TAI COCHION AND TREFARTHEN ROMAN SETTLEMENT

Interim Excavation Report

Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Gwynedd
Gwynedd Archaeological Trust

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Interim Excavation Report

Project No. G1632

Report No. 1037

Prepared for : Cadw

March 2012

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Published by Gwynedd Archaeological Trust
Gwynedd Archaeological Trust
Craig Beuno, Garth Road,
Bangor, Gwynedd, LL57 2RT

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Interim excavation report 2011-12

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Significant finds of Roman metalwork have been reported to the Portable Antiquities Scheme from fields around Tai Cochion, (Fig. 1 SH47786554) close to the Anglesey shore of the Menai Strait. Regular reports of Roman finds in the fields between Barras and Trefarthen (SH48136565c) were also made to the Cambrian Archaeological Association during the 1860s: "There were formerly the remains of an extensive village in the Trefarthen field next to Barras where Roman coins and pottery have frequently been met with." (Williams 1867). It was assumed at the time that they indicated the remains of a high status Romano-British site. The recent finds included an unusual amount of high status material, suggesting a Roman site with links to the military.

It was initially decided to investigate the area using geophysical survey. The survey was carried out in three phases, all grant aided by Cadw. The first was part of the pan-Wales Roman Military Sites Project (Hopewell 2009, GAT report 778) the second, part of the Anglesey AONB (G2076) project and the third, funded by a Cadw contingency grant, was again part of the Roman Military Sites Project (G1632).

A total of 19.6 hectares was surveyed most of which was found to contain elements of an extensive settlement (Figs 2 and 3). The settlement comprised a 0.6 km long road with several side branches, running from Tai Cochion house to the shore of the Menai Strait. The roads were flanked by a series of small enclosures, with typical dimensions of about 20m x 40m. Many of the enclosures contained fairly clear, rectangular anomalies that were interpreted as buildings, with typical dimensions of around 16m x 8m. About 25 possible buildings were detected by the survey. Most appeared to be rectangular, possibly with internal subdivisions. A few seemed to be more complex with extensions or additional rooms. The western and southern parts of the settlement were fairly regular with one building in each plot. The northern and eastern parts were less regular and more difficult to interpret, either indicating the presence of several phases or an area of different activity. Scatters of possible thermoremnant anomalies throughout the settlement were interpreted as hearths, ovens or furnaces. The plots appeared to be defined by small ditches but there were no obvious signs of substantial defences around the settlement. Several phases of fields were detected to the north of the settlement. Some could be identified as boundaries shown on an 18th century estate map but others could be associated with the settlement. A surface finds collection comprising 207 sherds of Roman Pottery was made in the field to the south of Tai Cochion. These were examined by Peter Webster and were found to have a date range of c. AD 100 to c. AD 300. The majority was high status 2nd century material suggesting the presence of a Roman site of some importance.

The geophysical survey results and finds strongly suggested the presence of a Roman settlement of some importance, as opposed to a Romano-British roundhouse settlement suggested by earlier studies. The layout, with a central road flanked by plots or compounds containing rectangular buildings, is similar to Roman villages and small towns commonly found in the east and south-east of England. Its position of the site on the opposite side of the Menai Strait to Segontium Roman fort suggests that the settlement marks the crossing point of the Menai Strait. It is likely that a settlement would have grown up around the landing place and that it would have functioned as a trading point with the inhabitants of Anglesey.

The evidence from the initial phases of work was all indirect i.e. from geophysical survey and unstratified finds. This allowed a convincing hypothesis to be presented suggesting that this was a Roman trading settlement. Further physical evidence was, however, needed. In particular, confirmation of the interpretation of geophysical anomalies as roads ditches and buildings was required along with secure dating evidence, preferably from stratified finds

An assessment excavation was carried out in the summer of 2010. This investigated geophysical anomalies that had been interpreted as a rectangular building, a road, and plot boundary ditches. The excavation was run for three weeks as a community project and it confirmed the interpretation of the geophysical survey (Hopewell 2010). It revealed a rectangular building with stone foundations and a wattle and daub superstructure. This was probably a domestic building but may have had a secondary commercial function and was destroyed by fire. The road was eight metres wide and of typical Roman construction. The boundary ditches were relatively slight and did not appear to have a defensive function. Numerous smaller features including pits, and a small granary were also identified. Over 1000 sherds of pottery were recovered from the excavations. These were examined by Peter Webster and found to range in date from the second to the fourth century with a concentration between the mid/late second century and the late third to mid fourth century. There is no clear indication of activity after the early to mid-fourth century.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

The second season of excavation was carried out between 27th June 2011 and 12th August 2012 and was again run as a community project. The project was grant-aided by Cadw. Some additional resources, allowing a one week extension to the excavation were provided by GAT. The work was supervised by the writer and George Smith of GAT with assistance from Iwan Parry. About 20 volunteers worked on the site. About half of these were experienced archaeologists and the rest were students and beginners. Outreach activities were prioritised with school visits and activities programmed throughout the first month of the excavation. This element of the project was supervised by GAT's outreach officer Anita Daimond. An open day was arranged as part of the Festival of British Archaeology which was attended by about 500 people.

The two excavation areas were selected on the basis of the standard resolution geophysical survey. Trench 1 was designed to investigate a long rectangular anomaly interpreted as a building. This appeared to be longer than the building investigated in the first season and not as obviously set within a rectangular plot, perhaps suggesting a different function. Trench 2 was designed to investigate a circular anomaly and several smaller anomalies provisionally interpreted as industrial features. The area was resurveyed at high resolution (0.5m x 0.25m) in order to produce a clearer assessment of the buried archaeology and also to ensure accurate location of the trenches within the geophysics grid. The high resolution results and trench locations are shown on Fig.3. The site grid was then established and the area of the trench was metal detected in order to recover finds from the topsoil. All finds were located relative to the site grid. This process was supervised by the GAT staff and Archie Gillespie, an experienced metal detectorist with experience of archaeological metal-detector surveys. Great care was taken to avoid the disturbance of any deposits below the plough-soil. The topsoil was then stripped using a mechanical excavator. This was straightforward in trench 2 where features survived only as cuts into the natural substrate of silty glacial drift. Several fragmentary wall lines were quickly uncovered close to the current ground surface in trench 1. A layer of topsoil was therefore retained for hand-excavation across much of the trench in order to minimise the risk of damaging *in situ* features with the mechanical excavator. A further small trench was stripped of the upper layers of topsoil, but not down to archaeological horizons, to be used as an excavation training area for school parties.

The trenches were then hand-excavated; most features were sampled but not necessarily fully excavated. The site was metal detected again and all signals were marked in order to alert the excavators to the presence of metal objects. This was particularly useful for the recovery of small late-Roman bronze coins, that were very difficult to see.

After the excavation was completed the floor levels of the building were covered with geotextile and the site was backfilled.

The work program for 2011-12 did not include specialist analysis of the finds, environmental reports or carbon dating. The current document is therefore an interim report providing a description of the stratigraphy and some provisional conclusions but without the use of detailed dating evidence. A full report on the excavations from 2010 and 2011, designed for publication, will be produced in 2012-13.

3.0 RESULTS

3. 1 Trench 1

3.1.1 Removal of recent deposits

Prior to the start of the archaeological excavation the farmer had reported that many stones appeared in this part of the field when it was ploughed and that these were then collected and removed. It is clear that elements of a buried building were being disturbed by ploughing and that parts of the structure would be damaged or missing.

Gradual removal of the ploughsoil by machine revealed occasional blocks of stone forming two vague NE-SW lines where the walls of a building were expected from the evidence of the geophysical survey. The tops of some of the stones were at the current ground level. The most continuous line of stones was that at the north-west side of the expected building. The area outside these lines of stone was almost stone-free and consisted of either orange-brown silty soil or, in places, spreads of fine gravel. Because of the presence of *in situ* stone blocks on the line of the walls and the possibility of disturbing them the topsoil in the area of the interior of the building was not completely removed but left for later removal by hand.

Removal of this remaining topsoil (1091) within the building revealed more clearly two lines of stone blocks, forming the south-east and north-west walls of a building and, less distinctly, the north-east and south-west end walls. At the centre of the east side of the building was a gap in the building wall-line interpreted provisionally as an entrance.

Outside the walls of the building and parallel to them and about 1m outside them was a linear feature [1030]. This feature was most obvious at the east side of the building but traces of it could be seen around the north-west side and at both ends of the building. Outside the building in the area of the probable entrance was a gravelled area defined by two narrow linear features, the whole interpreted as a possible large roofed portico [1090] with walls remaining as beam-slots. The interior of the building was excavated by hand in a series of six sub-trenches that were separated by baulks. These were removed towards the end of the excavation. The eastern sixth of the trench was not excavated beyond the removal of the topsoil and an initial hand-cleaning. Four phases of activity were identified. Fig. 4 shows a plan of trench 1 after excavation. This principally includes phase 1 features along with unexcavated phase 3 floor surfaces (shown with a grey tone).

3.1.2 Phase 1: Construction and Initial occupation

The earliest phase consists of a large rectangular building [1026], facing south-east, with a large entrance [1090], 2.7m wide, on the south-east side covered with a roofed porch. There was a secondary narrow entrance [1069] on the north-west side. The building was *c*. 25m long and 6m wide internally, probably constructed of timber framing with wattle and daub panels set on a foundation of rectangular stone blocks. One metre outside the wall was a beam-slot (1030) for an outer ‘portico’ wall that ran along the south-east side of the building. A linear scatter of stones could be traced around all sides of the building. This was sectioned in three places; in two places a very shallow slot or gully could be seen, in the third only a scatter of stone. This could be interpreted as either a partly ploughed-out portico that continued around the entire building or as an eaves-drip feature, comprising a spread of stones and a slightly eroded gully. The space between the main and ‘portico’ wall on the south-east was devoid of finds or of any kind of surfacing, suggesting that the ‘portico’ had had a raised wooden floor. The ends of the building had slightly rounded corners, suggesting a hipped and thatched roof for which an angular end gable would not be needed. The porch of the main entrance had drip gulleys (1100 and 1102) on either side but the absence of any well constructed drip gulleys to

provide drainage around the main building is difficult to understand considering the size of the roof and the fact that the internal floor was below the level of the exterior.

Exposure of the lines of the main walls of the building showed that they consisted of approximately rectangular blocks of rough quarried limestone set with their best faces on the inside. This internal face would have been visible because the internal floor was lower than the external surface. The wall footings therefore sat on a ledge and would have been prone to subsidence on the internal, unsupported side and some blocks had clearly subsided inwards. Some of the wall stones had clearly been affected by heat, being split on their inner faces, the split pieces still being *in situ*.

The building was probably divided laterally into three main rooms or areas. It had a slightly sunken floor, the surface of which was of roughly-laid small cobbles and gravel (1159 and Plate 1) in the central area and of natural clay in the end areas.

The central area included what was probably a communal space with level floors on the south-east side of the building taking up more than half of the width of the interior. There was, however, no obvious hearth acting as a focal point. There was a narrower area along the north-west side of the building, where the floor was not level but sloped up towards the outer wall. This area was used for storage, cooking, food preparation and perhaps other craft activities. Several pieces of broken rotary querns were found and there was line of features along the north-west side of the building that included at least one oven or hearth (1114) and three associated with burning, two of which had stone working-surfaces (1149 and 1208). One consisted of two rotary quern stones (1149), one upturned and set into the floor with the other stone set on edge behind it. The activity belonging to it must have involved water because it was associated with a nearby small pit (1154) from which a drain (1110/1121) ran out through the main entrance, at some depth beneath the doorway and the outer gravelled surface.

The central portion of the building was served by a very wide entrance with a covered porch which may have been constructed in order to indicate the high status of the building. It alternatively may have had a more practical function such as access for a cart or even a storage area. At the north-west side of the central area was a low stone ‘bench’ (1211 and Plate 2) was built against the north-west wall. It began at the north-east side of the rear door (1069) and continued for 9m. It was *c*. 0.56m wide and appeared to survive to its full original height of 0.30m. Its function is uncertain. It was not of great structural strength because it consisted of an edging of orthostatic slabs infilled with small rubble which included part of a small rotary quern. It was a secondary feature because it butted against the inside of the wall footings.

The clay floor of the probable domestic rooms was somewhat burnt in patches. This could have been a result of burning during the destruction phase or, considering the lack of identifiable hearths, could indicate the positions of braziers.

There were traces of two partitions (1152 and 1097) in the north-east end of the building, enclosing an area of level floor, suggesting a domestic room. Other partitions would be expected but were not found, perhaps removed and erased by later use of the building. There was a hint of another partition across the south-west side of the central area, in line with the south-west side of the south-east doorway. This possible partition consisted of an SE-NW line of three small probable postholes (1117, 1119 and 1206).

There was considerable material to provide a date for the destruction phase. At the south-western end two large pots that had been close to the building wall had been buried by falling debris and crushed *in situ*. There were also a number of coins and bronze objects from this level (see Plates 3 and 4). An even more useful deposit was a spread of charred grain, mainly

confined within a shallow circular scoop 1150 at the north-eastern corner of the building, possibly the remains of a burnt basketry container. Radiocarbon dating of this grain could give a close date for the destruction phase.

There was an absence of stratified layers or finds that could belong to the construction of the building that would allow its primary phase to be dated. However, the destruction phase has a considerable amount of dating material from the structure itself. Timber from the burnt structure could be radiocarbon dated although if from large beams could be considerably older than the date of felling. A few pieces of charred wattle were collected in samples from this phase and these would give a close date for the construction. One coin was also recovered at depth within the gravel surface (1034) within the porch although the gravel floor itself is not necessarily primary.

3.1.3 Phase 2: Destruction level

A charcoal-rich layer (1218) notable for the presence within it of numerous fragments of burnt daub overlaid much of the phase 1 deposits. This layer varied somewhat in its depth and appearance through the building. Although occasional fragments of small pieces of burnt daub occurred throughout the layer, the majority of the daub was concentrated close to the inside edge of the wall-footings of the building. Some pieces of daub had roughly smoothed flat surfaces and some had impressions of woven wattles indicating that the walls had been timber-framed with inset panels of wattle and daub. The greatest amount and largest pieces occurred close to the south-west end of the building. The daub had survived because it was strongly heat-affected, becoming reddened and quite strongly fired. This indicates that at least parts of the building were destroyed by a fierce fire. The heat had been strong enough to cause spalling of the foundation stones in the south-western wall. The charcoal within the destruction layer was mainly finely broken but occasional larger pieces, probably of oak, were found and collected.

The lack of stone or slates indicates that the roof had been thatched or covered in wooden shingles. This would have burnt quickly and it is possible that analysis of samples of the burnt material will show the presence of burnt thatch material. Some areas of the clay floor of phase 1 were burnt *in situ* and this might be a result of the burning material falling onto the floor. The collapse of burnt material at the south-western end of the building had buried two large pots, which were left *in situ* but crushed, showing that the interior of the building, at least in this area, had not been cleared after the fire.

3.1.4 Phase 3: Late use

The burnt and fragmentary nature of the daub indicated a phase of burning destruction. The building was, however, not abandoned at this time. The fragmentary remains of a stone slab floor [1112] could be seen to overlay the charcoal and burnt daub-rich soil, showing that the activity relating to the slab floor post-dated the burning (Plate 1). This suggests that the building had not been entirely destroyed during the burning. The fire may have been localised, the most strongly burnt south-western part of the building was apparently not cleared and reused. The fire may not have destroyed much of the main timber framework of the building allowing it to be reused.

The full extent of the stone-slab floor is not known because it continued into the area of the unexcavated south-western quadrant and more was exposed by removal of the cross-baulk there. In this area several metal objects were found, some lying immediately on the slabs, others in the crevices between them. These objects included copper alloy coins, two possible chariot or furniture fittings, a lead steelyard weight and a sharp iron object. To the south-west of the main entrance the slab floor stopped abruptly, suggesting that it had been partially robbed out. This interpretation was supported by the by the presence of an irregular pit [1163]

that had been cut through this area. The function of the pit was uncertain as it had cut into the underlying surfaces and its fill was sterile gravel. However, it may have been dug to remove a post, perhaps associated with a second probable large post-hole [1088] on the north-east side of the doorway. The gravel fill could alternatively have functioned as a soak-away

There was a small outlying area of slab floor [1226] on the north-east side of pit [1163] showing that the slab floor had once continued further. However, the north-eastern half of the interior of the building had not been slabbed but consisted simply of the trampled remains of earlier surfaces and features along with occasional scattered pieces of rubble.

The main entrance to the building at this stage was still in use. The floor within the portico had a substantial gravelled surface through which ran a stone-lined drain [1121], which drained the interior of the house. The latest fill of the drain, outside the main doorway, contained a number of copper alloy coins indicating a 4th century date for the latest use of the building.

Removal of the burnt destruction layer just to the north-east of the main entrance revealed a number of iron objects, possibly horse equipment. It cannot be certain whether these belong to the later use of the building or were left *in situ* during the earlier destruction. They could have survived from the original phase of use, hidden beneath the destruction material.

There is a disparity between the presence of a number of artefacts on top of the slab floor [1112] and the general lack of artefacts in the rest of the building that could be certainly related to this later period of use. There also appears to be a lack of pottery belonging to the later period of use, suggesting that the building was perhaps dilapidated and used for stabling or storage rather than domestic use. However, this is at odds with the presence of a number of coins.

There was a narrower entrance [1069] through the north-west wall at the rear of the building. In this period the floor within the entrance had been raised by the laying of two slabs, rather haphazardly within the entrance and possibly by the addition of a new raised sill-stone. At the same time a line of three large stone blocks [1109] (not shown on Fig. 4) had been set a little way in front of and within this entrance, perhaps as a footing for an inner wall or partition, to create in inner porch.

There was no evidence of any structural partitions within the building in this phase although the difference in floors between the slabbed area and the merely trampled area at the north-east end suggested a difference in function between them.

Around the inner face of the stone wall footings of the building was found a series of small post-holes (1182, 1180, 1178, 1194, and 1197). These were irregularly spaced, not continuous around the whole building interior, but where most frequent, they were about 1.5m apart; some were set directly against the wall footings, others set a little way in from the footings. The holes had been cut into the floor of the first phase of the building. It seems likely that these post-holes held propping posts inserted during the later, Phase 3 use of the building, to stabilize those roof joists that may have been damaged after the earlier fire or have just been decaying. This repair had been carried out in an *ad hoc* manner and in a technically inferior way.

3.1.5 Phase 4: Abandonment and infilling

A layer of limestone rubble (1092) was found to overlay the phase 3 remains. This consisted largely of sub-angular limestone pieces between 100-150mm long, with occasional larger pieces. The origin of the stones seems likely to be from field clearance dumping which must

have occurred soon after the final abandonment of the building because in one place the rubble lay almost directly on top of the latest floor (1112) within the building. The floor level of the building proved to be lower than the surrounding area, creating a large hollow which had been infilled with rubble. The rubble was not evenly distributed within the building but was densest in the central and north-western areas and its surface tipped down towards the centre line of the building. There was relatively little rubble at the ends of the building and there was a distinct linear heap (1066) across the north-eastern half of the building, possibly indicating organised clearance dumping, perhaps with a cart.

Some of the rubble had also accumulated in the hollows of beam slots of the walls of the portico [1090], within a linear hollow [1035] in the centre of the portico floor and in the drip gullies of the portico roof. A small amount of the same rubble also spread beyond the walls of the building. There were no distinctive finds within this layer to suggest a date for its deposition. However, the lack of post-medieval pottery indicates an earlier date.

There is, however, some doubt about the interpretation of the rubble as field clearance because the topsoil does not appear to contain quantities of this type of stone. The natural substrate here is glacial silty clay with patches of gravel although excavation in Trench 2 showed that similar stone occurred at a little depth at the interface between the drift and the underlying decayed limestone bedrock. Further consideration is therefore needed. It may also suggest that the rest of the settlement in this area had also been abandoned and levelled by this time. However the building excavated in 2010 although of similar, sunken floor design, did not have evidence of rubble dumping like that in the building excavated in 2011. The soils in this area are some of the best in Anglesey and a return to agriculture after the end of the settlement would be understandable although it would have entailed considerable work in clearance of the earlier walls etc.

3.1.6 Trench 1 discussion

The overall sequence and interpretation of the building will become clearer when the artefacts are studied. The building was close to the contemporary road and within the overall settlement had a primary position facing the Strait. It was of a simple layout and appeared to lack any subsidiary buildings or features that would be expected of a purely domestic house or farmstead. The wide entrance with porch must have made it appear quite imposing suggesting that it had some commercial use such as for trade or a service industry. This is supported by the presence of features of probable craft industry as well as notable finds including numerous coins and bronze objects.

3.2 Trench 2

The trench was designed to investigate a series of anomalies on the geophysical survey that were interpreted as a large circular feature and a series of pits, kilns or other magnetically enhanced features. The plough-soil was stripped using a mechanical excavator revealing a series of features cut into the natural substrate. The natural substrate comprised variable glacial till, mostly reddish-brown consolidated silt with bands of gravel and occasional patches of clay. There were small outcroppings of limestone at the eastern end of the trench. The cut features did not reflect the apparently straightforward circular geophysical anomaly but appeared to be a series of intercutting pits and irregular features. These were all sectioned and recorded (see Fig 5) and are described below.

Pit 1572

This was a 1.8m diameter and 0.4m deep, roughly circular pit with shallow sides and a flat bottom. It was filled with compact brown clayey silt and cut by kiln 1510 at the south-east.

No finds were recovered from the pit but it apparently been backfilled prior to the construction of the kiln.

Kiln 1510

A few scattered stones were visible on the surface before the feature was excavated indicating some plough damage to the upper part. Excavation revealed a 0.7m deep, stone-lined sub-circular kiln, 1.4m wide on its NE-SW axis and slightly elongated to 1.55m to the south-east. The fill was excavated but the main structure of the kiln was retained.

A poorly defined cut with a diameter of 2.0m could be seen on the surface; this had presumably been excavated with close to vertical sides and was dug down to the limestone bedrock. This was lined with stone blocks bonded with earth or clay to form the body of the kiln. The base was formed by the bedrock and was somewhat uneven due to the natural fracture patterns on the top of the limestone. There was a lime rich concretion on the surface of the bedrock presumably dating from the last use of the kiln. The sides of the kiln, particularly the clay between the stones, were heat affected and reddened but not vitrified. There was a single flue or stoke-hole on the south-eastern side that had been damaged on the north-east by a plough-strike. It consisted of a 0.37m wide and c. 0.4m high gap in the facing with large edge-set stones on either side and a probable lintel leading to a steeply sloping cut (c. 40 degrees) that extended about 0.9m from the inner face of the kiln. The flue was not lined. The base was defined by a layer of light burning and the upper part contained several pieces of heat affected, partially calcined limestone.

The lower fills consisted of heat affected silty deposits with some charcoal, perhaps derived from natural soil from the C-horizon left *in situ* above the bedrock or material that had fallen or washed into the base of the kiln. A silty orange-brown deposit (1533) sloped up from the centre of the kiln and into the flue. This probably marked the last use of the kiln. The upper part of the kiln was filled with deposits of silty clay similar to the topsoil suggesting that it had been deliberately backfilled. Several pieces of fresh-looking Roman pottery were recovered from the fills. No post-Roman material was present suggesting that this was a Roman feature.

The lack of vitrification and other high temperature damage indicates that it operated at a relatively low temperature. The pieces of partly calcined limestone in the flue and lower deposits suggest a lime kiln. It was, however noted that there were no significant lime deposits within the kiln, which could merely indicate that it was well raked out after its last use. Its structure seems to be typical of a simple Roman flare kiln, characterised by an open-topped combustion chamber with (in the Roman period) a single stoke hole. (English Heritage 2011). A probable raking out pit (1521) was found to the south-east.

Raking-out pit 1521

This was a 3.6m diameter shallow pit, 0.29m deep, with a charcoal rich fill containing a few patches of white lime. This is consistent with it being a raking out pit for the lime kiln.

Boundary 1519

This 0.6 to 1.0m wide somewhat irregular linear feature corresponds to one of the Roman field boundaries detected by the geophysical survey. The feature was sectioned and was found to be shallow V-shaped, 0.8m wide and 0.16m deep with a greyish clayey fill. It is presumed that these boundaries were relatively slight and have been truncated by modern ploughing so that only the base of the cut remains.

Boundary 1551

Another slight linear feature was uncovered at the north-west of the excavation, 0.56m wide and 0.13m deep. This was also contained a clayey fill, runs at right angles to 1519 and corresponds to a boundary detected by the geophysical survey. This is presumed to be another truncated boundary.

Curvilinear feature 1505

This was an irregular feature forming a roughly semi-circular arc 19m long. It was 3m to 4m wide and was sectioned in two places. This was found to be very irregular with fairly steep sides and a very uneven base. It appeared to have been backfilled with a series of dumps of silty soil. Several pieces of Roman pottery were retrieved from the feature.

Curvilinear feature 1503

A short curvilinear feature forming a rough semi-circle 10m in diameter. The feature was 3m wide and was sectioned in two places and was found to be a slightly irregular cut with a U-shaped profile and about 0.4m deep.

Pit 1504

This was a shallow (0.32m deep) sub-circular pit with gently sloping sides and a diameter of 4.5m. The fill was loose brown silty loam and gravel containing occasional sherds of Roman pottery.

Pit 1502

A shallow sub-circular pit 1.5m in diameter and a maximum of 0.26m deep. This was initially interpreted as a tree-bole but comparison with 1505 which was also extremely irregular suggests that they may be related features.

Pit 1514

A shallow sub-circular pit with a very irregular base, 4.9m in diameter and 0.22m deep. It was filled with a series of dark brown silty fills containing charcoal flecks and appeared to have been deliberately backfilled. It was cut by pit 1535.

Pit 1535

A shallow oval pit with dimensions of 3.0m x 2.0m, cutting Pit 1514.

Pit 1532

A shallow pit with an uneven base, diameter 2.0m depth 0.2m. |It contained a rather mixed fill including Roman occupation debris, animal teeth and bones, burnt daub and black burnished ware.

Pit 1545

A shallow (0.2m) oval pit with dimensions of 1.9m x 1.2m. It contained a single greyish brown fill.

Pit 1546

A shallow circular pit with a diameter of 2.2m and a depth of 0.18m. It cut pit 1503 and linear 1547. The fill contained a small amount of slag and Roman pottery.

Pit 1566

Either a sub-circular feature or the end of a linear extending beyond the edge of the site. Excavation showed it to 0.7m wide and 0.19m deep. The fill contained slag, burnt daub and charcoal. It was cut by linear 1548.

Pit/Linear 1547

Poorly defined elongated pit that could be traced for 2.2m. It was 0.9m wide and 0.45m deep with a possible recut. The fills were similar to the subsoil but contained slag, charcoal and occasional animal bones.

Linear 1548

A poorly defined linear feature with a rounded profile in section. It was 0.35m wide and 0.12m deep and could be traced for 2.5m. The fill was similar to the surrounding subsoil but contained slag, charcoal and slate fragments. This feature cut pits 1566 and 1584.

Pit 1584

This was the slight remains of what appears to have been a shallow pit truncated to the north-east by pit 1566 and linear 1548 and to the south-west by curvilinear 1503. It appeared to have been backfilled and contained occasional fragments of slag.

Pit 1500

A small (0.6m x 0.4m) squarish cut feature about 0.17m deep. Possibly natural.

Pit 1568

A shallow (0.3m) pit, roughly figure-8-shaped with dimensions of 1.64m x 0.33m. It was filled with clean, coarse gravel.

3.2.1 Trench 2 discussion

The circular anomaly detected by the geophysical survey was not a discrete feature but a series of rather uneven and irregular shallow cuts. There are several features with similar characteristics, in particular, very uneven bases and rather mixed fills consistent with backfilling as opposed to silting. The two curvilinear features 1503 and 1505 and pits 1502 and 1514 seem to fit these criteria. They seem to be some of the earliest features in the trench as they are cut by later pits and seem to contain less occupation debris than the later features. Their function is unclear but there is a possibility that they were pits designed to recover material from the glacial till for the production of material for wattle and daub although it should be noted that much of the till contains only a small amount of clay. Daub usually requires a high clay content to make it pliable and adhesive. The till could however have been mixed with clay, straw and other materials sourced from elsewhere. The features were arranged in a semi-circular arrangement perhaps indicating that they were clustered around a central processing area.

The more regular pits (1545, 1546, 1504, 1535, perhaps 1572 and probably 1532) in general, cut the irregular pits and often contained more occupation debris such as slag and burnt daub. This suggests that they relate to activity while the nearby building was in use whereas the irregular pits relate to the construction of the building. Hopefully dating evidence from further post excavation will add more weight to this hypothesis.

The kiln would appear to be relatively late as it cuts one of the regular pits and the raking-out pit cuts irregular curvilinear feature 1505. If the kiln was indeed a lime kiln it does not appear to have been connected with the building in trench 1 as no lime appears to have been used in its construction. It could however have been used to produce lime, from the locally plentiful limestone, for use in Segontium or other building in the settlement.

3.3 The Finds

A detailed discussion of the finds will not be attempted in the present report because specialist studies will not be carried out until the 2012/13 phase of the project. Over 3000 sherds or pottery and around 100 coins were recovered from the excavation. Metalwork including furniture fittings (Plate 3), fibulae, and other jewellery (Plate 4) were also recovered. All have been catalogued and initial studies indicate a date range from the late first to the mid fourth centuries.

3.4 Additional Geophysical Survey

The western edge of the 2010 survey revealed the edge of what appears to be a double ditched prehistoric enclosure. A further area was surveyed in order to reveal the extent of the feature. The survey revealed a sub-circular (but with an approximate right-angle at the north) double ditch and bank enclosure with dimensions across the defences of 115m x 95m, enclosing an area with dimensions of 90m x 62m (c. 0.52ha). The interior was much noisier than the exterior indicating significant magnetic enhancement from occupation and the outlines of three or four possible roundhouses were detected. This appears to be a substantial, well-defended Iron Age or Romano-British settlement. Its sub-oval shape with one sharp corner is unusual as there are no obvious topographical constraints here. Some late Iron-Age and Romano-British settlements in North Wales (e.g. the nearby Caer Leb) incorporate both curving and angular elements. These are mostly later sites with occupation during the Roman occupation. There is, as yet, no dating evidence from the enclosure at Tai Cochion but there is a possibility that it may have been occupied at the same time as the main Roman (or Romanised) settlement at Tai Cochion. It also appears to be on the line of the Roman road and it may indicate that there was a pre-existing Iron Age route on this alignment that was adopted by the Roman road.

4. 0 DISCUSSION

The excavation revealed a fairly complete plan of a typical Roman building albeit with some unusual features. It appears to belong to a class of buildings known as corridor houses. These were a type of house, usually found in settlements, comprising a range of rooms with a portico or corridor along one side (Perring, 2002, 65). They often incorporated an entrance porch. The example at Tai Cochion appears to be a fairly simple variant. There were no post-holes along the wall line so it seems likely that it was a timber-framed construction built on narrow stone foundations. The superstructure appears to have consisted of wattle and daub panels with a thatch or wooden-shingle roof. The end walls were both bowed, an unusual construction for a Roman timber framed building. A review of the easily available literature (Perrin 2002, Hingley 1989 and Burnham and Wacher 1990) revealed only one possible parallel; a building interpreted as a shop at Nettleton (Burnham and Wacher Fig 58). The curving end walls, barely more than very rounded corners, as opposed to an apsidal construction, served no obvious function but presumably indicate that there was a hipped roof. The building, at least in its first phase, appears to have been subdivided into three main sections with a large central room containing a hearth and other features that were set into the ground along the north-western wall and were probably associated with food preparation and perhaps simple craft activities. There was also a stone bench along the south-western part of the north-western wall of the central room, a common feature in the larger rooms of Roman buildings (Perring, 197). This may belong to the first phase of the building as a possible partition, marked by a line of post holes, appears to run up the centre of the feature. The end rooms appear to have had a more domestic function. There was an additional longitudinal sub-division in the north-eastern end and a pile of charred grain indicates domestic activity or even storage. A relatively level floor and possible scorch marks from braziers define the south-eastern side. Only a strip along the north-western wall was fully excavated in the south-western third of the building and the layout in this area has not been fully resolved. A small hearth surrounded by stake-holes, probably indicating a that stakes were used to suspend a container over a fire, was found close to the rear entrance.

The first phase building was partly destroyed by fire. The burning was particularly fierce in the south-west of the building and the presence of two *in situ* pots apparently smashed at the time of the fire suggest that this part of the building may never have been fully rebuilt. The central and north-eastern parts were reused but the deposits from the second phase were rather fragmentary. There were no clear surviving partitions, although a row of stake-holes to the south-west of the entrance could be interpreted as such. The floor levels comprised two areas of rough stone paving and an apparently trampled earth floor. Frequent finds of coins metalwork etc from this phase indicate that the building may have retained a trade or storage function. After its final use, perhaps in the fourth century, the hollow was infilled with stone and the land presumably reverted to agriculture.

The building was one of at least 23 identified by the geophysical survey within the settlement and appears to be one of the largest. Its prime position overlooking the Menai Strait, grand entrance and portico suggests a high-status building, possibly with pretensions to being a villa. It was, however a fairly basic construction of timber and wattle and daub.

The settlement itself is extensive although without an obvious focus. It is, however, not possible to distinguish the details of all the buildings from the geophysical survey and there could be stone-built or higher-status structures within the settlement. The discovery, in the excavations, of occasional fragments of roofing tiles and slates along with a lime kiln suggest that a higher-status building may be present in the vicinity. There is however no obvious large villa compound and even the most apparently complex buildings such as anomalies 11 and 13 are relatively modest. The settlement may initially have grown up as a trading station at the crossing place of the Strait, in a somewhat *ad hoc* fashion. The area to the north of the road

does not seem to be regularly laid out. The settlement to the south in contrast is regularly arranged with buildings in regular plots implying a certain level of central planning.

The layout of the settlement is significantly different to the military *vici* that occur close to most of the forts in Wales (Hopewell 2005 and Burnham and Davies 2010). These settlements consist of fairly closely packed strip-buildings set end-on to the main road leading from the fort. In contrast, the settlement at Tai Cochion consists of well-spaced rectangular buildings, mostly in rectangular compounds.

Hingley (1989) classifies smaller settlements (excluding military *vici*)) into 'villa settlements', 'non-villa settlements' and 'local centres'. Villa settlements are based around a villa and may contain many compounds containing further buildings. Non-villa settlements encompass a wide range of settlement. Most are, however, relatively poor farming communities. This category includes both Romanised settlements and Romano-British round-house settlements. Local centres are seen as largely civilian, market settlements. The distribution of these settlement types varies significantly from region to region. Roman Britain has often been considered as two distinct regions. This division was initially proposed by Haverfield (1912) and used in much subsequent literature. The two regions are the 'military north-west', occupied by troops and showing few signs of Romanisation and containing no villas and the 'civilian zone' in the south-east containing 'nothing but civilian life' (ibid, 24).

Hingley proposed a three zone system (1989, 133). First, the south-east, containing an even distribution of villas and local centres. Secondly the north midlands and south-eastern Wales, a marginal zone containing a lower concentration of villas and local centres and thirdly the rest of Wales, north-western England and the south-western peninsula of England where villas and local centres are largely absent.

Settlement in all but the south-east of Wales is usually seen as being largely unchanged from pre-Roman patterns and consisting of small family groupings in farming communities living in roundhouse settlements. These communities presumably paid taxes during the Roman occupation and must have produced some surplus because Roman coins and pottery occur fairly frequently on the sites. Some hillforts, such as Tre'r Ceiri on the Llyn peninsula were also occupied in the Roman period.

The settlement at Tai Cochion, in many respects, fits into the category of a 'local centre'. It is situated in an obvious position for trade, at a crossing point of the Menai Strait. The finds suggest that it was wealthy and it doesn't appear to be centred on a villa or any official building. This suggests a greater degree of Romanisation than is usually assumed for this zone of Roman Britain. The settlement was probably founded at the end of the first century i.e. within two or three decades of the Flavian invasion, survived until the mid-fourth century, was undefended and wealthy. This indicates a relatively settled and prosperous society. Anglesey, known in later times as 'the bread-basket of Wales' was capable of producing an agricultural surplus and high-status Romano-British sites such as the distinctly Romanised Din Lligwy and Caer Leb are present elsewhere on the island suggesting the presence of a relatively wealthy elite. There are also several antiquarian accounts of potentially high-status Romano-British activity in the south-west of Anglesey, most notably 'tile, samian and coarse-wares' at Tre Anna (PRN 3143) along with poorly understood sites such as the find-spot of a late Roman/early medieval lead coffin from Rhuddgaer (PRN 3074). The recent discovery of a villa at Abermagwr in Ceredigion (Driver and Davis 2011) suggests that the military zone in the north and west of Roman Britain requires some re-evaluation and may in fact be a marginal zone much like the north midlands and south-eastern Wales. It is likely that if it is assumed that villas and local centres exist in this area a change in the focus of research could lead to further discoveries. Potential high-status civilian sites that have previously been

assumed to have military connections, such as the bath-house at Tremadoc, may also fit into this pattern of civilian centres.

5. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The excavation was grant-aided by Cadw. Thanks are due to George Smith who supervised Trench 1 and wrote most of the summary; to Jack Roberts for permission to carry out the excavation; to Peter Rogers for permission to carry out geophysical survey; to John Rowlands (Pixaerial) for aerial photographs; to Archie Gillespie for metal detecting expertise and to Anita Diamond, Tegid Williams, Iwan Parry and Emily La-Trobe Bateman for outreach and schools. Thanks to Ian Stenson for reporting the metal detector finds that alerted us to the importance of the site in the first place. Also thanks to Tegid for doing the blog. Particular thanks are due to Sara Richards for the onerous task of cleaning, processing, cataloguing and sorting the finds.

The excavation could not have happened without the dedicated work of the team of volunteers, John Burman, C. 'Beaver' Hughes, Jeff Marples, Brian Milner, Emily May, Daniel and Trevor Rhydderch-Dart, Gareth Jenkins, Steve Hughes, Lori Higgins, Garth Walpole, Rhys Mwyn, Peter Wight, Sadie Williams, Judit Abou-Samra, Becky Nutbourne, Shirley Williams, Rob Williams, Bill Errington, Marian Davies, Robert and Margaret Bradbury, Xara Bennett-Jones. Apologies are due to anybody that I've forgotten.

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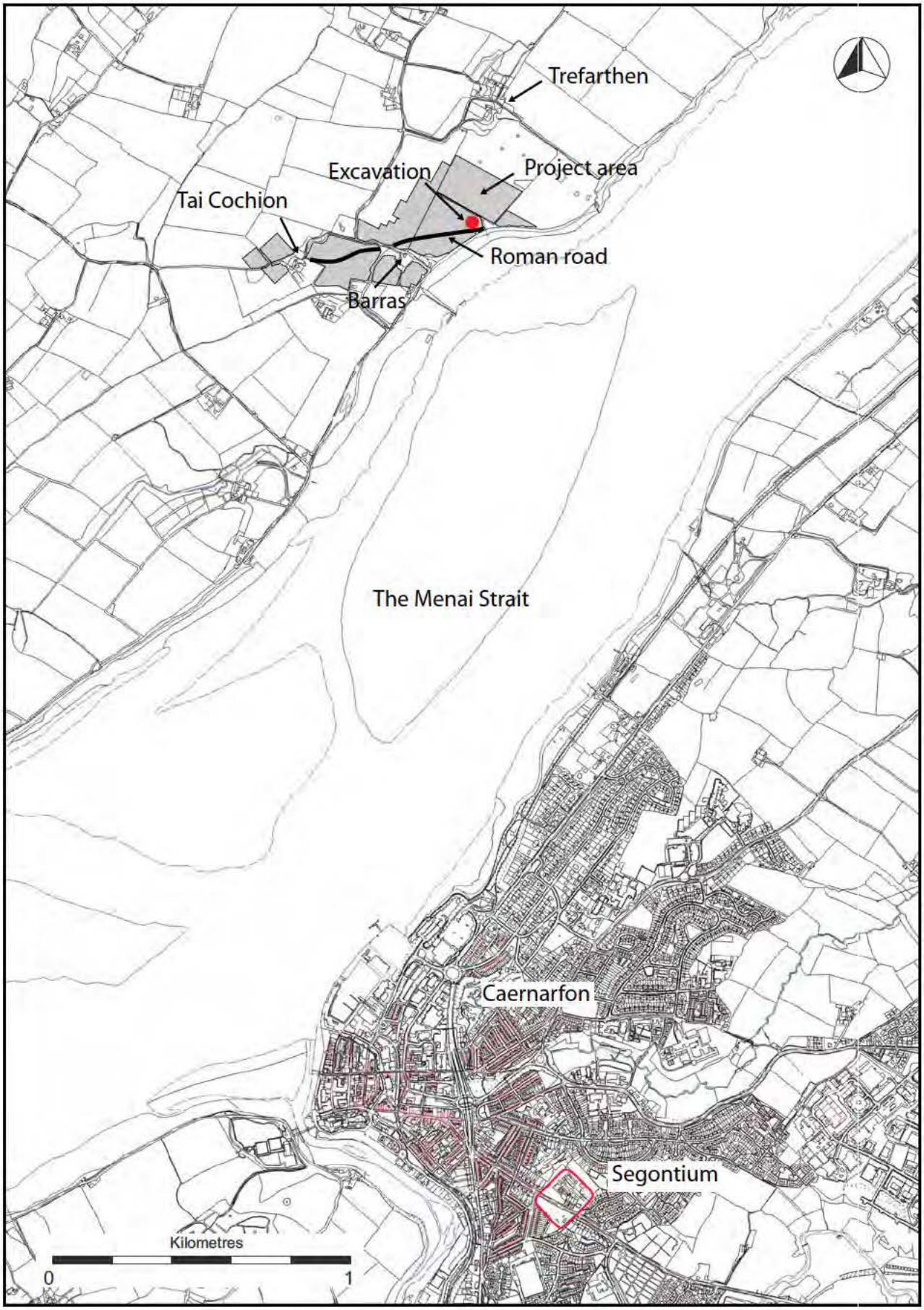

Fig. 1 Location map

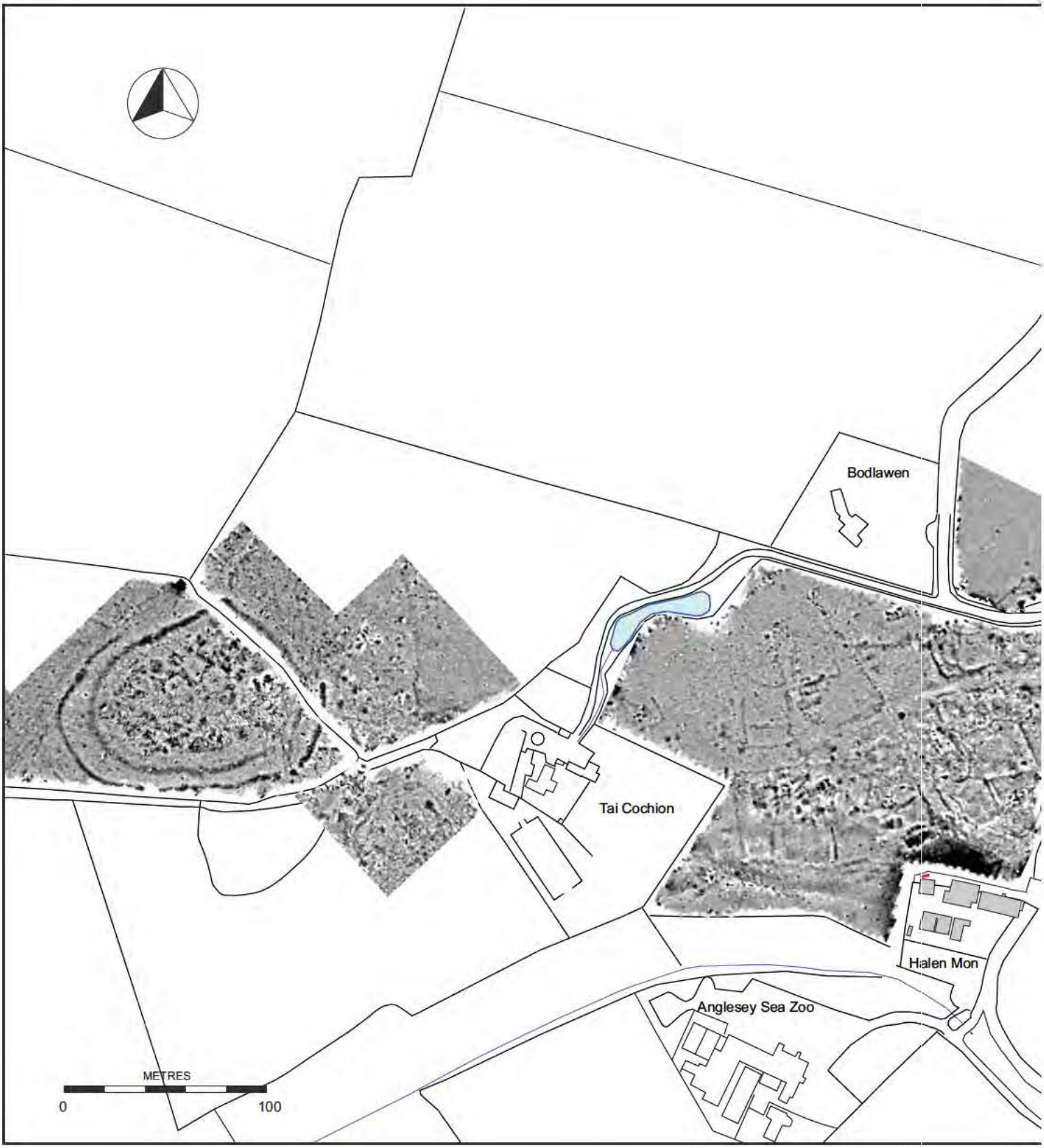
Bodlawen
Tai Cochion
Halen Mon
Anglesey Sea Zoo
METRES
0
100

Fig. 2 Tai Cochion and Trefarthen fluxgate gradiometer surveys 2009-11

Grey-scale plot


Bodlawen
Tai Cochion
Halen Mon
Anglesey Sea Zoo

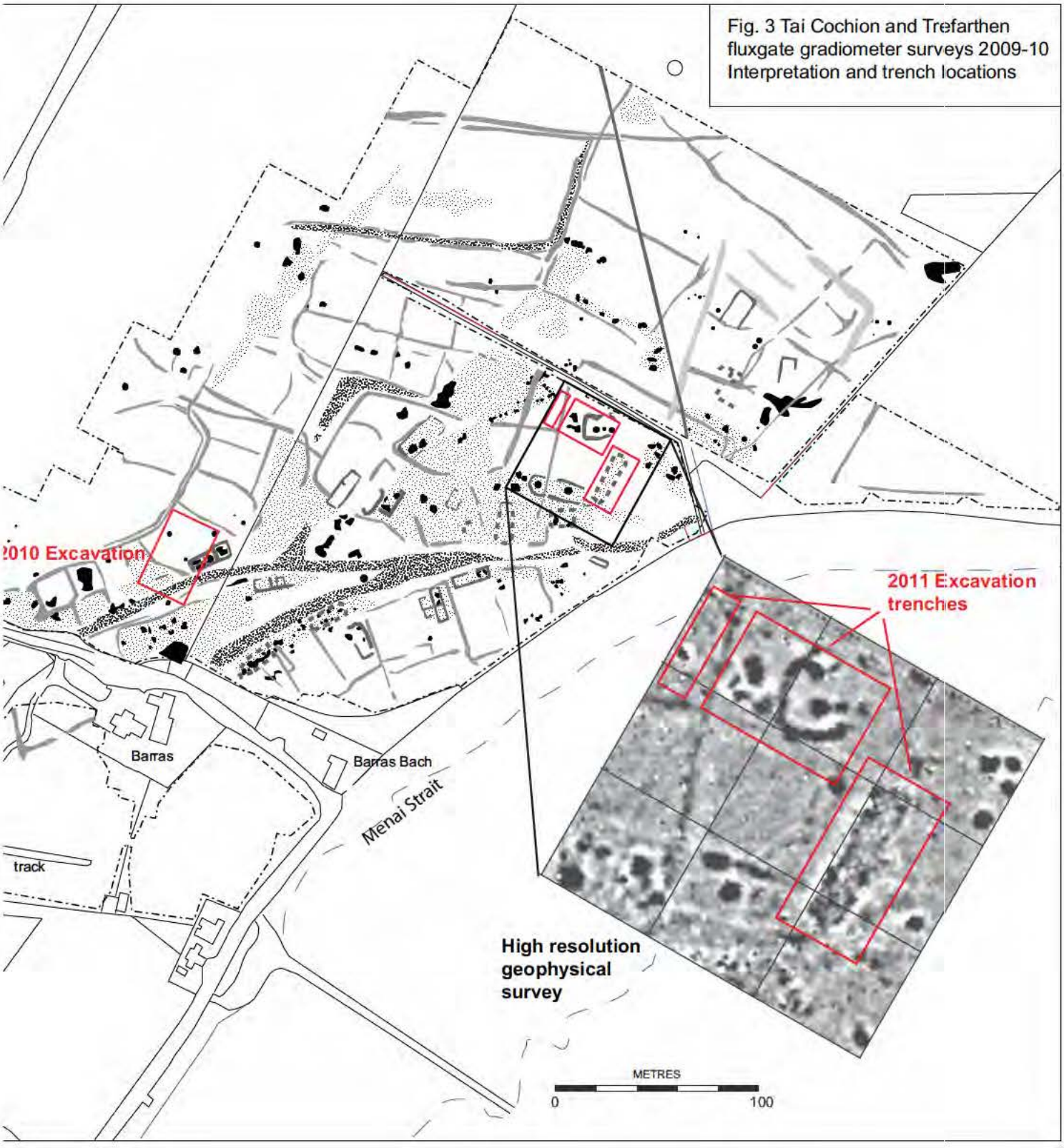
Fig. 3 Tai Cochion and Trefarthen
fluxgate gradiometer surveys 2009-10
Interpretation and trench locations
2010 Excavation
2011 Excavation
trenches
Barras
Barras Bach
Menai Strait
track
High resolution
geophysical
survey
METRES
0
100

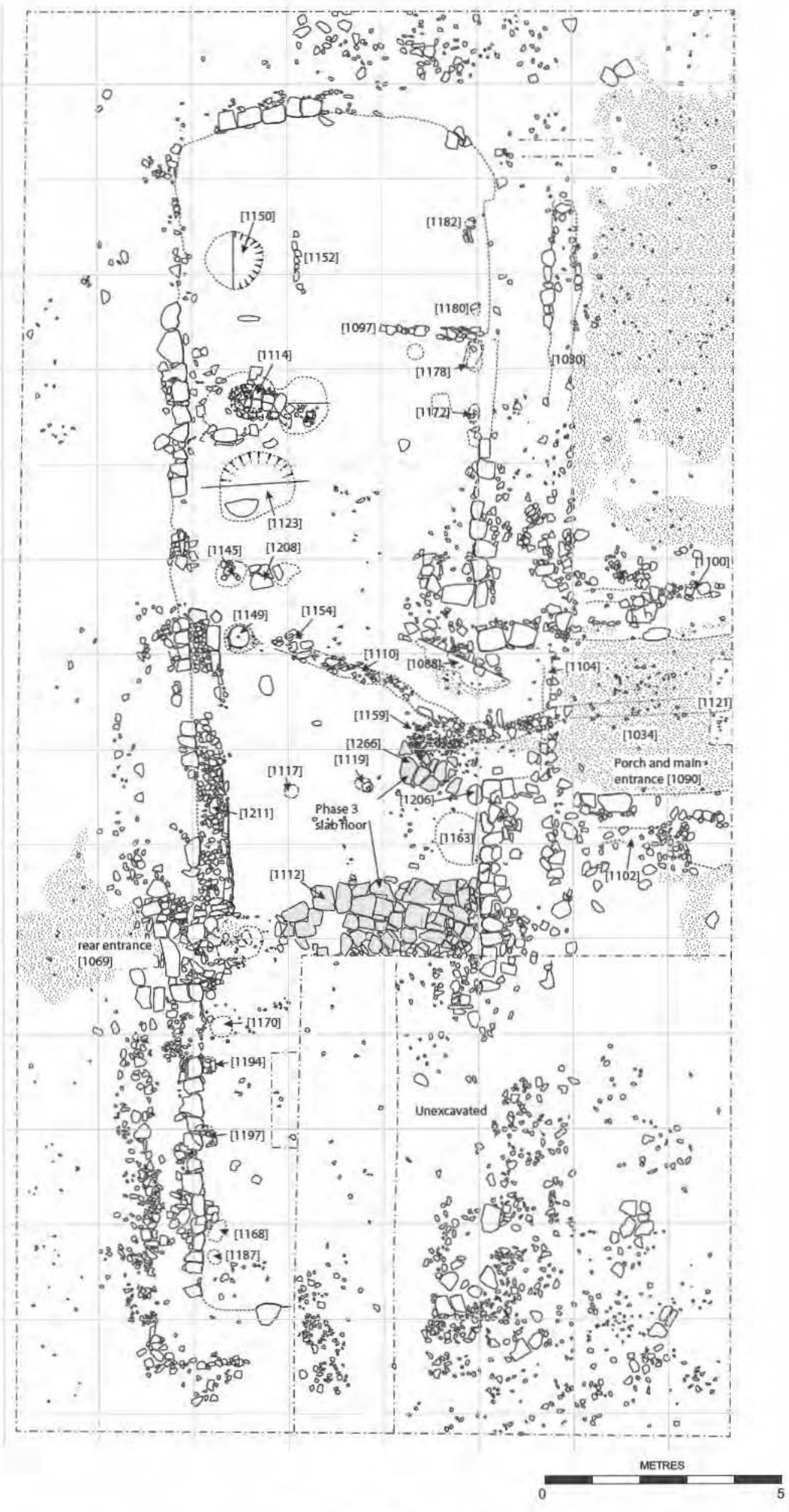

Fig. 4 Trench 1: Roman building [1026] after excavation showing phase 1 features and phase 3 flooring

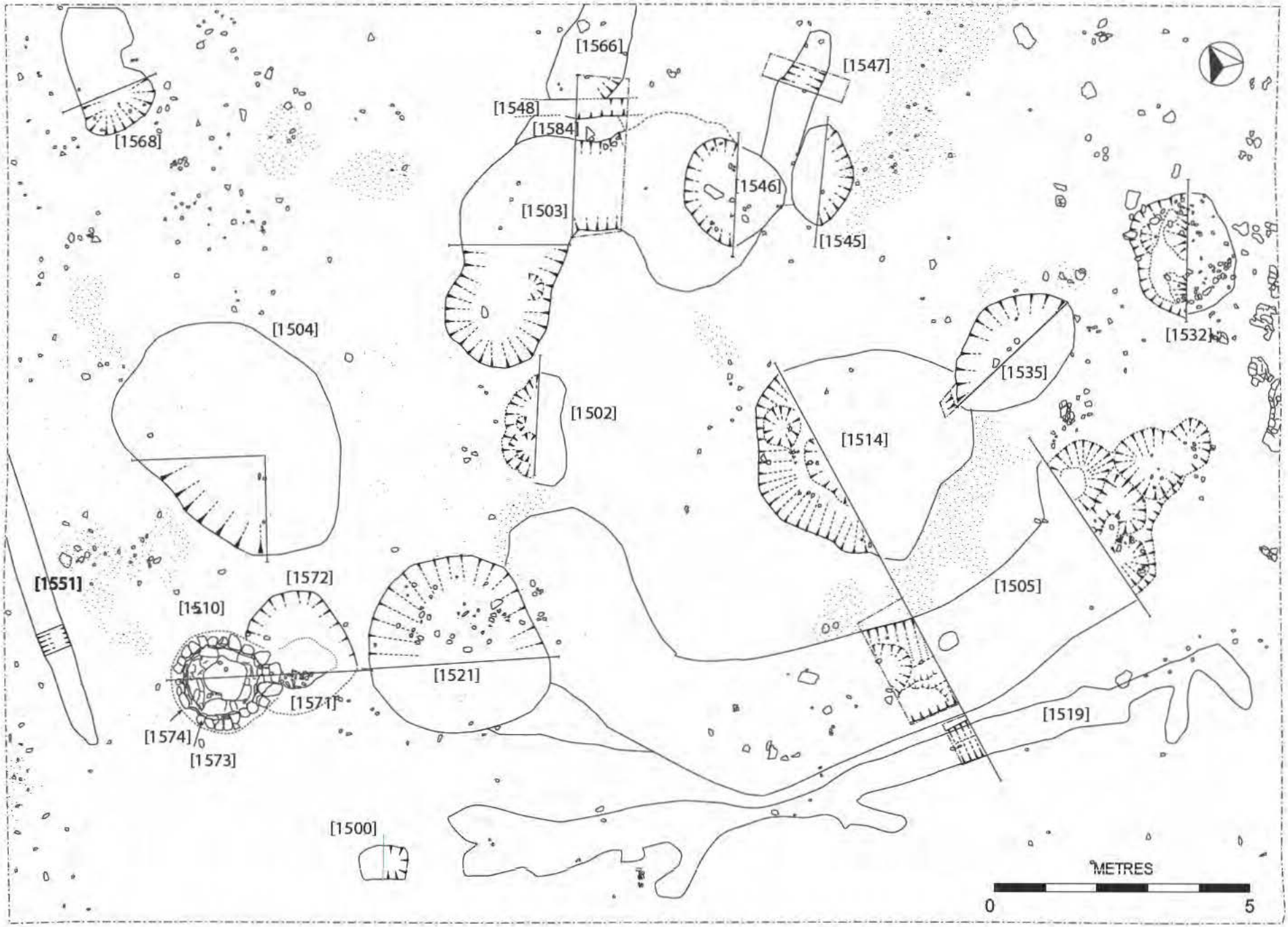

Fig. 5 Trench 2, post excavation

Plate 1. Phase 3 slab floor overlying phase 2 burning and phase 1 cobble floor

Plate 2. Bench 1211 and rear entrance 1069

Plate 3. Bronze furniture fittings

Plate 4. Copper alloy snake's head bracelet (top view)

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