

NANT MAGWR (WEIR), near Tan-yr-allt farm, Abermagwr, Trawsgoed, Ceredigion.

NPRN: 405315 (PRN 8377). NGR: SN 6688 7416

Report on enclosure complex and possible Roman site.

Previous knowledge of the site

Cropmarks showing the north-west corner of a bivallate enclosure with sharp angles were first recorded by Cambridge University aerial photographers on 8th August 1979, as 'cropmarks 1.25 miles SSE of Llanfihangel-y-Creuddyn (neg. refs. CKS9 & 10). These corner ditches were regularly photographed by Royal Commission aerial photographers in subsequent dry summers, showing on a better drained gravel ridge surrounded by less responsive ground. The status of the site remained uncertain and was recorded as NPRN 400289.

The discovery of the wider enclosure complex, July 2006

New aerial photography was taken of the site under drought conditions on 27 July 2006. This revealed a far more complex monument, comprising a large bivallate rectangular enclosure with the foundations of a stone building offset within the north-east corner, and an annex appended on the west side. Throughout the interior, parching revealed further short ditch sections and pits. However, the cropmarks also show much disturbance to the riverine gravels bordering the river and it appears that past flooding episodes or changes in the river course may have eroded or destroyed the southern parts of the site. A D-shaped univallate defended enclosure, a probable Iron Age farmstead, was also discovered as a cropmark lying some 330m west of the enclosure complex, close to Tan-yr-allt farm (NPRN 405316).

Details of the enclosure complex

A site visit on 5th June 2007 confirmed that the field in this location is fairly level, rising only slightly to the north-west. In places, the river exposes good sections of the subsoil of the field but no archaeological horizons were identified. Air photo mapping shows that the main bivallate rectangular enclosure measures approximately 115m north-south (the southern edge is not clear), and 79.8m east-west to the outer ditches, with an internal east-west measurement of 66.07m. The stone building in the north-east corner (located at SN 66887 74200) measures 20.0m east-west by 7.1m north-south. The bivallate ditches are set between 7.3-7.6m apart externally, with an internal gap of between 4.0-5.3m. A square annex appended to the lower west side of the main enclosure is fragmentary, but measures 44m east-west by 40m north-south.

Interpretation of the monument

A cropmark showing a large bivallate rectangular enclosure with sharp corners, an annex, and an internal stone building is highly unusual in Ceredigion, and indeed west Wales. A published map of the Trawsgoed demesne in 1771 (in Morgan 1997, *A Welsh House and Its Family: The Vaughans of Trawsgoed*, Gomer, 166) ends at the south edge of the Nant Magwr, showing no detail for the field in question but showing it on the land of Pen y Pombren Farm. Wider estate maps have not been researched to date. No traces of any building are shown in this location on the 19th century Ordnance Survey County Series mapping. At the same time, the Roman fort at Trawsgoed lies only 1.4km south of the Nant Magwr enclosures. It seems reasonable

to suggest that this enclosure complex may represent a Roman temple enclosure, or villa. Broadly similar enclosure complexes are known from Plas Newydd, Ruthin (NPRN 309755) and north-east of Forden Gaer at (NPRN 400779), while John Wiles has drawn parallels with the Dolwen fort/marching camp cropmark site which lies to the east of Llanidloes, Monts (NPRN 302113). The only oddity is that the rectangular stone building is not aligned with the axis of the main enclosure, or even arranged centrally. Its offset nature may suggest that the whole has more mundane origins, perhaps a medieval or later farmstead which has been plough-levelled.

Illustrations



Nant Magwr enclosure complex: general view of site from the north-west, 5th June 2007 (Crown Copyright RCAHMW, DS2007_160_003).



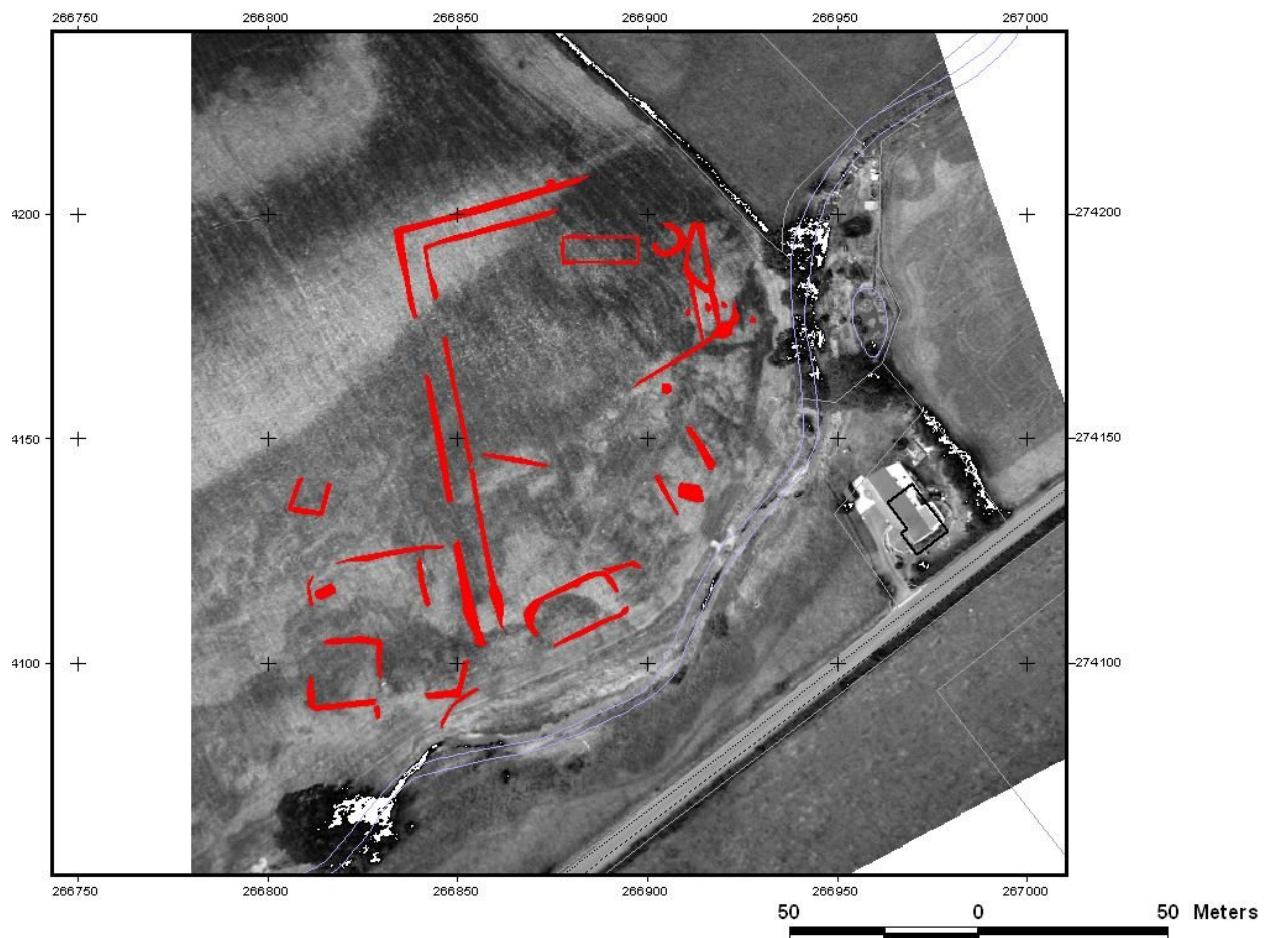
Nant Magwr enclosure complex: general view of cropmarks from the south-east, 27th July 2007. (Crown Copyright RCAHMW, AP_2006_3799).



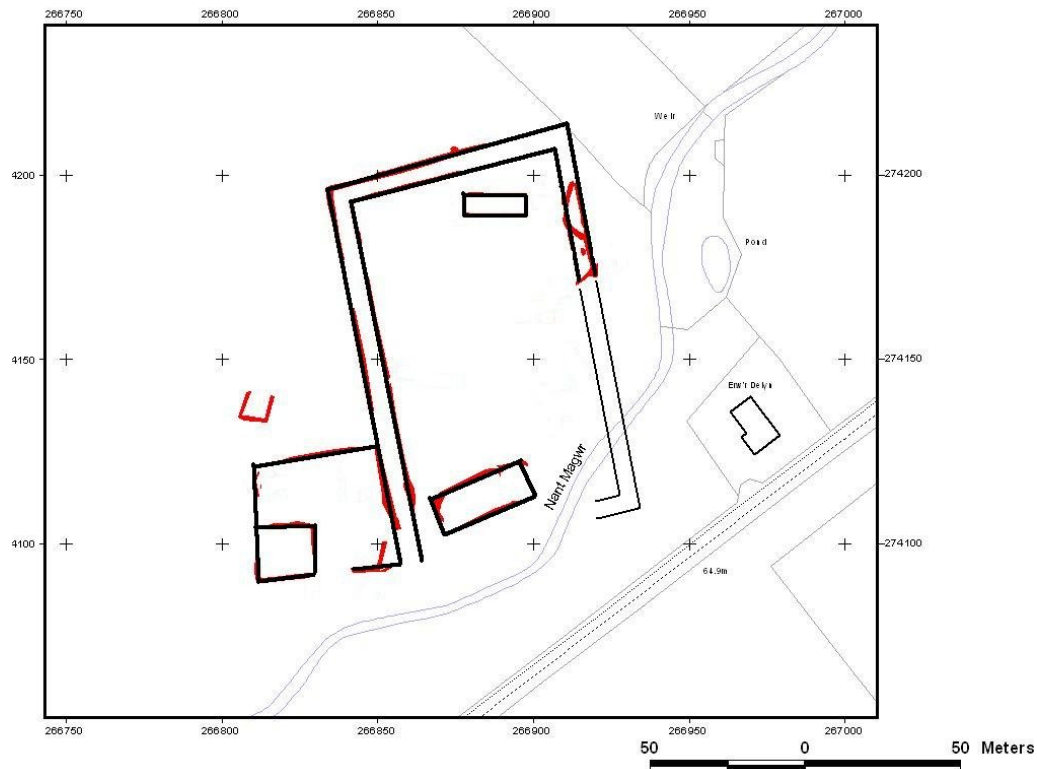
Nant Magwr enclosure complex: general view of cropmarks from the east, 27th July 2007. (Crown Copyright RCAHMW, AP_2006_3800).



Nant Magwr enclosure complex: detailed view of cropmarks from the south-east, 27th July 2007. (Crown Copyright RCAHMW, part of AP_2006_3798).



Nant Magwr enclosure complex: air photo mapping (in red) over rectified aerial photograph (Crown Copyright, All rights reserved. RCAHMW. Licence number 100017916, 2007).



Nant Magwr enclosure complex: generalised interpretation of possible original extents of enclosure complex (Crown Copyright, All rights reserved. RCAHMW. Licence number 100017916, 2007).

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