

Llanllyr, Talsarn -04/05/2026- TR 22 (Trench 22)

The excavation has begun, quite a lot of information to take into account for the first day ever doing fieldwork. Before the first bit of digging was done however, I started with grouping up with 3 other people on the site: two Canadians named Bret and Zach who are on international semesters and must be a year ahead of me; then additionally another became apart of our excavation group, he is called Owen and is from Wales. Furthermore, he is also a first year in archaeology like me and I have seen him before in lectures. We first had to become acquainted with the techniques used in the creation of our trench, numbered 22 with the process of establishing a point zero, putting a nail in the ground that formed the basis for outlining the dimensions of the rest of our trench. This involved running bright green coloured string connecting points along a 6m x 2m rectangle plot, *depicted on the right*. Before plotting these points out however, each corner of the 6m x 2m grid had to be checked according to pythagoras theorem that it aligned with the 3:4:5 ratio to produce right angles at each corner. This makes excavating easier later on as plotting finds will be much harder to do accurately with a wonky side wall!



After plotting out our trench area moved onto the de-turfing process. We were initially informed that this process would be easier with two people digging with a spade and two others carrying material with a shovel. However we just decided to go all out with the de-turfing process in the end. It was incredibly tiring, especially once the sun came out and scorched us whilst we were heaving big chunks of turf up but it felt rather good in the end. I preferred this all out approach to standing around. I even found some small bits of pottery and quartz scattered around in the top soil beneath my turf chunks. By the end of the day we had begun to excavate the topsoil beneath the layer of turf we had taken off. We achieved this by swapping our spades for trowels and hand shovels, we were barely able to start digging on this day and barely anything was removed from this initial layer (*see right*).



Llanllyr, Talsarn -05/05/2026- TR 22

Not much was achieved on this day, we simply continued to pick up where we left off yesterday. Lots of trowelling, im still trying to find the most optimal way to pull back the dirt that stands between me and finding something of note. We are finding high quantities of coal in this layer alongside a consistent amount of modern pottery shards, I've heard that the quantities of this stuff here (the pottery and rusted iron deposits that resemble old nails) signify that a bonfire has possible occurred on the land we are excavating in the not too distant past. Besides these odd bits of debris from the past, we have found no flints yet. This is slightly disheartening at the minute as the group slightly north of us on a similar plot of land have already uncovered their first evidence of Neolithic activity. Not to mention how much my knees are killing me, I think my hands are even starting to burn from the sunlight, a welcome but slightly uncomfortable change from the grey, colder weather that seems to always start the morning sessions of digging off. I will include some more pictures of yesterday's odd finds beside a nice bit of glass I found in my section of the trench. Its vibrant blue colour shocked me at first and made finding it easy, even if it isn't what I'm looking to find here.

Top right- A picture taken by me of our shared finding tray

Bottom right- A closer look at the blue glass fragment I found



Llanllyr, Talsarn -06/05/2026- TR 22

Still no flints. Similar to yesterday are only pulling up very small shards of pottery and coal, occasionally charcoal now. The presence of charcoal probably further supports that idea of bonfire activity on the land we are excavating. Despite the disappointment on the excavating front we picked up another new skill today and that was learning how to use the dumpy level (yes, *that is its name*) to make measurements on the levels of the 4 corners of our trench. I'm still mostly unsure of how to actually perform the calculations to acquire the number for the level of a point, but I do at least know how to use the dumpy level by acquiring readings through its scope.

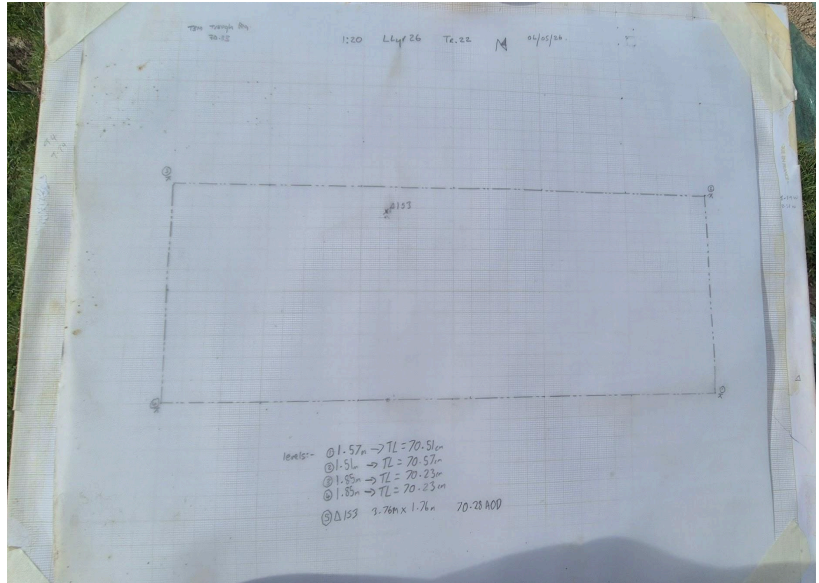
Right- Picture taken by me of a dumpy level set up



Llanllyr, Talsarn -07/05/2026- TR 22

Something has finally sort of happened... This Thursday it was just me and Zach initially upon arriving back at trench 22, Bret and Owen had disappeared/fallen ill. Until an older man named Bill came to help us dig the trench, to all of our collective surprises Bill was able to uncover what seemed to Martin (the man running the excavation) a piece of quartz that seemed to have been struck by some human thousands of years ago. It suggested that perhaps the Neolithic and maybe the Mesolithic peoples had been utilising quartz similar to the flints we are searching for, which apparently they have been recorded as doing so at other sites? Either way it allowed us to put the skills we learned yesterday in operating the dumpy level to use and we recorded its level on our new trench map, which can be seen to the right.

This find by Bill was a small boost to the spirits.



Llanllyr, Talsarn -08/05/2026- TR 22

Finally! Flint has been found by our trench! and it was by me no less. This find has definitely lifted my spirits completely. I can't really fully explain how exciting the moment was when I realised what I had held in my hands. I picked it up almost immediately upon seeing the toffee colour I had become familiar with in Trench 23's finds in the prior days.

The photo on the right is of our first flint in all its small glory! Upon discovering it I handed it immediately to Bill in our trench who had shown yesterday to have a really good eye for spotting worked items. He confirmed to me that was almost certainly a piece of flint debitage and due to flint not being native to the bedrock of southern wales inland areas, it is for certain that this piece of flint had come into contact with my very own ancestors all the way back in the neolithic period. Upon learning this and taking in this information, the weightiness of such a small piece of history seemed to finally rear its head once all the joy from finding it had dissipated in my mind. As we continued the excavation with hopes to find more flint evidence of our ancestors' activity in this valley, It continued to dawn on me all the way back to my bed in Lampeter how old the flint was.



Even neglecting the physical age of the object itself, tying it to people who would have almost certainly been my common ancestors interacting with it and then being dug up by me, someone who is quite a long way from home and born in the 21st century... It really comes into partial focus how awesome it is to find stuff like it. I hope to find more of it before the excavation is over.

Llanllyr, Talsarn -09/05/2026- TR 22

I've done it again! Back to back finds! I'm buzzing over this particular piece, it is the largest piece discovered this year so far and helps expand that idea that I've been thinking about since yesterday. The toffee colouring of the flint sticks out even more than before, shining it upon the sun you can also see the translucent nature of the piece as well. It additionally had a very smooth separate side that seemed far too smooth to my hands to be a normal piece of rock upon pulling it from the ground. All in all brilliant progress. I gotta keep this streak going!

Directly right- Large piece of flint I discovered



Llanllyr, Talsarn -12/05/2026- TR 22

In general, a whole lot of nothing these past days, there was a piece of blueish flint pulled from the ground yesterday but apart from that there hasn't been anything. Until today! I seemed to have found something mega interesting (on the day before we pack up no less). The object I discovered today, as it was described to me, is a stone axe reduction flake! Basically (I'm no expert on this) but during the manufacturing process of a stone axe back in the neolithic period, the rock that covered the stone that would be fashioned into an axe head, would be knapped off by the people in that age to create the tools they wanted. Also, according to the people at the site these flakes are pretty rare to find in fields such as the one we are in. The stone axe flake was pretty difficult for me to find, i only really saw the top sharp edge as it pricked my finger and even once i pulled it from the group a simple feeling that i was holding something that looked too grooved and sharp for it to be a simple rock was what held me from tossing it away. The rock when exposed to water also took a unique appearance that made it look distinctly different from all the groundstone rock I had been digging up all week.



Top right- Blue flint piece discovered 11/05/26

Bottom right- Stone axe reduction flake piece



Llanllyr, Talsarn -13/05/2026- TR 22

On the final day, *this section will consist primarily of pictures*. We mostly spent the day looking for more pieces of the axe flakes, some were discovered and I even found another piece, though it was less impressive than the first. We proceeded on and reluctantly had to close up our trench by filling it with all of the top soil we had dug from the trench. This process was tiring as it was in the heat, but it was helped along by other members of the excavation team. We made it on time for the bus back to Lampeter then back to Carmarthen, excavation over. Tomorrow is the day I then proceed to pack up and head even further distances than Carmarthen to reach my home of Newcastle upon Tyne, I will have much to think about and tell to family and friends over the coming days. Can't wait!



Top left- As much as we ever dug in the trench
(White tags are small finds locations)



Top right- Filling the trench back up



Bottom left- The small axe flake chunk I discovered



Bottom right- Excavation concluded
Zach- left, Me- middle, Owen- right