

**CAMBRIA ARCHAEOLOGY  
FIELD OPERATIONS**

**LAND AT CAPEL DEWI  
CEREDIGION  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT**

**NOVEMBER 2000**

**Report No. 2000/51**

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Project Record No. 42465

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LAND AT CAPEL DEWI, CEREDIGION: ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

By

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## LAND AT CAPEL DEWI, CEREDIGION ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

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## SUMMARY

A search for sites in the Aberystwyth region that are suitable for future industrial development has resulted in a block of land at Capel Dewi (centred on NGR SN63308260) coming under consideration. As a part of early feasibility studies into the suitability of the site for development a rapid archaeological assessment was commissioned by RPS Chapman Warren, Cardiff, in November 2000. The assessment was not intended to be a comprehensive study; rather it was a rapid review of the known archaeological interests on the site which would also provide information on new sites or areas of archaeological potential.

The assessment revealed that Peithyll, on which the potential development site is centred, may be the location of a medieval fortified house (PRN 12437; NGR SN63308260). The exact position of the medieval house is unknown, but the present house and yard area has been occupied since at least the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The farm now consists of a mid 19<sup>th</sup> century model farm with the farm buildings arranged around a square yard detached from the 18<sup>th</sup> century farmhouse. Field name evidence suggests that other buildings may have existed on other parts of the possible development site. There is no doubt that the site is of significant archaeological interest and importance.

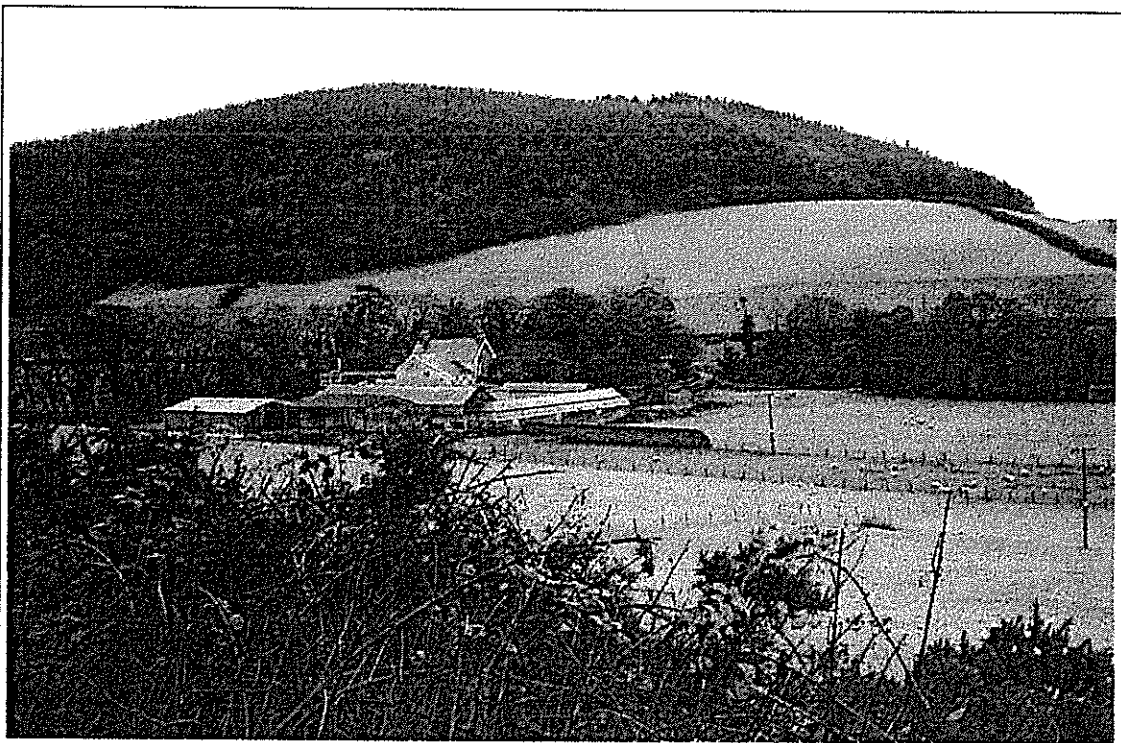


Plate 1: General view south across possible development site, showing Peithyll farm in centre. The site extends to the tree-line on the slopes of Banc y Gwmryn in the background.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 PROJECT PROPOSALS AND COMMISSION**

As part of an on-going search for potential industrial development sites around Aberystwyth a block of land at Capel Dewi (centred on NGR SN63308260) is currently being considered. One of the preliminary stages of this process is a rapid archaeological assessment of all areas under consideration. RPS Chapman Warren commissioned Cambria Archaeology Field Operations to carry out this assessment of the Capel Dewi development site in November 2000.

### **1.2 SCOPE OF THE PROJECT**

The assessment was intended to be a rapid review of all known archaeological interests in the development site and to identify new sites or features and areas of archaeological potential. It was also intended to outline the potential implications of development of the site and, where possible, to suggest possible mitigation measures.

### **1.3 REPORT OUTLINE**

This report describes the historical evolution of the study area (Section 2) before summarising the archaeological potential and implication of industrial development in Section 3. Recommendations based on the results of Sections 2 and 3 are given in Section 4. Details of research sources are presented in a series of appendices.

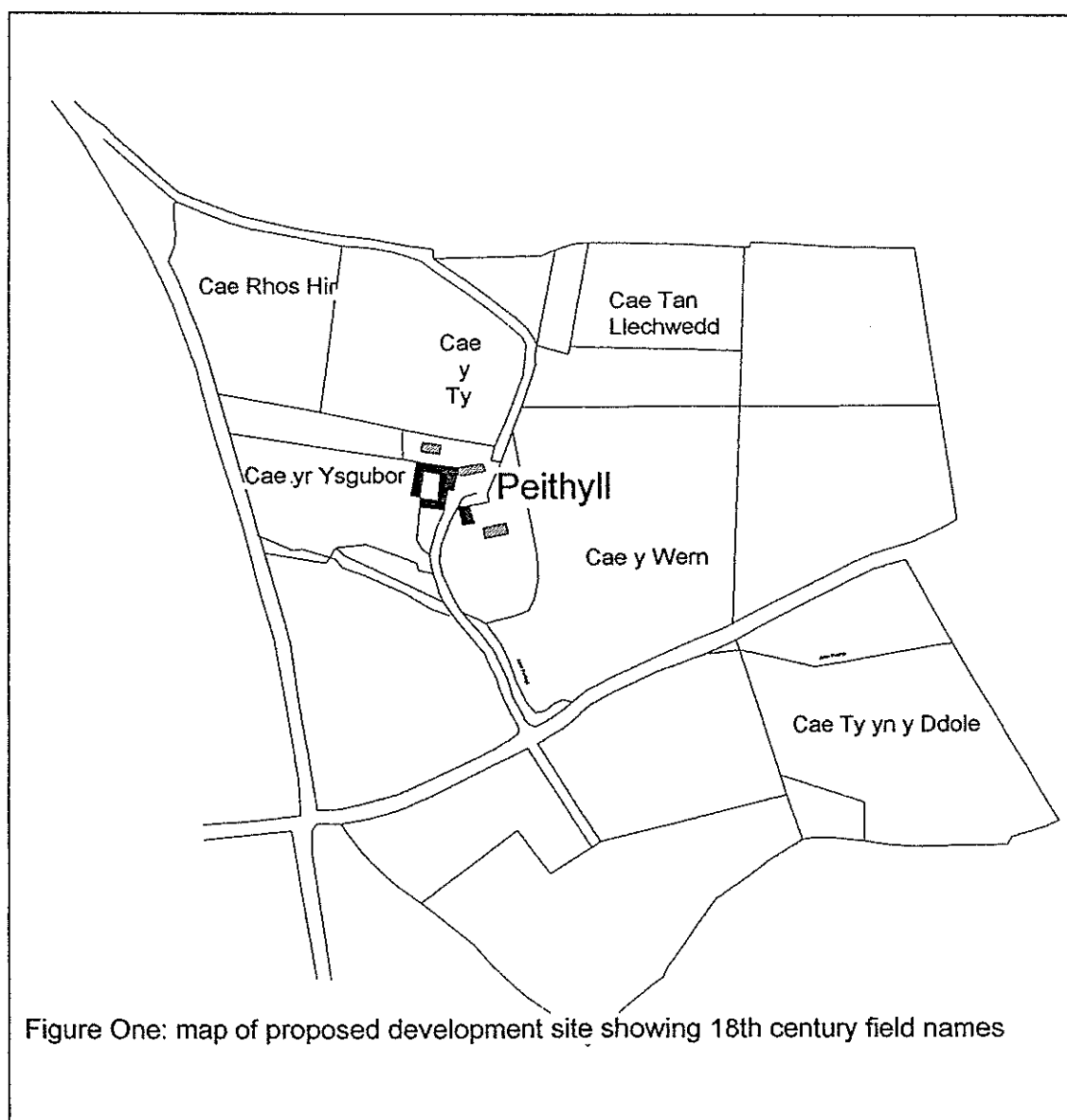
### **1.4 ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THIS REPORT**

All sites recorded on the county Sites and Monuments Record will be identified by their Primary Record Number (PRN) and located by their National Grid Reference (NGR). Any new sites will be assigned a PRN and located by their NGR. References to primary cartographic and documentary evidence and published sources will be given in brackets, full details will be found in the bibliography.

## 2. THE STUDY AREA

### 2.1 THE SITE

The site is divided into two sections, a core area of c. 16ha (40 acres) around Peithyll and an adjoining block measuring c. 17ha (42 acres) to the south and east. Hereafter, both sections will be considered as one unit. The area lies in a hollow between Allt Dderw on its north side and Banc y Gwmryn to the south, at the lower reaches of the narrow valley of the Afon Peithyll. The river runs east-west through the middle of the site. It is bounded on its north and south sides by blocks of woodland. The A4159 defines the west edge and field boundaries form the eastern limit. The site is currently under pasture and farmed from Peithyll, which sits centrally in the development site.



## 2.2 PEITHYLL: A RAPID HISTORY OF DEVELOPMENT

Peithyll (PRN 12437; NGR SN63118262) has its origins in the medieval period. William Rees on his *Map of South Wales and the Border in the Fourteenth Century* (1932) shows a fortified house on the site. However, reliable records for the place really only start in the 18<sup>th</sup> century when it was part of the Gogerddan estate. The earliest record so far located is a rental agreement from 1747 (NLW ref Gogerddan Collection RA1) when 'Pithyle' was occupied by Dorothy Lloyd at an annual rent of £19. It is clear from that entry that the farm was already well established as it was recorded as having arrears of £21-9s-1½d. In 1787 Peithyll consisted of the present house and a single north-south range of buildings on or close to the existing west range of farm buildings, which probably included a barn and attached animal shed. The farm survived in this form until the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century when interestingly it was depicted in on the tithe map of Llanbadarn Fawr, Parcel Ganol Township (1846), without the house. However, it is evident from a later 19<sup>th</sup> century description that the farm had been rebuilt to resemble its current form by 1872 (Nicholas 1872, 207).

At the time Nicholas described Peithyll as a *'plain mansion, chiefly noticeable for its investiture of modern farm buildings, adopted for an improved system of agriculture and rearing of stock'*. This suggests that the yard had been rebuilt as a Victorian model farm. The Ordnance Survey 1st ed 1:10560 published in 1891 shows the new layout as a complex of farm buildings arranged around a (covered?) courtyard with a large detached house a short distance to the southeast. Study of later maps shows that with the exception of a few modern farm buildings, the original 19<sup>th</sup> century layout has changed little since it was built. It is possible that the original range of buildings may have been incorporated into the courtyard buildings and that traces of them may survive in the present buildings. The 'plain mansion' described by Nicholas survives today and the groundfloor rooms all retain original plasterwork and mouldings.

The Ordnance Survey map of 1891 show the house surrounded on its south and east sides by a small area of woodland, which is also shown on the 1787 estate map. Footpaths through the wood suggest that it had a decorative function as well as serving as a commercial enterprise. One of the paths leads to a series of ponds that lie to the south of the yard. The ponds were shown on the late 18<sup>th</sup> century Gogerddan Estate map, but not on the tithe map. It is not clear if the ponds were omitted deliberately because they were no longer significant features, or as the result of a surveying error, but the fact that the house was also omitted from the tithe map suggests the latter. Three interconnected ponds, which were fed by the Afon Peithyll, were shown on the Ordnance Survey 1st edition map in 1891, but it appears that two of them had been combined to make one large pond by 1906. It is unusual, although not completely unknown, for a small farm like Peithyll to have an elaborate system of ponds in the later 18<sup>th</sup> century, indicating that the ponds may be associated with an earlier house, possibly even the fortified medieval house which occupied the site. The ponds are now almost completely silted and very overgrown.

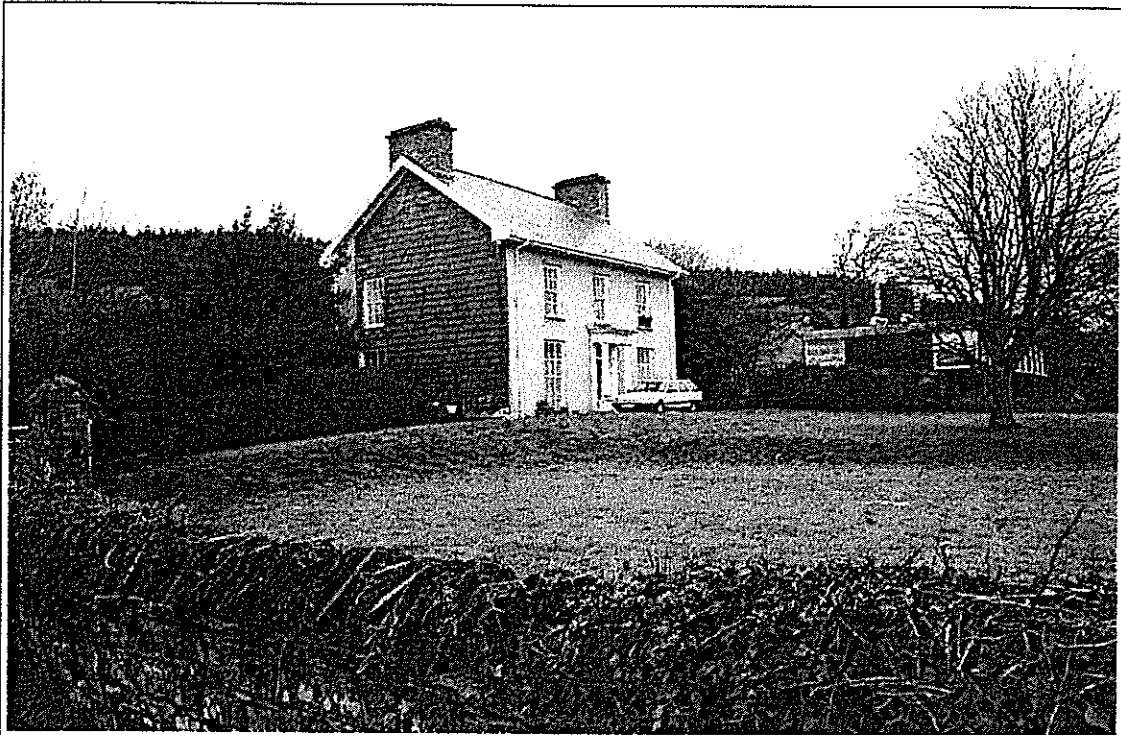


Plate 2: 18<sup>th</sup> century farmhouse, described in 1872 as a 'plain mansion'.

At the same time as the farm was being rebuilt the layout of fields was also undergoing a series of changes, most notably in the area to the east and northeast of the yard. On the late 18<sup>th</sup> century estate map the field boundaries tended to respect the topography of the land, with most boundaries curving and often following the contours across the slope of Allt Dderw. The area to the northeast of the site was simply called The Hill and was shown as unenclosed.

Some boundaries have been lost and others straightened. Most of the present layout was established by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. There has been some modern reordering with new boundaries and drains created in the recent past.

### **2.3 PLACE AND FIELD NAME EVIDENCE**

A rapid study of the field-names recorded on the schedule that accompanied the late 18<sup>th</sup> century estate map has revealed several interesting details. It is likely that Peithyll took its name from the Afon Peithyll which runs through a narrow valley which during the medieval period was known as Ystrad Peithyll. The remains of a motte and bailey castle called Ystrad Peithyll stand approximately 2.5km upstream (east) of the development site.

The name Peithyll and some of the field-names describe the location of the farm on the edge of formerly unenclosed land. The *Peith* element of Peithyll is an old term for moorland or rough open grassland and the field name Cae Rhos Hir (*long moor field*) also refers to an area of moorland. Most of the field-names are topographical and refer directly to their position in the landscape, Cae Tan Llechwedd (*field below the hillside*), or in relation to the house, Cae ty (*house field*). Other field-names provide



information on the character and condition of the land such as Cae y Wern (*field of the alder trees*) which indicates that an area of alder carr had developed in a field that was wet and poorly drained.

Two of the field-names refer to now lost buildings, Cae yr Ysgubor (*barn field*) and Cae Ty yn y Ddole (*field of the house in the meadow*). These names are very specific and both the fields survive, but it is not known at present where the buildings referred to were located. Could the house mentioned in Cae Ty yn y Ddole have been the original medieval house?

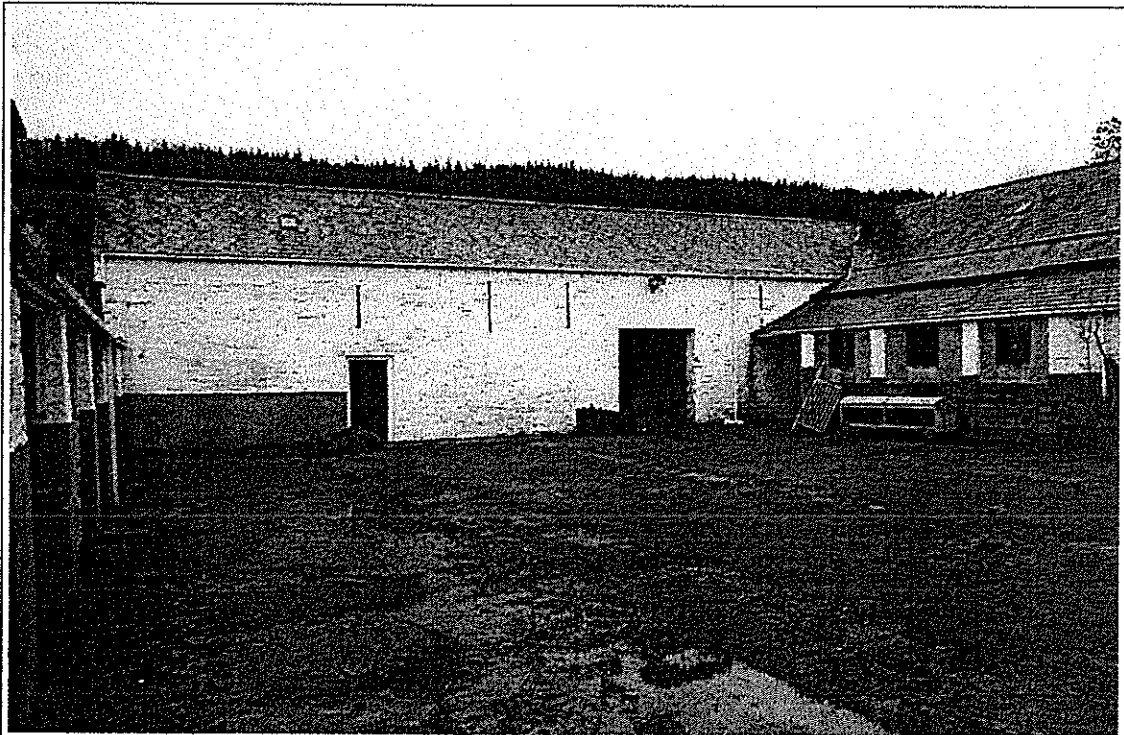


Plate 3: Interior of the 19<sup>th</sup> century farm courtyard showing the winnowing barn and stable in the north range. The possible 18<sup>th</sup> century range is just visible on the left.

### 3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL AND IMPLICATIONS

#### 3.1 PEITHYLL FARM

The most archaeological sensitive area of the site is the farm itself which may have been occupied since the medieval period, although the site of the medieval fortified house is unknown. What evidence, if any, survives for the medieval and subsequent post-medieval houses is unknown at present but obviously any development on or close to the yard, house or ponds has the potential to encounter significant archaeological remains.

The existing house dates from at least the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the yard is a mid 19<sup>th</sup> century model farm and therefore they form an important site in their own right. Farms of this kind with their planned yards and large farmhouse can provide enormous amounts of information regarding aspects of Welsh life as diverse as the changes in farming methods and the applications of new technology, to changes in architectural and decorative styles which reflect the economic and social milieu of the owners. For example, the walks through the woodland to the south and east of the house are clearly an attempt to create a landscape that reflects 'land ownership' rather than farming. However, the fact that the yard buildings are clearly visible from the main drive before it reaches the house indicates that the owners were equally happy to display that they were successful farmers.

The series of ponds which lie to the south of the house and yard form an important part of the farm complex. The ponds are first shown on the late 18<sup>th</sup> century estate map, but they are an unusual feature for a small farm, which Peithyll seems to be at that time. They possibly pre-date the 18<sup>th</sup> century buildings and may be associated with the medieval fortified house that is known to be located in the vicinity, or with a subsequent post-medieval phase of occupation.

Any proposed development that affects any part of the group will destroy the important associations between the group elements resulting in the fragmentation of the archaeological record and the loss of important evidence about the farm's development and the lives of those who lived there.

#### 3.2 OTHER POTENTIAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL INTERESTS

The only other areas of potential archaeological interest are the fields which refer to former buildings, Cae yr Ysgubor (*barn field*) and Cae Ty yn y Ddole (*field of the house in the meadow*). The name Cae Ty yn y Ddole is potentially an interesting and important piece of evidence. No houses were shown on the late 18<sup>th</sup> century estate map near the field so it had presumably been abandoned and demolished before the map was produced. At present we know nothing of the house in question so it is not possible to say much about its age or form, except that it is probably earlier than the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The house could be anything from a small field cottage to the original medieval fortified house. All eventualities must be considered.

## **4. RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **4.1 FUTURE WORK**

This rapid assessment of the historical development and archaeological potential of the site has shown that Peithyll has a long history and that the site has many important and interesting aspects. It is clear that in the event of this site going forward for planning and subsequent development there would be significant archaeological implications.

Without any details regarding the extent and nature of the future development it is not possible to make specific recommendations. However, if the development site is selected for a more detailed feasibility study it may be desirable to implement a programme of archaeological investigation, recording and evaluation to fully inform the decision making process. The programme would need to be comprehensive and likely to include, geophysical survey to locate missing buildings, standing building survey of the house and farm complex, topographical survey of the area around the farm, more detailed documentary searches and trial evaluations of those areas most likely to contain buried archaeological deposits.

## REFERENCES

### CARTOGRAPHIC SOURCES

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1932 A Map of Wales and the Borders in the Fourteenth Century by Willam Rees.

### DOCUMENTARY SOURCES

- 1747-1748 (NLW ref RA1)  
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1757-1758 (NLW ref RA4)  
1758-1759 (NLW ref RA5)  
1761-1762 (NLW ref RA6)  
1762-1763 (NLW ref RA7)  
1763-1764 (NLW ref RA8)  
1765-1766 (NLW ref RA9)  
1767-1768 (NLW ref RA10)

### PUBLISHED SOURCES

- Nicholas T 1872 *The County Families of Wales*, vol 1.

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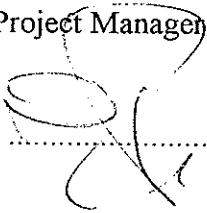
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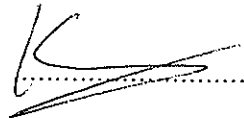
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This report has been checked and approved by Ken Murphy on behalf of Cambria Archaeology,  
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