

TY'N Y MWD, ABER
ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION (GAT 1092)

INTERIM REPORT NO. 86

G-1092

Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Gwynedd
Gwynedd Archaeological Trust

TY'N Y MWD, ABER
ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION (GAT 1092)

prepared for Cadw (Welsh Historic Monuments)

by N. Johnstone

illustrations by H. F. Riley

25th February 1994

Gwynedd Archaeological Trust Report No. 86

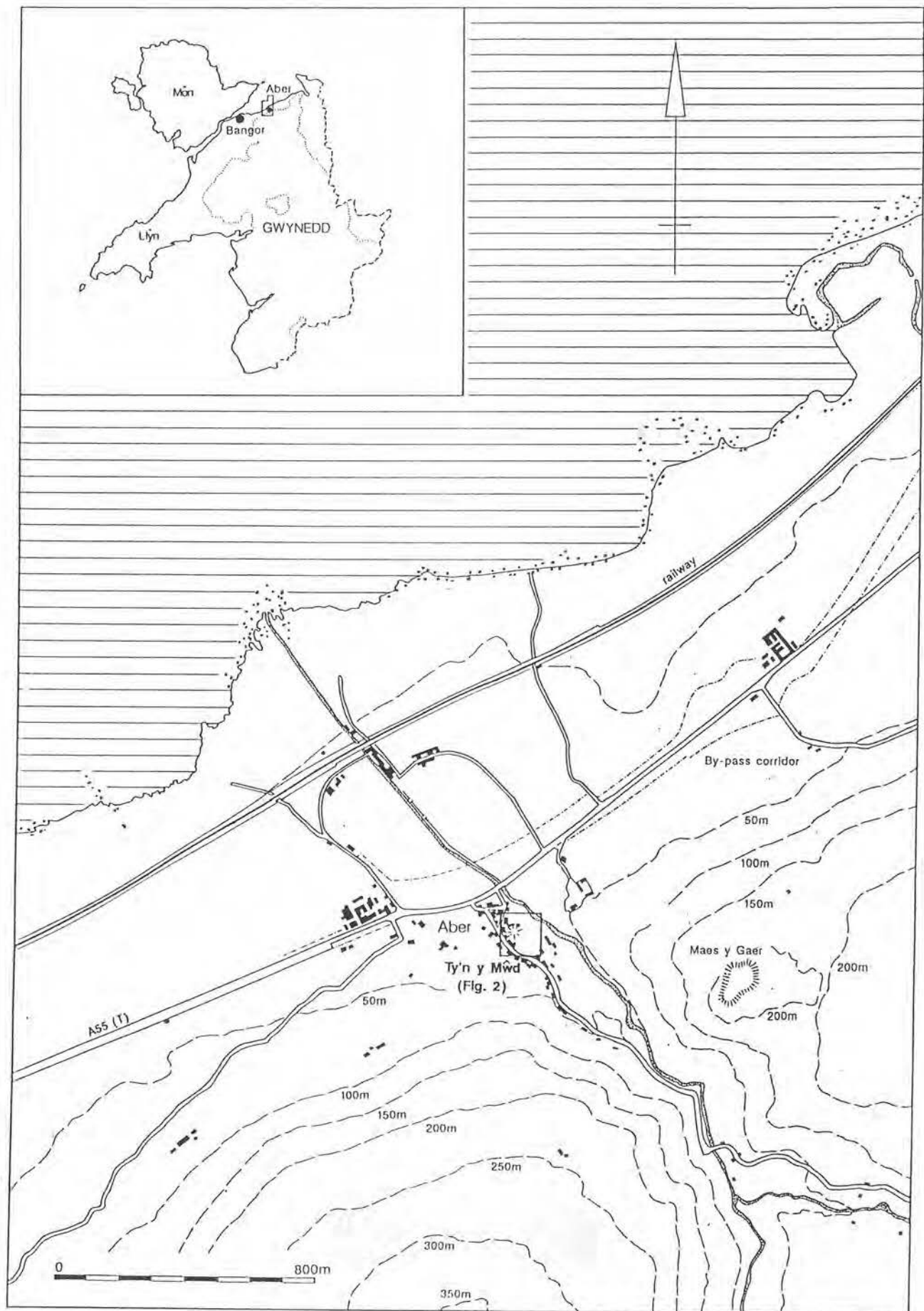


Fig. 1 Location map.

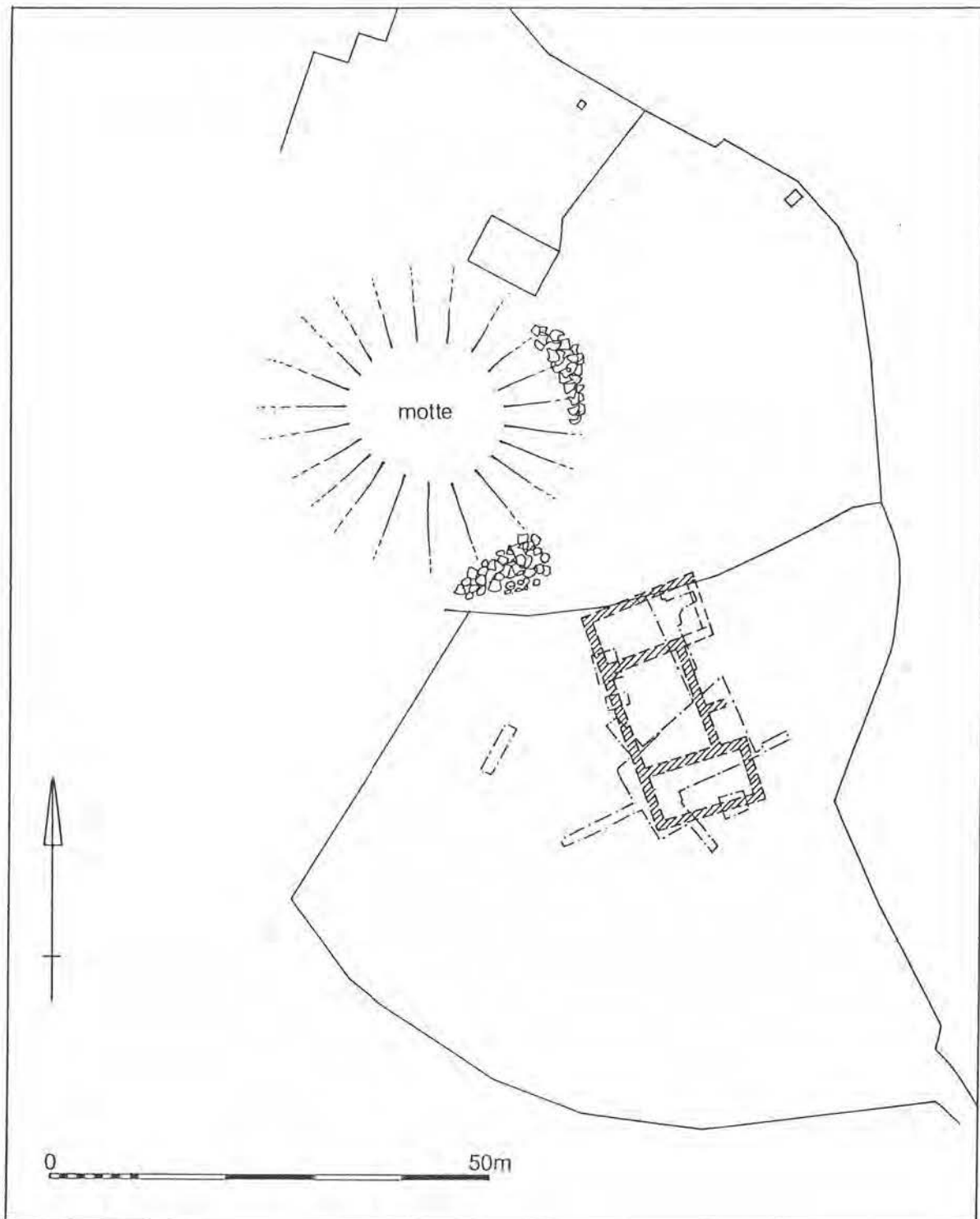


Fig. 2 Trench location.

TYN Y MWD, ABER

INTERIM STATEMENT

Background

In November 1993 Gwynedd Archaeological Trust undertook the excavation of an area at Tyn y Mwd, in Aber, SH 6568 7265 in a field immediately adjacent to the Norman Motte, Pen y Mwd, (SAM C007). The excavation was funded by Cadw as part of the Llys and Maerdref project and was aimed at clarifying the nature of the remains uncovered during an excavation in January 1993, occasioned by a planning application on that site.

The earlier assessment had identified the stone foundations of a rectilinear building in circumstantial association with mid 13th century pottery. However, while identifying the archaeological potential of the site, the nature and form of the structure remained uncertain. The excavation of November 1993 was intended to clarify the nature of the structure, and to this end a total of 120sq.m was excavated.

Excavation

An initial area totalling 80sq.m was opened to expand upon the results of the January excavation. Confirmation of the presence of a substantial stone structure led to the excavation of additional trenches in an attempt to recover a more complete building plan. On completion of the excavation the plan of a long rectangular structure aligned N-S, in three units with winged projections at north and south ends, could be postulated. The northern limit of this structure was incorporated in a later field boundary and, immediately to the south of this boundary, a post-medieval track had truncated deposits associated with the building. Ploughsoil and post-medieval deposits were cleared but no *in situ* stratified deposits associated with the structure were removed and excavation was halted at the horizon of the building foundations. The potential for identifying earlier structural detail, penetrating the subsoil, remains. A quantity of pottery was recovered, in the ploughsoil, at the interface between the ploughsoil and subsoil and in post-medieval contexts.

Structural remains

The foundations of a rectangular, three unit, building can be postulated from the excavated evidence. Acceptance of this interpretation would require a building 26m in total length with a central unit measuring 11.2 x 8m internally; a southern wing 10.8 x 5m internally and a northern wing less certainly c.13 x 5m internally. The width of the foundations is generally 1.1m with local variations and their composition is typically large sub-rounded boulder facing stones with rubble infill in brown silty clay. No evidence for thresholds or doors was identified and this is probably to be explained by the survival of the structure at foundation level only.

The absence of a hearth may be explained either by the incomplete excavation of the northern part of the central unit or by the almost complete removal in the course of later activities of original floor surfaces.

The structure had been robbed to a single course of its foundations except where localised preservation had occurred as, for example, where part of a later field boundary had incorporated original walling at the north end. In places the foundations themselves had been robbed.

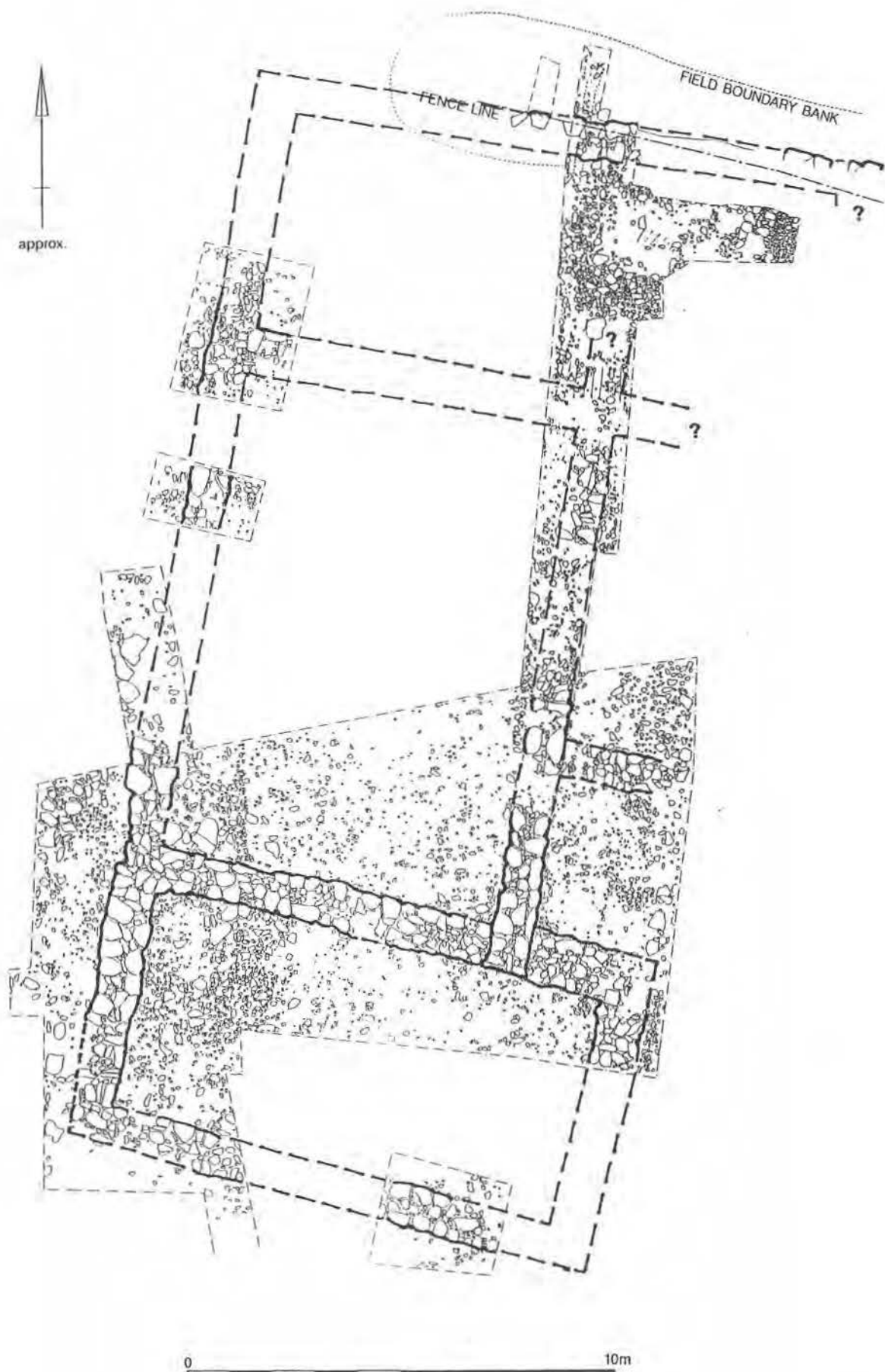


Fig. 3 Rectangular hall at Ty'n y Mwd.

The excavated evidence suggests the possible modification of an original structure in two instances.

- a) The south end of the east wall of the central unit has been truncated and the north wall of the south wing butts this wall at this point.
- b) The masonry of the north wing is mortared.

Artefacts

A quantity of pottery was recovered during the course of the excavations. The majority is post-medieval in date and occurs in the ploughsoil and in contexts associated with a post-medieval track which truncates the rectangular structure at its northern end.

Approximately thirty sherds of medieval pottery were recovered from the ploughsoil and from the interface between the ploughsoil and subsoil. Preliminary analysis suggests that the majority is of the 13th and 14th centuries with a few sherds of the 14th or 15th centuries.

One bronze ring brooch 0.30m diameter with punched decoration was recovered. It is of 13th or 14th century date.

Conclusions

The building identified might best be interpreted as a three unit, winged hall house having undergone modification to reach its final form in the 14th century. Fig. 4 illustrates a selection of Caernarfonshire halls of the 14th century for comparison.

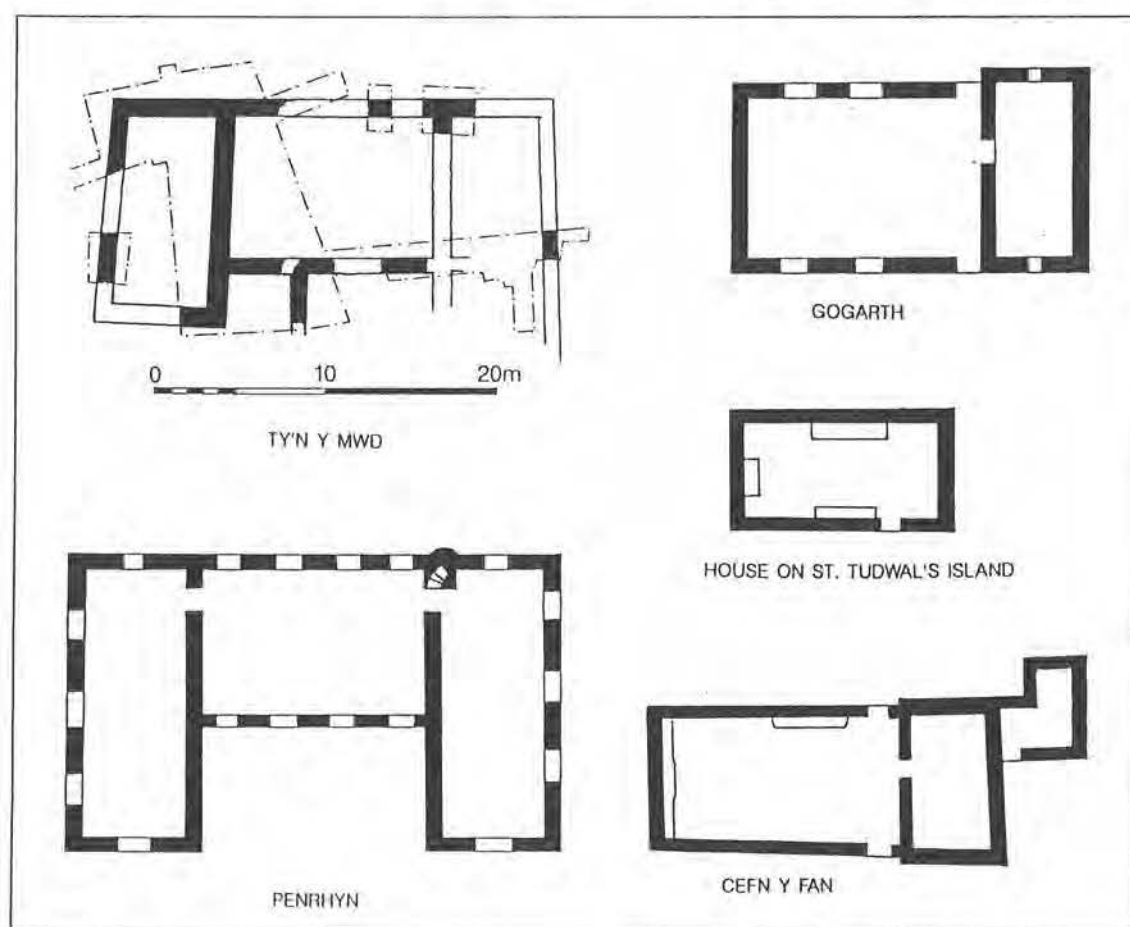


Fig. 4 Plan of Ty'n y Mwd showing comparisons to other Caernarfonshire Halls of C14th.

Antiquarian references consistently draw attention to the presence of building remains in the vicinity of the motte at Aber and some associate these remains with the pre-conquest *Llys*. In this connection, and with reference to the mortared masonry of the north wing, it might be appropriate to draw attention to the following Ministers' account of the early 14th century PRO.E101/485/30:

'In preparing the site of the Hall and Chamber [at Aber] at task 8/- To Masons supplying carriage of stone, setters, porters, and in carriage of sand at task by William of Kyrkby and Ithell of Bangor masons in the 3rd year of Prince Edward £17. 9s. 3d.

Total £17. 17s. 3d.'

'Further expenses laid out on the works of the Hall and Chamber of the Lord Prince at Aber in the 6th year of Prince Edward, by the hands of Richard of Hokenhall (? Hucknall), namely:-

In carriage of 4 boatloads of stone from the sea to Aber at task, at (several) times 4/-. And to hiring 2 carts with 2 horses and 2 boys (or grooms) for carrying stones of freestone, lime and sand, for 57 working days 28/6d. That is each taking 3d. a day.'

