

**GLAMORGAN-GWENT ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST
CONTRACTS SECTION**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT
LLANOVER ESTATE'S LAND
MYNYDD MAEN, GWENT**

AUGUST 1993

**PROJECT NO. A133
REPORT NO. 93/051**
Revised edition of Report No. 93/046

LLANOVER ESTATE'S LAND, MYNYDD MAEN, GWENT

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Summary

The Llanover Estate commissioned Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust (Contracts Section) (hereafter GGAT) to carry out an archaeological desk-based assessment of estate land on Mynydd Maen, Gwent. The purpose of the study was to assess the likely impact of a proposed development on the archaeological resource prior to the submission of a planning application. This report is a revised edition of GGAT report 93/046 incorporating evidence from air photographs and additional documentary research.

The study indicated that, although the area of the proposed development has been exploited since at least the Bronze Age, human activity has been transitory, leaving little apparent trace on the landscape. The visible remains are probably of nineteenth-century or later date and widely scattered across the mountaintop. The impact of the development is concluded to be small. The non-intensive nature of wind farms will allow the proposed development to be carried out in such a way that disturbance of identified archaeological sites is avoided.

Acknowledgements

This report was prepared by D J Maynard BSc, (Project Officer, Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust (Contracts Section)), with the assistance of other GGAT staff.

The author is grateful to staff at the Central Register of Air Photography for Wales, Cardiff, the staff of Gwent County Records Office for their assistance in documentary research. The author also wishes to thank Mr R Murray of Llanover Estates for permitting study of the Llanover estate plans and tithe maps and for facilitating access to estate land for the site visit.

1. Introduction

1.1 Development proposal and commission

Llanover Estates commissioned GGAT (Contracts Section) to undertake an archaeological desk-top study of estate land on Mynydd Maen, Gwent. The archaeological study will be submitted to the local planning authority as part of the planning application for a proposed scheme of development.

1.2 Specification for the report

The specification for the report is given in full in Appendix One, and included searches of SMR, documentary and air photograph sources and a site visit.

1.3 Layout of the report

The report describes the physical environment of the proposed development area (Section 2), gives a summary of the archaeological resource in the area (Section 3) and gives details of the likely impact of the development proposals on the archaeological resource (Section 4). Detailed data is presented in a series of appendices.

1.4 Abbreviations used in the report

Sites in the area previously recorded in the county Sites and Monuments Record are referred to by their Primary Record Number (PRN) and National Grid Reference (NGR). Sites, both previously-known and new, lying within the development area are referred to by numbers with the prefix MM: a list of these sites will be found in Appendix Two. 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 area of the proposed development lies to the west of Cwmbran on the summit of a chain of ridges over 400m above Ordnance Datum. The highest point of Mynydd Maen, at 472m above Ordnance Datum, lies immediately outside the area covered by the proposed development. The lower ridges of the mountain are pasture or conifer plantations, while the development area itself is currently used as rough pasture.

2.2 Surface geology

The proposed development lies on a scarped ridge of Pennant sandstone of the upper Pennant measures, overlying the sandstones and marine bands of the lower Pennant measures, both deposits are part of the upper coal measures (BRG 1970, 92-4). The easternmost limit of the south Wales coalfield lies immediately to the east of Mynydd Maen, where the underlying geology changes to Old Red Sandstone. The nearest mine to the development area was situated at ST 268 969, and exploited either the Upper Cwmgorse Marine Band or the Amman Marine Band. The superficial deposits on the hilltop consist of friable black and brown silty loams overlying sandstone rubble.

3. Summary of archaeological resource

The area of the proposed development has been utilised by man since the Bronze Age, but no evidence of settlement was found in the documentary search.

3.1 Prehistoric

Two Bronze Age arrowheads (PRN 107), found on Mynydd Maen, and bronze axe (PRN 91), found at Newbridge, are evidence of transient use of the area in prehistory. The mountaintop is probably at too high an altitude for the establishment of settlements but the arrowheads are evidence of exploitation.

3.2 Roman

No Roman sites are recorded in documentary sources as lying in the development area, which is situated inland of the main areas of Roman development. The nearest documented Roman sites are some 2km to the east, although there is little evidence for their existence. Roman or Romano-British land-use may have taken the same form as later medieval and post-medieval utilisation.

3.3 Early Medieval/Medieval

There is no evidence for medieval sites within the area of the proposed development. A chapel dedicated to Derfil Gadarn, a sixth century saint, was located 1km southeast of the proposed development area. In the medieval period much of Mynydd Maen, including the area of the proposed development, was owned by Llantarnam Abbey as part its lordship of Magna Porta. The Abbey maintained two granges on the fringes of the development area, at Llanderfel and at Cil-lonydd.

3.4 Post-Medieval/Modern

Little use has been made of the area of the proposed development in the post-medieval period. Numerous quarries and mines were worked around the base of the escarpment in the nineteenth century, and a few minor quarries were opened on the mountaintop. Otherwise the area has been used for rough pasture or shooting.

4. Impact of development proposals on archaeological resource

4.1 Nature of development

The proposed development envisages the construction of a wind farm on the mountaintop. In the absence of a detailed planning application it has been assumed for the purpose of this study that the area of the proposed development may be affected in some way during the construction of the wind farm.

4.2 Sites within the development area

The following sites fall within the development area:

- MM 1 A derelict twentieth-century building, shown as a 'Tower' or 'Bird House' on various OS maps.
- MM 2 Ruined twentieth-century building.
- MM 3 Nineteenth-century land boundary with marker stones.
- MM 4 Nineteenth-century land boundary with marker stones.
- MM 5 Nineteenth-century mineral boundary with marker stone.
- MM 6 Nineteenth-century land boundary with marker stones.
- MM 7 Possible nineteenth-century quarry.
- MM 8 Possible nineteenth-century quarry.
- MM 10 Undated standing stone.

4.3 Sites unlikely to be affected

It is improbable that sensitive deposits relating to the following site occur within the affected area:

- MM 9 Quarry Coch: site of a nineteenth-century quarry.

5. Recommendations

5.1 Archaeological resource

The study has identified ten archaeological sites within the affected area, all of which are post-medieval or modern, except for an undated standing stone (MM10).

5.2 Strategies for mitigation of damage to the resource

In devising the detailed development proposals, it will be possible to exclude the identified archaeological sites from any groundworks, preserving them in situ.

5.3 Conclusion

The impact of the proposed development on the archaeological resource will be small.

Appendix One: Specification

Definition of Study

The project will conform to the draft Standard in British Archaeology for Archaeology in Desk-based Studies, issued by the Institute of Field Archaeologists in September 1992, and will be carried out in accordance with the GGAT Contracts Guidelines for the Execution of Assessment Projects.

The specification was drawn up to fulfil the brief prepared by GGAT Curatorial Section.

1. Objectives

- 1.1 Assessment of existing archaeological information to determine the extent, character and significance of archaeological interests, in 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 present archaeological knowledge is insufficient for informed decisions to be made in the planning process.

2. Documentary Searches

- 2.1 Collation of information pertaining to sites recorded in the County Sites and Monuments Record (SMR).
- 2.2 Search of cartographic sources for additional archaeological information, and collation of information relating to archaeological interests.
- 2.3 Analysis of aerial photographic coverage held by the Central Register of Air Photography for Wales for additional archaeological information, and collation of information relating to archaeological interests.
- 2.4 Analysis of relevant primary historic documents and published sources for additional archaeological information, and collation of information relating to archaeological interests.
- 2.5 Analysis of borehole data, geotechnical studies, etc., for additional information, and collation of information relating to archaeological interests.

3. Fieldwork

- 3.1 Site visit to check the present condition of archaeological features identified by 2.1 - 2.5, and to assess factors that may have influenced the condition or visibility of these features.
- 3.2 Identification of previously-unknown archaeological features.
- 3.3 Rapid recording of archaeological features (e.g. sketch plotting and photographs).

4. Assessment

- 4.1 Assessment of the information acquired from the execution of 2 and 3.
- 4.2 Assessment of the impact of the development proposals on the defined archaeological interests.

5. Reports

The results of the study will be reported in a series of reports

- 5.1 Client - A bound report comprising a synthesis of data gathered through the execution of 2-4, placing the archaeological resource within its wider context, with supporting evidence in appendices, and identification of features of archaeological interest onto scale drawings, or listing of such features by eight-figure National Grid References. The identification of legal constraints (e.g. scheduled ancient monuments, listed buildings) relating to archaeological interests. A copy of this report will be deposited with the County Sites and Monuments Record.
- 5.2 Academic - A digest report of significant archaeological information in an appropriate outlet (e.g. regional/national academic journal).
- 5.3 Other - Initial notification to Cadw of sites which may satisfy the Secretary of State's criteria for national importance, which are a prerequisite for statutory protection.

6. Archive

- 6.1 Preparation of an ordered archive of records made during the assessment in accordance with NMR cataloguing procedures.
- 6.2 Deposition of the assessment archive with an appropriate organisation (usually GGAT Contracts records).
- 6.3 Submission of a copy of the report for inclusion in the County SMR, within 6 months of the completion of the work.

7. Staff

- 7.1 The project will be managed by the Principal Archaeological Officer (Contracts), AG Marvell BA, MIFA, and Projects Manager (Assessments), M Locock BA AIFA, and carried out by one of the Trust's Project Officers, all of whom have wide experience of such work.

8. Insurance

- 8.1 GGAT Contracts holds insurance cover for all risks involved in this type of project, including substantial Professional Indemnity cover.

9. Scope of the work

- 9.1 The work outlined in this specification will be carried out to the highest professional standards, and the conclusions drawn will be based on a considered review of the evidence available. However, the archaeological resource is unpredictable, and the encountering of unexpected archaeological deposits on the site cannot be ruled out.

Appendix Two: Archaeological sites in the area

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

Of the sites recorded in the County Sites and Monuments in the area of the proposed development only the first lies within the development area:

Sites within the area of the proposed development:

PRN 107
NGR ST 25 97
TYPE Flint Arrowheads
PERIOD Bronze Age

Sites within 1.5km of the proposed development:

PRN 91
NGR ST 2200 9807
TYPE Bronze Axe
PERIOD Bronze Age

PRN 106
NGR ST 2629 9530
TYPE Church
PERIOD Medieval

PRN 94
NGR ST 2295 9730
TYPE Chapel
PERIOD Medieval

PRN 3288
NGR ST 229 973
TYPE Find
PERIOD Undated

PRN 95
NGR ST 2294 9734
TYPE Building
PERIOD Medieval

PRN 3289
NGR ST 228 975
TYPE Cropmark
PERIOD Undated

PRN 96
NGR ST 2287 9715
TYPE Grange
PERIOD Medieval

PRN 3916
NGR ST 2731 9681
TYPE Brickworks
PERIOD Post-medieval

PRN 103
NGR ST 2739 9698
TYPE Dwelling
PERIOD Post-medieval

PRN 3917
NGR ST 2720 9763
TYPE Dwellings
PERIOD Post-medieval

PRN 104
NGR ST 2739 9701
TYPE Building
PERIOD Post-medieval

PRN 3918
NGR ST 2718 9680
TYPE Chapel
PERIOD Post-medieval

PRN 105
NGR ST 2658 9538
TYPE Dwelling
PERIOD Post-medieval

PRN 3919
NGR ST 2720 9673
TYPE Inn
PERIOD Post-medieval

New sites identified by this study

- MM 1 Structure marked as 'Tower' appears on OS 1" survey (1st edition, 1833-84) and as 'Bird House' on OS 1" survey (7th edition, 1961). The building was used to shelter shooting parties (R Murray, pers comm). A derelict structure survives on the site, but is of twentieth-century date.
- MM 2 Second structure, close to MM 1, but not shown on maps. Now ruined but also apparently of twentieth century date.
- MM 3 Series of boundary stones marking a boundary depicted on OS 6" survey (1st edition). At least one unmarked stone still survives.
- MM 4 Series of boundary stones marking the boundary between the manors of Abercarn and Magna Porta. At least two stones still survive.
- MM 5 Boundary stone marking boundary of mineral rights between Benjamin Hall, later Lord Llanover, and Capel Hanbury Leigh. Now partially recumbent.
- MM 6 Series of boundary stones marking the boundary between Magna Porta and possibly Mynyddislwyn. At least three stones still survive.
- MM 7 Possible quarry site identified during site visit. Survives as small depression between footpath and boundary wall.
- MM 8 Possible quarry site identified during site visit. Survives as an ovoid depression adjacent to footpath.
- MM 9 Series of depressions and a linear earthwork immediately adjacent to the development area. Probably the site of Quarry Coch, depicted on the Tithe plan and not shown on any other map of the area.
- MM 10 Standing block of quartz conglomerate situated close to track leading to gas repeater station. Not shown on any plan and not dateable.

Appendix Three: Cartographic and documentary evidence

Documentary and cartographic searches have shown the area around Mynydd Maen to have been utilised since the Bronze Age, although settlement has only occurred on the lower slopes of the mountain outside the development area. During the medieval period much of the area of Mynydd Maen was owned by the Cistercian monks of Llantarnam Abbey. The altitude and poor soil conditions on the mountaintop have probably restricted utilisation to rough pasture and hunting.

Prehistoric

The earliest evidence of human activity is the presence of two Bronze Age arrowheads found on Mynydd Maen in 1931 (PRN 107, NGR ST 25 97). These cannot be taken as evidence of settlement, merely of a human presence in the area.

Ridges and hilltops were commonly used in the Bronze Age for the siting of cairns-groups and other 'ritual' features. These features have been extensively explored in Dyfed and Glamorgan, less so in Gwent, and it is possible that prehistoric sites exist in the vicinity of Mynydd Maen, although none has been found or suggested.

Roman

The development area lies inland of the main belt of Roman occupation on the coastal plain and margins of the South Wales valleys. No known Roman sites are documented within 1km of Mynydd Maen, the nearest sites (PRN 125, NGR ST 28 96 and PRN 126, NGR 29 98) are noted in documentary sources as roofing-stone quarries but their location is based solely on the presence of an outcrop of the relevant type of stone.

Any Romano-British utilisation of the area is likely to have taken the same form as that in the medieval and later periods.

Early medieval/Medieval

Approximately 1km southwest of Mynydd Maen is the site of the chapel of Llanderfel (PRN 106, NGR ST 2629 9530). The chapel was founded in the sixth century and dedicated to Derfil Gadarn, one of only two foundations of this saint in Wales (Williams 1974, 36). The chapel was later acquired by the Cistercian monks of Llantarnam Abbey and became a local pilgrimage centre (Williams 1982, 180), which was still visited in the fourteenth century (Rees 1933). The 'Cil' element in Cil-lonydd (see below) may imply the presence of another Celtic religious site in the vicinity.

Llantarnam Abbey had substantial landholdings around Mynydd Maen as part of the lordship of Magna Porta, which stretched from the Abbey to Cwm-y-Glyn, north of Mynydd Maen. Granges formed the

main unit of exploitation on Cistercian estates, with Llantarnam maintaining up to thirteen in its estates (Cowley 1977, 69-96). Magna Porta included three granges; one at Llanderfel, a second at Cil-lonydd (PRN 94, ST 2295 9538 PRN 95, ST 2294 9734 PRN 96, ST 2287 9715) and a third at Gelli-las (now the site of Llantarnam Grange). The granges at Llanderfel and Cil-lonydd each consisted of approximately 150 acres and, as Cistercian land were exempt from tithes (Williams 1984, 240-1). The granges probably occupied the more easily cultivated land on the lower slopes of the mountain, with the mountaintop remaining as rough pasture or wasteland. By the thirteenth century the production of wool formed a major part of the income of many Cistercian abbeys in south Wales (Cowley 1977, 85-89), and it is possible that sheep were grazed on Mynydd Maen. Coal mining may also have occurred at Llanderfel (Williams 1984, 326-7).

Post Medieval/Modern

Mynydd Maen was used as one of the main triangulation stations in the 1815 Ordnance Survey of south Wales (Harley 1970). Marker stones were installed in the nineteenth century marking estate and mineral boundaries. At least one stone-quarry was worked adjacent to the development area. The site is shown as Quarry Coch on the tithe plan, but is absent from later plans suggesting it was abandoned between c1840 and 1880. A 'Tower' is marked on the OS 1" survey (1st Edition) at approximately ST 2555 9830, on later maps it is shown as a 'Bird House', these structures may have had the same function as the building currently occupying the site, sheltering shooting parties.

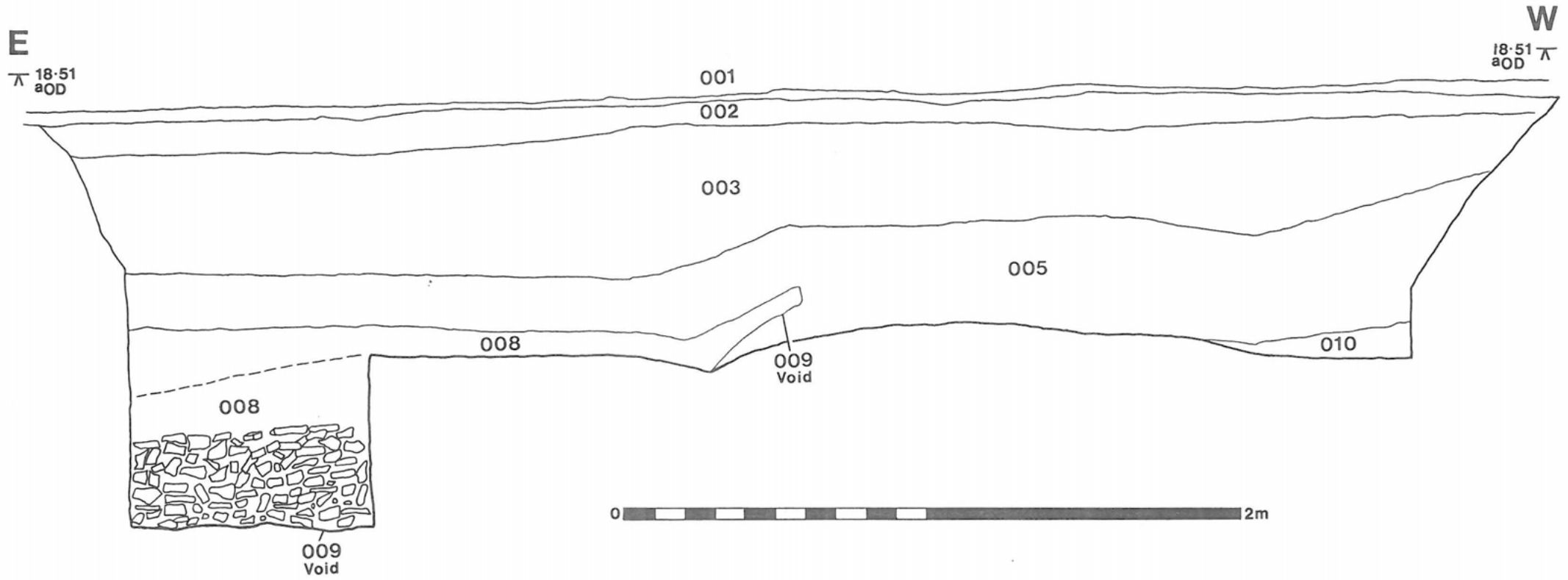


Figure Two South-facing section of Trench 1.

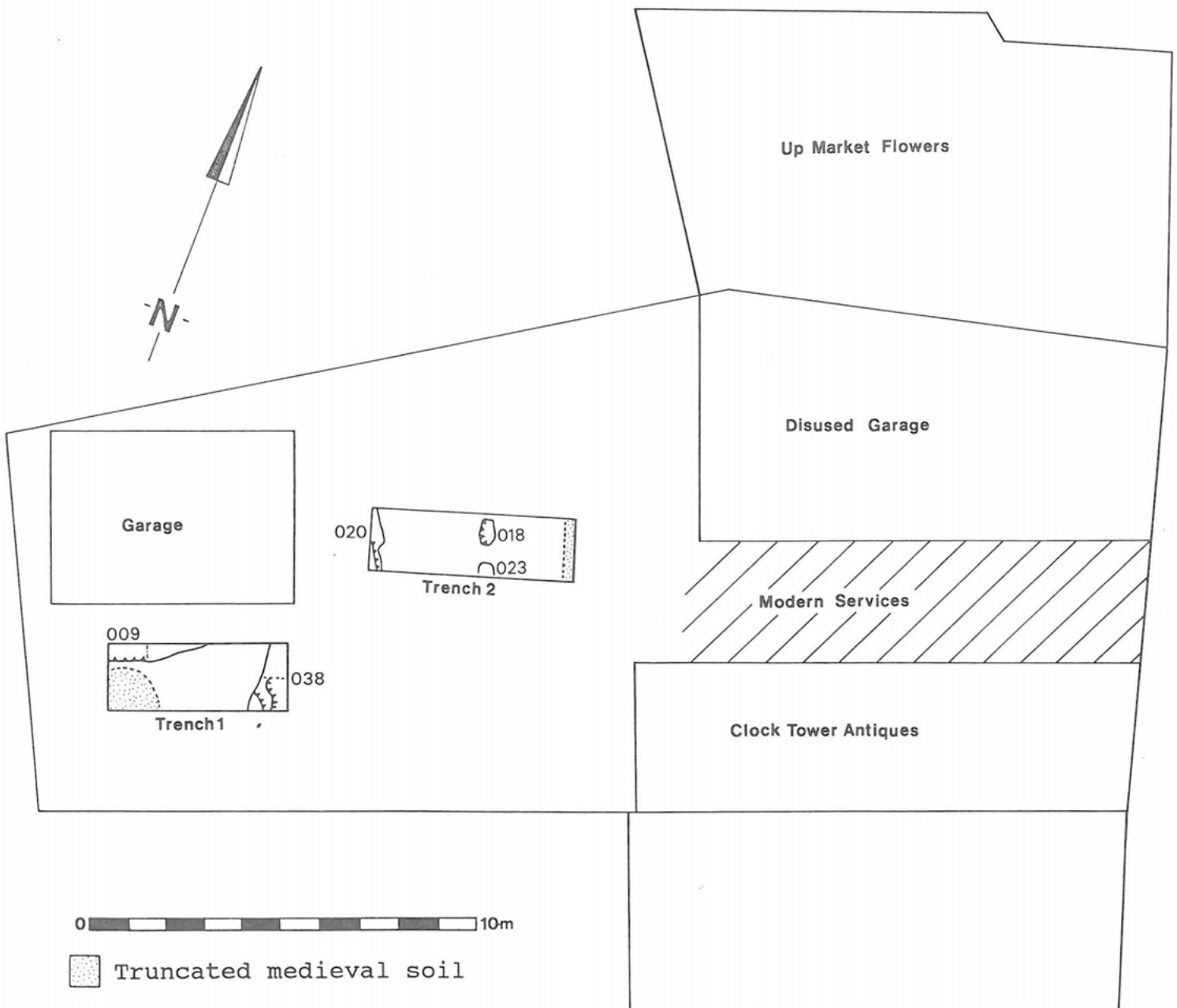
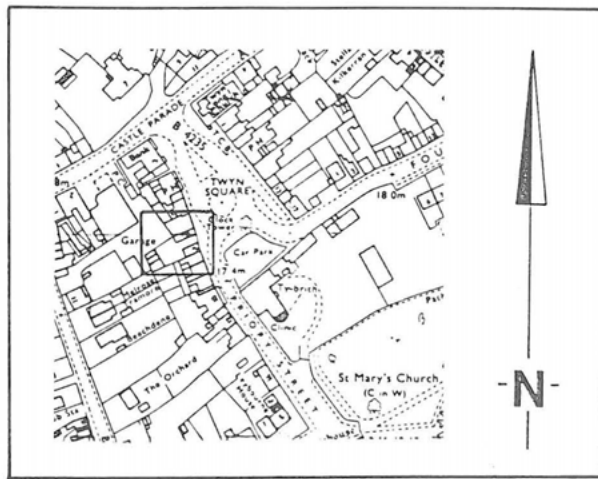


Figure One Location of Trenches 1 and 2.

Appendix Four: Aerial photograph evidence

1. Features identified

Little change was visible in the landscape in the period covered by air photographs.

MM 1 and MM 2

These two structures are visible in the coverage from 1947 onward and are apparently derelict and roofless by 1962.

MM 8

A further, larger feature is visible to the south of this site on the 1979 OS sortie, situated across the line of the footpath at approximately ST 244 955. The feature was not visible in the coverage from any other sortie and may possibly be a patch of vegetation.

MM 9

No change is visible in this site in the period covered by air photographs

2. Sorties examined

The Central Register of Air Photography for Wales holds the following coverage of the development area:

<u>SORTIE</u>	<u>SCALE</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>FRAME NO</u>
<u>RAF Sorties</u>			
CPE/UK 1997	1:9800	13/4/47	2225-2229 4226-4250 4044-4047
58/RAF/5154	1:10000	1/6/62	0225-0232 0225-0230
<u>Ordnance Survey</u>			
79/129	1:24400	22/9/79	006-008 045-047
<u>Commercial</u>			
J A Storey	1:20000	28/4/85	109-111 071-073

Appendix Five: Site visit

A site visit was undertaken to check for the presence of further features, and to examine the state of preservation of features previously identified. A series of photographs of features of interest were taken to record their present appearance. The lower margin of the mountaintop was overgrown with bracken, the summit was covered with coarse grass and heather, which may have concealed some archaeological features.

MM 1 'Tower'

The building is currently derelict and roofless. The brick and concrete construction places the building in the twentieth century, although it occupies the site of an earlier building.

MM 2 Building

The building is completely ruined; a twentieth century date is probable for this structure.

MM 3 Land Boundary

Only one stone on this boundary located, although others may be concealed in bracken. The stone has a rounded top and is unmarked.

MM 4 Land Boundary

Two stones in this series located, one of which has been disturbed. The in situ stone has ABC on the west side and MP on the east. The line of stones marks the boundary between the manors of Abercarn (ABC) and Magna Porta (MP).

MM 5 Mineral Boundary

Mineral boundary stone, larger than other boundary markers seen in the area. The stone is inscribed thus:

North side	South side
CHL	BH
Boundary	Boundary
of Minerals	of Minerals
Settled by Act	Settled by Act
of Parliament	of Parliament
1839	1839

Below the legend on the north side is roughly carved "Jim ?Mackintosh".

MM 5 The stone is now partially recumbent, the roughly carved name may be that of the stonemason.

CHL is Capel Hanbury Leigh and BH is Benjamin Hall, created Lord Llanover in 1859 (Clarke, 1979).

MM 6 Land Boundary

Three boundary stones located, marked MP on northeast side and M on southwest side. Other stones may be concealed in the bracken. MP is Magna Porta, M may be Mynyddislwyn.

MM 7 Possible Quarry

Oval depression probably marking the site of a small quarry. Now grassed over.

MM 8 Possible Quarry

Small oval depression probably marking the site of a quarry now grassed over. MM 7 and MM 8 may have been caused by quarrying of outcrops of bedrock to provide material for the adjacent dry-stone boundary wall.

MM 9 Quarry Coch

Linear earthwork with traces of dry-stone revetting close to a group of circular depressions. Now grassed over with some local erosion. A modern trackway passes through the site which lies outside the area of the proposed development.

MM 10 Standing Stone

Undressed block of quartz conglomerate erected close to track leading to the gas repeater station. Packing stones are visible at the base of the block, which is not recorded in documentary sources and is not dateable.

Appendix Six: 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

Appendix Seven: Sources consulted

The following sources were consulted:

County Sites and Monuments Record, GGAT, Swansea (see Appendix Two)

Published sources (see Bibliography)

Central Register of Air Photography for Wales, Cardiff (see Appendix Four)

Documentary and cartographic sources (see Appendix Three):

Ordnance Survey

1884 1" Survey (First edition).

1880 6" Survey (First edition).

1901 6" Survey (Second edition).

1969 Geological survey of Great Britain (England and Wales)

Other cartographic sources:

1840 Mynyddislwyn tithe plan (Llanover Estate documents)

A site visit was also undertaken (see Appendix Five).

Sources not consulted

No geotechnical reports were available.

No further air photograph coverage was examined, since the Welsh Office collection was sufficiently complete.

No further documentary or cartographic sources were examined.

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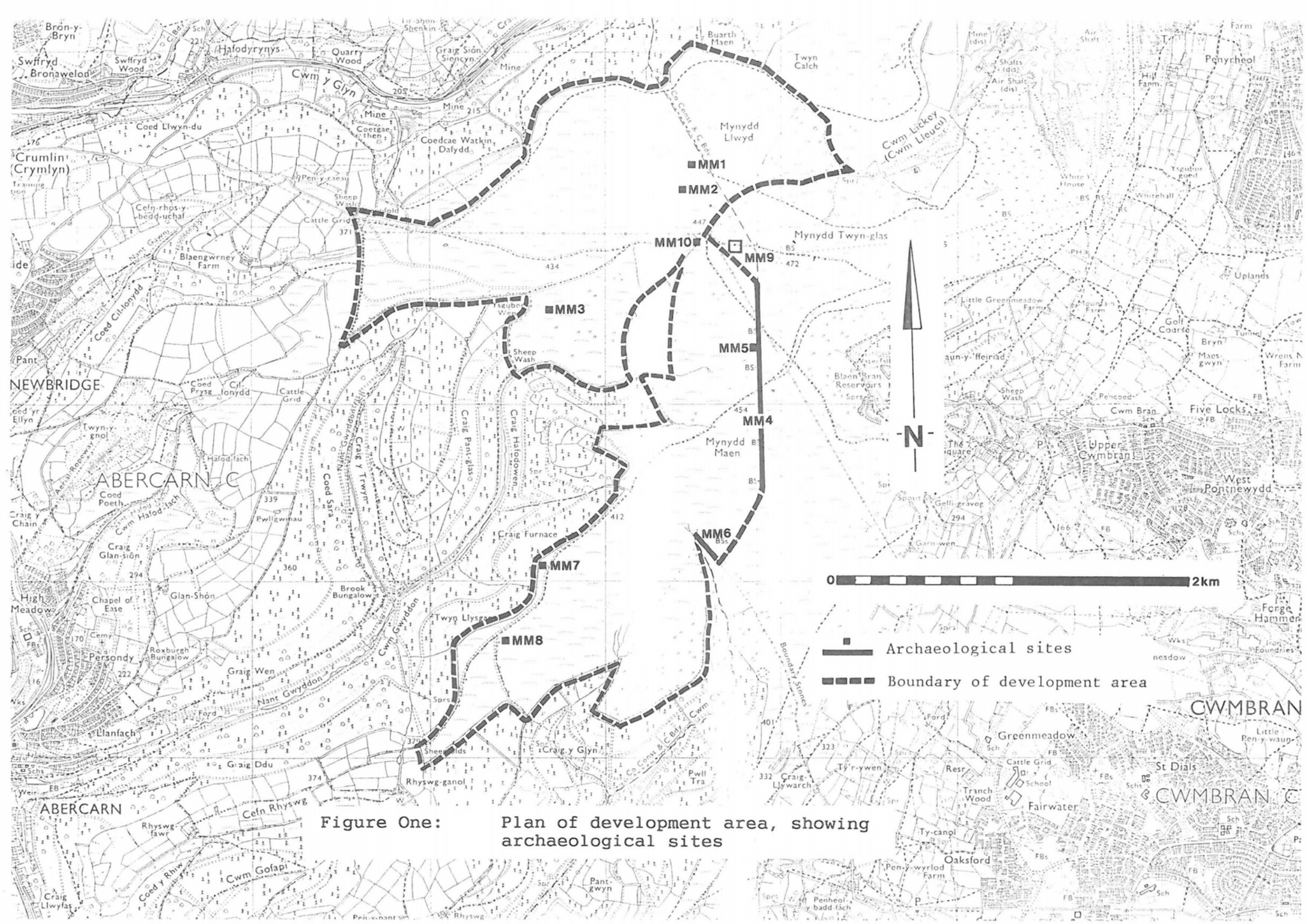


Figure One: Plan of development area, showing archaeological sites

- Archaeological sites
- Boundary of development area



Figure Two Mineral Boundary stone MM5

The inscription reads:

C H L
Boundary
of Minerals
Settled by Act
of Parliament
1839