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AROLWG CYMUNEDOL  
**GORSLAS**  
COMMUNITY AUDIT

Gan / By

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&  
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## **Introduction**

The purpose of this report is to present the archaeological record for Gorslas Community, as it is known now. It is based on a working document created in November 2003 and revised after consultation with the community through a community evening held on November 24<sup>th</sup>, 2003.

The information included in this report has been prepared largely from the Regional Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) for Carmarthenshire. Information volunteered by members of the local community after the community evening has also been added.

The SMR is a publicly accessible record held by Cambria Archaeology (The Dyfed Archaeological Trust), Llandeilo, which is one of the four Welsh Archaeological Trusts. Contacts details are included at the end of the report.

The content of the SMR database in large part reflects earlier fieldwork and desk-top research undertaken by Cambria and other archaeological organisations, particularly the Royal Commission for Ancient and Historic Monuments, Aberystwyth.

A key feature of the SMR is that all sites are given a unique record number, known as the Primary Reference Number (PRN). PRNs are quoted in the following text and the appended Site Gazetteer is arranged in PRN order.

There are many aspects of recent history in particular that are often felt to be outside the remit of conventional archaeology, but relevant to allied fields such as social history or genealogy. As this report is largely derived from material included in the regional Sites and Monuments Record, which is chiefly an archaeological record, it is not intended that a full account of the social and cultural history of Gorslas Community should be presented here.

## **PART 1: History and archaeology**

## 1. General Landscape

Gorslas community has several distinctive landscapes within its boundaries, all of which are very much a product of a combination of a fascinating geological background and the effect of many centuries of human activity.

The community is divided in half by the twin ridge of Carboniferous Limestone and Millstone Grit rocks that form the northern edge of the South Wales coalfield. This upstanding ridge of hard rock is particularly visible at the eastern edge of the community, on Banc-y-llyn, upon which is the well known Country Park centred on the natural lake of Llyn Llech Owain, which formed at the end of the last Ice Age and is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest. The Carmel TV Transmitter mast stands close to the top of this high ground and is one of the most visible landmarks in Carmarthenshire.



*Llyn Llech Owain*

The natural barrier formed by this ridge declines in altitude as it continues southwestwards, with a slight break to the east of Foelgastell, through which the modern A40 dual carriageway now passes. West of Foelgastell the ridge picks up altitude once again as it heads southwestwards to the sea near Kidwelly, dividing the valleys of the Gwendraeth Fawr and Gwendraeth Fach rivers. Along its entire length, the ridge is dotted with evidence of ancient burial cairns, tracts of ancient and semi-ancient woodland, evidence of late medieval and post-medieval land improvement and agricultural activity and more recent industrial exploitation, including lime and silica stone quarrying and limeburning.

To the north of the limestone/millstone grit ridge is an area of predominately agricultural land. Its western half is largely composed of well-established farmland, indicated by the irregular field shapes that can be seen on modern maps. The eastern

portion of the area has markedly different field shapes. Here, fields are generally rectangular in shape, with very straight boundaries. This is characteristic of parliamentary enclosure – land that was open common land until being enclosed by permission of an Act of Parliament in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. In this case, the area formed part of the open common of Mynydd Mawr, which was not enclosed until the second decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

South of the ridge, the land is also mostly former common land, enclosed out of the Mynydd Mawr common during the past 200 years. This area lies within the area of the Carmarthenshire anthracite coalfield and its agricultural quality was generally very poor – prior to the 19<sup>th</sup> century enclosure of Mynydd Mawr it was mostly open moorland used for the summer pasturing of stock animals. It is possible that the land at the extreme southwestern end of the community – southwest of Drefach – has been enclosed farmland since medieval times, as it is within the Gwendraeth Fawr valley and beyond the historic boundary of Mynydd Mawr common, which was as far south as Tumble and Drefach before the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

However, this part of the coalfield is no longer characterised by a rural landscape. 200 years of industrial activity has meant that there have been considerable landscape changes due to coal and iron mining and expanding industrial settlement. From Drefach to the west, through Cefneithin, eastwards to Gorslas village, the area bears many of the characteristics of a typical coalfield district.

Map 1 & 2

### Map 3



## **2. Archaeology by period.**

### ***2.1 Palaeolithic (250,000BC – 10,000BC)***

The Palaeolithic period includes the time of the last Ice Age when much of the district was affected by glaciers and arctic tundra conditions held sway. There are no finds of Palaeolithic date from Gorslas Community. The nearest known finds are bones found at the Pantyllyn or Craig-y-Derwyddon caves near Llandybie in the 19th century. These provide rare evidence of very early human activity in the region. Unfortunately, many of the human bones found were destroyed at the time, and human skulls taken away and later lost. Animal bones found within the cave at the time included wild boar and elk. A hyena's tooth found in Dinas cave, Llandybie is also a reminder of how different the flora and fauna of the district must have been over 10,000 years ago.

### ***2.2 Mesolithic (10,000BC – 4,000BC)***

During Mesolithic times, it is possible that this district was a periodic hunting area for communities based further to the south, in the area of Carmarthen Bay, which has been flooded by rising sea-levels since the end of the Ice Age. The people of this time were hunter-gatherers, and moved from place to place rather than living in settled communities. As they didn't live in permanent settlements or bury their dead in graves that can be easily identified, they can be difficult to recognise in the archaeological record. The clearest evidence of their presence is usually the flint tools they have left behind, or scatters of flint flakes at sites where those tools were fashioned. There are no current recorded finds of Mesolithic artefacts from Gorslas community.

### ***2.3 Neolithic (4,000 – 2,500BC)***

Although the archaeological evidence for this period in the area is limited, a number of sites of possible Neolithic date are recorded and show it likely that some settlement had occurred by this time. The Neolithic was the age of the first farmers. For the first time in this country, settled communities tied to the land developed. The most significant evidence of these societies are their religious monuments, such as stone circles and chambered-tombs. There are currently no such monuments known within Gorslas community, the nearest Neolithic sites being a now lost stone circle site recorded at Llandybie and the find-spot of a Neolithic flint axe found at Ammanford.

### ***2.4 Bronze Age (2,500BC – 800BC)***

There have been two finds of Bronze Age artefacts; a bronze spearhead and associated cremation burial (PRN655) and a narrow bronze axe or chisel. It is significant that both have been found in fissures or crevices in limestone bedrock in the area between Foelgastell and Maesybont.

A third important site of apparent Bronze Age date in the same area is the standing stone known as Llech y Tair Ffin (PRN10837). Less than 1km to the southeast of the

stone is Llyn Llech Owain, the name of which seems to indicate that another stone may well have been present in the area.

It is possible, therefore, that this area was a focus of human activity, perhaps settlement, during the Bronze Age, a period that was characterised by the spread of agriculture and permanent settlement across the country.



*Standing stone*

### **2.5 Iron Age (800BC – 43AD)**

At present, there is no evidence of settlement or other activity within the community area that dates to the Iron Age (700BC-70AD) or the Roman period (70AD-350AD), although there can be little doubt that there were agricultural communities in the district throughout that time. This is certainly suggested by archaeological evidence from neighbouring communities. A small Iron Age hillfort is known a few kilometres to the southwest at Limestone Hill, Crwbin and other Iron Age hillforts are known along the length of the Tywi valley to the north, such as the celebrated examples at Grongar Hill, Dryslwyn and Alltgyrddin (Merlin's Hill), Abergwili.

One fascinating link with the traditions of the Iron Age Celts survives in the mention of Glynystyn in the collection of ancient tales known as the Mabinogi. The name survived locally as a farm name until recent decades, but the dwelling has now been demolished.

## **2.6 Roman (43AD – 410AD)**

The Tywi valley is noted for the Roman road that connects Llandoverly, Llandeilo and Carmarthen, all of which had Roman military forts in the late 1<sup>st</sup> century AD and developed small *vicus* towns during the 2<sup>nd</sup> century. With another Roman fort at Loughor, to the south, it is clear that Gorslas community lies in a region that was settled and farmed, if only partially, before and during the years of Roman influence. Like many communities, Gorslas has at least one tradition of a “Roman Road” within its boundaries. An old trackway (now disused) that approached the medieval Capel Erbach from the south is said locally to be “an old Roman Road,” but this is more likely to be a medieval or early post-medieval road that gave access to the chapel-of ease.

## **2.7 Dark Ages (410AD – 1092AD)**

It is probable that Dark Age communities existed in the Gorslas area and exploited the extensive mountain pastures of the district. We know that in pre-Norman times, that the *maenor* was an important unit of economic and political division. Although we do not know what administrative unit covered the Gorslas area, the Lichfield Gospel Book, which dates to the 9<sup>th</sup> century AD and was originally kept at Llandeilo Fawr church, provides important documentary evidence about the existence of a *Maenor Meddynfych* in the area of the parish of Llandybie, just to the northeast of Gorslas.

One interesting connection with the Dark Ages is the dedication of the medieval chapel of Llanlluan to St Lluan, who is traditionally held to be one of the daughters of Brychan Brycheiniog, a Dark Age Irish prince who was the ruler of Brycheiniog (modern Breconshire).

## **2.8 Medieval (1092AD - 1540AD)**

During the Medieval period, the Gorslas area formed part of the commote of Iscennen, within the territory of the princes of Dinefwr. Although, by the later medieval period, Iscennen became part of the property of the Duchy of Lancaster, it was never subject to the degree of Norman settlement and remodelling of the landscape which marked the coastal lowlands of Carmarthenshire. Welsh settlement patterns and Welsh land inheritance systems remained in place.

At least one part of the modern Gorslas community formed the Manor of Llanlluan, an estate owned by the Lord Bishop of St David. It is probable that the larger ecclesiastical parish of Llanarthney was created during this period. The area that is now known as Gorslas Community formed the southern portion of the parish and was served by the chapel-of-ease of Llanlluan.

The distinction drawn in the introduction between those parts of the community that were once part of the Mynydd Mawr common and those areas which appear to have been settled and farmed much earlier, is key to allowing us to outline what Gorslas may have looked like in medieval times.



*Cowherding on the commons*

The only historic sites that can be said with any certainty to belong to the medieval period are the two recorded medieval chapels – Capel Llanlluan (PRN647) and Capel Erbach (PRN646). It is notable that both are situated on the line of the limestone ridge (as are two other chapels to the southwest – Capel Begewdin and Capel Dyddgen). These chapels were chapels-of-ease to parish churches such as Llanarthney and Llanddarog and their existence is undoubted proof that they served agricultural communities settled on adjacent lands. Their position therefore suggests that the better farmland along, and north of, the limestone belt was the focus of settlement.

Capel Llanlluan is of particular interest however, as in 1326 it is recorded by the “Black Book of St David’s” as standing within of the “Manor of Llanlluan,” owned by the Lord Bishop of St David’s. The “Black Book” is a very important historical source as it describes the tenants of each of the Lord Bishop’s estates and the duties that they had to fulfil in his service. It is quite possible that the area of irregular-shaped fields that can be seen today in the vicinity of the old chapel site is physical evidence of the fact that this pocket of land at the heart of the Llanlluan estate was under the plough in medieval times, whilst the higher ground that surrounds it formed ample mountain pasture where stock animals could be pastured for the summer months.

Most of the present community area would have been made up of the open moorland of Mynydd Mawr – a territory used primarily for the summer pasturing of stock and perhaps dotted with the *hafotai* (summer houses) of cowherds and shepherds. It is likely, however, that some woodland would have covered the limestone ridge that cuts through the middle of the area.

There are several place-names that may indicate medieval settlement or activity.

**Rhydymaerdy**, Cefneithin is an evocative name. In medieval times, the “maerdy” (reeves’ settlement) was important place, as the reeve or *maer* was responsible for the administration of the community. It is not known if there was a medieval “maerdy” at this location, but the origin of the name would be a useful topic of future research. It should be noted that the boundaries of the medieval Manor of Llanlluan of the Lord Bishop of St Davids, mentioned above, included this area and it may be that the “maerdy” referred to here was associated with the administration of the Manor (Rhydymaerdy is only just over 1km south of the medieval chapel of Llanlluan).

A kilometre to the southwest of Rhydymaerdy is **Neuadd Wen** Farm. “Neuadd” (hall) is a place-name that is also often associated with medieval settlement. There is a Neuadd Farm in the Amman Valley for example, which is known to have been the hunting lodge of the Lords of Dinefwr in medieval times. The origin of the name Neuadd Wen is also worthy of future study, and its proximity to the medieval Llanlluan estate is worth bearing in mind.

There are two “castell” place-names in the community that also merit attention. There is no known castle or fort in the vicinity of the village of **Foel-gastell** and therefore the origin of its name remains a mystery. The origin of the name of the **Castell-y-garreg** limestone quarry, located northwest of Llyn Llech Owain has, however, been explained by a tradition that a medieval castle stood on a crag here, but that the crag and castle have been completely quarried away during recent centuries. There is no way of proving or disproving this tradition archaeologically, but the proximity of the evocatively-named village of Castell-y-Rhingyll (“Serjeant’s Castle” - just outside Gorslas community) a kilometre to the southeast of Castell-y-garreg quarry raises the possibility of a link between the two places. There is no castle at Castell-y-Rhingyll and it is conceivable that the castle referred to by the name was indeed at the present site of the quarry.

## ***2.9 Post-medieval (1540-present): Industrial***

### ***2.9.1 Limestone & Millstone Grit***

Limestone was quarried for many centuries along the whole of the Carmarthenshire limestone belt, from the Mynydd Du to the coast at Kidwelly, and was burned in kilns built at the quarries to produce lime to fertilise the land. The tolls charged to transport this valuable commodity on turnpike roads during the 1830s were one of the main issues that sparked the Rebecca Riots in 1839 and led to the smashing of many tollgates and tollbars on the turnpike road network.

Lime was also an important material in the iron smelting process and limestone was also quarried for that purpose. This was true also of the millstone grit and silica sandstones that lie between the coal measures and the limestone beds in the geological sequence, which were extensively quarried and crushed in Carmarthenshire.



*19<sup>th</sup> century limekiln at Castle Quarry*

Many hundreds of large and small quarries and kilns can still be identified in the landscape, although limeburning came to an end in Carmarthenshire in the early 1970s and there are now very few working limestone quarries in the county. Within Gorslas community, there are a series of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century limestone quarry and limeburning complexes – most notably the Castell-y-garreg and Capel quarries (PRNs 22105 & 27694) to the north of Llyn Llech Owain and a second Castle Quarry (PRN 16803) to the west of Foelgastell.

Millstone grits have been quarried for centuries as the rough stone, as its name implies, was an excellent material for making millstones. However, the industrial age brought a new use for this resource, as the high silica content of the rock made it an excellent material for lining iron and steel furnaces. The gritstone was crushed down into silica sand for the smelting industry, and also as a raw material for the production of silica bricks, which were made in great numbers at Kidwelly. Within Gorslas there are numerous small quarries along the length of the gritstone ridge, but the only recorded quarry and crushing complex is that at Cwm-per, west of Foelgastell (PRNs 27594-7).

### ***2.9.2 Coal***

Coal mining is one of the most important heritage themes in the area and has certainly been one of the most influential forces that have determined the development of the landscape and settlement patterns of Gorslas community during the past 150 years.

Most coal mined in the Gorslas district before the Industrial Revolution was probably extracted by local people for their own use - either as domestic fuel or for limeburning. Early coal workings were simple affairs, either small drift workings and simple coal pits or perhaps some deeper bell pits. The records of the Duchy of

Lancaster for the Commote of Iscennen (William Rees, 1953) tell us that tenants of the Lordship were entitled to mine coal on the Mynydd Mawr common “*for necessary ffyre and burninge of lyme*” during the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Therefore, it is evident that mining on a limited scale would indeed have been carried out in this area during that period.

In common with the rest of the Carmarthenshire anthracite coalfield, the coal reserves of the Gorslas district were not exploited to any great scale until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Thomas Kymer’s pioneering work in the lower Gwendraeth valley area in the later 18<sup>th</sup> century, where a purpose built canal was used to carry coal to the coast at Kidwelly, was the beginning of a gradual increase in mining activity. During the period from 1814 up to the late 1830s, Kymer’s Canal was extended as the Gwendraeth Valley Canal, with its terminus at Cwmmawr, to aid the development of collieries in the upper Gwendraeth area. A feeder reservoir for this more ambitious canal was built at Cwmyglo, just south of Cefneithin, and the dam and the now drained reservoir bowl (PRN 22244) can still be clearly seen between the village and the playing fields at Crosshands. The canal was relatively short-lived however, being replaced by the Burry Port and Gwendraeth Valley Railway, which opened in 1869 and had much of its track laid along the line of the infilled canal.

It would be several decades, however, before industrial-scale exploitation of the coal seams of the upper Gwendraeth, including the Gorslas area, would be seen. The dramatic expansion of coal mining and associated settlement growth in the district can be traced on the four editions of the Ordnance Survey 1:10560 map series published in 1891, 1901, 1907 and 1921. It was Carmarthenshire anthracite that established Welsh coal as an internationally acclaimed fuel.

New markets opened up during this period, such as supplying the market gardening industry of the Netherlands, for which anthracite coal proved ideal to heat its hothouses. The invention of an anthracite burning stove in Scandinavia in 1880 as well as new developments in central heating added to the overseas domestic fuel market, particularly in France, Germany and Italy. Anthracite was seen as a fuel suited best to the closed ovens or fires of new central heating systems, rather than for burning on an open hearth. It was rarely used as a household coal outside the anthracite coalfield. The new market Cwmyglo canal basin (shown in blue ) 300% increase in the output of the £ going for export.

Locally, coal output peaked relatively late on. During the 1920s, the small, independent colliery firms faded away and new combines were formed across the anthracite coalfield, such as the United Anthracite Collieries Ltd, which controlled many mines in Ammanford and Gwendraeth valley districts. This was a period that saw increased mechanisation within the industry, technical improvements that consolidated existing pits. The year of peak production for south Wales anthracite was as late as 1934 when over 6,000 million tons was mined, despite a world recession. Anthracite was sold to such a varied range of markets – from brewing to central heating systems, that it was relatively unaffected by the recession in terms of demand. From the mid-1930s, coal mining in Carmarthenshire declined, apart from a period of renewed investment and confidence that followed nationalisation in 1947,



until the effective end of large-scale production by the 1990s, which was by that time largely dependent on opencast rather than deep mining..

The permission of the Committee of the Stock Exchange for dealing in the Shares now issued will be applied for and application for an official quotation will also be made.  
*The Subscription List will close on or before the 2nd day of July, 1924.*

## United Anthracite Collieries, Limited.

(Incorporated under The Companies Acts, 1908 to 1917.)  
 (Embracing The Great Mountain, Ammanford, Pontyberem and New Dynant Collieries.)

SHARE CAPITAL £2,500,000.	
<p><small>Authorised.</small></p> <p>£1,000,000 in 7% Cumulative Preference Shares of £1 each - - - - -</p> <p>£1,500,000 in Ordinary Shares of £1 each - - - - -</p> <p><u>£2,500,000</u></p>	<p><small>To be issued.</small></p> <p>£800,000</p> <p>£875,000</p> <p><u>£1,675,000</u></p>

### PROSPECTUS.

**Objects of Issue.** The Company has been formed to acquire as going concerns and actively develop the following anthracite collieries ranking amongst the foremost in the Swansea district, and being well known throughout the world for the highest quality anthracite produced, viz. :-

- The Great Mountain Anthracite Collieries (including the coal business of John Waddell & Sons, London, and the wagon repairing business of John Waddell & Sons, Llanelli).
- The Ammanford Anthracite Collieries.
- The Pontyberem Anthracite Colliery.
- The New Dynant Anthracite Collieries.

**Properties.** These Collieries are so situated as to afford exceptional opportunities for centralised management and control. They have, until recently, been worked under independent ownership, but great advantages have already accrued since unified management with attendant economies and increased efficiency were introduced.

Only a few successful pits of late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century date – Gors Goch (PRN 22073), Clos-yr-yn (PRN 16807), Clos-uchaf (PRN 27726) and Cwmmawr (PRNs 24181 & 30602) were found within the community area. In terms of surface features, the largest collieries in the district, which gave employment to many local inhabitants during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, such as Great Mountain, Blaenhirwaun, Crosshands and Emlyn all lie outside the boundary of modern Gorslas community (although their underground workings often crossed the surface boundaries). The decline of mining means that there are now remarkably few obvious features in the landscape that show how dominant the industry was during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Most of the colliery complexes have been demolished and many of the old coal tips have been levelled or removed. The little that remains should be considered to be of great historical significance.

### 2.9.3 Ironstone & Alexander Raby

Iron ore present in the coal measures was used until the 18<sup>th</sup> century to supply the iron smelteries of the county. Gorslas has a particularly important place in the industrial history of Carmarthenshire, if not the world, due to the exploitation of ironstone beds at Cwm Mwyn, between the present village square at Gorslas and the village of Cefneithin by Alexander Raby, a Scottish industrialist who established an ironworks at Cwmdyche, Llanelli. Raby opened the Carmarthenshire Tramway in 1802 - the first public railway in the world. It was a wooden railway, which used horse-drawn trams, built to carry iron ore, silica stone and limestone from Bancylllyn area to Raby's Cwmdyche furnace. A plaque commemorating the enterprise stands in the public park in the centre of Gorslas today.

Later in the 19<sup>th</sup> century iron rails were laid along the same bed, with some minor divergences, giving a rail link for the collieries of the upper Gwendraeth and



Llandybie areas to the port of Llanelli. The line closed with the decline of the collieries during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Nevertheless, as the course of the world's first public railway, and also one of the main arteries of the booming anthracite coalfield during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, this line is of great historic interest.

#### *2.9.4 Brickmaking*

Fireclays were often found associated with the coal seams of the district and these were exploited by many collieries during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries in order to manufacture bricks. Often these bricks are stamped with the name of the colliery that produced them. The Gors Goch Colliery (PRN 22073) was a local example of a mine that made use of its clay resources to establish its own brickworks.

### ***2.10 Post Medieval (1540-present): Non-industrial***

Although a full account of recent social history in Gorslas is beyond the scope of this report, it is important to outline some of the significant themes and events of recent centuries that have influenced the development of the community. These themes are not presented in any particular order of significance or chronology.

#### ***2.10.1 The Mynydd Mawr Enclosure***

As significant as the impact of industry has proven to the local landscape, there have also been great changes wrought from factors associated with land improvement and agricultural development during the past 200 years. The most obvious example of this was the enclosure of over 5000 acres of the Mynydd Mawr common in the parishes of Llanarthney, Llannon, Llandybie and Llanfihangel Aberbythych following an Act of Parliament passed in 1811-12. A detailed map of the lands that were enclosed was drawn up in 1820, and provides an exceptionally valuable snapshot of the local area at that time.

This large tract of open moorland, where local farmers had once enjoyed rights of common pasture, was divided into plots for sale and the land fenced and hedged in, to be improved as new farmland and settled with new farmsteads and cottages. Mynydd Mawr, like many other areas of common land, had become to be seen as a wasted asset by agriculturalists and the great landed-estates alike. These new territories could be farmed and settled to help meet the needs of a growing population, as well as secure new sources of income for the landed gentry (through rents charged on new tenants). The enclosure of Mynydd Mawr has undoubtedly contributed greatly to the way that Gorslas community appears today.

#### ***2.10.2 Droving***

The droving trade was one of the great economic activities in Wales during the period between the 17<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The trade depended on a network of local stock fairs, where farmers sold on their animals directly to drovers. The drovers were responsible for moving many thousands of cattle, sheep, pigs, horses and geese from farms across Wales to markets and fairs in the big English cities, including London, via a network of droving roads, which usually took the most direct route possible to avoid unnecessary diversions and extra mileage.

The site of modern Gorslas village appears to have played its part in the droving trade, and the wider pastoral economy of the county. Early 19<sup>th</sup> century maps show that the unusual six-road crossroads that now forms the village square was in existence well before the village began to develop. It was clearly an important place where a number of routes met on the open ground of Mynydd Mawr common. Inevitably, it became a place convenient to trade and meet, and an annual fair was held here (apparently on the site of the present Phoenix Inn). Before the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there was said to be a ffald (pound) close to the square where stray cattle could be penned.

### 2.10.3 Chapels and Churches

The spiritual needs of the pre-industrial community of the Gorslas area were served by Capel Erbach (PRN 646) and Capel Llanlluan (PRN 647), as chapels-of-ease to Llanarthney parish church. By the 18<sup>th</sup> century, both of these old chapels had fallen into disrepair – a condition that was commonly true of Anglican churches and chapels across the country by this time. Although Erbach was to fall into total ruin and never recover, Llanlluan was to become an important bridge between the old and the new. The Rev. Griffith Jones, Llanddowror often preached here and one of his Circulating Schools was held at Llanlluan in 1738. Around the same time, Daniel Rowland, Llangeitho began visiting Llanlluan to spread the Methodist revival with his powerful preaching. Remarkably, Griffith Jones resented Rowland's passionate and popular style and made every effort to bar him from the pulpit at Llanlluan – unsuccessfully.

By the 1740s a lively group of Methodists had been established in the area, encouraged by frequent visits by other great revivalists, making Llanlluan one of the most important churches in the early history of the Methodist revival. Howell Harries was a close friend of David Jones, Dygoed (which lies just outside the community boundary) and also visited regularly to hold religious meetings both at Dygoed and at the old Llanlluan chapel. Peter Williams married the daughter of Gors Farm, nearby, possibly at Llanlluan itself and this great figure in the early Methodist movement in Carmarthenshire is known to have preached his last sermon from the pulpit of Llanlluan in Jul, 1796. The great hymn-writer William Williams, Pantycelyn preached monthly at Llanlluan for some 35 years. It was a member of the Llanlluan congregation who drew the only known portrait of Williams Pantycelyn, from memory, many years after Williams' death. In 1840, the Methodists eventually left the decaying old chapel-of-ease, which had always remained the possession of the Anglican church, and built a new chapel of their own nearby, at the site of the present Capel Llanlluan (PRN22089).



*Capel Llanlluan*

Early nonconformists often held open air meetings. Local tradition has it that Methodists in the Drefach area held meetings under an old oak tree (PRN 49752) near the village before Seion chapel was built nearby. During the 18<sup>th</sup> century, local Baptists would often congregate at Llyn Llech Owain to baptise new converts in the waters of the lake.

As the population of the Gorslas area grew during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, other nonconformist denominations established a presence in the community, including the Baptists, Independents (Congregationalists) and also the Apostolic Church, which originated in neighbouring Penygroes. The community is dotted with the chapels of these denominations, whilst the needs of the Anglican community were met by the building of a new St Lleian's church in Gorslas village (PRN4734), ensuring that the name of the ancient Celtic saint lived on both in church and chapel in the area.

### *Rebecca's Daughters*

Gorslas saw one of the great rallies of the Rebecca movement, when thousands of Rebeccaites gathered for an open-air meeting on Banc-y-llyn in 1843. A fascinating relic of the Rebecca era is what is probably the only surviving tollbar house, which has been moved from its original location and rebuilt at Drefach.



## **2.11 Myths and Legends**

The recording of local tales and legends is as important as the recording of archaeological sites and historical events. Tales of the Tylwyth Teg or ghosts and ancient warriors are all too often only preserved in the minds of local people and, if not recorded, are increasingly lost with the passing of generations.

There are two particularly important tales associated with Gorslas that are thankfully recorded and well-known.

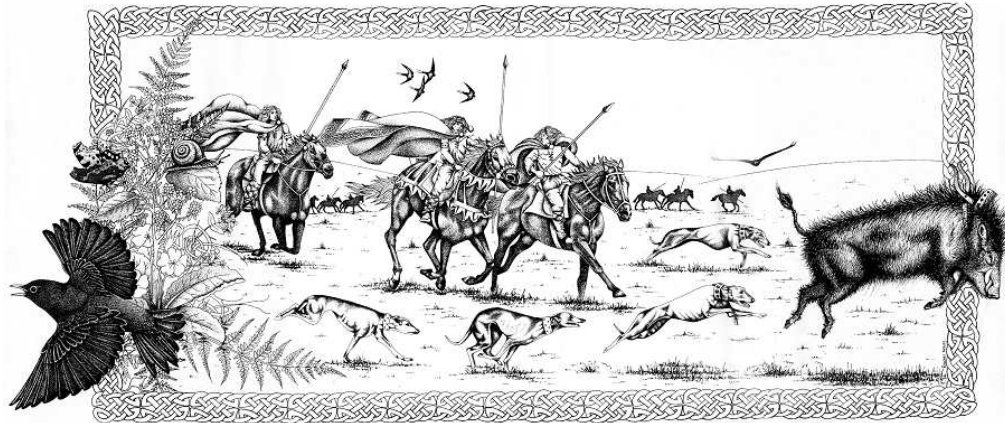
The first is the tale of Llyn Llech Owain. The lake is associated in legend to Sir Owain, a knight at Arthur's court. It is said that Owain removed a stone that capped a magical spring, causing water to gush out of the ground and form the lake. Another version of the tale names the medieval prince Owain Lawgoch as the culprit, but the story would appear to have all the hallmarks of being an ancient tale that has survived in the memory of local people since time immemorial.

Another legend that links us with the distant past, possibly the world of the ancient Celts, is the tale of hunting of the Twrch Trwyth, preserved in the medieval manuscripts now known as the Mabinogion. The epic chase of the wild boar from Ireland and across Wales to Cornwall by King Arthur and his men links many places in southwest Wales, including Gorslas. The story relates that the Twrch Trwyth, having crossed the mouth of the Tywi, heads eastwards;

*“Thence the Twrch makes his way to Glynn Ystu, more correctly perhaps Clyn Ystun, now written Clun Ystyn, the name of a farm between Carmarthen and the junction of*

*the Amman with the Llychwr, more exactly about six miles from that junction and about eight and a half from Carmarthen as the crow flies.” (Rhys, 1901).*

The farm named by Sir John Rhys, Glynystyn, once stood near Drefach, but was demolished around the year 2000. Even so, the link between Gorslas and such an important Celtic legend, known across the world, is a very notable aspect of local heritage.



## Reading list

The authors would welcome suggestions for any titles of local interest that readers feel should be added to this limited list.

- Bowen, Ivor    1914    *The Great Enclosures of Common Lands in Wales.*
- Jones, G R      1989    “The Dark Ages”. *Settlement and Society in Wales.*  
Ed. D Huw Owen. University of Wales Press. Cardiff.
- RCAHM          1917    *An Inventory of the Ancient Monuments in Wales and Carmarthenshire.* Vol V, county of Carmarthen. HMSO. London.
- Rees, W          1932    *Map of South Wales and the Borders in the 14th century.*
- Rees, W          1953    *A survey of the Duchy of Lancaster Lordship in Wales 1609-1613.* University of Wales Press
- Rhys, John      1901    *Celtic Folklore Welsh And Manx.* Chapter IX, Place-name Stories (for reference to Glynystyn).
- Roberts G M    1938    “Llanlluan”, tud. 19-27, *Methodistiaeth Fy Mro.* Treforus.
- Stepney-Gulston A  
                         1893    “Pantyllyn Bone Caves”. *Archaeologica Cambrensis*, Vol.X 5th series, 163
- Treharne K      1995    *Glofeydd Cwm Gwendraeth.* Cyngor Bwrdeistref Llanelli

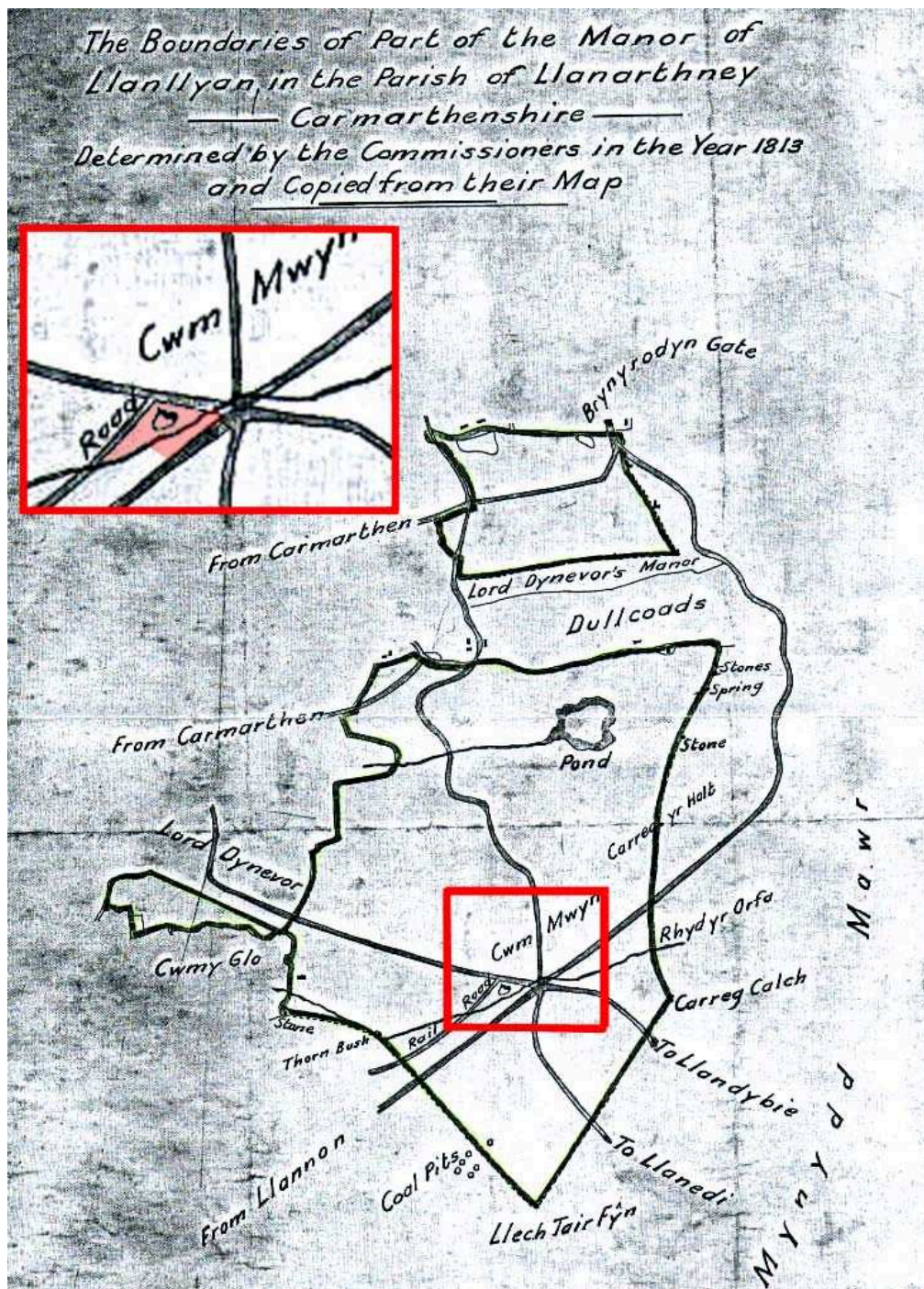
## **Part 2: Site type index and maps**

## **Part 3: Site gazetteer**



**Appendix:**  
**Images from Power Point Presentation of**  
**November 24<sup>th</sup>, 2003**

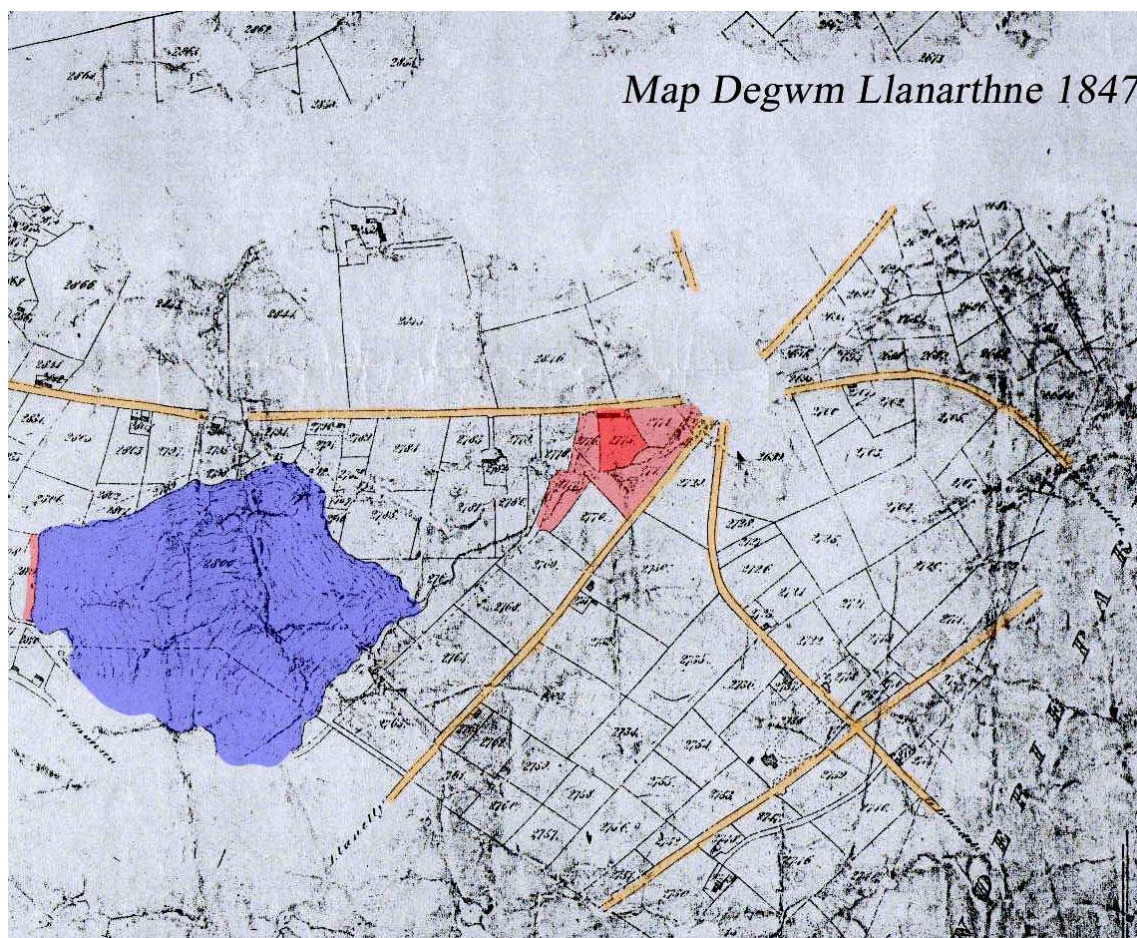
1. Portion of 1813 map of the Manor of Llanlluan
2. Portion of 1820 Mynydd Mawr Enclosure Award map
3. Portion of Llanarthney Parish Tithe map, showing Gorslas/Cefneithin area
4. A page of the Tithe Survey Apportionment, highlighting Cwm Mwyn



1. Portion of 1813 map of the Manor of Llanlluan







3. Portion of Llanarthney Parish Tithe map, showing Gorslas/Cefneithin area



LANDOWNERS.	OCCUPIERS.	Number referring to the Ten.	NAME AND DESCRIPTION OF LANDS AND PREMISES.	STATE OF CULTIVATION.	QUANTITIES IN STATUTE MEASURE	Payable to VICAR.	Payable to the IMPROPRIATOR.
Bishop of Saint David's	Griffiths Richard	2739	Penrhane		2 3 5		
		2740			2 3 50		
		2745			6 3 50		
		2746			4 2 50		
		2747			1 3 5		
		2748			2 10		
		2749			3 30		
		2750			3 3 5		
		2751			1 17		
		2752			3 5		
		2753			2 20		
		2754			2 17		
		2755			1 3 10		
		2756			3 3		
					33 20	11	1 2
	Harris David	2756	Georgic Cottage		2 1 20		
		2757	House and Garden		1 30		
		2758	Cottage & Land		6 10		
					7 3 20	2 6	1 5
		2771	Field	Woad	2 1 10		
		2772	"	"	1 35		
		2773	Cottage & Garden	"	1 35		
		2775	6 Cottages & Garden	"	1 1 30		
		2776	Pasture & Wood	Pasture	1 37		
		2777	Field	Pasture	1 30		
					6 15	1 4	1 5 6
	Lavis David	2774	Field	Woad	1 3 30	1 4	1 5
		2807	Field	"	2 10	1 4	1 5
Davies John	Davies John	2881	Welfen Fach		1 5		
			House & Garden				
Davies Thomas	Thomas Thomas	902	Cow & Sheep	Woad	3 3 20		
		903	Part of Cow & Sheep	Woad	1 12		
		912	House & Garden		1 36		
		913	Welfen Fach	Pasture	2 1 6		
					7 2 30	3 4	1 5 8

2771	Field	Woad	2 1 10			
2772	"	"	1 35			
2773	Cottage & Garden	"	1 35			
2775	6 Cottages & Garden	"	1 1 30			
2776	Pasture & Wood	Pasture	1 37			
2777	Field	Pasture	1 30			
			6 15	1 4	1 5 6	

4. A page of the Tithe Survey Apportionment, highlighting Cwm Mwyn

AROLWG CYMUNEDOL  
**GORSLAS**  
COMMUNITY AUDIT

**RHIF YR ADRODDIAD / REPORT NUMBER 2003/127**

**Tachwedd 2003**  
**November 2003**

Paratowyd yr adroddiad hwn gan / This report has been prepared by Paul Sambrook

Swydd / Position: Heritage Projects Manager

Llofnod / Signature ..... Dyddiad / Date 24/11/2003

Mae'r adroddiad hwn wedi ei gael yn gywir a derbyn sêl bendith  
This report has been checked and approved by

Jenny Hall

ar ran Archaeoleg Cambria, Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Dyfed Cyf.  
on behalf of Cambria Archaeology, Dyfed Archaeological Trust Ltd.

Swydd / Position: SMR Manager

Llofnod / Signature ..... Dyddiad / Date 24/02/2003

Yn unol â'n nôd i roddi gwasanaeth o ansawdd uchel, croesawn unrhyw sylwadau  
sydd gennych ar gynnwys neu strwythur yr adroddiad hwn

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