



Historic Landscape Mapping Programme

Recording abandoned and derelict vernacular buildings in the western area of the Brecon Beacons National Park, and Myddfai Community



This research and report, and the wider ABC Grass Roots Heritage Project were funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Brecon Beacons Trust, the Community Foundation in Wales, the Quaker Housing Trust, and the Pilgrim Trust.

Parts of this project were carried out in partnership with Dyfed Archaeological Trust

Written by Helen Whitear BA Hons, MA, Landscape Archaeologist

Adfer Ban a Chwm (ABC) is a building preservation trust whose aim is to restore pre-1919 derelict vernacular buildings within South Wales to high conservation and environmental standards, finding sustainable end uses appropriate to each individual building, and supporting local communities in appreciating and realising their intrinsic value.

Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Executive Summary | 1 |
| Introduction | 2 |
| Background to the <i>Historic Landscape Mapping Programme</i> - the rationale | |
| Programme aims and objectives | |
| The Study | 5 |
| Stage 1 Methodology - desk-based mapping | |
| Stage 2 Methodology - site visits | |
| Limitations of the study | |
| Difficulties and problems encountered | |
| Community building recording | 10 |
| Community building recording event 1: November 2016 | |
| Community building recording event 2: April 2017 | |
| Results and discussion | 13 |
| Results of the <i>Historic Landscape Mapping Programme</i> | |
| A brief history of abandonment within the study area | |
| Dwellings of the rural poor | |
| Place-names | |
| Conclusions and recommendations | 19 |
| Achievements | |
| What has been learnt? | |
| Why are these buildings relevant? | |
| Acknowledgments | 23 |
| Sources consulted & bibliography | 24 |
| Maps | |
| Map showing boundary of study area, and distribution of buildings and sites identified | |
| Sites identified during ABC Historic Landscape Mapping Programme (North BBNP) | |
| Sites identified during ABC Historic Landscape Mapping Programme (South BBNP) | |

Appendices

- Appendix 1 Gazetteer of sites identified during the desk-based study
- Appendix 2 Gazetteer of site visits with descriptions
- Appendix 3 ABC building recording pro-forma
- Appendix 4 ABC bilingual information sheet for farmers and landowners
- Appendix 5 Drawings produced by volunteers during building recording workshops
- Appendix 6 Llanerch-goch description and importance

Acronyms used in the text

ABC - Adfer Ban a Chwm
DAT - Dyfed Archaeological Trust
BBNP – Brecon Beacons National Park

BBNPA – Brecon Beacons National Park
Authority

NPA – National Park Authority

FUNDERS

HLF – Heritage Lottery Fund
QHT – Quaker Housing Trust

GIS – Geographical Information Systems
PRN – Primary Record Number
HER – Historic Environment Record (curated
and maintained by DAT for the study area)
OS – Ordnance Survey
NGR – National Grid Reference
AOD – Above Ordnance Datum

BBT – Brecon Beacons Trust
CFiW – Community Foundation in Wales

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is the result of ABC's *Historic Landscape Mapping Programme* (carried out in 2016 – 17) - a 'landscape-scale' study of abandoned, derelict traditional and vernacular buildings in the Western (Carmarthenshire) area of the Brecon Beacons National Park (BBNP). The study aimed to provide the necessary information to enable ABC to identify potential building/s to work on with the local community, and to demonstrate the number of abandoned and derelict buildings within the study area.

An initial desk-based assessment was carried out, where historic and modern Ordnance Survey (OS) maps were compared to generate a locational map of buildings which were in use at the end of the 19th and early 20th centuries and are now abandoned, followed by site visits to a selection of buildings identified during the desk-based phase.

Part of ABC's *Historic Landscape Mapping Programme* was a partnership project with Dyfed Archaeological Trust (DAT) who were funded by Cadw to map all *extant* (in use) traditional (pre 1915) buildings within the study area.

The mapping programme underpinned the first year of ABC's *Grass Roots Heritage Project*, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), the Quaker Housing Trust (QHT), the Brecon Beacons Trust (BBT), and Community Foundation in Wales (CFiW).

During the programme 281 sites of abandoned or derelict homesteads were identified by ABC, of which only 54 had existing records, resulting in the creation of 227 brand new records of derelict and abandoned buildings, and sites of buildings which were occupied at the close of the 19th century, within the study area. The evidence gathered shows the level of rural depopulation in Wales during the 20th century, and demonstrates very clearly that rural communities were considerably larger during the late 19th and early 20th centuries than they are now.

The abandoned buildings identified tell of life in the recent past, and many evidence a strong thread of continuity which stretches back through Welsh history. They are a valuable, but often misunderstood, rapidly disappearing and under-represented resource for understanding Wales' cultural past.

Introduction

Background to the *Historic Landscape Mapping Programme* – the rationale

The *Historic Landscape Mapping Programme* was devised as a way of identifying abandoned vernacular buildings which might be suitable for ABC, with support from the local community, to consider re-instating as affordable homes, in partnership with a local housing association. During the first year of the *Grass Roots Heritage Project* this model had to undergo change, after testing concluded that the option of working with a housing association to provide affordable homes was not necessarily the best end use for some of the buildings which might be viable for re-instatement.

There are large numbers of derelict, abandoned vernacular buildings across Wales, but many of them have not been recorded in any detail, if at all. Until recently, the majority of the population of Wales lived rurally, but this has changed rapidly over the last century. Farmsteads (both large and small), and cottages have been abandoned within the study area, leaving traces of a largely undocumented but recent cultural past witnessed only by the crumbling remains of buildings scattered throughout the landscape. These remains represent an invaluable record of Welsh life and are an important but under-represented part of Wales' social history. They are rapidly disappearing from maps and memories, and by recording them now there is a chance to understand them properly before they vanish completely.

The term 'vernacular' is used to refer to buildings which were domestic rather than public or monumental. They were constructed for, and by, local people using locally specific building materials and techniques. They fit comfortably within the landscape from which they were built, and of which they are a part. In south-west Wales many date from the 19th century, although some have earlier origins, and or have earlier elements incorporated within later buildings. Vernacular buildings can be found in towns as well as the countryside, but the area covered by the *Historic Landscape Mapping Programme* is (still) very rural, and most buildings were built and developed within an agricultural context.

As agriculture formed the mainstay of the Welsh economy, this rural way of life underpins much Welsh cultural tradition and identity. In rural Wales farmsteads of various sizes make up the majority of the built environment, and many of these comprise traditional vernacular buildings. These buildings are one of the most recognisable and visually significant aspects of landscape character, but they are also historical documents, and once they are gone they cannot be replaced.

These buildings are often the best record we have of the everyday lives of the ordinary people and communities of Wales. Their survival is just as important to Wales' cultural heritage as that of the grander buildings. Lack of recognition of their cultural importance means that they are rarely

protected under current planning law (few are listed), and so many are neglected and in decline, and ultimately threatened by permanent loss.

The buildings which now lie derelict were abandoned at different times, for a variety of reasons. Many were abandoned during the 19th century in favour of growing industrial centres, but rural depopulation has continued throughout the 20th and into the 21st centuries. The loss of community members (particularly younger people) to the opportunities offered in more urban areas, is a theme as relevant now as it was in the later 19th century.

In 2015 ABC approached Dyfed Archaeological Trust (DAT) regarding the proposed mapping programme, who offered their support for the aims of the project. It was agreed that ABC's *Historic Landscape Mapping Programme* should become part of a partnership project with DAT who were funded by Cadw Welsh Government Historic Environment Service to identify and map all *extant* pre 1915 buildings within the study area. DAT have supported ABC 'in kind' with use of facilities and practical support, throughout the project, and provided staff when one archaeologist just wasn't enough.

Information from this study has been incorporated into the regional Historic Environment Record (HER), a publicly accessible database held and maintained by DAT.

Programme Aims and Objectives

The *Historic Landscape Mapping Programme* underpins the wider *ABC Grass Roots Heritage Project*. Its aims were as follows:

- To identify and map all derelict and abandoned vernacular buildings which were occupied and in use at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries, principally in the western (Carmarthenshire) area of BBNP in order to ascertain their number and distribution
- To enhance existing records held by the local HER by adding further information where possible (many existing records had only scant information)
- To provide more detailed information on a percentage of the sites identified by carrying out site visits where possible
- To preserve by record information about these buildings and their immediate environs that may otherwise be lost
- To provide an overview of the current condition of selected buildings
- To broadcast information gathered widely through a series of community events

- To encourage community involvement and participation in the process of recording, understanding and appreciating local vernacular buildings by providing opportunities to volunteer
- To encourage interest in the sites identified and work with the local community to identify buildings which might be suitable for ABC to work with
- To elaborate on the social history of the buildings identified by collecting local memories and stories
- To demonstrate the heritage and cultural value of derelict and abandoned vernacular buildings as part of the wider historic landscape, and show how these buildings can inform on ways to look after our surviving traditional and vernacular buildings for the future

The Study

Stage I Methodology – desk-based mapping

Desk-based GIS (geographical information systems) analysis was carried out for the western (Carmarthenshire) area of Brecon Beacons National Park (BBNP).

The study area encompassed Myddfai Community (including the part which falls outside BBNP), the whole of Llanddeusant Community, and the parts of Llangadog Community, Dyffryn Cennen Community, Quarter Bach Community, Cwmamman Community and Llandybie Community which lie within the boundary of BBNP.

The historic maps consulted were the first and second edition 1:2500 OS maps (generally c. 1887 and 1906). These were compared with current OS map data. A total of 32 historic OS quarter sheets (both 1st and 2nd edition) were consulted.

In consultation with the HER manager and DAT archaeologist a new GIS database was created for the ABC/ DAT partnership project. To ensure compatibility, the structure of the ABC and DAT tables matched each other and the structure of the main HER database.

The split between extant and derelict buildings enabled the remit of the ABC archaeologist and the DAT archaeologist to be clearly defined at the outset of the partnership project. Whilst the ABC landscape archaeologist recorded those buildings which had been abandoned, the DAT archaeologist recorded those buildings present on the 2nd edition OS maps of the area which are currently still occupied.

All new sites and existing HER records for abandoned buildings were entered into this new GIS table. Details were added into all mandatory fields (site type, period, summary, Eastings and Northings). Notes fields were filled in including ABC notes, DAT notes, short description and long description.

Basic records were created for all new sites identified within the study area. The level of recording by the ABC archaeologist at this stage included a basic description of the layout of the site as it appears on 1st and 2nd edition OS, and whether or not it appears on current OS mapping. An attempt was made to record the condition of the site based on what was visible on current GIS aerial photographic layers (Next Perspectives satellite images and Google satellite images). This was not always possible as many sites are obscured by trees and other vegetation.

Clusters of individual buildings which appeared to be part of a farmstead were recorded as one site. For the sake of consistency site names were recorded in the earliest form in which they appear on the map sources consulted (usually on OS 1st edition).

Overlaying the post-code grid GIS layer on the study area ensured comprehensive coverage of a large area by breaking it down into more manageable areas for analysis.

During this process sites were earmarked for visits. The criteria used for selection were: identifying a need for further more detailed recording, a representative sample in terms of site-type, size and location, level of preservation, and also an assessment of possible suitability for re-instatement.

See Appendix I – Gazetteer of sites identified during the desk-based study

Stage 2 Methodology - site visits

The desk-based mapping was followed by site visits to shortlisted buildings for more detailed recording. Forty-seven site visits were carried out in total. Myddfai Community was prioritised on the recommendation of BBNPA.

The visits enabled identification of buildings which might, with the support of owner and community, be suitable for re-instatement by ABC. The criteria agreed with BBNPA, for a derelict building to be suitable for re-instatement, are as follows:

- Previous habitation by humans, not animals, not excluding farmsteads
- Good physical evidence of original building including window and door openings
- Some evidence of roof line
- Desirably, evidence of roof structure
- Evidence of local vernacular features
- Accessibility: distance to tarmacked road; to services

Recording focussed on construction methods and materials, possible chronological range and development, and significance of buildings within their wider landscape context.

The level of recording during site visits was based on Historic England's criteria for building recording: Level 1 (HE Guidance Note May 2016): *Level 1 is essentially a **basic visual record**, supplemented by the minimum of information needed to identify the building's location, age and type. This is the simplest record, and it will not normally be an end in itself, but will be contributory to a wider study. Typically it will be undertaken when the objective is to gather basic information about a large number of buildings – for statistical sampling, for area assessments to identify buildings for planning purposes, and whenever resources are limited and much ground has to be covered in a short time. It may also serve to identify buildings requiring more detailed attention at a later date. Level 1 surveys will generally be of exteriors only, though the interior of a building may sometimes be seen in order to make a superficial inspection and to note significant features. Only if circumstances and objectives allow will any drawings be produced, and these are likely to take the form of sketches.*

As the site visits progressed it became clear that within the allocated time-frame it was not going to be possible to identify each land-owner, contact them and gain permission for every site. Therefore sites which were on/ close to public rights of way were prioritised.

Dating the buildings was not the main object of this study. Any dating of sites is based on map evidence, structural development and on 'typology' (using diagnostic 'features' to provide a likely date range for the building/s). Without recourse to excavation or dendrochronology (dates derived from taking sample cores from structural timbers), close dating of vernacular buildings is problematic.

See Table 2: Gazetteer of site visits with descriptions

Limitations of the study

Due to the rapid nature and large area covered by the mapping programme, the desk-based study confined historic map work to the use of 1st and 2nd edition OS maps. Tithe maps and associated apportionment details were not consulted because of the time consuming nature of doing this for the large number of buildings identified. This would make useful further research (perhaps for volunteer involvement) and would allow sites to be traced back to the mid-19th century, to compare with the pace and level of abandonment during the late 19th and 20th centuries.

For this reason it was decided not to include records for abandoned cottage and farmstead sites held on the HER that do not appear on 1st and 2nd edition OS maps as it would skew the data-set (these sites have been recorded from a variety of other sources, including tithe maps, other earlier mapping and field work).

Difficulties and problems encountered

Desk-based study

Few problems were encountered with the desk-based element of the mapping programme, and the methodology agreed between ABC and DAT worked well.

Occasionally it was unclear whether a building was abandoned or still occupied/ in use. If an error became clear, good communication between ABC and DAT archaeologists and matching GIS table structure allowed re-allocation of sites to the appropriate dataset.

Every effort was made to capture *all* abandoned buildings which were occupied on historic OS first and second edition maps. The process was made as thorough as possible by breaking large areas down into more manageable pieces for analysis (by overlaying the post-code grid GIS layer on the study area). However, the author fully accepts that there may be a few sites that 'slipped through the net', and would be very pleased to hear from anyone who would like to add to the list of recorded sites.

The main criterion for mapping an abandoned building was that it had evidence that it was used for human habitation. Building type and function are not always clear from mapping, but generally inhabited buildings are identifiable because they are named on historic map/s.

Where a now abandoned building was clearly marked on historic OS maps, but not named it was recorded for completeness sake, but the site was designated 'building' rather than 'cottage' or 'farmstead'.

Classification of site type was slightly problematic as there is no widely recognised definition of what constitutes a 'cottage', a 'small farmstead' and a 'farmstead'. However, the project definition of type was internally consistent, with 'cottage' denoting a small, named building with no more than one small ancillary building.

Stage 2: site visits

Some problems were encountered at stage 2 (site visits) of the mapping programme:

Ideally there would be more time to engage with the community prior to visits so that people would not be suspicious of ABC activity, and wanted to be involved with the project.

A bilingual information sheet for farmers and land-owners was written to explain the mapping project and ABC's aims (see appendix 3). In most cases the rural community was more than helpful. Many were welcoming and supportive, and freely gave time and information. However, some were suspicious of the motives of ABC, and not keen to be involved.

It proved difficult to track down and contact owners of many of the sites that had been earmarked for visits, despite ABC's wider community engagement activities and an element of 'cold calling' which had mixed results. This became one of the biggest problems encountered during the project, particularly within a timeframe compatible with other project activities.

The site sample therefore favours buildings which are on or close to public rights of way. However for the purposes of re-instatement of buildings this proximity would be advantageous.

Visual inspections were conducted from a distance where necessary.

The nature of the terrain and remoteness of some of the sites meant that lone working was avoided wherever possible.

Co-ordinating site visits to coincide with access, weather windows and volunteer availability, was also difficult within a tight time frame and limited budget. Some site visits were deliberately delayed to allow for the planned volunteer involvement after the first community workshop, but this event

did not attract as many as hoped, so resulted in fewer contacts amongst land-owners, and fewer volunteers than anticipated.

The issue of the most appropriate and useful time for site visits to be conducted was never fully resolved. During the summer months the weather is reasonable but remains on the ground are often overwhelmed by vegetation. During the autumn and winter light is poor for photographic recording, and volunteers are generally less enthusiastic (although this didn't stop the really hardy ones). The best time to carry out building recording is during the spring time when vegetation is low and there are no fallen leaves or remains of summer growth. However, this is also the busiest time in the farming calendar and access can be a problem as farmers are lambing and calving.

Very many people in the rural farming communities within the western part of BBNP are first language Welsh speaking. Throughout the project, every effort was made to talk with members of the local community in the language in which they felt most comfortable, and it was an ambition of the project to use Welsh to discuss matters wherever necessary and possible (despite the landscape archaeologist being 'dim ond ail-iaith' – 'only second language') Often, talking with people in Welsh made a big difference between a negative and positive response to the *Mapping Programme*. It is of vital importance not to disregard the fundamental links between language, landscape, buildings, and associated memories held by local people.

Community building recording

As part of ABC's *Grass Roots Heritage Project*, a series of community events was organised by ABC project officers and the ABC landscape archaeologist. Volunteers were recruited from the local area to help record buildings identified during the *Historic Landscape Mapping Programme*. Two main building recording events took place in conjunction with DAT. Volunteers also assisted with site visits carried out by ABC's landscape archaeologist.

Community building recording event 1: November 2016

ABC and project partners DAT were keen to engage volunteers in building recording. DAT had a commitment to outreach within the Cadw funded element of the partnership project. Staff within DAT Heritage Management had been alerted to the case of Lan Farm (Dyffryn Cennen Community), at the western end of BBNP. This building had recently been identified by Cadw and was in the process of being listed. The owner and tenant farmer were contacted and kindly gave ABC and DAT permission to undertake building recording with community volunteers on a small scale over two days in November. Over the two extremely cold days in November, five local volunteers (all of whom were Welsh speaking) were assisted by one DAT archaeologist and the ABC archaeologist in producing measured drawings of the front elevations of the house, *beudy* and barn, as well as a comprehensive photographic record, and a rapid topographical survey of the farmstead (see appendices). The volunteers were provided with copies of historic maps of the site, and discussed understanding the buildings through their structural development, and the importance of oral histories associated with buildings.



Volunteers at Lan farmstead

Lan farm has been unoccupied for as long as the tenant farmer can remember (in his younger years he recalls storing potatoes there for sale in nearby Ammanford, as the earth floor was eminently suitable for keeping them fresh and in good condition). The exceptional level of preservation of early features, are a result partly of 'Lan' having been unoccupied for at least the latter part of the 20th century. However, it should be noted that had it lost its roof, the building would have deteriorated rapidly, so its survival can be directly attributed to the efforts of the tenant farmer. His care for the vernacular buildings at Lan is a shining example of 'benign' preservation.

Although Lan would be ideally suited to ABC's approach, its current owner is enthusiastic about its finer points and intends to look after the building for his own purposes, so we wish him well with his endeavours.

Community building recording event 2: April 2017

On Saturday 29th April 2017, a building recording day was run by the ABC landscape archaeologist, assisted by two staff archaeologists from Dyfed Archaeological Trust (DAT). Safety, site surveying and recording equipment were kindly loaned for the event by project partners and supporters, DAT.

The aim of the building recording day was to provide an opportunity for community volunteers to learn how to survey, record and understand old buildings archaeologically, whilst promoting health and safety best practice when working in and around derelict and abandoned buildings. It aimed to raise awareness of the historical significance and cultural importance of abandoned and derelict vernacular buildings and their value as repositories of social information about the local community.



ABC volunteers undertaking a site sketch plan and filling out building recording sheets (far group) at Tyle-bach farmstead

A number of buildings identified during ABC's *Historic Landscape Mapping Programme* were shortlisted as being suitable for access and training for a group of 10 volunteers. The local community in Llanddeusant were particularly helpful to ABC and with their assistance, access for building recording was negotiated with the owner of Llanerch-goch and the owner of Tyle Bach (both derelict vernacular buildings within Llanddeusant Community). The owners kindly gave permission for ABC to undertake building recording training with community volunteers.

The day began at 9.30am at the Tywi Centre in Llandeilo, with an indoor introduction to vernacular buildings and recording techniques, and site health and safety presented by ABC and DAT archaeologists. Nine community volunteers attended, and everyone was provided with an

information pack for the day containing site details, copies of historic maps of the sites to be visited, general information about traditional and vernacular buildings and ABC's building recording pro-forma (appendix 3).

The group proceeded to Llanddeusant, where the local Youth Hostel provided a base and use of facilities for the day. During a morning and afternoon session divided between the two sites, the volunteers were given introductory talks about the specific site, and then were split into groups of three, each led by a professional archaeologist. The groups were rotated so that each group got to experience two different aspects of building recording including undertaking the production of measured sketch plans, looking at the structural development of a building within its landscape context and writing site descriptions, and learning how to create comprehensive photographic records of a site. Throughout the day, the importance of the landscape context of the building, and the less tangible aspects of a buildings history (such as oral traditions) were stressed. There was also plenty of discussion about the innate environmental qualities of traditional buildings, the importance of understanding their fabric and development, and how this approach is relevant to those which are still in use as well as those which have been abandoned.

The group returned to Llanddeusant Youth Hostel for lunch break and hot drinks, and at the end of the day enjoyed much needed and delicious food at Myddfai Community Café while reviewing the day, and what had been learnt. ABC thanked the volunteers, whose clear enthusiasm and interest for the subject made the building recording day a great pleasure, and the staff members from DAT whose understanding and commitment made the day so successful. The subsequent feedback from volunteers was extremely positive, and demonstrated a genuine interest in more of this type of event.



ABC volunteers learning about site development at Llanerch-goch farmstead

Results and discussion

Results of the *Historic Landscape Mapping Programme*

At the completion of the desk-based element of the *Historic Landscape Mapping Programme*, within the study area (approximately 230 square kilometres), 281 abandoned sites of derelict or abandoned cottages, small farmsteads and larger farmsteads had been identified. 227 of these were previously unrecorded. Out of the total of 281, 79 lie within Myddfai Community, 57 of these were brand new records, and 22 were existing records.

Each new site has now been allocated a unique Primary Record Number (PRN) and has been incorporated into the local Historic Environment Record (HER). Each new site is accurately located with an 8 figure National Grid Reference, and has been given a basic site description in English and Welsh which appears on the HER. Pre-existing HER records have had extra information added to them where possible.

The partnership between ABC and DAT resulted in 'baseline data' for all extant and derelict historic buildings within the western area of the BBNP (Numbers for DAT)

The 47 visits carried out to sites shortlisted during the desk-based mapping process, by the ABC landscape archaeologist (many with the help of community volunteers) resulted in an assessment of each site's potential for re-use, and further information about the sites and their current condition. Non-sensitive information gathered during site visits is being added to individual site records now part of the HER as a result of this study.

A brief history of abandonment within the study area

The earliest reference to farm buildings in Wales appears in the laws codified by the Welsh King Hywel Dda. They mention a cowhouse, a barn with wattled walls, a cattle yard, a lean-to, a pigsty and a sheep fold. This assortment of buildings remained typical of small and medium sized farmsteads up until the late 19th century, and so represents continuity over at least a thousand years (William 1986).

Many of the buildings identified during the ABC mapping programme, and some which are still in use today (recorded by DAT), evidence this long continuity, not only in form and function, but also very likely in siting. Many sites are multi-phase complexes, incorporating buildings of different ages (with phasing, associated features, boundaries and earthworks, forming a 'palimpsest', or 'layered document', which can be read and understood if carefully recorded.

The twenty years between the first and second edition OS maps (1887 and 1906) is only a snapshot in time, and despite a strong thread of continuity, within this brief period there is evidence of

change. Farmsteads are abandoned, their morphology changes, buildings disappear, and occasionally farmsteads develop with the addition of a new building.

However, within this brief window of time, the most obvious and frequent change is abandonment. The evidence gathered during the historic landscape mapping programme supports and confirms an overall trend of rural depopulation in Wales during the 20th century. There are few examples of new farmsteads being built on new sites inside the study area. Sites abandoned during the 20th century were generally occupied contemporarily with those that remain occupied. Very few have been replaced, or re-occupied. This demonstrates really clearly that rural communities were considerably larger during the late 19th and early 20th centuries than they are now.

Myddfai Parish's population figures are more or less representative of this wider decline in rural areas. In Myddfai *The changes in parish population have been rather dramatic, showing a peak of 1192 persons in 1831 and since that time but more especially since 1861 there has been a steady decline to a figure of 338 in 1981. Such has been the decline, that the population of the present decade is about a third of that in the period 1831 - 1861* (DB James 1991). In his book 'Myddfai - it's Land and Peoples' James speculates about what the parish would have been like with three times its current population, and wonders how these changes came about.

Although specific combinations of circumstances must have led to the abandonment of each individual farmstead or cottage, in this 'landscape scale' study it has only been possible to pick up on the wider social trends that precipitated the abandonment of so many sites during the late 19th into the 20th Century. The continued population decline, which has been a feature of rural parts of Wales until the present, was however underway prior to the survey for the first edition OS maps during the later 19th Century. More research of earlier map sources (eg. tithe maps etc.) would shed further light on the pace of abandonment, and perhaps if any identifiable peaks coincide with specific recorded historical events.

The rapid population growth of the earlier 19th century had forced many to occupy areas that are now considered 'marginal', particularly upland areas. 'Squatter settlements' grew up on common land, and are believed to represent the 'Ty Un-nos' ('one-night house') tradition. If these 'Tai Un-nos' became established they would have been recorded as permanent settlements. Several examples of settlements which might have originated in this way were identified, especially on the southern slopes of the Black Mountain. They typically appear as buildings marked and named on 1st edition OS maps inside small enclosures carved out of otherwise unenclosed land.

The main criterion for mapping a building was that it had some evidence of use for human habitation. Usually buildings occupied as homes are named on historic maps, however, small, un-named

rectangular buildings (sometimes within associated enclosures) are relatively numerous on 1st edition OS mapping.

Some may represent field-barns associated with a nearby farmstead, but often they are sheep pens and folds. These are the main physical remnants of sheep farming, an important element of Welsh agriculture for many centuries, which has left little obvious impact in the buildings represented within farmsteads. Most pens are isolated from the steading area, and for this reason their original function is not always clear. A handy heap of quarried stone would have readily lent itself to re-use as a sheep fold, and so even when sites are marked 'fold' or 'sheep wash' on historic OS maps (not recorded as part of the study), this does not discount the possibility that some may be re-used derelict dwellings from an earlier period.

Despite the seemingly inhospitable nature of the high upland plateaus of the southern Brecon Beacons, there is archaeological evidence for more permanent settlement here during earlier centuries (for example at NGR SN7437 1521). Many sites recorded during the Cadw funded 'Deserted Rural Settlements' (DRS) project were occupied during the 'climatic optimum' of the medieval, and early post-medieval period (a brief window of warmer weather conditions which provided opportunities for exploitation of the high upland areas).

By the late 19th century these sites were long abandoned, and the Black Mountain uplands of BBNP are almost devoid of settlement (as can be seen from the overall distribution map – the 'hole' corresponds with the high plateau). However, evidence from this study flags up the possibility that some upland settlement sites which were permanently occupied during the medieval 'climatic optimum' were deserted and then re-occupied during the population rises of the earlier 19th century. This may be what happened at 'Ty Mynydd' (NGR SN6854 1495, ABC no. 45), visited during the project, whose associated boundaries appear to be more ancient than 19th century 'squatter settlement' origins.

Sites that had continued to be used intermittently for occupation on a seasonal basis in the intervening centuries (perhaps as temporary summer shelters or 'hafotai') would have formed obvious and practical starting points for the re-creation of settlements when a rise in population increased pressure on agricultural land.

Life at this altitude would have been very susceptible to the pressures of harsh winters, poor summers and reduced harvests, and consequent famine and disease. This precipitous life-style led to abandonment in favour of easier conditions elsewhere. Those like Ty Mynydd on the southern slopes of the Black Mountain were so close to the lure of industrialisation and urbanisation immediately to the south in the Amman Valley that few survived to be occupied into the 21st century.

Dwellings of the rural poor

Many of the now abandoned buildings identified during the *Mapping Programme* are really very small. That they are recorded with names on historic maps demonstrates that they were homes. Mostly they have no associated outbuildings marked, other than an occasional tiny ancillary building which might represent a pigsty, poultry coop, or possibly just a 'ty-bach' (literally 'small house' but designating an outside toilet).

These are almost certainly the cottages of the rural poor - a marginalised and historically under-represented social group, whose homes have not survived in great numbers, but who were nevertheless numerically and socially a very significant part of the population.

Life was often very 'hand-to-mouth' and in difficult times many became dependant on handouts from the parish. Records from Myddfai Parish show that in 1818-19 the rent for 27 separate households was paid out of the poor rate (James 1991). 'The Poor Law' (introduced in the early 17th century) had made it compulsory to provide for the poor of a parish by levying a rate on all occupiers of property. Understandably parishes tended to look after their own and no one else, and there would have been pressure from parishioners to reduce the poor rate they had to pay. The 'Act of Settlement' (1662) had given legal powers to expel or remove people who were not born inside the parish. Change to this Act in 1846 meant anyone resident for five years was not liable to eviction, but removal of people who were, or were likely to become dependent on handouts continued.

It is possible that this legislation was responsible for the forced abandonment of some of the less substantial dwellings named on the OS 1st and 2nd edition maps.

The 'Poor Law Amendment Act' (1834) grouped parishes together into 'unions' for poor law administration. The 'Llandovery Union' workhouse, set up in the 1830s, resulted in two categories of 'pauper' – those who were residents of the workhouse (receiving 'indoor relief'), and residents in their own places of abode (receiving 'outdoor relief').

Although names and a few scant details appear in lists from this time, probably the best reflection of the lives of those who received 'outdoor relief' are the archaeological remains and traces of their dwellings.

Many cottagers and small farmers were employed by the large estates, and were heavily dependent on the continued good will and support of their landlords to supplement a meagre existence. The following quote suggests a deliberate policy by some landlords of re-settlement in growing industrial areas: *When they found coal and wanted to expand.....there was nobody here to work the coal. Now as the boys were coming to work on the different farms, the landowners would give them some of the produce that was coming off the farm, the milk and potatoes and such like, because they raised big families on*

practically no wages..... So to get the labour, they stopped giving the extra produce to keep the family. Therefore the young men had to come up from the country, from their home counties, to South Wales for the mining. From north, south east and west they came. That was the way in which they got the labour..... and even today you've got Dai Cardi, and Bob Pemb and Tom and Roddy Tregaron. You had the name of the place that they came from..... But then that's how people were known. Llandeilo, that's another chap who used to work in the Ffaldau. Well, then, to get the labour they more or less starved the people out. My grandfather was of a family of six or seven in Pembrokeshire. Well, a couple of them brothers had to go. They walked to, and found work in, Maerdy. That would be about 1885 or 1890, something like that. But they used to walk over the mountains and change their jobs, and change their lodge. (Will Trigg in Davies, M. (Ed.) 1992)

Although the lure of a better life in the industrialising areas such as nearby Brynamman and Ammanford, was clearly responsible for much abandonment, there appears to be at least one example where the decline of an industry led to a concentration of abandonment in a specific locale. On the south-western fringe of BBNP, close to the present settlement of Square and Compass (NGR: SN6451 1749), the first edition OS of 1887 shows a dense concentration of cottages and small farmsteads in a semi-industrialised, but still largely rural landscape. Separate and distinct from the concentrated industrialisation to the south-east, it is a landscape typified during the late 19th century by small farmsteads and cottages with associated small enclosures (some have the hallmarks of 'squatter settlements' with encroachment onto common land). This appears to be a community supported by the mill and forge at Llandyfan (Cadw SAM no CM223) but also reliant on small scale farming to supplement any income from the mill/ forge. The decline of the mill and forge, seems to be directly linked to a high level of abandonment of smaller buildings, so that the area is now rural in character, with some survival of the 'proto-industrial' settlement morphology. This area has a very interesting community history that would benefit from more detailed study (perhaps by community volunteers or a local history group).

Place-names

For consistency, building names were recorded as they first appear on historic OS mapping (usually 1st edition; few examples first appear on the 2nd edition). Most names that have survived to appear on current maps, or those recalled by the local community seem to be rationalised, corrupted or sometimes corrected versions of the same name that appears on OS 1st edition, demonstrating a continuity and local recollection which runs through the last 100 years.

Where names of abandoned buildings have been lost to current maps and to local memory, carefully recording the name as it appears when occupied can jog memories, and provide an opportunity to locate homes identified through family history and other research.

But place-names, particularly the names of homes provide a really valuable insight into how people viewed their own place within the landscape around them. The majority of names of homes – of farmsteads large and small, and cottages are ‘topographical’, often describing the position of the building within the landscape, and its relationship with nearby natural features (for example ‘Ty Mynydd, Pen-rhiw, Tyle Bach etc.).

There is an opportunity to write much more on this, but it is outside the scope of this report. It has been one of the useful outcomes of the research to collate and collect the names of all abandoned sites within the study area as a resource for further study.

Conclusions and recommendations

Achievements

The ABC *Historic Landscape Mapping Programme* has achieved many, although not all of its aims.

At the start of the project it was suggested that there might be 'quite a few' abandoned buildings within the study area. The initial mapping phase rapidly revealed that this was something of an understatement. As the project progressed, and the number of identified abandoned sites rose steadily, it became clear that if ABC were able to rescue one or two of the buildings identified, this would represent a drop in the ocean. The idea of achieving 'preservation by record' for a large number of previously unrecorded sites became increasingly important.

Many of the sites visited survive as no more than lumps and bumps in fields, and perhaps the most eye-opening result of the study is the sheer number of these buildings which have almost completely disappeared in the last hundred years. Many of them in recent times, many more have deteriorated between the time that the founders of ABC first realised their plight, and when they have been re-visited (only a few years later) during the ABC *Historic Landscape Mapping Programme*.

The mapping programme set out to identify buildings that might have the potential for ABC to reinstate for community benefit. The fact that few buildings are in a position to make it onto this list does not mean that the mapping programme has failed, but it does highlight a tragedy – very few survive with enough information to reinstate without having to second guess their structure and without recourse to an imperfect and incomplete dataset.

The information gathered during ABC's *Historic Landscape Mapping Programme* helps to provide a fuller picture of the rural landscape (density and pattern of occupation) within the study area at the end of the 19th century. It shows how this landscape has evolved over the past 100 years, and the buildings (and communities) that have been lost. It adds to our current understanding of the rate of abandonment and change, and it confirms with physical evidence on the ground that the rural landscape of the western Brecon Beacons in the late 19th and early 20th centuries was far more populated than it is today.

The mapping programme underpinned ABC's *Grass Roots Heritage* community events. These events flagged up the heritage and cultural value of abandoned vernacular buildings, and community participation in their recording and understanding was encouraged and enabled. These events included a 'Historic Myddfai' open day, children's workshops in schools in Llandovery and Llangadog, archaeological building recording workshops, an 'Old House Surgery', all held within the study area. A photographic competition and exhibition entitled 'Dereliction' was also run, which cast a wider net, and encouraged entries showing abandoned vernacular buildings throughout south-west Wales.

The entries received demonstrate clearly that this issue is relevant to rural areas and communities outside of the study area, and throughout Wales. The ABC community events are detailed in a separate report about the *Grass Roots Heritage Project*.

What has been learnt?

Traditional and vernacular buildings are a tangible and widely accessible link with the past - many people still live in one. They could, and should be a more recognised part of community identity in Wales. There is an inherent connection between these buildings and the landscape - they housed the people, and nurtured the culture that created the landscape we see today. Within the National Park and in many other areas of Wales, our rural landscapes are widely recognised for their outstanding 'natural' beauty. Much of this beauty is the result of thousands of years of human activity – mostly agricultural. Sadly, many in the farming community (often the descendants of the families who helped create these landscapes, and built the buildings and have carefully maintained them for generations) now feel marginalised from current 'heritage' agendas.

Few of the abandoned sites identified have any sort of protective designation (listing/ scheduling) - only one of the buildings identified is listed. As yet none appear on 'local lists' (these have only so far been completed for eastern areas of BBNP). Without protection, these abandoned sites are very vulnerable and will continue to deteriorate. The threats are numerous – neglect, lack of understanding, current agricultural practices, development pressures, harvesting of materials (particularly stone) for re-use.

When they are gone they cannot be replaced or brought back, but more legislation may not help. It often causes resentment within communities who feel that these buildings belong to them. Their best hope for protection is probably understanding and engagement from the people who live with them, and in the ones that have survived - the local community.

Community involvement is clearly crucial, but cannot be forced or hurried. Although community members were encouraged to share local memories and stories about buildings and the local landscape, the timescale in which to achieve this was too short. This aspect could be developed further with more time. There are fundamental links between language (including place-names), landscape, buildings, and associated memories held by local people, and there is no doubt that the farming community, and in particular older generations who have lived and worked in the area, have knowledge about the buildings and their landscape that isn't contained anywhere else. Time is running out to record this knowledge so that it gets the recognition it deserves and is not lost to history.

Why are these buildings relevant?

It is easy to see why these buildings (and sites where buildings once stood) are dismissed, as individually they can seem small and rather insignificant. However, as a group they represent a huge and very significant part of Wales' social history - collectively their loss, and the loss of associated information will be enormous. The mapping programme focussed on those that were occupied at the end of the 19th and early 20th centuries, however, many of the buildings identified (whether individual or parts of farmsteads), and associated landscape features have great time depth. This history is evidenced by often complex sequences of building and earthwork feature development, further study of which could shed light on some of the less accessible history of Wales.

Collections of documents and photographs can show us what houses looked like generally, but lack the contextual information and the landscape associations that are gained from recording these buildings where they stand (and fall). What we are losing without record is disappearing very fast, and despite the efforts of public bodies such as Cadw, the St Fagans National Museum of History, the National Monuments Record and the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales, no-one is currently in a position to preserve this particular volume of information for the future.

These abandoned vernacular buildings are about more than history. Those which have remained in an unmodified state can inform appropriate treatment of the ones which survive and are still occupied or in use. The homes represented by the 'lumps and bumps' forgotten in fields and by the roadside also have direct relevance to the very modern need for sustainability in building materials and practice. These buildings were not designed beyond the basic needs of day to day existence, but their use of locally derived, home-grown materials, which are infinitely re-usable, recyclable and ultimately biodegradable, show potential ways forward for housing a growing population in buildings which are genuinely 'sustainable' in terms of life expectancy, energy consumption and end-of-life breakdown. These aspirations have already been simply and elegantly accomplished by an existing Welsh cultural icon – the small vernacular homes of the Welsh countryside. We should not ignore these 'small but perfectly formed' models for sustainable building practice!

This study covered a relatively small area but has highlighted the huge number of previously unrecorded sites of this type. This is almost certainly representative of many other parts of rural Wales, and so the methodology described in this report is directly relevant to other areas.

ABC's mapping programme has started to collate more detailed information on many new sites, and capture associated local knowledge, but there is so much still to be done, and it needs to be done very soon. Even a continuation of the mapping programme in the area already covered could provide opportunities for the information collected to be added to and enhanced, and could be achieved

through community volunteer participation (desk-based research, field visits and building recording). It is hoped that this research will provide a basis for, and impetus to further research and recording.

More information of this kind will help find ways to look after this important aspect of Wales' historic environment. Raising awareness of abandoned vernacular buildings will hopefully underline the importance of looking after those which survive and are still in use, and help protect Wales vernacular heritage from decline due to lack of recognition and understanding.

Most of the identified buildings and the sites that were once occupied by buildings represent heritage 'at risk'. The *Historic Landscape Mapping Programme* has shown that of the abandoned buildings which were homes at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries, many have been lost completely; some have barely any above ground remains surviving. The condition of the remains of the upstanding buildings is deteriorating very rapidly. Their significance and value as part of the wider historic landscape is still not widely recognised, despite their clear cultural importance.

ABC hopes that the *Historic Landscape Mapping Programme* and the wider *Grass Roots Heritage Project* will go some way towards redressing this situation. We should be very proud of our vernacular built heritage in Wales, not just for what it has been in the past, but also for the opportunities it represents for the future.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank our funders: the Quaker Housing Trust, the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Brecon Beacons Trust, the Community Foundation in Wales, and the Pilgrim Trust without whose financial support this project could not have happened, and also to thank organisations who have given ‘in-kind’ support to the project with resources, time, facilities and equipment, in particular DAT, the Tywi Centre, and Ty Mawr Lime.

Thank you to our dedicated and enthusiastic board of trustees: Joanie Speers, Roger Mears, Anjuli Quartermaine, Louise Schlee, Joyce Morgan-Gervis, to our former executive directors Lowri and Nathan Goss, to our Project Officers Nell Hellier and Helena Burke, and to our translators Melanie Davies and Cerys Jones. Also to Alice Thorne of BBNP, and other BBNP staff who have helped and supported ABC.

I would particularly like to thank staff and colleagues at DAT: Alice Pyper, Marion Shiner, Menna Bell, Ken Murphy, Huw Pritchard and others, who have often gone beyond the call of duty to offer help, guidance and inspiration throughout the project. I would also like to thank Menna and Huw for helping to make the community building recording days such a success.

Thanks also to the many people from the communities within the study area who have given help, support and knowledge – in particular Emlyn a Mair, Aled a'i mam Heather, Mrs. Bethan Jones (Llwynmeredydd), Llinos Davies and Bethan (Aberdyfnant). Thank you to Dafydd Evans (owner of Llanerch-goch), and also to the owner of Tyle Bach, for their permission to record their amazing buildings with the help of volunteers. Thank you also to Mr and Mrs Robert Owen of Penywaun Farm for their help and hospitality, and to the owner of Lan Farm, Richard Stevenson for his permission and support for community building recording there.

Thank you so much to our fantastic volunteers who have given their time to be part of the project and help with recording and furthering our understanding of these buildings: Amanda Price, Martin Davies, Sara Tommerup, Arthur Philips, Robert Hopkins, Luke O'Hanlon, Joe Moriarty, Peter Arnold, Sam Goggins, Alexandra Powell, Ruth Judge, Jane Carter, Caralinda Jeffries, Alice Pyper, Duncan Schlee, Roger & Leslie Milne, Lawrence Jones, Torin Whitear, Leon Whitear, Professor Peter Matthiessen.

Sources consulted and bibliography

Local Historic Environment Record (curated and maintained by Dyfed Archaeological Trust)

Google Street View and Satellite Imagery © 2016

Next Perspectives: 2004 High Resolution Aerial Photography

Ordnance Survey 1891 1st edition, 1:2500, Carmarthenshire (various sheets)

Ordnance Survey 1906 2nd edition, 1:2500, Carmarthenshire (various sheets)

Ordnance Survey: 2013 Mastermap, 1:2500

Ordnance Survey: 2016 OpenData “Buildings” layer, 1:2500

Wiliam, E. 1986: “The Historical Farm Buildings of Wales”. John Donald Publishers LTD. Edinburgh

Hughes, R. I. & O’Leary, P. 1999: “Wales of one hundred years ago”. National Library of Wales. Sutton Publishing Ltd. Glos.

Historic England Guidance Note (publ. May 2016): “Understanding Historic Buildings: A Guide to Good Recording Practice”

James, D. B., 1991: “Myddfai: Its Land and Peoples”. Published by the author

Roberts, K. (Ed) 2006: Cadw “Lost farmsteads. Deserted rural settlements in Wales.” Council for British Archaeology (CBA) research report 148

Ward, A. 1997: “Transhumance and Settlement on the Welsh Uplands: A View from the Black Mountain” in Edwards, N. Ed. *Landscape and Settlement in Medieval Wales* Oxbow Monograph 81 pp. 97 – 111

Swallow, P., Dallas, R., Jackson, S. and Watt, D. 2004: “Measurement and Recording of Historic Buildings” 2nd. Edition Donhead Publ. Dorset

Vejby, M. and Ahlers, J. 2013: 14 “Land, myth and language: the preservation of social memories” in Adrian M. Chadwick and Catriona D. Gibson (Eds) 2013 *Memory, myth and long-term landscape inhabitation*. Oxbow Books pp. 276 - 290

Davies, J. & Horák, J. 2009: “Building Stone Use in the Brecon Beacons National Park” Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum of Wales

Davies, M. Ed. 1992: “The Valleys Autobiography – a people’s history of the Garw, Llynfi and Ogmore valleys” Publ. by Valley and Vale

Sambrook, P. & Ramsey, R.: The Deserted Rural Settlements Project. Cambria Archaeology unpublished report

Sambrook, P. & Page, N.: The Historic Settlements of Dinefwr. Dyfed Archaeological Trust unpublished report March 1995

The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland 2011: "Scotland's Rural Past: Community Archaeology in Action" RCAHMS Edinburgh

The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland 2011: "Scotland's Rural Past: A Practical Guide to Recording Archaeological Sites" RCAHMS Edinburgh