

TRE'R CEIRI MONITORING VISIT

7TH JUNE 2000

Report number : 365

G1605

Prepared for
GWYNEDD COUNCIL

JUNE 2000

Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Gwynedd
Gwynedd Archaeological Trust

Event PRN
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By

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Introduction

Tre'r Ceiri (SH373446) is an exceptionally well preserved hillfort standing at a height of 485m on the easternmost of the three peaks of Yr Eifl, on the Llyn Peninsula. The two-hectare fort is bounded by a massive, 2.3 to 3.0m thick, dry-stone wall. Unusually, due to the inaccessibility of the site and the abundance of stone on the peak very little masonry has been cleared from the site for re-use. The rampart has survived close to its original height of up to 3.5m in places, the best-preserved portions retaining a dry-stone rampart. A further outer defensive wall stands to the north-west of the fort. There are two defended entrances through the inner rampart, at the south-west and north-west of the fort with additional simple gaps in the rampart at the north, west and south-east. The rampart is carried over the north 'postern' by several stone lintels. The north-west entrance appears have been the main entrance into the fort with a 15m long passage leading to a terraced pathway and a further gateway through the outer defensive wall. The interior of the fort contains the remains of about 150 dry-stone huts and enclosures exhibiting a great variation in size and shape, ranging from simple round huts to irregular and rectangular structures.

This spectacular site has been attracting large numbers of visitors for at least 100 years. Complaints about visitor damage were made by the Cambrian Archaeological Association as long ago as 1894 (Cambrian Archaeological Association 1895). The erosion and general deterioration in the condition of the site prompted Cyngor Dosbarth Dwyfor, in conjunction with Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments and Gwynedd County Council, to embark in 1989 on a conservation project to consolidate the site. The project ran for an initial five years. Gwynedd Archaeological Trust was commissioned to provide archaeological supervision and to record all works as they progressed. A management plan was produced at the end of the fifth season including a survey of all unconserved areas in the fort, recommendations for a further, concluding, five years' work and a long-term management strategy. Funding was subsequently agreed by Cyngor Dosbarth Dwyfor, Cadw and Gwynedd County Council for a further five-year program which commenced in 1994. Local government reorganisation in 1996 led to the formation of a new unitary authority, Gwynedd Council, who took over the management of the project from C.D.D. again with financial help from Cadw. The tenth season of the project was managed by C.D.D. and funded by Cadw. Work was completed in mid November 1998.

A strategy for the long-term management of the site was agreed during the latter years of the project and a management plan was produced (Hopewell 1999). The masonry on the site had been stabilised but remained somewhat vulnerable to erosion by the increasing numbers of visitors. Study of previous damage to the site had shown that the most efficient way of conserving the masonry is to consolidate damage soon after it has occurred thus ensuring that any areas of instability do not spread into the surrounding masonry.

It was therefore agreed that two monitoring visits should be carried out per annum. These visits would allow minor stabilisation work such as the backfilling of metal detector holes and the replacement of occasional stones to be carried out. A contingency budget was also put in place allowing a team of 3 stonemasons to be contracted for three days per annum to allow for the conservation of any more serious problems. The first monitoring visit was carried by G.A.T. out in August 1999.

G.A.T was contracted to carry out the second monitoring visit.

Results of the monitoring visit

The site was inspected on Wednesday 7th June 2000.

All masonry on the site was inspected for damage and points of instability. Provision was made for photographic, drawn and written recording.

The following minor areas of damage were identified and were marked onto a plan of the site (Fig. 1). Written records were kept of all works.

The Huts

1. A 0.2m deep hole, with dimensions of 0.2 x 0.3m, had been dug into the floor of hut 70. The hole had been dug into material that had been reinstated during the 10th season of the conservation project and no *in situ* remains had been disturbed. The excavation extended to below the wall foundations and the stability of the northern wall of the hut was being threatened. The hole was therefore backfilled.

The North-West Entrance

2. A single stone had been slightly displaced on the top of one of the outer flanking walls. This was in an area of original masonry and lichen growth patterns indicated the stone's original position. The stone was pushed back into place.

The Ramparts

Four areas of instability were identified, all of which appeared to have been caused by visitors walking along the tops of the rampart.

3. The action of visitors walking along the wall top had caused a patch of wall core to become loose. A few loose stones that were causing the instability were repacked into the core.

4. Two stones had been kicked off the end of the reinstated parapet. These were reset in order to stabilise the rest of the masonry.

5. A large stone in an area of reinstated masonry was balancing precariously on the edge of the outer rampart face. The stone appeared to have been pulled off by a visitor attempting to climb the rampart at this point. The stone was reset in its original position and the core was repacked behind it.

6. A loose stone on the inner face was stabilised by the addition of a single packing stone.

General observations

The cairn was observed to be in good condition with no obvious disturbance or remodelling having occurred since the last monitoring visit. All three notice boards were still standing and in reasonable condition although some shrinkage of the stick-on panels had occurred.

Discussion

No serious damage had occurred to the site over the ten months since the last inspection. Six minor points of instability were identified all of which were easily stabilised. In all cases more severe damage could have occurred within a short space of time if the stabilisation works had not been carried out. The damage to the rampart and entrance had been caused by the continuing tendency of visitors to climb on, and walk along the top of the ramparts. The hole in the floor of hut 70 may have been dug by a treasure hunter.

References

- Cambrian Archaeological Association 1895, 'Report of Carnarvon Meeting, July 1894.' *Archaeologia Cambrensis* 5th series XII, 146-148.
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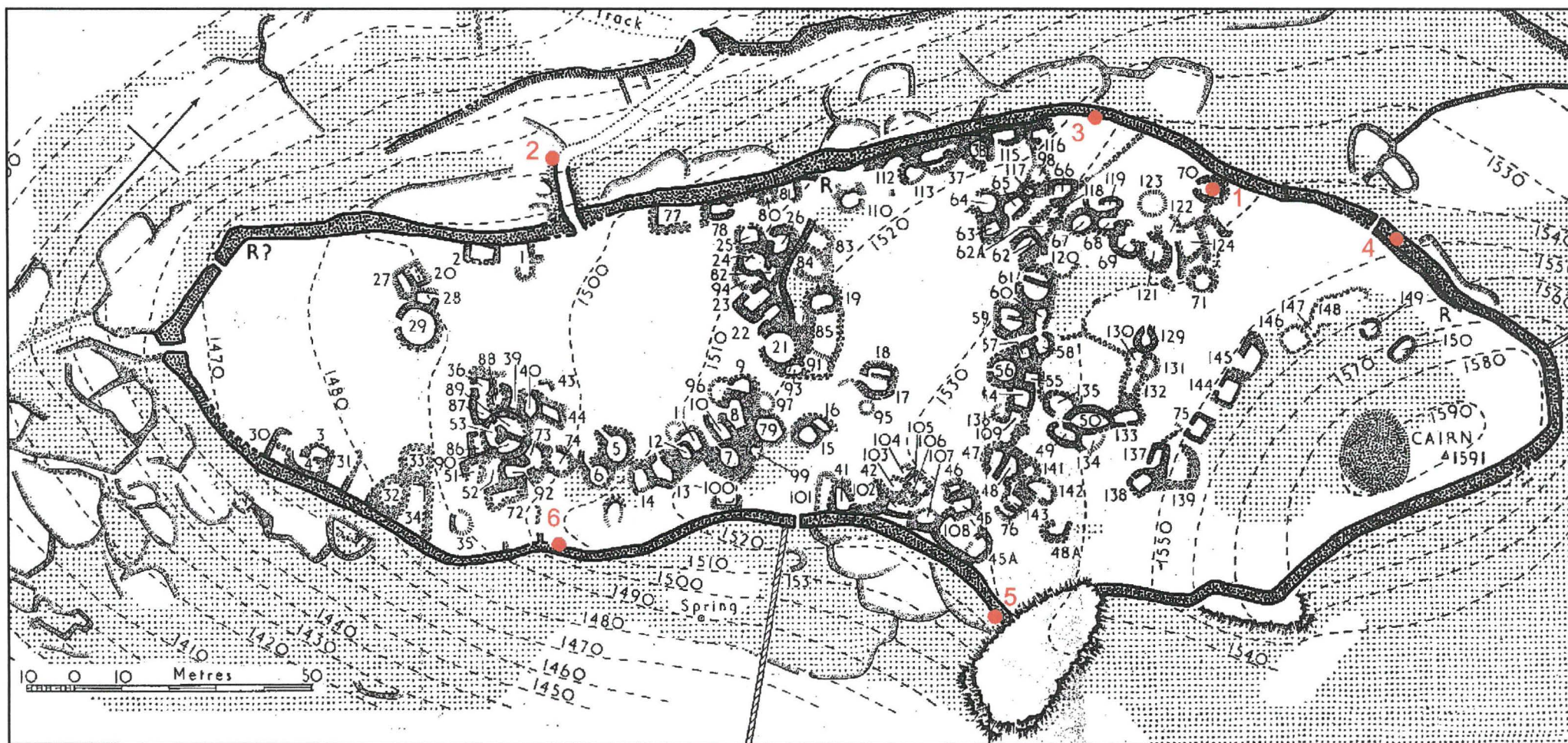


Fig. 1 Tre'r Ceiri (after RCAHMW 1960) showing points of instability identified in the June 2000 monitoring visit

