

Archaeology Wales

The Rhiw, Bridgend

Archaeological Photographic Record



By
Louis Stafford BA (Hons)

Report No: 1391


Archaeology Wales Limited,
Rhos Helyg, Cwm Belan,
Llanidloes, Powys, SY18 6QF
Tel: +44 (0) 1686 413857
Email: admin@arch-wales.co.uk


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Prepared For: Coastal Housing Group

Edited by: R. Hart
Signed: 
Position: Project Manager
Date: 18/09/2015

Authorised by: R. Hart
Signed: 
Position: Project Manager
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Non Technical Summary

This report results from an Archaeological Photographic Building Survey undertaken by Archaeology Wales Ltd (AW) of a masonry arch located in the rock face at the Rhiw multi-storey car park, Bridgend. The survey has been undertaken in advance of demolition works and the construction of a commercial and residential development. It has been prepared by Archaeology Wales Ltd for Coastal Housing Group.

The survey noted that the masonry arch which was covered in vegetation, comprised of a stone built retaining wall and adjacent segmented arch in a good state of preservation. The arch and wall appear to be contemporary, probably dating to the late Victorian period. No alterations were noted. The structure appears to have suffered only minor damage, mainly from vegetation root activity and weathering of the bonding matrix.

1 Introduction

Location and scope of work

In August 2015 Archaeology Wales Ltd (AW) carried out a photographic survey of a masonry arch in the rock face at the Rhiw multi storey car park, Bridgend, located at NGR: SS 90551 79621 (Fig 1). The survey complied with English Heritage guidelines (English Heritage, 2006, Understanding Historic Buildings). The work was required to satisfy a condition of planning consent prior to the demolition of and the redevelopment of the site (Bridgend County Borough Council: P/15/60/FUL).

The requirements of the survey were set out by the Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust (GGAT).

A Written Scheme of Investigations (Appendix 3) was prepared by Rowena Hart (AW) prior to the work taking place. This was subsequently approved by the GGAT.

Geology and topography

The solid geological formations beneath the assessment area are composed of mainly Porthkerry Member, Interbedded Limestone and Mudstone Sedimentary Rock with Blue Lias Formation also present in the area. The bedrock outcrops which are present on site appear to be that of the Rhaetic Sandstone, Quarella. (British Geological Survey 2001).

The site lies at approximately 20m above sea level situated on the eastern side of the River Ogmore which flows from north to south through the centre of Bridgend. The land is relatively flat directly adjacent to the river, rising gently to the east and south. The area is heavily urbanised surrounded by housing, industry and retail

Historical background

Prehistoric and early historic activity in this area is attested by the location of a late Neolithic or Bronze Age standing stone and a flint scraper find on the western bank of the river. Roman activity is indicated only by the find of a Roman coin hoard from Newcastle, also on the western bank of the Ogwr. The proposed site lies close to the earlier of two twelfth century castles located in this area known as Oldcastle or Nolton. The second, known as Newcastle, was located on the opposite (western) bank of the Ogwr and formed the focus for the

medieval settlement established by Robert Fitz Hamon c. 1106. The Old Castle (Nolton) site, which predates 1106, may be an early Norman structure or Welsh foundation and was located on higher ground on the southern edge of the proposed site (Soulsby 1983, 85).

The Old (Hen) and New (Newydd) castle focused settlements are mentioned by John Leland in his 1530s itinerary:

'At Penbont almost 2. Mile upper ther is a village, wherof that part that stondith on the weste side of the bridg is caullid Castelle Newith, and is in West Thawan; and that part of it that is on the est side of the bridge is caullid Henecastelle, and is yn Ter brennine' (Leland 1535-43, 29)

Leland's reference to Penbont (Bridgend) suggests that a bridge was built across the River Ogwr in the fourteenth-century, linking both settlements. A Coity Estate Map dated 1778 (see below) shows Penybont as a scatter of houses located on the east side of the Ogwr bridge on the bend of the river, north of Oldcastle. The road from Ewenny towards Coity and passing through Oldcastle in the eighteenth-century seems to have become the focus for further settlement during the early nineteenth century. It is during this period that Bridgend began to slowly grow. Quarries located close to the town mined Rhaetic sandstone (Quarella) present on the northern edge of the town and this industry played a part in its early development. The Rhiw was probably originally a trackway that connected the eastern side of Old Castle Village with a ford across the river Ogwr where Water Street Bridge is located today.

The area of the Rhiw (Rue) is mentioned in a report on sanitary conditions written in 1849:

'The Rue contains 14 houses letting at from 1s to 1s 8d a week. They are without water. In the street is an open gutter, and behind are very close and filthy yards, unpaved and wet and draining upon the houses. At the lower part of this street is a tan yard, and next it a fellmongery. The smell of the latter is complained of. Mr. Popkin also complains, and with great reason, of the smell of the adjacent public slaughterhouses. This quarter of the town is within the reach of the river floods.'
(Clark 1850)

The population of the town, however, did not significantly expand until the late twentieth-century with the arrival of the Ford Motor Company (Newman 1995, 158).

Map Regression

The 1878 Edition OS map 1:2500 appears to show only a small section of quarry face toward the southern half of the site, with a small circular wood overlying the site of the arch. A rectangular building which was orientated north-south is also present directly west of the arch and appears to be labelled 'tannery'.

The 1897 Edition OS map 1:2500 shows the previous rectangular building has now been removed. The map does not show any quarried sections and the wood which encroaches from the eastern side of site is still present overlying the position of the current arch. There appears to be a small pathway joining the Merthyr Mawr Road to the site of the Rhiw car park.

The 1914 Edition OS map 1:2500 shows the quarried outcrop as we see it today, with a south west to north east section. The arch marking where the scarp orientates north. The woods along the eastern side of site are no longer present and the path there appears to have its northern edge still marked but now forming a boundary. The boundary along the eastern edge has a small break where it joins the previous path to the north, possibly showing that access is still possible through this point

The 1948 Edition OS map 1:2500 shows no changes to the previous map, the northern edge of the previous pathway appears to still be marking the boundary with the same small break in the eastern boundary.

The 1972, 1977 and 1989 1:10000 OS Edition maps were also, but the resolution was too low to determine any changes, but appears that none occurred.

2 Aims and Objectives

Building Recording

The aims of the building recording were:

- . To provide a permanent paper and digital record of the structure prior to redevelopment of the area.
- . To assess evidence of phasing within the structure.
- . To assess evidence of construction techniques and original features within the Structure

3 Building Recording Methodology

Scope of Fieldwork

The survey was undertaken in accordance with CIFA Standard and Guidance for the archaeological investigation and recording of standing buildings or structures (2014) and to a standard equivalent to English Heritage Level 2 (English Heritage 'Understanding Historic Buildings: A Guide to Good Recording Practice' 2006).

The following will be considered:

- Site layout and organisation
- Function
- Materials, method of construction
- Original fixtures and fittings
- Subsequent fixtures and fittings
- Evidence of use and status
- Date/period of initial build and subsequent alterations

Project Officer Louis Stafford BA (Hons) undertook the building recording. All photographs were taken in high resolution (18MP) digital format. These were converted to TIFF format for storage.

4 The Building Recording

Figure 6 shows a measured sketch plan of the existing plan of the arch. Figure 7 shows the existing elevation of the structure and associated wall and bedrock. Figure 8 shows the location and direction from which the photographic plates were taken. The number after each red arrow corresponds to the plate on which the photograph appears. Not all photographs taken on site are presented in this report, however they will be included in the archive.

Plates 1-12 show views externally of the building and its surrounding. The survey found the structure to have had no alterations or fixtures present, with minor dilapidation of the pointing through root activity and weathering being the only notable change, with the structure appearing to be wholly original.

The Arch and Wall

The arch is orientated north to south with a small section of retaining wall attached which changes angle by approximate thirty degrees to the west. The arch is segmented, constructed of flat faced and squared grey limestone blocks with lime bonding mortar. The arch spans a width of approximately 3m at a height of 3.5m above ground level. The wall is of a slightly battered constructed of rough faced random rubble brought to course along a length of approximately 6m.

The arch appears to be a double skin of stones with the southern springer of the arch resting directly on the bedrock outcrop. The northern springer of the arch rests on the retaining wall. Lime has leached through on the western elevation and forms a thick lens on the underside of the arch. The arch does not appear to go further east and abuts the bedrock outcrop which forms the east underside of the arch. The northern and southern sides under the arch are battered toward the centre, with the bedrock forming the southern side and the stone wall the northern side.

The retaining wall appears to be a single skin of rough faced stone with rubble infill behind. The wall supports the arch on its northern side and continues over the top of the arch before joining the bedrock outcrop to the south. Two putlogs are present in the western end of the wall showing that timber scaffolding was used in the construction. The dense vegetation obscures the majority of the wall but appears to have dislodged the upper courses and removed some of the northern edge of the wall.

There appears to be little other details of note apart from a probable later insertion of a stone edged path running up the earth bank toward the north of the structure at a higher level, however this was heavily obscured by vegetation.

5 Discussion Conclusion

The majority of the structure was not visible due to dense vegetation obscuring the large parts of the structure. The simple construction noted from the site visit and the cartographic evidence allowed a relatively complete and reliable record to be made.

All photographs taken on site are included within the archive.

It would appear from the cartographic evidence from 1878 and 1897 OS maps, that there was always a through road from what is now the Rhiw car park toward Merthyr Mawr Road to the south of site and this may have facilitated the building of the arch and wall. The bedrock does not appear to be fully quarried to the extent that is present today until the late Victorian period as the 1914 map is the first to show the quarried face as it stands today. The encroachment of the quarry face on the eastern boundary of site may have cut off the through road from the Rhiw to the south and facilitated the building of the retaining wall and arch which would have allowed access to continue. The arch acts as a fairly decorative piece of functional architecture which supports the retaining wall and earth bank which rises from the north over the arch and allows a small path between the eastern boundary and the precipice of the outcrop.

The construction techniques used, with the use of putlogs and segmented arch are not datable on their own but are typical Victorian techniques. The OS maps place the current structure as being built between 1897 and 1914 at the end of the Victorian to Pre First World War Period. This would seem a valid date with only intrusive ground works of the earth bank leading to a definitive date.

6 Bibliography and references

British Geological Survey, 2001, 4th Edition, Solid Geology Map, UK South Sheet

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<http://map.coflein.gov.uk/> (accessed 18/09/15)

<http://data.gov.uk/data/> (accessed 18/09/15)

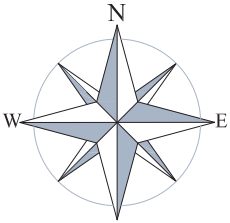
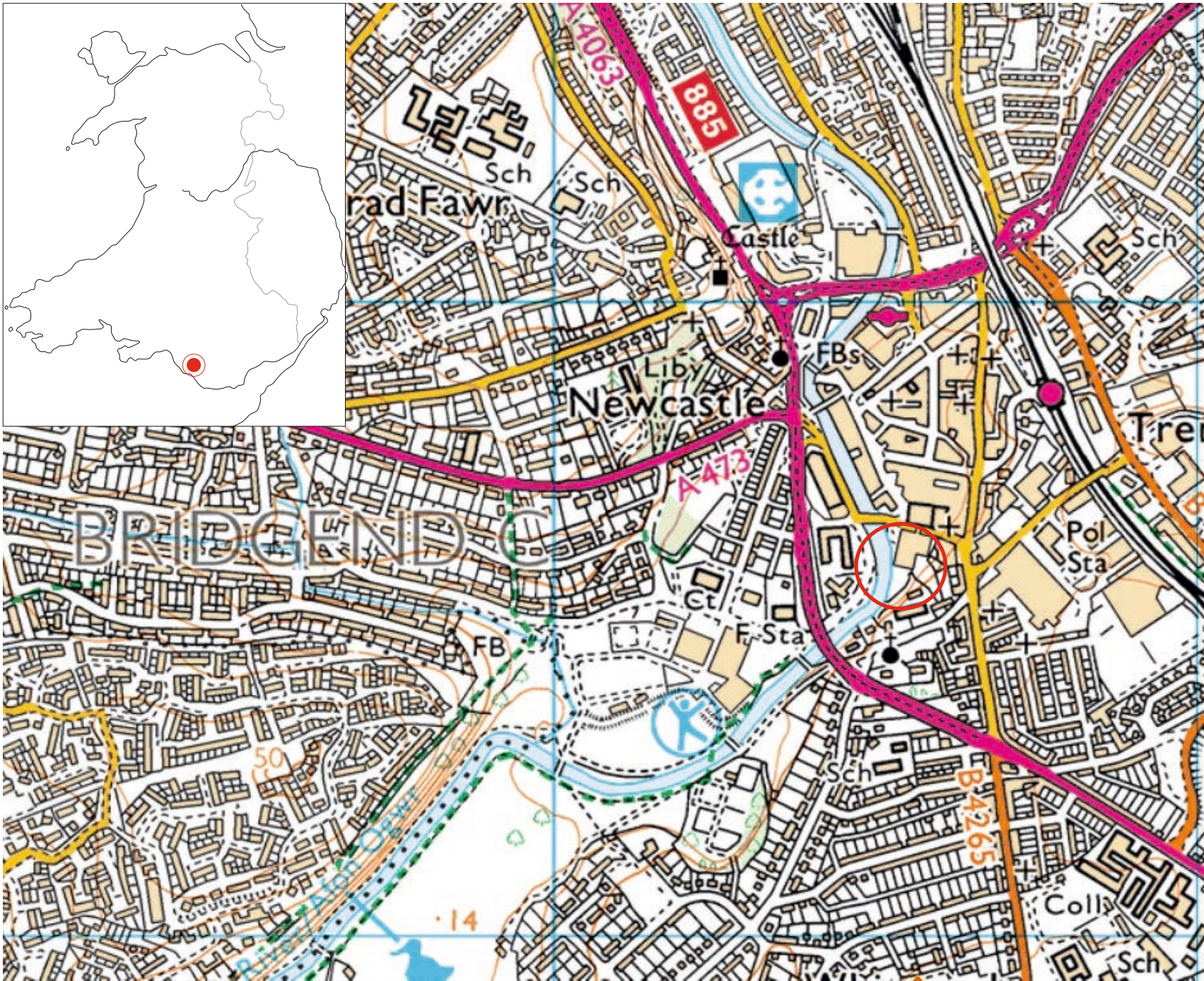


Fig 1: Site Location



Fig 2: OS 1878 1:2500



Fig 3: OS 1897 1:2500



Fig 4: OS 1914 1:2500



Fig 5: OS 1948 1:2500

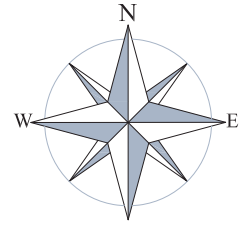


Fig 2-5: Historic Maps

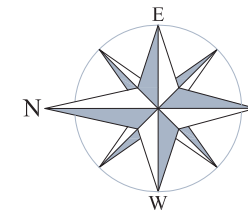
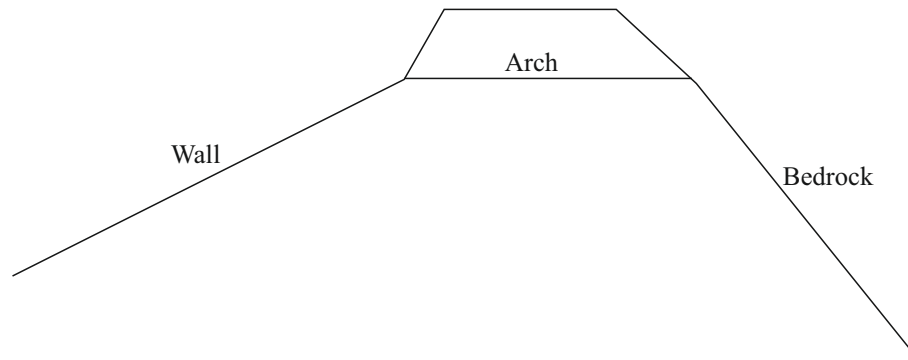
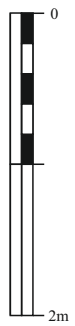


Fig 6: Sketch Plan

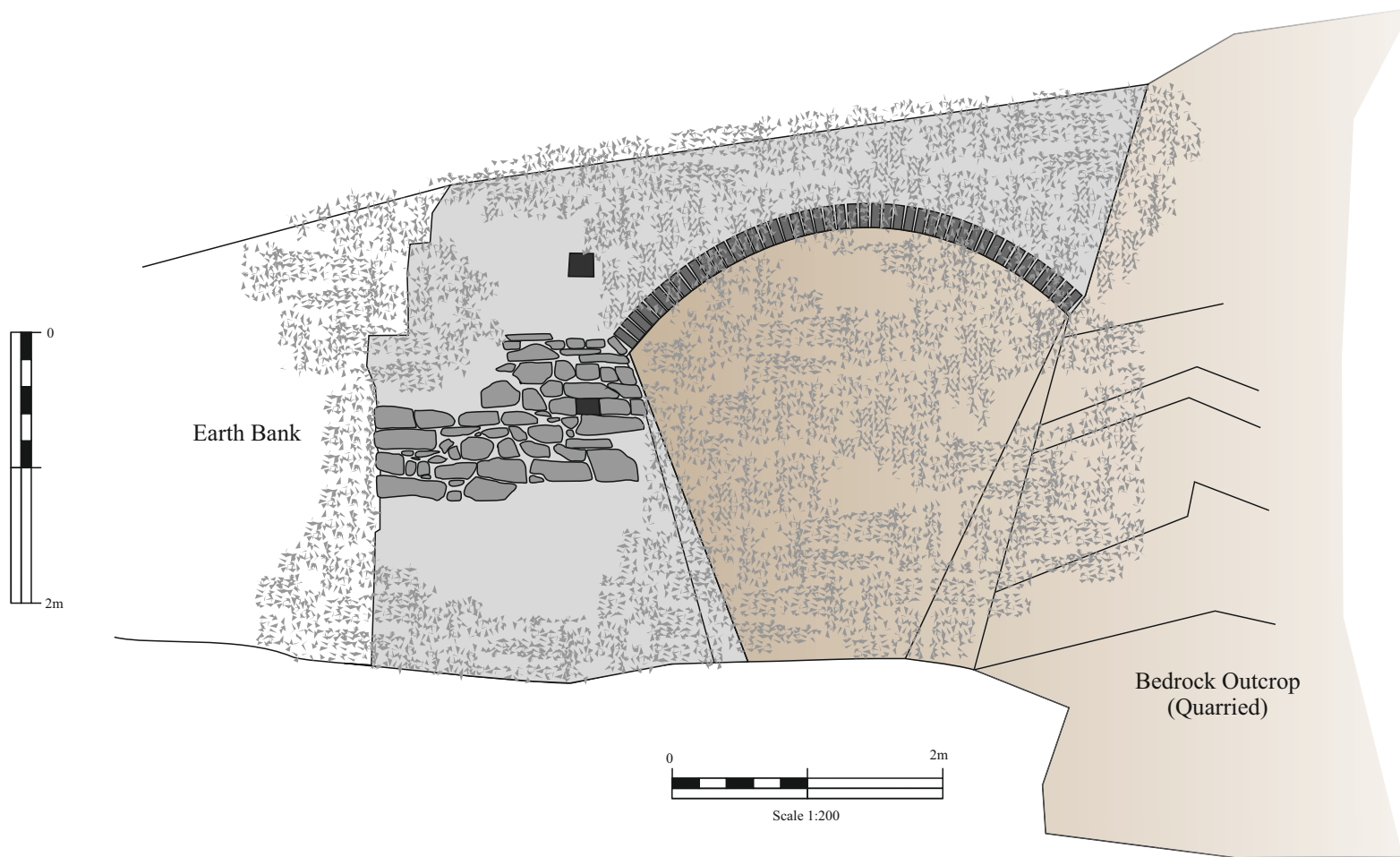


Fig 7: Elevation

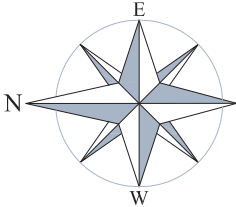
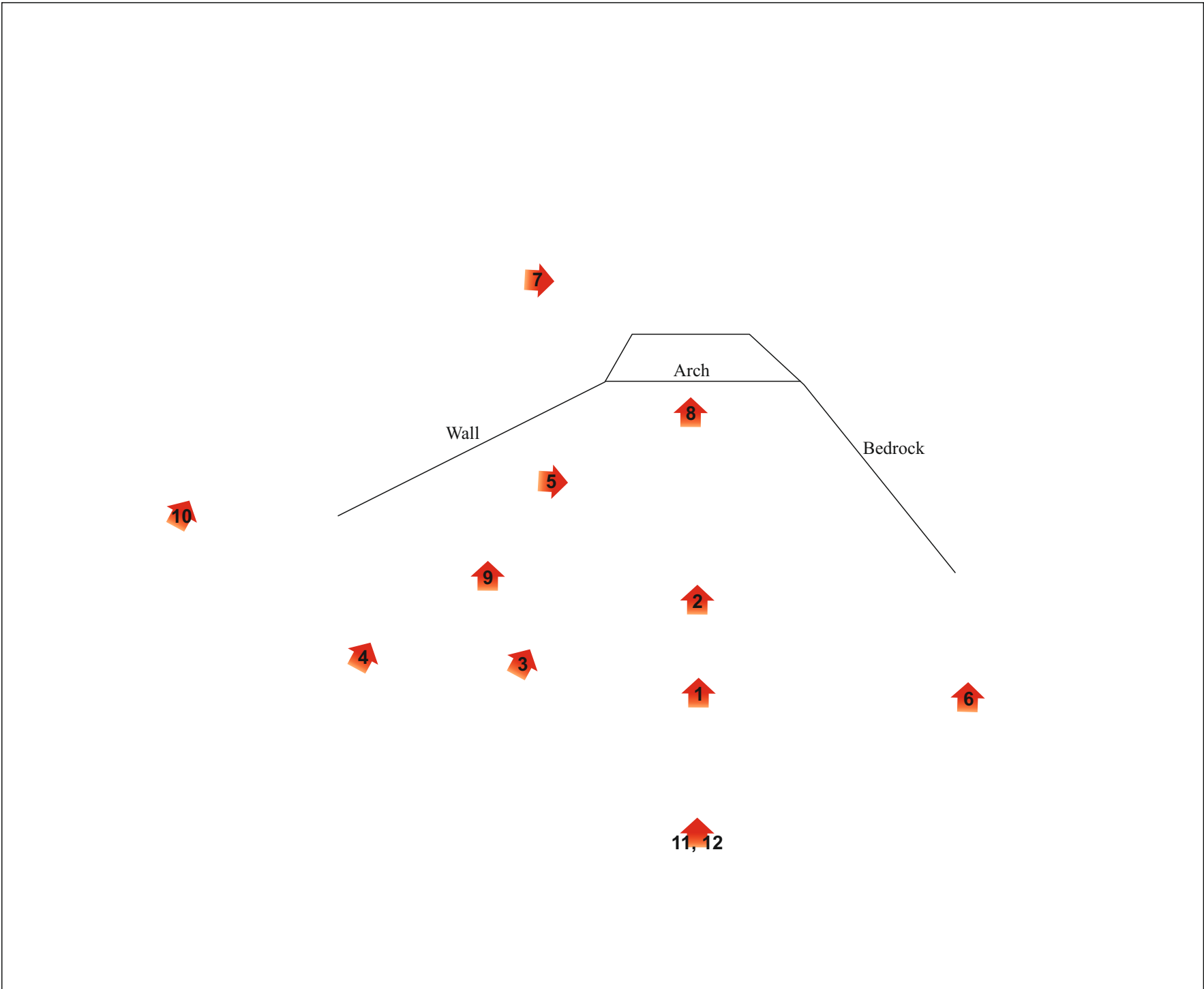


Fig 8: Photographic Plan, Arrows Correspond to Number and Direction



Plate 1: Western elevation, view from west



Plate 2: Western elevation, view from west



Plate 3: Close-up of arch, view from west

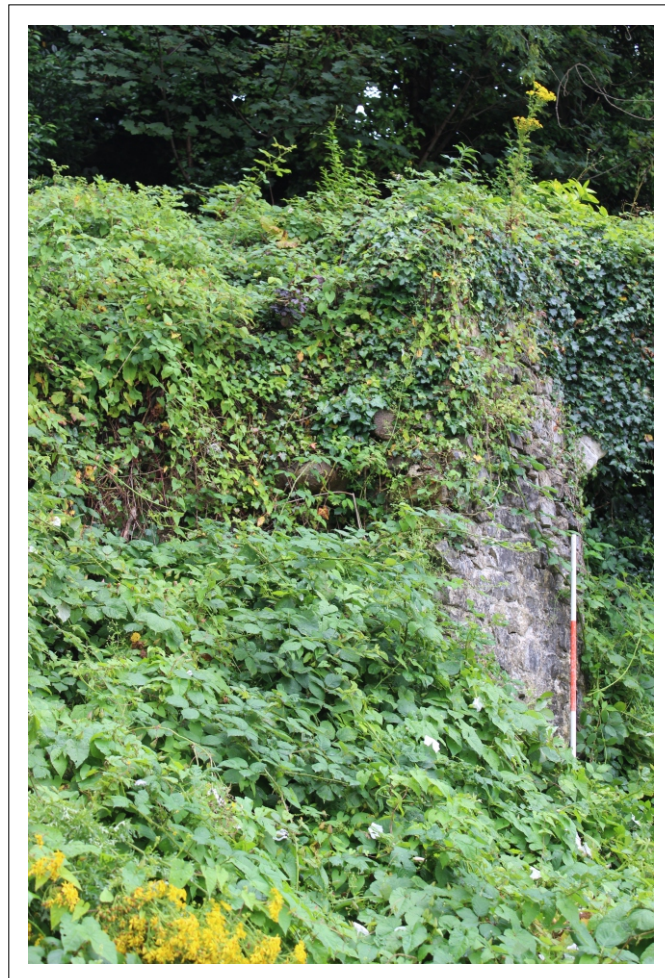


Plate 4: Close-up of retaining wall, view from north

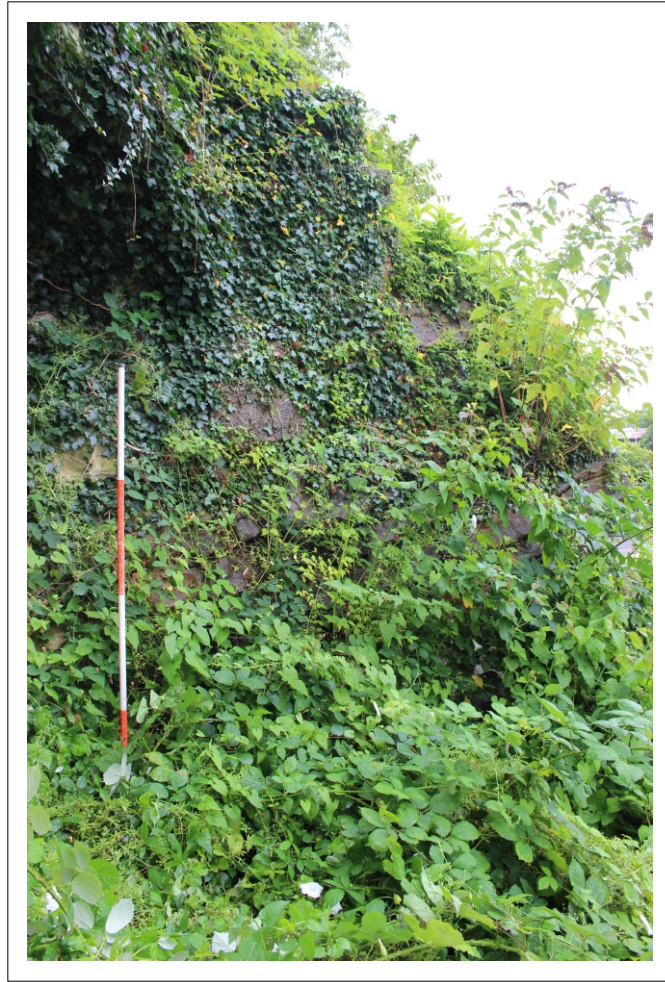


Plate 5: Close-up of bedrock outcrop, view from north



Plate 6: Bedrock outcrop, view from west



Plate 7: Above arch, view from north



Plate 8: Close-up of underside of arch, view from west



Plate 9: Close-up of northern retaining wall, view from west



Plate 10: Detail of stone edged path, view from west



Plate 11: Western elevation, view from west



Plate 12: Western elevation view from west

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Archaeology Wales Limited

Rhos Helyg, Cwm Belan, Llanidloes, Powys SY18 6QF

Tel: +44 (0) 1686 440371

Email: admin@arch-wales.co.uk

Company Directors: Mark Houlston MIFA & Jill Houlston
Company Registered No. 7440770 (England & Wales).
Registered office: Morgan Griffiths LLP, Cross Chambers,
9 High Street, Newtown, Powys, SY16 2NY