

BLAEN MYHERIN FARM, NORTH CEREDIGION (SN 5340 0595)

HISTORIC BUILDING RECORDING



Prepared by Dyfed Archaeological Trust
for Nick Young, Heritage and
Conservation Manager, Forestry
Commission Wales



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Gan / By

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BLAEN MYHERIN FARM, NORTH CEREDIGION

HISTORIC BUILDINGS RECORDING

SUMMARY

Dyfed Archaeological Trust Field Services were appointed by Nick Young, Heritage and Conservation Manager, Forestry Commission Wales to undertake a scheme of historic buildings recording of the surviving structures of Blaen Myherin Farm within Forestry Commission land in North Ceredigion. This document presents the results of this scheme of building recording.

The site was identified by Nick Young as being in a state of deterioration and that as part of an ongoing management scheme for the area, there was a need to undertake a historic building survey of the surviving buildings. The information from the survey would either lead to repairs and stabilization of the structures, or more likely form a detailed record of the buildings in their current state of preservation prior to further deterioration or demolition.

A farm of the name 'Blaen Merin' has been recorded in the area since 1540 at the time of the dissolution of lands of Strata Florida Abbey. This indicates that a farm of this name was in existence pre-1540, although it cannot be confirmed that the existing farm is in the same location as the medieval one.

The style of the current farmhouse suggests it is of 19th century construction. The attached range of barn, animal shed and store room/pigsty also suggests a 19th century date for their construction.

The main farmhouse is in a very bad state of preservation, with the SE gable end wall partially collapsed, the majority of the roof structure missing and all of the roof covering removed. An extension lies on the NE side of the farmhouse, possibly built in two phases. It is possible that the structure incorporates fabric of earlier structures, although the main SW frontage was rendered obscuring any such information, the SE gable end wall had collapsed, the NW gable end wall was obscured by the adjacent barn and the NE wall was a later addition.

The range of farm buildings attached to the farmhouse appears to be a slightly later addition. From roof construction and heights, it would appear they were all built in a single phase. The buildings comprised shelter for animals, a separate animal pen/stable possibly for a horse, three stalls for cattle, a pigsty, a storage room and a hay loft. The pigsty had been built at a lower level than the rest of the farmhouse at the SW end of the building, with an external stone walled pen. The lower level of the pigsty made use of the reduced ground level in this area.

The layout of the farm buildings indicate they were well planned and built to a model design. The layout clearly indicates that animal husbandry was the main function of the farm. Sheep farming would have been the main work of the tenant farmers, and provided their main income, with cattle and pigs mostly for their own consumption. The farm belonged to the large Hafod Estate during the 19th century, and the estate would have invested in the rebuild of the farm. Surviving purple paint on the majority of the door and window frames is probably a remnant of the estate colours.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Background

- 1.1.1 The historic buildings survey of the Blaen Myherin Farm has been commissioned from Dyfed Archaeological Trust Field Services by Nick Young, Heritage and Conservation Manager, Forestry Commission Wales.
- 1.1.2 The site was identified by Nick Young as being in a state of deterioration and that as part of an ongoing management scheme for the area, there was a need to undertake a historic building survey of the surviving buildings. The information from the survey would either lead to repairs and stabilization of the structures, or more likely form a detailed record of the buildings in their current state of preservation prior to further deterioration or demolition.
- 1.1.3 An initial visit was undertaken to the site by William Steele of Dyfed Archaeological Trust Heritage Management in late 2010. The scope of the survey was determined from the results of this initial visit in discussion with the Field Services section of Dyfed Archaeological Trust.

1.2 Site Location

- 1.2.1 Blaen Myherin is located in a sheltered natural basin at the head of the Myherin valley, Pontarfynach, Ceredigion (NGR SN 80059 79605). It is recorded on the regional Historic Environment Record (PRN 33166).
- 1.2.2 The HER record, which includes information from a survey in 1997, states that 'The present range of buildings at Blaenmyherin includes a typical 19th century cottage, which despite remaining mostly roofed is now in poor repair - the southern gable wall being in a state of collapse. To the west of the house is an L-shaped outbuilding in a much better condition and retaining many original features of its stable and byre. Graffiti on the doors and stable partitions of this outbuilding date back to the first decade of the 20th century and the appearance of the building suggests that it dates to the later 19th century (Sambrook 1997).
- 1.2.4 A visit was undertaken in the latter part of 2010 by William Steele of Dyfed Archaeological Trust who reported that the farmstead remained in a derelict condition, and had deteriorated since the field visit of 1997. The southern gable wall of the house and roof have since almost completely collapsed and water continues to wash out lime mortar bonds in the wall tops. The outbuildings remain barely weatherproof and are in need of repairs if they are to be maintained in the long term: walls are showing signs of instability and the roof covering of tin is now rusting and in need of total replacement.

1.3 Scope of the Project

- 1.3.1 The project is designed to record the existing fabric of Blaen Myherin Farm through a combination of a photographic survey of the structures, along with site notes, scale drawings, Total Station survey and historic research which combined will inform on the history and development of the buildings

1.4 Report Outline

- 1.4.1 This report describes the location of the site, its archaeological and historical background, before summarising the results of the historic building recording programme and the conclusions based on those results.

1.5 Abbreviations

- 1.5.1 Regional Historic Environment Record – HER; Primary Record Number – PRN; National Grid Reference – NGR; Scheduled Ancient Monument – SAM;; Dyfed Archaeological Trust Field Services – DAT-FS; Written Scheme of Investigation - WSI.
- 1.5.2 Due to the regular use of compass directions and locations the following are abbreviated in the main body of the report: northeast – NE; southeast – SE; northwest – NW; southwest – SW; north-northeast – NNE; south-southeast – SSE; west-northwest - WNW etc.

1.6 Illustrations

- 1.6.1 Record photographs are included throughout the text. Printed map extracts are not necessarily reproduced to their original scale and are illustrative only.

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL SUMMARY

- 2.1 The HER record for Blaen Myherin states that 'Formerly, its large sheepwalk extended over 1km north-eastwards onto the high moor of Cefn Blaenmyherin. This is one of the most important and historic settlement sites within the uplands of the Mynydd y Ffynnon Historic Landscape Characterisation area (see Appendix 1) due to the fact that it is listed in mid-16th century rent rolls describing properties rented out by the Strata Florida estate to tenant farmers. It is possible therefore that it was an upland property of Strata Florida before the dissolution of the abbey in 1538.'
- 2.2 More detailed study indicates that during the medieval period the Blaen Myherin site was located within the boundaries of Cwmystwyth Grange (see figure 2) owned by the Cistercians of Strata Florida Abbey. It formed part of a much larger 6360 acre estate owned by the Abbey (Williams, 2001, 309; Cowley, 1977, 272). Sheep farming for wool was an important part of the Cistercian economy and in 1291 Strata Florida owned a flock of 1327 sheep (Cowley, 1977, 88). It is considered that Cwmystwyth Grange was a sheep farm given its upland location, however, it is also known that lead smelting was undertaken on the Grange where large areas of woodland were cleared for fuel. So large was the extent of woodland clearance on the Grange that Leland noted of lead smelting in the area in c.1538 that '*some men supposed that is ceased because the wood is sore wasted*' (Williams, 2001, 228).
- 2.3 Following the dissolution of Strata Florida Abbey in c.1540 the landed estate passed into secular hands. A surviving rent roll for 1540 records that '*Blaen Merin*' was tenanted to William and Morgan Herbert (Hafod Uchtryd Estate Collection). In 1669 the property is recorded in a receipt for payments made by George David Parry to Sir Thomas Powell of Llechwedd Dyris (Hafod Estate Collection H/B2/4). In 1775 the property was leased by Thomas Parry, to William Lewis for the term of one year (*ibid*, H/B2/10). '*Blaen Merin*' and the rest of the Hafod Estate was leased for one year to the Right Honourable Dowager Lady Rodney, and others, by Thomas Johnes (*ibid*, H/B2/17). In 1815, '*Blaen Merin*,' was leased again by Thomas Johnes, this time to a Dr George Pearson (*ibid*, H/A15/2). A provisional order, issued by the Enclosure Commission of England and Wales in 1859, for the enclosure of lands in Llanfihangel y Creuddyn also includes reference to '*Blaenmerin*' (*ibid*, H/D4/5). '*Blaen Meherin*' is also referred to in an award, dated 1866, made to Richard Wakeford Altree for the enclosure of the area, which was confirmed by the Enclosure Commissioners (*ibid*, H/D3/1). In October 1871 the lands of '*Blaen Merin*' were farmed by T W Richardson of Pendre which were included in a valuation of sheep hay and turnips for the year (*ibid*, H/E10/10).
- 2.4 The 1820 Original Ordnance Surveyors drawings of the area mark '*Blaen Miherin*' but very little detail is discernable. By the 1891 Ordnance Survey map the farm is depicted broadly as it is today. However, a small square building is marked immediately to the SE of the outbuildings range. Also to the SE of the farm are marked a series of enclosures that correspond to those which survive today. A well is also marked. A sheep fold is also shown to the NW of the outbuildings. A footbridge crosses the River Merin to the west of the farm. Little change is discernable on the 1903 Ordnance Survey Map with the farm buildings remaining unchanged, however, the sheep fold to the NW, square building and well to the SE of the main farm buildings are no longer marked. No change is identifiable on the Ordnance Survey maps of the area for 1953, 1963 or 1981.

- 2.5 A search of publically accessible census returns (see appendix I) produced on a ten yearly basis record the names and occupations of a number of people and families that have occupied the farm since 1841. The census also occasionally gives an indication of the size of the land holding of the farm along with the numbers of people employed.
- 2.6 The earliest recorded occupant of the farm was David Davies, farmer, and his family in 1841. It is recorded that they also had three servants. In 1851 Richard Jones, occupied the house with his wife and four children. The whole family are recorded as shepherds. By 1861 Edward Jones, farmer, and his wife and six children were occupants and at that time and was 900 acres in size. Also resident at the farm was a lodger named as Owen Thomas, a lead miner originally from Holywell in Flintshire. The 1871 census records that John Evans, shepherd, and his family occupied the farm and that his 17 year old daughter, Jane, worked as a housemaid on the farm, whilst the 15 year old son worked as a shepherd.
- 2.7 John Evans and his family still occupied the property in 1881 where he continues to be a shepherd along with his youngest son Joseph. The two middle sons, John and Thomas, are listed as lead miners whilst John Evan's 4 year old granddaughter is also listed at the property. By 1891 James Powell, also a shepherd, along with his wife and seven children occupied the farm. Two of his sons, James and John, are also recorded as working as shepherds. James Powell and family were still resident in 1901, and he, along with the two sons, were still shepherds.
- 2.8 The census return for 1911 is recorded in Welsh and indicates that James Powell had died by this time but the farm continued to be occupied by his widow Margaret who is listed as doing house work as is her daughter Sarah. James Powell junior continues to live at the property and is recorded as a sheep shepherd. One servant employed as a shepherd is also recorded at the farm. The 1911 census also records that the house consisted of five occupied rooms. In addition to this, it is also recorded that Margaret Powell had given birth to nine live children four of which had died.

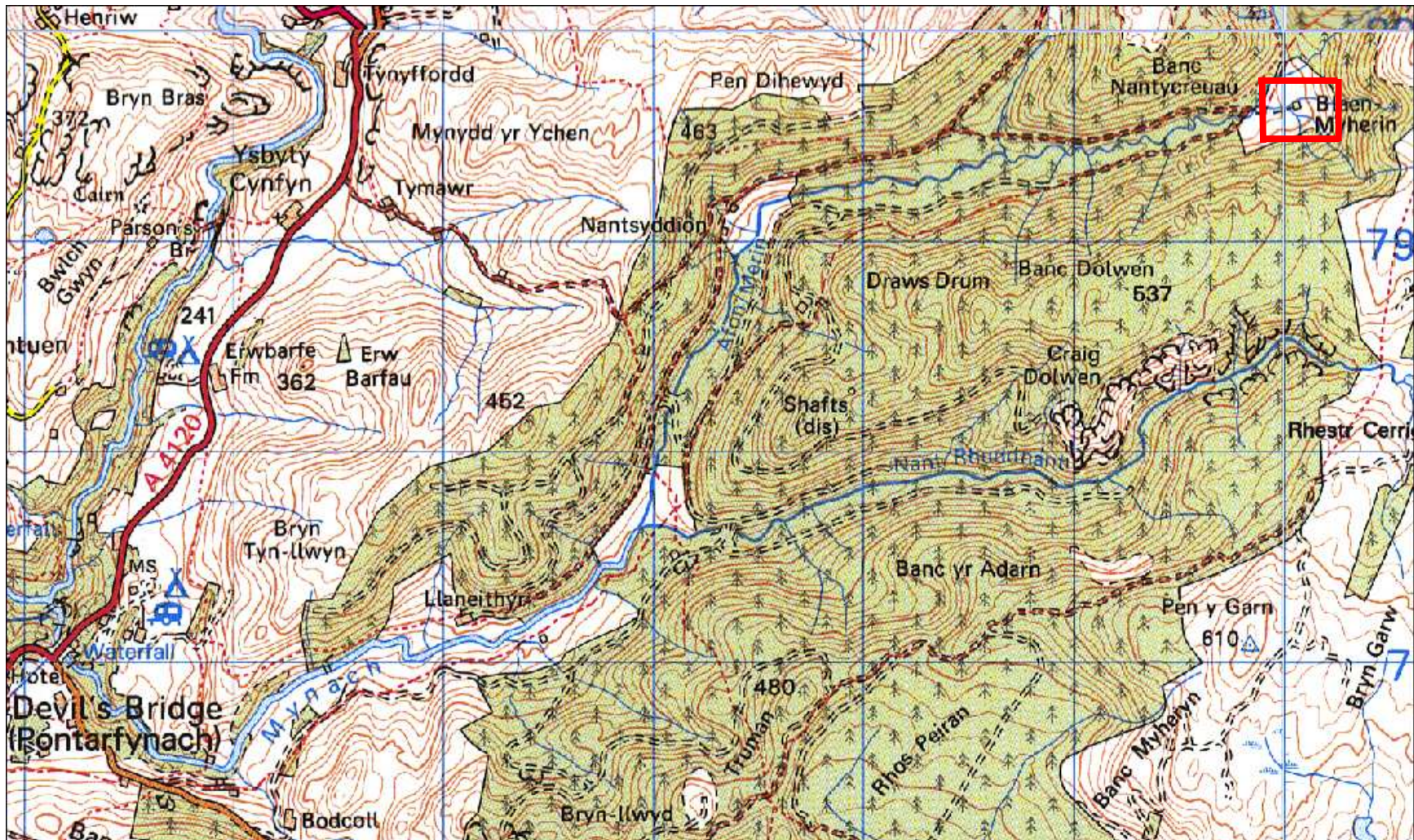


Figure 1: Location plan of Blaen Myherin based on the Ordnance Survey.

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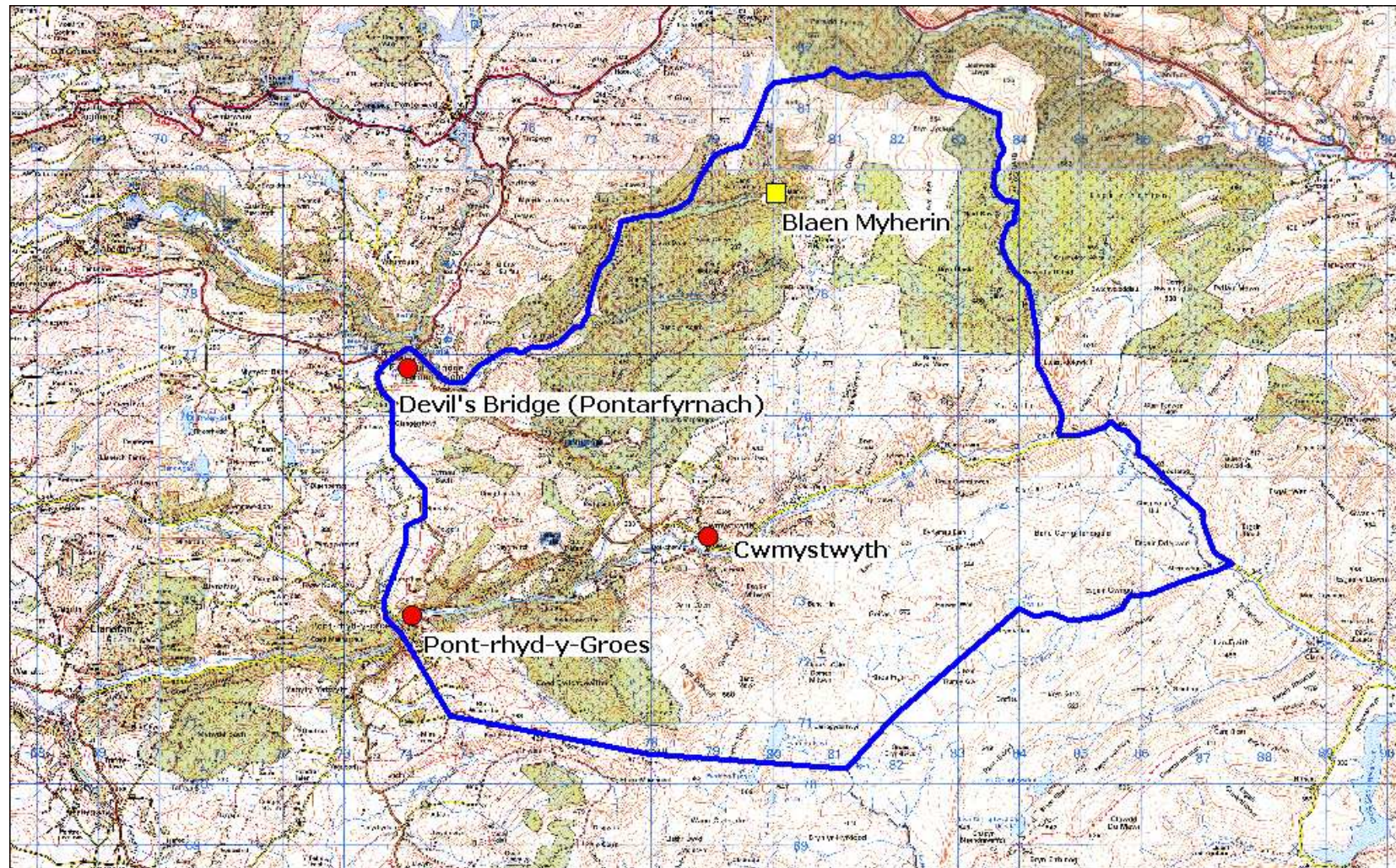


Figure 2: Map showing extent of Cwmystwyth Grange.

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3 METHODOLOGY

- 3.1 The following sources have been used to provide information regarding the historical background of the farm:
- Dyfed Archaeological Trust Historic Environment Record;
 - Walkover and photographic surveys of the farm buildings (undertaken February 2011); and
 - Other background material (various internet sources).
- 3.2 The building appraisal included the following elements:
- Full photographic record of all buildings and significant features within them (high-resolution digital photography). In addition scaled drawn elevations and plans were produced where required, along with an EDM survey;
 - An assessment of each building for its original function and importance, including internal features;
 - Provision of a basic brief report on the buildings, identifying key information sources (historic maps, HER search) and discussing any obvious phasing, chronology or other features of interest which were observed during fieldwork;
- 3.3 The survey followed the guidelines for a Level 2 building record, as described in *Understanding Historic Buildings: A guide to good recording practice* (English Heritage 2006).
- 3.4 The survey undertaken for this report used a Trimble Total Station EDM, which has provided an accurate building plan layout for Blaen Myherin Farm.

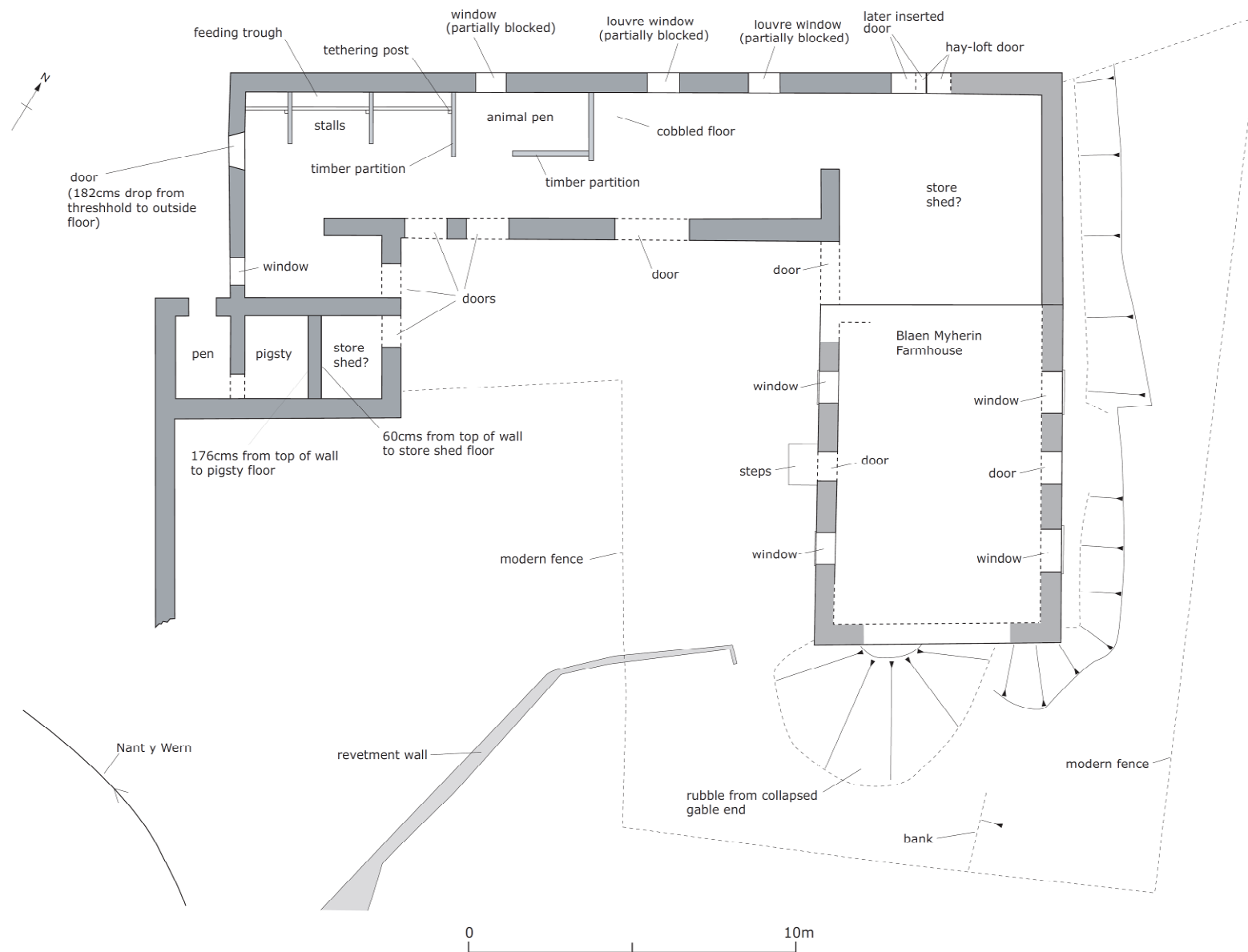


Figure 3: Plan of Blaen Myherin Farm showing building layout and details referred to in text.

4. BUILDING DESCRIPTIONS (Figure 3)



Photo 1: Blaen Myherin Farm

4.1 Blaen Myherin Farmhouse

- 4.1.1 The farmhouse at Blaen Myherin is a stone built two storied structure of 19th century date, in a very poor state of repair (Photos 1 & 2). The house has partially collapsed with no access possible to the interior of the building due to health and safety concerns.
- 4.1.2 The SW wall of the house contained a series of five boarded up windows, each with stone sills and a single door (Photo 2; Figure 4). These were arranged with three square windows at first floor level with two rectangular windows flanking the doorway at ground floor level. It is considered that the window openings would have housed timber sash frames, but these no longer survive. A small white ceramic fixing with metal core was noted set into the wall on the right hand side of the SE ground floor level window. This fixing may indicate the position of the entry point for an electricity or telephone cable to the house.
- 4.1.3 Concrete render covered the SW wall obscuring any evidence for modifications or alterations within the wall fabric. A timber wall plate was visible running along the top of the wall forming the tops of the upper floor windows. A series of steps, now partially buried in debris provided access to the central doorway.
- 4.1.4 The SE wall of the house had almost entirely collapsed, although at its NE end a small part survived to full height (Photo 3). No architectural detailing was visible within the wall.



Photo 2: Blaen Myherin Farmhouse, main SW elevation

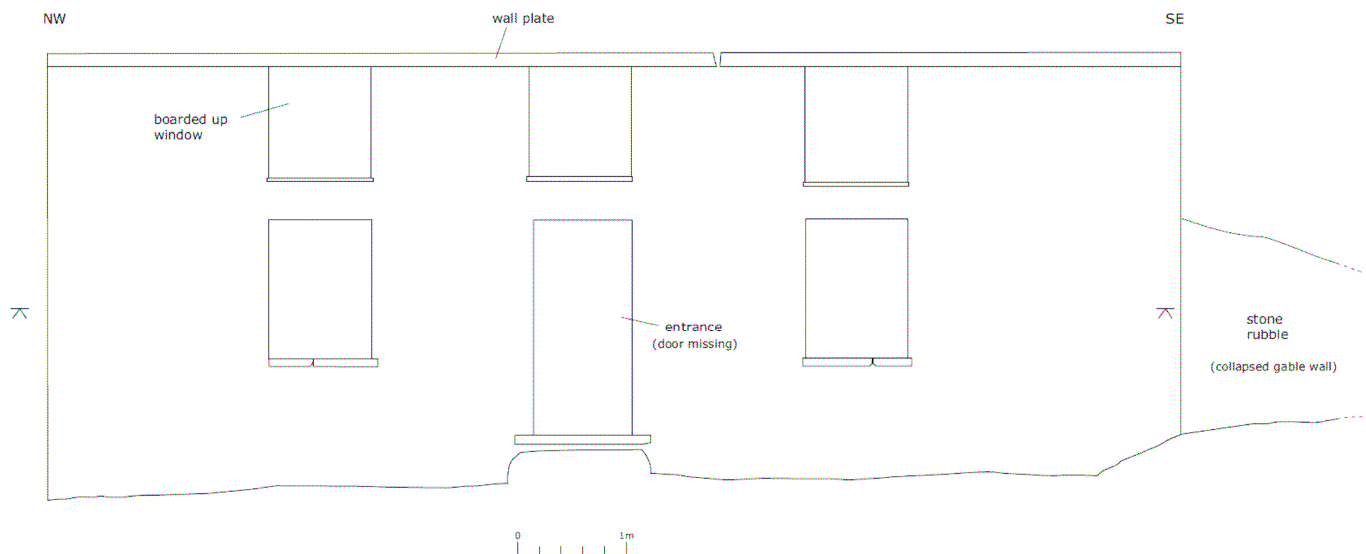


Figure 4: SW elevation of Blaen Myherin Farmhouse



Photo 3: Collapsed SE elevation of farmhouse



Photo 4: NE elevation of Blaen Myherin farm



Photo 5: Interior view of Blaen Myherin farmhouse showing line of interior stone wall

- 4.1.5 The NE elevation of the building was of single storey height, comprising a central doorway and two flanking rectangular windows (Photo 4). It is possible that this side of the building had a single storey extension added at some point with a cat slide roof present at the NW end of the building continuing the roof line down to the upper part of the new wall at the same pitch. Inside the building a stone wall was visible which may have been the original exterior NE wall of the farm (Photo 5). At the SE end of the farmhouse on this elevation, the area of the extension would seem to have been built with a separate pitched roof as evidenced by a surviving ridge beam and partial gable wall (Photo 6)
- 4.1.6 The NW elevation of the building was mostly obscured by the adjacent store shed or barn, although a small part was visible above the roof line (Photo 6). The exposed part of the wall was rendered and no details could be seen. A chimney was present at the apex of the roof, and internally a chimney breast and fireplace was present at first floor level (and presumably ground floor level too).
- 4.1.7 The roof of the farmhouse had mostly collapsed, although parts of the wooden framing were visible. It is uncertain what the roofing material had been, but it had been removed presumably for reuse elsewhere (slate tiles would seem likely).



Photo 6: SE end of extension area showing separate gable end and ridge beam

4.2 Barn

- 4.2.1 On the NW side of the farmhouse a store shed or barn was present. The building was aligned with the farmhouse, and being of the same width. The walls were flush with those of the farmhouse, although not as tall and the roof pitch shallower. Unlike the farmhouse, these walls were not rendered and comprised exposed stone work. A double width doorway was present on the SW facade (Photo 7).
- 4.2.2 The NE facade of the barn was of stone with no visible features or architectural detail, other than large quoins used for the corners of the structure (Photo 8). The building was roofed in corrugated metal, slightly corroded at the ends, but otherwise in a fair state of repair. Two skylights were present in the roof on the NE side.



Photo 7: Doorway into barn extension on NW facade, with the main farmhouse to the right, clearly showing the difference in wall heights



Photo 8: NE facade of barn structure



Photo 9: NW facade of barn structure

- 4.2.3 The NW facade of the building comprised the exposed gable end of the structure, with two openings, a doorway at ground level and an upper hay-loft door (Photo 9). It was noted that the upper hay loft door had remnants of a purple paint around the doorframe, something noted on all other internal timber work surrounding windows and doors, other than the doorway at ground floor level below (Photo 10). It is likely that the purple paintwork may have been a colour used for various estate buildings in the area. The lack of paint on the lower doorway suggests it may be later insertion into the wall. No remains of an upper floor survived within the structure. Both doorways were timber framed with wooden lintels. The door survived in the hayloft, but the lower doorway was boarded up.
- 4.2.4 Little other internal detail was present within the barn, except the entrance to the yard and animal shed to the SW (Photo 11), both with timber door frames and intact doors. The wall between the barn and the farmhouse showed no features of interest (Photo 12).



Photo 10: Internal view of doorways on NW wall of barn structure



Photo 11: Internal view of doorway to yard (left)
and access into the animal shed to the SW (right)



Photo 12: Internal view of wall between barn and adjacent farmhouse

4.3 Animal Shed

- 4.3.1 The animal shed was located to the SW of the farmhouse and attached to the SW face of the barn. It was aligned NE to SW, of stone construction, with a corrugated metal roof on timber frames. The ridge of the roof was perpendicular to that of the adjacent barn, and the underlying roof structure reflected this change in alignment (Photo 11).
- 4.3.2 On the SE facade are three entrances giving access from the structure to the yard; two doors in the SW end and a double door just to the north of centre (Photo 13). The stable doors of the SW doorway survived, with the upper half of the adjacent door still intact. No remains of the double doors survived. All doorways were timber framed with large wooden lintels.



Photo 13: SE facade of animal shed fronting onto yard

- 4.3.3 The NW facade had three small window openings with timber framed surrounds and wooden lintels (Photos 14 & 15). The windows may have been larger, as indicated by straight joints in the masonry projecting below the existing base of the frames. Only one window survived intact, that to the north, with a three pane glazed upper half and louvered lower half, presumably providing ventilation for animal housing (Photo 16). The middle window retained a central timber mullion for the glazed upper half (implying it had two panes), but the southern window was completely missing.



Photo 14: NW facade of animal sheds showing windows and raised level of structure



Photo 15: SW end of Animal shed



Photo 16: Internal view of surviving louvered window,
and showing partially blocked opening below



Photo 17: SW corner of animal shed, showing gable end wall

- 4.3.4 The SW elevation of the animal shed had a single doorway opening, with a drop from the threshold of the door of 1.82m down to the exterior ground surface (Photo 17). The doorway had a partial timber frame surviving, but no door. It was clear that the structure had been built on quite undulating ground, with a significant drop on the western side, although the interior floors were level with the yard to the east, indicating that they had been raised. The exterior walls of the structure were far taller at the southern end also indicating this change in ground level. No evidence was visible for the material used in the levelling.
- 4.3.5 A cobbled floor survived at the NE end of the building although only clearly visible in roughly the centre of the building. The northern end comprised a larger open area, with double doorway entrance from the barn to the NE (Photo 18) and from the yard to the SE. The doors survived for the NE door but not that to the SE. The two louvered windows provided light to this part of the building, which was otherwise mostly featureless.



Photo 18: Northern end of animal shed showing double doors into barn to the NE

- 4.3.6 A timber partition wall separated the northern part of the animal shed from that to the south (Photo 19). The partition wall was built over and below one of the timber roof trusses which formed the roof structure of the shed. Graffiti on this wall dated from the latter half of the 20th century (such as that dated 1959 on Photo 17).
- 4.3.7 A second timber partition wall divided an area in roughly the central part of the building, again rising to roof. An animal pen was formed between the two by a further low partition wall (Photos 20 & 21) which had graffiti upon it dating from 1901 (Photo 22). The third window provided light for this animal pen.



Photo 19: Timber partition wall in middle of animal shed,
showing exposed roof truss



Photo 20: Second timber partition wall and lower timber wall
forming an animal pen in the central part of the animal shed



Photo 21: Inside of animal pen showing window and partition walls



Photo 22: Detail of graffiti dated 1901 on animal pen partition wall

4.3.8 The southern part of the animal shed housed three animal stalls divided by two low level timber partitions between the SW end stone wall and the full height timber partition wall (Photos 23 & 24). The stalls retained tethering posts on either side of the stalls and a feeding trough along the NW wall (Photo 25).



Photo 23: Animal stalls in southern part of building



Photo 24: SW end of animal shed showing doorway and animal stalls



Photo 25: Detail of low level stall partition, tethering post and remains of timber trough

4.4 Pigsty, shed and storeroom

- 4.3.1 Attached to the SE of the gable end wall of the animal shed was a further small structure. This was almost square in size, with a roof ridge line aligned NW to SE, and thus perpendicular to that of the animal shed. This building was also roofed with timber trusses and corrugated metal sheet roof (Photo 26).
- 4.3.2 The SW elevation contained a single window and a small doorway at a low level providing access between an interior pigsty and an external stone walled pen area (Photo 27). The internal pigsty area was built at a lower level than the floor of the rest of the building, and included a raised and covered area providing a timber roof to the pigsty below as well as access (Photo 28). This raised area was located in a small room, presumed to have been used as a store room in the SE end of the structure, separated from the animal shed to the NW. A single doorway provided access to the yard to the NE (Photo 29), timber framed with no surviving door. The lintel above the doorway was linked to the adjacent doorway providing access to a further room to the NW. This room was linked directly to the animals stalls area of the animal shed by a double width doorway. A single doorway provided access to the yard to the NE (Photo 29) comprising a timber door frame with surviving door, with shared lintel.
- 4.3.3 The SW gable end of this structure had no architectural detail (Photo 30). The NE corner of this part of the structure was in a poor state of repair. A further stone wall projected to the SE of the exterior pigsty pen wall, forming a partial enclosure around the farm yard, although its full extent was unclear.



Photo 26: SW elevation of stores and pigsty building



Photo 27: Entrance to walled pen for pigsty on SW side of building



Photo 28: Raised area within store shed, providing access to pigsty below



Photo 29: NE elevation of stores and pigsty building showing doorways



Photo 30: SE gable end of stores and pigsty building

5. CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 The building recording survey at Blaen Myherin farm has provided an appropriate record of the structures to determine broad phasing and dating of the surviving structures. A farm of the name '*Blaen Merin*' was recorded in 1540 during the dissolution of lands of Strata Florida Abbey. The farm lay within the lands of the Cwmystwyth Grange, owned by the Abbey, and would therefore imply that the farm was present pre-1540. Whether the farm lies in the same location as the current Blaen Myherin farm is uncertain. The style of the current farmhouse suggests it is of 19th century construction, and the attached barn, animal shed and store room/pigsty also suggest 19th century date for their construction.
- 5.2 There are records of a farm in this area named '*Blaen Merin*' from the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries. The surviving structures at Blaen Myherin do not show any evidence for any building fabric dating before the 19th century, although it is quite common for farms to undergo complete rebuilds and modifications that obscure evidence for earlier structures. Such information may well be revealed through intrusive archaeological excavation or through opening up of the surviving building fabric.
- 5.3 Throughout the 19th century and into the 20th century the farm was occupied by a series of sheep farmers, their families and servants/farm hands. This would seem to have been the main farming practice in this region since at least the time that area lay in the hands of Strata Florida Abbey.
- 5.4 The main farmhouse is in a very bad state of preservation, with the SE gable end wall partially collapsed, the majority of the roof structure missing and all of the roof covering removed. Although access into the structure was not possible, the exposed elevations and partial observation of the interior demonstrated that it was of two stories, with a room to either side of the main entrance. It is likely that three rooms were present at first floor level. An extension had been added to the rear of the building either during the later part of the 19th century or earlier 20th century. This comprised an area covered with a cat slide roof to the NW and a separate roofed part to the SE. This may indicate two phases of extension. It is presumed that one of these rooms would have been used as a kitchen, and the other was certainly used as a bathroom during the 20th century, as evidenced by a surviving bath. The building was stone built, and presumably had a slate roof, although this has now been entirely removed. It is possible that the structure incorporates fabric of earlier structures, although the main SW frontage was rendered obscuring any such information, and the NE wall was a later addition.
- 5.5 The barn adjacent to the farmhouse on its NW side is of different build to the farmhouse. From its construction and the way the walls butt against those of the farmhouse, it is likely that it is a slightly later addition. The animal shed to the SW would appear to be of almost identical construction with the same roof height, although aligned perpendicular. The roof trusses and timber arrangements suggest the roof structures are contemporary, including with the store shed/pigsty in the SW corner of the farm yard, which may suggest these buildings are all contemporary and of the same phase of building.
- 5.6 The function of the barn adjacent to the farmhouse is likely to have been a store for animal feed in a hay loft at first floor level with animals housed beneath, or could have been used as a cart shed (or both). The double width doorway between the barn and the animal shed to the SW means that this

area could have been closed off.

- 5.7 The animal shed to the SW contained a cobbled floor and double width doorway leading from the yard, providing access for larger livestock. An animal pen was situated in the central part of the building, and three stalls in the SW end of the building. Single width doorways were present leading from the yard at the SW end, both with stable doors.
- 5.8 To the SE of the animal shed was an additional open area possibly used for animals, and a separate room divided with a stone wall, likely to have been used as a store shed. A raised area in this room had a timber covering over a pigsty below with a small doorway providing access for the pigs into a small walled external enclosure on the SW side of the building. Due to the natural ground levels, the farm buildings were raised to the SW of the main farmhouse, with material presumably being imported to create level floors across the majority of the farm buildings, and the yard they enclosed. This depth of build up increased to the SW. The floor of the pigsty had been constructed at the existing ground level, with no indication that it was a later insertion implying it was planned at the same time as the construction of the remainder of the farm buildings.
- 5.9 The layout of the farm buildings, other than the farmhouse, indicate it was well planned and built to a model design, as opposed to being a random collection of farm buildings built over several phases, each with changing functions. The layout clearly indicates that animal husbandry was the main function of the farm, presumably with covered open areas for sheep during lambing, a possible pen or stable for a horse, stalls for a few cattle and a pigsty. The sheep farming would have been the main work of the tenant farmers, and provided their main income, with cattle and pigs mostly for their own consumption.
- 5.10 The farm belonged to the large Hafod Estate during the 19th century, which presumably provided the funds for the rebuilding of the farm buildings. The estate is known to have constructed a number of farms to model designs to improve how the farms functioned and presumably maximise returns. As noted above, on all but one of the door and window frames, purple paint had been used which is likely to have been the colour used by the Hafod Estate to demonstrate their ownership.
- 5.11 ideally a scheme of consolidation of the remains of Blaen Myherin farm should be undertaken. The poor state of preservation of the main farmhouse is such that the remaining roof structure could not be saved. It would be possible to stabilize the walls by cement capping of the wall tops to prevent further water ingress and leaching of lime mortar. Repointing of the walls should also be undertaken.
- 5.12 The range of outer farm buildings could be stabilised through the replacement or patching of the corrugated metal roof, ensuring roof valleys are clear of debris and replacing gutters. This would prevent further deterioration of the interior of the buildings, especially in terms of the timber partitions and stalls which currently survive in a fair state of preservation. Repointing would assist in the preservation of the outer walls. The outer gable end wall on the SE part of the range should be propped up as they are showing signs of collapse. Where lintels, stone or timber, are showing signs of damage or failure then these should ideally be replaced.

- 5.13 This report and the archive material prepared for Blaen Myherin farm provide an adequate record of the buildings. The information may be used to assist in the development of a management plan for the structures if they are to be renovated or consolidated, or alternatively provide a record of the structures if they are to be demolished or deteriorate further.

6. SOURCES

Map

Ordnance Survey Original Surveyors Drawings 1820

Ordnance Survey 1891 1:2500 scale map

Ordnance Survey 1903 1:2500 scale map

Ordnance Survey 1953 1:2500 scale map

Ordnance Survey 1963 1:2500 scale map

Ordnance Survey 1981 1:2500 scale map

Bibliography

Sambrook, P., 1997, Mynydd y Ffynnon Archaeological Survey Unpublished
Dyfed Archaeological Trust Report

Dyfed Archaeological Trust Historic Landscape Characterisation Information

APPENDIX 1: HISTORIC LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISATION INFORMATION

MYNYDD Y FFYNNON: Grid Reference: SN 779776; Area In Hectares: 1641

Historic Background

During the Medieval Period, this area lay within Strata Florida Abbey's grange of Cwmystwyth. On the Dissolution the Herbert family of Powis Castle probably acquired it along with many other holdings of the former monastery, although the unenclosed portions would have remained Crown land. Herbert land in Cwmystwyth formed the basis of the later Hafod estate, of which Thomas Johnes was the most famous owner. Johnes was a voracious appropriator of Crown land, either for the purpose of establishing forestry or enclosing for agricultural use. He planted large tracts of forestry in this area, the locations of which are shown on an 1834 estate map (NLW R.M. A64) and on the tithe map of 1847. Johnes's plantings that survived until the 20th century were cut down during World War One (Edlin 1959, 13). In 1800, Johnes also founded an experimental farm, originally called New Farm, now Gelmast (Suggett, 1998-99). This was a sheep rearing and dairy farm, and much uncultivated land was brought under cultivation for perhaps the first time. Drainage schemes were initiated and a farmhouse and farm buildings constructed. Buildings still survive. In 1866, parts of this area were subjected to an Enclosure Act (Chapman, 1992, 53; NLW Card CC Deposit 6), which although awarded, had little physical effect on the landscape. Several small metal mines dating from the 18th and 19th century lie on the edge of this area in the Mynach valley. The main workings period of these mines was in the 1850s to 1870s (Bick 1983, 30). At the extreme northern edge of the area lay Nantycria mine, famed for its blende. It was worked from the 18th century, closing towards the end of the 19th century (Bick 1983, 29). In the 1950s, the Forestry Commission purchased most of the Hafod estate lands and began a large-scale programme of upland afforestation. Virtually the whole of this area was planted, the only notable exception being land close to Gelmast.

Description and essential historic landscape components

This area consists of a very large tract of undulating, sometimes craggy, upland. It achieves a maximum height of over 530m, but generally lies between 300 and 450m. Apart from a few pockets, the whole area is under conifer plantations. Prior to afforestation most of this area was unenclosed moorland, though some earth bank, earth and stone bank and dry-stone wall boundaries were present, particularly at lower levels. A farm and some associated fields established in 1803 survive at Gelmast. This model farm is listed and consists of a Georgian house, modified in the later 19th century, and ranges of stone outbuildings around a yard. Drainage ditches/boundaries are a feature of the landscape. At Nantycria mining remains consist of tips, small reservoirs and leats. The remains of metal mining in the Mynach valley were mostly obliterated by forestry operations. Indeed, plantations, tracks, roads and other forestry features are the most common and prominent historic landscape components in this area.

In addition to the vast numbers of metal mining remains in the archaeological record, several abandoned cottages, farmsteads and other dwellings testify that prior to the 19th century this area was populated, albeit sparsely. The Arch, an early 19th century folly, provides a touch of drama to this wooded landscape, and finds of Mesolithic date provide some time-depth.

This is a well-defined area with unenclosed land lying on all sides except on a small portion of the western boundary, and to the south where low-lying enclosed land is present.

BLAEN MYHERIN FARM, NORTH CEREDIGION: HISTORIC BUILDING RECORDING

RHIF YR ADRODDIAD / REPORT NO. 2011/11

RHIF Y PROSIECT / PROJECT RECORD NO. 100554

Mawrth 2011

March 2011

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

James Meek / Simon Ratty

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Llofnod / Signature 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: Head of Field Services

Llofnod / Signature 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

