Characterising the Double Ringwork Enclosures of Gwynedd: Meillionydd Excavations

June and July 2015

Interim Report

Raimund Karl, Katharina Möller and Kate Waddington

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Cover image: Shot of the 2015 trenches, taken from the higher slopes of Mynydd Rhiw, looking at the site past Bwlch y Clawdd.

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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). A detailed location description and site description has already been provided in a previous report (Waddington and Karl 2010, 4-5) and thus will not be repeated here. The overall research context and objectives for this project have also been outlined in previous reports (Waddington 2010; Waddington and Karl 2010, 3-4; Karl and Waddington 2011). This report outlines the stratigraphic sequence excavated in the 2015 excavation season, which took place in June and July 2013 (please see previous interim reports for the first five excavation seasons: Waddington and Karl 2010; Waddington and Karl 2015a; 2015b; Möller, Waddington and Karl 2016). The excavations continued the work of previous years, connecting to previous years' trenches towards the Northwest and focussing on the inner eastern entrance passage into the enclosure and the interior area towards its centre.

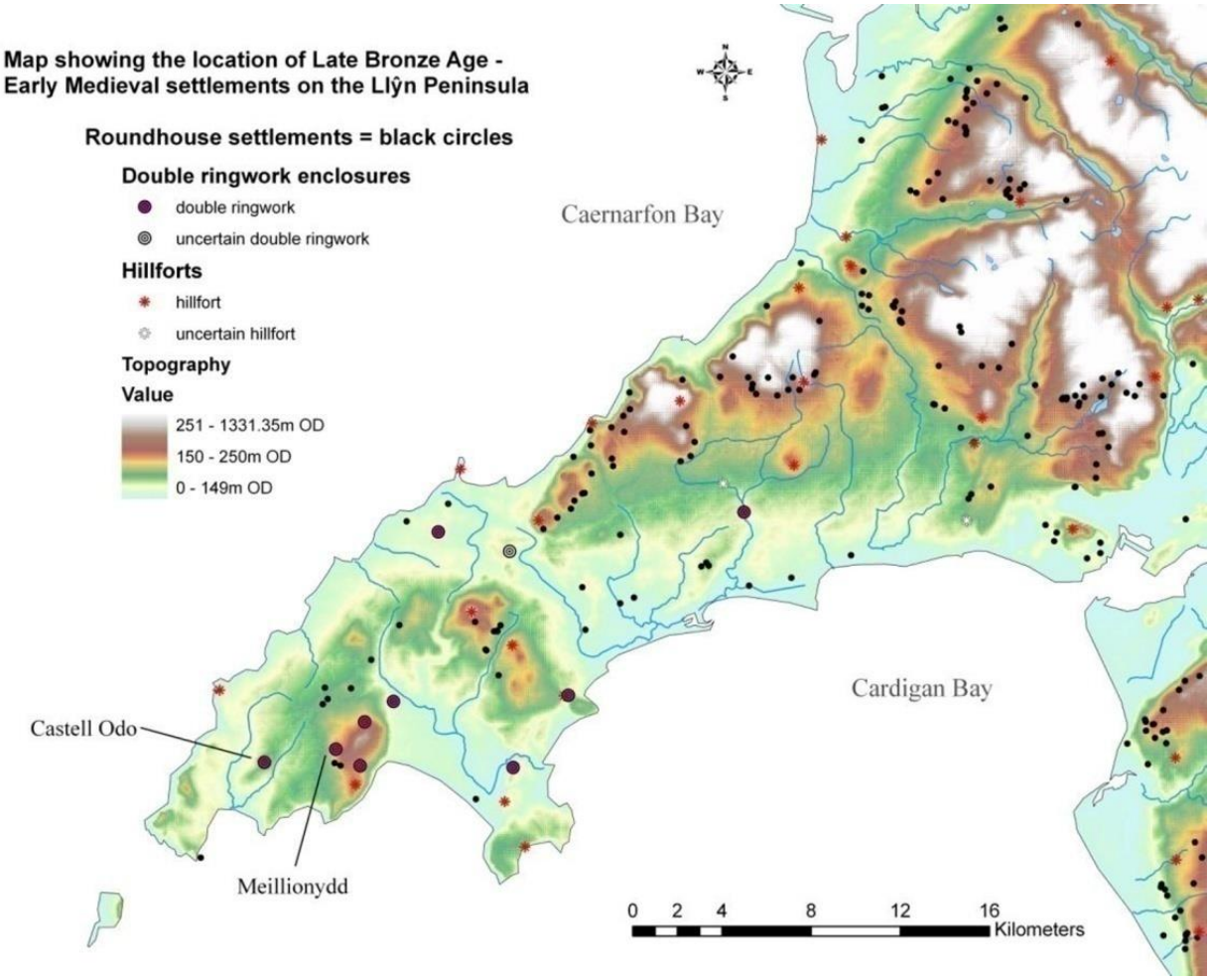

Figure 1: Map of the Llŷn Peninsula, showing the location of the site as well as all other later prehistoric hillfort and settlement sites in the area. The double ringwork enclosures are shown in purple circles, hillforts are shown in red stars and roundhouse settlements are shown in black dots (image: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

The objectives of the 2015 excavations

This sixth excavation season aimed to complete the excavations of the remaining parts of the eastern inner entrance to the enclosure and its interior area inside that inner entrance. This was achieved by excavating a single large contiguous area, trench 6, with a maximum overall length of 30.5 and width of c. 19 meters, in total c. 414 m^2. Towards the Southeast, this trench connected to Trench 1 extension, which had been excavated in 2012 and 2013 (Waddington and Karl 2015a; 2015b), to the East it connected to Trench 5, which had been excavated in 2014 (Möller, Waddington and Karl 2016), and to the Northeast, it connected to the western edge of Trench 3, which had been excavated in 2010 and 2011 (Karl and Waddington 2011). The overall excavation strategy followed in 2015 was to start with a cross-section across (approximately) the centre of the site towards its North-Western boundaries. It is expected that this strategy will take until c. 2017 to complete.

The overall objectives were to continue to collect data on the construction and phasing of the enclosure boundaries and buildings, to start to collect data on the interior area of the enclosure, and to continue to produce more datable materials or short-lived charcoal samples to build up a chronological sequence for these monuments in Gwynedd. The large trench aimed to:

- Expose and excavate the still unexcavated parts of the eastern inner entrance passage into the enclosure;
- Expose a sizeable area of the enclosure's interior area inside the inner entrance to identify buildings and other features in this area that appeared to show on the 2007 magnetometry and 2012 GPR surveys.

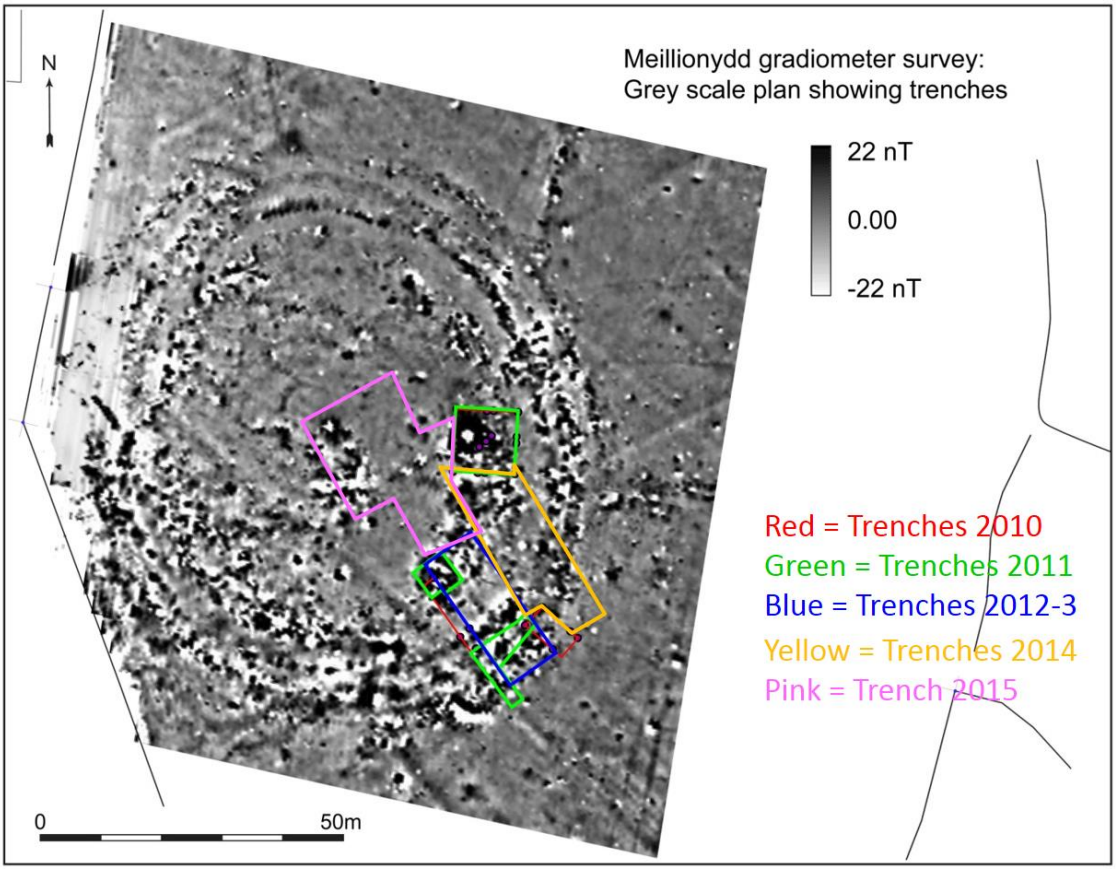

Figure 2: Geophysical survey of Meillionydd, showing the position of the trenches opened 2010-2015 (adapted from Smith and Hopewell 2007, fig 11). The 2015 trench is shown in pink.

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 were taken in RAW and JPEG format using a Nikon D5100 digital SLR camera with a AF-S DX 18-55mm F3.5-5.6G lens at 16.1 Megapixel resolution. In addition, digital photographs for three-dimensional photographic recording were taken in RAW and JPEG format using the same camera, lens and resolution and processed using AgiSoft PhotoScan 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.

The excavations: preliminary results

Trench 6

Trench 6 (Fig. 3) was opened in order to examine in greater detail those parts of the eastern inner entrance of the enclosure that had not yet been excavated in previous seasons and the area immediately inside it, roughly up to the centre of the site. Much of the inner area, apart from where features were protected by being set into the quarry hollow which seems to have run alongside the inner bank of the later (stone-built) phases of the site or the remains of the inner entrance itself, were relatively badly eroded. The by far most common feature within the open area inside the inner enclosure were postholes, some of which may connect up to form circular or sub-circular structures; but this is not always the case and not very clear even where circular structures may be suspected. Many of those were only very shallow, and in some cases, small depressions in the natural may have been the last remains of even shallower ones. Some remains of wall gullies survived as well in a few places, but rarely for more than a few meters length, and all but one also only very shallow. Similarly, what remained of stone roundhouses – particularly three quite clear shallow 'platforms' in the western corner, about halfway along the southwestern edge and about halfway along the north-western edge of trench 6 – was very shallow, with not even the lowest layer of stone walling surviving, except for a few isolated boulders in the odd place. The best preserved features in much of the interior of the inner enclosure were the remains of three sizeable storage pits of about 1.7-2 meters in diameter and c. 70-90 cm depth, arranged closely next to each other in the western corner of the trench. This indicates that much of the inner area of the enclosure has probably been badly ploughed out, possibly in the late 1940ies or 1950ies, which matches with plough marks on some stones found in trenches 1 and 3 during earlier seasons. However, in about the eastern third of the trench, the area of the inner entrance passage and some quarrying for the construction of the earth and stone inner bank and later roundhouse construction phases, preservation conditions were considerably better, with at least one and in places several layers of stone-walling of roundhouses surviving in situ.

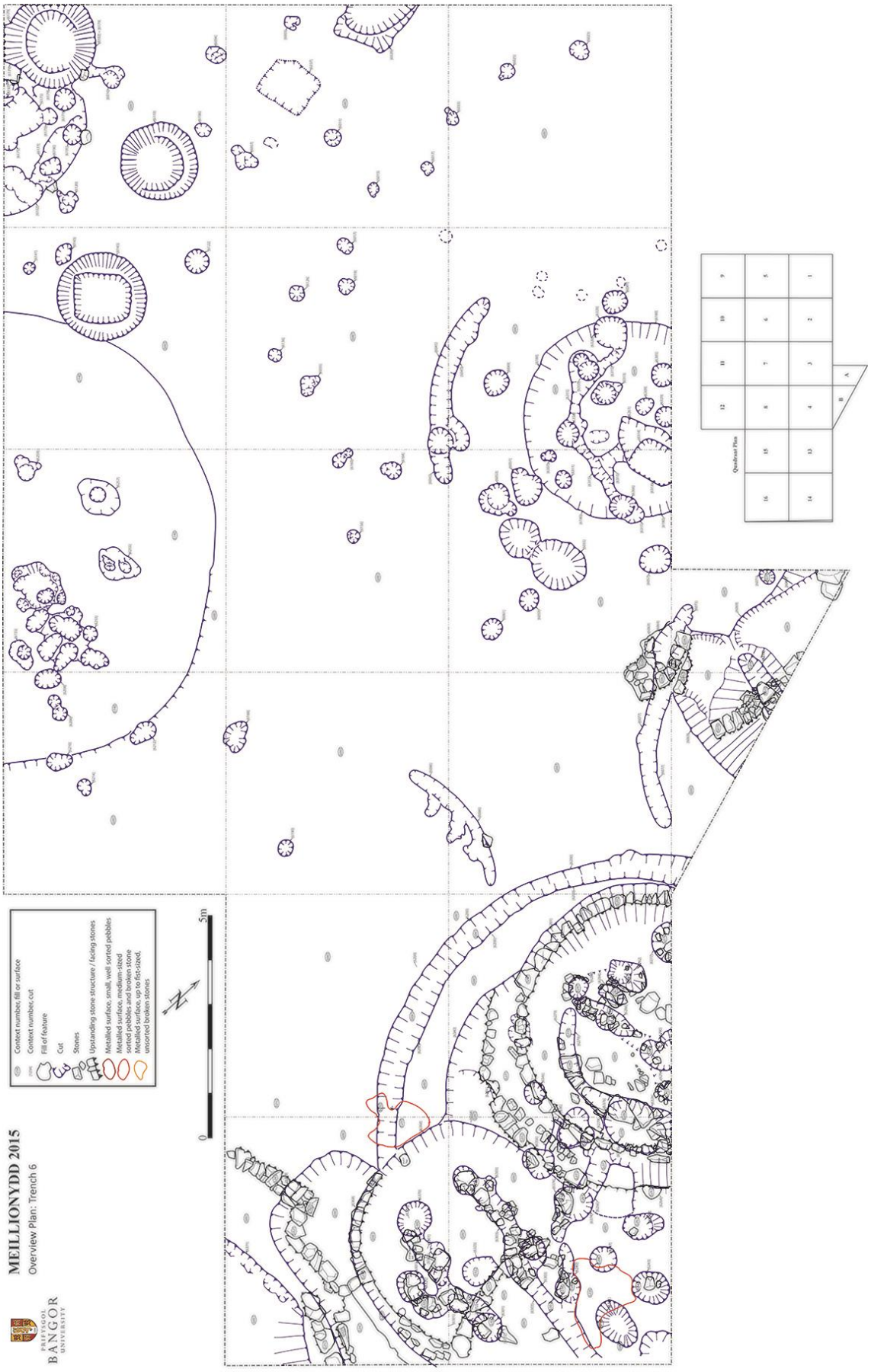

Fig. 3: Plan of trench 6, showing all main features excavated during the 2015 season.

The earliest features in the area consisted of several postholes, set into the natural, with no particular stratigraphic relationships with each other or any other significant features. Postholes [6023], [6025], [6033] and [6118] (wrongly labelled [6017] in Q5 on fig. 3) may have belonged, together with a few very shallow, uncertain depressions in the natural in Quadrants 2 and 6, to a roundhouse. Posthole [6023] with fill (6022) had a diameter of c. 26 cm and a depth of c. 10. Posthole [6025] with fill (6024) had a diameter of c. 25 cm and was c. 15 cm deep. Posthole [6033] was c. 27 cm in diameter and c. 7cm deep, with the fill indistinguishable from the topsoil. Posthole [6118] with fill (6117) had a diameter of c. 22 cm and a depth of c. 7 cm.

Alternatively, they could have been part of a linear feature, possibly also including postholes [6015], [6017] (in Q6), [6126], [6136], and then possibly turning at an almost right angle to also include postholes [6035], [6059], [6160] and [6164]. Posthole [6015] with fill (6014) had a diameter of c. 21 cm and a depth of c. 11 cm. Posthole [6017] with fill (6016) had a diameter of c. 22 cm and a depth of c. 8 cm. Posthole [6035] with fill (6034) had a diameter of c. 17 cm and a depth of c. 14 cm. Posthole [6059] with fill (6058) had a diameter of c. 40 cm and a depth of c. 20 cm. Posthole [6126] with fill (6125) had a diameter of c. 35 cm and a depth of c. 4 cm and may not have been a feature at all, but just a depression in the natural. Posthole [6136] with fill (6135) and packing stones (6223) had a diameter of c. 17 cm and a depth of c. 25 cm. Posthole [6160] with fill (6159) had a diameter of c. 20 cm and a depth of c. 14 cm. Posthole [6164] with fill (6163) had a diameter of c. 30 by 45 cm and a depth of c. 10 cm. Another posthole, [6019], is somewhat out of alignment along the longer leg of that possible linear feature, and two further postholes, [6061] and [6156] might form a gate with the final two postholes along its shorter leg. Posthole [6019] with fill (6018) had a diameter of c. 35 cm and a depth of c. 25 cm. Posthole [6061] with fill (6060), which contained two large packing stones, had a diameter of c. 24 by 50 cm and a depth of c. 20 cm. Posthole [6156] with fill (6155) had a diameter of c. 16 cm and a depth of c. 10 cm.

Postholes [6003], [6007], [6011] and [6094] in Quadrants 5 and 9 might form a 4-post structure, but this is uncertain, since one of them, [6007], could also have just been an animal burrow or at least was severely affected by animal activity. Posthole [6003] with fill (6002) had a diameter of c. 14 cm and a depth of c. 12 cm. Posthole [6007] with fill (6006) had a diameter of c. 30 by 45 cm and a depth of c. 10 cm. Posthole [6011] with fill (6010) had a diameter of c. 30 cm and a depth of c. 15 cm. Posthole [6094] with fill (6093) had a diameter of c. 38 cm and a depth of c. 18 cm.

A number of other postholes, [6188] and [6190] in Quadrant 8, [6096] (incorrectly numbered [6016] on fig. 3), [6106] and [6120] in Quadrant 9, [6122], [6141] and [6143] in Quadrant 10 and [6214] in Quadrant 12, an [6071] in Quadrant A, could not even be assigned to any suspected structure and may well be the remains of isolated posts. Posthole [6071] with fill (6070) had a diameter of c. 36 cm and a depth of c. 18 cm. Posthole [6096] with fill (6095) had a diameter of c. 31 cm and a depth of c. 20 cm. Posthole [6106] with fill (6105) had a diameter of c. 30 cm and a depth of c. 15 cm. Posthole [6120] with fill (6119) had a diameter of c. 50 cm and a depth of c. 12 cm. Posthole [6122] with fill (6121) and packing stones (6225) had a diameter of c. 40 cm and a depth of c. 32 cm. Posthole [6141] with fill (6140) had a diameter of c. 25 cm and a depth of c. 10 cm. Posthole [6143] with fill (6142) and packing stones (6270) had a diameter of c. 40 cm and a depth of c. 20 cm. Posthole [6188] with fill (6187) had a diameter of c. 60 cm and a depth of c. 20 cm. Posthole [6190] with fill (6189) had a diameter of c. 36 cm and a depth of c. 15 cm. Posthole [6214] with fill (6213) had a diameter of c. 20 cm and a depth of c. 17 cm.

In addition, what first seemed to be a relatively small posthole, [6055] with fill (6054) on excavation turned out to be a roughly figure of eight-shaped pit of no apparent function and with no clear association with any other feature on site. Given that in this area, the natural was very craggy, with considerable amounts of natural cavities between loosely packed stones, it is possible that this was no feature at all, but rather an outcropping of a lens of a particularly loose glacial deposit. Another pit, [6029], with fill [6028], was discovered running into the main north-western section of trench 6 in Quadrant 5. The part within trench 6 was c. 1.3 meters wide, had a minimum length of c. 1.4 meters, and had a maximum depth of c. 0.52 cm.

A roundhouse wall gully [6086], with fill (6085), which was very badly preserved, was located in Quadrants 4 and 8. In section, it was c. 23 cm wide and 7 cm deep. It is possible that its eastern end was truncated by a somewhat deeper roundhouse wall gully, [6200], but the relationship between these two gullies was not clear due to the badly eroded state of gully [6086].

Several sizeable postholes in Quadrants 2 and 3, [6041], [6049], the potential double posthole [6051] and [6053] and [6057] seem to form a circular arrangement, which may fit with the wall gully [6045] in Quadrants 2, 6 and 7. This wall gully section, which is roughly concentric with the circular post-ring formed by these postholes, seems to have later been disturbed by an animal burrow, which may have partially obliterated a posthole set in this gully. Posthole [6041] with fill (6040) and packing stones (6134) had a diameter of c. 60 cm and a depth of c. 27 cm. Posthole [6049] with fill (6048) had a diameter of c. 65 cm and a depth of c. 37 cm. Posthole [6051] with fill (6050) had a diameter of c. 65 cm and a depth of c. 30 cm. Posthole [6053] with fill (6052) and packing stones (6137) had a diameter of c. 60 by 80 cm and a depth of c. 35 cm. Posthole [6057] with fill (6056) and packing stones (6123) had a diameter of c. 65 cm and a depth of c. 24 cm. The gully [6045] with fill (6044) in section had a width of c. 33 cm and a depth of c. 27 cm, with the posthole set within it having a diameter of c. 50 cm and a depth of c. 32 cm.

Also almost perfectly concentric with gully [6045] was the well-defined cut [6180] of the sunken floor of a stone-built roundhouse in Quadrants 2 and 3 with a diameter of c. 4,5 meters and a maximum depth of c. 21 cm. Although no clear stratigraphic relationship could be observed that fully clarified the sequence of these buildings, the stone-built, sunken-floor roundhouse presumably belongs to a later building phase. However, given that gully [6045] and cut [6180] are near-perfectly concentric, it can be assumed that either the presumably later, stone-built roundhouse was erected directly after the earlier timber-built structure had been abandoned and (presumably) pulled down; or even that both were part of the same structure, a larger timber roundhouse with a central, stone-lined sunken floor area. The latter possibility would, however, be a highly unusual kind of building, and as such, we would suggest that a sequence from larger timber-built to smaller stone-built roundhouse is the more likely interpretation.

Only a few isolated stones survived of the lowest layer of drystone walling set into cut [6180], mainly along the north-western side of this house, which showed up as a ring of stony fill (6042) of between c. 30 to 100 cm variable width after removal of the topsoil, abutting an inner fill (6043) of the roundhouse of c. 3.6 meters maximum diameter. In the sunken floor area, there were numerous, in some cases quite sizeable postholes. These do, however, not seem to form an inner post-ring in the roundhouse and thus at least some of them may relate to another, earlier timber-built house which may have stood mostly outside the area excavated in 2015.

Of those, postholes [6305], [6307], [6309], [6311], [6313], and [6329] are not connected to any other features in the roundhouse floor. Posthole [6305] with fill (6304) had a diameter of c. 40 cm and a

depth of c. 41 cm. Posthole [6307] with fill (6306) had a diameter of c. 30 cm and a depth of c. 20 cm. Posthole [6309] with fill (6308) had a diameter of c. 40 cm and a depth of c. 25 cm. Posthole [6311] with fill (6310) had a diameter of c. 40 cm and a depth of c. 30 cm. Posthole [6313] with fill (6312) had a diameter of c. 55 by 75 cm and a depth of c. 30 cm. Posthole [6329] with fill (6328) had a diameter of c. 44 cm and a depth of c. 25 cm. Postholes [6320], [6338], [6359] and [6366] are set within or connected by a sizeable drainage gully, [6315], which runs across the sunken floor area in slight curve from north-west to south-east, where it may have emptied out of the house. Since the ground falls away towards east-south-east on this part of the site, the south-eastern side of the sunken floor area was preserved only very shallow, and the end of the drainage gully may well have been completely eroded away. Posthole [6320] with fill (6319) had a diameter of c. 74 cm and a depth of c. 30 cm. Posthole [6338] with fill (6337) had a diameter of c. 52 cm and a depth of c. 40 cm. Posthole [6359] was a double posthole with indistinguishable fill (6358) had a diameter of c. 48 by 65 cm and a depth of c. 35 cm in the lower part. Posthole [6366] with packing stones (6367) and a fill that was indistinguishable from that of gully [6315], had a diameter of c. 50 cm and a depth of c. 20 cm. Gully [6315] with fill (6314) in section had a width of c. 25 cm and a depth of c. 20 cm.

Fig. 4: Fireplace [6261] after removal of burnt clay infill (6260).

A shallower branch of gully [6315] also connected up the a two-levelled pit, defined by the polygonal cut [6261] which defined its upper level, and sub-rectangular cut [6318], which defined its lower level. The sloping upper part of this, [6261], was c. 1.2 meters in length, c. 70 cm in width, and c. 15 cm deep at its lowest point, while the lower part, [6318], had a maximum width of c. 90 cm, a minimum length of more than 1.2 meters where it went into the main north-eastern section of the trench, and c. 35 cm in depth. The fill of the upper level, consisted mostly of burnt clay (6260) which rested on a purposefully placed layer of stones (fig. 4), while much of the fill of the lower level was dark, ashy soil intermixed with irregularly sized stones (6317), with the two fills abutting each other. This polygonal, two-levelled feature thus seems to have been a fireplace with attached ash-pit,

slightly offset towards the east from the centre of the sunken roundhouse floor and contemporary with it and the drainage gully in it. A similar pattern of features was already observed in other stone-built roundhouses on site, for instance the one set into the internal quarry hollow for the outer bank next to the entrance into the outer enclosure (Waddington and Karl 2015b, 17-21).

Furthermore, three large storage pits were discovered near the western corner of the trench, near to or at the highest point of the little hill the site is set on. One of these, [6110], with upper, stony fill (6109), middle, considerably less stony fill (6133) and virtually stone-free bottom fill (6139), has no stratigraphic relationships with any other feature and thus cannot be put into even a local sequence. It was about 1,7 meters in diameter and c. 85 cm deep at its deepest point. Roughly 20 cms above that lowest point, a distinct ridge ran around c. half of the pit. Despite its quite substantial size, it did not contain a single find, nor any charred grains or other evidence of what once had been stored in it

About 2 meters south of it was another, very similarly shaped pit, [6145] with a stony fill (6144) which contained numerous cavities. It was c. 2 meters in diameter and c. 90 cm deep at its deepest point. Much like [6110], a pronounced ridge ran around the bottom of the pit c. 20 cm above its lowest point, which in case of this pit created a sub-rectangular deeper part of the pit in its centre. Like pit [6110], it contained no finds and no evidence of its former use.

Fig. 5: Post-excavation photo of the cut of the hearth [6135] with various depressions related to animal activities. The curving sandy layer (6146) with much fewer stones than the ordinary natural on site is also visible behind the ranging poles.

Its southern edge was partially covered by a sandy layer (6146), which seems to have formed the base for a large, later, stone-built roundhouse that extended across much of Quadrants 10, 11 and 12, with a diameter of roughly 10 meters. While of the walls of this house, virtually nothing remained, a few postholes of an inner post ring, [6156], [6253], [6255], [6257] and [6559], two possible entrance posts, [6210] and [6212], two further postholes possibly related to this house, the

double posthole [6206] and posthole [6208], and the remains of a central hearth [6235], which had later been seriously damaged by animal burrowing (fig. 5) and was associated with posthole (6236) and a stakehole (6237) within the same cut as the hearth.

Posthole [6156] with fill (6155) had a diameter of c. 30 cm and a depth of c. 10 cm. Posthole [6253] with fill (6252) had a diameter of c. 35 cm and a depth of c. 15 cm. Posthole [6255] with fill (6254) was also badly damaged, may have been a double posthole, and had a diameter of c. 85 cm with two smaller, deeper depressions of c. 20-25 cm diameter and a depth of c. 10 cm each. Posthole [6257] with fill (6256) was also set in a c. 70 cm diameter depression and had a diameter of c. 15 cm and a depth of c. 10 cm. Posthole [6259] with fill (6258) had a diameter of c. 35 cm and a depth of c. 12 cm and also was affected by animal activity. Posthole [6210] with fill (6209) had a diameter of c. 38 by 56 cm and a depth of c. 18 cm. Posthole [6212] with fill (6211) had a diameter of c. 40 by 60 cm and a depth of c. 17 cm. Double posthole [6206] with fill (6205) had a diameter of c. 32 by 60 cm and a depth of c. 12 cm. Posthole [6208] with fill (6207) and packing stones (6262) had a diameter of c. 40 by 60 cm and a depth of c. 25 cm. The original dimensions of hearth [6235 with ashy fill (6150) containing some sizeable bits of burnt clay seem to have been c. 1,2 meters in length, c. 80 cm in width, and a maximum of c. 20 cm in depth, with a quite uneven bottom.

The third storage pit, [6179], is also in a local sequence with a roundhouse, [6102] with fill (6101), but in this case Is the later of the features. Cut [6102] defines the sunken floor area of another relatively small stone-built roundhouse of, probably, c. 4.5 meters overall diameter, though its actual diameter cannot be precisely determined because most of it still lies in the unexcavated areas of the site. Much like with roundhouse [6180], only very little remains of the lowest layer of the stone walling this house once seems to have had, in the form of a few isolated larger blocks of stone set on the cut itself. The floor of this house, which is very uneven, again contained numerous postholes, [6171], [6173], [6195] (mislabelled as [6193] on fig. 3), [6196], [6197] (mislabelled [6095] on fig. 3), and the remains of a hearth or associated ash-pit, [6175], as well as a very short stretch of what might have been a part of a drainage gully, connecting to the ash-pit, as well as an irregular depression [6177] along the eastern edge of the feature, which may also have been a rather shallow gully, or may be a result of animal burrowing. Posthole [6171] with fill (6170), which in one place connected up with and was indistinguishable from fill (6172) and (6174), had a diameter of c. 48 cm and a depth of c. 25 cm. Posthole [6173] with fill (6172) had a diameter of c. 40 cm and a depth of c. 17 cm and connected up directly with ash-pit [6175]. Posthole [6195] with fill (6193) and packing stones (6194) had a diameter of c. 40 cm and a depth of c. 38 cm. Posthole [6196] with fill (6176) had a diameter of c. 30 by 45 cm and a depth of c. 10 cm. Posthole [6197] with fill (6176) had a diameter of c. 40 cm and a depth of c. cm. The dimensions of hearth or ash-pit [6175] with fill (6174) were c. 80 cm in width, at least 1 m in length (again, this pit ran into the main south-western section of the 2015 excavations), and a depth of c. 25 cm.

The remains of this roundhouse were at a later date cut by the third storage pit, [6179] with stony fill (6178). Shaped very similarly to the other two storage pits, it was c. 2 meters in diameter and c. 75 cm deep, with a much less pronounced ledge running around the bottom of it c. 20 cm above its deepest point. In contrast to the others, a partially collapsed section of its south-westerly wall had been repaired by a c. 1 m long section of drystone walling (fig. 6), set in line with the intact walls of the pit. Also in contrast to the other two pits, the bottom of this pit was filled with significant amounts – c. 50 litres – of charred grain, providing evidence that at least this, and presumably also the other two storage pits, were used for grain storage at some stage of their use-life.

Fig. 6: Storage pit [6179] during excavation, showing the drystone wall section put into the wall of this pit to repair a cave-in on its south-western side.

Fig. 7: Storage pits [6179] (right side in the very corner of the trench), [6110] (left, closer to camera), and [6145] (left, background), looking roughly from North to South. The suspected sequence of these three storage pits would be starting with pit [6145] in the background left, followed by [6110] in the left, and ending with [6179] to the right.

Given the arrangement and local sequences of two of these storage pits, it is tempting to suggest an overall sequence of all three storage pits starting with the southernmost of the three, [6145], which was later partly built over by roundhouse (6146); followed by the 'middle' storage pit [6110], which is located roughly between / besides both roundhouses (6146) and [6102]; and finally replaced by the westernmost of the three [6179], after roundhouse [6102] had been abandoned (fig. 7). It is also noteworthy that not only were these pits, which apparently were used for storing grain, placed on or very near the very top of the hill that the site is set upon, but that they were also sunk into the ground through a layer of a glacial deposit of stones which contains many hollow cavities despite being quite densely packed. This feature of the natural – which characterises much of the little elevation the site is set on, but into which features are not normally dug – means that the spot in which these pits were found is exceptionally well drained and dries out very quickly even after torrential rains. Yet, on the other hand, the many natural cavities between the stones in this glacial deposit, if grain had just been poured into these pits, there would have been considerable amounts of grain that would have fallen into the natural cavities in this layer. Since no evidence could be observed for any treatment of the walls of these pits except in the place where bits of one side had caved in, this would seem to indicate that grain would have had to be stored in them in some kind of organic container or containers, like sacks or barrels.

Quadrant A and B had been opened as an 'extension' of trench 6 to connect the 2015 trench with the western edge of trench 3, which had been excavated in 2010 and 2011 and had produced a complex sequence of building activity (Karl and Waddington 2011) extending in the direction of the 2015 trench. The features discovered in the 2015 excavations in this part of the site connect to features discovered in 2010 and 2011 and provide further detailed insight into the construction sequence along the inner side of the inner bank of the enclosure.

The earliest feature in the sequence in this part of trench 6 is another timber roundhouse wall gully, [6077] and [6073], with fills (6067) and (6072) respectively, in Quadrants 3, 4, and A. In section, it was c. 30 cm wide and 11 cm deep. This gully was later partially cut away by the cut of the quarry hollow [6069] with stony fill (6068), which was presumably created to quarry material for the construction of the inner bank. Cut [6069] was quite steep, in places almost vertical, towards the west (= uphill), while sloping much more gradually towards the south (towards the gate passage through the inner bank), reaching a depth of c. 40-50 cm along the steeper of its slopes. At a later stage, a stone roundhouse seems to have been built over the area where the earlier wall gully [6077] and [6073] had been cut away by the quarry hollow [6069]. Only a few stones of the lowest layer of both the inner (6066) and outer (6067) facings of that roundhouse's drystone wall survived over a length of c. 1 m (inner facing) to 2 meters (outer facing), with an additional layer of outer wall facing stones preserved where the quarry hollow [6069] was dropping away underneath where this wall had been built. The curve of this bit of walling indicates that this roundhouse will have had an inner diameter of roughly 4-4.5 meters, with the roundhouse wall being roughly 0.8-0.9 meters in width.

The bottom of quarry hollow [6069], about 1.6 meters from its southern terminus, contained parts of a drainage gully [6275] with fill (6274), which is the same as gully [555] excavated during the 2011 season in trench 3 (Waddington and Karl 2015a, 23). Running roughly from East to West, its overall width in section was c. 50 cm, its depth c. 30 cm, and its overall length – combining the stretch excavated in 2011 with that excavated in 2015 – c. 3.7 meters. Presumably, it served as a drainage for the earlier of the 2 stone roundhouse phases identified in trench 3 in 2010 and 2011 (Karl and Waddington 2011; Waddington and Karl 2015a, 23) in form of a linear arrangement of larger stone

blocks (113). This linear arrangement of stones indeed continued in trench 6 (6078), and while it appears to be too linear in the 2015 trench to form a nicely defined stone roundhouse wall, if combined with further large blocks of stones (109) discovered in 2010 in trench 3 Quadrant C, it still seems as if an earlier roundhouse in this area was just badly damaged by later building activity, possibly in an area where the wall of this earlier stone roundhouse turned into a small porch as also observed in the roundhouse in the outer quarry hollow immediately south of the entrance into the outer enclosure (see Möller, Waddington and Karl 2016).

Interestingly, drainage gully [6275] (= [555] in trench 3) at the bottom of the quarry hollow not only runs under this drystone wall, but terminates right outside it in what would seem to be a most inconvenient position. Its outer end seems to be in the worst imaginable place for draining water out of the house: in what appears to be the lowest corner of the quarry hollow, directly beneath its sharp uphill slope, where water must collect, not least also by draining from the roof of the stone roundhouse the gully is supposed to drain out of, every time it rains, and particularly during torrential rains. At first glance, it thus would seem that rather than draining water out of the house(s) identified in trench 3, it would serve much more to flood them in case of heavy rain. This, however, is unlikely to have been the case: this gully, much like the storage pits [6145], [6110] and [6179] at the very top of the hill that the site sits on, is sunk sufficiently deep into the natural that it goes into the natural drainage layer of the glacial deposit that contains many natural cavities and explains why the site in general is exceptionally well drained. Thus, despite the fact that drainage gully [6275] (=[555]) seems to drain 'uphill' into the spot of the site which probably collected the most surface water during heavy rains, it is likely to have worked very well as a natural sinkhole. Given that it was constructed in what would seem a highly counter-intuitive way, this seems to indicate that its creators intentionally used this natural draining property of the underlying natural to their advantage.

Quadrants 13-16 (fig. 8) were excavated to connect the 2015 trench with trench 1 extension, which was excavated mainly in 2012 and 2013 (Waddington and Karl 2015b; 2015c), and trench 5, which had been excavated in 2014 (Möller, Waddington and Karl 2016). It aimed at examining those parts of the inner entrance into the enclosure that had not yet been excavated and at clarifying the construction sequence in this area, since in the 2012-2014 seasons, several roundhouses had been partially excavated that extended into this area. On excavation, quadrants 13-16 of trench 6 revealed a particularly complicated sequence, considerably more so than had been expected before.

The sequence in this area of trench 6 begins with a wide, deep timber roundhouse gully [6200] with fill (6081) of a roundhouse of considerable size; with a diameter (as estimated from the curvature of the gully) of c. 12.5 meters. In section, this gully was up to c. 95 cm wide and c. 25 cm deep. It was later cut by the southern, in-turned terminal of the inner bank of the site, [6369] with facing stones (6321), although the point where the two features would have met did not survive due to later building activities in this part of the site, when cut [6368] was put in. Where that later cut truncated wall gully [6200] in Quadrant 16, the gully was also covered by a small, irregular patch of c. 1 by 1 meter of metalling (6233), which by size, type and sorting of metalling stones seems to be the same 'second' metalling as (6226) further to the East in Quadrant 14 and (1045), which had been identified in 2014 in trench 4 as the metalling associated with the construction of the entrance through the outer bank of the enclosure (Möller, Waddington and Karl 2016). This seems to indicate that both the inner and outer entrance and banks were constructed simultaneously with each other in one major transformation of the site.

Fig. 8: Post-excavation shot of quadrants 13-16, showing the cuts of the many different features discovered in this part of trench 6.

Of the also in-turned leg of the northern terminal of the inner entrance passage into the site, only a few ephemeral traces survived in quadrant 14, sealed beneath the wall of a later roundhouse (6202), (6271), (6272) and partly badly truncated by later features like drainage gully [6262] and postholes [6336] and [6356]; adjacent to but not abutting the lower part of 'second' metalling just mentioned, (6226). This indicates that the inner, in-turned gate passage originally had a width of c. 2.5-3 meters and had a metalled surface throughout at least up to where both in-turned legs of the gate passage terminated; or possibly even wider, with metalling further to the inside of the gate possibly having eroded away due to ploughing.

Several sizeable, deep postholes which survived within that in-turned gate passage were probably erected simultaneously with the banks and belonged to a substantial gate or even gate tower. In addition to posthole [634], which had been excavated in 2013 (Waddington and Karl 2015b, 9-10); postholes [6224], [6243], [6245], [6247], [6268], [6303], [6325], [6336], [6356], [6370], [6372], [6374] and [6375] may all have been associated with probably at least two, possibly more construction phases of a sizeable timber gatehouse. The dimensions of these postholes were, respectively: [6224] with fill (6219), which was partly covered by metalling (6226), was c. 74 by 112 cm in diameter and c. 70 cm deep. Its fill (6219) also contained the most memorable of the finds of the 2015 season, a decorated blue glass bead, SF 821 (fig. 9). [6243] with fill (6242) had a diameter of c. 70 by 85 cm and was c. 50 cm deep. [6245] with fill (6244) had a diameter of c. 55 cm and was c. 30 deep. [6247] with fill (6246) was c. 60 cm in diameter and c. 40 cm deep. [6268] with fill (6267) was c. 55 by 82 cm in diameter and c. 45 cm deep. [6303] with fill (6302), which was mostly indistinguishable from the drainage gully with the same numbers but with a slight cut separating it, was c. 52 by 64 cm in diameter and c. 25 cm deep. [6325] with fill (6324) was c. 60 by 70 cm in diameter and c. 35 cm deep. [6336] with fill (6335) was c. 52 cm in diameter in its lower, round parts, and c. 82 by 94 cm in its

irreglulary shaped upper parts and about 35 cm deep, [6356] with fill (6355) was c. 64 by 78 cm in diameter and c. 30 cm deep. [6370] with fill (6300), which was identical to the fill of gully [6301] which started at this posthole, was separated from this gully by a distinct cut and c. 76 cm in diameter and c. 30 cm deep. [6372] with fill (6300), which was also indistinguishable from gully [6301] in which it was set at its other terminus, was c. 66 cm in diameter and c. 35 cm deep. [6374] with fill (6265), which was indistinguishable from the fill of gully [6266] which was truncated by this posthole, had a diameter of c. 82 cm and a depth of c. 40 cm. [6375] with fill (6302), which was indistinguishable from that of gully [6303] in which this posthole was set, was c. 50 cm in diameter and c. 35 cm deep.

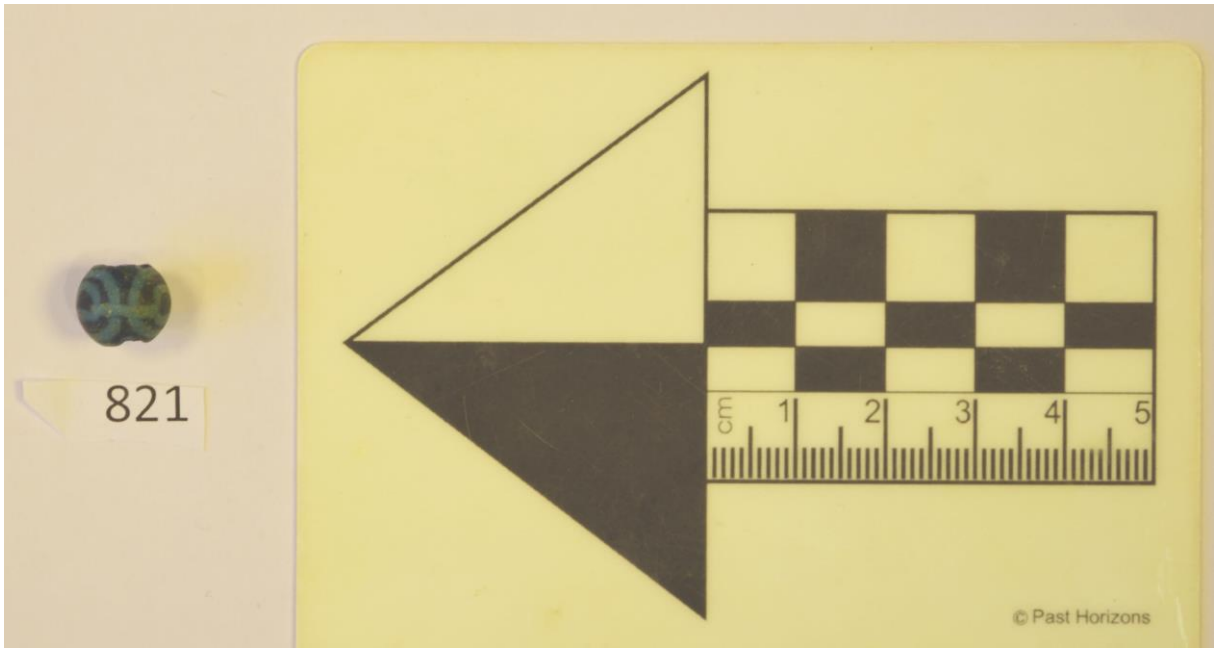

Fig. 9: Decorated blue glass bead SF 821 from CN (6219), the fill of posthole [6224].

While it is possible to connect these postholes in several different ways to form several different variants of consecutive gatehouse / -tower constructions, the posts require at least two consecutive phases of gatehouses to be accounted for; even if one disregards some of them as possibly belonging to other structures belonging to other buildings of different construction phases. Of the possible variants, the one which we think most likely to have been the first such gatehouse / -tower constructed, as its outermost posts, consisted of postholes [634] from trench 1 and postholes [6224] and [6243] in trench 6. These three postholes, which would have defined the outer face of the gatehouse, are unevenly spaced, with the postholes [634] and [6224] on the southern side (or left side as one approached the gatehouse) c. 2 meters and [6224] and [6243] on the norther side (or right side as one approached the gatehouse) c. 1 meter apart from each other. Assuming that each of these three postholes accommodated a c. 30 cm diameter post, this would leave sufficient space to drive an Iron Age cart or chariot of average or slightly less than that width (Furger-Gunti 1993, 220; Dent 1984, 87-92) through the southern passage of the gatehouse. The space left between [6224] and [6243] on the norther side would allow for a c. 80 cm pedestrian ‘gate’, too; and the load-bearing capacity of the posts in their deep posthole easily allow for a two-storey gate structure, creating a truly impressive inner entrance to the site. Interestingly, the two likely gateposts [634] and [6224] flanking what would be the wider passage through the gate also produced one each of the two best finds made on site as yet, with [634] containing a fragment of a jet bracelet SF 384 in its fill (Waddington and Karl 2015b, 32) and [6224] the decorated blue glass bead SF 821. It is this act of

clearly intentional deposition of material culture which has us assume that these two particular posts formed the outer posts of the first gatehouse in the sequence, as a kind of foundation offering.

Either simultaneous with the construction of the southern terminal of the inner gate or shortly after it, a stone-built roundhouse was built into the inner curve of its in-turning leg. The inner wall of this roundhouse, which also had a slightly sunken floor, is defined by cut [6371], which continues the cut from the roundhouse in the western corner of trench 1 in 2012/13 and remains of drystone walling (6251), which are on the same curve as the remains of drystone walling, (6), also identified in trench 1 already in 2010 on the other side of the same roundhouse (Waddington and Karl 2015b, 10). The remains of the lowest level of drystone walling of its outer wall facing (6249), on the other hand, abutted onto the facing of the southern terminal of the bank (6321). The width of the freestanding bits of the wall of this roundhouse thus was approximately 2 meters, which is very wide in comparison with other stone-walled roundhouses on site. However, it does seem to match well with the strength of the stone-walling on the other side of the same house in trench 1, where it merges with the bank body but has stone layers extending 'into' the bank body for almost 2 meters, too. Despite the exceptionally wide walls, its inner diameter still seems to have measured slightly over 6 meters.

Based on these observations, one can assume that the entrance into the inner enclosure at Meillionydd during this building phase was quite elaborated and impressive, which is a considerably contrast to the relatively simply and unelaborated outer gate. Approaching the inner gate, the roof of the sizeable roundhouse south of the entrance, or even parts of its unusually thick walling, will have protruded over a – at least at this point – quite substantial drystone-faced bank to the left, which curved in – to the North even more than to the South – to form a sizeable gate-passage sporting a massive gatehouse or even gatetower, with a wider gate passage going through its left, and possibly an about half as wide pedestrian gate to the right.

While this impressive façade of the site seems to have been maintained for a while, it was, however, not maintained for very long in the overall building sequence of the site. While the gatehouse or -tower seems to have been replaced at least once, the whole elaborate entrance construction was already completely obliterated in the next main construction phase of the site.

This is evident from the fact that the next building in the sequence in Quadrants 13-16 already obliterated this entrance completely: parts of the southern, and probably also of the northern terminal were truncated by cut [6368], which was cut into the middle of the former gate passage to enable the construction of a roundhouse. At its westernmost point, the bottom of this house was c. 40 cm below the surrounding natural, while at its easternmost point, it was virtually level with the surrounding natural. Parts of the inner wall facing of this roundhouse, (6234), survived where it was set into what remained of the southern terminal of the inner bank. Its fill, (6240), also contained as small finds, a small quern stone with matching grinder, SF 812, which were found close to the easternmost end of the preserved section of its inner drystone walling. The bottom of this roundhouse, which seems to have had an inner diameter of c. 4 meters seems to have contained, besides several of the postholes apparently associated with the gatehouses from the previous building phase, two drainage gullies [6301] and [6303], both of whom also penetrated into the natural layer providing the good drainage for the hill already mentioned before, and an ash-pit, [6323]. On its floor, there were also two badly defined and very crumbly patches of burnt loam / loamy soil. Of the two drainage gullies, the shorter one, [6301], contained two further, relatively shallow postholes, [6363] and [6365], which may either also have been associated with the earlier

gate construction or, which seems more likely to us, be features unrelated to the earlier gate, but possibly related to the roundhouse that obliterated the gate. Of these features, gully [6301] with fill (6300) connected the (gate-) postholes [6370], and [6372], with a second leg also connecting to [6325]. Overall, this gully was c. 4.2 meters long, c. 50 cm wide, and its rather uneven floor up to 15 cm deep. The dimensions of the postholes (other than the ones already discussed) set within this gully were as follows: [6363] with fill (6362) was c. 30 by 44 cm in diameter and c. 8 cm deeper than the gully floor, and [6365] with fill (6364) c. 28 cm in diameter and c. 4 cm deeper than the adjacent gully floor. The roundhouse's near-central ash pit, [6323] with fill (6322) was sub-rectangular, c. 80 cm long, c. 60 cm wide, and had a maximum depth of c. 12 cm. Gully [6303] with fill (6302) was c. 40-50 cm wide, c. 20 cm deep at its deepest points, and was recorded in trench 6 for a length of c. 5 meters. A sidearm of this gully almost connected up with gully [6266] (discussed later in the sequence), and thus may only have been added at a later date when this other gully was constructed. A continuation of this gully in Trench 1 was recorded as a linear depression on a post-ex plan, but not recognised and recorded as a separate feature in 2012/13 (Waddington and Karl 2015b, 10), which extends its overall length to c. 7 meters. From this phase onwards for at least several more, it is unclear how and where it was possible to enter the inner enclosure through anything like a gate, which either means that the inhabitants of the site used another entrance passage (e.g. on the as yet unexcavated western side of the enclosure), or alternatively walked across the bank, which for this, however, must already have been badly eroded to allow for crossing it this way.

Fig. 10: Roundhouse outer wall facing (6217), seen from the inside with cut [6368] and roundhouse (6202), (6271), (6272) in the background.

The inner wall facing (6234) of this roundhouse was then partially truncated by the outer facing (6217) of yet another roundhouse, built a bit further to the outside, but still firmly within the former entrance passage (fig. 10). Further bits of this facing had already been recorded as an alignment of several stones (606) next to the then main north-western section of trench 1 of then still unknown

function (Waddington and Karl 2015b, 10). Little else remains of this roundhouse, which did not seem to have its own cut; so the best that can be said that its outer diameter can be estimated to have measured c. 7 meters in diameter, which, assuming an average wall strength of slightly under 1 meter, would give an estimated inner diameter of c. 5-5.5 meters. It must, however, have obliterated significant further parts of what still remained of the northern terminal of the former gate passage.

In turn, this house seems to have been pulled down to be replaced with yet another one, a bit further to the inside and north of the previous one. Of this phase, only its cut, [6340], and possibly one posthole, [6346], which may belong to this phase, remained. Cut [6340] with fill (6271), which was indistinguishable from the core of a later roundhouse wall that obliterated most of this roundhouse, is preserved for a length of c. 3 meters and the bottom of it on a width of c. 1.5 meters. At its lowest point, it had been cut c. 30 cm deep into the surrounding natural. Posthole [6346] with fill (4345) was covered completely by a later phase roundhouse wall, was c. 50 cm in diameter and c. 20 cm deep. This roundhouse probably – estimating based on the curve of its cut – had an inner diameter of c. 5 meters; and was probably obliterated by the roundhouse defined by facings (1200) and (1206) and wall core (1207) in trench 5 of the 2014 season (Möller, Waddington and Karl 2016), which must have obliterated most of what remained of the in-turned northern inner bank terminal, too.

Fig. 11: Roundhouse (6202), (6271), (6272), showing the inner facing (6202), bottom fill (6269) and some of the capping stones (6280) of gully (6279).

That roundhouse, clearly attested only by features in trench 5, 2014, in turn was mostly obliterated by the final roundhouse in the entrance sequence, defined by cut [6201], inner facing stones (6202), rubble and earth wall core (6271) and outer facing stones (6272) (fig. 11). At its north-westernmost point the cut had been dug c. 40 cm deep into the surrounding natural. This house corresponds with cut [105] and stone blocks (251) found in trench 3 Quadrant C in 2010/11 (Waddington and Karl 2015a, 25), tumbled stones found just inside the northern main section of trench 5 in 2014, and presumably met with the northern stone lining (1239) of the stone-lined pit [1240] in trench 5 (Möller, Waddington and Karl 2016). Its inner diameter was approximately 5 meters, and just outside its eastern end, a passage through the inner bank existed after the previous roundhouse had been pulled down. Its floor contained numerous features again, including a sizeable, stone-capped drainage gully [6279], which connected to a sizeable sink-hole [6376], which in turn had an outlet in the form of yet another drainage gully, [6266], which went out underneath the roundhouse wall defined by facings (6201) and (6272) and core (6271), cutting roughly in half what little remained sealed under this wall of the in-turn of the northern inner bank terminal. Gully [6279] also almost connected to another short gully, [6286], which in turn passed next to two hearths or ash-pits, [6284]

and [6282]. Almost all of these gullies (with the exception of [6286]) and pits were filled with dark, sooty sediment containing lots of ash, including the part of the drainage gully that went out of the house. In addition, there was another posthole, [6288] and parts of two pits, [6277] and [6290] in the bottom of the roundhouse, with the former completing pit complex [1240] and the latter pit [1245] from trench 5, 2014 (Möller, Waddington and Karl 2016). Gully [6279] with fill (6278) and capping stones (6280) was c. 35 cm wide and c. 15 cm deep. The pit or sinkhole it emptied into, [6376], contained the same, indistinguishable fill and was c. 1.4 meters long, 1.1 meters wide and c. 40 cm deep. The gully emptying out of this pit, [6266] with fill (6265), which was indistinguishable from (6278), went out of the roundhouse beneath its southern wall, nearly connected up to gully [6303], and was c. 45 cm wide and up to 20 cm deep. Gully [6286] with mid-brown, friable, sandy clay loam fill (6285) may have contained a c. 40 cm diameter posthole and was c. 40-50 cm wide and c. 15 cm deep. Pit [6282], presumably a hearth or ash-pit with fill (6281) was sub-rectangular with a length of c. 90 cm, a width of c. 60 cm, and a sloping, stepped bottom which was, at its deepest point, c. 18 cm deep. Adjacent to it was another sub-rectangular pit, [6284] with fill (6283), which may have been another ash-pit or a posthole and measured c. 60 cm in length, c.32 cm in width, and was c. 15 cm deep. Posthole [6288] with fill (6287) was c. 40 by 50 cm in diameter and c. 20 cm deep. Pit [6277], with fill (6276) which completed pit complex [1240] from trench 5, 2014, was c. 86 cm wide in the main section, extended for about 40 cm into trench 6, and reached a maximum depth of c. 40 cm. It contained a few fragments of seashells of the same and possibly also different types than were found in the adjacent area in trench 5 in 2014 (Möller, Waddington and Karl 2016). Pit [6290] with fill (6289) was the same as pit [1245] from trench 5, 2014 (Möller, Waddington and Karl 2016) and was c. 90 cm wide in section, extended c. 65 cm into trench 6, and was sloping and stepped towards trench 5, reaching a maximum depth of c. 30 cm. The floor of the roundhouse was covered in a 5-10 cm thick bottom fill (6269). On this rested, on the western and eastern inside of inner wall facing (6202) of the house some wall tumble material (6209) and, in a band running from north to south and widening towards the top, an upper fill, (6230), consisting, again, of substantial amounts of mid-sized and partly heat-affected stones intermixed with dark brown, friable silty clay.

Above all the features described in this stratigraphic report rested a c. 15-25 cm thick layer of topsoil (6000).

Preliminary conclusions

The 2015 season, particularly when seen in conjunction with the work conducted in the previous 5 seasons, has helped to revolutionise our understanding of the development of Meillionydd. When we started trench 6, our understanding of the construction sequence of the site was that it seemed to have been quite similar to that at Castell Odo, as established by Leslie Alcock (1960). We could distinguish 4 main settlement phases: an early, unenclosed settlement consisting of timber-built roundhouses, followed by the first enclosure by means of a timber palisade and the u-shaped ditch, followed by a reconfiguration in the settlement to a stone-and-earth embanked double ringwork enclosure with stone-built roundhouses, with the enclosing banks partially demolished at a later stage by roundhouses built into the and over the bank bodies. The features discovered during the 2015 season, particularly in the area of the inner entrance passage in Quadrants 13-16, has provided us with a key to a much more fine-grained and detailed understanding of the site's biography.

While the main sequence just described, from open timber-built to enclosed timber-built to double enclosed stone-built to stone-built with partial obliteration of the banks still holds true, we can now

distinguish at least 8 main phases of construction, the first three of which can further be subdivided into 2 or even 3 (for main phase 2) sub-phases. For the 8 main phases, we can, with reasonable certainty, establish their relative chronological order: phase 1 was (in all likelihood) before phase 2, phase 2 before phase 3, etc.

Where sub-phases are concerned, e.g. 1a and 1b, their relative chronological position within the main phase is at least considerably less clear, if not entirely uncertain; 1a could before 1b or vice versa. This is mainly due to the fact that the first 2 main phases are the timber-built phases on site. Buildings belonging to these phases thus have mainly left postholes and the occasional wall gully as traces, and it is rarely, if ever, possible to establish a reliable stratigraphic sequence allowing to demonstrate which of two overlapping buildings came before the other. However, at least on one spot of the site, at least 5 different timber-built roundhouses partially occupy the same space, and thus cannot have stood simultaneously (fig. 12). Two of those also intersect with the wooden palisade or strong fence that enclosed the site in what we think has been main phase 2, and thus cannot have stood simultaneously with that palisade fence. This enables us to assign the latter two of the 5 overlapping timber-built roundhouses to main phase 1, which we think pre-dated the enclosure of the site, and the remaining 3 to main phase 2, the timber-enclosed phase of the site.

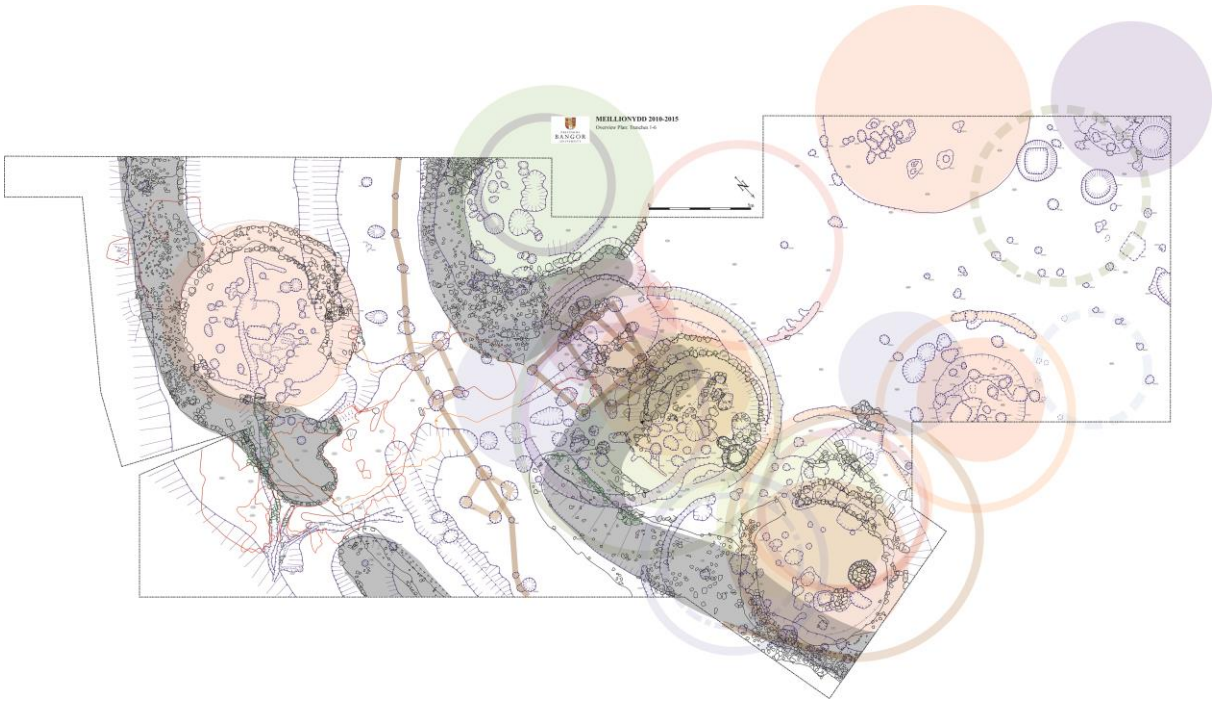

Fig. 12: Interpretative plan of trenches 1-6, 2010-2015. Timber-built roundhouses are shown as differently coloured rings, stone-built roundhouses as differently coloured circles. Rectangular and linear timber structures are shown in different shades of brown. Earth-and-stone banks are shown in grey. Note the overlap between 5 timber-built roundhouses somewhat north of the in-turned northern inner bank terminal.

On the following pages, each of the main and sub-phases will be discussed. Interpretative maps (figs. 13-24) in each case show the following: brown linear, rectangular and circular structures: timber-structures. Grey rings: stone-built roundhouses. Darkest hues of brown and grey indicate that a structure can definitely be assigned to the particular sub-phase or main phase shown. Medium hues of brown and grey indicate that a particular structure can be assigned either to this or, at the most, another two or three (sub-) phases. Light hues of brown and grey indicate that the structure could have stood in more than 3 (sub-) phases. Linear features in dark grey are the earth-and-stone banks,

shown in each phase in the shape they would roughly have had. Light grey areas are metalled areas, with only those areas shown in each phase that likely correspond with the particular phase(s) to which the metalling can tentatively be assigned, with only those areas shaded in grey where the metalling has survived until discovered during the excavations. Originally, the metalled surfaces may have extended beyond the areas shown on the interpretative plans.

The construction sequence

Phase 1

During main phase one, which probably dates to around c. 800 BC, the settlement was an open settlement, consisting of timber-built roundhouses located on or near the hilltop on which the site of Meillionydd sits. Houses at least partially seem to have been quite sizeable, with diameters up to or even exceeding 12 meters in some cases. During this earliest phase of the occupation of Meillionydd, buildings could well have stood not only within the area that later was enclosed by various features, but may have extended well beyond that, as seems to be indicated by the results of the 2012 GPR survey (see Higgins 2014, 37-40). This first main phase can be divided into two sub-phases, 1a and 1b, whose relative sequence cannot be ascertained.

Sub-phase 1a

This sub-phase is defined by a sizeable timber-built roundhouse (fig. 13) situated mainly in what was trench 3, excavated in 2010 and 2011. The only features surviving of this roundhouse are a number of sizeable and deep postholes (e.g. [200], [206]; see Waddington and Karl 2015a, 20), mainly in the area later built over by the inner earth-and-stone bank of main phase 3, which in this area also covers a number of postholes that can most likely be assigned to the palisade fence of phase 2, some of which seem to be intersecting with postholes assignable to this roundhouse. Despite this, due to the rather homogenous fills of these postholes, it is impossible to determine a clear stratigraphic sequence. However, the circle defined by the curve of these postholes overlaps not only with the likely line of the timber palisade fence, but also with the circles defined by the wall gullies and/or postholes of at least 4 other timber-built roundhouses. Several other roundhouses may also belong to this phase, e.g. one underneath what later became the northern inner bank terminal and one just inside of what later became the inner entrance to the site, as well as the timber-built roundhouse in what later became the southern inner bank terminal. The former two of these houses could, however, also belong to several other phases, and the last one to all phases containing timber-built roundhouses. In addition, the 4-poster north of the later metalled road leading into the site could also belong to this phase (but this 4-poster could belong to almost any phase on site), as could some possible but unclear timber-built roundhouses that may have stood further to the western end of the excavated area.

Sub-phase 1b

This sub-phase is defined by a c. 9 meter diameter timber built roundhouse (fig. 14) located mainly in the south-eastern corner of trench 3 and adjacent areas of trench 5. It was identified in 2014 in trench 5 only by two concentric wall gullies, [1236] and [1251] (Möller, Waddington and Karl 2016), which might indicate that it had a double plank wall, or could be the remains of two consecutive buildings erected in exactly the same place, but with a slightly different diameter (one of which would define a sub-phase 1c if the latter were the case). Again, this house is standing in the path the timber palisade fence would have taken, and thus, we assume that it predates the enclosed phase.

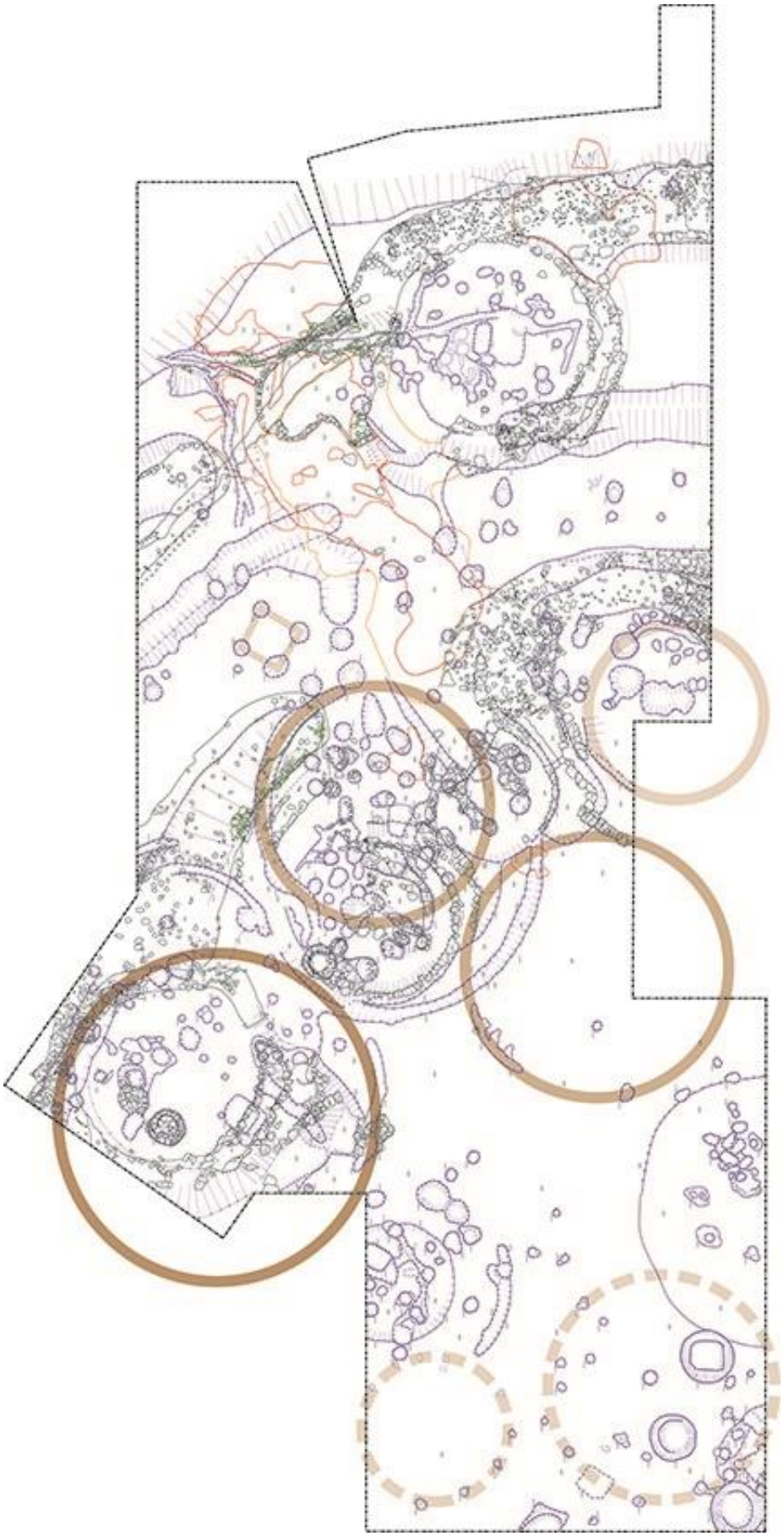

Fig. 13: Phase 1a (open timber-built settlement)

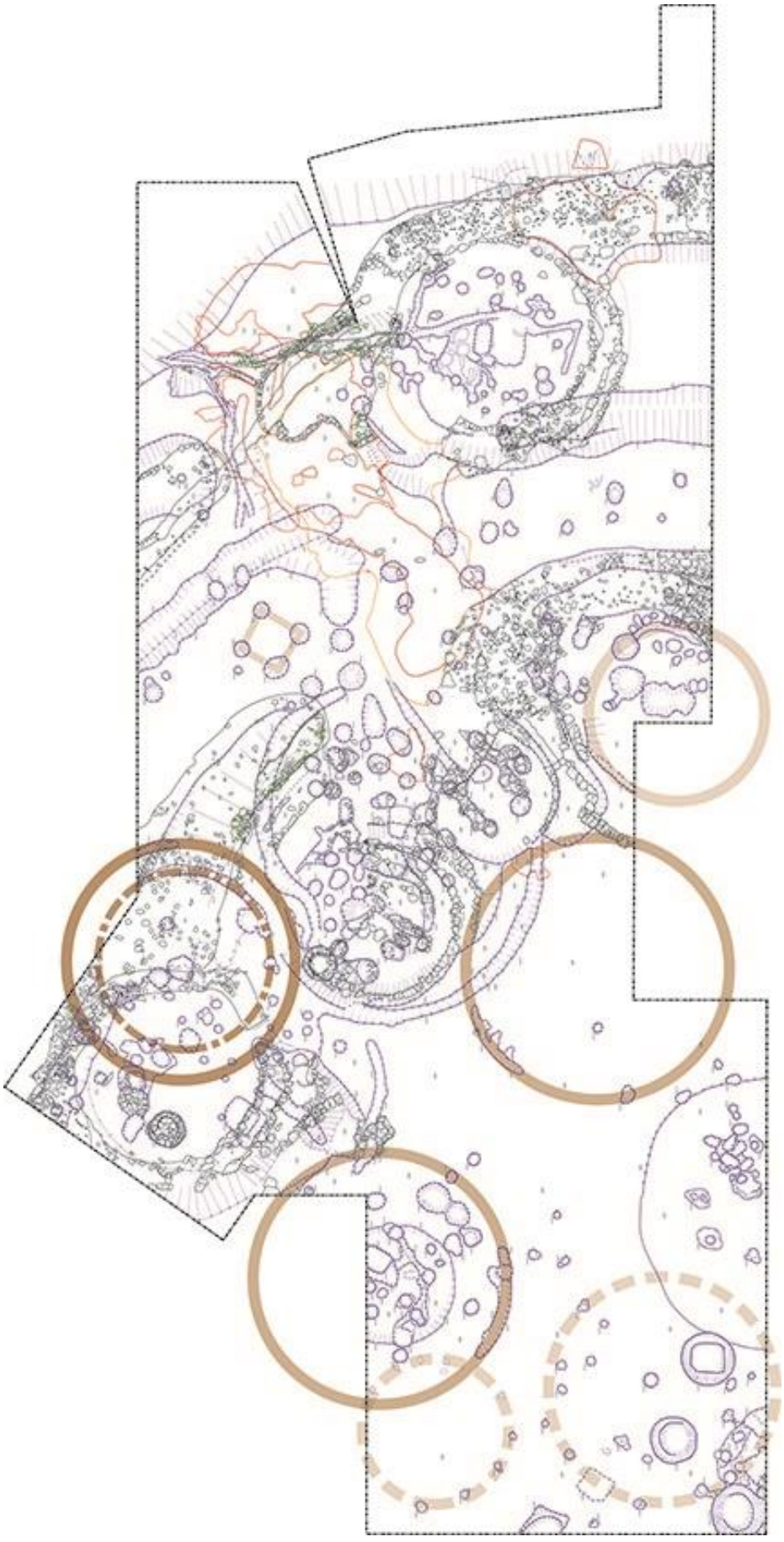

Fig. 14: Phase 1b (open timber-built settlement)

In addition to this house, several other buildings could have been stood during this phase, for instance the roundhouses defined by gullies [6065] and [6086] found during the 2015 excavations, the roundhouse underneath the southern inner bank terminal, a few other potential roundhouses, and the four-poster. However, none of those can be assigned to this sub-phase with certainty.

Phase 2

Phase 2 is the phase of the site enclosed by the u-shaped ditch and the timber palisade fence most likely associated with this ditch. Since the terminals of the u-shaped ditch contained a number of probably intentionally deposited, if very badly corroded, iron objects, possibly including one or two knifes, it probably dates to the early Iron Age, or at the earliest the later stages of the Llyn Fawr phase, possibly sometime around 600 BC. In this phase, much like in the previous one, buildings still seem to generally have been constructed in timber architecture, with the change to stone architecture only occurring in the subsequent phase of the occupation of the site. Again, the houses identified as likely to belong to this main phase are partially quite sizeable, with up to c. 12 meters in diameter, and an average diameter of c. 9-10 meters. At the moment, we are assuming that once the site was enclosed, most or even all of the buildings constructed during this phase will have been built inside of the enclosure defined by the u-shaped ditch and palisade fence, though this cannot be ascertained until those possible buildings outside the enclosed area identified on the GPR survey are excavated (Higgins 2014, 37-40). This second main phase can be divided into three sub-phases, which again cannot be put in a relative sequence with certainty.

Characteristic for all the sub-phases of this main phase is that they are enclosed by the u-shaped ditch ([23] the southern part, excavated in 2010-2013; [1064] the norther part, excavated in 2014), the rectangular timber gatehouse defined by postholes [651], [663], [665] and [866] (excavated in 2012 and 2013), and several postholes forming two possible courses of linear arrangements of posts connecting up to this gatehouse (Waddington and Karl 2015b; Möller, Waddington and Karl 2016). During a later phase of the use of this ditched, timber-palisaded enclosure, the first layer of metalling (1044) seems to have been put in, though we cannot determine in exactly which sub-phase this occurred. Thus, on the following interpretative plans for sub-phases 2a-2c (figs. 15-17), this metalling is shown only in sub-phase 2c (fig. 17), as this metalling covered parts of the northern terminal of the u-shaped ditch and thus must have constructed after this terminal had at least partially been filled with accumulated sediment, and thus relates to a later stage in main phase 2. However, since sub-phases 2a-2c could be in any sequence, we decided to only show the changed entrance design in the one we arbitrarily had named as the last of the three sub-phases. Thus, the interpretative plans must be read accordingly: it may well be that the buildings shown for sub-phase 2a, rather than those shown for sub-phase 2c, were actually contemporary with the entrance design shown in sub-phase 2c, or indeed any combination of any two of sub-phases 2a-c could actually have been associated with the entrance design shown only for sub-phase 2c, while any one of the three may have had the entrance design shown for sub-phases 2a and 2b.

Sub-phase 2a

This sub-phase is defined by another timber-built roundhouse (fig. 15) first identified during the 2010-2011 excavations of trench 3 (shown as ‘phase 2’ timber structure in Karl and Waddington 2011, 12; and possibly including posthole [6071] discovered in the 2015 trench). This building overlaps with the two defining the previous two sub-phases of main phase 1 and those defining the other two sub-phases of main phase 2.

Fig. 15: Phase 2a (timber-enclosed timber-built settlement)

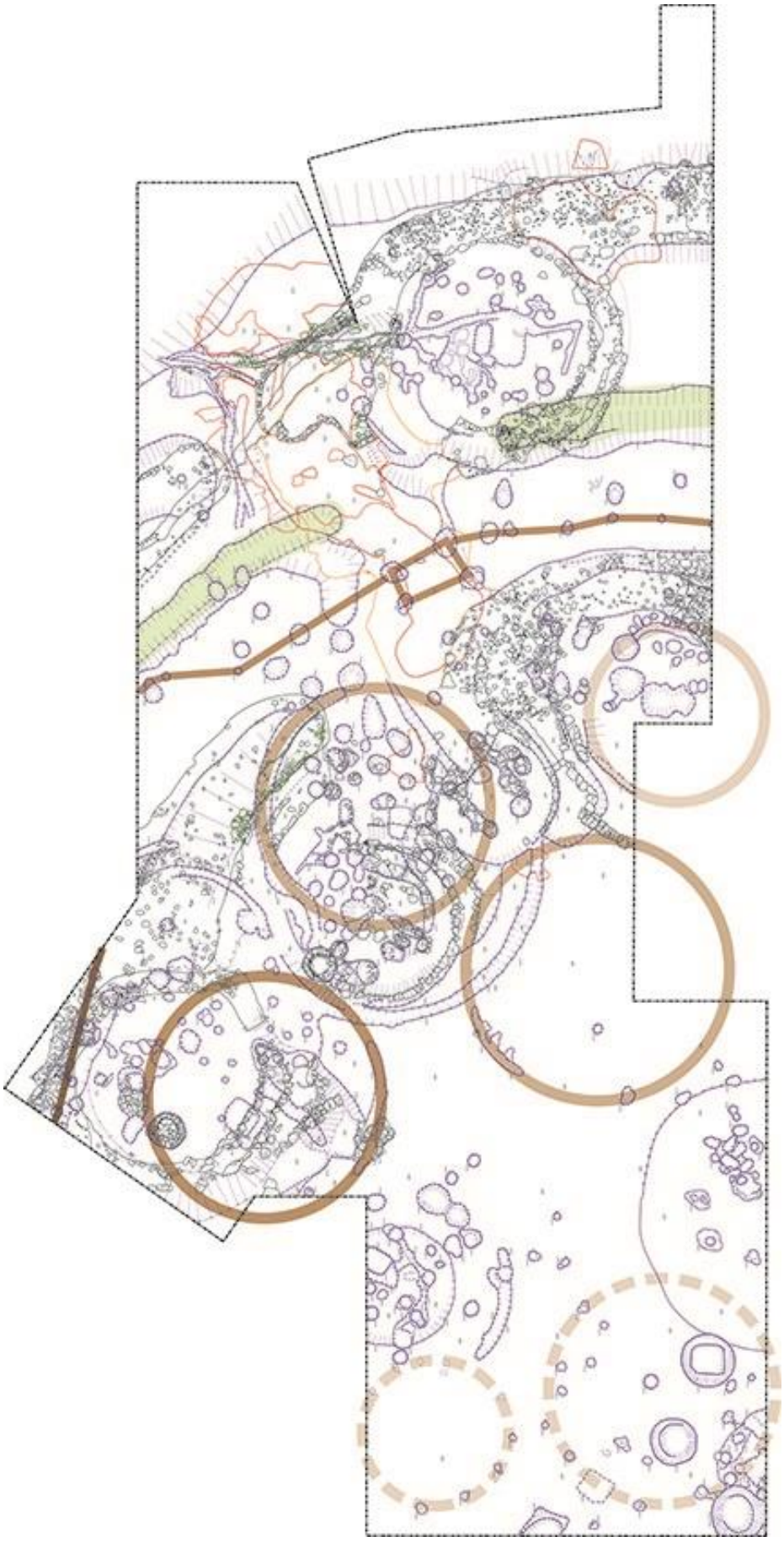

Fig. 16: Phase 2b (timber-enclosed timber-built settlement)

Fig. 17: Phase 2c (timber-enclosed timber-built settlement)

A number of the already aforementioned timber roundhouses could also possibly belong to this phase. Presuming the timber palisade shown for this sub-phase actually corresponds with it (rather than only one or two of the other two sub-phases of this main phase), the four-poster could not have stood in this phase. However, as explained before about the uncertainties about the relative sequence of the entrance design in sub-phases 2a-2c, this is not certain.

Sub-phase 2b

This sub-phase is defined by a timber-built roundhouse (fig. 16) first identified during the 2015 excavations in the form of roundhouse wall gully [6077]. This building overlaps with the three defining the previous sub-phases of main phases 1 and 2 and that defining the final sub-phase of main phase 2. Again, a number of the other aforementioned buildings could also have stood in this phase, though this is uncertain.

Sub-phase 2c

This sub-phase is defined by a timber-built roundhouse (fig. 17) first identified during the 2015 excavations in the form of roundhouse wall gully [6200]. This building overlaps with the four defining the previous sub-phases of main phases 1 and 2.

Again, a number of the other aforementioned buildings could also have stood in this phase, though this is uncertain. Presuming the timber palisade shown for this sub-phase actually corresponds with it (rather than only one or two of the other two sub-phases of this main phase), the four-poster could have stood in this phase. However, as explained before about the uncertainties about the relative sequence of the entrance design in sub-phases 2a-2c, this is not certain.

Further notes of caution regarding main phases 1 and 2

In addition to the caveats mentioned above already, it is also necessary to mention that the assignment of sub-phases 2a-2c to main phase 2 rests entirely on the fact that the buildings defining each of these phases do not overlap with the timber palisade fence which, together with the u-shaped ditch, defines main phase 2. Thus, they cannot be excluded on stratigraphic grounds as not being contemporary with the timber palisade fence-enclosed phase of the site.

However, the fact that sub-phases 2a-2c could have been contemporary with the timber palisade fence-enclosed phase of the site does not necessarily mean that they must have been contemporary with it. It is thus entirely possible that any, or indeed any two, of sub-phases 2a-2c, could actually pre-date the timber-enclosed main phase of the site. After all, it is entirely possible that the u-shaped ditch was dug, the timber palisade fence erected, then somewhat re-designed and the entrance passage metalled during what, where the building sequence is concerned, appears to be a single one of sub-phases 2a-2c.

Thus, it is possible that up to as many as two of sub-phases 2a-2c actually were still unenclosed and thus should correctly be seen as sub-phases of main phase 1 of the site's occupation. However, for the purpose of illustrating the overall building sequence and enclosure sequence in a single series of images, it was decided that the best way to show the site's development was to tentatively assign all building phases that could belong to the timber-enclosed main phase of the site as sub-phases of main phase 2.

Equally, there is no guarantee that the u-shaped ditch and the timber palisade fence were actually erected simultaneously: indeed, the ditched enclosure could theoretically completely pre-date the

timber enclosure. It would even be possible that there was an earlier timber enclosure which was later replaced by the ditched enclosure, which in turn might have been replaced by a second timber enclosure. The fact that the metalling associated with the timber gatehouse runs over the northern terminal of the u-shaped ditch means that the latest phase of this particular part of the enclosure sequence must have included the timber gate and metalled surface leading through it, but that does not preclude the possibility that u-shaped ditch and timber palisade were subsequent to rather than contemporary with each other.

However, these uncertainties could also not be shown in an interpretative illustration of the sequence of the site without having to show several different variants of possible sequences within what here has been defined as main phases 1 and 2. The option chosen thus seemed preferable for the sake of explanatory and illustrative simplicity. It is also the sequence we think to be the most likely of the several different possible variants. Regardless of this, these caveats have to be considered when reading this sequence.

Phase 3

Phase 3 saw the most significant remodelling of the site; the changes that gave it the outer appearance that is still characterising it today. It is this phase which is defined by the erection and main use of the two narrowly spaced concentric earth-and-stone banks with internal quarry hollows that turned Meillionydd into a double ringwork enclosure. It is also the phase in which the site was most monumentalised and appeared most impressive to contemporaries. Given that the u-shaped ditch pre-dates this phase of the site, this remodelling of the site must also have happened in the Iron Age, probably still well within the earlier Iron Age, presumably around c. 500-400 BC (though since we do not have any radiocarbon dates for this phase as of yet, that suggested date is still mostly speculation).

The transformation of the site into an impressive double ringwork seems to have been a single, planned event. While the quarry hollow inside the outer bank was dug, so were the gullies for the roundhouse set into its southern terminal and emptying the quarry hollow inside of its northern terminal. The outer bank was erected to include the roundhouse built into its southern entrance terminal within one architectural unit with the bank: The entrance through this bank was metalled with a new layer of metalling, which abutted the southern bank terminal and went into the porch of the roundhouse set into this. The metalling then presumably was continued up to and through the elaborated entrance through the inner bank, which seems to have been built simultaneously with the outer bank and also included a roundhouse built into its southern, in-turned terminal as one architectural unit. Into the inner entrance, a massive gatehouse or even a gate tower seems to have been set, with a wider passage – wide enough to allow for an average Iron Age chariot pass through it – to its southern side. The gatehouse might also have included a narrower northern passage for pedestrians. The metalling seems to have run through the in-turned gate passage and may have ended shortly to the inside of it, or may have continued and only eroded away since. Quite possibly – because that would further emphasise the quite impressive entrance situation that would have created – the four-poster than could be in virtually any phase of the site's sequence might have been placed just to the outside of this inner entrance to its north, just beside the metalled road that went through the two gates. And when the gatehouse was built into the inner gate, two pieces of jewellery, a fragment of a jet bracelet and a decorated glass bead, were intentionally deposited in its two main outer gateposts. The site, thus, seems to have been seriously monumentalised in a single planned act, that created – at least for the area – a very impressive approach.

Fig. 18: Phase 3a (double ringwork enclosure with gatehouse and stone-built settlement)

Fig. 19: Phase 3b (double ringwork enclosure with gatehouse and stone-built settlement)

It is rather tempting to see this as a particular social statement, made perhaps in competition with similar activities happening contemporaneously with it at Castell Odo (Alcock 1960), which after all is just about 3 miles as the bird flies to the West of Meillionydd and well visible from the site. Whether the inhabitants of Meillionydd were competing with those of Castell Odo (or indeed those of some of the other double ringwork enclosures on the Llŷn peninsula) for some particular social status or rank; or indeed were trying to establish their membership in an emerging elite by transforming their settlement into a 'llys' appropriate to elite status; some significant change that affected either just the inhabitants of the site, or indeed happened in wider society, seems to be expressed by this transformation and monumentalisation of Meillionydd.

As mentioned before, this phase of the sequence at Meillionydd can be divided into (at least) two sub-phases, 3a and 3b, which will not be discussed separately, because they are only distinguished from one another by the fact that the gatehouse or gate tower leading through the in-turned inner entrance passage seems to have been rebuilt at least once, possibly even more than once. Again, it is impossible to decide based on stratigraphy alone whether sub-phase 3a (fig. 18) came before or after sub-phase 3b (fig. 19) (and possibly another similarly distinguished sub-phase 3c); although we think that, given that the outer gate postholes of the gate shown as sub-phase 3a contain intentional depositions of material culture, while those of 3b do not, chances are that 3a did indeed come before 3b in this case.

Of course, like with the timber-built phases, there are several other buildings that may have been standing during this main phase (or its two to three separate sub-phases), but since they do not slot clearly into the main stratigraphic sequence of the inner entrance area, it is difficult to be certain which ones would have stood during this or some of the following phases. It may also well be that the first or second of storage pits on the top of the hill was now dug, though it is tempting to think that during phase 3, the sizeable stone built roundhouse in Quadrants 10-12 of trench 6 was also standing and occupied, seeing that the in-turned entrance seems to be pointing almost exactly at the entrance into this building as defined by its two entrance posts. If the latter were the case, the storage pit partially covered by this roundhouse would belong to one of the previous phases.

Phase 4

As radical as the transformation of the site from phase 2 to phase 3 seems to have been, almost as radical was its transformation from phase 3 to phase 4, at least as far as the archaeology itself seems to indicate. This phase (fig. 20) is defined by the complete transformation of the eastern inner entrance passage by the insertion of a stone-built roundhouse right in the middle of that – now former – gate passage. Since this completely blocked the eastern inner entrance, it has to be assumed that either there existed another entrance into the inner enclosure, perhaps on the western side; or that the inner bank already had been or now intentionally was almost levelled in at least some place, to allow crossing over it. At any rate, the very impressive approach into the site through its eastern gates had certainly been given up for what seems to be a much more modest appearance.

It is uncertain whether the outer entrance still remained functional, and whether the architectural unit of entrance passage, southern outer bank terminal, and attached roundhouse was maintained. It is possible, but not necessary that it was, thus this question must remain unanswered for the time being. Whether that architectural unit in the outer entrance was maintained or not, many other roundhouses may have been occupied during this phase, though which ones precisely is impossible to say, since they do not slot into the main inner entrance sequence.

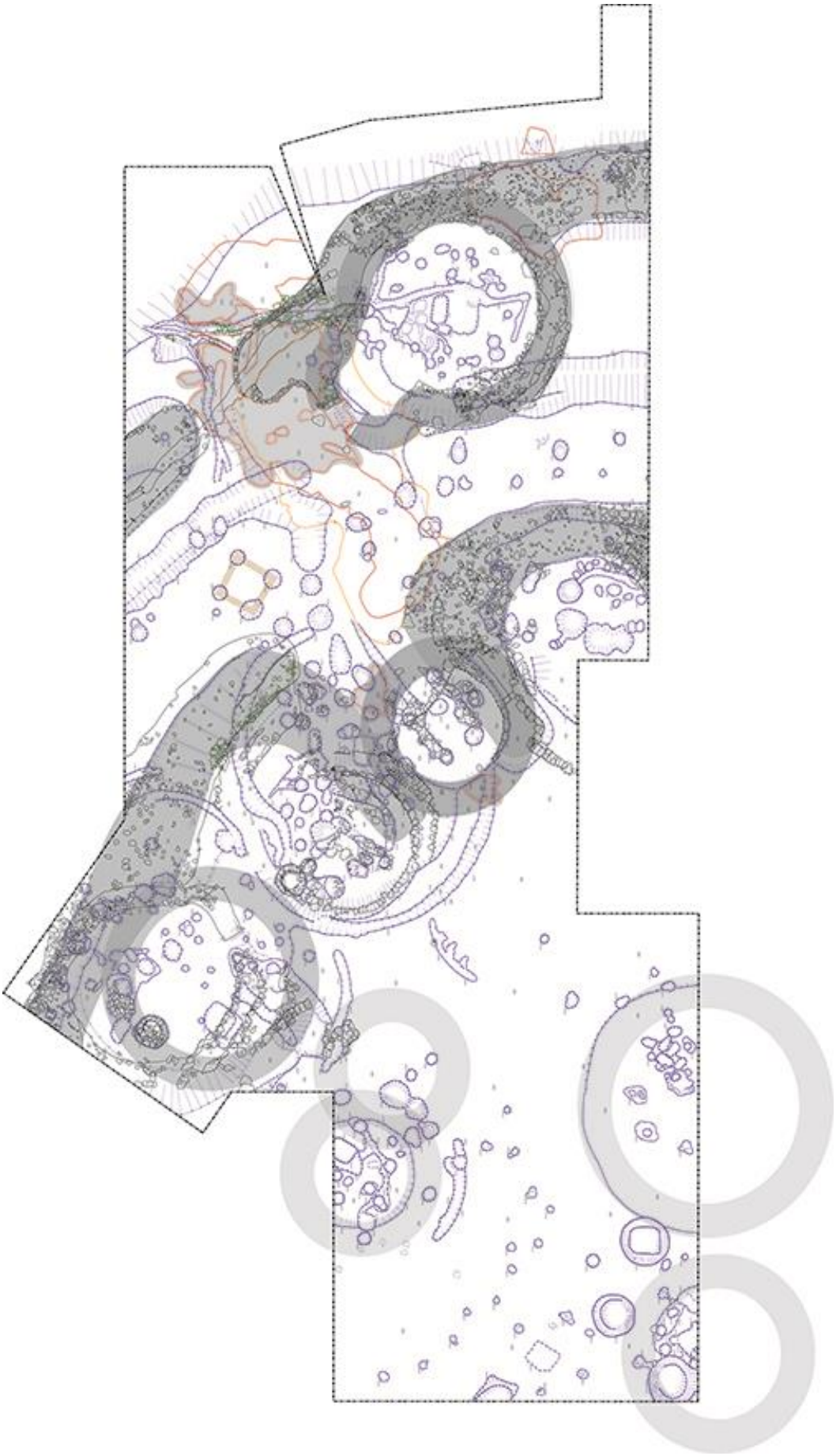

Fig. 20: Phase 4 (stone-built settlement, enclosing banks deteriorating and party built-over)

How the transformation the site went through from phase 3 to phase 4 can be explained in social terms is also a quite interesting question, particularly since Castell Odo seems to have gone through a similar transformation process at some stage of its use-life (Alcock 1960), quite possibly at – at least roughly – the same time that Meillionydd went through the changes that separate phase 3 from 4. It is difficult to imagine that social competition between the two sites led to both 'de-monumentalising' themselves; though perhaps even this is not entirely impossible as a response to similar social pressures or, indeed, similar 'fashions' of architectural design. However, it seems more likely that either whatever social status the inhabitants of those sites had gained or at least aspired to during phase 3 was lost again (or the aspiration abandoned since it no longer seemed achievable) in phase 4; or that a newly achieved status had become completely accepted socially that it no longer had to be expressed by architectural monumentalisation. Banks that were no longer maintained thus could possibly be a sad memory of better days long past. Or they could intentionally have been 'abandoned' because eroding bumps in the settlement sent the message that the site had been an 'elite residence' since time immemorial, proving the flawless noble pedigree of its inhabitants much more than newly built fancy walls.

Phase 5

Compared to the radical changes to the site from phase 2 to 3 and from phase 3 to 4, hardly anything changed from phase 4 to phase 5. This phase is defined by the roundhouse in the inner entrance passage (fig. 21) defined by the outer facing stones (6217) identified in 2015 and (606) in 2012/13 (Waddington and Karl 2015b, 10) that replaced the one before it, obliterating more or less half of that previous house. Again, many other roundhouses may have been occupied during this phase, though which ones precisely is impossible to say, since they do not slot into the main inner entrance sequence.

Phase 6

Again, very little seems to have changed compared to phase 5 in phase 6. The roundhouse in the entrance that had defined the previous phase now was replaced by another one in, again, roughly the same spot (fig. 22). This roundhouse, defined by cut [6340], identified in 2015, just sat a bit further inwards into where the former entrance passage had been, taking out a good part of what may have remained of the northern inner bank terminal of phase 3.

However, probably in this phase (though possibly only in an even later one), the metalled road that had led through both inner and outer gate was resurfaced and extended with a new, if comparably shoddily made layer of stones. This 'third' metalling also covered parts of the southern terminal of the outer bank and parts of the roundhouse built into that terminal. Thus, the entrance through the outer bank was either considerably widened or the outer bank completely abandoned in this phase, and the 'outer' roundhouse immediately south of that outer entrance either also completely abandoned, or at least had its porch removed and replaced by a simpler entrance. Since the metalled road also went straight at the former southern terminal of the eroding inner bank and was found to be abutting it during the 2012/13 excavations in trench 1 (Waddington and Karl 2015b, 9-10), it seems rather likely that it did not stop at the point where it met the remains of the former southern terminal of the inner bank, but rather went across it, with the evidence for this just having been eroded away since. It this can be assumed that in this phase, the inner bank in the former entrance area had almost completely eroded away or been levelled to allow access into what remained of the inner enclosure, passing directly south of the roundhouse defining this phase.

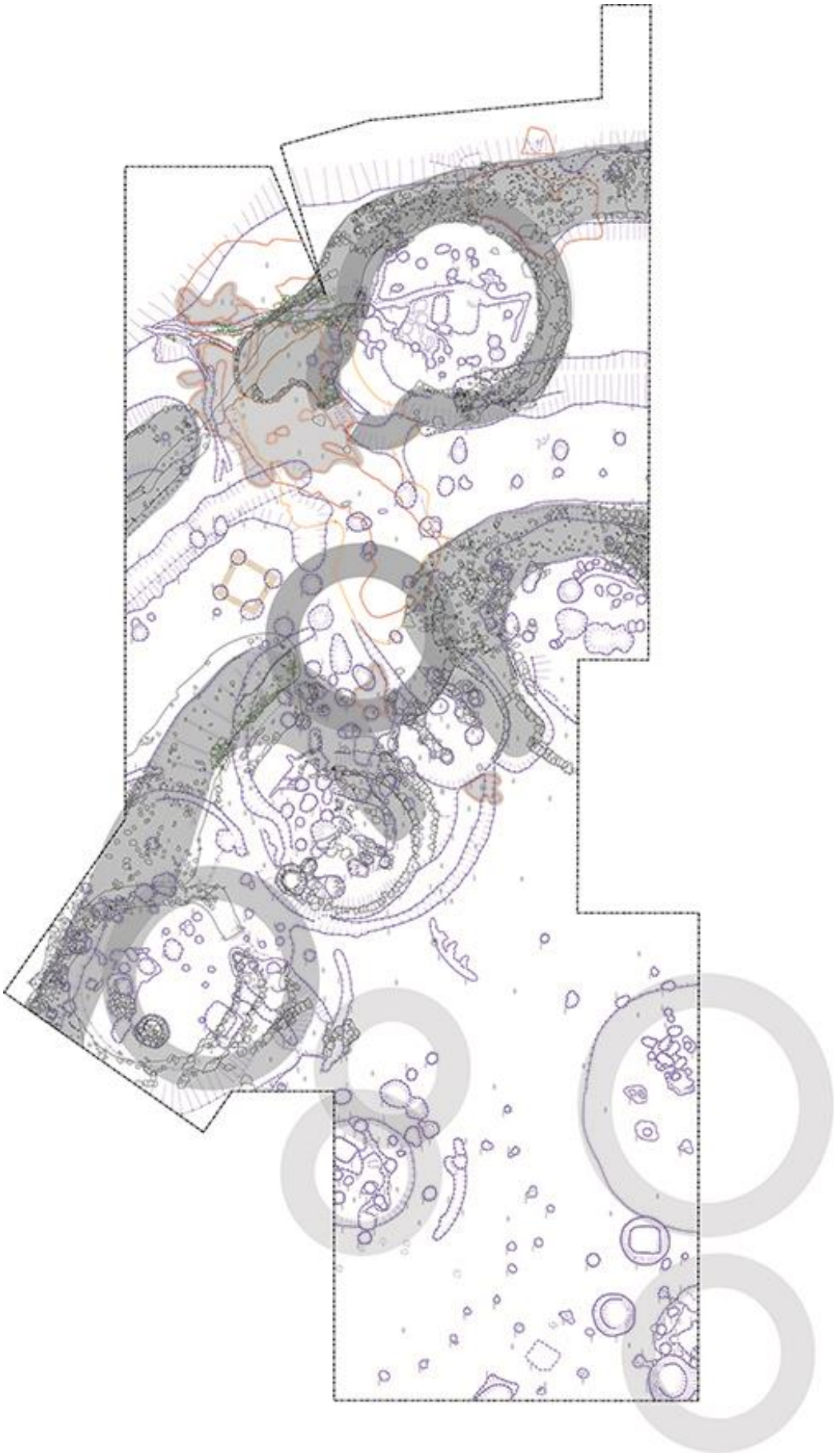

Fig. 21: Phase 5 (stone-built settlement, enclosing banks deteriorating and party built-over)

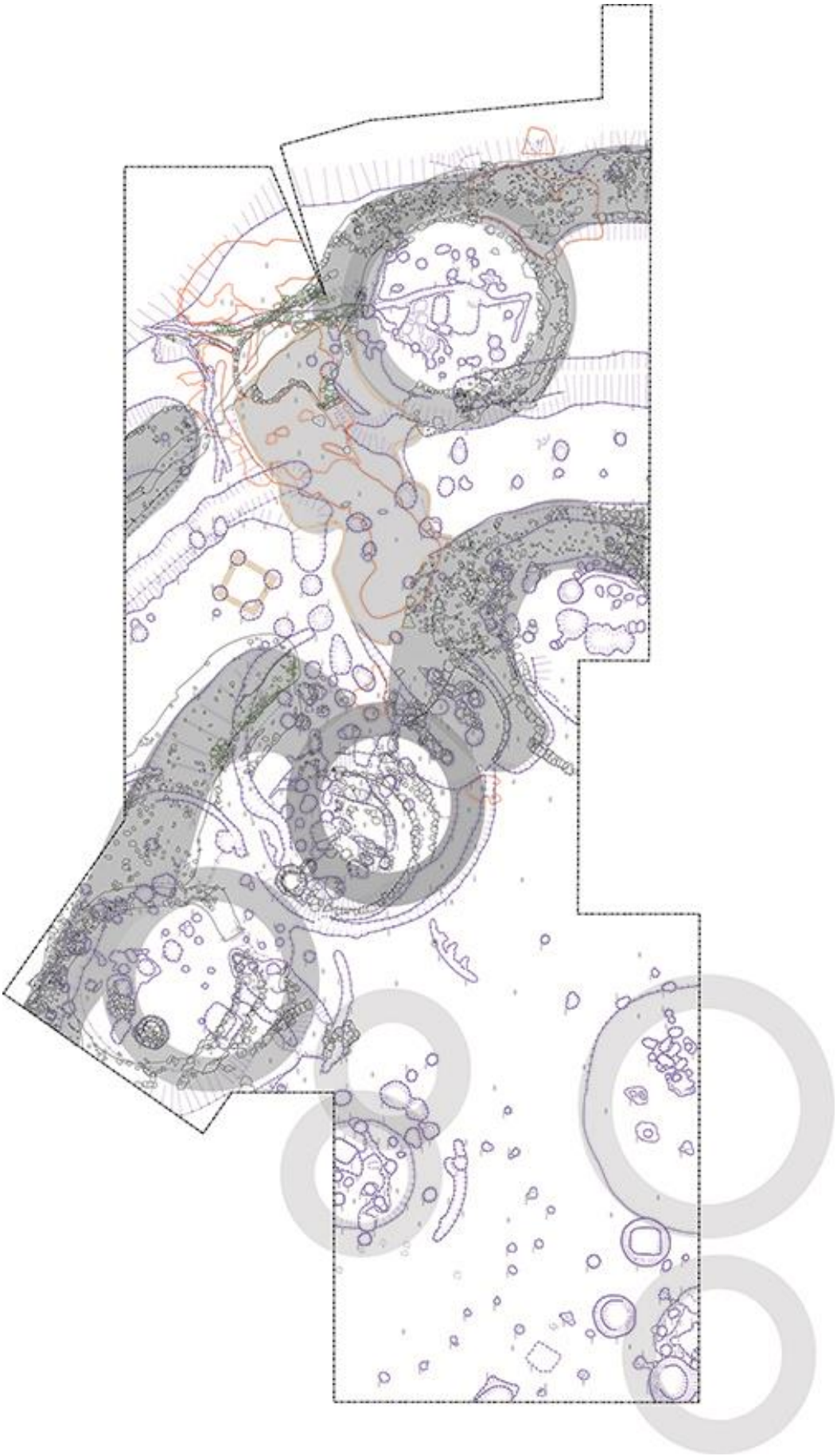

Fig. 22: Phase 6 (stone-built settlement, enclosing banks deteriorating and party built-over)

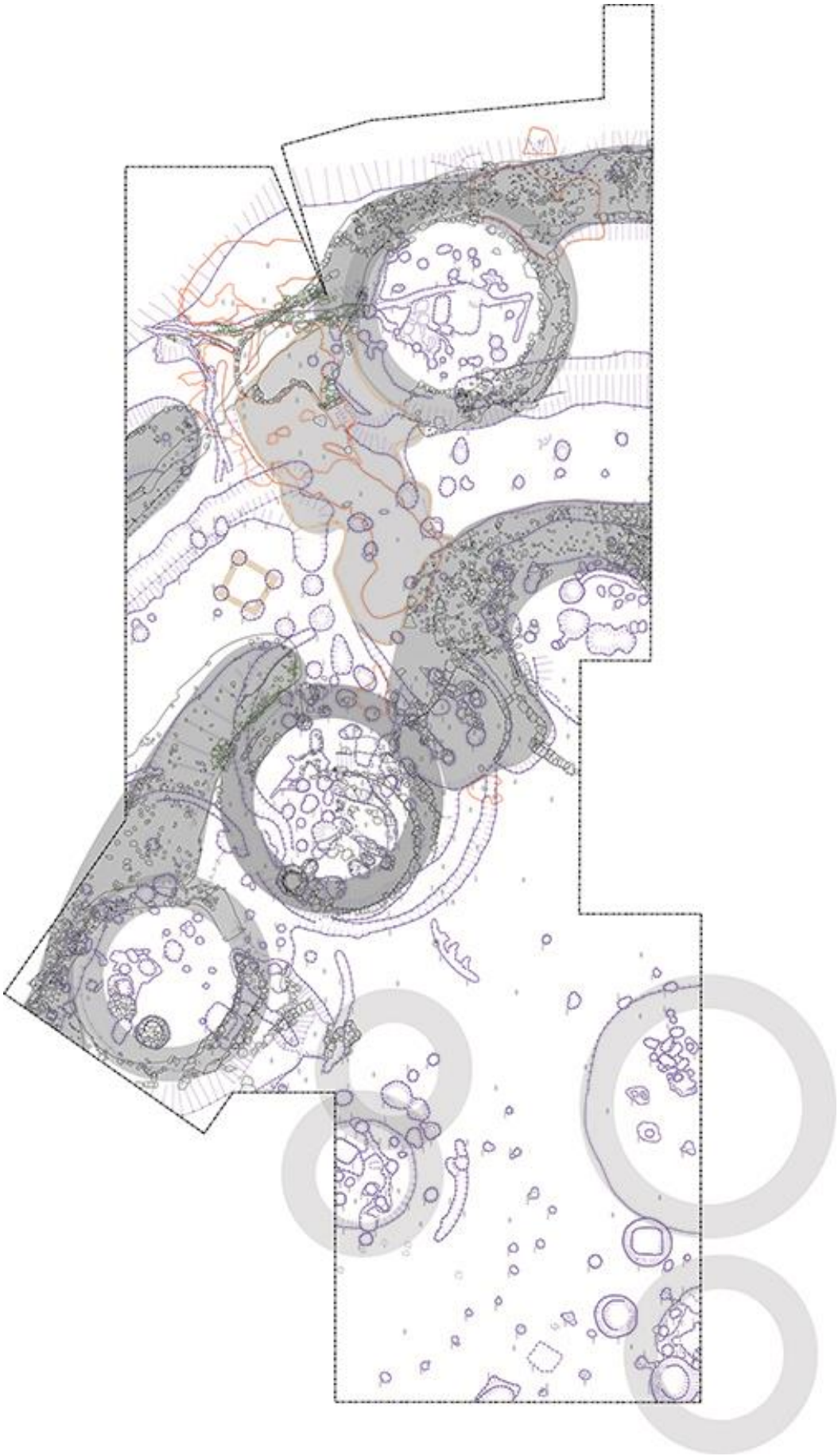

Fig. 23: Phase 7 (stone-built settlement, enclosing banks deteriorating and party built-over)

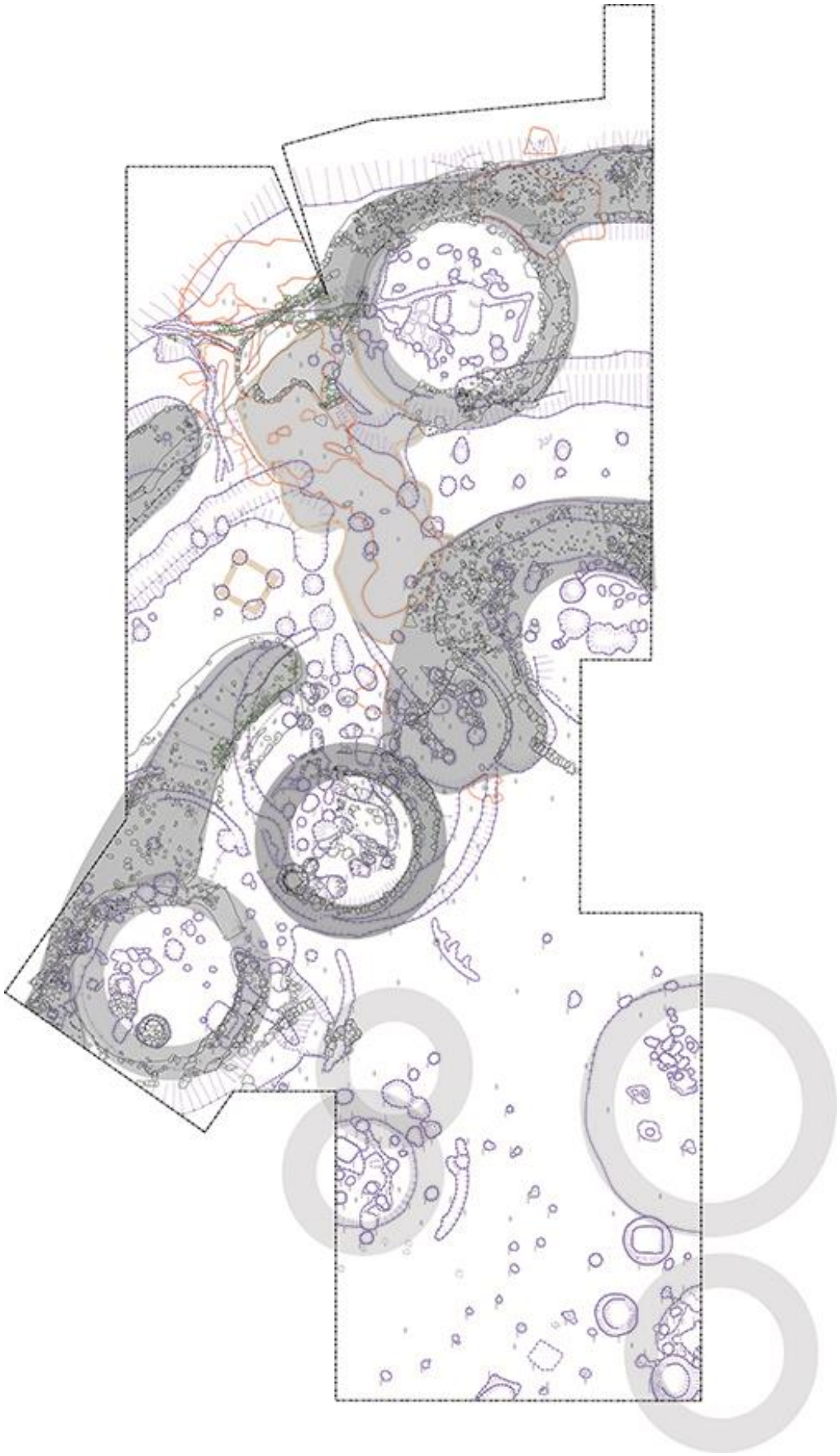

Fig. 24: Phase 8 (stone-built settlement, enclosing banks deteriorating and party built-over)

Phase 7

Change from phase 6 to phase 7 again was rather minor and insignificant. Phase 7 is defined by yet another roundhouse in the inner entrance sequence (fig. 23), defined by wall facings (1200) and (1206) and roundhouse wall core (1207) as discovered in 2014 (Möller, Waddington and Karl 2016). Again set into what had been the former northern terminal of the inner bank, it was set further to the outside and obliterated much of what remained of the in-turn of the northern inner entrance. To allow for a south-westerly entrance into this building, much of what still remained of that in-turned leg of the bank now seems to have been dug away completely. Also, the last roundhouse phase set into the inner bank slightly north of this building would seem to have been constructed in either this or the subsequent, final phase of the site (Waddington and Karl 2015a, 23-5). This would indicate that the construction of this phase of the site dates to the middle Iron Age, roughly around 300 BC, since charred twigs from a late feature in the floor of this house produced a radiocarbon date of 384–203 cal. BC (2σ; GU26312).

Phase 8

The final construction phase identified based on the inner entrance sequence is defined by yet another roundhouse built into what once was the norther terminal of the inner bank (Fig. 24). Discovered in 2015, it is defined by wall facings (6202), (6272) and wall core (6271), which sealed in some ephemeral remains of the former in-turned northern bank of the inner gate passage. Since this house was set a bit further to the inside of the inner enclosure than the previous one, this opened yet another 'level' access into the area defined by the inner bank through the gap created by where the somewhat larger house of the previous phase had stood. This final phase house seems to ultimately have partially collapsed and then been infilled with rubble, in what may have been a final closure of the site at the end of its occupation.

Concluding remarks on the construction sequence

The results of the 2015 season have provided us with a much improved understanding of the construction sequence of Meillionydd, particularly because of the complex sequence of building construction in the inner entrance area, which was one of the main foci of this season's work. When adding up all identified main and sub-phases, we now can distinguish 12 separate phases of construction, 11 of which are distinguished from each other by the construction of different roundhouses, which must have been constructed subsequently to each other because the overlap or clearly cut out parts of earlier buildings (Fig. 25).

The currently available radiocarbon dates for an early hearth of 753–410 cal. BC (2σ; 2450 ± 30; GU26311) and a late feature in the roundhouse sequence in trench 3 of 384–203 cal. BC (2 σ; 2225 ± 30; GU26312) (Waddingon and Karl 2015a, 31) provide an approximate 550 years for the occupation of the site. Of course, those dates may not be of the very earliest and very latest phases of the occupation of the site, and thus a bit may have to be added to either side of the dating range established by these dates. However, given that as of yet, we have neither found late Bronze Age pottery nor latest Iron Age pottery on site, it seems unlikely that the occupation of the site would have started much before 800 and ended only much after 200 BC. Rather, the radiocarbon dates from Meillionydd roughly corresponds with the mostly 'aceramic' period in much of west Wales (Davies & Lynch 2000,199-202), which corroborates an occupation of the site which lasted, at the most, for some 600-750 years, probably less. Thus, assuming that the site was occupied only for c. the 550 years defined by the maximum range of the 2 radiocarbon dates as yet available, that would indicate that each of the building phases identified at the site would have lasted for a maximum of c. 50 years. While this may still be a bit too long for the average expected use-life of a normal roundhouse, it is not much over it; and thus, it would seem likely that we can now identify most major construction phases that occurred on this site.

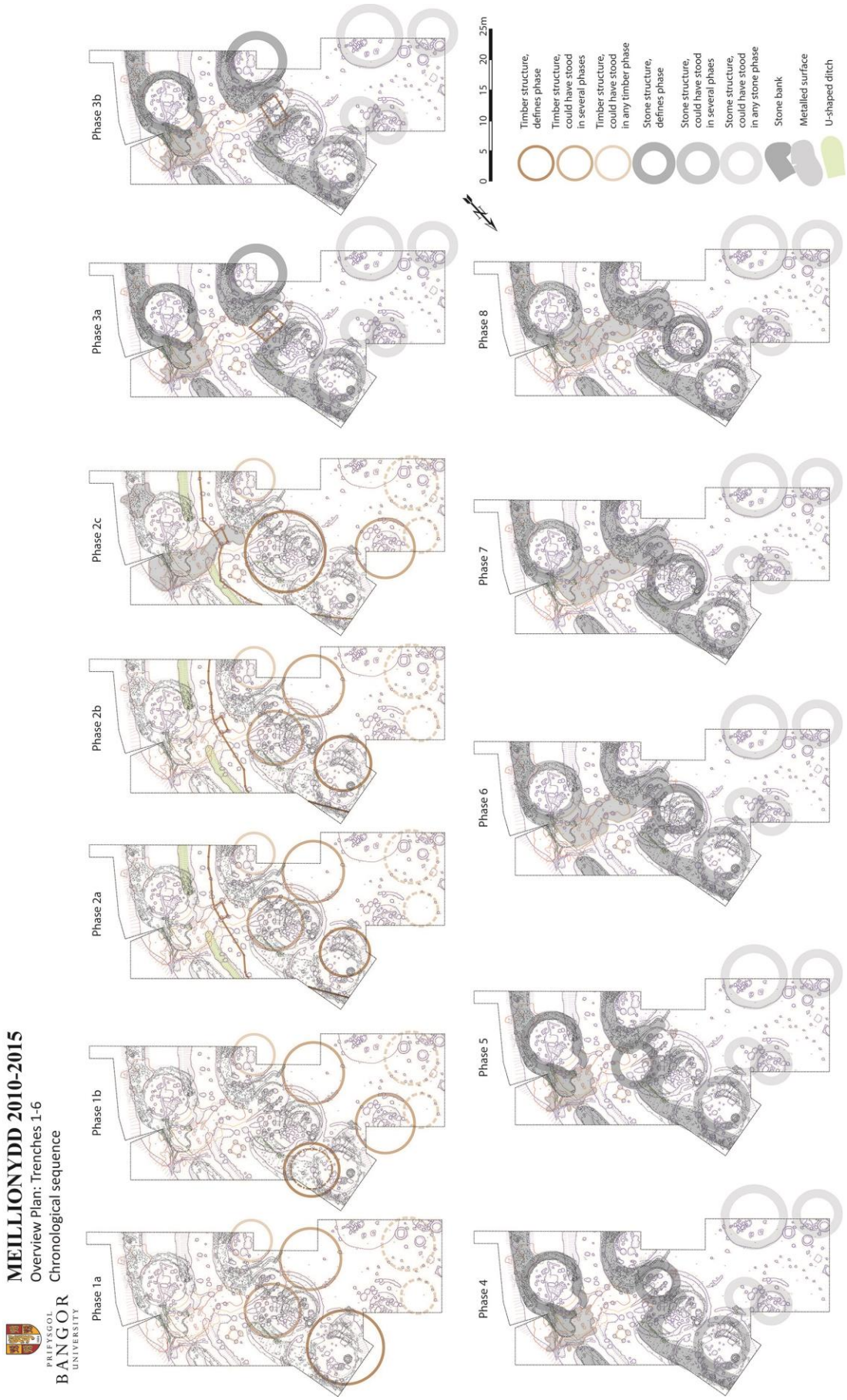

Fig. 25: Summary visualisation of the construction sequence at Meillionydd.

While the overall sequence in itself is already quite remarkable, what may be even more remarkable is that the site seems to have been enclosed 'properly' for only a quite short time of its lifecycle. If one were to assume that the buildings shown for phases 2a and b, for instance, were actually not part of the timber-enclosed phase of the site, but rather were part of main phase 1 (which would equally be possible, see the notes of caution above on pages 27-8), it could well be that the site was an unenclosed settlement for much of the first c. 200 years of its occupation. If its first enclosure by u-shaped ditch and palisade fence happened only around c. 600 BC, which would fit with the deposition of iron objects in the terminals of the u-shaped ditch, was transformed into the double ringwork enclosure with the impressive gate passage that characterised phase 3 roughly 50 years later, and transformed significantly again at around 500 BC to give us phase 4; it would only have been enclosed for about 100 years. That, then, could well have been followed by yet another c. 250 years of occupation of the site, during which the former banks of the site were quite possibly slowly eroding (and partially built into and over by later features), making the site effectively unenclosed again for the rest of its use-life. It could thus have been a 'functional' enclosure for less than one fifth of its occupation, while being a – more or less – open site for the rest.

While this sequence could perfectly well be explained by the changing fortunes of the inhabitants of Meillionydd in what may have been a rather competitive social environment, or indeed a number of other reasons like 'architectural fashion', it is remarkable that neighbouring Castell Odo (Alcock 1960) seems to have gone through an almost identical (if not as finely resolved) sequence. While we do not know whether the similar changes in the sequence at Castell Odo were contemporaneous with the significant changes to Meillionydd at the starts of its phases 2, 3 and 4, it is quite possible that they were: Castell Odo also seems to have started in the latest Bronze Age or the Bronze Age to Iron Age transition period, seems also to have been transformed into a double ringwork enclosure with a quite impressive eastern entrance sometime in the – quite possibly early – Iron Age, and have this entrance mostly destroyed by what seem to be several phases of subsequent building phases, still within the Iron Age. Of course, it may well be possible that when Castell Odo 'rose to prominence', the fortunes of Meillionydd were still going down the hill, or vice versa. However, it may well be possible, not least given the architectural similarities between the sites, that both were changed in very similar fashions contemporaneously with each other.

If that were the case, and the transformations of both sites into enclosed sites, then into monumentalised double ringworks and then again into de-monumentalised 'semi-open' sites happened contemporaneously and in just a comparatively short period within the use-life of both sites, it would seem much more likely that their – then parallel – transformations would allow to pinpoint some major phase of social change on the Llŷn. The relatively sudden emergence of some 'monumentalised' sites in a settlement environment where 'open' sites seem to have continued throughout implies that the monumentalised sites were somehow different, were inhabited (or at least owned) by a class of people different in at least some ways from 'everyone else'. Thus, we might witness in these changes the emergence of a particular social class – perhaps a land-owning elite – which during its emergent phase needed to clearly distinguish itself from 'ordinary' people, amongst other things, by enclosing their settlements with substantial banks and monumentalise their homes with impressive entrance constructions. That need for clear architectural distinction may well have disappeared relatively quickly once that transformation of society had become embedded: once the fact that society had changed had passed out of living memory; once all had died who had known another kind of community organisation, and the fact that an 'elite', perhaps a 'landed gentry' existed become generally accepted; the means to demonstrate membership in such an elite may well have shifted to something other than architectural monumentality. This may well have then been particular ancestry, ancestry that could as easily, if not even much better, be demonstrated by the bumps left behind by slowly eroding banks rather than by newly built ones. After all, everyone can dig a few ditches and build some drystone-faced walls in a relatively short time, while having them erode away naturally takes time, and even more time to have eroded banks in one's settlement since 'time immemorial'.

In turn, this might even explain why it seems to particularly have been the former eastern entrance into the site that seems to have been chosen fur such obsessive building activity: after all, this certainly will not have

been the most convenient spot on site to build new houses on site. Equally, or even more level spots than the former entrance passage could easily have been found, spots which would have required less demolishing of earlier structures and less digging into the hillside. Still, it seems to have been the former entrance area that seemed like a particularly attractive spot to the inhabitants of phases 4-8 at Meillionydd to build new houses, again and again, in almost the same spot. What seems to have made this particular spot special seems to have been the fact that this was where once the impressive entrance had been, even if hardly anything of it can have been clearly visible any more after the second later roundhouse had gone in. Yet, it remained the spot where it could be said that it had been where grandpa, then great-grandpa, and ultimately the distant ancestor who had established the 'special' social position of his 'dynasty' had had 'his gate' into his 'henllys', into 'his' enclosure whose age was apparent from its crumbled nature, a state that could much less easily be faked than shiny new banks and gates could have been erected.

Thus, the sequence at Meillionydd might allow us to date that particular social transformation – a transformation that would have planted the seeds for what would become the early medieval societies of Wales, where both ancestry and landownership are crucial for determining social status – as it happened locally on the Llŷn to, roughly, the period around 500 BC. Similar changes presumably happened throughout all of Wales and wider Britain, though it may well be that they happened in other parts of this island at different times than on the Llŷn.

Finds

Where finds are concerned, the 2015 season was not overly productive, much like the previous seasons. Among the most interesting finds were the decorated blue glass bead, SF 821 from (6219), the fill of gatepost [6224] already mentioned (fig. 9), a matching pair of quern and grinding stone SF 812, found in (6240), the fill of the defining roundhouse of phase 4, a fragment of a decorated spindlewhorl SF 729, found in the topsoil above gully [6200], and an obviously prehistoric piece of pottery, SF 815, found in (6337), the fill of posthole [6338] in gully [6315] in roundhouse [6180]. Another possible piece of prehistoric pottery, SF 760, was found in (6144), the upper fill of storage pit [6145]. In addition, a few more limpet shells SF 811 and possiblxy some razor clam shells SF 813 were found in (6276), the fill of pit [6277], which continued the pit complex [1240] from 2014, above which a large quantity of limpet shells, SF 575 had been found (Möller, Waddington and Karl 2016). In addition, several fragments of what seemed to be rotary quernstones SF 717, 724 and 784 were found, all in the topsoil (6000). In addition to these noteworthy finds, numerous fragments of quernstones, grinders, a pestle, whetstones, smoothing and hammer stones, Mynydd Rhiw stones, various pieces of flint and fragments of various other objects were found.

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Appendices

Small Finds Register

SF No.	Trench	Context	Category	Description
700	6	6000	Stone	Hammer Stone
701	6	6000	Stone	Smoothing Stone
702	6	6000	Pottery	Modern Glazed Sherd
703	6	6000	Stone	Hammer Stone
704	6	6000	Flint	Flint Core
705	6	6000	Stone	Smoothing Stone
706	6	6000	Stone	Smoothing Stone
707	6	6000	Stone	Possible Smoothing Stone
708	6	6000	Stone	Smoothing Stone
709	6	6000	Stone	Possible Hammer Stone
710	6	6000	Pottery	Modern Glazed Sherd
711	6	6000	Stone	Smoothing Stone
712	6	6000	Pottery	Buckley Ware Sherd
713	6	6000	Pottery	Modern Glazed Sherd
714	6	6000	Bone	Animal Bone
715	6	6000	Stone	Modern Whetstone
716	6	6000	Metal	Modern Wrought Iron
717	6	6000	Stone	Possible Fragment of Rotary Quern
718	6	6000	Glass	Modern Green Glass
719	6	6000	Metal	Modern Wrought Iron
720	6	6000	Stone	Sling Shot Pebble (Q6)
721	6	6000	Flint	Possible Worked Flint
722	6	6000	Stone	Smoothing Stone
723	6	6000	Stone	Possible Smoothing Stone
724	6	6000	Stone	Rotary Quern Fragment
725	6	6000	Stone	Worked Mynydd Rhiw Stone
726	6	6000	Stone	Worked Mynydd Rhiw Stone
727	6	6000	Stone	Smoothing Stone
728	6	6000	Stone	Worked Mynydd Rhiw Stone
729	6	6000	Stone	Decorated Spindle Whorl
730	6	6000	Pottery	Modern Glazed Sherd
731	6	6000	Stone	Possible Sling Shot Pebble in Q16
732	6	6000	Stone	Smoothing Stone & Hammer Stone
733	6	6111	Stone	Stone with one very flat side
734	6	6072	Flint	Possible Worked Flint
735	6	6000	Stone	Smoothing Stone
736	6	6000	Stone	Smoothing Stone
737	6	6109	Stone	Possible Fragment of Quern Stone

SF No.	Trench	Context	Category	Description
738	6	6000	Stone	Possible Whetstone
739	6	6000	Stone	Possible Fragment of Grinding Stone
740	6	6000	Stone	Possible Gaming Piece
741	6	6109	Stone	Grinding Stone
742	6	6042	Stone	Grinding Stone of Saddle Quern
743	6	6000	Stone	Pestle
744	6	6000	Pottery	Modern Glazed Sherd Q7/12
745	6	6000	Stone	Smoothing Stone
746	6	6133	Stone	Possible Smoothing Stone
747	6	6000	Stone	Whetstone
748	6	6119	Stone	Fragment of Smoothing Stone/Hammer Stone
749	6	6068	Stone	Fragment of Grinding Stone
750	6	6172	Stone	Fragment of Smoothing Stone
751	6	6172	Stone	Smoothing Stone/Whetstone
752	6	6170	Stone	Grinding Stone/Hammer Stone
753	6	6000	Stone	Smoothing Stone
754	6	6000	Stone	Grinding Stone
755	6	6000	Stone	Possible Whetstone
756	6	6144	Flint	Possible Flint Core
757	6	6000	Iron	Pieces of Iron
758	6	6000	Stone	Smoothing Stone
759	6	6000	Stone	Smoothing Stone
760	6	6144	Pottery	Possible Pottery
761	6	6000	Pottery	Modern Glazed Sherd
762	6	6000	Glass	Modern Green Glass
763	6	6000	Iron	Pieces of Iron/Possible Piece of Penannular Brooch
764	6	6144	Iron	Piece of Iron
765	6	6000	Metal	Piece of Slag From RH in Q13
766	6	6147	Stone	Whetstone/Hammer Stone
767	6	6000	Flint	Flint Piece
768	6	6000	Pottery	Modern Glazed Sherd
769	6	6000	Stone	Smoothing Stone
770	6	6000	Stone	Smoothing Stone
771	6	6000	Stone	Smoothing Stone
772	6	6000	Metal	Manganese
773	6	6000	Metal	Manganese
774	6	6000	Metal	Slag
775	6	6000	Pottery	Modern Glazed Sherd
776	6	6000	Glass	Modern Green Glass
777	6	6198	Flint	Two Pieces of Flint
778	6	6194	Stone	Possible Smoothing Stone
779	6	6121	Stone	Flint-like Stone (Green Stone)

SF No.	Trench	Context	Category	Description
780	6	6000	Stone	Hammer Stone
781	6	6121	Stone	Possible Quern Stone
782	6	6000	Stone	Possible Fragment of Lamp
783	6	6000	Stone	Smoothing Stone
784	6	6000	Stone	Possible Fragment of Rotary Quern
785	6	6000	Stone	Grinding Stone of a Saddle Quern
786	6	6000	Metal	Slag
787	6	6000	Pottery	Modern Glazed Sherd
788	6	6150	Stone	Polished Mynydd Rhiw Stone
789	6	6042	Concretion	Iron Concretion
790	6	6068	Stone	Fire Cracked Grinding/Hammer Stone
791	6	6068	Stone	Fragment of Saddle Quern/Grinding Stone
792	6	6068	Stone	Smoothing Stone
793	6	6204	Iron	Possible Lump of Oxidised Iron
794	6	6204	Stone	Possible Hammer Stone
795	6	6204	Stone	Possible Hammer Stone
796	6	6068	Stone	Fragments x6 of Quernstone
797	6	6068	Stone	Hammer Stone
798	6	6230	Stone	Smoothing Stone
799	6	6068	Stone	Lamp
800	6	6230	Stone	Smoothing/Hammer Stone
801	6	6230	Stone	Mini Saddle Quern
802	6	6240	Clay	Burnt Clay
803	6	6078	Stone	Smoothing Stone
804	6	6178	Stone	Quern Stone
805	6	6078	Metal	Possible Slag
806	6	6269	Stone	Possible Quern Stone
807	6	6248	Flint	Piece of Flint
808	6	6240	Stone	Smoothing Stone
809	6	6241	Stone	Fragment of Quern Stone
810	6	6241	Stone	Hammer Stone
811	6	6276	Shell	Collection of Limpet Shells
812	6	6240	Stone	Quern and Grinding Stone
813	6	6276	Shell	Fragments of Shell (Possible Razor Clams)
814	6	6375	Clay	Burnt Clay Fragment
815	6	6337	Pottery	Prehistoric pottery sherd
816	6	U/S	Glass	Piece of Blue Glass Bead?
817	6	6336	Clay	Possible Burnt Clay
818	6	6308	Crystal	Mountain Crystal
819	6	6289	Clay	Burned Clay
820	6	6281	Clay	Burnt Clay
821	6	6219	Glass	Blue Bead

Sample Register

Sample No.	Context	Trench	Type	Description
6-001	6056	6	Soil	Soil of possible gully
6-002	6072	6	Soil	Soil of possible posthole
6-003	6056	6	Charcoal	Charcoal
6-004	6064	6	Soil	Soil of posthole
6-005	6111	6	Soil	Soil of posthole
6-006	6056	6	Charcoal	Charcoal x2 pieces
6-007	6022	6	Soil	Soil of possible posthole
6-008	6030	6	Soil	Soil of possible gully
6-009	6040	6	Soil	Soil of posthole
6-010	6048	6	Soil	Soil of posthole
6-011	6054	6	Soil	Soil of posthole
6-012	6052	6	Soil	Soil of posthole
6-013	6058	6	Soil	Soil of posthole
6-014	6109	6	Soil	Soil of stone lined pit
6-015	6028	6	Soil	Soil of posthole
6-016	6109	6	Charcoal	Charcoal pieces
6-017	6048	6	Charcoal	Pieces of charcoal
6-018	6058	6	Charcoal	Pieces of charcoal
6-019	6044	6	Soil	Soil sample of gully
6-020	6133	6	Soil	Soil sample from big pit
6-021	6133	6	Charcoal	Charcoal from big pit
6-022	6004	6	Soil	Soil cample of gully
6-023	6043	6	Soil	Soil cample of inside RH
6-024	6133	6	Charcoal	Charcoal lump from big pit
6-025	6052	6	Charcoal	Charcoal from SW side of posthole
6-026	6133	6	Charcoal	Charcoal from big pit
6-027	6043	6	Charcoal	Charcoal from inside RH southern quad
6-028	6042	6	Soil	Soil sample of RH wall
6-029	6109	6	Charcoal	Charcoal from big pit
6-030	6139	6	Soil	Soil sample of big pit (another layer)
6-031	6101	6	Soil	Soil sample of round H fill
6-032	6043	6	Charcoal	Chunks of charcoal
6-033	6101	6	Charcoal	Chunks of charcoal
6-034	6101	6	Charcoal	Chunks of charcoal
6-035	6174	6	Soil	Soil sample from feature in Q9
6-036	6095	6	Soil	Soil sample from feature in Q9
6-037	6176	6	Soil	Soil sample from feature in Q9
6-038	6174	6	Charcoal	Charcoal from feature
6-039	6174	6	Charcoal	Charcoal from feature
6-040	6024	6	Soil	Soil sample from posthole
6-041	6044	6	Charcoal	Charcoal lump from gully

Sample No.	Context	Trench	Type	Description
6-042	6174	6	Charcoal	Charcoal lump from feature
6-043	6176	6	Charcoal	Charcoal lump from feature
6-044	6014	6	Soil	Soil sample from posthole
6-045	6010	6	Soil	Soil sample from posthole
6-046	6117	6	Soil	Soil sample from posthole
6-047	6002	6	Soil	Soil sample from posthole
6-048	6016	6	Soil	Soil sample from posthole
6-049	6176	6	Charcoal	Charcoal sample
6-050	6144	6	Soil	Soil sample from pit
6-051	6042	6	Charcoal	Charcoal from inside of RH
6-052	6144	6	Charcoal	Charcoal from big pit #3
6-053	6144	6	Charcoal	Charcoal from big pit #3
6-054	6144	6	Soil	Soil/charcoal from big pit #3
6-055	6144	6	Charcoal	Charcoal from inside of Pit 3
6-056	6144	6	Charcoal	Charcoal from inside of Pit 3
6-057	6198	6	Charcoal	Charcoal from inside of Pit 3
6-058	6198	6	Soil	Soil sample from Pit 3
6-059	6193	6	Soil	Soil sample from posthole
6-060	6193	6	Charcoal	Charcoal from posthole
6-061	6220	6	Soil	Soil sample from posthole
6-062	6018	6	Soil	Soil sample from posthole
6-063	6135	6	Soil	Soil sample of posthole
6-064	6121	6	Soil	Soil sample of posthole
6-065	6121	6	Charcoal	Charcoal sample from posthole
6-066	6034	6	Soil	Soil sample from posthole
6-067	6093	6	Soil	Soil sample from posthole
6-068	6036	6	Soil	Soil sample from feature
6-069	6140	6	Soil	Soil sample from posthole
6-070	6036	6	Charcoal	Charcoal sample from feature
6-071	6001	6	Iron	Fe deposits in soil/natural
6-072	6150	6	Soil	Soil sample of hearth
6-073	6150	6	Clay	Small pieces of burnt clay
6-074	6150	6	Charcoal	Charcoal pieces from hearth
6-075	6121	6	Charcoal	Charcoal piece from bottom of posthole
6-076	6218	6	Charcoal	Charcoal twigs
6-077	6150	6	Charcoal	Charcoal chunks from hearth
6-078	6218	6	Soil	Soil sample of RH wall tumble
6-079	6068	6	Soil	Soil sample of stoney layer
6-080	6204	6	Soil	Soil sample of RH inner fill
6-081	6068	6	Charcoal	Chunk of charcoal
6-082	6068	6	Charcoal	Twig of charcoal from stoney layer
6-083	6204	6	Charcoal	Twig of charcoal from inside RH

Sample No.	Context	Trench	Type	Description
6-084	6078	6	Charcoal	Small chunk of charcoal underneath stones
6-085	6068	6	Charcoal	Twig of charcoal from bottom
6-086	6205	6	Soil	Soil sample of posthole
6-087	6207	6	Soil	Soil sample of posthole
6-088	6043	6	Charcoal	Small chunk from inside RH
6-089	6239	6	Soil	Soil sample from ashy layer
6-090	6230	6	Soil	Soil sample of inside RH
6-091	6207	6	Charcoal	Tiny twig of charcoal
6-092	6230	6	Charcoal	Chunk of charcoal from RH
6-093	6076	6	Soil	Soil sample from gully
6-094	6119	6	Soil	Soil sample from posthole
6-095	6142	6	Soil	Soil sample of posthole
6-096	6119	6	Charcoal	Fragmented charcoal sample
6-097	6240	6	Soil	Soil sample of infill of RH
6-098	6068	6	Charcoal	Small charcoal sample
6-099	6230	6	Charcoal	Small chunk of charcoal in RH
6-100	6068	6	Charcoal	Large chunk of charcoal
6-101	6240	6	Charcoal	Twig of charcoal from infill of RH
6-102	6230	6	Charcoal	Twig of charcoal from in RH
6-103	6178	6	Soil	Soil sample from big pit 2
6-104	6240	6	Charcoal	Large lumps of charcoal
6-105	6248	6	Charcoal	Charcoal twig
6-106	6250	6	Charcoal	Charcoal twig
6-107	6240	6	Charcoal	Small chunks of charcoal
6-108	6250	6	Charcoal	Small chunk of charcoal
6-109	6240	6	Charcoal	Medium chunks of charcoal
6-110	6150	6	Clay	Three large chunks of burnt clay
6-111	6178	6	Charcoal	Small twig of charcoal
6-112	6256	6	Soil	Soil sample of posthole
6-113	6241	6	Soil	Soil sample of posthole
6-114	6241	6	Charcoal	Small chunk of charcoal
6-115	6240	6	Charcoal	Medium twig of charcoal
6-116	6085	6	Soil	Soil sample of gully
6-117	6178	6	Charcoal	Medium twig from big pit 2
6-118	6178	6	Seed	Carbonised seeds from big pit 2
6-119	6006	6	Soil	Soil sample of posthole
6-120	6125	6	Soil	Soil sample of posthole
6-121	6254	6	Soil	Soil sample of posthole
6-122	6178	6	Soil	Soil sample including carbon seeds
6-123	6209	6	Soil	Soil sample of posthole
6-124	6310	6	Soil	Soil sample of posthole
6-125	6319	6	Soil	Soil sample of posthole

Sample No.	Context	Trench	Type	Description
6-126	6258	6	Soil	Soil sample of posthole
6-127	6217	6	Charcoal	Twig of charcoal
6-128	6211	6	Soil	Soil sample of posthole
6-129	6330	6	Charcoal	Carbonised seeds from next layer of big pit
6-130	6330	6	Soil	Soil sample of big pit
6-131	6304	6	Soil	Soil sample of posthole
6-132	N/A	6	Soil	Soil sample of P1
6-132	6271	6	Charcoal	Charcoal sample underneath RH wall
6-133	6252	6	Soil	Soil sample of posthole
6-134	6276	6	Seeds	Carbonised seeds and charcoal from pit in RH
6-135	6326	6	Soil	Soil sample of posthole
6-136	6330	6	Charcoal	Charcoal tree of big pit 2
6-137	6252	6	Charcoal	Charcoal tree of posthole
6-137	6314	6	Soil	Soil sample of posthole
6-138	6287	6	Soil	Soil sample of posthole
6-139	6271	6	Soil	Soil sample of RH wall core
6-140	6252	6	Charcoal	Charcoal tree of posthole
6-141	6278	6	Charcoal	Charcoal twig from top of gully
6-142	6278	6	Charcoal	Charcoal twig from bottom of gully
6-143	6314	6	Charcoal	Twigs from gully
6-144	6151	6	Soil	Soil sample of posthole
6-145	6296	6	Soil	Soil sample of posthole
6-144	6300	6	Soil	Soil sample from gully
6-145	6269	6	Charcoal	Charcoal from bottom RH
6-146	6300	6	Charcoal	Charcoal from gully
6-147	6302	6	Charcoal	Chunk of charcoal
6-148	6322	6	Soil	Soil sample of features
6-149	6070	6	Soil	Soil sample of posthole
6-150	6155	6	Soil	Soil sample of posthole
6-151	6105	6	Soil	Soil sample of posthole
6-152	6153	6	Soil	Soil sample of posthole
6-153	6187	6	Soil	Soil sample of posthole
6-154	6159	6	Soils	Soil sample of posthole
6-155	6103	6	Soils	Soil sample of posthole
6-155	6163	6	Soil	Soil sample of posthole
6-156	6081	6	Soil	Soil sample of posthole
6-157	6357	6	Charcoal	Charcoal sample from layer
6-158	6246	6	Charcoal	Charcoal sample from posthole
6-159	6337	6	Soil	Soil sample of posthole
6-160	6357	6	Soil	Soil sample of ashy layer
6-161	6060	6	Soil	Soil sample of posthole
6-162	6337	6	Charcoal	Charcoal twig

Sample No.	Context	Trench	Type	Description
6-163	6246	6	Soil	Soil sample of posthole
6-164	6074	6	Soil	Soil sample of posthole
6-164	6050	6	Soil	Soil sample of posthole
6-165	6189	6	Soil	Soil sample of posthole
6-166	6358	6	Soil	Soil sample of posthole
6-167	6358	6	Charcoal	Small twigs from posthole
6-168	6278	6	Clay	Burnt clay
6-169	6306	6	Soil	Soil sample of posthole
6-170	6312	6	Soil	Soil sample of posthole
6-171	6242	6	Soil	Soil sample of posthole
6-172	6300	6	Charcoal	Charcoal from gully
6-173	6328	6	Soil	Soil sample of posthole
6-174	6328	6	Charcoal	Charcoal twigs of posthole
6-175	6355	6	Soil	Soil sample of posthole
6-176	6355	6	Charcoal	Charcoal twig of posthole
6-177	6260	6	Soil	Soil sample of hearth
6-178	6260	6	Clay	Sample of burnt clay from hearth
6-179	6345	6	Soil	Soil sample of posthole
6-180	6324	6	Soil	Soil sample of posthole
6-181	6308	6	Soil	Soil sample of posthole
6-182	6302	6	Soil	Soil sample of gully
6-183	6302	6	Charcoal	Charcoal from gully
6-184	6260	6	Charcoal	Charcoal from hearth
6-185	6285	6	Soil	Soil sample of posthole
6-186	6281	6	Soil	Soil sample from hearth
6-187	6219	6	Soil	Soil sample of posthole
6-188	6267	6	Soil	Soil sample of posthole
6-189	6317	6	Soil	Soil sample of posthole
6-190	6317	6	Charcoal	Charcoal of posthole
6-191	6289	6	Charcoal	Charcoal of posthole
6-192	6289	6	Soil	Soil sample of posthole
6-193	6281	6	Charcoal	Charcoal from hearth
6-194	6335	6	Charcoal	Charcoal of posthole
6-195	6335	6	Soil	Soil sample of posthole
6-196	6219	6	Soil	Extra soil sample of posthole due to Find #821
6-197	6283	6	Soil	Soil sample of posthole
6-198	6244	6	Soil	Soil sample of posthole
6-198	6278	6	Charcoal	Charcoal sample from gully
6-199	6278	6	Soil	Soil sample from gully