Monday, April 27

We had our first of two lectures before leaving for the excavation portion of the class. Met Dr. Bates, who explained the general history of the site and what we should expect to find during the excavation. We will be working on the Llanllyr site in Talsarn, which is about 15-20 minutes northwest of Lampeter. The area the site is in used to be part of a lake which has dried up. The site is supposed to be mesolithic or neolithic in time frame, but Martin mentioned that there is still a possibility of finding Iron Age or early Roman artifacts or features as well. The biggest find from the previous excavations at the site was a ground stone axe.

Tuesday, April 28

Quentin told us about our two written assignments for the course: the field journal and the Historic Landscape Characterisation. I have never done an HLC before, so I am interested in seeing what it will be like. It isn't something we seem to do at home, so hopefully I will be able to use what I learn from working on that assignment to help with other schoolwork.

Monday, May 4

We were introduced to the site area after our arrival at Llanllyr (~11:30am). The area is grassy, with large patches of short reeds. The area where the first excavation took place has a higher elevation than the rest of the surrounding area, and is also generally free of reeds. This is because the area would have likely been an island when the valley was a lake. This difference in vegetation can also be seen in other areas of the fields we are working in which would be consistent with this assumption. The previous excavation trenches can be seen from the surface as the grass is lighter in areas that were previously dug. This is especially true for the trench from the 2019 excavation. Martin mentioned that there have been patches of burnt ground that have been found, but no hearths. This means that the area was likely only temporarily occupied, as the

burnt ground likely belonged to campfires. For the excavation, I am working with Brett, Sam, and Owen. We established our trench today, a 2x6m rectangle, with the 6m edges running east to west. We used the 345 method (Pythagoras) to make sure our corners were at right angles. After we established our grid, we were able to begin removing the turf and topsoil. We used spades and shovels, cutting and loosening squares of turf with the spade and then lifting with the shovel. The chunks of turf were arranged in a U shape on our tarp with the opening facing our trench. We managed to completely deturf our trench by the end of day and began troweling. Finds from our digging included glass, iron, slag, and ceramic. The iron is natural, and the rest of the material was likely deposited as a result of a bonfire. Another possible reason for the ceramic being present is that it was intentionally distributed in the field to help the grass and other vegetation grow.

The weather was overcast, though there was no precipitation. The high temp. was about 15 degrees, with a slight breeze. Despite the clouds, the temp was comfortable to work in.



Figure 1: Our trench plot before we began excavating. Zachary Stanger, May 4, 2026. Photograph



Figure 2: Brett working on deturfing our trench. Zachary Stanger, May 4, 2026. Photograph



Figure 3: Our trench at the end of the day. Zachary Stanger, May 4, 2026. Photograph

Tuesday, May 5

We began work on the site at about 9:30am. We continued the troweling that we started the previous day. The section that I was trowelling was more elevated than the rest of the trench, as we were uneven when removing the turf. I was mainly digging through dirt, though there were

a lot of roots that made it difficult to trowel. The roots were likely from grass, as I don't remember digging up any reeds, although I am unsure why the grass would have roots deep enough to interfere with our digging after we removed the turf. We had no major finds from our day of excavation, but I found lots of pieces of coal and iron, as well as a piece of pottery. Quentin believes it is from the 19th century, and I believe it is a piece of stoneware. By the end of the day, there were parts of what is likely the next stratigraphic layer visible, a yellowish-brown clay layer.

The beginning of the day started out sunny, though it was overcast by the time we finished our tea break. There was an occasional breeze, but the temperature remained a comfortable working temp.



Figure 4: The section of our trench I was trowelling. Zachary Stanger, May 5, 2026. Photograph



Figure 5: Our trench with Sam troweling. Zachary Stanger, May 5, 2026. Photograph

Wednesday, May 6

Today, we continued our work on troweling our trench. Unfortunately, we were unable to recover any major finds (flaked stone), though we did find more ceramics, iron, and coal. Brett was sick today, so it was just Sam, Owen, and me to work on our trench. We worked three across down the length of the trench, and even though we were not excavating for a large portion of the day, we still managed to trowel almost the entire length of the trench. Apart from the excavation work, Quentin showed us how to both set up and use the level we will be using to record elevations for the excavation. The level we are using is a surveyor/builder/dumpy level, which is used in tandem with the leveling pole to find the elevation of any point on the site. First, we placed the pole of the temporary benchmark (TBM), for which we already know the elevation of. From there, we are able to determine the height of the level, which can then be used to find the elevation of whatever we place the pole on. In this case, we found the elevations of the four corners of our trench. The western edge of the trench is apparently 30 centimeters lower than the

eastern edge of the trench. Quentin also showed us how to draw a site map, which we will use to plot any flints we find. The map we made is a 1:20 scale of the trench.



Figure 6: Our trench at the start of the day. Zachary Stanger, May 6, 2026. Photograph

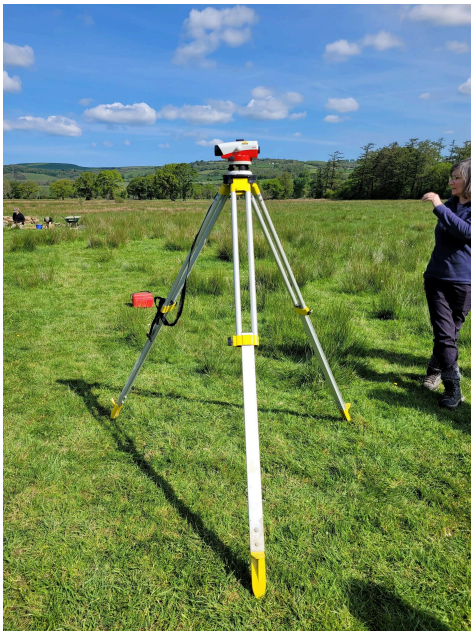


Figure 7: The Dumpy level. Zachary Stanger, May 6, 2026. Photograph

Thursday, May 7

We continued with the troweling. Brett was still sick, and Owen was not present either, so it was just Sam and me. Fortunately, we were joined by Bill, who helped us with our troweling of the trench. While trowelling with us, Bill was able to make the first proper find of the excavation, which was a piece of flaked quartz. After finding the piece, Ros showed us how to measure the X and Y values for the artifact, and Quentin showed us how to properly plot the artifact on our site map.



Figure 8: The nail and label for Bill's flaked quartz. Zachary Stanger, May 7, 2026. Photograph

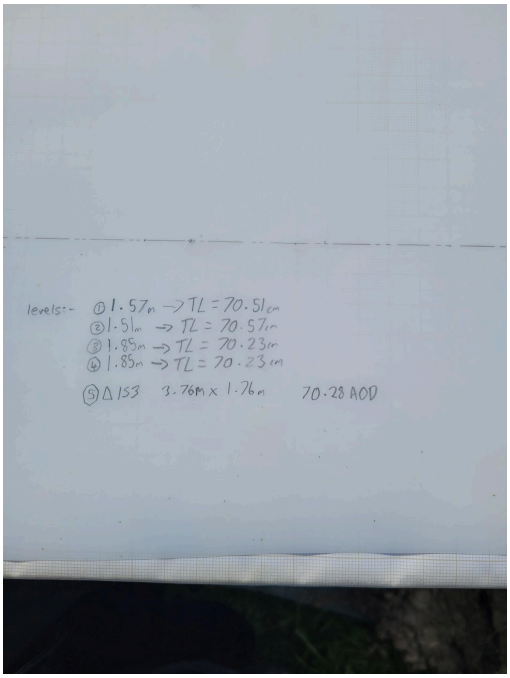


Figure 9: The coordinates of Bill's find on the site plan. Zachary Stanger, May 7, 2026. Photograph

Friday, May 8

We continued trowelling. Brett and Owen were back, which meant we had a full trench again. Sam found the first flint of our trench, which I believe is likely debitage. I believe this because there appears to be cortex present on the exterior of the flake, and I did not see any evidence of retouching at first glance. Quentin also showed us how to fill out the forms describing each layer of context. While doing this, we also determined the composition of the topsoil layer of our trench. Based on the look and texture, my assumption was that the soil was only clay, but Quentin showed us some rudimentary tests for deciding the composition. The first was the clump test, where we made and squeezed a ball of dirt in our hands. The dirt mostly held its shape, which means that it is likely mostly clay. To perform the stain test we spat on one hand and rubbed dirt on it to see if there would be a stain left on the hand by the wet soil. There was a light brown stain, which means that there is silt present, but it is not the primary component. The third test was the grit test, where we rubbed the soil between our fingers to see if there was any

grittiness caused by sand particles. There was no grittiness, which means there is no sand present in the topsoil of Trench 22.

Quentin challenged us to think about why context layers are the way they are, primarily with the sediment layers we will be digging into. The next layer of context that we will be digging through will be almost entirely clay, which I believe may have been sediment deposits created by the lake itself. I am not sure how the lake would have formed, but the sediments may have been left on the already dry mounds/islands after being carried into the lake by the feeding river/runoff.

Saturday, May 9

We continued trowelling today. Owen was gone again today. Brett was able to find a flint in the sift as we worked in the morning, but I didn't get a good look at it to tell what it may have been. Sam also found flint today, though his was in the ground. It was fairly large, about the size of my thumb, and may have been a blade. After lunch, Quentin, Martin, and Ros took us over to the other field to look at Mound 1 of the Llanllyr site, as well as the other trenches that are being dug. One of them is alongside one of the test pits that was made in a previous excavation, and the other has been dug into a ditch that had been filled with rocks. Unfortunately, I do not remember the dates associated with either trench.



Figure 10: Mound 1. Zachary Stanger, May 9, 2026. Photograph



Figure 11: The trench being dug alongside the test pits. Zachary Stanger, May 9, 2026. Photograph



Figure 12: The trench dug into the rock filled ditch. Zachary Stanger, May 9, 2026. Photograph



Figure 13: The end of the reeds at the southern edge of the site. Zachary Stanger, May 9, 2026. Photograph

Sunday, May 10

Continued troweling. Brett and Owen were gone again today, so it was just Sam and me working. No flints were found today. We also filled out the context sheets for the turf layer and

the topsoil. At lunch, I walked up to the fence on the north side of the field we are working in. The reeds there thin out and eventually stop the same way they do in the field we looked at yesterday, which made me wonder if there also would have been a lake edge to the north of where we are working as well. I spoke to Martin about this and he said that there haven't been any excavations in that area, but that he had done core sampling somewhere over there that showed that there were, I believe, samples of soil from the river, so at some point between where we are digging and the river, there is an area where the river samples begin. Exploring this more would be interesting, but I am glad that we are digging in an area that I know will have artefacts.



Figure 14: The northern end of the site. Zachary Stanger, May 10, 2026. Photograph

Monday, May 11

Continued troweling. Brett and Owen were back, so we had a full trench again. At around 10:30, I found my first flint. It is medium-sized, toffee-coloured, and I believe it is likely debitage. Brett and Ros helped me measure the X and Y coordinates for our site map, and Sam and Brett helped me measure the height of the flake. Brett and I measured it initially, but I was given the wrong backsite height, so Sam and I remeasured it and redid the math for my flake's height. Martin also spotted a flint that we all thought was just a piece of slate.



Figure 15: My flint in its small finds bag. Zachary Stanger, May 11, 2026. Photograph


Figure 16: The other side of my flint. Zachary Stanger, May 11, 2026. Photograph



Figure 17: Our trench at the end of the day. Zachary Stanger, May 11, 2026. Photograph

Tuesday, May 12

Continued troweling. Owen was gone again, though we were joined by Simon after lunch. We found multiple flints today, and Sam and I found what appears to be two flakes from stone axe creation. Martin is confident that the flake Sam found is one of these, as it has sharp edges and percussion marks. Martin is less sure about the flake I found, as it also has the sharp edges but no percussion marks. Finding these flakes was a big surprise, as, according to Ros and Martin, stone axes would not have been created like the other flints we have found, and instead would have been made at an “axe factory”.



Figure 18: Sam's flake in the ground. Zachary Stanger, May 12, 2026. Photograph



Figure 19: My flake in the ground. Zachary Stanger, May 12, 2026. Photograph

Wednesday, May 13

Last day of excavation today. Brett was gone again today, so it was just Sam, Owen, and me. We troweled until approximately 2:30 before we started backfilling. While trowelling, we

found a few more pieces of the stone axe flakes, as well as a piece of flaked quartz. Ros, Quentin, Rod, and Martin helped with backfilling. Megan and Nick also helped with the final steps. To backfill, we first laid a cloth over the trench, then shoveled all of the sifted dirt we accumulated back into the trench and packed it down. Then we moved the pieces of turf and placed them back into the trench as best we could. The pieces that couldn't fit were placed on top. Finally, we gathered the tarp and dumped the remaining dirt onto the trench area and spread the dirt over the grass as best we could.

Martin confirmed that the flake that Sam found yesterday is an axe flake, which means the trench may be a part of an “axe factory”. This is why we put the tarp over the trench, so excavations next year can come back and work more on what we have dug, which hopefully will be preserved.



Figure 20: Sam, Owen, and I posing on top of our trench after we finished backfilling. Zachary Stanger, May 13, 2026. Photograph