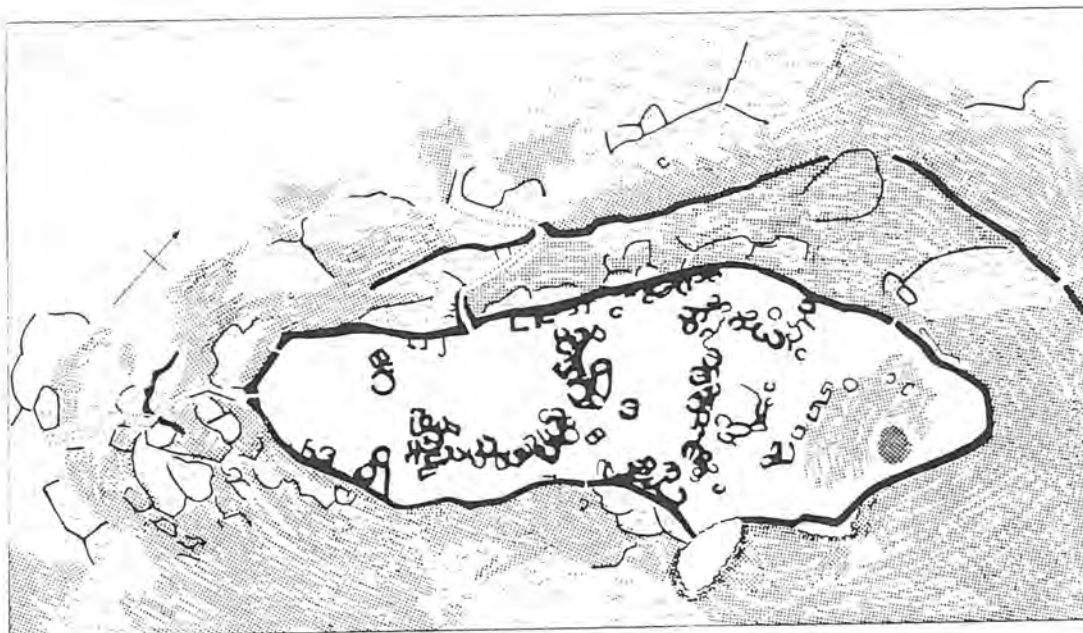


TRE'R CEIRI MONITORING VISIT

NOVEMBER 2001

Report number : 429



Prepared for

GWYNEDD COUNCIL

NOVEMBER 2001

Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Gwynedd
Gwynedd Archaeological Trust

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Introduction

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

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

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

It was therefore agreed that two monitoring visits should be carried out per annum. These visits would allow minor stabilisation work such as the backfilling of metal detector holes and the replacement of occasional stones to be carried out. A contingency budget was also put in place allowing a team of 3 stonemasons to be contracted for three days per annum to allow for the conservation of any more serious problems. Regular monitoring visits have been carried out by G.A.T. since the end of the conservation project although no visits were carried out at in late 2000 and early 2001 due in part to the foot and mouth epidemic. The site was reopened to the public in mid June and the site was visited at the end of the month. The second visit of 2001 was made at the beginning of November. Weather conditions were good with bright sunlight and a little snow remaining in sheltered hollows.

Results of the monitoring visit

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

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

The Ramparts

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

1. The wall core had become loose at this point and two original stones on the inner face were beginning to work loose. The core was repacked thus providing support for the facing stones which did not need to be reset.
2. There is a change in the height of the ground level causing a slight step in the wall top. The stone at the edge of the step had worked loose and the core was beginning to spill forwards. The stone was reset and the core repacked. No *in situ* facing was disturbed.
3. A stone had been pulled out of the wall core causing a patch of instability. The stone was replaced and the core repacked.

The Huts

4. Hut 89. About a dozen stones had been pulled out of the hut floor at the base of the Y-shaped partition and used to build a small length of rough walling on top of the original masonry. No *in situ* masonry had been damaged but this type of hole digging has been observed to have been one of the major causes of irreparable damage to the huts on Tre'r Ceiri as it undermines the basal course of the wall making repair/reconstruction almost impossible. Fortunately the partition had not begun to subside into the hole and it was possible to pack the stones back into the hut floor.

General observations

The cairn was observed to be undisturbed since the last monitoring visit. All three notice boards were still standing and in reasonable condition.

Discussion

There was only slight damage to the rampart representing a significant decrease compared to the last visit. The deliberate damage to hut 89, probably caused by unsupervised children, is of more concern although it is difficult to envisage any measures that could stop this type of thoughtless act. It does however underline the necessity for regular monitoring of the site in order to prevent damaged masonry from deteriorating. It was encouraging to note that there was no evidence to suggest that metal detectors had been used on site over the later part of the summer.

References

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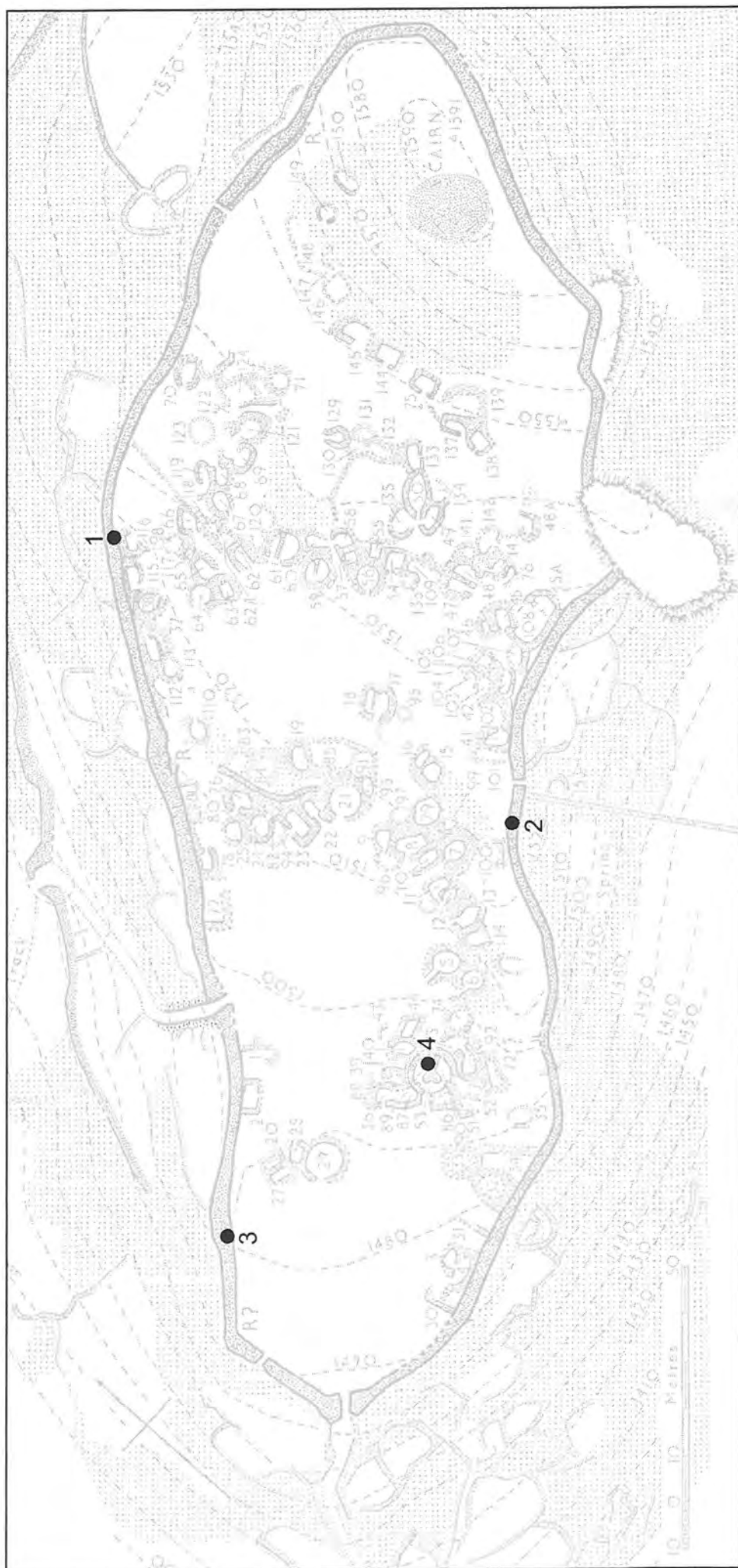


Fig. 1 Tre'r Ceiri (after RCAHMW 1960) showing points of instability identified in the November 2001 monitoring visit

