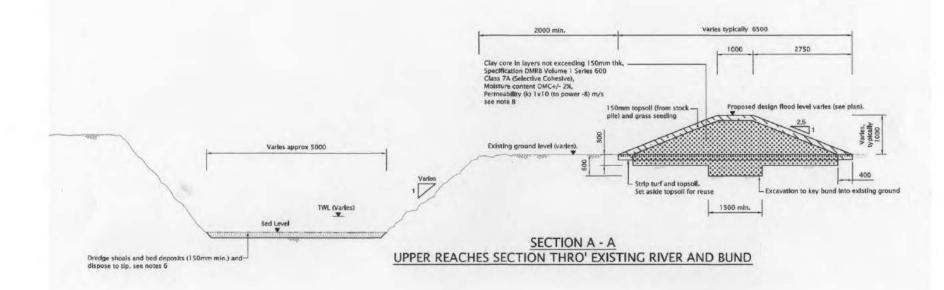


Fig. 3 Upper Reaches Section (provided by Conwy County Borough Council)

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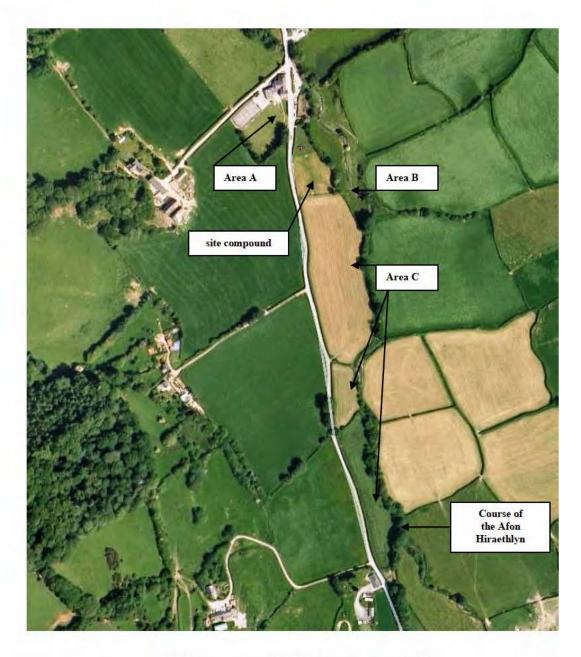


Plate 1 Site location (google-earth c.2000)

3. RESULTS OF THE WATCHING BRIEF

3.1 Three distinct areas were monitored during the construction phase. For the purpose of this report, the areas are identified as Area 'A' the school play area; Area 'B', the rough pasture east of the site compound and Area 'C', the three fields of grazing land, as seen in Plate 1. In addition, topsoil stripping was monitored over the east side of the site compound.

Area 'A' the school play area

3.2 On February 9^{th} 2011, the watching brief commenced with monitoring a c.2m wide topsoil strip undertaken to a depth of c.0.15m over the play area south of the school (Plate 1). No archaeological features were revealed. The material removed comprised loose mid brown sandy loam from which four sherds of white earthenware were recovered. The strip was followed by the excavation of a 1.5m wide trench immediately alongside the road to facilitate the construction of the flood wall (Plate 2). The trench was excavated to a depth of approximately 1.3m with an additional c.0.2m wide shallow channel cut into the base. The section of the trench revealed >0.3m of mid to dark brown silty loam, which sealed >0.2m of darker brown silty-clayey loam with dense small gravelly stone content. The gravelly loam sealed >0.3m of fine river gravels, which along some sections extended down to the base of the trench. Elsewhere, the gravels sealed a bright brownish-ochre clay, visible for >0.1m in the section and along the base of the trench. No archaeological features were revealed.



Plate 2: Area 'A' topsoil strip, view from the southwest



Plate 3: Roadside trench, viewed from the south

Area 'C' pasture land

- 3.3 Over the next two weeks, the c.6m wide topsoil strip over Area 'C' was monitored, as indicated on Plate 1 & Fig. 2. The topsoil strip extended to an average depth of 0.15m and the topsoil comprised mid to light brown sandy silty loam with occasional stones below a thin grass cover. Following the main strip, an additional 1m wide strip was excavated in a central position to a depth of 0.15m, in order to stabilise the clay bund. No archaeological features were revealed and the pottery recovered was mainly of $19^{th} 20^{th}$ century date (Section 4 *following*).
- 3.4 The strip cut through two hedged boundaries and, in the middle field, former modern farm access from the roadside gate to a make-shift bridge across the Afon Hiraethlyn (Plates 6 & 7). This modern bridge, partly supported by breeze blocks, has long-since collapsed (Plate 8) and a new access will be provided as part of the current scheme. The strip across the farm access produced a heavier stone and ceramic content including brick fragments, put down to aid access. In Fields 2 and 3, heavier patches of river gravels were encountered below the turf cover, indicating areas where the river had broken its banks.

Area 'B' pasture land

3.5 The topsoil strip over Area 'B' was also undertaken in February 2011. This area of the scheme falls under a different land-ownership to Area 'C' and access has been subsequently restricted. No further works have been monitored along this section of the river in view of access problems.



Plate 4: Area 'C'; Field 1 topsoil strip, view from the south



Plate 5 *left:*

Area 'C'; Field 1, during inner 1m wide strip, view from the north



Plate 6: View from Field 2 towards Field 1, following main topsoil strip



Plate 7: Hedged boundary between Fields 1 & 2, & strip over former farm track to destroyed bridge (Plate 7), viewed from the east



Plate 8 *left*: Farm bridge to be replaced, view from the south



Plate 9: View from the southwest over Field 2



Plate 10: View from the south over Field 3



Plate 11: View from the south over Field 3

Works within the river bed

3.6 The works within the river bed included limited dredging and removal of river bed deposits to variable depths together with the removal of tree stump and mature branches that both overhung and lay across the river. Sections of the dredging works were monitored during March 2011 until it became clear that the methodology of these works could have no further archaeological interest. No features were revealed and no finds recovered from the river bed.



Plate 12: Field 1, sample area to be dredged, indicating nature of works to be undertaken in the form of removal of fallen and overhanging branches and spreads of surface river gravels



Plates 13 & 14: Field 3 viewed from the south; following topsoil strip *left* and *right* after dredging and repairing the section of bank

4. FINDS

- 4.1 An assemblage of post medieval finds were recovered from the areas of the topsoil strip. The finds, although unremarkable in their nature, have been catalogued, but will not be deposited as part of the archive. This decision is made in view of the bulk and duplicity of the post-medieval material and in no way infers that the finds are of no archaeological interest. Many of the finds which were widespread over the pasture land, may have been originally deposited during the deposition of night soils, hedge laying and / or other agricultural practices.
- 4.2 The main artefact type collected from the site was pottery, which ranged in date from approximately the late 18th to 20th centuries. The assemblage is predominantly domestic in origin, representing utilitarian vessels, primarily tablewares, probably derived from dwellings located in the vicinity. The white earthenware recovered from the site included decorated press-moulded plates often copying the designs from the Far East (Willow pattern wares). The material represents the period when the pottery industry became mechanised and production of domestic wares rapidly increased.
- 4.3 The coarse coal-measures earthenware sherds recovered were mainly produced in the 18th and 19th centuries. Vessel forms mainly comprised pancheons and storage jars which could be produced cheaper in clay than their metal equivalents.
- 4.4 The three sherds of press-moulded buff fabric slipware are typical of the products produced in abundance by Staffordshire and Buckley potteries and later manufactured by local potters.
- 4.5 Samples of unstamped clay pipe stems were recovered. The smoking of tobacco in the late 16th century had brought a demand for a manufactured item which had not previously existed. Pipe production spread from London to the provinces in the 17th century and local manufacturers developed their own distinctive styles.

- 4.6 The glassware recovered comprised fragments of broken beer and mineral water bottles, perhaps evidence of the 'blob top' forms introduced in the 1890s period.
- 4.7 Where recovered, building materials comprised brick and slate, mainly collected from areas where they had been deposited to aid drainage.

FINDS CATALOGUE

Location	Count	Weight	Description	Provisional Date
Area 'A' School Field	4	27gms	White earthenware body sherds; teawares	20 th century
Area 'C' Field 1	2	6gms	Brick fragments	19 th / 20 th century
	7	23gms	Red coal measures coarse fabric with black manganese glaze; min. quartz inclusions; wheel thrown	Late 18 th / 19 th century
	1	5gms	Clay pipe stem	19th century
	2	5gms	Mottled ware sherds	19 th
	4	30gms	Green bottle glass	Late 19 th / early 20 th century
	3	18gms	Blue & white glazed industrial slipware	20 th century
	14	231gms	Undecorated white earthenware; teawares	20 th century
	6	221gms	Decorated white earthenware, blue & white 'willow pattern' teaware	19 th / 20 th century
	3	203gms	Decorated white earthenware, pinkish decoration – 3 sherds same vessel - teacup	20 th century
	1	207gms	Cream stoneware reeded jar	20 th century
Field 1/2 break in hedge	1	82gms	Thick white earthenware 'willow pattern' bowl (photographed)	19 th / early 20 th century
	1	41gms	White earthenware transfer printed part jar base & body sherd (photographed)	early 20 th century
	2	243gms	2 parts of a fineware cup	20 th century
	1	221gms	Green bottle glass	Late 19 th / early 20 th century
	4	469gms	Manganese glazed coal measures red, coarseware; pancheons sherds (photographed)	18 th / 19 th century
	6	296gms	Brick fragments	19 th century
Field 2	9	224gms	Undecorated white earthenware; teawares	19 th / 20 th century
	6	226gms	Blue & white transfer printed earthenware	19 th / 20 th century
	4	241gms	Green bottle glass	Late 19 th / early 20 th century
	3	266gms	Manganese glazed coal measures red, coarse-ware	18 th / 19 th century
	2	205gms	Brown glazed coal measures buff, coarse-ware	18 th / 19 th century
Field 3	5	463gms	Manganese glazed coal measures red, coarseware; pancheons sherds	18 th / 19 th century
	8	353gms	Manganese glazed coal measures redware; poss. bowl sherds	18 th / 19 th century
	1	50gms	Very dark green / black moulded bottle glass; average 11mm thickness	19 th century

2	254gms	Honey-brown colour glazed coal measures buff,	19 th / 20 th century
		coarse-ware; pancheons sherds	th .
2	265gms	Press-moulded buff fabric slipware (Plate 14); 3 x	Late 18 th / early
		body sherds, trailed brown slip on cream; 1 x rim,	19 th century
		cream slip on reddish-brown	
1	29gms	Coal measures redware; inner 7 outer brown	19 th / 20 th century
		glaze; rim sherd	
17	249gms	White earthenware teawares	19 th / 20 th century
7	297gms	Transfer printed earthenware asst.	19 th / 20 th century
5	218gms	Decorated teawares	20 th century
16	256gms	Transfer printed earthenware 'willow pattern'	19 th / 20 th century
2	218gms	Stoneware reeded jar fragments	Early-mid 20 th
			century
4	221gms	Industrial slipware; one brown striped; 3 Blue &	20 th century
		white stripes (Plate 14)	-
2	13gms	Dark green glass	19 th century
3	15gms	Asst. green bottle glass	19 th / 20 th century
2	18gms	Asst. green tinted clear bottle glass	19 th – 20 th century
5	16gms	Clear bottle glass	20 th century
8	16gms	Clay pipe stems (Plate 14)	19 th century
2	232gms	Brick frags	19 th century



Plate 15: Selection of finds recovered from pastureland

5. CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 The watching brief confirms that no features of archaeological interest have been uncovered during ground disturbance as part of the flood alleviation scheme. No evidence has been uncovered to indicate other than agricultural use of the land, which has remained relatively unchanged since the 1841 tithe map.
- 5.2 The watching brief has allowed for the opportunity to observe the relationship between the river and the adjacent agricultural land. The Afon Hiraethlyn still follows its natural course defining the boundaries of the pasture land in this area of the valley. There is evidence of periodic flooding, which appears to have been exacerbated in more recent times by blockages created by fallen trees and branches.
- 5.3 The watching brief has allowed for the recovery of finds of 18th to 20th century date, consistent with the period of land enclosure within the valley and the establishment of many of the farms that occupy the hillsides.

6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks are due to Conwy County Borough Council for contracting the work; Jenny Emmett, Development Control Archaeologist, GAPS for consultation in respect of the WSI (Appendix 1); Ivan Rawlins, Senior Contract Manager and Elfyn Roberts, Site Manager for Jones Bros., Ruthin, the main contractors on site.

7. SOURCES

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Welsh Office Planning Guidance, 1998, Circular 1/98 Planning and the Historic Environment

APPENDIX 1

WRITTEN SCHEME OF INVESTIGATION FOR A PROGRAMME OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORK

TO BE UNDERTAKEN DURING GROUND DISTURBING WORKS

IN ASSOCIATION WITH

EGLWYSBACH FLOOD ALLEVIATION SCHEME

SJ 8035 7012 - SJ 8035 6990

PREPARED FOR:

CONWY CBC

PREPARED BY:

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2ND FEBRUARY 2011

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This written scheme of investigation (WSI) for an archaeological watching brief to undertaken during ground disturbing works in association with Eglwysbach flood alleviation scheme (FAS) has been prepared for the approval of Gwynedd Archaeological Planning Service (GAPS). The WSI has been prepared by Castlering Archaeology, at the request of Conwy CBC.
- 1.2 In January 2010, an archaeological desk-based assessment and site walkover on the proposed FAS site was undertaken by Castlering Archaeology (Report No. 343). In view of the results of this report, GAPS have advised that an archaeological watching brief should be undertaken during ground disturbing works in association with the construction phase of the scheme.
- 1.3 The watching brief will be undertaken by Castlering Archaeology, subject to the approval of this WSI.

2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of the proposed programme of archaeological work is to secure

- the preservation by record of any archaeological remains or artefacts that are encountered during the development;
- the recording and assessment of suitable palaeoenvironmental deposits associated with archaeological features where these are encountered during groundworks
- the analysis, conservation and long-term storage of any artefactual/ecofactual material recovered from the site
- the production of a report documenting the results of the watching brief

3. METHODOLOGY

- 3.1 The watching brief will be undertaken using proven archaeological techniques, which comply with Guidelines and Codes of Conduct set out by the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA); in particular the *Standard & Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* (revised October 2008). The assessment follows the Welsh Office *Planning Policy Guidance Wales* (July 2010); *Circular 60/96: Planning and the Historic Environment: Archaeology* (December 1996) and *Circular 61/96: Planning and the Historic Environment: Historic Buildings and Conservation Areas* together with English Heritage's 'Management of Archaeological Projects' (1991, MAP2).
- 3.2 The fieldwork will comprise the monitoring of ground excavation work associated with the construction phase of the scheme. The watching brief will concentrate of the areas alongside the riverbank, while maintaining intermittent observations within the school grounds.
- 3.3 Sampling methodology in general will comprise:
- the half-sectioning of pits and post-holes; followed by complete excavation of the remaining fills, where considered appropriate, in order to maximise finds retrieval
- 10 20% sampling of linear features, in order to achieve sufficient archaeological evidence / finds / samples, as
 appropriate. Sampling may be followed by complete excavation of the remaining fills, in order to maximise finds
 retrieval

- in the event of human remains being encountered that may require removal, all relevant statutory and Home Office requirements and Environmental Health regulations will be fully complied with.
- 3.4 The archaeology will be recorded according to the normal principles of stratigraphic excavation, using pro-forma context sheets and register, scale plans and sections. Plans will be drawn at a scale of 1:20 or 1:50 and sections at a scale of 1:10 or 1:20 as appropriate and related to Ordnance Datum and published boundaries where appropriate. Photographs will be taken in 35mm format in monochrome and digital. Digital copies will be used for the report.
- 3.5 In the event of significant archaeological features, structures or deposits being encountered, provision will be made for their investigation and full recording prior to removal or disturbance. If necessary, arrangements will be made for development to be interrupted for reasonable periods in order that satisfactory records might be made following consultation with the client and GAPS.
- 3.6 Any archaeological objects and artefacts recovered during the course of the evaluation will be cleaned, suitably labeled and related to the contexts from which they derived where possible. The artefacts will be treated and stored appropriately prior to any deposition, following negotiations with the landowner. Suitable treatment will be similarly accorded to any environmental samples, industrial waste and faunal remains, which may be considered appropriate.
- 3.7 All spoil removed during groundworks will be scanned visually and using a metal detector to recover small finds. Any finds recovered will be recorded and their location noted on a site plan at a relevant scale

4. POST-FIELDWORK PROGRAMME

- 4.1 Following the completion of the fieldwork, an illustrated and bound report will be prepared in A4 format together with a full copy in pdf format on CD Rom according to the Brief. The report will include as a minimum:
- Synopsis / non-technical summary
- statement of objectives and background to the project
- summary of methodology
- a full written description of the results of the project
- finds reports as necessary
- plan and section drawings to scale, as appropriate
- photographic illustration, as appropriate
- conclusion
- list of all sources consulted
- archive statement
- photographic archive list
- copy of the WSI
- 4.2 An appropriate number of copies of the report will be produced for the client, GAPS and Gwynedd HER, within 6 months of the completion of the field work, on the understanding that it will become a public document after an appropriate period, following completion of the fieldwork.
- 4.3 A short summary of the results of the project will be submitted for inclusion in the next edition of CBA 'Archaeology in Wales' for publication in the relevant section of the annual 'Archaeological Notes'.

5. POST-EXCAVATION REQUIREMENTS

5.1 The precise post-excavation requirements in terms of finds analysis cannot be determined until completion of the on-site investigations.

6. ARCHIVE FORMAT AND DEPOSITION

- 6.1 The site archive will be included as appendices in the report. It will comprise a copy of the report and all written, drawn and photographic records relating to the assessment. Data recovered during the fieldwork will be quantified, ordered and indexed and stored according to the guidelines contained in *Guidelines for the Preparation of Excavation Archives for Long-term Storage* (UKIC, 1990), and *Standards in the Museum Care of Archaeological Collections* (Museum and Galleries Commission, 1992).
- 6.2 The archive, including all finds recovered during the course of the archaeological work, will be lodged at a repository agreed with GAPS will be deposited within twelve months of the completion of the fieldwork, subject to the agreement of the site owner regarding any finds.
- 6.3 The contractor is aware that responsibility for obtaining the site owner's permission for deposition of finds lies with the contractor. Should permission be refused a comprehensive record of the finds will be completed.

7. RESOURCES AND PROGRAMMING

- 7.1 The watching brief, report preparation and archive deposition will be undertaken or directly supervised by the Contractor, who is a Member of the Institute of Archaeologists (MIfA). The contractor will abide by the *IfA Code of Conduct* (1997), *IfA Code of Approved Practice for the Regulation of Contractual Arrangements in Field Archaeology* (1990), the *Treasure Act* (1997) and the *Burial Act* (1857).
- 7.2 Current programming indicates the project is likely to start towards the end of week ending February 11^{the} and the watching brief will be undertaken intermittently throughout Weeks 3-10 of the full programme of works, to an end date of week ending Friday 25th March.
- 7.3 The Contractor is an affiliated member of *CBA* and holds Insurance for Public and Employees Liability with Towergate Risk Solutions, recommended by *CBA*. The Contractor will adhere to the *Health and Safety at Work Act,* 1974.

APPENDIX 2 DIGITAL ARCHIVE

DIGITAL PHOTO ARCHIVE

No	SUBJECT	View from
1	Report Plate 1 - google-earth AP	-
2	Report Plate 2 - Area 'A' playing field & Ysgol Eglysbach	Southwest
3	Report Plate 3 - Ysgol Eglysbach roadside trench	South
4	Report Plate 4 - Area 'C' topsoil strip	South
5	Report Plate 5 - Area 'C'; Field 1	North
6	Report Plate 6 - Area 'C'; Field 2 towards Field 1	South
7	Report Plate 7 - Hedged boundary between Fields 1 & 2	East
8	Report Plate 8 - Farm bridge to be replaced	South
9	Report Plate 9 - Field 2	Southwest
10	Report Plate 10 - Field 3	South
11	Report Plate 11 - Field 3	South
12	Report Plate 12 - Field 1	North
13	Report Plate 13 - Field 3 section of dredging	South
14	Report Plate 14 – as above	South
15	Report Plate 15 - Finds	South
16	Ysgol Eglwysbach, January 2011	North
17	Ysgol Eglwysbach, bridge over Afon Hiraethlyn, January 2011	West
18	Ysgol Eglwysbach Area 'A' prior to works, January 2011	North
19	Area 'B' prior to works, January 2011	North
20	Area 'C' prior to works, January 2011	Northwest
21	Sample gateposts	West
22	Ysgol Eglysbach roadside trench	South
23	as above	South
24	Area 'C'; Field 1 during works	South
25	Area 'C'; Field 2 during works	South
26	Area 'C'; Field 3 during works	South
27	as above	South
28	as above	South