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Cae Iago W/12/2445

Tir Gofal Farm Visit Historic Environment Report – Call Out



Report No. 2003/38

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Countryside Council for Wales

CAMBRIA ARCHAEOLOGY

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21st March 2003

Cae Iago
Tir Gofal Farm Visit Historic Environment Report

By

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Introduction

In response to notification from the Tir Gofal Project Officer that an area of the Roman road *Sarn Helen* had been stripped by machine immediately to the west of the farm yard, a call out visit was requested by the Countryside Council for Wales to determine if the archaeology had sustained any damage and to establish the best course of action. The site was visited on the 21st March 2003.

The course of the Roman road from Pumpsaint up the Twrch valley is largely perpetuated by the existing minor road which runs north from Ffarmers. South of Cae Iago the course of the modern road kinks to the east of the farmstead and at this point the path of the Roman road diverges. A bank in the farmhouse garden which stands to a height of approximately 0.5 metre would seem to represent the remains of the Roman road continuing in its direct course north west. Beyond the garden the visibility of the Roman road is lost, (probably largely due to ploughing in the past although this area has not been cultivated for some years) but it would seem to run through the farmyard and across the field crossing the Afon Twrch to the northwest, it is then again visible only 90 metres to the northwest of the river crossing.

Observations

A large roughly rectangular area approximately 45 metres north south and between 21 to 25 metres east west has been stripped of turf and topsoil, and a muck heap to the west of the northern farm building has also been removed. The waste spoil had been used to create a bank approximately 1 metre high at the western limit of this area. The topography of the area gently slopes to the north and west, eventually reaching the Afon Twrch in the valley bottom. A shallow gully no greater than 0.2 metre deep had been excavated between the exposed area and the bank, presumably to drain excess water towards a small tributary stream to the north and to an existing field drain to the south.

When the site was visited the conditions were very dry and there had obviously been machinery and vehicles tracking over the area which obscured subtle variations in soil colour and makeup.

The exposed subsoil is generally very stony, and there are patches of different stone spreads visible, largely on the highest areas, nearest the farmyard and buildings. To the south of the area there is a mixture of stone up to 0.2 x 0.15 metre which may result from the various building episodes related to the farm building adjacent. Around the gateway from the farmyard is a spread of grey slatey aggregate which would appear to represent dumping episodes to provide hard standing around the gateway. From the southern most stone barn in a westerly direction a field drain cuts across the area towards the field drain to the west. To the north of the exposed area at its highest point a spread of shale fragments up to 0.25 x 0.15 metre in size are visible.

Conclusion

The line of the Roman road is not obvious, however it undoubtedly passes through the area exposed. As mentioned above it is likely that the Roman road in this area does not survive in good condition, since this area appears to have been ploughed in the past and it is also probable that any good quality stone incorporated into the make up of the road has been robbed in antiquity to provide building stone for the farm buildings. However there are very likely traces of the

Roman road surviving, and the stony spread to the north of the exposed area may represent the remaining stone makeup of the road which has been dispersed due to cultivation in the past.

Fortunately the works undertaken in this area do not appear to have significantly disturbed the underlying subsoil, and only the topsoil and turf appear to have been removed. The greatest depth of soil appears to have been removed along the eastern side, adjacent to the farmyard. The sections here show a continuous horizon of dark humic topsoil up to 0.5 metre deep which includes random stone fragments and cobbles; the depth of the topsoil here is probably attributable to muck heaps and a build up of waste from the farm buildings. At the lowest extent of the area there are still fragments of turf which survive directly overlying the exposed subsoil. This would confirm the assertion that only the turf and topsoil had been removed.

Although the line of the Roman road is not obvious, there is a suggestion that it occupies the highest and very stony ground which runs across the area from the muck heap/gateway to the northwest corner of the exposed area.

Recommendations

The intention to lay down quarried stone over the exposed area to create an area of hard standing should help to prevent further damage being caused to any remains of the Roman road. However, it is advised that a membrane such as Terram is laid over the entire area of the exposed ground surface. This will enable any future removal of the quarried stone to be carried out without causing any further damage to the underlying deposits.

The owner has expressed an interest in excavating a section of the Roman road. This would undoubtedly be a valuable exercise and would provide much significant information. Any excavation carried out along the line of the Roman road would have to be carried out by a suitably qualified organisation and a specification of works should be drawn up and presented to Cambria Archaeology and the Countryside Council for Wales in advance for approval.

If further works are being considered on any part of the Roman road, or in the immediate vicinity, advice must be sought from Cambria Archaeology and the Countryside Council for Wales before the work is carried out.

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This report has been prepared by Alice Pyper

Position Archaeologist (Tir Gofal)

Signature Date

This report has been checked and approved by Louise Austin on behalf of Cambria Archaeology,
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Signature Date.....

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