

EVALUATION EXCAVATION AT FAN BARROW, TALSARN, CEREDIGION

2010

INTERIM REPORT



Prepared by Dyfed Archaeological Trust
For Cadw



ymddiriedolaeth archaeolegol
DYFED
archaeological trust

DYFED ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

RHIF YR ADRODDIAD / REPORT NO. 2010/ 61

RHIF Y PROSIECT / PROJECT RECORD NO. 100252

Tachwedd 2010
November 2010

EVALUATION EXCAVATION AT FAN BARROW, TALSARN, CEREDIGION 2010 INTERIM REPORT

Gan / By

Duncan Schlee

Paratowyd yr adroddiad yma at ddefnydd y cwsmer yn unig. Ni dderbynnir cyfrifoldeb gan Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Dyfed am ei ddefnyddio gan unrhyw berson na phersonau eraill a fydd yn ei ddarllen neu ddibynnu ar y gwybodaeth y mae'n ei gynnwys

The report has been prepared for the specific use of the client. The Dyfed Archaeological Trust Ltd can accept no responsibility for its use by any other person or persons who may read it or rely on the information it contains.



YMDDIRIEDOLAETH ARCHAEOLEGOL DYFED CYF
Neuadd y Sir, Stryd Caerfyrddin, Llandeilo, Sir
Gaerfyrddin SA19 6AF
Ffon: Ymholiadau Cyffredinol 01558 823121
Adran Rheoli Treftadaeth 01558 823131
Ffacs: 01558 823133
Ebost: info@dyfedarchaeology.org.uk
Gwefan: www.archaeolegdyfed.org.uk

DYFED ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST LIMITED
The Shire Hall, Carmarthen Street, Llandeilo,
Carmarthenshire SA19 6AF
Tel: General Enquiries 01558 823121
Heritage Management Section 01558 823131
Fax: 01558 823133
Email: info@dyfedarchaeology.org.uk
Website: www.dyfedarchaeology.org.uk

Cwmni cyfyngedig (1198990) ynghyd ag elusen gofrestredig (504616) yw'r Ymddiriedolaeth. The Trust is both a Limited Company (No. 1198990) and a Registered Charity (No. 504616)

CADEIRYDD CHAIRMAN: C R MUSSON MBE B Arch FSA MIFA.
CYFARWYDDWR DIRECTOR: K MURPHY BA MIFA.

CONTENTS	
SUMMARY	1
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	1
INTRODUCTION	2
Project objectives	2
Methodology	2
<i>Geophysics</i>	2
<i>Evaluation excavation</i>	2
Historical and archaeological background	2
Photographs	3
Geology	4
Site description	4
EXCAVATION RESULTS	5
Trench 1	5
Cremation pit 004	5
Cremation pit 006	6
Samples	6
<i>Bulk soil samples</i>	6
<i>Pollen samples</i>	6
<i>Carbon dating</i>	7
<i>Other samples</i>	7
FINDS	7
Pygmy Cups	7
Copper	7
Flint	8
Worked bone	8
CONCLUSIONS	8
Archaeology	8
Monument management	9
Archaeological research	10
Outreach	10
Future work	10
SOURCES	12
ILLUSTRATIONS	
Figure 1: Site location map	13
Figure 2: Trench location with geophysics survey	14
Figure 3: Trench plan	15
Figure 4: Plans of cremation pits	16
Figure 5: Cremation pits in relation to surveys and mapping	17
Figure 6: Theoretical site interpretation	18
Photo 1: Aerial photograph taken in 1989	19
Photo 2: Aerial photograph taken in 1992	19
Photo 3: Aerial photograph taken in 1996	20

Photo 4: Ground photograph taken in 1988	20
Photo 5: Ground photograph taken in 1993	21
Photo 6: View from site towards the Carmarthenshire Fans	21
Photo 7: General view of trench looking north	22
Photo 8: Cremation pit 006	22
Photo 9: Preparing cremation pit 006 for lifting	23
Photo 10: Part of pygmy cup in cremation pit 006	23
Photo 11: Cremation pit 004 after removal of fill 003	24
Photo 12: Cremation pit 004 showing cremation 007 and pygmy cup	24
Photo 13: Cremation Pit 004 showing stone lining 009	25
Photo 14: Cremation pit 004 after removal of stone lining 009	25
Photo 15: Copper objects within cremation deposit 007	26
Photo 16: Detail of Pygmy Cup	26
Photo 17: Preparing to lift the Pygmy Cup	27
Photo 18: The base of the Pygmy Cup showing decoration	27

SUMMARY

A scheduled round barrow at Fan, near Talsarn, Ceredigion was ploughed flat in the late 1990s. In order to ascertain what survived, Dyfed Archaeological Trust obtained grant-aid from Cadw to evaluate the site. This was undertaken in two phases, a geophysical survey in 2009 and trial trenching in 2010. No evidence for the barrow mound itself remained, but two cremation pits were excavated. One, with a stone lining, contained a Pygmy Cup, and several fragments of bronze. The second (with no stone lining) contained another Pygmy Cup and another vessel. The vessels were lifted whole for laboratory-based excavation and conservation. Several bulk soil samples and pollen samples were also taken. The Pygmy Cups and other artefacts complement a Pygmy Cup and a bronze spearhead found in the barrow in the 19th century. The results of the evaluation suggest a complex monument, possibly of three phases, and that further archaeological remains, including more cremation pits, are present at a very shallow depth.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to Mr and Mrs Wright, Hubert Wilson, Annie Partridge, Helen Burnham, Astrid Caseldine, Phil Parkes and Adam Gwilt.

INTRODUCTION

During the late 1990s, a scheduled barrow (SAM CD078) located at NGR SN 5647 5870 was ploughed flat. Following this event Cadw commissioned Dyfed Archaeological Trust to undertake a condition survey of the site to inform decisions on its future management. The first phase of the assessment comprised a geophysical survey undertaken in 2009. This was followed up by targeted trench evaluation over 5 days of fine weather in October 2010.

Project objectives

The objective of the project was to ascertain the extent of damage to the monument, and what if anything survived of it. This information would then be used to inform decisions on the future management of the site, specifically, whether enough of the monument survived to warrant its continued SAM status.

This project also had the potential to discover more about the monument and to address several research objectives for the Early Bronze Age set out in *Introducing a Research Framework for the Archaeology of Wales*.

Methodology

Geophysics

A geophysical survey of the site of the barrow and its environs was undertaken in December 2009 using a fluxgate magnetometer. The survey provided a clear image indicating the extent of the barrow and a variety of other features of possible archaeological significance (Poucher 2009). This survey was used to inform the trenching strategy in 2010 (Fig. 2).

Evaluation excavation

An evaluation trench was located to enable several possible features of potential archaeological significance to be investigated. The trench was cut using a tracked 8 tonne JCB with a 1.20m wide toothless ditching bucket. Following initial results, the trench plan was modified to a 'T' shape to confirm the findings of the initial trench (Fig. 3). During the excavation advice was sought on environmental sampling and finds conservation. Standard excavation and recording techniques were employed.

Historical and archaeological background

Fan Barrow is associated with the discovery of a Bronze Age Pygmy Cup known as the Abermeurig or Nantcwnlle Cup. In an article in *Archaeologia Cambrensis* for 1879 the Rev. E.L. Barnwell reports that the cup was found in a field near Talsarn 'in the time of' Dr T.E. Rogers of Abermeurig'. Dr. Rogers died in 1846. His son Mr John Edwardes Rogers, exhibited the cup at a meeting of the Cardiganshire Antiquarian Society in Lampeter in 1879. At the same meeting Mr. Rogers exhibited a bronze spear head, also 'dug up near Abermeurig', reputedly from the same site as the Abermeurig Cup (Arch Camb 1958).

In an article on the Abermeurig cup (Arch Camb 1879) the Rev. Barnwell describes the cup as being of the 'incense-cup' variety adding that 'it may have been turned on the wheel, but this is not quite certain. The material is fine-grained sand, of a

yellowish colour. It especially resembles that found in a sepulchral urn near Bryn Seiont, Carnarfonshire'.

In 'A Short History of the Parish of Nantcwnlle' by the Rev. Evan Edwardes, published in the Cambrian News in 1930 (translated by J Hyatt 2003) the cup is described as having been found in a group of stones on Ty'n rhos bank on the Abermeurig estate.

Both the cup and the spearhead were donated to the National Museum of Wales in Cardiff (Accession No. 15.139/1-2). Correspondence from George Eure Evans of the Royal Commission in Wales, and a letter and manuscript that accompany the accession indicates that the two items were found in the same place by J. Edwardes Rogers when examining a burial tumulus on his estate as a young man. The evidence is recounted by Eyre Evans, his friend, after the death of Rogers in 1914-5.

In his article 'Bronze objects of the Bronze Age found in Cardiganshire' Arthur R Sainsbury states that the spearhead was found in 1851 (Transactions and archaeological record, Cardiganshire Antiquarian Society vol 7 1930 p78).

In his 'Corpus of Welsh Bronze Age Pottery' H N Savory is sceptical that the two objects are associated with the same findspot:

'One apparent association of a socket-loop spearhead of Class IV with a Bipartate Cup at Nantcwnlle, will have to be left out of account. This association, accepted by Wheeler and Grimes, is based upon a statement of Mr. G. Eyre Evans, preserved in a manuscript in the National Museum, that the Pygmy Cup and Spearhead had been found at the same time and place, and that this information was based on the personal account of the finder, whom he knew well. The finder was in fact, recollecting in old age the discoveries of his early youth, and Mr G. Eyre Evans is not himself clear as to whether the objects were directly associated in the same burial. The type of spearhead in question is one that appears to belong to Late Bronze Age I (c. 1000-800 B.C.) in southern England and if genuinely associated with the Pygmy Cup would bring this admittedly rather evolved specimen of the fine West Wales type down to a much lower (*earlier?*) date than the remaining evidence would suggest'. (p 104-5)

Adam Gwilt, the present Curator of the Bronze and Iron Age Collections at the National Museum of Wales suggests (pers. comm.) that the spearhead is of side-looped form generally dated to between 1500-1300BC (Acton Park and Taunton phases of the Middle Bronze Age) and that this is a good 200 years younger than the cup, possibly more. It is apparent then, that there is some uncertainty about the provenance, contextual association and the dates attributed to these objects.

The Pygmy Cup and spearhead are both on display in the 'Origins Gallery' at the National Museum of Wales in Cardiff.

Photographs

Aerial photographs of the barrow in 1989 and 1992 and 1996 (Photos 1, 2 and 3), show the barrow as substantially intact. Photo 4 gives an impression of how the barrow appeared prior to its destruction. Evidence of possible pitting in the surface of the mound (Photo 5) may represent antiquarian excavations. Other evidence of pitting visible in Photo 2 is potentially suggestive of secondary burial activity within the mound.

A digital aerial image from 'Get Mapping', thought to have been taken in about 2001, shows a curious area of discoloration in the vicinity of the barrow. This discoloration seems to indicate the area in which intensive ploughing and harrowing has 'scalped' the upper parts of the natural geology. Remnants of the barrow are visible as a roughly circular area of paler material on the southern edge of the discoloured area (the image is not included in this report for copyright reasons).

Geology

The underlying geology at the site is slates of the Llandovery group. The nearby quarry exposed near vertical strata of slate, shale and sandstones. The overlying soil was pale yellow clay-silt containing angular sandstone and shale in a range of sizes, with some paler slightly rounded sandstones also present in a range of sizes.

Site description

The site occupies a hilltop position with wide views in most directions (Photo. 6) except the east-southeast, where the distant view is blocked by a bluff across a small valley from the cairn.

Cadw Field Monument Wardens visiting the monument in earlier years, described it as a stoney cairn, c.20m in diameter and 1.5m high, situated on a small knoll on a ridge called Fan, at the top of a crest. The cairn was further described as irregular in appearance, mutilated, with an irregular and sunken, or 'dished' top (Photo 5). On the west side, a lower section, looking 'almost like an additional bank' is noted and sketched.

Cadw Field Monument Warden notes in 1999 suggest that the cairn had been virtually ploughed out at some time between May 1996 and the spring of 1998. At that time, only a little trace of it could be seen as a slightly stonier area. The site has also been ploughed since then. By the time of a visit in 2004 during the Cadw funded Prehistoric Funerary and Ritual Sites survey, there was no visible evidence of the monument.

EXCAVATION RESULTS

Trench 1

The evaluation trench was placed with the intention of revealing parts of features 1, 2, 3 and 4, identified in the interpretation of the geophysical survey (Fig. 2). In the event, no evidence of a bank or ditch around the barrow was apparent, although it is notable that the 'ditch signal' is at its weakest in the area of the trench location, suggesting that the feature may have been completely ploughed out at this point. No evidence for feature 2 was identified. The trench did not continue far enough to ascertain the existence or otherwise of feature 4.

Following the initial trenching, no clear evidence of any surviving mound structure was apparent. This led to uncertainty as to whether the trench was correctly located in relation to the geophysical survey and Ordnance Survey mapping. The trench was therefore extended to the south, to try and locate an anticipated stone cist (interpolated from the geophysical survey). A second trench was also cut, to ensure that if wrongly located, the trench would at least reveal part of the anticipated features. The result was a 'T' shaped trench. In the event, the trench was demonstrated to be correctly located, but little or no evidence of the anticipated features was discernable. The topsoil or plough zone was very thin over most of the trench, appearing to be little more than broken up stoney natural.

Several patches of grey clay silt were investigated, but were found to be shallow pockets of topsoil, containing bailer twine, silage wrap and wood fragments. At the location of an anticipated cist structure or robber pit, no such features could be discerned.

At the north end of the trench (beyond the anticipated edge of the barrow) the overlying topsoil was up to 0.15m thick. There was no evidence of a ditch or bank surrounding the barrow (as was suggested by the geophysics results). Surviving pockets of topsoil were excavated, to check for the presence of cut features. The character of these pockets of soil suggested that they could have filled depressions formed by the removal of stones associated with the barrow structure.

Cremation pit 004

Feature 004 is the construction cut for a stone lined cremation pit (Figs. 3 and 4, Photos. 11-14). The pit was 1.20m long, and 0.90m wide and 0.35m deep, with rounded corners and gently sloping sides to a slightly concave base (Photo. 14). Due to removal of the mound material, it is not known whether this cut pre-dates the main mound or is a later feature cut into the mound. There was no evidence of any in-situ burning having occurred within the pit. No evidence of toolwork was discernable in the clay-silt into which the feature was cut.

The pit was lined with locally sourced sandstone pieces of varying size and irregular shape (Photo. 13). The stones mostly appear to have been laid with considerable care to line the base and sides of the pit, rather than to build a formal structure within the pit. The two side-slabs on the north edge of the lining, appear to have been placed first, arranged upright, with packing stones behind. The base slabs were butted up against these two stones. The other side-stones overlie the basal slabs. Stones were selected for shape, and placed to minimise gaps between them, some gaps were overlain with other stones, others were infilled with small packing stones. Around the surviving top edge there was evidence of charcoal rich backfill between the pit cut and the stone lining. Lower down, there was no charcoal between the lining stones and the cut.

The cremation (007) was laid directly on the stone-lined base (Fig. 4, Photo. 12). The cremation did not fill the entire base of the stone-lined pit. Although centrally placed and localized, apart from some patches of a thin layer of non-cremation material that were observed adhering to the stone beneath the cremation, there was no clear evidence to suggest that the cremation deposit was originally likely to have been contained in a bag or box. The material was sampled for pollen analysis.

The cremation appeared to be thoroughly burnt and quite fragmented, although there was a possible group of north-south aligned long bones towards the east side of the deposit. During excavation a single fragment of what appeared to be cremated flint was observed, although no evidence to suggest if it had originally been a tool fragment was discernable. Several fragments of copper were contained within the cremation (see photo. 15). Since their form did not suggest specific items, these appear to be the melted remains of objects burnt along with the body. It is hoped x-ray analysis may provide evidence of their original form. A Pygmy Cup was laid on top of the cremation (see Photos 12, 16, 18) to the southwest, but not in the corner or against the edge of the pit lining.

The fill overlying and surrounding the cremation (010) contained frequent reasonably sized charcoal fragments, but fewer fragments of cremated bone. There were also occasional small pieces of copper within the fill. Several stones of similar size to those employed for lining the pit lay immediately above the cremation and fill 010 (Photo. 11).

Above this 'layer' of stones was another charcoal-rich soil layer (003) containing some small bone and charcoal fragments, small corroded copper fragments, and part of a possible worked bone pendant.

Cremation pit 006

This cremation pit was discernable as a roughly circular patch of mid grey clay-silt surrounded by natural yellow clay silts (Photo. 8). During initial cleaning a fragment of a decorated pygmy cup was recovered (Photo. 10). Subsequent investigation revealed that the pit also contained another larger vessel and possibly a second pygmy cup. Flecks of cremated bone and copper suggested this was a second cremation. Considering the limited time available and the fragility of the pottery, the decision was made to excavate around the feature and lift it as a block of soil, for laboratory-based 'micro-excavation' and conservation (Photo. 9). As a result, what type of vessel the larger pot is, and whether it contains the cremation, or is placed on top of it, is not yet known.

Samples

Bulk soil samples

The cremation deposit (007) was retained for osteological analysis and the recovery of fragments of copper, burnt flint, and any other items that may have been cremated with the body. The entire primary and secondary fills of cremation pit 006 were also retained as bulk soil samples, to be processed for the recovery of charred plant remains, cremated bone fragments and any other items that may come to light.

Pollen samples

Several pollen samples were taken from above, around and under cremation deposit 007, in an attempt to find possible evidence of ritually placed plants

within the cremation pit. Additional pollen samples will be taken from the fills of the ceramic vessels during their conservation.

Carbon dating

Samples of charcoal will be recovered from the bulk samples for obtaining AMS dates.

Other samples

Additional samples for other possible analyses will also be taken during the micro-excavation of the pots.

FINDS

Pygmy Cups

Welsh Pygmy Cups are thought to have been offerings or containers for offerings to accompany cremations, either alone or in association with food vessels (from which their form may be derived) and later are associated with cinerary urns. There are various forms with distinct distributions in Britain. Their characteristics demonstrate influences from the Atlantic seaboard of Europe but are probably a local style with influences from several continental sources. Wales and southwest Scotland has the main concentration of 'Bipartite' forms, and Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire have a notable concentration of specimens with fine characteristics. These are considered to be the 'pure' form, whereas further east, a higher proportion of Pygmy Cups are of coarser wares with less fine decoration. Welsh Pygmy Cups are generally considered to date to the Middle Bronze Age, in the centuries immediately following the end of the 15th century BC.

Because it was possible to recover the Pygmy Cup from cremation pit 004 in one piece, it has been possible to make some initial observations about it (Gwilt, pers. comm). The Cup is a high quality bipartite form with incised decoration with various characteristics in common with several examples from Savory's Type A (Savory 1958). It has a narrow and decorated base. The parallel, incised circles near the base are typical of west Wales (see Figs 4.7, 12, 16, 18 & 19 in Savory 1958). The infilled chevrons on the lower body are known on parallels from Ceredigion (Fig. 4.7 & 4.16 in Savory 1958), while the repeated zigzag motif on the upper body is similar to an example from Llanarth, Ceredigion (Fig. 4.11 in Savory 1958). The form (narrow base, modestly inturning and angular bipartite form with thick rim and internal ledge) is similar to examples from Llandyssul, Llanelieu and Llaneltyd (Figs 4.4, 5 & 9 in Savory 1958).

A pygmy cup associated with cremation pit 004 has suffered some damage, and will need to be carefully conserved before its form can be determined. Initial observations, however, suggest it is smaller, of less high quality, and with a simpler zig-zag motif (Photo. 10).

Pygmy Cups are found both unaccompanied with cremations and accompanied by urns. Both such situations are represented at Fan, but the large vessel in cremation pit 006 is yet to be excavated so its type and form have not been determined.

Copper

Although heavily corroded, fragmentary and possibly melted, it is hoped that analysis of the copper fragments recovered from within cremation 007 and the backfills 010 and 003, will provide evidence of what the objects may once have been. Analysis of the composition of the copper may also provide important detail

about metal production technology in the Bronze Age. A well dated cremation accompanied by ceramics along with copper objects will provide a useful addition to the evidence of the dates and distribution of Bronze Age burials containing metalwork within the region.

Small flecks of corroded copper noted during the initial excavation of cremation pit 006, may suggest this feature also contains metal objects.

Flint

A single worked flint 'thumbnail scraper' was recovered from context 002 during cleaning of the machined horizon of the trench.

Worked bone

A fragment of bone recovered from fill 003 of the stone-lined cremation pit, appears to have been worked and decorated. It is not clear if the bone has been cremated or not.

CONCLUSIONS

Archaeology

The results demonstrate that in the excavation trench at least, there is no evidence that the barrow structure has survived. No evidence of a ditch or bank surrounding the barrow (as was suggested by the initial interpretation of the geophysical survey) was apparent within the excavated area. From the detail apparent in the geophysical survey, however, it seems likely that some parts of the barrow may still survive elsewhere, especially to the east, where the image is more distinct. Alternatively, the geophysical survey may be depicting a 'ghost' image formed by a relative concentration of stone in the ploughsoil where the barrow once stood.

The evaluation did, however, reveal two cremation burials. These correspond with two of the geophysical signals identified as 'feature group 3' in the interpretation of the geophysical survey (Fig. 2).

A discrepancy between the Ordnance Survey plot of the barrow and the location of the features represented on the geophysical survey was apparent from the 2009 survey. This discrepancy was initially attributed to the effects of 'compound errors' between the various surveys. It was not until after the excavation survey was overlaid on the earlier surveys that an alternative explanation became apparent.

The correspondence between the 'group 3' features indicated on the geophysical survey and the location of the two excavated cremation pits, suggests these are both correctly located. In this survey, the cremation pits appear to be located on the periphery of the main barrow (Fig. 5). When the location of cremation pit 004 is plotted in relation to the Ordnance Survey, however, it appears in the exact centre of the barrow. This suggests that cremation pit 004 may actually be the primary burial of the formerly extant barrow (Fig. 6: Monument C). The large circular feature visible on the geophysical survey (Monument A) is therefore a different and earlier feature, which may have been a ring barrow rather than a round barrow. This realization probably accounts for an observation made by a local farmer that we were 'digging in the wrong place'!

In the light of this realization, the geophysical survey was re-examined for surviving evidence of this later barrow, but little convincing evidence could be

seen. The Field Monument Warden's description of the monument also mentions and sketches an additional bank on the west side of the main mound. This could correspond with the outer edge of the former barrow, perhaps suggesting it was surrounded by an outer bank. Unfortunately, because of the lack of surviving mound material, no stratigraphic evidence survives.

Cadw funded excavations at Pant-y-Butler undertaken in 2010 may provide a similar example. Here the barrow seems to have two phases, one represented by an outer turf bank, the other by a stone and earth mound.

The geophysical survey also shows a slight bulge in the northeastern part of the otherwise circular mound. It is possible that this represents the remains of a third funerary monument (Monument B) either pre-dating, or post-dating the main mound. It may just be possible to see part of this feature in Photo 2.

So, to summarize, it is possible that the position of the burial in relation to the surveyed mound is a coincidence, and monuments A and C are actually the same feature. Alternatively, the ploughed out Fan barrow that was the focus of this investigation, appears to be the latest in a sequence of three possible prehistoric monuments in this location (Fig. 6). This offers a potential solution to the provenance of the Pygmy Cup and Bronze spearhead excavated in the 19th century. The photographic evidence of possible pitting or secondary burial in the surface of the mound (Photo 2) and field observation evidence of the mound prior to its destruction (Photo 5) clearly demonstrates that the centre of the mound had been excavated. The Abermeurig Cup and spearhead were probably recovered from at least one, and possibly two secondary burials within Monument C. This would account for the difference in the dates attributed to the two objects.

Unfortunately, because of the extent of damage to the monument, it is not possible to determine whether the possible secondary use of the monument simply adopted the existing monument as a focus for burial, or involved a greater degree of 're-development', as may have been the case at Pant-y-butler.

Monument management

The field evaluation has demonstrated that little if anything of the fabric of the formerly extant Fan Barrow still survives below ground. It has also demonstrated that at least two cremation pits still survived cut into the natural below the former barrow. Other similar geophysical signals in the vicinity may therefore represent more cremation pits. In addition, geophysical evidence for two other prehistoric monuments have been identified, but it was not possible to fully characterize the extent of their survival.

The discovery of the cremation pits demonstrates that important archaeological remains survive within 20cm of the current ground surface. These are under immediate threat of destruction from agricultural activity (the land is periodically ploughed), weathering, and damage from plant roots.

Maintaining the scheduled status of the site is unlikely to achieve the future survival of this nationally important site. No surface remains of the monuments are visible, and re-defining a scheduled area around the site, but allowing the current agricultural regime to continue is unlikely to ensure the long-term future survival of the remaining buried archaeology. The land is not currently within an agri-environment scheme and because the remains are so shallowly buried, taking the area out of cultivation is unlikely to help prevent the damaging effects of root damage or weathering.

Further archaeological excavation to recover any additional cremation burials and to further characterize the nature of the three monuments and their environs (if anything survives), would ensure that sufficient information is recovered from the site to allow it to be de-scheduled and for the significance of the effects of further damage to the site to be substantially reduced. It would also provide an important opportunity to obtain new material for archaeological research outlined below.

Archaeological research

Evidence that can be obtained from analysis of the finds and samples recovered during the excavation may provide other clues to understanding the site. The discovery of the two cremation pits and the finds they contain will also add substantially to our understanding of the material culture, technology and burial practices, and is therefore of considerable significance for several avenues of research investigation into the Bronze Age in Wales in West Wales

AMS dates will show if the two differing burial styles belong to significantly different periods or require other explanations. AMS dates will also significantly increase our understanding of ceramic typologies for the region and will provide evidence for comparison with the 'Abermeurig cup'. The ceramic material also offers a good opportunity to sample for other forms of evidence such as lipid analysis and evidence of painted decoration on ceramics.

The results of full scientific analysis will also provide valuable information about the cremations and the copper and bone items included with them, for comparison with other Bronze Age barrow excavations undertaken in recent times within the region. Further analysis and investigation of the site is certainly warranted, and, although potentially costly, the inclusion of a range of period and artifact specialists may enable funding from a variety of sources to be employed in undertaking future investigations and analyses.

Outreach

The 2010 project was not considered suitable for the involvement of volunteers due to the remoteness and exposed location of the site, the prospect of poor weather in October, and uncertainty as to what, if any archaeology might be revealed. If further excavation is undertaken, outreach provision and opportunities for close collaboration with specialists can be developed.

Future work

The excavation has already produced a significant quantity of materials for processing, analysis and conservation. The results will make a useful addition to the evidence recovered from other recent barrow excavations in the region, and will add to the assemblage of Pygmy Cups from the Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire.

Although the evaluation trench did not identify any surviving evidence of the barrow, it has not ascertained whether remains might survive in other parts of the site. Any remains that do survive are undoubtedly under threat from continued cultivation and weathering. Further targeted, or open area excavation would potentially provide significant information about the nature of the site. The geophysical survey results suggest there is a strong possibility that there are more cremation pits in the vicinity of the two excavated examples. The shallow depth of topsoil over the site means that any remaining burials are undoubtedly at immediate threat of destruction from continued cultivation. The potential to add to the ceramic assemblage from the site, and to obtain more information on

Bronze Age burial practices, is of sufficient importance to warrant further excavation at the site in the near future. This would effectively archaeologically 'sterilize' the site, negating the need for its continued SAM status.

SOURCES

Cook, N. 2003 Prehistoric funerary and ritual sites in Carmarthenshire, *Carmarthenshire Antiquary* 39, 5-21.

Hughes, G. 2003 *Fan Foel round barrow, Mynydd Du. An archaeological survey and assessment*, Unpublished Cambria Archaeology Report.

Poucher, P. 2009 *Fan Barrow, Talsarn, Ceredigion Geophysical Survey*. DAT report no. 2010/8

Savory, H.N. 1980. *Guide Catalogue of the Bronze Age Collections*. Cardiff: National Museum of Wales.

Barnwell, E.L. 1879. The Abermeurig Cup, *Archaeologia Cambrensis* 10 (4th series), 222-5

Savory, H.N. 1958. A Corpus of Welsh Bronze Age Pottery; Part III: Pygmy Cups; Middle Bronze Age (c.1400-1000BC), *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* 18 (I), 89-118.

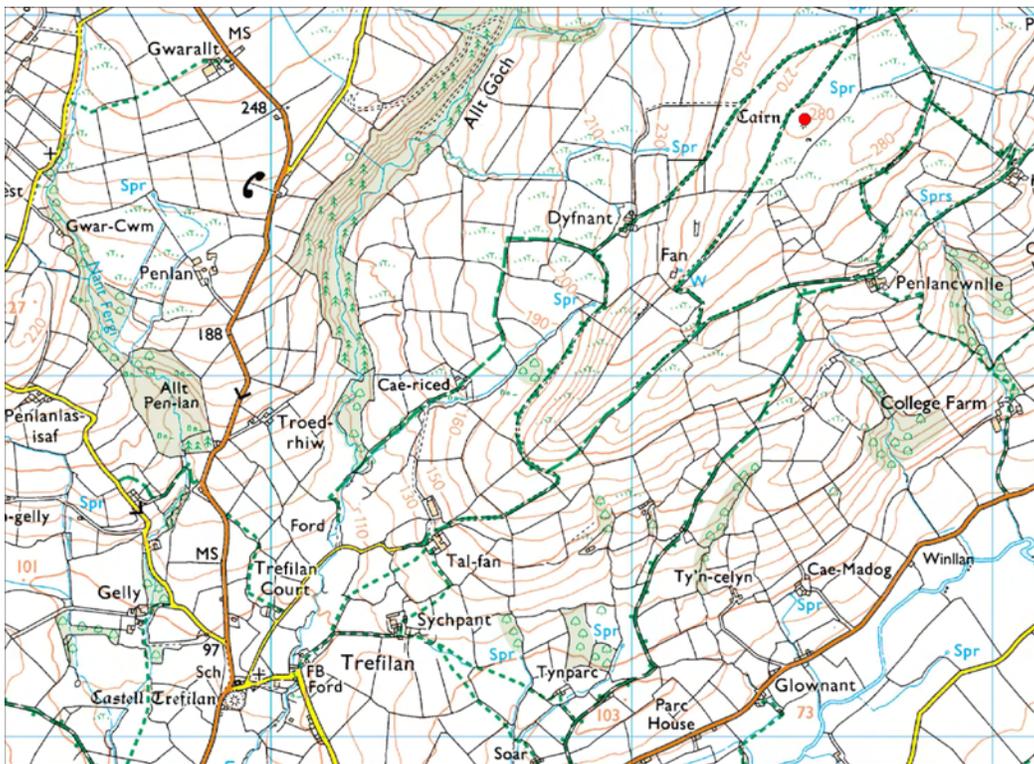


Figure 1: Site location map

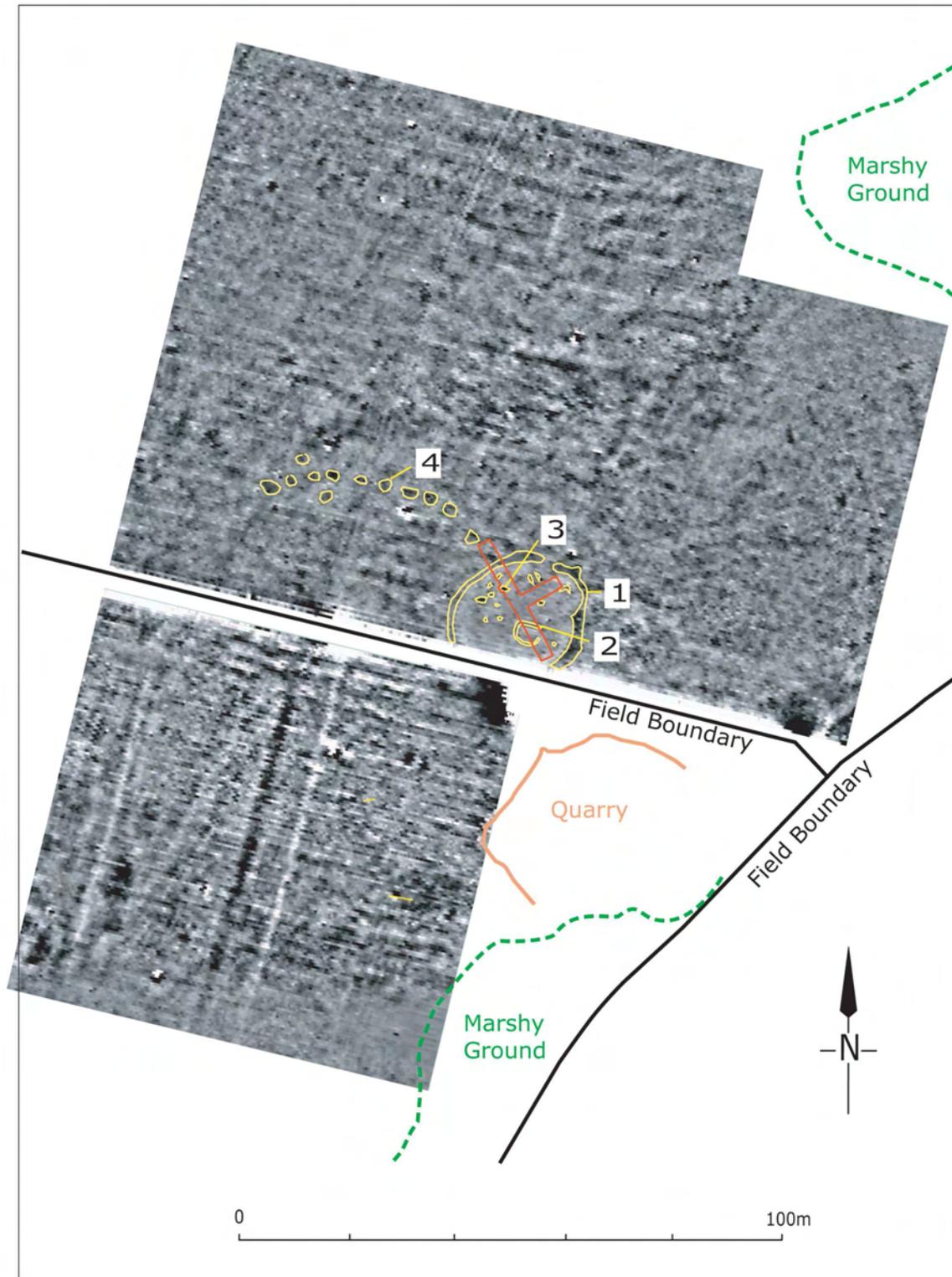


Figure 2: Trench location (in red) with geophysics survey and possible archaeological features (in yellow)

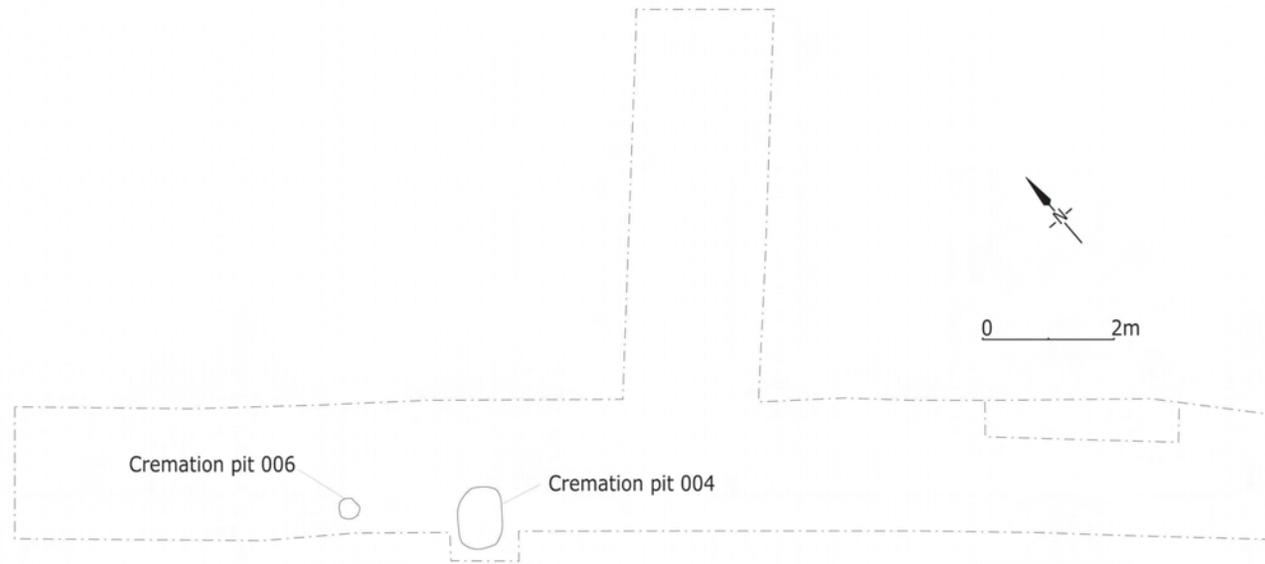


Figure 3: Trench plan

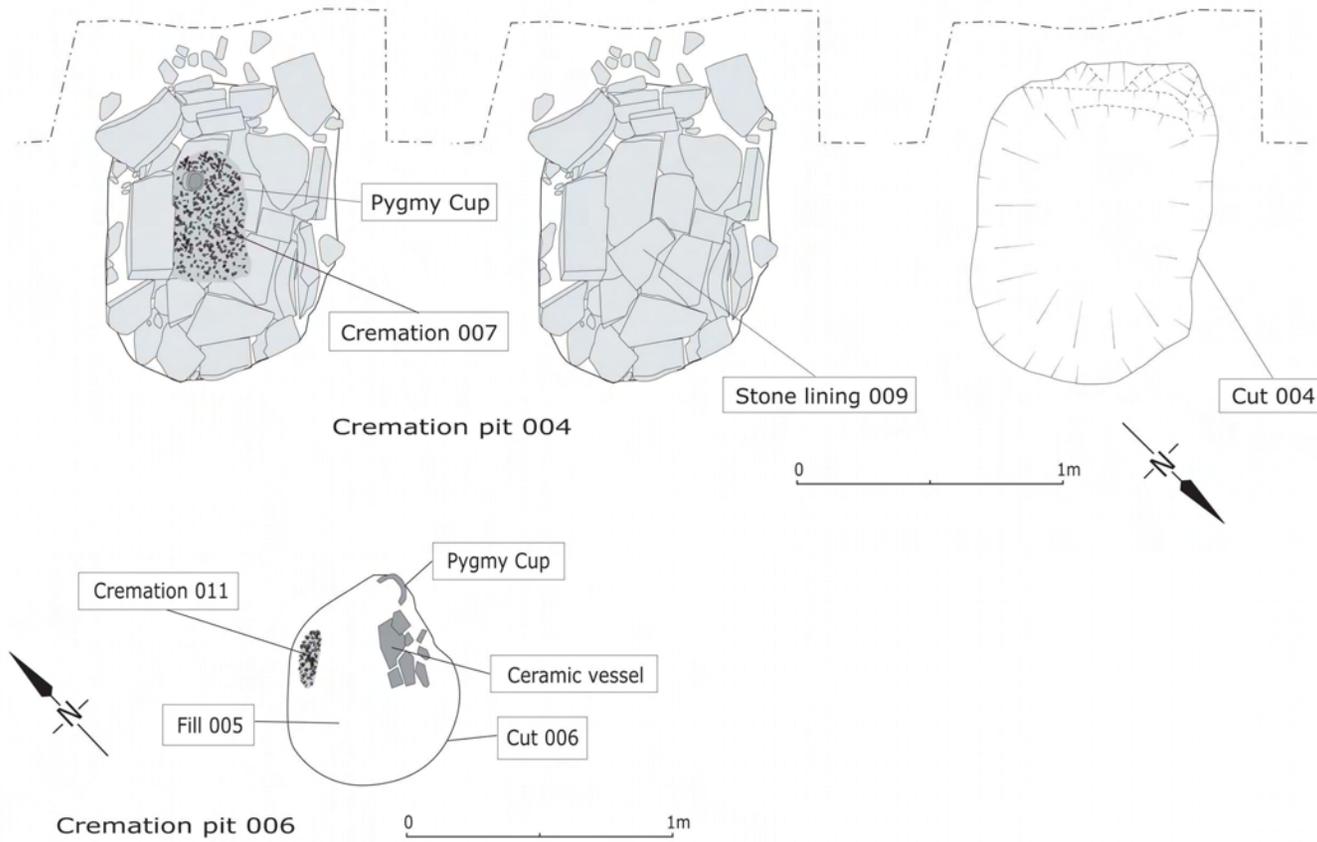


Figure 4: Plans of cremation pits

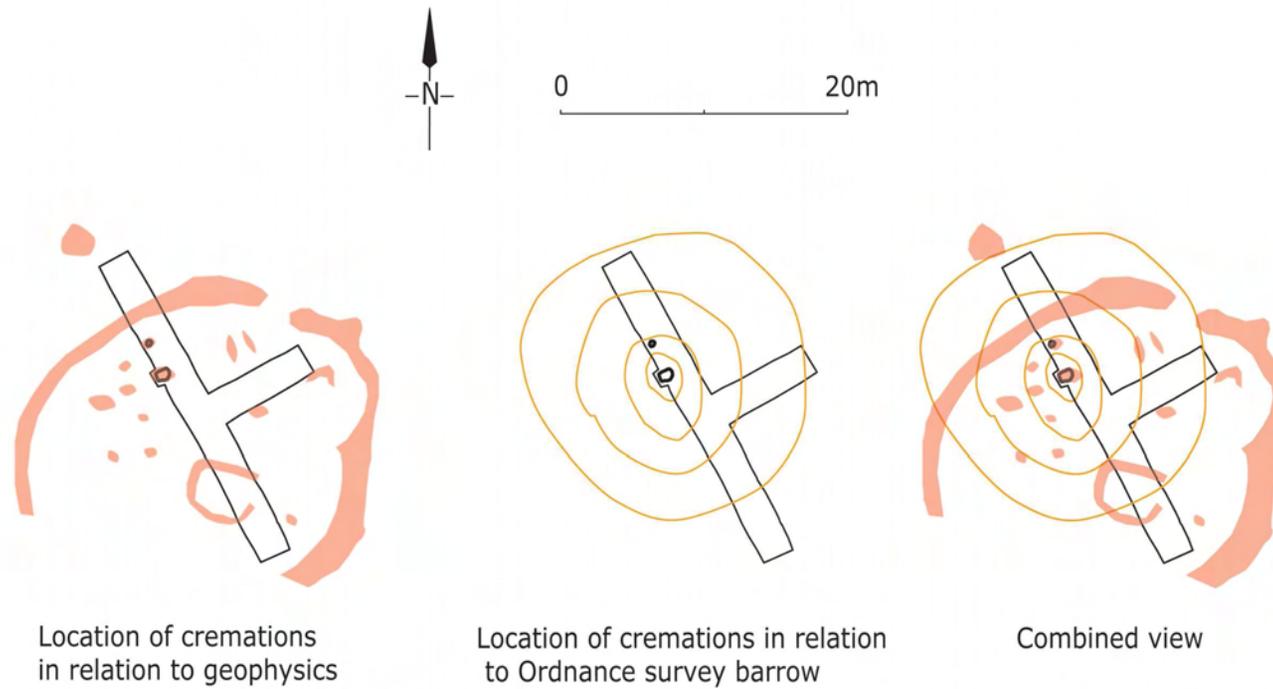


Figure 5: Plans of the cremation pits in relation to the geophysical survey and the Ordnance Survey mapping

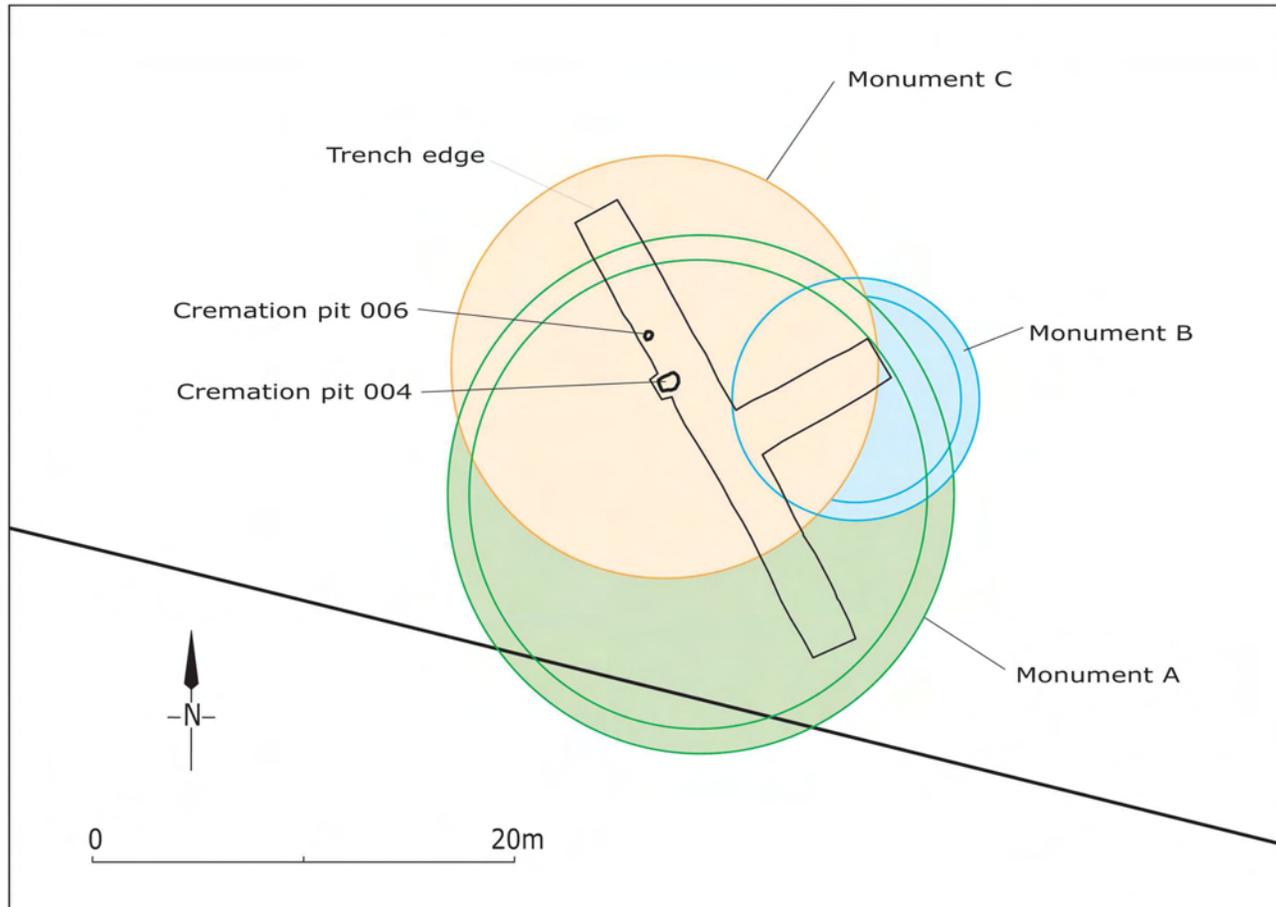


Figure 6: Theoretical site interpretation



Photo 1: Aerial photograph taken in 1989, looking north

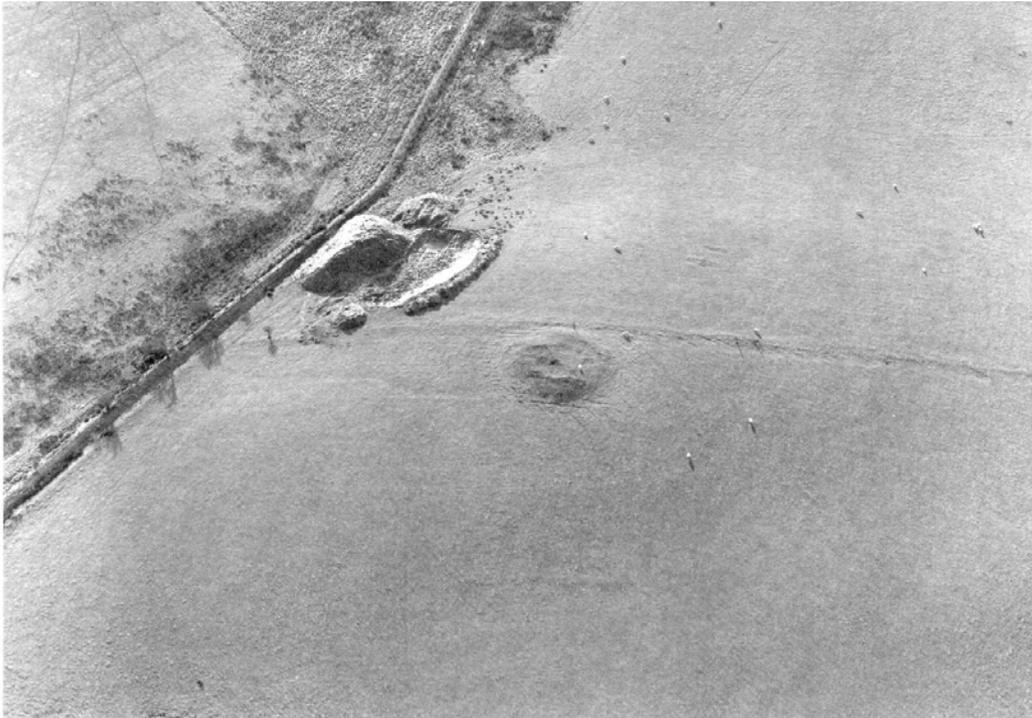


Photo 2: Aerial photograph taken in 1992, looking south



Photo 3: Aerial photograph taken in 1996 looking east



Photo 4: Ground photograph taken in 1988, looking east (H. Burnham, Cadw)



Photo 5: Ground photograph taken in 1993, looking east (H. Burnham, Cadw)



Photo 6: View from site towards the Carmarthenshire Fans



Photo 7: General view of trench looking north



Photo 8: Cremation pit 006 showing fragments of Pygmy cup and vessel



Photo 9: Preparing cremation pit 006 for lifting



Photo 10: Part of pygmy cup in cremation pit 006



Photo 11: Cremation pit 004 after removal of fill 003



Photo 12: Cremation pit 004 showing cremation 007 and pygmy cup in situ



Photo 13: Cremation Pit 004 showing stone lining 009



Photo 14: Cremation pit 004 after removal of stone lining 009



Photo 15: Detail of melted? Copper objects within cremation deposit 007



Photo 16: Detail of Pygmy Cup (with damage to part of rim)



Photo 17: Preparing to lift the Pygmy Cup



Photo 18: The base of the Pygmy Cup showing decoration

**FAN BARROW, TALSARN, CEREDIGION
EVALUATION EXCAVATION
2010
INTERIM REPORT**

RHIF YR ADRODDIAD / REPORT NUMBER 2010/61

**Tachwedd 2010
November 2010**

Paratowyd yr adroddiad hwn gan / This report has been prepared by
Duncan Schlee

Swydd / Position: Field Services Project Manager

Llofnod / Signature Dyddiad / Date

Mae'r adroddiad hwn wedi ei gael yn gywir a derbyn sêl bendith
This report has been checked and approved by

James Meek

ar ran Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Dyfed Cyf.
on behalf of Dyfed Archaeological Trust Ltd.

Swydd / Position:

Llofnod / Signature Dyddiad / Date

Yn unol â'n nôd i roddi gwasanaeth o ansawdd uchel, croesawn unrhyw sylwadau
sydd gennych ar gynnwys neu strwythur yr adroddiad hwn

As part of our desire to provide a quality service we would welcome any
comments you may have on the content or presentation of this report