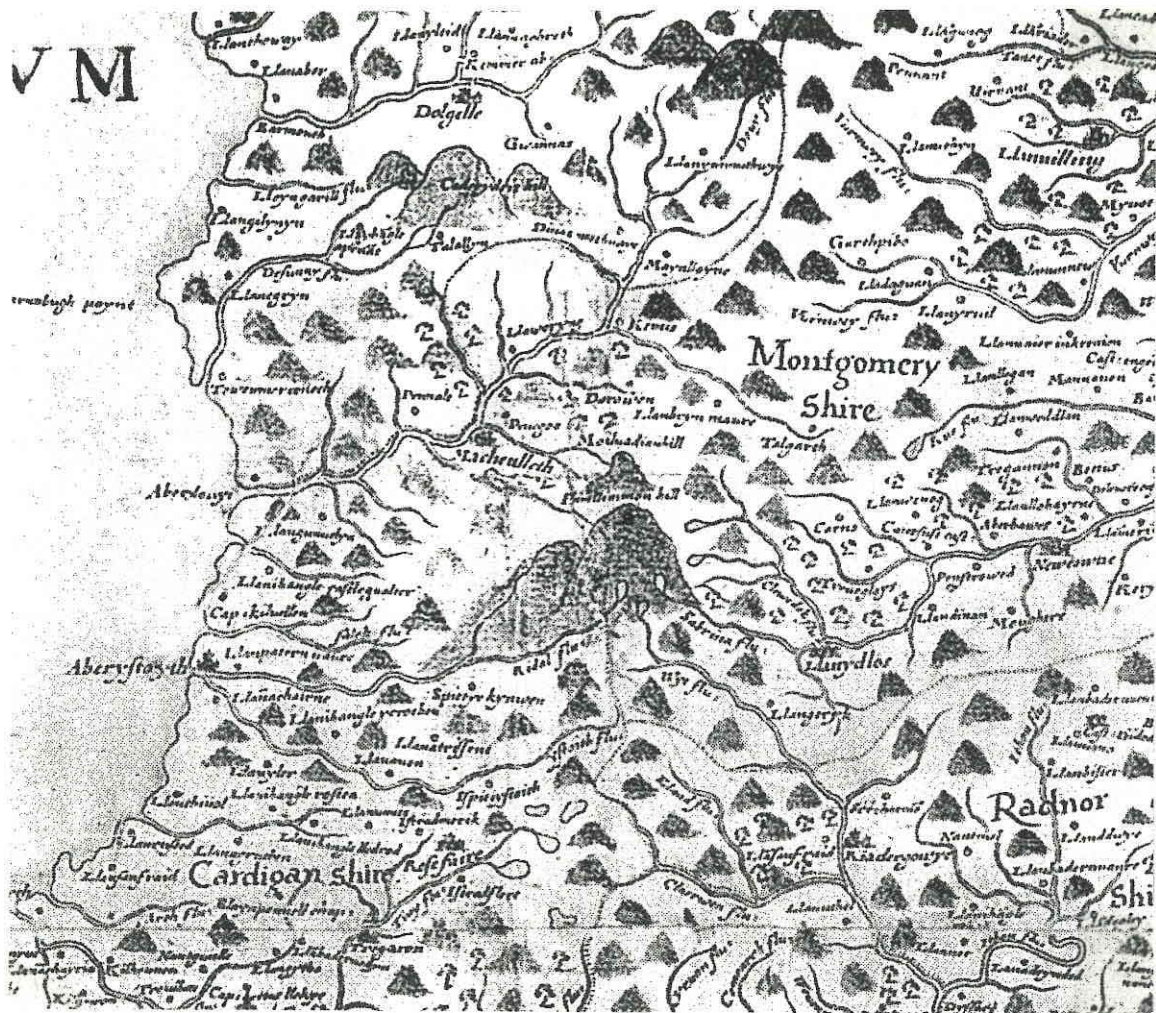


*The Mynydd y Ffynnon
Landscape Survey II*



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Landscape Survey II

FIELD SURVEY

By BOB SILVESTER

August 1997

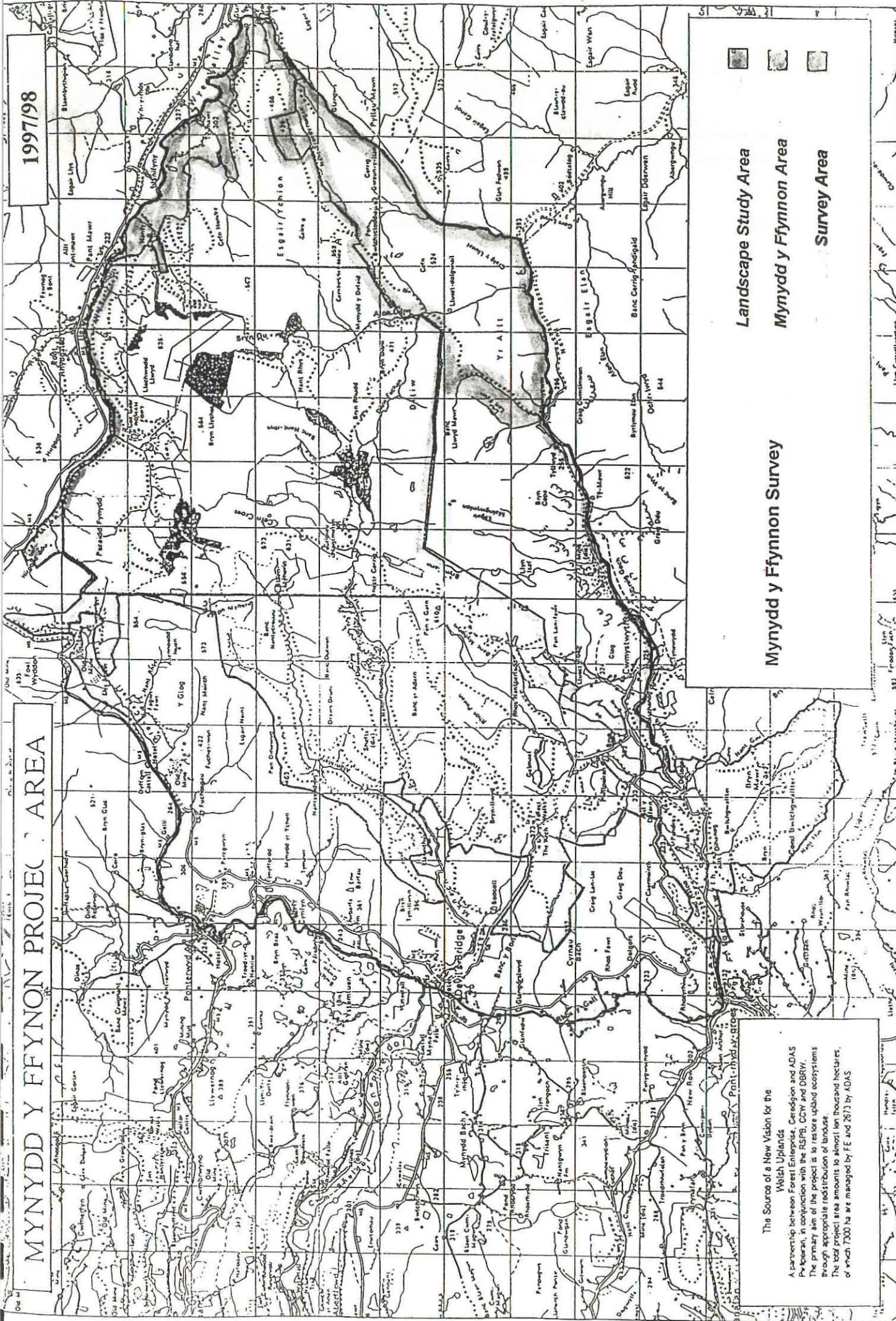
Report for RCAHMW

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MYNYDD Y FFYNON PROJECT AREA

1997/98



Landscape Study Area
Mynydd y Ffynnon Area
Survey Area

Mynydd y Ffynnon Survey

The Source of a New Vision for the
 Welsh Uplands
 A partnership between Forest Enterprise, Ceredigion and ADAS
 Pwllheli, in conjunction with the RSPB, CCW and DBRY.
 The primary aim of the project is to restore upland ecosystems
 through appropriate redistribution of land.
 The total project area amounts to almost ten thousand hectares,
 of which 7300 ha are managed by FE and 2673 by ADAS.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The area known as Mynydd y Ffynnon occupies a block of upland covering nearly 100 km² (centred at SN 8100 8000) in the heart of the Cambrian Mountains. It is bounded by the valleys of the River Ystwyth on the south, the River Wye on the north, and the River Rheidol on the west, with Devil's Bridge (Ceredigion) to the west and Llangurig (Powys) to the east.
- 1.2 ADAS and Forest Enterprise in conjunction with a number of other organisations initiated a joint project for Mynydd y Ffynnon in 1996 which was termed 'a new Welsh upland vision for the restoration of upland ecosystems', and was defined as 'a pilot scheme for the uplands aimed at restoring indigenous upland habitats and their wildlife conservation whilst ensuring that there are true economic returns for forestry and agriculture and hence the rural economy of the same area'.
- 1.3 The project involves conservation interests and one of the key objectives propounded in the mission statement was 'to maintain and enhance the landscape, ecological and historic value of Pwllpeiran and the surrounding land by producing sustainable and marketable agricultural and timber products and to investigate new ways of diversifying the rural economy. In turn this will then be used as a model for what could be developed elsewhere on the Welsh uplands and throughout the upland areas of the United Kingdom'. A further objective was 'to maintain and enhance the intrinsic landscape character and archaeological features of the agricultural land resource'.
- 1.4 In view of these stated objectives and the potential long-term significance of this project for other similar programmes elsewhere it was evident that at an early stage in the evolution of the project an input on the archaeological and historic landscape elements of the region was not only desirable but absolutely essential to ensure their integration into land management plans and other development initiatives that might arise during the duration of the project.
- 1.5 Funding for the overall Mynydd y Ffynnon project was anticipated from a number of sources and the application to the European Union (EU) included an element for archaeological survey over a two-year period. To release the EU monies it was necessary to find matched funding from other sources and this was achieved in 1996/97 by a joint bid from the Clwyd-Powys and Dyfed Archaeological Trusts (CPAT and DAT respectively) to the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments in Wales (RCAHMW) for grant aid under their Uplands Initiative Scheme.
- 1.6 The two archaeological trusts produced a detailed project design involving both ground survey and desk-top analysis, with proposals for different elements of the project being funded by different sources at different times. Delays in the establishment of the overall project forced the postponement of the EU-funded work, but that grant-aided by RCAHMW took place in 1996/97 and a joint introductory report was completed in March 1997 (Sambrook and Silvester 1997).
- 1.7 Further grant in aid was offered by RCAHMW in 1997/98 to both CPAT and DAT to resource fieldwork around the margins of the Mynydd y Ffynnon area in what has been termed The Landscape Study Area (see section 2.1.1 below). The results of the CPAT fieldwork are detailed in this report, while those from the DAT programme are considered in a separate report.

2 Definitions and Methodology

- 2.1 In terms of the historic landscape three areas are considered in relation to the Mynydd y Ffynnon project, namely:
 - 2.1.1 *The Landscape Study Area* is the large topographically delimited land block between the Wye, Rheidol and Ystwyth valleys

- 2.1.2 *The Mynydd y Ffynnon area* lies within the Landscape Study Area and is that tract of land defined by ADAS and Forest Enterprise for the purposes of their overall project. Its boundaries are configured by the modern landholdings of the two organisations and thus bear little relation to past land-use and activity in the region
- 2.1.3 *The Archaeological Survey Area* was the initial area defined by ADAS and Forest Enterprise (on advice from Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments) for the archaeological field survey in the east of the Mynydd y Ffynnon area. It consisted of approximately 10 km² of open hill land surrounded by forestry in the north-eastern part of the Mynydd y Ffynnon area. Its western boundary was a national grid line, arbitrarily adopted, its other boundaries a reflection of the Mynydd y Ffynnon area above. It was reported on in Sambrook and Silvester 1997.

3 The Survey Area (Fig 1)

- 3.1 Fieldwork was conducted over two blocks of land in the the Landscape Study Area between May and July 1997. The smaller comprised a strip of land between the Wye on the north and the afforested northern slopes of Mynydd y Ffynnon and is wholly in modern Powys. Working farms such as Ty-mawr and Nanty occupy the strip and virtually all of the land is sub-divided into fields, some of them flat, on the valley floor beside the river at a height of no more than 300m OD, a few on the fairly steep slopes rising out of the valley to nearly 450m OD.
- 3.2 The second, much larger area is on the south-eastern fringe of Mynydd y Ffynnon and extends from Powys into Ceredigion. Here there are upland ridges between the forestry on the north and the Ystwyth and its tributary, Nant Ffos-casaf, on the south. Though sub-divided by wire fencing into extensive sheepwalks in private ownership most of the area remains as unimproved moorland with only a few relatively small intakes close to the river showing improvement. The ground rises steeply from the valley floor of the Ystwyth at around 300m OD and rather more gently from the valley of Nant Ffos-casaf to a series of undulating ridges broken only occasionally by rocky outcrops. The highest points are Cerrig Gwaun-y-llan at 538m OD and Cefn at 526m OD, while Yr Allt in Ceredigion crests at 486m OD. Modern settlement is restricted to the valley of the Ystwyth but such is the altitude and remoteness that even that part encompassed by the survey contains only abandoned properties.
- 3.3 The anticipated coverage of the two areas was 8.6km² and this was accomplished within the time and resource limits.

4 Methodology

- 4.1 Fieldwork techniques were those adopted and refined during regular upland survey projects completed by CPAT since 1989. Except for stretches of bog and particularly steep hillslopes, both of which need to be judged against safety constraints, the ground was covered in 30m-wide transects, the alignments determined by a combination of natural and artificial landscape features backed up by compass. All newly identified sites were recorded on *pro forma* sheets and located on colour vertical aerial photography taken by ADAS in 1995. This information was subsequently fed into a computerised database, and sites located on a digitised map base using the AutoCad system which also generated precise grid references. A basic list of sites, known and newly discovered, is provided in an appendix.

5 Archaeology and Landscape

- 5.1 *The Archaeological Record.* Eight-six records were entered in the database as a result of the field survey, 30 in Ceredigion and 56 in Powys; two of those in Ceredigion and 13 in Powys were

previously recorded in the respective SMRs, and of these 15, Blaencwm Mine (DAT PRN 25936) was thought to be wrongly grid referenced, two or three sites were considered to be natural features (PRNs 6169, 6173 and ?6171), and one, Lluest Dolgwial (PRN 3364) was a placename to which no further evidence could be added to the record.

- 5.2 *Prehistoric era.* Sites of prehistoric date are not particularly common in the Landscape Study Area, though the presence of the Bronze Age, opencast copper mine at Copa Hill, Cwmystwyth, less than two kilometres from the southern survey area, enhances the interest of the region. Several cairns have been recognised in the past (Sambrook and Silvester 1997, section 6.4.4), and the survey has added to the number. A small ring cairn (DAT PRN 35175), 4m in diameter, with five upright stones and a similar number partially covered by turf, was located on a natural shelf on a south-facing slope opposite Yr Allt; two possible cairns (PRNs 38335 and 38351) both small and with little obvious structure to them though the latter may have an exposed capstone, were identified near the watershed between Nant Ffos-casaf and Nant y Fuches; and most significantly a small cairnfield comprising seven cairns (PRNs 38342-38348) was found on the crest of a spur overlooking the Ystwyth valley. These extend over an area of no more than 30m by 20m, four of them are in pairs, and three may have kerb remnants. While two of them have modern stone deposited on their crests, there is nothing to suggest that these monuments are anything other than prehistoric burial cairns.
- 5.3.1 *Medieval period.* Distinguishing upland features and monuments of medieval date from those of later centuries is frequently an impossible task - at best one can attempt to apply a chronological label on the basis of broadly defined, often inadequate or imprecise, morphological criteria. Two terraced platforms at the base of Yr Allt's steep eastern slope and within 50m of Afon Diliw, a tributary of the Ystwyth, are probably to be accredited to the medieval era. Both platforms (DAT PRNs 35163 and 35164) support the earth and stone-banked foundations of rectangular buildings, 21.5m and 13.5m long respectively, and their proximity - no more than 20m apart - seems to point to a discrete farming unit of the sort occasionally encountered in the less exposed locations on the uplands of Powys and beyond. On the opposite side of Afon Diliw are two more terraced platforms though these are more than 100m apart. The more northerly (PRN 38339) has the foundations of a long hut 11.5m on it, the other (PRN 38340) has lost much of its front half through erosion. Higher up the Diliw is a fifth platform (PRN 38334), of similar form but lacking any structural evidence, which is isolated just outside the enclosures that encompassed the later farmstead of Lluest Dolgwial.
- 5.3.2 In the northern survey area the valley side offers shelter for another terraced platform (PRN 5070), first recorded by the Ordnance Survey. It shows no signs of a structure on its platform but is accompanied by an embanked enclosure that contains faint cultivation ridges (PRN 38366).
- 5.4.1 *Post-medieval and early modern.* Small rectangular buildings grouped generically under the heading of long huts surface in many upland areas. In the absence of an extensive excavation programme, it is no more than an assumption that many are post-medieval in origin and seasonal in use. Some could certainly be medieval but this remains to be demonstrated. One group of at least three (PRNs 6168, 6170, 6172) with perhaps the eroded remnants of a fourth (PRN 6171) occupy valley locations on natural shelves just above stream level; all are close to the confluence of several such streams at the extreme east end of the search area and little more than one kilometre off the major valley channelling the Wye. Similar are two buildings (PRNs 35176 and 35179) in the upper valley of Nant Troed-y-rhiw, both of which have suffered from erosion, the latter to the extent that only a fragment of wall survives. Others are more isolated: that on Waun Crugiaudon (PRN 38350) overlooks Nant Ffos-casaf, a remote location at around 440m OD and well away from any other man-made features, other than a possible fold just outside the survey area.

- 5.4.2 Abandoned farm holdings are also encountered in the valleys: Troed-y-rhiw (DAT PRN 35182) comprises a house, outbuildings and a fold close to the Ystwyth, and about 100m away the ruins of another rectangular building which could be its predecessor (DAT PRN 35183); Nant y Gafod (DAT PRN 35170) is a typical rectangular structure with three compartments which in its current form is probably 18th-century at the earliest. Its is accompanied by outbuildings, a system of enclosures and a D-shaped platformed enclosure (DAT PRN 35169) close to the stead which is tentatively identified as a peat stack platform. On the opposite side of the Diliw is Lluet Dolgwial (PRN 38331), its field system largely intact (PRN 38332) but the stead itself substantially demolished and the stone reputedly carted off to Llangurig leaving only piles of rubble. Further up the Diliw at 380m OD is a four-cell building (DAT PRN 35174) now eroding into the river, and its associated enclosures masked by forestry. In the northern sector are the ruins of Glan Helem (PRN 21123), Pen-y-pontbren (PRN 38356) which was reputedly burnt down around 1900, Ty Newydd (PRN 5069) set on a platform with a stone-revetted apron, Hendre (PRN 21122) which reportedly had 17th-century internal details, its ruin now being resurrected perhaps as a holiday home, and Ty Mawr (PRN 20883) a much modernised farmhouse that appears to retain a central hall cruck.
- 5.4.3 Ancillary buildings include a ruined drystone walled building at Esgair-wen (DAT PRN 35181), perhaps for stock. Sheep folds were recorded in four places, and stone-built shelters even more frequently.
- 5.4.4 Works relating to water management were generally of industrial origin and included a leat (DAT PRN 35160) supplying Cwmystwyth Mine which was probably of mid to late 19th-century date; it commences at a stone-built dam (DAT PRN 35162) and was channelled on an aqueduct (DAT PRN 19905) across Nant Troed-y-rhiw. Earlier evidence is provided by a prospecting hush on the south-east slope of Lan Fawr was also recorded (DAT PRN 35178). Another dam (PRN 38364), this of concrete and relatively modern, serviced a leat (PRN 38365) leading off Nant Ty-mawr and heading for the farm of the same name.
- 5.4.5 There is considerable evidence of peat cutting on Yr Allt and on rising ground to the east of Afon Diliw. Trackways such as those leading on to Yr Allt (PRNs 35159 and 35168) may well have served the cuttings.

6 Conclusions

- 6.1 Fieldwork in these two areas fringing the higher ground of Mynydd y Ffynnon has revealed a limited but nevertheless significant range of archaeology and historic landscape features. Prehistoric burial cairns are conspicuous on higher ground though generally not on the most elevated points; the few house sites ascribed to the medieval era are in sheltered valley locations though it remains to be established whether these were permanently or seasonally occupied dwellings. Much of the post-medieval activity, whether permanent, seasonal or even industrial is also on or close to the valley floors of the main rivers and the tributaries running off them. The gross distribution plan (Fig 2) reinforces these conclusions, for there are concentrations in two areas - at the head of the Ystwyth where its tributaries the Diliw and Nant Troed-y-rhiw feed into it, and along the Wye - which contrast with the largely blank zones to the north-east of Yr Allt which are remote, are served only by small streams, and reach altitudes of over 500m OD.
- 6.2 Coupled with the work undertaken by DAT on the north-western edge of the Landscape Survey Area above the Rheidol and its tributaries, the results from this survey provide a clearer view of the level of past activity close to the rivers that define this large tract of upland, and valuable comparative data for the picture of past land use that has begun to emerge on the central plateaux of Mynydd y Ffynnon. It is anticipated that these results will contribute to a fuller, published assessment of the region at the end of the project.

7 Acknowledgements

All of the fieldwork on this project was undertaken by Richard Hankinson with assistance from Glyn Owen, Pat Frost and Gareth Davies - their efforts are acknowledged here. Thanks are also due to the local farmers who without exception allowed unrestricted access to their land.

8 References

Sambrook, P and Silvester, B 1997 *The Mynydd y Ffynnon Archaeological and Historic Landscape Survey* (CPAT Report no 223/DAT Report no 30440, Welshpool)

Appendix I - Sites in the Survey Areas

DAT PRN	CPAT PRN	Name	Grid Ref	Type	Date
	3364	Llest Dolgwial Placename	SN84337690	Placename	Post Medieval
	5069	Ty Newydd House	SN85998138	House	Post medieval ?
	5070	Glan Helem Platform	SN86868092	Platform	Medieval ?
	6168	Nant y Creigiau Hafod I	SN88067921	Hafod ?	Medieval ?
	6169	Nant y Creigiau Hafod II	SN88077919	Non Antiquity	Unknown
	6170	Nant y Creigiau Hafod III	SN88047917	Hafod	Medieval ?
	6171	Nant y Creigiau Hafod IV	SN88047915	Hafod ?	Medieval ?
	6172	Nant Hirnant Hafod	SN87737925	Hafod ?	Medieval ?
	6173	Nant Treodyresgair Cairn	SN87777930	Clearance cairn ?	Medieval ?
20883		Ty Mawr House	SN87228080	House	Post Medieval
21121		Abertrinant House	SN86358032	House	Post medieval
21122		Hendre House	SN86058133	House	Post Medieval
21123		Glan Helem House	SN86678058	House	Post Medieval ?
38328		Hendre Bank	SN86608133	Bank	Post medieval
38329		Hendre Trackway	SN86708100	Trackway	Unknown
38330		Hendre Barn	SN86718109	Barn	Post medieval
38331		Llest Dolgwial Farmstead	SN84317688	Farmstead	Post medieval
38332		Llest Dolgwial Field System	SN84437702	Field System	Post medieval
38333		Craig y Llest Sheepfold	SN84537627	Sheepfold	Post medieval ?
38334		Llest Dolgwial Platform	SN84547674	Platform	Medieval
38335		Bwlch y Cloddiau Cairn	SN85297832	Cairn ?	Bronze Age ?
38336		Cefn Boundary Stone	SN84867668	Boundary Stone ?	Post medieval ?
38337		Craig y Llest Boundary Marker I	SN85287585	Boundary Marker	Modern
38338		Craig y Llest Wall	SN85077574	Wall	Unknown
38339		Craig y Llest Platform I	SN84737569	Platform	Medieval ?
38340		Craig y Llest Platform II	SN84717580	Platform	Medieval ?
38341		Craig y Llest Cairnfield	SN85017582	Cairnfield	Bronze Age
38342		Craig y Llest Cairnfield Cairn I	SN84997582	Cairn	Bronze Age
38343		Craig y Llest Cairnfield Cairn II	SN85007581	Cairn	Bronze Age

38344		Craig y Llust Cairnfield Cairn III	SN85007581	Cairn	Bronze Age
38345		Craig y Llust Cairnfield Cairn IV	SN85017582	Cairn	Bronze Age
38346		Craig y Llust Cairnfield Cairn V	SN85027582	Cairn	Bronze Age
38347		Craig y Llust Cairnfield Cairn VI	SN85027582	Cairn	Bronze Age
38348		Craig y Llust Cairnfield Cairn VII	SN85017583	Cairn	Bronze Age
38349		Craig y Llust Boundary Marker II	SN85417602	Boundary Marker	Modern
38350		Waun Crugiaudon Building	SN85487710	Building	Post Medieval ?
38351		Ffos Gasaf Cairn	SN86277755	Cairn ?	Bronze Age ?
38352		Cerrig Gwaun-y-lan Sheepfold	SN86617807	Sheepfold	Unknown
38353		Cerrig Gwaun-y-lan Marker Cairn	SN86587805	Marker cairn	Modern
38354		Nanty Bridge	SN85428203	Bridge	Modern
38355		Ty Newydd Fold	SN85998140	Fold	Post medieval ?
38356		Pen-y-pontbren House	SN87748040	House	Post medieval
38357		Abertrinant Sheepfold	SN86318029	Sheepfold	Post medieval
38358		Nant Ty-mawr Building	SN86578043	Building ?	Unknown
38359		Nant Hirnant Building	SN87697919	Building	Modern
38360		Llechwedd Ddu Shelter	SN87037850	Shelter	Post medieval ?
38361		Llechwedd Ddu Sheepfold	SN86967839	Sheepfold ?	Post medieval ?
38362		Llechwedd Ddu Marker Cairn	SN86847874	Marker cairn	Modern
38363		Gwaun y Cloddiau Wall	SN86427892	Wall	Unknown
38364		Nant Ty-mawr Dam	SN87068062	Dam	Modern
38365		Nant Ty-mawr Leat	SN87148071	Leat	Modern
38366		Glan Helem Enclosure II	SN86888093	Enclosure	Medieval ?
38367		Glan Helem Enclosure I	SN86718059	Enclosure	Post medieval ?
38368		Nant Ty-mawr Enclosure	SN86978055	Enclosure ?	Unknown
19905	0	Nant Troed-y-rhiw Aqueduct	SN82867581	Aqueduct	Modern ?
25936		Blaencwm Mine	SN830757	Mine	Post medieval
35155	0	Yr Allt Shelter I	SN83017571	Shelter	Post medieval ?
35156	0	Yr Allt Shelter II	SN83007568	Shelter	Post medieval ?
35157		Nant y Gafod Shelter	SN84167643	Shelter	Post medieval ?

35158		Nant y Gafod Trackway	SN84307646	Trackway	Post medieval ?
35159		Yr Allt Trackway I	SN82847566	Trackway	Post medieval ?
35160		Cwmystwyth Mine Leat	SN83537545	Leat	Modern ?
35161		Neint Platform	SN83237540	Platform ?	Unknown
35162		Cwmystwyth Mine Dam	SN84317560	Dam	Modern
35163		Yr Allt Platform I	SN84607598	Platform	Medieval
35164		Yr Allt Platform II	SN84607596	Platform	Medieval
35165		Yr Allt Platform III	SN84577594	Platform	Post medieval ?
35166		Esgair-wen Field System	SN82857553	Field system	Post medieval
35167		Nant y Gafod Field System	SN84007659	Field system	Post medieval
35168		Yr Allt Trackway II	SN83507639	Trackway	Post medieval
35169		Nant y Gafod Peat Platform	SN84247654	Peat platform ?	Post medieval ?
35170		Nant y Gafod Building	SN84247650	Building	Post medieval
35171		Lluest Dolgwial Lazy Beds	SN84217674	Lazy beds	Post medieval
35172	38327	Lluest Dolgwial Bridge	SN84297714	Bridge	Modern
35173		Lluest Dolgwial Shelter	SN84207687	Shelter	Unknown
35174		Afon Diliw Long hut	SN84217755	Long hut	Post medieval ?
35175		Ffos Gau Ring Cairn	SN83897683	Ring cairn	Bronze Age
35176		Lan Fawr Building I	SN83257670	Building	Medieval ?
35177		Lan Fawr Shelter	SN83247671	Shelter ?	Post medieval ?
35178		Lan Fawr Prospecting Hush	SN83167635	Hushing	Post medieval ?
35179		Lan Fawr Building II	SN83277663	Building	Medieval ?
35180		Lan Fawr Bank	SN83037610	Bank	Unknown
35181		Esgair-wen Building	SN82737556	Building	Post medieval ?
35182		Troed-y-rhiw Farmstead	SN82797550	Farmstead	Post medieval
35183		Troed-y-rhiw Building	SN82767555	Building	Post medieval ?