

Erwbarfe W/11/4046

Tir Gofal Farm Visit Historic Environment Report Call Out



View across Erwbarfe, showing one of the spoil tips which help to characterise this landscape.

Report No. 2004/04

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CAMBRIA ARCHAEOLOGY

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Erwbarfe
Tir Gofal Farm Visit Historic Environment Report
Call Out

By

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CONTENTS

Introduction	3
General Description of Farm	4
Statement of Condition / Proposed Works	5
Management Recommendations	11
References	12
Farm Map	13
Quality Assurance Report	14

INTRODUCTION

A farm visit was undertaken at the request of the Countryside Council for Wales to address specific management issues on this farm. The aim of this report is to make an assessment of these issues in order 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

The holding of Erwbrafe lies at grid reference SN73237881, in the community of Blaenrheidol. It was visited by Cambria Archaeology on January 7th, 2004. The land holding is just outside the hamlet of Ystumtuen. The landscape is fairly typical of upland mid-Wales, with derelict mining features and pockets of improved green pasture fringing unimproved moorland.

The holding is an area of improved upland pasture, with extensive remains from the lead-mining industry at its northern edge. The farmstead of Pengarreg (now ruined) lies on the eastern boundary of the land. Field boundaries now mostly consist of modern wire fencing, but relict earth and stone banks show the original lines of small enclosures. Short stretches of grown-out hedgerows are marked by occasional lines of trees which are visible on the hillsides.

Lead-mining has long played an important part in shaping this landscape, with mines developing from the 16th century onwards. Small-scale mining may have been occurring before that date, but serious attempts were made to develop Ceredigion's mines when the Mines Royal society was set up in 1568. In 1703 the 'Mines Adventurer's' company, headed by Sir Humphrey Mackworth of Neath, rented some of the mines belonging to the Nanteos Estate apparently including 'the mines of Istimtean' (Griffiths, J:u.d.:27). It is known that a mine named 'Pengarreg' was included – the name of the now-ruined farmstead on this land parcel. It is likely, therefore, that the mine on Erwbrafe was in operation by the beginning of the 18th century, and probably earlier.

As the lead mining industry developed so did the hamlet of Ystumtuen, which consisted of a school, a chapel and a number of dispersed houses and cottages. With its fortunes tied to those of the mines, the hamlet declined in the early 20th century, as the mines closed, and by 1988, 36 houses were in occupation, including 12 holiday homes (Murphy, K:1999).

The whole land parcel is included in Historic Landscape Character Area 59: Ystumtuen, and is part of the landscape designated by Cadw as the Upland Ceredigion Area of Outstanding Historic Interest. These are non-statutory designations, and are designed to highlight and characterise areas where local land-use traditions have left particularly strong or distinctive evidence on the landscape. The Ystumtuen area is characterised by extensive lead mining remains, and by a number of deserted cottages and farmsteads. The area is high and craggy, with a patchwork of small fields surrounding the unenclosed moorland on the top.

STATEMENT OF CONDITION/PROPOSED WORKS

Pengarreg Farmstead

The now-ruined farmstead of Pengarreg lies on the eastern edge of this land holding. In 1690 a document listing the possessions of the Nanteos Estate in Ystumtuen included a farm named Penygareg (Murphy, K:1999) which indicates that this farm has early origins. It is interesting to note that a mine named 'Pencarreg', in Ystumtuen, was in operation in 1703 and possibly earlier (Griffiths, J:u.d.:27). Since the farm and mine are contemporary, it is important that they are considered as part of the same relict landscape, and that management addresses the needs of both areas.

The pattern of buildings and enclosures at Pencarreg which is seen on the 1891 Ordnance Survey map is clearly traceable in the remains which survive on the ground today.

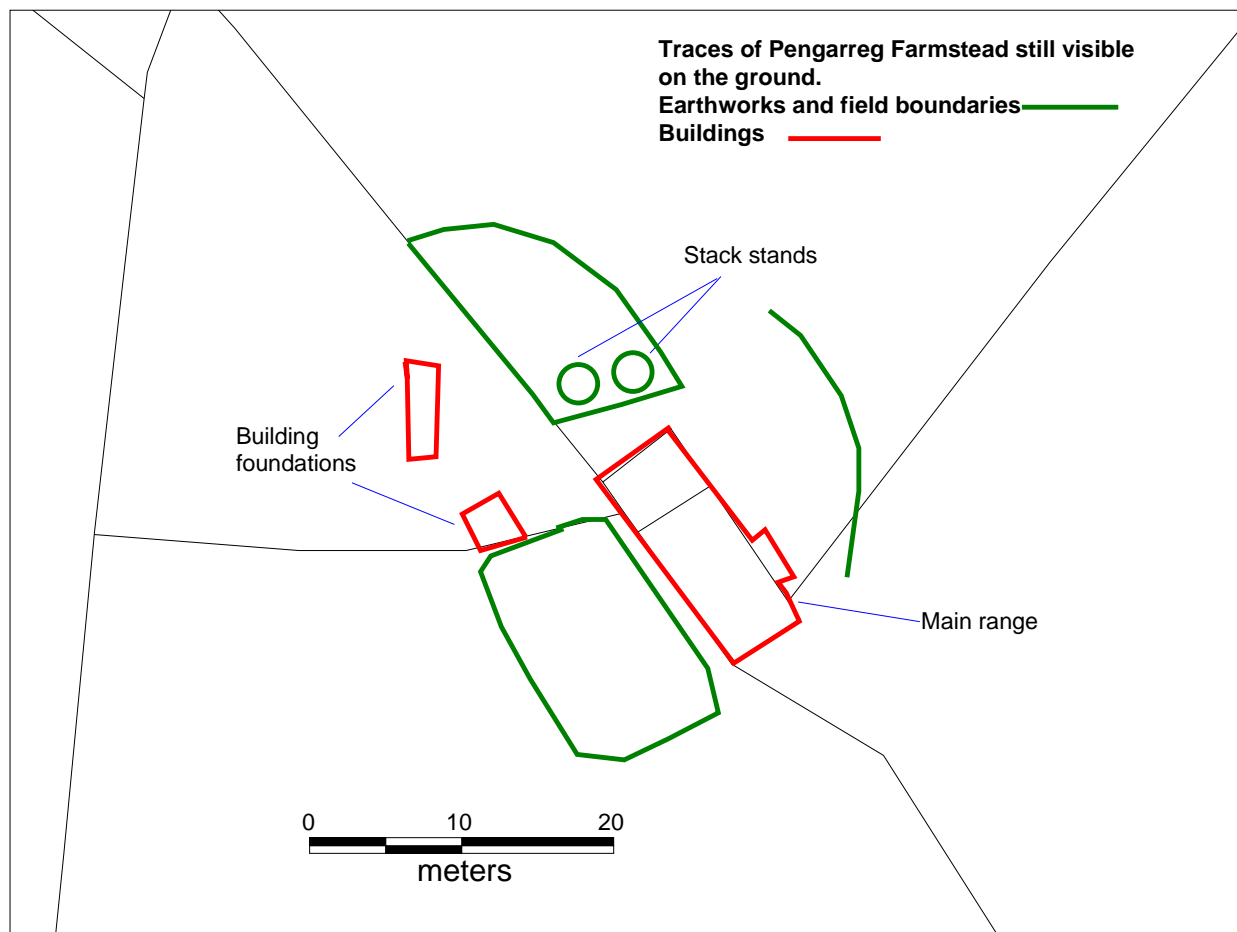


Plate 1 Schematic diagram showing what remains on Pengarreg farmstead.

Main Range

The main range at Pengarreg consists of three sections – a central ‘core’ and extensions at either end. The central part of the building is rubble stone built, bound with lime mortar, and has a number of large quartz inclusions. The extensions at either end are also stone built, but in a contrasting style, being of small stone slabs, roughly coursed, giving a much finer finish. There is a small porch or lean-to on the northeast. The building is now roofless, with collapsed timbers inside it, but the walls stand almost to gable height and indicate an original height probably of one and a half storeys. The interior is divided into three rooms, and a small brick-lined bread oven survives in the southeast interior wall.

The building seems to be in a stable condition, but trees from the grown-out hedge around the enclosure to the southwest are beginning to rub against the southwest wall. A few trees are growing up inside the ruins of the building. The landowner did not express any intentions to carry out any specific works on this site.

Building Foundations

The foundations of two small outbuildings survive just to the west of the main range. These foundations are both terraced into the hillslope and are built of the same roughly-coursed stone slabs as the ‘extensions’ at either end of the range, so were presumably constructed at the same time.

The foundations are stable features, and the landowner did not express any intention to carry out specific works. However, old feeders on the most westerly of the buildings indicate that they may have been used as locations for feeding livestock in the past.

Earthworks and Field Boundaries

Two distinct enclosures are seen next to Pengarreg – one to the south and one to the west. The one to the south is edged by trees, marking the line of a grown out hedge. A low, spread central bank divides this enclosure into two sections. The ground has slight undulations, which may be the remains of lazy bed cultivation of root crops.

A roughly triangular enclosure to the west of the main range is marked out by low earth banks. The enclosure is slightly raised from the surrounding ground level and contains two circular features at its east end. These are raised, firm platforms around 2m in diameter. They are probably stack-stands, on which hay ricks would have been built.

An earth bank curves around the northeast side of the main building. This was part of a boundary enclosing the main farm building, depicted on the 1891 Ordnance Survey map.

The earthworks and boundaries are all in good condition, and the site is grazed by sheep.



Plate 2 (above) *The northwest end of the main range of Pengarreg Farmstead. The circular feature in the enclosure to the left of the building is probably a stand, on which a hay rick would have been constructed.*

Plate 3 (below) *Trees from the grown-out hedge which surrounded the enclosure south of the building are beginning to rub against the masonry of the main range.*



Lead Mine – PRN 25900

Lead mining has played a critical part in forming the present-day landscape around Ystumtuen, and the area shaded green on the attached map contains substantial remains of the industry. This is one of a number of mines in the Ystumtuen area, and was in operation by 1703 (Griffiths, J:u.d.:27). The main, identifiable features are all marked on the map, but it is important to stress that the whole area was shaped by lead mining. Minor spoil-tips, trackways and paths are all located within the shaded area, and the ground itself has a hummocky and uneven texture, characteristic of area heavily disturbed by mining.

Level

An open cutting up to 3m deep and 3.5m wide. The level is not open for its whole length, but appears as three separate sections, with infilled areas between them. There has been some tipping at the eastern end, and modern rubbish has partially filled one open area.

Spoil Tip

A substantial raised mound about 4m in diameter. The top of the mound is flattened, with a depression in the centre. At first glance, this feature appears to be the top of a mine shaft, but Protheroe-Jones (1993:sheet 138) identified this mound as consisting of tip material only. The mound is turfed over and seems stable.

Shaft

A deep shaft, open at the top. This shaft is fenced off from the rest of the field, presumably for safety reasons. There has been some tipping into this shaft, and modern rubbish is clearly in evidence.

Shaft (collapsed)

A series of craters which mark the site of a collapsed shaft. The craters are set in an area of spoil and disturbed ground.

The area of the lead mine is all covered in short turf, and is used as grazing for sheep. Mostly it is in fair condition, but there are a number of clear sheep paths being formed, and these are starting to cause erosion problems where the slight vegetation has been lost. The erosion is most notable around feeders situated just to the west of the track which passes through the centre of the mine. Under Tir Gofal, a possibility has been raised that stock are taken off the mining area, and that heather regeneration is encouraged in this area.

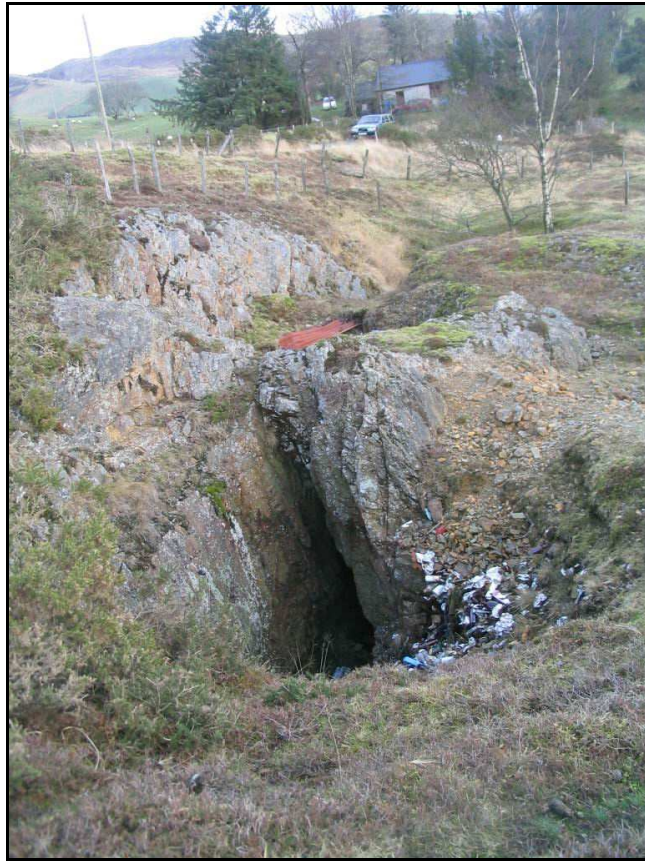


Plate 4 (above) *The level, running roughly east-west. There is some modern rubbish tipped into the cutting, in the foreground.*

Plate 5 (below) *The disturbed ground within the area of the lead mine. The mound in the middle distance is a shaft, many of the other mounds are probably from spoil.*



Trackway

A pronounced trackway leading up the hillslope and consisting of a narrow path between two earth banks. The track is seen on early Ordnance Survey maps and probably served the mines, with an 'offshoot' leading to Pengarreg Farmstead.

An interesting feature of the hillside south of the lead-mine is the nature of the field boundaries. A number of relict boundaries survive as large earth banks with shallow ditches either side. These ditches are probably where the material was removed to construct the hedgebanks, but they would also have served as shelter for sheep, allowing the hedges to act as shelter-belts on this otherwise open piece of high ground. A number of the boundaries are also marked on historic maps as the routes of paths or tracks.

Some of the boundaries on this hillside are likely to be at least 17th century in date, associated with Pengarreg farmstead. They may have later been re-used as tracks or paths.



Plate 6 *Trackway leading down the hillside towards the lead mines.*

MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

It is important that the importance of this whole landscape is recognised, as well as the importance of its individual, constituent parts. The farm, the mine and the field boundaries together all contribute to a relict landscape which dates back, in places, to the 17th century.

Pengarreg Farmstead

This site is generally in good condition and there are few management concerns.

- i. Branches which are beginning to rub against the stonework of the main building should be lopped off and removed from the site before they cause damage to the masonry.
- ii. The old feeders on one of the outbuildings should be removed.

Future maintenance should ensure that no ground-intrusive activities are carried out on this site or the associated enclosures, and livestock feeders or water troughs should not be situated in the area. Continued light grazing will prevent the incursion of scrub and vegetation and is to be encouraged.

The management guidelines provided in section B2 of the Tir Gofal Management Plan (Protection and Maintenance of Archaeological and Historical Features) apply to this site.

Lead Mine – PRN 25900

Management of this site should aim to ensure that the mine remains a visible feature and does not suffer from erosion. To this end, the proposal to encourage to exclude stock from this site and to encourage heather regeneration is generally welcomed, but there are a number of factors which will need to be borne in mind.

- i. Health and safety concerns. At present, the vegetation is very low and potential dangers (e.g. shafts and levels) are clearly visible. However, any increase in vegetation will reduce the visibility of these sites and make them a potential hazard. Fencing should be avoided wherever possible as it will encourage undergrowth and scrub within the fenced area. However if it is necessary for sites to be fenced off, the work should cause as little ground disturbance and be as visually unobtrusive as possible.
- ii. Stock exclusion will prevent the erosion in the west of the area from worsening, and will allow the very thin vegetation to establish better cover. However, it will also allow scrub and undergrowth to grow up, and these will eventually obscure the site and therefore reduce the ease with which the site can be understood. It is important, therefore, that scrub growth is controlled. This will need to be carried out by hand, and vegetation should be cut at ground level and removed from the site.
- iii. Once an adequate heather covering has been established across the mine, it will probably be necessary to re-introduce a light grazing regime in order to control the height and density of the vegetation and to prevent the sites from becoming completely invisible. Grazing should also negate the need for regular scrub control (see above) in the long term.
- iv. No further tipping should take place.

Trackway

The trackway and field boundaries should be maintained in their current conditions, and should not be removed or damaged.

REFERENCES

Cadw and ICOMOS UK:1998: *Register of Landscapes of Outstanding Historic Interest in Wales* p.12 – 16

Griffiths, J.H :u.d.: *Bro Annwyl y Bryniau Atgofion Am Ystumtuen* p.27 – 30 (English translation)

Murphy, K:1999: *Upland Ceredigion Historic Landscape Characterisation*. A Cambria Archaeology report produced for Cadw.

Protheroe-Jones,R:1993: Field notes on Ystumtuen mine, sheet 138

Ordnance Survey 1891 Cardignshire XI.NE

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Ordnance Survey Old Series 1834, sheet 57

Erwbarfe

Tir Gofal Historic Environment Consultation – Call Out


Countryside Council for Wales Reference W/11/4046


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National Grid Reference SN73237881


 Farm Boundary

Site Category A - National Importance


 Scheduled Ancient Monuments
Grade 1 and Grade 2* Listed Buildings

 Sites and Buildings of National Importance
without a statutory designation


Site Category B - Regional Importance

 Sites and Buildings of Regional Importance
including Grade 2 listed buildings

Site Category C - Local Importance

 Sites and buildings of Local Importance

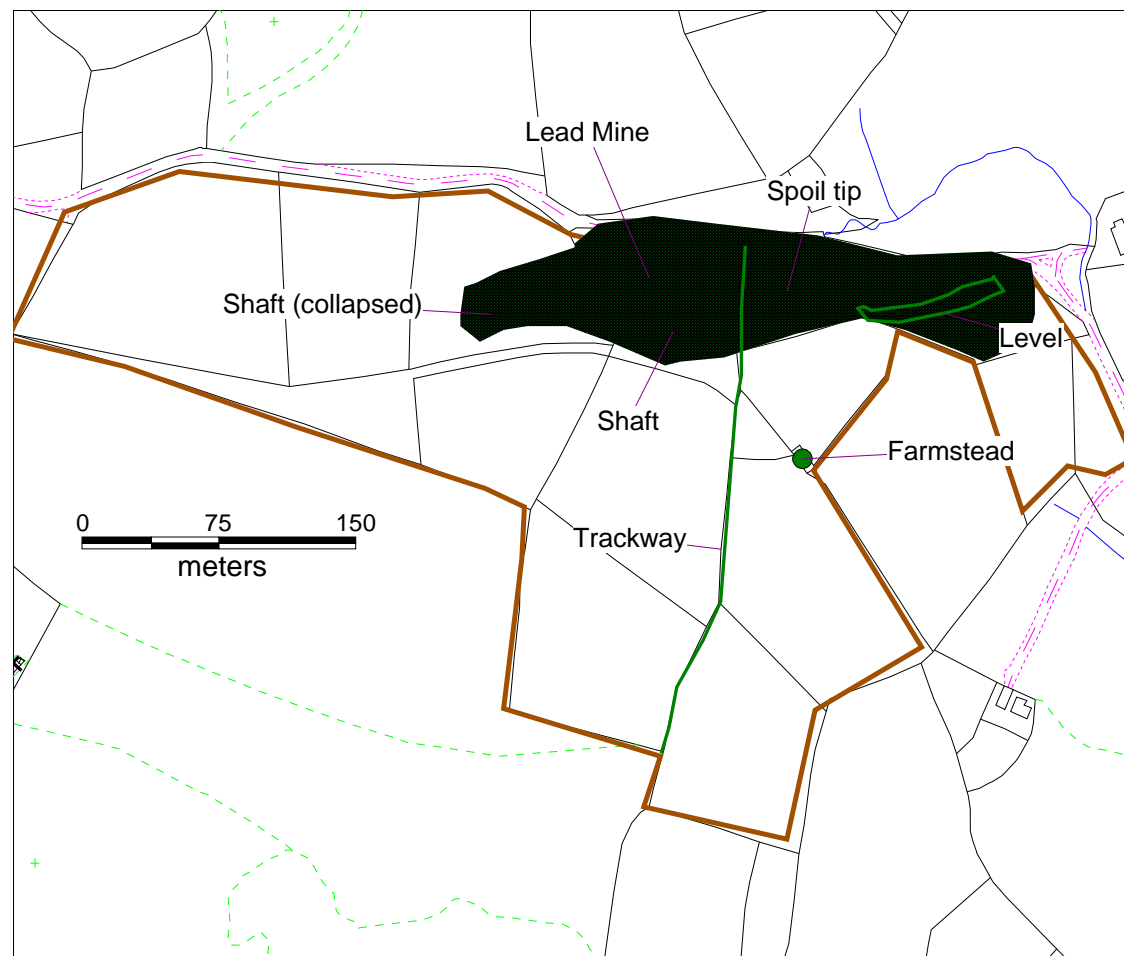
Site Category D – Unknown Importance

 Sites requiring further investigation and sites with
no physical definition

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**Erwbarfe
W/11/4046**

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Signature Date

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