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# Archaeological Recording and Watching Brief at Cerrig Gwyddel, Llangristiolus

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GAT Project No. G1843

Report No. 538

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*Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Gwynedd*  
Gwynedd Archaeological Trust  
*Craig Beuno, Ffordd y Garth, Bangor, Gwynedd LL57 2RT*

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Prepared for  
Andrew Teale

by

David Hopewell

**Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Gwynedd  
Gwynedd Archaeological Trust  
June 2004**

## **ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORDING AND WATCHING BRIEF AT CERRIG GWYDDEL, LLANGRISTIOLUS (G1843)**

### **Introduction**

Gwynedd Archaeological Trust was contracted to carry out a watching brief during building works at Cerrig Gwyddel during the conversion of ruined outbuildings into a dwelling. Cerrig Gwyddel is traditionally identified as the site of Llan y Gwyddal, a church reputed to have been built by Caswallon Lawhir to give thanks for his victory over Serigi Wyddel in the 6<sup>th</sup> century. It is also reputed to be the site of the battle itself. A possible cist (PRN 7871) was identified at this site in recent years, but subsequent examination during the Prehistoric Funerary and Ritual Monument Project carried out by Gwynedd Archaeological Trust suggests that it is a more recent feature, probably orthostats marking the line of a field wall or enclosure (Smith 2003). The buildings currently standing on the site consist of a multipurpose range of derelict agricultural buildings. These are shown on a map of the site, derived from an 1880s edition of the 25" OS map (Fig. 1) and attached to a conveyance dated 1894. Also shown are two additional structures, one probably a house the other a shed. These now visible as low overgrown foundations. The standing buildings appear to be unchanged in plan since this time. The conveyance records the sale of the property by John Prytherch Williams of Detroit to William Richard Hughes of Plas Bach. The conveyance records indentures of lease and release relating to the Prytherch family dating back as far as 1771.

### **Methodology**

A photographic record was made of all elevations of the standing buildings and a watching brief was kept during clearance of the floor levels. A measured sketch plan was also produced based partly on architectural drawings provided by the client (Fig. 2). The photographs are presented on a CD. The catalogue is in the form of a plan (Fig. 3) showing the position of the centre of each frame. Additional photographs taken by the Development Control Archaeologist, before the works commenced are also included.

### **Results**

#### **Building A**

This appears to incorporate three phases of masonry and has internal dimensions of 6.0m x 3.6m. The NW and SW walls are earliest, being constructed from large irregular field stones bonded with clay. The building style in the NE gable is more regular and incorporates somewhat unusual irregular galleting (small stones pressed into mortar joints). A door to the upper storey is located centrally. A somewhat indistinct masonry base presumably indicates the position of the base of external steps originally running up to the door. The front (SE) elevation has clearly been rebuilt and consists of coursed masonry bonded with lime mortar. The window headers are constructed from regular commercially produced bricks probably produced in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The internal elevation retains sockets for floor joists for the upper floor although it is possible that this was an addition relating to the later phases of building. A small opening low in the NW wall (photo 2596) may indicate the position of a water supply. The floor was in reasonably good condition, consisting of well-set cobbles on natural subsoil along with bedrock in the northern corner.

There was no sign of a hearth or chimney suggesting an agricultural use, probably a stable, for the building. It could have originated as a detached dwelling with a chimney in an earlier phase of the NE wall.

#### **Building B/C**

Building B/C was originally 2 storeys high with access to the upper storey provided by external stone

steps. The building is later than and abuts the stable (building A) and is constructed from irregular lime mortared local stone. Compartment B has internal dimensions of 2.25m x 5.3m. The second storey wall was carried over the full width of the compartment by a wooden lintel. The floor was found to be very roughly paved with irregular undressed local stone slabs. The width of the opening suggests that this was a cart shed.

Compartment C has internal dimensions of 2.4m x 5.3m with a 0.9m wide doorway in the SW wall on the ground floor and a similar door in the upper storey. The NW internal elevation was rendered with lime plaster and showed signs of sooting. There was however, no sign of a hearth and this could perhaps be the result of a fire after the buildings fell out of use. The floor was of compacted clay.

#### Building D

This building has internal dimensions of 7.5m x 3.6m and abuts the NW wall of building B/C. The SW wall and an internal division had mostly collapsed. The building appeared to be one storey high. The floor level was poorly defined but appeared to be packed earth.

#### Buildings E and F

Building E (internal dimensions 7.2m x 5.6m) appeared to belong to the same phase as building F as there was no visible joint or change in masonry style visible in the NE wall. This again appeared to be a single storey structure. There are doorways, capped with dressed sandstone segmental arches, in the NW and SE walls and a further blocked doorway into building D. The floor was found to be mainly concrete.

Building F has internal dimensions of 11.7m x 4.6m and is again a single storey construction. There are three doors in the SE wall, similar in style to those in building B. There is a single door and two ventilation slots in the NW wall. The opposite positioning of the doors in the SE wall suggests that this building was used as a threshing barn. Remains of timbers in the wall on the SE side of the central doors could indicate an internal partition.

Buildings E and F appear to be at least in part, contemporary. The south eastern wall incorporated in both buildings is a single phase with identical doorways, ventilation slots and a stone platform or bench along its complete length. The north-western wall of building F, however, abuts building E. There is a variation in the SW side of the gable between the two buildings suggesting that building E may have been enlarged. There is however no corresponding change visible in the NW gable of building E. This may indicate fairly extensive rebuilding. The NW sides of building E and building D appear to be contemporary and later than the stable (A) and cart shed etc (B/C). The style of the possible threshing barn (F) suggests that it is one of the earlier buildings on site.

Parts of the flooring of building F had survived. A drain and a fairly ornate pattern of cobbles and stone slabs were uncovered at the north eastern end. The building had been built lengthways into the slope and the floor at least at the NE followed the natural slope. The south western two thirds was less well preserved with occasional patches of cobbles and rough stone flagging remaining. The poor state of preservation may be the result of an attempt to level the floor in this part of the building. A possible crude step was recorded at the point where the floor began to deteriorate. Buildings E and F exhibited a higher standard of building than elsewhere on the site utilising dressed sandstone for the door headers and rectangular blocks of local stone at the corners of the buildings.

#### General observations and conclusions

All of the buildings incorporated scraps of reused building materials often in areas of repair. Sandstone blocks of the type used for the door headers in building F appeared in repairs in the stable (A) and fragments of crown glass, probably dating from the mid/late 18<sup>th</sup> or early 19<sup>th</sup> century, were recovered from the site. The map of the site shows what was almost certainly a dwelling to the NE of the present buildings. This was also shown on the 1891 1:10560 OS map but not on the 1920 1:2500. This suggests that it was demolished or fell into disrepair around the time of its sale at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The rest of the buildings have remained unchanged in plan since this time. The crown glass from the site presumably came from the house, as did the reused sandstone blocks. The agricultural

buildings, judging from the concrete floor in building E and some surviving timber lintels, stayed in use until the 1960s or later. The extensive remodelling of some of the buildings makes the phasing of the site somewhat difficult to resolve. The possible threshing barn (F) and part of the adjacent building (E) along with parts of the stable (A) appear to be earliest, almost certainly dating from the 18<sup>th</sup> century. It should however be noted that the construction of the earlier part of the stable is very crude, consisting of local boulders bonded with clay whereas the barn is clearly of a higher standard of construction, incorporating sandstone masonry and using lime mortar. The earlier part of the stable building could represent the remains of a dwelling predating the barns. The barn is likely to have been roughly contemporary with the house shown on the 1891 OS map. The front of the stable is clearly a later addition; the mass-produced bricks above the windows suggesting the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The sheds, building D and part of E are relatively lightly built from local stone and lime mortar and probably date from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The watching brief revealed no evidence for occupation of the site before the 18<sup>th</sup> century. There are, however, traces of further building foundations, not shown on any of the OS maps, on the rock outcrop to the north of the present site. Further investigation of this area could yield evidence of earlier activity.

## References

Smith G, 2003. Prehistoric Funerary and Ritual Monument Survey: West Gwynedd and Anglesey.

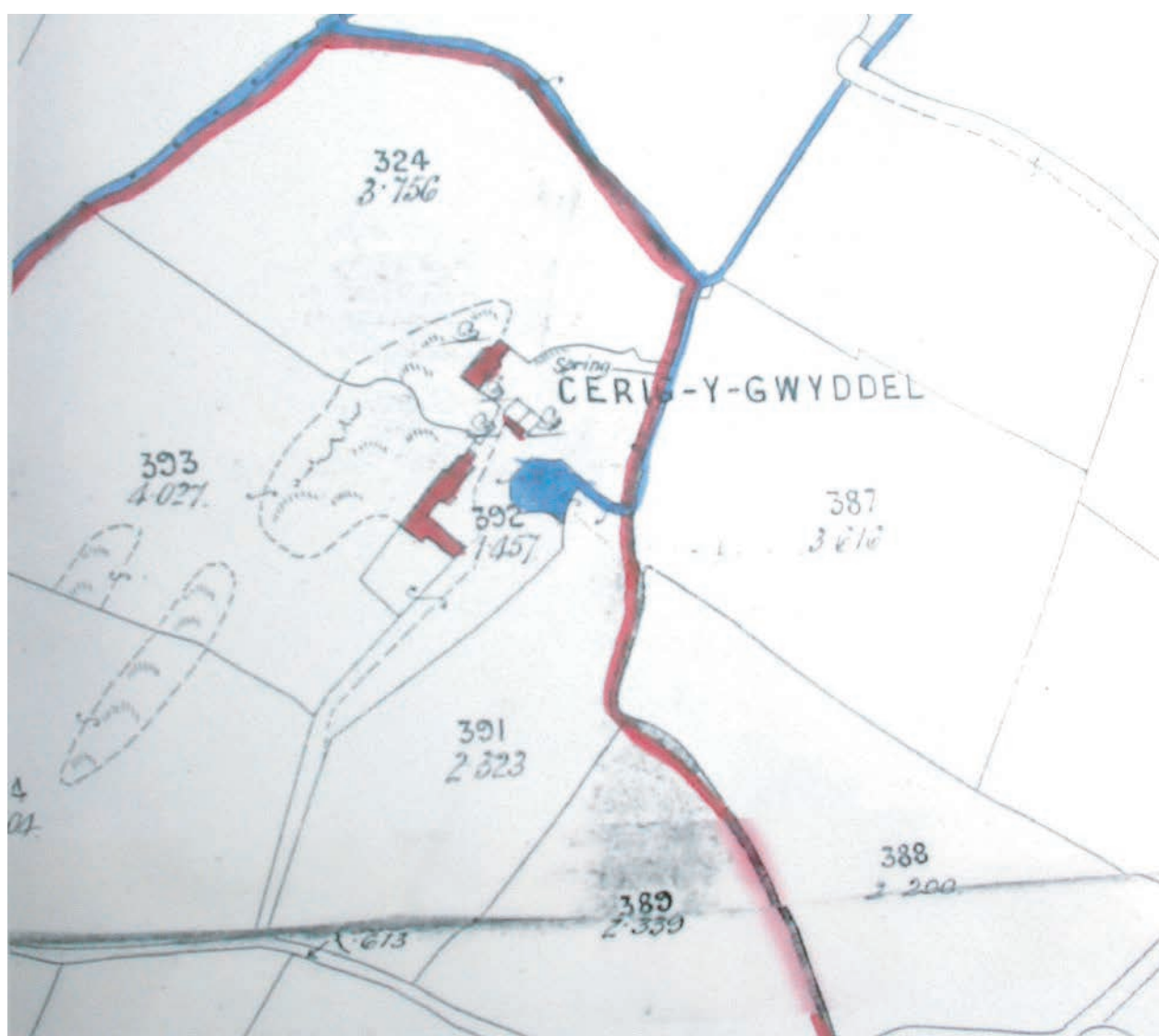


Fig 1 c.1880 25" OS map (from 1894 conveyance)

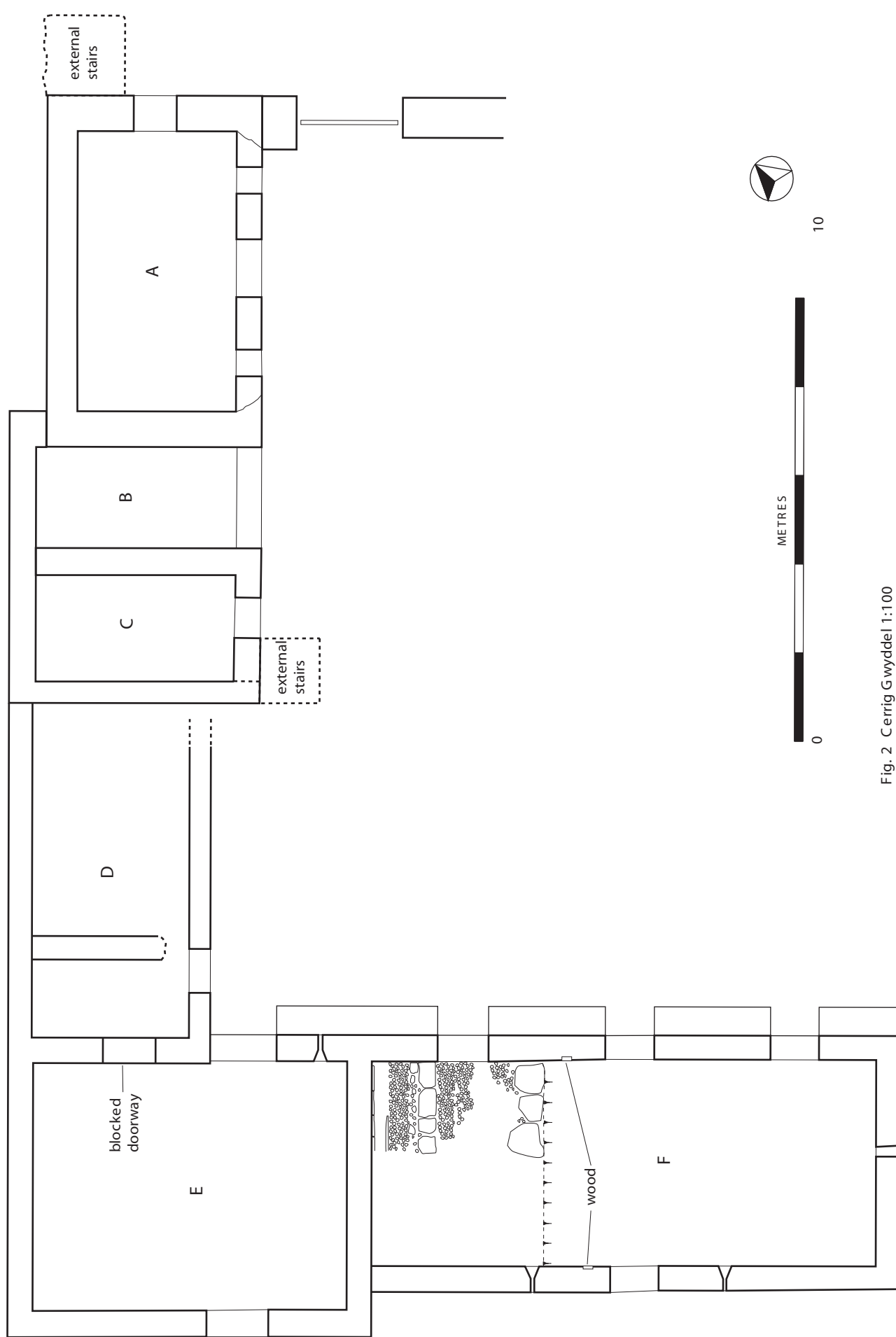


Fig. 2 Cerrig Gwyddel 1:100



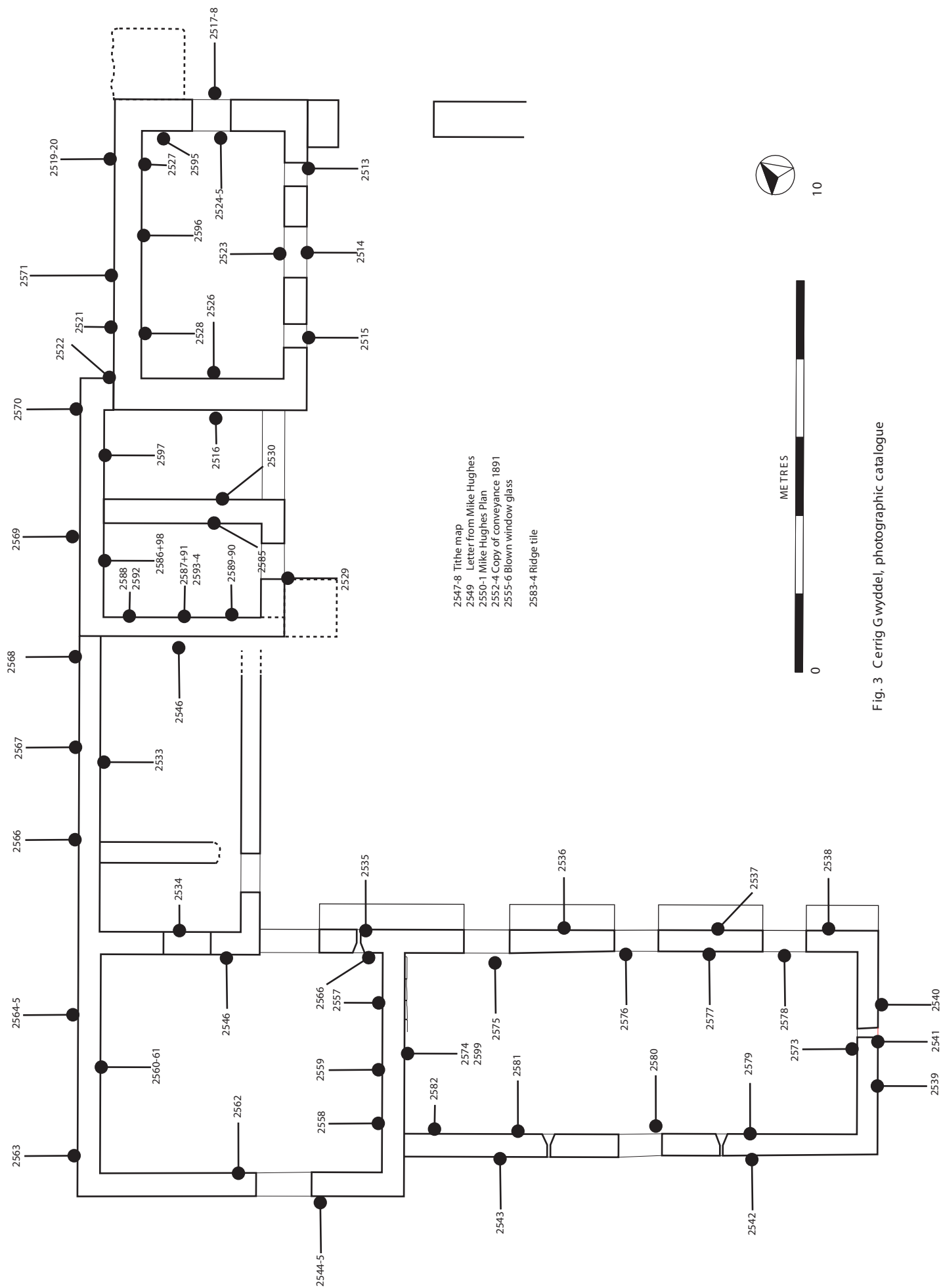


Fig. 3 Cerrig Gwyddel, photographic catalogue