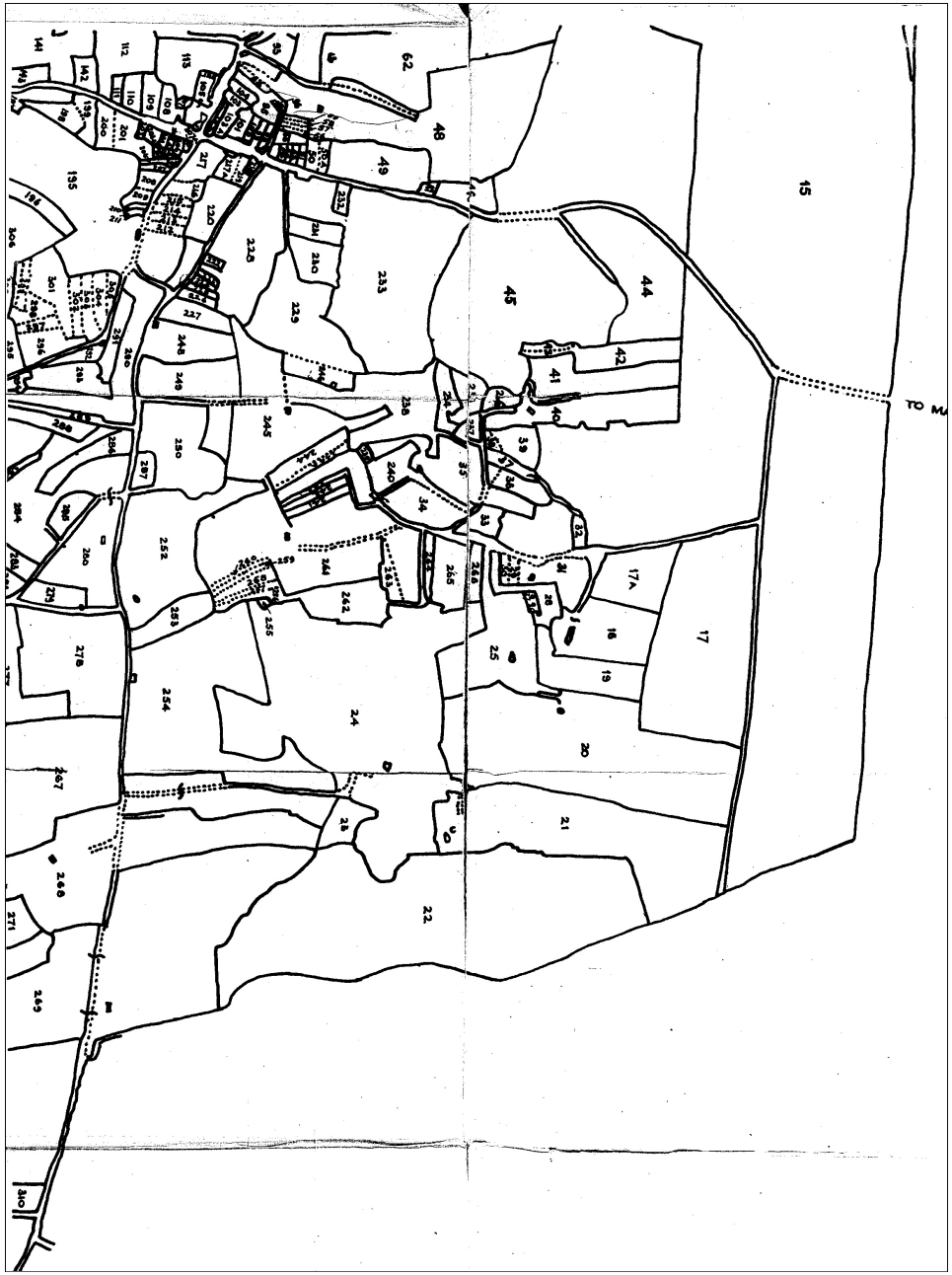

Fig. 29D Tithe commutation map of Newborough 1845. Owen's sheet D.

Appendix A

Antiquitates Parochiales

by Rev. Henry Rowlands' MS circa 1710

Parish of Llanbedr cum Newborough

This parish was anciently a *demesne* of the manor of Rhosir, which was situate here. Formerly, it was not called a township, but a manor, where the *regulus* or prince of the tribe fixed his residence and abode; wherefore formerly, under the government of the Welsh princes, this parish was divided into two portions, one of which I find to have been assigned for the more immediate duties of the court, according to the custom of the nation; the other, in a manner, held by free tenants, though bound to their lord by a praedial covenant.

The former of these again appears to have been laid out in two ways, and accordingly maintained two orders of domestic servants; that is to say, first, those domestic stewards who were wont to call themselves *Maerdrevs*, having for their possession twelve *gavels* (the British [Welsh] nation gave the name of gavel to certain portions of land which were allotted to tenants in right of homage); secondly those fellows of the meanest sort, called *Gardenmanni* (Garddwyr), who occupied twelve small gardens; these people were very much engaged in drudgeries. The second portion of the manor, which was designed for works, reckoned only eight gavels for its possessors, and from the circumstance of that possession it gave them the name of free natives, whose posterity even to this day have occupied their possessions, with appurtenances, by hereditary right. With these hands, indeed, were the works of the manor performed; with these ties were the hands bound to perform the works. Thus, in those ages, was the parish divided; but afterwards, when the ancient government had passed away, the princes of Wales and kings of England converted the first named portion of the manor,which lay nearest the princes' court, by the emancipation of the vassals and the bestowal of privileges, into a borough, annexed at first to the imperfect preliminaries of Caernarvon, but shortly after substituted for Beaumarais; at least, as appears from the Kennington petitions, they attempted to substitute it, and from that circumstance this place obtained the name of Newborough. Nevertheless, immediately from the time of Edward the second of that name, this town, on the granting of a charter specially in its favour, became in its own right free and independent. It has a mercantile guild with a *hanse*, as its own petty charter runs, regulated by the standard of the Rhuddlan statute; which grants were ratified to it by the sanction of Parliament in the first year of Edward III. They were afterwards inspected and approved by several of the kings of England; namely, by Richard II, Henry VI and VIII, as will clearly appear from the last charter of this borough that was inspected, to any one who will look into it, which is now in the possession of Sir Owen [Hughes], the most worthy mayor of this borough. From the old manor, by the king's permission, a new borough thus sprang up, whose privileges the nobility and gentry of the commot of Maene thought fit to acquiesce in throughout with a willing mind. Nor did the borough, by reason of its more tender age, become of less note and reputation than others; indeed, it yielded to none in respect of its ox market, and was doubtless the first, and bore the palm of superiority, amongst almost all the fairs of Wales, for the number and breed of its cattle. Again, it strikes us that it should not be considered the least in regard to the number of its inhabitants, for about the end of Edward II's reign it numbered no less than ninety-three dwelling-houses (so the *Extent* says) which were built in the town, thirteen gardens, one orchard, twelve crofts, (they are the words of the *Extent*,) and more than sixty lines (*lleiniau* [quillets]) of land, laid out for the separate houses. All which particulars indicate, indeed, that the frequency of the population in

that place was not to be despised, at least in the first period of its growth. I cannot, therefore, admit that there is any room for vain-glorious Beamarais to boast, as it usually does, that its burgesses elected their representatives in Parliament without Newborough; whereas we have the greater right to infer, that the patrons of this town at a former period, though now the tables are turned so much under the auspices of the great, were rather well received at the royal court; and that this new borough was relieved of such a weight, and the whole burden (so the matter was regarded then) thrown upon Beaumarais in that pacified and tranquil period, which was unacquainted with any such ambition as that what was in the beginning a burden, should at length come to be considered as an honour.

With respect to the princes' palace which the *Royal Extent* (the book of our records) repeatedly affirms to have formerly stood in this district, nothing now besides vestiges of the walls, lately uncovered by the sands, forming a square area, if one may measure a thing by its mere shadow, can be shewn; which place is, to this day, commonly called by the natives Llys i.e. the court. It is not far distant, too, on the south side, from the church of Newborough (which is dedicated to St. Peter); indeed, it nearly adjoins it; and therefore, I think there can scarce be a doubt that this Church was formerly used as a domestic chapel for these royal buildings, close to which it stood. And that such a chapel did adorn these buildings somewhere or other we read in the *Extent*; and in what place, pray, is it more likely that these royal buildings should have had their chapel, than where the church now stands, which when it had ceased to be domestic, forthwith became parochial, in which light it has long been regarded ?

We should not, I think, omit to mention the circumstance, that the manor of Rhoshir, to which nearly the whole of the commot of Maene appertains in right of homage, had been so valued by the English princes, and occasionally regarded by them of such importance, that our own kings and princes thought proper to reserve in their own hands the right and lordship of the said manor (a great many other places of that description having been altogether sold and alienated from the crown), and constantly dispensed justice to the whole commot through certain persons termed *Seneschals*; who for the most part received their commission from the chieftains of the island; to whom, as stewards of the manor, only twenty shillings but as deputies of the commot (those two offices are generally conferred upon the same individual), five pounds sterling are paid out of the prince's exchequer as their annual salary.

The other part of the parish, which is situate without the borough, is called Hendre Rhossir; but this only belongs to the manor now as a dependency, and by the laws of astriction; to which Rhoscolyn, Sybylltir, and Bryngwallan, lying on the outside, are added as hamlets. The land comprised by these districts is called, at the present day, the Manor, and to its steward (under the prince) being the judge of causes, and holding a Court and Pleas, the inhabitants of that place owe and perform their suit.

The proprietors of this considerable parish are the following:-

1. Sir Arthur Owen, Baronet, derived from the Meyrick stock in the line of Cynddelw; inheritor of very great wealth, whose father, Sir Hugh Owen, Baronet, succeeded to the estate of Brondeg by the will and devize of his kinswoman, Ellen Owen, who was the last heir of that house; and the said Arthur Owen, Baronet, now possesses what his father thus acquired.
2. Sir Owen Hughes. He joined together a great many purchases of land. Sprung from the stock of Gwerydd, he far surpassed others of his own family by the attainment of a more ample fortune, and rendered his house illustrious.

Also, William Griffith, of Pen yr Allt; Lewis Hughes, of Bryniau; and a few others, who are found to have kept in their own families their ancestral lands. Here, at a former period, two brothers of the house of Bodowen, Lewis and Gibbon, younger sons of Owen ap Meyrick, laid the foundation of families which flourished for some time. Lewis, the celebrated Justice of the Peace, who was frequently elected a member of Parliament, spent his distinguished life at Brondeg; Gibbon, perhaps of inferior fame, but of equal praise, lived in Newborough. Both transmitted to posterity most richly-stocked possessions; and their posterity were illustrious among their equals. At length, in the course of changeable things, one heir sold his property; the other was an unmarried woman, who, at her death, bequeathed hers as an hereditary estate to the family in which it had descended.

With respect to the quality of the soil, we must observe that the whole of the district, owing to a nitrous current of air blowing over it, displays very great fertility, suitable to the feeding of cattle, and the growing of corn. Part of the territory, facing the mid-day sun, grows and is refreshed daily by means of a copious besprinkling of sand which flies from the sea, strongly impregnated with salt; though sometimes the driving of the sand by the furious and frequent south-west wind has often proved not a little disadvantageous to this town. Indeed with a view to its prevention, at the close of the last century but one it was forbidden by the Virgin Queen, under very heavy penalties, for any one to break in pieces the heaps of sand which lay at the back of the borough, by pulling out the roots of rushes to make ropes of (as was usually the case), lest their compactness being by that means loosened, the small sand beaten from thence by violent winds, and drifted onward by storms, which it often threatens to do, should suddenly and unexpectedly overwhelm the town.

No other particulars that I know of occurred to me as worthy of observation in this district, except an upright stone at Brondeg, inscribed with rude characters; concerning which, what those letters signify, and what kind they are, I shall have more leisure to show elsewhere.

The boundaries of the incorporated borough, as I have been some time since informed by the inhabitants, are well defined by these marks, namely, - starting at Clynnog fechan we must proceed through Terwyn Beuno to Dolgeran; from thence through the middle of the Genyv marsh to the river Braint by Rhyddgaer; thence to Abermaene; from Abermaene to Ro-bach; from thence near Hendai to Bryn rhedyn; thence to Maes y Ceirchdir; thence to the Rhosddu pond; and from thence through Cae'r towyn to the high road; thence to Maenllwydd; thence going round a little to Llain y Groesvaen; then to a certain house in the town commonly called y Plas Ucha; from thence to Tir Bodvel; thence to Ty Mawr; from thence in a zig-zag direction to Bryn Madoc in the marsh of Malltraeth; from thence to Cerrig Mawr; from; from thence passing over Hendre'r orsedd to Glyn teg; thence to Cefn Mawr Ucha; from thence near Hendre'r orsedd to a place commonly called Tavern bridd; thence to Caeau brychion; from thence to the pond of Rhoshir; from that through Tir Nest to Brynsinc; thence going round Cerrig y Gwydd by the Rector's barn we arrive at Clynnog vechan, whence we commenced the circuit. By these marks we may easily perceive the separation and limits of Newborough, with its burgage territories and other rights, from the rest of the manor, as they were defined by royal charter."

Appendix B

Richard Fenton's notes "Out of [William] Williams' MS: Newborough" from *Arch. Camb*. supplement 1917, entitled *Fenton's Tours in Wales* p.269-270

"Once the County town; a wretched place now. The chief livelihood of the people is by making mats and ropes of the Sea Rushes growing on the sand banks, which they reap and dry for that purpose, though there is an Act against it. The three first Burgesses returned to Parliament were for this place. After the time of Ed. 1st it consisted of 93 houses, 13 Gardens, one Orchard, 12 Crofts, and 60 small fields for the Townsmen. It was a flourishing place 400 years ago in the time of Dafydd ap Gwilym. Here he first saw his beloved Morfydd at the Wake kept 29th June, St. Peter's day, and she most probably was from the neighbourhood. Its ancient name Rhoshir.[3] In Dafydd ap Gwilym's time it is described as a woody grove, and in these woods he is supposed to have had Interviews with his Morfydd, but perhaps the wood was the growth of the Poet's fancy sublimed by love.

Alas how changed from the luxuriant character he gives, not only of the landscape, but also of its inhabitants - their elegance, their hospitality, and the luxurious abundance of every good thing. But *Tempora mutantur* alas, and in derision the Villagers now are called *Hwyiaid Newbwrch*, Newborough Ducks, owing to their going barefoot for the most part."

Appendix C
Llys Rhosyr

Owen makes relatively little mention of the medieval royal court of the native Welsh Princes, known to have existed at Rhosyr up to the Edwardian conquest of 1282 and subsequently to have continued in use until the mid-14th century. Perhaps the single most important addition to our knowledge of the early history of the Newborough area since Owen's time has come from the archaeological excavation of the site of this commotal llys and maerdref administrative centre, carried out by Gwynedd Archaeological Trust from 1993 to 1996.

The site's location had never been completely forgotten in local folk memory. Indeed, its ruins must have been visible for centuries after it fell into disuse, standing forlorn amongst the drifting sands which overwhelmed the area during the 14th century. Henry Rowlands wrote in *Antiquitates Parochiales* in 1710:-

> "With respect to the princes' palace which the *Royal Extent* (the book of our records) repeatedly affirms to have formerly stood in this district, nothing now besides vestiges of the walls, lately uncovered by the sands, forming a square area, if one may measure a thing by its mere shadow, can be shewn; which place is, to this day, commonly called by the natives Llys i.e. the court. It is not far distant, too, on the south side, from the church of Newborough (which is dedicated to St. Peter); indeed, it nearly adjoins it; and therefore, I think there can scarce be a doubt that this Church was formerly used as a domestic chapel for these royal buildings, close to which it stood. And that such a chapel did adorn these buildings somewhere or other we read in the *Extent*; and in what place, pray, is it more likely that these royal buildings should have had their chapel, than where the church now stands, which when it had ceased to be domestic, forthwith became parochial, in which light it has long been regarded ?"

3 The *Arch.Camb.* Eds. remark "Actually, Rhos Fyr - the *Rosuir* of the *Vita S. Kebii* (Cotton MS. Vesp. A. XIV). From the form it would appear that *byr* was formerly used for the fem., now *ber*."

The well-known writer Thomas Pennant had access to the Sebright MS collection, possibly thanks to Angharad Llwyds's father John Lloyd of Caerwys. In his *Tour in Wales 1770* [4] he writes :-

> "Newborough, or more properly Rhos-vair, the British name, was a manor of our princes. It was divided into two parts; the one consisted of officers of the household under the prince; which were of two kinds, and had twelve gavels in land between them: part maintained the *Maer-drefyrs*, or persons who overlooked his demesne; the other was for the *Garddwyr*, certain persons resembling our cottagers, who possessed small parcels of land called *Gardds*.[5] There were besides eight gavels, which were the property of freeholders; the posterity of whom enjoyed the same to the very time of my author, Mr *Rowlands.*This was also the seat of justice for the whole commot of *Menai*, and continued so, long after it became subject to the *English*. A respect to a royal seat was still maintained by the new royal possessors. It became a manor of the princes of *Wales*. *Edward* I erected the town into a corporation, and gave it a gild mercatory, and other prvileges, which were confirmed by parlement in the first year of Edward III.[6] From this time it was called Newborough. In the latter part of that reign were found ninety-three houses, thirteen gardens, one orchard, twelve crofts, and sixty small pieces of ground inclosed for the use of the houses. The crown had its steward for this district, with a salary of ten pounds a year. The palace and royal chapel existed in the time of *Edward* III; for it appears by an inquisition taken here in 1329, before *William de Shaldeford*, representative of Richard, Earl of *Arundel*, justiciary of North Wales, that the tenants of the commot of Menai had been required to put those buildings into repair; but, on their representing that, if that duty was put in force, they would be of little or no advantage to the king, the justiciary was directed to enquire into the truth; and whether it would not be better for him to take an annual sum in lieu of the repairs, not only of the palace and chapel, but of all the other buildings on the royal manor."[7]

Iorwerth Peate writes in *The Welsh House* [pp. 130-1] that

> "All three [of the Welsh Law codes, Venedotian, Gwentian and Demetian] stipulate that the villeins have to erect nine buildngs for the king: the Gwentian and Dimetian versions list a hall, chamber, kitchen, chapel, barn, kiln-house, privy, stable and kennels, while the Venedotian has a dormitory for the chapel! All evidence points to the fact that the traditional Welsh house consisted of a number of separate buildings 'tei y llys' to quote *Manawydan*. This may account for the frequent use in the medieval poems of the plural form tai [houses] where 'house' is meant. For example, Dafydd Nanmor in his poem to Rhys ap Maredudd of Tywyn in Cardiganshire:[8]
>
> I'r tai ynghwr y Tywyn
> *To the houses on the edge of the Tywyn* [but 'house' is intended sense]

4 *A Tour in Wales MDCCLXX* Vol. II p.234 London, printed by Henry Hughes MDCCLXXXIII. Reprinted by Bridge Books Wrexham 1991.
5 Pennant footnotes this with '*Record of Caernarvon, in Biblioth. Litteraria*, 23.'
6 *Ditto* 'Mr. Rowlands' MSS' i.e. *Antiquitates Parochiales*.
7 *Ditto* 'Sebright MSS'.
8 Roberts, T. and Williams, I.: *The Poetical Works of Dafydd Nanmor* (1923) p.1

or Guto'r Glyn in his poem to Sir Siôn Mechain:[9]

Y mae curad a'm carai
I'm dwyn oddyma i'w dai
There is a priest who so loves me
That he would take me hence to his houses [but 'house' is intended sense]

We shall see that one of the characteristics of the later architecture was that it brought these separate 'houses' under one roof." Peate later [*ibid* pp. 150-1] adds

"Guto'r Glyn, mid-15th century, has a description of the house of Sir Siôn Mechain, who was vicar of Llandrinio, Montgomeryshire. He describes it as

Neuadd hir newydd yw hon
Nawty'n un a'r tai'n wynion:
Cerrig, ar frig awyr fry,
Cornatun yn cau'r nawty
Lwfer n ad lif o'r nen
A chroeslofft deg a chryslen...
Plas teilys[10]
A new long hall is this,
Nine houses in one and all white.
Corndon stone on the roof
Closing the nine houses.
A louvre prevents a downpour from the heavens
And a fair crossloft with a screen...
A tiled palace."

In a third poem another Montgomeryshire house is described: here again are the inevitable nine houses:

Ynt□y a wnaeth naw t□'n un,
I'r nawty yr awn atun.
They made nine houses into one,
We shall go to them, to the nine houses."

Cae Llys, Rhosyr

From *Annual Report*, Gwynedd Archaeological Trust, 1994-5.

"Rhosyr is well documented as the maerdref of the commote of Menai. Llywelyn ab Iorwerth signed a charter here in 1237 and a fair and market were well established before the conquest. Edward I's planned new town, Newborough, was built on Rhosyr lands in 1303. *Cae Llys* is situated 100m to the south west of St. Peter's Church, Newborough on the crest of a low but locally prominent ridge between the estuaries of the Braint and the Cefni on the south west coast of Anglesey. The local place name *Cae Llys*, the generalised locational informaton provided by antiquarian sources, the topography and circumstantial association of the church, recommended the site for limited trial excavation during 1992-93. Structural debris, in-situ walling and stratified pottery of the 13th and 14th centuries confirmed the potential of the site for further work.

Excavation at *Cae Llys* continued during 1994, extending over an area of 750 sq. metres. The principal features identified include a length of perimeter wall on the east side, broken by a clearly defined entrance, and the stone foundations and footings of a large composite structure. This has been interpreted as a hall (15m x 9m) with added ranges on the west and south sides and a possible subdivision at the east end, giving total dimensions for the structure of 20m x 14m. Excavations in 1995 attempted to establish the extent of the *llys* complex by locating the perimeter wall on the west, north and south sides and to clarify elements of the stratigraphic sequence and chronology which remained unresolved at the end of the 1994 season, particularly in the area of the hall.

Ten trenches were excavated on the periphery of the site and the perimeter wall of the *llys* was identified, defining three sides of a rectangular enclosure of at least 1.5 hectares. The wall still stood up to eight courses high in places. Structures close to the perimeter and internal subdivisions of the complex were also recorded. Dressed sandstone blocks provided architectural detail where door jambs and corner stones were required.

Within the enclosure, a second building was identified, 12m long and 7m wide. The stone walls which survived in places to a height of 1m, were bonded with clay. The house was provided with three doorways: one in the eastern gable end and the other two towards the eastern end of the north and south walls respectively. The door in the north wall gave access to what may have been a structure immediately to the north and earlier than the hall excavated in 1994. After the south range of the hall had been built, the door in the north wall was blocked. A corridor was added to the door in the south wall and it is assumed that another associated building remains to be discovered in the unexcavated south-eastern corner of the site. Kilns or ovens have been identified between the interior structures and the perimeter wall and slags suggest the presence of metal-working. Coins of the early-mid 13th century and pottery of the 13th and 14th century have been recovered.

There is potental at Llys Rhosyr for the definition of the entire circuit of the perimeter walls and for establishing a complete ground plan of the *llys* complex. It is equally significant that the potential exists for establishing a chronological sequence for structural evolution of the site demonstrating, perhaps, a development from free-standing structures of individual function to composite buildings by the end of the thirteenth century.

In addition to the Cadw grant, the excavations were made possible by generous funding from Ynys Môn Borough Council and the assistance of students from University of Wales Lampeter and U.W. Cardiff."

9 Williams, I. and Williams, J.Ll: *Gwaith Guto'r Glyn* (1939) p.275
10 *ibid* pp. 109-11, 132-4, 275-6.

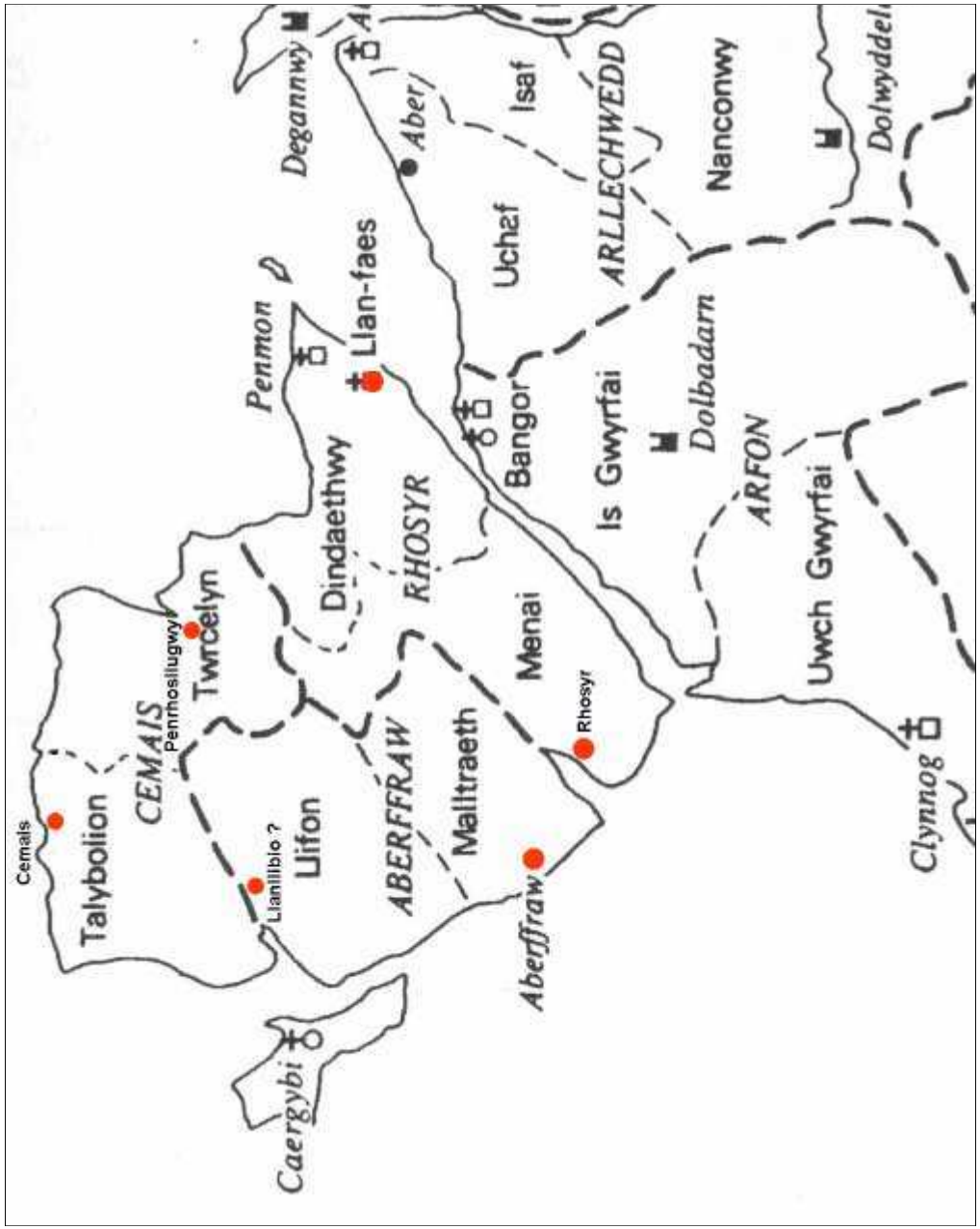

Fig. 30 Cantrefi and Cwmwdau of Anglesey with commotal centres named and marked

Fig. 31a Fluxgate magnetometer discovery survey which reveals the unexcavated western perimeter wall of Llys Rhosyr. The image of the wall is seen running N-S at image centre, with the SW corner at the bottom. *John Burman and Gwynedd Archaeological Trust 1996*

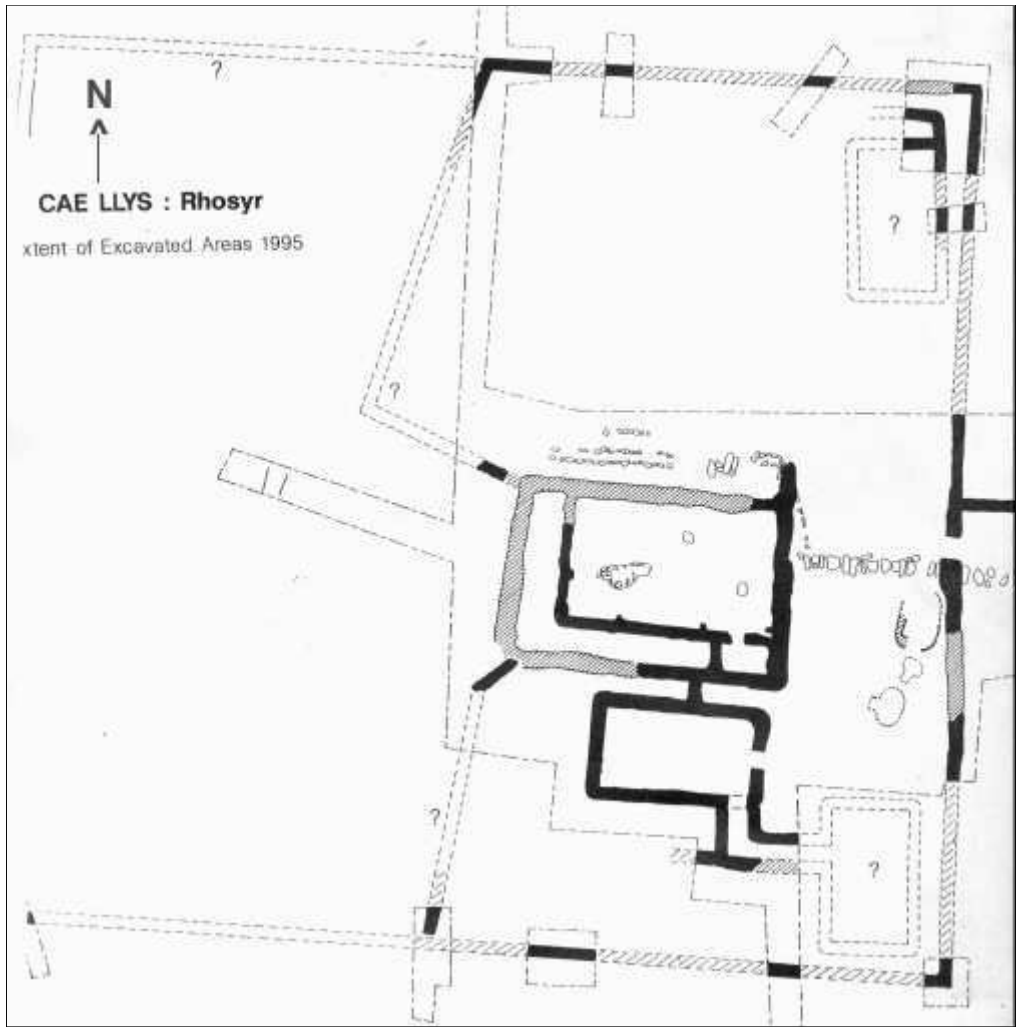

Fig. 31b Intermediate excavation plan of Llys Rhosyr at end 1995. The building surmised at the N.E. corner materialised in 1996-7; that surmised at the S.E did not.
Gwynedd Archaeological Trust 1995

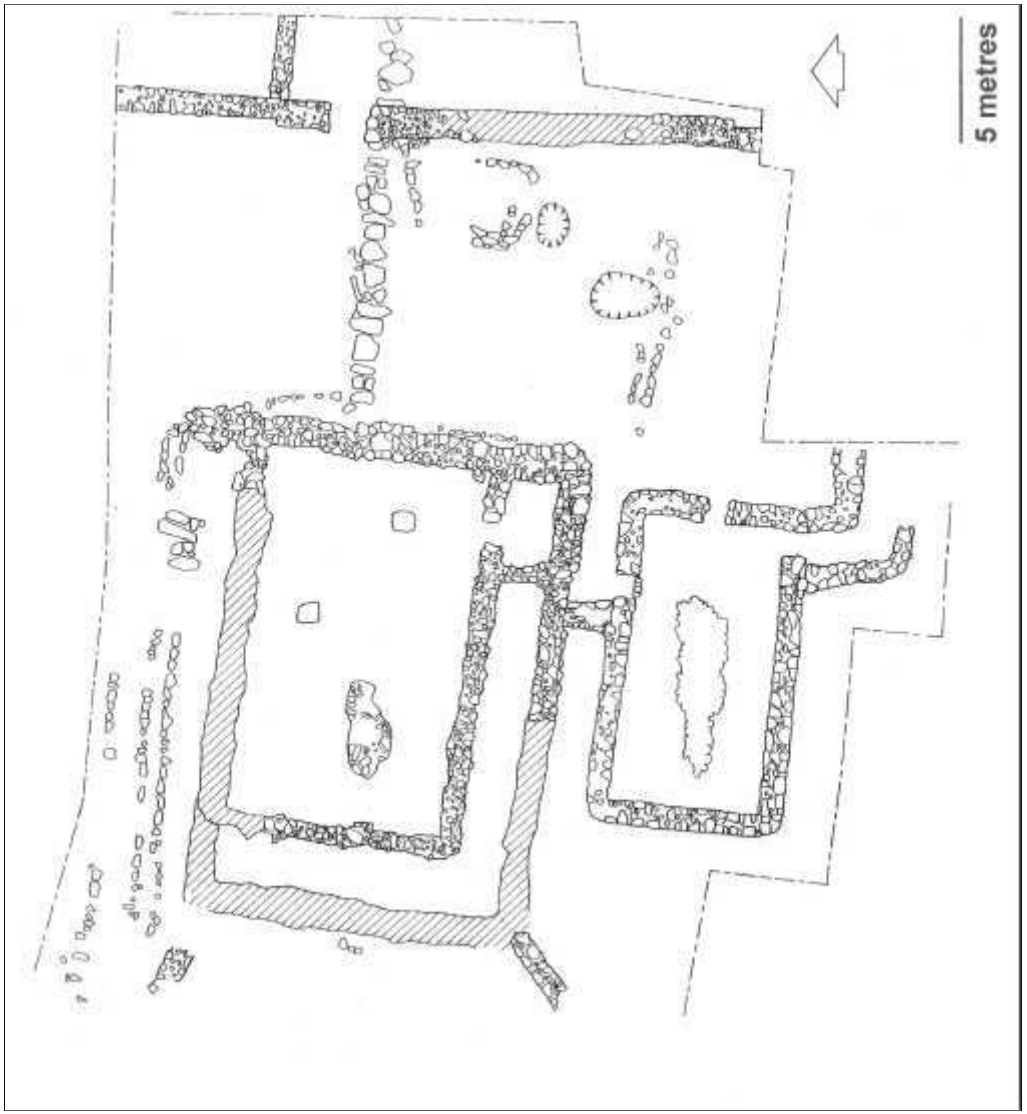

Fig. 32 More detailed ground plan of foundations of main Llys buildings A and B.
Gwynedd Archaeological Trust 1995

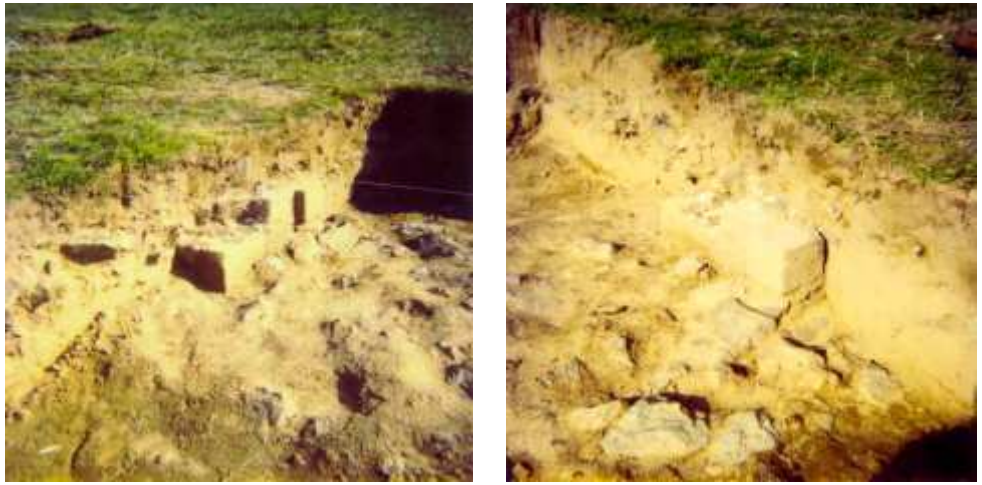

Fig. 33 Door jamb base of finely carved Anglesey millstone grit in the Llys south boundary wall. *TPTW 1995*

Fig. 34 The deeply buried east boundary wall of the Llys, with many courses of fine drystone clay-bonded masonry surviving. Foundations of a building of uncertain function, situated at the N.E. corner within the complex, are also visible. *TPTW 1995*

Fig. 35 Excavation of Llys building B and its curving entrance passage in progress. *Gwynedd Archaeological Trust 1995*

Fig. 36 The interior of Llys building B when fully excavated. Lookig east. *TPTW 1996*

Fig. 37 The building foundations standing at the N.E. corner of the Llys, fully excavated. Looking east. *TPTW 1996*

Fig. 38 The foundations of Llys building B, partially excavated. Looking north. *Gwynedd Archaeological Trust 1995*

Fig. 39 The east boundary wall of the Llys, looking south. *TPTW 1996*

Fig. 40 The north east part of the Llys looking south. *TPTW 1996*