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# **ST CYBI'S CHURCH, HOLYHEAD: GATES TO CHURCHYARD STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE ST CYBI'S CHURCH, HOLYHEAD: GATES TO CHURCHYARD

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## CONTENTS

<b>1.</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
1.1	Purpose	3
1.2	Brief description of the structures and setting	3
1.3	Circumstances of this Report	4
<b>2.</b>	<b>Relevant legislative and policy context: Heritage protection</b> Error! Bookmark not defined.	
2.1	Designation	5
2.2	Context	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
2.2.1	National Legislation	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
2.2.2	Planning Policy Wales	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
<b>3.</b>	<b>Background history of the application site</b>	<b>6</b>
3.1	Caer Gybi Roman fort	6
3.2	Development of the site	6
<b>4.</b>	<b>Designated heritage assets in the vicinity</b> Error! Bookmark not defined.	
4.1	Scheduled Monuments	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
4.2	Listed buildings	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
4.2.1	St. Cybi’s Church	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
4.2.2	Eglwys y Bedd	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
4.2.3	Stanley House and the Captain’s Table	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
4.2.4	The lower churchyard wall and east gateway	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
4.2.5	The upper churchyard walls	7
4.3	Conservation Areas	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
4.3.1	Holyhead Central Conservation Area	5
4.4	Other Designated Features	5
<b>5.</b>	<b>Proposed works</b>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
5.1	Summary of Proposed Works	4
5.2	Archaeology	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
<b>6.</b>	<b>Assessment of Significance of the Heritage Asset</b>	<b>7</b>
6.1	Requirement	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
6.2	Significance	8
6.3	Significance of this monument:	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
6.4	Significance of Caer Gybi Roman Walls	9
<b>7.</b>	<b>Assessment of potential impact of proposed works</b> Error! Bookmark not defined.	
7.1	Heritage assets potentially affected by the proposal.	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
7.2	Assessment of impact on Caer Gybi Roman Walls	10
7.3	Conclusion	10

## **APPENDICES**

### **Appendix 1**

Visual Inspection Report

### **Appendix 2**

Archaeological Assessment

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Purpose

This Statement of Significance has been prepared by Ramboll on behalf of Isle of Anglesey County Council (IoACC) in relation to an application for Faculty for works to the north and south gates of the churchyard, St Cybi's Church, located in the centre of Holyhead (National Grid Reference: SH 24688 82650).

The Statement broadly follows the Guidance Note provided by the Church in Wales, and Cadw's Conservation Principles for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment in Wales (Conservation Principles).

## 1.2 Brief description of the structures and setting

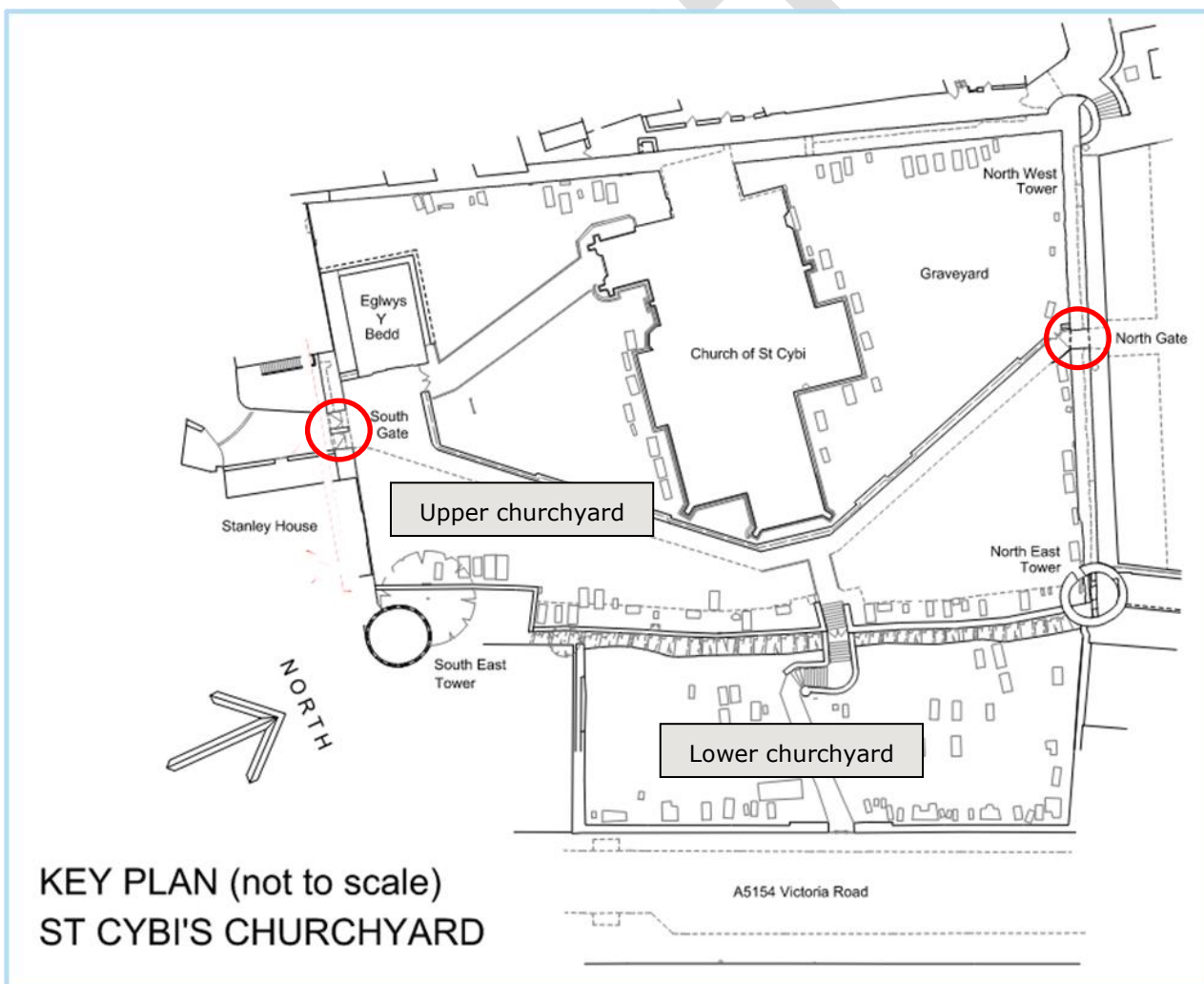


Figure 1 Key plan of churchyard (showing location of gates)

The site is located in the centre of Holyhead between Swift Square and Market Square. It is believed that the walls to the churchyard are the remains of the walls of a fort of the late Roman period dating back to c.410 A.D.

The upper churchyard walls comprise rubble stone walls approximately 4m high. Some parts have distinctive herringbone stonework. The walls form a rough rectangle, with St Cybi's Church located approximately centrally.

North gate in north wall: The north wall lies between a car park and the churchyard and is fully visible on both elevations. It is reasonably complete with a wall-walk and parapet. The north gate through this wall formed of a single archway, which is understood to be a later insertion. It is lined with brick to the soffit of the arch and stone to the sides, with recesses (assumed evidence of former gateposts). A modern steel barred gate is located within the arch.

South Gate in south wall: Parts of the south wall are built into adjacent buildings, with only the central section visible on both faces. The south gate has two tall archways separated by a stone pier which projects north into the churchyard. The archways have modern steel barred gates with barred overthrows. The archways have recesses and embedded timber which are assumed to indicate former gate locations. It is understood that the western arch is on the location of the original Roman gate whilst the eastern arch is a more modern opening.

### **1.3 Circumstances of this Report**

The churchyard walls and their gates have developed a number of defects over time. Refer to report 1620016062-001 Churchyard Walls Visual Inspection Report 31.08.2023 for full details (Appendix ???).

In summary, an assessment of the gates in August 2023 identified:

- Missing mortar in joints to north gate
- Areas of missing mortar and stone to the south gate.
- Large areas of missing mortar to the east elevation of the east wall.

### **Summary of proposed works**

This section summarises the works to the gates proposed by this Faculty application. (Full details of the proposals are contained within drawings submitted as part of the application).

- Removal of vegetation within joints in the wall and vegetation growth close to the walls causing potential for damage.
- Repointing joints which have missing, deteriorated or exposed mortar throughout
- Localised replacement masonry inserts to the southern arch central pier
- Capping in areas with insufficient wall capping.
- Removal of gates and fixings to north gate and making good
- Removal of gates, overthrows and fixings to south gate and making good

No excavation is proposed so there is no impact on any buried archaeological remains.

It is proposed to complete the works to the north and south gates as advance works for a larger project to improve the site as a whole, but which will form a separate Faculty application.

## 2. DESIGNATION

### 2.1 Scheduled Monument

Caer Gybi Roman fort is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (AN031) under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979.

Scheduled Monument Consent (see supported Faculty documents for detail) has been obtained for proposed repairs to the churchyard walls generally, including the proposed works to the gates, subject to the discharge of conditions. The Council have appointed Cat Rees of CR Archaeology to act as the Council’s archaeological advisor.

### 2.2 Listed Building

St Cybi’s Upper Churchyard Walls are listed grade I (Ref No. 5415). Changes to Listed churches and churchyards in the care of the Church in Wales require permission in the form of a Faculty, but do not need to apply for separate Listed Building Consent from the Local Planning Authority.

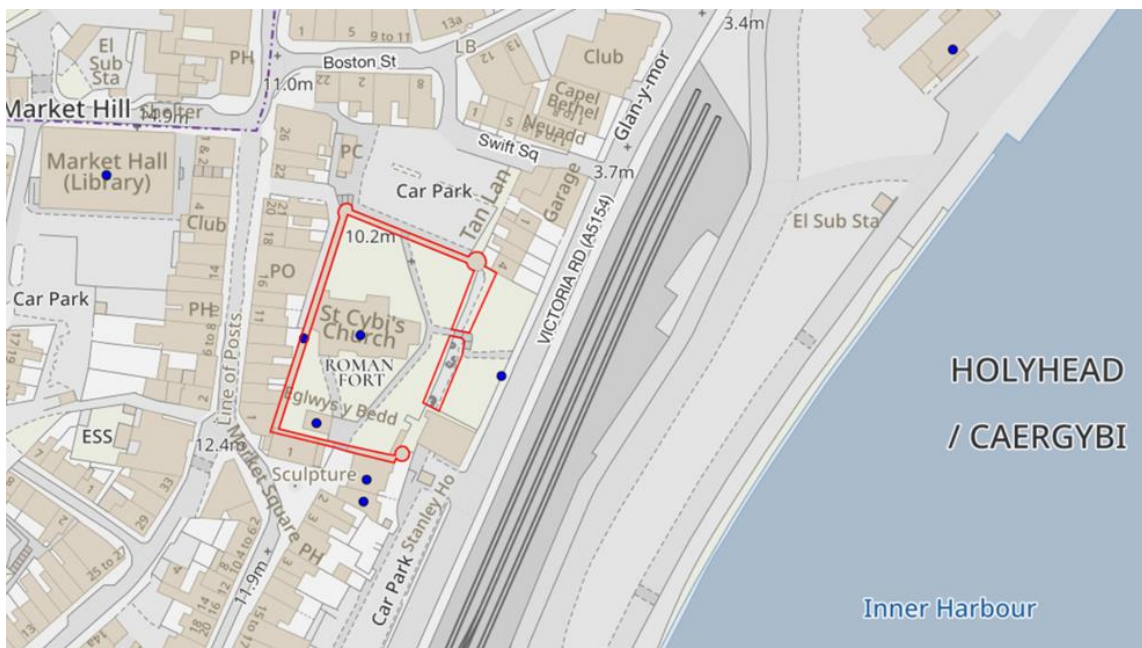


Figure 2 Extent of Scheduled Monument in red and Listed Buildings denoted by blue dots

### 2.3 Conservation Area

The site lies within the Holyhead Conservation Area. The Conservation Area Appraisal notes the gateways and passages, including the path through the churchyard. A separate conservation area application is not required.

### 2.4 Other designated features

The public footpath (PROW 19/033/1) running from the north to south gates is also part of the Wales Coastal Path, a designated long distance footpath, and the formal starting point of the Coastal Path is adjacent to the south gate. The footpath is currently diverted (until April 2025) for current construction works. It is proposed that the work to the gates is carried out in the same period to take advantage of the current diversion.



### 3. BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CHURCHYARD AND SETTING

#### 3.1 Caer Gybi Roman fort

The fort provides the earliest evidence of settlement in Holyhead. The C4th Roman fort of Caer Gybi formed part of the coastal defences against Irish incursions, and is the finest upstanding Roman Monument in North Wales.

An extract from the Cadw Summary Description document:

*The monument consists of the remains of a Roman fort. It is sub-rectangular and measures approximately 75m by 45m. The interior is occupied by St Cybi's church and associated graveyard.*

*The fort lies on a low cliff which would originally have fronted the shore; the east side of the fort which faces the shore is open and there is evidence to show that the north and south walls once continued east towards the water's edge. The remaining part of the fort on top of the cliff occupies 0.32ha; the walls are about 4m high and 1.5m thick. The north wall is the best preserved and shows details of a rampart walk and parapet, the former being about 1m wide. Two rows of putlog holes are also visible, the upper row being 1.5m above the lower. **A narrow entrance in the centre of this wall is probably a late insertion.** A car park occupies the area outside the north wall. The church tower is built against the west wall on the inside of the fort, whereas on the outside the south part has been built against and the north part is free-standing. **The south wall is also largely built against, but in the centre there is a fine double arched entrance which, although rebuilt, is probably original.***

*There was originally a tower at each of the four corners. The south west tower is mostly destroyed and hidden by modern buildings. The north east and south east towers have been largely rebuilt in late medieval or modern times, though they are Roman at the base. The north west tower survives in its original form. The foundations of the north east tower start at the base of the cliff and the remains of a wall running east are bonded into this tower. The east side is a fairly level cliff face supplemented with a stone retaining wall, which contains a relieving arch at the south end. A modern churchyard wall stands on top of the cliff.*

*The position of this site on a low sea-side cliff, together with the suggestion of an enclosed quay, and its similarity with Roman coastal forts in general, have given rise to its interpretation as a late Roman coastal fort. Although there is no direct dating evidence from the site, indications from excavations on Roman forts elsewhere in Wales - notably at Cardiff, Loughor and Neath - have demonstrated a definite pattern of late third-century coastal defence. As part of the late Roman coastal defence system the fort was linked to the signal stations on Holyhead Mountain and Carmel Head. Specific significant views from the fort when built would therefore have been to the west to Holyhead Mountain and to the north-north-east to Carmel Head along with the general view across Holyhead Bay, an arc from northwest to north-north-east.*

Importance:

*The monument is of national importance for its potential to enhance our knowledge of Roman military organisation. The monument forms an important element within the wider context of the Roman occupation of Wales and the structures may contain well preserved archaeological evidence concerning chronology, layout and building techniques.*

*The scheduled area comprises the remains described and areas around them within which related evidence may be expected to survive.*

### 3.2 Listing description: upper churchyard walls

Extract from listing:

*Late Roman small coastguard fort. Probably originally consisted of rectangular enclosure with tower at each corner, and, at lower level to E, flanking walls perhaps to quay. Former Roman E wall rebuilt in Medieval period, and again in C19, when lower churchyard was created. Some rebuilding of upper part of NE tower (itself medieval rebuild), possible C17. SE tower rebuilt C19.*

*Enclosure approximately 75m (N-S) by 45m (E-W). Wall approximately 4m high and 1.7m thick built of rubble with dressed facing stones, sometimes set in herring-bone fashion, with occasional levelling courses on inner face; 2 rows of putlog holes, lower close to ground level, and upper approximately 1.5m above. Parts of wall, especially to N survive to wall-walk level, with parapet up to 1m high. Towers approximately 5m in diameter. SE tower rebuilt on Roman foundations, and now forms part of Stanley House, as does part of S wall. **South gateway of 2 arches follows original plan but rebuilt.** Part of S wall incorporated into rear of No 1 Market Square. SW tower largely incorporated into C19 buildings. Parts of W wall built into tower of Church. NW tower exists partly to wall-walk level. **Gateway in N wall later insertion with brick-lined arch.** NE tower stands approximately 8m high from rock foundations in lower churchyard, and has, to E, bonding stones for former wall flanking quay. E wall (circa 1m thick) mainly modern. Stone stairs down to lower churchyard (which was created in early C19).*

Reason for designation:

Scheduled Ancient Monument: A 31.

Listed Grade I as outstanding structure from late Roman period.

Group value with Parish Church and Capel y Bedd.

### 3.3 Development of the site

The town of Holyhead developed in the Middle Ages as a port, with houses clustered around the fort. After the fort fell out of use, the walls contained a monastery, and subsequently a number of churches. Eglwys y Bedd dates from C14th, and the current church dates from C13th-C16th.

Extensive land reclamation along the shoreline C19th allowed the lower churchyard to be formed.

### 3.4 Recent history

Details of previous archaeological excavations and finds are noted within the report "Archaeological Assessment at St Cybi's Churchyards and Environs" CR Archaeology 2017, appended to this document at Appendix 2. Further archaeological excavation has been carried out recently adjacent the south gate, but the report has not yet been formally published. It is understood to have confirmed previous findings.

A new staircase and viewing platform were inserted into the NE tower in 2023, with minor repairs to the tower.

Construction work is currently underway within the St. Cybi's churchyard:

- Conversion of Eglwys y Bedd into a small café, with a new extension to the rear
- Internal alterations within St Cybi's church

Further work is planned to improve access and enjoyment of the churchyards and adjacent car park.

## 4. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE HERITAGE ASSET

### 4.1 Significance

The requirement is to describe the significance in terms of:

- i) Its special architectural and historical interest
- ii) Any significant features of artistic or archaeological interest

We have used the guidance in “Heritage Impact Assessment in Wales” and Conservation Principles to assess the significance by identifying its “aesthetic, evidential, historic and communal values”:

- *Evidential value – derived from physical remains and their potential to yield evidence about past when the historic asset was made, how it was used and how it has changed over time. The ability to interpret and understand evidence tends to be diminished in proportion to the extent of its removal or replacement. There may be buried or obscured elements associated with the historic asset which may also be an important potential source of evidence.*
- *Historical value – derives from the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present, i.e. illustrating aspects of history or having association with a notable family, person, event or movement. The use of a place for its original purpose, illustrates the relationship between design and function, and so may make a major contribution to its historical values. There may be physical evidence for these connections which it could be important to retain.*
- *Aesthetic value – derived from the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place. It includes the design, construction and craftsmanship of the historic asset. This can also include setting and views to and from the historic asset, which may have changed through time.*
- *Communal value – the historic asset may have particular significance to people for its commemorative, symbolic or spiritual value, or for the part it has played in local cultural or public life. This will be particularly important in the case of buildings in public use or sites where public access must be maintained or improved.*

In addition, we have considered any contribution made by and impact on the setting:

- *Setting - the surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced, which may include important views to and from the asset or non-visual aspects that contribute to the character of the asset and the experience it invokes.*

The levels of significance have been assessed as low, medium or high against each value, although it is recognised that this is very subjective.

## 4.2 Significance of north and south gates

Value	Comment	Assessment of significance
Evidential value	The primary purpose of the walls was to contain and define the site which it surrounds. The walls and gates indicate how the site was used in Roman times, and how they have subsequently been altered. In addition, the structures and surrounding areas may contain well preserved archaeological evidence.	High
Historical value	Although some parts of the walls, and in particular the gates, have been rebuilt, other parts of the walls date back to the later Roman period within the UK. They are only remaining features on the site which give a good indication to how the site would have looked and functioned in Roman times.	Medium
Aesthetic value	Although parts of the walls including the gates, are rebuilt, they largely retain their original appearance. The aesthetic value has been slightly decreased by previous repairs and metal gates which are not in line with the original Roman style.	Medium
Communal value	The churchyard, and the walls containing it, has a strong communal value, providing one of very few open green spaces for residents of Holyhead. The walls contain the church and redundant burial ground, hence the site has spiritual significance. The church is used for weddings, funerals and other services marking important events for families and the community. It has also become a popular tourist destination. The gates allow public access and mark the entrance and exit points of the coastal path crossing the churchyard.	Medium
Architectural value	The walls are typical of their time and type and are considered of interesting architectural value. The gates have lesser architectural value, having been rebuilt.	Low
Setting	The walls surround listed buildings which are of high value (historical, communal, aesthetic), which are designated for their group value.  The walls create a separation between the calm setting of the churchyard and the busy town centre. The gates give access to this setting and one of the only open green spaces within the centre of Holyhead, with unobstructed views over the harbour.	Medium

## 5. ASSESSMENT OF POTENTIAL IMPACT OF PROPOSED WORKS ON THE SIGNIFICANCE

### 5.1 Assessment of impact

Proposed Work Item	Objective	Significance of Affected Fabric	Potential Beneficial Impact	Potential Harmful Impact	Compensation and Mitigation
Remove vegetation from mortar joints.	Prepare walls for repair works required and prevent future damage from vegetation growth.	Some mortar may be original.	Improvement in appearance, Beneficial to conservation of historic fabric.	Minimal interference with historic fabric.	Hand tools to be used to prevent any damage to surrounding areas.
Piecing in new matching stone.	To repair damaged areas of the walls and prevent further deterioration.	Historic fabric affected; some stone may be original, although likely to be Medieval or later.	Improvement in appearance. Maintains stability. Beneficial to conservation of historic fabric by preventing water ingress.	Removal of damaged stone.	Hand tools used to prevent any damage to surrounding areas. New stone to match existing and not alter appearance of coursing etc. Minimal interference with historic fabric – only locally damaged areas to be removed.
Repointing where existing mortar inappropriate, missing or eroded	Repair damage to the walls to reinstate original appearance and prevent further deterioration.	Some mortar may be early in date but surface pointing is more likely to be later.	Improvement in appearance. Beneficial to conservation of historic fabric by preventing water ingress/vegetation growth/etc.	Removal of small amount of historic fabric required for repointing.	Only to be carried out where necessary for restoring the capacity of the masonry or removal and replacement of modern material not matching the original appearance. Lime mortar mix to be used suitable for the strength of the stone and exposure, samples for approval of colour/texture. .
Capping to wall heads	Reinstate existing damaged capping, prevent water ingress into wall heads.	Existing capping assumed modern.	Beneficial to conservation of historic fabric by preventing water ingress	Slight alteration to appearance where capping visible from the ground.	Minimum areas to be capped, sufficient mortar to provide a fall to direct water off wall head.
Removal of gates, overthrows and all fixings.	Gates to remain open year round as the exterior is an unrestricted public area. Existing corroded ferrous fixings embedded in the stonework to be removed.	Gates and overthrows are modern. Some fixings sit within historic fabric.	Improved access. More welcoming. Increased public use may deter anti-social behaviour. Reduces corrosion damage to stonework.	Potential loss of small amount of historic fabric where fixings are removed.	Hand tools to be used to prevent excessive damage to historic fabric.

### 5.2 Conclusion

The proposed work is assessed overall to have low (or less than substantial) harm on the significance of the listed walls. The proposed work is assessed as having a negligible impact on the setting; the appearance of the walls will not be significantly altered.

## **APPENDIX 1 VISUAL INSPECTION REPORT**

## **APPENDIX 2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT**