THE CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

Coed Ystrad, Carmarthen ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT







CPAT REPORT 299

CPAT Report No 299

Coed Ystrad, Carmarthen ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

David Thomas
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Report for the Woodland Trust

The Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust

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Cover Illustrations, from top;

River Towy, from Coed Ystrad Mixed Woodland, Coed Ystrad Oak, Coed Ystrad

Introduction

The Contracting Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust was commissioned in July 1998 by the Woodland Trust to undertake an archaeological and historical assessment of Ystrad Wood (centred on SN 39391901; Fig 1). The wood lies on the western edge of Carmarthen and covers an area of approximately 11.87ha.

The woodland was acquired by the Woodland Trust to enhance its wildlife, recreational and landscape value. The archaeological assessment aims to place the woodland within its historical context and to identify sites of archaeological interest for management purposes. Any specific management advice should be sought from the relevant archaeological curator, in this case the curatorial section of Archaeolog Cambria Archaeology.

Sources and Methods

The National Monuments Record held by the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales in Aberystwyth was consulted for sites which lay within the woodland or in its vicinity. A search was also made of the regional Sites and Monuments Record held by Archaeoleg Cambria Archaeology in their offices in Llandeilo. No archaeological features within the wood were identified from either source, though useful information was forthcoming for nearby sites.

The collections of the National Library of Wales in Aberystwyth and the Carmarthenshire Record Office in Carmarthen were searched for readily available documentary and cartographic sources including estate maps and documents, the tithe map and early editions of the Ordnance Survey. The earliest meaningful cartographic depiction of the eastern part of the wood is on an estate map of 1795 (Figure 2) but the first full depiction of the whole wood is on a later estate map which is dated 1833 (Figure 3). Both maps were produced for the Ystrad Estate which held the area during the nineteenth century. Later cartographic sources include the tithe map of Carmarthen St Peters Parish (Figure 4), which dates to 1837, the first edition of the One Inch Ordnance Survey map published in 1831 but surveyed in 1811-12, and the first and second editions of the Ordnance Survey Six Inch maps dating to 1888 and 1907 respectively (Figure 5, First Edition).

Useful information was provided by the Woodland Trust, including an historical assessent prepared for the Woodland Trust in early 1998 by Greg Nuttgens. Parts of this report draw heavily on that assessment, in particular on the background history of the Ystrad Estate.

A rapid field assessment was carried out to record the condition of sites identified during the desk-top study and to search for previously unidentified ones. A systematic transect approach to the fieldwork was not adopted, due to the density of the woodland and in places the steepness of the topography. Consequently, it is likely that there are further archaeological sites within the woodland which have yet to be identified.

The cartographic sources were digitised and rectified to modern grid co-ordinates using AutoCAD software. The Woodland Trust stockmap was also digitized so that sites identified could be recorded in relation to modern management plans. The digital maps were converted into MapInfo tables and site records were then produced in FoxPro through MapInfo. The digital results of the project will be made available to the Woodland Trust.

Topography

Ystrad Wood overlooks the modern town of Carmarthen on the north and east-facing slopes of the Towy valley. The eastern part of the wood is steep where it runs down to the former Plas Ystrad, but in other places the slopes are moderate. The solid geology is represented by the Llanvirn and Arenig series of Ordovician rocks. This stone has been quarried in places within the wood to obtain material for building.

Archaeological and Historical Background

Coed Ystrad lies to the west of the modern town of Carmarthen which has its origin in the Roman period and continued to be an important centre throughout the medieval and later periods. The land to the west and south-west of the town is agricultural land, elements of which are probably medieval or earlier in origin.

Little is known of the history of the wood and its surrounding area before the eighteenth century, but by this time it was part of the locally important Ystrad Estate. The earliest reference to the estate comes from around 1580 when the house was the home of William Davies, High Sheriff of Carmarthen. The latest house, now derelict, was built around the beginning of the nineteenth century by John Jones, Member of Parliament for Carmarthen between 1821 and 1832. The estate was bought in 1852 by a Mr Horton of London who became High Sheriff of Carmarthen in 1863. During the Second World War Plas Ystrad accomodated American servicemen who may have used the wood for training.

The Woodland History of Coed Ystrad

There is no direct evidence for the date of major woodland clearance in the area around Coed Ystrad, although pollen evidence from sites throughout Wales suggests that much of the country had lost its woodland cover by the end of the Iron Age. The remaining woodland was generally located on land not suitable for agricultural activity such as steep slopes. On this assumption the east-facing part of the wood, overlooking the former Plas Ystrad, may never have been cleared for agricultural use due to its steep gradient.

Apart from the area overlooking the former Plas Ystrad ,the eighteenth and nineteenth century cartographic evidence suggests that the wood has not had a long history of consistent woodland cover. In 1795, the date of the first of the estate maps, the eastern part of the present wood was part of the Ystrad Estate. This area is shown as wooded. The rest of the present wood was owned by the adjacent landowner, M.G. Davies Esq. and therefore not shown on the map. Two later estate maps, dating to 1833 and 1835, also record that the land above Plas Ystrad was wooded and by that time the rest of the present wood had been brought into the Ystrad Estate. These areas are depicted on the maps as unwooded, and even contain a small cottage and garden. The first edition of the One Inch Ordnance Survey map, surveyed in 1811-12 and published in 1831, shows that most of the eastern part was wooded but there still remained open ground to the west. The tithe map of 1837 records a similar pattern to the One Inch map and the apportionment describes the land use as a mixture of woodland, plantation and 'bwlch', meaning pass or gap. By 1888, when the first edition of the Ordnance Survey was published, the whole of the area of the current Ystrad Wood was wooded, with deciduous woodland to the east and mixed woodland to the west. A similar distribution of woodland is depicted on the second edition of the Six Inch map (1907) and continues to be the pattern to the present day.

The cartographic evidence suggests that the woodland cover of the present wood has expanded over the past two hundred years. In 1833 only 42% of the current wood was wooded. In 1837 it was 73%, but by 1888 it was almost entirely wooded, as it is today. Therefore, only 42% of Coed Ystrad has had continuous woodland cover since 1795, the remaining 58% being secondary woodland (Figure 6).

The expansion of the wood may be explained by the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century history of the wood. In 1795 only the eastern part was part of the Ystrad Estate. By 1833 the rest of the wood had become part of the estate. The schedule which accompanies the map of 1833 records that the acquired land was exchanged with Sir William Paxton, the adjacent landowner, presumably not much earlier than the date of the map. The acquired land is described as Park y Lann and the acquistion of new land and the creation of the

parkland may be linked to the re-building of Plas Ystrad between 1800 and 1810. The newly aquired land with its views over the town of Carmarthen and the River Towy having been converted from open ground to woodland as part of a picturesque parkland attached to the house. This is reflected in the tithe apportionment which records areas as plantation in the western part of the wood.

The first and second editions of the Ordnance Survey Six Inch map name the western part of the wood as Scott's Wood. It is not clear from where this name derives as it is not recorded on the tithe map or earlier estate maps.

The present character of the woodland reflects its former use as a picturesque wood. There are several imported tree species, including sweet chestnut, beech, and lime, and imported shrubs such as laurel. The rides through the woods follow shallow gradients and reveal extensive views over Carmarthen and the River Towy.

The Archaeology of Coed Ystrad

A gazetteer of archaeological sites recorded in Coed Ystrad is included in this assessment. Incorporated in the gazetteer are management categories designed as a guide to the relative importance of the sites on archaeological grounds. Descriptions of the categories are included in this report as Appendix I. Sites are numbered from 1 to 17. The location of the sites are marked on Figure 7.

There has been no previous archaeological investigation of Coed Ystrad and as a result there were no known sites within the wood prior to the assessment. The present survey has revealed a number of features relating to the history of the woodland and the exploitation of its resources by the surrounding population.

The cartographic and documentary evidence suggests that the western part of the woodland was agricultural land until the first half of the nineteenth century. The agricultural land use is reflected by a number of features within the wood. These include the remains of former field boundaries, such as the ditch and bank which divides Scott's Wood from the main part of the wood. Other earthworks follow the line of boundaries recorded on the second edition of the Ordnance Survey Six Inch map. Another feature of the former agricultural history is a small dew pond next to a curving boundary and trackway. The dew pond measures around 3m across with a well defined bank on the downslope side which has been breached to allow the overflow to escape. It was probably constructed as a watering point for stock, which may have been grazed in this area or passed thorough the 'bwlch' on their way from the summer meadows close to the river to winter pasture close to the farms.

The estate maps of 1833 and 1835 record a small house and garden within the wood, surrounded by small fields. No evidence remains of the house or garden features as the area has been extensively quarried during the second part of the nineteenth century.

Although quarrying is recorded in the tithe schedule it is not recorded on the tithe map or on earlier estate maps. The large quarry which still survives in the wood first appears on the first edition of the Ordnance Survey Six Inch map of 1888, suggesting that the large scale exploitation of the stone only began in the second half of the nineteenth century. Smaller quarries around the margin of the large quarry may represent the earlier quarrying recorded on the tithe map. A stone wall to the north of the quarry may be the remains of an office or processing building, while other features may indicate the presence of an aerial ropeway. The stone was taken away along an inclined track to the north-east towards Plas Ystrad and Carmarthen.

The current rides through the woodland follow the same tracks that were present on the latenineteenth century maps. They were probably constructed as part of the picturesque woodland attached to Plas Ystrad which was developed in the first part of the nineteenth century.

Conclusions

The assessment has suggested that Coed Ystrad does not have a long woodland history as only the eastern part, above the former Plas Ystrad, has had consistent woodland cover over the past 200 years. The rest of the wood is largely a creation of the nineteenth century when the woodled area was expanded, probably to form a picturesque part of Park y Lann, a parkland attached to Plas Ystrad.

The archaeology of the woodland reflects its history as former agricultural land with field boundarys and a dew pond surviving. During the latter nineteenth century, quarrying was carried out on a large scale within the wood, but it still retains much of its nineteenth-century character as a picturesque wood with rides and imported tree species and shrubs and extensive views over the modern town of Carmarthen and the River Towy.

Acknowledgements

CPAT Contracts wishes to thank Jerry Langford of the Woodland Trust for his help during the project. Thanks also to the staff of the National Library of Wales for their permission to reproduce Figs 2, 3 and 4. Assistance was also given by the staff of the National Monument Record at the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales in Aberystwyth, the staff of the curatorial section of Archaeoleg Cambria Archaeology in Llandeilo, and the Carmarthenshire Record Office in Carmarthen.

8 References

Bowen, D.Q. 1980. Geology. In Carter (ed), National Atlas of Wales. Cardiff: University of Wales Press.

Linnard, W. 1982. Welsh Woods and Forests: History and Utilization. Cardiff: National Museum of Wales.

Nuttgens, G. 1998 Unpublished Historical and Archaeological Assessment of Coed Ystrad. (Provided by Jerry Langford of the Woodland Trust).

Rackham, Oliver. 1990. Trees and Woodland in the British Landscape (Revised Edition). London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson.

Published Cartographic Sources

- 1831 Ordnance Survey One Inch Map Sheet LXI (National Library of Wales).
- **1888** Ordnance Survey Six Inch Map (first edition) Carmarthenshire Sheets XXXIXNW and XXXIXSW (National Library of Wales).
- 1907 Ordnance Survey Six Inch Map (second edition) Carmarthenshire Sheets XXXIXNW and XXXIXSW (National Library of Wales).

Unpublished Cartographic Sources

- 1795 A Map of Ystrad and Penllan (National Library of Wales, Volume 67, 28)
- 1833 Map of Ystrad, Penlann and other Lands in the Parish of St Peters (National Library of Wales, Volume 67, 27)
- 1835 Map of Ystrad, Penlann and other Lands situate in the Parish of St Peters (National Library of Wales, Volume 67, 28a)
- 1837 Tithe Map of Carmarthen St Peters Parish (National Library of Wales).
- 1908 Sale Plan of Ystrad Estate (Carmarthenshire Record Office).

Manuscript Sources

1838 Tithe Apportionment of Carmarthen St Peters Parish (National Library of Wales).

APPENDIX I

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE CATEGORIES

The following categories are based on those established for defining archaeological significance of sites during survey work on the Forest Enterprise (Wales) estate (Thomas 1997). They are intended only as a guide to the relative importance of the archaeological sites identified during this assessment.

Category A

Archaeological monuments of national importance

This category may include any site, whatever its form, which might meet the criteria for scheduling. It will by definition include all Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAMs) and listed buildings. Some, though not all, of the sites in this category may be recommended for scheduling if they are not already scheduled.

The main criteria for selection will usually be the rarity, condition and potential of the site. Typically, sites such as barrows, hillforts, linear earthworks or significant (ruined) buildings might fall in this category, although significant find scatters might equally well qualify on potential or relatively modern farmsteads on group value.

Category B

Archaeological monuments and landscape features of regional or local importance.

This category may include any site, whatever its form, which while not meeting the criteria for scheduling may still be seen as of regional or local importance. For example, a type of site unique to a particular locality but common elsewhere, or severely degraded examples of commonly occurring types.

Category C

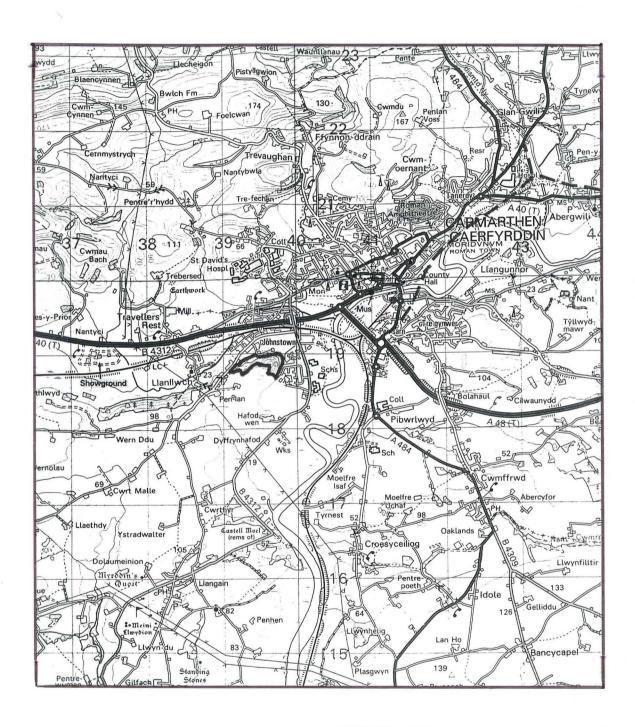
Archaeological monuments of lesser significance.

This category comprises sites which while being of archaeological or historical interest are not worthy of conservation or active protection.

Category D

Sites with no defined physical presence

This category comprises findspots, sites noted but not accurately located in antiquarian references, sites known only from placename evidence and other reported sites whose authenticity is in doubt (e.g. certain sites which have not been verified by recent archaeological fieldwork). No sites from this category were identified during the present assessment



Reproduced from the Ordnance Survey's

1: 50,000 map of 1997 with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

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Figure 1: Location of Coed Ystrad

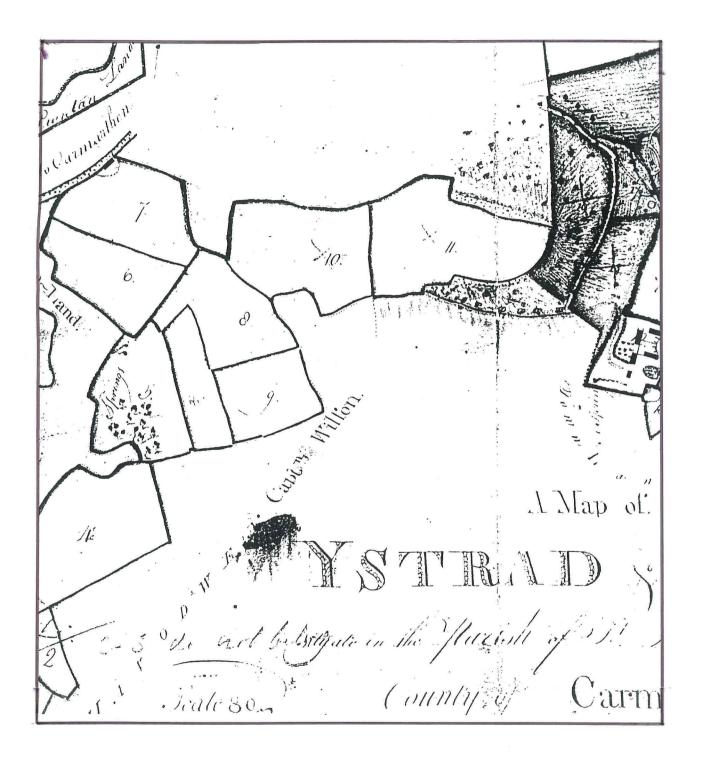


Figure 2: Extract from 1795 'Map of Ystrad and Penllan' (Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Wales)

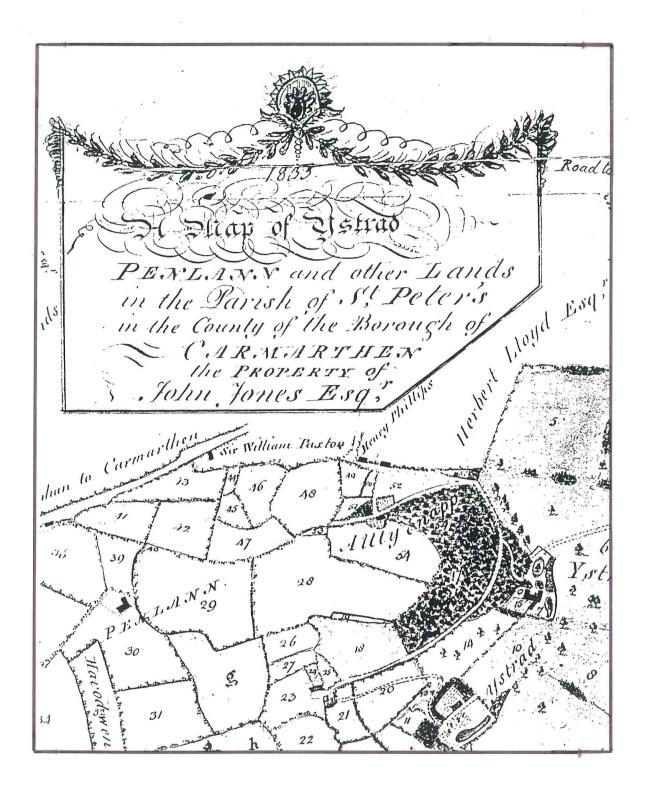


Figure 3: Extract from 1833 Map of Ystrad, Penlann and other Lands in the Parish of St Peters.

(Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Wales)

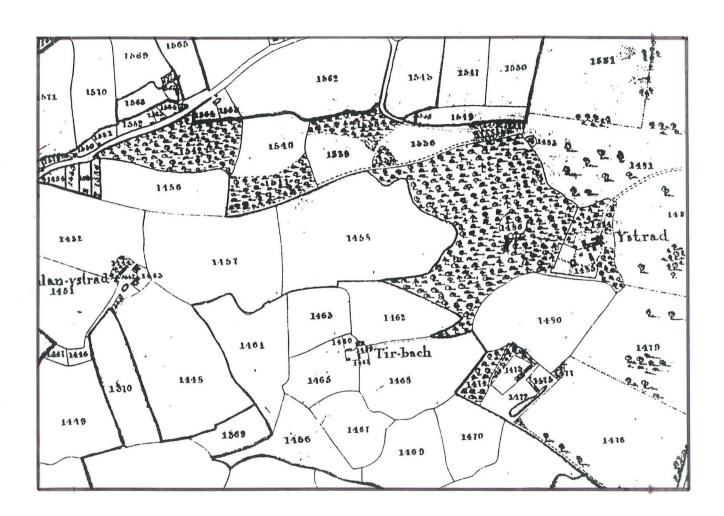


Figure 4: Extract of the Carmarthen St Peters Tithe Map (1837) (Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Wales)

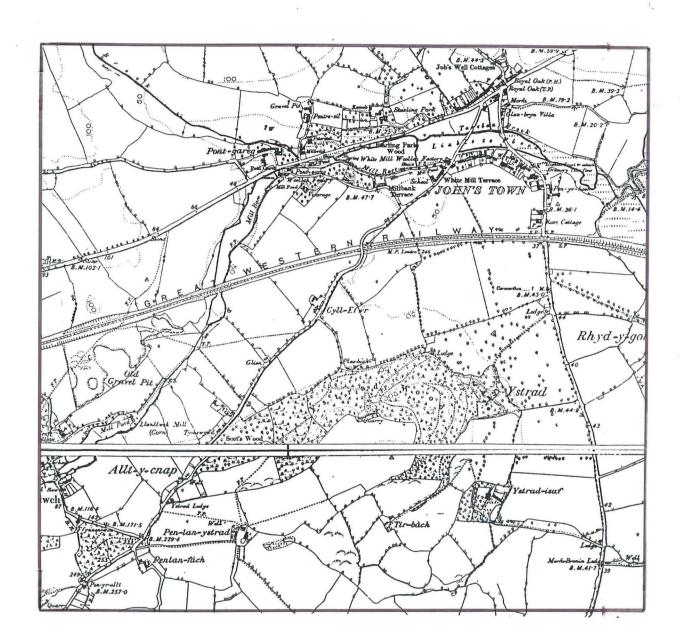
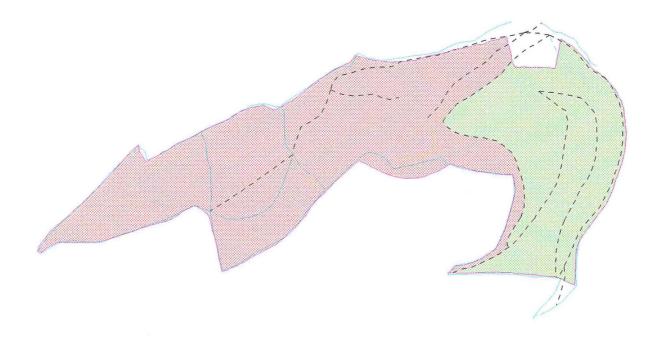


Figure 5: Extract of the first edition of the Ordnance Survey 6 inch map, Carmarthenshire Sheets XXXIXSW and XXXIXNW.
(Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Wales)

Figure 6
Areas of Secondary Woodland



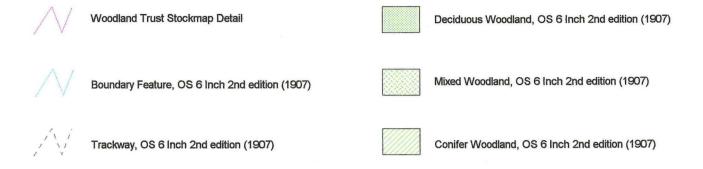


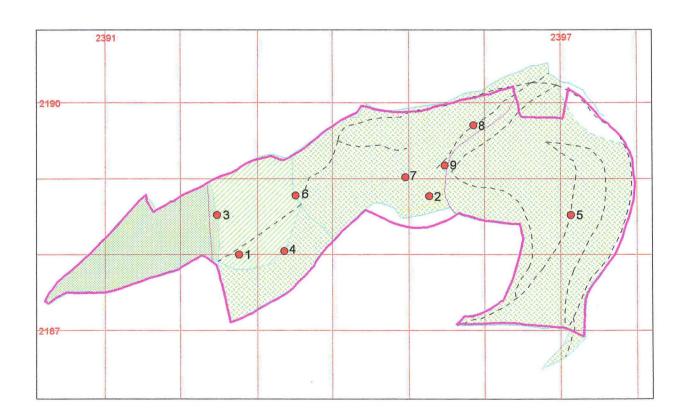
Consistently wooded areas from 1795



Open ground on 1833 estate map

Figure 7 Location of Archaeological Sites in Coed Ystrad (1:5000).





Gazetteer of Archaeological Sites

Site No

1

SN39271880

Coed Ystrad Dew Pond

Period Post medieval

Site Type Dew Pond

Dew pond c. 3m across. Bank on N side to retain water. Breached to allow overflow. Adjacent to trackway through wood, but presumably once part of agricultural land.

In good condition with no immediate threat.

Management Category

B

Site No

2

SN39521887

Coed Ystrad Quarry

Period Post medieval

Site Type Quarry

Large quarry probably operating during the late nineteenth century to obtain building stone. Possibly remains of earlier quarrying to the S above the quarry. Remains of processing building to N (site 7).

Quarry is large and deep but in good condition with no immediate threat.

Management Category

C

Site No

3

SN39241885

Scott's Wood Boundary

Period Post medieval

Site Type Boundary Bank

Boundary marked on first and second editions of the OS maps forming the boundary of Coed Ystrad and Scotts Wood. Also marked on estate maps of 1833 and 1835. Formerly part of agricultural land.

Trackway has passed through the boundary at its N end but otherwise in good condition with no immediate threat.

Management Category

C

Site No

4

SN39331880

Coed Ystrad Boundary I

Period Post medieval

Site Type Boundary Bank

Curving boundary marked on first and second editions of the OS maps and tithe maps. Forms the boundary of a plantation on tithe map.

In good condition with no immediate threat.

Management Category

0

Gazetteer of Archaeological Sites

Site No

5

SN39711885

Coed Ystrad Tracks

Period Post medieval

Site Type Track

Series of tracks on slope overlooking the former Plas Ystrad. Probably originated in the ninetenth century to provide picturesque walks through the woodland.

Still in use as tracks. Modern revetment in places. In good condition.

Management Category

C

Site No

6

SN39351887

Coed Ystrad Boundary II

Period Post medieval

Site Type Boundary Bank

Boundary marked on first and second editions of the OS maps. Also marked on estate maps of 1833 and 1835. Formerly part of agricultural land.

In good condition with no immediate threat though difficult to follow in places.

Management Category

C

Site No

7

SN39491890

Coed Ystrad Quarry Structure

Period Modern

Site Type Structure

Low remains of stone built structure. Not enough survives to suggest its purpose but probably processing building associated with quarry.

Survives up to 0.5m high. Only one wall visible. No immediate threat.

Management Category

C

Site No

8

SN39581897

Coed Ystrad Quarry Track

Period Modern

Site Type Trackway

Inclined track running away from quarry. No visible structure.

In good condition with no immediate threat.

Management Category

C

Gazetteer of Archaeological Sites

Site No

9

SN39541891

Coed Ystrad Cottage

Period Post medieval

Site Type House

House with associated gardens marked on estate maps of 1833 and 1835. Not recorded on tithe map or subsequent OS maps. Area now quarried and no remains survive.

Destroyed by nineteenth century quarrying

Management Category

D

SPECIFICATION FOR AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT OF YSTRAD WOOD, CARMARTHEN.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Woodland Trust have requested that an archaeological assessment be carried out at the above property (centered on c.SN395189). The assessment is required to aid the proper management of the archaeological resource of the woodland and to place the woodland within its historical context.
- 1.2 The woodland covers 12.15ha and lies to the west of Carmarthen. No archaeological sites have previously been identified in the woodland, but other archaeological assessments within woodlands in Wales have demonstrated the survival of a wide range of unrecorded archaeological sites including charcoal burning hearths, deeply incised holloways and surrounding earthworks (Thomas 1996; 1997). The surveys have also demonstrated the range of documentary and cartographic sources available for the placing of the sites within their historic context.

2 Objectives

- 2.1 The objectives of the assessment are:
- 2.2 to reveal by means of desktop survey and limited fieldwork the nature of the archaeological resource and historic context of the woodland.
- 2.2 to prepare a series of digital maps recording the development of the woodland as recorded on historic maps and related to the modern stock map.
- 2.3 to prepare a database of archaeological sites including site descriptions, location and assessment of their importance.
- 2.4 to prepare a report including an account of the historic context of the woodland along with a gazetteer of identified sites and maps of their location.

3 Methods

3.1 Desktop Survey

- 3.1.1 A search of the archives held by the National Library in Aberystwyth, the National Monument Record based at the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales in Aberystwyth, the Carmarthenshire County Record Office in Camarthen and the Sites and Monuments Record for the area held by Cambria Archaeology (formerly the Dyfed Archaeological Trust) will be conducted for material relevant to the property. This material may include estate maps, tithe maps and apportionments, early editions of the Ordnance Survey, manuscript documents and aerial photographs. Published sources relevant to the property will also be consulted.
- 3.1.2 Digital maps will be created by rectifying cartographic material to modern grid coordinates under AutoCAD. The Woodland Trust stock map will also be digitised allowing the overlay of the historic map data.

3.2 Fieldwork

3.2.1 Fieldwork will be carried out after the completion of the desktop assessment. The fieldwork will record the condition of sites identified during the desktop assessment and will record previously unrecorded sites. The transect approach to fieldwork will not be adopted as it is unsuitable for wooded areas.

3.3 Data Creation

- 3.3.1 A database will be compiled in FoxPro recording the location, condition and nature of specific archaeological features. The sites will be categorised according to their archaeological importance.
- 3.3.2 MapInfo tables will be created from the digital map data. Co-ordinates recorded in the FoxPro database will enable the sites to be viewed against the map tables.
- 3.4 Reporting
- 3.4.1 A report on the results of the survey will be prepared following the desktop survey, fieldwork and data creation. This will take the form of a typed and bound A4 document with sections on the historic context of the site, a gazetteer of sites and reference maps.

4 Resources and Programming

- 4.1 The assessment will be undertaken by 2 skilled archaeologists, one of whom has previous experience of carrying out assessments in wooded areas. Overall supervision will be by R.J. Silvester, a senior member of CPAT's staff who is also a member of the Institute of Field Archaeologists.
- 4.2 All report preparation will be completed by one of the two archaeologists who conducted the assessment.
- 4.3 Requirements relating to Health and Safety regulations will be adhered to by CPAT and its staff.
- 4.4 CPAT is covered by appropriate Public and Employers Liability insurance.

References

Thomas, D. 1996. *Priory Grove, Monmouthshire. Archaeological Assessment.* CPAT Report 211.

Thomas, D. 1997. Cwm George Woods, Vale of Glamorgan. Archaeological Assessment CPAT Report 256.

David Thomas Project Officer

STANDARD NOTES AND CONDITIONS

- The quotation has been prepared using the appropriate rates of pay, travelling costs and other expenses normally used for archaeological fieldwork by Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (henceforward termed CPAT). It is subject to revision for work done after 31 March 1999.
- An invoice will be issued for payment on submission of a report on 30-day settlement terms.
- On acceptance of the tender, the client should provide a written order for the work. CPAT will not otherwise be able to commence work.
- This estimate covers only the completion of the archaeological evaluation and the preparation of the commissioned report. The curatorial staff of Cambria Archaeology (formerly the Dyfed Archaeological Trust) in their role as archaeological advisors to the local planning authority will be solely responsible for determining any recommendations for further action arising from the proposed assessment. There is no commitment on the part of those CPAT staff involved in contracting to provide services or advice to the client in any form subsequent to the submission of the project report.
- Where CPAT is contracting to undertake a particular piece of work, it recognises that those intending to commission such work may wish to engage an independent archaeological consultant to assess the specification of works intended to satisfy the archaeological brief, to monitor the progress of the work or to advise on the recommendations for any further action.
- Whilst CPAT will make every effort to ensure that its work is both thorough and accurate, it cannot be held responsible for any omission or misinterpretation arising from the limitations of the procedures as laid down in the project brief/specification.
- 7 CPAT cannot be held responsible for any alteration or modification to the results or conclusions in the report, made by the client or a third party.
- 8 It is understood that the client will arrange for access for CPAT and its agents to the areas involved in the examination, and that, if appropriate, landowners will be notified by the client before work commences
- 9 It is understood that the client will be responsible of the payment of any compensation to the occupier and/or owner as a consequence of the archaeological works.
- 10 CPAT will not be liable to indemnify the client against compensation resulting from unavoidable damage to crops, structures or services during on-site operations.
- 11 Work undertaken during the project will be covered by CPAT's existing Public Liability and Employer's Liability indemnities.
- 12 CPAT and/or its sub-contractors will make every effort to ensure that its works do not constitute a hazard to members of the public or persons authorised by the owner to be on the land.
- 13 CPAT will endeavour to keep the results of client's assessment work confidential for an agreed period of time after completion of the project. Thereafter CPAT's results and conclusions will be considered in the public domain, and CPAT reserves the right to publish reports on the work undertaken, with all due acknowledgement to the client.

- 14 CPAT undertakes not to give information to the media without the prior agreement of the client (or his agent).
- 15 CPAT will retain possession of copyright on all survey records and commissioned reports, and it retains the right to assign these to a another body of its choosing in due course. It will provide an exclusive licence to the client for the use of the report and its contents in all matters relating to the project as described in the Project Specification.
- Finds, artefacts and samples will remain in the temporary possession of CPAT until fully studied and reported on. Subsequently, the client/landowner will nominate an appropriate local or regional public museum to which these will be donated.
- 17 It is CPAT's policy to adhere to the Code of Practice of the Institute of Field Archaeologists and other current recognised Codes of Practice etc. specifically dealing with archaeological work.
- 18 CPAT's work will be monitored by the relevant regional curatorial body. CPAT should be informed in writing, if the client wishes to institute his own monitoring system.