A MEDIEVAL DEFENDED ENCLOSURE NEAR LLANFAIRPWLLGWYNGYLL, ANGLESEY

Report for publication in the Transactions of the Anglesey Antiquarian Society

THE ANCIENT LANDSCAPE OF MÔN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY PROJECT

Project No. G2076

Report No. 1285

Prepared for Cadw
February 2013

By
George Smith, with Astrid Caseldine, Catherine Griffiths and David Hopewell

Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Gwynedd
Gwynedd Archaeological Trust

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Cover picture: Aerial photograph of crop mark near St. Mary's Church, Llanfairpwllgwyngyll, Anglesey,

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1. INTRODUCTION

The work was carried out as part of a project investigating a number of new archaeological sites in Anglesey identified as crop marks during aerial survey by Dr Toby Driver of the RCAHMW and by John Rowlands and Dafydd Roberts of Pixaerial. In the first year eight of these sites were assessed by geophysical survey and in the second year two sites were chosen for evaluation by trial excavation. One was a possible Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age enclosure at Carrog, Llanbadrig. The other, described here, was a small sub-rectangular enclosure close to the edge of the Menai Straits, just west of St. Mary's Church, Llanfairpwllgwyngyll at SH 53577116 identified as a crop mark by Dr Toby Driver in 2006 (Fig. 2a).

Acknowledgements
Thanks are due to the Marquis of Anglesey for agreeing to the work on his land, to David Holmes of Jones Peckover, the estate land agents and to the farmer Mr H. Roberts of Penmachno. Thanks also go to the RCAHMW for production of and permission to use the high resolution monochrome copy of the colour aerial photograph by Dr Toby Driver. The work was funded by Cadw with outreach provided by a grant from the Anglesey Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Sustainability Fund. The work was carried out by local volunteers and thanks go to Archie Gillespie, Chris 'Beaver' Hughes, Jeff Marples, Emily May, Brian Milner, and Rhys Mwyn. Geophysical survey was by David Hopewell and environmental soil processing by Gill and Richard Collier.

2. TOPOGRAPHIC AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND.

The enclosure lies at a height of 10m OD on a small promontory within more sloping land at the edge of the Menai Straits (Fig. 1b). The bedrock is metamorphic serpentine with a cover of glacial drift gravel (HMSO 1972 and1974). The soil is brown earth (Soil Survey1958) and the land is classified as of Grade 3 (MAFF 1977) of fairly good quality, suitable for general arable production. The present large fields here are permanent pasture but within them are traces of system of smaller fields with lynchets and 'ridge and furrow', showing arable use in the past. Another area of ridge and furrow occurs further to the east (Fig. 2). The present field system was laid out in the mid-19th century.

The present St. Mary's Church was built between 1850 and 1853, a development inspired by the building of the Britannia Bridge and the likelihood of future development of the village. The church replaced an earlier church (Llanfair), associated with the Medieval township of Pwllgwyngyll, centred around the road to the north. Construction of the new A5 road and later the railway changed the focus of settlement to the north-west.

The earlier church was fortunately described with a ground plan in *Archaeologia Cambrensis* in 1847 (170-2). It was a small simple building with an unusual apsidal east end and a plain semi-circular apsidal arch. The apse seems to have been the remains of an earlier pre-1282 building. A watercolour sketch of the earlier church (Fig. 2b) probably by Moses Griffiths in about 1780, was also included in Pennant's Tour in Wales (1783). This also shows a large mound just outside the north-east corner, which could have been an earlier feature. Some time before 1940 a decorated bronze pin was found, recorded as at 9 feet down, (which seems unlikely, perhaps 9 inches) while excavating a new grave in the church yard (Fox 1940, 248). The pin, originally ring-headed (Fig. 2c) is dated to about the 10th century AD and is one of a number of finds from Wales of the Early Christian period of Hiberno-Norse type, thought to indicate trading activity (Redknap 1991, 33 and 1994, 69).

Close to the west end of the church a small, culverted stream feeds a walled pool with steps for access, indicating its use for adult baptisms.

The topographic location of the enclosure suggests a defensive function. The high resolution geophysical survey by David Hopewell, confirmed the presence of a sub-rectangular enclosure approximately 40m by 40m defined by a ditch about 2m wide with possible traces of an internal bank and an entrance at the east end (Fig. 3). There were only faint and uncertain anomalies inside the enclosure but two possible round-house sites were identified at the west end. The survey also identified linear anomalies indicative of ridge and furrow cultivation, visible also as slight earthworks oriented up and down the slope. The ridge and furrow overlies the south side of the enclosure but respects the north side, where the enclosure bank must have been extant and was incorporated into a field boundary. The ridge and furrow was truncated by the present edge of the Menai Strait, indicating some erosion of the coast edge. The earlier field system had been largely erased by later ploughing or deliberate levelling.

3. EXCAVATION RESULTS

Two trenches were excavated (Fig. 3). Trench 1 provided a cross-section of the ditch and bank and part of the interior where a slight geophysical anomaly suggested a round-house. Trench 2 investigated the area of the entrance. The topsoil in the area of the geophysical survey was searched by metal detector but produced only post-medieval objects.

Trench 1 (Fig. 4)

Trench 1 was 20m long and 4m wide, crossing the enclosure ditch and the position of the enclosure bank on the west side. There was no surface earthwork of the bank and only a very faint indication of the ditch.

In the eastern half of the trench, in the interior of the enclosure, ploughing had reached the subsoil, which here was loessic silt, and only a thin layer (11) of possible remnant old topsoil survived, although disturbed by ploughing. This layer contained occasional pieces of charcoal and waste flint.

It was expected that features relating to settlement structures might be found. However, such features were absent apart from three small, shallow sub-circular pits, [20], [22] and {35}, two contained possible post-packing stones (Fig. 4c) so were probably post-holes although they were widely spaced and so unlikely to be part of the same structure.

The expected position of the enclosure bank was represented by a stony scatter. The enclosure ditch [5] was *c*. 4m wide and 1.5m deep at this point. At its east edge the ditch had been cut to respect a large glacial erratic boulder. Its contours showed that it had originally protruded above ground and had been pecked away slightly to create the east edge of the ditch. The part of the boulder that protruded above the surface had later been broken up, probably to clear the ground for the ridge and furrow cultivation phase and some of the debris had been thrown into the ditch in layer (26).

Four phases could be seen in the filling of the ditch (Fig. 4b). Firstly, primary silting of clayey silt with scattered sub-angular cobbles and small boulders (28). Secondly, further naturally accumulated silt dominated by gravel (27). Thirdly, a finer deposit of soil, randomly mixed with pieces of broken schist, sub-angular cobbles and gravel (26), probably a deliberate backfill. Fourthly humic silts probably being a gradual accumulation deriving from the ridge and furrow arable ploughing (6).

There were no artefacts in the ditch fill but some charcoal, sealed by the primary fill (28) was collected from a slight ledge at the east side of the ditch (33). This was identified as oak, a fragment of which produced an AMS date of cal AD 1025-1169 at 95% probability (SUERC-37188).

Trench 2 (Fig. 5)

This trench was 10m by 8m and investigated the entrance to the enclosure, spanning the area of the ditch terminals and the entrance gap between them.

The subsoil here was fine loose gravel, quite different to that in Trench 1. The two ditch terminals were separated by a gap of *c*. 3.5m but there was no trace of a bank. In the entrance gap between the former positions of the bank terminals, where any gateway would be expected, were three features [9], [29] and [31] which showed as darker, more humic areas within the gravel subsoil.

Feature [9] was linear and slightly curving with steep sloping sides and a slightly rounded base. It lay approximately along the contour and across the entrance gap. It contained no artefacts but produced some charcoal. The shape of the feature in plan and cross-section was unlike a drainage gully. It may have been a beam-slot, providing a threshold sill for the gate.

The other two features [29] and [31] were both interpreted as post-holes. Pit [29] was sub-circular and *c*. 1.20m in diameter. Within its fill was a smaller sub-circular feature, *c*. 0.37m diameter and 0.56m deep, the fill of which was more humic than the rest of the compact gravelly pit-fill and presumed to be a post-pipe. Pit [31] was also sub-circular, *c*. 0.37m diameter and 0.55m deep, but cut directly into the gravel with no inner post-pipe or additional post-pit or packing stones. In the lower part of the hole was a large sandstone block. It is most likely to have been inserted as backfill when the post was withdrawn.

The similarity in size of the pits suggests that they formed an associated pair as part of one structure. They lie on either side of the entrance gap between the ditch terminals and about 1m inside them, where the forward edge of the enclosure bank would have been so seem likely to be gate posts. The size and depth of the pits indicates substantial posts up to about *c*. 2.5m in height.

The fill of both post-holes produced some very decayed animal bone, which must have been introduced after the removal of the posts, suggesting that they had been withdrawn and their holes backfilled immediately, rather than decaying *in situ*, otherwise the gravel sides would soon collapsed. Hazel charcoal was recovered from the post-packing of post-hole [29] and this produced an AMS date of cal AD 1025-1164 at 95% probability (SUERC-37187).

A cutting {7}, 1.5m wide was made across the northern ditch terminal. The ditch was 5.2m wide at this point and 1.8m deep. Its profile had relatively gently sloping sides compared to ditch [5], resulting from the easily eroded gravel subsoil here.

The ditch fills consisted largely of gravel. The topmost layer (8) was accumulated ploughsoil, deriving from the period of ridge and furrow cultivation. Layer (17) was quite humic, above two layers of silting (18) and (19) with a greater proportion of gravel. The lowermost layer (24), in a deeper cut at the base of the ditch, was a primary silt of gravel and cobbles. The ditch was widened above this point, probably as a re-cut after early collapse of the gravel sides.

Layer (17) represents a period of stability, when the ditch had largely silted up. It contained some pieces of animal bone, charcoal, slag and one iron nail. This layer is stratigraphically equivalent to the backfill layer in Ditch cutting [5] and probably derives from levelling of the nearby bank and re-deposition of earlier occupation material, although none was diagnostic of date. Layer (19) also produced some similar occupation material, including animal bone, charcoal and one iron nail and, immediately above the primary silt must derive from activity

contemporary with use of the enclosure. A piece of hazel charcoal from this layer produced an AMS date of cal AD 1025-1158 at 95% probability (SUERC-37186).

4. ARTEFACTUAL EVIDENCE

Finds from the ploughsoil by detection and excavation were mainly iron nails of 18th and 19th century date apart from one 'fiddle key' horseshoe nail of Later Medieval date (from Trench 1). There was some scrap lead sheet, melted lead and one fishing weight.

Stratified finds include nine pieces of waste flint, some pieces of very decayed animal bone and a few small iron objects and pieces of slag.

Flint: 8 pieces came from Trench 1 of which 4 were from topsoil layers and 4 from layer (11). One piece came from layer (8) in the ditch in Trench 2. All the pieces derived from pebble flint, available locally, including 2 split pebbles and none retouched. 4 are thin tertiary flakes suggesting thinning of scrapers or knives and probably of earlier Neolithic date. The promontory, a well-drained area overlooking the Straits, would have been a favoured place for a temporary camp or activity area.

Iron and slag: In Trench 1, Layer (11) produced one small nail with a thick square head, possibly medieval. In Trench 2, from the ditch, Layer (17) produced one small timber nail and two pieces of iron slag and Layer (19) produced one iron concretion, probably smithing waste.

Animal bones: All came from Trench 2 and was all very fragmentary and decayed. The ditch Layer (17) produced fragments of cattle bone, mainly limb bone and one fragment of mature pig jaw, with teeth. The ditch Layer (19) produced fragments of cattle limb bone. Post-hole 29, packing fill (30) produced fragments of cattle limb bone and of mature cattle molars. Post-hole 31, backfill (32) produced fragments of cattle limb bone and mature cattle molars. Some of the bones show old breaks indicative of butchery and of intensive use of the resource. Those from (190, (30) and (32) are probably food residues from domestic activity contemporary with original use of the enclosure.

5. ENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE

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This included hand-collected wood charcoal, some used for radiocarbon dating, and charred plant material derived from flotation of bulk soil samples. In addition to providing material for radiocarbon dating, the samples were collected to provide information about the former woodland and environment in the area and, particularly, the agricultural economy contemporary with the use of the enclosure.

5.1 Charcoal Identifications

Methods

Clean sections were obtained in three views, transverse, transverse longitudinal and radial longitudinal, in order to examine the wood anatomy. The sections were examined using a Leica DLR microscope with incident light source. The charcoal was identified by reference to standard identification texts (e.g. Schweingruber 1978, Schoch *et al* 2004). Nomenclature follows Stace (1991). The results are presented in Table 1.

Results

Trench 1

Identifiable charcoal from the possible remnants of a buried soil layer (11) containing large cobbles was very scarce and comprised oak (*Quercus* spp.) and Maloiodeae type (crab apple

(*Malus sylvestris*), hawthorns (*Crataegus* spp.), rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*), whitebeam (*Sorbus aria*) and wild service-tree (*Sorbus torminalis*)). This layer contained waste flint flakes but had been disturbed by ploughing, therefore it is uncertain what period the charcoal represents. Oak, hazel (*Corylus avellana*), blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*) and ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) were identified from the fill (21) of post-hole [20], while only oak was recorded from the fill (36) of post-hole [35] and hazel wood and nutshell from the fill (37) of a post impression or stake-hole at the base of pit [35]. Oak was also identified from the basal fill (33) of the ditch, along with ash. One of the fragments of oak gave an AMS date of cal AD 1025-1169.

Trench 2
A fragment of blackthorn was recovered from a linear feature [9], possibly a beam/sill slot, lying between two possible gate post post-holes at the entrance, while a piece of hazel was obtained from the packing fill (30) of one of post-holes [29]. The latter produced an AMS date of cal AD 1025-1164.

Hazel, oak and alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) were identified from samples from the middle ditch fill (17). Two samples, 39 and 42 came from layer (19) near the base of the ditch [7]. 39 was of oak while 42 comprised several species including oak, hazel, blackthorn and ash, a similar range of species to that recorded in sample 1 from post-hole 20 in Trench 1. Hazel charcoal from sample 42 gave an AMS date of cal AD 1025-1158.

Discussion
AMS dates obtained from the charcoal suggest an 11th-12th century AD date for the enclosure. The evidence from contexts that might be contemporary with the enclosure is limited but indicates the presence of oak, ash, hazel, hawthorn and blackthorn woodland in the area. The last three species could represent scrub woodland rather than understorey in oak and ash woodland and could reflect secondary woodland following clearance and abandonment. The presence of alder in an upper ditch fill could perhaps indicate a change in woodland in the area or, depending on the origin of the charcoal, i.e. whether from natural or domestic fires, could indicate a change in selection.

Table 1 Charcoal identifications from a sub-rectangular enclosure near St Mary's Church, Llanfairpwllgwyngyll.

Trench	**1**	**1**	**1**	**1**	**1**	**1**	**1**	**2**	**2**	**2**	**2**	**2**	**2**	**2**	**2**	**2**	**Total**
Sample	**1**	**7**	**13**	**17**	**52**	**53**	**54**	**25**	**28**	**29**	**30**	**59**	**39**	**42**	**50**	**51**	
Context	**21**	**11**	**11**	**11**	**33**	**37**	**36**	**17**	**17**	**17**	**17**	**17**	**19**	**19**	**30**	**10**	
Feature	**P-H 20**	**BS**	**BS**	**BS**	**D**	**S-H, P 35**	**P 35**	**D**	**D**	**D**	**D**	**D**	**D**	**D**	**P-H 29**	**S**	
Quercus spp. (Oak)	4	-	1	1	3*	-	2	3	-	7	5	-	15	3	-	-	**44**
Alnus glutinosa (L.) Gaertner (Alder)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	**4**
Corylus avellana L. (Hazel)	4	-	-	-	-	10 +1ns	-	2	-	-	-	2	-	4*	1*	-	**23**
Prunus spinosa L. (Blackthorn)	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	1	**9**
Maloideae type (Crab apple, hawthorn, rowan, whitebeam, wild service-tree)	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	**2**
Fraxinus excelsior L. (Ash)	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-		-	1	-	-	**3**
Total	**15**	**2**	**1**	**1**	**4**	**10**	**2**	**5**	**4**	**7**	**5**	**2**	**15**	**10**	**1**	**1**	**85**

* Includes samples used for AMS dating ns = nutshell fragment

Feature: BS = buried soil D = ditch; P = pit; P-H = post-hole; S = beam/sill slot; S-H = stake-hole.

5.2 The Charred Plant Remains

Methods

Bulk soil samples were taken from two post-holes, [20], fill (21) in Trench 1 and [29}, packing fill (30) in Trench 2. The former is of uncertain attribution while the latter is considered to be part of the entrance gate of the enclosure. The samples were floated for GAT at a minimum fraction size of 500 microns. The samples were examined using a Wild M5 stereomicroscope and identified by reference to modern type material and seed atlases and manuals (e.g. Berggren 1969, 1981, Schoch *et al* 1988, Anderberg 1994, Cappers 2006, Jacomet 2006). Nomenclature and ecological information is based on Stace (1995, 2010). The sample details and results are given in Table 2.

Results and discussion

Plant remains were scarce in both samples but provide some evidence for arable farming in the area. Oats (*Avena* sp.) was recorded from both samples but otherwise the only cereal present in sample 1 from post-hole 20 was indeterminable whereas sample 2 from post-hole 29 yielded a barley (*Hordeum* sp.) rachis and a spelt wheat (*Triticum spelta*) glume base. The oats could be either wild or cultivated oats. Oat chaff needs to be present to be certain about the type of oat. Two caryopses from post-hole 20 were assigned to an oat/grass (*Avena*/Poaceae) category. A dock (*Rumex* sp.) seed and a grass caryopsis were also recovered from post-hole 29 and probably represent crop processing waste along with the chaff.

The only other remains from the post-hole samples were hazelnut (*Corylus avellana*) shell fragments from post-hole 20 and a probable blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*) stone fragment from post-hole 29. These remains suggest scrub woodland or hedges in the area. They may have been collected as wild food or simply incidentally along with wood for fuel. Their presence does, however, suggest activity in the autumn.

The AMS dates suggest the site is 11th-12th century AD in date, including one from post-hole [29] which gave a date of cal AD 1025-1164. The cereal remains suggest that oats and barley were grown in the area as well as spelt wheat. The occurrence of oat could indicate cultivation on poorer soils. In general oats and barley were widely grown at this time but naked wheats, largely bread wheat, had generally taken over as the main type of wheat grown. The presence of spelt wheat in the samples could indicate that it was still grown as a crop, if a minor one, or it could have been present as a contaminant of the other crops. Indeed it is possible that barley and oats were grown as a mixed crop (drage, dredge), a not uncommon practice in the Medieval period in case one crop failed.

There is evidence from several other sites in north Wales, such as Cefn Graeanog (Hillman 1982), Parc Bryn Cegin, Llandygai (Kenney 2008, Schmidl *et al* 2008) and Cefn Du and Melin y Plas on Anglesey (Ciaraldi 2012), that spelt was still grown during the medieval period. At these sites, too, it is possible that spelt was cultivated as a minor crop, or that it was a contaminant of other crops.

Table 2 Charred plant remains from a sub-rectangular enclosure near St Mary's Church, Llanfairpwllgwyngyll.

Trench	**1**	**2**	
Sample	**1**	**2**	**Ecological**
Context	**21**	**30**	**Preferences**
Feature	**P-H 20**	**P-H 29**	
Sample size (litres)	**10**	**20**	
Taxa			
Corylus avellana L. (Hazel) – shell frags.	2	-	W
Rumex sp. (Docks)	-	1	A, B, C, G, W, w
cf. *Prunus spinosa* L. (Blackthorn) – frag.	-	1	W
Avena sp. (Oats)	1	1	A, D
Avena/Poaceae (Oats/grass)	2	-	A, D, G
Hordeum sp. (Barley) - rachis	-	1	A
Triticum spelta (Spelt wheat) – glume base	-	1	A
Cerealia indet. frags.	3	-	A
Poaceae (Grasses)	-	1	C, D, G, H, M, R, W, d, o, w
Burnt bone	-	-	
Fungal sclerotia	1	2	

C* = Charcoal sample. Feature: P-H = post-hole.
Ecological Preferences: A = arable & cultivated; B = bank side, pond margins; C = coastal; D = disturbed ground, wasteland; H = heaths, moors; M = marshes, fens, bogs; R = road sides;
W = woods, hedgerows, scrub; d = dry; o = open ground; w = wet.
+ = present

6. DATING AND INTERPRETATION

The results have shown that the enclosure had a substantial ditch and bank, although it cannot be certain that this had a primarily defensive function. The site can be compared to the Iron Age and Romano-British settlement enclosure of Bryn Eryr, Llansadwrn, Anglesey, of similar sub-rectangular shape, although somewhat larger (Longley 1998). The entrance gap at Bryn Eryr was much wider at *c*. 6m compared to 2.8m at the St Mary's enclosure, the latter being therefore more defensible. The ditch was similar in size to that at the St Mary's enclosure but seemed to be simply a settlement enclosure, at most semi-defensive and perhaps more a matter of status.

A very similar sub-rectangular enclosure of the same period and size as Bryn Eryr has been excavated at Whitton, Glamorgan (Jarrett and Wrathmell 1981). There had been a complex timber entrance structure at Whitton suggesting a defensive function. The post-holes at St Mary's enclosure may have been the outermost of a similar structure and there are anomalies on the geophysical survey suggesting that there were two posts on the inside of the bank, making up a four-post structure for an entrance about 2.5m wide (Fig. 6).

The geophysical evidence for the interior of the St Mary's enclosure initially suggested roundhouses at the rear of the enclosure, but the central area was not investigated. It was evident that the phase of ridge and furrow cultivation had caused considerable erosion, so internal or external floor surfaces are almost certainly destroyed. The presence of charcoal, animal bone, slag and iron objects in ditch cutting [7] implies that there had been occupation within the enclosure. The presence of waste flint shows that there had been some casual Neolithic activity on the promontory long before the enclosure was built.

Before excavation it was thought possible that the enclosure might be of Early Medieval date because of its proximity to the church, one which was likely to have had an early foundation date, and because of the chance find close by of a decorated bronze pin of 10th century date. In terms of size and type the enclosure has its best parallels in homesteads of the Late Iron Age as at Bryn Eryr and Whitton. However, the excavation failed to find any evidence of round-houses or of any artefacts of Iron Age date, such as spindle whorls or querns and this left the interpretation open. Three radiocarbon dates were obtained. From Trench 1, Ditch cutting 5, Context 33. Primary silts, Oak charcoal SUERC-37188: 930 +/-30 BP, 95% 1025-1169 Cal AD. From Trench 2, Ditch cutting 7, Context 19. Primary silts, Hazel charcoal SUERC-37186: 945 +/-30 BP, 95% 1025-1158 Cal AD. From Trench 2, Context 30. Packing of post-hole 29. Gate post, one of pair for main entrance, Hazel charcoal: SUERC-37187: 935 +/-30 BP, 95% 1025-1164 Cal AD. Although the three radiocarbon dates obtained came from widely separate contexts they coincide closely within the period *c*. cal AD 1025 to 1165. This is partly because they occur within a flat area of the radiocarbon calibration curve. If this was not so then they would be more precise and would probably show some differentiation. Two of the dates – the packing of post-hole 29 and the basal fill of ditch in Trench 1 - could show a date of construction of the enclosure. The other date came from lower silt in the ditch in Trench 2, which contained rubbish debris and so could belong to occupation of the enclosure. This could indicate that the enclosure was occupied for some time, even though no structures were identified in the interior by geophysics or excavation. The lack of evidence from the geophysical survey or excavation suggests that if there were such buildings they were of timber and that structural evidence may have been removed by the later ridge and furrow cultivation.

Within the time span of probability of the radiocarbon dates it can be assumed that the construction was earlier in the period they represent and that occupation continued until at least later in that period. It seems unlikely then that the enclosure had any direct link with the previous find of the 10th century bronze pin from the churchyard. This period was one of great political instability in Gwynedd and especially Anglesey with rivalry between Gwynedd ruling families as well as competing external influences from Norse Ireland and from the Normans in England. Further disruption was caused by the invasion of North Wales by the Normans in 1098, when several castles built, including one at Aberlleiniog on Anglesey, eventually followed by the defeat and retreat of the Normans. There then followed a long period of consolidation in Gwynedd, with stability, prosperity and population growth under Gruffydd ap Cynan and Owain Gwynedd (Carr 2011, 21-4). It could be that this small enclosure was built in response to the political instability. The apparently careful dismantling of the gateway suggests the end of such instability although occupation might have continued. Its position, close to the Straits and to an accessible part of the shore line also suggests a maritime connection. This area of coastline borders the shallowest and narrowest part of the Menai Straits although one with difficult currents so was not a suitable ferry route. However, there were several fish traps on the shallower Anglesey side, including one close by that was destroyed during the construction of the Britannia Bridge (Fig. 1b). Such traps were productive and valuable properties in the Medieval period, some with documented Royal, ecclesiastical or state ownership rights (Hopewell 2000). The townships along the Straits here all came under the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Bangor and the use and protection of such fish traps could have provided another possible reason for the presence of settlement. The environmental evidence suggests that there was deciduous woodland of oak and ash in the

area, with understorey trees, and that the settlement utilised some cereal grains and so may have been involved in arable farming, with crops of oats, barley and spelt. Cattle and pig bones are also present, from meat butchered on-site. Together these may be just domestic debris from an enclosed farmstead. Rubbish material certainly accumulated some while after the primary silts in the ditch had accumulated so a purely temporary defensive function seems unlikely, despite the size of the enclosure ditch and the apparent dismantling of the gateway. Better understanding of its function can only be attained by further excavation of the interior of the enclosure.

Parallels for small enclosures of this period are rare. In Anglesey a substantially walled settlement of the 9th-11th century AD has been excavated at Llanbedrgoch (Redknap 2004). Elsewhere in Wales, at Maenclochog Castle, Pembrokeshire, a stake and wattle roundhouse was found set within a substantial ditch and bank enclosure and dated to between the 9th to 12th centuries (Schlee 2007). There are other examples in Ireland where it is now evident that Early Medieval settlement takes a variety of forms, including ovoid and rectilinear enclosures. One of these, on the east coast at Laytown, Co. Meath, provided a long sequence of settlement which suggested a move from curvilinear to rectilinear enclosures, containing circular houses with wattle and daub walls (O'Sullivan *et al* 2008). The rectilinear enclosure of the latest phase was *c*. 50m by 30m with finds suggesting a date of 9th to 10th C AD. The Maenclochog evidence indicates that roundhouses also continued in use in Wales much later than realised. The rectilinear style of ditched earthwork enclosure has much earlier antecedents in Wales than Ireland, but is paralleled in walled enclosures, for instance that of the Welsh royal court complex at Rhosyr, Newborough, of the 12th-13th century AD, which may have had earlier origins (Johnstone 1999).

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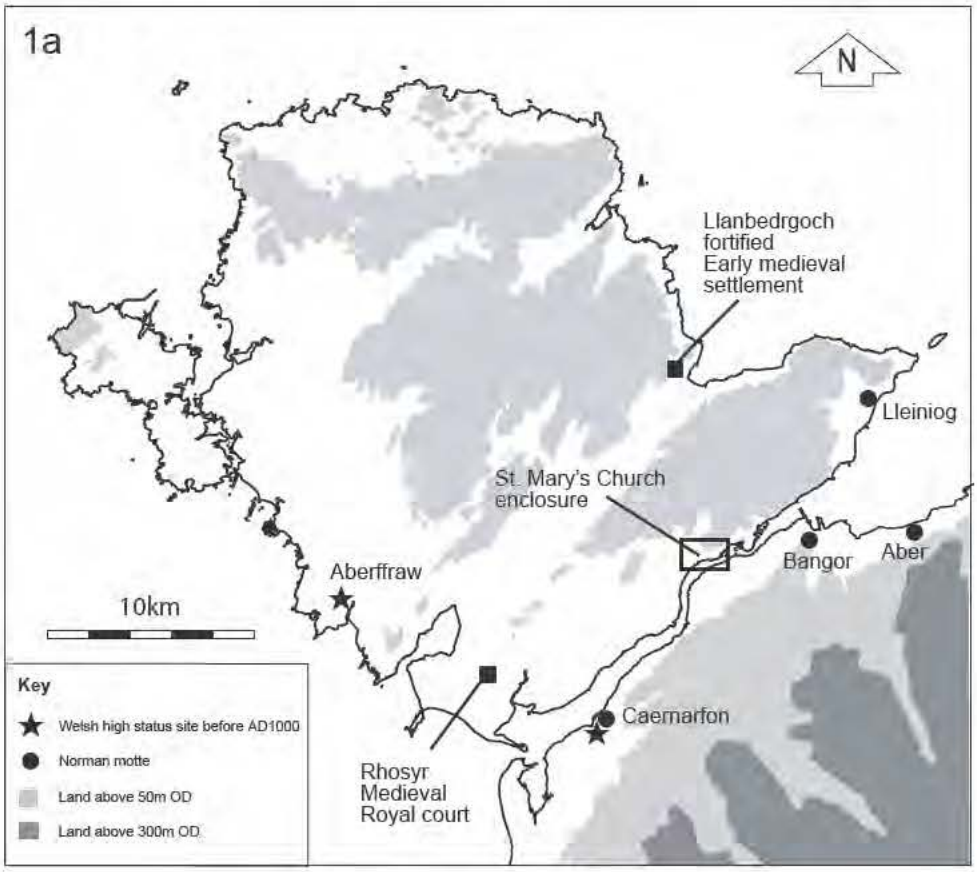

Fig. 1a General location map

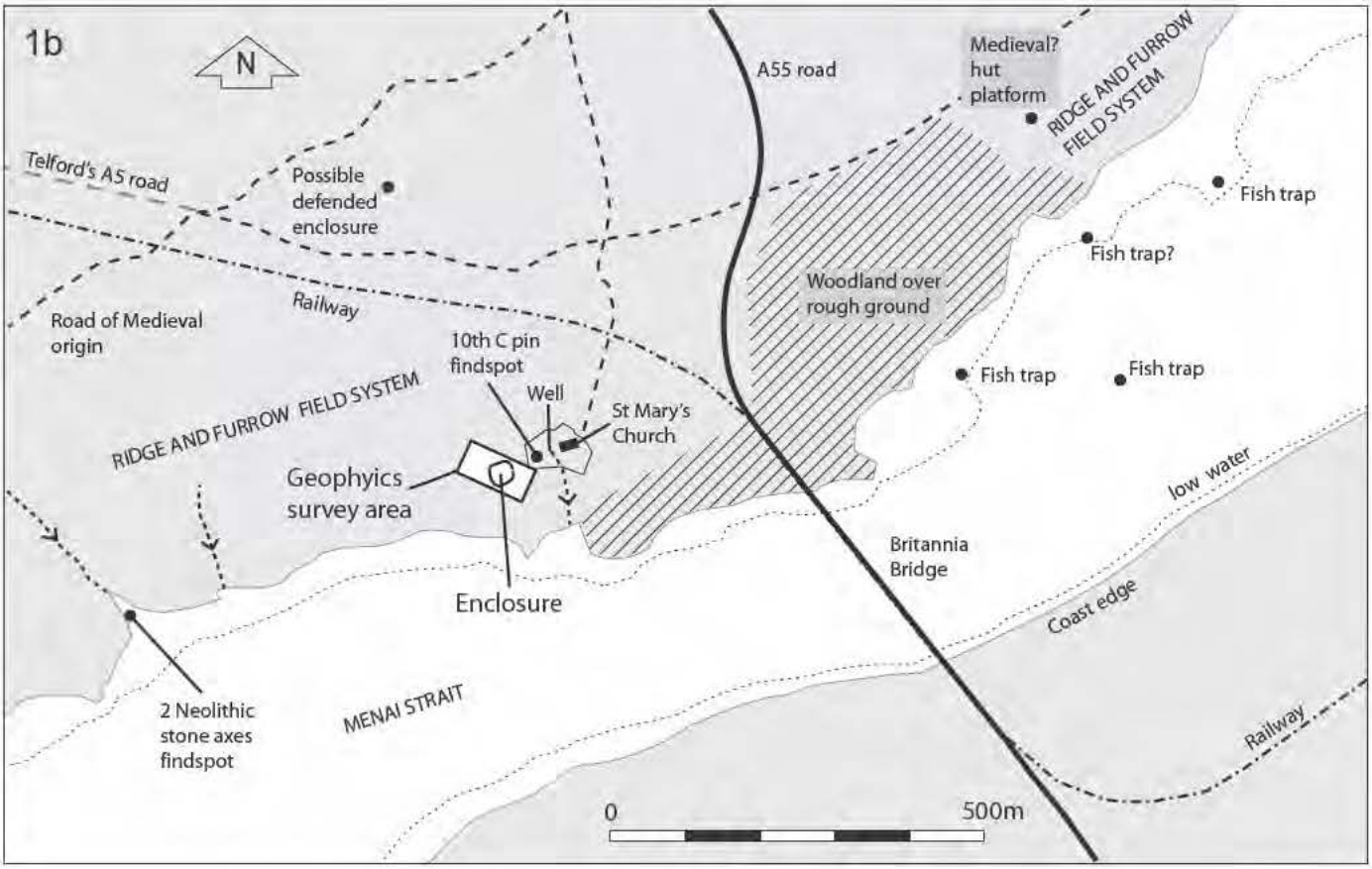

Fig. 1b Topographic location map

Fig. 2a Aerial photograph, from the north-east, showing crop mark enclosure and relict ridge and furrow in pasture during drought, 2006
Photo by Dr Toby Driver. Copyright RCAHMW

Fig. 2b Old St. Mary's Church, Llanfairpwllgwyngyll, c. 1780 (from Pennant 1783)

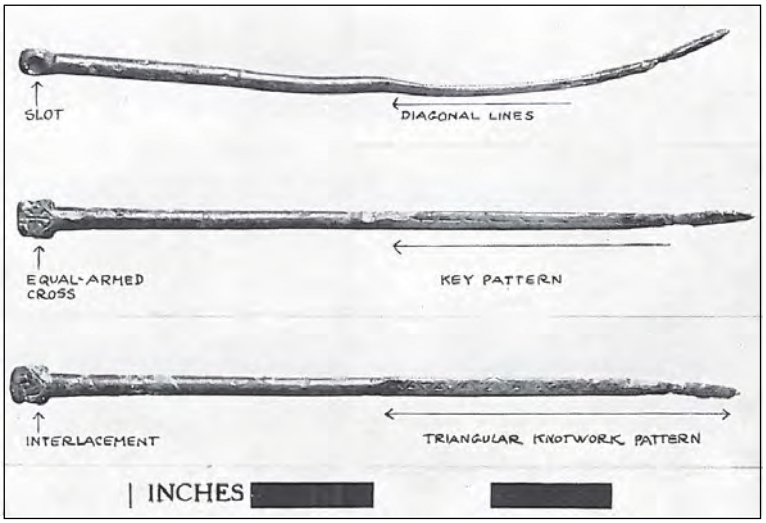

Fig. 2c 10th century AD Hiberno-Norse, decorated, ring-headed pin, found in the church yard (from Fox, *Arch. Camb.* 1940)

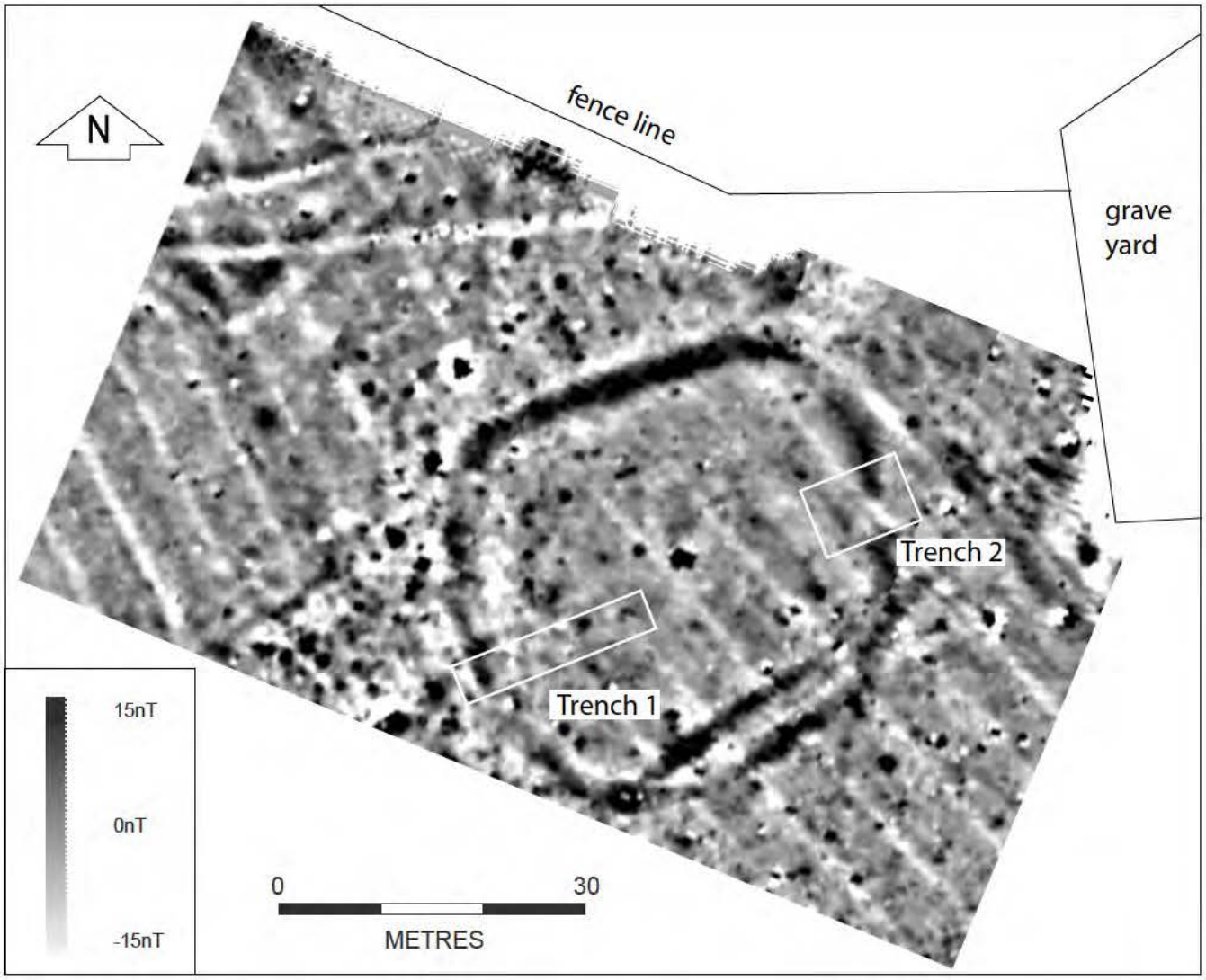

Fig. 3. St Mary's Church enclosure, fluxgate gradiometer survey (D. Hopewell) and location of the trenches

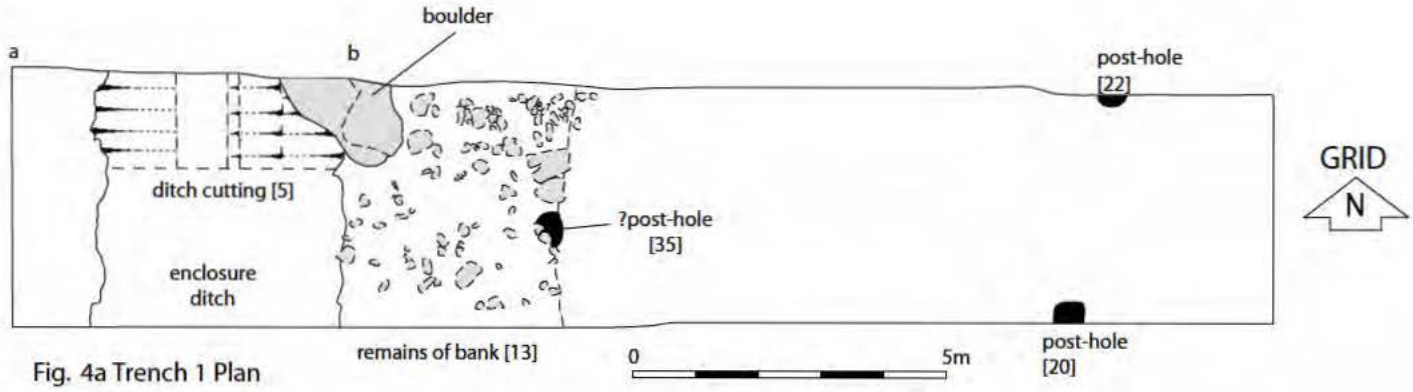

Fig. 4a Trench 1 Plan

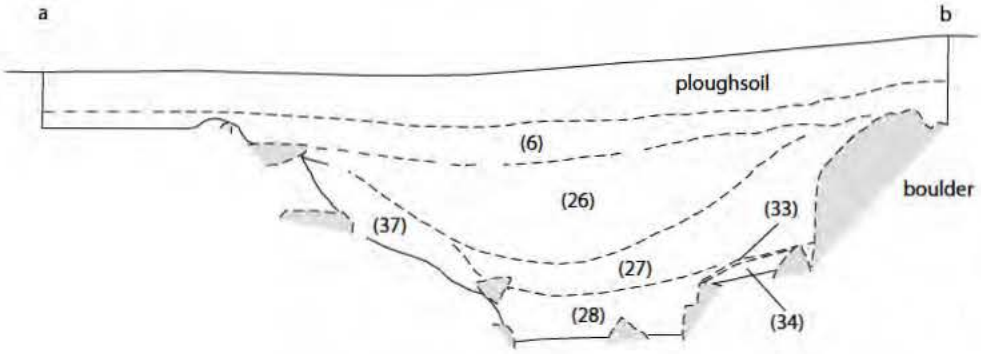

Fig. 4b Trench 1 Ditch cutting [5], section

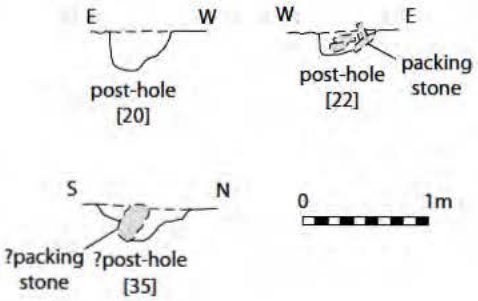

Fig. 4c Trench 1 Other feature cross-sections

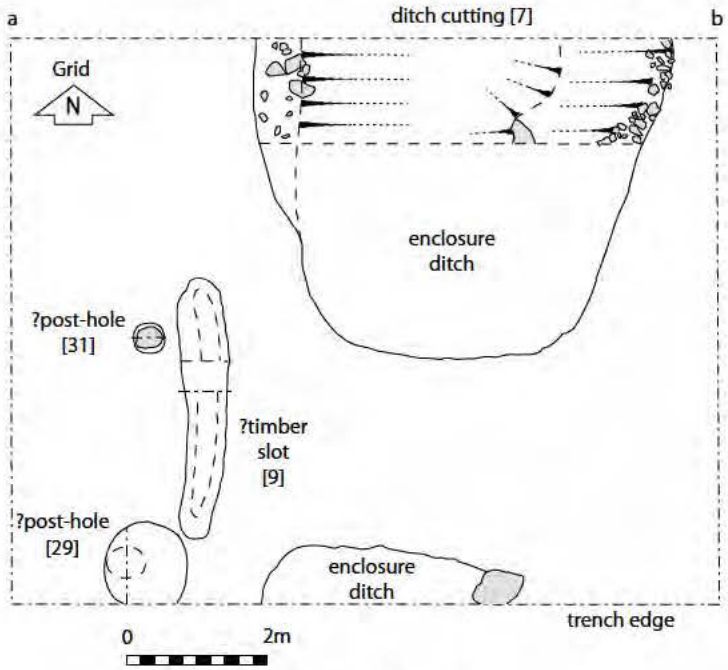

Fig. 5a Trench 2 plan

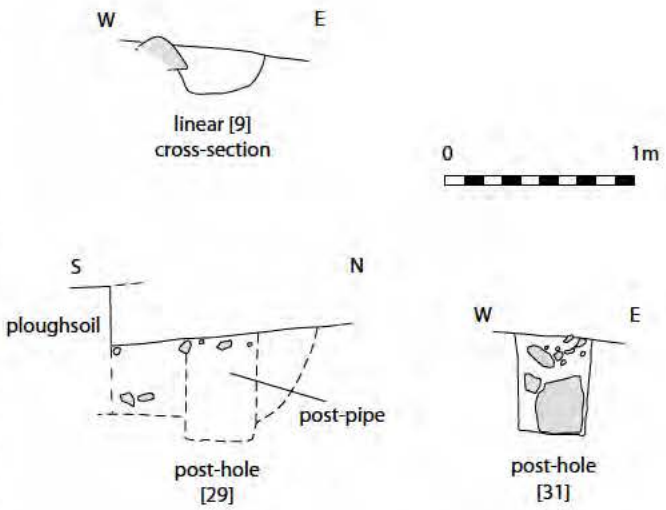

Fig. 5c Trench 2 Other feature cross-sections

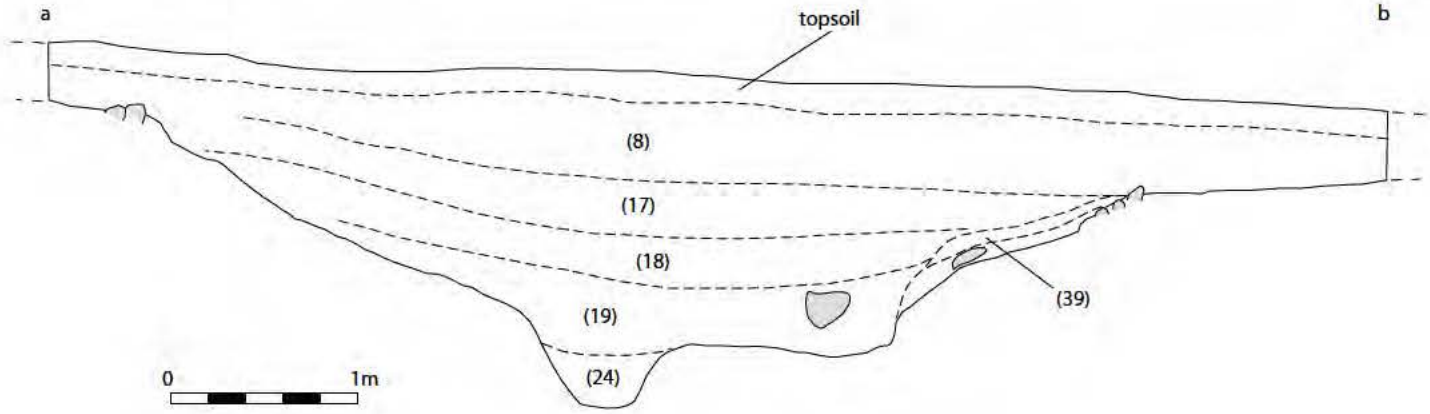

Fig. 5b Trench 2 Ditch cutting [7], south-facing cross-section

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