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TIR GOFAL HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT: CALL OUT VISIT

Prepared for:
Pumpkin Shed
W/13/5021

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INTRODUCTION

The land parcel identified as Pumpkin Shed for the purposes of the Tir Gofal application lies adjacent to Clegyr Boia rock, one of only a handful of known Neolithic settlement sites in Wales and a Scheduled Ancient Monument. It was recently discovered that the Countryside Council for Wales, acting on behalf of the landowner, had undertaken topsoil stripping within a field next to Clegyr Boia. It is understood that the aim of this activity is to encourage heathland regeneration by removing nitrogen rich topsoil and lowering soil fertility.

Although this activity has taken place outside of the legally protected Scheduled Area, it is still an area of considerable archaeological potential. Cambria Archaeology, the contractor responsible for providing heritage management advice within the Tir Gofal Scheme, did not receive notification before the topsoil stripping took place. Had there been consultation, the archaeological potential would have been highlighted and such activity would have been strongly discouraged.

Following discussion between Cambria Archaeology and the Tir Gofal project officer, it was resolved to undertake a call out visit. The purpose of this visit was to make an initial assessment of the nature and condition of the surviving archaeology and the impact of the work on the wider historic landscape. Information gained during the visit would be used to outline a strategy for future management. The site was visited on 16th November 2004 in conjunction with the National Park Archaeologist.

HISTORIC LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Pumpkin Shed consists of three improved fields, covering about seven hectares, which lie to the north and west of Clegyr Boia rock on the St. Davids Peninsula. The city of St. Davids is just over a kilometre to the east.

The peninsula consists of a gently undulating plateau with isolated, rocky outcrops rising to about 200 metres above normal ground level. It is open and treeless with pockets of open heath between the enclosed farmland. Field boundaries are low and comprise either earth and stone banks, stone banks or dry stone walls, sometimes following the lines of strip fields, reminiscent of medieval open field agriculture. Dispersed farms and small hamlets form the basis of the settlement pattern.

The landscape character of this area is rooted in patterns of Welsh land tenure, adapted through Anglo-Norman influence from the beginning of the medieval period. Many of the farmsteads are based on medieval villas that were associated with common land and open field systems, which were later enclosed (Ludlow & Murphy 2001).

St. Davids Peninsula is an area of considerable historic interest and high landscape value. It falls within the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park and also lies within the St. Davids Peninsula and Ramsey Island Landscapes of Outstanding Historic Interest in (HLW (D) 4). The landscape has been further assessed as part of the Historic Landscape Characterisation Project and lies within the Treleddyn – Treginnis Historic Landscape Character Area (289).

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORIC CONTENT

The stone walled enclosure at Clegyr Boia is usually classified within the large group of later prehistoric enclosures in southwest Wales (Crossley 1963). The site, subject to detailed investigation by Baring-Gould in 1902 and Williams in 1953, is best known for the evidence of Neolithic occupation it has produced. As such it gains status as one of only two known Neolithic occupation sites in southwest Wales, and few in the country as a whole. At least two post built structures, presumably buildings, and a midden were recovered beneath the rampart wall and inside the enclosure. The site is also notable in providing the largest single assemblage of Neolithic pottery in Wales (Burrows 2003, 34). The enclosure rampart is less well understood. Despite being commonly ascribed to the Iron Age, excavation has not confirmed this and recent interpretations (Vyner 2001) have argued for Neolithic chronology. Clegyr Boia derives its name from the Irishman Boia who, in the 6th century challenged the removal of St. Davids religious house to its present location (Rees 1992, 71-2). The argument for re-use during the Early Medieval period is persuasive.

A number of prehistoric flint working and finds sites are recorded within the surrounding landscape. These attest to more widespread prehistoric activity, specifically during the Mesolithic and Neolithic periods.

Specific archaeological content at Pumpkin Shed comprises a “stone” identified on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map (1889) in the field adjacent to Clegyr Boia. Aerial photographs also identify two features considered likely to be clearance cairns, at either end of the same field. One of these is consistent with the location of the “stone” mentioned above.

The proximity of Clegyr Boia and presence of lithic scatters in the surrounding landscape suggests potential for the presence of below ground archaeological remains of Mesolithic through to Early Medieval date at Pumpkin Shed.

ASSESSMENT OF THE SITE

The southeast field of Pumpkin Shed, which lies adjacent to Clegyr Boia rock, has been targeted for heathland regeneration and been subjected to intrusive groundworks and earthmoving activity. A rapid walkover survey was undertaken in order to identify the presence and condition of any archaeological features or material. The survey was undertaken in conjunction with the National Park Archaeologist.

The southwestern two thirds of the field are stripped to the sub-soil, with uneven pockets of topsoil remaining, the intention being to mimic the natural undulations of heathland topography. The stripped area is further disturbed and churned up from machinery tracking backwards and forwards.

Most of the removed topsoil is redeposited over the northeastern third of the field, otherwise it is heaped up around the perimeter to enhance existing boundary banks. A newly formed earth bank bisects the field on a northwest-southeast alignment to divide the two areas. The newly created banks are of substantial build and average 1.6m high and 1.6m wide. Heather cuttings have recently been spread over the surface of the stripped area.

Exposed archaeological remains include scattered pieces of pottery, glass and bricks from the eighteenth century onwards. At least one worked flint, and numerous unworked pieces were recovered. Two linear features, the possible bases of ditches, and a small spread of burnt material are also exposed. It is possible that these features may be associated with further prehistoric activity. An undated clearance cairn has been dismantled.

THE IMPACT OF THE WORK ON THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCE

HISTORIC LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

The St. Davids Peninsula is open and treeless, and divided by low field boundaries comprising earth and stone banks, stone banks or dry stone walls. The new earth banks at Pumpkin Shed are larger and of different composition than existing boundaries. They are out of keeping with existing landscape character.

The field pattern almost certainly follows the lines of enclosed open field strips. The creation of new boundaries can alter established field patterns. New boundaries should follow the lines of former divisions shown on historic maps. It is not understood if any such consultation has taken place in this instance, although the newly created boundary which bisects the field does roughly correspond to the line of a boundary shown on the parish tithe map of 1840-1.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES AND FEATURES

The presence of worked flint suggests that prehistoric lithic scatters and possible related archaeological material has been disturbed. Without the benefit of an archaeological evaluation before these works took place, the impact of the topsoil stripping on surviving archaeological remains will never be fully understood.

The exposed linear features and burnt material are vulnerable to erosion. Root action will cause further disturbance as heathland begins to regenerate over the site.

CONCLUSIONS

Due to the known archaeological potential of the site consultation regarding potential implications for the historic environment, prior to earthmoving activity, should have taken place.

The identified area has been shown to have included a number of archaeological features of unknown significance. In addition to a clearance cairn, which has been removed, and the artefacts moved within the stripped top soil, three surviving features have been revealed. If these features are associated with the prehistoric settlement of Clegyr Boia they would be considered to be of national significance.

Further assessment is now necessary to determine the extent of the damage done and try to understand the character and significance of the surviving archaeological remains.

RECOMMENDATIONS

An archaeological evaluation of the surviving remains on the site should be undertaken. This will aim to characterise the surviving archaeological evidence and identify its significance. With this information further decisions regarding the site's future management can then be made. Archaeological evaluation should comprise two phases of work:-

1. Initially a programme of intensive fieldwalking will need to be undertaken. This will enable all remaining archaeological material to be recovered systematically. The distribution of these finds will help to focus further investigative techniques. Areas with potential for further surviving buried archaeology will be identified.
2. The identified features and other areas of potential identified from the fieldwalking should be archaeologically cleaned and planned. Sample excavation may also be necessary to adequately characterise the archaeological remains.

From the results of the evaluation it will then be possible to identify the nature of remedial works which will need to be undertaken. This will include a strategy for the protection of areas of surviving archaeological remains, or the investigation, excavation and recording of threatened archaeological remains.

Measures will also need to be undertaken in order to lessen the impact of the works on historic landscape character.

A specific methodology for the future management of the site will need to be agreed between Cambria Archaeology and the Countryside Council for Wales.

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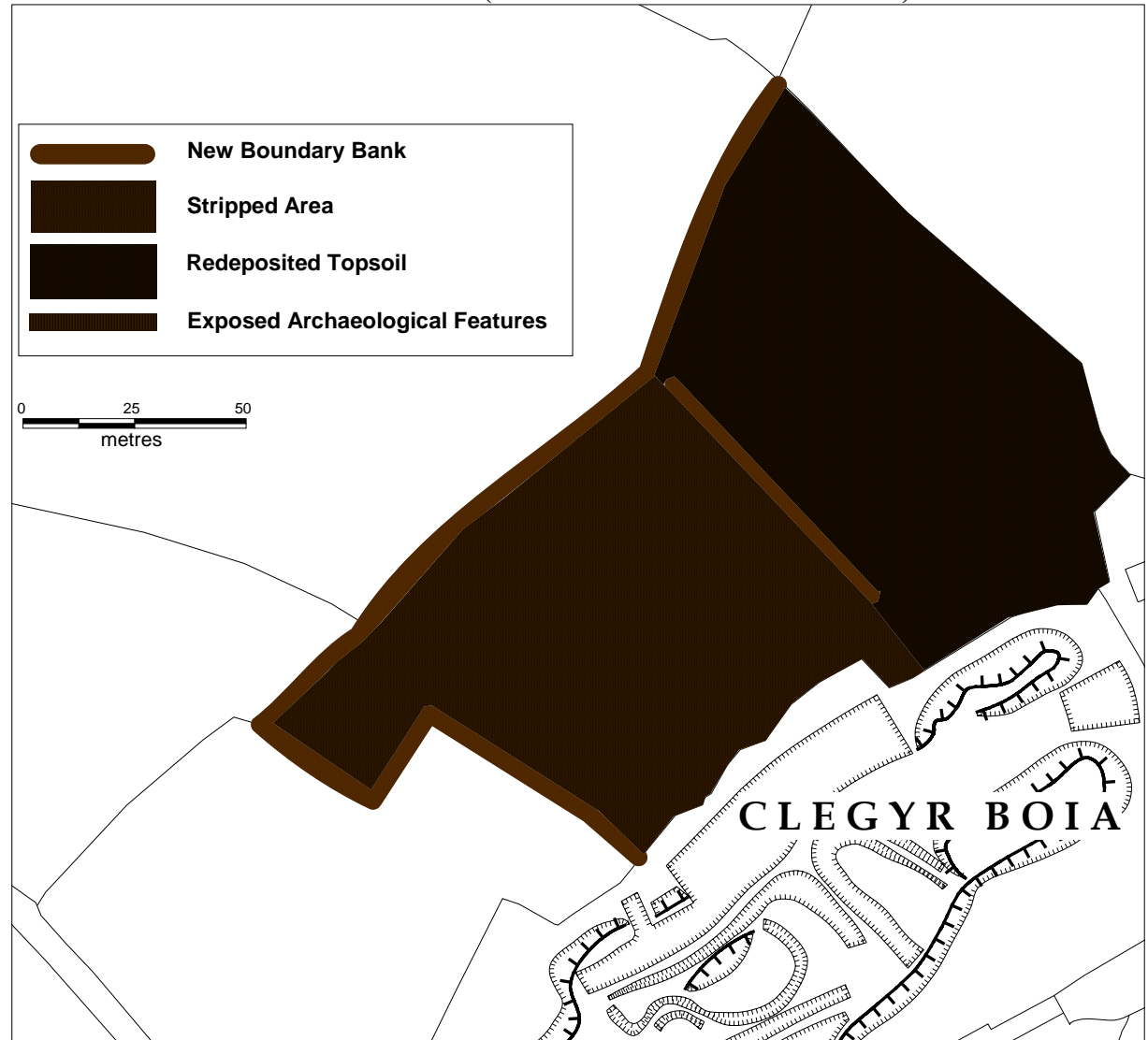
Maps

Ordnance Survey Old Series map (1819) Sheet 40, 1"
Ordnance Survey 1889 Pembrokeshire Sheet 20.02, 25"
Ordnance Survey 1908 Pembrokeshire Sheet 20.02, 25"
Ordnance Survey 1889 Pembrokeshire Sheet 20.03, 25"
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MAP OF THE DISTURBED AREA (features marked are not to scale)



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