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From  
Date 19<sup>th</sup> June 2007

# Llechwedd and Maenofferen Slate Quarries, Blaenau Ffestiniog

We were asked to visit Llechwedd Quarry by Gwynfor Roberts of Gwynedd Council, to identify whether any of the buildings in the area where the quarry company had begun demolition work were worthy of protection. An incline winding house had already been demolished, and concern was expressed over the adjacent buildings including the former fitting shop, smithy and carpenter's workshop. I was duly able to inspect these structures, and can confirm that they do not warrant listing. In reaching this view, it was helpful to be able to visit the adjacent (but more remote) quarry of Maenofferen (also in the ownership of Llechwedd), where a group of buildings fulfilling similar original functions has survived and is listed. The Maenofferen buildings form part of a much more intact group, since the slate dressing mill with which they were associated has also survived, and is listed at grade II\*. The surviving structures here represent a remarkably complete survival of a quarry level, whereas at Llechwedd, survival has been severely compromised by major losses, including the dressing mill and the incline itself. When confirming that we do not intend to list these buildings, could we also confirm the suggestion that I have already made to the quarry company that a photographic record be made of the structures here in advance of any further demolition?

Our initial survey work on both these quarry sites was guided by the work of Gwynedd Archaeological Trust (Report no 154, 1994-5) which considered the remains of all the slate quarries in Gwynedd and made recommendations to schedule or list. I have referred again to this report, and find that the only recommendations for protection at Llechwedd quarry were the group of structures at the exchange sidings. Railway bridges, power-house, crane and weighbridge house were all listed in the resurvey. At Maenofferen, recommendations focussed on the back-vein uphaulage incline, where the electrical winding house and the earlier steam engine house and chimney are listed grade II\*. The incline itself was also recommended for listing in GAT's report, recognising its significance, but acknowledging that as a feature which was still in use at the time, scheduling was not feasible. The listed buildings at Maenofferen form an impressive group, and there would be a strong case for reviewing the case for scheduling the incline (which continues underground), now that it is no longer in use. This would consolidate and complete statutory designation in this area.

The buildings at Maenofferen are in a very poor and deteriorating state of repair. They are no longer in use, and vandalism is an active problem. Though less remote, the weighbridge house at Llechwedd exchange sidings is also deteriorating and is now virtually roofless.

In light of both major issues (local concerns over demolition), and the deteriorating condition of the listed buildings), and recognising the historical significance of the slate quarrying landscape as a whole (which is included in the Blaenau Ffestiniog Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest), the quarry company may also wish to consider commissioning a conservation management plan, enabling a strategic approach to the management of the historic assets on this site.

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