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## **TIR GOFAL HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT: CALL OUT VISIT**

Prepared for:  
**Ryelands Farm**  
**W/12/4247**



Prepared by  
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Report No. 2004/74  
Project No. 49888

## **INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVES**

### **Historic landscape character**

Ryelands is centred on NGR SN67242216 in the community of Cyngor Bro Dyffryn Cennen in Carmarthenshire. The farm occupies high ground on the south side of the Tywi Valley in a landscape of small irregular fields and widely dispersed farms. Pockets of native and plantation woodland, and grown out hedge boundaries, contribute to a wooded feel in this area.

This pattern remains largely unchanged since the tithe drawing of c.1841. Notable recent developments in the vicinity include Bryngwyn Filter Station which lies just outside the eastern boundary of the farm. Ryelands farmstead itself was also established comparatively recently and does not appear on maps until after 1965.

The farm falls within the Cadw designated Black Mountain Registered Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest. This area has been further assessed as part of the Historic Landscape Characterisation Project, and falls between the Trichrug (231) and Allt Tregyb (203) Historic Landscape Character Areas (HLCAs). These areas are intended to define places where local land-use patterns have left particularly strong or distinctive evidence in the landscape. A description of these character areas is provided at the end of the report.

### **Archaeological and historic content**

The land occupied by Ryelands farm is marked as part of “Brenaye Forest” on a reconstruction map of Wales in the fourteenth century (Rees, W 1932) and was probably not enclosed until the post-medieval period. The medium sized irregular enclosures here contrast with larger, more regular fields to the north, south and east. These were probably enclosed later on, during parliamentary enclosure in the eighteenth or nineteenth century.

The farm is situated at the crossroads of two long established routes, which were recorded in the fourteenth century and are also marked on William Rees’ map. Particular interest at Ryelands is directed towards a substantial oval earthwork enclosure (c.40m diameter) of uncertain function and set back some 80m from the road. Suggestions include as a landscape feature on a nearby estate, and as an overnight stop for drovers. It is also believed locally to have once served as a base for men working in a nearby quarry.

A desk top assessment based on the regional Historic Environment Record (HER) as well as historic map evidence identified further historic sites and features within the farm boundary. These fall beyond the remit of the call out visit and are discussed in the Tir Gofal Historic Environment HE1 report.

### **Call Out Visit**

Following discussion between Cambria and the Tir Gofal Project Officer it was decided that a call out visit would be undertaken to assess the archaeological status of the oval enclosure (PRN 23438). Information gained during the visit would be used to determine management recommendations to be incorporated into the Tir Gofal management agreement. The farm was visited on the 19<sup>th</sup> July 2004.

## THE ENCLOSURE (PRN 23438)

### Description

The following description was provided after a site visit by Cambria Archaeology in 1985.

“The site is positioned midway along a north-west to south-east hedgeline close to the summit of the hill. The field to the north-east has already been cleared of stone and ploughed... the north-east field has been well cleared and although there is a lot of stone scattered about no particular features were observed. The south-west field is under rough grass and there are several small clearance cairns scattered about as well as traces of a trackway.

The tree ring consists of an oval enclosure measuring 42m north-west to south-east along the line of the hedge by 36m south-west to north-east. It is defined by a single bank constructed of a boulder and earth wall, with an external ditch... The bank measures 2m in width at the base and slightly less towards the top. It stands to 0.8m high internally and 1.0m high externally to the bottom of the ditch. The ditch measures 2m in width at the top and is 0.4m deep externally from the bottom to ground level... There are no traces of an entrance into the ring although the bank has been breached at several points which may coincide with an entrance. Internally the area is flat with scattered boulders including some very large rocks (CMS 1985).”

This description remains unchanged today but stone facing was noted on the west side where the bank is less damaged. The hedge running off the north-west and south-east is of a similar size but of earth and less substantial stone construction. There is no evidence of the hedgeline continuing beneath the enclosure and it probably pre-dates the field system.

Several trees, hawthorn and mountain ash, grow out from the bank and may represent an outgrown hedge. More trees grow internally with Scots Pine the dominant species.



The bank and outer ditch of the enclosure. North section.

## **Interpretation**

Given the absence of any specific documentary evidence or detailed local knowledge, the function of the enclosure remains uncertain. One suggested interpretation is as an overnight stop for drovers. It is positioned at the crossroads of two long established routeways, which are recorded on a reconstruction map of Wales in the fourteenth century (Rees, W 1932). Notes produced by Jenkins in the 1930s concerning drovers and their itineraries based on local knowledge mention “parallel roads” along the Twyi Valley from Pembrokeshire through to Llandovery and beyond. Specific details are not given but there is no reason to doubt that one of these routes may have followed the high ground to the south of the River Tywi. This would have met with another important north-south route across Black Mountain linking Glamorgan to the Tywi valley (Coyler 1976, 97).

There is a strong tradition of Scots Pines planted as way markers along drove roads. Their height and distinctiveness enabled them to be seen from a long way off and small groups were often found marking overnight stop offs. The Scots Pines in the enclosure at Ryelands, are marked on the 1<sup>st</sup> Edition 25” Ordnance Survey map of 1887, and would seem to be a long established feature. A long field enclosure, also containing pine trees is marked on the map some 50m to the north, across the valley slope but these trees are now lost.

It has also been proposed that the enclosure may be a landscape feature associated with a local estate but there is, at present, no further evidence to support this. A local resident recalls that, at one time, it housed men working in a nearby quarry and it could well have been put to a variety of uses in the past.

## **MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Condition**

Despite past damage, the site is now in a stable condition. The enclosure falls between two pasture fields and is mostly under grass with some reeds established on the interior. Several trees, possibly remnants of an outgrown hedge, are growing from the bank. Most are upright and stable but some have fallen. The Scots Pines inside the enclosure are nearing the end of their lives and the landowner recalls several having fallen in recent years.

### **Recommendations**

The site should be retained in a visible and stable condition. The management aim is to establish a stable grass sward. The current regime of regular grazing is keeping vegetation growth in check, but some reeds are established on the interior.

Retain the current grazing regime. Continue to treat reeds to prevent re-growth.

Monitor trees on the enclosure banks. Unstable specimens to be cut off at the roots before being allowed to fall naturally (this will prevent damage to the profile of the bank by uprooting).

The Scots Pines seem to be a deliberate and integral feature of the enclosure. Planting replacement specimens should be considered in order that the landscape impact of the enclosure does not diminish. The Second Edition Ordnance Survey map (1906) provides an accurate guide to inform replacement planting. A copy is provided below.

## REFERENCES

### Maps

Ordnance Survey 1887 Carmarthenshire Sheet 34.13, 25"

Ordnance Survey 1906 Carmarthenshire Sheet 34.13, 25"

Tithe Map & Apportionment 1841? Llandeilo Fawr parish

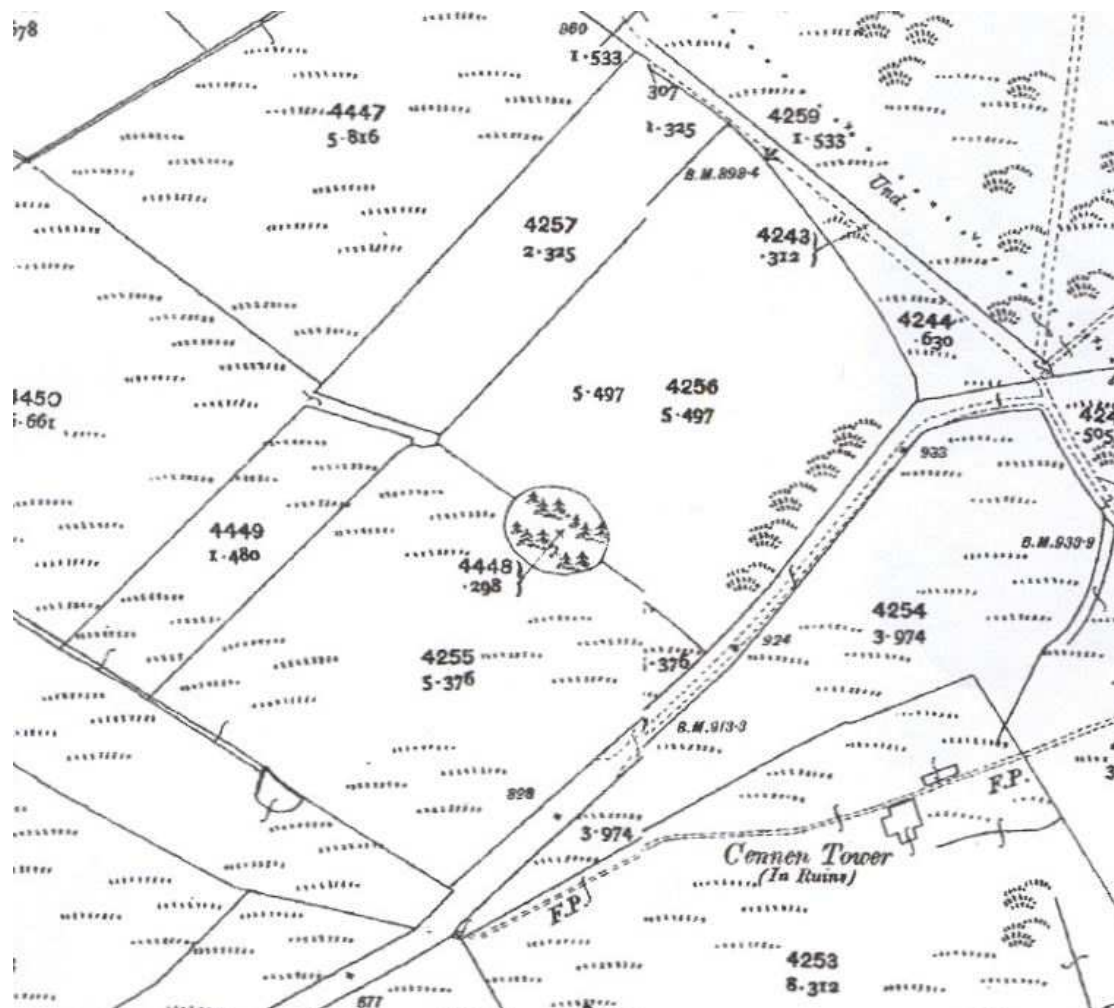
### Other Sources

Dyfed Archaeological Trust Historic Environment Record

Coyler, R. J. 1976 The Welsh Cattle Drovers. University of Wales Press, Cardiff

Cadw/ ICOMOS 1998 Register of Landscapes of Outstanding Historic Interest in Wales

Carmarthenshire Historic Landscape Characterisation of four landscapes on the Register of Landscapes of Outstanding Interest in Wales: Black Mountain and Mynydd Myddfai, Twyi Valley, Dolaucothi, Taf and Tywi Estuary.



Detail from 25 inches to 1 mile Ordnance Survey map of 1906 showing the enclosure and environs.



## **CARMARTHENSHIRE: TYWI VALLEY**

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### **HISTORIC LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA: 203 ALLT TREGYB**

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**GRID REFERENCE: SN 657214**  
**AREA IN HECTARES: 913.10**

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#### **Historic Background**

A large area occupying the south-east side of the Tywi Valley east of Llandeilo. It lay within Iscennen commote, specifically within Maenor Llys, of which Nant Breinant - which partly forms the northern edge of this area - was a named boundary in the 16th century (Rees 1953). Iscennen, unlike the rest of Cantref Bychan within which it lay, remained nominally independent of Anglo-Norman rule until 1284 when it was acquired by John Giffard. In 1340 it became a member of the Duchy of Lancaster (Rees 1953, xv-xvi). The eastern half of the character area is marked as 'Brenaye Forest' on Rees' map of South Wales in the 14th century (Rees 1932), but the medium-sized irregular enclosures in this area contrast with the larger, regular enclosures to the north, south and further east - some of which are 19th century enclosure of former common - and are probably earlier, though possibly still Post-Medieval. Rees' map also shows a straightish, intermittent unclassified road running WSW-ENE across the spine of the area. The western end of the area belonged to the vill (later estate) of Tregyb (Area 202) and although there is little difference in the landscape here, it is more wooded and features the name Tregyb Warren. The later history of the area is overwhelmingly pastoral although a factory near Tregyb is marked on 19th century maps.

#### **Description and essential historic landscape components**

Allt Tregyb character area lies on north-facing undulating and hilly slopes of the Tywi Valley between 30m and 220m. The valley side has a heavily wooded appearance, but this is more apparent than real, for although there are considerable stands of ancient deciduous woodland, and recent more scrubby woods and small conifer plantations, the overall characteristic of the area is one of small irregular fields and widely dispersed farms. Improved pasture is common, but there are many fields of rougher- and rushy-ground, reflecting the pockets of poorer land on the north-facing slopes. Some fields have recently been invaded with scrubby woodland. Fields are usually divided by earth banks topped with hedges, but some stony banks and stone-faced banks lie at higher altitudes. Hedges are in a variety of states of management, but are usually either well-maintained and trimmed or overgrown with distinctive hedgerow trees. Farmhouses and cottages in the vernacular style of 19th century date are the chief types of dwellings. Larger farmsteads are present, but most are relatively small for Carmarthenshire and consist of a limited range of stone-built farm buildings, sometimes compacted into a single range. Some farms have large modern agricultural buildings associated with them. Stone-built, single storey 19th century cottages at Gurnos-Cwmdu suggest squatter settlement-encroachment onto common land that fringed part of this area.

Recorded archaeology is limited to a scheduled standing stone, a Bronze Age findspot and a possible enclosure (undated).

There are no distinctive buildings.

This is a fairly well defined area and contrasts with the less wooded, richer land and larger farms of areas that lie to the north, east and west (Areas 190, 197, 225, 226), and with the higher less strongly enclosed land to the south (Area 231).

#### **Conservation priorities**

Part of this area lies within the Brecon Beacons National Park. Historic landscape conservation priorities must respect policies in the National Park Plan (1993) and the National Park Local Plan (1995). Decay evident in some of the boundary hedges is beginning to erode the historic character of parts of this area; this problem needs to be addressed. Consideration should also be given to the maintenance of other boundary types and to the management of the ancient broadleaf woodland. Historic farm buildings form an important component in this landscape. Although most are in use and

in a good state of repair, some consideration may have to be given as to how they can be best used/reused and maintained for future generations.

## **CARMARTHENSHIRE: BLACK MOUNTAIN AND MYNYDD MYDDFAI**

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### **HISTORIC LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA: 231 TRICHRUG**

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**GRID REFERENCE: SN 679222**

**AREA IN HECTARES: 786.10**

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#### **Historic Background**

A southwest - northeast ridge on the southeast side of the Tywi Valley. During the historic period the area lay within Cantref Bychan, divided between two commotes. The western half of the area lay within Iscennen commote, specifically within Maenor Llys. Iscennen remained nominally independent of Anglo-Norman rule until 1284 when it was acquired by John Giffard, and in 1340 it became a member of the Duchy of Lancaster (Rees 1953, xv-xvi). The remainder of Cantref Bychan, including Cwmwd Perfedd within which the remainder of this area lay, was invaded by the Anglo-Normans under Richard Fitz Pons who established a *caput* at Llandovery in 1110-16 (Rees n.d.), and was acquired soon after by the Clifford lords of Brecon as the Lordship of Llandovery. However, there were many episodes of Welsh rule and the area retained native tenurial customs until the end of the Medieval period when it was incorporated into modern Carmarthenshire. The boundary between the two areas is still represented by a 'T'-junction on the trackway that follows the spine of the ridge in the western half, which is shown as a trackway on Rees' map of South Wales in the 14th century (Rees 1932). Rees' map also labels this area 'Brenaye Forest', and indeed it appears that the area was probably unenclosed land during the Medieval period and later. The pattern of large, regular enclosures with straight boundaries was in place by 1839 (Llangadog tithe map) but it had probably been recently established; its morphology suggests late enclosure of former moorland. Some subdivision had taken place by 1891 (Ordnance Survey 6" First Edition). The area is dominated by its surviving prehistoric archaeology which provides great time-depth. Sites include a group of Bronze Age round barrows and a possible Iron Age hillfort. The higher ground within the area is pitted with former quarries, presumably Post-Medieval. There has been little recent development.

#### **Description and essential historic landscape components**

Trichrug character area lies across a southwest to northeast ridge. On the flanks of the ridge this area runs down to about 200 m, the highest summit achieved is over 400 m. The crest of the ridge rises from just over 200 m in the southwest to the high point at the northeast end. The whole ridge has been enclosed by medium- and large-sized regular enclosures, but over much of the ridge crest, certainly at the highest point, these have broken down, but on the flanks they survive though in a much degraded form. Boundaries to the fields take a variety of forms, earth banks with hedges, stony banks sometimes with hedges, and dry-stone walls. On the ridge crest hedges are either gone or derelict, but elsewhere they are in better condition, but generally overgrown. Nearly all the dry-stone walls have collapsed. Wire fences provide stock-proof boundaries. At the highest point the ridge essentially consists of a small area of unenclosed moorland. Elsewhere rough pasture and improved grazing constitute the main land-use, though several medium-sized conifer plantations are also present. The remains of numerous small quarries along the ridge comprise important landscape elements. Bronze Age burial mounds are also prominent features of the landscape. There is little present settlement in this character area.

Recorded archaeology is rich and important, comprising a Neolithic or Bronze Age findspot, a group of Bronze Age round barrows and, on the edge of the area, a Bronze Age standing stone. There is also an Iron Age or Roman findspot, a possible Iron Age hillfort, Post-Medieval quarries and unknown enclosures .

There are few buildings and none are distinctive.

This is a very distinct area on account of its relative high altitude. Its boundaries, however, are not hard-edged, as the large enclosures of the ridge merge with the smaller fields of neighbouring richer

farmland (Areas 200, 203, 226, 233 and 254). To the east there is a clear boundary where this area borders forestry (Area 230).

**Conservation priorities**

This area lies within the Brecon Beacons National Park. Historic landscape conservation priorities must respect policies in the National Park Plan (1993) and the National Park Local Plan (1995). However, there are few historic landscape conservation priorities in this character area. It would be desirable to allow the broken-down boundary walls and banks to remain in their current condition, so allowing the ridge to resume its former unenclosed character.



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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