

**EXCAVATION AT THE NEWHOUSE LONG
BARROW AND CAIRN, LAN FAWR,
CHURCHSTOKE, POWYS, WALES.**

REPORT No. 117

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EXCAVATION AT THE NEWHOUSE LONG BARROW (Mg-285, SO300973)

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Introduction

The long barrow at Newhouse was identified as a possible long mound during a site visit by the applicant in 1997 during the Cadw-funded *Upper Severn Valley Neolithic and Bronze Age Funerary and Ritual Monument Survey* undertaken by the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT) (Gibson 2000, 13-14, 2002, 4-5). Previously described as a possible round barrow by Lilly Chitty in 1949 (PRN 3422 - Powys HER maintained by CPAT), the mound actually appeared to be distinctly oval, some 35m long, with a wider and higher proximal end towards the west (Fig. 1). Some stones breaking the surface on the northern side suggested the possible remains of a peristalith of standing stones or kerb stones especially towards the eastern, distal end. There also appeared to be an area of quarrying on the northern edge. The site is unusually placed for a long barrow being off a crest (although on a false crest when viewed from the track to the East) and orientated towards the West. It is close to other cairns on the Lan Fawr ridge, and to Mitchell's Fold and Whetstones stone circles.

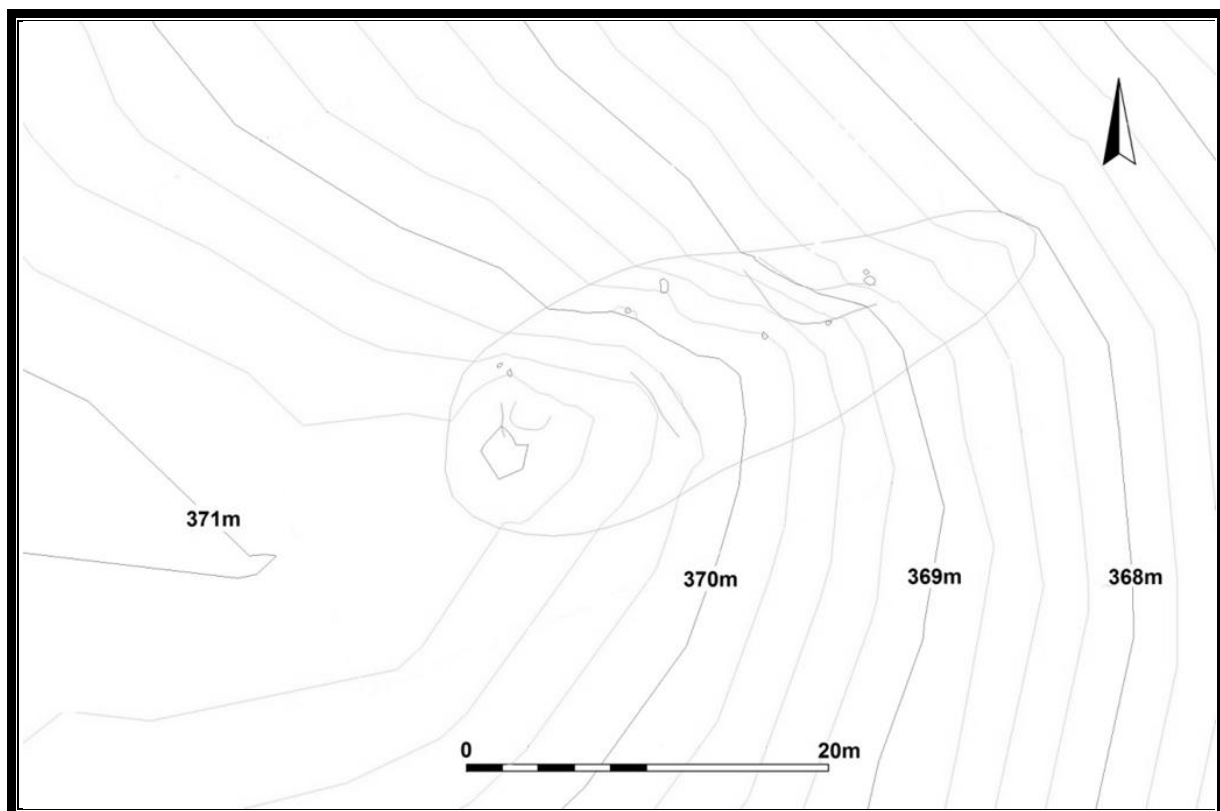


Fig 1: Contour survey of the Newhouse 'Long Barrow'

Despite the ambiguity of the site and the possibility that it was, in fact, a natural outcrop (Gibson 2000, 13) the site was scheduled as a long barrow (Mg-285) as part of the scheduling enhancement generated by the *Funerary and Ritual Monuments Project* already mentioned. The site however remained undated and its true nature unconfirmed. If it was indeed a long barrow, the importance of

the site would have been greatly enhanced given the rarity of these sites in the Upper Severn Valley. The dating of the site would also prove interesting given the lack of primary Neolithic dates so far recovered from the valley bottom: Lower Luggly is late in long barrow chronologies (Gibson 2000).

A pre-excavation geophysical survey (Fig. 2) did little to shed light on the nature of the monument confirming only that there was an elongated oval anomaly on the spot though with traces of loose stone at the proximal (western) end.

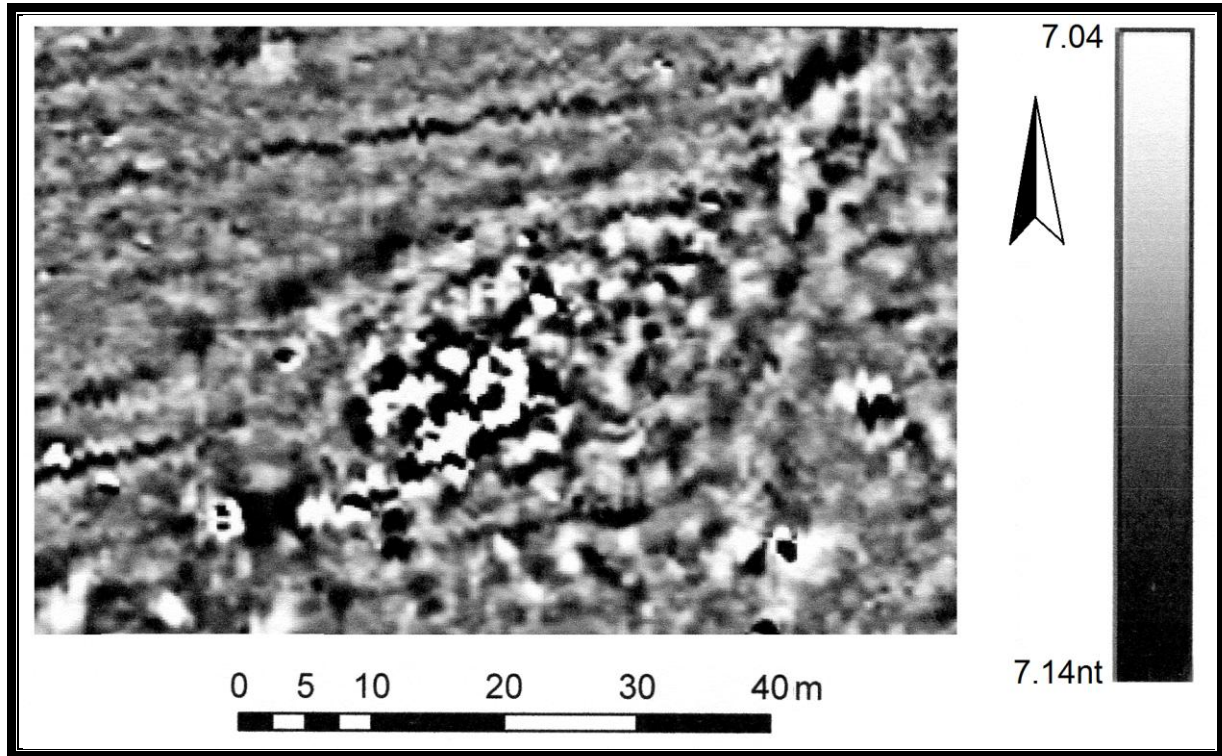


Fig 2: Magnetic Survey of the Newhouse long barrow by M. Pontorno, University of Bradford.

The present excavations were therefore designed to investigate the proximal end of the long barrow and the area of possible peristaliths or kerb stones in order to assess the nature of the monument. Scheduled Monument Consent (Appendix 1) was granted by Cadw for 2 trenches each 1.5 x 5m in size on condition that a pre-excavation contour survey of the field to include the long barrow and a nearby round cairn to the west (Newhouse cairn 1, Powys PRN 1827) was made. This was undertaken by the present writer and Nigel Jones of CPAT in June 2012 (Fig. 3). The excavation was undertaken in July 2012. The trenches were opened and excavated by hand as a training excavation for University of Bradford archaeology students under the direction of the present writer. The location of the trenches is shown on Fig 3.

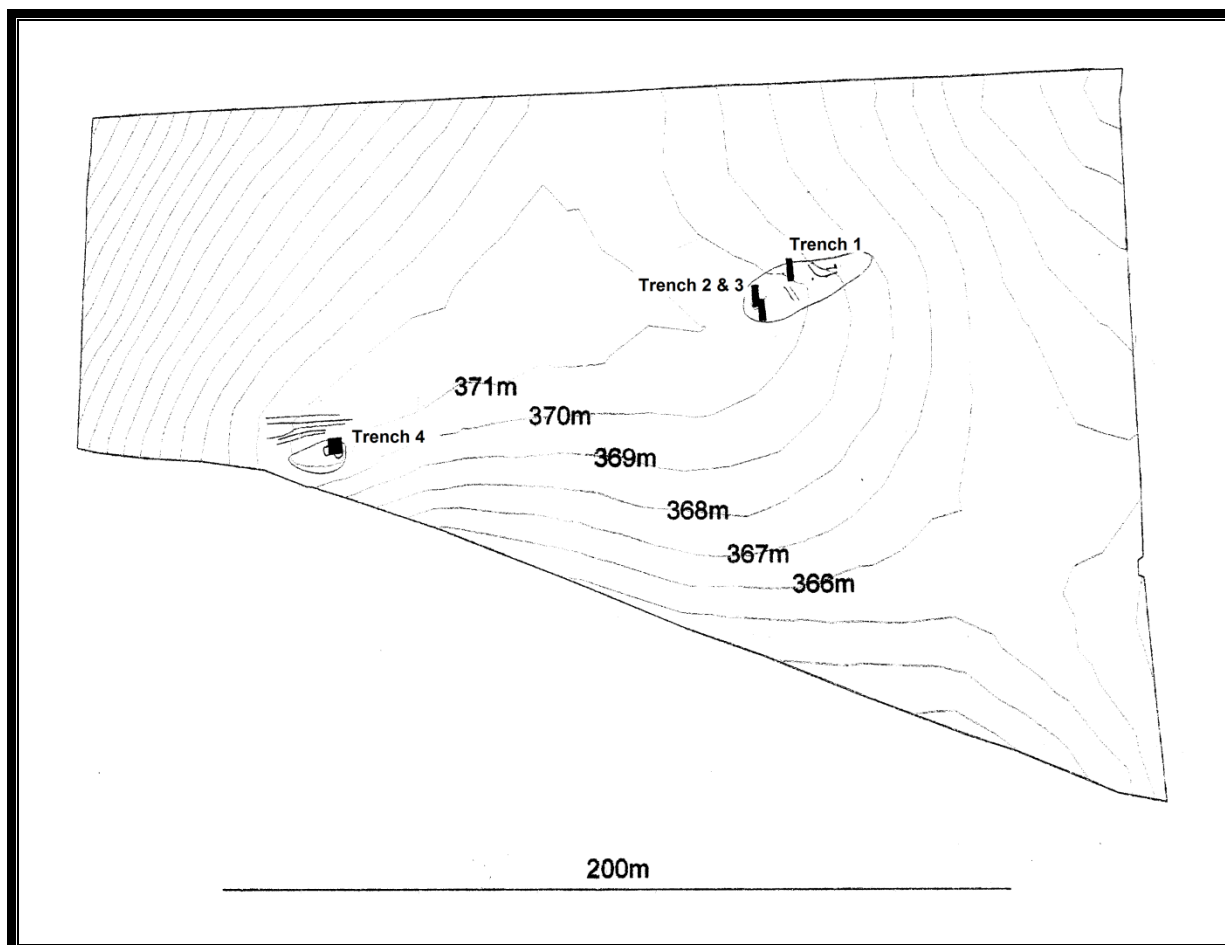


Fig 3: Contour survey of Newhouse with the location of the trenches.

Trench 1 (Figs. 4 & 5)

Trench 1 was opened over one of the possible kerb stones on the northern side of the mound. The overlying turf and shallow topsoil [101] was found to immediately overlie bedrock in the southern part of the trench and patches of bedrock and undisturbed natural subsoil in the remainder (Figs. 4 & 5). The large, broadly rectangular rock in the centre of the trench (Fig 5 'x') was the suspected kerb stone but proved on excavation to be part of the bedrock outcrop. It had been slightly dislodged perhaps as a result of agriculture or an attempt at quarrying/land improvement (plough scratches were noted at a number of points on the bedrock exposed during the excavations). That the site had attracted presumed archaeological activity in the past, perhaps connected to Chitty's 1949 visit, was demonstrated by the finding of a short piece of surveyor's tape within the topsoil immediately on the West side of the presumed kerb stone (Fig 6). There are no figures on the tape, but unusually the markings are at 30mm intervals. This may be an attempt to metricate a foot or else to divide a metre into 30 units. Alternatively the tape may originally have been marked in inches but has stretched considerably as was common in older tapes.



Fig 4: Trench 1 looking S. The turf and topsoil was found to directly overlie the bedrock. The stone originally suspected as being a kerb stone is in the centre of the trench with signs of lichen growth.

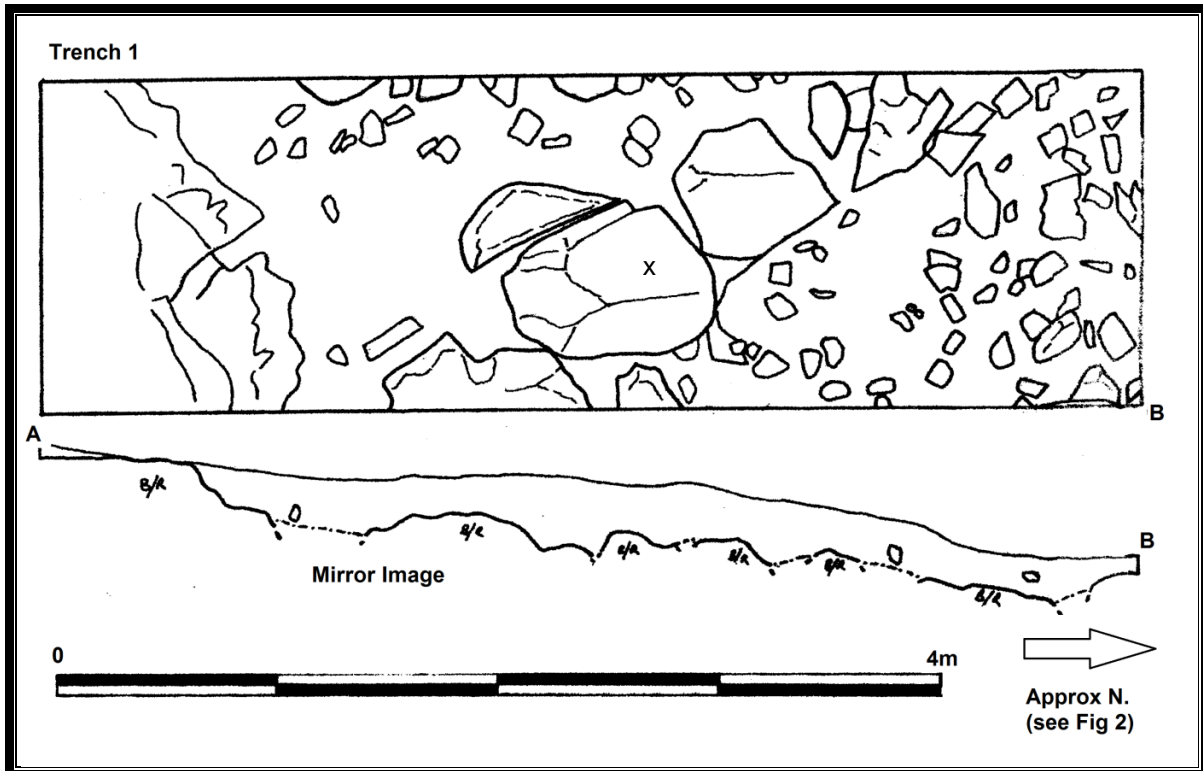


Fig 5: Plan of trench 1 after removal of the topsoil [101]. The presumed kerb stone is marked 'X'.

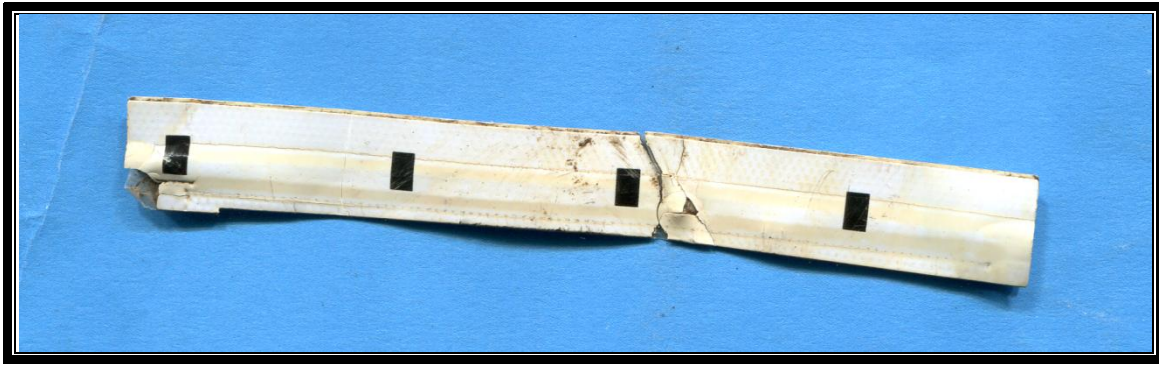


Fig 6: length of surveyor's measuring tape found in the topsoil on the W side of the presumed kerb stone (x on Fig 5). The markings are 30mm apart, centre to centre.

Trench 2 (Figs 7 – 9)

Trench 2 also measured 5m North-South by 1.5m as stipulated in the SMC (Figs 7 & 8). It was laid over the visible cairn at the proximal end of the long mound. The turf and thin topsoil [201] lay directly over the cairn stones in the southern part of the trench and over the natural yellow subsoil and bedrock in the North (Fig. 7). The cairn material [202] was composed of small stones rarely larger than a modern breeze block and generally some 15-25cm across interspersed with dense root material within a loam matrix. There were no traces of kerb stones, the larger stones on the North side being more than likely the result of gravity. A dark humic loam [203] underlay the cairn (Figs. 8 & 9) and directly overlay either the bedrock or the natural undisturbed subsoil. The lack of compaction and/or leaching observed in [203] suggested that the soil had been buried comparatively recently. There were no finds from this trench.



Fig 7: Trench 2: cairn material after removal of the topsoil. Looking N.

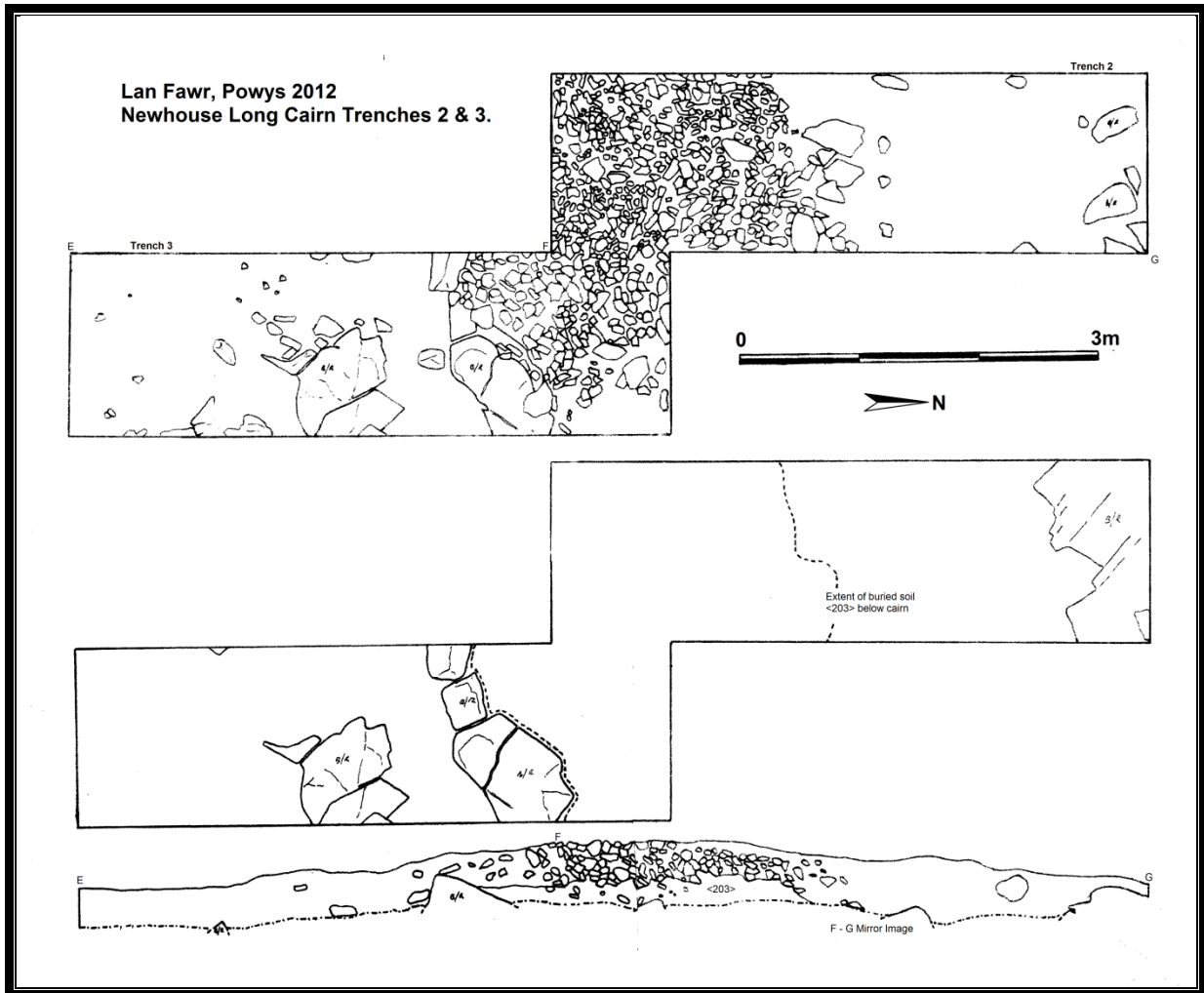


Fig 8: Trenches 2 and 3



Fig 9: Trench 2 - buried soil [203] after removal of cairn stones.

Trench 3 (Figs. 8, 10 & 11)

An addendum to the SMC was granted by Kate Roberts of Cadw by email on 3rd July 2012 (Appendix 2). This permitted the opening of a third trench across the cairn to provide a complete cross-section (Fig. 8). Once again, the thin turf and topsoil [301] overlay the stones of the cairn [302] in the northern part of the cairn and the natural undisturbed subsoil and bedrock in the southern part (Fig. 8 & 10). The stones of the cairn were contained by an outcrop of bedrock in the south. A buried soil corresponding to [203] was also contained by this bedrock outcrop (Fig 11) and overlay the undisturbed natural subsoil. There were no finds from this trench.



Fig 10: Trench 3 - cairn material after removal of topsoil. Looking W.



Fig 11: Trench 3. Buried soil [303] below cairn and contained by outcropping bedrock. Looking N.

Trench 4 (Figs. 12-15)

Having proved the Newhouse 'Long Barrow' to comprise modern clearance over a natural outcrop, it was decided, with permission of the landowner, to investigate the second cairn to the west (Newhouse cairn 1, Powys PRN 1827). This had the same superficial appearance to the long barrow in that loose surface stones were visible over areas of peripheral outcropping bedrock. This time the cairn had the appearance of a circular monument rather than a long barrow. Trench 4 measured 4m North-South by 3m (Fig. 12). Once again, the turf and topsoil [401] was thin with some cairn stones breaking the surface. The topsoil directly overlay the cairn stones [402] (Fig. 13) which in turn directly overlay the bedrock in the southern part of the trench and the natural undisturbed subsoil in the northern part (Figs. 12 & 13). The cairn proved little more than a single layer of stone intermixed with loam mixed with abundant root material. A piece of modern mirror glass (Fig. 16) and a single sherd of Bronze Age Pottery (Figs. 17 & 18) were recovered from this matrix.

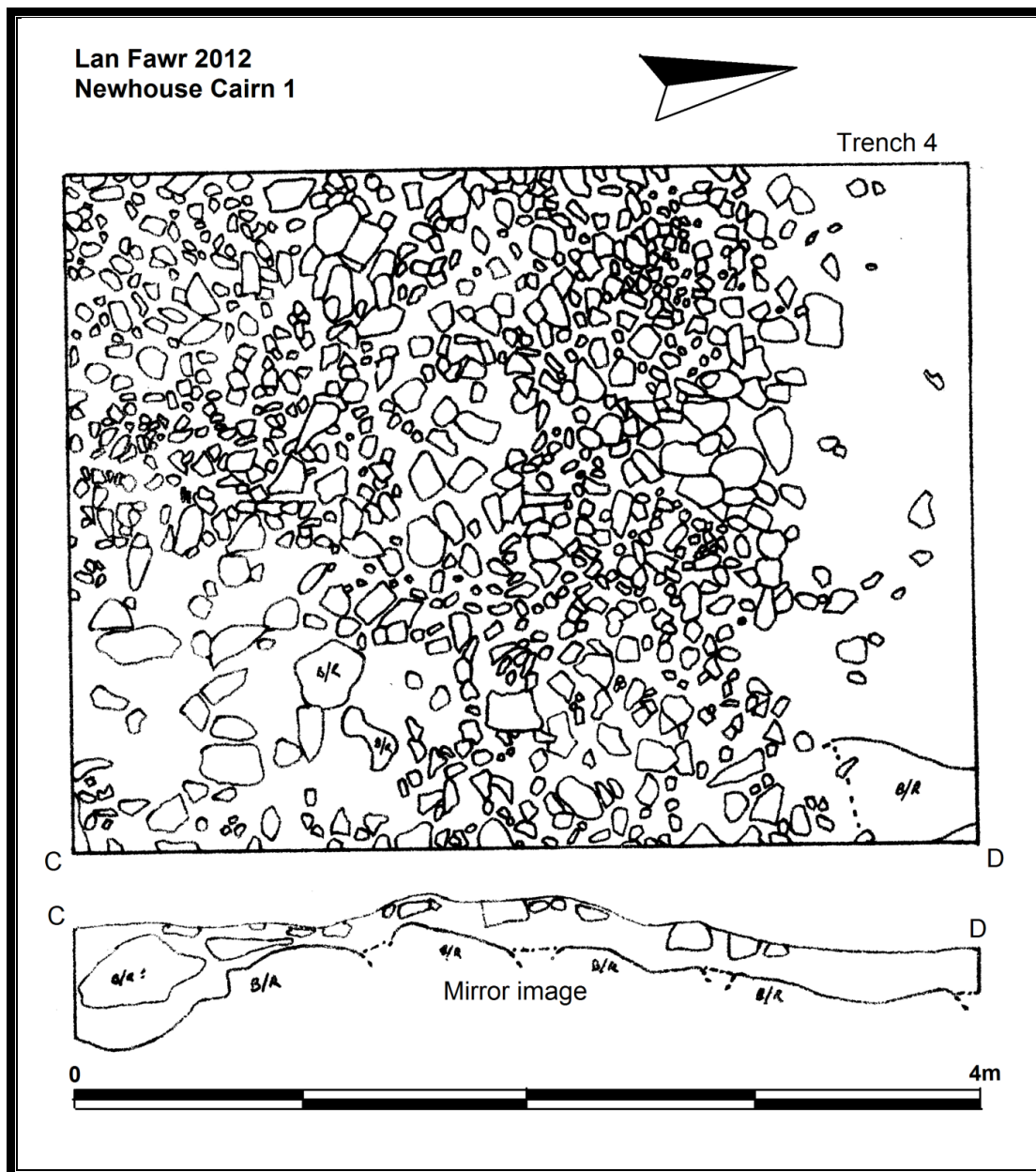


Fig 12: Trench 4 after removal of turf and topsoil



Fig 13: Trench 4. Cairn material after removal of topsoil and before extending the trench to the E. Looking S.



Fig 14: Trench 4. Disturbance in the SE corner of the trench. Looking E



Fig 15: Trench 4. Natural cavity in the bedrock [403] filled with loose stone and topsoil in the SE corner of the trench. Looking S.

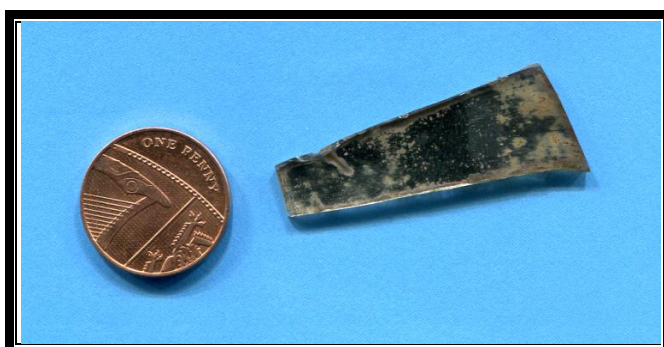


Fig 16: Mirror Glass from [402]



Fig 17: Bronze Age pottery from Trench 4, [402]

The stones seemed to be rather more sparse in the Southeast corner of the trench (Figs. 12 & 14) and indeed the bedrock had a deep natural cavity [403] in this area (Section, Fig. 12; Fig. 15). This cavity, rather than being filled with natural subsoil, was filled with loose stone and humic soil identical to [401]. This suggests that the fill is modern in origin, perhaps backfill from earlier unrecorded antiquarian activity. If this is correct, then it may be that the sherd of Bronze Age pottery may have been derived from a more complete vessel originally set within this depression. There were no flecks of calcined bone to prove the former presence of a cremation.

The Pottery (Figs. 17 & 18)

The sherd of pottery is clearly Bronze Age in date. The fabric is dark brown with an almost black core. It is thick and coarse though well-fired. It contains abundant rock inclusions up to 6mm across some of which break the outside where the vessel's surface is eroded. The rim has a well-defined rounded bevel with short bold oblique incised lines. The sherd is too small to accurately estimate the diameter but it is likely to be in excess of 200mm.

The rim form, fabric and decoration suggests that the sherd is from either a large Food Vessel or from a Collared Urn both datable to the first half of the second millennium BC.

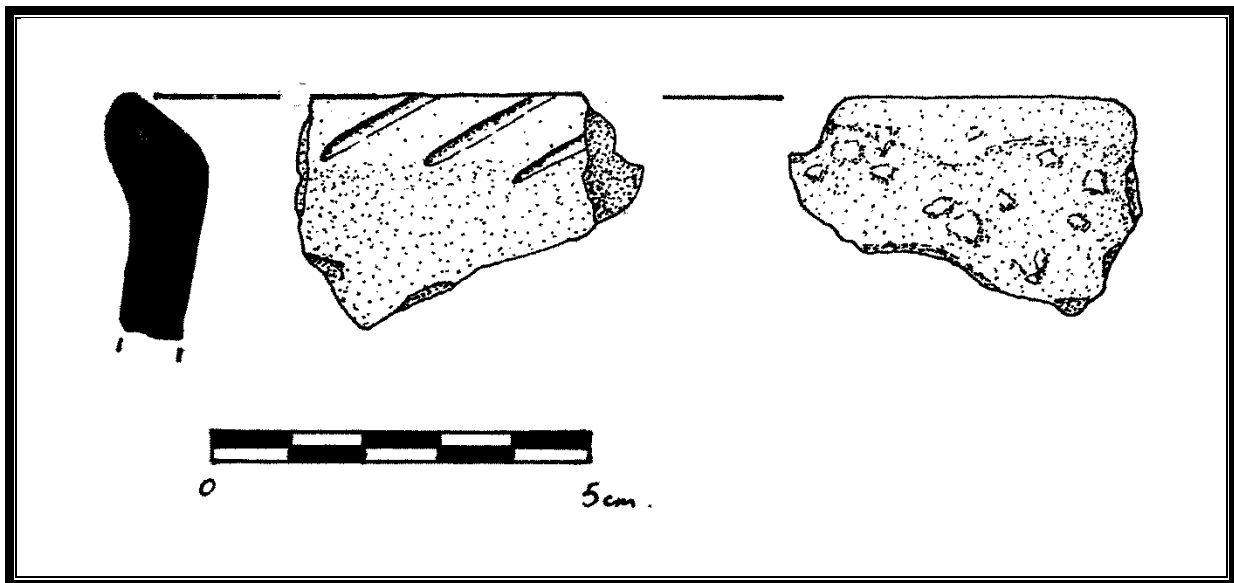


Fig 18: Bronze Age Pottery from [402]

Conclusion

The objectives of the excavation were to prove or disprove the Neolithic date of the Newhouse long barrow. This objective has been met but unfortunately has proved the proximal cairn to have been the result of modern clearance over a natural elongated bedrock outcrop. It remains a possibility that this outcrop had been utilised in prehistory as the cairn was not totally excavated however this is conjecture and the humic nature of the buried soil ([203]) suggests that the cairn is quite modern in origin. The finding of some old surveyor's tape suggests that it has been the focus of earlier antiquarian activity.

Cairn 1 also seems to have been comparatively recent in construction but may have been ancient in origin, the recent appearance being the combined result of land improvement and antiquarian disturbance. The sherd of Food Vessel/Collared Urn is difficult to explain if it were not from a disturbed burial. This again attests antiquarian interest in the site.

Acknowledgements

The writer is grateful to the landowners, Andrew & Stuart Richards, for permission to excavate and for their interest during the excavations. Thanks are due to Kate Roberts and Will Davies from Cadw for quickly amending the SMC at short notice. Excavation was undertaken during an unseasonally wet July by 1st year undergraduate students from Bradford supervised by Debbie Hallam and Jamie Walker. They are all thanked for their forbearance. The excavation was funded by the University of Bradford. The site archive will be deposited with the local HER maintained by CPAT and it is hoped that the pottery will be donated to Welshpool Museum.

References

Gibson, A. 2000. Survey and Excavation at a Newly Discovered Long Barrow at Lower Luggy, Berriew, Powys. *Studia Celtica*, 34, 1 – 16.

Gibson, A. 2002. Earlier Prehistoric Funerary and Ritual Sites in the Upper Severn Valley. *Montgomeryshire Collections*, 90, 1 – 40.

APPENDIX 1

SCHEDULED MONUMENT CONSENT



Plas Carew, Uned 5-7 Cefn Coed, Parc Nantgarw,
Caerdydd CF15 7QQ
Ffôn 01443 33 6000 Ffacs 01443 33 6001
Ebost cadw@wales.gsi.gov.uk
Gwefan www.cadw.wales.gov.uk

Plas Carew, Unit 5-7 Cefn Coed, Parc
Nantgarw, Cardiff CF15 7QQ
Tel 01443 33 6000 Fax 01443 33 6001
Email cadw@wales.gsi.gov.uk
Web www.cadw.wales.gov.uk

Alex Gibson
Archaeological Services
University of Bradford
BD7 1DP

Eich cyfeirnod
Your reference

Ein cyfeirnod
Our reference n/d

Dyddiad
Date 27 October 2011

Llinell uniongyrchol
Direct line 01443 336098

Ebost
Email: richard.kevern@wales.gsi.gov.uk

Dear Mr Gibson,

**ANCIENT MONUMENTS AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL AREAS ACT 1979
SECTION 2 AND SCHEDULE 1
APPLICATION FOR SCHEDULED MONUMENT CONSENT
PROPOSED WORKS AT: NEW HOUSE LONG BARROW (MG285)**

I refer to your application dated 23 July 2011, for scheduled monument consent to carry out a trail excavation at the site of the above scheduled ancient monument.

You declined the opportunity of appearing before, and being heard by, a person appointed for that purpose, afforded to you by Cadw in the letter dated 6 October 2011. Nor have you submitted any further representations in support of your case.

The proposed works can be carried out without detriment to the historic or archaeological integrity of the monument. Accordingly, the Welsh Government hereby grants scheduled monument consent for the works described at paragraph 4 of the application dated 23 July 2011, subject to the following conditions:

1. that Cadw shall be given at least two weeks notice, in writing, of the date of the commencement of the work or of any subsequent adjustment to this date, to allow Cadw's representatives to monitor on site activity;
2. that access to the site shall be afforded to representatives of Cadw;
3. That a topographic survey of upstanding earthwork features within the field shall be undertaken;
4. That the two excavation trenches shall measure no more than 1.5 x 5m;
5. That the ration of supervisors to students is to be less than 1:4;

Cadw yw gwasanaeth amgylchedd hanesyddol Llywodraeth Cymru. Ein nod yw hyrwyddo gwaith cadwraeth ar gyfer amgylchedd hanesyddol Cymru a gwerthfawrogiad ohono.

Cadw is the Welsh Government's historic environment service. Our aim is to promote the conservation and appreciation of Wales's historic environment.



BUDDSODDWR MEWN POBL
INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

- 2 -

6. that the individual or institution responsible for carrying out Palaeoenvironmental work shall be confirmed beforehand;
7. that on the completion of works the site shall be left in a stable and tidy condition;
8. that any modification to the proposed work shall require the written approval of Cadw, before it is undertaken;
9. that Cadw shall be informed in writing immediately upon the completion of the works; and
10. That an interim report is published in Archaeology in Wales and a full report in suitable national journal within the following 18 months, unless further work on the site is planned. That copies of all reports should be deposited with Cadw, the Historic Environment Record at Clwyd Powys Archaeological Trust and the Royal Commission for Ancient and Historic Monuments in Wales.

Section 2(6) of the 1979 Act provides that non-compliance with a condition attached to a grant of scheduled monument consent shall be an offence.

By virtue of Section 4 of the 1979 Act if no works to which this consent relates are executed or started within 5 years from the date of this letter, the consent shall cease to have effect at the end of that period (unless it is revoked in the meantime).

This letter does not convey any approval or consent required under any enactment, bylaw, order or regulation other than Section 2 of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979.

Your attention is drawn to the enclosed note (SMC19) which sets out your right to challenge the above decision.

Yours sincerely,



RICHARD W T KEVERN
Gweinyddu Henebion / Ancient Monuments Administration

Enc. SMC19

APPENDIX 3

CONTEXT SHEETS

New House Long Barrow, Lan Fawr 2012

Context sheet

No: 101	Type: Layer	Depth: Variable	Drawing: Section
Description: Trench 1: turf and topsoil			
Relationships: overlying bedrock or undisturbed natural subsoil			
Photog: Nos 4-8 inc.		Total Station:	
Other :			
Recorded By: Alex Gibson		Date 01/07/12	

New House Long Barrow, Lan Fawr 2012**Context sheet**

No: 201	Type: Layer	Depth: Variable	Drawing: Section
Description: Trench 2: turf and topsoil			
Relationships: overlying cairn stones [202]in southern part of the trench and			
Photog: Nos 1-3, 9-13		Total Station:	
Other :			
Recorded By: Alex Gibson		Date 01/07/12	

New House Long Barrow, Lan Fawr 2012
Context sheet

No: 202	Type: Layer	Depth: Variable	Drawing: Section
Description: Trench 2: stones of cairn set within a dark loamy root-rich matrix			
Relationships: underlying turf and topsoil [201] overlying [203]			
Photog: Nos 1-3, 9-13		Total Station:	
Other :			
Recorded By: Alex Gibson		Date 03/07/12	

New House Long Barrow, Lan Fawr 2012
Context sheet

No: 203	Type: Layer	Depth: Variable	Drawing: Section
Description: Trench 2: dark brown humic soil below cairn [202]			
Relationships: underlying cairn stones [202] and overlying undisturbed natural in southern part of the trench.			
Photog: Nos 9-13, 23-29		Total Station:	
Other : Lack of compaction and leaching suggests that this is not an ancient soil.			
Recorded By: Alex Gibson		Date 07/07/12	

New House Long Barrow, Lan Fawr 2012
Context sheet

No: 301	Type: Layer	Depth: Variable	Drawing: Section
Description: Trench 3: turf and topsoil			
Relationships: overlying cairn stones [302]in northern part of the trench and natural subsoil and bedrock in southern half			
Photog: Nos 14-22		Total Station:	
Other :			
Recorded By: Alex Gibson		Date 04/07/12	

New House Long Barrow, Lan Fawr 2012
Context sheet

No: 302	Type: Layer	Depth: Variable	Drawing: Section
Description: Trench 3: cairn stones in N part of trench			
Relationships: underlying turf [301] in northern part of the trench and overlying buried soil 303. Same as 202.			
Photog: Nos 14-22		Total Station:	
Other :			
Recorded By: Alex Gibson		Date 06/07/12	

New House Long Barrow, Lan Fawr 2012
Context sheet

No: 303	Type: Layer	Depth: Variable	Drawing: Section
Description: Trench 3: dark humic buried soil.			
Relationships: underlying cairn stones [302]in northern part of the trench. Limits confined by bedrock outcrop. Same as 203.			
Photog: Nos 30-33		Total Station:	
Other :			
Recorded By: Alex Gibson		Date 10/07/12	

New House Long Barrow, Lan Fawr 2012
Context sheet

No: 401	Type: Layer	Depth: Variable	Drawing: Section
Description: Trench 4: turf and topsoil			
Relationships: overlying cairn stones [402]in southern part of the trench and bedrock and undisturbed natural subsoil in N.			
Photog: Nos 34-41		Total Station:	
Other :			
Recorded By: Alex Gibson		Date 11/07/12	

New House Long Barrow, Lan Fawr 2012
Context sheet

No: 402	Type: Layer	Depth: Variable	Drawing: Section
Description: Trench 4: cairn stones set with in humic and root-matted matrix.			
Relationships: Underlying turf [401] and overlying bedrock in southern part of the trench.			
Photog: Nos 34-41		Total Station:	
Other :			
Recorded By: Alex Gibson		Date 14/07/12	

New House Long Barrow, Lan Fawr 2012
Context sheet

No: 403	Type: Layer	Depth: Variable	Drawing: Section
Description: Trench 4: natural hole in bedrock filled with loose stone and humic soil [401]			
Relationships: Underlying cairn stones [402]in south-eatern corner of the trench			
Photog: Nos 43-48		Total Station:	
Other :			
Recorded By: Alex Gibson		Date 22/07/12	

APPENDIX 4

PHOTOGRAPH CATALOGUE

LanFawr2012 No	Description
1	Trench 2 201 removed, cairn (202) in situ. Looking S
2	Trench 2 201 removed, cairn (202) in situ. Looking E
3	Trench 2 201 removed, cairn (202) in situ. Looking N
4	Trench 1: 101 removed, exposed bedrock & subsoil. Looking S
5	Trench 1: 101 removed, exposed bedrock & subsoil. Looking S
6	Trench 1: 101 removed, exposed bedrock & subsoil. Looking N
7	Trench 1: 101 removed, exposed bedrock & subsoil. Looking N
8	Trench 1 & 2 general view looking S
9	Trench 2. 202 partly removed, 203 exposed. Looking S
10	Trench 2. 202 partly removed, 203 exposed. Looking S
11	Trench 2. 202 partly removed, 203 exposed. Looking N
12	Trench 2. 202 partly removed, 203 exposed. Looking N
13	Trench 2. 202 partly removed, 203 exposed. Looking S. General View
14	Trench 3 301 removed looking NE
15	Trench 3 301 removed. 302 exposed. looking N
16	Trench 3 301 removed. 302 exposed. looking N
17	Trench 3 301 removed. 302 exposed. looking N
18	Trench 3 301 removed. 302 exposed. looking N
19	Trench 3 301 removed. 302 exposed. looking W
20	Trench 3 301 removed. 302 exposed. looking W
21	Trench 3 301 removed. 302 exposed. looking W
22	Trench 3 301 removed. 302 exposed. looking W
23	Trench 2. 202 removed, 203 exposed. Looking S
24	Trench 2. 202 removed, 203 exposed. Looking S
25	Trench 2. 202 removed, 203 exposed. Looking N
26	Trench 2. 202 removed, 203 exposed. Looking S
27	Trench 2. 202 removed, 203 exposed. Looking S
28	Trench 2. 203 removed, natural exposed. Looking S
29	Trench 2. 203 removed, natural exposed. Looking S
30	Trench 3. 302 removed, 303 exposed confined by bedrock. Looking N
31	Trench 3. 302 removed, 303 exposed confined by bedrock. Looking N
32	Trench 3. 302 removed, 303 exposed confined by bedrock. Looking N
33	Trench 3. 302 removed, 303 exposed confined by bedrock. Looking N
34	Trench 4. 401 removed, 402 exposed. Looking S
35	Trench 4. 401 removed, 402 exposed. Looking S
36	Trench 4. 401 removed, 402 exposed. Looking E
37	Trench 4 extension. 401 removed, 402 exposed. Looking S.
38	Trench 4 extension. 401 removed, 402 exposed. Looking S.
39	Trench 4 extension. 401 removed, 402 exposed. Looking E.
40	Trench 4 extension. 401 removed, 402 exposed. Detail of disturbance in SEcorner. Looking E.
41	Trench 4 extension. 401 removed, 402 exposed. Detail of disturbance in SEcorner. Looking S.
42	Trench 4. 402 removed, Bedrock exposed. Looking S.
43	Trench 4. 402 removed, Bedrock exposed. Detail of natural pit in bedrock (403). Looking SE.
44	Trench 4. 402 removed, Bedrock exposed. Detail of natural pit in bedrock (403). Looking SE.
45	Trench 4. 402 removed, Bedrock exposed. Detail of natural pit in bedrock (403). Looking SE.
46	Trench 4. 402 removed, Bedrock exposed. Detail of natural pit in bedrock (403).

	Looking SE.
47	Trench 4. 402 removed, Bedrock exposed. Detail of natural pit in bedrock (403). Looking E.
48	Trench 4. 402 removed, Bedrock exposed. Detail of natural pit in bedrock (403). Looking E.

APPENDIX 5

GENERATED ARCHIVE

Paper Records

A1 permatrace plan 1

Finds

Bronze Age pottery 2 sherds
Mirror glass 1 fragment
Surveyor's Tape 1 fragment.

Digital Archive

Photographs 1 folder of 48 photographs
Survey Data 1 file
Context sheets 1 file