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Wind Turbine at Site 10505 Rhosbeirio, Anglesey

Archaeological Trial Trenching Report



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Archaeological Trial Trenching Report

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Archaeological Trial Trenching

Summary

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Stephensen Halliday to undertake an archaeological evaluation in advance of development on land at Rhosbeirio, Anglesey, Wales. Previous desk-based assessment (Wessex 2013a) and geophysical survey (Wessex Archaeology 2013b) indicated that there was high potential for archaeological remains on the Site. The results of the geophysical survey indicated that the majority of the anomalies identified were of likely archaeological interest, and were grouped towards the eastern extent of the cable route, comprising a series of ditches oriented approximately northwest to southeast. Archaeological evaluation was requested by the Planning Control Archaeologist at Gwynedd Archaeological Planning Service (GAPS), who act as advisors to the Isle of Anglesey County Council.

Undated ditches were present in Trenches 2, 4 and 5 and the archaeology corresponded with anomalies depicted on the geophysical survey. The ditches in Trench 2 are seen on the geophysical survey as forming a right angle to the north of the trench. The angles of the ditches appeared to respect the modern field patterning and may relate to the enclosure of land in the post-medieval or modern period. The ditches within Trenches 4 and 5 were aligned northwest to southeast, and ditches within Trench 4 were aligned with a former field boundary, still visible as a stone wall to the southeast of the trench. It is possible that these features also relate to former field boundaries.

Thearchive is currently held at Wessex Archaeology's Sheffield offices under site code 88942 and will be deposited with Anglesey Archives in due course under a relevant accession number.

Archaeological Trial Trenching

Acknowledgements

This project was commissioned by Stephenson Halliday. Wessex Archaeology would also like to thank Gwynedd Archaeological Trust for their guidance and support throughout the project.

The report was compiled by Chris Harrison, the fieldwork was undertaken by Charlotte Burton and Chris Harrison. The illustrations were prepared by Chris Breeden. Grace Corbett managed the project on behalf of Wessex Archaeology.

Archaeological Trial Trenching

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project background

- 1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Stephenson Halliday to undertake an archaeological evaluation in advance of development on land at Rhosbeirio, Anglesey, Wales, NGR 239340 391140 (hereafter 'the Site').
- 1.1.2 Previous desk-based assessment (Wessex 2013a) and geophysical survey (Wessex Archaeology 2013b) indicated that there was high potential for archaeological remains on the Site. The results of the geophysical survey indicated that the majority of the anomalies identified were of likely archaeological interest, and were grouped towards the eastern extent of the cable route, comprising a series of ditches oriented approximately northwest-southeast.
- 1.1.3 Archaeological evaluation was requested by the Planning Control Archaeologist at Gwynedd Archaeological Planning Service (GAPS), who act as advisors to the Isle of Anglesey County Council. The work was carried in line with an approved Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI; Wessex 2013c). The results of the evaluation will allow for an informed decision to be made regarding the suitability of the Site for development.

1.2 The Site

- 1.2.1 The Site (**Figure 1**) comprises three agricultural fields to the south of Rhosbeirio Farm, approximately 2km east of the village of Llanfechell and some 5km southwest of Amlwch. The site occupies relatively flat land within the Afon Wygyr valley.
- 1.2.2 The Site lies on Neoproterozoic mica schist and psammite of the New Harbour Group, which is overlain by Quaternary superficial sediment comprising Devensian diamicton (Geological Survey of England and Wales).

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 General

2.1.1 The following is summarised from the DBA (Wessex 2013a).

2.2 Designated heritage assets

2.2.1 There are no designated or non-designated heritage assets within the Site; however, there are a number of assets in very close proximity, including Bronze Age remains comprising a cist burial and a round barrow, and an early 20th century chapel.



2.3 Prehistoric and Romano-British

- 2.3.1 A cist burial, containing a beaker and an inhumation burial, was discovered at Rhosbeirio Farm, to the west of the Site. A possible cist grave, sealed beneath the remains of a cairn, was excavated at Rhyd-y-Groes wind farm, c. 1.7km to the northeast of the Site. Furthermore, three round barrows are recorded within the wider area. The tumulus to the south-east of Rhosbeirio Farm lies 100m northeast of the Site. Although ploughed down, it survives up to 0.6m in height and its diameter has been estimated at approximately 30m. It is not certain whether the feature recorded c. 115m to the west of the Site represents a round barrow, as there is a natural rock outcrop at this location. These barrows are likely associated with the Pen-y-Morwydd barrow located on the summit of a small hill c. 730m to the west of the Site. Although deteriorating, the mound is 2m in height and the central burial is likely to have survived as there is no evidence of robbing. Additionally, a palstave has been found at Plas Bodewryd, approximately 500m to the south-east of the Site.
- 2.3.2 Although there is no record of late prehistoric and Romano-British activity within the Site, a number of enclosures, tentatively dated to these periods, are recorded within the nearby area. The earthwork enclosure at Llifad lies on the south-east facing slopes of the hill, c. 500m to the west of the Site. The pentagonal enclosure with a ditch and two banks is thought to be of Romano-British date, although a late prehistoric (Iron Age) date has also been indicated. A circular enclosure near Llifad (c. 410m to the south-west of the Site) remains undated, although a Romano-British date for this feature has been suggested. An irregular enclosure surrounding linear features, dated to the Iron Age period, is recorded approximately 840m to the north-west of the Site, to the south of Tai Hen Farm.
- 2.3.3 The investigations of a similar fortified enclosed farmstead, surrounded by fields and stock enclosures, at Rhyd-y-Groes wind farm, c. 1.7km to the northeast of the Site, revealed little dating evidence, although the site is now considered to date from the Late Iron Age through to the late Romano-British period.

2.4 Medieval and post-medieval

- 2.4.1 The archaeological evidence for medieval activity within the surrounding landscape is sparse, however, it is likely that this area was settled and farmed from the early medieval period onwards. Rhosbeirio is recorded in the mid-19th century as a small parish with the Parish Church of St Peirio located c. 370m to the north of the Site. The place-name Rhosbeirio, also known and Rhos-Peirio, translates as 'St Peirio's moorland'.
- 2.4.2 Further evidence for medieval religious activity within the Study Area comprises the late medieval church of St Mary in Bodewryd to the south-east of the Site and the site of medieval chapel at Capel Anhunedd-y-Pran, located c. 640m to the south-west of the Site.
- 2.4.3 The landscape seems to have remained essentially rural throughout the post-medieval period and there is no indication of any significant development during much of this period. Plas Bodewryd (c. 370m to the south-east of the Site), a mansion house set back from the country road in the hamlet of Bodewryd, comprises an early 16th century central block with later additions. A dovecote associated with the house is of 18th century date.
- 2.4.4 Rhosbeirio Farm, now used as stables, comprises an 'L'-shaped building dated to the 17th century, with walls made of rubble and slated roof.



3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

3.1 Trial Trenching

- 3.1.1 The aims of the trial trenching were to:
 - Record, as far as is reasonably possible, the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains observed.
 - Provide sufficient information to enable an informed decision to be made about the need for additional archaeological mitigation.
 - Investigate geophysical anomalies revealed by previous survey.
 - Make available the results of the work.

3.2 Fieldwork methodology

- 3.2.1 Details of the methodology employed during the evaluation can be found in the WSI prepared by Wessex Archaeology (2013c). The evaluation was carried out in accordance with this document and with industry best practice as outlined in guidelines issued by the Institute for Archaeologists (2008a, 2008b, 2010).
- 3.2.2 Five 30 by 2m trenches were set out in accordance with the agreed Site plan to an accuracy of within 0.1m using a survey grade GPS (**Figure 1**).

4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 The following is a summary of the information held in the Site archive. Trench locations are shown on **Figure 1** and the recorded contexts are summarised in **Appendix 1**. The plans of the trenches with archaeology in are presented in **Figure 2**.

4.2 Summary

- 4.2.1 A total of five trenches, measuring 30 x 2m were excavated. Trenches 1 and 2 were located within the western most field and targeted an area of ploughing and a northeast-southwest and northwest-southeast linear geophysical anomaly. Trench 3 was positioned in the middle field and targeted a possible circular feature on the geophysical survey. Trenches 4 and 5 were excavated in the eastern field and targeted northwest-southeast linear geophysical feature.
- 4.2.2 Trenches 1 and 2 occupied a plateau that extended westwards to a few meters west of Trench 3. The ground then descended eastwards towards a stream bed. Typically the stratigraphy of the trenches comprised topsoil overlaying natural. Subsoil was present in Trench 5.
- 4.2.3 No archaeology was uncovered in Trenches 1 and 3. Trenches 2, 4 and 5 revealed field boundaries of probable post-medieval to modern date, none of which produced any datable artefacts.



4.3 Trench 2

4.3.1 Trench 2 was excavated to natural at 0.25m below ground level (bgl), and reveal two linear features (running northeast-southwest and northwest-southeast) corresponding with geophysical anomalies (**203** and **205**; **Plates 1** and **2**). Both ditches were revealed to be cut as shallow 'U'-shapes with irregular southern edges. The ditches were filled by a single mid-brown sandy-silt (**204** and **206**). No finds were recovered.

4.4 Trench 4

4.4.1 Trench 4 was excavated to natural at 0.28m bgl, and revealed two northwest-southeast ditches, corresponding with the geophysical survey (**403** and **405**; **Plates 3** and **4**). The ditches were excavated to reveal steep sided 'U'-shapes. They were both filled by a single homogenous light greyish brown silty clay (**404** and **405**). No finds were recovered.

4.5 Trench 5

4.5.1 Trench 5 was excavated to natural at 0.5m bgl, and revealed a large northwest-southeast ditch (**504**; **Plate 5**) that corresponded with the geophysical survey. The ditch was cut into the subsoil (**502**) and filled with a mid-greyish brown sandy clay (**505**).

5 DISCUSSION

5.1 Summary

- 5.1.1 Archaeology was present in Trenches 2, 4 and 5 in the form of ditches. Where encountered, the archaeology corresponded with anomalies identified on the geophysical survey. No dating evidence was uncovered.
- 5.1.2 The ditches in Trench 2 were seen on the geophysical survey as forming a right angle to the north of the trench. The angles of the ditches appear to respect the modern field patterning and may relate to the enclosure of land in the post-medieval or modern period (Wessex Archaeology 2013a; **Figure 2**).
- 5.1.3 Trenches 4 and 5 revealed ditches all aligned northwest-southeast. The ditches in trench 4 are aligned with a former field boundary, still visible as a stone wall to the southeast of the trench. It is possible that these features relate to former field boundaries.
- 5.1.4 A possible circular feature of archaeological origin identified in the geophysical survey and investigated in Trench 3 was not uncovered. It is believed that a slight variance in the geology may have resulted in the geophysical response.
- 5.1.5 The features produced no finds and are shown on the geophysical survey as extending across the entire survey area. The lack of finds from the fills and the extended linear form of the ditches suggests they may be agricultural in function.

5.2 Conclusions

5.2.1 The features identified in the geophysical survey and targeted in Trenches 2, 4 and 5 have been shown to be shallow ditches. No finds were recovered from the ditches, making it difficult to assign a date of origin. However, the location and orientation of the ditches suggests they may align with the modern field pattern, and may therefore be post-medieval or modern in date and agricultural in function.



6 STORAGE AND CURATION

6.1 Museum

6.1.1 The archive from the fieldwork will be deposited with Anglesey Archives in due course under a relevant accession number.

6.2 **Preparation of archive**

- 6.2.1 The complete Site archive, which will include paper records, photographic records, graphics, and digital data, will be prepared following the standard conditions for the acceptance of excavated archaeological material by the relevant museum, and in general following nationally recommended guidelines (SMA 1995; IfA 2009; Brown 2011; ADS 2013).
- 6.2.2 All archive elements will be marked with the Site/accession code, and a full index will be prepared.

6.3 Discard policy

6.3.1 Wessex Archaeology follows the guidelines set out in Selection, Retention and Dispersal (SMA 1993), which allows for the discard of selected artefact and eco fact categories which are not considered to warrant any future analysis. Any discard of artefacts will be fully documented in the project archive.

6.4 Security copy

6.4.1 In line with current best practice (e.g. Brown 2011), on completion of the project a security copy of the written records will be prepared, in the form of a digital PDF/A file. PDF/A is an ISO-standardised version of the Portable Document Format (PDF) designed for the digital preservation of electronic documents through omission of features ill-suited to long-term archiving.

6.5 Archive

6.5.1 The project archive has been compiled into a stable, fully cross-referenced and indexed archive in accordance with current guidelines (Museum and Galleries Commission 1992; UKIC 2001; Brown 2011). The archive is currently held at the offices of Wessex Archaeology in Sheffield, under the project code **88942**.

6.6 Copyright

- 6.6.1 This report, and the archive generally, may contain material that is non-Wessex Archaeology copyright (e.g. Ordnance Survey, British Geological Survey, Crown Copyright), or the intellectual property of third parties, which we are able to provide for limited reproduction under the terms of our own copyright licences, but for which copyright itself is non-transferrable by Wessex Archaeology. Users remain bound by the conditions of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 with regard to multiple copying and electronic dissemination of the report.
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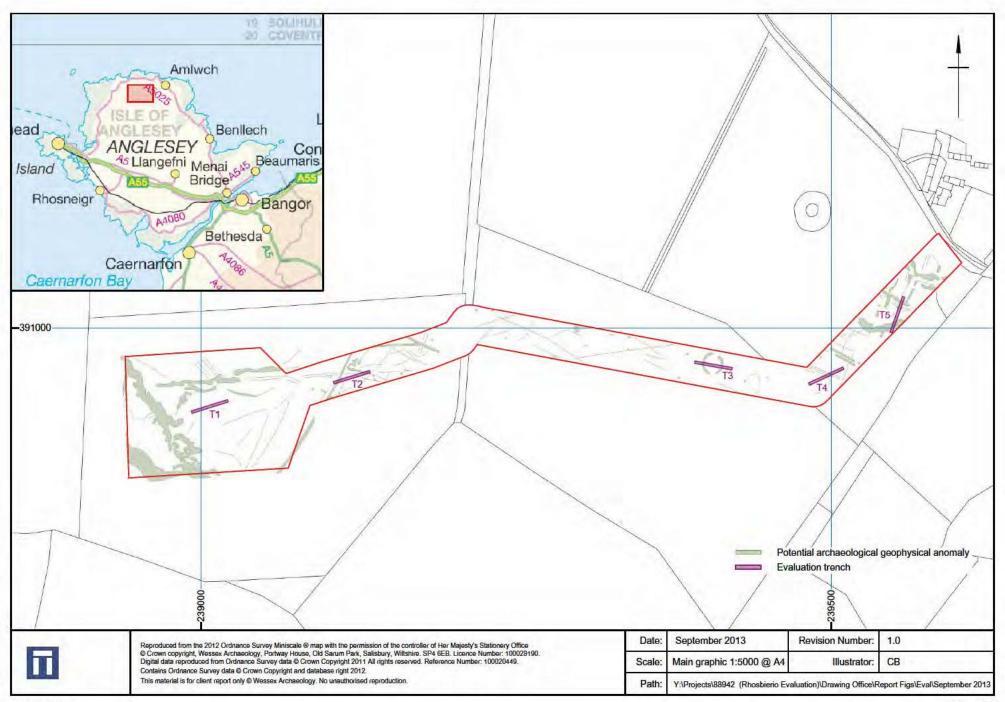
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8 APPENDICES

8.1 Appendix 1: Trench Descriptions

Context	Description	Depth BGL (m)
	Trench No. 1	Max Depth: 0.3
<mark>101</mark>	Topsoil: Mid-greyish brown moderately compact clayey-silt with dense rooting and sparse small subrounded stones (<15mm in size)	0- 0.25
102	Natural: Light orangey yellow silty clay with frequent inclusions of schist	0.25+
	Trench No. 2	Max Depth: 0.36
201	Topsoil: Mid-greyish brown moderately compact clayey-silt with dense rooting and sparse small subrounded stones (<15mm in size)	0- 0.25
202	Natural: Light orangey yellow silty clay with frequent inclusions of schist	0.25+
203	Cut: Shallow 'U' shaped ditch measuring 1.12m in width. The ditch had a steeped northern edge and an irregular shallow southern edge.	0.25- 0.29
204	Fill of 203: Homogenous mid-greyish brown sandy clay. No finds were uncovered.	0.25- 0.29
205	Cut: Shallow 'U' shaped ditch measuring 0.76m in width. Homogenous mid greyish brown sandy clay. No finds were uncovered.	0.25-0.36
206	Fill of 205: Homogenous mid-greyish brown sandy clay. No finds were uncovered.	0.25- 0.36
	Max Depth: 0.3	
301	Topsoil: Mid-brownish grey friable silty clay (60:40) with frequent rooting to the top layer and sparse small well rounded stones	0- 0.30
302	Natural: Light orangey yellow silty clay with frequent inclusions of schist	0.30+
	Trench No. 4	Max Depth: 0.73
401	Topsoil: Mid-greyish brown moderately compact clayey-silt with dense rooting and sparse small subrounded stones (<15mm in size)	0- 0.28
402	Natural: Light orangey yellow silty clay with frequent inclusions of schist	0.28+
403	Cut: Steep 'U' shaped ditch measuring 1.1m in width.	0.28- 0.52
404	Fill of 403: Homogenous mid-greyish brown sandy clay. No finds were uncovered.	0.28- 0.52
405	Cut: Steep 'U' shaped ditch measuring 0.9m in width	0.28- 0.73
406	Fill of 405: Homogenous mid-greyish brown sandy clay. No finds were uncovered.	0.28- 0.73
	Trench No. 5	Max Depth: 1.00m
501	Topsoil: Mid-greyish brown moderately compact clayey-silt with dense rooting and sparse small subrounded stones (<15mm in size)	0- 0.30

Context	Description	Depth BGL (m)
502	Subsoil: Mid-yellowish brown silty sand – hill wash, possibly formed by ploughing.	0.30- 0.5
503	Natural: Light orangey yellow silty clay with frequent inclusions of schist	0.5
504	Cut: Wide 'U' shaped ditch measuring 3.82m in width.	0.3- 0.8
505	Fill of 504: Homogenous mid greyish brown sandy clay. No finds were uncovered.	0.3- 0.8



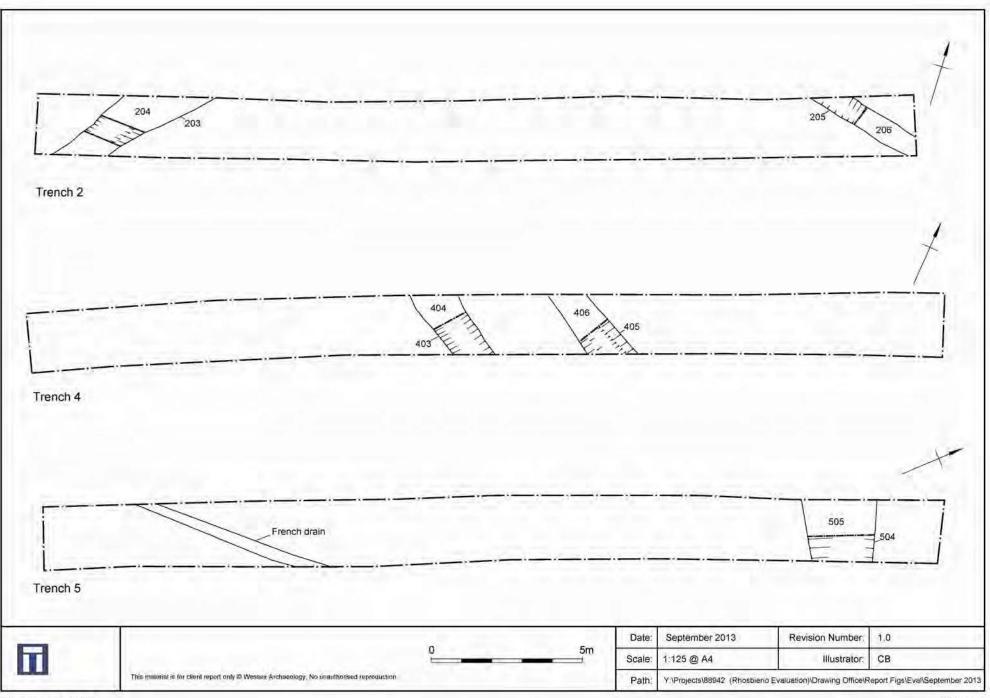




Plate 1: Trench 2, plan and section of 203 taken from the southwest



Plate 2: Trench 2, plan and section of 205 taken from the southeast

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Plate 3: Trench 4, plan and section of 403 taken from the southeast



Plate 4: Trench 4, plan and section of 405 taken from the southeast

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Plate 5: Trench 5, plan and section of 504 taken from the northwest

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