

An Initial Site Evaluation **“The Old Cutter” Site**

Moel-y-Don
Anglesey



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1. Abstract

Little is known in regards to the site, known as the “Old Cutter” at Moel-y-Don, Anglesey. Although it is featured on the Coflein website, the information is extremely limited (two aerial photographs taken in 1999).

On 20th September 2014, the authors, to assess suitability for further survey work, undertook an initial evaluation of the site. The site was recorded in a series of scaled photographs, with GPS co-ordinates being taken at the centre, bow and stern of the site. Measurements of the overall dimensions of the site were also recorded.

It was determined that this site would be suitable for further survey work to be undertaken. However, because of conditions at the site formal risk assessments and planning would have to be undertaken.

1.1 Acknowledgments

This report has been compiled from data collected by the authors on 20th September 2014. All photographs were taken by Melanie Taylor and Peter May and may be used with their permission.

The authors would also like to acknowledge the support of Michaela Gould (Peter's partner) for her on-going patience with our work at this and other projects.

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3. Introduction

There is little information to be found within the archaeological record for this site. There is reference to the site on the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales (www.coflein.gov.uk) website, in the form of aerial photographs taken in 1999 of a cutter, on an east / west alignment approximately 20m in length at this site (coflein reference: 401254). However this appears to be the only information at this time.

The site was identified by one of the authors, whilst out for a walk in the area. He remembers the vessel being there when he visited the site as a child in 1964, but did not recall the site until the recent walk. Information gained by speaking to a local man (who only gave his name as “Tom”) suggests that the vessel was towed to it’s current location to be repaired “many years ago” but was unable to elaborate on what had happened to the vessel for it to have remained.

3.1 Hypothesis

The vessel was towed to this site, prior to 1964 for repair, however due to a catastrophic event, perhaps fire, the vessel was abandoned, as repair became too expensive.

3.2 Site Location

The site is located on the foreshore of the Menai Straights, near to the Plas Coch holiday park, Anglesey. It can be accessed by car, down a narrow, single-track road, but parking is limited.

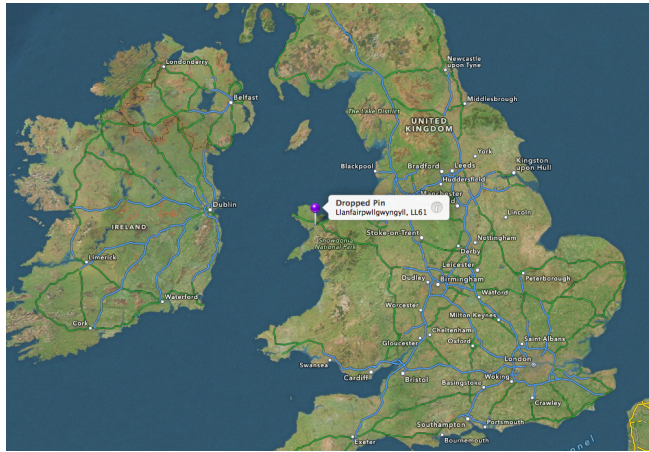
The site itself is within the inter-tidal range, although access will only be impossible at high tide, with the whole site being uncovered for much of the tidal range. It should be noted that extreme care should be taken with the tidal conditions within the Menai Straights, as they can be extreme and unpredictable to the un-familiar.

The RCAHMW put the site in Ordnance Survey reference SH51866785

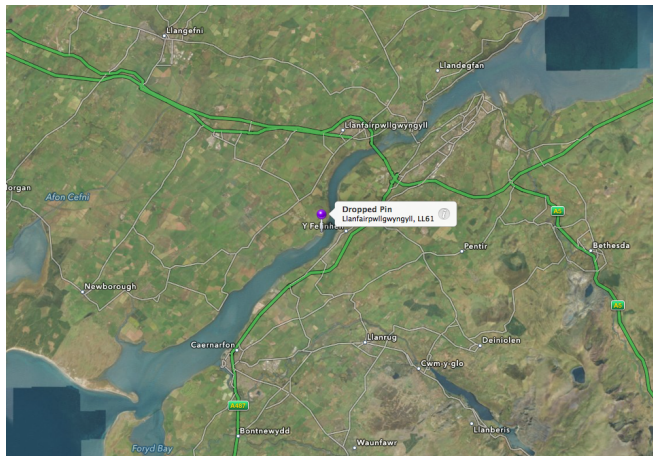
Global positioning system (WGS-84) position (to centre of site):

N	053°11'34.4"
W	004°13'06.8"

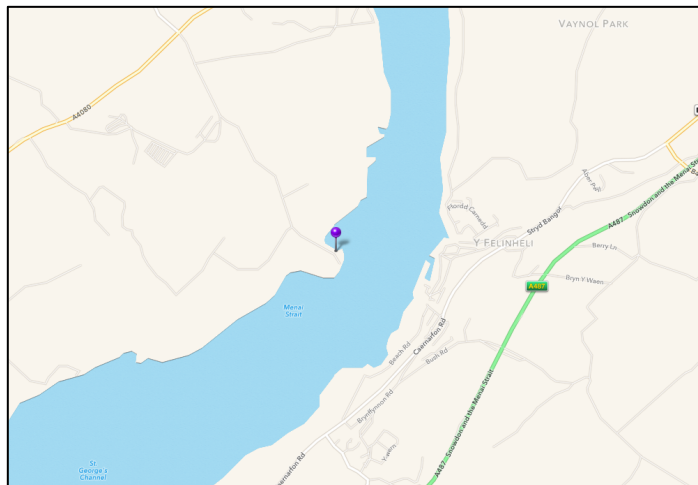
The following sequence of maps shows the sites position relative to the rest of the United Kingdom (Map 1), it’s position relative to North West Wales and the Isle of Anglesey (Map 2) and it’s precise location in detail (Map 3).



Map 1



Map 2



Map 3

3.3 Objective

To develop an overall view and understanding of the site in order to establish it's suitability for a formal survey to be undertaken on it in the future.

4. Survey

4.1 Methodology

A formal survey of this site was not undertaken on this occasion. Instead the site was recorded in scaled photographs. The overall dimensions of the site were recorded using a tape measure and some rough sketches were produced.

4.2 Equipment

Fuji HS 25 EXR Camera

Scaling poles (1 meter in length, divided in to 250mm sections – yellow / black)

50m tape measure

Hand held GPS (WGS-84)

Paper, clipboards and writing implements

The authors recommend that anyone attempting the site wears appropriate clothing / footwear. The site is surrounded by extremely soft thick mud that is around 4 inches deep in parts (ankle deep mostly).

5. Results

5.1 Description of Site

The site is a large vessel, of wooden construction, that has planking to both the outside of the timber frame (carvel) and inside with iron fixings and pins that are visible. It is well broken, with parts of the site obviously loose and waiting to fall away. The vessels rudder remains prominent at the stern of the vessel with the bow further up the shore and the whole site sits upright, on an east / west alignment.

5.2 Photographs and Measurements

Fig 1.



Figure 1 shows the overall scale of this site, the bow is in the foreground, (a scale pole is visible at the bow) with the stern in the distance. Behind the Menai Straights can be seen at low water.

Figure 2 clearly shows the starboard side of the site, whilst Figure 3 shows the port side elevation, with scaling visible on the upright sternpost. The overall length of this site, as shown in Figure 2 is 23.400m (blue line) whilst at it mid-point, again shown in Figure 2 it measures 4.600m (red line).

Fig 2.

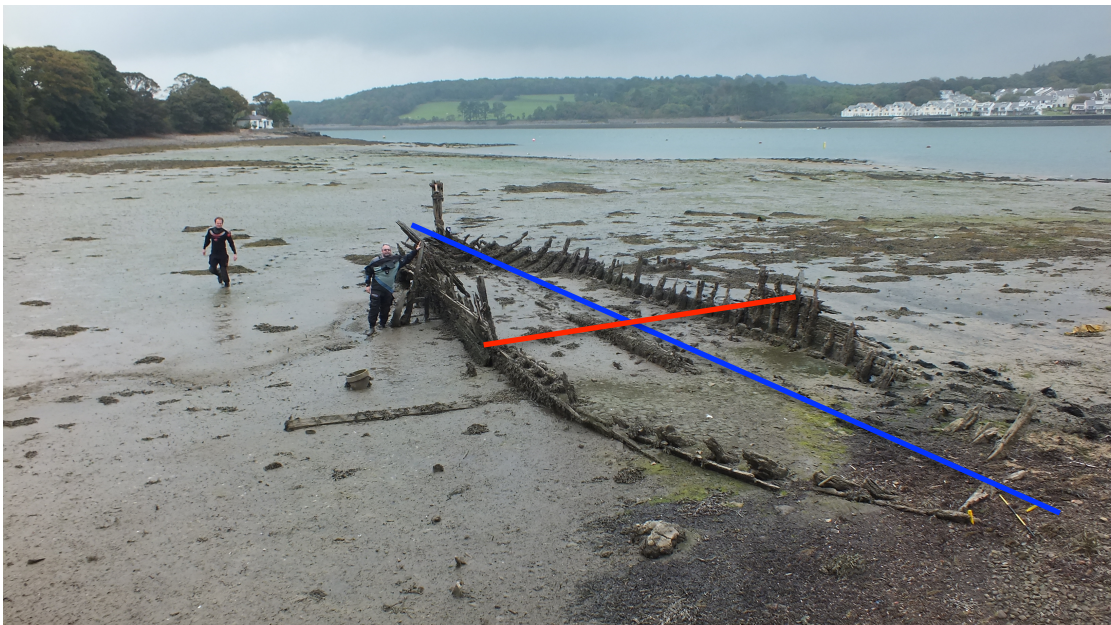


Fig 3.



In Figure 3 the yellow arrow shows the GPS position recorded for the bow, whilst orange arrow shows the GPS position of the sternpost (not the true end of the site):

Position A:	N	053°11'13.1"
	W	004°13'07.2"

Position B	N	053°11'34.8"
	W	004 °13'06.6"

The most prominent feature of this site is the sternpost and rudder, which remain upright and in situ, with many of the iron fixings still in place, as demonstrated in Figure 4. The height of this feature is approximately 2.260m. Figure 5 and 6 show the feature from a forward position and starboard position, respectively.

Fig 4.



Fig 5.



Fig 6.



The stern section of the site is arguably the most intact, and most stable section. Figures 7 and 8 show the internal view of this area, which is covered in a moderate layer of seaweed and in-filled with gravel.

Fig 7.



Fig 8.

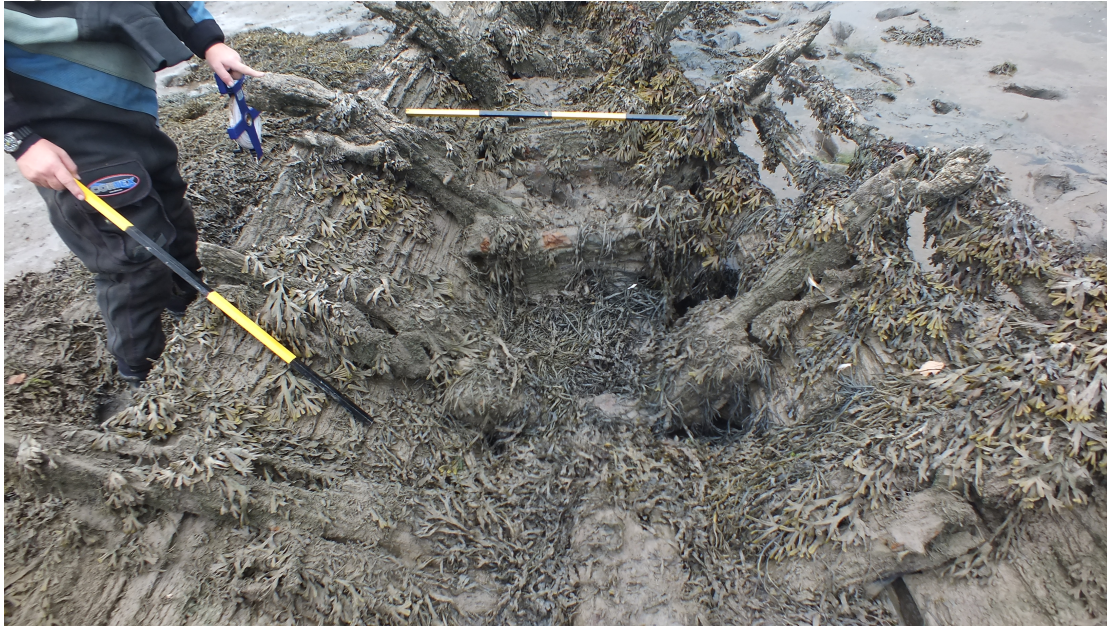


Fig 9.



Figure 9 demonstrates the coverage of seaweed and gravel more clearly. Also in this photograph it is possible to see that some of the iron fittings have become displaced and are lying in the vicinity of the site (red arrow).

As you progress forward of the site more features of the site become evident. Figure 10 shows part of the keel emerging from the mud and there is, what it thought to be, the remains of a bulkhead / partition visible (red arrow), although this is more clearly demonstrated in Figure 11.

Fig 10.



Fig 11.



Fig 12.



Fig 13.



Figures 12, 13 and 14 show the two layers of planking with the frame between them, evident on the Port side of the site and how the layers interconnect with the timber frame.

Fig 14.



Fig 15



Figure 15 is taken from the stern, looking towards the bow along the line of the keel. This picture is highly instructive in regards to the conditions on the site. Clearly, the bow is considerably more broken than the stern. Timbers have become loose and are out of situ (red arrows). The depth and viscosity of the mud is also evident through the footprints seen in the picture that have failed to collapse in despite having been made sometime earlier.

6. Discussion

As defined earlier in this report, the work undertaken here was merely a preliminary evaluation of the site in order to establish its suitability for further survey work to be undertaken. It was established prior to the evaluation being undertaken that there had been no previous significant work undertaken on this site and as such any information that could be gained would be useful in understanding the site.

This site is clearly within the inter-tidal range, although work can be undertaken at most stages of the tide, the exception being high tide (springs). Care should be taken on this site due to the muddy conditions, with site personnel wearing suitable clothing and footwear.

The site itself is of substantial size with the bow being more broken than the stern, as evidenced in the photographs. It is arguable that the outstanding feature of this site is the stern section, with the rudder, planking and bulkhead remaining in situ. Evidently the site is of wooden construction. At this time it has not been possible to identify the type of timber used in the construction. There is evidence that the fixings are made of iron, some of which have been dislodged from their original positions.

6.1 Recommendations

Clearly this is a highly complex site that does warrant a much more detailed, 3-D survey. There are questions that only full evaluation will answer:

1. What materials were used in the construction (type of wood)
2. How was the site constructed
3. Is there any evidence of why the site came to be

There are also several questions that need to be answered, through examination of the historical record:

1. What is the name of this site
2. What was the sequence of events that led to the creation of this site
3. Who was the owner
4. What was her background / role

7. Conclusion

The work undertaken in this preliminary evaluation of the site is limited. As such we have been unable to prove or disprove our hypothesis this remains a future objective. However, we were able to meet our objective for this evaluation in that we determined that this site is worthy of further, formal, survey and evaluation. Any survey work that is to be undertaken, should be done so in the near future as the site is degrading. It is also important to note that extreme care should be taken on this site due to the conditions that surround it.

8. References

Royal Commission for Ancient and Historic Monuments Wales website:
www.coflein.gov.uk (search Moel-y-Don, reference: 401254) accessed 22nd
September 2014.