Cloddio Prawf ym Mrynddu, Llanfechell, Ynys Môn

Trial trenching at Brynddu, Llanfechell, Anglesey



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CRYNODEB

Rhwng 14^{eg} a 25^{ain} o Awst 2023, bu YAG yn gweithio gyda Chymdeithas Hanes Mechell / Mechell History Society er mwyn ymchwilio cae a adnabyddir fel Cae Penrhyn yn ymyl plasty Brynddu, Llanfechell. Nod y cloddio oedd darganfod gwir natur y nodweddion archaeolegol posib a ddelweddwyd gydag arolygiadau geoffisegol a gynhaliwyd yn 2022 gan Monolith Archaeology. Yn ogystal, yr amcan oedd cynnwys y gymuned leol ym mhroses ymwchilio archaeolegol er mwyn sicrhau gwell dealltwriaeth o hanes a chynhanes Llanfechell.

Tros gyfnod o bythefnos, cloddiwyd pum ffos (wedi eu canoli ar CGC SH 372 912). Datgelodd rhain derfyn cae gyda ffos ddwbl yn perthyn i'r system cae cyn-19^{eg} ganrif, a allasai fod o darddiad canoloesol. Roedd hefyd ffos grom a allasai fod yn rhan o loc bychan a cheuffordd bosib. Roedd nodwedd fechan yn cynnwys telchyn crochenwaith allasai fod o ddyddiad yr Oes Efydd. Adfeddianwyd pen saeth fflint a rhai fflochennau a naddion fflint o sawl lleoliad led-led y safle. Darganfyddodd arolwg gyda synwyryddion metel a gynhaliwyd ar y cyd â'r cloddiad ddwy droellen gwerthyd blwm o'r cyfnod canoloesol yn ogystal â darnau arian, tocynnau, botymau ac eitemau diweddarach eraill.

SUMMARY

Between 14th and 25th August 2023 GAT worked with Cymdeithas Hanes Mechell / Mechell History Society to investigate a field known as Cae Penrhyn next to Brynddu House, Llanfechell. The aim of the excavations was to ground truth potential archaeological features imaged through geophysical surveys carried out in 2022 by Monolith Archaeology. In addition, the objective was to involve the local community in the process of archaeological investigation to better understand the history and prehistory of Llanfechell.

Five trenches (centred on NGR SH 372 912) were excavated over two weeks. These revealed a doubled-ditched field boundary belonging to the pre-19th century field system, which could be medieval in origin. There was also a curving ditch that may have been part of a small enclosure and a possible hollow-way. A small feature contained a sherd of pottery that may be of Bronze Age date. A flint arrowhead and some flint flakes and chips were recovered from various locations across the site. A metal-detecting survey that ran concurrently with the excavation found two lead spindle whorls from the medieval period as well as later coins, tokens, buttons and other items.



Plate 1. Aerial view of the trial trenches showing location on the edge of Llanfechell village (drone photograph by Brendon Croud)



Plate 2. Some of the volunteers who helped with digging and organisation (drone photograph by Brendon Croud)



Plate 3. Mike Woods doing a site safety induction in the marquee

INTRODUCTION

Gwynedd Archaeological Trust (GAT) was asked by Cymdeithas Hanes Mechell / Mechell History Society to undertake an archaeological evaluation (trial trenching) as part of a community led research project into the history and previous land use in and around the village of Llanfechell on Anglesey (Ynys Môn). Five trenches (Plate 1) were opened in a field, known as Cae Penrhyn, to the west of the hall at Brynddu (centred on SH 37094 91285 (Figure 1)), on the eastern edge of Llanfechell village. The trenches were positioned to investigate anomalies previously imaged in magnetometry surveys carried out in 2022 (Owen and Woods, 2022). The trial trenching took place between the 14th and 25th of August 2023 with the help of many volunteers from the local community.

Aims and Objectives

The aims and objectives were to:

- establish the date and nature of any archaeological remains identified through geophysical survey
- To work alongside members of the local history group and volunteers to investigate previous settlement in Llanfechell

Acknowledgements

GAT would like to thank the following for their contribution and support:

The Cymdeithas Hanes Mechell committee for planning and organising.

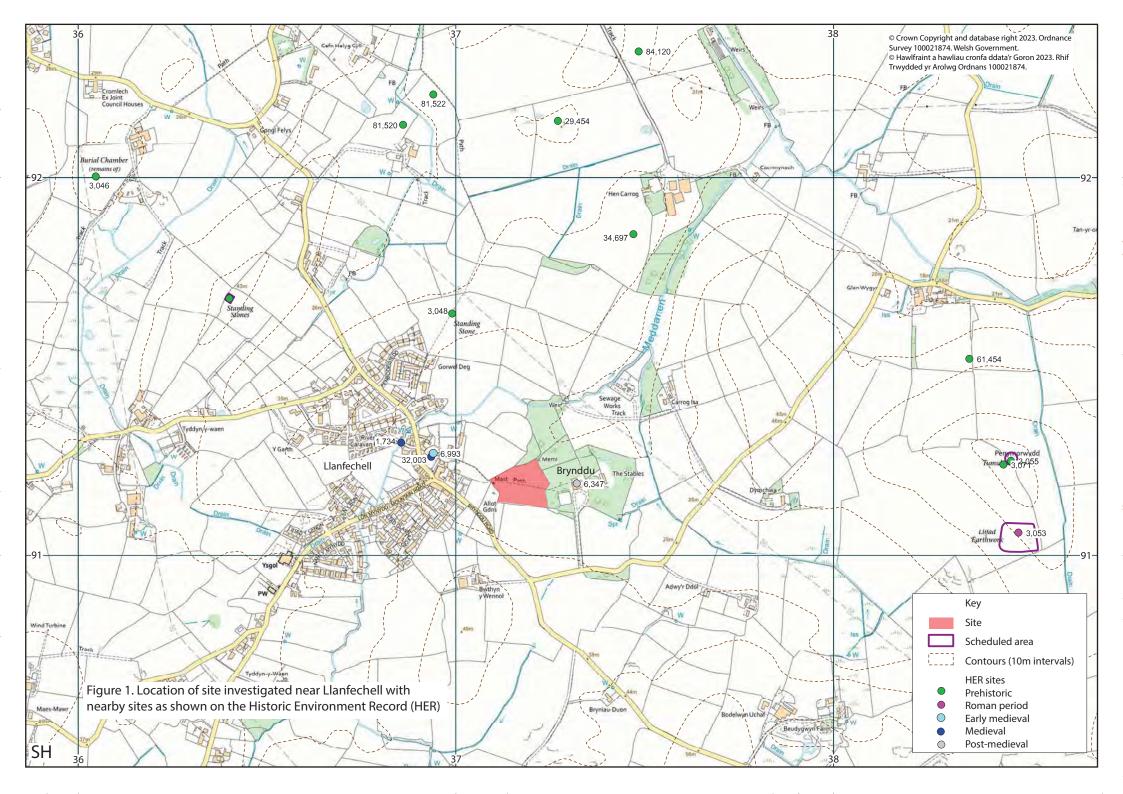
William and Robin Grove White for permission to excavate on the site.

All the volunteers who did the hard work, whether digging, organising or supplying tea.

Arwyn Owen of Monolith Archaeology for permission to use his geophysical survey plots.

GAT Project team: Jane Kenney and Mike Woods

This project was funded by grants from the Magnox community fund, Brynddu Estate, Llanfechell Community Council, the Anglesey Trust, and Gwynedd Archaeological Trust.



ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Figure 1

The field investigated measures 1.3 hectares and lies to the southeast of Llanfechell (SH 37094 91285), between 20m and 30m OD. The field is on gradually sloping lowland to the south and east of the river Meddanen and is currently used as grazing land for livestock. The underlying superficial geology comprises of a Devensian Diamicton till, deposited by glaciers between 116 and 11.8 thousand years ago during the Quaternary period. The bedrock in the area is comprised of Church Bay Tuffs and Skerries Grits, which are sedimentary rocks that formed during the Ediacaran and Cambrian periods between 635 and 485 million years ago (Geology of Britain viewer).

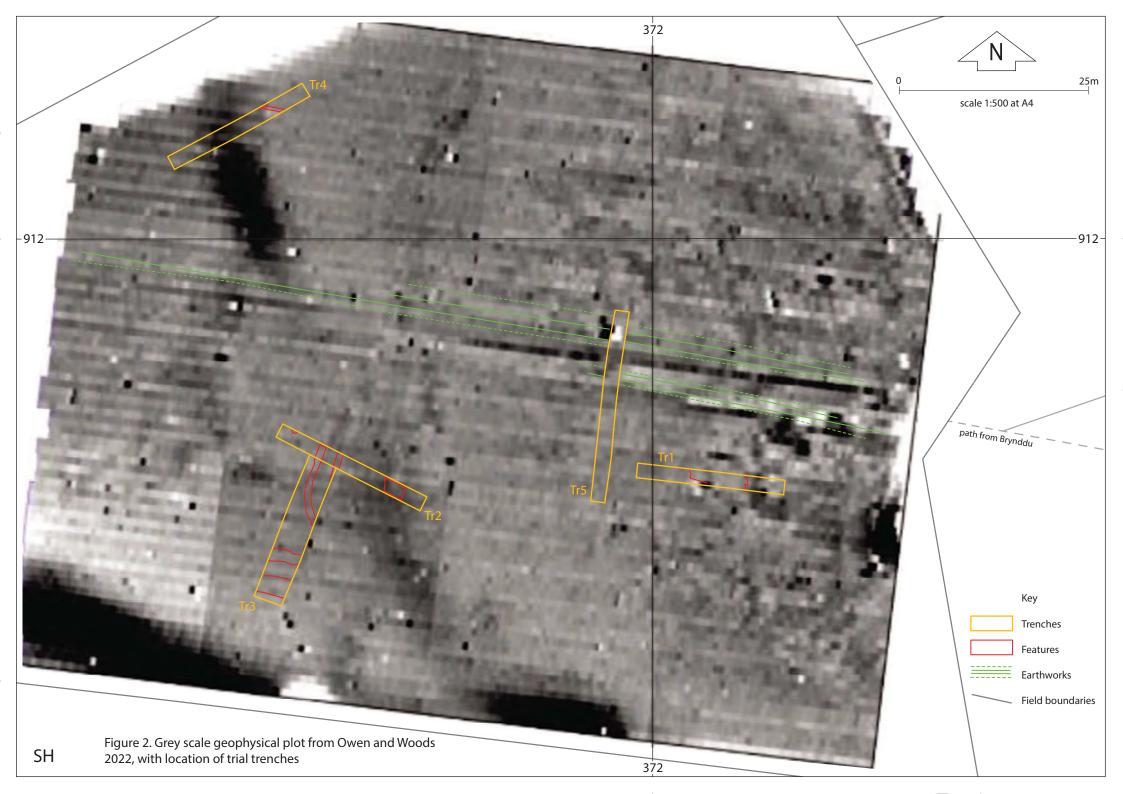
There is considerable evidence for prehistoric ritual activity and occupation of the area surrounding the dig site, with the Penbodeistedd stone (PRN¹ 3048, Scheduled Monument An080) being visible on the horizon to the north. The group of three standing stones (PRN 3047, An030) can be found 906m to the northwest of the dig site, with a destroyed megalithic burial chamber (PRN 3046) 1380m northwest at Cromlech Farm (Smith *et al* 2013). On the same ridge as the Penbodeistedd stone is a barrow cemetery of the Bronze Age (PRN 34697), identified by aerial photography. Near this, at Carrog Farm, was an Early Iron Age hilltop enclosure with evidence of Neolithic activity beneath it (PRN 29454), partially excavated by Gwynedd Archaeological Trust in 2010 (Smith *et al* 2014). Remains of the Pen y Morwydd round barrow (PRN 3055, An110) survive on a hilltop about 1.3km east of the site, with the defended settlement of Llifad (PRN 3053, An079) on the southern slope of the same hill. This settlement probably dates to the later Roman period.

Llanfechell is a medieval village but, apart from the church, knowledge of its medieval past is scare. There is a 1430 documentary reference to the earliest known fulling mill on Anglesey in the village (PRN 1734), though it is not known exactly where this was.

St Mechell's church (PRN 6993) is a grade II* listed building (reference number 5383) and is first recorded in the 1254 Norwich Taxation (Lunt 1926, 196). The Romanesque font and nave of the church are 12th century in date, but the structure has been remodelled in both the 17th and 19th centuries. An arm cross slab (PRN 32003) of mid to late 13th century date is in the porch of the church.

The Brynddu house (PRN 6347), stables and walled gardens are to the west of the dig site with the current buildings dating to the 18th century. But records show that an earlier structure

¹ Primary Reference Number for the Gwynedd Historic Environment Record (HER)



was at this site in the 16th century. The house is a grade II listed building (reference number 25171). There are records of a private footpath leading from the church to the Brynddu estate, which passes through the study area and is visible as a slight earthwork.

METHODOLOGY

Trial Trenching

The work was undertaken between 14th and 25th of August 2023, and was initially to include only 2 trial trenches. The number of volunteers willing to help dig enabled 3 more trenches to be opened, so that 5 trenches were excavated in total (Figure 2). The trenches were positioned to investigate geophysical anomalies, but also to avoid live services. A service search was obtained from PBS Utilities Services prior to the excavation of the trenches, which revealed a water main running across the field. The area to be excavated was also checked with a Cable Avoidance Tool (CAT) before digging.

The standard trench size was 20m by 2m, but trench 3 was 4m wide to allow more space to understand the features found, and trench 5 was 25m long to investigate both the pathway across the field and potential geophysical anomalies. The trenches were opened by the mechanical excavator using a toothless bucket, under constant supervision of GAT staff. The mechanical excavator removed the turf and ploughsoil in thin spits until the first significant archaeological horizon, or the natural glacial horizon, whichever was encountered first.

The trenches were manually cleaned by trowel, except for Trench 4, which was sufficiently clean after stripping to see that there was no archaeology present. All archaeological features/deposits/structures encountered were examined to determine extent, function, date and relationship to adjacent activity. The volunteers carried out most of the cleaning and excavation under supervision of GAT staff.

The location of the trenches, and any identified features, were recorded using a Trimble R8 Global Positioning System (GPS) unit. Hand-drawn plans were completed for appropriate features and the bedrock and natural deposits in Trenches 1, 3 and 5 were recorded by photogrammetry. Photogrammetry was also used to assist recording in Trench 2, with the resulting orthomosaics combined with survey data to provide a base for the final plan. Sections were drawn by hand of all significant features at a scale of 1:10 or 1:20. A photographic, written and drawn record was made throughout the excavation.

A metal detecting survey was carried out alongside the excavation with the metal finds being bagged and the location of each find recorded with the Trimble RS8 GPS unit. Some of the



Plate 4. Tea break in the marquee with some of the amazing cakes donated by volunteers and supporters



Plate 5. Volunteers digging in Trench 3 (photograph by Tonya O'Donnell)



Plate 6. Volunteers digging in Trench 2 (photograph by Tonya O'Donnell)



Plate 7. Jane Kenney giving instruction to volunteers (photograph by Tonya O'Donnell)



Plate 8. Aerial view of trenches 1, 2, 3 and 5 (drone photograph by Brendon Croud)

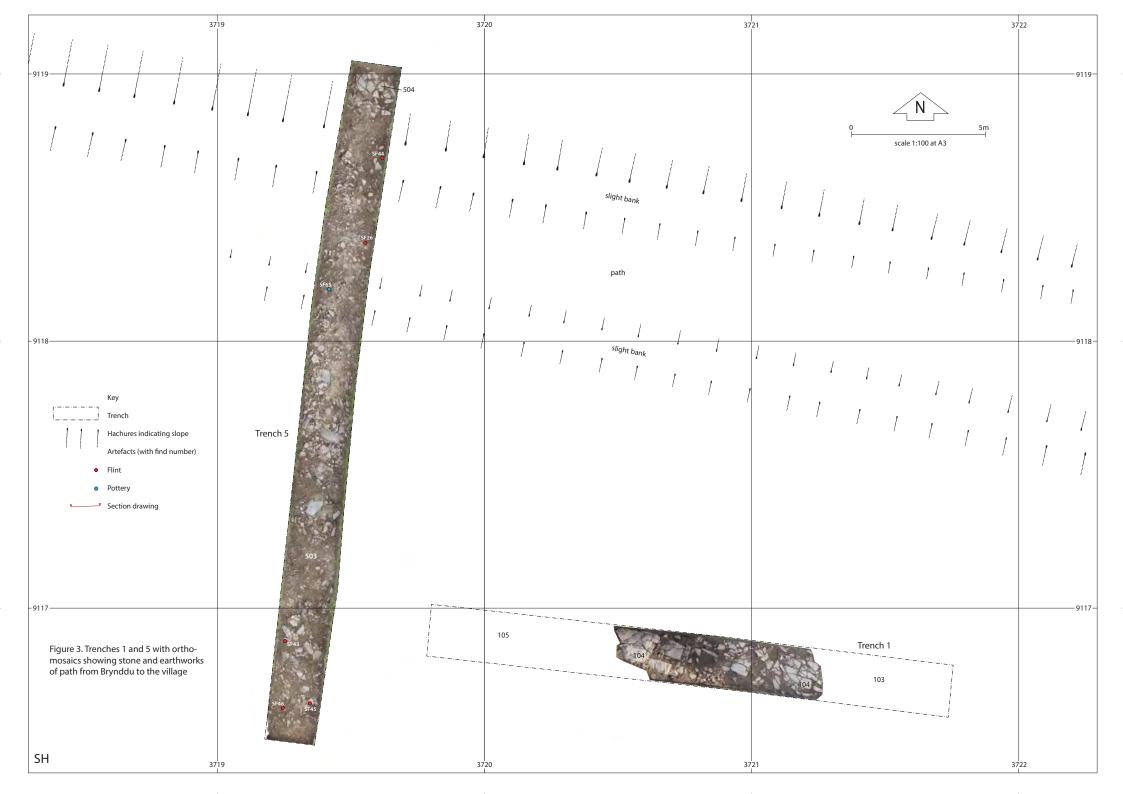
spoil from the trenches was sieved by volunteers to test for the recovery of finds from the ploughsoil.

Volunteers

This project was conceived and run by Cymdeithas Hanes Mechell / Mechell History Society with technical assistance provided by GAT staff. A major aim of the project was to provide an opportunity for local people to experience an archaeological dig and to engage with their history (Plate 2).

Cymdeithas Hanes Mechell members set up a marquee, kindly loaned by Caffi Mechell, to provide shelter and facilities for breaks (Plate 3). They organised volunteers to supply tea and coffee and many people brought cakes and other food, some of it healthy, to raise spirits and energy levels (Plate 4). They recruited and organised the volunteers and ran tours of the site. They enabled those who could not attend the dig to engage with the project through the Llanfechell Dig Facebook page with its numerous posts, including aerial views of the site provided by Brendon Croud.

Seventy-three people volunteered to dig or sieve for finds. Some came for a day, while others committed to the full two weeks. Digging took place through both wet and hot weather with volunteers working hard in difficult conditions as well as on fine days and maintaining enthusiasm and good humour throughout (Plates 5, 6 and 7). GAT staff provided supervision and instruction.



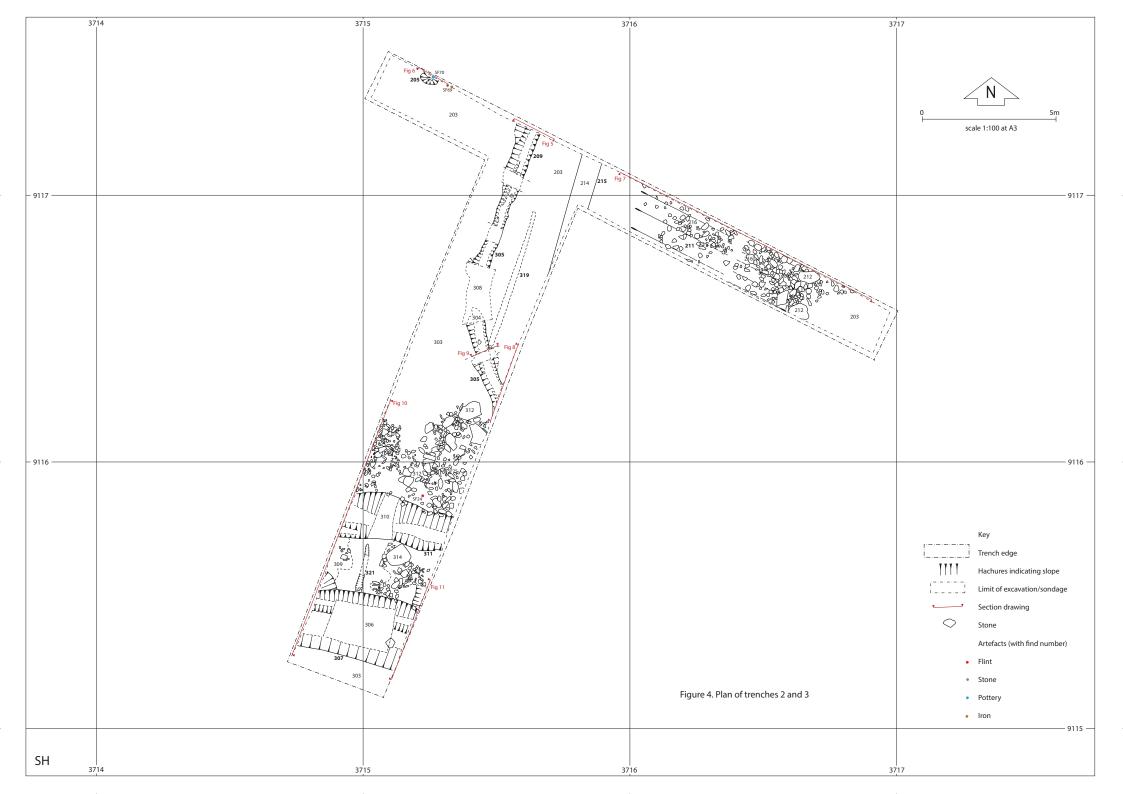




Plate 9. Trench 1 from the east showing the orange-brown glacial deposit (103) and the bedrock (104)



Plate 10. Trench 1 from the west showing the stony boulder clay (105) and the bedrock (104)

RESULTS

The excavation was a success, in both the archaeological results, with evidence for previous occupation of the field at Brynddu, and the community involvement, with everyone enjoying themselves during the excavation, learning about the history and prehistory of Llanfechell and digging with great enthusiasm (Plate 8).

The trenches provided several archaeological features and a small number of artefacts with more finds recovered by the metal-detecting survey making a total of 169 artefacts ranging from the Neolithic to the modern day.

Appendix I provides details of the deposits in each trench.

Trench 1

Trench 1 was located to investigate slight circular anomalies in the geophysical survey (Figure 2). The trench revealed an area of broken bedrock (Plates 9 and 10, Figure 3). The topsoil (101) and ploughsoil (102) together were up to 0.43m deep, but barely 0.05m deep over some of the stones. In the eastern end of the trench the natural glacial clay (103) was an orange-brown clayey silt with mottles of very pale brown, and numerous small and medium stones. At the western end of the trench the boulder clay was much stonier (105); a very pale brown gritty clay with c.75% angular stones up to 0.5m long. Between these deposits was an area of stone (104) about 7.5m long. The stones were sub-angular and up to 0.6m long, though one piece was 1.2m long. They were mainly *in situ* and had fractured in place, with the main fracture line running east-west. Smaller stones had been moved by ploughing and scattered around. Some of the smaller stones overlay the natural clay but all the larger stones were firmly embedded in it and were part of an outcrop of bedrock shattered by frost.

No artefacts were found within this trench other than unstratified modern finds in the turf and ploughsoil layers.

Trench 2

For plan see Figure 4

Trench 2 was located to investigate a possible ditched enclosure and large linear anomaly (Figure 2). The topsoil (201) and ploughsoil (202) together were 0.25m deep, with the natural glacial deposit (203) being a yellow-brown silty clay, with pale mottling in places (Plate 11). This glacial deposit generally had few stones but there was a concentration of stones in western end of trench. Under the more recent ploughsoil was a layer of relict ploughsoil (213).



Plate 11. Trench 2 from south-east showing natural glacial deposit (203) and the possible wall foundation (212)

Plate 12. Ditch [209] from the south-west, with south-west facing section in the baulk

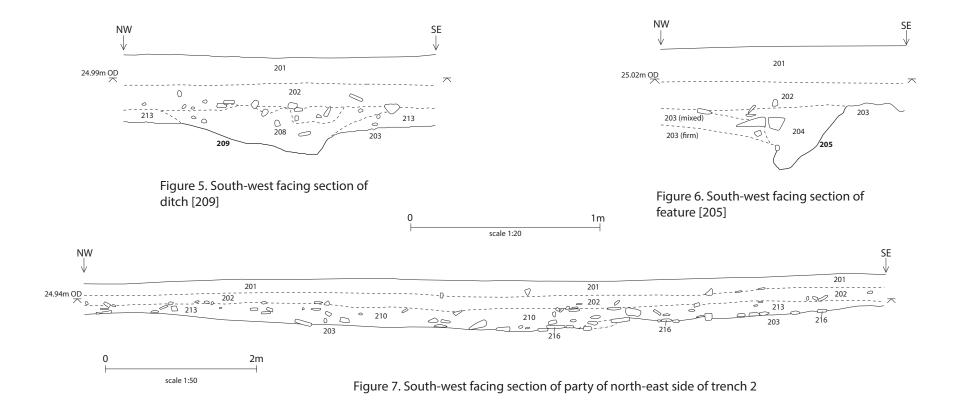




Plate 13. Feature [205] fully excavated with some of the surrounding stones removed, from the south

Plate 14. Feature [205] during excavation, showing the numerous stones in the natural clay close to the feature





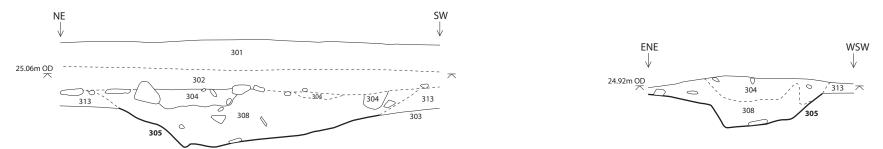


Figure 8. North-west facing section of ditch
[305]

0 1m
scale 1:20

Figure 9. North-north-west facing section of ditch [305]

This was 0.1m deep and was a brown silt with occasional stones. This was mainly defined due to being cut by archaeological features. A land drain [215] cut through this relict ploughsoil but was sealed under the upper ploughsoil (202). The upper fill of the land drain was a firm yellow-brown clay (214), very similar to the natural clay. As this feature was very straight, with vertical sides, and clearly a land drain, it was not excavated. Also cutting layer (213) was a straight-sided narrow ditch [209] running directly across the trench (Plate 12). This had a steep south-eastern side and a gradually sloping north-western side, with a fairly flat base (Figure 5). It was filled with a grey-brown slightly clayey silt (208) but in the top of the fill were patches of pale yellow-brown silty clay (206).

At the western end of the trench there was a small sub-circular feature [205], partly obscured under the baulk (Plate 13). This was 0.38m across and 0.30m deep (Figure 6). Its sides were steep and in places well-defined but elsewhere they were very poorly defined. Iron oxide concretions were present throughout the fill and into the natural clay, confusing the outline of the feature. The fill (204) was a grey-brown gritty silt with stones up to 0.2m long, but stones in the natural also projected into the fill and it was very difficult to identify which belonged to the fill. The indistinctness and confusion of this feature suggested that it was the natural result of frost action or weathering around one end of a roughly line of stones within the natural (Plate 14). However, a piece of possibly Bronze Age pottery (SF70) was found within (204), possibly indicating that this was a genuine feature.

In the eastern half of the trench was a very broad, shallow hollow [211], about 9m across and 0.3m deep (Plate 15, Figure 7). The relict ploughsoil (213) continued into this hollow and in the lower, wetter part became greyer in colour due to gleying and it was recorded as (210). In the base of (213) and (210), lying directly on hollow [211] was a spread of medium sized flat stones. These were up to 0.2m long and had eroded edges. These were restricted to hollow [211] and similar stones were not seen elsewhere on the site. Resting on layer (210) and stones (216) on the eastern side of the hollow were two large stones up to 0.8m long (212) (Plate 16). These were laid flat, and another stone sloped down at a lower level to the west. There were other small stones, similar to those in (216), between and around these large stones. An extensive iron oxide deposit under the stones was initially thought to be a very corroded iron object but further excavation showed it to be natural mineralisation. The gleying and mineralisation in this area shows that it has been wet for a long period of time and it flooded during the excavation.

Trench 2 produced several stone items such as struck flint and chert, stone roof tiles and a fire blackened beach pebble. A sherd of possibly Bronze Age pottery (SF70) was found in a possible pit [205], but it is unclear if this is an incidental find or indicates that the feature is Bronze Age in date. Modern glazed pottery and glass was found throughout the ploughsoil,



Plate 15. Hollow [211] from the south-east with stones (216) exposed and part of (212) removed



Plate 16. Stones (212), possible wall foundation, from the south-east

along with a clay pipe stem and a small iron object, probably part of modern farming equipment. An iron hand-forged nail (SF69) was also uncovered close to feature [205] but is difficult to date as hand-forged nails have been in use from the Iron Age up to the modern periods.

Feature [205] has been allocated PRN 103435 for inclusion in the HER.

Trench 3

For plan see Figure 4

Trench 3 was opened to further investigate the ditch [209] seen in trench 2 and to investigate a linear anomaly on the geophysical survey (Figure 2). The combined topsoil (301) and ploughsoil (302) was about 0.35m deep, over glacial clay (303), which was a yellow-brown silty clay, with orange-brown mottling, and generally few stones. Like in Trench 2 a lower ploughsoil could be identified. This layer (313) was 0.1m deep and was a brown slightly clayey silt with few stones. Cut through this lower ploughsoil was the continuation of ditch [209], recorded in Trench 3 as [305]. This ditch, up to 0.65m wide and 0.30m deep, ran from north to south, before curving gradually towards the south-east (Plate 17). About 10.7m of the ditch was exposed in both trenches 2 and 3. The main fill of the ditch (308), a continuation of (208) was a brownish-grey clayey silt with occasional stones, but there were patches of a firm pale yellow-brown silty clay with small stones and iron oxide mottling (304) in the top of the ditch (Plate 18, Figures 8 and 9). At the south-eastern end this survived to 0.15m deep and made the ditch difficult to find here until this layer, which closely resembled the natural clay, was removed. Two sherds of black-glazed post-medieval pottery were recovered from the fill (308) of this ditch.

In the middle of the trench was an area of angular and sub-angular stones (312), mostly less than 0.3m long but with some sub-rounded boulders up to 0.85m long (Plate 19). The stones were in a matrix of brownish-grey silt and many lay at steep angles, though the boulders all lay flat. Some of the smaller stones were mixed into the base of the ploughsoil, but when the deposit was heavily cleaned over it could be seen that most were embedded in the natural clay. These stones appear to have originated from the frost shattered surface of the bedrock, further disturbed by ploughing as well as frost heave to give a mixed and confused deposit of natural origin. There were similar stone deposits further south in the trench. Stones (314) were similar to (312), and essentially formed a continuation of this deposit (Plate 20). In section they seemed to rest in an irregular cut [315], but this is probably the limit of the frost action rather than a genuine cut. No bedrock was seen in section and the stone may have been moved some distance horizontally and vertically by frost heave during peri-glacial conditions. A similar



Plate 17. Curving ditch [305] from the south



Plate 18. West facing section of ditch [305] showing it sealed with the redeposited clay (304)



Plate 19. Stones (312) from the east



Plate 20. Stones (314) between ditches [307] and [311], from the east



Plate 21. East facing section through stones (309) in hollow [317]



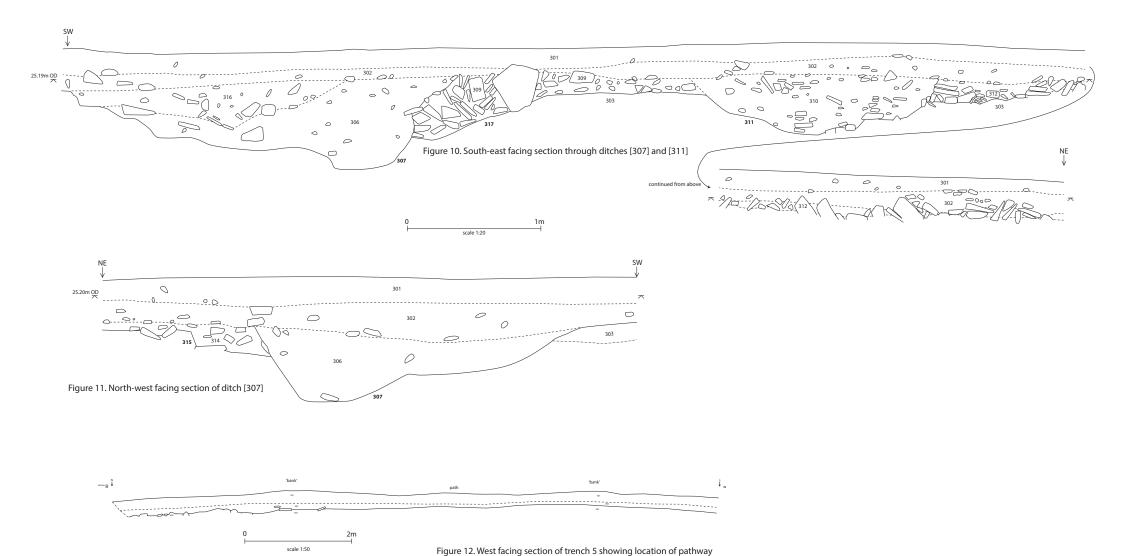
Plate 22. Ditch [307] from the south



Plate 23. East facing section of ditch [307]



Plate 24. Ditch [311] from the east



path of stones seen next to the north-western baulk of the trench (309) had stones set at steep angles within a fairly well-defined cut [317] (Plate 21, Figure 10). This initially appeared to be a possible anthropogenic feature but some of the stones were also firmly embedded in the natural clay, and it was concluded that this was also a result of peri-glacial frost heave causing stone movement and deposition.

Cutting these stone deposits in the southern end of the trench were two large ditches ([307] and [311]). These ran parallel to each other, on a roughly east-west alignment and about 2m apart. Ditch [307] was 2.4m wide and 0.65m deep at the deepest point (Plates 22 and 23, Figures 10 and 11). It had a very steep northern side with a gradually sloping southern side and a flat base with a channel 0.6m wide running along the northern side of the base. The fill (306) of this ditch was a soft, brownish-grey silty clay with occasional stones, some large. A large sherd (SF27) from the rim of a black-glazed jar of post-medieval date was recovered from this fill. In the top of the ditch, as seen in the east facing section, the fill became browner and more stoney (316), probably as a result of mixing with the ploughsoil. The ditch fill appeared to be largely an alluvial deposit, though with stones from the ditch side had fallen in. Ditch [311] was up to 1.8m wide and 0.4m deep (Plate 24, Figure 10). Both sides sloped fairly gradually to a roughly flat base. The sides and the base were rather irregular where the ditch had been cut through the stony deposits at either side. The fill (310) of the ditch was a brownish-grey clayey silt with c.25% stones. The stones clearly coming from the stony deposits the ditch had cut through.

Though the profiles of these ditches were different the fact that they ran parallel suggests that they were related and were probably part of a field boundary. It is likely that there was a wall or clawdd between them which has been entirely removed and that they formed a substantial double-ditched boundary.

Trench 3 produced a flint arrowhead (SF24) from cleaning the ploughsoil (302) from over the patch of stones (312). Other stone items include a struck piece of flint with retouch and both flint and chert debitage. A split river or beach pebble (SF94) came from the fill (310) of ditch [311], a sherd of post-medieval pottery came from the fill of ditch [307] and two sherds from the fill of ditch [305]. Modern pottery and glass were found throughout the topsoil and a burnt fragment of bone was also found.

Ditches [307] and [311] have been allocated PRN 103433 and ditch [209/305] has been allocated PRN 103434 for inclusion in the HER.



Plate 25. Trench 4 from the east with land drain



Plate 26. Trench 5 from the south showing stony boulder clay (503)



Plate 27. Trench 5 from the north showing stones (504) and stony boulder clay (503)



Plate 28. Section through one of the banks defining the path from Brynddu to the village, showing that this is built up purely of topsoil

Trench 4

Trench 4 was opened in the northern part of the field to identify a broad linear anomaly on the geophysical survey. A stone-filled land drain [405] ran almost east-west across the trench but otherwise there were no archaeological features or deposits present (Plate 25). The glacial clay was a yellow-brown silty clay, with orange-brown mottling. It was fairly silty on the surface but became hard and compacted clay just below the surface of the layer. No undulations or variations in the natural clay were seen that might account for the geophysical anomaly.

Some modern glazed pottery was found in the topsoil but nothing else was recovered.

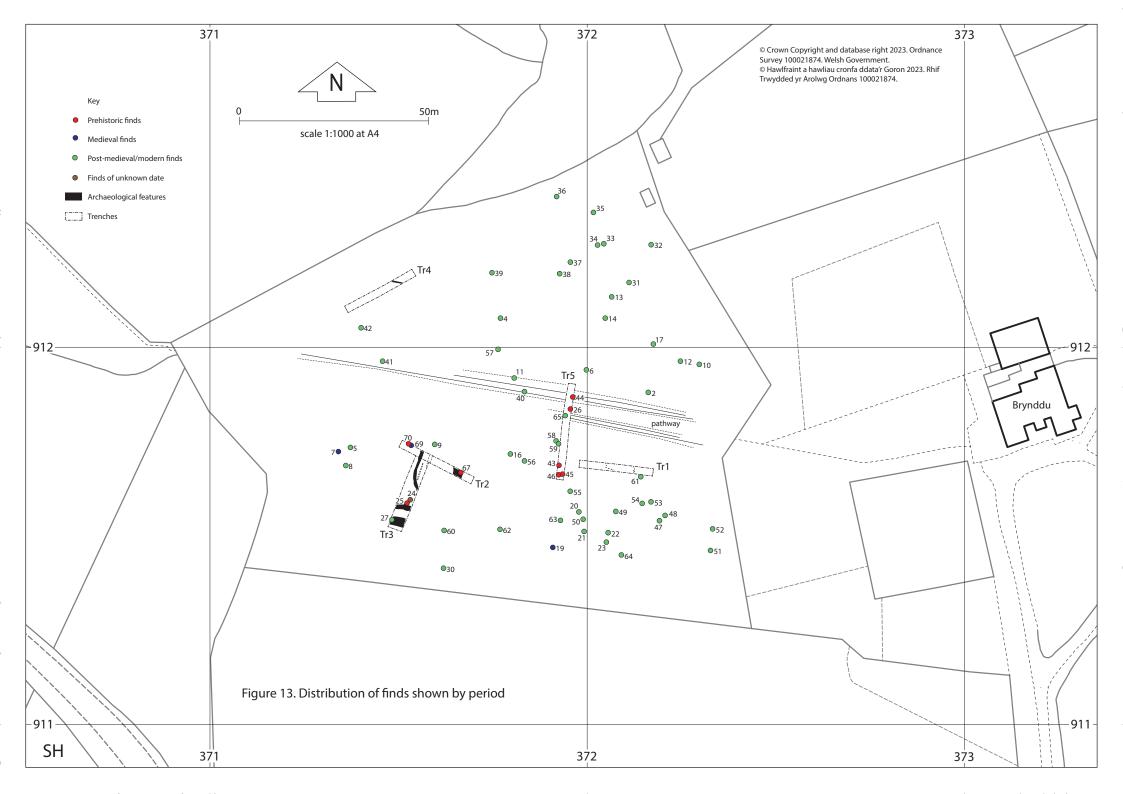
Trench 5

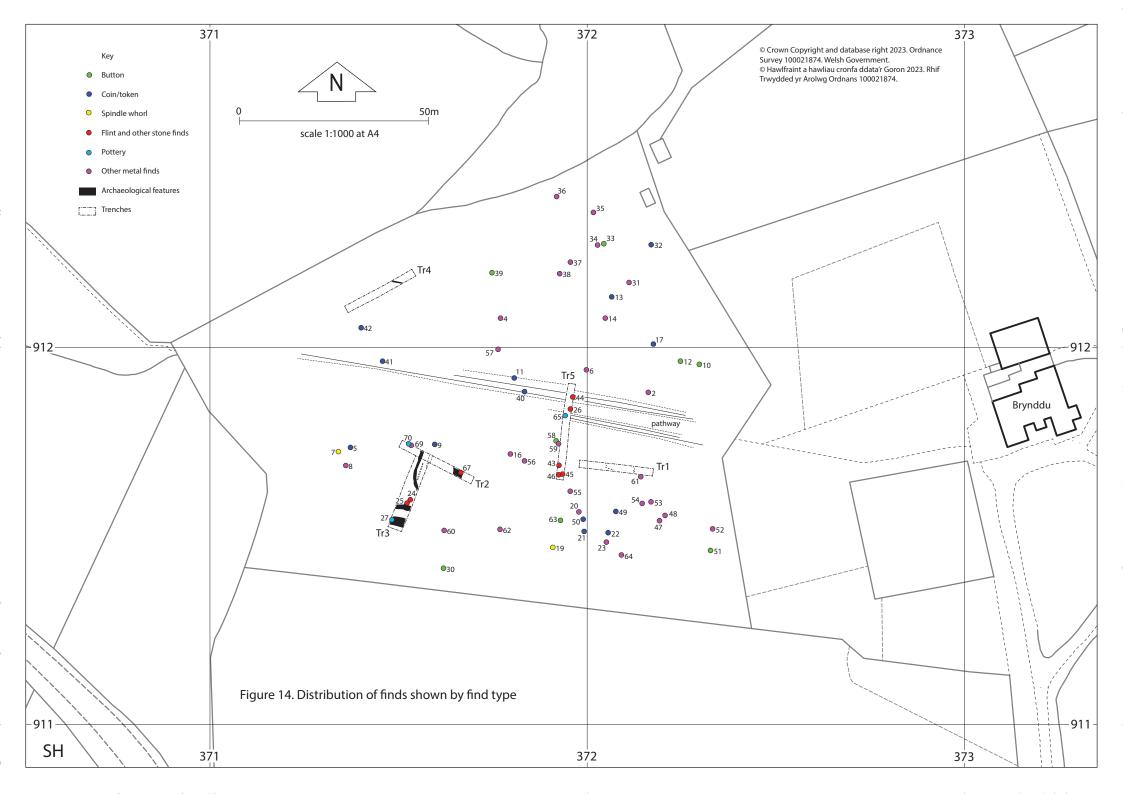
Trench 5 was opened to the west of Trench 1 to investigate slight circular anomalies on the geophysical survey and to inspect a section through the pathway that ran across the field from Brynddu towards the church. The path appears as slight linear earthworks running east west through the centre of the field. These earthworks are in the form of slight banks to the north and south of a level area, about 3m wide, indicating the pathway (Figure 3). The northern bank continues further west as a slight scarp, but the southern bank could not be traced much further than the location of the trench.

The topsoil (501) and ploughsoil (502) were 0.25m deep over an orange-brown gritty clay, with c.70% angular stones (503) (Plates 26 and 27). This was the natural glacial deposit and was similar to (105) at the western end of Trench 1. Many of the stones projected into the ploughsoil and considerable cleaning was necessary to demonstrate that there were no archaeological features present. At the northern end of the trench were blocky densely packed stones (504) which were firmly embedded in the clay. This may be the surface of the bedrock outcropping here.

No trace of the pathway was found in the trench. In section it could be seen that the slight banks visible on the surface were made entirely of topsoil (Figure 12, Plate 28). This was clearly not a built path. It is possible that the slight banks were the result of the line of the path not being ploughed while the path was in use.

Despite the lack of archaeological features, the trench produced a scatter of worked flints, including a retouched piece and several pieces of flint debitage. There was a concentration of struck flint chips at the southern end of the trench and further north a fragment possibly of a flint scraper and a worked flint pebble. All were found just above the natural clay in the base pf the ploughsoil (502). Pottery, glass and charcoal was excavated from the upper layers of the trench ranging from Late Medieval to modern.





Metal detecting survey

Two metal detectorists volunteered to carry out a survey of the field, resulting in the discovery of most of the metal objects found. This survey ran concurrently with the excavation and all the finds were located in three dimensions with the Trimble RS8 GPS unit to maintain spatial control over the finds across the site (Figures 13 and 14). The significant finds from the metal detecting survey are as follows: a copper alloy fitting, a keyhole plate, two Medieval spindle whorls, 1921 copper penny, a lead token of unknown date, a livery button with a hunting dog embossed on it, a George III penny, a musket ball, a modern lead bullet, George V penny from 1936, a copper gilded plate with drill hole, George III penny from the 18th century, an iron buckle of modern date, an iron chisel, a copper watch component, a copper Victorian penny from 1898, copper Irish penny and a fragment of a pony shoe. These were found throughout the field along with modern metal pieces such as washers, nuts, bolts and broken pieces of modern farming equipment. See Figure 15 for a selection of the medieval and post-medieval finds and appendix II for a full list of finds.



Scale 1:1 at A3

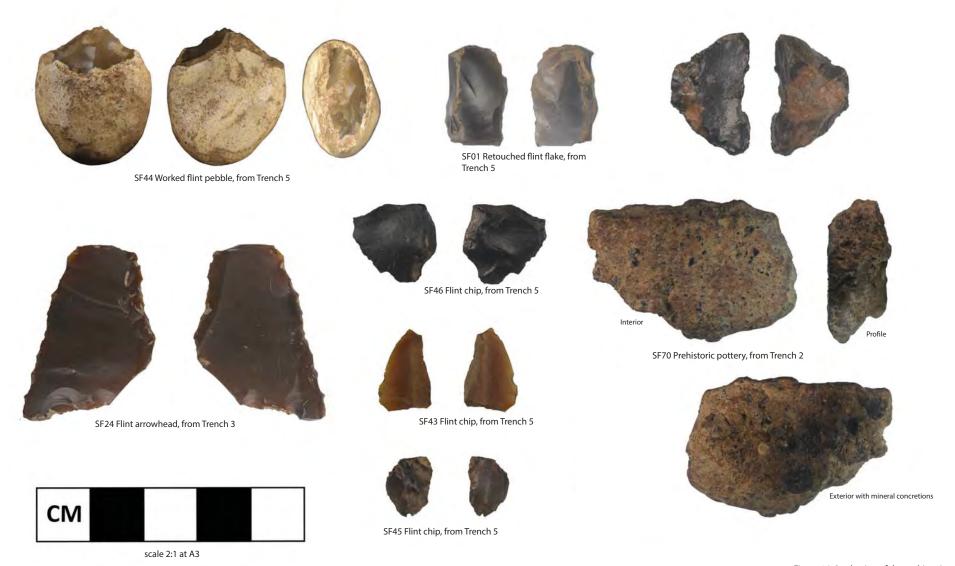


Figure 16. A selection of the prehistoric finds (photographed by Arwyn Owen)

Finds

Post-medieval pottery

A large sherd (SF27) from the rim of a black-glazed jar of post-medieval date was recovered from fill (306) of ditch [307] (Figure 15).

Two sherds of black-glazed post-medieval pottery came from the fill (308) of ditch [305].

Prehistoric pottery

Feature [205] produced what appears to be a sherd of prehistoric pottery (SF70) (Figure 16). Sherd of pottery was inspected by Frances Lynch. She considered that it was prehistoric, though it is of a very hard fabric. It is not Neolithic so is possibly Bronze Age but has no diagnostic features. It is possibly a break along a coil.

Flint and chert

Various pieces of black chert were collected but most were squared, slightly rounded pieces that had not been worked. Chert must form part of the range of stones naturally included within the glacial clays. The only piece that might have been worked was SF29, but that may have been accidentally shattered.

A small number of flint chips and flakes were recovered with a concentration in Trench 5 (Figure 16). This group included a beach pebble that had been partially worked, demonstrating that the flint used on the site was obtained from pebbles that wash up on the Anglesey beaches from deposits dumped by the glaciers under the Irish Sea. Two pieces from Trench 5 were retouched. One piece (SF01) on grey flint appears to be part of a broken tool, while SF26 may be a small fragment from a scraper with a trace of the scraper edge. The assemblage included no diagnostic pieces so they are difficult to date but might be from the Late Neolithic period.

In Trench 3 a flint arrowhead (SF24) (Figure 16) was found in the base of the ploughsoil while cleaning over the stones (312). This piece is on chocolate brown flint and would have been triangular, but two apices have broken off. All three sides have been retouched with steep retouch. One side is retouched on the ventral side of the flake, one side on the dorsal side and the third side has retouch on both sides. George Smith examined the piece and identified it as a transverse arrowhead. These date to the Late Neolithic or Early Bronze Age period and are often found within henge monuments, with one being found within the possible henge enclosure at Bryn Celli Ddu (Hemp 1931, p251-2).

Medieval spindle whorls

Two lead spindle whorls were found by the metal detecting survey. These biconical spindle whorls with large central holes are of a style that are typically of medieval date (Mould 2018, 114). A visitor to the site mentioned that four lead spindle whorls of similar design had previously been found during metal detecting the field, though these do not appear to have been reported to the Portable Antiquities Scheme. Such a concentration of spindle whorls is suggestive of proximity to a medieval settlement. Possibly an earlier settlement lies under Brynddu.

DISCUSSION

The archaeological aim of the project was to test the geophysical survey results and identify whether the anomalies indicated on that were genuine archaeological features. Trenches 1 and 5 demonstrated that the slight sub-circular anomalies were the result of variations in the natural deposits and the presence of bedrock near the surface. Trench 5 also showed that the pathway indicated on the maps was a superficial feature and not a built path.

Trench 4 showed that the broad linear anomaly running across the field was not a ditch or hollow way. As there was nothing in Trench 4 that might explain the anomaly it is possible that it was caused by bedrock or other changes close to the surface of the natural deposits. However, in Trench 2 there was a slight hollow [211] in the exact position of the linear anomaly. This part of the anomaly is less positively magnetic and could be entirely separate from the anomaly further north, being coincidentally roughly on the same alignment. The stones (216) in the base of the hollow could be the remains of a stone surface within a hollow-way. Similar stones were not seen elsewhere on the site but the presence of stone on the surface of the glacial clays that had been moved by frost action in Trenches 1 and 3 suggests that unusual stone deposits might occur naturally. The two large stones (212) on the eastern side of the hollow were laid level and could have formed the base of a wall, though it is hard to securely identify a wall from just two stones. If these were the base of a wall they were laid after the smaller stones (216) had been covered by silt. It is possible that hollow [211] was part of a hollow way with the remains of a boundary on its eastern side, although this was not certainly proved by the excavated remains. It is possible that this turned more to the north along a line of very slight linear anomalies and ran into the next field (Figure 2). However, it is also possible that this feature is entirely natural and did not continue much further than the trench.

In Trenches 2 and 3 a fairly clear linear anomaly was shown to be a narrow ditch [209]/[305]. In the geophysical survey there were hints that this turned west at its southern end and may have formed part of a small enclosure. In fact, it turned south-east and there is no evidence in the geophysical survey that it was part of an enclosure, but the clay in the top of this ditch would make it very difficult to detect with the magnetometry as there would be little difference between this and the natural clay. The curve of the ditch does suggest that it may have formed a ditch or drain around an enclosure, perhaps to create a dry area for a haystack. The fact that it was cut through the lower ploughsoil and had 2 sherds of post-medieval pottery in the fill suggests that this feature was not ancient, though no indication of it is shown on the available historic maps. This could be that it was not considered important enough to indicate on a map. The clay sealing the fill of the ditch may have slumped into the ditch from a low





Figure 18. A Plan of Brynddu Demesne and Bryn Clyni in the Parish of Llanfechell, dated 1805, copy held by Robin Grove-White. The field investigated is plot 1.

bank created from the material dug out of the ditch, further enhancing the possibility of this being a small enclosure.

The two ditches ([307] and [311]) in the southern end of Trench 3 are not indicated at all on the geophysical survey, despite their depth and size. A large sherd of post-medieval pottery, possibly part of a storage jar (SF27), came from the upper part of the ditch fill (306). This suggests infilling in the post-medieval period but does not suggest when the ditches were dug. An estate map of 1805 shows the southern boundary of the field running on a slightly different line (Figure 17). It had been moved and straightened by 1889 as it is shown on the present line on the first edition 25-inch County Series map. Overlaying the estate map on the modern mapping suggests that the two ditches are in fact this boundary (Figure 17). There is a slight error in the survey of the estate map in this field, making its fit with the modern mapping less than perfect, but the southern boundary clearly ran to the bend in the western field boundary, which would make it fit exactly with the two ditches. This would appear to be a double ditched field boundary pre-dating the present layout. The field boundary was probably changed in the early 19th century, a date that cannot be confirmed by the tithe map as this does not show any field detail for the Brynddu Estate. However, the rather sinuous boundary shown on the 1805 map (Figure 18) and the rounded western end of this field suggests that this boundary may be a survival from the medieval field layout, possibly using the line of a furlong boundary of an open field. Elsewhere on Anglesey traces of the strip fields of open field systems survive or are visible on the tithe maps where they have been preserved by being enclosed by walls or hedges (Kenney 2015). It is likely that the medieval village of Llanfechell was surrounded by open fields and that this was one of the major boundaries within that system. In this case it was probably always just two ditches, possibly with a route way between them and did not have a wall or clawdd.

CONCLUSIONS

The artefact assemblage from the excavations suggests prehistoric use of the land including the creation of flint tools in the field, suggesting activity around Brynddu since at least the Neolithic period. The small feature [205] in Trench 2 could be a geological feature such as an ice wedge but it is possible that it is a small, poorly defined posthole and that the prehistoric pot sherd found in it indicates Bronze Age activity in the area.

The discovery of two lead spindle whorls, and previous finds in the same field, hints at significant medieval activity in the field and proximity to a medieval settlement. The trial trenches were not wide enough to come to an understanding of the form and function of all the individual contexts. A series of ditches of different sizes were found running in different alignments across most of Trench 3. Two parallel ditches formed part of the earlier field boundary, removed and straightened in the early 19th century. The earlier boundary could have originally dated from the medieval period, later being included as the southern boundary of this field when the open field system was enclosed. A smaller ditch is possibly part of a small enclosure, such as a drained area for a haystack.

Further excavations would be required to come to a full understanding of the contexts discovered in this year's research. If excavations are continued in the field at Brynddu it is recommended that trenches be opened to the north of trench 2 to ground truth the sub-circular anomaly in the geophysics. The edge of this feature produced the Bronze Age pottery sherd which is possibly associated with both the sub circular anomaly and the large ditch system.

The excavations and metal detecting survey therefore found evidence for prehistoric, medieval and post-medieval activity in the vicinity of Brynddu. More importantly the volunteers enjoyed the experience with some continuing to study Archaeology after the dig itself.

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APPENDIX I

Trench Summaries

Trench 1

Grid references E end: 237217.47 / 391167.00 W end: 237197.93 / 391169.19

Size: 20m by 1.9m; max depth: 0.30m; orientation: E-W

Context	Depth	Description
number		
101	0.13m	Topsoil. Dark brown soft friable silt with few stones.
102	0.25m	Ploughsoil. Dark brown slightly clayey silt with c.10% small and medium stones.
103	0.3m	Natural boulder clay at eastern end of trench. Orange-brown clayey silt with mottles of very pale brown. Numerous small and medium stones.
104	0.05m	Sub-angular stones up to 1.2m long embedded in the natural clay. Shattered bedrock.
105	0.25m	Very pale brown gritty clay with c.75% stones up to 0.5m long. Natural boulder clay at western end of trench.

Trench 2

Grid references WNW end: 237150.54 / 391174.53 ESE end: 237169.55 / 391164.70

Size: 20m by 1.9m; max depth: 0.70m; orientation: WNW-ESE

Context	Depth	Description
number		
201	0.13m	Topsoil. Dark brown soft friable silt with few stones.
202	0.15m	Ploughsoil. Dark brown slightly clayey silt with occasional stones.
203		Natural boulder clay. Yellow-brown silty clay, with pale mottling in places. Generally few stones but more stone in western end of trench.
204	0.30m	Fill of hollow [205]. Grey brown gritty silt with stones up to 0.2m long.
205	0.30m	Sub-circular hollow with steep sides. Fairly well-defined in places but sides diffuse and poorly defined elsewhere. Possibly frost action or weathering hollow.

206	Up to 0.2m	Very pale yellow-brown silty clay appearing in patches and lumps in the top of ditch [209].
207		Not a real feature.
208	0.25m	Grey-brown slightly clayey silt with occasional small stones. Main fill of ditch [209].
209	0.25m	Straight sided narrow ditch running directly across the trench. SE side steep and NW side gradual with fairly flat base.
210		Soft brownish-grey silt with occasional stones. Lower ploughsoil, gleyed.
211		Very broad shallow hollow.
212		Possible wall foundation. 2 large stones up to 0.8m long with other smaller stones between.
213	0.1m	Compact brown silt with occasional stones. Relict ploughsoil.
214		Firm yellow brown clay. Fill of land drain.
215		Cut of land drain
216		Spread of medium sized flattish stones up to 0.2m long.

Trench 3 *Grid references* NNE end: 237156.58 / 391170.28 SSW end: 237148.97 / 391151.84 *Size*: 20m by 4m; *max depth*: 0.9m; *orientation*: SSW-NNE

Context	Depth	Description
number		
301	0.15m	Topsoil. Dark brown soft friable silt with few stones.
302	Max 0.20m	Ploughsoil. Dark brown slightly clayey silt with occasional stones.
303		Natural boulder clay. Yellow-brown silty clay, with orange-brown mottling.
304	Up to 0.15m	Firm pale yellow-brown silty clay with small stones and iron oxide mottling. In patches in the top of ditch [305].
305	0.30m	Narrow N-S aligned ditch curving to SE at S end. Sides steep in places and more gradual in others.
306	0.65m max	Soft, brownish-grey silty clay with occasional stones. Main fill of ditch [307].
307	0.65m max	Ditch running E-W, very steep northern side and gradual S side. Deeper channel running along northern side of base. Probable field boundary ditch.

308	0.3m	Brownish-grey clayey silt with occasional stones. Main fill of ditch [305].
309	0.46m max	Patch of stones in surface of 303. Stones up to 0.35m long, many at steep angles, some embedded in the natural and some seem to be in a cut [317].
310	0.4m	Brownish-grey clayey silt with c.25% stones. Fill of ditch [311].
311	0.4m	Ditch running E-W with fairly gradually sloping sides.
312		Haphazard collection of stones mostly less than 0.3m long but with some boulders up to 0.85m long. Frost shattered stone, top of bedrock.
313	0.1m	Brown slightly clayey silt with few stones. Lower ploughsoil
314		Natural stone deposit with stone mostly less than 0.35m long but includes one boulder 0.8m long.
315		Natural hollow or result of frost heave.
316		Greyish-brown slightly clayey silt with small and medium stones. Upper fill of ditch [307]
317		Natural hollow or result of frost heave.
318		Brown silt with no stones. Fill of furrow [319]
319		Very shallow, straight cut. Plough scar /furrow
320		Brownish grey silt with iron oxide mottling. Fill of furrow [321]
321		Straight narrow cut, U-shaped profile. Plough scar /furrow?

Trench 4

Grid references SW end: 237136.11 / 391210.09 NE end: 237154.09 / 391219.82

Size: 20m by 1.9m; max depth: 0.35m; orientation: SW-NE

Context	Depth	Description
number		
401	0.15m	Topsoil. Dark brown soft friable silt with few stones.
402	0.20m	Ploughsoil. Dark brown slightly clayey silt with occasional stones.
403		Natural boulder clay. Yellow-brown silty clay, with orange-brown mottling.

Trench 5

Grid references N end: 237195.96 / 391190.38 S end: 237192.73 / 391164.97

Size: 25m by 1.9m; max depth: 0.38m; orientation: N-S

Context	Depth	Description
number		
501	0.05m	Topsoil. Grey-brown soft friable silt with few stones.
502	0.20m	Ploughsoil. Grey-brown slightly clayey silt with occasional stones.
503		Natural stony boulder clay. Orange-brown gritty clay, with c.70% stones.
504		Blocky angular stones at the northern end of the trench. Firmly embedded in natural. Broken upper surface of bedrock.

APPENDIX II

List of Finds

Find No.	Sub-Area	Context No.	Context Description	Material	Description	Period	No of items
1	T05	502	ploughsoil	Flint	Retouched piece	Prehistoric	1
2	Metal detector survey	Unstratified		Cu alloy	Cu alloy fitting, book clasp?	Post-medieval	1
3	Metal detector survey	Unstratified		Cu alloy	Keyhole plate	Post-medieval	1
4	Metal detector survey	Unstratified		Lead	Lead weight	Post-medieval	1
5	Metal detector survey	Unstratified		Lead alloy	Token	Post-medieval	1
6	Metal detector survey	Unstratified		Cu alloy	Square key	Modern	1
7	Metal detector survey	Unstratified		lead	Spindle whorl	Medieval	1
8	Metal detector survey	Unstratified		Cu alloy	Cu alloy strip	Post-medieval	1
9	Metal detector survey	Unstratified		Cu alloy	1921 penny	Modern	1
10	Metal detector survey	Unstratified		Unknown	Livery button	Post-medieval	1
11	Metal detector survey	Unstratified		Cu alloy	coin George III penny	Post-medieval	1
12	Metal detector survey	Unstratified		Unknown	button (Tombuc button)	Post-medieval	1
13	Metal detector survey	Unstratified		Cu alloy	coin, very eroded	Unknown	1
14	Metal detector survey	Unstratified		Cu alloy	Unknown (part of pipe?)	Post-medieval	1
15	Metal detector survey	Unstratified		Cu alloy	coin (penny, Elizabeth II, 1965)	Modern	1
16	Metal detector survey	Unstratified		lead	bullet	Post-medieval	1
17	Metal detector survey	Unstratified		Unknown	coin?	Post-medieval	1
18	Metal detector survey	Unstratified		Cu alloy	gilded plate with drill hole	Post-medieval	1
19	Metal detector survey	Unstratified		lead	spindle whorl	Medieval	1
20	Metal detector survey	Unstratified		Iron	Horse buckle	Post-medieval	1

Find No.	Sub-Area	Context No.	Context Description	Material	Description	Period	No of items
21	Metal detector survey	Unstratified		Cu alloy	George V penny 1936-8	Modern	1
22	Metal detector survey	Unstratified		Cu alloy	George III half penny 1770's	Post-medieval	1
23	Metal detector survey	Unstratified		lead alloy	unknown, cutlery fragment?	Post-medieval	1
24	T03	302	ploughsoil	flint	Flint transverse arrowhead	prehistoric (late Neolithic)	1
25	T03	302	ploughsoil	stone	water worn pebble	Unknown	1
26	T05	502	ploughsoil	flint	Possible chip from a flint scraper	Prehistoric	1
27	T03	306	fill of ditch [307]	pottery	possible storage jar (post-medieval)	Post-medieval	1
28	Т03	302	ploughsoil	slate	slate pieces possibly from roofing tiles	Post-medieval	2
29	T03	308	fill of ditch [305]	chert	possibly worked chert	Prehistoric?	1
30	Metal detector survey	Unstratified		Cu alloy	button	Post-medieval	1
31	Metal detector survey	Unstratified		Iron	Iron object (starter handle)	Modern	1
32	Metal detector survey	Unstratified		Cu alloy	coin-American dime 1976	Modern	1
33	Metal detector survey	Unstratified		Cu alloy	button	Post-medieval	1
34	Metal detector survey	Unstratified		lead	bullet	Post-medieval	1
35	Metal detector survey	Unstratified		Cu alloy	Unknown	Post-medieval	1
36	Metal detector survey	Unstratified		Cu alloy	Unknown (key/handle?)	Post-medieval	1
37	Metal detector survey	Unstratified		Tin?	Toy soldier Late 19th/2oth century	Modern	1
38	Metal detector survey	Unstratified		Lead	Seal	Post-medieval	1
39	Metal detector survey	Unstratified		Cu alloy	button	Post-medieval	1
40	Metal detector survey	Unstratified		Cu alloy	Elizabeth II penny 1965	Modern	1
41	Metal detector survey	Unstratified		Cu alloy	Elizabeth II penny 1957	Modern	1
42	Metal detector survey	Unstratified		Cu alloy	George V penny 1937	Modern	1
43	T05	502	ploughsoil	Flint	Debitage	Prehistoric	1

Find No.	Sub-Area	Context No.	Context Description	Material	Description	Period	No of items
44	T05	502	ploughsoil	Flint	Flint pebble	Prehistoric	1
45	T05	502	ploughsoil	Flint	Debitage	Prehistoric	1
46	T05	502	ploughsoil	Flint	Debitage	Prehistoric	1
47	Metal detector survey	Unstratified		Unknown	ear tag	Modern	1
48	Metal detector survey	Unstratified		Lead?	Unknown (toy fragments?)	Post-medieval	1
49	Metal detector survey	Unstratified		Cu alloy	Texaco collectors' tokens 1969 (Martin Peters, West Ham United and Derek Dougan, Wolverhampton Wanderers)	Modern	2
50	Metal detector survey	Unstratified		Cu alloy	Elizabeth II penny 1965	Modern	1
51	Metal detector survey	Unstratified		Unknown	popper button	Modern	1
52	Metal detector survey	Unstratified		Iron	Chisel	Post-medieval	1
53	Metal detector survey	Unstratified		Iron	Metal plate	Post-medieval	1
54	Metal detector survey	Unstratified		Cu alloy	Furniture handle	Post-medieval	1
55	Metal detector survey	Unstratified		Cu alloy	Buckle	Post-medieval	1
56	Metal detector survey	Unstratified		Lead	handle (possibly for clock?)	Post-medieval	1
57	Metal detector survey	Unstratified		Iron	Rivet	Post-medieval	1
58	Metal detector survey	Unstratified		Cu alloy	button	Post-medieval	1
59	Metal detector survey	Unstratified		Iron	Iron object	Post-medieval	1
60	Metal detector survey	Unstratified		Iron	Chisel	Post-medieval	1
61	Metal detector survey	Unstratified					
62	Metal detector survey	Unstratified		Lead	Musket ball	Post-medieval	1
63	Metal detector survey	Unstratified		Cu alloy	button (possible livery button)	Post-medieval	1
64	Metal detector survey	Unstratified		Cu alloy	washer?	Post-medieval	1
65	T05	502	ploughsoil	pottery	small rim sherd	Early post- medieval?	1

Find No.	Sub-Area	Context No.	Context Description	Material	Description	Period	No of items
66	T02	212	ploughsoil	iron	2 badly corroded objects (natural mineral concretions)	Natural	2
67	T02	212	ploughsoil	Chert	debitage	Prehistoric	1
68	Т03	304	upper fill of ditch [305]	chert	debitage	Prehistoric	1
69	T02	204	fill of feature [205]	iron	hand forged nail	Post-medieval?	1
70	T02	204	fill of feature [205]	pottery	Possible Bronze Age pot sherd	Prehistoric	1
71	T03	Unstrat	spoil heap find	flint	Worked flint	Prehistoric	1
72	T03	Unstrat	Spoil heap find	glass	worn glass	Post-medieval	1
73	T02	204	fill of feature [205]	chert	5 chert pieces	Natural	5
74	Metal detector survey	Unstratified	Spoil heap T05	Cu alloy	Watch component	Post-medieval	1
75	Metal detector survey	Unstratified	Spoil heap T05	Iron	Piece of corroded iron	Post-medieval	1
76	Metal detector survey	Unstratified	Spoil heap T05	Cu alloy	Victorian penny 1898	Post-medieval	1
77	Metal detector survey	Unstratified	Spoil heap T05	Cu alloy	Elizabeth II penny 1963	Modern	1
78	Metal detector survey	Unstratified	Spoil heap T05	Cu alloy	token	Modern	1
79	Metal detector survey	Unstratified	Spoil heap T05	Cu alloy	sixpence Elizabeth II 1961	Modern	1
80	Metal detector survey	Unstratified	Spoil heap T05	Cu alloy	Irish penny 1961	Modern	1
81	Metal detector survey	Unstratified	Spoil heap T05	?	Button	Modern	1
82	Metal detector survey	Unstratified	Spoil heap T05	Iron	corroded iron fragment	Post-medieval	1
83	Metal detector survey	Unstratified	Spoil heap T05	Iron	nut and bolt (corroded)	Post-medieval	1
84	Metal detector survey	Unstratified	Spoil heap T05	stone/iron	iron concretion on stone	Post-medieval	1
85	Metal detector survey	Unstratified	Spoil heap T05	iron	fragment of pony shoe or boot heel	Post-medieval	1
86	T03	302	ploughsoil	Bone	piece of burnt bone	Unknown	1

Find No.	Sub-Area	Context No.	Context Description	Material	Description	Period	No of items
87	T02	213	lower ploughsoil	Flint	2x flint pieces (1 burnt)	Prehistoric	2
88	T05	502	ploughsoil	Pottery/chert/ glass/coal	1 Buckley ware sherd, glass, coal and chert	Post-medieval	7
89	T05	Unstratified	spoil heap find	pottery/glass	3x modern pottery 1x glass shard	Post-medieval	4
90	T05	Unstratified	spoil heap find	pot, glass, chert	2x modern pottery, 2x glass, 1x chert	Post-medieval	5
91	T02	Unstratified	spoil heap find	pottery, slate, glass, chert	5x modern pottery, 2x slate, 1x glass, 3x chert	Post-medieval	11
92	T02	213	lower ploughsoil	Flint	1x burnt flint, 1x struck flint	Prehistoric	2
93	T05	502	ploughsoil	chert, stone, glass, pottery	8x chert, 3x glass, 3x pebbles,3x modern pottery	Post-medieval	17
94	T03	310	Fill of ditch [311]	stone	half of a black beach pebble	Unknown	1
95	T02	212	Possible wall foundation	Chert	2x chert pieces, unworked, discarded	Natural	2
96	T03	302	ploughsoil	pottery	1x modern pot, 1x clay pipe stem	Post-medieval	2
97	T05	502	ploughsoil	glass, pottery, lead, chert	9x pottery, 1x pirate glass, 1x lead fragment, 2x chert	Post-medieval	13
98	T02	202	ploughsoil	pottery	3x glazed pottery sherds	Post-medieval	3
99	T03	308	fill of ditch [305]	pottery	Sherd with brown glaze	Post-medieval	1
100	T02	212	Possible wall foundation	stone	roofing slate?	Post-medieval	2
101	Т03	310	Fill of ditch [311]	stone	beach pebble	Unknown	1
102	T03	308	fill of ditch [305]	pottery	Black glazed sherd with grooves on exterior	Post-medieval	1

Find No.	Sub-Area	Context No.	Context Description	Material	Description	Period	No of items
103	T03	308	fill of ditch [305]	glass	sherd of thin green glass	Post-medieval	1
104	Т03	304	upper fill of ditch [305]	chert	Pieces of natural, unworked chert	Natural	2



