

NOTES

- 1 P. Smith, *Houses of the Welsh Countryside*, HMSO 1975 map 49.
- 2 The Inventory also noticed 1571 on the old dovecote near Kidwelly but this was almost certainly graffiti on an existing building.
- 3 P. Smith 'Historic Domestic Architecture in Dyfed: an outline' *Carmarthenshire Studies* (Carmarthenshire C.C.) 1974.
- 4 e.g. The two fine Georgian houses in Church Street, Carmarthen recently demolished and rebuilt were so marked as the property of Herbert Lloyd the notable late 18th century lawyer.
- 5 G. Evans 'On a Farm a Century Ago' *Carms' Historian* vol. viii 1971 p. 69.
- 6 *History of Carmarthenshire* (ed) J. E. Lloyd vol. ii p. 164.
- 7 J. P. Neale *Views of the Seats of Noblemen and Gentlemen* (London) 1822 vol. v No. 68.

Miss M. Bowen Evans provided much help in the Trelech area.

FORGOTTEN ROADS OF CARMARTHENSHIRE:

2. LLANGADOG TO TRECASTLE, BRYNAMMAN AND SWANSEA¹

by

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In the early 18th century three roads ran southwards and eastwards from Llangadog towards the Carmarthenshire border with the counties of Brecon and Glamorgan (Fig. 1). Two of these roads were of sufficient importance to merit inclusion on Emmanuel Bowen's Map of South Wales and Thomas Kitchin's Map of Carmarthenshire. The road from Llangadog to Tre-

castle in Breconshire has a history firmly rooted in the Middle Ages. The road to Swansea is not so well known, probably because it is a road which disappeared during the 19th century. The third road, linking the Tywi valley to the upper Amman valley and the area of modern Brynamman was not marked on these early maps and a completely new line of road had to

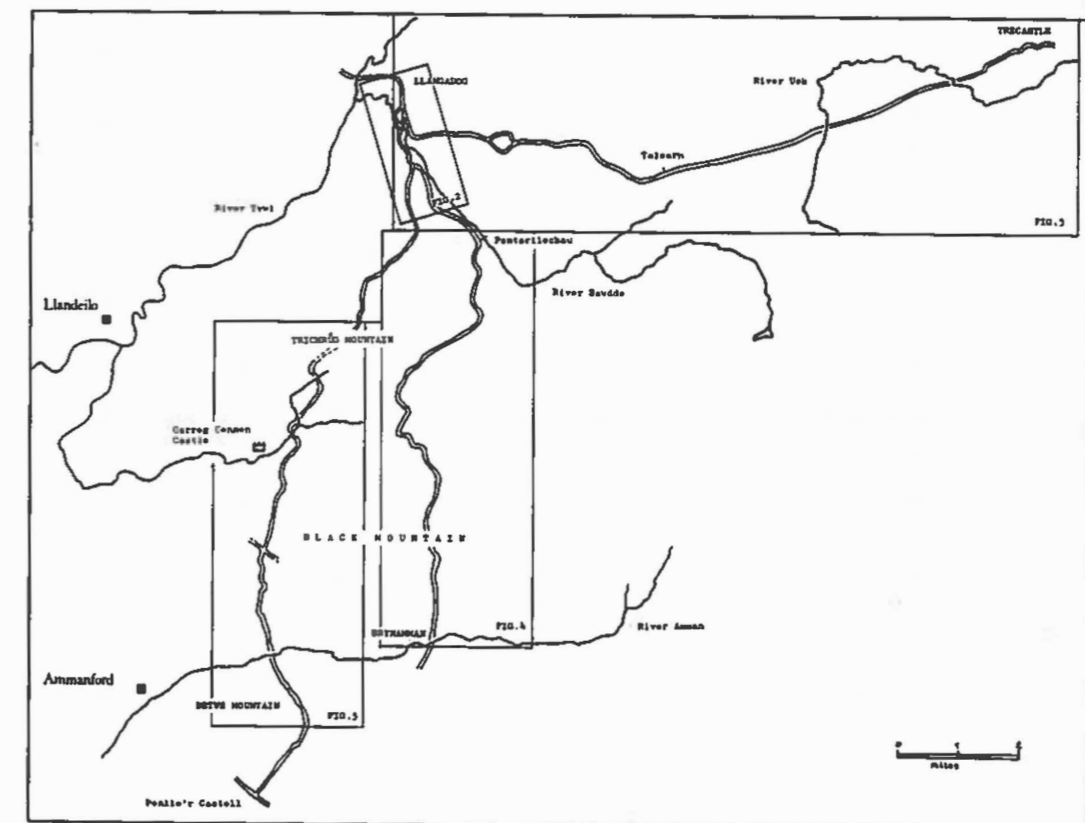


Figure 1: Key map

be constructed across the Black Mountain before it emerged to become the most important of the three roads under consideration.

I. LLANGADOG TO TRECASTLE - THE ANCIENT ROAD (Figs. 2 and 3)

A road across Talsarn Mountain certainly existed in the Middle Ages and for many years historians have speculated on whether this

route was of Roman origin.² The discovery of the Roman marching camp at Arosfa Gareg Lwyd³ seemed to add weight to their arguments, but more recent work has tended to undermine their theories.⁴ By the 13th century there is more definite evidence for this routeway. Edward in 1295 travelled from West Wales and on 10-11 June 'he was on the watershed crossing over to Brecknock by Llanddausant and Llywel', a route which was probably used by a convoy some twelve years earlier passing from Hereford to Dryslwyn, again through Llywel.⁵ This must have been Sarn Hir, along which tolls were collected for the lordship of Perfedd,⁶ and it probably lay on or near the line of the present day road on the moors near the county boundary. But the most illuminating piece of evidence for the highway comes from the Gough map of the mid 14th century.⁷ This map shows the main highways of England and Wales. The one road penetrating the Dyfed area is shown running through Brecon, Llywel and Llangadog before heading down the Tywi valley towards Carmarthen, and eventually westwards to St Davids. Llandovery is marked on the map but the road on this 'curious and ancient Map of Great Britain' passes well to the south of the town and the present day main road. The Gough map clearly shows that in medieval times the Talsarn route was the main link between the Tywi and the Usk valleys.

Change had however occurred by the 16th century, and travellers were increasingly using the road across Trecastle Mountain. John Leland's *Itinerary* in the 1530s took him from Brecon to Llandovery⁸ and the same route, avoiding the Talsarn road, is outlined in road surveys published later in the century.⁹

The same pattern can be seen in the 17th and 18th centuries. On John Ogilby's 1675 road map Llandovery continues to be the entry point for the main road from the English border into West Wales.¹⁰ A century later Baker sums up travellers' opinions on this road network when he described the Talsarn Mountain road as an alternative to the main highway to Llandovery.¹¹

But even if few long distance travellers used the Llangadog to Trecastle road it was still of sufficient importance for the early 18th century cartographers to include it on their maps. Their roads were in fact the local main roads, and the most important of these were pinpointed by Kitchin when he added a description and a

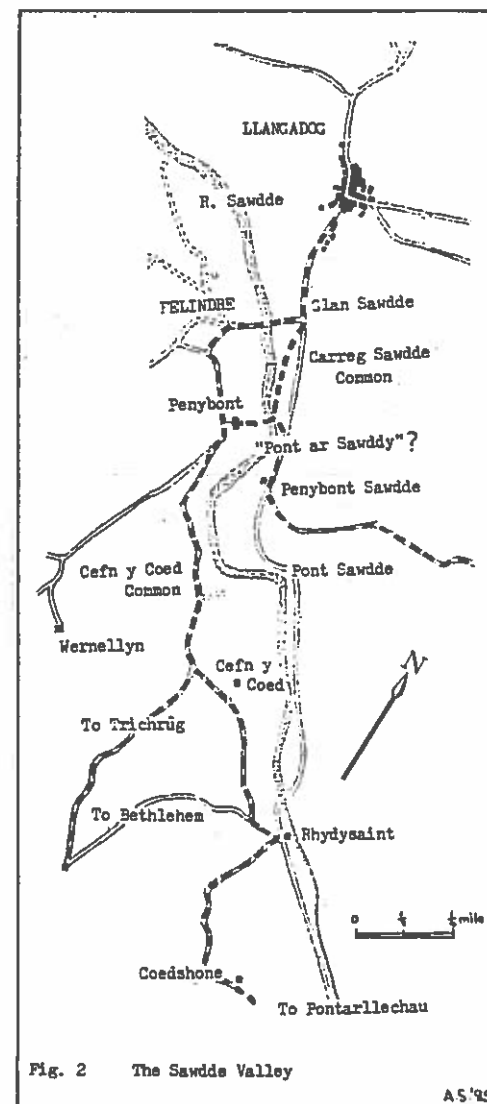


Fig. 2 The Sawdde Valley

mileage. Thus the route across Talsarn Mountain was marked 'Llangadog to Trecastle 13.2', while the Trecastle Mountain road was described as 'Llanymddover to Brecknock 19.1'. The latter was still the main road in the late 18th century but it had its problems. The Main Trust tried to solve these problems by making considerable, if unavailing efforts to redevelop the Talsarn route and restore it to its medieval glory as the main route into West Wales.

From Llangadog square the road ran southwards beneath the track of the present day A4069 towards Carreg Sawdde Common (Fig. 2). The line of road across the common is more difficult to ascertain. Both Bowen and Kitchin show the road fording the River Sawdde towards Felindre village and then recrossing by 'Pont ar Sawddy'. Both mappers fail to show a direct course southwards across this open grazing land. Common sense suggests that such a track must have existed but the absence of such a highway from these maps cannot adequately be explained. A road on the eastern side of the Sawdde valley may of course be hidden beneath the tarmac of the present day main road. On the other hand the faint outline of a double bank heading from the area of Glan Sawdde house towards the presumed site of the original bridge in the vicinity of Penybont Sawdde farm may well indicate the line of the pre-turnpike road. The supposition is that with the demise of the old bridge and with the construction of a new bridge further southwards, a new road, basically on the line of the present day road, would have been developed.

Beyond Carreg Sawdde Common the road turned eastwards, heading away from the Sawdde valley towards Pantmaenog farm (Fig. 3). This is a minor road today and on it stands a former public house, Tafarn y Wawr, evidence surely of a busier highway in centuries past. Further proof of former glory for this side road comes from another property, Trallum Melin,¹² which used to stand halfway between Maesglas and Pantmaenog farms. This cottage is mentioned in the 1784 Main Trust Act indicating that this was the road which the Trust hoped to revitalize. From Trallum Melin the road swung eastwards towards Nant Dyrfal. This is indicated by a northerly swing towards 'Maen Dunon' (Mandinam farm) and 'Golchval' (Olchfa Fawr farm) on the Bowen and Kitchin maps. This road is disused today but its double hedge banks can still be seen, both on the ground and on O.S. maps. Having joined with a road from Olchfa Fawr farm and Llangadog, the road turned southwards alongside Nant Dyrfal to meet the track from Pantmaenog farm. The Pantmaenog road came into greater prominence when the Main Trust turnpiked this area and the Nant Dyrfal section presumably reverted to parish status and was then abandoned.

The present day road link between Nant Dyrfal and Talsarn involves a long northerly sweep around the lower slopes of Rhiwiau, the main ridge between the Bran valley to the north and the Llechach and Sawdde valleys to the south. In the 18th and 19th centuries this route was even longer. There was no road between Gilfach and Cae Sarah farms and this meant that the road crossed Nant yr Hiddl going as far

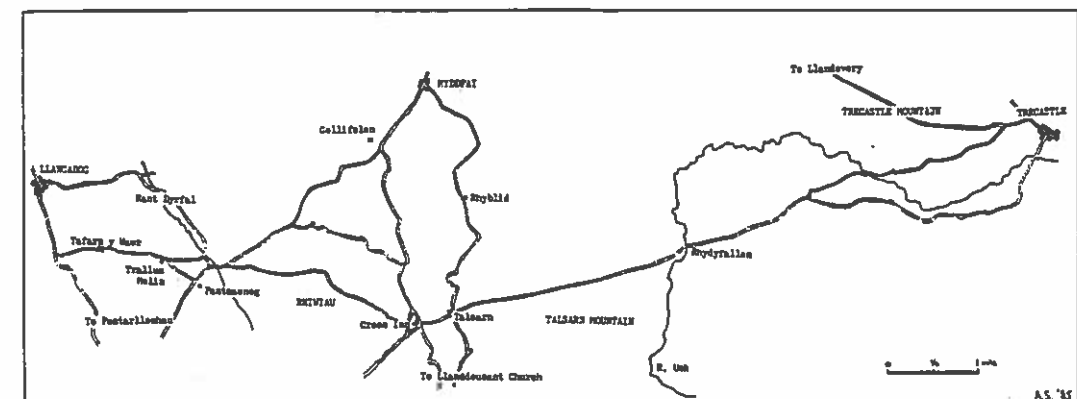


Figure 3: Llangadog to Trecastle

north as Gellyfelen farm before turning southwards towards Talsarn.¹³ But the Bowen and Kitchin maps indicate a fairly straight route at this point. The only line to meet this requirement is the track which today climbs the steep and exposed north-facing slopes of Rhiwiau. Although disused for motor traffic, the track can still be walked straight through to Cross Inn, where it meets the road climbing from Pontarllechau and Twynllanan.

At Cross Inn and at Talsarn the Llangadog to Trecastle road was crossed by roads leading from Myddfai towards Llanddeusant Church. 18th century court leet presentments show that these two roads were part of an important local network of roads, invariably described as roads leading from the market town of Llandovery to the market town of Neath.¹⁴ A presentment of 1738 goes even further by describing the road between Llanerch-gŵch and Aber Dyfnant and on to the Black Mountain as part of the road between Builth Wells and Neath 'being the usual way for all manner of carriages whatsoever within ye parish of llanthoysant'.¹⁵ The line of this route from Llandovery divided in the village of Myddfai, with one road heading towards Rhyblid farm and then on to Talsarn, while the second track passed Gellyfelen and Gelli-meichiau farms before meeting the Llangadog to Trecastle road at Cross Inn. The two roads from Myddfai came together again just north of Llanddeusant Church. After crossing the Sawdde the road climbed past Gellygron farm on to the barren heights of Tyle Dŵ and Rhiwlas, before descending into the valley of the Twrch Fechan and heading down towards Neath. Today few people venture into such a wild desolate area, but 250 and more years ago such 'minor' trackways were clearly vital to the economic and social life of South and West Wales.

From Talsarn the pre-turnpike road from Llangadog headed in a direct line towards the Mountain Gate and the open moorland beyond. The gate was not a tollgate but with the mountain ditch marked the division between farmland and moorland; it presumably stood at or near the cattle grid on the edge of the Talsarn moors. Bowen and Kitchin show a long straight track crossing the moors towards the River Usk, and this line is on or near the present day moorland road.

The road crossed the River Usk into the

county of Brecon at a ford called Rhyd y fallen and then continued its north easterly line straight towards Trecastle. But on the hillside overlooking Capel Cwm Wysg there has clearly been a change in the road pattern. Both of the 18th century cartographers show the pre-turnpike road recrossing the River Usk and joining the Llandovery to Brecon road on Trecastle Mountain before descending to Trecastle village. Early O.S. maps confirm this picture. Only a hedge line remains to indicate the line of road from Talsarn Mountain down to 'Pont Gwenllyan ych Howel' in Cwm Wysg,¹⁶ but a minor road from the valley floor still struggles up the south eastern slopes of the mountain before plunging downhill again to the village of Trecastle.

The need to avoid hills with steep gradients clearly led to a new road. This was built on the southern flank of the Usk valley and the new road with its leisurely slope contrasts vividly with the steepness of the gradient on the earlier highway. This type of improvement is typical of the work of the Trusts in the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

The original road from the county border to Trecastle was turnpiked by the Brecon Trust in 1767.¹⁷ The Carmarthenshire Main Trust took control of the road on their side of the border in 1784¹⁸ and their road linked up with the Llangadog Trust roads in the Sawdde valley, turnpiked some 5 years earlier.¹⁹ The roads of these three Trusts thus offered a route into West Wales, which was an alternative to the Brecon to Llandovery road over Trecastle Mountain.

But the Brecon Trust was clearly unhappy with the Talsarn Mountain road. Even before their licence for renewal came before Parliament in 1787 they had effectively abandoned this highway and were even hindering the Main Trust who wanted to develop the route. Admiral Lloyd of Danyralt near Llangadog, one of the leading supporters of the Main Trust and clearly an ardent advocate of the route across Talsarn Mountain, was outspoken in his criticism of the Parliamentary petition presented by the Brecon Trust for their renewal Act. In March 1787 he gave evidence before the House of Commons on behalf of the Main Trust alleging that the Brecon company had only made a pretence at maintaining their section of the Talsarn Mountain road and that this had

had serious consequences for both himself and others—he had invested his own money in roads on the Carmarthenshire side of the county boundary, and the Llangadog and Main Trusts had applied for their acts in the belief that the Brecon Trust would maintain their road. The House of Commons agreed with Admiral Lloyd's sentiments and ordered the Brecon Trust to be discharged of its responsibilities, and, one suspects, much to the relief of that Trust, granted control of their road to the Main Trust.²⁰

A new section of road in Breconshire was then built by a trust which really only operated in Carmarthenshire. In 1805 this length of road was described as 'the turnpike road called the admiral's from its having been suggested and planned by the late admiral Lloyd of Danyralt'.²¹ Surviving receipts for the period June 1788 to December 1789 show that well over £300 was spent on the road from the River Usk to Pontnewydd near Trecastle. Compensation was found for the loss of land for the new road. Resources were allocated for bridges over the Hydfor and Wingon streams. Money was spent on the construction and maintenance of the new road.²²

The efforts of Admiral Lloyd were valiant but unsuccessful. The seeds of failure were sown in the same 1784 Act which renewed the Main Trust's control over the Llangadog to Trecastle turnpike. The Act gave the Trust permission to explore a new route between Llandovery and Trecastle along the Gwydderig valley. In this quest the Main Trust were joined by the Brecon Trust with their 1787 renewal Act²³ and very quickly the Gwydderig road, the fore runner of the present day A40, sounded the death knell of the routes across the mountain ridges. Admiral Lloyd's efforts were in fact wasted—in 1803 the Main Trust, when renewing its licence for a second time, abandoned both the Trecastle and the Talsarn Mountain roads.²⁴

2. LLANGADOG TO BRYNAMMAN—THE NEW ROAD. (Figs. 2 and 4)

Of the three roads under discussion, that from Llangadog to Brynamman is probably the best known today. In economic terms it provides an important link between the upper Amman and Tawe valleys and West and Mid Wales, while its scenic values are well known to car owners

and leisure seekers out for a run. But in the 18th century the picture was a very different one. The industrialisation of the Amman and Tawe areas had yet to take place, so that traffic across the Black Mountain was indeed very light—in fact Emmanuel Bowen and Thomas Kitchin fail to record the track on their maps. But a track did exist. The Act of Parliament of 1779 creating the Llangadog Trust described the road to be turnpiked as 'to and through the Town of Llangadog, over Coed-yr-Artwydd, by Pont ar Lleche and Gwinfe Chapel, over the Black Mountain, by Cwmllywd and by Gelly Veinon and Eskirn-y-Gelin, to the River Amman . . .'.²⁵

From Llangadog square the road headed southwards towards Carreg Sawdde Common, sharing the highway with the Trecastle route (Fig. 2). At the common travellers faced the problem of crossing the Sawdde river. Pont Carreg Sawdde is a 20th century road bridge, which replaced an earlier mid 19th century foot bridge linking Felindre and Llangadog villages. Earlier than this there was only a ford as is indicated on the Tithe Map of 1839 and the 18th century surveys of Bowen and Kitchin. The River Sawdde at low water caused no problems for those fording at this point, but in flood it became a major and dangerous obstacle. Thomas John in riding to Llandeilo in March 1771, attempted to ford the Sawdde but was drowned 'by the rapidity of the stream and the flood in the said river'.²⁶ Downstream was another fording point linking Felindre to the bridge across the River Tywi, but this ford presumably presented the same problem and dangers. Yet some 500 yards upstream lay 'Pont ar Sawddy'; Thomas John could have saved himself if only he had diverted from his direct path.

This bridging point was an early one as it is shown on both Saxton's 1578 map and Speed's of 1609. This evidence indicates the site of the bridge could be medieval in origin and this would partly explain why the Trecastle to Llangadog route used to be the line of entry from the border into West Wales in the Middle Ages. Bowen and Kitchin confirm the earlier map evidence and both name the bridge 'Pont ar Sawddy'.

Both local tradition and archaeological remains are non-existent when one looks for the actual bridging point. The only clear evidence comes from place names. The bridge probably stood between Penybont farm on the

west bank of the River Sawdde and on the opposite bank the equally significantly named Penybont Sawdde farm. A bridge at this point was also in direct line with the road coming from Trecastle. In the same area as the bridge and possibly a little to the north was yet another fording point. The Tithe Map shows a ford and the remains of a double bank can still be seen leading across the common from Glan Sawdde house towards these crossing points.

The bridge was probably a wooden structure as no remains of its foundation pillars appear to have survived. But it was clearly a bridge of some size and importance. The maps referred to above indicate this as does the fact that the Llangadog Trust placed a toll gate on the western approaches to the bridge in 1780.²⁷ Six years later the Trust ordered that 'in case John Moore will not accomodate the Gatekeeper at Penybont with Bed Room during the Limming season that a Booth be erected for him in some Commodious place near the said gate'.²⁸ This clearly suggests not only a bridge capable of handling the lime carts coming down the Sawdde valley from the Black Mountain limekilns, but also that this traffic was increasing. This increase in traffic may have been one of the factors which led to the building of a new bridge.

The new bridge 'Pont Sawdde' was sited around a bend in the river some 750 yards upstream from the presumed site of the earlier bridge. The spot was known as 'Llyn Cae Fulchi'.²⁹ The bridge was built by the Llangadog parish authorities; in 1789 alone Gwynfe Hamlet, Dyffryn Ceidrich Hamlet and the Hamlet above Sawdde had to find £20 towards this task.³⁰ Surprisingly the Llangadog Trust were only involved in constructing the approach roads. It is not clear why this should have been so, for the Trust certainly had the authority to build bridges as can be seen from their construction of Rhyd y Ceir bridge, a mile south west of Llandovery.³¹

The vestry order to build a 'wooden bridge consisting of Three Couples of substantial Timber and Two Stone Abutments' was made in March 1786.³² What the order does not reveal is that this was a suspension bridge, hence the renaming of the fields 'Ynys dan y bont crok' and 'Ynys war y bont crok'.³³ These fields were part of Penybont farm and were probably the fields which the churchwardens had rented

from John Moore in 1783 on which materials for building the bridge were stored.³⁴

This bridge is marked on both the 1812 Original Drawings and the 1831 Ordnance Survey. But the Tithe Map of Llangadog parish shows that yet another change had taken place by 1839. A new bridge, Bont Fawr, was built further upstream near the Rhydysaint crossroads. Pont Sawdde, the former bridge, was not recorded on the Tithe Map and neither were the approach roads to that bridge. Who built the new stone Bont Fawr has yet to be established. But by 1839 the last but one episode in the saga of the Sawdde crossing points had been completed—only Pont Carreg Sawdde between Llangadog and Felindre remained to be built.

With every new crossing over the River Sawdde, so the road system had to be adapted and altered. Originally a road linked Felindre to Penybont and then ran on southwards towards Cefn y Coed Common.³⁵ Beyond the common the road joined with another early road coming from the area of modern Bethlehem at the Rhydysaint junction. These still survive as quiet country lanes, but two hundred years ago they were part of the first turnpike system in the Sawdde valley.

These roads lost much of their importance when Pont Sawdde was opened in the late 1780s and the Felindre and Penybont links presumably reverted to parish status. The Trust gave precise instructions to its contractors regarding the approaches to the new bridge. Orders were given for a 30 foot roadway which was to contain a carriageway 16 foot wide with 12 inches of gravel in the centre tapering to 9 inches on the sides.³⁶ Hedges enclosing the new road were ordered a year later.³⁷ The road cut across Cefn y Coed Common to Pont Sawdde and on the opposite bank a similar track ran across Ddigoed fach field to link with the Llangadog to Trecastle road. This line can still be traced today. North of Cefn y Coed farm the road survives as a lane and a hedgerow running towards the ruins of the bridge; the hedgerow originally was the causeway which lifted the road on to the bridge and which also split the field into two, later to be renamed 'Ynys dan' and 'Ynys war y bont crok'. On the eastern side of the river the track across Ddigoed fach is the present day A4069 from Pont Goch cottage to Penybont Sawdde farm.

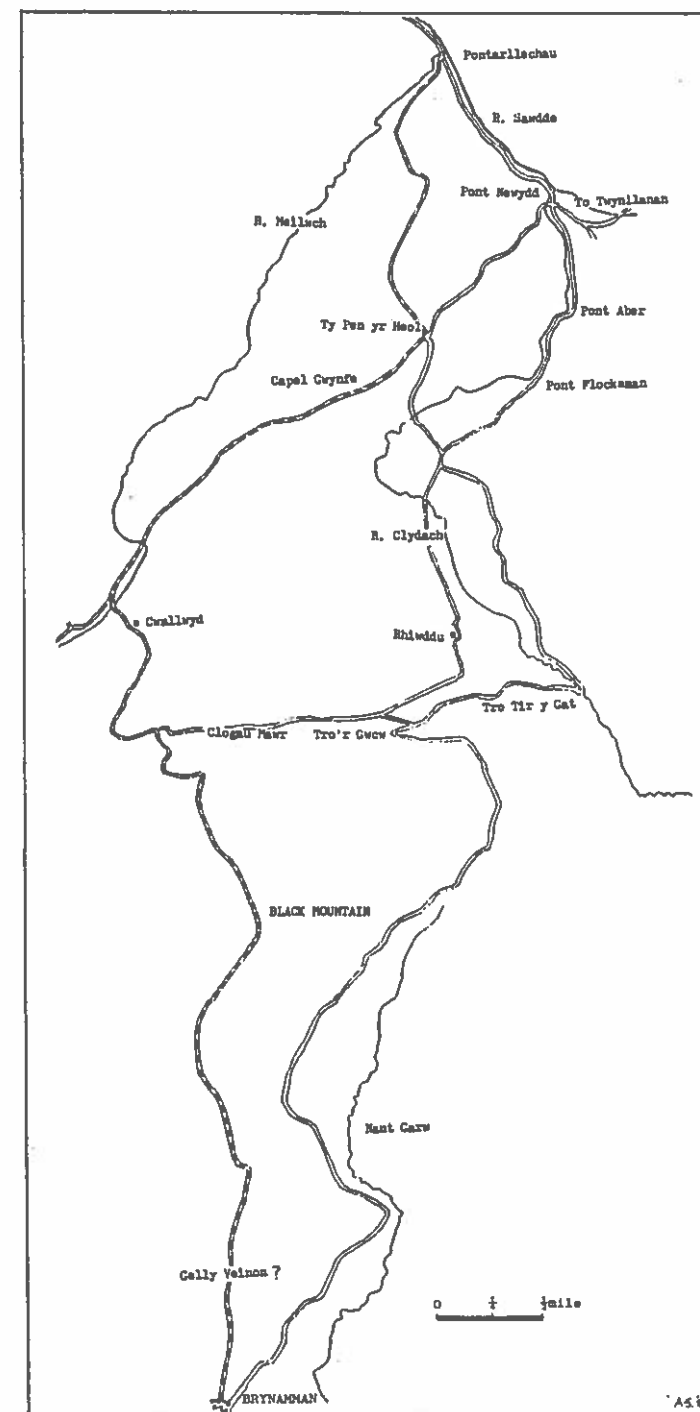


Figure 4: Part of the road from Llangadog to Brynamman

Further change came to the road system when Bont Fawr was built. An existing path from Pont Goch to Felin y Cwm and then on towards Caeaubychain was upgraded to turnpike status and became the approach road to the new stone bridge, as it still is today. On the other side of the bridge a new stretch of road was built to link with the older roads coming from Felindre and the Bethlehem area, this creating a second and newer Rhydysaint road junction.

The present day road from Bont Fawr to the Three Horse Shoes public house at Pontarllechau heads straight up the Sawdde valley, running alongside the river. Fenton travelled this road in the early 19th century and he tells us that this was a turnpike construction — 'proceeded then to Trecastle by way of the new road which leads through a most delightful winding valley'.³⁸ Unfortunately Fenton made no mention of the old road and the early maps of the area are equally silent. The only clue as to a possible line of the road comes from the 1779 Llangadog Trust Act. In turnpiking the road from the area of present day Bethlehem the Act speaks of the road running 'under the North Side of Garnvolgam by Coed Shone House, to join the Road at Pont-ar-Lleche Mill'. The phrase 'by Coed Shone House' possibly indicates a farm track which still links Rhydysaint to Coedshone farm and which rejoins the present day A4069 opposite the junction of Nant Ffynnant and the River Sawdde. The road then continued up the valley to Pontarllechau on or near the line of the present A4069. The abandonment of the Coedshone track and the construction of the new road appears to have been undertaken early in 1780, when John Nathaniel contracted with the Trust for 'the new road already began at Pontarllechau towards Rhydysaint'.³⁹

From Pontarllechau the line of the early road towards the Black Mountain is preserved in a series of minor roads (Fig. 4). The track ran roughly in a southerly direction climbing the northern flank of Pontarllechau hill. At Ty Pen yr Heol, the present day Bryn Clydach crossroads, the Llangadog Trust sited their Gwynfe tollgate.⁴⁰ From here the road turned in a more south westerly direction running through Capel Gwynfe on the ridge which overlooked the Meilwch and Clydach valleys. In 1794 an attempt was made to by-pass Pontarllechau hill and the ridge road by surveying a new

route from Pontarllechau along the banks of the River Meilwch to Rhydlydan, but nothing appears to have come from this suggestion.⁴¹

A mile and a half beyond Capel Gwynfe the road turned once again on to its southerly track. From the crossing of the River Meilwch just below Cwmllywd farm the track began the long climb to the top of the Black Mountain. Initially the Llangadog Trust had used Cwmllywd as a toll house as well as appointing a gate at Ty Pen yr Heol in Gwynfe,⁴² but there is no further reference to Cwmllywd tollgate after 1781.⁴³ Above Cwmllywd farm there was a gate which was constantly referred to by the Trust in its minutes. This was the Mountain Gate, marking the boundary between the inhabited cultivated countryside and the wild empty moorland of the Black Mountain. This gate on occasion marked the limit of repairs to the road, but the Trust invariably ordered the road to be repaired as far as the limekilns, the remains of which can still be seen on Brest Cwmllywd and Clogau Mawr.

For the next three miles the road scaled the exposed slopes of the Black Mountain, climbing steeply from the River Meilwch at around the 700 foot contour line to a high point on Banc y Cerig Pwdrion at just under 1600 feet and then descending more gradually to Bryn Uchaf farm above modern Brynamman at around 750 feet. The mountain was, and still is, an obstacle, and it is no surprise to see that Saxton's 16th century map of Carmarthenshire makes a special feature of 'the black mountayn'. The problem faced by those early travellers can still be judged today, for the original track across the mountain still survives much as it was in the 18th century. The road was unpaved and unfenced. Beyond the field line there were no farms, no houses, and no inns to assist the weary and the lost. The track on occasions disappears into bog and only the presence of two lines of extremely large boulders prevented travellers and riders from wandering off the line of road during darkness or when low cloud and mist obscured the mountain. On a clear summer's day the Black Mountain can present a very attractive face, but wind, rain, snow and mist can still make the mountain a very dangerous and formidable area.

In the early years of the Llangadog Trust a great deal of time and effort was spent in improving the old trackway across the mountain.

The lines of boulders may well be the work of the Trust, as a comparison with other nearby moorland tracks shows that only the Black Mountain highway had these very distinctive roadside markers. A clearer sign of Trust activity can be seen on Banc Melyn immediately above Cwmllywd Mountain Gate. Here the road cuts obliquely across the contours towards Tro Rhiwcrugos, as Admiral Lloyd's new road did just west of Trecastle. The person primarily responsible for arranging these Black Mountain improvements appears to have been Dr Richard Bevan, a Neath surgeon.

Bevan had a strong connection with eastern Carmarthenshire. He owned a small estate in Llangadog parish⁴⁴ and had been involved in a search for lead on the Black Mountain in the 1760s.⁴⁵ He was closely involved with road improvements between Neath and Llangadog on both sides of the River Amman, in 1785 writing that 'we shall set about making ye road from mellin reed urvro to amon river soon'.⁴⁶ This was about the time that his relationship with the Llangadog Trust was at breaking point. He had invested his own money in the mountain road and had contracted with the road gangs and supervised their work. But in September 1785 in reply to a request to have the unfinished sections of the road made good he replied 'I'll have nothing more to do with it but I shall make good my contract with Richard William'.⁴⁷ What caused the friction can only be guessed at, but the Trust appears to have had little interest in the moorland track apart from an initial outburst of enthusiasm in the early years. After 1784 there is no reference to the mountain road in the Trust's minutes; even the appointment of the Reverend Lewis Lewis of Gwynfe as the road surveyor from the River Amman to Rhydysaint in 1794 failed to stimulate any activity on the mountain.⁴⁸ Bevan's efforts like those of Admiral Lloyd appear to have been wasted.

The reason for this was that the Trust's main interest lay in the road system connecting with the limestone quarries on the northern side of the Black Mountain. Reference has already been made to repairs to the Cwmllywd road; significantly these repairs were only ordered to the road as far as the limekilns. In 1794 the Trust began discussing the possibility of extending their control over other roads leading to the quarries. Their proposal to turnpike the parish

road from Twynllanan to Gwynfe Gate and then to the area above Rhiwddu farm was clearly aimed at the lime traffic, assisting those carters coming from the direction of Talsarn and beyond. It was originally intended that these new roads should be included in the renewal petition presented to Parliament in 1795.⁴⁹ But when the Act was eventually passed there was no change in the Black Mountain road system under the Trust's control.⁵⁰ The trustees did not however abandon their plan. Four years later they came to an agreement with the inhabitants of Gwynfe Hamlet which stipulated that the Gwynfe authority would improve and maintain the existing parish road from Gwynfe Gate to the Rhiwddu Mountain Gate, while the Trust would take control of the track from the Rhiwddu gate to the Clogau Mawr limekilns.⁵¹ This scheme was put into operation in 1799.⁵²

The minutes of the Llangadog Trust for the early years of the 19th century do not appear to have survived and so we are unable to show why the Trust's policy changed in the first decade of the 1800s. In December 1812 the Trust petitioned for another renewal of their licence.⁵³ This reveals the same commitment to the lime traffic, but with a new interest in the Black Mountain route. The Act of May 1813 allowed the Trust to abandon the former road from Pontarllechau and Gwynfe over the Black Mountain as far as Bwlch Bach near the Gelly Veinon Mountain Gate overlooking modern Brynamman. In its place the Trust gained permission to operate a turnpike from Pontarllechau over Pontnewydd to the limekilns beyond Rhiwddu and then to take the road over the Black Mountain to the Glamorgan border. The Act also gave the Trust the right to control the road as far as the Swansea Canal at Ystradgynlais,⁵⁴ but there is no evidence to show that this latter section of road was adopted.

What we do know is that the Llangadog Trust adopted and modernized the existing road network south of Pontarllechau and built a new road over the mountain to Brynamman. From Pontarllechau the Trust took control of the parish road running parallel with the River Sawdde as far as Pont Newydd and then along the banks of the River Clydach to Pont Flocksman. Both these bridges existed in 1813 — Pont Newydd is named as an existing structure in the Act and Pont Bryntyle, the former name of Pont Flocksman, is marked on the

Original Drawings of this period. What was new was a stretch of road from Pont Newydd towards Pont Aber. The line of the original road survives as the driveway to Y Bont Newydd house and beyond the house as a track through woodland. The lines of the two tracks, pre-turnstile and turnpike, join together about 100 yards or so up the Sawdde valley.

From Pont Flocksman the road ran in a south westerly direction to meet another parish road coming from Gwynfe tollgate. This latter road was the road which the Gwynfe Hamlet agreed to modernize in 1799. This track can still be seen today climbing the hill from New Inn to and beyond Rhiwddu farm. From the farm the track turned in a more westerly direction to reach the quarries of Clogau Mawr and Clogau Bach and further along to join with the old highway across the Black Mountain. Above Rhiwddu the deep hollow way of the former track is still clearly visible where it meets the minor road coming from the direction of Tro'r Gwew.

From Pontarllechau to the present day New Inn the Llangadog Trust utilized the existing road network. Beyond this point they built a new highway, the first stages of which were constructed on the eastern slopes of the Clydach valley. The major obstacle presented by the steep slopes of Brest Rhiw Ddu was solved by two hairpin bends at Tro Tir y Gat and at Tro'r Gwew with a road angling across the steep terrain to link the two corners. This dog leg led the new road to its highest point around the 1600 foot contour in a gap between Pen Rhiw Ddu and Foel Fawr. The descent on the southern slopes of the Black Mountain towards Brynamman was far gentler with the road following the western side of the Garw valley.

The 1813 Act gave permission for the old and new roads to be linked, though the exact purpose for this has not been ascertained. The link road was to run from the Gelly Veinon Mountain Gate to meet the new turnpike at Gwely Arthur, a point north west of Tro'r Derlwyn. No sign of this road has been found and one must therefore presume it was never constructed.

The new Black Mountain road was built by John Jones of Bryn-brain, Cwmllynfell, later coming to live at Brynamman House. The details of his construction work have not survived but we are informed that his road opened in 1819—'Yn y flwyddyn hono y gwnaed yr

heol fawr dros y mynydd du i Brynamman'.⁵⁵ His work has survived the test of time for his road, the present day A4069 is still the major link between the Tywi and Amman valleys.

3. LLANGADOG TO SWANSEA—THE DISAPPEARING ROAD (Figs. 2 and 5)

Very little documentary evidence survives for the highway linking Llangadog and Swansea. That such a route existed and was considered fairly important can be judged from its inclusion on Emmanuel Bowen's and Thomas Kitchin's maps. The latter mapper even recorded the distance between the two places, a designation only given to the main highways of the day. Yet this road was never turnpiked, no traveller appears to have written about it and very little local knowledge of its former history can be traced today.

From Llangadog the road followed the line of the Black Mountain road for the first mile or so (Fig. 2). Beyond Carreg Sawdde Common it faced the same problems of crossing the river, problems which were eased by the development of the various bridging points. On the western bank of the River Sawdde the route headed in a south to south westerly direction and the immediate line of highway is still preserved in a series of parish roads beyond Felindre. Between Penybont farm and Cefn y Coed Common a road branched off towards Ffairfach and Bethlehem on the southern side of the Tywi valley. Along this road near Wernellyn farm another fork provided an alternative route over the northern flank of Garn Goch before rejoining the main line of the Swansea road on Trichrûg Mountain. On the southern edge of Cefn y Coed Common the main line of this highway divided. One line carried on towards Rhydysaint and Pontarllechau as has already been described. The other division took the road towards its first mountain obstacle, Trichrûg.

Beyond the crossroads formed with the Bethlehem to Rhydysaint road, the track negotiated a low ridge and a small stream, Nant Ffrwd y Felin, before tackling the lower slopes of Banc Carreg foelgam. The easy gradient enabled the road to continue its direct line southwards. But the steeper upper slopes forced the road on to a more south westerly heading, cutting across the face of the ridge to reach a high

point on Trichrûg around the 1,100 foot contour mark. It was near this point that the alternative route passing Wernellyn and Garn Goch joined the main track. The lines of both tracks can still be followed, being preserved as farm tracks and footpaths.

On the summit the precise line of the former highway is difficult to pinpoint, but despite the absence of conclusive evidence it probably ran along the ridge towards the Cennen Tower road junction (Fig. 5). Near the ridge the Bowen and Kitchin maps show a road passing in between two houses, 'Trechrûg' and 'Duvadva Ddu'. There is a strong possibility that these two sites correspond to Carreg-lwyd farm, and either Dafadfa uchaf or Dafadfa isaf farm. The other piece of cartographic information from the 18th century matches up conclusively with topographical evidence. Bowen and Kitchin both show the road running north of the River Camnant and this places the road firmly on or near the Trichrûg ridge. The farm track west of Carreg-lwyd farm may well be on the line of this ridge highway, but unfortunately fieldwork and aerial photography have failed to discover the line of road running eastwards from Carreg-lwyd. It appears that on these high open moorland areas the line of an unhedged road was quickly swallowed up by the surrounding vegetation, when finally abandoned as a trackway. This disappearance of unbanked road can be witnessed on both the Black Mountain and Betws Mountain overlooking modern Glangamman and Ammanford, while on the former Llangadog to Brynamman road only the line of marking boulders distinguishes the line of the road from the surrounding moorland of the Black Mountain.

The western flank of Trichrûg Mountain was clearly an important crossroads in the network of local roads. Bowen and Kitchin record the Llangadog to Swansea highway passing 'Trechrûg', while the same house is described in 1759 as standing alongside the Llandeilo to Brecon road.⁵⁶ This latter route may well have shared the same track as the Llansawel to Neath road which in 1738 climbed the hill from Pontpren-areth.⁵⁷ Another road climbed from the south west and could well be an extension of the ridge trackway. All these roads together with another two coming from the direction of the Dafadfa farms and from modern Bethlehem met near the Cennen Tower. In all half a dozen roads met

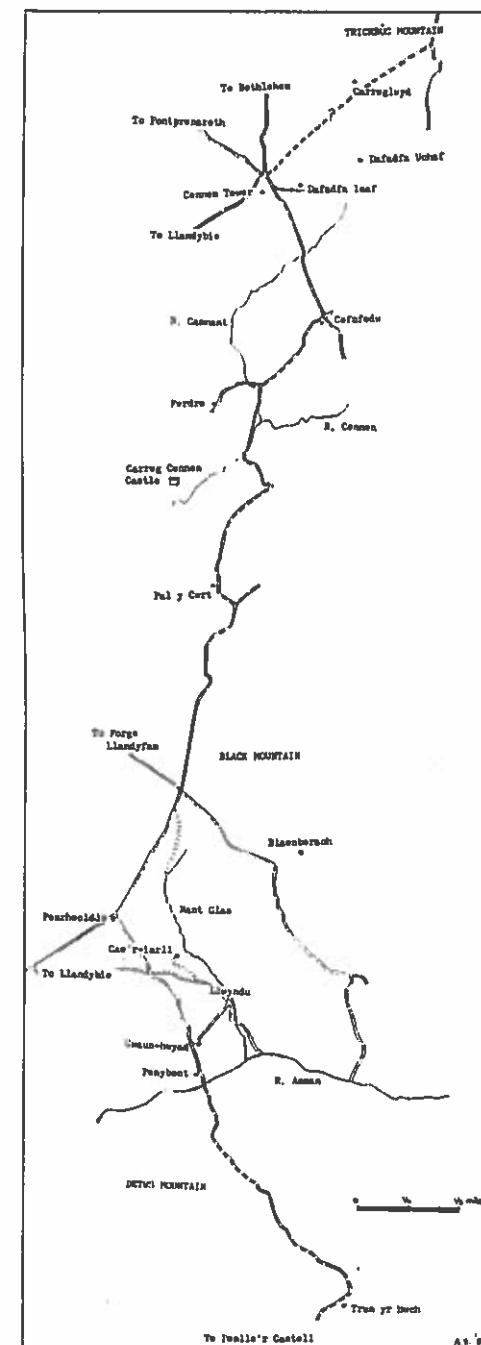


Fig. 5: Part of the road from Llangadog to Swansea

here but only the line of the road from Llangadog remains uncertain.

From the Cennen Tower crossroads the Llangadog to Swansea highway turned southwards. It crossed the upper course of the River Camnant, before turning towards Ferdre farm at the Cefnfedw crossroads. Midway between these two farms the road made yet another 90 degree turn before recrossing the River Camnant. These abrupt twists and turns follow the evidence of the 18th century mappers and are still used as public highways. Only the last section of road leading down to the Camnant ford is a forest path on private property. On the other side of the stream the road survives as a double banked farm track leading towards and then along the bank of the River Cennen. The road forded the river at the foot of Castell Carreg Cennen and then began to climb the lower slopes of the highway's second mountain obstacle, the Black Mountain in Llandeilo-fawr parish.

The line taken to the summit follows a similar pattern to the line on Trichrûg Mountain. On the lower more gentle slopes the road ran directly uphill and can still be traced, but not walked, as a wildly overgrown double hedged track. As the gradient increased so the road turned in a south westerly direction to cut the contours at a more leisurely angle. A foot-path still preserves this track above Hengrofft farm. Around the 800 foot contour mark the gradient eased and the highway crossed a large open highland enclosure. The ploughing of Pal Brynia has obliterated the line of the road, but a gateway in the southwestern corner together with the track passing the ruins of 'Pale y Brinia' house indicate the line of this early road. The house, referred to locally as Pal y Cwrt, was marked on both Bowen's and Kitchin's maps, but an estate map of 1782 describes it as a ruin.⁵⁸ The house was a substantial structure, as can be seen from the surviving foundations, but it is not clear whether the decline in the fortunes of the house corresponds with the decline in the importance of the road. Beyond the Pal the highway was joined by a road from Capel Gwynfe and the former Llangadog to Brynamman road. It then climbed steadily over the west facing slopes of the Black Mountain until it reached a point where it could look down and across at the third major obstacle in its path, the River Amman and

Betws Mountain.

Both Emmanuel Bowen and Thomas Kitchin give a quite clear description of the road crossing the Amman valley. From the Black Mountain it plunged straight down the hillside with a very marked eastward facing bend approximately two thirds of the way down the slope. A house 'Tu yr heol' is marked on the crown of the bend. A mill was situated at the river crossing and the road is again shown heading in a straight line up the southern side of the valley to 'Trwyn yr Hwch'. This property, the present day Trim yr Hych, is the one surviving roadside feature which can be positively identified from the maps of Bowen and Kitchin; in 1743 the inhabitants of Betws parish were presented for not repairing the highway here.⁵⁹ What is more difficult to ascertain is the exact line of the road from one hill top to the other.

Three possible lines need to be examined. The first follows the present day road from the crossroads on the Black Mountain on what is called the Old Llandeilo Road. A distinct feature of this stretch of road is the bend at Blaenberach. It might be argued that this particular point is too high on the hillside to fit the cartographic evidence. But further down the hillside in the vicinity of Old Bethel Chapel there is another distinctive bend where the road makes an abrupt turn towards the river, fording it immediately to the west of the present day Recreation Ground.⁶⁰ But here the parallels with the 18th century mapping evidence run out. No trace has been found of a 'Tu yr heol' near Old Bethel Chapel and there is no evidence, either archaeological or documentary or even in local tradition, of a mill at this fording point. On the other side of the valley, footpaths intersect the hillside on the lands of Gelli-caedrum, but not one of these can be described as a straight line running from the river to the summit.

A more probable route across the Amman valley has its starting point just south of the Black Mountain crossroads. The very faint remains of a track can still be seen beginning its southward line in the vicinity of the 969 foot spot height marked on the 1:25,000 series O.S. maps. The road ran along the western bank of Nant Glas and joined up with another track coming from the direction of Forge Llandyfan. Both tracks have almost completely disappeared and yet the line from Forge Llandyfan was used

within living memory by miners walking from the Cennen and Llŵchwr valleys to work in the Glanamman pits. The virtual disappearance of these roads adds weight to an earlier statement that when unhedged tracks on open moorland were abandoned, nature was swift to obliterate all signs of their former line. Thus the exact line down the hillside is not clear. There was certainly a trackway between Cae'r-iarll and Llwyn-du farms and the remains of an old road passing Gwaun-hwyad farm can still be walked today. Linking these two tracks together would create a very marked bend immediately above Penybont farm. But no trace of a 'Tu yr heol' can be found here.

However a third possibility links the road network on the Black Mountain to Penybont farm. This line of road branched off the mountain road near the present day Penyrheolddu. The remains of a double hedge bank in a small area of forest indicated the line of the former track, but from Twynmynydd the road still survives as a deep hollow way down the hill side to the River Amman at Penybont. Unfortunately there is no sharp bend on this particular line of road, though the intriguingly named Tir dan yr heol might suggest that this was the 18th century 'Tu yr heol'. One of these two roads coming down the hillside to Penybont farm appears to be the road described on the Bowen and Kitchin maps, but more evidence is needed before a firm conclusion can be reached.

Evidence is far more positive for the road on the other side of the valley. The crossing point of the river is clearly indicated by the name of the farm, Penybont, and by the mill on the opposite bank of the river in Betws parish. The exact situation of the mill is not known, but a very strong local tradition and the field name 'Ynis dan y felin'⁶¹ indicate a site near the confluence of Nant Garenig with the River Amman, almost exactly opposite Penybont farm. From here Heol Garenig climbs for just over a mile in an almost straight line to reach Trim yr Hych, still the highest house on this part of Betws Mountain. These features exactly fit the descriptions presented by the 18th century mappers.

On the summit the road turned in a south

westerly direction, but as has been suggested earlier, it is no surprise to find that all signs of a trackway on the moorland summit of Betws Mountain have disappeared. However the foot-path shown on early O.S. maps does indicate the line of the former highway and points to the crossing into the county of Glamorgan between the significantly named Henrhyd farm and Penlle'r castell.

Here at the county boundary the road divided. Bowen's map shows the division, but Kitchin's map of Carmarthenshire only reveals a road heading towards Neath. This ran down the Upper Clydach valley, crossed the River Tawe at Pontardawe, climbed from Alltwen to Rhos by the southern older route and finally ran down the Clydach valley through Bryncoch to Neath. This road can still be driven on today, as can the other road shown on Bowen's map; this was the final stretch of the Llangadog to Swansea road.

From Penlle'r castell the road headed southwards down the upper reaches of the Lliw valley before turning briefly in a south easterly direction towards Cynghordy farm and Rhyd y pandy. Reverting to its southerly heading the road was joined by another from the direction of Mynydd Pysgodlyn and Betws. The road then ran through Llangyfelach and presumably lies beneath the present day B4489 heading towards the centre of Swansea.

The notion that the road described above was the main thoroughfare between the Tywi and Tawe valleys in the 18th century seems hardly credible today. This may explain why the Llangadog to Swansea road died so quickly, without fuss and without regrets. Some short stretches survive as minor road, while farm tracks also account for other sections of the former highway. But much of it has completely disappeared, especially on Trichrûg, on the Black Mountain and on Betws Mountain. The serious problem that these mountains posed for travellers was eased by the turnpiking of valley roads in the late eighteenth century. The new turnpikes meant slightly longer journeys, but with fewer hills and more bridges, those journeys became quicker and safer. The Llangadog to Swansea road simply disappeared.

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- 12 The 1812 O.S. 2 inch Original Drawings, sheet 189 and the 1831 1 inch O.S. name the property as 'Pwllymelyn' and 'Pwll-y-felin' respectively. Trallum Melin is the name recorded in the 1784 and 1803 Main Trust Acts and in the 1839 Tithe Map of the parish of Llangadog.
- 13 NLW 2 inch Original Drawings, Sheet 189. The date of the bill of costs was 1812.
- 14 CRO, Cawdor Vaughan 539, 543, 546 and 6612.
- 15 Ibid., 539.
- 16 Emmanuel Bowen's *Map of South Wales*, 1729.
- 17 7 George III, c. 60.
- 18 24 George III, c. 33.
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- 35 This area of common land has been described with a variety of names and with a variety of spellings. The 1779 Llangadog Trust Act refers to 'Coed yr Artwydd'. The 1839 Tithe Map describes it as 'Cefn Coed yr Arllwydd' while the Apportionment has 'Cefn Coed yr Arglwyd'.
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