



# Cefn Maes Mawr W/11/3472

## Tir Gofal Farm Visit Historic Environment Report



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# CAMBRIA ARCHAEOLOGY

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## Cefn Maes Mawr Tir Gofal Farm Visit Historic Environment Report

By

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Following a request from the Tir Gofal project officer, a call-out visit was undertaken to establish the nature and possible significance of a mound in the southwest of the land at Cefn Maes Mawr.

## **GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF FARM**

Cefn Maes Mawr (at grid reference SN32364632) lies a few miles north of Newcastle Emlyn, near the village of Troedysaur. It was visited by Cambria Archaeology on May 20<sup>th</sup>, 2003.

The farmstead itself is seen on the Ordnance Survey Old Series map of 1834, and named as "Cefn y Maes". The overall field pattern has altered little since the production of the tithe map in 1837, and several sunken trackways which are in use today follow the same routes as those seen on historic maps.

The landowner was approached by a group who are interested in locating the grave of Prince Gereint, the eldest son of King Erbin of Dumnonia. He apparently inherited the throne of Dumnonia in around AD 490. Legend states that he was a Knight of the Round Table, and fought with King Arthur at the Battle of Llongborth Beach where he was mortally wounded. It has been suggested that the site of this battle is marked by a farm named "Llongborth", around 3 ½ miles northwest of Cefn Maes Mawr. The burial place of Gereint is apparently also recorded in a farm name – Bedd Geraint (meaning Grave of Geraint). This is the farm adjoining to the west of Cefn Maes Mawr. A large mound in the southwest of Cefn Maes Mawr was suggested as a possible site for the grave mound of Prince Gereint.

Although the place-name evidence is intriguing, it should be treated cautiously. The Ordnance Survey 1834 map, for example, records the farm of 'Bedd Geraint' as being named 'Perth Cerynt', so even though the current name is seen on the 1891 map, it probably only dates from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

## **DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE**

The mound lies in a field bounded on the north and west side by Afon Ceri. The area is a flat, narrow valley bottom, and the hills either side rise quite sharply above the floodplain. The ground is unimproved pasture, with a large amount of rushes and reeds in lower lying areas. There are several areas of higher ground which show up clearly as grass covered 'islands' within the rushes. If they were seen in isolation, many of these mounds may be identified as being artificially constructed. However, aerial photographs clearly show that the whole landscape along the Ceri Valley has been formed through complex geomorphological processes. It is likely that many of the 'earthworks' in the area were formed through glacial action. The situation is further complicated by several palaeochannels, which highlight previous meanders of the river, and show up as areas of much darker vegetation and wetter soil.

The landowner commented that the soil in these fields is very shallow, and is underlain either by almost pure clay, or by clean gravel. Both of these are often found in old river valleys, and gravel is also frequently associated with glacial action.

The mound in question is roughly oval, around 40 – 45m in length and 25m wide. At its highest, it stands to at least 3.5m. The east end in particular has a regular, symmetrical profile, with the sides sloping evenly down to the boggy ground which surrounds the mound. In the centre, it narrows significantly, giving an overall ‘kidney-bean’ shape to the feature.



**Plate 1.** *The mound, viewed from the south. Although other mounds exist in this and surrounding fields, this is the most pronounced of them and is reputed to be the burial place of Prince Gereint.*



**Plate 2.** *Looking west from the mound. Other raised areas of drier ground are clearly visible as patches of paler vegetation. The lower lying areas are very wet, and covered in reeds which show as the darker green ‘channels’.*



This is the most pronounced of the mounds in this or surrounding fields, and its regular, curved shape does give some credence to the idea that it may be man-made. However, given the landscape within which the mound is set, it seems most likely that it is the result of natural, glacial processes.

## **MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS**

It has been proposed that further archaeological research should be carried out across the feature. The group concerned are intending to undertake a geophysical survey within this field, and have plans, eventually, to excavate the site.

Although it seems likely that the site is of natural origin, a geophysical survey may still yield evidence to the contrary. Detailed plans for the work should be drawn up, and discussed with Cambria Archaeology prior to the survey beginning. Only after the initial geophysical survey has been completed will it be possible to assess the suitability of any future excavation plans. If excavation is to be carried out, it will be in consultation with the Tir Gofal Project Officer, since the field is within a habitat creation area.

The present management regime involves only light grazing across this field, and should be continued.

## **SITE AND AREA STATUS GLOSSARY**

The following abbreviations are used in the gazetteer to refer to site and area status. These schedules, lists and registers are compiled and maintained by Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments.

### **SAM - Scheduled Ancient Monument**

This is a statutory designation. Scheduled Ancient Monuments are protected under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979.

### **LB1, LB2\* & LB2 – Listed Building 1, 2\* & 2**

This is a statutory designation. Listed buildings are protected under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

### **HLW - Historic Landscapes of Wales**

Historic Landscapes of Wales are defined by the *Register of Landscapes, Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in Wales: Part 2.1 Landscapes of Outstanding Historic Interest and Part 2.2 Landscapes of Special Historic Interest*. The register is advisory and has no statutory powers.

### **PGW - Parks and Gardens of Wales**

Parks and Gardens of Wales are defined by the *Register of Landscapes, Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in Wales: Part 1 Parks and Gardens*. The register is advisory and has no statutory powers.

## **REFERENCES**

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