DYFED ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST LTD

DINEFWR HISTORIC SETTLEMENTS PROJECT

THE HISTORIC SETTLEMENTS OF DINEFWR

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Commissioned by: **CADW**

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1. INTRODUCTION.

The Dinefwr Historic Settlements Project is the second part of a Cadw funded project designed to compare and contrast the settlement history of two outwardly very different areas within the county of Dyfed, namely South Pembrokeshire and Dinefwr. South Pembrokeshire, the subject of the first part of the project (Kissock, 1993), was chosen for its perceived "Englishness", based on the apparent differences in settlement types and patterns in comparison with the rest of Dyfed; its cultural Englishness being reflected in a settlement pattern characterised by often planned, regular villages very much on the English model. Dinefwr, on the other hand, can be said to typify "Welsh Wales", being in all respects different from South Pembrokeshire, in terms of culture, language, topography and, of course settlement patterns. Here villages have long been perceived as being comparatively rare and irregular nucleations, the characteristic settlement pattern of the district being one of small villages and dispersed farmsteads.

South Pembrokeshire became politically and culturally anglicised at an early date, with a significant influx of planted settlers of English and Norman descent during the twelfth century. It shall be seen that Dinefwr retained much of its Welsh character through that period due to the success of its ruling families in resisting complete Norman domination until the late thirteenth century.

Since the mid-1850's, however, Dinefwr has itself seen two great influxes of population. The first accompanied the boom in the coal industry during the last half of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century, which dramatically altered the settlement pattern and landscape of the southern edge of the district. The second has occurred during the late twentieth century. Modern communications now make it possible to live in the countryside and work in the town. Dinefwr lies within easy reach of conurbation's such as Swansea, Neath and Carmarthen, and many now seek the quality of life available in the country whilst being able to commute easily to work elsewhere.

The increasing demand for housing in what were previously relatively remote areas has lead to significant new developments which have altered the character of many of the villages of the District, with much vacant land within and on the fringes of modern villages being subject to building proposals. Inevitably, such development poses a threat to the historic landscape of Dinefwr. The Historic Settlement Project is a timely opportunity to quantify the changes occurring in the villages of Dinefwr, whilst at the same time identifying actual and potential threats to archaeological sites, historic buildings and historic landscapes and suggesting the appropriate archaeological response to such threats.

Much of the information contained in the following text is derived from the Sites and Monuments Record of the Dyfed Archaeological Trust, Llandeilo. Where this is the case, Primary Reference Number (PRN) is given, this being the number by which each site is catalogued within the Sites and Monuments Record.

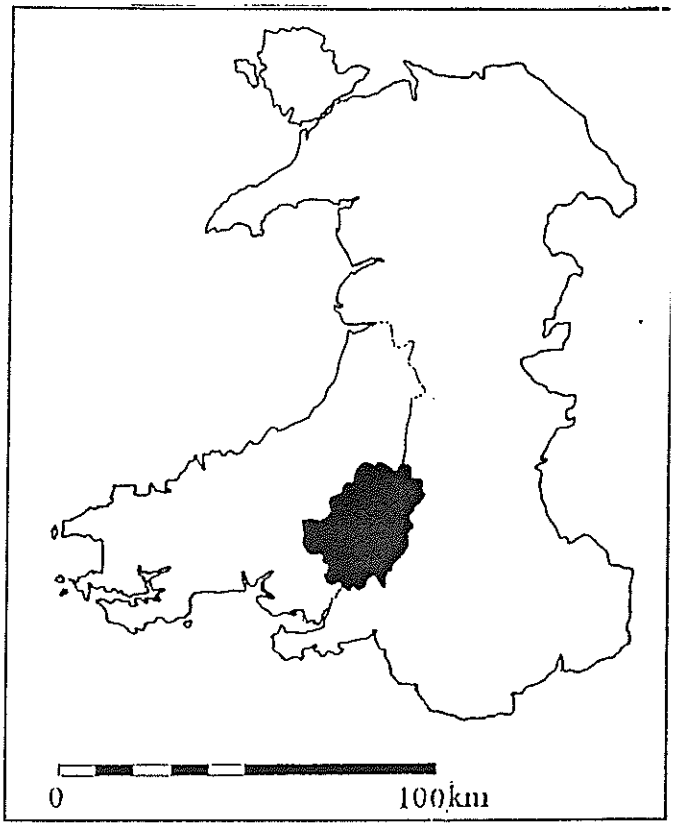

Fig.1; Locational Map of Dinefwr

2. THE AGE OF THE SAINTS.

"He that would study the course of affairs in the valley of the Towy during the three or four centuries which followed the end of Roman rule will get but scant assistance from either history or archaeology". (J.E.Lloyd, 1939, 113).

Early mediaeval Dinefwr is distant not only in a temporal sense. It is a poorly documented period and archaeological evidence for settlement is almost non-existent. The situation has however improved since the days of J.E. Lloyd and we now possess enough information to be able to partially reconstruct the main aspects of the administrative framework by which society was organised.

We know that before the eighth century AD, West Wales was divided into small kingdoms or *gwledydd*. Ystrad Tywi was one such *gwlad*, centred on the Tywi valley, possibly with its political centre at Dinefwr, Llandeilo. These *gwledydd* had, however, coalesced well before the time of the Norman conquest. Ystrad Tywi and Ceredigion were temporarily united as the kingdom of Seisyllwg between the eight and tenth centuries (Fig.2). In the tenth century, Ystrad Tywi became part of the powerful kingdom of Deheubarth, founded by Hywel Dda, which later had its political centre at Dinefwr Castle (Fig.3).

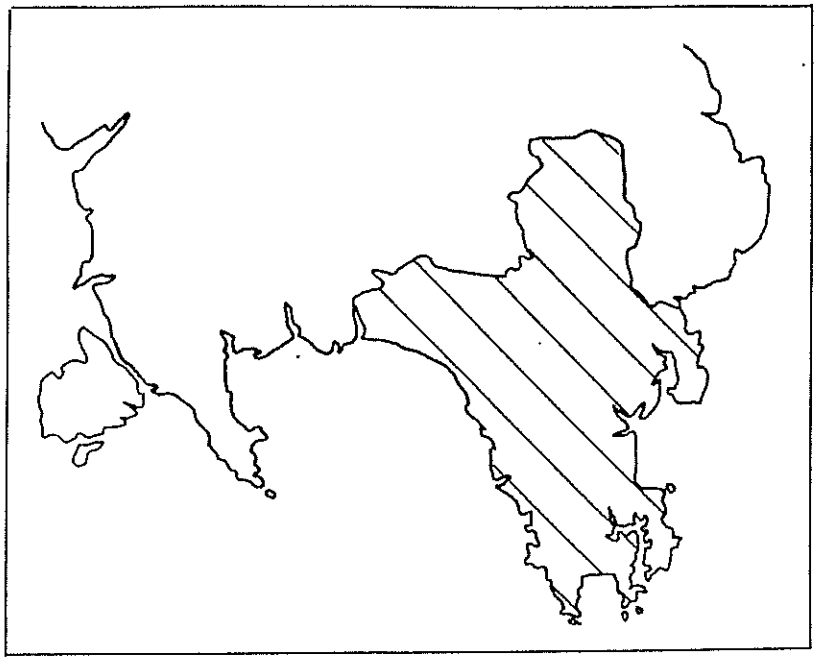

Fig.3; Deheubarth in the tenth century.

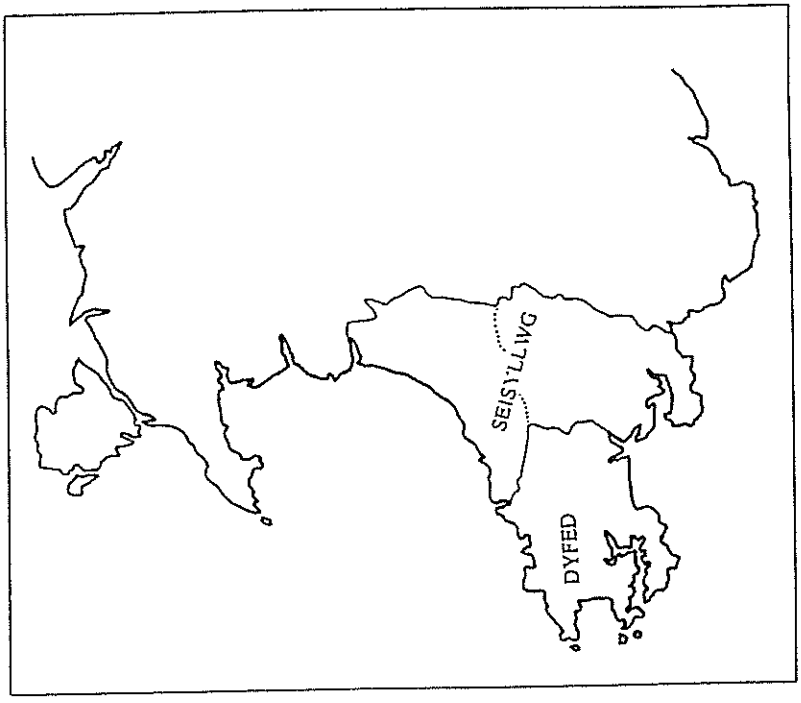

Fig.2: Early kingdoms in West Wales.

Early mediaeval settlement.

Within each *gwlad*, it is known that smaller units were created for the purpose of economic and political administration. These estates were known as *maenorau* and are attested to have been an integral element in the administrative system by the ninth century. *Maenorau* were further divided into townships or *trefi*. In this context, a township should not be thought of as a nucleated settlement, which the name might seem to imply. Rather, it represents a unit within which the majority of the population would have lived in scattered farmsteads, perhaps with occasional small nucleations of dwellings.

Each township was responsible for the production of a single commodity; upland townships might be responsible for pasturing animals and meat production, whilst lowland townships might be more concerned with grain production; others may have been engaged in more specialised activities such as fishing or woodland management. In this way agricultural output and the exploitation of natural resources was controlled, not only ensuring that the *maenor* would be largely self-sufficient in the commodities required to maintain its population, but also that it would produce a surplus which would maintain those at the top of what was an intensely hierarchical society. Bondmen, unfree farmers tied to the estates of the free population, would pay food and service renders for the maintenance of those of higher status. The king or lord would have a *llys* or court in each *maenor* which would serve as its chief administrative centre. Each maenor would also have a *llan* or church as its religious centre and a strong defensive site for communal protection in times of trouble.

The Lichfield Gospels.

Reconstructing these early estates in Dinefwr would be nigh on impossible were it not for the existence of contemporary evidence which allows the identification of some *maenorau* and *trefi* in early mediaeval Ystrad Tywi. This comes from a series of marginal entries contained in "The Book of St.Chad", also known as "The Lichfield Gospels". This gospel book is now in the possession of Lichfield Cathedral, but was kept by the monks of Llandeilo Fawr during the ninth century AD, when the marginal entries were made.

The marginalia list land and food gifts to the church of St.Teilo and include boundary details for two estates donated to Llandeilo Fawr, one of which is even named - *Mainaur Med Diminih*, modernised to "Maenor Meddynfych". The boundary details enable a full reconstruction of the extent of both estates; Meddynfych being almost coterminous with the modern parish of Llandybie in southern Dinefwr The other is the township known as Trefwyddog, which corresponds with the later parish of Llanycrwys, which now lies just over the northern boundary of the district but was once part of the commote of Caeo, probably originally a *tref* within such a larger unit.

For Trefwyddog, the marginalia record renders paid by the township, detailing loaves of bread, butter, a ram, a sow and quantities of cereals. G.R. Jones (1972, 313) sees this as proof that a bond population in the township was paying such renders to maintain "a wealt and privileged upper stratum". It also, importantly, shows than in this relatively mountainous and remote corner of Dinefwr a mixed agricultural economy was being maintained by early mediaeval communities, capable of producing sufficient surplus to pay renders d to the ruling elite.

The Lichfield Gospels do not provide the only evidence of *maenorau* within Dinefwr. Other valuable sources are the twelfth century "Llandaff Charters", compiled in support of the claims of the Bishop of Llandaff to extensive lands within the diocese of St. David's. Though many of the charters are spurious twelfth century forgeries, some are probably based on earlier charters or traditions of the pre-conquest period. One of these names a Mainaur Brunus, located in Llanegwad parish (W. Davies, 1976). This name surviv in a modified form in the name of Llandeilo'r Wnws Farm at Nantgaredig in Llanegwad parish, the site of ar early mediaeval chapel (PRN 7557).

Whether or not archaeological evidence of the settlements and farmsteads of the pre-conquest period will ever be identified remains to be seen. It may be that the *llys* or chief residence of each of the *maenorau* was originally a focus of settlement for the bondmen who maintained the chief court of their lord or king.

Within Maenor Meddynfych, the modern farmstead of Myddynfych has been suggested as the probable site of the *llys* of the *maenor* (G.R.Jones, 1972), whilst the parish church of Llandybie was probably its ecclesia tical focus by the ninth century. This pattern of *llys* and *llan* would be repeated for each of the *maenorau* within Dinefwr, though in the absence of documented evidence comparable to that of Meddynfych we can only guess at their locations. It may be significant that the *maenorau* named in later mediaeval documentation often bear the names of the settlements which later became parish churches, hence there were *maenorau* of Myddfai, Llanddeusant, Llansadwrn, Caeo, Llansawel and Betws. The chapelry of Capel Gwynfe may also be considered i this context, as there was also a Maenor Gwynfe (Rees, 1932). These may have been the religious foci of pre-Norman society, surviving as foci of religious and settlement activity until the present day.

Another candidate for early mediaeval settlement is the hill on which Dinefwr Castle (PRN 882) stands. Here a high status defensive site is suspected which may have been the focus of pre-Norman settlement. In late mediaeval times Welsh tradition, echoed by authors such as Giraldus Cambrensis, identified Dinefwr (then the political centre of the kingdom of Deheubarth) as one of the three great royal centres of Wales, alongside Aberffraw in Gwynedd and Pengwern in Powys, with origins stretching far back into the pre-conquest era. Modern

opinion is however that this late mediaeval tradition was derived from bardic fervour rather than historical fact (R.R.Davies, 1991). No archaeological evidence has been provided to confirm that pre-twelfth century occupation occurred in the area of Dinefwr castle.

Ecclesiastical communities.

Although ecclesiastical communities and estates were not divorced from the *maenor* and *tref* system there were important differences between secular and ecclesiastical society. One of these was the establishment of monastic communities or *clasau*. These settlements had a church or chapel as their focus, within a *llan* enclosure and many of these early ecclesiastical foci have remained in use until the present day as the sites of parish churches and chapelries.

We have a ninth century description of a monastic community which may have been located within Dinefwr. This is contained in "The Life of St.Paulinus", written by a Breton monk named Wrmonoc in 844 AD (Doble, 1971). Wrmonoc observes that a community founded by Paulinus had by the ninth century grown to include "numerous buildings", indicating that a *clas* community could develop into a relatively large settlement.

Paulinus, who lived during the sixth century, has traditionally been associated with Dinefwr; Capel Peulin (PRN 5541) in Llanfair-ar-y-bryn parish, is dedicated to him and a sixth century inscribed gravestone from Crugybar, Caeo, commemorates a Paulinus (though there is doubt as to whether this refers to the same person). Wrmonoc relates that Paulinus was born *at Brehan Dincat* and that he established a monastic college nearby, which was dedicated to two saints. Doble identified *Brehan Dincat* with Llandingad, Llandovery, and claims Llanddeusant ("The Church of Two Saints") to be the site of the college. We cannot be sure whether either claim is correct, but it seems certain that this monastic foundation was located in southern Wales.

By the ninth century Llandeilo Fawr was the most influential of the ecclesiastical communities in the district, and others are suspected to have existed at Llandovery and Llangadog.

It is worth noting that these early ecclesiastical foci are located in areas which are known or strongly suspected to have been of importance during Roman times. The Roman road along the Tywi Valley was probably still in use at the beginning of the early mediaeval period and Llandeilo stands on or near its projected route. Numerous Roman finds are known from Llandeilo, including a Roman milestone of the late third century AD (PRN 872), a coin hoard (PRN 886). More recently, sherds of amphorae, mortaria and Samian ware have been found in the vicinity of Dinefwr Farm (Crane, 1994). It has also been suggested that a Roman fortlet was located in the Rhosmaen, Llandeilo area (James, 1992).

A Roman fort is found at Llandovery (PRN 4072), which became the largest urban nucleation in late mediaeval Dinefwr. The mediaeval town may have its origins in a community associated with the early church of Llandingad, which stands on the southern fringe of the town. If this truly is Doble's *Brehan Dincat*, the Llandovery area would appear to have been the focus for Christian activity by the sixth century, possibly with origins in an established Romanised community.

Llandovery lies on an important junction in the Roman and early mediaeval road network, where the north east - south west Tywi valley road crosses the east - west Brecon to Ceredigion route. The Ogofau Gold Mines (PRN 1946) at Dolaucothi and the Roman fort at Pumsaint (PRN 1956) stand on the latter road. Here too, it appears that Roman activity might have been influential on later settlement patterns. Pumsaint has an early mediaeval chapel (PRN 1955) within the ramparts of the Roman fort, suggesting that some status may still have been accorded to the site subsequent to the Roman period.

It is interesting to note the proximity of Caeo to Pumsaint. Caeo appears to have been the most important ecclesiastical centre in Dinefwr before the ninth century AD. The parish churches at Llansadwrn, Llanwrda and Llansawel and the chapel at Pumsaint were recorded by later mediaeval sources as being chapels of ease to St.Cynwyl's, Caeo.

Three early Christian monuments have been found within Cynwyl Gaeo parish; one built into the fabric of St.Cynwyl's (PRN 1882) and two others found at the site of an early mediaeval cemetery at Maes-llanwrthwl, Crugybar (PRN's 9939 & 9940), only a few kilometres south of Caeo. Each of these stones has been dated to the sixth century AD. The status of Caeo and the early date of the Christian monuments suggest that the importance which must have been attached to this gold producing locality in Roman times had not diminished.

Other inscribed stones, ranging in date from the seventh to eleventh centuries are known at Llandeilo church (PRN's 889, 890 & 891), Llanegwad church (PRN 697), Llansawel church (PRN 1821), Llech Eiudon (Llanfynydd parish) (PRN 705), Cefn Cethin Farm (Llandeilo parish)(PRN 788) and a lost stone from Ty'n-y-llwyn, Myddfai parish (PRN 4091). They only serve as general indicators of pre-conquest settlement, as it is not known if they stand on their original sites.

Even if there was not a direct continuity of settlement in any of these cases, it is not surprising that Roman and early mediaeval activity should correspond at sites which were situated on important communications routes, Llandovery, Llangadog and Llandeilo all stand on historic fording and bridging points of the Tywi.

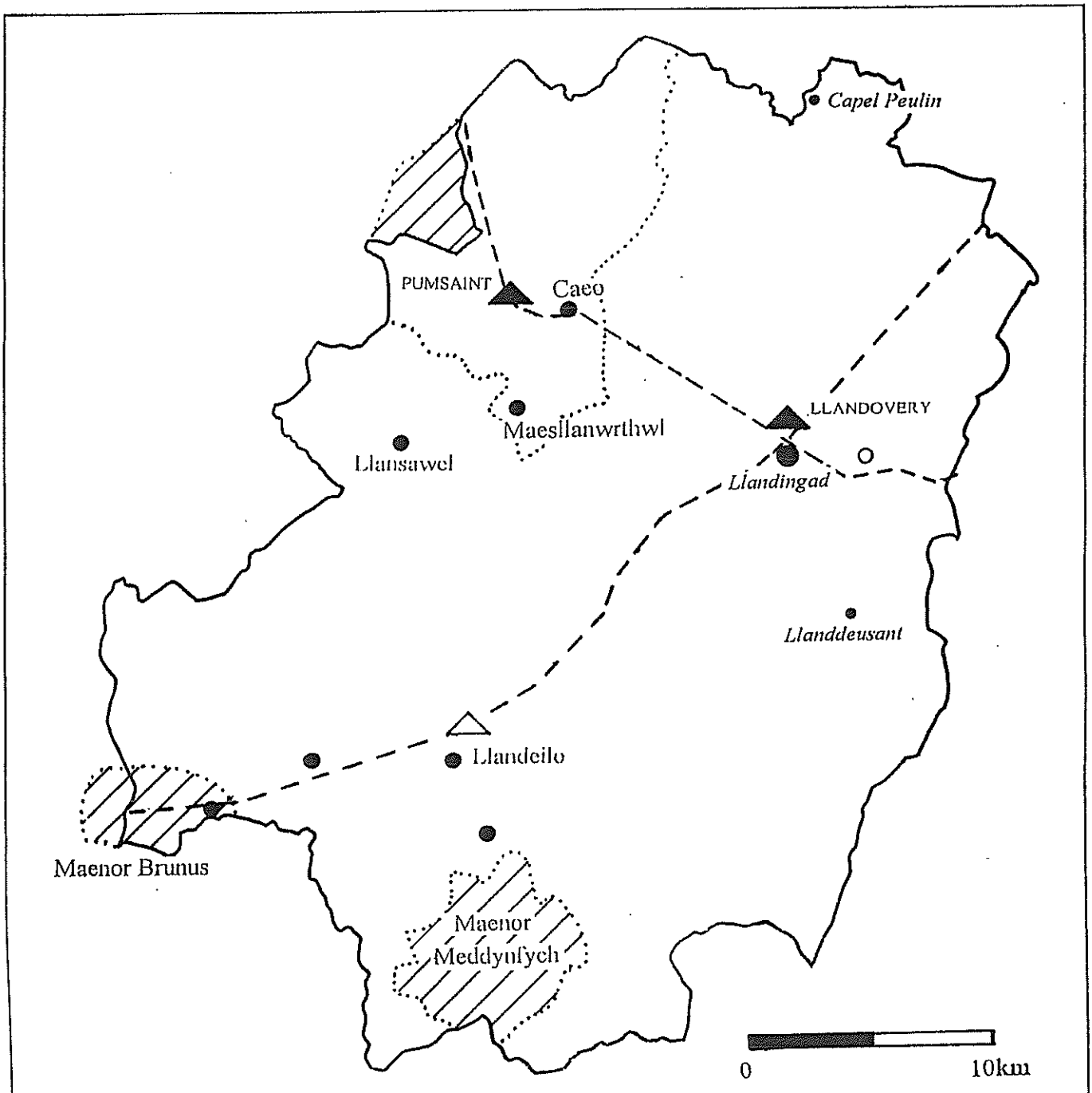

Fig.4; Pre-conquest Dinefwr - sites mentioned in text.

Llanau in the modern landscape.

Many of the early ecclesiastical foci are the sites of churches in modern towns and villages. Archaeological evidence of early mediaeval settlement may survive at many of these sites. Fifteen of the villages included in the study have mediaeval parish churches, ten of them dedicated to Celtic saints, some of which, as previously mentioned, may have been the religious foci for pre-Norman *maenorau*;

Cynwyl Gaeo - Cynwyl
Llansawel - Sawel
Llansadwrn - Sadwrn
Llanwrda - Cawrdaf
Llanfynydd - Egwad
Brechfa - Teilo
Llanegwad - Egwad
Llangathen - Cathen
Llandybie - Tybie
Betws - David.

Cilycwm, Myddfai and Llanfihangel Aberbythych may be pre-tenth century dedications to St.Michael, and Talyllychau and Llanddeusant may be rededications of former Celtic churches. To this list can be added the churches of Llandingad (Llandovery), Llangadog, Llandyfeisant and Llandeilo, as well as the chapelries of Capel Gwynfe and Pumsaint.

Several settlements which have a mediaeval parish church or chapel stand within or overlie traces of larger sub-circular enclosures, features absent from non-ecclesiastical towns and villages. These enclosures may be surviving traces of mediaeval *llanau,* ot radial field systems. The best examples occur at Betws, Capel Gwynfe, Llandingat and Llangadog (Figs.5 - 8, a-d).

Llanegwad village appears to be the focus of a partial radial field system (Fig.9, a-b). which may represent traces of a mediaeval field system associated with infield / outfield farming practiced by a community which lived around the church. This arrangement is well described by Kissock (1992) with reference to similar features in Pembrokeshire. The theoretical model for such agricultural practices is provided by late mediaeval Welsh laws which describe *tir corddlan* or nucleal land. G.R.Jones describes nucleal land thus;

"This was not to be shared as homesteads but, rather, as gardens; and if there were buildings thereon they were to be shared as cells or chambers. The gardens of nucleal land appear to have been arranged in a radial fashion around some kind of nucleus; those which radiated from the enclosure which contained a church were long narrow strips said to be a legal acre in length with their ends to the graveyard... Such gardens were regularly manured so that they could be cultivated, year in year out, like an infield; and probably, although separated only by turf baulks, they were encompassed by a strong fence so that they could not be entered by beasts." (1983, 156).

At Llanegwad topographical constraints would n permit a fully radial field system to develop, the field boundaries only take on a radial character on that flat ground which is available. The churchyard does not lie the centre of the radiating boundaries, rather a larger sub-circular feature seems to be the focus. This feature may be purely topographical, formed by a rounded spur on which the upper part of the village stands. Even so th radial field boundary which runs around the south eastern side of the village is significant enough to have caused the diversion of a small stream which runs along its outside edge. It seems reasonable to suggest that this boundary was created at an unknown date to define land farmed by inhabitants of Llanegwad, but in the absence of archaeological evidence it is not possible to determine whether or not it is of mediaeval, let alone early mediaeval origin.

It must be stressed that in each of the above cases the evidence for radial boundaries or sub-circular enclosures is largely cartographic and few, if any, conclusions can be drawn from such features without a wider archaeological evaluation. Even so, the archaeological potential of each of the villages which appear to be associated with such features should not be understated. It is apparent that of all the villages in Dinefwr, those listed above are the most likely to have traditions o settlement extending back into the pre-Norman period.

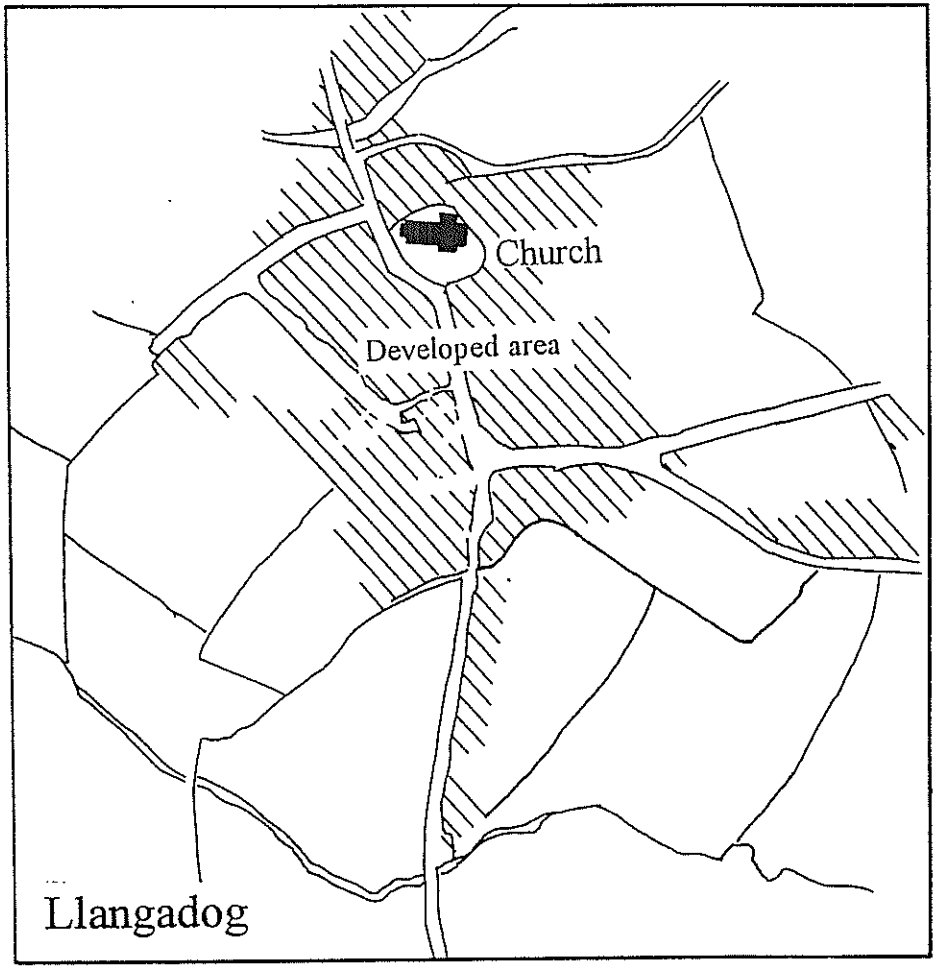

Fig.5a; Modern Llangadog

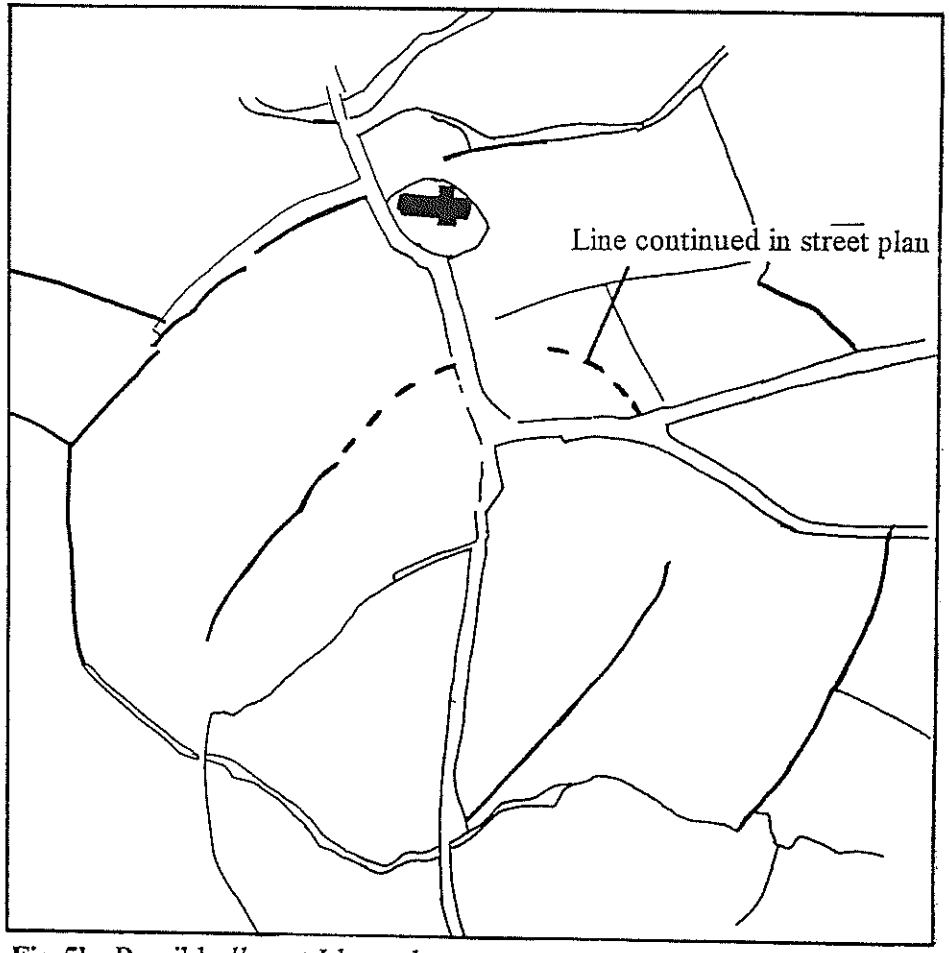

Fig.5b; Possible *llan* at Llangadog

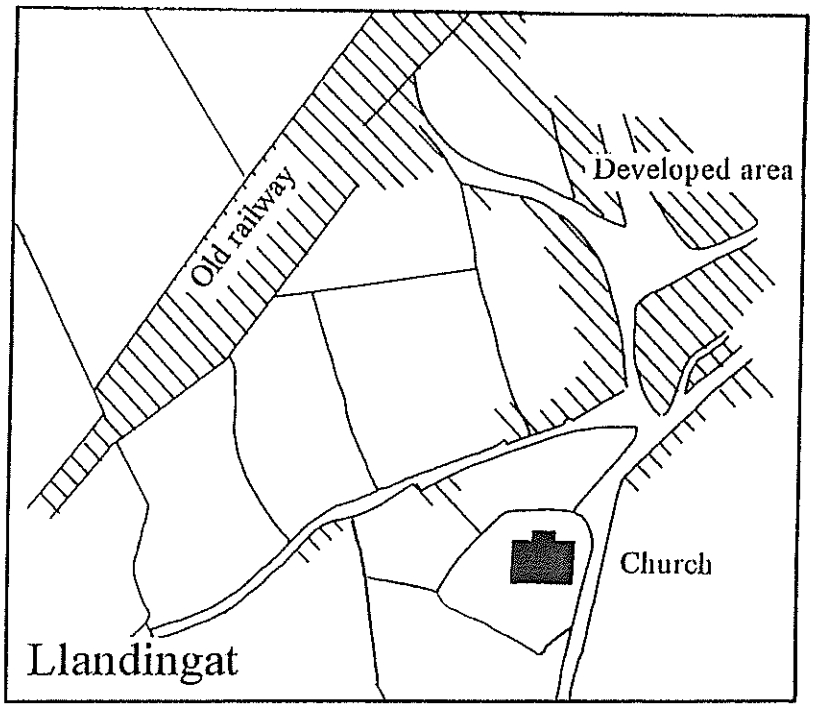

Fig.6a; Modern Llandingad

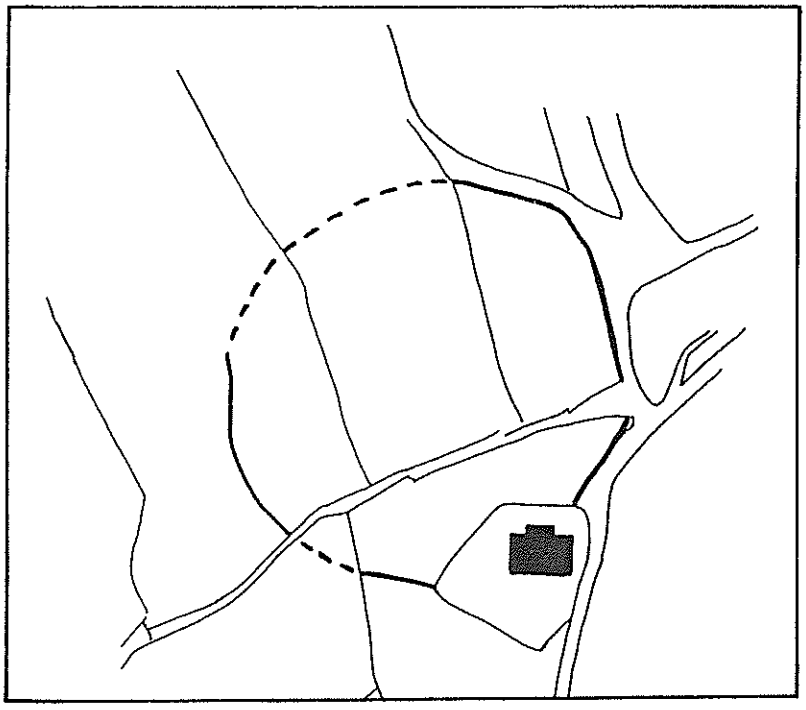

Fig.6b; Possible *llan* at Llandingad

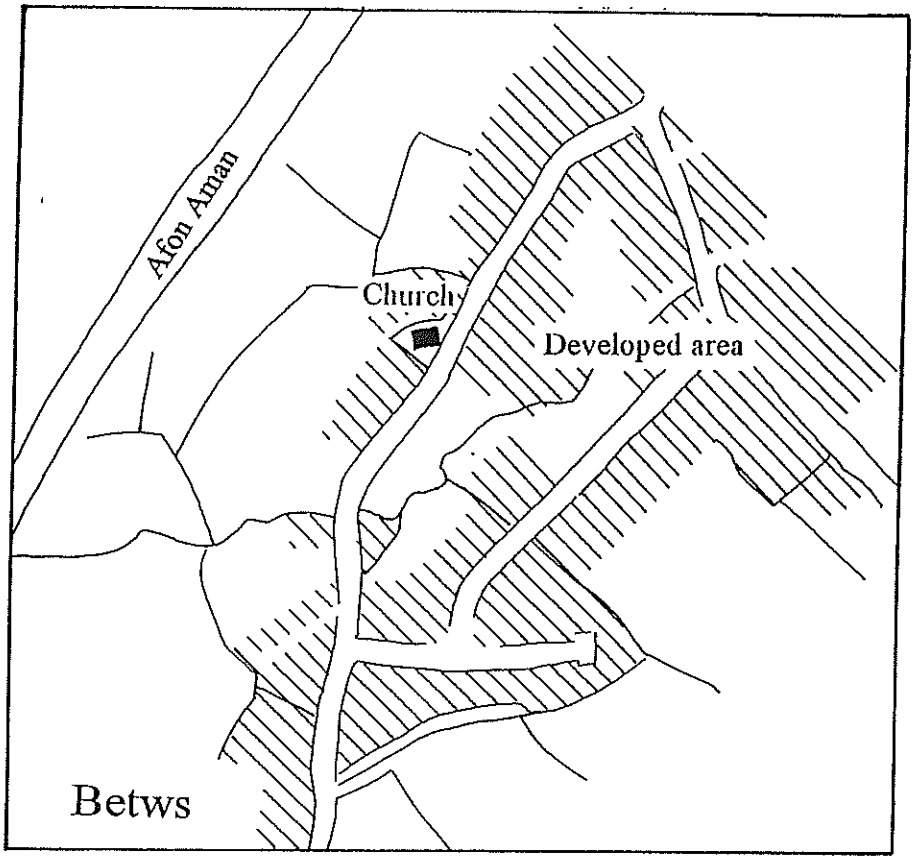

Fig.7a; Modern Betws

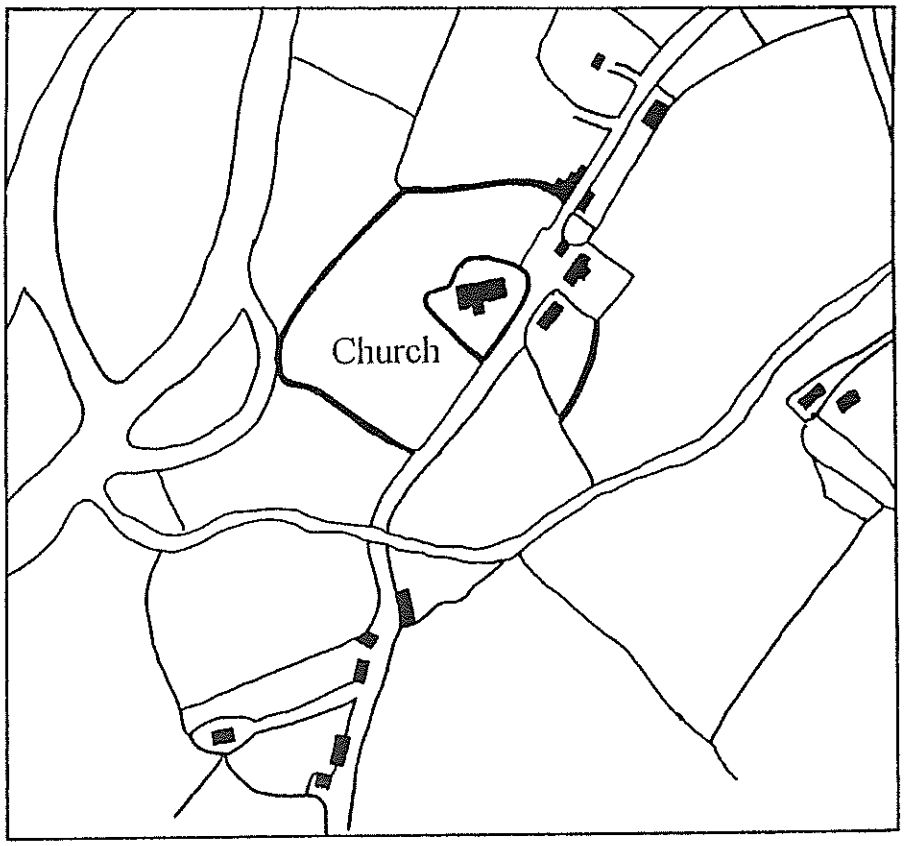

Fig.7b; Betws in 1848 (tracing from Betws Parish tithe map).

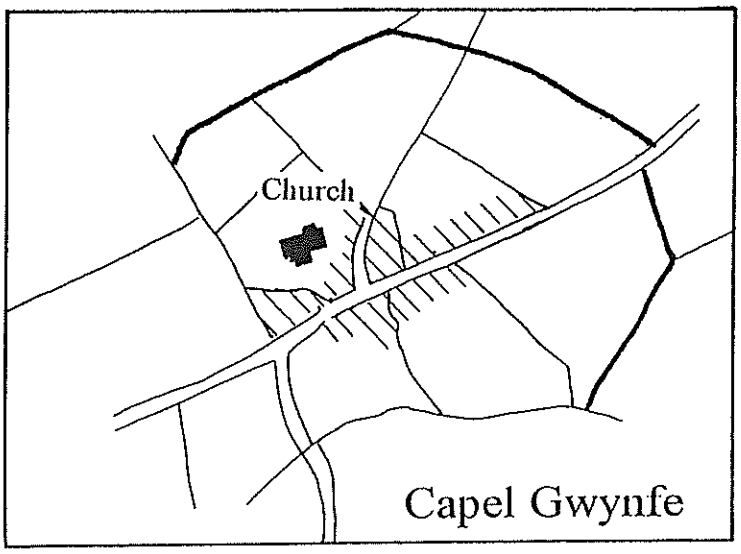

Fig.8; Possible *llan* at Capel Gwynfe

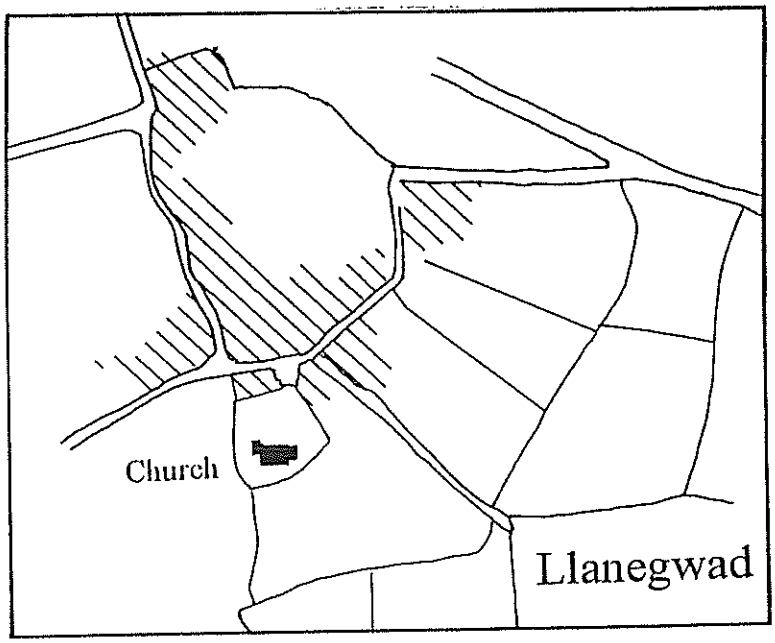

Fig.9; Radial field pattern at Llanegwad.

Summary

The absence of firm archaeological evidence makes the early mediaeval history of Dinefwr very difficult to fully interpret. Only occasional glimpses into the workings of contemporary society are available, through rare and fragmentary documentary sources. Discussion therefore tends to be confined to a few localities, beyond which we are in the realms of supposition and possibility. Future archaeological work may help address this deficiency in the historical record. This is not to denigrate the important advances which have been made, particularly by G.R.Jones since the 1970's, which at least enable the recreation of a semblance of a framework on which to base our discussions. It is fortuitous that some of his seminal work was indeed centred on areas within Dinefwr itself, Meddynfych and Trefwyddog, which give us a firm base on which to proceed. From his interpretations of the Lichfield Marginalia, it is possible to see that the Dinefwr landscape was well organised in social and agrarian terms by the ninth century AD, with settled communities with a mixed agricultural economy and exploiting the landscape to its maximum potential.

Early ecclesiastical activity was leading to the creation of religious foci which remain important within the modern landscape, the sites on which many parish churches stand. Some of the most favourably sited centres shall be seen to develop as foci of economic activity and settlement well above anything their saintly founders could have foreseen.

3. THE AGE OF THE PRINCES

It is clear that the settlement pattern of modern Dinefwr was in a formative stage well before the Norman period. The foci for some settlements were already in existence, namely important ecclesiastical sites and the bond settlements associated with high status courts or residences within the *maenor* estates. Late mediaeval documentary sources allow us to see the detail of the main political units, which had been established before the eleventh century, in the form of *maenor*, commote and *cantref* units (Fig.10), though it has been suggested that the *cantrefi* and commotes were created as late as the tenth century (Davies, 1982, 132).

The arrival of the Normans has important implications for the history of settlement in Dinefwr. The landscape package they brought is still identifiable in the modern landscape; stone and earthwork castles and stone churches were built and for the first time we can identify towns and villages. It is a period which would reshape the settlement pattern of the district into a form which would survive in great measure until the industrial revolution.

The period also provides the first eyewitness descriptions of the Dinefwr landscape. These come from the observations of Giraldus Cambrensis, who describes the area around Dinefwr Castle as being thickly wooded and Talyllychau as a "remote and sterile spot". He also relates the tale of a Welsh abbot deceiving a Breton knight into thinking that the Tywi valley was an impoverished wasteland by leading him across the most difficult paths through the woods and eating handfuls of grass to satisfy his hunger, implying that it was the best food available in times of need! The abbot was certainly concealing "greener pastures" elsewhere in the valley.

Although Giraldus' observations must be treated with caution, it is clear that large areas of woodland and wasteland were to be found in mediaeval Dinefwr. On several occasions the Princes of Deheubarth sought safety in the uplands of the northern commotes. As late as 1287-91 the last Prince of Dinefwr, Rhys ap Maredudd, managed to evade capture for four years by hiding out in the uplands of Cantref Mawr and mid-Wales.

Woodland and waste were, however, valuable resources in their own right for the established agricultural communities of the area. It has already been seen that the communities within the *maenor* system needed arable, pasture and woodland to maintain themselves.

Later mediaeval settlement; Native society.

The changes which were to accompany the Norman conquest must be considered against a background of change and development within native society. We have seen that the *tref* and *maenor* were fundamental to the organisation of land and people in pre-conquest society. The documentary evidence provided by later mediaeval Welsh law texts allows us to see these units in greater detail and also understand their role within the wider administrative framework.

Settlement patterns varied, in many respects due to the differing systems of land tenure which were enshrined in Welsh law. These were based on the division between bondmen who lived on *tir cyfrif* or reckoned land, and freemen, who lived *on tir gwelyog* or hereditary land. The demise of both systems of tenure would eventually lead to the pattern of scattered farmsteads so typical of the modern rural Welsh landscape, Dinefwr included.

Tir Gwelyog - Hereditary land.

Tir gwelyog or hereditary lands were held by *gwelyau* or clans of freemen. They were passed from generation to generation by *gavelkind*, sons inheriting equal shares of their fathers estate. Each son had the right to establish his own homestead or *tyddyn* on his clan lands upon attaining the age of 14, the youngest son inheriting his father's homestead (the *hendref*). The resultant settlement pattern of this form of tenure was one of scattered homesteads standing on their own lands.

Not all land was divided in this fashion however, large areas of upland pasture and woodland were held jointly by the clan and would be exploited as a common resource. It is likely that the *tyddyn* and *hendref* would be supplemented by a *hafod* or summer residence on the

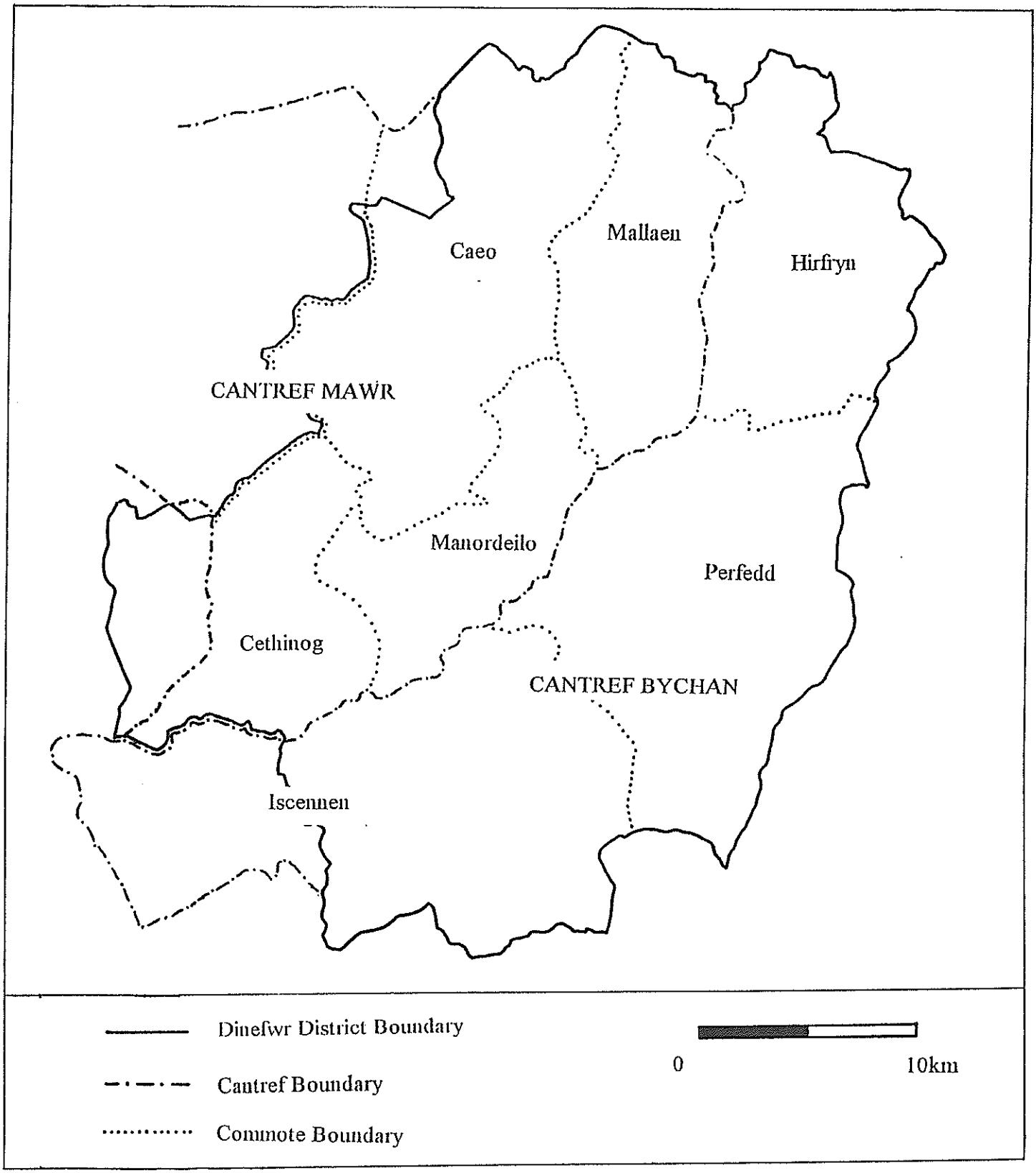

Fig.10; Fourteenth century cantrefs and commotes.

fringes of the common land, for use when livestock were moved to their summer pastures. The remains of stone built structures which dot sheltered stream valleys across the Black Mountains area in the south east of Dinefwr may well have their origins as mediaeval *hafodydd*, belonging to communities whose permanent homesteads lay further west on the more hospitable lands of the commotes of Perfedd and Iscennen.

Bondmen could also hold hereditary lands, as seen in the case of Ferdre, Carreg Cennen (below), though these were valued at half of those of the free population. (Ferdre is all the more important in the context of the previous paragraph, as its bondmen also paid rents on lands on the Black Mountain).

The constant sub-division of hereditary land, which was obviously a finite resource, would inevitably lead to serious difficulties as individual inheritances became smaller and smaller and the parcels of land which made up each holding became more and more scattered, especially as early law strictly prevented the sale of hereditary land by a *gwely* member. Before the conquest the Welsh legal system had already adapted to overcome this problem to an extent with the introduction of the *prid* arrangement, by which it was indeed possible to buy and sell hereditary land. It became possible for wealthier members of society to acquire larger and more compact estates, which by later mediaeval and early post mediaeval times were merging into even larger estates. It is the sub-division of these later estates into tenant farms that has in large part created the modern rural settlement pattern of scattered farmsteads so typical of "Welsh Wales", including Dinefwr.

The bond settlements; The *Trefgordd.*

It seems that the most likely instances of people inhabiting nucleated agricultural settlements in mediaeval Welsh society were in the form of the small hamlet known as the *trefgordd* (G.R.Jones, 1985). These are described in fifteenth century law texts, but may well be of earlier origins, though it cannot be shown that they were found in pre-conquest Wales. The laws specifically require a *trefgordd* to be composed of nine houses and to possess a plough, a kiln, a churn, a cock, a cat, a bull and a herdsman. That these dwellings stood close together is evidenced in the legal requirement that compensation should be paid to neighbours whose dwellings might be damaged in the event of fire. The kiln also had to be positioned a fixed minimum distance away from the dwellings. The laws are of course theoretical models of ideal situations, but it is clear that settlements similar to this model must have existed in practice.

The bondmen who inhabited the *trefgordd* were probably the lowest status of the bond population. They farmed reckoned land or *tir gyfrif* which was periodically divided by a reeve, a court official, amongst the male inhabitants in the community.

The fate of such bond vills was settled by the decline of bond tenure during the fourteenth century. Social change, war and plague left many bond vills underpopulated, yet the *tir cyfrif* system meant that the same level of labour and service was demanded of the remaining inhabitants as would be of a fully populated vill. This extra burden encouraged many bondmen to abscond from their lowly status in search of a better life elsewhere.

The vills often became vacant and their lands appear to have been absorbed into the estates of neighbouring landholders. Like the townships of the free population, many may well have been converted into single farmstead holdings, thus adding to the development of the rural settlement pattern of scattered farmsteads we see today. The name of a township could well be retained in that of a single mansion or major farmstead, as may have happened in the case of major post-mediaeval dwellings such as Derwydd (PRN 812) and Blaenau (PRN 20925), the names of two of the seven townships of mediaeval Llandybie parish.

Urban life; Norman and native.

The Tywi valley was under Norman control during the first half of the twelfth century and a series of motte and bailey castles were built to protect the area. The first stronghold established by the Normans in Dinefwr was at Llandovery. By 1116 Cantref Bychan was in the possession of Richard fitz Pons, who built a motte and bailey castle at Llandovery. It is possible that a small civilian settlement grew around this early castle, but apparently few Anglo-Norman settlers came to the area during this period, in contrast to Pembrokeshire or the Gower, which were subject to early, rapid and planned influxes of immigrants.

The progress of the Norman advance was soon to be interrupted however, as the sons of Gruffudd ap Rhys of Deheubarth re-established Welsh supremacy across much of the south west. The youngest son, Rhys ap Gruffudd, later the Lord Rhys, became the dominant character in the affairs of south west Wales during the latter half of the twelfth century, appointed as Justicar of Deheubarth by Henry I in 1171.

The political and military history of the period is complex and for the sake of clarity will be largely avoided here. Nevertheless, this turbulent period has implications for the settlement history of the district. The military success of the Welsh lords clearly made large scale English immigration impossible during the twelfth century and probably ensured that native institutions could develop and adapt to the new political and economic situation. As a result, Dinefwr was to remain firmly part of "Welsh Wales" until the end of the thirteenth century.

The *Maerdref.*

The traditional view of pre-Norman Welsh society is that the inhabitants of the country lived in scattered homesteads and had a natural aversion to urban life. In the twelfth century Giraldus Cambrensis promulgated this myth by painting a picture of a people living in

dispersed and rather poorly built homesteads. This interpretation of pre-conquest Welsh society is deceptive. Although it was indeed common for people to live in scattered *tyddynod* on hereditary lands, the law books also provide models for nucleated settlements, as seen with the example of the *trefgordd*. There were conditions under which some settlements could become relatively large nucleations, these were the *maerdrefi* associated with centres of power and the monastic communities of the native church. It is possible that some of the historic towns of Dinefwr have their origins in such settlements.

The *maerdref* was a special township adjacent to the king's court or *llys* in each commote. Here the bondmen who farmed the demesne lands lived apparently near or amongst the numerous officials and servants who served the court. These must have ranked as more substantial nucleations of settlement, especially where associated with the chief royal court. In conjunction with the *maerdref*, the king or lord of the commote was provided with an upland township which would meet the requirements of summer pasture for his livestock.

Bondmen, especially in South Wales, formed only a small percentage of the population by the thirteenth century and were often found only at the *maerdref* of a commote. This appears to have been true in Dinefwr itself. Rees (1924, 100) notes that in the commote of Perfedd all land was held by free tenants in 1317, with the exception of one small estate at Felindre Sawdde. At that time there were 250 freemen divided between the four *maenorau* of Perfedd. These almost certainly lived on scattered farmsteads on their clan lands. It is likely that only the heads of households are counted here, the true population of Perfedd may well have been in excess of 1,000 persons..

It is not possible to identify the *llysoedd* and *maerdrefi* of all the commotes of Dinefwr. Dinefwr Castle was the political capital or *llys* of the kingdom of Deheubarth and would be expected to be the site of a *maerdref* settlement. Indeed, the old town of Dinefwr, which stood near the castle, was known in Welsh as Trefysgolheigion, "The Township of Scholars", referring of course to the court officials who must have dwelled there. The demesne lands of the castle, recorded in the late thirteenth century when the English Crown took possession, amounted to 48 acres, much larger than those of Castell Carreg Cennen (8 acres) and the demesne lands of the commote of Perfedd at Felindre Sawdde (18 acres).

At the political centre of the commote of Iscennen was the Ferdre (Maerdref) estate (PRN 12734) attached to Carreg Cennen castle (PRN 3998). The name Ferdre is applied to two neighbouring farms near Carreg Cennen, which must correspond roughly with the location of the demesne.

Fourteenth century records show that a small estate here (only 8 Welsh acres) was worked by 13 bond tenants who were in the charge of a reeve and subjects to its own legal court. They were responsible for the maintenance of the lord's mill, reaping corn, hay making, animal husbandry, the carriage of produce and manual labour and held their land by inheritance, with perpetual right to their holdings (Rees, 1924, 200). They paid rent on their own holdings at the *maedref* as well as other holdings in the wasteland of Pedol on the Black Mountains, which may indicate that they were also responsible for the summer pasturing of the lord's livestock. They may well have spent at least part of their year occupying *hafodydd* similar to those further east, along the valley of the Afon Clydach (Ward, 1991). Examples of similar *hafod* sites are known west of Nant Pedol (e.g. PRN's 13118 and 13119), though whether they were in use during the thirteenth and fourteenth century is not known.

Felindre Sawdde (PRN 5012), Llangadog, in the neighbouring commote of Perfedd, may have originally been the *maerdref* of Castell Meurig (PRN 5515), a twelfth century motte and bailey castle on the opposite bank of the Afon Sawdde. During the fourteenth century Felindre was a demesne estate of the Lordship of Llandovery. Here 15 bond men farmed 18 acres, these being the only bond men in the whole of Perfedd. Like Ferdre, Carreg Cennen, Felindre was administered by a reeve and had its own court. The status of Felindre was increased in 1383 when Nicholas de Audley, Lord of Llandovery, awarded an annual fair to the village.

It is possible that the bondmen here lived in a nucleated community, with the strip fields of the demesne alongside. The unusual rectangular morphology of Felindre and the accompanying strip fields (PRN 8329) are unique amongst the villages of Dinefwr and bear the hallmark of English influence (Fig.11). It does not compare with the planned villages seen in anglicised South Pembrokeshire, however. Despite elements of regularity in its road plan, the dwellings and gardens within the village are completely irregular in their layout. There is no visible indication that this layout overlies an earlier arrangement. Cartographic sources show the village morphology to have changed little since the late eighteenth century.

Castles and Towns.

When Anglo-Norman control was established over Dinefwr those *maerdrefi* which had developed into trading centres under Welsh control were suitable for transformation into English style borough towns. Trefysgolheigion or Old Dinefwr achieved borough status and was complemented by the new borough of Dinefwr Newton, founded in 1298. The two existed side by side, the former populated by Welshmen, the latter largely by English incomers. Both seem to have gone into terminal decline after being attacked by the forces of Owain Glyndwr in the early fifteenth century. They appear to have been abandoned by the seventeenth century, their economic role inherited by nearby Llandeilo Fawr, which stands in a much more favourable position on the communication routes along the Tywi valley.

Dryslwyn Castle (PRN 699), probably built by the princes of Deheubarth during the twelfth century, may originally have had a *maerdref* (possibly at Felindre,

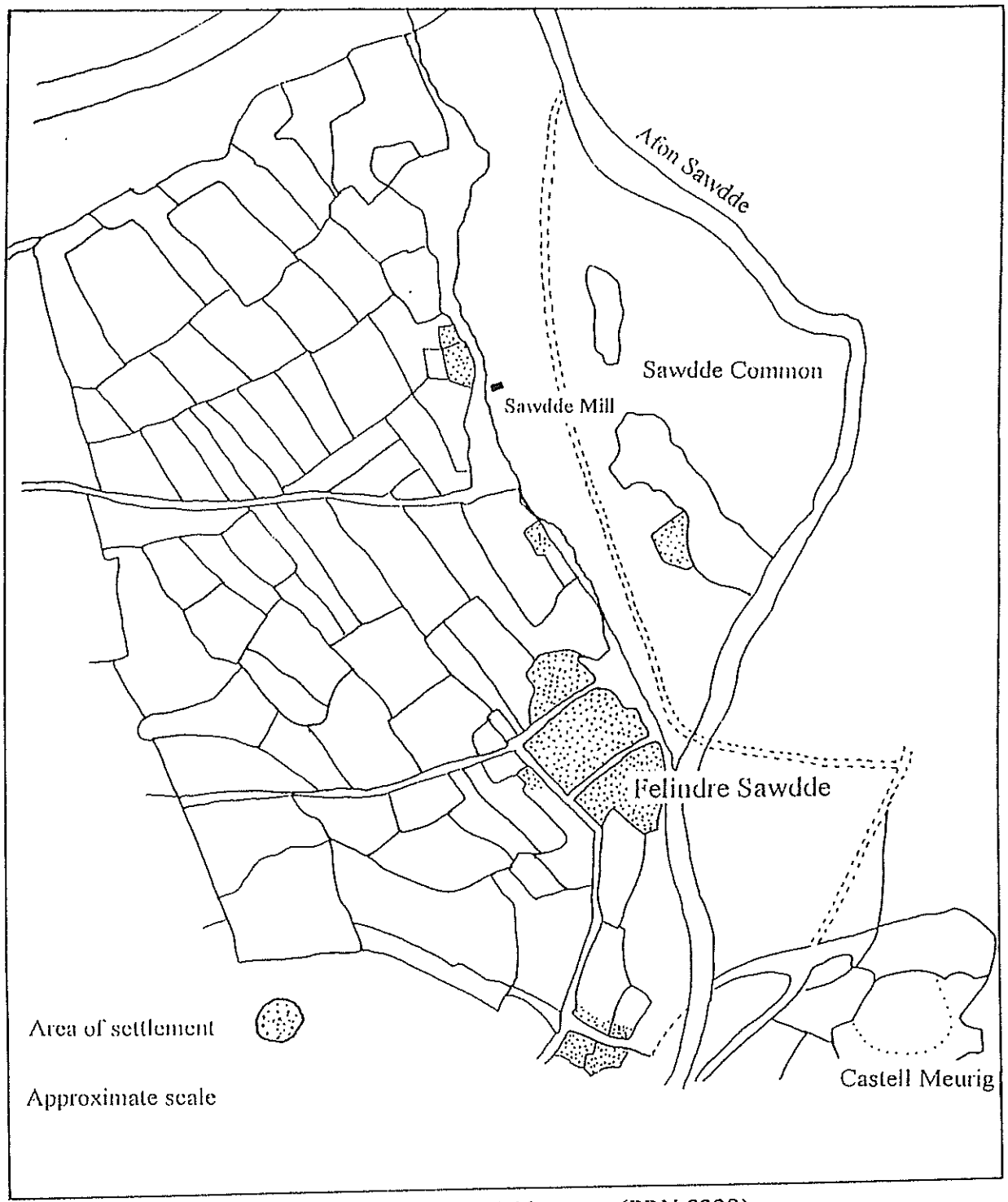

Fig.11; Felindre Sawdde in 1837. Note strip field system (PRN 8329).

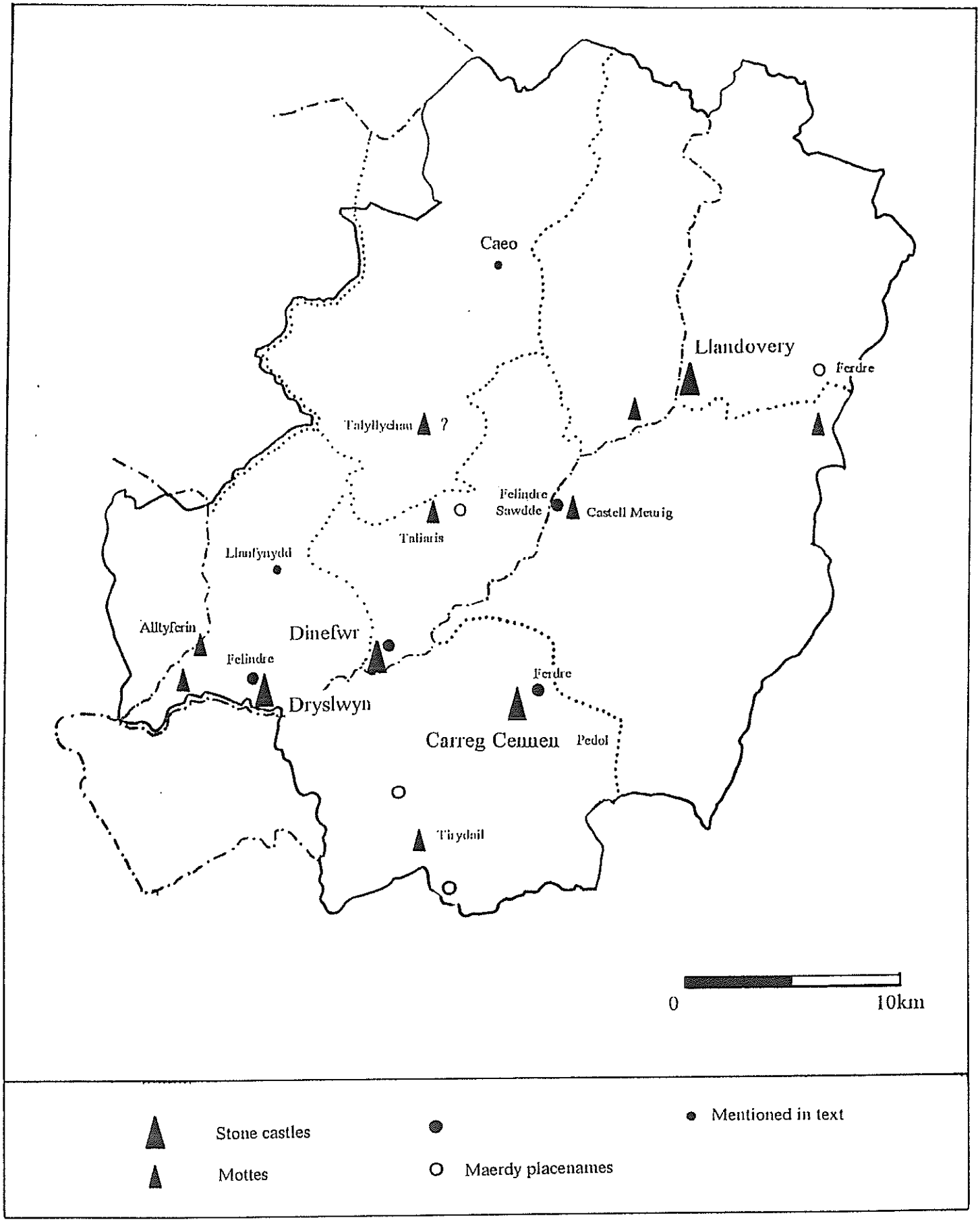

Fig.12; Late mediaeval Dinefwr - sites mentioned in text.

Dryslwyn), and was later the site of an English borough (PRN 9712). Carreg Cennen, however, despite its excellent defensive situation, had a small *maerdref* far from the main trading routes which did not develop into anything more than a single farmstead. Its bondmen petitioned the Crown for maintenance of their rights to farm their hereditary land when Deheubarth eventually came into English possession in the late thirteenth century.

The demesne lands of the Norman Lordship of Llandovery lay close to the town. However, the significance of the farm named Ferdre, some 3.5km east of the town, on a prominent site overlooking the valley of the Afon Gwydderig to the north, is unknown. The name is clearly derived from *maerdref*, but it is difficult to link it with any political centre. One possibility is that a demesne vill belonging to Llandovery was located here at some time when the town was in Welsh hands.

It is worth mentioning the existence of smaller and less well known motte and bailey castles within Dinefwr, as well as the occurrence of "maerdy" as a place name. (See Fig.12). Little is known of the motte castles at Llanegwad (PRN 695), Tirydail (PRN 831), Alltyferin (PRN 689) and Glan-Mynys, Llanwrda (PRN 5526), but they may be associated with the initial Norman incursion into Dinefwr, or may indeed be Welsh castles built to resist the invaders. A motte like feature at Talyllychau (PRN 1896) may be a natural feature (Butler, 1984). The motte at Taliaris (PRN 834), however, stands at the centre of the later Taliaris Estate, and a farm named Maerdy stands nearby, suggesting that a reeve or *maer* with administrative responsibilities over the Taliaris demesne may once have resided there. Maerdy occurs as a farm name at several other locations in the district;

Llandybie - north west of the village, suggesting that a bond community may have existed there.
Llansadwrn - south east of the village. Possibly associated with Abermarlais Estate.
Betws - south of the village.
Ffairfach - south of the village. Possibly associated with the Tregib Estate, or the Talhardd Grange of Talyllychau Abbey. (see Fig.12).

Ecclesiastical boroughs.

It has been shown that the later borough towns of Dinefwr and, perhaps, Dryslwyn had their origins in *maerdrefi*. The other three historic towns of Dinefwr, namely Llandovery, Llangadog and Llandeilo are believed to have their origins in small pre-conquest settlements associated with their respective ecclesiastical centres. It seems likely that an important and possible large community existed at Llandeilo Fawr as early as the ninth century. The ancient foundations at Llandingad (Llandovery) and Llangadog may have also developed small communities by the time of the conquest. Like the *maerdrefi* they may well have become foci of trade and settlement, due to their positions on important crossing points on the Tywi, and were suited to later development as English boroughs.

How far any of these centres developed as Norman style towns during the twelfth century is difficult to gauge. It is apparent that the native lords did not seek to eradicate the new castles and towns founded by the Normans. When they were repossessed by the Lord Rhys he seems to have preferred to incorporate them into his own possessions. The Lord Rhys is seen to act in support of the townsmen of Llandovery, some of whom threatened to return to England after bitterly complaining about the behaviour of the monks of Llandovery Priory. He closed the Priory in 1185 and expelled its troublesome inhabitants. When he took Cardigan Castle in 1165, the town was spared and brought under the protection of Deheubarth. These growing towns were symbols not of subjugation but rather of changing economic and political circumstances which had to be controlled rather than denied.

The Lordship of St.Davids held lands in Dinefwr as part of its Tywi estates, acquired c.1300. These included the church and borough town of Llanegwad, the church and lands of Llanfynydd, the Patria of Llandeilo Fawr and the Patria of Llangadog. It seems that the Lordship was the driving force behind the creation of English style boroughs at Llanegwad, Llandeilo and Llangadog.

Details of the inhabitants of each of these towns, as well as the duties they owed to the Lord Bishop, are preserved in the *Black Book of St.David's* (1326). Most of the burgage holders named are Welsh and belong to named *gwelyau* or clan groups. The duties of the burgage holders of Llanegwad included the carriage of timber for, and wattling the walls of, their lord's wooden built buildings at their own expense. They were not however required to contribute to the construction of any stone built structures he might wish to erect.

Llandeilo and Llangadog are well known as early settlements, less is known of the status of Llanegwad and Llanfynydd.

Llanegwad was of a small borough town (PRN 12777). A.J.Richard (1939) was of the opinion that burghal status in this instance was largely a statement of privileges awarded to the community rather than of any significance as to the extent of the settlement, which remained no more than an "agricultural village". There is no solid evidence in the current village layout to indicate where the 20 burgage plots mentioned in the Black Book of St.David's were located.

Llanfynydd is treated in much the same way as Llanegwad in the text of the Black Book and one wonders whether it was also an agricultural village, minus the privileges conferred by borough status to Llanegwad. The same question may be asked of other parish church villages, such as Llansawel, Myddfai, Caeo, Llandybie, Cilycwm and Llansadwrn which, like Llanegwad and Llanfynydd, appear as relatively significant villages on the earliest cartographic records (generally early nineteenth century Ordnance Survey and Tithe Maps).

Fourteenth century records survive which give some idea of the size of the towns shortly after the final conquest of the area. The number of burgages or holdings

within each of the towns during the opening years of the century are known;

Llandovery	- 78 burgages
Newtown	- 44 "
Dryslwyn	- 34 "
Llanegwad	- 20 "
Llandeilo Fawr	-13.5 "
Llangadog	- 33 burgesses

Burgage plots varied in size and could be shared by more than one person. The 78 burgages of Llandovery covered 120 acres of land. Llanegwad, with 20 burgages had 24 burgesses. Rees (1924) suggested that the population of the borough can be estimated by multiplying the number of burgesses by five, to take account of family and servants. A small borough such as Llanegwad might well have had a population of 50 to 100 persons; Llandovery perhaps over 500.

Monastic Settlements.

Part of the Norman "landscape package" was the introduction of monastic foundations of the continental model which were unlike the old Celtic *clas* type communities. Richard fitz Pons established Llandovery Priory as a cell of Great Malvern Priory shortly after building his castle at Llandovery. This was a short lived foundation which, as seen above, was eventually closed by the Lord Rhys in c.1185.

There is some doubt as to the location of the priory itself. St.Mary's Church, Llanfair-ar-y-bryn, on the northern edge of the town, may have been the priory church. Field names such as Cae'r Abbey and Llanfair Grange (PRN 10410) nearby are supportive of this location. Further north it is clear that the village of Cynghordy derives its name from a monastic foundation and the place name Maes Mynach (PRN 5456) suggests that the priory held land in the vicinity of the village. There is no evidence to suggest that any associated settlement developed or that Cynghordy has its origins in such a settlement.

Like Richard fitz Pons before him, the Lord Rhys was a good son of the church. In the 1190's he founded the Premonstraterian Abbey of Talyllychau (PRN 1897). This abbey, under the protection of the house of Deheubarth, initially acquired large estates. Several granges were farmed within the Dinefwr district, such as at Brechfa Gothi, Brunus Grange (Llanegwad), Talhardd near Ffairfach and Traethnelgan, centered around Talyllychau itself.

It has been suggested that Talyllychau was chosen by the lord Rhys due to the existence of an earlier *clas* community there (PRN 12300). This has not been confirmed, but new monastic communities certainly developed at Talyllychau and on its granges, composed of monks and lay brethren. The nature of such communities is difficult to assess. F.G.Cowley (1977) describes them thus;

"a group of buildings which included a granary, stalls and pens for livestock, living quarters for the lay-brethren and hired labourers, and in some cases a chapel"

A larger community might be expected to develo around the abbey itself, a concentration of lay brethren might have been needed close at hand to work the land. Only a small number of monks are known to have lived at the abbey throughout the later mediaeval period, usually less than 10 in number. It therefore seems unlikely that any significant nucleation occurred either on the granges or adjacent to the abbey. The modern village of Talyllychau is largely a recent creation, only a small core around the abbey and another grouping of dwellings around the Edwinsford Arms crossroads were in existence by the early nineteenth century. However, the loose agglomeration of dwellings around Cwmbyr, south of the abbey, may be indicative of the site of an earlier settlement. There has been some shrinkage in the part of the village since the early nineteenth century, which has resulted in a shift of settlement focus from the western to the eastern side of the Afon Du valley.

Other monastic estates existed within the boundaries of modern Dinefwr, namely Llanfihangel Cilfargen, a possession of Whitland Abbey, and that of Nantybai, a grange belonging to Strata Florida in Ceredigion. The latter is believed to have been granted by Gruffudd ap Rhys (son of the Lord Rhys) c.1200. This was an upland grange which seemed primarily concerned with the mountain pasturing of animals, although a mediaeval corn mill stood on the site of the present water mill, indicating that some arable farming was also practised. It should not be forgotten that lead was mined in this area by the late thirteenth century, the Crown taking the "eleventh foot" of the ore in taxation (Rees, 1968). This would imply that a mining community of unknown size must have existed in the locality of Nantybai and Rhandirmwyn.

Parishes

One important element in the changes that were occurring in late mediaeval society was the establishmen of ecclesiastical parishes, probably during the early twelfth century. The *Taxatio* of Pope Nicholas IV, a valuation of ecclesiastical properties composed in 1291, names most of the parish churches of Dinefwr, showing that the parishes were established by this time. The parish became more than an ecclesiastical unit in succeeding centuries, forming communities by which their inhabitants were identified, and taxed.

The parishes of Dinefwr were made up of groups of existing townships and usually appear to conform with commote boundaries. What is significant in their contribution to the development of settlement patterns is the elevation of one site, the parish church, to a central position in the affairs of the community. As defined centres of ecclesiastical importance, their social and economic importance was usually enhanced. If the churches such as Llanfynydd, Caeo, Llansawel, Myddfai, Cilycwm and Llansadwrn were not already locations of nucleated settlement, it seems probable that they would become so.

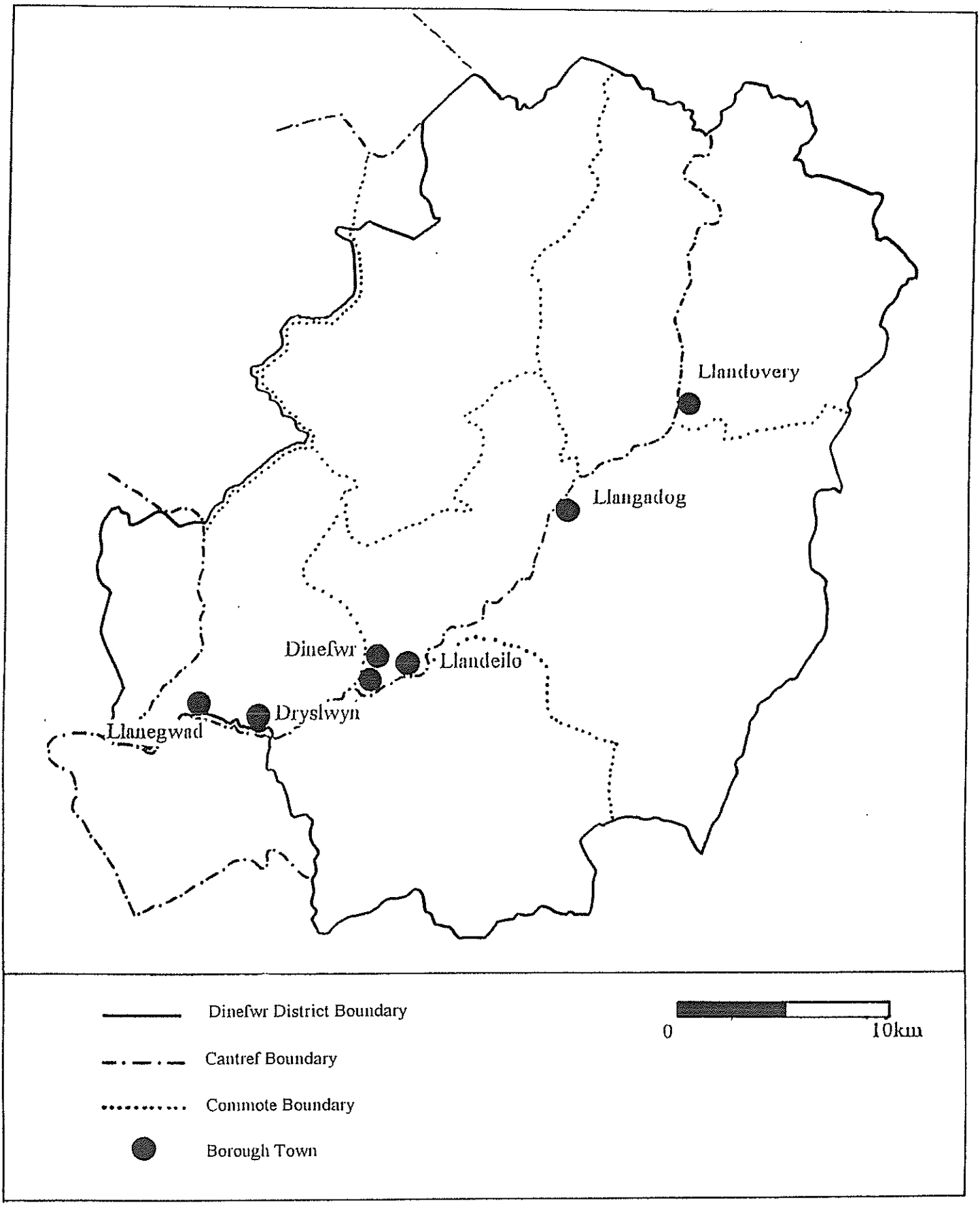

Fig.13; Fourteenth century towns.

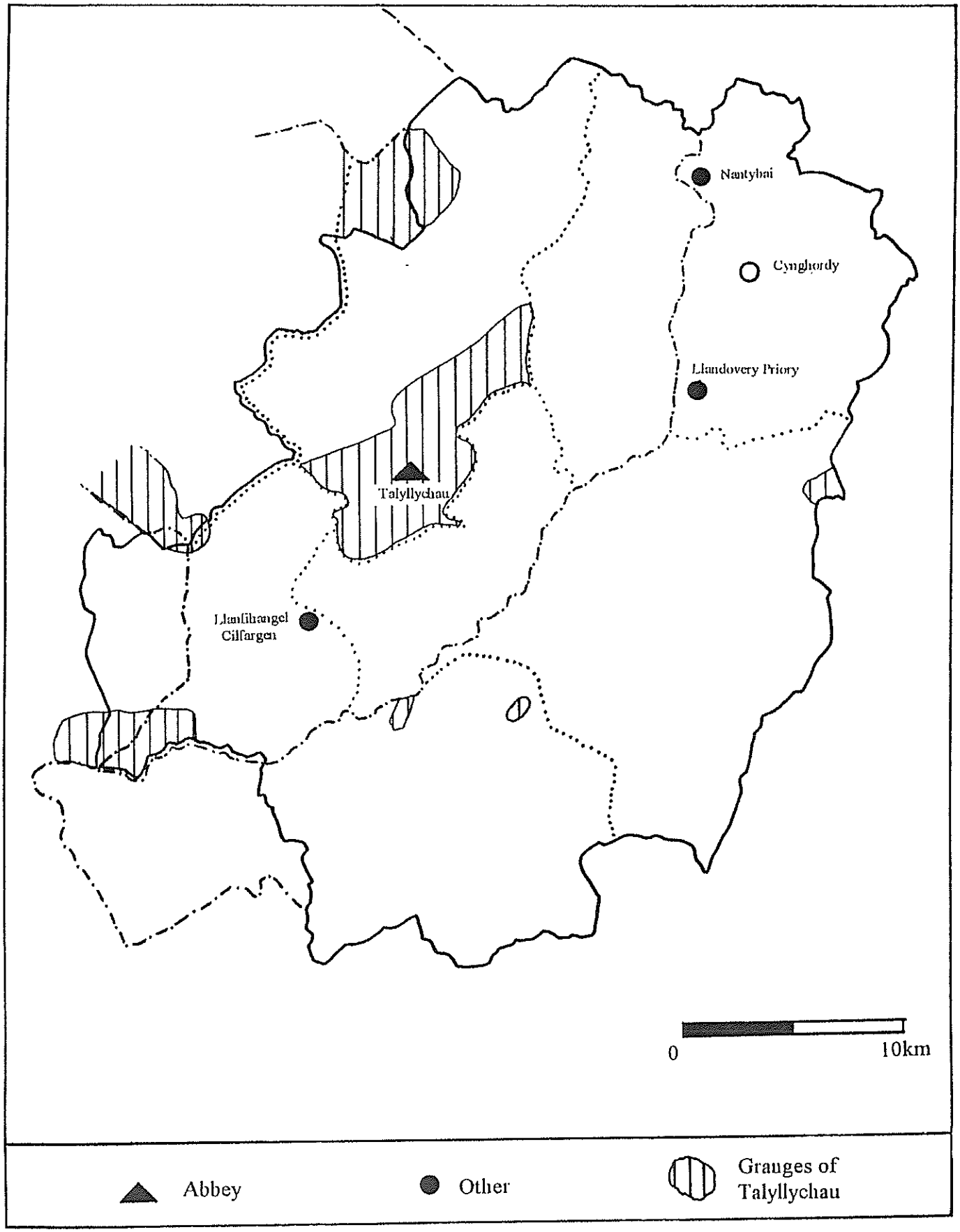

Fig.14; Late mediaeval monastic foundations.

Summary

It is clear that the settlement history of Dinefwr diverges sharply from that of areas such as South Pembrokeshire and Gower during this period due to the absence of large influxes of Anglo-Norman settlers and the consequential absence of new villages which might accompany such planted communities. It is evident that for strategic reasons the Normans undertook the early capture and defence of the Tywi Valley, which was effectively the main communications route from Breconshire into south west Wales. That the valley was also one of the most fertile areas in the region was an added incentive to maintain control of it. Such changes which did occur during the twelfth century appear confined to the growth and perhaps replanning of existing settlement foci along the Tywi (Llandovery, Llangadog and Llandeilo). The only village which can be dated to this period is Felindre Sawdde, if indeed it was the *maerdref* of the twelfth century motte and bailey castle of Castell Meurig. The monastic communities of Llandovery and Talyllychau can also be considered as new foci of settlement, only the latter surviving beyond the century of its foundation.

The thirteenth century saw the establishment of new urban centres, the borough towns of Dryslwyn, Dinefwr and Dinefwr Newton. All of which ultimately decayed and disappeared, their economic role being filled by Llandeilo. Their downfall may indicate a period of economic stagnation following the great plagues of the late fourteenth century, which may have halved the population of the country, and the destruction wrought by the war of independence fought by Owain Glyndwr during the first decade of the fifteenth century.

Agricultural communities, especially those in the Tywi hinterland, initially appear to have continued to live according to Welsh customs and traditions and remained in their scattered farms and hamlets. The overall economic and social changes that were happening generally throughout Welsh society were inescapable however. Gradual changes in tenurial practices, war, plague were ultimately to lead to the decay and abolition of Welsh law and customs in the early post mediaeval period. Thereafter, the landscape and settlement pattern took on forms with which we are familiar today.

4. THE RISE OF THE VILLAGE.

The Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries.

From the sixteenth century onwards documentary and cartographic sources improve in frequency and quality and the picture of settlement history becomes gradually clearer. This is partly a result of the activities of the leading gentry of the Elizabethan age, who, in the wake of the Act of Union and The Dissolution of the Monasteries were free to acquire land and build large estates ; activities which necessarily required detailed record keeping as frequent disputes arose over boundaries and land ownership, often leading to protracted legal battles. At the same time increasing attention was being paid to the surveying and mapping of the country. Humphrey Llwyd produced a map of Wales in 1573, bu probably the single most useful cartographic record we have is Saxton's Map of Carmarthenshire of 1578, whic shows towns, castles, parish churches and the leading houses of the day and is an invaluable starting point in the study of post mediaeval Dinefwr.

Saxton names only four towns in what is now Dinefwr; Llandovery, Llandeilo, Newton (Dinefwr) and Llangadog. The fifth "historic town", Dryslwyn, had by this time been abandoned, Dryslwyn Castle alone being shown. The town apparently failed to recover from damage inflicted during the Glyndwr rebellion. Leland passed through the Dryslwyn area in the late 1530's and simply remarked that it was;

"was a place ful of difficulte and encombrance to passe through" (Toulmin-Smith, 1906).

Leland provides further glimpses of the settlements and landscape along the Tywi valley, noting that the mansion of the late Sir Rhys ap Thomas, the great Tudor magnate, at Abermarlais (PRN 11484) was "a welle favorid stone place" and that the ground between Abermarlais and Llandovery was well wooded. Of Llandovery itself he gives an impression of a town in decay;

"...a poor market town...hath but one streate, and that poorly buildid of thatchid houses."

Saxton's map does not explicitly indicate the existence of any type of nucleated settlement other than the main towns, but most parish churches are represented. This category includes;

Llanegwad
Llandybie
Llanfihangel Aberbythych
Llangathen
Llandyfeisant
Llanfihangel Cilfargen
Llanfynydd
Llansawel
Betws
Talyllychau
Llansadwrn
Llanwrda
Caeo
Cilycwm
Llanfair-ar-y-bryn
Myddfai
Llanddeusant

The only direct evidence that a nucleated settlement existed at any of these locations (apart from Llanegwad, which had previously been granted borough status) prior to 1578 comes from Llansadwrn. The Lordship of Llansadwrn adjoined and was in the possession of the Abermarlais estate of Sir Rhys ap Thomas. Upon his death it was inherited by his grandson Rhys ap Gruffudd, who fell foul of Henry VIII and was executed

in 1531. His lands thereafter came into Crown ownership and a survey was made of his properties, including "the manor, lordship, hamlet and town of Llansadwrn" (Cawdor Muniments, 1536). The use of "town" in this case probably refers to a nucleated settlement rather than a dispersed township.

Also shown on Saxton's map are several lesser chapels; Capel Gwynfe, Pumsaint, Capel Newydd and Capel Peulin. Only the first two of these now stand within nucleated settlements. Archaeological evidence does indicate that at Pumsaint there was some late mediaeval or early post-mediaeval settlement in the vicinity of the chapel (Burnham, B & H, 1989), but there is no known evidence to suggest that any of the other small chapels of ease, many not recorded by Saxton, were the focus for settlement at that time.

It seems likely that nucleation would also have occurred around some of the other named churches, though no cartographic, documentary or archaeological record exists to support such an assumption. The parish church villages must have become focal points of social activity in their localities, though before the late eighteenth century we have no real evidence as to what further role they played. Local economic activity may have centred on the church. This certainly happened at Caeo, Llandybie, and Llangadog, recorded as sites of annual or bi-annual fairs by George Owen in 1601. He also lists fairs held at the towns of Llandeilo and Llandovery as well as at Abermarlais, still an important residence 70 years after the death of Sir Rhys ap Thomas. Ffairfach, which was developing as a satellite trading centre in the shadow of Llandeilo had an annual fair. Felindre Sawdde also retained its annual fair, granted in 1383.

The Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries.

"Er mai pentref bychan oedd, ceid ynddo efail y gof, swyddfa y crydd, gweithdy saer coed, a gweithdy y dilledydd...yn siop y saer y byddai, yn gyffredin, ysgol gan; yn swyddfa y crydd, cwrdd i adrodd chwedlau y plwyf; yn efail y gof y byddai y senedd, ac yng ngweithdy y teiliwr, rhyw fath o ysgol holwyddori."

" Despite being a small village, it had a smithy and workshops for the cobbler, the carpenter and the tailor... singing classes were held in the carpenter's workshop; old local tales were recounted in the cobbler's shop; the village council was held in the smithy, and general knowledge classes in the tailor's shop." (Parch.John Davies, 1912, 4).

The above quote is a description of the rich social and cultural life enjoyed by the inhabitants of the tiny village of Talsarn, Llanddeusant, in the mid-nineteenth century. It is all the more remarkable in that were it not for this single reference, in the biography of one of its better known sons, it would have been wholly forgotten, for we are also told that the half or dozen or so cottages which stood there were removed without trace by the early twentieth century. It is a rather romanticised account of nineteenth century village life, which often had a less pleasant side for many people, but it does give us an insight into the self-sufficiency of the village communities of rural Wales at that time and the very localised nature of the industries and services that supplied many of their needs. It is perhaps a pattern of village life which we can extend backwards for at least a century, but it is also one that was soon to change radically in the wake of the industrial and population boom soon to hit the neighbouring Amman and Gwendraeth valleys. Indeed, the settlement history of the period can only be properly discussed against the background of the demographic changes taking place occuring throughout the district.

Population.

The population of Carmarthenshire as a whole, between the censuses of 1801 and 1891 almost doubled, from 67,000 to 130,000 inhabitants. However, whereas there was a general increase throughout the county between 1801 and 1841, from 1841 to 1891 some areas experienced dramatic growth and others significant decline.

Within Dinefwr this phenomenon can be seen in the census returns for the parishes north of the coalfield;

	1801	1831	1891
Cilycwm	1485	1637	1019
Llanddeusant	682	1006	561
Myddfai	934	1192	786
Llanfynydd	1145	1436	949
Llangathen	908	1182	750
Llanegwad	1557	2214	1508

The increase in population in the south eastern parishes within the area of the coalfield stands in contrast;

	1801	1831	1891
Betws	708	830	2417
Llandybie	1513	2248	4388

(Comparable growth was experienced in the new civil parish of Quarter Bach, carved out of Llangadog Parish in 1881). (All figures from Bowen-Evans, 198x).

Rural Villages.

A rather grim picture of the dwellings of the Llandeilo district is painted by Sir Thomas Gery Cullum who visited Llandeilo in 1775. The "mud Houses" of the area were of "wretched construction", with conical wickerwork chimneys and wall "often seen in a state of vegetation. They were invariably thatched and without glass windows. Gery Cullum does however note that thei inhabitants were "better cloathed than the inhabitants of the better houses of England". (Roberts, 1939).

Such descriptions help us envisage the conditions which were common in the villages of the district at the

start of the nineteenth century, and bring some colour to the maps and plans which allow us to see their layout in detail for the first time. The first opportunities we have to view village plans come during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, particularly with the publication of the 1st edition 1" to 1 mile Ordnance Survey map of 1831.

A few villages are mentioned in earlier documentary sources, Llandybie, for instance, is described as nine houses clustered around the church in the late seventeenth century. Brechfa was visited by Iolo Morgannwg in 1796 and found to be "a small village of 7 or 8 houses" (Bowen-Evans, M, 1988). The chapel of Pentretygwyn was established in and named after the village in 1749. Estate maps of the period show that Felindre Sawdde (1790) and Llanfynydd (1815), existed as small villages, but such references are exceptional.

It is clear from these few descriptions that the villages which did exist by the early nineteenth century were in the main small settlements, unless local circumstances were exceptional, such as the case of Rhandirmwyn, where the lead mines supposedly employed 400 workers in 1790.

It would appear that droving was one of the most important rural trades by the early nineteenth century, especially in the northern western part of the district, where villages such as Caeo, Cilycwm and Llansawel were important points along the droving routes, where drovers could pasture their animals and lodge overnight. In eastern Dinefwr, Myddfai was also a centre of droving activity. These villages were probably the most significant settlements in pre-industrial Dinefwr outside the towns, in large part due to the droving trade. Smaller villages such as Ffarmers, Porthyrhyd, Siloh and Cynghordy also stood on the droving routes and the presence of inns and possibly chapels in some of these villages may be due to this association.

One other rural industry which may have been influential in the development of some villages was the woollen industry. By the late eighteenth century the technology became available to enable the factory production of woollen cloth. Small woollen mills were established at several locations in Dinefwr, including Felingwmisaf, where the Dolau Factory may well have been the *raison d'etre* for the existence of this minor village. Other factories opened at Llanfynydd, Llansawel and Pentregwenlais. The latter village is noteworthy in that it's original core, clustered around the mill area survives in a ruined condition, wedged between the modern village and the spoil heaps of Pentregwenlais quarry. Its layout, which includes terraced cottages and cobbled roads, may date to the eighteenth century.

The crafts and cottage industries which were practised by the inhabitants of both village and countryside are too numerous to mention, but the virtual self-sufficiency of many communities is partly shown in the above description of Talsarn, Llanddeusant.

Late nineteenth century parish histories provide us with a valuable insight into the nature of some of the villages during the first half of the century, recording the memories of older inhabitants. This gives us a picture o social conditions, and indeed the architecture and layou of the villages in some instances, which probably were little changed since the previous century or even earlier and echo the words of Gery Cullim, quoted above. In th north of Dinefwr, the villages of Cilycwm and Llansawe are particularly well recorded, and serve to illustrate the internal changes experienced in many villages during tl mid-nineteenth century.

Llansawel was an important market town during the early nineteenth century, "the central station connec ing the whole industrial pursuits of the surrounding parishes" (Price, 1898), but it was remembered by elder inhabitants as having "no stone bridges over the two rivers, only wooden footbridges; and nearly all the hous were straw thatched, many being hardly better than hut Gradually, however, they gave way to larger and slate covered dwellings" (Price, 1898).

This rebuilding of the village is echoed in cartographic sources, with a noticeable internal change in th village between the parish Tithe Map of 1840 and the 1:2500 OS Map of 1888. By 1888 the Board School, Siloh Chapel, the Post Office and Police Station had appeared, a new smithy built and the church restored. However, work remained to be done, for Llansawel Mill as late as 1894, was "a low thatched house, leaking, wit no proper loft, no windows or ventilation...a disgraceful hovel" (Price, 1898).

A similar picture is painted of Cilycwm. Late nineteenth century Cilycwm was described as a neat and orderly village (as it remains), in contrast to its condition half a century earlier, when the houses of the village were described as being untidy, largely mud-walled structures with reed thatch roofs (Morgan 1901). Again, a Post Office, school, chapel, vicarage and new terraced cottages appear. One unusual reference in this source is of the survival of the village green, an open parcel of land opposite the churchyard where villagers often gathered for recreational purposes.

Comparison of the Tithe Maps and late nineteenth century OS Maps covering most of the villages of the district, particularly those developed around a parish church, show that the loose agglomerations of cottages o the 1840's had largely vanished by the 1880's, being replaced by neat rows of terraced cottages. Many of these survive in good condition, particularly in villages such a Caeo and Cilycwm which have seen little expansion during the twentieth century.

The changes experienced within the villages of Dinefwr during the nineteenth century were not restricte to those recorded in bricks and mortar. Changes in agricultural practice which reduced the numbers of those employed on the land, meant that many now had to trave further or move away in search of employment. The new opportunities and relatively high wages obtainable at the collieries and ironworks of Glamorganshire and southern Carmarthenshire were an added impetus to this movement, which is of course reflected in the declining population of rural parishes during the second half of the nineteenth century. A telling comment on this phenom-

enon was provided by David Davies, a farmer at Rhyblid, Myddfai, in 1894;

"10 years ago I paid my best man £20. Now I pay £25 to a boy under 20...It is impossible to get a married couple to live outside the town and village. I offer 12 shillings a week, with house, garden and part fuel, without any response" (Rhys Davies, 1983).

Those who remained in the villages and the rural hinterland also saw major changes in their lifestyles as new technologies, better communications, access to new markets, new fashions and new services rapidly altered their world.

The effect of these changes is clearly shown in the parish records of Llanfynydd. A comparison of the trades pursued by the inhabitants of the village and parish listed in the baptismal records of the periods 1810-1830 and 1875-1905 shows a significant change;

1810-1830
Cardmaker - Weaver - Glover - Taylor - Shoemaker - Smith - Miller - Labourer - Farmer - Victualler Glazier - Cooper - Shopkeeper - Carpenter - Servant - Gardener - Gamekeeper - Drover - Soldier - Seaman (of Cork)

1875-1905
Civil Engineer - Railway Guard - Assayer - Schoolmaster Clerk - Coachman - Surgeon - Commercial Clerk (at Swansea) - Ordnance Surveyor - Woollen manufacturer - Factoryman - Collier (at Ystradgynlais).

New rural villages.

In view of the population changes charted during the nineteenth century, it is surprising that there was some new development in rural Dinefwr. Several villages have their origins in the latter half of the century, but it will be seen that this reflects a change in economic and social activity combined with, or perhaps caused by, improving communications and services, rather than an increasing population.

An early example of the appearance of such a new village is that of Halfway, Myddfai. Here a coaching inn was built alongside the new turnpike road between Llandovery and Sennybridge. The road was not constructed before the late eighteenth century. Subsequently a small village grew along the road line, including a chapel, smithy and later a Post Office.

Villages such as Crugybar, Porthyrhyd and Maesybont are also fine examples of such settlements. They originate with the establishment of a school and/or Post Office intended to serve scattered rural communities. In the case of Crugybar and Porthyrhyd, the new services were located next to existing chapels, thereby adding to the nucleating pull of these new local "service centres".

Ffarmers is probably the best developed of such villages, despite its remote location. Originally only a public house and a cottage at a cross-roads on a drovers road, it acquired a Post Office and School in the late nineteenth century and a village hall in the 1930's. The village has grown significantly in the late twentieth century, though it is almost unique amongst the villages of the district in that it has no place of worship.

Nucleation did not always occur however. Remote Cwrtycadno, Cynwyl Gaeo, had a chapel and school by the end of the nineteenth century but no dwellings. Cynghordy also had the essential requirements of chapel, Post Office and school, as well as a mill, parish church and vicarage, inn and even a railway station, but they were so dispersed that there was no single focus for a village to develop around. Indeed, the most significant development to occur was the building of a twentieth century council estate, away from any of the historic buildings.

More unusual perhaps are the development of Derwydd and Golden Grove from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. Both are located near mansions which were the residences of influential families, influential enough, it would seem, to persuade the necessary authorities to position railway stations where the line passed closest to the mansion. Whereas Golden Grove was already a small nucleation around a parish church, Derwydd developed as a result of the opening of the railway station. The positioning of a railway station at Nantgaredig was similarly important in the development of the village.

Industrial Villages.

We have already touched upon the demographic changes which occurred in nineteenth century Dinefwr as a result of the rapid expansion of the coal industry during the latter half of the century. Samuel Lewis (1833), noted of Betws Parish that;

"Coal is supposed to abound in various parts, but very little of it has hitherto been worked".

Coal certainly had been extracted locally well before Lewis wrote the above. A remarkable drift mine was worked at Brynlloi, Betws from 1757, where a canal was driven into the hillside and the coal brought out by barge (Thomas, 1894). Small coal mines were operating throughout the parish of Betws during the early 1800's and it is probable that similar coal pits had been exploited since late mediaeval times. Coal is known to have been mined near Llandybie before the sixteenth century (Rees, 1968).

Nevertheless, it is clear that Lewis is correct in that coal output in his day was insignificant in view of the potential of the local coal resource, which would be realised in later decades. It was also on such a small scal that no significant demographic effect was felt, the parishes along the Amman Valley remained for the most part rural in character. They may well have remained so were it not for the opening up of the valley with the construction of a new Turnpike road in 1817 and the arrival of the railway in 1838. The export of coal and

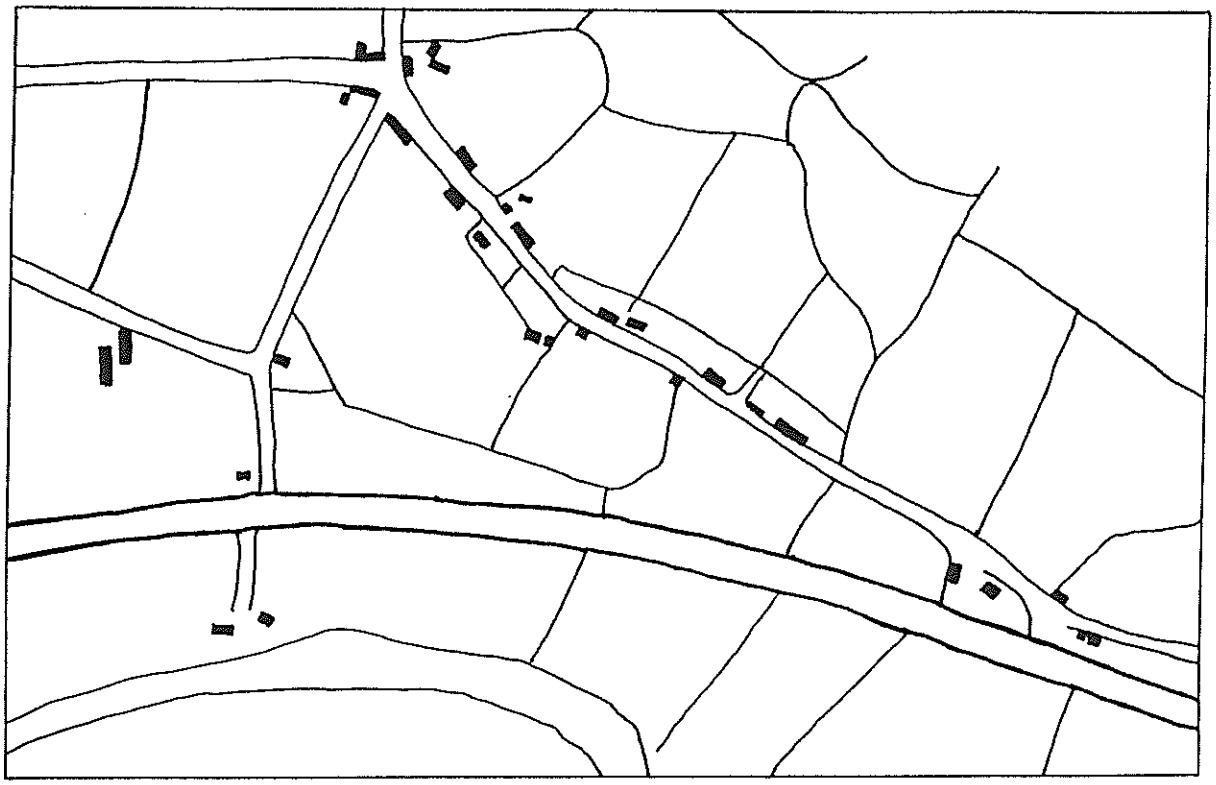

Fig.15; Cross Inn (now Ammanford), 1840. ***From Llandybie Tithe Map***

import of people became much easier, reflected by the population boom previously mentioned.

The subsequent growth of the coal towns is all the more remarkable when one considers that there are no significant towns or even villages recorded on the Tithe Maps which cover the coalfield area (Llandybie, Betws, Llangadog, Llanfihangel Aberbythych and Llandeilo Fawr parishes, dated between 1838 and 1848). Ammanford, now a town of approaching 6,000 inhabitants, was "Cross Inn" in 1840, merely a handful of cottages and an inn on a cross-roads (Fig.15). Villages such as Pen-y-groes, Saron and Blaenau were also little more than a few cottages around road junctions (Roberts, 1939). The parish churches of Llandybie and Betws were both the focus of small nucleations, the former being the most significant, almost certainly due to the presence of the limestone quarries at Pantyllyn and Cilyrychen to the north west.

The dynamics of the development of a coal town are well illustrated in the excellent *"Hanes Brynaman"* (Rees, 1898). This short local history charts the transformation of the scattered community of Gwter Fawr into the coal town known as Brynaman. (Brynaman was originally a house name, but when the railway station opened in 1864, the name Brynaman was adopted). It traces the gradual build up of the population in the mid-nineteenth century, accompanied by the acquisition of new housing, nonconformist chapels and public houses. During the latter half of the century larger coal mines opened as well as a Tinplate Works and entire streets of terraced housing were constructed by the coal and tinplate companies to house their workers. The burgeoning population inevitably required shops and public utilities and Brynaman became a thriving industrial town. The speed of the change and the development of the coal industry were remarkable, for by 1898 the author records that the first miner's cottages built in the village were already buried under a large coal tip.

Away from the coalfield other industries prospered, many with pre-nineteenth century origins. Around the northern rim of the coal measures extractive industries developed along millstone grit and limestone outcrops. The production of lime for agricultural use was an important local industry which supplied farmers across much of northern Carmarthenshire and Cardiganshire. A concentration of important lime producing quarries developed during the nineteenth century in the Llandybie area, at Cilyrychen (PRN 4858) and Pistyll quarries (PRN 27497). East and west of this point numerous smaller quarries were also worked and villages such as Llandybie, Pentregwenlais, Pantyllyn and Carmel were undoubtedly home to numerous quarrymen. This industry may well have given rise to the latter two.

Lead was mined at several locations within Dinefwr. Small mines were developed during the nineteenth century in the lower Tywi valley, in Myddfai parish and near Talyllychau, but none of these were of any long term significance to the settlement pattern of their localities. The largest mining complex in Dinefwr was that of Rhandirmwyn (PRN 17443). Lead was mined here as early as the thirteenth century (Rees, 1968) but from the late eighteenth until the early twentieth century production was almost continuous. Rhandirmwyn, as a lead mining village, is unique in Dinefwr, and several

small rows of miners cottages remain. It appears as a relatively large, though not compact, settlement on the 1840 Llanfair-ar-y-bryn Tithe Map. The neighbouring village of Nantybai also had a row of miners cottages, now lost. Gold was also mined at Dolaucothi (PRN 1946) near Pumsaint until the 1930's.

Twentieth Century.

The settlement history of the early twentieth century is essentially an extension of the processes which were occurring before 1900, with new industries burgeoning, the population increasing and villages growing. Few new villages were created after 1900 however. Cwmgwili, a coal village, appears for the first time on the 1915 OS 1:2500 third edition maps, but it seems that after the General Strike of 1926 and the World depression that soon followed, the pace of industrial development faltered badly. By 1939, the coal mines of Llandybie parish were almost all closed (Roberts, 1939). Any respite that might have followed the nationalisation of the coal industry in 1947 was short lived as the collieries of southern Dinefwr declined until virtually disappearing in the 1980's. The pattern of decline was repeated in all the other industries of the district and the loss of employment was mirrored in demographic changes.

Probably the most significant addition to the rural village landscape during the mid twentieth century were the small council house estates provided to meet local needs during the 1950's. In some cases this was the first significant addition to the village for a century, as at Caeo, Crugybar, Llansadwrn and Gelli Aur.

Planning requirements of the late twentieth century have encouraged the definition of areas suitable for further development and this has in effect lead to the categorisation of Drefach (Llandyfan), Waunystrad, Fferws Hill and Temple Bar as village entities.

Summary.

Despite occasional hints from documentary sources, it is really only in the late eighteenth century that we see the cartographic representation of villages. Their development prior to this remains hazy and difficult to chart. It seems that throughout the early post-mediaeval period that the parish villages slowly developed, generally being small clusters around the focus of the church. The remaining villages which are known to predate the nineteenth century are generally seen to be associated with a specific industry, such as the lead mines at Rhandirmwyn or the woollen mill at Felingwm-isaf. Where parish villages stood on important communications routes they could develop into rather more significant settlements, as with Llansawel, Cilycwm and Myddfai, associated with the droving trade.

It is however in the mid nineteenth century that the villages of Dinefwr grow and multiply. Population increases brought large scale new developments to the industrial south east, whilst social change in the rural parishes led to a movement from the land to the towns and villages, a move no doubt eased by the appearance c new services such as schools, post offices and village shops, from the 1860's onwards.

5. CONCLUSION.

Dinefwr was chosen as a study area because of its very "Welshness", expected to contrast sharply with South Pembrokeshire, the first study area chosen by the Dyfed Archaeological Trust. This expectation has been fulfilled in many respects. A simple historical analysis would identify the point of divergence with the failure of the Normans in the twelfth century to gain complete and permanent control of Dinefwr, as they did in South Pembrokeshire.

Undoubtedly, other factors have contributed to th differences between the two areas, such as climate and physiography. Large parts of Dinefwr may have been considered sufficiently inhospitable in the twelfth centur that there was no great desire on the Norman side to capture and colonise such an area, beyond the fertile lands of the Tywi valley and the strategically important communications routes which followed its course. This point is well illustrated by the concentration of late mediaeval towns and castles along the Tywi valley.

There is no evidence for any period of retrenchment or retreat in the settlement pattern of the district, unless the little understood *hafodydd* of the uplands are included. Though stagnation may well have occurred during the fifteenth century following the plagues of the late fourteenth century and the devastation that visited some towns during Owain Glyndwr's war of independence.

The impression gained of the settlement history o the district is, aside from the creation of the borough towns in the thirteenth century, one of slow and organic growth around the foci of churches, chapels and industries until the sudden and dramatic boom after 1850. The social history of the following eighty years, especially of the industrial areas, is one of a vibrant economic and cultural life, it is a period in which village life in Dinefw reached its peak. Over half the seventy villages listed in the Settlement Gazetteer which accompanies this report possess schools, village shops and Post Offices built within 20 years either side of the turn of the century, nearly all have chapels which date to the nineteenth or early twentieth centuries. It is a sign of the twentieth century decline of village life that many of these buildings are listed as closed in the Gazetteer.

The influx of people into rural Dinefwr during recent decades has breathed some new life into the villages and towns of the area, but the building boom which has accompanied it has increased the villages to their largest ever extent. The continued growth of many will undoubtedly pose a serious threat to the archaeological evidence that may survive within many historic villages which could help explain their origins and development and fill many of the gaps in our current knowledge and understanding of earlier societies.

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