
**PROPOSED NEW DWELLING ON LAND ADJOINING
TAL Y CAE, TREGARTH:**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

Project No. G1881

Report No. 597

Prepared for
Mr D. M. Williams

August 2005

By

G.H. Smith



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Gwynedd Archaeological Trust

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1. SUMMARY

The survey showed that the wall of the former Iron Age/Romano-British hut circle here has been totally destroyed. However, the area of the proposed development is close to the former hut and so has some potential for archaeological evidence of activity associated with the settlement. Observation suggests that the whole of this area has been disturbed either at the time of construction of the nearby houses or more recently. An archaeological watching brief with basic recording is therefore recommended as appropriate mitigation. This would need to take place during any topsoil stripping, grading or foundation or service trench excavation as part of any development.

2. INTRODUCTION

Gwynedd Archaeological Trust was asked by Mr Dyfrig M. Williams to carry out an archaeological assessment of a small parcel of land at Tregarth at NGR SH 60376850 in relation to a planning application for a proposal to build a new dwelling there. An Iron Age or Romano-British hut circle is recorded in the Gwynedd Historic Environment Record (HER) at the north edge of the proposed development area.

3. SPECIFICATION

The requirement was for a field visit and desk-top study to provide an assessment of the proposed development area for any possible *in situ* archaeological remains or for any archaeological potential in relation to known archaeological remains or any historical records in the vicinity. The conclusions would be presented in a report to include comments on the possible impact of the development on any archaeological remains.

4. METHODS AND TECHNIQUES

4.1 Desk-top study

The Gwynedd HER was consulted for information on relevant sites in the vicinity and such books, early maps and other information as available.

4.2 Field search

The area was visited on 9th June 2005, walked over and photographs taken with a sketch plot of features identified.

4.3 Report

A brief description is made of the archaeological and historical background, followed by a description of the surface features together with a discussion of their possible impact and relevance. Finally there is a brief summary of the recommendations for mitigation.

5. TOPOGRAPHIC DESCRIPTION

The area lies on a plateau at approximately 120m OD (360ft), between the valleys of the rivers Cegin and Ogwen. It is poorly drained and much is marshy or scrub woodland with patches of permanent pasture on better-drained areas.

6. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The area as a whole is rich in prehistoric archaeological remains that have survived because the dissected nature of the land makes it unsuitable for clearance and drainage. Unlike many other areas elsewhere in Gwynedd this area was not affected markedly by agricultural improvements as part of the

Penrhyn Estate in the 19th century and in 1891 the proposed development area was part of an area that seems to have been unimproved land (Fig. 2). The area was clearly suitable for the small scale farming of the Iron Age and Romano-British period and a number of settlements survive within 1km of the development area (Fig. 1). At the north edge of the development area the Gwynedd HER records the partial remains of a hut circle, PRN 313. Close by, 200m to the south-west is the well-preserved and extensive unenclosed settlement of Parc Gelli, a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM C202), PRN 260. To the west is an enclosed hut circle settlement at Cororion, (SAM 268), PRN 27. To the south-east are the hillfort of Pendinas, PRN 223 and another possible hut group, PRN 5744. To the south-west is the site of another enclosure, possibly a settlement, at Penarth Gron, PRN 53. There are also some probable medieval settlement remains in the area, at Cororion and Moel-y-Ci. Indeed the Llandegai and Llanllechid Archaeological Group suggested that the whole of this area should be considered as a landscape of archaeological value because of the number of known surviving remains and the likelihood of others not yet discovered (see below).

The hut circle at the north edge of the development area has previously been described as follows:

1. Round hut, 28ft in diameter, with a wall 3ft 6ins thick faced on both sides with large stones (RCAHMW 1956, 109).
2. Possibly Romano-British but may extend into other periods (RCAHMW 1964, xc-xcii).
3. The round hut is 9.5m diameter. Its wall largely destroyed on all but the south side where it is visible as a turf-covered bank containing stone, some 0.4m high (Fig. 3, Ordnance Survey 1969).

The area was visited again in 1976 and 1979 by the Llandegai and Llanllechid Archaeological Group, which reported: 'A building development is taking place in this area, and a rotary quern, decorated type, was brought to our attention by the men on the building site. They had already found a circular hut, reported it to the U.C.N.W. Bangor and destroyed it. Further hut circles were noted very close to this site and between this point and the Parc Gelli group of eleven, and it is probable that there was settlement all along the ridge to the Penna'r Bronydd road making quite a large hamlet of the Iron Age/Romano-British period. The quern has been published in the Transactions of the Caernarvonshire Historical Society, Vol. 36, 1975'.

The site of the hut was visited again in 1996 as part of a survey of prehistoric settlement for Cadw. The area was then badly overgrown and obscured by dumped timber and other debris and so it could not be ascertained whether any of the hut circle still survived (Hopewell 1996).

The rotary quern find indicates that the settlement was in use during the Romano-British period because this type of quern did not come into use until at least the later first century AD in north-west Wales. However, it is very likely that the settlement was already in existence in the later first millennium BC.

7. THE SURVEY

The proposed development area is a small irregular enclosure, part of a former large field – rough pasture on the OS maps of 1891 (Fig. 2) and 1969 (Fig. 3). There is no gate into the enclosure. It is deeply overgrown with bracken and nettles but looks as though it has been cleared, possibly by machine, in the winter, with small trees cut down, branches and stumps left (Figs 5 and 6).

The upstanding remains of the hut circle PRN 313 no longer exist. The garden area of the new house to the north-west (Caerau) was presumably machine levelled and that part of the garden where the bank of the hut could be seen is now quite flat. The small triangle of land which appears to form the north corner of the present application has actually been fenced off and incorporated into the garden of the house to the north-west and is now also quite flat. The bank of the hut must have been deliberately levelled although the line of the fence still retains the line of the former hut bank (Fig. 4).

The thick vegetation cover of the rest of the enclosure makes it almost impossible to assess but there is a slight pond-like hollow, probably natural, at the south and nearby a group of large sub-angular boulders, probably the remains of an outcrop. At the north a slight ridge or terrace can be traced,

oriented north-west to south-east. This could be a feature contemporary with the former hut-circle (Fig. 4).

8. CONCLUSIONS

Even though the Iron Age/Romano-British hut itself has gone, the area close to it must have been used for contemporary activity as indicated by the find of the rotary quern (PRN 3662) close by during earlier house construction in 1973. Such activity remains would not be structurally significant and so would not merit preservation. The thick vegetation cover makes it impossible to assess the ground surface at present and geophysical survey would be unlikely to be productive here. However, observation suggests that the whole of the proposed development area has been disturbed, either at the time of construction of the nearby houses, or more recently. An archaeological watching brief with basic recording is therefore recommended as appropriate mitigation. This would involve the observation of any topsoil stripping, grading, foundation trench or service trench excavation during any development.

9. DOCUMENTARY SOURCES

Gwynedd HER

Hopewell 1996. Hut Circle Settlement Survey Field records, GAT Project No. G1104.

Ordnance Survey record cards

RCAHMW 1956. *Inventory of Ancient Monuments in Caernarvonshire, East*, HMSO, London.

RCAHMW 1964. *Inventory of Ancient Monuments in Caernarvonshire, West*, HMSO, London.

Maps

Ordnance Survey 1st ed. 1891, 1:2560.

Ordnance Survey 2nd ed. 1:25 inch map 1969.

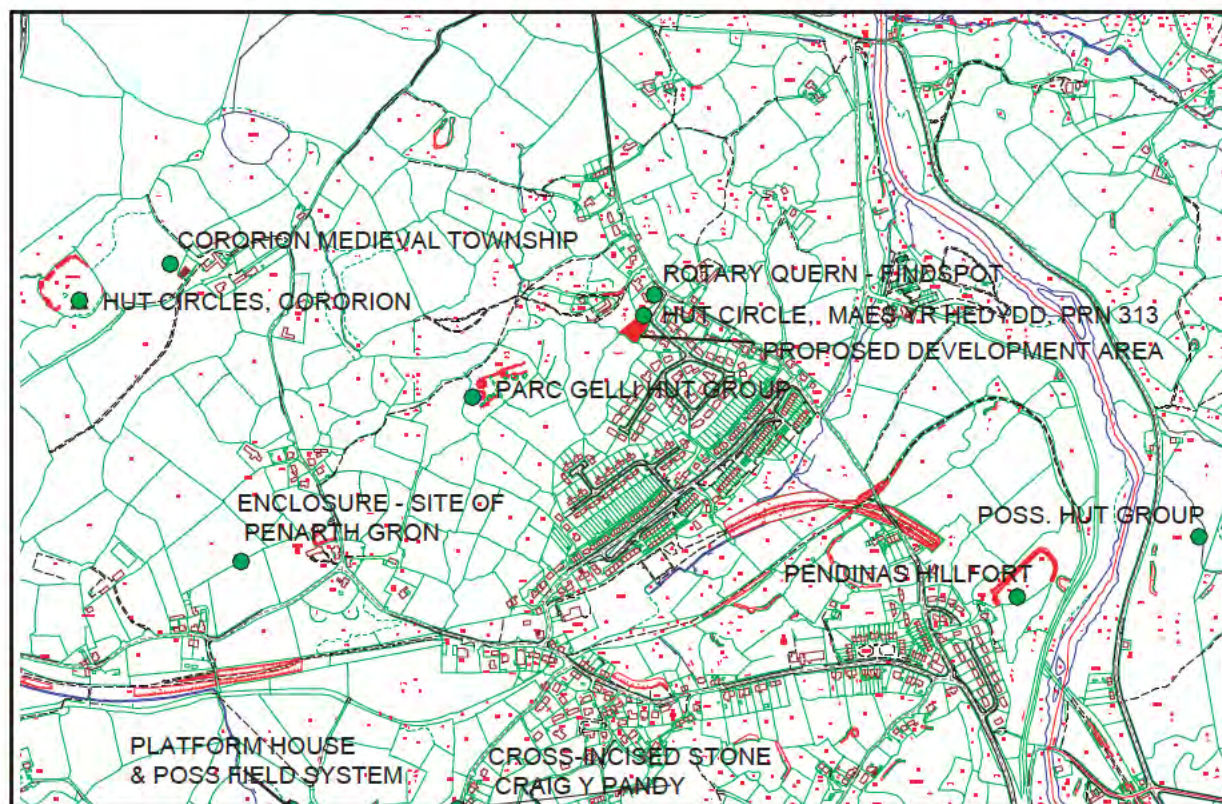


Fig. 1 Tal-y-cae, Tregarth. Location of the proposed development area in relation to known archaeological features within 1 km recorded on the Gwynedd Historic Environment Record

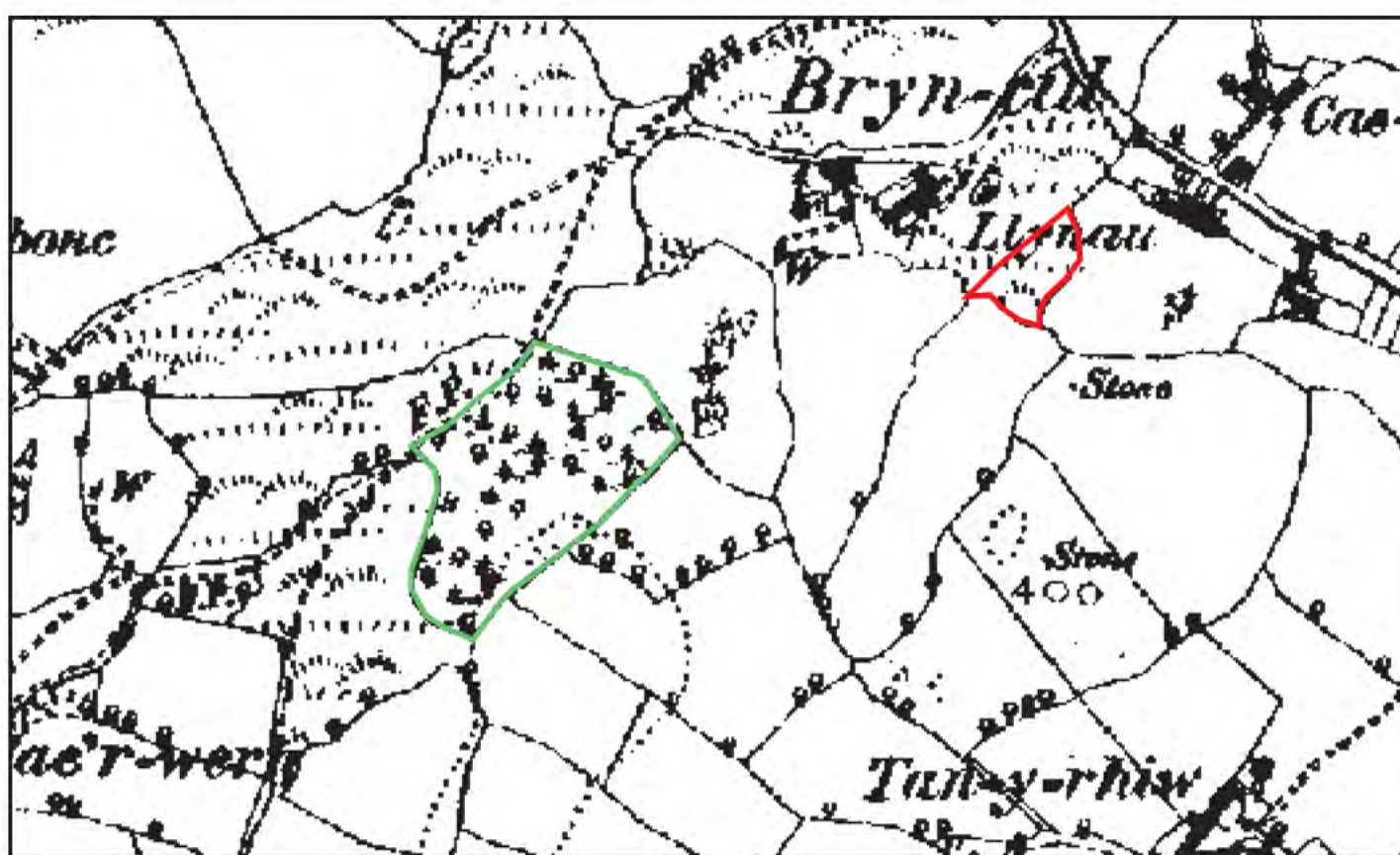


Fig. 2 Tal-y-cae, Tregarth. Extract from OS 1:2560 map, 1891, showing the location of the proposed development area (Red) and of the Parc Gelli Iron Age/Romano-British settlement (Green). Not to scale.

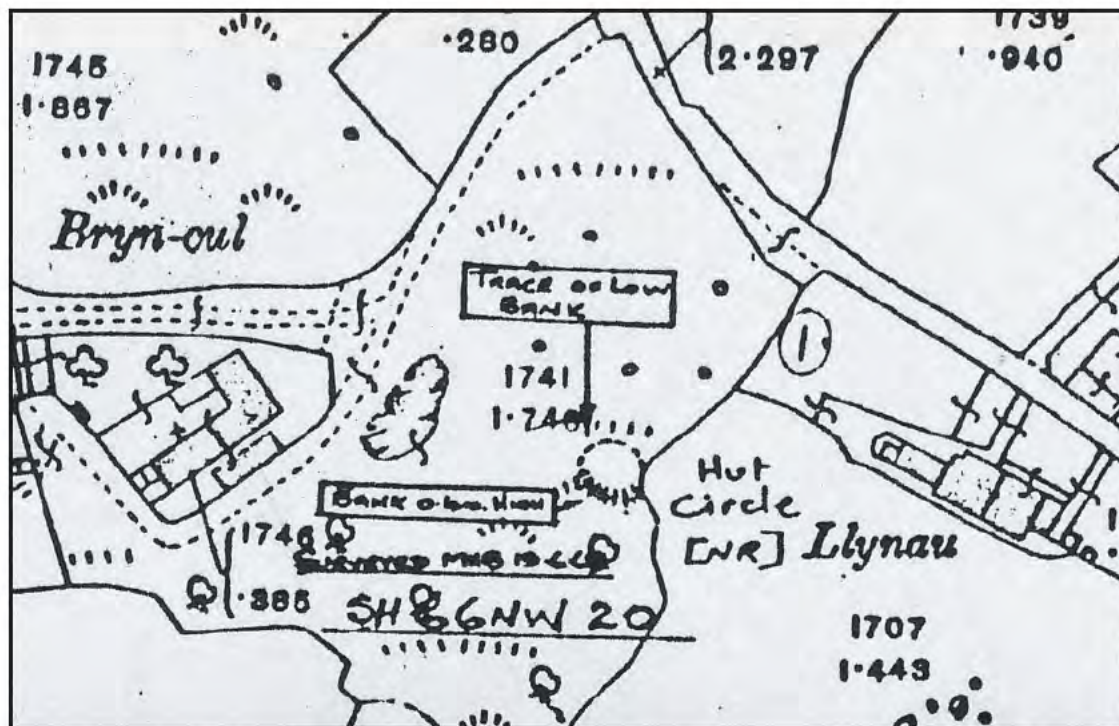


Fig. 3 Tal-y-cae, Tregarth. Hut circle PRN 313 outline survey by the Ordnance Survey in 1969 prior to housing development in the area. Scale 1:1250

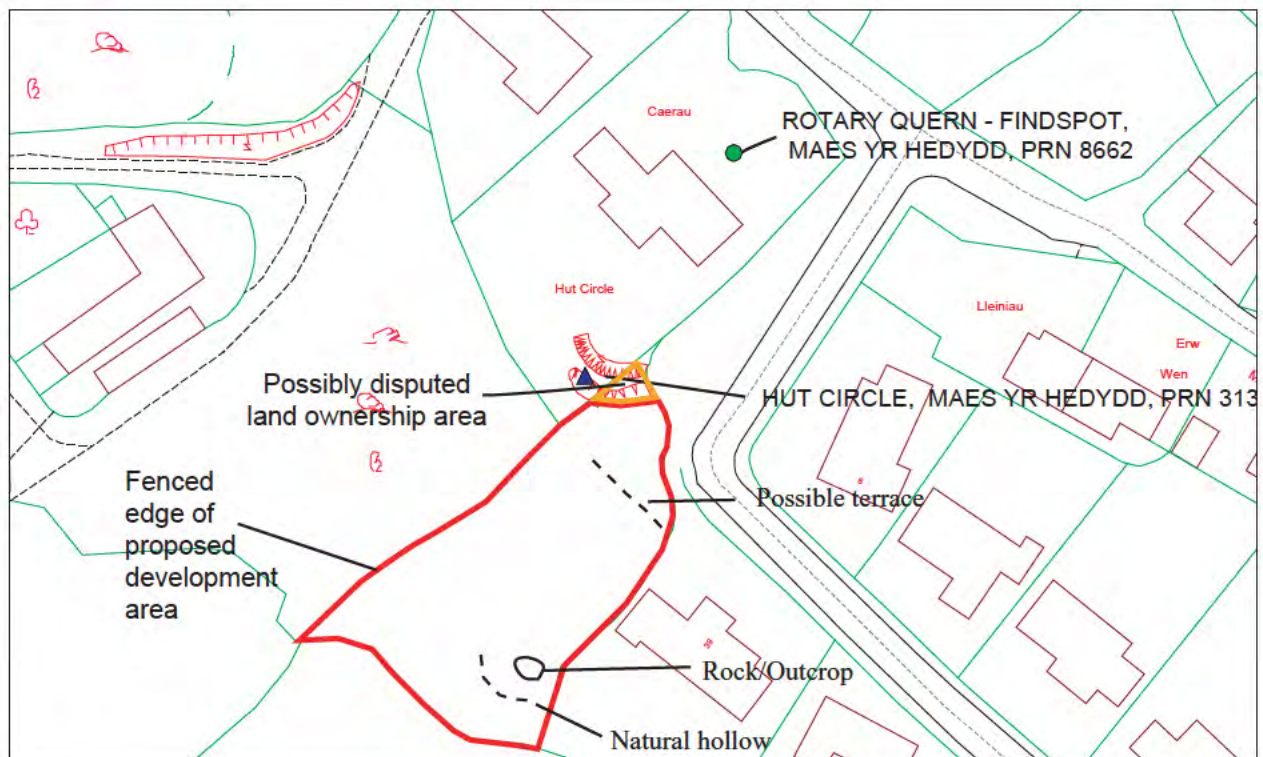


Fig. 4 Tal-y-Cae, Tregarth. Plan of development plot and former hut circle, PRN 313.



Fig. 5 Tal-y-cae, Tregarth. Location of the former hut circle, PRN 313.
From the south. Scale with 0.2m divisions.



Fig. 6 Tal-y-cae, Tregarth. General view of the proposed development area. From the south-west.



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