

Aberglasney Gardens, Carmarthenshire

Archaeological Watching Brief



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Report No. 641



CAMBRIAN
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
PROJECTS

Aberglasney Gardens, Carmarthenshire

Archaeological Watching Brief

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Report No: **641**

Date: **October 2010**



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Summary

In June 2010, Cambrian Archaeological Projects carried out an archaeological watching brief during the demolition of a wall and the excavation of a foundation trench for a new wall at Aberglasney Gardens, Llandeilo. The ground works did not reveal any archaeological features, but did demonstrate that a garden had once existed to the south of the line of the wall.

1. Introduction

1.1 Location and scope of work

In June 2010, Cambrian Archaeological Projects was commissioned by Graham Rankin of the Aberglasney Restoration Trust to undertake an Archaeological Watching Brief during ground works in the area of the Stable Block at Aberglasney Gardens (NGR: SN 5815 2231; fig. 1). The works involved the removal of an existing wall and the excavation of a footings trench along the same line for the construction of a new wall (fig. 2).

The work was undertaken on the 9th June 2010 by Hywel Keen.

1.2 Geology and topography

Aberglasney Gardens are located 4km west of Llandeilo in the Towy River Valley. They lie at around 70m AOD on the northern terrace of the river in an area of Ordovician Sandstone (British Geological Survey 2001).

1.3 Historical Background

The house and gardens at Aberglasney are known to date back to the medieval period (c. thirteenth century), although details of the early history of the site are scarce. In the fifteenth century, there are known to have been 'nine green gardens' surrounding the house (Aberglasney Restoration Trust 2010), and Aberglasney was evidently a fine country estate. The house and estate passed through a number of different families, with each new owner and each generation putting their stamp on the estate through programmes of rebuilding and redesign. In the twentieth century, the house and gardens began to decline and following the second world war the estate was broken up and sold, finally coming into the ownership of the Aberglasney Restoration Trust in 1995.

2. Aims and Objectives

The aims and objectives of the archaeological watching brief were:

- to establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within the development area.
- To provide sufficient information to allow mitigation against any adverse effects the proposed development may have on the buried archaeological resource.

3. Archaeological Watching Brief

3.1 Methodology

An archaeologist was on site for all of the ground works. Following the demolition of the existing wall the area was cleared of rubble using a machine fitted with a toothless ditching blade (fig. 3 and 4). Following the ground clearance, a trench 18m long and 1m wide was excavated using a toothed bucket to a maximum depth of 1m (fig. 5).

All works were undertaken in accordance with both the IFA's *Standards and Guidance: for an archaeological watching briefs* and current Health and Safety legislation.

3.2 Watching Brief Results

3.2.1 Soils and ground conditions

The weather conditions were good during the ground works, with no rain. The ground was dry.

3.2.2 Distribution of Deposits

An original area of stone walling 10m long was demolished. This stood directly on top of the natural clay, 0.5m below the turf.

On the southern side of the wall a dark brown garden soil was identified; this was heavily root disturbed and reached a maximum depth of 0.6m from the current ground surface (fig. 6). The depth of the garden soil gradually increased to the east.

The foundation trench for the new wall extended to the north of the demolished section of stone wall for a distance of 18m. The garden soil was observed across the entire trench, reaching a maximum depth of 0.6m and overlying the natural clay.

A modern service trench cut across the area 0.6m to the north of the demolished wall. No features of archaeological significance were identified.

4. Discussion and Interpretation

4.1 Reliability of field investigation

The watching brief was not hampered by any modern buildings or bad weather.

4.2 Overall Interpretation

The watching brief revealed that the demolished wall had acted a boundary for a garden situated to the south of the Stable block. There was no evidence of any activity that predated the wall.

5. Bibliography

Aberglasney Restoration Trust 2010. Aberglasney – a garden lost in time. <http://www.aberglasney.org/index.php> accessed 1st October 2010.

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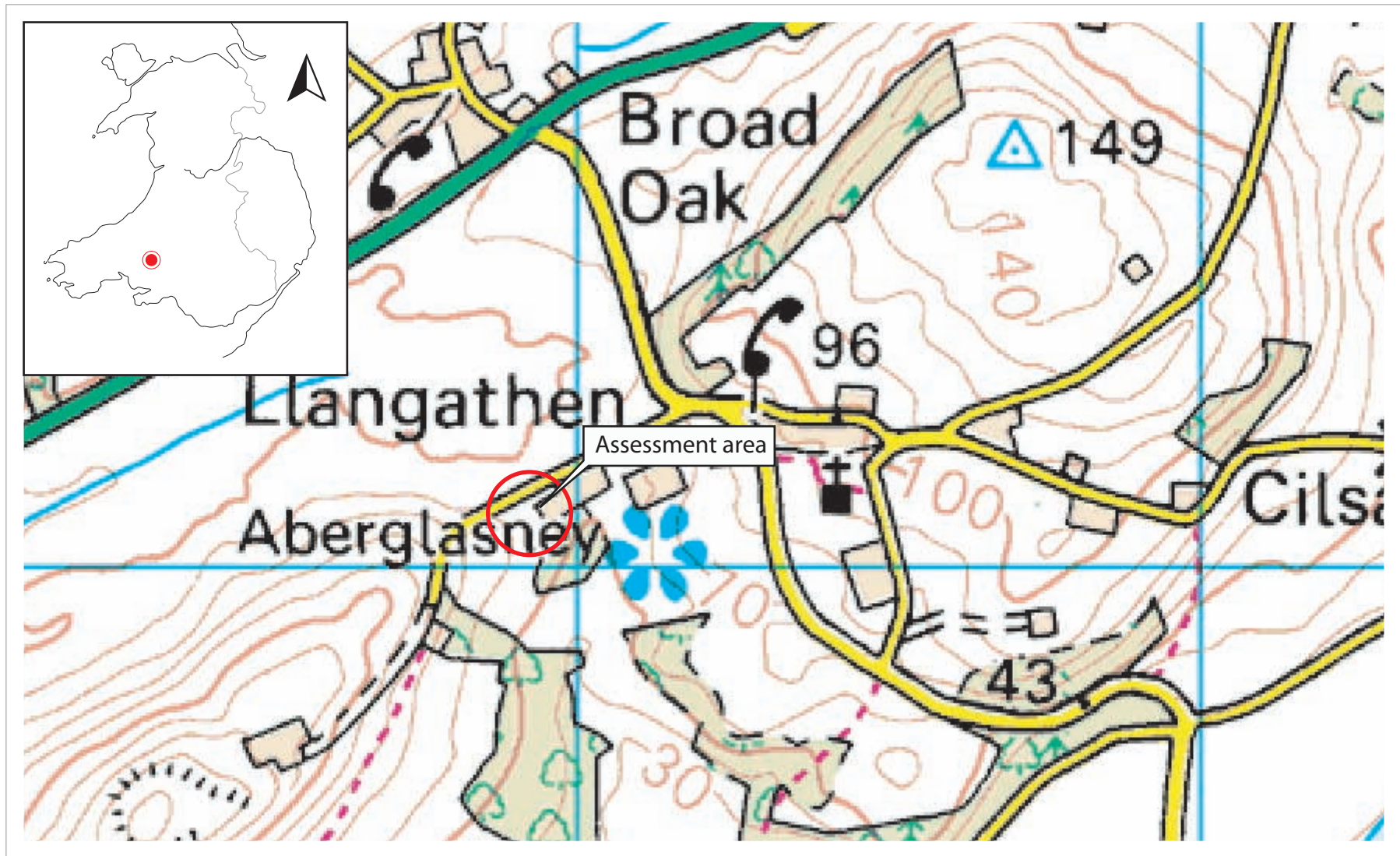


Fig 1: Map showing general location of assessment area



Fig. 2
Location of
foundation trench



Fig. 3
Working shot
across site after
demolition of wall
Looking SE



Fig. 4
Working shot a
cross site after
demolition of wall
Looking SW



Fig. 5
View SW along
foundaton trench

Scale = 1m



Fig. 6
North-facing
section of trench

Scale = 1m



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