

GLAMORGAN-GWENT ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

ARCHAEOLOGICAL DESK TOP STUDY
MAESLLAN LANDS, GELLIGAER

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CONTENTS	PAGE
Executive summary	3
Acknowledgements	3
1. Introduction	4
2. Physical environment	5
3. Summary of archaeological resource	6
4. Impact of proposals on archaeological resource	9
Bibliography	10
Appendix One: Specification	11
Appendix Two: Summary of information on the county Sites and Monuments Record	13
Appendix Three: Cartographic and documentary evidence	14
Appendix Four: Aerial photograph evidence	16
Appendix Five: Previous fieldwork in the area	17
Appendix Six: Site visit	18
Appendix Seven: Catalogue of research archive	20
Figure One: Plan of development area	
Figure Two: Areas of archaeological interest	

Executive summary

Rhymney Valley District Council requested an archaeological assessment before determining a planning proposal for the development of a golf-course at Maesllan Lands. A desk-top study of the archaeological implications was carried out. This examined the Sites and Monuments Record, documentary records, maps, and aerial photographs to define the nature of the archaeological resource in the area.

As a result of this work it has been possible to define several areas where archaeological features may be present. These include a possible Roman cemetery alongside the road on the eastern side of the site; prehistoric burial structures in the north and a 6th century monastic site in the west. There is also a possibility that a prehistoric settlement is located somewhere in the vicinity of the survey area. Any of these features, if confirmed in the area of the proposed golf-course, may be designated by the Secretary of State for Wales as a Scheduled Ancient Monument and it is therefore advised that further investigation of the area including trial excavation is undertaken before the planning permission is determined.

Acknowledgements

This report was prepared by C.N.Maylan, (Assessment Officer, Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust), with the assistance of other GGAT staff.

The author is grateful to the staffs of Glamorgan County Record Office; the Library of the University College of Wales, Cardiff; Swansea Reference Library and the Central Register of Air Photography for Wales, Cardiff. He is also indebted to M.Locock, E.M.Evans and J.Compton of the Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust and Mr Witney-Jones of the Gelligaer Historical Society for their advice.

1. Introduction

1.1 Development threat and commission

Mr A.Courtney submitted a planning application (5/5/92/0109) to Rhymney Valley District Council proposing the construction of a golf-course at Maesllan Lands, Gelligaer. To enable determination of this application to be made, the applicant was requested to produce an archaeological assessment of the proposed development. In order to comply with this request, Mr Courtney through his agents Geraint Davies Trigg Associates, commissioned the Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust to undertake a desk-top study of the proposed development.

1.2 Specification for the report

This report was to include a summary of the information on the County Sites and Monuments Record, checking of air photographs held by the Welsh Office, examination of documentary and cartographic sources in the Glamorgan Record Office and the library of the University of Wales College Cardiff, and a site visit to check current land-use and factors likely to affect the condition of identified sites: on the basis of this research the implications of the affect of the proposals on the archaeological resource were to be defined. The specification is included as Appendix 1. While all available sources of information about the buried remains have been consulted, the nature of archaeological sites cannot be reliably predicted prior to excavation.

1.3 Scope of the report

The report describes the physical background of the site (Section 2), the nature of known or likely archaeological sites in the area (Section 3), and the impact of the proposals on the archaeological sites (Section 4). The information on which the conclusions are based is listed in the Appendices.

1.4 Abbreviations used in the report

Sites previously recorded in the county Sites and Monuments Record are referred to by their Primary Record Number (PRN) and National Grid Reference. References to documents and published works are given in brackets: the full titles will be found in the bibliography.

2. Physical environment

2.1 Topography

The site of the proposed development (see figure 1) lies on a southerly slope (dropping from 259m to 236m) to the north of Gelligaer and is bounded on the east by a road known as the Heol Adam, on the south by the B.4253 and on the west and north by dry-stone walling. The land is all currently pasture, that 'at the south-western corner being rough grazing. In the centre of field 2 (ST 1255 9723) stands a small copse of mature oaks, this is the only area of formal woodland; although some trees are present on the field boundaries. The field boundaries consist of dry-stone walls up to 2m high, or the remnants of such walling which have collapsed and now survive as low banks, topped by wire fences.

2.2 Surface Geology

The underlying geological strata is red sandstone. It is overlain by a combination of sols bruns acides and gleyed soils (Crampton and Webley 1963, 329). This geological change would probably render any geophysical investigation of the archaeology ineffectual. Geotechnical investigation of the site has not yet been undertaken.



3. Summary of archaeological resource

3.1 General

The identification of sites in the vicinity of the survey has relied on chance finds. The majority of archaeological interest in the area has been centred on the Roman forts at Gelligaer. The site is bordered on the east by the Heol Adam which may be on the route of a Roman road and is likely to have been a route way from the earliest period of man's settlement. The strategic importance of this area can be seen by the Roman forts and the medieval castle at Gelligaer. It is therefore possible that evidence for all periods of human activity may be found in the assessment area.

3.2 Prehistoric

Neolithic, Bronze Age and Iron Age activity have all been recorded in the vicinity of the survey area (chiefly to the north on Gelligaer Common). The principal prehistoric feature in the survey area is the cup-marked stone (a Scheduled Ancient Monument) called Maen Cattwg (ST 1269 9744). Although this may be an isolated feature, it is more likely to be part of a tomb structure. Cup-marked stones have been found as part of both Neolithic Chambered Tombs and Bronze Age Round Barrows (Ashbee 1958, 191). Normally Chambered Tombs are solitary features, whilst Round Barrows are found in groups. Some Round Barrows were sited on the remains of previous settlements (Savory 1962, 15) and some form of settlement associated with this possible tomb may be situated in the vicinity of the survey area.

3.3 Roman

The Roman occupation of this area is dominated by the military presence at Gelligaer. This commenced c.AD74-78 with the construction of an earth-and-timber fort (PRN 1131) of 2.2 hectares centred at ST 1331 9723. This was replaced by a smaller stone fort (PRN 661), towards the south, between AD 103-111. This fort appears to have been occupied until the late second century AD and possibly re-occupied in the late third/fourth century.

The earth and timber fort would have provided a base for a garrison of 1000 infantry or 500 cavalry, whilst the stone fort would have probably housed a auxiliary infantry unit of 500 men (RCAHMW¹ 1976b, 98).

The forts lies on the main Roman route between Cardiff and Brecon. The remains of this road are slight. It has been suggested by the Ordnance Survey that it followed the line of the present Heol Adam alongside the development area. Although cartographic evidence suggests that a now-destroyed hedge line

1. RCAHMW is an anacronym for the Royal Commission for Ancient and Historic Monuments in Wales

some 100m to the east may represent the route. It is possible that both lines are roads and that while the eastern route passed through the fort the Heol Adam route was a by-pass.

Roman forts, especially those which were occupied for a long period, usually have an associated civilian settlement (vicus) surrounding them. Outside the confines of the habitation and usually alongside major roads it is usual to find cemeteries. These are often located on high ground overlooking the fort and settlement. No evidence for the vicus has been located in the Gelligaer area. It is unlikely to be located in the assessment area; however, it is more likely that a cemetery may be in this area. Although a small cremation cemetery was found to the south of the fort in 1910, the high ground alongside the possible road, marked by the Heol Adam, would appear to be a possible location for a cemetery.

3.4 Early Medieval (5th to 11th Centuries)

The period between the Roman withdrawal from Wales and the start of its conquest by the Normans is confused by the lack of reliable historical sources and the ephemeral nature of the archaeological evidence. Apart from a slab with a ring cross incised on it, found at Capel Gladys (ST 1249 9928), little definite evidence for human activity during this period in the area of the survey has been found. In 1966, Gethin-Thomas suggested that field 2 may have been the site of a monastery founded by St Cadoc during the 6th century (for further discussion on this site, see Appendix 5).

3.4 Medieval

Gelligaer was part of the Lordship of Senghenydd, with the castle situated at ST 137 969 being one of the principal strongholds. It is probable that a settlement was positioned close to the castle, but there may have been some outlying farmsteads. Although it is possible that the later farmstead at Maesllan was preceded by a medieval one; the apparent creation of the farm in 1747 would seem to preclude this.

In 1150 Griffith ap Ifor granted a large tract of land in Senghenydd (probably including the survey area) to the Abbey of Margam. Although this grant was confirmed by William, Earl of Gloucester, the land does not appear to have become a permanent part of the Margam Estate. However, it is possible that some form of monastic building was constructed to exploit this land.

3.5 Post-Medieval

Before 1719 the survey area was part of Hendai Farm. In 1719 it was purchased from Edmund Lewis by Edward Morgan. In 1747 it appears to have been divided as a separate land-holding and leased to William Edwards.

By the time of the Tithe Map (1842) the lands of Maesllan had been combined into the present land allotment and were part of the estates of Sir Charles Morgan of Ruperra Castle. It was let to a tenant Lewis Williams. The farmstead for the farm was situated in a small enclosure in the south-east corner of field 7 at ST 1304 9733. The remains of the homestead are still visible and it would appear to have been of low status.

4. Impact of development proposals on archaeological resource

Although golf-course development appears to cause little damage to archaeological deposits, the initial construction can cause extensive destruction. Archaeological deposits are to be found in the zone between topsoil and bedrock. Any activity which disturbs the present topsoil may therefore damage or destroy the the archaeological remains. This means that a wide range of activities have archaeological implications including:

- stripping of topsoil
- removal of subsoil as part of landscaping.
- quarrying and exposure of bedrock.
- drainage and irrigation works
- underground cables and services
- deep cultivation and ploughing
- removal of trees
- planting of trees and shrubs
- buildings
- road construction
- burial by dumped soil

It will therefore be apparent that conventional techniques of golf-course construction will have a wide-ranging archaeological impact, and therefore that considerable mitigatory measures may be necessary. What form these will take cannot be proposed at present as the state of archaeological knowledge relating to the identified potential sites within the development area is uncertain and this can only be tested by ground investigation. The principal areas that will require further investigation are:

Alongside the Heol Adam (to investigate the possible Roman cemetery).

In the area surrounding the Scheduled Ancient Monument called Maen Cattwg (to investigate the possibility of prehistoric funerary structures and settlement).

In the area of the oak copse in field 2 (to investigate the possible celtic monastery).

Scheduled Ancient Monuments

The cup-marked stone (Maen Cattwg ST 1269 9744) is a Scheduled Ancient Monument. As such no action that will damage or alter the monument is allowed. It is possible that further investigation will discover other archaeological sites which are in categories that the Secretary of State for Wales may consider qualifies as of national importance, and that he may adopt as Scheduled Ancient Monuments. This may force the design of the golf-course to be radically altered and it would therefore be useful for further investigation works to be undertaken as soon as possible.

Further Investigation

Further investigation of the area will require trial excavation. The changing nature of the geology coupled with the ephemeral nature of archaeological remains likely to be present on the site would suggest that geophysical techniques would not be suitable for this situation. Although it is possible to delineate foci of archaeological interest, there is a possibility of archaeological features (especially prehistoric) being located in any part of the survey area. We would suggest that a series of trial trenches should be excavated. The majority of these should be concentrated on the three areas outlined above; however, a random system of trial areas should be opened in other parts of the affected area to investigate further possible archaeological features not located in this report.



Figure Two: Areas of archaeological interest

Sources Consulted

- Ashbee P. 1958 "The Excavation of the Tregulland Barrow, Treneglos Parish, Cornwall" Antiquaries Journal XXXVIII 174-196.
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- Thomas V.D. 1992 The Farms and Farmers of Senghenydd Supra Prior to the Industrial Revolution Privately Published, Leicester.

Appendix One: Specification

1. Objectives
 - 1.1 Assessment of existing archaeological information to determine the extent, character and significance of archaeological interests. in both local regional and wider contexts and the likely effects of the proposed development on such interests by means of documentary study and field visit.
 - 1.2 Identification of areas or features requiring further assessment, where there is good reason to believe that present archaeological knowledge is insufficient for informed decisions to be made during the planning process.
2. Searches
 - 2.1 Collation of information pertaining to sites recorded in the County Sites and Monuments Record (SMR).
 - 2.2 Searches of relevant cartographic sources for additional archaeological information and collation of information relating to archaeological interests.
 - 2.3 Analysis of aerial photographic coverage for additional archaeological information and collation of information relating to archaeological interests.
 - 2.4 Analysis of relevant historical documents for additional archaeological information and collation of information relating to archaeological interests.
3. Fieldwork
 - 3.1 Site visit to check present condition of visible archaeological features identified through the execution of 2.1 - 2.4 and to assess factors that may have influenced the condition and/or visibility of archaeological features.
 - 3.2 Identification of unknown archaeological features or sites.
 - 3.3 Rapid recording of archaeological features or sites (eg sketch plotting and photographs)
4. Assessment
 - 4.1 Assessment of importance of information acquired from the execution of 2.1-2.4 and 3.1.

- 4.2 Assessment of the impact of the development proposals on defined archaeological interests.

- 5. Report
 - 5.1 Client - Synthesis of data gathered through the execution of 2-4, together with inclusions of supporting evidence in appendices as appropriate and identification of areas or features of archaeological interest onto scale drawings and/or listing of such features by eight figure National Grid References. Identification of legal constraints (eg scheduled ancient monuments, listed buildings etc) relating to archaeological interests.
 - 5.2 Academic - Digest report of significant archaeological information in appropriate outlet (eg regional/national journal or bulletin).
 - 5.3 Other - initial notification of sites without statutory protection which may satisfy the Secretary of State's criteria for national importance which is a prerequisite for statutory protection.

- 6. Archive
 - 6.1 Preparation of an ordered archive of records made during the assessment, but excluding matters affected by confidentiality or copyright.
 - 6.2 Deposition of the assessment archive with an appropriate organisation, preferably the County SMR.

- 7. Staff
 - 7.1 The project will be managed by the Trust's Principal Archaeological Officer (Contracts) AG Marvell who is a member of the Institute of Field Archaeologists validated at Member grade and carried out under the supervision of one of the Trust's Assessment Officers or project Managers (to be identified) all of whom have wide experience of undertaking such works.

Appendix Two: Sites listed on the county Sites and Monuments Record, held at GGAT, Swansea

The Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) is a directory of archaeological records kept by the Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust Ltd., and adopted by the Mid-Glamorgan County Council as an official archaeological record. Each entry in this record is assigned a primary record number (PRN).

655m Maen Cattwg ST 1269 9744 cup-marked stone

This is a rectangular block of stone measuring laying flat on the ground surface. It is 2.6m long, 1.7m wide and 0,6m high. The upper surface is covered by a series of 33 cup-marks. Two more slabs of stone are visible under the western corner of the main stone, these have been suggested as part of a collapsed cromlech of which the main stone formed the capstone (RCAHMW 1976a, 43)

A62 Heol Adam Roman Road

The traces of this road are slight and its existence is presumed as it would link a chain of Forts. It is assumed by the RCHAM(W) and the Ordnance Survey to follow, or be close to, the line of Heol Adam, but no definite evidence for this has been found.

Appendix Three: Cartographic and documentary evidence

Cartographic Evidence.

Maps relevant to the proposed development and retained by the Glamorgan County Archives and the Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust were examined. These plans can be divided in two groups:-

- i) Ordnance Survey maps drawn from 1876;
- ii) Tithe plans drawn c.1842;

i) Ordnance Survey maps.

Three editions of the Ordnance Survey were examined, these were; the first edition (1876/9), the second edition (1899) and the third edition (1919).

The Ordnance Survey plans show that fields 3 and 8 were divided into two parts by east-west field in 1875. The boundary in field 3 was removed by 1899 and the one in field 8 by 1919.

A track is marked on all of these maps leading from the northern boundary of field 1 at ST 1242 9749 to the north-west corner of field 3. It then crosses field 3 to the north-west corner of field 8 and proceeds eastward across field 8 until it meets the Heol Adam at ST 1303 9736. Another track is marked on the maps of 1899 and 1919 proceeding from where the first track enters field 3 south to the Gelligaer Road, meeting it at ST 1267 9710.

The farm, in a separate enclosure in the south-eastern corner of field 7 is shown on all plans.

A ditch running south-west from the copse of oaks in field 2 was shown on the 1875 map but not on any of the later maps.

The line of the road known as Heol Adam was marked on the 1875 map as "supposed site of Roman road" and on the later maps as "Roman road"; however, outside the area of the survey, the line of field boundaries between ST 1310 9735 and ST 1298 9749 may represent the line of this feature.

ii) Tithe Map

The tithe plans were drawn c.1840 to enable the Tithe Commissioners to commute tithes payable in goods to tithes payable in money. The majority of parishes in England and Wales are covered by these plans. The tithe plans show field boundaries, buildings, streams and land usage. The tithe apportionment (the register that accompanies the plan) lists the owners and tenants of the parish and also records the field names, which sometimes can suggest former uses of the area.

A copy of the tithe map of Gelligaer was consulted at the Glamorgan Record Office. This plan was drawn by William Jones of Brecon in 1842. The lands of Maesllan were owned by Sir Charles

Morgan of Ruperra and rented to Lewis Williams. At this stage the farm was divided into twelve parcels of land, with fields 3 and 8 being divided east-west to form two extra fields and the homestead being depicted in a small enclosure in the south-eastern corner of field 7.

The apportionment gives the field names and a list with their possible meaning follows:-

Site No	Tithe No.	Field Name	Meaning
1	1661	Pengwaun	Edge of Meadow
2	1662	Waun Maesllan	Maesllan Meadow
3	1663	Cae Maen Catwg	Maen Catwg Field
3a	1664	Cae Ffwg	
4	1665	Cae Gorlon	Fold Field
5	1666	Cae Mawr	Big Field
6	1667	No name	
7a	1668	Cae Dubwnt'r Ty	
7b	1680	Maesllan Homestead	
8a	1669	Cae Cerrig	Rock Field
8a	1670	Cae Barre	
9	1671	Cae Canol	Central Field

Appendix Four: Aerial photograph evidence

The collection of the Central Register of Air Photography for Wales, Cardiff, was examined to check for the existence of unrecorded archaeological sites and to examine land-use. Colour and monochrome vertical stereoscopic photographs of various scales were viewed. The photographs were taken in oblique lighting more suitable for locating earthworks rather than soil-marks.

The farmstead at ST 1304 9733 was clearly visible on all photographs before October 1962 when it appears to have been demolished.

The line of a ditch crossing field 2 from ST 1242 9743 to ST 1248 9726 was seen on photographs taken in 1962 and 1979. This is presumably a relict drainage ditch, which may have been used as a field boundary.

In field 1 a small pit, possibly a quarry, was seen on a photograph dating to 1946 (ST 1247 9745). This had been back-filled by the time the next photograph was taken in 1947.

In the south-eastern corner of field 2 most photographs showed parch marks. These are probably of a geological nature rather than archaeological as rock outcrops are noticeable on the ground in this area.

Coverage checked

RAF Sorties

1069/UK/1502	May 1946	4239-4242
CPE/UK/1997	April 1947	4210-4211
58/RAF/5154	June 1962	0347-0350
58/RAF/5502	October 1962	0235-0238

Ordnance Survey

OS79-129	September 1979	013-014, 040-041
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Commercial Sorties

J.A.Storey	April 1985	077-078
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Appendix Five: Previous fieldwork in the area

The Monastery of St Cadoc:

This feature was suggested by Gethin-Thomas in 1966. His theory was based on a local legend that St Cadoc had founded a monastery near to Gelligaer. On a plan drawn by Saxton in the seventeenth century, a church is depicted to the north of the Gelligaer. By comparing the distances between other features on the plan, the Maesllan area was suggested as the site. The missing church is identified by Saxton as "Faldray" and whilst no evidence for this name in the Maesllan area can be identified, Gethin-Thomas suggested that the name Maesllan meant Church Field and that this proved that it was the site of the church. The apportionment to the tithe plan named the field to the west of field 2 as "Cae Seint" (meaning Saint's Field), and the first edition of the Ordnance Survey gives the small pool at ST 1246 9713 the name "Pwll Seint" (Saint's Pool). The association of this saint with St Cadoc is the name given to the cup-marked stone in field 3 as Maen Cattwg.

When he visited the site Gethin-Thomas identified features in the north-eastern corner of field 2 as graves and his conclusive evidence for the position of the monastery was the "mysterious foundations" discovered by the Water Board during work in the copse of oak trees in field 2.

This theory, whilst producing circumstantial evidence, appears to have many possible errors. The distances on Saxton's map may well not be accurate, especially as it is drawn at a very small scale. The name Maesllan can mean Church Field, but this may refer to land owned by the church, as easily as the field in which a church stood (it is possible that this area was part of land given to Margam Abbey by Griffith ap Ivor in 1150 (Patterson 1973, 115)). There are no signs of the graves in the north-eastern part of the field, and it would be very odd that earthwork evidence for these should remain whilst none are apparent for the monastery. There is no corroborated evidence for foundations having been discovered by the Water Board; however, a 24" water main does cross the field close to the copse of oaks.

It would therefore appear that there is only circumstantial evidence for a monastery in this field. Although it is possible to refute all of the evidence there is still the possibility of an archaeological site being present in this area. Trial excavation would confirm or refute such claims.

Appendix Six: Site visit

The site was inspected on the 17th June 1992. The principal aim of the field visit was to allow an assessment of the archaeological potential of areas where no sites had been identified, and to check on the condition of previously-identified sites.

Some of the fields were being grazed by a small group of horses but in general the site was covered by long grass which made identification of possible human activity difficult.

The fields are chiefly divided by dry-stone walls or the remains of such walls which have formed low banks, and are now topped by wire fences.

Field 1:

This field was very rough, with numerous hollows and mounds. Most of these appear to be of recent date. Two large patches of nettles at ST 1247 9745 and ST 1249 9743 were noted, these may have been quarries as noted by the aerial photography. A number of linear depressions probably relate to attempts to drain this field. No indications of significant archaeological features were noted.

Field 2

The major area of interest in this field relates to the copse of oak trees centred at ST 1255 9723. This is the area identified by Gethin-Thomas as the site of the monastery of St Cadocs (see Appendix 5). The area has an uneven surface and a linear depression running north-east, south-west was noted at ST 1254 9724, this may relate to the work of the waterboard during which it is claimed walls were discovered. Several outcrops of stone were noted in this area. A search of the area centred on ST 1255 9738 the suggested position of the graves (see Appendix 5) found no visible evidence for such features.

Field 3

Apart from Maen Cattwg no other features were noted in this field. Maen Cattwg is in the state described in Appendix 2.

Field 7

The remains of the homestead are still partly visible at ST 1304 9733. These comprise two partially demolished walls on the northern and western sides, and the eastern wall which has been incorporated into the boundary with the road. These would have formed a building at least 6m long and 5m wide. It is possible that the homestead had been converted into a barn as rebuilding of the roadside wall appears to take the form of blocking of such

a feature. There was no indication of other buildings or features associated with the farmstead.

Appendix Seven: Catalogue of research archive

The research archive is held at GGAT, Swansea, and includes the following:

1. Copy of the report
2. Brief and specification for the report
3. Notes made during research, including transcripts of relevant documents and notes from secondary sources
4. Photocopies of OS maps at various scales, annotated by researcher
5. Correspondence and notes from meetings with specialists
6. Notes and photographs from site visit
7. Annotated drafts of the report