

CPAT Report No. 1397

Treflys, Llangammarch Wells


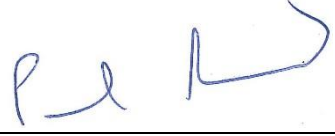

TOPOGRAPHIC SURVEY



YMDDIRIEDOLAETH ARCHAEOLEGOL CLWYD-POWYS

CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

Client name: Cadw
 CPAT Project No: 1926
 Project Name: Llysoedd and Maerdrefi
 Grid Reference: SN 9364 4908
 County/LPA: Breconshire
 CPAT Report No: 1397
 Event PRN: 142760
 Report status: Final
 Confidential: No

Prepared by:	Checked by:	Approved by:
		
Richard Hankinson Senior Archaeologist	Paul Belford Director	Nigel Jones Principal Archaeologist
15/02/2016	16/02/2016	17/02/2016

Bibliographic reference:

Hankinson, R., 2016. *Treflys, Llangammarch Wells; Topographic Survey*, Unpublished report, CPAT Report No 1397.

Cover photo: The ruined farm building at Treflys, from the east (CPAT 4129-0001)



YMDDIRIEDOLAETH ARCHAEOLEGOL CLWYD-POWYS
 CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

41 Broad Street, Welshpool, Powys, SY21 7RR, United Kingdom

+44 (0) 1938 553 670

trust@cpat.org.uk

www.cpat.org.uk

©CPAT 2016



The Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust is a Registered Organisation
 with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists

CONTENTS

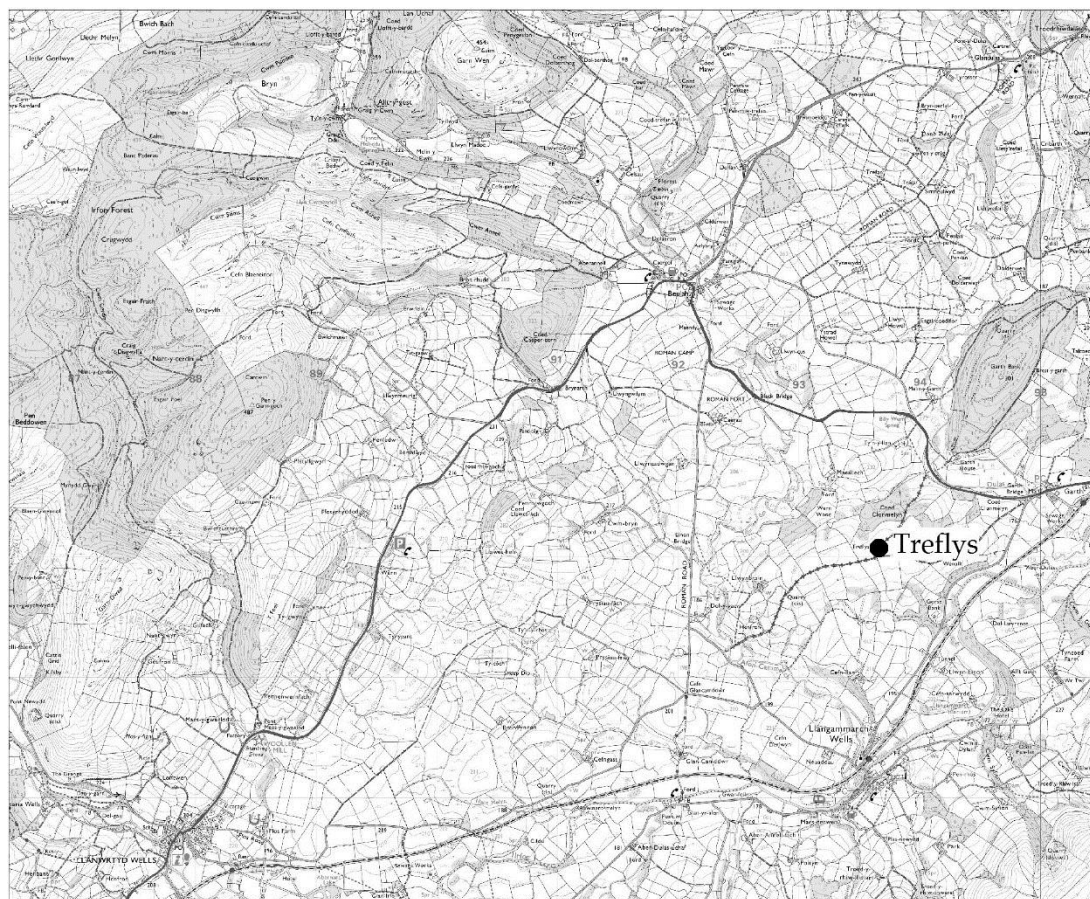
SUMMARY	II
1 INTRODUCTION	1
2 BACKGROUND	2
3 METHODOLOGY	3
4 THE SURVEY	4
5 CONCLUSIONS	6
6 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	7
7 SOURCES	7
8 ARCHIVE DEPOSITION STATEMENT	8
APPENDIX 1: SITE ARCHIVE.....	9

Summary

A topographic survey was carried out on earthworks at the site of a former farm called Treflys in the parish of Llangammarch Wells. The name of the farm had been considered to link this site to that of a local court (llys) from the latter part of the early medieval period and aerial photographs revealed cropmark evidence of an enclosure which might define the extent of this llys, broadly centred on the farm. All visible earthworks were recorded, including those defining a sub-circular enclosure which was associated with the farm and encompassed a plantation in the 19th century which presumably acted as shelter for the farm building. Traces of what had been a reasonably large earthwork bank were identified underneath the bank defining the sub-circular enclosure on its north-east side, but elsewhere this earlier bank had been either completely removed or showed only as a very denuded low earthwork, probably as a result of post-medieval land improvement. The cropmark enclosure was plotted from the aerial photographs and this showed that it was associated with the earlier bank, thereby demonstrating that there were surviving surface traces of the suggested early medieval enclosure.

1 Introduction

- 1.1. The survey described herein relates to a study of Llysoedd and Maerdrefi undertaken by CPAT on behalf of Cadw, with a view to identifying relevant sites in north-east and east Wales (Silvester 2015). The *llys* was the place where the court of a King or Prince was situated, while the often nearby *maerdref* referred to the King's land in the district with its associated bond settlement. Both terms are dealt with in detail in the Welsh law codes.
- 1.2. Treflys was identified as the likely site of a *llys* by Silvester on a number of grounds, not least that 14th-century records show that the *llys* portion of the name has historical integrity (see below). This was also a site where earthworks suggested there was some physical surviving evidence, and aerial photographs taken by RCAHMW in 2006 showed traces of a cropmark enclosure which was likely to have encompassed the *llys*. Silvester suggested that a full earthwork survey coupled with aerial photograph transcription would be beneficial in understanding the complex.



This map is reproduced from Ordnance Survey material with the permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office © Crown Copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. Welsh Government. Licence Number: 100017916 (2016).

Atgynhychir y map hwn o ddeunydd yr Arolwg Ordnans gyda chaniatâd Arolwg Ordnans ar ran Rheolwr Llyfrfa Ei Mawrhydi © Hawlfraint y Goron. Mae atgynhychu heb ganiatâd yn torri Hawlfraint y Goron a gall hyn arwain at erlyniad neu achos sifil. Llywodraeth Cymru. Rhif Trwydded: 100017916 (2016).

Fig. 1: Location of Treflys

- 1.3. The survey and transcription formed part of a limited programme of follow-up work supported by Cadw for 2015-16. The survey was carried out in November 2015 and the details recorded assisted the transcription of information from the aerial photography.

2 Background

- 2.1. This section is based on Silvester 2015, but it is worth recounting a brief description of relevant terms, as used below. In medieval Wales, each group of dwellings forming a settlement was termed a *tref*, or township, and these were grouped together to form a major land division known as a *cantref* (literally 100 townships). The cantref potentially had its origin in the period following the Roman withdrawal from Wales, when the land was divided between a series local lords, who claimed the rights of a King over their landholding. The cantrefi were subsequently often subdivided into *commotes* (*cwmwd* in Welsh) for the purposes of land administration, and in the case of Treflys it seems to have been one of four commotes within the cantref of Buellt, that are recorded in the Red Book of Hergest, dating approximately to the end of the 14th century (<http://www.rhyddiaithganoloesol.caerdydd.ac.uk/en/ms-page.php?ms=Jesus111&page=90r>).
- 2.2. Treflys was formerly a township in the ecclesiastical parish of Llangammarch, recorded (as Treflus) by Edward Lhuyd in the late 17th century. William Rees went further, however, and saw it as a commote. Rees also pinpointed the name on his map of South Wales in the Fourteenth Century (1932). What significance can be attached to this is not clear, but Richards cites Treflas in an Inquisition Post Mortem of 1359 and Trefflys in the Ministers' Accounts for the years between 1360-7, documents which mention both Owen ap Cad', the 'beadle' and Hoel ap Richard, the reeve of Treflys. The name also appears in the 16th century with the prefix 'Swydd', showing that it was seen as a subdivision of the cantref of Buellt (Builth) (Morgan and Powell 1999, 148).
- 2.3. Treflys is also the name given to an isolated farm, now ruined, astride a broad ridge a little less than 2km to the north of the village of Llangammarch (Fig. 1). Despite being close to the boundary of the administrative area, the ridge-top location would have been selected to dominate the landscape, perhaps confirming that the site was a focal point of the commote.
- 2.4. The origin of the farm is unknown; it was named and depicted on the Ordnance Survey surveyor's drawing of 1820, although this was an annotation that could be later than the given date. It was certainly in existence by 1843 when the Tithe map and apportionment give its owner and occupier as one Ebenezer Maitland. On both the Tithe map and the late 19th-century large-scale Ordnance Survey map (Fig. 2), the L-shaped farm building was encompassed entirely within a broad, near-circular, shelter belt composed primarily of conifers; the earlier map showing that the roadway approaching from the north-east passed through the farmstead and exited to the south, while the later shows the farmstead to have been bypassed. Examination of the remains of the L-shaped farm building suggests it is likely to be of 18th century or later date.

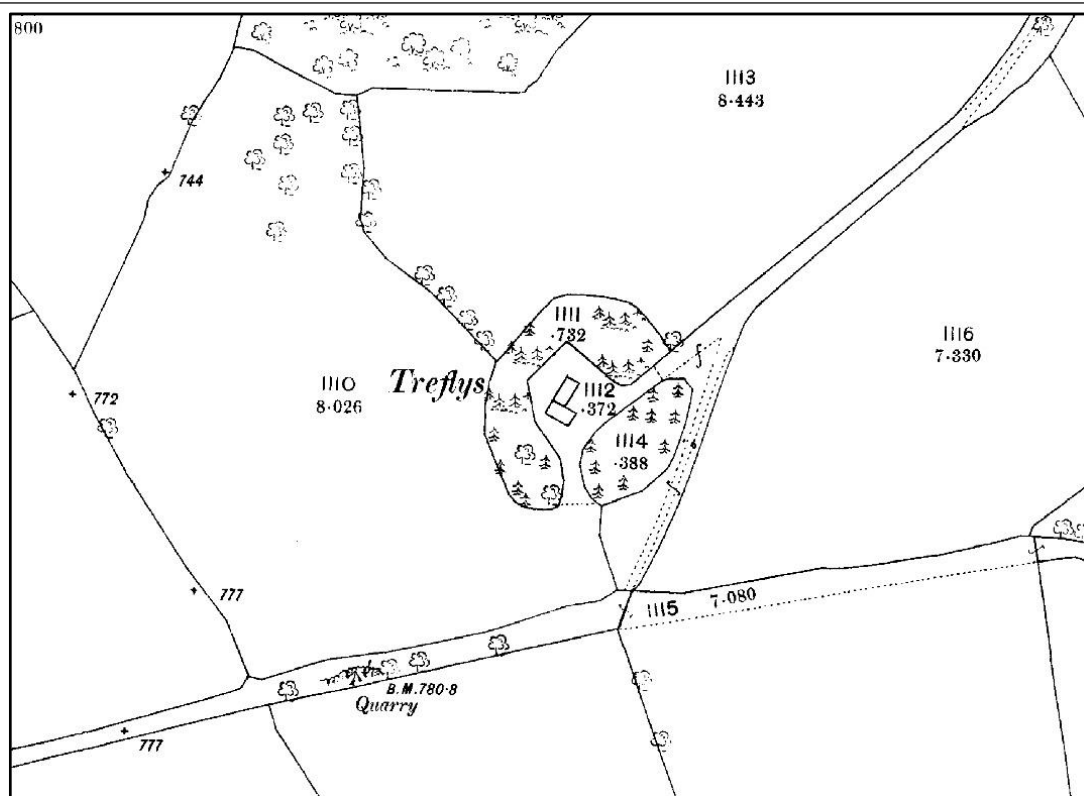


Fig. 2: Treflys as depicted on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map of 1889.

- 2.5. The relict earthworks of one or perhaps two enclosures, their circuits incomplete, survive on the hill top, marking to some degree where the shelter belt lay. The earthworks had not been systematically recorded or surveyed prior to this study. Aerial photography by the Royal Commission in July 2006 (AP_2006_3650: Fig. 3) displays the cropmark of a further larger enclosure which on the east at least encompasses the earthworks. Silvester noted that it was unclear but perhaps unlikely that these features are all of one period and also that a full earthwork survey coupled with aerial photograph transcription would be beneficial in understanding the complex. Notwithstanding the lack of detailed evidence, Silvester suggested that Treflys was a very strong contender for a court site that has surviving features.

3 Methodology

- 3.1. All visible earthworks were recorded using total station surveying. The current field boundaries in the immediate locality were also surveyed and these were used to move and rotate the survey to align it with the Ordnance Survey mapping.
- 3.2. The revised survey was then used to provide locational information which permitted the aerial photograph to be registered in relation to the Ordnance Survey mapping, thereby allowing the cropmarks to be accurately plotted. The results from the survey and aerial photograph plotting were combined to produce Fig. 4, and this has been adapted to provide a phased plan (Fig. 5).

4 The Survey

- 4.1. Now the earthworks at Treflys have been planned it is quite clear that they belong to at least two separate phases of activity. The more recent comprises the sub-circular enclosure associated with Treflys farm, consisting of a series of banks forming two distinct plantations, primarily of conifers, which were those depicted by the Ordnance Survey in the late 19th century (Fig. 2). The banks are generally up to about 3.5m in width and collectively enclose an area measuring 95m north/south by 90m east/west. A pair of parallel banks define the sides of a trackway/road heading north-east. The ruinous L-shaped farm building lies in an approximately central position within the sub-circular enclosure.
- 4.2. The earlier phase of activity is primarily that evidenced from aerial photography, and can be seen on Fig. 3. The cropmarks are primarily of a ditch, averaging 3m in width, which defines the north-east and south-east sides of a sub-rectangular enclosure measuring about 150m north-west/south-east by 70m wide. The orientation may be significant, in that the Roman fort at Caerau lies on a similar hilltop about 1 mile to the north-west, and the sites would presumably have been intervisible. It is difficult to be sure of the exact location of the south-west side, in part owing to the presence of a later field boundary. One entrance can be identified on the north-east side, where there is a gap in the cropmark and the ditch terminals seem to be slightly offset; a second gap can be seen at the east corner of the enclosure but this seems a less suitable location.



Fig. 3: Aerial photograph showing the earthworks and cropmarks at Treflys, from west-south-west (RCAHMW AP 2006_3650, © Crown copyright RCAHMW)

- 4.3. It is significant that a larger bank lies immediately inside the cropmark ditch on the north-east side of the earlier enclosure; this bank is about 7m wide and quite

pronounced to the south-east of the entrance in this side, where one of the banks defining the farmstead enclosure rises up onto it and seems to have protected it from agricultural improvement. To the north-west of the entrance the bank becomes much lower where it has been spread out by past agricultural activity to a width of up to 11m. After turning south-west it then becomes a north-west-facing scarp, 7m wide. The spread-out section of bank is visible on the aerial photograph as a broad line which had retained more moisture than the adjoining soils. One anomalous feature on the aerial photograph is a narrow curving ditch, up to 1.5m wide, towards the north-west end of the early enclosure; its alignment suggests that this could be a subdivision of the enclosure and it is interesting that a similarly aligned bank was identified to the north-west of the ruinous building. The latter bank formed part of the enclosures extant in the late 19th century and on these grounds has been attributed to the earthworks of the second phase, although this may represent the survival of an earlier feature that was reused.

- 4.4. It is worth noting that the local field boundaries are also embanked. These were surveyed as single lines, not earthworks, to allow the survey to be positioned in relation to the Ordnance Survey mapping. It is, however, possible that one section, to the north-west of the former farm building, may lie on the alignment of a section of early bank but whether any of the embanked boundary belongs to the early period is not clear.

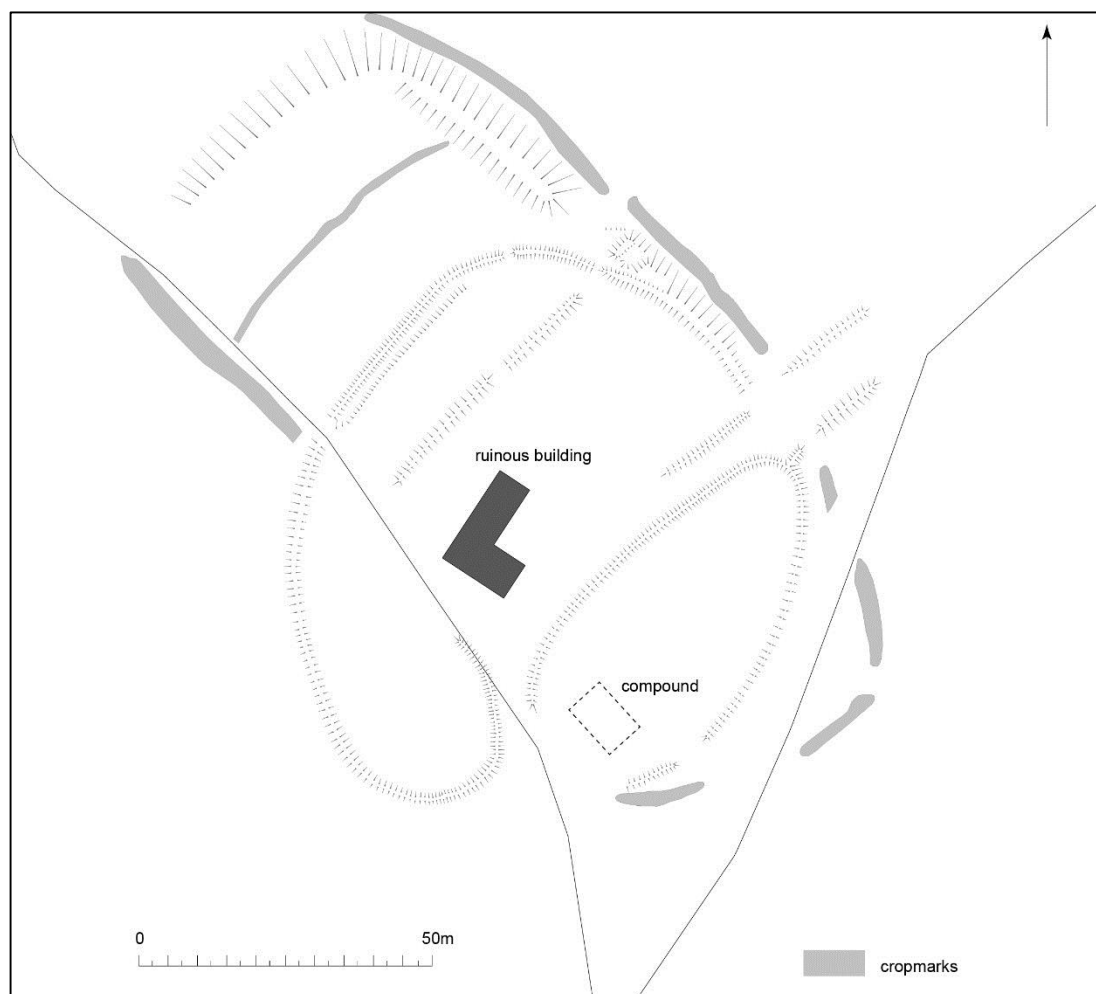


Fig. 4: Composite plan of the earthworks and cropmarks at Treflys

5 Conclusions

- 5.1. The results of the study have shown that there was an early sub-rectangular enclosure at Treflys, which would originally have comprised a substantial earthwork bank, perhaps 7m wide, encompassed by a 3m wide ditch and covering an area measuring about 150m by 70m or approximately 1.0ha. The evidence is best preserved on the north-east side of the site, where it has been partly protected beneath a later earthwork, but cropmarks and slight earthworks provide evidence of its north-west and south-east sides. The south-west side is rather more difficult to define, but is likely to have been in the approximate location of a later field boundary. In the absence of corroborative evidence it can only be suggested that this enclosure is of early medieval date, though this seems a reasonable assumption based on the evidence noted above. This site also compares approximately to an enclosure thought to have a similar origin at Llys, near Llanfechain in Montgomeryshire, where an area of 1.25ha has been calculated.

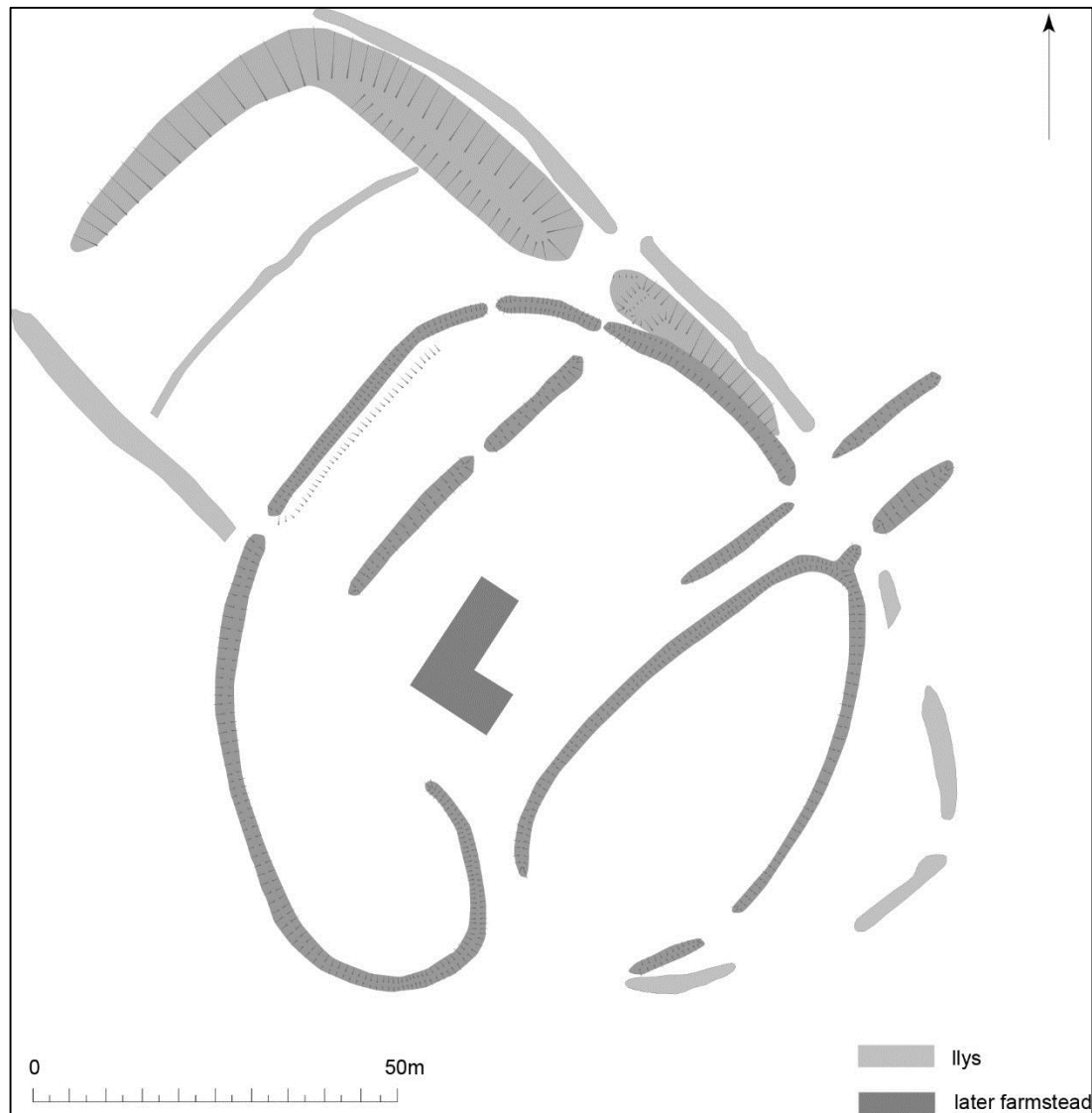


Fig. 5: Phased plan of the earthworks and cropmarks at Treflys

- 5.2. At some point in the late-medieval or early post-medieval period, and while it was still visible as a substantial earthwork, the enclosure was partly overlain by the earthworks of an enclosure relating to a new farmstead called Treflys. Where it was overlain, these later earthworks seem to have protected the earlier enclosure, but the increased activity and land improvement associated with the farmstead appears to have led to the remainder of the enclosure becoming severely denuded, such that it is now only the ditch which appears to survive in most parts of the circuit.
- 5.3. It is interesting that the name Treflys was given to the later farmstead, as this may imply some recognition of the function/origin of the early enclosure in the minds of those responsible for the construction of the farm. There is, however, no firm evidence to provide an absolute date for either set of earthworks.

6 Acknowledgements

- 6.1. The writer would like to thank the owner of Treflys, Miss S Price of Llwyn-y-brain, Llangammarch Wells for permission to carry out the work. Also his colleagues at CPAT, Will Logan and Sophie Watson for their assistance with the survey and report preparation.

7 Sources

Written

Lhuyd, E., 1909-1911. *Parochialia being a Summary of Answers to Parochial Queries* etc (Cambrian Archaeological Association; 3 Vols; edited R. H. Morris).

Morgan, R., and Powell, R. F. P., 1999, *A Study of Breconshire Place-names*, Llanrwst: Gwasg Carreg Gwalch.

Richards, M., 1969. *Welsh Administrative and Territorial Units*, Cardiff: University of Wales Press.

Silvester, R. J., 2015. *The Llys and the Maerdref in North-East Wales*, Unpublished Report: CPAT Report No 1331.

Cartographic

Ordnance Survey surveyors' drawing No 310 (1820).

Tithe map and apportionment: Treflis in the parish of Llangammarch (1843).

Ordnance Survey 1st edition 1:2500 map: Breconshire 10.12 (1889).

Aerial photographic

RCAHMW, taken in July 2006 (RCAHMW AP 2006-3650 and 3651).

8 Archive deposition Statement

- 8.1. The project archive has been prepared according to the CPAT Archive Policy and in line with the CIfA *Standard and guidance for the creation, compilation, transfer and deposition of archaeological archives guidance* (2014). The archive will be deposited with the regional Historic Environment Record, maintained by CPAT in Welshpool. A summary of the archive is provided in Appendix 1.

Appendix 1: Site Archive

CPAT Event PRN: 142760

Survey files: Project 1926, Llysoedd and Maerdrefi

Penmap - treflys.pts

DXF - treflys.dxf, treflys2.dxf

Mapinfo - base.tab, boundary.tab, building.tab, default.tab, top.tab

Adobe Illustrator - llys.ai, llys.jpg