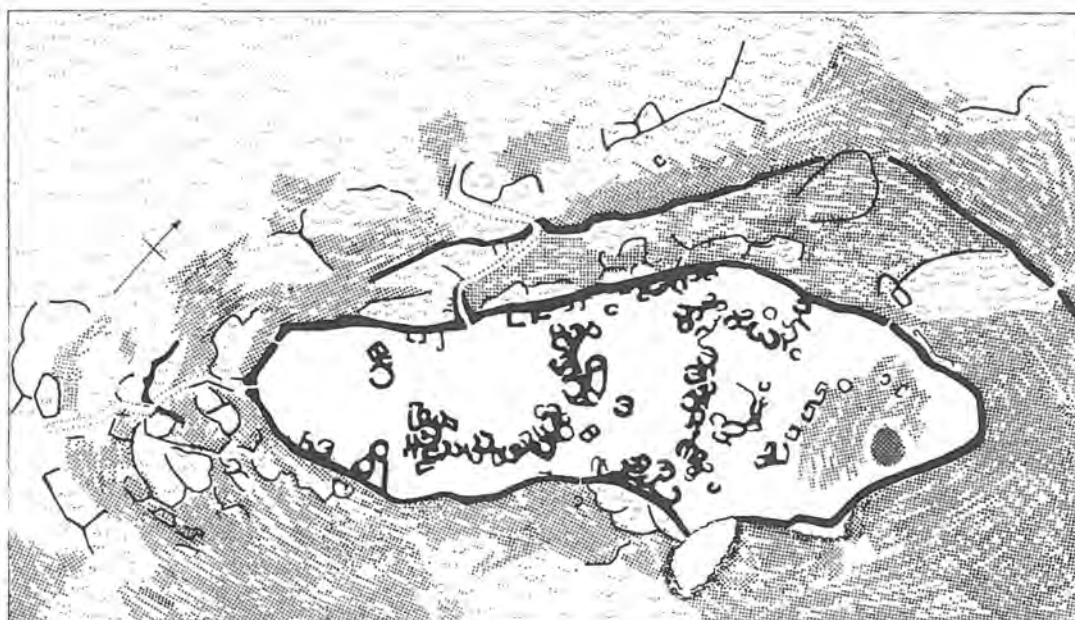


TRE'R CEIRI MONITORING VISIT

MAY 2004

Report number : 534



Prepared for

GWYNEDD COUNCIL

MAY 2004

Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Gwynedd
Gwynedd Archaeological Trust

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Archaeological

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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. The first monitoring visit of 2004 was carried out on 28th May. Weather conditions were good with clear skies and low winds.

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 along with digital photographs where necessary.

The Huts

1. Hut 77. A small hole had been dug in the floor of the hut. This was filled back in using weathered stones on the surface.
2. Hut 60. A large slab on the end of the wall had been turned over thus destabilising the core. This was reset in its original position and the core was repacked.
3. Hut 11. Several stones, some containing drill holes indicating conserved masonry, had been removed from the face and top of the dividing wall between huts 11 and 12 and piled on to the main hut wall top. The damage was photographed (Plate 1) and the masonry was reinstated (Plate 2).
4. Hut 53. A small hole had been very recently dug in the floor of the hut; the grass was still green beneath the removed stones. The hole was infilled and weathered stones were used on the surface.

The Ramparts

Only one area of instability was identified.

5. A large header had been pulled from the top of the inner face and clumsily replaced thus destabilising two further facing stones. The large header was reset after the removal of several crisp packets that had been deposited within the wall. The core behind the stones was repacked thus stabilising the facing.

The north-west entrance

6. The conserved masonry in this area has weathered very well and vegetation has grown in between the stones of the floor because of the damp conditions in this part of the fort. Unfortunately this process has been somewhat marred by the deposition of a large blob of yellow paint on one of the floor slabs (Plate 3). This appears to be an oil-based marker paint. An ineffectual attempt had been made to scratch off the paint at some point but it was still visually intrusive.

The majority of the paint was scraped off using a steel blade and the surface of the stone was painted with a peat solution in order to aid the regrowth of moss and lichens.

The cairn

7. Two small sub-cairns had been built resulting in holes in the reinstated material in the centre of the structure. These were demolished and the stone used to fill in the holes.

The notice boards

The information board by the cairn has been vandalised. Two holes have been smashed in the Perspex covering (Plate 4). The board on the approach to the south-west entrance has also been damaged. The Perspex has clearly been attacked with a rock and is scratched and cracked. The board at the north-western entrance is a little scruffy but still intact. The frames and legs of all of the boards are stable and intact.

Discussion

The level of damage recorded during this monitoring visit was relatively high and was mainly deliberate as opposed to being a result of general erosion. The blob of paint in the north-west entrance could well be an ill-considered survey point, set up during a university or school field trip.

The general condition and stability of the monument is however, very good. The regular monitoring of the site and repair of any damage is clearly continuing to be a successful conservation strategy.

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Fig. 1 Tre'r Ceiri showing points of collapse identified in the May 2004 monitoring visit (after R.C.A.H.M.W. 1960)



Plate 1 Hut 11 southern wall, before reinstatement



Plate 2 Hut 11 after reinstatement



Plate 3 Paint on north-east entrance passage floor



Plate 4 Damage to the cairn information board

