
Coedydd Aber NNR
Historic Landscape Resource Management Survey:
Stage One Report



GAT Project G1553
CCW North West Area No NSO2524

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Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Gwynedd
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Crynodeb Gweithredol / Executive summary

HARMS Coedydd Aber

Comisiynodd Cyngor Cefn Gwlad Cymru, Ymddiriedolaeth Archeolegol Gwynedd i wneud astudiaeth rhychwantu o archeoleg a hanes tirlun Gwarchodfa Natur Genedlaethol Coedydd Aber. Gwnaed yr astudiaeth i gynorthwyo'r gwaith rheoli o ddydd i ddydd, i ddarparu deunyddiau crai ar gyfer gwell dehongli o'r dyffryn i'r cyhoedd ac i ddarparu gwybodaeth ynghylch datblygiad amgylchedd y dyffryn a allai gael ei fwydo i strategaethau rheoli ar lefel cysyniadol. Roedd y gwaith yn golygu rhychwantu natur a maint y ffynonellau hanesyddol gwirioneddol a phosibl, ymgymryd ag ymchwil ddogfennol ragarweiniol a gweithredu rhaglen helaeth o arolygu maes. Mae'r olaf wedi datgelu nifer fawr o nodweddion pwysig nad oedd wedi eu cofnodi'n flaenarol, gan gynnwys aneddiadau cyn-hanesyddol a chanol oesol ynghyd ag olion y tirluniau amaethyddol yr oeddynt wedi eu lleoli ynddynt. Mae cyfanswm sylweddol o ddogfennaeth archifol yn parhau ac mae'r ardal yn cynnig posibilrwydd o astudiaeth anghyffredin o helaeth a manwl o ddefnydd tir a ffyrdd o fyw yn y gorffennol. Gyda'i gilydd, mae darganfyddiadau'r gwaith maes a'r ymchwil hanesyddol yn ei gwneud yn bosibl i dynnu casgliadau rhagarweiniol ynglyn â'r modd y mae pobl a oedd yn byw yn y dyffryn wedi shapio ac wedi cael eu siapio a'r modd y mae pobi a oedd yn byw yn y dyffryn ynglyn

wedi siapio ac wedi cael eu siapio gan ei amgylchedd dros amser. Lleolir yr ardal ar ryngwyneb gwastadedd arfordirol ffrwythlon a'r ucheldiroedd mynyddig, ffactor sydd wedi dylanwadu ar yr amrediad o weithgareddau amaethyddol sy'n bosibl. Ond mae patrymau cymdeithas a defnydd tir wedi amrywio'n sylweddol gydag amser.

Cofnodwyd nodweddion yn rhychwantu dros dair mil o flynyddoedd o hanes dynol yn ystod yr arolwg a safleoedd claddu cyn-hanesyddol i weddillion chwarela ac amaethyddiaeth yn y bedwaredd ganrif ar bymtheg. Roedd pentref Aber yn safle un o'r maenorau, neu lysoedd, Tywysogion Gwynedd yn ystod y Canol Oesoedd cyn i Gymru gael ei choncro, ac roedd teuluoedd yn y dyffryn wedi eu clymu wrth economi'r llys brenhinol. Daeth traddodiad canol oesol o aneddu tymhorol yn gysylltiedig â phori gwartheg ar dir porfa'r ucheldir yn ystod misoedd yr haf, i ben yn ystod y ddeunawfed ganrif wrth i economi yn seiliedig ar ddefaid gael ei ddatblygu gan y stadau oedd yn rheoli'r ardal. Sefydlwyd mân-ddaliad yr oedd rhywun yn byw ynddo yn barhaus yn y dyffryn, a hynny mae'n debyg yn rhan gyntaf y bedwaredd ganrif ar bymtheg. Mae twristiaeth a diwydiant hefyd yn nodweddion pwysig o hanes y dyffryn yn ogystal â defnyddio a rheoli coedlannau, ffactor sy'n hanfodol i ecoleg cyfoes y Gwarchodfa Natur Genedlaethol, ac yn fwyaf nodedig i fflora cen cerrig cyfoethog y goedlan hynafol y mae'r dyffryn yn enwog o'i phlegid.

Mae'r adroddiad hwn yn crynhoi darganfyddiadau'r prosiect. Mae'n cynnwys arolwg o gronoleg a phatrwm y defnydd tir hanesyddol yn y dyffryn ynghyd â rhestr fanwl o'r holl nodweddion archeolegol a gofnodwyd yn ystod y gwaith maes. Nodir anghenion rheoli penodol ar gyfer pob un o'r nodweddion, a lle bo hynny'n briodol, gwnaed argymhellion ynghylch ymchwiliadau pellach. Tynnir sylw at y ffyrdd y gall yr astudiaeth rhychwantu hon ddatblygu gyda gwaith pellach. Mae'r astudiaeth wedi dangos gwerth gwaith o'r math hwn ac yn darparu glasbrint y gellid ei fabwysiadu ar gyfer safleoedd dynodedig o bwysigrwydd amgylcheddol mewn rhannau eraill o Gymru.

Coedydd Aber HARMS survey

The Countryside Council for Wales commissioned Gwynedd Archaeological Trust to carry out a scoping study of the archaeology and landscape history of Coedydd Aber National Nature Reserve. The study was undertaken to assist day to day management, to provide raw materials for the better interpretation of the valley to the public and to provide information on the development of the valley's environment that could feed into management strategies at a conceptual level. The work involved assessing the nature and extent of historical sources, undertaking preliminary documentary research, and implementing an extensive programme of field survey. The latter has revealed a large number of important and previously unrecorded features, including prehistoric and medieval settlements along with traces of the agricultural landscapes in which they were set. A significant quantity of archival documentation survives and the area offers the possibility of an unusually extensive and detailed study of past land use and life styles. Together, the findings of the fieldwork and the historical research allow preliminary conclusions to be drawn about the way in which people living in the valley have both shaped, and been shaped by, its environment through time. The area lies at the interface of a fertile coastal plain and the mountainous uplands, a factor that has influenced the range of possible agricultural activities. However, patterns of society and landuse have varied considerably over time.

Features spanning over three thousand years of human history were recorded during the survey from prehistoric burial sites to the remains of 19th century quarrying and agriculture. Aber village was the site of one of the manors, or *llysoedd*, of the princes of Gwynedd during the middle ages prior to the conquest of Wales, and sites in the valley were tied into the economy of the Royal court. A medieval tradition of seasonal settlement associated with the grazing of cattle on upland pastures during the summer months, came to an end during the eighteenth century as a sheep based economy was developed by the landed estates which controlled the area. A permanently occupied smallholding was established in the valley, probably in the early part of the nineteenth century. Tourism and industry are also important features of the valley's history, as is woodland exploitation and management, a factor which is fundamental to the contemporary ecology of the National Nature Reserve, most notably to the rich ancient woodland lichen flora for which the valley is noted.

This report summarises the findings of the project. It comprises a review of the chronology and pattern of historic landuse in the valley together with a detailed gazetteer of all archaeological features recorded during the fieldwork. Specific management needs are identified for each of the features, and where appropriate, recommendations for further investigation have been made. The ways in which this scoping study can be carried forward by further work are highlighted. The study has demonstrated the value of work of this kind and provides a blueprint that could be adopted for designated sites of environmental importance elsewhere in Wales.

Acknowledgements

The Trust wishes to thank Richard Kelly and Duncan Brown for their comments and advice throughout the course of the project and Clifton Hughes (Beaver) and David Jones for their help in the field. Beaver is a keen archaeology enthusiast and discovered many of the sites that are described for the first time in this report.

The work has been carried out, and the report compiled, by John Roberts, Dr David Gwyn and David Thompson.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Countryside Council for Wales commissioned Gwynedd Archaeological Trust to carry out a scoping study of the archaeology and landscape history of Coedydd Aber National Nature Reserve. The study forms the first phase of a broader HARMS (historic landscape and archaeological resource management survey) initiative for the NNR and includes a review of archival resources, an extensive programme of field survey and the initial findings of oral history work. The purpose of the study was to gather information about the archaeological and historic landscape of the Reserve in order to inform and better integrate its management with nature conservation resources.
- 1.2 The NNR is located in the Abergwyngregyn (Aber) valley, a steep-sided valley situated between the Carneddau mountains of Snowdonia and the coastal plain of north-west Wales (figure 1). Landuse within valley is varied - the floor is a patchwork of fields, deciduous woods and coniferous forest, which gives way to upland grazing and open moorland on the upper slopes. It lies within both the Snowdonia National Park and the North Arllechwedd Landscape Area, which is included in the Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments/CCW/ICOMOS UK Register of Landscapes of Outstanding Historical Interest (Cadw 1998). The NNR receives over 40,000 visitors a year and is popular with both local people and tourists.
- 1.3 The valley's environs include many nationally important archaeological sites, such as: the Neolithic stone axe source at Graiglwyd, Penmaenmawr; the Bronze Age mines at the Great Orme, Llandudno; and the henge and cursus complex at Llandegai near Bangor. Abergwyngregyn was the commotal centre of Arllechwedd Uchaf, and was a favourite residence of the princes of Gwynedd in the thirteenth century (Davies 1987, 119). Princess Joan and Dafydd ap Llywelyn, wife and son of Llywelyn ab Iorwerth are both known to have died there (Jones 1955, 235, 239 quoted in Johnstone 2000).
- 1.4 Features relating to settlement and agriculture from the prehistoric period to the present day are abundant throughout the area, but are generally poorly understood in relation to the better known sites. Archaeological features in the Aber valley include exceptionally well preserved prehistoric and medieval settlement remains, extensive traces of agricultural activity relating to both animal husbandry and cultivation, a substantial hillfort, and a number of possible prehistoric burial sites.

2 Project rationale and objectives

- 2.1 The HARMS initiative represents an important interface between landscape history and nature conservation. Particular reference was to be made during the project to knowledge of past land-use as a means of understanding the development of the ecology of the valley. The following themes and subjects were identified as key objectives of the project:
 - to gather and interpret information on cultural traditions, settlement and land-use history of the prehistoric period to the present day;
 - to advise on land use practices and management within the National Nature Reserve from the perspective of environmental history;
 - to provide a background within which everyday management of the reserves (for example path repair, coppicing and so on) can be carried out without risk of inadvertent damage to archaeological features and the historic landscape;
 - to provide raw materials and information for interpretation and educational purposes;
 - to identify areas where further investigation is required.
- 2.2 At a general level, it was also hoped that the project could establish and trial a standard methodology for the evaluation, management and study of the cultural heritage of a designated nature conservation area.

KEY
 Limit of HARMS study area

3 Assessment of historical documentary resources

3.1 Introduction

- 3.1.1 The archival resources of the University of Wales, Bangor, the Caernarfon Record Office of the Gwynedd Archives Service, the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth, the National Monuments Record, Royal Commission on Ancient and Historic Monuments, Aberystwyth, and the Public Record Office, Kew, were examined for material relevant to the manor and the parish of Aber, in particular to lands within the study area. In addition, contact was made with the Melville Richards Institute for Place-Name Studies at the University of Wales, Bangor.
- 3.1.2 These confirmed extensive documentation relating to Aber from the English conquest to the modern period, a reflection of the fact that the area has been successively a princely llys, a Manor of the crown of England, and a holding of the Bulkeley family and subsequently of the Penrhyn family, all of which have bequeathed substantial archival holdings.
- 3.1.3 A fully referenced catalogue of these resources is given in section 9. The material includes papers from estate and solicitors collections, parish records and historic maps. The popularity of the valley and the falls as a tourist destination from the late eighteenth century onwards meant that many engravings and other visual material was produced; a greater corpus of antique images is known to exist and the subject is proposed for study within phase II of this project. Similarly, numerous antiquarian and travellers accounts include descriptions of the area (Richard Kelly pers. comm.). A thorough survey of this literature was beyond the scope of the current phase of the project, but is considered to be a significant enough to merit further work in phase II.
- 3.1.4 The potential significance of these findings in terms of land-tenure, biographical associations, settlement and land-use are discussed below (sections 3.2.1 to 3.2.4). The analysis of place-name evidence has not been included in the following discussion but is put forward for phase II of the project. Information collected by NNR staff from the late Mr Stanley Jones, whose family farmed the Nant Rhaeadr holding has established an important base-line for further work on place-names associated with different areas of the valley (Duncan Brown pers. comm.). Demographic information and occupational details derived from the census records are also proposed for phase II.

3.2 Summary of findings – historical documentary resources

3.2.1 Land-tenure

- 3.2.1.1 Aber is several times referred to as one of the favourite residences of the Princes of Gwynedd in the thirteenth century¹ Princess Joan and Dafydd ap Llywelyn, wife and son of Llywelyn ab Iorwerth, both died there²
- 3.2.1.2 In 1287 the Manor of Aber was granted to Henry Somur for five years. In 1323 it was held by Edmond de Dynieton, in 1327 by John de Houseum. In 1390 Henry de Coton claimed the title of the Manor, but it was seized by the Prince's escheator, and Henry de Coton was compensated with the grant of the Manor of Walton-on-Trent. In 1417 the Manor was granted to John de Pont, and in 1437 a petition for the grant of the Manor provides for the maintenance of the houses, woods, closes and gardens appertaining thereunto.³ In 1484 the Manor was granted to Richard Vaughan together with Cemmaes.⁴

¹ R.R. Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence and Change: Wales, 1063-1415* (Oxford, 1987).

² T. Jones, *Brut y Tywysogyon*. Cardiff.

³ R. Rees, *Calendar of Ancient Petitions Relating to Wales* (Cardiff, 1975), p. 61, p. 167, p. 323, pp. 451-2.

⁴ University of Wales, Bangor: Bangor mss 21275, British Museum: Harleian mss 433.

3.2.1.3 By the sixteenth century, if not earlier, locally-based gentry families are recorded as owning land in the parish; a marriage settlement of 1558 required William Coetmor to enfeof his daughter Ales and son in-law Robert with lands in Aber and elsewhere.⁵

3.2.1.4 There then followed a series of disputes relating to Aber and Cemmaes. Rice Thomas was the lessee in 1551, and in 1553 he and his wife acquired the grant. In 1610 Sir William Thomas, Rice's grandson, purchased both of them outright.⁶ It was Sir Thomas who built, around 1600, the house at Pen y Bryn.⁷ Adhering to the King's side in the Civil War did nothing to help the family's fortunes, and in 1678 financial difficulties led John Thomas to enter into negotiations with the Bulkeley family of Baron Hill for the purchase of land within the Manor. Though he remained lord of the Manor of Aber until his death in 1705, from the end of the seventeenth century the Bulkeley family of Baron Hill were the main proprietors, themselves Lords of the Manor from at least 1715 onwards.⁸ The last parting shot came in 1753 when William Thomas brought an unsuccessful action against Lord Bulkeley, claiming the advowson of the church of Aber.⁹

3.2.1.5 In 1863 the Bulkeley family initiated their policy of selling off their Caernarvonshire lands, and their Aber holdings were bought up by the Penrhyn estate,¹⁰ in whose holding it remained until 1925, when Henfaes was sold, together with the upland holdings of Meuryn Uchaf and Nant.¹¹

3.2.2 *Persons connected with Aber*

3.2.2.1 The scoping survey has identified a number of famous individuals connected with Aber.

- John Owen of Bodsilin (*floruit* 1600), son of Owen ap Robert of Bodsilin, was secretary to Sir Francis Walsingham, Queen Elizabeth I's spymaster. He married Elin, later Lady Eure, granddaughter of Sir William Maurice. He was father of Colonel Sir John Owen.¹²
- Colonel Sir John Owen of Clennenau (1600-1666), the royalist commander condemned to death by the Rump parliament and subsequently reprieved by Cromwell.¹³
- Rev. Hugh Davies MA (1739-1821), rector of Aber 1787-1816, author of *Welsh Botany* (London, 1813) and of *Cyngor Difrif Periglor i'w Blwyfolion* (1801).¹⁴

3.2.3 *Dwellings*

3.2.3.1 The study has established the potential archaeological significance of the following dwellings:

- Nant cottage - in 1925 this was described as comprising a parlour, kitchen, back kitchen and two bedrooms. The adjacent farm building included a shippon for four cows and a stable.
- Nant - as 'Nanteracdrat' this farm is mentioned as one of the *vaccaries* of Aber in the *Record of Caernarfon* in 1352, and is next recorded in 1547 when it was illegally occupied.¹⁵ A Baron Hill rent roll of 1716 states how many head of cattle were pastured in the valley.¹⁶
- Meuryn - this farm is mentioned as one of the *vaccaries* of Aber in the *Record of Caernarfon* in 1352, and is next recorded in 1547 when it was illegally occupied.¹⁷

⁵ UWB: Baron Hill 3013 - includes schedule.

⁶ UWB: Bangor mss 2128 1, Plas Coch mss 3263-3300, *Calendar of Patent Rolls 1553, 121, Dictionary of Welsh Biography*.

⁷ DWB, entry for Thomas family of Coed Helen.

⁸ UWB: Baron Hill 4726 et seq., DWB.

⁹ National Library of Wales: Llanfair Brynoddol mss, UWB Baron Hill 4590.

¹⁰ UWB: Penrhyn Castle I 1 80, 2872 etc.

¹¹ CRO: XSC 336 (1925).

¹² Dictionary of Welsh Biography, entry for Maurice and Owen families of Clennenau, Penmorfa and Glyn Cywarch.

¹³ D.W.B.

¹⁴ D.W.B.

¹⁵ Records of the Court of Augmentations p. 10

¹⁶ Owen T.J., 'The Records of the Parish of Aber', T.C.H.S. 14 (1953) p. 89

¹⁷ Records of the Court of Augmentations p. 10.

3.2.4 Land-use

- 3.2.4.1 Pastoral: cattle. Records of 1303 confirm four vaccaries at Aber, and the 1352 Record of Caernarvon suggest that Meuryn and Nant were included in the vaccaries lying 'in the ffriddoedd near Aber'. Hyde Hall, c. 1809-1811, remarked that 'This fertility of the soil, together with the ample but unoccupied opportunities of irrigation, ought, it should appear, to afford a peculiarly large supply of food for the maintenance of cattle; but I am not enabled to state that a greater number is fed here than in any other district of the county. Much provender however, is expended by the droves of cattle, of which this is one of the stations in their way along the Bwlch y Daufaen (sic) pass to Tal y Cafn ferry.'¹⁸ However, cattle grazing contracted sharply in the early nineteenth century, and the tithe map of 1848 suggests that the upland areas were exclusively devoted to sheep pasture.
- 3.2.4.2 Pastoral: sheep. An account of 1333 mentions eleven Flemish weavers living in the village, implying an economy heavily dependent on sheep-farming. The rudimentary nature of the tithe map and apportionment makes it difficult to calculate how the land in the parish and individual farms was divided up between pasture and other forms of land-use. The unenclosed pasture comprised much the greater part of the parish - 3,755 acres, 3 roods and 11 perches, and the 40 acres, 2 roods and 34 perches of Breichiau were also common to the tenants.¹⁹ Meuryn, Waun and Nant were entirely given over to sheep pasture. By the twentieth century farm leases specified the amount of sheep that the farms were permitted to graze on the mountain - Meuryn Uchaf, for instance, was entitled to graze 180 sheep on Llwydmor, Bera and Foel Fras.²⁰
- 3.2.4.3 Dairying - William Williams observes in 1806 'Farmers have their summer leys on the height of their hills which was walled out for that purpose and to the elevated parts the women climbed or ascended every morning and evening with their pails to milk their cows and descend with them full of milk.'²¹ The significance of dairying at Aber is underlined by the presence of a margarine factory in the early twentieth century, one of the earliest to be erected in Britain.²²
- 3.2.4.4 Arable land - the renders of wheat indicated by the extent of 1284 would have been grown on the fields of the coastal plain, but the renders of barley, fodder and oats indicate that arable farming was also carried out on the uplands, perhaps at Meuryn Isaf, Nant and Ffridd. However, there is no further record of arable farming here after the thirteenth century. Aber continued to enjoy a reputation for grain; William Williams Llandygái remarks in 1806 that it produces 'excellent wheat and white pease.' The precise extent of arable land is not clear from the tithe map (copy included as appendix 1) though arable land is recorded on the east banks of the Afon Rhaeadr Fawr between the falls and the confluence with the Afon Anafon. The place name Cae Rhyg (Rye Field) is associated with land to the east of Afon Rhaeadr Fawr (Duncan Brown pers. comm.).
- 3.2.4.5 Timber - there is little evidence for significant levels of afforestation in the area before the nineteenth century. Early nineteenth century engravings show the valley as predominantly unwooded (figure 2). However, by the end of the century maps show many of the slopes had become woodland (see 1st and 2nd edition 6" to the mile OS maps, appendices 2 and 3). Hyde Hall remarks in 1810 'The lower part of the parish is rich in trees though not in wood, and enjoys that appearance of warmth which the circumstance always bestows. Upon the side of the hills some wood is discernible, but it is neither extensive nor well preserved ...'²³ Part of Pen y Bryn farm is described as 'Wood' on the tithe map of 1848, and the slopes below Maes y Gaer were already wooded. An undated but apparently mid-nineteenth century map in the Baron Hill collection²⁴ records tree-planting, seemingly on the west bank of the Afon Rhaeadr Fawr near Bont Newydd where no plantation is shown on the tithe. By the time of the ordnance survey of 1887-8

¹⁸ Edmund Hyde Hall, *A Description of Caernarvonshire* (1809-1811) (Caernarfon, 1952) p. 90.

¹⁹ CRO: XPE 56/88

²⁰ CRO: XSC 336 (1925).

²¹ William Williams Llandygái.

²² Pers. comm., David Leighton and Brian Malaws, Royal Commission on Ancient and Historic Monuments of Wales.

²³ Hyde Hall, p. 90.

²⁴ UWB Baron Hill S6605.



Figure 2 'View near Aber' – engraving c. 1832
(with thanks to Duncan Brown).

afforestation had practically reached the extent shown on the Penrhyn sale map of 1925. Perhaps significantly the holding simply noted as 'Cwt' (hut) on the tithe map is shown as 'Cytgoed' (shared wood) on the Penrhyn sale map.²⁵ The woodland above Bont Newydd on the west side of the Afon Rhaeadr Fawr may have arisen naturally, being made up of native trees. The oakwoods on the east side above Nant and higher up may have been planted or be natural. The 1887 map shows them as patchy, which agrees with the present infill of birch in the gaps, though the upper boundary is stable, and possibly corresponded to a fence which has since been removed. Scattered bushes are shown on the higher slopes in 1887, presumably the hazels which survive in the plantations. The plantations date from the period post-1925.

- 3.2.4.6 Coppicing – Coedydd Aber contains approximately 10ha of alder woodland known as Wern Goch and Wern Fudr that used to be coppiced by itinerant clogmakers. The coppicing is estimated to have come to an end in the 1920s (Aubroeck 1995). Coppicing has recently been reintroduced on these stands as they were becoming over-maturity as well as to perpetuate a traditional practice.
- 3.2.4.7 Slate and mineral extraction - Hyde Hall mentions the slate quarry (presumably PRN 20841) as having been discontinued owing to the coarseness of the material.²⁶ It is identified on the tithe map (appendix 1), and doubtless the hope was to find the Cambrian vein exploited at Penrhyn and Dinorwic Quarries. Some small mineral trials are identified on late nineteenth century maps. Cae Brics ('brick field') is understood to have been opened to provide bricks for the construction of the Chester and Holyhead Railway from 1843 to 1848. Though nothing is now visible at surface level, ploughing and drilling by the University Farm has turned up traces of coke, presumably used in the firing process.²⁷
- 3.2.4.8 Tourism - Aber has been recognised as a place of scenic beauty since the late eighteenth century, when Pennant commented on the beauty of its waterfall.²⁸ Its popularity increased as a consequence of the provision of visitor accommodation by 1788,²⁹ the opening of the post road in the 1820s and the opening of the railway in 1848.

3.3 Recommendations arising from the review of historical documentary resources

- 3.3.1 The area offers the possibility of unusually extensive and detailed study, not only in view of the survival of archival documentation on a significant scale, a reflection of the patterns of land-holding within the area but also because of the self-contained nature of the study-area. The following points are highlighted:
- The scoping study has identified that extensive documentation exists (unusually so for an area of low population density) which has great potential for further study;
 - At the time when the current research was undertaken, new documents (additional material from the Penrhyn estate) were being curated at the University of Wales Bangor archives department and the material is likely to repay further study;
 - Particular attention should be paid to the late medieval/early modern period (C16th onward) as a great deal of material relating to this period survives for Aber. Also, there is much potential in working back from here to establish earlier patterns of land tenure and use;
 - The history of the advowson of Aber, ministers accounts etc - glebe lands and holdings;
 - Detailed study of more unusual sources could reveal important information about land rights. For example, documents relating to a pew dispute involving the Bulkeley family contains information about rights concerning the ffridd;
 - Important information in antiquarian and travellers accounts;

²⁵ CRO: XSC 336 (1925).

²⁶ Hyde Hall, p. 91.

²⁷ Pers. Comm. John Pilling of Llanfairfechan.

²⁸ Thomas Pennant, *A Tour in Wales* vol. II (London: 1783) p. 316.

²⁹ UWB Baron Hill 4593, counterpart lease, 1788, from Lord Bulkeley to James Sumpter of the Bull's Head, Aber.

- Census record.

4 Oral history – assessment of potential

- 4.1 Discussion with the curators of the sound archive at the Museum of Welsh Life confirmed that there were no tapes in the St Ffagan's collection of Aber residents, though there were a number relating to the neighbouring parishes of Llanllechid and Llanfairfechan. Two interviews were recorded as part of the project, one in English with Mr John Pilling, one in Welsh with Mr Ken Ponsonby, both of whom had worked on the College farm. Summaries of these appear as appendix 4a and 4b. These follow accepted transcription practice in that accent, dialect and vocabulary are given verbatim. Contact was also made with a number of other individuals about the possibility of recording an interview.
- 4.2 The present scoping study has identified a number of long-term residents of the area who could take part in an oral history programme, and work has begun on recording their reminiscences. There was generally some reticence in coming forward to record interviews as despite their interest, many of the people approached felt too shy to record a tape. The following recommendations arise from the oral history review:
- Future attempts to record interviews could involve local societies, and should aim to create a less intimidating profile for oral history work;
 - Improvement works by the college farm during the twentieth century clearly affected the survival of remains in a number of areas within the NNR. It would be helpful to assess this further by interviews / oral history.
 - Staff at the National Museum of Wales St Ffagan (contact, Beth Thomas) are interested in the project as they do not have any tapes from Aber so far.

5 Assessment of the archaeological resource: field survey

5.1 Methodology

- 5.1.1 Fieldwork was conducted in March and June 2000 with the aim of identifying and recording all features of potential archaeological interest within the National Nature Reserve. As 1:2500 scale Ordnance Survey maps were not available, features were plotted onto a base-map comprising a combination of the OS 1:10000 map for the area enlarged to a workable scale, superimposed with the OS digital Landline data. Written descriptions were made for each feature, and 35mm colour print and transparency photographs taken to produce a comprehensive photographic archive. Detailed features descriptions along with discussion of historical or archaeological context, management recommendations and indications of the scope for further research are presented in the detailed gazetteer (section 10). Their locations are depicted on figure 3 and on the A1 sized plot which accompanies this report.

5.2 Summary of results

- 5.2.1 The valley was known for its important archaeological remains prior to the current survey and twenty one features were recorded in the Sites and Monuments Records for the NNR area (including Maes y Gaer hillfort, Bont Newydd bridge, 11 hut circle settlements, 2 long hut settlements, a cairn and three slate/mineral trials). Fieldwork has resulted in a massive increase in known sites and features to over 130. A number of newly recorded sites were first identified by Clifton Hughes (Beaver), volunteer warden at the NNR. Others were unknown prior to the commencement of the work. Key new sites include hut circles, long huts and burial cists. The following table lists the frequency of sites recorded during the survey by site-type categories and includes all individual archaeological sites and features that appear in the gazetteer (section 10). Some sites appear more than once on this list. This is because on a number of occasions a number of phases or types of activity may be present at a single site, even though that site has been

Figure 3a Archaeological features within NNR

[See figure 3b for detail of central area]

OS data: Reproduced from the Ordnance Survey maps with the permission of the controller of her Majesty's Stationery Office G0272825G

KEY

● 334 Feature location and PRN (Primary Record Number)

Limit of HARMS area

Contours (shown at 10m intervals)

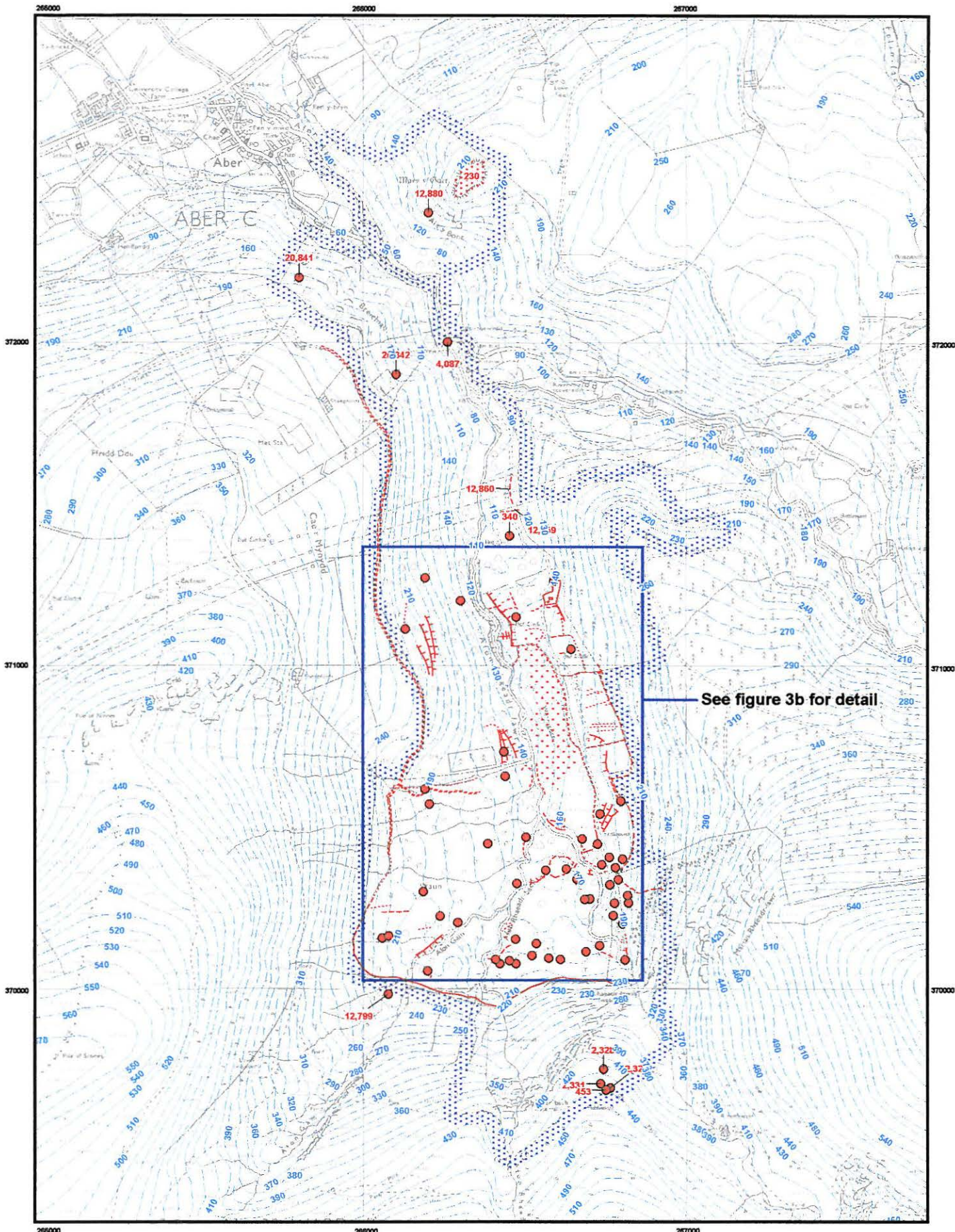
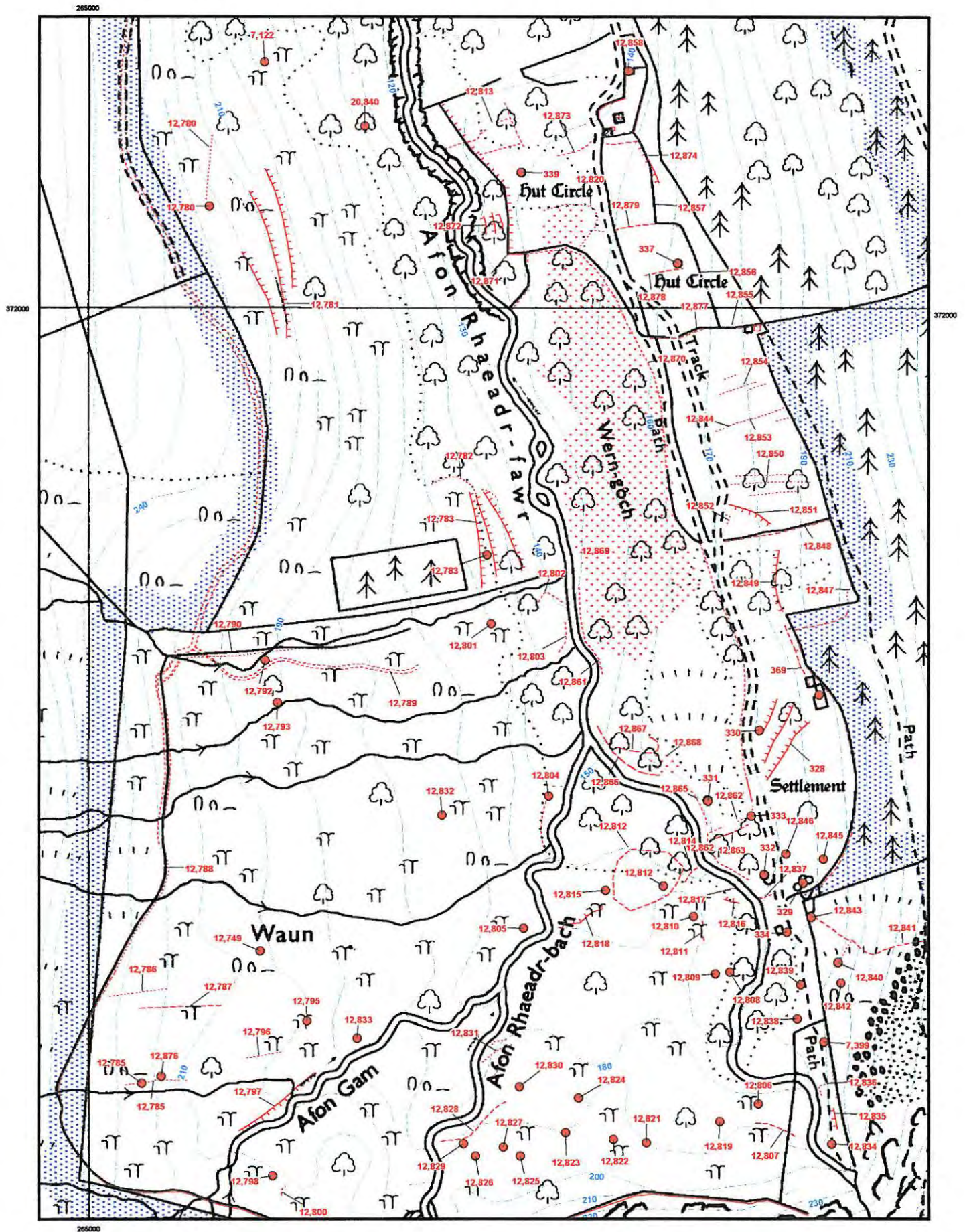


Figure 3b Archaeological features within NNR - detailed view

OS data: Reproduced from the Ordnance Survey maps with the permission of the controller of her Majesty's Stationery Office 00272626G

KEY

- 334 Feature location and PRN (Primary Record Number)
- Limit of HARMS area
- Contours (shown at 10m intervals)



allocated a single PRN (Primary Record Number). So for example, PRN 369 is a long huts group, but is overlain by a post medieval sheepfold and so is listed under both of these site types. In some cases, interpretation of a site is unclear and it has been listed under two possible types (for example PRN 332 is listed under 'hut circles' and 'burial cairn'). Where the interpretation of a site is felt to be fairly insecure, a question mark suffix is used to denote possible interpretation.

Frequency of sites recorded during the survey

Site type category (frequency)	Primary Record Number (PRN)				
Banks (6)	12796	12807	12850	12854	12859
	12871				
Bridge (1)	4087				
Burial cairns (3)	332?	?12838	?2331		
Clearance cairns – possibly ancient (4)	12818	12819	12830	12846	
Clearance cairns – probably modern (5)	12785	12793	12794	12824	12876
Coppice – former (2)	12868	12869			
Ditch (1)	12787				
Hedgerows (1)	12857				
Hillfort (1)	230				
Hut circles (17)	330	331	332?	333	337
	339	340	453	2327	2328
	7399	12791	12808	12827	12839
	12840?	12845			
Hut circles – enclosed group (1)	329				
Iron fence setting (1)	12836				
Long huts (17)	329	330	334	12783?	12792
	12798	12799	12801	12804	12815
	12821?	12829?	12832	12833	12880?
Long hut group (4)	369	12812	12822	12843	
Lynchets (2)	12781	12847			
Platform – circular (1)	12825				
Platform - ?natural (1)	7122				
Platform – rectangular (3)	12826	12780	12880		
Post medieval farmstead (Nant Cottage)	12875				
Sheep dip – C20th	12858				
Sheepfolds (3)	369	12843	12855		
Shelters – eg shepherds' shelters (3)	12805	12822	12829		
Slate quarry (1)	20840				
Stone setting; possible cist (5)	12795	12806	12809	12810	12823
Strip lynchets (1)	328				
Terraces (8)	12783	12828	12831	12842	12849



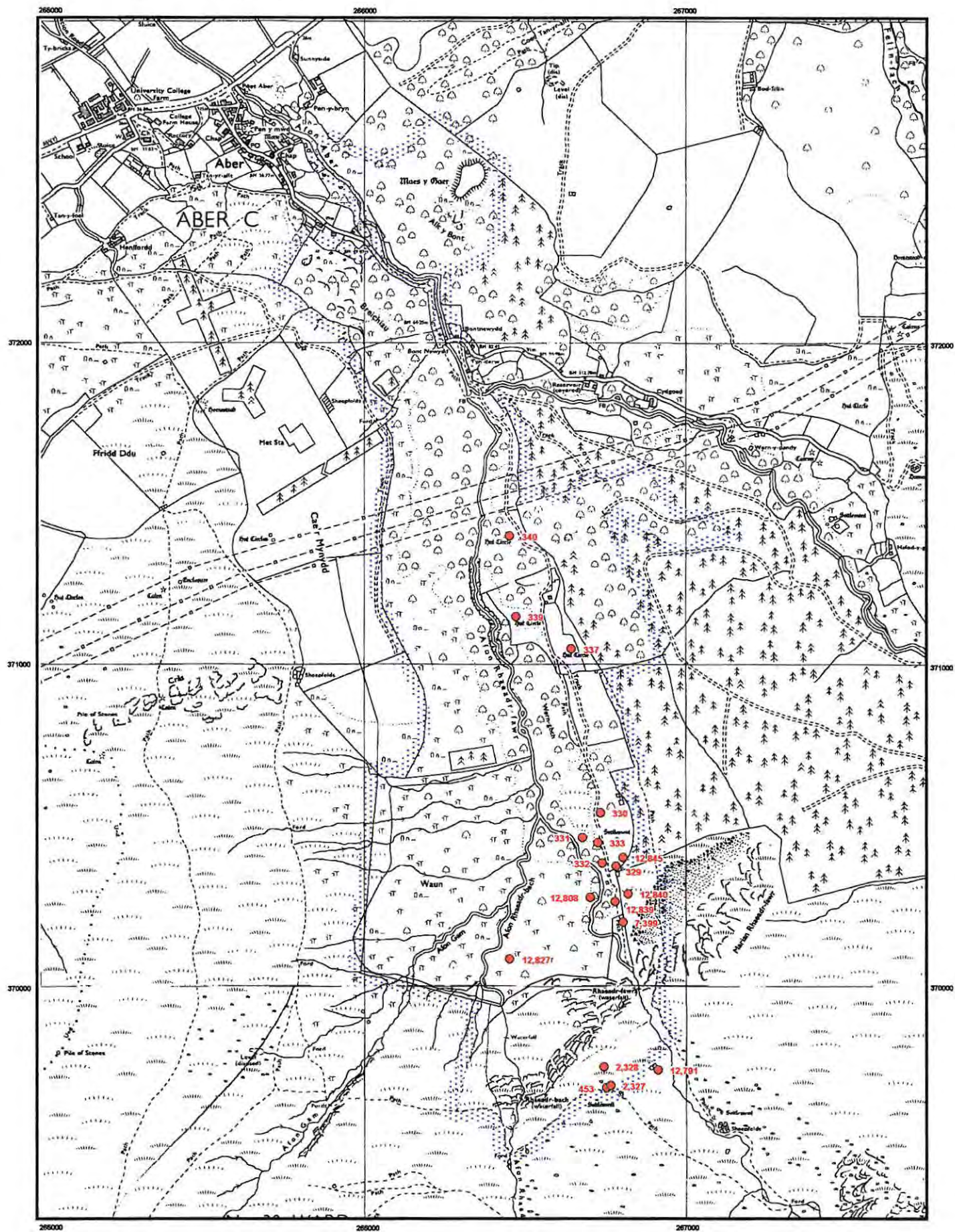
Figure 4 PRN 12810 - possible cist

Figure 5 Sites of definite and possible hut circles within the NNR

OS data: Reproduced from the Ordnance Survey maps with the permission of the controller of Her Majesty's Stationary Office G0272925G

KEY

- 334 Feature location and PRN (Primary Record Number)
- Limit of HARMS area
- Contours (shown at 10m intervals)



	12851	12872	12880		
Trackways and pathways (6)	12789	12817	12828	12834	12835
	12874				
Trial levels (2)	20841	20842			
Wall footings – field walls (27)	12782	12784	12786	12796	12797
	12800	12802	12803	12811	12812
	12813	12814	12816	12820	12837
	12849	12852	12853	12856	12859
	12860	12865	12867	12870	12873
	12878	12879			
Wall footings – possible structures (3)	12852?	12867?	12819?		
Walls - upstanding drystone walls (9)	12788	12790	12841	12844	12848

5.3 Chronological synthesis and discussion

5.3.1 The earliest known features present in the valley are cist graves (figure 4) and a possible burial cairn dating to the early to mid Bronze Age (2000-1100BC). The size, form and location of the group of huts above Rhaeadr Bach (PRN 453 and neighbours), along with the presence of cairns and the possible presence of a series of slight field walls may suggest a Bronze Age date by analogy with inferences for similar sites elsewhere in Gwynedd (for example Cwm Ffrydlas, Bethesda and Allt Lwyd, Llanegryn (Lynch 1995, 45 & 58; GAT Research Framework unpub.)). No excavation has taken place at sites of this type in Gwynedd, and their dating is tentative, on the basis of comparison with sites elsewhere in Britain (eg Manley 1990). The potential research interest of these sites is therefore high.

5.3.2 The hill-fort at Maes y Gaer, which dominates the mouth of the valley, is traditionally interpreted as belonging to the Iron Age (600BC-43AD), although a number of excavations at sites of this kind from the 1980s onwards have demonstrated that they often have their origins in the social and economic upheavals of the late Bronze Age (1100-600BC) which are commonly attributed to population pressure, deterioration of climate and soil degradation.

5.3.3 The earliest clear settlement pattern in the NNR dates from the Iron Age (as above) and Romano-British (mid 1st to early fifth centuries AD). Figure 5 shows the distribution of both definite and suspected hut circle settlement sites (including hut groups and individual sites) in the NNR. The hut circles are mostly fairly substantial and comparison with the interpretation of similar sites elsewhere in Gwynedd would suggest that they are the remains of permanently occupied self-sufficient farmsteads. There is a marked concentration of these features around the head of the valley. The valley occupies a key transitional zone between the fertile land of the coastal strip to the north of Aber village, and the mountainous uplands. The hut circles were located so as to exploit the upland summer pastures on which cattle would have been grazed in summer. It is likely that the settlements would have been tied in to a broader cattle-based economy. Cattle theft and fighting between tribal groups appears to have been endemic in Iron Age Britain and is commonly seen as a stimulus for the development of hillforts during this period. Despite the presence of small plateaux and gentler slopes throughout the NNR, the hut circles are often located at the edges of slopes, on spurs of land or on steeper ground (figure 6). Their absence from the flatter ground may be a product of destruction by more recent ploughing. However, their distribution may suggest that the settlement sites avoided areas of ground most suitable for cultivation. There is other evidence to suggest that the cattle economy was accompanied by some extent of arable cultivation, namely lynchets and small terraced fields. These are found in greater density on Cae'r Mynydd and Ffridd Du to the W and NW, but terraced fields were recorded around PRN 337 by the RCAHMW investigators in the 1940s, but which have subsequently been destroyed, and a number of features identified during the current survey may relate to early field plots, possibly including the lynchets PRN 328.

5.3.4 Important documents from the medieval period provide a key insight into the working of one of the *llysoedd*, or courts, of the princes of Wales, and its relationship with its economic hinterland. References are made to four Royal *vaccaries*, or dairy farms, associated with the *llys* at Aber in the



Figure 6 PRN 12808 Hut circle to W of Afon Rhacadr Fawr



Figure 7 PRN 12812 Long hut or possible pair of long huts. Tentatively interpreted as a possible site of one of the un-named vaccaries referred to in the Record of Caernarfon.



Figure 9 PRN 12831 Cultivation terraces beside Afon Rhaeadr Fach

fourteenth century Record of Caernarfon (Record Commission 1838). These serviced herds of cattle grazing on the mountain pastures during the summer months. The site of one of the *vaccaries* has long been associated with a group of ruined buildings lying within the NNR, although excavations at the site failed to reveal conclusive evidence for an early date (Butler 1962). It is suggested that two previously unrecorded sites recognised during the current project may be the remains of a further two of the *vaccaries*, PRN 12822 and 12812 (figure 7). The fourth is identified with Hafod y Gelyn which lies beyond the NNR in the Anafon valley to the E.

- 5.3.5 Fieldwork has also revealed traces of numerous small settlements many of which are located in close proximity to springs and streams (figure 8). They are interpreted here as hafodydd or summer settlements. Seasonal occupation of the valley was an important part of the economy of the llys and its associated settlements. Detailed accounts of the organisation of the manor at Aber towards the close of the 13th century is available. This provides valuable information regarding land use in the valley at that time and there are direct references to areas within the present NNR. This information is given in an extent (assessment document) of the manor compiled in the late 13th century. Jones Pierce (1962) carried out a detailed analysis of the document in terms of the relationship between the parish and manorial boundaries. The only permanent settlement was that of the *maerdref*, the settlement tied to the llys, and occupying the site of the present day village. Traditionally the *maerdref* was occupied by tied or bond families who paid tribute to the prince in kind, through services and customary labour. Aber was unusual in that by the time of the extent, the traditional hierarchy of settlement had eroded such that free-tenants also dwelt in the *maerdref*. The fertile land on the coastal strip would have been farmed by the bond tenants, but Jones Pierce suggests that the free-tenants (or cottagers) may have farmed the less attractive areas of land on the hill-slopes and valleys to the south. Renders of wheat referred to in the document would certainly have been produced from the coastland by members of the bond community. However, the free-tenants were growing sufficient quantities of barley, fodder and oats to indicate that arable farming was being carried out in the upper areas of the valley. Meuryn, Nant and Ffridd (Ddu) are among the possible areas where this may have taken place.
- 5.3.6 Potential evidence for small scale cultivation was found at various locations in the southern half of the NNR during the current survey. An area of ridge and furrow can be made out on aerial photographs for the south west corner of the Reserve, and a number of small terraces and lynchets noted on spurs of land and at bends in the river may have implications for the intensity of occupation, and / or for the nature of the agricultural regime employed in the valley at the time. For example the use of small, often awkward, plots of land such as the riverside terraces of PRN 12831 (figure 9) may suggest that grazing land was at a premium and that all cultivation of crops was secondary and was forced into more marginal or fringe locations. Alternatively, cultivation of meadow for hay crops may have been very important in the area generally, with all suitable locations being employed, to ensure as large a harvest as possible. Preliminary interpretations of the survey evidence suggests that the boggy ground to south of Wern Goch may have been a wet meadow. The area of the Waun between Afon Rhaeadr Bach and Afon Rhaeadr Fawr may have carried substantial quantities of meadow.
- 5.3.7 Arable cultivation is not usually considered to accompany transhumance (seasonal movement of people and stock) although here there does appear to be evidence that mixed-economy subsistence agriculture was practised. Butler (1962) draws on Sayce's (1956 and 1957) classic study of transhumance in Montgomeryshire in his interpretation of the long hut group excavated by the RCAHMW (PRN 369). He suggests that the cultivation of grain, hay and flax may have taken place on land in the vicinity of the site.
- 5.3.8 During the eighteenth century sheep grazing replaced the traditional cattle economy of the uplands under the ownership of the area by the Bulkeley and subsequently, the Penrhyn Estates, and the seasonal pattern of settlement fell into decline.
- 5.3.9 A great deal of the evidence revealed during the current survey is of relevance to discussion of the pattern of changing historic landuse. Unfortunately, the extent of the archaeology has meant that a disproportionate length of time was spent on the fieldwork and management related aspects of the project, and a thorough engagement with the implications of the new data is proposed as a major task of the second phase of the project.

- 5.3.10 It does seem clear however that the valley supported significant populations of people engaged in mixed subsistence economies entailing the summer grazing of cattle on upland pastures accompanied by the cultivation of hay as well as various hardy arable crops on a small scale. A similar pattern can be envisaged for the medieval and late prehistoric periods alike, although aspects of social and economic organisation will have differed, for example permanent occupation in late prehistory and the seasonal transhumance system of the medieval period. The topography of the valley lends itself to a particular range of agricultural possibilities, and a mosaic of hay meadow, small cultivation plots and woodland is likely to have characterised the landscape of the valley for much of the last two thousand years at least. Much of the land on the valley sides is damp, and tree species tolerant of boggy conditions (such as alder) have probably also been a long term feature of the valley. Relict walls including PRNs 12870 and 12820 enclose the boggy woodland area of Wern Goch, and the possibility that these boundaries delineate a medieval coppice coupe boundary is raised under the descriptions for these features in the current survey.
- 5.3.11 The lichens which are a statutory feature notified in the SSSI/NNR designation for Coedydd Aber are generally thought to imply that a wood-pasture regime has been an important component of the historical-ecology of the valley. The term 'wood pasture' has fairly particular connotations in terms of landscape history, and is generally associated with southern and mid-Wales rather than the mountainous north. However, the local interaction of society and environment has effectively created similar conditions, namely a patchwork of small wooded areas, cultivation plots, meadow and pasture.
- 5.3.12 All linear features and boundaries encountered during fieldwork, such as upstanding and relict walls, banks and revetments, were recorded and mapped as part of the current survey. However, given the large number of features this entailed, the difficulty of accurately marking the layout of the features against the OS base-map used for the survey and the limited survey time available, descriptions made were generally fairly brief. Follow up work is required as outlined in the management and research recommendations of this report before an attempt can be made to tie down the chronology of the bounded landscape of the valley.

6 Management recommendations

6.1 Summary of management recommendations

- 6.1.1 The survey has shown that on the whole the archaeology of NNR is in good condition and that current landuse regimes are generally conducive to protection and preservation of the sites. Damage to and destruction of features has clearly occurred in the past, for example, the loss (probably through ploughing in the late 1950s or 1960s) of the terraced fields recorded by the RCAHMS in the vicinity of hut circle PRN 337 and the impact of improvement works including ploughing and stone clearance carried out by the College Farm on the land between Afon Rhaeadr Fawr and Afon Rhaeadr Bach, as well as to the west of Afon Rhaeadr Bach. The positive, integrated approach currently being adopted towards the management of the nature conservation and archaeological interests means that problems on this scale are no longer an issue. The single greatest remaining threat is probably the potential for inadvertent damage to sites as part of routine maintenance and other works within the NNR where the precise location of a site is not clear, or where a previously unknown site is present. A number of instances of this kind were recorded prior to the survey (for example the movement of vehicles and the stacking of timber over relict field boundaries associated with one of the hut circle settlements, and the planting of new areas of woodland in a couple of cases) and a key part of the rationale behind the current project was to ensure that the archaeological interests of the valley were identified, located and mapped to avoid problems of this kind in future. The key to good management is the provision of information, and the gazetteer of feature descriptions together with the accompanying map of feature distributions is a fundamental baseline of information for use by NNR staff in the day to day management of the reserve.
- 6.1.2 Basic standard management guidelines (as described below) apply to all identified features. However, beyond this, specific management recommendations are given for individual sites. Mostly, these relate to potential threats which need to be monitored to ensure that do not develop into a problem. In some case, there are more immediate management needs. In a few cases positive action is needed to address issues of ongoing concern. Other recommendations concern the need

for further assessment of particular sites, including detailed recording work, and opportunities for presentation of sites to the public.

- 6.1.3 Descriptions of individual recommendation types are given below (6.2 to 6.7), along with lists of sites to which they relate. The recommendations are itemised on a site by site basis in the gazetteer of features (10).

6.2 General management guidelines

6.2.1 Standard management recommendations

- 6.2.1.1 This category applies to all sites and provides a summary list of management guidelines that are intended as a baseline of good conservation practice. It should be borne in mind however that ideally, no major programme of work should proceed without prior archaeological consultation.

- Archaeological sites should not be used as a source for stone, turf or other materials.
- No stone wall should be re-built, removed or otherwise altered without prior archaeological consultation.
- Materials (including stone, topsoil etc.) should not be stored or dumped in archaeologically sensitive areas.
- No material should be dumped within or removed from the slate and mineral trial sites PRNs 20840, 20841, 20842.
- Any change of use or alterations to historic buildings, such as Nant cottage (PRN 12874) should respect their scale and their traditional character.
- Where present, existing grass cover should be maintained.
- Light grazing is the best management regime for the conservation of a wide range of archaeological sites.
- Grazing should be maintained at a level that keeps undesirable vegetation under control but not such as to cause erosion. Fencing may be necessary to protect part of the site while allowing grazing elsewhere, in which case care is required when positioning fence posts.
- Artificial feed points and licking blocks should not be placed on archaeological sites.
- Care should be taken with any machinery in the vicinity of an archaeological site.
- If permanent fencing is erected, care should be taken that it does not cut across areas of archaeological significance. Temporary fencing within archaeologically significant areas may be required in exceptional circumstances (see above).
- No land should be cleared and improved without prior archaeological consultation.
- No areas should be ploughed without prior archaeological consultation.
- Proposals for other changes in land-use should be referred for archaeological comment.
- Existing erosion scars affecting sites of archaeological interest should be repaired and subsequently monitored and maintained.
- Rabbit populations (and those of other burrowing animals) should be kept under control.
- Woody growth and bracken should be cut or treated with herbicide without disturbing the ground surface.
- No new tree planting or drainage work should occur in areas of known or potential archaeological sensitivity.
- Trees should not be removed from archaeological sites or from areas of known archaeological sensitivity without prior archaeological consultation.
- Boggy and other wet areas should not be drained.

- No heavy machinery should be moved across archaeologically sensitive areas without prior archaeological consultation.
- The layout of any new roads, tracks and footpaths should be designed to avoid crossing areas of archaeological significance.
- Buildings and other structures should be maintained in good condition. All repairs and renovations should be carried out carefully and sympathetically. Expert advice should be sought where there are any doubts.
- If archaeological features or artefacts (such as pottery, flint or bone) are found, they should be left undisturbed if at all possible and reported at once to Gwynedd Archaeological Trust. Artefacts will always have a greater significance in context and in many cases will become meaningless if taken away.
- If the artefact is found loose on the ground surface, however, and is likely to be removed anyway, it is probably safer to record its exact location and then hand it in to one of the above parties with full details of the circumstances surrounding its discovery.
- Archaeological excavation is a skilled and expensive operation which should only be undertaken under the supervision of suitable experienced and qualified personnel, and with the proper resources. All excavations should be carried out within the parameters of a long-term research framework.
- Metal detecting can cause damage to the archaeological heritage by removing items from their archaeological context and disturbing sites. No metal detecting should be allowed on known archaeological sites, unless under qualified archaeological supervision. Metal detecting on a Scheduled Ancient Monument without the prior written permission of the Secretary of State is an offence.

6.2.1.2 Generally speaking, current practices which are not creating problems should be continued.

6.2.2 *Annual monitoring*

6.2.3 It is considered that given their vulnerability, and/or importance, a number of the sites should be monitored annually as part of an ongoing observation programme. The mechanics of this programme will need to be established through discussion with the NNR staff. However, fixed point photographic monitoring of habitats and species is already carried out in the reserve (pers. comm. Duncan Brown), and it may be possible to introduce a similar system for archaeological monitoring. Action will need to be taken to address any problems recognised during the monitoring programme, such as signs of scrub invasion and damage by stock or visitors.

6.2.3 PRNs for which this recommendation is made: 230, 329, 330, 331, 332, 333, 334, 337, 339, 340, 369, 453, 2327, 2328, 2331, 7399, 12791, 12792, 12795, 12798, 12801, 12804, 12806, 12808, 12809, 12810, 12812, 12815, 12821, 12822, 12823, 12827, 12829, 12832, 12833, 12838, 12839, 12840, 12845.

6.3 **Active management requirements**

6.3.1 *Bracken clearance (and annual control)*

6.3.1.1 Bracken grows copiously throughout many of the non-wooded areas of the NNR, and covers many of the sites in the Reserve during the summer and autumn. The problem is not new, and the RCAHMS noted bracken infestation as a problem on a number of sites surveyed in the area during the 1940s and 1950s (for example RCAHMS 1956, 14; site number 43 - equals PRN 332).

6.3.1.2 Bracken obscures sites from view, reducing their accessibility and making them susceptible to inadvertent damage. It has a vigorous and destructive rhizome system, and has been demonstrated to cause significant damage to archaeological remains, including buried deposits (Rees and Mills 1999). In some areas within the NNR bracken growth is so dense that even during winter and spring the litter of dead stems is so great that an adequate archaeological assessment cannot be carried out, and undiscovered features may be located within these areas. It was impossible to fully

evaluate the extent, condition or form of a number of known sites during the current survey for this reason. So many sites within the NNR are affected by bracken growth that it will only be possible to fully address the problem as part of a broader management plan. Whilst large areas of bracken are undesirable in many respects, they can also provide important habitats, for example for some moths and for various ground nesting birds. An integrated control plan is needed which balances the nature conservation value of particular stands of bracken, the potential value of the floral communities which they are replacing (for example heather moorland or rough grassland) and the importance and value of any archaeological interests.

6.3.1.3 However, particularly important sites affected by bracken coverage have been identified here for priority treatment (as below). A report published recently by Historic Scotland described possible control techniques (Rees and Mills 1999, 24-29). In the case of individual sites rather than large areas, the most appropriate techniques are by physical control (cutting / crushing and stock), or by hand spraying with herbicide. For most sites in the NNR hand cutting is likely to be the preferable control technique. Bracken should be cut twice a year, and is best carried out on maturing fronds around the middle of June and again about six weeks later, for at least three successive years (Rees and Mills 1999, 24).

6.3.1.4 PRNs for which this recommendation is made (of these, the main sites identified as potential candidates for presentation – including PRNs 329, 332, 334 and 12845) - should be targeted first): 329, 331, 332, 334, 337 (SAM, contact Cadw for their information in the event of work being carried out), 369, 12798, 12801, 12808, 12812, 12815, 12832, 12833

6.3.2 *Trees adjacent to or growing on site*

6.3.2.1 Regular monitoring has been recommended for most of the sites where trees are present (see below). There is a more immediate threat on two sites though, where it is thought that the removal of branches, or of a small number of trees is necessary to safeguard the site.

6.3.2.2 PRNs for which this recommendation is made: 337, 369

6.3.3 *Scrub clearance:*

6.3.3.1 Scrub cover obscures sites from view potentially leading to inadvertent damage, as well as protecting more substantial and potential damaging tree species to grow protected from grazing animals. Heavy scrub growth can itself lead to root damage to walling, earthworks and buried deposits. In either case, a programme of clearance and control is advisable. Light grazing by stock should help to prevent regeneration once clearance work has taken place.

6.3.3.2 PRNs for which this recommendation is made: 333 and 230 (Maes y Gaer – the site was not visited as part of the current survey but notes made in the Cadw Field Monument Warden visit report of 1990 and subsequently indicate that scrub control would significantly benefit the site).

6.3.4 *Re-hinge/relocate gateway:*

6.3.4.1 A gateway which currently directs stock over two sites, leading to potential damage to surface remains, needs to be either re-hinged to channel them in another direction, or preferably re-loaded altogether. Care is to be taken in digging new holes for gateposts as the area is generally of high archaeological sensitivity, and it may be advisable for an archaeologist to monitor the work.

6.3.4.2 PRNs for which this recommendation is made: 329, 12843.

6.3.5 *Tidy up site*

6.3.5.1 Basic clear up of rubbish or removal of recently introduced material such as soil or stone to a site. The latter would probably require careful monitoring by an archaeologist to ensure that in situ material is not removed inadvertently. PRN 369 seems to have been left in a fairly poor state following the 1961 RCAHMW excavations. Although now overgrown once again, some of the trenches do not appear to have been properly back filled and spoil mounds are visible around the

site. In the long term, if the site is to be targeted for presentation to the public, or is subject to further investigation, the opportunity should be taken to address these problems.

- 6.3.5.2 PRNs for which this recommendation is made: 369, 12845 (fencing rubbish etc.), 340 (introduced material).

6.3.6 Scheduled Ancient Monument management agreements - Cadw

- 6.3.6.1 Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments can assist with the repair and maintenance of scheduled ancient monuments through grant-aid, or by entering into a management agreement in appropriate cases. Agreements usually last for a period of five years. Payments to cover the costs of initial works may be available through the agreement. Further information can be obtained from Cadw, contact details: Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments, Adeilad y Goron, Parc Cathays, Caerdydd CF1 3NQ, 'phone number 029 20 500200. The Ancient Monument Inspector for Gwynedd, whose responsibilities include SAMs in the area, is Dr Mike Yates, whose direct line 'phone number is 029 20 826162. Ms Margaret Mason, who negotiates management agreements with landowners, is the Cadw Field Monument Warden for Gwynedd. Her 'phone number is 01758 721577.

- 6.3.6.2 PRNs for which this recommendation is made: 230 (Maes y Gaer) and 337

6.3.7 Vehicle erosion:

- 6.3.7.1 Prevent further damage from vehicles crossing the site.
- 6.3.7.2 PRN for which this recommendation is made: 329

6.4 Recording recommendations (require work to be carried out by an archaeologist):

6.4.1 Confirm precise NGR using GPS

- 6.4.1.1 A scaled up version of the 1:10000 Ordnance Survey map, enhanced by Ordnance Survey digital Landline data, was used as the base map for the current survey. There were insufficient marked features and fixed points on the base map against which features could be accurately located in some areas. Field trials of a Geographical Positioning System (GPS) within the NNR has shown that it can generate reliable National Grid References (NGRs) for sites (Duncan Brown pers. comm.). Ideally GPS readings should be taken for all features recorded during the survey. However, particular features should be prioritised (mostly those which it was especially difficult to plot against the base map), as listed below. Linear features can be mapped by taking readings at each end of the feature and at regular points along its length.

- 6.4.1.2 PRNs for which this recommendation is made: 453, 2327, 2328, 2331, 12780, 12781, 12782, 12791, 12792, 12804, 12812, 12827, 12850.

6.4.2 Re-survey to establish ground plan / full extent:

- 6.4.2.1 Required where further features beyond those recorded in the current survey are thought likely to be present and important to ensure that inadvertent damage to as yet unrecorded features is avoided. In some cases dense bracken or other vegetation coverage obscures areas or sites. Whilst most of the survey work was carried out in winter and early spring, some sites were recorded during summertime and may need to be assessed when vegetation has died back. Bracken coverage is so heavy in some areas that the blanket of dead and decomposing bracken remains so thick that it obscures features most of the year round. Bracken clearance will need to be carried out at these areas before they can be fully assessed.
- 6.4.2.2 In other cases, sites need to be revisited to clarify discrepancies within and inconsistencies between different accounts or field observations. Other areas have been identified as of archaeological potential, but where no definite feature was identified at the time of survey. It was not possible to spend a lot of time assessing ambiguous areas during this project, and a second visit, possibly under different conditions of light and vegetation may reveal features of interest.

6.4.2.3 PRNs for which this recommendation is made: 328, 453, 2327, 2328, 2331, 12801; 12839.

6.4.5 Large scale plan

6.4.5.1 The preparation of a scale plan should be seen as a priority for key sites, as a management tool and to provide resources for presentation work (including displays and leaflets). A detailed plan allows a site to be more reliably located and its extent identified, helping to avoid inadvertent damage by people working in the vicinity. Along with photographs a plan can act as a baseline for monitoring purposes. The plan should be prepared by suitably qualified archaeologists, and will require a measured survey (tape off-set or instrument assisted survey, or combination of the two).

6.4.5.2 In some cases, it was not possible to fully assess, interpret or record ephemeral remains identified during the survey due to time constraints. Focussed survey may help to clarify the interpretation of these sites as closer attention allows time to think assess the relationship between different elements and to make sense of patterns.

6.4.5.3 It was also difficult to interpret or adequately record a number of the larger or more complex sites within the scope of the current survey. Plans features groups should aim to show how the component elements articulate spatially.

6.4.5.4 Detailed plans will also feed into research objectives for the archaeology of the NNR and of the area generally, facilitating comparison between sites. Sketch plans were produced for some of the sites during the Gwynedd Archaeological Trust hut circle and deserted rural settlement projects (GAT 1994 and 1998), and a number of plans are also presented in the RCAHMS Inventory (1956). However, these were all produced at a small scale, and are generally sketches rather than measured survey plans. Further unrecorded features were noted at many of the sites which have sketch plans.

6.4.5.5 PRNs for which this recommendation is made: 329, 330, 331, 332, 337, 339, 340, 453, 2327, 2328, 2331, 7399, 12791, 12798, 12801, 12804, 12808, 12809, 12810, 12812, 12815, 12821, 12822 (a priority), 12827, 12832, 12833, 12839, 12840, 12842, 12843, 12845.

6.4.6 Measured sketch plan to be produced (CF scale plan)

6.4.6.1 In some cases, for example small or very poorly defined sites, a simple sketch plan will be sufficient for recording and management purposes.

6.4.6.2 PRNs for which this recommendation is made: 12806, 12823, 12829.

6.4.7 Yet to be visited

6.4.7.1 The site needs to be visited to confirm the RCAHMS description and to check that the grid reference given is correct. The possibility that the site is in fact PRN 9373 should be assessed.

6.4.7.2 PRN for which this recommendation is made: 12880.

6.5 Monitoring

6.5.0.1 A number of sites have been recommended for annual monitoring of general condition / state of preservation (see above). In some cases, however, potential threats have been identified which require more specific monitoring.

6.5.1 Animal erosion

6.5.1.1 Potential risk of earthwork erosion or of damage to walling and other features by stock (such as paths, poaching, sheep scrapes etc). For example a lightly worn path used by animals, including the college farm ponies, was noticed to cross the SE corner of PRN 334. This does not currently pose a significant threat but needs to be monitored. Action will need to be taken to divert the path if this becomes a significant path in future.

6.5.1.2 PRNs for which this recommendation is made: 334, 12808.

6.5.2 *Visitor / footpath erosion*

6.5.2.1 A number of the archaeological sites in the NNR are depicted on the OS 1:25000 map, lie close to the main trackway to the falls, and/or are easily recognisable. Accordingly they are likely to receive a significant number of interested visitors. Generally there were few signs that this was leading to significant damage to the majority of the sites. However, observations at PRN 340 indicate that this is a potential problem in need of regular review. A small amount of shallow digging had taken place in the entrance area of the W hut. Turf and stones had been removed and placed at various points around the wall of the site. The disturbance was minimal, and is more likely to have resulted from children playing than from any other activity such as metal detecting. Little if any disturbance has been caused to *in situ* material. However, placement of additional stone on the walling could become naturalised and be confused with original work in the future. The incident is not serious, but demonstrates that visited sites need to be regularly monitored to ensure that they are not being damaged.

6.5.2.2 PRNs for which this recommendation is made: 329, 334, 339, 340, 369, 7399, 12798, 12808.

6.5.3 *Bracken encroachment*

6.5.3.1 The impact of bracken on archaeological sites is discussed above. It was noted during the survey that bracken is growing nearby, but not currently upon, a number of sites. The risk of incursion needs to be checked and dealt with if it becomes significant. Preventative clearance may be necessary in some cases.

6.5.3.2 PRNs for which this recommendation is made: 12804, 12845.

6.5.4 *Burrowing animals*

6.5.4.1 Slight traces of burrowing were noted on one of the sites at the time of survey. Where it develops, activity of this kind has been demonstrated to cause significant damage to archaeological sites (Dunwell and Trout 1999). The site should be monitored and any further activity discouraged if it continues.

6.5.4.2 PRN for which this recommendation is made: 331.

6.5.5 *Natural erosion*

6.5.5.1 Accelerated weathering or erosion of exposed features and deposits.

6.5.5.2 PRN for which this recommendation is made: 12808.

6.5.6 *Trees adjacent to or growing on site*

6.5.6.1 Root penetration damages masonry and earthworks as well as disturbing buried deposits. Root pull resulting from tree-throw (the collapse of trees through wind-blow) is also a significant cause of damage. A recent survey of an enclosed Iron Age/Romano-British hut group near Tregarth, Gwynedd, has demonstrated the potential impact of tree-throw on archaeological remains. One of the hut circles was affected by tree-throw when visited in 1996, but its layout was still recognisable. However by the time the site was surveyed the following year two further trees had fallen, causing almost complete destruction (Smith 1999, 6-7).

6.5.6.2 The condition of any trees growing on or immediately adjacent to a site should be regularly monitored and steps taken to avoid damage if threatened in future. Those trees growing on the archaeological remains in the NNR are mostly mature and root penetration has probably already reached its maximum extent. However, the potential threat of tree-blow is a major concern and the trees will need to be monitored closely and action taken as necessary. In some cases, tree surgery work may be needed in future to prevent collapse or to reduce vulnerability to wind-blow. In the

case of significant threat, the tree should be felled with the stump left to rot *in situ*. Dead wood lying on sites is not a threat, and provides an important habitat for fungi and invertebrates.

6.5.6.3 PRNs for which this recommendation is made: 330, 331, 339, 340, 12812.

6.6 Presentation work

6.6.0.1 The rich concentration of a range of archaeological sites and features within the valley makes the area an ideal candidate for presentation work aimed at visitors to the valley. This should aim to draw out the way in which the society and the environment of the valley has changed through time, demonstrate how individual sites may have functioned and what they looked like in the past and emphasise the role of past landuse management practices in shaping the present day environment of the valley. Current visitor facilities include Nant Cottage exhibition/display space, car parking, public footpaths and disabled access. In collaboration with other organisations CCW organises annual open days and guided excursions, and other information is available in the form of leaflets.

6.6.0.2 Particular sites have been singled out as especially suitable as a focus for presentation work and are listed below. On a general level, a number of broad points should be borne in mind:

- Care needs to be taken to ensure that sufficient consideration is made of the likely subsequent impact on the sites themselves of improving presentation, interpretation and education facilities. Plans to increase the number of visitors to a particular archaeological site (for example through including it on a trail, publicising its existence and so on) should always bear in mind the site's vulnerability and the likely impact of increased numbers.
- Visitor access to archaeological sites and sensitive areas should be monitored: measures to control numbers and access may need to be considered if erosion and other damage is seen to be taking place.
- On-site interpretation should be used sparingly. Where it is used it should preferably not be fixed but should be capable of being moved, unless it is in a position which is not sensitive (e.g. within an existing car park or area of hard standing). This will prevent it acting as a permanent erosion focus. Off-site interpretation (such as leaflets, permanent displays at a central area and so on) will almost always be preferred.
- A programme of informed and integrated publicity/education material should be considered a priority. Self-guided walks could start in the main car-park, with an information panel, with further details available, for example in leaflet form.

6.6.1 *Candidate for improved presentation*

6.6.1.1 A number of sites have clearly recognisable ground plans and lie very close to the main N-S trackway through the NNR. A number of them would be obvious inclusions on an archaeological trail through the NNR. As noted above, bracken clearance is needed on many of the sites, and would help to open them up for visitors. Specific presentation recommendations are made in the gazetteer for some cases, for example, the display at the long-hut group site excavated by the RCAHMW (PRN 369) needs to be re-designed and re-located, and the permanent display at Nant Cottage would benefit from an overhaul.

6.6.1.2 The following key sites are identified as a presentation focus. They are located in a compact area, immediately either side of the track to the falls, and represent a range of site and period types, from a possible prehistoric burial monument to a medieval hafod type building:

6.6.1.3 Recommended sites (PRNs): 329, 332, 334 and 12845.

6.6.1.4 Other sites would also be suitable for presentation work, although they are often in areas in which the NNR staff are keen to encourage visitors. In other cases they may be located too far away from main trackway to allow for easy access; disabled access is a key concern in this respect. It would

however be worth considering the inclusion of these sites on an extended trail or guided archaeological tour through the valley, as well as for educational visits.

- 6.6.1.5 Other sites (PRNs): 331 (55m from track), 339 (approximately 100m from track), 340, 12845, 12808.

6.7 Further assessment work

6.7.1 Include in boundary and cultivation feature survey

- 6.7.1.1 All linear features, such as upstanding and relict walls, banks and revetments encountered were recorded and mapped as part of the current survey. However, given the large number of features this entailed, the difficulty of accurately marking the layout of the features against the OS base-map used for the survey and the limited survey time available, descriptions made were generally fairly brief. Follow up work involving more intensive recording of boundary types and construction form, searches for boundaries depicted on the late nineteenth century 6 inch to the mile Ordnance Survey maps but not encountered during the fieldwork carried out for the current project, and a focus on junctions between different boundaries to attempt to establish the chronological relationships between them should provide enough information to make more secure comments about the way in which the bounded landscape of the valley changed through time. This will assist management of the NNR as boundaries of various kinds are the type of feature most commonly affected by conservation and maintenance work. Further information about the relative antiquity of different features will enable decisions about relative value and importance to be made.
- 6.7.1.2 PRNs for which this recommendation is made: 12784, 12785, 12786, 12788, 12790, 12796, 12797, 12800, 12802, 12803, 12813, 12814, 12820, 12837, 12841, 12844, 12847, 12848, 12849, 12850, 12851, 12853, 12854, 12856, 12859, 12860, 12861, 12862, 12863, 12865, 12866, 12867, 12869, 12870, 12871, 12872, 12873, 12867, 12877, 12878, 12879.

7. Directions for future work: Scoping for phase II and beyond:

7.1 Phase II – priority tasks

7.1.1 The CCW brief identified a broad range of subjects for investigation as part of the long-term target of the HARMS initiative. These objectives were divided up into two phases, with the work presented in this report comprising phase I. The brief, including details of the phased approach are given here as appendix 5. A far greater number of archaeological features were present in the valley than had been suspected prior to commencement of the survey, and project resources were adjusted accordingly with a larger proportion of the time having to be dedicated to the feature survey that was originally envisaged. A number of objectives were therefore carried forward to comprise elements of phase II of the project.

7.1.2 It is important that the ground work established though the current survey is taken forward as phase II for the full potential of the HARMS initiative to be realised. The following list identifies priority areas for further work and is a collation of recommendations arising from the findings of phase I along with objectives carried over into the second stage and themes originally intended for phase II:

- a) Production of scale plans for key sites as indicated in site management recommendations;
- b) Completion of historical/archaeological survey to include the area of Maes y Gaer;
- c) Undertake specific work on linear and boundary features (to complement existing survey data and establish a chronology of the bounded landscape);
- d) Develop oral survey by gathering more relevant sources;
- e) Field and place name analysis;
- f) Survey of incidental anthropogenic features (coppice stools, pollards, traces of old fence lines);
- g) Review of antiquarian and tourist references;
- h) Photographic and artistic sources;
- i) Analysis of palaeo-environmental evidence (macrofossils, pollen etc);
- j) Appraisal of occupations and other relevant information in nineteenth censuses;
- k) Analysis of key documentary material identified during scoping study: see recommendations in section 3.3;
- l) Establish a web presence for HARMS findings;
- m) Order and map key aerial photographs from National Assembly collections (appendix 6);
- n) Full interpretation of the survey data, including integrated analysis of documentary and fieldwork findings to produce strong landuse history of the valley.

7.2 Extension of HARMS initiative

7.2.1 The project has revealed a large number of important and previously unrecorded features, including prehistoric and medieval settlements along with traces of the agricultural landscapes in which they were set. A significant quantity of archival documentation survives and the area offers the possibility of an unusually extensive and detailed study of past land use. The study has demonstrated the value of work of this kind and when carried through to phase II, will provide a blueprint for work on designated sites of environmental importance elsewhere in Wales.

7.2.2 In the longer term, it will be necessary to go beyond the scope of the HARMS initiative to establish a better understanding of some aspects of the valley's historical ecology. This would require an integrated programme of excavation and palaeoenvironmental research and would have

the benefits of increasing the educational and interpretative value of the archaeological resource of the NNR as well as providing a focus for public participation. A joint statement of interest in undertaking a project of this kind has been produced by Gwynedd Archaeological Trust and ARCUS (Archaeological Research and Consultancy at the University of Sheffield) and is included here as appendix 7. A number of possible sources of direct and partnership funding have been identified including the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), Cronfa Arbrofol Eryri (CAE), AHRB (the Arts and Humanities Research Board).

8 Glossary of terms

8.1 Acronyms

CCW – Countryside Council for Wales

EDM – Electronic Distance Measurer (a surveying instrument which calculates distances using laser beams)

GAT – Gwynedd Archaeological Trust

GIS – Geographical Information System

GPS – Global Positioning System

HARMS – Historic Landscape and Archaeological Resource Management Survey

ICOMOS – The International Council on Monuments and Sites (a non-governmental body of specialists professionally concerned with conservation, from 58 member nations).

NGR – National Grid Reference

NNR – National Nature Reserve

PRN – Primary Record Number (the unique number given to an archaeological site or feature within the Sites and Monuments Record).

RCAHMW – Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales

SAM – Scheduled Ancient Monument

SMR – Sites and Monuments Record (centralised repository and record of information relating to archaeological sites and landscapes – the SMR for Gwynedd is maintained by Gwynedd Archaeological Trust).

8.2 Definitions

Acre: ‘Derived from Old English aecer or Old Norse akr, ‘plot of cultivated land’. Originally an approximate measure of land which a yoke of oxen could plough in a day, it was standardised by Edward I (1272-1307) as a unit of 4840 square yards’ (Hey 1996, 1). Made up of four roods.

Advowson: ‘The right to appoint a priest to a benefice [an ecclesiastical living], especially a parish church. This right may be held by an individual (often a lord of a manor) or by an institution (e.g. an Oxford or Cambridge college or a monastery). Upon the dissolution of the monasteries many such rights were purchased by individuals from the Crown’ (Hey 1996, 2).

Enfeoffment: The surrender of property to a group of trustees.

Floruit: Refers to the time or period around which a person was known to be at work, e.g. ‘John Owen of Bodsilin (floruit 1600)’.

Perch: A square measure. 40 perches made one rood (a quarter of an acre). Old maps and surveys express measurements in the form of, e.g., ‘7 a[cre]. 3 r[oods]. 21 p[erches]’ (Hey 1996, 347).

Rood: A quarter of an acre. Made up of 40 perches.

Tithe map: Tithe maps were drawn up on a parish-by-parish basis in the 1830s and 1840s, in anticipation of legislative change, to record liability for tithe (ecclesiastical taxation). This was based on land-ownership, and the maps therefore provide a record of lordship, proprietorship and tenancy in this period.

9 Sources

9.1 Archival sources

9.1.1 University of Wales, Bangor Department of Manuscripts

Bangor manuscripts

21263/4	History of Aber.
21275	Photocopy of British Museum Harley ms 433.
21281	Photocopy of Public Record Office c 66/1796 no. 6.
21328	Photocopies of various documents relating to the history of Aber.

Plas Coch papers

3263-3300

Carter Vincent papers

701-708	Papers (1840-c. 1850) relating to tenements of Tyddyn Isaf, Tyddyn Uchaf, Plas Oer, Pentre Gwern Holiad, Weeg and Madryn.
709	Abstract of title (1895) of Colonel Henry Platt to freehold properties situated at Madryn.

Baron Hill papers

3013	Marriage settlement (1558); William Coetmor to enfeoff his daughter Ales and son-in law Robert with lands in Aber and elsewhere - schedule annexed.
3133	Concord in Court of Great Sessions (1668) between Thomas Bulkeley and Lewis Meyrick, plaintiffs/Lord Bulkeley and John Thomas deforciant, concerning the Manor of Aber and elsewhere and advowson of the church at Aber.
3134-5	Summary of transactions relating to the Manor of Aber (1674-5), and extract of Plea Roll of the Court of Great sessions held at Caernarfon 24 July 1615 (Latin).
3135	Final concord (1675) at the great Sessions between Owen Hughes esq., plaintiff/Robert Lord Bulkeley Viscount Cashel and Griffith Thomas esq. and Jane his wife, deforciant, concerning the Manor of Aber.
3136	Release (5 January 1676-7) by Thomas Bulkeley of Dinas to Robert Lord Bulkeley of various lands in North Caemarvonshire.
4590	Disagreement (c. 1770) between Bulkeley/Thomas of Aber (also Coedhelen) over right and title to the advowson of the rectory of Aber - account of the living from 1676 onwards.
4591-2	Lease with counterpart (1776) by Lord Bulkeley to William Jones, joiner, upon plot of land in Aber by the Bangor-Conwy road, for three lives, £1 <i>per annum</i> .
4593	Lease counterpart (1788), Lord Bulkeley to James Sumpter of the Bull's Head, Aber.
4594	Deed of lease (1789) seventh Viscount/Jones Yeoman, Gwem Engan, two lives, £4 1 0/- <i>per annum</i> .
4595	Lease (1789) Lord Bulkeley/Mary Evans widow and Wm Rowlands yeoman of Pentre'r Wem, Aber, 2 lives, £4 15/- <i>per annum</i> .
4596	Lease (1789) Lord Bulkeley/Evans Richard, yeoman, of part of Bryn meddyg, two lives £29 <i>per annum</i> .
4597	Lease (1797) Lord Bulkeley/Jane Hughes widow and John Thomas yeoman, of Lerpwl, Aber, two lives, 6s <i>per annum</i> .
4597-2	Lease (1798) Lord Bulkeley/Ellen Williams widow and William Thomas yeoman, of Tan'rallt, two lives, £11 <i>per annum</i> - expired 1849.
4598	Copy of schedule of deeds (1790) relating to the manor of Aber handed over to GD Fleetwood.

4599	Assignment of lease (1794) by John Wms, yeoman, with consent of Lord Bulkeley/Owen Jones yeoman of a piece of land whereon to build, 3 lives, 14/- <i>per annum</i> .
4600	Counterpart lease (1 83 1) by Sir RBWB to Mr Edward Smith, of a dwelling house, 21 yrs, £ 11 0/- <i>per annum</i> .
4691	Rentroll (1580) Bulkeley properties in Caernarvonshire.
4697	Rentroll (1617-8) Bulkeley properties in commote of Arllechwedd Uchaf.
4701	Rentroll (1628) Bulkeley properties in Caernarvonshire.
4714	Rentroll (1617-8) Bulkeley properties in commote of Arllechwedd Uchaf.
4726	Rentroll (1 689) Bulkeley properties in the parish of Aber.
4727iv	Rentroll (1690) Bulkeley properties in commote of Arllechwedd Uchaf.
4727vi	Rentroll (1690) Bulkeley properties in Caernarvonshire.
4727ix	Rentroll (1691-6) Bulkeley properties in commote of Arllechwedd Uchaf.
4733-41	Rentroll (1699) Bulkeley properties in commote of Arllechwedd Uchaf.
4743	Rentroll (1699) Bulkeley properties in Caernarvonshire.
4744	Rentroll (1713) Bulkeley properties (unspecified).
4745	Rentroll (1713-5) Bulkeley estate.
4752	Rentroll (1719-20) Bulkeley properties in Caernarvonshire.
4754	Rents and arrears (1721-3) Bulkeley properties in the parish of Aber.
4755	Rentroll (1722) Bulkeley properties in Caernarvonshire.
4757	Rentroll (1725-8) Bulkeley properties in Caernarvonshire.
4758	Rentroll (1728-174 1), Bulkeley properties in Caernarvonshire.
4759	Rentroll (1730), Bulkeley properties in Caernarvonshire.
4760-6	Rentals (1731-1750), Bulkeley properties, area not specified.
4770	Rental (1755), Bulkeley properties in Caernarvonshire.
4771	Rental (1756-7), Bulkeley properties, area not specified.
4773	Rental (1756-7), Bulkeley properties in Caernarvonshire.
4774-4954	Rentals, tithe rent charges, etc (to 1899), Bulkeley properties.
4961	Estimate and valuation (1778) of Bulkeley estate in Caernarvonshire.
4965	Valuation (1807) of Bulkeley estate in Caernarvonshire.
4969	Valuation (c. 1828) of Bulkeley estate in Caernarvonshire.
4971	Survey of timber (c. 1831), parish of Aber.
4972	Survey (1831) of Aber estate.
4973-4	Survey (c. 1840) of fields, acreage, etc.
5087-8	Acquittance (nd) by Receiver General, includes 'Tir Bleddyn Rwth in Uchaf'.
S6605	Plan (nd) of Aber plantations.
6611-6643	Plans and references (1840s) of sale of land in Aber for the Chester-Holyhead Rly.
6894	Exchange of land (1839) between Sir Robert Bulkeley Williams Bulkeley and Caernarvonshire Old Tumpike Trust.
6895	Plan of above.
7430	Rental of estate (1826-1831).

Penrhyn British Records Association papers.

Draft conveyance (1927) of Aber mill.
Draft conveyance (1927) of 84 a. 1 rood 9 perches formerly part of Pen y Bryn together with right to graze 40 sheep on Llwydmor Bera and Foel Fras and two other parcels of land.

Porth yr Aur papers

20504a Sale by John Owen of Bodsilin to Lewis Owen of High Holborn of Bodsilin.

5.1.3 University of Wales Bangor - Welsh Rare Books

X/JF81 Sale (1889) of Col. Platt's cattle.
X/KG79PWL Act relating to the road through Aber (17 Geo. 111).

9.1.2 Caernarfon Record Office

Aber Parish

Aber Parish Records of the parish of Aber.

Parish records

XPE/56 Parish records.
XPE/56/837 Copy of Public Record Office EIOI/485/30
XPE/56/844 Cows to be kept on Aber hills.

[excerpt from Williams a Watts-Williams *Cofrestri Plwyf Cymru* / Parish Registers of Wales:
C 1682-1872, M 1682-1837 B 1682-1888 **NLW** M 1837-1971 (Banns 1902-1917)
GASC Fac C 1682-1872 M 1682-1837 B 1682-1943 **GASC**
BT 1676-82, 1687-1701, 1705-1725, 1727-80, 1782-91, 1793-1854, 1883, 1888-1900 **NLW**
Cop index M 1813-19837 GFHS]

Gorddinog

30-46 Statement of account for Henfaes farm.
63 Account book (1891-1903) for Henfaes farm.

W. Gilbert Williams

8(35) Hearth Tax returns.
XLI 11/1-3 Militia returns (1 812-1814).
XM/807/4/1 Land Tax Assessment records (1933-1949).
XQAILT4/1 Land Tax Assessment records (1 746-1810).
QR/GK/4 Gamekeeper's deputation (1827).
X/QS 1 747-8/108 Persons eligible to sit on juries (1747).
XD/35/86 Correspondence re Henfaes.

Maps collection

XM/Maps/616 Tithe map (1848).
XM/Maps/127/17 Map (1925) of parish.
QE/GK/75 Reference (1872) to the Manor of Aber.

Poole

X/2278 Exchange of land at Aber.
X/3485 References (1766) to properties in Aber.
X/4505 References (1756) to the advowson of the rectory of Aber.

Carter Vincent

97 Reference (1891) to land in the parish of Aber.
248-51,71 Highway (1876-7) on Tan y Clogwyn common to Bodsilin.
286 Sale (1891) of Hafod y Gelyn.

General

XM/328 Photocopies of Public Record Office SC/6 Bundle I 1 72 - 3, 4, 8-12.
XM/5627 Notes (1901) on the history of Aber.
XPE/56/837 Correspondence (1958) with Public Record Office, concerning Sir William Sutton, Justice of Caernarfon 1301-1306.
XPE/56/839 Transcription of medieval documents (Latin) relating to the Manor of Aber, and to the repair of the hall and chamber at the *llys*.

9.1.1.3 *National Library of Wales*

Manuscripts

839c Draft of Edmund Hyde Hall's notes on Caernarvonshire relating to the parish of Aber and elsewhere (pp. 33-69 deal with Aber).

Llanfair-Brynodol

150 Financial problems of William Thomas.

Wynn papers

18 Reference to Hafod y Gelyn, 1648.

5.1.6 *National Monuments Record*

'Earthworks' and 'Domestic' files for relevant o.s. maps.

5.1.7 *Public Record Office, Kew.*

SC/6

Bundle 11 72/3, 4, 8-12.

C 66

1796 no. 6

Grant by letters patent to Sir William Thomas of the Manor of Aber.

9.1.1.4 *British Museum*

Harleian mss.

433 Grant by Richard Vaughan of the Manor of Aber and Wig.

9.2 **Cartographic sources**

1/10,000 SH67 SW, SE
SH77 SW
SH66 NW, NE
SH76 NW

9.3 **Visual material**

9.1.3.1 *National Library of Wales*

Prints

Accession number	Record number	Date	Subject
PA 6566A1	1810		Bridge, cottages
PD7458 A3	1865		People
PG 2335A4	1850		Woman in costume, bridge, waterfall
PG 2335A5	1850		Woman in costume, bridge, waterfall

Drawings

Drawing	volume	Page	Date	Subject
9	25	1810		Aber
9	27	1810		Valley
9	26	1810		Valley
10	17	/		View
10	18	/		Bridge
12	61	/		Pen y Bont

12	611	/	Waterfall
12	7	/	Valley
12	8	/	Valley
33	102	1812	Church
34	13a	/	Aber
44	2	1849	Valley
44	4	1849	Bridge
66	45	1813-24	View
345	13a(i)	/	View
107	13+14	1795	Bridge
107	14	1797	Valley
110	3	/	Waterfall

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10. Gazetteer of archaeological features within Coedydd Aber NNR

(accompanied by management recommendations and indications of scope for further work)

PRN 328

NGR: SH66757054C

Site type: Strip lynchets

Description

Cultivation features E. of Afon Rhaeadr Fawr. Three strip lynchets or terraces, c. 20m apart from one another, and each up to 1-1.5m high. Where visible at tree-throws and other erosion points, they appear to be of stone rubble and earth bank construction. Lines of oaks run along the two southern most lynchets, and a possible trackway follows the middle one.

The remains recorded by this survey do not entirely accord with the description given by the RCAHMW following their survey of 1947 (RCAHMW 1956, 13):

'A small group of terraced fields, near which lie some huts and hut groups (PRNs 329-334, 369 and 12845)...Near the N. end of the group is an enclosed hut-group (PRN 330), much ruined but apparently not earlier than the terraces. Below this, about 50 yards (46m) to the W., a terrace 160 yards (146m) long runs long runs N-S parallel to the contours. To the S. of the hut-group the slope is lyncheted for about 200 yards (183m) to form fields extending 60 yards (55m) up the slope. At the N. end of the series the terraces run at about 45 degrees to the contours but at the S. they run straight up and down the slope. Their average vertical height is about 3ft (1m)...There is no evidence as to the relative dates of the terraces and buildings apart from hut-group PRN 330. Some of these remains may be associated with the place referred to (as Nantedracadat / Nateracadrat) in Rec. Caern., 138-40'.

No features matching this description were noted at the NGR given by the RCAHMW (SH66807050), and as the group of lynchets recorded by the current survey centred on SH66757054 (60m to the NW) match the earlier description, the RCAHMW NGR is taken to be slightly inaccurate. However, the area was under fairly dense bracken cover at the time of survey, and it may be that the dense vegetation obscured further features. Also, a modern plantation lies in the vicinity of the RCAHMW NGR, and this might now obscure features that were previously visible.

There may be other reasons for the inconsistencies between the findings of the two surveys. Damage to the area in the fifty or so years subsequent to the RCAHMW survey may account for some loss of features. Chief among the causes of damage may have been the widening of the trackway that now provides the main N-S access route through the NNR to the falls at the head of the valley. No reference is made to the presence of this trackway in the various site descriptions for **PRNs 329-334** in the RCAHMW Inventory (1956, 13-14), despite the fact that it is an obvious feature against which to describe the location of the features. However, a path or trackway of some sort is depicted here on the 1st edition 6" Ordnance Survey map (surveyed 1877-1878) and so is likely to have been present at the time of the RCAHMW survey in the late 1940s. It may just have been a relatively small path at that time, having been made up into a more substantial trackway subsequently. A long terrace 160 yards (146m) is record in the RCAHMW description as running N-S parallel to the contours, passing to the W of **PRN 330**. The feature was not identified during the current survey and it is suggested that the modern trackway has utilised and overlies the line of this feature.

The group of lynchets lying to the S and E of **PRN 330** are fairly recognisable from the RCAHMW description. However, it is not clear that they represent the remains of 'fields' as such; the term implies plots bounded on all sides, and there is no visible evidence for boundaries running across / perpendicular to the lynchets which might have divided the strips into plots (although it is possible that the RCAHMW surveyors interpreted the 160 yard terrace as a boundary of this kind). The features are more suggestive of open strips resulting from plough cultivation. Lyncheting would have resulted from soil creep caused by ploughing against the contour of the slope, although the rubble and earth construction of the banks suggests that the strips have also been built up to a certain extent (possibly through the process of depositing stones cleared from the ground during ploughing at the edges of the cultivated strips) to aid the development of terracing. On the basis of this evidence the terms 'cultivation features' or 'strip lynchets' would seem more appropriate than 'terraced fields', the general description used by the RCAHMW.

The two pieces of dating evidence given in the RCAHMW account are ambiguous and contradictory. **PRN 330** is stated to be 'not apparently earlier than the terraces', implying that the features are late prehistoric, or at least Romano-British, in date, as could be assumed for the hut-group itself. However, the allusion to links with

Nantedracadat mentioned in the *Record of Caernarfon* (Record Commission 1838, 138-140) implies a medieval (C13th-C14th) date. Butler (1962, 33) is also unsure about the date of the features, but implies that they may have been used for the cultivation of hardy crops during the middle ages. The field evidence observed during the current survey favours the latter interpretation. A hut platform, which is part of **PRN 330**, seems to be truncated (overlain) by one of the lynchets and so must pre-date it. The lynchets have an appearance consistent with medieval strip cultivation, and are tentatively ascribed to this period here, pending further investigation.

References

RCAHMW 1956, 39 feature number 13.

Management recommendations

- **Re-survey to establish full extent.** Requires re-survey when bracken is down (possibly best in late winter / early spring when bracken has most fully rotted back). Some clearance may be necessary.

Scope for further investigation

- **Context survey (EDM).** Carry out instrument assisted survey to more accurately record the feature group, investigate their layout and micro-topography, and to assess their relationship with adjacent features (circular and rectilinear buildings).
- **Assessment of 'off-site' features – broader research programme.** Investigate the date and function of the features through trial excavation focussed on two areas. Firstly, the point where the northernmost lynchet appears to truncate the hut platform of **PRN 330**. Secondly, on a sample section through one of the lynchets to assess its structure as well as the potential for recovery of ecofacts (environmental evidence). Environmental sampling to be carried out if suitable deposits recovered.

PRN 329

NGR: SH66787037

Site type: Enclosed hut group and long hut

Description

Enclosed hut group consisting of 3 huts: 2 circular, one rectangular. Hut 1, roughly 6m external diameter. Its walls are marked by internal orthostats up to 0.3m high and are up to 1m wide. Entrance at NNW, *circa* 1m wide. Hut 2, is to NNW, lower than hut 1, and is c.7m diameter. The S part of the hut wall is present only as facing stones on the interior and is otherwise level with the ground surface. A rectangular building, well constructed of dry stone walling, c.4m x 6m, lies to the SW on the other side of a 2m wide hollow-way. It is clearly later in date, overlying the hut-group enclosure wall. Its SE end is not discernible, and has probably been quarried out during the construction of the NE-SW oriented field wall (**PRN 12844**) which skirts the hut at its SW. The surviving corners of the building are right-angled in form. There is no obvious entrance visible in the surviving remains of the building. Traces of the hut-group enclosure wall lie to the S of the field wall. To the SE the rectangular building overlies the levelled hut-group enclosure wall and flat ground within the enclosure. To the NW it has been built out over the enclosure on a stone-revetted platform.

The field wall **PRN 12844** is shown on the 1st edition 6" OS map of 1891 (surveyed 1877 to 1878). The map also shows another boundary, apparently relating to relict wall **PRN 12841**, predating **PRN 12844**. The regular, linear, form of **PRN 12844** suggests that it is enclosure period, i.e. late C18th / early-mid C19th in date. It is probably one of the walls referred to by Butler (1962, 35) as 'sheep wall', which he states to have been built in the decade 1810-1820. The earlier boundary shown on the map has a less regular form, and may be medieval in date. It is tempting to associate it with the long hut at **PRN 329**, although vegetation conditions did not allow this possibility to be assessed at the time of survey. The presence of prehistoric / Romano-British features suggest the possibility that the walls may have reused earlier boundaries. The presence of a further tenuous line of footings (**PRN 12837**) suggests a complex history of boundary changes in this small area.

The site was first recorded by the RCAHMW, and a brief description appears in the Caernarfonshire Inventory (RCAHMW 1956, 13):

'Huts near Aber Falls. An enclosed hut-group on a level shelf at the foot of the steep slopes on the E. side of the valley of the Afon Rhaia-dr-fawr, at a height of 600 ft. above O.D. (Fig. 31). Condition: much ruined and under thick bracken (29th October 1948)'.

It has latterly been visited as part of projects investigating hut circle settlement, on 8/6/94, and rural medieval settlement remains, on 6/1/96 (Gwynedd Archaeological Trust projects **G1104** and **G1464**). Comments and

recommendations from these visits have been included above.

References

RCAHMW 1956, 13 feature number 41.
GAT 1994 (project G1104: site record sheet)
GAT 1998 (project G1464: site record sheet)

Management recommendations

- **Re-hinge / relocate gateway.** A modern metal gate is situated at the corner of two post and wire fences immediately to the S of the site. The gateway is used to bring in sheep from the mountain land beyond at gathering time. It is currently hinged such that the animals are directed across the site. As stock trampling can cause considerable damage to sites through soil erosion and stone displacement, the gate should be re-hinged so that it directs animals away from the site. However, this may not be sufficient to entirely prevent the problem, and it would be preferable to re-locate the gateway. Furthermore, another site, **PRN 12843**, is also affected by this problem. Re-hinging the gate would not prevent stock crossing this point. The new position would have to be considered carefully as the area is of high archaeological sensitivity, and deposits could potentially be damaged by digging holes for the gateposts. It may be advisable for an archaeologist to monitor the work.
- **Bracken clearance.** Infestation has clearly been a problem at the site for many years, as the RCAHMW record it as having been bracken covered in 1948.
- **Vehicle erosion.** Voluntary wardens at the NNR have noted that local farmers tend to drive their quad-bikes over the site when approaching the mountain land through the gateway. The bracken was too high to assess whether this activity has led to any damage. The farmer / farmers involved should be informed of the importance and extent of the site, and not to take vehicles across it. Re-hinging the gate (as above) would also help to divert this threat away from the site.
- **Monitoring – visitor erosion.** Lies close to main trackway, is marked on the OS 1:25000 map, and is easily recognisable – likely to receive a lot of visits.
- **Large scale plan.**
- **Candidate for improved presentation.** The site has a clearly recognisable ground plan and lies very close to the main N-S trackway through the NNR. This is one of a group (including **PRNs 329, 332, 334 and 12845**) which would make an ideal concentration of features for presentation and interpretation work.
- **Annual monitoring.**

Scope for further investigation

An interesting site which displays probable medieval re-use of a late prehistoric / Romano-British settlement.

- **Candidate for excavation.** This is one of a group (including **PRNs 329, 332, 334 and 12845**) which would make an ideal concentration of features for presentation and interpretation work, possibly including excavation. Any excavation at the site should investigate the chronological relationship between huts 1 and 2, as well as the relationship between the huts and the enclosure wall.
- **Assessment of 'off-site' features – broader research programme.** See comments on **PRN 12837** regarding possible research on boundaries associated with the site.

PRN 330

NGR: SH66737054

Site type: Enclosed hut group and long hut

Description

Possible enclosed hut group with later rectangular building. The site is very difficult to interpret, and quite different descriptions and observations have been made at various times when visited by archaeologists. At the time of the current survey, the site was interpreted as consisting of a hut circle, a rectangular building and vestiges of walls. Contrary to the RCAHMW survey, the hut circle which lies to the S of the group beside a lynchet seems to be truncated (to the E) by the lynchet which it therefore predates (see description for **PRN 328**). It appears oval in form, roughly 4m x 6m (on a N to S axis) buried by lynchet and slump material to E. An orthostat sited at the NW is *circa* 0.6 by 0.6m in size. The rectangular building is assumed to be later than the hut circle. It is sited to the NW of, and lower than, the circle, and is set amidst a clump of oaks. It is 3m E-W by 4m N-S where it survives, but seems to have been robbed out at S end. It may have had a possible 8m original length, with entrance at the centre of the W side, now widened by stone removal. It consists of wall footings, grassed over, c. 0.5-0.6m wide and up to 0.4m high. Relict wall lines, surviving as footings only, lie to the W of both the circular and rectangular structures, and continue on the far side of the trackway (now main N-S route-way through the valley). These are mostly poorly defined and there are no obvious points at which relationships with either of the buildings can be established. A cairn, or stone spread, lies at the NW corner of the rectangular building.

The RCAHMW investigators recorded the site as:

'ENCLOSED HUT-GROUP. Remains of an enclosure of rectilinear outline, containing circular huts, at about 580 ft. above O.D. on the E. side of the valley of the Afon Rhaiadr-fawr. The walls are of earth and large stones, but the whole site is so much ruined that it is only possible to determine the character of one hut with certainty. This is circular, of 18 ft. diameter, and set against the foot of a lynchet. This is probably the group described in Lowe, II, 41; and Arch. Camb., 1924, p.100'.
[Visited 28th August 1947]

It should be noted that Lowe's description in *Arch. Camb.* does in fact accord more closely with **PRN 329** than with **PRN 330**.

It was not possible to make out the rectilinear enclosure at the time of the current survey, although it may be relevant that the RCAHMW did not specifically record the presence of the rectangular building at the group.

At the time of their survey of the area in (August) 1971, the Ordnance Survey Archaeology Division described the site in the following way:

'There is little remaining of this site except for confused masses of stone which makes identification of individual huts impossible'.

Notes and a sketch of the site made as part of a hut circle settlement project by Gwynedd Archaeological Trust in June 1994 stated that the site was generally as described by the RCAHMW. However, the sketch could not clearly be accorded with the field evidence at the time of the current survey. The site may have suffered some damage subsequent to the 1994 survey. However, the most likely period of damage is likely to have been associated with the widening of the main N-S pathway through the valley (runs immediately to W of site) which predates 1994, but post-dates the RCAHMW surveys. The most likely explanation for the discrepancies between interpretations is that the remains are quite damaged and are therefore very ambiguous.

References

RCAHMW no 40, vol1 1956, 13
GAT 1994 (project G1104: site record sheet)

Management recommendations

- **Trees adjacent to site.** Mature oaks surround the rectangular building, but are not growing on the site itself. Condition to be monitored and preventative tree surgery work carried out as necessary.
- **Large scale plan.** Interesting site but difficult to interpret due to complicated and ambiguous surface remains.
- **Annual monitoring.**
-

Scope for further investigation

The site is potentially interesting, but is poorly understood, as the surface evidence is ambiguous.

- **Candidate for excavation.** The antiquity and development of features such as the lynchets to the S and E of the site is generally poorly understood. Although interpreted differently by the RCAHMW investigators of the 1940s and the current survey, the hut circle seems to have a physical relationship with one of the lynchets. Small-scale excavation across the area of interface could help to establish the stratigraphy and therefore relative age of the features. See research scope comments for **PRN 328**.

PRN 331

NGR: SH66677046

Site type: Hut circle

Description

Round house on very slightly raised area surrounded by boggy ground. Internal diameter about 7m, walls 1.0m wide and up to 0.4m high. A single large orthostat / rock pillar, 0.5m wide and 0.8m high is sited in the wall to the NE. Numerous boulders and orthostatic facing slabs are visible through out the walling. A possible entrance lies to the SE.

The site is much as recorded (as feature number 42) in the RCAHMW Inventory:

'Round hut, diameter 26ft., on level ground 500 ft above O.D., 90 yards SW of No. 40 [**PRN 330**].
The wall is 2-3 ft. thick and 1ft. 6ins. high, of large boulders, with a single orthostat 2 ft. 6 ins. high

on the NE. The entrance, 7ft.wide, lies on the SE. The construction is poorer than is usual in huts of this size. Condition: fair; trees growing on the wall' [Visited 12th February 1948].

Despite the RCAHMW comment regarding the relatively poor construction of the walling, it is felt that the site is a fine and well preserved example of its type, an isolated round house. The boggy nature of the ground surrounding the site, and presumably of the deeper portions of the area within the site itself may suggest damp soil conditions favourable to the preservation of material within the floor deposits.

The trees referred to by the RCAHMW as growing on the hut's wall appear to have fallen, or been felled, but their former presence is demonstrated by a number of rotten stumps.

Management recommendations

- **Bracken clearance.**
- **Trees on site.** A grown out hazel coppice stool lies in the interior of the site, close to the wall at the NE near the orthostat upright. Root action may have caused some damage, but as there is unlikely to be much further growth, the situation is probably stable for the time being. The tree should be monitored for deterioration, and preventative tree surgery work carried out as necessary. In the case of significant threat, it should be felled with the stump left to rot *in situ*. Two fallen trees lie across part of the site to the E/SE. Dead and decomposing wood provides a rich habitat for invertebrates etc, and as the trees are not causing any damage to the site no action need be taken to remove them from their current position.
- **Monitoring - burrowing animals.** At time of survey, there were traces of recent burrowing animal activity, in the form of trial diggings / scrapings in the centre of the site. Although these were shallow and had not been developed into burrows, the site should be monitored and any further activity discouraged if it occurs.
- **Large scale plan.** No plan exists at present.
- **Candidate for improved presentation.** The site has a clearly recognisable ground plan and whilst it lies slightly away from the main N-S trackway through the NNR (approx. 55m to the W), it is easily accessible from it.
- **Annual monitoring.**

Scope for further investigation

A well preserved site with a clearly visible layout.

- **Candidate for excavation:** The site is a well-preserved example of its type. The boggy nature of the ground surrounding the site, and presumably of part of the interior of the site may have damp soil conditions favourable to the preservation of organic material and palaeoenvironmental evidence. It may therefore provide a rewarding subject for future excavation.

PRN 332

NGR: SH 66747038

Site type: Burial cairn / hut circle

Description

Circular stone built feature with a single orthostat or stone pillar standing within S wall. The site is fairly complicated, with a number of slight features, and is heavily moss covered, making interpretation of the separate elements difficult. The main feature is consists of a low oval, 4.5m by 3m on a NW-SE axis, of tumbled walling (/piled stone). A large orthostat is built into the wall of the oval to its SE, measuring 1.35m high with a width of 0.35m at top and 0.8m at base.

Another area of walling is present immediately to the SW of the oval structure. It is about 1m wide, and consists of large boulders with smaller packing stones. It is difficult to make out its layout. It could be interpreted as an annex 9m by 4m on a NW-SE axis, as there are slight indications that the walling curves round to join the oval structure at both ends. However, these indications are ambiguous and the outer area of walling has been interpreted differently by the RCAHMW as traces of an enclosure wall. The description given in the RCAHMW Inventory for this feature (1956, 14, feature no. 43) is supplemented in the old management plan for Coedydd Aber by information from original field notes held by the Royal Commission, and is given as follows:

'An enclosure wall 3ft. 6in. (1m) thick of large boulders, with a core of smaller stone, is just traceable to the S and E of the hut. This seems to form the SE end of a rectangular enclosure, 25ft (7.5m) wide from the NE to SW, which would have contained the hut. However the NW part of the enclosure has entirely disappeared' [Visited 12th February 1948].

At the time of the current survey, it was thought that the evidence on the ground did not suggest that the 1m wide boulder and stone wall continued along the S part of the oval on a NE-SW axis as envisaged in the Royal

Commission description. However, a sparse line of stones was recorded as a possible relict field wall on roughly this alignment, and interpretation of these as the robbed out continuation of the enclosure wall would support the RCAHMW hypothesis. This line runs roughly parallel to, and about 17m away from, a more definite relict wall line. **PRN 12837**. A further possible length of relict walling lies between the two on a similar alignment, about 10m away from **PRN 12837**. Although it gives rather a vague description, it is of interest to note that a description of a site in the Aber Valley given in *Archaeologica Cambrensis* of 1864 (Blight 1865) may be of relevance to the present discussion. The site has formerly been ascribed a different number within the SMR (**PRN 4070**), and given the grid reference SH 66827004. However, this record appears to have been made from interpretation of the written account alone. No feature was found at this location when the site was searched for in the field (not found by Ordnance Survey Archaeology Division team 1971). Re-reading the 1864 description at the time of the current survey would seem to suggest that the site referred to is in fact **PRN 333**. It was described as a double circle of stones lying 300 or 400 yards from the Aber waterfall on comparatively low ground thickly overgrown with brambles and tall weeds. The inner circle, 18ft (c. 5.5m) in diameter, was apparently constructed of drystone walling, two courses of which remained in 1864, and had a 6ft (c. 1.8m) high stone standing within it but not at its centre. The circles were not concentric, the distance between the walls being 33ft (c. 10m) on the N side, but only a few feet on the S. Although it is difficult to know how reliable this description is, it suggests that the field evidence was more extensive in the mid C19th than it is now and would tend to support the RCAHMW interpretation of an enclosure around the oval feature.

An engraving of the site described by Blight is published in the *Arch. Camb.* article of 1865 (figure 10)



CIRCLE AT ABER, CAERNARVONSHIRE.

Figure 10 Engraving from Bright 1865 (*Arch. Camb.*) – probably depicting **PRN 332**

A further length of relict wall runs roughly NW from near to the NW end of the annex / enclosure wall. No definite relationship between the two could be made out on the ground, and the remains of the former (a sparse line of stones) is much less substantial than the latter. The feature is not referred to in the Royal Commission description. Despite this, were the two features part of the same arrangement of walling, this would support the argument for the presence of an enclosure wall. In the balance, the observations of the current survey would tend to support the interpretation of the corner of walling of an 'annex' area rather than as an enclosure wall surrounding the site. The relict walls have the appearance of field boundaries. Their relationship with the site is unclear although they may form part of a broader association of huts, field walls and other structures including **PRN 329** and **PRN 332**. Evidence for the associations between these various features has been further complicated where they have been truncated by the N-S trackway to the falls. However, in at least one instance (**PRN 12837**) a boundary line running towards the enclosed hut group **PRN 329** does continue on the far side of the trackway.

The old CCW management plan contains summaries of comments made by Frances Lynch (former lecturer in prehistory at the University of Wales Bangor) and by Stephen Briggs (of the RCAHMW) after visits to this site on 23rd April 1976 and 23rd June 1976 respectively. Frances Lynch was doubtful that the site was a round hut, as interpreted in the original RCAHMW description, and noted that it appeared to be connected by walls to **PRN 329**. Stephen Briggs believed that the site could be a round barrow or cairn with the depression / hollow at the centre suggesting that it has been robbed, but stated that without excavation it would not be possible to verify this claim.

The site does seem too small to be a round house or dwelling of any kind, particularly in comparison to the substantial round houses to the E (PRNs 329 and 12845) and N (PRNs 331 and 333). The feature could be an ancillary structure, such as a stock pen or working area, related to the hut group to the E (PRN 329). The vestiges of wall lines noted above do suggest that this feature is tied into a broader arrangement of structures and boundaries. However, the pillar / orthostat is an unusual feature, and could be seen as a standing stone which has either been built into the wall of a contemporary circular feature, or has been incorporated into a later structure. This would suggest a ceremonial dimension to the function of the structure, and it may be the remains of a cairn or other prehistoric monument, as thought by Francis Lynch and Stephen Briggs. The 'walling' of the oval feature is of piled rather than laid stones, possibly suggesting that they form the external portions of a cairn rather than the remains of a structured wall.

The latter interpretation does require explanations for the presence of the relict walls and the possible enclosure wall, and for their relationship with the oval feature itself. More than one phase of activity could be reflected at the site, with a wall and building arrangement pre-dating the development of a ceremonial monument, or *vice versa*. The enclosure walling could be seen as an annex to the oval 'hut' feature. However, in the context of a ceremonial role for the site, the area could be a platform or courtyard adjoining the main feature, the barrow / cairn. It is not possible to favour any particular interpretation at this stage, and further investigations will be required to say anything more definite about the site. Excavation is likely to be the only way to assess the function of the site.

Although references to this site appear in the archaeological literature as early as the mid C19th (Blight 1865) and seems to be one of the sites referred to by Bezant Lowe in the early C20th (Lowe 1912a, 115; 1912b, 208), more recently, it has been the source of considerable confusion. This arises in part from discrepancies within the RCAHMW Inventory entry (1956, 14). The site is recognisably that described as feature number 43 in the Inventory. However, the grid reference given (SH 66807047) is incorrect and is in fact the location for another site, that recorded here as PRN 12845 (which fits the description of, but again not the NGR for, feature number 44 in the RCAHMW Inventory (1956, 14). The site is however depicted on modern Ordnance Survey maps of the area (see 1:10000 quarter sheet SH67SE and 1:25000 Outdoor Leisure Series map number 17 for example), because, in 1971 the O.S. Archaeology Division surveyors recognised it from its Inventory description and corrected the NGR error. The NGR has remained uncorrected in the Gwynedd Sites and Monuments Record however. This led to the site being overlooked when the area was visited by project staff from Gwynedd Archaeological Trust as part of a survey of hut circle settlement in North West Wales in the 1990s, when the site recorded under this PRN (PRN 331), actually being PRN 12845.

References

RCAHMW 1956, 14 (site number 43).
Blight 1865
Lowe 1912a
Lowe 1912b

Management recommendations

- **Bracken clearance.** Clearance should be prioritised here to make the site visible to visitors.
- **Large scale plan.** Interesting site but difficult to interpret due to complicated and ambiguous surface remains. Focussed survey would help to clarify the ground plan. No plan of the site appears in the RCAHMW Inventory. It has previously been confused with other features and for this reason was not visited as part of the Gwynedd Archaeological Trust early settlement (hut-group) survey project, with the result that no sketch plan is available from this project either.
- **Candidate for improved presentation.** It would make a good site for presentation as it lies adjacent to the main N-S trackway through the valley and is easy to recognise because of the large orthostat. This is one of a group (including PRNs 329, 332, 334 and 12845) which would make an ideal concentration of features for presentation and interpretation work.
- **Annual monitoring.**

Scope for further investigation

Further work is required to aid interpretation. It is an interesting site, particularly given the unusual presence of the large orthostat within the 'walling'. The possibility that the site may be a prehistoric barrow or burial cairn adds to the interest. Numerous cairns are located high up on the ridges and peaks surrounding the Aber Valley, but no definite examples have been confirmed within the valley itself. Positive identification of the site as a cairn would raise interesting issues concerning the placement and positioning of these monuments in the prehistoric landscape.

- **Context survey (EDM).** The survey and resulting plan should set the site in its broader context, and should aim to investigate the possible relationships between the oval feature, the relict walls, and round houses lying to the E, N and NW.
- **Candidate for excavation.** In the longer term, excavation is likely to be the only way to determine the function of the site. This is one of a group (including PRNs 329, 332, 334 and 12845) which would make an ideal concentration of features for presentation and interpretation work, possibly including excavation.

PRN 333

NGR: SH66727045

Site type: Hut circle

Description

Probable round house overlain, overlain by later field wall at N. The site is slightly terraced against a gentle E-W slope. Internal diameter of about 7.5m with walling about 1m wide, mostly as slumped earth and stone banks. Two patches of stone spreads overlie the walls to the S and SW. That to the SW may contain the displaced jambs of an entrance formerly located at this point. Orthostat facing stones are visible in places throughout W, S and E portions of wall interior, with small section of double orthostats construction (each side faced) detectable beside stone spread to E. A low relict field wall lies a few metres to the S of the site, bounding an area of boggy ground, running in an arc which possibly respects the round house site, implying that the features may be associated with one another. A later field wall, the continuation of **PRN 12863** to the W, overlies the N end of the site, and continues SW-NE (as **PRN 12870**), approximately along the line of the main footpath to the falls as a lyncheted rubble spread with low wall footings visible in places.

The site is not included in the RCAHMW Inventory (1956). However, there are discrepancies in the grid references and details for some of the sites in this area given in the Inventory, which have given rise to a number of ambiguities. The grid reference given for feature no. 44 in the Inventory is SH 66727047 a point which lies a little over 20m NNE of **PRN 333**. However, the description is recognisably that of **PRN 12845** which lies over 90m to the SE. The grid reference for this site, SH 66807040, was incorrectly given as the location of **PRN 332** (RCAHMW feature no. 43) in the Inventory (1956, 14). The correct grid reference for **PRN 332** does not appear under any of the other descriptions for sites in the vicinity. Taken together, this evidence suggests that four sites were identified by the Royal Commission Investigators, but that mistakes were made when the field notes were written up for the publication volume. The descriptions made in the field seem to have been quite brief, and could easily have been confused. This seems to have resulted in **PRNs 333** and **12845** being conflated, with feature number 44 in the Inventory having the approximate grid reference of **PRN 333**, but the description of **PRN 12845**. The omission of a description for **PRN 333** from the Inventory meant that when this site was visited in 1994 by Gwynedd Archaeological Trust as part of the hut circle settlement project (GAT 1994), it was incorrectly identified and recorded as **PRN 331**. The sketch plan made during this visit is recognisable as **PRN 333**, and the surveyor records confusion over the inconsistencies between the RCAHMW description and the form of the site on the ground.

It is surprising that the main trackway to the falls, which lies immediately to the E of the site, is not used as a topographic reference point by the RCAHMW in the Inventory descriptions. This may suggest that the track was less substantial in the late 1940s, the time of the RCAHMW fieldwork. Subsequent widening and consolidation of the track may have resulted in quarrying of stone from this and other sites / features in the vicinity.

References

GAT 1994 (project G1104: site record sheet - incorrectly recorded as **PRN 331**)

Management recommendations

- **Scrub clearance.** A dead tree surrounded by a dense thicket of brambles overlies the NW walling of the site. The brambles are unlikely to represent a significant threat, but their removal would make the site easier to see and to interpret. The brambles will prevent grazing of the site, possibly leading to the growth of more damaging scrub and tree growth. The dead tree does not threaten the site, although it does obscure part of it from view. Given the likelihood that the dead wood acts as an important wildlife habitat for invertebrates and lichens, it may on balance be desirable to leave the tree to rot in situ. In the event of scrub clearance or movement of dead timber, the work should be supervised by an archaeologist to avoid damage to the walling.
- **Large scale plan.** Ephemeral remains. Site will be easier to interpret if scrub clearance carried out, in which case re-survey should be carried out to clarify the full ground plan. A rough sketch plan was produced during the Gwynedd Archaeological Trust hut circle settlement project in 1994. However, the plan was produced very rapidly, and a number of features identified during the current survey are not depicted. Parts of the site are not immediately apparent, and may be difficult to identify for people who are not used to recognising features of this kind.
- **Candidate for improved presentation.** The site lies immediately beside the main N-S trackway through the NNR and so, despite its slightly ephemeral appearance, it would make a reasonable candidate for improved presentation to visitors, and for inclusion on an archaeological trail of the NNR.
- **Annual monitoring.**

Scope for further investigation

No recommendations.

PRN 334

NGR: SH66767032

Site type: Long hut

Description

Long hut. Rectangular building remains, sunken by c. 0.8m below the ground level. Located on a shelf above Afon Rhaeadr Fawr to the W. There is no obvious entrance, although a possible sheep-creep/later blocked entrance is present at the N end of the E wall. The site is marked as a sheepfold on the first edition 6" Ordnance Survey map of 1891 (surveyed 1877-1878), and is likely to have been partly rebuilt for this purpose. It is long and thin, c.12.9m x 5.6m external dimensions and 11.3m x 3.7m internal. The walls are of drystone construction but are not particularly well preserved. An amount of loose stone, probably derived from wall tumble, lies within the structure. The site remains as it was described by the RCAHMW following survey on 28/8/1947.

References

RCAHMW 1956, 13 feature number 45.
GAT 1998 (project G1464: site record sheet)

Management recommendations

- **Bracken clearance.** Clearance should be prioritised here, as the site is otherwise easy to see and to interpret.
- **Monitoring - animal erosion.** A lightly worn path used by animals, including the college farm ponies, was noticed to cross the SE corner of the feature. This does not currently pose a significant threat but needs to be monitored. Action to be taken to divert the path if necessary.
- **Monitoring - visitor erosion.** Lies close to main trackway, is marked on the OS 1:25000 map, and is easily recognisable – likely to receive a lot of visits.
- **Non-disturbance.** Loose stone, probably derived from wall tumble, lies within the structure. This is not to be removed as it may be difficult to differentiate tumble from *in situ* material.
- **Large scale plan.** Important for record purposes and for use in interpretation / presentation material.
- **Candidate for improved presentation.** The site lies immediately beside the main N-S trackway through the NNR and would make an obvious candidate for improved presentation to visitors and for inclusion on an archaeological trail. This is one of a group (including PRNs 329, 332, 334 and 12845) which would make an ideal concentration of features for presentation and interpretation work.
- **Annual monitoring.**

Scope for further investigation

- **Candidate for excavation.** This is one of a group (including PRNs 329, 332, 334 and 12845) which would make an ideal concentration of features for presentation and interpretation work, possibly including excavation.

PRN 337

NGR: SH66647105

Site type: Hut circle

Description

Round house. The site consists of a single round house lying on ground sloping gently to the W. It is in good condition, with surviving floor and additional features such as an orthostatic (stone slab) doorway and a possible porch. The hut circle is c. 9m diameter overall, with walls c. 1.5m wide and 0.3 to 0.6m high. There is an entrance c. 2m wide facing NW, flanked by orthostats, one still standing, the other fallen. A number of large boulders set upright in front of the entrance suggest that there was a porch. The site is partially grassed over, but where faces are exposed, the walls consist of piled stones.

When first recorded, by the RCAHMW (visited 19th October 1948), there were traces of small rectangular terraced fields in the vicinity, which were probably associated with the site. The ruin of an old field wall of large stones was recorded to lie against the S side of the hut. The site was visited by the Ordnance Survey Archaeology Division in August 1971, and at this time it was recorded that the old field wall and the terraced fields were no longer visible. The terraced fields were not identified during later visits by archaeologists from Gwynedd Archaeological Trust and Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments in 1988, 1994, and 1996. It seems likely that land improvement, possibly stone clearance accompanying ploughing and re-seeding of parts of the area, had taken place between the late 1940s and 1971, leading to the loss of features. The land here was ploughed during the 1939-1945 war according to Butler

(1962, 34), and may have been in subsequent years also. Wall footings that probably equate to the old field wall mentioned by the Royal Commission were traced during the current survey (PRN 12878). Another relict wall line (PRN 12879) runs parallel to it a little over 40m to the N. The date of these boundaries is uncertain. PRN 12879 is depicted on the 1st edition OS 6" map (surveyed 1877-1878), but PRN 12878 is not. This does not necessarily provide any comment on the relative antiquity of the features, but does at least show that the latter fell out of use before the former.

Despite the RCAHMW comment regarding the chronological relationship between the field wall and the round house, the possibility remains that the relict wall reuses the line of an earlier boundary, possibly associated with the round house. The perpetuation and reuse of prehistoric and Romano-British wall lines through to the post medieval period and the present day is known throughout Gwynedd, and has been demonstrated by excavation, for example at the site of Bush Farm, Felinhelli (Longley, Johnstone and Evans 1999). However, no evidence was found during the current survey of lengths of walling running along the contours between the two relict boundaries which would have suggested that they formed part of the small terraced rectangular fields referred to by the Royal Commission. The area is under pasture, but grazing levels are relatively low and spreading vegetation, including bracken, obscures patches on and in the vicinity of the site. A similar situation is recorded at the time of all of the 1990s surveys noted above. On the balance, the evidence suggests that if the terraced rectangular fields mentioned by RCAHMW existed here, they have been lost through land improvement. The relict walls are probably medieval or post medieval in date, but could have earlier origins, and may originally have formed the cross contour components of the terraced field grid. The patches of vegetation covered ground could conceal traces of the terraced fields and efforts should be made to check the area in winter / early spring. A modern ash plantation (planted some time between the field visits of 1988 and 1994) now lies immediately to the S of the round house, reaching to within 2m of the site. This may obscure further traces of features associated with the site.

The site is a Scheduled Ancient Monument. The scheduled area consists of a circle, 15m diameter, centred on the hut circle.

References

RCAHMW 1956, 14 feature number 48.
GAT 1994 (project G1104: site record sheet).
GAT 1998 (project G1464: site record sheet).

Management recommendations

It is important to note that any intrusive work on the site would require scheduled monument consent from Cadw.

- **Bracken clearance.** Non-intrusive work such as bracken clearance does not officially require scheduled monument consent. However, it would probably be worth letting Cadw know for their information that work of this kind was planned. The 'phone number for the main Cadw offices is 01222 500200. Dr. Mike Yates, based in Cardiff, is the Inspector of Ancient Monuments who's responsibilities include Gwynedd. Alternatively, contact the Cadw Field Monument Warden for Gwynedd, Ms Margaret Mason, directly. Her number is 01758 721577.
- **Trees adjacent to site.** The ash tree plantation to the S of the hut circle lies within 2m of the edge of the site. The proximity of the trees is a possible cause for concern as the roots could cause damage to the structure and to any buried deposits within it. It may be desirable to remove some of the trees closest to the site. The plantation is mentioned as a potential cause for concern on Cadw's SAM visit records. It would be useful to discuss the problem with Cadw staff and may be worth hold a site meeting between the Warden of the NNR, GAT and Cadw's Field Monument Warden (and/or the Cadw Inspector of Ancient Monuments for the area).
- **Consider entering a Cadw SAM management agreement.** Agreements usually last for a period of five years, and are used to encourage beneficial management of field monuments. Grant-aid and payments to cover the costs of initial works may be available through the agreement. Further information can be obtained from Cadw (contact detailed for Dr Mike Yates and Ms Margaret Mason as above).
- **Large scale plan.** A reasonable sketch plan of the site was produced as part of the hut group survey in 1994. Given the acknowledged importance of site however (as a scheduled ancient monument) it would be useful to have a more accurate plan (measured survey) for use in management and interpretation purposes.
- **Annual monitoring.**

Scope for further investigation

It is important to note that any intrusive work on the site would require scheduled monument consent from Cadw.

- **Revisit.** The site should be revisited when vegetation is at its lowest (late winter / early spring) and the area searched for traces of the terraced fields referred to by the RCAHMW. If evidence of these features is found, it would be useful to undertake a measured survey of them.
- **Assessment of 'off-site' features – broader research programme.** It would also be useful to re-evaluate the relationship between the site and the relict boundary (PRN 12878), and to undertake work that may provide a date for the boundary. It was described by RCAHMW as overlying the site, but it is possible that the boundary has earlier origins given its physical relationship with the round house and the fact that it may have formed part of the field system referred to by the RCAHMW.

PRN 339

NGR: SH66477115

Site type: Hut circle

Description

A well preserved round house, about 5.5m in diameter (internally) with well-defined walls up to 1.9m wide. There is an entrance, c. 1m wide at N with a large orthostat (about 1m high) to E side. Some facing stones visible on the inside of the wall, particularly to the N.

Three large full-crowned oaks are growing on the walls of the hut. Curiously there is no mention of these trees in the RCAHMW Inventory description. However, comparison with oaks in the woods on the Meuryn slopes as well as on open ground which have been dated by coring would suggest that they are between 120-150 years old (pers. comm. Duncan Brown).

References

RCAHMW 1956, 14 (feature number 50)

GAT 1994 (project G1104: site record sheet).

Management recommendations

- **Trees growing on site.** Three large oaks are growing on the walls of the hut. They are have probably reached maturity, and there is unlikely to be much further damaging root growth. The trees seem stable but their condition should be monitored for weaknesses, as root pull/tree throw can cause serious damage to archaeological sites. Preventative tree surgery may be necessary in future depending on results of monitoring.
- **Measured survey and preparation of detailed plan.**
- **Potential candidate for improved presentation:** The site has a clearly recognisable ground plan and would make an interesting inclusion on an archaeological trail through the NNR. However, it lies approximately 100m away from the main N-S trackway to the falls and the general policy of encouraging visitors to stick to the footpath may preclude raising awareness of the site.
- **Monitor – visitor erosion.** The site is shown on the OS 1:25000 map, and is easy to identify. Accordingly it is likely to receive a significant number of interested visitors despite lying a little away from the trackway. No damage was recorded at the time of the current survey, but the site should be monitored as this represents a potential threat.
- **Large scale plan.**
- **Annual monitoring.**

Scope for further investigation

There are no visible features, such as relict boundaries or cultivation features, with a direct physical relationship with the site. However, there are traces of relict walls in the vicinity (**PRN 12873** to the NE and **PRN 12820** to the SE) and a series of small terraces of undetermined date lie to the W (**PRN 12872**). Future work should aim to establish whether there are any associations between these features.

- **Geophysical survey.** Geophysical survey may help to trace the extent of buried boundary features.
- **Assessment of 'off-site' features by excavation – broader research programme.** Trial trenches could be excavated across some of the boundary features to assess their form, and in the hope of recovering dateable material or environmental samples. Excavation of the hut circle itself could be considered depending on the results of the geophysical survey and other works.

PRN 340

NGR: SH 66457140

Site type: Hut circles

Description

Pair of round houses and traces of field walls located a short distance to the SW of the main N-S trackway to the falls. The site is as described by the RCAHMW as:

'Two intercommunicating circular huts, at 390 ft. above O.D. on the E side of the Afon Rhaiadr-fawr. The more westerly and better preserved hut is of 18 ft. (5.4m - internal measurement) diameter, with a wall 4 ft. (1.2m) thick and 2 ft. (0.6m) high, of earth and small stones faced with larger stones. The outer face is only visible on the S. On the E, a doorway 5 ft. 6 ins. (1.65m) wide leads into the second hut. This is so ruined that its dimensions cannot be determined. There are faint traces of old field walls to the S' [visited 13th March 1950] (1956, 14).

The wall of the W hut is up to 0.5m high. The conjoining hut to the E is now very difficult to make out. Several large boulders (no reference in RCAHMW description) appear to have been dumped within the interior of the huts.

Traces of the field walls referred to by the Royal Commission Investigators are still visible to the S of the E hut. These comprise a corner of walling, varying in width between 0.5m and 1.2m, which extends 7m on a SW-NE orientation and 6m SE-NW. A further possible relict wall line lies to the W of the site, running along the edge of the scarp slope running down towards Afon Rhaeadr Fawr.

References

RCAHMW 1956, 14 (feature number 51)
GAT 1994 (project G1104: site record sheet).

Management recommendations

- **Trees growing on site.** A number of trees are growing on the walls of the W hut circle, including hazel, hawthorn and a mature oak. The trees seem stable but their condition should be monitored for weaknesses, as root pull/tree throw can cause serious damage to archaeological sites. Preventative tree surgery may be necessary in future depending on the results of monitoring.
- **Monitor – visitor erosion.** The site is depicted on the 1:25000 OS map and clearly receives a lot of visitor interest. Evidence of recent activity on the site was recorded at the time of the current survey. A small amount of shallow digging had taken place in the entrance area of the W hut. Turf and stones had been removed and placed at various points around the wall of the site. The disturbance was minimal, and is more likely to have resulted from children playing than from any other activity such as metal detecting. Little if any disturbance has been caused to *in situ* material. However, placement of additional stone on the walling could become naturalised and be confused with original work in the future. The incident is not serious, but demonstrates that visited sites need to be regularly monitored to ensure that they are not being damaged.
- **Large scale plan.**
- **Candidate for improved presentation:** clearly recognisable ground plan; less than 25m away from the main trackway. Obvious inclusion on an archaeological trail through the NNR. Possible visitor erosion to be closely monitored, as above.
- **Removal of recently introduced material.** Some of the large boulders lying within the centre of the huts appear to have been dumped there relatively recently. Removal of the boulders would help to clarify the ground plan of the sites for visitors, and would prevent them being mistaken for original work in future (as they may well be if they are allowed to develop a moss / lichen covering). This work would require careful monitoring by an archaeologist, and may prove to be impossible without prior excavation to ensure that *in situ* material is not removed inadvertently.
- **Large scale plan.** The site is very close to the path, and so is potentially at greater risk than some of the other sites in the NNR. Evidence of slight damage by visitors was recorded at the time of the current survey and demonstrates the need for baseline information against which to monitor any change in condition.
- **Annual monitoring.**

Scope for further investigation

The relationship between the two hut circles, and the presence of relict field walls in the area adds to the interest of the site. The difference in the condition of the two huts, with the W being in much better condition, may suggest some degree of phasing, rather than the two being conjoined as suggested by the RCAHMW. It may be that the E hut predates the W hut, and that material from the former was robbed for construction of the latter. However, it should be noted that the E hut is closer to the trackway, and material may have been used for making up the surface (although why the W hut would not also have been similarly quarried is not clear). There does seem to have been some degeneration in the condition of the E hut since the RCAHMW's visit in 1950, although there clearly was a great difference in the remains of the two huts even at that time.

- **Geophysical survey.** Geophysical survey may help to trace the extent of the walling to the S of the site and whether there is a relationship between this and the hut circles. The position of any excavation trench across the boundary should be guided by the results of the geophysical survey.
- **Candidate for excavation.** Excavation could target the area where the two features meet to assess the nature of the relationship between them.

PRN 369

NGR: SH66807058

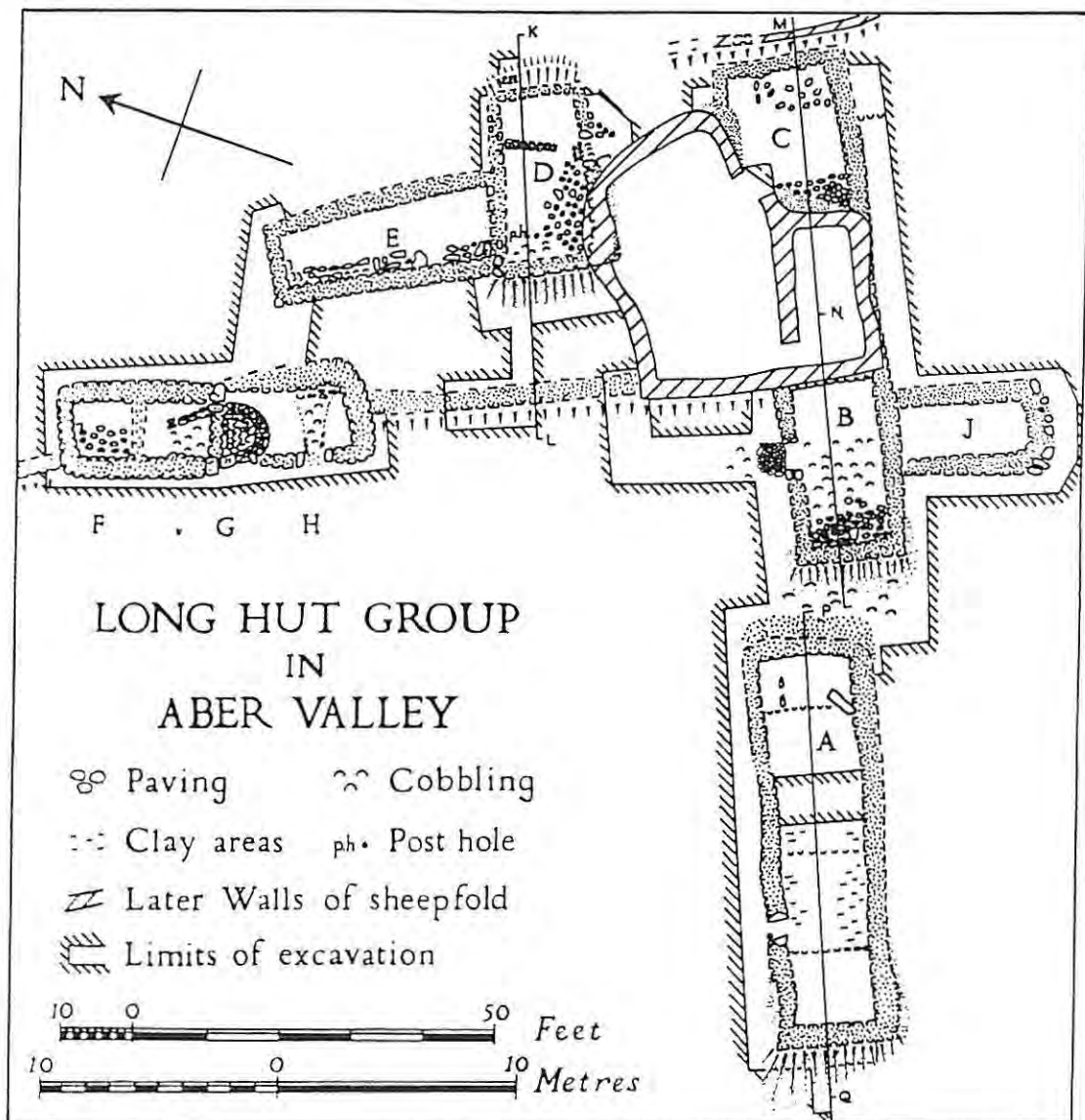
Site type: Long hut group

Description

Long hut group excavated by RCAHMW in October 1961. The following description is compiled from a summary of the excavations (Butler 1962), the final excavation report (Butler 1962) and an entry in the additions section of volume 3 of the RCAHMW Caernarfonshire Inventory (1964, 123). A plan of the site is given in Butler (1962, fig. 2).

The group is set on sloping ground, and comprises nine buildings, four across the slope and five along it. The latter are deeply cut into the hillside but only slightly built at the lower end. The lower ends are paved to give roughly level floors. No hearths were found in the group during excavation, and there was little trace of internal features. The earliest features are two long huts set across the slope. The northern of the pair (c.6.5m x 3m) has an entrance in the S wall and a hood bank above its upper (E) end. About 6m to the S, the second hut has an entrance in the N wall, and was originally of the same width. Rebuilding and robbing have obscured its length. The group was later enlarged by the construction of additional buildings and annexes. The walls of the buildings are 0.6m-1.0m wide of earth and stone with some slab facing. The site was subsequently robbed to build the sheepfolds which overlie portions of three buildings at the S of the group, and which are now the most immediately visible remains at the site.

A narrow trackway approaches the group from the N. According to Butler (1962, 26) the track seemed to broaden out into a yard as it reached the hut group. A paddock, c. 30m N-S by 18m E-W, was recorded immediately to the N of the hut group during the current survey. The paddock is defined by relict stone walls of occasional large boulders with smaller stone, surviving to between 0.5m and 0.6m high. The relationship between the paddock and the track was not clear, and the paddock may be the yard referred to by Butler, with the trackway broadening out into it. A path or trackway runs along the W side of the paddock though, and at the time of survey, it appeared that this was the continuation of the approach track, and that access into the paddock was gained only from to its S, the hut group end. Butler's plan shows the S end of the track running between building E and buildings F, G and H to terminate in the centre of the group.



Plan of RCAHMW excavations (from Butler 1961, fig.2)

The trackway fades to the N, but a little beyond this point, on a similar alignment lies a stretch of lynchet / terrace c. 5m wide with a total length of c. 65m. This was recorded as a separate feature during the current survey, as **PRN 12849**, because although it seemed likely to be a continuation of the trackway from the hut group, it had a slightly ambiguous appearance, which could easily be natural in origin. However, support for the former interpretation is given by Butler, who, possibly observing the feature at a time when there was less vegetation growth in the area, describes the track as 'crossing a wet flush as a revetted terrace' (1962, 26). To its N end the terrace is lost within a modern (fenced) plantation. It may continue on the far side of the plantation as **PRN 12851**. A series of terraces or lynchets run across the hill slope immediately to the SW of the hut group (**PRN 328**).

A full description of the excavation findings, including details of the construction type, dimensions and chronology of the buildings is given in Butler (1962, 26-29), which is reproduced here as figure 11.

A document of 1303 refers to four vaccaries (or cattle farms) in the parish of Aber (BBCS VII, 152: XVI,116), and the more detailed Record of Caernarfon (Record Commission 1838, 138-140) names individual 'hafotries' of Meuryn and Nanteracadrat. The long hut site was not included in the original RCAHMW survey of the valley, although reference was made to Nanteracadrat in connection with the remains of hut circles and field terraces to the SW (**PRN 328**, RCAHMW 1956, 13). The first published reference to the long hut group was by Gresham (1957, 127), which refers to the site as the most likely location of Nanteracadrat. Rectangular structures (found either individually, or in groups, and in many cases with associated remains) are a common archaeological feature of the uplands of north west Wales. However, they are relatively poorly understood and it is difficult to date them or to interpret their function, even provisionally, on the basis of their surface appearance alone. Part of the rationale of the RCAHMW excavations was the chance to investigate structures of this kind, where the association with documentary evidence seemed to support the assumption that they were medieval in origin (Butler 1962, 25).

Although the hut group showed signs of rebuilding and alteration, the excavations recovered little artefactual material. Potsherds representing nine vessels were found; one of these was possibly medieval, with the remainder being late C18th and C19th century. The evidence was not sufficient to establish the association between the site and Nanteracadrat, and the site was interpreted as an C18th hafod with attendant store and milking shed, overlying earlier features of an undetermined date and function. However, in his report, Butler draws a series of broader conclusions about the interpretation of the site, based on analogy with other sites to supplement the dating material and stratigraphic information derived from the excavation (1962, 26-29). Three main periods of occupation were inferred, as summarised below:

1. Long-hut (building D) on slight platform taking advantage of a small knoll. Well built dry stone wall construction. Post hole in floor at NW corner suggests roof (turf / rush-thatched?) supported by post or posts at lower end. Doorway led out and across to a shed or barn (building C). Butler suggests that this pairing represents the full extent of the original settlement, and compares the site to a pair of long huts on Meuryn Isaf above Afon Anafon (**PRN 351**; RCAHMW 1956, 67 feature 63; the site, at grid reference SH 67557095 has subsequently been lost under forestry), and sites in Dolgarrog, Dyffryn Conwy and with a settlement on Dean Moor in south Devon which was occupied between c. 1250-1350 (1962, 30). A medieval date was therefore suggested for the earliest phase, and the site was seen as a *hafod* or summer farm, where activities associated with the grazing of cattle on upland pastures (including the production of dairy products) would have taken place.

2. The second period saw considerable reworking of the site, including rebuilding of the southern of the original long hut pair (C), construction of a further building (B) on the same axis as C slightly further down slope and alterations to D. These changes are attributed to the e. C18th. Further extension in the mid C18th included construction of 'sheds', separate buildings (F and G) and annexes (E and J) set along the contours, and another building running across the slope further down from B. The site was interpreted as a milking station, with D as an inhabited structure (possibly accompanied by C), B a dairy and A a fodder store. G was interpreted as a hay or flax drying room, suggesting that the inhabitants of the settlement carried out some cultivation. Again, the site is seen as having been bound into the seasonal role of the *hafod*.

3. The final stage is defined as the decay of the *hafod* and its replacement by an *ad hoc* occasional settlement in the C19th, when the buildings to the N of the group were rebuilt as a shepherd's hut and a stable, with C possibly used as a cattle shelter until its eventual collapse and replacement by the sheepfolds.

Butler's interpretation of the site may have been influenced by its association with the vaccary of the historical documents. However, the evidence is clearly ambiguous, and any conclusions have to be seen as tentative pending further evidence. In particular analogy with a site as geographically removed as south Devon provides no basis for secure dating of the hut group. However, it seems reasonable that the site would have operated as a *hafod* given its location on generally poor land with access to large areas of upland grazing. The association of the site with the vaccary of Nantedacarar was not disproved by the excavation, and the would be worthy of further investigation. Butler provides an interesting and useful discussion of the operation of the site and its broader socio-economic context in the excavation report (1962, 31-36).

References

Gresham 1957

Butler 1961

Butler 1962

RCAHWM 1964, 123

The site is depicted on the first edition 6" Ordnance Survey map of 1891 (surveyed 1877-1878) as a sheepfold.

Management recommendations

- **Tidy up – removal of timber.** Dead wood has accumulated within building B, and should be removed from the site.
- **General tidy up.** The site seems to have been left in a fairly poor state following the 1961 RCAHWM excavations. Although now overgrown once again, some of the trenches do not appear to have been properly back filled and spoil mounds are visible around the site. In the long term, if the site is to be targeted for presentation to the public, or is subject to further investigation, the opportunity should be taken to address these problems.
- **Tree growing on site.** A mature oak is situated at the S of the site. Its branches are growing out over the sheepfold and knock against it in places. Tree surgery should be considered to prevent further damage.
- **Bracken clearance.**
- **Re-design and re-location of interpretation board:** An interpretation board is currently located on the far side of the fence to the E of the site, on a footpath at the edge of the Forest Enterprise plantation. The board has become a bit dated and a re-vamp is needed. The current illustration is an inaccurate composite of all phases of activity. A re-drafted version of the excavation plan would be an improvement. The location of the board is far from ideal, with visitors looking across from the forestry side unable to see the full extent of the site without climbing over the fence. The site is clearly marked as a 'settlement' on the modern 1:25000 OS map, and it probably does receive a fair number of visitors. The current arrangement means that people approaching the site from the main N-S trackway to the W have to cross the site, and the fence, to look at the board. This has led to erosion damage where a path has formed over the walls of the buildings to the N of the sheepfold. The board should be relocated, and would probably be best to the centre W, below the site. A stile could be provided so that visitors can access both the site and board from the forestry side of the fence. Care should be taken regarding the placement of the stile so that visitors are not directed over the site itself. Another possibility would be to signpost the site from near SH66847069 where the upper path from Nant Cottage passes a corner in the forestry. Again, a stile would be required for visitors to leave the forest, but from this point they could be directed along the original track approaching the hut group from the N.
- **Monitoring – visitor erosion.** As mentioned above there is currently a minor erosion problem in the form of a narrow footpath running across the site towards the interpretation board. The impact of encouraging access to the site would need to be carefully monitored if the site is selected for presentation work, or as part of an archaeological trail.
- **Annual monitoring.**

Scope for further investigation

- **Candidate for re-excavation.** The RCAHWM excavations of the site occurred over a fairly short period (three weeks), and were carried out by a relatively small team (total of 7), for such an extensive site. The photographs published in the report, and the account of the excavation suggest that the site was not fully investigated. For example deposits within some of the buildings seem to have been removed back to floor levels but not fully excavated for traces of earlier phases. Also, excavation was focussed tightly on the buildings, with no attention to yard areas or any 'off-site' features such as middens, which are often valuable sources of evidence. Neither was it common practice at the time of the excavation to sample deposits for environmental evidence, of the kind that may have helped cast light on economy and function. The archaeology of sites such as these tends to be fairly subtle, and the sketchiness of the excavation plan published in the report combined with other aspects of the work may suggest that its full potential was exploited. The RCAHWM excavations did not recover conclusive dating evidence for the earliest phase of the site and the possibility of an association with the vaccary of *Nantedacarat* named in the early C14th Record of Caernarfon remains open. The site would clearly merit further investigation, although this would be a serious undertaking requiring considerable resources.

PRN 453

NGR: SH66756968

Site type: Hut circle

Description

PRNs 453, 2327, 2328, 2331, 12791 (as well as 2329 and 2330 which lie just beyond the NNR boundary) form a group of scattered small hut circles and cairns situated on a small shelf above a steep drop into the Aber valley. The group was first recorded by Griffiths (1950, 49-50) and later by the RCAHWM (1956) and the Ordnance Survey Archaeology Division (OSAD, 1969). The area was not visited as part of the current survey, but has been assessed relatively recently by staff from Gwynedd Archaeological Trust (in 1994 as part of a survey of hut circle settlement in

Gwynedd). It was noted that there was some confusion in the existing records as to the locations of the various huts and cairns in the area, and that the record needed to be reassessed. There are more features in the area than there are individual PRN numbers on the Sites and Monuments Record. In some cases, different features were recorded under the same reference number, but it is clear that various previously unrecorded features were identified during the hut group survey. The features are generally fairly slight, with the walls of the hut circles surviving as low spreads of rubble walling. The nature of the terrain and the lack of features against which to record the locations of the sites adds to the difficulty of adequately recording the group. Griffiths interprets all of the circular features as hut circles, but some of them are wide spreads of stone with no detectable walling and are more likely to be the remains of cairns. Whether these cairns are primarily field clearance cairns, or burial features is not clear. Excavation of cairns elsewhere has shown that during the bronze age ritual and practical purposes were not held apart, and that cairns derived from field clearance were often seen as suitable contexts for the disposal of the dead. However, as it is not possible to date either the settlement remains or the cairns on the basis of surface evidence alone, it is not currently possible to make a firm interpretation of the features. The hut group survey recorded three 'new' cairns, all visible as very low mounds of stone. Two lie c. 15m and 50m SE of **PRN 453** and are 5m and 4m in diameter respectively. The third lies c. 15m NE of **PRN 2330**. The features have not been ascribed PRNs as part of the current project as it is felt that the area needs to be visited and recorded in greater detail before the range and location of archaeological features can be established. An additional hut circle recognised during the 1994 survey (and recorded as **PRN 2328a**) has been given an individual number, **PRN 12791**, under which it is described.

Griffiths mentions that there were traces of a field system, very poorly preserved, but which could be seen as rough lines of stones diverging to the NW and NE of **PRN 2327** (1950, 50). The RCAHMW state that faint vestiges of enclosure walls remained near the huts, but these were not found by the OSAD or subsequently.

PRN 453 was recorded by the GAT hut group survey as having a 5m internal diameter, with walls 0.3m high and spread up to 2m wide. The hut is built on level ground and no entrance is visible. Much loose stone was present on the walls, but this was thought likely to be a later addition. This description varies slightly from those of the RCAHMW (3m diameter with traces of an inner wall face) and the OSAD (3.8m diameter, walls 0.8m thick and 0.2m high).

References

Griffiths 1950, 49-50 (feature number 15, i).
 RCAHMW 1956, 8 (feature number 16, i).
 GAT 1994 (project G1104: site record sheet)

Management recommendations

- **Confirm precise NGR using GPS.** There are few fixed points on the OS map against which the features can be accurately located, and GPS should be used to generate accurate NGRs for the various features.
- **Re-survey to establish full extent.** The sites need to be re-surveyed to resolve the inconsistencies within and between previous accounts. An intensive search of the area should be made for traces of the field walls referred to by Griffiths (1950, 49-50). The RCAHMW records further traces of enclosure walls to about 270 metres to the SW of the group, just above Rhaeadr Bach (1956, 8). These features are not recorded on the Sites and Monuments Record, and the area needs to be visited and assessed.
- **Context survey (EDM).** If any of the relict field walls are located, it may be worth carrying out an instrument assisted (EDM – electronic distance measurer) survey to show their layout and relationship to the various cairns and hut circles. The GPS readings should be sufficient to produce a plan showing the layout of the cairns and the huts so long as no associated features, such as the relict walls, are discovered.
- **Large scale plan.**
- **Annual monitoring.**

Scope for further investigation

- **Revisit.** An intensive search of the area should be made for traces of the field walls referred to by Griffiths (1950, 49-50).
- **Context survey (EDM).** If any of the field walls are located, it may be worth carrying out an instrument assisted (EDM – electronic distance measurer) survey to show their layout and relationship to the various cairns and hut circles.
- **Candidate for excavation.** The size, form and location of the features, along with the presence of cairns and the possible presence of the field walls referred to by Griffiths may suggest a relatively early date for the group, possibly Bronze Age, by analogy with dates inferred for similar sites elsewhere in Gwynedd (for example Cwm Ffrydlas, Bethesda and Allt Lwyd, Llanegryn (Lynch 1995, 45 & 58; GAT Research Framework unpub.). No

excavation has taken place at sites of this type in Gwynedd, and their dating is tentative, on the basis of comparison with sites elsewhere in Britain. The potential research interest of the site is therefore high.

PRN 2327

NGR: SH66766969

Site type: Hut circle

Description

One of a group of scattered small hut circles and cairns situated on a small shelf above a steep drop into the Aber valley. See **PRN 453** for general description.

PRN 2327 was recorded by the GAT hut group survey as having a 3m internal diameter, with walls 0.3m high of rubble spread up to 1.5m wide. The hut lies on a slope and is cut into the ground at the SSW and terraced out at the NNE. No facing stones were visible. This description varies slightly from that of the OSAD (3.8m diameter, with walls 0.8m thick and 0.2m high).

References

Griffiths 1950, 49-50 (feature number 15, ii).

RCAHMW 1956, 8 (feature number 16, ii).

GAT hut group survey G1104 notes 1994

Management recommendations

See **PRN 453**

Scope for further investigation

See **PRN 453**.

PRN 2328

NGR: SH66746975

Site type: Hut circle

Description

One of a group of scattered small hut circles and cairns situated on a small shelf above a steep drop into the Aber valley. See **PRN 453** for general description.

PRN 2328 lies approximately 25m to the N of **PRNs 453** and **2327**, on a lower shelf at the brink of the cliff. The field notes of the RCAHMW, OSAD and GAT hut group survey are in general agreement about the form of the site. It is built in the lee of and up against a 2m high rock outcrop, and forms a small circular platform on the sloping ground. Has an external diameter of about 6m with walls of piled stone, up to 0.5m high and about 1.5m wide.

References

Griffiths 1950, 49-50 (feature number 15, iii).

RCAHMW 1956, 8 (feature number 16, iii).

GAT 1994 (project G1104: site record sheet).

Management recommendations
See PRN 453

Scope for further investigation
See PRN 453

PRN 2331

NGR: SH66736970

Site type: Cairn

Description

One of a group of scattered small hut circles and cairns situated on a small shelf above a steep drop into the Aber valley. See PRN 453 for general description.

PRN 2331 is described by the Ordnance Survey Archaeology Division (1969) as the remains of a small cairn surviving as a platform or low mound, 3.0m diameter and 0.3m high.

Three other cairns were recorded in the vicinity during the GAT hut groups survey (1994) – see PRN 453.

References

GAT 1994 (project G1104: site record sheet).

Management recommendations
See PRN 453

Scope for further investigation
See PRN 453

PRN 4087

NGR: SH66247200

Site type: Bridge

Description

Bont Newydd bridge, above Abergwyngregyn C18th. Scheduled Ancient Monument number C061.

Management recommendations
Scheduled Ancient Monument.

Scope for further investigation
No recommendations

PRN 7122

NGR: SH66197127

Site type: Platform - ?natural

Description

Small *Juncus* covered sub-rectangular platform set along the slope. Located on steep bracken-covered ground directly above the tree line. Dimensions 5m N-S by 2m E-W, raised c. 0.5m above slope to the E, semi-circular in shape at W.

Axis lies parallel to the hill slope. The feature lies about 100m ENE of the grid reference given to a site identified from aerial photographs in the 1990s, which was described as a rectangular earthwork or enclosure (given PRN 7122 in the Sites and Monuments Record). Inspection of this point and its vicinity during this survey failed to confirm the presence of any possible archaeological remains and it is suggested that the current feature is the one visible on the aerial photographs. The feature may have formed as the result of small scale extraction of stone or earth for walling work, or through slate / mineral prospection diggings. However, it may be entirely natural in origin, having formed through ground surface slumping around a spring rise. There is a line of similar features to the SW, comprising boggy flushes, platforms and water-eroded linear features.

Management recommendations

No specific recommendations.

Scope for further investigation

No recommendations

PRN 7399

NGR: SH 66807020

Site type: Hut circle

Description

Possible hut circle overlain by long hut. The site comprises a number of ambiguous features that are difficult to interpret. Situated at a fork between the main N-S track to the falls and a smaller track which branches off from this to join the pathway which crosses into the NNR from the forestry and the scree slopes to the N and NE. A possible hut circle, c. 4.5m internal diameter (6m external) is the most obvious feature nearest the fork. The sparse rubble walls are of shattered stone similar to that of the near by scree slopes, with some ground-set boulders. A possible long hut, which appears to be a later structure truncating the edge of the hut circle lies to the S. 4m x 2m internal dimensions incorporating a large (1.5m high x 1.5m x 2.5m) boulder at SW corner. Wall footings survive to no more than 0.2m high. The interiors of both the hut circle and the long hut are level with or slightly sunken beneath the ground surface. The long hut is more reliably an archaeological feature, the hut circle slightly more tenuous. A further possible feature, more ephemeral again than the former two, lies immediately within the fork of the paths, to the N of the hut circle. It is a possible corner of walling c. 2.5m x 2.5m, opening to the SW. The feature has been confused by the later small track (edged, 1.5-2.0m wide) which overlies it. The feature may originally have been an annex to the hut, although it is not possible to say anything definite about it on the basis of the surface evidence alone.

Management recommendations

- **Monitoring – visitor erosion.** Trackways run to either side of the site and it should be monitored to check that visitors taking a short cut across it are not causing damage.
- **Large scale plan.** To clarify the ground plan and aid interpretation of the site.
- **Annual monitoring.**

Scope for further investigation

The feature is poorly understood although there is clearly potential for settlement remains of at least two phases.

PRN 12780

NGR: SH66137111

Site type: Platform – sub-rectangular

Description

Revetted sub-rectangular platform set along the contours of the hill slope. Possibly the site of a dwelling, particularly given its location to the E of the Ffridd land of Cae'r Mynydd which is covered with relict terraces, lynchets and field boundaries, showing it to have been cultivated in the past. The site is 9m N-S by 6m E-W, and is raised against the slope on its E side by revetting / walling up to 1.8m, to make a level platform. A possible second platform adjoins to the NE, and is 6m N-S by 5m E-W. This feature is more tenuous, and could just be a stone clearance pile. Faint traces of a possible lynchet run NE from the site (from SH66137112 to SH66137119). The site lies 10m to the NW of a metal survey pole numbered 9 (probably an ecological survey marker).

Management recommendations

- Confirm precise NGR using GPS.

Scope for further investigation

No recommendations.

PRN 12781

NGR: SH66207105C

Site type: Lynchets

Description

Lynchets. Series of eroded lynchets, roughly 60m long, at the edge of formerly cultivated land (numerous cultivation features including relict terraces, lynchets and field boundaries are located on the Ffridd of Cae'r Mynydd to the E). The western lynchet is well defined and is about 2m high. The lower lynchet is less well defined and is between 0.5-1.0m high. A possible third, poorly defined lynchet lies to the SW.

Management recommendations

- Confirm precise NGR using GPS.

Scope for further investigation

No recommendations.

PRN 12782

NGR: SH66407082C

Site type: Wall footings

Description

Sparse wall footings, c. 8m long and 0.5m wide, visible as a bend above a slight break in the slope.

Management recommendations

- Confirm precise NGR using GPS.

Scope for further investigation

No recommendations.

PRN 12783

NGR: SH66427075C

Site type: Terraces and possible long hut

Description

Poorly defined sub-rectangular feature, 7m E-W by 4m N-S, possibly the site of a building (although the evidence is very tenuous), located on a level shelf. The shelf appears to be a terrace, 10m E-W and 20m N-S. Two other possible terraces are located here, each 0.5-2.5m high, and it is possible that each represents a natural terrace which has been modified through lyncheting resulting from former cultivation and field clearance.

Management recommendations

No specific recommendations.

Scope for further investigation

No recommendations.

PRN 12784

NGR: SH66447080C

Site type: Wall footings

Description

A short length of wall footings which are approximately 1m wide, of blocks and slabs. At their E end, above the river, the footings make a corner which is 3m N-S by 4m E-W, from which they lead away to the W. No direct relationship / connection with any of the other remains in the vicinity is discernible.

Management recommendations

- **Include in boundary and cultivation feature survey.**
- Scope for further investigation**
- **Follow up to boundary and cultivation feature survey.**

PRN 12785

NGR: SH66067016

Site type: Modern clearance pile

Description

Field stone clearance pile probably of recent origin, 2.5m diameter and c. 0.5m high. As per similar feature, PRN 12876, which is located 20m to the E, it is situated on the line of a removed wall (running between SH66047015 and SH66117016), from which the stone may be derived.

Management recommendations

- **Include in boundary and cultivation feature survey.**

Scope for further investigation

- **Further desk-top investigation.** Establish extent of C20th college farm improvement works to help eliminate later features from evidence for earlier patterns of landuse.

PRN 12786

NGR: SH66067026C

Site type: Wall footings

Description

Sparse footings of a former wall line (running between SH66027025 and SH66087026), probably removed during improvement works by the College Farm in the 1950s and 1960s. Patches are visible over approximately 40m distance.

Management recommendations

- **Include in boundary and cultivation feature survey.**

Scope for further investigation

- **Follow up to boundary and cultivation feature survey.**



Figure 12 Detail of wall construction style showing overhanging upper courses - PRN 12788

PRN 12787

NGR: SH66117024C

Site type: Ditch

Description

Shallow, linear feature (running between SH66067024 and SH66157024), possibly a ditch resulting from the removal of a field boundary of some kind, probably removed during improvement works by the College Farm in the 1950s and 1960s.

Management recommendations

No specific recommendations.

Scope for further investigation

No recommendations.

PRN 12788

NGR: SH65987008C

Site type: Drystone wall

Description

Drystone wall (running between SH66787001 and SH66087060) separating the valley from the mountain land. Roughly 1.4m high and 1m wide, tumbled to the W and reduced footings, but standing elsewhere to slab and upright block coping stones. Leans outwards towards top on upslope side at SW corner. This form of construction deters stock from jumping onto the wall, but its use tends to be restricted to particular dry-stone wallers, or to local traditions, and is not universal in *ffridd* walls of this kind. This is probably the 'sheep wall' mentioned by Butler (1962, 35), which he states to have been built in the decade 1810-1820.

The original line of the wall after point SH66087060 runs NW to a multi-cellular sheepfold on Cae'r Mynydd, and beyond (as depicted on the first edition 6" OS map of 1891, surveyed 1877-1878).

PRN 12790 is a possible continuation / spur of the *ffridd* wall, running to roughly E-W.

References

Butler 1962, 35

Management recommendations

- Include in boundary and cultivation feature survey.

Scope for further investigation

- Follow up to boundary and cultivation feature survey.

PRN 12789

NGR: SH66187090C

Site type: Trackway

Description

Narrow track, currently forming part of the North Wales footpath route. Fades out to the S of a gap in the *ffridd* wall (PRN 12788), where crosses stream (SH66077044), and to the N, continues beyond SH65857198 to join tracks running across Ffridd Du and past Henffordd into Aber village. The track is 2m wide for much of its length, and terraced / built up to a height of c. 1.5m on its E side in places at the S part of its length. At another stream crossing, SH66097062, the track is sunken and bound by clawdd like banks to a total depth of about 2m. The clawdd to the W

of the track seems to supersede / overlie the earlier mountain wall (**PRN 12788**) here. Evidence shows that the track post-dates **PRN 12788**. The trackway is not shown beyond point SH66087166 on the first and second edition 6" OS maps (surveyed 1877-1878 and 1899 respectively) and it may have been extended into what is now National Nature Reserve land to provide access for College Farm vehicles and machinery in the mid C20th. A branch of the track splits at SH66117063 and runs for about 250m eastward before fading out beyond SH66367061.

Management recommendations

No specific recommendations.

Scope for further investigation

No recommendations.

PRN 12790

NGR: SH66237063

Site type: Drystone wall

Description

Relict wall running between SH66107062 and SH66357066, possible continuation / spur of ffridd walls (**PRN 12788**) in the form of mostly grassed over footings, 1.2m wide. Survives as drystone walling to 1.2m high for an approximate 10m stretch at the W end of its length. A ditch / small stream course runs to the N side of the wall for much of its length.

Management recommendations

- Include in boundary and cultivation feature survey.

Scope for further investigation

- Follow up to boundary and cultivation feature survey.

PRN 12791

NGR: SH66916974A

Site type: Hut circle

Description

One of a group of scattered small hut circles and cairns situated on a small shelf above a steep drop into the Aber valley. See **PRN 453** for general description.

PRN 12791 lies approximately 150m to the E of **PRN 2328** and 20m to the E of a group of sheepfolds shown on the Ordnance Survey map (1:10000 and 1:25000). It was first recognised by the GAT hut group survey (1994), when it was recorded as **PRN 2328a**, but has been given an individual PRN by the current project. Its proximity to the sheepfolds may have led to it having been mistaken for part of the complex and overlooked by previous surveys. According to the hut group survey description, the site seemed to have been re-used as a sheepfold. Another structure, a rectangular fold (4m x 3m) lies adjacent to the SW. The circle is cut into the hill-slope at the SW, with a revetment of large boulders and piled stones to about 0.8m high, and is terraced out to the NE. The internal diameter is about 5m, and the walls consist of a low rubble spread.

References

GAT 1994 (project G1104: site record sheet).

Management recommendations

See **PRN 453**.

Scope for further investigation

See PRN 453.

PRN 12792

NGR: SH66197062

Site type: Long hut

Description

Surviving NW corner of otherwise destroyed rectangular building / long hut. Located on small terrace on spur to S of a gully and to the N of a stream course. The former axis of the building would have been E-W, across the contours. The surviving lengths of walling run 4.5m E-W by 3m N-S. The W wall survives to 3 courses, c. 0.4m high. The feature appears to have been truncated by a track, probably created during the 1950s/60s improvement works by the agricultural college.

Management recommendations

- Confirm precise NGR using GPS.
- Annual monitoring.

Scope for further investigation

No recommendations.

PRN 12793

NGR: SH66207057

Site type:

Modern clearance cairn

Description

Modern clearance pile, 5m E-W by 1m N-S by 0.8m high, probably derived from field clearance by the College Farm in the 1950s and 1960s.

Management recommendations

No specific recommendations.

Scope for further investigation

- Further desk-top investigation. Establish extent of C20th college farm improvement works to help eliminate later features from evidence for earlier patterns of landuse.

PRN 12794

NGR: SH66197030

Site type: Modern clearance cairn

Description

Large end-set slab with modern field clearance mound (8m N-S by 2m E-W and 0.7m high) on its N side. The slab is probably natural, *in situ*, but is mentioned due to the possibility that it may relate to an archaeological feature such as a ruinous prehistoric burial cist or other structure, which has been buried by modern field clearance.

Management recommendations

No recommendations

Scope for further investigation

As per PRN 12793.

PRN 12795

NGR: SH66247022

Site type: Stone setting; possible cist

Description

Sub-rectangular stone-setting, c. 3.5m NE to SW by 3m SE to NW, of 9 or 10 stones. Single upright stone, 0.5m high, at the N corner of the feature. Other stones are small boulders roughly 0.3m high and 0.4m by 0.4m size. A broken end-set slab (0.6m by 0.3m) is located in the centre of the feature. A grassed over square slab lies beside it. There are very faint traces of a low bank around the knoll, and the site may be the remains of a small prehistoric ritual / burial monument (such as a ring cairn, kerb cairn or stone circle) with a central cist. However, this interpretation is very tentative. The location would generally appear to be suitable for a site of this kind, comprising of a small grassy plateau surrounded by low knolls, but nevertheless having good views despite being hidden from sight.

Management recommendations

- **Annual monitoring**

Scope for further investigation

- **Second opinion.** Details of the site to be passed on to GAT prehistoric funerary and ritual project staff for a possible second opinion visit.
- **Large scale plan.** A measured survey of the knoll could be carried out to map out the position of the various stones and banks present. This may help to confirm or refute interpretation of the possible features on the knoll as of archaeological interest.

PRN 12796

NGR: SH66207019C

Site type: Bank and wall

Description

Ploughed out bank (running between SH66177018 and SH66217019) with stretch of walling about 5m long. Further traces, possibly on the same alignment as **PRNs 12785** and **12876**, may be present.

Management recommendations

- Include in boundary and cultivation feature survey.

Scope for further investigation

- Follow up to boundary and cultivation feature survey.

PRN 12797

NGR: SH66207013C

Site type: Wall footings and revetting.

Description

Short lengths of stone walling / reveting (running between SH66167010 and SH66257017), c. 1m wide and 0.5m high, lying to the W of the stream course.

Management recommendations

- **Include in boundary and cultivation feature survey.**

Scope for further investigation

- Follow up to boundary and cultivation feature survey.

PRN 12798

NGR: SH66207005

Site type: Long hut

Description

Well preserved long hut. External dimensions 4.9m E-W by 7.7m N-S. Internal dimensions 3m E-W by 6m N-S. Walls 0.8-1m wide, and up to 0.35m high, but mostly removed at the central parts of the E and W side walls. Lies on a small platform, made up to provide a level base for the site, on a gentle N-S slope. It is generally grassed over. North Wales Footpath runs immediately to the N of the site, but does not cut into it. A mature hawthorn to the E should prevent people from walking over the site itself. Possibly a *hafod*. The site is of a type which is generally thought to be medieval in date, and to have been used as *hafodydd* in the tradition sense of the term, as a temporary summer dwelling place associated with the grazing of animals (particularly cattle) on upland pastures (GAT 1998, report no. 289, 30).

Management recommendations

- **Monitoring – visitor erosion.** The North Wales Footpath runs immediately to the S of the site, but does not cut into it. A mature hawthorn is situated at the E of the site. It does not present a threat to the site, and as it deters people from inadvertently walking over the long hut itself, it should be retained. Being so close to the path, the site is fairly vulnerable, and should be monitored to ensure that the footpath does not encroach onto it.
- **Bracken clearance.**
- **Large scale plan.**
- **Annual monitoring.**

Scope for further investigation

As a possible medieval *hafod*, the site would merit further work. Appears to be well preserved.

- **Candidate for excavation.**

PRN 12799

NGR: SH66086998

Site type: Long hut

Description

The site lies c. 40m to the S of the National Nature Reserve boundary. It comprises the remains of a rectangular building, 0.5m high drystone walls, c. 8m by 4m on N-S axis. Possibly a medieval *hafod* although the nature of the walling may suggest that it is either of a later date, or that it was reused as a shepherd's shelter or a storehouse of some kind (of post-medieval date).

Management recommendations

Lies outside the NNR.

Scope for further investigation

- **Large scale plan.**

PRN 12800

NGR: SH66217004C

Site type: Wall footings

Description

Short length of wall footings (approx. 11m in length) roughly 1m wide. Visible where it is crossed by the North Wales Footpath and the feature has been exposed. It is not possible to establish where the wall runs beyond this point. It is rather tenuous, and may be of natural origin. A number of small platforms and stone lengths are located in the area but they are not obviously of cultural origin.

Management recommendations

- Include in boundary and cultivation feature survey.

Scope for further investigation

- Follow up to boundary and cultivation feature survey.

PRN 12801

NGR: SH66447066

Site type: Long hut

Description

The site is densely bracken covered (even at time of survey, during early spring, the dead bracken was so thick that it was very difficult to assess the area). Although obscured, it appeared that a long hut was located here, surviving as drystone walling up to 0.5m high at the SW (upslope). Although it was difficult to make out dimensions, it is possibly 4m SE-NW by 7m (external). Sited perpendicular to the fall of a slight slope, in a natural bowl, on otherwise more steeply angled hillside. The situation (sheltered level ground close to a stream or river) and form of the site is typical of *hafodydd*, and it may therefore be medieval in date (GAT report no. 289, 30). The site appears similar in form to PRN 12804, which is situated in a similar location 200m to the SE.

Management recommendations

- Bracken clearance.
- Re-survey to establish ground plan / full extent (following bracken clearance).
- Large scale plan. May be necessary, depending on findings of revisit.
- Annual monitoring.

Scope for further investigation

Potentially interesting site (possible medieval *hafod*)

- Revisit. Site needs to be reassessed once bracken has been cleared.

PRN 12802

NGR: SH66507069C

Site type: Revetting

Description

Zig-zag of revetting, 0.5-0.7m high, running alongside and across a small stream course running into Afon Rhaeadr Fawr.

Management recommendations

- Include in boundary and cultivation feature survey

Scope for further investigation

- Follow up to boundary and cultivation feature survey.

PRN 12803

NGR: SH66527064C

Site type: Wall footings

Description

Wall footings crossed to S by a small footpath located above the river. Survives only as a short length, an arc of about 15m, but may possibly continue around the edge of a natural plateau / shelf to the N (the W side of this area is defined by the steep natural slope of the ravine side).

Management recommendations

- Include in boundary and cultivation feature survey.

Scope for further investigation

- Follow up to boundary and cultivation feature survey.

PRN 12804

NGR: SH66507047

Site type: Long hut

Description

Long hut located 10m to the W of Afon Rhaeadr Fawr. Lies on SW-NE axis with dimensions 5.7m wide by 9m long externally, and 3.5m by 6.9m internally. The site is notched into the slope of a natural terrace above the river and is terraced out raised up by roughly 0.8m to the NE. Including the area of skirting at the NE gable, the site has an external length of 10m. Its walls survive up to 0.5m high and 0.7m wide. A possible trackway, about 65m long, leads SW, down towards the river at SH66497041. The situation (sheltered level ground close to a stream or river) and form of the site is typical of *hafodydd*, and it may therefore be medieval in date (GAT 1998, report no. 289, 30).

Management recommendations

- **Monitoring – bracken encroachment.** The site was not bracken covered at time of survey, but is at risk from invasion.
- **Confirm precise NGR using GPS.**
- **Large scale plan.**
- **Annual monitoring.**

Scope for further investigation

As a possible medieval *hafod*, the site would merit further work. Appears to be well preserved.

- **Candidate for excavation.**

PRN 12805

NGR: SH66477032

Site type: Shelter

Description

Stone walled sub-circular feature - possibly a small shelter. 4m external diameter, 2.5m internal. The feature abuts a bank of river deposited stone and soil to the W. It lies less than 3m away from the river and is about a metre above it. Walls comprises a number of large blocks and medium sized stones, some which are set on end, with some possible edging visible internally and externally. The interpretation of this site is not entirely secure given its proximity to the river. It is possible that it may have originated through river action, although at the time of visit, a cultural origin was favoured. The small size of the feature, coupled with its proximity to the river would imply a temporary used as a short-term shelter, or as a small pen / fold for animals.

Management recommendations

No specific recommendations.

Scope for further investigation

No recommendations.

PRN 12806

NGR: SH66727013

Site type: Stone setting; possible cist

Description

Roughly circular or sub-square feature 2.5m by 2.5m by 0.3m high, consisting of a single width of boulders. Located on slightly sloping ground. The interpretation of this site is unclear but it has the appearance of a possible prehistoric burial cist.

Management recommendations

- **Measured sketch plan to be produced.**
- **Annual monitoring.**

Scope for further investigation

- **Second opinion.** Details of the site to be passed on to GAT prehistoric funerary and ritual project staff for a possible second opinion visit.

PRN 12807

NGR: SH66757011C

Site type: Bank

Description

Grassed over stony bank, with a line of trees growing above it, approx. 45m long, c. 2.5m wide at greatest and 0.5m high. Runs SE-NW (from SH66777010 to SH66727011) and is crossed by a modern fence line. A length of about 6m is apparent to the E of the fence and roughly 40m to the W of it. The surrounding area is very stony and other features may be located here but the evidence is too ambiguous to make out anything conclusive.

Management recommendations

No specific recommendations.

Scope for further investigation

- **Revisit.** The area is stone covered. It was not possible to pick out conclusive patterns at the time of the current survey but it is possible that features are present.

PRN 12808

NGR: SH66707028

Site type: Hut circle

Description

Hut circle located on, and slightly terraced into a series of shelves above (to the W of) Afon Rhacadr Fawr, on generally gently S-N sloping ground. Walls are of boulders, stone packing and turf, and are mostly grassed over. Two earthfast boulders are incorporated into the walls on the E side. Internal diameter 4.6m with walls 1.1m wide. Entrance to N, 1m wide, orthostat to E side. The site is located at the edge of a steep scarp (c. 10m high) running E down to the river. The back and E side of the circle are level with the ground surface, whilst the W side and entrance area are raised above it by about 0.4m. The floor is slightly sunken (by up to 0.4m) to level it out against the slope of the hillside. Orthostatic facing stones are present at the inside edge of the wall to the SE where the interior is most deeply sunken. The site has a very clear ground plan and seems very well preserved. The possibility for preservation of floor deposits is high.

The site is similar in form to some of the isolated round houses on the E side of Afon Rhacadr Fawr, but has a smaller internal diameter (4.6m compared with PRNs 331, 337 and 339 at 7m, 6m and 5.5m respectively). Its most similar to PRN 12845 (again slightly off-circular / oval, 4m x 3m with entrance to N). It is not known whether these observations are significant in terms of function or date.

Management recommendations

- **Bracken clearance.**
- **Monitoring –natural and animal erosion.** Site is located directly at the edge of a steep scarp. Erosion scars at the top of the slope are close to and possibly encroaching upon the E side of the circle (it is difficult to tell for sure as the walls are level with the ground surface at this point). The erosion seems to be natural, resulting from weathering of the scarp edge, although it may be exacerbated by livestock as hoof prints were visible here and elsewhere along the edge. The situation should be monitored and action taken to stabilise the erosion if it shows signs of further expansion. If it is not possible to prevent erosion damage, it may be advisable to excavate and record the site before information is lost.

- **Monitoring – visitor erosion.** An unofficial footpath which runs along the edge of the scarp above Afon Rhacadr Fawr, cross directly through the centre of the site. Ideally the path should be diverted, as it may eventually lead to erosion of floor deposits and damage to the walling.
- **Large scale plan.**
- **?Possible candidate for improved presentation.** As the site has a clearly recognisable ground plan it could be included on an archaeological trail. However, as it is threatened by erosion already, it may be felt that this would merely increase the potential damage. More generally there may be a feeling against encouraging visitor to this part of the NNR.
- **Annual monitoring.**

Scope for further investigation

- **Candidate for excavation.** Generally in a good state of preservation, but faced with recognised threats.

PRN 12809

NGR: SH66687027

Site type: Stone setting: possible cist

Description

Horse-shoe shaped stone setting feature, 2.5m at widest and c. 0.3m high. Lies c. 15m to the W of round house **PRN 12808** and may be an ancillary structure of some kind. However, it could be interpreted as a prehistoric burial feature / cist.

Management recommendations

- **Large scale plan.**
- **Annual monitoring.**
-

Scope for further investigation

- **Second opinion.** Details of the site to be passed on to GAT prehistoric funerary and ritual project staff for a possible second opinion visit.

PRN 12810

NGR: SH66687034

Site type: Stone setting: possible cist

Description

Feature of piled stones, with rectangular void or possible cist at centre. Well faced in places on exterior, with blocks to the W and pair of end-set slabs to the SE. Internal dimensions of cist area are 1.25m N-S by 0.6m E-W and approximately 0.5m deep. A broader circular area of possible stone spread, c. 5.8m N-S by c. 5.3m E-W surrounds the feature. This is mostly grassed over, but stones can be seen in places throughout, and could be felt beneath the ground surface with the tip of a ranging rod. A possible edge of stones in an arc facing inwards towards the cist can be made out at the SW of this area. The site is situated on flat ground within a wide natural bowl. The whole feature has the look of a heavily robbed out cairn, or other type of prehistoric burial monument.

Management recommendations

- **Annual monitoring.**
- **Large scale plan.**
- **Annual monitoring.**
-

Scope for further investigation

- **Second opinion.** Details of the site to be passed on to GAT prehistoric funerary and ritual project staff for a possible second opinion visit.

PRN 12811

NGR: SH66677032C

Site type: Possible boundary and cleared plot

Description

Edge of possible relict boundary (running between SH66677031 and SH66677033) across cleared broad shallow gully with a possible cleared rectangular plot behind to the E, bound by the edge of the river scarp. A few stones and blocks, mostly grassed over, are located on this area, but it is not possible to make out any definite features. If anything the evidence is suggestive of a plot cleared of stones for cultivation. The feature could be associated with either the round house to the SE (**PRN 12808**) or with the long hut and paddock to the NW (**PRN 12812**).

Management recommendations

No specific recommendations.

Scope for further investigation

- **Re-evaluate if opportunity arises.** Ambiguous remains, not meriting further attention on own basis.

PRN 12812

NGR: SH66627037

Site type: Long hut or possible pair of long huts, and associated enclosure

Description

Long hut or pair of long huts located on low spur of land that is about 13m wide and up to about 2m high at N, and which may have been partly levelled to create a platform for the structures. The most definite feature is a long hut on the top of the spur. Its walls are of boulder and turf bank construction, and are spread up to 2m wide in places, making it difficult to define the site's dimensions precisely, although, they are approximately 7.6m N-S by 3.8m E-W externally. The corners of the building are not particularly well defined. Some faced walling is visible at the N end. An unstructured pile of boulders lies to the N, where the spur falls away, which may be tumble from the site or the product of field clearance, but which may also have formerly been part of a structured feature such as revetting or a skirt of material around the end of the site. Other stone built features lie to the W of the long hut, including a short boulder wall line (running E-W parallel with the N end of the more definite long hut (No.1)) as well as three N-S oriented grassed over, faced and coursed wall lines of varying lengths. It is very difficult to interpret these features on the basis of surface evidence alone. The group could be seen as a second long hut (No.2), less than 3m wide and slightly shorter than the other, set immediately adjacent and parallel to, but slightly lower than No.1. An area of stone spread, possibly tumble from No.1 overlies the E wall and part of the interior of No.2. The boulder wall and the third possible N-S wall line (only c. 3m long), may form the revetting or the edge of a slight terrace for a platform to the second long hut, at its N and NE. This interpretation is necessarily provisional. The site may be the product of a number of phases, for example, containing the remains of two and possibly three overlapping buildings. A measured survey and preparation of a plan for the site may help its interpretation.

The long huts are set at the SE of a large elliptical enclosure, centred on SH66617038, roughly 40m N-S by 30m E-W, defined mostly as a low rubble spread, but as wall footings in places. There is a line of mature trees along the wall at the W side of the enclosure. Another cleared area (40m N-S), more heavily bracken covered than the ground to the NW and N of the long huts, lies to the N of the elliptical enclosure. There are faint traces that a spur of the wall at the W of the enclosure appears to continue around this northern area, suggesting that it is either an integral part of, or is associated with, the enclosure itself. A short length of wall footings to the NE of the long huts may also be associated with the site (**PRN 12814**).

PRN 12815, a large rectangular building, lies about 60m to the W of the long huts, and about 10m beyond the W wall of the enclosure, and may therefore be associated with them. The possible pair of long huts on the spur have parallels with the first phase of the site excavated by the RCAHMW c. 300m to the NE, on the far side of the Afon Rhaeadr Fawr (**PRN 369**; Butler 1962). The earliest structures on the site were thought by the excavators to represent a dwelling with an entrance facing out directly on to a parallel byre. Whilst the evidence is tenuous, the site was connected with that of *Nanteracadrat*, one of the vaccaries (or cattle farms) mentioned in the early fourteenth century Record of Caernarfon (Record Commission 1838, 138-140). Only one of the other vaccaries is named, that of *Mewryn* (geographical name for the broad flank of mountainside to the E of the Aber valley), and it is tempting to put forward this site as a possible candidate for one of the unnamed sites (see also **PRN 12822**, which is also proposed as a candidate).

Management recommendations

- **Bracken clearance.**
- **Confirm precise NGR using GPS.**

- **Tree growing on site.** A mature hawthorn is growing on the N end of the E long hut. It does not currently represent a threat, but its condition should be monitored and preventative tree surgery work or felling carried out if it appears to be at risk, as root pull resulting from collapse of the tree would cause significant damage.
- **Large scale plan.** The long huts need to be planned in detail.
- **Annual monitoring.**

Scope for further investigation

The site is complicated and the surface remains are fairly ambiguous.

- **Context survey (EDM).** A broader instrument assisted (EDM) survey should be carried out to map the relationship between the long huts, the enclosure and the rectangular building to the W (**PRN 12815**).
- **Candidate for excavation.** The site could be interpreted as a medieval *hafod*, and it is tempting to associate it with one of the vaccaries mentioned in the early fourteenth century Record of Caernarfon.

PRN 12813

NGR: SH66447119C

Site type: Wall footings

Description

A series of relict field walls, surviving in tumbled condition or as footings alone.

Management recommendations

- Include in boundary and cultivation feature survey.

Scope for further investigation

- Follow up to boundary and cultivation feature survey.

PRN 12814

NGR: SH66667039C

Site type: Wall footings

Description

Short length, roughly 5m, of wall footings running SW-NE, possibly associated with **PRN 12812**.

Management recommendations

- Include in boundary and cultivation feature survey.

Scope for further investigation

- Follow up to boundary and cultivation feature survey.

PRN 12815

NGR: SH66567037

Site type: Long hut

Description

The remains of a large rectangular building, 8.2m N-S by 5.4m E-W external dimensions. 3.5m wide internally. The site is well preserved of rubble built drystone walls, with a spread of tumble material within the interior. It is located at the top of a shallow gully running SE-NW across a gently sloping S-N hillside. It is notched into the ground surface (to a maximum of 0.3m at the S) to level out the floor against the slope, with the result that the interior of most of the site is sunken apart from the N end at which the floor is roughly flush with the ground surface. Despite the rubble spread over the interior, three distinct levels or compartments are identifiable within the building, with definite edges bounding the bottom and middle sections but less clear between the middle and upper ones. From S to N the sections are 3.4m, 2.1m and 1.5m respectively, and there is a height difference of about 0.2m between levels.

The footings of a short spur of walling, a little over 1m long, project into the centre of the upper (S) section from and perpendicular to the E wall of the building.

Multi-cellular rectangular buildings are known in various areas of north west Wales, including the nearby Afon Anafon valley to the E of the Aber valley. However, these buildings appear to consist of adjoining cells with solid walls between them, rather than interconnecting rooms or compartments. The RCAHMS excavations at long hut group **PRN 369** to the E of Afon Rhaeadr Fawr showed that the floor of building A was divided by a series of stone edged steps of equal which gave five floor levels of equal area (Butler 1962, 29). The building was provisionally dated as mid-C18th and was interpreted as a food store forming part of a larger arrangement of structures forming a season dairy farm (Butler 1962, 31). However, it may not be appropriate to draw an analogy between building A and the current feature, **PRN 12815**, as the former is much larger, being almost 14.5m long and 3.4m wide.

An alternative interpretation of **PRN 12815**, would be as a 'long house', in the sense that Peate, the who first defined the term in literature, originally intended, as a type of peasant dwelling which had house and byre under the same roof (1946, 51-84). However, the socio-economic connotations of definition are very specific, as notes on layout. No structure has yet been positively ascribed to this category in north Wales on the basis of excavation, and it is not possible to make a secure interpretation on the basis of surface evidence alone. The comparison is drawn to illustrate the potential interest of the site. This is further increased by the possibility of an association with the long hut / huts and enclosure to the E (**PRN 12812**). Taken together the features represent an intriguing group. As discussed in connection with the **PRN 12812**, it is tempting to see these features as the remains of one of the unnamed pair of the four vaccaries referred to in the Record of Caernarfon (Record Commission 1838). These suggestions are very tenuous, and can not be taken any further without some degree of excavation.

Management recommendations

- **Bracken clearance.**
- **Monitoring – general.** Although the site is well preserved and is heavily moss covered, suggesting that it has remained stable for some time, the walling is a bit vulnerable as it is fairly loose in places. The area is rarely visited. The site should not be included within any presentation leaflets, or on an archaeological trail, as encouraging visitors would lead to damage to the site. The area is currently lightly grazed and this regime appears conducive to preservation of the site, preventing scrub growth, but not being so great that stock trample or disturb the walling. The impact of any change to this landuse regime would need to be carefully monitored, and action taken as necessary. For example, switch to a dominance of cattle would lead to greater risk of damage from trampling.
- **Large scale plan.**
- **Annual monitoring.**

Scope for further investigation

An interesting and well-preserved site. The possibility of an association with the long huts and enclosure of **PRN 12812** increase the potential interest of the site.

- **Context survey (EDM).** As per **PRN 12812**.
- **Candidate for excavation.** The possibility that the site could be a long house in the sense of Peate's definition of the term (1946, 51-84), coupled with the temptation to associate it with one of the vaccaries mentioned in the early fourteenth century Record of Caernarfon make it good candidate for further research, including excavation.

PRN 12816

NGR: SH66707035C

Site type: Wall footings

Description

Possible rough wall footings, c. 1m wide, dividing two levels on a natural shelf terrace above the river Afon Rhaeadr Fawr. The shelf is about 90m N-S by 40m E-W overall. Confirmation of the presence of a wall here would suggest that the shelf was deliberately divided out into two areas, possibly for cultivation purposes. A pathway, **PRN 12817**, of unknown date leads towards the Afon Rhaeadr Fawr from the NE of the shelf.

Management recommendations

No specific recommendations.

Scope for further investigation

- **Assessment of 'off-site' features – broader research programme.** Although not a priority, excavation of a small trench across the feature would aid its interpretation and could provide useful information on landuse in the area more generally. Any support for the possibility that the shelf was cultivated would have implications for

the intensity of occupation, and / or for the nature of the agricultural regime employed in the valley at the time. For example the use of small, often awkward, plots of land such as this riverside shelf may suggest that grazing land was at a premium and that all cultivation of crops was secondary and was forced into more marginal or fringe locations. Alternatively, cultivation of meadow for hay crops may have been very important in the area generally, with all suitable locations being employed, to ensure as large a harvest as possible.

PRN 12817

NGR: SH66707037C

Site type: Pathway

Description

Pathway down to Afon Rhaeadr Fawr from NE part of a natural shelf above the river, running from a point where there is a slight hollow at a natural break in the shelf. There are indications that the pathway may originally have been stepped.

Management recommendations

No specific recommendations.

Scope for further investigation

No recommendations.

PRN 12818

NGR: SH66547034C

Site type: Linear field clearance pile

Description

Line of probable field clearance stone (running between SH66517032 and SH66567035), situated on a natural break of slope which is about 10-20m wide, running S to N. The clearance material takes the form of a stone bank which is spread up to 3.5m wide in places and is up to 3.5m high. The area is generally bracken covered but it seems possible to make out that the gently sloping ground to the S has been cleared of stone.

Management recommendations

No specific recommendations.

Scope for further investigation

- **Assessment of 'off-site' features – broader research programme.** No immediate recommendations although the feature is of interest as it seems to demonstrate that portions of the surrounding land have been deliberately cleared of stone. Whether this has been to increase the availability of land for pasture or for cultivation can not be established from the surface evidence. No cultivation ridges or other features were identified at the time of survey, but much of the area was obscured with dead bracken. May be worth investigating as part of a broader research programme.

PRN 12819

NGR: SH66697011

Site type: Clearance pile and possible building footings

Description

Field stone clearance pile, c. 4.5m x 8.5m, E-W axis, roughly rectangular with fairly well defined edges visible at the E, N and NW corner. There are some indications that the clearance spread may overlying the footings of a rectangular building, the remains of which are c.0.5m high at the N side and flush with the ground surface at the S side. The cleared stone is heavily moss and grass covered, possibly indicating that the clearance episode dates to an earlier period than to any improvement works in the mid-twentieth century by the College Farm (or other agency). Further

possible features lie to the N, adjoining the site, including the vague edge of a sub-rectangular or circular structure, c. 7.5m in diameter. This feature is very ambiguous, but it seems possibly to make out a patchy robbed out stone bank (to N) and a line of edging (to S). Possibly the site of a hut circle or a long hut, although the surface evidence is so vague that it is impossible to be certain that this is an archaeological feature.

Management recommendations

No specific recommendations.

Scope for further investigation

Further work at the site of the clearance pile / building remains are not seen as a priority, although the following suggestions could be followed up through as part of a broader research programme.

- **Further assessment.** Removal of some of the pile may help to establish whether a building is present beneath – not a priority though.
- **Revisit .** The general area is fairly stone covered and it is possible to make out various patterns, some of which, like the potential hut circle / long house, may be the remains of archaeological features.
- **Further desk-top investigation.** Establish extent of college farm improvement works to help eliminate later features from evidence for earlier patterns of landuse.

PRN 12820

NGR: SH66477109C

Site type: Wall footings

Description

Relict stone walls, surviving as sparse footings, which seem to be associated **PRN 12870**, the boundary around Wern Goch. The relationship is confirmed by the first edition 6" OS map (surveyed 1877-1878) on which they are depicted. The footings (running between SH66547106 and SH66497111) may in part mark out a former coppice coupe given the shape of the area they partly enclose and the presence of trees which appear as though they may formerly have been coppiced. A spur of footings running to the east is shown by the first edition 6" OS map to be the continuation of boundary **PRN 12879** to the E of the current main north-south trackway to the falls.

Management recommendations

- **Include in boundary and cultivation feature survey.**

Scope for further investigation

- **Follow up to boundary and cultivation feature survey.**

PRN 12821

NGR: SH66617019

Site type: Possible long hut

Description

Possible long hut. Small, approximately 5.5m x 3.5m (external), which would seem to cast some doubt on the interpretation as a dwelling, however in other respects, appears to be the remains of a house or a building of some sort, rather than a peat stack or other type of feature. Sub-rectangular in plan with rounded ends (although the visible plan may be affected by the spread of tumbled masonry that overlies it). Oriented on a roughly N-S axis. The wall footings are visible as grassed over banks up to 0.3m high and 0.75m wide.

Management recommendations

- **Annual monitoring.**
- **Large scale plan.**
- **Annual monitoring.**

Scope for further investigation

It would be interesting to investigate the site in light of its possible association with features at **PRN 12822**, which lies about 35m to the W.

- **Candidate for excavation.**

PRN 12822

NGR: SH66577009C

Site type: Long hut group and shepherd's shelter

Description

Building complex, which appears to consist of a ?C19th shepherd's shelter overlying, and probably utilising stone from, earlier structures. Situated within level ground of a broad natural bowl above land sloping gently to the N. N of the site (survey area G), the bowl seems to have been cleared of stone, although it is not clear whether this is from an episode associated with the site itself, or whether it relates to C20th land clearance, possibly by the College Farm. The remains are difficult to interpret, but the complex consists of at least 5 components, including up to three rectangular structures and two annexes.

To the W of the group is feature A, a large rectangular structure, on an E-W axis. Features C and D adjoin A to the north and south respectively. It is not possible to work out the chronological relationship between C and A from the surface remains, but the walling of D appears to be integral to that of A, implying that they are contemporaneous. D appears to be a linking structure or area between feature A and further features to the east. These lie on a north-south axis, and are interpreted as the remains of two superimposed structures. Feature E, the possible shepherd's shelter, is a drystone rectangular building with walling surviving to between 0.8m - 1.5m high, which overlies and therefore post-dates, an earlier structure. It may be relevant that nothing is shown at this location on the 1st edition 6" Ordnance Survey map of 1891 (surveyed 1877-1878) whilst features such as sheepfolds are shown elsewhere in the valley (for example PRNs 334 and 369). The OS surveyors may have missed the feature, but its omission may suggest that it was already derelict by the 1870s. The earlier structure, building B, appears to be sub-rectangular in form. Close inspection of the masonry allows for the possibility that feature B is itself made up of two components, with a rounded wall, possible an arc of a hut circle to the N, with a possible yard or annex to the south. There is no way of clarifying these suggestions on the basis of the surface evidence however, and for the purposes of this survey it is assumed that the remains are in fact those of a medieval or early modern long hut.

The assumed earlier features of the group (A-D) are not dissimilar in extent to the earliest phases of PRN 369 (the long hut group in the valley excavated by the RCAHMW), and it is tempting to put forward the suggestion that this site should be investigated further as the possible location of one of the unnamed of four vaccaries mentioned in the early fourteenth century Record of Caernarfon (Record Commission 1838, 138-140).

More detailed descriptions and dimensions of the various features / structures are described individually as subdivisions of PRN 12822.

Management recommendations

- **Annual monitoring.**
- **Large scale plan:** a priority.
- **Annual monitoring.**

Scope for further investigation

The site is potentially very interesting. It appears to consist of a group of long huts with a later shepherd's shelter superimposed on it. An area of cleared land lies in front of (N of) the group. The site is not dissimilar in size to the earliest phase of the long hut group PRN 369 which was excavated by the RCAHMW (Butler 1962). Whilst the evidence is tenuous, the site was connected with that of *Nanteracadrat*, one of the vaccaries (or cattle farms) mentioned in the early fourteenth century Record of Caernarfon (Record Commission 1838). Only one of the other vaccaries is named, that of *Meuryn* (geographical name for the broad flank of mountainside to the E of the Aber valley), and it is tempting to put forward this site as a possible candidate for one of the unnamed sites (see also PRN 12812 which is also proposed as a possible candidate). PRN 12821 should also be investigated as part of any research into the group as it lies less than 35m to the E and may have been an associated structure of some kind.

- **Candidate for excavation.**

PRN 12822/A

Site type: Long hut

Description

Feature A: Long hut (on E-W axis), c. 9m x 4.5m), and c. 0.8m - 1.0m wide. Walls surviving as low turf and stone footings (grassed over). The S side wall is missing.

PRN 12822/B

Site type: Long hut

Description

Feature B: Sub-rectangular structure, c. 4m x 8m on N-S axis, pre-dating feature E. Best preserved at the N end, where 0.35m to 0.4m high. Elsewhere, the remains are rather vague. It is assumed that the remains are in fact those of a medieval or early modern long hut. However, it is possible that the N end of the feature represents the remains of a hut circle, with the footings to the S comprising an adjoining rectangular yard. The construction of the later structure (feature E) has clearly affected the layout of the earlier remains, and has made interpretation on the basis of surface remains alone impossible. *Juncus* within the interior structure E indicates poor drainage and the possibility of a solid/stone floor. This would probably belong to structure B, given that E may be a simple shepherd's shelter.

PRN 12822/C

Site type: Annex

Description

Feature C: annex to N of and adjoining feature A. 3.5m E-W by 3.5m N-S. N edge of feature is ambiguous, possibly reflecting the edge damage caused by ploughing in the area to the N.

PRN 12822/D

Site type: Structure

Description

Feature D: Rectangular footings, 3m E-W by 4m N-S, between features A and E/B, possibly forming a linking room or area between the two other structures. There is insufficient evidence to determine a chronological relationship between this and the other features of the complex. Possible internal wall spur (c.1.5m E-W) projecting from W wall of N half of feature D.

PRN 12822/E

Site type: Shepherd's shelter

Description

Feature E: Rectangular structure mostly of rough drystone construction, overlying feature B. Entrance on W side. Dimensions approximately 4m E-W by 6.5m N-S. N end wall well constructed (faced and up to 1.5m high), but rest of walling mostly tumbled (remaining to 0.5m to 0.8m high) and of rough construction. *Juncus* grass within the interior of the structure indicates poor drainage and the possibility of a solid/stone floor, although this is more likely to be related to feature B. Interpreted as a post medieval shepherd's shelter.

PRN 12823

NGR: SH66527010

Site type: Stone setting: possible cist

Description

Roughly square or rectangular feature, very tentatively interpreted as a cist. 3m N-S by 2.5m E-W external dimensions, c. 1.2m N-S by 0.8m E-W internal. Earthfast boulder to W, c. 0.9m high, defines most of W side. Walling of 2-3 courses, c. 0.3m to 0.4m high to S, and hints of walling to N and E sides. Suitable location on NE facing slope above natural basin (survey area G). The site has extensive views along the valleys of Afon Rhaeadr Fawr to the N and Afon Gam to the SW (likely to have been an axis of communication from prehistoric times onwards), and E to the falls and the mountains.

Management recommendations

- Measured sketch plan to be produced.

- **Annual monitoring.**

Scope for further investigation

- **Second opinion.** Details of the site to be passed on to GAT staff working on the Prehistoric Funerary and Ritual Project for a possible second opinion visit.

PRN 12824

NGR: SH66537014

Site type: Modern clearance cairn

Description

Small cairn, c. 1m diameter and c. 0.3m high. Possibly fairly modern. The general area is a wide natural bowl, which has the appearance of having been cleared and ploughed. The possibility that this was carried out in the mid C20th as part of improvement works by the college farm needs to be investigated, although the clearance could be of a much earlier date.

Management recommendations

No specific recommendations.

Scope for further investigation

- **Further desk-top investigation.** Find out the extent of any improvement works carried out in the area by the college farm in the C20th, to help eliminate later features from evidence for earlier patterns of landuse.

PRN 12825

NGR: SH66477008

Site type: Circular platform

Description

Scoop / circular platform, possibly the platform of a hut circle or other structure, but may be of entirely natural origin. The S end is notched into the hill-slope by c. 0.8m, and the platform is roughly 6 to 7m in diameter.

Management recommendations

No specific recommendations.

Scope for further investigation

- **Assessment excavation – broader research programme.**

PRN 12826

NGR: SH66427018

Site type: Rectangular platform

Description

Roughly rectangular platform, c. 6m x 3.5m on SW-NE axis, above river, 3m from scarp edge. Could be seen as a platform for a rectangular building, although the evidence is inconclusive and the feature could be of entirely natural origin. Its location of the feature is given by a small hawthorn immediately to the N, and broken ground to the S.

Management recommendations

No specific recommendations.

Scope for further investigation

- **Assessment excavation – broader research programme.**

PRN 12827

NGR: SH66457085

Site type: Hut circle and possible associated features

Description

Hut circle at SH66457085, external diameter about 7.5m, internal 4.0m, notched into a gentle S-N slope by c. 0.7m to the S to produce a level floor. Walling, c. 1-1.5m wide to the E and W, and c. 0.15m - 0.30m high, of grassed over stony banks / rubble spreads with no well-defined edges. Walls become slighter as run around to the N, where there are hints of an entrance. An end-set stone (0.3m x 0.3m) lies at the S within the bank.

The area is generally quite stone covered and it is possible to pick out numerous patterns amongst them, some of which appear archaeological in origin. The evidence is tenuous, but the most convincing of the possible features located in the vicinity of the hut circle are as follows (the more definite hut circle site is taken as feature **a**):

Feature **b** - a possible edge of stones and low ditch that run for about 5m SE to NW past the SW of hut circle feature **a** and curve around it to the N. The feature may be the remains of a hood gully diverting water from the hill-slope to the S around and away from the hut circle.

Feature **c** - A possible relict wandering wall line, runs roughly NW to SE from a point close to the SE of hut circle feature **a**. It is traceable for a distance of about 25m before fading out.

Feature **d** - A U-shape of possible stone footings and low grassy bank located c. 4m to the SE of the hut circle feature **a** and immediately to the N of the first traces of the relict boundary, feature **c**. The whole feature is less than 4m E to W and 3m N to S, with walling remaining to less than c. 0.2m high. Could be seen as the slightly terraced platform of a hut or ancillary structure of some kind.

Feature **e** - The possible site of a second hut circle which lies about 8m to the NE of feature **a**. Takes the form of a slight platform with a low (less than 0.15m high) circular spread of stone surrounding it, with a diameter of about 7m. The evidence is inconclusive and could easily be of entirely natural origin.

Feature **f** - A possible stone settings / cairn, c. 1.5m x 2m, oval shape, which lies about 10m ENE of feature **a**.

Feature **g** - a further possible length of relict walling, c. 10m long. Located about 15m to N of the site of the feature **e**.

Management recommendations

- **Confirm precise NGR using GPS.**
- **Large scale plan.** Detailed plan of main hut circle (feature **a**).
- **Annual monitoring.**

Scope for further investigation

A very difficult area to interpret. It would be tempting discount most of the features if it were not for the presence of the more definite hut circle (feature **a**).

- **Revisit.** Would be worth re-visiting the area under different conditions of vegetation and light to see if it is possible to assess the features more conclusively.
- **Assessment excavation – broader research programme.** The hut circle appears to be in much poorer condition than those to the E of Afon Rhaeadr Fawr (such as PRNs 331, 337, 339 etc). However, the various features may never have been more than platforms created to take wooden buildings. This opens up an interesting possibility for research, as the sites may differ in terms of function and date to the more substantially built examples. It should also be borne in mind that the differing states of preservation may be a result of greater land improvement / clearance work in this area. Ultimately, only excavation is likely to cast any light on the assessment and interpretation of the features. However, unless there is thought to be some potential in the hypothesis that the platforms relate to timber buildings, this must be a low priority and is only likely to be pursued as part of a broader research programme.
- **Large scale plan.** Detailed plan of main hut circle (feature **a**)
- **Context survey (EDM).** General survey plan showing spatial relationships between the features.
- **Second opinion.** It would be useful to have an opinion on the features from a member of the GAT hut settlement survey. Details of feature **f** to be passed on to GAT prehistoric funerary and ritual project staff as a possible site visit combined with comment on the huts.

PRN 12828

NGR: SH66427011

Site type: Pathway and terraces

Description

Old track / path leading steeply over scarp (c. 13m high) towards the Afon Rhaeadr Bach, at a point where the river is about 2m wide. Where the track runs roughly E-W along the level ground below the scarp, towards the river, it

widens out onto a shelf, and is revetted on its N side (c. 0.4-0.6m high). The features lie between about SH66387009 and SH66457014. It may be that the track is running on to the N edge of a pre-existing feature, a terraced plot, c. 5m N to S by 30m E to W. The terrace may have been deliberately prepared as a level surface for cultivation (for hay or arable). Further terraces lie on the same side of the river about 50m downstream (**PRN 12831**). A structure, utilising a large *in situ* boulder is located on the terrace (**PRN 12829**).

Management recommendations

No specific recommendations.

Scope for further investigation

See recommendations for **PRN 12831**, with which this site may be associated.

PRN 12829

NGR: SH66417009

Site type: Shelter / long hut

Description

Rectangular structure, 7m E-W by 3.5-4.0m N-S of end-set boulders and slabs along with other traces of wall. A very large boulder is utilised for N/NE wall (4m by 4m in size). The feature is interpreted as a sheep pen or shelter of some kind, but may have originally been a dwelling. However, its location below and to the N of a high scarp edge, in a damp position which would receive little light, casts some doubt on its interpretation as a dwelling. The feature may be associated with the revetted terrace on which it is located, and approached by a trackway across the scarp to the E (see **PRN 12828** for descriptions of both). Further terraces lie less than 50m away to the N (**PRN 12831**).

Management recommendations

- **Measured sketch plan to be produced.**
- **Annual monitoring.**

Scope for further investigation

See recommendations for **PRN 12831**, with which this site may be associated.

PRN 12830

NGR: SH66477015

Site type: Clearance cairn

Description

Stone from field clearance, piled against a couple of earth-fast slabs. Roughly 1.5-2.0m N to S, situated amidst otherwise rock-strewn slopes. The feature may have derived from clearance of the land to the E, as per survey areas C and G.

Management recommendations

No specific recommendations.

Scope for further investigation

- **Further desk-top investigation.** Establish extent of college farm improvement works to help eliminate later features from evidence for earlier patterns of landuse.

PRN 12831

NGR: SH66447019

Site type: Revetted terraces

Description

Path, c. 1.5-2.0m wide, running SW over scarp down to river, and on to a broad, revetted terrace, in a similar arrangement to that observed for **PRN 12829**. A second terrace is located to the S. The terraces are wider to the W, and are similar in size (dimensions: 8m wide at E to 15m wide at W and c. 50 to 70m long) although that to the S is slightly longer. A possible third terrace, c. 20m by 8m lies to the N, and is closer to river (5-6m away). The terraces are stepped up from N-S and are approximately 0.5m, 0.6m and c.1.5-2.0m high respectively.

Management recommendations

No specific recommendations.

Scope for further investigation

- **Assessment of 'off-site' features – broader research programme.** It would be interesting to research the function of the terraces, especially as it seems to form part of a larger group with terrace and trackway (**PRN 12828**) and rectangular structure (**PRN 12829**). The possibility that small plots like this were cultivated (whether for hay or for an arable crop) would have implications for the nature of past landuse in the area as a whole. Any work should aim to investigate the structure of the feature, as well as to collect potential dating material and environmental samples.
- **Context survey (EDM).** Production of a plan showing the form of and spatial relationships between the features.

PRN 12832

NGR: SH66387045

Site type: Long hut

Description

Long hut, 10m by 6m on SW to NE axis. Set across and slightly notched into gently sloping ground to produce a level platform. Walls survive in the form of sparse footings only, c. 0.3m at NE end and about 1m wide throughout, but most easily visible at the E, W and N. Its form and location - insubstantial, on sloping ground close to a running water source - could be seen as indicative of a medieval *hafod*.

Management recommendations

- **Bracken clearance.**
- **Confirm precise NGR using GPS.**
- **Large scale plan.**
- **Annual monitoring.**

Scope for further investigation

- See **PRN 12833** for research possibilities.

PRN 12833

NGR: SH66297020

Site type: Long hut

Description

Long hut 7m by 4.4m on SW to NE axis, set across sloping ground which runs down to the Afon Gam. Better preserved to W, where up to 0.4m high. Faint remains of walling at E side, but becomes less visible to N and S where grassed over. Its form and location - insubstantial, on sloping ground close to a running water source - could be seen as indicative of a medieval *hafod*.

Management recommendations

- Bracken clearance.
- Large scale plan.
- Annual monitoring.
-

Scope for further investigation

- **Candidate for excavation.** One of a number of possible medieval *hafodydd*. It would be of interest to investigate one of the isolated and relatively insubstantial features of this kind which are found in the valley (e.g. PRNs 12801, 12804, 12832, and 12833). Comparison with the more extensive grouped sites (e.g. PRNs 369, 12812 and 12822), or with those which have more substantial / visible above ground remains (e.g. PRN 334), may help to elucidate whether the differences in form relate to differences in function and chronology.

PRN 12834

NGR: SH66817009C

Site type: Presentation pathways

Description

Short sections pathway, possibly remnants of C18th / C19th viewing pathways constructed as part of the picturesque presentation of the falls for tourists. A number of possible phases to the footpath are visible. Steps are present in places where the routes pass through boulders, and in places the paths are kerbed.

Management recommendations

No specific recommendations.

Scope for further investigation

- **Further desk-top investigation.** The arrangements associated with C18th and C19th tourism to the falls is poorly understood although the valley is known to have been a popular destination. Further as yet unrecognised features relating to this period may be present in the valley, and this could make an interesting subject for further research.

PRN 12835

NGR: SH66817012C

Site type: Revetted pathway

Description

Short stretch of revetted path, vague and part buried by scree to E. Possibly part of an early leisure path from the falls across the scree to the hanging valley of Afon Rhaeadr Fawr.

Management recommendations

No specific recommendations.

Scope for further investigation

See recommendations for PRN 12834.

PRN 12836

NGR: SH66807015C

Site type: Iron fence setting

Description

Traces of an iron railing fence line set into wall footings. Thought possible to be part of a Victorian period enclosure around the mouth of the falls at the time of the current survey, although the NNR warden has subsequently commented that he believes them to be the remains of a National Park boundary erected in the C20th (Duncan Brown *pers. comm.*).

Management recommendations

No specific recommendations.

Scope for further investigation

See recommendations for **PRN 12834**.

PRN 12837

NGR: SH66747036C

Site type: Wall footings

Description

Wall footings, continuation of boundaries from E side of track to falls, on an approximately NE-SW alignment. The strongest footings are probably part of **PRN 12844**, which is shown on the 1st edition 6" OS map of 1891 (surveyed 1877 to 1878) to continue on this side of the track. The map shows that the boundary cornered and then continued on a roughly N-S alignment along the scarp above Afon Rhaeadr Fawr. Remnants of the corner and continuation were not observed during the current survey. The early OS map also shows another boundary, apparently relating to relict wall **PRN 12841**, predating **PRN 12844**. The southernmost of the other two possible wall lines lying between the continuation of **PRN 12844** to the S, and **PRN 332** to the N, must relate to the earlier boundary shown on the map. The regular, linear, form of **PRN 12844** suggests that it is enclosure period, i.e. late C18th / early-mid C19th in date. It is probably one of the walls referred to by Butler (1962, 35) as 'sheep wall', which he states to have been built in the decade 1810-1820. The earlier boundary shown on the map has a less regular form, and may be medieval in date. It is tempting to associate it with the long hut at **PRN 329**, although vegetation conditions did not allow this possibility to be assessed at the time of survey. The presence of prehistoric / Romano-British features in the area suggest the possibility that the walls may have reused earlier boundaries. The presence of a further tenuous line of footings a short distance to the S of **PRN 332** suggests a complex history of boundary changes in this small area.

Management recommendations

- Include in boundary and cultivation feature survey.

Scope for further investigation

- Follow up to boundary and cultivation feature survey.
- Assessment of 'off-site' features – broader research programme.
- Context survey (EDM). Assess and plan the extent of, and spatial relationship between, features in the area (structures and boundaries).
- See recommendations for **PRNs 329** and **332**.

PRN 12838

NGR: SH66777023

Site type: Possible burial cairn

Description

A prominent low stony knoll, immediately to W of main N-S trackway to the falls. There are traces of possible edging marking out on area of about 13m diameter around the knoll (strongest to SW, but vague generally). A rectangular stone setting, less than 0.2m high, again somewhat vague, 3m E-W by 3.5m N-S, is located roughly centrally on top of the mound. The feature has the appearance of a robbed out cairn, although the evidence is very tenuous. It is not particularly substantial, but has made use of / enhanced the natural shape of the knoll to produce a feature which belies its actual size. The site has wide views, S towards to the falls, SW towards Afon Gam, N down the valley and so on. This location is the sort of place that may have been used as a viewing platform for the falls had the trees in the area been lower or absent in the past. The knoll is slightly cut away to the NW, probably quarried away as material for construction of the track.

Management recommendations

- Annual monitoring.

Scope for further investigation

- **Second opinion.** Details of the site to be passed on to GAT prehistoric funerary and ritual project staff for a possible second opinion visit.

PRN 12839

NGR: SH66787026

Site type: Hut circle

Description

Probable hut circle in poor condition. Appears to be approximately 8m in diameter (external). Is truncated by the main N-S trackway to the falls to E side. Most convincing to S and SW where visible as low grass covered earth and stone bank, c. 1.2m wide by 0.2m high. Interior not entirely level. There appears to have been some disturbance, possibly as the result of tree throw. Further features may be located in the vicinity (including possible wall footings which run NNW from the site for about 5m), but are difficult to interpret and would probably repay more detailed survey and mapping to pick out any conclusive patterns. The whole site is located on a broad natural shelf above and to the E of the river. The area to the E is bracken covered and may obscure further features.

Management recommendations

- **Monitoring – bracken encroachment.** May be worth clearing and controlling areas of bracken nearby, to prevent incursion on to the site.
- **Revisit.** Re-survey area to E of hut circle once bracken cleared.
- **Large scale plan.**
- **Annual monitoring.**

Scope for further investigation

- **Assessment excavation – broader research programme.** It would be useful to excavate one of the possible hut circles represented by PRNs 12839, 12840 and possibly 7399, firstly to check that they are archaeological features, and secondly to assess why they are so much less substantial than other hut circles in the valley (such as PRNs 331, 337 and 339). This may be a result of differing preservation and extent of robbing (PRNs 7399, 12839 and 12840 are located very close to tracks and walls and may have been more heavily robbed) or may be a product of different form, function or date. For example: were they ancillary structures rather than dwellings; do they relate to a different period of activity; were they platforms for timber structures?

PRN 12840

NGR: SH668157029

Site type: Possible hut circle

Description

Possible hut circle c. 8m in diameter (external). Walls visible as low (less than 0.2m high) patchy grassed over stony banks. Some stones strewn throughout interior, but mostly flat. Set on a natural semi-circular terrace that has been built up on S and W sides to form a level platform. Open views. Compare with PRNs 12839 and 7399, 50m and 90m away to the SW and SSW respectively. Wall footings of similar type to the hut circle walling run NE from the site to a kink in a drystone wall (PRN 12841) at SH66827030. A grassy, seemingly cleared of stone, lies to E of the hut circle.

Management recommendations

- **Large scale plan.**
- **Annual monitoring.**

Scope for further investigation

- **Assessment excavation – broader research programme.** See recommendations for PRN 12839.

PRN 12841

NGR: SH66867030C

Site type: Drystone wall

Description

Kinked drystone wall (between SH66797044 to the W and SH66937031 to the E) runs up to, partially over, and then fades out within scree slopes. Uncoursed, rubble-built construction, now mostly tumbled, but stands to 1m high in places. The wall is shown on the 1st edition 6" OS map of 1891 (surveyed 1877 to 1878) apparently terminating at the same point in the scree. To its N it is crossed by the geometrical enclosure period field boundary **PRN 12844** (also shown on the 1891 map), which runs down from Meuryn Uchaf. This is probably one of the walls referred to by Butler (1962, 35) as 'sheep wall', which he states to have been built in the decade 1810-1820. It is now marked by a post and wire fence, but the fence follows a line of wall footings, suggesting that the boundary was originally a drystone wall. The possibility of an association between the **PRN 12841** and features at **PRN 329** and **12843** suggest that it may respect earlier boundaries and be at least medieval, and possibly prehistoric/Romano-British in origin.

Management recommendations

- Include in boundary and cultivation feature survey.

Scope for further investigation

- Follow up to boundary and cultivation feature survey.

PRN 12842

NGR: SH66827026

Site type: Terrace / platform

Description

Trapezoid shaped terrace, 14m E-W by 13m N-S, with scree spilling on to E end. Seemingly built up at N and NW corner by c. 0.5m to form a level platform. Vague traces of banks and footings can be seen disappearing into the scree at E side. Although it is impossible to make out any strong patterns, the area has the general feel of archaeological potential; for example, the platform may have held timber buildings.

Management recommendations

- Large scale plan.

Scope for further investigation

- **Geophysical survey.** Geophysical survey may help interpretation of the site, by determining the presence or absence of buried features.

PRN 12843

NGR: SH66777034

Site type: Long huts and later sheep fold

Description

Complex of drystone walling, earth bank and revetted features at corner of ruinous wall (**PRN 12841**). A very confusing and difficult to interpret area. At time of current survey it was thought to represent the remains of two long huts, one of which is overlain by a later sheepfold (formed as a rectangular crook in the field wall). The 1st edition OS map of 1891 (surveyed 1877 to 1878) does not depict a sheepfold here (but does show the corner in the wall), although it does mark features of this kind elsewhere in the valley, suggesting that the fold was derelict by this time. The features are located on moderately sloping ground, where the mountain side to the E levels out to a broad natural terrace above the Afon Rhaeadr Fawr. The higher of the 2 long huts is set parallel to the contours, is approximately 5m N-S by 2.5m wide, and is cut into the hill slope at its E side to make a level floor. Its outline is visible to the S, N and W as low banks with occasional large stones. There is a 1.5m length of revetting, 0.4m high, at the N part of the E wall. A wide orthostat, about 1m high, is located towards the N end of the W wall, and is possibly a door jamb. The second long hut is set along the slope on an E-W axis, and is approximately 8m E-W by 4m N-S. It is notched into the hill slope at the E, and the floor building is split into two sections (the E higher than the W by about 0.3m) by a

cross wall of faced footings. The field wall takes a right angle corner at the N end of this cross wall, then runs along it before turning again to follow the W half of the S wall of the long hut, and then its W end, forming the sheepfold. The E end of the long house is rounded, and the cross wall possibly slightly curved. The ground plan could be taken to infer that this area is in fact a hut circle of c. 3m diameter, casting doubt on the identification of the second long hut.

Management recommendations

- **Re-hinge / relocate gateway.** A modern metal gate is situated at the corner of two post and wire fences immediately to the NW of the site. This has already been mentioned as a problem in relation to possible erosion (due to stock trampling) to **PRN 329**, and the same threat also holds for **PRN 12843**. Its current location means that when stock are brought through it they are directed across the site. Re-hinging the gate was advocated as a solution to this problem for **PRN 329**. However, this would probably not be sufficient for **PRN 12843** and it would be preferable to relocate the gateway. The new position would have to be considered carefully as the area is of high archaeological sensitivity, and deposits could potentially be damaged by digging holes for the gateposts. It may be advisable for an archaeologist to monitor the work.
- **Large scale plan.** Important as may assist interpretation of the site.

Scope for further investigation

The area is complicated and requires more detailed attention than was possible through the current survey.

- **Revisit.** The site needs to be re-visited and re-interpreted, particularly in view of the succession of use visible at hut group **PRN 329** less than 20m to the NW (hut group enclosure wall overlain by long hut, which is itself overlain by field wall).

PRN 12844

NGR: SH66777065C

Site type: Drystone wall

Description

Relict wall line (running between SH66807036 to the S and SH66727101 to the N) tumbled at S, sparse footings elsewhere. Forms boundary of forestry plantation to the E, and has been damaged by forestry operations. Shown on the first and second edition of the 6" OS map, published 1891 and 1901 (surveyed 1877-1878 and 1899 respectively). Appears to pre-date the geometrical Enclosure period field boundary which runs down from Meuryn Uchaf.

Management recommendations

- **Include in boundary and cultivation feature survey.**

Scope for further investigation

- **Follow up to boundary and cultivation feature survey.**

PRN 12845

NGR: SH66807040

Site type: Hut circle

Description

Round house / hut circle situated on fairly steep ground, terraced out on the W side to produce a level platform. The site is oval, with walls of piled stones, 1m wide and up to 0.5m high. Internal dimensions are roughly 4m N-S by 3m. E-W. Entrance, c. 1m wide, faced with orthostats, lies at the NW. Lies c. 25m NE of enclosed hut group **PRN 329**.

This site is probably feature number 44 in the RCAHMW Inventory (1956, 14), where it is given an incorrect grid reference (SH 66807040, which is in fact the NGR for feature 43 (**PRN 332**)). The discrepancy led to the current feature being recorded as **PRN 332** by the GAT hut circle settlement survey (1994), and the correct feature numbered as **PRN 332** was not visited. The current survey has allowed this confusion to be cleared up, this feature has been given a new PRN (as given here).

References

RCAHMW 1956, 14 (feature number 44).

Management recommendations

- **Monitoring - bracken encroachment.** The site was surrounded by bracken at the time of survey, and should be monitored against encroachment. It may be worth undertaking preventative clearance work.
- **Tidy up – removal of rubbish.** Scraps of fencing wire and other rubbish littered the site at the time of survey, and should be removed.
- **Large scale plan**
- **Candidate for improved presentation.** The site has a recognisable ground plan and lies fairly close to the main N-S trackway through the NNR. This is one of a group (including **PRNs 329, 332 and 334**) which would make an ideal concentration of features for presentation and interpretation work.
- **Annual monitoring.**

Scope for further investigation

- **Candidate for excavation.** This is one of a group (including **PRNs 329, 332, 334 and 12845**) which would make an ideal concentration of features for presentation and interpretation work, possibly including excavation. See comments in report section on scope for presentation and interpretation work (**page XXXX**).

PRN 12846

NGR: SH66767041

Site type: Clearance cairn

Description

Clearance cairn 8m E-W by 4m N-S and c. 0.5m high, of small stone rubble. No obvious structure. Has probably resulted from field clearance to the S and SE. A number of prehistoric / Romano-British settlement sites lie nearby (**PRNs 339, 332, 333 and 12845**) raising the possibility that the feature may be early, although it is not possible to date it on the basis of surface evidence alone.

Management recommendations

- No specific recommendations.

Scope for further investigation

- **Assessment of 'off-site' features – broader research programme.** Further investigation of examples of smaller 'off-site' features such as this, as well as of lynchets and relict boundaries, is necessary to build up a picture of the date and operation of the economy of the valley through time. Work may include excavation and sampling for palaeo-environmental evidence.

PRN 12847

NGR: SH66837069C

Site type: Lynchet

Description

Lynchet / terrace surviving in corner of field, c. 0.5m high, running on NE-SW axis, approx. 20m long. The feature may be a lynchet (build up of soil) left behind after the removal of boundary PRN 12844 at this point. A wall seems to be shown here on the 1st edition 6" OS map of 1891 (surveyed 1877 to 1878).

Management recommendations

- **Include in boundary and cultivation feature survey.**

Scope for further investigation

- **Follow up to boundary and cultivation feature survey.**

PRN 12848

NGR:SH66717075C

Site type: Drystone wall

Description

Drystone wall. Tumbled drystone wall (running between SH66697075 at the W and SH66817077 at the E). Junction with continuation of feature number **PRN 12844** to the E (footings only here - not possible to make out any relationships). 0.5m high, c. 0.7m wide. Random rubble construction with facing stones in places. Shown on 1st edition 6" OS map of 1891 (surveyed 1877 to 1878).

Some of the walls in this area were partially quarried of stone by NNR staff during the 1990s, although it is not known whether this boundary was amongst those affected. The stone was used in construction of the clawdd / wall to the W side of the southernmost part of the main trackway to the falls (pers. comm. Duncan Brown).

Management recommendations

- **Include in boundary and cultivation feature survey.**

Scope for further investigation

- **Follow up to boundary and cultivation feature survey.** Record to be made of boundaries affected by quarrying of stone for trackway work in the 1990s so that recent activity is not confused with past boundary removal work.

PRN 12849

NGR: SH66757071C

Site type:

Terrace / wall footings

Description

Length of lynchet / terrace or wall footings running between SH66767067 at the S and SH66757074 at the N - possible continuation of track from long hut group **PRN 369** to the S, c. 5m wide and total length of c. 65m. The feature is slightly ambiguous and may be natural in origin. However, support for the former interpretation is given by Butler, who, possibly observing the feature at a time when there was less vegetation growth in the area, describes the track as 'crossing a wet flush as a revetted terrace' (1962, 26). To its N end the terrace is lost within a modern (fenced) plantation. It may continue on the far side of the plantation as **PRN 12851**.

The 1st edition 6" OS map of 1891 (surveyed 1877 to 1878) shows a wall on this alignment. No clear trace of this wall was made during the current survey. The feature did not appear to be the remains of wall footings alone, but it may be that the line of the trackway from the long hut group was re-used by a later field boundary. The 1891 OS map shows the boundary turning W at its northern end, then down towards the main track to the falls. No traces of these portions were seen on the ground during the current survey.

Management recommendations

- **Include in boundary and cultivation feature survey.**

Scope for further investigation

- **Follow up to boundary and cultivation feature survey.**

PRN 12850

NGR: SH66747081C

Site type: Banks

Description

Earth bank / lynchet with occasional stones throughout its length, and fall of c. 0.4m to its N side. There are traces of low banks to either side and of stone clearance beside nearby tree. Butler (1962, 34) refers to ploughing having taken place on these slopes during the 1939-1945 war. The banks do not seem to have been produced by this period of activity, and are more likely to be the traces of earlier episodes of cultivation which have been levelled out by the wartime ploughing. Their date is unknown. The RCAHMW refer to terraced fields (which are no longer evident on the ground) associated with the round house **PRN 329**. Comparisons with these features would suggest a possible late prehistoric or Romano-British date. Other cultivation features tentatively dated to this period are present on the W slopes of the valley (Cae'r Mynydd) and on Ffridd Ddu above Aber village. However, they may equally be medieval in date. Butler (1962) envisages cultivation of various kinds taking place on these slopes during this period, and banks, ridge and furrow and lynchets assumed to be medieval are also present on Cae'r Mynydd and Ffridd Ddu.

Management recommendations

- **Confirm precise NGR using GPS.** Take two end points and central reading for each of the features so that they can be more accurately located.
- **Include in boundary and cultivation feature survey.**

Scope for further investigation

- **Follow up to boundary and cultivation feature survey.**
- **Assessment of 'off-site' features – broader research programme.** Excavation of narrow trenches through the features to produce sections and to assess potential for palaeo-environmental sampling.

PRN 12851

NGR: SH66727078

Site type: Revetted terrace

Description

Length of rough reveting, approx. 50m in length, with a slight terrace behind. Runs approx. SE-NW between SH66747077 and SH66707079. Possibly the continuation of **PRN 12849**. No walling is shown at this location on the on the 1st edition 6" OS map of 1891 (surveyed 1877 to 1878).

Management recommendations

- **Include in boundary and cultivation feature survey.**

Scope for further investigation

- **Follow up to boundary and cultivation feature survey.**

PRN 12852

NGR: SH66707077

Site type: Wall footings, possible building

Description

Corner of rubble and earth footings, 7m SW-NE by 3.5m NW-SE. The feature may be the corner of the former enclosure or rectangular structure such as a long hut. The walls are up to 0.7m wide. Little remains of the W side where the feature has been bisected by a spur loop of the main trackway to the falls.

Management recommendations

No specific recommendations.

Scope for further investigation

No recommendations.

PRN 12853

NGR:SH66727088C

Site type: Wall footings

Description

Remains of wall line consisting of large boulder footings, running between SH66707087 and SH66767089. The boundary is not depicted (pre-dates) on the 1st edition 6" OS map of 1891 (surveyed 1877 to 1878). The date of the feature is unknown, but could be either medieval or late prehistoric / Romano-British (see **PRN 12850**).

Management recommendations

- **Include in boundary and cultivation feature survey.**

Scope for further investigation

- **Follow up to boundary and cultivation feature survey.**
- **Assessment of 'off-site' features – broader research programme.** Excavation of small trenches to produce sections and to assess potential for palaeo-environmental sampling.

PRN 12854

NGR: SH66717091C

Site type: Banks

Description

Pair of low banks, probable cultivation features, c. 0.3m high by 3m wide, and located approximately 5m apart. Difficult to pick out within bracken growth at time of survey. Nothing is shown here on the 1st edition 6" OS map of 1891 (surveyed 1877 to 1878). Butler (1962, 34) refers to ploughing having taken place on these slopes during the 1939-1945 war, which may have damaged the feature. The date of the feature is unknown, but could be medieval or late prehistoric / Romano-British (see **PRN 12850**).

Management recommendations

- **Include in boundary and cultivation feature survey.**

Scope for further investigation

- **Follow up to boundary and cultivation feature survey.**
- **Assessment of 'off-site' features – broader research programme.** Excavation of small trenches to produce sections and to assess potential for palaeo-environmental sampling.

PRN 12855

NGR: SH66737098

Site type: Sheepfold

Description

Sub-rectangular drystone wall fold, 7m E-W by 9m N-S and up to c. 1m high. Field walls lead away from the fold to the E and W. The feature is not shown on the 1st edition 6" OS map of 1891 (surveyed 1877 to 1878) although similar folds are depicted elsewhere in the valley. However, it does appear on the 2nd edition map of 1901 (surveyed 1891), implying that (unless initially missed out by the OS surveyors) it was constructed between the late 1870s and early 1890s.

Management recommendations

No specific recommendations.

Scope for further investigation

No recommendations.

PRN 12856

NGR: SH66657108C

Site type: Wall footings

Description

Approx. 250m length of wall footings running between wall **PRN 12877** (SH66697098) and the SE corner of the enclosure boundary around Nant Cottage **PRN 12875** (SH66597119). The wall is depicted on the 1st edition 6" OS map of 1891 (surveyed 1877 to 1878), which also shows **PRN 12879** to be part of the same boundary layout.

Some of the walls in this area were partially quarried of stone by NNR staff during the 1990s, although it is not known whether this boundary was amongst those affected. The stone was used in construction of the clawdd / wall to the W side of the southernmost part of the main trackway to the falls (pers. comm. Duncan Brown).

Management recommendations

- **Include in boundary and cultivation feature survey.**

Scope for further investigation

- **Follow up to boundary and cultivation feature survey.** Record to be made of boundaries affected by quarrying of stone for trackway work in the 1990s so that recent activity is not confused with past boundary removal work.

PRN 12857

NGR: SH66587118C

Site type: Hedgerow

Description

Grown-out hedge at back of former garden area of Nant Cottage. The hedge is not shown on the 1st or 2nd edition 6" OS maps (1891 surveyed 1877 to 1878 and 1901 surveyed 1899 respectively). At the time of these maps, the boundaries around the smallholding were such that they excluded the outbuilding to the SW of the cottage. The hedgerow is C20th in date and may relate to the period of extension of the cottage enclosure to include the outbuilding (as per the present arrangement).

Management recommendations

No specific recommendations.

Scope for further investigation

No recommendations.

PRN 12858

NGR: SH66577126

Site type: C20th sheep dip

Description

Modern concrete, slate and brick construction sheep-dip.

Management recommendations

No specific recommendations.

Scope for further investigation

No recommendations.

Tumbled wall on E bank of Afon Rhacadr Fawr approx. 100m long. Date unknown, but the feature is not shown on the 1st edition 6" OS map of 1891 (surveyed 1877 to 1878). It is possibly part of a formerly continuous boundary around an area of wet coppice (Wern Gôch), as discussed in relation to **PRN 12870**. However, there area a number of wall lengths alongside the rivers in the valley, and it may be that some of them were constructed to prevent erosion of the river bank (as per **PRN 12866**).

Management recommendations

- Include in boundary and cultivation feature survey.

Scope for further investigation

- Follow up to boundary and cultivation feature survey.

PRN 12862

NGR: SH66687040C

Site type: Drystone wall

Description

Approx. 90m length of low tumbled walling (maximum 0.4m to 0.5m high) running along the E side of the Afon Rhacadr Fawr before turning E as patchy footings running to and crossing the N side of **PRN 333**. Beyond this the boundary probably originally continued as **PRN 12870**. The section beside the river may have been constructed to prevent erosion of the river bank. The antiquity of feature unknown. The 1st edition 6" OS map of 1891 (surveyed 1877 to 1878) is ambiguous. **PRN 12870** is shown in part as a solid line, and dotted lines elsewhere along its length may indicate tumbled sections of walling. Dotted lines are also shown in the position of **PRN 12862**, but this area is also the point where ground conditions change (wetter to the N), and elsewhere, it is obvious that the dotted line convention is used to depict vegetation changes. The wall post-dates the hut circle **PRN 333**, although it is possible that it may be reusing the line of an earlier boundary contemporary with the hut.

Management recommendations

- Include in boundary and cultivation feature survey.

Scope for further investigation

- Follow up to boundary and cultivation feature survey.

PRN 12863

NGR: SH66707043C

Site type: Drystone wall

Description

Relict field wall, approx. 40m long, now heavily moss covered. About 0.8m wide with spread of tumble to either side. Runs approximately NE-SW (SH66727044 to SH66687042), terminating at drop above river to the SW.

Management recommendations

- Include in boundary and cultivation feature survey.

Scope for further investigation

- Follow up to boundary and cultivation feature survey.

PRN 12865

NGR: SH66677046C

Site type: Wall footings

Description

Possible relict wall footings located to the W of hut circle **PRN 331**, running in an arc between SH66677044 at the SE to SH66657048 at the NW. Approx. 40m long. Date unknown, but the feature is not shown on the 1st edition 6" OS map of 1891 (surveyed 1877 to 1878).

Management recommendations

- Include in boundary and cultivation feature survey.

Scope for further investigation

- Follow up to boundary and cultivation feature survey.

PRN 12866

NGR: SH66587051C

Site type: Drystone wall

Description

Tumbled wall (0.5m high) on E bank of Afon Rhacadr Fawr. Approx. 90m long, running in an arc between SH66627049 at the SE to SH66557055 at the NW. Marks out a small plateau to its E side at a bend between places where the steep E-W scarp slope runs down to the river (plateau is approx. 40m N-S and 20m from the bottom of the scarp to the river bank). A small stream runs onto the plateau at its S end. The function of the wall is not clear, but as there is evidence of lyncheting (soil build up) behind it, it is possible that the wall was constructed in a deliberate attempt to trap sediment and moisture from the river to produce a small cultivation plot. Date unknown, but the feature is not shown on the 1st edition 6" OS map of 1891 (surveyed 1877 to 1878).

Management recommendations

- Include in boundary and cultivation feature survey.

Scope for further investigation

- Follow up to boundary and cultivation feature survey.

PRN 12867

NGR: SH66617052C

Site type: Wall footings and footings of possible structure

Description

Relict wall footings, and possible building remains, on small knoll. The area is heavily bracken infested, the wall remains are difficult to make out, and there is a possibility that further features are located here. The footings run (from about SH66577052) along a hill spur leading up from the steep scarp above the confluence of Afon Rhacadr Bach and Afon Rhacadr Fawr, before contouring around the W, S and E sides of the knoll. The remains are very patchy, are less than 0.3m high and 0.5m wide, and are heavily moss covered. The footings fade to the N side of the knoll near a small corner of masonry. The corner (at approximately SH66617054) is 6m SW-NE by 4.5m SE-NW and terminates at a steep scarp edge to at the NW end of the shorter side. The corner has the appearance of an other wise destroyed and removed building, possibly a long hut, although there is no other evidence here to confirm this interpretation. The evidence of the 1st edition 6" OS map of 1891 (surveyed 1877 to 1878) is ambiguous. A dotted line is shown around the wet ground to the E, but is unclear whether this represents a disused boundary or a change in vegetation type. The latter seems most likely. However, at the point where the corner of masonry was noted during the current survey, the line is solid rather than dotted, possibly suggesting that a wall was present here in the late 1800s.

Management recommendations

- Include in boundary and cultivation feature survey.

Scope for further investigation

- Follow up to boundary and cultivation feature survey.

PRN 12868

NGR: SH66627050C

Site type: Former coppice

Description

A small area of over-mature ?hazel coppice.

Management recommendations

No specific recommendations.

Scope for further investigation

No recommendations.

PRN 12869

NGR: SH66587084

Site type: Former coppice

Description

Steep water-logged ground, known as Wern Gôch, running from beside the main track to the falls, down to river to W. There are a number of natural terraces and springs throughout the area. Some oak present, but mostly over-mature alder coppice with very heavy bramble cover at ground level. No earthworks, walling, artificial terraces etc noted in the area, but as tree and scrub growth is dense throughout, the area is very difficult to survey and features may be present but not observed. The whole area may formerly have been occupied with coppice woodland, possibly bounded by a wall now surviving as footings and tumbled sections only (**PRN 12870**).

Management recommendations

- Include in boundary and cultivation feature survey.

Scope for further investigation

No recommendations.

PRN 12870

NGR: SH66467100C

Site type: Wall footings

Description

Lengths of relict walling along a boundary line lying to W of main N-S path through the valley and turning W at its N end around the N part of Wern Gôch. Patches of lyncheting and of double orthostatic construction (including some large stones up to 0.7m high) are present throughout, along the length of the boundary. Walling varies between 0.7m and 0.9m high. The arrangement of wall remains at SH66677074 appears to show that there may originally have been a junction here with wall **PRN 12848**, which is bisected by, but appears originally to have continued across the line of the main footpath. This layout is confirmed by the 1st edition 6" OS map of 1891 (surveyed 1877 to 1878).

To the N of its junction with **PRN 12848**, **PRN 12870** continues as relict footings within the E edge of scrubby woodland (**PRN 12869**, Wern Gôch) before curving round with the edge of the woodland to terminate by Afon

Rhaeadr Fawr to the NW (at SH66467100). Much of **PRNs 12870**, particularly the northern half, may in fact be defining the original extent of this wet area of former coppice, and may therefore have been maintained as a coppice coupe boundary.

To the S **PRN 12870** may originally have joined **PRN 12862** and continued towards the Afon Rhaeadr Fawr to the W. No clear evidence of this remains on the surface and the evidence of the 1st edition OS map is ambiguous (see **PRN 12862**).

Management recommendations

- **Include in boundary and cultivation feature survey.**

Scope for further investigation

- **Follow up to boundary and cultivation feature survey.**

PRN 12871

NGR: SH66447115C

Site type: Revetted bank

Description

Revetted bank (walling on W side), 0.5m high, running along scarp slope down to river Afon Rhaeadr Fawr. The bank joins **PRN 12870** at its S end, which curves round to the S at this point, possibly defining the W side of an area of former coppice **PRN 12869**.

Management recommendations

- **Include in boundary and cultivation feature survey.**

Scope for further investigation

- **Follow up to boundary and cultivation feature survey.**

PRN 12872

NGR: SH66447109C

Site type: Terraces

Description

Series of three possible terraces in very steep gully sloping E-W down to river Afon Rhaeadr Fawr. The eastern most terrace is 2m wide and about 10m N-S, the central one 3m wide and 12m N-S, and the western most 3m wide and 15m N-S. The features may be natural and may have arisen from soil slippage. However, the presence of an isolated, short length of walling / revetment, up to 1m high, running E-W at the N end of the central and westernmost terraces confirms human activity in the gully. The antiquity of the possible features is unknown, although prehistoric / romano-british settlement sites are located in the vicinity, particularly **PRN 339** 50m to the NE.

Management recommendations

- **Include in boundary and cultivation feature survey.**

Scope for further investigation

- **Assessment of 'off-site' features – broader research programme.** Knowledge of the date and function of the terraces would contribute to our understanding of changing patterns of landuse in the valley through time. There may be some potential for recovery of palaeo-environmental samples. Analysis of soil micromorphology may also help in the interpretation of the features.
- **Follow up to boundary and cultivation feature survey.**

PRN 12873

NGR: SH66537118C

Site type: Wall footings

Description

Short length of relict wall which survives within an area of scrubby trees on boggy ground to the SW of Nant Cottage. The wall disappears to the SW of the scrub patch, but occasional boulders and stones may be the remnants of the its continuation towards the site of round house **PRN 339**, with which it may be associated.

Management recommendations

- Include in boundary and cultivation feature survey.

Scope for further investigation

- See recommendations for **PRN 339**.
- Follow up to boundary and cultivation feature survey.

PRN 12874

NGR: SH66617117C

Site type: Terraced trackway

Description

Terraced trackway, 2m wide, with tumbled revetment wall to the W, and 1m high bank to E. A wall is shown at this location on the 1st edition 6" OS map of 1891 (surveyed 1877 to 1878), with a trackway to the E.

Management recommendations

Scope for further investigation

PRN 12875

NGR: SH66587121

Site type: Late C18th/ early C19th farmstead (Nant Cottage)

Description

Nant Cottage, outbuilding and surrounding wall. The placename element 'nant' has long been associated with this part of the Aber valley running up towards the falls. It appears in the vaccary name 'Nanteracadrat' in the mid C14th Record of Caernarfon (Record Commission 1838, 138-140) and in there is a reference in a document of 1547 relating to Aber footnote 19 illegal occupation of the *ffridd* Nanterhiet (Records of Court Augmentations quoted in Butler 1962, 32). A 1716 Baron Hill rent roll and parish documents of the mid C18th mention Nant valley (quoted in Butler 1962, 32-33). Parish registers show that farmers and labourers were living at 'Nant y Rhacadr' between 1799 and 1852. These are the first references to a recognisable dwelling, and probably relate to the present Nant Cottage. The location of the medieval vaccary was not established by the RCAHMW excavations of 1961 but left open the possibility that the long hut group (**PRN 369**) may have been the site referred to as 'Nanteracadrat'. As Butler writes, 'the position of the hut group is, however, one likely to have been chosen for a *hafod* or summer cattle farm'. The C16th and mid C18th references are to area of land rather than to specific dwellings / farms. Taken together there is no specific evidence for a smallholding at the site of the current Nant Cottage before that of the late parish records from the 1799 onwards, and the farmstead is assumed to be late C18th / early C19th in date. The excavations at **PRN 369** demonstrated use of the site into the C18th with more *ad hoc* use extending into the C19th. The evidence suggests that 'Nant' was a seasonal farmstead or *hafod* in its earlier phases and was located towards the head of the valley (with good access to the mountain pasture above the valley). A more permanent farmstead was not established until the late C18th / C19th when a location further down the valley, the present Nant Cottage was chosen. The Nant Cottage farmstead is first shown on the OS 2" engravings of c.1820 and is depicted on a water colour painting dated to about 1840 (*ibid.*).

Nant cottage was sold by the Penrhyn Estate in 1925, at which time it was described in the sale document as comprising a parlour, kitchen, back kitchen and two bedrooms with an adjacent farm building including a shippon for four cows as well as a stable.

The scenic beauty of the valley and its waterfall has meant that Aber has been visited by tourists since the late eighteenth century. It is unknown whether Nant had an early role in catering for tourists although it is known that it did so in the early C20th. The small holding was bought by its tenant, Richard Jones in 1925. The 19XX NNR management plan states that Mrs Jones, his wife, ran a successful tea room at the cottage:

'A total of 80 people could be accommodated in the tea room (which was sited at the front of the barn) and at least a further 20 outside at tables set out under a plum orchard. A limited menu of home-made and home-produced food was offered... The tea room also provided employment for 6 local girls'.

The outbuilding currently houses a permanent display about the NNR, and the cottage itself is used as a materials and tools store and as a shelter staff.

Management recommendations

- Any change of use or alterations to the cottage and outbuildings should respect its traditional character and scale of use.

Scope for further investigation

- **Further desk-top research.** Further research should aim to establish the history of the farmstead more precisely, particularly whether it played a role in catering for tourist prior to the known C20th tea room. Photographs, prints, travellers' accounts and oral history may help in this respect. Further information on the C20th farming regime at Nant is contained in the old NNR management plan.
- **Photographic record.** A small photographic survey of the cottage and outbuilding should be carried out to provide an archive record.

PRN 12876

NGR: SH66087016

Site type: **Modern clearance cairn**

Description

Clearance cairn. Field stone clearance pile probably of recent origin, linear in form on N-S axis, 7m by 10m and 1m high. As per similar feature, **PRN 12785**, located 20m to the W, it is situated on the line of a removed wall, from which the stone may be derived.

Management recommendations

- **Include in boundary and cultivation feature survey.**

Scope for further investigation

- **Further desk-top investigation.** Establish extent of C20th college farm improvement works to help eliminate later features from evidence for earlier patterns of landuse.

PRN 12877

NGR: SH66687098C

Site type: **Drystone wall**

Description

Wall running W from sheepfolds (**PRN 12855**). Shown on 1st edition 6" OS map of 1891 (surveyed 1877 to 1878). Appears to be contemporary with / part of the same boundary layout as **PRN 12870**.

Some of the walls in this area were partially quarried of stone by NNR staff during the 1990s, although it is not known whether this boundary was amongst those affected. The stone was used in construction of the clawdd / wall to the W side of the southernmost part of the main trackway to the falls (pers. comm. Duncan Brown).

Management recommendations

- Include in boundary and cultivation feature survey.

Scope for further investigation

- **Revisit.** Only a brief note was made during the survey as the feature was recorded at the end of the project time available for fieldwork. A better description is required including dimensions, condition information and photograph.
- **Follow up to boundary and cultivation feature survey.** Record to be made of boundaries affected by quarrying of stone for trackway work in the 1990s so that recent activity is not confused with past boundary removal work.

PRN 12878

NGR: SH66637104C

Site type: Wall footings

Description

Wall footings, surviving to less than 0.5m high, running c. SW from near **PRN 337**. The wall is not shown on the 1st edition 6" OS map of 1891 (surveyed 1877 to 1878) although another relict wall line, **PRN 12878**, which runs parallel to it, 40m to the N is shown on the map. Both walls are probably medieval in origin, continuing in use through to the post-medieval period. The RCAHMW recorded **PRN 12878** as lying against, i.e. later than, the S side of hut **PRN 337** (RCAHMW 1956, 14). The possibility that the relict boundaries may relate to the traces of terraced fields (assumed to be prehistoric or Romano-British in date) noted by the RCAHMW in 1948 (but apparently no longer visible on the surface) is discussed under **PRN 337**.

Some of the walls in this area were partially quarried of stone by NNR staff during the 1990s, although it is not known whether this boundary was amongst those affected. The stone was used in construction of the clawdd / wall to the W side of the southernmost part of the main trackway to the falls (pers. comm. Duncan Brown).

Management recommendations

- Include in boundary and cultivation feature survey.

Scope for further investigation

- **Revisit.** Only a brief note was made during the survey as the feature was recorded at the end of the project time available for fieldwork. A better description is required including dimensions, condition information and photograph.
- **Follow up to boundary and cultivation feature survey.** Record to be made of boundaries affected by quarrying of stone for trackway work in the 1990s so that recent activity is not confused with past boundary removal work.
- **Assessment of 'off-site' features – broader research programme.** See **PRN 337**.

PRN 12879

NGR: SH66617108C

Site type: Wall footings

Description

Wall footings running ENE to WSW. The wall is shown on the 1st edition 6" OS map of 1891 (surveyed 1877 to 1878) where it can be seen to form part of the same boundary layout as the wall footings to the W of the trackway to the falls (**PRN 12820**). Another relict wall line, **PRN 12878**, which is not depicted on the 1891 map lies about 40m to the S. Both walls are probably medieval in origin, continuing in use through to the post-medieval period. The RCAHMW recorded **PRN 12878** as lying against, i.e. later than, the S side of hut **PRN 337** (RCAHMW 1956, 14). The possibility that the relict boundaries may relate to the traces of terraced fields (assumed to be prehistoric or Romano-British in date) noted by the RCAHMW in 1948 (but apparently no longer visible on the surface) is discussed under **PRN 337**.

Some of the walls in this area were partially quarried of stone by NNR staff during the 1990s, although it is not known whether this boundary was amongst those affected. The stone was used in construction of the clawdd / wall to the W side of the southernmost part of the main trackway to the falls (pers. comm. Duncan Brown).

Management recommendations

- **Include in boundary and cultivation feature survey.**

Scope for further investigation

- **Revisit.** Only a brief note was made during the survey as the feature was recorded at the end of the project time available for fieldwork. A better description is required including dimensions, condition information and photograph.
- **Follow up to boundary and cultivation feature survey.** Record to be made of boundaries affected by quarrying of stone for trackway work in the 1990s so that recent activity is not confused with past boundary removal work.
- **Assessment of 'off-site' features – broader research programme.** See PRN 337.

PRN 12880

NGR: SH66207240A

Site type: Terrace / long hut platform

Description

The site was not visited as part of the current survey, but is recorded in the National Monuments Record of the RCAHMW (National Primary Record Number (NPRN) **15152**). It is described as a rectangular terrace, roughly 15m x 6m set along the contours of the slope, possibly the site of a dwelling. The terrace was said to have been partially destroyed by quarrying and many good terraces were noted to lie in the vicinity. The existence of the site has not yet been confirmed as the area was not visited as part of the current project. However, the terrain at the grid reference quoted is very steep and craggy and it seems an unlikely location for a feature of this kind. It is suspected that the grid reference is incorrect. A rectangular building is recorded in the Gwynedd SMR (**PRN 9373**) at SH66437225, about 280m to the SE, on the hillside NNE of Bont Newydd. This would seem a more likely location for the site and it may be that the records have become confused.

Management recommendations

- **Area yet to be surveyed.** The site needs to be visited to confirm the RCAHMW description and check that the grid reference given is correct. The possibility that the site is in fact **PRN 9373** should be assessed.

Scope for further investigation

- **Await results of survey visit.**

PRN 20840

NGR: SH66307120

Site type: Trial level, Afon Rhaeadr Fawr

Description

One of two small trial levels (along with **PRN 20842**) on the W side of the Aber valley. Their antiquity is not known. They are shown on the 1st edition 6" OS map of 1891 (surveyed 1877-1878), but not on the Tithe Award map for Aber (1848). It should be borne in mind however that the Tithe map is not very detailed and lack of reference to the trials probably just means that they were not recorded by the surveyors rather than that they post-date the map. The trials are assumed to have been for minerals.

Management recommendations

- **No dumping or removal of material to occur at the site of the working.**

Scope for further investigation

- **Further desk-top investigation.** Further archival research may produce more information.

PRN 20841

NGR: SH65807220

Site type: Slate quarry, Brechiau

Description

A small slate quarry. Hyde Hall mentions the slate quarry as having been discontinued owing to the coarseness of the material (1952 [1809-1811], 91). The hope was to doubtless to find the Cambrian vein exploited at Penrhyn and Dinorwic Quarries. Breichiau is identified on the Tithe Award map for Aber (1848), and is depicted as 'Old Quarry' on the 1st edition OS map (surveyed 1877-1878).

Management recommendations

- No dumping or removal of material to occur at the site of the working.

Scope for further investigation

- **Further desk-top investigation.** Further archival research may produce more information on the date and operation of the quarry.

PRN 20842

NGR: SH66107190

Site type: Trial level, Bont Newydd

Description

One of two small trial levels (along with **PRN 20840**) on the W side of the Aber valley. Their antiquity is not known. They are shown on the 1st edition 6" OS map of 1891 (surveyed 1877-1878), but not on the Tithe Award map for Aber (1848). It should be borne in mind however that the Tithe map is not very detailed and lack of reference to the trials probably just means that they were not recorded by the surveyors rather than that they post-date the map. The trials are assumed to have been for minerals.

Management recommendations

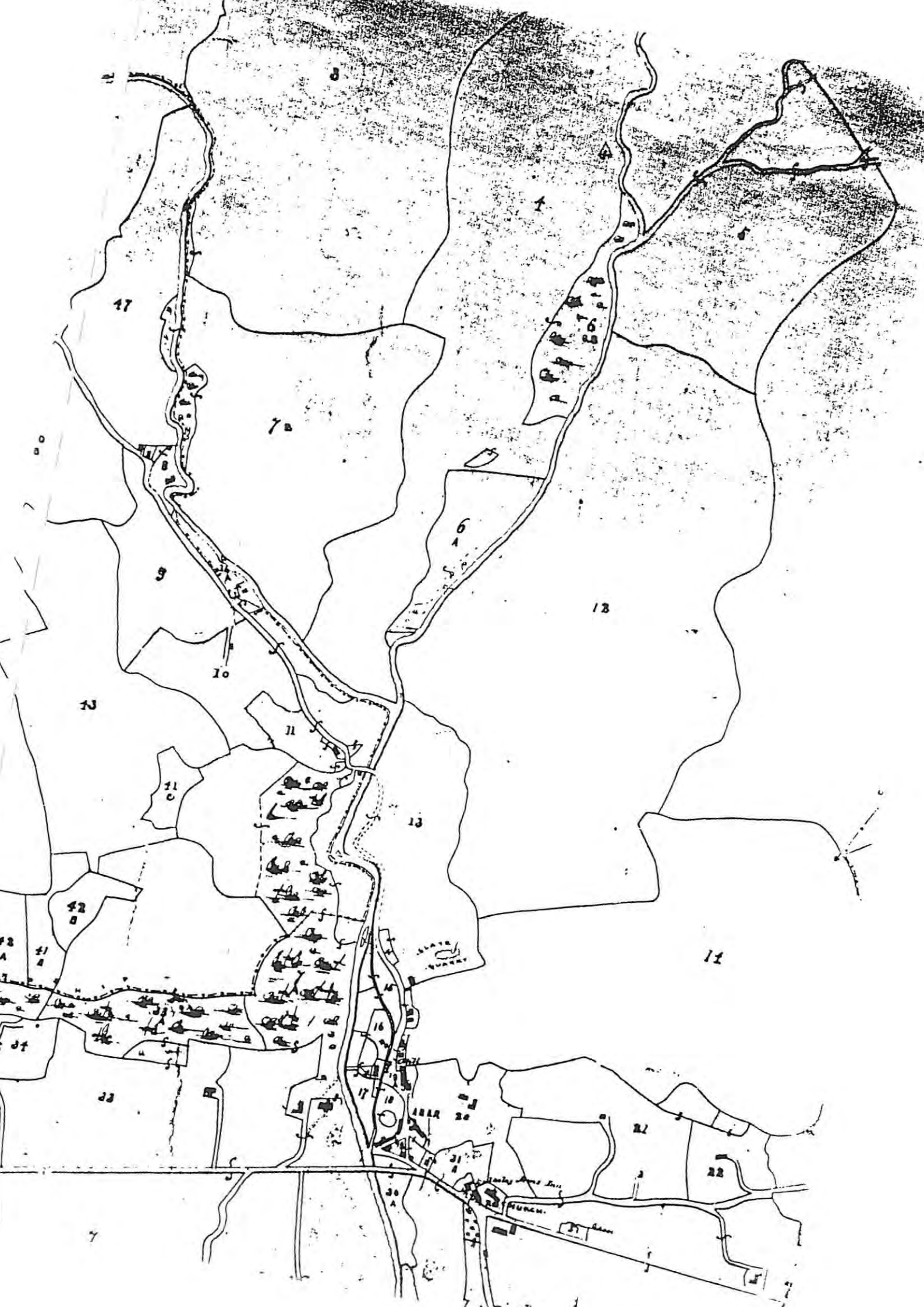
- No dumping or removal of material to occur at the site of the working.

Scope for further investigation

- **Further desk-top investigation.** Further archival research may produce more information.

Appendix I

Extract from tithe award map for Aber – detail of village and Nant Rhaeadr



Appendix II

Extract from 1st edition Ordnance Survey map of 1891 (surveyed 1877-1878)

1877-8

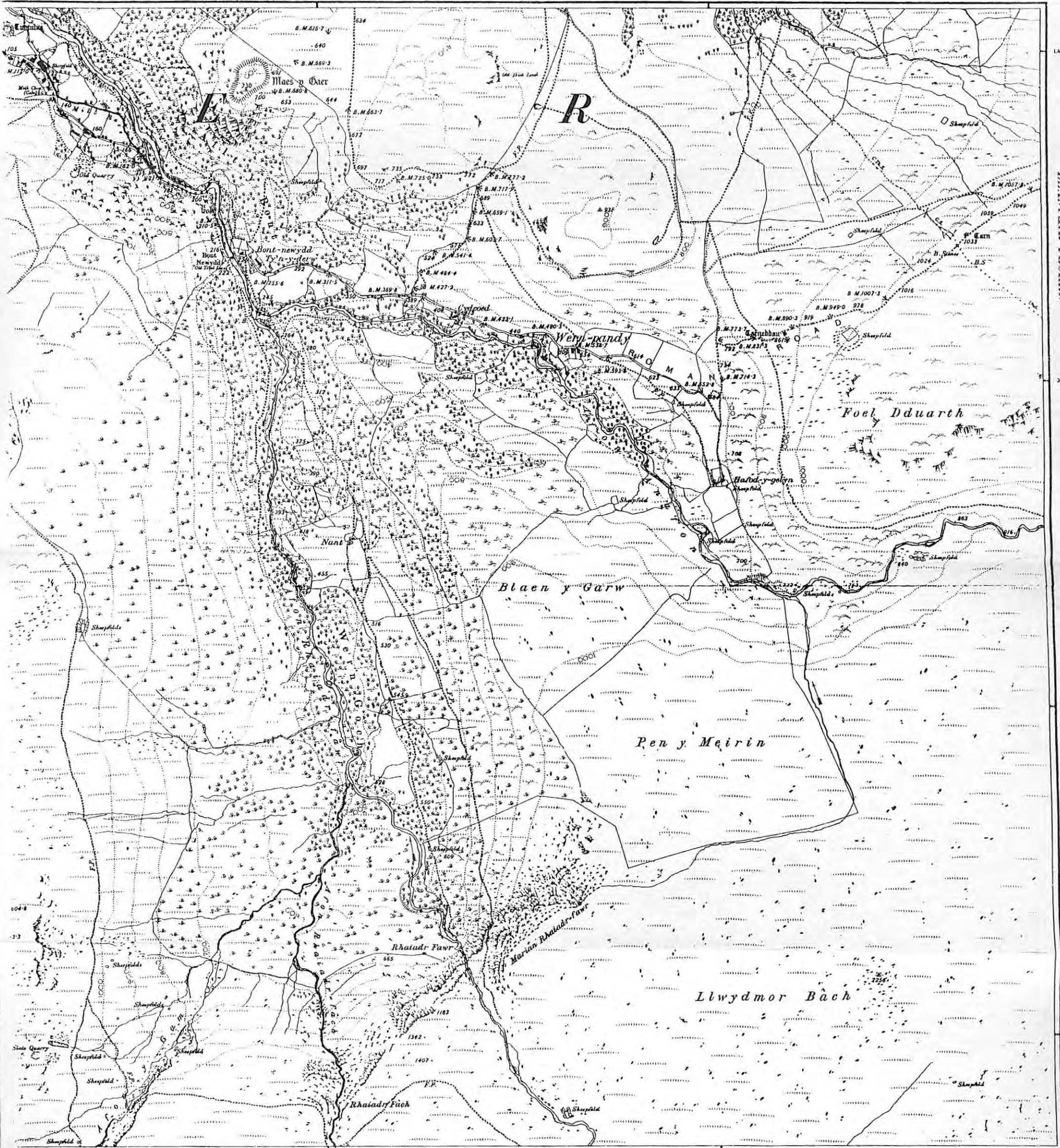
Northern or Arfon Division
VII. N. E.
Coed Tau-yr-allt

Carnarvonshire. Sheet VII. S.E.

LLANFAIR-FECHAN

Lon. 3° 59' W.

4° 0'



XII. N. E.

Cwm yr Afon Goch

Lon. 3° 59' W.

Llwydmor Mawr

6000 5280 Feet
1 Mile

Price 1s.

10 Chains 5
40 Perches 20

Scale — Six Inches to One Statute Mile or 880 Feet to One Inch — 1/10560

60 Chains 320 Perches
1 Mile

incographed from 2500 Plans and Published at the Ordnance Survey Office. Southampton.

1891

at above the Approximate Mean Water at Liverpool, those indicated thus (B.M. 54.7) refer to Marks made on Buildings, Walls, &c.

Sheet VII.

N.W.	N.E.
S.W.	S.E.

Appendix III

Extract from 1st edition Ordnance Survey map of 1891 (surveyed 1877-1878)

SECOND EDITION, 1901.

DANGOR & BEAUMARIS UNION

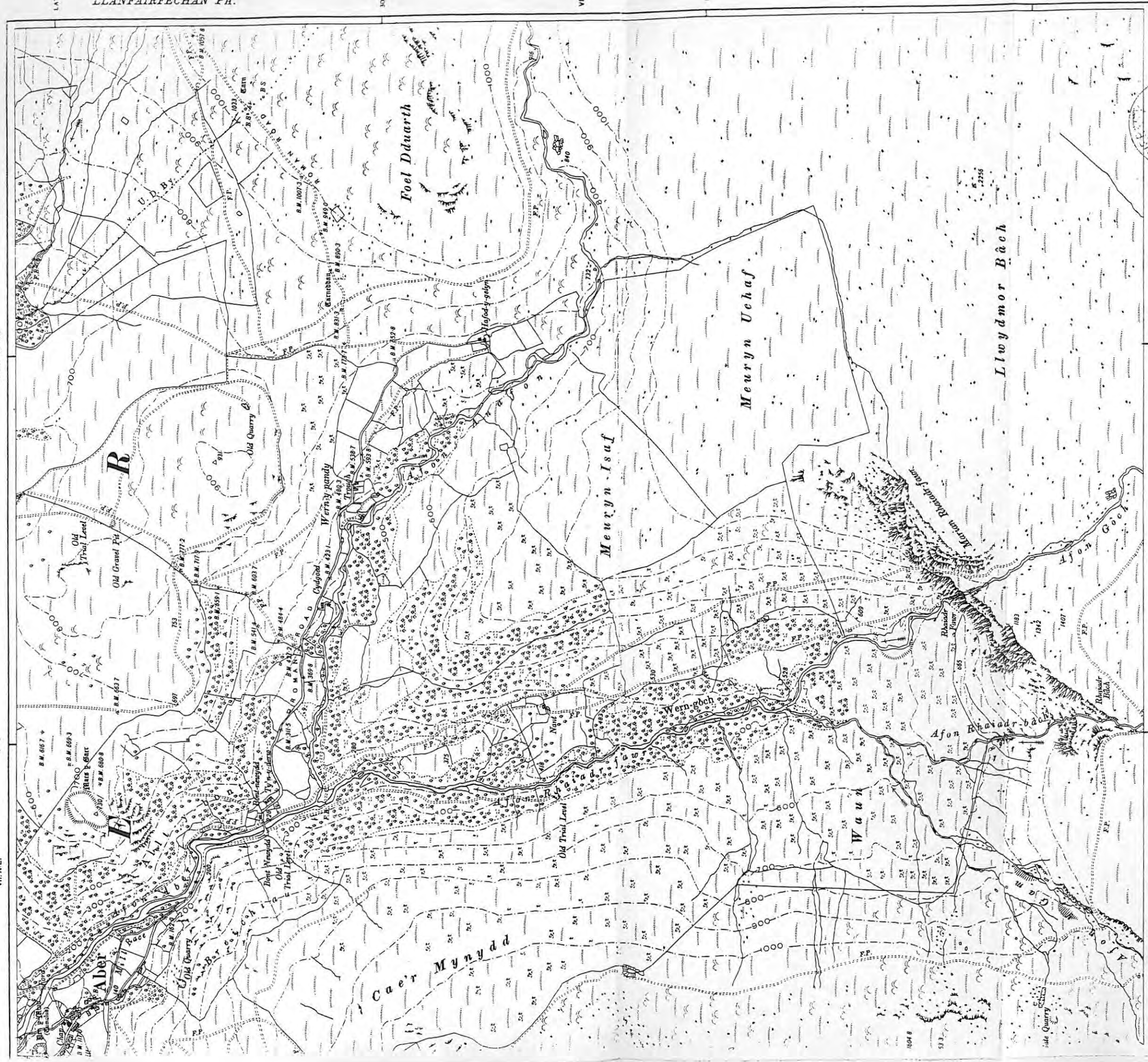
VII. N.E.

OGWEN R. D.

4° 0'

CARNARVONSHIRE. SHEET VII. S.E.
LLANFAIRFECHAN U.D.

LONG 3° 59' W.



XII. N.E.

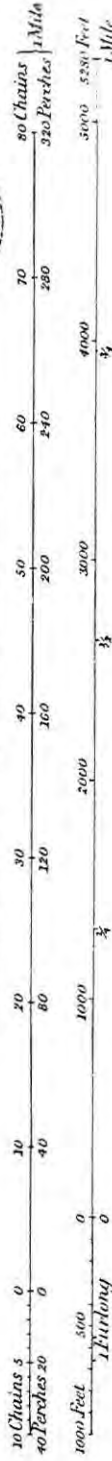
4° 0'

Cum gr Afon-goch

LONG 3° 59' W.

Llywdmor

Scale — Six Inches to One Statute Mile or 880 Feet to One Inch — 10320



Price 1s.

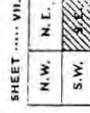
reographed from 2350 Plans and Published at the Ordnance Survey Office, Southampton.

N.B. — The representation on this map of a Road, Track, or Footpath, is no evidence of the existence of a right of way.

Feet above the assumed Mean Level of the Sea at Liverpool, which is 0.50 of a Foot below the general Mean Level of the Sea.

* B.M. 54.71 refer to Bench Marks on Buildings, Walls, &c. those marked thus 1:1 preceded or followed by the height to surface levels.

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Appendix IV

Summary transcriptions of oral history interviews

- 4a John Pilling
- 4b Ken Ponsonby

APPENDIX 4a

G1553/001 Tapiau Llafar/Oral History Tapes

Rhif y tâp: Tape number:	G1553/001
Dyddiad: Date:	21/03/2000
Enw'r siaradwr: Speaker's name:	John Pilling
Cyfeiriad: Address:	Gorwel, Llanfairfechan
Enw'r holwr: Interviewer's name:	D.Rh. Gwyn
Ardal(oedd) y dystiolaeth: Area(s) referred to:	Abergwyngregyn
Prif bwnc/bynciau: Main subject(s):	Agriculture

John Pilling – Gorwel, Llanfairfechan; retired technician, University farm. Summary

Family lived in Llanfairfechan over 100 years – grandparents ran Llanfair Arms. Was a Glynllifon student – worked 3 years in New Zealand, before starting as technician at College Farm. Returned because of family commitments.

Mainly consisting of work with sheep and with postgraduate students. College Farm did a lot of teaching at that time – this died out in the 1980s. Commercial farm, field trials. Extensive upland holdings, some land owned by Forestry. Bottom part leased from Forestry – western part owned by College, eastern part mostly plantation. College farm had grazing rights up to 3,000' from falls to watershed – about four miles.

Remembers communal sheep-gatherings – after lambing, ewes returned to mountain with lambs – left undisturbed until shearing in May-June. Commoners of Aber gathered together – all sheep sorted at College farm. Men taken by tractor and trailer to top of Foel Fras, would then spread out to near the Falls, sheep would be brought to sorting farms at College farms. Began 6 am from College farm, gathering 8 am, be down in good weather early afternoon. Then a couple of hours to sort sheep out.

Gathering done in two days. First day was the bulk of it, second day Llanllechid side, bringing sheep down - sheep to old sorting pens below ffridd wall. Next gathering beginning of September for ewe sales – sold to lowland farms. Last gathering was end of October before the winter and to introduce the rams in early November. Sheep kept for the first year sheep wintered on the lowland, either college ffridd, 800' (between Aber Falls and lowland) or sent away.

Earlier college farm mixed – included a dairy unit. Also herd of welsh mountain ponies, established around beginning of century, about 40 when JP worked there.

Little conflict between farm and forestry. Bottom of valley not planted. June gatherings coincided with tourist season, congestion coming through Aber village.

Penrhyn estate – mountain shepherd saw that commoners grazed only permitted number of sheep – was expected to know all the earmarks. College farm welcomed by farmers – advice service, advanced equipment; when JP started in 1965, sorting pens were very modern – circular dip following Australia-New Zealand patterns, instead of catching sheep individually.

APPENDIX 4b

G1553/001 Tapiau Llafar/Oral History Tapes

Rhif y tâp: Tape number:	G1553/002
Dyddiad: Date:	30/03/2000
Enw'r siaradwr: Speaker's name:	Ken Ponsonby
Cyfeiriad: Address:	Cefn Roger, Llanerchymedd, Ynys Môn
Enw'r holwr: Interviewer's name:	D.Rh. Gwyn
Ardal(oedd) y dystiolaeth: Area(s) referred to:	Abergwyngregyn
Prif bwnc/bynciau: Main subject(s):	Amaethyddiaeth

Mr Ken Ponsonby: crynodeb

Un o Gumbria oedd ei dad; gafodd swydd yn College Ffarm – rhywun yng Nghumbria yn gofyn i Professor Winter am bailiff – brawd ei dad yn dweud bod na job yn College Ffarm yn 1912. Dechreuodd yng College Ffarm. Priodd adeg rhyfel byd cyntaf – gartref oedd school howse Abar; ganwyd chwaer 1921. Ganwyd ef 1925. Symudodd i dy newydd wedi dwy flynnadd. Aeth i Ysgol Ffreiar. Yn cofio ei dad yn gofyn be mae o isio wneud – ‘Plenty of work on the farm – but I tell you this much, the men come before you.’ Aeth i Gumbria at brawd ei dad – gweithiodd yn fanno. Job cyntaf a gafodd oedd ‘spreading manure’ – dau fis. Oedd yng Nghumbria pedar mlynadd – pum swllt y wnos i ddechra, dod adra unwaith y flwyddyn.

Job fel second cowman, Brooks Rhyll – mi gymris i job – aeth adra i Gollege Ffarm. Bu'n gweithio fel ‘Milk Recorder’ gyda'r Proff, wedyn Head Hearsman – saith mlynedd. Gwneud i ffwrdd a'r hen fuilddings adag yna. 1959, prynodd lle bach yn Sir Fon.

Yn cofio gwaith Head Hearsman – ‘pickup beler’ cyntaf yn North Wales yn Aber – yn ôl o o stesion, ‘bales’ yn dyn ac yn tori. Y lloia, a'r Welsh Blacks. Pan oedd ef yn adal ysgol, fourteen yn gweithio yn College Ffarm, pump ym mhentre – deg o dai yn perthyn i'r Ffarm – tai eraill – gwaith merched – gafodd ‘Loey’ gwobr gan y Cwîn – gwraig yn gwneud gwaith y dairy. Golchi'r boteli a'r mashîns.

Pobol y Coleg – Professor White dechra yr un amser a'i dad, stiwdants yn dwad bore dydd Sadwrn. Professor Roberts – doth yna 1943. Professor Lucas a Phrofessor John Bryn.

Y groes uwchben Aber – ar ochr y ffridd – gobethir rhoi Welsh Blacks ar y ffridd – ‘shelter belt’ i'r gwartheg – pa ffordd mae'r gwynt yn dwad, medru cael sheltar.

Appendix V

CCW HARMS project specification

A proposal for a HISTORIC LANDSCAPE AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT SURVEY (HARMS), ON COEDYDD ABER NNR

1. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

To carry out a HARMS survey of Coedydd Aber NNR which will identify and record features of the cultural heritage of the NNR and relevant adjacent areas, and survey and assess their significance and value a) as historic features in their own right, b) as features within a cultural landscape to be taken into account when planning other management operations. The cultural heritage is defined as that which relates to the site up to declaration of the NNR in 1975. A report including management guidelines for the identified landscapes and individual sites and recommendations for further work will be produced.

The purpose of the survey is:

1. to inform CCW and its various clients and partners on the present ecological, cultural and landscape qualities of the valley and how these came to be, to allow more sensitive site management policies.
2. to provide sound and interesting material for the better interpretation and improved educational use of the site.
3. to identify areas where further investigation is required.
4. to provide a background within which everyday management of the reserves (eg path repair, coppicing etc) can be carried out without risk of inadvertent damage to the historical features and the landscape.
5. To assist with landscape planning.
6. To provide and trial a standard methodology for the evaluation, management and study of the cultural heritage of a protected site.

2. METHODOLOGY

A contractor or contractors will be commissioned to carry out a HARMS survey at Coedydd Aber NNR. The survey will be informed by the existing site management plan. The survey will comprise the following elements:

2.1 Source searches

oral

The long-standing residents of Abergwyngregyn and their relatives, (including those who may no longer be resident) will be interviewed. Lines of enquiry will include i) uses of the valley by villagers, ii) uses of the valley by visitors, iii) undocumented names of fields, features etc., iv) land use practices. The National Museum of Wales' oral sound archive at Sain Ffagan should be investigated for information and any deficiencies in their record of Aber people should be made good as a further project in association with this one.

literary

References to the valley in published works will be collected

archive

All sources containing references to the valley will be collated and relevant sections collected. These should include the following:

- General published works including the Royal Commission Inventory, Medieval Extents, litigation and correspondence etc.
- Regional Sites and Monuments Record

- National Monuments Record
- Cadw records including SAM and Listed Building information
- Relevant archive collections including the County Record Office (tithe maps, Land Tax Assessments, estate surveys, OS maps etc) , the University of Wales archives, the National Library of Wales and possibly the PRO.
- Melville Richards' information base of place names based at the University of Wales, Bangor, should be interrogated for relevant material

Images

All sources of a) oblique photographs, b) aerial photographs, c) paintings and drawings etc. and d) maps will be recorded and described for any content which sheds light on the valley's history.

CCW data

Existing CCW management plans and files

The recorded present day botanical species composition of the high forest areas, shrub layers and field layers on the site will be examined with a view to postulating possible anthropogenic influences (Oliver 1993, Latham 1997)

The recorded present day seed bank flora will be examined with a view to postulating possible anthropogenic influences (Albin 1995)

The recorded lichens and their significance for microclimates of the recent past and as a possible harvestable resource (Sanderson 1998).

2.2 Accurate field survey

cultural evidence

This part of the assessment will involve walking the study area and recording (short description, sketch plan, photograph, map position) all sites encountered. The aims of this stage are:

- to verify the results of the desk based assessment,
- to identify any further historical and archaeological sites which exist as above ground features including field boundaries and clearance cairns, all features to be presented within their temporal context with appropriate chronological maps.
- to identify on the ground, map, interpret and photograph all obvious non-artefactual anthropogenic features (eg evidence of past coppicing and lopping) .
- to itemise and review the possibilities of other less obvious anthropogenic features (eg the age and species structure of woodland stands, the age of coppice stools as revealed by radial migration of root stocks, the age of coppice stems (Aulbroeck 1996), the existence and distribution of "alien" species)
- to record and photograph during the winter in appropriate light, the condition of all features noted .
- to make appropriate recommendations regarding methods for the surveying, measurement, investigation, excavation and recording of features.

Other evidence

An opportunity may exist in a small peat body in the upper section of the valley for palynological study of the peat column, and possibly carbon dating for evidence of past vegetation, crop species and use of

materials as tools. The feasibility of such a study will be assessed and costed.

3. THE REPORT

Following completion of the desk-based assessment and field survey and assessment (2.1 and 2.2) a report will be produced detailing the findings and interpreting the results. All features of interest will be evaluated on a scale as follows: International or National (Wales) importance, Regional importance, Local importance, other criteria of significance, and lastly potential importance of sites/features for which there is insufficient information to classify. The evaluation will be based on standard SMR (Wales) classifications.

Sites and features will also be classified according to their contribution to, and significance for, the landscape as a whole as perceived by the average visitor to the site.

An attempt will be made to paint a pen picture of life in the valley and of how the valley may have looked in three periods of history and prehistory, the choice to depend on the completeness of the information. On the basis of this information, an artist at a later date will be commissioned to depict the valley visually in these periods using the waterfall as a focus.

Full management guidelines will be included in the report which will enable historical and landscape considerations to be taken into account when considering *any* kind of management on the site.

The following format is suggested:

- Introduction
- Summary of aims and project design
- Methods and techniques
- General environmental, archaeological and historical background
- Results of the Archive survey
- Results of the Field Survey
- Interpretation, evaluation, discussion of cultural landscape
- Pen pictures
- Guidelines for the management of the archaeology and other aspects of site.
- Recommendations for further work
- Non technical summary
- Gazetteer of features based SMR core data.

The text will be fully supported by maps, diagrams, photographs and information appendices.

4. STAFF RESOURCES

The work will be undertaken in stages consistent with the availability of resources.

Phase 1

The first phase of the project will involve those elements related to 1) field survey and assessment of cultural landscape, 2) field survey for obvious anthropogenic features and review of other possibilities, 3) study of the document archive, and 4) production of a report on Phase 1, including management guidelines for the identified landscapes and individual sites and an evaluation for the second phase including recommendations for further work. The following are estimated costs:

Phase 2

The following costs are indicative only and will depend on the findings of Phase 1(4) above.

- 1) age of coppice stands, stools and regrowth (PhD study?)
- 2) age of other stands
- 3) oral studies

- 4) pollen analysis
- 5) artists impressions
- 6) other initiatives generated by partners

5. PARTNERS

Interested partners and stakeholders may include agencies such as CADW, SNPA, FE, NT, UWB, Local history societies, and private concerns such as Powergen (cf overhead cables). The local school and the local community should be involved at an appropriate level. Partners should be encouraged to contribute to Phase 2 when this is adequately defined and they will be approached after completion of Phase 1.

6. HEALTH AND SAFETY AND INSURANCE

All work will be planned and implemented according to the recommendations of SCAUM (Standing Conference of Archaeological Unit Managers) Health and Safety Policy as defined **Health and Safety in Field Archaeology** (1979). The contractor will insert the appropriate clauses from its own standards for archaeological survey and assessment. A minimum public indemnity limit of £2,000,000 will be required and a Professional Indemnity Insurance of £250,000. A Site Hazard and Risk Assessment will be provided. The contractor(s) will furnish CCW with their own assessment of risks associated with their specialist activities.

Duncan Brown
Warden
Coedydd Aber
25 October 1999

Appendix VI

Itinerary of National Assembly aerial photographic coverage for NNR area.

CENTRAL REGISTER OF AIR PHOTOGRAPHY FOR WALES



National Assembly for Wales, Room G003, Crown Offices, Cathays Park, Cardiff, CF1 3NQ Tel. 01222 823819 Fax. 01222 823080



Name Mr John Roberts Address Gwynedd Archaeological Trust Graig Beuno,, Ffordd y Garth BANGOR Postcode LL57 2RT Telephone 01248 352535	Location Abergwyngregyn Nat. Nature Res. Date of photos required All prints to view Note: RAF, Meridian and pre-1979 O.S. reprints are available from the National Assembly for Wales. NPH = No Prints Held (refer to address list) CUCAP W6/70 & W6/75	OS Map Sheet No 115 National Grid Ref 265 -268 / 369 - 373 signed <i>Visser M. Davies</i> Your ref.
---	---	--

Date: 03/05/2000

COVER SEARCH

VIEWING BY APPOINTMENT ONLY

Our ref. W-AP-PR 00-135

WO Lib No:	Old Lib No:	Sortie Number:	Date Flown:	Scale:	Air Survey Org:	Photo Type:	Film Loc:	Print Loc:	Prints Available to View:	
4552	4507	106 G LA 281	01/05/1945	Oblique	RAF	B & W	WO G022c 5/3	WO G074 2/0	Yes	
4712	611	CPE UK 1996	13/04/1947	1:9840	RAF	B & W	WO G022c 6/6 x4	WO G074 3/4	Yes	3293 - 97 / 2297 - 2301
4840	984	541 RAF 38	21/05/1948	1:10000	RAF	B & W	WO G022c 3/2 x2	WO G074 4/3	Yes	4036 - 38
4835	945	541 RAF 178	08/10/1948	1:9960	RAF	B & W	WO G022c 3/3	WO G074 4/2	Yes	3195 - 3197
6208	2074	58 RAF 5165	06/06/1962	1:20000	RAF	B & W	WO G022c 4/6 x3		Yes	F22 = 216 - 220 / 226 - 230 F21 = 226 - 230
6530	0	OS 65 168	11/08/1965	1:10000	Ordnance Survey	B & W IR				1 - 3
6921	0	BKS 3918	09/10/1969	Various	BKS		BKS		Yes	635124 - 25 / 16775 - 77
7174	0	OS 71 218	12/05/1971	1:27000	Ordnance Survey	B & W	WO M002 15/5	WO G022b 1/2	Yes	12
7181	0	OS 71 284	04/06/1971	1:27000	Ordnance Survey	B & W	WO M002 15/5	WO G022b 1/2	Yes	158
8162	0	13 RAF 5847	26/08/1981	1:50000	RAF	B & W	WO M002-10/3	WO G074 9/5	Yes	32 - 33
8510	0	1 PRU RAF 0734	24/04/1985	1:25000	RAF	B & W		WO G074 10/1	Yes	195 - 197 / 153 - 155
8606	0	J A Story	01/10/1986	1:10000	JASstory(NRSC)	Colour	NRSC	WO G074 10/2	Yes	5386 = 38 - 39 / 107 - 108
9004	0	OS 90 045	06/04/1990	1:10300	Ordnance Survey	B & W	Ordnance Survey			32 - 34
9501	0	BKS 95/12	01/03/1995	1:20000	BKS	B & W	BKS	WO G074 10/4	Yes	9514 = 147 - 148
9783	0	OS 97 564	25/05/1997	1:9800	Ordnance Survey	B & W	Ordnance Survey			10 - 12
9778	0	OS 97 540	02/05/1997	Various	Ordnance Survey	B & W	Ordnance Survey			89 - 91 / 49 - 51

Appendix VII

Joint Archaeological Research and Consultancy at the University of Sheffield (ARCUS)
and Gwynedd Archaeological Trust (GAT) statement of research intent.

Cultural Landscapes of the Abergwyngregyn Valley

Statement of intent

Project Summary

A project will be established to investigate the past human inhabitation of the Abergwyngregyn valley, a National Nature Reserve in north-west Wales, with particular reference to settlement, land-use and environmental history. This project will be a collaboration between the Gwynedd Archaeological Trust (GAT) and the Archaeological Research and Consultancy at the University of Sheffield (ARCUS). It will combine academic research, practical fieldwork and training, public outreach and will promote understanding and enjoyment of the past and the area's cultural traditions. It will feed in to sustainable landscape management strategies sympathetic to the character of the historic landscape of the area.

The aims of the project will be:

- to gather and interpret information on cultural traditions, settlement and land-use history of the prehistoric period to the present day.
- to understand how this landscape was inhabited in the past, and investigate the changing relationship between people and the environment, through an integrated excavation and environmental sampling programme,
- to advise on landuse practices and management within the National Nature Reserve from the perspective of environmental history,
- to promote the bi-lingual (English and Welsh) dissemination of results throughout the duration of the project, and after project completion, by a variety of media. These will include academic and popular publications, a web-site, CD-ROM, temporary exhibitions and lectures,
- to enhance local knowledge and enjoyment of the past through a variety of education and public outreach activities, including school projects, museum displays, site open days, popular publications and guides to archaeological walks,
- to apply current theoretical and practical archaeological approaches to address research themes arising out of previous surveys in north-west Wales,
- to provide high quality training at Masters level, for essential elements of archaeological practice, for all aspects of the project,
- to establish a successful collaborative relationship between the archaeologists and nature conservationists involved in the management of a National Nature Reserve, and to provide a bench mark for future inputs by archaeologists and landscape historians into National Nature Reserves elsewhere.

The Aber Valley

The Aber Valley is a steep-sided valley between the Carneddau mountains of Snowdonia and the coastal plain of north-west Wales. The area was designated as a NNR because of its importance as an area of outstanding ecological value. The valley lies within the Arllechwedd landscape area, which is included in the Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments / ICOMOS Register of Landscapes of Outstanding Historical Interest. It is within the Snowdonia National Park. The valley and its environs include many important archaeological sites, such as the Neolithic stone axe source at Graiglwyd, Penmaenmawr, the Bronze Age mines at the Great Orme, Llandudno, and the henge and cursus complex at Llandygai near Bangor. Features relating to settlement and

management plans informed by patterns of past land-use, and promote of the archaeology and environmental history of the valley to the public.

The Abergwyngregyn project would draw on the local knowledge and experience of Gwynedd Archaeological Trust and on the academic resources of the Department of Archaeology and Prehistory, University of Sheffield, a NERC five star rated research department. Amongst other subjects, the University of Sheffield department specialises in environmental archaeology. The main participants in the project will comprise staff and students of the University of Sheffield Archaeology Department, staff from Gwynedd Archaeological Trust, volunteers (derived from members of the local community, local archaeological and historical societies and the Friends of GAT independent archaeology group) and local school groups.

Annual fieldwork will comprise an Easter survey and a summer excavation. Two types of survey will be carried out; rapid landscape survey will enable large areas of land to be surveyed for archaeological features relatively quickly, and more detailed survey of selected areas will be carried out using a total station (EDM). The detailed survey will enable areas of complex remains to be mapped, and stratigraphic relationships to be made clear.

A recent research framework document produced by GAT on archaeology in north west Wales has identified the lack of modern excavation as being the single most important constraint on understanding of the archaeology of Gwynedd. Virtually no category of site has been excavated in sufficient numbers or detail to allow more than very broad generalisations about monument type or chronology. As part of the project a month of excavation will take place each summer throughout the project. It is intended to carry out several open area excavations, and a series of smaller trenches and test-pits. The excavations will be placed according to the results of the surveys and documentary studies, and will address specific questions and research goals arising from previous regional and site-specific studies.

Results of the project will be presented in different ways. The results of each year's work will be prepared as an interim report. During the summer season of fieldwork, public open days to the excavations will be announced through local radio and press. Pre-arranged school visits will also be scheduled. Bi-lingual exhibitions will be displayed during each fieldwork season. Disabled participation in the project work will be encouraged. A surfaced trackway running the length of the reserve provides disabled access along the length of the reserve. This will enable wheel-chair users to take part in archaeological tours of the valley and to observe excavation work in progress.

The project will result in a monograph, and articles in relevant peer-reviewed period-specific and/or regionally-specific journals. Education and outreach will be central strands of the work, and a teaching pack accompanied by a CD-ROM will be produced. The project results will also be published in a popular, accessible format, such as a short guide to the history of the valley. It is also intended to create one or more pamphlets for archaeological walks in the valley, based upon existing footpaths. A web site will be produced, linked to both the GAT and ARCUS websites. This will include details of the project, updates on the fieldwork as it progresses, copies of each interim report and access to raw data.