

Her copy

---

# Historic Landscape Characterisation

## Mawddach

---



GAT Project No. G1772c

Report No. 492

September 2004

---

*Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Gwynedd*  
Gwynedd Archaeological Trust  
*Craig Beuno, Ffordd y Garth, Bangor, Gwynedd LL57 2RT*

Event PRN 40623

**Front cover:** Aerial view looking south-east across the flatlands of Morfa Mawddach (area 10) in the foreground, the wooded hill slopes of area 15 behind and Llynnau Gregennan (area 14) towards the northern slopes of Cadair Idris (area 17) beyond.

'On the top of Cadair Idris I felt how happy a man might be with a little money and a sane intellect, and reflecting with astonishment and pity on the madness of the multitude.'

*From* The Romance of the Welsh Mountains  
*Thomas Love Peacock*

'The Mawddach, how she trips though throttled  
If floodtide teeming thrills her full,  
And mazy sands all water-wattled  
Waylay her at ebb, past Penmaen Pool.'

*From* Penmaen Pool  
*Gerald Manley Hopkins*

## CONTENTS

*page*

### **Part A General information**

1	Preface	5
2	Background and acknowledgements	7
3	Evolving historic characterisation methodology	8
4	GIS related <i>proformae</i>	9
5	Current themes in historic landscape characterisation	11
6	Managing historic character	16
7	Glossary of keywords and expressions	21

### **Part B Mawddach**

8	Historical processes and background	25
9	Historic character areas	35
10	Bibliography	67

### ***Appendix I***

Extract from the Register of Landscapes of Outstanding Historic Interest in Wales - Mawddach HLW (Gw) 14	70
---	----

### ***Figures***

Map showing extent of study area and character areas

Maps of character areas face the text

Photographs of character areas follow the descriptive text of each area



## **Part A**

### **General information**

## 1 Preface

- 1.1 Natural forces and human activity acting together over the last six thousand years have contrived to produce a landscape of great beauty and variety in Wales, a national asset that is essential both to our national identity and to our individual "sense of place" and well-being. The diversity and imprint of human activity on the landscape is everywhere to be seen, from the enigmatic stone monuments of the prehistoric period and the magnificent castles and abbeys of the medieval period to quite commonplace and typical features like field boundaries that can often be of great age. But the landscape is more than just attractive scenery or a record of the past; it also provides a place for us to live, work and sustain ourselves, through farming, forestry, tourism and so on, processes that all shape, and will continue to shape, the landscape.
- 1.2 Recognising and raising awareness of the importance and wealth of the historic fabric of the landscape has been the central theme and message of the, non-statutory, Register of Landscapes of Historic Interest in Wales, the first part of which, covering thirty-six "outstanding" landscapes, was published in January 1998. This is being compiled as a joint initiative between Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments, the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) and the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), working in collaboration with the four Welsh Archaeological Trusts, the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales and the Welsh unitary authorities.
- 1.3 The Historic Landscapes Register provides a first step national overview of the historic content of the Welsh landscape. The next step, so essential to the process of informing the way in which aspects of the historic landscape may be managed, is to make available more detailed information about the character of this landscape at a more local level. This is achieved through a process known as historic landscape characterisation which has been developed in Wales jointly by Cadw, CCW and the Welsh Archaeological Trusts. This involves the identification of geographically definable and mappable areas of historic character, as determined by the range and distribution of surviving archaeological and historic features and the main types of historic land use patterns or historic "themes" that have shaped the area. The key historic characteristics of the area are then identified along with recommendations for their positive management.
- 1.4 This report is one in a series of landscape characterisation exercises being undertaken by the Welsh Archaeological Trusts with grant aid from Cadw. These studies will initially concentrate on those areas identified on the Historic Landscapes Register, although it is accepted that the whole of the Welsh landscape can be said to be, in one way or another, historic. Information is being prepared in a form which is compatible with CCW's landscape assessment and decision-making methodology, known as *LANDMAP*. It will be made available to a wide range of organisations and will feed into various initiatives to protect and manage the Welsh countryside, most notably the Tir Gofal agri-environment scheme. It is also seen as making a particularly important contribution to raising awareness and heightening a feeling of local distinctiveness.
- 1.5 The Historic Landscapes Register and these characterisation exercises fully acknowledge the dynamic and evolving nature of the landscape. They promote the view that protecting the legacy of the past in the landscape is not to be achieved by preventing change or fossilising the landscape but rather by informing the process of change, creating tomorrow's landscapes without necessarily sacrificing the best of yesterday's.

## 1 Rhagair

- 1.1 Mae'r grymoedd naturiol a'r gweithgaredd dynol a fu'n gweithredu ar y cyd dros y chwe mil o flynyddoedd diwethaf wedi cyfrannu at y broses o gynhyrchu tirwedd o harddwch ac amrywiaeth hynod yng Ngymru, ased cenedlaethol sy'n hanfodol i ni o ran ein hunaniaeth genedlaethol a hefyd o ran ein lles a'n 'hymdeimlad o berthyn i le' unigol. Gellir gweld ymhobman yr amrywiaeth a'r olion a adawyd ar y tirwedd gan weithgaredd dynol, o henebion cerrig enigmatig y cyfnod cynhanesyddol a chestyll ac abatai gwych y cyfnod canoloesol, i'r nodweddion eithaf cyffredin a nodweddiadol fel ffiniau caeau a all yn aml fod yn hen iawn. Ond nid dim ond golygyfeydd deniadol neu gofnod o'r gorffennol yn unig yw'r tirwedd; mae hefyd yn darparu lle i ni fyw, gweithio a chynnal ein hunain ynddo, drwy gyfrwng amaeth, coedwigaeth, twristiaeth ac ati, oll yn brosesau sy'n llunio, ac a fydd yn parhau i lunio'r tirwedd.
- 1.2 Bu cydnabod a chodi ymwybyddiaeth o bwysigrwydd a chyfoeth ffabrig hanesyddol y tirwedd yn thema ac yn neges ganolog y gofrestr anstatudol, *Cofrestr O Dirweddau O Ddiddordeb Hanesyddol Eithriadol Yng Nghymru*, y cyhoeddwyd y rhan gyntaf ohoni, sy'n cwmpasu trideg chwech o dirweddau 'eithriadol' ym mis Ionawr 1998. Caiff y Gofrestr ei llunio fel menter ar y cyd rhwng Cadw, Cyngor Cefn Gwlad Cymru a'r Cyngor Rhyngwladol ar Henebion a Safleoedd (ICOMOS) sy'n gweithio mewn cydweithrediad a phedair Ymddiriedolaeth Archeolegol Cymru, y Comisiwn Brenhinol Henebion Cymru ac awdurdodau unedol Cymru.
- 1.3 *Y Gofrestr o Dirweddau o Ddiddordeb Hanesyddol* yw'r cam cyntaf, trosolwg cenedlaethol o gynnwys hanesyddol tirwedd Cymru. Y cam nesaf, mor hanfodol i'r broses o lywio'r modd y gellir rheoli agweddau ar y tirwedd cenedlaethol, yw trefnu bod gwybodaeth fwy manwl ar gael ynglyn a chymeriad y tirwedd hwn ar lefel fwy lleol. Cyflawnir hyn drwy broses a elwir yn nodweddiad tirweddau hanesyddol a ddatblygwyd yng Nghymru ar y cyd a Cadw, Cyngor Cefn Gwlad Cymru ac Ymddiriedolaethau Archeolegol Cymru. Golyga hyn nodi ardaloedd o gymeriad hanesyddol y gellir eu diffinio a'u mapio'n ddacaryddol, yn ol yr hyn a benderfynir gan ystod a dosbarthiad y nodweddion archeolegol a hanesyddol sy'n goroesi a'r prif fathau o batrymau defnydd tir hanesyddol neu 'thema' hanesyddol sydd wedi llunio'r ardal. Nodir nodweddion hanesyddol allweddol yr ardal felly ynghyd ag argymhellion ar gyfer eu rheoli'n gadarnhaol.
- 1.4 Mae'r adroddiad hwn yn un o gyfres o ymarferion nodweddiad tirweddau hanesyddol yr ymgwymerir ag ef gan Ymddiriedolaethau Archeolegol Cymru gyda chymorth grant gan Cadw. Bydd yr astudiaethau hyn yn canolbwyntio yn y lle cyntaf ar yr ardaloedd hynny a nodwyd yn y *Gofrestr O Ddiddordeb Hanesyddol*, er y caiff ei dderbyn bod modd disgrifio tirwedd Cymru gyfan, mewn un ffordd neu'r llall, fel un hanesyddol. Mae gwybodaeth yn cael ei pharatoi ar ffurf sy'n cydweddu a methodoleg asesu tirweddau a gwneud penderfyniadau Cyngor Cefn Gwlad Cymru, sef *LANDMAP*. Bydd ar gael i ystod eang o sefydliadau a chaiff ei fwydo i fentrau amrywiol er mwyn diogelu a rheoli cefn gwlad Cymru, yn bennaf y cynllun agri-amgylcheddol sef, *Tir Gofal*. Caiff ei weld hefyd yn gwneud cyfraniad arbennig o bwysig i'r broses o godi ymwybyddiaeth a dwysau'r ymdeimlad o arbenigrwydd lleol.
- 1.5 Cydnabyddar *Gofrestr O Dirweddau O Ddiddordeb Hanesyddol* a'r ymarferion nodweddiad hyn yn llawn natur ddeinamig y tirwedd sy'n parhau i esblygu. Hyrwyddant y farn mai nid trwy rwystro newid neu ffosileiddio'r tirwedd y mae diogelu treftadaeth y gorffennol yn y tirwedd, ond yn hytrach drwy lywio'r broses o newid, gan greu tirweddau'r dyfodol heb o anghenraid aberthu tirweddau gorau'r gorffennol.

## **2 Background and acknowledgements**

### **2.1 The study area**

- 2.1.1 The area which forms the focus of this work encompasses the whole of the area of Mawddach which has been identified on the *Register of Landscapes of Outstanding Historic Interest in Wales* by Cadw, CCW and ICOMOS, HLW(Gw) 14, in Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments, 1995, p 121).
- 2.1.2 The study area is situated in the modern county of Gwynedd, and the historic county of Meirionnydd. It includes Barmouth and the mountains immediately fringing the estuary on the northern side, stretching from the mouth of the estuary inland to Penmaenpool, and extends on the southern side up to the mountain ridge of Cadair Idris. It includes a variety of different terrains and habitats, and of different historic landscape types, from the mudflats of the estuary to the magnificent heights of the Cadair range, and includes heavily-wooded valley sides, low-grade agricultural land, 17<sup>th</sup>-century farm settlements, small, modern villages and beaches. It is particularly noted for its wealth of extensive relict archaeological remains along the line of Ffordd Ddu on the southern side above the estuary and below the heights of Cadair Idris.
- 2.1.3 Barmouth is the largest town here, but there are also the smaller settlements of Llwyngwrl, Fairbourne, Arthog and Friog (which date mainly from the 19<sup>th</sup>-century onwards). There are few significant industrial archaeological landscapes in the area, the main exception being the gold mining remains north of Bontddu (on the northern side), and mining and quarrying remains above Arthog on the south. The area also contains three registered parks and gardens, Abergwynant, Panorama Walk and Glan-mawddach on the shores of the estuary.

### **2.2 Acknowledgements**

- 2.2.1 The author is grateful to several people for their contributions to this project. Colleagues within and outside the Trust offered helpful advice throughout, especially those involved in the informal 'characterisation working party' comprising the WATs, Cadw and CCW. Judith Alfrey provided much useful information on buildings, and Nina Steele provided SMR data in a number of formats. Margaret Mason compiled the entries for the parks and gardens, and George Smith contributed the general section on relict archaeology. Marianne Longley prepared the figures and Nina Steele the maps. The remainder of the work was carried out, and the report compiled, by David Thompson.

### **2.3 Abbreviations**

The following abbreviations are used in this report.

CCW	Countryside Council for Wales
DRO	Dolgellau Record Office
GAT	Gwynedd Archaeological Trust
GIS	Geographic Information System
HLC	historic landscape characterisation
JMHRs	<i>Journal of the Merioneth Historical Record Society</i>
NLW	National Library of Wales
SMR	Sites and Monuments Record
THSC	<i>Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion</i>
UDP	Unitary Development Plan
UWB	University of Wales, Bangor
WATs	Welsh Archaeological Trusts

### 3 Evolving historic characterisation methodology

3.1 Historical landscape characteristics are the tangible evidence of the activities and habits of the people who occupied, developed, used and shaped the land to serve human needs in the past; they reflect the beliefs, attitudes, traditions and values of these people. They include the physical remains of all aspects of human activities and exploitation in the past (above and below ground, known and potential), and our understanding, interpretation and even perception of those remains. They may reflect a variety of activities occurring at one time, or evolving functions in different periods of time.

3.2 The Countryside Commission (in its document *Views from the Past*, 1996) states that as managers we should be concerned with the historic character of the present landscape, and not with the study of the past for its own sake. It places the idea of 'historic landscape character' at the centre of this concept.

3.3 Characterisation is defined as *the process of identifying and defining the particular characteristics which make each area distinctive*, and is rapidly emerging as a sound basis for describing, understanding and managing the environment. It is the great depth of human activity which underpins much of that which we feel is important about locality and landscape, and helps give an area its local distinctiveness. Historic landscape characterisation sets out to establish the historic depth within the modern landscape by identifying its principal historic components.

3.4 The term 'historic character' is generally preferred to 'historic landscape', as it is now accepted that all landscape is historic in that it reflects, to a greater or lesser degree, the processes which have occurred in history and which have formed its present appearance.

3.5 At present there is no standard, accepted methodology for establishing the historical character of landscape, but recent work in Wales has suggested that a practical approach based on considering the evidence as a series of themes may provide an answer. At a landscape level, what is significant in historical terms might include field boundary patterns (whether they are irregular or regular, their size, date *etc.*); settlement patterns (whether scattered or nucleated, date of origin *etc.*); the relict remains of earlier periods which are to be found in upland or marginal landscapes; the effect of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century estates on the landscape; the impact of industry, military installations and so on.

3.6 The dominant historic themes or patterns in a locality help define local historic character. The combination of these characteristics give an area its local distinctiveness, and it is the definition of areas of local distinctiveness which leads to character areas.

3.7 The process of characterisation can be briefly summarised as -

(one or several) components	→	dominant patterns
(one or more) dominant patterns	→	coherent character
coherent character (with definable limits)	→	character area
(several) character areas	→	local landscape

3.8 Characterisation is a practical tool intended to aid management in its broadest forms. It is essential, therefore, that the process identifies key historic landscape characteristics which are features and/or patterns that can actually be managed, and that the success of this management can be measured for monitoring purposes.

3.9 The reports emerging from characterisation work contain a number of elements. The first part of the report contains general information concerning the background to the project, the methodology employed, a glossary of terms and general management issues. The second part contains information relating to the specific area under study, including (a) a general historical introduction to the area divided thematically; (b) a description of each character area split into three parts (an historical background, key historic landscape characteristics and conservation and management priorities – accompanied by a map of the area and an illustration); and a select bibliography.



## **4 GIS-related *proformae***

- 4.1 This section contains instructions on filling in the GIS-linked recording forms created as part of the project. The form consists mainly of 'tick boxes' compatible with a table to be created (for example) in Mapinfo, and has now been standardised across Wales. This information is intended to be linked to GIS tables used by *LANDMAP*, and the form contains a number of fields which can be cross-referenced to any subsequent *LANDMAP* exercises.
- 4.2 The form is loosely divided into three parts – the first identifies the study area by name, number, project and location, and contains general information; the second is a list of historic landscape 'themes' which is intended to act both as a check-list and to ensure systematic recording (which can be transferred to a database) of all character areas to a certain level (the current list of themes is included in section 6 below); and the third relates to management issues.

### ***PROJECT NO***

This simply records the individual project number each Trust assigns to the particular project (e.g. G1657).

### ***AREA***

This is the name of the area as used in the project: this will usually be based on a geographical, historical or cultural association.

### ***HLCA NO.***

This is simply a consecutive number (beginning at 1) assigned to areas within the project. In this case, PRNs have also been allocated to the areas and these are displayed at the top of the character area descriptions in this report.

### ***HLCA NAME***

As above, a historic, cultural or simple geographic name is preferred (e.g. Pen y Groes), otherwise a more general topographical description (e.g. rolling meadow) might be more appropriate.

### ***LOCATION***

A six figure central grid reference should be sufficient.

### ***SUMMARY OF CHARACTER***

This should be succinct, preferably fewer than *c.* twenty words (e.g. for Caernarfon - *Roman fort, castle, walled medieval town, slate quay, sequence of housing stock*). This is intended as *aide-memoire* for writing the report.

### ***GENERAL HISTORIC INTEREST***

This is simply a summary of the information contained below in the individual themes to sum up the principal historical interest in the area.

### ***THEMES***

Boxes within each theme should be ticked where that element exists as a significant factor at landscape scale within an area. The ticked boxes will form the basis of the free-text description in the report: this description should refer to as many of the ticked boxes as is thought appropriate, and supply supporting information. An up-to-date list of themes is included below.

### ***PRINCIPAL CURRENT LAND USES***

This field summarises the broad principal land uses within the area in an attempt to try to identify which future management mechanisms (e.g. Tir Gofal for agriculture, UDPs for residential/urban areas) might be relevant to managing the area.

### ***RECORDED BY / DATE***

Name of compiler and date, following standard practice.

***KEY HISTORIC LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISTICS***

This should be a simple list of the principal components within the area (for example - parkland, gentry houses, substantial farmsteads, limestone walls) which make it distinctive.

***CONSERVATION PRIORITIES & MANAGEMENT***

This summarises the key historic landscape components which underlie (and are essential to) the character of the area and therefore need to be managed if the historic character of the area is to be maintained. This can be a summary of the relevant part of the main area entry in the report.



## 5 Current themes in historic landscape characterisation

### SUBSISTENCE

#### AGRICULTURE (Field pattern)

- Unenclosed/open
- Evolved/irregular
- Regular (small)
- Regular (medium)
- Regular (large)
- Large enclosures
- Med. strips
- R+F
- Estate owned and improved
- Varied
- C20th post-war
- Other
- Not present/Unknown

#### AGRICULTURE (Field boundary)

- Dry-stone wall
- Stone-faced bank
- Stone-faced bank with hedge
- Hedge
- Distinctive hedgerow trees
- Earth bank
- Dyke
- Ditches
- Mortared walls
- Slate pillars
- Pale
- Sheepfolds
- Post+wire fence
- Other
- Not present/Unknown

#### FORESTRY

- Ancient woodland
- Other broadleaf woodland
- Plantation
- C20Forestry
- Scrub/unmanaged
- Coppice
- Charcoal burning
- Other
- Not present/Unknown

+ supporting information (date, historical associations, archaeological data *etc.*)

## ARCHAEOLOGY

### RELICT

- Prehistoric settlement/fields
- Medieval settlement/fields
- Prehistoric ritual
- Post-medieval settlement/fields
- Turbary
- Other
- Scattered
- Not present/Unknown

### INDUSTRIAL

- Quarrying
- Mining
- Manufacturing
- Mill
- Brewery
- Metal processing
- Other processing
- Craft/cottage
- Rural industry
- Other
- Not present/Unknown

### BURIED

- Cropmark/parchmark
- Urban deposits
- Find scatters
- Palaeoenvironmental evidence
- Other
- Not present/Unknown

### MILITARY

- Prehistoric
- Roman
- Early medieval
- Anglo-Norman
- Edwardian
- Welsh
- Tudor
- Civil War
- C19th
- WWI
- WWII
- Other
- Not present/Unknown

+ supporting information (date, historical associations, archaeological data *etc.*)

## **BUILT ENVIRONMENT**

### **SETTLEMENT PATTERN**

Loosely dispersed scatter  
Dense scatter  
Clustered  
Ribbon  
Nucleated – planned  
Nucleated – organic  
Business/commercial  
Other  
Not present/Unknown  
Specify date (if relevant)

### **BUILDING TYPE**

Farmhouse  
Cottage  
Terraced housing  
Shops  
Place of worship  
Processing  
Distinctive vernacular style (specify in character summary)  
Other  
Not present/Unknown

### **PRINCIPAL BUILDING MATERIAL**

Stone – random  
Stone – coursed  
Clay/earth  
Wood  
Brick  
Concrete  
Other

### **PRINCIPAL ROOFING MATERIAL**

Slate  
Tile  
Thatch  
Stone tile  
Concrete tile  
Metal  
Other

### **ORNAMENTAL / LEISURE**

Deer park  
Parkland/garden  
Garden/park (C20)  
Tourism  
Sports facilities  
Hunting estate  
Other leisure

### **ECCLESIASTICAL**

Cemetery (medieval)  
Cemetery (modern)  
Church (medieval)  
Church (post medieval)  
Monastic  
Chapel (nonconformist)  
Other

+ supporting information (date, historical associations, archaeological data *etc.*)

## **INFRASTRUCTURE**

### **COASTAL/MARITIME**

- Sea defences
- Intertidal features
- Harbour/fishing
- Other
- Not present/Unknown

### **COMMUNICATION**

- Footpaths
- Tracks
- Lanes-winding
- Lanes-straight
- Turnpike
- Major road
- Ports/docks
- Airfields
- Bridges
- Communications towers
- Public rail
- Industrial rail
- Other rail
- Canal
- Other
- Not present/Unknown

### **RESOURCES**

- Power generation
- Power distribution
- Water supply
- Peat cutting
- Other
- Not present/Unknown

**+ supporting information (date, historical associations, archaeological data *etc.*)**

## **OTHER**

### **HISTORIC ASSOCIATIONS**

Place-name  
Artistic  
Folklore/legend  
Events  
Literary  
Persons  
Other  
Not present/Unknown

+ supporting information (date, historical associations, archaeological data *etc.*)

## **6 Managing historic character**

### **6.1 Rural land-use change**

- 6.1.1 There have been many pressures on the rural environment and the countryside over the last 50 years as a result of changes in land use and shifting priorities for agriculture (the principal rural land use). Agricultural intensification and the maximisation of productivity were the priorities up until the mid-1980s, and as a consequence the character of rural landscapes changed dramatically during this period as hedgerows and trees were removed to create more efficient farming systems. Reclamation of the hills and marginal land led to the removal of significant upstanding archaeological sites and palimpsest landscapes.
- 6.1.2 Currently, due to agricultural over-production and a general greater awareness of and concern for the quality and protection of the rural environment, the implementation of the Common Agricultural Policy provides a number of incentives to farmers and landowners to manage their land in an environmentally sensitive manner. The all-Wales Tir Gofal scheme includes provision for the conservation of certain habitats and the protection and enhancement of stone walls and boundaries, as well as sites and features of archaeological and historic landscape interest.
- 6.1.3 However, of the estimated 27,000 farms in Wales, only c. 600 farms per year are currently entering into such agreements, which leaves the vast majority outside any formal management scheme, and so many important archaeological sites and landscape features continue to be lost. The challenge therefore is to identify historic landscape priorities for conservation, protection, enhancement or even restoration both within the scheme and without it.
- 6.1.4 Three of the principal advantages of an approach using character areas are that (a) it is able to identify and map both local distinctiveness and national importance; (b) by identifying physical features which can be managed it can feed directly into land management and development planning strategies; and (c) it sets the management of individual features within their local landscape context, allowing emphasis to be placed on those features which best define local landscape character. It can assist in management plans by setting priorities for management and enhancement, highlighting intrinsic values, and encouraging links to multi-purpose management.
- 6.1.5 Characterisation is about management: if we are going to manage effectively, we must know what is there, what is important and what we want to do with it. Character areas can tell us what is distinctive (*i.e.* important both locally and nationally) about a particular area, and therefore what needs to be managed in order to retain that area's distinctiveness (character).

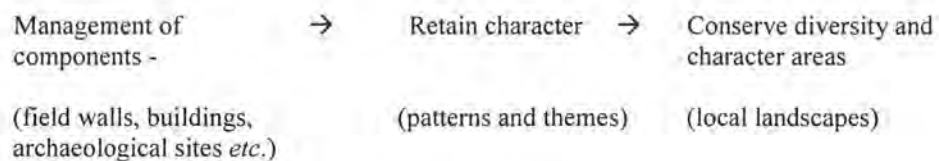
### **6.2 General considerations**

- 6.2.1 Positive management should be aimed at halting and, if necessary, reversing any trends that can be shown to be causing unacceptable damage to the historic landscape resource. If at the same time management can actually enhance the historic landscape, then that is even better. It is essential that such management is continuous, and contains provisions for monitoring and review.
- 6.2.2 One of the basic tenets underpinning management is that we should be aiming to continue (rather than halt) the evolution of the landscape: to do this we must first identify what is important and significant in historic landscape terms. It is the overall historic character of the present landscape (as evidenced in important and significant groupings and patterns) which we should aim to retain, but in order to do this we must concentrate management actions at the level of individual components. We must identify, conserve and enhance the local and regional historic diversity of our landscapes.
- 6.2.3 Agri-environment and other rural initiatives offer the opportunity to integrate the needs of the historic environment with modern land-use requirements to produce a workable, effective management system. More importantly, they should result in a working, viable landscape,

which should provide ways and means for the various human activities in an area to be integrated with each other and with conservation, at the same time providing opportunities for study, research, education, interpretation and quiet enjoyment.

6.2.4 This means that sites and features of historic landscape interest are positively managed for their own sake, rather than just left unimproved. It is important that the management of such features is integral to the management of the farm, or the scheme or park or whatever, as a whole, rather than an isolated, unrelated activity.

6.2.5 By working at the most basic level, management can be used to retain the general historic character of the area -



6.2.6 A management plan should specify conservation objectives for a site/area and how they will be monitored; it should identify points at which some response will be made if monitoring shows that a feature is changing; it should establish what activities/processes will be the subject of monitoring; it should establish what management of on-going activities is required; and identify the types of development or activities which might adversely affect the site.

6.2.7 Not all the sites and features which comprise the historic environment require the same detailed level of management: some sites can be adequately managed by the application of simple, general strategies, while more complex sites merit more detailed, site-specific, problem-led responses.

### 6.3 Mechanisms - general

6.3.1 It is envisaged that characterisation has many potential applications to management including -

- assisting in developing landscape conservation and enhancement projects, by identifying elements and patterns of the historic environment which are considered either typical of a local area (provide local distinctiveness) or are of particular importance (rare at a national level);
- targeting resources within grant aid by government and other organisations towards conserving elements and patterns of the historic environment in the same way;
- developing policies for unitary development plans (UDPs);
- assisting in determining planning applications, especially large-scale developments such as roads, wind-farms, mineral extraction, large-scale landfill, waste disposal, reclamation, water schemes, major settlement and major industrial development;
- aiding the management of land by farmers, and large corporate landowners such as industrial companies, water or electricity companies, the forestry industry and the National Trust;
- providing baseline information for local areas against which future change can be monitored, for example as part of the Tir Gofal scheme;
- providing general information not already on the SMR which can be used to inform advice given as part of a number of rural initiatives such as Tir Gofal, Woodland Grant Schemes *etc.*;
- providing advice in a rural framework to conservation agencies including Cadw, the Countryside Council for Wales, the Environment Agency, local authorities, national parks and others;



- providing information to a number of wider initiatives, including contributing to our academic understanding of landscape, stimulating further research, raising public perception of the landscape, and the preparation of policy statements by public bodies.

#### 6.4 Mechanisms - specific

6.4.1 ***Tir Gofal*** is open to applications from farmers throughout Wales. Within the scheme, payments will be made to farmers for observing 'codes of good environmental practice', one of which is care and enhancement of the historic environment. As the scheme is a 'whole farm' scheme, it allows archaeological management strategies sensitive to the character of the landscape as a whole to be integrated with farming practices. Characterisation is useful for monitoring purposes, as it sets out the wider historic environment framework within which individual farm plans will sit. It can also help prioritise management within a broader landscape context.

6.4.2 ***Unitary Development Plans*** address 'land use' issues and the UDPs for Snowdonia National Park and Gwynedd are currently being compiled, both of which take into account previous ***LANDMAP*** initiatives which have recently been completed.

6.4.3 ***Countryside strategies*** are the responsibility of local authorities (together with others), which have a general duty under section 1 of the Countryside Act, 1981, to have regard to the desirability of conserving the natural beauty and amenity of the countryside in the exercise of their functions relating to land. Countryside strategies principally address management of the countryside in areas outside settlement limits, but they are also a mechanism, at least in part, for implementing development plan policies. In Wales, such strategies are supported by CCW.

Local authorities have a number of powers which have implications for the management of the historic environment including the power to establish Country Parks (section 7 of the Countryside Act 1968); the ability to declare Local Nature Reserves (section 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949); the ability to enter into access agreements with landowners (section 64 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949); the ability to buy derelict land (often of industrial archaeological interest) for reclamation purposes (section 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949); the duty to make Tree Preservation Orders where appropriate (section 198 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990); and the duty to apply The Hedgerow Regulations 1997 which controls the removal of certain important hedgerows (from section 97 of the Environment Act 1995). Other powers are treated separately below.

Many local authorities have a countryside warden service which would benefit from characterisation information.

6.4.4 ***Local Agenda 21 programme*** At Rio, governments committed themselves to setting up national targets for safeguarding and improving the environment. Local Agenda 21 and Local Biodiversity Action Plans provide the means of meeting these targets, and of promoting the principles of sustainable development, at a local level. Both initiatives are about embracing a conscientious vision of the long-term future by identifying what matters locally and paying serious attention to the global costs of maintaining local lifestyles.

This has implications for archaeology and the historic environment. At a local level, sense of place is a fundamental aspect of quality of life. The present day landscape underpins our sense of the place in which we live. Much of its character and distinctiveness is derived from the historic environment (archaeology and the built heritage in all its forms). The historic environment is of course both fragile and non-renewable. We have a responsibility to maintain it so that future generations can also appreciate and benefit from it in the same way that we do. However, the landscape is not static. Just as today's landscape is a product of the changing relationships between people and their environment through time, so it must be allowed to continue to change.

The point of sustainability is that it promotes change which meets the needs of the future whilst retaining the integrity of the historic environment. In order to do so decisions have to be made about the relative importance of different elements. Traditionally, evaluation has been based on individual sites, with particular examples being selected out for special protection (known as

scheduling). However, it is the sum total of historical and archaeological features, not individual sites, which gives landscape much its grain and it is often the more ordinary features that create 'local distinctiveness'. In order to ensure that decisions about the future of the historic environment are made on a secure basis, sound information needs to be gathered. Historic landscape characterisation work of the kind being carried out by the Trusts provides historic environment audits, from which decisions of this kind can be made.

- 6.4.5 **Biodiversity Action Plans** Snowdonia National Park has recently prepared a Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP): this will to a large extent be informed by the *LANDMAP* exercise recently carried out, which means that historic environment information is available. In addition, the Trust is communicating with the person responsible for the LBAP.

LBAPs are a means by which Local Government Authorities can implement the biodiversity recommendations established after the Rio Summit. They achieve this by building up local partnerships and taking account of both national and local biodiversity priorities to develop strategies for the conservation of species and habitats of local significance. As we are still at the early stages of our involvement, more information will be forthcoming at a later date, but it is already obvious that the type of general information coming from characterisation projects will be able to feed into such plans.

At a general level, archaeology is of relevance to LBAPs because it raises awareness of the historical origins of the contemporary environment. There are no purely 'natural' environments in Britain; the landscape is the product of millennia of human activity. Our knowledge of the changing relationship between people and their environment through history allows us to understand the land-use activities which have led to the creation of contemporary landscapes, and comment from an informed historical perspective on those practices which could be encouraged in order to protect and conserve particular landscapes and ecosystems.

- 6.4.6 **Access** is a key issue in the countryside, if we are to enjoy the landscape and all its inherent interests and in turn engender understanding and respect for the countryside and the way it works. In addition to the rights of way network, the Countryside Rights of Way Act has been passed by Parliament. As many of the best-preserved and most fragile palimpsest archaeological sites and landscapes lie within areas to which there will shortly be greater public access, this has potential implications for archaeological management.

Historic landscape characterisation can identify these areas (*i.e.* where there are well-preserved yet fragile archaeological remains) and thus highlight the potential management problems if the areas are 'opened up' to public access. It may even be that such areas could be excluded from unfettered access under new legislation, either permanently or on a temporary basis.

Characterisation also has the potential to inform leaflets, trails and other interpretative material.

- 6.4.7 **Tourism** The Wales Tourist Board (WTB) has the strategic responsibility for encouraging people to visit Wales and for the provision of tourist facilities. In recent years tourism has become one of the most important growth sectors of the economy. Unitary authorities all have a tourism strategy of some description, and historic characterisation has a part to play in sustainable 'green tourism' in that it can help identify local distinctiveness which can be used both to attract visitors (by way of advertising), create atmosphere and to inform quality initiatives such as local walks, guides and other recreational activities. It can also direct visitors to areas with a robust historic environment, and away from those which are particularly fragile.
- 6.4.8 **Management agreements** In addition, local authorities have the ability (under section 39 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act, 1981) to enter into management agreements with landowners. This is an area which could be explored further from the historic environment perspective, as such agreements could cover not only individual monuments but also historic landscape characteristics (such as boundary types).
- 6.4.9 **Other local authority programmes** Local authorities have programmes for economic development, highways maintenance, environmental education and coastal protection. These would all benefit from the information which is being compiled through the characterisation projects, and, in the other direction, the safeguarding of the historic environment would benefit from those drawing up these programmes having direct access to historic landscape

characterisation data. In fact, information at this broad level would probably be more useful than detailed, site-specific SMR data.

- 6.4.10 **Forestry Commission** Information from characterisation projects will be invaluable in contributing to national and regional indicative forestry strategies, indicating where new proposals for planting are likely to be acceptable (or unacceptable) from an historic environment perspective. On a day to day basis, it can provide information at a landscape level which can inform proposals for new planting. It will be particularly useful when considering proposals under any of the challenge schemes.
- 6.4.11 **Environment Agency** is responsible for producing Local Environment Action Plans (LEAPs) and Catchment Management Plans (CMPs). The historic environment does not have a high profile in either of these, and both could therefore benefit from information which characterisation can provide.
- 6.4.12 **Other bodies** Historic landscape characterisation information can be used to educate and inform a wide range of organisations and individuals including statutory agencies, voluntary bodies (RSPB, Woodland Trust, North Wales Wildlife Trust, British Trust for Conservation Volunteers, National Trust) town councils, community councils, farming unions and others. It is our experience that often it is easier to explain the importance of, and inherent interest of, the historic environment by using historic characterisation, than by the more traditional means of individual archaeological sites and excavations.

Local distinctiveness and a sense of place, which are of undoubted interest to people, can all be conveyed by such means, and the potential importance of this aspect of characterisation cannot be emphasised too strongly.

## 7 Glossary of keywords and expressions

### 7.1 Definitions

#### *Character*

the overall impression created by an area of landscape which is susceptible to being described

#### *Characterisation*

the process of identifying and defining the particular characteristics which makes different areas of landscape distinctive

#### *Character area*

is where component elements form dominant patterns to allow the definition of an area which can be clearly described: historic character areas are either

a) areas which embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or theme, or represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction: or

b) areas which show organisation of space either during one particular period or through time. This may be visible in the arrangement of fields or siting of settlements; or a pattern of land-use which represents traditional practices unique to a community; or in the sheer density of remains relating to either a single theme/period or succession of periods/themes; or the grouping together of buildings *etc* which are distinctive in style, design or method of construction; or a transportation system reflecting an important innovation in engineering.

#### *Coherent character*

where the components and patterns across an area of landscape are consistent, coherent character can be defined which can lead to character areas

#### *Component*

the most basic building blocks of the historic landscape, including walls, farms, cottages, archaeological monuments *etc.*, which, when combined, form dominant patterns

#### *Dominant patterns*

patterns formed by components such as field walls which are visually dominant in an area: the spread of a single dominant pattern, or the coincidence of two or more, leads to coherent character

#### *Element*

another word for component (preferred)

#### *Evaluation*

The process of attaching value (non-monetary) to a particular area of landscape, usually by reference to an agreed set of criteria in the context of the assessment

#### *Feature*

another word for component (preferred)

#### *Historic landscape*

the physical remains in the current landscape of the evidence for past human exploitation of the environment over time

#### *Relict*

historic landscape components which are no longer in use are described as relict for management purposes

## 7.2 Process of characterisation

This can be briefly summarised as -

(several) components → dominant patterns

(one or more) dominant patterns → coherent character

coherent character (with definable limits) → character area

(several) character areas → local landscape

## 7.3 Levels at work

<i>level</i>	<i>action</i>
landscape	strategic policies, overviews ( <b>national</b> )
character areas	management policies - <i>LANDMAP</i> , UDPs, countryside strategies ( <b>regional</b> )
(coherent character	<i>stage of characterisation (general management guidelines)</i>
patterns/groupings	characterisation is undertaken at this level ( <b>local</b> )
components	define what's important/typical & manage landscape components ( <b>site specific</b> )

## 7.4 Useful descriptive terms

### *presence*

conspicuous, evident, missing

### *scale*

open, exposed, enclosed, secluded, confined, intimate, small scale, medium scale, large scale

### *diversity*

uniform, simple, diverse, complex

### *unity*

unified, ordered, interrupted, fragmented, chaotic, rambling, structured, organic

### *balance*

harmonious, balanced, discordant, chaotic

### *enclosure*

confined, enclosed, open, exposed

### *texture*

smooth, textured, rough, very rough

### *colour*

monochrome, muted, colourful, garish

### *movement*

remote, vacant, peaceful, active

*form*

straight, angular, curved, sinuous

*stimulus*

boring, bland, interesting, invigorating

*other*

palimpsest, aesthetic value, visual amenity, educational potential, sense of place, distinctive character, common character, historically complex, domesticated character, essentially wild

## **Part B**

### **Information specific to Mawddach**



## 8 Historical processes and background

### 8.1 Introduction

The Mawddach estuary enjoys a justifiable reputation as one of the finest and most spectacular natural sights in Wales, and has attracted an increasing number of tourists since the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The area comprises a river estuary and surrounding coastal slopes situated to the west of Cadair Idris in southern Meirionnydd. Underpinning this beauty, of course, is a long and complex land-use history which has shaped the landscape over a period of several thousand years.

On the higher ridges above southern side of the estuary is a complex relict landscape which contains some of the most important and extensive early prehistoric monuments in Wales (including groups of bronze age funerary and ritual monuments, the so-called Ffordd-ddu (prehistoric) trackway, settlements and field systems (including Llys Bradwen)) around Cyfannedd and on Bryn Seward, as well as medieval settlements and associated enclosures, particularly around Llynnau Gregennen.

The area also displays an interesting and important age profile in terms of building, both in Barmouth town and out in the countryside. Settlement history in this area is more intricate than many parts of Meirionnydd, since the agricultural/vernacular settlement has an overlay of 'polite', gentry building associated with the development of the area as a fashionable venue in the nineteenth century; this may be linked with the romantic movement, when the area attracted many distinguished artists, writers and thinkers who valued (and recorded) the wild beauty in the landscape. Associated with this is the growth of tourism from c. 1800 onwards, spreading outwards from Barmouth, a history of which is very well documented in this area, particularly following the coming of the railway in 1867, when whole 'new communities' (such as Fairbourne and Arthog) were established which transformed the landscape and social infrastructure.

At the same time, the area attracted the attentions of rich Midlands industrialists who built impressive water-side mansions and planted many of the wooded hillslopes (Caerdeon and Glandwr Hall are just two examples on the north side of the estuary). The area, partly due to its clement, natural climate, has various designed landscape elements, utilising its natural advantages to the full. Many of these, such as Panorama Walk, date from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when a conscious effort was made to develop Barmouth as a tourist resort, but they often have earlier origins. On the south side of the Mawddach are the two great gardens of Garthangharad and Abergwynant, both of which include significant areas of fine woodland as well as areas of formal or semi-formal garden.

There is good evidence for the development of agricultural practices in the area, particularly in the complex relict landscape on the southern side of the estuary where there are series of earthwork and stone-built enclosures (some associated with prehistoric and medieval settlements), lynchets, field boundaries and an important series of field cow houses (associated with early farmhouses).

The hills just behind the northern slopes of the estuary witnessed a unique gold rush in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which had a local landscape impact still discernible in the form of adits and levels (serious mining ended during the First World War), as well as being responsible for the development of Bontddu. At more or less the same time, across the estuary, two slate quarries were opened up in Panteinon Valley, although these were never the serious undertakings found further north, although their remains are clearly visible from below. There was limited lead, silver, copper and manganese mining above at from Cyfannedd fawr.

The theme of communication routes has always been important here. In addition to the supposed prehistoric route known as Ffordd Ddu, which heads inland from the coast following a number of important prehistoric monuments, the Barmouth ferry was an important institution which carried people across the mouth of the estuary from at least the medieval period (Gerald of Wales mentioned it). The ferry was also used as part of the Royal Mail route which ran from

Dolgellau to Barmouth (in later years using the new turnpike road which passed through Bontddu), before crossing the estuary and heading south to Tywyn.

However, it was the opening of the coastal Cambrian Railway in 1867 (which linked Aberystwyth with Pwllheli), including the building of a permanent bridge across the mouth of the estuary, which dramatically altered the coastal landscape in the area, bringing an increasing of tourists and leading to the development of Barmouth and Llwyngwrl, as well as the building of Fairbourne, in addition to many other new developments.

The popularity of the Mawddach estuary increased rapidly during the Romantic movement of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century (which co-incided with the growing popularity of Barmouth as a holiday destination), as has already been mentioned. The many visitors who stayed at Barmouth over the years, and described in letters and other writing the beauty of the area included Shelley and his wife Harriet, Wordsworth, Pennant (of course!), Charles Darwin, John Ruskin, Gladstone, William Wilberforce, General Booth and the Ladies of Llangollen. One of the earliest of the many painters who visited the area (often many times) was Richard Wilson. Finally, the first property donated to the National Trust (Dinas Oleu, above Barmouth) is here.

## **8.2 Land ownership**

Straddling a major estuary as it does, the project area lies within three medieval parishes and two commotes – Llanaber (in the commote of Ardudwy), Brithdir and Dolgellau and Llangelynnin (both in the commote of Tal-y-Bont) (Williams-Jones, 1976, ). In the Merioneth Lay Subsidy Roll of 1292-3, Llanaber is recorded as being relatively well-off (worth between 30 – 40 shillings per thousand acres), Brithdir and Dolgellau is relatively poor (worth between 20 – 30 shillings per thousand acres) while Llangelynnin is one of the richest parishes in Merioneth (worth between 40 – 60 shillings per thousand acres).

There are several deserted rural settlement sites around Llynau Gregennan (eastern end of area 14), but again no work has been carried out to put these in a landscape or economic context. Further east (in area 18), however, we have excellent documentation for, and surviving evidence of, a number of 17<sup>th</sup>-century farmsteads which belong to a series of medieval townships (Cefn-yr-owen, Dolgledr and Dyffrydan) and are probably situated on the same sites.

Where evidence from early maps (mid-19<sup>th</sup> century) exists, it suggests that the present fieldscapes have not changed much over the past 150 years or so. The present regime consists entirely of pasture fields (sheep and cattle, plus some horses) and no arable fields were noted during fieldwork.

## **8.3 Agriculture**

Although there is considerable evidence for prehistoric settlement and land-use in the area (see below, section 8.3), much of this is in the form of ritual activity (see area 8, 16, 20 and 24) and there is little to attest to land division and agriculture. A number of hut circle settlements and associated enclosures exist on the southern uplands of the Mawddach (areas already cited), but there is a surprising lack of the associated phenomenon known as ‘wandering walls’ (Bowen & Gresham, 1967). Only a single excavation (Crew 1978) has been carried out here on a hut circle, which proved to be of 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD date. The Mawddach area did not have (and still hasn’t) much good arable land or other resources and was a marginal area, not heavily settled, with little to offer in the way of opposition to Roman authority or participation in the Romanised economy. It must have continued as a lightly settled rural area with no real focus of settlement in the Roman period.

Around the top of Afon Gwynant there are several 17<sup>th</sup>-century farmsteads which documentary records show belonged to one of three medieval townships here (Cefn-yr-owen, Dolgledr and Dyffrydan). It is likely that the original names related to farmsteads on the present positions. Unfortunately, the 1840s Dolgellau tithe map which records them, contains just the names and approximate extent of the holdings so it is impossible to reconstruct field patterns of the period or say much about the type of agriculture being carried out, although the nature of the area today suggests that it has always been marginal.

Several of the field boundaries hereabouts (more so than in any other area around the Mawddach) consist of drystone walls on top of lynchets on the steeply-sloping ground which suggests some considerable period of use (elsewhere some might be considered prehistoric in origin if associated with contemporary settlement sites). There is no evidence for the distinctive pattern of quilllets within the area around any of the known townships. Where evidence from early maps (mid-19<sup>th</sup> century) exists, it suggests that the present fieldscapes have not changed much over the past 150 years or so.

The land immediately adjacent to the north side of the estuary is very steep in places, and is now largely covered by woodlands, interspersed with areas of open pasture, often grazed by horses (see photograph, area 03) and/or cattle, as well as sheep. Some of this woodland is ancient or semi-natural (although the best examples are to be found on the south side, *e.g.* area 19) but much of it is modern forestry. Most of the enclosures are large and irregular in shape, and suggest post-medieval land divisions, probably originally for some form of arable cultivation (most of the fields have been carefully cleared of stone in what is generally a very rock-strewn area, although in the upland areas they remain uncleared (see photograph of area 06), although no arable fields exist today. Some of the land towards the inland end of the estuary have clearly been drained, although most of this evidence for this activity comes from across the water.

The area south of the estuary is more interesting. Here we have a landscape of great contrasts, which sweeps down from the inhospitable summit of the Cadair Idris ridge, across the relatively fertile fields surrounding the early farms around Afon Gwynant and around Llynau Gregennan, to the drained saltmarshes bordering the Afon Mawddach. Below the agriculturally-unimproved scree and above the steep, wooded slopes which extend down to the level of the estuary, there is an area running west – east which comprises relatively good agricultural land. Although this is all currently down to pasture, the nature of many of the field boundaries here (either walls on top of substantial lynchets (*e.g.* area 18 – see photograph), or substantial ‘consumption’ walls (built to use as much stone from the surrounding fields as possible) (as in the eastern end of area 14) suggests clearance for some form of arable cultivation (if only hay for fodder).

Some of the lynchets may have their origins in the prehistoric period (there is no associated settlement but their shape and appearance are typical), although the consumption are probably later. Further west in area 14 (see photograph) and in area 15 there is evidence for prehistoric land division in the form of curvilinear stone-built walls. There is an interesting and distinctive series of drystone walls in area 23 to the south, on the sea-facing slopes, which is regular in pattern and unlike any patterns inland.

Area 18 in particular is characterised by a series of field cow houses (most farmsteads here appear to have at least one – see photograph), built as usual on hillslopes with an upper storey for storing hay). These appear to be mainly 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century in date, although some are undoubtedly earlier.

As on the north side, the steep slopes on this side of the estuary are also largely wooded (this gives way to bare cliffs and fieldscapes as the slopes turn to face the sea). As described in area 19 below (and see photograph), much of this is important ancient or semi-natural woodland, although other sections (area 12, for example) are modern conifers or designed parkland (around Abergwynant, area 25).

Below these woods, on Morfa Mawddach near the mouth of the river is a large area (10, and see photograph), much of which was formerly owned by the Ynysfaig Estate, which as late as the early 18<sup>th</sup>-century was still unenclosed and labelled ‘turbary’. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, a vast quantity of peat was cut from here, to be dried out and ferried across to Barmouth for export. Most of this area is now saltmarsh and designated as a SSSI.

## **8.4 Settlement**

### **8.4.1 Medieval background**

Six townships are recorded within the area covered by this project in the medieval period (Williams-Jones, 1976), all but one on the southern side of the estuary. Llanaber is a modern settlement, now an extension of Barmouth along the main coast road to the north at SH601199



(area 01). On the southern side were the townships of Dolgledr (now remembered in the name of a mountain at SH690175 – area 08), Cefn-yr-Owen (remembered in both a hill and two modern farms around SH683151, as well as other farmsteads here – area 18), Cregennan (whose name is recorded today in both lakes and a farm at SH647141 – area 14), Morfa Maenog (Morfa is a hill at SH614112, but there is also an Afon Morfa centred on SH635135 – area 15) and Llwyngwrl (a modern village at SH591096 – area 22). However, the 1840s Dolgellau tithe map also records farmsteads near Cefn-yr-owen as belonging to another township, that of Dyffrydan (see area 18).

The Merioneth Lay Subsidy Rolls records 101 tax payers in the parish of Llanaber in 1292-3 (a relatively high number compared with other parishes), while in Dolgledr there were 21, in Cefn-yr-owen 10, in Cregennan 16, in Morfa Maenog 12 and in Llwyngwrl 28. (It is interesting that the highest populations were in the two settlements which survive as nucleated today.)

#### **8.4.2 Nucleated settlements**

There are few nucleated settlements in the area. On the northern side of the seaward end of the Mawddach estuary, Barmouth (area 01) was a small and inaccessible fishing settlement, first recorded in the 16<sup>th</sup> century (and still with some important early buildings on the steep hill side), until it started to develop in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. By 1770, the town was well-established as a small port in coastal trades, based largely on the Meirionnydd woollen industry, but it was the opening of the railway in 1867 that it expanded rapidly to cater for the new tourist trade. The town today has a distinctive Victorian architectural character.

Still on the north side of the estuary, Bontddu (area 05) is a small, almost-entirely 19<sup>th</sup> century 'ribbon development' along the main road which was extended from Dolgellau to Barmouth at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which largely owes its development to the gold mining boom which took place to the north of the village.

To the south of the estuary, Llwyngwrl (area 22) also grew from small origins, at the point where the coach road crossed the Afon Gwrt, in the later nineteenth century after the arrival of the railway, expanding mainly via individually commissioned private houses (there are some good Arts and Crafts style houses dating from c. 1900-1920). Further north Arthog contains several interesting and 19<sup>th</sup>-century terraces of well-built houses along the main, while nearby Fairbourne (area 11) is an entirely twentieth century resort, and again (notwithstanding some hotels and commercial shops, post office etc.) is comprised mainly of private houses (mostly bungalows). It looks like a monument to the failure of planning.

#### **8.4.3 Non-nucleated settlements**

Of the earlier vernacular landscape, the best evidence is in the two valleys which run down from the Diffwys upland into the Mawddach at Borthwnog and Bontddu (area 05), and the upland area immediately below the steep slopes of Cadair Idris (principally area 18). Both areas have seen some contraction of settlement, leaving behind a series of abandoned farmsteads. Building within a vernacular tradition continued until (roughly) the early nineteenth century when vigorous building programmes by estates introduced new styles and modes of building. This vernacular tradition is dominated by masonry in rough or quarry-dressed blocks, slate roofs (some earlier random slate roofs still survive), with gable copings to earlier buildings.

However, there is some evidence for a prior tradition of building in timber – for example the former farmhouse at Cefn-yr-owen-uchaf (area 18) appears to have been cruck-framed originally, with stone walls added c. 1600. Most of these vernacular farmhouses are quite small (Cefn-hir-uchaf is single storeyed farmhouse), though the five bays of Cefn-yr-owen-uchaf denote a high status house. Garth Isaf (area 16) is another exception, as a unit-system farmstead of linked dwellings. There are two farm-houses in close proximity at Nant-y-gwyrddail (of 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century dates – see also area 18); this may suggest subdivision of a holding by partible inheritance. Many houses are of one and a half storeys (in contrast to the sub-medieval tradition further north, where storeyed houses predominated from the later 16<sup>th</sup> century); where two full storeys are found at an early period (e.g. the 17<sup>th</sup>-century houses at Hafod Dywyll (area 19) and Gallestra, Kings (area 18)), it probably denotes a higher status, as may be borne out by their inclusion as farms belonging to the township of Cefn-yr-owen (also area 18).

There is strong evidence of the work of estates shaping the landscape (evidence for which also exists in the tree planting and gardens which line both sides of the estuary (see area 03, 12, 25 *etc.*). Penmaenpool is an estate village, with a terrace of workers cottages, and a model farm. Arthog similarly has very strong estate character (which is remarkably well-preserved), with terraced cottages, home-farm, and clear evidence of patronage in church, school and vicarage. Arthog Hall was built in 1833 in a deliberately picturesque style by a Lancashire cotton mill owner (see area 10 – there are definite cultural resonances here). Later gentry houses suggest a divorce from agriculture however – for example, Ty'n y coed, Arthog (area 15) and the gothic house at Bontddu (area 05 - now the hotel), the Edwardian house at Glan y Mawddach and the fairy-tale castle of Coes-faen (both area 03).

#### **8.4.4 Building types and material**

The area displays a very interesting and important age profile in terms of building: there is a long chronology here with examples from the late 16<sup>th</sup> right through to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Settlement history in this area is more intricate than many parts of Meirionnydd, since the agricultural/vernacular settlement has an overlay of 'polite', gentry building associated with the development of the area as a fashionable venue in the nineteenth century; this may be linked with the romantic movement, valuing wild beauty in the landscape. Associated with this is the growth of tourism, a history which is very well documented in this area (see areas 01, 11 and 22 below).

On the north side of the Mawddach, there is evidence for a continuous vernacular building tradition from the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, working with local stone as rubble and with slate roofs (though the ubiquity of gable copings probably indicates that this is a later replacement of thatch). Storeyed houses were common from the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, but the varied social context of building also ensures the survival from a later period of single-storeyed or lofted houses (see the listed example in Bontddu). Local stone is ubiquitous, varying in the manner of its dressing, coursing and finish (the quality of finish is one of the key indicators of social status, though other changes may be the result of changing quarrying techniques).

On the southern side, there is an important cluster of 17<sup>th</sup>-century farmsteads in the medieval townships centred around the top of the Afon Gwynant. Most of these have been described in the previous section.

The significance of the 'unit-system' of linked dwellings, which is also common in Ardudwy, is interesting: Plas Canol and Lloyd are particularly good examples of this, with secondary dwellings associated with large, sub-medieval farmhouses (J Alfrey, *pers comm*).

This local vernacular style and building type is severely disrupted by the introduction of outside influences, traditions, the advent of the railway (and money!) from the industrial Midlands during the mid- to late 19<sup>th</sup> century. This is evidenced not only in new houses of this period (Coës-faen, on the northern side of the estuary (area 03) being a case in point, but there are many more), but also in the degree of modification to existing buildings at a later period (e.g. Ty'n y coed (area 15, owned then by a rich quarry owner) and Plas Canol).

The post-Cambrian Railway (finally opened throughout its length in 1867) settlements of Fairbourne, Arthog, Friog and Llwyngwrl in particular all have several buildings constructed of brick, many of which are in the incongruous style of villas set in their own grounds rather than anything indigenous to the area. Each of these have significant terraces of early-mid 19<sup>th</sup> century house built of stone (Arthog terrace (area 10) is a particularly magnificent example), but later buildings in these ribbon developments are in general much larger, ornate structures. Unfortunately, Fairbourne seems to lack any buildings of note whatsoever.

### **8.5 Relict archaeology**

This topographically varied area encompasses coast, river estuary, upland plateau and hill slopes. There is no archaeological evidence of human activity here before the Neolithic period in the fourth and third millennia BC but the same is true for most of Meirionnydd. By comparison with the rest of north-west Wales, activity before the Neolithic period would have been concentrated around the coast and its absence here may be the result of the submergence of relevant sites by rising sea-levels in the post-glacial period. Peat-beds have been found below the present high

tide line on the coast at Llanaber, just north of the Mawddach area and these have produced red deer antlers and cattle bones. Further south at Borth and Ynyslas, Cardigan, other coastal peat deposits are exposed for some 5km along the shore. They appear as outcrops on the beach from beneath the adjoining Borth raised bog, under which they must extend, and consist of fen, alder carr and forest beds overlying salt marsh clay (Heyworth and Kidson 1982, 102). Radiocarbon dates give a date of c. 6000 BP for the underlying salt marsh and dates of c. 5400 BP to 3900 BP, at its lowest for the forest bed (*ibid.*). A number of casual archaeological finds have been made from these peats including a Mesolithic flint pick, flint flakes, an antler tool and a hearth which produced a date of c. 4000 BP from the surrounding peat (Sambrook and Williams 1996, 26) as well as bones of red deer and cattle. Buried peats and ancient forest beds have been identified on the coastal plain around the mouth of the Mawddach between Fairbourne and Arthog. These are as yet undated but are likely to be of a similar date to those at Borth and in future may produce evidence of human activity.

There are no neolithic chambered tombs in this area to indicate the presence of permanent settlement in the fourth and third millennia BC but there was certainly a human presence here as demonstrated by five finds of stone axes. In north-west Wales as a whole stray finds of axes occur much more widely than the distribution of chambered tombs, suggesting that they may derive from itinerant seasonal activity such as hunting, collecting or herding rather than permanent settlement.

The Mawddach area was certainly intensively used in the second millennium BC as demonstrated by the presence of two significant concentrations of funerary and ritual monuments typical of that period. One is on the south-facing slopes of Allt Llwyd, near Llwyngwrl, the other is on the plateau to the south of the Cregennan Lakes, Arthog. Both areas contain a variety of types of burial monument and the Cregennan area also has a number of standing stones and cup-marked stones. The two areas are linked by an ancient route, the Ffordd Ddu, and the Cregennan area is also approached by another route from the west which has been identified as a prehistoric route because it is marked by two rows of standing stones and several burial cairns (Bowen and Gresham 1967). No actual settlement of that period has yet been identified here and it seems likely that both areas are specialised foci of funerary and ritual activity. The associated settlement may not have been far away, either in the lowland of the coastal plain or valleys or on better-drained slopes just above the coastal plain. The latter location is supported by finds of a stone axe-hammer from Fegla Fawr, a hillock at the south side of the Mawddach, and two separate finds of bronze axes on the hill slopes between Fairbourne and Arthog. Just outside the area are two finds of bronze axes on the slopes south of Allt Llwyd, two on the slopes north of the Afon Dysynni and one from the beach at Llwyngwrl. A further relevant find, from Arthog, is that of a bronze bucket of a rare and imported Central European type belonging to the early first millennium BC (Hemp 1960). This was a chance find in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century during peat-cutting. It may have been a ritual deposit but its location is close to the head of a navigable creek and so again may point to a link to routes rather than to settlement in the immediate vicinity.

The Mawddach area continued to be occupied but less intensively used during the first millennium BC. The estuary must have had some value for the access to the interior and the shelter it provided for ships on this open coast. There were three hillforts in the area, two overlooking the mouth of the estuary at Pared Cefn Hir and Craig y Castell and another above Llwyngwrl at Castell y Gaer. The hillforts were small and clearly rather local centres of power and the associated settlement likewise was light and scattered. This contrasts with the situation in the second millennium when the Cregennan area was a major focus of funerary and ritual activity. There are remains of settlement of this general period, both enclosed and open, as well as field systems and enclosures on the upland of Allt Llwyd and between Llwyngwrl and Islaw'r Dref. Excavation of one round house in advance of afforestation at Cyffanedd Fawr above Friog showed it to have been occupied between the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD (Crew 1978, 1979, 1981) and most of the known settlement in the area can be expected to belong to this period. Another rectangular enclosure, possibly a settlement at Pant y Llan, Arthog has also produced a chance find of imported Roman pottery. The Mawddach area did not have much good arable land or other resources and was a marginal area, not heavily settled, with little to offer in the way of opposition to Roman authority or participation in the Romanised economy. It must have continued as a lightly settled rural area with no real focus of settlement in the Roman period.



## 8.6 Parks and gardens

The area has various designed landscape elements, utilising its natural advantages to the full. Many of these date from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when a conscious effort was made to develop Barmouth as a tourist resort, but they often have earlier origins. On the north side of the estuary, Panorama Walk is a case in point. This was developed in probably the late 19<sup>th</sup> century as a tourist facility, and consists of a path leading to a viewpoint with magnificent views over the estuary and the sea, which leads off an old road north-east of Barmouth. Both road and footpath were present earlier, but the first part of the path was laid out during the relevant period with revetting, drainage channels, steps and embasements for seats; from the second decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century at least, there was a café near the point where the path branches off from the old road. This was possibly preceded by an earlier one on a nearby site, with associated 'pleasure grounds', but was closed during the second world war and did not subsequently reopen, although the path remains in use.

Nearby, and formerly with access to Panorama Walk, is the relatively small but significant garden of Glan-y-Mawddach. On a steeply sloping site with spectacular views, this terraced garden was developed during the early twentieth century, but the house is older and some of the terracing and footpaths were certainly present before this. The terraces around the house are fairly formal in character, while the main garden area, above the house, is largely wooded, with zig-zag paths and several small 'secret' gardens at different levels, incorporating water features, steps and statuary.

Further east, Caerdeon has a 19<sup>th</sup>-century garden with terraces below the house and woods above, again with views over the estuary, though more restricted than those of Glan-y-Mawddach. The woodland contains many informal paths, and there is a stream with waterfalls down the eastern side of the garden. There are minor gardens on this side of the estuary at Barmouth (area 01), Bontddu (area 05), Glandwr Hall and Farchynys (all area 03), all of which would have had views over the estuary, although some are now obscured by trees. Good plantings of trees survive at these and other sites – a sure indication of designed landscapes of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and sometimes earlier.

On the south side of the Mawddach, there is a minor garden associated with Arthog Hall (area 15) and the two great gardens of Garthangharad (area 16) and Abergwynant (area 25), the former on the valley side and the latter low down, close to the river. Both of these include significant areas of fine woodland and have views (though in the case of Abergwynant, not from the house – see photograph) over the estuary. They also both have areas of formal or semi-formal garden, walled kitchen gardens, etc., and in their present form are basically of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

## 8.7 Industrial

There is little of industrial archaeological interest in the area, and few, if any, major monuments. In about 1860, the owner of the copper mines above Bontddu (area 05) discovered gold, and the owners of the Ffrra and Clogau Copper Mining Company (actually situated outside the character areas considered in this report) took out a licence to extract gold, and by May 1861 profits were sufficient to initiate a mini gold rush in the area. Gwynfynydd Gold Mine was also established at this time but serious mining ceased during the First World War. All of these mines were water-powered; although around 150 shafts and levels are known in the mountains to the north of Bontddu, the three main centres of activity were those listed above (Farr, 2001). At Clogau the mining was adit mining, centred on inclined tunnels which were dug by hand until the 1870s, when compressor drills were introduced. Ffrra Mine was powered by a waterwheel which had been built as a crushing mill for the copper mine and was adapted to its new use in 1862. A zig-zag track and incline connected it with the mine above. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century a new mill powered by a turbine was built, and downstream a smaller mill was in use until the 1930s.

At more or less the same time, across the estuary, two slate quarries were opened up in Panteinon Valley. Henddol was started in the early 1860s, was in production by 1865 but ceased production in 1871 following a rockfall. Goleuwern quarry had been opened in 1867, and when Henddol was re-opened in 1892 the two traded together as Cambrian Estates Ltd, finally closing in 1920 (Richards, 1991). Another quarry, Bryngwyn had an even shorter and more erratic life.



Both quarries shared joint facilities (mill, smithy etc.) relying on horse and carriage transport for moving the slate out. Further east, above Arthog, Ty'n y Coed quarry was opened in the mid 1860s, and its material was also taken by tramway across the morfa to a small jetty on the estuary below and thence to Barmouth. Ty'n y coed is still used today for some extraction and some dumping.

The Barmouth ferry, which crossed from Penrhyn point on Morfa Mawddach (area 10), transported the slate across the estuary to Barmouth (area 01), whence it was shipped out, along with lead, silver, copper and manganese from Cyfannedd fawr (the remains of the mines and adits, which were initially opened in 1827 but mainly worked during the period 1851-63, lie to the north of the eponymous farm at the top of this area). The silver mine here, the only one in the district, was producing approximately 40oz of silver from a ton of ore at its height.

## 8.8 Communications

In 1188, Gerald of Wales described his journey around Wales with Archbishop Baldwin which involved crossing over the mouth of the Mawddach by the ferry (see also section 8.7) – ‘on the same day we ferried over the bifurcate river Maw’ (probably a reference to the fact that two ferries were used, one from Penrhyn point (now Fairbourne) to Ynys y Brawd, and another shorter one from there to the mainland at Barmouth). The name of the island near Barmouth has probably given rise to the story that the ferry was run in the late medieval period by local monks. Later it was run by local fisherman: the ‘Survey of the Ports, Creeks and landing places on the Welsh Coast’ (published in 1569) recorded that ‘*Bermowe had towe litel Bootes that the said Res ap Res and Harry ap Eden do use to carry men over that passage*’.

From the reign of George III the ferry was owned by the Barmouth Harbour Trust and was let annually to tenants who lived at Penrhyn Farm (area 11 – now the golf course clubhouse), near the far end of the promontory. Up until 1860, when it was sold, the ferry provided the main income for the farm as the Royal Mail route then ran from Dolgellau to Barmouth (in later years using the new turnpike road which passed through Bontddu), across to Penrhyn Farm and then on to Towyn and Machynlleth. Up until 1860, when it was sold, the Barmouth Ferry (see area 09) provided the main income for the farm. The 1860 sale document for the farm says that a new carriage road had recently been made which ran through the property and which was used by the daily mail coach which followed the above route. The line of the road has been preserved in the modern main road which runs just behind the shingle beach. There is a single reminder of the former ferry in a water trough at Pystyll-y-Mail in Friog (area 10). The main reason for the construction of the Fairbourne Light Railway (which began life as a horse-drawn tramway in 1899 built by McDougall to serve his private brickworks) was to join up with the ferry which crossed the Mawddach from Barmouth on the north side, to Penrhyn point (the station is still called Porth Penrhyn station) on the southern side.

Cambrian Railways was formed in 1864 (an amalgamation of three mid-Wales companies) and the section of the railway which linked Aberystwyth-Machynlleth-Barmouth-Porthmadog (intended to go on to Porth Dinllaen, but never built) opened on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1865. The section along the cliffs south of Friog (bottom of area 21) were the most difficult to engineer (for 18 months, in fact, a coach and four operated between Llwyngwrl and Barmouth ferry). Barmouth Bridge (area 09) was completed in 1867: it was a remarkable feat of engineering and included 113 spans and 500 timber piles. The cast iron swing bridge was added at the northern end in 1899, a ferry being continued in the meantime. The main line was opened throughout its length on 10<sup>th</sup> October 1867, and a year later a siding was added to Morfa Mawddach station (at the southern end of the bridge) to service material being brought down from the slate quarries above Friog (area 15). These sidings, although dis-used, are still clearly visible.

In 1899 McDougall (see area 11) built, at his own cost, a station to serve his enterprise which was the development of the area on the morfa as a holiday resort for wealthy Midlands industrialists. Originally called South Barmouth, the name agreed between McDougall and Cambrian Railways for the new station was ‘Fairbourne’ (some locals had wanted it re-named Ynys Faig but the company refused). The extension to the east of Morfa Mawddach station, which ran along the southern side of the estuary to Dolgellau, was closed in 1967 and is now a cycleway (‘the Mawddach trail’). The main line continues to run (as far north as Pwllheli) and is generally acknowledged as one of the most beautiful railway journeys in Britain.

The first turnpike roads in north Wales were constructed in 1777: the Act was general and embraced all principal highways in Merionethshire. There was a single Trust which was split into five districts of roads, one of which was Dolgellau and Mawddach, which controlled the road to Barmouth. George Kay, writing in 1794, commented that, recently, the roads in Merioneth had been much improved by the turnpikes but were still, in his opinion, too narrow. He reported that 'part of the road from Dolgellau to Barmouth cost two and a half guineas per rood of eight yards'. This road would appear to be a brand new construction, as all previous traffic had been by boat. Somewhat later, in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, a turnpike road was constructed which ran from Towyn in the south, through Llwyngwrl, Friog (where the toll house, now listed, still remains) and Arthog following the base of the steep cliffs to Penmaenpool, where it also met with the timber bridge built in 1869, and on towards Dolgellau. The former main route from Llwyngwrl inland to Dolgellau (known as Ffordd ddu, and possibly early prehistoric in origin – see area 24), is still traceable as a series of footpaths, tracks and the minor road over the top past Llynau Gregennan and Cefn-yr-owen (area 18). All other roads and trackways in the area serve remote farmsteads.

## 8.9 Cultural associations

According to Welsh legend, the palace of King Gwyddno, associated with the legend of Cantre Gwaelod (the drowned kingdom) was at Garandir on the sea-facing hillslope at, or near, Barmouth. (There is a large enclosure shown half-way between Llanaber church and Barmouth on Lewis Morris's 1748 map of the coastline here which cannot be traced on the ground today.) In 1188, Gerald of Wales described, in his journey around Wales with Archbishop Baldwin, crossing over the mouth of the Mawddach by the ferry (see area 09, and section 8.6 above) from Penrhyn point to Ynys y Brawd, and thence to the mainland.

In later years, particularly during the Napoleonic period, the area is associated with smugglers: many of the inns have stories about landing contraband, particularly the George III at Penmaenpool. Hen-ddol farmhouse (a late 17<sup>th</sup>/early 18<sup>th</sup> century farmhouse on the slopes above Arthog) was the site of a notorious siege in 1780 when bailiffs went to arrest the owner, one David Williams, for smuggling and several of the former were injured before the latter was arrested.

The popularity of the Mawddach estuary increased rapidly during the Romantic movement of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century (which co-incided with the growing popularity of Barmouth (see area 01) as a seaside, holiday destination). The many visitors who stayed at Barmouth over the years, and described in letters and other writing the beauty of the area included Shelley and his wife Harriet (1812), and Wordsworth (1824). Charles Darwin spent two summers at Barmouth in 1828-9, while Ruskin started his first social experiment, The League of St George (which many consider to be the fore-runner of the modern welfare state) in Barmouth, when he was given 13 cottages by his close friend Mrs Fanny Talbot (who also donated Dinas Oleu (area 02) to the National Trust) to pursue his innovative ideas. Gladstone, William Wilberforce and General Booth were also regular visitors, and the Ladies of Llangollen documented their single stay away together from Plas Newydd (here at the Cors y Gedol Hotel for three days).

John Hucks travelled through north Wales in the 1790s, and related his impressions of the landscapes through which he passed in a series of letters, including one written on July 29, 1794, which contains the following passage:

*There is nothing interesting in the road to Barmouth [from the north], nor has that place itself any striking peculiarities, except that the houses are so whimsically built, upon the side of a steep hill, that the inhabitants may have the advantage, if they choose, of looking down upon the sea shore, and in the season is full of company, who resort thither for the purpose of bathing. From Barmouth to Dolgelly we were highly gratified; the road wound along a ridge of rocks, that hang over the Avonmawr, an arm of the sea; which, at full tide, has the appearance of a large lake, surrounded with beautiful trees; etc.*

There is another extensive, interesting (if somewhat florid!) description of the Mawddach estuary written by the traveller Tomas Roscoe in 1836, which gives a very good impression of how the changing landscape appeared at that time.

*'The towering summits of the giant Idris, almost baffling the sight, stretched far beyond; around me lay the deepening, shadowy vale, while to the right of the bold hills presented the appearance of huge mountain waves in the rolling mists and fast gathering twilight. The silvery tints and beauty of the river, pursuing its desired path like the current of life through the heart of these wild and dreary mountains; the occasional views of woods, meadows and cornfields, intersected by some branch streams, and again the wilder moor, the mountain hollow, the bushy dells, through which is caught at intervals some fleshing cataract, made my walk along the Mawddach most interesting.*

*Its beauties are so manifold and extraordinary that they literally beggar description. New pastures of the most exuberant fertility, new woods rising in the majesty of the foliage, the road itself curving in numberless unexpected directions, at one moment shut into a verdant recess, so contracted that there seems neither carriage nor bridle-way out of it; at another, the azure expanse of the main ocean filling the eye. On one side, rocks glittering in all the colours of that beauty which constitutes the sublime, and of a height which diminished the wild herds that browse or look down upon you from the summit, where the largest animal appears insignificantly minute. On the other hand, plains, villas, cottages or copses, with whatever tends to form that milder grace which belongs to the beautiful'.*

Many artists over the years have painted the Mawddach estuary and its surrounding landscape, but two of the most prolific include John Varley (1778 – 1842), the watercolour artist whose 1801 painting of Cadair Idris was his first exhibited work, and Richard Wilson, whose 1770 painting of the same subject was said, by Pennant, to be so good that it saved him from having to describe his ascent up it!



## Historic Landscape Characterisation - Mawddach

Location of areas (see next page for key)

This map is reproduced by the National Assembly for Wales with the permission of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, (c) Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. Licence Number: GD 272221

## 9 Historic character areas

9.1 The study area has been divided into 25 separate historic character areas as follows:

01	Barmouth	(PRN 18331)
02	Dinas Oleu rocky heights	(PRN 18332)
03	Wooded hill-slopes, north side of Mawddach	(PRN 18333)
04	Cutiau	(PRN 18334)
05	Bontddu	(PRN 18335)
06	Lower Afon Cwm-Mynach	(PRN 18336)
07	Forestry, Ffridd y Mynach	(PRN 18337)
08	Open mountain, Dolgledr	(PRN 18338)
09	Mawddach estuary	(PRN 18339)
10	Morfa Mawddach	(PRN 18340)
11	Fairbourne	(PRN 18341)
12	Coed y Garth	(PRN 18342)
13	Coastal strip, south of Llwyngwrl	(PRN 18343)
14	Llynnau Gregennan	(PRN 18344)
15	Wooded hill slopes, above Arthog	(PRN 18345)
16	Open mountain, Bryn Brith	(PRN 18346)
17	Northern slopes of Cadair Idris	(PRN 18347)
18	Medieval settlements, Islawr dref	(PRN 18348)
19	Gwynant valley	(PRN 18349)
20	Forestry, Cyfannedd	(PRN 18350)
21	Gallt Ffynnon yr Hydd	(PRN 18351)
22	Llwyngwrl	(PRN 18352)
23	Fieldscape above Llwyngwrl	(PRN 18353)
24	Enclosed upland, Waun Oer	(PRN 18354)
25	Abergwynant designed landscape	(PRN 18355)

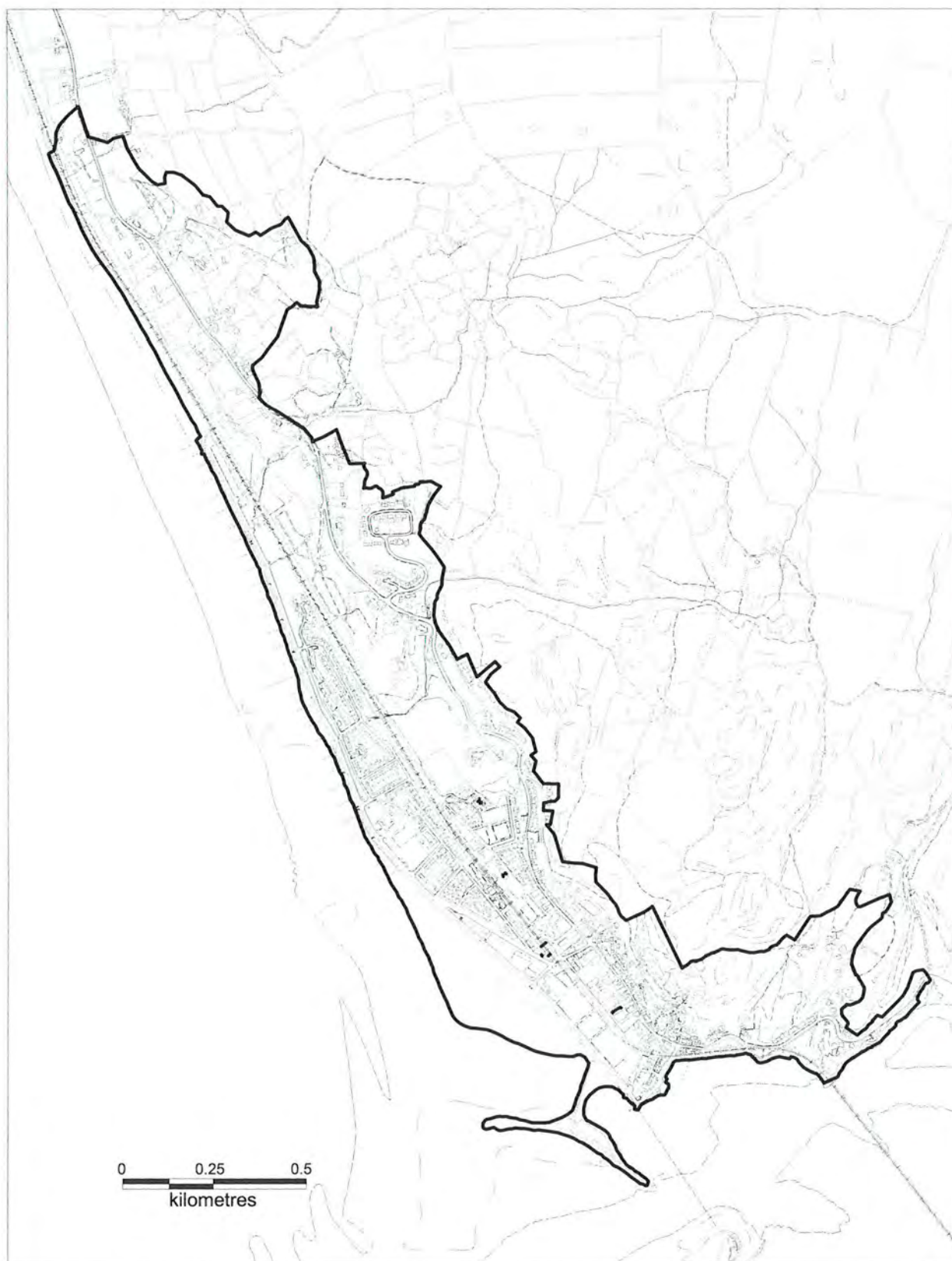
9.2 An overall location map showing the position of these areas in relation to each other is included at the beginning of this section.

9.3 Each area description has been divided into three sections following the model of earlier reports – historic background, key historic landscape characteristics and a management section.

9.4 A map showing the extent and detail of each area is located facing the description. The area is outlined with a solid, black line.

9.5 Colour plates which give an impression of the overall texture and character of each area are also included following the description: some of these are aerial photographs, but sometimes a ground level view has been more appropriate.





## Historic Landscape Characterisation - Mawddach

Historic Landscape Character Area  
01 - Barmouth

This map is reproduced by the National Assembly for Wales with the permission of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, (c) Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings.  
Licence Number: GD 272221

*Historic background*

On the northern side of the seaward end of the Mawddach estuary, Barmouth was a small and inaccessible fishing settlement until it started to develop in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The sea was the basis of the town's economy and shipbuilding started in the 1750s. By 1770, the town was well-established as a small port in coastal trades, based largely on the Meirionnydd woollen industry. The harbour was deepened and a new quay built in 1802, and the opening of the railway in 1867 resulted in further growth as the town began to cater for the new tourist trade. The town has a distinctive Victorian architectural character.

From the end of the eighteenth century, travellers accounts provide a series of vignettes of the town, and a vantage point from which to survey the lines of its subsequent development. They make it clear that Barmouth (in common with many other North Wales towns) had embarked on a process of rapid change – its buildings ‘amazingly increased’ by c1810 (Fenton, 1917 ed). This growth appears to have had two main engines. One was the expansion of trade – there were a hundred ships registered in the port in 1795. This prompted an Act of Parliament for the repair and enlargement of the harbour, in 1797. The port's continental trade never recovered after the war with France, but a coastal trade remained busy with imports including coal, American and Baltic timber, limestone, corn and grocery, and with the export of woollen cloth, timber, manganese, copper and lead ore, slates, butter and cheese. In spite of growing difficulties of access to the harbour, a coastal trade continued until the arrival of the railway in 1867 hastened its decline. In its heyday, this trade was supported by ship-building and repair.

The other agent of the town's growth was the rise of holiday-making. By 1800 there were already two inns in the town – the *Cors y Gedol* (with a large boarding house adjoining) and the *Lion*. By 1833 it had risen ‘to an eminent rank among the watering places on this part of the coast’ and ‘numerous respectable lodging houses’ had been built (Lewis, 1833). Through the efforts of the land-lord of the *Cors y Gedol*, there was also a bath house, a billiard room, and regular assemblies in the hotel during the season; there were three chapels and the *Church of Saint David*, built in 1830.

The arrival of the railway marked an even more dramatic shift in the fortunes of the town and stimulated a major campaign of building: the *Cors y Gedol* hotel was rebuilt in 1870, and many other boarding houses and domestic terraces can be dated to the following decades (Porkington Terrace, c1870, for example). Several chapels followed (*Caersalem*, of 1866 just pre-dates the railway), and *The Church of Saint John* was built specifically to provide for the town's population of English-speaking visitors in 1889. By 1902, ‘with but few exceptions, all the houses in the town are let to visitors (Heywood). This rapid growth fostered urban institutions and amenities, with a public water supply from 1873 (from a reservoir at Llyn Bodlyn). Commercial establishments – shops and banks – also signify its urbanity: the North and South Wales Bank arrived in 1870, and *Morris and Co* was built in 1882.

This growth had a distinct spatial character. Some of the earliest buildings to survive are on the flatter ground between shore-line and hillside: ‘A street is formed by a few mariners and fishermen's houses, built on the strand’ (Rev J Evans), but at the end of the eighteenth century, it was building on the steep slopes which imparted a distinctive character to the place: ‘The houses placed on the steep sides one above another in such a manner as to give the upper an opportunity of seeing down the chimney of their adjacent neighbours.’ (Thomas Pennant, 1779). ‘Principally built upon a high rock, rows of houses standing upon the shelves one above another, like part of the City of Edinburgh, and said to resemble the town of Gibraltar’ (Rev. J. Evans, *A Tour Through Part of North Wales* in 1798). ‘The most remarkable part of the place is a cluster of houses built many years back, occupying the sides of a little gully in the mountain, and rising one above the other to the very summit, looking like a lava of houses, as if they had been vomited out of the rock’. (Fenton). This essentially eighteenth century character still survives in what is now known as ‘Old Barmouth’, and it was in this area that the Guild of Saint George established itself in 12 or 13 cottages given by Mrs Talbot in 1874.



Early nineteenth century development consolidated the sense of a single long street, but later, the town also expanded seawards to the north-west: during the 1870s, a triangle of land to the south-west of the railway line was laid out according to a more formal plan (1-12 Marine Parade is dated 1878); perhaps this formality was in part due to the activities of the Local Board, the first one of which was elected in 1872.

### ***Key historic landscape characteristics***

#### *townscape, harbour*

The shape of the town before c1750 remains very unclear, but the location and character of known early buildings (seventeenth century or earlier) provides some clues. Close to the harbour, Ty Gwyn is a later 15<sup>th</sup> century floor hall, an important and rare survivor from this period, built by Gruffydd Fechan of Cors y Gedol. The choice of first floor hall is interesting, especially in the light of the later pattern of building in the town, which appears to have favoured the vertical division of property, as if space was at a premium. The first indication of this comes with another early survival. Pen y grisiau, is a late seventeenth century house built at right angles to High Street. It is thought to have originally comprised three independent domestic units, one above the other. The only other putatively seventeenth century building (Pen y graig and Gibraltar cottage) appears also to have been built from the outset as a complex of independent dwellings, again partly vertically divided, on a steeply sloping site in what is now known as Old Barmouth. This building has not been investigated in detail, and there may possibly be others, as yet unidentified, of similar date and type.

Other early houses apparently lie within the conventions of the regional vernacular: Anchor Cottage is parallel to High Street near the harbour – a two unit, end-chimney house. There are other buildings in the town which belong to the next phase in the development of regional building traditions as storeyed houses (Quay Cottage, Walsall House, Church Street; Cumberland Place area).

By c. 1800, there were several strands in the architecture of the town. On the higher slopes, a scatter of small cottages appears in early engravings of the town – they are probably mid eighteenth century. These lofted cottages lie within an identifiable regional vernacular tradition. They are of particular interest as being early examples of small cottages – a building type rarely surviving from this early period. Some of these formed the nucleus for the Guild of Saint George (Saint George's Terrace, Rock Terrace, Caprera Cottage).

It was on the lower slopes and the sands below them that most development took place. In this area there are several substantial buildings which may also be of pre-1800 date: they are characterised as two storeyed, with distinctive slab-rubble walls, coped gables and fine stone gable-end chimneys. Bennar Terrace is a listed example of this house type. It is becoming clear however, that there are several other examples of this type, partially concealed behind later facades.

Representing a refinement of this vernacular style, are several individual houses showing the influences of polite architectural ideas. There are some good late eighteenth century buildings close to the High Street – perhaps the finest of these, Saint Anne House, was originally the Lion hotel., but Tyn y coed, and Aber House, High Street belong in this tradition, and Maine House antiques (altered with the later addition of a shop) may be another. Their architectural refinement is indicative of the prosperity and esteem of the town in this period.

Characteristic of early nineteenth century development was the building of pairs or short terraces – a building form which normally implies speculation and an organised building process. Some of these are not far removed from a vernacular tradition – especially in their handling of building materials – Walter Lloyd Jones and Co, and Bennar Terrace for instance. The sophistication to which this building process could also aspire, however, is exemplified in Fron y Graig/Tan y Fron, High Street, Graig Fach, Church Street and 1-4 Goronwy Terrace.

The clustering of dwellings appears to have continued as a feature of development on the by now crowded lower slopes: one vertically arranged tenement house – Williams Buildings – has been identified, and there may be others. This is a highly unusual mode of building which would repay more detailed investigation.

Until the coming of the railway, urban building during the nineteenth century remained within the broad confines of a Georgian tradition, at times more or less polite in its aspirations, but deriving an overall harmony from the common use of local materials. It is variety in the handling of the local stone (characteristically worked in very large blocks) which begins to describe nuances in that tradition. This coherence was challenged in the rapid growth of the town following the arrival of the railway, which introduced quite different building types and traditions. In the first place, the units of development were often bigger, with longer terraces, the largest of which was 1-12 Marine Terrace of 1878 – probably the town's most ambitiously scaled project which was originally a symmetrical composition. Later nineteenth century buildings were also taller, of 3, 4 and even 5 storeys. They often employed a new masonry style (snecked stonework), and introduced other architectural elements. Two of these are the dormer gable and the bay window, the latter especially associated with sea-side boarding houses. There was also a greater stylistic eclecticism, with a wider vocabulary of detail (classical, renaissance and gothic). Bellevue buildings and Hendre villas are good examples of this.

The commercial building which characterised the main street also exemplifies this new architecture. Ael y Don, Church Street, dated 1871, is a grand symmetrical terrace; elsewhere on the axis of High Street and Church Street, much of the development comprises single buildings on single plots. Possibly this is indicative of the earlier origins of settlement in this area, since it is a development process that implies constraints on available plot size. Individual buildings in this area illustrate the importance of commerce in the later nineteenth century town, not least as patron of particular architectural styles and building types. Good individual examples include *Morris and Co*, and the *Midland Bank*, but the architectural variety of the main street resulting from this pattern of development lends a strong character to the town.

Although building materials had been imported previously, there were new sources of material in this railway era: brick and terracotta make an appearance, as does non-local stone, and cast-iron – the railings at Bellevue buildings came from a foundry in Birmingham.

So in conclusion, Barmouth developed much more sporadically after c1880. There is a series of later nineteenth and early twentieth century detached houses on the higher slopes, but its largest expansion to the north-west is with mid twentieth century public housing, quite detached from the historic part of the town. What remains, therefore, is a well-preserved resort, in which the successive chapters of its history until its prime c1880 can still be clearly traced.

### ***Conservation priorities and management***

The above characterisation analysis provides a context for understanding the significance of listed buildings (of which there are some 88 in the town) and their contribution to the historic character of the town. It also highlights gaps in coverage – most notably the under-representation of post -1870 building. Little of the residential development from this period retains sufficient detail to warrant listing, though there are two terraces at least which could be considered, and one or two individual houses; commercial building in the main street suggests a more fruitful area for any list enhancement.

The town is surprisingly coherent, retaining virtually intact the distinctive geography and architectural character of its development from early origins through rapid 19<sup>th</sup>-century growth. Its qualities are given as much in townscape as in the merits of individual buildings, and the town would benefit from a strategic approach to management, acknowledging its tight-knit, strong overall character.

Barmouth boasts a series of buildings of highly unusual character which remain to be fully understood – these are the multiple dwellings (17<sup>th</sup>-century unit system houses and later tenements). It is also becoming clear that there may be many more early (pre 1800) buildings in the town. There is scope here for a valuable recording project to elucidate this highly specialised building form.

The settlement lies outside the Snowdonia National Park.

*CCW vertical AP reference: Geoscan, 1993, line 43 110 92 003*

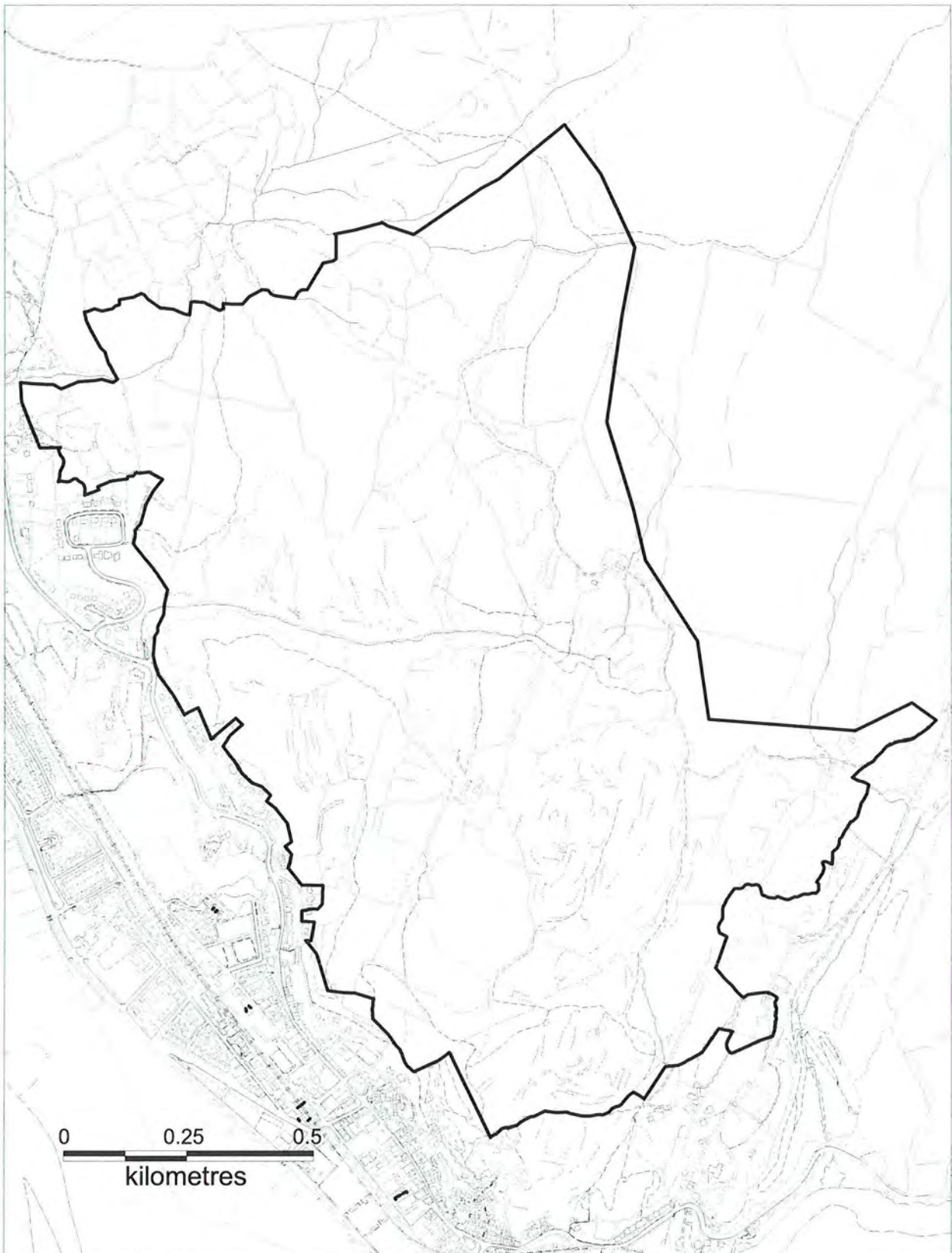


01 Barmouth

(PRN 18331)

View of the harbour front, with a characteristic 19<sup>th</sup> century, four-storey stone terrace facing it, while the 1867 railway passes in the mid-distance, and beyond a series of 17<sup>th</sup> century and later houses straggle up the vertical hill side.





### Historic Landscape Characterisation - Mawddach

Historic Landscape Character Area  
02 - Dinas Oleu rocky heights

*This map is reproduced by the National Assembly for Wales with the permission of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, (c) Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings.  
Licence Number: GD 272221*

*Historic background*

The four and a half acres of wild headland known as Dinas Oleu was gifted to the National Trust (the Trust's first property in fact) in 1895 by Mrs Fanny Talbot, a Barmouth resident and great benefactor (see also section 8.7 above). Mothers would take children with whooping cough up on to Dinas Oleu to benefit from the sea air. There is reputed to be a late prehistoric defended enclosure here (hence the name), but traces of it are very difficult to make out.

*Key historic landscape characteristics*

*rocky headland, National Trust property*

This character area corresponds almost exactly with a SSSI (CCW ref. SSSI 'Barmouth hillside' 31WMP), first designated in 1953 and since revised, which extends to 66ha. It is a nationally important geological site which exposes an almost continuous rocky section from the upper part of the Rhinog Grits, through the Hafotty Formation, Barmouth Grits and into the Gamlan formation, all of which are rocks which belong to the Harlech Grits Groups and which date from the lower-middle Cambrian period.

The locality is of particular interest for its clear demonstration of the above, thick clastic sequence, while approximately a third of the area is covered by woodland, including an area of sessile oak on the western seaboard.

*Conservation priorities and management*

A small part of the area, the peak of Dinas Oleu itself which includes the putative hillfort, is owned and managed by the National Trust and is readily accessible by the public. The remainder is privately owned and should be managed to retain its SSSI interest. There is little of archaeological interest here, beyond the disused levels and drystone walls, and probably nothing which requires active management. Interestingly, the whole area lies outside Snowdonia National Park.

*CCW vertical AP reference: Geoscan, 1993, line 43 110 92 003*

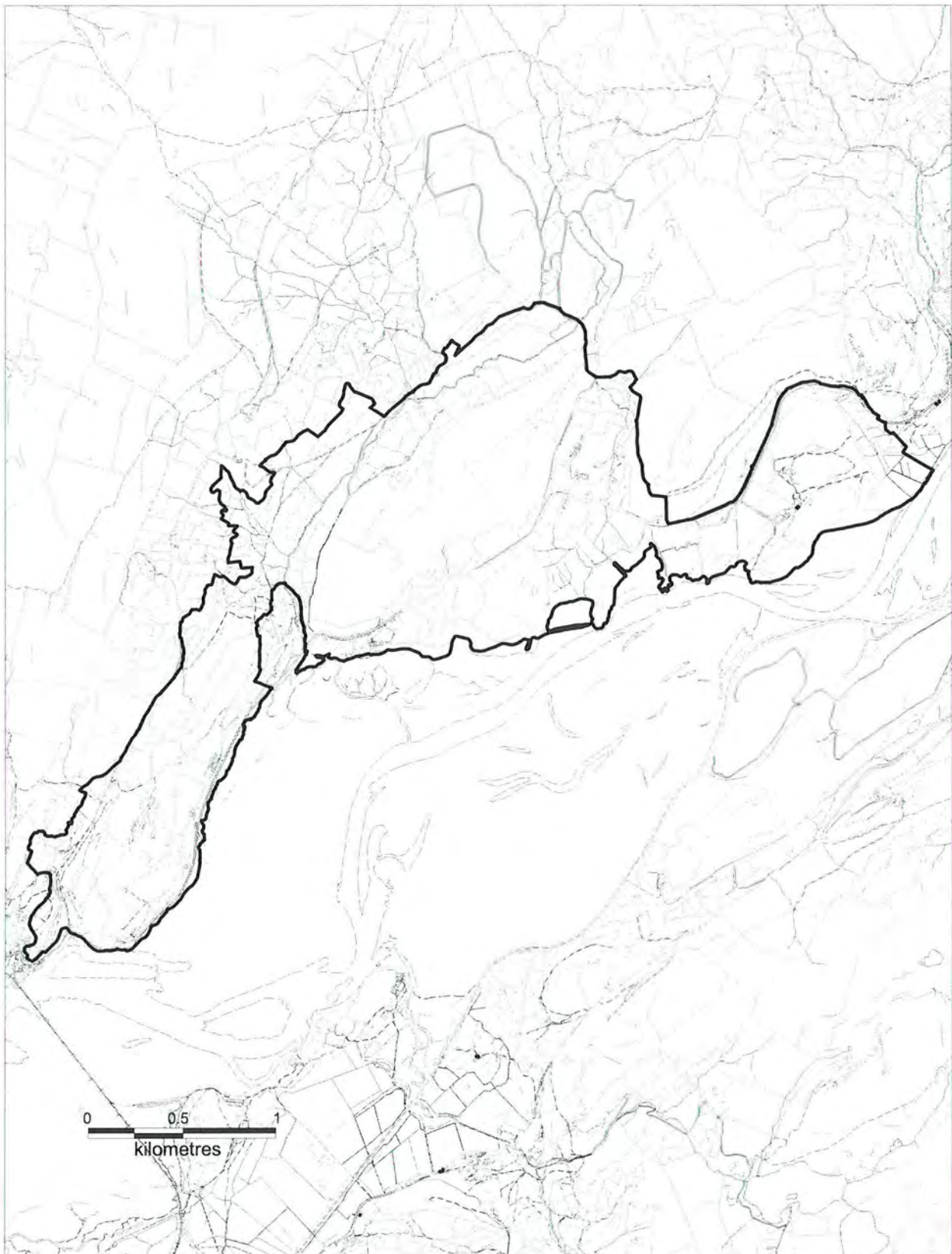


02 Dinas Oleu rocky heights

(PRN 18332)

A view of the rocky outcrop jutting out over the town below and dominating every view of Barmouth.





### Historic Landscape Characterisation - Mawddach

Historic Landscape Character Area  
03 - Wooded hill-slopes, north side of  
Mawddach

This map is reproduced by the National Assembly for Wales with the permission of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, (c) Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings.  
Licence Number: GD 272221



### *Historic background*

The most significant features of this area are the two Registered Gardens just outside Barmouth, at the western end of the area, Panorama Walk and Glan-y-Mawddach house.

Panorama Walk is a grade II Registered Park and Garden (PG (Gd) 26 (GWY)), which comprises a well-made and well-preserved late Victorian footpath created to take advantage of the dramatic natural scenery around Barmouth; it has superb views and formerly incorporated a tea room and 'pleasure grounds'.

The history of Panorama Walk is not well known, but the Revd. Fred Ricketts, who was very active in promoting and developing Barmouth as a seaside resort in the early years of the last century, is said to have laid out the 'pleasure grounds' near the cafe, and may have been instrumental in the development of the walk. The route is, however, based on older roads and footpaths. It is a well constructed path designed to make an area with superb picturesque views accessible to most people. (In the early 1880s, a penny was charged by Mr Davies of the Corsygedol Hotel for entry via a 'toll-wicket' gate, causing people to grumble and write to the papers to complain.)

The area was known as 'Panorama Pleasure Grounds', and there was a view from the tea room, as well as higher up, although there is no record of there being actual gardens. Any planting must have been ephemeral as there is nothing on the site today which does not appear to be natural (apart from a few conifers on the knoll behind the site of the tea room). However, the young woodland which now clothes the site obviously post-dates the period of the walk's greatest popularity, and before it became established there would have been spectacular views over the estuary along almost the whole length of the path from the tea room to the high viewpoint. Now the woodland extends over the hillside both above and below the site of the tea room, and to obtain a good prospect one must go further along the path towards the viewpoint. There are now no traces of seats near the tea room site (early photographs show wooden benches outside the shack).

More generally-speaking, on either side of the northern part of the unclassified road there is older, planted deciduous woodland interspersed with fields, which forms part of the Glan-y-Mawddach estate. The western part of the unclassified road, leading from the minor road from Barmouth, is through open country, basically grassland with some bracken, trees and scrub. After the footpath leaves the woods and comes out to the higher ground with the viewpoint there is heath vegetation, with a little bracken at first, then heather, gorse, bilberry and grasses.

Immediately below this, Glan-y-Mawddach is a grade II\* Registered Park and Garden (PGW (Gd) 62 (GWY)) comprising an exceptionally interesting formal and woodland Edwardian garden in an outstanding position on the Mawddach estuary. The garden contains unusual secret compartments, each one of a different character, all linked by an intricate network of paths. It is also very richly planted with trees, evergreen shrubs and hedges, the rhododendrons and azaleas giving a spectacular display. Glan-y-Mawddach house was built in the second decade of the nineteenth century and was altered and extended in the late nineteenth - early twentieth century. The garden was developed by Mrs Keithley in the early years of the twentieth century between 1900 and 1914.

Beyond these gardens, the (undated but mid-19<sup>th</sup>-century) Llanaber tithe map shows that the majority of enclosures were then much as they are today, larger on the wooded slopes and hill tops with smaller fields in the low-lying areas.

Other major mid-19<sup>th</sup> century houses here, all set along the frontage of the Mawddach and signifying the importance of the area at that time include Coesfaen Hall (built 1844), with its distinctive clock tower which gives it the appearance of a fairy-tale castle, easily visible from Barmouth, and Glandwr Hall (built c. 1840) further east.

### ***Key historic landscape characteristics***

*parks and gardens, 19<sup>th</sup> century 'mansions', wooded hill slopes, views*

The wooded slopes which extend along the (northern and southern) banks of the Mawddach estuary (see also areas 06, 07, 12 and 25) are a mixture of deciduous semi-natural woodland and modern (20<sup>th</sup> century) conifer plantation. The slopes are, in most areas, so steep as to disallow evidence of human habitation. Behind these slopes, the hills and valleys north-east of Barmouth were the centre of several 'gold-rushes' in the mid and late 19<sup>th</sup> century, and some of the mines contain important ranges of surviving industrial archaeological features. The banks of the estuary itself are lined with mid 19<sup>th</sup>-century 'mansions' and gardens which are now flourishing, having reached maturity.

### ***Conservation priorities and management***

The two Registered parks and Gardens are most worthy of conservation, as are the principal characteristic features of the area, the gardens, woodland and 19<sup>th</sup> century houses on the shoreline. Most of the area, with the exception of the western end, lies within Snowdonia National Park.

*CCW vertical AP reference: Geoscan, 1993, line 43 110 92 003*



03      Wooded hill-slopes, north side of Mawddach      (PRN 18333)

A close-up view of the wooded hill slopes showing the mixed nature of the area, with open fields (here grazed by donkeys) on the level areas and wooded, south-facing slopes.



### Historic Landscape Characterisation - Mawddach

Historic Landscape Character Area  
04 - Cutiau

This map is reproduced by the National Assembly for Wales with the permission of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, (c) Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings.  
Licence Number: GD 272221

***Historic background***

This small, somewhat non-descript settlement (which doesn't actually have a name, either on most maps or physically on the ground) is shown on the (undated but mid-19<sup>th</sup>-century) Llanaber tithe map as a series of some dozen buildings set around an irregular series of four or five minor tracks winding around the steep, south-facing hill slope on the western side of the Mawddach estuary, where the Afon Dwyndant empties into the estuary.

Two of the small rubble-housed farmhouses next to Capel Cutiau itself are listed. One is a small, storeyed end-chimney type with a small farm building added at the uphill end, and the other is a small, two-unit lobby-entry house north west of the latter, which is probably 19<sup>th</sup> century.

***Key historic landscape characteristics***

*small 19<sup>th</sup> century houses, exotic gardens, narrow lanes*

The architecture is an eclectic mixture of styles, and the photograph shows the large, probably 18<sup>th</sup> century, mill with its exotic garden. There are no service buildings in this settlement with the exception of the chapel. The gardens are fairly dramatic, something which is characteristic of many gardens along this shore of the estuary. Little else is known of the area.

***Conservation priorities and management***

The existing buildings and their gardens are the main characteristic of this area which require conservation. The settlement lies within Snowdonia National Park.

*CCW vertical AP reference: Geoscan, 1993, line 43 110 92 003*

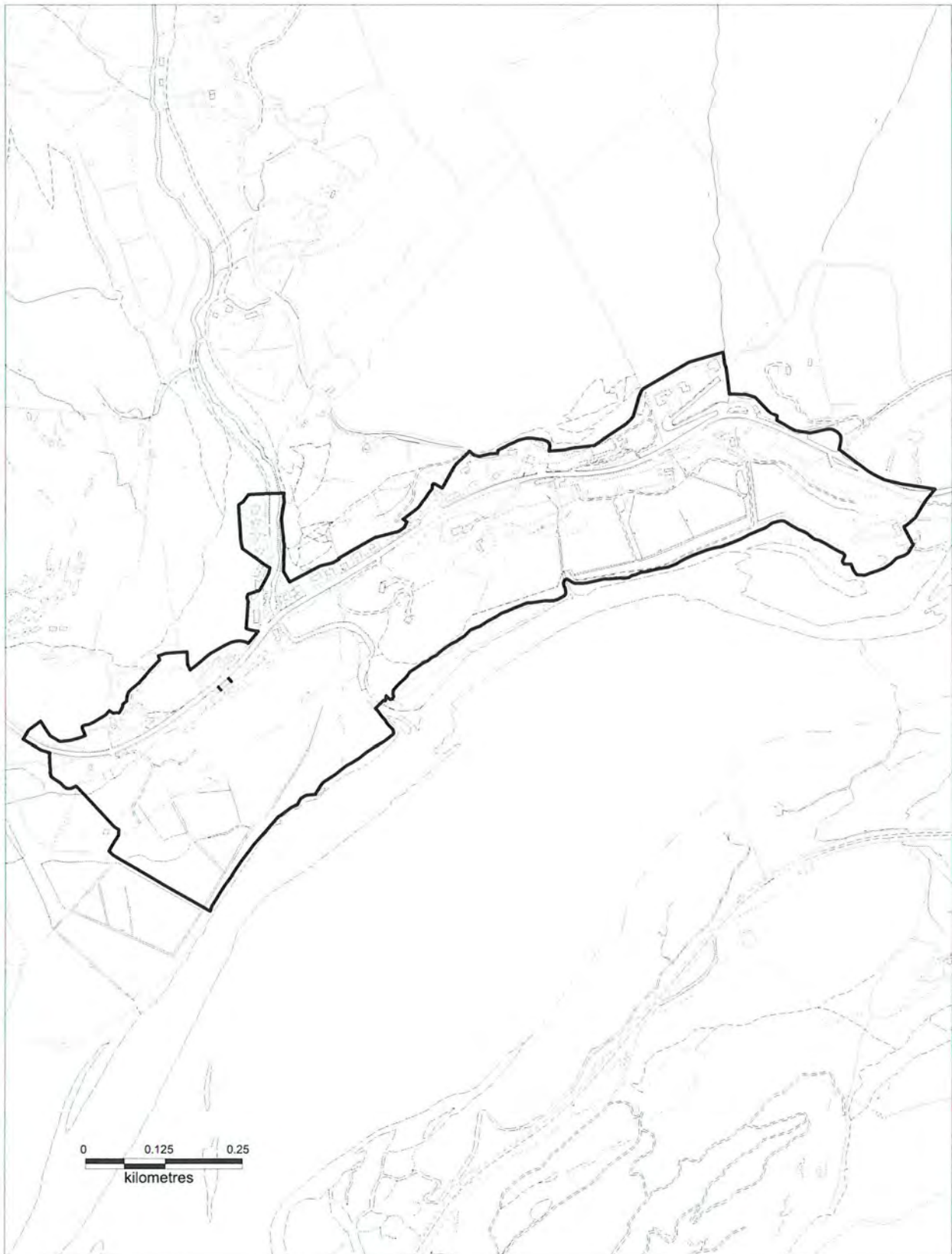




04 Cutiau

(PRN 18334)

A view showing the exotic nature of the plantings in the private garden around the mill at the heart of this distinctive and quirky settlement.



## Historic Landscape Characterisation - Mawddach

Historic Landscape Character Area  
05 - Bontddu

This map is reproduced by the National Assembly for Wales with the permission of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, (c) Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings.  
Licence Number: GD 272221



### *Historic background*

Bontddu is an almost-entirely 19<sup>th</sup> century 'ribbon development' along the main road which was extended from Dolgellau to Barmouth at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Llanaber tithe map shows only a handful of houses along the north side of the road (see photograph), and even now, after road improvements, the southern side of the road remains almost empty. The minor road up to Hirgwm, where gold mining later in the century was centred, to the north of the village leads off from the centre of the village, and it is this enterprise that is responsible for the growth and development of this settlement and its infrastructure.

### *Key historic landscape characteristics*

#### *19<sup>th</sup> century ribbon development*

The architecture of the settlement, strung out along the main road but with a couple of stretches where the road has been straightened leaving the houses set back, is almost entirely 19<sup>th</sup> century, with a couple of hotels, a mill as well as several terraces of two-storied houses, which have been added-to by a number of 20<sup>th</sup> century dwellings, garage etc. The area today, with its excellent microclimate, contains a significant number of interesting (non-registered) private gardens.

### *Conservation priorities and management*

There are only two listed buildings here: Tyn twll, a vernacular 18<sup>th</sup> century rubble-built cottage with a brick lean-to, at the eastern end of the village, while Y Refael, just east of the Halfway House Hotel, was originally a late 17<sup>th</sup> vernacular house which was extended in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to create a smithy. The whole settlement has a distinctive, 19<sup>th</sup> century, character which is worthy of conservation. The area lies within Snowdonia National Park.

*CCW vertical AP reference: Geoscan, 1993, line 43 110 92 004*



05 Bontddu

(PRN 18335)

A view showing one of the substantial, stone-built terraces of housing which line the northern side of the main road and characterise this diverse straggling, 19<sup>th</sup> century ribbon development. The 'centre' of the village is to the left, while the chapel and hotel are to the right.



### Historic Landscape Characterisation - Mawddach

Historic Landscape Character Area  
06 - Lower Afon Cwm-Mynach

This map is reproduced by the National Assembly for Wales with the permission of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, (c) Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings.  
Licence Number: GD 272221

***Historic background***

This area is centred on a small, remote valley leading off from the northern banks of the Mawddach based on the Afon Cwm-mynach, with a wider area of woods and lately-enclosed (probably 19<sup>th</sup> century for the main part) fields. There is no recorded evidence for prehistoric settlement here, although several deserted rural settlement sites do point towards 16<sup>th</sup> century and later settlement. The earliest houses recorded are 17<sup>th</sup> century (see below). The area also contains some evidence for late 19<sup>th</sup> century, gold mining in the areas away from the estuary. Much of the area facing on to the Mawddach estuary itself, is modern conifer plantation.

In about 1860, the owner of the copper mines above Bontddu (area 05) discovered gold, and the owners of the Vigra and Clogau Copper Mining Company (actually situated outside the character areas considered in this report) took out a licence to extract gold, and by May 1861 profits were sufficient to initiate a mini gold rush in the area. Gwynfynydd Gold Mine was also established at this time but serious mining ceased during the First World War. All of these mines were water-powered; although around 150 shafts and levels are known in the mountains to the north of Bontddu, the three main centres of activity were those listed above (Farr, 2001). At Clogau the mining was adit mining, centred on inclined tunnels which were dug by hand until the 1870s, when compressor drills were introduced. Figra Mine was powered by a waterwheel which had been built as a crushing mill for the copper mine and was adapted to its new use in 1862. A zig-zag track and incline connected it with the mine above. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century a new mill powered by a turbine was built, and downstream a smaller mill was in use until the 1930s.

***Key historic landscape characteristics***

*mining remains, early farmhouses, irregular fields, woodland*

There are four listed buildings here (all grade II): Borthwnog Hall Hotel is a late 17<sup>th</sup> century, elegant Georgian villa with 19<sup>th</sup> century alterations; Cae-mab-seifion is an early 17<sup>th</sup> century upland vernacular farmhouse which retains much of its original character; Cesailgwm-bach, nearby is also an early 17<sup>th</sup> century farmhouse, while Maestryfer is a late 17<sup>th</sup> century house and byre complex of whitened rubble. Much of the area is covered by a mixture of deciduous and conifer woodland, particularly on the hill slopes, while the open valley sides above the estuary contain open fields defined by straggling drystone walls (see photograph).

***Conservation priorities and management***

The main characteristics worthy of conservation include the listed farm buildings (see above), the woodland, the mining remains and the general atmosphere. The whole area lies within Snowdonia National Park.

*CCW vertical AP reference: Geoscan, 1993, line 43 110 92 004*





06 Lower Afon Cwm-Mynach

(PRN 18336)

A view showing the nature of the open fields, many of which remain uncleared of stone, and the mixed woodland (old semi-natural and modern plantations) which characterise the part of the area above the estuary sides.



### Historic Landscape Characterisation - Mawddach

Historic Landscape Character Area  
07 - Forestry, Ffridd y Mynach

This map is reproduced by the National Assembly for Wales with the permission of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, (c) Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings.  
Licence Number: GD 272221



## **07      Forestry, Ffridd y Mynach                      (PRN 18337)**

### ***Historic background***

This area comprises a small patch of mainly 20<sup>th</sup>-century woodland which dominates an earlier deciduous woodland on the north-facing hillslopes below the uplands of Dolgledr (area 08) above the estuary (see also area 12).

### ***Key historic landscape characteristics***

*woodland, hill slopes*

This is a small area of woodland above the estuary, immediately to the east of Abergwynant and on the main hillslopes of the upland massif which rises above the Mawddach. Most of the dominant species are typical of modern forestry, although the central area contains an area of older, deciduous woodland.

### ***Conservation priorities and management***

The woodland cover needs to be maintained to conserve the overall character of the Mawddach estuary, even if the species are not too interesting. The area lies within Snowdonia National Park.

*CCW vertical AP reference: Geoscan, 1993, line 43 110 92 008*



07 Forestry, Ffridd y Mynach

(PRN 18337)

The steep, north-facing slopes of the mountain range leading down to the Mawddach estuary are principally covered by a mixture of semi-natural woodland and modern conifer plantations in this area.



### Historic Landscape Characterisation - Mawddach

Historic Landscape Character Area  
08 - Open mountain, Dolgledr

*This map is reproduced by the National Assembly for Wales with the permission of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, (c) Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings.  
Licence Number: GD 272221*

***Historic background***

Although this area is characterised by a lack of modern settlement, there is a considerable amount of evidence for prehistoric activity here. An extensive cairnfield, originally recorded by Bowen & Gresham (1967) stretches along both sides of the (former main) trackway which leads east from Hafod-y-dywyll (area 19) and down eventually to Dolgellau (probably the fore-runner of the current road – see also area 16): it includes a variety of different cairn types, including kerb cairns, and was obviously important area in the earlier prehistoric period.

There are also two hillforts here, both confusingly called Craig y Castell, one at the northern and the other (scheduled) at the southern end of the area. To the east of the latter are the remains of 19<sup>th</sup> century mining. Those apart, there are only a series of 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> century field walls which divide the area up into a series of large, irregular enclosures.

***Key historic landscape characteristics***

*relict prehistoric archaeology, field walls, open mountain*

The considerable wealth of relict archaeological features and the field walls which characterise this area have been mentioned above. The landscape bears comparison with the volcanic, rocky exposures of Cadair Idris (area 17) and Pared-y-Cefn-hir (area 16), but this has no SSSI designation.

***Conservation priorities and management***

The principal conservation priorities must be the relict archaeological sites, the two hillforts (the southern one of which is a scheduled ancient monument) and the cairnfield which is probably more vulnerable as the cairns are slight and lie in the small 'valley' between rocky peaks. The area lies within Snowdonia National Park.

*CCW vertical AP reference: Geoscan, 1993, line 43 110 92 009*

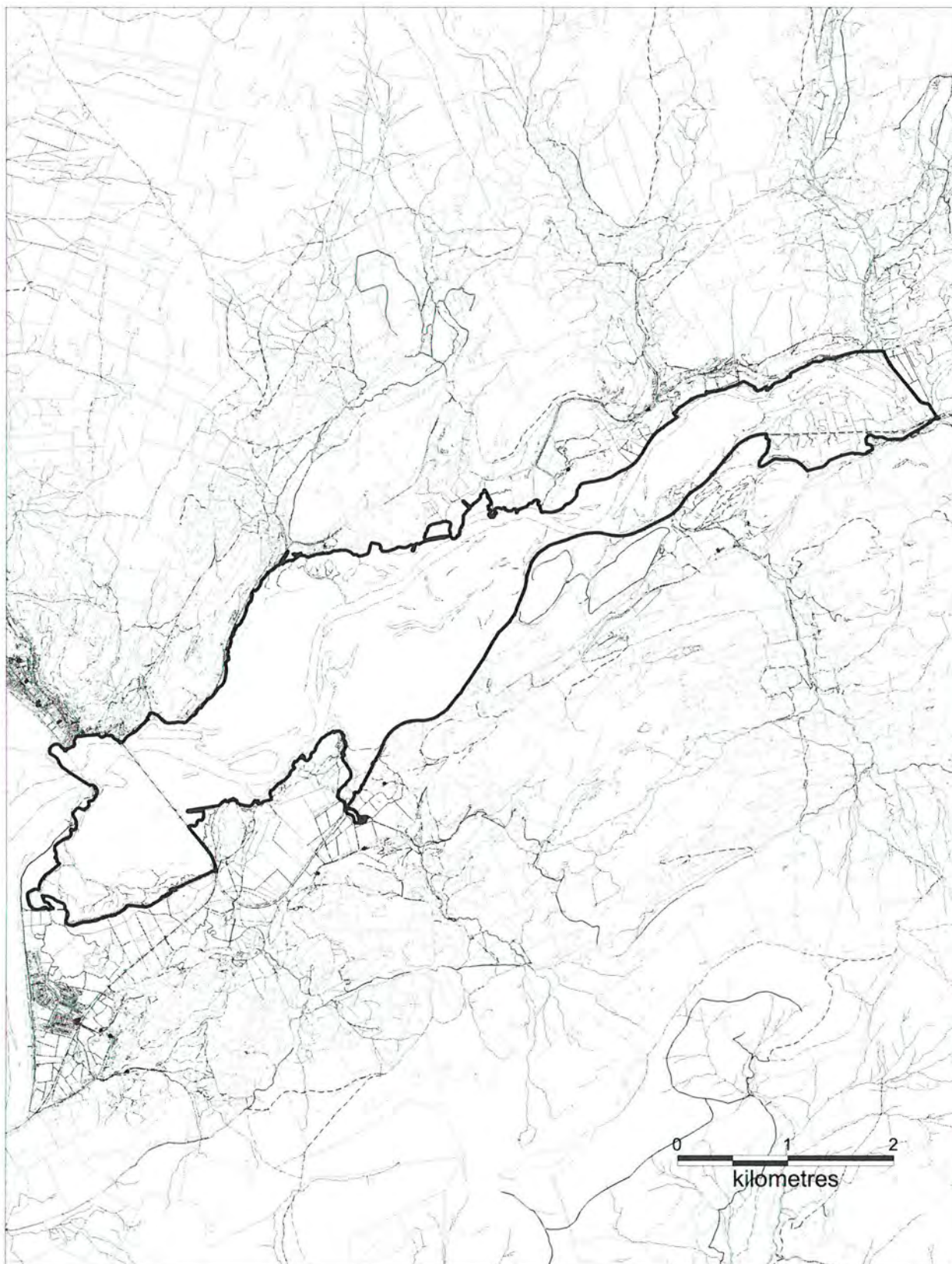




08      Open mountain, Dolgedr      (PRN 18338)

The (un-named) central height of this unenclosed, volcanic plug of uplands rises above the woodlands and enclosed fields of areas 18 and 19.





## Historic Landscape Characterisation - Mawddach

Historic Landscape Character Area  
09 - Mawddach estuary

*This map is reproduced by the National Assembly for Wales with the permission of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, (c) Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings.  
Licence Number: GD 272221*

*Historic background*

This area comprises the tidal estuary of the Afon Mawddach, with its sandbanks and marshy flatlands, as far inland as the present A470. It has drainage/flood banks at its inland end and is crossed here and at its mouth by bridges. The latter is a viaduct constructed as part of the Cambrian Railway in 1867, while the trestle bridge further inland (built in 1879 across from Penmaenpool) is one of only a few wooden structures of its kind in Britain.

In 1188, Gerald of Wales described his journey around Wales with Archbishop Baldwin which involved crossing over the mouth of the Mawddach by the ferry – ‘on the same day we ferried over the bifurcate river Maw’ (probably a reference to the fact that two ferries were used, one from Penrhyn point to Ynys y Brawd, and another shorter one from there to the mainland). (The name of the island near Barmouth has probably given rise to the story that the ferry was run in the late medieval period by local monks.) Later it was run by local fisherman: the ‘Survey of the Ports, Creeks and landing places on the Welsh Coast’ (published in 1569) recorded that ‘Bermowe had towe litel Bootes that the said Res and Harry ap Eden do use to carry men over that passage’. From the reign of George III, the ferry was owned by the Barmouth Harbour Trust and was let annually to tenants, who were the owners of Penrhyn Farm (area 10), at the northern end of the promontory. Up until 1860, when it was sold, the ferry provided the main income for the farm as the Royal Mail route then ran from Dolgellau to Barmouth, across to Penrhyn Farm and then on to Towyn and Machynlleth.

By the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century the ferry, which still from Penrhyn point, transported slate from quarries in the Panteinon Valley along with lead, copper and manganese from Cyfannedd fawr above Arthog (area 15), across the estuary to Barmouth (area 01), whence it was shipped out. With the increase of goods from Barmouth after the 17<sup>th</sup> century came an increase in demand for ships (and thus an increase in boat yards) at places like Penmaenpool and Borthwnog. On the north side of the estuary and at the eastern end, Maes-y-garnedd was a busy ship-building centre as well as a trading centre for the distribution of goods and merchandise (including flour, oatmeal, beans, rye, timber, bark *etc*) from Barmouth for local people inland around Dolgellau. On the southern side, Penmaenpool stands on an inlet. The George III hotel had been built by 1650, originally as two separate buildings, one a pub, the other a ship-builders. Boats were generally built here, then towed across to Barmouth for the fitting of sails, rigging *etc*. The 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries saw a lot of boat building (between 1750 and 1865 318 vessels were launched), but it more or less ceased with the coming of the railway in 1867 (when the two buildings were amalgamated). The railway, which ran from Morfa Mawddach station to Dolgellau runs in front of the hotel. It was closed in 1964, and now acts as ‘The Mawddach trail’: it is partly an RSPB bird-watching sanctuary. The area is described as ‘Strand’ on the 1842 Dolgellau tithe map. The area has been magnet for tourists and visitors for a couple of hundred years, and was particularly popular during the Romantic period (see section 8.7 above) when travel to the Continent was not possible. It was heavily promoted later in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as a place for wealthy Midlands industrialists to buy land and build exotic houses.

*Key historic landscape characteristics*

*estuary, mudflats, marsh, reedbeds*

The Mawddach estuary is located in a wide, glacially-excavated valley which has extensive sandflats throughout its length, with areas of muddy sediments and large areas of saltmarsh. It is a largely-intact estuarine system, which contains good examples of intertidal to terrestrial ecotones, from saltmarsh to grazing marsh, including reedbeds, woodland and rock exposures.

It is predominantly a sandy estuary but also has extensive areas of muddy shore (which is rare in north Wales) including some of the most extensive sheltered mudflats in the Cardigan Bay area. Rock forms a narrow strip around much of the upper shore, where it is dominated by lichens and furoid algae. Saltmarsh (the third-largest area in Cardigan Bay) occurs along both shores, and

there are extensive stands of common reed. Its mouth is protected by the sand and shingle Fairbourne Spit (area 10), and on the north side by Barmouth (area 01). Its special features are the estuarine habitats, particularly muddy sediments and saltmarshes, reed beds and raised mire. There is also a substantial species interest which includes several species of waterside birds, rare vascular plants, bryophytes and invertebrates.

### ***Conservation priorities and management***

Aber Mawddach (Mawddach estuary) has been designated a SSSI covering 1340.6 ha, which includes the whole of character area 09 and part of area 10 (see the photograph of the latter) (CCW SSSI ref. 'Mawddach estuary/Afon Mawddach' 31WVS). It was designated for its biological features which include the estuary itself, a large shallow estuary which drains south-west into Cardigan Bay, plus a series of adjacent habitats. The overall management objective for the SSSI is to retain the habitat- and species-related interest of the area, which includes several BAP species.

A comprehensive report 'Restoration of the Mawddach Estuary – a desk-top study', commissioned by CCW, was published by Wallingford Consultants in 2003. The report looked at the potential for restoring the Mawddach estuary back to as natural a state as possible, including re-creating estuarine wetlands in current low-grade farmland. This would be achieved by managed coastal re-alignment and the removal of existing land drainage works.

*CCW vertical AP reference: Geoscan, 1993, line 43 110 92 003*

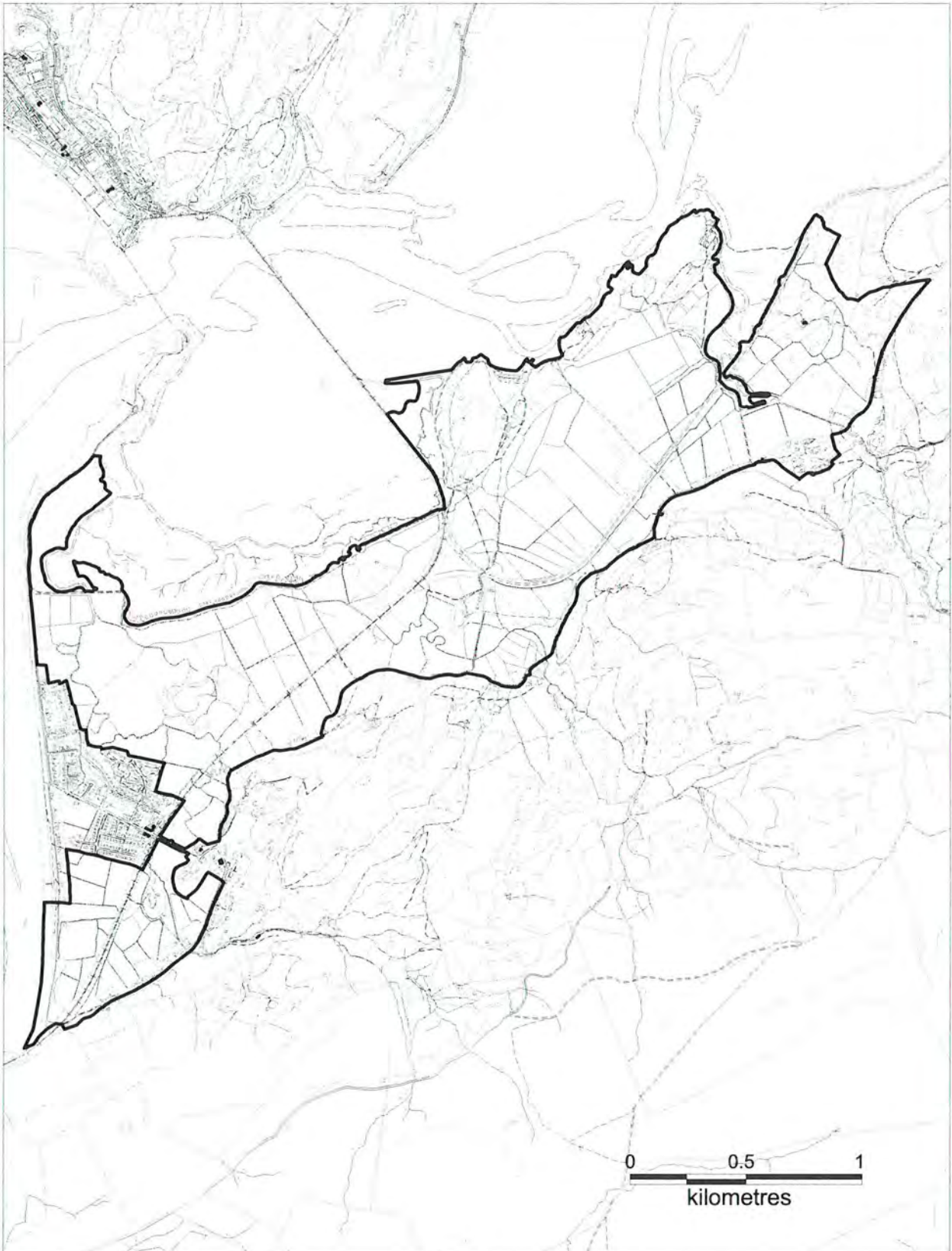




09 Mawddach estuary

(PRN 18339)

The tidal estuary of the Mawddach, at almost high tide, is shown here in a view looking north from Penmaenpool towards the wooded slopes of area 06.



## Historic Landscape Characterisation - Mawddach

Historic Landscape Character Area  
10 - Morfa Mawddach

This map is reproduced by the National Assembly for Wales with the permission of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, (c) Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings.  
Licence Number: GD 272221



### *Historic background*

Much of the area was owned by the Ynysfaig Estate in 1703, and a map of Ynysgyfflog, Fegla Fawr and Fegla Fach drawn by T Roberts in 1804 (NLW 49-18-22) shows a huge area to the south-east of those 'islands' as being unenclosed and labelled 'turbary'. This corresponds with the area included in the Mawddach SSSI as Arthog Bog (see below and above - area 09). From that period, to at least 1836 (Roscoe, 1836), the area was known as Morfa Mannog and in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, a vast quantity of peat was cut from here, to be dried out and ferried across to Barmouth for export.

Along the southern flank of the area above the floodplain, Arthog (the name is supposed to be derived from a personal name, although there is no evidence for this) is a small, ribbon settlement alongside the main A493, originating in the mid-19<sup>th</sup>-century. In 1894, Solomon Andrews (the Cardiff businessman who was also responsible for the development of Pwllheli amongst other holiday resorts at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup>/20<sup>th</sup> centuries) purchased several farms and land at Arthog, including Tyddyn Siefre with its now defunct quarry and tips (see area 15). In 1899 he built a network of tramways to carry quarry waste from the tips to build a sea-wall facing the estuary, where Mawddach Crescent was built over the next three to four years. He had hoped that this would also, in tandem with Fairbourne, develop into a holiday resort but it never really took off, with the Crescent being the only completed part of the development.

Further south, and of similar character, is Friog, also built along the eastern side of the main road (originally a tollgate road built to replace the former main west-east route, Ffordd ddu, which ran over the top – the contemporary toll house still exists at the southern end of the village (listed grade II), along with a series of chapels and boarding houses), but is now dominated by detached modern dwellings in their own gardens.

### *Key historic landscape characteristics*

*saltmarsh, raised mire, 19<sup>th</sup> century terraced housing and ribbon development*

The small terraces of houses which characterise the tiny settlement were built principally in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. Arthog Terrace, for example, is an exceptionally-complete (listed) terrace of twelve gabled, rubble-built houses with a single slate roof and its neat gardens actually located across the main road, which was built in 1860s, and Y Bont is a similar mid-19<sup>th</sup> century terrace. The distinctive National School with its bell tower is dated 1844, and nearby are a single arch stone bridge and St. Catherine's church (also early 19<sup>th</sup> century and listed grade II), opposite which is a mill. Pencei still exists as a reminder that, before the embankments further out were built, the high tide formerly came up to (and over) the turnpike road.

Part of the area, known as Arthog Bog (lying between Arthog on the mainland and the former 'island' of Fegla Fawr is designated as a SSSI (CCW ref. 31 WVS - see photograph). This is the only example of an estuarine raised mire in north Wales, a rare peatland type otherwise confined in Wales to the flanks of the Dyfi estuary. Although now reduced in size, it is still floristically and entomologically rich. It is important for breeding birds including redshank and snipe.

### *Conservation priorities and management*

The retention of the character of the superb Victorian terraced houses and other contemporary buildings in Arthog and Friog are an absolute priority. Aber Mawddach (Mawddach estuary) has been designated a SSSI covering 1340.6 ha, which includes part of area 10 (see photograph). It was designated for its biological features which include the estuary itself, a large shallow estuary which drains south-west into Cardigan Bay, plus a series of adjacent habitats. The area lies half (the eastern half) within and half outside Snowdonia National Park.

*CCW vertical AP reference: Geoscan, 1993, line 45 109 92 103*



10 Morfa Mawddach

(PRN 18340)

This view of the flatlands which comprise an essential part of this SSSI, part of which includes Arthog bog, was taken looking south-east from Morfa Mawddach railway station on the edge of the National Park, with the volcanic uplands of Bryn Brith (area 16) beyond.



### Historic Landscape Characterisation - Mawddach

Historic Landscape Character Area  
11 - Fairbourne

*This map is reproduced by the National Assembly for Wales with the permission of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, (c) Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings.  
Licence Number: GD 272221*



## 11 Fairbourne (PRN 18341)

### *Historic background*

Up until 1860, when it was sold, the Barmouth Ferry (see area 09) was run from Penrhyn Farm on Morfa Mawddach, situated where the modern settlement of Fairbourne is now. This provided the main income for the farm as the Royal Mail route then ran from Dolgellau to Barmouth, across to Penrhyn Farm and then on to Towyn and Machynlleth. The 1860 sale document for the farm says that a new carriage road had recently been made which ran through the property and which was used by the daily mail coach which followed the above route. The line of the road has been preserved in the modern main road which runs just behind the shingle beach. There is a single reminder of the former ferry in a water trough at Pystyll-y-Mail in Friog (area 10).

In 1865 Thomas Sarin, a railway contractor, purchased the Ynysfaig Estate (see area 10), with the aim of developing land to the west of the new railway on the flat morfa, as part of a larger scheme to develop huge tracts of Cardigan Bay to the north of Aberystwyth following the establishment of the Cambrian Railway. Work had begun at Aberystwyth itself and Borth (just over the border in Ceredigion) when he was made bankrupt. The estate passed through several hands and in 1895 was finally bought by Sir Arthur McDougall (of self-raising flour fame) who also saw the potential for the development of what was then known as Morfa Henddol, and convert it into a popular seaside resort. It was well-endowed for this purpose - the land was wide and flat and very sandy, all set against a magnificent wider landscape, the winters were mild and there was good access via the railway direct to the Midlands.

A master plan for the site was drawn up in 1896 by Silk Wilson & Sons, Manchester, in which sites were allocated for 250 dwellings, a church, post office, hotel, market place and baths, plus a 6 yard-wide esplanade which was to run for a mile and a third facing the sea, a pier (with a pavilion), a landing stage for ocean-going ferries, a wider road and new station. The whole was to be called South Barmouth. However, it didn't work out. By 1900 a few terraced houses had been built along Beach Road and Belgrave Road, along with a couple of shops and a post office adjacent to the level crossing (now part of the Emporium), plus tennis courts and a nine-hole golf course and pavilion on Beach Road. The former Penrhyn farmhouse had become the new golf club house. Several rich industrialists bought plots and built holiday residences where their children could stay over the summer with their governesses, and many families even spent Christmas here away from the smog and smoke of the city.

McDougall planted a rose tree in the garden of every new house he built. In addition he built his own brick works just north of the present station which was served by a horse-drawn tramway, and in 1899 he built, at his own cost, a station to serve his enterprise. The name agreed between McDougall and Cambrian Railways for the new station was 'Fairbourne' (some locals had wanted it re-named Ynys Faig but the company refused). The horse-drawn tramway (the originator of the Fairbourne Light Railway) was probably extended to the ferry in 1898 and became a popular tourist attraction (as it still is), also providing links to the beach and golf course.

Fairbourne continued to be developed but it never became 'the holiday centre for the Midlands' which McDougall had envisaged, and in 1912 he sold it to the Fairbourne Estate Company which continued to develop it slowly and operate the tramway. However, in August 1917 the Estate was broken up and sold in parcels at auction and since then the settlement has been subject to piecemeal development as a holiday resort. St. Cynon's church was consecrated in 1927.

### *Key historic landscape characteristics*

*20<sup>th</sup> century seaside development, light railway*



Fairbourne is a modern (20<sup>th</sup> century) holiday village originally developed by McDougall of 'self-raising flour' fame which is situated on the southern side of the seaward end of the Mawddach estuary, opposite Barmouth. It bears the hall marks, in its layout and building stock, of having been built deliberately as a seaside resort, serviced by both railway and road, and it retains that atmosphere and character today. It is served by road (from Dolgellau to the east and Tywyn to the south) and rail (Cambrian coast railway), and its principal attraction is the Fairbourne light railway.

#### ***Conservation priorities and management***

Unsurprisingly there are no listed buildings here, and actually little worthy of actual conservation. The area lies outside Snowdonia National Park.

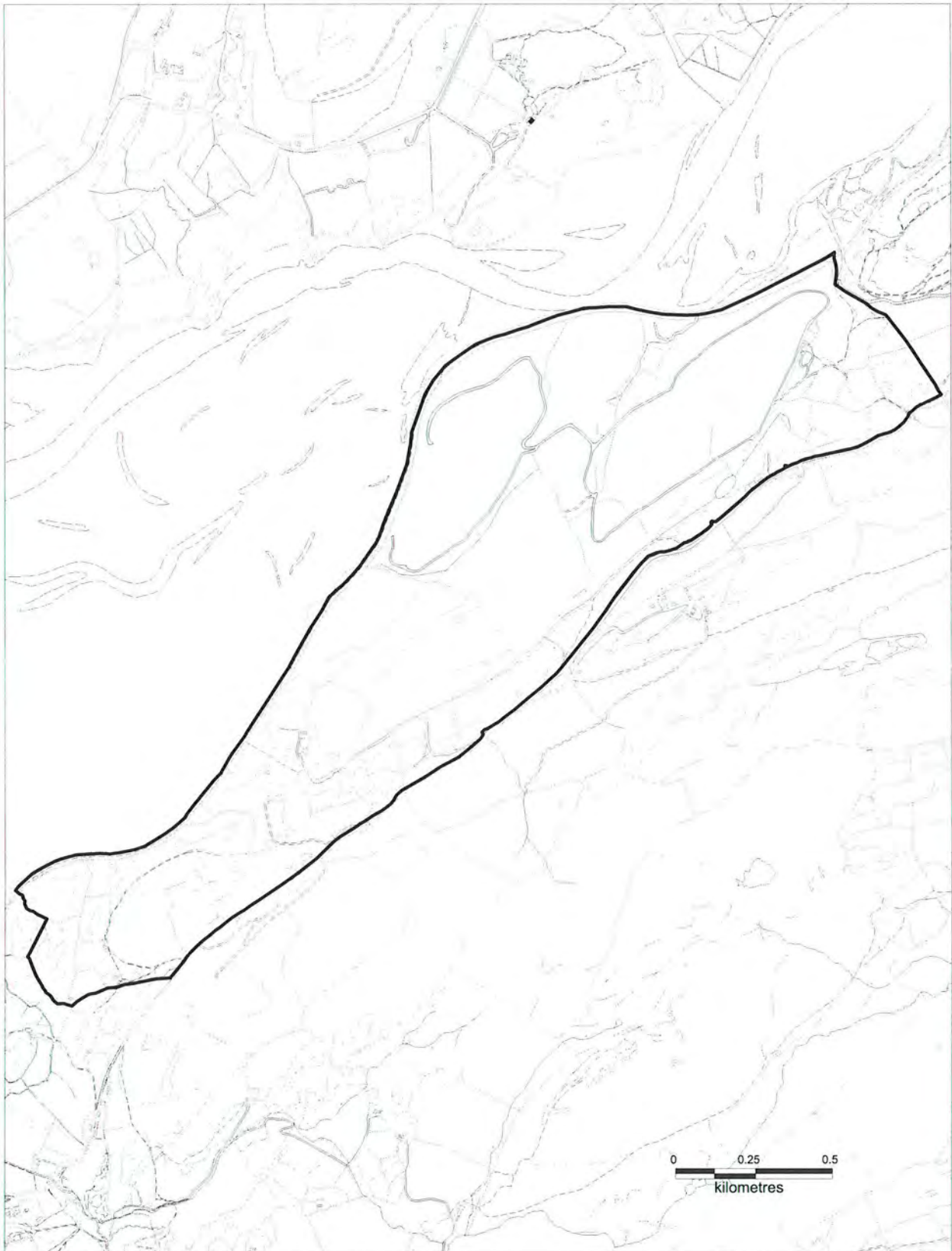
*CCW vertical AP reference: Geoscan, 1993, line 45 109 92 103*



11 Fairbourne

(PRN 18341)

This view, taken looking northwards from the main road, clearly shows the unsympathetic and unfinished nature of this early 20<sup>th</sup>-century settlement, planted on the flatlands at the mouth of the estuary, and based on a single main road along which are the largest buildings in the settlement (including the pink structure which is the Springfield Hotel, clearly visible here), with a series of smaller, estate roads leading off it.



## Historic Landscape Characterisation - Mawddach

Historic Landscape Character Area  
12 - Coed y Garth

This map is reproduced by the National Assembly for Wales with the permission of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, (c) Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings.  
Licence Number: GD 272221

## 12 Coed y Garth (PRN 18342)

### *Historic background*

This area comprises a large block of modern forestry owned by the Forestry Commission, extending across a small hill below the main massif, right on the edge of the Mawddach estuary. There are three or four houses here, all 19<sup>th</sup> century villas typical of the area.

### *Key historic landscape characteristics*

*woodland, forestry, Victorian villas*

Most of the area comprises 20<sup>th</sup>-century forestry (see photograph), with a series of Victorian villas included.

### *Conservation priorities and management*

A former barn (dated 1672, and partly demolished) and a cottage near Garth-isaf (the latter an unusual building with interesting, early 18<sup>th</sup> century detail) are both listed grade II. Some of the older woodland, outside the ownership of the FC, also deserves particular management. The area lies within Snowdonia National Park.

*CCW vertical AP reference: Geoscan, 1993, line 43 110 92 008*

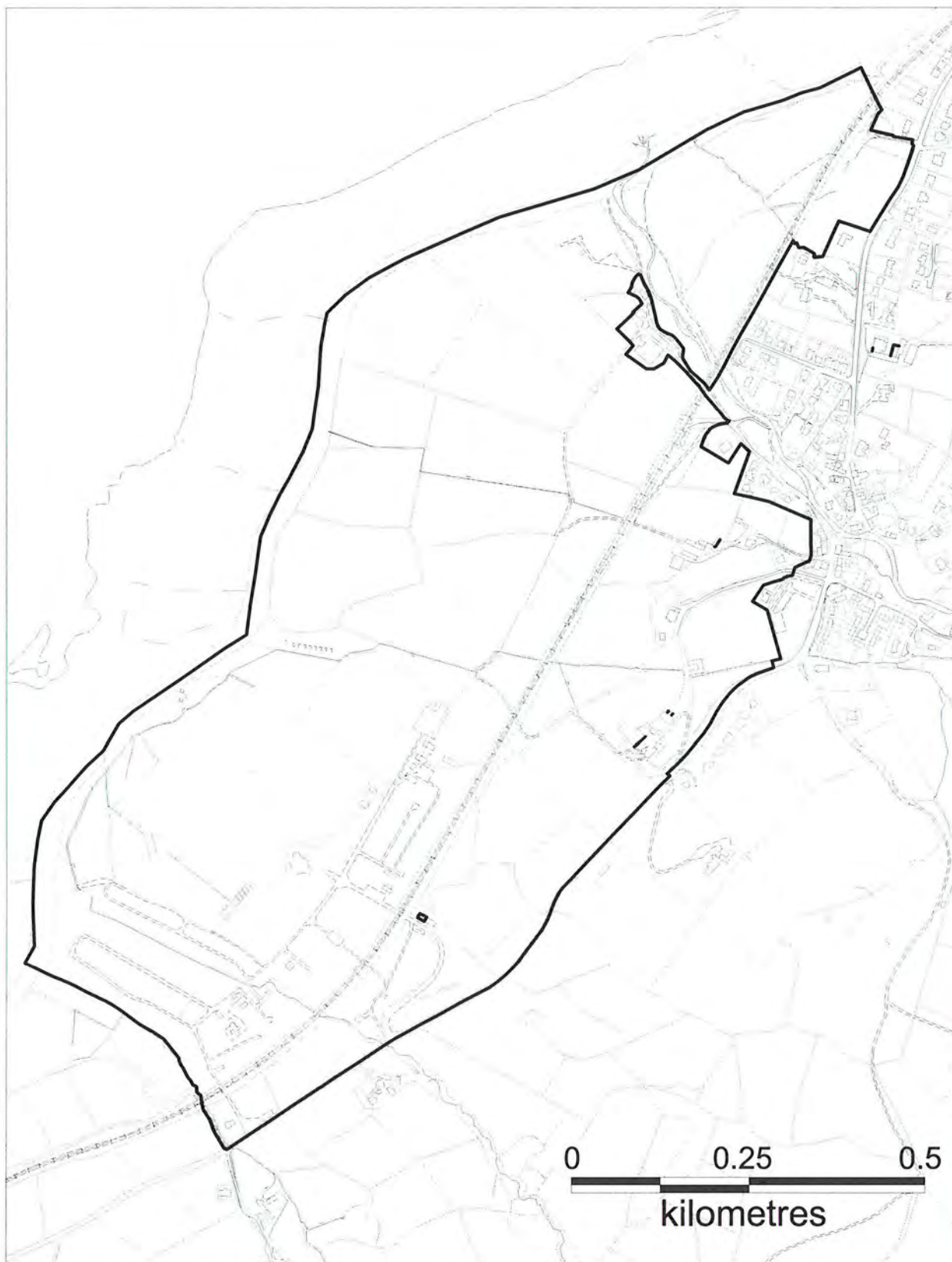




12 Coed y Garth

(PRN 18342)

This particular view of the forestry along this stretch of the Mawddach demonstrates the mixed deciduous/conifer character of the woodland.



### Historic Landscape Characterisation - Mawddach

Historic Landscape Character Area  
13 - Coastal strip, south of Llwyngwril

This map is reproduced by the National Assembly for Wales with the permission of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, (c) Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings.  
Licence Number: GD 272221

## **13 Coastal strip, south of Llwyngwrl (PRN 18343)**

### ***Historic background***

Most of the fields shown on the 1839 Llangelynnin tithe map are of similar size and shape to the few that exist today, although the actual boundaries are differently-placed. The area is bisected by the Cambrian Railway which was finally opened in 1867, and was largely responsible for the development of Llwyngwrl as a holiday resort (see also notes on area 11). The area also contains the remains of the World War II Llwyngwrl camp. The caravan sites date from the 1970s onwards.

### ***Key historic landscape characteristics***

*caravan sites, drystone walls, WWII camp*

The three main characteristics, as described above, include the distinctive drystone walls, most of which appear to be late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the remains of the WWII camp (which includes a grey, brick blockhouse, rifle range, earthen butts and brick-faced concrete plinths along the coast edge), and the rigid lines of white, static caravans.

### ***Conservation priorities and management***

The field pattern formed by the white walls, and the remaining evidence for the WWII camp should be conserved. The area lies within Snowdonia National Park, which designation stops at the coast edge.

*CCW vertical AP reference: Geoscan, 1993, line 47 108 92 219*

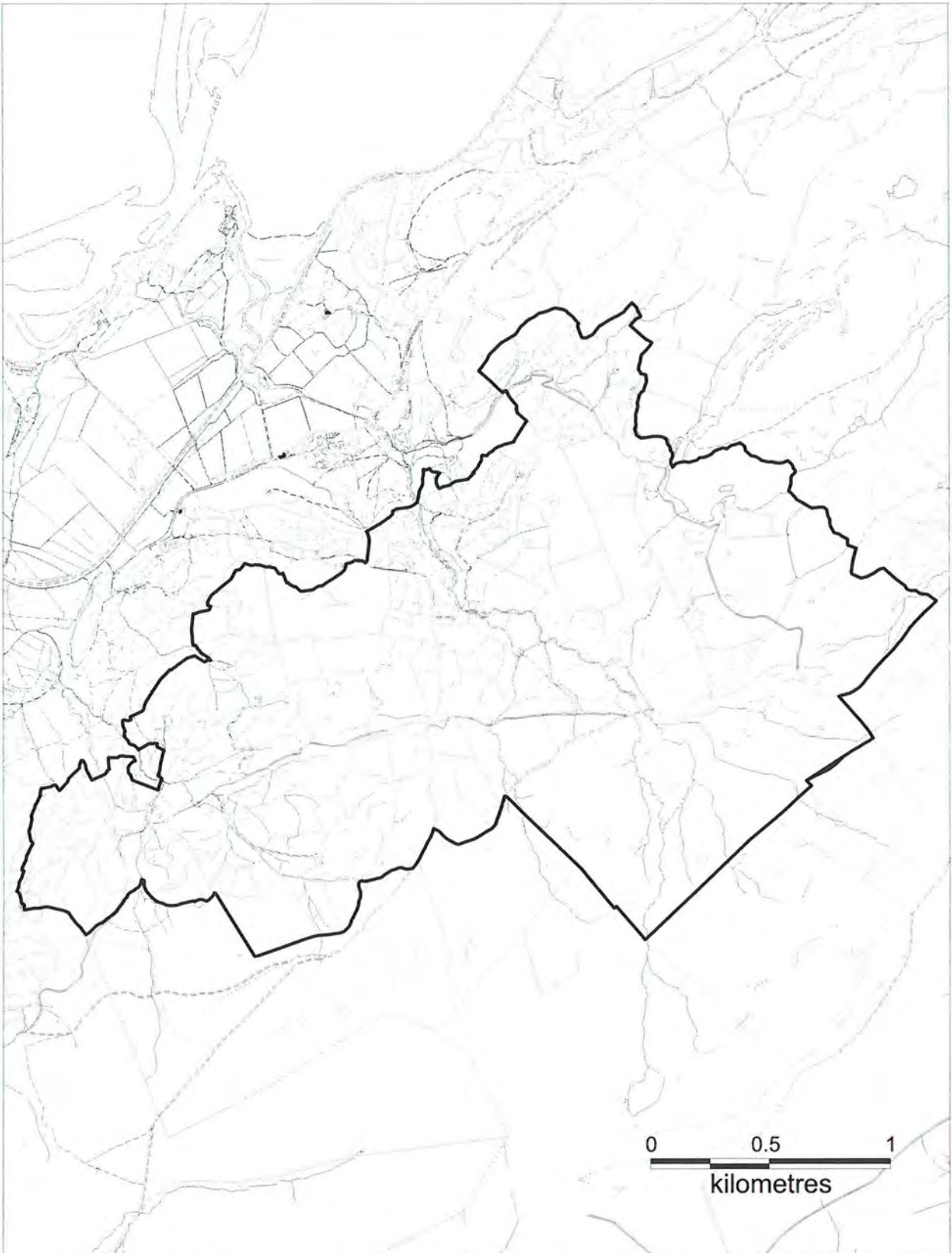




13 Coastal strip, south of Llwyngwrl (PRN 18343)

The coastal strip around Llwyngwrl, stretching westwards from the main road to the coastal edge and then away to the south, basically comprises a series of drystone wall-defined enclosures overlaid by regular and unforgiving ranks of white, static caravans.





### Historic Landscape Characterisation - Mawddach

Historic Landscape Character Area  
14 - Llynnau Gregennan

This map is reproduced by the National Assembly for Wales with the permission of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, (c) Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings.  
Licence Number: GD 272221

## 14 Llynau Gregennan (PRN 18344)

### *Historic background*

Ffordd Ddu is an ancient mountain route running from Llwyngwrl to Dolgellau, originating, according to some, in the neolithic period (see above section 8.3). The present minor road across the top, which predates the current main road which runs along the base of the cliff, was formerly a major route across the area, and served quite a number of farms, some of which are now either ruined or 'retirement' homes.

The eastern part of the area, around Llynau Gregennan themselves, are literally covered with dozens of relict archaeological sites (see section 8.3 above), including standing stones, cairns, hut circles and other more-ephemeral features from the prehistoric period. There are also considerable remains of deserted rural settlement sites from later periods (Cregennan is recorded as a free township in the medieval period). These sites, many of which are scheduled ancient monuments, testify to a long history of land-use which extends over several thousand years. Most of these sites lie within the area owned by the National Trust and were recorded during the Trust's archaeological survey of the area. Interestingly, the sites recorded on the regional SMR stop at the minor road bisects the area from north to south, from Cregennan up towards Braich Ddu.

There are a number of minor farmsteads here, from the 17<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, a couple of which are listed, including Cefn-hir uchaf (grade II – a late 17<sup>th</sup> century vernacular single storey rubble cottage) and Pant-Phylip, a one and a half storey, rubble-built vernacular farmhouse dated 1731, but nothing compared with those in area 18 to the east. Most of the area is shown on the 1839 Llangelynnin tithe map as comprising large, irregular enclosures, much as today.

### *Key historic landscape characteristics*

*Relict archaeological sites, irregular enclosures, farmsteads, trackways*

A large area of complex field patterns, widely-scattered farms (some bearing the names of medieval townships) and one of the most significant landscapes of relict prehistoric sites in the region, as described above, form the main interest in the area. The land is of poor quality, and in between the rocky knolls there are patches of bog and pasture fields. The eastern part of the area, which contains the better land, is characterised by the dozens of relict archaeological sites; while the western part, which rockier, is bleaker and contains just a couple of inhabited houses.

### *Conservation priorities and management*

Much of the eastern part of the area is now owned by the National Trust and is managed by them, and there are some twenty scheduled ancient monuments here (reflecting the range of relict sites). The priority must be to record and conserve this important relict archaeological landscape. There are also a couple of listed buildings (see above). The area lies within Snowdonia National Park.

*CCW vertical AP reference: Geoscan, 1993, line 45 109 92 107*

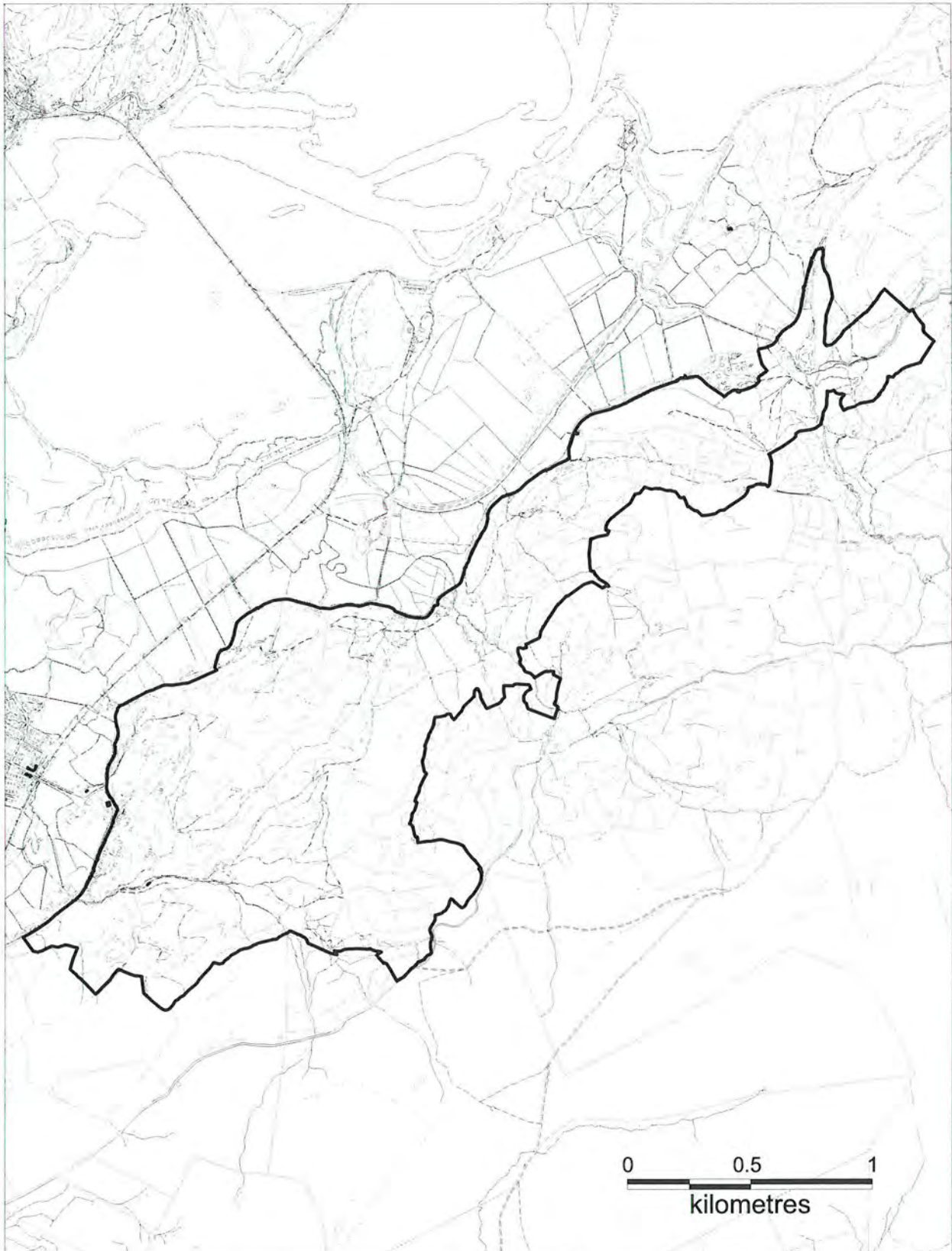


14      Llynnau Gregennan

(PRN 18344)

This view shows the farm of Hafod Taliadau, set amongst a series of irregular fields defined by stone walls and cairns, which are characteristic of this remote but important upland area.





### Historic Landscape Characterisation - Mawddach

Historic Landscape Character Area  
15 - Wooded hill slopes, above Arthog

This map is reproduced by the National Assembly for Wales with the permission of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, (c) Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings.  
Licence Number: GD 272221



*Historic background*

Two slate quarries were opened up in Panteinon Valley in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Henddol was started in the early 1860s, was in production by 1865 but ceased production in 1871 following a rockfall. Goleuwern quarry had been opened in 1867, and when Henddol was re-opened in 1892 the two traded together as Cambrian Estates Ltd, finally closing in 1920 (Richards, 1991). Another quarry, Bryngwyn had an even shorter and more erratic life. Both quarries shared joint facilities (mill, smithy etc.) relying on horse and carriage transport for moving the slate out. Further east, above Arthog, Ty'n y Coed quarry was opened in the mid 1860s, and its material was also taken by tramway across the morfa to a small jetty on the estuary below and thence to Barmouth. The Barmouth ferry, which crossed from Penrhyn point on Morfa Mawddach (area 10), transported the slate across the estuary to Barmouth (area 01), whence it was shipped out, along with lead, silver, copper and manganese from Cyfannedd fawr (the remains of the mines and adits, which were initially opened in 1827 but mainly worked during the period 1851-63, lie to the north of the eponymous farm at the top of this area). The silver mine here, the only one in the district, was producing approximately 40oz of silver from a ton of ore at its height. In 1748, Cyfannedd-fawr was occupied by Morus Jones, a well-known poet and winner of many bardic chairs.

*Key historic landscape characteristics**17<sup>th</sup> century farmhouses, mining remains, woodlands*

At the top of the area is 'The Blue Lake, a 40ft-deep quarry pit which was deliberately filled with water in 1901 by McDougall's engineer (see area 11) to act as a reservoir in a scheme to provide Fairbourne with electric lighting. Pipes were laid down to the village, but nothing came of the idea.

Arthog community contains a number of listed buildings which testify to the importance of the area over the last three hundred years or so. Arthog Hall is a country house built in a picturesque, castellated style in 1833 for Reginald Fourden, a Lancashire cotton-mill owner (on the site of the medieval Pwll-arthog) while the cottage and home farm nearby (both also grade II), has a range of agricultural outbuildings including a cart house, stable range and hay barn. The Old Lodge (built in 1835 to serve the hall) is also listed. Garth y Fog farmhouse (grade II\*) is a small, two-storey, rubble-built vernacular farmhouse dated 1796, while Hen-ddol farmhouse (a late 17<sup>th</sup>/early 18<sup>th</sup> century farmhouse near the quarry) was the site of a notorious siege in 1780 when bailiffs went to arrest the owner for smuggling (it also has an interesting range of 19<sup>th</sup> century outbuildings). Adding to the 19<sup>th</sup> century stock of buildings along the estuary is Ty'n-y-coed, a small Victorian country house built in eclectic Gothic style in the 1860s by David Davies who had recently bought the estate and founded the eponymous quarry.

*Conservation priorities and management*

Preservation of the character of the listed and other buildings is a priority, along with the quarrying and mining remains. A small (12ha) area within the eastern end of this character area above Arthog Hall has been designated as a SSSI (CCW ref. 'Arthog Hall Wood' 31WFP) because of its biological interest as an example of a bryophyte-rich woodland with several rare and uncommon species. The wood is north-facing and occupies a deep, wooded ravine which provides an ideal microclimate for the growth of bryophytes and ferns. Sessile oak and downy birch make up the main canopy tree species, with rare and uncommon bryophytes, ferns, orchids and flowering plants in the understorey. The area lies within Snowdonia National Park.

*CCW vertical AP reference: Geoscan, 1993, line 45 109 92 108*



15      Wooded hill slopes, above Arthog      (PRN 18345)

The characteristic wooded hillslopes between Friog, set along the main road, and the unenclosed mountains are visible in this view which looks towards the south-east. Morfa Mawddach (area 10) forms the foreground.



### Historic Landscape Characterisation - Mawddach

Historic Landscape Character Area  
16 - Open mountain, Bryn Brith

This map is reproduced by the National Assembly for Wales with the permission of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, (c) Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings.  
Licence Number: GD 272221



## 16 Open mountain, Bryn Brith (PRN 18346)

### *Historic background*

There is a series of relict prehistoric sites in the centre of this area, stretching along a minor, low-lying 'valley' which runs west to east from Llynnau Gregennan to Ty'n-llidiart (area 18), and which might be part of the original route of Ffordd Ddu (see also area 08). These sites include a number of cairns and at least one hut circle settlement in the bottom of the valley alongside the modern footpath, as well as a small hillfort on the steep ridge immediately to the north.

There are no recorded medieval remains here, and the nearest farmstead which belongs to Cefn-yr-owen township lies outside to the east. In later periods, virtually no enclosures are shown on the 1842 Dolgellau tithe map, and the current landscape has not changed much since. There are remains relating to 19<sup>th</sup> century slate quarrying (particularly Chwarel Ty'n-y-coed, a small early quarry later for dumping waste from nearby Arthog quarry – see above, area 15) along the northern slopes of the area.

### *Key historic landscape characteristics*

*relict prehistoric sites, field walls*

This character almost exactly corresponds with a SSSI designated in 1981 (CCW ref. 'Cregennan a Pared y Cefn Hir' 31WNH) which extends for 162ha, and also includes a very small part of the eastern end of character area 14 (although the woodland on the northern slopes of the area is not included in it). The site is located in a mountainous tract of land lying on the north-west flank of the Cadair Idris massif (see area 17). It is a nationally important geological site which provides the cleanest, best exposed and most complete sections through the lower part of the Aran Volcanic Group, a sequence of volcanic and marine sedimentary rocks. It is an important site for observing the relationships between rocks of mixed origin, and for dating the volcanic episodes which interrupted normal marine sedimentation. The locality is complimentary to the classic volcanic terrain of Cadair Idris (area 17) nearby, and, like it, it is also important for teaching, educational and research purposes.

### *Conservation priorities and management*

The principal conservation priorities must be the relict archaeological sites – the hillfort and particularly the cairnfield and hut circle which are probably more vulnerable as they are slight and lie in the small 'valley' traversed by a footpath.

According to the latest CCW report on the management of the area, the current grazing regime consisting of sheep, cattle and some horses will have little or no adverse effect on the geological interest of the site and should be left alone (but monitored on a five-yearly basis). The area lies within Snowdonia National Park.

*CCW vertical AP reference: Geoscan, 1993, line 45 109 92 108*

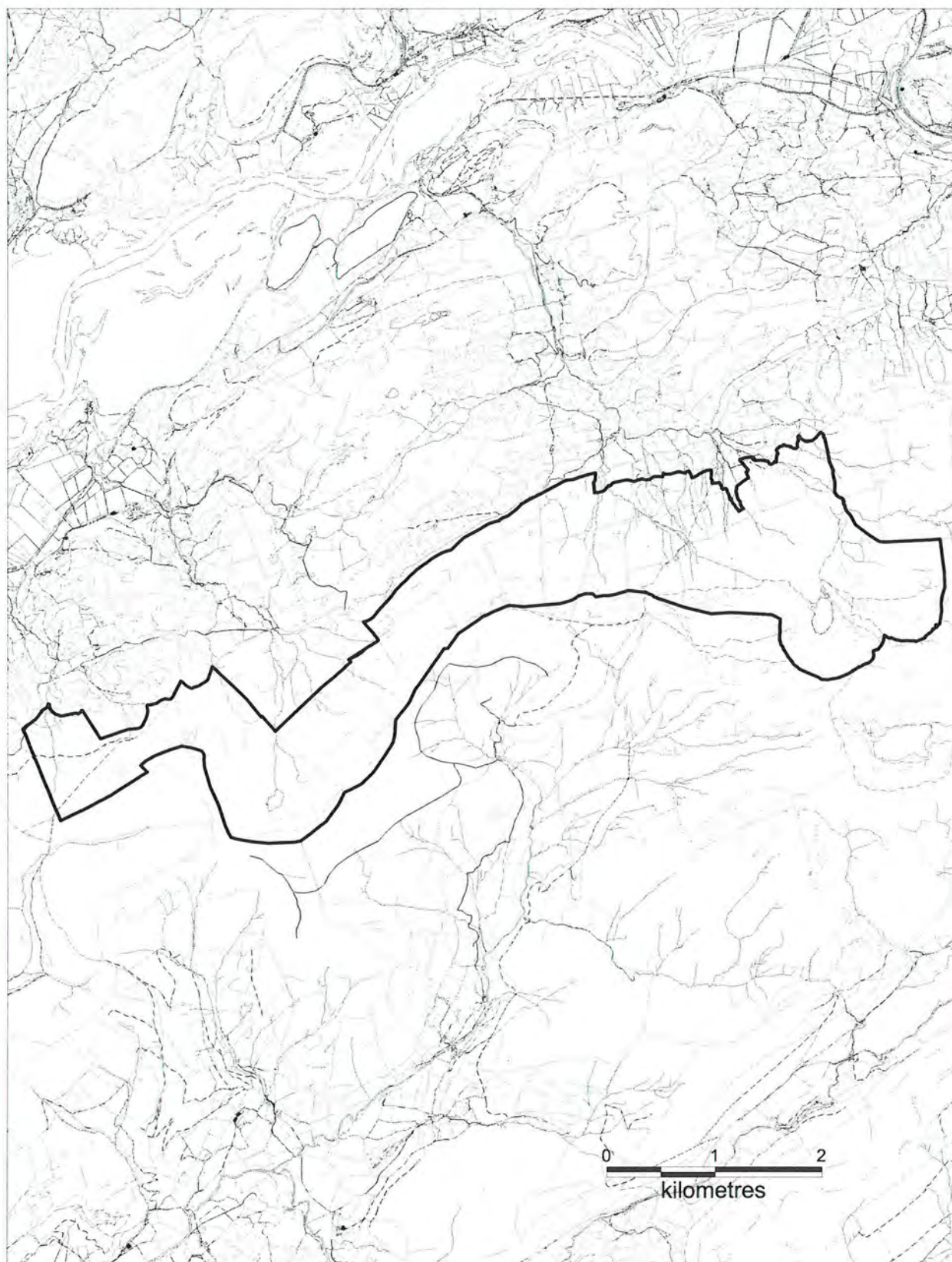




16      Open mountain, Bryn Brith

(PRN 18346)

The three central volcanic peaks of this geological SSSI, including Pen Moelyn, are clear in this view looking west at the eastern end of the area.



### Historic Landscape Characterisation - Mawddach

Historic Landscape Character Area  
17 - Northern slopes of Cadair Idris

*This map is reproduced by the National Assembly for Wales with the permission of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, (c) Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings.  
Licence Number: GD 272221*



*Historic background*

The Cadair Idris range has true mountain qualities, with precipices dropping to lakes and a particularly dramatic northern side (when it is visible!), where snow often lies late, which dominates the town of Dolgellau. The high summit ridge, with screes, boulders and high, wet gullies where alpine plants grow, is very popular with walkers: the highest peak (Mynydd Moel) is 863m, and there are several routes to the top. The mountain is associated with a number of myths and legends – it is the chair of the giant Idris, and anyone sleeping on the mountain overnight will awake as either a madman or a poet! Most of the western part of the area is labelled, on the 1839 Llangelynnin tithe map, as ‘Common’, while the eastern part, shown on the 1842 Dolgellau tithe map, shows only five or six huge enclosures defined by simple, straight, walls heading directly up the slopes (most of which can be traced today). These carry on down into area 18. Much of the land is described as belonging to Cefn yr Owen uchaf and isaf (see area 18).

*Key historic landscape characteristics**mountain summit and upland screes*

This area contains the summit of Cadair Idris and the steep, craggy, inhospitable slopes below on the northern side. The area contains few vestiges of previous human habitation beyond the typical, straight 19<sup>th</sup> century enclosure walls running across and down the slopes, a few sheep folds and a single prehistoric settlement site.

Most of this character area lies within the Cadair Idris SSSI (CCW ref. SSSI ‘Cadair Idris’ 31WMT) which altogether extends to some 1102ha in all, much of which includes a National Nature Reserve. It has been designated for its outstanding geomorphological importance which includes such features as the extensive Tal-y-lyn fault, as well as several corries and narrow summit ridges. Geologically it is a highly complex area; the massif comprises a section of well-exposed Ordovician volcanic and sedimentary rocks (see also areas 15 and 19). These support a range of plant communities, with grassland prevailing but which also contains bilberry heath and areas of montane moss heath, well-developed acidic soligenous mires and blanket mire, with remnants of sessile oak woodland on the lower slopes. There is a moderately-rich flora on the higher, less accessible slopes and ledges, and in addition some ornithological interest; it has also long been used for research and teaching purposes.

*Conservation priorities and management*

Conservation of the features and habitats for which it was designated SSSI (together with the open mountain atmosphere) must be the over-whelming priority. The area lies within Snowdonia National Park.

*CCW vertical AP reference: Geoscan, 1993, line 45 109 92 109*



17 Northern slopes of Cadair Idris

(PRN 18347)

Aerial view looking south-east towards the summit of Cadair Idris, with area 17 in the centre of the photograph below the summit ridge.





### Historic Landscape Characterisation - Mawddach

Historic Landscape Character Area  
18 - Medieval settlements, Islawr dref

This map is reproduced by the National Assembly for Wales with the permission of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, (c) Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings.  
Licence Number: GD 272221

*Historic background*

The 1842 Dolgellau tithe map shows a road leading up the eastern side of the Gwynant valley (now a footpath, and not the line of the present road) with tracks leading off it to a series of farms such as Glasdir (see photograph), Callestra, Tyn-y-llidiart, Pany-y-piod, Nant-y-gwyrddail, Cae-einion, Maes-yr-wynn, Erw-wen and Cefn-yr-owen uchaf and isaf (ten farms in all). All of these farms are situated on the western side of the Afon Gwynant, and all are recorded as being in the 'Township of Cefn-yr-owen'. Most of these farms are still inhabited (and listed) although some are derelict. The Cefn-yr-owen locality represents one of the earliest settlement areas in the community; tax returns for 1292-3 show ten for Cefn-yr-owen, as opposed to just three for Dolgellau (Higham, 1994).

To the east of the Afon Gwynant, most of the current farms are listed as being in the 'township of Dyffrydan': these include Dyffrydan itself, as well as Tyddyn mawr, Penrhwyngwyn, Tyddyn-rhiw and Ty-nant. Just north of these, yet another series of farms including Cae-yn-y-coed, Waen fechan, Hafod-dywyll, Ffrwd-y-brithyll (which lies in areas 8 and 19), Tyddyn Ivan Fychan and farms outside the project area are recorded as being in the 'township of Dolgledr'.

Unfortunately, the tithe map only shows holdings under the farm name, so it is impossible to reconstruct the actual fields that were in existence. However, it is clear from fieldwork that most of the current boundaries (some in use and some now disused) must date from at least the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, and it is likely that the landscape of this area owes much to its relatively dense occupation during the later medieval period.

*Key historic landscape characteristics*

*farmsteads, irregular fieldscape, trackway*

The area is characterised by a scattered settlement pattern of 17<sup>th</sup> century farms, most probably on the sites of earlier medieval settlements. Many of these are important and form a significant group of early, 17<sup>th</sup>-century farmsteads. It includes Cae-einion farmhouse and its barn (both grade II), both vernacular in style and rubble-built with slate roofs, Cefn-yr-owen uchaf (grade II\*) itself, Gallestra (grade II, and an interesting 17<sup>th</sup> century vernacular farm complex), Nant-y-gwyrddail bach (also grade II, a late 16<sup>th</sup> century upland house-and-byre range of considerable interest), the 17<sup>th</sup> century Nant-y-gwyrddail farmhouse and stable block. The field walls are drystone built, and many of them are on the top of substantial lynchets which display their age (probably at least medieval). The two trackways which cross the area (one a road, and the other now largely a trackway) are also probably medieval in origin.

*Conservation priorities and management*

Many of the farmsteads as outlined above are listed buildings (some with their associated outbuildings), and these must be the conservation priority, along with their surrounding fieldsapes. The area lies within Snowdonia National Park.

*CCW vertical AP reference: Geoscan, 1993, line 45 109 92 109*



18 Medieval settlements, Islawr dref (PRN 18348)

The remains of a medieval-derived landscape, characterised by farmsteads set amongst enclosed, steep fields and patches of woodland, are evident in this view of the deserted remains of Glasdir-mawr (mentioned in medieval documents) and its surrounding landscape.





### Historic Landscape Characterisation - Mawddach

Historic Landscape Character Area  
19 - Gwynant valley

This map is reproduced by the National Assembly for Wales with the permission of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, (c) Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings.  
Licence Number: GD 272221



*Historic background*

The current road which leads up through the valley and is situated on the western side of the river is relatively modern, as the 1842 Dolgellau tithe map shows the original road up from the estuary to the farms above is on the eastern side of the river. It still exists as a footpath and links the farms of Cae-yn-y-coed, Waen fechan, Hafod-dywyll (an important, rubble-built vernacular upland sub-medieval farmhouse dating from c. 1600), Ffrwd-y-brithyll and Tyddyn Ivan Fychan (recorded as being in the 'township of Dolgledr'). The origins of the name 'Kings', given to the bridge and the house which is now a Youth Hostel, is not known. Caban Cadair Idris, nearby is a former school and school-master's house, built in 1876 in a simple Gothic style which once served a thriving farming community (based on the farmhouses in area 18 above). There are no other recorded archaeological features here.

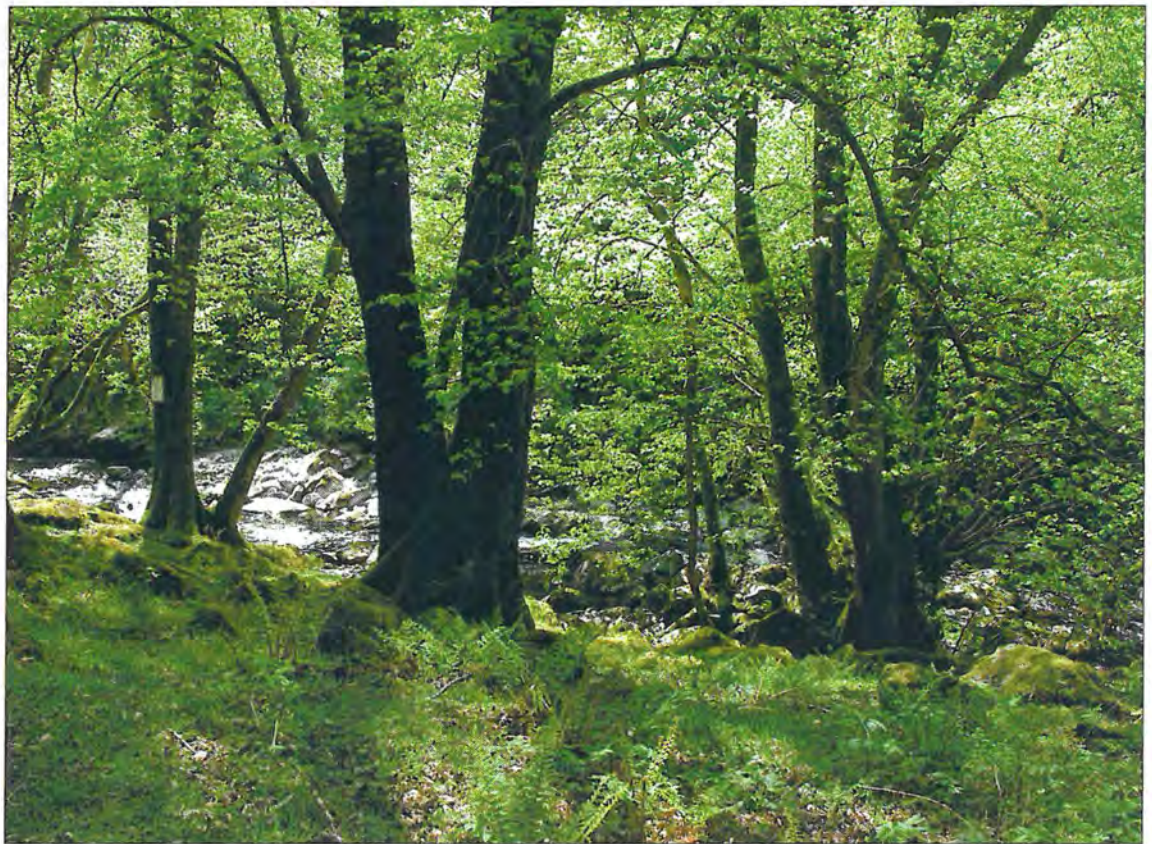
*Key historic landscape characteristics*

This is a small wooded area which is quite distinct from the surrounding landscape. Its extent, which is about 88ha, corresponds almost exactly with a SSSI (first designated in 1957 and revised in 1982) (CCW SSSI ref. 'Coedydd Abergwynant' 31WNA). It is a large oak woodland which extends along the, often steep-sided, ravine of the Afon Gwynant. Although much of the area is dominated by sessile oak, there are also areas of more mixed deciduous woodland comprising mainly ash and wych elm. The area is also important for bryophytes and ferns, some locally-rare shrubs and a good lichen flora (particularly on the hazel trees). This all supports an interesting set of breeding bird species, and the whole is growing over a series of Ordovician volcanic rocks (see also descriptions of areas 15 and 17) which are amongst the more common, acidic, sedimentary rocks which are responsible for the underlying appearance of this whole area around Cadair Idris.

*Conservation priorities and management*

Hafod-dywyll is grade II\* listed building (see above) and Caban Cadair Idris is listed as grade II, and the conservation of these should be a priority. There are no other recorded archaeological features here. Beyond these, the main management priorities must be to retain and improve the SSSI interest of underlying rocks, arboreal superstructure and bird population. The whole area lies within Snowdonia National Park.

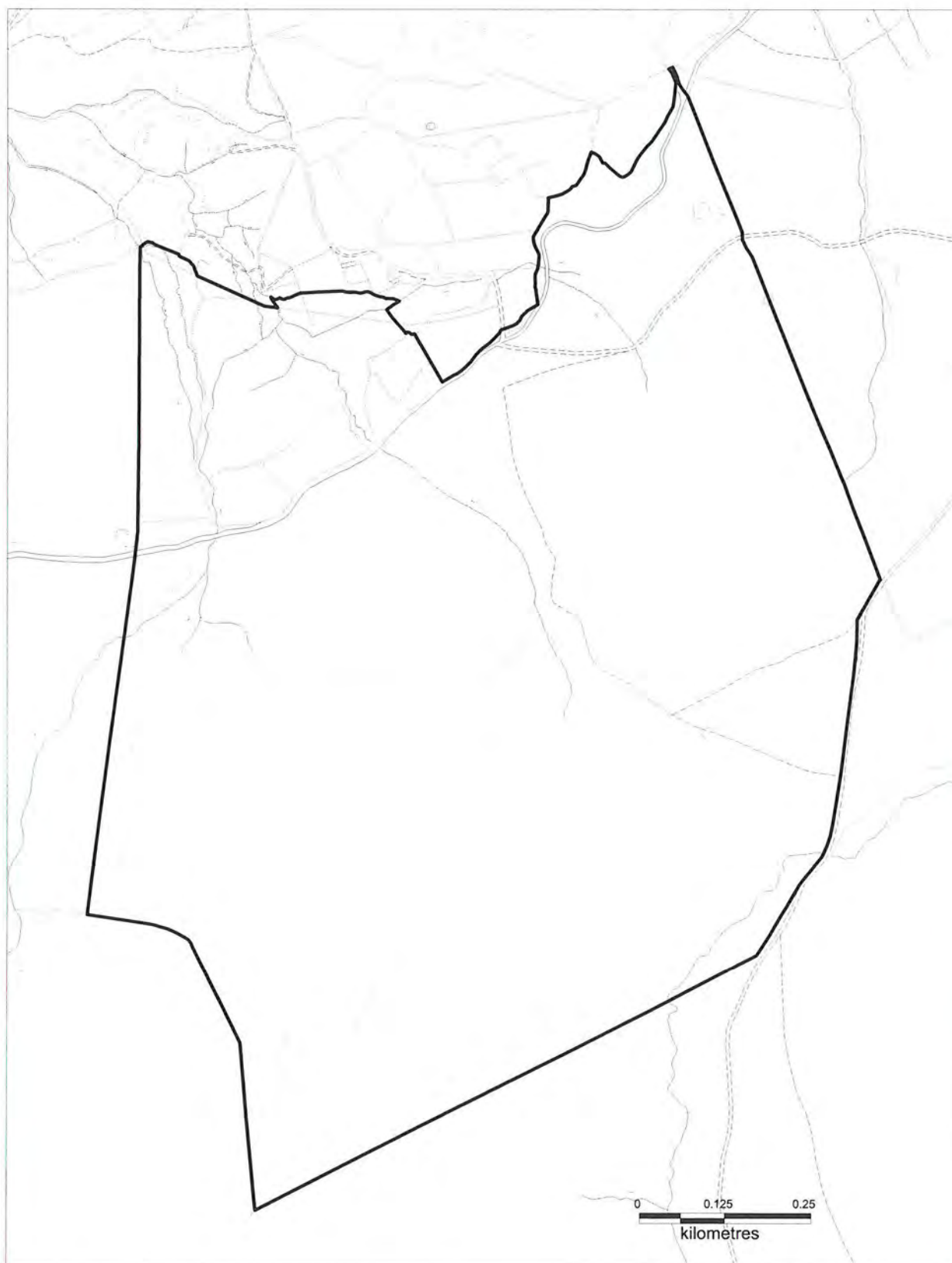
*CCW vertical AP reference: Geoscan, 1993, line 43 110 92 009*



19      Gwynant valley

(PRN 18349)

The intimate character of this narrow wooded valley (an SSSI), based on the narrow Afon Gwynant, with a largely oak upper storey and fern-dominated under storey, shows in this photograph.



### Historic Landscape Characterisation - Mawddach

Historic Landscape Character Area  
20 - Forestry, Cyfannedd

*This map is reproduced by the National Assembly for Wales with the permission of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, (c) Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. Licence Number: GD 272221*

## 20 Forestry, Cyfannedd (PRN 18350)

### *Historic background*

This area, now covered by modern forestry, contains at least five major archaeological sites (all scheduled) which testify to a long history of landuse here, particularly in the prehistoric period. The sites include burial cairns and later prehistoric settlements comprising hut circles, enclosures and associated walls.

Most of the area is described on the 1839 Llangelynnin tithe map as 'Common', and is shown as consisting of just one or two large enclosures. The area was unfortunately afforested in the 1960s by the Forestry Commission, but has been sold relatively recently to a private concern and timber is now being extracted.

### *Key historic landscape characteristics*

#### *20<sup>th</sup> century forestry, relict archaeology*

The accompanying aerial photograph shows the extent of the modern forestry which is completely unsympathetic to both the underlying archaeology and the surrounding landscape. In landscape terms, it is the forestry which is dominant, although the archaeology still exists within the understorey.

### *Conservation priorities and management*

The management of this area is of particular concern, as the extraction of trees is damaging both the archaeology within the forest, and the sites along the main road below where timber is dumped. The conservation of the scheduled ancient monuments must be a high priority. The area lies within Snowdonia National Park.

*CCW vertical AP reference: Geoscan, 1993, line 46 109 92 092*





Aerial view of the modern forestry planted at Cyfannedd in the latter part of the 20th century, completely disregarding both the underlying relict archaeology and the contemporary landscape.



### Historic Landscape Characterisation - Mawddach

Historic Landscape Character Area  
21 - Gallt Ffynnon yr Hydd

This map is reproduced by the National Assembly for Wales with the permission of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, (c) Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings.  
Licence Number: GD 272221

*Historic background*

The small enclosures shown on the 1839 Llangelynnin tithe map are much as they exist today. The stretch of railway which runs along the base of the cliffs here was the final stretch of the Cambrian Railway to be completed (technically it was the most difficult feat of engineering) in 1867. Otherwise, there is nothing of historic landscape interest here.

*Key historic landscape characteristics*

*railway, drystone walls*

An 11 kilometre-long coastal stretch from a point south of Morfa Mawddach (area 10) which takes in parts of Gallt Ffynnon yr Hydd (area 21), the coastal stretch to the south (area 13) and Llwyngwrl (area 22) was designated a SSSI (CCW ref. SSSI 'Glannau Tonfanau i Friog' 31 WVV) in 1999. It was designated for both its geological and marine biological interest. The north-west facing shore is backed by high rocky cliffs (area 21) while the majority of the coastline is made up of eroding, soft, sedimentary cliffs. It is important for its structural geological and mineralogical features which provide important evidence regarding the age of the Dolgellau Gold Belt. The cliffs and intertidal zone are composed of folded and faulted, south-east dipping sedimentary rocks which range in age from Middle Cambrian to Lower Ordovician. They consist of interceded mudstones, siltstones and sandstones and are located at the south-west end of the Dolgellau Gold Belt and which display Cambrian rocks which have a geochemical signature characteristic of the veins within the Gold Belt further north.

*Conservation priorities and management*

The area is moderately exposed to wave action, but there is nothing practical which needs to be done to ensure the continued character of this area. Most of the area (above high-water level) lies within Snowdonia National Park.

*CCW vertical AP reference: Geoscan, 1993, line 46 109 92 094*



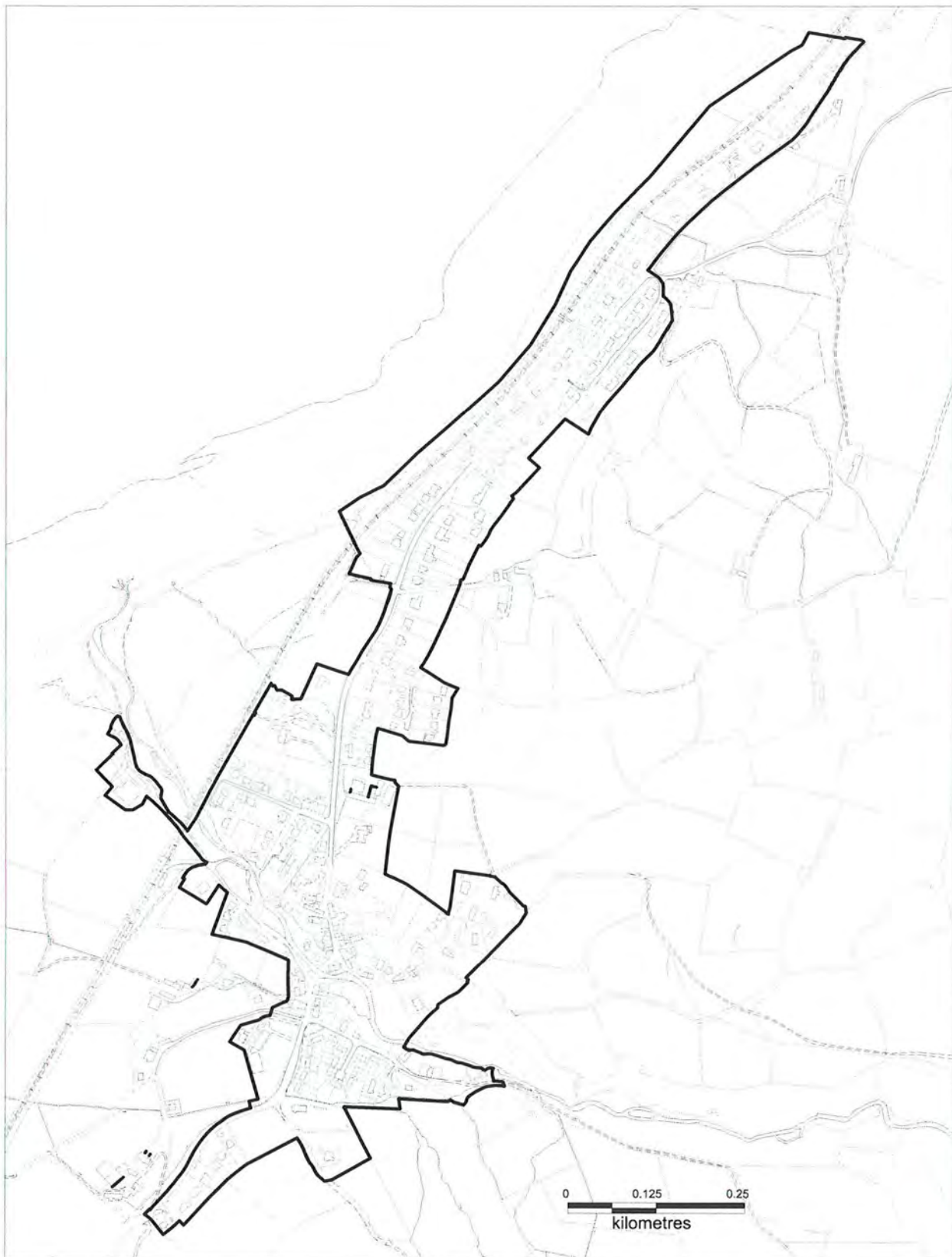


21      Gallt Ffynnon yr Hydd

(PRN 18351)

The steep, unimproved sea-facing slopes of this area, containing just a few (unnecessary) drystone walls, is visible in this view centred on Graig Wen with some 19th century houses along the main road visible at the bottom of the photograph.





## Historic Landscape Characterisation - Mawddach

Historic Landscape Character Area  
22 - Llwyngwril

This map is reproduced by the National Assembly for Wales with the permission of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, (c) Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings.  
Licence Number: GD 272221

*Historic background*

Llwyngwrl was one of the six medieval townships in the project area, and there is a reference in the Nannau papers (NLW A2, dated 1436) to the 'release by Llywelyn ap Evan ap Owain of Llwyngwrl to Mourning bychan ap Howell Self of a tenement called Tyddyn yn y Fron Goch in the township of Llwyngwrl'. Unfortunately this place-name cannot be traced. There are no buildings, and certainly no nucleated settlement, shown hereabouts on the 1839 Llangelynnin tithe map.

The village is a ribbon settlement which stretches out along the main road, and is largely a product of the post-railway (1867) age, when it developed as a seaside resort. The buildings display a wide range of styles and construction, developing outwards (and in time) from a central core around the bridge which carries the road across the Afon Gwrl (see photograph) where there are solid, stone-built terraces, two- and three-storeyed and many early 19<sup>th</sup>-century in date, a public house and shops, to the north in particular where there are stone- and brick-built detached and semi-detached villas, set in their own grounds. Like many of the late settlements on the western coast of Wales, the railway station (which was usually responsible for the settlements' development) was actually located outside (and west) of the actual settlement.

One of the prominent and more surprising features of the village is the Quaker burial ground towards the southern end in Bryn Tallwyn. By the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, many families in the area were Quakers, although this village is principally 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century in date. One of the prominent local people buried here was Dr George Walker (18087-84) who developed the quarries in the Panteinion valley (area 15).

*Key historic landscape characteristics**19<sup>th</sup> century ribbon development, Quaker cemetery*

Llwyngwrl is a largely late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century ribbon development set out along the main A493 road, with some nucleation towards its southern end where the road crosses the Afon Gwrl, and where the earliest origins of the settlement lie. The houses towards the southern end are mainly terraced while further north they give way to large, Victorian detached and semi-detached villas built in a variety of styles. The Quaker cemetery here is a distinctive historical feature.

*Conservation priorities and management*

There is a single listed building here – Hendre (grade II), a late 18<sup>th</sup> century or earlier stone-built cottage which actually pre-dates the settlement proper. There are too many different styles here to give the village a cohesive and distinct character. The area lies within Snowdonia National Park.

*CCW vertical AP reference: Geoscan, 1993, line 47 108 92 219*



22 Llwyngwrl

(PRN 18352)

A 19th century public house, now distinctly white-washed, and adjacent short terrace of stone-built, substantial, two-storey houses lie at the heart of this straggling, 19th and 20th century village on the main coast road between Dolgellau and Tywyn.





### Historic Landscape Characterisation - Mawddach

Historic Landscape Character Area  
23 - Fieldscape above Llwyngwril

This map is reproduced by the National Assembly for Wales with the permission of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, (c) Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings.  
Licence Number: GD 272221



***Historic background***

Most of the fields shown on the 1839 Llangelynnin tithe map appear to be larger than those that exist today, which implies that most of these fields were created since that time. There are few settlements and archaeological sites here.

***Key historic landscape characteristics***

*drystone walls, field patterns*

The area is characterised by its distinctive pattern of drystone field walls on the seaward-facing hillslopes above and around Llwyngwrl. There is little else of interest in the area (see below).

***Conservation priorities and management***

There are two scheduled ancient monuments in the area: the large, defended enclosure of Castell y Gaer and the kiln at Carn-gadell. However, the main historic landscape characteristic is the series of dry stone walls which dominate the sea-facing slopes: these and the pattern they form should be a conservation priority. The area lies within Snowdonia National Park.

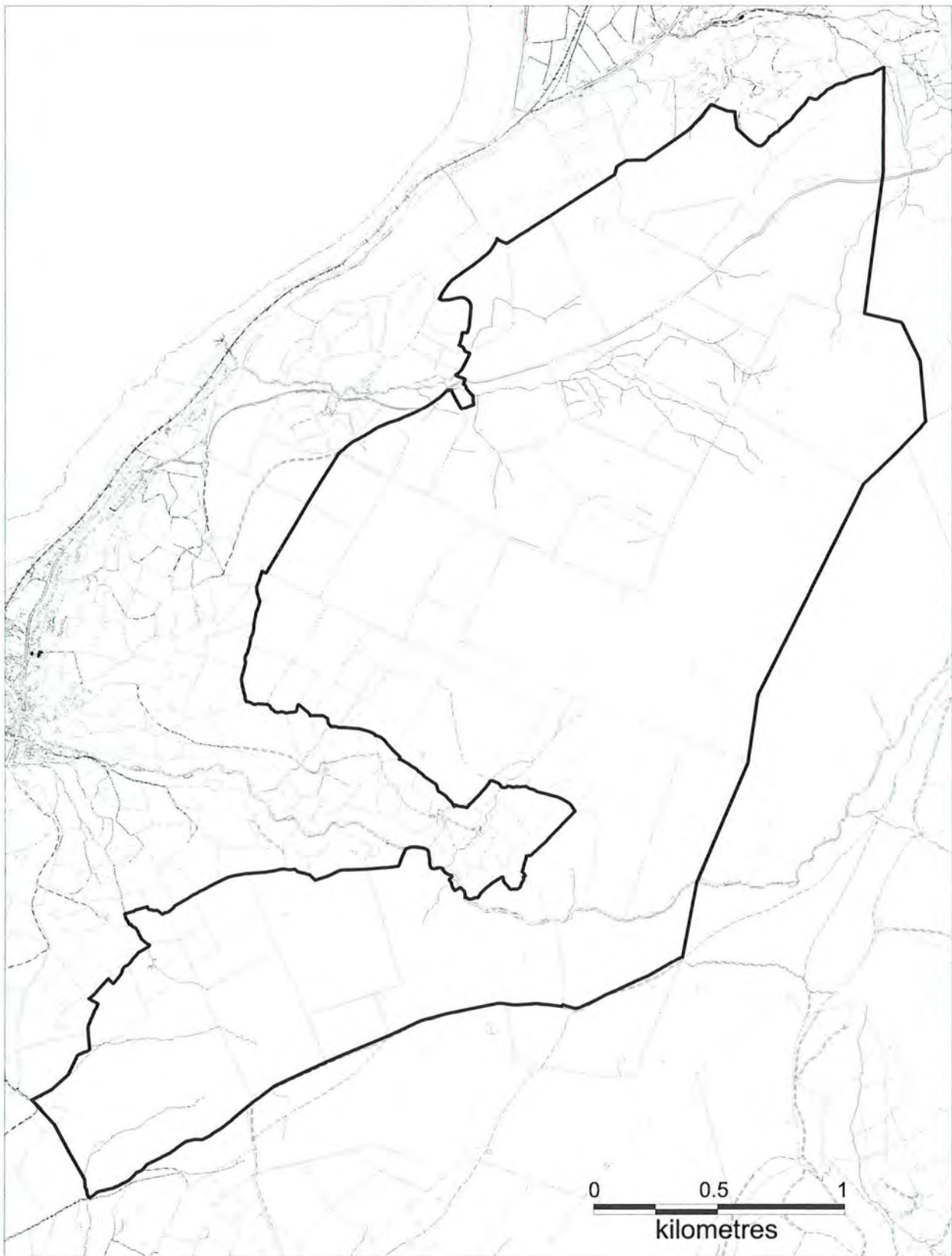
*CCW vertical AP reference: Geoscan, 1993, line 47 108 92 219*



23      Fieldscape above Llwngwrl

(PRN 18353)

The nature of this fieldscape, comprising large, irregular pasture fields defined by drystone walls on the gentler sea-facing slopes between the tree-line and the unenclosed uplands around Llwngwrl is clearly visible in this photograph.



### Historic Landscape Characterisation - Mawddach

Historic Landscape Character Area  
24 - Enclosed upland, Waun Oer

This map is reproduced by the National Assembly for Wales with the permission of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, (c) Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings.  
Licence Number: GD 272221

*Historic background*

The Mawddach area was certainly intensively used in the second millennium BC as demonstrated by the presence of two significant concentrations of funerary and ritual monuments typical of that period. One is on the south-facing slopes of Allt Llwyd, near Llwyngwrl, the other is on the plateau to the south of the Cregennan Lakes, Arthog. Both areas contain a variety of types of burial monument and the Cregennan area also has a number of standing stones and cup-marked stones. The two areas are linked by an ancient route, the Ffordd Ddu and the Cregennan area is also approached by another route from the west which has been identified as a prehistoric route because it is marked by two rows of standing stones and several burial cairns (Bowen and Gresham 1967). No actual settlement of that period has yet been identified here and it seems likely that both areas are specialised foci of funerary and ritual activity. The associated settlement may not have been far away, either in the lowland of the coastal plain or valleys or on better-drained slopes just above the coastal plain.

The large, irregular enclosures shown on the 1839 Llangelynnin tithe map are almost exactly as they exist today and almost all are labelled 'Common'. The area is also shown as being crossed by a number of 'unenclosed' trackways.

*Key historic landscape characteristics*

*relict prehistoric archaeology, remote atmosphere*

The principal characteristics of the area are the relict (prehistoric) archaeological remains, which are spread out along the former Ffordd Ddu in the northern part of the area along the cliff top. Otherwise, the majority of the area is devoid of much historic interest except for the typical straight, drystone walls, which divide the area up into large, 19<sup>th</sup>-century enclosures.

*Conservation priorities and management*

There are three scheduled areas here, along the former Ffordd Ddu on the cliff tops. At the eastern end, Bryn Seaward, there is a series of standing stones, cairns, settlements and enclosures; and further west, below a continuation of the row of standing stones, is a larger area which contains extensive settlement remains. The preservation of these must be a conservation priority, as should the preservation of the wild, open nature of the upper reaches of the area. The whole area lies within Snowdonia National Park.

*CCW vertical AP reference: Geoscan, 1993, line 47 108 92 219*





24      Enclosed upland, Waun Oer

(PRN 18354)

The wild, largely unenclosed nature of this character area, simply divided into large, regular (and irrelevant) enclosures by straight, drystone walls, is clearly visible behind the typical 'make-shift' shearing pens made of corrugated iron, odds and ends of fencing and an old caravan visible in the foreground.



### Historic Landscape Characterisation - Mawddach

Historic Landscape Character Area  
25 - Abergwynant designed landscape

This map is reproduced by the National Assembly for Wales with the permission of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, (c) Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings.  
Licence Number: GD 272221

*Historic background*

Abergwynant is a small nineteenth-century garden and park with kitchen garden and outbuildings (designated as grade II on the Cadw Register of Parks and Gardens - PGW (Gd) 32 (GWY)) which has the appearance of having been laid out all at one time and to have been little altered since.

The house and farm occupy most of a relatively level, sheltered site on the southern banks of the Mawddach estuary, and the house, which lies near the bottom of the landward slope of a substantial ridge, faces south-east and has a view down over its garden and then up to the hills south of the valley side. It is a solid, gabled, Victorian house, built of grey stone on a square plan, with large chimney-stacks and extravagantly decorated barge-boards. It was reputedly built by Sir Hugh Bunbury for Sir Robert Peel who died in 1850, but information about Peel's connections with this area has proved elusive. Later the property belonged to the Richards-Peel family. The house was sold and became a hotel in 1951, and remained so until 1992. After 1992 the house lay empty until recently. When the restoration is complete, it will once more open as a hotel.

*Key historic landscape characteristics**Victorian house, designed park and garden*

The house is surrounded by a series of connected stable buildings, cottages, coach house, kitchen garden etc. All the buildings are of stone with slate roofs, and a stone wall links them to enclose the yard. The greater part of the park, to the north, alongside the Mawddach estuary, is hilly and wooded, on the riverside ridge. The home farm lies on level ground to the south-west, beyond the Afon Gwynant, and on the east of the river is a small area of gently sloping open parkland. The house is on the north-eastern edge of this and the north-western valley is occupied by the kitchen gardens and stable-yard. The south-eastern valley is taken up by woods and a large fishpond. This is clearly not natural, being retained by a dam across its small valley.

Where the valleys open out is the parkland, with the garden area in the middle, immediately to the south of the house. The house is thus surrounded by its garden and park and backed by woods, but in fact lies towards the south corner of the park, the larger, wooded area being to the north, east and west. The woodland to the north has an extensive network of paths and rides, many now becoming overgrown but until recently offering literally miles of recreational routes. The woodland on the slope up from the edge of the Mawddach estuary is ancient oak woodland.

South of the woods, the parkland is still easily recognisable as such, and the area immediately south-east of the house retains a number of specimen trees. This area has rocky outcrops and has probably not been ploughed, although the rest has. Further east is a large artificial fishpond, which once had a boat house, and more woods fill the long triangle north-east of this, between the main drive and the A 493. The garden, woods and parkland all appear to be contemporary, and are stylistically compatible with a mid nineteenth-century date, as suggested for the house. From maps it is clear that the present layout is close to that of the late nineteenth/early twentieth century, and as it is stylistically Victorian it may well be original. During the time it was run as a hotel the gardens and parkland were maintained but little altered.

The garden area is fairly small, and consists largely of a shrubbery or 'wilderness', with a sloping lawn and a terrace around the house. The wilderness, which is given this designation on the second edition 25-in. Ordnance Survey map, is of course not in any modern sense wild, and has in fact an immensely complex and detailed design, thickly planted with shrubs. The kitchen garden is probably contemporary with the house, and the orchard is presumably more or

less contemporary with the rest of the gardens and park, but may have been added to the kitchen garden, with the extension of the latter, at a slightly later date.

***Conservation priorities and management***

Proper management of the park and garden is of paramount and singular importance here. The area lies within Snowdonia National Park.

*CCW vertical AP reference: Geoscan, 1993, line 43 110 92 008*





25      Abergwynant designed landscape      (PRN 18355)

This view, which looks eastwards, shows Abergwynant house near the centre of the ornamental, designed parkland which has placed it on the Cadw Register of Parks and Gardens.

## 10 Bibliography

### 10.1 Published sources

- Berry, D, 2002, *Walks around Barmouth and the Mawddach Estuary* (Welshpool).
- Bowen, G (ed), 1971, *Atlas Meirionnydd*, Bala.
- Bowen, E G and Gresham, C A, 1967, *The History of Merioneth, Vol. 1*, Dolgellau.
- Boyd, J I C, 1979, *Narrow-gauge railways in mid-Wales*.
- Budenberg, G F (ed.), 1987, *Lewis Morris: Plans in St. George's Channel, 1748* (Stockport).
- Cragg, R (ed), 1997, *Civil engineering heritage - Wales and west central England*, London
- Cadw & ICOMOS, 1998, *Conwy, Gwynedd & the Isle of Anglesey, Register of Landscapes, Parks and Gardens of special Historic Interest in Wales: Part 1: Parks and Gardens*, Cardiff
- Crew, P, 1978, 1979, 1981, Cyfannedd fawr, Arthog, *Archaeology in Wales*, 18, 19, 21, CBA (Wales).
- Crew, P, 1998. Excavations at Crawwellt West, Merioneth, 1990-98: A late prehistoric upland iron-working settlement, *Archaeology in Wales*, 38, 22-35.
- Davies, E, 1973, Hendre and hafod in Merioneth, *JMHRs*, vii, pt 1, 13-27.
- Eckley, M & Lewis, M, nd, *Cwmwd Arduwy* (Harlech).
- Edlin, H L (ed), 1975, *Forestry Commission Guide to the Cambrian Forests* (London).
- Evans, Rev. J, 1800, *A Tour through part of North Wales*.
- Evans, W H & Jones, M, 1996, *The Mawddach Estuary* (Birkenhead).
- Farr, M, 2001, *Underground Wales* (Llandysul).
- Fenton, R, 1917 edition, *Tours in Wales 1804-1813*.
- Ffoulkes, W.W. 1852. Tumuli, Merionethshire, *Arch. Camb.* 2<sup>nd</sup> ser. 3, 96-104.
- Gascoigne, C P, 1922, The story of the Cambrian – a biography of a railway (Llandybie).
- Godwin, F and Toulson, S, 1977, *The drovers' roads of Wales*, London.
- Hall, G W, 1988, *The gold mines of Meirioneth* (Hereford).
- Harrison, A, nd, *The light of other days: a history of Friog and Fairbourne*.
- Hellyer, A G L, 1975, 'On the edge of an estuary', *Country Life*, 18 September 1975, pp. 704-06.
- Hemp, W J, 1960, the tale of a bucket, *JMHRs*, III, pt IV, 353-9.
- Heywood, A, 1902, *A Guide to Barmouth and Harlech*.
- Heyworth, A and Kidson, C, 1982, Sea-level changes in southwest England and Wales, *Proc. Geol. Assoc.* 73, 91-111.
- Jenkins, J G, 1977, 'Rural Industry in Merioneth' *JMHRs* 81, pp. 1-15

- Jenkins, J G, 1969, *The Welsh Woollen Industry* (Cardiff)
- Jones, E R, 1909, *A History of Barmouth and its Vicinity*.
- Jones, A R & Tydeman, W (eds), 1979, Hicks, J, 1795, *A pedestrian tour through North Wales, in a series of letters* (Cardiff)
- Lewis, *Medieval Boroughs of Snowdonia*
- Lewis, S, 1833, *A Topographical Dictionary of Wales*.
- Lloyd, W L, 1973, *Barmouth and Maritime Merioneth*.
- Lloyd, W L, 1974, *The town and port of Barmouth (1565 – 1973)* Maritime Merioneth (Porthmadog).
- Lloyd, W L, 1977, *The Unity of Barmouth* (Denbigh).
- Lloyd, W L, 1981, *Sails on the Mawddach*, Maritime Merioneth 7.
- Milner, W J, 1996, *Rails through the sand* (Chester).
- Owen, H J, 1950, *Treasures of the Mawddach*.
- Parkinson, A J, 1984, 'Fulling Mills in Merioneth' *JMHR* 9 IV, pp 420-56
- Parry, O, 1953, 'The Hearth Tax of 1662 in Merioneth', *JMHR* 2 I, pp 16-37
- Pennant, T, 1781, *A Tour in Wales* (re-printed 1991, Wrexham).
- Percy, G C B, nd, *The Mawddach Estuary*.
- Pritchard, R T, 1961, 'Merionethshire Roads and Turnpike Trusts' *JMHR* 4 I, pp 22-36
- Richards, A J, 1991, *A gazetteer of the Welsh slate industry*, Llanrwst.
- Roberts, G M, 1971, 'Methodistiaid Calfinaidd' in *Atlas Meirionnydd* (Bala)
- Roscoe, T, 1836, *Wanderings and Excursions in North Wales*.
- Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments and Constructions, 1921, *An Inventory of the Ancient Monuments in Wales and Monmouthshire vol. VI – County of Merioneth* (London)
- Soulsby, I, 1983, *The towns of medieval Wales*, Chichester.
- Sloan, R, 1991, *Wings of war over Gwynedd*, Llanrwst
- Smith, J Beverley & Smith, L I Beverly (eds), 2001, *History of Merioneth volume II – the middle ages*, Cardiff
- Thomas, C, 1967a, 'Merioneth Estates, 1790-1850: A Study in Agrarian Geography' *JMHR* 5 III, pp 221-38
- Thomas, C, 1967b, 'Enclosure and the rural landscape of Merionethshire in the sixteenth century' *Institute of British Geographers*, 42, pp 153 - 162
- Williams-Jones, K, 1973, *The Merioneth Lay Subsidy Roll*

## 10.2 Cartographic sources

Ordnance Survey Merioneth 1886-1918 series 25"/1 mile

Ordnance Survey 1976 series 1/10,000 maps

## 10.3 Unpublished documents

CCW, 1999, *Aber Mawddach management plan*.

Gwynedd Archaeological Trust, 1996, *Coastal erosion survey – Aberdaron-Aberdyfi* (GAT project G1315, report no. 196).

Gwynedd Archaeological Trust, 1996, *Upland survey – Cadair Idris SSSI (part)* (GAT project G1322, report no. 198).

Gwynedd Archaeological Trust, 1997, *Welsh historic churches project - Gwynedd gazetteer, part 4 Meirionnydd*.

Higgon, I, 1990, *Arthog*.

Higham, M, 1994, *A Snowdonia township* (unpubl. MA thesis, University of York).

Sambrook, R P and Williams, G, 1996, Cardigan Bay Coastal Survey, *DAT report no. PRN 30751*.

Smith, G H, 1999, *The Gwynedd Hut Group Project, Archaeology and Conservation*, GAT, Report No. 357.

Wallingford, H R & Cascade Consulting, March 2003, *Restoration of the Mawddach Estuary – a desk top study*, CCW Report 575, contract no. 4609.

## 10.4 Visual material

There are many photographs of Barmouth and the bridge in the Francis Frith collection (1822-1898). For details see [www.francisfrith.com](http://www.francisfrith.com).

John Varley (1778 – 1842) Watercolour artist produced many paintings of the area including

1804	Sunrise from top of Cader Idris
1803	Part of Cader Idris and Tal y Llyn
1807	Barmouth – a sketch
1808	Barmouth
1809	View of Cader Idris
1809	Cader Idris
1810	Barmouth
1812	Cader Idris
1813	Cader Idris x 2
1814	Barmouth
1815	Barmouth
1816	Cader Idris

(see Kauffman, C M, 1984, *John Varley (1778-1842)* (London))



## ***APPENDIX I***

Extracts from the Register of Landscapes of Outstanding Historic Interest in Wales

Mawddach HLW (Gw) 11

*Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Gwynedd*  
Gwynedd Archaeological Trust

*Craig Beuno*, Ffordd y Garth, Bangor, Gwynedd LL57 2RT  
Tel. / Ffon: 01248 352535 Fax. Ffacs: 01248 370925  
email / ebost: [gat@heneb.co.uk](mailto:gat@heneb.co.uk)

Gwynedd Archaeological Trust is both a Limited Company (Reg. No. 1180515) and a Charity (Reg. No. 508849)