

**EXCAVATION OF A MEDIEVAL TIMBER
TRACKWAY & POSSIBLE ROMAN LEAD
SMELTING SITE
AT LLANGYNFELYN, TALYBONT**
Interim report



Paratowyd gan Archaeoleg Cambria
Ar gyfer Cadw
Prepared by Cambria Archaeology
For Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments



A R C H A E O L E G
CAMBRIA
A R C H A E O L O G Y

ARCHAEOLEG CAMBRIA ARCHAEOLOGY

RHIF YR ADRODDIAD / REPORT NO. 2005/89
RHIF Y PROSIECT / PROJECT RECORD NO. 54922

Gorffennaf 2005
July 2005

EXCAVATION OF A MEDIEVAL TIMBER TRACKWAY and POSSIBLE ROMAN LEAD SMELTING SITE AT LLANGYNFELIN, TALYBONT Interim report

Gan / By

Cambria Archaeology

*Archaeoleg Cambria yw enw marchnata Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Dyfed Cyfyngedig.
Cambria Archaeology is the marketing name of the Dyfed Archaeological Trust Limited.*

Paratowyd yr adroddiad yma at ddefnydd y cwsmer yn unig. Ni dderbynnir cyfrifoldeb gan Archaeoleg Cambria am ei ddefnyddio gan unrhyw berson na phersonau eraill a fydd yn ei ddarllen neu ddibynnu ar y gwybodaeth y mae'n ei gynnwys

The report has been prepared for the specific use of the client. Cambria Archaeology can accept no responsibility for its use by any other person or persons who may read it or rely on the information it contains.



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

ARCHAEOLEG CAMBRIA
Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Dyfed Cyf
Neuadd y Sir, Stryd Caerfyrddin, Llandeilo, Sir
Gaerfyrddin SA19 6AF
Ffon: Ymholiadau Cyffredinol 01558 823121
Adran Rheoli Treftadaeth 01558 823131
Ffacs: 01558 823133
Ebost: cambria@acadat.com Gwefan:

CAMBRIA ARCHAEOLOGY
Dyfed Archaeological Trust Limited
The Shire Hall, Carmarthen Street, Llandello,
Carmarthenshire SA19 6AF
Tel: General Enquiries 01558 823121
Heritage Management Section 01558 823131
Fax: 01558 823133
Email: cambria@acadat.com Website:

Cwmni cyfyngedig (1198990) ynghyd ag elusen gofrestredig (504616) yw'r Ymddiriedolaeth. The Trust is both a Limited Company (No. 1198990) and a Registered Charity (No. 504616)

CADEIRYDD CHAIRMAN: B.C.BURNHAM, MA PHD FSA MIFA. CYFARWYDDWR DIRECTOR: E G HUGHES BA FSA MIFA

**EXCAVATION OF A MEDIEVAL TIMBER TRACKWAY and POSSIBLE ROMAN LEAD
SMELTING SITE
AT LLANGYNFELIN, TALYBONT
Interim report**

RHIF YR ADRODDIAD / REPORT NUMBER 2005/89

**Gorffennaf 2005
July 2005**

Paratowyd yr adroddiad hwn gan / This report has been compiled by Nigel Page

Swydd / Position: Project Manager

Llofnod / Signature Dyddiad / Date 19/08/2005

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

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

Swydd / Position: Director

Llofnod / Signature Dyddiad / Date 19/08/2005

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

EXCAVATIONS AT LLANGYNFELIN 2005: INTERIM REPORT

INTRODUCTION

This short interim statement reports on the main results of the second season of excavation on the Borth Bog trackway site (Fig. 1). The background to the project and the results of previous excavations have been reported elsewhere (Jones 2004ⁱ; Page 2005ⁱⁱ) and they will not be repeated here. The main focus of the 2005 season was to further investigate the relationship between the trackway and the industrial deposits uncovered below its southern end in 2004 and to characterise, where possible, the nature and extent of the industrial activity.

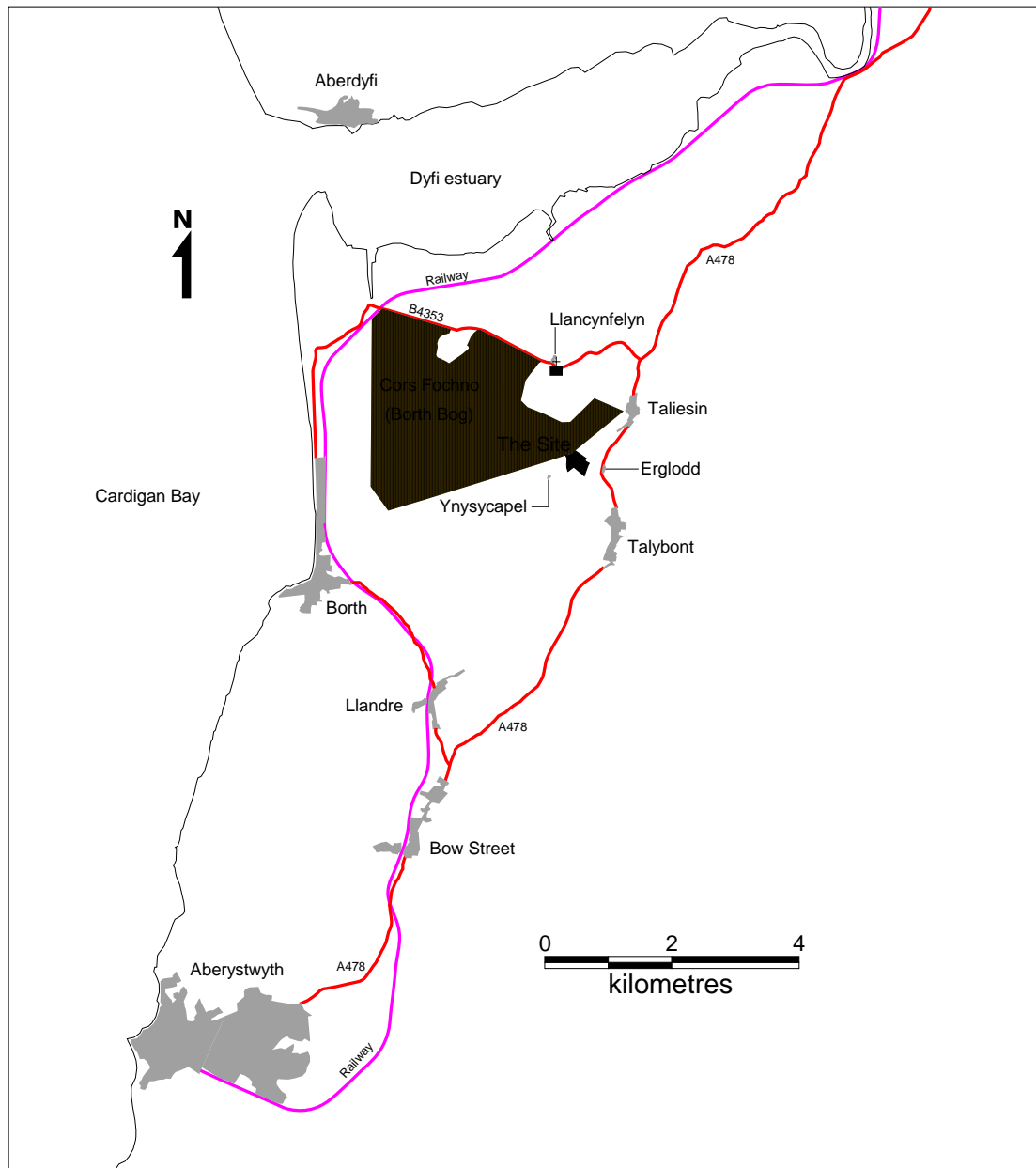


Figure 1: Location plan.

OBJECTIVES AND METHODS

The main objectives of this season's excavation were to:

- determine the relationship, if any, between the industrial deposits and the trackway.
- assess the extent, character, date and significance of the industrial deposits and any associated processing complex.
- retrieve more dating evidence for the trackway and industrial material.
- undertake a systematic programme of palaeoenvironmental sampling to investigate the pre-industrial landscape and to assess the impact of the industrial activity on that landscape.

To achieve those aims it was decided to implement a strategy of open area excavation and test-pitting (Fig. 2). Two open area excavations were opened; at the southern end of the trackway (T6) and across a prominent earthwork (T7), which was thought a promising location for a furnace or furnaces. The test-pits, which initially measured 1m x 1m, were excavated across a wide area: some test pits were expanded to further investigate revealed features and deposits.

This two-fold approach allowed detailed investigation of known areas of interest and gave the opportunity to rapidly assess a large area along the bog edge.

EXCAVATION RESULTS

Open areas

The two open areas (T6 and T7) were located to investigate specific aspects of the site.

T6 was positioned at the southern end of the trackway and covered the central part of one of the 2004 excavation trenches (T4) to further investigate the trackway and its relationship to the underlying industrial deposits.

Removal of the upper layers of gravel revealed a surprisingly well-preserved stretch of timber corduroy (Plate 1) and the extensive spreads of industrial waste material identified in June 2004. The timbers consisted for the most part of close-packed cross-timbers, including half-round timbers (probably alder) and split oak planks. Four parallel rows of stake uprights ran along the line of the trackway and were for the most part below the cross-timbers. A single silver birch branch had been laid to act as a side rail for the cross-timbers.

The half-round timbers, which retained their bark, had been laid with the rounded side uppermost suggesting that they had not been laid as a walkway. Therefore it now seems very likely that the timbers were a foundation raft for the trackway, which was always intended to be a gravel track with the earlier industrial material being used to form a stable and free-draining walkway surface. The timbers were sampled for species identification and dendrochronology.

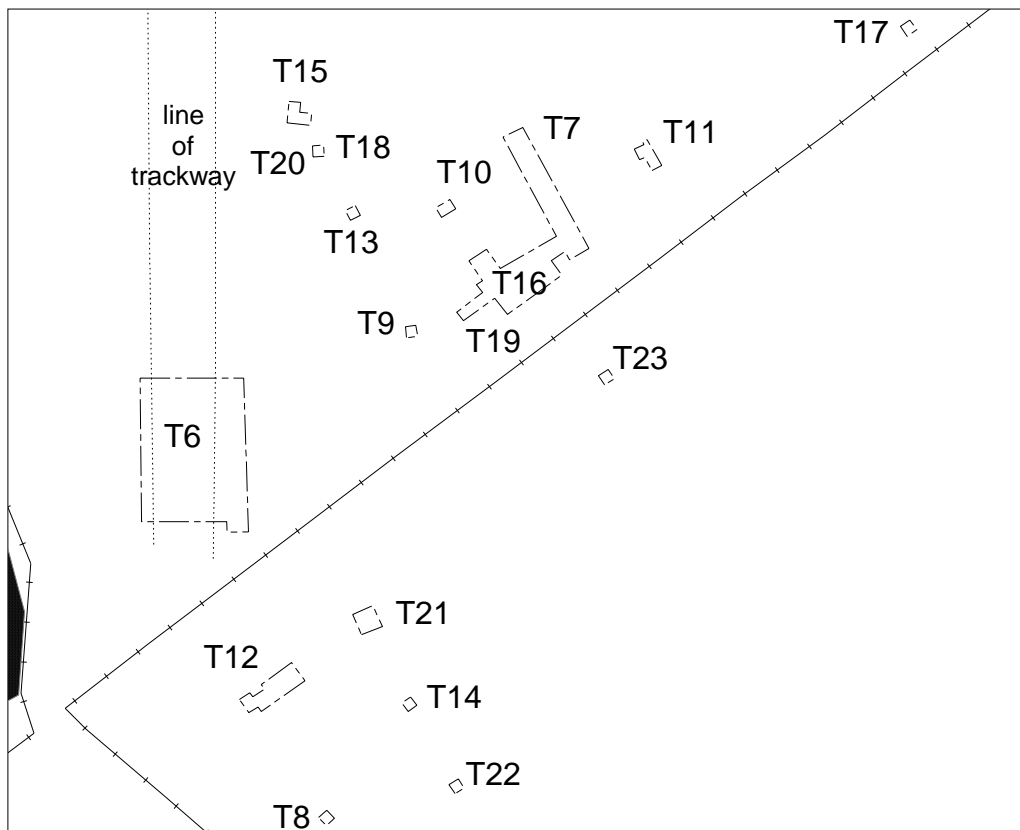


Figure 2: Plan showing trench and test pit locations.



Plate 1: cleaning the timbers after machine stripping in T6.

The deposits below the trackway were partially investigated last year and this year's excavation confirmed that the deposits are made up of extensive dumps of waste material. Samples taken from two of these deposits in 2004 returned radiocarbon dates of 60BC-90AD and 20AD-220AD (cal 2 sigma) indicating a Romano-British or Roman date for the industrial activity. In 2004 the excavation revealed that part of the trackway was slumping to the west, this excavation has resolved that issue, by showing that the trackway was slumping into a peat filled hollow that underlay the western half of a short length of the trackway (Plate 2).

The peat seems to have developed sometime after the abandonment of industrial activity in this area and before the trackway was constructed.



Plate 2: section at north end of T6 showing the industrial deposits and peat below trackway.

T7 was positioned to investigate a prominent mound a short distance to the east of the trackway. The mound was selected for excavation as it was felt that it would have provided an ideal location for a furnace of the sort thought to have been used on the site. Initial machining revealed a charcoal spread that covered the top and north side of the mound. The spread increased in thickness towards the base of the mound (Plate 3).

However, investigation of the mound revealed no structural evidence for a furnace.



Plate 3: The extensive charcoal spread at the base of the mound in T7.

Test pits

Sixteen test pits were excavated across the site to try to define the limits of the industrial activity and to identify individual furnace locations. The strategy of test pitting was successful as it defined the site limits on the north and south edges and located the remains of a furnace in TP21.

A furnace was located just south of the bog edge on a low ridge. The furnace consisted of a patch of heated clay in a shallow hollow (Plate 4). Heat affected stones, some with lead glazing, which appear to have been furnace lining were also present. Galena bearing ore rocks were also recovered from this trench. Samples were taken from the furnace and surrounding deposits. Initial rapid assessment of the galena bearing rock indicates a local origin, although it is probably not from the nearby Erglodd mine.

Fragments of furnace lining were also recovered from several other test pits and sherds from a blue-green glass vessel that may be Roman were recovered from TP10.



Plate 4: The base of a furnace.

Conclusions

This season's excavation has been successful in answering the main research objectives.

It is clear that the trackway is later than and, therefore, not associated with the industrial activity.

The galena and waste residues still indicate lead smelting, although silver may also have been extracted. A furnace has been located and it appears that many more may survive in reasonable condition below the overlying gravel and waste deposits (see Plate 4).

The extent of the industrial activity, which clearly extends for some distance east – west along the bog edge beyond the excavation area, was a surprise.

Extensive sampling has provided material for palaeoenvironmental analysis, dendrochronology, radiocarbon dating and industrial analysis, which will aid the understanding of the site and its place in the landscape.

ⁱ Jones R 2004 *Archaeological evaluation and salvage recording at Llangynfelyn, Talybont*. Cambria Archaeology report for Cadw.

ⁱⁱ Page N 2005 *Excavation of a medieval timber trackway at Llangynfelyn, Talybont*. Cambria Archaeology report for Cadw.