

**T I R - D A F Y D D**

**REPORT ON ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD EVALUATION**

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**BRITISH COAL OPENCAST SOUTH WALES REGION**  
**TIR-DAFYDD**

**REPORT ON ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD EVALUATION**

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

This report was commissioned by British Coal Opencast, South Wales Region, following the submission of a Preliminary Archaeological Assessment on the Rock Castle West/Blaen y Glyn proposed opencast site (DAT 1992).

1.1 The present report is the result of a Field Evaluation of a smaller area than the 420 Ha covered by the Preliminary Assessment. This report covers an area which is in the eastern half of the original assessment area and extends over an area of 136 Ha.

1.2 The area of the proposed opencast site has been named by British Coal Opencast as 'Tir-Dafydd' and in December 1992 British Coal announced its intention to submit a planning application to develop the site. Throughout this report the area that is the subject of the field evaluation is referred to as 'the site'.

1.3 A Field Evaluation is "a programme of intrinsic and/or non-intrusive fieldwork designed to supplement and improve existing information to a level of confidence at which planning recommendations can be made" (ACAO 1993). In some cases there remains an element of uncertainty about the nature of some of the individual sites examined during the Field Evaluation. This situation has been taken into account in the recommendations in respect of those sites.

- 1.4 Some individual archaeological and historic sites mentioned in this Report carry a reference number, PRN---. This refers to the Primary Record Number allocated to the site in the Dyfed Archaeological Trust's Sites and Monuments Record (Dyfed SMR). The National Grid Reference is appended in each case.

## 2.0 **SITE DESCRIPTION**

- 2.1 The proposed open-cast coal site known as Tir-Dafydd is situated to the west of the settlement of Llandybie and to the north of the settlement of Blaenau.
- 2.2 The site can be divided into undisturbed, and disturbed land formerly utilised for open-cast coal extraction and now restored.
- 2.3 The undisturbed land, which lies in the north-western area of the site (Fig 1), comprises mostly semi-improved pasture bounded by hedgerows which are growing on banks and a few small sections of woodland. Much of the land is wet and rushes are widespread. It is drained by tributaries of the Afon Lash which run to the south-west of the area.
- 2.4 The disturbed land which lies in the south-eastern area (Fig 1), consists of pasture-land which is bounded by recently constructed banks and ditches. This part of the site was not surveyed as all archaeological features have been removed in recent times.

### 3.0 **SURVEY RESULTS**

3.1 The project consisted of a survey, by field walking, of all the undisturbed fields within the bounds of the site; an investigation of the previously recorded sites, and of all sites discovered as a result of field walking; a core testing of the small peat bog in the field known as Coed Cae; and a survey of the standing buildings at Maes-yr-Onnen and Tir-Dafydd.

3.2 The field survey revealed a landscape of enclosed fields consisting mainly of rough pasture.

#### **Boundaries and Fields**

3.3 The majority of field boundaries comprise banks and ditches, the ditches draining to the south into the Afon Lash. The banks vary in size from 0.5m to 1.5m high by 1.0m to 2.0m wide but in places their original height is exaggerated due to subsequent deepening of the ditches cut on one or both sides. The banks consist mainly of soil with a few scattered stones in the core of the structure. In some places attempts have been made to face the banks with stone but this is rare. The ditches vary in depth from 0.2m to 2.0m. As many have been cleared and deepened, it is difficult to estimate their original size.

3.3 i The species of trees and shrubbery growing on and around the banks and ditches appear reasonably consistent throughout the site; consisting of such species as hawthorn, hazel, ash, rowan, holly, willow, oak and wild rose. There was little variation in species across the whole site,

although water-loving trees such as willow were more prevalent in the wetter fields.

- 3.3 ii The historic meadow land (Waun), including the area mentioned in the 9th century land charter (DAT 1992, para 7), is well-defined topographically and vegetationally. The fields, especially in the Gwaun Henllan and Maes-yr-Onnen area, were wet and soft consisting mainly of rushes and some grass. The better drained fields around Glyn-yr-Henllan and Tir-Dafydd were firm, mostly grass but with a few patches of rushes. All were pasture. Some of the fields had been damaged by machinery, gaining access for test boring, making it difficult to assess the full archaeological potential, especially in the wetter areas.
- 3.3 iii In the dry, better pasture (Cae Drysni, Rhandir, Cae Canol (fig 1)) near Glyn-yr-Henllan, where the grass was short, faint traces of ridges could be seen indicating that the area was once subject to 'ridge and furrow' cultivation. The field name 'Rhandir' is derived from 'Rhandroedd' meaning 'sharelands', and it is possible that the ridge and furrow is a physical legacy of the communal cultivation of this area in medieval times.

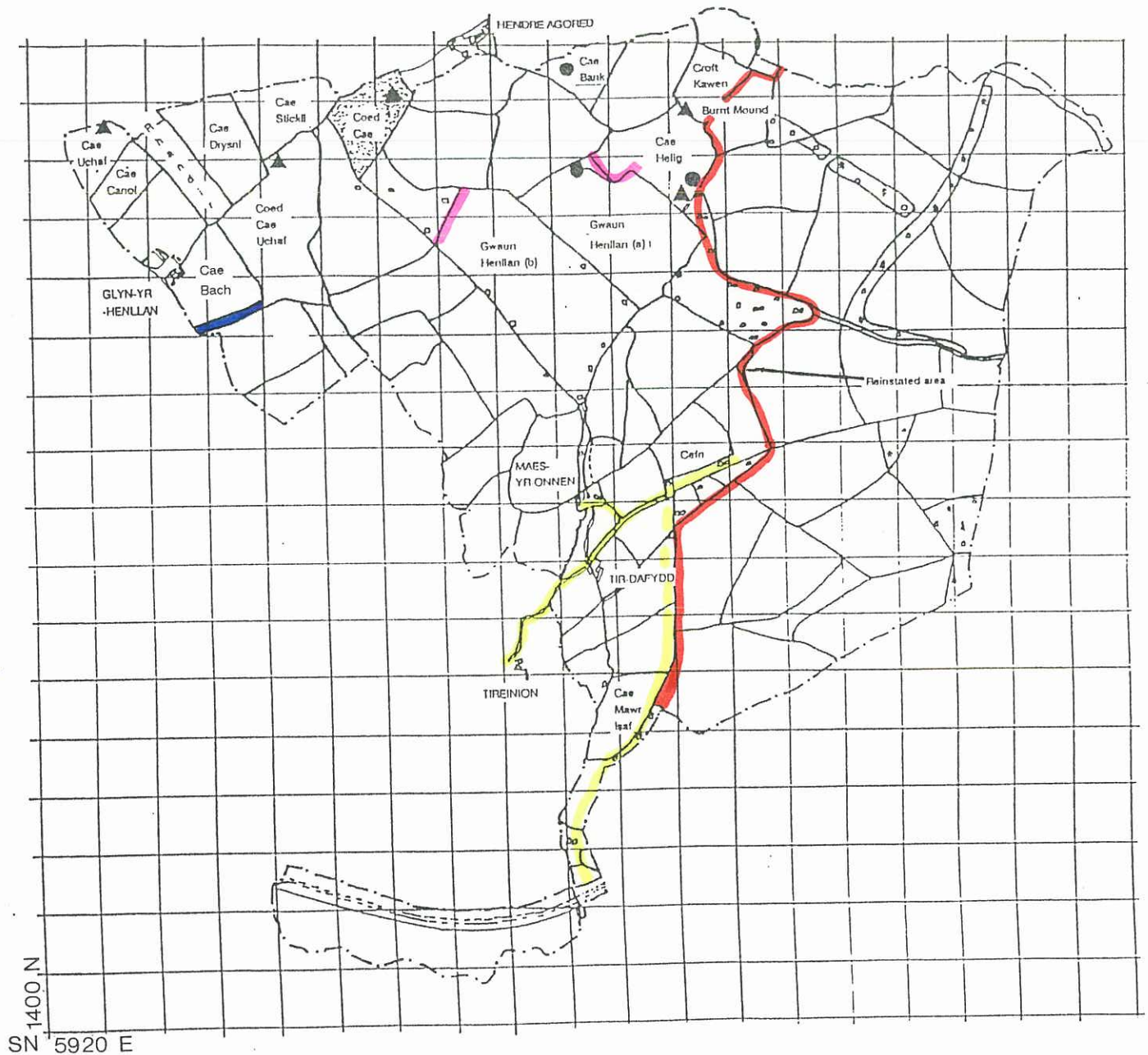
### **Trackways**

- 3.4 Within the field system a number of historic trackways, some sunken, were revealed (fig 1). The majority consisted of a trackway bounded on both sides by a bank, most of the banks being lined with oaks. In other cases there was one bank while the opposing side was lined by trees. In one case the trackway was defined by an avenue of oaks

alone. Most of these trackways were wet or running with water owing to their sunken situation but in one case, a raised dry centre could be seen. Some of the track sections were short, running along the edge of one field but disappearing in the next.

- 3.4 i One longer section could be defined running through the narrow southern section (site of proposed road) and continuing north to the south-west corner of the field called Cefn (fig 1), where it turns towards Tir-Dafydd and Maes-yr-Onnen. It can then be traced in the present track running from Tir-Dafydd to Tireinion.
- 3.4 ii In detail, the southernmost section of the trackway has been cut by a new access road but a stone lined bank can be seen at the southern end of the track. North-westwards it follows the line of a modern footpath/cattle track but where the footpath continues into the field called Cae Mawr Isaf the original track follows the eastern side of the field (fig 1). Here it is marked by a double bank or bank and line of trees and is 5-6m wide; it is mostly overgrown or has been eroded in some places by the earlier quarrying. It continues north and then north-eastwards along the southern boundary of the field called Cefn. The strip is much overgrown but a new track has recently been made down its centre-line. The trackway is not further traceable into the field to the east.
- 3.4 iii From the junction at the south-west corner of Cefn field, a trackway turns south-westwards towards Tir Dafydd and becomes narrower, only a couple of metres wide. Here it takes on the appearance of a sunken road: it runs between two tree-covered large banks, has a stone surface

# TIR DAFYDD PROJECT AREA



Trackway Sections: ref - 3.4 i, ii, iii  
 ref - 3.4 iv  
 ref - 3.4 v  
 Sites Investigated: positive results  
 negative results  
 Area of Peat

Fig 1



and is lower than the surrounding fields. To the south-east of Maes-yr-Onnen it comes to a crossroad where it is intersected by a track which is traceable to Maes-yr-Onnen, although it has been damaged in places, while in the opposite direction it leads into a field. It then continues south-westwards towards Tir- Dafydd but becomes much overgrown. It has been destroyed at Tir-Dafydd by modern work, making it impossible to ascertain how it originally entered the farmstead. Its route continues in the present track which leads to Tireinion.

- 3.4 iv Another section of trackway lies to the south of the field called Cae Bach (fig 1), which is attached to the farm Glyn-yr-Henllan. It runs from the modern road to the field called Coed Cae Uchaf, where no further trace of it can be found. It is 5m wide with a 2m wide raised centre and is bounded by large, tree-lined banks on both sides.
- 3.4 v Two further sections of trackway can be traced in the fields called Gwaun Henllan a & b (fig 1). The first in field 'b' consists of a bank paralleled by a line of oak trees; the trackway is waterlogged. It cannot be traced into surrounding fields. Stones from field clearance lie across the trackway and on the bank. The second track, in field 'a', is defined by an avenue of oaks following the north-west corner of the field. The trackway is partially waterlogged. Both trackways follow the edge of the boundary recorded in the 9th C land grant of Maenor Meddynfych.

### Individual Sites

3.5        Eight individual sites of known or reputed archaeological or historic interest were investigated within the boundaries of the Tir-Dafydd site.

3.5    i        The probable Bronze Age Site, a '**burnt mound**', originally incorrectly sited in historic records, (PRN808; NGR: SN60321558; Figs 1 & 2), was re-located and examined to determine its extent. The site is on the boundary between two fields, Croft Kawen and Cae Helig. The field boundary runs over the approximate centre of the mound. On the Cae Helig side a stream runs along the boundary cutting through the mound. This allowed the interior of the mound to be examined, revealing a typical core of small fire-cracked stones. Trial trenches established the extent of the mound in Cae Helig and Croft Kawen.

In Croft Kawen traces of burnt stone and charcoal could be found up to 4.5m into the field, with a further spread of stone up to 7.0m. As anticipated no direct dating evidence was recovered. Mounds of this nature are mostly of Bronze Age date. The site is reasonably well preserved, apart from the section removed by the stream bed.

3.5    ii        The site of a **possible mine**, (PRN7674; NGR: SN60331542) was examined. The feature is recognisable as a rectangular intrusion, some 2m deep with associated small spoil tip. Since the nature of the field evidence confirms the Dyfed SMR records of a 'pirate mine' dug during the strike of 1920's, no further investigation was considered necessary.

# TIR-DAFYDD PROJECT BURNT MOUND

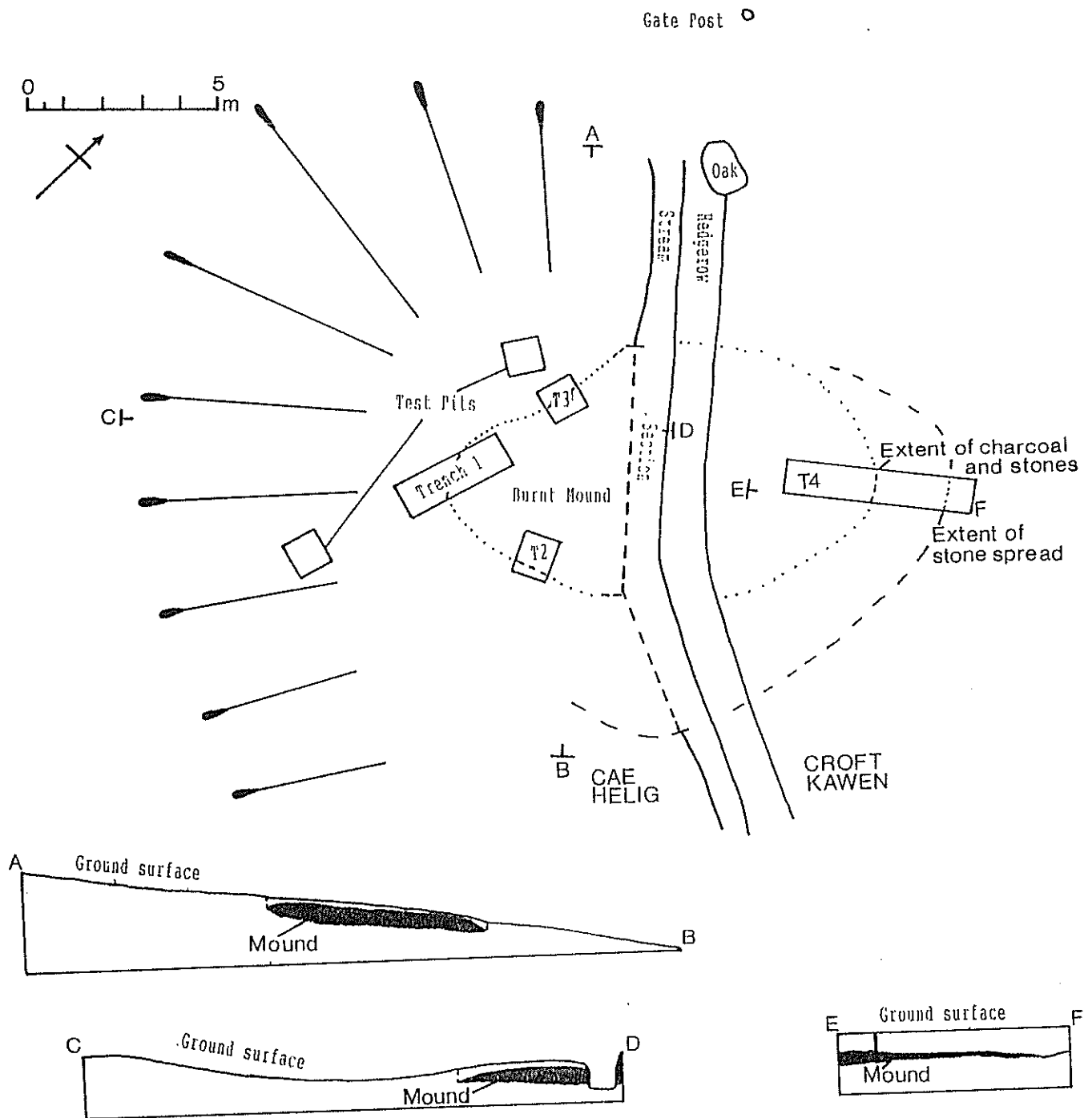


Fig 2

- 3.5 iii The site of '**building foundations**' recorded in the Dyfed SMR was investigated by trial trenching. There were suggestions from previous records (PRN 7673, NGR 6033 1543) of the existence of a building in this area, perhaps even an early chapel (see Dyfed Archaeological Trust Preliminary Archaeological Assessment, Page 9). Despite sub-surface exploration, no evidence of any structure or structures were found. A large number of stones were spread along the adjacent southern boundary of Cae Helig.
- 3.5 iv A **platform** noted in the field called Gwaun Henllan (a) was examined by trial trenching (NGR: SN60131548). The trenching revealed no archaeological features.
- 3.5 v A **platform/ridge** noted in the Preliminary Archaeological Assessment, in the field called Cae Bank was investigated, by mechanical trenching (NGR: SN59331556). No archaeological features were discovered; bedrock was revealed under a shallow topsoil.
- 3.5 vi A previously **unrecorded archaeological site** was located on the boundary between the fields Coed Cae Uchaf, Cae Stickil and Cae Drysni. Here there is a sharp and significant deviation in the line of the boundary, creating a corner in Coed Cae Uchaf (NGR: SN59631550; figs 1 & 2). This may be the very ruinous remains of a former building. Limited trial excavation failed to provide sufficient information to clearly establish its possible function or date. There are plainly artificial features present in the form of low rubble banks (Fig 2). Moreover the surrounding boundaries are significantly different

**TIR-DAFYDD PROJECT  
BUILDING IN COED CAE UCHAF**

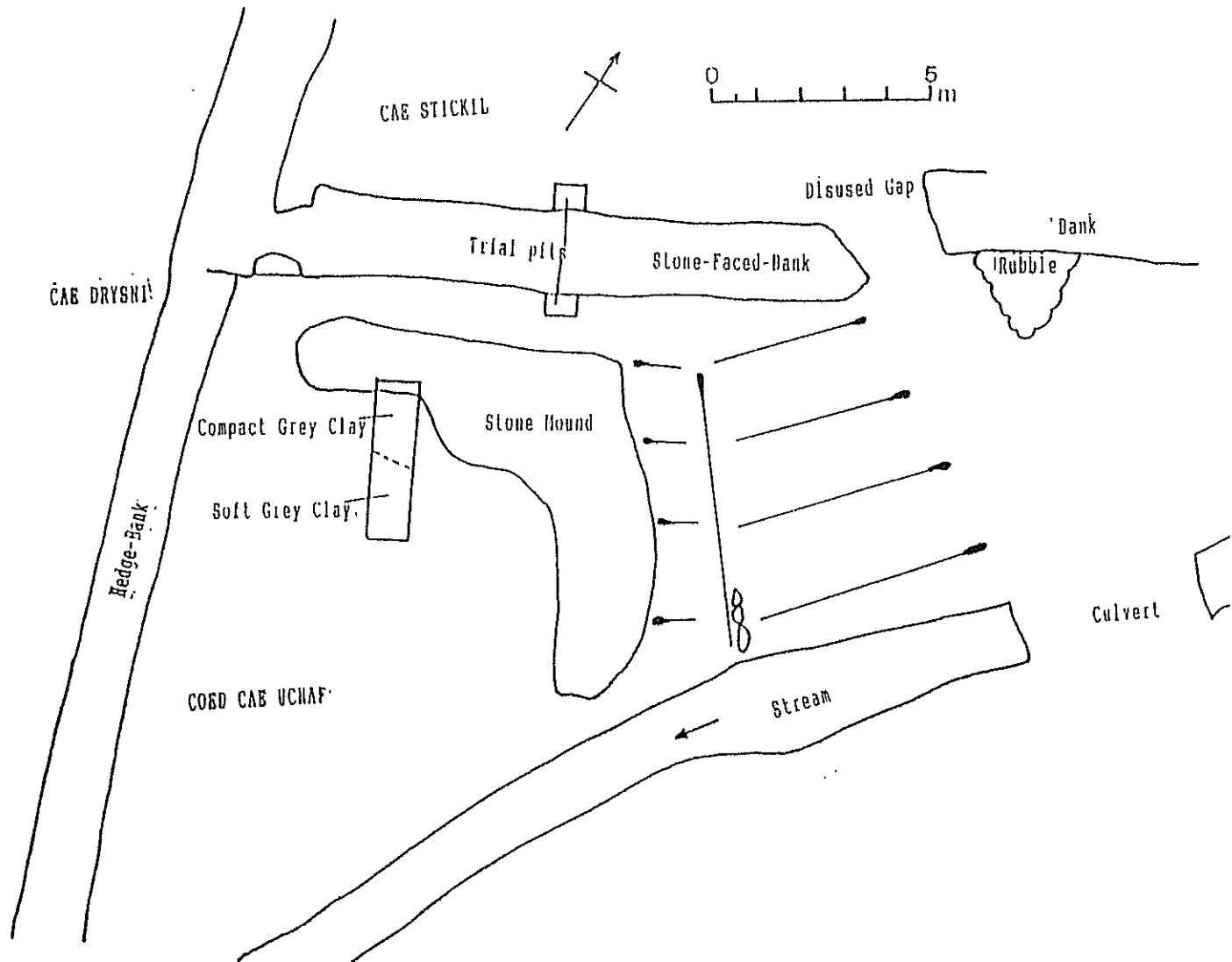


Fig 3

from the rest of those in the Tir Dafydd site, consisting, in the south-west corner of Cae Stickil, of a well-built stone faced bank, the northern side of which has been buried by ploughwash.

- 3.5   vii   The superficial elements of a **possible site** on the northern side of Cae Uchaf were surveyed (NGR: SN593155). Here there is a level linear platform with spreads of stone, some overgrown by oak trees. No clear pattern suggestive of an early settlement could be deduced from the surface evidence. Whilst some of the stone debris may be attributed to relatively recent field clearance, it is possible that the 'platform' and some of the earlier stone spreads may conceal a structure or feature of some antiquity.

- 3.6       Investigation of the field Coed Cae to the west of Hendre Agored (fig 1) revealed **deposits of peat** (NGR: SN598156). The field is on a bench at a break in slope below the limestone ridge. The boundary bank on its lower side impedes drainage and has clearly created the build-up of peat. Coring revealed that the peat is 1.25-1.80m deep with a mix of silts and clay for a further 0.50m below this. Macrofossils are present throughout.

- 3.7       The **farmhouse** at Maes-yr-Onnen and its outlying buildings were investigated (NGR: SN60131490; fig 4). A detailed description was made of the farm together with a ground floor plan and photographic record.

- 3.8       The **standing building** at Tir-Dafydd and outlying features were investigated (NGR:N60161478; fig 5). A detailed description was

made of the site together with a ground floor plan and photographic record.

- 3.8 i The remains of **another building**, to the east of the standing structure, were located and planned. These remains consist of low, eroded walls, forming part of a building (? house). The major portion of these vestigial remains has been recently destroyed (Fig 5).

TIR-DAFYDD PROJECT  
MAES-YR-ONNEN AND OUTLYING BUILDINGS

Overall plan of site

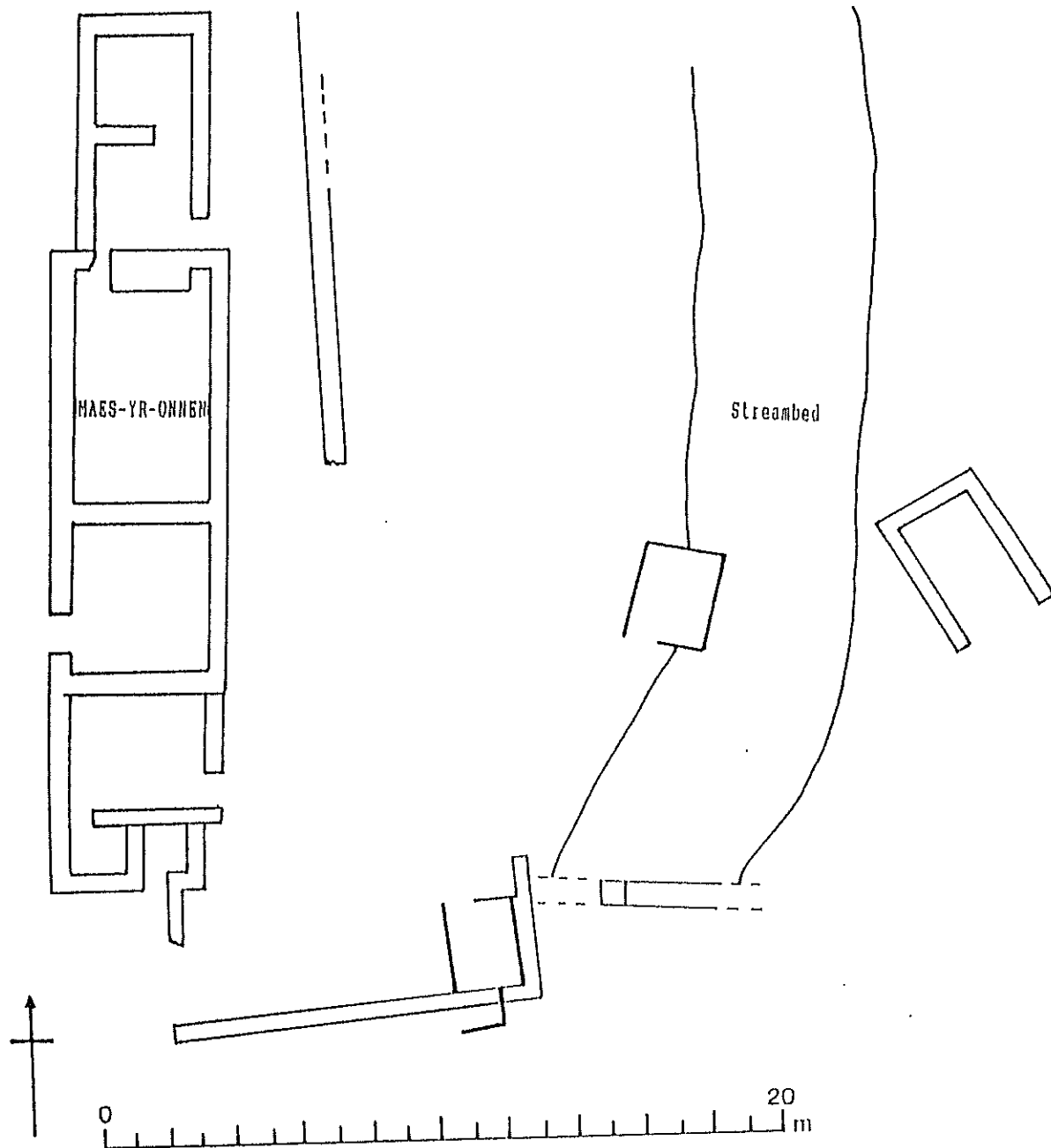


Fig 4



TIR-DAFYDD PROJECT  
TIR-DAFYDD AND OUTLYING WALLS

Overall plan of site

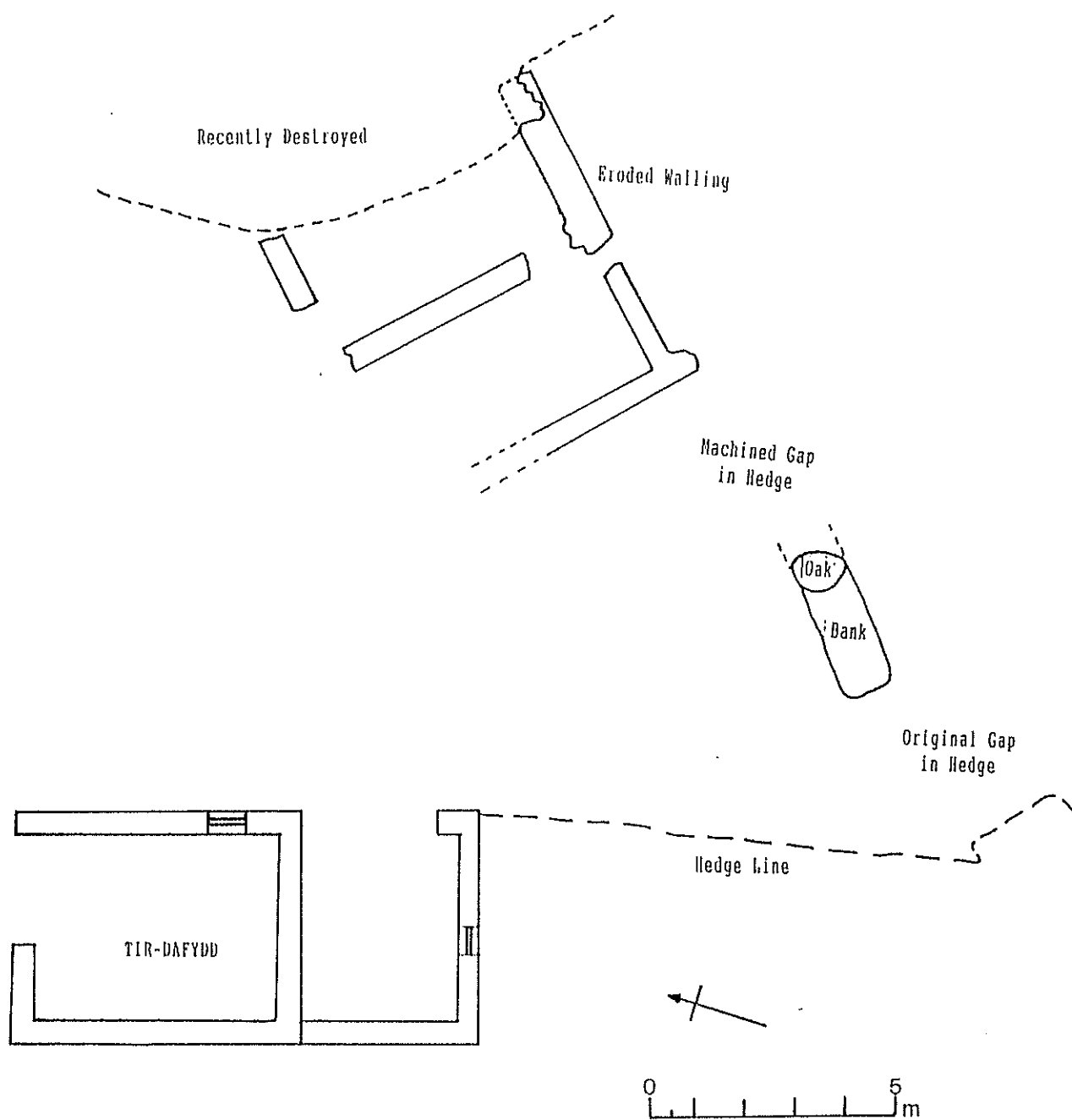


Fig 5

## 4.0 SUMMARY

### Individual Archaeological Sites

- 4.1 Eight individual sites were investigated during the field evaluation, six by sub-surface sampling in addition to recording of superficial features.
- 4.2 Of these eight sites, two possible sites previously identified proved to be of no archaeological significance. These were the **supposed platform** at NGR: SN60131548 (para 3.5 iv above), and a possible structure at NGR: SN59331556 (para 3.5 v above). In both cases the superficial features were proved to be of natural origin.
- 4.3 Two further sites were previously recorded on the Dyfed SMR. One of these, the '**mine**' (PRN7674; para 3.5 ii above) was not subjected to sub-surface examination due to its origin as a 20th century feature. The other site (PRN7673; para 3.5 iii above), despite records of earlier discoveries, failed to produce any evidence of surviving archaeological features.

Of the remaining 4 sites:

- 4.4 The existence of a '**burnt-mound**' site at NGR: SN60321558 (para 3.5 i above) was confirmed and its limits defined. No dating evidence was recovered by way of associated artifacts, but this is often the case in sites of this nature and the evaluation established the existence of ample quantities of charcoal which could be used to obtain a date by radio-carbon determination. The majority of burnt-mound sites are

attributable to the Bronze Age. The site is reasonably well-preserved and has significant archaeological potential.

4.5 A previously **unrecorded site** was found during the field evaluation, at NGR: SN59631550 (para 3.5 vi above), Coed Cae Uchaf. The superficial features were much eroded and not readily resolvable in terms of establishing the site's nature or date. It is likely the remains represent some small building or buildings of a domestic or agricultural nature. The absence of any reference to this site on records investigated during the Preliminary Archaeological Assessment, and the possibility that it is contemporary with or pre-dates the establishment of the field boundary on the northern side, suggests that the site may be mediaeval or earlier. More extensive archaeological investigation is required to establish its nature and date.

4.6 Investigation of the area of peaty soil at Coed Cae (NGR: SN598156) established that the depth of peat present is such that it does not contain a full post-glacial sequence, and that its formation is very likely to be related to the establishment of the field boundary on its southern side. Nevertheless the deposit contains valuable evidence which would help to elucidate the period of the establishment of the boundary itself and the subsequent land-use and vegetational history of the area.

4.7 In Cae Uchaf at NGR: SN593155 (para 3.5 vii above) **spreads of stones** in the north east corner of the field, overgrown with oak trees, could not be superficially resolved into any definite structure. The source of this stone is likely to be due to field clearances part, but may

mask earlier structures. More extensive archaeological investigation is required to determine this.

### **Buildings**

- 4.8 The initial recording of the **ruinous buildings** at Maes-yr-Onnen (NGR: SN60131490; para 3.7 above) revealed no features definitely attributable to a pre-19th C period. There is a possibility that the holding may be of at least early 17th C origin (Preliminary Archaeological Assessment, Page 10) but there is no indication of this in the present fabric. It is possible that the present building may have been rebuilt on an earlier site of which there may be some evidence below the existing floor and surrounding ground levels.
- 4.9 The initial recording of the standing building and ruinous structures at Tir-Dafydd (NGR: SN60161478; para 3.8 above) again revealed no features attributable to a period earlier than the 19th C. Because of extensive damage, the full plan and layout of the farmstead could not be recovered by superficial recording. Archaeological excavation would be required to establish the origin and date of the remaining foundation walls. No supporting documentation has been discovered to suggest any mediaeval or earlier settlement.

### **Historic Landscape Components**

- 4.10 The site contains a pattern of field enclosures, boundaries and former trackways of some antiquity. The majority of surviving components are demonstrably pre-19th C and are likely to be of at least mediaeval

origin, and possibly earlier. Whilst some of the deeper ditches associated with some of the boundaries are likely to be 19th C, these are plainly enhancements (for improvement of drainage), of earlier boundaries. Although variations in the nature of construction of boundaries are present, these were not resolvable in terms of chronological development: a programme of detailed archaeological investigation, by way of cross sections of boundaries would be necessary to obtain dating evidence to construct an absolute and relative chronology of the origins and development of the enclosure pattern.

## **5.0 EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

**5.1** The following evaluation and recommendations are based on the results of the Preliminary Archaeological Assessment and the subsequent Field Evaluation.

### **Individual Archaeological and Historic Sites**

**5.2** The proposed open-cast site contains no Scheduled Ancient Monuments or Listed Buildings.

**5.3** Of the six archaeological sites identified in the Field Evaluation as possessing archaeological importance or further archaeological ~~PA~~ potential, none are considered to fulfil the Secretary of State's non-statutory criteria for scheduling (PPG 16 Annex 3) with the possible exception of site PRN808 (para 3.5 i above).

- 5.4 Of the standing buildings investigated - Maes-yr-Onnen and Tir Dafydd - neither would be likely to be considered as sufficiently architecturally or historically important to be listed by the Secretary of State under the provisions of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act, Section 1. It should be noted however that both these sites have some archaeological potential which would require further investigation.
- 5.5 Dyfed County Structure Plan Policy EN1A has a presumption in favour of protecting and conserving wherever possible unscheduled archaeological historical and architectural features or areas of importance. The policy also includes the creation of conditions to provide adequate opportunities for the recording and excavation of sites where permission is granted for development (DCC 1990).
- 5.6 As a result of the Field Evaluation, we consider that some individual sites have sufficient archaeological importance to warrant 'preservation by record' should the development (which would result in the total destruction of these sites) proceed.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 5.7 **We therefore recommend** that prior to the commencement of any development, the applicant make provision for the further investigations and recording of individual sites working to a brief prepared by or on behalf of the Planning Authority. These sites are:

- (1) Burnt Mound (PRN808; NGR: SN60321558)
- (2) Coed Cae Uchaf : possible building  
(NGR: SN59631550)
- (3) Tir-Dafydd (NGR: SN60161478)
- (4) Maes-yr-Onnen (NGR: SN60131490)
- (5) Coed Cae Peat Deposit (NGR: SN598156)
- (6) Cae Helig site of building foundations  
(NGR: SN603154)

5.8 Not all these sites should necessarily receive the same level of investigation. **We would recommend** that the brief should include the following requirements:

Recommended Response	Site
(1) Total excavation and recording:	) Burnt Mound
(2) Selective excavation to determine whether or not a programme of further archaeological excavation: is justified.	) Coed Cae Uchaf ) Tir-Dafydd ) Maes-yr-Onnen
(3) Selective sampling and programme of environmental analysis of pollen and plant remains:	) ) Coed Cae peat deposit
(4) Watching brief during topsoil stripping:	) ) Cae Helig

5.9 In the case of the possible structures in the north-east corner of Cae Uchaf (NGR: SN59631550) **we recommend** that in view of the marginal position of this site in relation to the proposed development, the site should be left undisturbed. If this is not possible, there should be a selective excavation to determine whether or not a total excavation to secure preservation by record is justified.

## **Historic Landscape**

- 5.10 The Preliminary Archaeological Assessment of the Blaen y Glyn area emphasised its importance as an historic landscape. In the restricted area of the Tir-Dafydd site, the field evaluation has added little to this original assessment, and it is not possible to provide a statement on the precise date of origin and historical evolution of the enclosure pattern without a programme of cross-sectioning of individual boundaries and trackways, and further documentary research.
- 5.11 Overall, there can be no doubt that the enclosure, trackway and field pattern is of historic value. Assessment of its **relative** importance depends, not only upon securing dateable evidence for its individual components, but also upon detailed investigation and analysis of local and regional historic landscape patterns. Such local and regional studies do not at present exist.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 5.12 In such circumstances **it is recommended** that if the proposed development is to proceed, a programme of further recording by excavation of selected features (including field boundaries and trackways) be prepared, subject to a brief provided by or on behalf of the Planning Authority, sufficient to ensure an adequate level of 'preservation by record' of the historic landscape. Such a programme should also include provision for further documentary research.



## 6.0

### REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

ACAO - 1993 Model briefs and Specifications for Archaeological Assessments and Field Evaluations. Association of Archaeological Officers. March 1993.

DAT - 1992 Rock Castle West/Blaen y Glyn Proposed Open Cast Coal Site. Preliminary archaeological Assessment. Dyfed Archaeological Trust (Curatorial Section). November 1992

DCC - 1990 Dyfed Structure Plan (including Alterations No.1) Dyfed County Council. November 1990

PPG 16 Planning Policy Guidance Note 16: Archaeology and Planning, Welsh Office. November 1991

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## 7.0

### LIST OF MAPS AND DRAWINGS

- 7.1 Fig 1 - Area of proposed open cast, showing trackways, archaeological sites, buildings and selected field names.
- 7.2 Fig 2 - Plan of Prehistoric burnt mound (including profiles).
- 7.3 Fig 3 - Plan of site in the field called Coed Cae Uchaf.
- 7.4 Fig 4 - Plan of Maes-yr-Onnen and outlying buildings.
- 7.5 Fig 5 - Plan of Tir-Dafydd and outlying walls.
- 7.6 **List of records not included in this document.**
  - 7.6 i Plan of trenches across the burnt mound at 1:20 & section across the burnt mound at 1:20 - ref 3.5 i.
  - 7.6 ii Plan of trench across the platform in Gwaun Henllan (a) at 1:20 - ref 3.5 iv.

- 7.6 iii Section across the boundary between Coed Cae Uchaf and Cae Stickil at 1:20 - ref 3.5 vi.
- 7.6 iv Ground floor plan of Maes-yr-Onnen at 1:50 - ref 3.7
- 7.6 v Photographic record of Tir-Dafydd site project - 47 black and white prints & 50 colour slides.
- 7.6 vi Field notes of the survey.