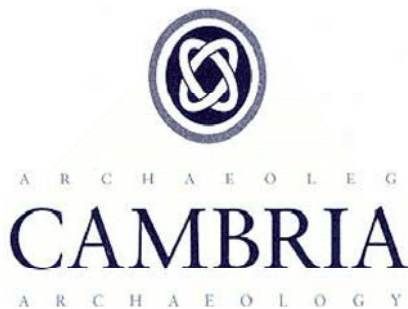


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**TIR GOFAL MANAGEMENT PLAN:
HERITAGE MANAGEMENT INFORMATION
(Call Out)**

Prepared for: Coed Bwlarth



Holding No: W/12/5128

Report Number: 2005-96

Project Record Number: 53,737

**Prepared by
Helen Milne**

INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVES

Coed Bwlarth farm comprises two adjacent holdings lying to the north of Pentre Gwenlais. An archaeological call out visit was undertaken at the request of the owner, who had identified three piles of stones, which she thought might be archaeologically significant. The owner also wishes to provide information for educational access, on the historical and archaeological resource within the holding.

Call Out Visit

The Call Out Report responds to management concerns regarding specific sites, with the aim of providing recommendations to be incorporated into the Tir Gofal Management Plan. In this instance additional information is also provided for the purposes of educational access to the farm. The report does not provide management advice for all known sites on the farm, for these recommendations please refer to the Historic Environment Report 1 (HE1). This report supplements but does not supersede the previously produced HE1 report.

When visited (22 June 2005), the area around the piles of stones was under quite dense vegetation and therefore it was difficult to assess their extent and significance. Only two of the three piles that the landowner had identified initially were located at the time of the farm visit (PRNs 53,112 and 53,113).

The two piles (SN60773 16841, and SN60821 16840 respectively) consisted of quite angular stone, although there was at least one larger more weathered stone in the western pile. The visible parts of the features appeared to be relatively insubstantial, and the collections of stone were loose, with little sign of weathering.



The western stone pile (PRN 53,112)



The eastern stone pile (PRN 53,113)

The owner thinks that the features might be burial mounds. Such burial mounds, often called ‘round barrows’ by archaeologists are generally thought to date from the Bronze Age (c. 2000BC – 600BC). They are circular mounds of earth or stone placed over the location of a burial, which may be a crouched inhumation in a stone lined grave (referred to as a cist), or it may cover a pottery urn containing cremation ashes. Some barrows occur in pairs, alignments or groups, which due to their morphology, location and association, are interpreted as being predominantly funerary or ritual in nature.

The location and appearance of the stone piles at Coed Bwlarth are not suggestive of a funerary or ritual explanation, although more detailed archaeological investigation of the site (excavation/ geophysical survey) would be necessary to confirm or refute this assertion.

The most likely explanation is that the features are clearance cairns, and their proximity to each other suggests that they are part of a small cairnfield. Clearance cairns are defined as irregularly constructed, generally unstructured, mounds of stones. They are sometimes, but not always circular, and are normally a by-product of clearing the land to make it suitable for cultivation. It is almost impossible to assign a date to this activity. In upland areas clearance cairns are often thought to date from the Bronze Age, when a climatic upturn meant that areas which are today considered marginal, were cultivable. In this instance, the lack of weathering (the angular nature of the stones) and absence of lichen growth, suggest that they had been submerged in the soil until relatively recently, making a post-medieval/ modern date more likely for the creation of the cairns. Map evidence may support this theory – both first and second edition Ordnance Survey maps use conventions that represent rough, tussocky, unimproved ground for the field in which the features are located. Clearance cairns are indicative of past agricultural activity, and their protection and preservation is important in this respect.

Although nothing more definitive can be said about the stone piles, and Prehistoric archaeology cannot be confirmed at the site, the landscape history within, and immediately around the Coed Bwlarth holdings is of great interest. Information about the development of this landscape would provide suitable interpretative material for educational access. Both holdings lie within Historic Landscape Character Area 190 Llanfihangel Aberbythych, Tywi Valley (Cadw/ ICOMOS Register of Landscapes of Outstanding Interest in Wales). These areas are intended to define places where local land-use patterns have left particularly strong or distinctive evidence in the landscape, and the descriptions provide a general overview of the history and archaeology of the defined areas (a copy is included at the end of this report). The following text is an outline of the main points of interest, within and immediately around the holding, although more detailed research into local history and folklore could be used to supplement the material.

The prehistoric period

A range of prehistoric archaeology, recorded in the vicinity of the Coed Bwlarth holdings, represents early human activity in the area.

A former hilltop southeast of the main holding bears the name ‘Dinas’ on historic map sources, implying the prior existence of a fortification. The hill no longer survives having been removed by workings at Cilyrychen Quarry. In 1914 the Royal Commission for Ancient Historic Monuments described the ‘Dinas’ site as a ‘fine natural plateau’ defended on all sides bar the south by very steep slopes. A bank of earth and stone surrounded the level area at the summit. The site was partially excavated in 1910, when a number of indications of human occupation were recovered, including burnt stone, and some horse and sheep bones. There was also a human molar, a hyena’s tooth, and a ‘small white quartz pounder, smoothed as though from frequent use’ (RCAHM Carmarthenshire, 1914). The range of material suggested some form of settlement, possibly dating to the Palaeolithic.

Further prehistoric activity in the area is represented by finds of human bones, which were recovered from a cave system to the west of the holding during the 19th century. Bronze Age finds were also recovered from Gwenlais Quarry. Quarrying has since destroyed much of this prehistoric evidence.

Industrial activity

Historic features within the modern landscape date largely from the post-medieval period. At this time industrial activity associated with the unique limestone geology of the area, had a clear impact in the immediate vicinity of the holding. Quarrying and limekilns are first recorded on historic maps in the nineteenth century, although it is likely that industrial activity of this sort was occurring on a smaller scale prior to that time. Expansion of the industry throughout the mid to late nineteenth century changed the local landscape physically, and attracted settlement. By the time the second edition Ordnance Survey map was published, most of the limekilns had been abandoned. However, quarrying for limestone continued into the twentieth century, on a larger scale. The Coed Bwlarth holdings lie just outside the main area of quarrying, but a gravel pit (PRN 54693) is marked within the holding on the 1906 Ordnance Survey map.

The settlement pattern

There has been some change to the settlement pattern since the mid nineteenth century. As mentioned above, industrial expansion attracted settlement to the area during the late nineteenth/ early twentieth century. Small nucleated settlements such as Pant-y-llyn terrace (a nineteenth century row of workers cottages built to serve the adjacent limestone quarries), Carmel and Milo, were superimposed over an underlying, and more ancient pattern of dispersed farmsteads, such as Bwlarth farmstead itself. This farm lies just to the northeast of the main holding, and appears on various historic maps, including the Old Series Ordnance Survey map of 1831.

There has also been some settlement abandonment. The site of a cottage/ small farmstead called 'Bwlarth Fach' (PRN 54,690) lies just outside the eastern edge of the main holding. It too, is marked on various historic map sources, including the Old Series Ordnance Survey map, but is now abandoned. An enclosure of unknown function (PRN 54,691) is marked centrally within the main holding on both first and second edition Ordnance Survey maps. This may represent the former site of a cottage, although no building is marked in this location on the parish tithe map. Just outside the western boundary of the holding, a building at a fork in the road (Pant-y-Llwyn), is marked as a smithy on historic map sources.

Neither holding includes a farmstead within its bounds, but land encompassed by the Bwlarth holdings probably belonged to the farmstead of the same name in the past. Wells (PRNs 54692 & 54694) at the northeastern corner of the holding may have provided water to Bwlarth Farmstead prior to the advent of mains pumped water. The name of the woodland, 'Coed Bwlarth' implies a connection to the farmstead, and perhaps ownership.

The Bwlarth place-name is of interest; the 'bwl' element can mean 'bowl', or may be a corruption of 'bwlch' (meaning gap, pass or notch), while the 'arth' element means 'bear'.

The field pattern and woodland

The present enclosure pattern within and immediately around the two holdings has seen little change since it was recorded on the parish tithe map in 1841. It is characterised by small to medium sized, quite regular fields. These contrast with the more irregular fields in the surrounding area, which are believed to reflect land tenure patterns of late medieval origin. The regular nature of the fields within the main holding suggests later enclosure, and these were perhaps carved out of a formerly more extensive wooded area, now represented by the current Coed Bwlarth.

Coed Bwlarth itself may represent remnants of ancient woodland. It is marked on all available historic map sources, and conforms to a number of the criteria by which ancient woodland is recognised (woods that have existed for 400 years or more and are not planted are classed as ancient). Within the woods there may be evidence for past woodland management, such as old coppice stools, pollards, sawpits, or charcoal burning platforms. Ancient woodland is an important aspect of the historic environment – human intervention has often played a substantial role in shaping the seemingly natural woodland environment, so it is important to retain evidence of past management and exploitation.

The first and second edition Ordnance Survey maps show a change in the composition of Coed Bwlarth between the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. On the first edition the woodland is marked as entirely deciduous, whilst the second edition shows that by this time the woodland was largely coniferous, although the boundary remained unchanged. It seems unlikely that the deciduous trees were replaced totally by conifers, but more likely that the woodland was being managed, and fast growing conifers were planted amongst deciduous trees, perhaps as a cash crop to supply the demands of local industry.

Conclusion

It is important to emphasise that the lack of conclusive evidence regarding the date and function of the stone features should not prevent archaeological/ historic landscape interpretation from playing an important part within an educational framework. In addition to interpretative material on the evolution of the landscape within and around the holdings, it may also be possible to incorporate further research into the history of the area, in particular local oral history, into a programme, which could involve educational access and the local community.

Maps

Ordnance Survey Old Series, Sheet XLI, 1831.

Ordnance Survey 1st. Ed. Carmarthenshire (25" to 1 mile) Sheet XLI.11; 1878

Ordnance Survey 1st. Ed. Carmarthenshire (25" to 1 mile) Sheet XLI.15; 1878

Ordnance Survey 2nd. Ed. Carmarthenshire (25" to 1 mile) Sheet XLI.11; 1906

Ordnance Survey 2nd. Ed. Carmarthenshire (25" to 1 mile) Sheet XLI.15; 1906

Tithe Map Llandeibie Parish, Carmarthenshire; 1841.

Apportionment Llandeibie Parish, Carmarthenshire; 1840.

Other sources

Cadw/ ICOMOS Register of Landscapes of Outstanding Interest in Wales.

Kenneth Murphy & Neil Ludlow, 2000: Carmarthenshire Historic Landscape Characterisation. Historic Landscape Character Area 190: Llanfihangel Aberbythych. Tywi Valley.

Royal Commission for Ancient Historic Monuments, Wales, 1914: Carmarthenshire Inventory.

Coed Bwlardd W/12/ 5128/a



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CARMARTHENSHIRE: TYWI VALLEY

HISTORIC LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA: 190 LLANFIHANGEL ABERBYTHYCH

GRID REFERENCE: SN 585189

AREA IN HECTARES: 2294.00

Historic Background

A very large character area bisected by the valley of the Afon Cennen. It occupies the central part of Iscennen commote which, 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 nature of this tenure may be reflected in the pattern of small- and medium-sized irregular fields which characterise the area, and may be late Medieval in origin, like similar fields in Area 185 towards the west end of the Tywi Valley which appear to pre-date the late 16th-century enclosure of their margins. Evidence for ridge and furrow cultivation, however, has been recorded in the western part of Area 190. The present pattern of enclosures and farms had nevertheless evolved by at least the early 19th-century, and is depicted as such on the tithe maps of Llanfihangel Aberbythych (1837) and Llanarthne (1848) parishes, though all early settlement is shown as dispersed. Possible ecclesiastical land lies to the west of the area and the origins of Talhardd, a farmstead on the low-lying ground on the west side of the Cennen, are said to be as a 13th century grange of the Premonstratensians at Talley (Rees 1932). However, it is not listed among the former possessions of the abbey in an early 17th-century rental (Owen 1894, 92) which may have been compiled after it had spilt from the estate. The present house is sub-Medieval but a nearby *maerdy* place-name, derived from a reeve or *maer*, may be associated with a monastic holding or the Tregib estate in Area 203 (Sambrook and Page 1995, 17). The only other early gentry house is Derwydd, to the south-east of the area, an important holding which was referred to in 1550 as the home of Rhydderch ap Hywel ap Bedo (Jones 1987, 55), with a garden remodelled in 1889 (Whittle 1999). Cellifor to the west is at least late 17th-century (Jones 1987, 29), now rebuilt, while Caeglas and Cefncethin to the east were established in the late 18th-century (Jones 1987, 20, 27), though none of the latter houses were associated with large estates. A railway was constructed along the Cennen Valley between Ammanford and Llandeilo in 1841 by the GWR, but 19th- and 20th-century development has been limited. Although there was some limestone extraction in the area, immediately beyond to the southeast intensive extraction was undertaken from the 19th century onwards giving rise to a number of settlements. These are concentrated on the fringe of the area, which also features new concentrations at Carmel, Milo and Pant-y-llyn.

Description and essential historic landscape components

Llanfihangel Aberbythych character area rises from the Tywi valley on its northern edge at 20 m above sea level to over 250 m on its southern boundary. It includes the lower valley of the Cennen and the Marlais valley. It essentially consists of land that is entirely enclosed by small- and medium-sized irregular fields with a settlement pattern of dispersed farms. Land-use is almost entirely pasture, with a little arable. The pasture is mostly improved, though there is rougher and rushy ground in the Temple Bar/Milo area. There are numerous small stands of deciduous woodland, particularly on steep valley sides, some of which may be ancient. Field boundaries are of earth banks topped with hedges, and may be late Medieval in origin. Hedges are generally in good condition, though there is evidence of some neglect and dereliction at higher levels. Occasionally hedges are overgrown, and a few possess distinctive trees. At lower levels towards the Tywi valley farms tend to be larger than on higher ground. Superimposed over the ancient settlement pattern of dispersed farms are 19th- and 20th-century villages and hamlets, linear development and dispersed dwellings. Both Milo and Carmel villages have 19th century cores consisting of stone-built dwellings and chapels, but both have late 20th-century additions in the form of dwellings in a variety of styles and materials. Pant-y-llyn is a 19th century row of workers cottages built to serve limestone quarries close by. Dispersed and linear 19th- and 20th-century residential development is mostly strung along the A476 and A483(T) roads, with concentrations close to Llandeilo and at Derwydd.

Recorded archaeology is of relatively low density and low diversity. A group of Bronze Age burnt mounds lie near the Cennen, and there are possible round barrow and standing stone sites. There are two Iron Age hillforts. A Roman road south of Llandeilo may be preserved in the line of field boundaries. There is an inscribed stone in the eastern part of the area, which appears to relate to the pre-Conquest church at Llandeilo Fawr (Area 202), and possible holy wells and crosses are recorded as place-names. Post-Medieval features include quarries, lime-kilns and possible kilns to the south of the area, bridges, a mill, a possible smithy, a possible pound or fold, and cottages. The railway opened by the GWR in 1841 is still operational and a dominant feature of the landscape.

There are some distinctive buildings. Talhardd farmhouse, which is Grade II listed, is largely sub-Medieval, probably of 16th century date, with 17th century fittings and late-Georgian remodelling; it was once thought to have been moated. Derwydd is Grade II* listed and incorporates an early 16th century house and possibly also the remains of a 15th century house. It contained 18 hearths in 1670 and was thus among the largest in Carmarthenshire at the time (Jones 1987, 55). House and garden are entered as ref. number PGW (Dy) 6 (CAM) in the Cadw/ICOMOS Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in Wales (Whittle, 1999). The far west end of the area is dominated by Paxton's Tower, a Grade II listed folly erected on an outlying part of the Middleton estate in c.1807-10, and there are two Middleton lodges. Farms lying at lower levels towards the Tywi valley tend to be larger than those on higher ground, and their respective buildings are of a higher quality, often with three-storey 18th- and 19th-century dwellings in the Georgian tradition. The stone-built buildings on the larger

farms, which are mostly 19th century, are also larger and often arranged in a formal basis around a yard. However, the predominant farmhouse style is the stone-built, slate-roofed dwelling of two storeys and three bays in the vernacular rather than the polite tradition. The masonry, mostly 19th century farm buildings on these smaller holdings tend to smaller and less formally arranged, often consisting of just one range. Most farms have large modern farm buildings associated with them. There are a number of 19th century chapels.

This character area is fairly well defined along its northern edge with on its boundary with Areas 182, 193, 194 and against the town of Llandeilo (Area 202). To the south character areas have yet to be defined, but there is at least in part a clear border between this area and a limestone ridge. To the east there is no clear definition between this area and Areas 197, 203, as all three areas possess similar historic landscape components, but rather a zone of change.

Conservation priorities

Most of the historic landscape components in this character area are in a reasonable state of preservation. However, the 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 be given 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.