Characterising the Double Ringwork Enclosures of Gwynedd: Meillionydd

Excavations, July 2011

Stratigraphic Report

Kate Waddington and Raimund Karl

Bangor: Gwynedd, November 2015

Bangor Studies in Archaeology
Report No. 10

Bangor Studies in Archaeology

Report No. 10

Also available in this series:

Report No. 1: R. Karl and H. Butler 2009. *Moel y Gaer Llanbedr Dyffryn Clwyd. Excavations, Summer 2009. Preliminary Report.*

Report No. 2: K. Waddington 2010. *Excavations at Meillionydd 2010: Characterising the double ringwork enclosures on the Llŷn Peninsula*.

Report No. 3: R. Karl and I. Brown 2010. *Caer Drewyn and its environs. Survey and desktop analyses, 2009-2010. Preliminary Report*.

Report No. 4: K. Waddington and R. Karl 2010. *The Meillionydd Project: Characterising the double ringwork enclosures in Gwynedd. Preliminary Excavation Report*.

Report No. 5: I. Brown and R. Karl 2011. *Caer Drewyn and its Environs. Site surveys and analyses 2010-2011. Excavations at Moel Fodig hillfort, August 2011. Interim Report*.

Report No. 6: R. Karl and K. Waddington 2011. *Characterising the Double Ringwork Enclosures of Gwynedd: Meillionydd. Excavations, July 2011. Preliminary Report*.

Report No. 7: S. Morton Williams, K. Möller, I. Brown and R. Karl 2012. *Hillforts of North Wales: Moel Fodig. Excavations 2011-2012. Interim Report.*

Report No. 8: R. Karl, B. Burin, Z. Frana, V. Gufler, J. Hörhan, A. Medek, T. Rechberger, K. Rokita, T. Trausmuth, S. Unterweger, A. Vonkilch and M. Wallner 2014. *Archäologische Interessen der österreichischen Bevölkerung. Bericht und Analyse einer Umfrage, November 2013 – Jänner 2014*.

Report No. 9: R.Karl 2015. *Meinungsbilder zum Barbarenschatz-Urteil. Bericht und Analyse einer Umfrage, März 2015*.

Cover image: Members of the excavation team, standing in postholes in trench 3

Published by:
Bangor University School of History, Welsh History and Archaeology
College Road
Bangor, Gwynedd LL57 2DG

Contents

This excavation was funded by:

Canolfan Uwchefrydiau Cymreig a Cheltaidd Prifysgol Cymru
University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies

Llŷn Ardal o Harddwch Naturiol Eithriadol
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
www.ahne-llyn-aonb.org
PARTNERIAETH TIRLUN LLŶN LANDSCAPE PARTNERSHIP

The Prehistoric Society

ARGE Archäologie

This project was carried out in collaboration with:

Introduction

Meillionydd is a 'double ringwork' enclosure dating to the first millennium BC. It is located near the village of Rhiw (NGR SH21902905), on the south-western end of the Llŷn Peninsula in Gwynedd, northwest Wales (Figure 1). The site is located on a gently rounded hilltop, at 190m OD, with excellent views of the western tip of the Llŷn Peninsula and surrounding coast, as well as other parts of north and south Gwynedd, and Anglesey. The hilltop forms a spur projecting from the higher slopes of Mynydd Rhiw. The double ringwork enclosure of Castell Odo is clearly visible from the hilltop to the west, and the impressive stone Iron Age hillforts of Tre'r Ceiri, Garn Boduan and Carn Fadryn can be seen in the distance to the northeast. A detailed site description has already been provided in a previous report (Waddington and Karl 2010, 4-5).

The overall research context and objectives for this project have already been outlined in previous reports (Waddington 2010; Waddington and Karl 2010, 3-4; Karl and Waddington 2011). The interim report for the 2010 excavations also provide a detailed stratigraphic report for the various trial trenches that were opened in that first excavation season (Waddington and Karl 2010).

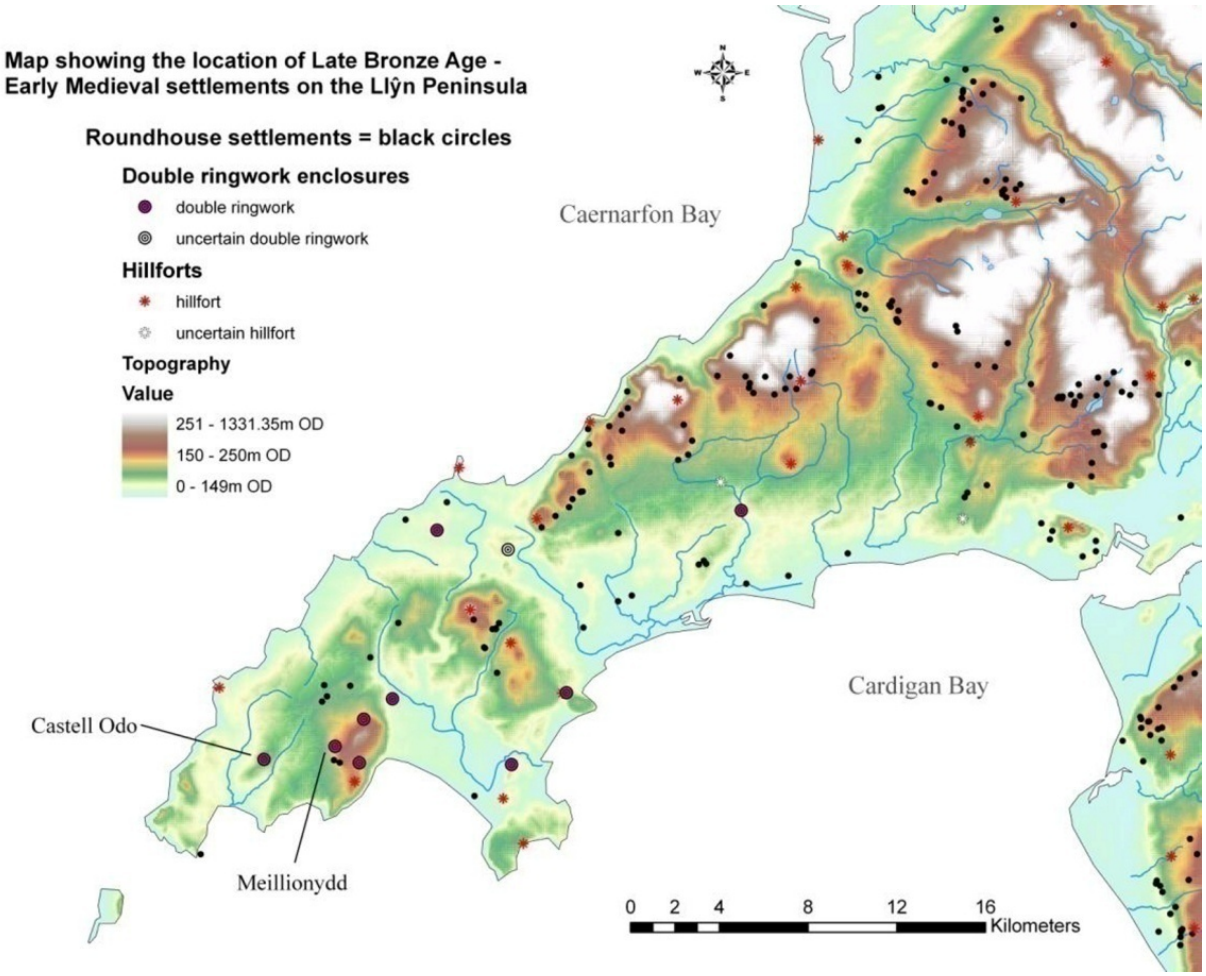

Figure 1: Map of the Llŷn Peninsula, showing the location of the site as well as all other later prehistoric hillfort and settlement sites in the area. The double ringwork enclosures are shown in purple circles, hillforts are shown in red stars and roundhouse settlements are shown in black dots (image: K. Waddington).

The objectives of the 2011 excavations

The excavations in 2011 continued the work carried out in 2010. This second excavation season aimed to reopen and extend the trial trenches opened on the eastern side of the enclosure, so that the excavations of all archaeological deposits and features may be completed, thus enabling the sequences to be fully explored and understood. The aims at the beginning of the excavation were to:

- extend trench 1 c. 9m to the southeast, in order to excavate the remainder of the quarry hollow and to assess its relationship with the outer bank and outer ditch (trench 1 east extension),
- partially reopen and extend the north-western end of trench 1 to expose a new and larger area of the inner bank and roundhouses (c. 6m by 6m; trench 1 west extension),
- extend the south-western corner of trench 2 by 5m by 5m so that the occupation features identified beneath the bank may be investigated and the inner facing of the outer bank may be examined in greater detail (trench 2 extension),
- reopen trench 3 (10m by 10m), enabling the excavation of the roundhouses to be fully completed.

In week 2 of the excavation, trench 2 extension was connected to trench 1 east extension, and this was done to gain a better understanding of the stratigraphic relationship between the quarry hollow and the outer bank (Waddington and Karl 2010, 9), which were now exposed for a length of c. 10 meters (Figure 2).

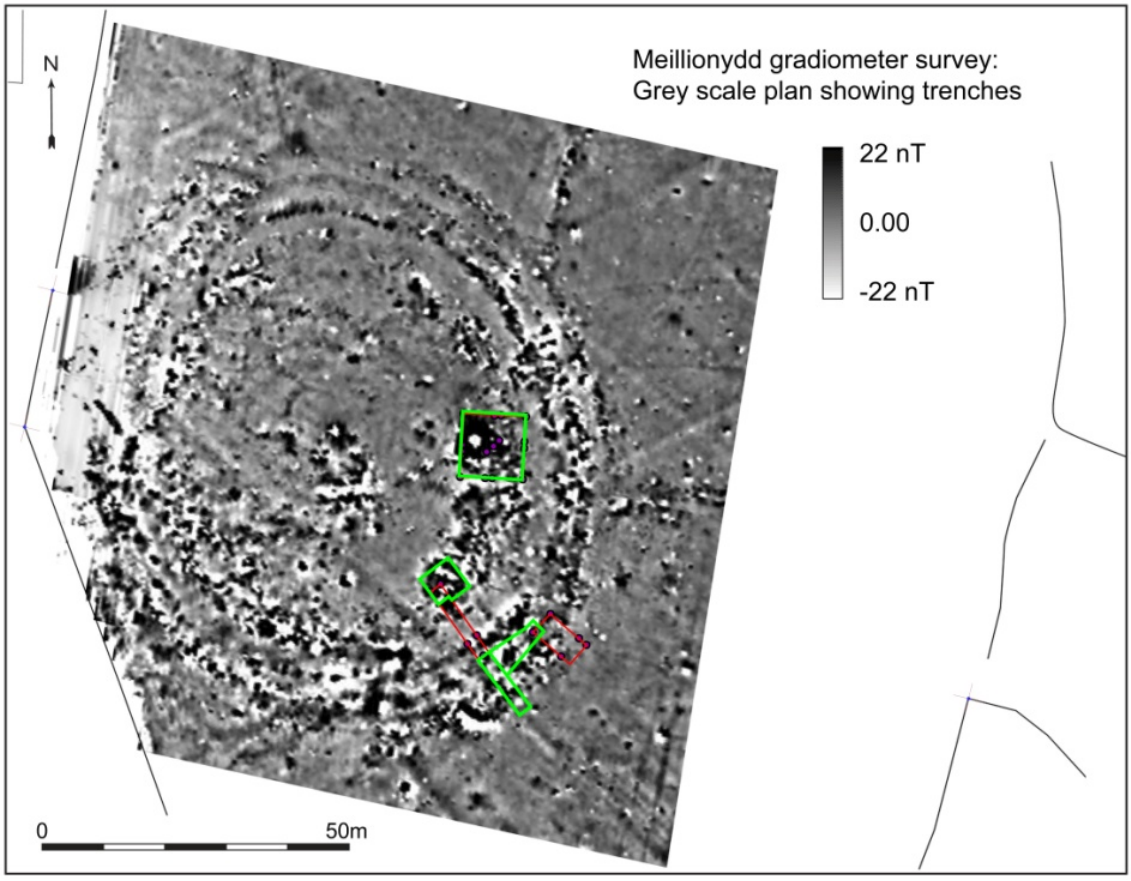

Figure 2: Geophysical survey of Meillionydd, showing the position of the trenches as excavated in 2011 (adapted from Smith and Hopewell 2007, fig 11). The 2011 trenches are shown in bright green, and the 2010 trenches are shown in red.

Methodology

The excavations were carried out in the stratigraphic method (Harris 1989; Harris et al. 1993). All contexts were recorded in single context recording on standard context record sheets, as were small find and samples. In addition, where appropriate, single and multiple context plans and sections were drawn on permatrace. Digital documentation photographs of features and quadrants / trenches were taken in RAW format using a Pentax *istDL2 digital SLR camera with a SMC Pentax DA 18-55 mm F3.5-5.6 AL lens at 6 Megapixel resolution. In addition, digital photographs for three-dimensional photographic recording were taken in RAW and JPEG format using a Nikon D50 digital SLR camera with a AF-S DX 18-55mm F3.5-5.6G ED lens at 6 Megapixel and 1 Megapixel resolution respectively and processed using Agi Soft Photo Scan Standard Edition for creating 3D renderings. The trenches were recorded as 3D survey points using a Leica GPS 1205 Smart Pole with +/- 1.5 cm accuracy, averaged out of 4 independent measurements. All records, plans, photos and 3D measurements were taken by staff, students and volunteers under guidance and supervision of the excavation directors, who also checked the records for correctness and completeness. All students, and almost all volunteers, performed all these tasks (with the exception of surveying) at least once, in most cases repeatedly over the course of several days. Finds were recorded using standard finds record sheets, with individual team members responsible for finds recording and the excavation directors for keeping the site diary as well as the general excavation record book.

The excavations: preliminary results

Trench 1 East extension

Trench 1 east extension aimed to investigate the stratigraphic relationship between the quarry hollow and the outer bank (the quarry hollow was identified in front of the outer bank in the 2010 excavations; Waddington and Karl 2010, 9), as well as to examine the structure of the outer bank itself. Another aim was establish whether an outer ditch was present, as this was shown on the interpretation of the magnetometer survey results (Smith and Hopewell 2007; see Figure 3 below). The excavation was successful in identifying the structure of the bank and the relationship between the quarry hollow and outer bank. The two are undoubtedly contemporary, as the hollow terminates at the inner facing of the outer bank, and truncates the underlying subsoil. The bank would have been constructed mostly from the material excavated from the quarry hollow. (As identified in 2010, the quarry hollow cut through the fills of a pre-existing u-shaped ditch/palisade trench, but this did not extend into the extension trench.)

The outer bank had been constructed, much as was already recorded in trench 2 in 2010, as a simple dump rampart, but in the area exposed in trench 1 east extension, it also produced evidence for a well-set inner facing constructed from substantial, but not dressed, stones. Even though the trench extended eastwards and into an area well outside the outer bank, no evidence for an outer ditch could be identified. Instead, a very shallow, slight depression in the area immediately behind the outer bank (Figure 4) was identified and this has been interpreted as a shallow quarry scoop [487].

The natural gravel in this trench was assigned context 11. The subsoil sitting beneath the bank was a friable orange sand (479), which contained a few angular stones and occasional charcoal fragments. This was c. 0.05-0.10m thick. The layer contained three discrete patches of darker soil which were originally planned as postholes but proved to be ephemeral deposits of natural material on excavation. One deposit (483) consisted of a light brown sand which was irregular in shape and

around c. 0.30m in diameter. On excavation, it reached a depth of 0.15m, and whilst a cut number was assigned [482], this was never clear enough to be positively identified. Due to the irregular nature of the cut and the sterile nature of the fill, it is clearly a natural feature. Overlying this layer was the main body of the bank (478 and 49; see below). The cut for the quarry hollow [155] was also located directly below the inner facing stones of the bank. In section, the cut appeared to truncate subsoil 479. We are therefore confident that the construction of the quarry hollow and the bank are contemporary. This quarry hollow begins immediately infront of the bank; in its entirety (including the parts excavated in 2010), the quarry hollow cut [155] measures c. 7m wide and between 0.60-0.70m deep, with a flat bottom. As well as providing material for the construction of the outer bank, the hollow also effectively levelled an area on the inner side of the outer bank, which was later used for roundhouse construction (see Trench 2 extension, below). In contrast, in the area behind the bank, a very shallow cut [487] for a quarry scoop was visible cutting away the underlying natural gravel (11), measuring 2.40m wide, with a maximum depth of only 0.20m. The fills within the quarry scoop and quarry hollow are dealt with below, as they formed later, so here we will concentrate on the structure of the bank.

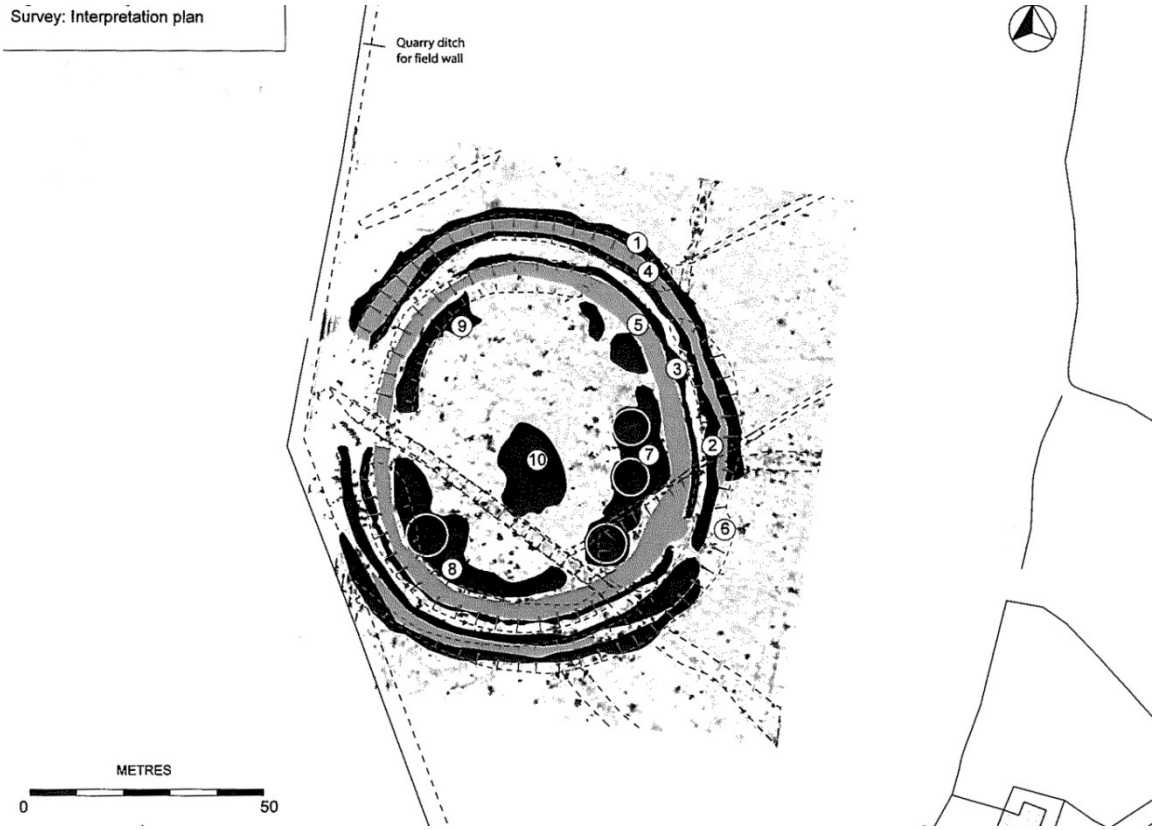

Figure 3: Interpretative plan of the geophysical survey at Meillionydd (suspected banks are indicated in grey and occupation deposits and suggested ditches are in black; Smith and Hopewell 2007, fig 16). Following excavation, this interpretation now needs to be amended.

Figure 4: Northeast-facing section of trench 1 East extension (stitched from two separate images). The facing stones of the outer bank are visible in this section. The quarry hollow is in front of the bank, at the right end of the image, and the shallow quarry scoop is behind of the bank (on the left side of the image).

The bank had a width of c. 3m in width and reached a maximum thickness of 0.45m. The earthwork was noticeably less pronounced in this part of the enclosure and it had clearly been slighted at some point in the past. As the evidence in trench 2 reveals, a large roundhouse was inserted into the body of the outer bank in a later period of occupation (see below), and there may be additional roundhouses extending immediately to the north and south along the perimeter of the outer bank. Such activity undoubtedly resulted in the truncation of the bank in this area. The lower body of the bank consisted of a lower light reddish-brown sandy silt (478, equivalent to 55 in Trench 2 2010), which was up to 0.30m deep and sloped down on the eastern and western faces of the bank. Overlying the western edge of this layer was a discrete patch of dark brown silt (477), c. 0.08m thick, and this is sealed by the facing stones of the inner bank (486) as well as the body of the inner bank (49), which in turn covers the entirety of the sequence of bank deposits. This is a mid-brown sandy silt with frequent angular, rounded, and burnt stones, measuring c. 0.25m thick. Sitting directly above the western edge of contexts 477 and 49 is the inner facing stones of the bank (486). The lower course of the inner facing stones was preserved and comprised of five closely set stone blocks (Figure 5). No outer facing stones were preserved, although the presence of large stone blocks in the north-facing section on the eastern edge of the upper bank layer (49) is suggestive that outer facing stones originally existed.

Figure 5: Image showing the inner facing stones of bank, the top of the bank, and the bottom of quarry hollow (the green string shows the original edge of trench 1 east extension before the bulk dividing this trench from trench 2 extension was removed).

The sequence in the trench now splits into two; the deposits infilling the quarry hollow in front of (and to the west) of the outer bank, and the deposits forming in the area behind (and to the east) of the outer bank. We shall deal with the quarry hollow first.

The primary layers within the quarry hollow [155] consisted of a loose dark brown silt (311) with some stone inclusions that was only 0.05m thick. It was identified 1m to the west of the inner face of

the bank and it was cut by the outer wall face of the adjacent stone roundhouse in trench 2. The overlying silt accumulation consisted of a dark orangey-brown silt (460) that contained some large stone blocks and occasional charcoal flecks. The layer was 0.15-0.17m thick and it extended for 1.4m from the inner wall face of the bank (this layer is also cut by the later roundhouse set into the outer bank and quarry hollow; see trench 2 extension, below).

The following deposits are associated with the occupation of the adjacent roundhouse in trench 2 extension. A mottled mid-brown silt (317) which contained frequent lenses of bright red, pink, and orange ash, as well as some smaller stones, banked up against the inner wall face of the bank, extending for 0.80m to the west. This was between 0.05-0.20m thick (in trench 2 extension, it directly overlay a discrete ash dump, context 321, which also banked up against the outer face of the house wall; see below). It appears that during the occupation of the roundhouse, the narrow space between the roundhouse wall and the inner face of the bank was utilised for refuse disposal.

Partly overlying the final ash dump was a slump of bank material, which possibly accumulated when the roundhouse was abandoned. This consisted of a mixed crumbly orange and yellow gravel (461) with frequent small- to large-size stones. It reached a maximum depth of 0.20m, and it extended for c. 1.10m in front of the inner face of the bank, although it was confined to the southern edge of the trench. The next layer in the sequence was an orangey-grey gravelly silt (459). This was approximately 0.18m thick and it contained some large angular stones. It infilled the quarry hollow in the western-most metre of the trench (it is equivalent to quarry hollow fill 146 in trench 1, and possibly 303 in trench 2 extension). Next in the sequence came a friable mid- to dark brown silt with occasional large stones and some charcoal flecks (452; equivalent to 302 in Trench 2 extension). This extended for 1.7m infront of the bank and it covered the underlying bank slump. Finally, covering the western limits of layer 452 and extending over layer 459 was a mid-greyish brown silt (455) with frequent stones and burnt stones, and occasional flecks of charcoal (it is equivalent to context 143 in trench 1). Overlying the entire sequence was the topsoil (451) which was approximately 0.15-0.20m thick in this area and contained frequent stones.

Infilling the shallow quarry scoop [487] in the area immediately behind (and to the east) of the outer bank was a soft mid- to dark brown silt (463). This also accumulated against the eastern edge of the lower layer of the bank (478), where it was c. 0.05-0.10m thick, although it reached a depth of 0.20m inside the quarry scoop. The layer contained relatively frequent charcoal flecks and the dark, humic nature of this deposit suggests that it formed during the occupation of the enclosure and represents natural silting within the hollow. Partially overlying this was bank slump 453, which extended to a maximum length of 2m and was up to 0.40m thick. This consisted of a mid-brown silty loam which was mottled with pockets of yellowish sandy gravel and contained some angular stone blocks and burnt stone. The final two layers within this part of the trench are silt accumulations. A dark brown silty loam (456) contained some small angular stones; this layer was between 0.08-0.15m thick and it partially overlay the eastern limits of the bank slump, extending some 2m to the east. Overlying this was a reddish brown friable silt (454) which also accumulated against the bank slump and extended across the entire trench. This layer contained some medium-sized stones and it was approximately 0.10m thick. Overlying this was the topsoil (451) which measured c. 0.20m thick in the area immediately behind the bank, although where it overlay the bank it was only 0.08-0.10m thick and was notably richer in stone.

Trench 1 West extension

Trench 1 West extension was opened to expose a larger area of the roundhouse and the inner bank which were identified at the western end of trench 1 in 2010. For this purpose, the north-westerly c. 3 meters of the fully excavated features in trench 1 had been covered with plastic sheeting before backfilling in 2010 and were reopened this year, with the trench extended c. 3 meters to the northwest and c. 3 meters to the northeast. After cleaning, the trench was extended a further 0.80m along its southeast edge to fully expose the inner bank (Figure 6), which was identified in 2010 as the potential foundation trench for the inner stone facing of the inner bank.

Figure 6: Top; the upper fill of the linear foundation trench for the inner bank is visible on the left, and the rubble infill of the roundhouse platform is visible on the right. Bottom; excavation of the upper fill of the inner bank feature shows the gravel basal fill, as well as ploughmarks in the large stones that were set within the cut.

The orange gravel natural in this area was assigned context 352 (equivalent to 11/08 in 2010). As identified in 2010, the inner bank sat within a narrow linear scoop [10], measuring up to 0.80m wide. This cut was noticeably shallower in this area when compared to trench 1; the sides were less steep and it measured only 0.15m deep (see Figure 6). This linear cut, with its various fills (376, 360, 30 and 09, see below), visibly curved to the north-west at the very northern limits of the area (Figures 7 and 8) which, as the subsequent excavation season confirmed, formed the beginning of the in-turn for the entrance through the inner bank (which lay further north of trench 1 West extension, excavated 2012). The very base of the cut contained a shallow, concreted deposit of gravel (376). This was only 0.05m deep and it was blackened and rusty-coloured in places. It appears to represent some form of iron mineralisation which occurred naturally. Sitting above this was a compact stony layer consisting of a dark brown loam with frequent small stones (360). These underlay some larger boulders which had been deliberately set along the central area of cut (30). Unlike the section of the inner ditch exposed in 2010, which contained closely set and regularly-spaced boulders, these were much less well-preserved in this area. Some of the boulders remaining in the feature showed clear evidence of having been scraped repeatedly by a plough (see Figure 6, bottom image), which seems to have dislodged some of the boulders. It was also observed that the topsoil cover (03) in much of this area was thinner than in the area exposed in 2010, and hence the feature was less-well protected. The uppermost fill of the feature was a stone-rich grey-brown silty loam (09), which partially covered context 30. Similar to Trench 1, this layer was relatively rich in heat affected stone (small to medium sized stones). Overall, this feature is unusual, but it clearly represents part of the body of the inner bank, which was evidently slighted in this area at some point in the past.

Just under half of a roundhouse, which is roughly 9m in diameter, was exposed in the western half of the trench. This house is positioned c. 1.50m in front of the inner bank and c. 4.40m of the building was exposed. The house sat within a terrace cut [47], which reached a maximum depth of 0.60m in the western corner of the trench; the floor is characterised by a high density of features which were sealed by a substantial rubble infill. In the 2010 trench, the wall of the roundhouse consisted of a dry-stone wall (06) which was fairly well-preserved (three courses high in one place), although only the inner wall-face remained. It seemed likely that the house was originally set into the body of the inner bank, located immediately behind the wall in this area, and this is similar to the situation in Trench 2 (see below). The house therefore appears to be later than the construction of the inner bank. However, in the 2011 extension trench, the wall of the roundhouse was not clearly identified. Some large stone blocks were present along the edge of the roundhouse terrace cut, but no facing stones survived, and the rubble blocks could equally have been associated with the upper rubble layer that infilled the house on abandonment. Similar to the outer bank, it is possible that the wall had been truncated by the plough in this area. However, in the 2011 extension trench, a curvilinear pattern of postholes, stakeholes and a gully ran along the inside of the terrace cut and these are undoubtedly associated with the construction of a house (see below). They either represent the presence of an earlier timber roundhouse, or they form part of the roundhouse wall in this area. It may well be the case that where the roundhouse wall was free-standing, it comprised of timber posts and wattle and daub walls. In contrast, where the wall was physically set into the body of the bank, as appears to have been the case in the 2010 trench, the inner face of the wall was necessarily constructed from facing stones, which not only served to provide a stable wall for the house, but also provided support for the body of the inner bank, preventing it from slumping into the interior of the house.

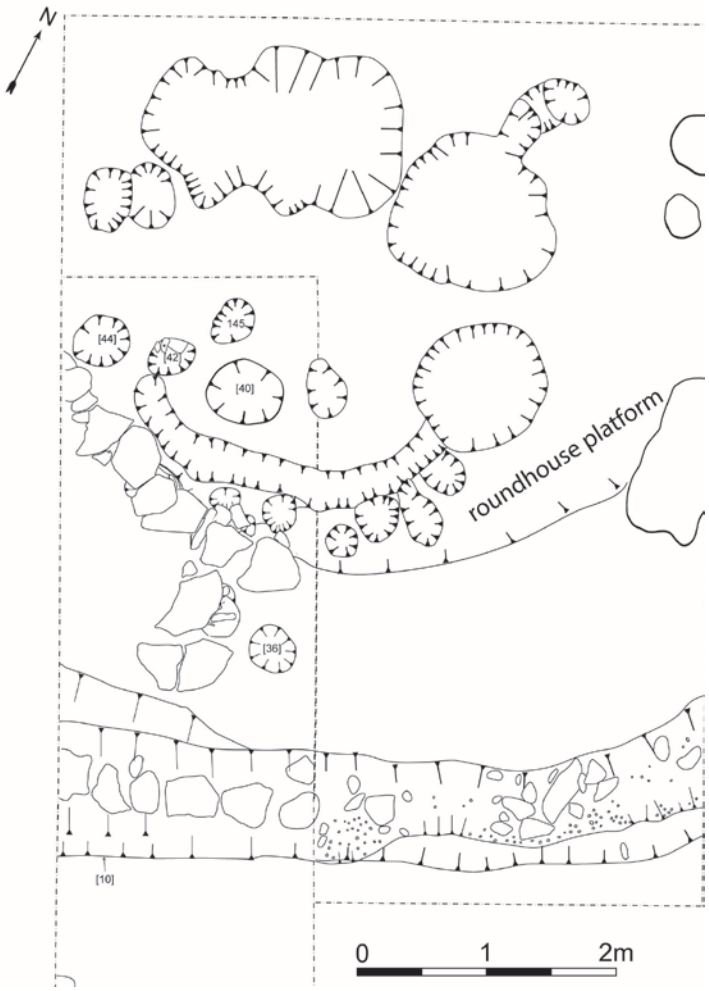

Figure 7: Post-excavation plan of trench, showing the inner bank with stone settings, and the house platform, with stone wall, curving gully and various postholes and pits cutting the floor. The position of the 2010 trial trench is indicated by dash-dot-dash line. All features were fully excavated, apart from three on the northern side of the trench which were covered in plastic and excavated in 2012.

We shall deal with the curvilinear gully [153] first, as this may represent the earliest feature within the house platform. The gully [153] was well-preserved in the newly opened areas; it was 0.30m wide and 0.25m deep, continuing in a curve for about 1.5m into the newly opened area, where it terminated in a relatively sizeable pit with large upright packing stones, possibly a post-pit [398] for a door post (Figures 7 and 8). In trench 1 in 2010, this gully feature also partially ran along the inside of the preserved inner facing stones of the roundhouse wall, terminating just before the trench edge. The feature contained upright packing stones (408) along its entire length, consisting of narrow stone slabs, and it was filled with a mid-brown silt (154) (see the fills of this feature in Figure 11). We originally interpreted this feature as a wall slot for an earlier plank built roundhouse (Waddington and Karl 2010), but this now seems unlikely. It is of an entirely different character to the wall slots of plank-built houses that were excavated at Meillionydd in 2015, being of much smaller dimensions. It possesses more similarities, in terms of its dimensions, to the internal drains within the roundhouse in trench 2 that were excavated in 2013/2014. However, in the trench 2 roundhouse, these were capped with stone. Due to the in situ packing stones preserved within this gully, it also seems unlikely that it functioned as a drain, and a more appropriate interpretation is that it is a slot for a wattle wall for the roundhouse. The fact that this gully also terminated within a large door post provides further support to the interpretation that it is associated with the construction of the house. This large post-

pit [398] was circular in shape, with a diameter of 1m and a depth of c. 0.45-0.50m deep. It had steep sides and was was roughly V-shaped in profile. It was filled with three large upright packing stones (409), and a relatively loose dark grey-brown silt with frequent charcoal fragments (367) (see Figure 9).

Figure 8: Post-excavation photo of the eastern part of trench 1 West extension, showing the inner bank (left side of image), and cut features associated with the roundhouse, in particular showing the gully terminating in the large post-pit for the roundhouse door (right-hand side of image).

Figure 9: Entrance post-hole [398] of the roundhouse, showing two large upright packing stones and the basal fill. The stone uprights of the infilled gully [153] are visible in the top right hand corner.

The remaining features which were associated with the construction of the roundhouse were identified along the northern edge of the trench; these were planned but they could not be excavated in 2011 due to time-restraints (see planned features without hashers on Figure 7). These features were excavated in 2012 and they are described in the subsequent interim report. However, for orientation purposes, these consisted of the other entrance post-pit ([384] and fill 383), located c. 1m to the northwest of the entrance post [398] discussed above; one posthole ([382] and fill 383), which sits just within the house terrace cut, and represents the continuation of the house wall; and two possible additional features ([371] filled with 370, [387] filled with 386) which sat in the area immediately infront of the entranceway.

The gully [153] was also partially cut on its southern edge by an alignment of closely set postholes (Figure 7). The most northerly posthole [373] was 0.40m in diameter and 0.20m deep. This contained upright packing stones (410) and a fill of mid-brown loose silt (372). An irregularly shaped pit, possibly a double posthole [375] sat immediately to the south and this measured 0.60m by 0.30m and was up to 0.25 deep. It contained a fill of dark brown silt (374) with some medium-sized stones. Immediately to the south was another posthole or stakehole [378], which had a diameter of c. 0.35m-0.40m at the top, but was only 0.15m wide in the lower two-thirds of the feature. It was 0.25m deep and filled with at least five upright packing stones (411) and a dark brown silt (377). Sitting immediately next to this feature was a stakehole [400]. This was 0.25m in diameter and 0.18m deep. This also contained four packing stones and a dark silty soil (401). This alignment of features, which sit just inside the cut for the house, are undoubtedly associated with house construction activities. They may well be a replacement or repair to the gully [153], which possibly supported a wattle wall, and this suggests that the house had two phases of occupation. The presence of at least two phases of occupation in this house is also supported by the presence of some intercutting pits (see below).

The remaining features inside the house consist of pits (Figure 7). One small circular feature [380] was positioned in the north-western corner of the trench. It was 0.30m in diameter and 0.25-0.30m deep. It contained a dark brown loam with frequent charcoal flecks and some small stones (379). Another circular feature [388] was located just inside the roundhouse entrance. It had a diameter of around 0.40m and a depth of around 0.30m deep. It contained a lower ashy fill which was bright orange in colour (389), and an upper fill of dark grey charcoal-rich silt with frequent burned reddish clay-like deposits. This may represent a hearth pit, or at the very least a pit for depositing ash.

There were also three sizeable pits cutting through the house floor, one of irregular shape [402], one roughly round [403], and one roughly curvilinear in shape [396]. All of the pits contained some ash deposits and heat-affected stones, showed some evidence of having been subjected to in situ burning, and contained remains of clay lining, in one case still containing some preserved grain or seeds. They appear to have served as cooking pits. One pit [396] was positioned immediately inside the house entrance-way (Figure 10). This feature was approximately 1.40m in diameter and 0.35m deep, with gently sloping sides and a rounded bottom. The basal fill was a compact, reddened clay lining (395) which was up to 0.05m thick, and extended from the base up the southern sides of the feature. This lining contained ash and burnt material impressed into it, as well as preserved unburnt seeds (sample number 173). It was covered with an upper fill of dark brown charcoal-rich silt (385) which contained frequent lenses of reddish-orange clay, ashy deposits and heat affected stones. The lowest lense within this fill consisted of a dark ash-rich layer which was visible sitting directly above the clay lining in the section drawing, and measured between 0.05-0.10m thick. This was not

assigned a separate context number on excavation, due to the frequency of lenses within this pit fill. Based on the nature of the pit fills, this pit clearly functioned as a hearth or cooking pit.

Figure 10: Half-sectioned cooking pit [396], showing the clay lining near its base.

Two further pits [402, 403] were situated near the centre of the house floor (see Figure 7). The cut for pit 402 was unusually wide and irregular in shape and it appears to represent at least three intercutting pits which were not visible on excavation, although one re-cut is clear in the northern end of the section drawing. It measured 1.4m in length and its width varied from 1.15m to 0.80m. This was a shallow feature, with a maximum depth of only 0.30m, and it was also lined with clay (406). This lining consisted of a yellow-ish grey compact layer, between 0.03-0.10m thick, and it was overlain by a black charcoal-rich ash (407), which was confined to the northern side of the feature as well as its base. The upper fill of the feature consisted of a compact reddish-black clayey loam (363) with frequent lumps of reddened clay containing charcoal flecks, lumps of unburned, yellow clay, and heavily burnt stone. The adjacent pit [403], located immediately to the south, was circular in shape, with a diameter of 0.40m and a depth of 0.30m. It was broadly bowl-shaped in profile, with a flat bottom. This pit was not lined with clay, but the fill consisted of a compact mottled grey-brown silty loam with frequent inclusions of reddened clay and charcoal flecks and some burnt stones (404). Immediately to the east of this feature was a small circular pit [357], measuring 0.50m in diameter and 0.30m deep. This was filled with a black-ashy soil with frequent charcoal fragments (356).

Overlying all these pits was an occupation floor, consisting of a patchy dark grey-black clayey loam (364) which extended mainly across the western side of the house floor, located immediately above the cooking/hearth pits. This occupation horizon was only 0.03m thick in places and it contained frequent charcoal flecks and lumps of burned orange clay. It was quite similar to the upper fills of the cooking/hearth pits and appears to represent trampling of these upper fills into the floor of the house.

A sequence of silty rubble layers sat above these features. It was unclear if the earliest two layers relate to the occupation of the house or its abandonment. The primary layer was a rubble spread (351) that was confined to the south-western corner of the trench. This consisted of a dark brown silt with frequent charcoal flecks and burnt stones and was approximately 0.05-0.10m thick. It contained some medium-to-large angular stone blocks which may represent wall collapse. However, there were notable circular-shaped gaps within the rubble, and these were identified in plan as the upper fills of possible pits or postholes (354, 356, and 358). Only one of these features proved to be a cut feature on excavation; this was a posthole [355] which contained several upright packing stones (412) and a fill of dark grey-brown silt (354). This cut through one of the earlier pits [357] which lay underneath the rubble layer. The other possible cut features were not identified on excavation, but they overlie the large cooking pits and it is possible that they were not visible in the dark fills of these features. 351 therefore either represents a later occupation horizon within the house, or alternatively, it is an abandonment/destruction layer that accumulated when these internal posts were still standing. Partially overlying 351, but extending across the entirety of the house floor, was a soft dark brown silt with some charcoal inclusions (28). This did not contain many stones and it was approximately 0.07m thick. This may either represent an occupation floor, the collapse of the roof of the building following abandonment, or the natural silting up of the roundhouse following abandonment. Due to the uncertainty of the nature of 351 and 28, environmental soil samples and phosphate sediment samples were retrieved from 351 and 28 on a 1m grid, and the analysis of these samples will hopefully shed light on the formation processes of these contexts.

Overlying these layers, and infilling the entire roundhouse terrace, was a substantial, compact rubble layer, which was up to 0.50m thick (05; Figure 11). Much of this deposit consisted of a compact stone rubble infill which contained with very little soil, but where soil existed, it consisted of a mottled dark brown and yellow sandy silt. This contained some very large stone blocks, although stones of all sizes were present within the layer, as well as fire-cracked and heat affected stone. As already established in 2010, it would appear to be a deliberate infill that potentially accumulated in one event. It may be that the walls of the roundhouse were pulled down and the material was dumped into the house interior. As already discussed in the 2010 preliminary report (Waddington and Karl 2010, 13), this is clear evidence of an elaborate and labour-intensive closing rite, in which the walls of the roundhouse were deliberately slighted and the material thus collected and used to infill the roundhouses.

The rubble infill of the house was broadly contemporaneous with a shallow layer of rubble (07) that extended from the outer limits of the house terrace cut, eastwards towards the inner bank. This layer was a distinct spread of stone which largely formed on the outside of the house; its relationship to the rubble infill of the house (05) was unclear and the two are very likely broadly contemporary.

Overlying the entire trench was the topsoil (03), which was rich in stone.

Figure 11: Top; the hut platform in Trench 1 west extension, showing the pits before excavation and the curvilinear wall gully, with upright packing stones *in situ* (the stretch of the gully in the foreground was excavated in 2010). The stone infill of the roundhouse is clearly visible in the section. Bottom; excavating the compact stone infill of the roundhouse.

Trench 2 extension

Trench 2 extension aimed at examining the occupation features discovered, but not excavated, next to the outer bank in 2010 (Figure 12). The trench aimed to expose a large enough area of the outer bank and adjacent quarry hollow in order to gain a better understanding of the structure and stratigraphic relationships of these two features. Trench 2 extension also served to connect the area excavated in trench 2 in 2010 with trench 1 east extension in 2011.

Trench 2 extension turned out to have a more complex stratigraphy than expected. More than two thirds of the length of the extension produced evidence for yet another roundhouse which was set into the quarry hollow. This house cut through the basal layers of the quarry hollow and it also cut

through the outer bank, partially truncating it (Figures 13 and 14). Excavations this year concentrated on exposing the roundhouse walls and removing the abandonment fills of the roundhouse. This resulted in the exposure of occupation floor deposits as well as several postholes and pits, which were excavated in future excavation seasons.

Figure 12: Photo of stone setting in the south-western corner of trench 2 in 2010.

Figure 13: Trench 2 extension, showing the later roundhouse set into the body of the bank, and what turned out to be a stone-capped drain on the floor of the roundhouse in the foreground.

The natural orange gravel in this trench (323, equivalent to 11 in trench 1 east extension), was cut by the quarry hollow [155]; the nature of this feature is described in the description of trench 1 east extension above. Contemporary with this cut is the outer bank, which was exposed but not excavated this year. This consisted of an orangey-brown gravelly loam with frequent stones (49) which was faced on its inner side with large stone boulders (301) (although only two were preserved in this trench as the inner facing stones of the bank had been robbed during the construction of the roundhouse (see below).

The basal fills of the quarry hollow consisted of two dark silt layers which presumably represent the natural silting up of the floor of the quarry hollow by rain wash material from the adjacent bank. The basal layer is a loose dark brown silt (311) with some stones, that was only 0.05m thick in places. It was identified 1m to the west of the bank and it extended to the south end of trench 1 east extension. The overlying silt accumulation consisted of a dark brown silt that contained some large stone blocks and occasional charcoal flecks, reaching a maximum depth of c. 0.10m. Both layers were truncated by the cut for a large roundhouse [338], located immediately to the north of these deposits.

The next activity concerns the creation of the roundhouse. As well as cutting through the basal fills of the quarry hollow, this roundhouse also cut through part of the outer bank (49 and 301). An area of c. 7m in length and c. 1m wide was removed from the rampart and the house set within the newly opened area. The inner facing stones of the outer bank were also generally absent in the area immediately in-between the roundhouse wall and trench 1 east extension, and it appears that the inner facing stones of the bank in this area were robbed for the creation of this house wall.

This roundhouse is particularly well preserved due to its protected position within the deep wide quarry hollow which was located on the hill slope inside the outer bank. At an estimated diameter of c. 8 meters, it is about the same size as the other stone-built roundhouses identified on the site (Waddington and Karl 2010, 10-3, 17-25; see stone roundhosue in trench 3). Where its wall is freestanding, it also seems to be constructed in the same technique as the wall of the roundhouse excavated in quadrant 3B in trench 3 in 2010 (Waddington and Karl 2010, 21-4, especially fig 13), with a well-built inner (305) and outer (306) faced wall, which is partially constructed from substantial boulders, and contains a dark silt and rubble core (307). This wall is preserved to a height of 0.40m. Where the wall is built into the body of the outer bank, it only has an inner stone facing, as it utilises the bank as the core for the roundhouse wall. Three large stones (72) were excavated on the inner face of the outer bank in trench 2 in 2010; these were assumed to be the inner facing stones of the bank, but these can now be positively re-identified as the inner facing stones of the roundhouse wall.

The cut for the construction of this roundhouse also re-exposed the natural gravel at the base of the quarry hollow and the area exposed within the interior of the house was an orangey yellow gravel (325). This was recorded as clayey in consistency in places, presumably the effect of exposure and wear during house construction and occupation. Sitting in the southern periphery of the roundhouse cut, in between the inner face of the house wall (305) and the working section through the house, was a compact orange loam (318) which was approximately 0.05-0.10m thick and may represent a floor deposit (or trampling deposits which eroded the natural orange gravel). Next in the sequence came a series of postholes and pits which were exposed and planned, but left unexcavated until the entire house could be exposed in a future season. The features consisted of five postholes which cut the floor of the roundhouse (325) and may well be associated with the construction of the roundhouse ([328] filled with 329; [330] filled with 331; [332] filled with 333; [334] filled with 335; and [336] filled with 337) and two pits which are associated with the occupation of the roundhouse ([326] filled with 327) and [339] filled with 319). One of these pits [339] cut through the orange compact loam (318), described above.

The stone setting already exposed, but not excavated in 2010, which at first looked to be aligned with the (inner) stone facing of the roundhouse wall, turned out to be somewhat out of alignment (Figures 13 and 14), and also set slightly lower, than the facing stones of the roundhouse wall. As a

future excavation season revealed, these stones (72) capped an internal drain which is associated with the occupation of the roundhouse. This was left unexcavated for a future season.

Sitting ontop of the roundhouse floor, and associated with the final occupation or abandonment of the house, were three layers (309, 312 and 313). Sitting in the southern half of the house was a dark grey-brown clayey loam (312), containing some charcoal inclusions and burnt stones. This was a thin layer, c. 0.03-0.05m thick, and extends across the house floor. It may well be associated with the use of a hearth pit excavated in the central area of the house in a subsequent season (2013). A discrete spread of compact yellow-ish grey clay (313), mottled with burnt clay and charcoal deposits, spread across the north-western corner of the extension trench. It sits immediately above a large pit [326] and it may well be a clay sealing deposit for the pit, as it was fairly substantial and was 0.15m thick in places. Finally, a compact dark orange-brown loam (309), c. 0.08m thick, containing fairly frequent medium-sized angular stones which may represent wall tumble, spread over the floor when the house was abandoned.

Overlying these deposits were the abandonment fills of the roundhouse. The basal fill was a mottled orange-brown loam, containing lenses of clay, small stones and sandy deposits (314), which was overlain by an extensive and thick rubble-rich brown silt (308). This rubble layer contained crushed clay deposits and measured between 0.20-0.30m thick.

Figure 14: The stone roundhouse wall set into the outer bank next to the entranceway.

Immediately outside the house, and infilling the quarry hollow, was a series of ash dumps which are presumably associated with the occupation of the house. The basal deposit was a compact clayey greenish grey silt with frequent charcoal flecks (321), which banked up against the roundhouse wall, and measured 0.30m wide and c. 0.60m in length. It contained a large lense of charcoal which spread over the outer face of the roundhouse wall. It was overlain by a more extensive mottled mid-brown silt (317) which contained frequent lenses of bright red, pink, and orange ash and some smaller stones. This was between 0.05-0.20m thick, and as outlined above, it also extended into trench 1 east extension where it banked up against the inner wall face of the bank. It would therefore appear that the narrow space behind the roundhouse wall was utilised for the dumping of ash and possibly other organic refuse. Overlying this, and banking up over the outer face of the house wall, was a discrete deposit of light greyish brown silt containing a large lense of charcoal-rich orange-red clay (316). This was partially sealed by another discrete accumulation of material; a firm orange clayey gravel, containing very few stones and reaching a depth of 0.15-0.20m (315). This appears to be a

dump of redeposited natural, possibly from the cleaning or excavation of a hearth pit inside the house.

Overlying these occupation dumps, and infilling the quarry hollow to the south of the roundhouse wall, was an orange-brown silty loam (303), c. 0.10m thick, containing frequent medium to large sized stones (this is possibly equivalent to 459 in trench 1 east extension). The next fill is a dark brown silt (302) which also contained frequent medium to large sized stones and some charcoal inclusions (this is equivalent to 452 in trench 1 east extension). Overlying this, and extending into the centre of the roundhouse fills, was the uppermost fill of the quarry hollow. This was a mid-greyish brown silt (455) containing frequent stones, burnt stones, and occasional flecks of charcoal. This is contemporary with a mid-brown silty loam (48) which contained significantly fewer stones and spread across the remainder of the house fills. The topsoil (01) covered all the deposits in this trench.

To conclude, the outer bank in trench 2 extension, which is located immediately adjacent to the entrance-way (identified and excavated in the 2014 season) had clearly been slighted and a relatively large roundhouse was set into it. Castell Odo also had a roundhouse built into one of the banks near its entrance, although in this example, the house is set into the inner rampart. However, both the inner and outer banks also seemed to be particularly strongly slighted in the area of the entranceway at Castell Odo (Alcock 1960), and it may well be the case that excavation of the outer banks at this site would produce roundhouses as well, similar to Meillionydd. It therefore seems that during a later stage in the occupation of both sites, the banks were slighted and roundhouses were deliberately incorporated into the existing boundaries next to the entrance-way.

The entire roundhouse, with its walls and internal features, was covered with plastic sheeting and reopened in the next season.

Trench 3

Trench 3 was not completely excavated in 2010. In the majority of areas (quadrants 3A, B and C), nearly all features had been fully excavated in 2010, and these have been described in detail in the 2010 interim report (Waddington and Karl 2010, 17-25). In quadrant 3D, only the topsoil had been removed in 2010, and this area was completed, along with all other features remaining in the other quadrants, in 2011. The bulks preserving the working sections between the quadrants (labelled 3E and 3F) were also fully excavated in 2011.

All of trench 3, except for the north-easterly corner of quadrant 3B that had been fully excavated in 2010, was reopened in 2011. The backfilled areas were excavated to the level of the plastic sheeting by a mechanical digger, with the bulks excavated entirely by hand. This trench was completed during the 2011 season, and it contains at least three roundhouses (Figure 15), possibly more, and the badly preserved remains of the slighted inner bank. Individual quadrants are tackled separately below.

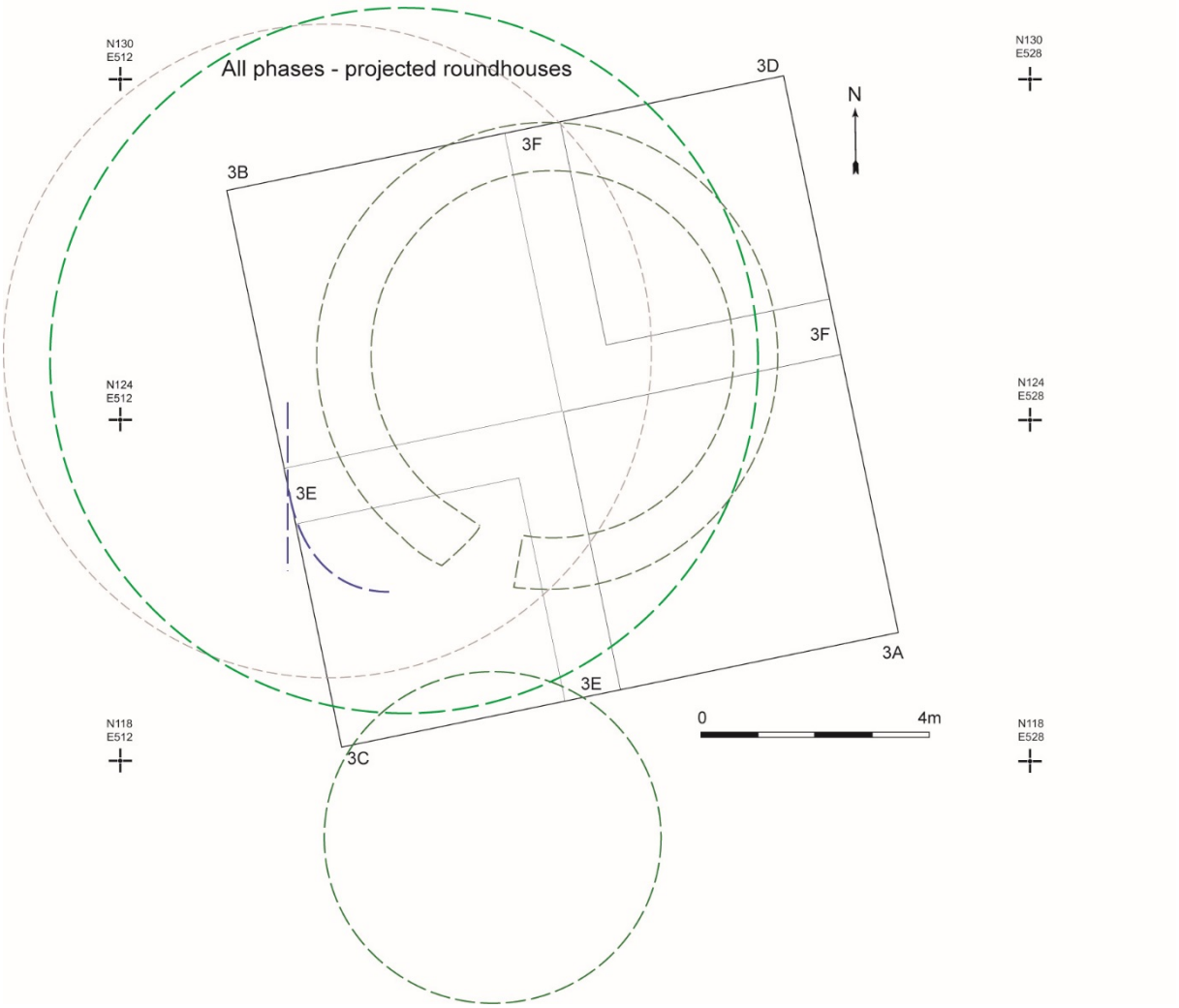

Figure 15: Plan of trench, showing the location of the 2010 quadrants 3A-D, and the working bulks that were removed in 2011 (3E; 3F and 3D were removed simultaneously in 2011). The illustration also shows the schematic positions of three definite roundhouses and two possible roundhouses. The large 12m diameter timber roundhouse is shown in green, the position of another possible timber roundhouse is shown in grey. The possible wall of a stone roundhouse is shown in purple, and this was truncated by an 8m diameter stone roundhouse, which is shown in bright green, which may be contemporary with another stone roundhouse (shown in green) visible in the southern limits of the trench.

Quadrant 3A

The remaining features to be excavated in quadrant 3A were cut features associated with the timber roundhouse phase (Figure 16). Some of these features were sealed by a deposit of concreted redeposited natural gravel and clay (190). This deposit may represent a levelling deposit that was laid down when the stone roundhouse was constructed, or it may represent the decayed remains of the wattle and daub wall of the timber phase roundhouse.

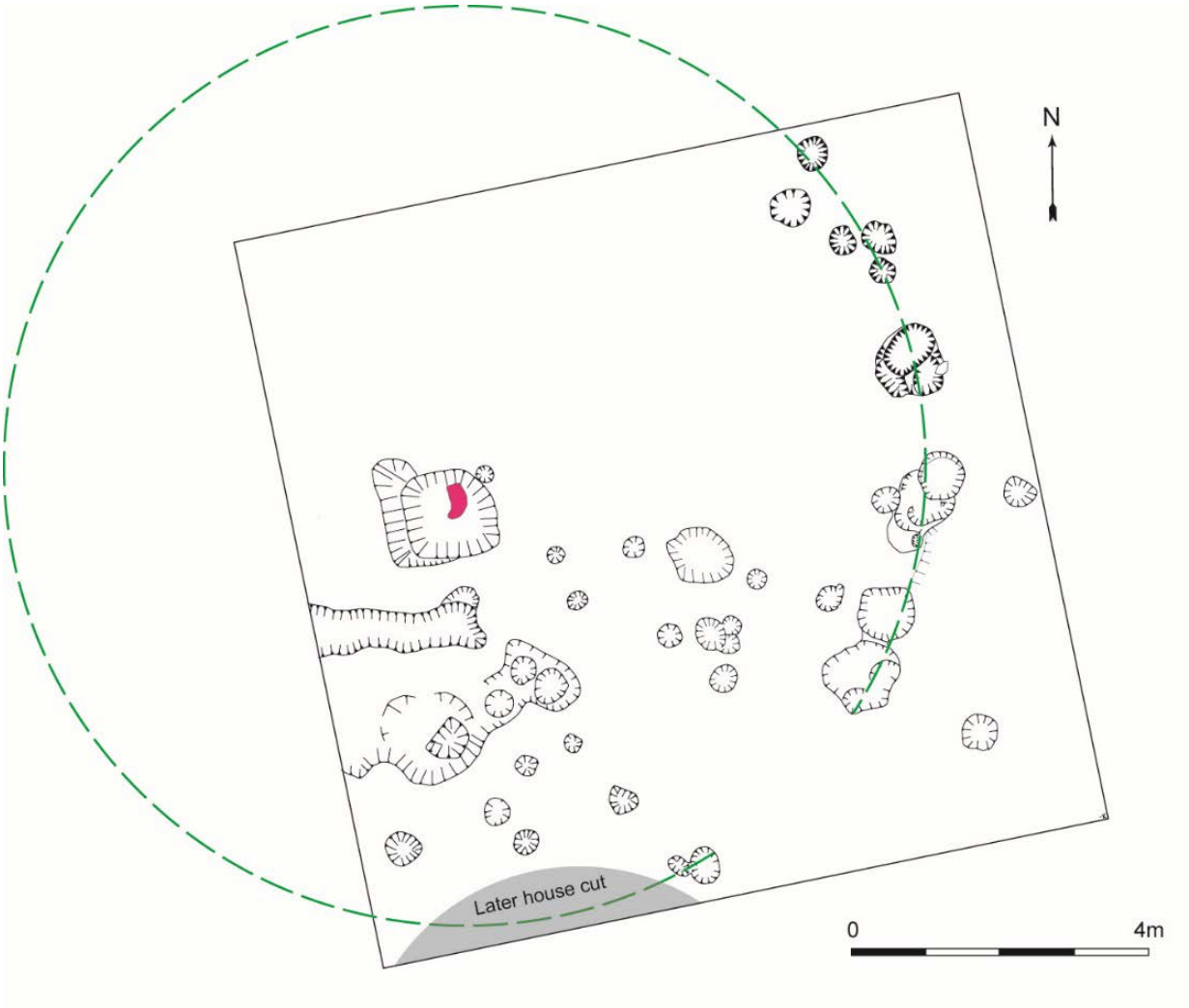

Figure 16: Plan of trench 3, showing all timber-phase features and the bulks, and the position of one large 12m diameter timber roundhouse with a central hearth (shown in green dotted line). Two postholes to the east of this post-arc in quadrant 3C were excavated in 2010 and they can not be positively associated with any particular roundhouse structure. They may well represent the remains of a timber fence boundary that was identified and excavated in the 2013-2014 seasons within trenches located around the entranceway to the enclosure.

One large post-pit [244] was excavated in the centre of the quadrant, and located immediately next to a large pit [206] that was excavated in 2010. Feature 244 was roughly curvilinear in shape, with a diameter of 1m and a depth of c. 0.30m. It contained two post-pads in the southern half of its base, and it is interpreted as a double posthole for the south-eastern entranceway to a large 12m diameter timber roundhouse (see Figure 16; the corresponding entrance post appears to be located in quadrant 3C, next to the cut for the later stone roundhouse in the southern limits of the trench). It was filled with a dark grey silt which was rich in charcoal (229) and contained a lense of charcoal in the uppermost part of the fill. This posthole was partially capped with the redeposited clay and gravel (190). The remaining features in this trench consisted of a shallow scoop for a hearth pit [243] which was associated with a stakehole [254] and was cut by one posthole [240] and a shallow scoop

[200]. The hearth scoop was very shallow, with a depth of only 0.15m, and it was elongated in shape, measuring c. 1m by 0.50m. The cut itself was irregular and at least two distinct recuts were visible once the feature had been fully excavated, although differential fills were not visible on excavation. It was filled with a mottled red/orange sand (242) which contained lenses of charcoal, and a discrete lense of charcoal was visible in the uppermost fill of the feature, spreading southwards outside of the cut for the hearth, and overlying the fill of the adjacent stake-hole. This stakehole [254] was visible on the southern edge of the hearth pit and it was presumably associated with an earlier burning of the hearth. It was 0.08m in diameter, with a depth of 0.12m, and it was filled with a dark brown silt (255). A shallow scoop or posthole [200] cut through the hearth fills; this was partially excavated in 2010 and completed in 2011. It was oval in shape, with a diameter of 0.40m and a depth of 0.15m. It was filled with upright packing stones (245), and a dark brown silt (201). The remaining posthole [240] was a circular feature, with a diameter of 0.20m and a depth of 0.28m, and a fill of mid-brown soil (239).

Quadrants 3C/E and 3B

Quadrant 3C had also mostly been excavated in 2010, but some features remained. This had originally been a 4m by 4m quadrant, with a 1m wide bulk left between it and quadrants 3A and B to allow the creation of a main cross-section through trench 3. The area of the bulk, named 3E, will be discussed together with quadrant 3C, since it is technically part of this quadrant. The adjacent quadrant 3B was almost completely excavated in 2010, but it is also tackled here, as the remaining contexts left to be excavated extended into bulk 3E and quadrant 3C.

Figure 17: Cluster of postholes with packing stones in quadrant 3C (235, filled with 230; 234, filled with 232; 235, filled with 230).

In quadrant C, three circular postholes [235, 234 and 236] were exposed beneath the later stone roundhouse wall (Figures 16 and 17). These postholes were contained within a shallow cut [569],

which was roughly L-shaped, measuring c. 1.30m in length and c. 0.60m wide, and which cut the natural orange gravel (102). Posthole 236 was 0.50m in diameter and 0.25m deep. It contained upright packing stones (241) and a dark brown silty fill (231). The other two postholes were smaller, measuring c. 0.35m in diameter: one posthole [234] was 0.20m deep and filled with packing stones and a dark brown silt (232), while the other [235] was 0.35m deep and filled with grey-brown silt (230) which contained stones, including a flat stone which sat across the uppermost part of the fill. These features preceded the stone roundhouse phase (they were sealed by the roundhouse wall, 117; see below), and while they are certainly associated with the timber phase of roundhouse construction, it is uncertain which timber building they are associated with. They may form part of an inner post-ring for one of the timber roundhouses, or perhaps they belong to an internal structure within one of the timber roundhouses.

Figure 18: The gully or drain [555]following removal of bulk 3E.

Broadly contemporary with these postholes, and cutting through the natural gravel in bulk 3E, were an additional five postholes (Figures 16 and 18). The southernmost feature consisted of a double posthole [257] which may well be the door post of the 12m diameter timber roundhouse also identified in quadrants 3A and D. The circular-shaped posthole measured 0.45m in diameter and 0.35m deep and it contained a smaller 0.20m diameter posthole on its western side. The feature may actually represent two intercutting features, but there was no distinction in the fills on excavation, which consisting of a mottled reddish and dark brown silt with some small stones (258), but with no in situ packing stones. Four other circular postholes, two with diameters of c. 0.30m [276 and 279] and two with diameters of c. 0.25m [277 and 278], were located further north in the corner of the bulk. These all contained packing stones but they were shallow features by comparison with other postholes in the trench and they have no clear association with any particular buildings. They may in fact be associated with roundhouse occupation activities, rather than construction. One posthole

[276] was 0.15m deep and it contained a packing stone (280) and a brown silty fill (272). Another [279] was only between 0.05-0.10m deep and this contained possible dislodged packing stones (283) and a dark brown fill (275). Posthole 277 was up to 0.20m deep and contained in situ packing stones (281) and dark brown silt (273). And finally, posthole 278 was only 0.08m deep but it contained an upright packing stone (282) and a dark brown silt (274).

In addition to these postholes, a deep and wide gully was excavated in the western limits of the bulk (Figure 18). The cut [555] was aligned east-west and it extended 2.40m into the trench, and it terminated somewhere outside of the western limits of the trench. It was approximately 0.30m deep. The fill was an homogenous dark brown loose silt with frequent small angular stones (554). It was sealed by the overlying roundhouse wall but it appears to be located within the cut for the roundhouse terrace, so it is presumably associated with the stone building phase, although it is not clear what this feature relates to. It is possible that it is a drain of some type. Further excavation to the west of trench 3 will enable this feature to be better understood and this formed a task for a future season (2015).

This gully appears to be broadly contemporary with the construction of the terrace cut [233] for the stone roundhouse phase (Figure 19). In bulk 3E and quadrant 3B, the first layer in the cut consisted of a dark brown silt (124), which was overlain with a linear arrangement of large stone blocks (113) which sits within a dark grey brown silt (109). This stone alignment consisted of closely set blocks orientated roughly north-south and located along the western-most limits of the trench edge. The stones have been interpreted as the possible facing stones of an earlier wall that was later cut by the large stone roundhouse which extended across the trench. As demonstrated in a future excavation season in 2015, these stones do indeed form part of a wall for another structure in this area (see forthcoming interim report). Some stone blocks were also present in the area between this earlier wall and the later roundhouse wall; they were too haphazard in plan to form part of a structure and they are presumably wall tumble associated with the destruction of one of the stone buildings in this part of the trench.

The next activity in the sequence consisted of the construction of a stone wall for the roundhouse, which was 8m in diameter (Figure 19). The wall in bulk 3E was not quite as well-preserved as the segment excavated in quadrant 3B in 2010, as it was only two courses high in the northern part of the bulk, and only a single course high in the southern part of the bulk. The three large inner facing stones (97) and the three outer facing stones (121) were filled with a core of dark brown silt and smaller stones (117). This wall appeared to truncate context 124, discussed above. In bulk 3E, the wall sat directly on top of the gully and the three postholes contained within the L-shaped cut in quadrant 3C (see above). The wall was not visible in the north-eastern corner of quadrant 3C, and it is suspected that the roundhouse entrance existed in this area, as the natural gravel appears to have been truncated to slope down here into the natural gravel (111) exposed on the roundhouse floor.

An occupation deposit sat directly infront of the inner facing stones in 3E. This was positioned on the roundhouse floor and also in the suspected entranceway, and it consisted of a dark brown soil with frequent charcoal flecks (110), which also partially extended into quadrant 3B in 2010. Overlying this was a stone tumble (259) which consists of medium to large-sized angular stones located immediately infront of the roundhouse wall in bulk 3E separating quadrants 3C and 3A. This was contained within a mottled sandy silt which was c. 0.20m thick.

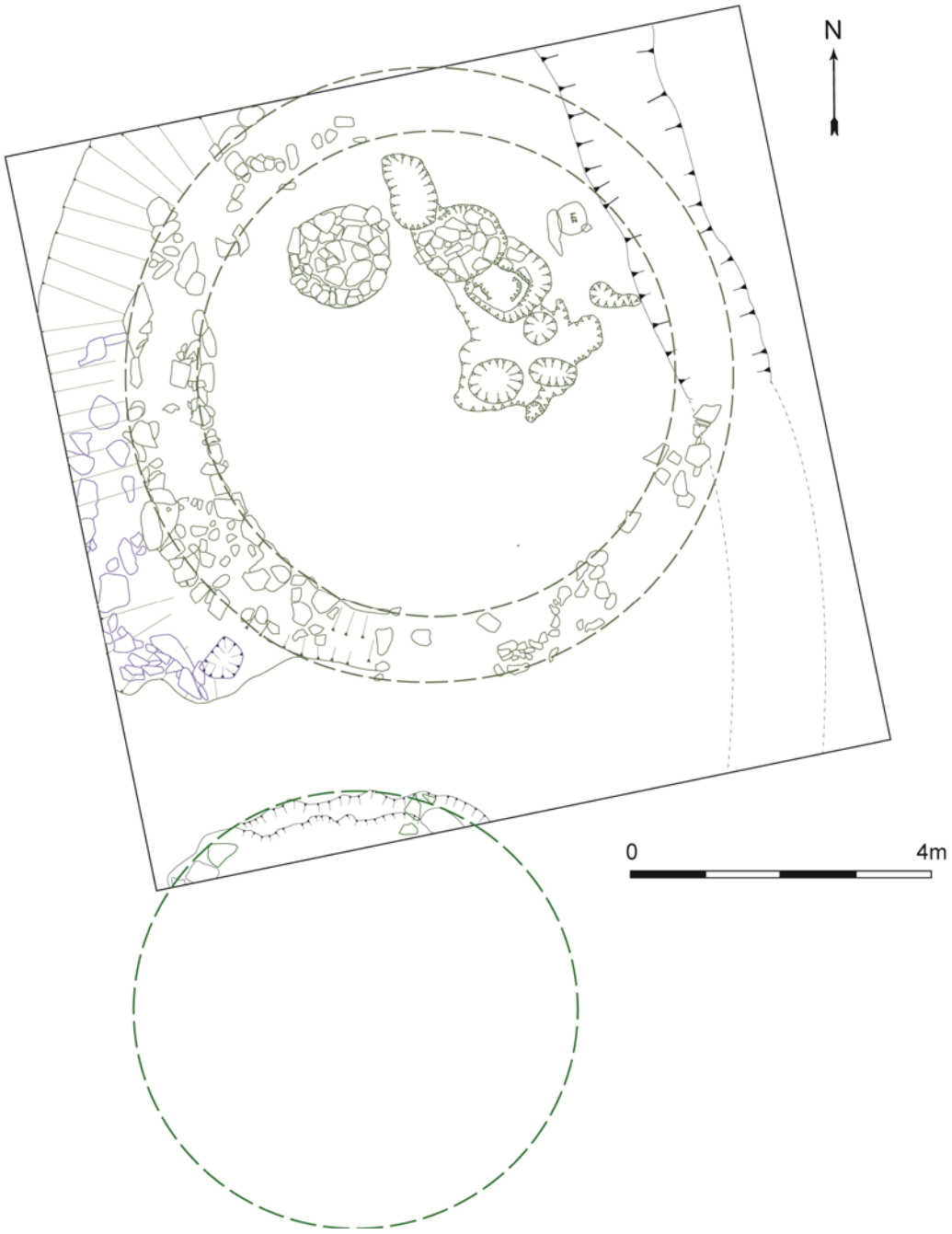

Figure 19: Phase 3; the stone roundhouse phase in Trench 3. The wall tumble and the remains of an earlier roundhouse wall are shown in purple, and the two definite roundhouses are shown in green. The 8m diameter roundhouse encompassing the main part of the trench appears to directly overlie the linear cut of the badly preserved remains of the inner bank in quadrant 3D.

Extending over all of these layers was the lower abandonment infill of the roundhouse (108), which extends into 3B and 3D. This consisted of a light yellowish brown sand which was packed full of small stones. This was overlain by the main rubble infill of the roundhouse, which consisted of dark brown loam which was once again packed full of small- to large-sized stones (116, equivalent to 107 in 3B). This is presumably broadly contemporary with a demolition layer located to the south of the roundhouse in bulk 3E. This was a compact layer of angular and rounded stones sitting within a dark

brown silt (101). This layer was excavated in quadrant 3A in 2010 and it was originally presumed to be the fill of the roundhouse, but this clearly also spread outside of the roundhouse suggesting that the walls of the house had already been demolished in this area when the house was infilled. The topsoil (04) overlay the entire sequence.

The remaining feature left unexcavated in 2010 in quadrant 3C was a house, located along the southern edge of the trench. This was positioned within a cut [249 and 105], which was 3m in length and extended some 0.80m into the trench (Figure 20). It was approximately 0.30m deep; the material infilling the first terrace cut for the house [249] was filled with a grey-brown loam (250). This contained a few larger stone blocks (251) were found along the western edge of this cut (Figure 20), but did not form a clear and well-built stone facing for a roundhouse wall. A posthole [247] was also associated with this terrace cut, positioned just inside the cut and located in the south-eastern corner of the trench: this was c. 0.50m in diameter and filled with packing stones (248) and a dark brown silt (246). This feature extended outside the southern limits of Trench 3C. The terrace then appeared to be recut [105] and this was filled with a mid-brown silt (104) with frequent medium-sized stones. This house was entirely exposed in a future excavation season and this is discussed in a forthcoming interim report.

This house is not stratigraphically related to the 8m diameter roundhouse located to the north, and so it is impossible to determine whether the two buildings are contemporary. It seems likely, however, that the two houses belong to the same stone building phase, when roundhouses were constructed around the entranceways to the enclosure and directly next to (or in the case of trench 2 extension, ontop of) the boundaries of the enclosure.

Figure 20: The edge of the stone roundhouse which was partially exposed in quadrant 3C, showing two stone blocks sitting along the edge of the first cut for the house. Postholes associated with the timber phase are visible to the left of this cut.

Quadrant 3D/F

In 2010, only the topsoil in quadrant 3D had been removed, and the archaeology cleaned and partially recorded. After deturfing and re-cleaning the area in 2011, the features already observed in 2010 – the rubble infill of the last stone roundhouse (128), and

the fill of the linear feature of the inner bank (130) containing many larger stones (Figure 21), were planned and excavation commenced.

The earliest features in this quadrant consist of five circular postholes and a shallow scoop which formed a post-arc and cut through the underlying natural gravel (131) on the eastern side of the quadrant (Figure 16). These sat within, and to the west of, a very shallow terrace cut for the timber roundhouse [260], which extended roughly north-south across the quadrant and was only c. 0.05m deep. The posts sitting within this terrace form an arc for a large 12m diameter timber roundhouse, which appears to have been rebuilt or repaired once. The largest of the postholes [264] had a diameter of 1.10m and a maximum depth of 0.80m. Following the excavation of the fills, it became clear that the feature contained two cuts for posts, with one cut probably representing a post-repair. This feature had a basal fill of light grey-brown silt (293), which was only present on the sides of the cut, several upright packing stones (285), and an upper fill of dark grey-brown silt (265) which contained small-medium sized stones, burnt stone, and clay deposits. The remaining postholes located immediately north were smaller by comparison, but located close enough together to suggest that two phases of roundhouse construction existed. A circular-shaped shallow scoop [295] was visible c. 0.60m to the north; this was 0.30m in diameter, with a depth of only 0.08m. It contained a dark brown loam with some small stones (294). Directly next to this feature was a posthole [266], which was 0.50m in diameter and 0.35m deep. This contained four in situ packing stones (292) and a fill of dark brown silt (267) with some small stones. The adjacent posthole [290] had a diameter of 0.32m and a depth of 0.26m and this was filled with a dark brown silt with one upright packing stone (289). Posthole 288 was larger, being 0.55m in diameter and 0.40m deep and it was filled with a grey-brown silty loam (287). The final and most northerly posthole [268] had a diameter of 0.50m and a depth of 0.30m and it was filled with packing stones (291) and a light grey-brown clayey loam (269). Immediately next to this was an ephemeral spread of charcoal (286), which was roughly 0.28m by 0.08m.

Figure 21: shot of quadrant 3D, following removal of topsoil. The linear feature of the bank is visible in the foreground, and the rubble infill of the roundhouse is visible in the top left-hand corner of the trench.

Overlying this post-arc was the stony fill of the linear feature of the inner bank (Figure 21). The cut for this linear feature [570] was very shallow (only 0.10m deep), but relatively wide (c. 1.40m) and it contained a dark brown-grey stony silt with some large stone blocks (130). The feature turned out to be very similar to, but shallower and less regularly set than, the inner bank in trench 1 and trench 1 extension. The stony fill had a maximum thickness of 0.25m, and this contained larger stone blocks. It is undoubtedly a foundation trench for the inner facing of an inner bank which has been almost entirely obliterated in this area. It extended into bulk 3F, but was not identified in 2010 in quadrant 3A, where it was too unclear to be identifiable as a distinct feature due to the mass of rubble excavated in this area (though the cut is visible in the southern section of quadrant 3A, where it was only 0.05m deep and 0.60m wide). Partially overlying the bank on the northern part of the quadrant was a deposit of yellowish-brown silt (237) which contained occasional stones.

The next activity in the sequence concerns the construction of the 8m diameter stone roundhouse (Figure 19). Immediately infront of the inner bank, and cutting deposit 237, was the terrace cut [261, equivalent to 161 and 112] for the house (also identified in quadrants 3B and 3C/E; see above). A yellowish brown silt (129) ran along the outside of the terrace cut and this was relatively rich in stone. This curvilinear spread of material had a maximum width of 0.70m, and it also partially overlay the inner bank at the southern end of the quadrant. As such, this deposit has been interpreted as the badly preserved remains of the base of the stone roundhouse wall. No stones of the wall were preserved in this area, but this is because the wall in this part of the house sits on the edge of the roundhouse terrace cut, and this has been obliterated, either during the abandonment of the building, or through post-abandonment disturbance and ploughing. It is apparent that the roundhouse was either physically set into the body of the inner bank (similar to the situation in Trench 2 extension; see above), or that the bank was slighted and the roundhouse wall partially set on top. Either way, the roundhouse post-dates the construction of the inner bank.

Figure 22: Half section through the working hollow and its pits, on the floor of the stone roundhouse in quadrant 3D.

Several features were identified in the floor of the roundhouse (see Figure 19); these included two circular cuts on the eastern edge of the floor, and a working hollow containing a variety of cut features towards the centre of the floor. The two features located on the eastern edge of the floor included a posthole [558] that had a diameter of 0.40m and a depth of 0.28m. It was filled with packing stones (557) and dark grey-brown fill (298) which was quite rich in charcoal and lumps of clay. Adjacent to this was a shallow scoop [559], which had a diameter of 0.44m and a depth of 0.05m. This contained one large stone on its western edge and a fill of dark grey-brown silty loam (271 = 556). These features have been tentatively placed in this phase, although it is possible that they belong to the earlier timber phase and that they were truncated by the terrace cut for the stone roundhouse.

The remaining features were all concentrated within a shallow working hollow (Figures 19 and 22), located in the south-western corner of the quadrant. These evidently sit within the floor of this final roundhouse and they are undoubtedly contemporary with the stone-lined pit that was excavated in quadrant 3B in 2010. The cut for the working hollow [571] was irregular in shape, with a width of between 1m-2m and a maximum length of 2m, and it had a depth of between 0.08m–0.15m. This hollow was cut by various features. The earliest feature was a sub-rectangular pit [562] (see Figure 23). This had a diameter of 1m and a depth of 0.42m. The pit contained several lightly burnt or heat-exposed clay layers, substantial amounts of ash and charcoal and a small piece of slag, indicating that it may have been used as some kind of furnace (Dave Chapman pers comm.)[1]. The flat bottom of the pit contained some medium-sized (0.15m in length), deliberately-set, flat stone slabs which sealed a dense spread of charred twigs and was in turn covered by lenses of charcoal (fill 568, c. 0.10m thick; see Figure 23). A sample of an unidentified charred twig from the spread of charred remains beneath the flat stones produced a date of 384–203 cal. BC (2 sigma; GU26312), which would place the occupation of the stone roundhouse to the Middle Iron Age (see discussion below). Overlying this was a stony infill (567) measuring 0.15m thick, and this was capped with a thick deposit of clay (565) which was up to 0.08m thick. These upper fills extended well-above the top of the cut, and the feature would have protruded on top of the roundhouse floor during its occupation.

Cutting this pit was a circular-shaped pit [572], which had a diameter of 1.10m and a depth of 0.40m, and was packed with stones (563), much like the adjacent stone-lined pit in quadrant 3B (excavated in 2010). This indicates that it may have been in use during the final phase of occupation of this area and was filled with stones during the final closure of the final roundhouse phase.

The final remaining features, which are all broadly contemporary, consisted of shallow cuts in the southern end of the working hollow and an elongated curvilinear pit [572] located in the northern end of the hollow. Amongst the cluster of features in the southern end of the hollow was a scoop [566] which had a diameter of 0.65m and it was filled with a dark brown/black silt (299) which contained a dense amount of charcoal, and had clearly been the focus for in situ burning. Two other circular scoops, with diameters of 0.42m [551] and 0.55m [552], as well as a stakehole measuring 0.20m in diameter, all appeared to have the same fill, which consisted of a dark grey sticky deposit with frequent charcoal and burned clay inclusions (262). This deposit also filled the entirety of the working hollow [571] and it sealed the upper fills (and 565 and 563) of the earlier pits, where it reached a maximum thickness of 0.15m. The pit [572] in the northern end of the working hollow was

[1]An interpretation of this feature as a furnace was suggested by David Chapman of Ancient Arts when he visited the site on 23/7/2011.

also entirely filled with 299. This pit was oval in shape, with a length of 1.10m, a width of 0.30m, and a depth of 0.40m, and it abutted the later pit [572].

Figure 23: Top; stone slabs (568) at bottom of possible furnace pit [562]. Bottom; charred twigs sealed below stone slabs (568) at the bottom of the possible furnace pit [562].

Overlying the infilled quarry hollow and the rest of the roundhouse floor in this quadrant was a light yellowish-brown sandy silt with fairly frequent stones (252), which was up to 0.10m thick. This deposit contained some larger stone blocks, which might represent wall tumble, and it appears to be an abandonment horizon. It was covered by the dense rubble infill of the roundhouse (128; see

Figure 21), which only reached a maximum thickness of 0.20m in this area, due to the shallow nature of the roundhouse cut on this side of the house, but it was nevertheless a compact stone spread. The topsoil (224 = 02) covered the entire sequence.

Preliminary conclusions and summary interpretation

Much like the excavations in 2010, the excavations in 2011 produced quite spectacular features and demonstrated a complex occupation sequence. The aims of the excavations were achieved.

As in 2010, the excavations in 2011 mainly confirmed the results of the geophysical surveys undertaken by Gwynedd Archaeological Trust, though some of the interpretations of the magnetometer survey (Smith and Hopewell 2007, fig 16) have to be reconsidered in the light of the excavation results. While the presence of a double ringwork at Meillionydd has been proven beyond any doubt, it has now been established that the site was not surrounded by an outer ditch as proposed by Smith and Hopewell (2007, fig 16; see Figure 3 above), but rather consisted of an inner bank, a U-shaped ditch outside of the inner bank which was later truncated by a wide, flat quarry hollow, and an outer bank, which in all likelihood was constructed from the material excavated from the quarry hollow, situated just inside the outer bank, as well as the shallow quarry scoop located on the outside of the bank.

The excavations demonstrated that the outer bank is constructed from simple dumps of earth and stone, faced roughly with stones, and associated with quarry scoops. The contemporary quarry hollow and the outer bank was also the focus for occupation activity in a later phase of the settlement. In trench 2 extension, the bank and the basal silts of the quarry hollow had been partially cut away to incorporate an 8m diameter stone roundhouse. This building, being attached to the outer bank and next to the enclosure entranceway, may have played an important role on the settlement.

The inner bank is very different in trench 1 and trench 1 west extension. This was badly preserved and only the foundation stones survived, consisting of a linear arrangement of boulders set within a shallow foundation trench and located immediately behind a roundhouse platform. This linear feature appears to be the foundation trench for the stone facing of the inner bank, which had been truncated by the construction of the adjacent roundhouse.

The roundhouse platform in trench 1 west extension was set within a terrace scoop, and the floor is characterised by a number of postholes and large pits. The curving slot of a wattle/stake wall terminated within a large pit with packing stones, which is probably the door-post of an east-facing entrance porch. The inner face of part of a curvilinear stone wall was located next to the wall slot in trench 1, but did not extend into trench 1 west extension; we therefore have proposed two possible interpretations. The wall slot and the inner face of the stone wall may represent two phases of roundhouse construction, a timber roundhouse followed by a stone roundhouse, with the stone wall in trench 1 west extension not surviving. Or, our preferred interpretation, is that the house was mainly constructed from timber, but where it was set into the body of the inner bank in trench 1, the wall utilised the body of the bank, but this was necessarily faced with stone to create a stable structure and to prevent the bank from tumbling into the house. These interpretation can not be verified until the trench is extended further to the west in a future excavation season (2015) which exposed the rest of the structure. On abandonment, the roundhouse platform was deliberately infilled with compact rubble layers, which appear to partly derive from the slighting of the adjacent

bank structure. This is a substantial packing, c. 50cm thick, which is rich in heat-affected stone and it is certainly a deliberate infill.

In trench 3, a number of roundhouses were identified which broadly split into an earlier timber phase and a later stone phase. The early timber occupation phases are represented by small pits, postholes, and a gully, some of which are difficult to reconstruct. However, a post-built timber roundhouse, c. 12m in diameter, was clearly identified and this contained a central hearth pit, which was sealed by the stone wall of the later 8m diameter stone roundhouse (see Figure 24). This timber roundhouse showed evidence for being rebuilt at least once and two double postholes on the southeast indicates the location of an entrance porch. A date of 753–410 cal. BC (2 sigma; 2450 ± 30; GU26311) on an unidentified charred twig from the basal fill of the hearth confirms an earlier Iron Age date for the building. Following its abandonment, a substantial cut for a terrace was created and within this there is tentative evidence for two stone roundhouses. The second phase was well-defined. This stone roundhouse has a diameter of c. 8m, with an entrance to the south-west. Where the stone-faced wall was positioned within the terrace cut, it stood to a height of 0.75m with a thickness of c. 1.5m (quadrant 3B excavated in 2010). This house floor was cut by pits which include a stone-lined storage pit and a working hollow containing a series of working pits. The earliest pit in the working hollow, which has been interpreted as a furnace pit by Dave Chapman of Ancient Arts, has been radiocarbon dated and confirms the sequence outlined here. A sample from a spread of unidentified charred twigs which were sealed by stone slabs at the base of the pit produced a date of 384–203 cal. BC (2 sigma; 2225 ± 30; GU26312), which would place this building in the Middle Iron Age. On abandonment, this building was deliberately infilled with stone rubble and the deposits produced three spindlewhorls, two of which were unfinished. These deposits may well indicate the presence of elaborate house closing rites which took place on the settlement during its abandonment.

Figure 24 The early timber phase hearth, sealed by the later stone roundhouse wall. This hearth has been radiocarbon dated to the earlier Iron Age. These features were excavated in 2010 (see Waddington and Karl 2010).

The third excavation season took place in July 2012. We reopened and extended trenches 1 and 2, to create a large 12m by 20m trench. Here, we continued to investigate the inner and outer boundaries, with the associated roundhouses, as well as the entrance through the inner bank. The sequence will be set out in a forthcoming excavation report.

Acknowledgements

We are extremely grateful the landowners of Meilionydd, the Thomas family at Meillionydd Mawr and Meillionydd Bach, who have generously hosted the excavations and activities and have been tremendously supportive of the work.

A great many thanks are due to the excavation team who have made this work possible: Mark Hagger, Bob Chatterley, Gareth Davey, Max Higgins, Daisy Hughes, Beki Jones and Michael Lyons from Bangor University; Lilly Brooks, Caitlin Jennings, Isobel Reid, Stephen Springate and Rose Whitehouse from Cardiff University; Tanja Trausmuth, Mario Wallner, Alexandra Vonkilch, Paul Glanzer, Olivia Senk, RubinaBergauer, Cornelia Kleiber, Stefan Baumgartner, Angelina Schaupal, Christian Gutschier, Nadja-Carina Dainko, Katharina Wickel, Victoria Spiesberger, Sigrun Maurer, Alexander Salzmann and Julia Kühne from the University of Vienna; our tourist Ilse Seethaler from Vienna; and Sam Martin from Castell Alun High School. Special thanks are owed to Beki Jones, Tanja Trausmuth, Alexandra Vonkilch and Mario Wallner for their supervision on site, to Michael Lyons and Rhys Mwyn for leading the School Visits at the site, and finally to Sonja-U. Prochaska for her help again this year and for generously providing the team with essential delicious cake! We would also like to thank Dafydd Davies-Hughes and his team from Felin Uchaf for their assistance with backfilling and re-turfing, and to everyone at Felin Uchaf for helping to make the community open days such a success.

We are extremely grateful to Arwel Jones of the Llŷn Landscape Partnership for his support in the project and for providing many excellent ideas, as well as Dafydd Davies-Hughes and David Taylor for their inspired ideas and hard work during the community open days and school visits. Thanks are also due to David Chapman and his team from Ancient Arts for their exciting copper smelts during the open day. We are also grateful to George Smith from Gwynedd Archaeological Trust for his support in the project as well as his helpful advice.

This research would not have been possible without funding from the Publications and Collaborative Research Committee at the University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies, The Prehistoric Society, Cardiff University and ARGE Archäologie. The open days were funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund 'Your Heritage' grant and were run in collaboration with Arwel Jones of the Llŷn Landscape Partnership and Dafydd Davies-Hughes at Menter y Felin Uchaf.

References

Alcock, L. 1960. Castell Odo: an embanked settlement on Mynydd Ystum, near Aberdaron, Caernarvonshire. *ArchaeologiaCambrensis* 109, 78-135.

Harris, E. 1989. *Principles of Archaeological Stratigraphy*. 2nd ed., London, Academic Press.

Harris, E., Marley, R. et al. (eds.) 1993. *Practices of Archaeological Stratigraphy*. London, Academic Press.

Karl, R. and Waddington, K. 2011. Characterising the Double Ringwork Enclosures of Gwynedd: Meillionydd Excavations, July 2011. Preliminary Report. Bangor Studies in Archaeology, Report No. 6. Bangor: Bangor University School of History, Welsh History and Archaeology.

Smith, G.H. and Hopewell, D. 2007. *Survey of prehistoric defended enclosures in north-west Wales: assessment of some possibly multivallate enclosures in Llŷn and Anglesey 2006-7*. Gwynedd Archaeological Trust: unpublished report (number 664).

Waddington, K. 2010. *Excavations at Meillionydd 2010: Characterising the double ringwork enclosures on the Llŷn Peninsula*. Bangor Studies in Archaeology, Report No. 2, Bangor: Bangor University School of History, Welsh History and Archaeology.

Waddington, K. and Karl, R. 2010. *The Meillionydd Project: Characterising the double ringwork enclosures in Gwynedd. Preliminary Excavation Report*. Bangor Studies in Archaeology, Report No. 4, Bangor: Bangor University School of History, Welsh History and Archaeology.

3D-renderings of the post-excavation state of trenches 1 West extension and 3 are available on request as 3D-pdfs or universal 3D.