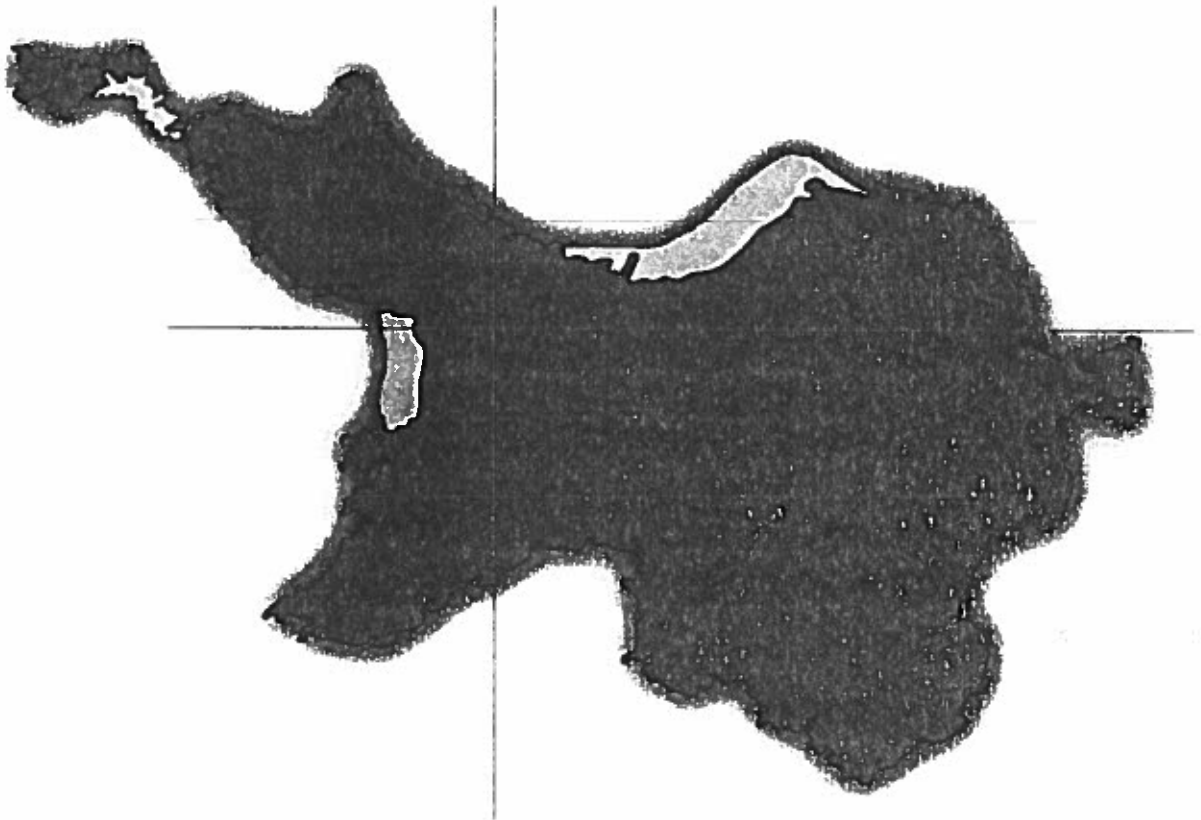


PRN 45092



# Caldey Island

an archaeological survey



Commissioned by  
**The Caldey Island Trust**

**M. D. Johnson B.A(Hons)**  
The Department of Archaeology  
University of Wales, Lampeter SA48 7ED

# **Caldey Island**

**An archaeological survey**

**1997**

**Commissioned by  
The Caldey Island Trust**

**Report by  
M. D. Johnson  
The Past Office  
The Heritage and Archaeology Practice  
At the University of Wales, Lampeter  
SA48 7ED**

# **CALDEY ISLAND: AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY**

## **CONTENTS**

### **1. Introduction**

- 1:0 Background
- 1:1 Previous archaeological work on Caldey

### **2. The 1997 Survey**

- 2:0 Purpose of survey
- 2:1 Methodology of survey
- 2:2 Summary of survey results

### **3. Stages of development of Caldey Island**

- 3:0 Palaeolithic
- 3:1 Mesolithic
- 3:2 Neolithic
- 3:3 Bronze age
- 3:4 Iron age and Roman
- 3:5 Early and Later Middle Ages
- 3:6 Post-Mediaeval

### **4. Discussion**

- 4:0 Caldey's prehistory
- 4:1 Early and later Mediaeval Caldey
- 4:2 The 19th Century Landscape
- 4:3 Industrial Archaeology

### **5. Acknowledgements**

### **6. Bibliography**

### **7. List of Archaeological Sites**

## **FIGURES**

- Fig. 1 Map showing distribution of all recorded archaeological sites
- Fig. 2 Copy of surveyors drawing for the 1st edition 1' O.S. map
- Fig. 3 Caldey, prior to separation from the mainland.
- Fig. 4 Map showing distribution of Palaeolithic sites.
- Fig. 5 Map showing distribution of Mesolithic sites.
- Fig. 6 Map showing distribution of Neolithic sites.
- Fig. 7 Map showing distribution of Bronze age sites.
- Fig. 8 Map showing distribution of Iron age and Roman sites.
- Fig. 9 Map showing distribution of Dark age and Mediaeval sites.
- Fig. 10 Map showing distribution of Post-Mediaeval sites.
- Fig. 11 Map showing sites of unknown period.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This report has been written as an outline appraisal of the archaeological potential of Caldey Island, a pre-eminently important location of early and later Christianity in Wales and Western Europe. It is framed not as an exhaustive study in its own right, but as an introduction to what is known and as a precursor to a more detailed research design aimed at developing the island's historical and archaeological potential.

### 1:0 Background

Caldey Island is situated off the south coast of Pembrokeshire, some 3 kms south of Tenby (Ordnance Survey sheet SS19NW). The island, 2.3 kms E - W by 1.4 kms N - S, covers about 220 hectares with the majority of the land being down to grazing. The shoreline of Caldey is irregular, predominantly composed of high cliffs with a number of small bays and inlets. Lying off the most westerly peninsular is the small islet of St Margaret's which is accessible from Caldey across a natural causeway at low tide.

The geology of the island is of vertically tilted carboniferous limestone in the north of the island, with the southern half comprising old red sandstone from which the bulk of the soils are derived. A clay belt runs E -W across the middle of the island at the centre of which a number of springs arise, feeding a small stream that flows northwards down a shallow valley to the sea.

Caldey has an extensive history of settlement, the earliest evidence of which comes from caves in the limestone cliffs where archaeological finds from the Palaeolithic period onwards have been recorded. Mesolithic finds are widespread and, while characteristically coastal, a number have been found at inland locations.

One area where Caldey must be considered to be of great archaeological and historical interest is its connection with Welsh monasticism, with three principal phases of activity. The earliest documentary source for the first of these is the 7th-century *Life of St Samson of Dol*, referring to events of the previous century. This evidence has been supported with finds of 6th and 7th century pottery from near St David's church, and the presence on the island of an Early Christian Monument with a suggested early 9th-century date.

From the 12th century until the dissolution of the monasteries in 1536, Caldey was occupied by a Benedictine community and many architectural and landscape features remain from this period, though most of these have undergone varying degrees of subsequent remodelling. These include the Old Priory, with its associated series of fishponds which have been the subject of a structural analysis and landscape survey, jointly conducted by D.A.T. (Dyfed Archaeological Trust) and R.C.A.H.M. (Royal Commission on Ancient and Historic Monuments); St Illtud's and St David's churches; and a watch tower which stands above Priory Bay. Documentary evidence also indicates that a medieval chapel, dedicated to St Mary, occupied a position near to the present lighthouse at Chapel Point.

## **2. THE 1997 SURVEY**

### **2:0 Purpose of the Survey**

The immediate purpose of the present survey is to meet the requirement placed on the Caldey Island Trust with regard to their application to the Heritage Lottery Fund for the proposed Caldey Island Tourism Project.

The Archaeology Department of the University of Wales, Lampeter was requested to undertake an archaeological survey of Caldey Island in advance of proposed developments to the island under the tourism project. The brief consisted of three parts:

1. To conduct an archaeological survey of the whole island.
2. To characterise the stages of development of the island.
3. To locate archaeologically sensitive areas.

To clarify the nature and extent of the survey required, the Heritage Lottery Fund agreed to supply the recommendations of their independent archaeological advisors (The Council for British Archaeology). While the recommendations were concerned with the project proposals as a whole, three areas relevant to a survey were noted.

1. Full and explicit consultation of the regional Sites and Monuments Record and relevant organisations and agencies.
2. The history of the land-use and economy of the island.
3. The industrial archaeology of the island.

These three areas have been duly incorporated in the overall survey programme.

### **2:1 Methodology**

As a preliminary to field survey, a desk top study was carried out which included consulting:

- a. The regional sites and monuments record (SMR) and other sources held by Dyfed Archaeological Trust,
- b. The Tenby Museum and Art Galleries collection and archive,
- c. The National Library of Wales departments of Maps and Manuscripts,
- d. The Royal Commission on Ancient and Historic Monuments Wales.

A field survey was then carried out between the 2nd and 6th June 1997, involving a team of three people systematically field-walking a designated area of the island each day. The 25-inch O.S. map with all recorded sites marked on was employed as a base, onto which all new sites were plotted. For each new site a record form was completed with measured sketch drawings, and photographs were taken.

Post-survey work included compiling a site list for the island and correlating all previously recorded sites with the results of the field survey. These were then plotted and drawn up as a series of period distribution maps (Figs 1 and 4-10).

Most of the caves are multi-period sites, for example Nanna's Cave spans the period from the late glacial to the Romano-British period, and others clearly contain material from different periods. Unfortunately, early excavations have, in some cases removed stratigraphy without adequate records, thus losing much valuable contextual information. There is also a problem in that artefacts may not be directly associated with the Pleistocene faunas and few radiocarbon dates are available (David, 1991). The Caldey caves are a very important archaeological resource but the designation of the lithic assemblages to the Upper Palaeolithic has recently been questioned in the light of more recent work on mainland cave sites where radio-carbon dates have suggested a early Mesolithic date (Ros Coard, pers comm).

The caves were not included in this survey for reasons of time, safety and because their location means that they are extremely unlikely to be affected by the present development proposals. It is possible however, that the potential of the cave systems on the island have not been completely explored and any future work should only proceed within the framework of a professional multidisciplinary research programme.

### **3:1 Mesolithic (Fig. 5)**

There are thirteen sites recorded from the Mesolithic period on the SMR and a further eleven recorded as Mesolithic/Neolithic. Of the first group, six records refer to finds, four to cave finds, two to flintworking floors and one to an occupation site. The cave finds have been adequately described by Lacaille and Grimes (1955,1961) and were not visited during the survey and no new material was found while field-walking.

Radiocarbon dating of human skeletal remains found in Ogof-y-Ychen has produced a determination of 7020 bp placing it in the early Mesolithic. David has suggested that the burial was made at a time contemporary with the occupation site at Daylight Rock (16). Similarities with the material here with that at Nabs Head, which has also produced a early Mesolithic date strengthens this argument.

The early Mesolithic finds on Caldey are part of a wider pattern of coastal distribution seen along the south west coast of Wales. Caldey at this time would still have been connected with the mainland (Fig. 3), and would have appeared as a small area of upland surrounded by low lying coastal marshes and woodland (Evans,1975). The finds from Caldey demonstrate its favourable location, allowing the exploitation by hunting and gatherer groups of the surrounding rich coastal environment.

### **3:2 Neolithic (Fig. 6)**

Eighteen sites are recorded on the SMR for this period, the majority of which are find sites of lithic material. Eleven sites are classed as possibly belonging to the Mesolithic or Neolithic, whereas seven sites are more confidently assigned to the Neolithic.

The raw materials for most of these finds are flint pebbles, probably derived from nearby beaches. Flint cores, flakes and flint debitage makes up the majority of the finds and two sites with more extensive material have been recognised as flint working floors (30,34).

It seems highly probable that the place-name is derived from this sequence of banks and hollows and this may account for it being classed as barrows on the SMR.

The two other barrow sites on the SMR were visited, but no. 44 could not be definitely located due to low scrub vegetation along the cliff top at its recorded position. The barrow is described as being possibly a natural feature by Lacaille and Grimes (1961, p32-3), who also mention other similarly slight "mounds" as being due to the natural topography (e.g. no.133). The only mound they seemed confident of ascribing a Bronze Age origin to (43), is located on the highest point of West Beacon Point. The mound is about 23 metres in diameter and roughly 1.20 metres in height and has a commanding position over the south coast of the island as well as being clearly visible from Giltar Point on the mainland.

### **3:4 Iron age / Roman (Fig.8)**

Nine sites are recorded for the Iron Age and Romano-British periods on Caldey, six of which are cave finds from Potter's Cave and Nanna's Cave. Of the three remaining sites, two are recorded as coin hoards and one as a possible settlement.

The evidence for the earliest part of this period is sherds of late Bronze Age - early Iron Age type pottery found in both Nanna's Cave and Potter's Cave (47-48). Other finds from Potter's Cave include 48 glass annular and globular shaped beads, possibly from Glastonbury or Meare, found with fragments of a carinated bowl (49). Bones from two human adults found in a mixed sandy layer with both Bronze Age and Romano-British finds are also recorded for Potter's Cave (51).

Nanna's Cave has produced two spindle whorls and pottery sherds (50) from a disturbed occupation layer containing materials from different periods (129). Other finds from Nanna's Cave include a lignite armband, glass bead, coin, and fragments from over 20 pots of 2nd-4th century Romano-British coarse ware (54). Similar pottery fragments have been found, together with flint debitage and a fragment of a felsite axe, (55) from an exposure near the shoreline above Priory Bay.

The range of materials found for this period compared with earlier ones, suggests greater links of exchange or trade with the mainland. The spindle whorls and animal bone give direct evidence of the agricultural exploitation of the island, but unfortunately the disturbed condition of the layers from which the cave finds were derived, together with their complete removal during excavation, adds up to a sad loss of detailed contextual information.

Set in a wider context, the Iron Age and Roman periods in Wales saw a marked increase in clearances, and the majority of sites examined have produced evidence for the cultivation of crops. While the growing of cereals also expanded, the overall picture is still one of a predominantly pastoral economy.

Three sites were recorded during the field survey which may date from this period of the island's history, two are lengths of trackway (75-76), and the third is a small, stone built, corbelled roofed structure on St Margaret's Island.

The two sections of trackway are thought to belong possibly with the hollow-way (66) previously recorded. About 20 metres of trackway 76 is visible, on level ground, just north of a field enclosure in a area of rough scrub vegetation above the central part of Priory Bay. The trackway may be more extensive than recorded, but the vegetation was too dense to investigate it further. The second section of trackway (75) is roughly 50 metres in length, cutting across sloping ground within a field enclosure about 300 metres west of trackway 76. A stone boundary wall overlies the trackway to the east, with no sign of an opening having ever been present in the structure of the stonework, suggesting that the trackway predates the field boundary.

The 1887 First Edition Ordnance Survey 25-inch map shows a trackway running east to west, across the north of the island towards St Margaret's Island. It appears that this route goes out of use at around the turn of the century as it is not shown on the 1906, 2nd edition map. As a route linking the central valley area of the island and the landing place in Priory Bay with St Margaret's Island, the age of the trackway is probably related to the history of occupation, and the exploitation of resources of St Margaret's Island. The area where the trackway terminates above the causeway to St Margaret's, is that described by Lacaille and Grimes and discussed above (3.3) as the 'Terrace of The Three Mounds'. The causeway is only negotiable at low tides, so it seems likely that on occasion people would have to wait for varying lengths of time at this location before being able to pass over to the island. The 'midden' and irregular mounds in this area could well provide important archaeological evidence relating to the history of the relationship between Caldey and St Margaret's.

St Margaret's Island is presently managed by the Dyfed Wildlife Trust as a nature reserve, it was not visited during the field survey but Brother Gildas let us see a number of recent photographs of the buildings and other structures on the island.

There are two recorded sites on the island for this period, both referring to the same building, they are classed as a chapel (68), and a cell (155). This is largely based on the observations of the Rev. W. Done Bushell (*Arch Camb*, 1908, pp.258-9) who suggested that a building, latterly quarry workers' cottages, originally comprised a chapel, dormitory and refectory, constituting a cell of the Priory on Caldey. In the corner of a small stone walled field enclosure to the west of the cottages, is a corbel-roofed rectangular, single room, structure (69). This roof suggests an early date, but the walls are very regular and may be a result of later restoration, and it is possible that it may have acted as a hermitage.

The evidence we have so far, suggests that the Mediaeval settlement pattern on Caldey had three main centres, one at the Old Priory site, the second in the area surrounding St David's Church, and the third on St Margaret's Island. A further chapel, dedicated to St Mary is referred to by William of Worcester around 1490 (Bushell, 1908, p.256). The chapel is thought to have been situated in the area of the present Lighthouse at Chapel Point. All these areas, together with the crossing point on Caldey over to St Margaret's Island, must be considered as having high archaeological potential for future research.



## 4. DISCUSSION

### 4:0 Caldey's prehistory

At present there are a number of problems in attempting to adequately characterise the prehistory and early historic period of Caldey Island. The long history of land-use, with a thorough-going re-organisation of the landscape from the early 19th century onwards has already been mentioned (2.2). The most valuable sites for providing information for the earliest periods (Upper Palaeolithic, Mesolithic) have been the islands cave systems. Unfortunately a full interdisciplinary approach, which is now recognised as being essential for these highly specialised contexts (Caseldine, 1990, p.30), was not in place when the caves were excavated and so consequentially a great deal of contextual information has been lost (David, 1991). Possibilities may still exist in yet unidentified and unexcavated parts of the cave systems (Smart, 1970), and any future work in this area must include the current range of analytical techniques now considered as necessary.

The Mesolithic material on the island, in particularly the Daylight Rock occupation site, has been considered more recently by David, who identified parallels with the lithic assemblages at Nabs Head, St Brides Bay (David, 1988, 1991). Stray finds of single or a small number of flint artefacts have been recorded over much of the island, whereas four sites, classed as flintworking floors, have produced more extensive assemblages (8, 19, 30, 34). At present these four sites are in areas under grazing but they have the potential to provide the opportunity for more detailed investigation, which in addition to the scheduled area at Daylight Rock, should be considered as archaeologically sensitive areas.

For the remainder of the prehistoric period, including the Romano-British period, potentially the most informative sites would again have been Potter's and Nanna's caves. The disturbance of the deposits here over time has left us with a range of different categories of finds but allowing only a limited possibility of reconstructing the relationships between them. Away from the cave sites the only surface features that have been recorded are the Bronze age barrows, with the most impressive example at West Beacon Point.

Though there is evidence from each period of prehistory, this does not necessarily indicate a continuity of occupation on Caldey Island. Perhaps, similarly to the recent history of the islands around the Pembrokeshire coastline, settlement of the island may have been sporadic with longer and shorter periods of occupation and abandonment. What is apparent from the archaeological record is that the island presented conditions favourable enough for evidence of occupation to be identified from all periods.

### **4:3 Industrial Archaeology**

The industrial archaeology of Caldey is dominated by limestone quarrying. Ludlow comments that Thomas Kynaston's purpose in purchasing Caldey was to exploit the island's limestone resources (Ludlow 1994, p.6). At the peak of quarrying activity 20,000 tons of limestone per year were produced, with the majority going for export although some was burnt on the island in two limekilns (81,82). The largest quarry on the island is at High Cliff between the eastern end of Priory Bay and Den Point. The cliff here has been worked back leaving a wide, rock platform. A number of structures associated with the latest phase of quarrying in c.1910-1915, can still be seen at the eastern end of the quarry together with discarded equipment, but these are rapidly being lost to storms and high tides.

The industrial archaeology of Caldey Island, while not as impressive as that found in other parts of Pembrokeshire, is certainly important to the history of the development of the island. The form and distribution of the quarries, aided by documentary sources, could well be put into a chronological framework with special relevance to the built environment of the island and its social and economic history.

### **5:0 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Grateful thanks are offered to: Mike Williams and the Caldey Island Trust for commissioning the survey; Jennifer Hall and Emyr Morgan at Dyfed Archaeological Trust for their invaluable assistance; the Abbot of Caldey, Father Robert, and the community for their hospitality; Brother Gildas, for his valuable comments; my colleagues at Lampeter, Michael Tierney and Adrian Turgel, for assisting with the field survey; and Professor David Austin and Alex Woolf for their academic guidance.

## 7. A LIST OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES

### Palaeolithic Sites.

Caldey Survey No.	Site name	Grid reference	Type	DAT SMR No.
1	Ogof-yr-ychen	SS14659691	Cave finds	7448
2	Eel Point Caves	SS13039726	Cave finds	4548
3	Ty Chwarel	SS14269699	Finds	4274
4	Potter's Cave	SS14369707	Cave finds	11994
5	Nanna's Cave	SS14589697	Cave finds	4894
6	Ox Cave	SS14655691	Cave finds	11992
7	Small Ord Point	SS14949674	Raised beach	12865
8	Daylight Rock Cave	SS14979660	Cave finds	7343

### Palaeolithic/ Neolithic Sites

9	Nanna's Cave	SS14589697	Cave finds	11982
---	--------------	------------	------------	-------

### Mesolithic Sites

11	St David's Church	SS14289664	Finds	12250
12	The Old Priory	SS140964	Finds	12251
13	Valley Field	SS146959	Finds	12252
14	Eel Point Cave	SS13039726	Cave finds	12232
15	Potter's Cave	SS14349707	Cave finds	4255
16	Daylight Rock	SS14969663	Occupation site	3445
17	Drinkim	SS14469622	Finds	4563
18	Valley Field	SS14439595	Flintworking floor	4280
19	Valley Field	SS14509594	Flintworking floor	4281
20	Daylight Rock Cave	SS14989660	Cave finds	3571
21	St David's Orchard	SS140960	Finds	10102
22	Priory Bay	SS1396/7 or 1497	Finds	11691
23	Nanna's Cave	SS14589697	Cave finds	4249

### Bronze age/ Iron age Sites

47	Potter's Cave	SS14369707	Cave finds	4258
48	Nanna's Cave	SS14589697	Cave finds	4251

### Iron age Sites

49	Potter's Cave	SS14369707	Cave finds	5006
----	---------------	------------	------------	------

### Iron age/ Roman Sites

50	Nanna's Cave	SS14589697	Cave finds	4252
51	Potter's Cave	SS14369707	Cave finds	11995

### Roman Sites

52	Caldey Island	SS1095	Finds	4260
53	St Margaret's Island	SS120972	Finds	4284
54	Nanna's Cave	SS14589697	Cave finds	4253
55	Caldey Island	SS138968	Settlement?; Finds	3449

### Dark age/ Mediaeval

56	Priory Bay	SS14109685	Landing place	000
57	Sandy Bay	SS12189765	Inhumation	000
58	Caldey Island	SS1095	Inscribed stone	5008
59	Ynys Pyr Monastery	SS1496?	Monastery	2370
60	St Davids-dedication	SS143966	Celtic dedication	10187
61	Caldey Island	SS1095	Inscribed stone	4245
62	St David's Church	SS14289664	Cemetery	4564
63	Caldey Island Cemetery	SS14239668	Cemetery	4244
64	<i>St David's Church</i>	<i>SS14289664</i>	<i>Church</i>	<i>4282</i>
154	Orchard	SS1496	Finds	000

88	Little Drinkim	SS16799640	Quarry	0000
89	Little Drinkim	SS14789638	Quarry	0000
90	Little Drinkim	SS14779639	Quarry	0000
91	Jones' Bay	SS16749674	Quarry	0000
92	Sandtop Bay	SS13049686	Quarry	0000
93	Sandtop Bay	SS12969686	Quarry	0000
94	Sandtop Bay	SS12849693	Quarry	0000
95	Sandtop Bay	SS12909690	Quarry	0000
96	Eel Point	SS13009720	Quarry	0000
97	Eel Point	SS13049719	Building	0000
98	Eel Point	SS13079719	Quarry	0000
99	Red Berry Bay	SS13649636	Building	0000
100	High Cliff	SS14389692	Magazine	0000
101	Tea Garden Field	SS14109652	Building	0000
102	Old Sand Pit	SS14169684	Sand pit	0000
103	Old Quarry	SS14169702	Quarry	0000
104	High Cliff	SS14259710	Quarry	0000
105	High Cliff	SS14429707	Quarry	0000
106	Petrol Field	SS14209629	Building	0000
107	Priory Bay	SS13269700	Quarry	0000
108	Priory Bay	SS13769675	Quarry	0000
109	Old Quarries	SS13959690	Quarry	0000
110	St Margaret's Island	SS12209737	Cottages	0000
111	St Margaret's Island	SS12009727	Field enclosure	0000
112	St Margaret's Island	SS12099708	Dwelling	0000
113	Caldy House	SS14079635	Major Dwelling	0000
114	Caldy House	SS14079636	Gardens	0000
115	Caldey Island Farm	SS14069628	Farm	0000
116	Farmhouse	SS14169630	Dwelling	0000

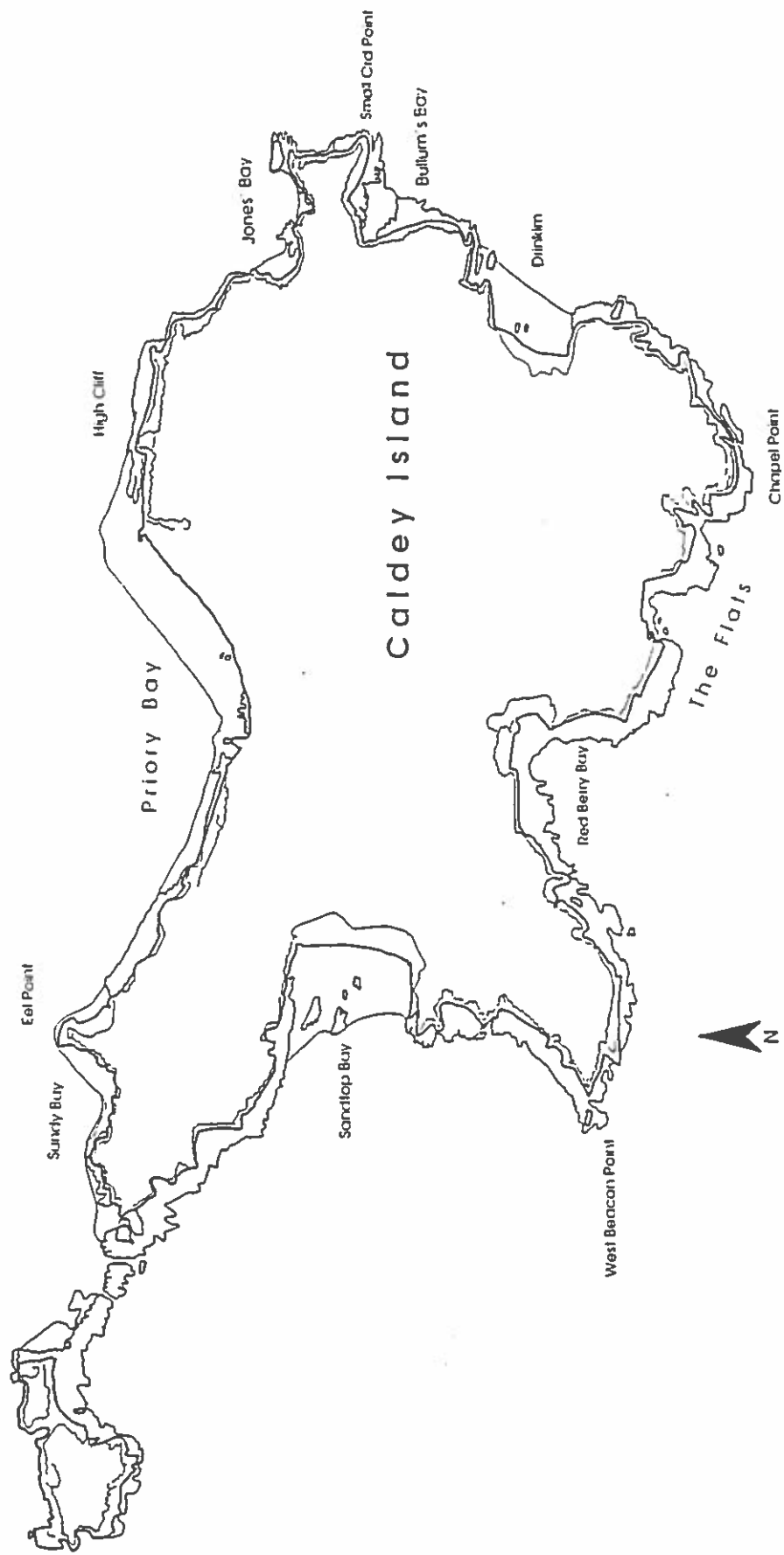
144	St Margaret's Island	SS11979722	Cave finds	11972
145	Sandtop Bay	SS13279655	Earthworks	0000
146	Caldey Island	SS1095	Finds	4881

**General Period Sites**

147	Caldey Island	SS1095	General	7440
148	Cathedral Cave	SS1296	Cave	11695
149	St Samsons	SS144971	Cave	11696
150	Stalactite Cave	SS143971	Cave	11697
151	Potter's Cave	SS14369707	Cave	13072
152	Nanna's Cave	SS146969	Cave	13073
153	Ogof-Yr-Ychen	SS14659691	Cave	0000

(Sites in italics have more than one period entry.)

SI Margreth's Island



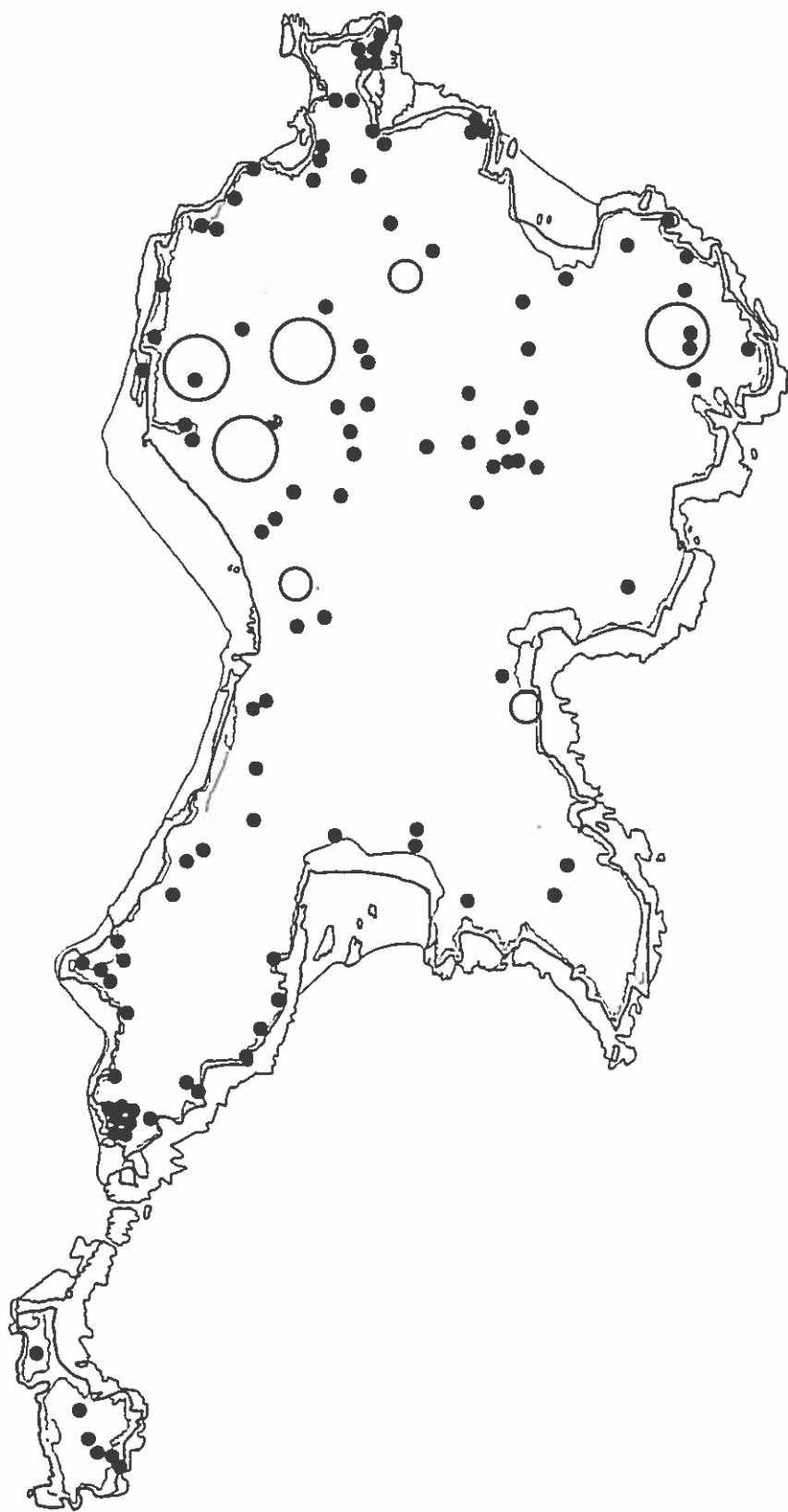


Fig. 1 : Map showing distribution of all recorded Archaeological sites



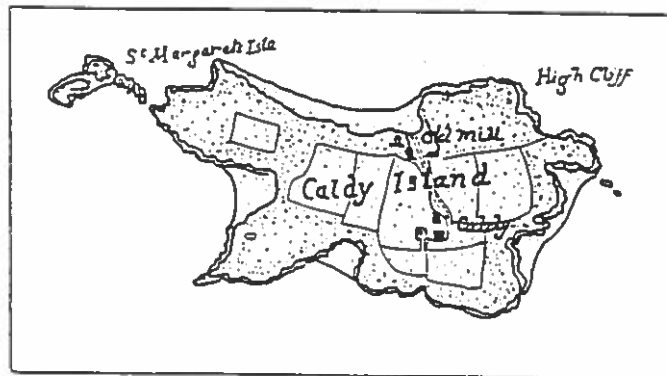


Fig 2 : Copy of the surveyors drawing for the 1st edition 1" O.S. map.

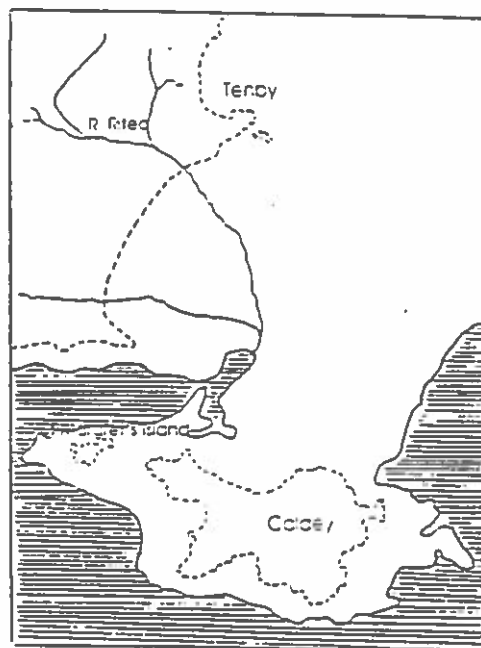


Fig. 3 : Caldey, prior to separation from the mainland.  
Broken line indicates present day high water coastline

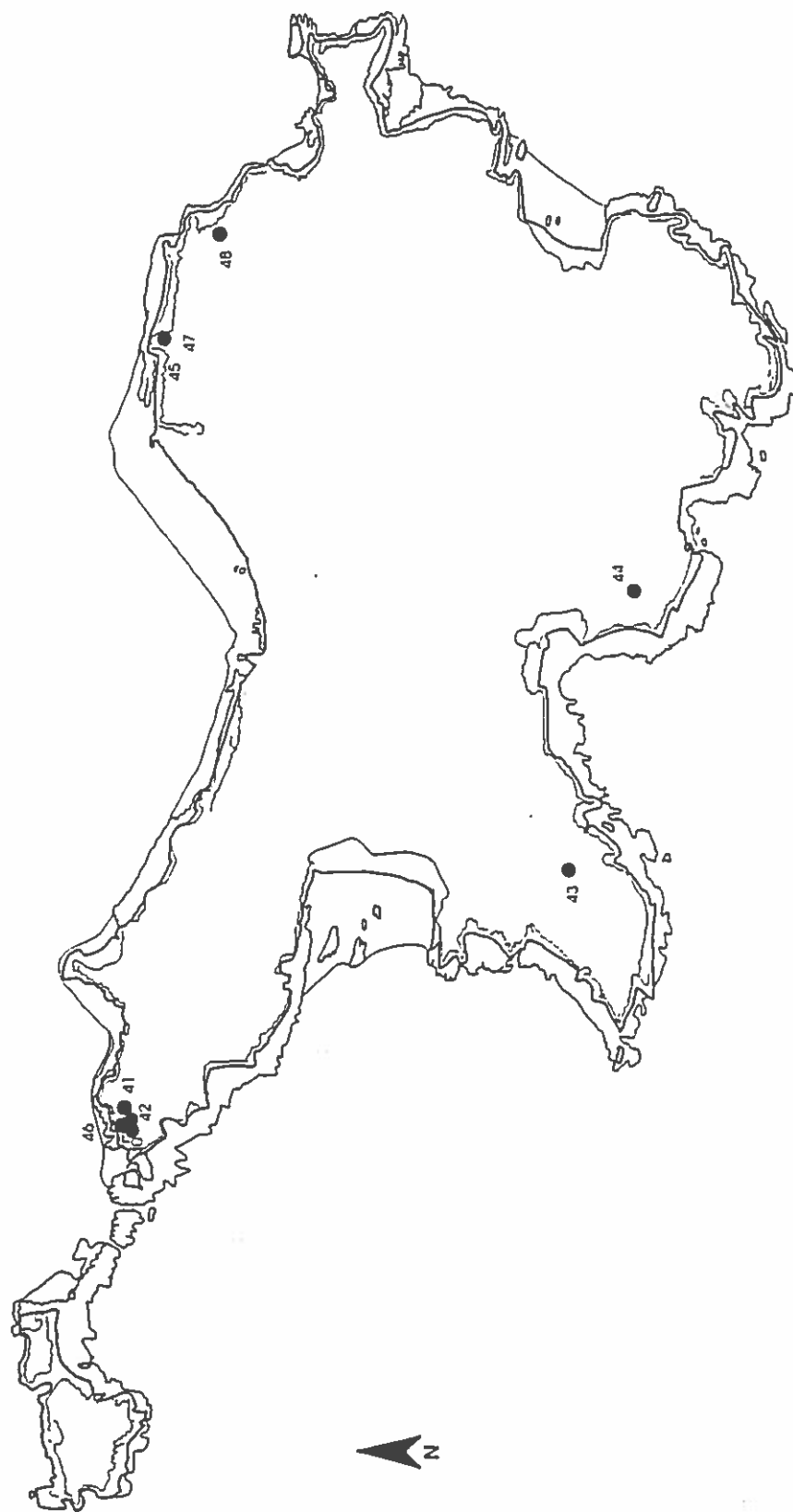


Fig. 7 : Map showing distribution of Bronze age sites.

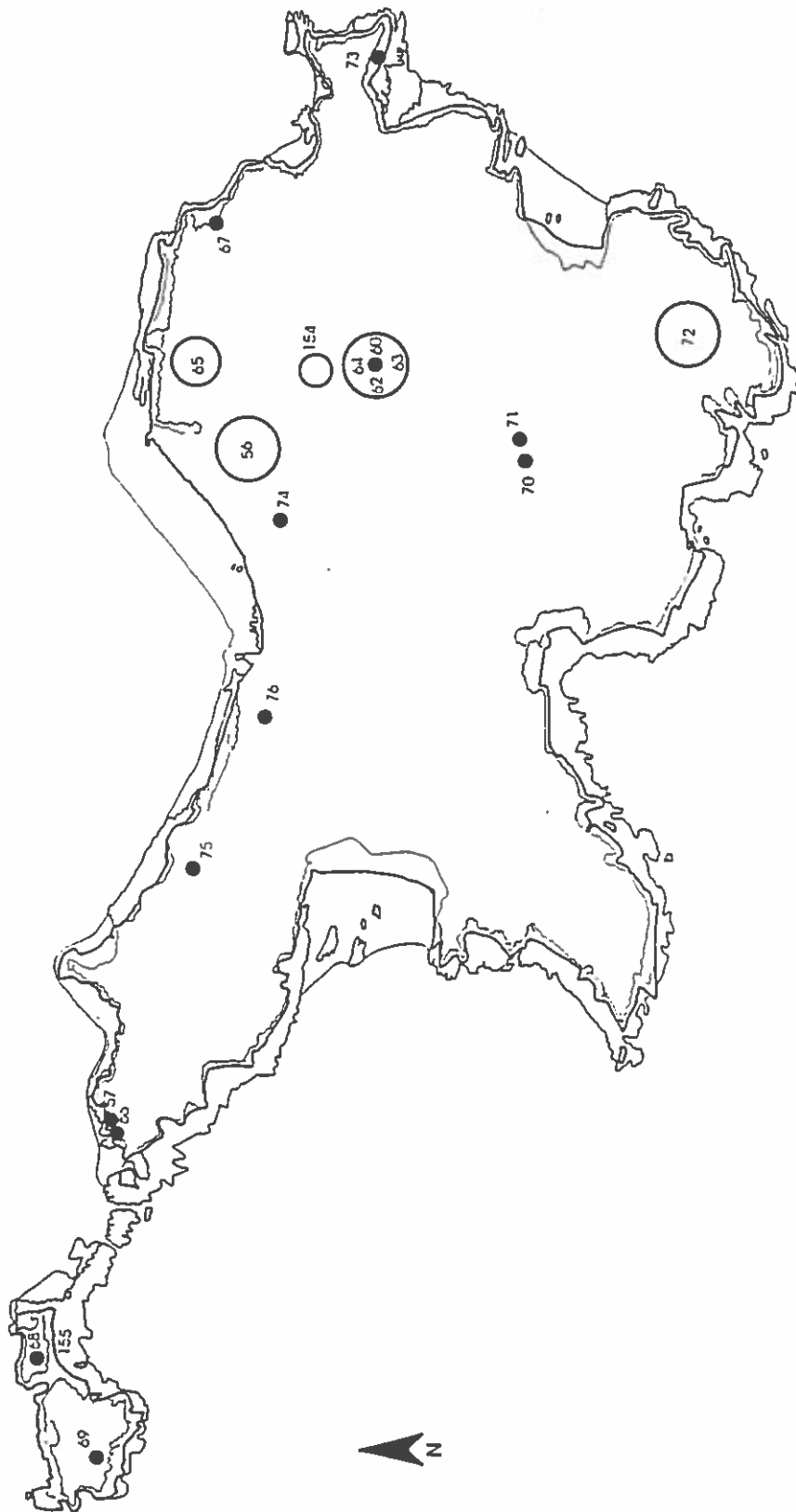


Fig. 9 : Map showing distribution of Dark age and Mediaeval sites.

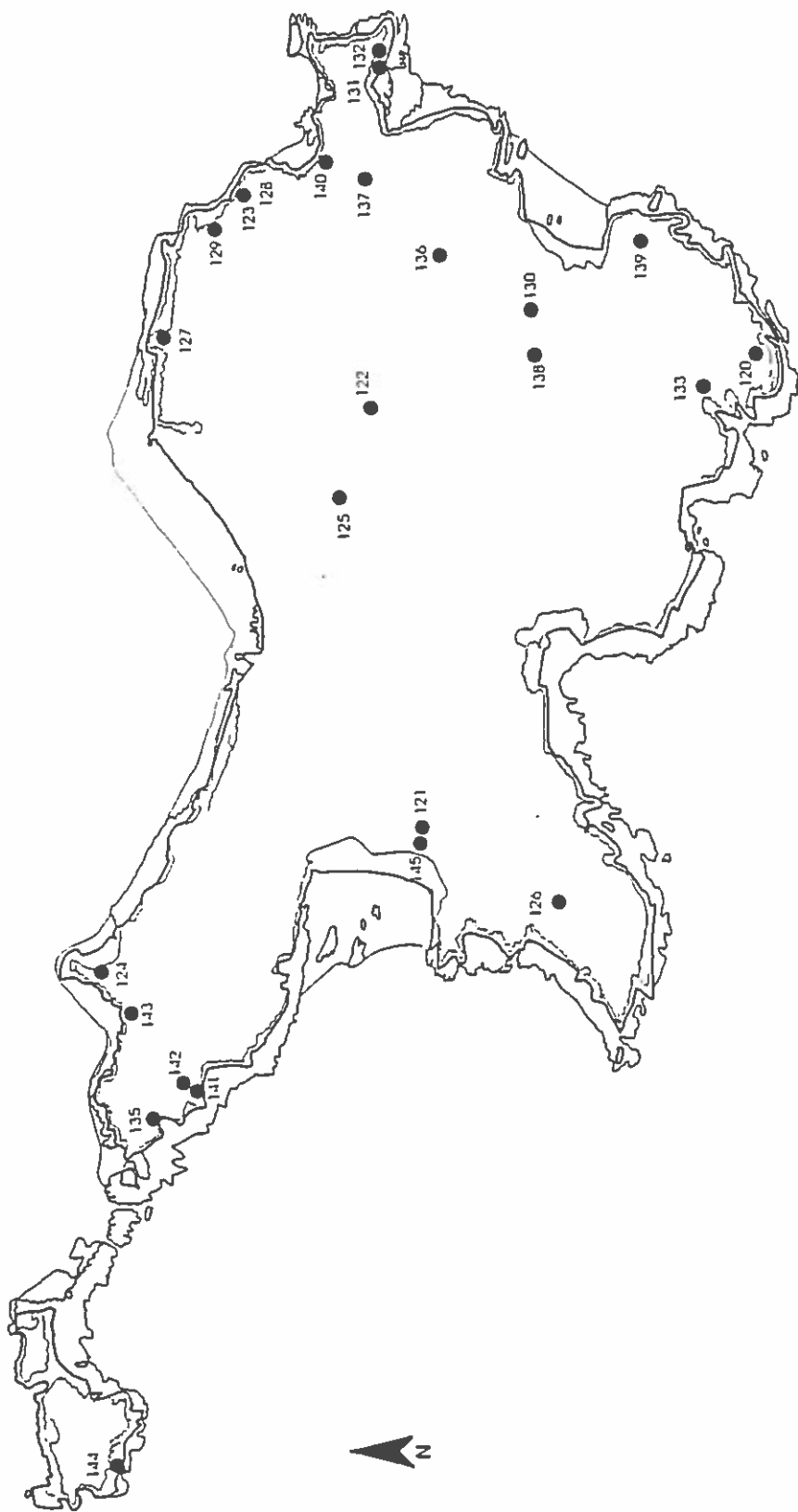


Fig 11 : Map showing sites of unknown period.

