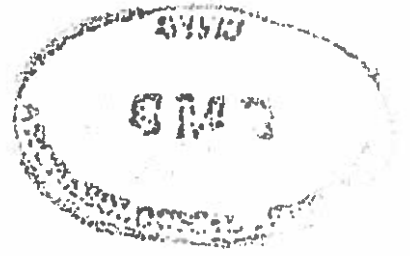


Nov 2003



Maes Cottage W/12/3905

Tir Gofal Farm Visit Historic Environment Report Call Out



The boundary shared between land owned by Maes Cottage and St. Peters Churchyard, Llanbydder.

Report No. 2003/122

**Report Prepared for:
Countryside Council for Wales**

CAMBRIA ARCHAEOLOGY

REPORT NO. 2003/122
PROJECT RECORD NO. 48453

November 2003

Maes Cottage
Tir Gofal Farm Visit Historic Environment Report
Call Out

By

Polly Groom

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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 concerns 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

Maes Cottage consists of three holdings, of which two were visited by Cambria Archaeology on November 4th, 2003. Holding W/12/3905 lies in the community of Pencarreg, at grid reference SN53224489. Holding W/12/3905/a is within the community of Llanybydder, at SN51804397.

W/12/3905

This land holding lies just on the outskirts of Pencarreg, in an area divided by the Manchester – Milford railway line.

In general, the area east of the railway line tends to have small and irregular fields which are probably the result of early enclosure. West of the railway line the fields are probably later – their squared shapes and regular sizes are typical of fields created by parliamentary enclosure of common land. The railway line was constructed in 1886, and cuts through both of these different field patterns, showing that the field pattern which is still seen today was in place by the mid – late 19th century.

The holding also contains a number of domestic dwellings – Maes Cottage itself, Troedrhiw Farm and Pen Rhiw cottage. Of these, only Troedrhiw Farm is seen on the parish tithe map (1840, Llanybydder parish) – the others are first seen on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map, so must date to between 1840 and 1886.

W/12/3905/a

The second land parcel occupies the ground immediately behind (west of) Llanybydder market place. Part of the boundary is shared with the churchyard of St Peters Church. This is a small, roughly circular churchyard (PRN 30142) bounded on the north and west sides by a pronounced stone-faced bank topped with mature trees. It is this boundary which is shared with the land included in this Tir Gofal application. Although the church standing today (PRN 738) is largely a 19th century building, it is probably on a much earlier site – the first construction of the church may have been 14th century, and a circular churchyard is often an indication that the site is earlier still.

Statement of Condition/ Proposed works

W/12/3905

Railway Embankment

This railway line was constructed in 1886, and the original plan was to have a line running from Manchester to Milford Haven, via Crewe, mid Wales and Carmarthen. However, it extended no further north than Aberystwyth when the company went into liquidation. The line was absorbed into the GWR network in 1906, ceased carrying passengers in 1965 and closed to freight in 1973 (Steele, W:2003).

A well-preserved section of the railway embankment runs for around 320m (350yds) along the western edge of this land holding. The shape is still very clear, showing its flattened top and smooth, steep sides. This section of embankment is highest at its north end, where it stands to a height of some 5 – 6m (18 – 20ft). The surface of the embankment is still covered with the stone ballast which was laid around the tracks and sleepers. Original railway post and wire fences run along either side of the embankment.

A pronounced ditch runs along the east side of the embankment, then turns sharply and drains into a small, stone-built culvert which runs under the railway embankment. A simple, small footbridge formed of one concrete slab crosses the channel which leads into the culvert. The ditch does not appear to carry on to the south beyond the culvert so must have been put in place to only drain a few exceptionally wet fields.

The site is generally in good condition, though some scrub is growing up in places and a number of semi-mature trees are growing along the top and sides of the embankment. At the north end is a very small conifer plantation which marks the land boundary – beyond this, the embankment has been flattened and survives only as a parch mark in an improved field. Scrub is also partially blocking the ditch and has obscured the culvert.

The landowner proposed to maintain the railway embankment as a visible feature, and to carry out some scrub and vegetation control. They also wish to create a pond just northeast of the culvert, and to clear the ditch so that it can act as an overflow for the pond. It has also been suggested that the fencing is replaced alongside the embankment.



Plate 1 (above) The railway embankment, part of the dismantled Manchester-Milford line.
Plate 2 (below) A small, stone-built culvert passing under the embankment, now very blocked with silt and leaves.



Pen Rhiw Cottage and Garden

Map evidence suggests that Pen Rhiw cottage was constructed sometime between 1840 and 1886. The cottage is a simple stone-built two-room dwelling with a loft and a fireplace in each gable. It is now roofed with corrugated metal, but some thatch is preserved under this, and from inside it appears that the thatch rests on closely-set branches rather than on rafters. The remains of a piece of cloth are still pegged onto the underside of the roof – this was probably put in place to stop parts of the underthatch from drying out and falling into the room. Thatching in this way is typical of cottages constructed in the 19th century by, and for, labourers – it did not require a professional thatcher, and was therefore cheaper and easier to maintain (Wiliam, E: 1993: p.21). Another interesting survival is the chimney hood at the north end of the house. Although the fireplace has been replaced with what is probably a bread oven, the chimney hood still survives. It appears to be constructed of wattle and daub, covered in layers of limewash. Again, this was a typical feature of rural labourer's cottages, but is one which very rarely survives.

The cottage is associated with a long, narrow stretch of garden which runs along the roadside. Parcels of land like this were often carved out of verges, and began life as 'squatter' settlements – the (often illegal) occupation of pieces of waste ground and common land. Whilst huge areas of common land were enclosed by Parliamentary act during the 18th and 19th centuries, those who did not own land were forced to establish their own homes and farmsteads (Cadw: 2002: p.13).

The cottage is in a stable condition, and a line of mature trees marks out the garden. The landowner has expressed an interest in re-instating this boundary.



Plate 3. Part of the roof of Pen Rhiw cottage: close set poles taking the place of the rafters with an underthatch woven into them. The cloth would be in place to prevent parts of the thatch from falling into the room.



Plate 4. Line of trees marking the edge of the garden associated with Pen Rhiw cottage.

W/12/3905/a

Boundary with St Peters Church

The boundary which survives today is a raised earth bank, topped with mature trees and partially supported by a stone facing on the bank. This is formed of small to medium sized stones which are pressed into the earth bank rather than being a self-supporting wall.

The boundary is in various states of repair – in places, the stonework is almost entirely gone but towards the east, sections of it stand nearly intact. Tree-roots are the major cause of damage to the wall – they are dividing the stonework and pushing individual stones out of the bank. The boundary is no longer stockproof, and gaps between the trees are infilled with wire netting, on both the churchyard side and the field side of the boundary.

The landowner needs to make this boundary stockproof, and was considering the feasibility of restoring parts of the stone facing.



Plate 5. The boundary shared with St Peters Church, Llanybydder. Tree roots are pushing the stone facing off the bank, and there is little earth left that the stones can be set back into.

Management Recommendations

W/12/3905

Railway Embankment

Some scrub clearance will need to be carried out on this site. Vegetation should be cut at ground level and removed, and care should be taken that the ballast which covers the ground surface is not removed during these works. Trees growing on the sides of the embankment are a concern, since their roots will eventually cause damage to the structure. They are also more vulnerable to wind-throw, since the depth of soil on the sides of the embankment is very shallow. Ideally, most of the young trees growing on the sides should be cut at ground level and removed. The ones growing on the flattened top are more stable, but care should be taken that the top of the site is not allowed to become overgrown and, consequently, impassable. Any trees which look unstable, or which are growing in thick clumps should also be removed and trees which are left in place should be managed to prevent them from becoming unstable. Coppicing may be one appropriate method of woodland management.

Re-growth of vegetation is likely to be comparatively slow, because of the stone ballast on the ground, but clearance may need to be periodically carried out in the future. If the site shows signs of turfing over, then light grazing may prove a practical way to achieve this in the long term. Future maintenance should aim to keep the site in a stable and visible state.

The landowner is also proposing to create a pond, and to clear and re-use the ditch east of the embankment, as well as the culvert which it drains into. The restoration of these features would be very welcome, especially since they would be re-used for their original purposes. Clearance of the culvert should be carried out carefully by hand. The depth of the drain is not known at this point, and there is also a possibility that there is a stone lining to the channel leading into the culvert. Any such lining should not be damaged or removed. The channel should be kept within its original cut and care should be taken that only modern silt and rubbish are removed from it – its depth should not be increased.

As far as is practical, the ditch should also be cleared by hand, again taking care that any lining is not disturbed or damaged. The line of the ditch is very clear, and it should not be expanded beyond its original outline or depth – only modern silt should be removed. Ideally, a photographic record should be made of the site during and after clearance, (including more detailed photographs of the culvert and any ditch or channel linings) and a copy of the photographs deposited with Cambria Archaeology.

The survival of the original railway fencing contributes to the significance of this site, and it is important that this is not lost. The majority of the fence posts are now rotten, but the design of the fencing is clear – simple post and wire, with the wires becoming closer set towards the base of the fence. The fencing should be replaced on a 'like for like' basis, using the surviving stretches as a pattern.

Pen Rhiw Cottage and Garden

There are no works proposed which affect the building directly, but the garden is an important part of the setting for this typical 19th century cottage. The landowner has expressed an interest in restoring the boundary around the garden, and this would be welcomed. It was probably originally a laid hedge, and ideally this would be re-instated, although some of the mature trees may be retained as standards, and incorporated into the hedge.

W/12/3905/a

Boundary with St Peters Churchyard

There is comparatively little that can be done to restore this boundary now that the trees are so mature. In places, the outside of the bank now has no earth for stones to be set into, but consists solely of tree-roots, and the stone facing in these areas cannot be restored. In other parts the stonework would benefit from the replacement of fallen stones, and if this were carried out on a regular basis it would certainly slow the rate of decay.

In order to make the boundary stockproof, the most practical solution is to put a new fence in place outside the bank. The appearance of the bank would then be maintained, since it would prevent the necessity for small patches of 'infill' fencing between the trees around the churchyard. These could be taken down once the new fence is in place.

It is important that the strip of land between any new fence and the bank is not allowed to become overgrown. It may need occasionally to be cleared of scrub or undergrowth.

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Maes Cottage

Tir Gofal Historic Environment Consultation

Countryside Council for Wales Reference W

Cambria Archaeology Reference PRN48453

National Grid Reference SN5322489

100

Site Category A - National Importance



Site Category B - Regional Importance



Site



Site Category D – Unknown Importance



Only sites referred to in the text are shown on this map.

Many sites referred to in the text are shown on this map – for a map of all known sites and features, please consult the

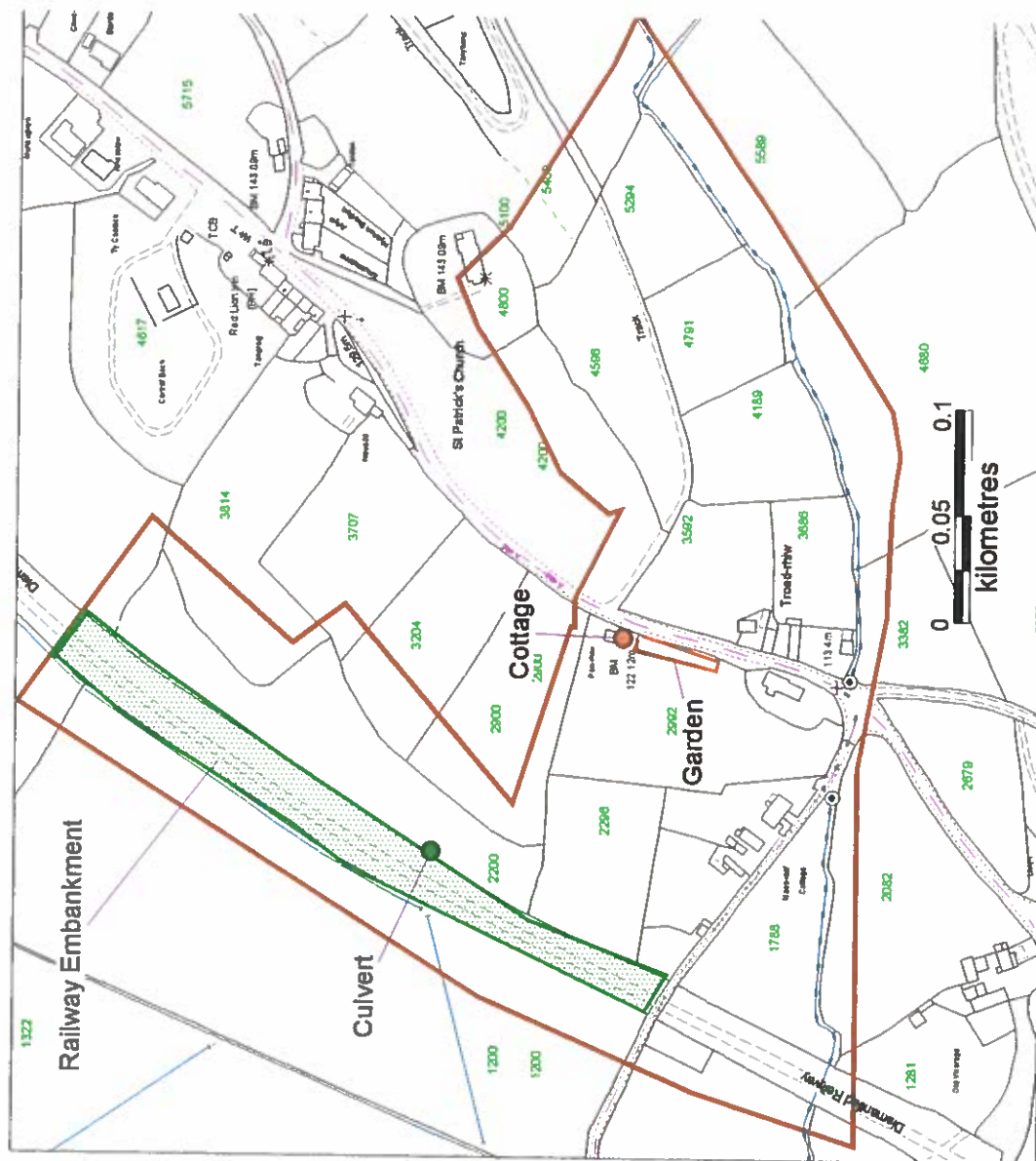
... a map of all known sites and features please consult the [unclear] report

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Maes Cottage
 Tir Gofal Historic Environment Consultation
 Countryside Council for Wales Reference W/12/3905/a
 Cambria Archaeology Reference PRN48453
 National Grid Reference SN51804397

 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

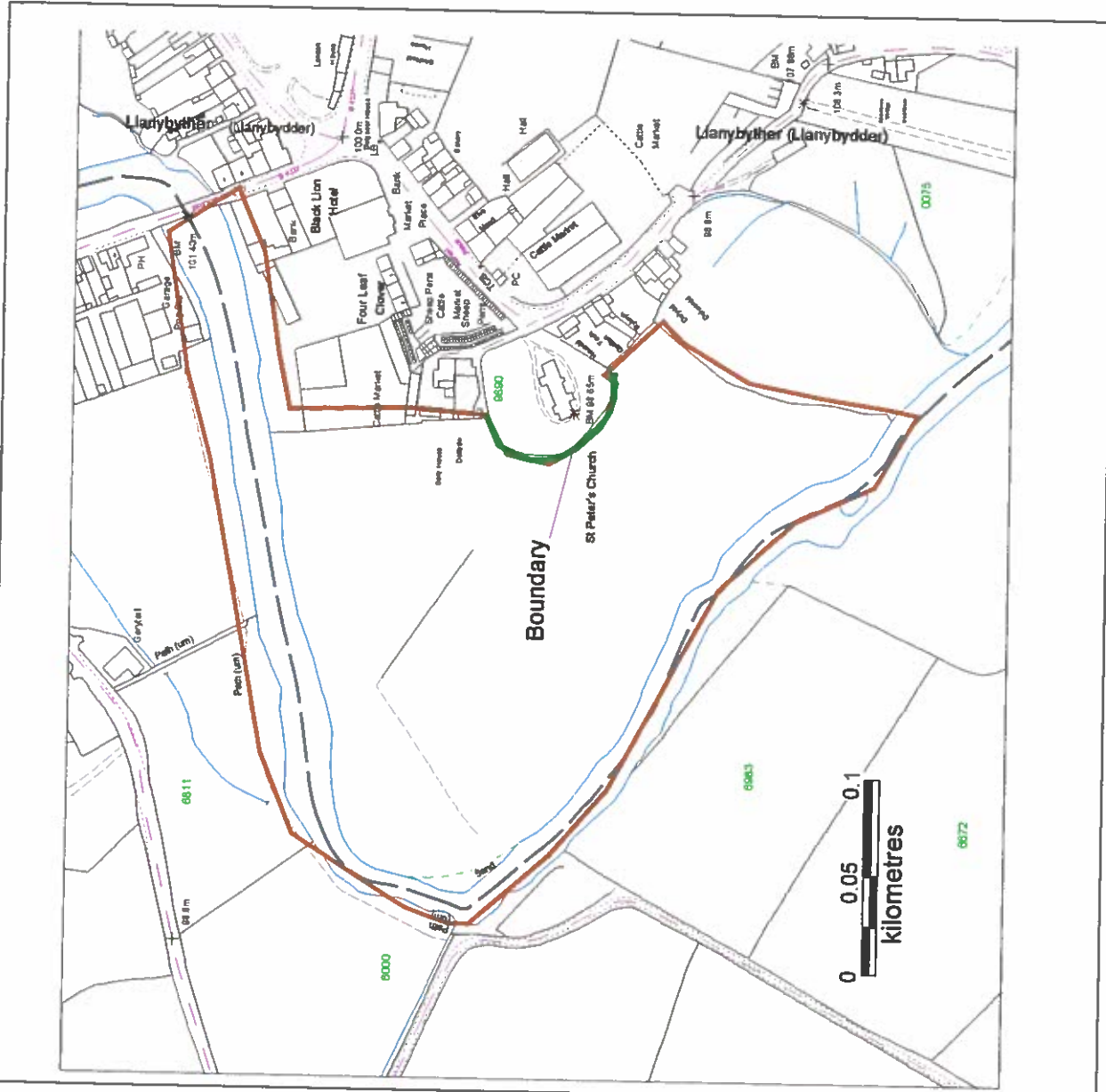
 Sites and buildings of Local Importance

Site Category D - Unknown Importance

 Sites requiring further investigation and sites with no physical definition

Only sites referred to in the text are shown on this map – for a map of all known sites and features please consult the HE1 report.

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**Maes Cottage
W/12/3905**

**REPORT NUMBER 2003/122
PROJECT RECORD NO. 48453**

November 2003

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Signature P. Groom Date 18/11/03

This report has been checked and approved by Ken Murphy on behalf of Cambria Archaeology,
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Position: Principal Archaeologist (Field Operations)

Signature [Signature] Date 18/11/03

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