

THE CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

**Proposed Windfarm on
Gernos Mountain,
Llangynllo, Ceredigion**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

CPAT Report No 488

Proposed Windfarm on Gernos Mountain, Llangynllo, Ceredigion

ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

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November 2002

Report for Mr A N Davies

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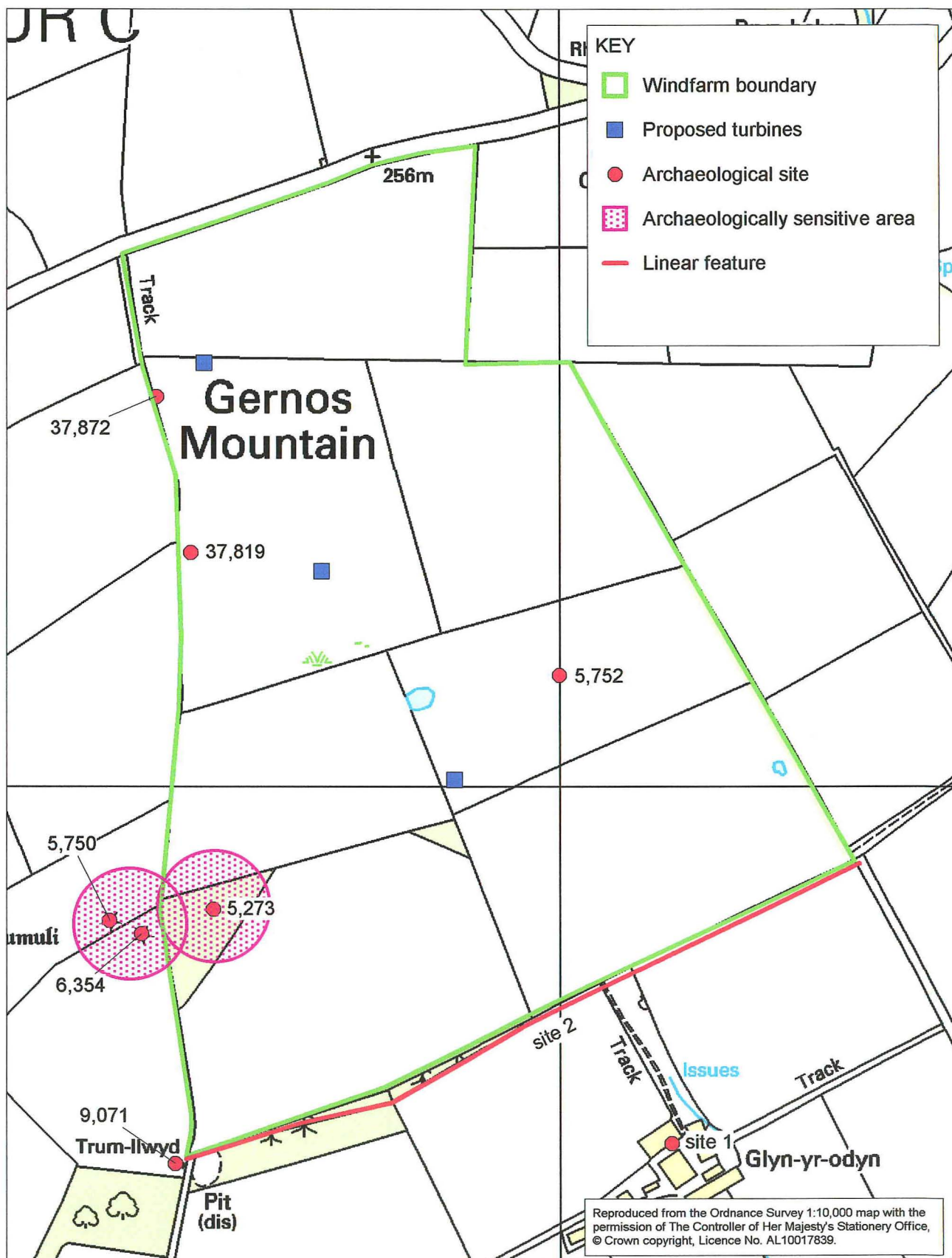
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Map 9.1 Gurnos Mountain Windfarm proposal area. Scale 1:5,000

9.1 INTRODUCTION

- 9.1.1 In June 2002 the Contracts Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust was invited by Dulas Ltd (Dyfi Eco Park, Machynlleth), on behalf of Mr A N Davies of Glynroden, Coedybryn to undertake within the Windworks programme, an archaeological assessment of the site of a proposed windfarm on Gernos Mountain in Ceredigion.
- 9.1.2 The purpose of this archaeological assessment was to establish the nature of the archaeological resource within the boundary of the proposed windfarm, and also to assess the impact of the proposal both on archaeological sites in its vicinity and on the historic landscape. A further purpose was to recommend mitigation measures where the proposed development was likely to have an impact, whether direct or indirect, on the archaeological resource.

9.2 GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

- 9.2.1 The proposed windfarm, comprising three turbines, falls within a defined area (henceforward termed the proposal area) of 0.35km². It is centred at SN 36004600, in south-western Ceredigion, about 7km to the north-east of the small town of Newcastle Emlyn which lies on Afon Teifi, a river that here forms the boundary between Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire.
- 9.2.2 The proposal area occupies the eastern and somewhat larger portion of a broad and relatively prominent hill or plateau – the so-called Gernos Mountain – which achieves a maximum height of 276m above sea level. It is one of the higher points in the immediate area but with similar hills rising up to the north-east and also on the far side of the Teifi to the south.
- 9.2.3 The hill top is now enclosed with wire fences creating a pattern of very regular enclosures, interrupted only by shelter belts of conifers. Most of these enclosures are given over to permanent pasture but one field within the proposal area, and another edging it, were under cereal crops at the time of the field visit.
- 9.2.4 The soils on the hill top fall largely within the Parc Association of well-drained loamy soils with a humose or peaty surface horizon (Soil Survey of England and Wales map and legend; Rudeforth *et al*, 1984, 210).

9.3 METHODOLOGY

- 9.3.1 The proposal area, and thus the area of the assessment, was initially identified by National Wind Power in conjunction with Mr N Davies as a block of land defined entirely by existing land boundaries. Its extent is depicted on the accompanying plan (Map 9.1).
- 9.3.2 The methodology adopted for the assessment consisted of an initial desk-top study of readily available, primary and secondary sources. The main basis for the study

was the data held in the regional Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) which is maintained by Cambria Archaeology (Dyfed Archaeological Trust) in Llandeilo, Carmarthenshire. Two further repositories were accessed, namely a) the National Monument Record (NMR), a section of the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments in Wales (RCAHMW), and b) the National Library of Wales (NLW), both of which are based in Aberystwyth. Relevant material examined at these repositories included documentary and cartographic data and also aerial photographs. The material sources that proved to be relevant to the study are detailed in Section 9.10, below, as are the printed works that were consulted. Information was also provided by the Ceredigion Archives in Aberystwyth.

- 9.3.3 The search for information was restricted to those repositories listed above, as these were considered to be the primary sources of information likely to be relevant to the study, and the available resources did not permit a comprehensive examination of documentation in other, smaller archives which may contain potentially useful material.
- 9.3.4 A second element of the assessment was a field survey. This allowed both a review of those sites and features already known to exist, and also a record to be prepared of any new sites encountered during the walkover survey. However, the field examination of known sites of archaeological and historic landscape interest beyond the boundaries of the proposal area was not comprehensive, and the records of these given in Appendix 1, part 2 are derived in part from the information held in the regional SMR.
- 9.3.5 A visual search was made, too, for areas which might contain deposits of palaeoenvironmental potential. However, the thinnish soils and extensive improvement of the land on the plateau top militate against the survival of deposits that might have such a potential. Although the possibility that there may be small, undetected pockets of peat cannot be dismissed entirely, no obvious evidence was encountered from a visual examination of the land surface within the proposal area, or in any exposed sections where pits and ponds had been cut, of significant, deeper, deposits.
- 9.3.6 The survey was carried out on foot and consisted of the examination of the area in a systematic manner. Wherever possible, regular transects were walked, and the field pattern was such that the ground could be covered in this way in as efficient a manner as possible. Sites of archaeological and historic landscape interest which were discovered during the survey were located with reasonable accuracy by the use of hand-held Global Positioning System (GPS) equipment and by establishing the relative positions of the sites to mapped boundaries. Where necessary, the GPS handset was also used to aid the mapping of more extensive landscape features.
- 9.3.7 All of the sites recorded by the desk-top and field survey assessments were entered into a Foxpro database and, where appropriate, mapped in relation to the proposal area using the Mapinfo software package. It should be noted that the more important archaeological sites identified within the proposal area are defined by zones of archaeological sensitivity in Map 9.1. This treatment has, however, not generally been extended to comparable sites outside the proposal area as it has to be assumed that there is no likelihood of any disturbance to these sites under the

current proposals. Other archaeological sites are distinguished by a single dot which gives no guide as to the overall size of the site that it denotes, while linear features are indicated by lines.

9.3.8 Only those archaeological sites which are within, or near to, the proposal area have been mapped on Map 9.1. An extract of the information within the database is included in this report as Appendix 1. Part 1 refers to sites within the proposal area, Part 2 to sites around the proposal including some that fall beyond the limits of Map 9.1. The Primary Record Numbers (PRNs) given to individual sites are those officially attributed to each by the Dyfed SMR. Where no number has yet been attributed, the writer has given a simple site number.

9.3.9 The importance attributed to each site which has been identified in the proposal area and its locality is given in Appendix 1. Sites have been graded in importance from A to E, using the following criteria, which have been developed from that used in the Department of Transport's *Design Manual for Roads and Bridges* (Volume 11, Section 3, Part 2).

Category A - Sites which are statutorily designated as being of national importance under the *Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act* of 1979, or those considered by us to merit such a designation.

Category B - Sites of regional importance; these are not of sufficient importance to merit a statutory designation but are nevertheless of particular relevance to the understanding of the archaeological resource of the region.

Category C - Sites of local importance; these are considered to be of lesser merit but are nevertheless useful in understanding the archaeological resource of the local area.

Category D - Damaged or minor sites which are of interest but which, due to their condition or nature, are unlikely to provide much significant information on the archaeological resource of the area.

Category E - Sites which could not properly be evaluated from the information revealed by this assessment. Some form of further assessment may be required to ensure that these sites can be properly assessed; otherwise, specific mitigation which takes into account the uncertainty of the results of the evaluation should be considered.

9.4 RESULTS OF THE ASSESSMENT: THE ARCHAEOLOGY

9.4.1 The archaeological assessment identified only five archaeological sites and features within the proposal area, with rather more in the immediate vicinity. Four of the five had previously been recorded in the regional Sites and Monuments Record.

9.4.2 The only visible trace of prehistoric activity within the proposal area is the putative burial cairn (PRN 5273, and generically classed as a round barrow) close to the

western boundary. This is a significant monument, not least because of the presence of two other barrows lying a few metres to the west although just beyond the boundary of the proposal area. Together they form a group of considerable archaeological importance. The cairn has been damaged during planting operations and now has a tree and gorse bushes growing on it. Nevertheless, it is still recognisable. There is a lingering doubt about the authenticity of this monument, a possibility being that what is now visible is the base of a much more recent clearance cairn (see Appendix 1, part 1). However, as all the barrows are shown in outline on the 1891 Ordnance Survey map, well before this portion of Gernos Mountain was properly enclosed, its integrity should probably be assumed, although only excavation can properly resolve the issue.

- 9.4.3 The absence of other traces of prehistoric activity within the proposal area should not be taken as an indicator that prehistoric communities avoided the plateau. The presence of prehistoric people can be inferred from these burial mounds and it is quite possible that there was some settlement or more transient activity on the plateau as well as burial. Earthwork traces of such settlements are rare and it is more likely that their presence will be detected through scatters of finds, particularly tools and waste materials, during ground disturbance.
- 9.4.4 Evidence of activity in subsequent periods is absent. No Roman or indeed medieval sites or material have been recognised on Gernos Mountain, and it is likely that during these centuries (1st century AD to 15th century), the hill was open heathland, used perhaps for grazing but possibly not for settlement.
- 9.4.5 Gernos Mountain in the post-medieval centuries seems to have remained as open heathland, although local communities may have held common rights on it. Gradually, parts of it were enclosed, though throughout its history this seems to have been undertaken directly by local landowners, rather than through the better documented mechanism of parliamentary enclosure. A north to south division (the western perimeter of the proposal area) was in place by 1842, but even towards the end of the 19th century much of Gernos Mountain, including all of the proposal area was still open heathland. The most northerly field in the proposal area, as well as those immediately to the east of it, is defined by banks supporting thorn trees and was probably enclosed at the very end of the 19th century or early in the 20th century. The stone-faced earthen bank (site no 2) edging the hill on the south side is earlier, even though the date at which it was erected to demarcate the enclosed farmlands to the south from the open grazing on the hill cannot be established with any accuracy - its origin in the post-medieval era can, however, be assumed with some confidence.
- 9.4.6 There was one certain encroachment on the plateau. Two small conjoined enclosures (PRN 37819) were still depicted on the earliest large-scale Ordnance Survey maps in the later 19th century, and there was certainly a building, almost certainly a cottage set within one of them, though when it was erected and when abandoned are unknown. Much more doubt attaches to the possible dwelling sites (PRN 37872) seen on an aerial photograph; their integrity needs to be confirmed. Other cottages will have lain round the edge of the open hill: Trum-Ilwyd (PRN 9071) is the only known example close to the proposal area.

- 9.4.7 Other features on Gernos Mountain such as the quarry (PRN 17474) are also likely to be 18th or 19th-century in date.

9.5 RESULTS OF THE ASSESSMENT: THE HISTORIC LANDSCAPE

- 9.5.1 The historic landscape of Gernos Mountain is a modern one. The regularly laid out fields defined by wire fences, the plough-smoothed improved pasture, the conifer shelter belts and the occasional ponds are all integral elements of this modern landscape on the plateau. Of the earlier open heathland little remains: the boundary around the southern side of the hill, the abandoned cottage sites and quarry around the periphery and the fugitive traces of the small encroachment close just below the highest point all date from a period no more than a couple of centuries ago. In the 19th century, too, Gernos Mountain in its relatively open state would have formed a backdrop to the parkland landscape of Gernos (PRN 9881), although screened to some extent by conifer plantations. Few details of the Gernos setting have emerged – it does not appear in the recently published Cadw/Icomos *Register of Landscapes, Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest* for Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire (2002) - and indeed the 19th-century landscape that shows on early Ordnance Survey maps has undergone fundamental agricultural modifications in more recent times
- 9.5.2 Much further back in time the burial mounds are isolated remnants of a prehistoric landscape, the nature of which can only be speculated about.

9.6 PREDICTED IMPACTS

- 9.6.1 Five individual archaeological sites lie within the proposal area, although the authenticity of two of these – PRNs 5752 and 37382 – is uncertain. Other monuments and elements of the historic landscape, of course, lie in the vicinity of the proposed windfarm. The predicted impacts range from visual intrusion on the settings of monuments to the possibility of physical impacts by elements of the site infrastructure. As far as can be ascertained the proposed turbines, as currently positioned, should not themselves have any direct physical impact on any monument within the proposal area, although in the absence of full details of the infrastructure associated with the proposed windfarm (e.g. road lines, service trenches etc), the conservation of the archaeology cannot be fully established.
- 9.6.2 Each site and any potential impacts will be dealt with in PRN order, below. A limited consideration of the impact of the proposal on the historic landscape setting has also been attempted.
- 9.6.3 **Site no. 2. Gernos Mountain wall Category C.** This feature lies at a distance of more than 200m from the proposed site of turbine 3. While the turbines will have a visual impact on this monument, a direct physical impact is improbable, although service lines associated with the proposed windfarm may interfere with it.

- 9.6.4 **PRN 5752.** *Clyn-yr-odin cropmark. Category E.* The significance, and indeed the authenticity, of this feature remains uncertain. It lies well over 100m away from the proposed turbines.
- 9.6.5 **PRN 5273.** *Gurnos Mountain barrow (E). Category A.* This site is over 200m from the nearest proposed turbine so there should be no direct physical impact from the windfarm. A direct visual impact on this monument and its neighbours, however, is unavoidable, given the level nature of the plateau.
- 9.6.6 **PRN 37819.** *Gernos cottage I. Category D.* The surviving remnants of this site are within 100m of the proposed site of a turbine. A direct physical impact is possible, but in view of the minimal site survival the visual impact is negligible.
- 9.6.7 **PRN 37872.** *Gernos cottage II. Category E.* The significance, and indeed the authenticity, of this feature remains uncertain. The most northerly turbine lies within 50m of its presumed setting, although there remains uncertainty as to whether the site lay within the proposal area.
- 9.6.8 The impact of the proposal on this historic landscape must also take account of the view both from and to monuments in the immediate environs of the proposal area. The group of barrows (PRNs 5750, 6354 and 5273) will be affected by the introduction of the proposed windfarm, although these monuments represent only discrete elements of an otherwise lost historic landscape.

9.7 PROPOSED MITIGATION MEASURES

- 9.7.1 A limited range of mitigation measures is proposed to reduce or negate the impacts which have been predicted in the previous section. These range from a proposal for a watching brief to the careful control of any ground works and are dealt with in PRN order, below, in the same way as the previous section. There are also impacts which are not specific to a single site and suitable methods of mitigation for these are considered briefly in paragraph 9.7.8, after the mitigation responses for site specific impacts.
- 9.7.2 It is assumed that all turbine construction works will be limited to those areas defined in the proposal. Any subsequent alterations to the turbine positions and the determination of the infrastructure that links them will necessitate a reconsideration of the impacts and mitigations proposed here.
- 9.7.3 **Site no. 2.** *Gernos Mountain wall Category C.* No direct physical impact is envisaged from the construction of the turbines, but the possibility that the infrastructure associated with the windfarm may have some direct impact must be taken into account. Any roads or service lines must utilise existing breaks in the bank. No satisfactory mitigation can be suggested for the inevitable direct visual impact.
- 9.7.4 **PRN 5752.** *Clyn-yr-odin cropmark.* In view of the uncertainties over the authenticity of this monument no mitigation measures are recommended.

- 9.7.5 **PRN 5273.** *Gurnos Mountain barrow.* This monument currently lies in a fenced plantation and well away from any proposed turbine. If however, any infrastructure elements of the windfarm are likely to pass through the plantation enclosure, the barrow should be fenced off to create an exclusion zone with a diameter in excess of 50m. The proposal will, of course, have an immediate impact on the setting of the barrow (and its neighbours) which could be reduced slightly, but not removed, by siting the turbines further to the east.
- 9.7.6 **PRN 37819.** *Gernos cottage I.* The central turbine comes close to but does not appear to impact directly on this site. No mitigation measures are therefore proposed, although all infrastructure works should avoid this area.
- 9.7.7 **PRN 37872.** *Gernos cottage II.* In view of the uncertainties over the authenticity of this monument no mitigation measures are recommended.
- 9.7.8 There is a possibility that sites which have only sub-surface traces, and have not therefore been revealed by this assessment, are present within the area of the proposal. If any such site is present, there is a potential that elements of the site might be disturbed during the initial ground works which precede construction. In order to provide some mitigation for this potential impact, a watching brief should be carried out during ground works, with the aim of properly recording any archaeological features which are revealed. The archaeologist carrying out the watching brief must be allowed a reasonable time to carry out the necessary archaeological recording.

9.8 CONCLUSIONS

- 9.8.1 As a result of the archaeological assessment we can draw the following conclusions:
- there is one visible archaeological site within the proposal area of sufficient importance to merit the highest level of classification. This warrants some degree of physical protection during any construction works close to it, but nothing obvious can be done to prevent visual disruption to its setting and that of its neighbours
 - there is a small amount of other archaeology within the proposal area, but it is considered to be of no more than local or minor importance. Limited mitigation measures only are required
 - the proposal lies in a landscape area of some historical interest, although such are the modern modifications to the landscape that little of this historic landscape can now be recognised
 - details of the infrastructure elements of the windfarm were not available at the time that this study was undertaken, and it is therefore impossible to assess their impact on the known archaeology

- the most appropriate archaeological response to the proposal, is in the view of the writer, the careful design of the windfarm layout which prevents physical disturbance to the more significant monuments, combined with a watching brief during construction works

9.9 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

9.9.1 The writer would like to thank the staff of the following repositories for their help and assistance:

The Regional Sites and Monuments Record held by Cambria Archaeology (the Dyfed Archaeological Trust) at Llandeilo, and particularly Mr R Jones for responding promptly to specific enquiries;

The National Monument Record administered by the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments in Aberystwyth;

The National Library of Wales in Aberystwyth.

The Ceredigion Record Office in Aberystwyth, and particularly to Miss H Palmer of for responding to enquiries about Gernos.

9.10 REFERENCES

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1983 Soil Survey of England and Wales map and legend (Sheet 2 - Wales, at 1:250,000 scale)

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Aerial photographic sources

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OS Vertical APs: 74/127/202-03, dated 14-06-1974. Scale = 1: 7500

OS Vertical APs: 74/247/597-98, dated 03-10-1974. Scale = 1: 7500

Appendix 1 (Part 1): Archaeological sites within the Gernos Mountain windfarm area

PRN: 5273 Site no: Gurnos Mountain barrow (E) **NGR:SN35694589**
Site type: Round barrow **Category :** B

A cairn, presumed to be of Bronze Age date, now in a small conifer plantation. Heavily disturbed, its irregular surface is only roughly circular and some 16.4m N/S by 14.8m E/W and up to 0.4m high. Its top appears slightly hollowed. Several gorse bushes and one conifer grow out of its east side. It is classed as a genuine antiquity in the Cardiganshire County History (1994) but there is some uncertainty about the integrity of this monument as the owner believes that it might be the remnants of a larger mound of stone resulting from field clearance during the 20th century, this mound having been partially removed by a construction firm some years ago.

PRN: 5752 Site no: Clyn-yr-odin cropmark **NGR:SN360461**
Site type: Cropmark **Category :** E

Cropmark of unknown significance seen on an aerial photograph and recorded in the Dyfed SMR. On the ground there are some surface irregularities but nothing to suggest a specific feature here, or anything of significance.

PRN: 37819 Site no: Gernos cottage I **NGR:SN35674621**
Site type: Cottage **Category :** D

Site of former cottage situated on high ground on Gernos mountain, presumably of late 18th or early 19th-century origin and representing encroachment onto former common land. Two enclosures remained in 1891 although no buildings at that time. The dwelling thus demolished and only a stone scatter on the surface now indicates its approximate site. A scarp bank, 0.6m runs diagonally into the field and this is almost certainly part of the enclosure system.

PRN: 37872 Site no: Gernos cottage II **NGR:SN35644635**
Site type: Cottage ? **Category :** E

One of a number of possible dwelling sites show on a 1955 aerial photograph, but no surface evidence noted in the field in 2000, and curiously early mapping shows no indications of anything on what is one of the highest points of the former open common.

PRN: Site no: 1 Glyn-yr-odyn NGR: SN36104568
Site type: Farmstead Category : D

PRN: 5750 Site no: Gurnos Mountain barrow (W) NGR: SN35574588
Site type: Round barrow Category: A

PRN: 5753 Site no: Talgarth NGR: SN35234605
Site type: Cropmark Category: E

PRN: 5754 Site no: Balen Bwch Isaf NGR: SN36584659
Site type: Ring barrow ? Category: E

PRN: 6354 Site no: Gurnos Mountain barrow (Middle) NGR: SN35624586
Site type: Round barrow Category: A

PRN: 7337 Site no: Coed-y-bryn NGR: SN35354525
Site type: Chapel Category: E

PRN: 9070 Site no: Cefn Coed NGR: SN35584521
Site type: Cottage Category: E

PRN: 9071 Site no: Trum-Ilwyd

NGR: SN35654566

Site type: Cottage

Category : C

Site of deserted cottage, surviving as a terraced platform, 20m N-S x 12m. The grassy wall base of a gable wall, c.5m long, survives at the north end of the platform and the northern ends of the eastern and western long walls survive. The rest of the building has been removed and is crossed by a modern access track, but the south front of the platform is revetted in stone and could have formed a support for the gable end. There may have been a small ancillary structure between the north gable wall and the edge of the terrace cut, no more than 3m long. On the opposite side of the track that passes Trum-Ilwyd is a large pit, almost certainly a quarry.

PRN: 9881 Site no: Gernos

NGR: SN36354513

Site type: Mansion

Category : B

Gentry house, now derelict, though precise condition not known. The present building, known as Mount Gernos, of c.1800-25 with additions from c.1870 is the successor of one or more former houses, known as Gernos, going back into the 16th century. RCAHMW thought that the core of the building might perhaps be 18th-century.

PRN: 17474 Site no: Gernos quarry

NGR: SN36124652

Site type: Quarry

Category : D

Quarry showing on modern Ordnance Survey maps, and certainly in existence in 1891 although at that date it was smaller, and there was another, smaller quarry pit to the north of it.

PRN: 37873 Site no: Gernos cottage III

NGR: SN36064554

Site type: Cottage ?

Category : E

An aerial photograph of 1955 suggests that a deserted settlement may have been located within a parcel, subsequently wooded as depicted on the 1964 1:10560 OS map.