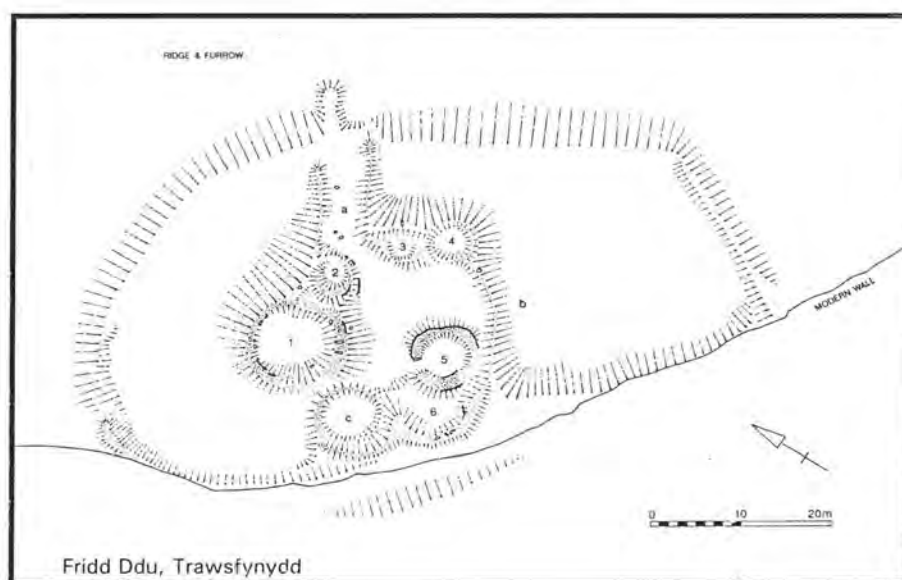


HUT CIRCLE SETTLEMENT MANAGEMENT
PROJECT:
TOPOGRAPHIC SURVEYS OF MONUMENTS
AT RISK

G1473



Report No. 323

Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Gwynedd
Gwynedd Archaeological Trust

HUT CIRCLE SETTLEMENT MANAGEMENT
PROJECT (G1473):
TOPOGRAPHIC SURVEYS OF MONUMENTS
AT RISK

Prepared for Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments

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March 1999

GAT Report No. 323

HUT CIRCLE SETTLEMENT MANAGEMENT PROJECT:

TOPOGRAPHIC SURVEY OF MONUMENTS AT RISK, G1473, 1997-8

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A. INTRODUCTION

This work comprised proposals to survey a number of hut circle settlements that had been identified as a result of the recommendations arising out of the hut circle settlement survey. This survey recognised that many settlements lack adequate plans and that such plans are beneficial to proper management practice, particularly for monuments which are scheduled or are proposed for scheduling or require any kind of management intervention. The small selection of settlements proposed for survey all lacked adequate plans and had either a substantial threat or had been assessed as of significant archaeological potential and had been assessed as of schedulable quality. Six areas of settlement were identified as suitable for survey. One was found to be inaccessible because of refusal of access so a further area for survey was agreed. The locations of the monuments agreed for survey are shown on Fig. 1. These were:

1. Nucleated settlement and field system north-east of Moel y Gerddi, Llanfair, Meirionnydd, PRN 5214 (SH63SW).
2. Nucleated settlement, Penbodlas, Buan, near Llanbedrog, Dwyfor, PRN 418 and 4017 (SH23SE).
3. Enclosed settlement, Cororion, Tregarth, PRN 27 (SH56NE).
4. Enclosed settlement, Fridd Ddu, Trawsfynydd, Meirionnydd, PRN 1604 (SH73SW).
5. Scattered settlement, Llyn Morwynion, Ffestiniog, Meirionnydd, PRN 5142, 5143, 5144 (SH74SW).
6. Scattered settlement, Caerfadog Uchaf, Dolbenmaen, Dwyfor, PRN 173-177, 2361 (SH54SW).

B. SURVEY METHODS

All the surveys were carried out by total station with detail added by hand on a further visit. Because of problems with producing acceptable final drawings in CAD from a previous survey (at Bron-y-foel Uchaf, Meirionnydd, GAT Report No. 211) the main drawings of each survey were done by hand. The machine plots were combined with the added detail and drawn up by hand to produce finished products which were of sufficient standard to be used for publication, if necessary, and to be used in any future management or research. The survey files will be available for any further enhancement or additional use as CAD files, if ever required. It was found that the final illustrations took some 50% longer than the time allotted because of the level of hand detailing required. Report illustrations 4, 6, 7 9 and 11 are by Danny Dutton, 3 and 14 by Andrew Smith, the remainder by the author.

All the surveys were carried out in late winter or early spring to benefit from absence of bracken cover.

In addition to the survey, further more detailed recording and environmental sampling was carried out at one of the sites, Llyn Morwynion.



Fig. 1 Location of hut circle settlement surveys (PRNs)

C. THE SURVEYS

1. Nucleated settlement and field system north-east of Moel y Gerddi, Llanfair, Meirionnydd, PRN 5214 (SH63SW) (Figs 2-4).

Introduction

The enclosure in which the site is located is crossed by a public footpath. Permission for access for the survey was given verbally by the wife of the owner. This was designed to be an outline survey of an area of huts and field enclosures to allow delineation of the area for scheduling since the site had been proposed for new scheduling. The site had had no previous measured survey and it was impossible to fix its position in relation to the OS map. Both previous visits, by P. Crew, who first identified the site, and by GAT had been in summer when bracken was masking much of the remains. Both visits had noted that apart from several huts there were various wandering wall enclosures. The present survey found that such enclosures were actually not of much extent although a new site, a platform hut and enclosure, were noted nearby and included in the survey. Therefore, after the outlines of the general features had been plotted, more time was spent on a detailed survey rather than just an outline survey.

Description

a. The Settlement Area

The site lies in an area of rough pasture on a large sloping shelf on the north-east side of Moel-y-Gerddi. It consists of a scattered group of at least four round huts with associated enclosures defined by irregular walls of single boulder lines. The situation allows some shelter from the prevailing south-west winds and provides a wide outlook over the nearby valley.

Hut 1 is about 6m diameter internally with walls c. 1.5m wide and c. 0.4-0.5m high which show as substantial grassy banks although some external facing stones are visible. It is not quite clear where the entrance was, there is a slight gap at the south-east and there is a more obvious gap at the north-west where a boulder enclosure wall abuts the hut.

Hut 2 is about 5m diameter internally with walls c. 1.5m wide and c. 0.4m high with an entrance gap c. 1m wide on the east. The walls show as massive, grass-covered stony banks with a few upright slabs demarcating the inside face.

Hut 3 is c. 5m diameter with walls showing as a low stony bank with internal and external facing stones of slabs and boulders, most prominent at the down-slope, east side. The position of the entrance is not obvious but was fairly certainly at the south-west where it would open onto an artificial terrace revetted by a low boulder wall which abuts the hut here and which creates a possible path running towards Hut 4.

Hut 4, the furthest south, is presently visible as a small sheep pen with a lamb-creep covered by a large slab-lintel in one corner. The pen wall is of laid construction, and of an odd truncated D-shape with two walls straight and the other curving. At the west side is a small sub-rectangular platform, cut into the hillside. The curving part of the pen wall suggests that it is built over the remains of an earlier circular hut. However, despite close scrutiny it was impossible to see any remnants of the continuation of a circular structure from the one length of curving wall. It must still be probable that the pen was rebuilt from the ruins of an earlier structure.

Platform 5 proved to be much larger than the hut circles, c. 9m by 11m, and substantially built up above the slope and cut into it. Curiously the platform itself is offset somewhat from the corresponding terrace into the hillside. The difference in size from the hut circles and the complete absence of structural evidence suggests that it was perhaps a working platform or a fodder stack-stand.

Platform 6, to the east of Hut 1, is c. 6m diameter. It lies directly on the edge of the steep natural scarp and so, although fairly certainly an artificial feature, it seems unlikely to be a domestic hut in this position. Possibly more likely it may have been a working platform.

b. The Enclosures

These consist of irregular but angular areas defined partly by lines of boulders and partly by use of the natural scarp and slope edges. Also, the edge of the scarp to the east seems to have been modified slightly creating a terraced effect, perhaps by cultivation. The walls, boulder lines, define areas around the settlement, rather than separate fields, although they could be fairly restricted 'garden' plots. One wall runs north-west from Hut 1 and fades away as it meets the steeper slope of the hillside, i.e. its purpose was to define the area on the shelf, not to enclose the area as such. Another wall defines the edge of the steeper slope to the east of Hut 3 and then runs off over the edge of the shelf, down the steeper slope before turning and terminating at a slight natural terrace. Another fragment of walling was recorded further up the slope but this seemed likely to be associated with the platform hut discovered nearby. It must be accepted that all the boundaries are visible as only slight lines of boulders and with some accumulation of blanket peat more could exist than can be seen on the surface.

c. The Platform House

During contour surveying of the shelf a rectangular platform was discovered approximately 150m north of the hut circle settlement. It is visible as a grassy embanked rectangular area, c. 8m by 4m. Between the platform and the hut circle settlement was noted a fragment of rectilinear terracing, probably part of a field associated with the platform house. Both features were planned in outline. More detailed study might identify further associated features.

The field in which the above features lies is a large rectilinear enclosure, part of an 18th-19th century estate enclosure system. The enclosure has previously been affected by the construction of a water pipeline taking water from Llyn Eiddew-mawr. The pipe trench runs along the steep hillside, fortunately avoiding the shelf on which the settlement features lie but running very close to the platform house. The line of the pipe was plotted in this area but not further on the steeper slope to the south, where its exact line was not visible.

Summary

The survey shows that these huts were quite substantially built and although within fairly rough and remote heathland are actually only at an altitude of 230m i.e. below the 240m boundary which is used to identify the lower limit of the 'upland' in the RCHMW Uplands Initiative. The majority of the area around the settlement was clearly too steep for cultivation but that on the shelf, of perhaps 10 acres or more, certainly was not too steep. The size of the huts and their 'nucleated' setting suggests that they are of the later prehistoric/Romano-British period, not earlier. The general area in which they lie, particularly the lower valley and undulating land to the east has numerous features of abandoned post-medieval settlement and agriculture and there is good potential for there being other, earlier features too.

Management

The settlement lies in an area of poor sheep pasture, difficult of access and therefore with little likelihood of any improvement or other threat. The remains themselves can therefore be regarded as stable. The existence of a public path means that the site could be included in a walking information leaflet if such was ever proposed.

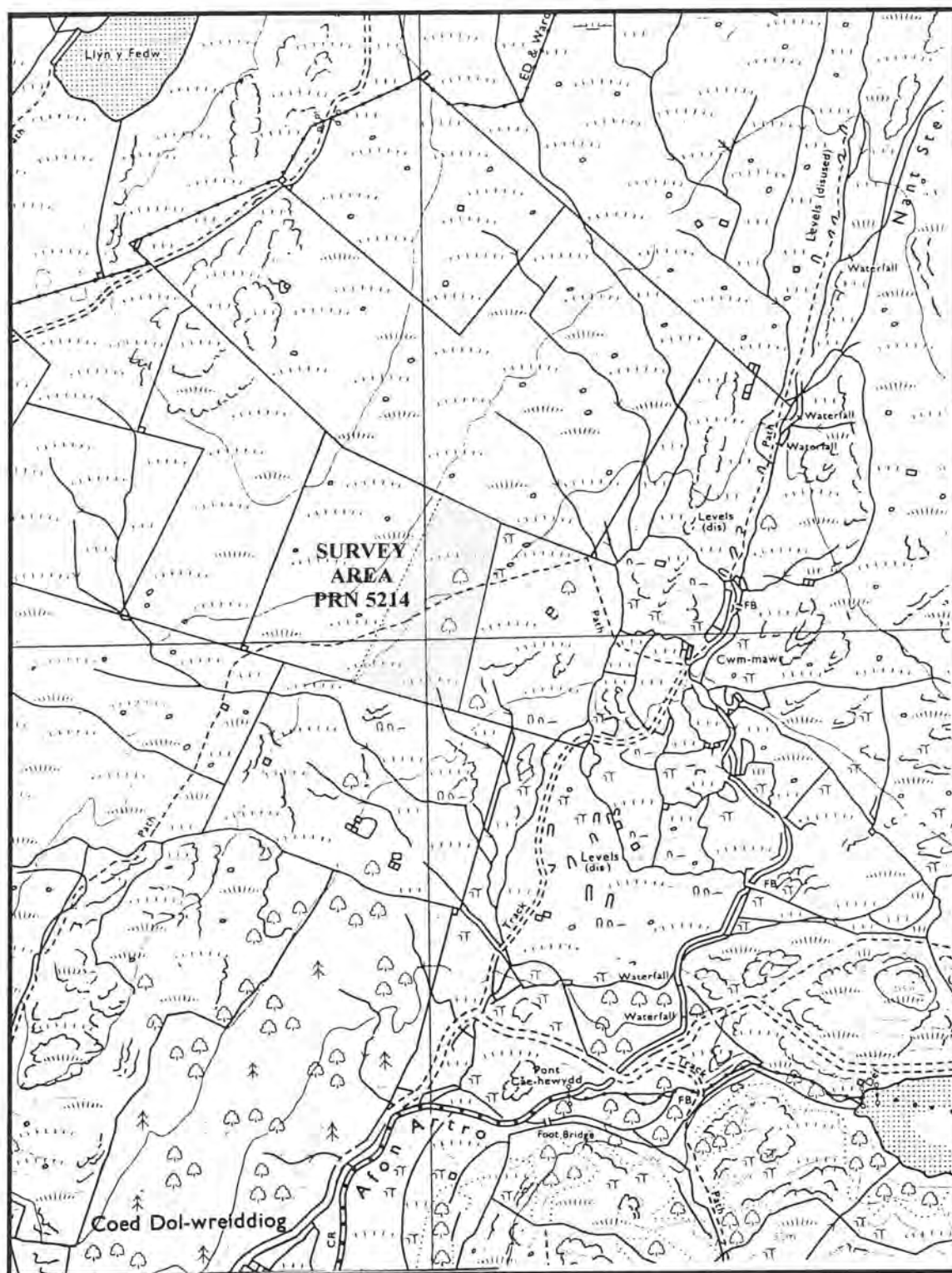


Fig. 2 Location map, settlement PRN 5214, NE of Moel y Gerddi (SH63SW), Scale 1:10,000

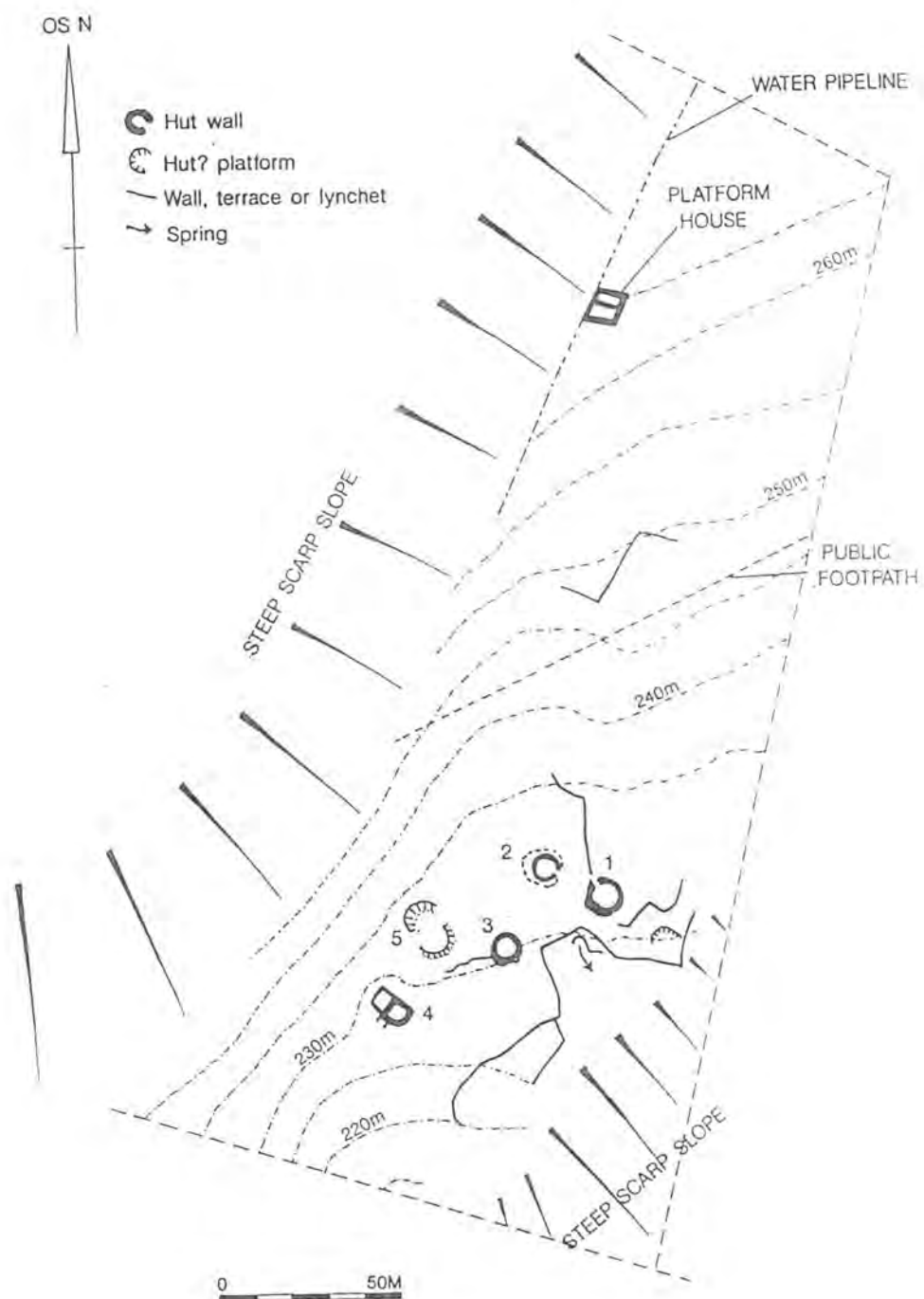


Fig. 3 General survey, nucleated settlement and field system north-east of Moel y Gerddi, Llanfair, Meirionnydd, PRN 5214 (SH63SW).

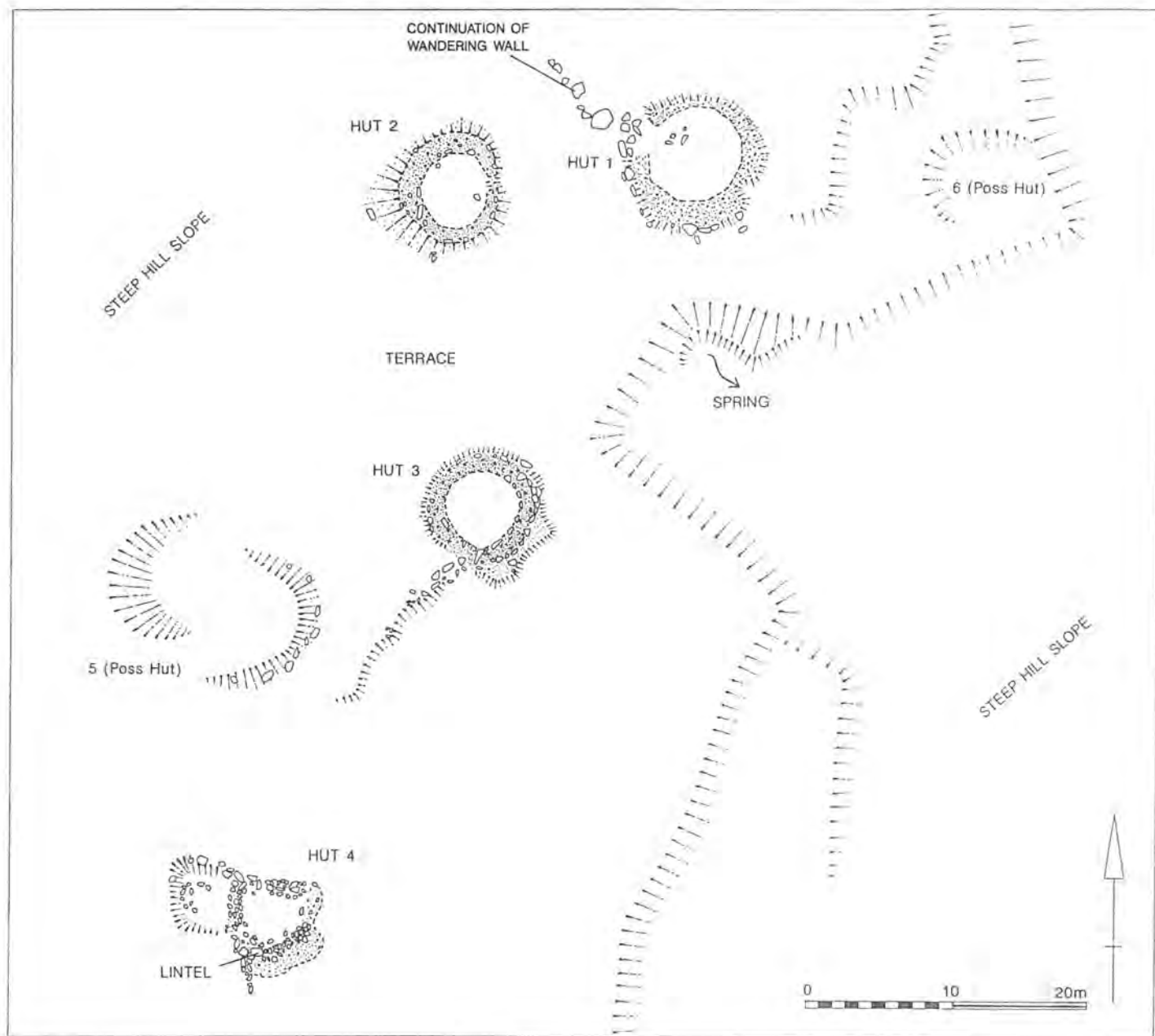


Fig. 4 Detailed survey, settlement north-east of Moel y Gerddi, PRN 5214.

2. Nucleated settlement, Penbodlas, Buan, Dwyfor, PRN 418 and 4017 (SH23SE) (Figs 5-7).

Introduction

The land is part of the Nanhoron Estate. Permission for the survey was given verbally by the tenant farmer of Pen-bodlas Farm and by letter by the landowner, Mr D. Harden of Nanhoron.

Description

This settlement stands within improved and enclosed pasture on an E facing gentle slope to the south-east of Pen-bodlas Farm and overlooks the junction of Nant Bodlas and Nant Saethon with the Afon Horon. The settlement comprises two groups of hut circles: an enclosed group of three circular huts (PRN 4017) set on a level terrace, associated with a further enclosed hut group (PRN 418) only 70m to the NW. Adjoining the huts is a rectilinear field system defined mainly by banks and partly by terraces (Fig. 6).

The site was described as 'very ruined' by the RCAHM but this impression can be seen to be because the banks are of earth rather than stone and taking that into consideration the remains can be seen to be well preserved for their type and for this lowland area of generally totally cleared and ploughed land. The site has just fortunately survived because the field in which it lies has remained unimproved, although surrounded on all sides by ploughed fields in which only a few slight remnants of the former pre-improvement field system can be seen.

The western settlement area (PRN 418) is bisected by a post-medieval hedge bank which has quarry ditches on either side. This must have caused some damage when it was built but appears to have been very neatly done. However, the bank is no longer in use as a boundary so at least the ditches will not be re-cut. The eastern settlement area (PRN 4017) is also bisected by a hedge bank but which is still in use as a field boundary.

a. Settlement PRN 4017

This appears to comprise three huts, each c. 9m crest to crest, i.e. originally c. 7m to 8m in diameter internally, with entrances facing into the enclosure. The most impressive of the huts is that at the south with its bank standing up to c. 1m in height; otherwise the banks are c. 0.4m in height, and partly masked by a medieval? lynchet which has formed up-slope.

Two of the huts are conjoined and these are joined by a bank to the third hut which lies in the adjoining improved field and which is in rather poorer condition and its structure less clear. This latter hut also has a dump of field clearance stone within it. There may have been two other smaller compartments within the original whole conjoined structure.

This group appears to be linked to another enclosed hut group (PRN 418) by an intervening yard or levelled area.

b. Settlement PRN 418

This comprises a similar conjoined group to PRN 4017 but with possibly six compartments of which at least three can be regarded as hut circles, each c. 6m in diameter internally. All face in to a common yard. This extremely compact plan and the common yard is rather unusual for North Wales with close similarity to the 'courtyard house' type of settlement more typical of Cornwall.

c. The Field System

This was not originally intended to be part of the survey which was planned to be just a detailed record of the settlement itself. However, when the survey was begun it was realised that it comprised an unusually well preserved fragment of probable medieval field system. Additional time was therefore spent so that an outline plan of the whole modern field could be prepared (Fig. 6). The fields are defined by what are now low grassy banks, probably spread by some modern ploughing to a width of c. 2m. They form a complex pattern of small enclosures of which the main identifiable element seems to have been narrow strip fields, the width of which was a c. 20m, i.e. close to the classic 'chain' of 22 yards. Generally the field system avoided or respected the hut circle settlements, which could suggest contemporaneity. However, one field

bank which appears to be part of this system runs up and onto the top of the wall bank of one of the huts in settlement PRN 4017, showing that the field boundaries are later than the hut circle settlements.

Management

This settlement lies within enclosures characterised by improved and semi-improved grazing, although the site has so far escaped serious damage from agriculture, its fragile condition, mainly due to its construction of earthen banks, leaves the site in an extremely vulnerable position. The owner is aware of the remains and has asked his tenant to avoid damaging the remains but the land is still grazed by cattle which pose a threat depending on grazing intensity although the remains seem stable at present.

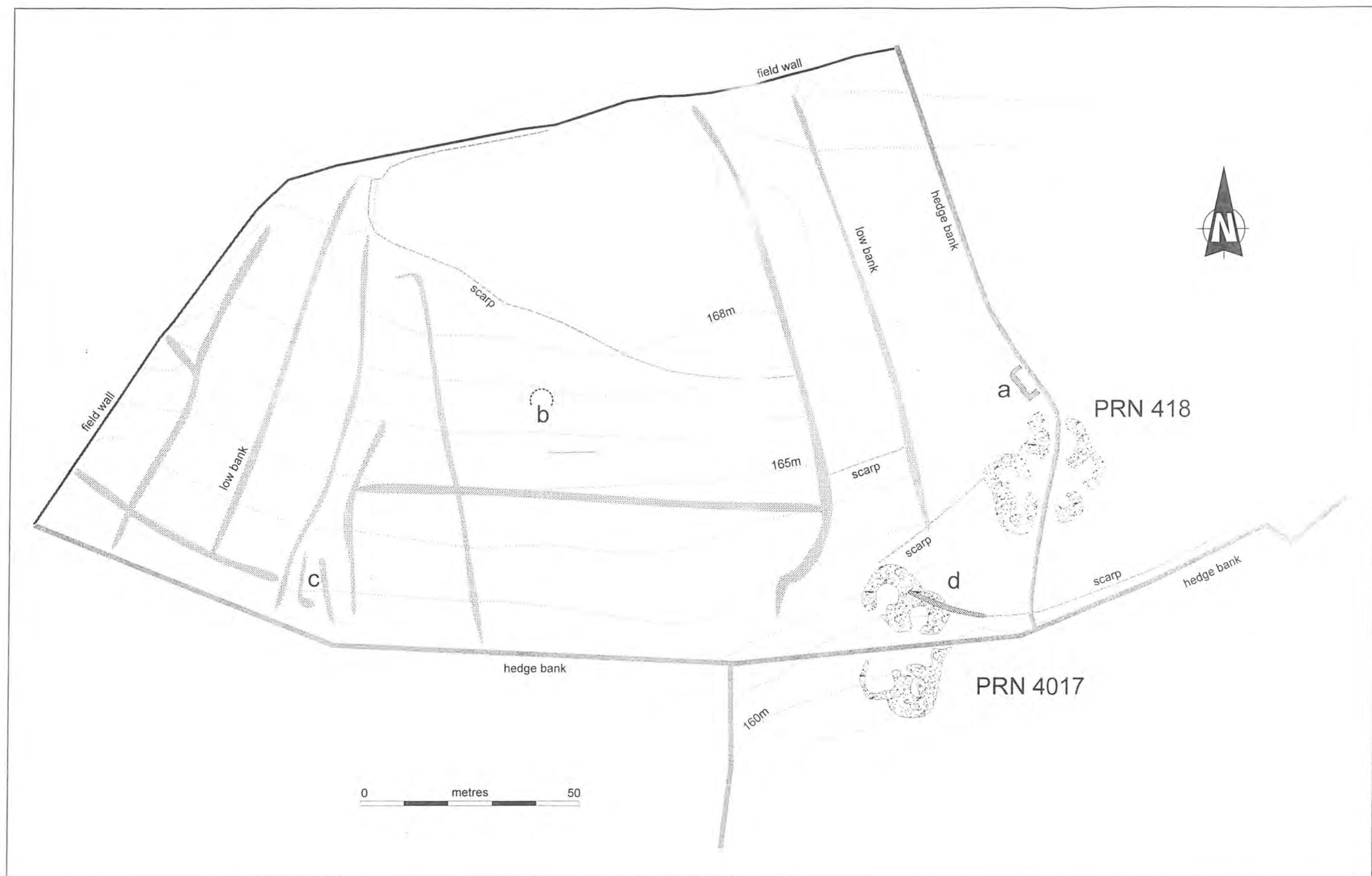


Fig. 6 General survey, settlements south of Penbodlas, PRNs 418, 4017.



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FIELD SYSTEM AND NUCLEATED SETTLEMENT AT
PENBODLAS, BUAN, DWYFOR. PRN 418 & 4017.
SH23SW

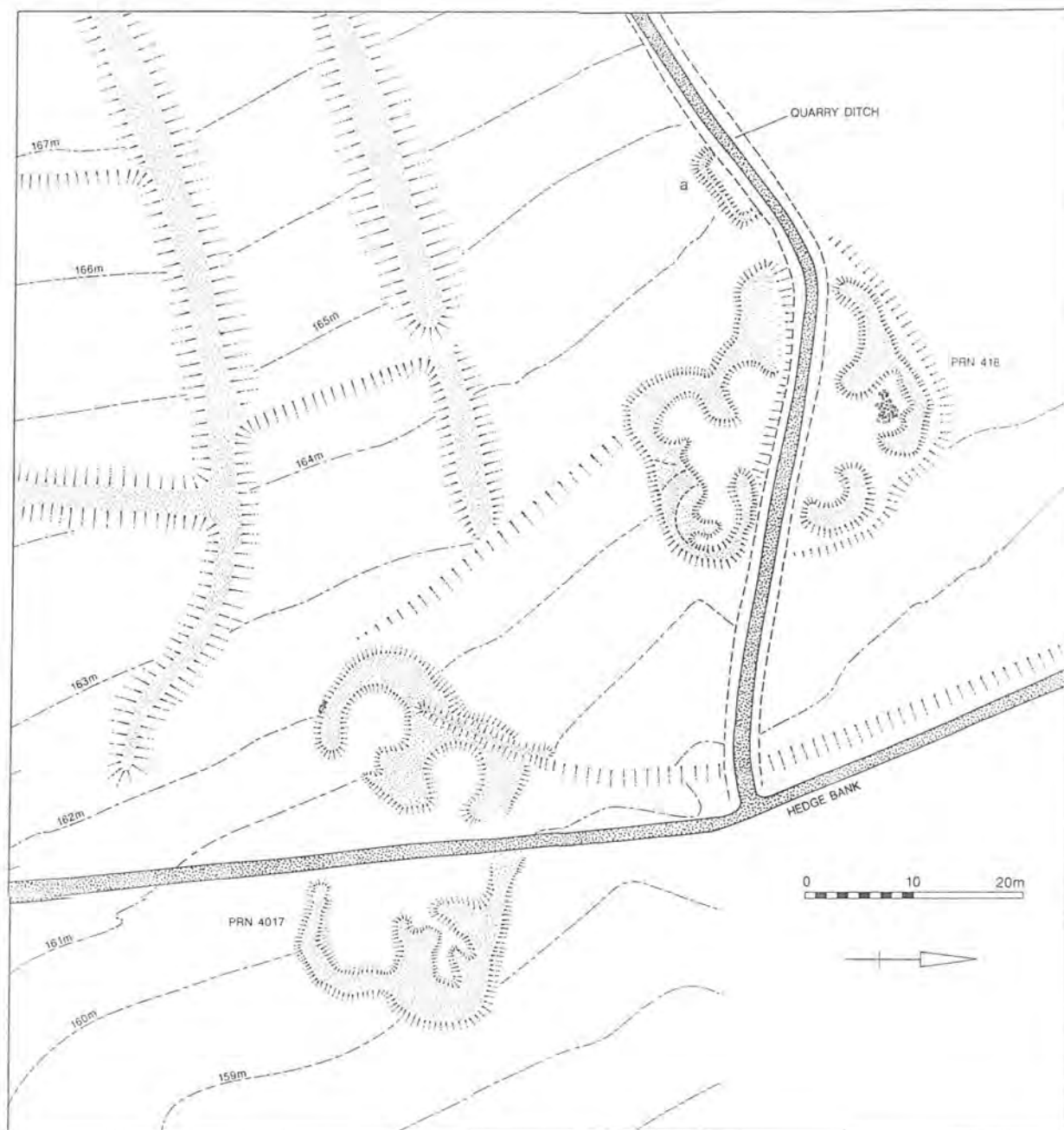


Fig. 7 Detailed survey, settlements south of Penbodlas, PRNs 418, 4017.

3. Enclosed settlement, Cororion, Tregarth, PRN 27 (SH56NE) (Figs 8-9).

Introduction

The settlement lies in a small enclosed area of mature woodland, within Moel-y-ci Farm, part of the Penrhyn estate. Permission for access was given by the tenant farmer. Access is easiest from Cororion itself from where a public footpath crosses the field adjoining the settlement.

Description

The settlement lies in level marshy ground beside a small stream about 100m south-west of Llyn Cororion which is mentioned in early Welsh mythology, giving the site added interest.

a. Hut 1, at the north-west, comprises a circular bank, *c.* 3m wide and 0.5m high with an overall diameter of *c.* 10m. There is an entrance gap at the east side. Estimation from the remaining few exposed facing stones suggests that all four huts were probably of about the same size, *c.* 7m diameter internally.

b. Hut 2, at the south-east is similar to Hut 1 although the position of the entrance is not clear, possibly at the north-west, facing into the enclosure.

c. Hut 3, at the south-west, is also similar to Hut 1, but the bank is somewhat higher and wider and gives the impression that the hut was deliberately built up above the natural ground surface, not surprising considering it lies only a few feet from marshland which at times must be flooded. The entrance gap is at the south opening onto a causeway across the marsh, running towards the entrance into the settlement enclosure itself.

d. Hut 4 was damaged by tree-throw when first visited in 1996 but the hut circle was still recognisable. However, a further tree or two had fallen by the time of the survey in 1997 and despite careful scrutiny only one side of the circuit can now be made out. The rest is a jumble of lifted up tree boles, tree trunks and brambles. There are burnt stone visible amongst the upturned ground.

e. The enclosure is sub-oval in shape, *c.* 45m across. Its shape gives the impression of having been laid out as a series of joined straight segments rather than a deliberate oval. At first it appears to be an enclosure bank but when studied closely the 'bank' is so low that it seems to be more of a terrace than a bank. On the south-west it is clearer but surmounted by more recent hedge bank, and for a short length, a rubble wall on the outside of which is a ditch. The enclosure bank, is traceable some way on the west side where there it runs rather straight alongside a canalised stream which makes it difficult to be sure of the authenticity of the bank and of the original route of the stream. The bank is also traceable to the east for a way before its outer edge fades into the general slope. The inner edge however, is traceable most of the way around the circuit. It does not follow the line of the modern slate fenced enclosure as suggested by the OS plan. There is no suggestion of an earlier bank beneath the fence line on that side. On the north-west side there is impenetrable scrub and rhododendrons which make the enclosure impossible to trace or survey. At the south, however, is a clear entrance **b**, the west side of which is demarcated by a line of large boulders and another line of boulders lines the edge of the drier terrace leading up to the entrance on the east side. Outside the enclosure and opposite the entrance is a broad, shallow linear hollow **c** which is probably a remnant of hollow-way leading to the enclosure. Inside the entrance is a stony causeway **a** leading towards Hut 3. Between Hut 2 and Hut 4 is another stone line which does not seem to serve any direct purpose since it is actually in the marshy area and not on the edge of it. It may be that it marked what was once the edge of the marsh area and, alternatively, it has been suggested that the linear area of marshy ground along which the stone line lies may actually have originally been a continuation of the hollow-way from the entrance, leading towards Hut 4 and that this has since become waterlogged.

Summary

The settlement is in an unusual position so close to waterlogged ground, even though most settlements of similar type are situated close to spring or stream. Because the stream is now canalised it is difficult to know whether the stream always ran on the west side of the settlement or whether it followed a more sinuous route, which may have taken it through the settlement. Certainly, the marshy area at the west side, inside the enclosure seems too wet to have ever been just part of the enclosure in the sense of use as a yard, but why it should be included within the enclosure is difficult to explain. It has even been suggested that Llyn Cororion may once have been much more extensive and that this settlement formed something like a

'lake village'. It was first investigated by Sir Ifor White and his daughter, Gwenno Cafell still holds some notes. At her request a visit was made by the author and Dr D. Jenkins to look at the site and surroundings. It was thought that, if anything, it was more likely that, with some attention to drainage, the settlement was probably drier at the time of occupation than at present and that most of the marshy soil was only a surface accumulation. However, the presence of waterlogged soils close to the settlement where rubbish can be expected to accumulate, gives it extra research potential.

The enclosure bank may be so low and ill-defined because ploughing may once have infringed it and levelled it. Its spread and the lack of stones does show that it must be mostly an earth bank so it must have been supplemented by a timber fence or a hedge.

Management

The settlement is protected from grazing animals in a fenced enclosure but is within rather over-mature woodland. It is the effects of the tree growth, decay and possible future felling that create a clear threat to the archaeological preservation, which at present is mainly good. However, one of the four huts of the settlement has been severely damaged in recent winters by tree-fall of trees growing on the hut banks, causing almost complete destruction of the hut bank. Trees of a similar age are growing on the banks of the other three huts, but none have yet fallen, threatening eventual damage. Some kind of management programme therefore needs to be put in place.

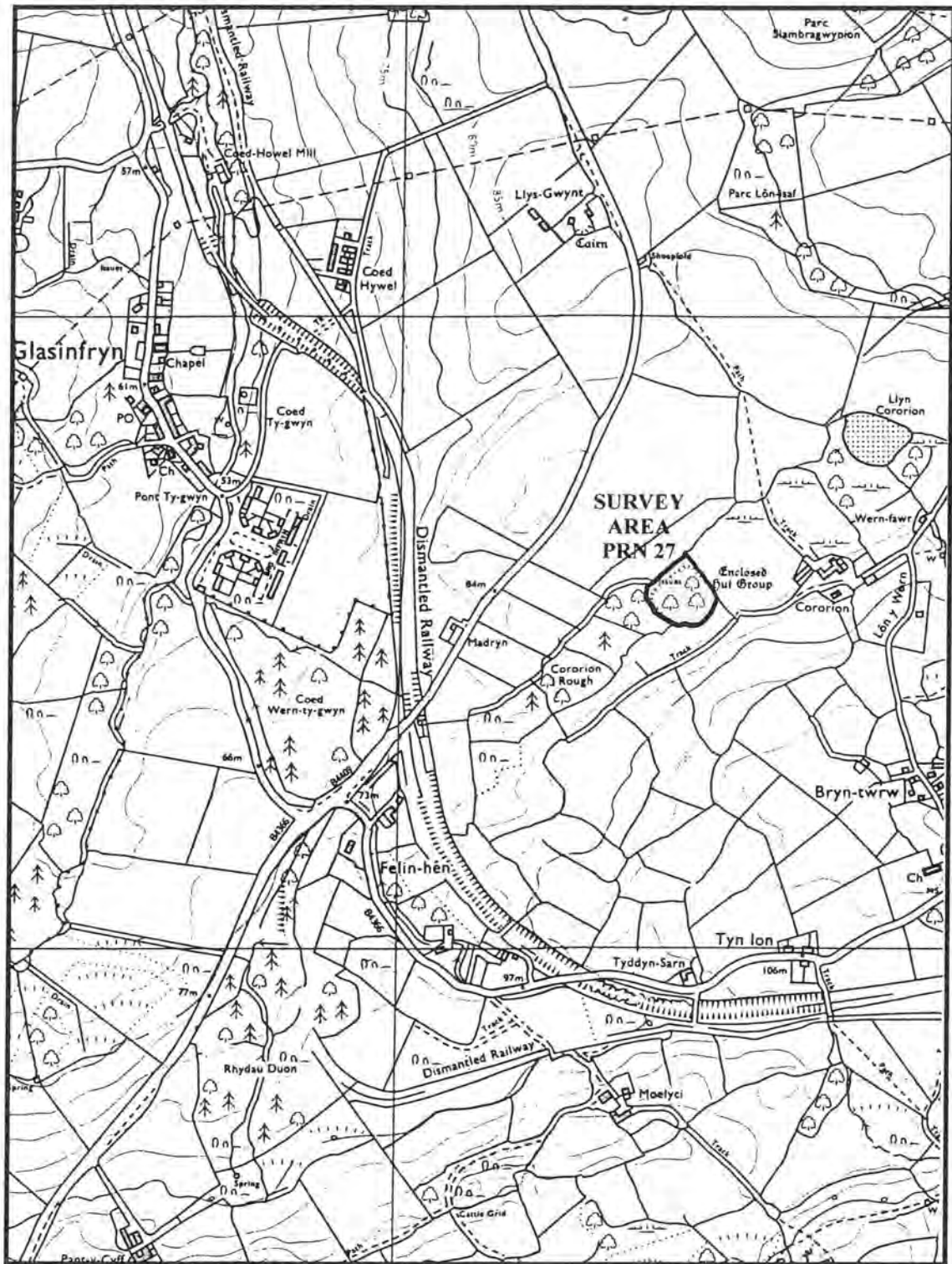


Fig. 8 Location map, enclosed settlement at Cororion, Tregarth, near Bangor, PRN 27, (SH56NE), Scale 1:10,000

4. Enclosed settlement, Fridd Ddu, Trawsfynydd, Meirionnydd, PRN 1604 (SH73SW) (Figs 10-11).

Introduction

This settlement was first noted on wartime aerial photographs by the OS, who then checked and surveyed it (at 1:10000). A more recent aerial photograph of the site has since been published in a book by Peter Crew. The landowner, Mr Gareth Williams is an interested and knowledgeable person and readily agreed to the work. Indeed he would have liked us to excavate the site.

Description

The detailed description does not differ from that previously written as part of the Gwynedd Hut Group survey except in respect to general interpretation.

The settlement area consists of a compact group of five huts of varying sizes arranged around a central courtyard.

The largest, Hut 1, is *c.* 9m diameter internally with walls of earth banks with some inner facing stones visible. The entrance is particularly impressive, edged by large orthostatic slabs in an unusual arrangement, possibly suggesting an internal bench by the door, or a double door.

Hut 2 adjoins to the north and is only *c.* 5m diameter internally with a few internal and external facing stones. This hut almost appears an afterthought, intruding onto the passageway and raised up above it.

Hut 3, across the passage, is even smaller, very ruinous and of uncertain shape, *c.* 4m diameter internally. Adjoining it is another similar sized hut, 4.

Hut 5, to the south lies on its own and is larger, *c.* 6m diameter internally with stone facing and a large orthostatic door jamb.

Adjoining Hut 5 is an irregular area 6, terraced into the slope, possibly an outbuilding or working area.

West of 6 is a vaguely circular area of rubble, partly terraced into the slope but not sufficiently so to identify it as another hut.

The enclosure at first appeared ovoid, *c.* 75m across slope and *c.* 50m up and down slope, bounded by a substantial bank, *c.* 5m across and 1m high. At the up-slope side it becomes more of just a terrace cut into the slope than a free-standing bank. There is a wide entrance at the north-east, down-slope side with an unusual (for North Wales) flanking bank. The passageway, *a*, between the entrance and the settlement area is flanked by banks which continue to join the huts, forming an inner enclosure defined partly by the hut walls and partly by a small bank. The area between the inner, settlement area and the outer bank does not seem to have been easily accessible, that is, there is no substantial entrance such as would be needed if it was used as a stock enclosure, for instance. The north-western part may have been accessed via a gap in the entrance passage next to the outer entrance. The south-eastern part seems to have been isolated, apart from a narrow gap, *b*, in the inner enclosure.

The new survey has shown that the layout may be more complex than was at first recognised. The outer enclosure is not ovoid but consist of two elements: at the north-west it is sub-circular and the south-eastern part is rectilinear. The main house, 1, is approximately central to the sub-circular part. The plan suggests that the settlement may have begun sometime in the first millennium BC as a concentric layout and then have developed with the addition of further huts and of the south-eastern part of the outer enclosure.

The modern field east and north of the settlement shows clear marks of ridge and furrow which is most likely to be associated with the remains of a medieval? rectangular hut not far to the east of the hut circle settlement.

Management

The settlement is complete and in remarkable condition with banks standing to a considerable height. The structures are not very impressive because much of the walls seem to have been of earth and trampling has obscured their outlines. Nevertheless, the structures must still be well preserved below the surface as must be the contemporary floor levels, inside and out.

The field is grazed only by sheep and the remains can be considered to be stable. The field around is bracken covered since it has not been controlled because of a previous management agreement with the Snowdonia National Park. Since then the owner has entered a Tir Cymen agreement and has opened the track below the settlement as a permissive footpath. He would like to have a display board designed and installed to provide information about the settlement and to incorporate a copy of the present survey plan.

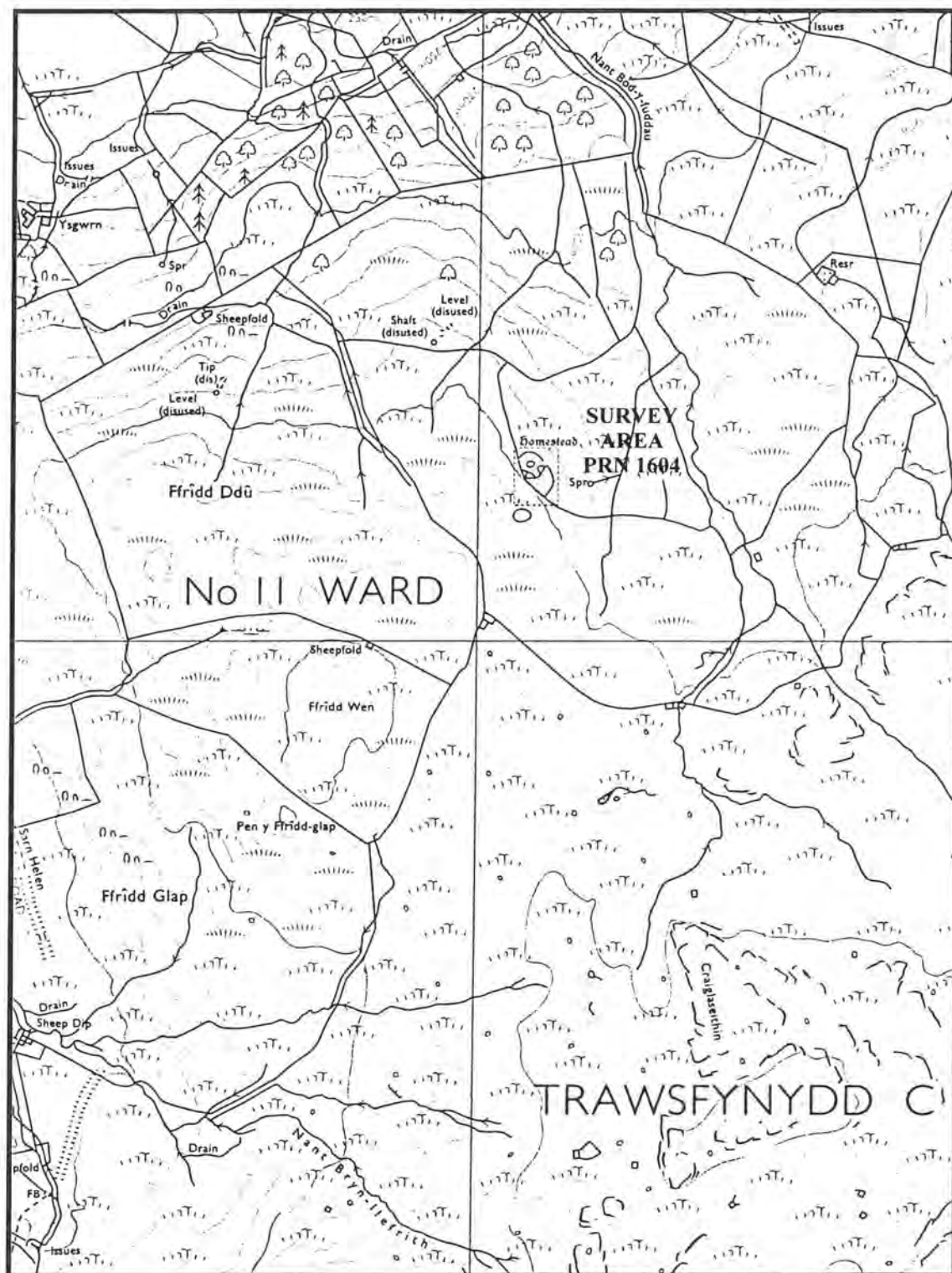


Fig. 10 Location map, enclosed settlement at Fridd Ddu,
Trawsfynydd, PRN 1604 (SH 73SW) Scale 1:10,000

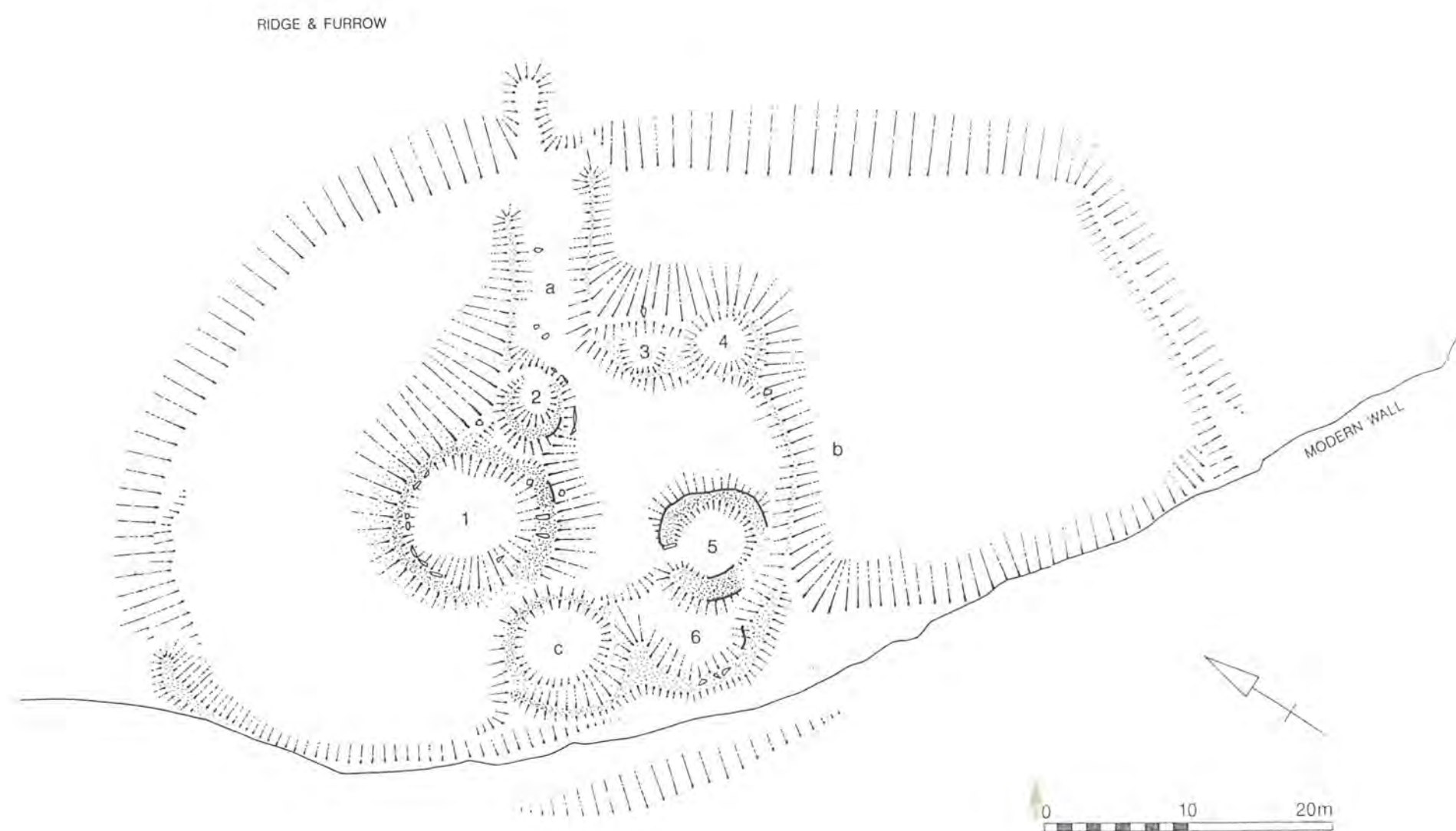


Fig. 11 Detailed survey, settlement at Fridd Ddu, PRN 1604 (SH73SW).

5. Scattered settlement, Llyn Morwynion, Llanffestiniog, Meirionnydd, PRN 5142, 5143, 5144 (SH74SW) (Figs 12-16).

Introduction

Llyn Morwynion lies north-east of Llanffestiniog in rough upland at a height of 360m OD, between the Afon Gamallt and the Afon Gam, about 500m south-west of Y Garnedd (Fig. 12). It is accessible by a public footpath from the Llanffestiniog to Penmachno road, by Llyn Dubach. The marsh around Llyn Dubach is a SSSI for its wetland flora. The area of the survey lies within common land under the control of the Crown Commissioners and at the edge of the Llyn Morwynion reservoir, under the management of Dwr Cymru (Welsh Water). Verbal permission for survey and peat sampling was obtained from Gwilym Jones, Area Supervisor for Dwr Cymru.

The site consists of three separate but probably related features: two hut circles (PRN 5142 and PRN 5144), about 200m apart and a group of small sheepfolds/shelters that appear to overlie a series of earlier, small circular platforms associated with wandering walls (PRN 5143). These features were first recorded in 1985 identified by Twm Elias of the Snowdonia National Park and noted by Peter Crew (Archaeology in Wales 25, p. 24). The most immediate interest was that one of the hut circles was exposed by erosion at the edge of the reservoir, showing it to be buried under about 1m of peat, suggesting the possibility of unusually good preservation and potential. They were visited in October 1995 as part of the Gwynedd Hut Group Survey. At this time the reservoir levels were below normal because of unusually low annual rainfall and a considerable extent of the perimeter of the reservoir floor was exposed, showing that the hut at the edge of the reservoir was overlain by c. 0.8m of peat and that it had been built over an earlier peat bed of which a considerable area was visible, including an in situ tree stump, clearly a land surface contemporary with the hut (Fig. 13). In addition, one of the wandering walls of the complex nearby was also exposed at the edge of the reservoir showing that it appeared to have been built on probably the same surface that the hut circle had been built. It too had been buried by a similar depth of peat so that although it shows on the modern surface as merely a faint, discontinuous line of stones, below the surface it is a very substantial linear stone bank.

The site was visited again 1996, as part of the scheduling proposal process when it was still similarly exposed. A proposal for survey and sampling was then put forward for the following year. Unfortunately, that year proved to have a more normal rainfall and the reservoir returned to its normal levels, submerging the remains. Also in the following winter, because of the previous drought years Dwr Cymru constructed a new water pipeline to transfer water from the Afon Gam to the east into Llyn Morwynion, when necessary, in order to maintain water levels. This means that the remains will now probably remain continually submerged and will not be available to normal archaeology. There may be an opportunity when the reservoir water levels are reduced for bed or dam maintenance but contact with the water engineer shows that there is no imminent prospect of this. The survey and recording was carried out as proposed in May 1998. An overall contoured survey of the area was carried out as well and a more detailed plan and profile of the hut circle at the edge of the reservoir as well as a profile of the stone enclosure bank exposed at the opposite side of the reservoir. Two environmental peat sample columns were also extracted in January 1999 (Figs 15-16). One was from the peat deposit overlying the hut circle, exposed at the reservoir edge and partly under water, from which a normal column was obtained. The other was from the peat deposit underlying the hut, and this could only be obtained from further out in the reservoir and this was successfully obtained by auguring underwater.

Description

The description mainly follows that of the original visit in 1995, when the remains were all exposed to view (Fig. 13).

Hut PRN 5142 is circular, c. 4m diam. internally, with walls c. 1m wide and up to 0.3m high and an entrance gap at the east. The walls are grown over but there is some large laid slab inner and outer facing visible. The hut appears to be built on a deliberately raised rubble platform. It is likely, considering the evidence from 5143 and 5144 (below) that beyond this hut there are other features hidden by blanket peat.

Hut PRN 5144 is visible only in half of its extent, exposed by erosion in a low 'cliff' of peat at the edge of the reservoir. The rest of the hut lies hidden beneath blanket peat that is at a minimum of about 0.6m depth over the highest part of the visible hut wall. The hut is about 4m diam. internally, with a wall about 1m wide and surviving up to 0.4m high. A few inner and outer facing stones are visible. It appears to have

been built over an earlier peat horizon, using flat slabs as footings. The entrance was not visible in the exposed western half of the hut, and would normally be expected to be found in the south-east quarter, away from the prevailing winds.

Just to the west, only 2m beyond the hut wall, probing showed a further 0.6m depth of peat below the surface on which the hut was built and on which as a small tree stump. To the north is an area of stony surface, possibly external flooring, also eroding out of the reservoir edge, below the peat. To the south-west are the remnants of a boulder wall set against larger, in situ boulders, forming a small pen or shelter.

The platforms, PRN 5143, could be the sites of timber huts or of working areas and are enclosed by a wandering wall. This appears on the surface as very tenuous line of boulders but where it is exposed at the edge of the reservoir (Fig. 16, lower) it can be seen to be a substantial boulder bank, sitting on probably the same peat horizon as hut PRN 5144 and buried by a similar depth of blanket peat. The platforms may well be related to the hut circle and the similar size of the two huts 5144 and 5142 also suggests that they may be related.

Management

The site has been assessed as of significant potential both in terms of specific archaeological research potential, and, more generally, in terms of non-statutory criteria. It therefore is appropriate to consider a management response.

The area is remote and little used except for sheep pasture. The features within the heathland are therefore at little risk. Those within or at the edge of the reservoir, however, are at risk:

- a. from water erosion,
- b. from any maintenance works associated with the reservoir
- c. possibly from damage by fishermen who use the reservoir.

Risks b and c can be met but erosion needs direct intervention. The peat cover over the submerged hut circle is eroding slowly and rather less than half of the hut is still covered. A period of exceptional weather with rain and strong wind could feasibly suddenly speed up the erosion. An early response is therefore needed. The present recording and sampling is part of such a response and analysis of the environmental record, and associated radiocarbon dating should help to define the potential. There are two possible responses. The first would be to try to physically protect the remains. This could be done by sandbagging of the hut circle but would not be a permanent or even long term solution, would be unsightly and would be very difficult to carry out because of the lack of wheeled access to the site. The second response would be to excavate and record the remains before they are lost. However, this cannot be done while the reservoir levels are as high. As it is unlikely that the reservoir can be lowered for the archaeological work to take place it would be necessary to arrange for the archaeological recording to take place during the next period of maintenance work on the reservoir. This could mean waiting for some years, by which time the peat cover could have eroded away. A further approach would be to excavate only the land bound area of the hut circle, leaving a protective baulk of peat at the reservoir side. This would allow only a limited area of the hut to be investigated although perhaps, as it should include the entrance area, might be an informative one. It would also require groundwater pumping to allow work. A pump, and other equipment could be brought from the reservoir access track at the south side, by the maintenance boat. Such work might be financially supported by Dwr Cymru, as a more viable alternative to protection works. The value of such work will be determined by the results of the next stage of environmental and dating work.

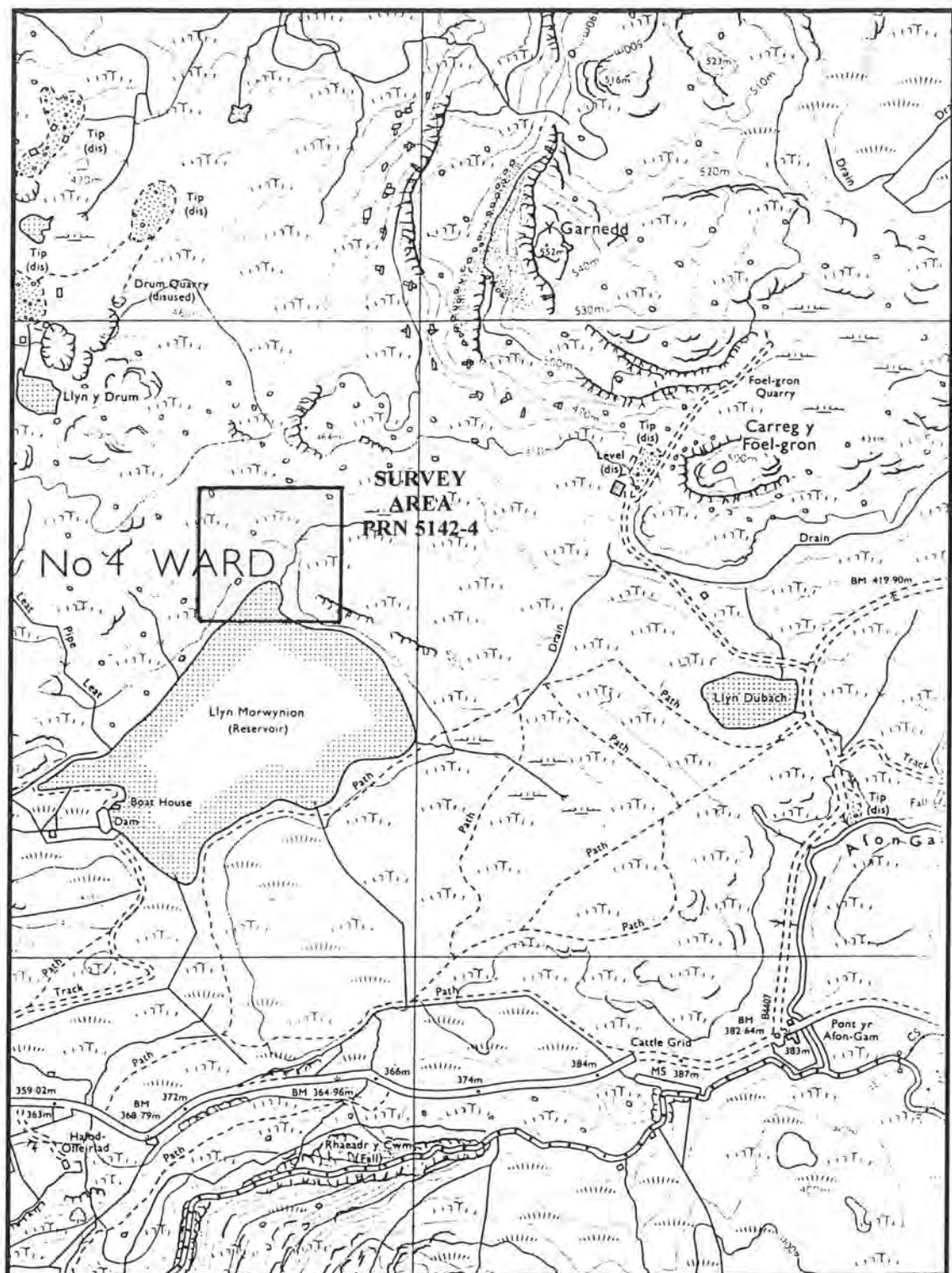


Fig. 12 Location map, scattered settlement at Llyn Morwynion, Ffestiniog, PRN 5142-4, (SH74SW) Scale 1:10,000

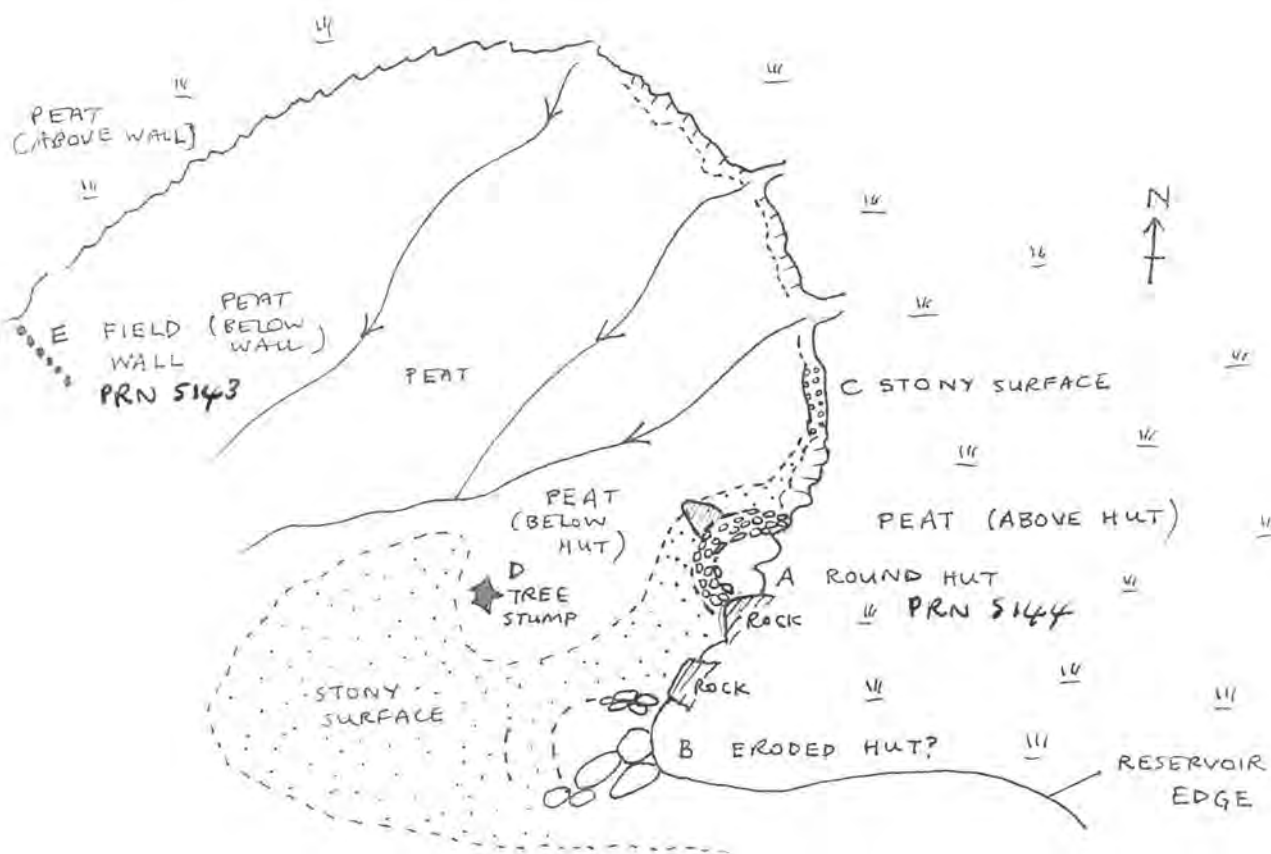


Fig. 13 Sketch survey, settlement features at Llyn Morwynion, PRNs 5142, 5143, exposed by lowered water levels due to drought, 1995.

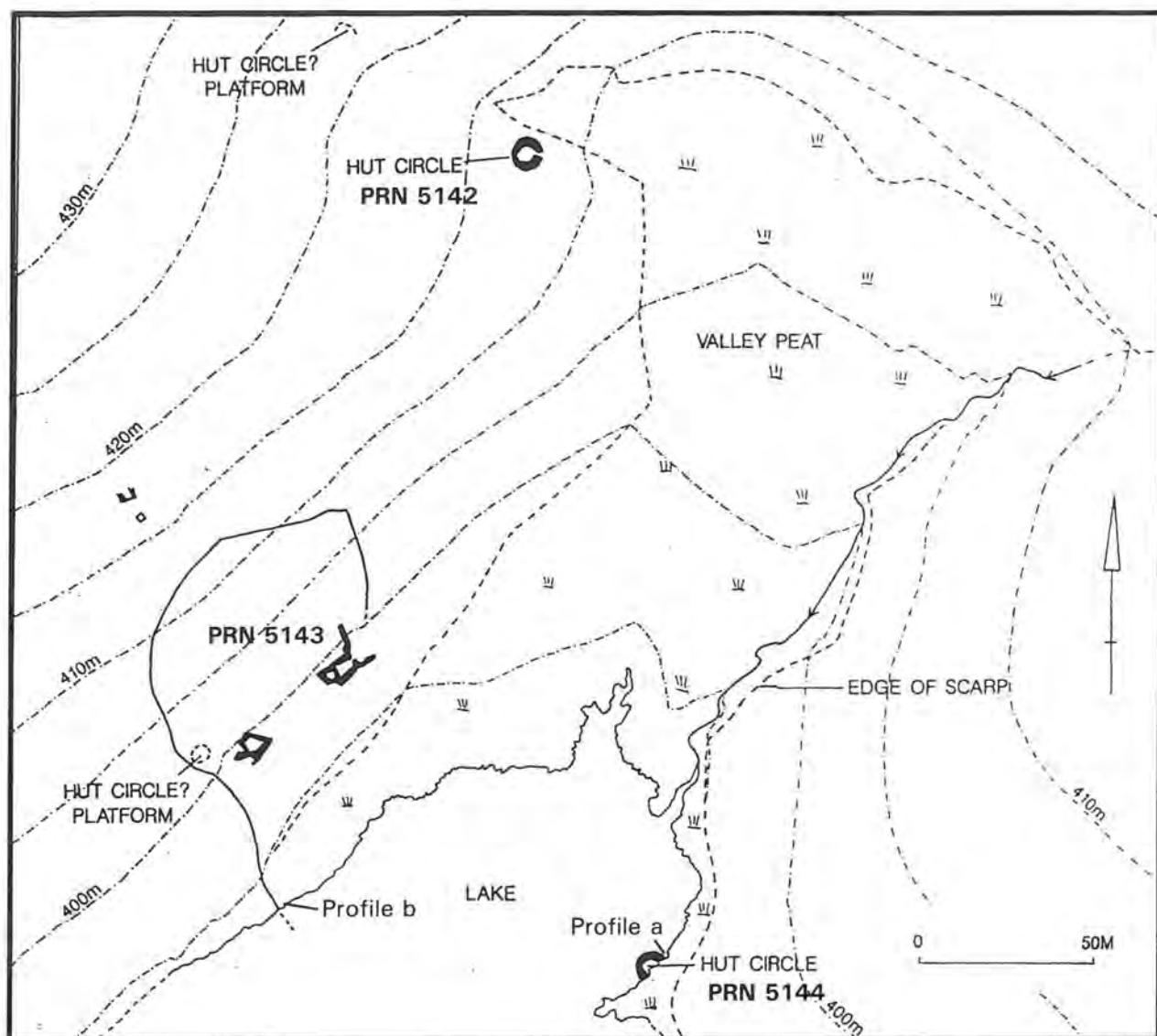


Fig. 14 General survey, settlement at Llyn Morwynion, PRNs 5142-4.

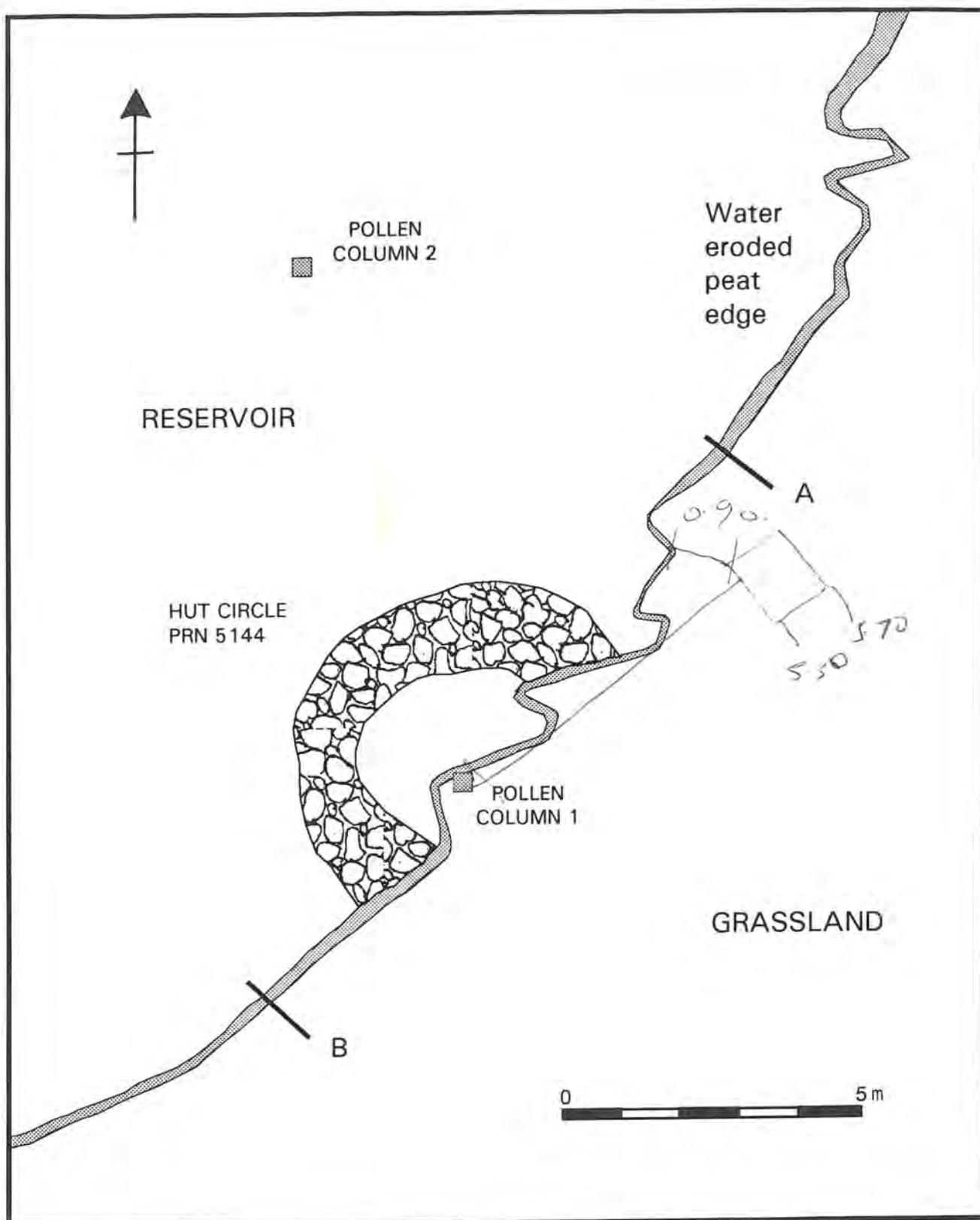
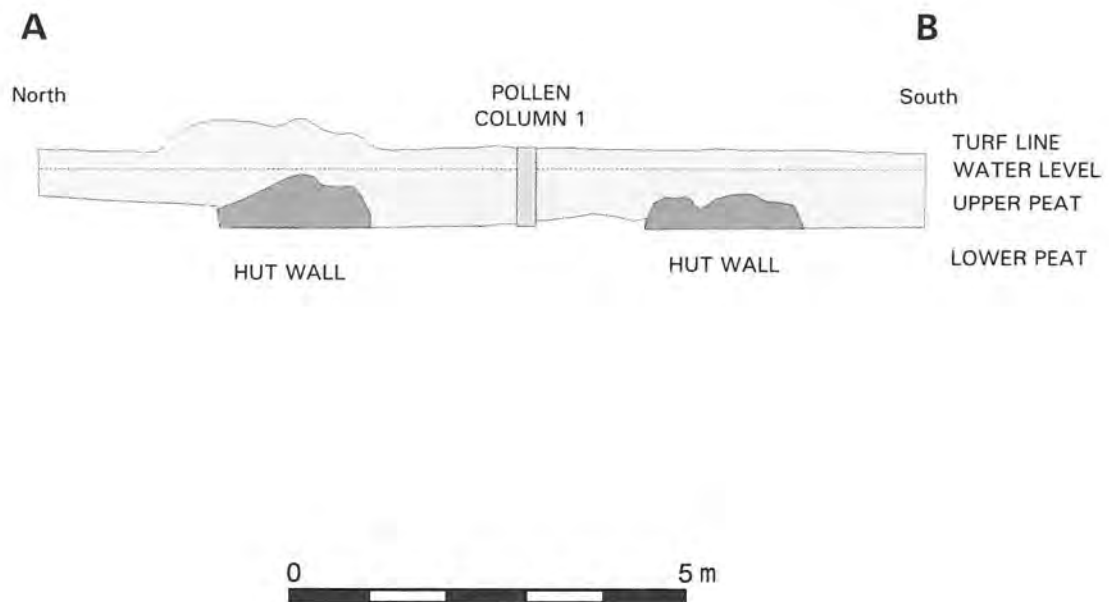


Fig. 15 Detailed survey, hut circle PRN 5144, Llyn Morwynion (stylized fill)

Profile a: hut circle PRN 5144
at east edge of lake



Profile b: buried stone bank, part of PRN 5143,
at west edge of lake

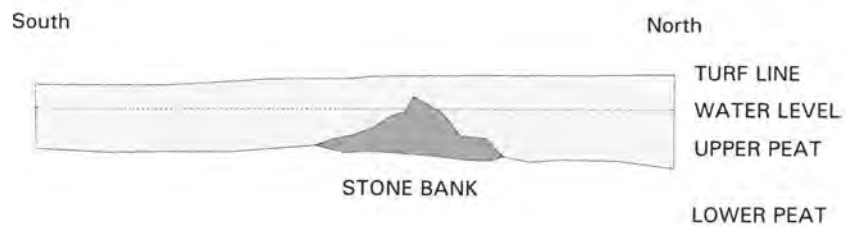


Fig. 16 Lake-edge profiles, hut circle PRN 5144 and enclosure bank part of PRN 5143, Llyn Morwynion

6. Scattered settlement, Caerfadog Uchaf, Dolbenmaen, Dwyfor, PRN 173-177, 2361 (SH54SW) (Figs 17-18).

Introduction

The site lies on a medium to gentle, south-west facing slope in enclosed, improved sheep pasture at the foot of Moel Hebog at a height of 250m OD. The site consists of a scatter of settlement remains lying within a large field centred at SH 545 445 (Fig. 17). These include both round huts and rectangular huts, some lying in close association, suggesting continuity, others lying more widely scattered. The field is part of Traian Farm, to the south, the house now abandoned. There are also three other small farmhouses nearby that have been abandoned, Caerfadog Uchaf, Caerfadog Isaf and Cae Bach, illustrating a decline in the intensity of farming, now reduced to low intensity sheep pasture. Traian belongs to Mr M. Parry of Rorsedd Fawr, Chwilog, who gave verbal permission for the survey. The site is accessible from the private farm track to Traian and by public footpath from the Cwm Ystradlyn road.

The survey included all the hut circle and long or platform huts identified but not all the later slight cultivation terraces and other enclosures because these were found to be both very extensive and complex and to be very tenuous because of recent plough damage. It was also clear that few, if any, related to the hut circle settlement, although they could relate to the long hut/ platform hut settlement as was suggested by the RCAHM (Caernarvonshire Inventory, 1960, 87). More detail of these could be added by further time spent surveying or possibly by adding details from aerial photographs, if they could be taken at particularly advantageous times of low light.

Description

The field has obviously been partially cleared of stone in the past, and lightly ploughed and reseeded for pasture. Earthwork remains of earlier settlement still survive although of mainly quite low earthworks, not upstanding structures. There are several enclosures, some with ridge and furrow that look like arable fields for medieval or post-medieval cultivation. There is an unfinished drystone wall running across the area and there are three 'shelter walls' built up from clearance stone. Most of the remains survive as grassy banks and platforms although some walls remain. Nevertheless, most of the outlines of the individual features can be seen.

One group of features, including long huts and hut circles was planned by Gresham, illustrated in his article 'Platform Houses in North Wales' (Arch. Camb. 1954, Site III, Fig. 9 and pp 35-6) although not there tied in to OS map information. This area was therefore incorporated into the survey to produce an overall plan. In all there are six areas of features, three of them, PRNs 173, 174 and 2361 make up Gresham's Site III. This site is of particular interest because of its similarity to the documented medieval settlement at Gesail Gyfarch, 2.5km to the south and one of a possibly related scatter of long hut settlements in this area identified by Gresham. In terms of the present survey it is also of interest because of the survival of round huts and their possible relation to the long hut settlement.

PRN 173. Three or four hut probable hut circles consisting only of circular platforms, now very much graded into the general slope. One is much larger than the rest at c. 10m diam., and there are two others to the north and west about 4m diam. that look like the remains of huts. That at the north has slight remains of a stone-faced earth bank. There is also a smaller, possibly sub-square platform that seems to overlie the larger platform and there are two other slight scoops that seem to be just scarps, not useable platforms.

PRN 174. Platform house.

PRN 175. Five hut circles. Like PRN 173, one is clearly much larger at c. 10m diam. with the other four about 5m diam. There are slight traces of wall banks.

PRN 176. Three hut circles. These lie at the angle of a probably post-medieval rectangular-walled enclosure and have been incorporated in it and robbed for its construction. Only one of the huts, the northern one, is reasonably well preserved and is c. 5m diam. internally with a stone-faced earth wall about 1m wide and up to 0.6m high. The others are visible mainly as circular rubble platforms.

PRN 177. Two hut circles. These lie at the west of the modern field close to a stream in a rough marginal area just outside the area of medieval and post-medieval cultivation and so have survived almost intact. They are of particular interest because they form an unusual, very similar pair, joined by straight length of

wall bank. Both are in good condition and about 7m diam. internally with orthostatic stone-faced walls, about 1m wide and up to 0.6m high. They have entrances that face each other next to and on the north side of the joining wall so that it would have provided shelter from the prevailing winds. Both have fallen orthostatic entrance jambs.

PRN 2361. Platform house.

PRN 178. To the south of 177, cut by a modern field boundary and obscured by rubble dumping from a drainage ditch alongside the boundary. This was recognised as a slight platform and bank in 1994 but was not identifiable in 1998.

PRN 179. A single hut in the next modern field to the south, lies in the base of a small valley and seems to have partially survived clearance through being on the edge of the improved area. However, it consists of little more than a circular scoop with slight evidence of a bank or wall at the south side. A terrace joining it just above the slope is probably just the edge of more recent cultivation.

Management

The site has particular value for the extent and number of settlement features and for the intimate association of long huts and hut circles rather than for the condition of the remains themselves. It has added value as part of a contemporary pattern of early settlement in the area identified by Gresham, which includes documented medieval settlements at Gesail Gyfarch and Cefn y Fan although Gresham could find no documentary reference to that at Caerfadog Uchaf.

Of the individual hut circle sites comprising the complex the SUM values of the criteria scores were not all high, being 17, 17, 19, 21, 18 and 19, respectively. Nevertheless, the overall value is higher and the site was noted for possible scheduling although reserved until the long huts had been assessed. As these are generally slightly better preserved than the hut circles then they would probably achieve a higher score. Together, the features would be of clear potential for scheduling. However, unfortunately, between the original visit for the Hut Group Survey and that for the Deserted Rural Settlement Survey, the field was reploughed and reseeded. This lowered the condition and visibility of the remains and following a further visit as part of the Gwynedd Deserted Rural Settlement Survey none of the medieval remains were assessed as of high value by that survey. Elements of the medieval settlement remains were given further individual record numbers, PRNs 6752 and 6753 (Fig. 18). However, the remains were all still visible, if reduced in overall condition and it was worthwhile to record them as they comprise an exceptional group of features and further ploughing in future is likely to reduce their visibility even further.

The two well-preserved hut circles, PRN 177 were suggested to be of national importance while the complex making up Gresham's site III, PRNs 173, 174 and 2361 were suggested to be possibly worthy of protection for their associated group value rather than their individual value. The whole complex is clearly at risk of eventual complete removal with continuing ploughing and reseeded at intervals. A general management agreement for the whole field would make more sense than piecemeal preservation.

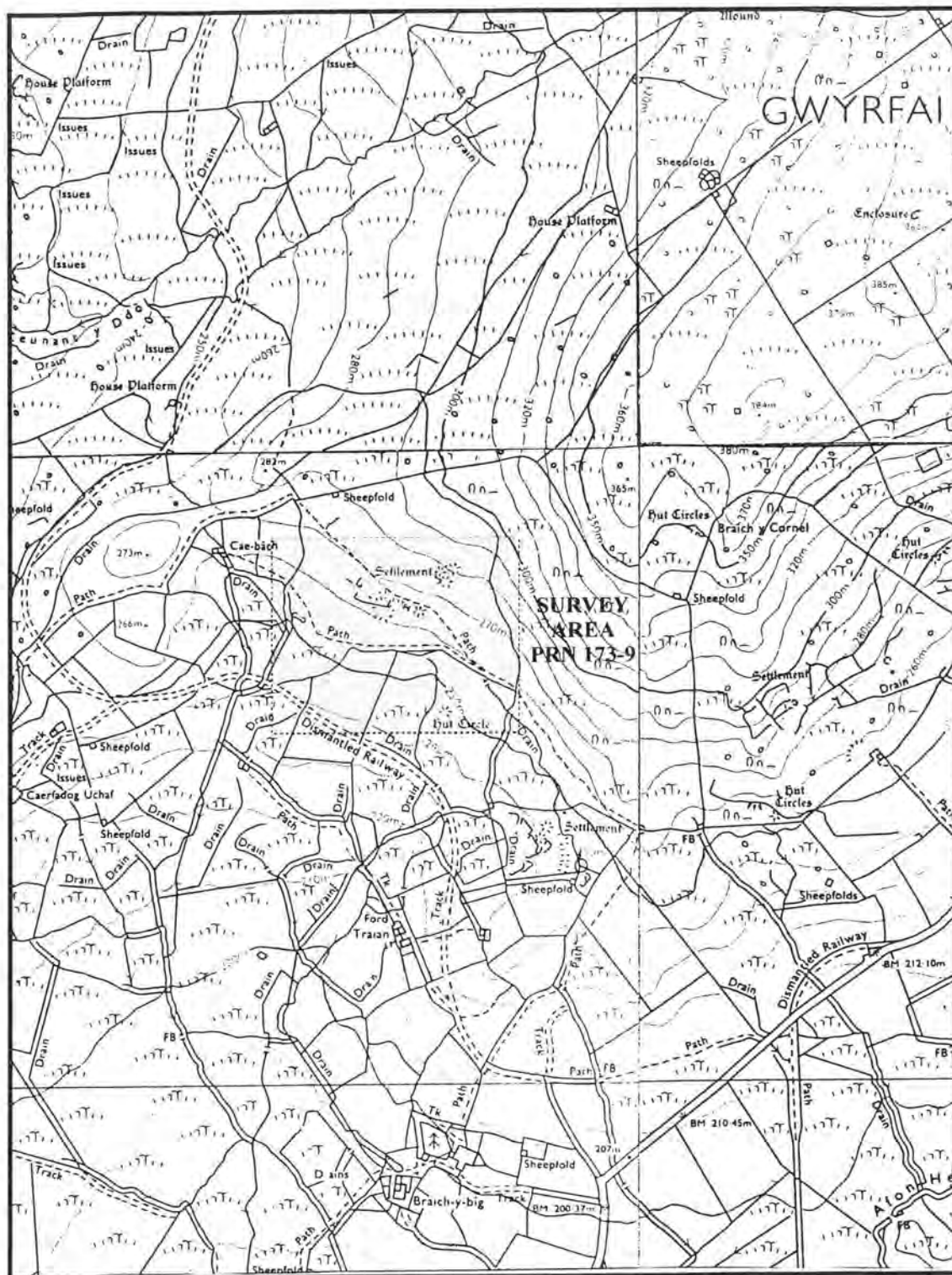


Fig. 17 Location map, scattered settlement at Caerfadog Uchaf, Dolbenmaen, PRNs 173-9, (SH54SW) Scale 1:10,000

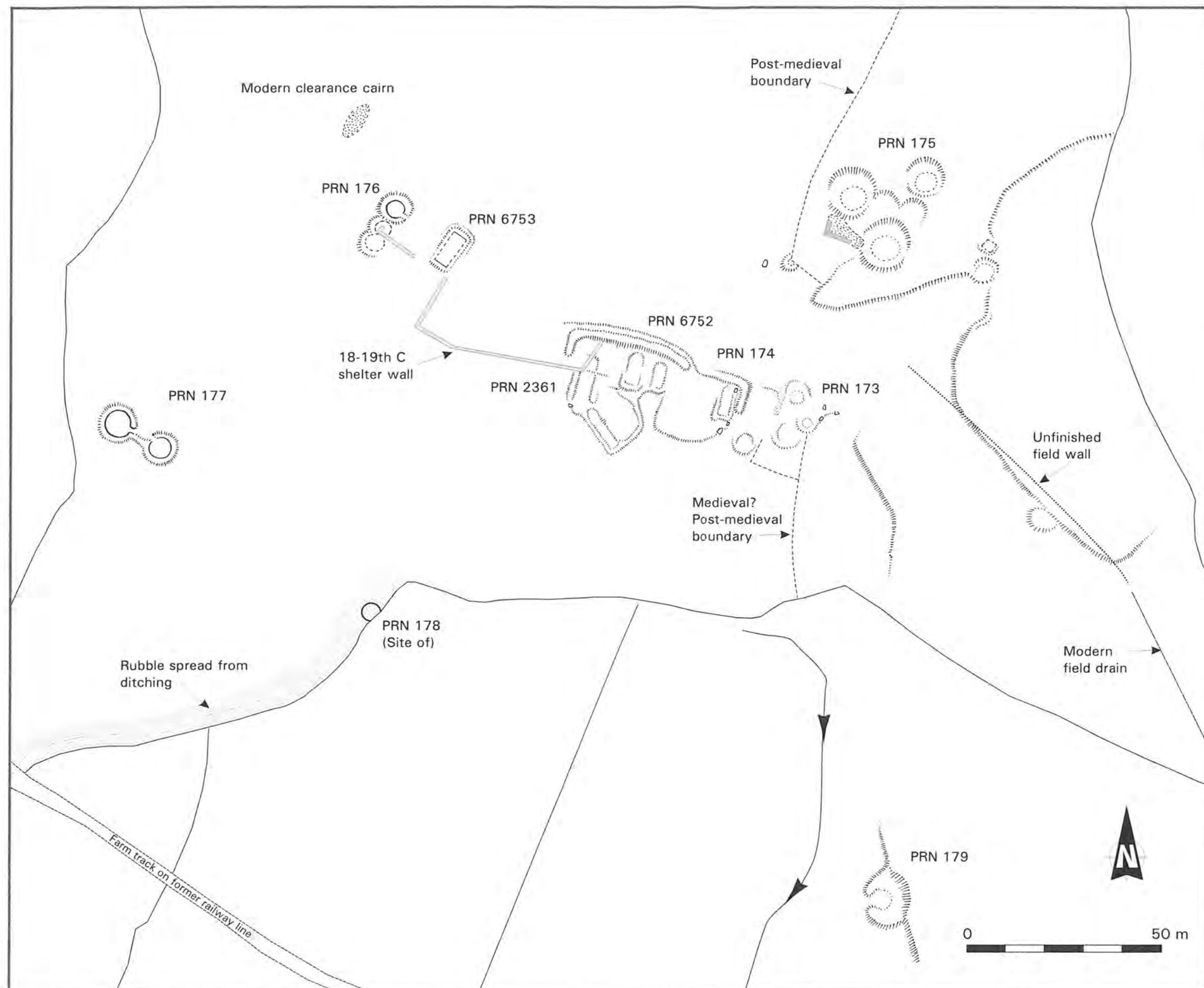


Fig. 18 General survey, hut circle and long hut settlement at Caerfadog Uchaf, PRNs 173-9, 2361, 6752-3.

D. LIST OF FIGURES

1. Location of hut circle settlement surveys, SMR record numbers (PRNs).
2. Location map, settlement PRN 5214, NE of Moel y Gerddi (SH63SW), Scale 1:10,000.
3. General survey, nucleated settlement and field system north-east of Moel y Gerddi, Llanfair, Meirionnydd, PRN 5214 (SH63SW).
4. Detailed survey, settlement NE of Moel y Gerddi, PRN 5214.
5. Location map, nucleated settlements south of Penbodlas, near Llanbedrog, PRNs 418, 4017 (SH 23SE), Scale 1:10,000.
6. General survey, settlements south of Penbodlas, PRNs 418, 4017.
7. Detailed survey, settlements south of Penbodlas, PRNs 418, 4017.
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11. Detailed survey, settlement at Fridd Ddu, PRN 1604 (SH73SW).
12. Location map, scattered settlement at Llyn Morwynion, Ffestiniog, PRNs 5142-4 (SH74SW), Scale 1:10,000.
13. Sketch survey, settlement at Llyn Morwynion, PRNs 5142-4, exposed by lowered water levels due to drought, 1995.
14. General survey, settlement at Llyn Morwynion, PRNs 5142-4.
15. Detailed survey, Hut circle PRN 5144, Llyn Morwynion.
16. Lake-edge profiles, hut circle PRN 5144 and enclosure bank part of PRN 5143, Llyn Morwynion.
17. Location map, scattered settlement at Caerfadog Uchaf, Dolbenmaen, PRNs 173-9 (SH54SW), Scale 1:10,000.
18. General survey, hut circle and long hut settlement at Caerfadog Uchaf, PRNs 173-9, 2361, 6752-3,

