

E/09983.

LAND ADJACENT TO GOLWG YR ALLT  
TALLEY, CARMARTHENSHIRE  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL APPRAISAL



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For  
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LAND ADJACENT TO GOLWG YR ALLT, TALLEY  
CARMARTHENSHIRE  
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CONTENTS	PAGE
Summary	1
1.Introduction	2
2.Summary of the Historic Landscape Development	3
3.The Archaeological Resource	5
4. Potential Impacts of the Proposed Development	8
5. Suggested Further Archaeological Works	9
Sources	10
Figure 1: Location map of site. Development area in red	3
Figure 2: Extract of 1 <sup>st</sup> edition 1:2500 OS map showing development area bounded in red	4
Figure 3: Extract of 2 <sup>nd</sup> edition 1:2500 OS map showing development area bounded in red	4
Plate 1: View of proposed development site looking east	5
Plate 2: View of proposed development site looking north east	6
Plate 3: Modern trackway noted during site visit	7

LAND ADJACENT TO GOLWG YR ALLT, TALLEY, CARMARTHENSHIRE:  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL APPRAISAL

Summary

*Proposals to develop a large plot of land adjacent to Golwg Yr Allt, Talley, Carmarthenshire (NGR SN3653255) required an archaeological appraisal. The appraisal was considered necessary due to the close proximity of the site to the medieval abbey (PRN 1897; SAM CM013; NGR SN63273277). To the north east of the proposed development site are the sites of possibly two medieval chapels with possible cemeteries, which once belonged to the abbey, Capel Crist (PRN 1899; NGR SN63613267) and Capel Mair (PRN 10571; NGR SN63613267).*

*The Local Planning Authority's (LPA) archaeological advisors recommended that an archaeological appraisal be carried out before the planning application for the site (Planning application E/09983) is determined. MYBA Developments commissioned Cambria Archaeology Field Services to carry out the appraisal in January 2008.*

*The appraisal revealed that there are no known archaeological sites within the proposed development area, but its location is potentially significant. The topography of the site, low lying with a small stream, is fairly typical of the type of landscape that could contain burnt mounds. Burnt mounds are generally found close to small watercourses such as the one that forms the southern boundary to this site.*

*The close proximity to the abbey and the sites of two possible medieval chapels, which may have served a secular settlement in the vicinity suggests the surrounding landscape was the focus of much activity which may result in archaeological deposits or features being present within the proposed development area.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Project Proposals and Commission

Proposals to develop a large plot of land adjacent to Golwg Yr Allt, Talley, Carmarthenshire (NGR SN63653255), required an archaeological appraisal. The proposed development site lies just to the south east of, but close to the medieval Talley Abbey and, therefore, the LPA's archaeological advisors recommended that an archaeological appraisal be carried out before the planning application for the site (Planning Application E/09983) is determined. MYBA Developments commissioned Cambria Archaeology Field Services to carry out the appraisal in January 2008.

### 1.2 Scope of the project

The appraisal consisted of the examination of available sources of information such as maps, published works and aerial photographs held in the Historic Environment Record<sup>1</sup> (HER) and a site visit. The results are intended to identify the extent and character of the archaeological resource, to assess the likely and potential impacts of the scheme on that resource and, if required, to outline a possible programme of further works to mitigate those impacts. The appraisal should be seen only as the first stage of the archaeological process and does not preclude the possibility that further archaeological input may be required prior to, or during, the proposed development.

### 1.3 Abbreviations used in this report

All sites recorded on the county HER are identified by their Primary Record Number (PRN) and located by their National Grid Reference (NGR). References to cartographic and documentary evidence and published sources will be given in brackets throughout the text, with full details listed in the sources section at the rear of the report.

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<sup>1</sup> Held and managed by Cambria Archaeology, The Shire Hall, Llandeilo.

## 2. SUMMARY OF THE HISTORIC LANDSCAPE DEVELOPMENT

### 2.1 The Site Location

The proposed development site occupies a long narrow area of land to the southeast of Talley Abbey. The site slopes from the northeast to form a very shallow stream valley where it is very low lying and wet. The south of the site is bounded by mature trees and a stream, whilst the northern boundary consists of modern housing as does that to the west. The eastern boundary being a fence line which surrounds a playing field.

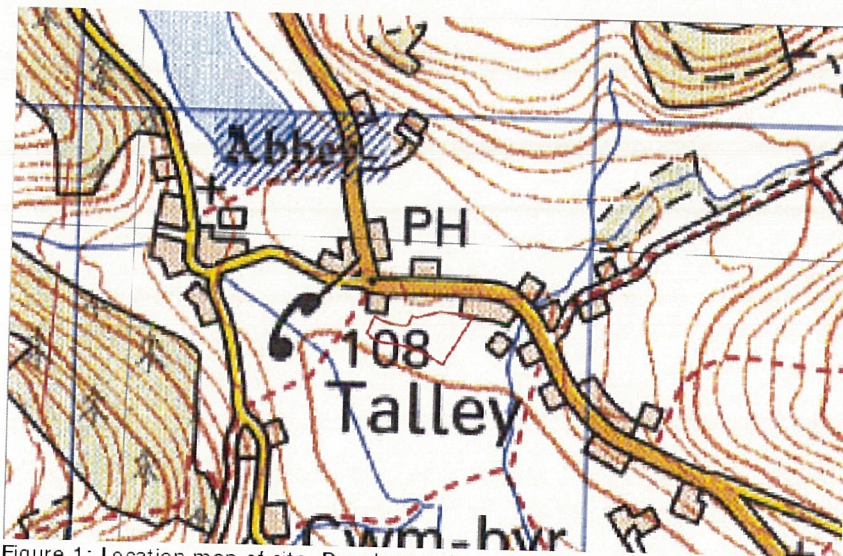


Figure 1: Location map of site. Development area in red.

Reproduced from the 2002 Ordnance Survey 1:50,000 scale Landranger Map with the permission of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, © Crown Copyright Cambria Archaeology, The Shire Hall, Carmarthen Street, Llandeilo, Carmarthenshire SA19 6AF. Licence No AL51842A

### 2.2 Landscape Development

Map regression has revealed that at least since the late 1800s the site has not been the subject of any development (Ordnance Survey (OS) 1888: 1906). The site was once subdivided into two fields with a boundary shown running northeast – southwest across the site on both the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> edition OS maps. No trace of this boundary was noted during the site visit.

To the north and west the landscape has been the subject of much modern development in the form of housing. Whilst to the east a playing field now occupies what was once agricultural land. A track was noted during the site visit but this is probably modern and associated with access to the playing field.

Developments such as the construction of the Edwinstford Arms public house, the Post Office and latterly modern housing within the vicinity of the proposed development site attest to the continuing development of Talley.

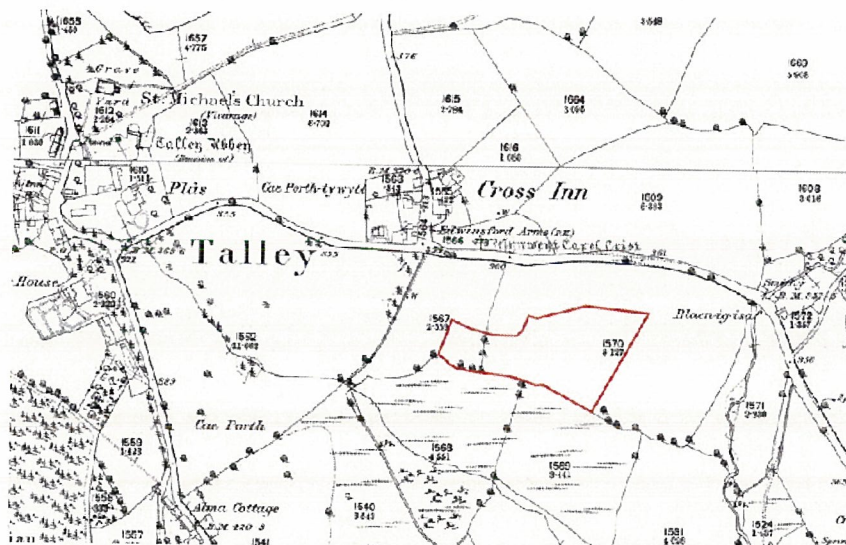


Figure 2: Extract from Ordnance Survey 1<sup>st</sup> edition 1:2500 map showing development area bounded in red.

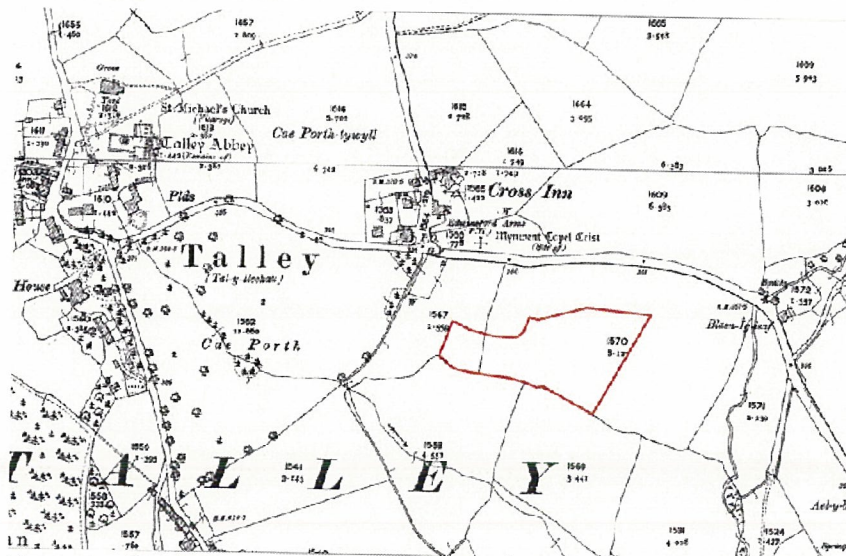


Figure 3: Extract from Ordnance Survey 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 1:2500 map showing development area bounded in red.

### 3. THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCE

#### 3.1 Known Archaeological Sites.

There are no known archaeological sites within the proposed development area.

#### 3.2 Archaeological Potential

The buried archaeological resource is unknown and frequently unpredictable. With a proposed development of this scale, and given its location, there is the potential for buried remains to be present across the site.

The small stream running along the southern boundary of the site is a typical of the location of burnt mounds. A burnt mound usually consists of a low irregular mound of fire-cracked stone and charcoal. The broken stones that form these mounds result from being heated in a fire and then being dropped into water, or other liquid, to heat it. The mounds can vary in diameter between c.2m and c.15m and can possess associated troughs or pits. This form of archaeological feature usually dates to approximately 2000 BC, although examples are known which have earlier or later dates. Burnt mounds have widely been interpreted as being places for cooking (Williams, 1990, 130-138). No evidence of any burnt mounds was noted during a site visit for this appraisal.



Plate 1: View of proposed development site looking east.



Plate 2: View of proposed development site looking north east.

The abbey at Talley is unique to Wales being the only house of the Premonstratensian Order, also known as White Canons (Rees, 207). The order being founded by St Norbert of Xanten in valley of Premontre, France in 1121 (Gibbon, 1). The abbey at Talley was founded by Rhys ap Gruffydd in the mid to late 1180s (Cowley, 35). An abbey such as Talley although located in relative seclusion would have had a substantial impact on the wider landscape. The abbey would have formed the centre of a substantial network of landholdings, in the case of Talley this consisted of over 480 acres (*ibid*, 273). Talley abbey was the focal point of social and economic systems whereby the landscape would have to be manipulated and managed to provide a substantial surplus to support the religious community (Aston, 21). The manipulation and management of the landscape could be achieved in a number of ways such as the construction of fisheries, mills, clearing of woodland and the establishment of granges. A grange being a farm complex located some distance away from the main abbey. In addition to these outlying granges the outer court of many monastic houses would also contain complexes of farm buildings (Bond, 125). The presence of Cae Porth to the west of the proposed development site along with Cae Porth Tywyll to the north west, on both the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> edition OS maps suggests the outer court may have once been located in the vicinity of the site (OS, 1888 & 1906). Much of the labour required to ensure the abbey's interests were maintained was drawn from the *conversi*, also known as lay brothers, these were men who had in effect left the secular life but were unable to be raised to clerical status. The lay brothers began to decline in the 1200s and to address this the abbey would have leased out much of its lands as opposed to directly working them (Bond, 156).

To the north east of the proposed development site, the sites of possibly two medieval chapels, which may once have been owned by Talley Abbey, could be seen as significant as it may suggest the abbey may have had further interests in the vicinity. The presence of chapels in the vicinity of the development site suggests there may have been a medieval secular settlement in the vicinity of the site.



Plate 3: Modern trackway noted during site visit.

#### 4. POTENTIAL IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The absence of specific design plans makes it difficult to be definitive about the impact the proposed development would have on the archaeological resource. However, construction processes are familiar enough to enable general statements to be made which can be used to inform the final design plans.

##### 4.1 General considerations of development

A development such as the one proposed adjacent to Golwg yr Allt, Talley involves a range of processes that would have an immediate and obvious archaeological impact. The main construction processes in this case would be:

1. Site Clearance
2. Excavation of new foundations and service trenches.
3. Construction of new roads.
4. Heavy plant and machinery moving across the site.
5. Landscaping.

As with any form of construction work these processes have an impact on the landscape whether through initial topsoil stripping and levelling through to the excavation of foundations and service trenches prior to construction. All of these processes have the potential to damage, remove or destroy previously unknown archaeological features and deposits.

An assessment of the likely severity of impact of the proposed development on identified archaeological features can be made according to the following criteria:

- 1- Total - complete destruction of the site
- 2- Very severe - loss of most of the major components of a site
- 3- Severe - loss of some of the major components of a site
- 4- Medium - loss of some components of a site
- 5- Slight - some loss of some minor components of a site
- 6- None - No impact on the site or feature or its setting
- 7- Beneficial - an improvement to a site or feature or its setting
- 8- Unknown - areas where the potential impacts are currently unknown

##### 4.2 Potential Impacts on the Buried Archaeological Resource

The nature and extent of any buried archaeological deposits or features is as yet unknown.

Impact: Unknown

## **5. SUGGESTED FURTHER ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORKS**

The further archaeological works outlined below are suggestions only, the final decision regarding the scope and extent of any further works will be taken by the LPA's archaeological advisor.

### **5.1 Potential buried archaeological features and deposits**

The extent of the buried archaeological resource is as yet unknown, but it may include burnt mounds and evidence of medieval settlement or agriculture. It is possible that geophysical survey of the site will identify and locate any buried archaeological features. Burnt mounds are particularly susceptible to geophysical survey and, therefore, a survey of the site could be a rapid and non-intrusive method of providing the information required to determine the planning application.

A watching brief could be maintained during the early stages of the development, principally the works associated with site clearance and topsoil stripping, in order to identify and record any archaeological features exposed.

## SOURCES

### Map

Ordnance Survey 1888 Carmarthenshire Sheet XXV NE 1:2500.  
Ordnance Survey 1906 Carmarthenshire Sheet XXV NE 1:2500.  
Ordnance Survey 2002 Landranger 1:50000.

### Published Works

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*Land Adjacent to Golwg Yr Allt, Talley, Carmarthenshire: Archaeological Appraisal*

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