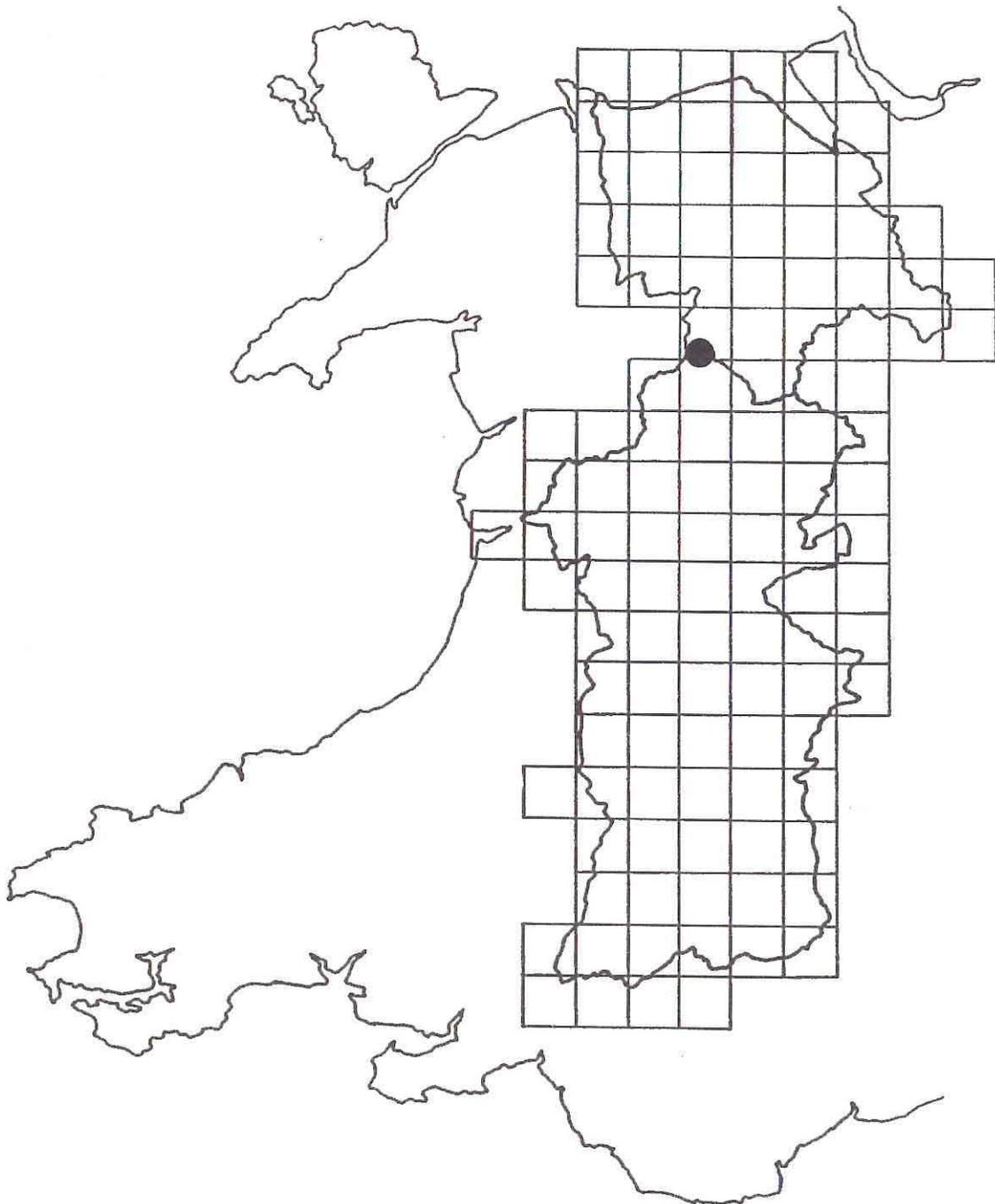


THE CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

*Field Survey on the Pale Estate,
Llandrillo, Clwyd*

FIELD SURVEY



CPAT Report No 130

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Report prepared for Countryside Council for Wales

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1 Introduction

1.1 The Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT) was commissioned by the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) in July 1994 to carry out a survey of the archaeology of a tract of moorland forming part of the Pale Estate near Llandrillo in Clwyd. It also falls within the much larger Berwyn Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), for which CCW has statutory responsibility.

1.2 The archaeological potential of the western side of the Berwyn range has increasingly come into focus in recent years. A desk-top assessment of the Berwyn NCR was completed for CCW in 1992 (Silvester 1992a), collating data on all the archaeology recorded and known at that time. In the same/following year with resources from Cadw/Welsh Historic Monuments, CPAT completed the field survey of a transect across the Berwyn from west to east which served to demonstrate the richness of both the prehistoric and medieval archaeology on this western side above Llandrillo (Silvester 1991; Silvester 1992b). Confirmation of this richness has been demonstrated by the decision of Cadw to schedule as ancient monuments of national importance nearly a dozen sites between the streams known as Clochnant (SJ 0435) and Nant Esgeiriau (SJ 0433). Current work includes the survey reported on here and also a detailed survey of extensive medieval field systems surviving in improved pasture south of Nurse Gron (SJ 035349) funded by Clwyd County Council through the Clwyd Archaeology Service.

1.3 The area selected for field survey on the Pale Estate (see Fig 2) is located to the east and south-east of the head of Cwm Pennant, the valley to the south of Llandrillo; and to the west of Moel Sych, one of the main summits of the Berwyn Range. Its northern boundary, Nant Esgeiriau, was determined in discussion with Mr D. Elias of CCW's regional office at Bala (Gwynedd) and was adjacent to an interfluvial ridge known as Pennant whose archaeological potential had already been recognised in 1992. It was anticipated that during 1994 resources would be forthcoming from Cadw/Welsh Historic Monuments to fund a thorough survey of Pennant, thus enabling the current survey to be linked with the transect completed in 1992, but unfortunately this expectation was not fulfilled.

1.4 The survey reported on here commenced in June 1994 and was carried out intermittently up to February 1995. This report was subsequently written in March 1995.

2 Geographical Background of the Survey Area

2.1 The area covered during fieldwork totalled 5.4 square kilometres (see Fig 2). Survey focused on the higher, generally north-west facing, slopes of Cwm Pennant in the community of Llandrillo.

2.2 The ground rises from a level of approximately 330m OD in the vicinity of Ffridd yr Eglwys in the north and Nant Crechwyll in the west, up to a maximum elevation of 730m OD on the watershed of the main ridge of the Berwyn Mountains. This

ridge, extending west-south-west from Moel Sych, is incorporated in the survey area for a short distance, so that fieldwork encompassed the uppermost portion of Cwm yr Eithin, located in the northernmost part of the community of Llangynog, in Powys. As noted above, the northern boundary of the area is delineated by the stream known as Nant Esgeiriau.

2.3 The landscape of the survey area is one of rounded hills and spurs, divided by steep-sided, U-shaped, valleys carrying small, rapidly-flowing streams. Within the area, the valleys have a broadly south to north trend and appear to have been originally formed by glacial action. The underlying geology is formed of silts, sands, calcareous mudstones and impure limestones of Ordovician Age, interbedded with acid tuffs and rare lava flows, representative of contemporaneous mild volcanic activity (Smith and George 1961).

2.4 The soils derived from the underlying geology vary greatly within the survey area, from permeable, well-drained soils of the Manod Soil Association on the lower valley sides, to wet loamy soils of the Wilcocks 2 Soil Association in the higher stream valleys. The lower interfluves are generally covered by seasonally waterlogged soils of the Hafren Soil Association, with a peaty surface horizon, while at higher levels, up to the crest of the Berwyn ridge, the soils are very thick, perennially wet, peat soils of the Crowdy 2 Soil Association (Rudeforth et al 1984).

2.5 Vegetation cover tends to mirror the change in soil type. It grades from grasses and bracken at lower levels, to grasses with increasing quantities of juncus on the interfluves. On the higher ground with thick peat soils, the vegetation is predominantly ericoid in nature.

2.6 At present the area is mainly used for stock grazing purposes, although the upper, heather-covered, slopes are undoubtedly of little value in this respect. The only other readily apparent land-use is for leisure; a permissive path along the ridge mentioned in paragraph 2.1, above, is frequented by walkers traversing the Berwyn Mountains.

3 Survey Methodology

3.1 Throughout, the fieldwork team consisted of two persons, and a total of 18 man-days were worked in the field.

3.2 The original design of the survey was to cover an area of c. 4 square kilometres. In practice, however, the mixture of open grassland found at lower levels, with heather covered peat found on the highest ground, enabled a total of 5.4 square kilometres to be completed, in the time available.

3.3 The fieldwork techniques adopted for the survey were those developed during previous upland surveys by CPAT in both Clwyd and Powys. In general, the ground was covered in transects with a 30m separation, the alignments being determined by a combination of natural and artificial landscape features. Areas

of heather-covered peat were subjected to less intensive examination as it was considered likely that all but the most recent (and therefore normally easily visible) archaeological features would be obscured by the combination of peat growth and heather thickness (Silvester 1992b).

3.4 Locations of archaeological sites were determined using monochrome aerial photographic cover taken by J.A. Storey Ltd in 1987 and colour cover by Geonex in 1993, both at a scale of 1:10000. The sites identified in the field were described, measured, photographed, and sketched as appropriate.

4 Archaeology and Landscape

4.1 This section is intended to provide an overall assessment of the archaeology of the survey area; the individual archaeological sites identified during the survey are described in more detail in the gazetteer below.

4.2 The total number of sites identified during the survey is 37, of which only 6 have been previously recognised. Those sites which can be dated by analogy are ascribed to the prehistoric, medieval, post-medieval, and modern periods. Five sites were not sufficiently diagnostic to be attributed to a specific period and are recorded as undated in the gazetteer.

4.3 Prehistoric Period

4.3.1 The only previous evidence of prehistoric activity in the survey area was a supposed cairn site PRN 01 on the main Berwyn ridge to the west-south-west of Moel Sych. Despite a number of earlier, positive references to the site, we are uncertain about its authenticity on the basis of the visible evidence.

4.3.2 The area to the north of the survey area (ie Pennant) contains considerable evidence of prehistoric activity, in the form of both burial cairns and habitation sites. In addition, a number of burial cairns have been recorded on Yr Aran, to the north-west of the survey area. In the survey area itself conclusive evidence of broadly contemporary activity is restricted to the more northern sector, perhaps demonstrating constraints on prehistoric activity in the form of altitude or inaccessibility.

4.3.3 The survey revealed four cairns of probable or possible Bronze Age date. One of these, PRN 105768, is of particular significance because of its size and the evidence of a central cist, and merits a statutory designation. Indeed, during the course of the present survey it was visited by Cadw's regional Inspector and it is anticipated that it will be scheduled in due course.

4.3.4 In addition to funerary monuments a number of low boundary walls composed of roughly piled stone were recorded; these may well relate to farming practice in the prehistoric period. None compare in terms of complexity with the wandering walls and hut circle complex on the adjacent Pennant

interfluve.

4.4 Medieval Period

4.4.1 The area to the north and north-west of the survey area is utilised by a significant group of long narrow strip fields, systems which by analogy with well-dated examples elsewhere, can be attributed to the Middle Ages. Only a small portion of one of these strip field systems (PRN 105075) extends into the survey area. Perhaps as a result being within the CCW land holding, it appears to have escaped recent land improvements, and, as such, the ridge and furrow which is a frequent characteristic of medieval ploughing practice has survived. In addition to this evidence, an earthwork platform and banks (PRN 105765) may define a contemporary habitation site which was related to the arable activity represented by PRN 105075.

4.4.2 Generally, however, the survey area fell outside the zone of more intensive agriculture in this period. Two probable hafotai (PRNs 105758 and 105760), which are likely to date to the medieval period, were discovered adjacent to streams in the northern section of the area. These sites strongly suggest that the area was used for seasonal grazing during the summer months (ie transhumance), although it is conceivable that PRN 105758 was a more permanent dwelling of the longhouse type. Certainly, from their location, it seems unlikely that these sites were associated with the arable activity noted in the preceding paragraph.

4.4.3 Only one sheepfold (PRN 105788) is considered to be potentially of medieval date. Yet, it remains a possibility that some of the sheepfolds attributable to the post-medieval period, may have originated at this time.

4.4.4 Other possible evidence of occupation during this period is provided by two hut sites (PRNs 105782 and 105785) on or near the ridge known as Crechwyl. The dating and precise nature of these sites is difficult to ascertain with any certainty, but a possible explanation is that they may have been used as shelters for shepherds during inclement weather.

4.4.5 No evidence of other land use during this period has been recognised.

4.5 Post-medieval Period

4.5.1 Activity in more recent centuries has been almost entirely pastoral in nature. This is demonstrated by five sheepfolds, located in stream valleys (PRNs 105060, 105065, 105070, 105761 and 105769). In a majority of cases, the good condition of these structures suggests that they were used until fairly recently; PRN 105060, in particular, may still be in use. One of the sheepfolds (PRN 105769) has been constructed on the site of the major cairn (PRN 105768) noted above, and represents an excellent example of the disturbance of an earlier monument by subsequent agricultural activity.

4.5.2 One building (PRN 105069) has been dated to this period.

The fairly exposed location near the crest of an interfluvium seems unusual. The simple fireplace suggests habitation, but perhaps it was associated with peat cutting, which is much in evidence in the vicinity.

4.5.3 The only activity not of a directly pastoral nature is revealed by a small quarry, PRN 105775. The excavated material is slate, probably used for local roofing purposes. A group of larger quarries occurs further to the north, and it is likely that this was an outlying member of that group.

4.5.4 Further features of post-medieval origin are a number of boundary stones (eg PRN 105779) and marker cairns (eg PRN 105784). These almost certainly delineate the boundaries between different land holdings.

4.6 Modern Period

4.6.1 Two sites can probably be attributed to this period. A cairn (PRN 105776) appears to be of fairly recent construction, although its purpose is difficult to determine, while the shelter (PRN 105777) is most probably a recent construction, used by walkers traversing the main Berwyn ridge.

4.6.2 As noted above, a majority of the sheepfolds, first constructed during the post-medieval period, were probably still in use in modern times, and have only recently been abandoned.

5 Conclusions

5.1 From the evidence revealed by the survey, it would appear that the majority of the survey area, throughout its history, has been used for pastoral agriculture. More intensive farming occurred on the periphery during the Bronze Age and medieval periods, most probably as a result of favourable climatic conditions.

5.2 Funerary sites ascribed to the Bronze Age occur immediately to the south of the zone which appears to have been farmed at that time. This may be of significance, although more detailed survey of the interfluvium immediately to the north of the survey area is required before any conclusions can be drawn.

5.3 Owing to the remote and difficult nature of the terrain, and also their altitude, it appears that the higher slopes, forming the extreme southern and eastern parts of the survey area, have seen little, if any, activity during the last five thousand years.

7 Acknowledgements

7.1 CPAT would like to thank the farmers who have grazing rights on the Pale Estate moors and who in the main farm adjacent areas for allowing access through their land, and for their interest and assistance during the course of the survey.

8 References

Rudeforth et al 1984 Soils and their Use in Wales Soil Survey of England and Wales Bulletin No 11 Harpenden

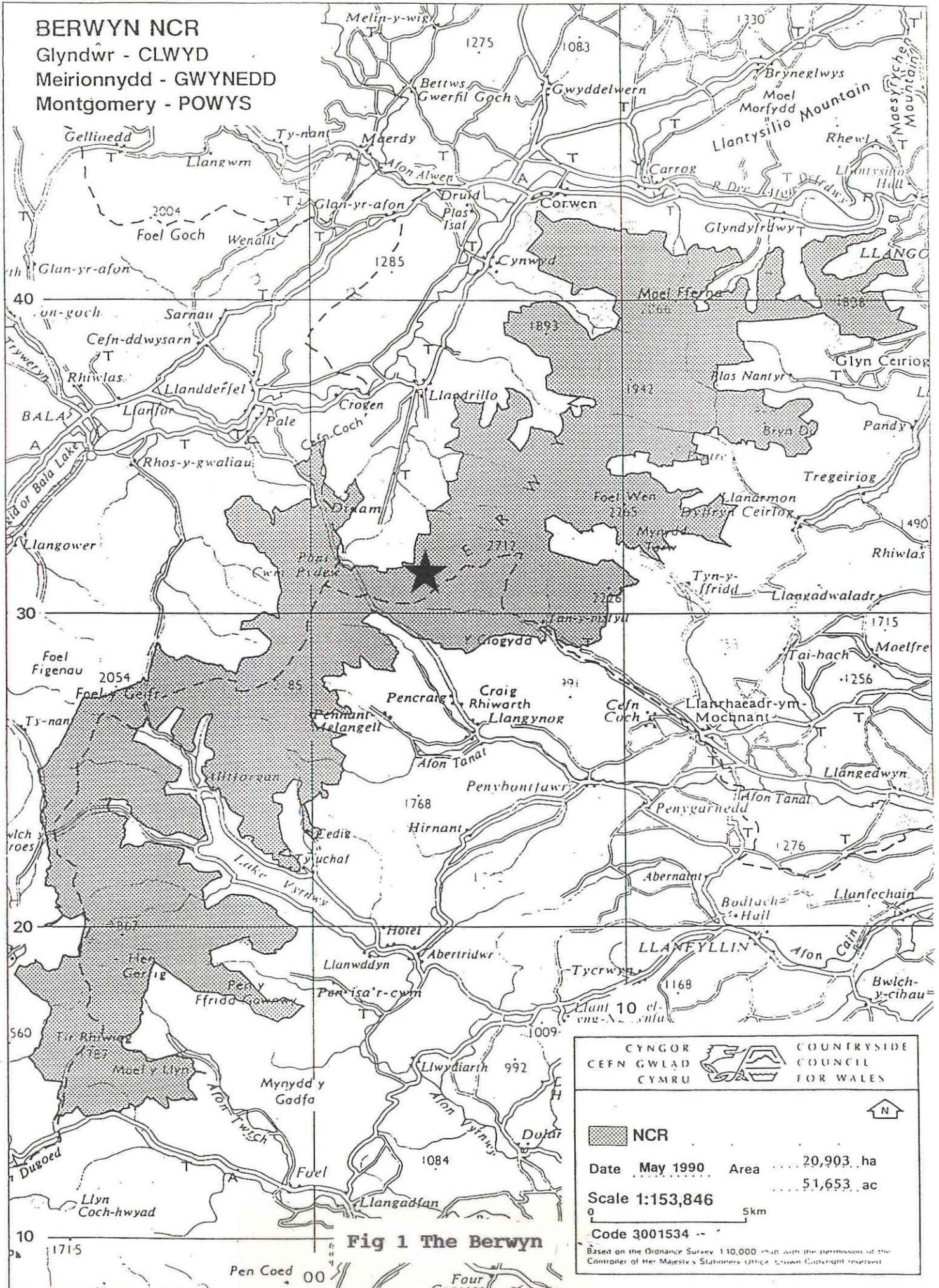
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BERWYN NCR
 Glyndŵr - CLWYD
 Meirionnydd - GWYNEDD
 Montgomery - POWYS



CYNGOR CEFN GWLAD CYMRU COUNTRYSIDE COUNCIL FOR WALES

 NCR

Date May 1990 Area 20,903 ha
 51,653 ac

Scale 1:153,846

Code 3001534

Based on the Ordnance Survey 1:10,000 map with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. Crown Copyright reserved.

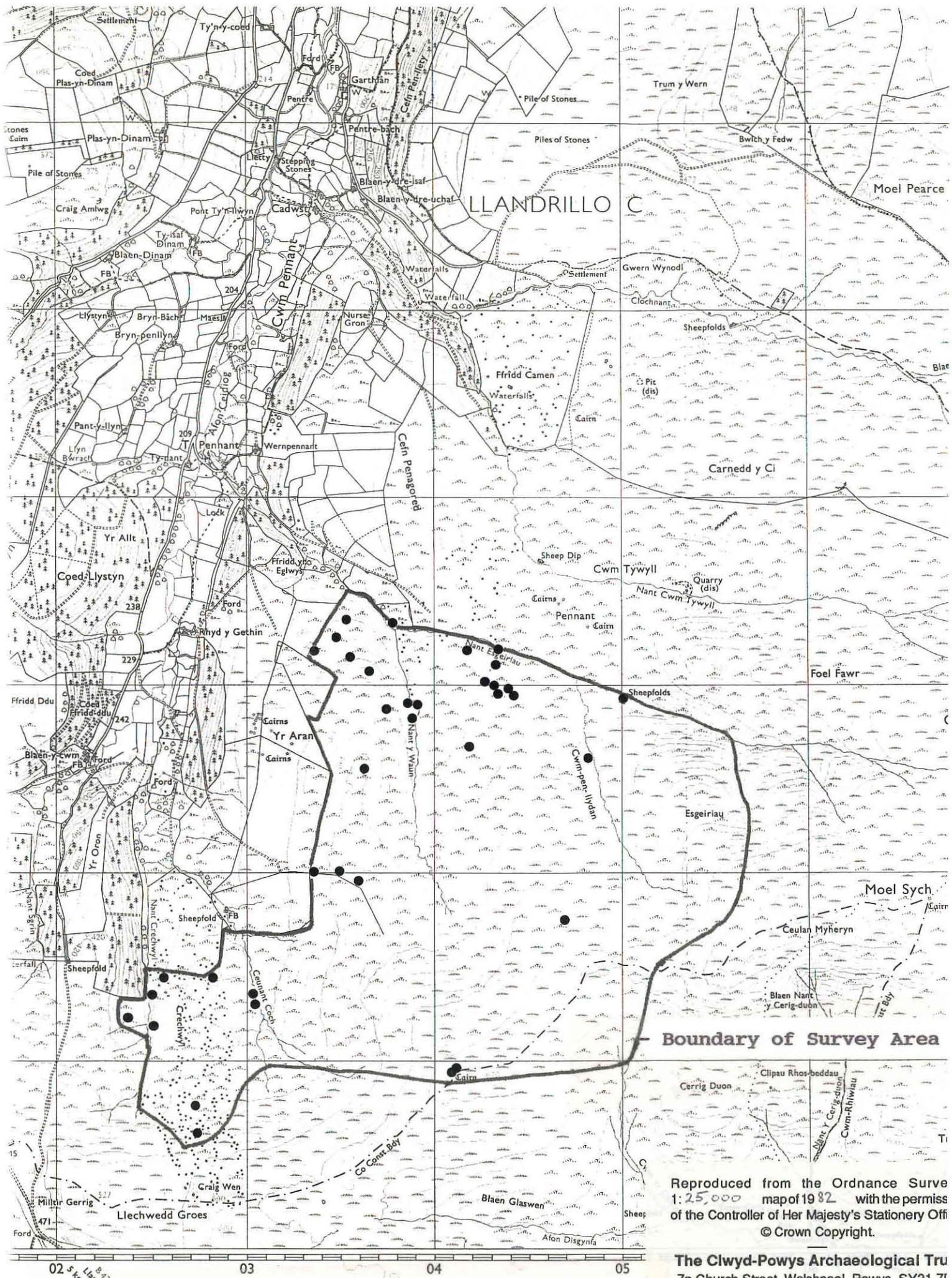


Fig 2 Locations of Archaeological Sites (Scale 1:25,000)

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Gazetteer of Sites - Pale Estate Survey, Llandrillo

PRN 1 Pen y Garnedd SJ04103093

Cairn ? Bronze Age ?/Non Antiquity ?

Circular turf and bilberry covered mound surmounted by shelter PRN 105778. The evidence that this is the site of a cairn does not appear to be conclusive, despite a number of previous references to a cairn at this location. A number of small mounds of natural origin occur along the ridge.

PRN 105060 Nant Ysgeiriau SJ05003290

Sheepfold Post medieval

3-unit sheepfold complex with entrances linking compartments. Post and wire extension to W. Concrete sheep dip sunk into ground near SE corner.

PRN 105065 Nant Crechwyl SJ02473136

Sheepfold Post medieval

Double entrance fold. Drystone walled construction, capped where intact on W side. Entrance on SE side, funnelled exit on SW - probably towards a dipping pool (little trace of pool remains) in the adjacent stream.

PRN 105069 Yr Aran SJ03633255

Hut Post medieval

Rectangular hut aligned Ne/SW with entrance in NE corner and chimney in NW corner. Chimney is formed from a slab set across the angle of the corner. Built of slaty slabs quarried from outcrops to W. No obvious internal features. Possibly associated with peat cutting, of which there are a large number of traces on this ridge.

Gazetteer of Sites - Pale Estate Survey, Llandrillo

PRN 105070 Ceunant Coch SJ03033135

Sheepfold Post medieval

Irregular shaped drystone walled fold - S and E walls straight, W wall curves withslope and is cut in. Entrance at N end. No internal divisions.

PRN 105075 Yr Aran SJ03353315

Field System Medieval

System of strip fields on lower NW facing slope of Yr Aran, delineated by banks. Section within CCW land holding retains a small amount of ridge and furrow cultivation, perhaps lost due to land improvement elsewhere.

PRN 105758 Nant Ysgeiriau SJ03783332

House Medieval ?

Narrow rectangular building represented by stone foundation walls with some edge or end set stones. Best preserved at E end. Internal dividing wall with doorway 1.2m wide. E half on higher level than W.

PRN 105759 Nant y Waun SJ03863291

Shelter/fold Medieval/Post-medieval

Subrectangular or oval structure defined by walls of large stone. Aligned N/S with entrance at N.

PRN 105760 Nant y Waun SJ03883290

Hafod Medieval/Post-medieval

Long narrow structure, probably 3-roomed. N part raised above old ground surface by stone built platform, which is wider on E (visible) side than foundations of wall. A second phase looks like the construction of a small circular fold with possibly a second further N.

Gazetteer of Sites - Pale Estate Survey, Llandrillo

PRN 105761 Nant y Waun SJ03873283

Sheepfold complex Post-medieval

2 part sheepfold. N part irregularly shaped, N and W walls set into surrounding slope. S part with probable entrance at S end. W wall absent - or never constructed? A probable third entrance into small dammed dipping pool in stream.

PRN 105762 Yr Aran SJ03733286

Standing stone (marker) Undated

Small marker stone, aligned WNW/ESE. Not inscribed.

PRN 105763 Yr Aran SJ03653309

Standing stone (marker) Undated

Upright stone aligned WNW/ESE.

PRN 105764 Yr Aran SJ03473323

Cairn Undated

Circular mound, largely turf covered but with some loose stone exposed on NW side (includes some quartz).

PRN 105765 Ffridd yr Eglwys SJ03523331

Platforms and enclosure Medieval ?

Platform defined by two banks with discontinuous enclosure. May be associated with field systems to W.

Gazetteer of Sites - Pale Estate Survey, Llandrillo

PRN 105766 Nant Ysgeiriau SJ04163319

Wall Prehistoric ?

Length of curving wall, very ruined.

PRN 105767 Nant Ysgeiriau SJ04323320

Wall Medieval ?/Post-medieval ?

Right angled length of walling with corner on SW. Longest section of wall parallel to stream on N. No visible corresponding walls on N or E sides to form structure. Mainly a single course of stones. No other features owing to a landslip.

PRN 105768 Nant Ysgeiriau SJ04403297

Cairn Bronze Age

Major stone cairn lacking clear kerbing but with exposed ?centrally placed cist. Cist is capped by large capstone slab which may have been moved laterally to some degree. Collapse of capping at E end exposing internal structural features. Cairn largely robbed, particularly to W and NW for construction of later enclosures/sheepfolds to W and NW.

PRN 105769 Nant Ysgeiriau SJ04403297

Sheepfold complex Post medieval, possible earlier phase

Complex of sheepfold enclosures and entrances representing at least two phases of construction. Robbed linear wall on SW side, material used for reconstruction of other walls. One assumed curvilinear, one course, enclosure formed of cairn material, to E of main (later) complex. Low linear walls probably butting onto cairn perimeter on N side.

PRN 105770 Nant Ysgeiriau SJ04303310

Field walls Prehistoric ?

Linear field wall - scattered and discontinuous. 3 cairns (probably modern) constructed at points on its line. This length of wall may be part of PRN 105766, with a gap between the two lengths. A second wall joins the main run from a north-eastern direction.

Gazetteer of Sites - Pale Estate Survey, Llandrillo

PRN 105771 Nant Ysgeiriau SJ04333300

Cairn Bronze Age/Prehistoric ?

Circular cairn with possible central cist, suggested by two edge set stones forming an angle.

Possible 3m diameter cairn covered by moss and rushes 15m to NW.

PRN 105772 Nant Ysgeiriau SJ04283301

Cairn Bronze Age ?

Fairly well defined stone cairn. Largely turf-covered. Not as clear as PRN 105771.

PRN 105773 Nant Ysgeiriau SJ04343297

Cairn Bronze Age ?

Almost entirely turf-covered cairn, with a few exposed stones.

PRN 105774 Nant Ysgeiriau SJ04203269

Shelter Post medieval

Semi-circular setting of stones to NE of large boulder. No internal features. Wall one course high.

PRN 105775 Cwm-pen-llydan SJ04833262

Quarry (slate) Post medieval

Quarry scoop cut into hill slope. Level interior. Quarry waste downslope to E reaching edge of stream. No visible access track.

Gazetteer of Sites - Pale Estate Survey, Llandrillo

PRN 105776 Cwm-pen-llydan

SJ04673175

Cairn

Undated

Isolated stone cairn with hollowed centre. Stone is large slaty slabs, probably recently quarried (within past 200yrs). No vegetation growth, even around edges of cairn, of a density to suggest any great age to this structure.

PRN 105777 Blaen Glaswen

SJ04103095

Shelter

Modern

Modern shelter aligned E/W. Possibly constructed from cairn material, although this is difficult to establish. Shelter takes the form of a tight horseshoe open at E end.

PRN 105778 Yr Aran

SJ03563316

Standing stone

Undated

Upright slate slab, aligned N/S. Another acutely leaning slab 35m to NW. This stone is worn on its upper half from sheep rubbing, and a curved upper end.

PRN 105779 Yr Aran

SJ03583194

Standing stone

Post medieval ?

Upright slate slab, aligned N/S.

PRN 105780 Yr Aran

SJ03503202

Standing stone

Post medieval

Marker stone on former fence line. Stone aligned E/W, in line with change of direction in modern fence located 20m to W.

Gazetteer of Sites - Pale Estate Survey, Llandrillo

PRN 105781 Yr Aran

SJ03353200

Standing stone Post medieval
Upright slate slab aligned with modern fence.

PRN 105782 Nant Crechwyl

SJ02493116

Hut Medieval ?/ Early post medieval ?
Rectangular hut foundations defined by circuit of stones. No obvious entrance. A fairly large natural rock outcrop (or boulder) at SE end.

PRN 105783 Crechwyl

SJ02543147

Shelter Post medieval ?
Roughly rectangular shelter enclosed on 3 sides by large natural boulders. Aligned N/S along slope. Gap on SW corner filled with stone. Stone within.

PRN 105784 Crechwyl

SJ02703077

Cairn (marker) Post medieval
Rectangular cairn of 5 courses of stone. Aligned N/S. Some collapse at S end.

PRN 105785 Crechwyl

SJ02833144

Hut Medieval/Post medieval
Subrectangular stone foundations, 2 courses high, aligned E/W. Entrance at E end. Perhaps 2-roomed, single course of stone aligned N/S may represent internal division.

Gazetteer of Sites - Pale Estate Survey, Llandrillo

PRN 105786 Crechwyl SJ02733062

Cairn (marker) Post medieval

Heap of stones, probably originally built up as PRN 105787, nearby.

PRN 105787 Ceunant Coch SJ03043130

Hut Post medieval

Sub-rectangular drystone hut or shelter. Some tumbled stone inside, but likely to be near its original height. Possible entrance at NE corner.

PRN 105788 Nant Crechwyl SJ02353122

Fold and paddock Medieval/Post medieval

Sub-triangular fold with large square or sub-rectangular paddock/enclosure attached. Fold walls mostly stone built, paddock defined by earthwork banks.