

**Heather and Hillforts Survey Report:  
Moel y Gaer, Lantysilio**

**Engineering Archaeological Services Ltd**

registered in England

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**Commissioned by**

**Denbighshire County Council**

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## Introduction

As part of the development phase of the Heather and Hillforts Landscape Partnership Scheme, Engineering Archaeological Services Ltd were commissioned to carry out a topographical survey of Moel y Gaer, Llantysilio (SAM De 126) hillfort (Figure 1). The aims of the project were to record the physical remains on the site. The fieldwork took place between 19/12/06 and 10/1/07

## Methodology

The topographic survey was undertaken using a Geodolite 506 Total Station. Initial stations were defined by using a Garmin Geko 201 hand held GPS system, with subsequent stations being surveyed using the Total Station. Features and breaks of slope were defined at a resolution of less than five metres between readings, whilst the general ground form was recorded by a series of ground levels taken on an approximate 10 m grid. The survey was processed using NRG Engineering Surveying System v. 8.09. This not only allowed for the compiling of the survey drawing, but also calculated the contours and provided the wire frame ground models of the site.

Temporary stations were marked with plastic pegs during the course of the survey.

## Moel y Gaer, Llantysilio

Moel y Gaer, Llantysilio, is the smallest of the hillforts within the Heather and Hillfort study area (Jones, 2004, 7). It occupies one of the lower summits of the Llantysilio Mountain, between Moel y Gamelin and Moel Morfydd (Figure 1). These two peaks block the view from Moel y Gaer to the east and west leaving the best views to the south towards the River Dee and north over the valley of

the Afon Alyn. It also overlooks a relatively low pass between the two valleys at the foot of Moel y Gamelin.

No substantial archaeological work has been documented from the site (Williams, 2004), although the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust carried out an Archaeological Condition Survey (Jones, 2004, 7 - 8) as part of the initial phase of the Heather and Hillfort Project.

## Topographical survey

### Temporary Stations

Station Name	Easting	Nothings	Level (m)
A	16722.000	46393.000	499.000
B	16697.455	46345.647	503.580
C	16701.518	46420.528	501.264
D	16625.414	46386.546	500.856
E	16736.405	46336.354	497.737

The single rampart at Moel y Gaer, Llantysilio encloses an area of approximately 0.95 ha. It is most developed on the northern and eastern sides of the hillfort where an external ditch is also evident. Elsewhere the defences would appear to consist of a single rampart which enhances the natural slope of the hillside. Quarry hollows occur only in the north eastern sector.

Only one gateway is evident. This has an inturned corridor, approximately 22.25 m long and 2.25 m wide. Either side of the corridor itself the rampart appears to have two platforms consisting of sections of the ramparts which are wider and slightly higher than the general pattern. The southern platform is

at the eastern end of the southern side of the corridor, whilst the northern platform is approximately 14 m north of the entranceway. The function of these platforms is unknown, but they appear to be distinctive design features, probably associated with the gateway.

Within the hillfort there appear to be the remains of eleven possible hut platforms. These tend to concentrate on the more sheltered eastern side of the hillfort, however the level of heather and bilberry growth within the hillfort would allow for other, more subtle features to exist.

Major erosion within the hillfort is concentrated on the track which crosses the site. This enters through the gateway, crosses the site and then continues, across the western rampart, before extending into the landscape. This track is still being used by motor vehicles and remains a constant threat to the remains. Where the track crosses the western rampart, the rampart has been completely destroyed and the possible pre-rampart ground surface is exposed.

### **Discussion**

The position of Moel y Gaer, Llantysilio within the landscape possibly reflects part of its role. It occupies a relatively low peak with its views to the east and west totally blocked by Moel y Gamelin and Moel Morfydd. It does, however, have good views to the south-east along a side valley from the valley of the River Dee. This would give relatively low level access along the col between Moel y Gaer and Moel y Gamelin and thence to the valley of the Afon Alyn

The presence of possible hut platforms within the hillfort would suggest that it was occupied, at least on a seasonal basis. The number of possible hut platforms is limited, but the heather and bilberry cover on the site is reasonably dense so it is probably that more subtle

archaeological features were not recorded. This can only be confirmed if the vegetation cover is removed or shortened by cutting or burning.

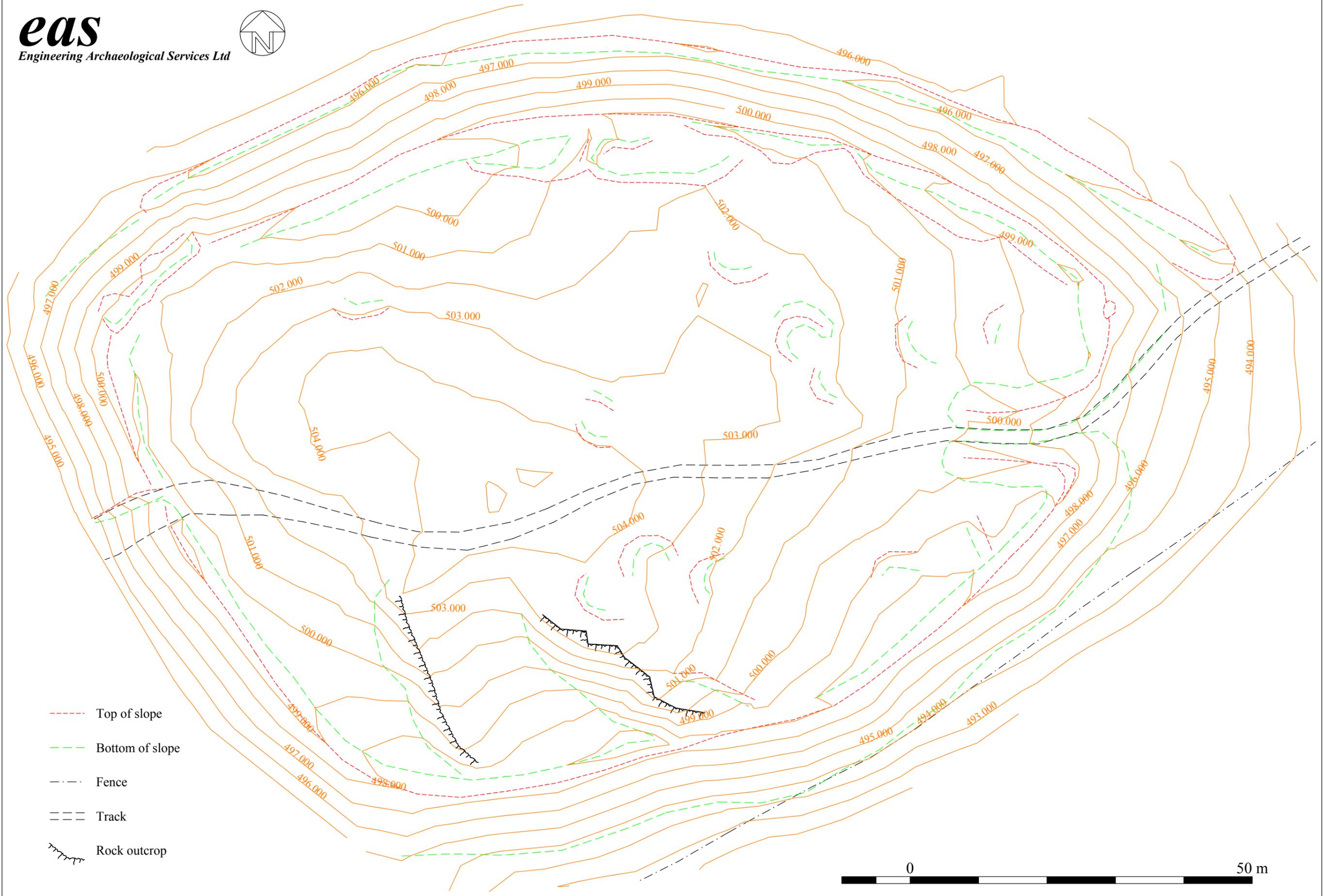
The modern track, used by motor vehicles as well as walkers, remains an active source of erosion. It is probably impossible to completely stop or control this activity and to some extent the damage has already been done. Two points of particular concern remain, however, where the track runs through the gateway and crosses the western rampart. Monitoring of the erosion occurring at these two points may reveal constructional details and pre-hillfort deposits which should be recorded whenever possible.

### **References**

- Burnham, H. 1995. *A guide to ancient and historic Wales. Clwyd and Powys*. HMSO, London
- Jones, N. 2004. *Heather and hillforts archaeological conditions survey*. Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust Report 658.
- Williams, S, 2004 *Heather and Hillforts Landscape Partnership. Desktop study of the hillforts*. Unpublished report by Denbighshire Countryside Services

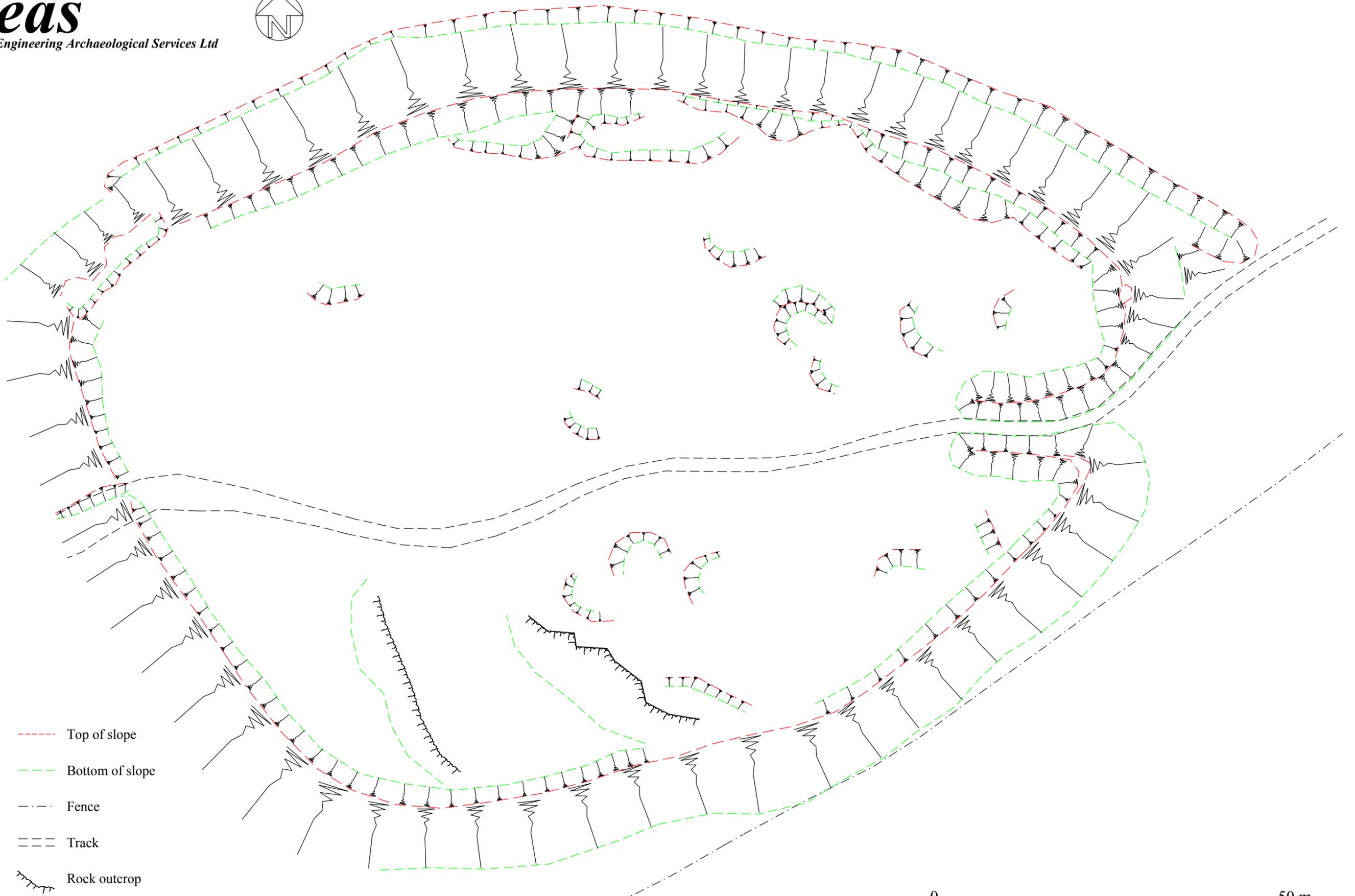
### **Acknowledgements**

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- Top of slope
- Bottom of slope
- · - Fence
- Track
- ⚡ Rock outcrop





-  Top of slope
-  Bottom of slope
-  Fence
-  Track
-  Rock outcrop



