

Interim

SITE ON FIELD BELOW BLAEN BOWI FARM, CARMARTHENSHIRE
Archaeological Investigation 2016

CENARTH, Blaen Bowi Farm (SN 3209 3506)

CONTENTS

- 1 Summary/Conclusions
- 2 Introduction
- 3 Acknowledgements
- 4 The Site
- 5 Initial Evaluation
- 6 Fieldwork Activity
- 7 Methodology
- 8 Initial Conclusions
- 9 Future Plans

1 Summary/Conclusions

Following last year's successful initial investigation of the parch marks found at the Blaen Bowi site, a further week of excavations was undertaken under the guidance of Mr James Meek MCIfA of Dyfed Archaeological Trust. This included the local community and volunteers/ students.

Excavations continued around the fireplace and a new trench was opened to the south of this. The fireplace revealed a curved back wall structure (some suggestion of a clom building) and the side walls were revealed. In the new trench we found an west/east wall, with a right angle turn towards the first trench. These walls seem in broad alignment with the fireplace.

A large number of post mediaeval finds were found which the group intends to be professionally evaluated and recorded.

The complexity of the site revealed by the magnetometer survey and the quality of the structures so far excavated revealed strongly indicate that further excavation work would be beneficial.

The community group, Prosiect Archaeoleg a Hanes Cwmsidan formed to investigate the site and history, have set up a Facebook page to relay details of this years excavation and encourage local participation. This contains a dig diary and informal photographs. It is also possible to obtain a 3D representation of the fireplace in trench 1 via the link:-

<https://skfb.ly/OrSU>

Interim

This may be an example of a house/hamlet of which few other examples have been excavated in this area.

2 Introduction

The farm known today as Blaen Bowy is situated in the old Parish of Cilrhedyn in northern Carmarthenshire and is approximately 11 miles from both Carmarthen and Cardigan. The

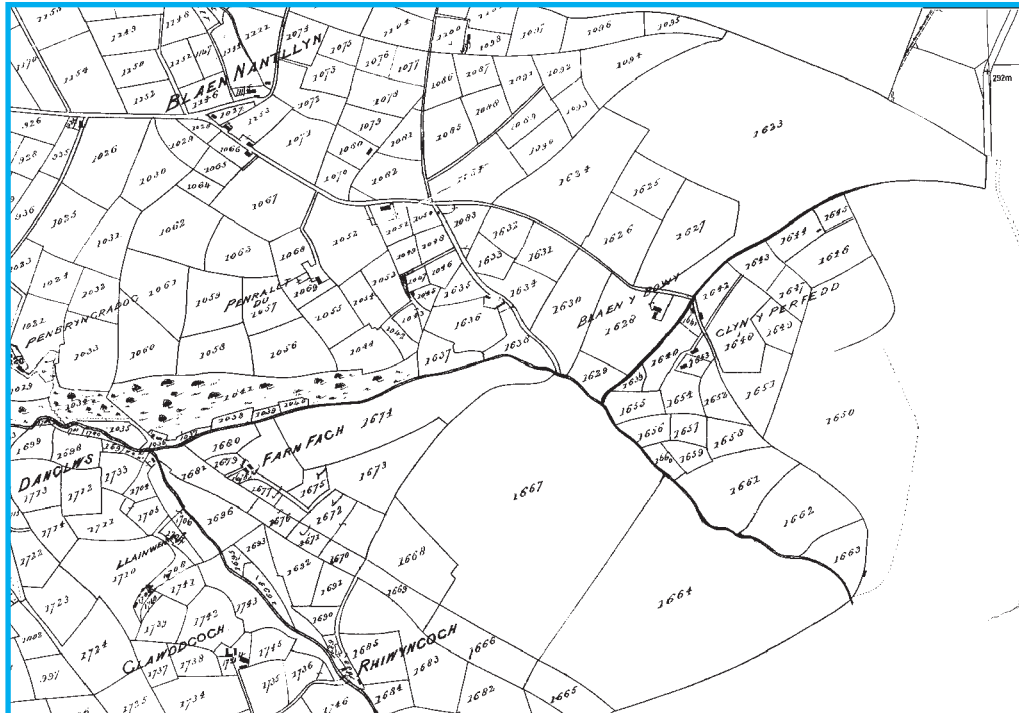


Figure 1. A section of the Cilrhedyn Tithe map showing the Blaen Bowy, Clyn Perfedd and Lan estates and their surroundings.

farm has been within the present family since early 1900s when it was purchased by the present owner's great grand-father.

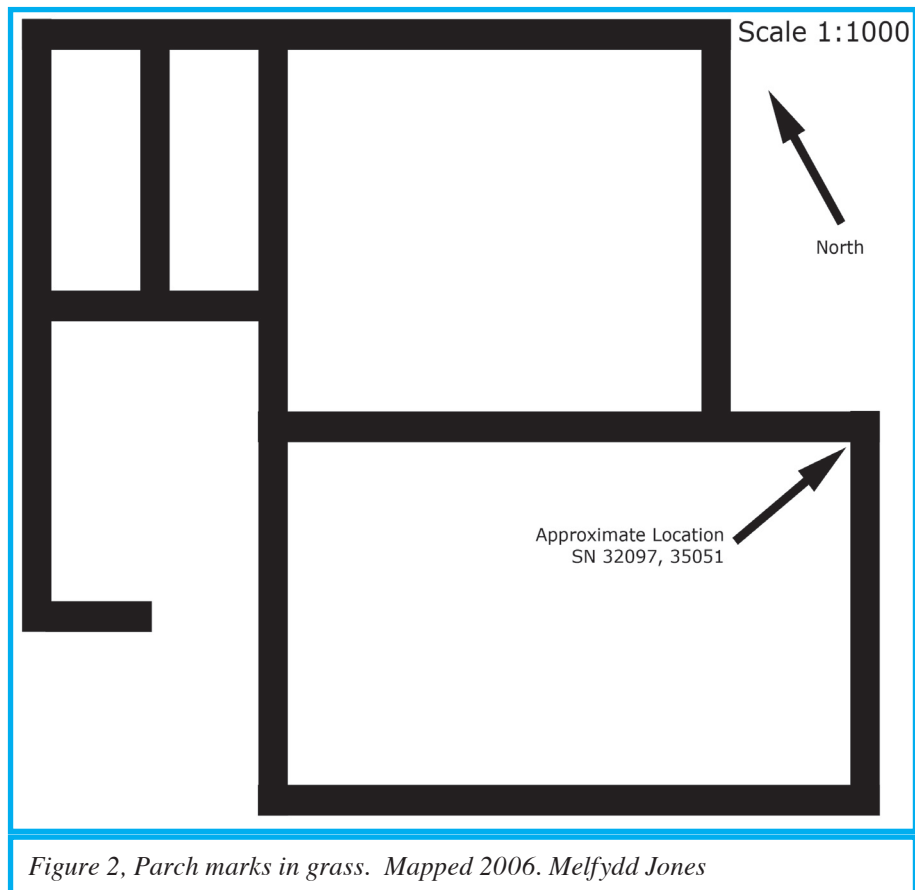
Those working the field listed on the tithe map (figure 1) as area 1628/Park Ty-Bach have known for many years that in dry summers a series of parch-marks appear. These parch-marks were recorded in the very dry summer of 2006 by Melfydd Jones, the present owner's father. (Figure 2) The plan is showing what appears to be a series of interconnected rooms or enclosures.

The field appears to be named on the 1830 Ordnance Survey One Inch map (Figure 3) as 'Llan Bowy' which suggests the possibility of a church or related building.

In 2015 the landowner, Mr Guto Jones, arranged a series of further archaeological investigations to be undertaken at the site including topographic survey, geophysical survey and a small trial trench evaluation. The topographic survey indicated a series of level areas and ridges, suggesting buildings and paddocks, which were backed up by the results of the gradiometer survey. Two small trenches were opened at the site in late summer 2015 to target some of the identified features.

A local history group was set up by the members of the local community, Prosiect Archaeoleg₂

Interim



Interim

a Hanes Cwmsidan, which has undertaken cartographic and documentary research into the area, but have not found any records of any farm or settlement at the site.

3 Acknowledgements

Mr Melfydd Jones for the initial plan and ideas and Mr Guto Jones for the invitation to excavate his land.

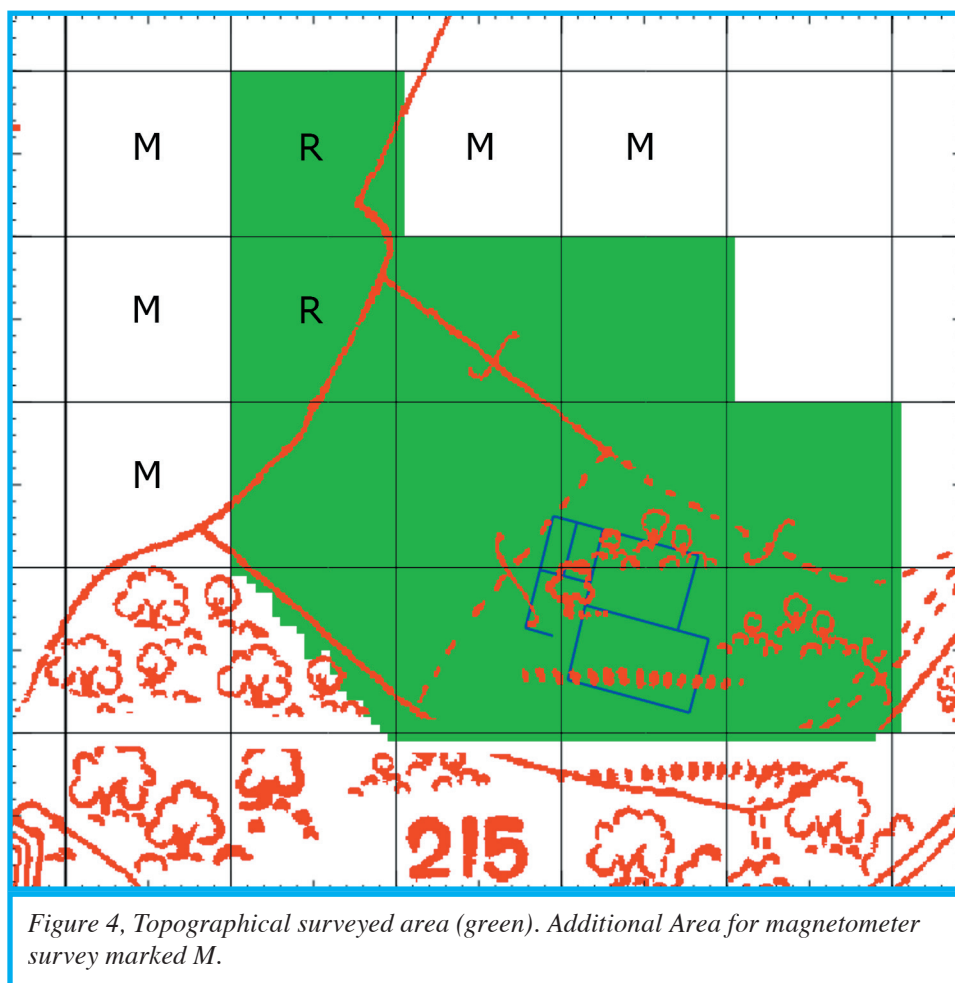
We are very grateful to both the Carmarthen Antiquarian Society and the Cambrian Archaeological Association for their valuable financial assistance.

We are also grateful to Mr James Meek MCIfA of Dyfed Archaeological Trust for supervising the excavations.

We would like to acknowledge the assistance of the many other professionals who have shown an interest and offered support, advice and practical help during the year, including Professor David Austin and Jemma Bezant.

4 The Site

In early 2015 Dr. T. Southern completed a topographical survey over approximately 4800



square meters of the field surrounding the position of the parch-marks. The area surveyed is shown in figure 4 superimposed on the County Series, first edition 1:2500 map of 1889/90

Interim

and is overlaid by a 20m by 20m grid. The approximate location and orientation of the parch marks are shown in blue on the grid plan. This topographical survey shows that the parch marks are located just to the east of a rectangular enclosure and that enclosure contains other rectilinear features. The field boundary that is running approximately NNE -SSW that separates fields numbered on the tithe map as 1628 and 1629 (Park Ty Bach) from the adjacent western field 1630 (Park Mawr) clearly has a curved feature just to the north of the most northern corner of the main rectangular enclosure. The boundary, confirmed from area calculations, between field 1628 and Ty Bach is also mirroring a side of the enclosure. Although what is within this curve of the boundary is not clear from the topographical survey, the very fact that the field boundaries are mirroring the position of the enclosure boundaries suggests that field boundaries, when created, went around something that was either in use or at least in the memory of those creating those boundaries.

5 Initial Evaluation

In July 2015 James Meek from the Dyfed Archaeological Trust visited the site and realised its potential and agreed to assist by supervising a weekend dig of two trial trenches. Each trench was planned to be across where walls were expected to be from the parch-marks. It should be noted that that year, due to the weather, the parch-marks had been absent so the origin and alignment of them has some degree of error.

During the same weekend a commissioned magnetometer survey of what was thought to be the extent of the site was also undertaken. The results are shown in figure 5 with the position of the trenches worked on in 2016 overlaid.

Besides the work in Ty Bach, additional document searches have been made with a view to understanding more of the history of this ‘hamlet’ located besides the Bowy. These searches have revealed, apart from the tithe map, a 17th century will referring to a property named “Lether Bowy” (meaning Bowi slope) whose location is as yet unknown but could possibly refer to the Parc Ty Bach site. Other possibilities for its location are the site now known as Blaen Bowi or the farm further up the hill named Glyn Perfedd in the Victorian era. Since the Bowi stream, which now becomes the Barddu beyond the bridge below Ty Bach, is still marked Bowi on the first edition one inch map, the property could also have been located further down the valley.

All available aerial photography has been examined and apart from confirming the presence of the enclosures north of Park Ty Bach has not revealed additional information on the area of the parch-marks

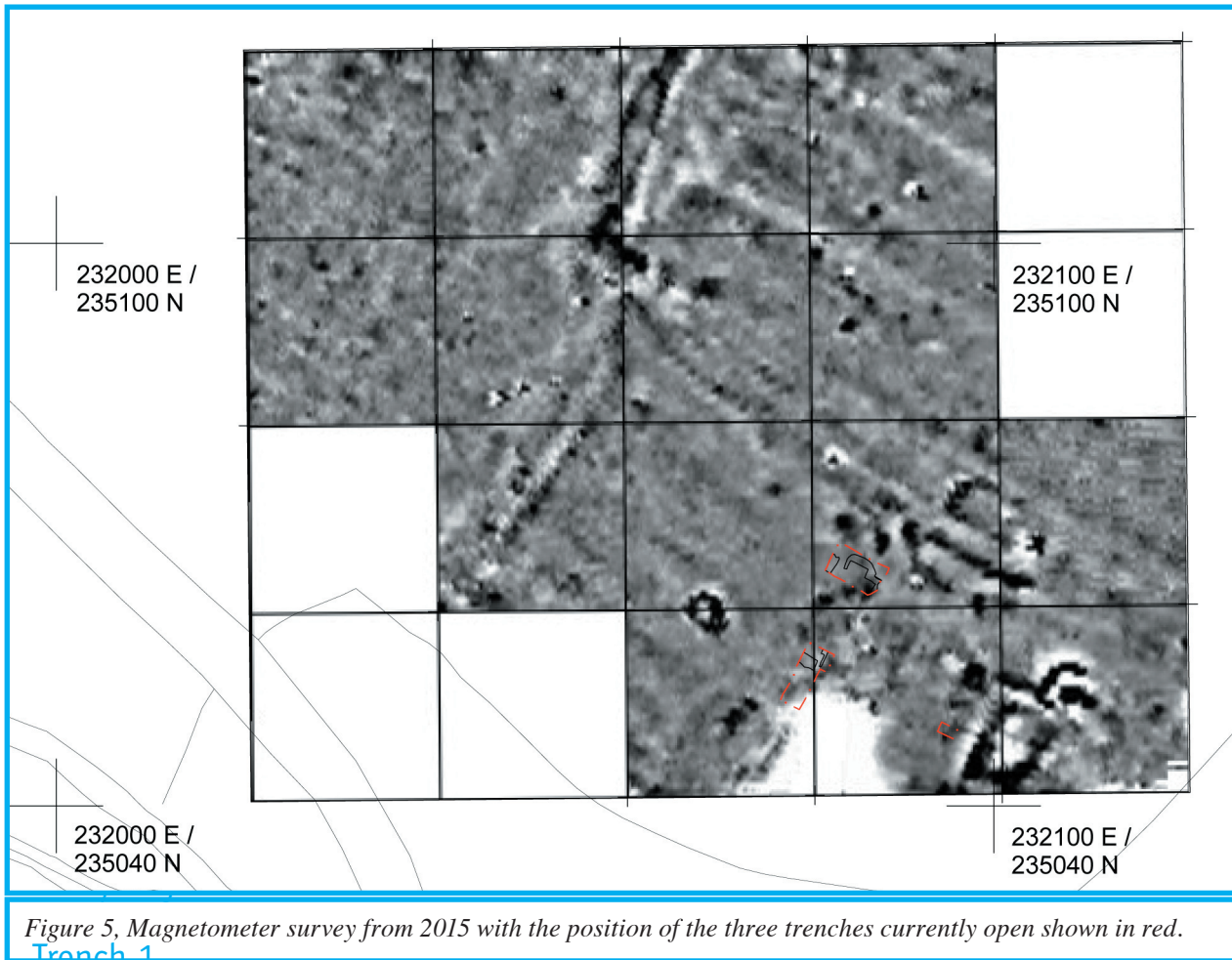
6 Fieldwork Activity

In addition to the magnetometer survey, two separate excavations were undertaken on the site, in August 2015 and July 2016.

Magnetometer survey

The magnetometer survey, Figure 5, revealed several interesting features but was not able to detect the presence of the walls amongst the rubble. It showed that the field boundaries are in fact three-part structures having a low magnetic response sandwiched between two areas of high responses suggesting that these boundaries were in a form akin to a track-way with banks/ditches on either side. The survey also indicated that north of the Park Ty Bach boundary there

Interim



Trench 1

This trench was extended this year to reveal the back of the fireplace and both the eastern and western side walls. The rear of the fireplace is curved, and, particularly on the east side, the absence of an outer wall suggests it was built into the hillside. On the west side, there is a 'gap' between the fireplace and the west wall, with a step or shelf (large flagstone) at the bottom. The floor in trench 1 was cleaned up but the flagstones that we found last year did not extend beyond the hearth. The floor beyond the fireplace appeared to be composed of compacted earth and was discoloured, suggesting burning. This floor, on the east side, seemed to continue under the side walls which may indicate earlier building.

It is possible to obtain a 3D representation of the fireplace in trench 1 via the link:-

<https://skfb.ly/OrSU>

Trench 3

A new trench was opened this year to the south of trench 1.

There was a wall across the trench (west/east) with a good, but shallow, face on the north side with a truncated right angle of wall at the east end. There may be some alignment between the structures in the two trenches. On the south side, the remaining wall was much deeper but partly obscured by more random stones, assumed to be part of the wall 'falling in'. At the bottom of this wall were larger foundation stones, before the ground terraced south. This area may have been levelled off and used as a yard.

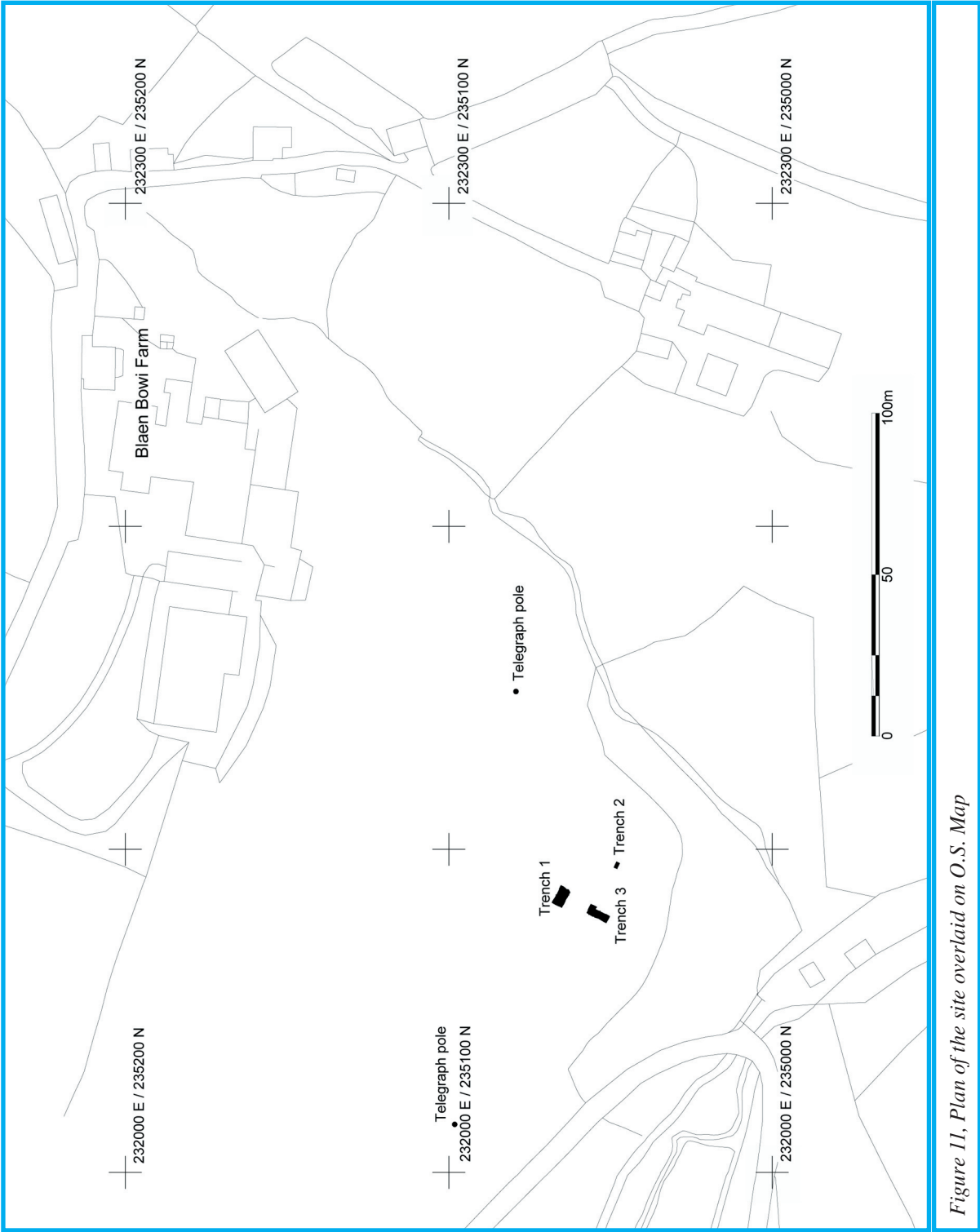


Figure 11, Plan of the site overlaid on O.S. Map

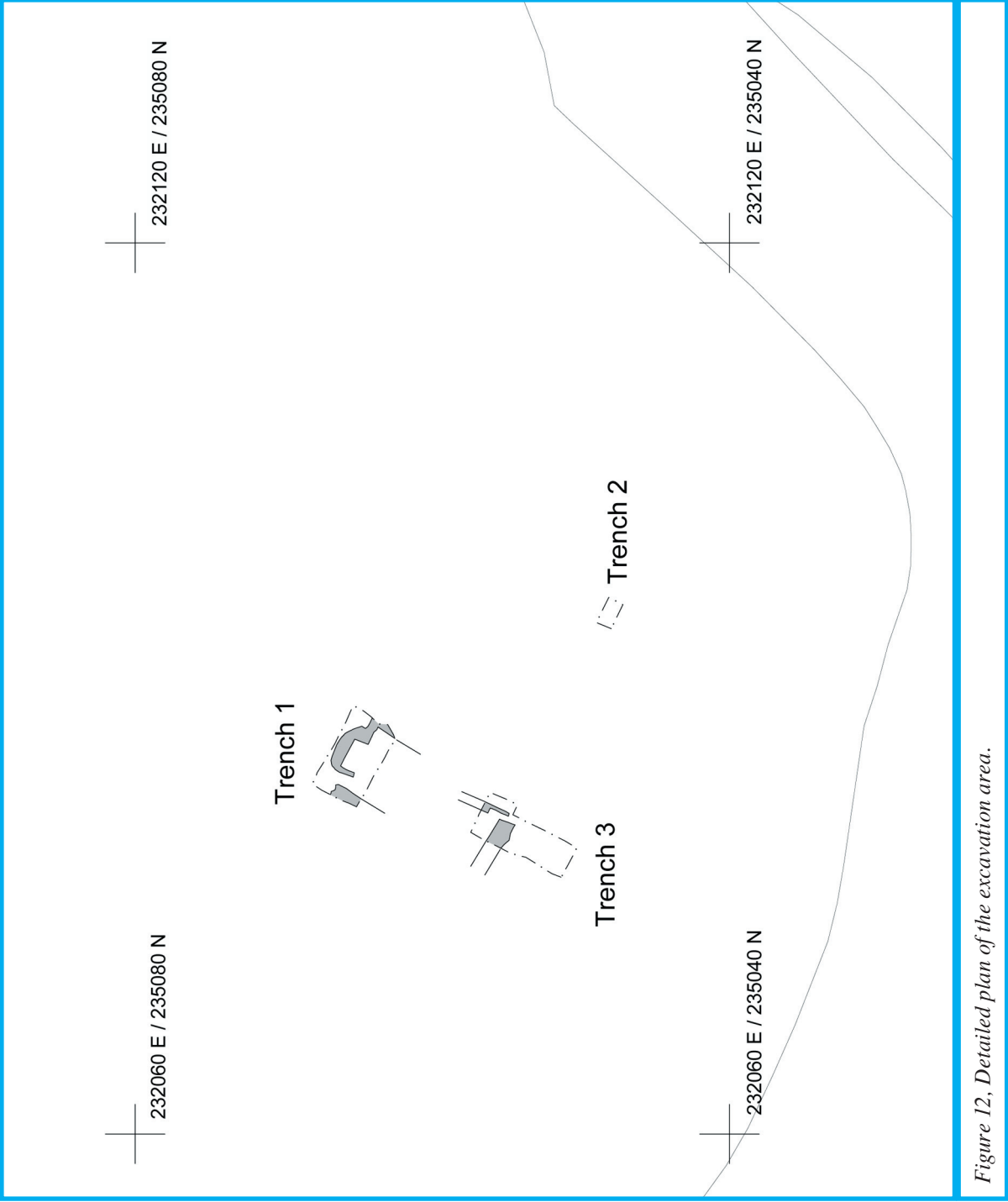


Figure I2, Detailed plan of the excavation area.

Interim

A lot of post mediaeval finds were found in a particular area close to the base of the wall facing south. Whilst initial thoughts suggested a ditch/pit, a number of large tree roots have grown within the trench and this has made proper identification more difficult.

In both trenches a large number of finds were found, mostly post mediaeval pottery, an iron pot, clay tobacco pipes, the remains of an iron cooking pot and one piece tentatively identified as delft. It is the group's intention to have all these finds professionally assessed and recorded.

To preserve the site viewing and future research/excavation, Guto Jone has fenced the area and taken it out of agricultural use.

7 Methodology



Figure 5, Trench 1 looking north west.



Figure 6, Trench 1 looking north east.

The evaluation was undertaken in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIFA) Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation (CIFA 2014). The works were supervised by James Meek MCIFA.

All deposits were recorded by archaeological context record sheet, scale drawing, photography

Interim

and site notebooks. All individual deposits were numbered using the open-ended numbering system in accordance with the DAT Archaeological Services' Recording Manual. Significant deposits were recorded by scale drawing; drawn plans have been related to Ordnance Datum and the topographic survey. A digital photographic record was maintained.

The trenches were located to the ordnance survey grid using a Trimble TST.

All data recovered during the evaluation will be collated into a site archive structured in accordance with the specifications in Archaeological Archives: a guide to best practice in creation, compilation, transfer and curation (Brown 2011), and the procedures recommended by the National Monuments Record, Aberystwyth. The National Standards for Wales for Collecting and Depositing Archaeological Archives produced by the Federation of Museums and Art Galleries of Wales will also be adhered to. Then digital archive will be collated to the



Figure 7. Trench 3 looking south at north face of wall. Right hand side has been taken down to "natural".



Figure 8. Trench 3 looking north showing south face of wall and "natural".

Interim



Figure 9. Trench 3 looking west at north east corner.



Figure 10. Trench 3 looking north across complete trench.

standards laid down by the RCAHMW and deposited with the National Monuments Record.

8 Conclusions

James Meek suggests it is likely that the structure identified in Trench 1 may be an earlier farmhouse, possibly a precursor to the existing Blaen Bowi farm which lies upslope to the north. A few sherds of medieval pottery were recovered from the site, with larger quantities of post-medieval material and a scatter of modern ceramics. It is thought likely the structure dates from the later medieval period, and has a number of associated buildings and paddocks nearby.

In discussing this with his colleague at DAT, Helen Whitear, it is further suggested that the rounded corners of the chimney is very typical of a clom built superstructure (clay and dung walls). This sort of structure is a very traditional style of building for the North Carmarthenshire / South Ceredigion area.

As mentioned above, David Austin believes the site suggests the site has several occupation phases of an upland farm complex which as time and status progressed move up the slope from the original location.

Interim

There is also the possibility of church property giving rise to the 'Llan Bowi' name.

This may be an example of a house/hamlet of which few other examples have been excavated in this area.

All agree further work on the site would be beneficial.

9 Future Plans

While dependant on future funding, the group hope to undertake the following:-

Finds

To have the finds professionally identified and recorded.

Survey work

Extend the magnetometer survey to the north and the east and undertake further resistance surveys of the site

Further excavations

In trench I, further work to the west side, to fully understand the structure, and to establish the building extends north of the fireplace.

Connect trenches 1 and 3 to establish if the walls belong to the same building.

As the magnetometer survey indicates this is a complex site which shows many further potential structures, significant further excavation work will be requires to investigate these.

The group intends that all finds, records and digital material will be appropriately archived.

Bibliography

Brown, D.H., 2007. "Archaeological Archives, A guide to best pratice in creation, compilation, transfer and curation." Institue of Field Archaeologists.

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APPENDICES

Report not yet available/to follow:

Small finds report

Trench drawings

Appendix 1 Interim Accounts.

Prosiect Archaeoleg a Hanes Cwmsidan

Interim accounts (unaudited) at 31/8/2016

Expenditure	£	Income	£	Balance (£)
Coleman Event Shelter	149.99	Membership Fees	60.00	
Dyfed Archeological Trust - magnetometer survey	216.00	Carmarthenshire Antiquarian Soc. grant	500.00	
Dr T Southern - agreed expenses re Castle Studies Trust	70.35	Cambrian Archeological Assn Grant	500.00	
Towergate Insurance - liability Insurance	177.97	Work for Pembroke Castle (Castle Studies Trust)	800.00	
James Meek - expenses and honorarium re 2016 excavation	250.00			
Mr G Jones (Re Abba Loo Ltd) Potable toilet re 2016 dig	52.80			
	<u>917.11</u>		<u>1,860.00</u>	<u>942.89*</u>

* Estimated Committed expenditure

Professional evaluation and recording of finds - £500

Coleman Event Shelter - £200

Contribution to fencing to exclude animals from excavation areas - £75

Addition grids magnetometer survey - £100

Interim

Carmarthen Antiquarian Association - Summary of expenditure @ 31/8/2016				
	Exp	Inc	Bal	
Grant			£500.00	
Coleman Event Shelter		£149.99		
James Meek - expenses and honorarium re 2016 excavation		£250.00		
Mr G Jones (Abba Loos Ltd) Portable toilet hire re 2016 dig		£52.80		
		£452.79	£500.00	£47.21

Interim