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11/05/2000

UNA REVISIONE STORICA DELLA COMUNITA' DI  
ADRODDIAD HANESYDDOL AR GYFER CYMUNED  
HISTORICAL AUDIT FOR THE COMMUNITY OF



# LLANFIHANGEL RHOS-Y-CORN



ESEGUITA DA MARIA PITTARO, PAUL SAMBROOK & PHILLIP WAIT  
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## PREMESSA RHAGAIR PREFACE

*Llanfihangel-rhos-y-corn e' una piccola comunita' situata nella parte nord-orientale del Carmarthenshire. Ricerche archeologiche sono state compiute su questa comunita' ai fini della realizzazione di pannelli di informazione storica da collocare nei punti di maggiore interesse culturale di Llanfihangel. La CAMBRIA Archaeology ha ricevuto l'incarico direttamente dalla comunita' di Llanfihangel, nome che in gallese fa riferimento alla chiesa di San Michele. Prima di ideare qualunque pannello che oltre a contenere notizie storiche, e' provvisto di splendidi disegni che trasformano in immagini le informazioni in esso contenute, la CAMBRIA procede alla stesura di una relazione contenente gran parte del materiale ricavato dalle ricerche geografiche, bibliografiche e fotografiche effettuate in precedenza. Molte di queste ricerche vengono fatte recandosi direttamente sul posto, altre invece consultando gli archivi di musei e biblioteche, ma soprattutto i registri anagrafici. Quello che, infatti, interessa maggiormente gli archeologici e' studiare la vita delle persone nel passato, le attivita' svolte e i loro usi e costumi con un particolare riguardo alle pratiche religiose. I registri anagrafici forniscono molte informazioni in proposito, cosi' come pure le antiche mappe geografiche. Su quest'ultime sono spesso segnalate chiese e edifici che hanno a loro tempo svolto un ruolo culturale non indifferente, ma di cui oggi esistono solo tracce. Il lavoro degli archeologi gallesi consiste percio' nel riportare alla luce e mostrare al pubblico tutto cio' che vi e' stato e ha contribuito alla formazione di quella che e' l'attuale cultura del Galles.*

*Lo sforzo di organizzazioni come la CAMBRIA sta proprio nel riscoprire, salvaguardare e promuovere l'eredita' storico-culturale del Galles allo scopo di allargare le conoscenze della gente locale e favorire il "green tourism". Il green tourism e' cio' che in Italia e' comunemente noto come agri-turismo, caratterizzato dal soggiorno dei visitatori nei Bed & Breakfast e dalla possibilita' di fare lunghe passeggiate lungo i sentieri della comunita'. Molti pannelli si trovano proprio ai bordi di tali sentieri.*

*La relazione che segue verra' conservata negli archivi della CAMBRIA. Copie di essa saranno mostrate ai membri piu' influenti di Llanfihangel che possono commentare il lavoro e suggerire gli argomenti e le immagini da preferire per la realizzazione dei pannelli.*

Maria Pittaro 11.05.2000



Llanfihangel-rhos-y-corn is a small community in the north-east part of Carmarthenshire. Archaeological research on that parish has been carried out in order to create interpretative panels which will be placed in Llanfihangel, showing its major points of cultural interest. CAMBRIA Archaeology has been given that task by the community of Llanfihangel.

Llanfihangel is a Welsh name meaning St. Michael's Church. Before creating a panel, which will contain artwork related to the events described in the written historical text, CAMBRIA staff usually write a report about the main geographic, bibliographic and photographic researches that have been carried out. Most of these researches are done on site, others are done by examining the material present in museum or library archives, and studying the census returns in record offices. What archaeologists, in fact, are most interested in is the life of people in the past, their activities, their habits and their traditions. Lots of information about life in the past is also provided by old maps, where many now destroyed buildings and churches which played an important cultural role are shown. Therefore, the work of Welsh archaeologists consists in recovering everything that has contributed to creating modern Welsh landscape and society.

The role of organizations like CAMBRIA Archaeology is to rediscover, preserve and promote Wales' heritage in order to enlarge local people's acquaintances on their culture and improve "green tourism". "Green tourism" is more commonly known in Italy as "agri-tourism", characterized by visitors staying overnight in Bed & Breakfasts and having the opportunity of enjoying walks on local public footpaths. Interpretative panels are often placed alongside these paths.

The following report will be kept in CAMBRIA's Archives. Copies of it will also be shown to influential people in Llanfihangel, who may comment on the work done and suggest the information they would prefer to have represented on the panels

Maria Pittaro 11.05.2000

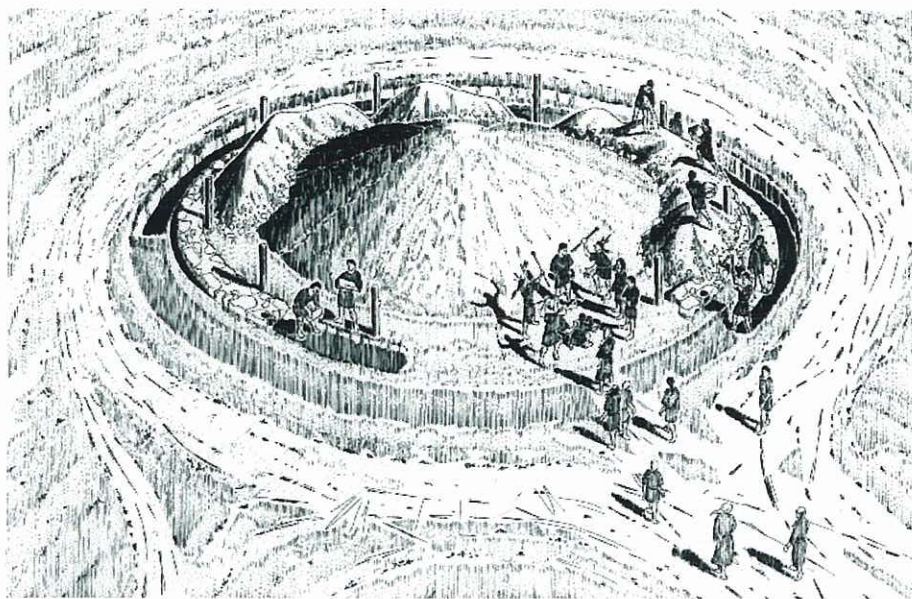


*Left: Maria Pittaro and Neil Ludlow of Cambria Archaeology, searching for the grave of David Rhydderch (the mid-19th century landlord of "The Wheaten Sheaf Inn") in the churchyard at St David's Church, Abergorlech.*

## PREISTORIA CYNHANES PREHISTORY

The prehistoric archaeology of the community is largely confined to the northern, upland of the area. A number of fine bronze age round barrows, the burial places of communities who lived in the area during the period c.2,000 - 1,000 BC are found along the modern community boundary. These include the barrow cemetery at Crugiau Edryd (four round barrows and a ring-barrow) and Crugiau Geir which serve as boundary markers along its northern and western sides. Several other *crug* sites lie within the community and a number are protected as Scheduled Ancient Monuments. At Llidiad Nenog, a bronze age standing stone has been moved and reused as a tombstone at Capel Nenog.

There is no recorded archaeology pertaining to the Iron Age or Roman period in the district, although it is likely that settled farming communities would have been present in the district throughout these periods. The stream name Nant-y-castell shown on the original OS 1:1" map of 1831 may indicate that an iron age hillfort exists in the vicinity of Cwm-mareddydd, in the south western corner of the community, but there is no record of such a site at present.



*A bronze age round barrow being constructed*



## STORIA PRIMORDIALE HANES CYNNAR EARLY HISTORY

There is little evidence as to the early history of the district during the centuries between the Roman and Norman periods. It is quite probable that a large portion of the district was covered by natural woodland, with settlement and agricultural activity developed along the floors and lower slopes of the narrow river valleys which break up the mountain block to the north of the Cothi valley.

The little evidence that can be gleaned for this period is largely based on the study of local placenames and a few traditions relating to the early ecclesiastical history of the region.

In pre-Norman Wales, it is known that the land was divided into small estates or *maenorau* which were the building blocks of larger kingdoms; Maenor Brunus was one such estate, focused on the area of Nantgaredig in the Tywi Valley to the south of Llanfihangel Rhos-y-corn. We do not know anything of the nature and extent of the *maenorau* of the Llanfihangel Rhos-y-corn neighbourhood, but a few local placenames and observation of the local landscape may offer clues.

The importance of the Cothi Valley, or Glyn Cothi, as an historic communications route into the north-east of Carmarthenshire is a factor that must be considered in relation to this early period. Whereas the hills to the north may well have been wooded and thinly settled, the presence of churches and chapels-of-ease along the Cothi and some of its tributary valleys is points to the establishment of Christian centres of worship during the period known in Welsh as *Oes y Saint* or the "Age of the Saints" (5th - 10th centuries AD). Hence the churches at Llansawel to the north-east of Abergorlech, at Abergorlech itself and at Brechfa, point to well established communities along the Cothi before the Norman period.

The site of Capel Sain Silyn at Gwernogle may be evidence that an early Celtic Christian cell had been founded here too, perhaps as early as the 6th century AD. A local tradition has it that a hermit named Silyn had founded a cell here around that time. An intriguing range of local placenames in the area between Gwernogle and the present church of Llanfihangel Rhos-y-corn may indicate a centre of pre-Norman Christian activity. Names such as Esgair Fynwent (Cemetery Ridge), Cae'r Paderau (Prayer Field), Pant y Bettws (Hollow of the Oratory) and Ffynnon Sain Silyn (Silyn's Well) are all suggestive of early ecclesiastical activity, but cannot easily be explained.

There is very little which informs us of secular life and administration of the district during this period. The name of the farm of Llystyn in the south of the community has *llys* (court) as an element and this may suggest that it was a focus of administrative authority a pre-Norman times.

## STORIA MEDIEVALE HANES CANOLOESOL MEDIAEVAL HISTORY

The community takes its name from the church and parish of Llanfihangel Rhos-y-corn. The date of the foundation of this church is also unknown, but certainly belongs to the mediaeval period. However, the mediaeval name of the parish was in fact *Llanfihangel Trefcornew*<sup>1</sup>, which translates as The Church of Michael in the Township of Cornew. *Cornew* may be a misspelling of *Corneu*, plural of *Corn* = horn- or crescent-shaped. This may refer to a local topographical feature.

The historic record for the district during the mediaeval period is quite poor, but enough is known to allow us to explain the main themes of importance.

The political administration of the district during the 11th century, during which the Norman invasions of Wales began, was based on Welsh tradition and law. The region within which Llanfihangel is located was part of the important kingdom of Deheubarth, which probably had its political capital to the south-east in the Tywi valley at Dinefwr, Llandeilo. Deheubarth, like other Welsh kingdoms, was divided into smaller administrative units; *cantrefi* (hundreds), which were subdivided into *cymydau* (commotes), which were in turn sub-divided into *maenoraau* or estates.

Most of the area of the modern community fell within Cwmwd Mabdrud, within Cantref Mawr, although the Abergorlech area fell within Cwmwd Mabelfyw. But, importantly, the area also lay within the boundaries of the ancient forest of Glyncothi, a fact which underlies the historical development of the district. It meant that the forest was a valuable source of timber and was also an excellent hunting ground in pre-Norman times. But it was undoubtedly also of great importance to the princes of Deheubarth as its remote, mountainous and wooded landscape was an ideal place from which to defend their territory from the Norman invader. The landscape gave an advantage to the mobile armies of the Welsh princes, who could take on the heavily armed Norman cavalry in woods and on hills in an often difficult landscape. One of the greatest defeats suffered by the Normans in Deheubarth occurred just outside the Llanfihangel area near Dryslwyn, in the Tywi Valley. A large Norman force was ambushed in the wood and routed by the Welsh, who had the advantage of local knowledge and tactics which suited the terrain they fought in.

Throughout the 12th century, the princes of Deheubarth kept control of Cantref Mawr and the stronghold of the Forest of Glyncothi, to which we know they moved many of their possessions and kinsmen. During the second half of the 12th century, under Rhys ap Gruffudd, they were able to recapture much of South-west Wales from the Normans and Rhys was able to make peace with the English king under favourable terms in 1170. Without the stronghold of Glyncothi, it is unlikely that the Welsh of Deheubarth could have so successfully resisted the Norman armies for so long.

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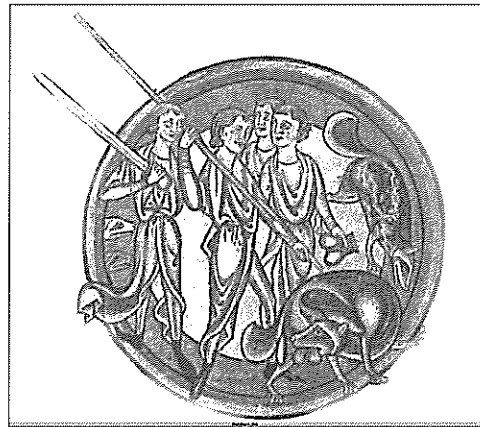
<sup>1</sup> see William Rees' Map of South Wales in the 14th Century.



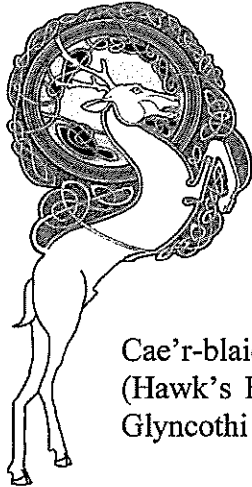
The military success of Rhys ap Gruffudd ensured that, during his lifetime, the political power of Deheubarth was dominant in the region. Rhys was not just a warrior prince, however. He was also a generous benefactor to the church and during his later years gave extensive lands and property to the Cistercian abbeys of Whitland and Strata Florida, as well as founding the Premonstratensian Abbey of Talylychau. This abbey was given eight large granges within Cantref Mawr, including that of Brechfa-Gothi, which includes the south-western corner of the modern community of Llanfihangel Rhos-y-corn and may well have included rights on land on Mynydd Llanfihangel Rhos-y-corn mountain. This grant gave away a large portion of the south-western corner of the Forest of Glyncothi and meant that the Afon Marlais river became its new south-western boundary.

Approximately one hundred years later, Deheubarth was conquered by the English during the reign of Edward I. The last of the princes of Deheubarth, Rhys ap Maredudd, ruled Cantref Mawr and the Forest of Glyncothi until his final rebellion in 1287, which led to his death and saw Cantref Mawr and the Forest of Glyncothi taken into English control. Soon afterwards, during the 1290's, the English Crown established the Royal Forest of Glyncothi and the area was autonomously administered, separated from Cantref Mawr. The former stronghold of the Welsh Princes now came under the oppressive Forest Law of the English Crown, which was intended to create and maintain permanent hunting reserves. Forest officers and forest courts maintained the forest law and it is interesting to note that records survive which show that many of the forest officials were Welshmen; Einion ap Trahaiarn and Cadwgan ap Ieuan being the first recorded in 1301-02.

Under this new administration the mediaeval Royal Forest of Glyncothi was maintained as a hunting ground and source of timber, protected by laws which prevented unauthorised hunting, land clearances and enclosure. The ancient forest therefore survived for several centuries under the protection of the Crown. The 15th century poet, Lewys Glyn Cothi, who was born within the Forest of Glyncothi before 1450, celebrated the forest in a poem to Rhys ap Dafydd of Blaen Tren, Llanybydder. The poet describes a fruitful forest, full of bees, deer, falcons, blackbirds, herons and squirrels.



Some local placenames tell us about ancient land use practices and the wildlife of the area during mediaeval and earlier times.



Cadwgan, Hendreinon and Hendrefadog may be ancient homesteads of local noble families. The *hendre* was the homestead of prominent families and the personal male names Einon and Madog are likely to be those of the founders of the homestead. Hafod-tridrws and Hafod-rhwynnos may well be sites associated with places where cattle were summered on the mountain pastures in the Middle Ages (*hafodydd*).

Cae'r-blaidd (Wolf Field), Clyn-yr-ewig (Hart's Nook) and Bryn-hebog (Hawk's Hill) give some idea of animal species once found in the area of Glyncothi Forest in the past.

The religious history of the district in mediaeval times focuses on the churches of Llanfihangel Rhos-y-corn, Abergorlech and several chapels-of-ease which also served the district. Both churches are of mediaeval origin, but their date of foundation is not known, and they may date to the Norman period. Both have been rebuilt in recent centuries and their mediaeval fabric has been lost or obscured.

Several placenames show the importance of ecclesiastical history to the district; Capel Mair, Capel St.Silyn, Dan-y-capel, Esgair Fynwent and Pant-y-bettws seem to show the location of Christian chapel and burial sites, which had gone out of use before the 18th century. Llan-meredidd may also belong to this category. Several holy wells, natural springs which became religious shrines in early Christian times (and which may often have been pre-Christian shrines also) appear to be located in the area; Ffynnon Capel and Ffynnon Sain Silyn was located near Gwernogle.

The parish tithe map records some particularly interesting field names. At Pentre Evan is *Cae Mair* (Mary's Field) which may have religious associations. At Hendre Tywarch, *Cae Gwyn* (White or Blessed Field) and *Cae Pyderau* (Prayer Field) bear testimony to the local tradition that mediaeval pilgrims passed here on route to the church of Llanfihangel Rhos-y-corn.



Although the forest was of great importance to the local economy in mediaeval times, there is no doubt that some agriculture was practiced on the better lands along the river valleys. By late mediaeval times, a mediaeval corn mill was located at Felin Fforest and there was also a fulling mill at Abergorlech with medieval origins (described as Glyndaghwen Mill by William Rees). Another mill existed near Brechfa.



## STORIA RECENTE HANES DIWEDDAR RECENT HISTORY

One of the most significant aspect to the history of the Llanfihangel Rhos-y-corn district from the 16th century onwards was the loss of the woodlands of the Forest of Glyncothi as economic changes meant there was an increasing demand for farmland. Forest Laws fell out of use before the 17th century and last known forester of Glyncothi had been appointed in 1533-34. The Forest Laws were repealed in 1760 and thereafter, the Royal Forest of Glyncothi became known as the Crown Manor of Glyncothi.

The ancient forests of the country had a greater value as sources of timber for building (especially ship-building) and as a untapped reserve of land which could be cleared and brought into agricultural production than as hunting grounds for the king and his lords. The Tudor period saw the beginning of great economic and social changes as mediaeval laws and customs were replaced. This was especially felt in Wales, where the ancient practice of *gavelkind* (by which property was divided equally amongst male heirs) was replaced by the English law of *primogeniture* (by which the eldest son inherited property). This enabled individuals to begin to build large personal estates opening opportunities for a new class of wealthy landowning families to appear.

The 16th century traveller John Leland observed that the mountains of west Wales were generally deforested and bare. He explained this as occurring largely as the result of forest clearance followed by overgrazing of the new pastures, which prevented any woodland regrowth. The process of clearing the forests of Glyncothi may have been quite slow and piecemeal, but by the end of the 17th century it is possible that most of the woodland had been cleared. In 1690, a letter to the antiquarian Edward Lhuyd noted that the Llanybydder area “was a very woody tract” thirty years previously; the use of the past tense implies that the district lost much of its woodland by the early 18th century.

Whatever the fate of the forest, the opening up of new lands made it possible for agricultural activity to be carried out on a larger scale. A number of well-established principal farmsteads can be pointed to in the district, many of which must have their origins in the period of the forest clearance. Potentially, the earliest farmsteads are located in the main river valleys of the district, with the most recent located on the higher ground to the north, where land was taken into cultivation from the common land during the 18th and 19th centuries, long after the woodland had been lost.

It is not possible to be sure of the detail of these processes, but a number of local farms possess fine farmhouse buildings of the Welsh longhouse type which suggests that they were well established and successful holdings before the 19th century. Amongst those recorded by Cambria Archaeology are the longhouses at Pantybettws, Esgair Fynwent and Cae-dwgan. The main characteristic of the longhouse is that it contains, under one roof, the dwelling house at the upper end and the animal byre at the lower end, divided by a cross-passage and usually connected by a door.

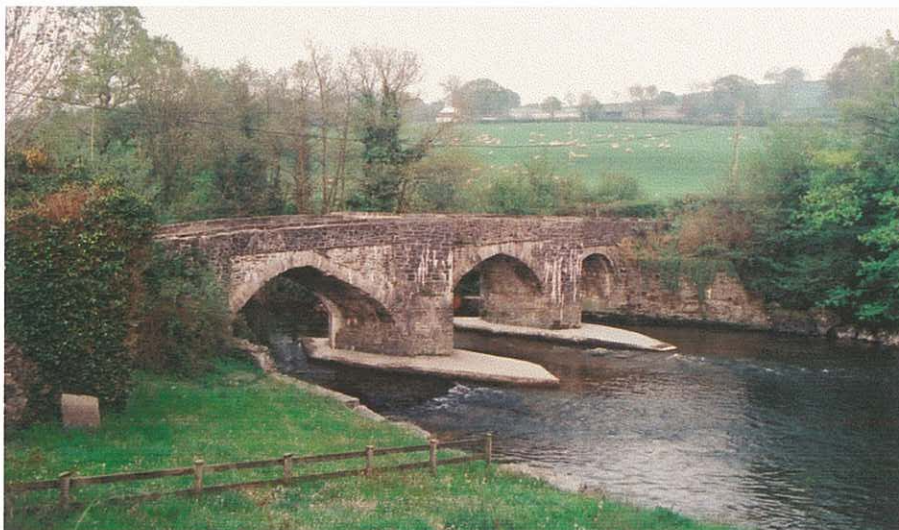


Some of the major dwellings worthy of mention, were Pengwernogle, which appears on Saxton's Map of Carmarthenshire of 1578. Fforest Brechfa is a mansion which dates to the Stuart period (17th century). Brithdir was also a major dwelling

Agriculture and forestry were the main occupations of the local population from mediaeval times until the 20th century. Another important occupation which would have influenced the local economy was that of the cattle drover. The drovers were responsible for moving thousands of cattle and sheep every year from farms in west Wales to the cities and markets of England. One of the main droving centres in the region during the 18th and 19th centuries was at Llansawel, a short distance east of Abergorlech. The road along the Cothi valley from Brechfa, through Abergorlech and on to Llansawel would have been frequently used by the drovers, as would the mountain track across the commons in the northern part of the community of Llanfihangel Rhos-y-corn.

There were undoubtedly some dangers facing the drovers on their travels, especially when returning from the English markets carrying considerable sums of money on their person. It is significant that the old name for the mountain track across the commons was *Ffordd y Lladron* or the Road of Thieves, and it is probable that highwaymen and robbers would occasionally have taken advantage of unsuspecting or lone travelers passing by this route. It is possible that some of the local woodlands were cleared in order to reduce the risks of ambush for travellers along such remote roads.

Other recent industries of note are confined to of a small woollen industry, best represented by the 19th century Nantyffin Woollen Mill (between Brechfa and Abergorlech) and the 19th and early 20th century Brechfa Chemical Works, where naptha oil was extracted from wood.



*Pont Abergorlech. The historic bridge over the Cothi at Abergorlech. The ivy covered ruins of Abergorlech corn mill can be seen at the left of the photograph.*



Since the 17th century, great environmental, social and economic changes have been matched by religious developments which have seen the growth of nonconformist chapels across Wales. The Welsh Congregationalist denomination were particularly successful within the community of Llanfihangel Rhos-y-corn. Three Congregationalist chapels are found within its borders, the earliest cause being at Abergorlech, which was founded in 1660, the first chapel there being built in 1740 (as with most early nonconformist congregations, meetings were held in local farms and barns before the chapel was built). There are also Independent chapels at Gwernogle and Lldiad Nenog.

The only other denomination to have been represented in the district were the Unitarians, and one of the greatest historical figures associated with their cause, Thomas Evans (Thomas Glyn Cothi) was born at Capel Sain Silyn, Gwernogle, in the late 18th century and raised amongst the congregation of Gwernogle chapel. He was a passionate political reformer and anti-slavery campaigner. Like his father he was a weaver and travelled the fairs of south Wales selling his cloth. Through this he became interested in the Unitarian cause and his father's home was licensed for Unitarian preaching in 1786. The former Unitarian chapel of Cwmwrdu, near Gwernogle, grew out of this early congregation. Unfortunately the chapel has now closed and been converted into a private dwelling. Another prominent 19th century Unitarian, William Thomas (Gwilym Marlais) was born at Glanrhyd-y-gwiall, Nantyffin. He rose to prominence as a literary figure, political reformer and teacher of some note and was minister at Llwyn Rhydyrowen, where he led local tenant farmers in a dispute over farms rents and tenancy conditions - a protest that saw his congregation locked out of their own chapel by their landlord.



*A typical Welsh nonconformist chapel*

## STORIA SOCIALE HANES GYMDEITHASOL SOCIAL HISTORY

The social history of any district is one of its greatest historical assets, but without detailed documentary and oral research, details are difficult to collect and present. A brief survey of material held at the National Library of Wales and Carmarthenshire Record Office gives us an overview of the main trends in local social history and some insight into local traditions.

Amongst the most notable documents at the National Library are two 19th century "Bidding Letters" which recall the Welsh tradition of inviting friends and family to present gifts to a couple due to be married. The purpose of the "bidding" tradition was to ensure that the newly-married couple had all the furniture and possessions required to establish their new home. They recipients of the gifts would be expected to return the favour to friends and neighbours in the event that any of them were married in the future.

Another rural institution was the *cwrw bach* ("small brew") which was an opportunity for someone facing financial hardship to get the help of their neighbours. They would brew a quantity of *medd* (mead) or beer (*cwrw*) and invite neighbours to their home to help them drink it. The guests would of course pay for their drinks and well-to-do guests would pay a little more than necessary for the host's benefit. Such communal efforts to help friends and neighbours was one of the most endearing aspects of rural Welsh society in the face of economic hardship.

Records at the National Library and Carmarthenshire Record Office give details of the local community during the 19th century. Comparing the census returns for 1841 and 1891, it is easy to see that there was a decrease in the population during this period. Between 1841 and 1891 the amount of inhabited houses was also reduced, with the number of uninhabited houses growing. It is also interesting to note how the female population was larger than the male population throughout these years.

	1841	1891
Inhabited houses	219	57
Uninhabited houses	19	3
Males	472	129
Females	506	134

In 1841 most of the local population were involved in agriculture. It is possible to see agricultural man-servants and agricultural female-servants were most numerous. The remaining population included many farmers. Paupers were also quite common and an interesting range of crafts and other occupations are recorded, such as carpenters, tailors, masons, blacksmiths, ministers, shoemakers and weavers. "Wood colliers" (charcoal burners) are also listed, reminding us of the continuing importance of the local woodland as a source of fuel.



Swydd Gaerfyrddin, Medi 29ain, 1877.

Gan ein bod yn bwriadu cymeryd arnom y SEFYLLFA  
BRIODASOL, ar ddydd Mawrth yr 16eg o Hydref nesaf,  
bwniadwn wneud NEITHIOR ar yr achlysur yr un  
dydd, yn ein tŷ ein hunain a elwir Ty'r-cae, yn mhlwyf  
Llanfihangel-rhosycorn; yn mha le, ac ar ba amser, yr  
hoffir ech cyfeillach siriol, a pha roddion bynag a weloch  
yn dda gyflen arnom y pryd hwy, a dderbynir yn ddi-  
olchgar, a gydnabyddir yn wresog, ac a ad-delir yn  
serchog, bryd bynag y gelwir am danynt ar y cyffelyb  
achlysur,

Gan eich ufydd wasanaethwyr,

THOMAS THOMAS,  
ELIZABETH EVANS.

Y mae y Dyn Ieuan, ynghyd a'i Fam, Sarah Thomas,  
ynghyd a'i Frawd a'i Chwaer-ynghyfraith, David ac Elizabeth  
Thomas, Hafodygrugyn, yn dymuno ar fod i bob pwythion o'r  
natur uchod dyiedus iddynt hwy, gael eu dychwelyd i law y  
Dyn Ieuan, y dydd uchod, a byddant yn ddiolelgar ynghyd  
a'i Frawd-ynghyfraith a'i Chwaer, David a Mary Evans, Ty-  
canol, Brechfa, am bob rhoddion ychwanegol.

Hefyd mae y Ferch Ieuan, ynghyd a'i Mam, Hannah  
Evans, Llwynnealyn Mawr, Llanwenog, ynghyd a'i Brodyr, a'i  
Chwaerorydd, Evan, David, Thomas, Sarah, Anne, Hannah,  
Rachel, Lettice, a Eleanor Evans, a'i Chwaer, Margaret Tho-  
mas, yn dymuno ar fod i bob pwythion o'r natur uchod dy-  
edus iddynt hwy, gael eu dychwelyd i law y Ferch Ieuan  
y dydd uchod, a byddant yn ddiolelgar am bob rhoddion  
ychwanegol.

Gaerfyrddin: Argraffwyd gan S. Jones, Heol Prior.

Carmarthenshire April 22nd, 1848.

As we intend to enter the MATRIMONIAL  
STATE, on TUESDAY, the 23rd day of MAY  
next, we purpose to make a BIDDING on  
the occasion the same day, at the Young  
Man's Father's House, called WHITE HALL,  
in the Parish of Llanfihangel-rhos-y-corn;  
when and where the favour of your good  
and agreeable company is humbly solicited,  
and whatever donation you may be pleased  
to bestow on us then, will be thankfully re-  
ceived, warmly acknowledged, and cheer-  
fully repaid, whenever called for on a similar  
occasion,

By your most obedient servants,

DANIEL EVANS,  
ELIZABETH THOMAS.

The Young man, with his Father and Mother, David and Anne  
Evans, White Hall, Brechfa, desire that all bidding debts due to  
them be returned to the Young Man on the said day, and will be  
thankful with his Brothers and Sisters for all favours granted.

The Young Woman desires that all bidding debts due to her be  
returned on the said day, and will be thankful for all favours  
granted.

PRINTED BY M. JONES, PRIORY STREET, CARMARTHEN.

In 1891 the main occupation was still farming, but there was a decrease in the presence of paupers and the development of new occupations. In 1891, the first coal miners have already appeared and a few innkeepers and schoolmasters are present. That means that the life of this relatively remote community was becoming influenced by the industrial development of the coalfield area in south-eastern Carmarthenshire.

Better organised public educational services were replacing the denominational Sunday Schools and also having an effect. The cultural character of the population was changing. The main language spoken remained Welsh but the language of education had undoubtedly become English.

During the 20th century, huge changes affected the culture and physical appearance of the landscape. Many of the cottages of farmsteads of the old community disappeared beneath huge coniferous forest plantations, as the Forestry Commission created a new Glyncothi Forest to answer the national need for home grown timber.



*A view of Abergorlech from the southern end of its historic bridge, with St David's Church in the centre*



## VILLAGGI PENTREFI VILLAGES

### ***Llanfihangel Rhos-y-corn Church***

The first church in Rhos-y-corn parish was, according to tradition, probably built by a hermit named Silyn, who is held to have settled in Gwernogle in the 6th or 7th century. The site of Capel St Silyn is still visible at Gwernogle. St. Michael's church dates from at least as early as the 13th century. It became a place of pilgrimage and pilgrims who had climbed the steep hill of "Rhipyn Silyn" would kneel on a large flat stone at the point from which they would first see the church. The fields around became known as "Cae'r Paderau Bach"(Fields of the little prayer).

A second nave was added to the church c. 1500. The furniture in the church , which includes an eighteenth century "Sunburst " Pulpit, is the work of local craftsmen. In the last century a school was hold in the church parch.

### ***Abergorlech***

Although itself a very small village, Abergorlech is the largest of the historic settlements found within the community. It stands at an historic fording and bridging point of the Afon Cothi and is graced by a splendid three arched-stone bridge spanning the river.

Historically, the Abergorlech area fell within the parish of Llanybydder, but St David's church, originally a chapel-of-ease to Llanybydder, has probably existed at Abergorlech since at least Norman times. The 1st edition OS map of 1880 names the church as St Mary's and the St David dedication may well be a recent rededication. The church was restored in 1885. It is possible that the lower portions of the nave and chancel walls are those of an earlier church building.

Abergorlech was recorded as having a fulling mill during mediaeval times, but little else is known of the village before the 19th century. The mill site is still recognisable in the shape of a ruined mill building on the Abergorlech side of the Cothi, at the end of Abergorlech Bridge.

The Black Lion Inn, is now the only pub in the village. In the mid-19th century there was a pub called "Wheaten Sheaf Inn" in Abergorlech, which occupied the dwelling now known as Ty Mawr. Ty Mawr (Great House) was undoubtedly an early gentry house of probable late mediaeval origin. The Congregational Chapel was built here in 1740. The later 19th century saw a school being built in the village also, although it has now closed and been converted into a private dwelling.

### ***Gwernogle***

The Independent chapel at Gwernogle was built in 1749, rebuilt in 1819 and renewed in 1890. Nearby is the site of the ancient chapel of St Silyn, which had become a cottage by the 18th century and was the birthplace of the famous preacher and reformer, Thomas Evans (Thomas Glyn Cothi). The cottage is now used as an outbuilding for a neighbouring house and a plaque bearing the following commemorative inscription is fixed to its gable end;

*Yn y ty hwn y ganed Thomas Glyn Cothi Mehefin 20, 1764  
Bu farw yn Aberdâr Ionawr 29, 1833  
Pregethwr, Diwygiwr, Llenor, Emynydd*

The 19th century saw a small hamlet developing around the chapel. A post office was built here in the late 19th century (which is now a private dwelling but still recognisable as an old post office building). A smithy stood on the hill above the post office during the 19th century and a school lay just to the east of the chapel. To the south was the Church Mission Hall.

### ***Llidiad Nenog***

The poetically named settlement of Llidiad Nenog (Llidiad = gate; Nenog - at altitude/heavenly) comprises of a few dwellings and Capel Nenog, is a small 19th century Congregational chapel in a remote and altudinous location in the north of the community.

### ***Brechfa***

Brechfa village was the focus of the mediaeval monastic grange of Brechfa-Gothi which was owned by Talley Abbey between the 12th and 16th centuries. The heart of the village lies on the southern side of the Afon Cothi and is therefore outside the Llanfihangel Community boundary. However, in recent times the village has developed northwards and new housing appeared within Llanfihangel Rhos-y-corn. An early 20th century chemical works at Brechfa, where naptha oil was produced from wood, is located within Llanfihangel Rhos-y-corn. Earlier interest is prompted by the name of a field called Maes-y-groes "The Field of the Cross" on the northern bank of the Cothi, opposite Brechfa parish church to the south.



GWERNOGLE

Ysgol a mynwent a chapel llwyd,  
A hanner dwsin o dai;  
Afon byllog a'r coedydd yn rhwyd  
Uwchben ei frydiau di-drai.

Llethrau dan ellytydd yn codi'n serth,  
A'r bryniau tal ar bob tu,  
Ffermdai ar wasgar, a thir di-werth,  
Dwy dderwen o'r oesau fu.

Dyna a welit wrth ddod i'r hen gwm  
Am y tro cyntaf erioed,  
A'th ysgeiriau flin gan deithio trwm  
Dros ffordd ddi-groeso i'th droed.

Ond nid y ffordd honno a gerddwn ni  
Y Plant wrth gyrchu'r hen fro,  
Eithr lloriau llyfnion, na gweli di,-  
I'w troedio pan fynno'r co'.

(Parchedig T.Eurig Davies, 1949)

GWERNOGLE

*A school, a cemetery and a grey chapel,  
And half-a-dozen houses,  
A lazy stream, with beautiful trees  
Hanging above its endless flow.*

*Wooded slopes rising steeply,  
And high hills lie on all sides,  
Farmsteads scattered amongst the waste lands  
Two oaks from an age gone by.*

*That's what you see in the old valley  
Arriving for the very first time,  
Your limbs so tired from travelling so far  
Along the hard, stony road.*

*But we, the Children, don't go that way  
When visiting the old places.  
We walk an easier road, beyond your understanding,  
The path of our memory's store.  
(Reverend T.Eurig Davies, 1949)*

**Appendix:** Sites on the Regional Sites and Monuments Record  
Map of Archaeological Sites in Llanfihangel Rhos-y-corn

Copy of William Rees' Map of South Wales in the 14th Century  
(Carmarthenshire portion)

Copy of 1st edition 1 inch : 1 mile Ordnance Survey Map of 1831  
for the Llanfihangel Rhos-y-corn district



Maria at the Cambia Archaeology offices, Llandeilo



# **Appendix 1:** **Llanfihangel Rhos y Corn Community**

## **Sites on the regional Sites and Monuments Record**

PRN	Grid Reference	Site Name	Type of Site	Date	Site Status
712	SN50233547	CRUG PENHEOL	ROUND BARROW	Bronze Age	SAM
716	SN54433568	CLUN MAERDY BARROW	ROUND BARROW	Bronze Age	
722	SN515367	CAPEL NENOG;BRYN LLEWELLYN	STANDING STONE	Bronze Age	
730	SN55103667	CRUG CNWC	ROUND BARROW	Bronze Age	LB2
737	SN51153466	HAFOD TRIDRWS	ROUND BARROW	Bronze Age	
742	SN54963470	ST MICHAEL'S	CHURCH	Mediaeval;Post Med	
1188	SN53473949	CRUGIAU EDRYD "B"	ROUND BARROW	Bronze Age	SAM
1189	SN53463946	CRUGIAU EDRYD "C"	ROUND BARROW	Bronze Age	SAM
1190	SN53443943	CRUGIAU EDRYD "D"	ROUND BARROW	Bronze Age	SAM
1195	SN58503367	ST DAVID'S	CHURCH	Post Med	LB2
3384	SN545353	CLYN-MERDY	UNKNOWN	Unknown	Unknown
3385	SN547351	CLYN-MERDY	UNKNOWN	Unknown	
3397	SN509342	SALACH	UNKNOWN	Unknown	
4761	SN50763662	CAE GARN	ROUND BARROW?	Bronze Age	Mediaeval?;Post Med?
4764	SN551341	ALLT PANT-Y-BETTWS	RABBIT WARREN	Mediaeval?;Post Med?	
5393	SN50003100	CWM PIB	CAVE	Unknown	
5866	SN53303557	HENDRE-EINON	HENDRE?	Mediaeval?;Post Med?	Mediaeval?;Post Med?
5868	SN55113644	HAFODRWYNOS	HAFOD?	Mediaeval?;Post Med?	
6786	SN53103388	BURFA	COTTAGE	Post Med?	
6787	SN54733450	PANT-Y-BETTWS	LONGHOUSE	Post Med	LB2
6788	SN52183096	FFOREST;FOREST;FFOREST BRECHFA	MAJOR DWELLING;FARMSTEAD	Post Med	LB2
6789	SN53573452	ESGAIR FYNWENT	LONGHOUSE	Post Med?	Post Med?
6790	SN53013400	CAPEL SAIN SILIN	DWELLING	Post Med	
6791	SN52503410	CAE-DWGAN	LONGHOUSE	Post Med	
6792	SN53103390	BURFA;BYRFON	COTTAGE	Post Med	Post Med?
6794	SN55553248	CAPEL MAIR	LONGHOUSE	Post Med	
6795	SN56413290	MAES Y BIDIAU	LONGHOUSE	Post Med?	
6797	SN55503211	NANT Y FFIN	COTTAGE	Post Med	Post Med
8224	SN52403725	PEN-RHIW-DILFA	DWELLING	Post Med	
10570	SN5555325	CAPEL MAIR	CHAPEL	Mediaeval	
11479	SN5233	PENGWERNOGLE	DWELLING	Mediaeval	Bronze Age;Unknown
11590	SN50323555	MYNYDD LLANFIHANGEL	ROUND BARROW?;CLEARANCE CAIRN?	Bronze Age;Unknown	
11591	SN50373563	RHOS Y COR	ENCLOSURE?	Unknown	
		MYNYDD LLANFIHANGEL			
		RHOS Y COR			



PRN	Grid Reference	Site Name	Type of Site	Date	Site Status
11765	SN53003300	FFYNNON CAPEL	HOLY WELL?;WELL CHAPEL?	Mediaeval?;Post Med?	
12936	SN537311	GLYNCOTHI	FULLING MILL	Mediaeval	
13020	SN524359	PENGARREG	SETTLEMENT?	Unknown	
13490	SN5339	RHOS WEN	RACECOURSE?	Post Med?	
13590	SN50293555	MYNYDD LLANFIHANGEL	ROUND BARROW?	Bronze Age?	
		RHOS-Y-COR			
13694	SN504353	MYNYDD LLANFIHANGEL	COMMON LAND	Mediaeval;Post Med	
		RHOS-Y-COR			
13702	SN535387	LLANFIHANGEL RHOSYCORN	COMMON LAND	Mediaeval;Post Med	
		MOUNTAI			
13791	SN533378	LLANFIHANGEL RHOS Y CORN	COMMON LAND	Mediaeval;Post Med	
13792	SN540382	LLANFIHANGEL RHOS Y CORN	COMMON LAND	Mediaeval;Post Med	
14191	SN534394	CRUGIAU EDRYD	BARROW CEMETERY-LINEAR	Bronze Age	SAM
17082	SN50613481		GRAVEL PIT	Post Med	
17083	SN50573490	FFYNNON LAS	WELL	Post Med	
17084	SN51443458	HAFOD TRIDRWS	HAFOD?	Post Med	
17087	SN52913424	FELIN GWERNOGLE	MILL	Post Med	
17088	SN52983401		CHAPEL	Post Med	
17089	SN52903402		SMITHY	Post Med	
17090	SN53053406	GWERNOGLE	SCHOOL	Post Med	
17091	SN54493437		VICARAGE	Post Med	
17094	SN53333387	FFYNNON-Y-GOG	WELL	Post Med	
17095	SN54833377	PANT Y FFYNNON	WELL	Post Med	
17097	SN52483208		SMITHY	Post Med	
17098	SN52383201	KEEPER'S LODGE	LODGE	Post Med	
17099	SN53513289	CWMWRDU	CHAPEL	Post Med	
17100	SN53483272	PONT CWMMAWR-DU	BRIDGE	Post Med	
17101	SN53193253	HENDRE FADOG	HENDRE?	Post Med	
17102	SN51833113	FELIN MARLAIS	MILL	Post Med	
17103	SN53713112	FELIN FFOREST	CORN MILL	Post Med	
17104	SN53723100	PONT FELIN FFOREST	BRIDGE	Post Med	
17108	SN52103062	FOREST LODGE	LODGE	Post Med	
17109	SN52373054	BRYN Y FELIN	MILL?	Post Med	
17110	SN52463028	PONT TY MAWR	BRIDGE	Post Med	
17119	SN53603003	PONT YNYS BRECHFA	BRIDGE	Post Med	
17125	SN58623368	PONT GORLECH	BRIDGE	Post Med	

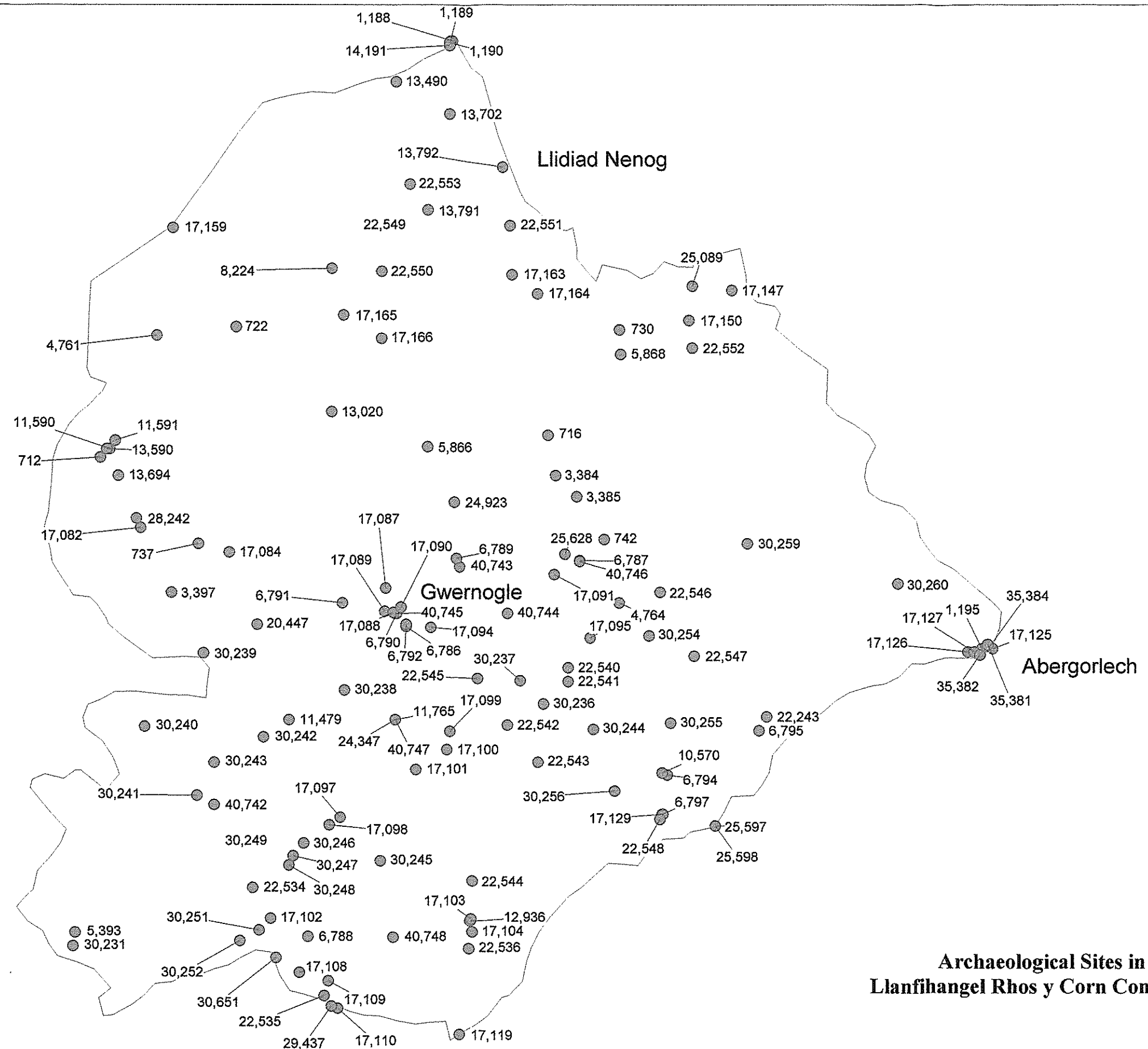
PRN	Grid Reference	Site Name	Type of Site	Date	Site Status
17126	SN58373364	CAPEL NEWYDD	CHAPEL	Post Med	
17127	SN58433364	ABERGORLECH	SCHOOL	Post Med	
17129	SN55513211	PONT NANT Y FFIN	BRIDGE	Post Med	
17147	SN56153704	FELIN-FACH;ALLT FELIN FACH	MILL	Post Med	
17150	SN55753676		GRAVEL PIT	Post Med	
17159	SN50913763	FFYNNON NANT TO	WELL	Post Med	
17163	SN54093719		QUARRY	Post Med	
17164	SN54333701		GRAVEL PIT	Post Med	
17165	SN52513681		QUARRY	Post Med	
17166	SN52873659		GRAVEL PIT	Post Med	
20447	SN517339	PANT Y RHYG	DWELLING	Post Med	
22243	SN56483303		DWELLING	Post Med?	
22534	SN51663142	NANT BOETH	COTTAGE?	Post Med	
22535	SN52333040	BRECHFA;Y GWAITH	CHEMICAL WORKS	Post Med	
22536	SN53693084	TY NEWYDD	COTTAGE?	Post Med	
22540	SN54623349	PANT MAENOG	COTTAGE?	Post Med	
22541	SN54623336	TAN Y CAPEL	COTTAGE?	Post Med	
22542	SN54053295	LLAIN OLEU UCHAF	COTTAGE?	Post Med	
22543	SN54343260	TIR YR YN	COTTAGE?	Post Med	
22544	SN53723148	TY'R BANC	COTTAGE?	Post Med	
22545	SN53773339	PEN DRE	COTTAGE?	Post Med	
22546	SN55483420	PANT TAWEL	COTTAGE?	Post Med	
22547	SN558336	ESGAIR ONEN FAWR	COTTAGE?	Post Med	
22548	SN55483206	NANT Y FFIN	WOOLLEN MILL	Post Med	
22549	SN52943768	CWM NANT RHYS	COTTAGE?	Post Med	
22550	SN52873722	BLOTWETH	COTTAGE?	Post Med	
22551	SN54073765	MAES LLYN	COTTAGE?	Post Med	
22552	SN55783650	PANT Y FYDA	COTTAGE?	Post Med	
22553	SN53133804	PEN RHIW FELEN	COTTAGE?	Post Med	
24347	SN5333	ALLT Y GARTH TRAMWAY	TRAMWAY	Post Med	
24923	SN53553505	BRITHDIR	MAJOR DWELLING	Post Med	
25089	SN55783708	LLETTY YN Y LLWYN	DWELLING	Mediaeval;Post Med	
25597	SN5632	BEDW BACH	PARK	Post Med	
25598	SN5632	BRYN COTHI	PARK	Post Med	
25628	SN54593456	PENTRE IFAN	DWELLING	Post Med	



PRN	Grid Reference	Site Name	Type of Site	Date	Site Status
28242	SN50573490	BRECHFA MOUNTAIN	PROJECT RECORD	General	
29437	SN524303	BRECHFA	VILLAGE	Mediaeval;Post Med	
30231	SN49983087	CWM-PIB	DWELLING	Post Med	
30236	SN54393315	LLUNDAIN-FACH	DWELLING	Post Med	
30237	SN54173337	PANT-Y-FER	DWELLING	Post Med	
30238	SN52523328	RHIW-SAITHBREN;RHIW-SAIT H-BREN	DWELLING	Post Med	
30239	SN51203363	LLWYN-YR-ODYN	DWELLING	Post Med	
30240	SN50653294	PEN-RHIW-LWYD	DWELLING	Post Med	
30241	SN51143229	GILFACH-MEREDYDD	DWELLING	Post Med	
30242	SN51763284	GWASTADAU	DWELLING	Post Med	
30243	SN513326		CHARCOAL BURNING SITE	Post Med	
30244	SN54863291	CYNARTH	DWELLING	Post Med	
30245	SN52863167		DWELLING?	Post Med	
30246	SN52143184	PANT-Y-CEFN	DWELLING	Post Med	
30247	SN52043172	TY-NEWYDD	DWELLING	Post Med	
30248	SN52003163	HENFFORDD?	DWELLING	Post Med	
30249	SN51723186	GELLI-GRIN	DWELLING?;FARMSTEAD?	Post Med	
30251	SN51723102		DWELLING?	Post Med	
30252	SN51543092	PLAS	DWELLING	Post Med	
30254	SN55383379	WATKIN;DAN-Y-COED	DWELLING	Post Med	
30255	SN55583297	GLAN-CAPEL-MAIR;LAN-CAPE L	DWELLING	Post Med	
30256	SN55063233	TAN-YR-ALLT-GANOL;TAN-YR -ALLT	DWELLING	Post Med	
30259	SN56303466	ESGAIRONEN FACH;ESGAIR-ONEN-FA	DWELLING	Post Med	
30260	SN57713428		DWELLING?	Post Med	
30651	SN51883076		MILL RACE	Post Med?	
35380	SN53SW		PROJECT RECORD	General	
35381	SN58373365	BRECHFA AND ABERGORLECH WALKS	SCHOOL	Post Med	
35382	SN58483361	ABERGORLECH	MILL	Post Med	
35384	SN58573369	CORN MILL ABERGORLECH	SMITHY	Post Med	
35388	SN53562858		TRACKWAY	Post Med?	
35966	SN	ARCHAEOLEG CAMBRIA ARCHAEOLOGY	PROJECT RECORD	Mediaeval;Post Med	

PRN	Grid Reference	Site Name	Type of Site	Date	Site Status
40742	SN51303220	NANT-Y-CASTELL	HILLFORT?	Iron Age?	
40743	SN53603444	ESGAIR FYNWENT	CEMETERY?	Dark Age?;Mediaeval?	
40744	SN54053400	CAE'R PADERAU;CAE'R PYDERAU	PILGRIMAGE STATION	Mediaeval	
40745	SN53003400	FFORDD SAIN SILYN	PILGRIMS WAY	Mediaeval	
40746	SN54733449	PANT-Y-BETTWS	PREACHING STATION	Mediaeval	
40747	SN53003300	FFYNNON SAIN SILYN	HOLY WELL	Mediaeval	
40748	SN52983095	LLYSTYN	LLYS?	Mediaeval	





Archaeological Sites in  
Llanfihangel Rhos y Corn Community

