
ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION AT BODFAN, TREFOR, ANGLESEY, MARCH 9th 2004

GAT Project No. G1835

Report No. 523



Bodfan in 1900: Extract from the Ordnance Survey 25 inch map (at half size)

Prepared for Rodney and Gillian Coates

By George Smith

March 24th 2004



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Gwynedd Archaeological Trust was asked by Prof. R. Coates to carry out an archaeological excavation at Bodfan, Trefor (SH 36508080), to investigate an area adjoining a field boundary wall to assess whether a drainage ditch might once have been present there.

TOPOGRAPHIC LOCATION

Bodfan lies at about 70m OD on a gentle south-east facing slope below a plateau rising up to 80m OD. The land falls away to the south-east to the field of the adjoining property Llamrebol. Flood-drainage from the higher fields of this property, lying to the north-west, is taken along a field ditch on the west side of the wall dividing Bodfan and Llamrebol. There are no permanent watercourses on the Bodfan land and the water supply for the original house here, Hen-dy, was derived from a well at the rear of the property.

HISTORIC AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The two storey house of Bodfan was built c. 1920 and replaced an earlier single storey traditional stone cottage Hen-dy which lies nearby and is in process of renovation. Hen-dy has an adjoining farmyard and outbuildings. Hen-dy (the Old House) was the original name for the farm and was so named on the first edition Ordnance Survey 6 inch to the mile map of 1890 (Fig. 2).

The area to be investigated comprised a small irregular paddock south of Hen-dy. The field wall at the west is an earthen or rubble bank (*clawdd*) faced with small stones, only about 0.8m high, designed to be topped with a hedge, as it is now. The wall seems likely to be of 18th or 19th century date belonging to a re-designed landscape of large, regular fields laid out as part of agricultural improvements by large estates around that time. It does not appear to continue the line of any more ancient boundary, despite being curvilinear in plan. The boundary that forms the north side of the Hen-dy land, however is long and curving, at odds with the overall rectilinear pattern of fields and does seem likely to be an old boundary that was incorporated into the 18th - 19th century field pattern.

The Gwynedd Sites and Monuments Record has no recorded archaeological or historic features, buildings or finds on or in the immediate area of Bodfan. However, the area as whole has plentiful evidence of prehistoric and medieval activity. There are important Neolithic and Bronze Age burial monuments at Presaddfed, 1km to the west. There is also evidence of medieval origins to the agricultural landscape in the form of field names. The adjoining farm, Llamrebol was called Llain-yr-ebol in the 19th century (Fig. 2) and *llain* refers to strip fields, indicating a medieval origin. There is also another house nearby incorporating the same name element - Llain Grin just to the north (Fig. 1).

EXCAVATION

A trench 3.75m long was excavated in the south part of the paddock approximately perpendicular to the field wall and as close to it as possible, finishing 0.60m from the wall (Fig. 3). The trench was dug partly by machine and partly by hand. The soil was friable and deep loam with small pieces of natural (i.e. not roofing) slate. The subsoil was an orange-brown silty clay. The profile of the trench is shown in Fig. 4. The topsoil surface sloped gently down towards the field wall, rising slightly as it approached the wall. The top of the

subsoil was found at 0.35 to 0.45m below the field surface. It followed approximately the same slope as the field surface and there was no ditch of any kind as it approached the wall or any evidence of waterlogging or natural drainage. However, the dip here, upslope of the wall must naturally accumulate moisture and nutrients and this was demonstrated by the presence of a considerable run of hedge tree roots within this lowest-lying area at about 0.2m below the surface. The subsoil in this area was also riddled with small-mammal runs, probably as a result of a greater worm population in this damp and nutrient-rich area.

CONCLUSIONS

There was no evidence of any kind of man-made ditch, scoop or natural gully here. It might have been expected that there would at least be a shallow quarry scoop for the construction of wall-bank but it seems that it must have been built with material derived from a ditch on the west side. This would be understandable if the wall-bank belonged to and was built by the owner of the land on the west side rather than the Hen-dy side.

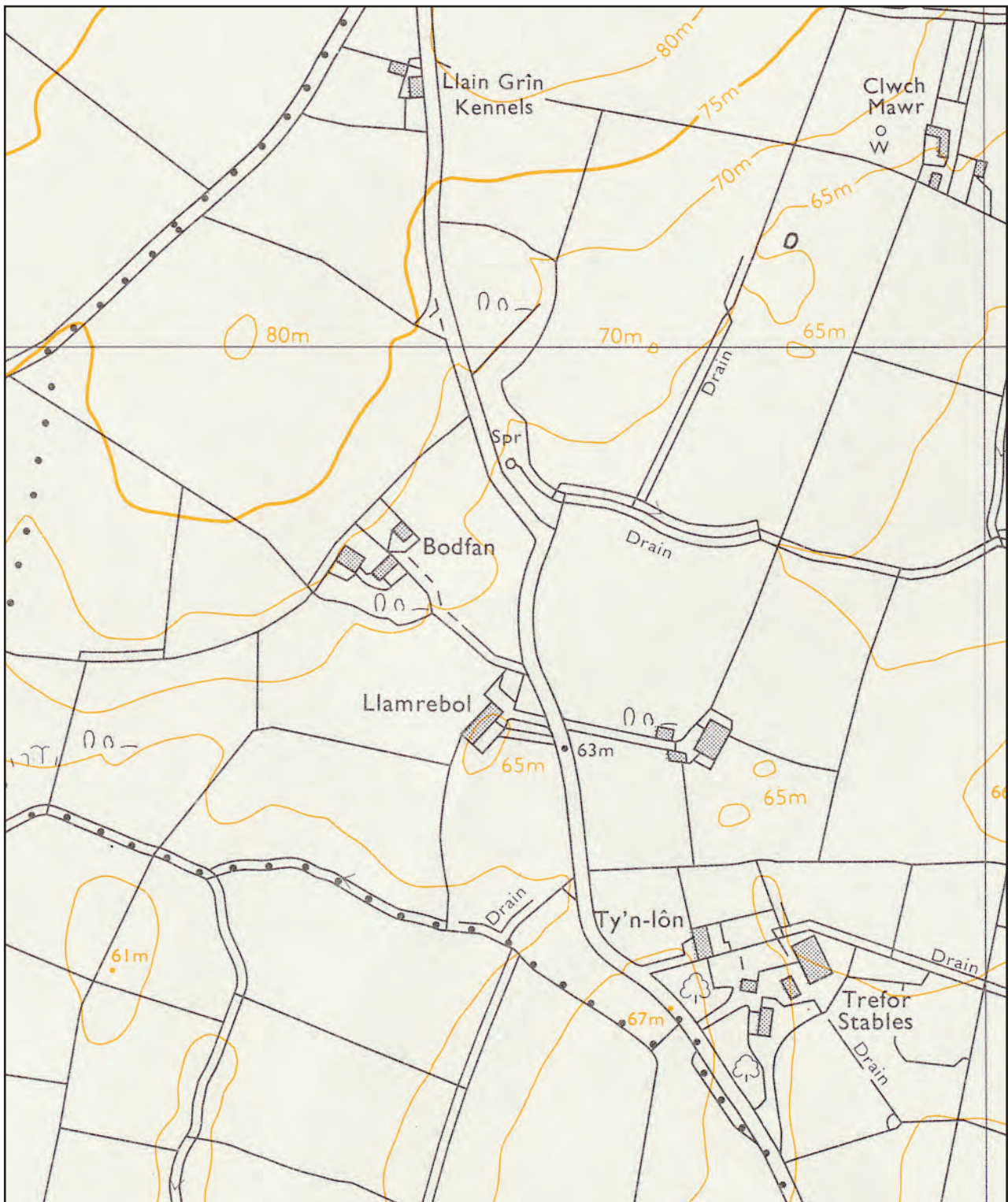


Fig. 1 Bodfan: Location map. Scale 1:5000.

Based on OS 1:10,000 scale maps.

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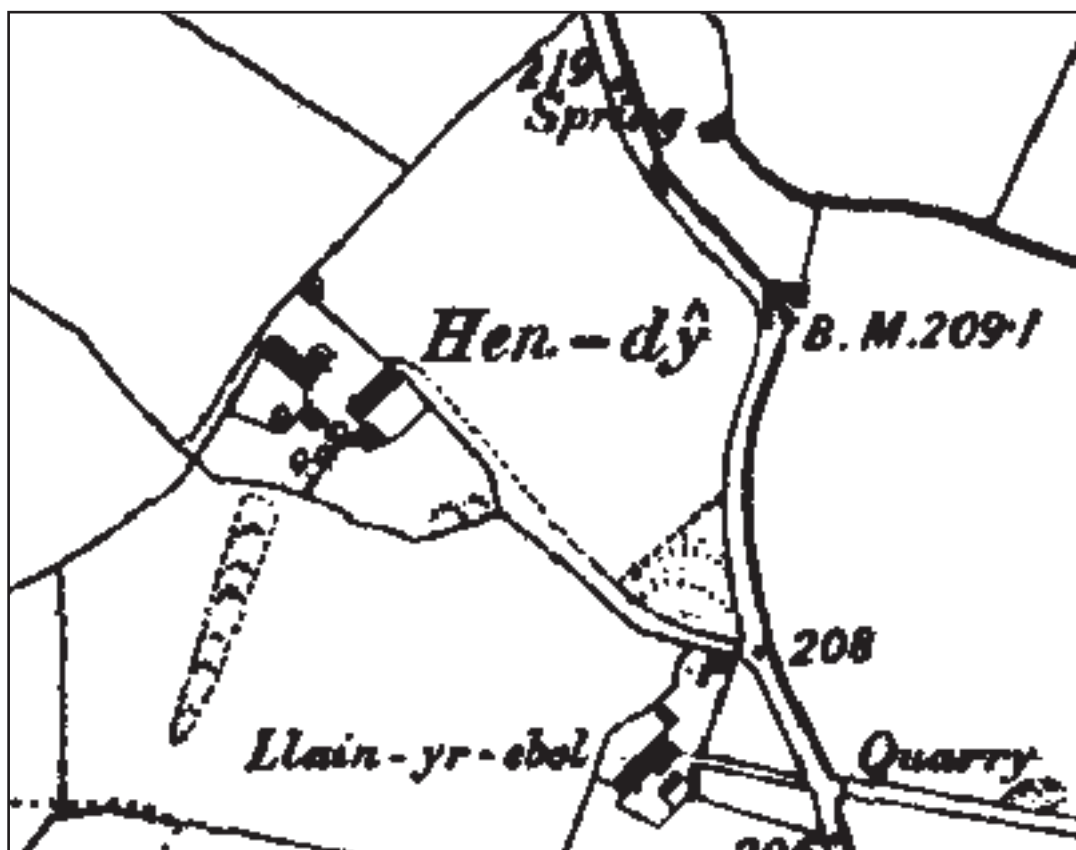


Fig. 2 Bodfan: Extract from Ordnance Survey 6 inch map 1891 (Not to scale)

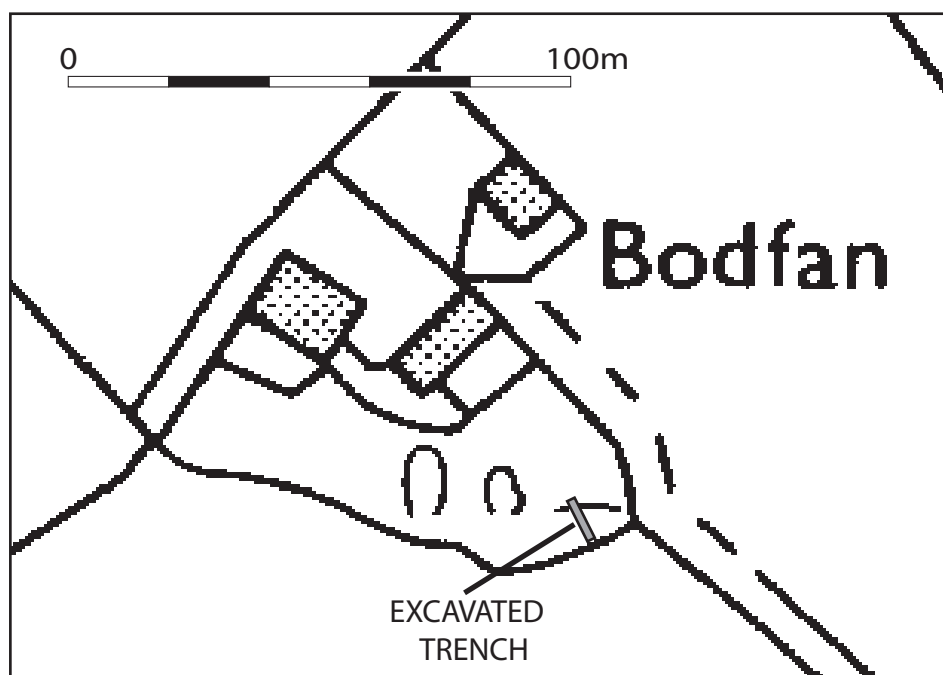


Fig. 3 Bodfan: Location of excavation trench

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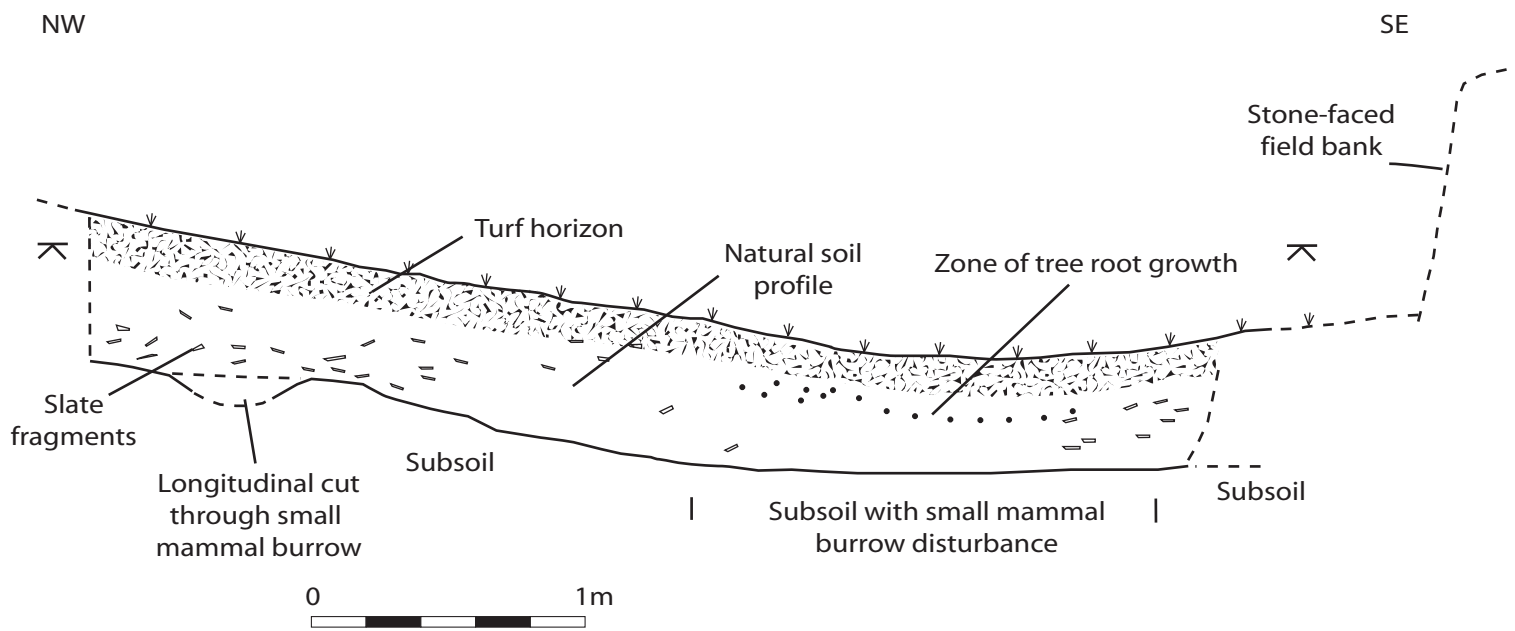


Fig. 4 Bodfan: Section of trench at east side



Fig. 5 Bodfan: General view of excavated trench, from the west, showing the yellow-buff subsoil.
The base of the trench has been slightly overcut by the machine at the near side.
Vertical scale with 25cm divisions. Horizontal scale with 50cm divisions.



Fig. 6 Bodfan: Close up of the north-west end of the excavated trench, from the west,
showing the sharp division between the topsoil and the yellow-buff subsoil.
Scale with 50cm divisions.



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