

Present: Maureen Lloyd, Stuart Fry, John Price, Richard & Celia Price, Jenny Francis, Elsa Harflett, Sylvia Bigglestone, Bronwen Jenkins, Iris Lloyd, Krystyna Zaremba, Derek Pyke, John Olliver, Marisa Pocock, Ros Coles, Janet Russell, Dawn Richards, Lucy Trench, Robert Collingwood, Richard Harris, Roy & Avryl Lloyd, Lisa Lloyd, Jenny Hodge, Phil & Chris Lewis.

Apologies: Wendy & Dainis Ozols, Joan Lloyd, Angela Swindell, Ann & Howard Dean, Allison Joyce, Adela Campbell, Cherry & Victor Williams, Barbara Lloyd, Sue Lawler, Helen Barnett

On Thursday June 27th the group met outside Painscastle Hall for a view of the Bachawy valley and the local area under the expert eye of our historian, Stuart Fry. He asked the group to look at the roadside hedges with a view to identifying how many species they included. With car sharing, the group headed for Llanbedr church where Stuart discussed the hedges along the road from Painscastle. Some road widening has probably led to a more ordered arrangement of species with dominance of hawthorn and hazel, however the group did identify some variety, especially in the right hand side hedges. From the 1700s, the estates had their own nurseries and so hedges from then often just contain one or two species. There was some elder which is often an invasive species, not often planted as it was associated with witchcraft. One identifying feature of a road is the fact that old roads were often very winding; if the road is straight it is likely to be a newer road dating from after the formation of the county in the mid 1500s. Prior to the formation of the estates, people would have gone to a wood and picked saplings and planted them as a hedge or they would have left a strip from a wood to form a hedge. The tenants on the estates were not allowed to touch the oaks; they had to be left for timber, so that is indicative of older hedges.



Llanbedr church is not close to the castle. Usually, at the time of the Normans, the church was close to the castle along with the burgage plots, blacksmith, etc, but Llanbedr is a mile and a half away. This rather suggests that it pre-dates the Norman settlement. The Llan is the site on which the church is located. Some of the Llans, as in Llandeviron or Llanbachawy, should probably be Glan which means “beside the brook or bachawy”. Llandeilo Graban is a Llan; the circular site is very obvious.

Llanbedr would also be a Llan; it would have been the site of a Celtic Clas or a Celtic monastic settlement, but it is very big. This would have been an early site on which the church was later put, but this site is big enough to have had a ‘village’. It could be a very early site dating back to the Iron Age. Unlike Llandeilo Graban, which has a line of sight to Dinas above Talgarth, there does not seem to be a similar comparison at Llanbedr. Llanbedr churchyard does have a lot of bluebells which is indicative of ancient woodland, but that does not support the idea of a settlement. It would have been a wooded valley with open tops, with the

majority of farms on the spring-line. Probably pre-Norman, the tops were important with a lot of occupation as living in the wooded valleys (until they were cleared) would have been difficult. It is quite soft rock so we have rounded top hills; once you cross the Black Mountains you have the harder rocks of South Wales.

Llanbedr is a large church, which suggests there must have been a large community. Stuart and Robert Collingwood, an architect, had much discussion about the interior of the church.

The group then moved on to one of the top fields belonging to Trewyrlod which presented an outstanding view of the watershed of the Bachawy. Trewyrlod is the wyrlod or hay field and that would have been kept up for hay each year. Richard Price told Stuart that one of the fields was called the Common, although it was not common-land. It would have been the open field which was used to move the stock to when the wyrlod was kept up for hay. Richard had drawn attention to a lump in the field, it is not natural so what is it? There is a dominant view as it looks down the valley. Is it a bronze age burial mound, would it have been bigger at one time? Bronze age burials are usually on the skyline while in the neolithic age they tended to be slightly lower down the slope in view of their own people. Often the time before the Normans has been neglected - what was here before the trefs, the villis, as well as the prehistoric monuments? There are two bronze age mounds at Rhosgoch, one in the chapel graveyard and one at The Lane. After looking at the LIDAR for the area, the group moved down to the farmyard at Trewyrlod. They went into the barn which dates from 1709 and which appears to have been built in two parts. There is a comparison with Lower Pentre and New House farm buildings. Lower Pentre had woven ash or oak sticks on the wall and a stone tile roof which was replaced in the 1960s. The group then moved to the field alongside the river. Stuart said this was the wyrlod. It would be interesting to find the three big open fields; they may be up to twenty to thirty acres. There was some discussion on hedges and a spider like web that nearly covers the hedge of bird cherry. It is similar to the oak processional moth which kills the oak off and possibly it has been made by the bird cherry ermine moth.

The group then retired to Trewyrlod house for refreshments kindly provided by Celia Price. It was an interesting evening with many thought provoking questions for the group to try to investigate about the local area.