

HAFOD: CAVERN CASCADE WALK ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

RECORD NO. 35852

MARCH 1998

Commissioned by: Hafod Trust

Report by: K Murphy

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Introduction

A public footpath on the Hafod estate, Ceredigion (27/82 on the definitive map) follows the course of part of the Gentleman's Walk established by Thomas Johnes by 1796. The walk and the footpath lead to the Cavern Cascade (hence the name of the walk), a well-known and relatively well-frequented feature of the area. In recent years, sections of the walk/footpath have deteriorated and have become passable only with great care. In early 1998, because of the dangerous condition of a short length of walk/footpath, Ceredigion County Council closed off public access pending remedial work. This remedial work was undertaken in March 1998. The watching brief was undertaken over two days at the beginning of this work.

General Description

The Gentleman's Walk up to the Cavern Cascade was constructed on a terrace cut into the steep east-facing valley side of the Nant Cau. It was well-built, and seems, on surface evidence, to have averaged about 1.5m in width. It was, and is still, partly revetted with dry-stone walling on its down-slope side. The walk is still in good condition from an old mine level to the Cavern Cascade (Figs. 1 & 2). The watching brief took place on the section north of the old mine level to a spur path which leads down to a footbridge over Nant Cau. To the north of this spur path the walk is in passable, but not good, condition. Further to the north the terrace on which the Gentleman's Walk was situated has entirely disappeared; the public footpath follows a different course here.

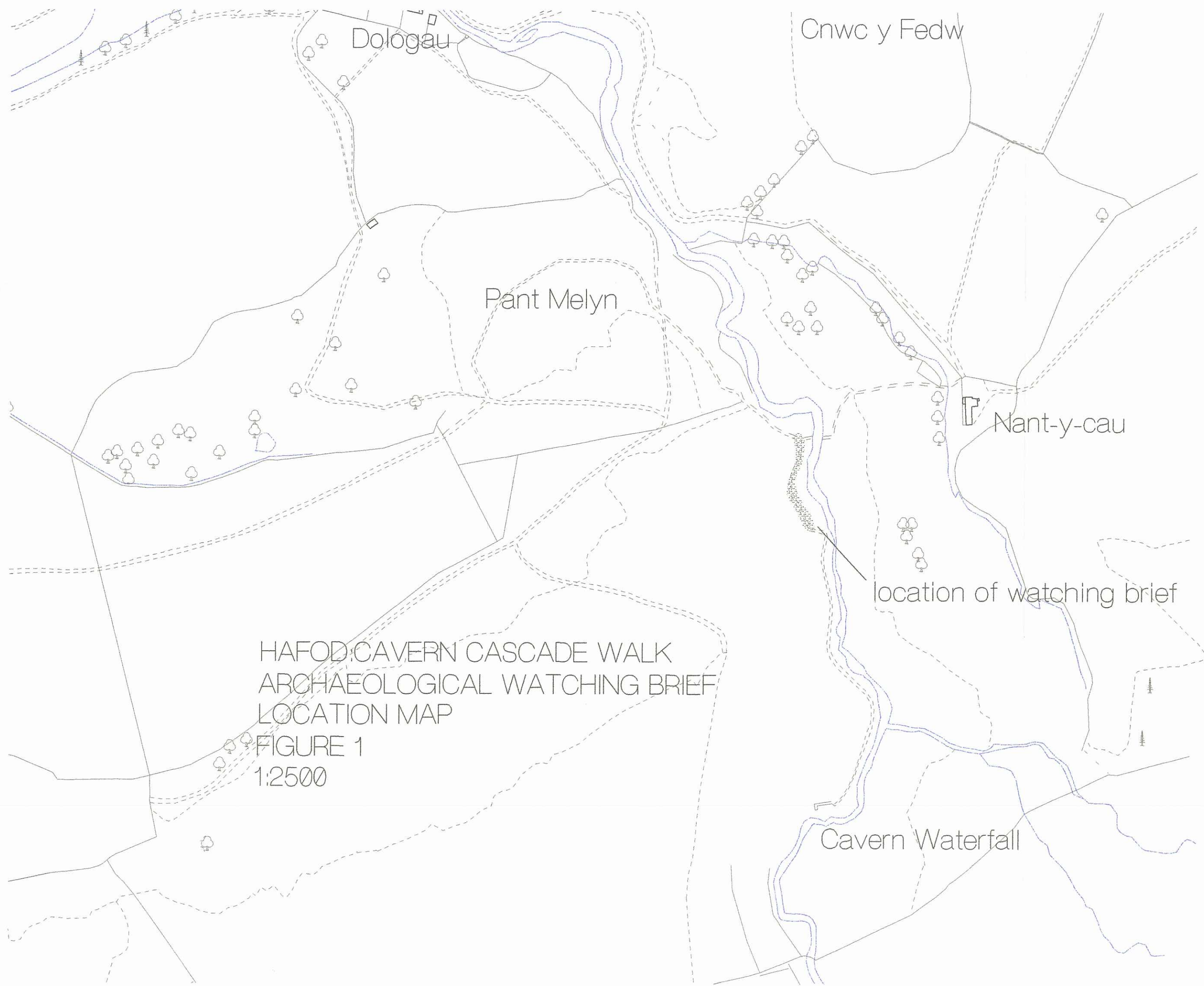
Nature of the remedial work

The scope of the work to bring the footpath up to required safety standards was very low key and involved the clearance of moss and other vegetation on the course of the Gentleman's Walk and the excavation with hand tools of accumulated spoil along its course. This spoil was then used to extend the width of the terrace; this was retained by a 1.5 x 1.5 inch oak stakes driven into the ground. A c. 15m length of path terrace immediately to the north of the old mine level comprised the main area requiring remedial work. Other problem and potentially dangerous areas required only pockets of clearance and excavation.

Because of the limited amount of ground disturbance required for the remedial work, the watching brief was by necessity limited in scope. It was decided not to relate the recorded archaeology to Ordnance Datum as this would have required an inordinate amount of work. It is hoped that the information presented here will be tied into the Ordnance Survey data when a complete survey of the Cavern Cascade Walk is undertaken.

The watching brief

Prior to the repair work, the course of the Gentleman's Walk and the modern path-line followed by recent visitors for some 15m north of the old mine level no longer



HAFOD CAVERN CASCADE WALK
ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF
LOCATION MAP

FIGURE 1
1:2500

coincided. The Gentleman's Walk was discernible as a narrow, c. 0.7m wide, overgrown terrace partially covered in hill-wash, 1-2m below which was the recent path-line - a worn and very narrow undulating path on the edge of a steep slope (Fig. 2, Photos. 1 & 2). The vegetation and hill-wash which had accumulated on the terrace of the Gentleman's Walk was cut back (Photos. 3 & 4) and the resulting spoil used to help create a wider walk-way and so re-establish the public footpath on its historic route. This created a walk-way terrace approximately 1.5m wide.

At the southern end of this 15m length of walk (Figs. 2 & 3), the surface of the original terrace created in the late 18th-century was not reached by the clearance of hill-wash and other debris, though the original rock-cutting on the east side of the terrace was recorded. No other constructional elements were observed. It is possible, though unlikely given the regular and continuous use of the path since the 18th century, that Johnian walk surfaces survive in this area below the restored path levels.

In the central section of the 15m length severe erosion had destroyed most of the evidence of the walk's terrace. A water worn gully ran down the steep slope to the west and across the path.

A good terrace was present in the northern part of the 15m long section. Here, however, it was discovered that erosion prior to recent accumulation of hill-wash and vegetation had stripped off any walk surfaces that may have once existed down to the rock-cut Johnian terrace (Fig. 4, Photos. 5-7). In some very short lengths this rock-cut terrace lay some 70mm above the height of the proposed path restoration level and therefore was lowered to during the remedial work. At the northern end of this section low steps were created on bedrock to bring the footpath up from its worn course onto the newly created/historic terrace described above.

There was no evidence of a dry-stone revetment wall - as can be seen in other lengths of the Walk - in the 15m long section described above

To the north of the 15m long section described above the public footpath was, and is still, situated on a worn terrace below the Gentleman's Walk (Photo. 8). From the junction of the path down to a footbridge over Nant Cau to the north, the public footpath and the Gentleman's Walk coincide. At the junction, cutting back of the up-slope side of the public footpath/Gentleman's Walk was required. Here, in this very small-scale work, only natural glacial deposits overlying bedrock were observed (Photos. 9 & 10).

Conclusions

The remedial work permitted the observation and recording of parts of the Gentleman's Walk. Because of the low-key approach, very little damage occurred to features and deposits associated with the Gentleman's Walk. 18th- and 19th century layers associated with the Walk were not encountered: they may survive in pockets on a rock cut terrace excavated for the Walk. The minimal and low-key nature of the work described here to achieve a safe walk-way on a Johnian terraced Walk may have implications for the restoration of other Walks on the Hafod estate.

Figure 2. Plan showing location of watching brief

1:100

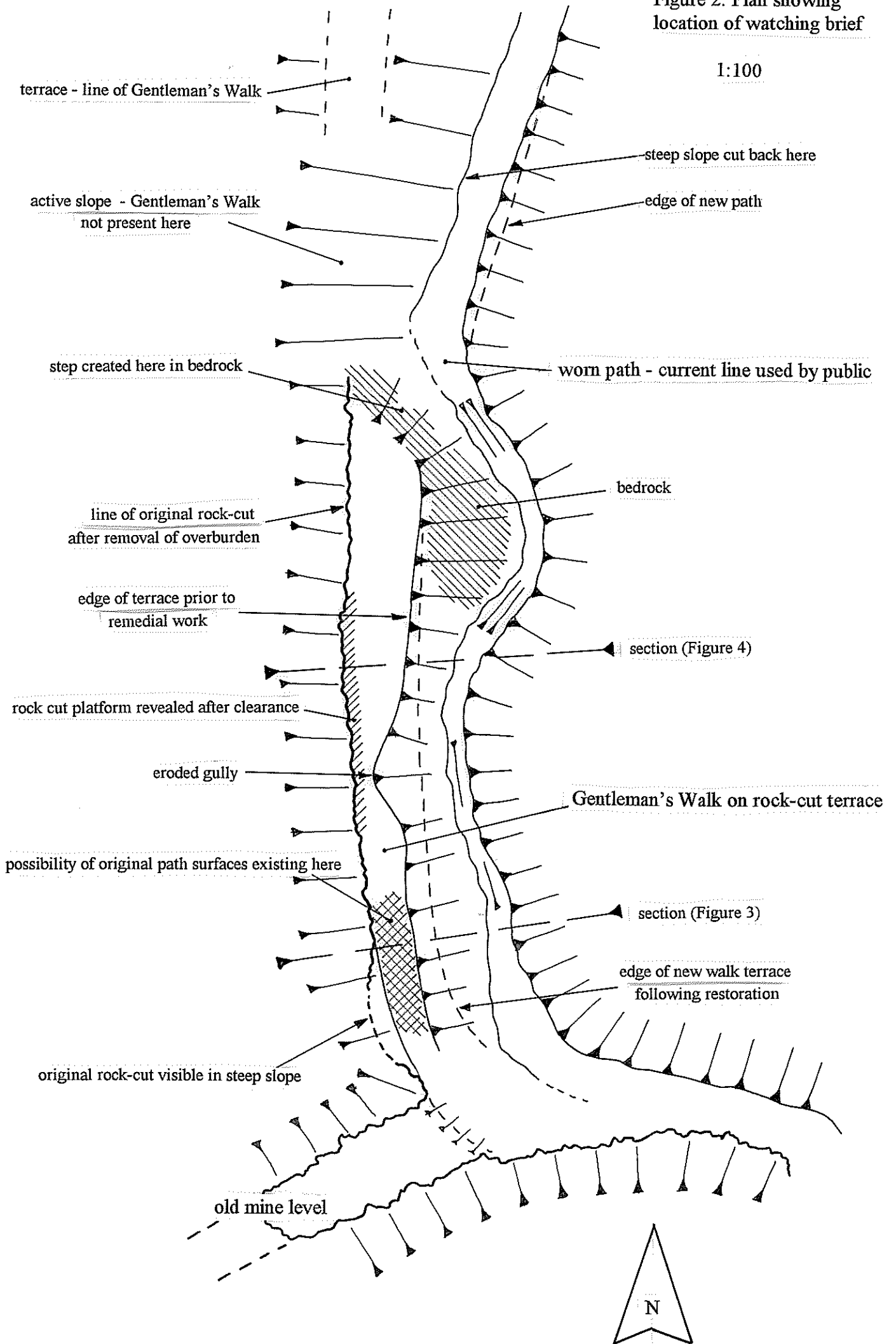


Figure 3. Section of Gentleman's Walk

1:20

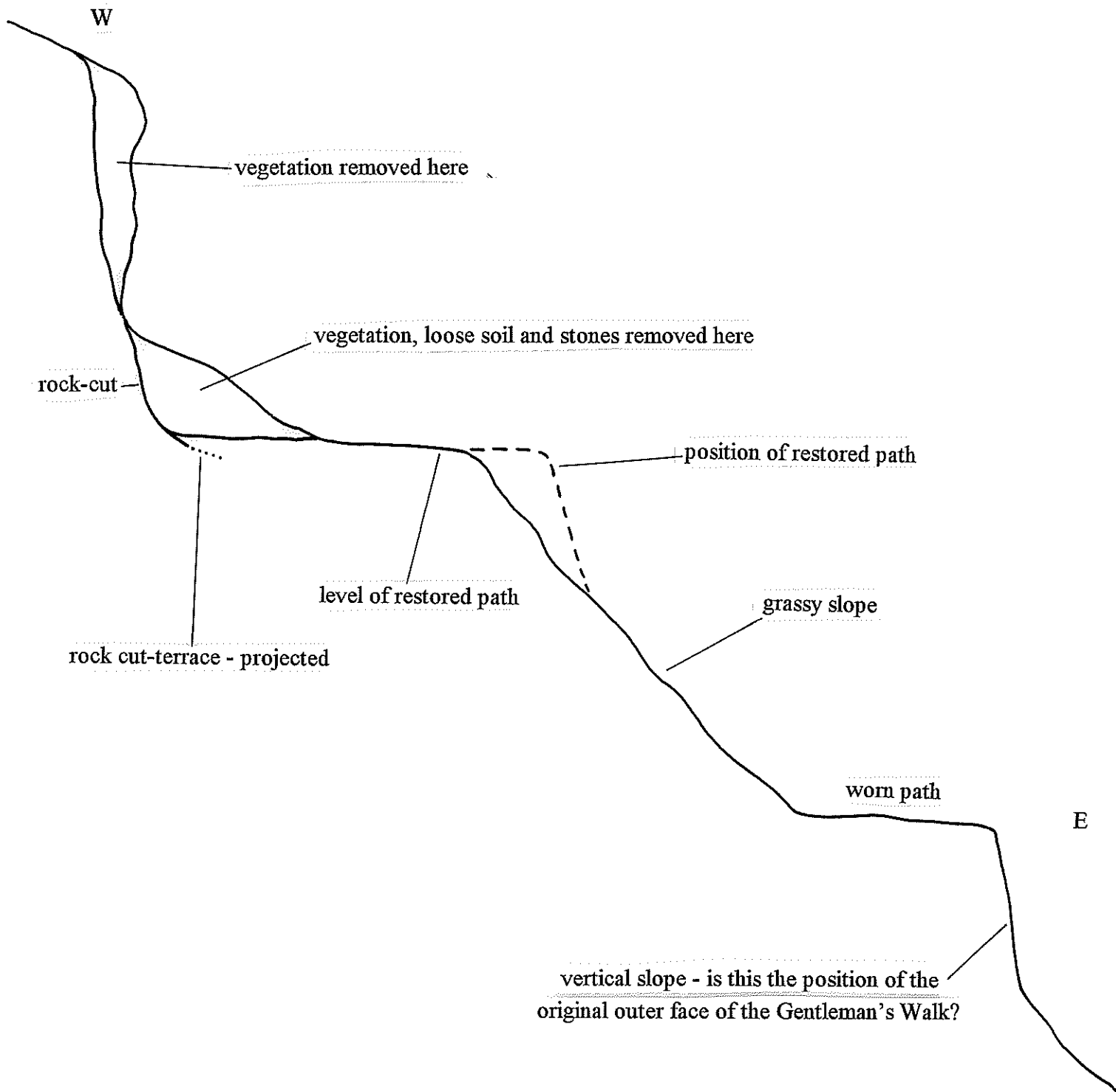
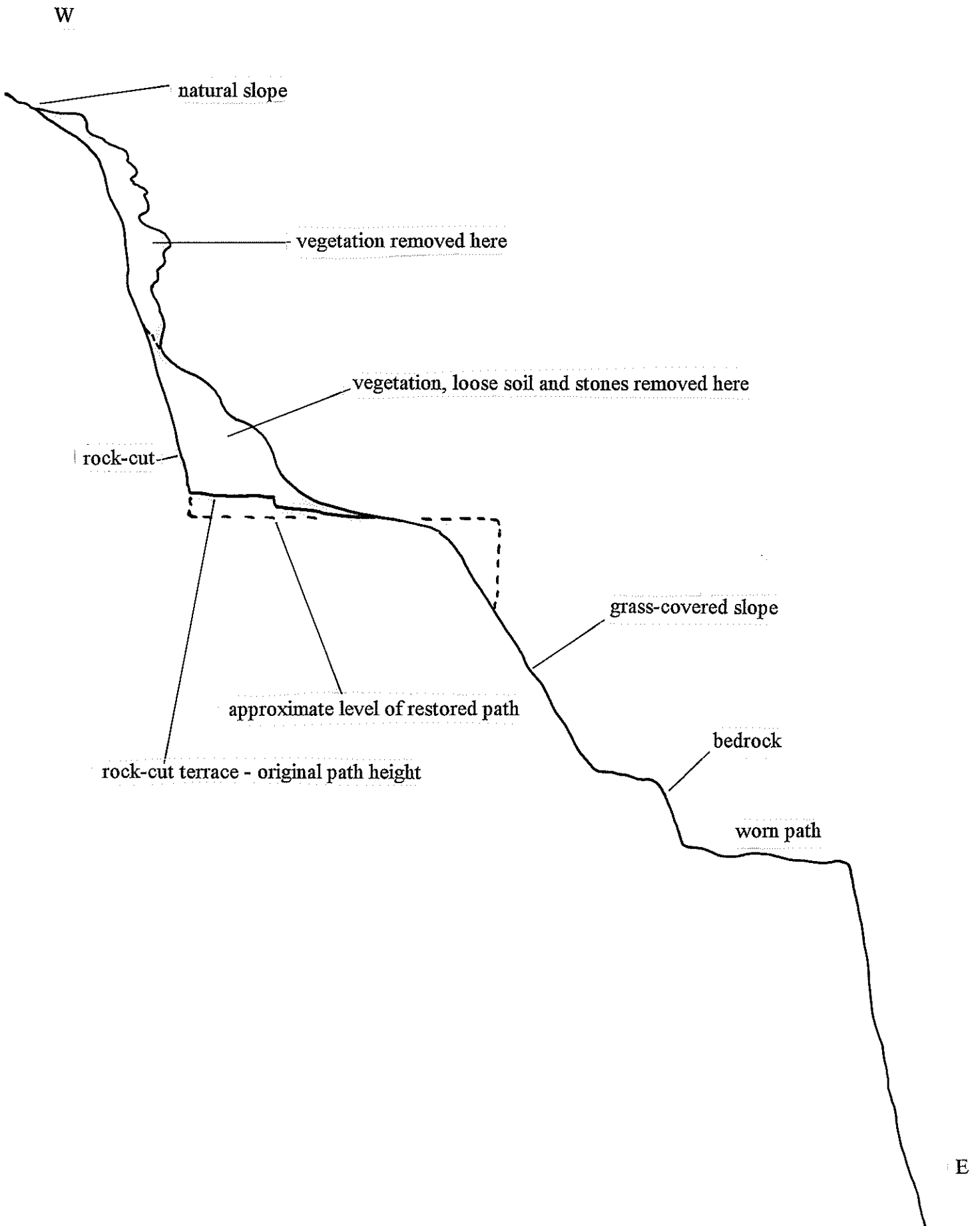


Figure 4. Section of Gentleman's Walk

1:20





Photos. 1 & 2. North of the old mine level. Prior to the remedial work. The overgrown terrace of Gentleman's Walk can be seen with the worn modern path below.



Photos. 3 & 4. Remedial work being carried out on the terrace of the Gentleman's Walk



Photos. 5 & 6. Location of section shown on Fig. 4. The right-hand end of the scale rests on the rock-cut terrace of excavated for the Gentleman's Walk



Photo. 7. Location of section shown on Fig. 4. The right-hand end of the scale rests on the rock-cut terrace of excavated for the Gentleman's Walk

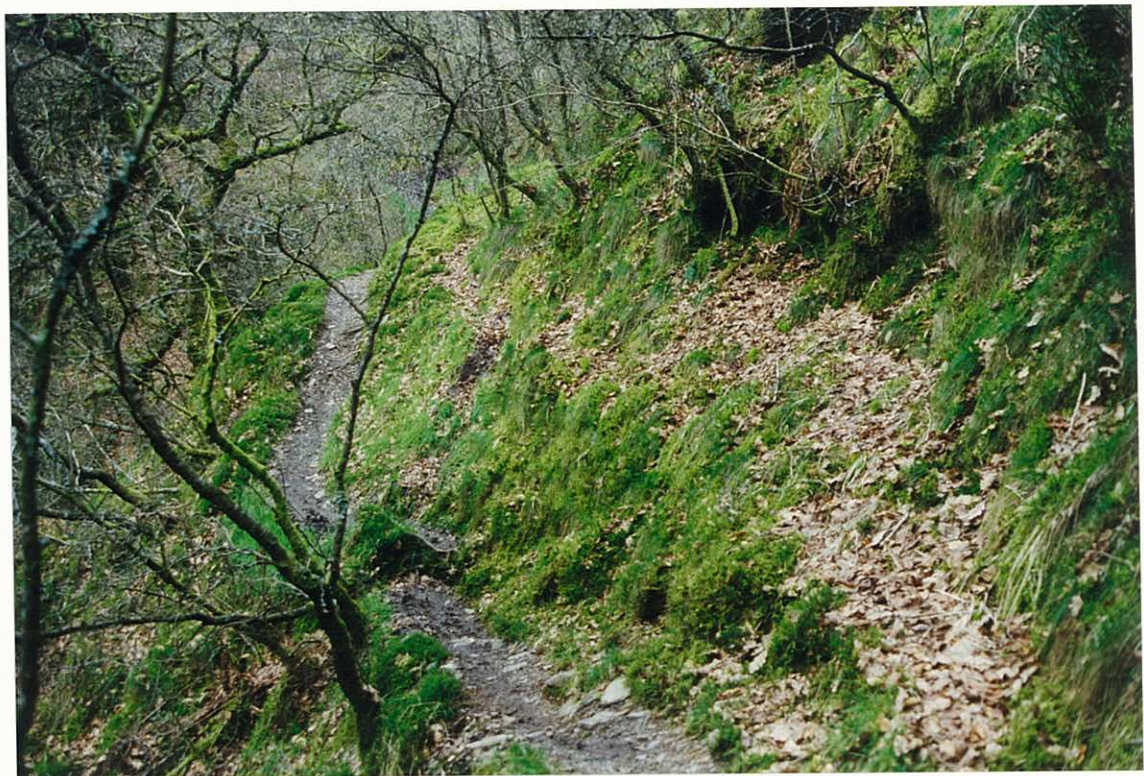


Photo. 8. Between the 15m long restored section of the Gentleman's Walk and the path down to the footbridge over Nant Cau. Here no remedial work was necessary. The course of the Gentleman's Walk is visible as a vegetation covered terrace with the public footpath below



Photos. 9 & 10. Remedial work on the path at the junction of the Gentleman's Walk and the path down to the footbridge over Nant Cau

Index to the archive (archive deposited with NMR housed with RCAHMW)

B Photocopies of site notes and drawings

D Colour prints (negatives retained by Cambria Archaeology)
Neg. numbers DAT98-1.1 to 3 and DAT98-2.11 to 16

Colour slides

1. pre-watching brief
2. pre-watching brief
3. work in progress
4. work in progress
5. section of Walk terrace
6. section of Walk terrace
7. undisturbed Walk terrace and footpath
8. minor works to path
9. minor works to path

Black and white negatives

9. pre-watching brief
10. pre watching brief
11. undisturbed Walk terrace and footpath
12. minor works to path
13. minor works to path
14. minor works to path
15. work in progress
- 16 work in progress
17. section of Walk terrace
18. section of Walk terrace

HAFOD: CAVERN CASCADE WALK - ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF
ARCHAEOLEG CAMBRIA ARCHAEOLOGY

Copy of specification

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF
to be undertaken during the restoration of
THE CAVERN CASCADE WALK, HAFOD

SPECIFICATION

Introduction

The public footpath up to the Cavern Cascade, Hafod has been closed by Ceredigion County Council because of its dangerous condition. The public footpath follows the course of a section of the Gentlemen's Walk now known as the Cavern Cascade Walk. It is the County Council's intention to make the walk safe for public access. This work has been scheduled to start on 16 March. It is estimated that it will take two weeks. The works will consist of: clearance of moss and overgrowing vegetation along the line of the path; excavation of shale using hand tools to provide a step up onto the path; provision of revetments along side of path using 1.5 x 1.5 inch oak stakes and spoil from clearance.

It is presently unclear how this work will affect the archaeology of the Walk. It is intended that this should be an intermittent watching brief, targeting specific sensitive areas.

This project specification has been prepared by Cambria Archaeology Field Operations in response to a request by the Hafod Trust. It has been prepared in accordance with the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* (Institute of Field Archaeologists, 1994) and Hafod - Archaeological Guidelines.

Cambria Archaeology Field Operations has considerable experience of this type of project and always operates to best professional practice. The conclusions will be based on a considered assessment of the collected data. Cambria Archaeology Field Operations has its own Health and Safety Policy, and all works are covered by appropriate Employer's Liability and Public Liability Insurances. Copies of all are available on request.

1. Project objectives

- 1.1 The observation, investigation and recording of any archaeological deposits revealed during the works.
- 1.2 Preparation of a report fully representative of the data collected during the fieldwork.
- 1.3 Preparation and deposition of site/project archive.

2. Fieldwork

- 2.1 Investigation of any archaeological features and deposits revealed during the works.
- 2.2 Recording of any archaeological features or deposits will conform to best current professional practice in accordance with the Cambria Archaeology Field Operations Recording Manual. All deposits will be recorded using the open-ended numbering system employed by Field Operations. Significant archaeological features and deposits will be drawn at an appropriate scale (no less than 1:20) and photographed in 35mm format.
- 2.3 All finds will be retained and, where possible, related to their contexts. Finds will be temporarily stored by Cambria Archaeology Field Operations in stable conditions.

- 2.4 Deposits containing potential palaeoenvironmental material will be sampled and the samples stored in stable conditions. Arrangement for specialist services will be arranged following discussions between all relevant parties.
- 2.5 Should any human remains be encountered the District Coroner's Office and the Police will be notified immediately. All human remains will, where possible, be left *in situ*. If preservation *in situ* is not possible all statutory permissions must be received in writing before removal begins.
- 2.6 In the event of unexpected, but significant archaeological sites, features or deposits it may be necessary to employ further staff. This would only occur following discussions between Cambria Archaeology and the Hafod Trust.

3. Post fieldwork

- 3.1 Collation of data recovered during the fieldwork and preparation of a site archive in accordance with the specifications in Appendix 3 of Management of Archaeological Projects (English Heritage 1991), and the procedures recommended by the National Archaeological Record.
- 3.2 Assessment of the results of the fieldwork.
- 3.3 Preparation of a report fully representative of the results of the fieldwork to be sent to the client for dissemination to all relevant parties.
- 3.4 Preparation of summaries of the results of the fieldwork for publication in an appropriate regional or national archaeological journal.
- 3.5 Deposition of the project archive, including artefacts and ecofacts (excepting those which may be deemed to be Treasure Trove).

4. Staff

- 4.1 This project will be managed by Kenneth Murphy who has wide archaeological experience, including many projects of this type.
- 4.2 Other staff will be drawn from the team of experienced archaeologists regularly used by Cambria Archaeology Field Operations.

Prepared by K Murphy, 17 February 1988