

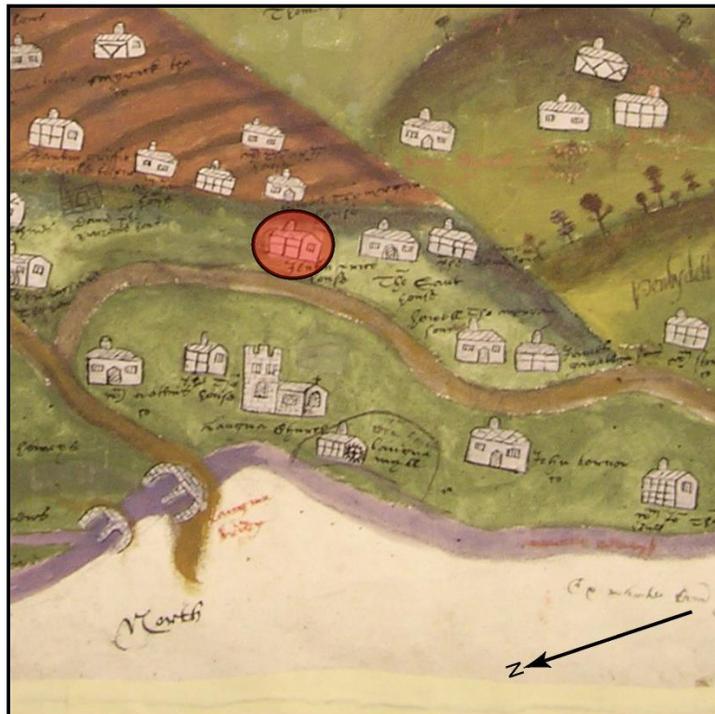
ARCHAEOLOGICAL OBSERVATION

**SLEATH FARMHOUSE
LLANGUA
ABERGAVENNY
MONMOUTHSHIRE
NP7 8HD**

NGR: SO 3920 2565

JOB N^o: BA0921SFPM

PROJECT TITLE: SLEATH FARMHOUSE: ARCHAEOLOGICAL OBSERVATION



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1. Non-Technical Summary

This report presents the results of a programme of archaeological observation carried out by Border Archaeology at Sleath Farm Llangua Abergavenny.

The aim of the programme of archaeological work was to ensure the preservation by record of any surviving archaeological finds, features or deposits revealed during the course of groundworks, namely, the excavation of drainage works and a partial rebuild of the property, and to confirm that no impact on the archaeological resource occurred without the implementation of this programme of archaeological work.

These excavations revealed evidence of modern topsoil overlying a made ground layer. This overlay an old topsoil horizon, which, in turn, overlay natural silts. Natural was observed in this area at 90.84m OD. No significant archaeological deposits were observed.

2. Introduction

Border Archaeology was instructed by Michael Keyse Architectural Consultant on behalf of Philip Manning Esq. to undertake archaeological observation of groundworks relating to the restoration of Sleath Farmhouse Llangua Abergavenny Monmouthshire (NGR SO 3920 2565), (Planning Ref. DC/2008/01360). These related to drainage works towards the end of the rebuild programme which had previously required no new foundation excavations for the property (Fig 1), much rebuilding already being evident prior to the 2009 Desk Based Assessment.

The site is bounded on all sides by fields. To the W of the site is the A465. The ground level on the site is 91.96m OD sloping down to 90.46m OD. The site code is SFL11.

Copies of this report will be remitted to Mr Manning, Mr Keyse, the Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust and the regional Historic Environment Record.

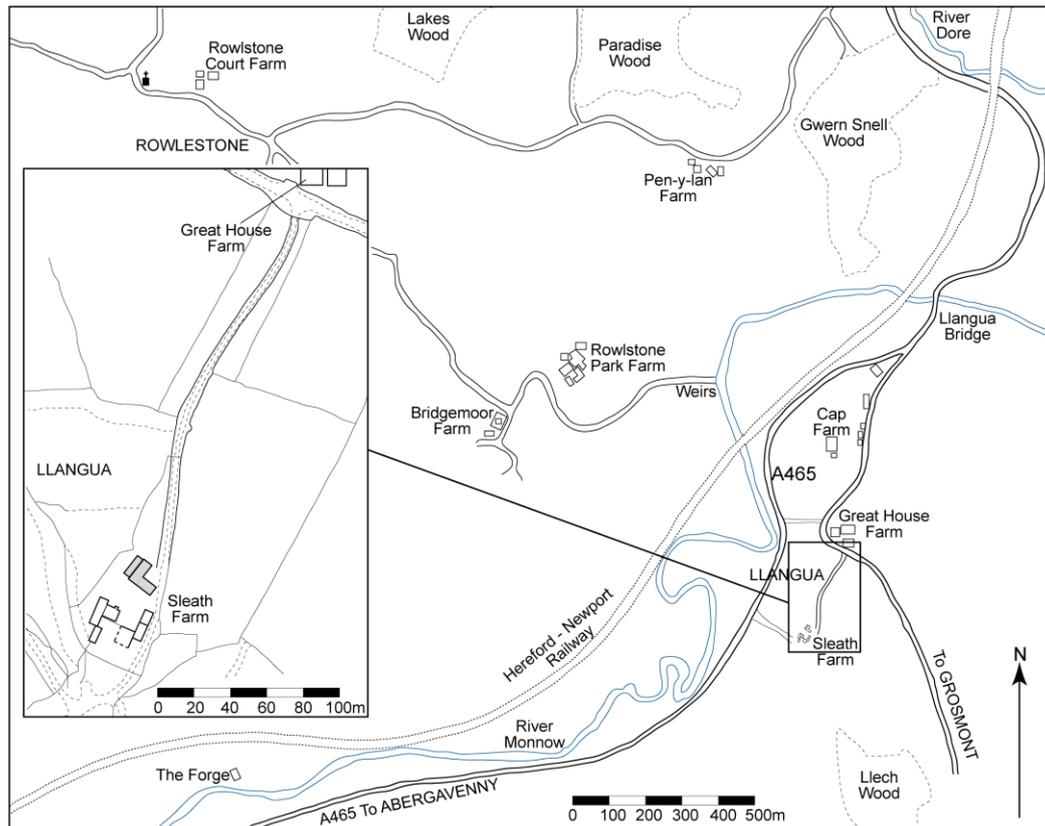


Fig 1: Location of site

3. Soils and Geology

The soils of this area are predominantly typical argillic brown earths of the BROMYARD series (571b), consisting of well-drained, fine reddish silty soils with some similar soils with slowly permeable subsoils and slight seasonal waterlogging and some well-drained coarse loamy soils. The underlying solid geology is Devonian reddish silty shale, siltstone and sandstone (SSEW, 1983).

4. Historical & Archaeological Background

4.1 Prehistoric

There is limited evidence of prehistoric activity within the immediate vicinity of the study area, consisting of a single flint core of Mesolithic date recovered during fieldwalking at NGR SO 3900 2500 (Portable Antiquities Scheme Ref: NMGW-3039D5).

4.2 Medieval

The origins of the present settlement of Llangua can be traced back to the early medieval period. The earliest reference to Llangua occurs in a charter of 872 AD, contained in the 12th century *Book of Llandaff*, which mentions the church and estate of *Lann Culan* (GGAT PRN 08296g). *Lann Culan* is presumably identifiable with the present parish church (originally dedicated to St Ciwa, now to St James), although the existing fabric appears to date from no earlier than the 12th-13th century (GGAT 2003, 7; Newman 2000, 316). The etymology of Llangua, denoting 'the church or religious settlement of Ciwa', is thought to relate to a 6th century Welsh female saint named Ciwa, about whom relatively little is known (Bradney 1904, 91).

Shortly after the Norman Conquest, it appears that William FitzOsbern, earl of Hereford, established a small monastic community at Llangua as a cell of the Benedictine abbey of Lire, which he had previously founded in Normandy. The endowment of this cell included the manor and church at Llangua, which further confirms the presence of a pre-Conquest ecclesiastical settlement in this area (Davies 2004, 344).

While the precise location of this monastery and the extent and layout of the conventual buildings remain unclear, it is traditionally presumed to have stood close to Great House Farm (GGAT PRN 01596g), some 200m to NE of Sleath Farmhouse (Bradney 1904, 91). The monastic community at Llangua was never large and the priory and its estates were seized by the Crown along with other 'alien priories' and granted to the Carthusian monastery of Sheen in the early 15th century (Smith 2001, 189)

4.3 Post-Medieval

After the Dissolution in 1536 AD, it appears that the estates of the monastery at Llangua came into the hands of the Crown and were granted to the distinguished Scudamore family of Kentchurch Court. The Kentchurch Court MSS contain several references to Sleath Farm (then called 'The Llech'), the earliest being a lease of 'the messuage called the Llech' by John Scudamore Esq. to John Saunders (who was the Scudamores' tenant at Great House Farm) dated September 30th 1642 (HRO Ref. AL40/662). Saunders subsequently leased the

property to one Philip Morgan of Skenfrith upon the marriage of his daughter, Elizabeth, to the latter's son and heir, Richard (HRO Ref. AL40/580).

The Llangua tithe map of 1838 shows the property (then marked as 'The Sleath') consisting of the farmhouse and an adjacent complex of outbuildings, much of which remains intact (NA IR30/22/37). The tithe apportionment, dated 1837, records that the property was then owned by John Scudamore Esq. of Kentchurch Court, while the occupier was a local farmer named James Prosser (NA IR29/22/27). The Scudamore family remained in possession of the manor of Llangua until the early 20th century (Bradney, 1904, 92).

The Sleath is of considerable importance as a rare surviving regional example of a late medieval cruck-framed hall-house. Building recording work previously undertaken (Tonkin 1998; Suggett 2009) has identified an initial construction phase dating from the early 16th century, with subsequent alterations undertaken in the early-mid 17th century and the mid 19th century. The evidence of the documentary record and the surviving buildings demonstrates that The Sleath is a long-established historic farmstead, probably of late medieval origin, and quite possibly associated with the nearby monastic site at Great House Farm.

The archaeological potential of the site, in terms of buried deposits or features, is difficult to quantify as no previous investigations have been undertaken within the study area. Comparison with the 1838 tithe map indicates that the farmhouse and adjacent complex of outbuildings were already largely established by the early 19th century; however, the possibility that buried archaeological deposits or structural remains relating to earlier medieval occupation on the site cannot be entirely discounted.

5. Methodology

5.1 Summary Description of Works

This programme of archaeological observation was carried out in accordance with practices established by the Institute for Archaeologists in *Standard and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (2008). Border Archaeology adheres to the IfA *Code of conduct (2010)* and the revised *Code of approved practice for the regulation of contractual arrangements in field archaeology* (2008) and is fully cognisant of the English Heritage *MORPHE* methodology and the provisions of *Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment*

The septic tank and soak-away trench were excavated between September 8th and September 13th 2011 in a controlled manner using a toothless bucket. Groundworks were carried out under archaeological observation and spoil and removed material were examined for artefacts, the aim being to identify, record, and, where appropriate, further investigate any surviving deposits, features or structures of archaeological significance.

Full written, graphic and photographic records were made in accordance with Border Archaeology's *Field Recording Manual* (2008). Levels were established in relation to a temporary benchmark (TBM) traversed-in from a spot height adjacent to Great House Farm.

Plans and sections were produced on gridded, archivally stable polyester film at scales of 1:200, 1:100, 1:50, 1:20 or 1:10, as appropriate. All site drawings are numbered and listed in a drawing register, these numbers being cross-referenced to written site records.

A photographic record was compiled using a high-resolution 12 MPX digital camera. Each photograph, other than general shots of work in progress, contains an appropriate scale and records are indexed and cross-referenced to the written record. Details concerning subject and direction of view are maintained in a photographic register, indexed by frame number.

The progress of the evaluation was recorded & assessed by the Company's General Manager George Children MA MifA using the Company's ISO 9001 procedures.

The site record comprises four Context Recording Sheets, one top plan at 1:200, a section at 1:20 and 52 photographs.

The site records can be found under the site code SFL11 and will be deposited with Abergavenny Museum.

5.2 Recovery, processing and curation of artefactual data

No archaeological finds were recovered from the excavations at the Sleath Farm excavations.

5.3 Environmental Strategy

No deposits considered suitable for environmental sampling were identified during the course of the fieldwork.

6. Results

Septic Tank	
Location	NGR SO 3920 2565
Dimensions	3.60m × 3.60m × 3.50m
Modern ground level	91.96m OD
Depth of archaeological deposits seen	N/A
Level of base of trench	88.46m OD
Natural observed	90.84m OD

Soak-away trench	
Location	NGR SO 3920 2565
Dimensions	44m × 1m × 2m
Modern ground level	91.96m OD sloping down to 90.46m OD

Depth of archaeological deposits seen	N/A
Level of base of trench	89.96m OD sloping to 88.46m OD
Natural observed	90.84m OD

The septic tank was excavated to the NW of the farm building. The ground level in this area measured 91.96m OD. The septic tank trench consisted of 0.40m of firm light reddish-brown sandy silt topsoil (001) overlying 0.52m of firm mid reddish sandy silt subsoil/redeposited natural, which contained occasional small stones and degraded stone (002). Beneath this lay a former soil horizon (003), 0.20m, deep which overlay (004), interpreted as natural silt. No archaeological deposits or features were observed (*Plate 1, Fig 2*).



Plate 1: Excavation of the septic tank; section shows made ground (002) overlying early soil horizon (003) and natural silt (004) beneath it.



Plate 2: Soak-away trench, facing N, showing subsoil (102) overlying natural (103)

The soak-away trench sloped from 91.96m OD to 90.46m OD at the S and consisted of 1m of loose mid-brown sandy-silt topsoil (101) overlying 1m of light brown subsoil (102), which in turn overlay a pinkish-red silt with degraded sandstone inclusions, interpreted as natural (103) (*Plate 2*).

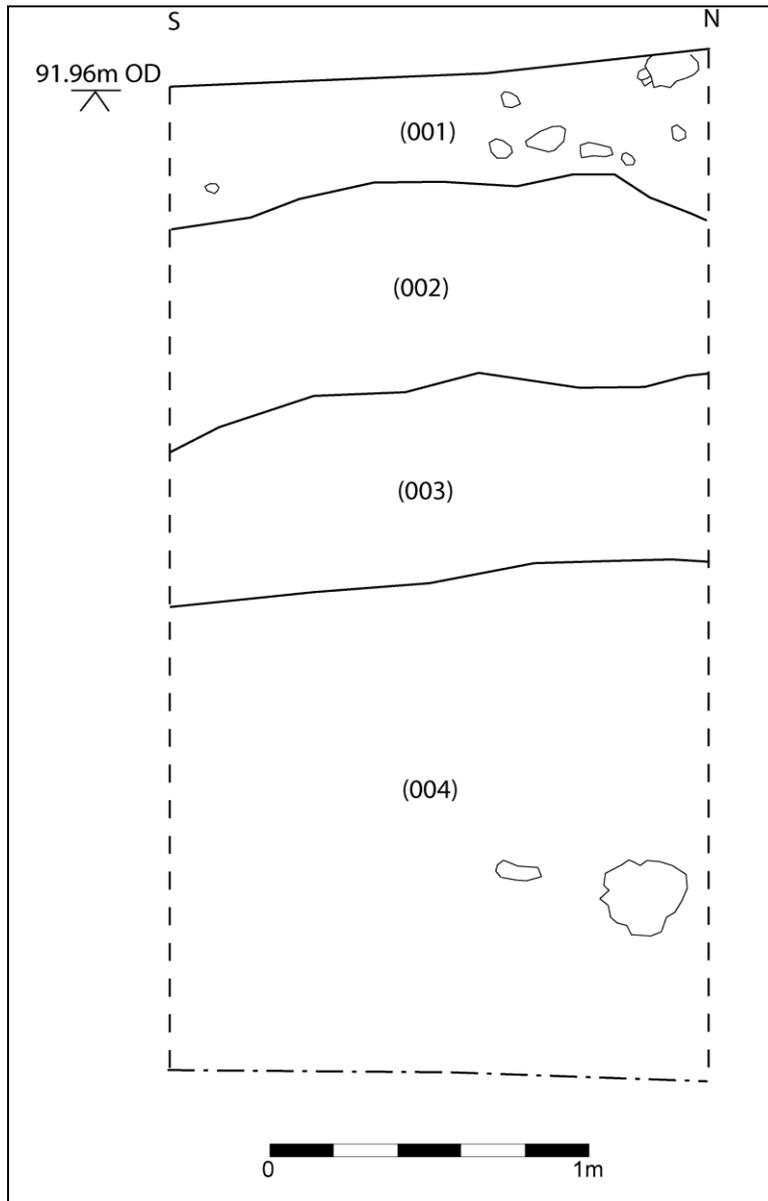


Fig 2: Representative section through the septic tank excavation

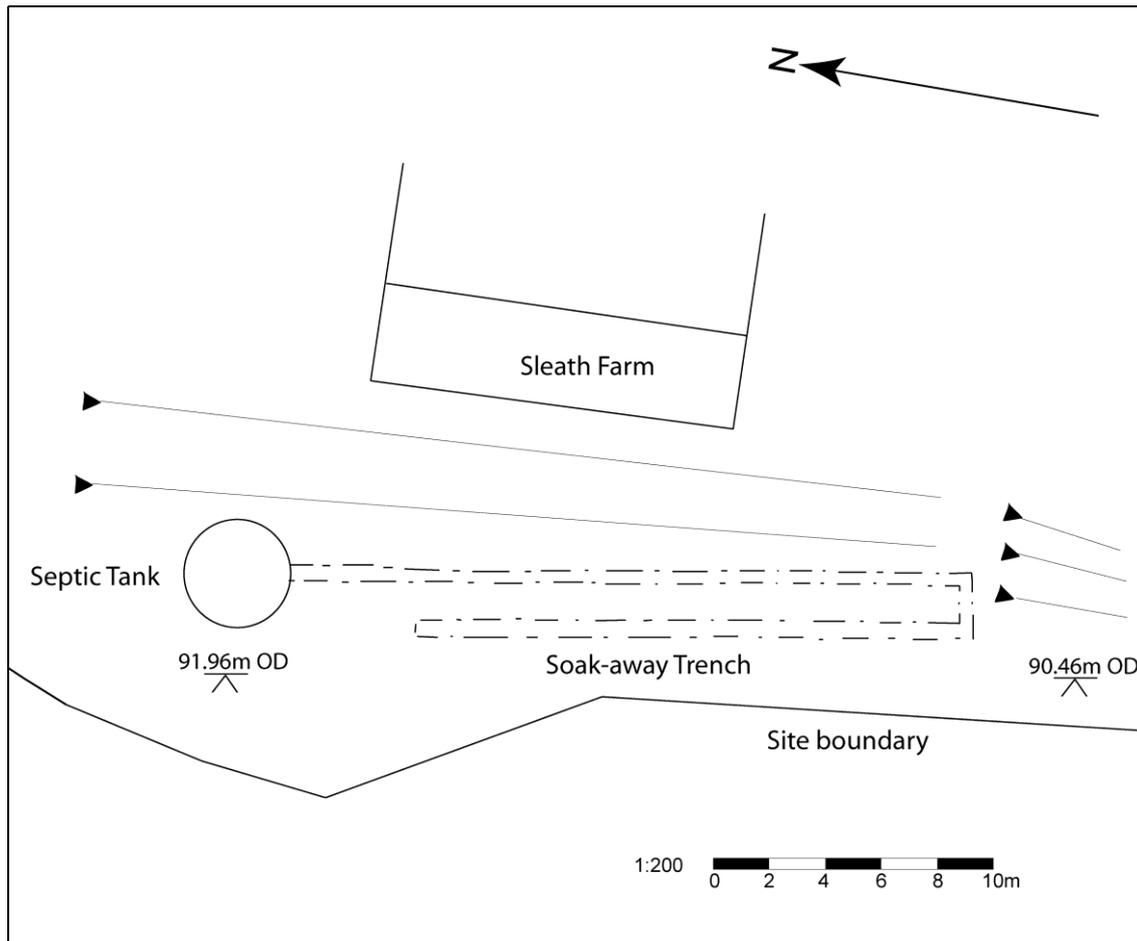


Fig 3: Plan of the septic tank and soak-away trench

7. Discussion of Results

The excavation of the septic tank at Sleath Farm, Llangua, revealed topsoil (001) overlying modern make-up deposit (002) over an earlier soil horizon (003), which overlay natural silt (004). The excavation of the soak-away trench revealed the topsoil (101) overlying a light-brown subsoil (102), which in turn overlay the natural silt (103). Neither trench yielded any archaeological features or finds.

8. Copyright

Border Archaeology shall retain full copyright of any commissioned reports, tender documents or other project documents, under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 with all rights reserved; excepting that it hereby provides a licence to the client and the Council for the use of the report by the client and the Council in all matters directly relating to the project as described in the Project Specification to use the documentation for their

statutory functions and to provide copies of it to third parties as an incidental to such functions.

9. References

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10. Cartography

Manuscript plan of the manor of Grosmont 1588 (NA MPC 1/251) – National Library of Wales

11. Appendix 1: Matrix



Document Control

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