

ENCLOSED HUT GROUP  
PENYGROES COTTAGE  
LLANDDEINIOLEN

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY AND EXCAVATION

REPORT NO. 54

GAT NO. 1087

Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Gwynedd  
Gwynedd Archaeological Trust



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by N. Johnstone  
illustrations by H.F. Riley

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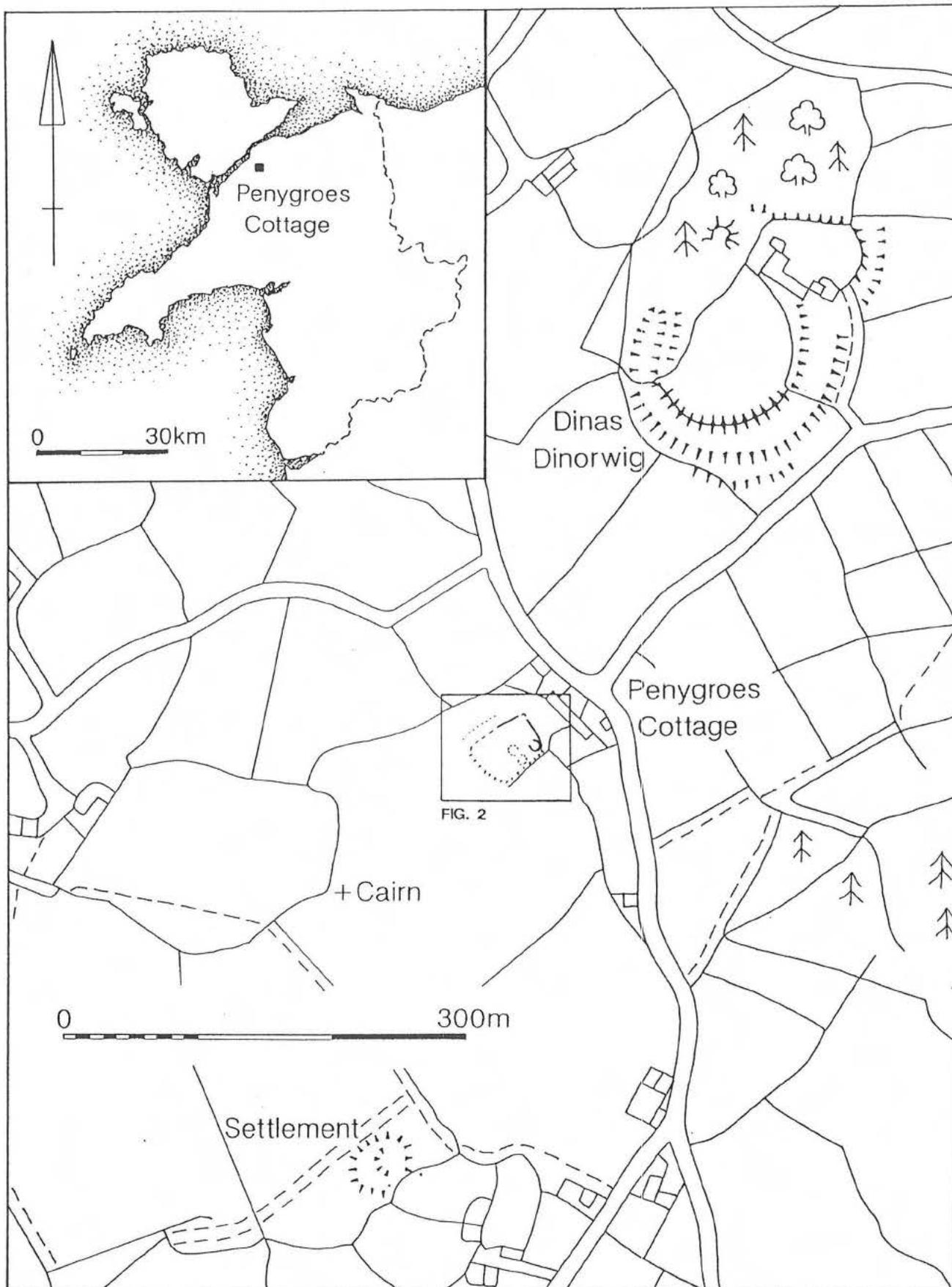


Fig. 1. Location map of enclosed hut group near Penygroes Cottage.

## Enclosed Hut Group West of Penygroes Cottage

In November 1992 Gwynedd Archaeological Trust was informed of clearance work in progress adjacent to the hut group at Penygroes Cottage in the parish of Llanddeiniolen, at SH54826502 (Primary Reference Number (PRN) 629, Fig. 1). The outbuildings to the north of the hut group together with an adjacent plot of land had been newly purchased for conversion into a house with proposed extension. The owner however was unaware that part of the hut group lay within his property. Landscaping had already impinged on the hut group, partially burying a length of the enclosure wall, and was intended to continue up to the line of the property boundary.

The owner was informed of the implications of the work and its effect on the hut group, and he volunteered his full co-operation in implementing a strategy to safeguard the archaeological remains.

The Trust proposed the following response, which was approved by Cadw :

1. To establish the limits of the enclosed hut group and its component parts by Electronic Distance Measuring (EDM) survey (the extant records are wholly inadequate).
2. To establish the extent and degree of damage and the quality of surviving archaeology within the threatened area (new property boundary) by
  - a. limited trial excavation along 2m length of what appears to be enclosure wall damaged by machinery.
  - b. supervised clearance of dumped material from remaining length of enclosure wall.
3. To formulate a management strategy to minimise the detrimental effects of the present earthmoving operations and any proposed building and landscaping works.
4. To collate information so that an adequate and considered response might be made to any planning authority.

### The site

The site was recorded by the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historic Monuments(Wales) (RCAHMW) in Vol I of the *Caernarvonshire Inventory* (no 1181):

(1181) Enclosed Hut Group W. of Pen-y-Groes, at 470ft above O.D. on the N.W. side of a low ridge forming the S.E. side of a shallow valley. A straight sided enclosure c. 40 yds square, with angles to the cardinal points, is surrounded by a wall ca 6ft thick faced with large boulders. This is destroyed on the N.E. side. Against the centre of the S.E. wall is a hut 21ft in diameter. Traces of two similar huts exist in the S. corner and against the middle of the S.W. wall; between them are indications of an entrance to the enclosure. Large stones to the N and W may be the remains of further destroyed huts and enclosures.

The field in which the huts lie is known as "Cae Go Uchaf" (the upper smith's field) and pieces of clinker are found in the soil.

Condition: poor heavily robbed

The site was also noted in the National Monuments Record (NMR) in 1967:

This site is in poor condition and all that now remains are traces of the wall in the south east and an earthen banked hut circle 8.0m in diameter and 0.9m high with an entrance in the east at SH 5482 6502. A rough circle of stones at SH 5479 6499 may be the remains of a second hut circle.

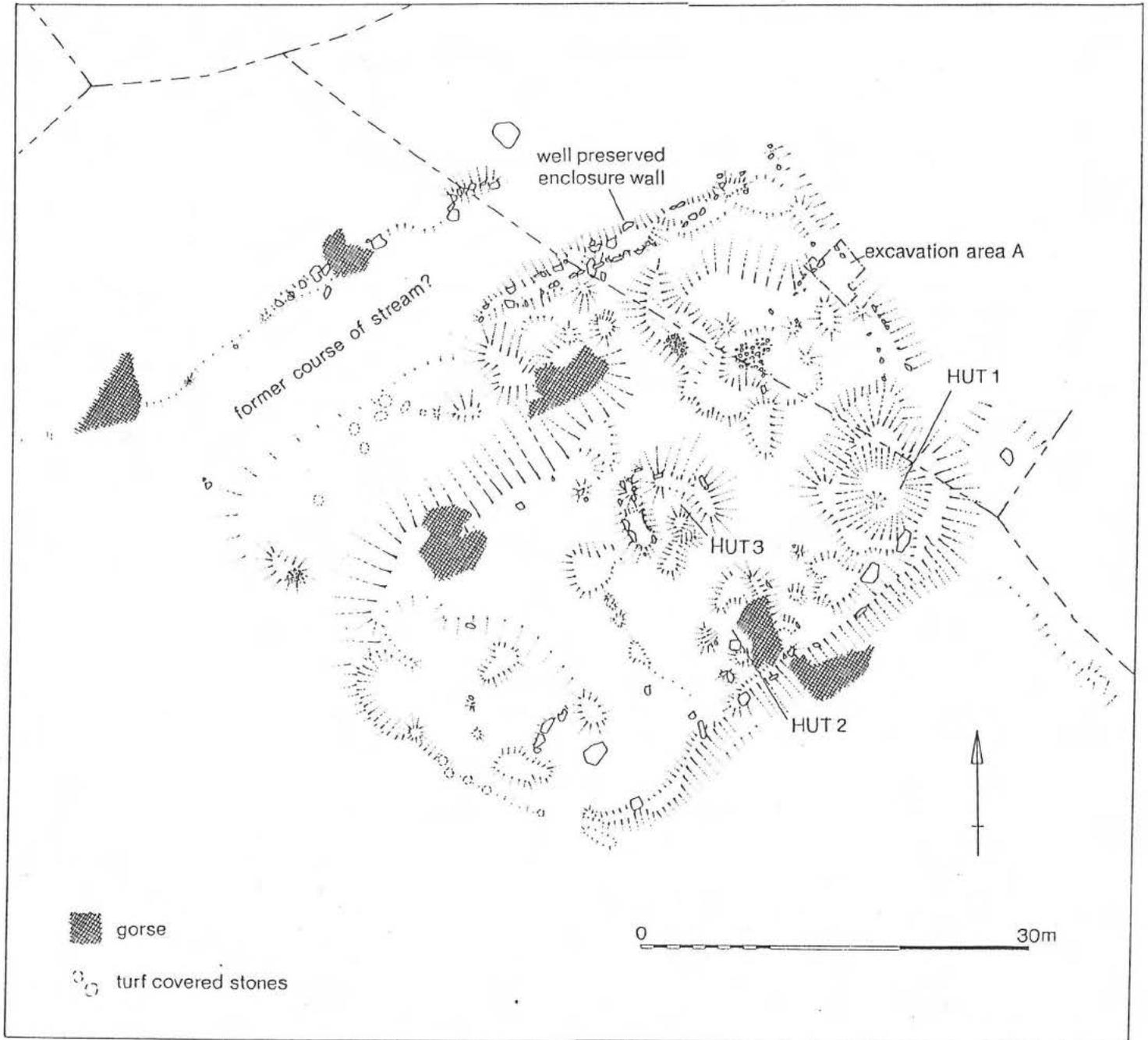


Fig. 2. EDM survey of enclosed hut group.

## The Survey

1. The limits of the hut group and any damaged areas were established by EDM survey (Fig. 2). The principal features consist of the enclosure wall and a number of hut circles. The enclosure wall is well preserved on the south-west of the site and could be traced on the north-west side (contrary to the RCAHMW description). The Commission's description saw the enclosure as 40yds square with huts located against the centre of the south-east wall, the south corner and the middle of the south-west wall, with an entrance between the last two huts.

The Trust's survey identified one well-preserved hut circle in the east corner of the enclosure (hut 1), another further south (hut 2) and a third to the north-west of hut 2 (hut 3). It is not immediately clear whether these are the same three huts recognised by the RCAHMW. It is however possible that hut 1 is that noted by them as being in the centre of the south-east wall, hut 2 is the one in the south corner and hut 3 is the one in the centre of the south-west wall.

The Commission's description suggests that the enclosure wall was thought to be further north (if hut 1 has been correctly identified with the Commission's south-east hut). It was also noted that large stones to the north may have been the remains of further huts. Machine stripping at Penygroes cottage had progressed to within feet of the enclosure wall as identified by GAT, and the area had been subsequently buried under the spoil heaps. It is possible that features of the site may have extended further northwards but in the absence of any earlier plan of the site no conclusions may be drawn on this point.

The southern extent of the site can not now be established with any certainty. The area of large boulders on the south of the site was considered as the limit of the site for the purpose of the EDM survey. Recent work on hut groups has emphasised the complex sequence often involved in their development with the realisation that surviving remains may incorporate several phases in a site's history. The enclosure may therefore only relate to one phase of activity on the site and should not be taken as defining the limits of the site other than in that particular period. With the above in mind the Commission's description of the site as being in poor condition should not be given too much weight.

## The Excavation

2. Within the limits of the new property boundary all visible features were recorded by context and planned by EDM. They consisted in the main of grassed-over stone hummocks/humps. These may be field clearance cairns or they may reflect underlying features. The records are deposited in the site archive at GAT.

a. Limited trial excavation was undertaken on a length of the north-east enclosure wall. A trench 2.5m x 2m was investigated in an area damaged by machine clearance (Fig. 3). Two large facing stones (0.50m x 0.25m approx) marked the north-east side of the enclosure wall. The wall core consisted of brown silty soil and stone, partly truncated on its south-east face. The wall had been built on the natural subsoil, an orange gravelly clay, on which a possible clay hearth had been constructed (only a small part of this feature fell within the excavated area). The hearth was subsequently covered by a grey, stone-free silt which abutted the enclosure wall. Subsequently a large bank, 2.20m wide and 0.6m high (context 016), had been built on top of the grey silt. The bank was faced with large stones up to 0.60m high and 0.30m wide and had of an orange clay matrix. The later bank abutted the earlier enclosure wall (the side facing stones still *in situ*).

b. The recent landscaping had buried the northern extent of the enclosure wall; this was uncovered by machine and then cleared by hand. Some slight disturbance of the wall was noted and recorded on the plan. The location of what was thought to be the corner of the enclosure is marked on the plan, but the possibility remains that the line of the enclosure may have continued under the recent landscaping.



Fig. 3. Excavation Area A.

## Results

Twenty-five Roman coins have so far been recovered from the site. Eight of these were recovered below the topsoil in the vicinity of the earthen bank (context 016). Another seven were recovered in the area of machine disturbance, although significantly none were found from the grey layer underlying the bank. Five coins were recovered in March of this year; three found by the owner of the property seem certainly to have eroded from the earthen bank and a further two were found when backfilling the excavation trench.

Overall, the contexts in which the coins were recovered strongly suggest that they were originally part of a hoard (the fusing together of two of the coins, 07a and 07b, together with the good state of preservation of some, adds further support to this interpretation). The original location of the hoard was probably disturbed during the construction of the earthen bank and some of the coins presumably incorporated in the makeup of the bank. The twenty coins so far identified (Mr. J E Jones, University College of North Wales) are in the date range 218 to 268 AD.

Two sherds of black burnished ware were recovered, one from the grey silt below the later earthen bank. A sherd of mortarium came from a redeposited context outside the enclosure wall and a lead weight was also found in the grey silt.

3. The production of a plan of the extent of the archaeological remains at Penygroes cottage has been the most important element in implementing a management strategy for the site. The owner of the property was unaware of the extent of the hut group remains and the survey undertaken of the property had only identified a single hut circle. Negotiations between the Trust and the owner have resulted in an informal agreement that no ground disturbance on any scale will take place in the area identified as being archaeologically sensitive. A stone wall is to be built on the line of the property boundary; this will run across the grassed-over remains of one of the huts. An appropriate response will be implemented once the nature of the disturbance becomes clear. The agreement has led to a considerable change to the intended landscaping work on the site and the Trust acknowledges the co-operation extended to it by the owner.

4. Following the completion of the work at Penygroes the Trust was able to make an informed response to the planning application for a proposed extension to the outbuildings to the north of the hut group.

## Finds List

Finds no	Description
01	Antoninianus Trebonianus Gallus
02	Antoninianus Gordian III
03	Antoninianus Trebonianus Gallus
04	Antoninianus Valerianus
05	Antoninianus Gallienus
06	Antoninianus Gallienus
07a	Antoninianus Valerianus
07b	Antoninianus Gordian III

08	Mortarium sherd
09	Daub frags
10	Greyware Pottery
20	Antoninianus Herennia Etruscilla
21	Denarius M A Antoninus
22	Antoninianus Trebonianus Gallus
23	Antoninianus (frag) M Otacilia Severa
24	Double Denarius Gordian III
25	Antoninianus (frag) Herennia Etruscilla
26	Antoninianus Herennia Etruscilla
27	Antoninianus (frag) M J S Philippes
28	Denarius Severus Alexander
29	Sestertius Julia Mamaea
30	Antoninianus Gordian III
31	Black Burnished Rim
32	Black Burnished Rim
33	Lead Weight
34	Antoninianus Otacilia Severa
35	Coin Unidentified
36	Coin Unidentified
37	Coin Unidentified
38	Coin Unidentified
39	Coin Unidentified