



CPAT Report No. 1335

**North East Wales Community Archaeology  
Programme 2014-15**



**YMDDIRIEDOLAETH ARCHAEOLEGOL CLWYD-POWYS  
CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST**

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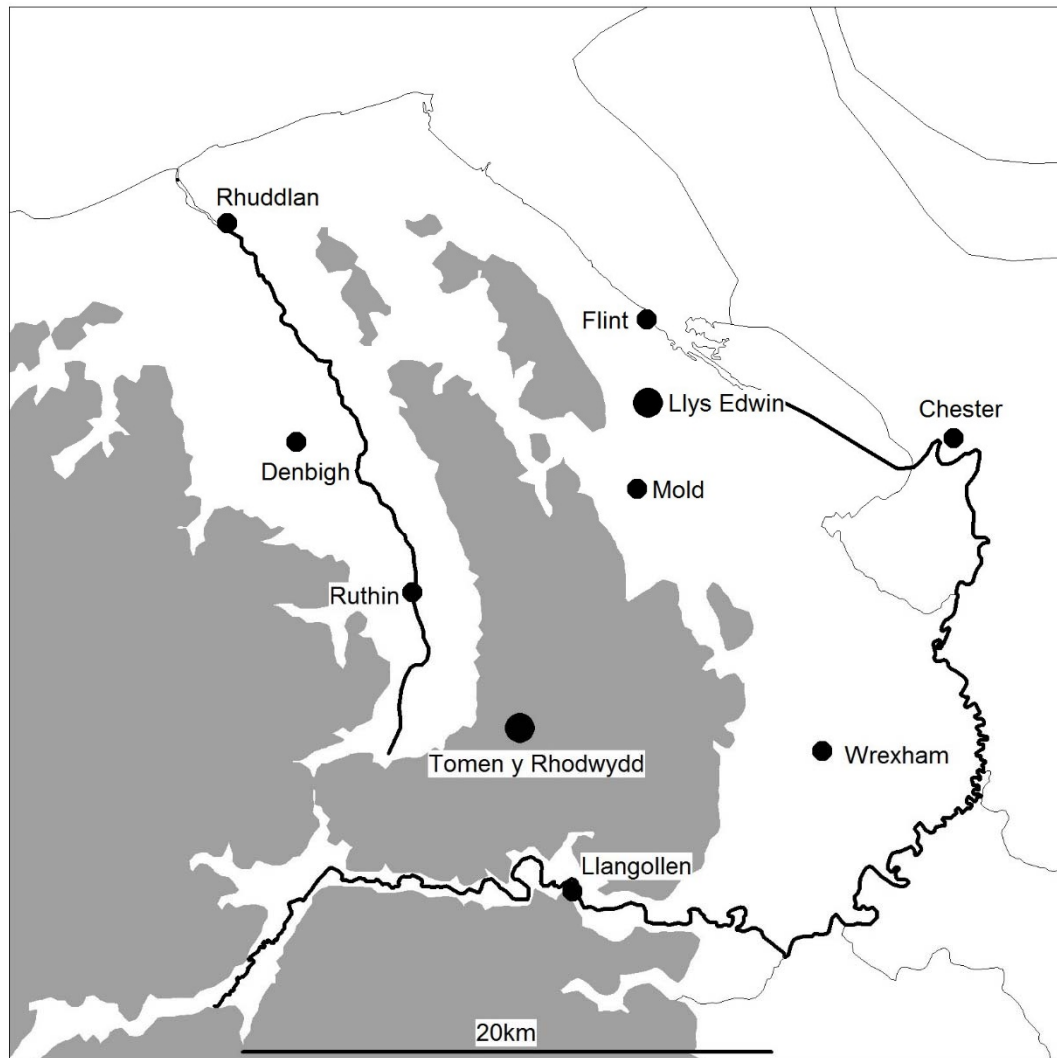
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## 1 Introduction

- 1.1 The North East Wales Community Archaeology project was initiated in 2013-14 with grant aid from Cadw with the aim of undertaking volunteer and education-oriented, archaeology-based tasks in the former Clwyd region, ranging from conservation to fieldwork and educational events. The programme of work during the first year concentrated on survey, conservation and outreach activities at Tomen y Rhodwydd (Castell yr Adwy) near Llandegla, Denbighshire (SAM De 018; PRN 100932). These works were undertaken in collaboration with Coleg Cambria Llysfasi and Denbighshire County Council and with the aid of volunteers from the wider local community.
- 1.2 The project continued in 2014-15 with further work at Tomen y Rhodwydd as well as similar volunteer and community-based activities on the site of Llys Edwin near Northop, Flintshire (SAM Fl 023; PRN 100289) (Fig. 1).



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Fig. 1 The location of Tomen y Rhodwydd and Llys Edwin in North East Wales

## 2 Tomen y Rhodwydd

- 2.1 Tomen y Rhodwydd is a motte and bailey castle located at the head of the Nant y Garth Pass, south-west of the village of Llandegla, Denbighshire at SJ 176 516, in an area of outcrops of carboniferous limestone (Figs. 2 and 3). It was formerly part of the township of Buddugre'r within the parish of Llanarmon yn Iâl.
- 2.2 The castle consists of an earthen mound (the motte) standing at one end of an oval enclosure (the bailey) protected by a strong bank and ditch. The site has not been excavated; nevertheless it seems likely that the motte carried a palisade round its edge and inside this was a strong wooden tower. The morphology of the earthworks suggests that the whole structure is essentially of one period; the motte had not been superimposed on an earlier earthwork as far as can be established from surface evidence. The site is unusual in having a substantial counterscarp bank round the outside of the motte ditch and extending a short distance outside the bailey also. This bank, however, is not neatly finished, but rather resembles a series of spoil dumps. Also uncommon is the relatively low elevation of the broad motte summit above the embanked bailey, a contrast to the massive scale of the defences.



Fig. 2 Tomen y Rhodwydd from the air. Photo CPAT 84-c-0278

- 2.2 The castle was probably built by Owain ap Gruffydd ap Cynan (Owain Gwynedd) who, after becoming king (later prince) of Gwynedd in 1137, continued the expansionist policies of his house at the expense of the Norman earl Ranulf of Chester and another Welsh prince Madog ap Maredudd of Powys. He annexed Mold and Ystrad Alun in 1146 and Tegeingl in 1149. In order to secure these acquisitions he subsequently annexed the *cwmwd* (commote) of Iâl (Yale) in Powys, and constructed Tomen y Rhodwydd in order to control access into Dyffryn Clwyd and the passage of the upper valley towards Mold. This occupation was short-lived, however. In 1157 Iorwerth Goch ap Maredudd, Madog

ap Maredudd's brother, took the castle and burnt it, restoring the authority of Powys over Iâl (Pratt 1979).

- 2.3 It is not known whether Tomen y Rhodwydd was rebuilt after its destruction in 1157. A reference in the Pipe Rolls for 1212-13 records 'iron mallets for breaking the rocks in the ditch of the castle of Yale'; however, this may be a reference to another castle known as Tomen y Faerdre, in Llanarmon 3 miles to the north (*ibid*). The antiquary John Leland, writing in the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century, noted that the castle (then referred to as Castell Cefn Du) was in use as a sheepfold.



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Fig. 3. The location of Tomen y Rhodwydd.

- 2.4 Whilst arguably the best known of Welsh-built timber castles owing to the widespread publication of aerial photographs of the earthworks, and its prominent location overlooking the present A525, prior to the current project Tomen y Rhodwydd had not been subject to an archaeological survey, other than by the Ordnance Survey in 1963. The objectives of this project have therefore been to provide an accurate topographical plan which outlines the extent of the site and notes its present condition, the scale of erosion, vegetation coverage and other issues. In addition, a longitudinal profile across the monument has been mapped (see Fig. 5) together with the location of what has been considered to be a previous archaeological excavation test pit (of which there is no known record within the regional Historic Environment Record).

### Earthwork survey

- 2.5 Over a period of two days volunteers and students from Coleg Cambria were instructed in the use of total station digital surveying using a Leica TC500 in conjunction with Penmap survey software. As in the previous year students and volunteers were encouraged to form working groups to undertake hand-drawn plans highlighting topographical contours and other relevant detail. This enabled the participants to identify the types of issues addressed through site heritage management as well as identifying archaeological information that had previously gone unrecorded.



Fig. 4 Surveying the earthworks at Tomen y Rhodwydd with the involvement of local volunteers. Photo CPAT 3791-0171

### Conservation

- 2.6 Following on from the successful programme of vegetation clearance conducted during 2013-14 the remainder of the earthworks were cleared of vegetation over a period of five working days involving a total of 36 volunteers and students from Coleg Cambria (see Appendix 1 for list of participants). All of the removed vegetation was burnt on site, within the scheduled area, on raised platforms. All root material was treated by a senior member of staff from Coleg Cambria to prevent regrowth.
- 2.8 The two seasons of clearance work have revealed the full extent of the earthworks allowing the public to appreciate the site and its setting fully for the first time. The effect of the vegetation clearance is demonstrated in Figs 6-7. From an archaeological perspective the work has helped to re-define the various phases and evolution of the monument as well as facilitating the topographical survey.

### Education

- 2.9 The opportunity was taken to spend a day in the classroom with students from Coleg Cambria as an introduction to the management of historic monuments on farmland and the role of agri-environment schemes such as Glastir. This was seen as a valuable opportunity to engage directly with members of the younger generation from the farming community.

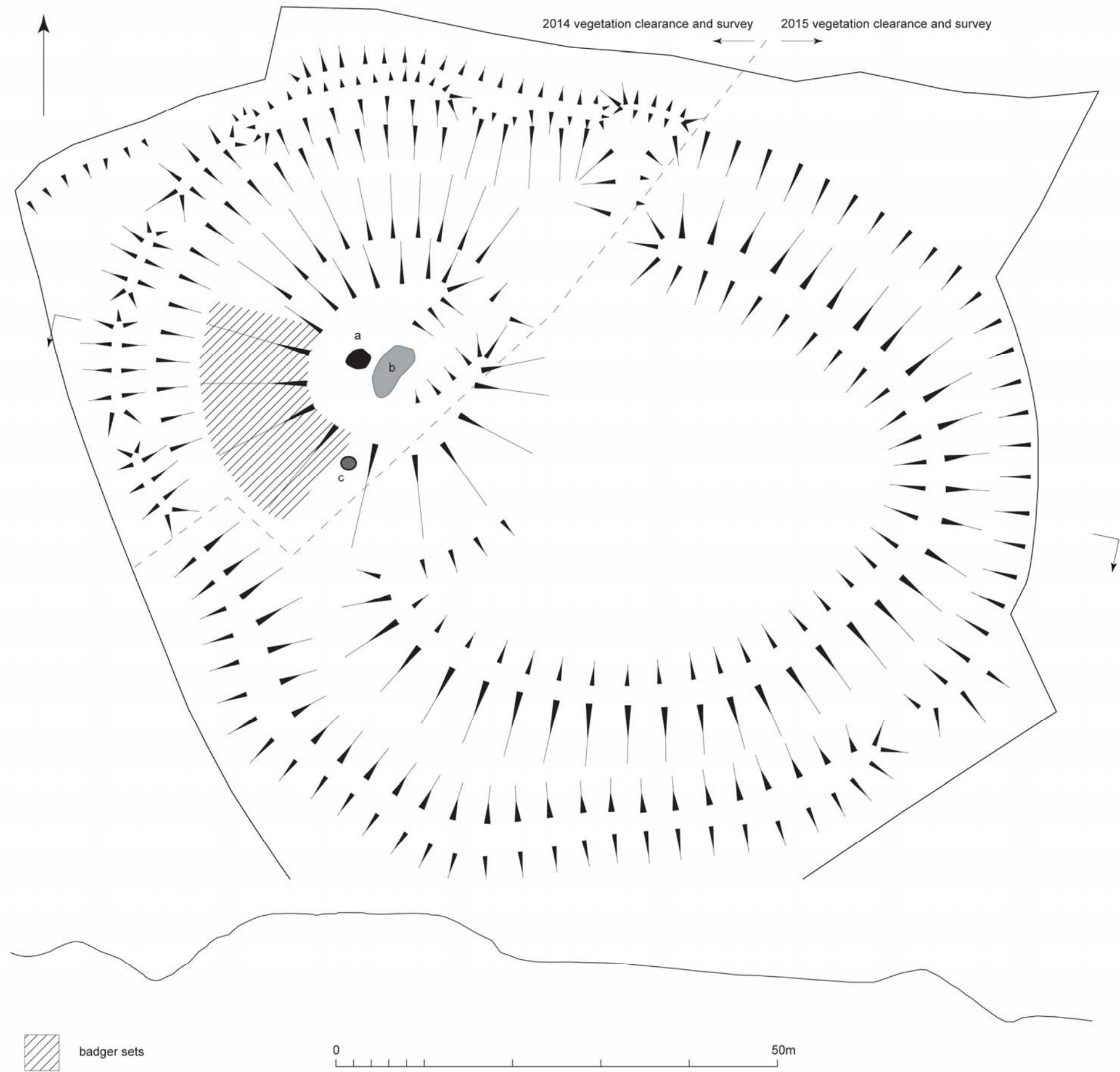


Fig. 5 The results of the 2014 and 2015 surveys of Tomen y Rhodwydd. a – disturbance, b – spoil, c – tree stump.





Fig. 6 Vegetation clearance on the outer defences during 2015. Photo CPAT 3392-0006



Fig. 7 The corresponding view of the outer defences after vegetation clearance. Photo CPAT 3392-0110



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Fig. 8 The location of Llys Edwin, adjacent to Glyndŵr University, Northop

### 3 Llys Edwin

- 3.1 The site (SJ 2370 6933) lies less than a mile to the north-west of Northop, and back from the coast by just over 3km. Rising ground to the south-west is broken only by the sharp defile of the small watercourse known as Afon Conwy while flattish ground to the north-east constitutes one of the natural shelves in the landscape above the Dee Estuary. The following text is based on research undertaken by Bob Silvester as part of the Cadw-funded study of Llysoedd and Maerdrefi (Silvester 2015).
- 3.2 In name it is associated with an 11<sup>th</sup>-century historical figure, Eadwine (or Edwin) of Tegeingl who appears in Domesday Book (1086). The entry for *Castretone* was assumed by T. A. Glenn to be synonymous with Llys Edwin and that appears to have been accepted without question by more recent authorities (e.g. Rumble and Morgan). Ellis Davies referred to a nearby plantation as Coed Llys, and further north, about 500m to the north-east of Llys Edwin is Llŷs Farm, but it is entirely unclear how far back in time these *llys* names can be taken.



Fig. 9 Aerial view of Llys Edwin in 1987. Photo CPAT 87-MB-872

- 3.3 A succinct description was provided originally in the Royal Commission's *Inventory for Flintshire* in 1912 which described a near-square enclosure with an inner ditch and outer bank, a mound in the north-east corner of the enclosure which had a separate bank and ditch around its west and south sides. For the Royal Commission this was a small motte and bailey, but one that was not positioned in a strong natural location. Further earthworks lay to the west.
- 3.4 In 1931 T. A. Glenn excavated Llys Edwin on behalf of Lady Daresbury, publishing his results three years later in a privately published volume entitled *The Family of Griffith of Garn and Plasnewydd*, though it was also re-printed as a separate publication. Glenn exposed the remains of a stone hall, probably of the first half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, but with timber predecessors. From the excavation report of three years later it can be gathered that Glenn identified at least four phases, as well as activity, indicative presumably of robbing and disturbance, and artefacts from Tudor times onwards. The excavation revealed a gate flanked by square projecting towers and opposite on the far side of the moat, a stone bridge abutment. South-east of this were a hall, kitchen and pantry, and a further square tower occupied the north angle of the moat. North-west of the yard were further rooms. While subsidiary buildings were found inside the moat on the south-east and south-west sides and were said to include a forge and stables, the latter apparently large enough to accommodate twenty or more horses, with a 'detached tower of great strength' close to the stables.
- 3.5 All these remains were of stone. Glenn considered that the hall complex had been partially rebuilt probably in the earlier 13<sup>th</sup> century, that the first stone phase replaced a half-timbered predecessor, and that this had in turn succeeded a timber building defined by post-holes.
- 3.6 On the south-west side of the site was a second moat (or ditch), this one wider, and, as shown on the Ordnance Survey plan, extending further to the north-west than the

moated enclosure, other than its south-western side which also runs on, following a parallel course. Early commentators saw these as outworks but the Ordnance Survey in 1962 were inclined to the more prosaic view that they were fishponds. The Ordnance Survey field investigator also recorded a further anomaly in that the north-eastern ditch of the enclosure continued towards the south-east, halting abruptly at the edge of the field, but suggesting more complexity to the earthworks than acknowledged by Glenn.

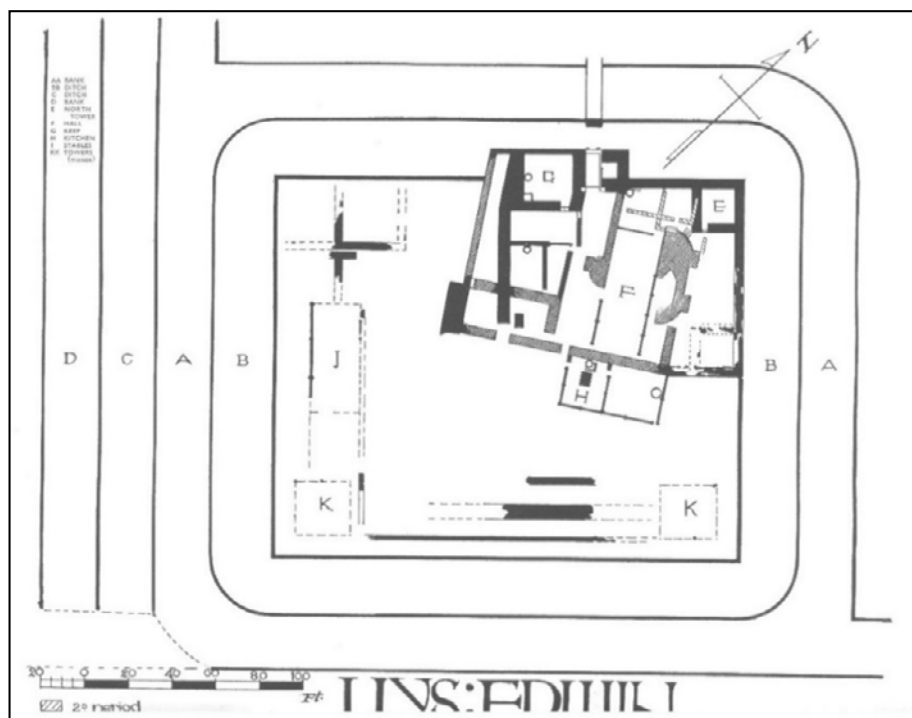


Fig. 10 Llys Edwin as excavated (after Glenn 1934)

### Earthwork Survey

- 3.7 The earthwork survey was conducted over a two-day period presenting an opportunity for students from the nearby Glyndŵr University, as well as local volunteers, to gain experience in digital surveying and the interpretation of earthwork monuments. The survey concentrated on a small area on the north-western side of Llys Edwin (Fig. 11) with the intention always being focused primarily on training and community involvement, rather than the production of an extensive, detailed survey. It is hoped that this will provide a firm basis from which to extend the survey to cover the entire site in the future.

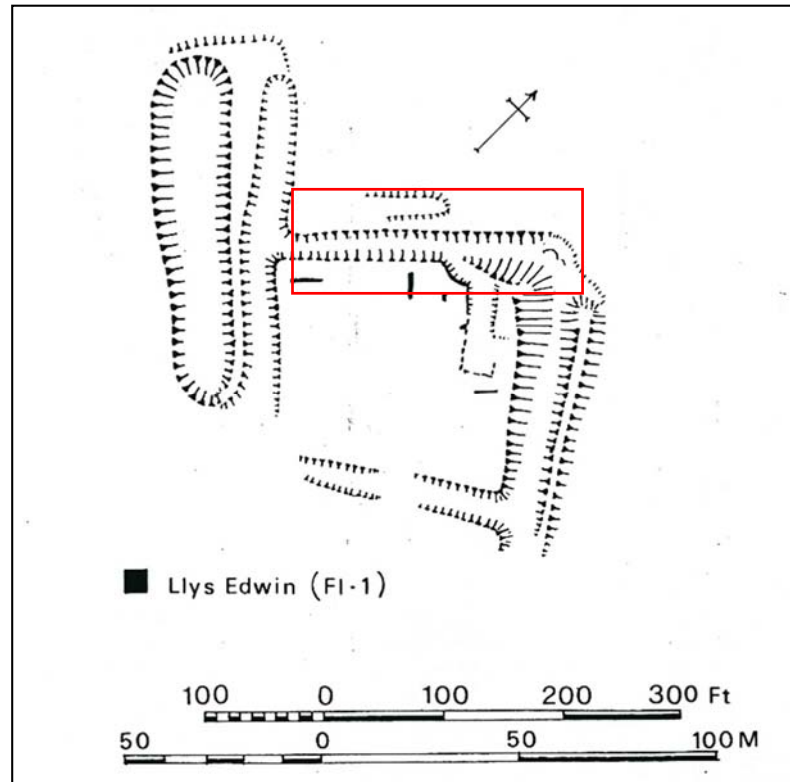


Fig. 11 Llys Edwin as drawn by Jack Spurgeon (after Spurgeon 1981) with the area of the 2015 survey outlined in red



Fig. 12 Students from Glyndŵr University (Wrexham and Northop) surveying the earthworks at Llys Edwin. Photo CPAT 3991.0017

## 4 Conclusions

- 4.1 The project has built on the success of the first year in 2013-14, once again combining archaeological survey and analysis, heritage conservation and community outreach. This has generated a more detailed picture of the extent and condition of both Tomen y Rhodwydd and, to a lesser extent of Llys Edwin. In both cases the surveys have provided important baseline data which will inform future research and heritage management activity on the site.
- 4.2 The scale of the conservation work at Tomen y Rhodwydd has far exceeded the targets that were originally set, with almost complete removal of vegetation cover allowing clear views of the monument for the first time in recent decades and thus enhancing the appreciation of visitors, as well as limiting root damage and inhibiting potential future erosion issues from rabbits and badgers.
- 4.3 At Llys Edwin the inception of the archaeological survey afforded the opportunity for the project to engage with Glyndŵr University campus with biology, ecology and history students from both Northop and Wrexham involved in both classroom and field workshops.
- 4.4 The majority of Welsh Scheduled Ancient Monuments lie on agricultural land, the communities that own, work on and around these monuments being vital partners in the management of the archaeological resource. The project has continued to maintain the links with the local agricultural community, whether through the very efficient workforce of Llysfasi and Glyndŵr students or the support of volunteers from several regional heritage and conservation interest groups.
- 4.5 The community outreach element of the project has enabled upwards of 60 people to access the sites and participate in archaeological and conservation work. Participants were drawn from a wide demographic range, and the level of interest generated suggests that further community-based archaeological projects will be sustainable in future years.
- 4.6 Subject to the availability of funding and landowner agreement a third season of work is proposed for 2015-6 to extend further the topographical survey and to include geophysical survey at both Tomen y Rhodwydd and Llys Edwin. In both cases the final objective is for a low-key access scheme and some on-site interpretation, for which the archaeological work will generate information. CPAT and Cadw are in discussion with the Clwydian range AONB over possible Sustainable Development Funding (SDF) for the Tomen y Rhodwydd works, the application for which has been strengthened greatly by the extensive volunteer man-hours recorded to date.
- 4.7 We also look forward to welcoming the Castle Studies Group, one of the UK's specialist interest bodies, to Tomen y Rhodwydd in the middle of April 2015, which will provide an opportunity to showcase the work undertaken as part of the project.

## 5 Acknowledgements

- 5.1 I would like to thank the following for their assistance with the project: Phil Venables and Andy White, Coleg Cambria; and Dr David Skidmore and Richard Lewis, Glyndŵr University.

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**Appendix 1: Summary of Community Participation**

<b>GROUP</b>	<b>Participated in Fieldwork</b>
CPAT	2
Cwmwd Ial Re-enactment Society	9
Clwydian Range Archaeology Group	3
Caer Alyn Archaeology History Project	2
Conservation Society Llanarmon	3
Coleg Cambria Llysfasi	17
Llandegla Community Church	1
Old Oswestry Landscape and Archaeology Project - OOLAP	1
Oswestry & Border History & Archaeology Group - OBHAG	1
St Asaph Archaeology Society	2
Glyndwr University (site visit)	12
Glyndwr University (fieldwork)	6
Bangor University	1
Chester University	1
Other visitors	4