

OLD CRICKET GROUND
TREARDUR BAY
ANGLESEY

ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

REPORT NO. 502

Prepared for

S V Owen Ltd

October, 2003

Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Gwynedd
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1. INTRODUCTION

A new housing development has been proposed on the site of the Old Cricket Ground, Trearddur Bay. The presence of a high density of archaeological sites in the area of the development site suggests there is potential for the recovery of archaeological information from the study area, and therefore a pre-determination archaeological assessment has been requested to assess the level of impact of the proposals upon any archaeological remains that may exist upon the site.

Gwynedd Archaeological Trust (Contracts Section) has been asked by S V Owen Ltd to undertake an archaeological assessment of the proposed site. A detailed brief has not been prepared for this work, but Gwynedd Archaeological Planning Service have been consulted on the level of work required, and will comment upon this report. The assessment has been conducted to a level specified in *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Desk-based Assessment* (Institute of Field Archaeologists, 1994, rev. 1999).

2. ASSESSMENT BRIEF

The basic requirement is for a desk-top survey and field search in order to assess the impact of the proposals on the archaeological and heritage features within proposed development area and close enough to it to be affected. The importance and condition of known archaeological remains is to be assessed and areas of archaeological potential and new sites identified. Measures to mitigate the effects of the proposals on the archaeological resource are to be suggested.

Gwynedd Archaeological Trust's proposals for fulfilling these requirements are as follows:

- a) to identify and record the cultural heritage of the area to be affected by the proposals;
- b) to evaluate the importance of what was identified (both as a cultural landscape and as the individual items which make up that landscape); and
- c) to recommend ways in which damage to the cultural heritage can be avoided or minimised.

It is possible that certain features will be not be capable of being assessed by a desktop and field visit, and that subsequent field evaluation may be necessary in the form of trial excavation or geophysical survey. This report will contain recommendations for any field evaluation required.

3. METHODS AND TECHNIQUES

3.1 Desk-top Study

Consultation of maps, computer records, written records and reference works, which make up the Sites and Monuments Record, was undertaken at Gwynedd Archaeological Trust. Records (including early Ordnance Survey maps, tithe maps and schedules, estate maps and papers and reference works - see bibliography) were also consulted in the library and the archives of the University College of North Wales, Bangor, and the County archives at Llangefni. Aerial photographs were inspected at the National Monuments Record, Aberystwyth.

3.2 Field Search

This was undertaken on 20 October, 2003. The site had been cleared of dense vegetation, and in many places the upper layers of sand were visible.

3.3 Report

All available information was collated, and transferred onto a single set of maps at a scale of 1: 10,000 for convenience. The sites were then assessed and allocated to the categories listed below. These are intended to give an idea of the importance of the site and the level of response likely to be required, for ease of reference; descriptions of the sites and specific recommendations for further evaluation or mitigatory measures, as appropriate, are given in the relevant sections of this report.

In some cases, further investigation may result in sites being moved into different categories. The criteria used for allocating sites to categories are based on those used by the Secretary of State when considering ancient monuments for scheduling; these are set out in Annex 3 to Planning Policy Guidance 16 (Wales): Archaeology and Planning.

Category A - Sites of national importance.

Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Listed Buildings and sites of schedulable or listable quality, i.e. those which would meet the requirements for scheduling (ancient monuments) or listing (buildings) or both.

Sites which are scheduled or listed have legal protection, and it is recommended that all Category A sites remain preserved and protected *in situ*.

Category B - Sites of regional or county importance.

Sites which would not fulfil the criteria for scheduling or listing, but which are nevertheless of particular importance within the region.

Preservation *in situ* is the preferred option for Category B sites, but if damage or destruction cannot be avoided, appropriate detailed recording might be an acceptable alternative.

Category C - Sites of district or local importance.

Sites which are not of sufficient importance to justify a recommendation for preservation if threatened.

Category C sites nevertheless merit adequate recording in advance of damage or destruction.

Category D - Minor and damaged sites.

Sites which are of minor importance or so badly damaged that too little remains to justify their inclusion in a higher category.

For Category D sites, rapid recording, either in advance or during destruction, should be sufficient.

Category E - Sites needing further investigation.

Sites whose importance is as yet undetermined and which will require further work before they can be allocated to categories A - D are temporarily placed in this category, with specific recommendations for further evaluation. By the end of the assessment there should be no sites remaining in this category.

4. ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Introduction

The study area (centred on SH 25767898) lies on Holy Island, a small island off the west coast of Anglesey, joined onto the larger by two bridges, Pont Rhyd y Bont and Stanley Embankment. The former is an early crossing point, and a bridge has existed there from at least the first half of the 16th century (it is mentioned by Leland in his Itinerary of c. 1530, and is clearly shown on Speed's map of 1610). The latter was built by Telford as a part of his new London to Holyhead road (completed 1822) though widened later in the century by the addition of the railway. The road that passes from Rhyd y Bont through Trearddur Bay (past the study area) and on to Holyhead is thus an early route for travellers to the port, which first became the official departure point for carrying the mails to Ireland in the reign of Elizabeth I.

At Trearddur Bay Holy Island is nearly cut into two parts by a tidal inlet from the Inland Sea which stops some 480m east of the bay. The remaining land bridge is a low-lying (between 3m and 4m OD) sandy common, with rock outcrops north and south. It has been suggested that prior to the last glaciation this formed the river channel for the Afon Alaw, and that the bay at Trearddur is a relict river estuary. The creation of the strait

between Holy Island and Anglesey, which would have been flooded by sea rise following the melting of the glaciers c. 8,000 BC, would have interrupted the course of the river, and created the present estuary on the west coast of Anglesey.

Sea level rise would have reached the levels of today by about 5000BC, though minor fluctuations would have occurred after that date, and particularly at Trearddur, where there has been significant erosion caused by rising sea levels. Within the intertidal zone in the bay is a peat layer with tree roots and trunks lying on the surface. Though not dated, a date of 5,500-6,000 has been obtained from similar deposits a short distance south at Llanddwyn (Williams 1996), implying inundation after that date. There is also evidence for local sea level rise during the second half of the nineteenth century, resulting in the erosion of a medieval cemetery (see below), though prior to then a green sward lay on the seaward side of the present promenade (Stanley 1846).

4.2 The Archaeological Background

The study area is best understood when seen in relation to the port of Holyhead, and the rich archaeological heritage of Holy Island. The location of Holy Island within the busy western seaways linking Brittany, Cornwall, Ireland, Wales, Northern England, Scotland and the Viking countries to the east provides an international setting until post-medieval times, when its use as an official port for Ireland became of dominant importance. The port of Holyhead provided easy access in most weather, and recognition from sea was aided by the dominant mass of Mynydd y Twr, or Holyhead Mountain.

Evidence for activity from Neolithic times (*circa* 4000 BC to 2500 BC) to the present is abundant within the northern part of Holy Island. The two Neolithic tombs of Trefignath and Trearddur lie 1.5 Km to the north. Four Neolithic polished stone axes have been found in the northern part of Holy Island (Lynch 1991), including two Graiglwyd axes found when excavating a hole for a turntable railway near Kingsland in 1926 (PRN 2507, SH 2504 8165), and one axe of unspecified stone found at Penllech Nest (PRN 2506, SH 251 816).

Two Bronze Age barrows were prominently situated on top of Holyhead Mountain (SH 219 829), though little can be seen of them now, and three barrows lay close to the shore at Porth Dafarch (SH 234 801), whilst others were situated at Garn (SH 211 825) and Gorsedd Gwlwm (SH 227 816). A barrow was recently discovered under the early Christian cemetery at Ty Mawr (SH 2520 8135). The Ty Mawr standing stone is one of several such stones in this part of Holy Island. There is another to the south, next to Stanley Mill (SH 2664 7888), and a rare pairing of two stones just over 3m apart, to the west at Plas Meilw (SH 227 809) (Lynch 1991).

The island has several notable Iron Age and Roman period sites. Holyhead is dominated by its mountain, to the north-west of the town. The summit is enclosed by a stone rampart wall forming the hillfort of Caer y Twr (SH 219 829). A much smaller promontory fort, Dinas on the south coast of Holy Island (SH 223 794), is probably also Iron Age. This promontory is surrounded by high cliffs and a low bank runs along the edge of the chasm, which separates it from the mainland. These forts were probably defensive refuges, and the population lived in more hospitable areas. Towards the foot of the south-western slope of Holyhead Mountain are a group of huts near another Ty Mawr (SH 211 820) and a similar hut group overlies the Bronze Age barrows at Porth Dafarch (SH 234 801). Excavation at Ty Mawr demonstrated that the stone huts belonged to the 1st millennium bc, but with some activity in the 3rd century AD, as well as earlier prehistoric and post-Roman settlement evidence. The finds from Porth Dafarch dated the huts to the Roman period (Lynch 1991, RCAHMW 1937).

A Roman fort was constructed at Holyhead towards the end of the 3rd century or later, as a naval base against Irish raiders. Several Roman coin hoards have been found on Holy Island, one apparently at Trearddur Bay, though the exact location is not known. It consisted of 13 coins ranging in date from the mid-3rd century to the third quarter of the 4th century (PRN 2012).

Holy Island was of considerable importance in the early Christian period, with the *clas* site of Caer Gybi large enough to attract the attention of the Vikings in 961 (Edwards 1986, 24). The foundation of this monastic community by St Cybi is traditionally dated to the mid 6th century AD. There is an unusual concentration of early Christian sites known, or suspected, on the island. These include a cemetery of long-cist graves, dating to approximately 6th to 8th century AD, discovered during the construction of the A55 dual carriageway, to the north-west of Ty Mawr Farm. At this site the graves were located around, and cut into, the remains of a Bronze Age barrow. Another cemetery, of similar date, lies close to the study area at Tywyn y Capel, the site of a medieval chapel (Capel St Ffraid) on the shore of Trearddur Bay (Edwards 1986, 31), with graves dating from the 6th century through to the medieval period. There were early Christian cist burials found at Porth Dafarch.

The development of the parochial system in the 12th century saw Holyhead church change from a *c/las*, or 'mother' church to a collegiate one. Responsibility remained, however, for a number of small chapels in the area, usually with associated wells, including Capel Ulo, and Capel Gorlas. Capel St Ffraid went out of use in the 17th century, and was delect by 1776 when it was engraved by Moses Griffith. It was washed into the sea during the latter part of the 19th century.

The official use of Holyhead as a port increased in the reign of Elizabeth I, when it became the departure point for the Royal Mail to Ireland. During Oliver Cromwell's Commonwealth Holyhead was garrisoned, and regular packet boats sailed to Ireland (Hughes and Williams 1981). The port subsequently grew until, by the early 19th century, it was the principle port for Ireland.

During the 17th century the road across Anglesey to Holyhead was probably just a rough track, but the forerunner to the bridge at Four Mile Bridge already joined Holy Island to Anglesey by 1578 (Hughes and Williams 1981). One of the earliest maps of Anglesey, published by Speed in 1630, marks Pont-Rhydbont (the bridge at Four Mile Bridge), and just to the west of it is Llansanffraid (St Bride's or Trearddur Bay), the only place marked on Holy Island, other than Holyhead itself (Evans 1972).

In 1765 the road from the Menai ferries to Holyhead was turnpiked, and much improved (Ramage 1987). However, transport was still difficult until Telford built his new London to Holyhead road (the A5), which arrived on Holy Island in 1823. The Stanley Embankment (grade II listed, 20074) carried the road over Afon Lasinwen, the tidal strait between Holy Island and Anglesey, replacing the ferries and fords. The embankment was designed by Thomas Telford, started in 1822 and opened in 1823; its construction created the body of water now referred to as the Inland Sea. In 1846-8 the railway line was constructed along the southern side of the embankment. The village of Valley dates largely from the time of its use as a construction village for the embankment. Much of the present area occupied by the village would have been below high water until the construction of the Crugas dam in the late 18th century.

The village of Trearddur Bay, named after the farm of Trearddur, is largely a creation of the 20th century. The 1840 tithe map shows no buildings around the bay, and the land partly in the ownership of Ty'n Towyn farm south of the bay. By 1890 there is one small cottage on the north side of the bay called Ty'n Towyn Bach, and the bay is called Tre Arthur Bay, though the coast edge is called Towyn Capel after the medieval chapel that once stood at the head of the bay. By 1900 the house of Glan Mor had been built close to the head of the bay, though little other development had taken place. However, by 1924 a significant number of additional houses had been built both around Glan Mor in the centre, and along Ravenspoint road to the south, whilst to the north the Trearddur Bay hotel had been built. The study area was never developed, though was used as a cricket ground in the post-war years, and a pavillion remains at the north end.

4.3 Summary

In pre-glacial times Trearddur Bay was a river estuary for what is now the River Alaw. The deposition of boulder clay during glaciation, and the inundation of the strait between Holy Island and Anglesey following the post-glacial sea rise, turned the estuary into a bay, though the remnants of trees and peat within the inter-tidal area suggest inundation of the bay did not occur until c. 5,000 BC. Recent excavations at Capel St Ffraid in Trearddur Bay have shown that a stable land surface was present at the head of the bay during Roman and immediate post-Roman times, and that cultivation of this soil took place on several occasions. In the 6th century AD a cemetery was established in a low sand mound close to the shore in the centre of the bay. Sand incursions, dating mainly from the climatic deterioration of the 14th century, produced a sandy common (*towyn*), and gathered round the cemetery site, forming a high mound. This latter continued to be used as a cemetery, and a chapel was built on top that went out of use in the 16th century. In the 19th century a localised rise in sea level caused the chapel and much of the cemetery to be washed away.

The present village of Trearddur Bay is a creation of the inter-war years. There is no evidence for development within the study area, which forms part of the dune system that developed in the Middle Ages. In post-war years it was used as a cricket field.

4.3 The study area

Geomorphology

Trial pits undertaken on site by Shepherd Gilmour (Report dated 16 April 1991) reveal yellow sand to a depth of approximately 1.8m, when traces of a grey/blue sand were encountered, which gave way to a grey clay at a depth of about 2m. Towards the east side of the site (Test pits 4 and 5) peat was encountered at about 1.8m, underlain by grey sandy clay. No dates are known from the peat layer, but the presence of fibrous material and grey clay may date it to the same period as the peat within the inter-tidal zone – approximately 5,000 BC. The lack of bedrock to a depth of 3m, and the broad band of alluvium across the site does help confirm the theory that this was once a river valley.

Archaeology

There are no sites of archaeological significance within the study area. The cemetery of Capel St Ffraid lies some 130m to the west, but there are no other sites immediately adjacent. The excavations undertaken at the cemetery of Capel St Ffraid revealed evidence for ploughing during Roman or immediate post-Roman times, and there is thus potential for the recovery of information from buried soils and peats (see Section 5 below).

A cricket ground was established on the site, possibly before the Second World War, and was in use at least until the 1960's. A small pavilion remains on the site.

5. IMPACT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The greatest potential for archaeological evidence is from the peats that underlie the site. If construction trenches are dug to a depth that will reveal these layers, then a programme of recording and sampling should be undertaken, to include environmental analysis and dating. This would be best achieved by undertaking a watching brief during the digging of construction and drainage trenches. It is also possible that buried soils exist that were not recorded during the test pit sampling, as this information would not have been relevant to the recorders, and this may, as at Capel St Ffraid, contain evidence for former agriculture.

The former cricket pavilion, though of relatively recent date and of local interest only (i.e. Category D), should be recorded by photographic record.

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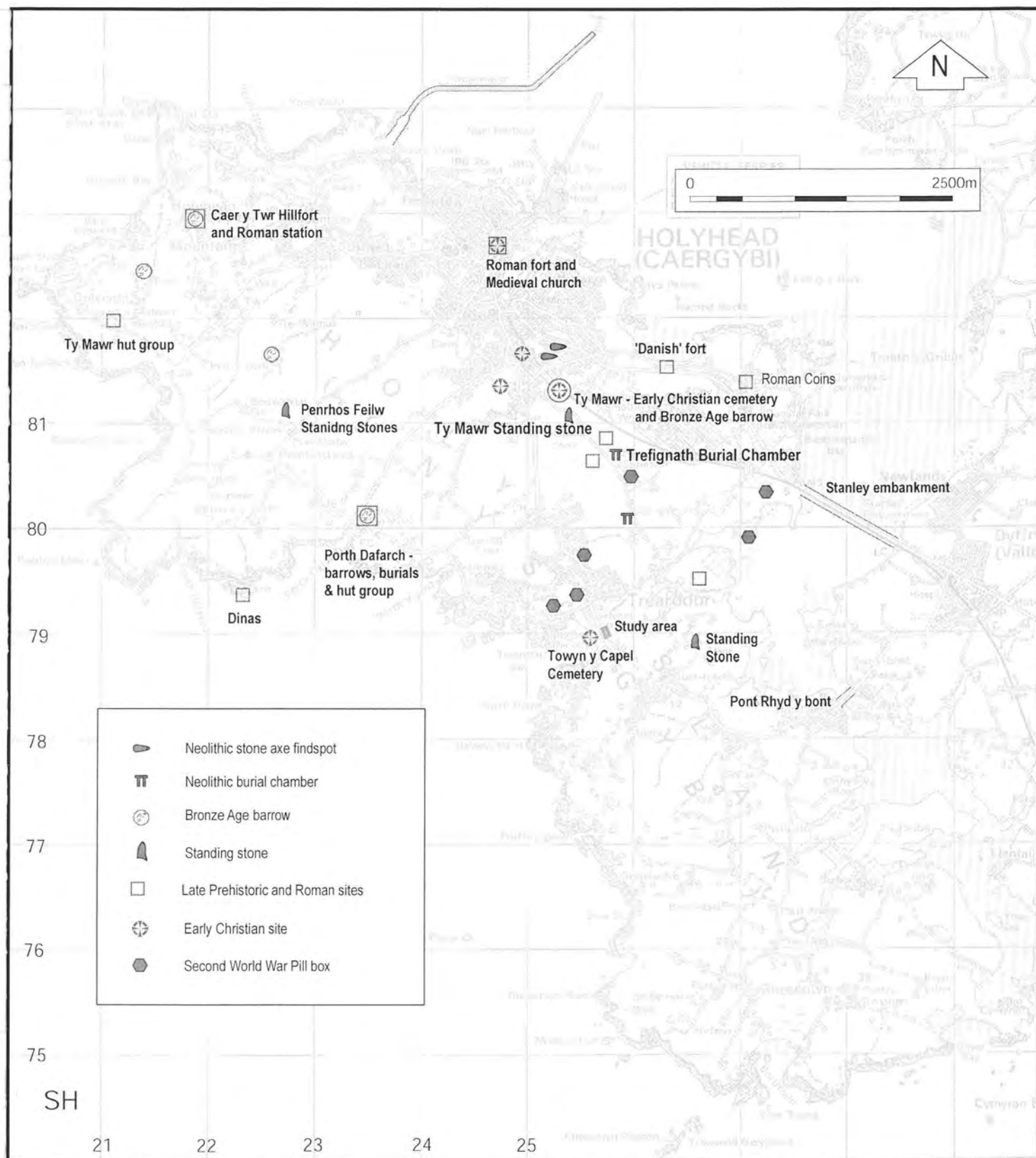
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Fig 1. Location of sites in proximity to study area.

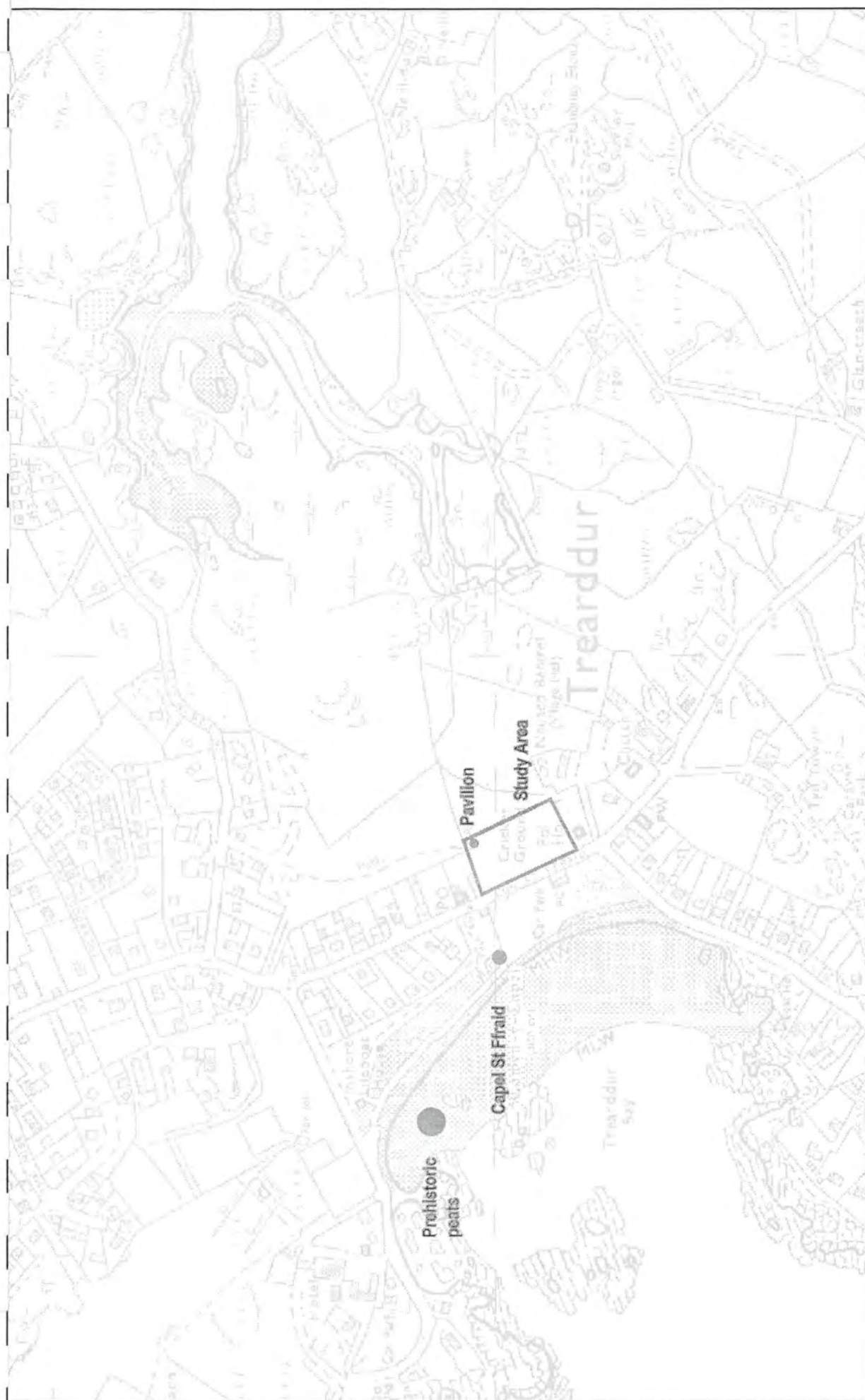


Fig 2. Study area and principal sites on OS 1:10,000 Sheet SH27NE 1975 (not to scale)

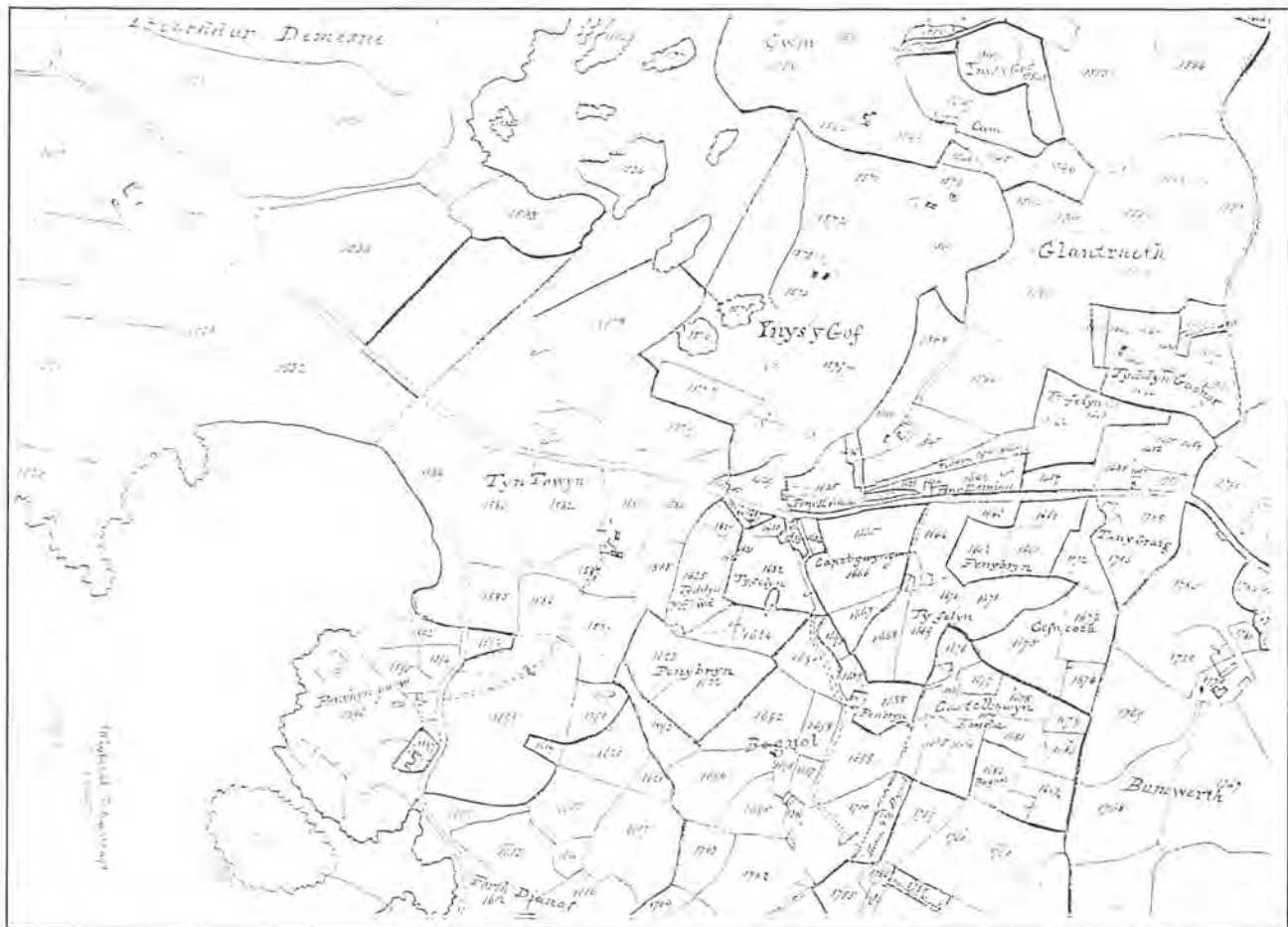




Fig 5: OS Map XI.11 1900



Fig 6: OS Map XI.SE 1926

