

## **A conjectural boundary feature from the Clydach Gorge to the Taff.**

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### **Summary.**

*This paper describes a feature which is sometimes in the form of a channel, sometimes appearing to make use of well-defined natural features and, at least in one case as a "bank and ditch". It has been shown as running intermittently over a distance of approximately 16 to 19 km. It is clearly old but its precise age is unknown. It is also unknown by whom it was commissioned and constructed. The main objective of this paper is to describe the feature in reasonable detail using maps and photographs but makes some speculations as to its history solely in the attempt to highlight the questions which need answering.*

All the work on foot was carried out with R. G. Burchell, who also arranged the geophysical survey, and he hopes, eventually, to produce a more academic report. In the present paper he is in general agreement with what can be seen but would prefer not to speculate on the origins of the feature. All speculation in this paper is entirely that of the author and is intended hopefully to highlight areas which need deeper research.

This report is intended to give a general description of the feature and it is accepted that a lot more detailed work will need to be done in order to understand its origin and purpose. For this reason this work concentrates on being descriptive and contains a wide range of maps and photographs in order to define its route and appearance. Because of the preliminary nature of the document it is intended only as a basis for fuller later research and reproduction, except to enable such research, is not intended. It is suggested that those interested in carrying out future work contact the author of this paper who possesses a great deal of other relevant material.

The feature was first noticed on the upper flank of Cefn Manmoel in March 2006 by Rodger Burchell from his home in Ebbw Vale. As the author lives in Tredegar Burchell rang and asked him if it also appeared on his side of the mountain. On investigation it was found to be clearly visible and a visit to the area showed that there was indeed such a feature and a remarkably prominent one at that, as can be seen in Photo. 1, which was taken facing east and downhill towards St. James, Tredegar from SO 15870 08357.

Examination of the 1:25,000 Ordnance Survey map of the area (Fig. 1) showed that this deep channel had been observed by the Ordnance Survey surveying team but that it had been rendered as a drainage channel associated with directing water to Scotch Peter's Reservoir – a network of such drainage channels can also be seen in Fig. 1. Close examination of the feature (indicated with broken red), is shown on the map as crossing the main

contouring water collection channel for the reservoir at SO 15696 08315, this immediately made it clear that the section of the descending ditch immediately uphill of this collection channel, was deliberately blocked off, as can be seen in Photo. 2 taken where the contouring drainage channel crosses from left to right and the descending ditch is clearly visible above the fence line; top half of the picture. It is clear from this that the descending ditch was not being utilised as a drain to collect water as the feeder for the reservoir truncates it. The feature can be clearly seen on Google Earth (Photo. 4.) where it has been indicated with small black arrows.

The feature is shown on the 1839 Bedwellty tithe map running as far east as the boundary fence of Lewis Harry Lewis (1839 property No. 2206) at approx. SO 165 085.

The feature runs in a straight line uphill and continues out of sight. It is crossed by the Manmoel road, with no provision made for water to pass beneath the road; after this it crosses the highest point at SO 1620 0843. It subsequently continues for some distance downhill on the Ebbw Vale side as can be seen in Photo. 3 – this was the feature originally observed by Rodger Burchell. More recent research on the mountain for another paper still in preparation has shown that the present ridgeway road to Manmoel was upgraded sometime between the Ordnance Survey surveyors drawings of 1815-1817, where it is shown as a narrower route taking a more sinuous path, and the first edition 1" O/S map of 1832 – last updated in 1825-1828. Neither map shows the feature being discussed in this paper.

The true date of this linear feature, the characteristics of which strongly suggested might be a boundary marker, is uncertain. My first reaction when I saw it was that it was of Late Bronze Age because of its similarity to other such features such as, but not only, the one already known of further south on Cefn Manmoel running from approx. SO 1799 0565 to SO 0718 0570. This feature had been attributed by Frank Olding and others to such a date and the similarity of the section to the newly discovered one is obvious. Rodger Burchell, while not dismissing this, suggested that it could possibly be an ecclesiastical boundary associated with the ancient Manmoel grange - an outlier of Llantarnam Abbey's lands. If this was so that would date it (and perhaps by implication the northern feature as well) as Late Mediaeval e.g. 1200AD or somewhat later. The two features are not, however, necessarily of the same nature other than that both are embanked ditches. The more southerly features most probably designed to control movements of cattle as was common practice.

Perhaps because of the discovery of linear boundary features to the east of Tredegar, his eye was attuned to such things and, after a light snowfall in February 2007, Martin saw from the window of his house in St. James what appeared to be a possible similar feature running over the flanks of Mynydd Bedwellty (Photo. 5, where it has been indicated by an arrow). The lower part of the feature below the mountain wall is comprised of a "bank and ditch" but the feature appeared to continue westward as a shallow furrow over the mountain.

A site visit shortly after showed that there was such a feature to be found but that it was far less imposing than that just described. Some photographs give a good sense of the feature.

Photo. 6. Taken facing east from SO 14293 07270.

Photo. 7. Taken facing east at the point where it crossed the path over the ridge which runs north to south. (SO 14239 07221).

The alignment of the feature is shown, lined in red, on Fig. 2. To the east it seems to align approximately with the western end of the boundary feature running over Cefn Manmoel as is discussed earlier - this can be seen in Photo. 26. which was taken (from SO 14542 07321) facing east towards the stream gully descending from near the western end of the section of the feature crossing from Ebbw Vale down to the River Sirhowy (marked with an arrow). It is also possible that the stream running down the steep declivity through St. James, Tredegar, might also have served as a boundary feature. The lower part of this stream today runs through a culvert which enters the river at approx. SO 1465 0743, immediately downstream of the present pedestrian bridge crossing the river Sirhowy (marked on Fig. 2 with a red cross). The First Edition 1" O/S map shows that this point is seemingly approximately 300m out of alignment with the postulated eastern projection of the feature crossing Bedwellty mountain. To the west of Mynydd Bedwellty it appeared to continue, at a slightly different bearing, over Twyn Tysswg and continues to the Rhymney River. From here there was, as yet untested at this time, the tantalising possibility of it continuing over Cefn Brithdir just south of Pontlottyn and Fochriw. As can be seen from the 1:25,000 O/S map of the area (Fig. 3) a section of a linear water feature is shown crossing from one side of the mountain to the other and, as was the case for the boundary feature over Cefn Manmoel, it is shown in blue i.e. as a water course. Traversing the mountain from SO 1117 0516 to SO1160 0547, as it does, this designation is highly unlikely. This 'blue feature' is further extended with stone walls at each end.

The next section we examined on foot was from Cwm Tysswg to the Rhymney River at Pontlottyn (Fig. 2) and, although an area around SO 132 065, immediately to the east of the golf course, was ploughed and planted, it was possible to follow its path west through the golf course, despite levelling and mowing. The feature became very clear either side of the western boundary fence of the golf course and could be seen continuing downhill towards Abertysswg. The section to the east of Abertysswg was not easy to trace at the area near the main road through Abertysswg but was clear after it had crossed a water channel which ran around the flank of the mountain carrying water from the Nant Tysswg at about SO 133 069 for industrial use in the area once occupied by Pwll-y-llaca and the Mc. Laren collieries. (approx. area SO 122 064)

This led to a detailed examination of the 1:25,000 O/S maps of a wider area and two possible further sections could be seen traversing Cefn Brithdir and

Mynydd Fochriw (Fig. 3.). These features were characterised on the maps by being similarly depicted by the Ordnance Survey as was the section from Tredegar to Ebbw Vale i.e. as blue lined drainage ditches. As the first found was clearly not a drainage ditch, passing as it did up one side of the mountain and down the other, the feature over Cefn Brithdir and Mynydd Fochriw immediately aroused suspicions and, obviously, required a close examination on foot.

A visit to Cefn Brithdir and Mynydd Fochriw (Fig. 3) immediately showed that our suspicions were justified with, in both cases, clear ditches being apparent. The feature was very clear over Cefn y Brithdir as Photo. 8, taken facing east at SO 115 053, where it passes over the northern flank of the mountain and Photo. 9 where it can be seen running diagonally across the photo towards the conifer plantation with Fochriw village to the right and beyond. This section of the feature can also be clearly seen in Photo. 27, where it has been highlighted with arrows. The feature over Mynydd Fochriw was particularly interesting in that the present ridgeway road passed over it – just as the present Manmoel road passed over the feature on that mountain (Photos. 10 and 11).

What was also of interest was to be seen on the ridgeway of Fochriw Common where the feature was quite prominent. Photo. 10 was taken uphill facing west where it rises from the modern road just to the south of the cemetery, at approx. SO 101 043, and Photo. 11, where the feature was crossed by the ridgeway road. The area is shown on Fig. 4 (Modern 1:25,000 O/S) and Fig. 5 taken from the 1" 1832 O/S map shows the considerable "ribboning" of the north/south route. The early roads shown in Fig. 5, taken from a 1" 1832 O/S, show the "braided" character clearly. This feature has been discussed elsewhere (Refs. 1 and 2.) and the annotated letters on the map are related to this. Route "A" (lined in blue), which leaves the ridgeway road just south of Carn bugail, descends to Merthyr. Surface damage to the road crossing the feature at SO 101 043 shows that it has some metalling but only an archaeological section could provide an adequate understanding of its construction - the "braid" F seems to be the best fit for the "Roman" road (M 621). Photo. 12 is a Google Earth image of the area discussed and this shows that there is some interaction between the road and the boundary feature and, on foot, it appeared that the road had sunk a little across this line suggesting that the road we see today was laid over the feature.

The western side of the Mynydd Fochriw ridge was accessed by driving down the rough road flanking its western side and it was gratifying to see the feature descending the mountain, passing beneath the road at approx. SO 0965 0422 and continuing downhill towards the river (Photo. 13). Further downhill the feature was disturbed by a branch of the road leading north to Nant-y-ffin, by the railway and by some mineral works but below the railway it could once more be found as far as the junction of the Nant y ffin and the Nant yr Heol

The far side of river was not readily accessible so we returned to the car and made our way onto Merthyr Common where, driving down the mountain road, at SO 081 042 it passed beneath the road. It was not a wall, as Fig. 4

suggested, but a well-defined channel similar to the others previously found descending eastwards downhill towards Nant y ffin. We followed it uphill to the west (Photo. 14) over the highest point and down the Taff side as far as approx. SO 077 040 after which it could be seen, changing direction slightly, continuing towards Pentrebach (Photo.15).

The section over Mynydd Fochriw and Mynydd Gelligaer were of particular interest as on both mountains ancient roads were to be found – this, of course, is also true of the Mynydd Manmoel road. The section crossing Mynydd Fochriw was of particular interest as the Roman road from Cardiff to Brecon running along the ridge (M 621). I. D. Margary, in his "Roman Roads in Britain" (Ref. 3), remarks on this area (he was travelling from north to south)

*"The crowd of railways and works in the valley below the reservoir (Talybont) has obliterated everything on to Dowlais, and the road is next seen on the ridge of Gelligaer Common, where the present road from Dowlais Top Station, after getting clear of the old quarries, straightens along the ridge and represents it as far as the hump of Mynydd Fochriw. Here the old track can be seen climbing steeply up, while the modern road goes round. The Roman road went straight on along the ridge of the grassy common, but it is not visible for some distance, although  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile further on it is clearly visible as a rough grass track showing a difference in the rough herbage. At this point, where a side lane comes up from Bedlinog, it joins the present rough but drivable track along the ridge and follows this in very straight lengths all the way to Gelligaer, where it passes close by the Roman fort and camp." Not very precise but affirming a road in more or less the right place.*

Ignoring for the moment his comments of the area of Dowlais Top this seems to be a pretty fair description. In Martin's Volume 2, "Dowlais Top to Bwlch ar y fan" (Ref.2), he discusses the area in some detail and points out that a side road branched off the ridgeway some distance below Carn Bugail and descended, via Nant y fin, to Merthyr. This has been shown as route "A" on Fig. 5 which is taken from the first edition Ordnance Survey Old Series 1" to the mile map published in 1832 and surveyed finally around 1827. Close examination of this map shows what, at first sight, to be a tangle of braided tracks over the mountain north of here. Although there are some minor diversions over short distances it can be seen north from Gelligaer "G" splits into other main routes - one splitting off west to Merthyr "A", another "D" to the east passing via Pontllytyn to "Sarrowy Bridge", Pont y gof and Nantyglo and that the third continues over Mynydd Fochriw to Dowlais Top and beyond. This leaves "B" and "F", neither of which are shown on modern maps but are partly represented on the 1952 1" O/S and, to a lesser degree, on the 1972 1" O/S. The 2008 1:25,000 O/S map does show a section labelled "Roman Road" but this finishes well short of the area where the boundary feature crosses the clearly visible length of old track where a geophysical survey was carried out. This section of track was quite clear on the ground and it was seen, at a point where a modern vehicle had caused some damage to the surface turf, to have at least some metalling. This track, which corresponds best to braid "F", along the ridge can be seen in Photo. 11 and in Photo. 12, which was produced using Google Earth.

On 29 04 2009 a geophysical survey using both Magnetometry and Resistivity was carried out by SiteScan Archaeological Ltd at SO 09977 04305 (Photo. 28.) where the boundary feature crosses the track. The geophysical survey showed the boundary feature very strongly on the magnetic data but the road which sits on the bedrock hardly registers. The resistivity results are less clear but suggest that the boundary feature passes beneath the road. This is the impression given by the Google Earth image of the site (Photo. 12).

Taken at face value the visual appearance with the above results would seem to indicate that the boundary feature predated the metalling of the track. If it is the Roman road (Margary M 621) one would expect a degree of metalling on one so important. This would seem to imply that the boundary feature is very old indeed, i.e. predating the Roman Road, but for such an important matter to have any degree of certainty an archaeological investigation is needed.

It was now apparent that the feature ran over a considerable distance (Fig. 6) and this raised the questions regarding its point of origin and end i.e. how far to the east and how far west. These facts would be of great importance in attempting to ascertain its nature and its age and, for this reason, it was decided to examine the area to the east of Ebbw Vale to see if the feature continued.

West of Ebbw Vale a very credible route for the boundary feature has been shown although it is only really well-defined and largely undisturbed where it passes over high ground. Off the ridges it is largely destroyed by the extensive development which has taken place in the South Wales valleys in the last 200 years. However, there are strong suspicions that there might never have been a continuous cut ditch but that natural features, such as rivers and deep stream channels, were used if there was such a feature suitably placed. This is in accord with the old records we have concerning parish boundaries and their commemoration by perambulation and "beating the bounds" to identify and to pass on the knowledge of such boundaries to the future generations.

However, between the Ebbw Fawr and the Ebbw Fach such has been the level of industrial activity that, although there are features which could be associated, there is no feature of which one could be certain to be relevant. East of the Ebbw Fach the only indisputably cut boundary ditch is that running from Carreg Gwair (SO 2118 1033) eastwards to meet the present Brynmawr to Blaenafon road at SO 0880 1110 (Fig. 7 - 1:25,000 O/S). It also ran westwards, with a slight change in direction, through the field downhill towards Blaen Cwm Celyn, again following a course rendered as a blue lined water-course by the O/S which, on examination, it clearly was not.

From its apparent direction this led to the speculation whether the feature might have a meaningful relationship with the Iron Age hillfort of Twyn y dinas, shown most clearly in Fig. 9 (1832 1" O/S).

More recent maps do not distinguish the camp nor do they name the other hillfort of Craig y gaer which faces Twyn y dinas across the valley.. The presence of these two fortifications and the steep natural boundary formed by the Clydach Gorge leads to the speculation that they might have been related to two different tribal territories. Fig. 9, taken from first published edition of the 1" O/S map, shows the valley in the 1820s with the two hill-forts clearly shown and named. It also shows Pwll-y-Cwn where the river Clydach is easily crossed – today there is very impressive bridge known as the “Devils Bridge”. This is shown more clearly on Fig. 8, which is a section of a 6" to the mile O/S map.

The actual area of Twyn y dinas is better seen in a series of Google Earth images - Fig. 10 covering the entire area from the Brynmawr to Blaenafon road and Twyn y dinas and Figs. 11 and 12 closing in progressively.

At first sight a wider area, including Carreg Gwair, viewed with Google Earth was very exiting as it showed a clear linear feature running from the Brynmawr to Blaenafon road proximate to the end of the ditch to the east from Carreg Gwair and a very straight line from here towards Twyn y dinas, this corresponded well with a feature marked as a footpath on Fig. 8 (1950 6" O/S). However, hopes were dashed when, on inspection, it was found that a major pipeline had followed the path of the possible boundary feature virtually exactly. There is a short section near Waunllapria (Photo. 16), which is very suggestive but hardly convincing comprising less than 100m in length.

Twyn y dinas itself is a promontory fort offering very good views of the valley - Photo.17. down the valley, Photo. 18. across the valley to Craig-y-gaer and Photo 19. up the valley. The fort site itself is difficult to interpret as it has been quarried for its limestone to an unknown extent - a similar fate was suffered by Craig-y-gaer.

The ground falls away steeply to north and east making the site very suitable for defence and it is particularly interesting that the wall bounding the large field area on the northern side follows the contours of the ground and is strongly built and acts, not only as a boundary wall but, as a revetment allowing the land surface on the uphill side to be relatively level and nearly up to the top of the wall while on the downhill side the wall appears to be nearly 2 m. high. This raises speculation as to whether the large flat area might have been the site of the "Dinas". It would be desirable if further investigation were possible. This level area is very prominent on Figs. 11 and 12 (Google images).

Having found the possible eastern end of the feature our attention was turned to the west of the Taff. Passing over Merthyr Common the feature continues downhill (Photo. 15) towards Pentrebach until becoming obliterated by early industrial activity at SO 0755 0390.

The 1990 1:25,000 O/S map (Fig. 13), shows a linear feature running from SN 0425 0188 in the west to SN 0520 0265 in the east – this is very clear on the Google Earth image (Photo. 20). Closer examination of the images

showed that to the west of the Mynydd Merthyr ridgeway road there is an old high stone wall marking the boundary between Cwmbach C. and Troed-y-Rhiw C. (Photos. 21 and 22). Where this boundary crosses the Mynydd Merthyr ridgeway road there are two boundary stones – one at SN 04655 02228 (Photo. 23) which is engraved with ownership markings and a Ordnance Survey Bench mark) and the other (Photo. 24), with ownership markings only, nearby at SN 046 027.

The linear feature to the east of the ridgeway road which, descending directly towards Pentrebach, is less certain as it comprises a broad path through the forestry so that, although it looks as though it marks a feature possibly pre-dating the forestry, it is less certain. From SO 0535 0270, where there are the ruins of an old sheep dip a strong stone wall continues downhill alongside a steep-sided stream gully. It has been previously suggested that such deep stream gullies- such as that to be found at St. James in Tredegar – could have provided a satisfactory natural boundary feature..

Any continuation of a possible feature at the western end of the wall (SN 0425 0188) has not been pursued as the area has been developed over many years but there are interesting aspect to the arrangement of some local lanes near Ffynon-y-gog which might repay some future work.

Further west still either to the north/west towards Hirwaun or south/west towards Neath is awaiting future work but, certainly, there are interesting looking features to be seen both on maps and by close scanning with Google Earth

## **Discussion.**

This putative boundary, spanning, possibly as much as 16-19 km., raises many questions which will require further research.

1) It is old. Yes, but how old? Are all the sections of the same age or were some earlier ones incorporated into a later extended boundary? Certainly there is considerable variation in the dimensions of the cross-section with the one over Mynydd Fochriw being still up to approx.1.5m. deep and 2.5m. wide in places while the one over the northern flanks of Mynydd Bedwellty sometimes as little as 0.5m or even less in places. Most of the others are intermediate. (Their dimensions are reasonably clear from the photographs.)

2) It seems that, historically, natural or other pre-existing features were sometimes used as boundaries by mutual agreement. The deep stream gully running down the flank of the mountain from near the western end of the boundary feature from Ebbw Vale past St. James might have served such a purpose. At present the boundary feature over Mynydd Manmoel ends at its western end at a stone wall at SO 1553 0828 but the area of some 20m. or so on each side of the wall is very boggy and covered in rank vegetation making it difficult to see the relationship of the wall to the boundary feature. This relationship could well be informative - on the Bedwellty mountain the



boundary feature appears to pre-date the wall - it would, however require some manual work to ascertain the relationship here. The general configuration of the stone walls descending from the mountain are interesting as they appear to be so shaped as to "funnel" livestock from the mountain to the lower ground. The impression is that the boundary feature continues below the wall but any possible further continuation is no longer discernable due to the presence of a wide forestry road, downhill of which is a heavily forested area. The general alignment of the boundary is such that it would have met the stream channel approximately opposite Llyswedog isaf.

From consideration of maps such Fig. 2. it was noticed that projections of the boundary feature over Mynydd Bedwellty and Mynydd Manmoel crossed at approx. SO 1540 8815 - just above St. James Park in the area proximate to the western end on the boundary from Ebbw Vale. The area between the Sirhowy river and this point is today heavily built over and despite a careful search of old maps, such as the 1877 25 inch to the mile O/S, no convincing intermediate alignments could be found.

3) In the lower parts of the valleys in the industrialised areas, such as Tredegar and Ebbw Vale, the features are lost but they can still be found in others such as near Nant-y-ffin and, to a lesser extent, Cwm Twyssg.

4) The feature does not pass over the highest ground but rather across the northern flanks. At each of the points where they pass over the highest ground the crossing point on the adjacent ridges can be seen.

5) Does it continue further in either direction or does it provided a north/south boundary with the Taff and the Clydach gorge defining the east/west boundaries?

6) The suggestion is that, to the east, it continues towards the River Clydach and hence possibly down the gorge (Fig 7). It would seem that, unless such a prominent feature as the Clydach Gorge was used any land boundary over the mountains east towards the River Usk would present many problems. The existence of Twyn y Dinas on the southern side of the gorge and Craig y gaer on the northern might be considered as being related to a suggested boundary down the gorge.

7) It can be seen from Fig. 6 that, in the main, the feature is only to be found where it ran across the mountain ridges although there are some exceptions. One, which is very striking, is to be found on the eastern flank of Mynydd Bedwellty where the boundary feature from the west after meeting the stone mountain wall at SO 14346 07321 continues downhill to the east as a bank and ditch. This section which continues until it meets the drainage channel contouring the mountainside above Ty Trist colliery at SO 14640 07406. It is curious that this prominent "bank and ditch", clearly to be seen on Google Earth, is not shown on most maps, not even on the parish tithe map (it is partially rendered as a wall on the 2002 1:25,000 O/S). Over this stretch it is a "clear bank and ditch". Photos. 25 (facing uphill) and 26 (facing downhill) were taken at a gate opening at SO 14542 07317. On Fig. 26 the view across

the valley shows the area at the end on the Ebbw Vale to Tredegar section of the feature (arrowed) discussed in 2). On the lower slopes of the mountains and on the valley bottoms it is difficult to identify the feature with any degree of confidence due to the effects of the intense industrial and occupational activity in the valleys since the end of the 18<sup>th</sup>. century which destroyed most any traces and because the downhill slopes have natural well-defined features which could be used as boundaries by agreement - this is quite likely to be the case at the western end of the feature running from Ebbw Vale to Tredegar where a deep natural stream gully leads down to the river. Another possibility, depending upon its date of inception, is that the wild vegetation in the valleys was very heavy indeed. Although there is no clear dating at present it is clear that each of the sections crossing the ridgeways are related to each other and form a common feature over a considerable distance. This would imply a strong authority or an agreed policy and strategy by a number of lesser authorities

## **Conclusions.**

1) Although, in this paper, the feature has sometimes been referred to as a “boundary feature” this is not a proven fact but has been used as a name of convenience which seems to be appropriate considering its general character and its long-distance nature.

2) The term “boundary” implies a line of separation around an occupied area or between two adjacent areas. In the latter case any boundary would have to be by agreement between the two adjacent authorities. As we have no idea as to the date of its inception we also have no idea as to the identity or identities of any such authorities.

3) It is observed that the feature does not cross the highest point of the mountains but, generally, across the northern flank of the mountain ridges. Typical of this characteristic is that section which runs across Cefn y Brithdir (Photos 9. and 27 – where it is highlighted with arrows.). It is not known why this should be so but some possibilities could include:

a) One authority might have perceived the high ground as its ancestral territory. The higher ground i.e. the ridgeway tops and the upper flanks have a large number of religious and cultural sites and these might have been generally respected

b) It might be a defining line between the higher, and generally less productive, ground – due to altitude and weather - and the lower i.e. a line of exclusion by one authority to another.

c) Ascent and descent across the higher ground is more difficult.

d) Generally the higher ground was – and still is – more suitable to grazing than for arable farming indicating, perhaps, different cultural behaviours and lifestyles.

4) It is pre-industrial – certainly existing before the construction of Scotch Peter's Reservoir and its associated water collection channels.

5) It predates the present Manmoel road as it passes beneath it. This is also the case where it crosses the other ridgeways, such as those on Cefn Brithdir, Mynydd Fochriw and Merthyr Common. That the feature carried no water is clear because no provision is made, such as a culvert, to carry water beneath the road. The features relationship to crossing roads is of the greatest importance – one of the first to be subjected to an archaeological investigation should be on Mynydd Fochriw where it interacts with the Roman road as can be seen in Photos. 11, 12 and 28. Fig. 28 was taken at the site where the geophysical survey was carried out.

6) The ditch is up to 5ft. (1.75m) deep on Mynydd Manmoel, although there are suggestions it was re-cut in the early days of the 19th. century. At other places it is very variable, being a small trough across Mynydd Bedwellty and of different sections between these extremes in other place. It would appear, from what we can see today that the boundary was more definitive than defensive.

7) It is a matter of note that near the top on the Ebbw Vale side of the mountain there is a side feature running from SO 292 006 to SO 163 083 but the reason for this is not certain as to whether this was an original feature or a later addition. Just below here there was mineral extraction in probably the early 19<sup>th</sup>. century and, as there is a water seepage at the highest end of this spur, it is possible that this water might have been sough during the industrial period. This spur is visible on the aerial photograph (Photo.4) highlighted by the different vegetation benefiting from the water, particularly rush, following its course.

8) On the Tredegar side, downhill of the track running through the present forestry plantation, the 1:25,000 O/S map (Fig. 1) shows a section of wall which might have been contiguous. Being within the plantation this is not presently visible.

9) The feature can be seen on the aerial photograph taken using Google Earth and is indicated in Photo. 4, where the feature is highlighted by a series of arrows. The other sections described can also all be seen with Google Earth.

Although it would take further work to be precise and to get a fuller understanding it does appear that the boundary feature respects known ancient sites such as barrows and cairn fields.

10) The feature does not match any known parish boundaries of any date.

## **References.**

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