

# FIELDWORK AT GLANDY CROSS, CARMARTHENSHIRE

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REPORT ON THE SALVAGE RECORDING & SURFACE COLLECTION OF  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL MATERIAL IN RESPONSE TO LAND IMPROVEMENT  
MEASURES AROUND YR ALLOR, MAY-JULY 2000



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CAMBRIA ARCHAEOLOGY

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By

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## Summary

*Archaeological salvage recording at Glandy Cross, Cilymaenllwyd, Carmarthenshire (NGR: SN137267) was undertaken during land improvement between May and July 2000. The fieldwork, including monitoring visits and surface collection, was undertaken in the northern part of a field which contained a number of known prehistoric monuments including the standing stones at Yr Allor. Archaeological survey in 1991 had previously identified evidence for an axe production site in an adjacent area. Although no evidence of further axe production was identified within the northern area of the field, a linear arrangement of stones was recognised and a general scatter of rhyolite fragments and pieces of white quartz collected.*

## **Introduction**

The following report details the results of archaeological salvage recording and surface collection at Glandy Cross, Carmarthenshire (Fig. 1, NGR SN137267). The work was undertaken by Cambria Archaeology during stone clearance and land improvement in the northern part of a field containing known prehistoric features including Yr Allor standing stones (PRN 1000) and both round and ring barrows (PRNs 667, 1083, 9753, 12690 and 13034). Previous work in the southern part of the same field revealed lithic material representing the remains of a Neolithic axe factory (David & Williams 1995). The objective of the work in the northern area was to determine whether or not evidence for this axe factory extended into this part of the field and to provide a salvage record of any other archaeological features or deposits that might be damaged by the land improvement. The work was undertaken between May and July 2000 and was funded by CADW through its contingency fund.

## **Background**

The fieldwalking project which took place in July 2000 forms part of a wider range of interest shown by Cambria Archaeology to the area around Glandy Cross since 1981 and particularly during the first part of the last decade. The nature and results of this work will be briefly discussed and summarised in the following paragraph, although for greater detail and interpretation of the evidence see Kirk and Williams (forthcoming).

Although the area around the Glandy Cross prehistoric monument complex has been recognised as a significant archaeological resource since at least the seventeenth-century, a more comprehensive understanding of its socio-cultural context and chronology remained largely unexamined until Cambria Archaeology began a programme of watching briefs and field assessments following stone clearance operations dating back to 1981. A full assessment programme was eventually instigated in 1991 and 1992 as a result of the various land improvements made in the general area during the 1980s and also the immediate threat posed by the ploughing and clearance that had taken place in the area around Yr Allor stones (Kirk and Williams, forthcoming). Funded by a grant from CADW, one of the objectives of Cambria's work at Glandy Cross was not only the excavation and fieldwork aspect of the project (comprehensive site survey, aerial reconnaissance, geophysical analysis, selective excavation and documentary research) but also the development of a strategy for the conservation, preservation, interpretation and local communication of the importance of the complex.

The area around Glandy Cross is rich in prehistoric archaeological material (Fig. 2). The concentration of such a large number of Neolithic and Bronze Age sites within such a localised area suggests that Glandy Cross is one of, if not ~~the~~, the most important monument complexes in West Wales. In addition to the known sites within Yr Allor field (OS 7963) which were examined and recorded, particular concentrations of worked rhyolite were newly discovered during fieldwalking at the site in 1991 and led to the identification of an axe manufacturing site dated to the Neolithic (PRN 14299) (David and Williams 1995).

In May 2000 Cambria Archaeology was alerted to the presence of heavy plant machinery and clearance work taking place within Yr Allor field to the north-west of the stones and axe production area. As a consequence a series of field visits were made to monitor the work and to provide a salvage record of any features or deposits threatened. Following the stone clearance the field was ploughed and a surface collection undertaken to identify any further lithic material that might represent further evidence for Neolithic axe production.

### **Field Visits**

Various field visits to monitor the stone clearance were made on May 11th, 12th, 13th, 18th and 23rd 2000. In addition, aerial photographs of the site were taken by Toby Driver of the RCAHMS on 15th May 2000 which produced a series of colour slides and black and white prints.

The stone clearance activity within this part of the field involved the excavation of two large pits: one on the south-eastern boundary of the cleared area and one in its southern corner. All the large boulder erratics from the field were dug out and dumped into these pits using a hi-mac and four large dumper trailers. Following this stone clearance the field was deep ploughed.

Observations were made of several locations where stones had been removed. None produced any evidence of antiquity although it may be possible that any prehistoric features had already been destroyed during the course of this land improvement operation.

Several site visits were also undertaken during the course of the ploughing. Several localised spreads of subsoil were observed which stood out against the ploughed soil. These may have indicated former mounds although no artefacts, burnt material or any other evidence for prehistoric activity could be identified. It is possible that these spreads of surface subsoil were the result of more recent removal of glacial erratics.

No trace could be seen during the field visits of the oval stony mound (PRN 12690) which had been recorded in the north-western corner of the affected area. This had previously been described as 5 x 4 x 1m high with a large stone visible on one side and another protruding 0.6m through the top.

In the northern part of the field several concentrations of small boulders (up to 0.3-0.4m long), possibly part of a plough-damaged linear boundary, were identified. As there was no evidence for a field boundary in this area on the Tithe Map, and given that the oval stony mound previously recorded as PRN 12690 was no longer *in situ*, it is likely that these boulders may represent the remains of this probable Bronze Age monument which originally lay further upslope.

## Surface collection at Glandy Cross: methodology

The surface collection was undertaken over an area of c.1500 square metres and was based on a 20m grid (Fig. 3). At the time of the fieldwork the field had been seeded and rolled which limited visibility. The first part of the fieldwork was also hampered by heavy rain and the clayey nature of the subsoil. As a consequence it was extremely difficult to distinguish between worked rhyolite (which may have been the debris from Neolithic axe production) and natural, unworked stone. Therefore, each 20m grid square was intensively walked and all potential material was collected. This was subsequently washed and sorted at Cambria's offices.

## Results

A preliminary assessment by G. Hughes and K. Murphy of the material collected suggests that only 11 fragments of rhyolite showed any evidence of working (Fig. 4). However, this represents only a fraction of the possible material present within the area with the rest potentially reburied when the field was reseeded and rolled prior to our arrival. Preliminary analysis of the material has revealed the following pieces:

- |       |           |                              |
|-------|-----------|------------------------------|
| i)    | square 6  | definite primary large flake |
| ii)   | square 8  | probable flake               |
| iii)  | square 13 | probable flake               |
| iv)   | square 37 | definite flake               |
| v)    | square 54 | possible flake               |
| vi)   | square 56 | possible flaked lump         |
| vii)  | square 62 | probable flake               |
| viii) | square 65 | possible flake               |
| ix)   | square 67 | probable flake               |
| x)    | square 74 | possible flaked lump         |
| xi)   | square 87 | possible flaked lump         |

The general distribution of worked and unworked rhyolite (Fig. 5) suggested slight concentrations in the north central and south-western parts of the area surveyed. Quantities of white quartz (Fig. 6), although not collected, were also noted as occurring in certain concentrations within particular areas of the field. The distribution of this material was difficult to interpret as a result of the amount of material that had clearly been moved or washed downslope. However, one spread was found in squares 7, 12, 13 and 29, close to where a possible cairn and standing stone (PRN 12690) had existed prior to the present land improvement programme. Other concentrations of white quartz were also noted further upfield in squares 38, 39 and 52.

## Discussion

Given the amount of disturbance associated with the stone clearance and land improvement, any interpretation of the results of the surface collection should be treated with caution. Further post-depositional disturbance may have been caused by the general

slope of field which may have resulted in some of the material moving down the field and towards the road. The absence of any significant quantities of worked rhyolite may suggest that the area of axe production identified in 1991 does not extend into the northern part the field. However, this view must remain inconclusive because of the poor visibility and nature of the ground conditions during the current fieldwork phase. The more general distribution of rhyolite does at least allow tentative analysis of the volume of rhyolite possibly imported to or distributed within the immediate locale which may or may not have been deliberately brought into the axe factory area and for whatever reason either ignored, discarded or never worked (see fig. 5)<sup>1</sup>. Indeed, the flint material found during the 1991 season was almost certainly of non-local origin (David and Williams 1995: 446) and thus it is plausible that despite the occurrence of rhyolite erratics on the site itself, some material for axe production may have been deliberately chosen and imported from 'significant' places within the wider landscape. According to David and Williams (*ibid.*: 452) the rhyolite used both here and at the Glyn-yn-Fran axe factory 6.5km to the northeast of Glandy Cross came from erratic material scattered about in the lee of the Preseli ridge, although an exact source for some of this material has been petrologically and chemically traced to Carn Alw at the eastern end of the Preselis. These hills were clearly visible from both axe manufacturing sites and given the rich, ritual landscape of the immediate and surrounding area (including a number of chambered tombs, standing stones and barrows), it is no coincidence that specific sites such as Glandy Cross were chosen as particular locales for both the siting of monuments and the production of axes in the Neolithic and Bronze Age. Equally, it is not surprising that particular lithic material such as that available at Carn Alw should have been chosen as the source of raw material for perhaps specially-commissioned artefacts. This area has a close association with other monuments and thus with prehistoric ritual activity generally. The Preseli hills were clearly a significant part of the prehistoric ritual landscape in the Neolithic and Bronze Age and their dramatic appearance continues to dominate the landscape today.

The spreads of white quartz may also be taken as significant. White quartz is often found deliberately deposited in association with certain ritual monuments, and tends to be placed on or around the outside of cairns or barrows, at the entrances to chambered tombs, and indeed the spread here may indeed suggest an area of prehistoric ritual activity within this particular part of the field.

From an initial analysis of the archaeology already known for this area it was expected that much of the material would derive from the top part of the field which lay close to the axe manufacturing area identified during fieldwalking and other work in 1991 (PRN 14299). It was also expected that certain quantities of archaeological material may also have been unearthed during the ploughing/clearing process in the north-western part of the field where the small oval cairn had been recorded (PRN 12690). Despite some of the

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<sup>1</sup> However, it should be noted that a concentration of rhyolite erratics were noted during the excavation of trench b during the 1991 season of fieldwork within this same field (Kirk and Williams) and therefore it is probable that much of the material produced at Glandy was sourced from the immediate area surrounding the axe manufacturing site.

conclusions presented here it is difficult at present to fully interpret the nature and spread of the material encountered during the fieldwalking exercise at Glandy Cross and to place this within an overall view of the nature of prehistoric activity at the site during the Neolithic and Bronze Age. One of the main problems in interpreting the spread of material within the northern part of the field in question is the considerable disturbance to the area during the land improvement programme prior to Cambria's involvement. Given the degree of slope on the field and the deep-ploughing, re-seeding and rolling process, it is likely that much of the material which we might have expected to recover from the top of this part of this field may well have been moved downslope and buried before Cambria Archaeology arrived. Therefore, the concentration of white quartz and the boulders noted in the northern corner of the field may be the best evidence we have of prehistoric activity in this particular part of the cleared area, which was perhaps connected more to the oval cairn than the axe manufacturing site.

### **Recommendations**

Unfortunately, the salvage recording and surface collection was not undertaken in ideal circumstances. The fieldwork had to take place at extremely short notice in response to a particularly damaging development. Land improvement of this nature has now had a significant impact on the archaeology of a substantial area of this highly important site. If 'preservation *in situ*' is not possible then perhaps the full excavation ('preservation by record') of the surviving deposits in the field should be considered.

### **Acknowledgements**

The initial field visits and salvage recording was undertaken by Don Benson and Nigel Page. The surface collection was carried out by Nikki Bestley, Nigel Page and Richard Ramsey. The report was edited by Gwilym Hughes and area digitised and mapped by Hubert Wilson. Cambria Archaeology would like to thank the farmer, Mr. Davies, for his co-operation in allowing the fieldwork to take place and to CADW for funding the project.

### **References**

- David, A and Williams, G 1995 'Stone Axe-head Manufacture: New Evidence from the Preseli Hills, West Wales' *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society* 61, pp.433-60  
Kirk, T and Williams, G (forthcoming) 'Glandy Cross: A Later Prehistoric Monumental Complex in Carmarthenshire, Wales' *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society* 66

Note: The material retrieved during surface collection is currently housed within the offices of Cambria Archaeology. It is intended that this and the rest of the material from Glandy Cross will be eventually deposited with the Carmarthen Museum, Abergwili.



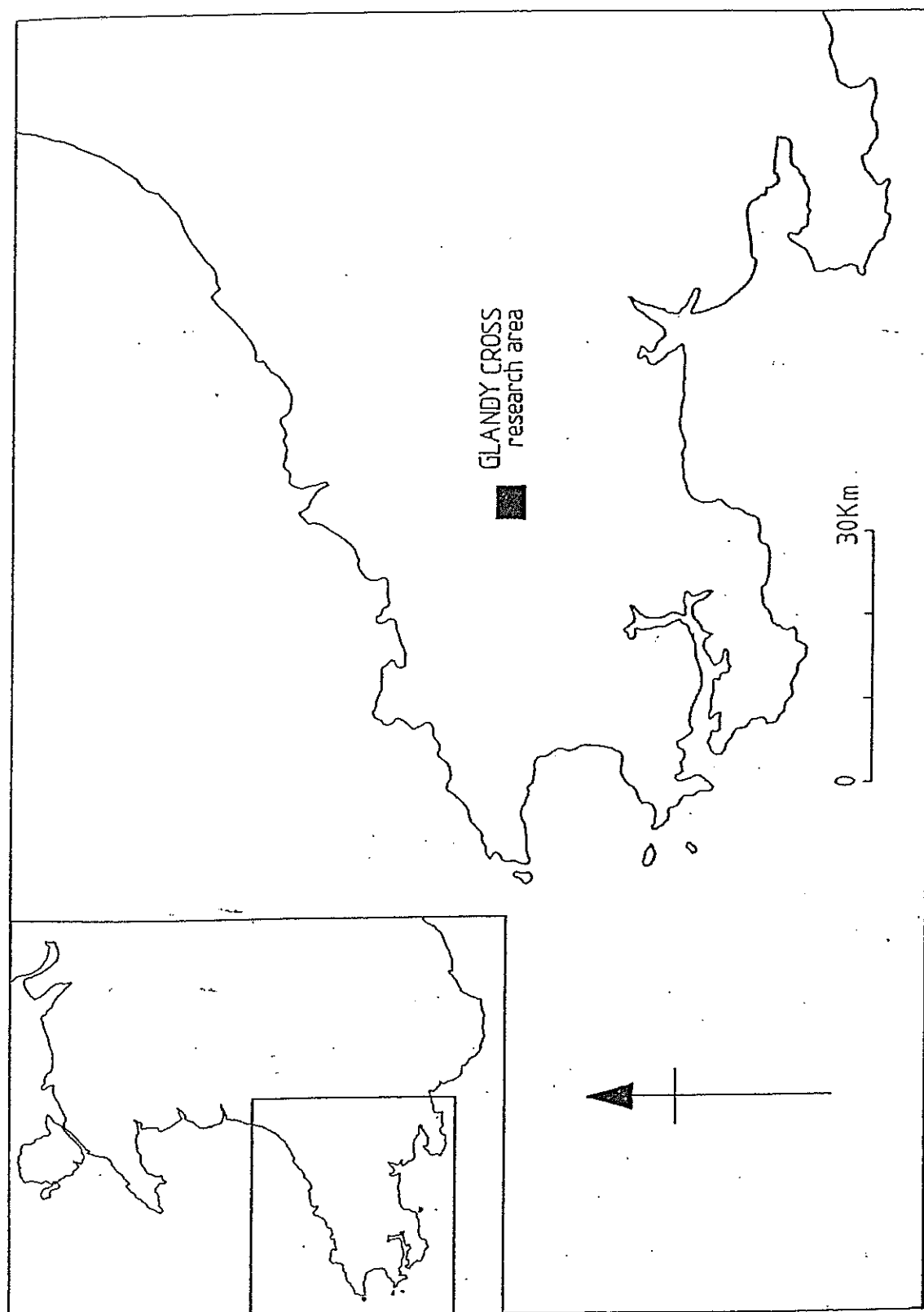


Fig. 1 Location of Glandy Cross, Carmarthenshire

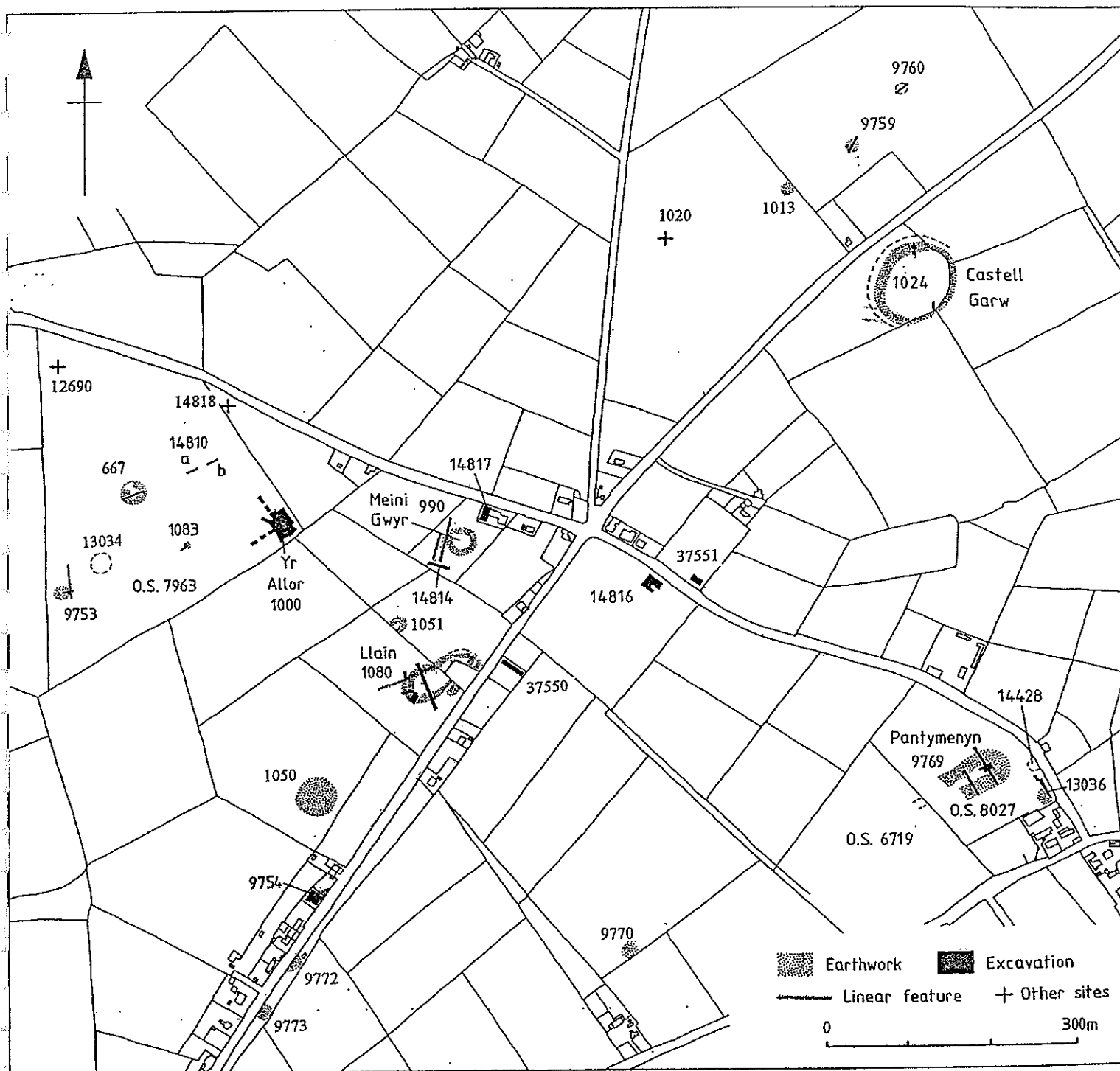


Fig. 2 Archaeological features within the area around Glandy Cross

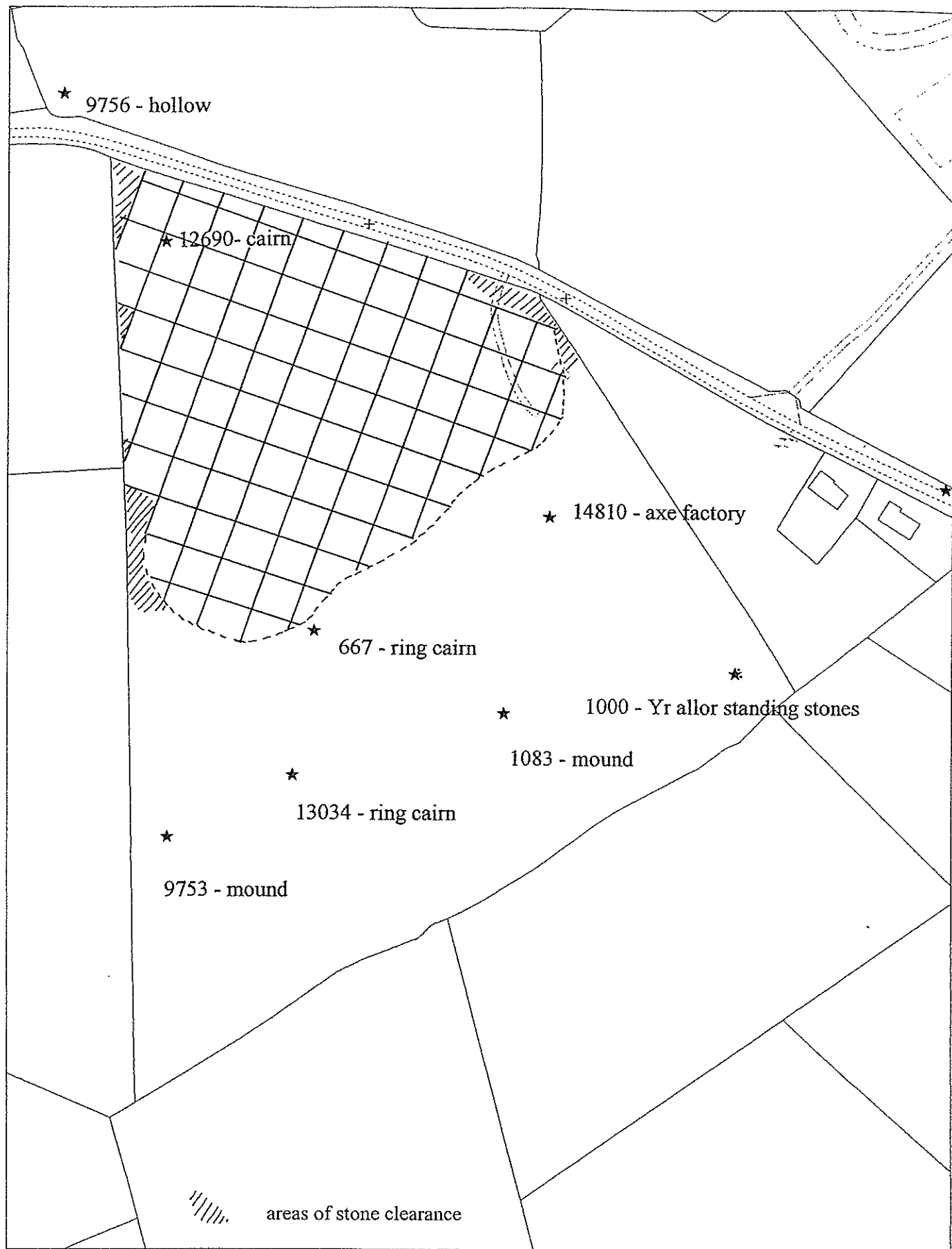


Fig. 3 Area of surface collection and location of monuments within the immediate landscape scale 1:250



Fig. 4 Distribution of worked pieces of rhyolite

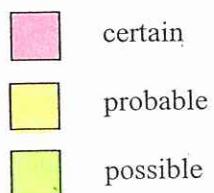




Fig. 5 Distribution of all rhyolite pieces collected (numbers equal pieces collected per square)



Fig. 6 Distribution of concentrated areas of white quartz

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**JULY 2000**


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Position Project Officer

Signature N. J. Bestley Date 5<sup>th</sup> September 2000.

This report has been checked and approved by Ken Murphy on behalf of Cambria Archaeology,  
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Signature  Date 7 Sept 2000

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