Historic Landscape Characterisation:
Dysynni Valley

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March, 2009

Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Gwynedd
Gwynedd Archaeological Trust
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Prepared for
CADW

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General information

1 Preface

1.1 Natural forces and human activity acting together over the last six thousand years have contrived to produce a landscape of great beauty and variety in Wales, a national asset that is essential both to our national identity and to our individual "sense of place" and well-being. The diversity and imprint of human activity on the landscape is everywhere to be seen, from the enigmatic stone monuments of the prehistoric period and the magnificent castles and abbeys of the medieval period to quite commonplace and typical features like field boundaries that can often be of great age. But the landscape is more than just attractive scenery or a record of the past; it also provides a place for us to live, work and sustain ourselves, through farming, forestry, tourism and so on, processes that all shape, and will continue to shape, the landscape.

1.2 Recognising and raising awareness of the importance and wealth of the historic fabric of the landscape has been the central theme and message of the, non-statutory, Register of Landscapes of Historic Interest in Wales, the first part of which, covering thirty-six "outstanding" landscapes, was published in January 1998. This is being compiled as a joint initiative between Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments, the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) and the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), working in collaboration with the four Welsh Archaeological Trusts, the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical
Monuments of Wales and the Welsh unitary authorities.

1.3 The Historic Landscapes Register provides a first step national overview of the historic content of the Welsh landscape. The next step, so essential to the process of informing the way in which aspects of the historic landscape may be managed, is to make available more detailed information about the character of this landscape at a more local level. This is achieved through a process known as historic landscape characterisation which has been developed in Wales jointly by Cadw, CCW and the Welsh Archaeological Trusts. This involves the identification of geographically definable and mappable areas of historic character, as determined by the range and distribution of surviving archaeological and historic features and the main types of historic land use patterns or historic 'themes' that have shaped the area. The key historic characteristics of the area are then identified along with recommendations for their positive management.

1.4 This report is one in a series of landscape characterisation exercises being undertaken by the Welsh Archaeological Trusts with grant aid from Cadw. These studies will initially concentrate on those areas identified on the Historic Landscapes Register, although it is accepted that the whole of the Welsh landscape can be said to be, in one way or another, historic. Information is being prepared in a form which is compatible with CCW's landscape assessment and decision- making methodology, known as LANDMAP. It will be made available to a wide range of organisations and will feed into various initiatives to protect and manage the Welsh countryside, most notably the Tir Gofal agri-environment scheme. It is also seen as making a particularly important contribution to raising awareness and heightening a feeling of local distinctiveness.

1.5 The Historic Landscapes Register and these characterisation exercises fully acknowledge the dynamic and evolving nature of the landscape. They promote the view that protecting the legacy of the past in the landscape is not to be achieved by preventing change or fossilising the landscape but rather by informing the process of change, creating tomorrow's landscapes without necessarily sacrificing the best of yesterday's.

1 Rhagair

1.1 Mae'r grymoedd naturiol a'r gweithgaredd dynol a fu'n gweithredu ar y cyd dros y chwe mil o flynyddoedd diwethaf wedi cyfrannu at y broses o gynhyrchu tirwedd o harddwch ac amrywiaeth hynod yng Ngymru, ased cenedlaethol sy'n hanfodol i ni o ran ein hunaniaeth genedlaethol a hefyd o ran ein lles a'n 'hymdeimlad o berthyn i le' unigol. Gellir gweld ymhobman yr amrywiaeth a'r olion a a dawyd ar y tirwedd gan weithgaredd dynol, o henebion cerrig enigmatig y c yfnod cynhanesyddol a chestyll ac abatai gwych y cyfnod canoloesol, i'r nodweddion eithaf cyffredin a nodweddiadol fel ffiniau caeau a all yn aml fod yn hen iawn. Ond nid dim ond golygyfeydd deniadol neu gofnod o'r gorffennol yn unig yw'r tirwedd; mae hefyd yn darparu lle i ni fyw, gweithio a chynnal ein hunain ynddo, drwy gyfrwng amaeth, coedwigaeth, twristiaeth ac ati, oll yn brosesau sy'n llunio, ac a fydd yn parhau i lunio'r tirwedd.

1.2 Bu cydnabod a chodi ymwybyddiaeth o bwysigrwydd a chyfoeth ffabrig hanesyddol y tirwedd yn thema ac yn neges ganolog y gofrestr anstatudol, Cofrestr O Dirweddau O Ddiddordeb Hanesyddol Eithriadol Yng Nghymru, y cyhoeddwyd y rhan gyntaf ohoni, sy'n cwmpasu trideg chwech o dirweddau 'eithriadol' ym mis Ionawr 1998. Caiff y Gofrestr ei llunio fel menter ar y cyd rhwng Cadw, Cyngor Cefn Gwlad Cymru a'r Cyngor Rhyngwladol ar Henebion a Safleoedd (ICOMOS) sy'n gweithio mewn cydweithrediad a phedair Ymddiriedolaeth Archeolegol Cymru, y Comisiwn Brenhinol Henebion Cymru ac awdurdodau unedol Cymru.

1.3 Y Gofrestr o Dirweddau o Ddiddordeb Hanesyddol yw'r cam cyntaf, trosolwg cenedlaethol o gynnwys hanesyddol tirwedd Cymru. Y cam nesaf, mor hanfodol i'r broses o lywio'r modd y gellir rheoli agweddau ar y tirwedd cenedlaethol, yw trefnu bod gwybodaeth fwy manwl ar gael ynglyn a chymeriad y tirwedd hwn ar lefel fwy lleol. Cyflawnir hyn drwy broses a elwir yn nodweddiad tirweddau hanesyddol a ddatblygwyd yng Nghymru ar y cyd a Cadw, Cyngor Cefn Gwlad Cymru ac Ymddiriedolaethau Archeolegol Cymru. Golyga hyn nodi ardaloedd o gymeriad hanesyddol y gellir eu diffinio a'u mapio'n ddaearyddol, yn ol yr hyn a benderfynir gan ystod a dosbarthiad y nodweddion archeolegol a hanesyddol sy'n goroesi a'r prif fathau o batrymau defnydd tir hanesyddol neu 'themau' hanesyddol sydd wedi llunio'r ardal. Nodir nodweddion hanesyddol allweddol yr ardal felly ynghyd ag argymhellion ar gyfer eu rheoli'n gadarnhaol.

1.4 Mae'r adroddiad hwn yn un o gyfres o ymarferion nodweddiad tirweddau hanesyddol yr ymgymerir ag ef gan Ymddiriedolaethau Archeolegol Cymru gyda chymorth grant gan Cadw. Bydd yr astudiaethau hyn yn canolbwyntio yn y lle cyntaf ar yr ardaloedd hynny a nodwyd yn y Gofrestr O Ddiddordeb Hanesyddol, er y caiff ei dderbyn bod modd disgrifio tirwedd Cymru gyfan, mewn un ffordd neu'r llall, fel un hanesyddol. Mae gwybodaeth yn cael ei pharatoi ar ffurf sy'n cydweddu a methodoleg asesu tirweddau a gwneud penderfyniadau Cyngor Cefn Gwlad Cymru, sef LANDMAP. Bydd ar gael i ystod eang o sefydliadau a chaiff ei fwydo i fentrau amrywiol er mwyn diogelu a rheoli cefn gwlad Cymru, yn bennaf y cynllun agri-amgylcheddol sef, Tir Gofal. Caiff ei weld hefyd yn gwneud cyfraniad arbennig o bwysig i'r broses o godi ymwybyddiaeth a dwyshau'r ymdeimlad o arbenigrwydd lleol.

1.5 Cydnabydda'r Gofrestr O Dirweddau O Ddiddordeb Hanesyddol a'r ymarferion nodweddiad hyn yn llawn natur ddeinamig y tirwedd sy'n parhau i esblygu. Hyrwyddant y farn mai nid trwy rwystro newid neu ffosileiddio'r tirwedd y mae diogelu treftadaeth y gorffennol yn y tirwedd, ond yn hytrach drwy l ywio'r broses o newid, gan greu tirweddau'r dyfodol heb o anghenraid aberthu tirweddau gorau'r gorffennol.

2 Background and acknowledgements

2.1 The study area

2.1.1 The area which forms the focus of this work encompasses the Dysynni valley in Gwynedd,which has been identified on the Register of Landscapes of Special Interest in Wales by Cadw, CCW and ICOMOS, HLW(Gw) 54, in Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments, 2001, pp. 73-9).

2.1.2 The study area is situated in the modern county of Gwynedd, and the historic county of Meirionnydd. It includes the Broadwater, the Dysynni valley and the mountains which surround it, including Bird Rock, and stretches north-east to the summit of Cadair Idris. It includes a variety of different terrains and habitats, and of different historic landscape types. These vary from the reclaimed land of the estuary to the registered gardens of Peniarth and the urban settlement of Tywyn.

2.1.3 As well as the town of Tywyn, there are smaller settlements at Bryn Crug and Llanegryn. The area includes several important Prehisotric forts and an important medieval landscapes, as well as nineteenth century landscapes of improvement and water-defence and historic railway lines.

2.2 Acknowledgements

2.2.1 The author is grateful to several people for their contributions to this project. Former colleagues in the Gwynedd Archaeological Trust offered helpful advice throughout. David Longley contributed the section on the Medieval landscape of the study area, and Nina Steele provided SMR data in a number of formats. The report was discussed with Andrew Davidson of Gwynedd Archaeological Trust. The report has profited from extensive conversation with Judith Alfrey of Cadw.

2.3 Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used in this report.

CCW	Countryside Council for Wales
DRO	Dolgellau Record Office
GAT	Gwynedd Archaeological Trust
GIS	Geographic Information System
HLC	Historic landscape characterisation
JMHRS	Journal of the Merioneth Historical Record Society
NLW	National Library of Wales
SMR	Sites and Monuments Record
THSC	Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion
UDP	Unitary Development Plan
UWB	University of Wales, Bangor
WATs	Welsh Archaeological Trusts

3 Evolving historic characterisation methodology

3.1 Historical landscape characteristics are the tangible evidence of the activities and habits of the people who occupied, deve¬loped, used and shaped the land to serve human needs in the past; they reflect the beliefs, attitudes, traditions and values of these people. They include the physical remains of all aspects of human activities and exploitation in the past (above and below ground, known and potential), and our understanding, interpretation and even perception of those remains. They may reflect a variety of activities occurring at one time, or evolving functions in different per¬iods of time.

3.2 The Countryside Commission (in its document Views from the Past, 1996) states that as managers we should be concerned with the historic character of the present landscape, and not with the study of the past for its own sake. It places the idea of 'historic landscape character' at the centre of this concept.

3.3 Characterisation is defined as the process of identifying and defining the particular characteristics which make each area distinctive, and is rapidly emerging as a sound basis for describing, understanding and managing the environment. It is the great depth of human activity which underpins much of that which we feel is important about locality and landscape, and helps give an area its local distinctiveness. Historic landscape characterisation sets out to establish the historic depth within the modern landscape by identifying its principal historic components.

3.4 The term 'historic character' is generally preferred to 'historic landscape', as it is now accepted that all landscape is historic in that it reflects, to a greater or lesser degree, the processes which have occurred in history and which have formed its present appearance.

3.5 At present there is no standard accepted methodology for establishing the historical character of landscape, but recent work in Wales has suggested that a practical approach based on considering the evidence as a series of themes may provide an answer. At a landscape level, what is significant in historical terms might include field boundary patterns (whether they are irregular or regular, their size, date etc.); settlement patterns (whether scattered or nucleated, date of origin etc.); the relict remains of earlier periods which are to be found in upland or marginal landscapes; the effect of 18th and 19th century estates on the landscape; the impact of industry, military installations and so on.

3.6 The dominant historic themes or patterns in a locality help define local historic character. The combination of these characteristics give an area its local distinctiveness, and it is the definition of areas of local distinctiveness which leads to character areas.

3.7 The process of characterisation can be briefly summarised as -

(one or several) components	-	dominant patterns
(one or more) dominant patterns	-	coherent character
coherent character (with definable limits)	-	character area
(several) character areas	-	local landscape

3.8 Characterisation is a practical tool intended to aid management in its broadest forms. It is essential, therefore, that the process identifies key historic landscape characteristics which are features and/or patterns that can actually be managed, and that the success of this management can be measured for monitoring purposes.

3.9 The reports emerging from characterisation work contain a number of elements. The first part of the report contains general information concerning the background to the project, the methodology employed, a glossary of terms and general management issues. The second part contains information relating to the specific area under study, including (a) a general historical introduction to the area divided thematically; (b) a description of each character area split into three parts (an historical background, key historic landscape characteristics and conservation and management priorities accompanied by a map of the area and an illustration); and a select bibliography.

4 GIS-related proformae

4.1 This section contains instructions on filling in the GIS-linked recording forms created as part of the project. The form consists mainly of 'tick boxes' compatible with a table to be created (for example) in Mapinfo, and has now been standardised across Wales. This information is intended to be linked to GIS tables used by LANDMAP, and the form contains a number of fields which can be cross-referenced to any subsequent LANDMAP exercises.

4.2 The form is loosely divided into three parts – the first identifies the study area by name, number, project and location, and contains general information; the second is a list of historic landscape 'themes' which is intended to act both as a check-list and to ensure systematic recording (which can be transferred to a database) of all character areas to a certain level (the current list of themes is included in section 6 below); and the third relates to management issues.

PROJECT NO

This simply records the individual project number each Trust assigns to the particular project (e.g. G2012).

AREA

This is the name of the area as used in the project: this will usually be based on a geographical, historical or cultural association.

HLCA NO.

This is simply a consecutive number (beginning at 1) assigned to areas within the project. In this case, PRNs have also been allocated to the areas and these are displayed at the top of the character are descriptions in this report.

HLCA NAME

As above, a historic, cultural or simple geographic name is preferred (e.g. [Tywyn]), otherwise a more general topographical description (e.g. rolling meadow) might be more appropriate.

LOCATION

A six figure central grid reference should be sufficient.

SUMMARY OF CHARACTER

This strives to be succinct, preferably fewer than twenty words (e.g. for Caernarfon - Roman fort, castle, walled medieval town, slate quay, sequence of housing stock). This is intended as aide-memoire for writing the report.

GENERAL HISTORIC INTEREST

This is simply a summary of the information contained below in the individual themes to sum up the principal historical interest in the area.

THEMES

Boxes within each theme should be ticked where that element exists as a significant factor at landscape scale within an area. The ticked boxes will form the basis of the free-text description in the report: this description should refer to as many of the ticked boxes as is thought appropriate, and supply supporting information. An up-to-date list of themes is included below.

PRINCIPAL CURRENT LAND USES

This field summarises the broad principal land uses within the area in an attempt to identify which future management mechanisms (e.g. Tir Gofal for agriculture, UDPs for residential/urban areas) might be relevant to managing the area.

RECORDED BY / DATE

Name of compiler and date, following standard practice.

KEY HISTORIC LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISTICS

This should be a simple list of the principal components within the area (for example - parkland, gentry houses, substantial farmsteads, limestone walls) which make it distinctive.

CONSERVATION PRIORITIES AND MANAGEMENT

This summarises the key historic landscape components which underlie (and are essential to) the character of the area and therefore need to be managed if the historic character of the area is to be maintained. This can be a summary of the relevant part of the main area entry in the report.

5. Current themes in historic landscape characterisation

SUBSISTENCE

AGRICULTURE (Field pattern)
Unenclosed/open
Evolved/irregular
Regular (small)
Regular (medium)
Regular (large)
Large enclosures
Med. strips
R+F
Estate owned and improved
Varied
C20th post-war
Other
Not present/Unknown

AGRICULTURE (Field boundary)
Dry-stone wall
Stone-faced bank
Stone-faced bank with hedge
Hedge
Distinctive hedgerow trees
Earth bank
Dyke
Ditches
Mortared walls
Slate pillars
Pale
Sheepfolds
Post+wire fence
Other
Not present/Unknown

FORESTRY
Ancient woodland
Other broadleaf woodland
Plantation
C20Forestry
Scrub/unmanaged
Coppice
Charcoal burning
Other
Not present/Unknown

+ supporting information (date, historical associations, archaeological data etc.)

ARCHAEOLOGY

RELICT
Prehistoric settlement/fields
Medieval settlement/fields
Prehistoric ritual
Post-medieval settlement/fields
Turbary
Other
Scattered
Not present/Unknown

INDUSTRIAL
Quarrying
Mining
Manufacturing
Mill
Brewery
Metal processing
Other processing
Craft/cottage
Rural industry
Other
Not present/Unknown

BURIED
Cropmark/parchmark
Urban deposits
Find scatters
Palaeoenvironmental evidence
Other
Not present/Unknown

MILITARY
Prehistoric
Roman
Early medieval
Anglo-Norman
Edwardian
Welsh
Tudor
Civil War
C19th
WWI
WWII
Other
Not present/Unknown

+ supporting information (date, historical associations, archaeological data etc.)

BUILT ENVIRONMENT

SETTLEMENT PATTERN
Loosely dispersed scatter
Dense scatter
Clustered
Ribbon
Nucleated – planned
Nucleated – organic
Business/commercial
Other
Not present/Unknown
Specify date (if relevant)

BUILDING TYPE
Farmhouse
Cottage
Terraced housing
Shops
Place of worship
Processing
Distinctive vernacular style (specify in character summary)
Other
Not present/Unknown

PRINCIPAL BUILDING MATERIAL
Stone – random
Stone – coursed
Clay/earth
Wood
Brick
Concrete
Other

PRINCIPAL ROOFING MATERIAL
Slate
Tile
Thatch
Stone tile
Concrete tile
Metal
Other

ORNAMENTAL / LEISURE
Deer park
Parkland/garden
Garden/park (C20)
Tourism
Sports facilities
Hunting estate
Other leisure

ECCLESIASTICAL
Cemetery (medieval)
Cemetery (modern)
Church (medieval)
Church (post medieval)
Monastic

+ supporting information (date, historical associations, archaeological data etc.)

Chapel (nonconformist)
Other

INFRASTRUCTURE

COASTAL/MARITIME
Sea defences
Intertidal features
Harbour/fishing
Other
Not present/Unknown

COMMUNICATION
Footpaths
Tracks
Lanes-winding
Lanes-straight
Turnpike
Major road
Ports/docks
Airfields
Bridges
Communications towers
Public rail
Industrial rail
Other rail
Canal
Other
Not present/Unknown

RESOURCES
Power generation
Power distribution
Water supply
Peat cutting
Other
Not present/Unknown

+ supporting information (date, historical associations, archaeological data etc.)

OTHER

HISTORIC ASSOCIATIONS
Place-name
Artistic
Folklore/legend
Events
Literary
Persons
Other
Not present/Unknown

+ supporting information (date, historical associations, archaeological data etc.)

6 Managing historic character

6.1 Rural land-use change

6.1.1 There have been many pressures on the rural environment and the countryside over the last 50 years as a result of changes in land use and shifting priorities for agriculture (the principal rural land use). Agricultural intensification and the maximisation of productivity were the priorities up until the mid-1980s, and as a consequence the character of rural landscapes changed dramatically during this period as hedgerows and trees were removed to create more efficient farming systems. Reclamation of the hills and marginal land led to the removal of significant upstanding archaeological sites and palimpsest landscapes.

6.1.2 Currently, due to agricultural over-production and a general greater awareness of and concern for the quality and protection of the rural environment, the implementation of the Common Agricultural Policy provides a number of incentives to farmers and landowners to manage their land in an environmentally sensitive manner. The all-Wales Tir Gofal scheme includes provision for the conservation of certain habitats and the protection and enhancement of stone walls and boundaries, as well as sites and features of archaeological and historic landscape interest.

6.1.3 However, of the estimated 27,000 farms in Wales, only *c*. 600 farms per year are currently entering into such agreements, which leaves the vast majority outside any formal management scheme, and so many important archaeological sites and landscape features continue to be lost. The challenge therefore is to identify historic landscape priorities for conservation, protection, enhancement or even restoration both within the scheme and without it.

6.1.4 Three of the principal advantages of an approach using character areas are that (a) it is able to identify and map both local distinctiveness and national importance; (b) by identifying physical features which can be managed it can feed directly into land management and development planning strategies; and (c) it sets the management of individual features within their local landscape context, allowing emphasis to be placed on those features which best define local landscape character. It can assist in management plans by setting priorities for management and enhancement, highlighting intrinsic values, and encouraging links to multi-purpose management.

6.1.5 Characterisation is about management: if we are going to manage effectively, we must know what is there, what is important and what we want to do with it. Character areas can tell us what is distinctive (i.e. important both locally and nationally) about a particular area, and therefore what needs to be managed in order to retain that area's distinctiveness (character).

6.2 General considerations

6.2.1 Positive management should be aimed at halting and, if necessary, reversing any trends that can be shown to be causing unacceptable damage to the historic landscape resource. If at the same time management can actually enhance the historic landscape, then that is even better. It is essential that such management is continuous, and contains provisions for monitoring and review.

6.2.2 One of the basic tenets underpinning management is that we should be aiming to continue (rather than halt) the evolution of the landscape: to do this we must first identify what is important and significant in historic landscape terms. It is the overall historic character of the present landscape (as evidenced in important and significant groupings and patterns) which we should aim to retain, but in order to do this we must concentrate management actions at the level of individual components. We must identify, conserve and enhance the local and regional historic diversity of our landscapes.

6.2.3 Agri-environment and other rural initiatives offer the opportunity to integrate the needs of the historic environment with modern land-use requirements to produce a workable, effective management system. More importantly, they should result in a working, viable landscape, which should provide ways and means for the various human activities in an area to be integrated with each other and with

conservation, at the same time providing opportunities for study, research, education, interpretation and quiet enjoyment.

6.2.4 This means that sites and features of historic landscape interest are positively managed for their own sake, rather than just left unimproved. It is important that the management of such features is integral to the management of the farm, or the scheme or park or whatever, as a whole, rather than an isolated, unrelated activity.

6.2.5 By working at the most basic level, management can be used to retain the general historic character of the area -

Management of components -	-	Retain character	-	Conserve diversity and character areas
(field walls, buildings, archaeological sites etc.)		(patterns and themes)		(local landscapes)

6.2.6 A management plan should specify conservation objectives for a site/area and how they will be monitored; it should identify points at which some response will be made if monitoring shows that a feature is changing; it should establish what activities/processes will be the subject of monitoring; it should establish what management of on-going activities is required; and identify the types of development or activities which might adversely affect the site.

6.2.7 Not all the sites and features which comprise the historic environment require the same detailed level of management: some sites can be adequately managed by the application of simple, general strategies, while more complex sites merit more detailed, site-specific, problem-led responses.

6.3 Mechanisms - general

6.3.1 It is envisaged that characterisation has many potential applications to management including -

- assisting in developing landscape conservation and enhancement projects, by identifying elements and patterns of the historic environment which are considered either typical of a local area (provide local distinctiveness) or are of particular importance (rare at a national level);

- targeting resources within grant aid by government and other organisations towards conserving elements and patterns of the historic environment in the same way;

- developing policies for unitary development plans (UDPs);

- assisting in determining planning applications, especially large-scale developments such as roads, wind-farms, mineral extraction, large-scale landfill, waste disposal, reclamation, water schemes, major settlement and major industrial development;

- aiding the management of land by farmers, and large corporate landowners such as industrial companies, water or electricity companies, the forestry industry and the National Trust;

- providing baseline information for local areas against which future change can be monitored, for example as part of the Tir Gofal scheme;

- providing general information not already on the SMR which can be used to inform advice given as part of a number of rural initiatives such as Tir Gofal, Woodland Grant Schemes etc.;

- providing advice in a rural framework to conservation agencies including Cadw, the Countryside Council for Wales, the Environment Agency, local authorities, national parks and others;

• providing information to a number of wider initiatives, including contributing to our academic understanding of landscape, stimulating further research, raising public perception of the landscape, and the preparation of policy statements by public bodies.

6.4 Mechanisms - specific

6.4.1 Tir Gofal is open to applications from farmers throughout Wales. Within the scheme, payments will be made to farmers for observing 'codes of good environmental practice', one of which is care and enhancement of the historic environment. As the scheme is a 'whole farm' scheme, it allows archaeological management strategies sensitive to the character of the landscape as a whole to be integrated with farming practices. Characterisation is useful for monitoring purposes, as it sets out the wider historic environment framework within which individual farm plans will sit. It can also help prioritise management within a broader landscape context.

6.4.2 Unitary Development Plans address 'land use' issues; the UDPs for Snowdonia National Park and Gwynedd are currently being compiled, both of which take into account previous LANDMAP initiatives which have recently been completed.

6.4.3 Countryside strategies are the responsibility of local authorities (together with others), which have a general duty under section 1 of the Countryside Act, 1981, to have regard to the desirability of conserving the natural beauty and amenity of the countryside in the exercise of their functions relating to land. Countryside strategies principally address management of the countryside in areas outside settlement limits, but they are also a mechanism, at least in part, for implementing development plan policies. In Wales, such strategies are supported by CCW.

Local authorities have a number of powers which have implications for the management of the historic environment including the power to establish Country Parks (section 7 of the Countryside Act 1968); the ability to declare Local Nature Reserves (section 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949); the ability to enter into access agreements with landowners (section 64 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949); the ability to buy derelict land (often of industrial archaeological interest) for reclamation purposes (section 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949); the duty to make Tree Preservation Orders where appropriate (section 198 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990); and the duty to apply The Hedgerow Regulations 1997 which controls the removal of certain important hedgerows (from section 97 of the Environment Act 1995). Other powers are treated separately below.

Many local authorities have a countryside warden service which would benefit from characterisation information.

6.4.4 Local Agenda 21 programme At Rio de Janeiro, governments committed themselves to setting up national targets for safeguarding and improving the environment. Local Agenda 21 and Local Biodiversity Action Plans provide the means of meeting these targets, and of promoting the principles of sustainable development, at a local level. Both initiatives are about embracing a conscientious vision of the long-term future by identifying what matters locally and paying serious attention to the global costs of maintaining local lifestyles.

This has implications for archaeology and the historic environment. At a local level, sense of place is a fundamental aspect of quality of life. The present day landscape underpins our sense of the place in which we live. Much of its character and distinctiveness is derived from the historic environment (archaeology and the built heritage in all its forms). The historic environment is of course both fragile and non-renewable. We have a responsibility to maintain it so that future generations can also appreciate and benefit from it in the same way that we do. However, the landscape is not static. Just as today's landscape is a product of the changing relationships between people and their environment through time, so it must be allowed to continue to change.

The point of sustainability is that it promotes change which meets the needs of the future whilst retaining the integrity of the historic environment. In order to do so decisions have to be made about

the relative importance of different elements. Traditionally, evaluation has been based on individual sites, with particular examples being selected out for special protection (known as scheduling). However, it is the sum total of historical and archaeological features, not individual sites, which gives landscape much its grain and it is often the more ordinary features that create 'local distinctiveness'. In order to ensure that decisions about the future of the historic environment are made on a secure basis, sound information needs to be gathered. Historic landscape characterisation work of the kind being carried out by the Trusts provides historic environment audits, from which decisions of this kind can be made.

6.4.5 Access is a key issue in the countryside, if we are to enjoy the landscape and all its inherent interests and in turn engender understanding and respect for the countryside and the way it works. In addition to the rights of way network, the Countryside Rights of Way Act has been passed by Parliament. As many of the best-preserved and most fragile palimpsest archaeological sites and landscapes lie within areas to which there will shortly be greater public access, this has potential implications for archaeological management.

Historic landscape characterisation can identify these areas (i.e. where there are well-preserved yet fragile archaeological remains) and thus highlight the potential management problems if the areas are 'opened up' to public access. It may even be that such areas could be excluded from unfettered access under new legislation, either permanently or on a temporary basis.

Characterisation also has the potential to inform leaflets, trails and other interpretative material.

6.4.6 Tourism The Wales Tourist Board (WTB) has the strategic responsibility for encouraging people to visit Wales and for the provision of tourist facilities. In recent years tourism has become one of the most important growth sectors of the economy. Unitary authorities all have a tourism strategy of some description, and historic characterisation has a part to play in sustainable 'green tourism' in that it can help identify local distinctiveness which can be used both to attract visitors (by way of advertising), create atmosphere and to inform quality initiatives such as local walks, guides and other recreational activities. It can also direct visitors to areas with a robust historic environment, and away from those which are particularly fragile.

6.4.7 Management agreements In addition, local authorities have the ability (under section 39 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act, 1981) to enter into management agreements with landowners. This is an area which could be explored further from the historic environment perspective, as such agreements could cover not only individual monuments but also historic landscape characteristics (such as boundary types).

6.4.8 Other local authority programmes Local authorities have programmes for economic development, highways maintenance, environmental education and coastal protection. These would all benefit from the information which is being compiled through the characterisation projects, and, in the other direction, the safeguarding of the historic environment would benefit from those drawing up these programmes having direct access to historic landscape characterisation data. In fact, information at this broad level would probably be more useful than detailed, site-specific SMR data.

6.4.9 Environment Agency is responsible for producing Local Environment Action Plans (LEAPs) and Catchment Management Plans (CMPs). The historic environment does not have a high profile in either of these, and both could therefore benefit from information which characterisation can provide.

6.4.10 Other bodies Historic landscape characterisation information can be used to educate and inform a wide range of organisations and individuals including statutory agencies, voluntary bodies (RSPB, Woodland Trust, North Wales Wildlife Trust, British Trust for Conservation Volunteers, National Trust) town councils, community councils, farming unions and others. It is our experience that often it is easier to explain the importance of, and inherent interest of, the historic environment by using historic characterisation, than by the more traditional means of individual archaeological sites and excavations.

Local distinctiveness and a sense of place, which are of undoubted interest to people, can all be conveyed by such means, and the potential importance of this aspect of characterisation cannot be emphasised too strongly.

7 Glossary of keywords and expressions

7.1 Definitions

Character

the overall impression created by an area of landscape which is susceptible to being described

Characterisation

the process of identifying and defining the particular characteristics which makes different areas of landscape distinctive

Character area

is where component elements form dominant patterns to allow the definition of an area which can be clearly described: historic character areas are either

a) areas which embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or theme, or represent a significant and dis¬tinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction: or

b) areas which show organisation of space either during one particular period or through time. This may be visible in the arrangement of fields or siting of settlements; or a pattern of land-use which represents traditional practices unique to a community; or in the sheer density of remains relating to either a single theme/period or succession of periods/themes; or the grouping together of buildings etc which are distinctive in style, design or method of construction; or a transportation system reflecting an important innovation in engineering.

Coherent character

where the components and patterns across an area of landscape are consistent, coherent character can be defined which can lead to character areas

Component

the most basic building blocks of the historic landscape, including walls, farms, cottages, archaeological monuments etc., which, when combined, form dominant patterns

Dominant patterns

patterns formed by components such as field walls which are visually dominant in an area: the spread of a single dominant pattern, or the coincidence of two or more, leads to coherent character

Element

another word for component (preferred)

Evaluation

The process of attaching value (non-monetary) to a particular area of landscape, usually by reference to an agreed set of criteria in the context of the assessment

Feature

another word for component (preferred)

Historic landscape

the physical remains in the current landscape of the evidence for past human exploitation of the environment over time

Relict

historic landscape components which are no longer in use are described as relict for management purposes

7.2 Process of characterisation

This can be briefly summarised as -

(several) components - dominant patterns

(one or more) dominant patterns - coherent character

coherent character (with definable limits) - character area

(several) character areas - local landscape

7.3 Levels at work

level	*action*
landscape	strategic policies, overviews **(national)**
character areas	management policies - LANDMAP, UDPs, countryside strategies **(regional)**
(coherent character	*stage of characterisation (general management guidelines))*
patterns/groupings	characterisation is undertaken at this level **(local)**
components	define what's important/typical & manage landscape components **(site specific)**

7.4 Useful descriptive terms

presence
conspicuous, evident, missing

scale
open, exposed, enclosed, secluded, confined, intimate, small scale, medium scale, large scale

diversity
uniform, simple, diverse, complex

unity
unified, ordered, interrupted, fragmented, chaotic, rambling, structured, organic

balance
harmonious, balanced, discordant, chaotic

enclosure
confined, enclosed, open, exposed

texture
smooth, textured, rough, very rough

colour
monochrome, muted, colourful, garish

movement
remote, vacant, peaceful, active

form
straight, angular, curved, sinuous

stimulus
boring, bland, interesting, invigorating

other
palimpsest, aesthetic value, visual amenity, educational potential, sense of place, distinctive character, common character, historically complex, domesticated character, essentially wild

Part B

Information specific to Dysynni Valley

8 Historical processes and background

8.1 Introduction

The study area is defined by the slopes and the floor of the Dysynni valley, as well as the lower part of the tributary valley of the Afon Fathew and an extensive area of flat land along the coast of Cardigan Bay.

By contrast with the Mawddach estuary to the north and the Dyfi estuary to the south, the upper part of the Dysynni valley is remote and little visited. It forms a re-entrant, closed by the prospect of Cadair Idris at its north-eastern limit, and dominated by the spectacular feature of Craig yr Aderyn. The main transport axis through the area, the present A493 road, cuts across it, with the result that other than farmers and those who have deliberately chosen to enjoy its natural beauties, it has few visitors.

The Afon Dysynni, and its principal tributary, the Afon Fathew, join 3.5km before they enter the sea. At the mouth of this valley, and separated from Cardigan Bay by a bar, the Afon Dysynni opens out to form a lake known as the Broad Water or the Morfa Gwyllt. It is known from documentary sources that this was once more extensive than it is now. It is overlooked by the Tal y Garreg hillfort. Bowen and Gresham suggested that this natural harbour might have been the starting point of the Ffordd-ddu, the enigmatic Prehistoric trackway that picks its way around Cyfannedd and on Bryn Seward in the Mawddach historic landscape to the north. They point out that it might have been an important focus in Prehistoric times:

Although there is no harbour there at the present day, it seems that extensive silting and the formation of a shingle beach, have destroyed what may once have been a convenient haven for shipping …. the Broadwater, 80 miles from the Wicklow mountains, is less than 20 miles from the source of the Severn. (Gresham and Bowen, 1967)

Not only might it have been a haven in Prehistory, but it is possible also that it retained this function in the sixth century when a clas (semi-monastic) church was founded near the shoreline, the nucleus of the present town of Tywyn. Ynysymaengwyn, a settlement which in late Medieval and Modern times emerged as the centre of one of the two most important local estates, would also have been at one time nearer the water's edge. The other principal estate is centred on Peniarth, which lies further inland but it is possible also that in Medieval times navigable water extended this far.

These two houses and their associated parks, together with the villages of Bryncrug and Llanegryn and the town of Tywyn emerged as focal points of this area in late Medieval and Modern times. The Corbet family of Ynysymaengwyn in particular, as the major landowners within the study area, were particularly active in draining and enclosing the lands around their property, and acted as patrons of the town of Tywyn. In the nineteenth century their efforts transformed it from a small and wretched settlement into a sub-regional centre with pretensions to becoming a holiday resort, particularly after it was connected to the main railway network in the 1860s. Tywyn has a more important place in railway history as the lower terminus of the Talyllyn Railway, the first railway in the world to be re-opened by volunteer labour.

8.2 Land ownership

The project area lies within the modern communities of Bryncrug, Tywyn, Llanegryn and Llanfihangel y Pennant, as well as straying into Aberdyfi, Pennal and Llangelynin. In the Medieval period the land north of the Dysynni river lay in the commote of Talybont, the land to the south in the commote of Ystumanner, and included the historic parishes of Tywyn, Llanfihangel y Pennant and Llanegryn. The principal landowners in the late Medieval and the Modern periods were, as noted, the families who held the Ynysymaengwyn and Peniarth estates. Ynysymaegwyn dominated the lower part of the study area, Peniarth the upper. There were however, a number of freeholds such as Dolau Gwyn and Cae'r Berllan.

8.3 Agriculture

Evidence for pre-Medieval agriculture is limited, though it is clear that the upland areas were already

colonised in the Iron Age/Romano-British period. At Craig Ty'n y Cornel a remarkable landscape survives which comprises eleven circular stone-footed huts and a long-hut settlement of three huts associated with yards and paddocks on a south-east facing slope at approximately 330m AOD, together with a wandering field system associated with one or the other, or with both (SAM: M167, SH 6375 0845 C), indicating the possibility of continued occupation into the Medieval or even the post-Medieval period.

It is clear from documentary evidence that the study area was agriculturally extremely productive in the Medieval period (Thomas 2001), and that it was controlled both by ecclesiastical and secular, princely, authority. The area around Tywyn itself is likely to have been under control of the clas, and it is possible that the place-name element Faenol south of the town residence (SH 5898 0023) represents the seat of ecclesiastical authority. Place-name evidence, in the form of erw- and llain- elements around Faenol provide clues as to historic farming and ownership here, but Thomas notes:

…much more detailed research needs to be conducted here and across the Dysynni at Llanegryn, before local inter-relationships can be disentangled in either of the southern commotes (Thomas 2001).

Though from 1209 until the sixteenth century the Cistercians of Cymer abbey managed lands north of the Dysynni, around Llanegryn and to the east of Talygarreg (Williams 2001), much of this area formed a royal manor, centred around the llys (palace, court) at Talybont, the background to which is discussed more at length in 8.4.1 below. The lay subsidy roll of 1292-3 indicates that Talybont, Ystumanner and Peniarth were already densely populated at that date and refers to 'Meadow, garden and croft and other easements of the court' at Talybont as well as 'three vaccaries in which 120 cows can be maintained' in the higher land. 'Wheat and oats were widely grown even beyond the broad arable lands of the demesne, while equal attention was paid to the care of cattle and the production of butter on the more nutritious hafodydd on the interior higher slopes, and winter fodder was available from the greatly valued meadow clearings in the valley' (Thomas 2001). Even so, it is clear that even some low-lying areas remained wooded until the thirteenth century; it is recorded that seventeen woodmen had to cut a way for the Queen's carriage on her journey from Castell y Bere to Tywyn (Ll.B. Smith, 2001).
Although Thomas suggests that in the early medieval period three-fifths of Merioneth was uninhabited and unused, it is clear that assarting of the uplands within the study area begins at an early stage. There is evidence for a quickened pace in the sixteenth century. By this stage, assarting of the upland commons was tending to lead to litigation, and it was in this period that the major landowners initiated intakes of the lowland meadows, from settlements along the lower slopes that had been established in Medieval times. The open field landscape was increasingly being broken up with fences and substantial summer dwellings were being built on uplands colonised, or re-colonised, in the Medieval period (Thomas 2007). The process was slow and incomplete; as late as the 1830s Samuel Lewis was able to describe the parish of Llanegryn as three-fifths unenclosed and uncultivated, and states that much of it was dug for peat (Lewis M4v). Of Llanfihangel y Pennant he remarks 'nearly one-half of it, situted in the vale, is fertile and in a state of good cultivation, a considerable portion producing excellent corn; whilst the mountainous parts … afford only pasturage for sheep (Lewis 2E4v). The parish's productivity may reflect its comparatively large farms. Nearly half were over 200 acres in extent, and Gwastadfryn, at the head of the Dysynni valley was the largest at 750 acres at the time of the tithe award of 1838 (Thomas 1967, tithe schedule). This seems true of the study area as a whole. The houses of minor land-owners and farm-houses within it take many different forms, reflecting investment at various stages from the sixteenth century to the nineteenth, but are many of them are of considerable size, as are many of the cow-houses and field barns associated with them. Dolau Gwyn (listed II*) on the edge of the historic landscape area in the valley of the Afon Fathew, is a largely complete gentry house of 1620, an impressive site surrounded by trees. Cae'r Berllan (listed II*), on the Dysynni valley floor at SH 6630 0774 is a striking gentry house incorporating some sixteenth-century fabric, though most of the structure dates from c. 1690. It is surrounded by an imposing garden wall and gate piers, and stands adjacent to substantial out-buildings, including ty ffon (listed II), a possible service building or secondary dwelling. Nant y Caw (listed II) at SH 6537 0937 is an upland farm of the same
approximate period with a lofted stable set in line and which with other farm-buildings forms an L-plan. Bryn Erwas at SH 6166 0303 is a nineteenth century farm complex on the former Ynysymaengwyn estate build out of quarry 'rags' – poor quality slate not suitable for splitting – reflecting its location near both the road and the railway from Abergynolwyn quarry, but is of considerable size and is well

constructed.

Active strategies of enclosure were pursued by the landowners, particularly by Ynysymaengwyn, in the early nineteenth century; an enclosure act enabled the estate to enclose 672 acres by the construction of drains and sea-dykes, which limited the extent of the Broadwater. A large area of open water to the south of Tywyn was also enclosed in the nineteenth century, and a drainage system extending from the sea to Craig yr Aderyn was installed in 1862 (Chapman 1992, Whatley, 1995).

There is little record of commercial forestry within the study area, though it is probable that Coed Peniarth was actively exploited by the estate.

Peat-digging was clearly an important local activity, though it does not seem to have been exploited commercially but only to have been used to warm the houses of the local poor. There are extensive peat exposures (though little evidence of digging) near Tywyn at SH 5855 9853.

In addition, two fish-weirs operated within the area, cored Peniarth and cored Ynysymaengwyn. It is possible that Cymer abbey may also have had a fishery of the Dysynni (Williams 2001). The river was noted for its salmon, and the weirs continued to function until the 1860s when the passge of the Fisheries Act of 1861 and the opposition of the Commission on Salmon Fisheries brought them to an end (Jenkins 1977).

8.4 Settlement

8.4.1 Medieval background

All documentation in respect of the larger regional units of Medieval north-west Wales up to the twelfth century refer to cantrefi. These territories are of ancient origin. During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, however, these cantrefi were subdivided into two or, sometimes, three parts, designated commotes (w. cymmydau). Medieval Meirionnydd was bounded on the north by the Mawddach and on the south by the Dyfi. The Dysynni runs north-east to south-west, entering the sea between Tonfannau and Tywyn. The river, and the watershed of Cadair Idris, divides the cantref. The commote of Talybont lay north of the Dysynni and the commote of Ystumanner to the south.

Furthermore, there emerged, within each commote, one township in the hands of the Prince which was run on manorial lines and which served both as a home farm and a focus for the administration and taxation of the commote. This was the maerdref of the commote and at its centre, the llys, might be found royal halls, lodgings, granaries etc. More widely in each commote there would be townships, and hamlets within townships, occupied by freeholders; bond tenants of the prince; tenants who held their land from the bishop and quasi-monastic communities which held their land in the service of a church. Tenure might be complex, particularly in times of stress or depopulation as, for example, during and after the Black Death when more lenient and favourable tenures were devised to attract tenants to the land. In simple terms, during the Age of the Princes and after, there were freeholders whose children had a heritable interest in the patrimonial land; bond tenants under tir gwelyog tenure whose children also had a heritable interest in the land but who were nevertheless saddled with restrictions of movement and profession and who were obliged to make somewhat more onerous customary renders to the king than the freeholders did. Thirdly, there were tied bond tenants labouring under tir cyfrif tenure. By the thirteenth century this tenure was characteristic of estate workers of the king's desmesne and also, but largely invisible in the documentary record, on the estates of dynastic freeholding lords. Tir cyfrif was the most onerous of tenures and while the progeny of these tenants might expect to inherit their fathers' labours, the land was not inheritable and was capable of redistribution.

The essential component of community within the commote was the tref, or township, and the important focus of tax collection. As partible inheritance, among free and tir gwelyog bond tenants, was conducive to the proliferation of individual smallholdings, by the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the bounds of a township had become fixed, and, for administrative purposes, subdivisions of the township came into being. These sub-sets, named gwelyau (across much of north-west Wales) were offshoots from the patrimonial core (although still within the boundaries of the parent township) and often bore

the names of the sons or grandsons of an earlier patrimonial head of 'clan chief'. This process was particularly pronounced across the lands of freeholders whose gwelyau were several and their lands extensive.

Almost everyone owed tax to the king, or prince, free or bond, and surveys, and the accounts of ministers of the Crown, provide the evidence for the social pattern of the landscape in the central middle ages.

8.4.2 Nucleated settlements

As noted, there are three nucleated settlements in the area, the town of Tywyn, and the villages of Bryncrug and Llanegryn.

The town of Tywyn is situated on an area of flat land that might have one time have been a sandy foreshore, effectively on a ridge of land which extends to form the bar between Cardigan Bay to the west and the Broadwater and Penllyn to the east, though the shoreline here has seen very considerable changes through the erection of sea-defences and the building of the railway in the 1860s.

The nave of St Cadfan's Church, Tywyn.

The origin of the settlement appears to lie with the parish church. As Davidson points out, the dedication to Cadfan implies a sixth century date (Davidson 2001), and the name Tywyn ('sea shore' or 'sand dune') suggests that it was a coastal location, although possibly the presence of a spring might also have attracted settlement (Lewis 3M3 v). Tywyn is recorded by the Medieval chronicle Brut y Tywysogion as being 'ravaged by the gentiles' (Vikings) in 963, so it was clearly attractive to raiders, and it is likely that the church was the principal ecclesiastical centre of the south-western part of Gwynedd. Gresham speculates that it would have been well-placed to receive visitors, their servants and horses on the basis of Giraldus' description of his arrival there with Archbishop Baldwin in 1188 (Gresham 1987-8). The aisled Romanesque nave of the present church dates from the twelfth century, but the crossing, transepts and chancel are modern, and it is clear that the church saw significant changes in itsstructure from the seventeenth century to the nineteenth. As noted in 8.3, just south of the later town is the farm of Faenol Uchaf, the name of which may indicate that it was the site of the main ecclesiastical residence.

By the thirteenth century, the influence of Tywyn church may have shrunk to the southern commote of Ystumaner, though a villa de Tewyn is recorded in 1283, implying the beginnings of urban life alongside the ecclesiastical settlement. It had nine taxpayers at the time of the Merioneth Lay Subsidy Roll of 1292. Tywyn, however, was not a planned town, and seems to have grown up in an ad-hoc way round the church.

The Medieval town was probably adjacent to the church, around what is now Corbett Square, College Green, National Street, Red Lion Street and Church Street (SH 5883 0089 C), the area shown as the urban nucleus on the earliest known map of the town, dating from 1794 (DRO: ZM/3667). Other than the putative 'borough of Bere', Tywyn is the one settlement within the study area which historically merited a market. Pennant described it as 'merely lanes bordered by wide and dirty ditches' in 1789. The 1794 map shows a 'Trefnewydd' (new town) in the region of the present co-op store at SH 5843 0498. Lt Sheringham's Admiralty map of 1835 confirms that the town is growing but is still very clearly a tywyn, being surrounded by largely enclosed areas of foreshore. In 1794 the road which leads away from the Medieval town to the beach is a wandering lane; the present straight High Street is marked on the 1" ordnance survey of 1837 but was not to be built up for some time.

The arrival of the coastal railway in the 1860s seems to have been the impetus for building here, as the

station was built near where the railway crossed High Street, 500m from the church. Growth seems to have been marked in the 1860s, with the building of houses, shops and hotels and the installation of a gas supply; even so, development along High Street seems to have been sporadic and uncontrolled, with houses and shops of different design and scale, and some plots unoccupied until the twentieth century (DRO: Z/CD/201 [map of estate, 1860], Merioneth 25" o.s., XLVI 9 [1901], Whatley 1995).

The slowness to develop High Street may reflect the sale of the Ynysymaengwyn estate to John Corbett in 1878. This did, however, lead to further investment in the town, including the development of the water and sewage system, the building of the promenade, the assembly room of 1893 (now the cinema, built on the site of the Anchor Inn), the Intermediate School of 1894 and the market hall of 1897. Corbett was no relation of the Corbets, and was in fact from quite a humble background; his money came from salt works in Droitwich. Although Ynysymaengwyn was inhabited mainly by his French wife, from whom he separated early on, he continued to shower the town with developments (Boyd 1988). A plan for a pier came to nothing (Wilkinson 1984) but the Promenade was inaugurated in 1889 and it was clearly intended that it should be developed as a seaside suburb of the town. Some moderately sized hotels were eventually built here, as well as the attractive boarding house range 'Trem Enlli', but photographs from the early twentieth century show these standing in open fields alongside the few vernacular farm buildings which are shown here in the eighteenth century; it was only in the later twentieth that the area came to be entirely taken up with housing, when rows of bungalows and other standard modern dwellings covered the remaining unoccupied spaces.

Corbet Square, Tywyn.

The village of Bryncrug is recorded as a Medieval township and is situated at a point where Cefn Gaer to Pennal Roman road and its successor, the Medieval road past Domen Ddreiniog, cross the Afon Fathew. It is shown on the Tywyn tithe map of 1842 and on an estate map of 1860 as three small settlements, based on Pont Fathew (SH 6089 0333), Perthi Citiau (SH 6089 0311) and Pont y Felindre (SH 6138 0309), which are likely to have expanded with the opening of the Talyllyn Railway in 1866, which would have enabled it to become a dormitory settlement for Bryneglwys quarrymen and their families. It has continued to expand as a suburb of Tywyn in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century.

Most of the land at Bryncrug belonged to Ynysymaengwyn but it seems also to have enjoyed the patronage of Peniarth estate on the evidence of the large 'Peniarth' hotel of 1901, an establishment where the lease was purchased by the Towyn Temperance Society in 1904, who thereafter kept it as a non-alcoholic establishment for the next eighty years. The village seems to have developed in an ad-hoc way with little sense of an estate pattern of architecture being imposed on it.

The village of Llanegryn was described by Samuel Lewis as 'pleasantly situated', on the lower northern slopes of the Dysynni valley (Lewis 1833). Llanegryn church is listed in the 1253 Taxatio, though most of the present fabric probably dates from the fourteenth century, though it lies some little way from the main nucleation of Llanegryn village. Sixteenth century documents refer to the building of a new mill within the parish of Llanegryn and to the destruction of the old mill during the Glyndwr uprising; it is possible that these were situated on the stream within the present village, as a former mill building stands near the bridge. The Llanegryn to the map of 1842 indicates a small ribbon settlement along the road to Peniarth and Pont y Gath at the point where it crosses a tributary of the Dysynni. There are indications of a nucleated village in 1627, and in 1761 a Llanegryn shop sold snuff and tobacco imported from Caernarfon. The local historian David Williams suggests that most of the houses within the core of the village date from 1815 to 1870. He indicates that the distinctive estate cottages built by Peniarth at the eastern extremity of the village (Preswylfa, Bryn Meirion and Maes yr Haf) were built shortly after 1870.

There are smaller nucleations such as at Rhyd yr Onnen and at Pandy/Brynglas, which appear to predate the opening of the Talyllyn Railway but to have grown slightly as a consequence of a station being provided to serve them. Both of these are points at which the railway crosses a stream and there appears to have been a fulling mill at both.

8.4.3 Non-nucleated settlements

Non-nucleated settlements within the study area are typically substantial farm-house dwellings. These are often situated at the break of the slope, where the flat lowlands of the Dysynni valley floor suddenly yield to the steep slopes which characterize it examples are Bodilan, Ty'n y Ddol, Tynyfach, Cae'r Berllan (as noted above, a major seventeenth century gentry house, with some earlier work), Llanllwyda and Gesail. Just by Llanegryn are farms such as Glan y Morfa, which may represent sixteenth century assarts onto low-lying meadowland. It was remarked in the nineteenth century that many of the farms in the area were large, and this patterns seems to have remained true into the early twenty-first century. Another, non-farm, settlement at the break of slope is the little group of houses around the church of Llanfihangel y Pennant.

Outside the nucleated areas the landscape is largely of isolated farms, as here at Caer Berllan

8.4.4 Building types and material

Both building types and material illustrate the change from late-Medieval vernacular, through estate sponsored dwellings and farm buildings of the nineteenth century, and railway-era use of brick and other imported materials in boarding houses and villa dwellings, to typical late twentieth-century housing estates. Of these, the use of imported material on any large scale is confined to Tywyn, though there is some use of brick in Llanegryn and Bryncrug, and to a very limited extent in some of the farms. Housing estates are to be found in the the nucleated settlements of Tywyn, Llanegryn and Bryncrug.

The earliest surviving inhabited houses are typically gentry houses built in the polite tradition, though using mainly local materials. Cae'r Berllan, home of the lawyer Huw Owen in the late 16th century, is a significant building of two floors with attaics and cellars, and a front of five window bays. The house was originally built of uncoursed rubble with stepped gables, but the façade was rebuilt in coursed stone c. 1690. Dolau Gwyn, dating from the early 17th century, makes dramatic use of stepped gables, a feature introduced into north Wales by Richard Clough in 1567. It is of three storeys, with a storeyed porch, and mullioned windows. The principal façades are of smooth faced long slabs, though the rear walls are of uncoursed rubble. No houses survive at the former estate of Ynysmaengwyn, though the first, dating from c. 1730, was built of local rubble with long slate quoins, the second house, which faced it, of c. 1733 repeats its outer form but was more regular, whereas the third, and principal, house, a substantial double-pile dwelling was built of neatly cut and finely pointed blocks of slate ashlar with sandstone quoins, strings and voussoirs, with a pedimented doorway. The house at Peniarth, the other principal estate, is part 17th century, and also uses slate ashlar for the early façade, though much of the house was faced in locally made brick in the 18th century.

Early houses of lesser status include Old Ty'n y Fach at Llanfihangel y Pennant, a farmhouse of one storey with attics, the original sub-medieval house was of cruck construction with three bays, and walls of local rubble. Raised crucks, relatively common elsewhere in Merionethshire, can be seen in the 17th century barn at Pen y Meini, Llanfihangel y Pennant. Slightly later in date is Gwastadryn, a 17th century farmhouse built in local slate stone of two storeys, with a principal 3 bay range and a rear wing of 2 bays. Cedris, an early 17th century house, is built of irregular slate rubble on buolder foundations, and is of one storey with attics. The main house is of three bays with a rear kitchen wing which might be slightly later.

There was some use of mud-walled cottages within the study area; examples survived long enough to be photographed in the village of Llanegryn but the site is now occupied by modern bungalows (y Rhos – SH 6035 0559 – Bro Dysynni Ddoe a Heddiw 1997). A small shed with a mud wall survives at SH 6169 0589.

An example of hte use of dark building stone at Tywyn

Lewis in the 1830s describes the Tywyn houses as 'of respectable appearance … built principally of the coarse grey stone which is found in the neighbourhood (Lewis 3M2v) possibly a reference to quarrying at Tonfanau. A dark grey building stone material is still very evident in Tywyn, though in many cases houses which on the basis of their outward proportions appear to be late eighteenth century have often been pebbledashed.

There is some, limited, use of slate rags as a building material, both in the Tywyn itself and elsewhere for instance the shop at Bryncrug and (as noted in 8.3) the farm Bryn Erwas. This reflects the opening up of Bryneglwys quarry in the 1840s, which for a while exported by horse-and-cart along the Fathew valley but which used the Talyllyn Railway from 1866. However, it is clear that the arrival of the main line railway greatly reduced the price of brick from north-east Wales, and this becomes a major building material in the town there after. Tellingly, Tywyn Wharf station on the Talyllyn Railway is built of brick. However, the proportions of apparently brick-built dwellings, and the distinctive shape of their chimneys sometimes suggest that the use of brick or other imported materials may hide much older elements of the fabric (examples at SH 5879 0089).

Some of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century structures in Tywyn make considerable and striking use of brick, such as Paige's Furnishings of 1903, a shop with the prominent display windows on the High Street at SH 5866 0081. So do the substantial terraces of boarding houses erected in the late nineteenth century, with their polychromatic decoration, mingling red brick and yellow brick, for instance Idris Villas (SH 5826 0077). The growing numbers of holiday visitors, mainly from the English west Midlands, led to the construction of a considerable number of these boarding houses in Tywyn. Those on Pier Street are good examples – three-storeys in height, with bow windows and small front gardens defined by low brick walls but making use also of wrought-iron fences. There is also evidence of professionals from outside the area building homes for themselves locally in the nineteenth century and bringing with them a distinctive Victorian style of embellished architecture; Woodlands Holiday Home at SH 61962 0357 was built as 'Brynffynnon' for a Manchester solicitor, before the 1860s (Boyd 1988).

The use of slate as a roofing material is practically universal. The majority of these probably came from the Bryneglwys quarries, which lie outside the historic landscape area. The use of ceramic ridge tiles and other ceramic roof decoration is widespread.

The houses estates erected post-war within the study area take several different forms but all reflect UK-wide assumptions about housing provision. They include extensive areas of retirement bungalows at Tywyn as well as two-storey dwellings.

8.5 Relict archaeology

As with the Mawddach historic landscape area to the north, this topographically-varied area encompasses coast, river estuary, upland plateau and hill slopes. A concentration of finds of Neolthic stone axes in the Dysynni area is further evidence that it may have been attractive as a Prehistoric communications route, and a notable group of Bronze Age burials and burial urns were identified near Tywyn (Smith 2004). Gresham and Bowen have argued that a linear pattern of standing stones at Waun fach, Porthygwyddwch and Bryn Seward suggest the alignment of an ancient route from the

Broadwater northwards (Gresham and Bowen 1967).

8.6 Parks and gardens

The area has two important designed landscape elements, Ynysymaengwyn and Peniarth. The second of these is identified in the non-statutory Register of Landscapes, Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in Wales as Grade II*. The citation is as follows:

Parks and gardens which by reason of their historic layout, features and architectural ornaments considered together make them of great quality.

Peniarth, which remains in private hands, has its origins in a Medieval township and seems to have been set out as a park in the sixteenth century, when Syr Owain ap Gwylim praises Dafydd Llwyd's:

Percydd, mynydd uwch minion
Pysgod, yd, cig is brig bron
Gwar cwmwd, goror cymwys,
Gweirglodd-dir, coetir bod cwys

(Parks and a mountain above the boundaries/Fish, corn, meat are below the breast of the hill/The commote is broad with a fitting limit/Every furrow being meadow and woodland).

The bard's emphasis is still on the estate as economic resource rather than the demesne as plesaunce, but it is clear that Dafydd Llwyd had made far-reaching changes to his property. Peniarth remains in private hands.

Ynysymaengwyn, the other park within the area, has been considerably altered by its present use as a caravan park, and little can now be identified of the former garden. The house has also been demolished.

Other gardens and private grounds have also been given over to caravans, including part of Peniarth and 'Woodlands', where the caravan park is a prominent landscape feature on the southern-facing slopes of Foel Wyllt, overlooking the Afon Fathew.

8.7 Industrial

There is comparatively little landscape evidence of productive industrial sites in the area, other than the granite quarry at Tonfanau. Samuel Lewis refers to slate quarries in the parish of Llanegryn which produced for local needs only (Lewis M4v), and there was some small-scale processing of slate slabs possibly sawing, certainly enamelling work, carried on in Tywyn itself. There are mineral trials, both for slate and for lead, around Corlan Fraith in the southern part of the historic character area.

As well as the royal mill at Llanegryn, mills are referred to from the late Medieval period. In the sixteenth century a law-suit confirms that a new mill had been built at Llanegryn and that an earlier structure had been destroyed during the Glyndwr rebellion (Thomas 2001). Only one corn mill is recorded on a tributary of the Dysynni (and none on the river itself) though the Afon Fathew and its tributaries drove a woollen mill and two corn mills within the Dysynni historic landscape area. Textile production in the area was small-scale and under-capitalised even by Welsh standards; hand-powered weaving was still being continued at Llanegryn in 1938, the last place in the country where it was reported (Gwyn 119).

The ordnance survey maps indicate light industry at Tywyn at the start of the twentieth century in the form of a slate works and a soda-water factory. In more recent times, small industrial estates have been set out in Bryncrug and in Tywyn.

8.8 Military

Within the Dysynni historic landscape area the pricipal military site is Castell y Bere, a foundation of

Llywelyn ab Iorthwerth and probably the castle which a chronicle describes him as building in 1221. It has been described as quite exceptional that a castle should be built 'aloft among the hafodydd' (Cathcart King and Kenyon, in Smith 2001, 387); Castell y Bere is not a lofty castle but is does fall within a pattern of castle building by Llywelyn ap Iorwerth in the first half of the thirteenth century, and the ground plan is consistent with other native castles of this period. It is possible that the massive curtain walls which enclose an area formerly open and a rock-cut ditch in front of the apsidal tower may reflect work of the year 1287 and the dangers posed by the threat of the rising of Rhys ap Maredudd. The castle may have been destroyed and abandoned in the aftermath of Madoc's rebellion of 1294 (Evans 1967).

Other defensive sites from the Medieval period are the two mottes, Domen Ddreiniog and Bryn y Castell, considered in 8.4.1 above.

The area's strategic location on the coast facing what was then the Irish Free State, considered to be vulnerable to German invasion, led to the establishment of defensive sites all along Cardigan Bay. RAF Towyn (sic) operated between August 1941 and May 1945, flying Queen Bee and Hawker Henleys for No 1 Anti-aircraft Co-operation Unit and Westland Lysanders for No 6 Anti-aircraft Co-operation Unit but was apt to flood. At the end of the war it was taken over by the army. The runways have disappeared but many of the buildings are extant (Smith 2004). Tonfanau camp extends slightly in the historic landscape area at SH 5621 0351. It remained active until 1965.

Traces of military buildings, concrete hardstanding and associated tracks dating from the 1939-1945 war can also be seen in the grounds of Penairth, which were taken over by the Marines. It is understood that both German and Italian prisoners-of-war were kept locally (Annand 1983).

8.9 Communications

Communication systems have left their mark on the historic landscape.

As noted above, it is possible that the Broadwater and the Dysynni represent an ancient embarkation area, and that they may be connected with Prehistoric routes in the Mawddach area to the north. Ynysymaengwyn and Tywyn would have been on the tidal reach of the Dysynni until the nineteenth century, and Domen Ddreiniog and Talybont just beyond the tidal limit. Gerald of Wales alludes to his stay in Tywyn on his journey north with Archbishop Baldwin in 1188 but unfortunately says very little about it. It is clear that he arrives overland from the Dyfi estuary, and the likelihood is that he followed the road from here to Talybont and beyond the following morning. The antiquity of the name 'Talybont' indicates that both that the road has followed broadly the same alignment here since the Medieval period and that a bridge existed here early on. The present stone bridge dates from 1752 but has been bypassed by a modern structure.

Little thereafter is known, or can be surmised, about the road system until the Industrial/Modern period. Although the Merioneth turnpike act was passed in 1777, there is little evidence that it affected the study area until the mid nineteenth century, when a turnpike road was constructed which ran from north from Tywyn through Llwyngwril and so on towards Dolgellau (Pritchard 1961).

Railway bridge built in 1911 across the Dysynni.

The coming of the national railway network clearly affected the study area. The Cambrian Railways Company was formed in 1864 (an amalgamation of three mid-Wales companies) and the section of the railway through Tywyn which linked Machynlleth and Pwllheli had opened in 1867, though an isolated section from Aberdyfi through Tywyn to Llwyngwril had been working since 1863. This altered the coastal landscape in the area in that it brought tourists in greater numbers to Tywyn and enabled the construction of the Talyllyn Railway, the

first purpose-designed steam narrow-gauge public railway in Britain.

The present bridge which carries the railway over the Dysynni is a structure which carries the date of 1911, a three-span hogged-profile steel girder construction by Fich and Co. of Chepstow, carried on circular steel stanchions. The wooden piles of the earlier bridge are visible in the water.

A different type of communications systems is represented by Guglielmo Marconi's wireless receiving station at Tywyn, which opened in 1914 and closed in 1923. Little remains beyond 'Marconi Bungalows' at SH 5950 0019 (Gwyn 2006).

8.10 Tourism and leisure

Tourism is evident in the landscape of the Dysynni valley in several ways. The curative properties of the spring at Tywyn were still bringing people to it in the late nineteenth century, by which time it had been formed into a public bath-house (Lewis 3M3 v) – the building which survives at SH 5867 0099 dates from c. 1871 but by 1903 it was out of use and had become part of a soda-water factory (Whatley 1995). The Corbett Arms hotel at Tywyn is an imposing structure, particularly when viewed from the road that leads into the town from the north, and is evidence for a growing leisure market. The earlier six bays of this ten-bay hotel appear to date from the first half of the nineteenth century; another six were added in 1900, the date which appears on the date-stone. Sea-side second homes on the foreshore at Tywyn were already a feature of the late eighteenth century landscape, the property of well-off families from the English midlands who preferred Tywyn to Aberystwyth. However, the attempts to develop a pier and later the Promenade at Tywyn, (1877-1879 and from 1889 onwards respectively), were clearly less than entirely successful (Wilkinson 1984).

From the mid-twentieth century onwards, caravan parks have become common; examples are noted at Pall Mall, Ynysymaengwyn and Ysguboriau (all along the A493 road between Tywyn and Bryncrug) at Rhyd yr Onnen and Woodlands, near Pont y Garth and at Llanllwyda. In some cases, chalets have also been constructed.

The revival of the Talyllyn Railway has added considerably to the tourist 'draw' of Tywyn and the area a depiction of the locomotive Dolgoch and its train adorns the 'Welcome to Tywyn' signs.

8.I1 Cultural associations

The study area includes a stone on which the earliest written Welsh, of the eighth century, survives. This is in Tywyn church, and reads, in the transcription of Sir Ifor Williams:

An 8th century inscribed stone at Tywyn church

+TENGRUI CIMALTE(D) GU / ADGAN // ANT ERUNC DU BUT MARCIAU + CUN BEN CELEN // TRICET NITANAM

This he interpreted as + Ceinrwy wife of Gwaddian (lies here) close to Bud and Marchiaw + Cun, wife of Celyn – the grief and loss remain (Williams 2001).

Castell y Bere occupies an important place in Welsh nationalist consciousness as the last garrison to surrender to the Anglo-Norman forces, on 25 April 1283.

According to Rhyfeddodau y Byd Mawr (Dolgellau, 1828) Peniarth Uchaf was the first place in Wales where tea was brewed, in 1700.

At Llanfihangel y Pennant is the home of Mary Jones (1784-1864), whose chance meeting with the Rev. Thomas Charles on the upper slopes of Cadair Idris prompted her to make her pilgrimage to Bala to buy her bible in 1800. Her tearful disappointment when she found out that there were none left not only prompted

Charles to give her his own bible but to initiate the process which led to the foundation of the British and Foreign Bible Society. The story of Mary Jones was
tailor-made for the Welsh Sunday School of the later nineteenth century, and her cottage was painted by S. Maurice Jones in 1891, as part of a commission from O.M. Edwards for Cymru Coch; it also appeared in Cartrefi Cymry in 1896. She herself lived on into cranky and bad-tempered old age at Bryncrug, where she is buried.

The National Library of Wales' Peniarth manuscripts rank as one of the foremost national collections. They were catalogued by J. Gwenogvryn Evans for the Royal Commission on Historic Manuscripts whilst they were still at Peniarth.

Dr William Owen Pughe (1759-1853) was born at Ty'n y Bryn, near Pont Ystmanner, though he moved away from the area when he was only three years old. He edited The Cambrian Register and Y Greal, and was principal editor of The Myvyrian Archaeology of Wales. He prepared The Cambrian Biography, and is remembered for his belief that Welsh was near to the primitive mother-tongue of mankind (Dictionary of Welsh Biography).

The revival of the Talyllyn Railway from 1951 has also added to the cultural mix and the cultural focus of the region (and initiated a process which in Gwynedd has evolved into a multi-million pound sector and become a vital part of the region's economy). In essence this narrow-gauge railway survived from its opening in 1866 until after the second world war in pratically its original form and with minimal maintenance. Its very decrepitude had already attracted the attention of Picture Post in 1947, when a cow was shooed onto the rails so that it could be photographed holding up a train. Its revival was the work of an enginerer from an Anglo-Irish family, Lionel Thomas ('Tom') Caswell Rolt, who saw it as recreation of a way of life threatened by increased state control, a techno-arcadia which celebrated Victorian entrepreneurship and engineering skills (Rolt 1953). It provided the inspiration for the Ealing comedy The Titfield Thunderbolt, and the lesser-known American film Railway with a Heart of Gold. More recently, Dr Dafydd Roberts has explored some of the cultural tensions between the very English enthusiasm of the Talyllyn Railway Preservation Society and the priorities of the Tywyn community (Roberts 2008).

9 Historic character areas

9.1 The study area has been divided into fourteen separate historic character areas as follows:

01	Dysynni lowlands	(PRN 28650)
02	Tonfanau/Tal y Garreg	(PRN 28651)
03	Tywyn	(PRN 28652)
04	Talyllyn Railway	(PRN 28653)
05	Corlan Fraith	(PRN 28654)
06	Bryncrug	(PRN 28655)
07	Peniarth gardens and house	(PRN 28656)
08	Llanegryn	(PRN 28657)
09	Enclosed northern slopes	(PRN 28658)
10	Intermediate slopes	(PRN 28659)
11	Upper slopes	(PRN 28660)
12	Craig yr Aderyn	(PRN 28661)
13	Cadair Idris higher slopes	(PRN 28662)
14	Castell y Bere	(PRN 29773)

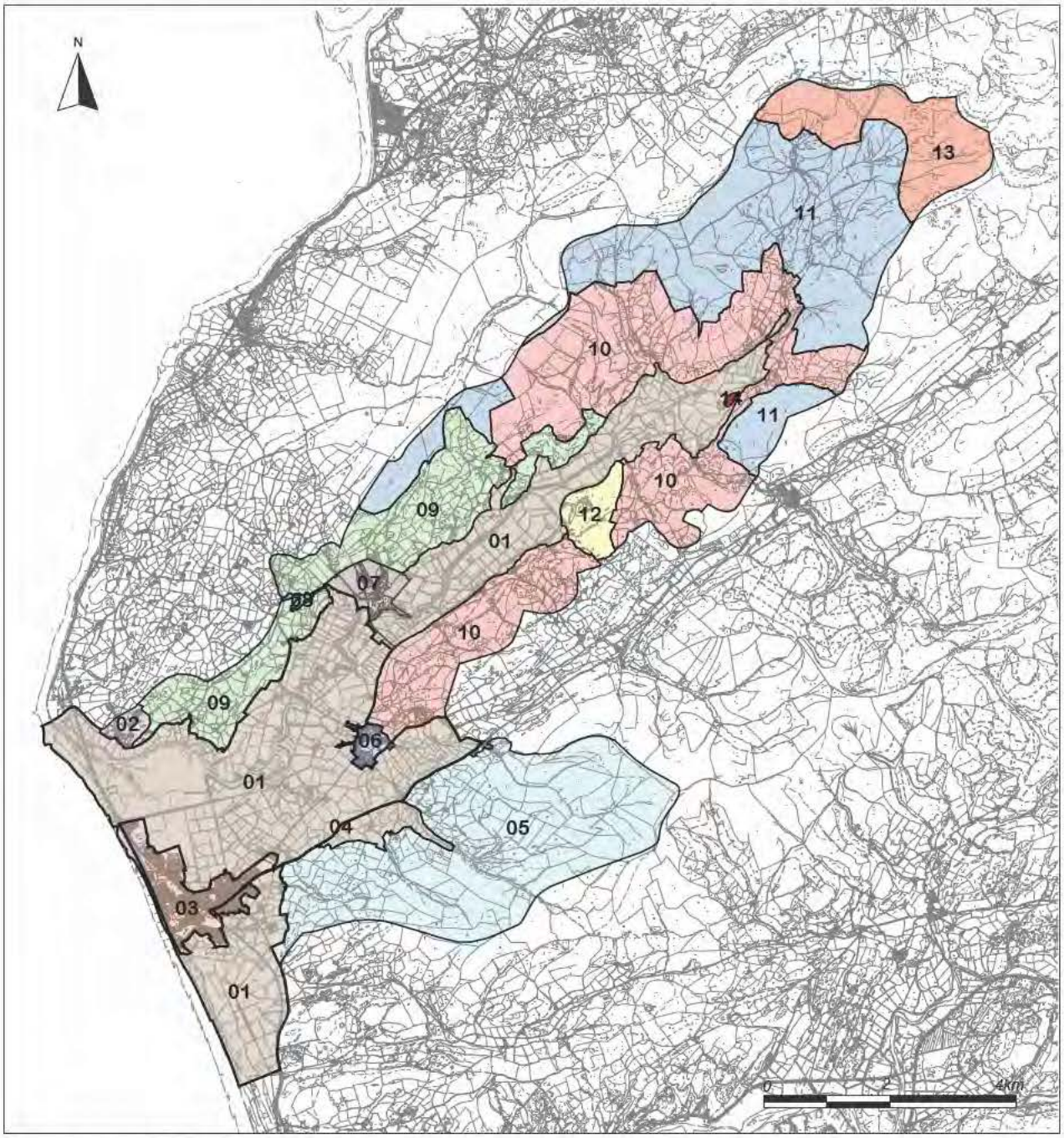
9.2 An overall location map showing the position of these areas in relation to each other is included at the beginning of this section.

9.3 Each area description has been divided into three sections following the model of earlier reports – historic background, key historic landscape characteristics and a management section.

9.4 A map showing the extent and detail of each area is located facing the description. The area is outlined with a solid, black line.

9.5 Colour plates which give an impression of the overall texture and character of each area are also included following the description: some of these are aerial photographs, but sometimes a ground level view has been more appropriate.

Fig 1. Location of numbered character areas



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01	Dysynni lowlands	08	Llanegryn
02	Tonfanau/Tal y Garreg	09	Enclosed northern slopes
03	Tywyn	10	Intermediate slopes
04	Talyllyn Railway	11	Upper slopes
05	Corlan Fraith	12	Craig yr Aderyn
06	Bryncrug	13	Cadair Idris higher slopes
07	Peniarth gardens and house	14	Castell y Bere

01 Dysynni lowlands (PRN 28650)

Historical background

An extensive lowland area that extends from the sea shore of Cardigan Bay to the foot of the mountains at Gwastadfryn beyond Llanfihangel y Pennant church, and which includes the course of the Afon Dysynni and the Broadwater, the expanse of water into which the Dysnni flows near the point at which it empties into the sea and the lower part of the Dysynni's tributary, the Afon Fathew.

Much of this area was clearly open water until historic times. It has been suggested that the Broadwater was an embarkation and landing-point in Prehistory, and it is highly likely that the establishment of the town of Tywyn (area 03) and the high-status dwellings at Peniarth (area 07) and Ynysysmaengwyn in the Medieval period reflect a shoreline that reached much further inland. As well as the Broadwater, a large lake remained in the marshes at Penllyn, south of Tywyn, until after 1860. Embankments were constructed around Ynysymaengwyn and Tywyn in the light of the enclosure act of 1805. Water-control systems were installed from the upper part of the valley around Craig yr Aderyn to the sea in the 1860s.

The farm settlement at Talybont retains the name of the pre-Conquest commotal centre or llys, which is probably associated with the motte of Domen Dreiniog 250m to the south. The llys and its demesne land lay close to the river, at its crossing at Pont Dysynni, where in 1284 a fish weir is noted. No certain visible indications of the llys survive at or near the farm buildings at Talybont thougha a small earthwork castle stands on the river bank, 250m to the south. This might be thought to be a component of the llys complex but is not documented.

The erection of the native royal castle of Castell y Bere (in area 14) would be consistent with the late use of this llys. The Castle would have guarded the upland pastures which would have formed part of the Medieval administrative landscape catered on Talybont.

The broad plain of the Dysynni as seen from Tywyn

Key historic landscape characteristics

Reclaimed land; coastal inlet

This area includes the Broadwater SSSI and the Dyfi SSSI.

In essence, though this character area includes the Broadwater, it is an expanse of flat land, much of which has been reclaimed from the sea in historic times. It is not clear whether in the Medieval period much,or some, would have been salt marsh and was gradually improved or whether very active strategies involving building dykes and other sea-defences enclosed what would previously have been open areas of water. The Dysynni river is embanked, and substantial embankments have clearly also been erected in the vicinity of Ynysymaengwyn, as a consequence of the enclosure act of 1805-9. There is in addition much evidence of water-control systems, sea-defences and other improvements as far inland as Pont y Garth (SH 6355 0708), indicating active strategies on the part of local landowners to manage and develop this land.

In places there is an almost parkland quality to this character area, with clumps of larch and pine trees dotted about, evidently representing deliberate planting. The sense of a 'parkland' is best appreciated from the higher ground to north and to south of this area, though it becomes muted towards the head of the valley, around Gwastadfryn, where the landscape becomes wilder, and to the south. There is almost the sense of a Lake District statesmens's landscape within this area, since farms are large, typically built just below the break of slope, and farm-houses seem to vary in date of construction from the seventeenth century to the nineteenth. Some of the farm-houses are substantial sub-Medieval structures, others are almost villa-like constructions of the Victorian period or even later. Some farm outbuildings are remarkably

impressive, such as the seventeenth century cow-house at Llanllwyda, with its roof of early graded slates and its catslide dormer. Boundaries are variously post-and-wire, hedgerows, stone walls with some use of slab fences near the railway 04.

The character area includes the garden at Ynysymaengwyn, which has been developed as a caravan park. Little is evident of the historic garden and less of the house. The perimeter wall forms an important feature along the Tywyn road, as do the ornamental late-nineteenth century gateposts with the elephant motif at the principal entrance.

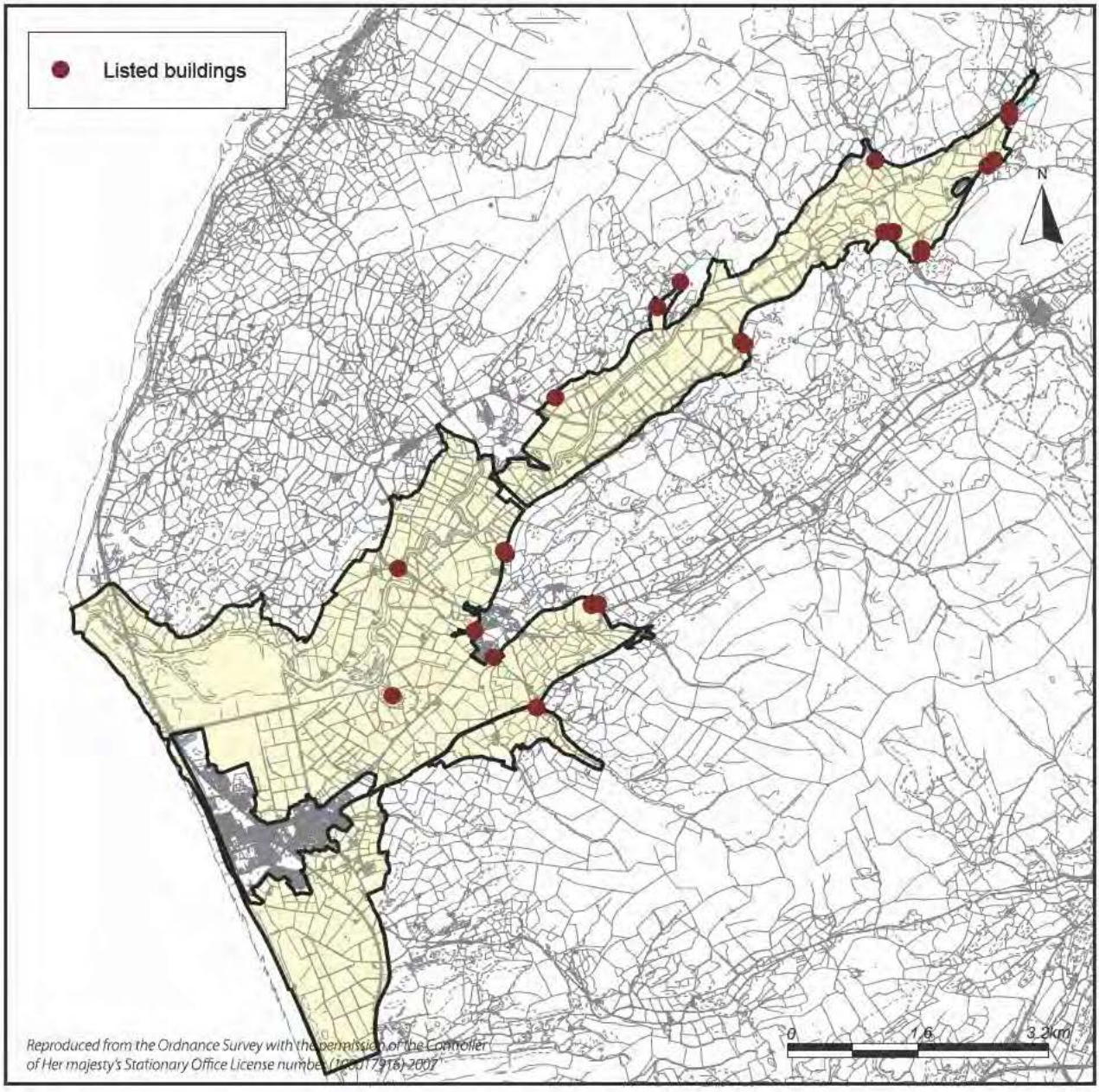
The part of this area which includes the twentieth century military sites preserves the abutments of a bailey bridge at SH 5667 0292.

Conservation priorities and management

Landscape conservation strategy should ensure that the open character of this area is retained and that gradual attrition by the expansion of the built-up areas of Bryncrug and Tywyn be resisted. The views across the valley are an important part of historic character, and in particular the view towards Tywyn from Ynysy-maengwyn, dominated by the tower of Tywyn church should not be be obscured. The character of historic farm-houses, farm-buildings and cottages should be retained.

The settlement lies partly within and partly without the Snowdonia National Park.

Fig 2. Landscape Character Area 1: Dysynni lowlands (PRN 28650)



02 Tonfanau/Tal y Garreg (PRN 28651)

Historical background

The site of a hillfort, in which, it has been suggested, a small primary bivallate hillfort is overlain by a still smaller and later 'citadel' which is defended by strong banks and rock-cut defence ditches, possibly an post-Roman/Early Medieval re-occupation overlying a putative earlier hillfort.

The ridge has been quarried since at least the nineteenth century. A narrow-gauge link to the Cambrian Railways was put in c. 1898, superseded by a standard-gauge siding in 1906, around the the time it was taken over directly by John Corbett of Ynysymaengwyn, working as Tonfanau Granite Quarries. In 1965 this became a subsidiary of Penmaenmawr and Welsh Granite Co., and operated as Kingston Minerals from 1965 to 19181. It was thereafter worked by Mr G.C. Evans of Aberllefenni, and is now the only operating quarry within the Snowdonia National Park.

Quarrying has had a significant impact on the landscape setting of the hillfort and possibly on its stability also.

Tal y Garreg hillfort and quarry as seen from the Dysynni estuary

Key historic landscape characteristics

Industrial landscape threatening earlier archaeological landscape

A ridge overlooking the Dysynni valley, on the crest of which is situated the Tal y Garreg hillfort; to the south west, at Llechlwyd, the ridge is also defended by massive bivallate ramparts. Their chronological relationship with each other is unclear. These have been truncated by quarrying operations. Tal y Garreg has a strong visual relationship with Craig yr Aderyn, on which a further hillfort is located. It has been suggested that as a post-Roman feature, the citadel feature is the precursor of the commotal centre at Tal y Bont in 01.

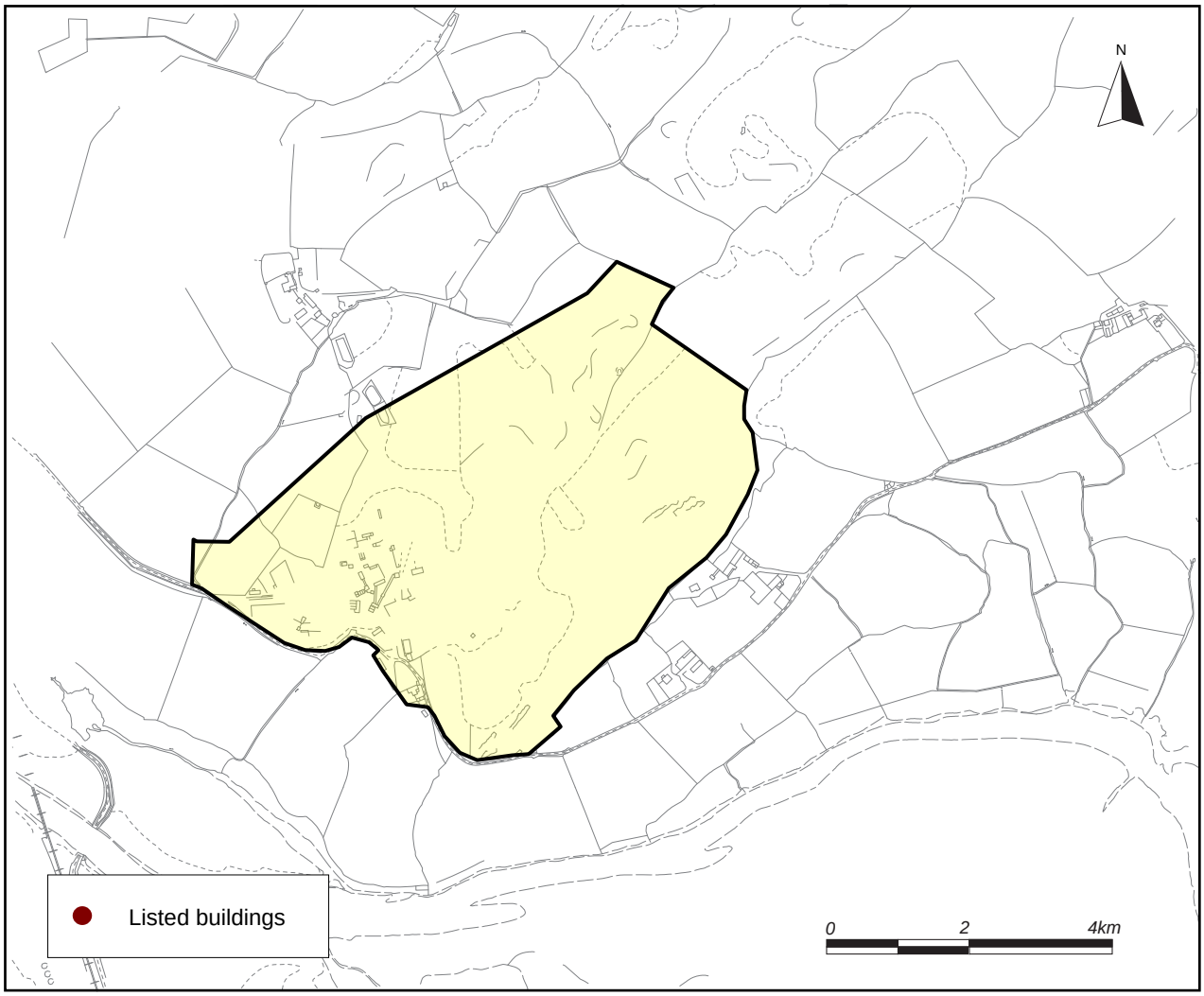
The quarry exploits a NNE-SSW tending sill of coarse dolerite/gabbro, suitable for road surfacing material. Traces of earlier internal arrangements including inclines, chutes, aerial ropeways and gravity assisted crushing plant are visible in and amongst modern haul roads. There were at one time four working levels. The rail connection was removed post-1970.

Conservation priorities and management

Monitoring for quarrying impact on hillfort; archaeological assessment of stone-quarrying landscapes within Gwynedd as a whole.

The settlement lies within the Snowdonia National Park.

Fig 3. Tonfanau/Tal y Garreg (PRN 28651)



03 Tywyn (PRN 18349)

Historical background

A market town and holiday resort which now forms a sub-regional centre for southern Gwynedd. Its origins appear to lie with its parish church, and as the name 'Tywyn' (sea-shore or sand-dune) suggests, it is probable that when it was founded it was near the water's edge. It may have been the principal ecclesiastical centre of the south-western part of Gwynedd. A villa de Tewyn is recorded in 1283, implying the beginnings of urban life but it was never a planted borough town and seems to have evolved around the church. The market seems to have grown up around the church and Corbett Square. Visitors record uniformly negative judgements of the place until the early nineteenth century, when it began to expand under the patronage of the Corbet (and from 1878 the Corbett) family of Ynysymaengwyn. From the 1860s it was served by the national rail network, and boasted civic infrastructure in the form of gas supply. By this stage it had pretensions to becoming a holiday resort, and boarding houses were springing up.

The purchase of the Ynysymaengwyn estate by John Corbett in 1878 led to further investment in the town, including the development of the water and sewage system, the building of the promenade, the assembly room of 1893 (now the cinema), the Intermediate School of 1894 and the market hall of 1897. The High Street was developed slowly from the 1860s to the 1960s, and villa-type housing made its appearance particularly in the southern part of the town.

From August 1941 and May 1945 an RAF camp was established at Tywyn, taken over by the army at the end of the war. The runways have disappeared but many of the buildings are extant, as are services personnel married quarters, semi-detached dwellings to the north of the camp, now in private hands.

The revival of the Talyllyn Railway in 1951 placed Tywyn on the tourist map once again. The town acquired a supermarket on the site of the former main-line goods yard in the late twentieth century, a hospital, a leisure centre and an industrial estate on the road near Pendre. A proposal for a marina sea-front development was turned down but there has been considerable new build on the Promenade area.

Tywyn opposite the church, possibly the site of the medieval town

Key historic landscape characteristics

Tywyn is a town of some architectural variety, and in which different street patterns are evident. The historic core of the town is characterised by small two-storey houses of possibly eighteenth century or early nineteenth century date as well as some larger double-fronted structures in the vicinity of the church and the market place. The church itself, with its twelfth century nave and Victorian transept, chancel and tower, is recognisably the historic centre of this part of the settlement, and its tower is visible for some distance

away. However, the substantial Corbett Arms Hotel closes off the historic market area and dominates this part of the town. Some of the buildings facing the church are unoccupied, including Geufron House with its attractive Italianate triple window.

Away from this area, the architecture varies considerably. Along High Street, which extends from the Medieval core westwards, double-fronted dwellings of Hanoverian proportions can be seen near to mid-nineteenth century terraced dwellings and a brick-built bon marché, Paige's Furnishings of 1903. The Victorian and Edwardian ambience of the western end of High Street is however dented by a modernist leisure centre. A cluster of nineteenth century boarding houses 'Idris Villas' and on Pier Road make use of polychromatic brick patterns. Around Tywyn Wharf station, at the intersection of Station Road/Brynhyfryd Road and Neptune Road, the buildings are later, more elaborately 'villa' in style and apt to make greater use of brick.

There are extensive areas of twentieth-century housing in the town.

The sea front buildings (in the area between the main line railway and the promenade) include some pre-railway stone-built vernacular dwellings of perhaps eighteenth century date, and some substantial nineteenth century hotels and apartment blocks, but dwellings are mostly post-war 'infill', bungalows and housing estates. The apartment block 'Trem Enlli' is particularly impressive, and preserves some of its original detailing in the form of wrought ironwork and attractive timber balconies.

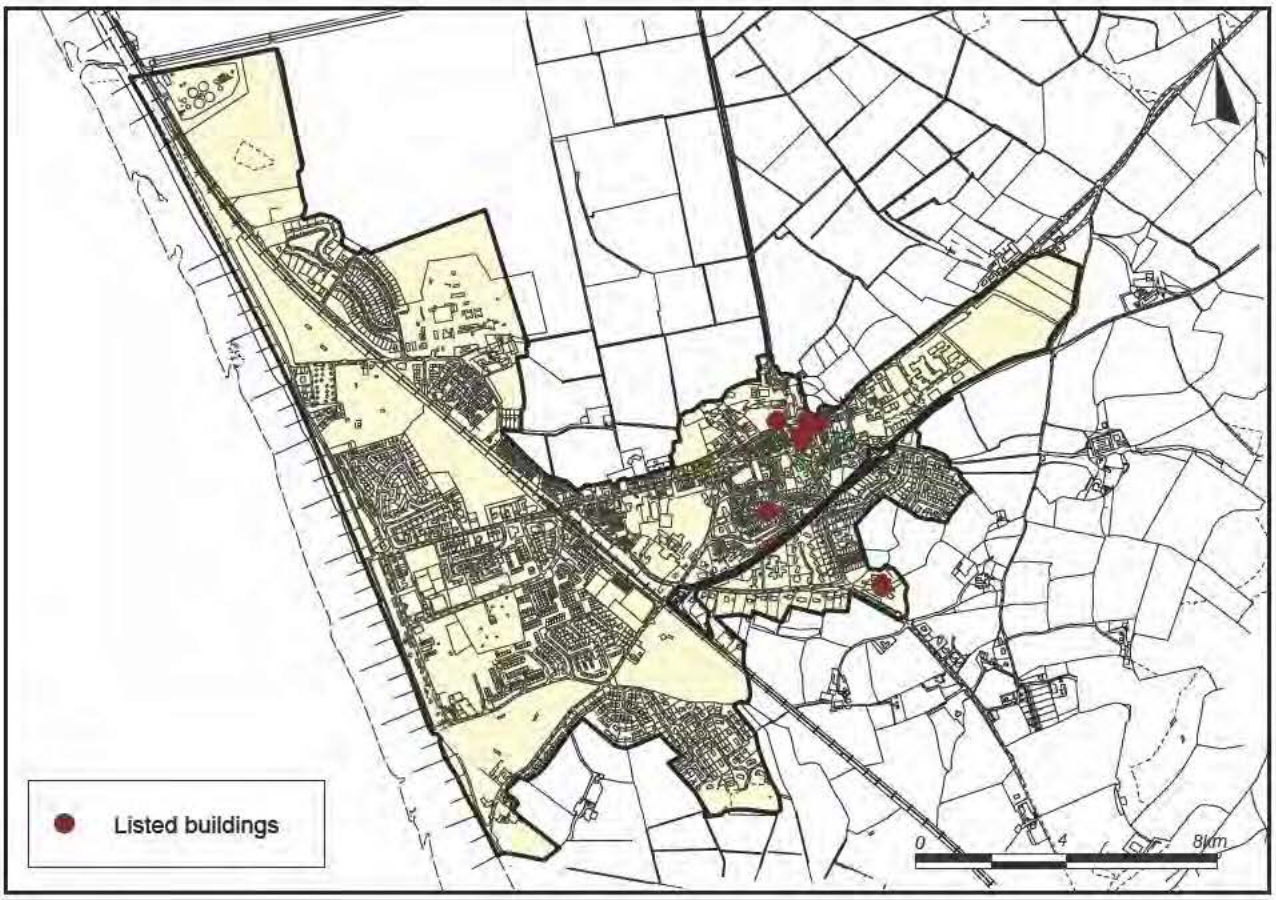
This area includes the twentieth-century military camps at Tywyn.

Conservation priorities and management

Retention of historic character of pre-twentieth century buildings and of streetscape; adaptation of buildings in accordance with historic character, working with existing pallet of historic building materials; encouragement to re-occupation of disused buildings; preservation of historic skylines, roof-scapes and chimneys; preservation by record of wartime structures in the event of demolition.

The settlement lies outside the Snowdonia National Park.

Fig 4. Tywyn (PRN 18349)



04 Talyllyn Railway (PRN 28653)

Historical background

The Talyllyn Railway runs for 11.67km (7.25 miles) from Tywyn to near Abergynolwyn, though only the first 5.17km runs within the Dysynni historic landscape. It was financed and built by the McConnel brothers of Manchester, and opened in 1866 to carry slate from the Bryneglwys quarries to the standard gauge railway at Tywyn, and to operate passenger trains, making it the first narrow gauge railway (in this case 0.686m – 2' 3" gauge) in Britain authorised to carry passengers by steam. The quarries shut in 1946 but the railway survived as a passenger carrier and tourist attraction; it was not nationalised in 1948 and in 1951 it became the first railway in the world to be preserved as a heritage railway by volunteers, initially under the management of Tom Rolt. Effective control of the railway is now in the hands of the Talyllyn Railway Preservation Society. In 1976 an extension was opened along the former mineral line from Abergynolwyn to the new station at Nant Gwernol. The railway has seen a steady increase in passengers carried since 2000, with nearly 95,500 passenger journeys recorded in 2006, although this figure is still only around half the peak figure carried in 1973.

From 1952 the railway has also maintained a Narrow Gauge Railway Museum at Tywyn Wharf station which displays exhibits from the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. The present substantial museum building and station extension was opened in 2005.

Rhyd yr Onnen station on the Talyllyn Railway

Key historic landscape characteristics

Victorian narrow gauge steam railway.

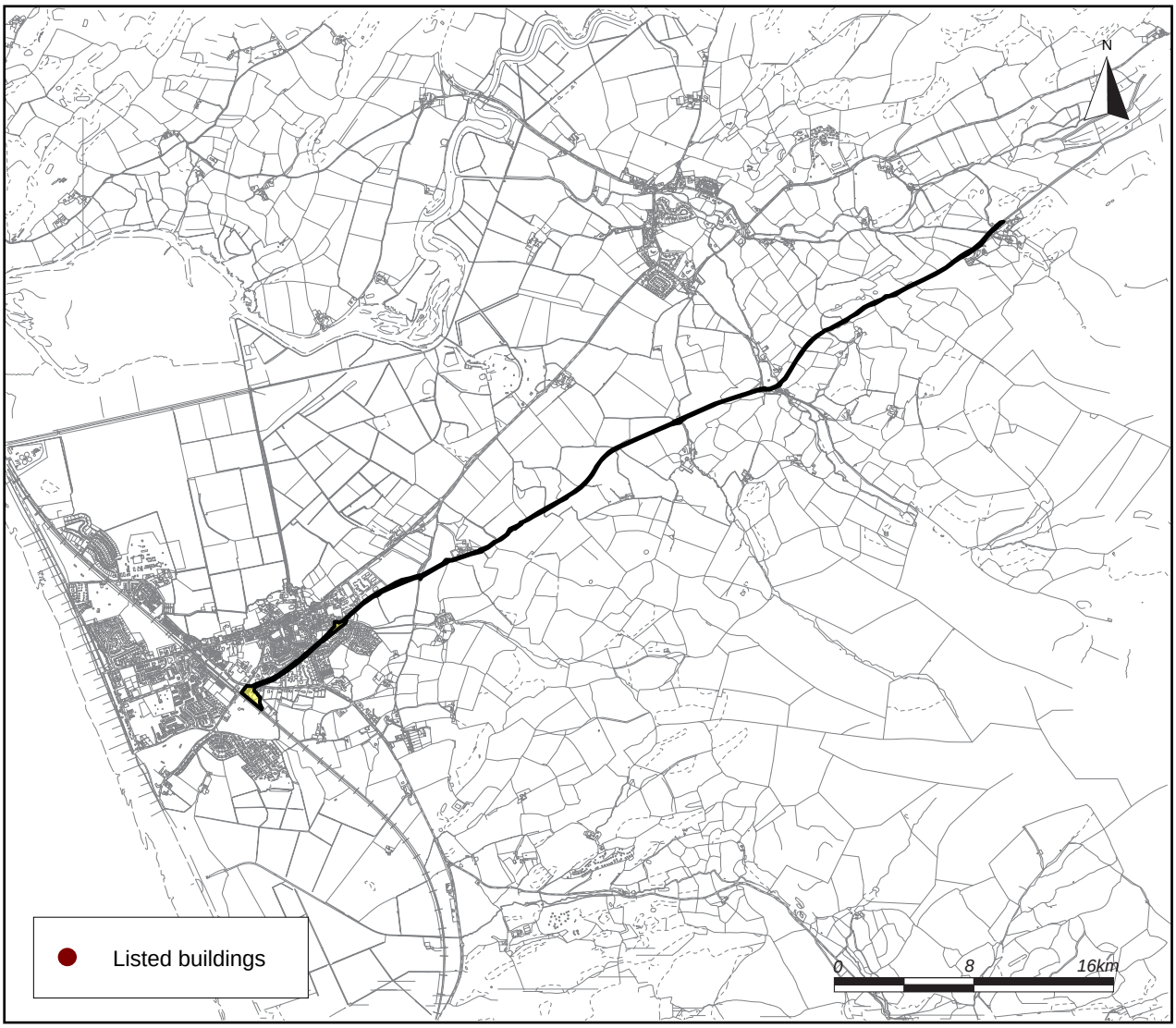
This landscape area is characterised by many of the buildings and structures associated with the railway's opening in 1866, and as such constitutes a remarkable survival. The ambience of the 1860s survived practically unaltered into the early preservation era (1950s onwards) but has since then been comparomised by the exigencies of running a railway that responds to modern tourist needs and to the requirements of the railways inspectorate. This is reflected in the building of breeze-block and modern corrugated workshops and infrastructure, particularly at Tywyn Pendre. The new museum building at Tywyn Wharf station uses red brick and slate to match the 1866 station building nearby but is considerably greater in scale. The smaller stations up the line (Rhyd yr Onnen and Brynglas both lie within the Dysynni historic landscape area) preserve the sense of a small rural railway of the nineteenth century.

Conservation priorities and management

Preservation of Victorian ambience; encouragement to preparation of Conservation Management Plan by, or commissioned by, Talyllyn Railway Preservation Society.

This character area lies partly within and partly outside the Snowdonia National Park.

Fig 5. Talyllyn Railway (PRN 28653)



05 Corlan Fraith (PRN 28654)

Historical background

An area that seems to have been enclosed in the nineteenth century, and where some abortive mineral trials took place. The motte Bryn y Castell may have guarded a Medieval route across this character area to Pennal. It seems to have been erected in the 1140s by Cadwaladr, son of Gruffydd ap Cynan and brother to Owain Gwynedd, at a time when the spur on which it stood would have overlooked the flood plain east of Tywyn. It is one of only two documented castles built within Gwynedd by Welsh lords at this time. By the nineteenth century it formed part of the Ynysymaengwyn estate and seems to have been exploited for sheep-farming.

The motte at Bryn y Castell lies left of the farm

Key historic landscape characteristics

Key characteristics here

An area of rising ground to the south of the Dysynni lowlands which reaches to the ridge of Corlan Fraith, characterised by (mainly) regular enclosures of probable nineteenth century date, very small-scale mineral trials, and several sheepfolds. Farm-houses and farm-buildings associated with this area are generally situated just below it in 01 (eg Hendy, Ty Mawr and Cynfal), though the substantial Victorian farms of Bryn y Castell and Caerffynnon are situated within it. Pine trees are evident in a number of areas but it is otherwise open and unwooded. The motte Bryn y Castell lies within this character area.

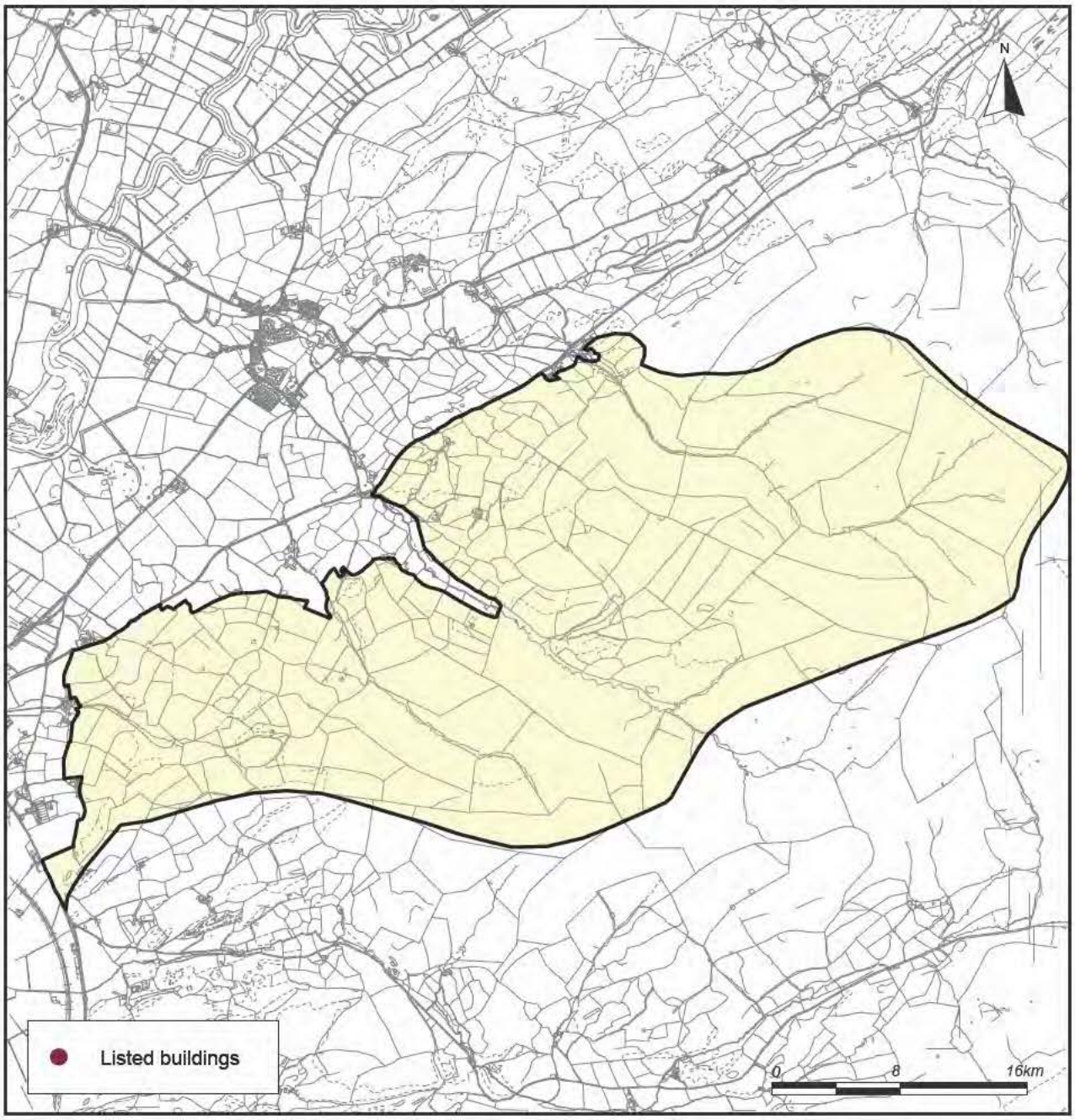
The area seems little visited, even though it is situated adjacent to the Talyllyn Railway and to the caravan parks around Rhyd yr Onnen station.

Conservation priorities and management

Preservation of sense of remoteness and open character; management of new build and encouragement to appropriate conversion of existing buildings.

This character area lies within the Snowdonia National Park.

Fig 6. Corlan Fraith (PRN 28654)



06 Bryncrug (PRN 28655)

Historical background

The village of Bryncrug is identified as a Medieval township and is situated at a point where Cefn Gaer to Pennal Roman road and its successor, the Medieval road past Domen Dreiniog, cross the Afon Fathew. It is shown on the Tywyn tithe map of 1842 and on an estate map of 1860 as three small settlements, based on Pont Fathew (SH 6089 0333), Perthi Citiau (SH 6089 0311) and Pont y Felindre (SH 6138 0309), which are likely to have expanded with the opening of the Talyllyn Railway in 1866, which would have enabled it to become a dormitory settlement for Bryneglwys quarrymen and their families. It has continued to expand as a suburb of Tywyn in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century.

Most of the land belonged to Ynysymaengwyn but it seems also to have enjoyed the patronage of Peniarth estate on the evidence of the large 'Peniarth' hotel of 1901. The village seems to have developed in an ad-hoc way with little sense of an estate pattern of architecture being imposed on it.

The general store at Bryncrug

Key historic landscape characteristics

Nineteenth century village

Bryncrug is situated on the main coastal road on the Afon Fathew, near its confluence with the Dysynni, and is made up of buildings that are largely nineteenth to twentieth century in date as such, it contrasts strongly with the more vernacular character of Llanegryn. The Peniarth Arms Hotel is the dominant building of the village, mainly built of squared stone but with brick chimneys and ceramic chimney pots. On each side of it are small Victorian terraced houses. The church is also nineteenth century.

A feature of the village is the attractive general store and newsagent's facing the bridge for travellers leaving Tywyn. The proportions are vernacular, and it includes five of the distinctive Merioneth dormer windows on the top floor but it is built mainly out of slate rags, suggesting a date in the 1840s, when Bryneglwys quarry moved into production, or later.
Other nineteenth century dwellings in the village have been pebbledashed and it is not possible to identify the building material.

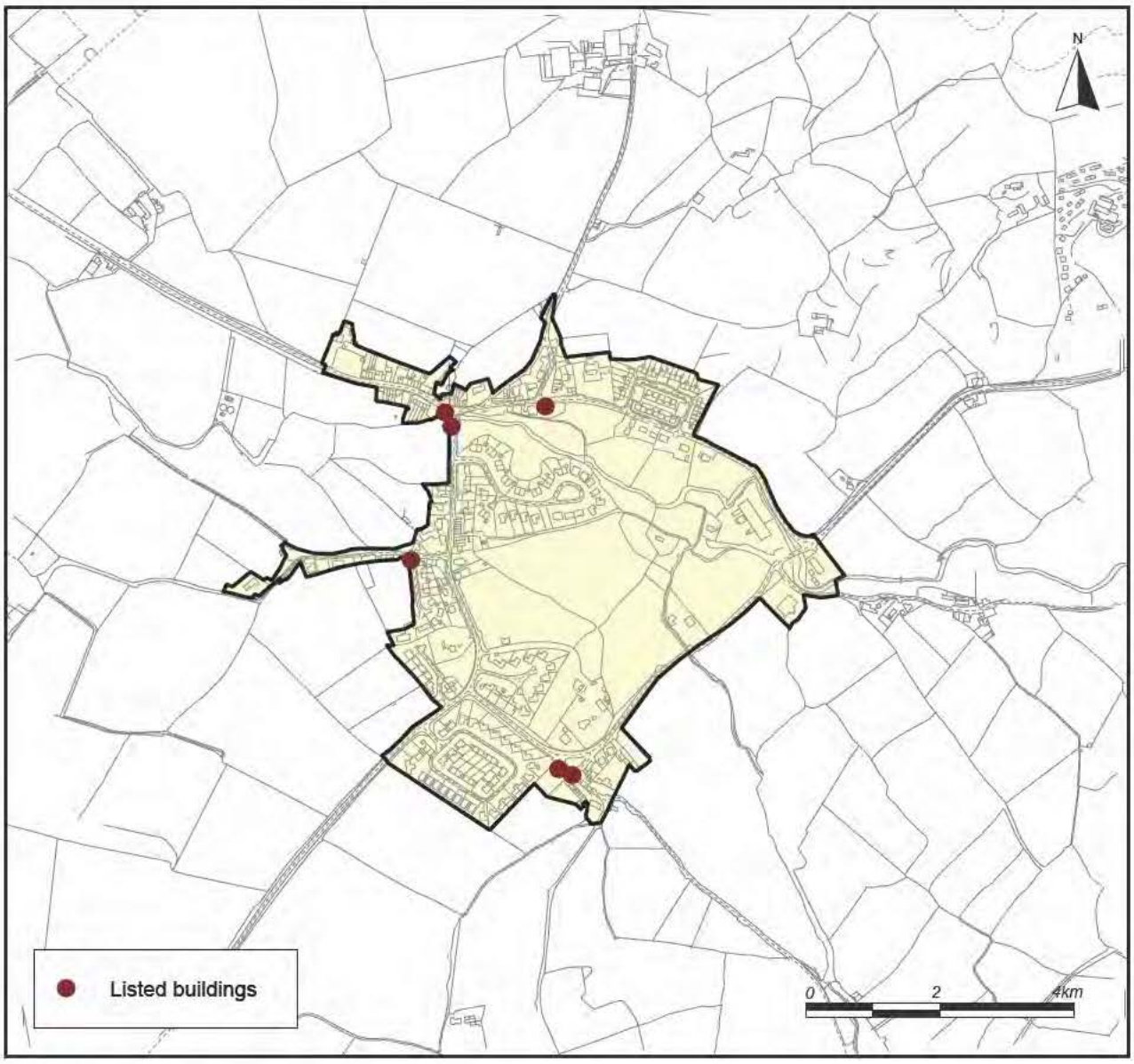
There are some late-twentieth century housing estates in the village.

Conservation priorities and management

Encouragement to use of historic features eg window frames and to removal of pebbledash on Victorian buildings; retention of historic character; adaptation of buildings in accordance with historic character, working with existing pallet of historic building materials; preservation of historic skylines, roof-scapes and chimneys.

The settlement lies within the Snowdonia National Park.

Fig 7. Bryncrug (PRN 28655)



07 Peniarth gardens and house (PRN 28656)

Historical background

A dwelling on the northern banks of the Afon Dysynni, long the residence of the Owen family, which has its origins in a Medieval township. The lay subsidy roll of 1292-3 indicates that it was already densely populated, as the focus of a free secular dynastic lordship. There were sixty-two freeholding families in Peniarth at that stage, who had sufficient resources to be taxed. Six of the sixty-two tenants had movable assets in excess of the worth of 10/-, the equivalent of two horses or three cows. By 1418 there was a house on the site referred to as the 'plas', in the ownership of the Llwyd/Lloyd family, by whom it seems to have been set out as a park in the sixteenth century, when Syr Owain ap Gwylim praises Dafydd Llwyd's 'Parks and a mountain above the boundaries/Fish, corn, meat are below the breast of the hill/The commote is broad with a fitting limit/Every furrow being meadow and woodland'.

In the mid-sixteenth century the property passed by marriage to the Owen family and it seems to have been Richard Owen who completed the enlargement of the house and possibly also a further laying out of the grounds by 1700. The older part of the house is of seventeenth century date, stone-built, of massive blocks, with later additions, including a later seventeenth century range which made the house a square plan. If the grounds are later, they probably originate with Richard's son, Lewis. In any event, a late seventeenth or early eighteenth century date seems likely.

There have been alterations carried out to the house and the grounds ever since. The estate office block has a date-stone of 1727, and is thought originally to have been erected as a folly; a brick façade on the north-east front has a portico of 1858.

The driveway to the house was from the south until the Second World War, until the bridge over the Dysynni was destroyed. The former service entrance is now used.

Peniarth remains a private dwelling.

The entrance to Peniarth

Key historic landscape characteristics

Grade II* landscape park, grade II* listed dwelling

The house itself and the park remain in private hands. The house is invisible from the road or from any other place of pblic access, being hidden by a grove of trees.

The pleasure grounds surround the house and run down to the river, and afford views of Cadair Idris. They are mainly woodland, with many mature trees, ornamented with walks, summer houses and a boat house. A detailed description of the gardens is provided in the Register of Parks and Gardens, but in summary the late seventeenth/early eighteenth grounds seem to have occupied a triangular area mostly to the north of the

house, whereas it is possible that the earlier garden is where the kitchen garden is situiated now. Traces of military buildings erected during the 1939-1945 war can also be seen in the grounds, ion some places partly covered by forestry, together with concrete hardstanding and associated tracks.

The most prominent public feature is the fine ornamental gateway at the northern end of the park on the Llanegryn to Pont y Garth road, erected when this driveway was promoted to principal entrance to the park in 1945. The square-plan pillars are of pale coloured ashlar gritstone, with panelled fronts surmounted by a ball and ring-and-ball finial. The boundary walls with their cock-and-hen copings, form a conspicuous feature along the Llanegryn to Pont y Garth road.

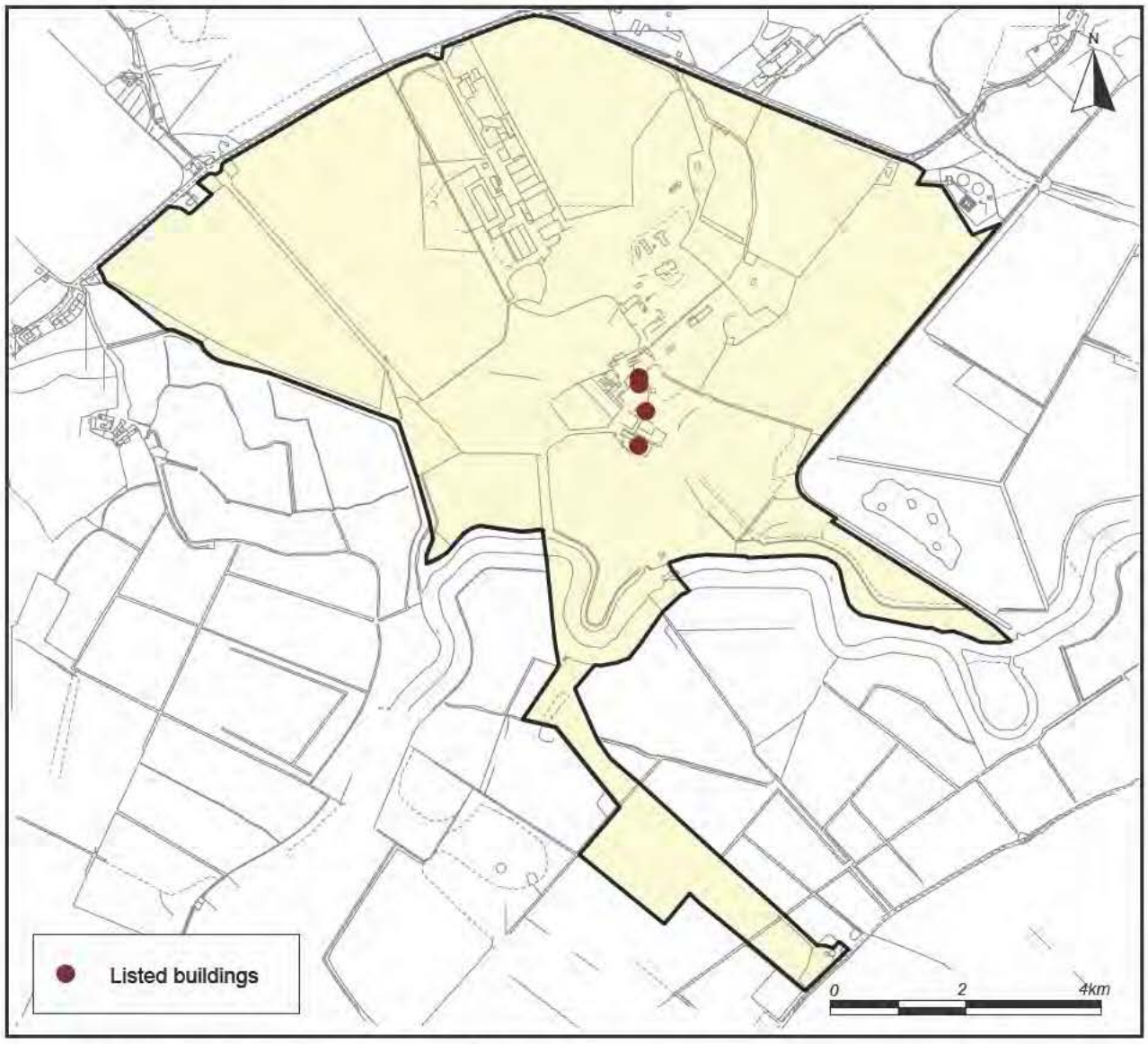
It is noted here that the home farm associated with Peniarth is situated in area 09 at SH 6105 0604.

Conservation priorities and management

Recognition of this house and garden's historic importance by listing as Grade II* inclusion in the Register as Grade II* is an important first step.

The house and gardens lie within the Snowdonia National Park.

Fig 8. Peniarth gardens and house (PRN 28656)



08 Llanegryn (PRN 28657)

Historical background

Llanegryn church is the centre of one of the historic parishes of the Register area, though it lies some little way from the main nucleation of Llanegryn village. The church itself, listed in the 1253 Taxatio, is Medieval; most of the fabric probably dates from the fourteenth century. It seems likely that Llanegryn grew up as a mainly unplanned ribbon settlement where a secondary road crosses a stream, although as noted below it seems likely that the Peniarth estate constructed some of the dwellings in it. Sixteenth century documents refer to the building of a new mill within the parish of Llanegryn and to the destruction of the old mill during the Glyndwr uprising; it is possible that these were situated within the present village, given that it offers an advantageous site for water-power. The Llanegryn tithe map of 1842 emaphsises the mill-streams and indicates a small ribbon settlement. There are indications of a nucleated village in 1627, and in 1761 a Llanegryn shop sold snuff and tobacco imported from Caernarfon. The local historian David Williams suggests that most of the houses within the core of the village date from 1815 to 1870. He indicates that the distinctive estate cottages built by Peniarth at the eastern extremity of the village (Preswylfa, Bryn Meirion and Maes yr Haf) were built shortly after 1870.

The bridge and village of Llanegryn

Key historic landscape characteristics

Historic village

The church is situated at some little distance from the village, which effectively straggles along a secondary road leading to Peniarth and Pont y Garth at a point where it crosses a small tributary of the Dysynni. Llanegryn is fundamentally vernacular in character. Houses are mainly stone-built and two-storey, individually constructed but apparently of nineteenth century date.

An unusual feature of the village is the creation of a small square at its eastern end, formed by two chapels of different denominations and a shared vestry. A 1950s village hall, ‘Neuadd Egryn’, completes the sense of a square, though it clashes with the Victorian architecture of the religious buildings, now out of use and decaying.

An exception to the unplanned character of the village is the two rows of Peniarth estate-sponsored houses at the eastern extremity of the village at SH 6035 0559, with their self-consciously faux-vernacular style and distinctive cast-iron windows.

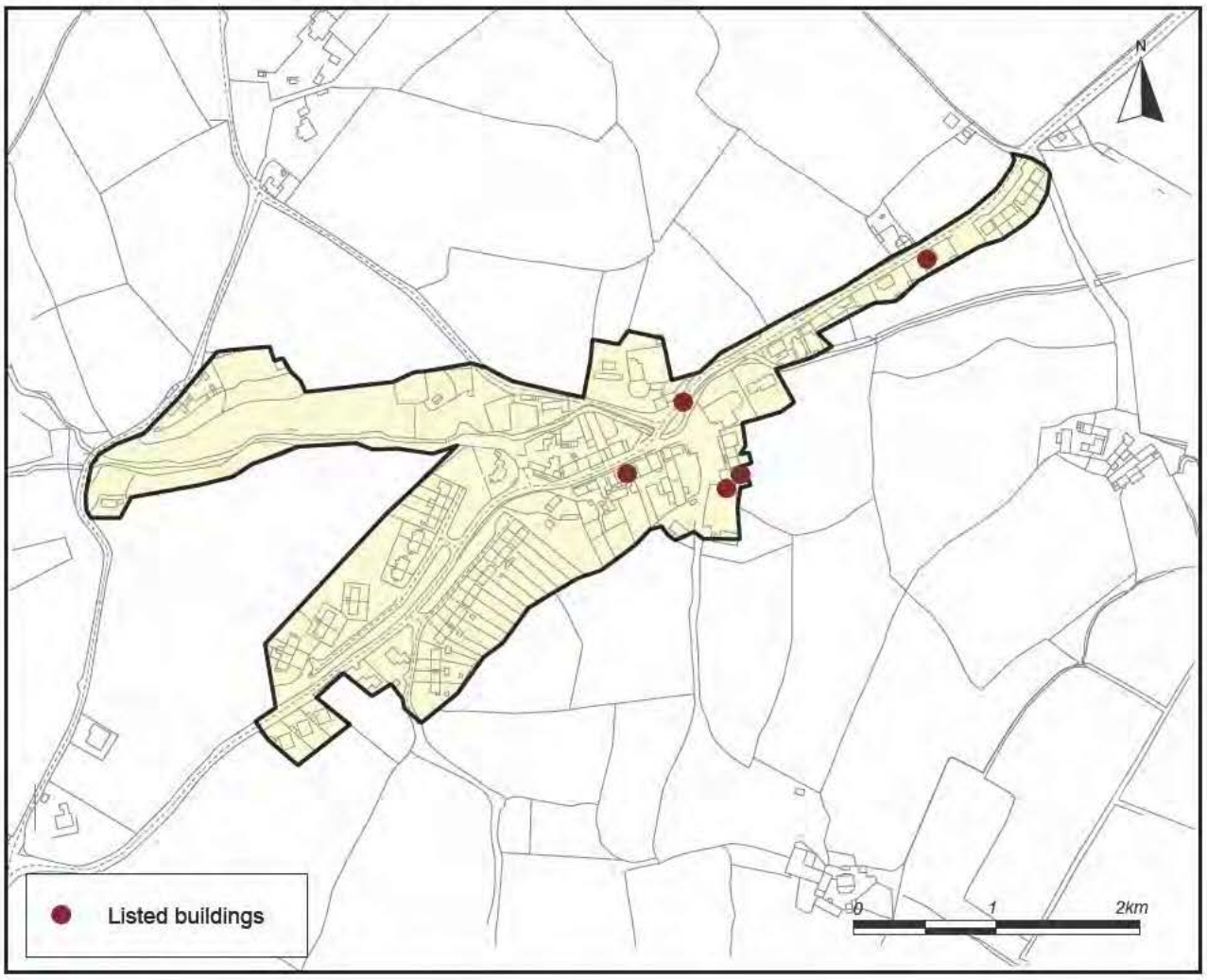
The modern dwellings to the east of these stand on the site of the tai pridd, the earth-walled houses.

Conservation priorities and management

Adaptive re-use for redundant religious buildings; preservation of character of settlement; adaptation of buildings in accordance with historic character, working with existing pallet of historic building materials.

The settlement lies within the Snowdonia National Park.

Fig 9. Llanegryn (PRN 28657)



09 Enclosed northern slopes (PRN 28658)

Historical background

Areas of historic enclosure on the lower slopes of the northern part of the study area. This area includes the relict medieval landscape associated with the llys at Tal y Bont (Taly Bont itself is in 01). Enclosure of this area seems to have been well under way by the sixteenth century, when as noted in 8.6 above, Syr Owain ap Gwylim's praise-poem to Dafydd Llwyd of Peniarth refers to 'Percydd, mynydd uwch minion' (Parks and a mountain above the boundaries).

Woodland and enclosure fields on the lower northern slopes

Key historic landscape characteristics

Key characteristics here

Improved lower slopes marked by enclosures, some of them wandering, some of them regular, as well as by scattered woodlands and farm settlements, including Tyrgawen, Peniarth Uchaf and Peniarth Canol, on a ledge overlooking the Dysynni valley, as well as the Peniarth home farm at SH 6105 0604. It includes a strip of land above 01 that extends to Tal y Garreg and Tonfanau where as well as nineteenth century farm dwellings there has been some later development, taking advantage of the views over the Broadwater and south over Cardigan Bay.

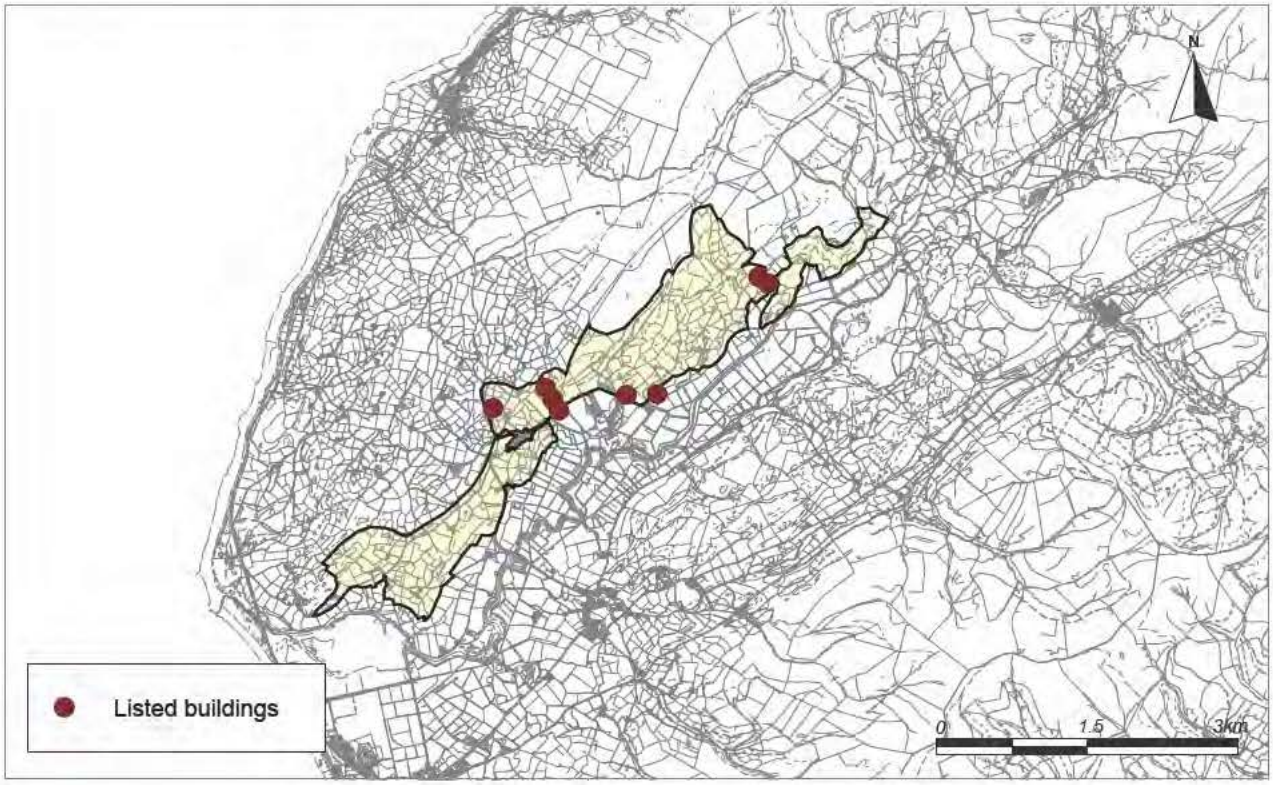
This area merges into 10 but is considerably less wild and remote.

Conservation priorities and management

Preservation of historic character of area, including field boundaries and farm dwellings/buildings.

This character area lies within the Snowdonia National Park.

Fig 10. Enclosed northern slopes (PRN 28658)



10 Upper slopes (PRN 28659)

Historical background

The largely unenclosed upper slopes of the historic landscape area. The hut-circle settlement of Craig Ty'n y Cornel indicates that these areas had been colonised in the Iron Age/Romano British period, and the survival of long houses here indicates that settlement survived into, or was resumed in, the Medieval period. It is not known whether the adjacent field system was associated with the earlier or the later period or with both. There is a continuity of occupation and exploitation from the Medieval period at Nant Caw Fawr, a farm which is recorded as a Medieval township. The woodlands of Coed Pennant are early.

The unenclosed upper slopes are visable across the valley

Key historic landscape characteristics

Mixed character area

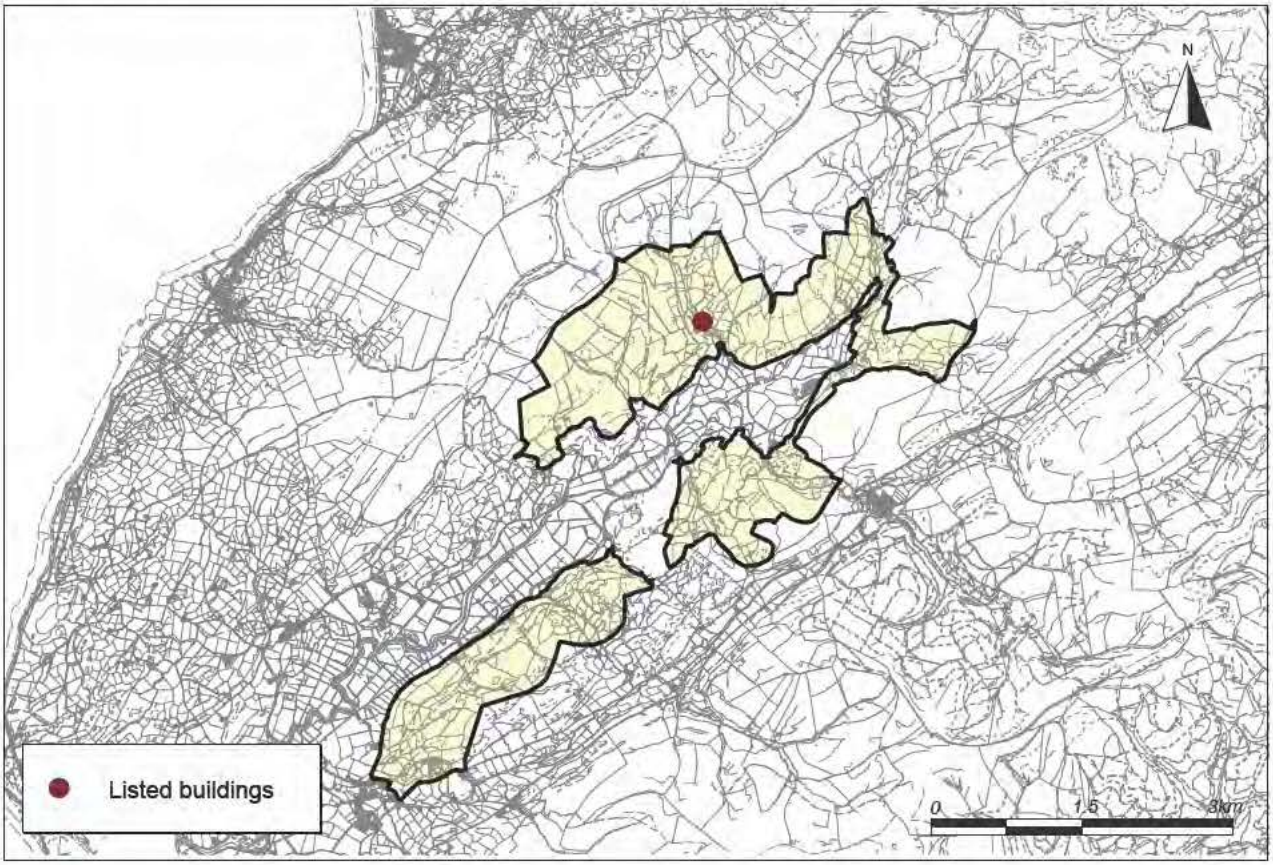
Again, an area which merges into those above (11) and those below (09) but which is characterised by steep-side slopes and a mixture of woodland, some scree and enclosures. Farm dwellings and farm buildings are generally situated below this character area, with the exception of Nant Caw Fawr, which is situated in a side valley up a winding track. The hut-circle settlement of Craig Ty'n y Cornel is associated with winding walls and long houses with traces of yards and paddocks.

Conservation priorities and management

Preservation of this character area's sense of remoteness must be a priority.

This character area lies within the Snowdonia National Park.

Fig 11. Upper slopes (PRN 28659)



11 Intermediate slopes (PRN 28660)

Historical background

An area broadly similar to 10, but less developed, and historically exploited as a sheep-walk. It includes the historic crown ffridd (sheepwalk) of Mynydd Pennant, which before the Conquest would have been an important component of the medieval administrative landscape in the hand of the prince although see 14 Historical background below, since it is possible that the ffridd extended to the upper part of 01, and around Castell y Bere (14); given that these were not an incidental or purely seasonal resource, it is perhaps more appropriate to consider these hafotiroedd (summer-lands – seasonally-occupied upland holdings) or ffriddoedd as cattle ranches, ranging from the valley floors to the high summer pastures. It is likely that the one settlement, Hafotty Gwastadfryn, represents enclosure of the sixteenth century as an upland colony of the lower-lying farm Gwastadfryn, which lies at the inland peak of area 01.

The intermediate slopes are visable above the tree line

Key historic landscape characteristics

Upland landscape of minimal human habitation

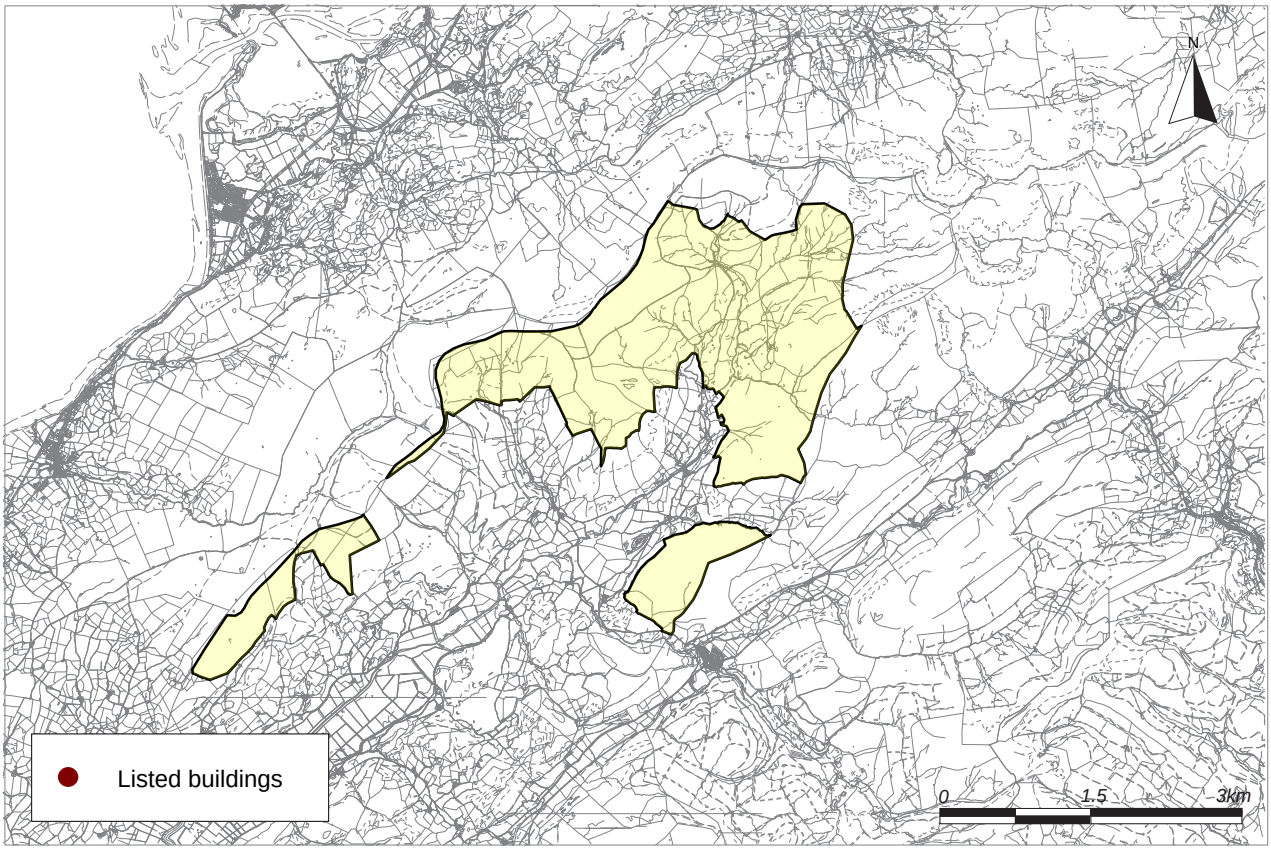
This area includes part of the Cadair Idris SSSI (CCW ref. SSSI 'Cadair Idris' 31WMT). It is made up of upland and appears within the post-Medieval period at least to have been devoid of permanent settlement with the exception of Hafotty Gwastadfryn at SH 6779 1220. It is crossed by a number of upland tracks used by farmers. It closes off the upper part of the Dysynni valley above 10 around Llanfihangel y Pennant church.

Conservation priorities and management

There does not seem to be any strong threat to this character area. Preservation of its sense of remoteness must be a priority.

This character area lies within the Snowdonia National Park.

Fig 12. Intermediate slopes (PRN 28660)



12 Craig yr Aderyn (PRN 28661)

Historical background

A spectacular crag, surmounted by a hillfort in which two distinct building periods have been identified but which cannot be dated with any confidence) and in which Roman-British pottery has been identified. The hill-fort is remarkable for its elaborate inturned entrances and double lines of defence.

The character area as a whole is a nesting area for choughs and great cormorants.

The crag of Craig yr Aderyn dominates the landscape of the upper valley

Key historic landscape characteristics

Spectacular hillfort location

It would be hard to conceive of a more spectacular location for a hill-fort; the northern slopes are prohibitively steep, and the only means of access is along a ridge from the south. It has a strong visual relationship not only wth the lowlands but with the whole of the Register landscape and forms a visual counterpoise to Tal y Garreg hillfort.

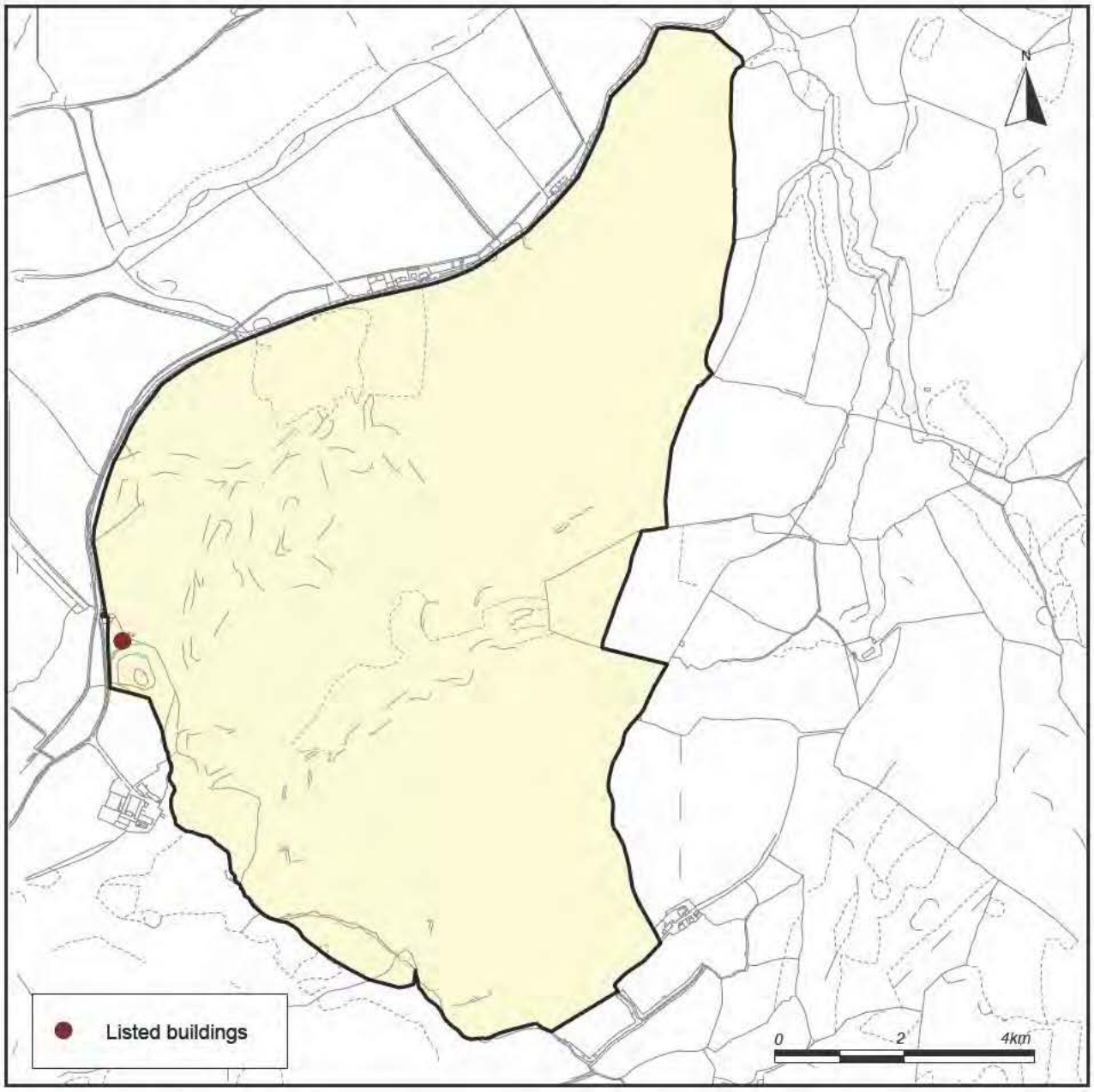
The boundaries identified here are those of the SSI and a Special Protected Area. The hillfort itself is also a SAM. This landscape area comprises rocky crags, acid grassland, heath and bracken; it is of European importance as a traditional breeding and roosting site for choughs, which are present througout the year, and for great cormorants. The maintenance of a short grassy sward, which provides an important feeding area for choughs, is considered one of the factors influencing the number of breeding and roosting birds.

Conservation priorities and management

As a SAM, a SSSI and an SPA, this area is appropriately managed.

This character area lies within the Snowdonia National Park.

Fig 13. Craig yr Aderyn (PRN 28661)



13 Cadair Idris higher slopes (PRN 18347)

Historical background

The Cadair Idris range has true mountain qualities. It closes the view up the Dysynni valley. The high summit ridge, with screes, boulders and high, wet gullies where alpine plants grow, is very popular with walkers: the highest peak (Mynydd Moel) is 863m, and there are several routes to the top. The mountain is the chair of the giant Idris, and is associated with a number of myths and legends, some of which are found on in connection with other Gwynedd peaks – anyone sleeping on the mountain overnight will awake as either a madman or a poet!

The summit of Cadir Idris from the eastern side

Key historic landscape characteristics

mountain summit and upland screes

This area contains the summit of Cadair Idris and the steep, craggy, inhospitable slopes below on the northern side. The area contains few vestiges of previous human habitation.

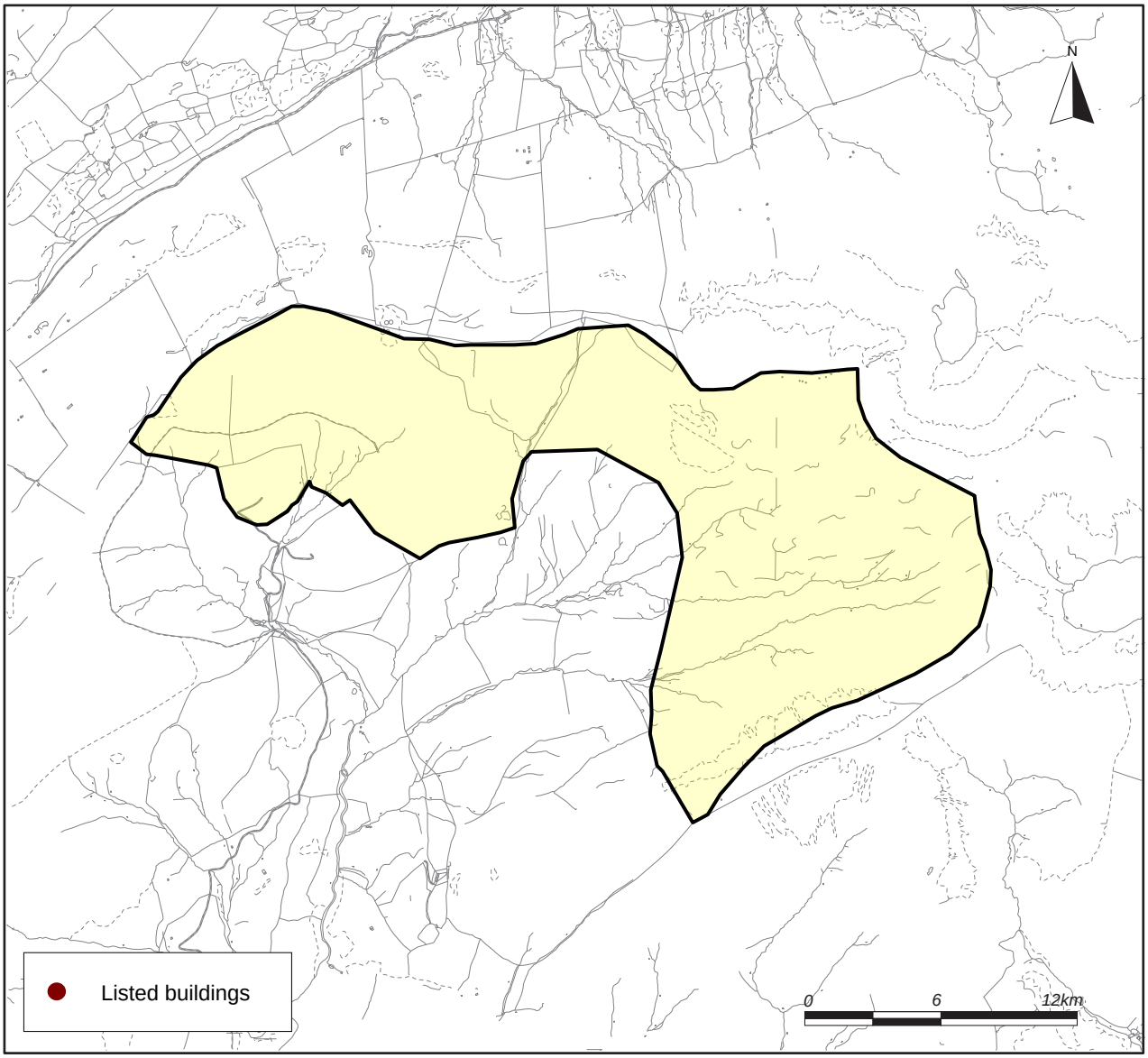
The eastern half of this character area lies within the Cadair Idris SSSI (CCW ref. SSSI 'Cadair Idris' 31WMT) which altogether extends to some 1102ha in all, much of which includes a National Nature Reserve. It has been designated for its outstanding geomorphological importance which includes such features as the extensive Tal-y-lyn fault, as well as several corries and narrow summit ridges. Geologically it is a highly complex area; the massif comprises a section of well-exposed Ordovician volcanic and sedimentary rocks (see also areas 15 and 19). These support a range of plant communities, with grassland prevailing but which also contains bilberry heath and areas of montane moss heath, well-developed acidic soligenous mires and blanket mire, with remnants of sessile oak woodland on the lower slopes. There is a moderately rich flora on the higher, less accessible slopes and ledges, and in addition some ornothological interest; it has also long been used for research and teaching purposes.

The Cadair Idris National Nature Reserve extends into the eastern part of this character area to the extent of 0.4234km2.

Conservation priorities and management

Conservation of the features and habitats for which it was designated SSSI (together with the open mountain atmosphere) must be the overwhelming priority. The area lies within Snowdonia National Park. It should be regarded as a single area with Mawddach Historic Landscape character area 17 (PRN 18347)

Fig 14. Craig yr Aderyn (PRN 28661)



14 Castell y Bere (PRN 29773)

Historical background

Castell y Bere is a native castle site, a foundation of Llywelyn ab Iorthwerth and probably the castle which the chronicle describes him as building in 1221. Its principal function was probably to guard the upland pastures of Cadair Idris. Though it has been described as quite exceptional that a castle should be built 'aloft among the hafodydd', Castell y Bere does fall within a pattern of castle building elsewhere in Gwynedd by Llywelyn ap Iorwerth in the first half of the thirteenth century. Dolbadarn, Dolwyddelan and the earlier castle at Dinas Emrys are close to the valley floor but are, nevertheless, within the boundaries of the royal hafodydd or ffriddoedd in their respective commotes. Prysor, of uncertain date, and Carndochan, are elevated and are among the ffriddoedd. Castell y Bere is close to and, on the analogy of Dolwyddelan and Dolbadarn may very well be, within the fridd of Pennant. The advantage of these locations lies in control of mountain valley routeways and access and protection of the valuable resource of cattle.

The ground plan is consistent with other native castles of this period. It is possible that the massive curtain walls which enclose an area formerly open and a rock-cut ditch in front of the apsidal tower may reflect work of the year 1287 and the dangers posed by the threat of the rising of Rhys ap Maredudd. The castle may have been destroyed and abandoned in the aftermath of Madoc's rebellion of 1294.

The medieval Castell y Bere

Key historic landscape characteristics

Historic castle site; last stand of Welsh independence

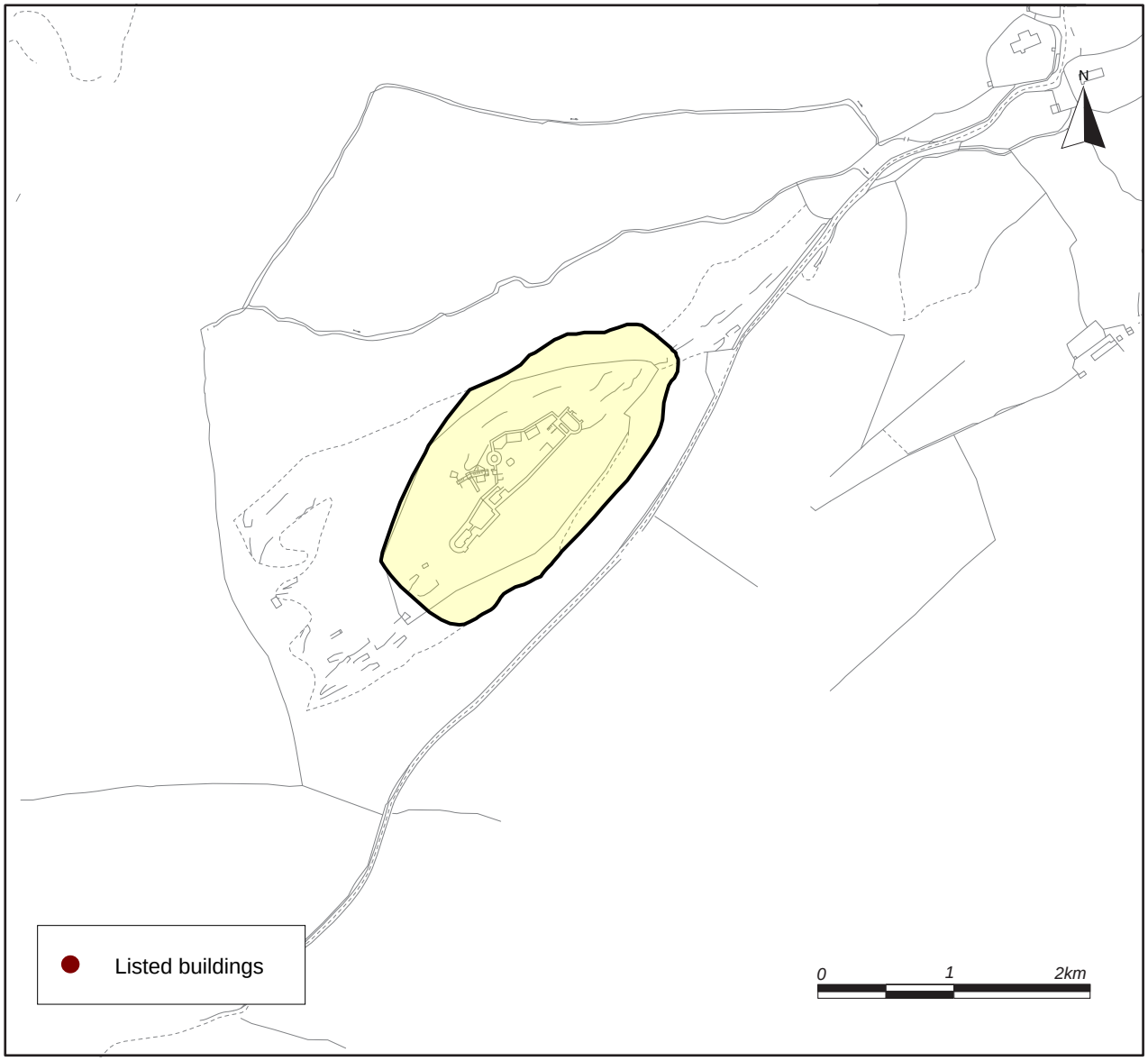
Castell y Bere is situated on a spur of wooded rock in the lowland pastures of the upper part of the Dysynni valley, adjacent to the church of Llanfihangel y Pennant, and at the foot of the lower slopes of Cadair Idris. It is a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

It occupies an important place in Welsh nationalist consciousness as the last garrison to surrender to the Anglo-Norman forces, on 25 April 1283.

Conservation priorities and management

As a Scheduled Ancient Monument it is appropriately monitored by Cadw. It lies within the Snowdonia National Park.

Fig 15. Castell y Bere (PRN 29773)



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APPENDIX I

Extracts from the Register of Landscapes of Outstanding Historic Interest in Wales

Mawddach HLW (Gw) 11

Landscape description
The lower and middle reaches of the River Dysynni and its tributary the River Cader occupy a distinctively straight, glaciated valley that cuts across southern Gwynedd in a neat line from the higher flanks of the Cader Idris ridge in the north east to the shores of Cardigan Bay in the south west. As it approaches the sea, the valley dramatically opens out into a broad, flat coastal haven and estuary which are barred by extensive sand dunes and shingle banks along the coast. The south side of the haven is, in fact, geomorphologically part of the Bala Cleft, a major geological fault cutting across North Wales. The fault continues outside the area as a parallel valley to the south east, in which the Dysynni rises in Taly-llyn Lake. The Dysynni flows into the main part of the valley described here through a narrow ice-breached col that connects the two valleys at Ystumanner. The haven and main valley floor lie at less than 10m above OD for a considerable distance inland, the slopes rising steeply on either side to hills and ridges that gradually rise from about 200m above OD in the south west to almost 900m above OD at the summit of Cader Idris in the north east.

This picturesque valley bears diverse evidence of human occupation and activity from the prehistoric period to the recent past and is particularly notable for the reclaimed landscape created by pioneering agricultural improvements on the post-medieval gentry estate of Ynysmaengwyn during the late 18th and early 19th centuries. A number of prehistoric finds, largely Bronze Age artefacts, indicate that the low-lying coastal area currently occupied by the town of Tywyn was settled from a very early period. A large complex of enclosures and other features, visible only as crop-marks from the air, which lie near Bryncrug, mght relate to the settlement of the area during the prehistoric period. The valley also boasts three Iron Age hillforts, two of which are sited close together on Tal y Garreg, a prominent spur overlooking the entrance to the estuary and the safe haven of Broad Water. Despite the infringement of their settings by a large quarry, it is still possible to appreciate the advantages of the commanding position of these two forts over the estuary. The higher fort contains a small fortified stronghold which may be early medieval or medieval in date. The third fort is sited about 8km inland of Tal y Garreg and occupies the crown of a spectacular, cone-shaped rocky eminence, Craig yr Aderyn (Bird's Rock), which is cordoned by precipitous cliffs overlooking the Dysynni valley. Before later land reclamation and drainage schemes, the River Dysynni might well have been tidal as far as Craig yr Aderyn, thus allowing easier access to the fort from the sea.

The medieval history and settlement of the area is better documented. In the 12th century, the cantref of Meirionnydd came under the sphere of influence of Powys, but in 1123 the sons of Gruffydd ap Cynan of Gwynedd acquired the cantref, and a motte, Castell Cynfal, was established at Cynfal by Cadwaladr Owain in 1137. In the pre-Conquest period, however, the old cantref of Meirionnydd was divided into the two commotes of Tal-y-bont and Ystumanner, with the border lying at least partially along the River Dysynni. The llys and maerdref of Ystumanner was at Pennal, which is outside the area, whereas the equivalent administrative institutions for the commote of Tal-y-bont, to the north of the river, were probably situated on or near the motte at Domen Ddreiniog near the mouth of the River Dysynni, with the maerdref located in the vicinity of the farm still known as Tal-y-bont. It appears that the bond townships were all situated on low-lying valley sites or close to river estuaries. There was a free township at Gwyddelfynydd, and a very extensive township at Cynfal. When Llywelyn ab Iorwerth took over the cantref from his son Gruffudd in 1221, he established the masonry castle at Castell y Bere. The castle was captured by the forces of Edward I on 25 April 1283 after a siege involving over 3,000 men. In 1284, Edward granted the new town of Bere free borough status. The castle and borough subsequently went into decline following the revolt of Madog in 1295.

Bere also had a rival in Tywyn, lying down the valley on the coast. The ecclesiastical origins of Tywyn date back to the mid-6th century when Cadfan, a monk from Bardsey, is said to have founded a monastery here, which eventually emerged as the clas or mother church of the surrounding district and had become a centre of religious pilgrimage by the medieval period. In AD 963, when it was presumably already surrounded by a small native settlement, it was attacked by the Danes, but

recovered. The sources mention the name of an abbot in 1147. Gerald of Wales visited the monastery 30 years later. Parts of the present church of St Cadfan, notably the nave, aisles, and a section of the north transept, date from the 12th century, and it may well occupy the site of the original structure. There are records of two early funerary stones here. One, formerly in the graveyard, had a Latin inscription, but has now disappeared; the other, St Cadfan's Stone, has had a varied history, but is now within the church, and is particularly interesting. The inscription is in Welsh and is the earliest known writing in that language, dating perhaps from the 7th century, which makes it of enormous linguistic importance.

There is no real date for the establishment of Tywyn, which existed by 1283 and thus was not a planned town, unlike Bala (p. 68), and Harlech in Ardudwy. The 'villa de Tewyn in Merennyth' is recorded in 1283, and the Extent of Merioneth in 1284 mentions the existence of small burgesses at Tywyn, probably Welshmen. At this time, Tywyn had 209 taxpayers, the highest number of any parish in the new shire, although ten years later this appears to have dropped to only nine. The town had a viable economic existence, however, with a market every Friday, and tolls in the late 13th century amounted to 13s 4d a year. Throughout the Middle Ages, however, it is unlikely that Tywyn was more than a cluster of cottages around the church. Indeed, as late as 1820, Tywyn was described as 'so dull and secluded a place as to be very rarely honoured by foreign visitors', and it had no streets, 'merely lanes, adorned with wide and dirty ditches meandering placidly along their centre.' It took the opening of the Cambrian Railways in 1863 and the consequent development of the tourist industry for the town to start transforming itself into what it has become today.

There was much Crown and monastic land within the area in the medieval period, and this was eventually incorporated into the private gentry estates of Peniarth and Ynysmaengwyn. Perhaps chiefly famous for its huge and important library, now in the National Library of Wales, Peniarth is an ancient seat of the Wynne family, dating back to the 15th century. Ynysmaengwyn, similarly, had a history dating back to the 15th century and beyond, although the original house was burnt down following the Civil War in 1656. It was subsequently restored and passed by marriage to a Corbet (of Moreton Corbet, Shropshire), with whose descendants it remained until 1874, when it was sold to John Corbett, MP for Droitwich and later Worcester, who was responsible for many of the buildings in Tywyn. In 1964, after a long period of neglect and decay, the owners at the time, Tywyn Urban District Council, unfortunately decided that the central mansion should be used as a fire practice, a method of destruction that was, ironically, in keeping with tradition. Now only a few outbuildings remain and the site is a caravan park.

Of the two estates, it was Ynysmaengwyn that had the greater impact on the landscape of the area. Edward Corbet of Ynysmaengwyn was a leading light in the agrarian revolution in North Wales, and was seen as the embodiment of a progressive landowner in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. When he inherited the estate, the home farm consisted of 240ha, 105ha of which were turbary. In 1788, he began draining and building embankments, and within six years the whole estate was under cultivation. Corbet transformed inland wastes and coastal marshes in the valley into productive land. By mixing in lime and dung and regular ploughing, he turned the soil into a black loam which yielded three times as much hay as previously. He was also foremost in North Wales in the practice of irrigation on his property; he could produce early spring fodder for cattle and provide pasture until June by 'flooding' about 160ha to 200ha every year. Corbet also introduced principles of a scientific crop sequence into the county, and experimented with improving his animal stocks by selective breeding. His horses were widely renowned.

The Talyllyn Railway starts outside the area and runs to the coast from above Abergynolwyn in the upper Dysynni valley to connect with the Cambrian Railways at Tywyn. Opened in 1866, the line is of considerable historical importance in that it was both the first publicly operated, purposebuilt, steam powered narrow gauge railway in Gwynedd, and also the first example of a successful volunteer railway preservation movement, formed when the railway was faced with closure in 1950–01. It was built by Lancashire cotton magnates anxious to find alternative outlets for their capital during the American Civil War, and as well as passengers, it carried slate from the Bryneglwys quarry to Tywyn, from where it was moved on by the standard gauge railway. The original passenger rolling stock from the 1860s
survives, as do both its original locomotives and very many other original features. Today, it contributes to the area's thriving tourist economy which has taken its place alongside the more traditional agricultural activities that at one stage so radically altered the valley's landscape.

S U M M A RY

Ref number HLW (Gw) 17

Index map number 54

OS map Landranger 124, 135

Former county Gwynedd

Local authority Gwynedd

Principal area designations

The area is almost entirely within the nowdonia National Park. It includes:
Broad Water and Craig yr Aderyn Sites of Special Scientific Interest; Castell y Bere Guardianship Site.

Criteria 1, 3

Contents and significance

The picturesque Dysynni Valley to the southwest of the Cader Idris range in south Gwynedd contains diverse evidence of human occupation and activity from the pre historic period to the recent past. The area includes: crop-marks of hidden, possibly pre-historic settlements; Iron Age hillforts; a centre of Early Christian activity; medieval earthwork and masonry defensive sites; two of the finest post-medieval gentry estates in Meirionnydd, Ynysmaengwyn and Peniarth, the former having had a significant impact on the landscape through extensive and remarkable agricultural improvement, land reclamation and drainage schemes during the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

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