

THE CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

Middle Usk Valley: Brecon and Llan-gors
HISTORIC LANDSCAPE CHARACTERIZATION



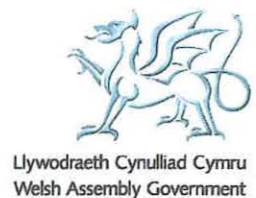
The meandering river Usk with Llangorse Lake in the background. Photo CPAT 05-C-104

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Middle Usk Valley: Brecon and Llan-gors
HISTORIC LANDSCAPE CHARACTERIZATION

by W J Britnell
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Preface

Natural forces and human activity acting together over the last six thousand years have contributed 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.

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.

The *Historic Landscapes Register* provides a first step, a 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, the 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 historical

Rhagair

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 henedlaethol 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 gwyh 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 hyfyd yn darparu lle i ni fyw, gweithio a chynnal ein hunain ynddo, drwy gyfrwng amaeth, coedwigaeth, twristiaeth ac ati, oll yn broseau sy'n llunio, ac a fydd yn yn parhau i lunio'r tirwedd.

Bu cydnabod a chodi ymwybyddiaeth o bwysigrwydd a chyfoeth ffarig hanesyddol y tirwedd yn thema ac yn neges ganolog y gofrestr anstatudol, Cofrestr o Dirweddau o Ddiddordeb Hanesyddol Eithriadol Yng Nghymru, y cynoeddwyd y rhan gyntaf ohoni, sy'n cwmaus 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 â phedair Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Cymru, y Comisiwn Brenhinol Henebion Cymru ac awdurdodau unedol Cymru.

Cofrestr 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 â chymeriad y tirwedd hwn ar lefel fwy lleol. Cyflawnir hyn drwy broses a elwir yn nodweddiad tirweddau hanesyddol y gellir eu diffinio a'u mapio'n ddaearyddol, yn ôl 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 'themâe' hanesyddol

features and the main types of historical 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.

This report is one of 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 to the 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.

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.

sydd wedi llunio'r ardal. Nodir nodweddion hanesyddol allweddol yr ardal felly ynghyd ag argymhellion ar gyfer eu rheli'n gadarnhaol.

Mae'r adroddiad hwn yn un o gyfres o ymarfeirion nodweddiad tirweddau hanesyddol yr ymngmeirir ag ef gan Ymddiriedolaethau Archaeolegol Cymru gyda chymorth grant gan Cadw. Bydd yr astudiaethau hyn yn canolbwyntio yn y lle cyntaf ar yr ardaloedd hynny a nodwyd yn y Gofestr o Ddiddordeb Hanesyddol, er y caiff ei dderbyn bod modd disgrifio tirwedd Cymru gyfan, mewn un ffordd neu'r llall, fel yn hanesyddol. Mae gwybodaeth yn cael ei pharatoi ar ffurf sy'n cydweddau â 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 dwyshau'r ymdeimlad o arbenigrwydd lleol.

Cydnabyddia'r Gofestr o Dirweddau o Ddiddordeb Hanesyddol a'r ymarfeirion 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 abethu tirweddau gorau'r gorffennol.

Richard Avent

Cadw

Richard Kelly

Cyngor Cefn Gwlad Cymru/Countryside Council for Wales

Introduction

THE PURPOSE OF THE PRESENT STUDY

This study is a contribution to the overall historic landscape initiative currently being funded by Cadw, the Countryside Council for Wales and ICOMOS UK. Its principal aim is to provide information to aid the management of the historic landscape. The following uses of historic landscape characterization were identified by Cadw:

- Planning, including large-scale intrusions such as roads, windfarms, mineral extraction, large-scale landfill/waste disposal, reclamation, water schemes, major settlement schemes, and major industrial developments
- Landscape management by large corporate landowners, farmers, industrial companies, water and electricity companies, the forestry industry, and the National Trust
- Advice to conservation bodies such as Cadw, the Countryside Council for Wales, the Environment Agency, local authorities, national parks
- Local landscape conservation initiatives and management agreements by Cadw, Countryside Council for Wales, local authorities
- To enhance our understanding of the historic aspects of landscape, stimulating further research, raising public perception of the landscape, and the preparation of policy statements by public bodies

EVOLVING HISTORIC LANDSCAPE CHARACTERIZATION METHODOLOGY

Historic landscape characterization is a contribution towards the overall historic landscape initiative currently being funded by Cadw, the Countryside Council for Wales and ICOMOS UK. Its principal aim is to provide information to aid the management of the historic environment.

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 the 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.

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 these ideas. Characterization is defined as the process of identifying and defining the particular characteristics which make each area distinctive, and is rapidly emerging as the basis for describing and understanding the environment. Historic landscape characterization is one dimension of this approach: it sets out to identify the principal historic components within the current landscape. It is the great depth of human activity which underpins much of that which we feel is important and helps to give an idea of its local distinctiveness.

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.

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

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 the definition of 'character areas'.

The concept of 'character areas' differs somewhat from comparable studies in England, which are based on 'historic landscape types', where the predominant form of the present landscape is identified principally by the existing patterns of enclosures within areas of landscape.

The process of characterization adopted here can be summarised as follows:

| | | |
|---|---|--------------------------------|
| one or more <u>dominant patterns</u> | → | <u>coherent character</u> |
| <u>coherent character</u> with definable limits | → | <u>character area</u> |
| one or more <u>character areas</u> | → | <u>historic landscape area</u> |

Characterization is a practical tool intended to aid management in its broadest forms. In order to be of any practical use, this has to be translated into the management of 'landscape tangibles' (ie the evidence for historical processes and periods in the present landscape). It is essential, therefore, that the key historic landscape characteristics are features and/or patterns to which can be applied management prescriptions whose success or otherwise can be measured for monitoring purposes.

The reports emanating from this work contain a number of elements: the description of each character area split into three parts — historical background, key historic landscape characteristics, and key historic landscape management priorities — accompanied by a map and a photograph. The historical background provides a straightforward description of the archaeological and historical development of the area. The section on key historic landscape characteristics lists the principal characteristics which make that area distinctive and which future management should therefore concentrate on. The section on key historic landscape management priorities begins to define the scope for creative action within a number of initiatives (including LANDMAP, Unitary Development Plans, and Tir Gofal, the all-Wales agri-environment scheme) which can sustain or even enhance elements considered essential to the historic character of the areas.

MANAGING HISTORIC CHARACTER

Rural land-use change

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 maximization of productivity were the priorities up until the mid-1980s, and as a conse-

quence 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.

Currently, due to agricultural overproduction 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 as well as sites and features of archaeological and historic landscape interest.

However, of the estimated 27,000 farms in Wales, only about 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.

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.

Characterization 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 (ie 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).

General considerations

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.

One of the basic tenets underpinning management is that we should be aiming to continue (rather than halt) the past 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.

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.

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, as a whole, rather than an isolated, unrelated activity.

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

| | | | | |
|---------------------------------|---|-------------------------|---|----------------------------|
| management of <u>components</u> | → | retain <u>character</u> | → | conserve <u>diversity</u> |
| boundaries, buildings, | | | | and <u>character areas</u> |
| archaeological sites etc | | | | |

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.

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.

General mechanisms

It is envisaged that characterization has many potential applications to management including the following:

- 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
- assisting in determining planning applications, especially large-scale developments such as roads, windfarms, 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, Countryside Council for Wales, 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

Specific mechanisms

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 will allow archaeological management strategies sensitive to the character of the landscape as a whole to be integrated with farming practices. Characterization 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.

Unitary Development Plans address 'land use' issues and are currently being compiled by unitary authorities in Wales and England.

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, of implementing development plan policies. In Wales, such strategies are supported by the Countryside Council for Wales and in England by the Countryside Agency.

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.

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 archaeological features not individual sites which give landscape 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 characterization work of the kind being carried out by the Welsh Archaeological Trusts provides historic environment audits, from which decisions of this kind can be made.

Biodiversity Action Plans Local Biodiversity Action Plans (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 characterization 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.

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, a bill has recently been passed by Parliament with proposals to provide greater public access to open areas of countryside. As many of the best-preserved and most fragile palimpsest archaeological sites and landscapes lie within open areas of countryside, this has potential implications for archaeological management.

Historic landscape characterization can identify these areas (ie 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.

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

Leisure strategy Historic landscape characterization may have a bearing on local authority leisure strategies.

Tourism The Tourist Boards for Wales and England have the strategic responsibility for encouraging people to visit the borderlands 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 characterization 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.

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).

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

Forestry Commission Information from characterization 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.

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 characterization can provide.

Other bodies Historic landscape characterization information can be used to educate and inform a wide range of organisations and individuals including statutory agencies, voluntary bodies (RSPB, Woodland Trust, Wildlife Trusts, 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 characterization, than by the more traditional means of individual archaeological sites and excavations.

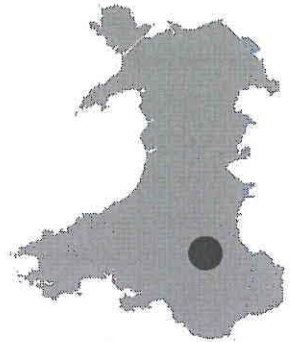
Local distinctiveness and a sense of place, which are of undoubted interest to people, can all be conveyed by such means, and the potential importance of this aspect of characterization cannot be emphasised too strongly.

David Thompson and Dafydd Gwyn
Gwynedd Archaeological Trust

The Middle Wye Valley historic landscape area

The *Middle Wye Valley* represents a diverse and well-preserved historic landscape. The following description, taken from the *Register of Landscapes of Special Historic Interest in Wales* (Cadw 2001, 80-3), identifies the essential historic landscape themes in the historic character area that are considered in greater detail in the sections which follow.

The section of the Usk valley identified here lies to the east and west of Brecon in southern Powys; an area confined on the south by eastern flanks of the Brecon Beacons range and on the north by the southern foothills of Mynydd Epynt. To the east, the western end of the Black Mountains scarp overlooks the shallow basin containing Llangorse Lake which has been included in the area. The Usk valley forms a distinctive and easily accessible corridor across the area, with its wide, flat floor rising gently from 120m above OD at Llansantffraed in the east to 150m above OD at Aberbrân in the west. On either side of the valley, the slopes rise to a gently rolling and dissected landscape of low hills, ridges and shallow valleys between 150m and 300m above OD.



The visual impression of the whole area is dominated by small hedged fields enclosing the rich agricultural land of the valley bottom, and it is in many ways a typical Mid Wales vista. This rich pattern of land use is a product of its complex farming and settlement history, from early Neolithic farmers, through Roman and Norman 'invaders', via the Celtic saints, to the remains of medieval and later agriculture and commerce. Each period of land use has moulded the landscape and each in turn has been overlain and partly obscured by its successors. Almost in contradiction to this continuity, the Middle Usk Valley is also a classic example of a Welsh landscape of domination, conquest and political change, and many of the archaeological and historic elements visible today result from man's imposition of his control on the landscape, not only in the Roman and medieval and later periods, but also in the prehistoric period.

The earlier prehistoric remains are typified by the Neolithic chambered long barrow of Tŷ Illtud, lying in the east of the area between Brecon and Llangorse Lake. This 5000-year-old megalithic tomb comprises a series of drystone built chambers once covered by a long earthen mound. The site is one of a group of such barrows in the Brecon Beacons and the Black Mountains. Although relatively few remains of this remote period survive in this, or in any other, landscape in Wales, these communal burial mounds provide an intriguing glimpse into the life and death of the Neolithic farmers who occupied the Middle Usk Valley. Local tradition says that the empty chambers of Tŷ Illtud were later used as a hermitage by St Illtud in the 6th century, at which time a number of crosses and other Christian symbols were carved into its walls.

The later prehistory of the Bronze Age is represented by a number of round barrows and burial cairns which occupy the higher ground overlooking the rich valley floor of the Usk, which in turn plays host to a number of enigmatic standing stones.

To the west of Brecon lie the impressive remains of Brecon Gaer, the finest surviving example of a Roman fort in Powys. Built within sight of the native Iron Age settlements at Coed Fenni-fach and Pen-y-crug, it guards the Roman road as it descends from Fforest Fawr to cross the Usk and march north into Mid Wales. To the east of Brecon lie the remains of Powys's only Roman villa, where excavations in the 18th century revealed an outstanding mosaic-floored bath-house. The extent of Roman settlement in the area is unknown, but there is little doubt that the Romans quickly assimilated and exploited the existing pattern of settlement and land use that they would have found surrounding the major Iron Age hillforts at Allt yr Esgair, Slwch Tump, Pen-y-crug and Coed Fenni-fach.

Also to the east of Brecon lies Llangorse Lake, which has an important place in Welsh history and mythology. The small man-made island, or crannog, was constructed as a fortified palace by Brychan, king of Brycheiniog, during the late 9th century and destroyed, according to the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, in AD 916. A local legend recounts how the

lake covers the remains of a city ruled by a cruel and greedy princess who agreed to marry a poor suitor only if he brought her great wealth. The man murdered a rich merchant to gain the princess's hand, but in revenge, the merchant's ghost raised a terrible storm which drowned the kingdom. It is not known when the legend originated, but it predates the first archaeological excavation of the crannog in 1850 and is an interesting and perceptive folk memory. More plausibly, as a major royal and ecclesiastical centre in Brycheiniog, the crannog could have a claim to have been the *locus scribendi* of the early Welsh stanzas, *Canu Llywarch Hen*, written quite probably between the 8th and mid-10th centuries, when Llangorse and the Brycheiniog dynasty were in their heyday. The remains of this artificial island were fully revealed by excavation during the early 1990s. Llangorse is the only crannog known in Wales, although it is a form common in Ireland; this possible Irish connection is also perhaps evidenced by the large number of Ogam inscriptions in local churches. The lakeside villages of Llangorse and Llangasty-Talylyn both have probable early Celtic monastic foundations.

Conquest and settlement from the medieval period are also represented here and history and tradition suggest that the decisive battle between the Welsh forces of Bleddin ap Maenarch and the invading Norman army of Bernard de Neufmarché was fought near Battle in 1093. Norman victory led to the subjugation of the native population and the rise of Brecon town. The earliest castle at Brecon was a motte and bailey, later replaced by a masonry castle. The town also boasts the remains of a Benedictine priory, originally founded in 1100, which, despite its extensive renovation between 1862 and 1874 by the great Victorian architect, Sir Gilbert Scott, still retains many interesting features, such as rare Early English lancet windows and 16th-century conventual buildings. In 1923, the priory, which by then had become Brecon's parish church, was chosen as the cathedral of the newly formed Diocese of Swansea and Brecon, one of the two new dioceses founded by the new Church in Wales, following its separation from the Church of England. The town also contains a Dominican friary, originally founded in the 13th century, which, although now a school and much altered, is claimed to be the largest single group of Dominican buildings surviving in Britain.

The presence of the castle and these two important ecclesiastical buildings formed the basis of a flourishing medieval town and by the 13th century, the settlement had spread to occupy the lower ground alongside the River Usk, now spanned by a fine stone bridge of 1563, and had been provided with stone defences. Although some of this medieval fabric survives in places, today Brecon's architecture is characterized by fine brick and stone town houses of the 18th and 19th centuries. Indeed, a population of 5026 placed it as the ninth largest town in Wales at the end of this period. Much of this later architecture survives unaltered and unspoilt by modern development, and combined with its medieval roots this contrives a particularly pleasing and valuable asset, and one that is becoming increasingly rare in other towns in Wales. Today, Brecon is internationally known for its annual Jazz Festival.

Brecon, like its Roman predecessor, was built to maintain the Usk valley as a strategic route into West Wales, and like the Gaer, it is watched over by native settlements of an earlier period, such as Llanspyddid and Llanfrynach, ranged around the rim of the valley. One of these early Welsh settlements, Llan-ddew, gained fame in the medieval period as the site of the palace of the Bishops of Brecon. This modest castle was occupied between 1175 and 1203 by Gerald of Wales who, as Archdeacon of Brecon, described it as being 'well adapted to literary pursuits and the contemplation of eternity' and started his famous tour of Wales from here in the late 12th century. The village displays an impressive set of medieval earthworks indicating its former size and importance.

The Middle Usk Valley is particularly notable for its medieval castles, containing as it does fine examples of the early motte and baileys of the Norman marcher lords, such as those at Aberyscir, Alexanderstone and Treberfydd, stone castles such as at Pencelli, and a fine later medieval defended tower house at Scethrog. Much of the valley retains a medieval character associated with these strongholds, typified by small shrunken villages surrounded by hedged pasture. A particularly impressive example of the former wealth and importance of this area during the medieval period is that of Llanfihangel Tal-y-llyn. Here the former extents of the medieval village are clearly visible, with earthworks indicating former streets and building platforms which once made up almost one quarter of the village. The area is also notable for its large country houses of the 18th and 19th centuries, such as Peterstone Court, and their associated estates, which have built on the landscape of their medieval and early post-medieval predecessors such as

Tŷ Mawr at Llangasty-Talylyn.

The advent of the Brecon and Monmouthshire Canal (begun in 1799, first opened in 1801 and then joined to the Monmouth Canal in 1812), which winds its way along the southern fringes of the area, connected the valley to the vibrant industrial economies of South Wales. The resulting wharfs and store houses at the canal terminus in Brecon became an important area for agricultural trading and the cloth industry. In the 1860s the canal was, in its turn, eclipsed by the Brecon and Merthyr Railway which connected Brecon to the Great Western Railway at Neath, via Ystradgynlais, in the south, and later to Hereford, via Hay-on-Wye, in the east. Ironically this arterial connection has long since disappeared while the canal, crossed by its characteristic lifting and humpbacked bridges, now provides an idyllic and popular tourist route through the margins of the valley.

SUMMARY

| | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Reference number | HLW (P) 7 |
| Index map number | 58 |
| OS Map | Landranger 1606, 161 |
| Former county | Powys |
| Unitary authority | Powys |
| Principal area designations | The area is almost entirely within the Brecon Beacons National Park. It includes: Llyn Syfaddan (Llangorse Lake) and part of the River Usk (Upper Usk) Sites of Special Scientific Interest; The Gaer, Brecon, Guardianship Site; crannog in Llangorse Lake Scheduled Ancient Monument; Brecon Conservation Area. |
| Criteria | 3, 5 |
| Contents and significance | The section of the Middle Usk Valley lying east and west of Brecon, including Llangorse Lake, in southern Powys, is a classic example of a Welsh landscape of domination and conquest, for which there is an important and significant range of diverse and well-preserved evidence spanning the prehistoric, Roman, medieval and later periods. The area includes: a Neolithic chambered tomb; Bronze Age ritual and funerary monuments; Iron Age hillforts and enclosures; a well-preserved Roman auxiliary fort; an early medieval lake dwelling or crannog — the only one in Wales; Early Christian and medieval ecclesiastical and monastic sites; a range of medieval defended sites and settlements, including Brecon town with its later, distinctive and largely unspoilt Victorian townscape; significant sections of the Brecon and Monmouthshire Canal; important historic, literary and mythological associations. |

About this study

The Study Area

The purpose of the present study is to provide a fuller and more detailed characterization of the *Middle Usk Valley: Brecon and Llangorse* historic landscape historic landscape area as defined in the *Historic Landscapes Register* (Map 1). The definitive boundaries of the Middle Usk Valley historic landscape are as defined in the register.

Methodology

A MapInfo 6 workspace was created, within which the Historic Environment Record (HER) held and maintained by the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust was interrogated against modern Ordnance Survey (OS) raster (1:10,000) and vector (LandLine) map-bases, and Landmark raster map-bases from early editions of the Ordnance Survey (1:2,500 and 1:10,000).

As part of the historic landscape characterization process a total of 8 historic landscape character areas were defined by an intuitive process (see Map 2), representing discrete geographical areas of broadly consistent historic character represented physically by a dominant land use or form of settlement, for example, informed by the HER datasets, Listed Buildings Lists, the *Register of Historic Parks and Gardens*, and by historical associations (Cadw & CCW 2003).

The study has been primarily desk-based, drawing upon information in the Historical Environment Record and in readily available published sources. Limited fieldwork was undertaken to test the validity of the desk-based assessment of the landscape character areas, to gain an overview of the buildings in the landscape area. A single aircraft flight was undertaken to provide oblique aerial photography. The identification of unrecorded sites of archaeological or historical significance and the confirmation of sites already identified was beyond the scope of the project and was not attempted.

Presentation

The results of the study are presented in two sections. The first provides a thematic narrative of the development of the historic landscape area as a whole. This is followed by a description of individual historic landscape character areas, accompanied by a list of essential sources and a location map. Photographs of character areas are presented towards the end of the report.

In the absence of a condition survey of the historic landscape features in the historic landscape area no attempt has been made to evaluate the historic landscape elements considered in this report or to formulate detailed management prescriptions, though a number of key historic landscape management issues are identified in the case of each of the character areas.

A bilingual version of the report will be available in due course on the CPAT website (www.cpat.org.uk) as part of the historic landscape characterization initiative, a consideration that has influenced the format and layout of this printed report to some extent. An illustrated leaflet about the historic landscape will also be produced to draw attention to the information available on the internet.

Spelling of place-names

The spelling and punctuation of a number of Welsh place-names in the Middle Usk Valley historic landscape area have changed over the years and appear in a variety of different in English or Welsh formss, as for example in the case of Brinore/Bryn-oer and Llan-gors/Llangorse. Generally, an attempt has been made in this report to use the spelling and punctuation shown on various recent editions of Ordnance Survey (though occasionally with

reference to Elwyn Davies's *A Gazetteer of Welsh Place-Names*).

Recommendations

There is an urgent need to complete a comprehensive fieldwork recording and audit of sites of archaeological or historical interest within the Middle Usk Valley historic landscape and to integrate records of these sites into a single record base, both of which were beyond the resources available to the present study.

Acknowledgments

Help during the preparation of this report was given by Judith Alfrey and William Read of Cadw (who provided considerable help with the sections relating to buildings), to Nigel Jones of CPAT who took the aerial photography which area used to illustrate this report, and to Chris Martin of CPAT for his help and assistance with various matters.

The Making of the Middle Usk Valley Landscape

ENVIRONMENTS AND BOUNDARIES

The Natural Landscape

The Middle Usk Valley historic landscape area is bounded to the north by Mynydd Epynt, by Mynydd Troed and Mynydd Llan-gors on the western edge of the Black Mountains to the east, and by the eastern flanks of the Brecon Beacons to the south.

The underlying solid geology throughout the area is of Silurian and Devonian Old Red Sandstone. The principal ice flow down the Usk valley during the last glaciation was divided by the western end of the Black Mountains near Llan-gors in the eastern part of the area, one branch turning south-eastwards down the Usk towards Crickhowell and the other continuing to the north-east across the Llynfi lowland to the Wye valley between Glasbury and Hay-on-Wye. Llangorse Lake, the largest natural lake in Breconshire, is of glacial origin. It is up to 8.5 metres deep and probably cut into solid rock at its lowest point. Water in the lake is retained by a barrier of glacial gravel together with more recent alluvial deposits, brought down by streams rising on the hills to the east. Other glacial deposits including morainic debris are present in the Usk valley in the Gilestone/Llansantffraed and Brynich/Groesffordd areas. The slight valley at Pennorth, was formed as a glacial meltwater channel running southwards from the direction of Llangorse Lake in the direction of the Usk valley.

The historic landscape area falls into a number of distinct topographical areas. The areas bordering the river Usk are generally flat and low-lying and between about 120-60 metres above sea level. On the east is the slightly elevated shallow basin around Llangorse Lake enclosed by gently undulating hills rising to a height of about 270 metres but with the isolated ridge of Allt yr Esgair between the Usk valley and the lake which rises to a height of 390 metres above sea level. The area to the north-east of Brecon is again gently undulating and generally between about 140-270 metres. The topography of the area to the north of the Usk and to the north-west of Brecon is more diverse, broken down into a number of distinct stream valleys and small isolated hills such as Coed Fenni-fach and Pen-y-crug which reach heights of about 300 metres. Brecon itself occupies a relatively level area bordering the flood plain of the river, between about 130-80 metres above sea level.

The soils throughout the area are predominantly well-drained, coarse reddish loamy soils overlying the sandstone bedrock, with fine, reddish silty alluvium along the flat flood plain of the river Usk, and with clayey, silty and loamy soils subject to seasonal waterlogging on the north-western margin of Llangorse Lake. Modern land use throughout the area is mostly permanent pasture, but with some arable and fodder crops and conifer plantations on steeper and less accessible land such as Allt yr Esgair and Coed Fenni-fach.

The historic landscape area is drained by a number of distinct streams and rivers. On the north-west are the Nant Brân, Afon Ysgir and Afon Honddu which join the Usk at Aberbrân, Aberyscir and Brecon (Aberhonddu) respectively, bringing water down from the southern flanks of Mynydd Epynt. To the north the Afon Brynich drains land to the south and west of Llan-ddew, joining the Usk just to the east of Brecon. To the south is the Afon Tarell which enters the Usk at Llanfaes and the Afon Cynig which joins it at Abercynrig. The Usk itself occupies a broad alluvial floodplain between Brecon and Talybont-on-Usk, with a complex and active system of river meanders and cutoffs. The eastern part of the area, however, is principally drained by the Afon Llynfi and its tributary streams such as the Nant Tawel at Llanfihangel Tal-y-llyn and the Nant Cwy at Llan-gors which feed Llangorse Lake and drain northwards to join the watershed of the river Wye near Talgarth.

Middle Usk Valley Historic Landscape Area



From early times the Middle Usk Valley has occupied an important nodal point in lines of communication linking south-east Wales along the Usk valley and midland England via the Wye valley with south-west Wales, a route occupied successively by the Roman roads of the 1st to 4th centuries, the turnpike roads of the 18th and 19th centuries, the railways of the later 19th and 20th centuries, and by modern trunk roads.

ADMINISTRATIVE LANDSCAPES

The secular landscape

The historic landscape area is thought to have fallen within the territory of the Silures, a pre-Roman tribe which occupied south-east Wales during the course of the Iron Age. Tribal organisation at this period is probably reflected locally in a number of large and prominent hillforts throughout the area including those at Coed Fenni-fach, Pen-y-crug, Slwch Tump and Allt yr Esgair.

The area was conquered by the Roman army and became integrated within the Roman empire in about AD 75, the conquest period and the period of Roman occupation being represented by the Roman fort and possible temporary camp at Brecon Gaer, to the west of Brecon. It has been suggested that its Roman name, Cicucium, given in the Ravenna Cosmography, might derive from a Celtic root describing its topographical setting as a breast. Brecon Gaer lies at the hub of a system of strategic military Roman roads, running southwards in the direction of Ystradgynlais (Powys), northwards towards Llandrindod Wells, south-eastwards along the Usk valley to Abergavenny (Monmouthshire), north-eastwards to Kenchester (Herefordshire) and south-westwards to Llandovery (Carmarthenshire). Inscribed Roman milestones indicate that the road between Brecon Gaer and Llandovery was maintained into at least the later 3rd century and the road between Brecon Gaer and Abergavenny up to at least about the middle of the 4th century. Apart from a civil settlement which became attached to Brecon Gaer no large centres of population were established in the area during the Roman period and consequently the area appears to have remained under military control and administration until the end of the period of Roman rule in the early 5th century, though the presence of the high-status complex at Maesderwen, near Llanfrynach, points to the establishment of Roman landed estates in the area during the course of the 3rd and 4th centuries.

The 6th-century commemorative stone known as the Victorinus Stone (now in Brecknock Museum) was found to the south-east of Scethrog on the probable line of the Abergavenny to Brecon Gaer Roman road. The vertical inscription on the roughly cylindrical pillar-stone, records the name of Nemnius (or Numnius) son of Victorinus strongly suggests that local elites within late Roman secular society, some retaining Roman names, were an influential in systems of social organization and land-use in the early post-Roman period.

By the early medieval period the area formed part of the kingdom of Brycheiniog which emerged as one of the early British kingdoms in Wales by the 7th to 8th century. Pre-Norman traditions suggest an association between the kings of Brycheiniog and Talgarth at that period. These foundation legends contained in two medieval Latin texts — *De Situ Brecheniauc* ('About Brycheiniog') and *Cognacio Brychan* ('The kin of Brychan') — identify Teuderic (Tewdrig) as the king of the district in perhaps the early 5th century. Teuderic, who claimed descent from a Roman nobleman, lived in a place called Garth Matrún. Commentators have identified the *garth* 'mountain spur' as the prominent and distinctively-shaped hill now known as Mynydd Troed (2-3 kilometres beyond the eastern boundary of the historic landscape area) and Garth Matrún as the modern town of Talgarth ('the brow of the garth') which lies at the foot of Mynydd Troed. According to tradition the kingdom of Brycheiniog was founded by the legendary figure of Brychan, grandson of Teuderic, apparently by expansion of his grandfather's kingdom, with its administrative focus at Talgarth in the fertile valley of the Llynfi.

The kingdom of Brycheiniog, one of the less aggressive of the early Welsh kingdoms, came under conflict with

from various quarters, to the extent that in the latter part of the century it was seeking protection from the Anglo-Saxon ruler, king Alfred. There are indications of conflict with the emergent kingdom of Gwynedd in north-west Wales by the 9th century and in 896 Viking raiders were also causing devastation in parts of the kingdom.

The historical and archaeological evidence points to the crannog or artificial island in Llangorse Lake as the residence of Tewdwr ab Elise, king of Brycheiniog in the late 9th and early 10th century, the crannog possibly having been built in response to the dangers posed by the Viking raids. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* records that in 916, following Alfred's death, lady Aethelflaed, Anglo-Saxon ruler of the Mercians and daughter of Alfred, sent an army into Wales three days after the murder of abbot Ecgerht and his companions. The army is said to have destroyed Breccanmere ('Brecon mere'), almost certainly to be identified as the crannog within the lake, where the royal court was sited, resulting in the capture of Tewdwr's wife and over thirty other people. The crannog, the only certain site of this kind known in Wales, has many Irish parallels: it seems to have been influenced by Irish building techniques, and was possibly constructed with the assistance of Irish craftsmen. It is probably significant that in later genealogical texts the kings of Brycheiniog claimed descent from a part-Irish dynasty, an association which probably also explains the occurrence of a distinctive cluster of ogham-inscribed stones in the area. The use of the unusual construction methods at Llan-gors crannog may have strengthened the royal houses' claims to Irish ancestry and thereby enhanced their social and political standing. The destruction of the Llan-gors crannog is marked by a burnt layer found during the course of archaeological excavation.

The locations of subsequent royal centres in Brycheiniog are uncertain. Dependence upon the English crown continued into the 10th century. The kings of Brycheiniog attended the English royal court in the 930s, though towards the end of the 10th century the kingdom recognised the overlordship of the kingdom of Deheubarth in south-west Wales, then under its king Maredudd ab Owain. In the 11th century it was acquired as a sub-kingdom by the expansionist kingdom of Gwynedd under its ruler Gruffudd ap Llywelyn. Native rule finally came to an end with the Norman conquest of Brycheiniog by Bernard de Neufmarché when the defeat of Rhys ap Tewdwr, prince of Deheubarth, ruler of south Wales and overlord of Brycheiniog in 1093 brought the rule of Bleddin ap Maenarch of Brycheiniog to an end.

The castle built and developed at Brecon in the late 11th century or early 12th century, after the conquest, by Bernard de Neufmarché and his successors, became the administrative centre of the new marcher lordship of Brecon. The settlement which grew up alongside the castle became the major market town of the region, its influence extending far into the surrounding countryside. In the later half of the 12th century the marcher lordship formed part of the territory of William de Braose and in the later 13th century by marriage to the Bohun family of the earls of Hereford and Essex. Following the Treaty of Montgomery in 1267 it briefly formed part of the territories subject to Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, but again fell to the Bohun family in the 1270s following the conquest of Wales by Edward I in 1284, but was confiscated by the crown following territorial disputes with neighbouring lordships in the 1290s. Parts of the Middle Usk Valley were subdivided into feudal manors after the English model granted to knight's and others who had given service to Bernard de Neufmarché during the conquest, including the following within the historic landscape area: Scethrog (Sir Miles Picard, de Picardé or Pitcher); Llanhamlach and Llanfihangel Tal-y-llyn (Sir John Walbeffe or Walbeoff); Aberyscir (Sir Hugh Surdwal); Gilestone (Sir Giles Pierrepont); Llansantffraed (Walter de Cropus), Llanspyddid (Sir Richard de Boulogne, or Bullen). Earthen motte and bailey castles which are probably to be associated with Norman manorial centres were founded at Aberyscir, Alexanderstone and Treberfydd.

By the Middle Ages the northern part of the historic landscape area, to the north of the Usk formed part of the *cantref* (hundred) of Cantref Selyf and the area to the south of the river to the cantref of Cantref Mawr. At the Act of Union in 1536 these medieval subdivisions together with the commote of Tir Ralph to the east of Brecon came to form the hundreds of Defynnog (Devynnock), Merthyr and Pencelli (Penkelly) respectively within the new county of Breconshire.

Brecon, like the Welsh medieval castle towns of Aberystwyth, Caernarfon, Carmarthen, Haverfordwest and

Denbigh had developed the status of an important regional centre by the end of the medieval period. Along with Carmarthen, Caernarfon and Denbigh, Brecon was designated as one of the four regional capitals of Wales by the Act of Union in 1536. The town lay on one of the major lines of communication across south Wales and as implied by the status conferred upon it at this time, which brought both judicial and revenue raising functions, was probably based upon its accessibility:

And forasmuch as the counties of Brecknock, Radnor, Montgomery and Denbigh be far distant from the City of London where the laws of England be commonly used, ministered, exercised and executed and for that the inhabitants of the said shires of Brecknock, Radnor, Montgomery and Denbigh be not of substance, power and ability to travel out of their counties to seek the administration of justice it is therefore enacted by the Authority aforesaid that the King Our Sovereign Lord shall have one Chancery and Exchequer at this Castle of Brecknock and one other at this town and Castle of Denbigh.

It continued to assume prominence in the administrative affairs of Wales until it was eclipsed in importance by the developing industrial towns of south Wales in the later 18th and 19th centuries. Brecon remained the county town of Breconshire until the local government reorganisation in 1974 when Brecknockshire, Radnorshire and Montgomeryshire were combined to form the new county of Powys. It remains the administrative centre of the Brecon Beacons National Park, designated in 1957.

The ecclesiastical landscape

Early medieval churches of certain or possible pre-Conquest date within the historic landscape area are known at Llan-ddew, Llanfaes, Llanfrynach, Llan-gors, Llanhamlach, Llanfihangel Tal-y-llyn, Llangasty Tal-y-llyn, and Llanspyddid.

Llan-gors evidently formed an important pre-Conquest ecclesiastical centre. A charter in the Book of Llandaff (*Liber Landavensis*) describes a judgement against king Tewdwr ab Elise of Brycheiniog made in the *clas* ('monastery, mother church') at Llan-gors in the early 10th century in favour of bishop Libiau of Llandaff. A royal estate here, corresponding to the later ecclesiastical parish of Llan-gors, had been granted by Awst, an earlier king of Brycheiniog, to the bishop of Llandaff in about the 8th century.

Following the Norman conquest under Bernard de Neufmarché monastic centres were established at the newly-created settlement of Brecon, after which the town of Brecon became the focus of religious life in the region and the centre of the archdeaconry of Brecon. A fortified palace belonging to the bishop of St David's was established at Llan-ddew in the 12th century which formed the residence of the archdeacons of Brecon and the administrative centre for the management of episcopal holdings in the area.

The Benedictine priory of St John's, which became an important landowner in the region, was founded before 1106 as dependant of Battle Abbey (Sussex). As in the case of the newly-established Anglo-Norman settlements elsewhere in south Wales, the juxtaposition of the castle and an adjacent monastery housing Norman Benedictine monks was part of a conscious strategy to stamp both secular and religious authority upon this newly-conquered territory.

A Dominican friary, subsequently known as Christ College, had been established by the mid 13th century at Llanfaes. Both the priory and the friary were suppressed in 1537. The priory church subsequently continued in use as a parish church and became the cathedral church in 1923 when the new diocese of Swansea and Brecon was created. In the 1540s Christ College was established as secular college and grammar school.

By the mid 19th century the following tithe parishes fell wholly or partly within the historic landscape area:

Aberyscir, Battle, Llandefaelog-fach, Brecon St John, Brecon St David, Brecon St Mary, Llan-ddew, Llanfrynach, Llanhamlach, Llanfeugan, Llansantffraed, Llangasty Tal-y-llyn, Llanfihangel Tal-y-llyn, Cathedine and Llandefaelog-fach.

LAND USE AND SETTLEMENT

Prehistoric and Roman land use and settlement

The earliest indications of human activity within the Middle Wye Valley historic landscape area are represented lithic implements found by chance in the peats below Llan-gors crannog. These belong to the Mesolithic period and probably represent one of a number of temporary camps used by hunter-gatherer groups moving along the Usk valley and up onto the surrounding hills on a seasonal basis. These finds from Llangorse Lake are probably an indication of its importance as a wildfowling and fishing resource from early times.

A general picture of the early land use is given by studies of sediments in Llangorse Lake which indicate a decrease in tree pollen and an increase in sedimentation during the period between about 3800–950 BC, suggesting a period of forest clearance and arable agriculture during the Neolithic and Bronze Age periods. Settlement sites of these periods are as yet undiscovered within the area but the existence of early communities of settled farmers is indicated by a scattering of characteristic burial and ritual monuments of these periods. The fact that the area has probably been farmed intensively since the later prehistoric period may explain why all traces of associated settlement sites have now disappeared from view. The Ty Illtud long barrow, between Llanhamlach and Pennorth, is one of a group of early Neolithic chambered long cairns which are known in and around the Breconshire Black Mountains. A number of round barrows of early Bronze Age date are known within the area and include a hilltop cairn on the summit of Allt yr Esgair and the prominent series of valley-bottom standing stones at Cradoc, Battle, Llanhamlach (Peterstone) and Gileston may also be of Bronze Age date.

The presence of the cluster of relatively large Iron Age hillforts, noted above, at Coed Fenni-fach, Pen-y-crug, Slwch Tump and Allt yr Esgair suggests that the area probably supported a substantial population by the later prehistoric period. No doubt much of the native broadleaved woodland still survived at this time, though a significant amount had probably already been felled and cleared for the creation of both pasture and arable land by pattern of as yet undiscovered dispersed farmsteads in the lower-lying areas around the hillforts. Indeed, it is likely that some of the irregular field patterns to be found within parts of the historic landscape area suggesting piecemeal woodland clearance and enclosure have their origin in the Bronze Age and Iron Age periods.

It is likely that the area most continued to be settled and farmed on a reasonably intensive scale throughout the Roman period even though relatively few habitation sites of this period have again yet been identified. A further substantial increase in the rate of sedimentation in Llangorse Lake suggests an intensification of arable agriculture and increased soil erosion in about the 3rd century AD, at least within the watershed of the river Llynfi, which probably mirrors the pattern of land use elsewhere. A nucleated civilian settlement sprang up in the shadow of the Roman fort at Brecon Gaer probably inhabited by merchants and artisans supplying goods and services to the military. This was probably a relatively short-lived settlement of the later 1st and 2nd centuries, however, and appears to have had little lasting impact upon the settlement and land use pattern of the area. The high-status Roman building complex at Maesderwen, near Llanfrynach, on the southern margin of the historic landscape area, may indicate the emergence of an aristocracy owning large landed estates in the area by the 3rd and 4th century AD, and it may possibly have been from within this milieu that the legendary king Teuderic emerged in the 5th century, as one who claimed descent from a Roman nobleman.

Early medieval and medieval settlement and land use

Farms and estates which had emerged during the course of the later Roman period most probably continued in production into the early medieval period, including the holdings and estates of the kings of Brycheiniog and his followers in the pre-Conquest period. The late 9th to early 10th-century royal palace on the crannog at Llangorse Lake is unique in Wales and atypical of other contemporary settlements in the area in the early medieval period: these were likewise probably of timber construction, but would have been encircled by fields rather than by water.

Little is yet generally known of the pattern of land use, landscape organisation or settlement in the period before the Anglo-Norman conquest in the late 11th century. As noted above, a pattern of churches had sprung up before the conquest period in the late 11th century, including the church at Llan-ddew and those at Llan-gors and Llanspyddid associated with inscribed or decorated stones of the 7th to 9th centuries. Other churches, such as Llanfrynach and Llanhamlach are associated with pre-Conquest inscribed or decorated stones of the 10th to 11th centuries. The origins of some medieval churches, such as Llanfihangel Tal-y-llyn and Llanfaes, is less certain. Nucleated settlements are associated with a number of these churches, notably those at Llanfrynach, Llan-gors, Llanfihangel, Llanspyddid and Llan-ddew which had probably emerged as free or bonded settlements before the Norman conquest in the late 11th century. A number of these nucleated settlements, such as Llanfihangel Tal-y-llyn, Llan-ddew and possibly Llanhamlach contracted in size as a result of rural depopulation during the post-medieval period, resulting in patterns of abandoned house platforms in some instances. The status of some other churches is less clear, such as that already mentioned at Llanhamlach, as well as those which may have originated in either the pre- or post-Conquest period at Aberyscir, Cathedine, Battle, and Llansantffraed. Today these churches are associated with little more than a single farm or a scattering of houses, which suggests that they may have originated as proprietary churches endowed by prominent landowners following the conquest, and set up next to their principal habitations — the predecessors of the present-day farms or gentry houses which lie next to the churches.

Following the Anglo-Norman conquest under Bernard de Neufmarché in the late 11th century substantial rural landholdings appear to have been granted to knights and other high-ranking individuals who had taken part in his expedition. These probably included estates confiscated from native princes and landowners within the native kingdom of Brycheiniog as well as those which may have been newly-established at this time, often occupying the richer lower-lying agricultural land in the Usk and Llynfi valleys. As noted above, Norman manors recorded within the historic landscape area include the following: Scethrog, granted to Sir Miles Picard, de Picardé or Pitcher; Llanhamlach and Llanfihangel Tal-y-llyn granted to Sir John Walbeffe or Walbeoff; Aberyscir, granted to Sir Hugh Surdwal; Gileston (Gilestone), granted to Sir Giles Pierrepont; Llansantffraed, granted to Walter de Cropus; and Llanspyddid, granted to Sir Richard de Boulogne, or Bullen, many of whom founded estates that were to survive into the modern period.

After the conquest Brecon became the administrative, religious and commercial focus of the region. The town appears to have been established here on the western bank of the Afon Honddu, possibly at some remove from earlier native royal centres. It lay adjacent to the earth and timber castle was probably established in the late 11th century or early 12th century by the Norman lord, Bernard de Newmarché, shortly after the conquest of the kingdom of Brycheiniog in 1093 and the Benedictine priory was founded before 1106. The settlement subsequently expanded along the banks of the river Usk to the east of the Honddu, being provided with town defences in perhaps the early to mid 13th century and receiving a series of charters from the later 13th. As noted above, it was designated as one of the four regional capitals of Wales by the Act of Union in 1536.

A number of the secular, early manorial centres, such Pencelli, Aberyscir, Llangasty Tal-y-llyn (Twmpaen Motte) and Alexanderstone were associated with mottes or motte and bailey castles probably in the late 11th or 12th centuries, to which in some instances masonry keeps or defences were added possibly at a later date. The 16th-century defensive tower house at Scethrog, associated with the Picard family, may have replaced an earlier

defensive structure. Ecclesiastical estates belonging to St David's had been established at Llan-ddew by the 12th century, the manorial centre here being focused on the bishop's palace which was also provided with masonry defences, probably in the 13th or 14th century. These episcopal holdings remained in the possession of St David's until the Reformation in the 1530s. Brecon Priory also had substantial holdings in the area, which included the parish of Battle, which as noted above, was named after the priory's mother church at Battle in Sussex. Just prior to the reformation St David's holdings in the archdeaconry of Brecon and those of Brecon Priory were managed by a single steward, Thomas Harvard, who stood accused in 1531 of wrongfully appropriating revenues owed to the manor of Llan-ddew.

Systems of arable farming associated with a number of these secular and ecclesiastical manorial centres appear to have given rise to distinctive field patterns that are still evident in some areas at the present day. Characteristic patterns of strip-fields with hedged boundaries, representing the enclosure and amalgamation of medieval open-field furlongs are discernible, for example, near Llanspyddid, Aberyscir, Aberbrân, Llan-ddew, Alexanderstone, and Llanfihangel Tal-y-llyn, in each case associated with relict ridge and furrow cultivation. Relict ridge and furrow of possible medieval open-field origin has also been identified at or near the centres at Pencelli, Llan-gors and Battle. Possible reorganised strip fields and ridge and furrow have also been identified on the eastern, northern and southern margins of the town of Brecon, including its southern suburb of Llanfaes, which may represent former medieval open-fields associated with the manor and town of Brecon itself. In some instances the Welsh place-name element *maes*, which occurs in the place-name Llanfaes, is thought to indicate former open-fields.

An indication of the impact of intensive agriculture in the later 12th century in the area appears to be given by the observation by Gerald of Wales in his *Description of Wales* that Llangorse Lake was sometimes tinged with red. This suggests that soil erosion was taking place at least within the watershed of the river Llynfi, presumably following ploughing or after woodland clearance. Suspended sediments of this kind are still carried into the lake by streams in winter and spring. Gerald's observation that the lake was sometimes tinged with green suggests the formation of an algal bloom of the kind observed in recent years which has been viewed as a detrimental effect of modern agricultural practice resulting from the leaching of nitrates and phosphates. In a modern context high levels of both nitrate compounds and ammonia are often caused by intensive livestock production and it may have been this which was the cause of a similar phenomenon in the later 12th century.

The customary medieval patterns of tenure and land use based upon the manorial system and open-field cultivation probably began to break down and fragment during the course of the later 14th and 15th centuries, exacerbated by the plagues and other disasters that occurred during this period. The deaths of a significant proportion of tenants in areas such as the Watton are recorded in 1372, for example. The commutation of services to rents, the sale and dispersal of demesne holdings will have encouraged the establishment of individual freehold farms with perhaps a greater emphasis on grazing. As well as the attack on the town of Brecon during the Glyndŵr uprising in the early years of the 15th century many of the rural manors in the surrounding countryside were also devastated, it being recorded that in the area 'The rebels purpose to burn and destroy . . . all pertaining to the English in these parts'.

More irregular field patterns elsewhere, often at some remove from these early manorial centres, appear to represent a process of piecemeal clearance and enclosure of farmland from prehistoric, Roman, and early medieval periods onwards, characterizing a more dispersed pattern of settlement associated with freehold or tenanted farms.

The river Usk and Llangorse Lake evidently provided an important source of nutrition from early times. Gerald of Wales in the 12th century noted that the lake was a source of pike, perch, tench and eels and that like the river Usk it was also a source of trout. Medieval ministers' accounts make reference to parties of women from Llanfaes

fishing in the lake with nets. These sources of fresh fish were also supplemented in the medieval period by artificial fishponds, such as those which are known from earthwork evidence to the west of Llan-ddew church, which no doubt supplied the kitchen of the bishops' palace at Llan-ddew.

Post medieval and modern land use and settlement

The towns, villages and farms that had emerged in the area by the end of the medieval period continued to expand and develop during the post-medieval period.

Though subsequently eclipsed by the growth of the industrial towns and cities of south Wales, by the 16th century Brecon had emerged as one of the four regional capitals of Wales. It is clear that by the early 17th century the town was beginning to expand beyond the area defined by its medieval town walls, notably on the north, in the area of the Struet and Mount Street. Improvements in the turnpike roads from the later 18th century saw an expansion in commercial activity and the development of coaching inns. Early industry in and around the town, largely based on the use of water power provided by the Usk and Honddu, was fostered by the coming of the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal at the very beginning of the 19th century and the opening of the Hay Tramroad by the end of the second decade of the century, giving rise to industries based upon the use of coal and limestone. The town underwent a further spurt of growth in both workers' and artisans' housing and in town houses of the gentry and merchants and by the early 19th century had seen the expansion of the suburbs of the Watton to the east and Llanfaes to the south-west, the population doubling in the period between 1801-51 to nearly 6,000. The town further developed with the coming of the railways in the later 19th century. During the course of the later 19th and 20th centuries the town has seen a considerable expansion in housing in the Pendre area to the north-west and in both housing and commercial developments in the Camden Road area to the east.

Several of the nucleated villages and hamlets in the area developed around earlier, medieval nucleated settlements or manorial centres, sometimes associated with a church or castle, whilst others appear to have simply grown up around a farmstead. Some of the latter may have become small estate centres, though despite the existence of several country houses in the area, their influence on the wider settlement pattern appears to have been patchy.

The small nucleated villages that had emerged during the medieval period, such as Llan-gors, Llanfihangel Tal-y-llyn, Llan-ddew and Llanfrynach continued to develop during the post-medieval period and indeed the surviving architectural evidence for their development belongs very largely to later centuries. Llanfrynach is a particularly good example of a nucleated village with the church at its centre, alongside which Ty Mawr has been identified as a fortified later medieval manor house. The agricultural roots of the settlement are suggested by the presence of some good farm buildings, but a strong village character is lent by the unified terraces that front the main road through the settlement, opposite the church. Beyond this nucleus there is an interesting mix of more informally developed housing (a huddle of very modest houses), giving quite a social-economic depth to the historical settlement here, where modern development has been fitted in sympathetically. There is a marked distinction between the informality of settlement in many of the villages where the majority of smaller houses and cottages are located (see for example Llanfrynach and Battle), and the appearance of control exercised by larger landowners in the rural areas. There is no surviving evidence for squatting or encroachment, for example, not even associated with the small common at Llan-gors, though there may have been some roadside intakes on the road to the west of the village.

Some of the villages clearly grew up during the post-medieval period as farm-settlements, in which one or more farms form the nucleus for later growth. A good example of this is Llanfihangel Tal-y-llyn, in which there is a good farm complex in the middle of the village, but which is mostly otherwise a settlement of late 19th to early 20th-century character, with the addition of a modern housing estate. Scethrog may be another example of this. The nucleation here, which includes the earlier 16th-century house at Hen Persondy and a number of 18th-century houses and barns at Neuadd and Scethrog Farm, lies to the north of an earlier focus at the Tower which was probably part of a 16th-century fortified tower house built by a branch of the Pichard family. Llanspyddid likewise

appears to have been little more than a couple of farms with the church alongside the main road until it expanded when a housing estate was built further up the slope to the south in the 20th century. Troedyrharn and Alexanderstone to the east of Brecon both retain the character of farm settlements, in which farmhouses and their working ranges are accompanied by what were probably estate labourers' cottages.

The historical development of the different villages and hamlets in the historic landscape area is reflected in the differing nature of the building pattern: thus the informal development of individual houses in Llanfrynach contrasts with the more organised process of terraced building in the same village, or at Talybont-on-Usk. Llan-gors and Llanfihangel Tal-y-llyn also have a settlement pattern characterised as an agglomeration of individual buildings suggesting development over a period of time and by many different agents. The formally designed terraces at Cradoc and Tal-y-llyn by contrast, show the influence of a single controlling hand.

Several villages, such as Llan-ddew, Llanfihangel Tal-y-llyn and possibly Llanhamlach, appear to have undergone a period of contraction in the later 19th century, possibly in response to farm mechanisation and the competing attractions for employment in the burgeoning industrial settlements of south Wales. This also affected a number of more dispersed rural habitations, as for example on the eastern slopes of Allt yr Esgair, south of Llangorse Lake. This process resulted in the abandonment of former house-platforms dating probably from the medieval period onwards that are visible in and around these settlements, though most villages have experienced a period of renewed growth and revitalisation during the later 20th and early 21st centuries, including the renovation of many of the existing buildings.

Outside the town of Brecon the settlement pattern is characterised by dispersed farms, the degree of dispersal and the dominance of quite substantial farmhouses with large associated buildings suggesting that individual holdings were relatively large. It is only on the upland edges of the area that this pattern gives way to one in which smaller farms are closer together. Generally, the dominant pattern indicates an origin in a pattern of landholding in which there were many, relatively prosperous, freeholders.

The 16th and 17th centuries onwards saw the formation of a number of landed estates which were to continue to have an influential and visible impact upon the landscape in terms of the enclosure and improvement of farmland and in the development of houses and tenanted farms. Some of these estates sprang from prominent families that had emerged during the medieval period, the earliest house at Abercynrig, for example, appears to have been built by the Aubrey family in the 13th century, a family which rose to prominence during the 16th century when the family estates were greatly enlarged by Dr William Aubrey, lawyer and MP. The Games family which produced a number of sheriffs of the county who owned properties at Aberbrân, Newton (near Brecon) and Buckland, traced their ancestry to Sir Dafydd Gam, knighted by Henry V at Agincourt in 1415.

The area to the west and south-west of Llangorse Lake displays evidence of early prosperity in a series of buildings with probable early origins. These include Ty Mawr, the former manor house replaced by Treberfydd as well as other buildings in the area with features indicative of an early date such as Llan farmhouse, and Neuadd Farm, where the 19th-century farmhouse nevertheless retains evidence for its predecessor, including a good corbelled gable-end chimney. Similarly, Trebinshwn is big enough to have the character of a small country house — its large complex of farm-buildings has partially been converted to domestic use; the main house is early 19th-century Georgian, but its symmetries have been planted on a 17th-century house.

The Watkin's family of Penoyre held substantial properties in Brecon and the parishes to the north of the town, forming an estate which had its origins in the holdings of a 17th-century lawyer, Pennoyre Watkins. Other larger farms may have had early origins as estate-centres, such as Ty Mawr, Llangasty Tal-y-llyn, mentioned above, or Aber-Brân-fawr, the large farm that lies west of the road to Aberbrân on the north side of the A40. The latter is a particularly interesting and apparently an ancient farm complex with what appears to be a double farmhouse, perhaps grown from the hall and retainers' wing of the original house. Some of these farms continued, or were later configured, as the

nuclei of estates. As noted in the following section, considerable investment appears to have been made during the 19th century by a number of the estates as well as some individual landowners to improve their farms. There is a good illustration of this at Llanbrynean, just to the south of the village of Llanfrynach, where a characteristic 19th-century model farm still survives, with a large later 19th-century house facing out from an enclosed yard at the rear.

Major landowners in the 19th century were the Gwynne Holford family of Buckland Hall, lying just to the south-east of the area, whose land included many farms stretching from Llangorse Lake to Cathedine. Treberfydd is a good example of a small estate with associated parkland, the nucleus of the estate here having apparently shifted from the nearby Ty Mawr to this newly-built house in the 19th century. Estate patronage is exceptionally well illustrated here by the reconstruction of the church at Llangasty Tal-y-llyn in mid 19th-century Gothic revival, together with the contemporary rectory, and schoolhouse. The patron was Robert Raikes who came to Treberfydd to establish a centre of Tractarian worship. His architect was John Loughborough Pearson, the well-known Victorian church architect, who was responsible for all the buildings mentioned above, as well as the house itself. Its park was landscaped by the architect and designer W. E. Nesfield. There are also estate cottages in the immediate vicinity of the house, and the substantial farm complex of Treberfydd Farm. The farmhouse looks as if it was remodelled by the estate in the 19th-century but its plan form suggests early, possibly 16th-century origins. The farm buildings include a good cartshed range with cylindrical stone columns.

There are further examples of estate cottages and improved farms elsewhere, but nothing that could be described as an estate village. The small estate of Maesderwen, for example, lies just to the west of the village of Llanfrynach, but there is little overt estate character to the settlement. There are clear indications of estate influence on settlement at Battle, lying close to the large house of Penoyre (described by the diarist Francis Kilvert as having 'only twenty-five bedrooms') with gate lodges and other ancillary estate buildings (perhaps a laundry?) just to the east of the village, which was the focus of a large estate in the 18th and 19th centuries. Some cottages in the village have a strong estate character, but the village as a whole does not have any sense of a coherent plan and it may be that the estate was only one of a number of landowners here, imposing its own architectural style where it could, but in piecemeal fashion. The house at Penoyre itself had a chequered history, becoming a military hospital during the Second World War, and passing through various hands since 1939 when the estate was sold, becoming successively a school, a club house for Cradoc Golf Course established in the grounds of the house in about 1960, and since 1970 a nursing home, a hotel, a rehabilitation centre and again a nursing home.

A general resurgence in agricultural activity in the area during the post-medieval is suggested by the analysis of sediments in Llangorse Lake which indicate increases in the rate of sedimentation at about the beginning of the 19th century, probably in response to the cultivation of marginal hill-lands within the catchment area of the Llynfi. The land, most of which is enclosed, includes some of the best grade agricultural land in the county of Brecknock and appears to have been farmed quite intensively.

Various changes were being made to traditional farming methods to increase agricultural production from the second half of the 18th century, many of which were being actively promoted by the Brecknockshire Agricultural Society, founded in 1755, the earliest county organisation of this kind in Wales. In addition to improvements to crop and animal husbandry, a number of changes were being made which were to have a lasting impact upon the historic environment. Widescale improvements to land drainage were introduced in a number of areas. The improvement of soil fertility by the application of lime required the construction of limekilns. The investment in new farm buildings and improvements in provision for the housing and welfare of agricultural workers had impacts upon the built environment which are discussed below. Many changes were made to field boundaries in some areas. Former medieval open-fields were probably undergoing a process of enclosure from the end of the medieval period, resulting in distinctive field patterns visible near Llan-ddew and Llanfihangel Tal-y-llyn, for example, with strip fields and dog-legged boundaries. A number of areas of formerly more extensive upland common were enclosed during the 18th and 19th centuries, as for example to the north of Brecon and to the north-west of Llangorse Lake. This resulted in the

creation of distinctive, rectilinear field patterns in these areas and the fragmentary pattern of unenclosed commons which survive in the area today. Surviving from this process are the two remnant lowland commons between Llan-gors and Llanfihangel Tal-y-llyn which between them cover over 20 hectares, and the small patch of common land of about a hectare in extent just to the west of Battle. A residual narrow strip of common land survives along the ridge of Allt yr Esgair along the course of an ancient trackway between Pennorth and Bwlch which is marked as a 'Roman Road' on some Ordnance Survey maps but which now seems unlikely to be of this date.

The developing transport infrastructure during the later 18th and 19th centuries was a significant element in the shaping of settlement patterns in this area, with a number of smaller settlements emerging at a number of the more significant road junctions as well as near the canal and near stations and halts on the tramways and railways whose histories are described more fully below. Tal-y-llyn grew up at a railway junction, for example, and the 19th-century growth of Pennorth is probably also accounted for by the railway. Houses here are dated 1868 and the chapel was rebuilt in 1893. The railway clearly also exerted an influence on Cradoc where there was formerly a railway station. The influence of roads is apparent, in for example the strung out settlement with early-mid 19th-century houses which follows the A40, at Llanhamlach.

The Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal was particularly influential on the location of settlement in the late 18th to early 19th century. At Talybont-on-Usk, early settlement is represented by the substantial Maes Mawr Farm to the south-east, but the modern village largely owes its development to the canal, as suggested by the rows of cottages which are characteristic of this form of settlement. There is also some architectural detail in cottages to the north that may be indicative of the work of a landed estate. Talybont-on-Usk contrasts with Pencelli, where the houses in the village are clustered together along the road but with no semblance of a unified building campaign. They are of varied sizes and heights. Settlement here clearly had early origins associated with the castle, and there are some fine farm buildings suggesting that the nucleus of settlement in the 18th century was a farm village which expanded with the arrival of the canal. The later settlements at Cradoc and Groesffordd in particular underwent significant residential expansion during the second half of the 20th century, the latter in relation to a local authority housing scheme.

Some reorganisation of field boundaries was undertaken in conjunction with the development communications network, firstly with the turnpike road system in the later 18th century and later in response to the construction of the canal, tramroad and railway networks during the course of the 19th century. However, apart from the larger-scale reorganisation of field boundaries near Pennant, just to the west of Brecon, these changes were generally on a relatively modest scale, and the general pattern is one of these lines of communication overlying much earlier field systems.

BUILDINGS IN THE LANDSCAPE

There are several seemingly early farmhouses scattered across the area, where 16th-century origins are suspected. There are also fragments of even earlier domestic buildings such as Ty Mawr, Llanfrynach and the bishops' palace at Llan-ddew. Thereafter, most architectural periods seem to be represented, and there is no sense of one period dominating building development. This relatively long chronological span, and perhaps also the land-ownership pattern in the area, has militated against the emergence of a strong vernacular style, though the dominant plan-type was that in which the chimney backed onto the entry (Peter Smith's plan-type B). There is however, a strong coherence in the use of building materials — the locally obtained red sandstone predominates, with the introduction of brick only after the arrival of the railways in the second half of the 19th century. Earlier traditions of working in timber can certainly be identified in the area, as for example at Gilfach, Llan-gors, but have left little trace in the external character of its building stock.

There is also a clear social hierarchy in building, with a series of small country seats at the top of the range; most

farms are also quite large, and have the character of gentry farms. Some of these have associated cottages, though the smaller dwellings of this kind, most of which are unlikely to be earlier than about 1800, generally seem to be gathered into the villages. This may be the result of a rationalisation of settlement in the 19th century, but whatever its origins, it is a strong feature of this area. This hierarchy is reflected in a range of architectural languages, since some of the small country houses belong to 'polite' architectural traditions, rather than the vernacular. Some of them were designed by the leading architects of their day. Examples of these polite houses are Scethrog House (late 17th century), Peterstone Court, Maesderwen (an early 19th-century Doric villa outside Llanfrynach), Aberyscir Court (1837), Penoyre (1848, by the architect Anthony Salvin), and the remarkable complex of buildings by the architect J. L. Pearson at Treberfydd. The transition from vernacular to polite traditions is neatly illustrated by the house at Trebinshwn, where the original house of about 1630 was comprehensively re-fronted in 1805.

Red sandstone predominates, but there are variations in both its colouration and its handling. In some instances it is finished almost as ashlar, elsewhere is rubble. The use of lime-wash and render also contributes significantly to the character of settlements but its traditional use in the area appears to be diminishing. The influence of the railways is clear in the introduction of imported, manufactured materials. The railway settlements of Tal-y-llyn and Pennorth for example make extensive use of brick and especially a yellow brick of uncertain provenance, typically used for string-courses and window and door openings. For roofing, there remain a few examples of split-stone roofs traditionally used in the area, but imported slate from north Wales now predominates.

Field evidence suggests a vigorous campaign of farm improvement from about 1800. Whereas farmhouses have a range of dates from the 16th-century onwards, and a corresponding range of architectural form, there is a much greater coherence amongst the stock of farm buildings, because of their much more restricted chronology. Most of the examples seen seem to be early 19th-century or later. There are large numbers of well-planned farmyards that look to be the result of improved agricultural practices and considerable investment. Examples include the model farm outside Llanfrynach mentioned above, and Aber-Brân-fach Farm and Pool Farm, both near Aberbrân, where the house is built as part of the farm ranges, though the latter have been converted. Troedyrharn, Alexanderstone, Wern and Manest Court also have fine, large courtyard ranges. Dominant buildings tend to be the barns, though the farms were clearly mixed, with good ranges for housing stock as well. Other characteristic building types are open-fronted shelter or cart sheds (sometimes with cylindrical stone pillars supporting the roof), and there are also examples of open hay barns, whilst there are granaries at Ty Mawr, Llangasty Tal-y-llyn. An unusual example of a possible hay barn at Aberyscir uses wrought iron in the roof trusses; its association with the large house suggests considerable investment.

The buildings of the town of Brecon provide a valuable record of its long history of prosperity, fulfilling its roles as county town, agricultural centre, and garrison town. The centre of Brecon has preserved its character remarkably well, the medieval layout of its main streets, recognisable in Speed's map of 1610, being still easily recognisable today. Amongst domestic buildings there is very little which is obviously medieval though there are a number of important early post-medieval survivals. Buckingham Place was originally a 16th century house with detached kitchen or solar; the 2 parts were linked in the early 18th century. Church House in Lion Street is a late 16th- or early 17th-century L-plan house, refronted in the 18th century. Just outside the western limits of the town stands Newton House built around 1582 by John Games, High Sheriff of Breconshire. Possibly the earliest double-pile plan house in Wales, and four storeys high, the house has interiors which include a great hall with screen and fireplace with heraldic relief. Upper rooms with relief plasterwork including Tudor roses and fleur-de-llys. The typical sub-medieval building type in Brecon was the so-called 'three-quarter house' consisting of side and rear walls of stone with a timber-framed front. Most obvious of these is 20 Ship Street, dating to the mid 17th-century, which retains its timber front. Most houses of this type were re-fronted in the late 18th century or early 19th century, however, of which the Sarah Siddons' public house in High Street Inferior is one of many examples.

Town houses of the 18th century and early 19th century belonging to gentry or prosperous tradesmen survive in remarkable numbers, especially in Lion Street, The Struet and Glamorgan Street. No. 4 Lion Street is rare in using exposed brick and follows fashionable plans from the English Midlands. Cantre Selyf, also in Lion Street, with 17th-century origins, has enriched plaster ceilings and fine stair. In Glamorgan Street, Havard House, again with 17th-century origins, has remarkable interiors including panelling and stair. Hamilton House, in The Struet, has fine Regency interiors.

As a county town Brecon provided space for balls and theatrical performances. Above Nos 29 and 30 High Street Superior the former great room of the Bell Inn survives where the actress Sarah Siddons performed. To the rear of a furniture shop in The Watton, a purpose-built theatre survives, which has unfortunately been stripped out. The importance of the town as a retail centre is shown by fine 18th- or 19th-century shop fronts at 20 High Street Inferior, for example, and especially 46 High Street Inferior with classical detailing worthy of Bath. Amongst public buildings, the present Brecknock Museum, built as the Shire Hall around 1840, by the architects T. H. Wyatt and David Brandon, is one of the best Greek Revival buildings in Wales, and housed courts which partially survive. The present Guild Hall is a late 19th-century remodelling of a building of 1770, formerly with open arcading on the ground floor for market use.

The Plough Chapel in Lion Street has a good late 19th-century interior. The church of St Michael (by the Victorian architect and inventor Joseph Aloysius Hansom) of 1851 is early in date for a Roman Catholic church in rural Wales, and the great Spanish soprano Adelina Patti was married here in 1899. Outside the historic centre, the main road out of Brecon to the east, the Watton, was largely developed in the early to mid 19th century, with regular terraces of houses in late Georgian style. The front wall of the barracks with its keep of the 1870s hides excellent buildings of the 1840s arranged around a parade ground. The former cavalry barracks with lantern are particularly impressive. The red brick buildings on the west side date from around 1805, however.

The part of the present day town across the river Usk was formed the separate parish of Llanfaes. Brecon spread across the bridge and there are good late 18th- to early 19th-century houses near the bridge. The church of St David's was rebuilt in 1859, and again in 1923-35. Also here Christ College incorporates remains of the medieval friary of St Nicholas. The choir the medieval chapel remains, as do the 13th-century infirmary and guest hall. The whole was restored in the mid 19th century by architects Pritchard and Seddon, and their School House (1861) is a fine Gothic Revival building in its own right. Brecon Congregational Memorial College, now converted into flats, was designed by the architect Thomas Thomas in an Elizabethan Renaissance style and built as a theological college between 1867-69 on a prominent hillside location on the eastern side of the town. The new building, with Bath stone dressings, and has been described in the following terms: 'a pleasing structure of native stone, harmonizing well with the unpretentiously beautiful Brecknockshire landscape and exhibiting in its simplified, angular and sober version of the Gothic idiom some of the virtues and idiosyncrasies of Welsh Puritanism'.

The Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal came at the very end of the 18th century, but very little survives apart a weigh office and bridges. One of the canal bridges on the eastern outskirts of the town has an extra arch through which the Hay Tramroad ran. The steam railway came in the 1860s and vanished a century later but has left few traces apart from the abutment to a viaduct which crossed the Honddu (in the Postern), and the name Viaduct House of a building in the Struet.

The relative lack of Victorian and Edwardian houses suggests a period of slow down in the town's economy, although there are some attractive Edwardian villas to the north of the old railway line. As already mentioned, the overall 'Georgian' character of the town masks earlier origins for many of the buildings, and some residents have objected to the local authority's enhancements to its Georgian character. Major developments such as the Bethel Square shopping centre have generally been handled well. The inner relief road built in the early years of the 21st century has meant the loss of listed buildings. Perhaps the biggest disappointment is the loss of character to the

less important, but typical smaller houses lining the approaches to the town by replacement glazing and roofing in the approaches to Brecon.

INDUSTRIAL LANDSCAPES

A number of different and generally small-scale extractive and processing industries characteristic of rural areas were active in area from at least the medieval period onwards, but though significant in local terms have had a fairly muted impact upon the historic landscape area as a whole.

Relatively small and isolated quarries for building material for houses, agricultural building and walling appeared throughout the area since medieval times and perhaps particularly during the period between the late 17th and 19th centuries, the principal material quarried being Old Red Sandstone either in the form of more amorphous red or brown blocks or more greenish-grey beds of more slabby stone. Some of the latter, which occurs as beds within the Old Red Sandstone, appears to have been suited for the production of split-stone roofing tiles which was used as a traditional building material in the area (perhaps initially limited to high-status buildings) until, as noted above, its use was supplanted by imported slate as the predominant roofing material during the course of the later 19th and earlier 20th centuries. A group of small abandoned quarries is to be seen, for example, in the area between Llanfihangel Tal-y-llyn and Pennorth which were probably used for building materials. Quarries which supplied building works in Brecon are known in the Honddu valley, just to the north-east of the priory, and at Pennant, to the west of the town. Larger-scale stone quarries are also known along the Allt yr Esgair ridge, to the north of Talybont-on-Usk.

Limekilns, largely for the production of agricultural lime were set up and operating in the area in the 18th and 19th centuries, particularly following the opening of the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal at the beginning of the 19th century which readily transported both limestone and coal to feed the kilns. Kilns were constructed alongside the canal at the Watton, Brecon, and at Brynich and possibly Pencelli. An impressive bank of kilns survives at Talybont-on-Usk which were connected with the Brinore Tramroad.

Water power of the Usk and Llynfi and their tributary rivers and streams were harnessed from medieval times until the later 19th and early 20th century when they were gradually replaced by alternative and more reliable forms of energy which were less dependent upon seasonal fluctuation. Several early mills are known which exploited the flow of the Afon Honddu in Brecon including the corn mill known as the Watergate Mill, Castle Mill or Honddu Mill, near the confluence with the river Usk, where a mill was active from at least the later 14th century until the early 20th century. Further upstream, the Brecon woollen mill, a former fulling mill known as Burges Mill or Priory Mill, was in operation from at least the mid 17th century until again the earlier 20th century. Medieval mills are also recorded at Pencelli and the Watton, which went out of use in the early 15th century, possibly as a consequence of the devastation brought about by the Glyndŵr rebellion. Water corn mills which survive in varying states of preservation are known on the banks of the river Usk at Millbrook, north-west of Llanhamlach, on the Nant Cwy stream in the village of Llan-gors, on the Nant Brân stream at Aberbrân, on the Nant Menasgin stream at Pencelli, and on the Afon Cynrig, north-west of Llanfrynach, all of which were probably in use during at least the 18th and 19th centuries. A water mill on the Afon Llynfi is depicted on a 16th-century map of Llangorse Lake. Water-powered sawmills were in operation in Brecon in at least the later 19th century on the Afon Tarell near Pont a'r Darell, Llanfaes, and off Orchard Street, the Watton, adjacent to the canal and railway wharfs. Former saw pits dating from the 18th or 19th centuries are recorded at Llan-gors and Brecon. Each of the former water mills was associated with a variety of other structures including leats and millponds, some of which have either been filled in or still survive as distinctive landscape features.

Water power was also exploited at the iron furnace on the river Honddu at Forge Farm about a mile north of Brecon. The furnace built about 1720 and supplied with iron ore and limestone from Hirwaun and charcoal from the surrounding countryside was based on bloom methods. It remained in operation until about 1780, coming

under increasing competition from ironworks in the Merthyr area from the middle of the 18th century using coke-fuelled blast furnaces.

Other relatively short-lived industries in the area include the brick and tile works exploiting deposits of glacially-derived clay were in operation in the 19th century to the north of Brecon on the southern flanks of Pen-y-crug and at Tairderwen where complexes with the remains of kilns and clay pits are still visible. These works probably supplied the growing town of Brecon with locally-produced ceramic building materials until the impact of competition with more cheaply produced goods from elsewhere was felt as a result of the coming of the railways in the last decades of the 19th century.

Other characteristic small rural industries included village smithies at centres such as Llanfihangel Tal-y-llyn, Talybont-on-Usk, Llan-gors and Cross Oak in the 19th century but most probably of earlier origin. Brecon was provided with a slaughterhouse and a tannery, off Bridge Street. The former Brecon Brewery operated from premises in The Struet, Brecon in the early to mid 19th century and a malthouse of this period was in use at Abercynrig, just to the south-east of the town.

Town gas for lighting was introduced into Brecon in the late 19th century with the establishment of the former gasworks just off Charles Street, initially using coal supplies transported by canal and stored in three gasometers, which remained in production into the first half of the 20th century.

TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS

The extent to which river transport may have been employed in early times in the middle and upper reaches of the Usk is poorly documented though the use of water craft for fishing, including the use of dugout boats and coracles, is documented on Llangorse Lake from about the 9th century onwards.

The principal lines of communication by land within the historic landscape area have been determined by the topography, notably the axis of the valleys of the Usk and Llynfi and the major blocks of upland, and successive Roman roads, medieval routes, turnpike roads, canals and railways and modern trunk roads have all tended to follow broadly the same routes.

Roads

As noted above, the earliest transport and communication system of which there is known evidence is the network of strategic Roman roads which focus on the fort at Brecon Gaer, to the west of Brecon, established in the later 1st century. Road radiate outwards from the fort linking with forts and major settlements elsewhere. The lines of road are known southwards in the direction of Ystradgynlais (Powys), northwards towards Llandrindod Wells, south-eastwards along the Usk valley to Abergavenny (Monmouthshire), north-eastwards to Kenchester (Herefordshire) and south-westwards to Llandovery (Carmarthenshire). Parts of the course of each of these roads are known from fieldwork or excavation though other stretches are more speculative. Inscribed Roman milestones indicate that the road between Brecon Gaer and Llandovery was maintained into at least the later 3rd century and the road between Brecon Gaer and Abergavenny up to at least about the middle of the 4th century.

The Roman road network probably ceased to be maintained and gradually went out of use in the early medieval period, in the 5th and 6th centuries AD, probably to be replaced by a less regular network of unpaved routes and more minor tracks linking larger and smaller nucleated settlements and scattered farmsteads. From at least the late 11th century most of the more major routes have focused on the town of Brecon which became the major market town and commercial centre for the region as well as a staging point for those travelling to and from west Wales via the Usk valley.

A system of drovers' roads probably became established across Wales from later medieval times onwards, and

particularly from their heyday in the 18th and early 19th centuries, along which cattle were driven in herds to markets in the midland and southern counties of England, as far afield as London. One of these traditional routes crossed the historic landscape area from west to east, running from the head of the Swansea Valley across the northern flanks of the Brecon Beacons from Hoel Senni to Llanfrynach and from there along the Usk valley to Monmouth via Crickhowell and Abergavenny, more or less along the route of the modern A40.

Improvements were made to many of the major roads in the historic landscape area during the course of the later 18th and early 19th century as a result of the creation of turnpike roads largely from the efforts of the Breconshire Agricultural Society whose members were keen to encourage an expansion in commercial activity. An Act of Parliament was passed in 1767 for the widening and repair of the principal roads in the county of Brecknock and the setting up of a system of tolls and gates and toll-houses, which were consolidated into a single trust by a second Act in 1830. By the 1830s, for example, toll houses had been set up on each of the principal roads out of Brecon — on the road north to Llandefaelog, the roads north-east to Llan-ddew and Felinfach, the south-east to Crickhowell, south-west to Merthyr, and west to Sennybridge and Llandeilo.

As a consequence of the improvements to the turnpike roads coach services from London via Gloucester, Monmouth and Abergavenny were extended from Brecon to Carmarthen and Milford Haven in west Wales. Coaching inns were established in Brecon for travellers and large warehouses to accommodate the goods being transported by heavy waggons were erected in the town near St Mary's Church.

Some notable road bridges of medieval and later date spanning rivers and streams survive within the area. Stone bridges in the town of Brecon include the Castle Bridge of medieval origin and the Priory Bridge of early 19th-century date spanning the Honddu river, the Usk Bridge dating from 1563, and early 19th-century Pont-ar-Darell bridge across the Afon Tarell in Llanfaes. The medieval Watergate Bridge across the Honddu at Brecon was replaced by the present iron bridge in 1873. A series of stone bridges across the Nant Brân stream on the western edge of the historic landscape area include two stone bridges, the late 18th-century Aber Brân Bridge and the early 19th-century Pont-ar-Fran bridge. Other noteworthy stone road bridges in the area include the probably 18th-century Lock Bridge across the Usk at Brynich, the late 18th-century bridge across the Caerfanell stream at Talybont-on-Usk, and Felindre Bridge across the Afon Cynrig next to the former Abercynrig Mill.

The Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal

The Brecknock and Abergavenny Canal Company was formed following an Act of Parliament of 1793. The section between Gilwern and Llangynidr was opened in 1797, being extended westwards to Talybont-on-Usk in 1799 and finally to Brecon in 1800, designed by the canal engineer Thomas Dadford junior. The canal was finally linked to the coast by the Monmouthshire Canal in 1812 which took it as far as Newport, when it became 42 miles long and was renamed the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal. Major works included the canal lock at Brynich, the stone-built aqueduct carrying the canal across the river Usk at Brynich, and tunnel just outside the historic landscape area, to the south-east of Talybont-on-Usk. There is a second, rebuilt aqueduct across the Nant Menasgin, north-west of Pencelli and a modern marina at Ty-newydd. Between Talybont-on-Usk and Pencelli are a series of lift bridges, most of which have been replaced or substantially repaired. Many of the original road bridges have been replaced by more modern concrete structures though a number of original stone and brick-built humpbacked bridges survive. The major goods carried northbound to Brecon included coal, iron and limestone from the south Wales coalfield. Wood for use in the collieries was carried in the reverse direction. Much of carrying trade was by the Brecon Boat Company, originally by horse-drawn barges, coal being sold at wharves along the line and at Brecon.

The canal was associated with two horse-drawn tramroad systems. An original scheme to build a branch canal from the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal to Hay-on-Wye and Whitney and there to join the river Wye, was never realised, and was replaced by a tramroad built from the canal at Brecon to Hay, which opened in 1818, and

subsequently on to Kington and Eardisley, Herefordshire. The Brinore (Bryn-oer) Tramroad, built in 1814-15, began at the canal wharf at Talybont-on-Usk and running 12 miles southwards outside the historic landscape area to the Trevil limestone quarry and the Bryn-oer colliery near Tredegar.

The canal was taken over by the Great Western Railway in 1880, much of the iron and coal trade by this date having been taken over by the railway companies. Commercial trade continued into the 20th century, finally ceasing in about 1933. Much of the Monmouthshire branch of the canal was abandoned thereafter, but the stretch between Brecon and Abergavenny remained largely open. Restoration work between 1968 and 1970 led to the reopening of the canal to pleasure craft from Pontypool to Brecon, a distance of 33 miles. Today the canal is generally called the Brecon and Abergavenny Canal.

Tramroads and Railways

As noted above, the opening of the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal provided the impetus for the construction of several horse-drawn tramroads in the first two decades of the 19th century which carried materials to and from canal-side wharfs. The Brinore Tramroad provided an important link with the limestone quarries and collieries of the south Wales coalfield. The Hay Tramroad, completed in 1818, enabled coal, coke and lime to be carried onwards from the canal terminus at Brecon on to Hay-on-Wye, Kington and finally Eardisley in Herefordshire.

The Hay Tramroad continued in existence for 40 years, competing with the improved turnpike roads for traffic. In 1862 the tramway was superseded by the Hereford, Hay and Brecon Railway Company which reused much of the former course of the tramway, though traces of its former embankments and culverts survive in places, as in the case of the section just to the south-east of Llanfihangel Tal-y-llyn where a former loop of the tramroad is still visible. Construction of the railway involved the digging of over 500 metres of the now-sealed railway tunnel to the west of Tal-y-llyn. The railway was linked to the Mid Wales Railway line northwards to Llanidloes in 1865s at the Three Cocks junction. The Hereford, Hay and Brecon Railway Company was amalgamated with the Midland Railway Company in 1874 which subsequently became the Mid Wales Railway, which eventually closing in the 1962.

The Brecon and Merthyr Railway which opened in 1865 branched from the Hereford, Hay and Brecon Railway at the Tal-y-llyn junction, east of Brecon, linking southwards to Merthyr and the industrial valleys of south Wales via Talybont-on-Usk, superseding the Brinore Tramroad. The Neath and Brecon Railway running westwards to Neath via Aberbrân was completed by 1872. Both the Brecon and Merthyr line and the Brecon and Neath lines closed in 1963. Attempts to link up the Usk valley in the Crickhowell area by railway with a junction at Tal-y-llyn were considered but abandoned before any construction work was undertaken.

Much of the course of the former railway lines within the historic landscape area survive as distinct landscape feature marked by embankments, cuttings, tracks, field boundaries, and bridge abutments. In many areas the former railway lines simply cut across earlier field systems of medieval or later date, though it is evident that in some areas that significant boundary changes were made following the construction of the railways, most notably in the area just to the west of Brecon. Outside the town of Brecon itself, within the historic landscape area there were formerly stations at Cradoc, west of Brecon, on the Neath and Brecon line, at Tal-y-llyn at the junction between the Brecon and Merthyr and Mid Wales lines and at Talybont-on-Usk on the Brecon and Merthyr line, of which little trace now survives. Intact railway bridges survive at Pennorth and Talybont-on-Usk.

CULTURAL ASSOCIATIONS

The Middle Usk Valley between Brecon and Llan-gors is associated with the works of a number of notable writers and poets from the early medieval and medieval periods onwards. It has been argued, for example, that the famous cycle of early Welsh poems known as *Canu Llywarch Hen* ('Song of Llywarch the Old'), probably dating to the 9th or 10th century, were composed at Llan-gors crannog.

Llan-ddew, a village to the north-east of Brecon, is associated with Gerald of Wales (Giraldus Cambrensis), a colourful cleric of Anglo-Welsh parentage appointed archdeacon of Brecon in 1175 at the age of twenty-eight and particularly well known for two compositions which provide a rich source of social and economic information about medieval Wales known as the *Itinerary through Wales* (*Itinerarium Kambriae*) and *Description of Wales* (*Descriptio Kambriae*). The medieval manor of Llan-ddew belonged to the bishops of St David's had a fortified palace there. The tithes of the parish were appropriated to the archdeaconry of Brecknock and Gerald describes his residence there evidently with some affection: 'a place of dignity, but no great omen of future pomp or riches; and possessing a small residence . . . well adapted to literary pursuits, and to the contemplation of eternity'.

Gerald's *Itinerary* provides a record of the journey he made throughout Wales in 1188 in the company of archbishop Baldwin preaching for the Third Crusade in his *Itinerary through Wales*. One of the chapters concerns their journey through Brecknock, preaching at Hay-on-Wye, Llan-ddew and Brecon, and alludes to a rich vein of myth and legend about the Middle Usk Valley, much of which has no doubt now been lost, some involving events that occurred in Gerald's time and others of much greater antiquity. He records, for example, the miraculous happenings involving a boy endeavouring to take pigeons from a nest at a church dedicated to St David at Llanfaes. He also describes the annual festival at St Elyned's Chapel, just to the east of Brecon, which involved a frenzied dance in around the churchyard which involved the male and female participants miming various professions, including those of ploughman, shoemaker, tanner, spinner, and weaver.

Gerald writes of the life of Illtud the early medieval saint whose name is associated with a number of topographical features in the parish of Llanhamlach, including the Neolithic chambered tomb called Ty Illtud ('Illtyd's House'), an upright stone which formerly stood nearby called Maen Illtud ('Illtud's stone'), and a holy well or spring known at Ffynnon Illtud ('Illtud's Well'). Gerald relates the story that the mare that used to carry the hermit's provisions was mated by a stag, a union resulting in 'an animal of wonderful speed resembling a horse before and a stag behind'. Stones of the chambered tomb are covered by numerous symbols including crosses, stars, lozenges, first recorded by the 17th-century antiquary, Edward Lhwyd. The dating of these symbols is uncertain but they may relate to the use of the site as a cult centre of St Illtud between the early medieval period up until perhaps the Reformation in the mid 16th century, though the depiction of a 5-stringed lyre may indicate a Roman association.

Llangorse Lake (Llyn Syfaddan), the second largest natural lake in Wales and rich in natural resources, was a focal point in the pre-Norman kingdom of Brycheiniog and was a further rich source of myth and legend from early times. One interpretation the Welsh name of the lake, Llyn Syfaddan, is that it is derived from the name of a pre-Christian deity, suggesting that may have been the focus of an early pagan cult. In the later 12th century Gerald of Wales in his *Description of Wales* notes that it was celebrated locally for its miracles. Since early times the lake has been an important feeding place for waterfowl and it is probably no coincidence that one of the early folktales relates to birds upon the lake. Gerald records an 'ancient saying in Wales that if the natural prince of the country, coming to this lake, shall order the birds to sing, they will immediately obey him' and records an instance of this during the reign of Henry I when Gruffudd, son of Rhys ap Tewdwr, succeeded in this challenge where the two Normans who accompanied him—Milo, earl of Hereford and lord of Brecknock, and Payne FitzJohn—had failed. Gerald also noted that the lake was also sometimes seen by the inhabitants 'covered and adorned with buildings, pastures, gardens and orchards'. A related legend is recounted by Walter Map in a manuscript of anecdotes and tales held by the Bodleian Library in Oxford known as *De Nugis Curialium* ('Courtiers' Trifles'). Map, a friend of Gerald and most probably a native of Herefordshire, who became archdeacon of Oxford in 1197,

recounts a folk-tale that the palace or town within the lake was drowned because of the wickedness of the prince and his subjects. It belongs to a tradition of inundation legends of a kind associated with other lakes in Wales and elsewhere, including Llyn Tegid near Bala, but perhaps in this instance based upon a folk-memory of the early medieval crannog. With the revival in interest in folklore in the modern era this and other tales about Llangorse Lake were to be retold in publications such as Sir John Rhys's *Celtic Folklore* published in 1901 and W. Jenkyn Thomas's *The Welsh Fairy Book* of 1907.

Llangorse Lake was also renowned from early times for a number of phenomena which as we have seen above were probably anthropogenic in origin but which then appeared magical. Gerald of Wales noted that the lake was sometimes tinged with red 'as if blood flowed partially through certain veins and small channels', though at other times it was seen as being portentous if 'the large lake and river Leveni [Llynfi] were tinged with a deep green colour'. Gerald also noted that when the lake froze over in winter the covering of ice was said to emit 'a horrible sound resembling the moans of many animals collected together' which is the origin of *Clamosus*, the alternative Latin name for the lake given by Gerald. The remark by William Howells in his *Cambrian Superstitions* published in 1831 that the water of the river Llynfi will not mix with that of the lake, is amongst other phenomenon recorded at a later date.

The church dedicated to St David at Llanfaes mentioned by Gerald is again referred to in a praise poem to St David called *Canu y Dewi* by the little known poet, Gwynfardd Brycheiniog ('Grey Bard of Breconshire') writing in about the 1180s, who as his name suggests may have been a native of Breconshire. The poem lists twenty churches owned by St David's, amongst those in Breconshire being

Llanfaes, a lofty place shall not suffer by war,
Nor the church of Llywell from any hostile band;
Garthbrenngu, the hill of Dewi, void of disgrace
And Trallwyng Cynfyn by the dales.

Llangorse Lake forms the context of a poem entitled 'The Swan on Syfaddan Lake' attributed to the 14th-century poet, Dafydd ap Gwilym, the most distinguished of the medieval Welsh poets, given below in a translation by Sir H. Idris Bell.

Fair swan, the lake you ride
Like white-robed abbot in your pride;
Round-footed bird of the drifted snow,
Like heavenly visitant you show.
A stately ministry is yours,
And beauty haunts your young hours.
From God's hand this day you take
Lordship over Syfaddon lake,
And two noble gifts you have
To keep you safe from the whelming wave:
Master craft in fishery—
On the wide lake could be better be?—
And skill to fly on high and far
On strong wings over hill and scaur.
Your eyes discern, high overhead,
Earth's face beneath you spread,
And search all ways the watery deep,
Whose countless crop of fish you reap,

Riding the waves in stately sort
 For fish to angle is your sport,
 And your fishing rod, beyond compare,
 'Tis your long neck, shapely and fair.
 Warden you are of the round lake,
 Fair-hued as the foam-flake.
 Pure white through the wild waves shown;
 In shirt as bright as crystal stone
 And doublet all of lilies made
 And flowered waistcoat you're arrayed,
 With jacket wove of the wild white rose;
 And your gown like honeysuckle shows.
 Radiant you all fowls among,
 White-cloaked bird of heaven's throng. . . .

The well-known 15th-century Welsh poet Lewys Glyn Cothi also mentions the lake in a poem which alludes to its associations with the *afanc*, a mythological water beast, which in modern Welsh is one of the names by which the beaver is known. In the poem, addressed to friend Llywelyn ab Gwilym ab Thomas Vaughan of Bryn Hafod in the Towy valley, Lewys suggests that it would be as hard to make him leave his friend's hospitable home as it would be to get the lure the *afanc* away from Llyn Syfaddan.

The *afanc* am I, who, sought for, bides
 In hiding on the edge of the lake;
 Out of the waters of Syfaddan Mere
 Was he not drawn, once he got there.
 So with me; nor wain nor oxen wont to toil
 Me to-day will draw from here forth.

Later medieval literary associations within the Middle Usk Valley include the poet Huw Cae Llwyd (1431-1504) and his son Ieuan who praises Brecon (Aberhonddu) at a time when it had probably already become one of the pre-eminent towns of medieval Wales: *Aber sy benna seren, Hyd nef, Aberhodni wen* ('Fair Aberhodni, the greatest star as far as Heaven'). The priory church at Brecon, the 'Church of the Holy Rood' had become a notable place of pilgrimage from at least the early 15th century, pilgrims being drawn to the highly decorated rood screen commemorated by Welsh poets but destroyed at the time of the Reformation. Offerings by pilgrims at the rood had become an important source of income to the priory. It is described as '*Y grog Aur droediog drwydoll*' ('The golden rood, footed, pierced') the poem entitled '*Crog Aberhonddu*' ('Brecon Cross') by Hywel ap Dafydd ap Ieuan ap Rhys, a poet from Raglan of the second half of the 15th century associated with a number of prominent families in south Wales, including Phylip ap Tomos of Llanspyddid. Another later 15th-century poet, William Egwad, emphasises the role of the rood in contemporary religious observance: 'at Aberhonddu let every man pray: there, is an image gracious for its restfulness'.

Perhaps the best-known literary associations with the area, however, are with the 17th-century metaphysical poet and translator, Henry Vaughan (1621-95), a member of one of the important gentry families of the area. Henry's family lived at Newton, on the banks of the river Usk between Scethrog and Llansantffraed, where he is believed to have been born. His twin brother, Thomas, philosopher, mystic and alchemist, served as rector of Llansantffraed church in about the mid 1640s (where Henry is buried), being evicted from the living by the Puritan parliamentary commissioners under the terms of the Act for the Propagation of the Gospel in Wales in 1650. Their sister lived at Trebinshwn on the other side of the mountain near Llangorse Lake. Henry was proud of his Welsh ancestry and frequently signed himself 'the Silurist'. Though Welsh-speaking, he regarded himself not as a successor to the

Welsh poetic tradition but as the first Welsh poet to write in the ‘civilizing’ medium of English. The collection of poems *Olor Iscanus* (‘Swan of the Usk’), with dedication written at Newton by Usk in December 1647, was published in London in 1651, its title possibly being a reprise of the title of the poem entitled ‘The Swan on Syfaddan Lake’ attributed to Dafydd ap Gwilym. Like many of the metaphysical poets, few of his works are concerned with descriptions of the physical landscape, though it is clear from its opening poem of *Olor Iscanus*, ‘To the River *Isca*’, that he cherished his native valley:

Thus *Poets* (like the *Nymphs*, their *pleasing themes*),
 Haunted the *bubbling Springs* and *gliding streams*,
 And *happy banks*! whence such *fair flowres* have sprung,
 But happier those where they have *sate* and *sung*!

The river Usk is the subject of a further Latin poem in the same collection, entitled *Ad fluvium Iscam* (‘To the river Usk’) includes the following couplet:

Isca parens florum, placido qui spumeus ore
Lambis lapillos aureos

(Kind Usk, among thy flowers, whose wave
 Golden pebbles still doth lave’).

Priory Grove, the celebrated wooded walk along the Afon Honddu in Brecon is celebrated in his poem entitled ‘The Priory Grove, His Usual Retirement’ from *Poems, with the Tenth Satyre of Juvenal Englished*, published in 1646, which seems to relate to the courting of his first wife, Catherine Wise.

HAIL, sacred shades ! cool, leafy house !
 Chaste treasurer of all my vows
 And wealth ! on whose soft bosom laid
 My love’s fair steps I first betray’d :

Henry and his brother Thomas were grandsons of William Vaughan of Tretower, a well-established Welsh family which had associations with the Herberts and which proudly traced its ancestry back to a member of the family that had fought at the battle of Agincourt. He was educated at Llangattock by a further relation, Matthew Herbert, and Jesus College, Oxford, and then in about 1640 studied law in London, though this was disrupted by the Civil War. He became involved with the literary circle of Ben Jonson, and it is clear from a number of early works and from later writings that in the political turmoil of the time his sympathies were very much with the Royalists and with the Established Church. Recalled from London, he appears to have been appointed clerk to the Chief Justice of the Great Sessions of Brecknockshire, Radnorshire and Glamorganshire in 1642. It seems likely that both Henry and Thomas enlisted in the service of the king and took an active part in royalist defeats near Chester which probably ended their participation in the Civil War. Vaughan had returned to Newton by 1647, as evidenced by the dedication of *Olor Iscanus*, where he lived for the remainder of his life. In a letter to John Aubrey dated 1673, Vaughan states ‘My profession . . . is physic [medicine], wch I have practised now for many years with good successe (I thank god!) & a repute big enough for a person of greater parts than my selfe’, though when he first began to practise medicine is uncertain, though this was probably by 1655, the year in which he published his *Hermetical Physick: Or, The right way to preserve, and to restore Health*, translated from the Latin text by Heinrich Nolle.

John Aubrey, a distant ancestor of the Aubreys (Awbreys) of Breconshire which included branches at Cantref,

Abercynrig and Tredomen, was most famous for his *Brief Lives* which includes portraits of leading figures of Breconshire, as well as for his antiquarian writings about Stonehenge and Avebury. The earliest house at Abercynrig was probably built by the Aubrey family in the 13th century. The family had gained local prominence by the 14th century and by the 16th century Dr William Aubrey became a national figure, well known as an intellectual, lawyer and MP whose wealth, as noted above, enabled him greatly to extend his estates. Within the present house there are traces of an earlier, 16th-century one, probably built by Dr Aubrey. In *Brief Lives* John Aubrey states that his great grandfather bought Abercynrig from an Aubrey cousin and that he built the 'great house at Brecknock: his study looks on the river Usk. He could ride nine miles together on his own land in Breconshire'.

The prominent gentry families of Breconshire fostered an early interest in the antiquities of the Middle Usk Valley, a number of whose sites in the historic landscape area were amongst the earliest to be investigated or to be speculated about in Wales during the time of the Enlightenment. John Aubrey, who as we have seen, had strong Breconshire connections provides the earliest known reference to one of the Breconshire Neolithic chambered tombs the following probable mention of Ty Illtud: 'The Carn at Cravannesh [?Manest] in the parish of Llansandfred [Llansantffraed] in the Countie of Brecknock'. He further recorded that 'under this Carn is hid great treasure. The Doctor caused it to be digged; and there rose such a horrid tempest of thunder & lightening, that the workmen would work no longer; and they sayd they sawe strange apparitions; but they found a Cake of Gold, which was of a considerable value. This was about 1612. From Sr Tho: Williams Baronet, Chymist to K. Charles II'. In 1690 Ty Illtud was also to be visited by William Jones, assistant to the antiquary Edward Lhwyd, and received its first mention in print in the 1695 edition of William Camden's *Britannia*.

Knowledge of this or other local sites may not have been universal at this time in the locality, however. Writing to John Aubrey in 1694 from his house at Newton, just 2.5 kilometres away, Henry Vaughan confessed little knowledge of antiquities in the area.

Honoured Cousin.

I received yours & should gladly have served you, had it bene in my power, butt all my search & consultations with those few that I could suspect to have any knowledge of Antiquitie, came to nothing; for the antient Bards (though by the testimonie of their Enemies, the Romans;) a very learned societie; yet (like the Druids) they communicated nothing of their knowledge, butt by way of tradition wch I suppose to be the reason that we have no account left us: nor any sort of remains, or other monuments of their learning, or way of living.

The earliest discoveries at the Maesderwen Roman villa near Llanfrynach were made in 1698, when Hugh Thomas reported on finds of brick and the ruins of walls in a field called 'Kearney Bach' (*Carnau Bach*), on an estate recently purchased by William Thomas. Hugh Thomas's report notes that about 20 years previously a pavement of small stones of various colours had been uncovered, together with pottery, Roman coins and other finds, the adjoining field called 'Clos y Gavelin' being largely covered with iron cinders that were thought to be of Roman origin. The site was rediscovered in 1783 when workmen clearing trees and brushwood from the corner of a field on the estate and extensive excavations were undertaken by Charles Hay of Brecon, copies of which were published in the journal *Archaeologia* in 1785.

The crannog or artificial island on Llangorse Lake known as Ynys Bwlc was a further site in the historic landscape area to excite early antiquarian interest. Two local antiquaries, Edgar and Henry Dumbleton were the first to realise that the island was artificially constructed and recovered from partial excavations in 1868 animals bones, pottery, leather, bronze and a rubbing stone, reported upon in the journal *Archaeologia Cambrensis* published in 1870. Copies of Ferdinand Keller's *The Lake Dwellings of Switzerland*, published in 1866, had become widely influential in Britain and Ireland, inspiring many antiquaries to look more closely at potentially similar sites closer to home. Modern excavations in the 1980s and 1990s have shown, as noted above, that the crannog was defended by a palisade and probably comprised an early medieval hall comparable to the contemporary Irish royal crannog sites, and was connected to the shore by a wooden causeway

A painting by the well-known Radnorshire artist, Thomas Jones, which appears to show boatmen at work fishing on Llangorse Lake in perhaps the 1780s or 1790s can be seen in the possession of the Brecknock Museum and Art Gallery. Pleasure boating had become a popular pastime on the lake by the 1890s and by this date jetties and boathouses had been built on both the north and south sides of the lake. Tourists had begun to visit and pass through the historic landscape area in increasing numbers from the middle of the 18th century, encouraged by improvements in the turnpike road network, and by the publication of road maps, topographical and historical accounts and by prints of picturesque scenes such as the views of Llan-ddew, Pencelli Castle and Brecon by Samuel and Nathaniel Buck, published in 1774.

The first decade of the 19th century saw the publication of the first, two-volume edition of Theophilus Jones's *History of the County of Brecknock*, conceived at the turn of the century, and one of the finest of earlier generation of Welsh county histories. Jones (1759-1812), educated at Christ College, Brecon, and trained as a lawyer, lived for many years in Lion Street, Brecon. The subject matter of the two volumes, published in 1805 and 1809, focused as is usual, upon the early history of the county and upon the pedigrees of its gentry, but it also considered the customs and traditions of its inhabitants and the county's antiquities. The volumes owed much to the researches of his friend and near contemporary, the ecclesiastical historian the Revd Henry Thomas Payne (1759-1832), who together with the Brecknock historian and antiquary Thomas Price, who were active in researching and writing upon the early history and antiquities of the county.

Richard Fenton and Sir Richard Colt Hoare were amongst the early visitors from further afield who came to see for themselves the antiquities of the county, Sir Richard painting a watercolour view of the priory church in Brecon in 1793. The pair made the acquaintance of Theophilus Jones and Thomas Payne amongst others. They visited the Roman fort at Brecon Gaer on 22 May 1804:

charmingly situated near the Usk; nor can a finer situation be imagined, whether we consider the Aspect, the River, the Woods, and the sublime back Ground of Mountains seen through a Skreen of Trees. . . . At the farm house of Aber Eskyr [Aberyscir] saw a Brick, about 9 inches square and 2 thick, stamped with LEG. II AVG [the Roman legion called the Second Augustan].

The Usk valley as a whole was to be admired for its picturesque scenery:

the beautiful vale of Usk, which, whether we consider its form, its cheerfulness, or its boundaries, is without comparison the prettiest Vale in the Kingdom. A very peculiar feature of it is the endless openings into Smaller Vallies on each side.

Saw the course of the new Canal to Brecknock for a great way on the North side of the Usk, and then on the South side.

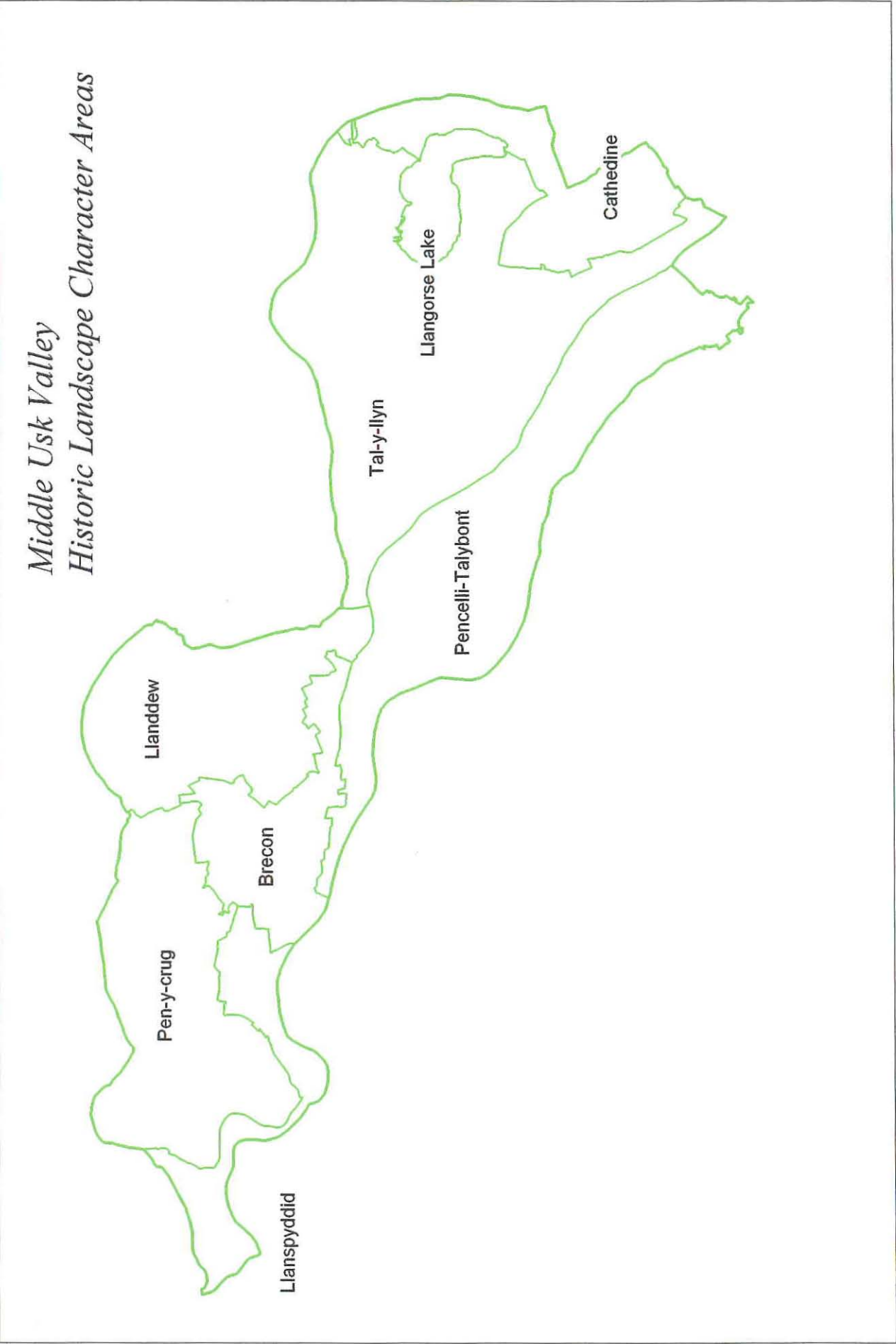
From the mid 18th century the town of Brecon became the focus of the cultural life of the region. Balls and theatrical performances were held in the great rooms of a number of inns. The tragic actress Sarah Siddons (1755-1831) was born at The Shoulder of Mutton in the High Street (now the Sarah Siddons public house), whose parents were strolling players who had recently performed in the town. Her associations with the town after her early years were slight, though she did perform in the great room at the Bell Inn when on provincial tour.

Brecon became an important regional focus of nonconformist worship and teaching in the 19th century, during the course of which there eight chapels in the town belonging to the Wesleyans, the Baptists, Calvinistic Methodists and the Independents who each had separate English and Welsh-speaking chapels. The swing to nonconformism during the town during the 19th century is shown very clearly by the religious census of 1851 which shows that nearly 60% of the population attended nonconformist places of worship. Early nonconformist meetings in the area had tended to be at chapels or in private houses in the surrounding countryside, the earliest chapel in Brecon was Welsh Independent or Congregational Plough Chapel, built on the site of the Plough public house in 1699 and subsequently enlarged between 1874-1901. John Wesley often preached in the

town promoting the Methodist cause. In 1780 a Welsh Calvinistic chapel was built in the Struet by Lady Huntingdon, which was replaced by Bethel chapel built in 1859, which could seat 800. A Baptist chapel was built at the Watergate in 1806, superseded by the Kensington Chapel built in 1844. The Welsh Wesleyan missionaries built the Tabernacle in the Struet in 1824, though this had already been converted to a shop by the 1870s. The English Independent Chapel built in Glamorgan Street in 1836 and the English Calvinistic Presbyterian Chapel was built at the Watton in 1866, largely in response to the greatly increasing numbers of English speakers in the borough during the later 19th century. Only four nonconformist chapels still remain in use. Brecon Congregational Memorial College (named in memory of ministers ejected from the Anglican Church in the 17th century), founded in 1869, had had its roots in the Brecon Independent College founded in 1839 in what was then a private house in St Mary's Street. By 1852 it was recognized as one of the colleges of the University of London and in 1903 became an associated theological college of the University of Wales. It became an important educational institution which it has been claimed 'decisively moulded the development of the Welsh people'.

In cultural terms today, the area is perhaps best known for the annual Brecon Jazz Festival, and for the tourism and leisure activities associated with the Brecon and Abergavenny Canal and Llangorse Lake

Historic landscape character areas in the Middle Usk Valley



Historic Landscape Characterization

Middle Usk Valley: *Llanspyddid*

Brecon, Glyn Tarell, Trallong and Ysgir communities, Powys
(HLCA 1170)

Medium and large-sized regularly-shaped fields occupying the floor and lower slopes of the Usk, lower Ysgir and Aberbrân valleys west of Brecon, with small medieval church settlements at Llanspyddid and Aberysgir and elements of transport history associated with Roman roads, post-medieval roads, and the railway.

Historic background

Early prehistoric settlement and land use is suggested by the find of a Neolithic stone axe near Pennant farm.

Strategic military Roman roads running southwards in the direction of Ystradgynlais (Powys) and south-westwards to Llandovery (Carmarthenshire) from the Roman fort at Brecon Gaer are thought to run through the character area although their courses are speculative since no certain surviving structural evidence has yet been found. Inscribed Roman milestones indicate that the road between Brecon Gaer and Llandovery was maintained into at least the later 3rd century. Roman finds are known from the village of Llanspyddid which may also indicate an early settlement focus.

In the early medieval period the area formed part of Cantref Selyf within the kingdom of Brycheiniog, which following the Norman conquest under Bernard de Neufmarché formed part of the marcher lordship of Brecon.

The small parochial church settlement at Llanspyddid originated in the pre-Conquest period and formed part of the manor of Brecon following the conquest. Little early recorded history is attached to the earth and stone castle and church at Aberyscir though these probably date to the post-Conquest period, in the late 11th and 12th centuries, land here forming a manor granted by Bernard de Neufmarché to Sir Hugh Surdwal in the late 11th century. The medieval bishop of St David's held ploughlands at Aberbrân, listed in the *Black Book of St David's*, which may be represented by the strip-field pattern in part of this area.

At the Act of Union in 1536 the area later formed part of Merthyr Hundred within the county of Brecknock. It subsequently formed parts of the 19th-century tithe parishes of Llanspyddid, Llanspyddid Penbont and Aberysgir.

Key historic landscape characteristics

Medium and large-sized regular fields occupying the floor and lower slopes of the Usk and lower Ysgir valleys west of Brecon, mostly between a height of about 140-160 metres above sea level with predominantly hedged boundaries. Field patterns in the eastern part of the area, near Aberbrân and between Llanspyddid and Brecon, appear to be derived from the enclosure of medieval open-field furlongs. These include some areas of relict ridge and furrow cultivation possibly of medieval date associated with these settlements.

Settlement is characterized by the two small parish church settlements at Llanspyddid and Aberyscir and dispersed farms of medieval and post-medieval origin. Llanspyddid church, dedicated to St Cattwg, dates from the pre-Conquest period, the churchyard housing a pillar stone of 9-10th century date, which is thought to mark the grave of Aulach, father of Brychan. The churchyard was probably once considerably larger. The small nucleation at Aberysgir appears to have originated as a small manorial centre with earthen castle and probably a proprietorial church foundation associated with

the manor granted to Sir Hugh Sudwal.

Aberyscir Court is a gentry farmhouse of the 1830s, probably built in succession to an medieval manor house. The character area includes a number of other widely dispersed characteristic stone farm complexes of 16th-, 17th and early 18th-century date which are likely to be of medieval or early post medieval origin. These include Pen-y-wern, Penishapentre, Fenni-fach and Pennant, comprising farmhouses associated with a variety of outbuildings including barns, stables cowhouses, cart sheds and granaries, sometimes set around a partly enclosed yard.

Three 18th to early 19th-century stone road bridges crossing the Afon Brân and its tributaries, Pont-yr-Fran, and Aberbrân-fach Bridge and Aber-brân Bridge, fall along the western margins of the area.

The dismantled course of the Neath and Brecon Railway railway line, completed by 1872 and closed in 1963, crosses the northern side of the area.

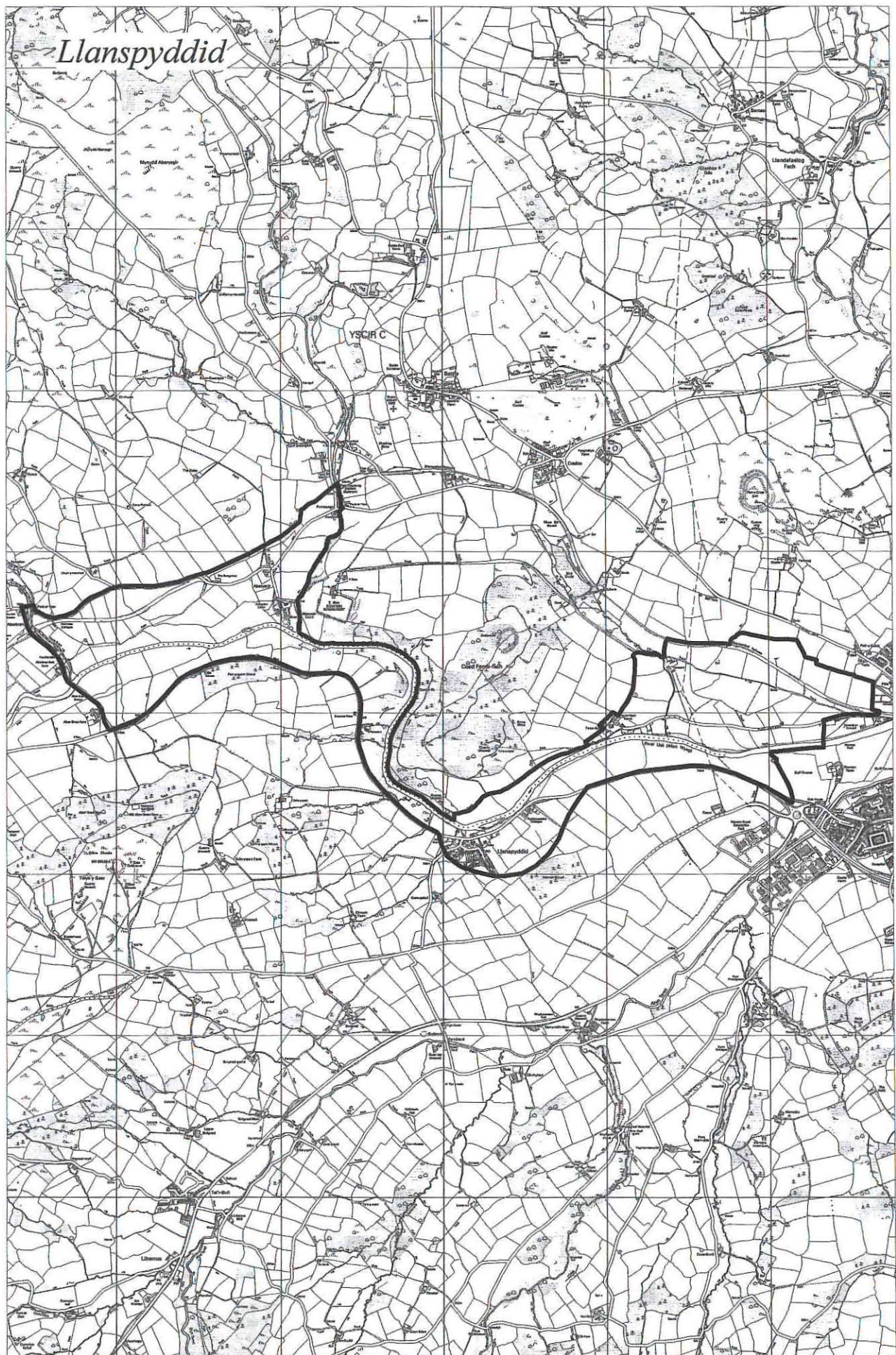
Sources

CPAT Regional HER; Bissell 2001; Brunskill 1999; Burnham 1995; Clough and Cummins 1988; Davies 1982; Davies, D., 1992; Haslam 1979; 2004; Jones, T, 1809; Jones and Smith 1965; Macalister 1949; Nash-Williams 1950; Silvester and Dorling 1993; Silvester and Hankinson 2002; 2003; Thomas 1994

Key historic landscape management issues

Historic landscape management issues have not been assessed in the field or evaluated, and at this stage it is only possible to point to issues which have been identified during the course of this essentially desk-top study.

- *Conservation and management of structure and deposits associated the network of Roman roads converging on Brecon Gaer.*
- *Conservation and management of traditional field boundaries*
- *Conservation and management of relict traces of ridge and furrow possibly denoting medieval open-field cultivation associated with Llanspyddid and Brecon.*
- *Conservation and management of deposits, buildings and structures relating to the early history and social, economic and industrial development of Llanspyddid and Aberyscir.*
- *The visual setting of the medieval castle and church Aberyscir.*
- *Conservation of vernacular buildings, including farm complexes of 17th, 18th-century and earlier origin.*
- *Conservation and managment of element of transport history including stone-built road bridges and structures associated with the former Neath and Brecon Railway.*



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Historic Landscape Characterization

Middle Usk Valley: *Pen-y-crug* Brecon, Honddu Isaf and Ysgir communities, Powys (HLCA 1171)

Diverse, undulating landscape to the north and west of Brecon with predominantly irregular fields, and areas of conifer woodland and unenclosed hilltop common, broken by small stream valleys. Prehistoric and Roman defensive structures including the large Pen-y-crug and Coed Fenni-fach Iron Age hillforts and Brecon Gaer Roman fort. Significant elements of transport history including the Roman road network focused on Brecon Gaer and the later 19th-century Neath and Brecon Railway.

Historic background

The dating of the prominent standing stones at Battle and Cradoc is uncertain, though they may possibly be of Bronze Age date. Early settlement and land use is indicated by the Pen-y-crug and Coed Fenni-fach Iron Age hillforts and by the Roman fort and associated Roman civilian settlement at Brecon Gaer, dating from the conquest period in about AD 75.

In the early medieval period the area formed part of Cantref Selyf within the kingdom of Brycheiniog, which following the Norman conquest formed part of the marcher lordship of Brecon. The fall of the native kingdom, marked by the battle between Bleddyn ap Maenarch and Rhys ap Tewdwr and Bernard de Newmarché in 1093 which is traditionally held to have taken place in the fields to the south of the village of Battle, but this is in fact named after Battle Abbey in Sussex, which drew income from the parish here. The church at Battle, dedicated to St Cynog and first documented in the 1220s, was a dependent chapel of Brecon Priory.

Following the Act of Union in 1536 the area later formed part of Merthyr Hundred within the county of Brecknock. It subsequently formed parts of the 19th-century tithe parishes of Brecon St John and Battle.

Key historic landscape characteristics

Predominantly medium to large-sized irregular fields with hedged boundaries, between a height of 140-310 metres above sea level, representing piecemeal enclosure from at least medieval times. Smaller, discrete areas of straight-sided fields suggesting enclosure or landscape reorganisation in the post-medieval period, with an area of rough, unimproved common land pasture on Pen-y-crug. Woodland at Coed Fenni-fach and along the north bank of the river Usk including some semi-natural and replanted broadleaved woodland and conifer plantations probably of the later 18th to 20th centuries.

Later prehistoric settlement and land use in the area is indicated by the two large and strategically-sited hillforts at Pen-y-crug and Coed Fenni-fach which probably represent Iron Age tribal centres associated with the native tribe known as the Silures.

The characteristic Roman fort at Brecon Gaer was constructed in the conquest period following the subjugation of the native tribe known as the Silures in about AD 75, stone defences being added in the earlier 2nd century and a civilian settlement becoming attached to the fort. The fort's garrison appears to have been reduced in size by about the middle of the 2nd century though there is evidence of continued activity of some kind, possibly of a civilian nature, continuing into at least the later 4th century. A cropmark enclosure site about 300 metres to the west of Brecon Gaer may represent a Roman military practice camp.

Brecon Gaer lay at the hub of a system of strategic military Roman roads, running southwards in the direction of Ystradgynlais (Powys), northwards towards Llandrindod, south-eastwards along the Usk valley to Abergavenny (Monmouthshire), north-eastwards to Kenchester (Herefordshire) and south-westwards to Llandovery (Carmarthenshire). Inscribed Roman milestones indicate that the road between Brecon Gaer and Llandovery was maintained into at least the later 3rd century and the road between Brecon Gaer and Abergavenny up to at least about the middle of the 4th century. Parts of the course of each of these roads are known from fieldwork or excavation though other stretches are speculative.

Modern settlement is represented by the small nucleated church settlement of medieval origin at Battle, the small nucleated settlement which appears to have grown up at road junctions or bridge crossings as at Cradoc and Pont-yr-Ysgir in the post-medieval period, and by relatively large and dispersed farms with other scattered houses and cottages elsewhere, some of which may originate in the medieval period. An earlier phase of gentry houses is represented by Gaer House farmhouse, probably 16th-century timber-framed building to which a stone-built wing was added later. At Pen-y-crug is a characteristic later 18th and early 19th-century stone-built complex including a farmhouse, barn, cowhouse and wood store. Lake House is a later 19th-century rendered stone villa on western shore of Gludy Lake, built in a Swiss or Alpine cottage style.

Industrial activity in the area is represented by scattered former small stone quarries for building stone and by the former brick and tile works on the southern slopes of Pen-y-crug hillfort which probably supplied the expanding town of Brecon with building materials in the late 18th- and earlier 19th-century, going out of use once building materials could be supplied to Brecon by rail, from the 1860s onwards.

The dismantled course of the Neath and Brecon Railway line, completed by 1872 and closed in 1963, line crosses the northern side of the area.

Sources

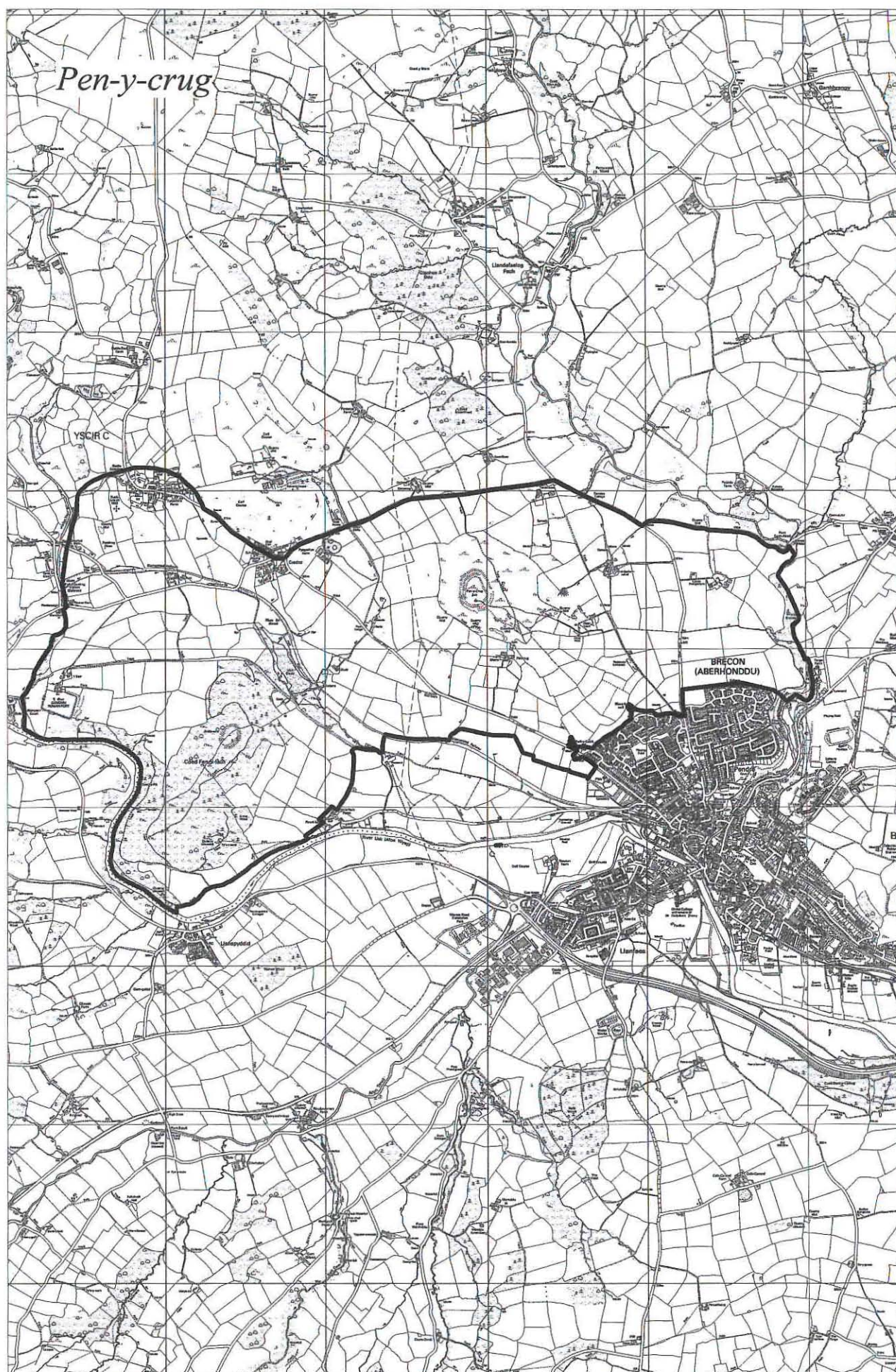
CPAT Regional HER; Cadw Listed Buildings database; Charles 1938; Burnham 1995; Casey 1970; Craster 1954; Davies 1981; Davies 1999; Fenton 1917; Glynne 1886; Haslam 1979; Hogg 1965; Jarrett 1969; Jones 1909; King 1959; Jones and Smith 1965; Lewis 1833; Martin and Walters 1993; Maxwell and Wilson 1987; Morgan and Powell 1999; Parry 1985; RCAHMW 1997; Rivet and Smith 1979; Silvester and Dorling 1993; Wheeler 1926; Waller 2000

Key historic landscape management issues

Historic landscape management issues have not been assessed in the field or evaluated, and at this stage it is only possible to point to issues which have been identified during the course of this essentially desktop study.

- *Conservation and Management of the possibly Bronze Age Battle and Cradoc standing stones and their setting.*
- *Conservation and management of the Iron Age hillforts of Pen-y-crug and Coed Fenni-fach and their visual setting.*
- *Structure and deposits and setting of Brecon Gaer Roman fort and its visual setting, and the associated external civilian settlement and the possible adjacent military practice camp.*
- *Conservation and management of the structure and deposits associated with the Roman road network converging on Brecon Gaer.*
- *Conservation and management of traditional field boundaries.*

- *Conservation and management of deposits, buildings and structures relating to the early history and social, economic and industrial development of Battle and their visual setting.*
- *Conservation of vernacular buildings.*
- *Conservation and management of the remains of the former rural and commercial industries including limekilns in Coed Fenni-fach and the remains of early brick and tile works and associated structures on the southern slopes of Pen-y-crug.*
- *Conservation and management of buildings and structures associated with the former Neath and Brecon Railway.*



Historic Landscape Characterization

Middle Usk Valley: **Brecon**

Brecon community, Powys
(HLCA 1172)

Large nucleated settlement of medieval origin alongside the river Usk, first established in the late 11th century alongside the castle built by Bernard de Newmarché following the Norman conquest, later becoming one of the largest towns in Wales in the 17th century and the county town of Breconshire. It continued to expand and develop as important regional commercial and administrative centre throughout the 18th and 19th from its position at the hub of regionally important road, canal and railway networks, though eclipsed in industrial and economic importance by the rapid rise of the industrial town and cities of south Wales in the later 19th century.

Historic background

Early settlement and land use in the vicinity of the town is suggested by a number of both Bronze Age and Roman chance finds. The course of the Roman road from Brecon Gaer to Abergavenny is thought to run along the north bank of the Usk, through the area now occupied by the town, but no evidence of its physical presence has been identified so far. There is documentary evidence to suggest that a dilapidated or abandoned pre-Norman church lay on the site later occupied by the subsequent Benedictine priory. Although the status of this early church and any associated secular settlement is uncertain it has been suggested that it may have been monastic in origin and encompassed by a circular *llan* ('enclosure').

An earth and timber castle was probably established in the late 11th century or early 12th century by the Norman lord, Bernard de Newmarché, shortly after the conquest of the kingdom of Brycheiniog in 1093, which became the administrative centre of his newly-created marcher lordship of Brecknock. Religious institutions associated with the early settlement included a chapel dedicated to St Nicholas within the castle and the Benedictine priory that was founded to the north of the castle before 1106. This included the priory church subsequently to be dedicated to St John the Evangelist which shortly after its foundation was granted with lands in the lordship to Battle Abbey (Sussex). Like monastic churches elsewhere the priory church was also used as a parish church and from the early 15th century it became known as the Church of the Holy Rood after the ornate rood screen celebrated by pilgrims to the church.

Brecon, the English name of the town, is a shortening of Brycheiniog or its English or Latin derivatives; Aberhonddu, its Welsh name, is taken from that of the Afon Honddu, the river which joins the river Usk towards the centre of the town and divides the eastern part of the town from that on the west. The settlement was besieged by Llewelyn ab Iorwerth in 1217 and laid waste by him in 1231 and 1233. It subsequently recovered, being provided with defences in perhaps the early to mid 13th century and received a series of charters in the period between the 1276 and 1517. It became a regionally important religious centre, forming the focus of the archdeaconry of Brecon. The castle was temporarily taken by Llywelyn ap Gruffudd in the Welsh war of independence in 1263. It was again attacked in 1404 during the course of the Glyndŵr uprising.

The town was designated as one of the four regional capitals of Wales by the Act of Union in 1536 and during the 1540s, Christ College, a secular college and grammar school were attached to the Dominican friary, which had been established by the mid 13th century, its church dedicated to St Nicholas. Both the Dominican friary and the Benedictine priory were dissolved in 1537–38, the priory church subsequently continuing in use as a parish church and becoming a cathedral church in 1923 upon the creation of the new diocese of Swansea and Brecon. The town continued to

flourish during the 16th to 18th centuries, initially under the influence of the wool trade, being described by George Owen in the early years of the 17th century as 'a bigge towne faire built'. It underwent further expansion as a commercial, industrial, legal, administrative and judicial centre and as a military garrison town in the later 18th and 19th centuries. The town expanded in response to the development of the turnpike road network from the later 18th century, the coming of the canal at the beginning of the 19th century, and tramroads and railways during the course of the 19th century. It remained a prominent county town from its geographical siting within the middle Usk valley, but it declined in national importance from the later 19th century following the growth of the south Wales coalfield and the expansion of the south Wales ports. Brecon remained the county town of Brecknockshire until the creation of the new county of Powys in the local government reorganisation of 1974, and is still the administrative centre of the Brecon Beacons National Park, designated in 1957.

Key historic landscape characteristics

The town of Brecon is sited on an alluvial fan deposited by the river Honddu at the point where it met the floor-plain of the Usk, the alluvial cone having later become incised by the Honddu which now forms part of a wooded walk known as Priory Groves. Brecon occupies an important position at the confluences of the Usk, Honddu and Tarell. There are several important historic fording points across the Usk here which are still usable at low water. The original settlement was centred on the early earthen motte and bailey castle and Benedictine priory (the later cathedral church of St John) on the north bank of the Usk, west of the Afon Honddu river. The original timber tower was rebuilt in stone as the partly surviving keep (Ely Tower) in about the late 12th century, other parts of the defences also rebuilt in stone at this period or in the 13th or 14th centuries including the curtain wall and towers and gateways, parts of which were still visible in the mid 18th-century but which are no longer visible above ground level. Early stone buildings made use of Roman building materials taken from Brecon Gaer, just under 4 kilometres to the west.

The main area of the medieval borough was subsequently laid out to the east of the Afon Honddu, presumably superimposed upon former farmland, the street pattern of the medieval town including a large triangular area used as the market square being still strongly reflected in that of the commercial core at the present day. This eastern portion of the town was provided with defences in perhaps the early to mid 13th century which comprised town walls with interval towers and gates at Struet Gate to the north, Watton Gate to the east, Bridge or West Gate leading to a bridge across the Usk, and Watergate leading to a bridge across the Honddu on the north-west. St Mary's church, in the centre of the town, probably dates from the later 12th century, but only become a parish church in 1923. The town defences appear to have been still relatively intact at the beginning of the 17th century but together with the castle were partially destroyed during course of the Civil War in the 1640s. A number of the medieval gates were ordered to be removed in 1775 to improve the flow of traffic. The southern suburb of Llanfaes, to the south of the Usk may have emerged by the end of the 12th century. The present parish church and former chapel dedicated to St David at Llanfaes have been in existence since at least the 1180s, on the site of the present church built in 1924. A medieval hospital and chapel dedicated to St Catherine were also established on the eastern outskirts of the town near the Watton, which appear to have disappeared above ground level by the end of the 17th century.

There are fine medieval remains at the castle, cathedral and abbots lodging, St Mary's church, and at Christ College but there is now little surviving evidence above ground level of the medieval period in domestic buildings. The castle is sited in the angle between the Usk and Honddu with a bridge over the Honddu linking it with the town. The remains of the castle consist of mound, with ruinous late 12th-century keep; attached to the present Castle Hotel is the ruined great hall of about 1280. The line of the town walls remains, but the extent of medieval survival is debated. Sections behind the council offices in Bulwark, and also in Captain's Walk (as well as a gateway there) are scheduled monuments, but a study currently under way casts doubt on their being medieval. To the north of the historic centre the walled cathedral precinct forms one of the most important medieval groups in Wales. The Benedictine priory church of St John the Baptist was founded in 1093, but the present building dates from the 13th century and 14th century. Although sited away from the town centre it was the parish church and housed the town's guild chapels and has important funerary

monuments. Conventual buildings include the Canonry, partly on the line of a medieval cloister range with some ancient fabric, and the Deanery which incorporates the medieval Abbot's Lodgings and perhaps guest hall. The Almonry too has some medieval fabric, but although the adjacent gateway is medieval, the walls of the precinct may be as late as the 18th century. The Priory became a cathedral only in 1923 when its parish functions were transferred to St Mary's. The medieval St Mary's church was originally a chapel of ease to St John's, and its fine tower of 1510-20 dominates the town centre.

The surviving suggest a period of rapid development 1570-1630, and again in the last quarter of the 17th century for about 50 years. A possible slow down in central fifty years of 18th century was followed by a boom from around 1790 to around 1850. This pattern is common to many country towns in Wales and England. The buildings give an overall impression of a long history of prosperity as Brecon fulfilled the tradition roles of county town, agricultural centre, and garrison town (the Barracks were developed in the early 19th century). Gentry town houses survive particularly in Lion Street, The Struet and Glamorgan Street. Brecon has particularly fine domestic interiors including panelling and exceptional staircases from the earlier 17th century to the mid 19th century. The town held balls and theatrical performances (the great tragic actress Sarah Siddons was born here in 1755). The shell of a theatre survives as well as the 'great rooms' of inns where balls and performances took place. Architecturally, the town gives an overall impression of being Georgian in character, with small-pane sash windows, classical doorcases and detailing, and often smooth render, but the continuous prosperity of the town meant constant rebuilding so that many of the buildings in the historic centre contain fragments of earlier buildings on their sites.

In the post-medieval period the town expanded beyond its medieval limits, particularly in the Pendre area on the north-west, in the area of Llanfaes to the south-west and in the Dering Lines area to the east, probably overlying former areas of medieval open-field cultivation associated with the medieval town. These open-fields appear to be denoted within the drawn boundaries of the character area by traces of ridge and furrow cultivation, in the playing fields just to the south of Christ College, and by a suggestion of a relict pattern of strip fields in the area of the playing fields and sport grounds south of the Watton, on the level ground north of the Usk. Low-lying land in the vicinity of Llanfaes that was previously subject to frequent flooding is now protected by flood defences built in 1983.

The buildings and townscapes of the town provide a valuable record of its economic and social history. An element of social stratification had evidently already developed in the town by the 16th and 17th centuries, the period of the earliest surviving buildings in the town, which has resulted in the presence of larger and more affluent town houses in Glamorgan Street, for example, and workers' housing with narrower street frontages in Ship Street and parts of Llanfaes. The town became an important focus for nonconformist worship from the later 17th century onwards, surviving early to later 19th-century chapels within the town, some of which have now been converted to other uses, including Bethel Chapel (1852), Plough Chapel (1841) and the Presbyterian Chapel (1866) at the Watton.

There are relatively few visible surviving remains of Brecon's important transport and industrial history. Several bridges or bridge sites of medieval origin across the Usk and Honddu survive within the town, including Usk Bridge, Castle Bridge, Watergate Bridge and Priory Bridge. The 7-arched Usk Bridge dates from 1573, although modified in 1794 and 1801. A number of inns such as the Castle, the Bell, the Wellington Hotel and the Golden Lion developed as coaching inns the later 18th and 19th centuries following the development of the turnpike road network from the later 18th century. The Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal (now called the Brecon and Abergavenny Canal) which opened in 1800 was of particular importance in the transport and distribution of coal and lime from south Wales. It terminated at a complex of wharfs, dry docks, lime shed and other buildings at the Watton, most of which have now disappeared above ground level. There are likewise few surviving remains of age of tramroad and rail transport in Brecon, represented by the opening of the Hay Tramroad in 1818, the Hereford, Hay and Brecon Railway in 1862, the Brecon and Merthyr Railway in 1865 and the Neath and Brecon Railway in 1872. The Brecon and Merthyr Railway at first opened a station at the Watton (on a site now occupied by offices) and the Neath and Brecon Railway a temporary station at Mount Street, but a joint station was subsequently opened at Free Street in 1871 (on a site now occupied by the fire station). Commercial

traffic on the canal ceased in the 1930s but continues to form an important focus for tourism and leisure activities. The railways ceased to carry both freight and passengers in the early 1960s.

Industrial sites associated with the use of water power include several early watermill sites on the Usk and Afon Honddu and originating in the medieval period, including the corn mill and malt mill called Castle or Honddu Mill, a former saw mill below Castle Bridge on the Honddu, and the site of a former fulling mill, now demolished, near Priory Bridge. Canal-side limekilns were established at a number of points along the southern margins of the town.

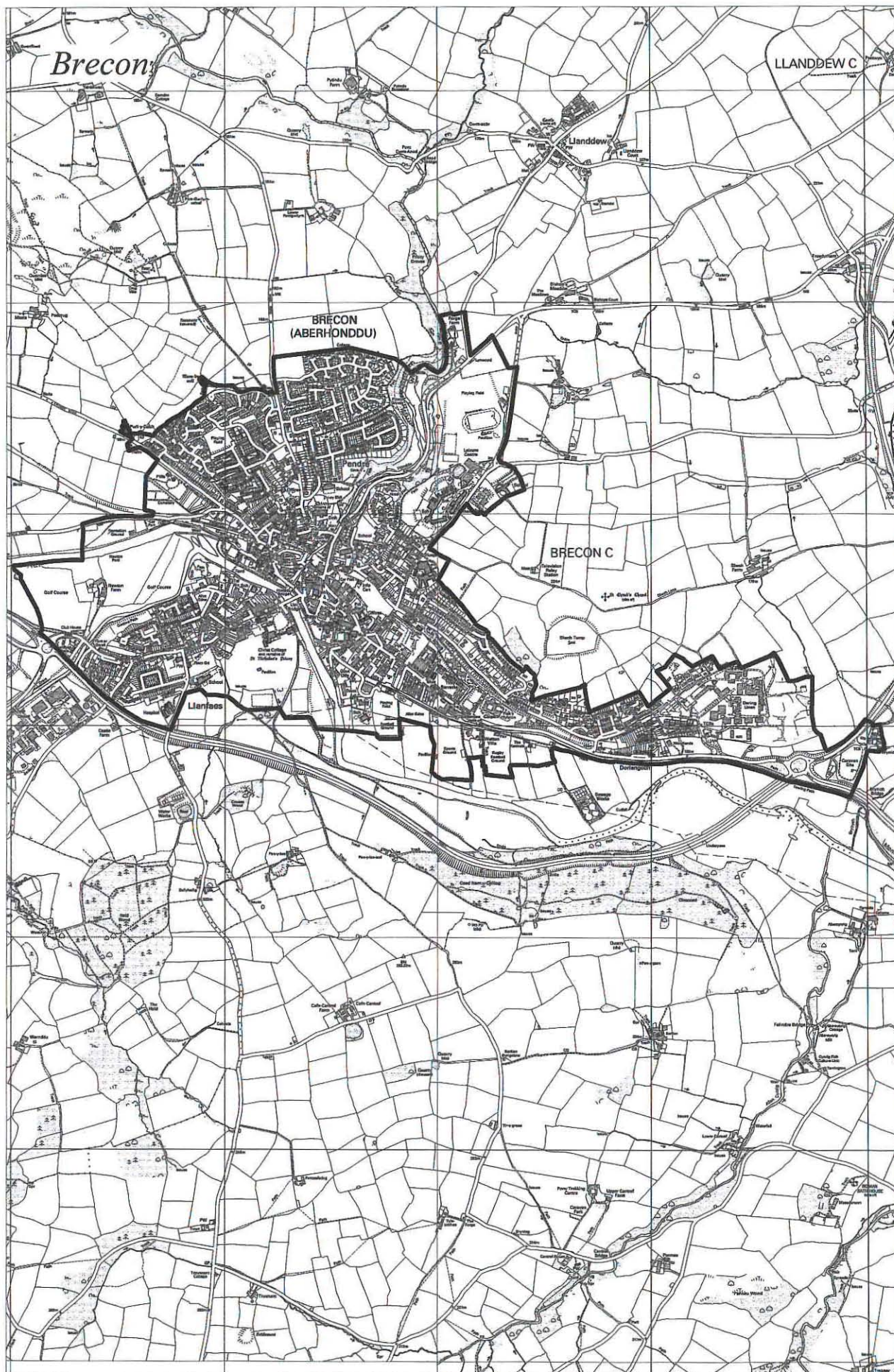
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Key historic landscape management issues

Historic landscape management issues have not been assessed in the field or evaluated, and at this stage it is only possible to point to issues which have been identified during the course of this essentially desktop study.

- *Conservation and management of deposits, buildings and structures relating to the early history and social, economic and industrial development of Brecon.*
- *Conservation and management of deposits and structures associated with the medieval castle and town defences and their visual setting.*
- *Conservation and management of structures and deposits associated with medieval religious buildings, structures and complexes within the town including St John's priory, St Nicholas's friary, the churches of St David and St Mary and their visual setting, and the missing St Catherine's chapel.*
- *Conservation and management of structures associated with Brecon's early industrial history, including the former limekilns along the canal, the Struet woollen mill, the Priory corn mill, and the former fulling mill and ironworks at Forge Farm.*
- *Management of possible traces of medieval open-fields suggested by relict ridge and furrow and by field patterns south of the town.*
- *Conservation and management of structures relating to the history of transport in and around Brecon including bridges, turnpike roads, canal, tramroad and railways*
- *Conservation and management of buildings associated with the cultural, commercial, administrative and social history of the town.*



Historic Landscape Characterization

Middle Usk Valley: *Llan-ddew* Brecon and Llanddew communities, Powys (HLCA 1173)

Undulating lowland landscapes to the east and north-east of Brecon, composed of large to medium-sized regular fields, probably of medieval and later origin, together with the shrunken medieval village of Llan-ddew and a number of widely dispersed larger post-medieval farms and possibly later prehistoric hillfort and enclosure.

Historic background

Later prehistoric settlement is probably indicated by the large and strategically sited Slwch Tump hillfort and adjacent enclosure site, just to the east of Brecon, the hillfort probably representing an Iron Age tribal centre. The Roman road from Brecon Gaer to Kenchester (Herefordshire) is thought to cross the northern side of the area, passing through Llan-ddew, but as yet no physical evidence of its existence has been found within the character area, nor yet has any other evidence of Roman activity been found. It is thought that a church had been established at Llan-ddew by about the early 6th century, which by the early medieval pre-Conquest period had become a *clas* church—a regionally prominent ecclesiastical centre.

In the early medieval period the area formed part of the cantref of Cantref Selyf within the kingdom of Brycheiniog, which following the Norman conquest under Bernard de Neufmarché formed part of the marcher lordship of Brecon. A masonry castle and palace belonging to the bishop of St David's was established at Llan-ddew in the 12th century, associated with the management of an episcopal manor in the area which survived until the Reformation in the mid 16th century. An earthen castle was also established at Alexanderstone on the eastern edge of the character area, perhaps during the 11th to 12th centuries, which may have formed one of a number of smaller estates established within the area following the conquest. The place-name Alexanderstone is first recorded in the later 14th century, being derived from a personal name with the English suffix *-ton* denoting a farm or settlement.

Following the Act of Union the area later formed part of Pencelli Hundred. It subsequently formed parts of the 19th-century tithe parishes of Llan-ddew, Brecon St John, Brecon St Mary and Llanhamlach.

The Breconshire historian Theophilus Jones records that extensive land improvement was undertaken in the vicinity of Llan-ddew during the later 18th century by a number of the larger landowners.

Key historic landscape characteristics

Predominantly rural landscape of large and medium-sized regular fields with hedged boundaries, generally between about 150-260 metres above sea level. The general regularity of the field pattern throughout the area, together with some strip fields and fields with dogleg boundaries and the presence of some remnant ridge and furrow around Llan-ddew and near Alexanderstone suggests that an extensive proportion of the field pattern in the area may result from the enclosure and amalgamation in the later medieval period or early post-medieval periods of medieval open-field furlongs associated with the town of Brecon, the episcopal manor at Llan-ddew and other smaller secular manors.

Settlement in the early medieval and medieval period appears to have focused on the larger ecclesiastical manorial centre at Llan-ddew and the smaller centre at Alexanderstone. The small village of Llan-ddew possibly maintains its medieval plan. The large cruciform church with central tower dates from the 13th century but is thought to have

originated as a religious centre from the 6th century. It set in a large curvilinear churchyard of which the boundary is partly defined by a dry-stone wall. The settlement was granted a market charter in about 1290 and was probably more extensive in the medieval period than today, being associated with now abandoned building platforms. The masonry castle to the north-east of the village centre was built by the bishops of St David's during the 12th century as a residence for the archdeacon of Brecon. It was occupied by Gerald of Wales, archdeacon of Brecon, in the later 12th century but was in ruins by 1550. It is associated with a well traditionally ascribed to the 14th century, built into an arched recess in the south-west curtain wall, now equipped with a 19th-century cast-iron hand pump. The remains of earthwork fishponds probably associated with the bishops' residence are visible to the south-east of the church. An extensive earthwork field system including some house sites and a substantial hollow way, occupies the field between the centre of the village and Llanddew Court, which are probably the remains of a medieval strip-field system and of some regional significance. Further earthworks indicating medieval field systems are visible to the north-west, north and south of the village centre, extending beyond Standel farm. A process of relatively modern rural depopulation is suggested by house plots within the settlement that have been abandoned since the mid 19th century.

There are a relatively small number of dispersed, larger farms within the character area. The large gentry farmhouse at Alexanderstone dates from the 17th-century but is probably on the site of an earlier manor house, associated with an earthwork castle probably originally associated with a medieval manorial centre established after the Norman conquest. Relict building platforms and ridge and furrow cultivation in the immediately surrounding area probably belong to this centre. Slwch Farm is a gentry farmhouse rebuilt in the early 19th century which together with three ranges of later 18th to mid 19th-century with characteristic stone-built outbuildings surround a farmyard, including cart and animal bays and a hay loft. Ffynnonau Farm has a late 17th to 18th-century house, with characteristic thick stone rubble walls.

St Elyned's Chapel, a medieval, non-parochial chapel to the west of Slwch Farm, is first recorded in the earlier 12th century, associated with well and possible enclosure site, of which some masonry structure was recorded in the early 19th century.

There are a number slight but characteristic remains of rural industries within the character area including scattered stone quarries of medieval or later date for building stone, such as the abandoned stone quarries inside the Slwch Tump hillfort, the remains of the 19th-century and probably earlier Felin Cwm Anod corn watermill on the river Honddu on the western boundary of the area.

Sources

Cadw Listed Buildings Lists; CPAT Historic Environment Record; Burnham 1995; Charles 1938; Dorling 1999; Emery 2000; Haslam 1979; Jones, T, 1909; Jones NW 1991; 1993; Jones and Bailey 1909; King 1959; Martin and Walters 1993; Morgan and Powell 1999; Owens 1993; Rees 1993; RCAHMS 1986; Silvester 1993; Silvester 1997; Smith, L T, 1906; Smith, P, 1988; Smith and Jones 1965; Westwood 1885; Williams 1976

Key historic landscape management issues

Historic landscape management issues have not been assessed in the field or evaluated, and at this stage it is only possible to point to issues which have been identified during the course of this essentially desktop study.

- *Conservation and management of the later prehistoric earthwork enclosure and hillfort at Slwch Tump and their visual setting.*
- *Management of structures and deposits associated with the Roman road between Brecon Gaer and Kenchester (Herefordshire) assumed to run through Llan-ddew.*

- *Management and conservation of buildings, structures and deposits associated with the early history of the nucleated settlements at Llan-ddew and Alexanderstone and their visual setting, including Alexanderstone earthwork castle and the church and bishop's palace complex at Llan-ddew.*
- *Conservation and management of structures and deposits associated with the rural, medieval St Elyned's Chapel.*
- *Conservation and management of relict settlement remains and traces of ridge and furrow cultivation at Llan-ddew and Alexanderstone.*
- *Conservation and management of traditional field boundaries.*
- *Conservation and management of the remains of the former rural industries including the corn watermill and associated structures at Felin Cwm Anod on the Honddu, north of Brecon.*



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Historic Landscape Characterization

Middle Usk Valley: *Tal-y-llyn*

Llanfrynach, Llan-gors and Talybont-on-Usk communities, Powys
(HLCA 1174)

Undulating lowland fringing the northern side of the Usk valley and including part of the watershed of the river Llynfi. Landscape of predominantly medium to large-sized irregular fields, dispersed farmsteads and small church settlements of early medieval and medieval origin. Early settlement and land-use indicated by prehistoric burial and ritual monuments. Small post-medieval settlements relating to now-abandoned 19th century tramroad and railways.

Historic background

Substantial evidence of early and later prehistoric settlement and land use in the area is indicated by lithic chance finds, the Ty Illtud Neolithic chambered long cairn near Llanhamlach, several possible round barrows of probable Bronze Age date and the possibly Bronze Age Llanhamlach standing stone.

The line of the Roman road between Abergavenny and Brecon Gaer is assumed to run across the southern and western parts of the area, though its precise course is unknown. A Roman milestone with two early 4th-century inscriptions found built into farm buildings at Millbrook is probably to be associated with the course of this road. Further evidence of Roman activity is provided by a coin hoard found near Cefn Brynich. Early medieval settlement and land use is indicated by the 6th-century commemorative stone known as the Victorinus Stone found to the south-east of Scethrog on the probable line of the Abergavenny to Brecon Gaer Roman road, the 7th/9th-century and 10th/11th century inscribed stones at Llan-gors church, the 10th/11th-century decorated stone in Llanhamlach church, and by the 10th/11th-century sculptured stone at Llanfrynach church.

Historical evidence points to royal and episcopal associations with the area of Llan-gors from early times. A charter of about the 8th century in the Book of Llandaff (*Liber Landavensis*) records the grant by king Awst (Augustus) of Brycheiniog and his sons Eliud and Rhiwallon to bishop Euddogwy (Oudoceus) and his successors of a royal estate (*territorium*) the boundaries of which appear to correspond to the ecclesiastical parish of Llan-gors which lies to the north and east of Llangorse Lake. The grant included its fish and its fishery for eels and therefore included the lake. The charter also records the donation by Awst of his own and his sons' bodies to the church for burial, suggesting that the church may have been a royal burial ground. Another charter describes a meeting in the *clas* ('monastery, mother church') at Llan-gors in about 925 between king Tewdwr ab Elise (or Elisedd) of Brycheiniog and bishop Libiau.

Before the Norman conquest the area formed part of the eastern edge of the cantref of Cantref Selyf to the north of the river Usk. Shortly after the conquest Cathedine, together with the parish of Llanfihangel Tal-y-llyn and part of Llan-gors were assigned by Bernard de Neufmarché to the defeated Welsh prince Gwrgan ap Bleiddin ap Maenarch but later possessed by Bernard himself, the eastern part of the area forming part of the medieval Marcher lordship of Blaenllynfi and subsequently the hundred of Talgarth. Cwrt y Prior in Llangorse community, said to be occasional residence of the priors of Brecon; Llanthony Abbey also had land in the parish granted in early 14th century. Twmpan Motte, near Treberfydd is probably associated with a manorial estate established after the normal conquest. The area later formed part of Pencelli Hundred, and parts of the 19th-century tithe parishes of Cathedine, Llanfrynach, Llansantffraed, Llangasty Tal-y-llyn, Llanhamlach, Llanfihangel Tal-y-llyn, and Llan-gors.

Key historic landscape characteristics

Gently undulating landscapes fringing the northern side of the Usk valley, east of Brecon and to the west of Mynydd Llan-gors and encircling the western side of Llangorse Lake, generally between a height of 120-250 metres above sea level. Landscapes are predominantly medium and large-sized irregular fields with hedged boundaries probably representing anciently enclosed land created in piecemeal fashion from prehistoric and Roman periods onwards but there are some distinctive field patterns of strip-field form with dog-legged boundaries near Llanfihangel Tal-y-llyn and Llan-gors which represent the amalgamation and enclosure of medieval open-field furlongs. The land is mostly well-drained but with unimproved lowland grassland and some marshy land on the more poorly-drained ground around the western margins of Llangorse Lake. Modern land use is predominantly grassland but with some arable, which appears to have been more widespread in the past.

Settlement is characterized by a distinctive pattern of small nucleated church settlements of early medieval or medieval origin (some of which appear to be shrunken settlements), dispersed farms of medieval, late medieval and early post-medieval origin and a number of smaller country houses of 18th- and 19th-century date which were the focus of small landed estates, as well as several small nucleated settlements which arose from their position along turnpike roads or the railway during the 19th century.

Today, Llansantffraed and Llangasty Tal-y-llyn comprise little more than parish churches of medieval origin, adjacent to substantial houses or farms, and possibly in origin proprietary churches established by prominent landowners. Llansantffraed is first recorded at about the beginning of the 12th century and Llangasty Tal-y-llyn in the early 14th century. The two larger nucleated settlements at Llan-gors and Llanfihangel Tal-y-llyn each include several village farms which express their agricultural origins. Llan-gors is of early medieval origin, the present church, largely rebuilt in the later 19th century is associated with early medieval inscribed stones suggesting an origin in the 7th to 9th century. The modern village includes an inn, school, and chapels and former smithy and corn mill. The village contains a number of substantial stone-built houses of 17th-century and later date including Pendre Uchaf House and Ty Mawr farmhouse, with associated farm buildings of 18th-century date. Llanfihangel church and settlement is likewise probably of early medieval pre-Conquest origin. The church was again largely rebuilt in the later 19th century but was probably originally set within a much earlier curvilinear churchyard now partially encroached upon by later buildings. The modern settlement includes a nonconformist chapel and former smithy. An area of relict building platforms and hollow-ways to the north-east of the village centre suggest that the village may have shrunk in size since the medieval period. Its former agricultural status is indicated by areas of surviving ridge and furrow cultivation probably representing former medieval open-field cultivation to the north and south-west of the village centre.

Non-parochial nucleated settlements developed at Scethrog, Tal-y-llyn and Pennorth. Scethrog lies to the north of an earlier focus at The Tower, with earlier 16th-century Hen Persondy ('Old Vicarage') and a number of 18th-century houses and barns at Neuadd and Scethrog Farm. Tal-y-llyn and Pennorth arose from their position at the junction of roads and former railways.

Vernacular farmhouses and outbuildings of 17th to 19th-century form a distinctive element of the built environment of the character area, and includes a number of earlier buildings of longhouse type, set up and down the slope, with a barn or byre at the lower end of the house, as well as a number of farm complexes set around a farmyard. Characteristic examples include Ty Gwyn (Pennorth), Powis Terrace House and Lower Pendre (Llan-gors), and Llan House (Llangasty Tal-y-llyn). Characteristic stone barns, cartsheds and granaries, sometimes with narrow ventilation slits, survive at Ty Newydd (Scethrog), Brynderwen (Tal-y-llyn) and Ysgubor Newydd (east of Pennorth), the latter probably estate-built. Hemley Hall Cottage, probably 16th-century in origin is an unusual survival of an earlier small cottage.

The character area also includes a number of distinctive 18th- and 19th-century small mansions, gentry houses, and fashionable, gentlemen's farmhouses with associated farm buildings, some of which have origins in the 16th or 17th

century. These houses, sometimes prominently sited, appear in a variety of vernacular, classical or Gothic Revival styles and which form a distinctive element of the rural built environment. They are generally stone-built and some are associated with small landed estates. Examples include Scethrog House, Manest Court, Newton House, Trebinshwn, Llansantffraed House, Ty Mawr (Llangasty Tal-y-llyn), and Treberfydd, some of which are of 16th or 17th-century origin. Higher status village houses of this kind include Neuadd and Bryn-llici (Llan-gors), Old School House (Llangasty Tal-y-llyn), Yr Hen Persondy (Scethrog). The medium-sized country house at Glynderi, Tal-y-llyn, built in 1816, is unusual in being brick built and is most probably associated with the nearby Hay Tramroad.

Several of the larger houses in the character area are associated with notable 19th-century gardens and garden features. Treberfydd House being associated with an ornamental garden, walled kitchen garden, ha-ha and a small area of parkland planting and at Trebinshwm with a rectangular garden partly enclosed by the rear wall of the courtyard behind the house which incorporates a garden room.

A number of important elements of transport history survive within the character area. The course of the Roman road between Abergavenny and Brecon Gaer is thought to be approximately followed by the course of the modern A40, though as yet no physical evidence has been found and its state of survival here is uncertain. A number of the more prominent roads were improved as turnpike roads during the later 18th and 19th centuries, most notably the present A40 which defines much of the southern boundary of the area, along which several milestones of this period survive. The former Hay Tramroad, completed in 1818, was built to carry coal, coke and lime from canal-side wharfs at Brecon into Radnorshire and Herefordshire. It cut through earlier field systems along its course and its construction including the digging of the 500 metre Tal-y-llyn tunnel, now sealed. It continued in operation for 40 years, being superseded by the Hereford, Hay and Brecon Railway in 1862 which reused much of the former course of the tramroad, though traces of its former and embankments and culverts survive in places, as in the case of the section just to the south-east of Llanfihangel Tal-y-llyn. The railway, which became the Mid Wales Railway, eventually closed in 1962. Its former course and a number of associated structures, notably the intact railway bridge at Pennorth as distinctive landscape features.

There are a number slight but characteristic remains of rural industries within the character area including scattered stone quarries of medieval or later date for building stone, together with former village smithies at Llanfihangel Tal-y-llyn and Llan-gors, and a former corn watermill at Llan-gors.

Sources

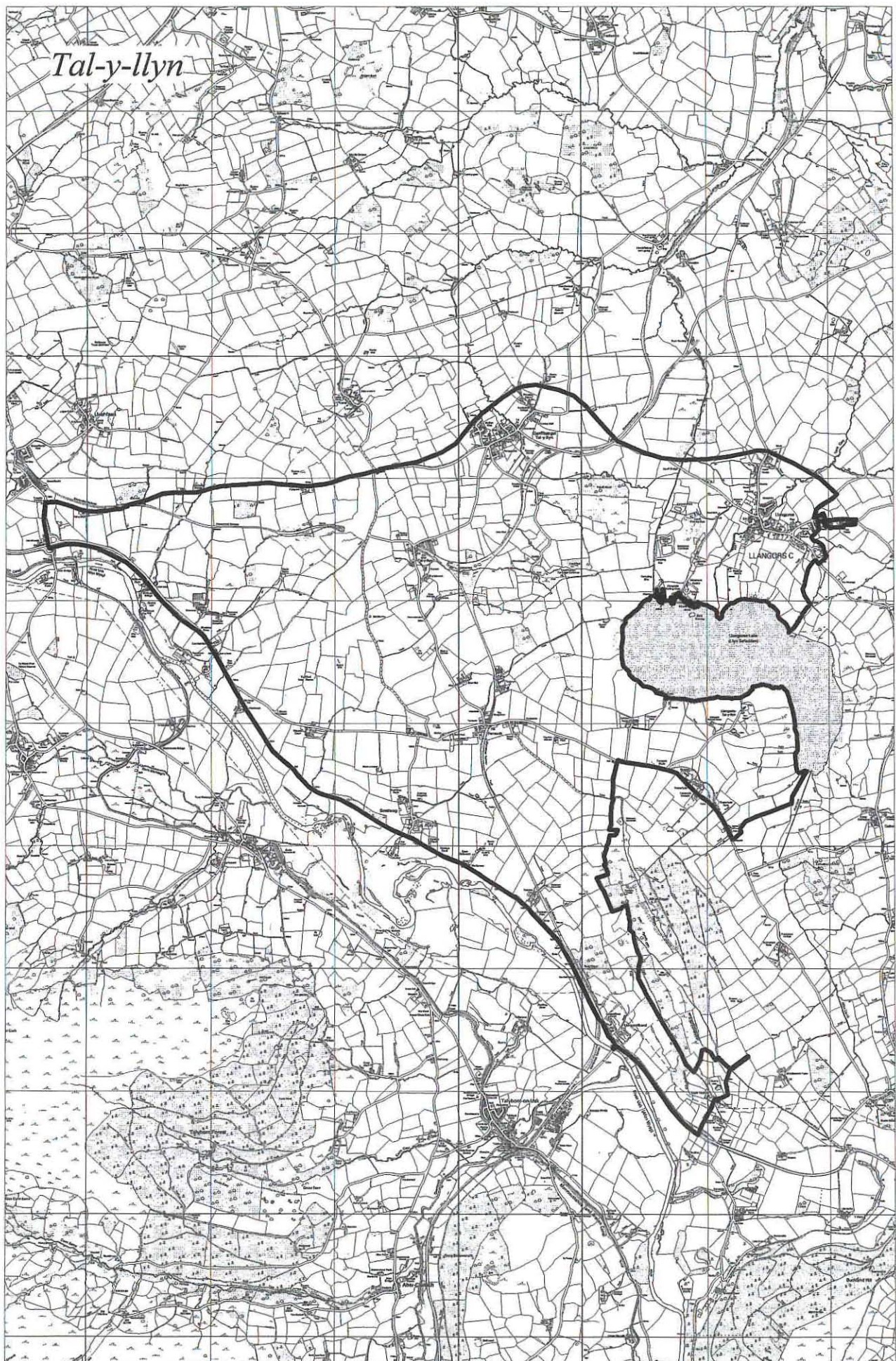
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Key historic landscape management issues

Historic landscape management issues have not been assessed in the field or evaluated, and at this stage it is only possible to point to issues which have been identified during the course of this essentially desktop study.

- *Conservation and management of Neolithic and Bronze Age burial and ritual monuments and their setting.*
- *Management of structures and deposits associated with the Roman road between Abergavenny (Monmouthshire) and Brecon Gaer, assumed to lie approximately along the course of the A40.*

- *Conservation and management of deposits, buildings and structures relating to the early history and social, economic and industrial development of the nucleated settlements at Llan-gors, Llanfihangel Tal-y-llyn, Llanfrynach, Llangasty Tal-y-llyn, Llanhamlach, Llansantffraed, Pennorth, Scethrog and their visual setting.*
- *Conservation and management of relict settlement remains and traces of ridge and furrow cultivation at Llanfihangel Tal-y-llyn and Llan-gors.*
- *Conservation and management of traditional field boundaries.*
- *Conservation and management of vernacular houses and traditional farm buildings*
- *Conservation and management of abandoned house sites*
- *Conservation and management of medieval earthwork castle Twmpan Motte, near Treberfydd.*
- *Conservation and management of the historic gardens and garden features.*
- *Conservation and management of structures relating to the 18th and 19th-century transport history of the area including those associated with roads, canal, tramroads and railways.*
- *Conservation and management of buildings and structures associated with former rural industries, including quarry sites, former smithies and watermills.*



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Historic Landscape Characterization

Middle Usk Valley: *Pencelli-Talybont* Brecon, Llanfrynach and Talybont-on-Usk communities, Powys (HLCA 1175)

Large irregular, low-lying fieldscape probably representing relatively late enclosure of former common meadows on the broad alluvial floodplain of the Usk between Brecon and Talybont-on-Usk, with complex and active system of river meanders and cutoffs, crossed by the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal, and including the small nucleated settlements of medieval origin at Llanfrynach, Pencelli, and Talybont-on-Usk. Significant Roman villa complex at Maesderwen near Llanfrynach.

Historic background

Early prehistoric settlement and land use is suggested by the possibly Bronze Age Gileston standing stone, about 300 metres from the south bank of the river Usk and probable Bronze Age Cae Gwin barrow with stone cist, north-east of Llanfrynach. Later prehistoric settlement and land use is indicated by the Cross Oak hillfort, north of Talybont-on-Usk.

The line of the Roman road between Abergavenny and Brecon Gaer is assumed to fall along either the A40 or the B4558 roads which bound the northern and southern sides of the area respectively. A substantial high-status Roman civilian complex of the early 3rd to later 4th century, with decorated mosaic floors, is known at Maesderwen, just to the west of Llanfrynach, which may have formed to focus of a large privately-owned estate. Roman ironworking also appears to have been undertaken within the area.

The area formed part of the eastern edge of the cantrefs of Cantref Selyf to the north of the Usk and Cantref Mawr to the south and subsequently part of Pencelli Hundred, and parts of the 19th-century tithe parishes of Llansantffraed, Llanfeugan, Llanfrynach and Brecon St David.

Later medieval and early post-medieval settlement is indicated by the Tower, Scethrog, probably part of a 16th-century fortified tower house, built by a branch of the Pichard family.

Key historic landscape characteristics

Predominantly large irregular, low-lying fields with hedged boundaries generally on the flat valley bottom bordering the meandering river Usk possibly representing late medieval or post-medieval enclosure of former common meadows, between a height of 120-60 metres above sea level. Modern land use is predominantly pasture.

Modern settlement is largely confined to the three small nucleated settlements at Llanfrynach, Pencelli and Talybont-on-Usk. Llanfrynach comprises several substantial farms, rows of terraced cottages, public house and Baptist chapel. The medieval parish church, largely rebuilt in the later 19th century, is dedicated to the local early medieval saint Brynach. It lies within a very large curvilinear churchyard and is associated with a pre-Conquest cross slab of the 10th/11th century. The small modern settlement at Pencelli largely owes its existence to the road and canal which passes through it, though it probably originated as a dependent settlement associated with Pencelli Castle. The castle, which probably formed the focus of a medieval manorial estate, was in existence by the early 13th century and evidently remained in good repair until the late 15th century. Talybont-on-Usk is likely to owe its origin to the medieval bridge across the river Caerfanell in existence by the 14th century. It expanded as a small industrial and commercial

centre along the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal, acting as a transfer point for coal and limestone brought from the south by way of the Brinore Tramroad, built in 1814–15 and the Brecon and Merthyr Railway during the later 19th century. The settlement includes a number of substantial 17th and 18th-century houses, the White Hart Inn, a late 18th to early 19th-century inn, and a Methodist chapel. Structures associated with the settlement's industrial and transport history include a bank of stone-built former limekilns alongside the canal and beneath the Brinore tramroad, possible remains of station buildings and offices associated with the tramroad, an aqueduct carrying the canal across the Caerfanell and a railway bridge crossing the B4558. The more dispersed settlement at Llanhamlach may represent a shrunken settlement originally focused upon a medieval manorial centre superseded by Peterstone Court and associated with a proprietary church, but the modern settlement pattern is influenced by the late 18th to early 19th-century Abergavenny to Brecon turnpike road on the course of the modern A40.

Significant features associated with the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal include the early 19th-century stone aqueduct of four arches and two cutwaters at Cefn Brynich which carries the canal across the river Usk, near the probably 18th-century stone-built Lock Road Bridge with its four massive arches and cutwaters. A number of the original stone humpbacked canal bridges survive on the stretch of road between Talybont-on-Usk and Pencelli though others were lowered and replaced by concrete bridges in the 1950s and 1960s. There are also a number of steel lift bridges of which at least some were repaired or replaced during the 20th century. There are small groups of 19th-century canal cottages to the north-west of Talybont. Other industrial remains include the important intact water-powered Gileston corn mill and mill-house. The mill structure which is probably of 17th century origin, has surviving 18th and early 19th-century machinery, making it one of the best-preserved example of watermill in Brecknock.

Notable elements of designed landscapes include the former parkland associated with Peterstone Court and the series of post-medieval formal walled garden enclosures, ponds and water channels around the secluded fine late seventeenth-century manor house adjacent to the river flood plain at Abercynrig, near the confluence of the Afon Cynrig and Usk. The house is associated with a complex of well-preserved farm buildings arranged around a yard including stables, former cider mill and dovecote.

Sources

CCW SSSI citation; CPAT Historic Environment Record; Cadw Listed Buildings Lists; Charles 1938; Davies 1992; Emery 2000; Hay 1785; Hogg and King 1967; Hughes 1990; Jones and Owen 2000; Jones and Smith 1965; King 1961; Morgan and Powell 1999; Nash-Williams 1948-50; RCAHMS 1988; Silvester and Dorling 1993

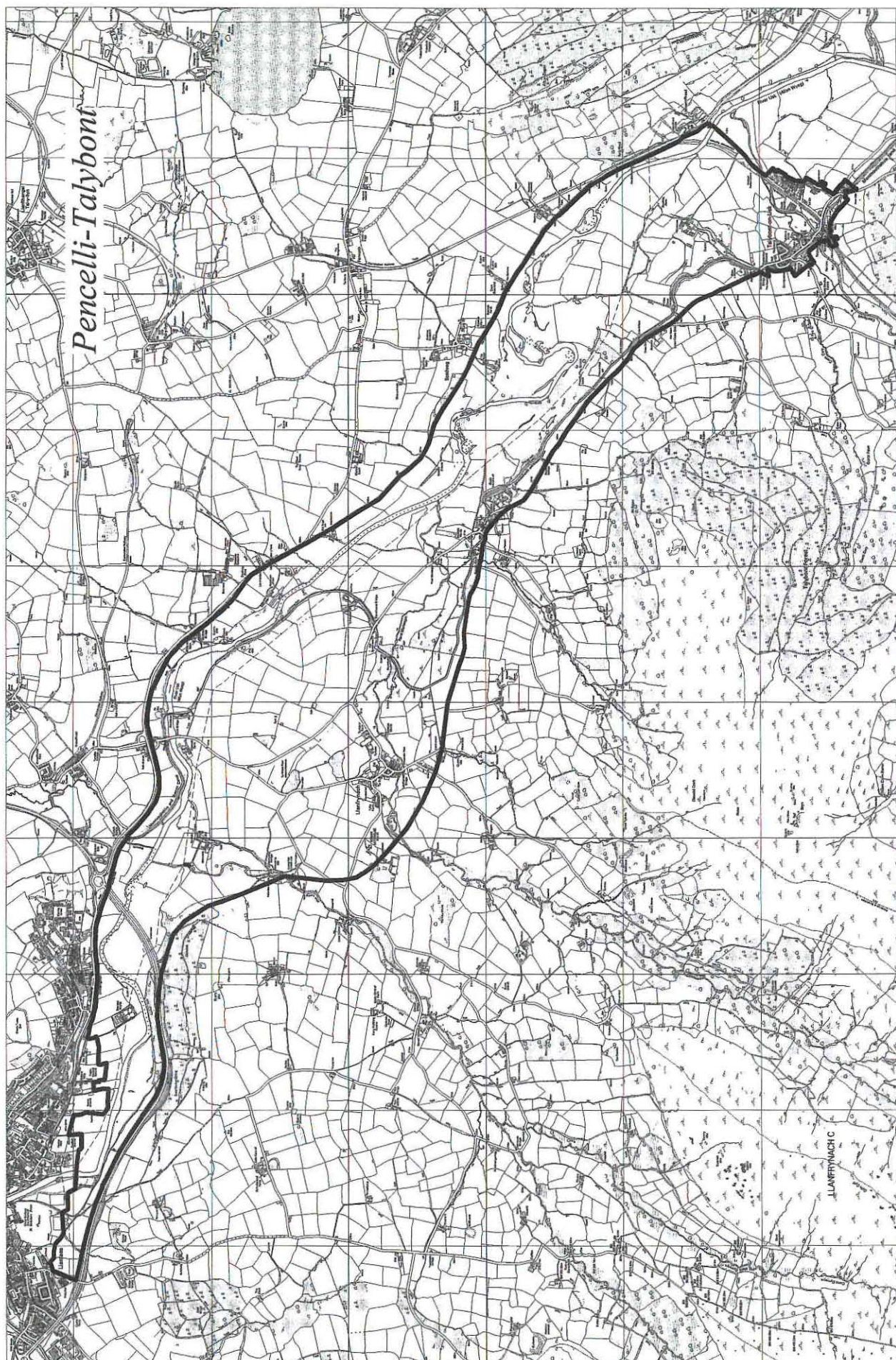
Key historic landscape management issues

Historic landscape management issues have not been assessed in the field or evaluated, and at this stage it is only possible to point to issues which have been identified during the course of this essentially desktop study.

- *Management of the Gileston Bronze Age standing stone and its setting.*
- *Management of the Cross Oak hillfort whose interior and defences are vulnerable to ploughing.*
- *Management of structures and deposits associated with the possible course of the Roman road between Abergavenny and Brecon Gaer*
- *Management of the high-status Roman civilian complex and metalworking area at Maesderwen near Llanfrynach.*
- *Conservation and management of deposits, buildings and structures relating to the early history and*

social, economic and industrial development of the medieval nucleated settlements at Llanfrynach, Pencelli and Talybont-on-Usk and their visual setting.

- *Conservation and management of important vernacular buildings, including the late medieval Scethrog Tower.*
- *Conservation and management of buildings and structures relating to transport history in the area including that associated with roads, canal, tramroad and railway.*



Historic Landscape Characterization

Middle Usk Valley: *Llangorse Lake*

Llan-gors community, Powys
(HLCA 1176)

Large, natural late glacial lake which formed a central feature in pre-Norman Brycheiniog and is now the focus for nature conservation and watersports. The lake is associated with much early folklore and with artificial island or crannog unique to Wales which formed an early medieval royal residence. Evidence of much earlier, Mesolithic activity and sediments of significant regional palaeoenvironmental potential.

Historic background

As noted above in the historical background to the Tal-y-llyn historic landscape character area, historical evidence associates the area of Llan-gors with the royal and episcopal estates from about the 8th century. Both historical and archaeological evidence suggests that the crannog towards the northern side of the lake was a residence of the kings of Brycheiniog in the 9-10th centuries. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle records that in 916, Aethelflaed sent an army into Wales three days after the murder of abbot Ecgberht and his companions. The army stormed Breccanmere ('Brecon mere') and captured the king's wife and over thirty other members of the court. The attack on the mere almost certainly refers to the crannog, and the capture of the wife of king Tewdwr ab Elise. The Book of Llandaff records the grant of Llan-gors to the church of Llandaff by the king of Brycheiniog in the 7th century. Gerald of Wales in his *Itinerary* written in the later 12th century notes that the lake supplied pike, perch, trout, tench and eels. The fishing rights were granted to the monks of Brecon priory and there is a mid 13th-century reference to the use of a boat. John Leland refers to the stocks of fish in the lake in the early 16th century. A map of 1584 shows two boats drawn up on the bank of the lake, a watermill where the Llynfi joins the southern end of the lake and three eel traps are shown where the river flows out of its northern side. A survey of the mid 17th century entitled 'A Survey of a certain Poole or fishing Poole commonly called Llinsavathen' refers to the presence of weirs at which 'good store of Eles taken in potts'. Gibson's 1722 edition of Camden's *Britannia* mentions coracles for fishing.

Llan-gors (or Llangorse, the anglicized version of the name) is taken from the adjacent village which is derived from the Welsh *llan* 'church' and *cors* 'reeds, marsh, bog'. The lake has also been known by the Latin name Clamosus, by the Welsh name Llyn Syfaddan (or Syfaddon), and also as Llan-gors Mere, Brecknock Mere or Mara de Brechonia and various other forms.

A view of the lake showing groups of fishermen in boats was painted by the Welsh landscape artist Thomas Jones probably in the last decade or two of the 18th century. The lake has been a pleasure resort since the early 19th century, having been used for boating, fishing and wildfowling, private boat houses and landing stages being shown on 1st edition of the Ordnance Survey on north and south shores in the 1880s, the coming of the railways in the later 19th bringing visitors to Tal-y-llyn Station which lies within a mile of the lake. Today the lake is a focus for the competing demands of tourism, nature conservation and watersports.

Key historic landscape characteristics

Natural lake of glacial origin, about 133 hectares in extent and second only in size in Wales to Llyn Tegid, Bala. The lake is up to about 8.5 metres deep, at a height of about 155 metres above sea level and probably cut into solid rock at its deepest levels. The lake, which is surrounded by 10 hectares of reed beds, is fed and drained by the

Afon Llynfi which enters it at the south-east and leaves it to the north-west. The water level in the lake is retained by a barrier of glacial gravel reinforced by more recent fan deposits, brought down by streams rising on Mynydd Troed and Mynydd Llan-gors to the north-east and east respectively. The lake surface and the adjacent common are registered Common Land.

Sediments deposited in the base of the lake provide an important record of palaeoenvironmental change in the area since the end of the last ice age. Study of these sediments within the lake indicate a decrease in tree pollen and an increase in sedimentation during the period between about 3800–950 BC, suggesting a period of forest clearance and arable agriculture during the Neolithic and Bronze Age periods. A further substantial increase in the rate of sedimentation has suggested an intensification of arable agriculture and increased soil erosion in the Roman period, at about AD 250. Further increases in the rate of sedimentation took place at about the beginning of the 19th century, probably in response to the cultivation of marginal hill-lands within the catchment area of the Llynfi. The suspended sediments carried into the lake by streams in winter and spring is not a recent phenomenon: in the later 12th century Giraldus Cambrensis noted that the lake was at times tinged by red, as if blood flowed through veins and small channels.

The artificial crannog, called Ynys Bwlc, forms a small island crowned with shrubs, about 40 metres by 30 metres across, which protrudes up to a metre above the surface of the lake but is sometimes submerged below its surface in the winter. The crannog which supported the settlement lies about 40 metres from the north shore of the lake and was constructed of two concentric rings of oak piles revetting a platform of small pieces of sandstone placed on a lacework of timber overlying brushwood matting. The piles are driven through a layer of peat which includes much earlier, Mesolithic finds. Dendrochronological dating shows that the crannog was built in the 890s though the mound also includes some Roman material in its make-up. Excavations in the 1860s and between 1987–93 have shown that the crannog was defended by a palisade and probably comprised an early medieval hall comparable to the contemporary Irish royal crannog sites, and was connected to the shore by a wooden causeway up to 3 metres wide. The high quality of some of the associated artefacts, which include an antler comb, embroidered textile, parts of a portable shrine, two log boats (including an earlier find), carbonised grain and animal bone, support its identification as one of the early royal sites of Brycheiniog. It has been suggested that it may have been a centre of royal administration, as well as a place for hospitality, where the ruler received tribute as well as taking part in sporting activities such as wildfowling and fishing. The site seems to have been influenced by Irish building techniques, and was possibly constructed with the assistance of Irish craftsmen. A foundation legend of the royal dynasty of Brycheiniog claimed descent from Irish ancestry. The use of this unusual construction method in Wales may have been intended by later kings to substantiate these claims and thereby enhance their social and political standing. A charred horizon recognised during the excavations may represent the attack by Aethelflaed's army in 916.

In 2005 a stone bund was constructed around part of the crannog to protect it from further wave action.

Sources

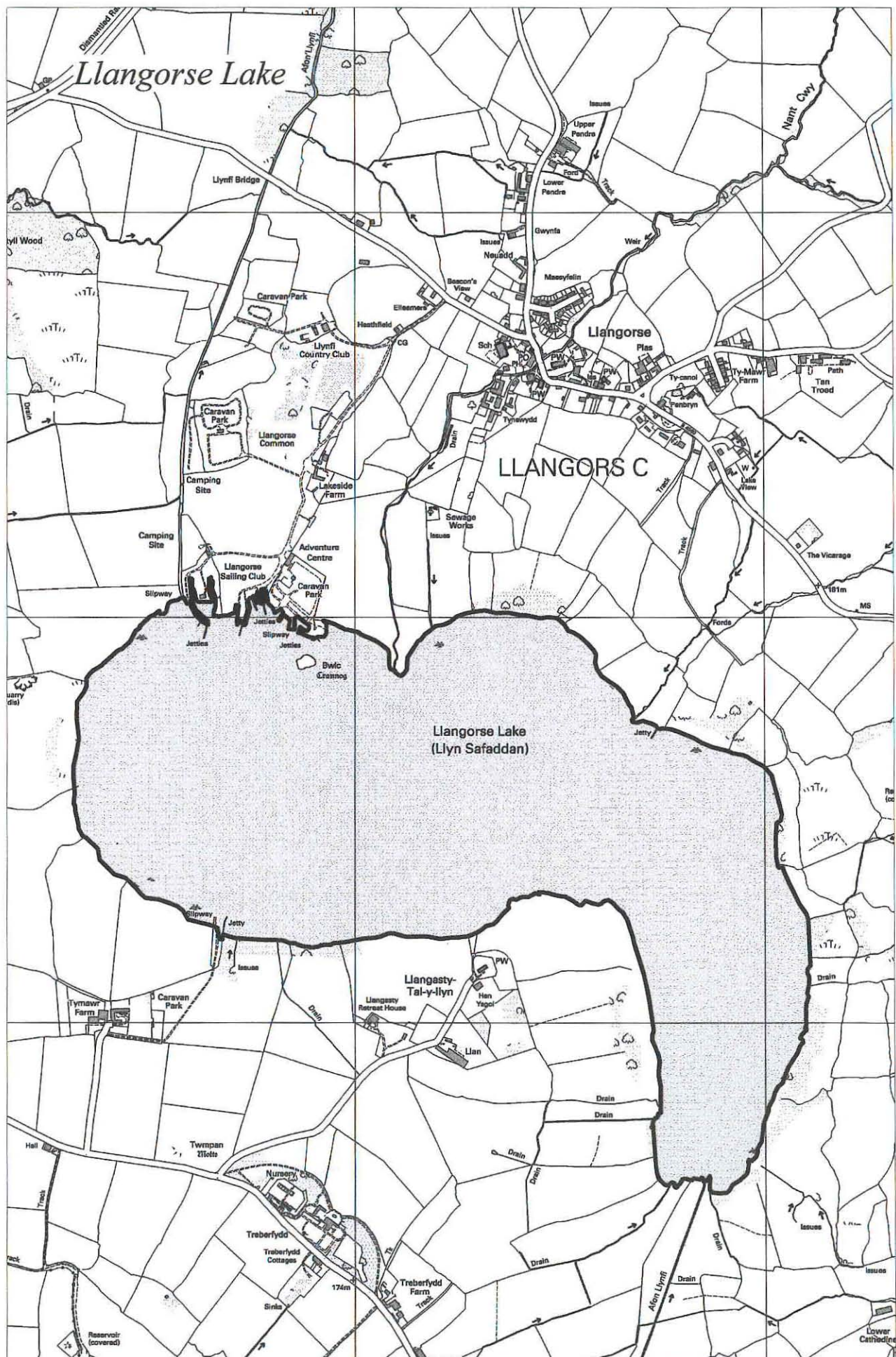
CCW SSSI citation; CPAT Historic Environment Record; Arnold and Davies 2000; Burnham 1995; Camden 1586; Caseldine 1990; Chambers 1985; Davies 1999; Davies 2000; RCAHMS 1997; Figgis 1995; Fox 1926; Granger-Taylor and Pritchard 2001; Jones et al. 1985; McGrail 1975; 1978; 1979; Manning 1895; Mumford and Redknap 1999; North 1957; Raikes et al. 1986–87; Redknap 1993; Redknap 2000; Redknap 2002; Redknap and Lane 1994; Redknap and Lane 1999; Sims-Williams 1993; Smith 1906; Thomas 1994; Waite et al. 2005.

Key historic landscape management issues

Historic landscape management issues have not been assessed in the field or evaluated, and at this stage it is only possible to point to issues which have been identified during the course of this essentially

desktop study.

- *Conservation and management of the early medieval crannog site and its visual setting.*
- *Management of lake sediments which are of significance to the study of the palaeoenvironmental and land use history of the region.*



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Historic Landscape Characterization

Middle Usk Valley: *Cathedine*

Llan-gors community, Powys
(HLCA 1177)

Regularly partitioned fieldscape on the western slopes of Mynydd Troed and Mynydd Llan-gors overlooking Llangorse Lake, with scattered farms, probably enclosed in later medieval and early post-medieval period. Early prehistoric activity indicated by lithic finds. Abandoned and derelict house sites.

Historic background

Later prehistoric settlement and land use is indicated by the Bronze Age ridge-top burial cairn on Allt yr Esgair and the subsequent Iron Age hillfort. The area formed part of the eastern edge of the cantref of Cantref Selyf to the north of the river Usk. Following the Anglo-Norman conquest in the late 11th century the whole of Cathedine was initially assigned by Bernard de Neufmarché to his prisoner Gwrgan ap Bleiddin ap Maenarch but was later repossessed by Bernard, and from the late 12th century formed part of the medieval Marcher lordship of Blaenllynfi. Following the Act of Union in 1536 it formed part of the hundred of Talgarth, and later formed part of the 19th-century tithe parish of Cathedine. The church dedicated to St Michael at Cathedine, which is first recorded at about the beginning of the 12th century, was largely rebuilt in the 19th century.

Key historic landscape characteristics

Predominantly regular fieldscapes with hedged boundaries to the south and east of Llangorse Lake, on sloping hill-land of Allt yr Esgair and the western flanks of Mynydd Llan-gors, lying between a height of between about 150-390 metres above sea level. The distinctive field patterns in the area appears to represent systematic clearance and enclosure or the enclosure of former common grazing in the later medieval or early post-medieval period. Modern land use predominantly pasture, with some conifer plantation on Allt yr Esgair. Modern settlement includes a number of widely dispersed farms including Trebinshwn farm and house and Lower Cathedine, both of which are perhaps late medieval or early post-medieval in origin. Rural depopulation at perhaps the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century is represented by a number of abandoned house sites on the eastern flanks of Allt yr Esgair. There are former stone quarries of earlier 19th-century or earlier date on Allt yr Esgair ridge, some of which has damaged the defences of the Iron Age hillfort. These are associated with a trackway which leads towards Talybont-on-Usk. The late 19th-century turnpike road from Talgarth to Bwlch forms much of the eastern boundary of the area. The circular earlier 19th-century Paragon Tower folly, high on the western side of Allt yr Esgair, east of Newton, was probably a focus for riding, hunting or walking expeditions associated with one of the local landed estates.

Sources

CPAT Historic Environment Record; RCAHMW 1997; Cadw Listed Buildings Lists; Glynne 1886; Haslam 1979; Jones, T, 1911; Jones and Smith 1963; Morgan and Powell 1999; Silvester 1998; Silvester and Dorling 1993

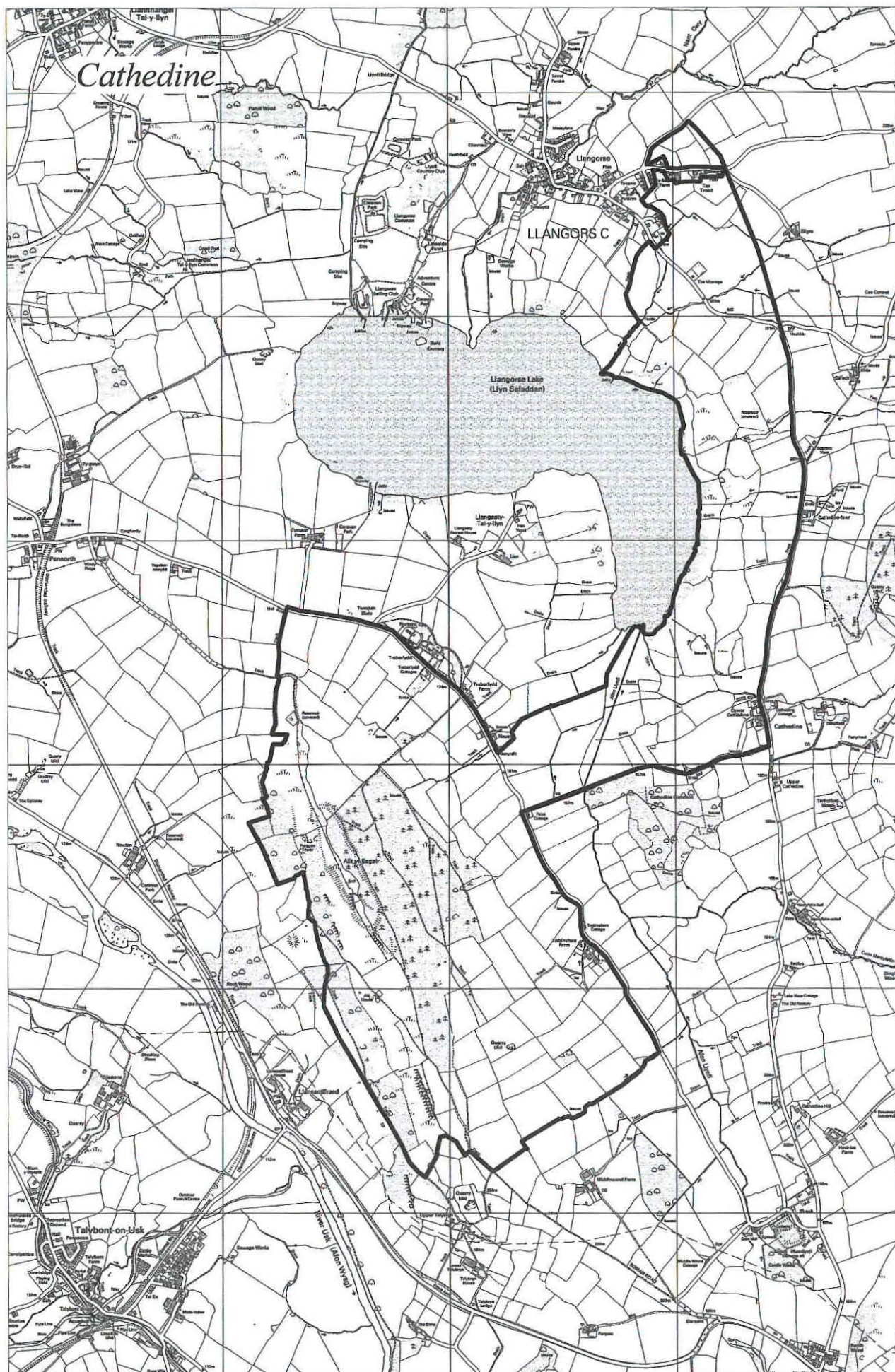
Key historic landscape management issues

Historic management issues have not been assessed in the field or evaluated, and at this stage it is only possible to point to issues which have been identified during the course of this essentially desktop study.

- *Conservation and management of Bronze Age ridge-top burial cairn and probably later prehistoric enclosure and hillfort on Allt yr Esgair (the former much damaged by stone quarrying in the past) and*

their setting.

- *Conservation and management of traditional field boundaries.*
- *Conservation and management of abandoned house sites.*
- *Conservation and management of vernacular buildings.*



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Photographs of Character Areas

Middle Usk Valley: *Llanspyddid*



Regular fieldscapes looking eastwards from Aberbrân, with Llwyn-y-merched farm in the foreground. The medieval bishop of St David's held ploughlands at Aberbrân, noted in the *Black Book of St David's*, which may be represented by the strip-field pattern in the area towards the middle. The squarer field patterns on the rising ground to the left possibly represent late medieval enclosure. The line of the former Neath and Brecon Railway runs across earlier field boundaries in the middle distance. The settlements of Battle and Cradoc are visible in the right background. Photo: CPAT 05-C-149



Modern strip fields near looking northwards towards Aber-Brân-fach Farm, with the modern A40 in the foreground, the Aber-brân Bridge crossing the river Usk towards the background. Photo: CPAT 05-C-151

Middle Usk Valley: *Llanspyddid*



The wooded hilltop of Coed Fenni-fach viewed from the north-west with Brecon Gaer Roman fort and Y Gaer farm visible towards the lower right, with the course with the straight course of the Roman road running eastwards along the Usk valley to Abergavenny cutting across diagonally towards the top right. *Photo: CPAT 05-C-156*



Fields just to the west of Brecon. To the extreme right is the road to Cradoc. To the left of this is the course of the former Brecon and Neath Railway, with relict field boundaries indicating extensive landscape reorganisation in this area in the late 19th century, following the construction of the railway. Running less parallel with this is the track leading to Pennant Farm which lies on the assumed course of the Roman road from Abergavenny to Brecon Gaer. Further left again is the minor road leading to Fenni-fach Farm, which lies on the bank of the river Usk towards the top left. Newton House built in about 1582 by John Games, High Sheriff of Breconshire lies at the bottom left. *Photo: CPAT 05-C-163*

Middle Usk Valley: *Pen-y-crug*



The multiple banks and ditches of the Pen-y-crug Iron Age hillfort, on common land north-west of Brecon, viewed from the south-west. The remains of the former clay pits and brick and tile works lie in the area of bracken and scrub just to the right of the hillfort. *Photo: CPAT 05-C-141*



The church settlement of Battle first documented in the early 13th century, viewed from the west with The Pool to the right. The battle which resulted in the conquest of the kingdom of Brycheiniog in 1093 is traditionally held to have taken place in the fields in the middle distance, to the south of the village, perhaps on the basis of the place-name, though the settlement is actually named after Battle Abbey in Sussex, which drew income from the parish. The ridge and furrow visible in these fields is possibly of medieval origin. *Photo: CPAT 05-C-146*

Middle Usk Valley: **Brecon**



Brecon, viewed from the south with the suburb of Llanfaes and Christ College to the left of the river Usk and St John's Priory Church, now Brecon Cathedral towards the centre, to the right of the river. The early settlement appears to have been established adjacent to the castle and the priory on the far side of the wooded valley of the Honddu river, subsequently extending to the area of the planned medieval town towards the right. The houses in the background represent the expansion of the town in the 19th and 20th centuries. *Photo: CPAT 05-C-170*



Brecon, viewed from the south-west showing the wooded grounds of the Castle Hotel and the remains of the medieval castle in the right foreground and the Cathedral towards the left. The medieval bridge crossing the river Usk is visible in the foreground. *Photo: CPAT 05-C-174*

Middle Usk Valley: *Llan-ddew*



Fields just to the west of the village of medieval origin at Llan-ddew, visible at the bottom right, viewed from the north-east. The characteristic strip fields combined with dog-legged boundaries and remnant traces of ridge and furrow cultivation represents enclosed medieval open-fields associated with the church settlement which probably first originated in the early medieval period. *Photo: CPAT 05-C-121*



The cross-roads at the centre of Llan-ddew village, viewed from the south. The medieval cruciform church lies to the left of the cross-roads, and in the field beyond this are earthworks which most probably represent medieval fishponds. The fortified medieval bishop's palace is visible just to the right of centre. The site of archaeological excavations investigating the site of medieval house plots are visible in the field in the foreground. *Photo: CPAT 05-C-128*

Middle Usk Valley: *Tal-y-llyn*



Church settlement of Llan-gors, viewed from the south. The present church dedicated to St Paulinus lies within a distinctive curvilinear churchyard near the centre of the settlement and probably represents an early medieval ecclesiastical site dating from at least the 7th century. *Photo: CPAT 05-C-44*



Partly flooded fieldscapes at the southern end of Llangorse Lake. Llangasty Tal-y-llyn church is visible on the edge of the lake to the right of centre and 19th-century Treberfydd country house and home farm towards the left background. *Photo: CPAT 05-C-78*

Middle Usk Valley: *Tal-y-llyn*



Fieldsapes near Neuadd Farm, Llangasty Tal-y-llyn, near the southern end of Llangorse Lake. Photo: CPAT 05-C-62



Fieldscape just to the south of Llanfihangel Tal-y-llyn, near Lake View. Like the similar field pattern near the village of Llan-ddew, the strip fields combined with dog-legged boundaries and remnant traces of ridge and furrow cultivation have derived from the enclosed medieval open-fields associated with the medieval church settlement. Photo: CPAT 05-C-93

Middle Usk Valley: *Pencelli-Talybont*



Active river meanders of the river Usk where it occupies the broad alluvial floodplain near Scethrog. *Photo: CPAT 05-C-101*



Fields near Brynich viewed from the north. The regular field patterns in this part of the Usk valley appear to represent systematic enclosure and landscape reorganisation during the post-medieval period. *Photo: CPAT 05-C-188*

Middle Usk Valley: *Pencelli-Talybont*



The modern A40 trunk road towards the foreground near Brynich runs roughly parallel with the river Usk and the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal. The Brynich Locks lie near the road bridge crossing the Usk towards the right and the canal aqueduct which carries the canal over the river lies just to the left. *Photo: CPAT 05-C-191*



Fieldscape near Llanhamlach, viewed from the south-east. The isolated Llanhamlach church lies near the banks of the river Usk towards the middle foreground with Peterstone Court Hotel just beyond. The Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal curves around towards the left, where it passes the Ty-newydd marina. *Photo: CPAT 05-C-195*

Middle Usk Valley: *Llangorse Lake*



Llangorse Lake viewed from the north-west during a period of flood, with the Llynfi valley to the right. *Photo: CPAT 05-C-96*



Llangorse crannog, the artificial island also known as Ynys Bwlc near the northern shore of Llangorse Lake. Historical and archaeological evidence suggests that the crannog, about 40 metres by 30 metres across, was a royal residence of the kings of Brycheiniog in the 9-10th centuries. *Photo: CPAT 05-C-51*

Middle Usk Valley: *Cathedine*



Regular fieldscapes probably of late medieval or early post-medieval origin on the eastern flanks of Allt yr Esgair. The Iron Age hillfort runs along the crown of the ridge, just beyond the modern conifer plantation. *Photo: CPAT 05-C-76*



Fieldsapes on the western flanks of Mynydd Llan-gors near Cathedine-fawr, visible in the foreground. *Photo: CPAT 05-C-81*

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Appendix 1: Chronological Guide

The following chronological guide is adapted from that given in the Council for British Archaeology's online British and Irish Archaeological Bibliography, available at <<http://www.biab.ac.uk/chronology.asp>>. This provides an indication of the approximate span of each period in calendar years. These dates should not be taken as definitive or absolute and may well be debated.

Palaeolithic 500,000-10,000 BC

- Lower Palaeolithic 500,000-70,000 BC
- Middle Palaeolithic 70,000-35,000 BC
- Upper Palaeolithic 35,000-10,000 BC
- Early Upper Palaeolithic 35,000-20,000 BC
- Last Glacial 23,000-15,000 BC
- Late Upper Palaeolithic 15,000-10,000 BC

Mesolithic 10,000-4000 BC

- Earlier Mesolithic 10,000-8000 BC
- Later Mesolithic 8000-4000 BC

Neolithic 4000-2300 BC

- Early Neolithic 4000-3400 BC
- Later Neolithic 3400-2300 BC

Bronze Age (BA) 2300-700 BC

- Early Bronze Age 2300-1500 BC
- Middle Bronze Age 1500-1200 BC
- Late Bronze Age 1200-700 BC

Iron Age 700 BC - AD 43

- Early Iron Age 700 BC – 400 BC
- Middle Iron Age 400 BC – 100 BC
- Late Iron Age 100 BC – AD 43

Romano-British AD 43-450

Early Medieval AD 450-1066

Medieval 1066-1547

Post-medieval 1547-

Industrial 1700-

Modern 1901-

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