

SEPT 2003



Maesybeddau W/13/3805

Tir Gofal Farm Visit Historic Environment Report Call Out



*A field wall adjacent to a possible church or chapel site will be
restored through Tir Gofal*

Report No. 2003/101

Report Prepared for:
Countryside Council for Wales

CAMBRIA ARCHAEOLOGY

REPORT NO. 2003/101
PROJECT RECORD NO. 45683

16th September 2003

Maesybeddau
Tir Gofal Farm Visit Historic Environment Report
Call Out

By

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Introduction

A farm visit was undertaken at the request of the Countryside Council for Wales in order to address specific management issues on this farm. The aim of this report is to make an assessment of these issues to provide management recommendations to be incorporated into the Tir Gofal Management Plan. This report is not intended to assess the structural condition or stability of any given site.

The Call Out Report responds to management issues regarding specific sites, it does not provide management advice for all known sites on the farm, for these recommendations please refer to the Historic Environment Report 1 (He1).

General Description of Farm

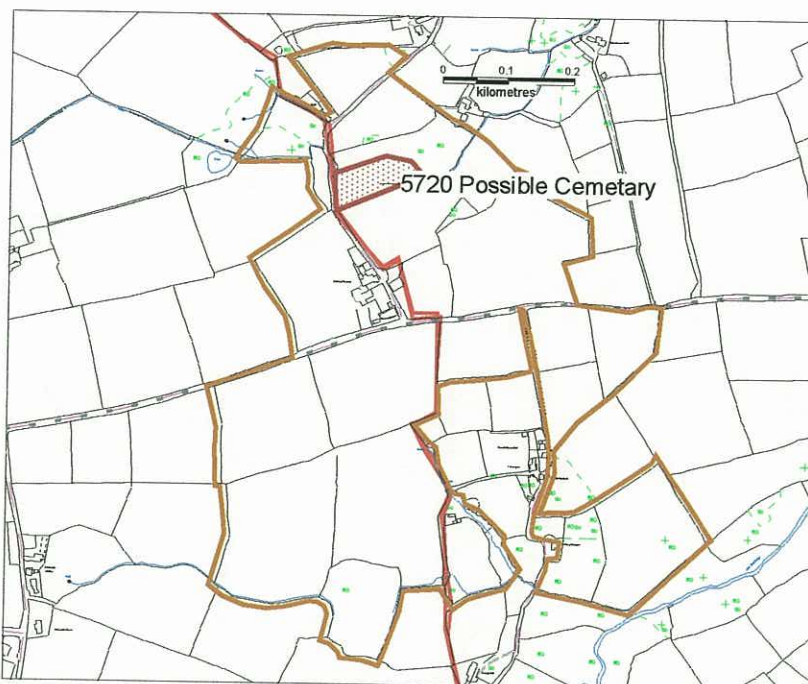
Maesybeddau, Pembrokeshire, lies within Nevern community, centred on National Grid Reference SN10663625. The farm was visited by Cambria Archaeology on the 16th of September 2003.

There are three holdings which constitute Maesybeddau farm. The main holding, which is centred around the farmstead, lies on the boundary between the Historic Landscape Character Areas of Eglwyswrw and Brynberian-Mirianog within the Preseli Registered Historic Landscape, in the Cadw/ICOMOS 'Register of Landscapes of Outstanding Historic Interest in Wales', (Historic Landscape Characterisation Areas 280 & 279 in Murphy and Ludlow, 2001; Area HLW (D) 7, Map 9 in Cadw/ICOMOS 1998;). The Historic Landscapes Register is a non-statutory, advisory document assessing the historic significance of the landscape to enable those involved in land care to make informed management decisions. The Registered area is further broken down in Historic Landscape Character Areas which assess components (such as land use, settlement, field pattern etc) within the landscape which give regions their distinctive quality.

Maesybeddau farm is situated on the gentle east facing slopes which lie above the steep sided valley of the Afon Brynberian. The landscape is made up of small irregular shaped fields defined by different types of field boundary, all composed of stone to a greater or lesser extent, and most with a hedge growing on top. Many of these boundaries have been supplemented with additional fencing.

The place-name, Maesybeddau (field of graves) is intriguing; the 'beddau' element (graves) is often associated with burial grounds from the bronze age (2000-600BC) or early medieval periods (410-1066AD). However, it does also become associated with naturally occurring landforms or with artificial features of a much later date, which are grave-like in their appearance. A recent survey of early medieval sites in Pembrokeshire incorporated Maesybeddau (Ludlow & Hall, 2003). This survey suggested that, based on the field pattern which appears to be the result of 18-19th century enclosure and that the Tithe map of Nevern (1843) does not indicate any ecclesiastical field names, in this instance the 'beddau' element would appear to be associated with the natural glacial erratic boulders which frequent the landscape in this area.

The occupants of the farm are aware of a tradition that claims that the field to the north of the house was the location of a mass burial from a battle site (possibly the battle of Mynydd Carn, Prn 1432, which took place in 1081 with Gruffydd ap Cynan and Rhys ap Tewdur, against Trahaern, the site of which is in much dispute.) In addition, it is believed locally that a field to the north of the holding holds the site of a former church or chapel and an associated burial ground. Indeed when the occupants took over the farm some 40 years ago they ploughed this field and discovered a large quantity of stonework in the centre.



The main holding of Maesybeddau farmstead, showing the location of a possible burial ground Prn 5720

Gazetteer

Prn 5720 - Possible Burial Ground

To the north of the farm is the suggested site of a battlefield burial site. The field was originally subdivided by a field boundary which was removed by the present owners. It was in the long, narrow field at the northern extent of the current enclosure that traditionally was the burial site of those slain in a local battle.

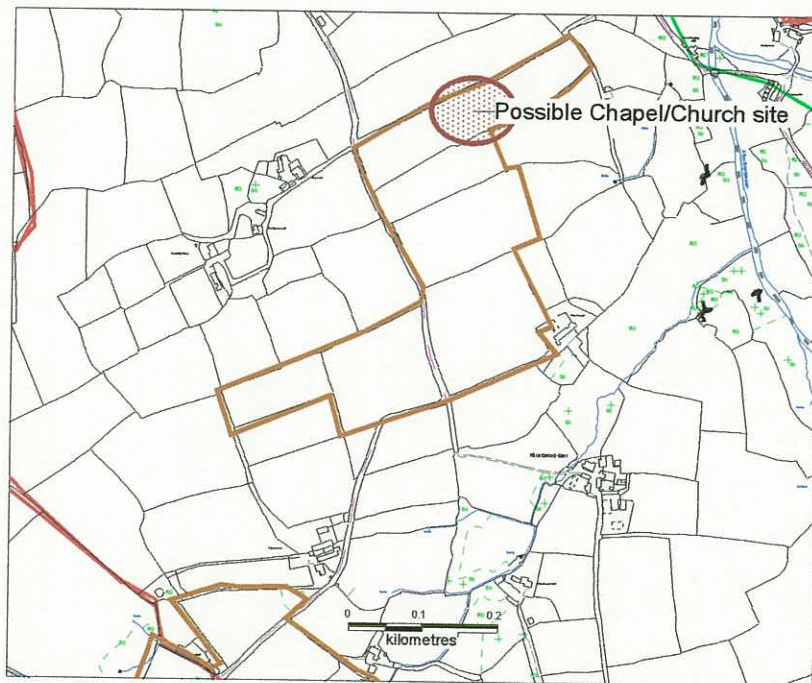
This field is occasionally ploughed and, at the time of the farm visit, had recently been cultivated. The field shows no indication of any earthworks or visible remains, and there is not even any indication of the relic field boundary which was removed within the last fifty years. Along the existing field boundary to the north are a number of large pieces of stone, the results of clearance from various episodes of cultivation.

Management Recommendations

Although there are no visible remains of any archaeological features in this field, the site of a battlefield burial would not necessarily be possible to identify from the ground. These kinds of sites are normally identified by geophysical surveys which can detect where the ground has been subjected to disturbance. On the basis of oral tradition alone it is difficult to assess the potential for archaeological remains, and consequently provide management recommendations. However, ideally the area identified should be excluded from cultivation to any greater depth than that which has been already carried out. If this area is to undergo any form of ground disturbing activities such as ploughing then please inform Cambria Archaeology in advance.

Possible Chapel/Church Site

When the present owners initially took over this farm they cultivated a long, narrow field to the north of the main farm holding. On ploughing this field a neighbour related the local tradition that a church or chapel used to stand in this field along with an associated burial ground. The field has not been ploughed since. Apparently when this field was ploughed an area of increased stone was noted, although it is not known if any of this stone showed signs of being cut stone or hewn which might indicate its use as a building material. The Tithe map of Nevern parish (1843) shows this field named 'Llain Fawr' a reference to the morphology of the field.



The second holding at Maesybeddau to the north of the farmstead, showing the location of a possible chapel or church site.



This field may have been the site of a church or chapel with an associated burial ground

The field is now under permanent pasture. Aerial photographs (RAF, 1955) indicate that a field boundary used to subdivide this field at the centre. There is no indication of earthworks which might indicate a building platform, however there is a change in the gradient of the slope towards the centre of the field and the ground appears to drop away more sharply to the east. It is possible that both the stonework observed through ploughing, and the change in gradient from west to east, is derived from this field boundary

A substantial stone wall defines the southern boundary of this field, it is currently in a poor condition and has collapsed in various areas. This wall is potentially going to be restored through Tir Gofal.



This impressive field wall which contains massive glacial boulders may also contain worked stone from the church or chapel site.

Management Recommendations

Whilst the site of this possible church or chapel and associated burial ground is kept under permanent pasture, it is under no threat. There has been no further evidence identified to confirm the existence of this structure, however until further investigation can be carried out on this site the present landuse of permanent pasture should be continued.

The restoration of the field wall is to be welcomed. The stone which is to be used for the wall is still lying to either side of the boundary. It maybe worthwhile to note that any masonry from the church or chapel may have been incorporated into the field wall. If any unusual or dressed stone (stone cut and finished for wall construction) is identified during the restoration please inform Cambria Archaeology.

References

Aerial Photograph/Meridian Airmaps/1955/210-230

Ludlow, N & Hall, J. 2003. *Early Medieval Ecclesiastical Sites Project Stage 2: Assess & Field Pembs Part2a: Gazetteer Of Sites*

Tithe map 1843 Nevern Parish

Tithe apportionment 1840 Nevern Parish

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This report has been prepared by Alice Pyper

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Signature Alice Pyper Date 6th November 2003

This report has been checked and approved by Louise Austin on behalf of Cambria Archaeology,
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Position: Principal Archaeologist (Curatorial)

Signature Louise Austin Date 12/11/03

As part of our desire to provide a quality service we would welcome any comments you may have
on the content or presentation of this report