

CEFN CREIGIAU GROUND SURVEY

REPORT TO ACCOMPANY MAP COMPILED BY

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INTRODUCTION

This report and accompanying map are the results of the ground survey of Cefn Creigiau carried out by M Grayston and J Wills during April, May and October of 1995. The objective was to target specific areas deserving further investigation in determining the route of this section of the Ladies Walk.

By systematically recording any features that may indicate a pathway and producing a map showing their relative positions to each other, non relevant features can be eliminated from the study and those requiring further investigation can be pinpointed.

Whilst carrying out the survey we aimed to be as objective as possible. However, some prior knowledge of the site was valuable and keeping in mind Cumberland's description of this section of the Ladies Walk helped to direct more attention to certain areas. More specifically possible promontories that can be speedily reached from Eglwys Newydd and from there provide views of the Alpine Bridge and Pendre Farm.

METHOD

The survey was carried out from a base line originating in Pendre Field at grid reference (764733; O.S. sheet 77 2 .5 inch map 1956) running at a direction of 030 degrees.

Transects were run from this base line at 10 metre intervals (increasing to 15 and 20 metre intervals at the northern end of the hill where visibility was clearer) and at a direction of 120 degrees over Cefn Creigiau to Pen Creigiau Road. For an explanation of variations in transect intervals and baseline positions refer to Findings and Interpretation. Each measured distance on the transect was sighted by compass and ranging poles, and corrected for any variation in elevation. Surveying 5 metres to either side of the transect, the offset distance to any noteworthy feature was recorded along with its dimensions and orientation.

The survey area is bounded by the Beech tree on the edge of Pendre field to the South and Eglwys Newydd to the North. These two end points were chosen because the Ladies Walk has been completed as far as Eglwys Newydd and the Beech tree is located at such a distance down Pendre field that any path emerging below this tree would constitute a long upward haul across the field to Hawthorn Cottage before descending to the mansion site.

FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION

As the survey progressed it became apparent that several factors could produce misleading results if they were not accounted for. Most obviously the past and present land use, particularly forestry activity, caused surveying and interpretation difficulties. The existing plantation not only obscured views and ground features but also guided the eye to see paths, clearings and levels that would not otherwise exist. It is possible that interesting features which could have provided further clues to the route of this section of the Ladies Walk may have been disrupted and possibly destroyed by forestry plantation preparations.

The local geology caused a degree of confusion as outcrops of bedrock resembled levels cut to form pathways. Natural levels were also evident as a result of downslope movement of soil and needle litter and their accumulation around tree stumps and roots.

The density of ground cover i.e brash material, fallen trees, needle litter and natural vegetation also hindered accurate transect sighting. The steep gradient at the beginning of each transect proved difficult in maintaining an accurate survey line. For these reasons and from the lack of any features found the base line was moved progressively further eastward. Similarly, transect intervals were increased as ground cover density lessened allowing a greater visible area per transect.

The accompanying map has been compiled solely from the ground survey data and is drawn to a scale of 1:400. In addition to man made features, a degree of topographic detail is also included in order to show the features in relation to the lie of the land. It is

hoped that this will aid interpretation of their significance and location. The most notable features in this respect are the numerous rock outcrops and the four ridges that comprise the summit of Cefn Creigiau. The ridges are numbered 1 to 4, 1 being nearest Eglws Newydd to the North.

The drawing of the map and a working knowledge of the area surveyed has enabled us to highlight a number of significant areas of interest.

- 1) The map shows a "worn forest path" leaving PenCreigiau Road adjacent to transect 33 (T33) and climbing Southwest between ridges 2 and 3 to drop down the other side where it merges with, but is still discernable within, the "cleared forest path/track".

This "worn path" is present as a slight depression in the top soil/needle litter and varies in width to a maximum of 1 metre. For the duration that the path is traceable it does not pass over ground of a steep gradient, thus avoiding excessive ascent or descent, and allows distance to be covered quickly. This would appear to fit Cumberland's description of this section of the Ladies Walk (see Cumberland pp 19 and 20). The path can be traced to the base of ridge 4 from where its line can no longer be discerned within the "cleared forest track".

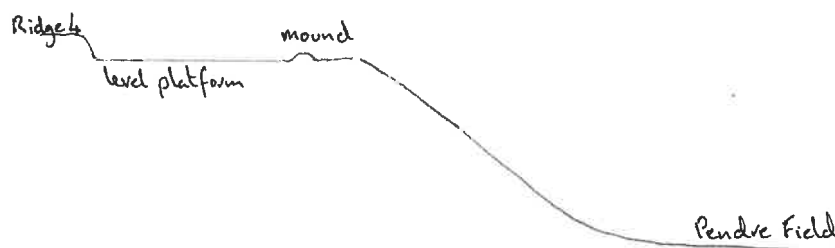
- 2) The four ridges forming the crest of Cefn Creigiau run approximately parallel to each other from Northeast to Southwest and are flanked on all sides by rock outcrops of varying size. The topography of each ridge varies widely from rocky

hummocks and hollows to areas of a smoother, flatter surface.

Because of their higher relative elevation it is likely that one of these ridges would be a suitable promontory to command a view of Pendre Farm and the Alpine Bridge thus befitting the description by Cumberland. Unfortunately this cannot be ascertained as the view is obscured by standing conifers.

From the topography of the ridges it is possible to infer a number of points.

Ridges 1, 2, and 3 are not of sufficient elevation to maintain a clear view over ridge 4 down to the Alpine Bridge in the valley below. The westerly sides of these three ridges are too narrow and uneven to provide a stable platform from which to view Pendre Farm. Although it may be possible to see Pendre Farm and the Alpine Bridge from ridge 4, there is certainly no gentle precipice to the variegated fields below as described by Cumberland. Instead the ridge ends abruptly as a sheer rockface several metres high at the base of which there is a broad level platform extending to the top of the western slopes of Cefn Creigiau (see diagram below).



The survey revealed an interesting site crossing transect 11 to the South of ridge 4. This site constitutes a small promontory on the top of the concave slopes that constitute the western edge of Cefn Creigiau. It is also possible to pick out a view of Pendre Farm through the trees. A previously drawn contour cross section revealed that this site, although of lower elevation, is suitably positioned for a view down to the Alpine Bridge.

- 3) First traced at transect 15 (T15) and running round the West side of the ridges is a mound of 2 metre width believed to be an old boundary wall. This is an extensive linear feature that continues all the way to the church car park. The mound is covered in soil and grass and its construction could not be determined by probing with a ranging pole due to the proliferation of loose rock scattered over the whole survey area. A significant break in this feature at T16 along with smaller breaks at T21, T22 and T26 may be gateways and thus worthy of further investigation. T16 could provide a link in the path between the "worn forest path" and the promontory described in point 2.

- 4) Crossing transects 4 and 5 is a level mound approximately 3 metres wide and 7 metres long. This may form a bridge across a depression running up the slope. The orientation of this mound is in alignment with a break in the stone wall which runs up the hillside in an East/West direction crossing transect 6.

Between the stone wall and the promontory (see point 2) is an area of levels and outcrops seemingly cut into the side of the hill. Connected together these would

provide a means for the path to descend from the plateau gently across this steep slope, through the break in the wall and across the mound down to the beech tree on the edge of Pendre field.

- 5) On T13 there exists a feature that cannot be considered in isolation. Its significance is only apparent if the promontory mentioned in point 2 above is deemed to be of any significance. The feature consists of a linear depression in the bedrock approximately 1.3 metres wide and several metres long. Its position is such that it enables easy passage over difficult ground from the break in the mound (T16) to the promontory site.
- 6) The break in the wall at T6 was marked by two large stone blocks, one at either side. Other stone blocks are widespread over the survey area and may be glacial erratics as they are comprised of course grained sandstone whereas the bedrock of the area is interbedded sandstones and mudstones. Some of these blocks however appear to be of a regular geometric shape. This honed appearance, coupled with their relative positioning, suggests that they may have been used to serve a purpose either for construction or decoration.
- 8) There are a number of quarry pits of various size cut into the East and West slopes of Cefn Creigiau. Associated with the mouth of each pit is a mound of up to 2 metres width and a fan of rock debris extending down the hillslope. In most cases there are old, well established dense growths of rhododendrons surrounding these pits.

It is the distribution of these quarry pits within the area surveyed that is of particular interest. On the eastern slopes of Cefn Creigiau the quarry pits can be found on the hillside soon after leaving the church car park, but only extend a short distance to the South before quarrying ceases. At an adjacent point on the West side the quarry pits continue South along the hillside as far as the stone wall at transect 6.

The map shows that quarrying seems to have followed the line of the "worn forest path" i.e the pits stop where the path crosses over from the East and continue where it emerges on the West. Whether the "worn path" actually forms this part of the Ladies Walk or not it is suggested that these quarry pits would have supplied the aggregate for the path material and therefore would follow the line of the path very closely.

It is argued that it is unlikely that the quarries would have been used to provide stone to build the walls found in this survey area. The size of the pits does not relate to the volume of stone that would be needed to build these walls.

Historically in places such as the Lake District and Yorkshire Dales, areas renowned for their dry stone walling, walls were built from stone debris cleared from the land. Constructions that require stone of a specific grade normally use quarrying as a source for that material. In quarry blasting it is possible to obtain the desired grade of aggregate by controlling the quantity of explosives used thus minimising waste, time and money.

On the East side of Cefn Creigiau the only place where rhododendrons are to be found is around the quarry pits and on the West this is where the greatest density of rhododendrons occur. It is highly likely that these were planted in order to screen the pits from the views afforded from the path.

- 9) Sections of pathway were recorded between T2 and T5. These form part of a network of paths that are shown on the 1850 Ordnance Survey map. These also appear the 1957 aerial photographs of the area. They are present as deep well worn depressions in the ground.
- 10) An inexplicable feature exists between T30 and T31. This is a ditch that is 1.5 metres wide, a metre deep and 14.5 metres long. It is dissected 8.5 metres along its length by a 2 metre width of bedrock. A smaller trough runs several metres South into the craggs at the eastern end of ridge 2. There is another ditch 7 metres further East of similar width and depth which is 4 metres long.
- 11) Several concentrations of chippings and loose stones can be found over the survey area. Their distribution follows no distinct pattern. They occur either as material exhumed by standing tree roots, uprooted trees or as freestanding accumulations. Their physical appearance varies from weathered to fresh unweathered chippings. It is possible that some of these clusters may represent path material but it is difficult to say objectively which.

CONCLUSION

The authors feel that there are three main areas of findings that are most significant in trying to determine the route of the Ladies Walk over Cefn Creigiau.

The "worn forest path" presents itself as a likely candidate for the route of the walk for the distance that it is traceable. The reason for the presence of this worn depression, and that it describes such a sinuous route with no apparent destination, is not entirely obvious.

For the duration of the survey (April, May & October), no one was actually seen using this pathway as a means of passage through the woodland despite the increased tourism usually experienced during the bank holidays. Either this pathway has been used infrequently but over a long period of time (although frequently enough to erode the needle litter layer faster than it is replenished) or it follows the ghost outline of a relic pathway, one sufficiently distinguishable to be able to persist and survive through various disruptions over a long period of time. Therefore this is one area that warrants further investigation.

The promontory and the series of levels and outcrops that connect with the gap in the wall and the level mound beyond provides an easy descent over an otherwise steep hillside. The only other evidence of a path on this side of the hill is the small network of paths found in transects 2 and 3 that are shown on the old Ordnance Survey maps of this area. The absence of any other evidence for a path in this area suggests that greater consideration should be given to these outcrops and levels as a sensible route down off

Cefn Creigiau.

Supporting these postulations is the distinct pattern of the quarry pits. As argued before, it is likely that the pattern of these pits follows very closely the line of the path they were used to supply. Therefore, the point at which quarrying commences on the East side of Cefn Creigiau will be near to where the path originates, and where it ceases will be where the path crosses over to the West where quarrying is then resumed. The series of levels and outcrops are in an area of intensive quarrying. Further investigation needs to be carried out to determine whether these levels and outcrops were used as a means of access to the pits themselves or whether they actually represent a pathway traversing down through this area.













It seems anomalous that the "worn forest path" should leave PenCreigiau Road at a considerable distance from both the carpark and the first quarry pits and ascend the hillside at such an oblique angle. Between transects 30 and 31 the "worn path" veers sharply to the South. The quarry pits found at transect 34 could be used to derive a more preferable route in which the path leaves the road much nearer the carpark, ascends the hill at a shallower gradient and joins the worn path at T30/T31 at a less oblique angle. The wide level found above the quarry pits in transect 34 may hold some significance if the path were to take this proposed route.

GROUND SURVEY MAP OF CEFN CREIGIAU

1:400 SCALE

SURVEYED AND COMPILED BY
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1995

KEY

-  Black line with transect origin
-  Transect origin marked by wooden stake
-  Black outcrop with height
-  Stone block with 3 largest dimensions
-  Tree stump with diameter (stumps without dimensions have a diameter 40-100cm)
-  Coppiced tree stump (headless)
-  Large fallen tree with A denoting direction of fall
-  Stone wall or earth mound
-  Area of loose stone shippings
-  Slope from ridge centre to level ground
-  Symbol marks the break in slope around a ridge or promontory
-  Quarry pit

