

BRON-Y-FOEL UCHAF,  
DYFFRYN ARDUDWY, MERIONNYDD

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY

Report No. 211

Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Gwynedd  
Gwynedd Archaeological Trust

BRON-Y-FOEL UCHAF,  
DYFFRYN ARDUDWY, MERIONNNYDD  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY (G1422)

prepared for Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments

by George Smith

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# **SURVEY AT BRON-Y-FOEL UCHAF, DYFFRYN ARDUDWY, MERIONNYDD (PRN 1118, NGR 60932506)**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The work was carried out on 18th and 20th June 1996. An EDM survey was first completed and plotted with further surveying and addition of details on the second visit. The general survey is plotted at 1:1000 (fig. 2) while the structural features are reproduced at 1:200 (fig. 3). It appeared that the additional small field to the south included in the brief was not that intended since OS field no. 0006 is now a well cleared area. It seems that the intended field was actually field no. 9798 which is included although it contains no structural features.

## **GENERAL DESCRIPTION**

The area lies at c. 190m OD on a gentle, west-facing slope at the foot of the steeper, rocky slopes of Moelfre. These gentler slopes have a fertile soil cover, mainly because of reasonable drainage, and numerous early settlement features are to be found in a broad band from here to the south above Cors-y-gedol and Egryn. The land has been extensively cleared and used for arable farming at least from Roman times. The antiquity of the immediate area of Bron-y-foel Uchaf itself is attested by the chambered tomb (PRN 1084, SAM M65) 200m south-west of the farm, by a circular homestead (PRN 2926) 500m south and an enclosed hut group and outlying large round house (PRN 1135) 400m west of the farm (see fig. 1).

The present day fields covered by the survey represent something of an island of survival of early features since the fields to the south and west have been well cleared in recent times. The features within the survey area continue some way into the next field to the north (9116) in a good state of preservation and there seem likely to be other features, yet undiscovered, amongst the rocky area of hillside to the east. In terms of field plan it seems likely that the survey area, along with fields 9116, 8000 and 8109, at some point formed a single, small, nucleated land-holding (fig. 1, dotted outline). This land-holding is likely to have been associated with some of the settlement features recorded here.

## **DESCRIPTION OF FEATURES**

These are only described in summary form at this stage.

### **Fields and field boundaries**

The field boundaries are very irregular and roughly built and evidently comprise a collage of different periods of use, varying from lines of low rubble to coursed rubble like that dividing fields 0506 and 9300. The irregularity of the boundaries is at least partly the result of incorporation of large ground rocks in its plan. Some of the surviving complete enclosures are less than 0.09ha (0.25ac) and one is only c. 0.02ha (0.05ac). There are several discontinuous boundaries and terraces which suggests that some original smaller enclosures have been obliterated and incorporated into larger field areas during later use. Although the earliest small enclosures may have been hand-hoed, it seems certain that some ploughing took place during later (medieval?) land use. Apart from terraces within the fields there are various possible entrance gaps and ramps between terraces.

### **The Cairns**

There are at least twenty of these excluding very minor dumps. They vary from c.4 to 8m dia., fairly distinct in outline. The distinctness and similarity in size with round huts suggests that at least some of the cairns are small round huts obscured by later dumping. Three (8, 9 and 10) also show some evidence of internal walling and four (8, 9, 10 and 11) have evidence of

attached yards or annexes. Cairn 12 is also large, discrete and regular in outline and has a later small trapezoidal shelter (?) built on its top. It is significant that the cairns are mainly discrete within the fields and not incorporated in the walls, which are generally narrow lines of rubble whereas recent walls tend to be broad, incorporating masses of clearance stone.

## The Structures

**Hut 1.** Originally recorded as a round hut, when planned this appears deliberately sub-circular, 3.5m internal dia., c. 6m external dia., with walls c. 1m wide and up to 0.4m high. It has an entrance at the south, c. 1m wide, framed by two orthostatic pillars.

**Hut 2.** Less well preserved than 1 but has some internal facing showing it to be a small sub-circular hut c. 5m dia. overall.

**Hut 3.** Also sub-circular, c. 4.5m dia. internally, c. 8m dia. externally with walls c. 1m wide and 0.4m high with occasional internal and external facing stones visible, entrance not visible, terraced into the slope. A short distance to the south-west is a complex of small sub-rectangular walls, possible the remains of associated non-domestic structures.

**Long Hut 4.** 10m by 3.5m internally with walls c. 1m wide and up to 1m high with some orthostatic slab inner and outer facing. No entrance visible. The hut sits on a carefully terraced area and it has a small annex/sub-terrace at the east end. There are other, probably more recent rectangular structures/enclosures c. 20m to the north, beyond the survey area.

**Rectangular Hut 5.** c. 5.5m by 3.5m internally with walls c. 0.8m wide and up to 0.4m high of mainly coursed construction. Possibly opposed entrances on the longer sides. The hut has an associated yard area to the north and north-west.

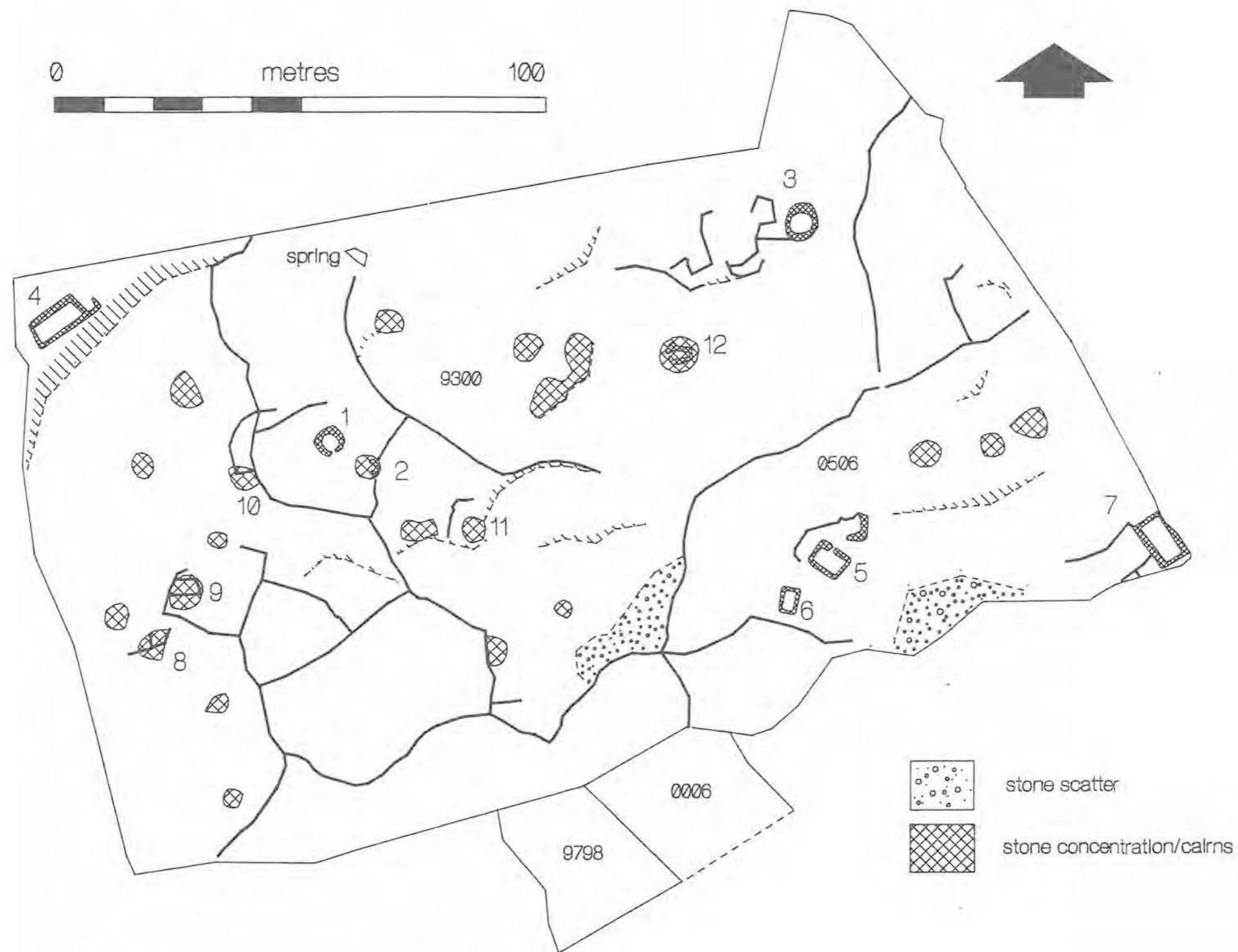
**Rectangular Hut 6.** c. 4m by 2.25m internally with walls c. 0.8m wide and up to 0.5m high. Entrance probably at the north end. Of similar construction to Hut 5 and presumably contemporary and perhaps subsidiary.

**Platform House 7.** c. 8.5m by 4.5m internally with walls c. 1.25m wide with large orthostatic slab inner and outer facing and opposed entrances in the longer sides. Terraced into and built up above the slope, its wall-line partly re-used by the modern field wall. There is another small platform structure closely adjoining, up slope, to the south-west, just beyond the survey area.

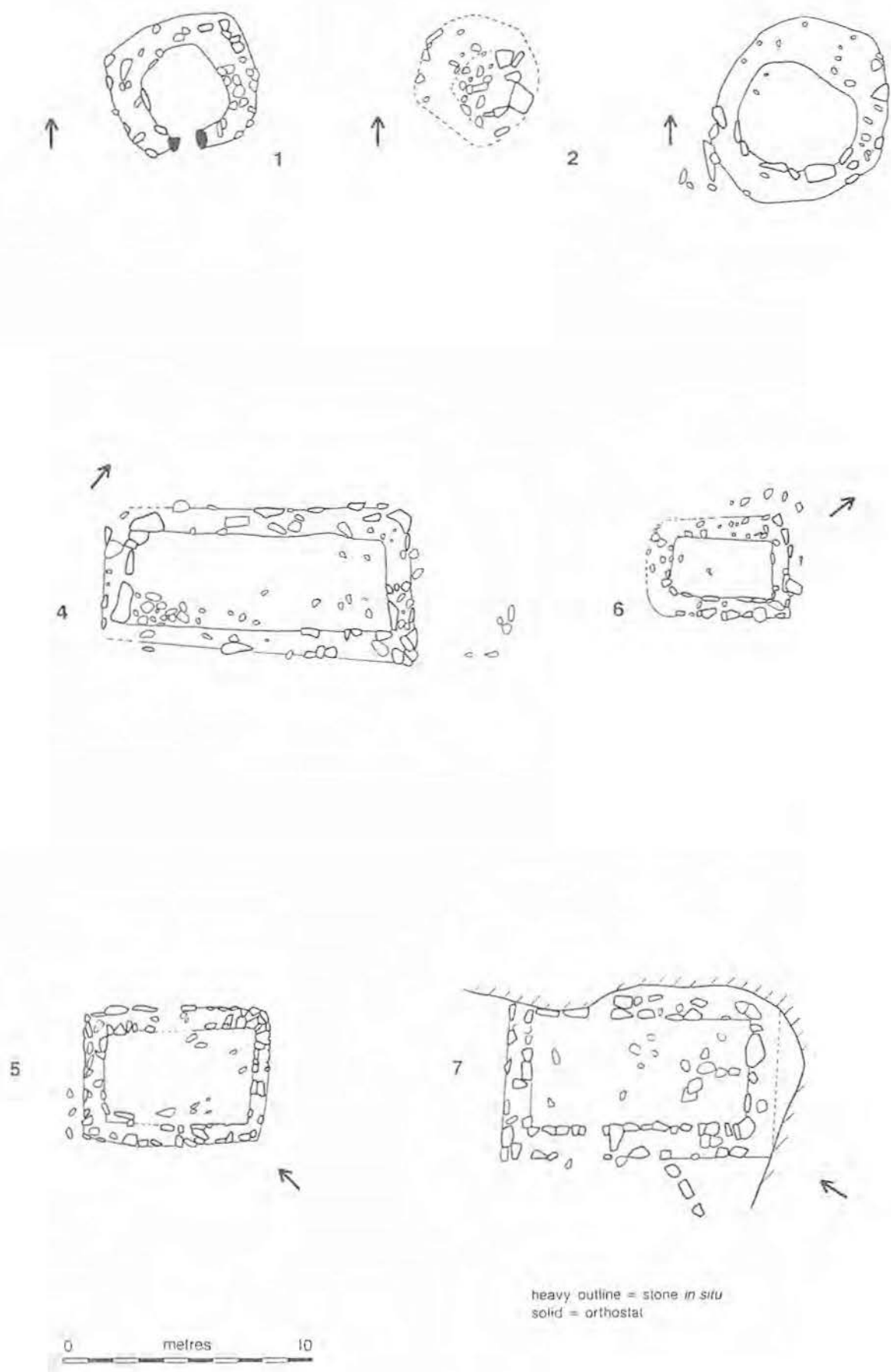
## SUMMARY

In general, the variety of structural types shows a long period of use and re-use although this could only be proved by excavation. While there was clearly Later Iron Age or Romano-British settlement in this area, as shown by the large round house and enclosed hut group 400m to the south-west the small size and odd shape of Hut 1 makes it difficult to ascribe a similar period to this site. It is also odd that Hut 1 survived intact and without dumping when the area was quite intensively used and modified in medieval times, as shown by the presence of the long hut and platform house and suggests quite late re-use and modification of the round house. It is the evidence for the longevity of use with a variety of settlement types with their associated subsidiary buildings, fields and paddocks which provides the greatest potential and interest of this site.





Bron-y-foel Uchaf Fig. 2  
General plan of survey area



Bron-y-foel Uchaf Fig. 3  
Detailed plans of structures

