

The topographical legacy of the medieval monastery: evolving perceptions and realities of monastic landscapes in the southern Welsh Marches (*volume 1 of 2*)



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I certify that all material in this thesis which is not my own work has been identified and that no material has previously been submitted and approved for the award of a degree by this or any other University.

Edward Procter

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Appendices

[The appendices will be stored electronically and accessed at Open Research Exeter (ORE). The DOI (Digital Object Identifier) and URL for each appendix will only be allocated after the submission of the finalised thesis to the ORE. In the meantime, the appendices have been included as a separate hard-copy volume].

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Abstract

This thesis assesses the impact and legacy of the medieval monastery on the historic landscape up to the present day, examining both physical topography and how landscapes have been perceived and experienced; exploring not only what mark has been left, but also what embedded memory, recognising that the stories about landscape are as important as material evidence. A hypothesis that the topographical legacy of monasticism has remained a central element (though often hidden or unseen) underscoring the *genius loci* of the places looked at is explored, examining how this has influenced landscape evolution, experience and remembrance.

Monastic estates have traditionally rarely received comprehensive attention from landscape archaeologists and historians, and few studies have attempted to track the subsequent evolution of these estates beyond the Dissolution within the context of their monastic antecedents. The research questions of this project are addressed through the detailed examination of landscapes associated with several monastic houses in the southern Welsh Marches and the tracing of their later progression. Adopting an interdisciplinary and multi-layered approach, a core emphasis on topographical change and continuity is supported by an examination of shifting conceptions of cultural value. Consequently, the study interweaves themes which have long dominated historical and archaeological discourse around landscape with a more recent interest in how places and landscapes are perceived, appreciated and codified in both the past and present. The tools of conventional landscape history and archaeology are deployed, combined with approaches more commonly associated with cultural geography to provide a comprehensive analysis – a deep topography - of the perceptions and realities of these complex landscapes.

Presented here is a research project which can ultimately contribute to informing decisions on how such landscapes with complex pasts and presents are managed, utilised and presented to the wider public; an urgent need, now more than ever, as competing land-use pressures play out across rural and urban Britain, and the cultural and economic value of 'heritage assets' is increasingly seen to be realised on a landscape rather than a fragmented site-based level.

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List of abbreviations

BL:	British Library
Coflein NMR:	Welsh National Monuments Record
CPAT HER:	Clwydd and Powys Archaeological Trust Historic Environment Record
Dean HLC:	Gloucestershire County Council Historic Landscape Characterisation: Forest of Dean
Eccles Gwent Map:	<i>Ecclesiastical Map of Medieval Gwent</i> (Williams 2002)
Edward II Charter:	<i>Edward II's Charter reconfirming earlier land grants to Llanthony Priory, 1325</i> (in Atkyns 1974)
Edward IV Charter:	<i>Edward IV Charter to unite Llanthony Prima and Secunda, 1481</i> (in Atkyns 1974)
GGAT HER:	Glamorgan and Gwent Archaeological Trust Historic Environment Record
Glam Archives:	Glamorgan Archives
Glos Archives:	Gloucestershire Archives
Glos HER:	Gloucestershire Historic Environment Record
Gwent Archives:	Gwent Archives
Harley Archive:	Harley Archive
Hereford Archives:	Herefordshire Archives
King John Charter:	<i>King John's Charter granting lands to Llanthony Priory, 1199</i> (in Atkyns 1974)
Llanthony Charter:	<i>Charters of William II and Henry I Project: Llanthony Priory</i> (in Carpenter 2013)
NA:	National Archives
NLW:	National Library of Wales
Newport Ref:	Newport Reference Library
Pastscape NMR	Historic England Pastscape National Monuments Record

PRO:	Public Records Office (predecessor to National Archives)
Tithe Map:	Tithe Maps and Apportionment Schedules
Wye HLC	Cadw Historic Landscape Characterisation: Lower Wye Valley

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Chapter 1

Introduction



Figure 1.1: The precinct and ruins of Llanthony Priory (Monmouthshire) set amidst the fields, woods and mountainside commons of a wider monastic estate landscape (Source: author).

In *Pike*, Ted Hughes (2004, 25), that most visceral poet of landscape, remembers a pond in which he used to fish, its lilies and ‘muscular tench’ which had ‘outlasted every visible stone of the monastery that planted them.’ This image encapsulates in miniature something of the central hypothesis explored here: that within the historic landscape, often hidden in plain sight, spreads a topographical legacy of the great estates managed by the monastic houses of the Middle Ages (Figure 1.1). In the poem, the ancient fishpond of an unnamed abbey; more expansively in this study also farmsteads, field systems, chapels, routeways and many other trace landscape features that have long-outlasted the monastic era. A very particular relict medieval topography – physical but also experienced, perceived and remembered – underpinning the *genius loci* of former monastic realms from the high-water mark of medieval activity and influence through waves of later continuity and change, yet

rarely studied in any breadth or depth at a landscape scale. Taking up this challenge, this research project explores not only what material mark medieval monastic topography has left, but also what embedded memory; recognising that heritage and landscape are ‘subjective phenomena’, their stories as important as physical evidence (Harvey 2015, 912).

David Knowles (1976, 320), quoting from Shakespeare’s *Sonnet Number 73*, reflected that:

‘the ghost of medieval monasticism remained and remains to haunt this island. The grey walls and broken cloisters, the “bare ruin’d choirs, where late the sweet bird sang,” speak more eloquently for the past than any historian would dare.’

More expansively, David Austin (2005, 108) project director at Strata Florida (Ceredigion), the largest sustained Welsh monastic archaeology and landscape study, has remarked:

‘from the world of the articulate monk who was artist, poet, spiritual guide, historian, politician, animal and plant breeder and so much more, we have a multitude of words and pieces of art which can inform us, in a way no other sector of medieval society can, about the wider meanings of landscape.’

A list to which can be added the actual material form, structure and features of the physical landscape bequeathed by monastic estates. It is perhaps the depth, breadth, diversity and reach of their imprint on the landscape – physical, perceptual, spiritual, artistic; deep and lasting – that sets the monkish community (and their lay hands) somewhat apart from the secular agents and architects of the broader cultural landscape.

Despite this rich potential, monastic estates units – in contradistinction to architectural and archaeological remains within the abbey precinct – have traditionally received limited attention from landscape archaeologists and historians. Moreover, few previous studies have examined the symbolism, memory and perception of monastic landscapes or tracked the evolution of these domains after the Dissolution (Bond 2004, 10; Everson and Stocker 2007, 215). Several recent agenda-setting contributions (Austin 2004; Bezant 2014; Walsham 2011; Whyte 2009) have suggested new methodological and theoretical frameworks to address

this subject, thus providing impetus and broader context for this project. Forensically examining landscapes associated with several monastic houses in the border geography of the southern Welsh Marches and tracing their later trajectory, this thesis assesses the impact and legacy of monasticism on the historic landscape, stretching the chronological survey up to the present day to bridge the gap between medieval and post-medieval landscape study.

The layered characteristic of landscape is often referred to as a 'palimpsest', the analogy to a manuscript in which layers of writing have been obliterated to make way for the next first coined by William Hoskins (1955). A more nuanced observation imagines an amalgam of features from different periods at any one time: subject to a kind of 'weathering' or 'the ongoing signature of natural forces and human work – of, simply, experience' (Mabey 2008, 40). In Graham Fairclough's (2012, 479) reckoning, 'landscape is a way of seeing all surviving remains of the past, all periods of time, folded together into the present day.' Adopting an interdisciplinary and multi-scale approach to landscape as such a many layered experience, a core emphasis on tracing and accounting for the physical evolution evident within the regional case studies is supported by an examination of the shifting conceptions of cultural and economic value, of meaning and memory, which landscape change reveals or provokes (Cosgrove 2008, 3; Fleming, 2008; Johnson, 2007a). Recognition here that landscape is in part a construct of perception: how people identify with – and express their identity through – topography, sense of place, the culture of work and custom, artistic and folk practice, naming in the landscape and so on (Barnwell 2003, 7; Gilchrist 2009, 399; Rackham 2000, 4; Whyte 2009, 2).

Consequently, though rooted in the themes and tools of conventional landscape history and archaeology, this research interweaves an experiential interest in how places and geographies are and have been understood, appreciated and codified (Cresswell 2004, 33-4; Johnson 2007, 198-9; Tilley 1994; Whyte 2009; Wylie 2007, 169-172). In this way, the project presents a novel interface and convergence between landscape history and approaches more commonly associated with cultural geographical practice (Wylie 2007). Straddling this boundary, walking as fieldwork praxis provides a key methodological anchor for this research and supplies the groundwork for the case studies, as explained in Chapter 4 and reflected upon in

Chapter 11: a cross-disciplinary approach seeking to bridge the ‘esoteric specialisation’ often embedded within landscape discourse (Aston and Rowley 1974, 24). Set within a research framework pivoted around the rich and deep topographical textures revealed and evoked by landscape walks, other complementary methodologies, sources and data-sets are also deployed to broaden the investigation. Inevitably, though, a single doctoral thesis cannot hope to encompass every element of archaeological and historical evidence. Choices have been made (as set out in Chapter 4) as to which techniques and sources can best be marshalled and integrated to offer a broad insight into the perceptions and realities of the richly-layered landscapes of the study area.

This ‘deep topography’ narrative (widening the compass of Nick Papadimitriou’s (2008) term for ‘conscious walking’ of place examined further in Chapter 2) – a biography of both the real and the imagined – can help inform contemporary decisions on how such places are managed, utilised and presented to the wider public. For this is a pressing need, now more than ever, as competing pressures of land-use play out across Britain, the cultural and economic value of ‘heritage assets’ increasingly seen to be realised on a landscape rather than a fragmented site-based level (Fowler 2004; Rippon 2004). This thesis presents examples of actual and proposed public engagement including landscape-themed walks and talks, the harnessing of mobile technology and social media and the depositing of the research data-sets in open-access repositories: aids to the layering and defining of local distinctiveness which can help to root the historic landscape as a core element of social memory and place-making (Cresswell 2004, 87).

To test the central hypothesis, several core research questions are framed around three thematic clusters. Firstly, addressing Middle Ages topography:

- How far is it possible to recreate the medieval landscapes of the monastic estates in the case study areas?
- What similarities and differences can be observed between these monastic landscapes?
- Are there commonalities in the medieval landscapes of the case studies that can be attributed to the border character of the Welsh Marches?

Secondly, looking beyond the suppression:

- How does the legacy of monasticism manifest itself in subsequent post-Dissolution secular landscape development across the case studies?
- Is there any commonality in the post-Dissolution evolution of the monastic estates studied in terms of designed and designated heritage landscapes?

Finally, moving further towards considerations of perception, today's historic environment and heritage management:

- What patterns and trends emerge in historic and contemporary perceptions and reactions to the case study monastic landscapes and their transformations?
- To what extent are the monastic topographical features across the case study areas unseen and 'hidden in plain sight' in the modern-day historic landscape?
- What risks, challenges and opportunities exist when considering the management and presentation of these landscapes now and in the future?

The next chapter explores the wider frame of reference, the research context, within which these questions rest, commencing with a brief general historiography of the study of landscape archaeology/ history. Filtering down to landscapes of monasticism, examples of monastic landscape study (relatively scarce) and regionally-specific research (largely precinct or site-based) are then reviewed. In recognition of the convergence of approaches inherent to this study, further landscape perspectives – of experience and perception – from literary and artistic representations to cultural geography, walking practice and psycho-geography – are also introduced. Chapter 3 defines the geography of the southern Welsh Marches, lays out its historical context as a border region and summarises the various component landscape character areas or *pays*. e methods and sources used for this research and their rationale are then presented in Chapter 4, including an explanation of the case study selection process.

The three case studies ranged over chapters 5 to 10 form the central evidence base. Here, the carefully selected Monmouthshire estate landscapes of Llanthony Priory

and the abbeys of Llantarnam and Tintern, are analysed in two parts: a first chapter investigating the medieval monastic landscape, a second tracking its post-Dissolution evolution. The case studies include only short summary conclusions as more detailed discussion of the landscape evidence identified is saved for Chapter 11 bringing together threads from all three, comparing findings to address the research questions set out earlier. A concise conclusion then completes this analysis of the topographical legacy of the medieval monastery.

Chapter 2

Research context

2.1 Introduction

Landscape is a concept with multi-layered and often contested meanings. Matthew Johnson (2007, 4) has described how the term can refer to the land itself, a way of seeing, of engaging with the world, or a mixture of all three. An evidential characteristic when constructing any historiography of landscape study is that, in academic thought, the topic ranges wide across many disciplines, from anthropology to art history, ecology to geomorphology, cultural geography to economic history, landscape archaeology to heritage management (Cosgrove 2008, 1; Howard *et al* 2013, 1). It 'is almost the archetypical interdisciplinary theme ... quintessentially a common ground' as Graham Fairclough (2012, 473) has noted; perhaps especially so when considering the relationship between a complex historical phenomenon such as monasticism and landscape topology (Bond 2000, 71).

This breadth is both a strength of the landscape approach but also highlights a potential tension underpinning research in this field (Muir 1999, xiii-xiv). Due to a complexity of meanings (sometimes confused and conflated) and a broad spread across academia, the subject defies an overarching meta-narrative (DeLue 2008, 9). 30 years ago, Coones (1985, 5) cautioned that despite the value placed on collaborative research the 'centrifugal tendencies of an era of specialism' mitigated against a true unity of approach in historic landscape study. Despite an increasing focus on inter-disciplinarity and integrated landscape management this still seems true as fragmented special interests and governmental structures continue to inhibit dialogue between related agendas and approaches (Barnwell 2007, 203; Reynolds 2009, 409-10).

Having acknowledged this multiplicity of sometimes interconnected, sometimes disparate specialisms it is necessary to lay down boundaries for this discussion,

which does not aim to encompass all landscape-related discourse. Landscape archaeology/ history is foregrounded in the initial examination of approaches presented here. The spotlight is then aimed at the study of the landscapes of monasticism. Finally, further perspectives concerned with considerations of landscape experience and perception, including literary and artistic responses and concepts associated with cultural geography, are brought into the discussion.

2.2 Approaches to the study of landscape archaeology/ history

2.2.1 Landscape archaeology/ history contextualised



Figure 2.1: A landscape-scale view of medieval strip lynchets flanking an Iron Age hillfort with a post-medieval deer park in the background, Dyrham (Gloucestershire) (Source: author).

In 1998 a collection of papers examining the contemporary state of landscape archaeology was published in honour of one of the discipline's key founding figures: Christopher Taylor. In his introductory chapter, Tom Williamson (1998, 1) provided a lucid explanation of what archaeological research at a landscape-scale encompasses (Figure 2.1):

'It is distinguished, not so much by a coherent body of applied technique or theory, but by subject-matter. In essence, landscape archaeologists are

concerned with explaining how what we see today came to look the way it does, and with interpreting the spatial patterns and structures created in the past in terms of social and economic behaviour. In particular, landscape archaeology is characterised by an interest in scales of analysis wider than that of the 'site': it focusses on the broader matrices of settlement patterns, field systems, territories and communications. Lastly, its tools tend, for the most part, to be non-destructive – aerial photography, earthwork surveys and field walking.'

To this toolkit should now be added remote sensing, satellite imagery, Geographical Information Systems (GIS) and other spatial computing technologies. Williamson goes on to point out that landscape *archaeology* and *history* are to some extent interchangeable. No distinction is made here and *landscape archaeology* is used, with an implied use of physical evidence alongside documentary sources, as shorthand for both from now on.

Before touching on the foundations and historiography of landscape archaeology it is instructive to briefly turn to the perceived absence of theory touched on in Williamson's quote. Some have proposed that any relative lack of underpinning theoretical concepts within landscape archaeology in Britain is strongly counter-weighted by the establishment of well-developed and innovative methodologies for fieldwork and the integration of new technologies (Jones and Hooke 2011, 31-5). Moreover, as Roberta Gilchrist (2009, 386, 397) has argued, the dichotomy between scientific, empirical data versus theoretical approaches is largely a false one: theory has often reframed the types of research questions and methodologies used and theoretical developments across the humanities have been implicitly assimilated.

Theoretical context is, therefore, increasingly ingrained in academic discourse within the field, perhaps emblematic of a widening hinterland of complementary ideas and approaches that have the potential to converge around the concept of landscape. Ashmore and Knapp (1999, 1, 19) explicitly identified a shift from landscape seen purely as passive backdrop, resource or object of gaze to an emphasis on its 'socio-symbolic dimensions: landscape is an entity that exists by virtue of its being perceived, experienced, and contextualized by people' and further, in recognising the

interrelatedness of space and time, ‘ancient sites, monuments and even entire landscapes may be transformed and re-used as people encounter and interact with particular places, as they re-create the past.’ An acknowledgement here of the increased importance of social theory in archaeological landscape study: understanding how people interrelate with and imbue meaning to space and place through time. Foundational to this are the ideas of the pioneering American social geographer, Carl Sauer (1963) who first conceptualised the notion of *cultural* landscape, distinct from but connected to the natural landscape (Wylie 2007, 19). Building on this theoretical broadening, scholars such as Barbara Bender (1993) have sought to bring together archaeological, anthropological and geographical perspectives on the cultural landscape.

In *Ideas of Landscape* (2007a) Matthew Johnson adopted a particularly partisan approach via a clear and stated agenda to deconstruct the empirical English landscape tradition of landscape archaeology, historical geography and local history exemplified by the pioneering work of Hoskins (1955), Beresford (1957; Beresford and St Joseph 1958) and others, contrasting it with more theoretically grounded explorations of landscape found in anthropology, cultural geography and post-processual archaeology (see, for example, Bender 1993; Cosgrove 2008; Ucko and Layton 1999, Wylie 2007). In contrast to a focus on prehistoric landscapes in Ashmore and Knapp’s work, Johnson’s (2007a, 201-2) agenda advocates a more integrated landscape approach for non-intrusive historical archaeology.

Johnson articulates a perceptive critique of existing traditions that to some observers (particularly in a lively debate with Andrew Fleming (2007, 2008) in the pages of the *Landscapes* journal (Johnson 2007b) is excessive in its attack on still vital field techniques and only sets out a new approach in rather vague terms (Pryor 2010, 748; Rippon 2009, 244-45). The author does, however, helpfully pinpoint a clear delineation (within the UK) between scholars and practitioners engaged in landscape archaeology research and interpretation, and those who consider landscape from a cultural geography perspective. This somewhat fractured approach is a recurring motif when reviewing the literature of the past 40 years or so and might explain, or be a symptom of, the lack of a tradition of a single, unified landscape discipline in British academia. This is an ongoing disconnect, suggesting significant scope for

greater cross-fertilisation of knowledge and ideas (Fairclough 2012; Schofield 2007). Johnson's underlying call for combined methodologies reflects the direction of travel of academic discourse and one that is taken up in this research project.

2.2.2 The development of landscape archaeology

The antecedents of the fieldwork tradition that Johnson critiques, embedded still in contemporary British landscape archaeology, can be found in antiquarianism but were particularly developed by O.G.S Crawford during his long term of office as Archaeology Officer for the Ordnance Survey up to 1946 (Hauser 2007, 155-161; Rippon 2009, 232). His ground-breaking combination of field archaeology, aerial photography and mapping laid the foundations for modern landscape-scale interpretation (Bowden 2001, 29; Gardiner *et al* 2012, 3).¹



Figure 2.2: W.G. Hoskins, author of *The Making of the English Landscape in the countryside of his native Devon* (Source: en.wikipedia.org).

In the early post-war years, historical geography and economic history provided the impetus for later developments in landscape archaeology (Baker 2003, 6-9; Rippon

¹ Brought to a wider audience with the publication in 1953 of his book *Archaeology in the Field* (Johnson 2007, 55; Muir 1999, 33).

2009, 230).² W.G. Hoskins' *The Making of the English Landscape* (1955) looms large here, though now seen as very much of its time and open to criticism – for instance, for its limited acknowledgment of the role of monasteries in the landscape (Bond 2000, 63; Fleming 2008, 74; Gardiner and Rippon 2007, 1; Jones 2015, 2-4) (Figure 2.2). It remains, however, a seminal empirical work that set a template for widescreen landscape narratives at county, regional and national level.³

Such pioneers and their contemporaries realised that archaeology, particularly from the historical epochs, was not just buried in the ground but also all around as relict features in the modern countryside (Gardiner *et al* 2011, 4). It was on their shoulders that the graduates of the new or expanding archaeology, geography and history departments of the 1960s, and the staff of the Royal Commissions on Ancient and Historical Monuments, helped refine and professionalise a distinctively British landscape practice as a modern discipline, both in the field and academia (Bowden and McOmish 2011, 21; Rippon 2009, 232). Within this tradition comes the large body of research and publications that spans the period from the 1970s into this century.⁴ Here is a legacy of immensely practical field guides to the analytical techniques of observing, interpreting and recording landscape features that are certainly not overburdened with theory. Innovation was, though, to the fore: integrating New Archaeology agendas of spatial analysis adopted from geography; challenging previously dominant invasion and migration paradigm in the early Middle Ages; and foregrounding the origins of the modern historic landscape and the ordinary lives of those who inhabited village, farmstead and field (Fowler 1988, 15; Rippon 2009, 233-4).

² In particular, the regional *Domesday Geography* and *Agrarian History of England and Wales* series'. A tradition that has persisted, see for instance Baker 2003; Hooke 2000 and Thirsk 2000.

³ See, for instance: Hodder and Stoughton's *The Making of* county series of the late-1960s and early-1970s, Collins *England's Landscape* regional guides (2006-7) and Pryor 2010.

⁴ Key examples include: Aston and Rowley 1974, Brown 1987, Fowler 1972, 2000, Muir 2000, 2004 and the prodigious output of Taylor, including his handbook on *Fieldwork in Medieval Archaeology* (1974).

An important contribution from the same generation and one that brought valuable expertise from the fields of botany and ecological history was provided by Oliver Rackham (1986; Rippon 2009, 230). His work helped to illuminate the distinction between the ‘Planned’ and ‘Ancient’ countryside of different English regions or *pays*, a general division that seems to have survived successive changes in land-use, settlement development *etc.*⁵ as well as demonstrating that woodland and other natural, managed vegetation could be just as indicative of landscape history as more obviously constructed features (Gardiner *et al* 2011, 4; Jones and Hooke 2011, 41; *ibid.*, 228). More recently, Stephen Rippon (2012a, 240; Rippon *et al* 2013) has demonstrated a practical integration of ecological data into landscape archaeology through mobilising paleo-environmental sequences from medieval sites (*e.g.* for preserved cereal remains and animal bones) to help provide evidence of land-use change over time.

2.2.3 Contemporary landscape archaeology research

Several key themes have been prominent in recent historic landscape research activity that together help us understand many of the drivers and processes that saw the British landscape crystallise into the general character we see today (Gardiner and Rippon 2007, 2). A non-exhaustive but indicative list would include: settlement and village evolution (most extensively examined in Roberts and Wrathmell 2002; see also Jones and Page 2006; Lewis *et al* 2001; and contributions in Christie and Stamper 2011); regional distributions of countryside typology (see Williamson 2003 for an outline of the different landscape types and debates around this subject; also Rippon 2004a, 2012b); the origins and development of the manorial system and transition from feudalism to a market-based economy (Dyer 2000; Faith 1997; Johnson 1996); and elite landscapes of power and other designed landscapes (Creighton 2002, 2013; Finch and Giles 2007; Johnson 1996; Liddiard 2007).

⁵ A pattern reflected in other categorisations of landscape character, such as the Highland and Lowland Zones identified in Fox’s *Identity of Britain* as far back as 1932, Roberts and Wrathmell’s (2002) settlement research, Phythian-Adams’ (1999) Cultural Provinces and HLC mapping.

The work of medieval historians such as Christopher Dyer (2000, 2009) has also emphasised the centrality of the activities, needs and interests of the, often unnamed and therefore unheralded, common people of town, village and field in the dynamics of shaping the landscape (Turner and Silvester 2012; Whittock 2009). As Gardiner *et al* (2011, 7) stress, it is often difficult to discern clear patterns in research outcomes across this plethora of activity; in many ways the picture has become increasingly complex and locally nuanced. The body of research work in Wales (and Scotland) has tended to be less well evolved than for many of the English regions with a focus on upland contexts and a reliance on empirical approaches (Austin 2006, 193).⁶

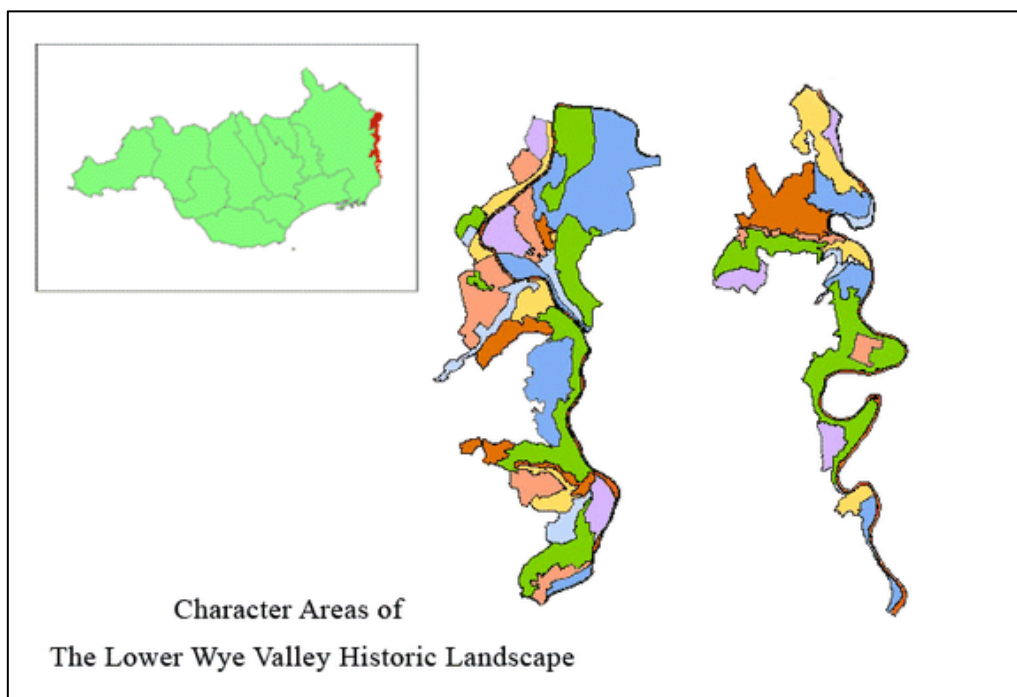


Figure 2.3: HLC map for the Lower Wye Valley Historic Landscape, from the Register of Landscape of Historic Interest in Wales (Source: © Gwent and Glamorgan Archaeological Trust, www.ggat.org.uk/cadw/historic_landscape/wye_valley/english/wyevalley_main.htm).

There is much evidence of a broadening of landscape archaeology research techniques and application across a wider spectrum of spatial and temporal contexts in recent years (Gardiner and Rippon 2007, 8). In *Making Sense of an Historic Landscape* (2012, 4) Rippon provides a particularly useful synthesis of the approaches that can now be used to study an historic landscape, integrating

⁶ Volumes edited by Edwards (1997) and Roberts (2006) provide a useful overview, see also Leighton and Silvester 2003.

established methodologies with other data-sets that can unlock understanding of local and regional landscape character variation. Other examples would include: the wide application of Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC), witness the county-level exercises sponsored by Historic England and other public bodies, a different approach concentrating on historic landscapes defined as of specific or outstanding interest adopted in Wales (Fairclough 2013a; Rippon 2004a) (Figure 2.3); the Whittlewood project applying integrated archaeological and historical research to micro-examination of villages evolution (Jones and Page 2006); and the EngLald project analysing map and artefact data on a national scale to help calibrate understanding of how the English landscape developed from the Bronze Age until the Domesday survey (Englaid website undated).

One important driver for such innovative landscape-framed approaches has been the opportunities presented by new technologies in terms of surveying, remote sensing, satellite imagery, data analysis, mapping and modelling, particularly apposite to the harnessing of GIS to develop digital HLC mapping and to digitise modern and historic Ordnance Survey maps and many historic environment records (HERs). Primarily developed to inform the planning process, HLC is not without its critics as comparatively broad-brush and one-dimensional in its reliance on field morphology and lines on the map to convey landscape character (Rippon 2013, 180; Williamson 2007a, 67-70). Nevertheless, its comprehensive application has led to some significant discoveries and provided a deep well of accessible data (Rippon 2009, 242). Verhagen (2012) provides further examples of the embedding of innovative practice in mainstream landscape archaeology at an international level (ranging from the detection of new features using LiDAR to digital terrain modelling), but also explores the inherent challenges of understanding the limitations and appropriateness of particular technologies, faddism and keeping pace with technological development.

While debates such as the Johnson-Fleming exchange mentioned above are generally a sign of a vibrant and healthy research environment, lack of communication between disciplines is not (Rippon 2009, 245). In part given impetus by *pan*-European convergences in the wake of the European Landscape Convention, there are the stirrings of coalescence around the concept of landscape

across academic and professional boundaries, as evidenced, for example, by the complementary contributions from a wide range of disciplines in Howard *et al's* *The Routledge Companion to Landscape Studies* (2013). An incisive and thought-provoking identification of the opportunities for landscape archaeology to become a central element in an emerging 'super-discipline' was provided by a paper presented at LAC2010, the first international conference devoted to the discipline. Fairclough (2012, 472-5) proposed that landscape archaeology can occupy a middle ground bridging scientific approaches to landscape and cultural geography and social science perspectives, suggesting that 'the underlying question is whether Landscape Archaeology exists to use the idea of landscape only to study the past ... or also (or mainly) to use archaeology to study the landscape of the present-day, in both its materiality and mentality, and thus to connect to all landscape disciplines and to a wider public.' This idea of connectivity with approaches from other branches of landscape study will be explored later in this chapter.

2.3 Monastic landscape study

2.3.1 An overview

As touched on in the introductory chapter, the wider landscapes of monastic estates have often received only limited attention from landscape archaeology practitioners (Figure 2.4). This despite a clearer evidence-base for monastic operations, in contrast to other elements of the medieval landscape such as rural settlements or field systems. Comprehensive archival evidence is frequently (though not always) readily accessible for monastic houses, including charters and other legal papers, manorial records and tax and valuation surveys (sometimes collected together in cartularies or other registers). Such documents often provide detailed information on the physical appearance, topography and development of estates: expressing the symbiotic relationship between monastic populations and the agricultural landscape around them (Davies 2014, 140; Moorhouse 1989, 29-30). In addition, greater physical evidence of buildings and large-scale landscape development projects often survives (Aston 2007, 20).



Figure 2.4: The precinct of Llanthony Priory in its landscape setting (Source: author).

This rich documentary legacy has facilitated a vast corpus of academic literature on the history of monasticism in Britain. Whilst generally little focussed on the wider landscape *per se*, numerous works provide contextual information on the architectural, agricultural and economic activity of monastic operations.⁷ Often these narratives are driven by long-standing orthodoxies, such as the foundation of monastic houses in reclusive wilderness areas, based on the non-critical use of contemporary sources that have more recently been challenged (Pestell 2004, 1).

Away from the archive, picturesque monastic ruins had been a popular topic of interest for antiquarians from Dugdale⁸ onwards and a conservative agenda primarily

⁷ See, for example: Knowles (1963) comprehensive historiography of monastic orders in England during the Middle Ages, Knowles and Hadcock's (1971) gazetteer of all the medieval religious establishments of England and Wales and Burton and Stöber 2008, Butler and Given-Wilson 1979, Coppack 2006, Greene 2005, Keevill *et al* 2001.

⁸ Dugdale's *Monasticon Anglicanum* (1653-1673 and revised by Caley, Ellis and Bandinel into new editions, 1817-1830) was the foremost product of the transcription of contemporary manuscripts from the monastic period that, alongside the study of remaining upstanding buildings, was a key focus of antiquarian activity.

interested in the physical appearance of the church and cloistral architecture has in many ways remained until relatively recently, itself influenced by the interest of the Romantic Movement in monastic ruins from an artistic perspective – a theme explored in more detail later (*ibid.*, 1-2). A narrow focus on architectural survey and ground plans of claustral ranges based on excavation became the long-dominant mode of fieldwork for monastic sites, supplemented by a spotlight on the workings of individual granges and out-farms as part of the study of the wider economic framework (Austin 2013, 4-5; Pryor 2006, 296).



Figure 2.5: Broadshawe, Bolton Abbey (Yorkshire). Site of an upland stock farm for cattle, part of a network of granges and specialist farmsteads described in Kershaw's economic history of Bolton Abbey (Source: author).

Though monastic landholdings are prominent in the long tradition of historical study of well-documented medieval estates, much of what has been written is from an historical geography, agrarian or economic history perspective (Moorhouse 1989, 43; Pestell 2004, 7; Rippon 2009, 230) (Figure 2.5).⁹ The focus has often been on the very particular estate management system of the Cistercian Order. For instance, Donkin (1978) presented a detailed analysis of their initial agrarian model rejecting the manorial system of long-established Benedictine houses in favour of direct land

⁹ See, for instance, the economic histories and thematic studies cited by Bond 2000, including Finberg (1951) on Tavistock Abbey (Devon) and Kershaw (1973) on Bolton Abbey (Yorkshire).

management through the grange system.¹⁰ Often emphasised is how the very underpinning values of the order in seeking independence from the outside world and requiring the White Monks to work the land themselves and reject dependence on feudal labour led directly to the development of the grange system and deployment of an 'in-house' lay workforce as economic operations flourished and expanded (Burton 1998, 13; Coppack 1998, 95-6; Knowles 1963, 215-16). Some of these ideas are now contested as generalisations. For instance, Wendy Davies (2014, 133) argues that the desert eremitic ideals of early monasticism were maintained through a more pragmatic, sometimes even ruthless, policy during the central Middle Ages: 'monasteries might create deserts in order to have a place of withdrawal.' Such manipulation of the landscape to provide secluded space included the reorganisation of estates and land-use to create consolidated blocks of arable fields or draining marshland and could lead to desertion (forced or otherwise) by former inhabitants (Moorhouse 1989, 32; Rippon 2004b, 127-8).

Two scholars have been particularly prominent in foregrounding landscape in monastic research. Mick Aston and James Bond were responsible for early multi-disciplinary attempts to recreate the landscape of monastic estates, to understand their distinctive characteristics, during the 1970s; more recently publishing comprehensive overviews of the core elements of monastic topography (Aston 1972, 2007; Bond 1973, 1979, 2004). Both (Aston 2007, 128; Bond 2000, 12-13) have stressed that the impact of medieval monasteries on the landscape has often been underestimated and remains unexplored due to limited detailed research on the topography and topology of individual estates, despite the fact that, at their height, monastic houses had rights of exploitation (through endowment of land and other privileges) over as much as a quarter of the whole land mass of England and Wales. Their major contribution has been to continuously underline that the practical requirements of monastic houses scattered across all parts of town and countryside inevitably led to a considerable impact on the medieval landscape. In Bond's (2000, 63) words: 'their needs placed demands on the resources of the land, for food,

¹⁰ Other volumes on the operation, management and topography of Cistercian estates include Burton and Kerr 2011, Coppack 1998 and, for a wider readership, Robinson 1998.

water, fuel and building materials. In consequence, even the most deliberately secluded communities could hardly avoid becoming focal points in the landscape.’

Stephen Moorhouse (1989) produced probably the first published overview of monastic estate development in Britain from a landscape perspective, though using evidence largely restricted to northern England. Here the importance of reading the physical remains of the landscape in the context of the ‘constantly changing economic machine of which they were a product’ and the commercialism of socially and economically integrated monastic estates was underscored (*ibid.*, 68).

Moorhouse (*ibid.*, 59-67) also made the case for further research into the networks of topographical features constituting monastic estates, the historic landscape potentially holding a wealth of such evidence, ranging from communications routes, fishponds, mills and farm complexes to more ephemeral features essential to day-to-day monastic activity (*e.g.* wayside crosses, animal pounds, sheep washes *etc.*).

At the apex of monastic land expansion and development the wealthier houses were undoubtedly trail-blazers in estate management through the enclosure of uplands, mineral extraction and so forth (Waites 2007, 215-16). Aston (2007, 23), however, cautioned that twelfth century England and Wales were already anciently settled with all land owned and utilised in some way, including woodland, waste and fen, therefore ‘the idea of pioneer monks moving into unknown and undeveloped primeval lands in this country in the early Middle Ages is a romantic but untenable myth.’ Interplay with the wider secular landscape was also an important element, not least because monastic and lay estates would adjoin and have many commonalities (Everson 1989, 141). As Moorhouse (1989, 50) has shown, monastic estates would reflect economic and social changes in the outside world, for instance the rapid increase in leasing to secure income in the later Middle Ages.

Medieval monasticism was, of course, a transnational phenomenon, perhaps the first since the fall of the Roman Empire (Bond 2000, 64). A recent pan-European landscape perspective is provided by Wendy Davies (2014, 138), emphasising that monasteries across the continent obtained most of their income from the collection of rent or in kind rather than through the sale of produce, with direct management of economic resources mostly restricted to larger houses, generally through labour

services from tenants. She also argues that across Europe the cultivation of landscapes of power, through such services and rents from tied tenants and the exercise of patronage over other landowners and the richer peasantry, as well as social memory through, for instance, the siting of marker stones and crosses in the landscape, gave monastic communities the capacity to ‘mould and change ... the visual environment’ (*ibid.*, 141-3).

In reviewing progress in such scholarship as the current century commenced, Bond (2000, 72) concluded that ‘the potential for continuing enquiry remains vast.’ More recently Davies (2014, 143) has noted: ‘We could do with more archaeology of monastic landscapes: evidence of physical change in settlement patterns and in types of structure, as well as those underlying economic strategies; clearance, planting, changes of crop and of stock, erection of boundaries, could all be revealed.’ David Austin (2005, 108; 2013, 8-9) has argued that the first step of amassing data, classification and typology is necessary but also indicative of an instrumentalist approach apparent in monastic landscape archaeology: the artificial separating out of functional and technological elements to describe how monastic estates worked rather than a more integrated analysis of the landscape. Tim Pestell (2004, 6) has reflected that, despite some new approaches such as Gilchrist’s (1994) gender-archaeological study of nunneries, theoretically-based research has been quite rare, with a general bias towards an economic analysis (monasteries as a capitalistic model) at the expense of addressing the spiritual elements of activity and wider landscape and community contexts. Much archaeological fieldwork has also remained focussed on individual case-studies, largely concerned with the precinct, home *demesne* or manor and other immediate landscape features (Brown 2012, 8; Pestell 2004, 1; see, for example, Coppack 2003; Greene 2004; Ludlow 2002).

2.3.2 Examples of monastic landscape studies

The grange (Figure 2.6) is one feature of the wider monastic landscape that has been subjected to scholarly analysis. Until relatively recently, research has been concentrated on economy utility rather than their topographical footprint, perhaps in part because granges often form the nucleus of standing farmsteads and so are relatively inaccessible, though a handful of sites have now been investigated in more

detail (Butler 1989, 7).¹¹ As Moorhouse (1989, 45) has observed, upland geographies in which landscape features may have survived relatively undisturbed as shrunken or abandoned farmsteads often provide greater potential for understanding the layout, diverse functions and evolution of granges.



Figure 2.6: Extensive earthworks at Monknash Grange, St Donats (Glamorganshire) (Source: © Crown copyright, Royal Commission of the Ancient and Historic Monuments of Wales Coflein NMR, www.coflein.gov.uk/en/catalogue/).

The most detailed general text on the subject remains Colin Platt's (1969) long-published overview, which first highlighted the lasting significance of the grange system in the landscape, particularly in more marginal agricultural terrains. The prevailing Cistercian model typology of enclosure, function and built structures has since begun to be challenged as more detailed assessments of individual granges and regional distributions are carried out (Brown 2012, 294-6; Waites 2007, 57-89). For instance, at Strata Florida (Cardiganshire) the evidence has demonstrated a

¹¹ Including: Abbingdon Abbey's grange at Dean Court, Cumnor in Oxfordshire (Allen 1994); Roystone Grange in the White Peak area of Derbyshire, a holding of Garendon Abbey (Hodges 2006); and work by the Royal Commissions to produce detailed plans at Monknash (Margam Abbey, Figure 2.6) and other grange sites in Glamorgan (Aston 2007, 185).

pragmatic hybrid of local and Cistercian practice often retaining pre-existing tenurial and land management processes (Bezant 2014).



Figure 2.7: The extensive earthworks of the Bordesley Abbey precinct, Alvechurch (Worcestershire) (Source © Cambridge University Collection of Aerial Photography, 1954, NT89).

Responding to a relatively underdeveloped monastic landscape research agenda, new methodological and theoretical frameworks have emerged which seek to place the monastery in a wider landscape setting and challenge orthodox thinking (Gilchrist 2009, 387; Keevil 2001, 137). The most sustained example of a more complete investigation of a medieval monastery and its landscape has been the Bordesley Abbey (Worcestershire) project run by the University of Reading, inspired by the pioneering work of Aston (1972) and others in highlighting the untapped potential of the extensive earthworks in

and surrounding monastic precincts to increase knowledge of the workings of monastic communities (Figure 2.7). Bordesley has demonstrated the value of a detailed long-term research programme integrating architecture, archaeology and archival work, including pre- and post-monastic study of the local countryside and wider regional context (Astill *et al* 2004).

This approach, familiar in medieval settlement studies such as Wharram Percy (Yorkshire), Whittlewood (Buckinghamshire/ Northamptonshire) and Shapwick (Somerset), has also been applied in a Welsh Cistercian context through the Strata Florida project commenced in 1999 (Austin 2004; Bezant 2014; Rippon 2009, 237). Here the aim has been to locate the abbey's landscape, environmental, social and economic contexts within broader themes such as identity, spirituality and cultural resistance, contributing to a regional heritage and regeneration agenda (Austin 2004, 193-4; 2013, 4). Landscape archaeology has enabled the detailed reconstruction and interpretation of the late-twelfth century precinct and core estate, the abbey's

grange system and a well-preserved monastic communication route (Bezant 2014; Fleming 2009, 2010b; Fleming and Barker 2008). In formulating a detailed place biography, the project is providing evidence that normative rules for behaviour, management, architecture and so on were flexible and changeable over time and location, and subject to complex, sometimes subtle, local variation (Austin 2013, 10).

One of the few attempts to survey the landscapes of a specific monastic house and its estates in forensic detail utilising modern archaeological techniques is Brown's (2012) study of Stanley Abbey (Gloucestershire), which also tested pre-existing models for Cistercian estate management and attitudes to the landscape. As an example of the analysis of a particular monastic landscape resource, Rippon (2004b, 91, 129) has marshalled rich archive material and historic landscape evidence to produce an HLC reconstruction of the management of Glastonbury Abbey's wetlands in the Somerset Levels, previously marginal terrain which became one of the abbey's most valuable resources. A fenland context is also apparent in the report on an excavation within the outer court of Thorney Abbey in Cambridgeshire, which both seeks to illuminate the wider topographical setting and catalogue the processes of reuse and dilapidation following Dissolution (Thomas 2006, 179).

A regional perspective is provided in Pestell's (2004) analysis of patterns of monastic foundation in East Anglia, seeking to shift the agenda away from the innate conservatism and enduring perceptions previously discussed through, for instance, foregrounding the symbolism and iconography in the monastic landscape, and countering the prevailing vision of Norman monasteries colonising new territory without monastic antecedents. Menuge's (2000, 22) examination of metaphor in contemporary medieval written evidence for Rievaulx and Fountains abbeys (Yorkshire) also questioned 'the agenda of the medieval foundation myth' of Cistercian civilisation of waste and wilderness.¹² Another regional study, Waites' (2007, 216) analysis of the monastic landscapes of the North York Moors and Yorkshire Wolds, highlighted correlations between estate development and patterns

¹² Similarly, Berman's (1986) analysis of the estate management documents of Cistercian houses in the south of France concluded that the White Monks were generally entrepreneurial managers and agricultural innovators rather than frontier pioneers as traditionally portrayed.

of subsequent prosperity, agricultural specialism, settlement and land-use: legacies of the 'unique instrument' of the grange as a 'unit of exploitation' with a range of functions.

2.3.3 A regional perspective

Until quite recently much of the regional literature relating specifically to monastic landscapes in the Welsh Marches was relatively old in academic research terms.¹³ David Williams' (1976, 1984, 1990, 2001) work on the Welsh Cistercians remains a peerless contextual overview of the establishment of the order across Wales combined with detailed economic histories covering all aspects of estate management synthesised from primary source material. Williams' pioneering work reflects the higher degree of academic discourse afforded to the denomination's activities in Wales, a trend continued by the aforementioned Strata Florida project.¹⁴

The settled view has been that monastic settlements had a lesser influence on the development of the rural landscape in Wales as compared to England and Scotland (Pryor 2010, 282). This hypothesis, arising from an assumed relative sparseness of monastic estates is now being challenged. Janet Burton (1998, 22) has argued that many Welsh houses founded in the first phase of monastic revival were part of an overt Anglo-Norman landscape of conquest, with little native Welsh input and support. In contrast, later founding, endowing or taking over of patronage of Cistercian houses became a notable feature of Welsh kingship. In such cases the monastic house and its estates became more integrated into surrounding society and landscape, often operating as a geographical 'central place' (Bond 2005, 55; Fleming 2008, 96; Gray 2005, 17). Bond (*ibid.*, 57) has also shown that, even in seemingly more remote highland country, few monasteries were sited outside the

¹³ See, for instance: Cowley's (1977) overview of monastic orders in South Wales, Rees' historical atlas of Wales (1951), Roberts 1987, Sylvester 1969 and Williams 1969, 1976, 1984, 1990. For more recent overviews see Burton and Stöber 2013 and 2015, Robinson 2006, Williams 2001 and the architecture-focused McCormick 2010.

¹⁴ Interest distilled in published outputs from conferences at Cardiff in 1998 and Abergavenny in 2004, including a special *Cistercians in Wales and the West* issue of the *Archaeologia Cambrensis* journal (2005, vol 154) and a book on Cistercians architecture and archaeology in Wales (Robinson 2006).

margins of previously settled land; the disruption and resettlement of existing communities as already discussed was not uncommon, particularly as the grange system spread the monastic influence over larger tracts of agricultural and upland grazing land (as documented, for example, on the estates of Margam Abbey).

Landscape-scale research, archaeological investigation and detailed topographical analysis of the estates of the monastic houses in this thesis' study area has been limited. The author's MSc dissertation and subsequent journal articles (Procter 2007a, 2007b, 2012) provide a preliminary overview of the impact of Llanthony Priory on its surrounding environs, prompted by Evans' (1980; 1984, 52) recognition following archaeological investigation of the priory site in 1978 that the house's economy, management of estates and landscape development had not been addressed. Precinct surveys have been produced for Chepstow, Llanthony and Tintern (all in Monmouthshire) and there have been several small-scale excavations, mainly relating to monument conservation (as recorded in Appendix 1). In addition, Williams (1976, 1990) has provided useful summations, analysis and mapping of the estates and granges of Dore (Herefordshire), Grace Dieu (Monmouthshire), Llantarnam and Tintern. The outcomes of site-based fieldwork activities at several granges have also been published (also listed in Appendix 1).

2.3.4 The monastic landscape after the Dissolution

Moving forward into the landscape after the Reformation and further gaps in the research record appear. Aston (2007, 20) has noted that there is often much evidence available, both archival and in the field, of the transition and change of use from monastic to secular estates. As Doggett (2001, 165, 173) has remarked, however, there has been little research on the demolition, conversion and re-use of monastic buildings (and their landscapes) in the vast literature on the suppression of the monasteries and its aftermath.

Everson and Stocker's (2007) study of Kirkstead Abbey (Lincolnshire) suggested a fresh approach, evidencing the conversion of the precinct to accommodate a new secular mansion and formal gardens. The fate of the physical structures of dissolved monastic houses and their estates could vary considerably: some transitioned to

parish churches, others saw conversion into gentry houses, others still became ruinous; some estates were taken on wholesale by new owners, others were split up. Holtorf and Williams (2006, 242-3) have examined ‘the manipulation of monastic architecture and landscapes in the post-reformation era in which elements of the material past were selectively remembered and forgotten’ through the integration of buildings into secular fabric or the retention of romantic ruins in designed landscape, perhaps taken furthest in the continuing and evolving ‘landscape of memory and myth’ in and around Glastonbury incorporating abbey buildings and topography.

The changes and adjustments to the ‘spatial context of peoples’ lives’ and their everyday ‘religious topographies’ wrought by the Dissolution and Reformation are often under-explored territory for landscape archaeology (Whyte 2009, 7). In commenting on the widely chronicled dramatic changes to the material fabric of religious buildings, Alexandra Walsham (2011, 4) observed that ‘historians have rarely ventured beyond ... the inner precincts of abbeys, priories, and convents. There has been surprisingly little scrutiny to date of the impression that the Reformation left upon the wider natural but also partly man-made environment within which these structures were situated.’ Her book, *The Reformation of the Landscape*, is a previously unopened window on the afterlife of the medieval religious landscape, noting how topographical features such as holy wells, wayside crosses and other sacred spaces influenced and reflected the immense societal and theological changes that sprang from the ruptures of the sixteenth century and beyond: how the landscape itself acted ‘as a form of iconography’ (*ibid.*, 2-6).¹⁵ Austin (2013, 4) has further commented on the legacy of monasticism in local social memory as manifested through continuing ritual practice and spiritual associations in a landscape full of meaning, often counter to official narratives.

¹⁵ Providing a landscape perspective to complement historical studies on the impact of the Reformation on society and popular culture such as Duffy 2001 and Hutton (1996).

2.4 Further landscape perspectives: experience and perception

2.4.1 Literary and artistic representations

‘A humble chapel of David the Archbishop (St David) formerly stood decorated only with moss and ivy ... a situation truly calculated for religion and more adapted to canonical discipline than all the monasteries in Britain’ (Gerald of Wales, Thorpe 1978, 96-7).

In the above description of Llanthony Priory’s late-twelfth century situation, Gerald is not simply reporting observed topography, his words are heavy with symbolism. Allegorical descriptions of the landscape setting of monasteries were common in contemporary writing during the monastic era. For instance, Clarke (2006, 68) has shown how the fenland houses of Glastonbury, Ely (Norfolk) and Ramsey (Kent) exploited the figurative potential of their watery environments (and the practical transformations through drainage and cultivation they were enacting) in texts and pastoral conventions which ‘transform the realities of topography and monastic land management into allegories of spiritual cultivation and triumph.’ Later representations of medieval monastic life and landscape in art and literature commonly used a monastic setting as a device to imbue a sense of antiquity, mystery or Gothic intrigue: Arthur Conan Doyle’s *The Adventure of Abbey Grange* and *The Adventure at the Priory School* (both 1904) in the Sherlock Holmes canon and the celebrated ghost stories of medieval scholar M.R. James,¹⁶ for instance.¹⁷ Literature that travels beyond such archaic and esoteric tropes is sparse.

¹⁶ An academic specialising in medieval manuscripts, James, as well as stories such as *The Treasure of Abbot Thomas* (1904) produced a popular companion to England’s monasteries (1926).

¹⁷ Other notable examples being *The Monk: A Romance* (1796) by M.G. Lewis, generally viewed as one of the first Gothic novels; Umberto Eco’s *The Name of the Rose* (1983); the *Cadfael* (1977-1994) historical murder mysteries of Edith Pargeter; and Casper David Friedrich’s painting, *The Abbey in the Oakwood* (1810).

One writer who spent much time in monasteries across Europe during the mid-twentieth century was Patrick Leigh Fermor. In his vivid and empathetic prose can be found descriptions which evoke an imagined monastic landscape of the Middle Ages. This account of his arrival at Abbaye de la Trappe in Normandy is worth quoting at length as illustration:

‘It [the abbey] dwindled off into farm buildings, and came to an end in the fields ... Among the furrows an image mouldered on its pedestal ... Across the December landscape, flat and waterlogged with its clumps of drizzling coppice and barren-looking pasture-land, ran a rutted path which disappeared beneath an avenue of elm-trees ... Isolated monks, all of them hooded and clogged, at work in the fields, ploughing or chopping wood, dotted this sodden panorama and the report of their falling axes reached the ear long seconds after the visual impact. Others were driving long herds of cattle to graze. Two of them would converse for a few seconds in their extraordinary semaphore, and then ‘*Viens, la blanche!*’ or, ‘*á droite, grosse bête!*’ would break the silence as a cow or a laggard cart-horse was urged through a gap in a hedge. Then the stillness fell once again’ (Fermor 1988, 67).

More generally, the combination of landscape, nature and sense of place with language, music and imagery is one of the most potent and enduring alliances within artistic and literary practice. Academic analysis of art and literature, however, has traditionally viewed landscape as inferior and subordinate to the main subject of the work (human activity, buildings, animals and so on). Landscape, as background, organises or frames the subject to give context or definition, but interpretation of its intrinsic significance is often overlooked (Andrews 1999, 5-7); an echo here perhaps of the traditional peripherality of landscape within archaeology. In an art history context, for instance, conventional scholarship presupposed a straightforward relationship with landscape, the painterly image as the prime expression of this.¹⁸ The artistic representation elicits an instinctive human response, which may be culturally influenced but essentially comes from within. A more sophisticated constructionist view has since come to the fore, emphasising how we select, edit and

¹⁸ As articulated, for instance, in Clark’s *Landscape into Art* (1966).

interpret what we see. In Andrews' (*ibid.*, 1-3, 15) formulation, any artistic image of a scene transfigures 'land into landscape; *landscape* into art', combining actual terrain and the pictorial facsimile; in effect 'the dissolving of the two together.'

A particularly fruitful exemplar of the symbiosis between art and landscape is Romanticism, a new way of looking at the world aesthetically (the gaze or view) and the relationship between nature and humanity which developed in the later 1700s and early-nineteenth century, simultaneously influenced by and reacting against Enlightenment scientific rationality (Johnson 2007b, 18-33). A transformation in envisioning that still resonates: as Austin (2013, 4) points out: 'the monastic ruin is a key graphic, literary and architectural component of that change still strongly influencing our management and visiting of monuments in the contemporary landscape.' Notable Romantic Movement figures produced work in and about places and landscapes in the study area and will be met again in the post-Dissolution case study chapters (Knight 1999; Moore 2007). One such, William Gilpin is often credited with formulating an aesthetic template for viewing the landscape, identifying 'picturesque' and 'sublime' scenes and noting not just the journey but emotional reactions to place, though often with little attention to history and the lives of the inhabitants (Hardyment 2012, 74; Pavard 2016, 30). His ground-breaking *Observations on the River Wye and Several Parts of South Wales* of 1782 (Gilpin 2005, 40), a symbolic representation of a tour through the area, firmly established the Wye Valley in which the 'splendid ruin' of Tintern Abbey and its woody, riverine setting 'make altogether a very enchanting piece of scenery' on the domestic Grand Tour circuit for the fashionable and wealthy.



Figure 2.8: Tintern Abbey, West Front, *JMW Turner*, 1794 (Source: © Tate Gallery).

It was on a walking tour in 1793 that William Wordsworth, doyen of Romantic poets, was inspired to write *Lines Written a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey* (Daiches and Flower 1979, 119). Wordsworth's compass went beyond the narrow aesthetic vision of Gilpin, guided by a more profound physical and emotional immersion in the landscape: to him the ancient abbey resonated with 'the still, sad music of humanity' (Hardyment 2012, 76). The ruins of monastic houses also featured regularly in the prodigious output of JMW Turner who painted Llanthony, Tintern and other antiquarian sites in the area (Figure

2.8). Landscape painters of the time were not seeking to develop an accurate documentary record of what they saw. Nevertheless, their work provides valuable topographical evidence, as well as visual reportage on an emerging mechanical age (Hamilton 2003, 11).

Though Llanthony and Tintern are notable for inspiring artistic responses ever since, the wider study area has a rich heritage of poetry, prose and folklore with a strong sense of place. Such work becomes a repository recording encounters and experiences captured whilst moving through the landscape, helping to bridge the gap between historical archaeology and cultural theories of identity, memory and perception embodied in the landscape (Dunham 2007, 183). There is also, as Robert Macfarlane (2014, xxviii-xxix) highlights, a more esoteric legacy: 'perhaps because of its combination of wildness (high ground) and habitability (rich valleys), the southern English-Welsh borderland is a region that has bred a peculiar number of seers,

savants and mystics.¹⁹ Alfred Watkins' fanciful and discredited 'ley-lines' theory espoused in *The Old Straight Track* (1925), 'an eccentric mirror-image of field archaeology' researched in the hills and lanes of southern Herefordshire part of this tradition (Matless 1998, 82).

An evolving literary conceptualisation of landscape that can also be drawn into this brief synopsis of sense of place as a vital component of artistic and literary work is a flowering of what has been, somewhat misleadingly, called the New Nature Writing of the last decade or so (Procter 2014a, 78). Perhaps in contradistinction to the long tradition of British natural history and topographical writing which has provided a balm of rural idyll for an increasingly urbanised population, contemporary writing on nature, landscape and place is in many ways coaxial to the cultural geographical responses to landscape discussed later in this section. Iain Sinclair has described natural historian Richard Mabey as 'the unacknowledged pivot' between earlier waves of environmental and nature writing and both the more experiential New Nature genre and those described as psycho-geographers further on (Hardyment 2012, 183; Mabey 2010, 11).²⁰ All share a rejection of the narrow confines of subject-specific discourse and a recognition of the interplay between human culture and the natural environment,²¹ reviving the cadence of earlier generations of British writers such as John Clare, Richard Jefferies, Thomas Hardy and Edward Thomas (Procter 2014a, 78).²²

¹⁹ As illustration, Macfarlane name-checks William Langland, Thomas Traherne, Henry Vaughan, John Dee, Arthur Machan and Alfred Watkins. He has written of a convergence of psycho-geography, ecology, archaeology and hauntology more generally in his article, *This Spectred Isle* (2015).

²⁰ Mabey's prolific output includes a 1986 biography of Gilbert White (eighteenth century parson-naturalist and author of the Ur-text of British natural history, *Natural History and Antiquities of Selborne*, 1798), *The Unofficial Countryside* (1973), an exploration of nature in urban edgelands, and *Nature Cure* (2005), a treatise on the positive impact of nature and place on the human condition.

²¹ For example, see Deakin 2007, Macfarlane 2007, 2012, 2015.

²² Books such as Jefferies' *Wild Life in a Southern County* (2011) and Thomas' *The South Country* (2009), chronicled not only flora and fauna but also the human life of communities whose everyday lives were immersed in the landscape, based on intimate knowledge and capacious walking.

2.4.2 Cultural geography and landscape

A return now to Johnson's (2007) assertion that well-established empirical techniques and post-modern experiential approaches need not be mutually exclusive when studying historic landscapes. Both, in fact, embody the ancient Greek notion of *theoria*: to look, contemplate, speculate; or, in Walter's (1988, 19-20) words, 'a complex but active mode of observation.' The rich potential, largely untapped, to blend cultural geographical analysis of how places are perceived, experienced and remembered with more conventional landscape archaeology,²³ as advocated by Fairclough, Johnson and others above will now be examined (with due regard to the sage warnings from Fleming and others on the need for a bedrock of empirical substance when considering landscape perception).

A central concern of the New Geography that developed from the late-1960s through to the early-1980s was to reframe notions of space, place and landscape through the prism of experiential perspectives, as articulated, for instance, by the concept of phenomenology. This approach viewed the environment as more than just a passive backdrop or external object of the spectator's gaze, a challenge to traditional ideas of landscape as simply a way of seeing the world or a repository of empirical material data (Cresswell 2004, 12-13; Tilley 1994, 10; Wylie 2007, 144). Such a paradigm drew on European philosophy concerned with the nature of existence, particularly the concepts of dwelling, being in the world and embodiment, the intertwining of self and landscape as the basis of experience as espoused by theorists Martin Heidegger and Maurice Merleau-Ponty (Tilley 1994, 13-14; Wylie 2007, 140-151). More recently, Tim Ingold (2000, 189) has revived this questioning of landscape as seeing – the Cartesian duality between 'culture and nature' and 'observer and observed' – traditionally informing Western philosophical thought (Wylie 2007, 145). His challenge to this order builds on Heidegger's 'dwelling perspective', binding nature and culture together whilst also recognising the dynamism inherent within landscape processes: 'it is through being inhabited that the world becomes a meaningful environment' (Ingold 2000, 173).

²³ For instance, the overview of methodological approaches and practical guide to investigating medieval rural settlements in Christie, and Stamper's edited volume (2011), contain no mention of phenomenological or other cultural geographical approaches.

This philosophical underpinning, that raw spatial entity becomes landscape through being, perception and memory, has become a core tenant of contemporary anthropology and cultural geography (Wylie 2007, 191). Landscapes are increasingly seen as ‘a form of codification of history itself’, freighted with remembrance and invocations of the past (Stewart and Stratham 2003, 1); or rather, the physical and perceptual remains of multiple pasts, including those more open to different interpretations (Holtorf and Williams 2006, 237; Shama 1996, 10; Tilley 1994, 11). Physical experience of landscape, social custom and memory are often indivisible; topographical prompts fundamental as a way of spatial remembering and interpreting in times of social and economic change (Walsham 2011, 7; Whyte 2009, 2, 9). However, as Holtorf and Williams (2006, 236-7) have identified, landscape archaeology ‘rarely considers how memories ... were inherited, inhabited, invented and imagined through the landscape.’ There is, therefore, considerable scope to more effectively cross-connect the recording of material traces through archaeological fieldwork with evidence of how landscapes have been remembered and re-appropriated by successive generations, through the interpretative layers provided by oral folk memories, antiquarian investigation, Romantic artistic representation, the modern heritage industry and so on (*ibid.*, 238-242) (Figure 2.9).



Figure 2.9: The Stony Way, Tintern: A major routeway connecting Tintern Abbey with its outlying granges and manors during the monastic period, now a backwater recreational path but with the remnants of its engineered medieval surface still clearly visible and echoed in the persisting ‘folk’ naming of the path; its past also remembered through inclusion in the Cistercian Way long distance walking route (Source: author).

A phenomenological approach to landscape has manifested itself widely across the humanities and artistic practice, demonstrating its agency as a distinctive form of landscape study supplementing other approaches (Wylie 2013, 57, 61). In an archaeological context, phenomenology has been particularly pioneered in prehistoric studies (see, for instance, Bradley 2000; Tilley 1994, 2004, 2010). This can be read as part of a broader exploration of the social and political dimensions of landscape now firmly embedded in prehistoric archaeology and its management as a heritage resource (McGlade 1999, 459). As most comprehensively practiced and explained by Christopher Tilley (2004, 219), prehistoric landscape phenomenology is characterised by a tactile and field-oriented approach, foregrounded by direct *in situ* encounters that go beyond standard interactions with artefacts and sites. Such activities – drawing plans, photography, mapping and excavation – inherently disembodiment evidence from its landscape context through conversion into text and imagery, producing what Thrift has described as ‘dead geographies’ (Wylie 2007, 171). The objective is to reclaim landscape as a holistic embracing of body, place, perception and the relationship between people and environment, to construct an ‘intelligent landscape’ in which topography and physiography of terrain and thought are distinct but connected (Tilley 1994, 14; 2004, 25). An approach Ingold (2005, 122) has described as ‘a manifesto for a genuinely outdoor archaeology’, a response to the paradox that much of the writing up, analysis and theorising of archaeological fieldwork takes place indoors *i.e.* away from the experience of inhabiting the landscape under scrutiny, through sight, sound and other senses and feelings.

Adoption of the approaches that explicitly examine experiential and perceptive engagement considered here has been somewhat under-developed in the study of historic landscapes, despite acknowledged scope for greater application (Gardiner and Rippon 2007, 6; Gilchrist 2009, 391; Holtorf and Williams 2006, 237). Examples would include Altenberg’s (2003) comparative consideration of space and identity in perceived marginal areas of medieval Britain and Scandinavia, and Johnson’s (2002) adoption of a phenomenological approach to underscore a study of the role of castles as elite stage settings. Nicola Whyte’s work (2009, 2015) can also be cited as a novel approach that foregrounds understanding and integrating perception, memory, interpretation and experience to explain landscape evolution. As she (2009., 5) contends: ‘understanding the landscape, as it was “inhabited”, should not

be confined to prehistory.’ Walsham (2011, 5) has also observed that early-modern people did not have a polarised view of nature and culture, they were indivisible in the landscape and imbued with meaning and memory. Here is a recurring phenomenon that Yi-Fu Tuan (2013, 4) has characterised as ‘topophilia’, the bond and interrelation between people and place. An intertwined-ness given voice through combining perspectives drawn from cultural geography identified here with landscape archaeology practice; providing a freshness through the enriched understanding of environment, culture and meaning that interdisciplinarity can encourage (Cosgrove 2008, 3).

2.4.3 Psycho-geography and deep topography

A further layer of cultural geographical thought will now added: an approach to landscape and place, psycho-geography, that has, to date, had limited convergence with phenomenological ideas and practice, let alone those of landscape archaeology. In its archaeological and anthropologist incarnations, phenomenology has generally concerned itself with a rural context. In contrast, with loose origins both in the English literary tradition of radical commentary on the underbelly of the city, largely centred on London,²⁴ and the *dérive* (‘unplanned journey’) of the Dadist and Situationist art and intellectual movements of mid-twentieth century Paris, psycho-geography has been resolutely urban in focus (Coverley 2006, 12). Common ground is a focus on direct experiential engagement with spatial surroundings, generally through the agency of walking.

Fairly nebulous and resistant to definition, psycho-geography has become something of a catch-all term, a meeting point for ideas and traditions with interwoven histories relating to the convergence of psychology, history, geography and the uncanny: a concern with the impact of the topographical environment on the human mind, emotions and behaviours (*ibid.*, 10-11). At root, it pathways a fresh reading and interpretation of geographical space, liberally folding together normally disparate

²⁴ Notably the writings of those whom Ackroyd (2004, 308-14) has termed ‘Cockney Visionaries’, Chaucer and Bunyan, Defoe, Blake and Dickens. A tradition forwarded into the modern age through the contrasting work and style of Ackroyd himself, Ballard, Sinclair and Keiller (Coverley 2006, 25-9).

subject-matter. The work of Iain Sinclair in political perambulations through contested spaces in and around London has proved particularly influential (see, for example, 2003, 2011), but perhaps the *magnus opus* of contemporary landscape philosophising loosely aligned with a psycho-geographic tradition is W.G. Sebald's *The Rings of Saturn* (1995). Sebald's reflective narrative recounts a long East Anglian walk that becomes a portal for evocations of and meditations on an array of times, places and people.²⁵ As Young (2010, 24) has commented, 'both these authors are adept at springing out the hermetic and esoteric histories lying latent in the landscape.'

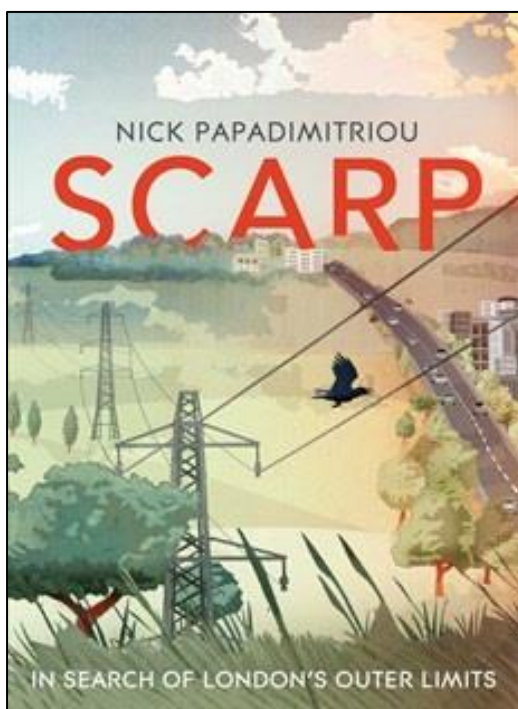


Figure 2.10: *Scarp: In Search of London's Outer Limits* (Source: www.bookdepository.com).

Nick Papadimitriou (2012) is another writer labelled as a psycho-geographer, though he defines his approach more sharply as 'deep topography' (Figure 2.10). This terminology could also be used to describe the work of outlier geographers, largely operating *extra academia*, such as Keiller (2013), Robinson (1990) and Self (2007): exponents of a more nuanced counterpart to psycho-geography, less shackled to its conceptual and urban prescriptions, an even less academically recognised approach.²⁶ Will Self (*ibid.*, 11-12) has described deep topography as 'minutely detailed, multi-level examinations of select locales that impact upon the writer's own microscopic inner-eye', combining ecology, history, poetry and sociology. As

²⁵ Which can be compared with film-maker Werner Herzog's 1991 record of his walk from Munich to Paris, also echoing Hilaire Belloc's (1945, 1958) accounts of proto-psycho-geographical pilgrimages from Canterbury to Winchester and from France to Rome at the turn of the twentieth century.

²⁶ A Google Scholar search for *deep topography* yields plentiful references to oceanographic research but none for cultural geography or landscape study.

Papadimitriou's deep topographer ventures throughout the Middlesex-Hertfordshire boundary lands and Sebald's long existential walk along the East Anglian coast demonstrate, any landscape can in principle be opened-up to this approach. Although psycho-geographical texts and practice have attracted some recent academic interest, this has tended to be confined to cultural geography and literary studies, focused on the urban experience.²⁷ There has been little interaction with other disciplines traditionally concerned with landscape: ecology, history, archaeology and so forth.

2.4.4 Critiques of experiential approaches to landscape

Experiential approaches essayed here have not been without sceptical responses; indeed, phenomenology, in particular, has often been viewed with suspicion within academic disciplines in which it has been practiced (Wylie 2007, 180). Some have perceived little more than an ambiguous abstract theory, removed from practical experience, lacking a clear and valid methodology and dislocated from environmental, socio-economic, historical, and indeed wider landscape, contexts (McGlade 1999, 461; *ibid.*, 139-140, 180-1).²⁸ In considering archaeological application, Fleming (2007, 89) has questioned how well-realised the fieldwork methodology has been, in contrast to more clearly formulated and tested techniques of modern landscape archaeology. The veracity of claims made about the siting of, for example certain Neolithic monuments following phenomenological research, has also been queried (Barrett and Ko 2009, 275). Such claims are strongly refuted by advocates who counter that everyday experience and field-based practice are central tenants. In Tilley's (1994, 11) words it requires 'a continuous dialectic between ideas and empirical data.' More fundamentally, a charge has been levelled of an underpinning romanticising of rural, pre-modern and non-Western ways of

²⁷ For example, Richardson 2015 and Garrett 2013.

²⁸ Tilley's field methods have been criticised for an over-dependence on the perception and interpretation of the individual researcher, over-representation of visual perception at the expense of other forms of experience and too much emphasis on experiencing specific monuments rather than the wider landscape (Altenberg 2003, 27-28).

experiencing landscape, with a simplistic and nostalgic view of a ‘more authentic’ engagement in the past (Wylie 2007, 181-2). Bull (2005) has outlined the many pitfalls of applying a modern value system or even a ‘mock medieval’ interpretation to how people thought and acted during the Middle Ages, an unconscious trap that it would be easy for a phenomenological viewpoint to fall into.

It is worth speculating that the critique of and suspicions around phenomenology within the landscape archaeology community discussed in Section 2.4.4 would be magnified in relation to psycho-geography and deep topography, particularly as they are generally practised outside an academic or professional setting. The underpinning philosophy and praxis here is perhaps though closer to more established approaches to landscape and place than one might initially think as archaeology, ecology and local history are all disciplines partially dependent on a dedicated cadre of amateur enthusiasts. Self (*ibid.*, 12) has proclaimed that practitioners of psycho-geography are ‘really only local historians with an attitude problem.’

The tensions between landscape archaeology and post-modernism in the form of phenomenology and other post-processual theory were recorded in the series of exchanges between Fleming and Johnson previously alluded to. This is a debate which could perhaps run and run, but to the outside eye Fleming’s (2008, 76) even-handed conclusion that, as in other disciplines across the humanities and social sciences, post-modernism can bring refreshing innovation to existing landscape archaeology praxis rather than replacing it seems to be a judgement that most could agree with.²⁹ Such a view fits well with John Wylie’s (2007, 186) assertion that the phenomenological approach has ‘identified new topical grounds and new forms of research practice, at once enriching and diversifying the ambit of landscape studies.’

²⁹ It is also interesting to note that one of the few examples of an experiential approach to historic landscape fieldwork is provided by Fleming (2010b) himself in a novel article on medieval long-distance roads that uses a modern journey on horse-back along such a track as part of its evidence base, though the use of this methodology is not elaborated upon.

2.5 Conclusion

If we are to find what Fairclough (2013b, 200) advocates as ‘ways for landscape understanding, characterisation and assessment to take fuller account of the invisible, remembered and imagined components of landscape’s past’, then, as Whyte (2009, 3, 5) articulates, landscape needs to be approached ‘as a lived environment imbued with multiple and diverse meanings and associations’, which can be re-interpreted or re-invented over time.

This review of academic research and discourse relating to the central hypothesis of this thesis has confirmed where the potential lies for an original and purposeful contribution to understanding how landscapes have been directly influenced and shaped by medieval monasteries. This study can help to populate under-occupied research spaces that, when combined, provide a deeper insight into the complexities of the landscapes of monasticism.

Despite regular calls for broadening out the monastic research agenda to the wider landscape, most detailed archaeological and historical investigation has remained site-focussed and has not strayed far beyond the confines of, spatially, the monastic precinct and, temporally, the period up to the Dissolution (Gardiner and Rippon 2007, 7; Greene 2001, 4-8). There is a clear opportunity to contribute to filling this void through a more expansive spatial and temporal examination of the wider landscapes of monasticism.

A further thread running throughout this overview has been the call for a greater synthesis of approaches to effectively understand the complex, Hydra-headed history and perception of such landscapes (Fairclough 2012; Moorhouse 1989; Rackham 2000, 10). For Rippon (2012, 91) historic landscape archaeology needs to press forward into new territory. Furthermore ‘there is a need to go beyond two-dimensional morphological analysis to embrace a more multi-sensory approach that includes, for example, the language, colour and texture of landscape’ (Rippon 2013, 199). To achieve this aim it may be that archaeologists and landscape historians need to step away from their comfort zones on occasion, to leaven scientific detachment with an open-mindedness to perception and subjectivity in attempting to

draw an all-round picture of human habitation of the landscape, to produce a 'biography of place' both particular and contextualised, less descriptive more interpretive (Austin 2006, 205; Fairclough 2012, 479; Reynolds 2009, 417).

It is this challenge, to move towards a three-dimensional approach to the 'totality of landscape' (Coones 1985, 11), much advocated in the literature reviewed here but perhaps less often followed through in practice, which this research project has taken up. The aspiration is not to replace conventional landscape archaeology fieldwork and research, or to graft theoretical or loosely-defined concepts wholesale into this thesis. Aspects of methodologies more commonly associated with prehistoric archaeology or cultural geography are harnessed in novel ways (for instance, the analysis of artistic, literary and folkloric reactions to monastic landscapes, walking-based experiential fieldwork in an historic landscape and deep topography techniques in a rural setting) to complement and cross-question other evidence bases. In so doing, this project also tests their veracity and usefulness in a historic landscape context bridging the gap with more familiar archaeological methodologies.

Chapter 3

The study area context

3.1 Introduction to the study area



Figure 3.1: Boundary of the study area located within the United Kingdom (Source: map drawn in ArcGIS® using Ordnance Survey Open Raster, 2016 data layer; downloaded from Digimap® under licence, <http://digimap.edina.ac.uk/>).

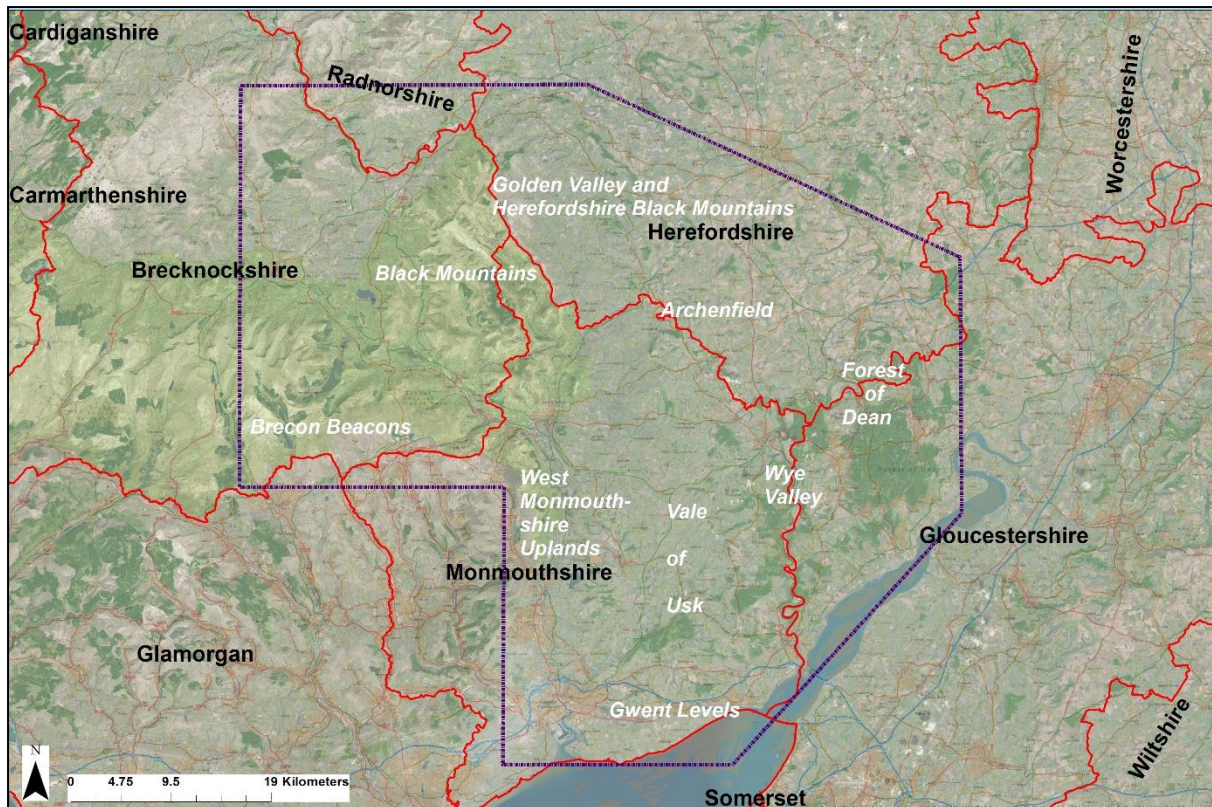


Figure 3.2: The study area and constituent landscape pays in a regional context delineated by historic counties (Source: map drawn in ArcGIS® using ArcGIS World Imagery, Ordnance Survey Open Carto 2 and 1:5000 Historic Counties data layers, downloaded from Historic Counties Trust <http://county-borders.co.uk/>).

A study area of the southern-most portion of the Welsh Marches encompassing territory on both sides of the Anglo-Welsh boundary – Herefordshire south of the River Wye, the Forest of Dean district of Gloucestershire, eastern Brecknockshire and most of Monmouthshire³⁰ – has been selected for its high potential to address the specific research questions posed here, the boundary drawn reflecting the distribution of monastic houses and including a range of landscape types (Figures 3.1 and 3.2). This territory contains a mixture of *pays* – of both upland and lowland, champion and *bocage* character – offering a variety of settings in which to explore landscape history, as outlined in Section 3.2 (Leighton and Silvester 2003, 31; Rowley 2001, 12).

³⁰ Pre-1974 county designations (known as ‘historic’ counties) are used because their administrative boundaries are consistent with most of the documentary and map evidence used in this study.

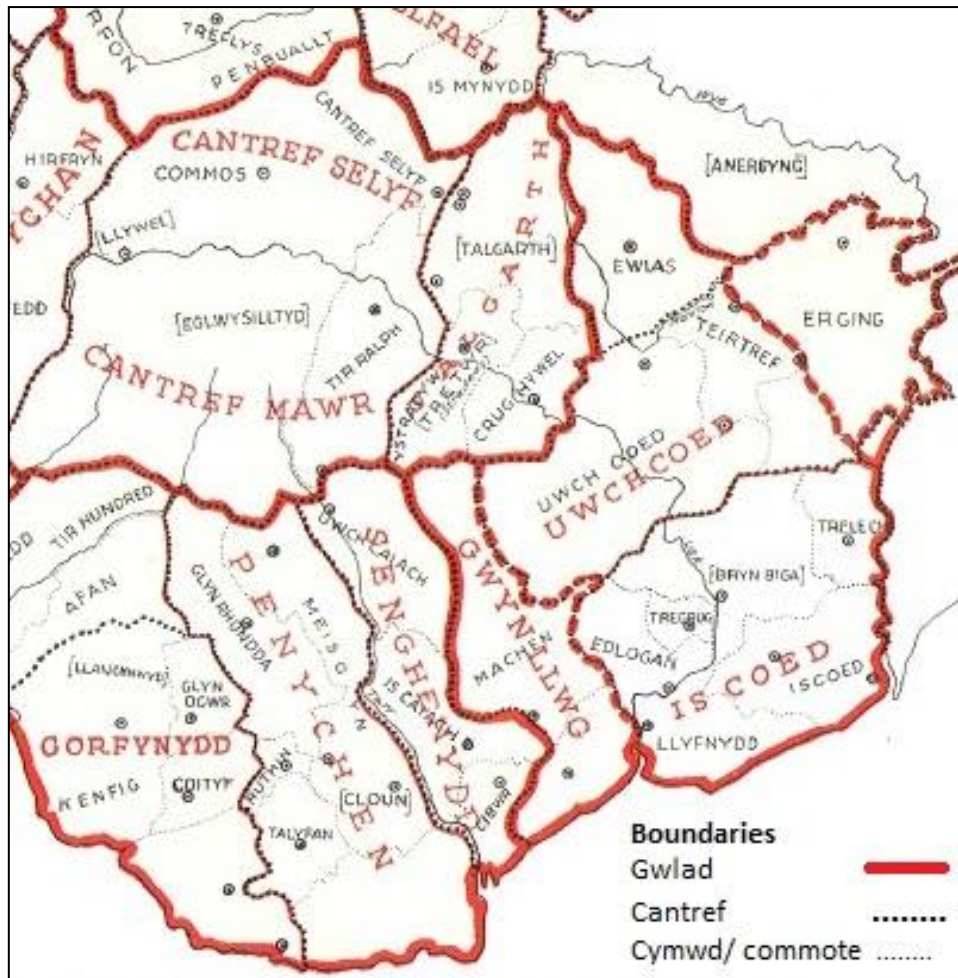


Figure 3.3: Map of pre-Norman Conquest administrative territories of south-east Wales (Source: after Rees 1972, Plate 28).

Anciently territory of the Welsh kingdom of Gwent, surrounding sub-kingdoms and the English Forest of Dean, by the early-twelfth century the region had been annexed by Anglo-Norman barons (Carr 1995, 34-6; Rippon 1997, 22) (Figure 3.3). Excepting Dean within English jurisdiction and the semi-autonomous district of Archenfield (previously Ergyng), a patchwork of Anglo-Norman lordships had settled over the study area by the mid-thirteenth century (Figure 3.4). The Statute of Wales following the Edwardian conquest of Wales between 1277 and 1282 subsequently laid-out revised arrangements for governance, with new administrative structures put in place that survived into the 1500s (Carr 1995, 83-4; Davies 1993, 166-7). A miscellany of around 150 individual Anglo-Norman border baronies endured, neither part of England nor simply a bulwark against Welsh kingdoms further west (Carr 1995, 36): some now in Crown hands, the remainder paying homage to the king but essentially remaining autonomous. These borderlands became more formally known

as *Marchia Wallie* ('the March of Wales'), thus cementing a regional identity, apparent since prehistory, as a political and cultural frontier up to the present day, though any idea of a fixed national boundary was not yet a reality.

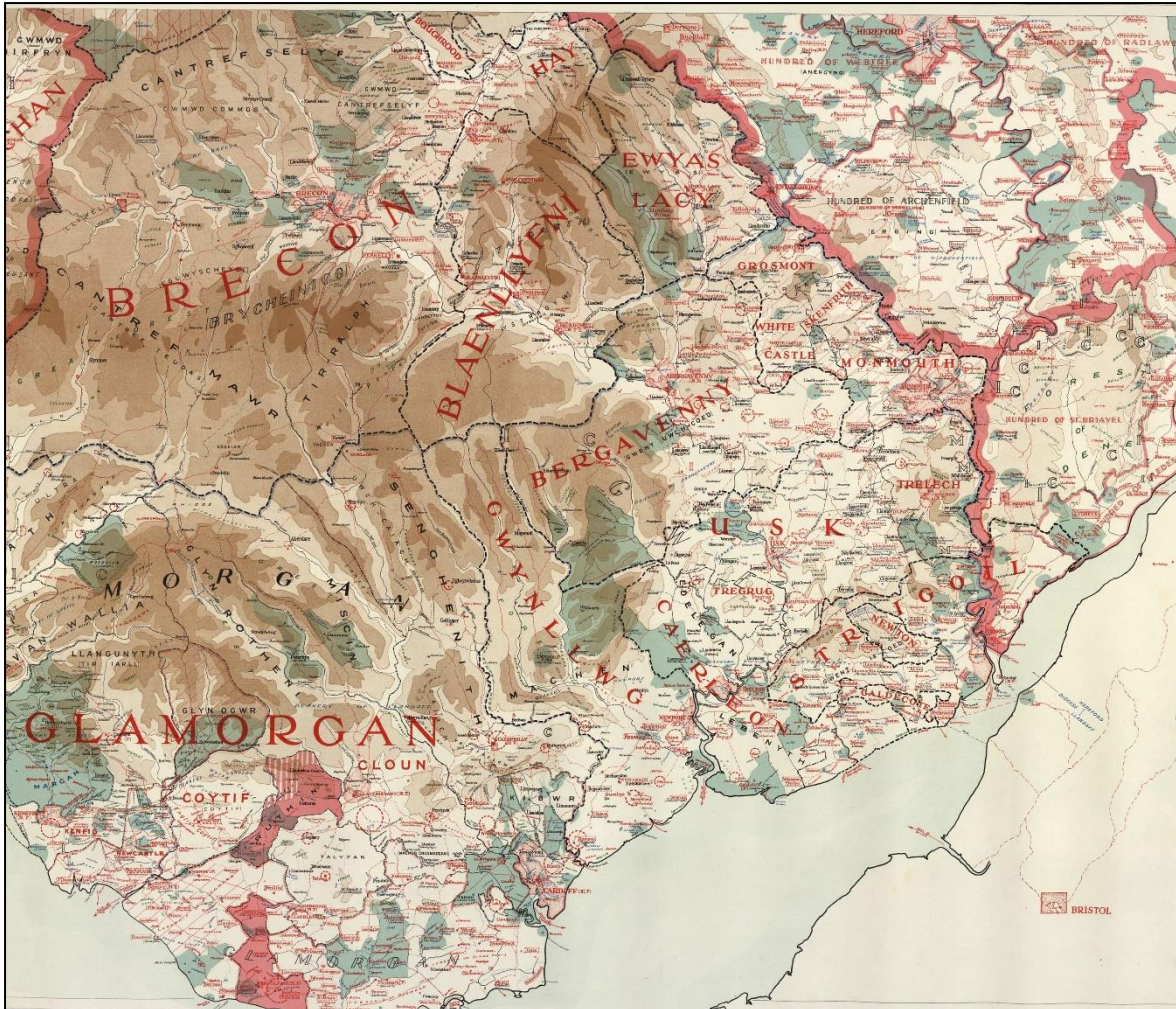


Figure 3.4: Map of Marcher Lordship territories in the fourteenth century (Source: extract from William Rees' map of South Wales and the Border in the XIV Century, 1933, <http://mappingwelshmarches.ac.uk/maps/>).

It was the Laws in Wales Act of 1535 which would conclusively change the political structure. Wales and the March were incorporated into the kingdom of England as a Principality, territorial units rationalised into 13 new Welsh counties: Tudor administrative structures which would largely remain in place until reorganisation of local government boundaries across the United Kingdom in 1974. Within the study area, the new counties of Brecknockshire and Monmouthshire (largely replicating the

ancient territory of Gwent) emerged,³¹ with Archenfield and the eastern half of Ewyas Lacy integrated into English Herefordshire (Figure 3.2). It can be argued that these signal changes helped to consolidate a sense of social and administrative stability, setting the definitive boundary between England and Wales (Brown 214, 104). However, as Bowen (1960, 66) has pointed out, the newly formalised frontier took no real account of cultural or linguistic factors and thus both sides of the border preserved native influences. For instance, Welsh was spoken by many in western Herefordshire for another 300 years, whilst some parishes of lowland and south-eastern Monmouthshire retained an English character. Nevertheless, the mid-1500s certainly marked something of a historical watershed for the March due to the profound impact of the political union of England and Wales, the Reformation and the Dissolution of the monasteries.

This south-east region of the March had been heavily colonised by monastic orders during the Middle Ages, with Monmouthshire home to the largest number of foundations in the territory of the four Welsh dioceses (Davies 1953, 63). The wider medieval geo-political dimension at play sketched out above, which saw the planting of many of these monasteries as a symbol of Norman expansion, power and control in a contested borderland, provided an additional dynamic enriching discussion of cultural landscapes here (Rowley 2001, 122; Williams 2008). There was also considerable variation in the post-Dissolution histories of the area's monasteries: some became ruinous, their estates broken up; others were converted into gentry houses with landscaped estates. The region has long attracted the attention of the artistic community, opening-up opportunities to explore the monastic legacy underpinning the evolution of landscapes as cultural, spiritual, and artistic touchstones (Andrews 1999, 8-9). Many of the monastic estates also occupied what are now designated spaces or countryside on the edge of urban areas; terrains viewed through the contemporary lens of high heritage and ecological value, but also facing pressures for change.

³¹ Monmouthshire became part of the Oxford circuit of the English assizes for its legal processes, contributing to the oft-confused perception, despite a largely Welsh cultural identity, of a county neither wholly English or Welsh; a confusion only fully resolved through the resurrection of Gwent in 1974 (Brown, 2014, 125; Connors, 2013, 33; Newman, 2002, 1).

3.2 The landscape of the study area



Figure 3.5: The Hatterall ridge of the Black Mountains, looking north-east up the Olchon valley from Oldcastle. An historic landscape at the intersection between England and Wales (Source: author).

How a landscape has developed over the *longue durée* is influenced by many factors, some relating to physical geography, others the consequence of human endeavour. The complex melding and interplay of such drivers is perhaps particularly noticeable in a border region such as the Welsh Marches with the turbulent history hinted at in the previous section, where cultural identities, often predating the lines on the map of formal boundaries, meet, merge and collide. Here the confluence of the Welsh uplands and more fertile champion terrain to the east has influenced the region's position as a cultural and political boundary for at least two thousand years (Rowley 2001, 12) (Figure 3.5).

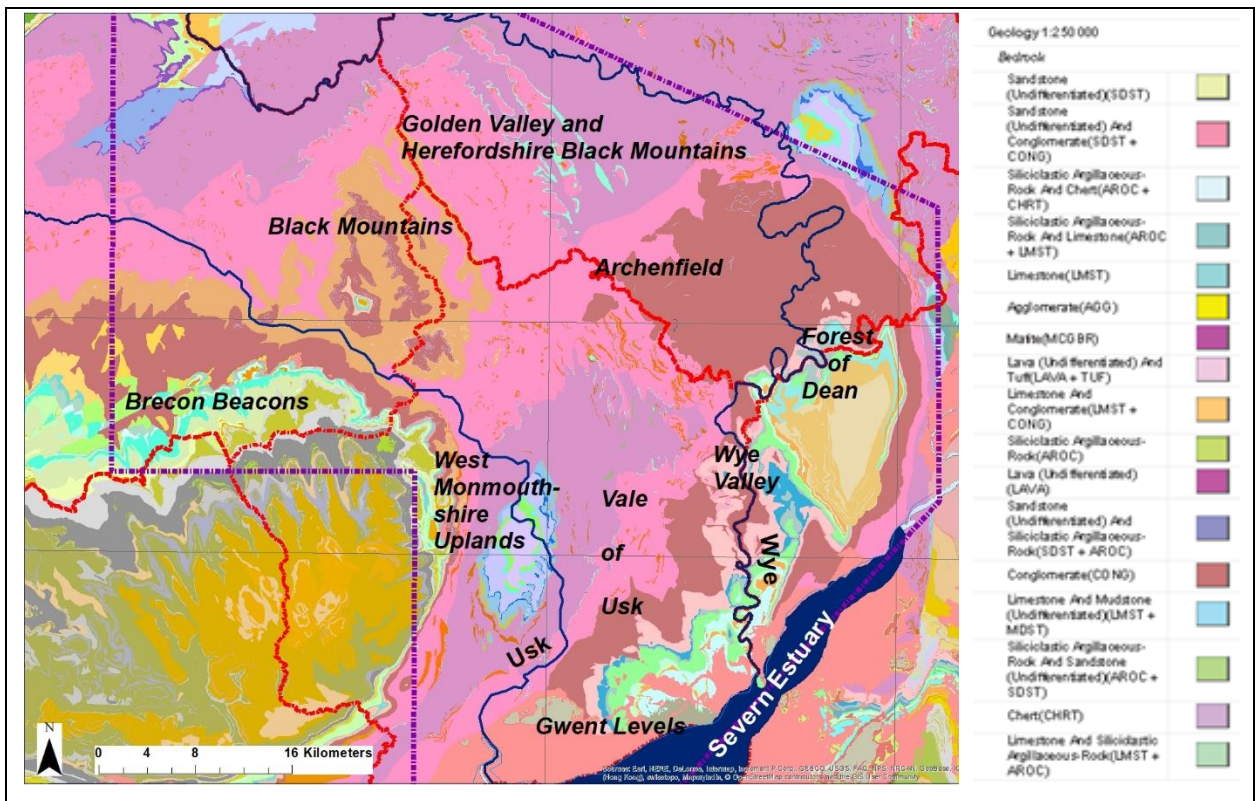


Figure 3.6: Geology of the study area (Source: map drawn in ArcGIS using British Geological Survey and 1:5000 Historic Counties data layers, downloaded from Digimap® under licence, <http://digimap.edina.ac.uk/>, and Historic Counties Trust, <http://county-borders.co.uk/>).

This border territory has a varied physical character due to a diverse underlying geology (Figure 3.6 and described in detail in Neville-George 1975, 52-6 and Trueman 1971, 285-9, 310-15) and the geomorphological impact of the last Ice Age, prior to which the Severn Estuary was the apex of a vast flood-plain (Rippon 1997, 14). During this epoch the Brecon Beacons and surrounding uplands became the most southerly glaciated region of the British Isles. Outside of the *montane* fastness of the Beacons, the dominant physical landforms are the lower river valleys and drainage basins of two great rivers, the Usk and the Wye.

Such variation extends to the territory's cultural history: several distinct 'landscape character' areas or *pays* are shown in Figure 3.7. The French concept of *pays* attempts to describe regions with distinctive geographies and common landscape character that traditional typologies based on agriculture practice, settlement pattern or physical geography could not adequately articulate (see Lake 2007; Muir 1999, 8; Rippon 2009, 228-230; 2012, 2-3 on the *pays* approach). A summary for each

identifiable *pays* in the study area is outlined below, most of which have been recognised more formally through various governmental designations as ‘landscape character areas’ (these summaries informed by Connors 2013; Darby 1976; Green 1992; Hart 2000; Hill and Worthington 2003; Hooke 2006; Millward and Robinson 1978; Mullard 2014; Newman 2002; Pilbeam 2006; Procter 1993, 2007; Rippon 1997, 2004; Rowley 2001; Sylvester 1969; Walters 1992; Williams 1975).

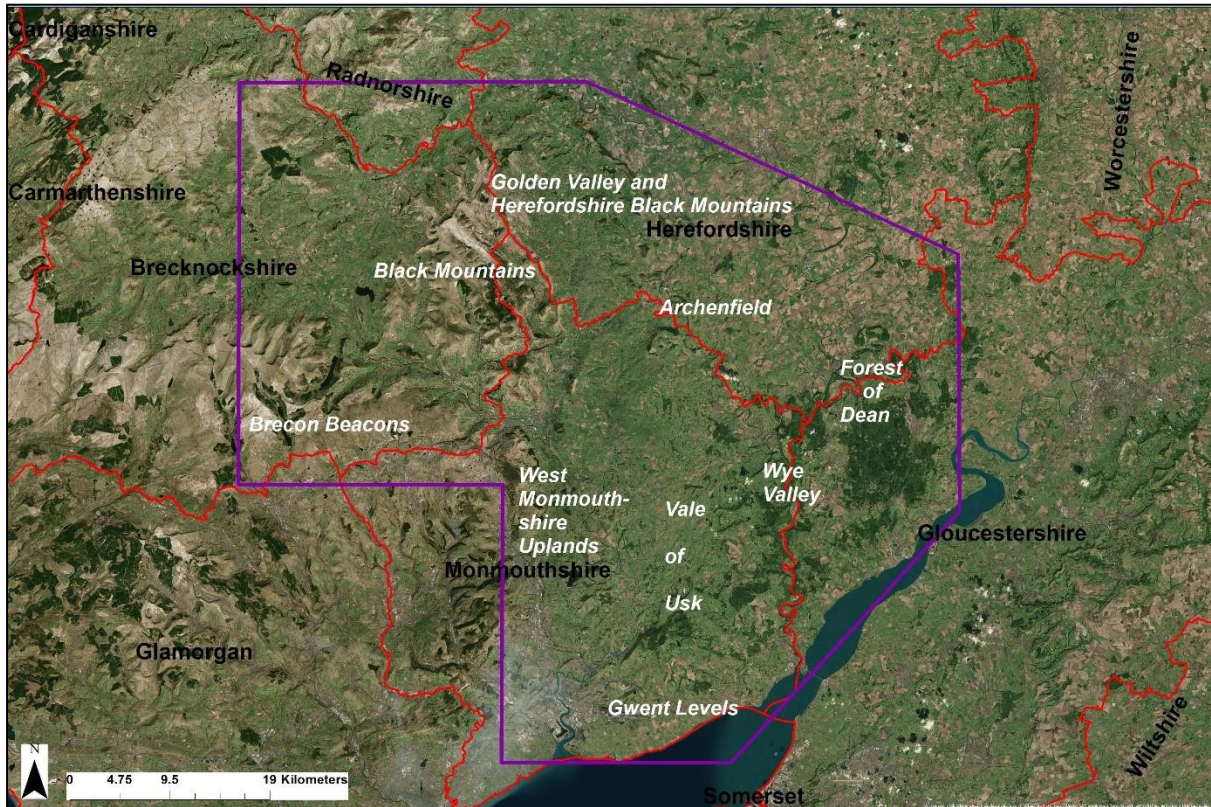


Figure 3.7: Physical geography of the main *pays* in the study area (Source: map drawn in ArcGIS using ArcGIS World Imagery base map and 1:5000 Historic Counties; Historic Counties Trust, <http://county-borders.co.uk/>).

3.2.1 Archenfield

The undulating terrain of Archenfield overlays hard beds of Old Red Sandstone bounded by a long curve of the Wye to the north and east, the Worme Brook in the north-west and the River Monnow south-westwards. Never particularly elevated – Garway Hill, the highest point, reaches 250m OD – the landscape contrasts with both the more dramatic topography westwards across the Monnow and the gentler relief of the Herefordshire Lowlands east of the Wye.

The eastern portion bordering the Wye flood-plain, characterised by low-lying spurs as the river meanders southwards, has long been of high agricultural quality, given over to arable and orchards in generally large regular low-hedged fields. To the west, rising ground of steep-sided coombs patchworked by smaller pastures with often overgrown, mature hedges predominates giving way to extensive areas of open grassland and bracken on the highest ground, the remnants of formerly extensive commons. Woodland is scarce in the east, excepting the steep slopes of the Wye which border the Forest of Dean. Wooded ground is more abundant westwards, including the remnants of the Treville medieval hunting forest. A network of narrow, winding lanes criss-crosses the area, linking thinly scattered hamlets and farmsteads, typically made up of buildings of local sandstone or brick, some half-timbered. There are no historically nucleated villages, in part a legacy of the districts status as something of a buffer zone between England and Wales before the Acts of Union.

3.2.2 Black Mountains



Figure 3.8: Scarp northern slope of the Black Mountains, looking east from Rhiw Constab (Source: author).

The Black Mountains, the eastern-most fraction of the Brecon Beacons National Park, are composed of a series of parallel north-west to south-east orientated valleys that dissect an upland of Old Red Sandstone extending from the main Beacons

massif. Their striking layered north-facing scarp slopes form a resistant prospect due to a succession of hard sandstone, shale and conglomerate beds overlying red marls, including bands of brownstones and plateau beds, resulting in the high cornice-shaped crests that characterise both these mountains and the Beacons (Figure 3.8). The long table-top upland ridges extending southwards are in many places at an altitude of over 600m OD, reaching over 800m OD at their highest. U-shaped in character due to the advance of glaciers during the last Ice Age, the interspersing catchments are drained by tributaries of the Usk and Monnow rivers fed by large numbers of fast-flowing watercourses fluting the valley sides. The steep-sided upper reaches are emphasised by extensive craggy outcrops, more gently contoured lower slopes and the valley floor characterised by hill-wash and colluvial deposits of red marl, their fertility further enhanced by glacial till of the Fforest series.

Extensive open heather moorland and wild grasses, now grazed by sheep and ponies and managed for grouse, dominate the exposed watersheds. Locally characteristic *ffridd*, a species-rich patchwork of birch and hawthorn scrub, bracken, acidic grass and bog and rocky crags on the higher slopes, descends to a mixture of semi-natural broadleaved woodland, early-twentieth century coniferous plantation and rough pasture. As with other upland districts in the study area, these belts of open common, wood-pasture and woodland historically hosted seasonal transhumance: the migration of farming families and their animals to the summer mountain pasture of the *hafod*, the winter *hendref* homestead at the main valley settlement. Traditional farming practices, based on this balance of upland and lowland, lingered well into the nineteenth century. Along the valley bottom, meadows were cut for hay and fertilised by cattle, the drier lower slopes managed for winter pasture and crop-growing. The common grazing lands have been subject to ebbs and flows of encroachment and abandonment, including arable farming and intakes of new enclosures when the climate was favourable or economic and population pressures dictated, though never subject to large-scale planned enclosure. By the late 1700s, most upland pasture had been given over to sheep, whilst mixed farming characterised farms down in the vales. Pasture and meadow for sheep, cattle and horses now predominate and little land is under crop. The dominant field morphology is semi-regular small to medium-sized enclosures with mature hedges, more

expansive regular-shaped fields covering the broadening lower valley as the high ridges taper out, stone wall or earth-bank boundaries common in the upper reaches.

These uplands are thickly spread with scattered or loosely clustered farmsteads along the lower valley sides, particularly strung along the spring line, becoming less frequent in the wilder, less fertile upper catchments. Larger farm units appear at a lower density as the valleys broaden out. Only a few hamlets and small villages exist, though the historic towns of Abergavenny, Crickhowell, Talgarth and Hay-on-Wye ring the mountains. Vernacular farm buildings largely date from rebuilding in rubble-stone during the 1600s or the periodic expansions higher up the hill-slopes in later centuries, though many may occupy sites of long-standing occupation, some likely evolved from upland *hafodydd*. Excepting extensive quarrying for building stone and localised peat cutting, industrial activity has been absent. There are few metalled roads through the hills but a thick network of small lanes, bridleways and *rhiw* footpaths criss-cross the valleys and high ground.

3.2.3 Brecon Beacons

Named after a chain of indivisible hill beacons on their summits, the Beacons form the mountainous heartland of the Brecon Beacons National Park (designated in 1957), the highest ground in southern Britain. Composed of thick sedimentary slabs of Devonian series Old Red Sandstone overlain by a cap of resistant conglomerate laid down by ancient watercourses, the mountains were subsequently sculptured by glaciation and erosion. The resultant distinctive dramatic relief of the steep scarp and more graduated table-topped dip-slope, steep-walled mountain *cwms*, U-shaped valleys and moraine deposits dominate the natural topography. The characteristic plateau of the dip-slopes is composed of lower beds of Downton and Ditton Series mudstones, strengthened by layers of siltstone and sandstone. At these high elevations, podzolic soils form in high rainfall and cool summer conditions; acidic, shallow and stony in character, thin and leached where limestone protrudes. Gley soils of the Wenallt series underlie the large areas of wet moorland, bog and mire, with extensive peat soils on the summits and high plateau.

Much of the area's landscape character results from medieval-rooted agricultural practices (as described for the Black Mountains). Late-medieval and post-medieval piecemeal enclosure imposed an irregular fieldscape, hedges and patches of coppiced woodland supplanting a more open scene of wood-pasture and commons. Further upslope, the Beacons contain one of the largest areas of remaining common land in Wales, a remnant of both the Norman hunting forest of Brecknock and the survival well into the 1800s of upland summer grazing by hefted sheep and cattle raised as breeding stock or to be fattened on lowland farms. The National Trust now owns over 5000 hectares of these uplands, including much of the central Beacons *massif*, whilst legally-defined grazing rights are still exercised through a commoner's association. Above the highest enclosed pasture traditionally foraged by horses and cattle and the *ffridd*, the moorland is now characterised by tracts of acid grassland, a consequence of overgrazing, heather beetle damage and poor management of burning.

Southern dip-slopes, here and in the Black Mountains, were liberally carpeted by commercial conifer plantations in the mid-twentieth century; reservoirs also constructed to supply Newport and the other industrial towns of Monmouthshire. Outside of the hamlets and larger post-medieval farms along the Usk valley and around the historic town of Brecon, most settlement is limited to a dispersed pattern of hill farms, with sandstone constructed farmhouses often remodelled in the eighteenth and nineteenth century from regional characteristic hall- and long-houses.

3.2.4 Forest of Dean

The Forest of Dean spreads across an asymmetrical and uneven high plateau rising to 200m OD, steep-sided valleys indenting its margins. Within the central high table, shale and a thick division of Pennant sandstone topped by Coal Measures give rise to thickly wooded undulating ground, traditionally dominated by oak and beech, topped by sandstone ridges of moderate relief (Figure 3.9). Dean, in common with much of the study area, was an archetype of the wood-pasture regions of Roman and early-medieval Britain: a mixed terrain of trees and open farmland with reserves of heavy woodland managed for timber and charcoal resources.



Figure 3.9: Western edge of the Forest of Dean plateau, looking east from Rockfield near Monmouth (Source: author).

Romano-British civilian and industrial settlements, including high status villas, have been found around Dean and the Wye Valley, suggesting a relatively settled part of Roman Britain. By the eleventh century, the *Domesday Book* reveals land ownership that had been dominated by Anglo-Saxon names, much now held by the Crown and church, in one of the most densely wooded places in England. It was during this era that royal hunting forest designation emerged, strict forest law applied by the Anglo-Norman aristocracy. Into the high Middle Ages, agricultural and population expansion saw even the royal hunting grounds of the Forest subject to extensive assarting. Sustained denudation of tree-cover precipitated phases of managed planting regimes from the late 1600s, by which time hunting had long subsided and the Forest was highly valued for its natural resources, including timber for the Royal Navy's ships. Such developments saw Dean's remaining woodland partitioned, new planting 'Inclosures' walled to exclude grazing. By the late-Victorian era, the landscape had been largely stripped of wood-cover following long centuries of exploitation. The resurgence of a wood-dominated character commenced with the initially commercially and strategically-driven coniferous planting of the Forestry Commission in the first half of the twentieth century, a recreational imperative coming to the fore later (Dean was created as Britain's first National Forest Park in 1938). By mid-century, most of the poor soils of the higher ground had been planted

with conifers, early larch and Scots pine supplanted by new fast-growing conifer species such as Sitka spruce. More recently, deciduous hardwoods have been planted due to their amenity and ecological value.

The plateau's diverse geology has seen exploitation for mineral extraction throughout history, industrial power provided by swift streams and the charcoal resources from plentiful woodland. A belt of Carboniferous Limestone has been quarried since at least the Romano-British period for iron ore (via naturally eroded hollows known locally as 'scowles'), *in situ* forges and furnaces later developed by the medieval abbeys of Flaxley and Tintern and the Crown. Relatively easily won coal seams saw the district develop a mining industry (operated by the Forest's 'Free Miners') that survives on a small-scale into the present day. Many waste-tips of the 'gale' drift mines and later larger-scale deep shaft mining now recolonised by woodland witness this activity, whilst the poor soils of the Dean plateau and patchwork of small-holdings and scattered settlement attest to the long centuries of industrial extraction. Heavily settled and worked post-medieval places later developed into the industrial towns of Cinderford, Coleford, Mitcheldean and Lydney that ring the main forested area and around which further development clustered.

Generally poor soils and often relatively steep relief have resulted in a predominantly pastoral landscape outside the primary areas of managed forest, with patches of arable fields restricted to gentler slopes and the low-lying corridor bordering the Severn Estuary between Lydney and Chepstow. Well-established hedgerows adorning a patchwork of largely irregular small to medium-sized fields and winding, narrow lanes add to the overall wooded character. Small, clustered historic settlements such as St. Briavels and Staunton are surrounded by a more dispersed pattern of hamlets and farmsteads occupying sheltered locations.

3.2.5 Golden Valley and Herefordshire Black Mountains

On the English side of the border, in Herefordshire, can be found the eastern foothills of the Black Mountains *massif* consisting of a lower-lying plateau of between 150m and 300m OD cut by several parallel valleys running north-west to south-east

between the River Monnow and a meandering arc of the Wye, characteristic of the transitional geography of this border realm. The largest and most open in character, the Golden Valley is named from the river it holds, the Dore (originating from the Welsh *dwr* meaning 'water', mistaken for the Norman-French word for 'gold') (Figure 3.10). This broad valley is highly fertile due to well-drained rich glacial red and brown loams of the Milford and Eardiston series and the alluvial drift of the Lugwardine Series. The western-most catchments of the Olchon and Upper Monnow have much in common topographically with the main Black Mountains massif over the border, only excluded from the Brecon Beacons National Park due to administrative issues.



Figure 3.10: The broad Golden Valley, looking north-west from near Kilpeck (Source: author).

Changes in land ownership and tenure in motion since the Tudor period saw this landscape transformed by piecemeal enclosure into a patchwork of mainly small and irregular hop fields, orchards and pasture, preceeding medieval open-field cultivation having largely disappeared. Along the fertile furlongs of the Golden Valley, larger fields and arable cultivation continued to predominate, the valley also noted for its 'floating meadow' systems of irrigation. Upland commons were subject to later planned enclosure and squatter encroachment. Scattered and dispersed settlement across this higher ground and the smaller valleys retains echoes of the area's history as part of the early-medieval Welsh kingdom of Ewyas, with many natural landmarks and watercourses retaining Welsh names and a mixed English, Welsh and hybrid etymology. A later layer of borderland character is provided by the belt of villages and hamlets strung along the Golden Valley in particular, a legacy of the Norman

Marcher lordship of Ewyas Lacy, with the lord's *caput* and imposing castle located at Longtown. Many of these settlements are compact and nucleated around a village green, swollen in size by modern expansion though timber-framed buildings remain common. The Cistercian Dore Abbey was another Anglo-Norman agent, operating widespread estates and granges here.

3.2.6 Gwent Levels

Stretching from the River Ely west of Cardiff to the Wye in the east, the Gwent Levels cover over 100km² of low-lying intertidal saltmarshes bordering the widening Severn Estuary, formed by the accumulation of gravel and loamy silt deposits with thick beds of peat underlying the surface. The Caldicot Level (of what were historically known as the 'Monmouthshire Moors') defines the coastal plain of the study area from the River Usk at Newport to the raised promontory of Sudbrook overlooking the mouth of the Wye, the intertidal shore also extending further east from here into Gloucestershire.



Figure 3.11: Grangefield, a holding of Tintern Abbey in the reclaimed marsh landscape of the Gwent Levels (Source: author).

In prehistory the ground was too marshy for agriculture or significant sustained occupation but from the Romano-British era onwards sea walls were constructed, the land intermittently but steadily drained and reclaimed for agricultural use. Lower

medieval sea levels encouraged settlements to emerge strung along a cultivable band of tidal sediment deposits on the coastal margins defended by a series of sea banks, their place names a mix of English and Welsh. Much of the reclaimed landscape is the result of vigorous drainage and land management practiced by Anglo-Norman lords. The monks of Goldcliff Priory and Tintern Abbey were at the forefront, digging ditches and channels to exploit land granted to them and managed from their granges in the area (Figure 3.11). Remaining areas of marshland were subject to later, more uniform reclamation and Parliamentary Enclosure. Field boundaries largely composed of ditches (known locally as 'reens'), canalised and banked watercourses and sea defences underpin aggressive water management systems to prevent both freshwater flooding and tidal inundation. Sections of varying field morphology and settlement pattern reflect different phases of reclamation and agricultural development, the character of the historic landscape as a whole having much in common with the 'Central Province' of England: a combination of medieval common fields formed of scattered strips of arable land (later enclosed, though some were still in operation into the 1800s) and small, radial fields clustered around nucleated settlements such as Magor and Redwick established by English and Flemish settlers.

These wetlands, a rare example of retained historic drainage networks, have been encroached upon by the growth of Newport as the main port for south-east Wales, the huge steelworks at nearby Llanwern (now closed, the site being redeveloped) and a transport corridor of railways and motorways linking South Wales with England via the Severn Tunnel and two Severn road bridges. The importance of their historic landscape and ecology as the largest reclaimed wetland in Wales has been recognised by inclusion in the *Register of Landscapes, Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in Wales* and designation as a Site of Special Scientific Interest.

3.2.7 Vale of Usk



Figure 3.12: Low hills and ridges in the Vale of Usk: looking south from Graig Syfyrddin (Source: author).

The morphology of the historic county of Monmouthshire can be thought of as an amphitheatre, centred on the Vale of Usk, a low-lying undulating flood-basin drained by tributary watercourses running southwards, bounded in the north by the Black Mountains, the uplands of the South Wales Valleys to the west. Eastwards the rising ground of the Trellech plateau sweeps south into the natural barrier of the high Old Red Sandstone and Carboniferous Limestone Wentwood ridge around which the Usk and Wye skirt on their journey to meet the Severn (Figure 3.12). Here the Usk changes character from the upstream river, wide meanders and oxbows distinguishing its flow through a broad flood-plain.

The Vale enjoys a largely rural character with regular patches of woodland (often adorning higher ground, most notably along the anciently-timbered Wentwood ridge), often irregular hedge-enclosed fields, small and scattered settlements and farmsteads. Here and there lies evidence of medieval common-field cultivation, for instance where the alluvial-rich Usk flood-lands are at their widest. This is a countryside reflecting the historic pattern established during the piecemeal enclosure of land and consolidation of estates during the Tudor and early-modern period. The

low-lying nature of much of the Vale provides a natural entry point into Welsh territory, as used by bands of hunters during the Palaeolithic and Mesolithic periods, the Romans who established a regional centre at Caerwent and the legionary fortress of *Isc*a (Caerleon) and land-hungry Anglo-Normans Marcher Lords.

The level of Anglo-Norman influence is less pronounced than in the Gwent Levels to the south, outside of settlements established around Marcher castles, such as Abergavenny, Usk and in the Three Castles district hard on the River Monnow boundary with Herefordshire. Within the wider countryside, English place-names are relatively few, village nucleation rare and many church dedications are to Celtic saints. Farmhouses were extensively rebuilt in stone in the early-modern era with some examples of brick-built structures amidst prosperous lowland farms.

3.2.8 West Monmouthshire Uplands

The western margin of the study area edges the Glamorgan highlands and lies geologically at the intersection between the sandstones of the southern dip-slopes of the Brecon Beacons to the north and the South Wales Valleys. Bands of younger overlying Carboniferous Limestone, Millstone Grit, Pennant Sandstone and Coal Measures are deeply incised by the Ebbw and Sirhowy valleys running north to terminate in high limestone uplands rising to 400m OD: the distinctive windswept limestone pavement, swallow holes, calcareous grassland and hanging beech wood scenery of Mynydd Llangattock and Bloreng, underlain by the extensive cave systems of Dan-yr-ogof.

Until the seventeenth century the uplands were wholly rural in character and utility. Thereafter, industrial enterprise and settlement began to take hold, unlocking the productive capacity of rich mineral deposits. Iron ore and coal extraction became the dominant land-use and economic activity, the valleys heavily industrialised and urbanised from the late-eighteenth century onwards. Large ironworks were established at Ebbw Vale and Blaenavon (where the well-preserved industrial topography of multiple phases of mineral working, processing and transportation is now a World Heritage Site). Coal production peaked in the mid-twentieth century, followed by a prolonged decline up to the mass closures of mines in the 1980s and

90s, long terraces of miners housing shelving the hill-sides now the main visual legacy of this industry (Figure 3.13). The pitted nature of the Mynydd Llangattock plateau was added to by numerous quarries used to extract the limestone used in the ironworks in the adjacent industrial valleys, which became thick with canals, roads, tramways and railways linking nodes of production and settlement with the port of Newport and the wider transport network.



Figure 3.13: Terrace of workers cottages at Abercarn, Ebbw Vale, site of a medieval grange of Llantarnam Abbey (Source: author).

3.2.9 Wye Valley

The lower Wye Valley between Symonds Yat below Monmouth and Chepstow is a twisting, steep-sided gorge for much of its length, filled by a series of great meandering river loops guarded by precipitous limestone cliffs. Within its broader reaches can be found more rounded hills and bluffs, often overlooking smaller tributary valleys. As the river winds its way to the Severn Estuary several rock types are crossed, the eastern cliffs including Dolomite limestone, quartz conglomerates and Carboniferous Limestone rimming the Forest of Dean plateau. This meandering character, unusual for such a steep-sided gorge, reflects the original flow of the river over a broad uplifted flood-plain before sea levels dropped and the water cut deep into the rock whilst retaining its previous morphology.



Figure 3.14: The encroaching small-holdings of common land squatters, St Briavels Common, Wye Valley (Source: author).

Long-famed for a scenic attractiveness that inspired the Reverend William Gilpin to write his far-famed treatise on the Picturesque following a 1770 visit, this stretch of the Wye has attracted many other artists, writers and visitors and is now a designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Extensive stands of ancient broadleaved woodlands of high ecological value adorn the steep valley slopes, with a mainly pastoral farmed landscape of regularly enclosed meadows on the narrow flood-lands. The fertile table-land atop the cliffs presents a mixture of well-wooded terrain, relatively large late-enclosure fields over previously open sheepwalks and arable acres, such as on the Trellech ridge. A patchwork of irregular small paddocks along tributary combs reflects piecemeal waves of squatter settlements attracted by industrial development from the late-sixteen hundreds to the early-nineteenth century. This part of a wider story of landless poor families encroaching the remaining commons, such as at Little Doward and St. Briavels; their cottages and small plots either cemented as permanent homesteads or abandoned to ruin, much of today's settlement pattern reflecting this unplanned and unregulated colonisation (Figure 3.14).

Exploitation of the woods of the lower Wye and neighbouring Dean for charcoal and iron-smelting has Romano-British roots, with other industries such as quarrying, tanning and papermaking providing later economic prosperity, particularly in tributary

valleys such as the Angidy. One of the linear settlements that characterise the narrow valley floor developed alongside the extensive abbey ruins at Tintern. Medieval castle boroughs established at Monmouth and Chepstow remain the main urban centres, the latter's position near the mouth of the Wye saw it develop as a ship-building centre.

This industrial history and a rich archaeological legacy including Iron Age hillforts, Romano-British sites and Norman fortifications reflects the lower Wye's importance as a riverine communication route for both trade, transport and conquest, and a natural and political boundary: the river here the Anglo-Welsh border. Tracking the river between Chepstow and Brockweir, a chain of linear earthworks, historically viewed as part of Offa's Dyke, are now argued to be unrelated, though they are likely a similar territorial marker along this long debatable frontier. The Wye itself, now an apparently tranquil watercourse, was a busy thoroughfare in the past with barges plying their trade between Monmouth and other quaysides along the river and the main regional port of Bristol. Fishing rights also historically important on the salmon-rich river, as well as the nearby Severn shore.

Chapter 4

Methodology and sources

4.1 Methodology: A fusion of landscape archaeology and cultural geography

An interdisciplinary approach has been adopted for this project integrating topographical, archaeological and historical evidence supplemented by analyses of perceptual narratives, including literary and artistic sources, folklore and contemporary opinion: a methodology that seeks to fuse conventional landscape archaeology praxis with practices more common in cultural geographical enquiry. Taken together, this synthesis of fieldwork, historical sources and ethnographic evidence can coalesce under the tag ‘deep topography’, a term borrowed from the metaphysical explorations of psycho-geography outlined in more detail in Chapter 2.³² A reflective review of the usefulness of this intersectional approach is included in Chapter 11.

Examination is multi-scale, the general overview of the whole study area in the last chapter preceding more detailed explorations of the three case studies chosen to ensure a representative reflection of the range of complex landscape histories and geographies. An initial audit of all the monastic houses in the study area has been carried out to select the most appropriate case studies as outlined in Section 4.2.

³² ‘Topography’, originally used to define the work of the early antiquarian writers and descriptive guides to localities and places, is often used reductively to describe the physical morphology of a landscape. The term developed a broader remit when assimilated into landscape history practice through the work of the pioneers of the 1950’s and 1960’s (Hoskins, Beresford *etc.*); this study uses the more expansive definition implied by ‘deep topography’ (Beckett, 2011, 57, 64).

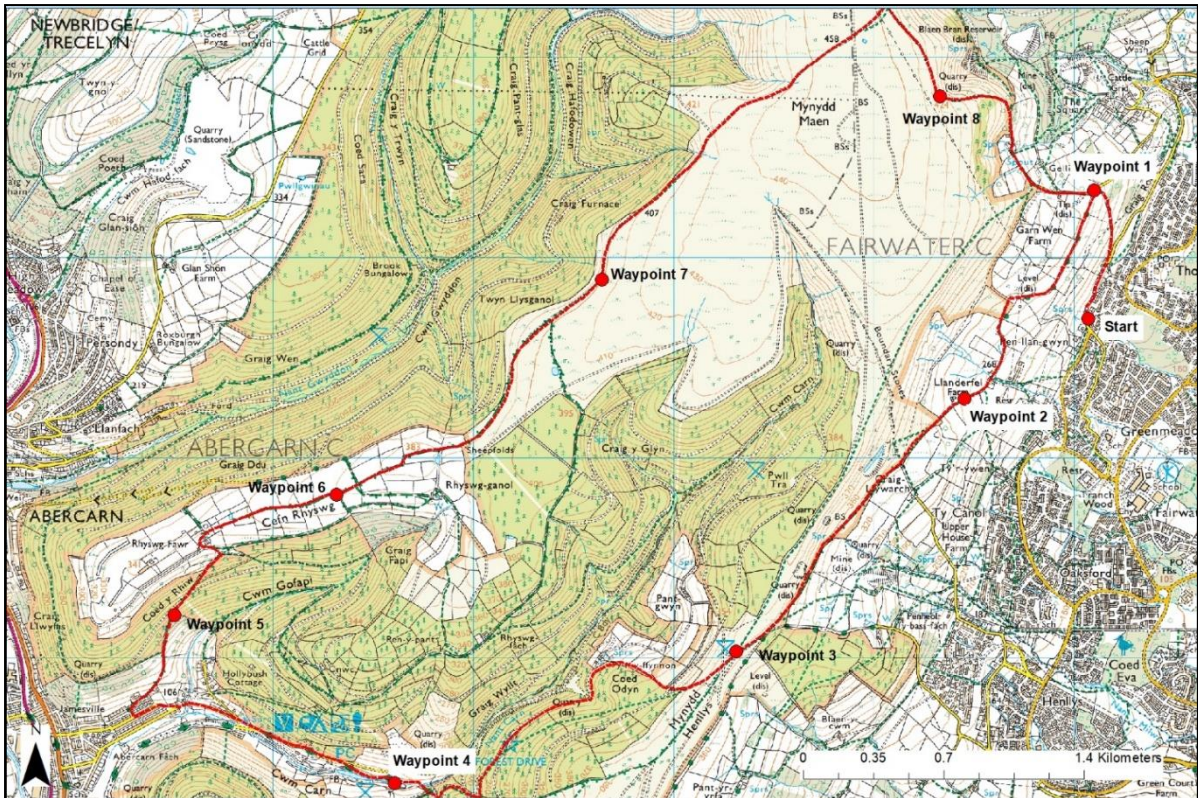


Figure 4.1: Route of the Mynydd Maen landscape walk, Llantarnam case study (map drawn in ArcGIS using Ordnance Survey 1:25000 Scale Colour Raster, Digimap® under licence, <http://digimap.edina.ac.uk/>).

13 experiential landscape walks have been undertaken across the three case study areas in a range of weather and seasonal conditions (example at Figures 4.1; full set of field notes at Appendix 6), supplemented by numerous ‘recces’, rapid surveys of targeted features (recorded in Appendix 7) and follow-up wanderings. The walks have been focussed on specific themes, features and objectives identified through initial desk-based analysis, but with scope to venture ‘off-piste’ when in the field. A key rationale has been to bridge the traditional fieldwork concentration on either macro-level reconnaissance across relatively large areas or smaller-scale targeting of specific sites and features through survey, field walking, test pitting and so on. Moving through the landscape on foot fulfils a complementary and connecting middle ground that can harvest additional evidence and value. Through a mix of observation, photography and note-taking, places that can easily be overlooked, neglected or invisible to the casual eye have been investigated and recorded, to deepen understanding of their landscape history and provide a more nuanced and perceptual view. The output from the walks is a set of detailed commentaries and photographic records of the landscapes encountered physically and perceptually,

with an accompanying map of the route (example at Figure 4.1). As well as informing the main narrative, these field notes, collated at Appendix 6, constitute a supplementary resource of in-depth meta observation (Figure 4.2).

A limited sample of targeted fieldwork has also been conducted on key identified features, focussed on rapid field assessment and measured survey (Appendix 7). More comprehensive archaeological and palaeoenvironmental prospection utilising geophysical techniques and invasive methods such as auger survey, test pitting or larger-scale excavation has been out of scope for this project. Such investigation would be both hard to target to ensure useful and relevant evidence within the relatively extensive case study areas and take away considerable time and resources from the core landscape-scale research methods described here.

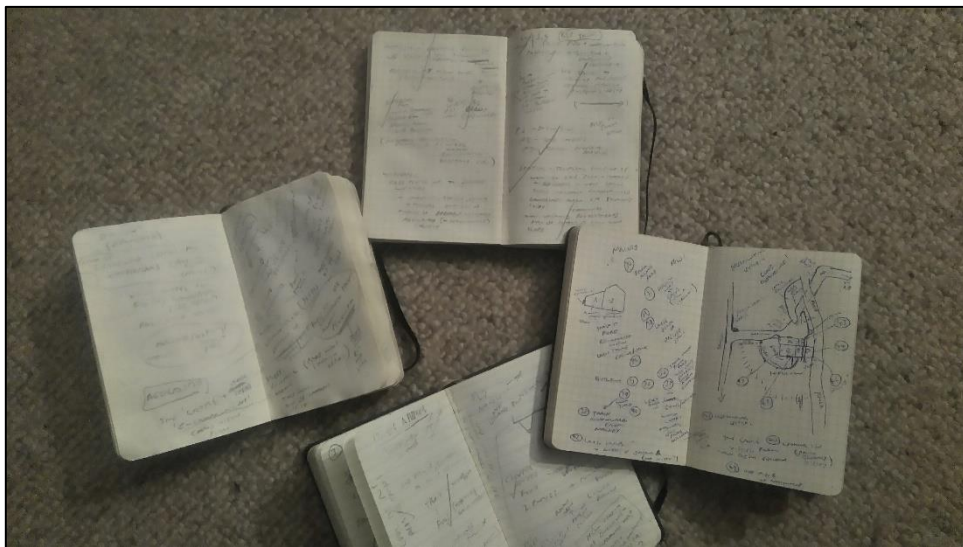


Figure 4.2: A selection of the notebooks from which the landscape walk field notes and commentaries were compiled (Source: author).

The results of the fieldwork and a meta exercise to examine existing data-sets and primary and secondary documentary sources described in Section 4.3 have underpinned the reconstruction of the case study landscapes of the monastic era and, from this baseline, the presentation and analysis of patterns of post-Dissolution continuity and change. Foundational to this research has been to map the case study landscapes using ArcGIS® 10.2.2 Geographical Information System (GIS) software. A comprehensive set of maps are included as figures throughout this

thesis showing, *inter alia*, postulated ‘point in time’ landscapes, land-use and thematic representations, thereby illustrating, illuminating and orientating the main narrative (as listed in Appendix 2, cross-referenced with their thesis figure number).

The maps were produced by integrating meta-data from a combination of evidence sources into GIS data layers constructed of polygons, lines and points drawn onto digital Ordnance Survey base maps and satellite imagery, annotated and formatted using GIS functionality. Detailed information on the base maps and specific data sources for producing each individual map can be found at Appendix 2. In summary, the key data resources utilised were:

- Historic maps (estate, enclosure, tithe, historic Ordnance Survey), modern Ordnance Survey and British Geology Survey mapping.
- Aerial photography, LiDAR and satellite imagery.
- Field observation and survey carried out for this project.
- Archive evidence, such as manorial account and court books.
- Historic environment records.
- Place- and field-name evidence.
- Previous archaeological and historical research outputs.
- Research on the wider medieval landscape.

A catalogue of the monastic landscape features presented in the narratives and maps, expanded with locational and supplementary information, has been collected together in gazetteers for each of the case studies (Appendix 4). So as to analyse and comprehend perceptions of the case study landscapes – of how such places are envisioned and represented – written, artistic, and cartographical landscape descriptions and depictions have also been examined. This activity has been supplemented by public engagement with contemporary perceptions and attitudes through walks and talks organised with local history groups and an online survey developed for this research project and publicised through social media and via organisations such as the Brecon Beacons National Park, Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and local history groups (responses summarised at Appendix 10). Whilst not purporting to be a fully representative statistical sample, the

survey results provide a snapshot of present-day opinion on the landscape impact of the case study monasteries.³³

A considerable corpus of field-names has been compiled from the interrogation of historic mapping and other sources, as referred to across the case study chapters and included in the gazetteers where signifying features of the monastic landscape. A general index of field-name elements encountered (and their meaning) is listed at Appendix 8.

4.2 Case study selection and rationale

4.2.1 The selection process

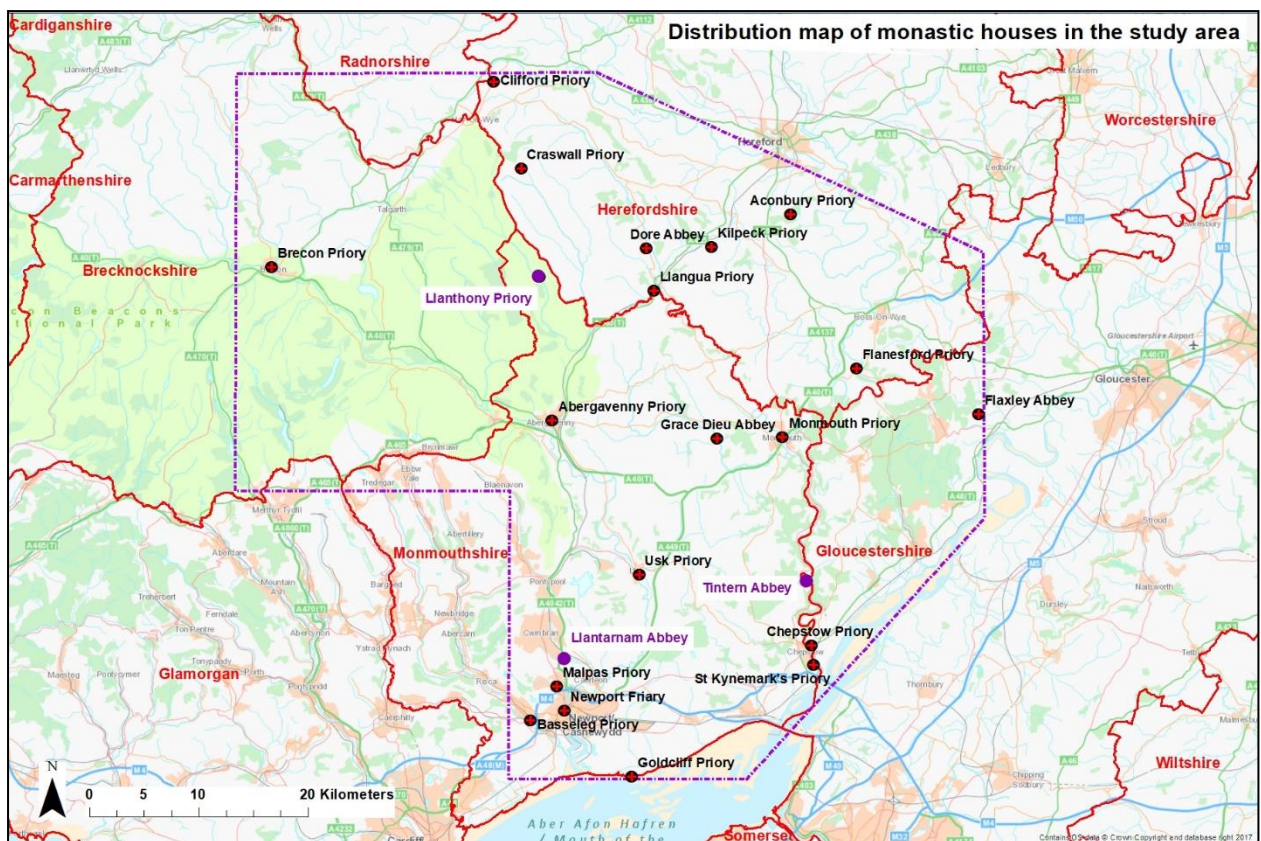


Figure 4.3: Distribution of monastic houses in the study area (Source: map drawn in ArcGIS® using Ordnance Survey 1:25,000 Scale Open Carto 2, 2016 and 1:5000 Historic Counties data layers, downloaded from Digimap® under licence, <http://digimap.edina.ac.uk/>, and Historic Counties Trust <http://county-borders.co.uk/>).

³³ Survey results are not presented for Llantarnam as insufficient responses were received.

There are 22 monastic houses within the study area and their geographical distribution is presented at Figure 4.3.³⁴ Analysis of the estate landscapes of all these monasteries has not been feasible or required within the scope of this project. The full corpus of abbeys and priories within the study area has, therefore, been subjected to an initial desk-based assessment and scoring-based selection process to choose three (and defined extents of their estates) for detailed case study investigation. A scoring process was used to establish a rank order taking account of a range of factors as outlined in Table 4.1 below, with higher weighted total potential scores (out of 5) for criteria judged to be the most important (recorded in the desk-based assessment spreadsheet at Appendix 1). Houses with more limited previous landscape study and therefore richer potential in this area were scored more highly than those which had already been subject to significant research. Preliminary field visit reconnaissance helped to inform this scoring process and refine the case study extents.

Table 4.1: Case study selection scoring criteria

Previous landscape study and recording	
Weighted total potential score: 5	5=limited; 1=significant
Availability of archive and research materials	
Weighted total potential score: 5	5=excellent; 1=poor
Heritage and conservation designations and value	
Weighted total potential score: 3	3=high; 1=low
Post-Dissolution history	
Weighted total potential score: 3	3=rich mix; 1=low mix
Physical evidence of granges, manorial farmsteads and other monastic landscape features	
Weighted total potential score: 5	5=significant; 1=limited
Communication network	
Weighted total potential score: 3	3=extensive; 1=limited
Cultural history	

³⁴ Two small Knights Templars houses (Garway and Ewias Harold in Herefordshire) fall within the study area but have not been included in this analysis.

Table 4.1: Case study selection scoring criteria

Weighted total potential score: 5	5=rich; 1=poor
Current risks of landscape degradation and fragmentation	
Weighted total potential score: 3	3=high; 1=low
Access and ownership considerations	
Weighted total potential score: 3	3=good; 1=poor

Following this initial scoping and selection exercise, the following three case studies have been chosen (presented in rank order), focusing on specific elements of their estate landscapes rather than a broader, generic overview, ensuring a representative mix of geographies with narratives providing strong potential to address the research questions outlined in Chapter 1.³⁵

Llanthony Priory



Figure 4.4: Llanthony Priory, looking southwards down the Vale of Ewyas (Source: author).

Surviving as an extensive Cadw-managed ruin in a remote setting in the Black Mountains, Llanthony was the first Augustinian house founded in Wales, endowed with multiple estates and holdings across south-western Herefordshire and eastern

³⁵ It will be noted that none of the Benedictine houses in the study area have been selected. They did not demonstrate sufficient potential for landscape impact, largely because most income came from rents and tithes with little direct management of estates.

Gwent but hindered by a hostile location on the margin of Anglo-Norman lordship (Figure 4.4). The case study area has been determined as the ‘Hothneyslade’ district encompassing a cluster of coterminous manors in the priory’s immediate locale: a territory forming Llanthony’s *demesne* estates hosting key communications routes into the priory with a varied post-suppression landscape history, including an experiment in nineteenth century landscape design and waves of cultural and heritage responses to the priory and its environs.

Tintern Abbey



Figure 4.5: Tintern’s abbey church and the remains of other claustral buildings, looking west (Source: author).

The second Cistercian house in Wales and amongst the wealthiest, Tintern’s prosperity was based on significant landed possessions ranged across both the English and Welsh sides of the Wye Valley and the low-lying Severn Levels, largely worked on the Cistercian grange farm model (Figure 4.5). The case study area encompasses the ‘Wye Valley’ estates surrounding the river-side abbey precinct: a landscape of intensively-worked grange farms and sheep stations, managed woodlands, fish weirs and trackways and riverine routes used for abbey and estate business. The abbey landscape saw post-Dissolution transformations into, first a proto-industrial environment and then a celebrated heritage and touristic location

focused on the far-famed ruined abbey church, inspiring Romantic era artists and writers.

Llantarnam Abbey



Figure 4.6: The nunnery occupying the nineteenth century mansion of Llantarnam Abbey on the site of the medieval monastery (Source: author).

Founded as a daughter house of Strata Florida Abbey with the support of local Welsh nobility, Llantarnam, its landed wealth straddling upland Welsh territory and the agriculturally richer countryside of the Anglo-Welsh lordships of southern Gwent, was never amongst the first rank of Welsh Cistercian monasteries (Figure 4.6). The abbey did, however, manage large tracts of land for arable and sheep farming, its home manor of Magna Porta and satellite grange farms forming the bounds of the case study area. The jewel in the crown of the abbey's possessions was the notable pilgrim shrine at Penrhys, west over the Glamorgan highlands and destination of the well-followed pilgrimage route from Llantarnam over Mynydd Maen. Post-medieval mansion houses and their parklands replaced the architectural footprint of the abbey, with much of its home manor enveloped by industrial development and the post-war urban project of Cwmbrân new town.

4.3 Sources

4.3.1 Primary sources

In the monastic *scriptorium* ‘landscape and text intertwined’ in the precise recording of land transactions and estate business (Davies 2014,140). Testimony from the field can enjoy a fruitful ‘colloquy with documents’, such historical sources combining with archaeological evidence to add depth and detail to landscape interpretation (Morris 2012, 13). Although cartularies containing comprehensive documentation of the case study houses’ history and business are absent, Llanthony and Tintern, in particular, have bequeathed an important if partial codex of primary documents. The key primary sources for the case study monasteries are summarised in Table 4.2 below, a fuller index in the bibliography.

Table 4.2: Key primary medieval sources for the case studies

Primary medieval source	Reference
Llantarnam	
Hywel ap Iorwerth charter quoted by Adam of Glastonbury, circa 1200	Bradney 1993a
<i>Taxatio Ecclesiastica Anglie et Wallie auctoritate P Nicholai IV</i> , 1291	Ayscough and Caley 1802
<i>Petition to King by Abbot and Convent of Caerleon (Llantarnam)</i> , 1316/7	NA, SC 8/119/5948
<i>Valor Ecclesiasticus temp. Hen VIII auctoritate Regia Institutus</i> , 1535	Caley and Hunter 1814
<i>Court of Augmentations Ministers Accounts: Monastic Possessions of the Dissolved Abbey of Llantarnam</i> , 1536/7	NA, SC 6/HENVIII/2497
Llanthony	
Purported Hugh de Lacy (priory founder), Pain fitz John, and Nigel fitz Erfast charter, before 1127	Dugdale et al 1846
<i>Mirror of the Life of the Venerable Robert de Betun, Bishop of Hereford</i> by William Wycombe, 1137	Atkyns and Smith 1974

Llanthony (continued)

<i>The History of the Foundation and Translation of the Monastery of Llanthony</i> , including	Atkyns and Smith 1974
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • King John charter, 1199 • Edward II charter, 1325 • Edward IV charter to unite Llanthony Prima and Secunda, 1481 	
<i>Gerald of Wales: The Journey Through Wales and the Description of Wales</i> , 1188	Thorpe 1978
<i>Taxatio Ecclesiastica Anglie et Wallie auctoritate P Nicholai IV</i> , 1291	Ayscough and Caley 1802
<i>A Calendar of the Registers of the Priory of Llanthony by Gloucester 1457-1466, 1501-1525</i>	Rhodes 2002
<i>Valor Ecclesiasticus temp. Hen VIII auctoritate Regia Institutus</i> , 1535	Caley and Hunter 1814
<i>Court of Augmentations Minister's Accounts for the Monastery of Lanthony</i> , 1540	Gairdner and Brodie 1896
<i>Court of Augmentations Lease to Nicholas Arnold</i> , 1540	PRO date unknown
<i>List of the Lands of Dissolved Religious Houses (Ministers Accounts Part II - Henry VII and Henry VIII)</i> , 1540	PRO 1964

Tintern

<i>Flores Historiarum</i> , 1305-23	Harrison 2000
<i>Taxatio Ecclesiastica Anglie et Wallie auctoritate P Nicholai IV</i> , 1291	Ayscough and Caley 1802
Edward I charter (<i>Calendar of Charter Rolls Vol. III, 29 Edward I, 1-20 Edward II</i>), 1307, including <i>inseximus</i> confirmation of earlier documents:	PRO 1908
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Richard de Clare charter (Earl of Pembroke, father of Walter de Clare, abbey founder), undated • Four Gilbert de Clare charters (Earl of Pembroke and Marshal of England, nephew of and heir to Walter de Clare, abbey founder), 1240s 	

Tintern (continued)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two Walter Marshal charters (Earl of Pembroke, brother of William Marshal the younger, abbey patron), undated • Richard de Clare charter (Earl of Gloucester and Hertford), undated • Five Roger Bigod charters (abbey patron, Earl of Norfolk and Marshal of England, 1301 • Maud Luvel of Trillek charter, undated 	
<i>Porthcasseg Manor Court Book</i> , 1262-1714 (incomplete)	NLW, Badminton Papers Vol III Monmouthshire, p34-59, 1639-70, 1718, 1728-9, 1757-69
<i>Merthyrgeryn Bailiff's Accounts</i> , 1387-8	NLW, Badminton Papers 1571
<i>Valor Ecclesiasticus temp. Hen VIII auctoritate Regia Institutus</i> , 1535	Caley and Hunter 1814
<i>Abstract of Particulars in the Court of Augmentations of the Rents etc. belonging to the Abbey of Tintern</i> , undated	NLW, Badminton Papers 2445, Badminton Manor Schedule
<i>Transcript of a grant to Henry, Earl of Worcester of the site of the late Abbey of St. Mary of Tinterne in South Wales</i> , 1536/7	NLW, Badminton Papers 2445, Badminton Manor Schedule
<i>List of the Lands of Dissolved Religious Houses (List of Ministers Accounts Part II - Henry VII and Henry VIII)</i> , 1540	PRO 1964

Even by the generally patchy standards of monastic houses in Wales, Llantarnam is poorly served by contemporary sources, which remain, as in William Dugdale's (1846, 728) time, 'most scanty'. In the absence of a cartulary, abbey chronicle,

patron's charters or detailed accounts, government and papal documents provide some shards of light in the historical murk. In contrast, the foundation and early history of Llanthony are exceptionally well-documented with three twelfth century sources providing rich details of the convent's early progression, location and the life of the community there: the *Llanthony History*, probably written by several canons and priors, *Mirror of the Life of the Venerable Robert de Betun, Bishop of Hereford* by William Wycombe and Gerald of Wales' *Journey Through Wales*. A picture of the extent of the properties granted to the priory is provided by a somewhat confusing codex of charters within a large cartulary mainly relating to its daughter house, Llanthony Secunda in Gloucester, reproduced in Dugdale's *Monasticon Anglicanum* (1693) and Atkyns and Smith (1974) – analysed to a degree by Austin (2014), Carpenter (2013) and Rhodes (2002). This, often muddled, inventory reflecting the complicated inter-relationship between the original Llanthony and Secunda. An 1199 King John charter and later proclamations largely endorsed earlier benefactions, the original charters having presumably been lost in the upheavals the priory experienced in the mid-1200s. This period of turmoil and the remote management of Llanthony's affairs after its demotion to become a cell of its erstwhile daughter house in 1481, probably account for the limited survival of other contemporary sources for the priory's hinterland estates, such as the glimpses provided in the Secunda registers (Burton and Ströber 2015, 128; Hodges 2015, 261).

Tintern has no surviving contemporary abbey chronicle or history, although sections of a manuscript called *Flores Historiarum* recounting events at the abbey in the early-thirteen hundreds are probably part of a larger work written in the abbey's *scriptorium* (Harrison 2000, 84-5; Williams 2001, 136). The abbey's foundational charter is also lost and a full cartulary lacking, perhaps destroyed at dissolution or during the English Civil War (Heath 1806, unpaginated; Wood 1908, 8). However, subsequent confirmation charters reiterating endowments to the abbey, consolidated in Edward I's 'confirmation of charters in favour of the monks of Tintern' elicited in 1307, offer much useful information on landed possessions (*Cal Ch Vol III*, 96-100).

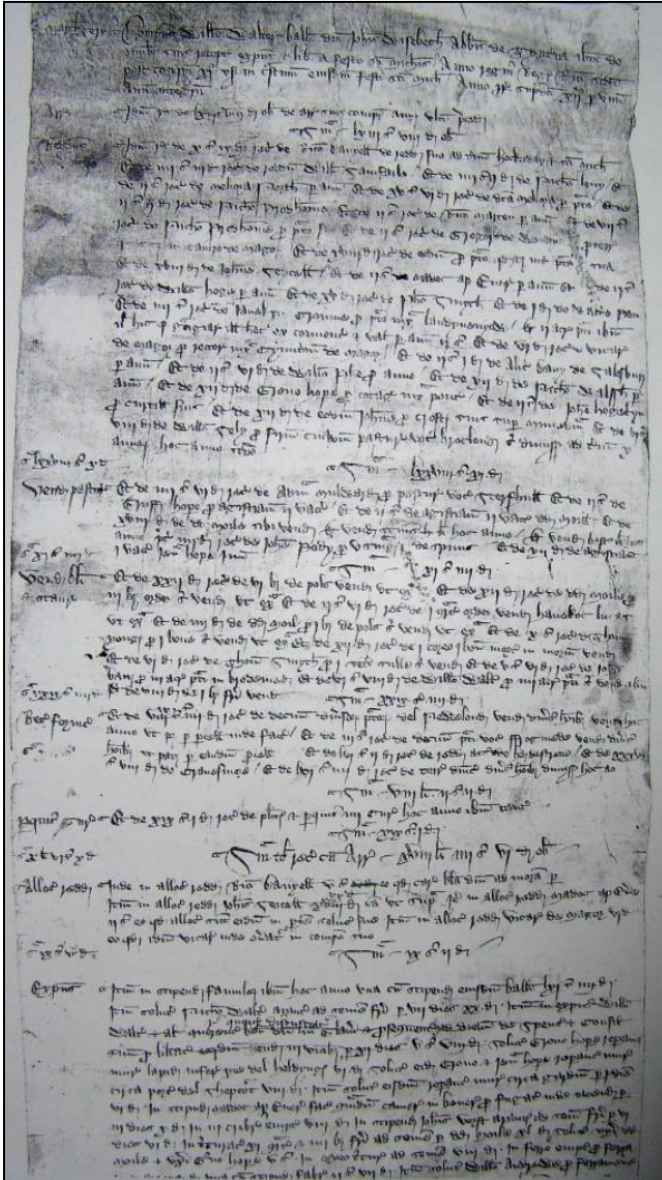


Figure 4.7: Extract from Merthyrgeryn Bailiff Accounts, 1387-8 (NLW, Badminton 1571, photographed with permission).

More generally, transcribed versions of governmental documents from the monastic centuries, notably *Ecclesiastical Taxatio* (1291), *Valor Ecclesiasticus* (1535) and *Calendars of Ancient Deeds, Charter and Patent Rolls*, record surveys and incidental references relating to the case study estates. *Minister's Accounts* compiled by the Henry VIII's Court of Augmentations after the suppression are even more valuable as they contain detailed inventories of holdings and tenancies (Williams 2001, 186). Although this reckoning is a late one, the *Accounts* generally show the maximum extent and

consolidation of monastic lands as there were few changes after the mid-thirteenth century (Waites 2007, 69).

In addition to charters and government surveys of monastic wealth, the most valuable historic sources shedding light on the 'darkness of medieval social and economic history' are several Tintern documents dating from the late-twelve hundreds onwards within the 'Badminton' collection (Millward and Robinson 1978, 128). This large archive, including a rare long – though incomplete – run of court rolls for the home manor of Porthcasseg and several accounts of the Tintern cellarer and bailiff of Merthyrgeryn grange, was accumulated by the Badminton Estate of the Dukes of Beaufort, the title taken by the owners of Tintern and the greater part of its

ex-monastic lands between 1682 and 1901 (Mason 1987, 71; Watt 2000, 58) (Figure 4.7).³⁶

A corpus of other post-medieval administrative, legal and manorial papers held by the National Library of Wales, the National Archives, Gwent Archives and other repositories, as recorded in the bibliography, have been consulted for references to land ownership, topographical and tenurial information. Perhaps the most important of these are written manorial surveys, such as the one carried out for Cwmyoy (Llanthony) in 1612, which include detailed accounts of manorial bounds and references to earlier customs and documents (*NLW*, Cardiff Central Library MS 5.15). Recourse has also been made to antiquarian studies transcribing and reproducing ancient documents or including contemporary descriptions of post medieval and early-modern estates previously held by monastic houses in the study area, such as Heath's *Descriptive Account of Tintern Abbey, Monmouthshire* (1793) and Dugdale's *Monasticon Anglicanum* (1655-1673).

4.3.2 Secondary sources

David Williams' extensive work on the economic history of the Welsh Cistercians provides much detail extracted from primary sources and elsewhere on the agricultural and mercantile activities, granges and other landed possessions and landscapes of Llantarnam and Tintern, particularly *White Monks in Gwent and the Border* (1976) and *The Welsh Cistercians* (2001); his *Atlas of Cistercian Lands in Wales* (1990) a detailed compendium including an inventory and cartographical representations of estates and granges. For Llanthony, this author's (Procter 2007a, 2012) initial assessment of the priory's monastic landscape and David Austin's (2014) work on the historical and landscape context of Llwyn-celyn farmhouse suggested a way forward. An extensive range of other secondary sources have been consulted, ranged across academic disciplines probing landscape from archaeology and heritage management to cultural geography and literary studies, topographical guides and commentaries, memoirs and natural histories. All are listed in the

³⁶ Many of these documents are held by the National Library of Wales and available to the public; however, those held by Gloucestershire Archives and the private Badminton Estate are not currently accessible, though they have been partially analysed by scholars such as David Williams in the past.

bibliography, as are online research resources examined, notably *Monastic Wales* (<http://www.monasticwales.org/>) and the web sites of relevant heritage bodies and designated landscapes.

4.3.3 Archaeological sources

The findings of several archaeology fieldwork projects, primarily in and around the case study precincts, recorded in articles and reports have been reviewed (see Page 1994 for Llantarnam; Evans *et al* 1980, 1984; Gardner 1916 for Llanthony; Courtney 1982, 1989; Fulford *et al* 1992; Parkes and Webster 1974; Webster 2004 for Tintern). More comprehensively, national and local historic environment records and other online repositories such as the Archaeological Data Service and Portable Antiquities Scheme have been consulted to review archaeological data and reports, though the investigation and recording of the components of the wider monastic landscape outside of the precinct has generally been patchy, something that the gazetteers produced during this study aim to redress (Appendix 4). Similarly, the detection and analysis of artefact, palaeoenvironmental and zooarchaeological evidence has been relatively limited within the case study areas, though such data has been referenced where a useful contribution to the landscape narrative can be made.

4.3.4 Cartographical, aerial photography, satellite imagery and other geo-spatial sources

Digital historic and modern Ordnance Survey, British Geological Survey, Land Cover and Land Utilisation Survey mapping, satellite and LiDAR imagery has been downloaded or accessed from the Digimap® online resource under the University of Exeter licence, with additional mapping available as GIS base layers in ArcGIS® 10.2.2. Digital copies, photocopy reproductions and photographs of estate, enclosure, tithe and other historic maps have been sourced from the Gloucestershire Archives, Gwent Archives, National Library of Wales, National Archives, Geoff Gwatkin Maps and other sources (example at Figure 4.8 and full listing in the bibliography). Historic county boundary data has been accessed from the Historic Counties Trust website. Natural Resources Wales' LiDAR open-access imagery has

also been utilised, aerial photography obtained from the Cambridge University Collection of Aerial Photography, RCAHM (Wales) and English Heritage’s online archive.



Figure 4.8: A Plan of Gellylas: in the Parish of Lanvihangel-Lantarnam, County of Monmouth by Meredith Jones, 1751 (Source: NLW, MS. MAPS VOLS. Lockwood Vol. 1 094/9/2, digital copy purchased).

4.3.5 Literary and art media sources

Representations of the case study monasteries and landscapes across a wide spectrum of historic and contemporary fiction, folklore, poetry and artistic media have been collated and analysed, useful in particular to build up a picture of perceptions over time. A 2014 exhibition entitled *Sites of Inspiration: Tintern Abbey and Llanthony Priory* harvested a particularly rich lode. Appendix 9 holds a repository of literary and art media items for each case study.

Chapter 5

Case study 1: Llanthony Priory - the medieval monastic landscape

5.1 Introduction



Figure 5.1: Llanthony Priory in its immediate landscape setting in the Vale of Ewyas (Source: author).

The extensive and impressively located ruins of the Augustinian priory of Llanthony occupy a secluded position on a shelf of red glacial clay above the River Honddu amidst the steep-sided Vale of Ewyas, one of the parallel catchments that incise the Black Mountains *massif* (Figure 5.1 and location map at Figure 5.2). This case study circuits a compact block of manors in the vale and the immediate vicinity of the priory: the core estate of Cwmyoy (including the priory's *demesne* and precinct) and the adjacent sub-manors of Oldcastle, Redcastle and Stanton (Figure 5.3). This lordship took the medieval name of Hothneyslade or Hondyslade (a vernacular derivative of 'Honddu' and either *lled*, Welsh for 'wide' or *slade*, Old English for 'wide marsh').



Figure 5.2: Location of Llanthony Priory and the Hothneyslade lordship case study area (Source: map drawn in ArcGIS® using Ordnance Survey Open Carto 2 and 1:5000 Historic Counties data layers, downloaded from Digimap® under licence, <http://digimap.edina.ac.uk/>, and Historic Counties Trust, <http://county-borders.co.uk/>).

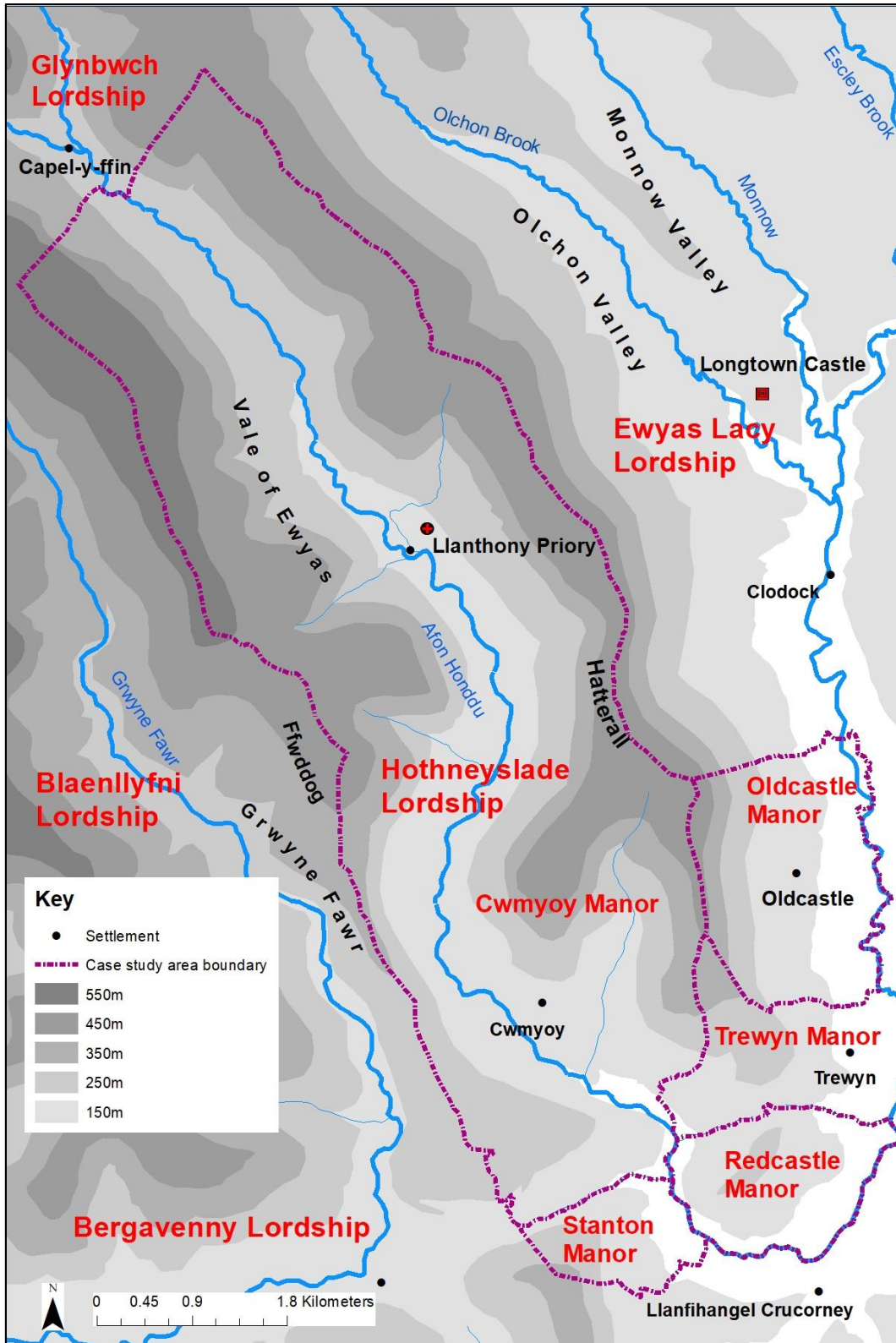


Figure 5.3: Hothneyslade in its medieval landscape context: purple dotted line indicates the boundaries of the Hothneyslade lordship. Anglo-Norman lordships are indicated in red lettering (Source: map drawn in ArcGIS® using Ordnance Survey 1:25,000 Scale Colour Raster data layer, downloaded from Digimap® under licence, <http://digimap.edina.ac.uk/>).

In this chapter, an overview of the monastery's history up to the Dissolution is followed by an introduction to the geographical spread of its estates and holdings in England, Ireland and Wales. The core narrative describes the unfolding of the Hothneyslade lordship during the four centuries of the priory's management of this landscape: an analysis informed by landscape walks and other fieldwork across the case study area and desk-based sources. This reconstruction is used to provide a baseline for the subsequent examination of post-Dissolution history in Chapter 6. Landscape components including farmsteads, field systems, upland grazing and so forth are examined, with a spotlight on the network of communications routes to and from the priory, its properties and the wider world. Finally, perceptions from contemporary commentaries on the priory and its monastic landscape are discussed. This structure is repeated for the further case studies in chapters 7 and 9.

This analysis is supplemented by:

- GIS mapping of the Hothneyslade estates' medieval landscape context (Figure 5.3), a 'point in time' indicative map of the landscape *circa* 1300 (Figure 5.16) and other thematic maps (mapping methodology and sources are detailed in Chapter 4 and Appendix 2);
- A gazetteer of medieval and monastic landscape features developed during the case study research, with rapid field survey notes for key examples (Appendices 4 and 7);
- Detailed field notes of the landscape walks which helped to inform the analysis presented here (Appendix 6 and composite map of routes at Figure 5.4).



Figure 5.4: Composite map of the landscape walk routes in the Llanthony Prioory case study (Source: map drawn in ArcGIS® using ArcGIS World Imagery data layer).

5.2 Monastic history of the priory



Figure 5.5: The west front of Llanthony Priory church: ‘the great grey pile of the abbey with its two west towers and its long vista of Gothic arches’ (Bradley 1911, 94) (Source: author).

The foundation sources for Llanthony Priory (Figure 5.5) describe how William de Lacy, an Anglo-Norman knight, came across a ruin, said to be Saint David’s sixth century hermitage whilst out hunting in the Vale of Ewyas *circa* 1105 and determined to commence a hermitic life there (Atkyns 1974, 263-4).³⁷ He was soon joined by Ernisius, chaplain to Queen Matilda, and they began to recruit followers, the new community receiving grants of land from his kinsman, the lord of Ewyas Lacy, Hugh de Lacy. Ewyas Lacy lordship, administered from a castle at the borough of Longtown, had been carved out of the ancient Welsh commote of Ewias by one of William the Conqueror’s nobles, Walter de Lacy, who, from his stronghold near Ludlow in Shropshire, accumulated large tracts of Welsh March territory in the late-eleventh century (Coplestone-Crow 1989, 57; Veach 2014, 21).

³⁷ Evans *et al* (1984, 54) have speculated that the hermitage chapel could have been on the site of what became St. David’s church in the priory precinct (thought to originally be the monastery’s infirmary), or at other sites in the valley at Henllan or Capel-y-ffin.

Gerald of Wales (Thorpe 1978, 97) suggested that the new foundation took on an existing name for its situation, Nanthotheni ('the Honddu or Hotheni stream'), which became Llandewi Nanthotheni in memory of the saint's chapel, subsequently transmuted into Llanthony by the non-Welsh speaking canons. In about 1108, William and Ernisius' church was consecrated by the bishops of Llandaff and Hereford, dedicated to St. John the Baptist. Initially unaffiliated to a monastic order, by 1118 the church became an Augustinian convent, with Ernisius its first prior and Austin canons recruited from Holy Trinity Aldgate, Colchester and Merton (Lovegrove 1943, 219). With a large body of 40 brethren and further generous endowments from its main patron, Hugh de Lacy, as well as his successor Payn fitz John, Miles, Constable of Hereford, and Henry I and Queen Maud, the new foundation initially thrived (Robinson 1980, 164; Stöber 2008, 14).

The medieval topography of the Vale of Ewyas was well-suited for a rural monastery: an isolated hill-country valley providing plentiful water, timber and land for cultivation (Gilchrist 1999, 238). Monastic houses such as Llanthony in the hermetic tradition of Saint Augustine were often founded in settings according to classical ideas of wilderness: perceived as remote and associated with an ancient hermitage (Aston 2007, 86; Johnson 2007a, 8; Robinson 1980, 12). In many ways, this up-country setting, one of the highest altitude monastic houses in Britain, was a more characteristically Cistercian location and a slightly later foundation date may well have seen the monastery bound to that order (Cowley 1977, 66; Robinson 1980, 15; Rowley 2001, 122; Williams 1975, 65-8). The siting of a monastery here also formed part of the new Norman elite's wider geo-political strategy. As James Bond (2004, 26) has observed, the Marcher barons used the plantation of English monks and their religious houses as a means of colonising and controlling Welsh territory.

Though monastic houses in border locations often benefited from baronial patronage and favour, the volatility and instability such areas experienced often militated against their growth (Bond 2004, 26; Williams 2008, 198-9). Following those early thriving years, Llanthony began to experience one of the changes in fortunes that were to characterise its chequered history as the canons struggled to establish themselves in this relatively hostile location, a symbol of the feudal structure of conquest (Davies 1953, 87; Rees 1972, 32). As David Austin (2014, 4, 17) has

suggested, the priory seems to have been targeted as ‘a very English and alien Marcher presence’ during periods of Welsh resurgence and uprising. Canons were generally recruited from Anglo-Norman or English border families rather than the indigenous Welsh populace, whom they seemed to view with antipathy (Cowley 1977, 43-4; Williams 2008, 194). The anonymous twelfth century history of the house described the local populace as ‘savage, without any religion, vagabonds, and delighted in stealth’ (Atkyns 1974, 263).

Around 1135, the community was forced to seek refuge at the Bishop’s Palace in Hereford for two years during the Welsh uprising against Anglo-Norman authority following the death of Henry I. As the instability of the ‘Anarchy’ during Stephen’s reign persisted they were unable to return to the priory and in 1137 an alternative site was provided at Hyde, just outside Gloucester, by Milo fitz Walter, Earl of Hereford. This hastily constructed new establishment, Llanthony by Gloucester (later Llanthony Secunda) (Figure 5.6), became a cell of the Welsh house (now Llanthony in Wales or Llanthony Prima) and was gifted its own endowments by the earl and others. Although originally established as a temporary arrangement, the daughter house soon began to drain both the revenues and contents of Llanthony Prima; the main body of canons reluctant to leave their new sanctuary and return to the frontier wildness of the mother convent to ‘sing to the wolves’ (*ibid.*, 268; Fancourt undated, 3; Mason 1975, 49). The traditions of the old site persisted, however, and for the next few decades a small number of canons remained in Wales, whilst the prior – and most of the community – largely administered affairs from the safer locale of Secunda (Cowley 1977, 31; Craster 1963, 7). The secular patronage of the de Lacy family had also lapsed now due to a succession dispute following Hugh’s death without male heir, compounded by the killing of his successor as lord of Ewyas, Payn fitz John, in 1137.



Figure 5.6: One of the few surviving monastic buildings at the site of Llanthony Secunda, Gloucester (Source: author).

The Welsh house experienced a revival in its fortunes from the 1170s, with the brethren returning under prior Clement (leaving a body of canons stationed at Secunda), though many preferred to spend time in the more comfortable environs at Gloucester and Prima continued to be despoiled of its contents. The mother house also received renewed endowments and patronage from a revived de Lacy family, particularly in Ireland where (the second) Hugh de Lacy had been granted the Lordship of Meath. These Irish revenues enabled a great rebuilding of the church and conventual structures in three phases between *circa* 1180 and 1230 (Hogan 2008, 24; Lovegrove 1943, 226-7). Progress was halted by Hugh's death in 1186, but charters confirming the original grants and endowments to Llanthony and the gifts and tithes in Ireland facilitated a resumption; the substantial revenues from Duleek church specifically utilised to pay for the construction (Hogan 2008, 256). It is the impressive precinct buildings of this period which largely form the extensive remains seen today (Craster 1963, 8; Newman 2002, 339) (Figure 5.7). The priory also garnered a reputation for attracting men of ability and learning despite its remoteness, experiencing a flowering of scholarly works and members of its community going on to become bishops (Cowley 1977, 150-3).



Figure 5.7: The remains of the central tower of the Llanthony church, looking north-east: part of the building programme of the late-twelfth and early-thirteenth century (Source: author).

The uneasy and entangled relationship between mother and daughter house remained problematic and in 1205 a settlement was agreed by which they became independent of each other. The Welsh house recovered its revenues, taking possession of those holdings in Herefordshire, Shropshire and Wales. Jointly granted properties, including those in Ireland, were divided up: a complex process only completed in 1217 (*ibid.*, 32; Hogan 2008, 26, 93). However, a grievous blow to Llanthony's continuing prosperity came with the death of Hugh's son, Walter in 1241, ending the line of the de Lacy family and their prominent support. A golden era of growth and prosperity was foreshortened. Wider socio-political instability across the Welsh Marches during the thirteenth century also impacted. The priory was the object of frequent raids by and disputes with neighbouring lords and the native populace, often involving protracted litigation. Taken into royal custody in 1276 due to its financial problems, an injunction to reform the priory was issued by Archbishop Peckham of Canterbury in 1284 (PRO 1901, 232; Cowley 1977, 101). Nevertheless, as the century waned, the priory's revenues were estimated at £157, a still

substantial income which (allowing for additional Irish receipts) placed Llanthony in the higher rank of Augustinian wealth (Ayscough and Caley 1802, 170; Robinson 1980, 112, 120; St John Brooks 1953, 146). Of Welsh monasteries, only Llanthony and Goldcliff could compare financially with the large Cistercian houses as the fourteenth century dawned (Cowley 1977, 96).

A new charter issued by Edward II and recorded in 1325 re-confirmed the grants of Walter de Lacy, including the lands of the Vale of Ewyas and all lay and church possessions in Ewyas Lacy, evidence of resurgence following a time during which privileges established in 1205 had been little exercised (*Edward II Charter*, 273-4; Craster 1963, 8). One outcome was a further phase of building work with alterations made to the church and a new gatehouse constructed. Disputes with the local community continued, however, and in 1348 the priory was again taken into royal custody due to its parlous financial state (PRO 1916a, 217). Various recorded incidents demonstrate a pattern of lax discipline, disorder and poor leadership, with the priory's reputation at a low ebb. Meanwhile, ongoing conflict, famine and instability in Ireland reduced the valuable income from the priory's estates there (Hogan 2008, 180). Though the house remained relatively solvent until the end of the century, it was, in common with many Welsh monasteries of the time, a far from thriving institution, with only seven registered canons in the Poll Tax return of 1381, though there had been 13 as recently as 1377 (Cowley 1977, 45; Lovegrove 1947, 76; NA, E 179/21/8).

Any hope of renewed stability and prosperity was extinguished by the Glyndŵr rebellion of the 1400s, sowing the seeds of what was to prove to be terminal decline. Prior John Welyngton was accused of siding with the rebels and some priory lands were seized by the Crown with damage inflicted by royal troops, though later returned and compensation paid when the prior declared loyalty to the king (Burton and Ströber 2015, 133). In around 1405 the priory was sacked by Glyndŵr's forces and most of the canons retreated to the safe-haven of Gloucester (PRO 1916b, 53). Little is known of the priory's fortunes for much of the rest of the century, probably an indication of its relative poverty and continuing decline; the legacy of the Glyndŵr years still hanging heavily. In 1448 the prior was excused from collecting taxes as

Llanthony's possessions were so badly affected by ongoing conflict in Wales (Craster 1963, 11; Williams 2008, 199).

A final chapter in the relationship between the two Llanthonys was to commence before the century was out, with the Gloucester house, which had long overtaken its Welsh counterpart in wealth, taking on the senior role. In recognition of its diminished status and mismanagement by successive priors, Edward IV granted Llanthony Prima as a cell to Secunda (under prior Deane) in a charter of 1481, which noted that the Welsh priory had been 'wasted, destroyed and ruined', with patronage of the priory, all its possessions and lands transferred to Gloucester (*Edward IV Charter*, 275-6; Lovegrove 1943, 216; Rhodes 1989, 28; 2002, xv). David Williams (2008, 208) has speculated that this union may have been as much fired by the desire of the Secunda community for additional estates and income as poor governance by the Welsh house. A sub-prior and four canons remained in Wales and the institution limped on, retaining some degree of residual independence in much-reduced circumstances. With annual income of only £112 – at the lower end of Augustinian wealth and in contrast to the Gloucester house's lofty £648 – Llanthony was dissolved in the first wave of the suppression of the monasteries in 1538 (Caley and Hunter 1814, 431; Lovegrove 1943, 228; Robinson 1980, 129).

5.3 An overview of Llanthony's estates and holdings

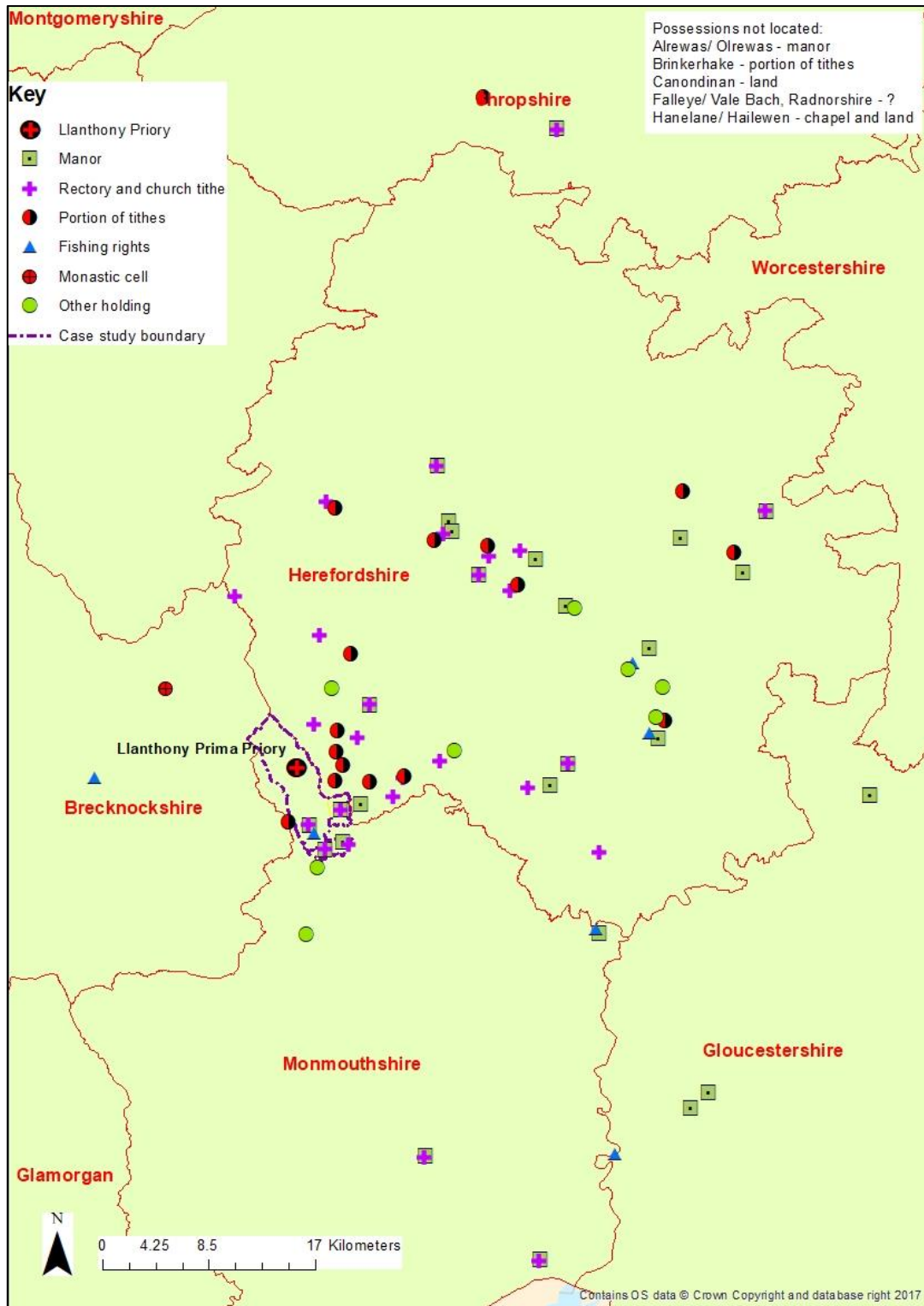


Figure 5.8: Distribution of Llanthony Priory estates and other holdings (Source: map drawn in ArcGIS® using Ordnance Survey 1:25000 Scale Colour Raster and 1:5000 Historic Counties data layers, downloaded from Digimap® under licence, <http://digimap.edina.ac.uk/>, and Historic Counties Trust, <http://county-borders.co.uk/>).

A comprehensive gazetteer of all the priory's recorded possessions in England and Wales can be found at Appendix 4 and Figure 5.8 maps their distribution. An overview of the charters and other contemporary sources that shed light on the composition of the priory's portfolio is provided in Chapter 4.

The immediate Vale of Ewyas hinterland first endowed to the fledgling monastic community from Hugh de Lacy would become the home manor of Cwmyoy, the core of the Hothneyslade estate (Lovegrove 1947, 64). Charters in the Llanthony *Secunda cartulery* confirm the foundational gifts from de Lacy and other benefactors, including the bequeathment of Oldcastle manor, churches in the de Lacy *demesne* manors at Clodock (Herefordshire), Weobley (Herefordshire) and Stanton Lacy (Shropshire) and a series of other manors, churches and tithes in Herefordshire (Carpenter 2013, 8, 16-18; Dugdale *et al* 1846, 569-70; Veach 2014, 23).

The founders were said to have declined offers of 'large possessions, fruitful farms' in the neighbouring Bergavenny lordship and further 'large farms' from de Lacy – desirous to preserve their eremitical life and be true to the wild dwelling of Saint John (Atkyns 1974, 265-6; Roberts 1847, 212). Land immediately to the south of the core estate in Bergavenny was, though, gifted by the powerful lord here, Brian fitz Count, including 'Banarau' (probably Bryn-arw, the native name for the land which would become Stanton manor) and 'Rethresanc' (later Redcastle) (Carpenter 2013, 10, 17; Dugdale *et al* 1846, 569-70). King John's charter confirming the original grants recorded that Ranulph de Baskerville of Eardisley east of Hay-on-Wye was another major donor of lands and tithes in Herefordshire including Eardisley, Foxley and Yazor (*King John Charter*, 272-3). These endowments demonstrate that the wider provincial Anglo-Norman elite were keen to be associated with the priory and continued into the thirteenth century, for instance Hugh de Tuberville's granting of the fishery at Llangorse and John fitz Reginald (Lord Herbert) giving the priory a right of free pasture for Llanthony's horses throughout his Welsh lands (Dugdale *et al* 1846, 569-70; Roberts 1847, 232).

Such strategic acquisition and consolidation of blocks of land to create an interlinked pattern of estates, through both piecemeal and planned grants from multiple donors, was defined by the building up of a geographically and economically balanced monastic estate portfolio (Coppack 2003, 109; Moorhouse 1989, 32, 51). As Evans

et al (1980, 5) proclaimed, Llanthony's 'status as one of the major religious houses in the Principality was maintained by the wealth of the estates with which it was endowed.' Later confirmation charters illustrate a determination to put income and the estate portfolio on a stable footing for the long-term future, facilitating the ambitious building programme of the priory's heyday (Austin 2014, 24; Carpenter 2013, 6).



Figure 5.9: The heartlands of Ewyas Lacy, looking east towards Longtown from the Hatterall ridge (Source: author).

Most of Llanthony's temporal estates, spiritualities, tithes and other holdings were in what is now Herefordshire, a patchwork astride the southern half of the county. Unsurprisingly, a cluster can be observed in Ewyas Lacy (Figure 5.9), one of the heartlands of the priory's main benefactors, strung along the mixed champion and pastoral lands of the catchments of the Dore, Monnow and their tributaries, mostly within 15 kilometres of the priory. Nina Wedell (2009b) notes that tithe receipts from Ewyas Lacy in 1839 still utilised headings apparently derived from the priory's inventory. Some correspond to parish names, whilst others are more parochial nomenclature referring to specific tithe barns, such as Bury Barn. Wedell (*ibid.*) suggests that this demonstrates 'an ancient geographical division where such barns were collecting points for tithes in kind', remaining current long after the tithes were commuted to cash. A further concentration was found 20 to 40 kilometres distant,

beyond the lands of the Cistercian Dore Abbey, forming a broad arc around Hereford in the low-lying verdant agricultural land of the Wye Valley as the river meanders southwards. Just over the northern county boundary into Shropshire was the outlier manor of Stanton Lacy and tithes from nearby Stokesay.

Outside of the Hothneyslade core, properties further west into Wales were relatively few, reflecting the geography of the de Lacy estates and the eastward-facing Anglo-Norman cultural inclinations of the priory community. To the south in Monmouthshire, a tenement was maintained in the town of Abergavenny and a manor and church held at Caldicot on the Gwent Levels and Llantrisant in the Usk valley (both transferred to Llanthony Secunda after 1205). An important resource was the fishing rights on Llangorse Lake, rich in bream, trout, eels and more, westward over the Black Mountains in Brecknockshire, with a short-lived cell established at nearby Llanellieu (Thorpe 1978, 93). Fisheries were also maintained at Hadnock and Tidenham in the lower Wye valley and, crossing into the English Forest of Dean, the priory had lordship at Alvington and Ayleburton, the manor of Okle Clifford a further Gloucestershire outlier (these landholdings also came under Secunda's control after 1205).

Comprehensive cartularies exist for the rich Irish possessions of both Llanthony houses, a function of the Anglo-Norman colonisation of Ireland, with the Prima properties controlled from a cell at Colpe, County Meath (Hogan 2008, 20). The Prima collection, which provides a level of detail on values, cultivation, tenantry and topography unavailable for the priory's English and Welsh estates, was put together in 1408 partly to defend against counter claims from the more powerful Secunda house (*ibid.*, 34, 212-3). The Irish estates, whose primary purpose was to provide money and goods for the mother house, were largely in rich, undulating lowlands, ideal for mixed farming and arable cultivation in the hinterland of Dublin from where produce could easily be transported for sale or sent to Wales via the Austin canons quayside at the emerging port of Drogheda (*ibid.*, 22, 103-4). Llanthony continued to draw income from its estates in Ireland even through its declining years and managing this process would have been one of the main administrative responsibilities of the prior (Craster 1963, 9).

The *Taxatio Ecclesiastica* tax survey of 1291, though excluding Irish income, provides a useful indicator of the revenue and management of Llanthony's estates and holdings (Ayscough and Caley 1802, 170). For instance, showing that the priory's Herefordshire manors held a substantial amount of arable *demesne* (437ha) and yearling sheep. David Robinson (1980, 28, 275) has compared the agricultural systems adopted by Augustinian monasteries based in remote areas such as Llanthony to the self-sufficient Cistercian model, employing large numbers of lay brethren and rejecting feudal sources of wealth (Maylan 2000, 25); an assertion disputed by David Austin (2014, 27) in the context of Llanthony. Certainly, maintaining and developing the priory estates would have required a ready supply of labour, though a close parallel with the economy of secular feudal estates is most likely (Moorhouse 1989, 32). In contrast to the directly managed granges of Cistercian houses, Llanthony's estates were fully manorialised units using the labour services of tenants under the control of a steward, operating a manorial court and drawing rent income (Ayscough and Caley 1802, 170; Cowley 1977, 66-7, 89, 273; Procter 2012, 100; Rhodes 2002, xxvii-xxviii). Although such income was therefore higher than the neighbouring Cistercians of Dore and Tintern, it was modest when compared to wealthier Benedictine establishments such as Goldcliff on the Monmouthshire coast (Cowley 1977, 240-1).

With less strict rules than either the Cistercians or Benedictines and more freedom to live and move amongst the lay community, Augustinian canons served parish churches where the rectory and tithes were appropriated, either directly or through a priory-appointed rector (McCormack 2010, 20; Williams 2008, 202). Consequently, such spiritualities were a larger source of guaranteed income than for other orders (Robinson 1980, 181, 273). 28 churches and chapels and 21 portions of tithes, though not all concurrent throughout the priory's history, explain why Llanthony's proportion of wealth from such sources was the highest in Wales in 1291, rectorial tithes in Ireland providing further income excluded from the *Taxatio* survey (Ayscough and Caley 1802, 170; Cowley 1977, 68). For example, the priory provided Clodock church in the Monnow valley with a parish priest, paid for from tithe revenue, who may initially have journeyed over from Llanthony to carry out this role but probably eventually resided near the church (Llewelyn 1919, 86). Raymond Williams (1980b, 242) provides a fictional picture of the busy nature of this role at

Clodock, where responsibility for supervising the mill, weir and hunting, for counting tenants' flocks and crops indicate the rector had more than purely religious duties.

The priory was still actively managing its temporal estates into the fourteenth century and the canons were prepared to take direct action to protect their possessions where necessary. For instance, in 1362 the prior and a band of followers destroyed a disputed weir at their Holme Lacy (Herefordshire) fishery (Craster 1963, 9-10; Fancourt undated, 4-5). As the century progressed and wage costs increased whilst land values fell, the Augustinians, in common with their monastic and secular neighbours, pursued a policy of selling or renting out much of the land outside of their *demesne* home farms and core income-generating estates (Cowley 1977, 263; Evans *et al* 1984, 54; Robinson 1980, 53). Where land was tenanted, feudal labour service was replaced by cash payments and revised tenurial arrangements (Davies 2014, 138; Watt 2000, 22). Llanthony was no exception, particularly given the other local pressures it faced, and many of its manors outside the core hinterland estates were farmed out to tenants, under the overall supervision of the cellarer and lay steward (Rhodes 2002, xxvii). Additionally, rectories and associated tithes were also often farmed out or impropriated with vicars from outside the convent appointed.

Nevertheless, at Dissolution, and despite its reduced circumstances, the inventories confirming the priory's properties to be sold, demonstrate that its temporal and spiritual resources were still considerable, including the core Hothneyslade lordship and other manors, 14 rectories and tithes of corn and grain from 13 other manors (NLW, Baker-Gabb Family Papers/Supplementary Deeds and documents 1616; NLW, Baker-Gabb Family Papers/GB 0210 BAKERGABB) (Figure 5.10).

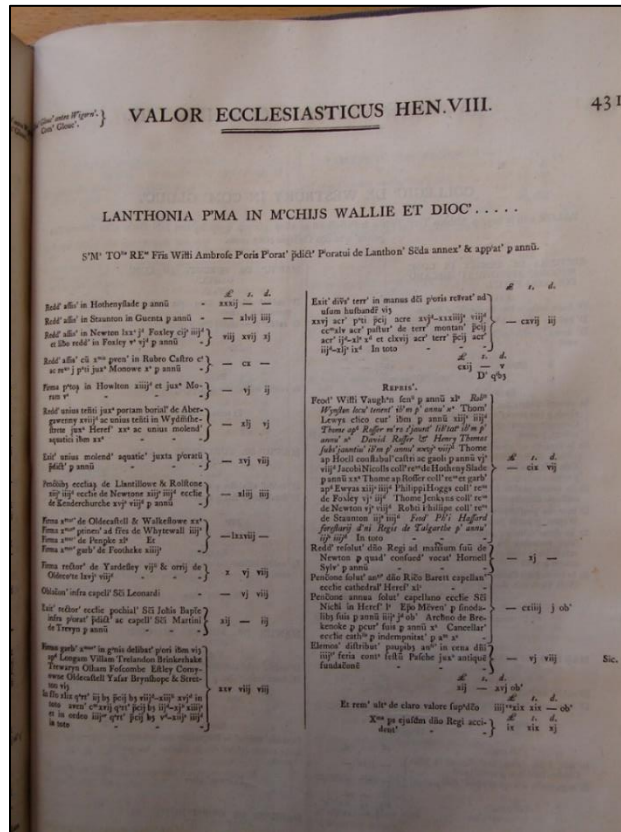


Figure 5.10: Extract from the Valor Ecclesiasticus survey of 1535 confirming the value of Llanthony Prima's possessions (Source: University of Bristol Special Collection, photographed with permission).

5.4 An introduction to the Hothneyslade lordship

Medieval Hothneyslade (mapped at Figure 5.3), with its concentration of English-named sub-manors (Oldcastle, Redcastle and Stanton), was administratively an Anglo-Norman manorial enclave: the priory's central temporal estate or 'Englishry' surrounded by highland 'Welshries' to the north and west³⁸ and the larger and powerful lordships of Bergavenny and Ewyas Lacy to the south and east (Davies 1973, 483). A binary Englishry-Welshry categorisation, however, conceals a more nuanced hybrid picture. Although subject to feudal English manorial practice, Hothneyslade's tenantry were overwhelmingly Welsh in culture and descent, their 'social memory' of earlier ancestral custom may have resurfaced to a degree in the

³⁸ For instance, in Glenhothney, a Welshry of the lordship of Hay which occupied the upper part of the Vale of Ewyas, a 1340 document shows how the land was worked and managed following Welsh legal custom (Morgan 1995, 16).

distinct late-medieval copyhold arrangements that emerged here discussed further below (Austin 2014, 6).

Archaic territorial boundaries, embodying what Raymond Williams (1990b 98) has described as the ‘tangled yet surprisingly persistent divisions of this land’ characterise the Hothneyslade locality. The line demarcating the northern limit of the Cwmyoy manor (and later Monmouthshire) in the upper Vale of Ewyas was anciently the border between the Ewias and Talgarth commotes, the kingdoms of Gwent and Brycheiniog, the Ewyas and Hay Norman lordships and a disputed diocesan boundary between Llandaff and St. David’s (Davies 1953, 95-6; *ibid.*, 98).

The gifting of Hothneyslade to the priory cleaved the old territory of Ewias in two (excepting the Ewyas Lacy sub-manors of Ffwddog and Bwlch Trewyn, which remained outside the priory’s purview), a dividing line later delineating Herefordshire from Monmouthshire and so England from Wales at the Acts of Union of the 1540s: the Anglo-Welsh border running along the Hatterall watershed a direct legacy of the original land grant to Llanthony. The unification of Ewyas Lacy territory with Bergavenny lordship, land which would become the priory’s Redcastle and Stanton manors also breached a long-standing and persistent regional land division.

5.4.1 Cwmyoy manor

The original grant of Cwmyoy confirmed in the 1199 King John charter encompassed manorial lands ‘between the mountains of Irisebroke and Ansmere’, St. Martin’s church and Honddu fish weirs (Dugdale *et al* 1846, 569-70). ‘Ansmere’ has not been located but ‘Irisbroke’ is probably Nantygwyddel (‘Irish brook’), a stream and farmstead north of Llanthony. Edward II’s charter of 1325, renewing Walter de Lacy’s bequest, confirmed the extent of the lands of the old gift to the priory in the Vale of Ewyas, i.e. Cwmyoy, more expansively:

‘Walter de Lacy, son of Hugh de Lacy, gave to St. Mary and the church of St. John the Baptist of Llanthony Prima and the canons there...all the valley in which the said church is situated to wit on the side of Kevencassec and Askaresweye and along the Ruggesweye up to Autefyn and on the side of

Haterel from the land of Seisel son of Gilbert by the Ruggewey to the bounds of Talgarth' (PRO 1908, 475).³⁹

The charter also reconfirmed that the priory, unusually, held full jurisdiction in Hothneyslade in areas of law such as theft, violence against the person and hunting rights that were normally subject to Crown or Common Law (Robinson 2008, 311). The prior had the power to administer justice through holding courts and erect gallows (PRO 1908, 475; *Edward II Charter*, 274; Lovegrove 1943, 216). David Austin (2014, 17) has commented that these wide legal powers mirror Forest Law and reflect the high level of lawlessness that the elite would perceive to be endemic in a relatively remote area.

Cwmyoy was by far the largest manor in Hothneyslade, composed of some 8000 hectares, including extensive tracts of upland grazing, and the priory's richest source of income outside of its Irish estates: valued at Dissolution as half that of the house's entire possessions (PRO 1964, m34; Procter 2012, 100). The southern stretch of the *demesne* was ideally placed to exploit the resources needed for a balanced manorial economy: a broad band of verdant land rich in glacial soil, tracts of wood cover and high summer grazing pasture.

5.4.2 Oldcastle manor

An early gift from Hugh de Lacy, this small manor occupied a rectangle of land rising from the River Monnow to the Hatterall watershed, now the only territory within Wales east of the ridge (Figure 5.11). Here, Oldcastle Court and St. John's Church clustered around the earthworks of a *motte*, one of a series of fortifications strung

³⁹ The boundary clause can be interpreted as follows: 'on the side of Kevencassec and Askaresweye along the Ruggesweye up to Autefyn' describes the western ridgeway to the boundary (*ffin*) with the lordship of Glynbwch in the north of the Vale of Ewyas; 'Kevencassec' is Cefn-casseg ('stony ridge'), whilst 'Askaresweye' is not readily identifiable. 'On the side of Haterel from the land of Seisel son of Gilbert by the Ruggewey to the bounds of Talgarth' relates to the eastern ridgeway along Hatterall Hill bounded by the manor of Bwlch Trewyn (part of which follows a stream named Nant-y-menyn in 1612 which may be derived from *maenol* meaning 'ancient division of land'), the seat of a branch of the Sitsyllt (later Cecil) family, to the south and the established boundary at Capel-y-ffin to the north (NLW, Cardiff Central Library MS 5.15).

along the border territory of Ewyas Lacy during the Norman advance of the eleventh century.

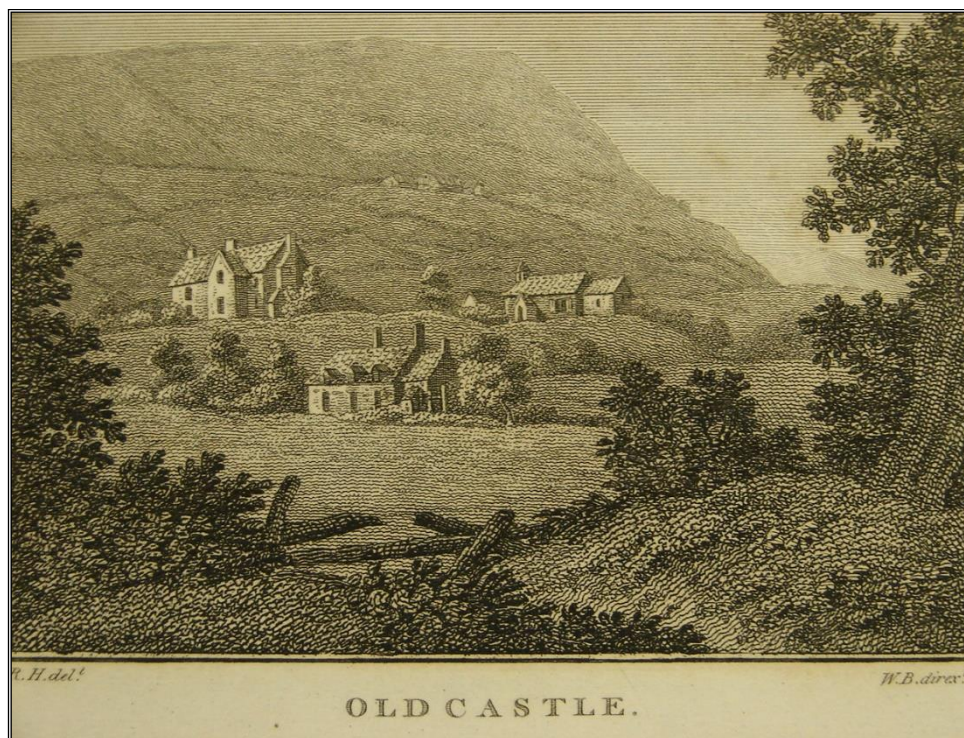


Figure 5.11: Early-nineteenth century engraving of Oldcastle Court by Sir Richard Colt Hoare from Coxe's *An Historical Tour of Monmouthshire*, 1801 (Source: University of Bristol Special Collection, photographed with permission).

5.4.3 Redcastle manor

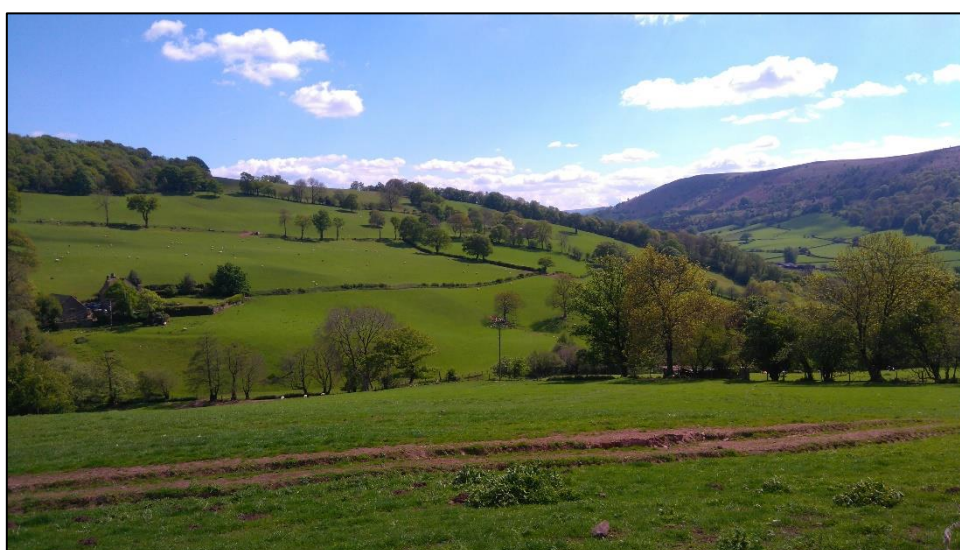


Figure 5.12: 'Redcastle high ground' looking south, with Little Lwygy farm to the left and the boundary with Bwlch Trewyn following the small valley below the farm (Source: author).

A gift from the lord of Bergavenny in the early years of generous donation, Redcastle is an enigmatic entry in the historical record of the priory's estates. No longer extant as a place-name, the sub-manor and its church have previously been unlocated, Joseph Bradney (1993d, 234) unable to find any documentary evidence in his exhaustive history of Monmouthshire. Early-twelfth century references to 'Rethresanc' and 'Rederessu' were Latinised to *Rubro Castro* or *Rebeum Castrum* by the Dissolution, the manor known as Redcastle thereafter (Carpenter 2013, 10). That this English name has now disappeared from map and memory is not unusual in the Welsh Marches; indeed, this phenomenon was particularly prevalent across the priory's holdings in Ewyas Lacy, such as at Bury Barn and Fosecombe, place-names and locations now lost (Coplestone-Crow 1989). Although absent from the landscape and, it seems, social memory for at least the last 200 years or so, the physical manifestation of Redcastle comes into view through the 1612 Cwmyoy manorial perambulation. Here references to 'Redcastle *demesne*' and 'Redcastle high ground' enable the bounds of the manor and its relationship to the rest of Hothneyslade and the neighbouring Bwlch Trewyn and Llanfihangel estates to be established (*NLW*, Cardiff Central Library MS 5.15) (Figure 5.12).



Figure 5.13: The motte near Trefeddw farm, surrounded by the red earth of a ploughed field, which may have been the manorial centre, providing Redcastle with its name (Source: author).

It can now be seen that Redcastle occupied a fertile block of rising ground at the mouth of the Vale of Ewyas adjoining the Bwlch Trewyn manor, bounded by the eastward curve of the Honddu and the low Bwlch pass carrying an ancient route into

Wales. Within this now defined territory can be found an unnamed Norman *motte*, standing in a field known as The Moat (*Tithe Map*, Appleby 1852) (Figure 5.13). A 1719 lease citing ‘the Mote, being the site or *demesne* of the manor of Redcastle’, a landholding of 47 hectares, establishes this ground as the likely nucleus of the manor (*Hereford Archives*, Harleian Index bundle 72). Lower Trefeddw, a now demolished Renaissance-era house uphill of the *motte*, may have been the manorial court (Fox and Raglan 1954, 72; Newman 2002, 210). The old house has been replaced by modern farm buildings and any upstanding remains of a bailey or manorial settlement around the *motte* would have been long ploughed out or destroyed during the construction of the railway cutting immediately below it (*Coflein NMR*, 306463).

5.4.4 Stanton manor



Figure 5.14: The landscape of Stanton manor rising from the River Honddu up to the hill of Bryn-arw, looking south-west from Hatterall Hill (Source: author).

The sub-manor of Stanton rises from the west bank of the Honddu to the uplands of Bryn-arw guarding the entry to the Vale of Ewyas (Figure 5.14). The gift of this land along with Redcastle holding the other side of the river by the lord of Bergavenny extended priory ownership southwards out of Ewyas Lacy territory. It can be

conjectured that the origin of the manor name was in the settling of the land grant of Bryngawr by new tenants brought from the Stanton Lacy manor (the de Lacy family base in Shropshire), perhaps to help cement the de Lacy hold on their realm (*NLW*, GB 0210 BAKERGABB). A freehold manor, Stanton may have been home to monastic officials, hence the location of a chapel there. By 1728, though, any pretensions as a place of importance that it may have had were long forgotten and it was referred to by the estate owner John Arnold as ‘a mean manor under Lantony’ (*Gwent Archives*, D591/32A/25).

5.5 The medieval landscape of Hothneyslade

Figure 5.15 maps the postulated landscape of the Hothneyslade estate as it had developed *circa* 1300, a reference point for the narrative that now follows. The map and the accompanying analysis are informed by the landscape walks and other field observation carried out for this project, contemporary and early post-medieval documentary evidence, analysis of field systems and other landscape features using map regression, aerial photography and satellite imagery, previous archaeological and historical research, place- and field-name evidence and research on the wider medieval landscape. A more detailed outline of the methodology and sources used to produce this map can be found at Appendix 2

The map displays a tableau of consolidation, improvement and expansion of inherited agricultural land (arable, pasture and meadow), supplemented by new specialist farmsteads. Yet to be comprehensively sub-divided by the largely linear field pattern to come, great open meadowlands for harvesting hay and straggling belts of wood-pasture for grazing stock occupied the valley bottom and lower slopes outside of the enclosed closes and cultivated infield-outfield around the farmsteads. Although thick woodland had been much reduced, significant managed coppice remained, with the higher valley side *ffridd* and ridges remaining as upland commonage. A more detailed analysis of the elements of this landscape is now presented.

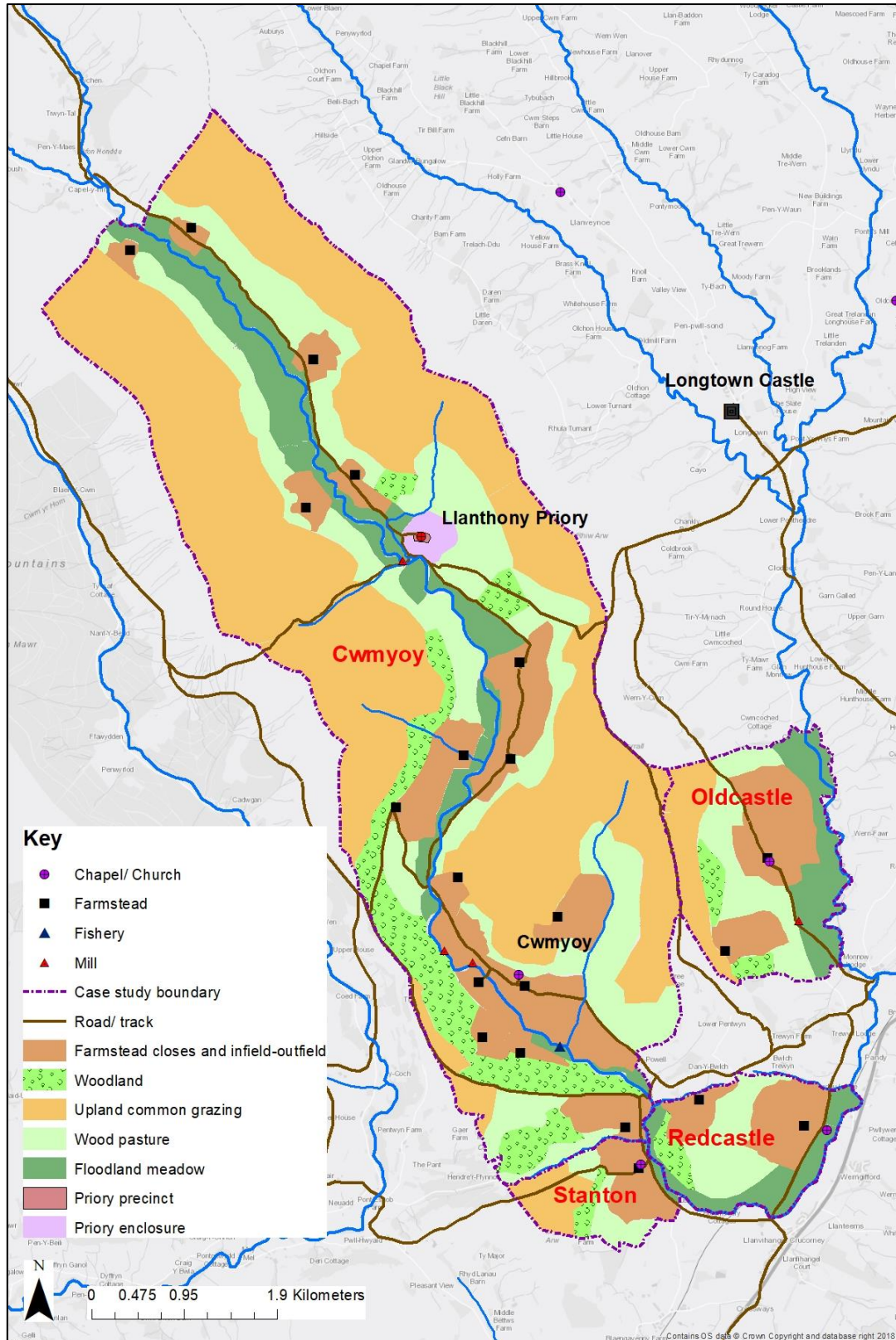


Figure 5.15: Postulated landscape and land-use of the Hothneyslade estate circa 1300 (Source: map drawn in ArcGIS® using Ordnance Survey 1:10560 County Series 1st edition, Monmouthshire, 1887 data layer, downloaded from Digimap® under licence, <http://digimap.edina.ac.uk/>).

5.5.1 Priory precinct and outer enclosure



Figure 5.16: Surviving arches of the Llanthony Priory nave, looking east from the central cloister garth (Source: author).

Llanthony Priory (Figure 5.16) has often been described as an Augustinian house with a characteristically Cistercian secluded location and precinct plan (Aston 2007, 117). The relatively large 16 hectare site encompassed the core precinct, housing the church, claustral ranges and other high-status features on level ground nested within a rising outer curtilage dedicated to agricultural activities (Bowden and Roberts 2012, 73) (Figures 5.17 and 5.18). The layout and Transitional architecture of the main monastic buildings has been recorded in much detail elsewhere and will not be described here.⁴⁰ Largely constructed between 1175 and 1230, the impressive new structures replaced the ‘plain ancient buildings’ of the original church, gone to ruin during the long exile in Gloucester (Atkyns 1974, 268).

⁴⁰ See, for instance, Craster 1963; Evans *et al* 1984; Lovegrove 1943; McCormick 2010; Newman 2002.

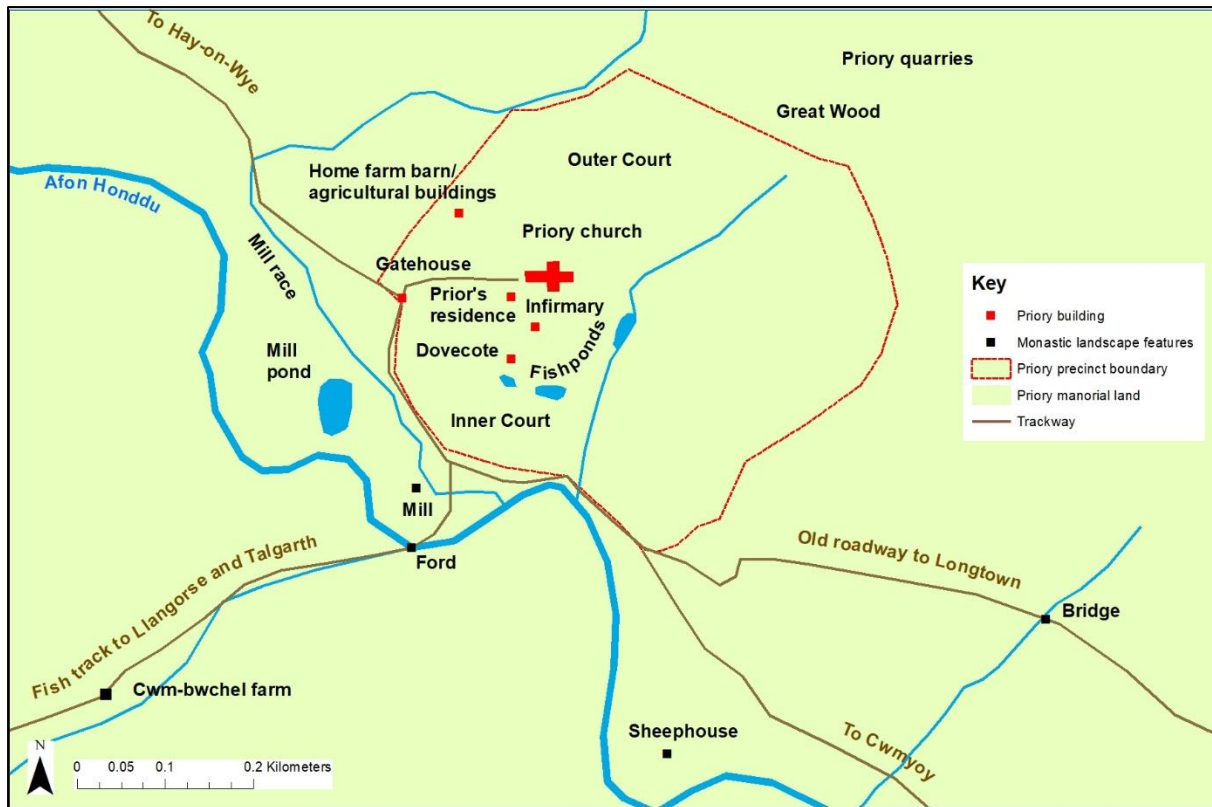


Figure 5.17: The priory and its surrounding monastic landscape (Source: map drawn in ArcGIS® using Ordnance Survey 1:10560 County Series 1st edition, Monmouthshire, 1887 data layer, downloaded from Digimap® under licence, <http://digimap.edina.ac.uk/>).

The enclosures of the outer *curia* combined domestic, horticultural and agricultural features and functions including cultivated land and livestock paddocks, in many ways mirroring the high-status seigneurial landscape of secular landlords (Connors 2013, 63; Coppack 2003, 119; Wiles 2016, 37). ‘Inclosed with stone walls’, the post-Dissolution sale inventory for ‘the site circuit and precinct’ of the priory recorded farm buildings, barns, orchards, gardens, a burial ground, rabbit warren, waters and pools (Gairdner and Brodie 1896, unpaginated; PRO undated, 163). Within the northern sector, bounded by the ditch of a diverted watercourse and the priory’s Great Wood, lay the outer court containing the main estate barn and ancillary agricultural buildings, functioning as the priory’s home farm, predecessor to the post-medieval Court Farm (Evans *et al* 1984, 45; Moorhouse 1989, 32). Security considerations and the domestic needs of the priory community would account for the siting of the estate’s great barn within the precinct (Procter 2012, 100-101). Long demolished, excavation in the early-twentieth century traced its foundations, 126 by 24 metres with a gabled porch entrance (Gardner 1916, 62). Accommodation and stabling for

visitors and travellers was also probably located here (Coppack 2006, 129-130). At the western corner of the enclosure stands the gatehouse constructed *circa* 1325 (Figure 5.19), converted and extended into a post-medieval barn but with much surviving original masonry, from which extant elements of a sturdy boundary wall suggestive of a defended protective space extend south and north-east (Burton and Ströber 2015, 134). There is no sign of a wall along the boundary ditch to the north and east of the outer enclosure, though much stone was removed from the site for buildings and road repairs after Dissolution (Gardner 1916, 57, 60-1; Hogan 2008, 25).

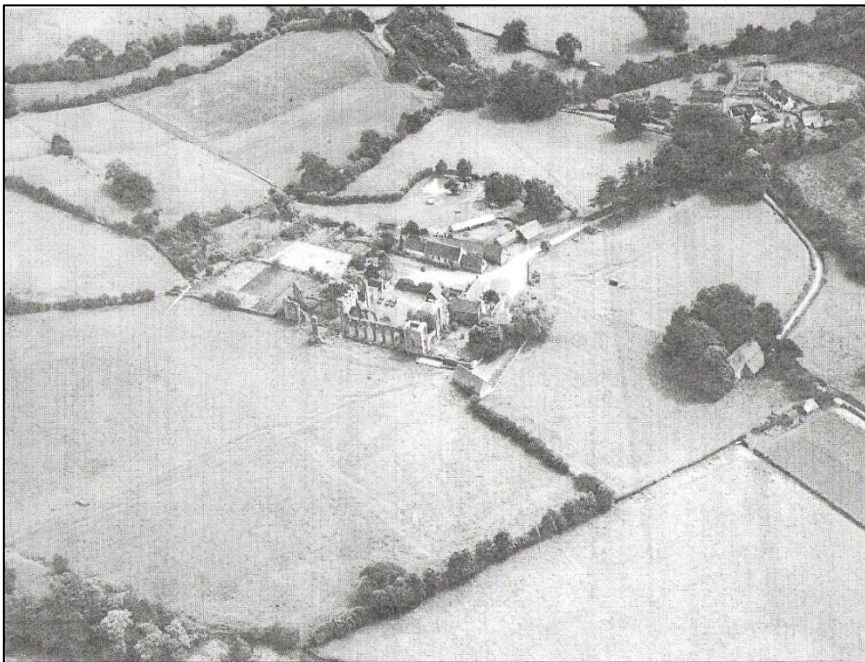


Figure 5.18: Oblique aerial photograph of the Llanthony Priory precinct and outer enclosure (Source: © Cambridge University Collection of Aerial Photography, 1948, BM70).

In the south-west quadrant lay a more formalised area, the inner court, containing three fishponds with high retaining banks (one surviving as an earthwork) fed by a diverted stream which also flushed the priory sewers and a *columbarium* (the upstanding remains of the dovecote probably dating from the fourteenth century) (Coppack 2006, 126; Gardner 1916, 57). This area is said to have contained extensive and well laid-out monastic gardens and orchards, perhaps comparable to the ‘fruitful vines’ Gerald of Wales praised at Llanthony Secunda (Bond 2004, 154; Bowden and Roberts 2012, 73; Cowley 1977, 66). The fields now covering this corner of the enclosure are known as ‘The Warren’, ‘Lower Warren’ and ‘Clapper

Field', names associated with rabbit breeding (*Tithe Map, Appleby 1852; Williamson 2007b, 36-7, 56*).



Figure 5.19: The northern elevation of the fourteenth century gatehouse at Llanthony, with post-medieval barn extension to the left (Source: author).

Although the number of canons lodged at the priory was relatively small during many phases of its history, an impression of an unpopulated and empty edifice would be misleading. The monastery and its surrounding landscape would have often been a busy place, peopled by an array of priory officers, servants and tenants, canons from Secunda and other ecclesiastical and official visitors, pilgrims, traders and workmen resident, working or passing through. The highest status lay office of Hothneyslade steward was occupied by provincial gentry such as James Nicols and William Vaughan resident outside the manor and the lack of recorded freehold properties in Cwmyoy may indicate that other higher-ranking officials also lived elsewhere (Austin 2014, 8). A cast of supporting lay officers – sergeants, constable gaoler, manorial court clerk, manor bailiff, porter/ janitor (who lived in a lodge beside the gatehouse) and proctor – recorded in the late-fifteenth and early-sixteenth century Llanthony Secunda registers were, though, likely resident within the precinct and surrounding manor (Rhodes 2002, xxviii, xxxii, 103, 108-9).

5.5.2 Farmsteads, settlements and land tenure

The geographical distribution of medieval farmsteads throughout the Hothneyslade lordship was influenced by a combination of existing settlement, priory management, estate formation and continuity, topography and land-use, forms of tenancy and individual decision-making (Figure 5.15 maps their postulated extent at *circa* 1300 and the gazetteer of medieval and monastic features at Appendix 4 identifies likely candidates). The Black Mountains and surrounding valley-lands had certainly been long-settled, farmed and traversed before the Anglo-Norman era: a managed *bocage* countryside governed by ancient Welsh customs of tenure and communal land management (Bowen 1960, 51-2; Emery 1989, 67-8; Hodges 2015, 259; Sylvester 1969, 103). David Austin (2014, 21) refers to pre-existing named communities in the valley identified in the priory's land grants, 'suggesting that these lands were already settled by farmers exploiting at least some arable ground, albeit still perhaps largely pastoral in their economy.'

Two types of landholding can be observed as the key medieval resource and will now be examined in more detail:

- 'Valley farms' – larger, higher-status units, originating when the most fertile ground and easily worked lower hill-sides were colonised; timber-framed and thatched dwellings often evolving into parallel ranges of post-medieval stone house and farm buildings with a bias towards arable farming though operating a mixed economy. The extents of these older valley farms reflect the exploitation of varied geographical resources (as do the wider territories of the priory manors): running from river-side flood-lands to the open shared grazing of the upper slopes; a pattern still observable on the nineteenth century tithe map (Figures 6.2 to 6.6) and, to an extent, in the modern historic landscape. Some may have origins as the anciently-established *trefi* of local kin groups, integrated into the priory's *demesne* as specialist farms (Brown 2004, 130; Newman 2002, 32; Smith 1975, 147).
- 'Nant farms' – at the spring-line break of slope between the 200m and 350m contour, generally adjacent to stream-filled gulleys (in Welsh *nant*, often a component of the farm name). Some of these steadings, straddling the divide between cultivated ground and the steeper pasture and rough grazing leading

to the moorland edge, may be the ancient settlements of Welsh freemen. Others developed later, during medieval or post-medieval expansion of permanent settlement into the summer *hafodydd* of the higher slopes (Silvester 2009; Smith 1975, 143; Williams 1981, 220). South of the priory to the mouth of the vale, these nodes are typically spaced at around 500m apart, their density increasing in the folded land further up the valley. Jemma Bezant (2009, 104) has discussed the location of ancient farmsteads in west Wales with comparable characteristics. Commonplace in other parts of highland Monmouthshire, many adhere to the dominant regional cruck-framed long-house model for medieval tenant farmsteads of house, animal byre and shed in one building aligned downslope and set within its own closes (Aston 2007, 86; Locock 2006, 48-59; Newman 2002, 32; Smith 1975, 45).



Figure 5.20: Llwyn-celyn in its landscape setting (Source: author).

Astride a knoll at the southern approach to Cwmyoy manor stands a particularly well-preserved and studied example of a late-medieval hall-house, Llwyn-celyn: one of the long-established valley farms and perhaps the home of a priory official or accommodation for visitors, a staging post on the way to the convent; even conceivably the temporary residence of the prior whilst Llanthony recovered from the ravages of the early 1400s (Morriss 2014, 30; Stanford undated, unpaginated)

(Figure 5.20). Attracted to purchase Llwyn-celyn because surviving architectural fabric suggested a farmhouse of around 1480 to 1500 vintage, the Landmark Trust are currently restoring the property. New radio-carbon dating of oak timbers from the house has, in fact, confirmed a construction date of *circa* 1420, making it one of the oldest known surviving domestic buildings in Wales (Fox and Raglan 1951a, 83-4; Newman 2002, 18; Smith 1975, 161; Stanford 2017). Intriguingly, this places construction at a very early stage in the rebuilding of farmhouses in stone and shortly after the devastation caused by the Glyndŵr uprising.

In studying post-medieval manorial documents relating to Llwyn-celyn, David Austin (2014) has identified the pivotal importance of a very particular form of late- and post-medieval copyhold tenancy in the development of farmsteads and their agricultural landscape in the Cwmyoy manor. Under this customary tenancy, proven by copy of the manorial Court Roll, the tenant had various responsibilities, including constructing and maintaining buildings on their holding and carrying out repairs of roads and bridges. They were required to pay a 'chief rent', serve on the manorial court and pay a heriot or fine if any of their land was assigned to another party. In return, the tenant had a high degree of autonomy in managing their property: they could either farm the land themselves, sub-let or mortgage it or sell land on; they could utilise the manors common grazing land, take stone for building and cut wood and timber within defined limits (*ibid.*, 5, 28; Watt 2000, 33-4). By the time such documents were written these tenurial arrangements, a more flexible version of the copyholding commonly practised in many later-medieval monastic and ecclesiastical estates and characteristic of a general drift to more anglicised tenancy in Wales, were already well-established 'time out of mind' and applied to most of the steadings in the manor (*ibid.*, 4-5, 28; *ibid.*, 32-3).

With the late-period priory a relatively weak and ineffectual landlord and land values low, this was, for the tenant, a highly favourable time in which to have the chief rent set: fixed not only for the life of the copyholder but also for those who they assigned to take over from them (sometimes up to four 'lives'). Thus, a course was set for the growth of a group of well-to-do and independent 'middling sort' farmers who would be the main actors in the development of the economy and landscape of the vale in the post-medieval period, as essayed in the next chapter (Johnson 1996, 55; Smith

1975, 37; Taylor 1975, 108). To David Austin (2014, 6), Llwyn-celyn, seat of one such line of copyholders, ‘was not a manor-house nor the gentry house of a freeman, but it certainly had the rhetoric of an aspiring Welshman.’ And these rising yeomen seem to have retained the antipathy towards the priory of their forebears (a recurring motif for subsequent relations between lord and tenant on the estate): the 1481 charter notes that in the preceding decades of decline and instability ‘certain secular persons who were farmers of the priory estates’ were involved in the wasting of the church and its landholdings (Lovegrove 1943, 227; Roberts 1847, 229). Such references speak of a populace who resented the priory’s Anglo-Norman lordship, fiercely guarding their old native freedoms against the threat of ever-increasing restrictions and rules, payments and fines.

Although it is difficult to ascertain when it began, this custom-based tenure may have evolved from much earlier oral practices codified during the monastic period, perhaps after the Glyndŵr rising of the early-fifteenth century (Austin 2014, 5).⁴¹ By this stage, the priory was in long decline and riding a tide of mismanagement and financial pressures. Even within the core Hothneyslade home manors, the prior and his officials would have sought, or been forced, to divest themselves of the onerous responsibilities of direct land management in favour of a more arms-length style that maintained a guaranteed income through fixed rents but also provided its tenants with a high – perhaps atypical – degree of autonomy. This process that may have originated as early as the reforms instigated by Archbishop Peckham in 1284, likely even more accelerated after the house became a cell of Llanthony Secunda in 1481 (*ibid.*, 33).

Surviving documentation relating to the Dissolution and subsequent sale of monastic lands and property provides evidence of this farming out of properties within the estate, although not when it commenced. So, for instance, we can see that the main ‘Cwmyoy manor farm’ was leased to Philip ap Nichole, perhaps a relation of the

⁴¹ The earliest recorded tenant of Llwyn-celyn, William John Richard in 1597, held a copy of a lease that probably followed the surrender of an earlier copyhold dating back into the monastic era (Austin 2014, 6).

Hothneyslade bailiff James Nichols, prior to Dissolution, ‘for a term of 50 years’ (PRO undated, 163). This may be the farmstead of Neuadd (‘hall’, corresponding to the English ‘manor house’), a surviving valley farm recorded in 1568 set amidst the good quality land in the broad plain below Cwmyoy hamlet (*Harley Archive*, 17/28/4; Mason 1975, 42).



Figure 5.21: Cwm-bwchel, a downslope cruck-framed farmhouse, looking eastwards towards the priory (Source: author).

It is likely that valley and *nant* farmsteads held, like Llwyn-celyn, under the copyhold arrangement described here are the older established properties in the manor with late-medieval (and probably earlier) origins. Notable examples of probable ancient valley farms include Maes-y-beran and Weild (now ruined), both on the main low-level route through the vale discussed in Section 5.6. The former’s name translates as ‘open share or plough-land field or meadow’, echoing the steadings putative origin as a specialist arable farm. Also standing on a key way to the convent is Cwm-bwchel, an example of the cruck-trussed (originally timber-framed) buildings typical of Monmouthshire’s small late-medieval houses (Figure 5.21). Constructed *circa* 1415 to 1560, they signify the geographical limits of progressive contemporary agricultural communities, generally found in lowland locations with arable farming dominant (Fox and Raglan 1951a, 16, 75-8). Cwm-bwchel with its higher elevation is an outlier, probably indicative both of a pastoral function (the farm name indicative of sheep-rearing) and the more advanced specialist agrarian practices of the priory

estate in comparison to native farming traditions in the surrounding upland catchments.

Chris Hodges (2015, 264) notes a cluster of steadings, including Llwyn-celyn, with possible medieval origin, as (single-storey) hall or long-house, towards the long-standing routeway traversing the southern part of the valley. Ty-hwnt-y-bwlch is one *nant* farmhouse here adhering to the long-house plan with probable fifteenth century fabric and re-used medieval masonry, including a thirteenth or fourteenth century pointed-arch doorway thought to be ‘spolia architecture’ taken from the priory (Coflein NMR, 20996; GGAT HER, 02183g; Harney 2017, 280; Newman 2002, 211) (Figure 5.22). North of the priory, Nant-y-gwyddel and Nant-y-carnau are further examples of *nant* late-medieval hall houses, whilst further south, in Redcastle, Little Llwygy (Figure 5.23) includes a locally rare single room dwelling dated to the early-sixteenth century (Coflein NMR, 45048, 20451; Fox and Raglan 1951a, 90).

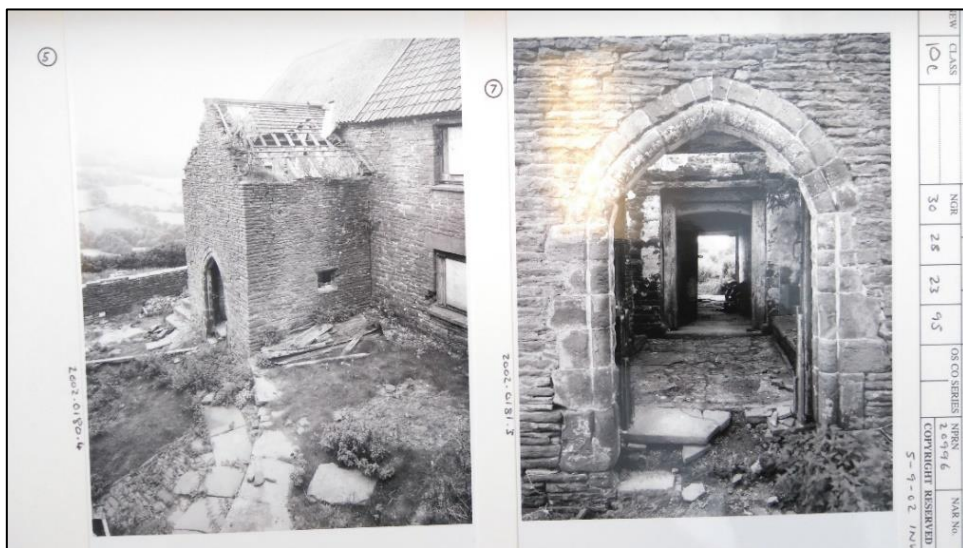


Figure 5.22: Doorway thought to have been ‘reclaimed’ from the priory at Ty-hwnt-y-bwlch (Source: © Crown copyright, Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historic Monuments of Wales NMR, photographed with permission).

The recent carbon-dating at Llwyn-celyn aside, these ancient farmsteads lack definitive dating. For Wales generally, a fifteenth century baseline can be applied for the oldest extant houses, and named individual steadings only really begin to appear in seventeenth century documents (Hodges 2015, 9, 262). Rebuilding and restyling in stone from the later-fifteenth century limit the survival of pre-1400 buildings

commonly rendered in timber, dry-stone wall masonry reserved for higher status manorial buildings (Fox and Raglan 1951a, 14; 1951b, 14-5; Smith 1975, 14). David Austin (2014, 27) presents a case for long-standing occupation of many farmstead sites, preceding monastic lordship; the priory, in common with monasteries in similar upland geographies, taking on the rents of an entrenched populace engaged in traditional pastoral farming activity. It may be that others post-date the priory's economic heyday, established by a caucus of enterprising copyholder tenants as discussed above rather than the active land-management by the canons (Procter 2012, 102). It can, though, be speculated that at least some of these farmsteads, particularly those occupying the verdant ground of the lower vale, had origins or evolved as specialist units in the more stable and prosperous phases of Llanthony's history. The examples cited here and in the gazetteer speak of a chain of farmsteads – specialist grain farms, *bercaries* and *vaccaries* for stock and so forth – developed to supply the needs of the priory economy, many perhaps only formally named in the autumn of the monastic era.



Figure 5.23: Eastern elevation of Little Lwygy, with the Tudor period portion of the house to the right (Source: author).

5.5.3 Field systems and agricultural land-use

The neat, rather monochrome green fields that dominate the historic landscape of Hothneyslade today contrast with a much more diverse medieval land-use pattern reflecting – in Andrew Fleming's (2010a, 86) phrase – the 'landscapes of

communities’: large swathes of arable fields, long river-side flood meadows, assarted land and wood-pasture, managed coppices and *mynydd* common, as mapped in Figure 5.15 (Bennett 1987, 43-4; Procter 2012, 102; Taylor 1975) (Figure 5.24).



Figure 5.24: The pastoral landscape of the contemporary Vale of Ewyas, looking north-west from the Ffwddog ridge (Source: author).

In the early-fifteen hundreds, the priory managed 177 hectares of land in *demesne*, whilst the estate valuation after the Dissolution mentions ‘*demesne* lands, meadows and feedings pastures’ amounting to 207 acres (84 ha) of ‘arable land and pasture lying separately in divers parcels’, 25 acres (10 ha) of meadow and some 462 acres (187 ha) of mountain pasture land ‘late in the cultivation and occupation of the former Prior and Convent ... which are commonly called the *demesne* lands of the said late Priory or Celle’ (Gairdner and Brodie 1896, unpaginated; PRO undated, 163; Rhodes 2002, 35). This is clearly a much larger area of directly-managed land than the immediate priory curtilages within the precinct walls. In the early-twentieth century, Gardner (1916, 63) observed that field-names in the valley were mainly Welsh, but none close to the priory were, with no anecdotal knowledge of any earlier non-English names. He speculated that this was evidence that the community’s founders cleared away ‘primeval forest’ to create their home farm. In reality, the priory’s *demesne* lands across the estate would have encompassed a mix of inherited

agricultural units, new and expanded cultivation around the convent and on favourable ground and expansion and intensification of wood-pasture clearance and wood resource management (Austin 2014, 21; Williams 1975, 68). Pope Innocent II's Papal Bull of 1131 confirming the land grants to the priory within the Vale of Ewyas hints of this landscape when it mentions 'in the valley around the church itself meadows and floodlands distinguished by certain bounds and of wood-pasture' (translated in Austin 2014, 19; Carpenter 2013, 8, 18).

An absence of detailed contemporary documentary evidence makes it difficult to definitively locate this activity and track the impact of the prior and his officials on land-use within medieval Hothneyslade. Several recorded legal cases do shed some light on not only the lawlessness that pervaded the Marches but also the activity of the priory farms. For instance, on several occasions in 1277 servants of Reginald fitz Peter, lord of neighbouring Bleanllynfi, took cattle from the Llanthony manor of Olrewas (not located) due to an alleged debt of 25 sacks of wool: a snapshot of the livestock economy of the priory estates (Cowley 1977, 224). Two years later, Thomas de Verdun, lord of Ewyas (lordly ties with the priory now much loosened), was accused by the prior of cattle rustling, harassment and trespass and of taking oxen and ploughs from Oldcastle and Redcastle, as well as causing damage and killing two canons in the Llanthony manor of Newton (Herefordshire) (PRO 1901, 350). This case finally settled 13 years later, it was not long before the priory was again complaining of harassment by this lord to the king, whilst in 1299 Gilbert de Bouhun and men of Crickhowell were cited for taking away beasts and other goods from Llanthony lands (PRO 1895, 465; Smith 2003, 8).

At Dissolution, the estate sale valuation was partially based on the corn, barley and oats produced and the 'tithes from ancient time belonging to the tithe barn of Comyowte' (whether this relates to the great barn at the Llanthony home farm or another 'tithe barn' located at the Cwmyoy manor farm is unclear), with renders of corn and oats also mentioned for Oldcastle (Gairdner and Brodie 1896, unpaginated). Arable production would have certainly been an important focus of activity, exploiting any suitable areas of fertile land for crops, particularly the favourable aspect of the eastern, south-westward facing, flank of the valley (Sylvester 1969, 413). Here the 'infield-outfield' system, familiar in medieval upland

topographies, would be utilised, the smaller ‘infield’ closes in constant cultivation and a larger ‘outfield’ of pasture in which portions would be ploughed up for rotational cultivation (Brown 2004, 132; Rackham 1986, 161; Taylor 1975, 88).

Even in the hilly settings of the Marches in which large open arable fields were not the norm, long narrow strips (or quilllets) worked in common as ‘share-land’ were often a feature of infield closes or outfield rotating tillage (Silvester 2004, 56). It is generally hard to evidence whether patterns of medieval arable farming have been retained in the fabric of the historic landscape, though they can be fossilised in later enclosures, earthwork evidence of ridge and furrow, terraced field banks and field names. Figure 5.25 presents one of several examples above Llwyn-celyn where substantial stone banks forming the field boundaries of the hillside can be observed. David Austin (2014, 66) has interpreted these as medieval arable lynchets, though their morphology differs from the archetypal terraced banks associated with the medieval ploughing up of steeper ground in other areas. Similar embankments can be seen across the upper fields of the nearby Stanton Manor farm, with possible strip lynchets systems also observable around the farmsteads of Noyaddllwyd, Perthi-crwn and The Birches.



Figure 5.25: Stone banked lynchet boundaries above Llwyn-celyn (Source: author).

In recalling the agricultural landscape that he farmed in the vale in the middle years of the twentieth century, Dai Griffiths (1995, 101) noted that, during the war, land that

had not been in cultivation for many generations was returned to arable. Here ‘the marks of these very old-fashioned ways of ploughing were still to be seen in a lot of these old fields’ producing narrow ‘coppes’ (ridges) and ‘reens’ (furrows). Although much is likely to have been subsequently ploughed out, a visit after snowfall revealed such tillage evidence in a large field adjacent to Neuadd farm (Figure 5.26). Snow also exposes similar in fields around Meas-y-beran and Weild where hints of curved field boundaries may also petrify plough lines (Andrew Fleming, pers. comment). Whether these patterns are a result of medieval ploughing or post-medieval cultivation is hard to establish.



Figure 5.26: Traces of possible ridge and furrow cultivation highlighted after snowfall at Neuadd farm (Source: author).

This field evidence is supported by some field name testimony in tithe apportionments and other documents alluding to possible medieval arable sharelands, for instance: Common Field at both Maes-y-beran and Lwygy, Llanerth Lase (possibly ‘long’ from *llaes* and ‘narrow strip’ from *llain*) at Nantygwiddel and other names that may originate from *erw*, the Welsh word for acre which can be an indication of arable strips (Austin 2016; Silvester 2016; *Tithe Map*, Appleby 1852) (see Appendix 4 for further details).

Higher up from the farmstead closes and arable infield-outfield, the intermediate slopes were still dominated by anciently worked commonage cow- and wood-pasture used from late autumn to early spring, livestock brought down from the higher summer-grazed grounds and kept away from the crops downslope, as described further in Sections 5.5.4 and 6.3.2 (Smith 1975, 143). These shared pastures, traditionally used flexibly and not divided up, eventually evolved into separate land parcels through agreement and piecemeal enclosure as outlined in the next chapter with through-routes up to the upland summer pasture maintained (Fleming 2010a, 73-9). A similar evolution can be observed when looking at the abundant well-drained water meadows historically utilised for hay-making for winter fodder (Rackham 1986, 332). Andrew Fleming (2010a, 76) has shown how such meadows in Swaledale (Yorkshire) were divided into ‘dales’ in the medieval period, unfenced but subsequently physically divided into separate enclosures whose names reflected their common meadow origins. Long co-axial boundaries divided the original meadow into strips which eventually became permanently separated units. The names of these enclosures often incorporate *ing* meaning ‘meadow’ or *holm* indicating a ‘meadow partially surrounded by water’, and the vernacular usage of the word’s *dol* and *ynis* with the same meaning to designate river-side flood meadows throughout Hothneyslade may indicate a similar genesis. For instance, Dol Fawr (‘great meadow’) at Llwyn-badarn, Ynis Agored (‘open meadow’) and Ynis y Prior (‘the prior’s meadow’) recorded within the Redcastle *demesne* alongside the River Honddu in 1612 (NLW, Cardiff Central Library MS 5.15; Tithe *Map*, Appleby 1852).

The limited archaeological and documentary evidence available demonstrates a combination of livestock activity across this varied landscape patina: cattle and pigs roaming the wood-pasture, oxen for plough and draft; rabbit rearing, horse breeding, bee-keeping and wool production also important elements of the estate economy (Cowley 1977, 68; Evans *et al* 1980, 34 and 1984, 54-5; *Gwent Archives*, D2408/1; Roberts 1847, 76-7). The priory history talks of ‘fruitful pastures ... and rich meadows for feeding of cattle’, the dominant activity in much of medieval upland Wales (Atkyns 1974, 263; Owen 1989, 215; Rees 1924, 195-7). As the fourteenth century progressed, and following the lead of the large Cistercian houses, opportunities presented themselves for monastic landlords to develop the ancient wood-pasture lands and upland waste of their estates into grazing for sheep to

supply wool to newly emerging markets (Williams 1990b, 288). Abundant hillside pasture and high grazing in Hothneyslade was conducive to conversion to such sheep-runs. Wool production certainly came to be an important element of the Llanthony economy, though cattle remained a staple livestock as was typical for smaller upland Welsh houses (Evans *et al* 1984, 54-5; Simmons 2001, 89; Williams 1975, 72; Williams 2008, 202).



Figure 5.27: Earthworks and sheep-dip in Bugley Meadow (Source: author).

The extent to which a monastic sheep economy prescribed a planned and coordinated re-configuration of the manorial landscape through assarting, enclosure and higher density grazing is unclear due to a dearth of evidence. One archaeological feature of note may provide a clue. Contained within a river bend immediately south of the priory lies an enclosure, Bugley Meadow, significantly larger than those around it, where tracks converge, including the Old Roadway, the main approach road to the priory from the Hatterall discussed in Section 5.6 (*Tithe Map*, Appleby 1852). Its name possibly an anglicised version of the Welsh *bugail*, meaning ‘shepherd’, earthworks within the field conform to the dimensions for a substantial building platform with evidence of a constructed sheep dipping and washing area on the adjacent riverbank (Figure 5.27). It may be that this was the site of the priory’s main sheepcote for housing the flock over the winter months, although utility of the upper section as a common arable field cannot be ruled out (Andrew

Fleming, pers. comment; Procter 2012, 100). Further details and a sketch plan can be found in Appendix 7.

5.5.4 Woodland, wood-pasture and parkland



Figure 5.28: Hill-side pasture with mature and recovering tree cover, suggesting the wood-pasture landscape which predominated across the medieval valley slopes (Source: author).

Contemporary and later representations of the environment in which the Augustinian community took root tended to promote the idea of a verdant and impenetrable wood-shrouded district, a wilderness apart. For instance, the twelfth century priory history recounted that ‘the broken rocks made it scarce passable for the swift light-footed beasts, of which there was a great number. In former times, these rocks surrounded and darkened the valley; for they were crowned with tall, towering trees’ (Atkyns 1974, 263). An impression of dense greenwood is an enduring motif: ‘the neighbourhood was in earlier days, and for many a century up to the early part of the eighteenth century, very thickly and most beautifully wooded’ (Llewelyn 1919, 19). In reality, the woodland character was more nuanced, a mixture of tree cover and more open tracts: the wood-pasture already described (Figure 5.28; the postulated extent *circa* 1300 mapped in Figure 5.15). Medieval documentary evidence often defines this land-use (*silua pastilis* in *Domesday Book*) as distinct from underwood, though the gradations between woodland, wood-pasture and open grazing are hard to

differentiate in practice (Williamson 2016, 87). Mostly a communal resource characterising hillslopes and upland edges and used for grazing, timber supply and leaf fodder, the extensive wide pasturage of the high Middle Ages was to be greatly diminished due to an increase in stock numbers and subsequent evolution into enclosed grassland, managed wood coppice and emparkment (Fleming 2010a, 78; Rackham 1986, 121; 2007, 136; Williamson *et al* 2017, 8, 92).

Some clusters of small irregular fields observable along the valley may be the consequence of medieval assarting; their substantial hedges containing larger trees, the ‘ghost’ remains of grubbed-out stands (Rackham 1986, 182-3; Taylor 1975, 95) (Figure 5.29). More typically, the valley slopes exhibit a semi-regular field morphology, indicating later enclosure of wood-pasture commons already denuded of dense cover due to long-term grazing. This was the culmination of a long, relentless process as more accessible land was opened-up through browsing and grazing or more proactively cleared of trees through felling or ring-barking, the slopes coming to be dominated by winter pasture rather than tree-cover (Fleming 2010a, 105).



Figure 5.29: The irregular shapes and well-wooded hedges of probable medieval assarted fields near Trevelog farm, north of Llanthony (Source: author).

As Andrew Fleming (2010a, 105) has pointed out, ‘the relationship between woodland and open country must have shifted dramatically’ by the later-medieval

era. Such dense stands of woodland as remained following agricultural expansion, largely carpeting steeper ground and deep gullies, would not have been left idle; rather, compartmentalised and heavily exploited as an important manorial resource. Commoner's access to and use of remaining wood-pasture and woodland were tightly administered through manorial courts (Rackham 1986, 121). References to 'hedgebote, firebote, ploughbote and cartbote', all quotas for specific wood-based resources, in the post-Dissolution lease of the Llanthony estates to Sir Nicholas Arnold are indicators of a landscape in which allotments of coppice, covert and spinney remained a significant and managed element (PRO undated, 163).



Figure 5.30: The woods of Cwmyoy looking west, the fields below the modern tree-line the result of post-medieval enclosure of wood-pasture (Source: author).

The western, more shaded, side of the Vale of Ewyas between Cwmyoy and Llanthony is today characterised by substantial belts of woodland. The coniferous plantations and recently regenerated deciduous trees here occupy the footprint of Cwmyoy manor's main managed siveculture resources, centred on Coed Cwmyoy and other enclosed coppices, their denuded remnants observable on the Ordnance Survey first edition and tithe maps (*GGAT HER*, 06063g; *Tithe Map*, Appleby 1852). Looming above these woods is the Ffwyddog ridge (from *ffawydd* meaning 'beech trees'), named for the only significant stand of beech in the Black Mountains within

the ancient area of woodland known as Coed Ewias (Williams 1990b, 178). A mixture of denser beech and oak woodland and wood-pasture of ash and thorn probably extended down to the river here, its perimeter retreating upslope as post-medieval piecemeal enclosure took hold (Mullard 2014, 269) (Figure 5.30). It may be that Coed Farm, set amongst this bosky place and home of the estate forester into the twentieth century, was the homestead of the manor's 'woodward' with responsibility for managing the estate's arboreal reserves (Bennet 1987, 231). Closer to the priory, Coed-mawr or Great Wood, now no longer extant, is chronicled in early-nineteenth century papers and tithe apportionment field names (*NLW*, GB 0210 BAKERGABB; *Tithe Map*, Appleby 1852). The name seems to recall a large tract of medieval woodland swathing the eastern mid-slope bounding the priory's outer enclosure, its remnants the woods of Loxidge and Wiral.

There is some evidence that the priory managed part of its wooded hinterland as a game park, a common-place feature of monastic estates receiving high-status guests despite a theoretical ban on hunting within religious orders (Bond 2004, 171-4; Moorhouse 1989, 64).⁴² The 1325 King Edward II charter confirmed that the Black Canons 'had all hunting and free warren within the bounds of their lands', whilst the post-Dissolution sale inventory included references to 'park' and 'vivaries', which may refer to an enclosed park or stock enclosures more generally (*Edward II Charter*, 474; Gairdner and Brodie 1896, unpaginated; PRO undated, 163). Contemporary sources speak of an abundance of deer on wooded slopes and the district had a history as a place of elite hunting, which the priory's foundation story of William de Lacy following deer into the valley confirms (Davies 1982 153; Evans 1984, 55; Thorpe 1978, 98). Moreover, animal remains found in excavations of the convent kitchen included red and fallow deer, perhaps indicative of a managed park such as that maintained by the nearby Abergavenny Priory (Evans *et al* 1984, 55; Evans 2014, 2). It may be that a park lay upslope of the precinct within or beyond the priory's Great Wood. Here, Heol-y-parc ('the park road') farmstead, a large field known as The Park and the raised mountain wall above Siarpal suggesting an upper park pale hint at medieval hunting ground (Rackham 2007, 134; *Tithe Map*, Appleby

⁴² It is also known that Llanthony Secunda maintained a park at Great Barrington on the edge of the Cotswolds (Bond 2004, 175).

1852). An attempt at emparkment in the early nineteenth century as described in Chapter 6, though, muddies the chronological waters.

Although the formal imposition of Forest Law here is not recorded, the Black Mountains terrain was well-suited to hunting and the uplands had been delineated by a series of chases, including the Forest of Ewyas, as Norman control and influence in the area was consolidated (Austin 2014, 16; Linnard 2000, 240; Silvester 2004, 55). Indeed, it seems likely that the district had been long-established as a royal game reserve for the Welsh rulers of Ewias (Ewyas Lacy Research Group undated a). There may, therefore, have been a more general employment of the extensive *fforest* waste across the remoter extents of the vale to hunt wild game rather than the maintenance of a self-contained park.

5.5.5 Upland common

As has been mentioned, Hothneyslade – given its mountain catchment topography – included a great deal of high-country territory: land probably relatively open since grazed by Mesolithic wild herbivores and exploited for summer grazing and its peat, bracken and building stone resources (Simmons 2003, 39) (Figure 5.15 maps its postulated extent *circa* 1300). In the Black Mountains, this sphere included the transitional *ffridd*, a rich habitat of hawthorn, bracken and gorse along the steep upper fringe of the wood-pasture, below the heather and marsh grass of the high moorland (Figure 5.31). The altitude at which these upland terrains commenced has varied through different eras, defined by farming and other cultural practices as much as climate, relief, geology and vegetation (Hodges 2015, 16). A relatively warm epoch, up to about 1300, made this high ground particularly amenable to agricultural activity. As the climate subsequently cooled, activity became more concentrated on turning sheep out for summer, the highlands subject to notional demarcation of sheep-walks. The fluctuating boundary with the increasingly parcelled and formalised lower ground was also set at a more permanent elevation by the later-fifteen hundreds (Silvester 2004, 60; Simmons 2003, 309).⁴³ This has become a conceptual

⁴³ Here the noticeable continuous boundary structure (the ‘mountain wall’) demarcating the divide between open terrain and farmed land that David Austin (2014) and Christopher Hodges (2015) have mapped comes into the picture and will be discussed further in the next chapter.

and physical division deeply incised in the landscape. Whether it formalised a pre-existing transition between what Raymond Williams (1981, 221) has described as the ‘intricately involved’ open upland and settled valley lands from the medieval centuries or further back into history is hard to ascertain.



Figure 5.31: Transitional ffridd between the field limit and high moorland ridge on the eastern flanks of the Vale of Ewyas (Source: author).

Several prominent large isolated stone-walled enclosures, often containing ruined building structures, can be observed above the mountain wall. All seem apart from the lower field systems and are now long abandoned. Some may occupy the ancient *hafod* ('summer dwelling') of transhumance that morphed into hill-farm units or sheep stations during late-medieval colonisation of common waste as the traditional summer migration to the uplands began to break down (Bowen 1960, 50-1; Brown 2004, 130; Hodges 2015, 14). These enclosures may have been functional stock-management features or reflective of an older pattern of land-use where defence, security and access to the upper slopes was critical (Fleming 2010a, 79).



Figure 5.32: Enclosure on Loxidge Tump, transected by a rhiw path to the upland grazing (Source: Getmapping®, downloaded from Digimap® under licence, <http://digimap.edina.ac.uk>).

Although there is no evidence that the priory operated a system of Cistercian-style grange farms, the Black Canons may have utilised such upland *hafodydd* as specialist stock out-stations (Fleming 2010a, 81; Moorhouse 1989, 32, 62). For instance, an undated bell-shaped enclosure and ruined building on Loxidge Tump (from *llociau*, 'sheep fold', or *llocesau*, 'shelter or refuge') overlooking the monastery on a spur of the main Hatterall ridge may have been an upland sheep corral (Figure 5.32). Tantalising evidence of such a specialist unit lies just outside the boundary of Hothneyslade in a heart-shaped block of fields near the head of the adjoining Olchon valley known as The Old Abbey on the Llanveynoe tithe map centred on a long-ruined building complex (Figure 5.33). This was the site of a farmstead called Abby (alternatively Vannachlogg: 'abbey high place' or 'high abbey' from *fan* and *mynachlog*), as identified in a bundle of eighteenth century legal papers (Ewyas Lacy Research Group undated b). No link with another monastery has been found and utility as a Llanthony out-farm can be speculated. Further details and sketch plans of both these examples can be found at Appendix 7.



Figure 5.33: The Old Abbey enclosures in the Olchon Valley looking south-west, with a deeply incised dog-leg hollow-way track over the ridge to Llanthony highlighted climbing the hillside above (Source: image supplied by Herefordshire Archaeology and annotated in MapInfo®).

The considerable volume of stone required for constructing the priory and its wider infrastructure was won from surrounding freestone outcrops and quarries of siliceous gritstone deposits (Cowley 1977, 55; Roberts 1847, 238; Thorpe 1978, 105). Here was an excellent local building material, accessible at or just below the surface in uniform layers of different thickness and hardness, weathering-resistant, easy to split into blocks and also useable for roof tiles (Hodges 2015, 30; McCormack 2010, 57). The Reverend George Roberts (1847, 238) declared that the stone for the monastic buildings was quarried from a site ‘said to be about two miles above the church, on the face of the hill’, though such a distance would have been logistically problematic. Perhaps a more likely source is an area of woodland and cliffs near the farmstead of Wiral farm (a corruption of *chwarel*, the Welsh word for ‘quarry’) sitting upslope from the priory on the slopes of the Hatterall (Evans 2014, 5). From here stone could have been transported downhill to the site by sledge, a frequently used form of transport in the hill country of the Welsh borders (see Section 5.6).

5.5.6 Churches, chapels, mills and other landscape features



Figure 5.34: The eastern elevation of St. Martin's church, Cwmyoy (Source: author).



Figure 5.35: The medieval cross in St. Martin's Church (Source: author).

A series of medieval churches and chapels adorned Hothneyslade and the surrounding area, a key source of spiritual income and influence for the priory. Foremost was St. Martin's, the parish church of Lower Cwmyoy, with famously unstable footings on an area of landslip and twelfth century features (Newman 2002, 209) (Figure 5.34). A thirteenth century stone cross displaying a weathered figure of Christ wearing a mitre is now housed within the church (Figure 5.35). Found in a nearby field in 1861, perhaps Cross Field, its original location is speculated on in Section 5.6 (Mason 1975, 44; Mee 1945, 51).



Figure 5.36: The southern elevation of the priory chapel for Stanton manor with ogee-headed lancet window clearly visible (Source: author).

More prosaically, a corrugated iron-roofed cow shed within the Stanton Manor farmyard incorporates a chapel of ease built by the priory in the early-fourteenth century, further evidence of revived fortunes at this time (Newman 2002, 292) (Figure 5.36). Across the Honddu, the location of Redcastle church, referred to as a vicarage in 1291 and a 'farmed out' rectory by 1535, remains unknown. A 1606 documentary lists 'the rectory and parish church of Redcastle', whilst a manorial conveyance document of 1720 makes no reference to a church (*Hereford Archives*, Harleian Index Bundles 16-17). This perhaps points to redundancy sometime in the late-seventeenth or early-eighteenth century as the sub-manor began to lose its status as an independent unit. Initial fieldwork for this project has identified two possible sites around the manorial centre postulated in Section 5.4.3. Further details and sketch plans can be found at Appendix 7. One, the abandoned Kildare small-holding just below the Redcastle *motte*, was a tenement leased in 1699, its name seemingly a corruption of the Welsh *cil* ('hermitage' or 'retreat', often associated with early monastic or ecclesiastical sites) or *cell* ('cell' or 'chamber') and *dwr* ('water') or *derw* ('oaks') (Brook 1988, 69; Davies 1953, 36; *Hereford Archives*, Harleian Index Bundle 72). Earthwork evidence of a long vanished Llanthony holding, the chapel of St. Martin in the adjoining manor of Bwlch Trewyn, has been surveyed by the author

and may provide some indication of the morphology of the Redcastle site (Procter 2007, 65-70) (Figure 5.37).

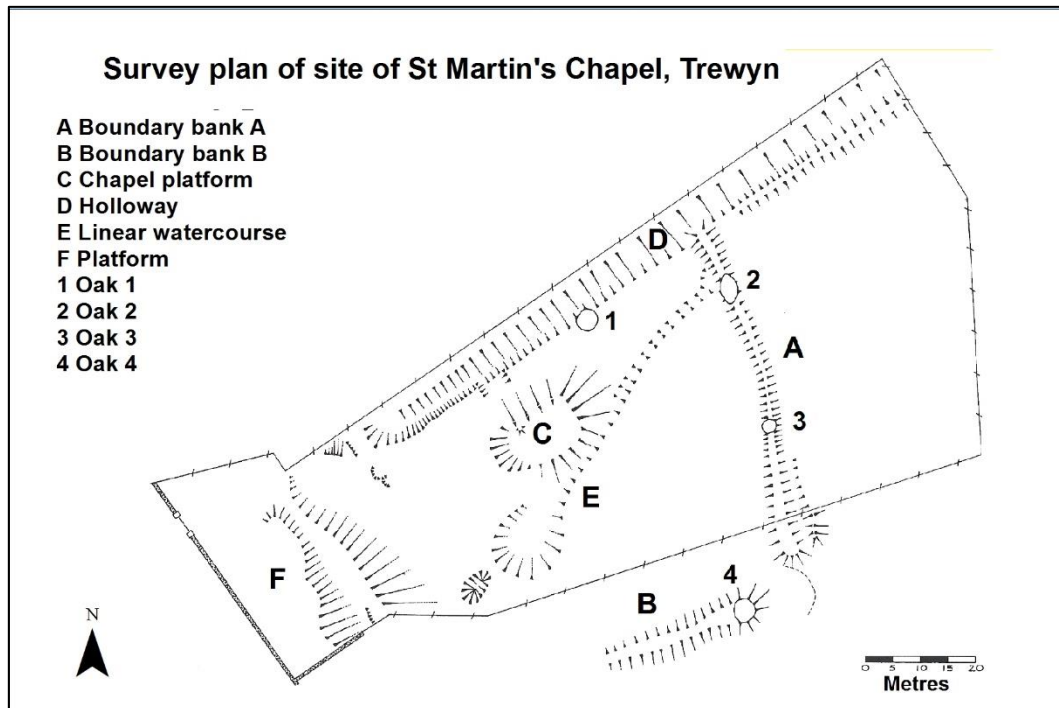


Figure 5.37: Earthwork plan of the site of St. Martin's chapel, Trewyn (Source: after Procter 2007, 97, annotated in ArcGIS®).

A post-medieval corn mill in Llanthony hamlet, now incorporated into a house, is thought to inhabit the site of the main priory mill (recorded as a 'water mill and one cottage' at Dissolution), though no trace of medieval architecture has been found (PRO undated, 163). An associated millpond, long leat and tailrace, described in 1916 as 'ancient' remain extant today (Gardner 1916, 63). A further monastic mill was recorded at Cmwyoy, perhaps located at the milling site on the Honddu active into the nineteenth century at which earthworks, some upstanding stone-work and a leat remain (Coates and Tucker 1978, 24; Rhodes 2002, 21). Upstream, alternative locations are revealed by the adjacent field names, Old Mill Meadow and Cae Pandy ('fulling mill field'), suggesting adjoining corn processing and fulling or even a shift from arable to wool production (further details at Appendix 7) (*Tithe Map*, Appleby 1852). Over the Hatterall ridge, earthworks beside a stream in an Oldcastle field called Old Felin ('old mill') perhaps suggest the site of one of the many lesser mills that have eluded maps and documentary records (Coates and Tucker 1978, 8, 13; *Tithe Map*, Jones 1839).

5.6 The priory's communication network

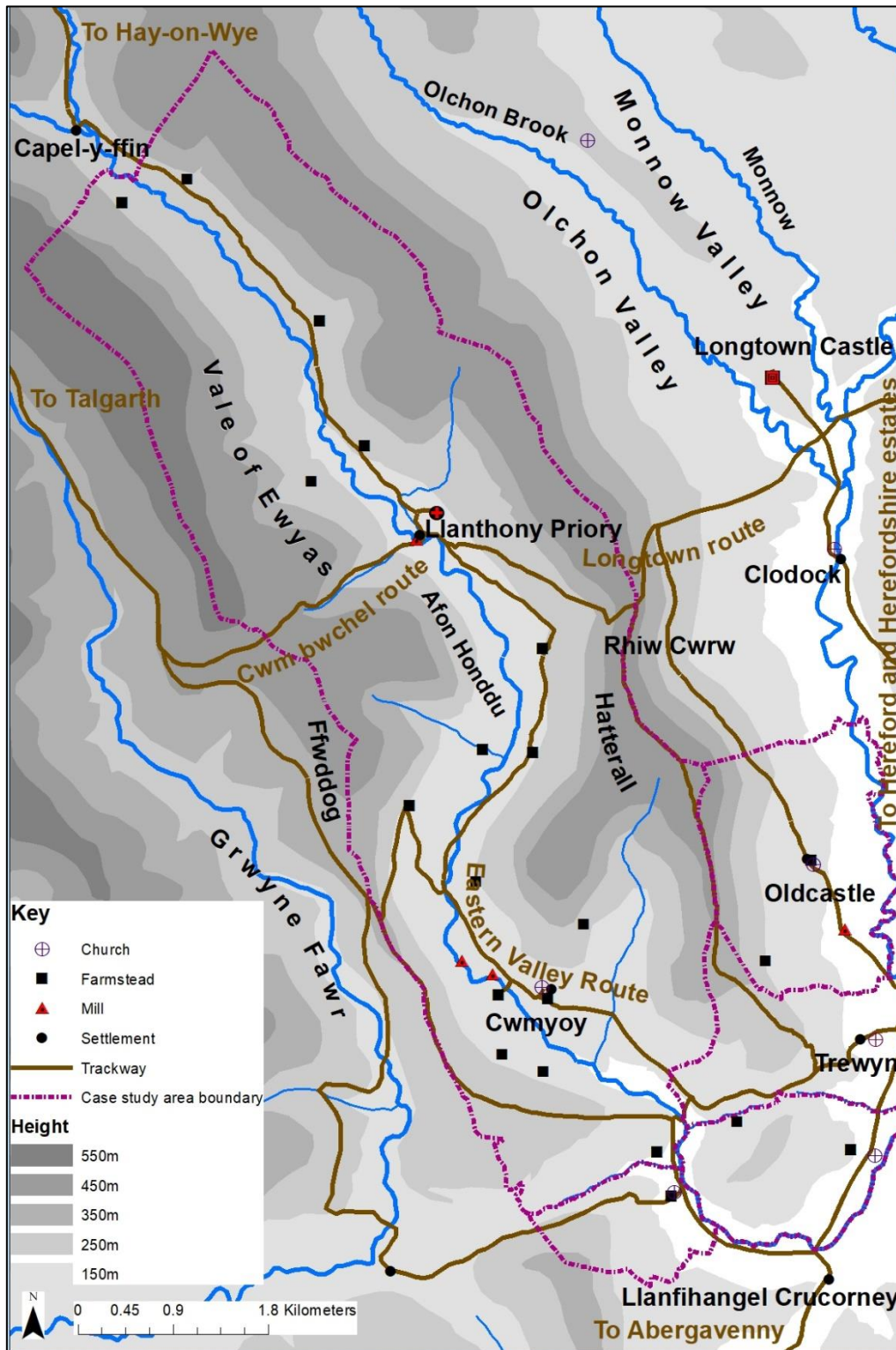


Figure 5.38: Postulated main medieval communication routes within Hothneyslade (Source: map drawn in ArcGIS® using Ordnance Survey 1:10560 County Series 1st edition, Monmouthshire, 1887 and 1:25000 Scale Colour Raster data layers, downloaded from Digimap® under licence, <http://digimap.edina.ac.uk/>).

The priory required a network of paths and lanes for the regular movement of stock, produce, people and goods to and from geographically spread estates, farms and satellites, provincial markets, neighbouring monastic and secular nodes and so forth. Monastic houses were also a focus for the regular movement of monks, ecclesiastical officials and high-status dignitaries, traders and other visitors and travellers. Pilgrims, poor wayfarers seeking charity and other more workaday movement would have added to the ebb and flow.

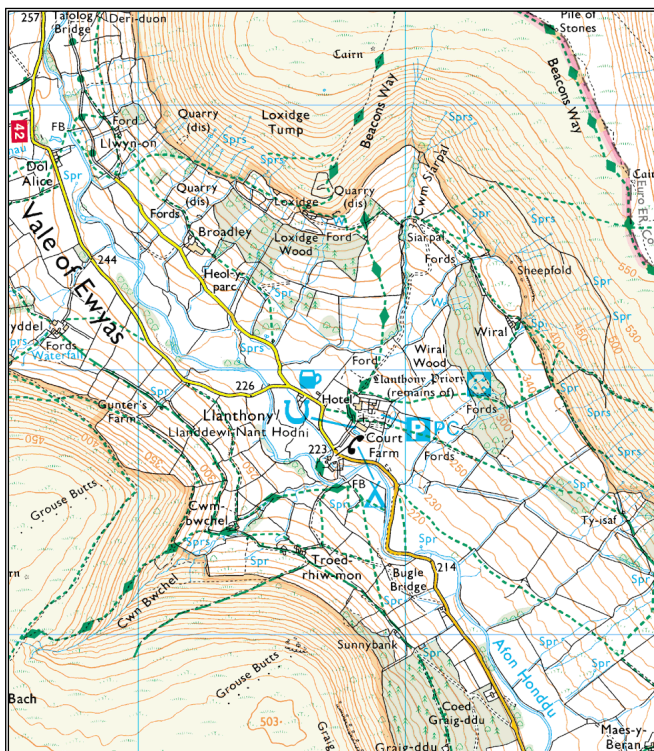


Figure 5.39: Network of tracks radiating out from Llanthony (Source: Ordnance Survey 1:25000 Scale Colour Raster, downloaded from Digimap® under licence, <http://digimap.edina.ac.uk/>).

Historic and modern cartography traces a thick spread of trackways radiating out from and connecting the priory nexus with its manorial hinterland and the wider communication network. Figure 5.38 maps the postulated primary medieval routes around Hothneyslade, notable examples of which are discussed below. Many remain as a web of winding farm lanes, deeply cut hollow-ways, stone-paved terrace-ways and drift paths grooved into the hillside known locally as *rhiws*; some long disused and forgotten, others Public Rights of Way (Figure 5.39). This legacy is particularly well-preserved

due to the subsequent marginality of the area and the difficult terrain over which many of the routes ran (Fleming 2009, 83).

The landscape inherited by the priory would have included pre-existing – often prehistoric – tracks up from settlements and along the mountain watersheds; the legacy of transhumance practice or long-standing trade routes, often remaining in medieval use. High-level ridge-line tracks lined with prehistoric features would have long formed a safer and easier alternative to the more densely wooded and marshy

valley floors (Wedell 2009a). It may well be that, initially at least, access routes to the priory continued to follow these high, open ridgeways for ease of passage and security (Colyer 1984, 10). Indeed, they seem to have remained in use beyond the monastic era: the track traversing the western heights of the Vale of Ewyas was still known as *Y-cefn-fordd-fawr* ('the great ridge road') in the late-sixteenth century (*Harley Archive*, 17/28/5). Also of long-standing antiquity are the diagonal and sometimes zig-zagging *rhiw* greenways terraced into the hillside from the intersection between the farmed landscape and the open upland grazing: steep tracks negotiated by sledges or two-wheeled 'gambos' pulled by oxen (Colyer 1984, 59; Griffiths 1995, 102; Procter 2014b; Williams 1981, 217). As the priory's manorial estate evolved throughout Hothneyslade, lower-level lanes developed binding farmsteads, churches and hamlets more permanently and enabling new ways for longer distance travel.

In the nineteenth century, the Reverend Roberts (1847, 218) noted that medieval sources regularly mentioned the high route over the Hatterall ridge as 'the ordinary way to Llanthony.' Before low-level alternatives to the south were instigated, this was the main way for most visitors and traffic from the lordship stronghold at Longtown and the priory's many estates in Herefordshire and England more widely. The track now most used to reach the priory ruins from the ridgeway (part of the Offa's Dyke Long Distance Trail) is commonly called 'the Beer Path'. Received wisdom, as oft repeated in guide books and other literary references, is that this moniker derives from the Welsh *Rhiw Arw*, originally *cwrw* meaning 'ale', a memory of the use of the path by the canons of Llanthony to transport ale (Hurley 2010, 91; Sinclair 2001, 313; Watkins 2005b, 51). This, though, is a cautionary tale of the risk of misinterpreting names in the landscape. *Rhiw Cwrw* ('ale pass or hillside') is, in fact, an ancient naming of the saddle over which the way from Longtown, redoubt of the de Lacy benefactors of the priory, climbs from the eastern flank of the Hatterall. *Rhiw Cwrw* was first recorded in the eighth century, in the *Book of Llandaff*, and so the name pre-dates the priory by several centuries at least (Coplestone-Crow 1989, 56; Wedell 2008, unpaginated). The Beer Path descending to the priory seems latterly to have taken on an Anglicised version of this ancient name, so giving rise to the fictional story of monks carrying ale along this trail (Hando 1944, 91). That its line reaches the priory enclosure via a nondescript field path crossing its northern

boundary rather than arriving at the gatehouse to the south is also problematic if it is to be considered monastic. A more likely origin is as a *rhiw* or drift road used by farmers to move stock up and down from the common upland grazing (Colin Passmore, pers. comment).



Figure 5.40: Route of the Old Roadway annotated by the author on a vertical aerial photograph (Source: © Crown copyright, Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historic Monuments of Wales, 1975, DI2007_1170 75.039-014).

Fieldwork for this project has identified a now-disused track (a prominent feature in the aerial photograph in Figure 5.40) charting a gentler course downslope of and parallel with the Beer Track as the more likely principal medieval passageway to and from the priory via the Hatterall ridgeway. Its lower portion, Old Roadway on the Upper Cwmyoy tithe map, now in part a deeply-incised sunken-way arcing into the approach lane south of the priory along the boundary of Bugley Meadow, elsewhere a broad drove-way cut by rilled streamlets, possibly originally lined by a ditch (*Tithe*

Map, Appleby 1852) (Figure 5.41). As it climbs the hillside, this disused track crosses a stream at which the remains of a rudimentary clapper-style stone bridge, medieval in form, can be observed (Figure 5.42). It then rises to run with and cross the post-medieval 'parish road' travelling along the eastern flank of the valley before ascending the upper heights of the hillside to switchback and meet the way to Longtown at a crossroads with the ridgeway on the Rhiw Cwrw col. Earthworks including embankments, braided hollow-ways and possible retaining stone work can be observed in this upper section.



Figure 5.41: Hollow-way section of the Old Roadway (Source: author).

Here the track also runs close to the ruined farmstead of Footway before climbing more steeply to the ridge, the name a memory of the passing route-way, literally the 'foot of the way' or perhaps derived from *ffordd* meaning 'road'. A 1679 manorial court entry records that 'we find that the way leading from Lanthony to Footway ... find it only a bridleway' (*NLW*, 1184); indication of the diminished status and poor state of this previously important monastic circuit, perhaps now only used as a farmer's *rhiw* to the high pasture. The centre of gravity by then had shifted from movement between the priory and the old Longtown seat of the de Lacys to Llanvihangel Crucorney to the south, home of the Arnold family, secular lords of Llanthony's local estates after the priory's demise.



Figure 5.42: Structural remains of a stone clapper-style bridge on the Old Roadway (Source: author)

As shown on the 1814 'Budgen' map of the Black Mountains, the Old Roadway connects eastwards with the terrace-way of the true Rhiw Arw identified above, thence a hollow-way lane forming the boundary between the parishes of Llanveynoe and Longtown (*BL*, OSD 195/ 22). Mention of this route comes in a 1674 lease document which identifies a field called Bryn Rewy ('hill road') in 'the vicinity of the lane called Heule y Rhiw Currow' (Wedell 1999, 43). A lane continues downhill passing Pen-rhewy ('end of the steep road') farm and fords the Olchon Brook to climb to Longtown, a thriving castle borough by the early-thirteenth century (Smith 2003, 9). Alfred Watkins (2005b, 50), who carried out field research in the district in the 1920s, identified then still cobbled stretches of the possible continuation of this route towards Hereford via the priory's manor of Rowlestone. Further details of the Old Roadway and Rhiw Arw route can be found in the landscape walk field notes at Appendix 6.



Figure 5.43: Stone slab surface of Cwm-bwchel track (Source: author).

Further fieldwork has identified the earth-banks and stonework of a cut and fill terrace-way descending to Llanthony from Bal-bach on the western ridge down the steep gully of Cwm-bwchel (Figure 5.38 and Figure 5.43). Further details and a sketch plan can be found at Appendix 7. This track, containing significant segments of the relict stone slabs and revetment walling of its construction, connected with both the ‘Great ridge road’ along the western elevation and an easement over the forbidding Black Mountains to Llangorse Lake in Brecknockshire on which the canons had fishing rights (Procter 2012, 103). The canons were said to use this passage to transport live fish wrapped in wet rushes to the priory fishponds (Mullard 2014, 240; Roberts 1847, 233; *GGAT HER*, 2354.0g).⁴⁴

Whilst the name Rhiw Pyscod (‘fish hill track’) may have been used for this itinerary in its entirety, a 1624 manorial survey identified the portion ascending Cwm-bwchel as Lloyber y Bulck (‘path of the pass’, from *Ilwybr y bwlch*) (NLW, MS 4.61).

The length of the Vale of Ewyas is today followed by a metalled through-road from Llanfihangel Crucorney to the south, tracking the western bank of the Honddu before climbing over Gospel Pass and down to Hay-on-Wye. This though is, in large part, a post-medieval route-way south of the priory, as evidenced by many straight and relatively wide segments. Medieval roads usually negotiated a more circuitous passage through occupied and demarcated land (Fleming 2010a, 71). This research

⁴⁴ A similar route has been recorded between Strata Florida Abbey and the well-stocked Teifi Pools fishing lakes in the Cambrian Mountains, including a slabbed track-way found under peat (Colyer 1984, 77).

has revealed that a more likely low-level medieval route to the priory from the south connecting its core estate farmsteads and other focal points: a well-defined but now out of the way turfed-over lane, embanked in parts, that runs from Llanthony to the manorial hamlet of Cwmyoy via the valley farms of Maes-y-beran and Weild (Figure 5.38 and Figure 5.44). This way largely follows the more forgiving gradient of the broader and less shadowed eastern side of the vale subject to more extensive medieval agricultural activity; a contrast to the steeper, more heavily wooded western flank traversed by the modern road.

The eastern valley road fords the river at Rhullan ('church road') and joins the line of its modern successor for one short stretch to avoid an extensive landslip below the resistant brownstones of the Darren promontory before switching back at Rhyd-yr-Honddu ('ford of the Honddu') (Millward and Robinson 1978, 32; Valley Views Magazine 1988). South of Cwmyoy, the route of this old valley way is now followed by the winding metalled lane that re-joins the modern through-road at the Queens Head Inn, having crossed the river once more at Pont Rhys Powell. This ancient bridge, recorded in 1612, also carried the ancient route from England into the interior of Wales as it traversed the southern edge of Hothneyslade. Running down from the Bwlch Trewyn pass, this 'old turnpike' as described by Archdeacon Coxe (1801, 225) then follow the lane past Stanton Manor Farm, and up over the northern edge of Bryn-arw westwards to Pont-y-escob ('bishop's bridge') at the mouth of Grwyne Fawr, named for the passing Bishop Baldwin on his preaching tour of 1188 (*NLW*, Cardiff Central Library MS 5.15; Thorpe 1978, 108). Further details of the eastern valley route can be found in the field notes from the Cwmyoy South landscape walk at Appendix 6.



Figure 5.44: Raised banked and hollow-way sections of the eastern valley route between Llanthony and Cwmyoy (Source: author).

One of the reasons for medieval folk moving more widely about the countryside was to visit religious sites connected to saints. Welsh shrines were popularised by a papal order that two pilgrimages to St David's Cathedral in Pembrokeshire were equivalent to one to Rome, unlocking a significant source of potential income for late-medieval monastic houses (Adair and Cheze-Brown 1978, 14; Colyer 1984, 63; Rackham 1986, 263). Associated with a hermitage of Saint David, the priory and other points on the way to and from it became part of the 'pilgrims' way' to St. David's. Charles Knight (*Gwent Archives*, D2408/2) has suggested a route from Trewyn to Llanthony via Cwmyoy (the church holding an image of Saint Leonard to which offerings were made) and then across to the old way through the Grwyne Fawr to Talgarth (Hurlock 2013, 123). The medieval cross found in a field near Cwmyoy mentioned in Section 5.5.6 may have originally served as a wayside Calvary on such a route, perhaps at Groes-lwyd ('holy or grey cross') near the

crossroads atop the Bwlch Trewyn pass between Trewyn chapel and Cwmyoy church that also stands at the edge of the priory's lands (other possible locations of wayside crosses are recorded in the gazetteer in Appendix 4). William of Wycombe's reference to an 'upright shaft of a cross' atop the Hatterall ridge on the route to Llanthony (quoted below) may be another indicator of pilgrimage, the bounds of the Austin canon's realm or a more general monastic waymarker; thus, not only waymarking and defining boundaries but also deepened the spiritual significance of the journey and attaching meaning to the places passed through (Moorhouse 1989, 37; Muir 2001, 45; Roberts 1847, 214-5; Whyte 2009, 29).

Visitors using these route-ways would make the final approach to Llanthony via the curve adopted by the modern valley road tracking the southern walled boundary of the monastic enclosure, winding round to what was the main historic entrance into the priory, the gatehouse (Figure 5.19). This provided maximum opportunity to view the impressive panorama of the conventual buildings and the more formal high-status features of the precinct, allowing visitors to arrive suitably awe-struck. A fossilised sunken way extends from the gatehouse to the main complex and stone foundations interpreted as a possible inner gatehouse have been found here. The current driveway to the ruins, hotel and Court Farm which strikes off at a right angle to the valley road is a later addition and breaches the line of the priory enclosure outer wall (excavated by Gardner 1916, 61).

5.7 Contemporary medieval perceptions of the landscape

'In the deep vale of Ewias, which is shut in on all sides by a circle of lofty mountains and which is no more than three arrow-shots in width, there stands the abbey church of Saint John the Baptist' (Thorpe 1978, 96).

The above description of Llanthony's position by Gerald of Wales is perhaps the most cited and evocative introduction to the priory's physical setting (Hughes 2006, 263). The Anglo-Norman cleric and scholar did not visit Llanthony directly on his journey through Wales in the 1190s: his party travelled down the neighbouring Grwyne Fawr valley to the west, Gerald's chapter on Llanthony is a digression, though he had close links with the priory and may have spent time there in his youth (Richter 1977-8, 118; Thorpe 1978, 97, 108-9). He described stone buildings with

lead roofs in his account, probably the choir and transept which represented the first stage of the rebuilding of the old church (Lovegrove 1943, 226). Gerald further commented on the temperate climate (providing a 'soul asylum and retreat' for the canons still largely based in exile in Gloucester), the fruitful and self-sufficient nature of the Welsh house, saving harsh words for the Secunda foundation and those who 'despoil the house of its herds and stores' (Thorpe 1978, 97-8). One of his most interesting observations when considering the medieval landscape is that:

'These mountain-heights abound in horses and wild game, those woods are richly-stocked with pigs, the shady groves with goats, the pasture-lands with sheep, the meadows with cattle, the farms with plough' (Thorpe 1978, 102-3).

A literal interpretation could be that the dense woodland described by Gerald as covering the vale when the community was set up had been transformed by the priory community and their tenants into productive farmland. References to an inherited 'wilderness' may though be metaphoric, in line with the allegorical vision of monasteries taming nature and bringing religion to new frontiers that such hagiographical descriptions tended to stress (Clarke 2006, 68; Davies 2014, 136).

Such allegorical references to the setting of Llanthony in the history of the priory have already been mentioned. The chronicle also contrasts life at the (then) mother house and the new foundation at Gloucester:

'there was a great deal of difference between the city of Gloucester and the rocks of Hatyre (Hatterall), between the Severn and the brook of Hodeni (Honddu) ... there fertile meadows, here barren heaths' (Atkyns 1974, 268).

Some light is also thrown on the relationship between the Black Canons and their neighbours. For instance, an episode in which a neighbouring Welsh nobleman was waylaid by his enemies in the 'outward court' of the priory and proceeded to seek shelter there with his large retinue, the prior forced to 'surrender his whole house to them, his chapel, his barns, cellars and all other useful offices' (*ibid.*, 267).



Figure 5.45: The summit of the Hatterall ridge at the point where the track from Longtown descends to the priory: the likely location of the cross mentioned in Wycombe's account (Source: author).

William of Wycombe's *Mirror of the Life of Robert de Béthune* provides a further visceral description of life at Llanthony in recounting a journey the prior made over the Hatterall ridge from the east, seemingly by the route outlined in Section 5.6 (Figure 5.45):

'When he arrived at the foot of the mountain they call Hatiram [Hatterall] night had already shut in the day; a wintry snow covered the roads ... he ascends slowly, sounding the road with his staff ... and now at last he attains the summit of the mountain, where the upright shaft of a cross offers a place of rest ... rising from his resting place, he attempts the descent of the mountain, which he finds to be even more severe than the ascent ... he makes his way to the point where the abrupt mountain-side descends by a gentle slope into the vale below; thence he hears the chiming of the bells to vespers in the church beneath him' (Roberts 1847, 214-5).

5.8 Conclusion

The agricultural footprint of Llanthony Priory as a medieval agent of change was perhaps lighter and certainly less evident than, for example, some of the great Cistercian houses of Wales. The farmed medieval landscape of Hothneyslade sketched out here, with clusters of closes, arable strips and paddocks nucleated around farmsteads amidst larger expanses of more open water meadows, unenclosed outfield, wood-pasture and coppice worked in common, would soon undergo a profound transformation. Piecemeal enclosure by informal agreement and encroachment commenced in the 1500s would be accelerated in the following 200 years (Johnson 1996, 52-4): a process dubbed by Christopher Taylor (1975, 115) as 'large-scale but silent enclosure by agreement.' These significant changes in the agricultural landscape are chronicled in the next chapter but many of the seeds were sown during the monastic era through, for instance:

- The creation of the enduring Hothneyslade/ Llanthony estate unit and its shaping of the future Anglo-Welsh border and county boundaries in the area;
- An established pattern of 'valley' and '*nant*' farms within the estate, with their arable and stock-rearing specialisms.
- The stirrings of a class of aspirational yeoman farmers amongst the priory's manorial tenantry enjoying the benefits of a particular form of copyhold tenure;
- Even in the stone for the rebuilding of nearby houses and farmsteads reclaimed from the priory's buildings.

The narrative of copyholders outside of direct monastic control shaping the landscape, perhaps from as early as the fourteenth century, as espoused by Austin (2014) taps into a wider debate as to whether landowners or tenant farmers were the key agents of change in the medieval landscape (Rippon 2009, 242). It also raises the question of whether they would have had this level of autonomy if a firmer lordship than the often-struggling priory was in place. A trend was being set echoing into the future, with a core group of independent-minded tenantry taking the lead on agricultural development whilst lords of the manor struggled with the economics of fixed low rents or lacked the interest or skill to innovate and manage effectively.



Figure 5.46: The Llanthony precinct, enclosure and its topographical hinterland (Source: author).

Of course, the priory ruins themselves are also important. The building complex and its topographical hinterland became a focus, catalyst and inspiration for future landscape development, as well as providing the district with a large part of its touristic and spiritual sense of place and *genius loci* (Figure 5.46). There are also many other marks on the landscape from the time of the Black Canons of Llanthony, constituting what Nicola Whyte (2009, 25) has termed ‘a wide-reaching geography of monastic provision’, including the concentration of small churches and chapels in the area and the notable prevalence of English and Anglo-Welsh hybrid place- and field-names. The network of communication routes was a particularly enduring legacy, as well as wayside crosses and other workaday landscape features.

Chapter 6

Case study 1: Llanthony Priory – the post-Dissolution landscape

6.1 Introduction

This chapter commences with a history of the ownership and development of the priory and Hothneyslade estates from the Dissolution up to the present day. The core narrative then describes the evolution of the landscape following suppression, assessing the monastic legacy and the extent of continuity and change. This analysis is supplemented by ‘point in time’ GIS mapping of the Hothneyslade manors in the mid-nineteenth century (Figures 6.2 – 6.6; the methodology and sources are outlined in detail in Chapter 4 and Appendix 2). How the landscape has been perceived in the past and in the present day, particularly in relation to its monastic legacy, is then addressed. Field notes from the landscape walks in the study area (Appendix 6), a list of artistic and literary references (Appendix 9) and a summary of responses to a landscape perception survey and interviews (Appendix 10 and extract at Figure 6.40) support these sections. This structure is repeated for the further case studies in chapters 8 and 10.

6.2 History of the priory and its estates since the Dissolution

Following its dissolution in 1538, Llanthony’s estates remained intact as a single appropriated block. The priory and all its ‘Lordships, Manors, Lands and Tenements, Rectories, portions and pensions and other Possessions’ were granted to Sir Nicholas Arnold, Lord Chief Justice of Ireland, who finally took ownership in 1546 (Bradney 1993d, 234; *NLW*, Baker-Gabb Family Papers/GB 0210 BAKERGABB; PRO undated, 163). Arnold’s purchase coincided with another highly significant development, the Acts of Union merging England and Wales politically between 1536 and 1543. A new boundary along the Hatterall ridge cleaved Hothneyslade, now in Wales and Monmouthshire, from the rest of Ewyas Lacy, now in England and Herefordshire. As Wedell (2009a) notes, in defining the border thus, the acts

appeared to give precedence to the old manorial topography of Llanthony's landholdings over what would have been more administratively and geographically logical: a familiar trajectory for former monastic estates in Wales (Watt 2000, 23).

Llanthony's possessions remained in the ownership of Arnold's descendants and his grandson, another Nicholas, extended the family landholdings in the area by taking lordship of the adjacent Llanfihangel estate, establishing home at Llanfihangel Court with the priory as a secondary residence (Bradney 1993d, 215-6). Hothneyslade, or variations of, remained a name of currency after the Reformation and at least into the early-seventeenth century. It does, though, seem to have disappeared from use thereafter, superseded by Cwmyoy, Llanthony or 'Cwmyoy alias Llanthony' as the more everyday lordship and estate title in manorial documents (Cwmyoy the name taken by the upper and lower portions of the parish largely coterminous with the manor). The Arnold family took the title 'of Llanthony', the 1665-1775 court book recording 'the Abby of Lanthony which gives name to the Lordship'; recognition that though the priory had been long in poverty and was now defunct, its name remained, bestowing both status and antiquity (*Gwent Archives*, D2408/2; *NLW*, 1184). Still part of the core estate, Oldcastle remained somewhat separate as both a manor and parish into the modern period, whilst Redcastle was eventually subsumed into both the Cwmyoy manor and Lower Cwmyoy parish and Stanton became detached as part of Llanfihangel Crucorney parish.

The Arnolds experienced long-running disputes with their tenants and were often in serious debt. Consequently, the Llanthony Estate, Llanfihangel and other ex-priory holdings in Herefordshire, were eventually sold on to Edward Harley, later the Earl of Oxford, of Brampton Bryan in north Herefordshire in 1726 for the significant sum of £36,186 (*HA*, 1726, Bundle 16). Harley's period of ownership was characterised by some modernisation of estate management and tenurial arrangements, including disposal of the historic tithes held elsewhere in the district, thus further loosening ties between the core domain and wider ex-monastic possessions and interests (Austin 2014, 39; Wedell 2009b). In 1799 the Llanthony and Llanfihangel estates and other remaining ex-priory assets in the portfolio, including Oldcastle, Redcastle and Stanton, were put up for sale in lots (*NLW*, GB 0210 BAKERGABB). The Llanthony Estate was sold to Colonel Mark Wood of Brecon, absentee landlord and speculator,

whilst Redcastle and Stanton were taken on by Hugh Powell, newly lord of Llanfihangel. Wood's plans for a shooting estate based at the priory saw the south-west tower and adjoining canon's dorter and *cellarium* converted into a lodge and house for his steward, the beginnings of the hotel that still abuts the ruins today (Figure 6.1); his main legacy, however, seems to be one of despoliation and disrepair (Fancourt undated, 5; Rowley 2001, 133). This familiar story of relative neglect was dramatically interrupted when the 'very noble property' of the Llanthony Estate was purchased by the Romantic poet Walter Savage Landor in 1809 (Colvin 1881, 45). Landor had ambitious plans to turn the property into a grand country estate but most of his designs were unrealised, as will be surveyed in more detail in Section 6.3.5 (Procter 2012, 99). By this stage, the Oldcastle, Redcastle and Stanton manors, eventually divided in the later-twentieth century, were under separate ownership (*Glam Archives*, DSA/6/470; DSA/6/863; *Gwent Archives*, D591/32A/229).



Figure 6.1: The Abbey Hotel and bar, originally Colonel Wood's shooting lodge utilising the south-west tower of the priory church (Source: author).

Landor left abruptly in 1814 and there followed a long period in which his family ran estate affairs from afar, their local agent resident at Court Farm, until the Llanthony Estate was finally broken up in 1958 when the, by now, freehold constituent properties were mostly sold to their sitting tenants. Residual elements of the estate,

including the priory ruins, hotel and 11 farms and small-holdings were sold separate lots in 1966 (*Gwent Archives*, D2408.22). Ministry of Works restoration of the remaining shell of the conventual buildings had begun in the 1930s. Though the priory site and agricultural land of the outer enclosures remain in private ownership, the ruins came under the guardianship of the Ministry of Works in 1951 and the core area and part of the inner and outer courts are a Scheduled Ancient Monument under Cadw management (Craster 1963, 12).

6.3 Post-Dissolution landscape evolution

Figures 6.2 to 6.6 capture the mid-nineteenth century Hothneyslade landscape in the finely-grained detail of tithe maps, reference points for the narrative presented below. The map and the accompanying analysis are informed by the landscape walks and other field observation carried out for this project, contemporary and early post-medieval documentary evidence, analysis of field systems and other landscape features using map regression, aerial photography and satellite imagery, previous archaeological and historical research, place- and field-name evidence and research on the wider medieval landscape. A more detailed outline of the methodology and sources used to produce this map can be found at Appendix 2

Apparent are the results of a great post-medieval consolidation and piecemeal enclosure, reorganising both existing closes and arable land and bringing the long belts of open flood meadow and wood-pasture into the fieldscape, with a notable reduction in the amount of woodland compared to the medieval picture and intake from the common *ffridd* as new farmsteads developed (though some more marginal enclosures have returned to rough pasture). The result a patchwork of mostly regular-shaped fields, larger in the broader reaches of the vale, smaller on the higher slopes and upper valley. Early, largely undocumented, waves of these progressions perhaps commencing during the later-monastic period. This broad sketch of landscape evolution will now be looked at in more detail.

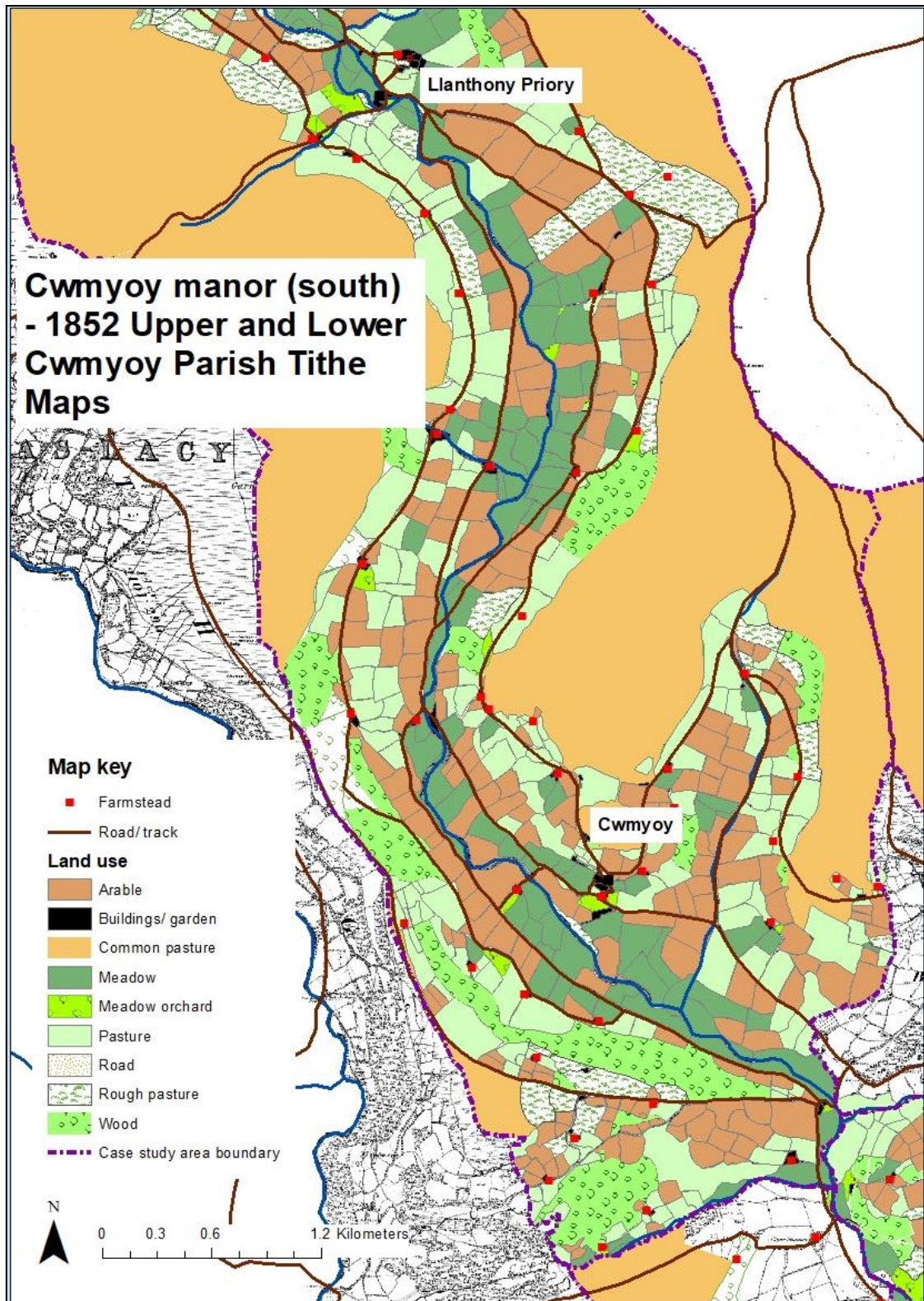


Figure 6.2: Cwmyoy manor (south) - land-use and field patterns from the 1852 Upper and Lower Cwmyoy Parish Tithe Maps (Source: map drawn in ArcGIS® using Ordnance Survey 1:10560 County Series 1st edition, Monmouthshire, 1887 data layer, downloaded from Digimap® under licence, <http://digimap.edina.ac.uk/>).

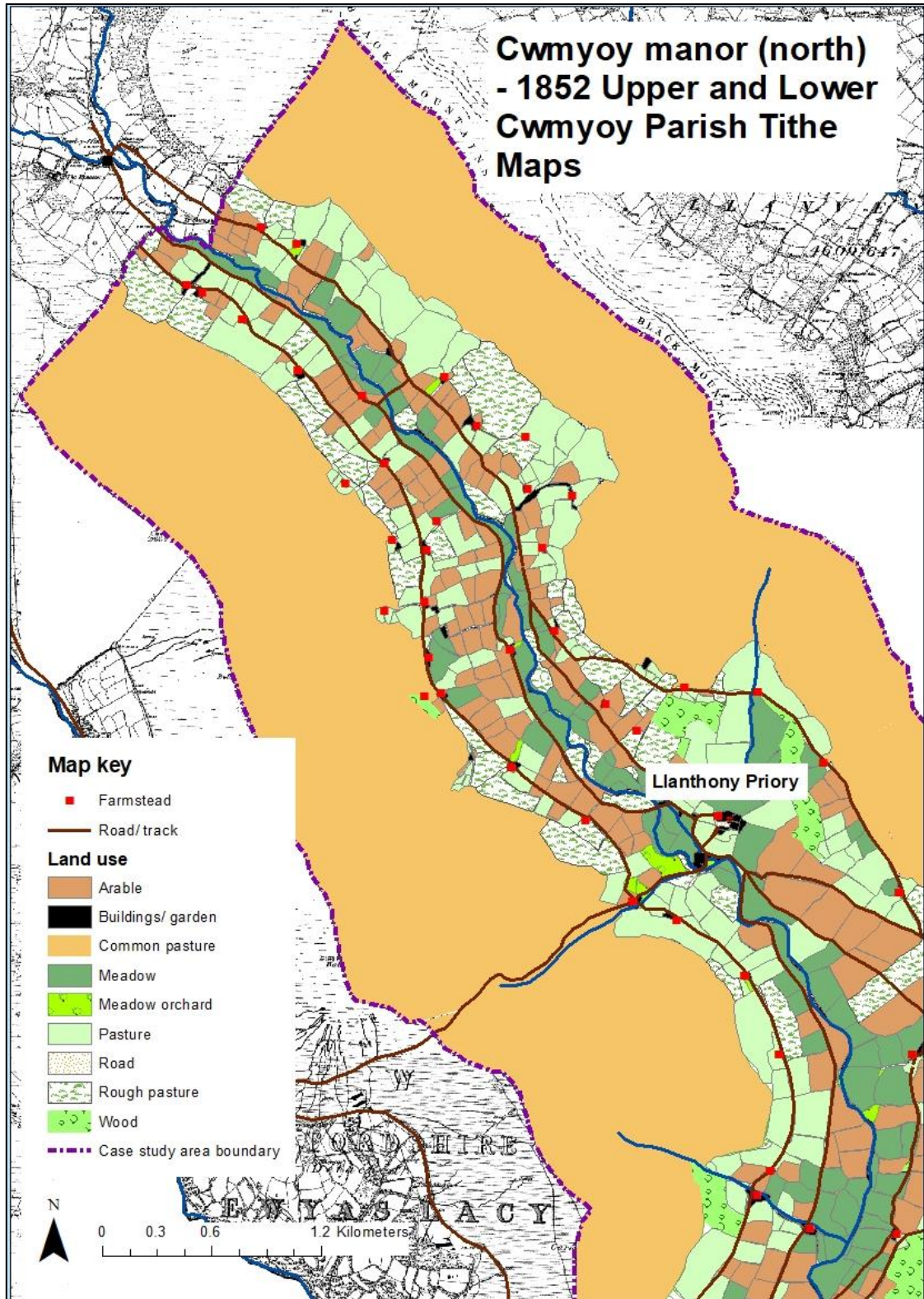


Figure 6.3: Cwmyoy manor (north) - land-use and field patterns from the 1852 Upper and Lower Cwmyoy Parish Tithe Maps (Source: map drawn in ArcGIS® using Ordnance Survey 1:10560 County Series 1st edition, Monmouthshire, 1887 data layer, downloaded from Digimap® under licence, <http://digimap.edina.ac.uk/>).

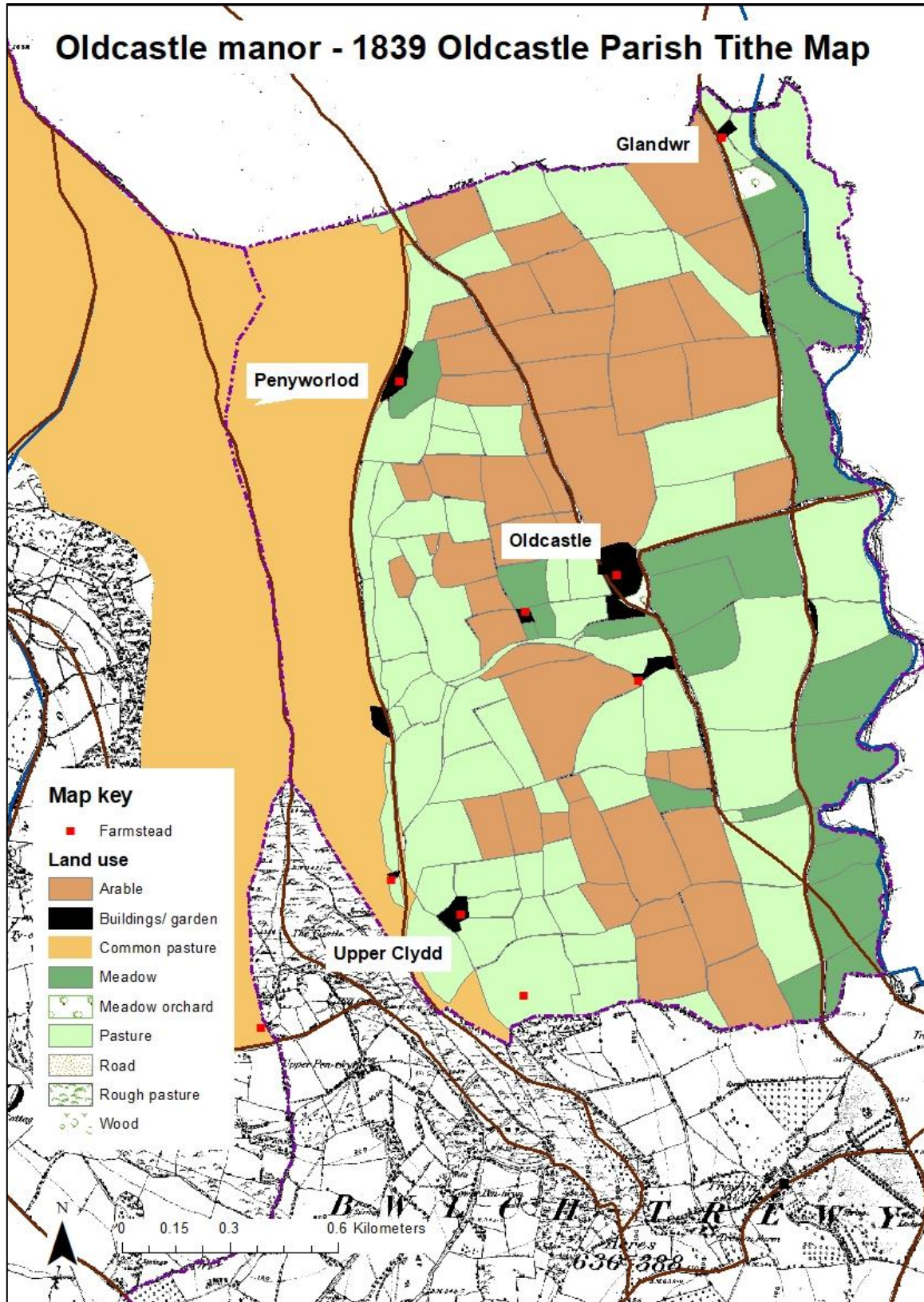


Figure 6.4: Oldcastle manor - land-use and field patterns from the 1839 Oldcastle Parish Tithe Map (Source: map drawn in ArcGIS® using Ordnance Survey 1:10560 County Series 1st edition, Monmouthshire, 1887 data layer, downloaded from Digimap® under licence, <http://digimap.edina.ac.uk/>).

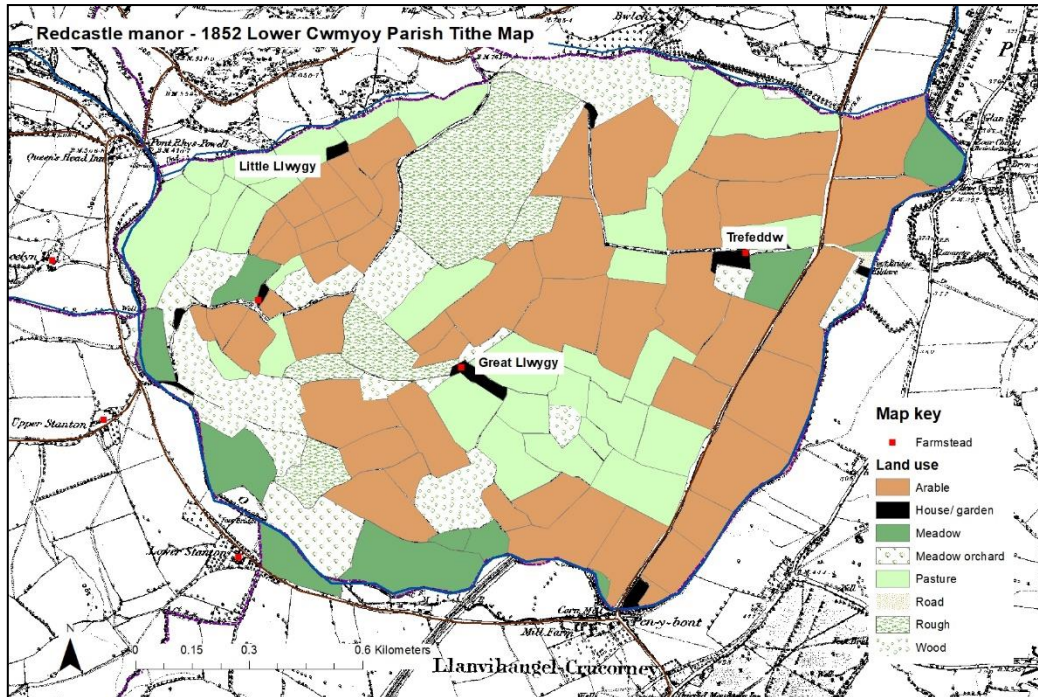


Figure 6.5: Redcastle manor - land-use and field patterns from the 1852 Lower Cwmyoy Parish Tithe Map (Source: map drawn in ArcGIS® using Ordnance Survey 1:10560 County Series 1st edition, Monmouthshire, 1887 data layer, downloaded from Digimap® under licence, <http://digimap.edina.ac.uk/>).

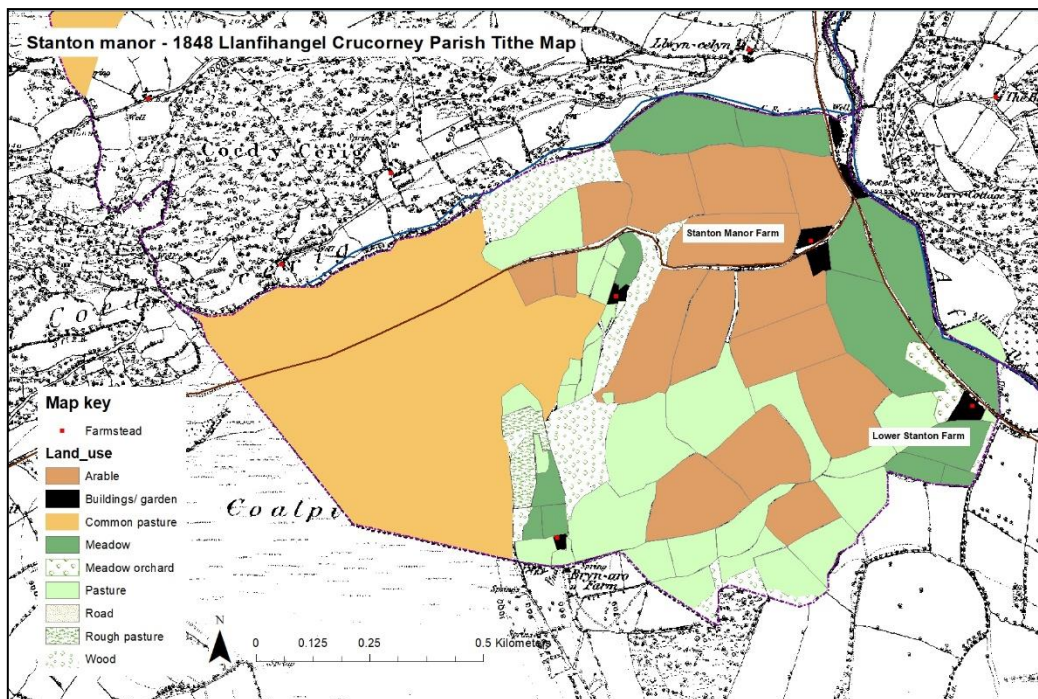


Figure 6.6: Stanton manor – land-use and field patterns from the 1848 Llanfihangel Crucorney Parish Tithe Map (Source: map drawn in ArcGIS® using Ordnance Survey 1:10560 County Series 1st edition, Monmouthshire, 1887 data layer, downloaded from Digimap® under licence, <http://digimap.edina.ac.uk/>).

6.3.1 Priory precinct and outer enclosure



Figure 6.7: St. David's parish church occupying the site of the priory infirmary (Source: author).

It would be wrong to think of the priory as simply falling into immediate ruination after the suppression. The main claustral buildings remained generally intact for the first few decades, although probably already in a state of decay in the later monastic era; whilst many of the ancillary buildings may have been taken down, their materials repurposed (Coppack 2003, 131; Doggett 2001, 165). The infirmary became and remains St. David's, the parish church of Upper Cwmyoy, other parts of the complex remained habitable and subject to various uses (Figure 6.7). Remaining parts of the west range originally converted into a hunting lodge by Colonel Wood became the Llanthony Abbey hotel, whilst a conjoined house, The Court, managing the *demesne* acreage of the old priory home farm, is thought to date from the mid-sixteenth century 'Greate House', the present building constructed in the 1620s or 30s (*Gwent Archives*, D2408/1; *Hereford Archives*, AB97/10a; Newman 2002, 349). A population also remained within the hamlet between the river and the precinct that took its name from the priory. From the late-sixteenth century, the local populace began robbing stone for building materials: a destructive trend – allied to unsympathetic ownership – that continued into the late-nineteenth century despite the presence of plentiful

local quarries (Evans 1984, 54; Gardner 1916, 61; Roberts 1847, 244). During Colonel Wood's tenure, the higher part of the central tower was partly taken down, the great east window collapsing by the end of the eighteenth century (Mason 1975, 50). Beyond the precinct, the perimeter of the outer enclosures was retained in field boundary banks, ditches and a watercourse; fossilised monastic fabric surviving as relict features in the modern landscape (Astill *et al* 2004, 109).

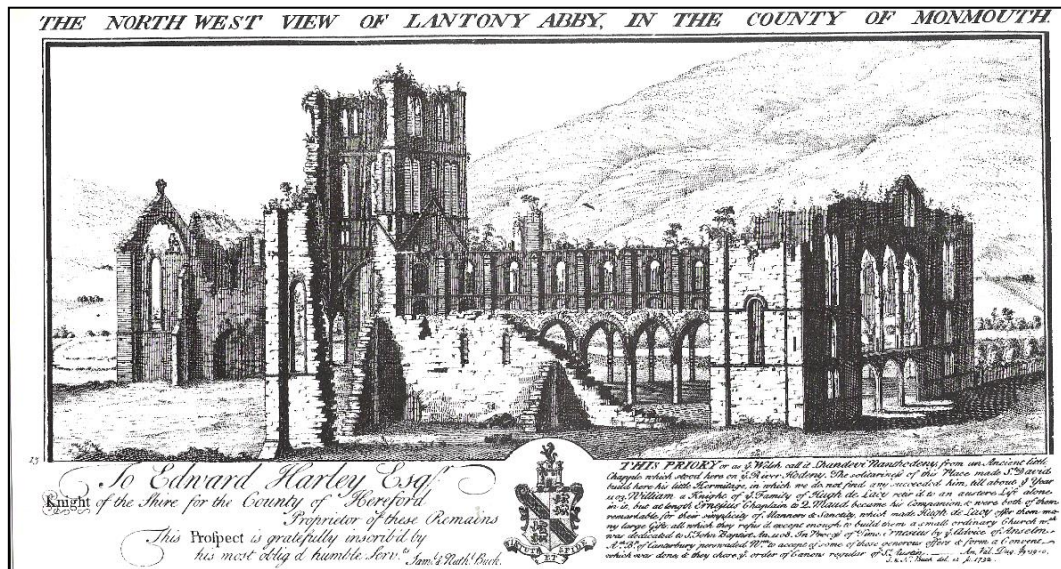


Figure 6.8: The Buck brothers' representation of the priory in 1732: a despoiled structure but with much still intact that has now gone, including the great west window (to the right), much of the central tower and all the piers of the nave (Source: © National Museum of Wales).

Revived interest in Gothic ruins from the late-eighteenth century led to more visitors and the previous long-term despoliation and neglect of the ruins began to slowdown, be regretted and recorded (Craster 1963, 12; Rowley 2001, 134) (Figure 6.8). By the early-twentieth century, the hotel, precinct ruins and surrounding landscape provided an attraction to grouse-shooting and fishing parties, hill-walkers and those lured by the history and peaceful position of the priory: 'a favourite object of pilgrimage throughout the summer months amongst the quieter and more intelligent type of excursionist' (Bradley 1911, 89; Colvin 1881, 54).

6.3.2 The wider post-medieval estate landscape

Outside the precinct and *demesne* farms, the suppression of the priory probably had limited direct impact on the surrounding countryside *per se*. Late-Tudor trends and developments in landholding and agrarian practice more generally would be the dominant influencers on landscape change (Brown 2012, 25, 297). As we have seen in the previous chapter, the older farms of Hothneyslade ‘except the *demesne* lands of Lanthony and Cwmyoy were all held by copy of Court Roll for the life of the taker of the Copy and his assignee’, probably codified sometime in the later fifteenth century (*NLW*, 1184). The copyholders held a keen knowledge of their historic land-use rights ‘time out of mind’, rooted in memory, kinship and a practical knowledge of the landscape (Whyte 2009, 6). The decline of the priory and wider economic forces propelled these long-established farming families into a strong position as the main agents of post-medieval dynamism in the agricultural landscape. Canny, newly cash rich, enterprising and eager to improve their lot, they were capitalising on a coming together in the late-sixteenth century and into the 1600s of both localised circumstances and wider economic and societal shifts. Low fixed rents and rising produce prices as new markets opened-up encouraged the commercialisation of land and farming and a more individualised relationship between tenant and lord; all underpinned, in the Welsh Marches, by a new stability wrought by the Acts of Union (Johnson 1996; Simmons 2003, 308; Taylor 1975, 118).

Much is known about how such transformations played out in Hothneyslade because this group of powerful tenants were in a long-running legal dispute with the Arnold family, lords of the manor, from 1611 to 1719. As David Austin (2014) has demonstrated, the legacy of this conflict is an array of contemporary archive material providing rich evidence of farmstead expansion and enclosure, of tenurial arrangements and customary practice and the ongoing contested relationship between lord and tenant. The tenantry, from whose number key manorial court positions were filled, valued their traditional customary structure but sought to reinterpret it to assist their ambitions. For their part, the Arnolds were keen to completely replace the old arrangements with modernised property and tenure practice to wrestle back control of estate management and address their severe

debts (*ibid.*, 29). During the second Nicholas Arnold's lordship, from about 1700, the Cwmyoy manor court book evidences a more authoritarian approach, with frequent fines for lapses in tenant responsibilities such as building and road maintenance and the removal of mature trees from the lord's woodland (*ibid.*, 37). For instance, in 1703 Phillip Gunter, copyholder at Nantygwyddel, had 'committed severall wasts on the said copyhold estates by suffering one house to continue ruinous and by felling and selling great quantities of wood above the growth of twenty years' (*Harley Archive*, MS 17/14).



Figure 6.9: An artist's impression of Llwyn-celyn farmhouse in Cwmyoy manor after a first floor, chimney and other enhancements were added to the original hall house in the seventeenth century (Source: © Landmark Trust, www.landmarktrust.org.uk/Properties-list/Llwyn-Celyn/History1/#tabs=History).

Although the homes of the rising copyholders were working farms and not overly influenced by external fashions, they were also part of a 'golden age of vernacular architecture' between 1400 and 1650 (Smith 1975, 141). This was 'the Great Rebuilding' as a rising class of wealthy farmers reconstructed their cruck-framed open-hall houses into portioned and two-storeyed houses; stone and brick replacing the characteristic 'black and white' half-timbered walls of the Herefordshire style, alongside new innovations such as chimneys and glass windows (Fox and Raglan 1951b, 15; Smith 1975, 147, 264) (Figure 6.9). Local building traditions coalesced with a wider trend of improvement in the south-eastern borderlands and a steady

drift towards greater uniformity of plan, decoration and construction more generally (Longcraft 2007, 24; Smith 1975, 149). A snapshot of this process is captured in a 1612 Cwmyoy manor survey reference to the rights of tenants to use stone from quarries in the manor for the 'edifying and repairing of their howses' (*NLW*, Cardiff Central Library MS 5.15). Documentary and field evidence suggests that many of the farm buildings in the area result from this busy period of reconstruction from the mid-sixteenth to early-eighteenth century (Hodges 2015, 278; Smith 1975, 435). For instance, Little Llwygy, Llwyn-celyn, Lower Stanton, Treveddw and Troed-y-rhiw-gou are examples of seventeenth century newly storeyed or converted cruck-framed hall houses (Fox and Raglan 1951b, 122; Smith 1975, 453-4).

These newly improved dwellings remained very much working farmsteads with all the attendant 'apparatus, the barns and beast houses, the muck and the mire' (Smith 1975, 323). Now sitting in a largely pastoral modern-day landscape and often used for general storage, its true purpose forgotten, the grain barn with characteristic opposing doorways and narrow ventilation slits was the most important building (*ibid.*, 142-3). Even in an upland environment most farmers grew corn – an important activity in the Vale of Ewyas, evident from the high proportion of arable fields in Figures 6.2-6.6 – to feed themselves and their animals in winter. The area has few stand-alone byres or field barns, highlighting the dominance of sheep rearing and decline in cattle breeding in the Black Mountains more generally by this time (Hodges 2015, 135).

The Cwmyoy manorial surveys of 1612, 1624 and 1675 commissioned during the aforementioned landlord-tenant dispute chronicle the contemporary field patterns and general land-use, with copious references to closes, meadows, parcels of land, roads and other topographical features (*NLW*, Cardiff Central Library MS 4.61; MS 5.15). Court books and proceedings of court barons running through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries reveal further field names, agricultural practice, custom and tenureship, helping to show how the local populace understood and gave meaning to their landscape (*Glam Archives*, CL/MS.4.61-63; *NLW*, 1184; Whyte 2009, 11). Here surnames of the copyhold families farming these lands and administering the manor court, some still found locally today, appear again and again. The emboldened

Gunters, Parrys, Powells, Prices, Prossers, Thomas' and Watkins' were increasing the size of their holdings and expanding further into uncultivated 'forest land' waste whilst also rebuilding their farmhouses and out-buildings as expressions of new-found wealth and status. Initially, these were often illegal encroachments, no doubt with the complicity of the manor court officials – drawn as they were from the same local families. Particularly striking was a great wave of piecemeal enclosure by informal agreement of the shared open wood-pasture on the valley sides and the higher grassland of the *ffridd* and *fforest* waste suited to the growing vogue for sheep-rearing requiring less daily animal supervision (Fleming 2010a, 106; Johnson 1996, 55; Simmons 2003, 308; Taylor 1975, 126).

Many examples catch the eye in the manorial documents, though locating them in the landscape is often difficult as farmsteads were not yet commonly named and contemporary field names have not always survived. In 1592 Roger ap Rice 'took from the Lord one parcel of waste land of the Lord's forest containing 40a in Cwmyoy' (*Harley Archive*, 17/28/2). A year later, on the hillside above Little Lwygy in Redcastle 'William Phillipp John Powell took one parcel of waste land of the common of Lloythgie viz one quarter of Lloythgie (40a) ... on all sides as now set out and divided by metes and bounds' (*Harley Archive*, 17/28/13). In Oldcastle, Watkin ap Glyn enclosed 'one parcel of land of Forest waste called Tarren Clyth' above Clydd farm 'rendering 12d a year and as a herriot when it arises the best animal' and assigned to John Price the Elder (*NLW*, Cardiff Central Library MS 5.15). One legacy of this piecemeal enclosure is a field name that recurs regularly in the manorial documents and later tithe surveys: 'purchas/ poorcas' (or variations), signifying land acquired by purchase (from *pwrcas*) from the lord's waste and enclosed into large pastures (Figure 6.10). For example, Cae yr Purchas Newydd ('field of the new purchase') and Cae yr Purcaswenith ('field of the purchase from the moor') at Llwyn-celyn (*Glam Archives*, C/L MS 4.63).

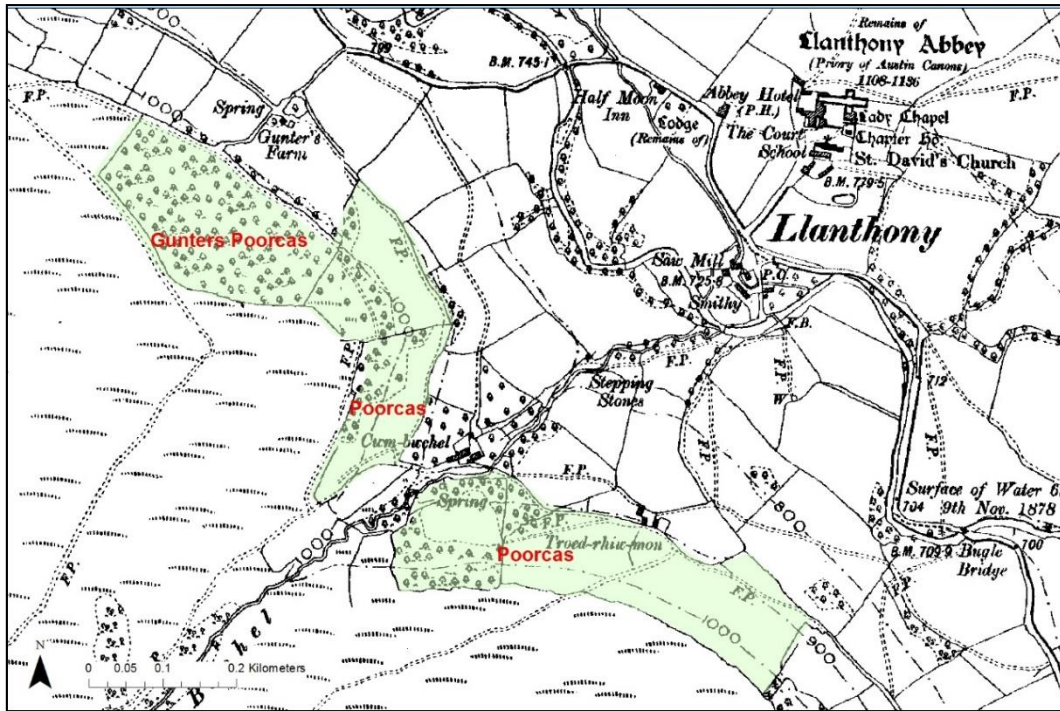


Figure 6.10: Examples of 'purcas/ poorcas' fields from the Cwmyoy tithe map (Source: map drawn in ArcGIS® using Ordnance Survey 1:10560 County Series 1st revision, Monmouthshire, 1905, data layer, downloaded from Digimap® under licence, <http://digimap.edina.ac.uk/>).

Many of the larger intakes would have expanded the stock of *nant* farmsteads identified in Chapter 5: developed by the cash-rich copyholders and then sub-let (whether officially recognised or not) to family members or others hungering for land. This process would also see old seasonal settlements or *hafodydd* converted into permanent habitations. A 'new and developing cultural landscape' of smaller and higher farms was emerging on the hill-bluffs above the long-established farmsteads (Hodges 2015, 11; Johnson 1996, 55; Silvester 2009). These developing farms vigorously enclosed the surrounding slopes, traditionally the great open outfield and wood-pasture, for sheep pasture and small-scale arable cultivation. Such modest mixed farms can be imagined from a 1711 description of Phillip Gunter's holding of Nany-y-gwyddel: 'one messuage or tenement, one bakehouse, one barn, 2 orchards, 2 gardens and certain parcels of lands, arable, meadow, flooding pasture and wood adjoining to the said messuage containing by estimation 45 acres of land' (NLW, Cardiff MS 4.63) (Figure 6.11). Landlords, alive to potential income, soon came to use the manorial courts to recognise and regulate these new arrivals, charging annual rents at market rates outside of the traditional tenurial system (Hodges 2015, 10-1; Silvester 2009).



Figure 6.11: The hillside setting of Nantygwyddel farmstead beside a stream, with good access to enclosed fields, woodland and upland grazing common (Source: author).

As the amount of open common decreased, and to prevent the loss of valued grazing rights, the powerful copyholders also adopted a strategy, no doubt agreed amongst themselves, of purchasing the rights of smaller properties or parcels of land adjacent to their own as they lapsed, often leaving the farmhouse empty. Thus, they effectively increased the size of their own holdings as well as securing additional shared rights (Austin 2014, 36). For instance, in 1593 William ap Rice ‘took by surrender of William Gunter one messuage or tenement with arable, meadow and pasture lands (40a) lying in Cwmyoy’ next to his own farm (*Harley Archive*, 17/28/7). North of Cwm-bwchel, William George ‘took from the Lord one parcel of the Lord’s forest containing 30 acres lying next to the land of the said William George, formerly in tenure of William Thomas Charles’ in 1674, including rights to take ‘housebote’ and other wood-based reserves suggesting a wood-pasture environment (*Harley Archive*, 17/28/1). In other cases, land would be taken on and sub-let. In 1580, Richus (Rees) William ‘took from the Lord ... various closes of arable land, pasture’ along the River Honddu in Redcastle opposite Stanton ‘to hold to him and to three assigns for rent 12/-’, then assigned to ‘John Parry John Ychan, the tenant’ (*NLW*, MS 4.61).



Figure 6.12: An area of old common wood-pasture naturally bounded by fluted streams (Source: author).

The enclosure pattern observed in the historic landscape of Hothneyslade, one of mostly neat coaxial and rectangular fields, is perhaps somewhat at odds with this evidence of a largely piecemeal laying out as medieval ways lapsed and new agrarian practice and farming units emerged. Closer inspection of the field systems on map and ground reveals that long, largely linear boundaries transect the valley sides at regular intervals bounding both upper pasture and flood-land meadow. These, in fact, follow the course of the many fluted streams running straight from the steep high ground, hedges and fences added later as land partitions hardened into divisions of individual ownership (Figure 6.12). This pattern is noticeable throughout the Vale of Ewyas but is particularly clear along the broader eastern flank of the valley between Llanthony and Henllan (Figure 6.13). Higher up the vale, such fields are narrower reflecting the greater concentration of mountain streams. It seems likely that these natural gulleys would have been anciently used to demarcate rights of access to common wood-pasture, consolidated as obvious field boundaries when enclosure and increasing stock levels took hold on the ‘wide pasturage’ of the valley sides (Williams 1990b, 192). Granting the emerging piecemeal field systems a more regular morphology, similar to later patterns of planned enclosure observed elsewhere, these boundaries are, in fact, the product of organic demarcation

practice, set by natural topography and ancient custom as much as economic or agricultural considerations (Finch 2007, 42).

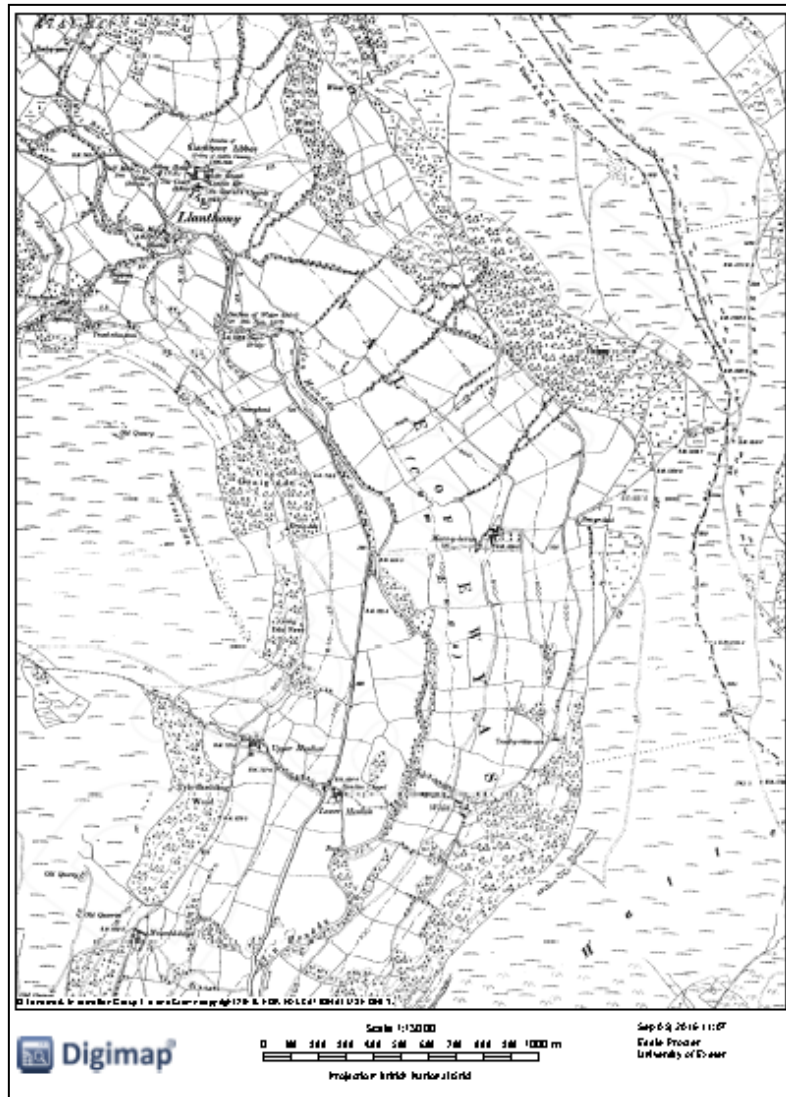


Figure 6.13: Long, linear field boundaries on the eastern side of the valley between Llanthony and Cwmoy following the course of streams (Source: Ordnance Survey 1:10560 County Series 1st revision, Monmouthshire, 1905, downloaded from Digimap® under licence, <http://digimap.edina.ac.uk/>).

Another arresting characteristic of the Hothneyslade landscape is the well-constructed dry-stone wall running along the divide between enclosed fields and the high, open rough grazing, part of an almost continuous structure snaking around the valleys and perimeter of the Black Mountains (Figure 6.14). Still largely extant, though tumble-down or replaced with a fence in parts, the ‘mountain wall’ is a structure typical of upland Wales (Garner 2009, 8; Hodges 2015, 14-5). The higher altitude agricultural activity enabled by the south-facing aspect of much of the

eastern side of the Vale of Ewyas has already been remarked upon, and Figure 6.13 shows how this determined a higher line for the wall than on the opposite flank (Hodges 2015, 36). The earliest written evidence for the wall comes from the western Black Mountains, in a 1561 Crickhowell estate survey and its first iteration seems to have been largely completed by the end of the seventeenth century, built in cooperation between tenants and landowner (*ibid.*, 280). As such, the mountain wall was an intrinsic component of the socio-economic changes outlined above; a physical symbol of the emerging measured and controlled landscape, constructed to cleave the remaining open commons above from the recently plotted and pieced landscape below though also formalising an anciently established conceptual land-use demarcation (Austin 2016). Although this barricade fixed the dividing line after much of the expansion into higher ground had taken place, later encroachment as described in the next section often breached it.



Figure 6.14: The line of the mountain wall above Maes-y-ffin ('meadow of the border') farmstead, with the open upland pasture above and enclosed fields, previously open wood-pasture and woodland, below (Source: author).

6.3.3 The wider estate landscape into the modern period

Although the legal outcome of the long-running Cwmyoy tenant-lord dispute is unclear, the case, which ended up before a Court of Exchequer judge in London, revealed systemic abuses and collusion amongst tenants and court officials (Austin

2014, 38-9). This sharp practice the catalyst for the tenant-led dynamism described in the previous section. Whether resulting from this case or a more general wresting of control of estate management, the balance of power appears to have tilted back towards the lord by the time of the Harley family's custodianship in the late-eighteenth century with lapsed copyhold tenancies replaced by annual terms paying market-based rents. By 1775, many of the tenancies were secured in this way and, in David Austin's (2014, 39) words, 'the Middle Ages were finally over on the lands of the Vale of Ewyas.' One knock-on effect was that many of the fine houses that rose out of the Great Rebuilding were now in disrepair, reflecting the relatively reduced circumstances of their tenant occupiers as their favourable tenurial arrangements were progressively reigned in (Smith 1975, 141). There remained, though, a relatively large residue with 'leases for life' paying peppercorn rents well into the nineteenth century (Evans *et al* 1984, 56; *Gwent Archives*, D2408.21). The decisive shift towards lordly control is reflected in the manor court books which witness a gradual reduction in entries, presentments coming to be dominated by minor matters, the deaths of tenants and property purchase and exchange (Watt 2000, 60). Here as elsewhere, although the manor court system limped on into the twentieth century before collapsing altogether, this was often in name only (*ibid.*, 42).

From the later eighteenth century into the 1800s, pressure from a rising population washed a further tide of farmstead development and encroachment across the margins of the mountain wall (Silvester 2004, 60). The Cwmyoy tithe maps of the 1850s locate these newly-established intake farms, characterised by high-level clusters of small, irregular fields (Gant 1979, 40; *ibid.*, 62; *Tithe Map*, Appleby 1852). The parliamentary enclosure that was profoundly rupturing other upland landscapes into the nineteenth century did not, however, impact upon the Hothneyslade commons, although this was nearly not the case. A bill to enclose 1618 hectares of the upland 'forest land' of Cwmyoy manor was passed through Parliament in 1814 but never implemented. Such an enclosure would have been the largest in Monmouthshire alongside the commons of Wentwood, transforming the open character of the high Hatterall and Ffwddog plateaus (Chapman 1991, 118) (Figure 6.15). This is part of the Landor story, discussed further in Section 6.3.5.



Figure 6.15: The open character of the moorland on the Ffwd dog ridge above the Vale of Ewyas, looking north from Garn Wen (Source: author).

By this stage, aside from these large upland expanses beyond the mountain wall, the Llanthony Estate was fully enclosed. The system of roughly rectangular enclosures required for modern methods of tillage and stock management was completed through the rationalisation of larger sheep pastures, any remaining archaic medieval closes around the old homesteads and irregular assart fields (Taylor 1975, 125-6). Coppice woodland and surviving patches of old wood-pasture were also in retreat, much denuded by the time of the tithe maps, often making way for crop-growing, as with the long series of arable fields replacing the lower stands of Cwmyoy Wood along the valley road, or rough pasture mirroring the shape of the cleared coppice (Johnson 1996, 55; *Tithe Map*, Appleby, 1852; Williamson 2016, 84; Williamson *et al* 2017, 75). High demand for timber and charcoal from the thriving iron industry engulfing the South Wales valleys gave further impetus to the reduction in wood cover.

As the maps at Figures 6.2 – 6.6 demonstrate, in the mid-1800s arable fields were still a significant component of most farms, accounting for approximately 30% of land-use units on the Cwmyoy tithe maps (and a higher proportion for the smaller sub-manors), compared to 48% under grass as meadow or pasture; the cultivated

fields clustered on the lower gradient and better soils on the valley floor with few over the 300 metre contour (Gant 1979, 40). Contemporary sources emphasised that the valley was 'fertile in corn and pasture', indicative of a prevailing mixed farming economy (Beaumont 1803, 332; Colvin 1881, 54; Coxe 1801, 212). This remained largely the case until increasing specialisation took hold in the later-twentieth century, with most local farmers growing wheat and barley for domestic use and oats for horse feed (Evans 2014, 67). As Robert Gant's (1979, 40) analysis of the Upper Cwmyoy tithe apportionments has shown, many holdings were relatively small, generally less than 90 acres (36ha), often below 30 (12ha). The Llanthony Estate still accounted for 60% of the agricultural landscape and two of the old valley farms from the monastic estate, the 267 acre (108ha) Court, which evolved from the priory's home farm, and Maes-y-berrin (287 acres or 116ha) were the largest landholdings. Another of the ancient farms, Weild on the old valley route to the priory, was no longer occupied, its land amalgamated with Henllan across the Honddu (*Gwent Archives*, D2408.21) (Figure 6.16).



Figure 6.16: The abandoned farmstead of Weild on the old eastern route through the valley (Source: author).

Some tenants were by now renting several adjacent small-holdings, as estate policy encouraged more economically viable consolidated farm units. The result, in combination with a broader rural depopulation trend (the Upper Cwmyoy parish

experiencing a near 50% decline in inhabitants between 1801 and 1931), was widespread abandonment of homesteads during the nineteenth century as mapped in Figure 6.17, particularly those more marginal steadings on the western valley-side and above the 300 metre mark (Gant 1979, 43; 1980, 39, 41). Further contraction of the farming community came in the late-twentieth century as consolidation of small hill farms accelerated, often on the death or retirement of an incumbent, and the dwelling became a holiday home or fell derelict (Griffiths 1995, 127; Simmons 2003, 309; Williams 1981, 220). The large number of ruined steadings and abandoned fields across the Black Mountain uplands are the legacy of this long trend of depopulation following the waves of late-medieval and early post-medieval settlement and commonage encroachment outlined above (Hodges 2015, 6).

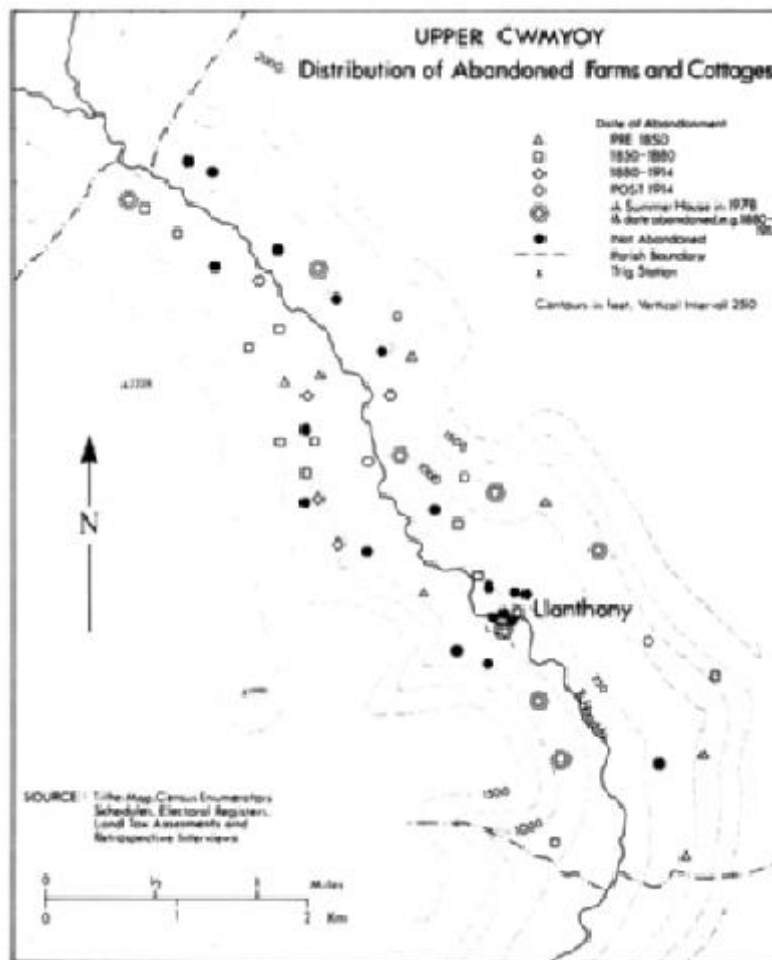


Figure 6.17: Distribution of abandoned farms and cottages in Upper Cwmyoy (Source: after Gant 1980, 42).

6.3.4 Communication routes

The network of tracks and footways which kept monastic life on the move did not disappear in the aftermath of the Dissolution, though some old ways may have slowly fallen out of favour or been repurposed as the line of enclosure walls (Fleming 2009, 83-5). More widely, road systems seem to have experienced a general deterioration by the end of the sixteenth century, perhaps partly explained by the fall of the monasteries, as rapid growth in trade and economic prosperity was increasing traffic (Hindle 2002, 17; Morriss 2005, 40). Monastic corporate responsibility for routeway maintenance having dissipated, the lord of the manor, manorial court and parish authorities had theoretical obligations, though this was highly *ad hoc* and often not followed through in practice (Colyer 1984, 60; Taylor 1979, 150). Cwmyoy court book entries, such as those for 1707, suggest disrepair was common: ‘we find the high way from Llanthony towards Chappell-fin to be overgrown with [ineligible] and bryors that ought to be torn down’ and ‘we find the high way at Rhyd Gronow at [ineligible] was found to be out of repair (*NLW*, 1184).

Documentary evidence to date the construction or improvement of the modern valley road is elusive. The next section chronicles estate development during Walter Savage Landor’s time and it seems most likely that his tenure in the early 1800s, which saw work on highways and bridges, probably consolidated the line of the modern through-way (Craster 1963, 12). A pressing need if the commentaries of Archdeacon Coxe (1801, 210) (‘I would not recommend timid persons to pass this way in a carriage’) and John Beaumont (1803, 314) (‘a ditch-like road, almost impracticable for coaches, strikes off among the mountains’) are to be believed. Unlikely to be a completely new forged route, the modern road probably improved and connected existing farm-ways to create a direct course through the valley, its bridges constructed in 1827 (*Coflein NMR*, 24223). Whether the old, meandering monastic way to Llanthony on the other side of the Honddu highlighted in Chapter 5 was in decline or out of use as a main thoroughfare by this time is unclear. Certainly, the new road is clearly in place on Budgen’s map of 1814 at the end of Landor’s time in the valley (*BL*, OSD 195/ 22). Maps of Monmouthshire by Hall (1833) and Moule (*circa* 1850) show both routes, though by this time the new road had probably superseded its eastern rival (Michael 1985). It was probably also during Landor’s

watch that the chestnut and beech-lined drive to the priory was constructed as a new entrance. Images prior to Landor's arrival (such as those in Figures 6.18 and 6.19) show the approach track still coming from the old gatehouse.



Figure 6.18: Llanthony Abbey, T Hearne, 1806 (Source: © National Library of Wales).

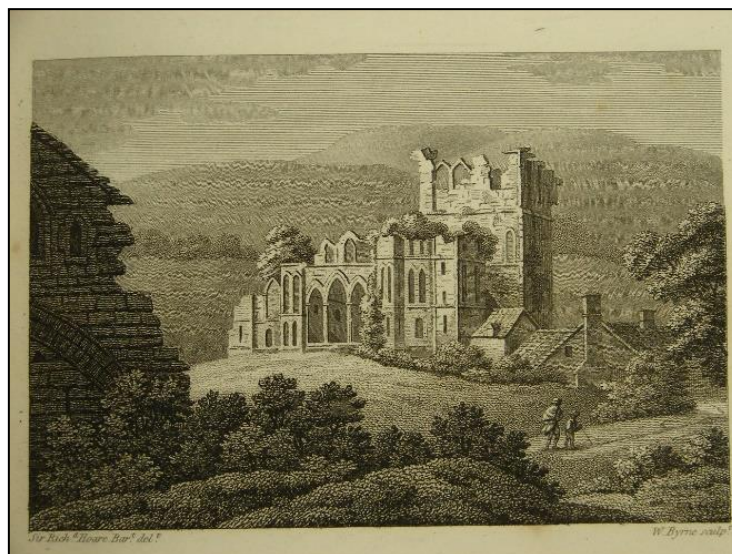


Figure 6.19: North View of Llanthony Abbey, Sir Richard Colt-Hoare, from Coxe's *An Historical Tour of Monmouthshire*, 1801 (Source: University of Bristol Special Collection, photographed with permission).

The proliferation of hillside *nant* farms described in Section 6.3.2 also heralded the coming of what became known as the 'parish roads', traversing the hill-slope often just below the mountain wall to connect these farms and the wider road network

(Figure 6.20). As Raymond Williams (1990b, 303) has articulated, ‘all those who lived down the valley and had business to transact or visits to make would travel along the roads halfway up the slopes beside the springs and the sources.’ Now largely modest field paths or bridleways, if not completely overgrown and out of use, these valley-side ways were kept in relatively good order well into the nineteenth century, busy with stock movement and other day-to-day traffic (Griffiths 1995, 104). Enclosure and the springing up of new farms often also led to a regularisation of pre-existing tracks that passed amongst newly partitioned ground through confinement within walls or hedges, constraining previous freedom to vary routes (Hindle 2002, 46). For instance, each farmstead had legally defined access points to the *rhiws* up to the mountain common through the mountain wall via funnel-shaped enclosures and hollow-ways (Fleming 2010a, 120; Hodges 2016, 15). By the early-twentieth century, the valley through-road could be described as its ‘sole artery’ (Bradley 1911, 83). Progressed into the road modernisation era of the mid-twentieth century, those tracks and farm drives that were metalled and improved became the network of supplementary lanes seen today. Meanwhile, previously important routes such as the monastic valley way, the ridge-top tracks and the parish roads traversing the valley sides – used time out of mind but now in terminal decline – eventually fell out of regular use and repair. Such ways have either been revived as walking paths or bridleways or quietly sunk back into the landscape.



Figure 6.20: Section of the parish road, south of Noyaddllwyd farm (Source: author).

6.3.5 Walter Savage Landor's designed landscape projects

'Llanthony is a noble estate, it produces everything but herbage, corn, and money. My son, perhaps, may make something of it, for it is about eight miles long and I planted a million trees on it' (Walter Savage Landor, quoted in Mee 1951, 85).



Figure 6.21: Walter Savage Landor (Source: https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Walter_Savage_Landor)

Changes in the landscape are often examined in terms of 'passive material culture', as simply the physical results of social and economic forces (Johnson 1996, 66). In reality, they are also often influenced by a range of other less predictable factors, from aesthetics to individual or group decision-making (Finch 2007, 44). Such unpredictability characterised the grand designed landscape plans for the Llanthony Estate embarked upon by Walter Savage Landor over six eventful years in the early-nineteenth century (Figure 6.21). Landor, 'a classicist, a disenfranchised gent; one of nature's exiles', purchased the estate in 1808 with proceeds from the sale of his ancestral seat in Warwickshire (Sinclair 2001, 135). Held in high esteem by his literary contemporaries, he was never widely read and is now largely forgotten. Sidney Colvin (1881, 1) opened his biography with the memorable line: 'Few men have ever impressed their peers so much, or the general public so little, as WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR.'

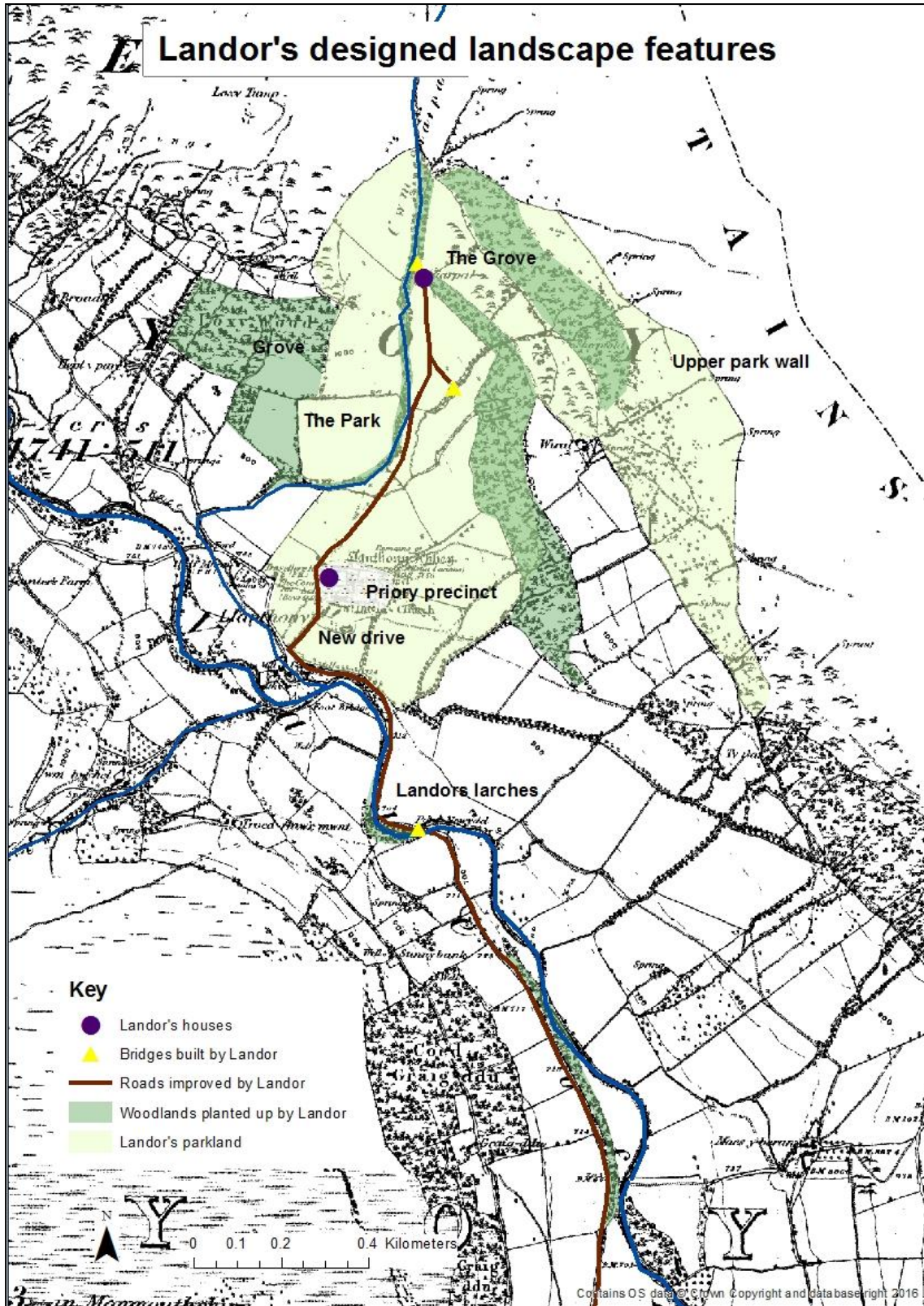


Figure 6.22: Map of Llandor's designed landscape features that were actually realised (Source: map drawn in ArcGIS® using Ordnance Survey 1:10560 County Series 1st edition, Monmouthshire, 1887 data layer, downloaded from Digimap® under licence, <http://digimap.edina.ac.uk/>).

Taking temporary quarters in one of the priory's surviving towers of the priory, Landor embarked on his new career as country squire and 'beneficent landowner' with gusto, contemplating the 'wild and striking country that he had chosen for his future home' (*ibid.*, 57). Thwarted in initial hopes to restore the priory as a landmark country home, restore services to the ruined church and set up a school, he pressed on with an Act of Parliament in 1809 to take down some modern additions and commence building a new mansion, 'a kind of superior belvedere' (Barber 2003, 113; Sansom 2006, 3; Rowley 2001, 134; Simmons 2003, 309). It may be that during this time ancillary buildings across the old outer court including the great barn were raised. 'Of wayward, scornful temperament and impulsive nature; just the man to buy a landscape and repent at leisure', Landor would ultimately be unsuccessful in realising his vision for the estate, concentrating as he did on grand and expensive capital schemes rather than maximising returns from his investment (Bradley 1911, 91-2; Evans *et al* 1984, 56). The main elements of his landscape plans that were realised are mapped at Figure 6.22 and will now be outlined. Further detail can be found in the field notes for the Landor landscape walk (Appendix 6).

All that now remains of Landor's new dwelling, The Grove, are a collection of unimposing sections of ruined wall and the shell of the coach-house, uphill from the priory in the small *cwm* known as Siarpal, probably on the site of a small-holding of this name (*NLW*, GB 0210 BAKERGABB) (Figure 6.23). Substantial in conception, there is no known plan or picture of the house and no indication that the building was ever fully completed or lived in – Landor was often absent from Llanthony – though during the summer of 1811 guests were hosted, including the poet Robert Southey (Elwin 1941, 129; Newman 2002, 350). Some years after Landor's retreat from the estate, the half-built mansion was mostly pulled down, the coach house remaining in use as a hay barn into the late-twentieth century. Iain Sinclair provides a distinctive fictional account of Landor's vision for the house and wider estate in his novel *Landor's Tower* (2001, 133):

'He saw the avenues of his planting, pastureland and parkland declining to the ruined priory. Here is my place. Siarpal. A mansion, commodious but plain, facing the warm south, respecting the nature of the chosen site; a fervent spirit responsive to method, the laws of proportion, simple husbandry. The

Roman model. Senatorial retirement from the fuss of society. Estates, well-managed, conversing quietly with the original rudeness of this remote valley; withdrawn from the vanity and pomp of the careless world, its princes and popes. Here Landor declared his republic.'



Figure 6.23: The ruined remains of Landor's mansion at The Grove, Siarpal (Source: author).

The memory of this dream of a wide parkland vista, framed now by mature trees, narrowing to then reveal a handsome mansion as the approach track curves its way uphill can still be conjured when walking up to the ruin from Llanthony (Figure 6.24). Here, though Landor's 'great vision' has been progressively 'undone by cruel wind and remorseless winters', hints of a gentry-designed parkland landscape around Siarpal remain, not least, the adjacent field known as The Park (*ibid.*, 142). Above the ruin an extension to the mountain wall, tracking the divide between open moor and enclosed valley, climbs sharply to reach over 500 metres. This is said to be Landor's upper park pale, built either to enclose Segovia sheep imported from Castile or protect newly planted trees (many still in evidence), though not as a habitat for game as Landor was vociferously anti-blood sport (Colin Passmore, pers. comment; Sansom 2006, 4) (Figure 25). There are clear echoes of the postulated priory park described in Chapter 5 here, though it seems doubtful Landor was aware of this.



Figure 6.24: Parkland vista view up towards Landor's ruined house at The Grove (Source: author).



Figure 6.25: View south-eastwards with Landor's woodland planting on the slope in the middle ground, the line of the upper 'park pale' shown by the diagonal line above the trees (Source: author).

This wall may be the only tangible outcome of Landor's wider attempts to enclose the upland commons of his estate. As a member of the landed classes, he was able to fund a personal Inclosure Act through Parliament, given royal ascent in 1814 (NLW, 9928496202419). This legislation to divide, allot and enclose 'two parcels of

commonable or waste land, containing together four thousand acres or thereabouts' – the unenclosed moorland on both sides of the Vale of Ewyas – was, however, never enacted. Two Commissioners were elected from the local gentry, a Hereford surveyor appointed to produce an enclosure map and a perambulation of the parish boundaries undertaken in September 1813 followed by a public meeting and the commencement of survey work, all at considerable expense to Landor (*Gwent Archives*, D591/ 32A; *NLW*, Baker-Gabb Family Papers/ 868; *NLW*, Mayberry Collection/ 5201). There is, though, no evidence that a map was ever produced and certainly the actual physical work to enclose the commons never took place. It has been speculated that this proposal was deeply unpopular with the estate's tenant farmers (*Gwent Archives*, D2408/1). By the following year Landor was gone and it may be that the expense and difficulty of this process was the tipping point in this decision.



Figure 6.26: The remnants of Landor's Larches
(Source: author).

Perhaps Landor's most strikingly realised project was the reinvigoration of neglected and depleted woodland through the mass planting of cedars of Lebanon (popular at the time for their Classical associations), beech, chestnut, larch and poplar, his eventual rather ambitious sounding aim to add two million trees to the landscape (Colvin 1881, 57; Elwin 1941, 122; Fancourt undated, 5). A programme of planting certainly took place, though how many trees were successfully grown is hard to gauge and no cedars remain (Evans *et al* 1984, 56-7). As well as the avenue of trees leading up to The Grove, many mature examples remain in the immediate vicinity and in the southern

approaches to the priory, though often in poor condition (Mason 1975, 51). As the valley was recorded as substantially denuded of trees prior to Landor's time, it seems likely that the old monastic woods above Llanthony on either side of The Grove were also repopulated. Most famously, in local memory, is the group of mature larch along the main valley road known as Landor's Larches (Figure 6.26).

Planting up woodlands and introducing new sheep were part of an attempt to revive the estate's moribund agricultural economy. Farmhouses were renovated, and new tenants brought in to improve cultivation methods, Landor hoping to relieve the visible poverty of the local population through employment in implementing his innovations (Sansom 2006, 4). The introduction of the new arrivals, however, seems to have been counter-productive; his appointed agent for the estate, Charles Betham – a man of no agricultural experience – becoming Landor's nemesis once installed in Court Farm. Certainly, the tenant-farmers and labourers of the estate failed to warm to his 'grandiose schemes for turning it into a sort of feudal domain' (Thoresby-Jones 1938, 22). Under Betham's watch 'Landor's rents were withheld, his game poached, his plantations damaged, his timber stolen, his character maligned, and even his life threatened' (Colvin 1881, 74). During one of his regular absences, some of the tenants pulled down part of the priory church for building stone and felled mature trees from the estate woods (Evans *et al* 1984, 56). Such actions led to expensive law-suits and regular appearances in court, where he also clashed with the local legal establishment. A flavour of the extent of these disputes can be gained from weekly letters between Landor and his solicitors held in the Baker-Gabb family archive, a number relating to Mr Betham including a request for him to stop ploughing up Great Wood (*NLW*, GB 0210 BAKERGABB).

Landor also engaged construction gangs to build new roads and bridges throughout the estate (Colvin 1881, 57). Little trace can be found of a projected long driveway to lead visitors through the valley to The Grove except the remains of 'baroque bridges that lead nowhere' (Prior undated, 22; Sansom 2006, 2). Such a carriageway was never realised, though Landor was probably responsible instead for improvements to what would become the modern through-road and the entrance drive to the priory, as described in Section 6.3.4 (Evans *et al* 1984, 56). Faint earthworks hinting of a track running downslope from The Grove to a bridge site are perhaps the remains of

unfinished work on the driveway. A further isolated remnant of this scheme is a ruined high-arched bridge over the Honddu below Henllan farm, known locally as the Devil's Bridge (allegedly remembrance of the low esteem in which Landor was held) for which Landor was in a dispute over payment with Philip Lewis in 1812 (*NLW*, GB 0210 BAKERGABB; *Valley Views Magazine* 1995) (Figure 6.27).



Figure 6.27: Landor's ruined bridge at Henllan (Source: author).

Squire Landor's ambitious plans to turn his property into a grand country estate ultimately ran out of money, local goodwill and motivation before most could be fully realised. Ill-advised financial decisions contributed to £70,000 spent on the estate in five years, failure to meet mortgage interest payments leading to eventual bankruptcy (Colvin 1881, 75). Disillusioned and broke, Landor abandoned the estate for a new life in Italy in 1814, his affairs brought 'to such a pass as utterly to disgust him with Llanthony, Wales and the Welsh' (*ibid.*, 70). His experience as 'a feudal chieftain of a mountain valley' comparable to Percy Shelley's similarly failed endeavour to run a Welsh country estate (Bradley 1911, 92). Llanthony was left in the hands of Landor family trustees, who remained as solid absentee landlords as the valley returned to a familiar pattern of benign neglect.



Figure 6.28: Llanthony and its parkland surroundings from the upper park pale, looking south-west from Hatterall Hill (Source: author).

Displaying the short-comings of both a quixotic dreamer and arrogant incomer, Landor sought to impose new ideas and schemes to transform the landscape of the Llanthony estate during his short, eventful stewardship (Figure 6.28). This episode repeated the monastic cycle in microcosm: a grand project, ultimately unsuccessful but still leaving a strong legacy embedded in the landscape, both physical and in memory (Evans *et al* 1984, 57): ‘the ghosts of the landscaped park remaining in the undergrowth’ (Pavard 2016, 19). Landor wanted to resurrect the priory as his country seat, but also develop the wider estate – bringing modernity and advancement to a wild place. Like the canons before him, the poet was attracted by the out-of-the-way beauty of the valley but also an outsider whose imposition of new ideas antagonised the local populace. The last words on his romantic landscape vision come from Landor himself, from a letter to Southey (quoted in Sansom 2006, 1):

‘Homeward I turn; o’er Hatterils rocks
I see my trees, I hear my flocks.
Where alders mourned their fruitless bed
Ten thousand cedars raise their head.
And from Segovia’s hills remote
My sheep enrich my neighbour’s cote.’

6.3.6 Churches, chapels and a New Llanthony

The churches at Cwmyoy, Llanthony and Oldcastle remained as functioning religious institutions into modern times. St. John's, Oldcastle, now deconsecrated, was rebuilt in 1864 by John Pollard-Seddon, author of *Progress in Architecture*, a reflection of antiquarian and architectural interest in monastic buildings (Mee 1951, 126). In contrast, the chapels of ease at Redcastle, Stanton and Trewyn had no such afterlife. Absent from the perpetual curacies listed in the Llanthony Estate sale papers of 1799, they had presumably long become redundant by this stage (*NLW*, Baker Gabb Family Papers/Deeds and documents 138).



Figure 6.29: A publicity shot of the monks of Llanthony Tertia fishing on a tributary of the Honddu (Source: www.fatherignatius.org.uk).

An interesting coda to the Vale of Ewyas' monastic story saw the establishment of a new monastery at Capel-y-ffin just over the northern boundary of the Hothneyslade estate (Figures 6.29 and 6.30). New Llanthony Abbey, otherwise known as Llanthony Tertia or The Monastery, was founded by the 'unorthodox and controversial' self-styled 'Father Ignatius' in the 1870s, perched on a damp and sun-deprived north-facing slope (Knowles 1963, 664; Mason 1975, 53). Expressing disgust at the 'sacrilegious use of the priory as a public hostelry', Ignatius initially attempted to purchase Llanthony, to rebuild and return it to its original function, but the Landor estate refused to sell (Fancourt undated, 8). New Llanthony became a focus of renewed pilgrimage until, after the founder's death in 1908, the ailing community broke-up due to lack of funds and leadership.

The monastery subsequently enjoying several functions, including housing an evacuated convent during the Second World War, a youth hostel and holiday accommodation. Most colourfully, an artistic community took residence in the 1920s, as chronicled in Section 6.4.2.



Figure 6.30: *The Monastery above Capel-y-ffin* (Source: author).

6.4 Perceptions of the landscape

6.4.1 Local folklore

The rich historic and architectural tradition of monasticism has bequeathed ‘an elaborate folklore’ surrounding many monastery sites (Aston 2007, 14). An additional layer of local folk tales is certainly a notable legacy of the priory. Perhaps inevitably, this includes the spectral. For instance, the tale of an apparition of one of the canons seen drifting down the lane to wash in the ‘monks’ pool’ by Bugle bridge just south of the priory, and the hooded figure said to inhabit the rooms of the hotel occupying the west tower (Foord 1925, 138; Mason 1975, 51). Another story tells of ‘the Old Hag’, an aged-women whose appearance would spell misfortune for anyone who crossed her. A rector of Llanthony claimed to have seen her in the churchyard surrounded by figures, who he took to be the risen dead. It was said that the hallowed precinct of the priory protected against her witchcraft (Palmer 1998, 81).

Equally curious and fanciful is the persistent report of a subterranean passage-way between the priory and Longtown, or perhaps Oldcastle (Beamont 1803, 312; Palmer 1998, 96). Mick Aston (2007, 14) brings rationality to what he describes as the ‘contrived monasticism’ inherent in some folklore legends, including those of

tunnels from monasteries to churches and castles which usually originate in a lack of understanding of sophisticated monastic drainage systems. The Llanthony tunnel legend was also debunked, though less convincingly, by Alfred Watkins (2005b, 173) in his book *The Old Straight Track*.⁴⁵

In his memoir of farming life in the valley in the mid-twentieth century, *That Inward Eye* (1995, 120-1), Dai Griffiths highlights the religious and spiritual threads running through the folk history of the Vale of Ewyas, an important element in the unique attraction of the valley to visitors: Saint David's hermitage, the legends of a visiting Bishop of Canterbury being run off the Tarren-yr-escob ridge on his horse and Saint Peter and Saint Paul preaching the gospel at the Gospel Pass, the proliferation of churches and chapels and, of course, the priory and later monastery of Llanthony. This religious tradition continues to some extent with the annual pilgrimage from the priory to the site of a purported vision of 'Our Lady of Llanthony' near The Monastery during Father Ignatius' time (Phillips 1951, 220; Rolt 2009, 46).

6.4.2 A diversity of words and images: topographers and antiquarians, artists and writers

'That first sight of Llanthony, sleeping in its cradle of hills, caused all other memories to vanish ... Was it the perfect composition of the design, every line leading to the Abbey? Something intangible as well – an element which made that scene forever ours, and us, I firmly believe, part of the place' (Fred Hando 1944, 91).

Written post-medieval references to Llanthony and Hothneyslade are sparse, even topographical writers of the time rarely specifically referred to the wider landscape (Lancaster 2008, 11). John Leland made very brief mention in his 1540 *Itinerary* (in a

⁴⁵ Watkins tells of working with his sighting compass and tripod at Longtown looking to identify a lay line over the Black Mountains ridge to Llanthony when a passing workman commented: 'They do say, sir, that there's an underground passage from here to Llanthony.' It came to Watkins that just as it would be hard for him to explain what he was doing, so too his 'predecessor surveyor of prehistoric times' mapping out the ley over the ridge by 'sighting rods' if confronted by the 'ignorant inquirer of his day', who therefore could have contrived that he was constructing a secret passage.

paragraph on Llanthony Secunda): ‘Nant Honddye (Llanthonddye – Llan nant Hondy) a priori of blake charms ... this priori was fair, and stode betwixt ii great hills’ (Chandler 1993, 176; Roberts 1847, 233). Michael Drayton’s (Hooper 2001, 100) epic topographical poem of 1612, *Polyolbion*, included a verse on the valley which begins: ‘Mongst Hatterills loftie hills, that with the clouds are crowne’d, the valley Ewias lies, immers’d so deep and round ...’. Into the eighteenth century and Henry Penruddocke Wyndham, a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries, toured Wales in the 1770s and produced the first published account of a touristic visit to Llanthony (Buck 2016, 6). Architects and antiquarians such as Joseph Parker and Richard Colt-Hoare would become regular visitors, studying and recording the ruins in a more analytical and scholarly way (Gibbs 2016b).

It was as new tastes for the ‘sublime’ and ‘picturesque’ in historic landscapes and places, particularly those such as Llanthony in a wild and remote setting, began to take hold in the later 1700s that the priory became a subject of particular attention (Moore 2007, 198). William Gilpin (2005, 52) visiting during his influential tour of the Wye and South Wales observed:

‘Dugdale describes it, in his *Monasticon*, as a scene richly adorned with wood. But Dugdale lived a century ago: which is a term that will produce or destroy the finest scenery. It has had the latter effect here, for the woods about Llanthony Priory are now totally destroyed; and the ruin is wholly naked and desolate.’

A somewhat bleak description which pre-dated Walter Savage Landor’s major tree-planting programme. In the wake of Gilpin and the Romantics – including Landor – who followed, Llanthony, like other medieval monasteries in dramatic locations, received a steady stream of visitors inspired to record their reactions to the place. Indeed, there is a diverse corpus of images and words centred on the priory ruins and surrounding landscape. A comprehensive list is provided at Appendix 9.

Colt-Hoare, who was to witness the great window of the western frontage collapsing, visited with Archdeacon Coxe whose poor impression of the roads as he journeyed through the valley has already been cited. To him, the priory ruins derived ‘a particular beauty from their situation in the Vale of Ewias, which unites dreariness

and fertility, and is well adapted to monastic solitude', though he bemoaned their 'hastening to decay' (Coxe 1801, 212). Other early-nineteenth century observers were wont to provide more dramatic and exaggerated evocations of the topography they encountered. Commentating on the Honddu, John Beaumont (1803, 314-5) exclaimed 'at an immense depth beneath (the road) the torrent is seen raging', whilst the hamlet of Cwmyoy was 'fearfully hanging on a cliff, and beneath a menacing hill.'



Figure 6.31: Llanthony Abbey, Cwmyoy, Monmouthshire, *JMW Turner, 1794* (Source: © Indianapolis Museum of Art).

The late-eighteenth and nineteenth century saw a proliferation of paintings and engravings of the priory and its environs.⁴⁶ Whilst the wider landscape setting is often somewhat impressionistic, the hillsides particularly exaggerated, such images provide some interesting topographical detail. One of the most well-known is by JMW Turner, drenched in foregrounded weather, light and emotion (Moore 2007, 193) (Figure 6.31). Turner's view of the priory (using the by now common though inaccurate 'abbey' appellation) is a cameo of his manipulation of landscape, the

⁴⁶ In a catalogue of Welsh topographical prints held by the National Museum of Wales in 1926, Llanthony was second only to Tintern Abbey in the number of representations of monastic sites (Moore 2007, 198).

surrounding highlands grander and more precipitous than reality, with a similarly chimeric gushing torrent below the ruins flooded by 'heavenly light' (Sinclair 2001, 142). Commenting on the painting's inclusion in Tate Britain's 2014 *Ruin Lust* exhibition, Iain Sinclair described it as 'fraudulent' in its interpretation of the hills and the 'cataracts' of the river; an image made for the tourist, the equivalent of modern 'ruin porn' (*Radio 4 Front Row*, 03/03/14).

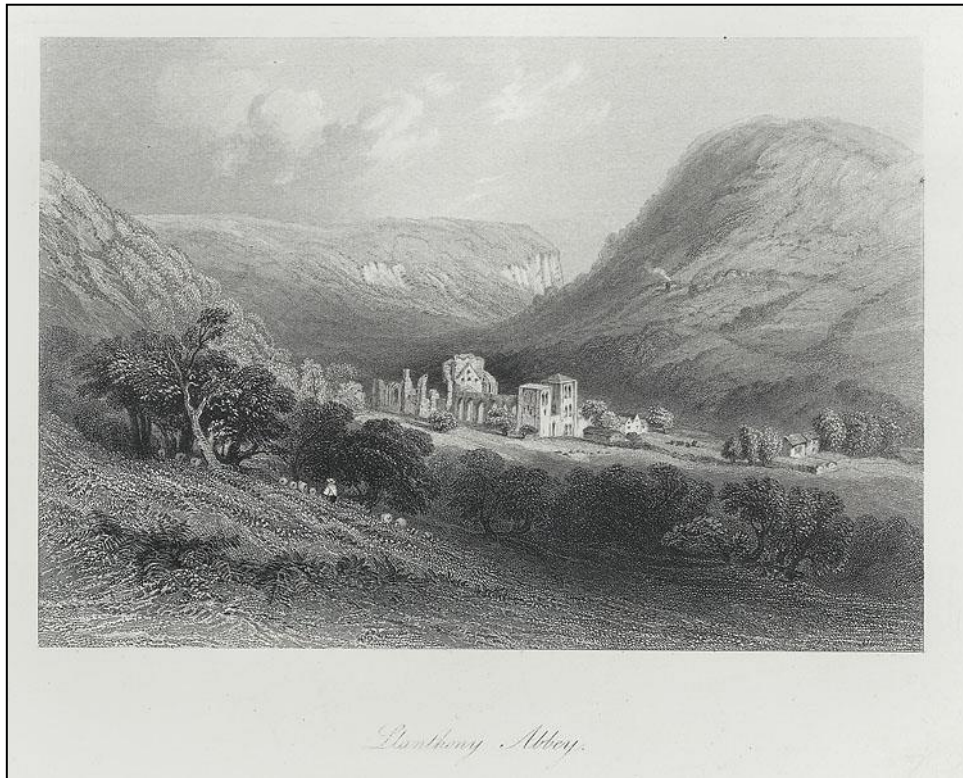


Figure 6.32: Llanthony Abbey, William Bartlett, post-1810 (Source: Gwent Archives, Pictorial/Llanthony/8).

Although it is rare for such images to focus on anything beyond the priory ruins, fixing one's gaze on the landscape backdrop can be instructive. Even Turner's imaginative work clearly represented a still-extant curvilinear enclosure on Loxidge Tump above the priory which may originate as a medieval sheep corral as discussed in Chapter 5. More broadly, the often quite generic landscape styling nevertheless illustrates something of the countryside of the time. In Bartlett's engraving, the enclosed pasture, mountain wall and *nant* farmstead of Troed-rhiw-mon are clear on the opposite side of the valley (Figure 6.32). A more orderly, neatly hedged fieldscape is observed in Edward Hayes' picture of 1800 (Figure 6.33), whilst the priory is often very much part of an agricultural scene with sheep and cattle grazing around its ruined shell (Figure 6.34).



Figure 6.33: Llanthony Abbey, Ernest Dayes, 1800 (Source: © National Library of Wales).



Figure 6.34: Llanthony Abbey, David Cox, 1854 (Source: © Tate Britain).

The very act of touristic visitations to historic sites such as Llanthony was already beginning to become a subject of comment and friction as the century progressed. The Reverend Francis Kilvert, curate of Clyro north of Hay-on-Wye in the 1860s, chronicled Victorian country life in this border district in his diaries. He provided a memorable account of a visit to the priory in which, although praising the peaceful situation he also made clear his distaste for a certain type of Victorian day-tripper:

‘What was our horror on entering the (priory) enclosure to see two tourists with staves and shoulder belts all complete, postured among the ruins in an attitude of admiration ... If there is one thing more hateful than another it is being told what to admire and having objects pointed out to one with a stick. Of all noxious animals too, the most noxious is the tourist. And of all tourists the most vulgar, ill-bred, offensive and loathsome is the British tourist’ (quoted in Barber 2003, 107).⁴⁷

Praise for exclusivity also comes from ‘The Insect Hunter’ (1838, unpaginated):

‘Llanthony is one of those speaking monuments of the olden time ... Luckily this beautiful spot has no road approaching it sufficiently macadamised to admit the passage of the luxurious vehicle of the opulent ruin hunter... it is not therefore and never can be in the range of the tourist.’

Arthur Bradley (1911, 89) was a prolific writer on Wales and the Marches and his description of exploring the Vale of Ewyas exemplifies the more sober and rational view of landscape ascendant by the Edwardian era. He mocks the over-egged dramatic descriptions of earlier visitors: perhaps they had never been out of the city and suffered from ‘nervous delusions’. For instance, an anonymous 1813 account that exclaimed ‘infinitely grand, awful, and horrific, are the convulsions in the Vale of Ewyas.’ Bradley (*ibid.*, 95) also had sharp words for Father Ignatius’ foundation of New Llanthony at Capel-y-ffin, which could not hope to approach the majesty of the original priory ‘however faithfully they may attempt to adhere to the models of ancient times.’ Commenting on the confusion that the new foundation had caused by appropriating the priory’s name he noted: ‘one of the most beautiful of monastic ruins, having due regard to its unique situation, in the whole island has been quite obscured in the public mind’ (*ibid.*, 96).

⁴⁷ Kilvert also makes reference to William Wordsworth and his sister Dorothy visiting Llanthony, on long walks from Llyswen in Brecknockshire via the Gospel Pass. The poet regularly came to Herefordshire though no account of a visit to Llanthony has been found (Barber 2003, 101).



Figure 6.35: Hill Pastures, Capel-y-ffin, David Jones, 1926 (Source: © National Museum of Wales).

Ignatius had been followed as resident of the new monastery at Capel-y-ffin by an equally controversial figure in Eric Gill, who set up an artistic religious community there in the 1920s: an 'experiment in communal living' (Sinclair 2001, 211). Gill, sculptor, typeface designer, printmaker and unorthodox Catholic was taken by 'the awesome power of the valley that has attracted people on spiritual pilgrimage for almost a millennium': a suitably remote place to set up a Christian community of craftsmen on the borders of mainstream society (Mason 1975, 54; Miles 1992, 15, 164). Influenced by the Utopian medieval aesthetic of William Morris and John Ruskin, Gill fostered a 'half peasant-like, half monk-like atmosphere' (Miles 1992, 47). Unlike other artistic visitors, his output whilst living in the valley little reflected the surrounding landscape, though he later returned regularly and members of his family remained until the 1970s. The landscape proved a more profound influence on another of the community, painter-poet David Jones. The transitional border landscape of the Vale fuelled his 'imagined construct' of Wales' past and experimental painting style, reflecting the dominant rhythms in the local countryside through subdued textures and colour (*ibid.*, 15, 143) (Figure 6.35).

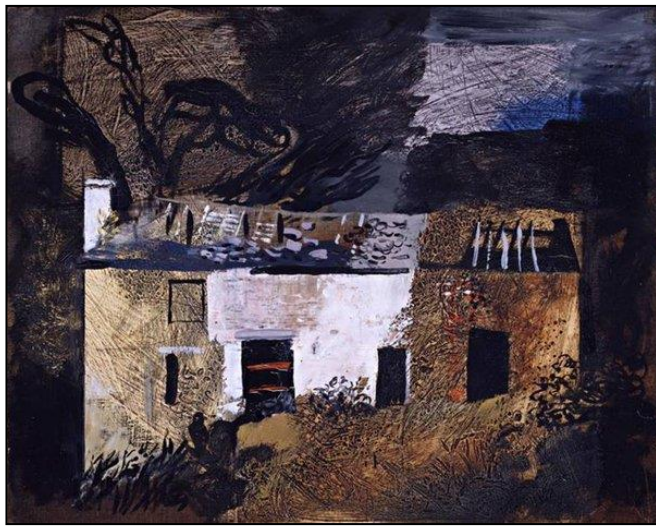


Figure 6.36: Llanthony, 1941 (top) and Ty Isaf, 1939-40 (bottom) by John Piper (Source: © National Museum of Wales/ Leeds Museum and Art Gallery).

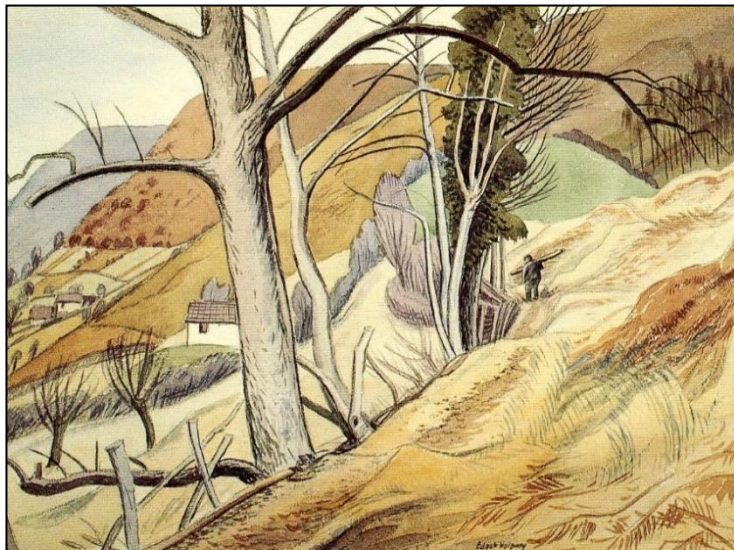


Figure 6.37: Mountain Path, Llanthony Valley, Edgar Holloway, 1943 (Source: Llanthony Valley and District History Group).

Seeking ‘concentrated solitude’, the artist Eric Ravilious spent several weeks at a farmhouse near Capel-y-ffin in the winter of 1938 and was visited by John Piper (Powers 2002, 42). Both produced a number of landscape paintings, Piper creating naturalistic images of the priory ‘in thunderous orange and purple’ with an eye also for the farm buildings of the estate in the surrounding countryside (Moore 2007, 198) (Figure 6.36). Piper and Ravilious’ work reflected a move towards more impressionistic landscape interpretations, other examples of which can be seen in Figure 6.38. Edgar Holloway was another mid-twentieth century visitor and his *Mountain Path, Llanthony Valley* depicts a working figure on the parish road with the mountain wall and *nant* farms clearly visible (Figure 6.37).

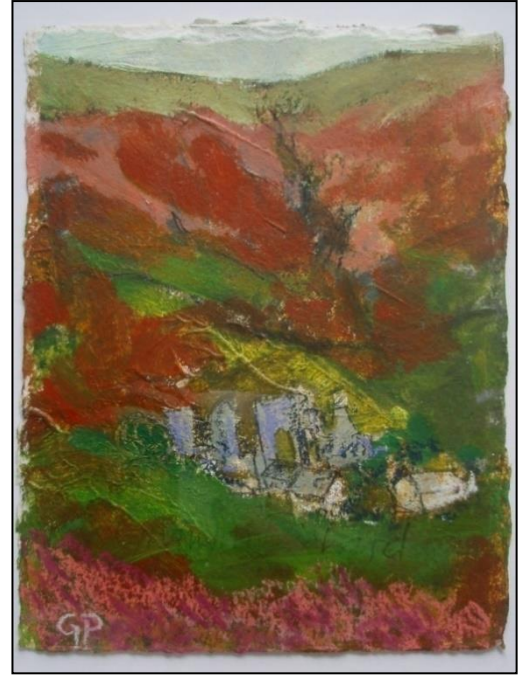


Figure 6.38: Llanthony Abbey, John Craxton, 1942 (above) (Source: © Tate Britain) and Llanthony Abbey, Gwylim Pritchard, 2005 (Source: Llanthony Valley and District History Group).

One of the first fictional written works sparked by Llanthony and its landscape had a supernatural theme. M.R. James (1994, 5), premier exponent of the English ghost story, used Herefordshire as the ‘imagined scene’ for one of his most famous, *A View from a Hill* (1925). The key dramatic setting is ‘Fulnaker Priory’, Llanthony its suggested real-life inspiration (Pardoe and Pardoe 2004). A local writer much influenced by James’ style was L.T.C. Rolt who fictionalised Llanthony and the valley as a thinly-disguised setting for two stories in his ghostly collection, *Sleep No More* (1948).⁴⁸ His memoir recalls how being enveloped by mist as he climbed over the ridge from Longtown to Llanthony became an inspiration for his writing (Rolt 2009, 9). In her introduction to a recent collection of his stories, Susan Hill remarks on how the Black Mountains combine ‘tranquillity, beauty and spirituality’ with ‘dread, menace, depression and foreboding’ (Rolt 2013, x). Alfred Watkins (2005b, 52), already mentioned, was another local man, from Hereford, who wandered extensively in the environs of Llanthony, ‘a favoured spot ... where primitive tracks

⁴⁸ In *Cwm Garon* the main character follows a mountain path from a Norman castle (based on the route from Longtown to Llanthony) to reach an inn at ‘Llangaron Abbey’ (the fictionalised Llanthony) where his supernatural adventure plays out in ‘Cwm Garon’ (the Vale of Ewyas). A wayfarer similarly seeks out shelter at the ‘Priory Hotel at Llanvethney’ (Llanthony again) in *The House of Vengeance* (Rolt 2013, 31-49, 121-9).

and notches can well be studied.’ His eccentric ‘ley lines’ theory may lack scholarly credence but is of interest as his research references many local sites.

Raymond Williams, one of the foremost men of letters of post-war Britain was a native of Pandy, across the Honddu from the old Redcastle manor. In later life, he produced a great work of fiction based on a scholarly framework, weaving historical events and landscape into a long-form narrative chronicling 25 millenia of local history: *The People of the Black Mountains* (1990a, 1990b), a mixing of real events and people with invented narratives. Conjured by a writer steeped in local culture but also a highly-regarded academic, the two books exude a more informed feeling for the landscape than many purely scholarly or descriptive accounts, giving voice to the unheard people of history: lowly novice canons, tenant farmers, women generally. The books are dense with sustained commentary on the medieval priory estate landscape, as the following extract recounting the scene after the devastation caused during the Glyndŵr rebellion illustrates:

‘The priory of Llanthony stood empty and neglected, its store room broken open. The monks no longer felt safe among their Welsh tenants, and had withdrawn to Hereford. Below a mountain stream, their retting mill had fallen into disrepair. The dried shocks of flax, pulled each day by the abbey’s labourers, stood abandoned ... Sheep grazed above the empty abbey, and across the river over the slopes towards the Coed y Dial’ (Williams 1990b, 300).

Recent decades have seen further layers of writing folded into the landscapes about Llanthony. Bruce Chatwin’s *On the Black Hill* (1982) fictionalised the eastern fringes of the Black Mountains, partly inspired whilst the writer spent time in the Vale of Ewyas.⁴⁹ More recently, *Resistance*, Owen Sheers’ (2007, 276) World War Two tale of a German invasion of Britain is largely set in the Olchon and Llanthony valleys, ‘a graveyard of failures, littered with the remnants of men foolish enough to think its geography sufficient to extract themselves from the world.’ The psycho-geographical writer Iain Sinclair (2001, 8) offered a more esoteric Llanthony-based fiction in

⁴⁹ Chatwin was staying with the painter Ozzy Jones at his house in Nant Bwch above Capel-y-ffin occupied by another artist and writer Reg Gammon during the 1940s and 1950s.

Landor's Tower, a novel in which the narrator/ main character has been commissioned to write a book about 'Walter Savage Landor and his gloriously misconceived utopian experiment in the Ewyas Valley.' The novel spends dense pages in the revenant footsteps of Landor, Ignatius and Gill around the priory, Siarpal and on the Hatterall ridge. To the narrator, the landscape setting of the priory was:

'Nothing more than a device to slow the pulse of the visitors, preparing them for the move into the surrounding countryside. The priory, this geological freak, had no centre; it was all view, the further you walked away from it, the more it made sense' (Sinclair 2001, 312).

Sinclair, who has also written on the 'Beat Poets' of 1950s America, is a link in a chain with another enigmatic outsider who spent time around Llanthony. Allan Ginsberg composed his epic stream of consciousness poem, *Wales Visitation* – a record of an 'LSD-fuelled hill walk', in the valley in 1967 (*ibid.*, 86) (Figure 6.39). These are but the latest additions to a canon of artistic responses to the *genius loci* of Llanthony and the Vale of Ewyas that seems to endlessly flower.

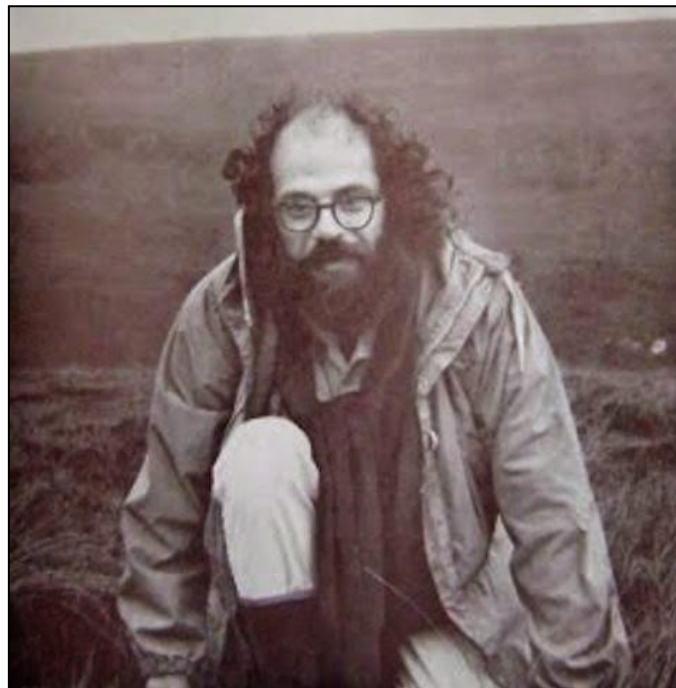


Figure 6.39: Allan Ginsberg in the Vale of Ewyas, 1967 (Source: <https://poetopography.wordpress.com>).

6.4.3 Modern-day perceptions of the landscape

An online survey was developed for this research project and publicised through social media and via organisations such as the Brecon Beacons National Park and Llanthony & District History Group in July-August 2016. The results provide a snapshot of views on the monastery and how its landscape impact is perceived today. The full results can be found at Appendix 10 and a summary of the main outcomes is provided below (an example question and responses at Figure 6.40).

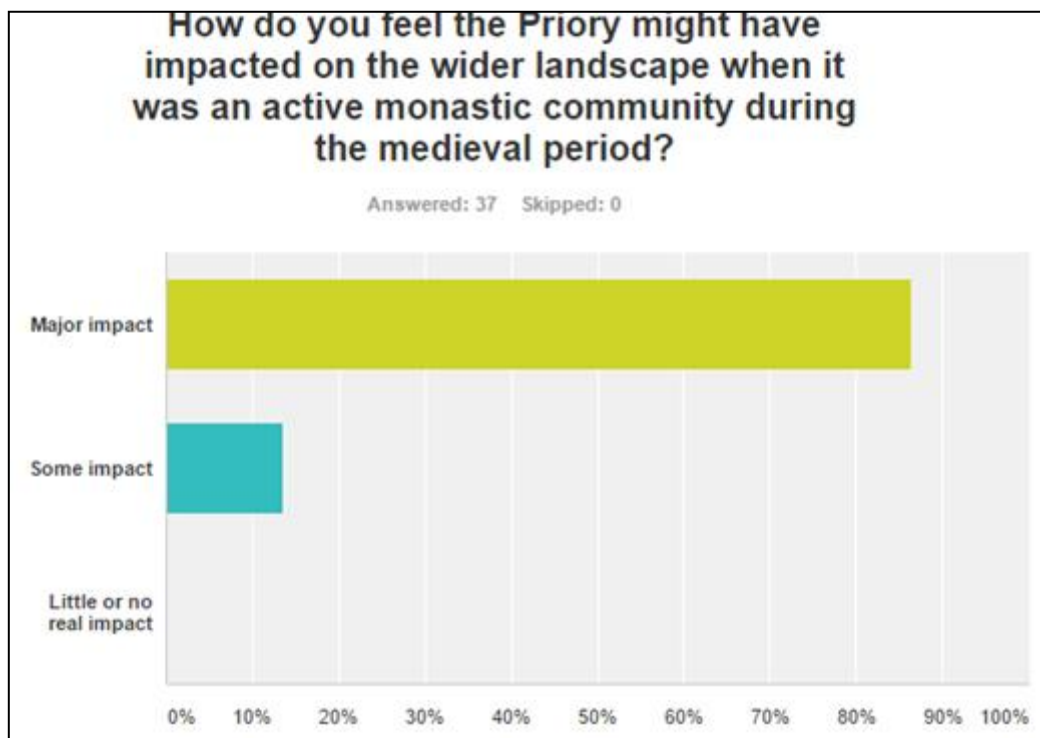


Figure 6.40: Example of question and responses from the online landscape perception survey (Source: author/ www.surveymonkey.com).

The Vale of Ewyas was typically seen as a beautiful, peaceful, spiritual and ancient landscape, partly or largely shaped by a rich history of human activity and subject to change. 60% of respondents felt the priory had a major impact on the local landscape: the ruins a focal point, integral to the landscape (both perceptual and physical), helping to define its special character and atmosphere. Most found it hard to imagine the district without the priory, the major draw for people into the valley; one respondent commenting that ‘the location (of the priory) feels like the palm of the hand of the mountains, drawing people in.’

The majority (75%) of respondents had a general awareness of the prior holding medieval lordship for the local area, with over 85% agreeing that the priory was a major actor in landscape development. Seen as a somewhat alien, resented and controlling outpost thrust into a previously isolated community, the priory is nevertheless perceived to have significantly impacted on the extent and efficiency of agricultural activity and land management, a focus for communications and communal and economic activity. Respondents identified a range of topographical features resulting from the priory's presence and activities, including the valley's dense network of tracks and paths, boundaries, relatively large farms with fine old houses, field systems, fishponds, mills, and quarries.

95% saw the priory and its secluded beauty as a major factor in the valley becoming a magnet for artists and writers and those seeking a peaceful and historic escape in modern times. Many also suggested that the very same elements of remoteness, tranquillity and spirituality that attracted the monastery founders had been a draw and creative inspiration for others, though it is hard to disentangle the two. Just over half felt that there was scope for the Brecon Beacons National Park and Cadw to provide more promotion and interpretation of the story of the priory and its landscape. Although it was also felt that this could potentially be overdone and become intrusive, visitors needed to be encouraged to explore more widely than the 'honeypot' of the priory ruins themselves. There was also a degree of resentment and ambivalence towards the National Park Authority from residents, perhaps a continuum with past relationship between the lords of the manor and the tenant farmers of the valley; the priory a locus, then as now, of 'incomer' influence.

6.5 Conclusion

In concluding the previous chapter, it was remarked that processes were set in train during the late-monastic decades which would help to shape the Hothneyslade landscape over the 200 years or so from the early-sixteenth century, an era in which the pattern of the historic landscape seen today was broadly laid down. Thus, we see an evolution from the largely unenclosed, bosky landscape of the priory foundation, through medieval expansion of arable farming and grazed valley sides under the prior's watch to the great post-medieval encroachments and piecemeal

enclosure, with an attendant infrastructure of rebuilt farmsteads, new *nant* farms, the mountain wall and parish roads. These developments led by an empowered and aspirational body of copyhold tenants rather than the lords of the manor. This transformation is tracked in the schematic diagram in Figure 6.41.

Landscape is, though, more than simply agrarian history. Monastic houses experienced both re-use and afterlife, adding new layers to their surrounding topography, an ‘archaeology of changing memories’ (Holtorf and Williams 2006, 242). For Llanthony, this endowment had several particularly interesting phases. Those who followed in the wake of the Black Canons (most notably Walter Savage Landor, Father Ignatius and Eric Gill’s artistic community) had similar motivations to the founders of the priory: seeking a wild place to live self-sufficient and contemplative lives, drawn by the valley’s religious history: ‘they all tried to live amidst the splendour of the Black Mountains, in spiritual communion, but they did not stay. Perhaps they could not find that they were seeking’ (Phillips 1951, 222). This pattern of retreat also seemingly related to an inability, for varying reasons, to cohabitate with the local population.

A product of the imposed authority of an Anglo-Norman elite, a procession of secular lords struggled with the potent symbolism of the Llanthony Estate as representing unwelcome authority and interference: a view which some have now projected onto the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority. In the eyes of the wider populace and the heritage industry, however, the priory, embedded in its landscape, has become one of the touchstone symbols of Welsh and regional heritage, regularly appearing in publicity materials and on lists of national treasures. Perhaps then, the clearest post-Dissolution legacy can be found in the great Romantic revival in interest in antiquity, remote and tranquil landscapes and places touched by spirituality. Llanthony stands as an exemplar of the ‘ivy-clad ruins by sylvan rivers’ on which emerging modern attitudes to the past were founded (Drabble 1979, 28). Its renewed notability foreshadowed both the lineage of quixotic latter-day incomers and the recreational tourism that the landscape of the priory’s Hothneyslade manors continues to experience.

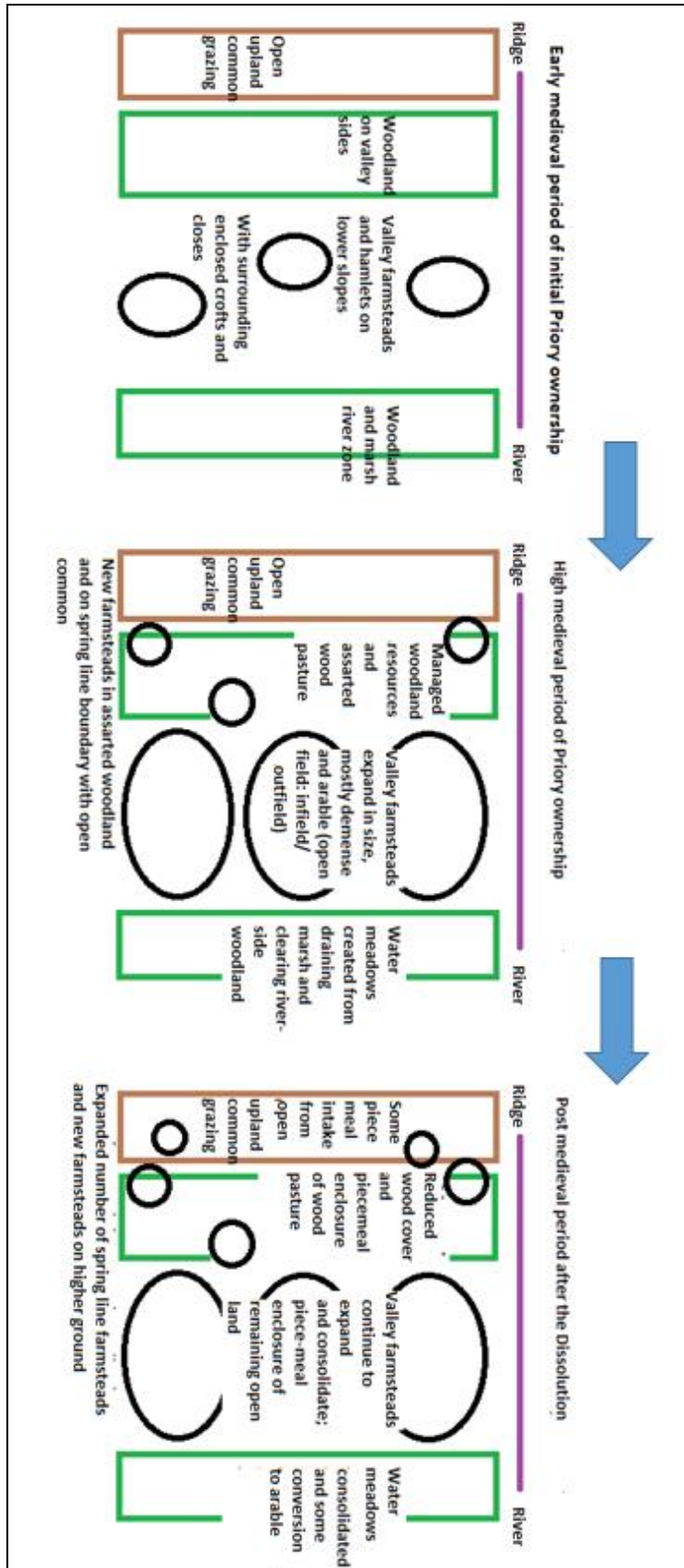


Figure 6.41: Schematic representation of the evolution of the agricultural landscape of Hothneyslade (Source: author).

Chapter 7

Case study 2: Tintern Abbey - the medieval monastic landscape

7.1 Introduction

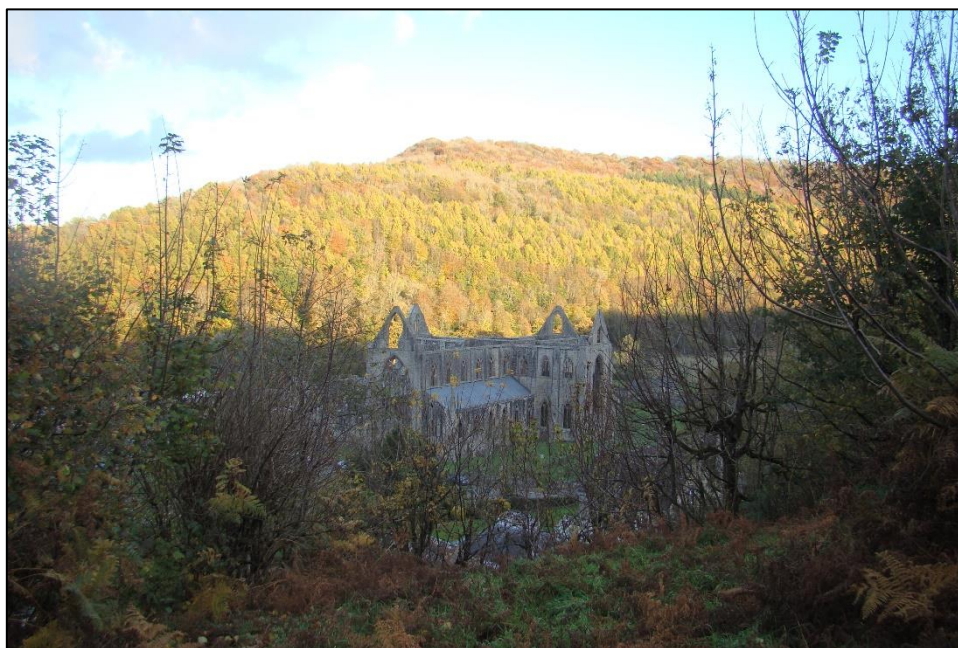


Figure 7.1: Tintern Abbey in its Wye Valley landscape setting (Source: author).

The celebrated ruins of Tintern Abbey and its encompassing precinct occupy a narrow plain on the west bank of the lower River Wye; a wooded border situation, in Wales but also on ‘the very rim of England’ (Deakin 2007, 126) (Figure 7.1 and location map at Figure 7.2). In David Williams’ (2001, 6) view, though not in the same league as the large Cistercian houses of England, ‘in anglicised Wales, Tintern took pride of place.’ The abbey, described by antiquarian Sir Richard Colt Hoare as exceeding any others in England and Wales on first sight, has been much visited and recorded in word and image over the last 250 years (Taylor 1861, 39). Although the Wye Valley, ‘a perfect setting for a modest Cistercian house’, has been an intrinsic element of Tintern’s appeal, this study seeks to achieve a wider and deeper landscape contextualisation: to analyse the imprint of the abbey and its estate

management of the surrounding countryside up to the present day (Knowles 1976, 295).

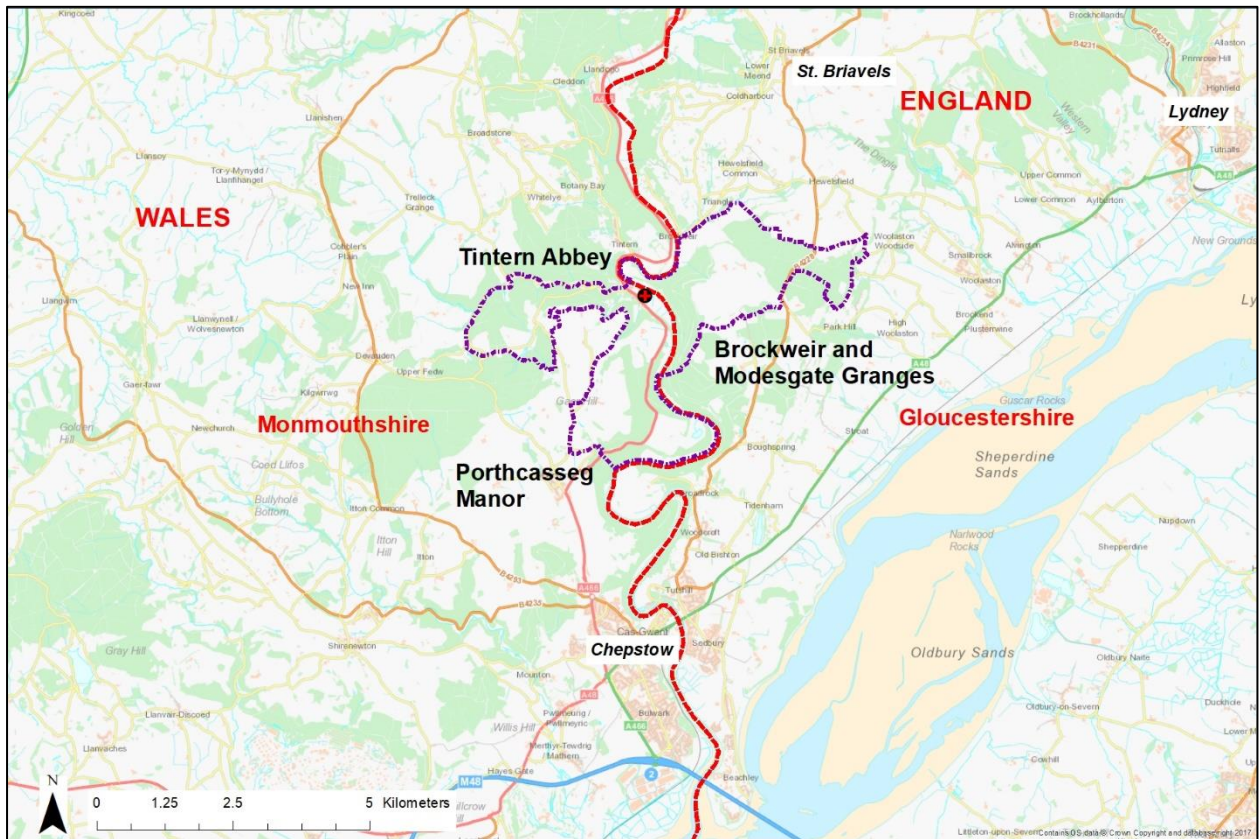


Figure 7.2: Location of Tintern Abbey and the Wye Valley estates (Porthcasseg manor and the granges of Brockweir and Modesgate) case study area (Source: map drawn in ArcGIS® using Ordnance Survey Open Carto 2 and 1:5000 Historic Counties data layers, downloaded from Digimap® under licence, <http://digimap.edina.ac.uk/>), and Historic Counties Trust <http://county-borders.co.uk/>).

The focus of this case study is on the abbey estates in the immediate vicinity of Tintern on both the Welsh western side of the Wye (Porthcasseg manor) and the English east (the granges of Brockweir and Modesgate): an encircling of home granges and manorial farms around the abbey precinct, referred to here as the ‘Wye Valley estates’ (Figures 7.2 and 7.3). Although some of the abbey’s granges have been subjected to documentary and archaeological investigation, previous study in the case study area – outside of the precinct – has been light.

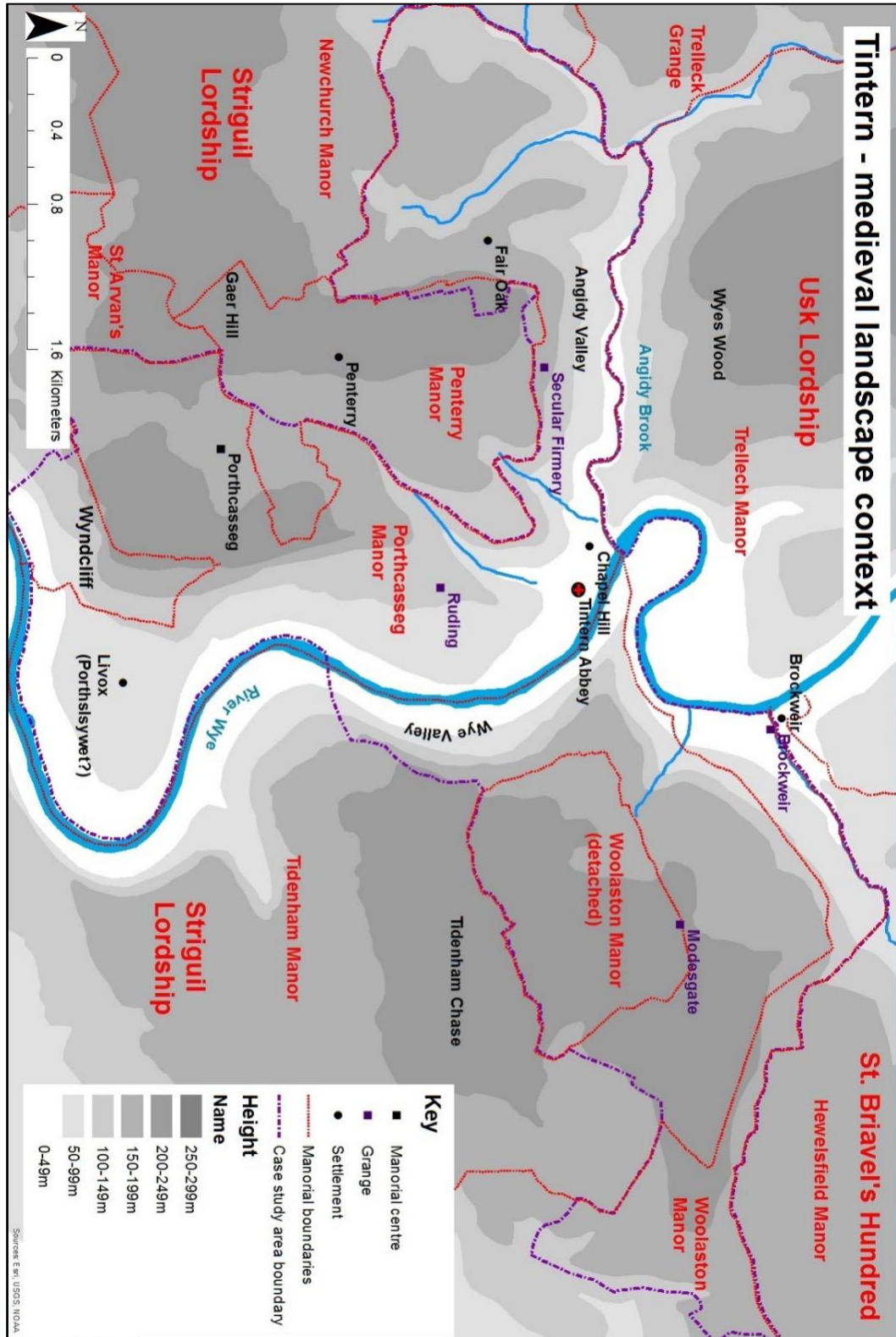


Figure 7.3: The Wye Valley estates in their medieval landscape context (Source: map drawn in ArcGIS® using Ordnance Survey 1:25,000 Scale Colour Raster data layer, downloaded from Digimap® under licence, <http://digimap.edina.ac.uk/>).

This analysis is supplemented by:

- GIS mapping of the Wye Valley estates' medieval landscape context (Figure 7.3), a 'point in time' indicative map of the landscape and land-use *circa* 1300 (Figure 7.24) and other thematic maps (the methodology and sources used for these maps are outlined in detail in Chapter 4 and Appendix 2);
- A gazetteer of medieval and monastic landscape features developed during the case study research, with rapid field assessment notes for key examples (Appendices 4 and 7);
- A summary of the abbey's wider grange network (Appendix 5);
- Detailed field notes of landscape walks which helped to inform the analysis presented here (Appendix 6 and composite map of routes at Figure 7.4).



Figure 7.4: Composite map of the landscape walk routes in the Tintern Abbey case study (Source: map drawn in ArcGIS® using ArcGIS World Imagery data layer).

7.2 Monastic history of the abbey



Figure 7.5: The south and east elevation of the church of St. Mary's, Tintern (Source: author).

The story of Tintern Abbey begins with the foundation north of Paris of L'Aumône Abbey as a daughter house of Cîteaux, the original *Novum Monasterium* and well-spring of the Cistercian Order, in 1121. Ten years later, Walter de Clare, lord of Striguil, founded a new abbey subordinate to L'Aumône at Tintern, dedicated to Saint Mary (Figure 7.5). As the second Cistercian house in Britain and first in Wales, Tintern was part of a new wave of monasticism following the Anglo-Norman elite's initial support for the Benedictines, generally well-established in long-settled population centres (Millward and Robinson 1978, 125). The new order commenced a rapid expansion across Britain, particularly into the less peopled uplands of Wales and northern England.

It is not known whether there had already been a settlement or ecclesiastical site at Tintern, though the new community certainly took an existing place-name for their monastery (Taylor 1861, 76). Tintern derives from the Welsh *Dindyrn* ('the royal fortress'), an ancient name referenced *circa* 620 in the *Book of Llandaff* (Davies 1979, 118; Osborne and Hobbs 1998, 87-8). Perhaps occupying a high promontory above the Wye, the name may have referenced a stronghold of Tewdrig, a sixth century King of Gwent, who, having retired to 'a hermitic life among the rocks of

Tintern', legend associates with a battle against Ceolwulf's West Saxons, either at a fording of the Wye or possibly Pont-y-saeson ('bridge of the Saxons') above Tintern in the Angidy valley (Robinson 2006, 49; Walters 1992, 124; Williams 1976, 94).



Figure 7.6: Oblique aerial photograph of Tintern Abbey, sited in the well-wooded Wye Valley (Source: © Crown copyright, Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historic Monuments of Wales, 1948, www.britainfromabove.org.uk/image/WAW006542).

On arriving at 'the Vale of Tinterne', the first colony of French monks from the mother house would have found the location conducive to their requirement for poverty 'far from the concourse of men', away from the worldly temptations and business of more thickly-settled places (Robinson 2011, 7; Thomas 1839, 19). The vivid and dramatic topography of the narrow, heavily-wooded valley, flanked to the south by high Carboniferous Limestone cliffs and lingering river meanders, offered up 'a wild enough place ... to fulfil all the newcomers' desires for remoteness' (Craster 1970, 3-4) (Figure 7.6). Tintern seems to adhere to the ideal-type of isolated site favoured by the Cistercians, set 'upon waste and desolate tracts' amongst 'the ancient hills that saw that abbey rise' described by Tennyson (Bond 2005, 63; Foord 1925, 116; quoted in Twamley 1839, 50). Although usually established away from existing townships, most communities of White Monks did not settle in unmanaged

landscapes, however, and were often conterminous with the seats of their benefactors, in Tintern's case the de Clare's of Striguil (Chepstow) a few kilometres to the south amidst their fiefdom occupying both sides of the Wye (Robinson 2006, 49). The riverine site and the surrounding land over which the abbey would develop its estates were not the 'waste howling wilderness' (Deuteronomy 32.10) of Cistercian propaganda; this was a long-established countryside rather than an empty, sequestered place.

With generous land grants in the local area (as outlined in Section 7.3), the new foundation soon flourished, protected from the worst of the Welsh uprisings against Norman Marcher rule during the 'anarchy' of Stephen's reign due to its proximity to the great baronial castle at Chepstow (Williams 1976, 96). This early prosperity led to an influx of new recruits, both choir monks and lay brothers; up to 60 brethren were in residence when a daughter house was established at Kingswood in Gloucestershire in 1139, numbers presumably becoming too large for the Wye Valley site (Brackspear 1934, 3; Robinson 2011, 14).⁵⁰ Little is known about the original abbey buildings, which were probably constructed of wood by an advance party before the main cadre of monks arrived. By the mid-twelfth century, under the energetic stewardship of Abbot Henry, the expanding community had built a church and subsidiary monastic complex out of stone (Newman 2000, 537; Robinson 2006, 50-1).

Both geographically and culturally adrift from much of Wales, the early-established, larger Cistercian abbeys of the south-east (Margam, Neath and Tintern) did not go on to contribute to the expansion of the order further into Wales through daughter houses, remaining tied to their Anglo-Norman patrons (Cowley 1977, 24; Craster 1970, 4). For border houses such as Tintern it remained true throughout their history that 'the sympathies and links of their communities had an English emphasis' and

⁵⁰ Most of the monks known throughout the abbey's history (around 100) were English or Anglo-Norman, surname evidence pointing to origins in Bristol, the Forest of Dean, Gloucester, Monmouth and the Wye Valley. As with other religious houses of south-east Wales, Welsh names were rare (Burton and Ströber 2015, 206; Williams 2008, 193-4; 2001, 129).

the abbey's landed properties extended no further into Wales than Monmouthshire (Rees 1972, 32; Williams 2008, 190).

In 1189, lordship of Striguil and patronage of Tintern passed to William Marshal, brother of Walter de Clare's heir, Gilbert (Burton and Ströber 2015, 204). Caught in an Irish Sea storm in 1201, Marshal vowed to build a new abbey in Ireland if he survived, leading to the foundation of a second daughter convent, Tintern Parva – also known as the Abbey of the Vow – near Wexford (Robinson 2011, 12). A further wave of recruitment at the mother abbey led to expanded accommodation and reorganisation of the cloistral ranges, assisted by generous new grants from Marshal's son, William the younger, who succeeded in 1219. Construction work carried on into the late-thirteenth century in contemporary Gothic style with more decorative ornamentation than the plainer earlier convent, including a new abbot house, lodgings for visitors and an infirmary (McCormick 2010, 11; *ibid.*, 29-31).

The expansion and relative stability at Tintern and elsewhere underscored the shielded position of the larger Cistercian houses of Wales from the political instability of the thirteenth century during the long Anglo-Welsh conflicts culminating in the Edwardian conquest (Cowley 1977, 230; Craster 1970, 4). Even in this period of growth, however, there are recorded hints of a decline in management, discipline and wealth and several disputes with neighbouring monasteries including Dore and Llantarnam (Robinson 2011, 16; Williams 1976, 107).

A new chapter in the abbey's history commenced when Roger Bigod, Earl of Norfolk, took on the mantle of lord of Striguil through marriage. A powerful figure already, Bigod would become marshal of England, an influential role at court, and an enthusiastic benefactor. By this stage, Tintern had fallen behind its neighbours in the modernisation of its abbey church (Robinson 2006, 125). Now, long-delayed plans to build a 'true Gothic great church' benefited from renewed impetus and a committed sponsor (Cowley 1977, 197; Robinson 2011, 34). Work having originally commenced in 1269, the new structure was consecrated in Bigod's presence in 1301, largely facilitated by the earl's gifts of additional possessions (Figure 7.7). Further building activity in the first half of the fourteenth century saw an expansion of the abbot's residence and a new great hall, reflecting the high-status of both the abbot and his

guests (Robinson 2011, 63). The improved monastic complex that emerged reflected a general trend amongst the Cistercians towards more comfortable living, moving away from the austerity of earlier generations of monks to ‘a more extrovert, worldly outlook’ (Burton and Ströber 2015, 209; McCormick 2010, 125). By the end of the thirteenth century, Tintern, with its new church nearing completion, was established as amongst the wealthiest Cistercian houses in Wales and the March. The abbey would then reach the ‘zenith of its fortunes’ as the business-minded abbot Hugh de Wyke (1305-20) secured royal renewal of the abbey’s grants and charters in 1307 from the dying Edward I who had obtained *seisin* of the lordship and abbey after Bigod’s death (Harrison 2000, 87; Robinson 2011, 15).



Figure 7.7: The interior of the new abbey church, looking south-east (Source: author).

After Bigod, Tintern was left without an active champion and patron and from now on there would be little new building development or additional landed property (Bergey 2016, 15). Nevertheless, his endowments and the charter renewals guaranteed relative wealth and stability as the wider monastic community moved into a financially difficult period in the mid-fourteenth century. Tintern was not totally immune, however, with debts of £174 in 1340, though this was not necessarily a sign of severe fiscal strain (Cowley 1977, 232). The abbey was also taking steps to reassert authority over its estates and maximise income, as evidenced by a court case brought by tenants at its valuable Acle manor in Norfolk complaining of unfair

rents and fines (Williams 1984, 245). Little is known of the direct impact of the defining social and economic disrupter of the era – the Black Death – on Tintern’s fortunes. In 1349, the vicar of the abbey’s Woolaston manor succumbed to the plague and, in the same year, the Porthcasseg court roll showed a higher than normal number of deaths (Cowley 1977, 256; Williams 1976, 108; 2001, 50). That there were only 14 monks recorded in 1395, a small number for such a large convent, may have been part of the pestilence’s legacy (Burton and Ströber 2015, 206).

By the early-1400s, indications of further financial difficulties began to emerge, perhaps exacerbated by the Glyndŵr revolt. For instance, in 1401/2 the abbot petitioned the king to support the ‘poor house of Tintern’, whilst in 1407 Tintern was pardoned from collecting tithes in the Diocese of Llandaff ‘because both the abbey and the diocese have been much devastated by Welsh rebels’ (Given-Wilson *et al*/2005, 378; Williams 1976, 108). The lordship of Striguil and patronage of Tintern passed to William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke and the abbey’s steward, in 1468. Though he was beheaded the next year as a Yorkist supporter, he bequeathed money for an uncompleted rebuilding of the cloister (Craster 1970, 7). The Herberts, and the Somerset family after them, retained the role of patron and steward, increasingly a means of controlling the abbey’s financial operations, far removed from the benefaction of their predecessors.

The legacy of the Glyndŵr rebellion hung heavily over Welsh monasteries and many struggled financially in the late-medieval phase, with Tintern no exception. By now, the Cistercian’s pious way of life had become laxer and an ‘indefinable spiritual rusticity’ often took hold (Knowles 1976, 310-12). In 1492, Abbot William made representations to the Pope, lamenting that the abbey was ‘threatened with ruin in its parts, walls, roofs, houses, granges and other buildings by time and the passage of years and the negligence and incompetence of those who once held the monastery’ and, further, that the community ‘was unable, on account of the slenderness of its fruits, to restore and repair it suitably’ (Fuller 1986, 3-4). In such hard times, attracting pilgrims became an additional source of income. The abbey claimed to possess a miraculous image of the Virgin, housed in a chapel outside the abbey church (Robinson 2011, 17; Williams 1976, 109).



Figure 7.8: An artist's impression of the abbey complex at its full extent towards the end of the Middle Ages (Source: after Robinson 2011, 37).

The standing and skilful management of the last abbot, Richard Wyche (1521-36), led to a period of stability in the run-up to the Dissolution (Williams 2011, 65) (Figure 7.8). Welsh abbeys, however, had few champions as suppression approached, with powerful local landowners lining up to benefit from the end of monastic land ownership. Tensions arose between abbot Wyche and the steward, Charles Somerset, Earl of Worcester, who clearly had designs on the abbey's landed property and would be granted such at Dissolution (Robinson 2011, 17-8). Although Henry VIII had renewed the abbey's grants in 1524, its days were numbered with the abbey in debt and the earl's custodianship motivated by self-interest (Williams 1976, 110). Tintern's final valuation, in the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* survey, though the highest of the Welsh Cistercian abbeys, was relatively small on a national scale and lower than its daughter house at Kingswood (Caley and Hunter 1814, 370-1). The commissioner appointed by Thomas Cromwell, Dr John Vaughan, confirmed hearsay of 'greatly abused' religious life at the abbey and, despite being the only Cistercian monastery in Wales still mustering the requisite abbot and 12 monks, Tintern was dissolved in 1536 in the first round of suppressions of houses valued under £200 (Courtney and Gray 1991, 247). A later, higher, valuation suggests that *Valor* perhaps deliberately underplayed the position to facilitate a speedier closure.

No matter, the buildings within the abbey precinct would begin their long decline into ruination, the church ‘a Gothic temple open to the sky’, awaiting the renewed interest of the Georgian romantics and antiquarians (Mee 1951, 154) (Figure 7.9).



Figure 7.9: Tintern Abbey, Monmouthshire by E. Beeks, nineteenth century (Source: © National Library of Wales).

7.3 An overview of Tintern's estates and holdings

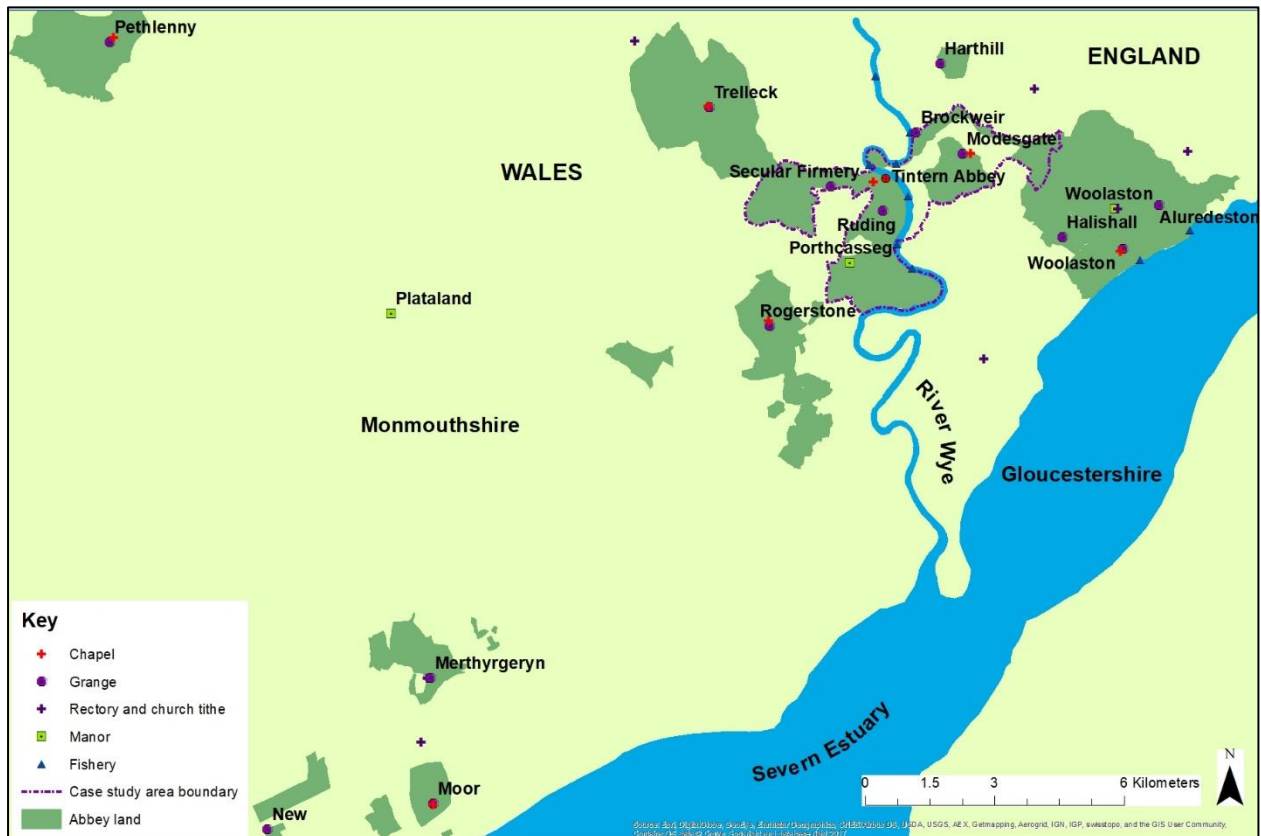


Figure 7.10: Distribution of Tintern Abbey estates and other holdings in Gloucestershire and Monmouthshire (Source: redrawn from Robinson 2011, 13 and Williams 1990, 99, with additions by the author, in ArcGIS® using Ordnance Survey 1:10560 County Series 1st edition, Monmouthshire, 1887 and Gloucestershire, 1889 data layer, downloaded from Digimap® under licence, <http://digimap.edina.ac.uk/>).

A comprehensive gazetteer of the abbey's recorded possessions can be found at Appendix 4 and Figure 7.10 maps their distribution. An overview of the charters and other contemporary sources that evidence the composition of the abbey's portfolio is provided in Chapter 4.

Tintern's prosperity was underwritten by the amassing of significant landed possessions largely bestowed by three benefactors, all lords of Striguil: Walter de Clare, the abbey's founder, William Marshal the younger in the mid-1200s and Roger Bigod in the later thirteenth century. By the time of the abbey's foundation there were few remaining wholly unexploited areas: 'Severn's wild shore'⁵¹ was not as remote as later romantic writing would suggest. The initial gift included the established local

⁵¹ *Legend of Tintern* from Edwin Paxton Hood's *Old England* (quoted in Taylor 1861, 43).

manors of Porthcasseg and Woolaston (Figure 7.11), which de Clare probably included to divest himself of church property, long-standing Wye fisheries, and more marginal country ripe for the grange farm model (Robinson 2011, 13). Within the grant was territory bounding the baronial hunting chase of Tidenham across the Wye on which the abbey would forge Modesgate grange. From the large Woolaston manor its brethren would carve out the eponymous grange from estuary-side marsh and meadow and the further *grangia* of Brockweir and Halishall. In the following years, land granted at Wilcrick in Magor would be exchanged for pasturelands at nearby Merthyrgeryn above the Caldicot Levels to create another grange. Further endowments came from Walter's successor, his nephew Gilbert, the valuable addition of 12 *caracutes* of prime arable land for a grange at Trelleck provided by his brother, Richard (Williams 1976, 113).



Figure 7.11: Woolaston looking south-eastwards towards the Severn estuary from the high ground of the manor, its grange occupying the low-lying land to the right (Source: author).

A descendent of the de Clare's, William Marshal the younger provided further generous gifts in 1223. These included the estate that became the abbey's westernmost grange at Pethlenny alongside the Usk, the productive arable farm at Rogerstone, a tract of undrained marsh that became Moor grange, and further parcels of land across the Caldicot Levels at Llanwarne, Magor and Porton gifted by Bartholomew de Mora, a knight of the lordship (Bradney 1993a, 257; PRO 1908, 105; Heath 1806, unpaginated).

As well as confirming grants from earlier charters in 1301, Roger Bigod, the third and final active patron, gifted Tintern its most valuable possession in the following year: Acle manor in distant Norfolk, which would provide a quarter of the abbey's income and thus a degree of financial security through difficult times, facilitating major capital projects into the sixteenth century (Heath 1806, unpaginated; Robinson 2006, 280). Bigod would also grant the church and advowson at Halvergate (Norfolk), a new grange at Aluredeston adjacent to Woolaston in exchange for the abbey's Plataland estate, and additional land extending Modesgate grange (Bergey 2016, 21; PRO 1908, 99-100, 106). By this stage, the abbots of Tintern had long moved away from the early Cistercian doctrine of shunning feudal income from manorial rents, church tithes and mills, part of a more general relaxation of austere Cistercian discipline (Williams 1976, 107). Additional manorial rents were received from Hewelsfield above Brockweir on the edge of the Forest of Dean jurisdiction. Church income came from Lydd (Kent), the abbey's only new possession after the Bigod era, and several local parishes, including Woolaston and its dependant chapel at Alvington, formally granted by the Bishop of Hereford in 1252 having provided tithes since as early as 1160, the first such appropriation in breach of the Cistercian's Charter of Charity in Wales (Bliss 1971, 288; Cowley 1977, 185; Williams 2001, 272-4).

Described here is a period of deliberate estate accumulation by a professional, structured and relentless economic machine, part of the transfer of significant secular wealth and cultural and economic power to the Cistercians in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries (Gilchrist and Mytum 1989, 32; Robinson 2006, 31). Facilitated by their benefactors, the abbey community pursued a strategic approach of extending and improving their agricultural properties through exchange and purchase, consolidation of new and existing land units and clearing or draining previously unproductive places (Peterken 2007, 13; Robinson 2011, 11; Williams 1990, 6). At its land-holding culmination, the abbey held lordship over a varied mosaic of geographies (of topography, soil type, altitude and relief) across both a compact tract of high table-like countryside on both the Welsh and English sides of the lower Wye Valley and extensive estuarine lowlands along the Severn Levels (Cowley 1977, 253). A portfolio that included a network of specialist granges (eight in Monmouthshire and six in Gloucestershire, spread across the landscape to avoid over-stocking and potential resource disputes between neighbouring farms), lordship

of local manors, fisheries on the Wye and Severn, a number of properties in nearby towns to facilitate trade and considerable rights and freedoms of passage, pasture and exploitation of mineral, water and wood resources within the secular forests of Dean, Wentwood and Wyewood (Bradney 1993c, 147; Heath 1806, unpaginated; Williams 1976, 119; 2001, 192).



Figure 7.12: The rich arable land of Pethlenny grange alongside the river Usk (Source: author).

The engine for the progression of this monastic landscape was the grange, the Cistercian independent ‘model farm’ introduced in Chapter 2 (Platt 1969, 12; Williams 1984, 242) (Figure 7.12). Although the more conventional manorial system of tenanted communities formed part of Tintern’s estate, the self-contained *grangia* economy was the preferred goal of the abbey’s initial land acquisition (Robinson 2006, 33). Purity of Cistercian ideals melded with more pragmatic imperatives (to exploit and develop the large tracts accumulated to sustain the community) to place manual labour at the heart of abbey life (Williams 1969, 13-14). Early generations of brethren engaged in a sustained programme of grange building, clearance of woodland and wood-pasture, enclosure and an intensification of stock rearing, cultivation and innovation (Robinson 2011, 11; Williams 1990, 16). Furthermore, the aim was a balanced economy of agricultural resources with arable-focused granges such as Rogerstone and Trelleck on the fertile plateau above the Wye, extensive

Abbas de Tintine her gūg de Affeto ubi sunt	1	0	0
tres caruc' terr' p'c' cuiuslibet	0	0	6
De prato ibem quatuor acr' p'c' cuiuslibet	0	1	0
De silva cedua p' a ^m	1	2	0
De redd' allis'	0	6	8
De p'ntis & p'quis'	0	1	5
De gurgite & p'cas' in Weyt	1	15	0
De pastura valli	0	4	2
Item idem her apud Rogenslon (*) quatuor ca-			
ruc' terr' p'c' cuiuslibet	1	0	0
De prato ibem quinddecim acr' p'c' cuiuslibet	0	0	6
De gardino & curtilag'	0	1	5
De molend' p' annu'	0	15	0
De pastura de vado	0	12	0
Item idem her apud Marthog'm duas car' terr'			
& dimid' & novendeci' acr' p'c' cuiuslibet	1	8	0
Et p'c' cuiuslibet acr' de p'ntis novendeci' acris	0	0	3
Item idem her in poch' de scti Brigida triginta			
acr' terr' p'c' cuiuslibet	0	0	3
De redd' allis' ibidem	0	5	0
Et in pochia de Magor de redd'	0	3	0
Et in paroch' de Wundy	0	12	4
Et in eadem pochia novendeci' acr' terre p'c'			
cuiuslibet	0	0	2
Et ibidem quatuordeci' acr' p'li p'c' cuiuslibet	0	0	6
Item idem her apud Motam (*) duas caruc' terr'			
p'c' cuiuslibet	1	10	0
De prato ibem quingint' acr' p'c' cuiuslibet	0	0	6
Et in la Bredem (*) Edeve in poch' de Magor			
quingingint' & duas acr' prati p'c' cuiuslibet	0	0	6
Et ibidem de redd' allis'	0	10	0
Item idem her apud Pentelony tres caruc' terr'			
p'c' cuiuslibet	0	6	8
Item idem her apud Trillek sex caruc' terr' p'c'			
cuiuslibet	0	6	8
Item idem her apud Platelande tres caruc' terr'			
p'c' cuiuslibet	0	6	8
Item idem her apud Haridrete unam caruc' terr'			
p'c'	1	4	0
Et ibem viginti quatuor acr' terr' p'c' oim	0	6	8
Item idem her in Villa de Sturgyl de redd'			
allis'	0	4	5
Item idem her apud Triket una molend' foler'			
p'c'	0	6	8
Et ibem de redd' allis'	0	12	0
De molend'	1	10	0
Et de una gurgite et dimid' p' annu'	2	0	0
De fab bolco vend'	0	13	4
De pannag'	0	6	8
De p'quis' cur'	0	13	4
De melle vend'	0	5	0
De tanneris (*)	2	0	0
Item idem her apud (5) Penbo (1) sexdecim acr'			
terre p'c' cuiuslibet	0	0	6
Et de redd' allis' apud Uffam	0	1	4
Et de Willmo de Hereford p' quadam gūg' de			
redd' allis'	0	0	6
Et de Jole de Stansou'we p' quadam gūg'	0	1	8
Item idem her in Landavenio triginta acr' pastur'			
p'c' cuiuslibet	0	0	3
Sūm' 38 5 0			

Figure 7.13: Extract from *Taxatio Ecclesiastica*, 1291 recording Tintern's income (Source: University of Bristol Special Collection, photographed with permission).

wooded resources on the hillsides, and pastoral farming amidst the Levels (Robinson 2006, 278).

A snapshot of the scale of the abbey's landed wealth and agricultural enterprise at the peak of its economic powers is found in the *Taxatio Ecclesiastica* survey of 1291 (Figure 7.13). With the important qualification that takings from the abbey's Gloucestershire estates and 'hidden' income from *demesne* produce are excluded, it records temporal value and income of £108, with church spiritualities of £36 (Williams 1976, 116). Low rental income indicates that most of the abbey's estate was still directly managed at this time. This valuation placed the abbey third in terms of Welsh Cistercian earnings, behind Neath and Margam, though estate acreage and volume of granges was modest in comparison to the upland houses of Strata Florida and Whitland (Cowley 1977, 78).

Something of the scale of the abbey's mixed agrarian operations is illustrated by the total of 24.5 *caracutes* of *demesne* arable land (up to three-quarters of overall hectarage) allied

to significant pasture and meadowlands grazed by over 3000 sheep as well as cattle, pigs and horses (Ayscough and Caley 1802, 161, 282; Burton and Ströber 2015, 206; Williams 1976, 119-120).

As the medieval woollen industry flourished, Tintern and Margam emerged as the leading producer and income-generators in south Wales and the March, with the abbey (alongside Dore) establishing a reputation for producing the finest wool and – stimulated by surpluses generated from large-scale pastoralism – active in the export

trade, particularly with Flanders and Italy (Cowley 1977, 89; Donkin 1978, 52; Williams 1990, 22). In a good year Tintern brought in £150 from the wool trade as recorded on the 'Pegolotti' list in the late-thirteenth century, though, as more of the abbey's land was demised sheep numbers declined and by 1535 no 'master of the flock' was recorded (Williams 2001, 253; 2008, 202).

Outside the gates of its own properties, Tintern also enjoyed many legal rights across the jurisdiction of neighbouring landowners; perhaps unsurprisingly, discord over the exercising of such rights was not uncommon. For instance, permission to stable up to 40 mares in the Forest of Dean was given in 1234 but the abbey was also charged with trespass over a mill built within the Forest near Hewelsfield in 1270 which had to be pulled down (Cowley 1977, 218; Williams 1976, 115, 120). Regular land conflicts were also recorded with neighbouring monasteries, including Llantarnam, Llanthony and even the daughter house at Kingswood, throughout the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries (Burton and Stober 2015, 206; Williams 1976, 104, 107).

Although Tintern had long operated a dual economy of *demesne* granges and tenanted manors, the abbey transitioned towards a new paradigm of more hands-off estate management from the mid-fourteenth century (Cowley 1977, 253). This was part of a wider long-term move away from the direct exploitation of lordly estates to a *rentier*-based economy (more farmland leased, less held in hand), given impetus by labour scarcity heightened by the Black Death (Burton and Ströber 2015, 207; Robinson 2011, 16; Williams 1990, 18). Cistercian communities, working their estates through the grange model and dependant on an 'in-house' workforce of lay brothers in decline since the late-thirteenth century, were particularly affected by this shift (Craster 1970, 6; Williams 1990, 7). As the old grange system became more unsustainable, the agricultural estate of the abbey experienced pragmatic manorialisation, coming to resemble those of secular neighbours and the great Benedictine houses with key local properties alone remaining in hand (Betsey 1989,

32; Cowley 1977, 262; Robinson 2006, 280; Williams 2001, 209).⁵² Whether this was the result of a formal review of land management, as transpired at Fountains Abbey, or a more reactive and piecemeal process is now unknowable (Coppack 2003, 116). In David Williams (1990, 18) words, an end was put to ‘the uniqueness of the earlier Cistercian economy’: starkly shown by the records for Merthyrgeryn – managed by lay brethren in 1291 but mostly tenanted and holding manor courts by 1387 with outside labour hired in (Ayscough and Caley 1802, 161, 282; *NLW*, Badminton 1571; Williams 1976, 118; 1984, 243; *ibid.*, 23). Most of Tintern’s granges, other lands and appropriated churches were leased out from this time, with the abbot and his officials becoming ‘financially interested landlords’ (Cowley 1977, 259; Williams 2001, 225).

As the final monastic decades commenced, stewardship of estate business was increasingly in the hands of bailiffs and other lay appointees (Davies 1953, 131). One component of the evolving estate management essayed above was a realignment in the status of the cellarer (a monk) and lay steward (Cowley 1977, 257). At the height of the abbey’s fortunes, the cellarer was a powerful figure, second only to the abbot, with day-to-day control of the abbey’s granges, manors and general finances (Williams 1984, 255; 2001, 216). By 1402, steward John ap Wilcock, a local landowner, was chairing the Porthcasseg manor court in the stead of the abbot and cellarer (*NLW*, Badminton 1655). A few decades later, the position was occupied by members of the Herbert family, earls of Worcester and provincial gentry, who would have an increasingly strong hold on the finances of the abbey up to the Dissolution, not always to the advantage of the religious community (*NLW*, Badminton 1657; Robinson 2006, 281; Williams 2001, 218).

As suppression approached, *Valor Ecclesiasticus* estimated the value of the abbey’s assets at £256 gross with deductions of £145 for fees, pensions, rents and other debts (Caley and Hunter 1814, 370-1; Williams 1976, 117-8).⁵³ By this stage, most

⁵² Probably explaining references to a number of the abbey’s granges, such as Aluredeston and Secular Firmary, as ‘manors’ in some later primary sources.

⁵³ The accuracy of these figures has to be considered in the light of the different valuations around the same time: the grant of the abbey’s estates to Henry, Earl of Worcester of 1535/6 estimated the annual value of the abbey at £188.3.10, whilst the accounts of the Court of Augmentations valued rents and assets at £231.6 (*NLW*, Badminton 2445).

income derived from fixed rents and tithes from land and rectories farmed out (with some paid in kind), though two *demesne* granges – Moor and Rogerstone – remained (Davies 1953, 130; Williams 2001, 78). The inventory of the abbey's landed possessions remained considerable, however, the estate portfolio of 'manors or granges' and other properties granted in earlier centuries still largely in place (PRO 1964, 27-8).

7.4 An introduction to the Wye Valley estates

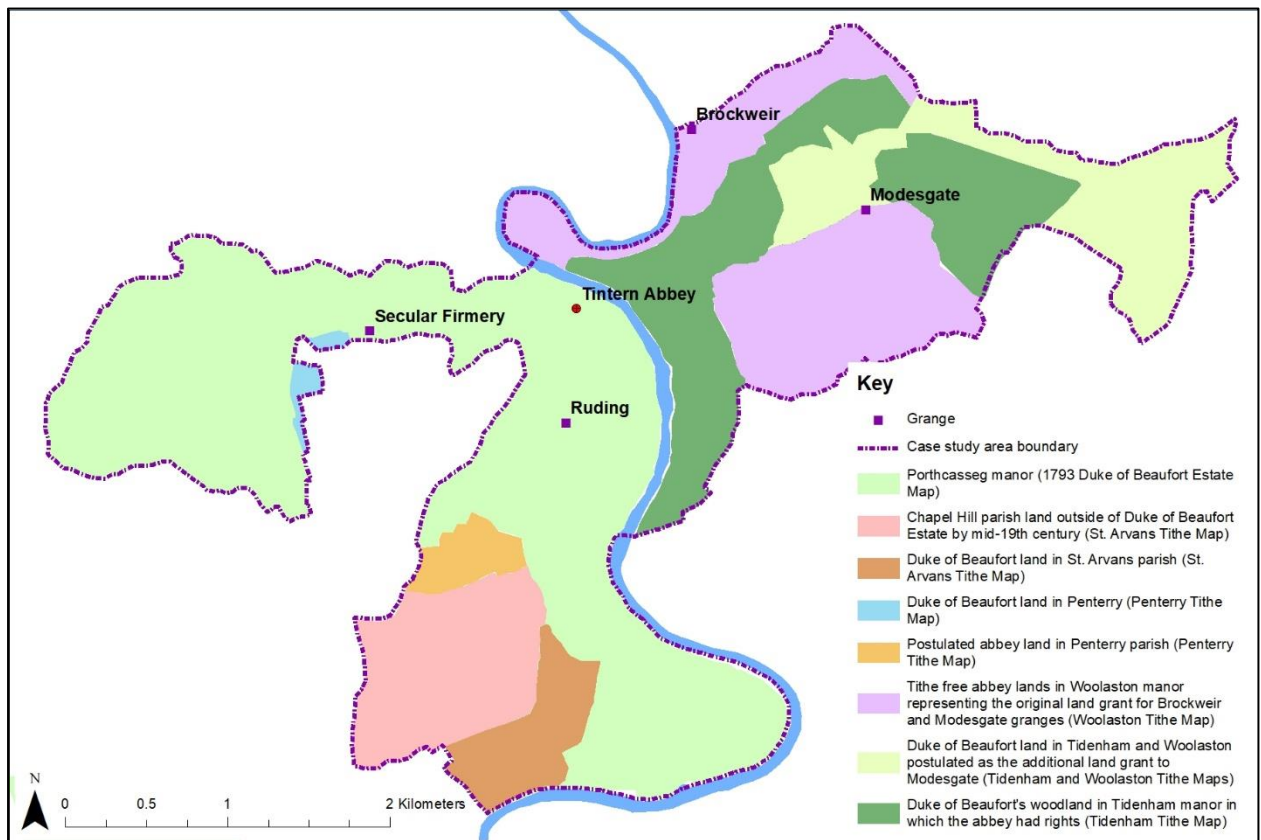


Figure 7.14: Make-up of the land units within the Wye Valley estates (Source: map drawn in ArcGIS® using Ordnance Survey 1:10560 County Series 1st edition, Monmouthshire, 1887 and Gloucestershire, 1889 data layer, downloaded from Digimap® under licence, <http://digimap.edina.ac.uk/>).

The constituent elements of the Wye Valley estates surmised from historic maps are drawn at Figure 7.14. On the western side of the Wye extends the abbey's Porthcasseg manor. Informed by the bounds of the manor drawn on a 1763 map of the Duke of Beaufort's Tintern Abbey Estate, the circuit of the manor largely follows the boundary of the nineteenth century parish of Chapel Hill, tithe-free in its entirety

(*NLW*, Badminton Vol. 2 143/1/1). Included are Duke of Beaufort lands in the neighbouring Penterry and St. Arvans parishes based on geographical unity and postulated abbey ownership rather than direct historical evidence. Crossing the Wye, a detached block of Woolaston parish (the original gift of Modesgate grange, confirmed as tithe-free ‘formerly Abbey land’ by the tithe commissioners) and other tithe-less land around Brockweir and Modesgate are supplemented by Duke of Beaufort fields within Tidenham postulated as the additional Modesgate land grant. Also included is the Duke’s surrounding common woodland in which the abbey had extensive rights of passage and use (*Tithe Map*, Gwatkin 1993a).

7.4.1 Brockweir grange



Figure 7.15: Brockweir village and the lands of the grange above, looking east (Source: author).

The toponym of the Wye-side settlement and grange of Brockweir (Figures 7.15 and 7.16) originates from either ‘weir by the brook’ (from the Old English *broc*) or the weir of Brockmael (perhaps from a sixth century prince of Gwent) (Osborne and Hobbs 1998, 13). It does not appear in *Domesday*, though a small settlement may have long attended the weir (Hart 2000, 83-4). Granted by William Marshal the younger in 1223 and centred on this established weir and crossing point on the Wye, the abbey grange occupied a thin belt of land forming an outlying finger of Woolaston manor. It stretched from the Ferry Farm promontory looped by the Wye to the west up the

southern flank of the steep Old Red Sandstone Brockweir Brook tributary valley to the bounds of Modesgate grange to the east (Heath 1806, unpaginated; Morgan and Smith 1972b, 102) (Figure 7.24). By the later-monastic era, the grange had been farmed out to local tenants (Morgan and Smith 1972b, 209).

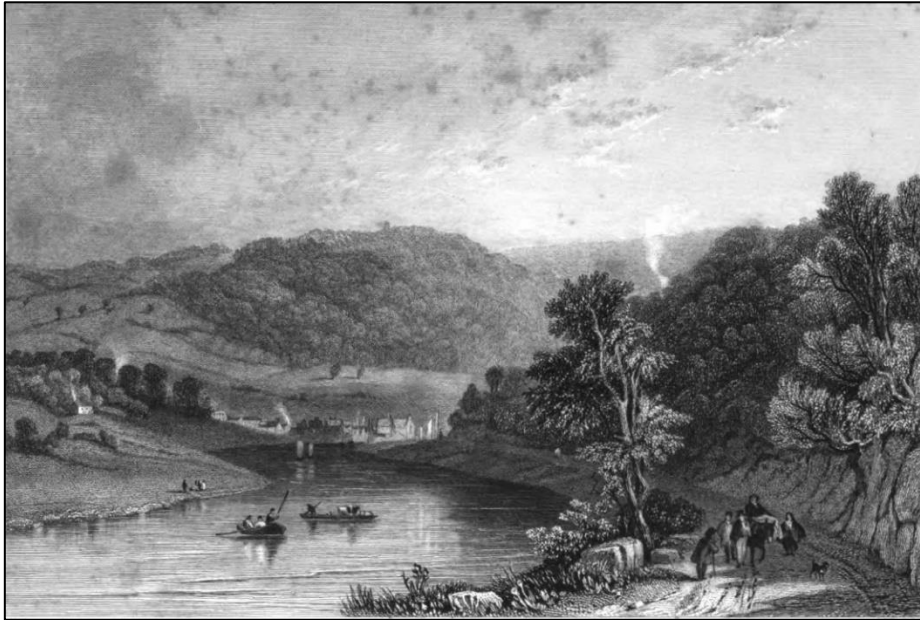


Figure 7.16: Village of Brockweir on the River Wye by W. Radclyffe, 1839 with the grange lands of Brockweir and Modesgate on the hillside beyond (Source: after Twamley 1839, 65).

7.4.2 Modesgate grange

Recorded as Modiete in 1089, this place-name is thought to compound either a personal name, Modi, or ‘meadow’ (from the Old English *mad*) with the Old English *gatta* meaning ‘road’ or ‘gateway’ (*Glos HER* 6033; Hart 2000, 11). The latter is perhaps a reference to the old track from Tintern that breaches the intermittent early-medieval bank and ditch ‘dyke’ that crests the steep eastern side of the Wye Valley between Chepstow and St. Briavel’s Common (described in Chapter 3) and runs up to the modern farmstead of Madgetts, probably successor to the Modesgate grange farm (Figure 7.17). That this was already long-worked and partitioned territory is testified by the *Domesday Book* which records that Brictric previously held three hides at Modiete, a fertile tract carved out of the northern part of Tidenham Chase divided between William of Eu, Roger de Lacy and Malmesbury Abbey (Williams and Martin 2002, 451, 463).



Figure 7.17: Madgetts Farm (Modesgate) looking south (Source: author).

William Marshal the younger described the original gift that became the nucleus of the abbey's arable farm, as 'the whole land of Modesgat, with all its appurtenants' (i.e. common lands) in 1223, recounting the Richard de Clare foundation charter (Heath 1806, unpaginated). This was a broadly rectangular block of land 250m high up on the limestone plateau above the bosky Wye Valley directly opposite the abbey, memorialised by the boundary of a detached portion of Woolaston manor and parish, its western stretch formed by the aforementioned dyke earthwork (Figure 7.3). A *circa* 1285 Roger Bigod charter added 'twenty-eight (acres) ... at Modesgate ... from the valley called Haselden to the grange of the monks' (PRO 1908, 99). 'Haselden' can be interpreted as the small valley that runs east of Madgetts Farm down to the Brockweir valley between Cows Hill and Beech Knoll in which a field was recorded as Monk Hazleton in 1815 (*Glos Archives*, Q/R1/144). This additional endowment included the pastures of Madgett Hill rising to the original grange and assarted land within the escarped spur that connects Brockweir with the rest of Woolaston to the south, possibly including the area of Little Meend as a detached out-farm (the extended boundary indicated at Figure 7.24). Together with adjacent land rented from Malmesbury Abbey, this brought all the agricultural ground of Modesgate within the grange's compass.

7.4.3 Porthcasseg manor



Figure 7.18: Extensive earthworks visible across the lane from the modern buildings at Porthcasseg (Source: © Crown copyright, Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historic Monuments of Wales, C630648, digitised from a photograph by John Sorrel, undated!).

Encompassing the abbey precinct and the granges of Ruding and Secular Firmary, Porthcasseg was Tintern's home manor, the central hub of its agricultural activities with much estate and tenant business taking place at its manor court (Cowley 1977, 253). First referenced in the *Book of Llandaff* as 'agrūm porthcassec' circa 693 in the hands of the Llandaff church, the manor was an anciently established land-unit with a resident tenanted population when included in Walter de Clare's initial endowment on founding the new abbey (Davies 1953, 54; Walters 1992, 119). Here, along the south-eastern borderlands of Wales, such estates had been early-adopters of the English manorial model, though traditional forms of land tenure and other customs may have been integrated and survived (Watt 2000, 32, 59). Translating as 'mare's gate' (or possibly 'ferry or port'), the manor's eponymous farmstead occupies an elevated position on the gently rolling plateau-lands above the Wye south of the

abbey (Osborne and Hobbs 1998, 75). Extensive earthworks immediately to the north of the modern Porthcasseg farm buildings suggest the site of the medieval manorial court (Figures 7.18 and 7.36). The manor extended to contain a wide arc of sloping ground running from the upper Angidy valley in the west southwards along the river to the bulbous peninsula of Livox within a wide meander, incorporating a mid-slope ledge on which stands Redding (Rudding) Farm, the settlement of Chapel Hill at the confluence of the Angidy with the Wye and the narrow river-side abbey precinct itself (Figure 7.3).

In addition to the tithe map data referred to above, the charter sources listed in Chapter 4 offer testimony to the territorial extent of the manor. Several describe the original Porthcasseg land grant in varying degrees of detail, most succinctly a Richard de Clare charter confirmed by Edward I in 1307 which pronounces its extent as: ‘all the hay of Porcassec and on the other side all the covert of the wood which goes up to the land of Pentir (Penterry)’ (PRO 1908, 96). William Marshal the younger’s charter of 1223 is more expansive in recounting the bounds of the manor and extensive rights, liberties and freedoms enjoyed by the abbey.⁵⁴ ‘Hay’ is an interesting topographical descriptor, from the Old English *haga* meaning either hedged-in, particularly newly assarted, land or a forest enclosed for game hunting, often synonymous with ‘park’ and perhaps a memory of early baronial hunting grounds predating formal emparkment (Bond 2004, 174; Muir 2004, 7; Winchester 2007, 171-2). Whether this or the references to a ‘quick-set hedge’ around the circumference of Porthcasseg describe the abbey estate as it was when these later confirmation charters were written or the inherited landscape that the lost original grant may have described cannot be stated with certainty.

⁵⁴ ‘The whole circumference, or quick-set hedge, of Porthcaffek (*Porthcasseg*), and the water which is called Angidy; and from Angidy by Waya (*Wye*), as far as the grove of the fee farm Porthslywet (*this place-name is not traceable but the topographical description would fit the location of Livox Farm*); and, on the other side (*i.e. back to the upper Angidy valley*), the covert of the Grove (*i.e. the woodlands on the south side of the Angidy*) as far as the valley which descends to the land of Pentir (*Penterry, perhaps the Fedw Brook valley at the western extent of the manor*); and so from the valley, through or over the mountain, as far as the fountain Achur (*Ffynnon Arthur, Penterry*), and so to Angidy’ and ‘the farm of ground cleared for tillage, with the farm house of Porcassec, and with all the woods, tenements, and tenants, and their appurtenances’ (transcribed in Heath 1806, unpaginated).

7.4.4 Ruding grange



Figure 7.19: Redding Farm looking north-west, nestled on a shelf of land above the Wye (Source: author).

Ruding was centred on the modern Redding Farm, the closest ‘home’ grange to the abbey precinct (Cowley 1977, 259) (Figure 7.19). The toponym is a direct reference to the creation of a new farm in wooded country, from the Old English *ryding* signifying ‘a clearing in woodland, assart or land taken into cultivation from waste’ (Field 1989, 273). Further emphasising origins in woodland clearance, it was named as ‘the grange of the Assart’ in 1291 (Ayscough and Caley 1802, 161). The grange’s principal acreage occupied the gently sloping shelf of land around the farmstead, with wood-pasture uphill to Ruding Green and meadowlands below alongside the Wye, as indicated by the Redans Farm parcel on the Duke of Beaufort 1763 estate map (*NLW*, Badminton Vol. 2 143/1/1) (Figure 7.37). Ruding was recorded as containing three *caracutes* of corn-land in 1291, which may have included the fertile soils of the Livox peninsula south of the main grange, a detached square of cleared farmland surrounded by woods, perhaps operated as an out-farm as explored in Section 7.5.2 (Ayscough and Caley 1802, 170, 282; Williams 2001, 239).

7.4.5 Secular Firmary grange

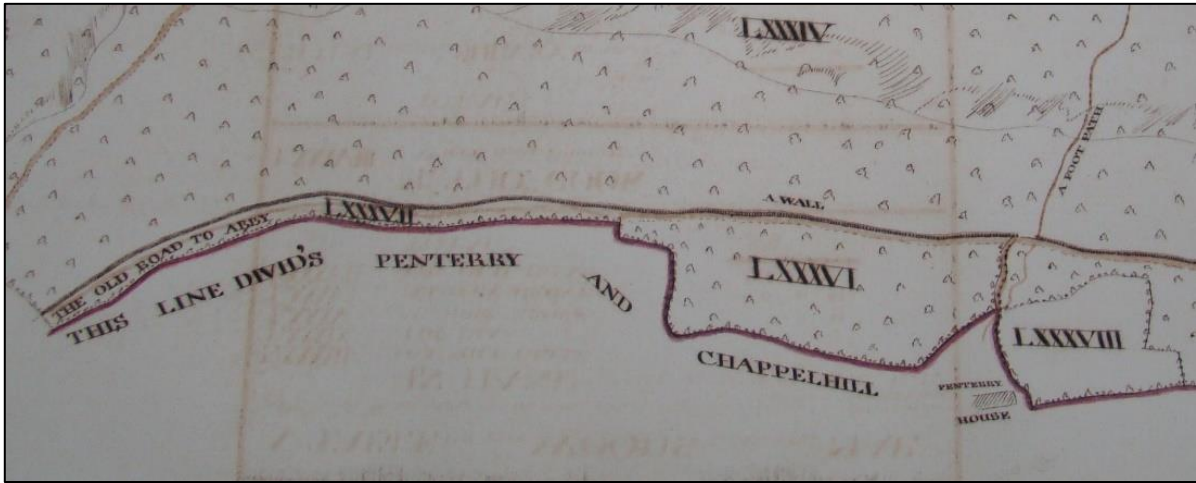


Figure 7.20: Location of Fermery Grove (LXXXVI) on the Duke of Beaufort estate map, 1763 (Source: National Library of Wales, *Badminton Vol. 2 143/1/1*, photographed with permission).

David Williams (1990, 20) and the GGAT HER (08343g) identify a small enclosed copse set high upon the tree-covered slopes of the Angidy valley – Fermery Grove on the 1763 Duke of Beaufort estate map (Figure 7.20) – as the probable site of this minimally documented grange; the name suggesting possible origins in hospitality, almsgiving and medical care for the lay population (Burton and Ströber 2015, 205; Williams 1976, 120-1). Ongoing archaeological work at nearby Trellech outside of the abbey’s purview, site of an important medieval borough, has identified a possible monastic hospice though a relationship with Tintern and Secular Firmary has not been established (Hamilton and Howell 2000, 233). Lying along the route down to the abbey from the ancient Chepstow to Monmouth road described in Section 7.6, Secular Firmary may have provided wayside hospitality, perhaps prior to upgrading of guest accommodation within the precinct (Bezant 2013, 141-2). Conversely, this somewhat secluded location in a heavily wooded, steeply-sloped valley above the abbey may be explained by caring for the sick and avoiding contagion.



Figure 7.21: Section of ancient wall along the edge of Fermery Grove (Source: author).

Secular Firmary's subsequent role remains something of an enigma. Perhaps more of the valley side was cleared during the medieval period or it may have encompassed a forestry economy. The holding was given a much lower valuation than other granges in 1291 and 1535/6, a further hint at a more specialised function with limited tilled land (Ayscough and Caley 1802, 282; *NLW*, Badminton 2445). The topographical context of Fermery Grove has been investigated in more detail for this project and seems somewhat atypical for a grange site (Appendix 7). It is suggested that the ancient wall edging the Grove marked the northern extent of the grange lands along which ran the routeway to the abbey mentioned above, with other evidence of building structures in the woodland here related to post-medieval squatter settlement rather than monastic infrastructure (Figure 7.21). With no direct evidence for the extent of this grange's agricultural estate, it can be supposed to have included assarted fields at nearby Fair oak and on the fertile Penterry plateau upslope on which stands the well of Ffynnon Arthur said to mark the boundary of Tintern territory (*GGAT HER*, 00760g; Williams 1976, 114) (Figure 7.24).⁵⁵ If the grange included a stretch of Penterry parish then the modern farm and historic gentry house of that name, lying on more favourable level ground just above Fermery Grove (somewhat distant to the medieval church and deserted settlement of

⁵⁵ Land at Penterry was gifted and exchanged at various points in the twelfth and thirteenth century.

Penterry), can be conjectured as an alternative for the locus of the grange (Williams 1990, 22) (Figure 7.22).



Figure 7.22: Penterry House, site of the possible locus of the Secular Firmary grange (Source: author).

7.5 The medieval landscape of the Wye Valley estates



Figure 7.23: Tintern's lands in the Wye Valley, looking south-west from Hewelsfield Common (Source: author).

Figure 7.24 maps the postulated landscape and land-use of the Wye Valley estates (Figure 7.23) as they had developed *circa* 1300, a reference point for the narrative that now follows. The map and the accompanying analysis are informed by the landscape walks and other field observation carried out for this project, contemporary and early post-medieval documentary evidence, analysis of field systems and other landscape features using map regression, aerial photography and satellite imagery, previous archaeological and historical research, place- and field-name evidence and research on the wider medieval landscape. A more detailed outline of the methodology and sources used to produce this map can be found at Appendix 2

The map displays a pattern of consolidation, improvement and expansion of inherited agriculture, supplemented by the winning of new farmland from woodland and wood-pasture as granges were established and developed on more favourable fertile ground in the early-monastic phase under the direct management of the abbey within a prevailing *bocage* context. A more detailed analysis of the elements of this landscape is now presented.

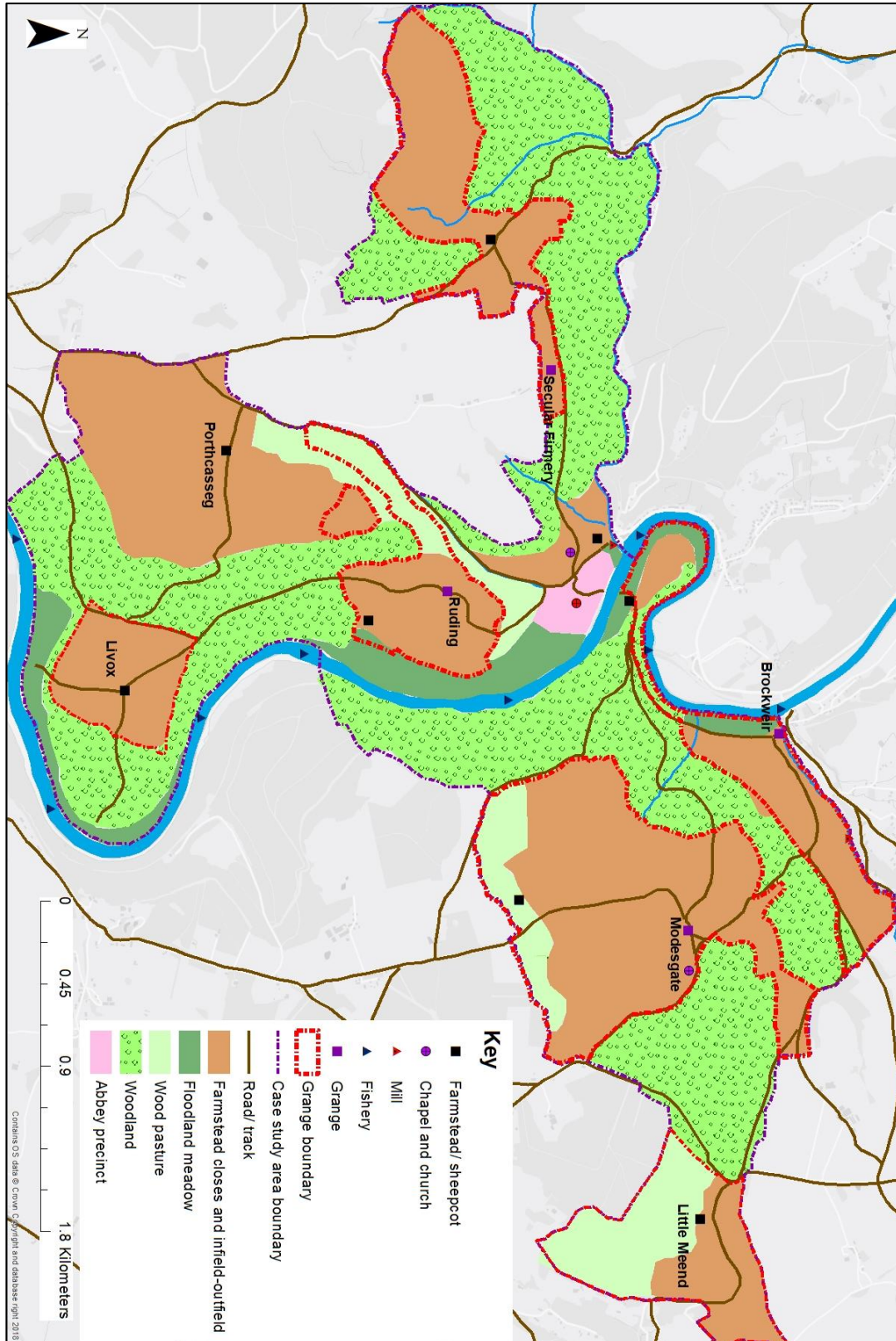


Figure 7.24: Postulated landscape and land-use of the Wye Valley estates circa 1300 (Source: map drawn in ArcGIS® using Ordnance Survey 1:10560 County Series 1st edition, Monmouthshire, 1887 and Gloucestershire, 1889 data layer, downloaded from Digimap® under licence, <http://digimap.edina.ac.uk/>).

7.5.1 The abbey precinct and surrounding settlement



Figure 7.25: Oblique aerial photograph of the abbey precinct looking south-east (Source: © Crown copyright, Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historic Monuments of Wales, 1947; www.britainfromabove.org.uk/image/WAW007098).

Tintern's riverine location has been an important element of its post-monastic appeal through the ages, 'the abbey of the watered vale' an intrinsic constituent in the ebb and flow of touristic visits to the Wye Valley (Davies 2012, 26; Thomas 1831, 38). Water was also pivotal to the original siting of the precinct, positioned near the confluence of the Wye with its fast-flowing tributary, the Angidy, at the height of the river's tidal reach: an ideal position for powering mills, ponds and drains, for fisheries and water transport (Bond 2005, 66; Williams 2001, 9). The valley-bottom site made the control of water supply and drainage critical to monastery life, a system of lead pipes constructed to divert water from the Angidy and Cold Well spring to service the precinct (Bond 2005, 64; Brackspear 1934, 5; Craster 1970, 24; *GGAT HER*, 00783g). At 10.9 hectares, the monastic enclave was relatively compact in comparison to larger Cistercian houses such as those in northern England – constrained by its narrow riverside site – though displaying many similar constituents

(Aston 2007, 109-110) (Figures 7.25 and 7.26). Access to the river and considerations of privacy and drainage probably explain the unusual configuration of the abbey's claustral buildings to the north of the church (Burton and Ströber 2015, 207; Craster 1970, 4; Newman 2000, 539).

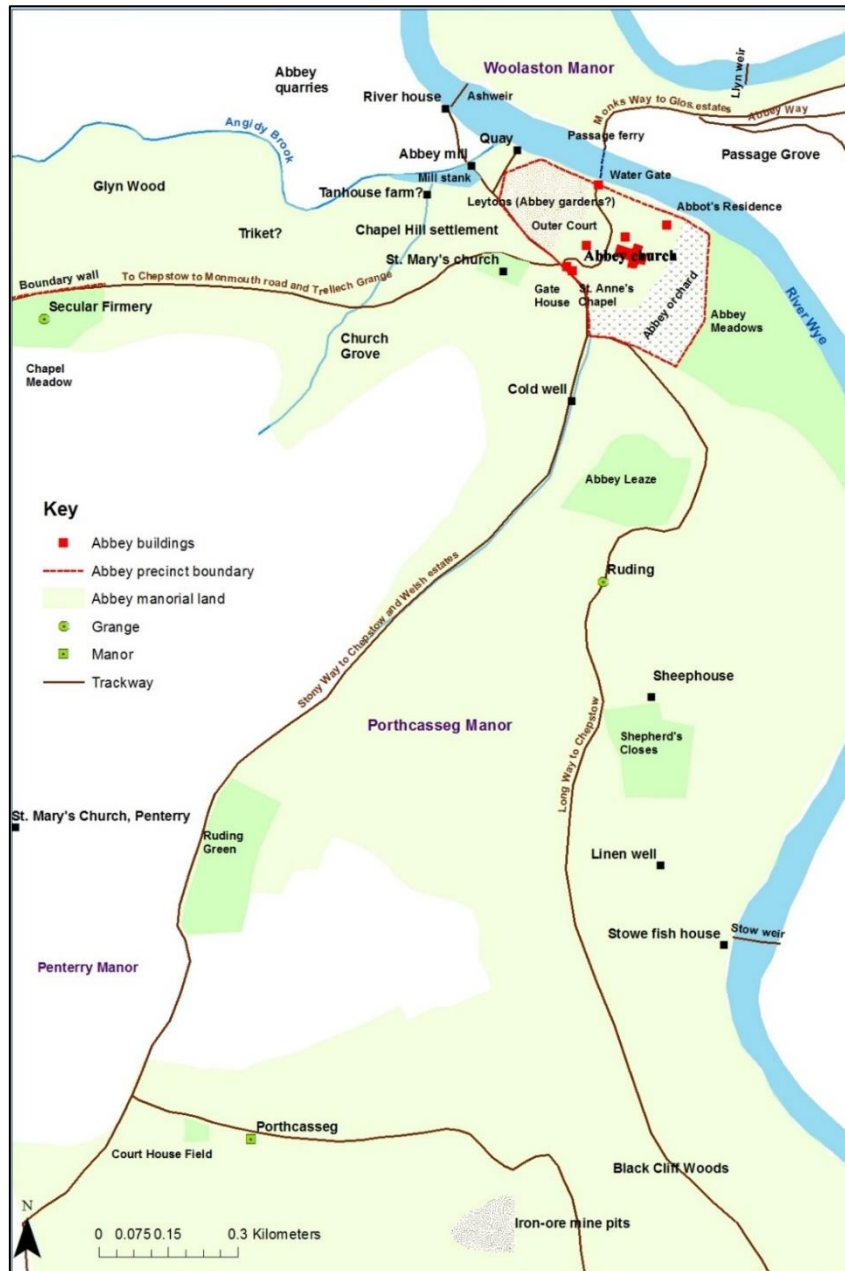


Figure 7.26: The abbey and its surrounding monastic landscape (Source: map drawn in ArcGIS® using Ordnance Survey 1:10560 County Series 1st edition, Monmouthshire, 1887 data layer, downloaded from Digimap® under licence, <http://digimap.edina.ac.uk/>).

Whatever temporary buildings characterised the abbey's foundation, they were likely to have been small-scale and transient, soon replaced by simple and austere

Romanesque stone structures which were in turn rebuilt 100 years hence as described in Section 7.2 (Brackspear 1934, 3; Burton and Ströber 2015, 207-8; Robinson 2011, 27-8). The components, function and architectural history of Tintern's abbey church and claustral ranges conforming to the uniform Cistercian plan and other conventual buildings across the inner court have been studied and described in detail elsewhere (Figure 7.27).⁵⁶

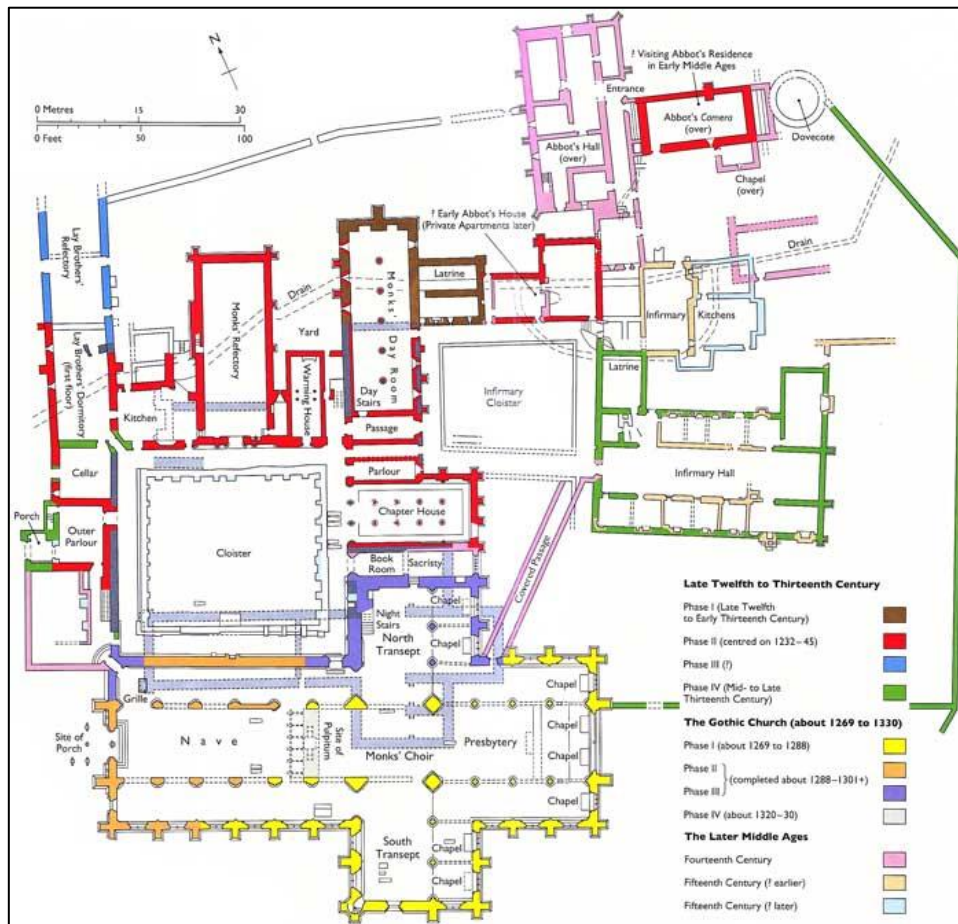


Figure 7.27: Ground plan of Tintern's abbey church and claustral ranges (Source: © Cadw).

The outer court (later known as 'Laytons') was a large agri-industrial space, north-west of the church. Here can be found a rare survival of the remains of an ancillary complex, examined during excavations led by Paul Courtney (1989) in the late-1970s (Burton and Ströber 2015, 209). This prospection revealed a large aisled hall (21x15.5m), interpreted as a guest-house and dated to the thirteenth century, along

⁵⁶ In particular, see Brackspear 1934; Craster 1970; Courtney 1989; McCormack 2010; Newman, 2000; and, most comprehensively, David Robinson's Cadw guide, 2011.

with a smaller chamber for high status guests, brew-house and kitchen (Courtney 1989, 104-115, 124). The remains of a smithy were also dug, mid-fifteenth century bowl-hearth evidence of silver extraction from lead within the hall implying a change of use to a non-ferrous metal-working compound (*ibid.*, 115, 125).

Further monastic industrial activity is evidenced by the tannery (at 'Triket', the exact location unclear) recorded at the abbey in both 1291 and 1535, probably to meet internal needs (Ayscough and Caley 1802 161, 282; Caley and Hunter 1814, 371; Cowley 1977, 84-5). A 1540 citing of 'a farm near the monastery called Tanhouse' and further reference to a *vaccary* between the precinct wall and the Angidy Brook may indicate that it lay alongside this watercourse and evolved into a farmstead, perhaps the abbey's 'home farm' (PRO 1964, 28; Williams 1969, 64). Buildings recorded in the various Dissolution-era inventories of the abbey's assets illustrate a wide range of other ancillary activities across the outer court: a bake-house, laundry-house, pantry-house, stables and gaol above the main gate (*NLW*, Badminton 1524). This busy built environment was flanked by two gardens stocked with diverse plants and herbs for medicine and cooking and the Abbey Orchard at, and perhaps beyond, the southern precinct boundary (Robinson 2011, 62; Williams 2001, 234, 311).

Walls and gates around the precinct underscore a deliberately designed physical and perceptual boundary, monastic life cloistered within to realise maximum security and tranquillity, the secular world without (Robinson 2006, 163-4; 2011, 19). Somewhat at odds with an urge for peacefulness, David Robinson (2011, 27) has pointed out that the precinct would have seen almost continuous building over four centuries, with masons scaffolding and other building infrastructure and disruption ever present. Extant sections of the original precinct wall, some of the best-preserved examples in Britain, signal much of the boundary's course though it is unclear whether the site was ever fully walled (Courtney 1989, 101; Craster 1970, 24; *GGAT HER*, 00714g) (Figure 7.28). Land access was via the Great Gatehouse, now long gone, though thirteenth century fabric and part of its chapel remain within St. Anne's House (Figure 7.29), whilst the second major entrance was the Watergate, still standing alongside the Anchor Hotel beside the Wye, accessed via a slipway at a ferry crossing point (*GGAT HER*, 00715g/ 00716g/ 00717g; Newman 2000, 556-7). Boats berthed at a cobbled ramp now buried in tidal mud, a slipway

also occupying the opposite bank of the river, timbers of which, possibly from the medieval operation, are still observable (GGAT HER, 00720g; Robinson 2006, 167) (Figure 7.30). A more decorative entrance may have given river access directly to the abbot's residence for high status guests, though there are no traces of such a structure (Newman 2000, 557).



Figure 7.28: Extant section of precinct wall, with the top of buried arch visible (Source: author).



Figure 7.29: Position of the Great Gatehouse on the line of the precinct boundary wall with St. Anne's House to the right and the abbey church behind (Source: author).



Figure 7.30: The Watergate circa 1935 when it still allowed access to the river via a cobbled slipway (Source: © A Vision of Britain Through Time, www.visionofbritain.org.uk/place/8958).

Moving to the secular space outside the precinct walls, by the late-fifteenth century a thriving community had grown up in the immediate vicinity of the abbey – cottages and businesses forming the nascent settlement of Chapel Hill, subsequently to give its name to the parish that would encompass Porthcasseg manor (Robinson 2011, 16). This was partly a consequence of the fall in *demesne* production when more abbey land-holdings were leased out, tenants literally setting up shop in the busy area around the precinct to sell their wares, although the abbey retained stringent regulation of activity here and within the precinct through the manorial court (Williams 1976, 101). Such developments intrinsically coupled the abbey to local trade and social community, creating a sense of connection, dependency and, no doubt, resentment and dispute (Stöber 2008, 17). A flavour of the abbey's policing of activities is provided by the Porthcasseg court rolls. The fifteenth century saw a range of transgressions and offences, including affray at the abbey gate and mill pond; 'improper use' of the precinct for keeping goats and prohibition of washing clothes in the central drain in 1528, whilst the playing of handball at the abbey gate was also forbidden (Williams 1976, 136; 2001, 214).

Frances Pryor (2010, 281, 355) has likened a large monastery to a medieval town in terms of activity and impact on the landscape, comparable to the model villages

developed by enlightened Victorian industrialists. The *Valor* survey of 1535 provided an insight into the size of the community living and working at the abbey and its environs, a bustling 'city in microcosm' at its height, even at this late and somewhat reduced stage (McCormick 2010, 125). In addition to the 13 monks, there were 35 servants in residence including six in the abbot's household, kitchen staff, fishermen, as well as a tailor, barber, porter, clerk of the church, ferryman, launderer, woodcutter and keeper of the horses (Newman 2000, 537; Williams 1976, 120; 2001, 139). Chapel Hill would also have been home to a wider population of agricultural labourers serving on the remaining *demesne* land, inn- and shop-keepers, stall-holders and others dependent on the abbey for their livelihoods (Courtney and Gray 1991, 147).

7.5.2 Farmsteads, settlements and land-tenure

That the loci of the abbey's estates were of high status, perhaps including substantial mansion houses, is evidenced by the historic record. A 'farm house of Porcassek ... the farm of ground cleared for tillage' is first mentioned in the 1223 charter (transcribed in Heath 1806, unpaginated). This was the location for the manor court house (probably in or near Court House Field), the administrative lynch-pin for the abbey lands on the west bank of the Wye with responsibility for both the business of the stand-alone granges and the tenanted properties of the manor (*NLW*, Badminton Vol. 2 143/1/1; Robinson 2011, 13; Williams 1976, 136). Across the river, Roger Bigod stayed at Modesgate grange-house the night before the inauguration of the new abbey church in 1301 and signed two charters gifting land to the monastery whilst there, an indication that the standard of accommodation was fit for the abbey's high-born patron, an earl and marshal of England (Bergey 2016, 24; Robinson 2006, 283).



Figure 7.31: Madgetts Farm, now a poultry business, looking west with the Wye Valley behind (Source: author).

A set of earthworks around Beeches and Madgetts farms have been subject to rapid and partial measured survey as part of this study; interpreted, at least in part, as remnants of the infrastructure of the medieval grange of Modesgate (Figure 7.31). In the paddocks immediately surrounding the modern farmsteads (which may overlie the site of the core grange buildings) can be observed sunken tracks, a large banked earthwork, lynchets, building platforms (in Chapel Meadow) and other rectilinear earthworks suggesting field system and enclosure patterns. An interpretive plan is shown in Figure 7.32, with further detailed interpretation at Appendix 7. Some of this earthwork assemblage likely had older antecedents, re-used or re-purposed indicators of the already settled country in which the monastic farm was established. Elements predating the grange would seem more likely to prefigure the Domesday vill of Modiate, as suggested by Fox (1955, 203) and the Forest of Dean Mapping Project, rather than earlier interpretations of an Iron Age or Roman camp or abandoned Anglo-Saxon settlement (Small and Stoertz 2006, 35). The Dean Mapping report, which included the Modesgate area as part of a larger regional 1:10000 survey, interpreted the linear banks as a component of a more extensive pattern of rectilinear field systems ranged along Madgett Hill, including a group of small enclosures representing the foci of the eleventh century hamlet (*ibid.*, 34-5).

Neither the report or previous interpretations referenced the abbey grange in relation to these landscape features.

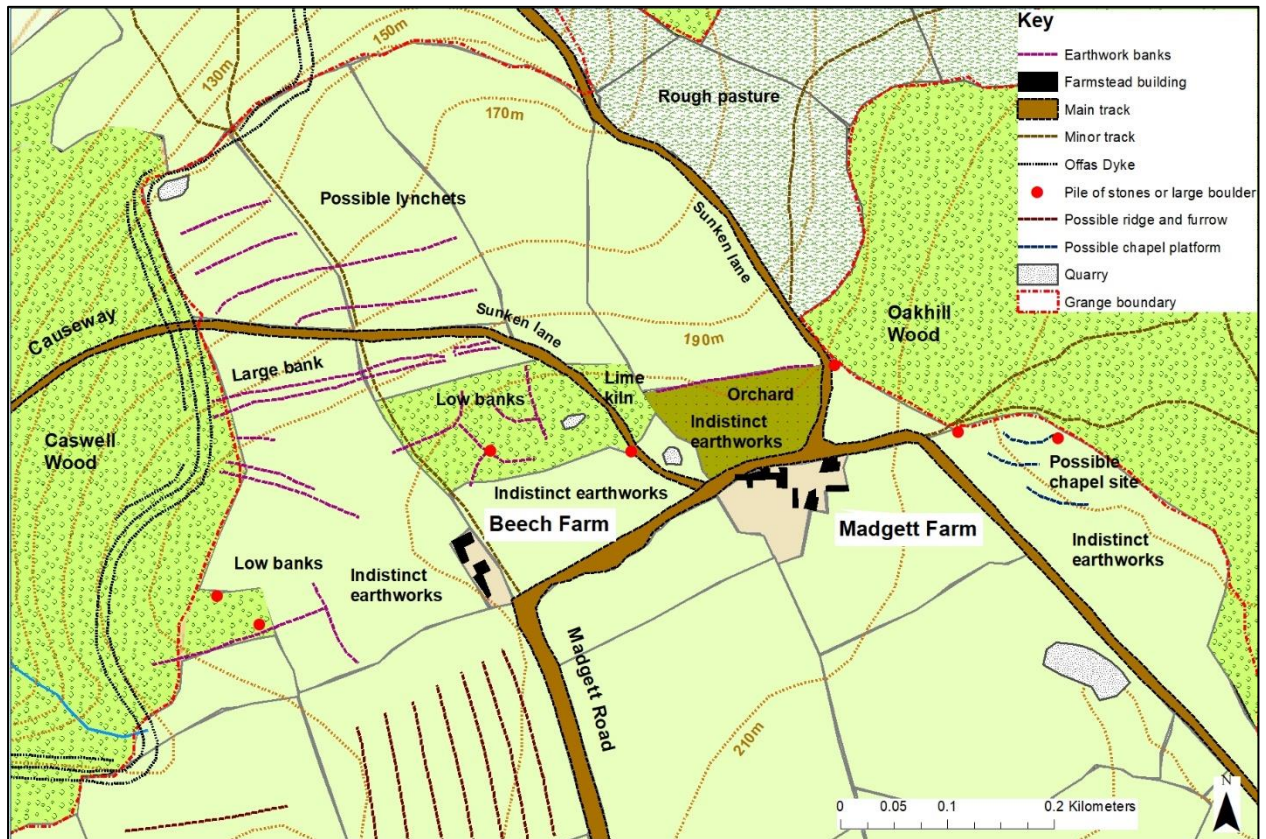


Figure 7.32: Interpretive plan of the earthwork features around Beech and Madgetts farms, superimposed on the landscape mapped in 1889 (Source: map drawn in ArcGIS® using Ordnance Survey 1:10560 County Series 1st edition, Gloucestershire, 1889 and 1:25,000 Scale Colour Raster data layers, downloaded from Digimap® under licence, <http://digimap.edina.ac.uk/>).

Hard on the eastern shore of the Wye north of Modesgate, the hamlet of Brockweir was established by the late-thirteenth century, its fortunes dependant on river trade (Baggs and Jurica 1996a, 156). It would seem likely that the nucleus of the abbey grange was co-located with this settlement, beside the abbey land boundary along Brockweir Brook where Townsend (sometimes Brockweir) Farm and a ruined corn mill stand. In the Wye-side meadow at the southern edge of the hamlet can be found a group of rectangular enclosure earthworks, probably medieval or later settlement and field boundary remains, perhaps representing the grange curtilage (*Glos HER* 1385865/ 1385868; Small and Stoertz 2006, 35). Across the stream stands the oldest recorded building in the village, the Malthouse, a Tudor house with possible, though formally undated, fourteenth century fabric thought to be part of the grange

court (Baggs and Jurica 1996a, 156; *Glos HER* 28782/ 6062) (Figure 7.33). A brewer was recorded at Brockweir in 1476 and, more esoterically, Walter Brockweir was the alchemist or herbalist of Tintern in 1478 (Morgan and Smith 1972b, 108; Williams 1990, 12). Higher up the Brockweir valley, stood a small farmhouse (demolished by 1840) called Bayly in 1633, the name perhaps referencing the grange bailiff (Baggs and Jurica 1996a, 156).



Figure 7.33: Malthouse (left) and adjacent Monk's House (right) in Brockweir (Source: author).

Several other post-medieval farmsteads may have earlier origins as tenant hamlets or out-farms of the main grange and manorial centres, components of a string of farming units ringing the abbey and furnishing its needs. Within the woods bedecking the upper reaches of the Angidy valley lies Fair oak in an area of cleared farmland and meeting-point of trackways: a name with significance in the landscape referenced in monastic charters (Williams 1999, 23). Further south, the peninsula now partly occupied by the huge disused Livox quarry (and previously Livox Farm) fits the topographical description of 'the fee farm Porthslywet' (a toponym suggesting a harbour on the Wye) noted in William Marshal the younger's grant of 1223, the land here farmed from Ruding grange (transcribed in Heath 1806, unpaginated; *Wye HLC*, Cadw undated). There are no other references to this now lost place-name and this may be a misinterpretation. Across the Wye, a remote

bulge of abbey acreage at the southern end of the Woolaston land corridor to Brockweir beyond Oakhill wood from Modesgate grange may have housed a small out-station to manage this remote *demesne*, historically known as Little Meend and the setting of a post-medieval farm called Whitewalls (from ‘white hollow’, a Tidenham Chase boundary feature, or alternatively recalling an earlier ‘white stone ruin’) (Morgan and Smith 1972a, 50) (Figure 7.34).



Figure 7.34: Whitewalls in Little Meend, looking south-east (Source: author).

David Williams (1990, 15; 2001, 214) has analysed business disclosed in the Porthcasseg court rolls which bring life to the manor’s tenantry: entry fines for new tenants; the laying down of pay rates and work duties, for instance 2d. a day for reapers, 3d. for mowers in 1401; and fines for collecting wood without leave, trespassing and felling in the abbot’s wood and other thefts and transgressions within the abbey estate, offences which seem to have been particularly prevalent during the Glyndŵr revolt and its aftermath. The tenants were largely Welsh⁵⁷ and long established, living in vills and hamlets on the edges of the grange lands – perhaps including the deserted settlement alongside Penterry church – and an important source of customary service labour (Cowley 1977, 253-7; Leighton 1996,

⁵⁷ During an early-fourteenth century land dispute with Llanthony Prima, abbot Hugh de Wyke visited Aluredeston grange ‘with a great number of the Welshry’ made up of the abbey’s local tenants and lay brethren (Williams 2001, 177).

52) (Figure 7.35). Although, as in the manorialised Norman March generally, older Welsh customs seem to have largely fallen out of use, the more enterprising amongst the tenantry were using the system to increase their holdings through marriage, assarting land and the leasing of monastic *demesne* (Jones 1937, 277). For instance, Nicholas Hathol paid an entry fine in 1302 for a tenement belonging to Alice Derneford whose daughter he had married (*NLW*, Badminton 1641). Although the abbey would benefit from an increase in tenants paying rent, such individualistic self-improvement would inexorably lead to ‘the gradual disintegration of the abbey granges’ as a distinct economic model (Cowley 1977, 254).



Figure 7.35: The site of the deserted medieval settlement alongside Penterry church, looking east (Source: author).

7.5.3 Field systems and agricultural land-use

The modern field typology across the core agricultural ground of the study area is, in general, moderate to large regular rectilinear enclosures well entrenched when transcribed onto the historic mapping of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century and little-altered subsequently. Such uniform field morphology is likely to be largely the result of sixteenth and seventeenth century re-organisation and rationalisation as described in Chapter 8, either planned by the estate or piecemeal and unrecorded tenant-led action (Johnson 1996, 53-4; Taylor 1975, 100, 115).

Within this regularity, various clues to the forerunning medieval field-scape and agricultural land-use mapped in Figure 7.24 can be discerned.

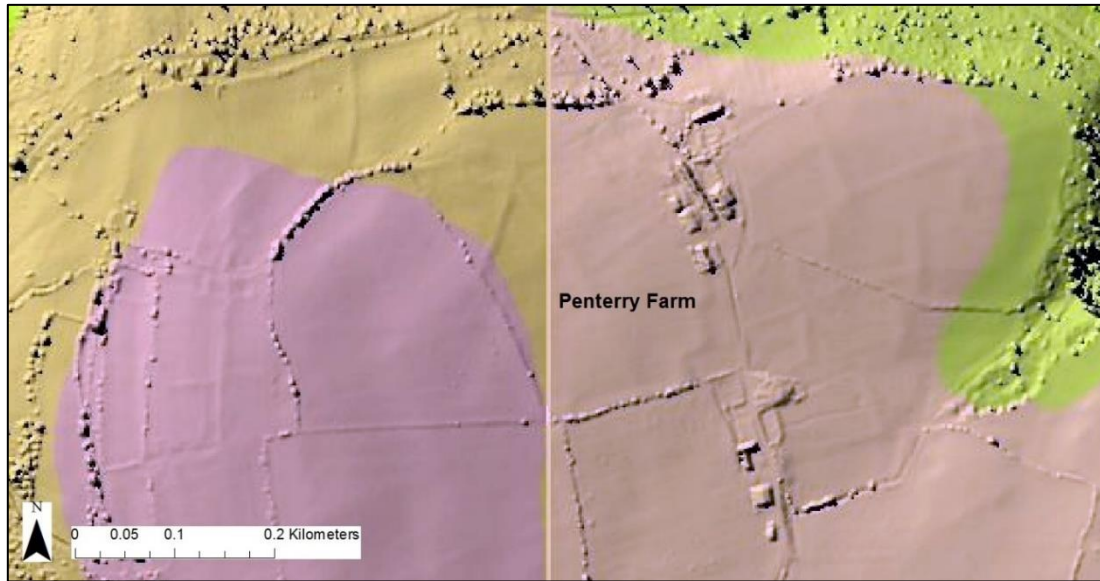


Figure 7.36: LiDAR images of the lines of possible medieval enclosures at Penterry and Porthcasseg farms (Source: drawn in ArcGIS® using LiDAR 2m DSM data layer, downloaded from Natural Resources Wales under licence).

Regular medieval documentary references to the abbey's 'farms' and 'tenements', for instance in William Marshal the younger's 1223 charter, describe not only the farm buildings and curtilage, but, more expansively, an array of small paddocks and closes clustered about the farmstead in the traditional 'infield/ outfield' system (Gray 1999, 37; Heath 1806, unpaginated). Such enclosures may have been bounded by ephemeral hurdle fences or walls from which stone has subsequently been reused elsewhere (there is evidence of such at some other abbey granges, such as Merthyrgeryn, as outlined at Appendix 5). The LiDAR images of revenant enclosures

around Penterry and Porthcasseg farms in Figure 7.36 hint at this now-vanished medieval field-scape.

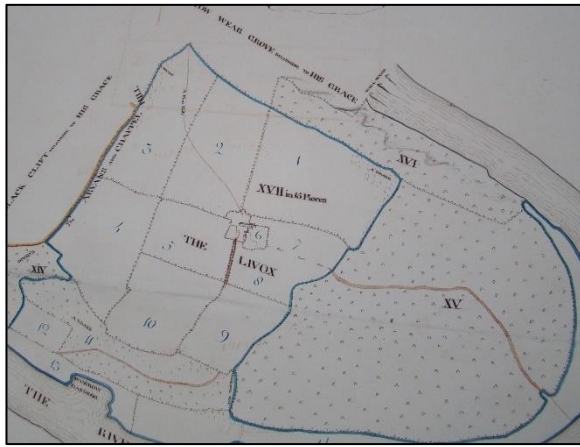
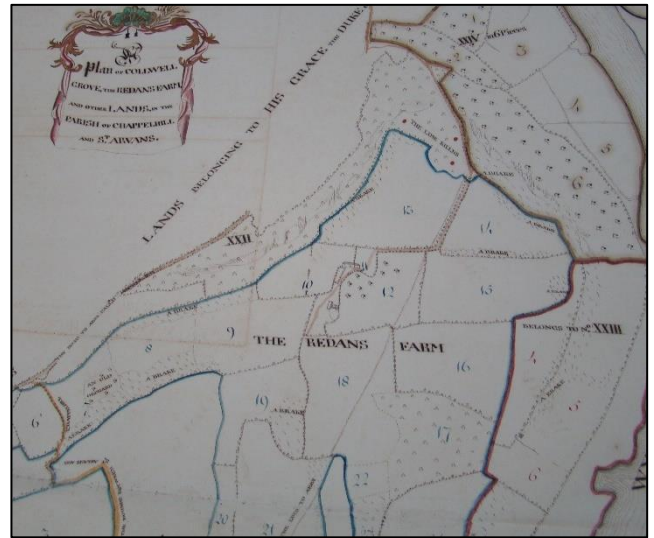


Figure 7.37: The 1763 Duke of Beaufort estate map shows the assarted fieldscapes of Livox and Redans (Rudding) farms surrounded by woodland (Source: National Library of Wales, Badminton Vol. 2 143/1/1, photographed with permission).



Tintern is a classic example of the active assarting Cistercian house, handed expansive wooded assets around the abbey which were ripe for clearance to expand cultivation and sheep pasture (Bond 2004, 71; Taylor 1975, 99). A large assart of 200 acres (80.9 ha) within Tidenham Chase recorded before 1282 is thought to have created the Halishall grange (Morgan and Smith 1972b, 106). Within the case study area, the bounds of the fields and place-names of Livox (from *Ilyfos*, Welsh for ‘elm trees or grove’) and Rudding farms speak of assarted clearings amidst the prevailing wood-scape alongside the Wye (*Wye HLC*, Cadw undated) (Figures 7.24, 7.37 and 7.39). Similarly, the enclosures around Fair oak Farm and The Cot above the Angidy valley, edged by curving mature tree-filled hedgerows and encroaching into the encompassing woodland, are similarly the likely result of medieval clearance (*ibid.*). It is also interesting to note the dominance of English field names in these locations, in comparison to surrounding land west of the Wye where Welsh-origin names predominate: as at Trelleck grange, established as an agricultural estate prior to abbey ownership (*NLW*, Badminton Vol. 2 143/1/1, 143/1/2). Modesgate displays a similar field morphology, with the rectangular enclave of the original monastic farm surrounded by medieval woodland, a hole punched through in the north when the

grange was gifted additional territory (Figures 7.24 and 7.38). Given its *Domesday* record as a pre-existing arable estate, clearance of at least part of the grange must have taken place prior to monastic stewardship.



Figure 7.38: The high ground of Modesgate grange in the centre of the image, an area of cleared fields surrounded by woodland (Source: Getmapping® downloaded from Digimap® under licence, <http://digimap.edina.ac.uk>).

The Porthcasseg court rolls chronicle how assarting by tenants, sometimes illegally, was a revenue source for the abbey between 1263 and 1392-3 (Williams 1976, 117, 134; 2001, 227). Clearing of woodland is also remembered by field-naming. An enclosure (now reverted to trees) in the abbey lands of Little Meend, probably managed from the Modesgate grange, was recorded in 1476 and into the nineteenth century as Monks Redding with further ‘ryding’ clearings held by tenants nearby and the abbey paying annual rent for pasture rights in new clearances in Roods Grove within Oakhill Wood (Morgan and Smith 1972b, 108; Williams 1976, 117).⁵⁸ Redans

⁵⁸ The field-names of Great Reddings, Far Reddings, Near Reddings, Reddings Ground, Royal Reddings, Steep Reddings, The Reddings, Upper Reddings and Winds Reddings on neighbouring

Hill and Redans Meadow around Ruding grange are further field-name indicators of terrain brought into cultivation or cleared for livestock (*NLW*, Badminton Vol. 2 143/1/1) (Figure 7.39).



Figure 7.39: Vertical aerial photograph of the assarted grange of Ruding and waterside meadows alongside the Wye amidst the prevailing woodland (Source: © Cambridge University Collection of Aerial Photography, 1986, RC8IL281).

Direct references to tillage are surprisingly rare in the sources for Welsh Cistercian estates, though arable production was at the heart of much grange activity. Porthcasseg court records highlight the priority given to helping with the estate harvest: ‘no-one shall work or collect corn outside the lord’s *demesne*, when the bailiff shows that there is work to be done for the lord within it’ ran a 1401 edict (*NLW*, Badminton 1654; Williams 1976, 136; 1984, 252). There is some possible field-name evidence of open or common arable field land-use in the case study area. Several ‘bargain’ enclosures at Modesgate and a holding called The Several

estates in Hewelsfield and Tidenham indicate that clearance across the heavily wooded areas of Dean and Tidenham was not limited to the abbey’s estates (*Tithe Map*, Gwatkin 1993b, 1995).

Bargains in Porthcasseg may be a memory of land divided from the common arable field, alternatively acquired by purchase or exchange (*Glos Archives*, Q/R1/144; Field 1989, 13; *NLW*, Badminton Vol. 2 143/1/1). As for a physical signature of medieval arable farming, some of the earthworks at Modesgate are suggestive of strip lynchets as described at Appendix 7 (*Glos HER*, 6033/ 6035; Hart 2000, 49) (Figure 7.40). Several lynchets were recorded in a ploughed field on the hillslope to the east of Porthcasseg Farm in the 1950s but are no longer visible (*GGAT HER*, 00771g). The limited surviving physical evidence of medieval arable land-use may reflect a history of cultivation into the modern period that may have been much ploughed out.



Figure 7.40: Horizontal linear earthworks on the hillside below Madgetts Farm, the possible remains of medieval strip lynchets (Source: author).

As has been observed, sheep farming and the wool trade became an important component of the abbey's economy. The 1763 Porthcasseg estate map displayed enclosed ground named 'Shepherds closes', worked from Ruding grange which hosted part of the abbey's valuable sheep flock and was perhaps the site of the manorial sheepcote demised in 1524 (*NLW*, Badminton Vol. 2 143/1/1; *Wye HLC*, Cadw undated; Williams 1976, 120). Uphill from the grange, a small combe of pasture-land, ideal sheep-walk, ascends to the plateau. At its head lies greensward historically known as Ruding (or Redans) Green, denoting an assarted 'grassy spot,

a permanently green place' (Field 1989, 270). The lush turf of the 'green' here provided grazing land for cattle and sheep in an unenclosed wood-pasture landscape still discernible today (Figure 7.41). Over the river at Modesgate, the southern edge of the arable-dominated grange beside the sinuous boundary with Tidenham Chase, later to become the farmstead of Sheepcot, may have been given over to sheep-walks supplemented by wood-pasture to the north on the steep topography of Madgett Hill.



Figure 7.41: Ruding Green sheep-walk looking north down the wood-pasture combe towards Castle Hill (Source: author).

In the valley below, the narrow floodplain bounding the Wye provided an important additional stock-grazing and hay-making resource: long water meadows, now somewhat encroached by returning woodland, that can be seen alongside the river (Rackham 1986, 337). Meads such as Laytons in the abbey outer court and Old Abbey Meadows immediately to the south of the precinct opportuned verdant grazing as well as forming a key aesthetic element in the abbey's riverside setting (*NLW*, Badminton 1524; Badminton Vol. 2 143/1/1). A thin strand of land hugging the riverbank constituting the southern part of Brockweir grange granted further meadowlands, with the large leazes of Lower and Upper Abbey Ham (gifted to the abbey as 'Riveham' in 1223) upstream probably also managed from this grange (Heath 1806, unpaginated) (Figure 7.42).



Figure 7.42: The Ham riverside meadow in Brockweir looking south, the Wye to the right (Source: author).

That pasture and meadow was utilised for animals other than sheep is indicated by entries in contemporary sources, with a piggery recorded at Porthcasseg, the 1411 sale of calves and cows from Ruding, the right of warren for rabbits and a 1506 reference to a Conygarth ('rabbit enclosure') near the abbey (*NLW*, Badminton 1575; Williams 2001, 251). Antiquarian Charles Heath (1806, unpaginated) proposed Porthcasseg farm as the location of the abbey's horse stud. This may be the case, though not based on the name ('mare's gate') which has much earlier antecedents.

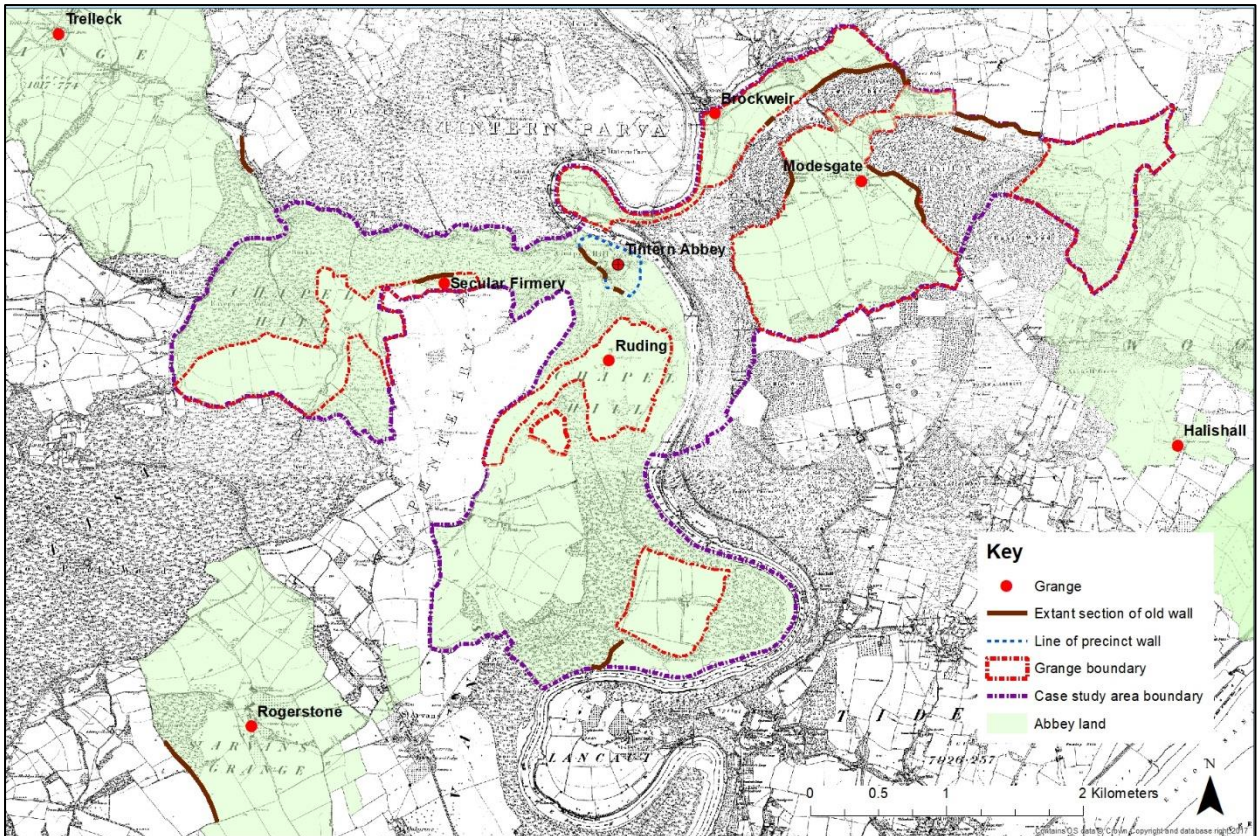


Figure 7.43: Identified extant sections of old boundary wall within the case study area and adjacent abbey lands (Source: map drawn in ArcGIS® using Ordnance Survey 1:10560 County Series 1st edition, Monmouthshire, 1887 and Gloucestershire, 1889 data layer, downloaded from Digimap® under licence, <http://digimap.edina.ac.uk/>).

Sub-division within the land-use sectors described may have generally been transient, mobile or absent during the monastic era, largely overlain by a patina of post-medieval enclosure. More durable physical boundaries were, however, required to demarcate the outer limits of the abbey estate, perimeter of a grange, or to divide cultivated and stock-land from woodland. For instance, in 1528 the Porthcasseg court recorded a requirement for tenants to close the hedges between their holdings and the monastic *demesne* (Williams 1976, 137). This may account for the more substantive boundary features that can be observed in several places: sections of old wall, commonly broken down and moss-covered but of substantial width and composed of often large boulders, orthostats at their base (Figures 7.43 and 7.44).



Figure 7.44: Sections of boundary wall (clockwise from top left): Fermery Grove, Brockweir, Woolaston manor boundary and Worrow Gasseg (Source: author).

Hedges rather than walls typically delineate contemporary boundaries between individual fields in the area. Where walls exist, they seem to indicate both significant, long-standing demarcation and more sophisticated building techniques than the medieval Welsh archetype (Garner 2009, 8, 22). The hillsides around Brockweir and Modesgate are littered with large conglomerate boulders, ideal for walling when cleared from land taken into cultivation. Sizable, skilfully constructed and enabled by the resources and planning of the monastic estate, several examples are illustrated in Figure 7.44. The remaining lower courses of an ancient wall in Fermery Grove may have signified the northern limit of the Secular Firmary grange, as described in more detail in Appendix 7. A similar structure divides the hillside pasture of Brockweir grange from Lower Chase Wood, whilst at Worrow Gasseg the lower

meadows of the Livox peninsula are bounded along the edge of Wyndcliff Wood by a moss-encrusted stone wall. Walling remnants can also be traced along the western bounds of Modesgate (medieval references to stone walling here may record the grange boundary or the line of the parallel 'Offa's Dyke') and the edges of the land corridor connecting Brockweir and Modesgate with the rest of the Woolaston manor (Bapty and Ray 2016, 189). Further examples of probable monastic stone boundaries at other granges including Merthyrgeryn and Rogerstone are described in Appendix 5.

7.5.4 Woodland, wood-pasture and commons



Figure 7.45: Wyndcliff Wood looking west from the bank of the river Wye (Source: author).

An arboreal environment was an important factor in the siting of a Cistercian abbey, where, in Bernard of Clairvaux's words, 'woods and stones will teach you what you can never hear from any master' (quoted in Robinson 2006, 45). The folded headlands of the lower Wye Valley house one of the most important stretches of ancient, semi-natural woodland in Britain (Peterken 2007, 5). Tintern's Wye Valley estates were set amidst a long-managed mosaic of communal wood-pasture, enclosed areas of coppiced woodland and hunting grounds subjected to repeated cycles of clearance and restoration (Pilbeam 2006, 41; *ibid.*, 7-8, 12-13). These enveloping greenwoods just part of the great sylvan bands forming the chases and

forests of Dean and Tidenham above the confluence of the Severn and Wye and Wyewood across the Trellech sandstone plateau running down to Wentwood (Bradney 1993c, 147). Evidence of large-scale monastic assarting across the abbey's estates as described in Section 7.5.3 also attests to an inherited terrain in which bosky country was prevalent. Extensive coppice and more open wood-pasture, managed as common resources, were core components of the landscape – perhaps its defining feature – into the monastic era (Rackham 2007, 134-6; Williamson 2016, 84).



Figure 7.46: Beech and holly within Buckle Wood in the Angidy valley (Source: author).

Whilst there is evidence that some of the abbey's wooded assets were cleared to increase and improve the cultivated estate, much remained as a valuable resource for a range of utilities and communal practices. Porthcasseg held its own extensive *bocage*, including Wyndcliff and Black Cliff woods along the Wye and the heavily forested slopes of the Angidy valley (Figures 7.45 and 7.46). The Angidy woods immediately above the abbey were particularly accessible, an allotment now called Ravensnest was previously known as Coed-yr-abad ('the abbot's wood'), another retains the antique name of Gethin's Grove, which may remember Walter Gethin, abbey cellarer in the mid-fifteenth century, or John of that name, one of the monks at

suppression (Williams 2001, 265; 2007, 67).⁵⁹ As already suggested, Secular Firmary grange set within this terrain may have specialised in forestry (*NLW*, Badminton 2445; *Wye HLC*, Cadw undated). It is notable how these same units of woodland management have continued through recorded history, with an unusually high proportion now classed as ‘ancient’ indicating a proven existence from at least 1600. In many cases these old woods probably reached their general historical pattern by the Norman Conquest, the preponderance of Welsh-named woods across Porthcasseg suggesting they were long-managed before the estate came into Anglo-Norman hands (Peterken 2007, 7, 12).



Figure 7.47: Passage Grove on the eastern bank of the Wye, part of the woodlands of Tidenham in which the abbey had extensive rights (Source: author).

Although the abbey was not granted ownership of the great belt of woods within Tidenham manor that encircled the Modesgate grange, it had extensive rights of access and use in these anciently common resources and other surrounding secular forests – coppiced groves and wood-pasture alike (Figure 7.47). In 1223, William Marshal the younger granted the abbey ‘the pasturage of all their cattle everywhere in our chase of Tudeham ... to marl or meliorate the land of the said Monks; and of

⁵⁹ Gethin rings out through later history as a local name of prominence: John Gethin, landlord of the Beaufort Arms in the early-nineteenth century, was a pioneer of the nascent tourism industry around the abbey ruins.

the underwood in the said chace, whatever shall be necessary for fuel, and to mend and plant hedges, and for other necessary uses of the farm' (transcribed in Heath 1806, unpaginated). A division of this woodland known as Lippets Grove forms part of the perimeter with the fields of Modesgate: its typonomy (from *lipgate* meaning 'land with fence over which deer but not sheep or cattle may leap') witness to the need to manage this interface (Field 1989, 126).



Figure 7.48: Pollarded beech forming the boundary between Lower Chase Wood and the pastures of Brockweir grange (Source: author).

Within the woods of the Wye Valley estates are found ash and lime, large stands of beech and oak, yews around limestone outcrops, and birch, rowan and holly on more acidic soil. In the medieval era, this medley of trees provided a patchwork of dense groves, thickets of differentially grown underwood, more open glades and coppiced woods grazed by wild and domestic animals with pollards along their boundary banks (Peterken 2007, 9, 13-15) (Figure 7.48). This rich sylvan variety was put to good use in meeting the high demand resulting from the daily life and economy of the abbey and its estates for a wide range of applications, from hedging, fencing and tool-making to fuel and charcoal and constructing fish weirs (Millward and Robinson 1978, 130). There is also evidence of a modest woodland related

income through the sale of honey, leather, pannage and timber; for instance, 5 shillings a year for coppiced wood from Ruding grange recorded in 1291 and 2 shillings paid for pannage rights in the manorial woods by Porthcasseg tenants in 1372 (Ayscough and Caley 1802, 282; Williams 1975, 117; 2001, 226). Less welcome were the regular instances of trespass and poaching in the abbey's woods (Williams 2001, 229).

7.5.5 Churches, mills, industrial activity and other landscape features



Figure 7.49: The ruins of St. Mary's church on a hillock above the abbey (Source: author).

Giving the settlement of Chapel Hill that grew up around Tintern its name, St. Mary's church perched atop a knoll overlooking the abbey is thought to have been constructed by the monks as a place of worship for their Porthcasseg tenants (Bradney 1993a, 261) (Figure 7.49). Another Porthcasseg church in the hands of St. Kynemark's Priory near Chepstow may have been sited at the manor's eponymous farm, where one of the buildings was noted as having the appearance of a religious building in the early-twentieth century, perhaps declining once Tintern had taken possession of the manor (Bradney 1993c, 45; Williams 1984, 245). None of the granges within the Wye Valley estates have surviving chapels but there are clues in the landscape. Chapel Meadow, near Madgetts Farm, may have housed Modesgate grange chapel (*Glos Archives*, Q/R1/144; Williams 1990, 62) (Figure 7.32). A further Chapel Meadow lies above the probable site of Secular Firmary, however there is no documentary evidence for a chapel associated with this grange (Williams 2001, 311).



Figure: 7.50: The post-medieval Abbey Mill alongside the Angidy Brook on the northern limit of the precinct, likely site of the original monastic mill (Source: author).

The abbey's main milling operation harnessed the power of the Angidy Brook, with fulling and corn mills constructed near its confluence with the Wye – the post-medieval Abbey Mill probably occupying the same site – and a large mill pond (the Stank, now filled in) above the mill also used as a fishery, the 'vivarium' of the 1223 charter (*Coflein NMR*, 413743; *GGAT HER*, 00721g; Heath 1806, unpaginated; Williams 1976, 96, 138; *Wye HLC*, Cadw undated) (Figure 7.50). Given permission to grind their own corn and that from surrounding Striguil lordship lands from at least 1224, this was an important component of the monastic infrastructure and local economy (Williams 1976, 119). The abbey also built a water mill at Hewelsfield before 1270, thought to have stood alongside Brockweir Brook, upstream of Brockweir hamlet below the spur of Mill Hill, where part of the 'Offa's Dyke' (above Mill Croft) was repurposed to form a dam behind which stand the dry earthworks of the millpond (Baggs and Jurica 1996a 153, 159; *Glos Archives*, Q/R1/144; *Glos HER* 21570) (Figure 7.51). Straddling the boundary with the Forest of Dean, the mill was recorded as impeding the passage of deer into the forest and the abbey was cited for harbouring poachers there (Williams 1976, 115).



Figure 7.51: Part of the early-medieval dyke utilised as a mill dam near Brockweir (Source: author).

Fish were an important source of fresh food at the abbey due to Cistercian restrictions on meat eating (Gilchrist and Mytum 1989, 64). Tintern's riverine location secured several lucrative fisheries (basket traps and corrock nets in a wooden frame, also known as weirs) along the course of the salmon-rich Wye running through its estates (Bond 2004, 194; Davies 1953, 74; Walters 1992, 140).⁶⁰ From Brockweir upstream to Livox Trough weir to the south, the abbey owned, part-owned or had

⁶⁰ The local surname Fisher which commonly occurs in archive documents, as well as Fisher's Field in Penterry, perhaps an echo of this long-standing occupation.

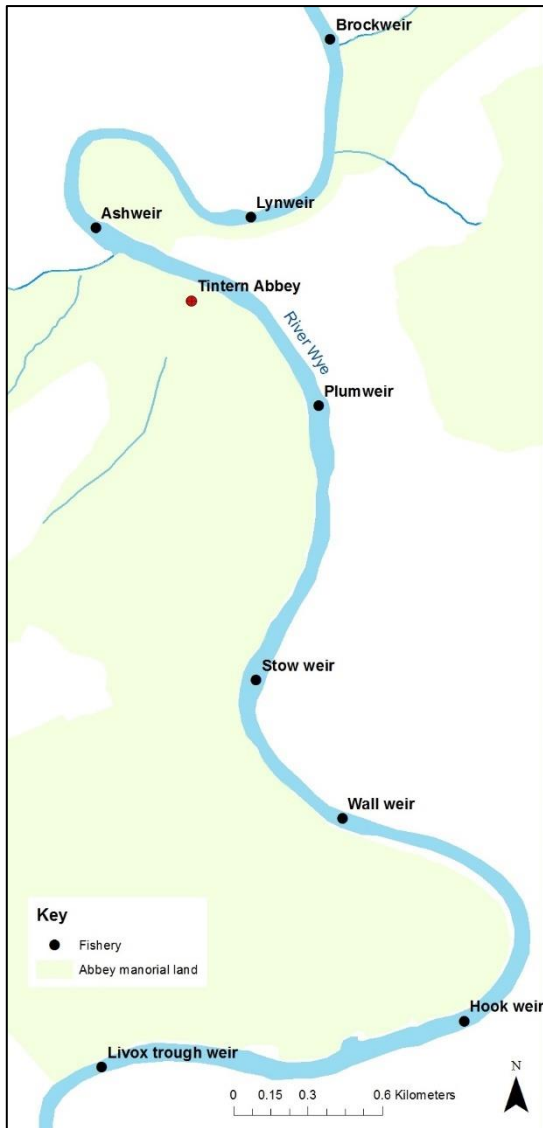


Figure 7.52: Tintern's Wye fisheries (Source: map drawn in ArcGIS® using Ordnance Survey 1:10560 County Series 1st edition, Monmouthshire, 1887 data layer, downloaded from Digimap® under licence, <http://digimap.edina.ac.uk/>).

rights to eight such fish-traps, pools above used as fishponds (Heath 1806, unpaginated; *Wye HLC*, Cadw undated) (Figures 7.52 and 7.53). Some were anciently established: Porthcasseg's fisheries on the Wye were mentioned in an early-medieval *Book of Llandaff* land grant, *Domesday Book* also referencing Severn and Wye basket weirs at Woolaston and Modesgate (Bradney 1993c, 45; Hart 2000, 58). Such valuable resources were often the subject of friction and dispute, not least concerning the blockage of river traffic (Williams 1976, 139). In 1330, abbot de Camme had several razed, in response to which the Earl of Lancaster, angry at the obstruction to boats carrying goods and supplies to his castle at Monmouth, sent men to take them down who were forcibly prevented by Tintern's monks and servants (Bond 2004, 197; Bradney 1993a, 219).

Beside Stowe weir stood a *piscatory* (fish house), said to be still inhabited in the 1780s, 'an ivied ruin' visible in 1831 and remaining in deep undergrowth on the river bank today (Taylor 1861, 78; Thomas 1831, 18).



Figure 7.53: The site of Ashweir on the Wye, just north of the abbey, looking up-stream (Source: author).

The lower Wye Valley was also mineral-rich with abundant local stone and other raw materials for building and trade. Tintern had rights to stone from Wyewood on the northern side of the Angidy valley for building work at the abbey and its granges as recorded in 1307, quarries peppering Barbadoes Wood supplying the red-green Devonian sandstone used to construct many of the precinct buildings (Bond 2004, 332; Heath 1806, unpaginated; Mason 1987, 71). Evidence of late-monastic non-ferrous metal-working within the abbey enclave has already been mentioned. More expansive industrial activity is also a possibility, though little explored (Gray 2007, 23). Economic exploitation of the locality's mineral resources certainly had a long lineage stretching back to the Roman era (Peterken 2007, 20; Thomas 1839, 66). Tintern long possessed a mine and forges in the Forest of Dean to supply the abbey smithy, as recorded in 1141 and 1267-8, though their exact location is unknown (Bond 2004, 343, 345; Williams 1976, 139). In studying the industrial activity of the Cistercians in the north of England, Arthur Raistrick (1972, 180-2) has shown that in the heyday of the monastic iron industry up to the mid-fourteenth century, such bloomeries and associated charcoal operations in forest districts were often highly mobile and ephemeral.

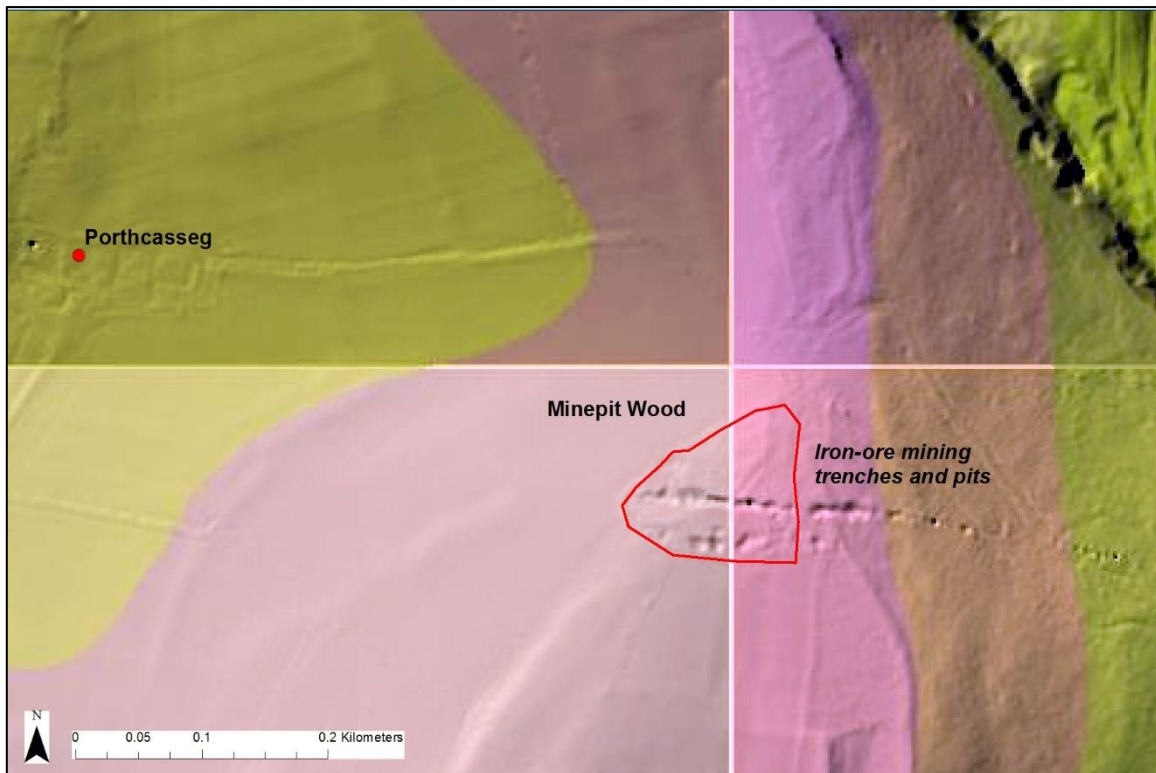


Figure 7.54: LiDAR image of the lines of iron-ore workings at Minepit Wood in Porthcasseg (Source: drawn in ArcGIS® using LiDAR 2m DTM data layer, downloaded from Natural Resources Wales under licence).

Closer to the abbey, within Minepit Wood on the edge of the great limestone outcrops of Blackcliff, two trenches and lines of pits indicative of extraction from a vein of iron-ore near the surface can be found, now blanketed by secondary woodland (Figures 7.54 and 7.55 and described in more detail in Appendix 7). Such rudimentary open-cast mining remains, known locally as ‘scowles’, and their associated bloomery slag deposits may well have medieval or even Romano-British origins, as recorded at nearby Alvington, Trellech and Woolaston (Raistrick 1972, 21; Stanford 1991, 166; Walters 1992, 142-3). It is unclear whether such a site speaks of the in-house extraction and processing of raw materials for use within the abbey and its estates or, as ventured by Joseph Bradney (1993a, 260), it was a monastic precursor to the production of iron-based materials and infrastructure that transformed the area around the old abbey in the post-medieval era, as examined in the next chapter (Bond 2004, 347, 349; Courtney and Gray 1991, 150). Commercial exploitation of mined resources was a hall-mark of other abbeys in mineral-rich locales and it may well be that Tintern was also engaged in such ‘Cistercian

enterprise', using the well-developed communication networks examined in the next section (Robinson 2006, 283).



Figure 7.55: Iron-ore mining 'scowle' in Minepit Wood (Source: author).

7.6 The abbey's communication network

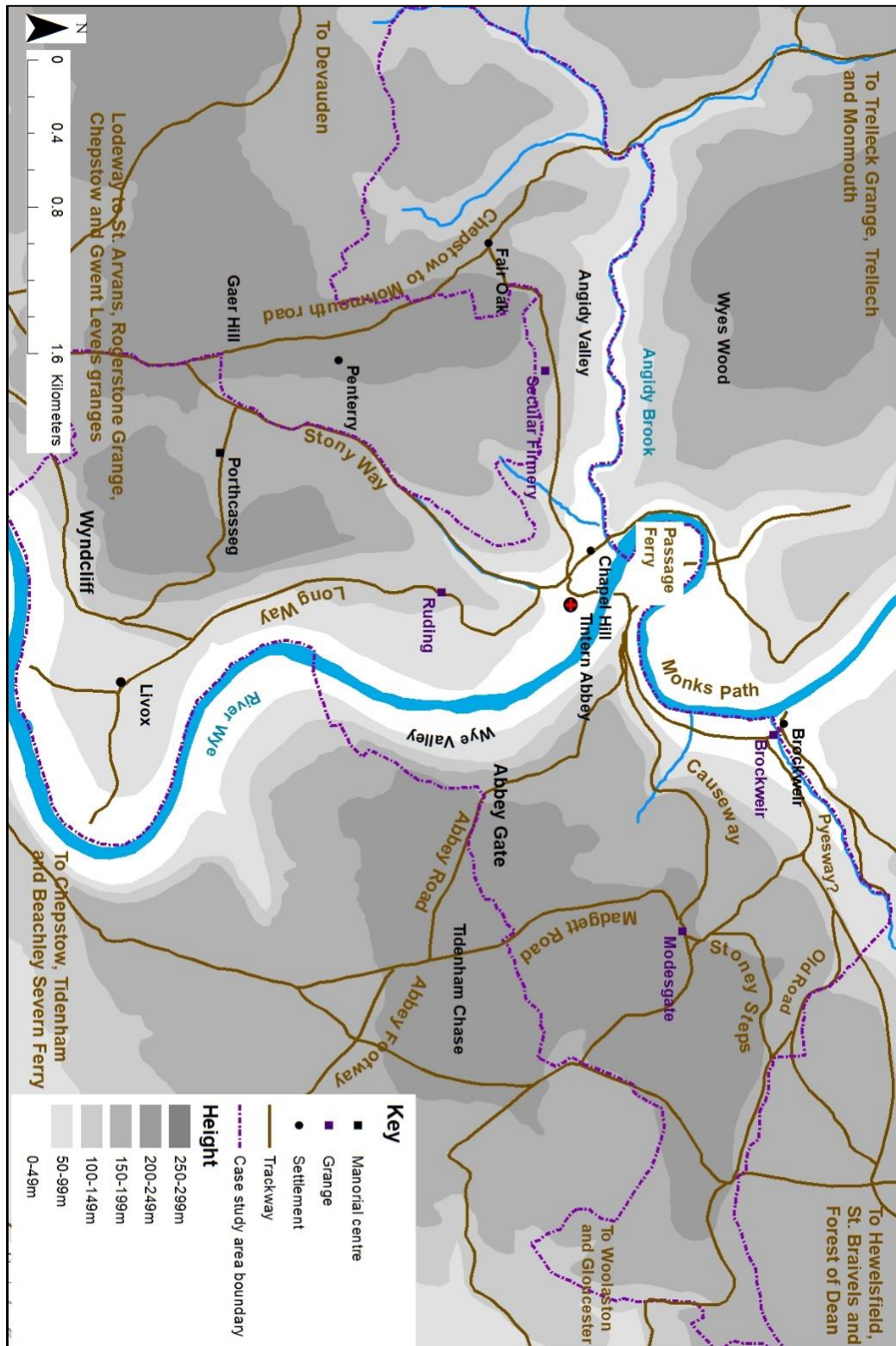


Figure 7.56: Medieval routeways around Tintern and the Wye Valley estates (Source: map drawn in ArcGIS® using Ordnance Survey 1:10560 County Series 1st edition, Monmouthshire, 1887 and Gloucestershire, 1889 data layer, downloaded from Digimap® under licence, <http://digimap.edina.ac.uk/>).

Way-leave, the right of passage, was an essential aspect of the monastic economy, not least for the transport of produce (Williams 2001, 249). Many of the abbey charters guaranteed explicit rights of 'a free road', access and passage 'free from toll' or any other hindrance through the donor's lands (PRO 1908, 105; Heath 1806, unpaginated). Travel-ways were also a factor in the strategic acquisition and development of the abbey estates, with landholdings strung along routes to markets and coastal ports and quays (Bezant 2013, 137; Hindle 1998, 44). For instance, Modesgate became a staging post on the way to and from Woolaston and the Gloucestershire lands; similarly, travel to the Caldicot Level granges was via Rogerstone. This not only made a geographically dispersed network of granges and estates feasible, but also enabled the abbey, its estates and the wider world to be physically connected by a system of routeways radiating out from Tintern. As Figure 7.56 illustrates, Tintern was at the apex of a web of monastic communication routes by land and water. Much of the land-based network has been walked, recorded and photographed during the case study landscape walks chronicled in Appendix 6.

Reasons for travel were various. The abbot frequently had duties which involved visiting other monastic houses and secular seats of power (Williams 2001, 29). Tintern was close to the main route from England into south Wales and so passing dignitaries, such as Irish and Welsh abbots on their way to the General Chapter, were regular visitors to the abbey (Burton and Ströber 2015, 207). For instance, Edward II stayed at Tintern during the final weeks before his death, Bishop Richard de Swinfield journeying from Woolaston to Tintern during his visitation through Hereford diocese in 1289 (Morgan and Smith 1972b, 106; Williams 1990, 11). There was also regular traffic between the abbey and its daughter houses in Wexford, Ireland and across the Severn at Kingswood, as recorded in 1262/3 (Bezant 2013, 135; Williams 2001, 162). In the harsh financial climate faced by the abbey in the fifteenth century, pilgrimage was also promoted to attract additional income. A 1414 reference to daily mass at the chapel outwith the west door of the abbey church featuring Tintern's 'miracle', a picture of the Virgin Mary, records that 'a very great multitude' came to visit (Twemlow 1904, 452). Such activities were a catalyst for traffic and accommodation, inns and other wayside infrastructure along the roads and paths to the abbey. Halfway to Modesgate from the Severn crossing at Beachley near Chepstow lies Spital Meend (derived from the Welsh *yspytty* meaning

'hospital'), indicative of a medieval *hospitium* or stopping place for pilgrims on route to Tintern and on to St. David's (Colyer 1984, 65; Taylor 1861, 52).

Unrecorded and more everyday movement of produce, stock and people between the abbey and its estates would have accounted for much traffic, though longer distance business and trade with wider markets was also an important reason for maintaining an effective communications network (Hindle 1998, 44). The 1411-12 Tintern accounts offer a rare glimpse of such movement, chronicling cellarer John Morris' court day visits to Porthcasseg, Woolaston and, further afield, to the abbey's Acle manor in Norfolk and to Bristol, the main regional trading hub (Williams 1984, 255; 2001, 259). Tintern was exempt from tolls and custom charges on its goods and owned a house in the Redcliffe merchant's quarter and other property in the city, whilst a Tintern-owned ship was recorded in the harbour, abbey boats regularly plying the Bristol Channel sea-ways (Bond 2004, 260, 307; Donkin 1978, 166; Williams 1976, 140). The success of Tintern's wool exports has already been mentioned, much of the produce would have been carried to Bristol either directly by boat or partly by packhorse train for onward transportation to overseas markets (Cowley 1977, 88; Hindle 2002, 21).

The Wye an important artery for transporting larger loads, Brockweir hamlet was home to a small community of watermen, as recorded in 1571, engaged mainly in the Bristol trade (Baggs and Jurica 1996b, 90; Bond 2004, 302; Williams 2001, 10). Downriver, the Water Gate enabled access to the Abbey Passage ferry, thought to date from the establishment of the abbey (*GGAT HER*, 00720g) (Figure 7.57). Monastic houses often had responsibility for the upkeep of such ferries for the benefit of travellers and pilgrims as well as their own needs, in this case connecting to land routes and the river-ways down the Wye to the Severn Estuary and Bristol (Hindle 2002, 138; Morgan and Smith 1972b, 106). 'Passage', French-derived, denoted crossings of the lower Severn reaches at which boat services operated by ancient right (Herbert 1985, 137). For instance, the Old Passage ferry from Beachley to Aust on the eastern bank was an age-old link from South Wales and the southern Marches into England on which the abbey had use 'free for themselves, their servants, and cattle' on the archaically named 'ferry of Betesseyo' or 'passage of Betesleia or Betesleg' in confirmation charters (PRO 1908, 97; Heath 1806,

unpaginated; Morgan and Smith 1972b, 57; Williams 2001, 249). Further upstream, at Woolaston Pill, the abbey's quay had the capacity to receive sea-going ships, enabling the transportation of surplus produce and incoming goods to and from Tintern's Gloucestershire estates (Bond 2004, 309; Fulford *et al* 1992, 101, 120).



Figure 7.57: The remains of the Abbey Passage ferry slipway on the east bank of the Wye opposite the abbey's Water Gate (Source: author).

Several land routes radiated out south-westwards from the Great Gatehouse to the abbey's Monmouthshire estates, connecting with other recorded medieval ways such as the causeway from 'the abbey to Platalande' mentioned in one of Roger Bigod's 1301 charters (PRO 1908, 106) (Figure 7.56). A now backwater byway runs south from the gate before dividing into the Long Way via Ruding grange and the Stony Way over the high Porthcasseg plateau: these were alternative routes to St. Arvans, the lordship nucleus and borough of Chepstow, the key *demesne* grange at Rogerstone and Tintern's Severn-shore landholdings (further details of these routes can be found in the field notes from the Porthcasseg and Stony Way landscape walks at Appendix 6). The Stony Way was a major cobbled routeway, still known as such, its surface substantially in place, climbing a narrow valley towards Porthcasseg and presumed by David Williams (1976, 134) to be a 'monastic enterprise' (Bond 2004, 294; Bradney 1993a, 256; *GGAT HER*, 03174.0g; *NLW*, Badminton 1657) (Figure 7.58). Before cutting through a high limestone cleft, the way commences as a track divided from a parallel stream by a stone revetment, morphing into a deep-

banked holloway running on to the metalled lane passing Porthcasseg Farm to Piccadilly Lane and on to St. Arvan's. First recorded in 1451, in 1506 it was remarked as 'the way leading from the abbey ... which is called Stony Way' and remembered by the adjacent Stonyway Meadow and Stoney Field (*NLW*, Badminton 1531; Badminton Vol. 2 143/1/1; *Tithe Map*, Pym 1844; Williams 1976, 134).

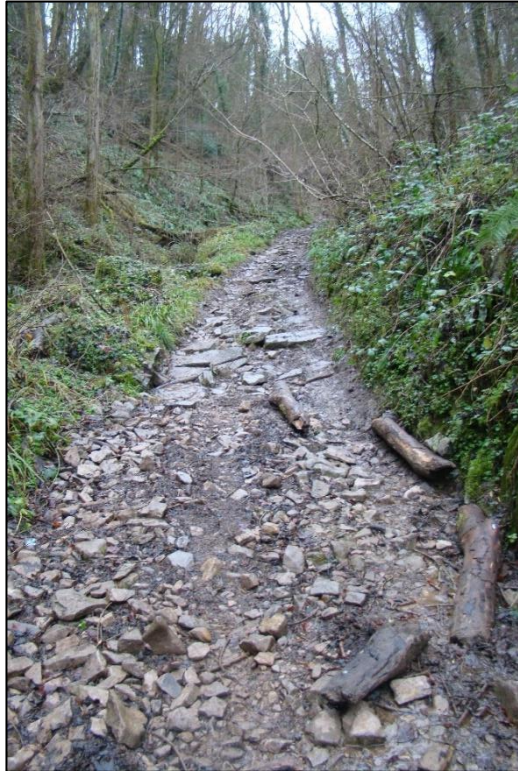


Figure 7.58: Views of the Stony Way, rising from the abbey gate towards Porthcasseg (Source: author).



Figure 7.59: Disused section of the Long Way in Black Cliff Wood (Source: author).

A level and more circuitous passage to St. Arvans was followed by the Long Way, recorded in the mid-fifteenth century, tracking a course along a narrow ledge between the Wye and looming limestone cliffs avoiding the Stony Way's sharp climbs over the shoulder of Gaer Hill (*NLW*, Badminton 1657). A more protracted route, but a better prospect for heavier loads or during inclement weather. Footways from St. Arvans to the farms at Livox and Ruding and on to the abbey charted on the 1763 estate map form a shadowy trace of the way. Its previously unrecorded course, following Public Rights of Way, disused embanked terrace-ways and a section of the modern A466 through the woods of the Wye Valley, has been retraced on the ground as part of this project (*NLW*, Badminton Vol. 2 143/1/1) (Figure 7.59).

From St. Arvans and running southwards past Rogerstone, these two tracks joined to become the Lodeway to the abbey property of Howick, connecting with highways to Merthyrgeryn and the Caldicot Level estates (Williams 1999, 27). Lodeway intrigues as a toponym with various possible origins. *Lode* is a place-name element of several Severn ferry crossings⁶¹ and so may denote the way to such a navigation across the estuary, though it veers away from the obvious route to the main medieval crossing at Beachley via Chepstow. Other plausible derivations are from

⁶¹ For instance, the old Upper and Lower Lode ferry routes at Tewkesbury (Gloucestershire).

the Old English *lad* denoting a watercourse or drainage channel, perhaps signifying the route to the abbey's reclaimed and ditched holdings on the Levels⁶², or *lodes*, south-west English vernacular for mineral veins (Gelling and Cole 2003, 82; Mills 1995, 214; Raistrick 1972, 21). W.H. Thomas (1839, 14) mentioned local 'lodes' of limestone and the naming could be for the transport of lime or iron ore, perhaps further evidence of monastic mining at Minepit Wood.

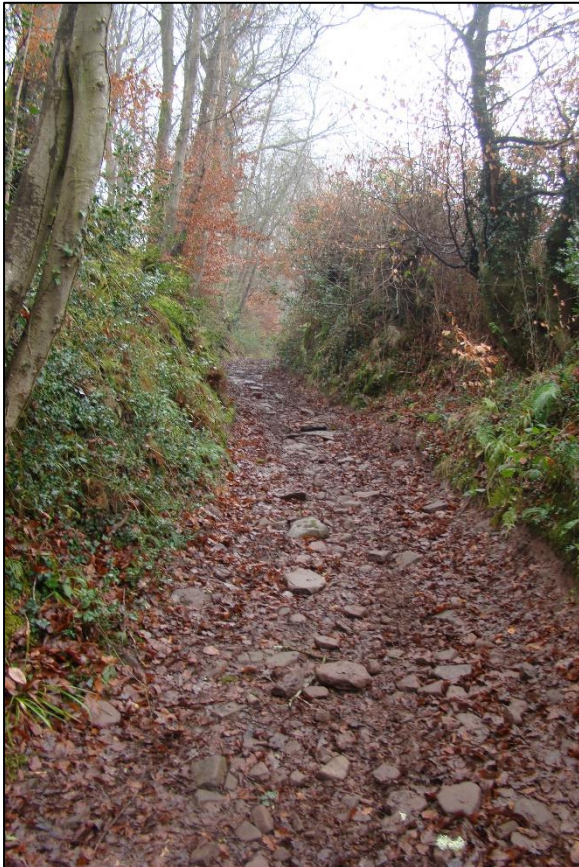


Figure 7.60: The old Chepstow to Monmouth road above Pont-y-saison (Source: author).

A further routeway ran directly west from the abbey gate, taking an elevated course up the Angidy valley past Secular Firmary grange to Fairoak, where it connected to the ancient – probably Roman – road from Chepstow to Monmouth (the modern through-way along the narrow valley floor would only come into existence when industrialisation colonised the gorge) (Walters 1992, 80). Described as 'the old way to the abbey' on the 1763 estate map, a contemporary medieval name has not survived (*NLW*, Badminton Vol. 2 143/1/1). Its route has been traced and followed for this research as a combination of archaic lanes with earthen and dry-stone faced banks, disused sunken stretches, forest tracks and house drives (further details can be found in the

field notes from the Angidy valley and Porthcasseg landscape walks at Appendix 6).

The medieval Chepstow to Monmouth highway climbed from St. Arvans via the now metalled Piccadilly Lane to Fairoak where the abbey road branched away. From here, a deep stone-reveted holloway registers its course through the woods of the

⁶² Canals in the Fenland of East Anglia commonly known as 'Lodes' have been associated with medieval monasteries, though may often have an earlier origin (Susan Oosthuizen, pers. comment).

upper Angidy valley down to the bridge at Pont-y-saison (Figure 7.60). A grass terrace-way then climbs parallel with the modern road up to Trelleck grange from where the line of the old route ran onwards to the burgh of Trellech along modern tarmac lanes, referred to as ‘the highway which leads from Trellech to the grange of the abbot and convent of Tintern’ in 1436 (Williams 1976, 122). Sections of metalled ‘ancient road’ and ‘traces of paving’ marked on the first edition Ordnance Survey map (1887), now turfed over or tarmaced, adorn its progress through the grange.



Figure 7.61: Stone-pitched track climbing from the Abbey Passage ferry (Source: author).

Crossing the Wye via the ferry from the abbey’s Water Gate, the Abbey Passage slipway on the eastern bank was the nodal point for land routes fanning out to the abbey’s Gloucestershire granges, the Severn crossing and destinations further into England. Here the 1815 Tidenham enclosure map is a useful cartographical and toponymical source for clues to older medieval routeways that can be followed on the ground. Further details can be found in the field notes from the Wye granges (East) landscape walk at Appendix 6.

From the slipway a track, slighted by the now disused railway branch-line to Tintern, climbs through the wooded Passage Hill. A well-preserved rise of pitched stone and banked path testifies to both the heavy traffic using this route and the sophistication of its construction, indicative of a paved medieval ‘causey’ (Morriss 2005, 95; Taylor 1979, 164) (Figure 7.61). Having ascended a promontory, the track splits (Figure 7.62). The left-hand route proceeds to Brockweir via a broad, level pathway with evidence of a cobbled surface for much of its route known as the Monks’ Path (or Way), although the antiquity of

this name has not been established (Baggs and Jurica 1996a, 151; Mason 1987, 78; Morgan and Smith 1972b, 106). The right-hand way soon branches again, splitting into the Causeway (perhaps another indication of a medieval ‘causey’) rising to Modesgate through Caswell Wood, and Abbey Road, a ‘rugged ... shady lane’ in 1839 winding a precipitous and often hollowed course up to Abbey Gate and across the open Tidenham Chase, now as the Abbey Footway, to Woolaston and the Gloucester road (*Glos Archives*, Q/R1/144; Morgan and Smith 1972a, 58; Ordnance Survey 1889; Thomas 1839, 41).



Figure 7.62: The junction of Monks’ Path to Brockweir (left) and Abbey Road to Modesgate and Woolaston (right) in Passage Wood (Source: author).

If the Monks’ Path is followed to Townsend Farm in Brockweir, a disused holloway alongside a Public Right of Way rises eastwards parallel with the Brockweir Brook and divides after crossing the ‘Offa’s Dyke’ earthwork (*Pastscape NMR*, 1387057). A field called Pyes Way (possibly from ‘magpie’) abutting this track may hint at its medieval name (*Glos Archives*, Q/R1/144). One route maintains an eastward climbing course alongside the old boundary wall dividing Lower Chase Wood from the higher pastures of Brockweir grange, in parts a distinct terrace-way. Another branch ascends sharply south up the scarp of Madgett Hill along the edge of Lower Chase and Oakhill woods to Modesgate grange (Figure 7.63). A prominent sunken way, it splits on cresting the hill at Madgetts Green. A track only now partly traceable

in commercial woodland probably skirted the boundary of Chapel Meadow and ran on to the 'ancient road' from Chepstow to Coleford (*Glos Archives*, Q/R1/144). A further branch, Madgett Road ran directly south across Tidenham Chase towards Chepstow and the Beachley Severn crossing road (*Glos Archives*, Q/R1/144). In 1815, this road (now Miss Grace's Lane) entered the grange lands at the 'ancient gateway of Madgetts' (*Glos Archives*, Q/R1/144). The conjoining of routeways at Modesgate is completed by the aforementioned Causeway climbing from Abbey Passage, emerging from the woods at a break in the dyke earthworks and running as a sunken lane to join Madgett Road, historically lined by marker stones (*Glos HER* 6033).



Figure 7.63: The sunken way from Brockweir to Modesgate looking north (Source: author).

The corridor of manorial land connecting Brockweir with the rest of Woolaston offers evidence of a further, now disused, component of this monastic web of tracks. Estate and tithe maps offer Old Road, Old Rood and Rood Grove enclosure names along the northern line of the manor boundary (*Glos Archives*, Q/R1/144; *Tithe Map*, Gwatkin 1993a). On the ground, the Old Road materialises as an overgrown banked holloway forking from the track up from Brockweir previously described, following a narrow dry valley clefting Cows Hill and Beech Knoll (Figure 7.64). Passing through Monk Hazleton field following a Public Right of Way, the line of a road becomes less obvious in the woods edging the rising ground of Oakhill, probably destroyed or

disturbed by forestry activity. A route arcing off here to the abbey's church at Hewelsfield is suggested by the field-name of Churchway near Cows Hill Farm (*Tithe Map*, Gwatkin 1993b). The old road may have then followed the Public Right of Way past Whitewalls down to Aluredeston and Woolaston granges. As with the Long Way, this offered a lengthier but easier alternative to the Abbey Road and Modesgate routes, avoiding the steep climb up from the Wye and highest part of the plateau and a more direct route to Gloucester and points north-east via the Roman road through Lydney.



Figure 7.64: The overgrown Old Road below Cows Hill (Source: author).

The monastic ways described often connect with a wider network of primary roads with Roman origins and there is evidence of some pre-monastic antecedents. As the Abbey Road and Madgetts Lane travel southwards they may in part have followed the line of a prehistoric trackway traced from the Severn at Broad Stone, west of Woolaston grange, over Tidenham Chase to the Wye at Brockweir passing a now-lost row of standing stones (Morgan and Smith 1972b, 55-6; Walters 1992, 23). The question of whether other routeways pre-date the abbey is difficult to answer: it has been suggested that the remnants of engineered trackway around Trelleck may be Roman in origin (Williams 1990, 63). Tintern's strategic position as a river crossing or earlier religious site may underwrite the pre-existence of some of the tracks that radiate out from it. What can be said, however, is that the abbey could draw upon the

labour and expertise required for the improvement and construction of surfaced and engineered routes such as the Stony Way (Williams 1990, 16; *Wye HLC*, Cadw undated). There are some hints of road maintenance in the abbey's primary records: for instance, in 1440 Porthcasseg tenants were admonished and fined for not repairing stretches of the Lodeway between St. Arvan's, Rogerstone and Itton which may have been paved (Williams 1984, 231; 1990, 27).

7.7 Contemporary medieval perceptions of the landscape

The abbey charters, taxation surveys, court rolls and grange accounts that have informed this chapter are rich in topographical descriptions and place-names, in the detail of everyday business and administration. In the absence of a comprehensive abbey history, however, voices recounting medieval perception of the landscape and setting of the abbey and its estates are few. Some tantalising fragments come down from William Worcester, one of the earliest English antiquarians and topographers, who visited Tintern in 1478, arriving from his home city of Bristol. He recorded historical and architectural details of the abbey in an idiosyncratic style in his *Itineraries* (Harrison 2000, 91). Worcester left basic entries outlining his route to Tintern including confirmation that the Aust ferry crossing was the main route from Bristol for onward travel to the abbey on horseback, probably via Modesgate, the Stony Way or the Long Way. Whilst awaiting the ferry, Worcester copied a list of the obits of the founders of Tintern found 'in an ancient calendar at Aust Cliff'; a signifier that Tintern was a destination of note from the Severn crossing (Harvey 1969, 55).

7.8 Conclusion

Tintern Abbey's agricultural operations and management of estate resources enacted a profound transformation of the landscape across the Wye Valley estates during the monastic centuries. Existing, long-established but essentially localised and marginal farming operations were expanded into an integrated, enterprising economy on both sides of the Wye through the establishment of granges within the wider tenanted landscapes of Porthcasseg and Woolaston. Managed initially by the abbey's lay brothers and later farmed out, the granges inscribed an enlarged patina of arable and grazing land on the fertile undulating plains above the Wye. Woodland,

pushed back to the steeper margins of the valley sides remained an important resource, managed in named coppice plots and bounded by walls to prevent stock escaping into its vastness or wild beasts encroaching on tilled land. The river Wye and its tributaries were also harvested for fish and utilised to power water mills.

Whilst the fieldwork undertaken for this study has revealed some elements of the infrastructure of the grange farmsteads, extensive relict features such as those preserved at Margam's Monkknash grange are lacking within the case study area, although field evidence at some of the other Tintern granges is more substantial. This may reflect the fact that, where a farmstead continued to operate into the post-medieval period, the evidence of the earlier buildings has often been erased by succeeding structures (Platt 1969, 74).

Tintern commanded land and water passage up the Wye valley, becoming a focus for a broader web linking the abbey, its estates and the wider world: southwards, along ways to local holdings and granges on the Severn shore; westwards, up the Angidy valley to the Chepstow to Monmouth road; eastwards, via the Wye ferry passage, to the Woolaston granges and Severn crossing to England; and downriver by ship to Bristol and external markets. At the heart of this network, the abbey functioned not only as a spiritual sanctuary but also a mercantile and population hub; a proxy for later settlement development, laying the foundations for the sustained post-medieval iron-based manufacturing operation that would come to the area.

Grange farms, woodland clearance, the travel-ways of the monks and lay brethren and other monastic features of the countryside were given permanent remembrance after the Cistercian community was long gone through the enduring names of fields, woods, farms and trackways. How this post-monastic landscape developed and came to be a core component of the 'sublime' Wye Valley – including, somewhat paradoxically, the industrial activity around the abbey – celebrated by Gilpin and Wordsworth as interest in the ruins of Tintern was awoken during the Romantic era will be taken up in the next chapter.

Chapter 8

Case study 2: Tintern Abbey – the post-Dissolution landscape

8.1 History of the abbey and its estates since the Dissolution



Figure 8.1: The east end of the abbey church (Source: author).

Following Tintern's suppression in 1536, the abbey, its appropriated estates and possessions 'in as full a manner as Richard Wyche, formerly abbot, held them' were granted to the prominent magnate Henry Somerset, Earl of Worcester for an annual knight's fee of one tenth of their £188.3.10 valuation, which was significantly below that in the 1535 *Valor Ecclesiasticus* survey and a receiver's inventory shortly after the transfer (*NLW*, Badminton 2445; Williams 1976, 112). This new era of Tintern estate lordship heralded protracted litigation over ownership and tenancy of former monastic property (*ibid.*, 92). One case involved Modesgate grange, subject of dispute between the out-going abbot and the earl who alleged that the old lease to the Madocke family had lapsed a month before suppression, renewed on a new long-term lease when the landholding should have reverted to the new lord (Williams 2007, 70).

There is no evidence that the earl, whose primary residences were at Chepstow and Raglan castles, ever lived at the abbey though it was used as a secondary residence for dependent members of the family (Courtney and Gray 1991, 149; Robinson 2011, 18). A descendent, Sir Thomas Herbert, lived at Tintern in the seventeenth century and may have occupied some of the monastic buildings (Craster 1970, 7). The great abbey church, however, became roofless shortly after dissolution as lead was stripped and sold-off but remained largely intact, an unsettling reminder of the religious ructions of the Reformation, not yet seen as a monument to ‘a safely romantic past’ (Knight 1999, 56; Newman 2000, 537).

David Williams (2007, 71-2) has pondered whether abbot Wyche, pensioned off and living out his final years as curate at Woolaston, ‘the manor of which he had once been the lord’, longed for ‘his former monastic life ... did he regret no longer having his substantial abbot’s quarters?’ Little is known of the fate of the remainder of the monks, although a few are known to have moved to clerical positions across Gloucestershire; there is no evidence that any residual religious community stayed on (*ibid.*, 68, 267). A sizeable secular populace did remain, no doubt including former employees and tenants of the abbey, leasing homesteads and parcels of land and setting-up make-shift homes within the redundant precinct (Robinson 2006, 283; Williams 2001, 92). Chapel Hill, the burgeoning settlement around the abbey, also expanded, colonised by iron industry workers engulfing the precinct area and spreading up the Angidy Valley, as outlined in section 8.2.5 (Robinson 2006, 5).

Although Earl Henry died within ten years, the Tintern Estate, encompassing the abbey, Porthcasseg manor (now largely subsumed within Chapel Hill parish), and all the local land-holdings, remained in the hands of his heirs (bestowed the title Duke of Beaufort from 1682) until the close of the nineteenth century. This notable continuity, however, was not without some ruction. For instance, Porthcasseg was confiscated from Henry, fifth earl and a prominent royalist, by Parliament for a time during the English Civil War and briefly in Crown hands in 1778 (Bradney 1993c, 45). Portions of ex-abbey land were absorbed into neighbouring domains and some fishing rights were disposed of, including Ashweir and Walweir (then known as Tintern and Abbey) in 1696 (*NLW*, Badminton 2445). Elsewhere, post-medieval farmhouses erected at former abbey granges, notably the seventeenth century Great

Estavarney mansion at Pethlenny, reflected the emerging prosperous yeoman status of the dwellings and their occupants (*GGAT HER*, 02039g; *Glos HER* 12879).



Figure 8.2: Early tourists in the abbey church as seen in *Tintern Abbey*, 1815 by Frederick Calvert (Source: © British Museum).

As the twentieth century dawned, the wider Duke of Beaufort estates, in common with those of many ancient noble families, were being disposed of, precipitating the final break-up of the old abbey's agricultural infrastructure. The sale of remaining Beaufort property across Monmouthshire in 1898 confirmed the colossal scale of the family's land ownership in the county: over 10,000 hectares encompassing some 20 manors including the abbey precinct and former Tintern lands at Trelleck Grange, Porthcasseg, Magor and Redwick, Pethlenny and Hewelsfield, fishing rights on the Severn, Usk and Wye and a rent roll of £30,410 *per annum*; the notice of sale highlighting 'the far-famed ruins of Tintern Abbey' alongside the castles of Chepstow, Monmouth and Raglan (*Gwent Archives*, MAN/H/20/0060). Pethlenny (by now known as Monkwood) was purchased by John Patrick, Marquis of Bute whose unfulfilled intention was to establish a monastic institution there (Bradney 1994b, 71). Rogerstone Grange, which had been leased by local gentry (the Curre and Somerset

families) and Merthyrgeryn and Moor (now Upper and Lower Grange, the 'chief farms' of Magor manor), long occupied by the Hodges family, were also sold on (Bradney 1993c, 41; *ibid.*, 230; 1994d, 232; Williams 1999, 30). Woolaston had already been disposed of in 1872, its old granges of Brockweir, Halishall (now Ashwell) and Modesgate (now Madgett) divided into smaller farms and all in separate hands by 1921 (Morgan and Smith 1972b, 109-110).



Figure 8.3: Tintern Abbey in its modern touristic setting (Source: © Crown copyright, Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historic Monuments of Wales, 1994; www.britainfromabove.org.uk/image/WAW006542).

The initial spur to the great surge in archaeological and touristic interest in Tintern sustained over the last 250 years – explored in more depth in Section 8.3.2 – came with the clearance and tidying of the abbey site by Charles Somerset, Duke of Beaufort in the mid-eighteenth century (Aston 2007, 170) (Figure 8.2). Final transformation into a heritage site was triggered by the disposal of the Beaufort ancestral estates, enabling the state to purchase the abbey in 1901. The Office of Works took on guardianship in 1913, commencing large-scale remedial and conservation work, removing ivy and post-medieval encroachment and exposing

medieval architecture (Newman 2000, 539; Robinson 2006, 287). Now in the care of Cadw, the abbey church and principal monastic buildings, the watergate, part of the precinct and surviving portions of wall, are scheduled as ancient monuments (Figure 8.3).

8.2 Post-Dissolution landscape evolution

Figures 8.4 and 8.5 capture the late-eighteenth to mid-nineteenth century landscape of the Wye Valley estates in finely-grained mapped detail, reference points for the narrative presented below. The map and the accompanying analysis are informed by the landscape walks and other field observation carried out for this project, contemporary and early post-medieval documentary evidence, analysis of field systems and other landscape features using map regression, aerial photography and satellite imagery, previous archaeological and historical research, place- and field-name evidence and research on the wider medieval landscape. A more detailed outline of the methodology and sources used to produce this map can be found at Appendix 2

Much of the woodland clearance had been completed during the high medieval heyday of the grange as outlined in the previous chapter. Whilst the pattern of agricultural land and wooded allotments had been largely set, these maps report a great post-medieval consolidation through piecemeal enclosure and reorganisation of closes, arable land and pasture, with some new intake from woodland providing additional capacity and, conversely, marginal wood-pasture returning to scrub or enclosed as wooded coverts between new fields. Earlier, largely undocumented, waves of these progressions had perhaps taken place or commenced during the later-monastic period. How these broad trends in landscape evolution played out will now be looked at in more detail.

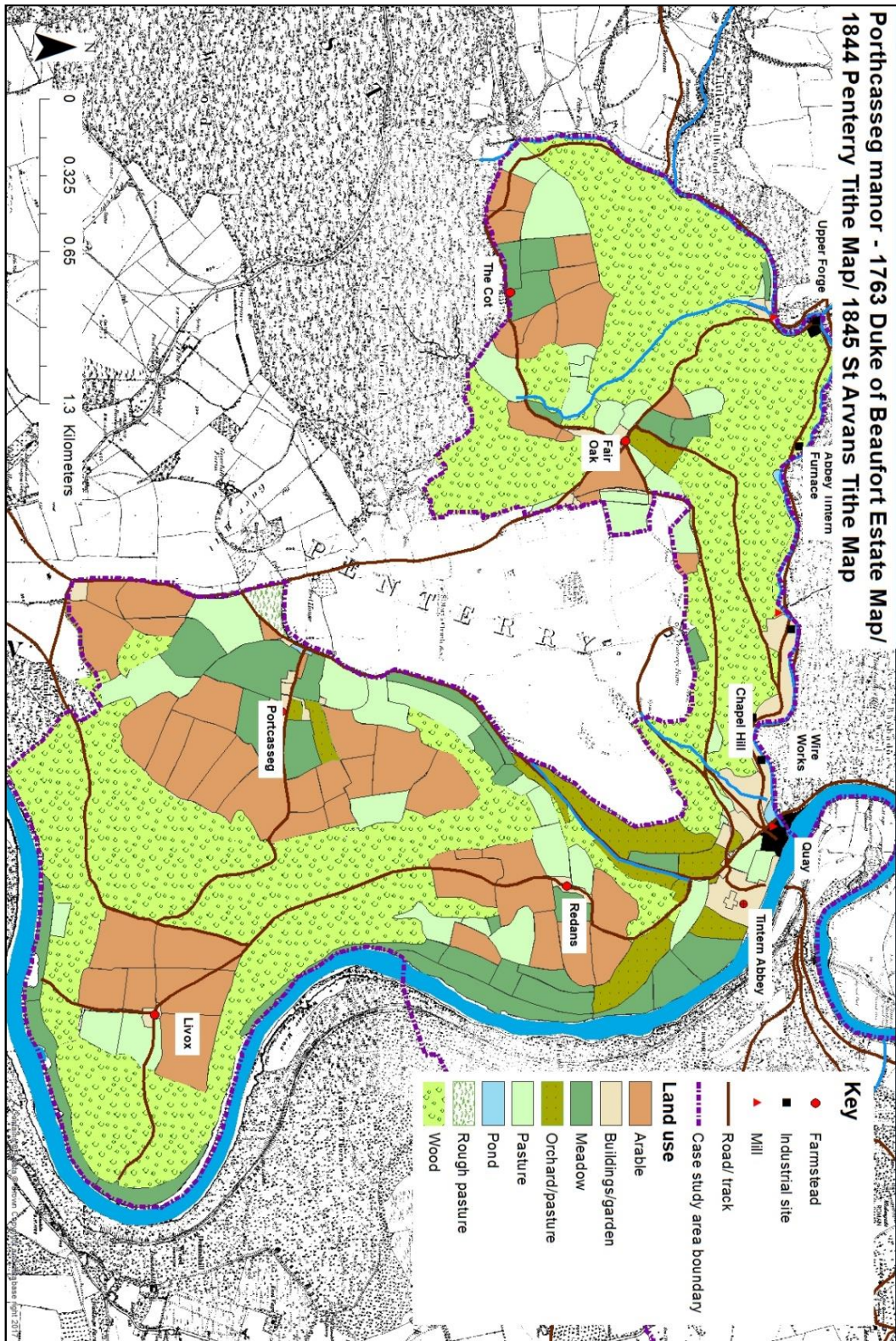


Figure 8.4: Porthcasseg manor - land-use and field patterns from the 1763 Duke of Beaufort Estate Map, supplemented by the 1844 Penterry and 1845 St. Arvans Tithe Maps (Source: map drawn in ArcGIS® using Ordnance Survey 1:10560 County Series 1st edition, Monmouthshire, 1887 data layer, downloaded from Digimap® under licence, <http://digimap.edina.ac.uk/>).

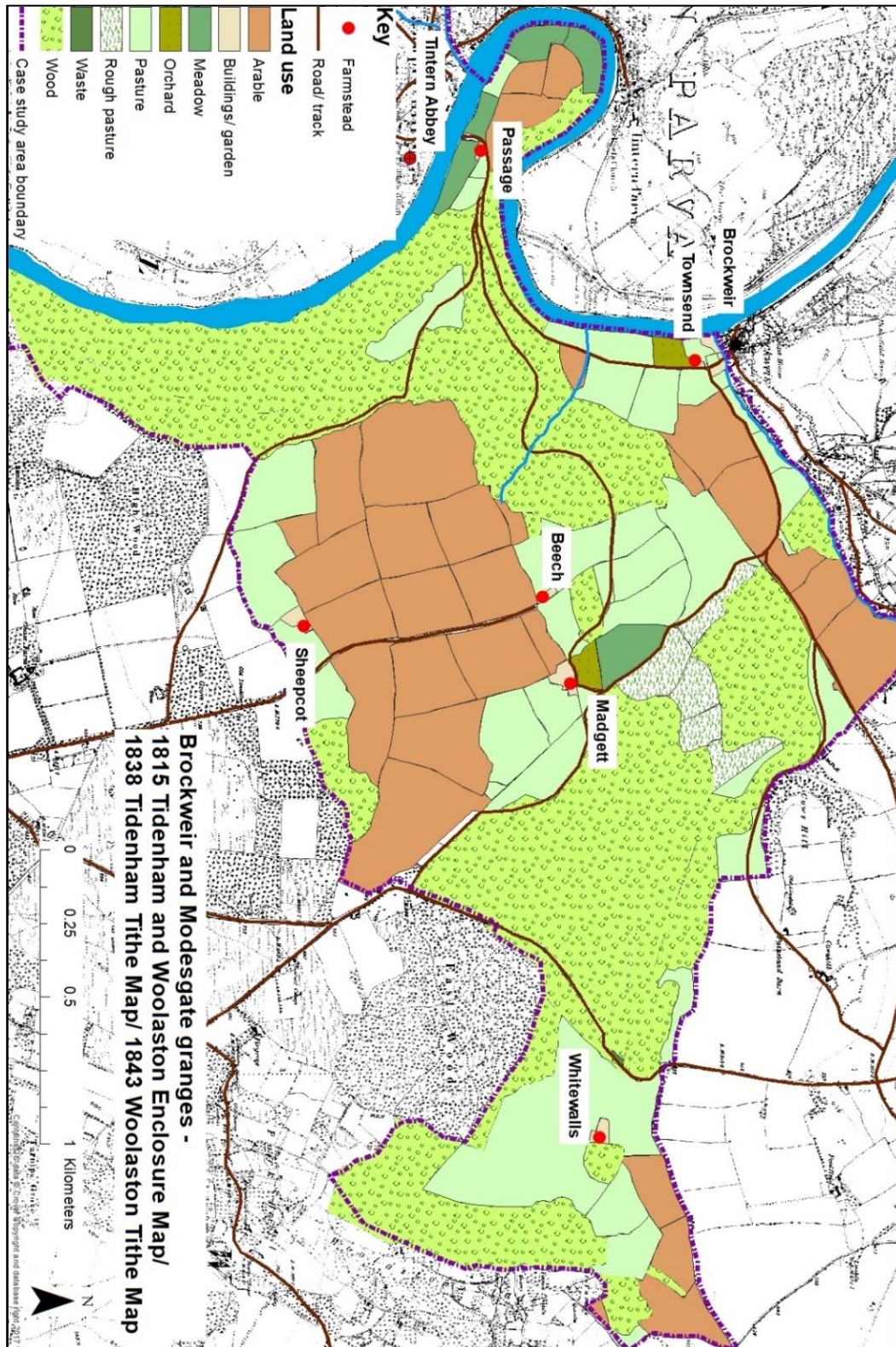


Figure 8.5: Brockweir and Modesgate granges - land-use and field patterns from the 1815 Tidenham Inclosure Map, supplemented by the 1845 Tidenham and 1841 Woolastone Tithe Maps (Source: map drawn in ArcGIS® using Ordnance Survey 1:10560 County Series 1st edition, Gloucestershire, 1889 data layer, downloaded from Digimap® under licence, <http://digimap.edina.ac.uk/>).

8.2.1 The abbey precinct and surrounding settlement



Figure 8.6: Tintern Abbey, 1836 by James Ward (Source: © National Library of Wales).

Dissolution did not lead to immediate destruction of Tintern's monastic infrastructure. Although lead from the church roof was disposed of by the Crown, evidence of continuing inhabitation of other buildings suggests that their essential fabric was retained (Craster 1970, 7). In fact, continuing occupation, and tillage of land, was a requirement of the granting of the precinct buildings to the Earl of Worcester (Courtney and Gray 1991, 145). Some structures, such as the abbot's house and the infirmary, were, though, levelled and their stone reclaimed whilst others were despoiled, but the abbey church was spared depletion and robbery and never taken down; the custodianship of the earl probably sparing it from more serious destruction (James 1926, 106; Rowley 2001, 134; Williams 2001, 92).

Never the principal residence of the Somerset family or their successors, the abbey was neither transformed and restyled into a gentry dwelling nor dismantled and destroyed. Rather, the first decades after suppression saw a pattern set of recurring phases of *ad-hoc* occupation overarched by gentle decline into rusticity running well into the nineteenth century; the noble arches, walls and windows of the abbey buildings a setting for numerous tiny orchards, small-holdings and cottages as the

local population moved into the vacuum caused by the removal of the monastic community (Figure 8.6).

Accounts for the Tintern Estate of 1568 and 1579 help to sketch out the topography of the precinct and surrounding area in the decades after dissolution (*NLW*, Badminton 1524 and 1531, translated in Courtney and Gray 1991, 155). Here we have a picture of the new landlord renting out holdings and tenements carved out of both the hallowed ground of the claustral buildings and the wider monastic arena. In 1568, Lady Eleanor Somerset took on the 'site of the former monastery of Tintern with orchard and close called Laytonfild' (occupying most of the outer court north of the abbey church) and the residence above the abbey gate. Further 'lands and tenements ... within the site of the former monastery of Tintern' were 'demised to various persons, from year to year': including the 'lawndrye house' tenanted to Agnes Langley, 'le pantryehowse with two gardens' to Matilda Greve, the abbot's stables to Thomas Tyler (possibly related to the abbey's last porter Edward Tiler), and John Gwynn, steward and later manager of the wireworks (see Section 8.2.5), renting 'St Anne's chapel' and the abbey graveyard.

Outside the precinct wall, meadows along the Angidy brook were demised to James Welsh to enable the building of a grist mill and dams in 1568, perhaps to replace the original abbey mill, Thomas Hackett accused in 1599 of digging up and destroying the 'ancient water course' from the wireworks to the mill (Donald 1961, 112, 136). Now established within the tourist infrastructure around the abbey, the 'Abbey Mill' has since been used for iron-forging, wire-making and timber-sawing (Wye Valley AONB 2011).

By 1579, the precinct and its immediate environs were undergoing further division and allotment: Richard Sparrow took an 'orchard called plummers', 'a tenement called le library and le cloyster' and 'two acres of waste land' extending to Stow weir, part of the former abbey meadows (*NLW*, Badminton Memorial 1531, translated in Courtney and Gray 1991, 156). Many of the gardens listed were likely the unroofed shells of the primary abbey buildings (*ibid.*, 149). A reference to the 'great orchard', named the 'Abbey orchard' in 1651, suggests that the monastic fruit grounds were retained intact (*NLW*, Badminton 1631-1632). Tintern long-remained orchard-rich

with a profusion of fruit trees into the nineteenth century, Edward Collins (1825, 131) remarking how the air was perfumed approaching the abbey ‘beneath the fruitful hill’ (Heath 1806, unpaginated). Some years later, W.H. Thomas (1839, 21) observed how ‘buried amidst un-couth apple trees’ the abbey ‘struggles to display its picturesque’, whilst the last ‘lofty walnut trees’ of great age and co-existent with ‘monkish times’ had recently been felled.

Estate accounts for the seventeenth century show that the abbey and surrounding *demesne* continued to be leased (Courtney 1989, 102). A manorial survey of 1651 verified a configuration of cottages, gardens and orchards, supplemented by a developing wire manufacturing infrastructure, initially in the old outer court (*NLW*, Badminton Papers Vol II Monmouthshire, 1631-1632, 2445). Here, the site of a furnace, leased by William Herbert along with ‘lands and pastures called the Laytons compassed with a high wall conteyning five acres’, included a ‘mansion house, iron forge house, furnace, timber coal house and coal yard, weigh house, store house with streams and ponds next to the river Wye.’ Rubble evidence and post-medieval sherds point to post-Reformation abandonment of earlier monastic industrial activity within the precinct, but revived and expanded industry was now emerging, as charted in Section 8.2.5 (Courtney 1998, 123).

The micro-division of the precinct area was still in evidence at a more advanced date as illustrated by the 1763 estate map (Figure 8.7): a hectic mosaic of dwellings, small-holdings, orchards and modest enclosures across the old monastic space, the nascent settlement of Chapel Hill spreading up the industrialised Angidy Valley. Tenants were utilising the smaller buildings of the monastic ranges, with larger, roofless structures such as the refectory vacant, becoming progressively ruinous as they were plundered for building materials, employed as orchards and small closes. The 1763 plan shows the precinct wall enclosing a smaller area to the south-east than the original line of the boundary, with part of the old abbey orchard now occupied by the post-medieval Abbey Farm, its two linear ranges abutting the remains of the claustral buildings (*Wye HLC*, Cadw undated) (Figure 8.8). A 1651 reference to Abbey Street, either the road running along the boundary wall or through the precinct, a further example of the numerous monastic mnemonics within the named landscape (*NLW*, Badminton 1631-1632).

A blend of domestic, agricultural and industrial occupation characterised the precinct and abbey buildings into the nineteenth century. Most strikingly, the keeping for a time of a deer herd in a precinct paddock (Heath 1806, unpaginated). A new era of emerging tourism was, though, beginning to affect profound change. The catalyst was the Duke of Beaufort's 1756 clearing of the church interior 'which had remained, from its dissolution, totally desolate and neglected', vegetation and 'rubbish, several feet above the present surface' including fallen masonry, which was dumped in the river or spread on local fields (Courtney and Gray 1991, 152-4; Heath 1806, unpaginated). The church was then turfed, remnant carved stones positioned around the site and an old gate put up at the west door 'to secure it as an object for gratifying a laudable curiosity', with ivy-covered walls retained to enhance the atmospheric scene (Heath 1806, unpaginated; Newman 2000, 347). The rustic Beaufort Arms inn, built along the line of the precinct wall, was upgraded to a hotel (later the Abbey Hotel) and ramshackle cottages, out-buildings and enveloping orchards gradually removed (Heath 1793, 55; *Wye HLC*, Cadw undated). Such interventions, often unpopular with the local population, were designed to improve accessibility and attractiveness to visitors rather than driven by antiquarian enquiry and a long way from modern conservation practice (Courtney and Gray 1991, 152; Robinson 2006, 286). Though Charles Heath (1806, unpaginated) disapprovingly recalled the demolition of part of the precinct wall during construction of a carriage road from the hotel to the church in 1823, one outcome of the removal of much of the post-medieval fabric was to uncover monastic remains which would later enhance archaeological knowledge (Courtney and Gray 1991, 154).

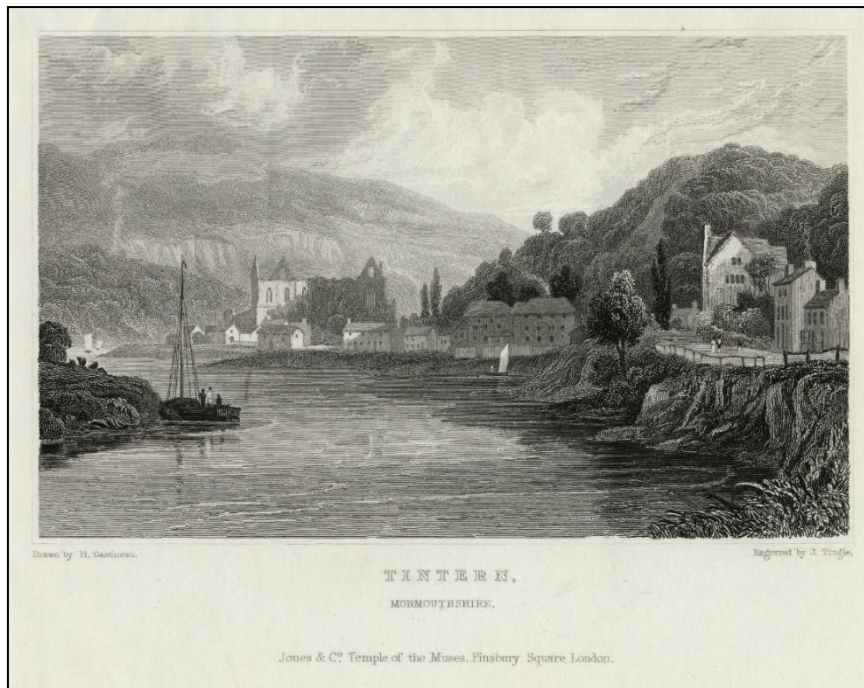


Figure 8.9: Tintern, Monmouthshire, 1830 by Henry Gastineau (Source: © National Library of Wales).

By the early-nineteenth century, a large straggling settlement had grown up around the abbey site, up the Angidy Valley and along the Wye, the result of piecemeal development accompanying the commercial activity described in Section 8.2.5 (Figure 8.9). Whilst this settlement and the wider parish officially took the somewhat obscure name of Chapel Hill (the village physically merging into the river-side community occupying the neighboring parish of Tintern Parva, amalgamating into a single new parish in 1902), as recently as the early-twentieth century it was colloquially known by older residents as ‘Abbey Tintern’ (probably reflecting the Welsh formulation, *Abaty Tyndyrn*) (Bradney 1994a, 255; Twamney 1839, 53).

Louisa Twamley (1839, 53) noted the strong resemblance of the village to the coal districts of the Midlands. Essentially an unplanned dispersed settlement, characteristic of early industrial development, Chapel Hill included a hierarchy of buildings, from the substantial houses of the ironmasters and their managers to small workers and squatter cottages and a supporting underpinning of schools, non-conformist chapels and public houses: all coalescing around the various industrial plant (*Wye HLC*, Cadw undated). Spurred by the burgeoning tourist industry, the early-twentieth century saw Chapel Hill and Tintern Parva further expand with neo-vernacular estate cottages, hotels and other facilities (*Wye HLC*, Cadw undated). St

Mary's church overlooking the abbey, rebuilt in 1866, has now joined its larger neighbour and namesake as a ruin: redundant since 1972, gutted by fire five years later (Bradney 1993a, 261).

8.2.2 The wider post-medieval estate landscape



Figure 8.10: 'Rodinge greene' and 'Castlefelde' on the hillside beyond the hedged lane, looking east (Source: author).

An early-modern snapshot of the evolving landscape is provided by the 1651 Porthcasseg manor survey, which reveals a countryside divided between the many agricultural holdings of copyhold and leasehold tenants. Men and women like Thomas Harkott who held 'one messuage and garden and fifteen acres of arable land ... and the upper meadow bounded upon the Ruddings Farm' reflecting a mixed farming economy of woodland, arable, pasture and meadowland (*NLW*, Badminton 1631-1632). This was an era of piecemeal enclosure by agreement during which the field systems displayed in the historic maps were largely embedded, although references to the actual process of this type of enclosure, informal by nature, are frustratingly absent in the written record. Mentions of acreages of 'arable and pasture land', 'meads' and named holdings (such as 'Castlefelde' and 'Rodinge greene') imply but do not explicitly mention enclosed fields (Figure 8.10). Conversely, 'Sheephouse ground' and 'the Livox mead bounded upon the Common of

Portcassege east and north and upon the river Wye to the south' suggest a still partly open scene surrounded by the common woodland of the manor (*NLW*, Badminton 1631-1632).

The 1698 taking of an un-named tenancy that would appear to be Porthcasseg Farm by William Morgan, a gentleman of Bristol, evidences an agricultural landscape now divided into named closes, mostly between three and eight acres (*NLW*, Badminton 2077) (Figure 8.11). Some of these fields – tenanted land in the monastic era, without the abbey's grange system – can be cross-referenced with the 1763 estate map but many have different names: the earlier roster largely Welsh, the latter mostly English or Anglicised (*NLW*, Badminton Vol. 2 143/1/1). As late as 1760, manorial court barons were still, as in monastic times, held at Porthcasseg House (home of Henry Moxley, the house subsequently rebuilt in the nineteenth century), but by the middle of the next century, with the farm now sold on, such gatherings had moved, firstly to the Duke of Beaufort Hotel opposite the abbey, then to the George Inn, Chepstow (Bradney 1993c, 45; *Gwent Archives*, MAN/H/20/0070-89).



Figure 8.11: Porthcasseg Farm, the rebuilt farmhouse in the background, looking south-east (Source: author).



Figure 8.12: *The Abbatical Mansion* (Source: after Thomas 1839, 45).

The possible monastic origins of the Malthouse in Brockweir were highlighted in Chapter 7. A building survey has revealed that its fabric included recycled materials from the abbey (*Glos HER* 28782; *Wye HLC*, Cadw undated). Other old local houses also re-purposed abbey stonework or have been linked with the convent, indicating the kudos and valued authenticity of monastic association even where not proven or credible. For instance, the ‘Abbatial Mansion’ in Tintern Parva, still-extant in the late-1800s was once thought to be an ‘extra-cloister residence’ to which the last abbot retired; though

unlikely to be monastic, it may have been constructed with materials from the abbey (Bradney 1993a, 249; Courtney and Gray 1991, 151; Thomas 1839, 45; Williams 2007, 71) (Figure 8.12). Also in the village, a seventeenth century house called The Hospice has been associated with monastic hospitality (*GGAT HER*, 09476g).

Elsewhere the monastic legacy was less welcome. Joseph Bradney (1993a, 219-222) quoted a 1610 treatise on the weirs of the Wye by Rowland Vaughan, by which time the river was ‘groing [groaning] under the burthen [burden] of intolerable Weares’ seriously inhibiting spawning salmon much to the complaint of local inhabitants. Acts of Parliament were passed in the late-1600s to take blockages down and make the river navigable, several Tintern weirs demolished. Bradney (*ibid.* 222) remarked that some remained into the nineteenth century, the fisheries now remembered largely as names in the landscape and shallow scatterings of stones.

An illustration of growing control of the lord’s woodlands comes in a 1584 Tidenham manor tenant dispute, the complainants bemoaning the enclosure of the manor’s extensive woods (including those around Modesgate), by tradition common of access (Morgan and Smith 1972a, 51-2). More generally, the lower Wye Valley would see most of its coppiced woods enclosed by the end of the seventeenth

century (Peterken 2007, 13). Increased exploitation of the district's timber resources was partly in response to an escalation in iron production across Monmouthshire in the late-sixteenth century leading to dramatically increased demand for charcoal (Donald 1961, 118). Ironmaster John Hanbury who will appear again in Section 8.2.5 was taken to court in 1585 charged with excessively denuding the woods around Tintern to which he had been given rights of charcoal production (*ibid.*, 121).

8.2.3 The wider estate landscape into the modern period

'We look down immediately upon the Wye which here makes a fine curve, forming a peninsula of fifty acres of pasture land at the end of which rises a grand Wood, spreading itself like the leaves of a fan, and richly adding to the beauty of the landscape. On the right of the river, and in the centre of the vale, the venerable Abbey appears with great dignity; whose ivy-vested walls, surrounded with meadows and luxuriant orchards, have a very singular and interesting appearance.'

Charles Heath's (1806, unpaginated) report of the early-nineteenth century landscape observed from the highpoint of Barbados Woods, looking south towards Tintern, suggests an unchanging scene of pastoral beauty. Although the view locks onto the abbey and river, the account includes the meadows, pastures, orchards and woods of a working agricultural district; a surrounding landscape that had matured in the centuries during which the abbey ruins settled into their post-monastic torpor.

The footprint of the medieval Porthcasseg manor was still largely intact when the 1763 estate map was drawn, excepting the eponymous farmstead itself which was now outside of the Beaufort Estate: 950 hectares, including 263 arable and 287 meadow and pasture, the remainder mainly still extensive coppiced woodland (*NLW*, Badminton Vol. 2 143/1/1) (Figure 8.4).⁶³ Much of the manorial land was in Chapel Hill but nearly half was in neighbouring parishes and extra-parochial, reflecting the configuration of the original monastic estate rather than emerging modern administrative arrangements. Although the map displays a largely enclosed

⁶³ Of the wider Duke of Beaufort estate in the area, The Grange (Rogerstone) and Trelleck Grange were predominantly arable at this time (*NLW*, Badminton Vol. 2 143/1/1, 143/1/2).

landscape (both farmed and wooded land), field morphology was still evolving with later Ordnance Survey mapping (1889) charting some significant differences (*NLW*, Badminton Vol. 2 143/1/1). Recognition here that the consolidation and realignment of field boundaries was an ongoing process, influenced by changes in agricultural practice and the decisions of estate managers and individual farmers. As discussed in Chapter 7, this picture of relatively fluid and dynamic enclosure means that medieval field systems have often been replaced by more regular partition and allotment. A template had been set by the monastic land managers, however, dictating which areas were later used as prime improved and enclosed agricultural land. At the former grange of Ruding (by now Redans) the semi-regular and partially consolidated field pattern of 1763 indicated a farm largely operating in a continuum with its previous monastic function as a mixed arable and sheep-rearing unit (*NLW*, Badminton Vol. 2 143/1/1). To the west, the farmsteads of Fair oak and The Cot, islands of cultivation hemmed in by woodland, signal medieval assarts now evolved into relatively regular post-medieval enclosure (*NLW*, Badminton Vol. 2 143/1/1; *Wye HLC*, Cadw undated).

Livox exemplifies this picture of a post-medieval farm developing out of the abbey estate: 134 acres (54 ha.) of largely arable fields with English ‘acre’ names laid out in a regular grid pattern by 1763, representing continuing tillage across this fertile monastic assart (*NLW*, Badminton Vol. 2 143/1/1). By now an eighteenth century ‘model farm ... on its well-tilled table of land’, Livox was leased to the adjoining Piercefield Estate from 1759 but remained in Beaufort ownership until purchased by the Crown in 1901 (Thomas 1839, 17; *Wye HLC*, Cadw undated). A dramatic change in the agricultural landscape of the farm came with the development of a huge commercial quarry, now closed, licensed to remove the core rock of the Livox promontory from the 1990s and the demolition of the farmstead (Peterken 2007, 23).

Cartographical evidence of the agricultural landscape on the eastern side of the Wye emerges through the parliamentary enclosure of the remaining woody heath of Tidenham Chase (Figure 8.13). When the parishes of Lancut, Tidenham and Woolaston were surveyed in 1815 prior to their enclosure act there was little open ground remaining outside the chase expanses along the southern bounds of Modesgate, noted as recently enclosed later in the century (Taylor 1869, 53). The

core former granges-lands of Brockweir and Modesgate were composed of ‘old inclosures’, enveloped by the managed woodland allotments and Tidenham Chase (*Glos Archives*, Q/R1/144). A last remaining area of relatively open ground, Little Meend, and a small amount of ‘waste’ in Oakhill Common would now be parcelled up along with the adjoining Woolaston Common (*Tithe Map*, Gwatkin 1993a). What emerges on this Gloucestershire side of the Wye is a more settled field-scape than Porthcasseg, where the earlier piecemeal enclosure was still evolving into the nineteenth century. The enclosure pattern already well-established in 1815 shows little material difference in the tithe and Ordnance Survey maps of later in the century (*Glos Archives*, Q/R1/144; *Tithe Map*, Gwatkin 1993a, 1995; Ordnance Survey 1889).



Figure 8.13: The former lands of Brockweir and Modesgate granges as displayed on the 1815 Tidenham enclosure map (Source: Gloucestershire Archives, Q/R1/144, digital copy purchased).

Modesgate had by now transfigured into Madgetts Farm, one of the larger post-medieval Beaufort Estate units in Woolaston, its 150 hectares dominated by arable in 1841 (*Tithe Map*, Gwatkin 1993a). At the heart of the ancient grange were the large and regular plateau-land fields, the signature of earlier (i.e. pre-1815) piecemeal replacement of the medieval arable strips, closes and open sheepwalks. These established enclosures remained much the same into the late-nineteenth century, aside from some consolidation or splitting of existing fields and a band of assarted closes amidst Oakhill Wood returning to rough pasture (*Tithe Map*, Gwatkin 1993a, 1995; Ordnance Survey 1889). At the turn of the eighteenth century, as with the smaller farms working the Brockweir grange lands, Madgetts had been running a largely pastoral economy over this expanse (Morgan and Smith 1972b, 106-110). A shift back to tillage was bespoken by a preponderance of nineteenth century arable fields with 'leaze' (signifying meadow) names. This cycle of changing land-use may have witnessed the ploughing-up of medieval ridge and furrow preserved in post-medieval pasture. In the early-nineteenth century the farm had been the neglected half of a joint tenancy with another holding at High Woolaston and by mid-century the old grange had been split between three farms: Beech, Madgetts and Sheepcot (Morgan and Smith 1972b, 106-110).

Beyond the northern limits of the old abbey lands, across the Angidy and Brockweir valleys, remaining tracts of waste and woodland in Wyes Wood and over St. Briavels and Hewelsfield commons saw large-scale squatter occupation due to an influx of industrial workers into the 1800s, resulting in a dense network of scattered cottages, small-holdings, irregular enclosures and lanes, interspersed by patches of remaining greenwood (Baggs and Jurica 1996a, 153; Deakin 2007, 128; *Dean HLC*, Gloucestershire County Council undated; *Wye HLC*, Cadw undated). Aside from encroachment in and around the emerging industrial economy of the lower Angidy Valley, this phenomenon left the former monastic agricultural units and their adjoining woodlands held in hand by the Beaufort Estate largely untouched. The Estate's woodlands remained held in severalty by the lord of the manor excepting a large swathe along with Wye below Modesgate, described in *circa* 1775 as 'the common wood' (Morgan and Smith 1972a, 51-2). Much of the 363 hectares of coppiced woodland held in hand across Porthcasseg in 1763 was contained within

large enclosed and named allotments, supplemented by many smaller brakes along field boundaries and occupying irregular corners (*NLW*, Badminton Vol. 2 143/1/1).

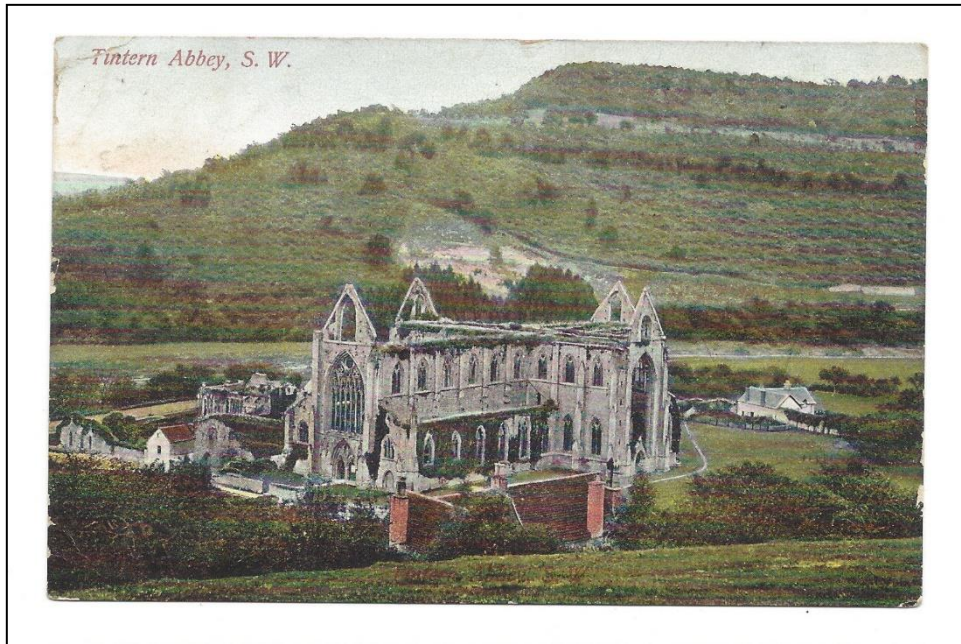


Figure 8.14: 1910 postcard image of Tintern Abbey with Passage Wood in the background (Source: unknown).

Change was afoot within these groves though as the demands of industry continued to escalate. Noting the rise of iron-making in the vicinity, Charles Heath (1793, vii; 1806, unpaginated) observed that the surrounding woods that 'must have been grand indeed' were now greatly reduced and felled every 12 to 14 years, whilst the once thickly stocked beech woods of Wyes Wood had also been denuded for fuel. This activity also left its imprint in the form of myriad charcoal hearth platforms and a proliferation of limestone quarries, kilns, sand and marl pits and associated trackways amidst the tree-cover (Peterken 2007, 18-20). A somewhat uneasy juxtaposition of industry and intensive exploitation of the woodlands with a burgeoning interest in the historic ruin and landscape of Tintern Abbey will be discussed in more detail in Section 8.4.2. One prominent visitor, Sir Richard Colt-Hoare, remarked in 1797 that the abbey 'is no longer decked with the fine woods which surrounded it some years ago and almost concealed it' (quoted in Knight 1999, 58). That Passage Wood across the river from Tintern had been almost completely denuded in the early-twentieth century is well illustrated in Figure 8.14.

Woodland management began to shift in the late-nineteenth century. The Crown had purchased many of the remaining woods in the district as the ancient estates were broken up. Tintern Crown Woods pursued a policy of growing tall beech trees for timber, whilst earlier in the century the Beaufort Estate had planted much larch and pine around Trellech and Tintern (Bradney 1993a, 132; Peterken 2007, 16).

Traditional coppicing practice was by now in decline but the commons of St. Briavels and Hewelsfield known as the Hudknolls anciently hosting the abbey's Harthill grange, their once thick cover of oak denuded by small-holder encroachment, remained as a rare survival of wood-pasture commons and remnant medieval practice, coppiced and grazed by local residents into the twentieth century (Deakin 2007, 128; Peterken 2007, 14).

As traditional forms of management and exploitation have diminished and woodland cover has increased, a quarter of the lower Wye Valley is now timbered, with a substantial coniferous legacy of post-war commercial planting now being progressively replaced by deciduous replenishment (Peterken 2007, 6).⁶⁴ In some places broad-leaved woods have been allowed to grow back unchecked over ungrazed commons and small fields in recent decades, a returning bosky habitat that has reduced open panoramas and sight-lines around the abbey (Deakin 2007, 134; *ibid.*, 31; *Wye HLC*, Cadw undated). An interesting example of such recolonisation is Monks Reddings, a tract of monastic assarting on the edge of the Modesgate grange which had returned to woodland by the early nineteenth century and remains so (*Glos Archives*, Q/R1/144). Similarly, the assarted fields known as Stoney Steps in 1815 between the woods of Lower Chase and Oakhill have reverted to tree-cover in modern times (*ibid.*; *Tithe Map*, Gwatkin 1995).

A section of the old abbey woods (Lower Matriddle and Wyndcliff) was absorbed into the designed landscape of Piercefield Park in the eighteenth century. Piercefield was acquired by Colonel Valentine Morris, scion of a wealthy sugarcane baron, in 1736 and the new landowner embarked on an ambitious programme to re-style the estate

⁶⁴ Many local woods, including the Tintern Crown Woods, have been under the control of the Forestry Commission and its Welsh successors since the 1920s, with the ancient woods of Matriddle, Wyndcliff and Caswell designated as Sights of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

into a fashionable landscaped park (now the site of Chepstow Racecourse), replete with woodland walks, a rustic team-rooms, grottos, caves, cold baths and viewing platforms (Kennedy 2002, 56; Peterken 2007, 20; Phillips 1951, 191). As a monastic-themed postscript, Colonel Wood, briefly the owner of Llanthony Priory, Llantarnam Abbey's Llanderfel grange and Tintern's Upper Grange (formerly Merthyrgeryn), bought the estate and completed the construction of its house in 1794, fallen stone from Tintern said to have been used to build a new park wall in 1802 (Taylor 1869, 68-9).

8.2.4 Communication routes

Post-medieval manorial documents long utilised references to 'highways' to and from the abbey to orientate and locate the legal landscape, markers of the endurance of Tintern as both a focal point and remembered place in the centuries after its abrupt cessation (*NLW*, Badminton 1631-1632). Other elements of the communication and transport infrastructure declined after the abbey's fall. For instance, the quay at Woolaston Grange seems to have lapsed into disuse and, progressively isolated from the shore due to coastal erosion, slowly decayed (Fulford *et al* 1992, 120). Some of the trackways to and from the abbey and in the surrounding areas, shorn of the monastic rationale for movement, would also decline in use and repair.

As roads became the subject of greater remark in the eighteenth century, it was clear that the land routes in the district, in common with much of rural Britain, were judged to be in a poor state. During a parliamentary enquiry prior to the counties Turnpike Act in the mid-eighteenth century, Colonel Morris of Piercefield Park replied to the questions 'what roads are there in Monmouthshire?' with 'None', and 'How then do you travel?' with 'In ditches' (quoted in Taylor 1861, 32). The fairer gradient of a new turnpike road circuiting the western boundary of Trelleck Grange through Llanishan would come to supersede the hilly stretch of the ancient Chepstow to Monmouth carriageway via Fairoak and Penterry (Thomas 1839, 60). The opening-up of the Angidy Valley by industrial activity had already seen a realignment of the main western approach to Tintern away from the old monastic ways to pass the 'wyre works' and forges alongside the Angidy Brook (*NLW*, Badminton 2073). The high-level monastic way from Fairoak to the abbey was enveloped by new small-

holdings west of the now redundant Secular Firmary grange (*Tithe Map*, Pym 1844). As the 1763 estate map attests, other medieval routes to the abbey were also now backwater paths and sunken lanes, marked as ‘old ways’ (*NLW*, Badminton Vol. 2 143/1/1).

Progress could be difficult away from the turnpikes. Riding from Monmouth to Tintern, Charles Heath (1793, vii, 28) described the route on leaving the ‘great road’ at Trellech as passing ‘through hollow and uncouth tracks, seldom attempted by any carriage but those of the native’ before entering the ‘profound dell’ of the woods of Angidy. Heath (1806, unpaginated) would also recount how the Stony Way, now the ‘foot road from Tintern to Chepstow’ was reduced to a narrow and rough lane through encroaching woods for which a guide was recommended. On a visit to Tintern in 1795 with the poets Robert Southey and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Joseph Cottle, publisher and patron of William Wordsworth, described a floundering night-time return from a long day out at Chepstow and Piercefield down the same steep and rocky path, disorientated, unsure of their way; later enjoying supper and a torch-lit tour of the abbey (Matheson undated).

It would be a later turnpike road (now the main A466 through the Wye Valley) that would help to open-up the backwoods of Tintern and the Wye to the wider world. Driven through the ruinous abbey precinct in 1815, the dramatic line of ‘the hanging road’ was cut and blown through the edge of Black Cliff and Wyndcliff, parallel with, and in places overlying, the monastic Long Way, its full course from Chepstow to Monmouth finally completed in 1827 (Collins 1825, 111; Twamley 1839, 48). Prior to the ‘new terrace road’, the Long Way had already been lost as a throughway to Tintern, the forbidding cliffs seen as a barrier to travel alongside the river between Tintern and Chepstow (Heath 1806, unpaginated; Taylor 1861, 37).

The monastic way up from Brockweir to Modesgate and over the plateau to the Chepstow to St. Briavels road and south to Woolaston described in the previous chapter remained an important byway, described as ‘the horse-way’ in 1683 and ‘the right road from Brockweir to Chepstow’ *circa* 1700, passing through the ‘Chase Gate’ dividing the bounds of Brockweir from Tidenham (Morgan and Smith 1972a, 54-5; 1972b, 105). Similarly, the southern approach to Modesgate retained its status;

hedged and walled as the land around it was enclosed, Madgett Road has become the partly metalled Miss Grace's Lane, although direct access to Madgetts Farm is by a ruler-straight access lane constructed in 1813 (*Glos Archives*, Q/R1/144; *ibid.*, 54-5; *ibid.*, 105).

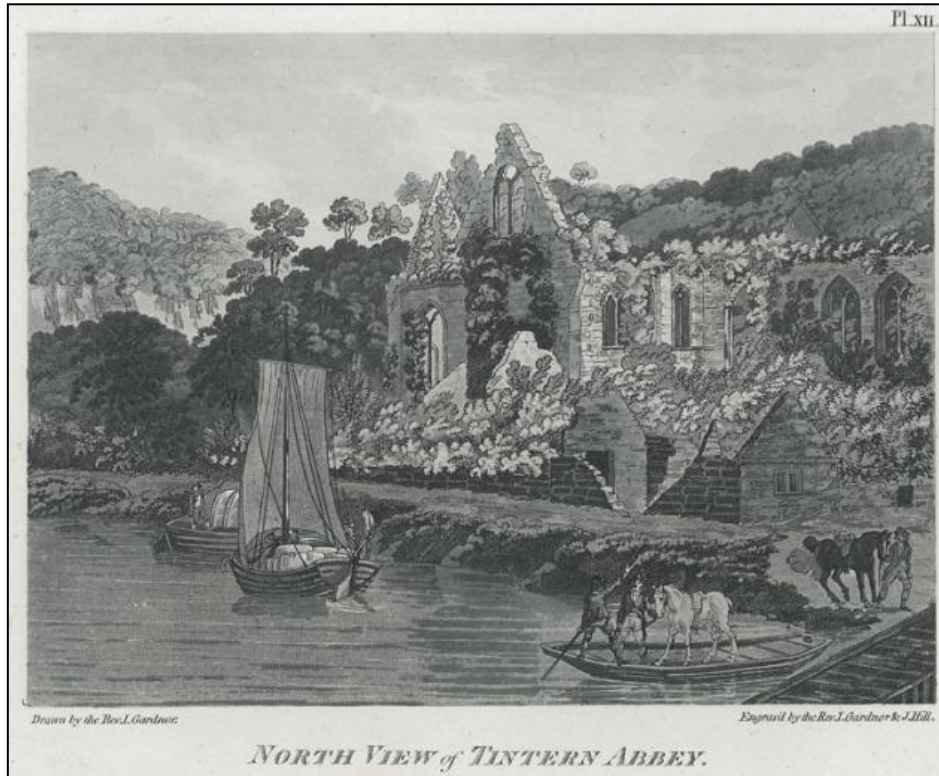


Figure 8.15: North View of Tintern Abbey, eighteenth century by John Gardner (Source: © National Library of Wales).

Due in part to the area's 'indifferent' roads and difficult terrain, water often remained the preferred long-distance means of conveyance for both goods and people (Wyndham 1781, 5). The monastic quayside at the confluence of the Angidy and the Wye was upgraded to accommodate the transport needs of the wireworks with wharfs and a tidal dock constructed in 1693 (filled-in in 1996), overseen from the Quay House (Newman 2000, 558). The need to transport charcoal and ore from local sources and the quay to the furnaces by packhorse saw both revived purpose for some medieval tracks and the forging of new routes (*Wye HLC*, Cadw undated; *Wye Valley AONB* undated). A tramway later connected the quayside with the various industrial sites along the Angidy Valley (*Wye HLC*, Cadw undated). Just upstream, at the limit of the Wye's tidal reach, a similar scene was found at Brockweir, where the riverside hamlet housed a community of boatmen and

shipwrights. The settlement remained a busy boat-building yard and port into the early-twentieth century, a point of transfer between sea-going vessels from Bristol and smaller craft operating up-river (Baggs and Jurica 1996a, 153; Heath 1793, ii; 1806; Twamley 1839, 64). A modest stone structure is all that remains of an extensive quayside lined with wharfs for coal, copper ore and other goods and yards for building and repairing the flat-bottomed trows that plied the Bristol trade route (Wye Valley AONB, undated). Deeply laden barges from these ‘busy little wharfs’ filled the Wye in the early-nineteenth century but rapidly declined with the coming of the Wye Valley Railway in 1876 (Bradney 1993a, 221; Collins 1825, 130; Thomas 1839, 42) (Figure 8.15). The railway was a further catalyst to the tourism boom and more efficient transport but a death-knell to the river trade, Tintern now served by a station and a siding crossing the Wye at Ashweir (Morgan and Smith 1972b, 105) (Figure 8.16).



Figure 8.16: Goods shed at the old Tintern railway siding at Ashweir (Source: author).



Figure 8.17: Near Tintern in Monmouthshire, 1822 by F. Nintz, thought to show the ruins of the gatehouse complex and St. Anne's Chapel as they then stood. Artistic license may explain the incorrect position of the abbey church in the background (Source: © National Library of Wales).

Modern arrival at Tintern bears little relationship to the medieval approach to the abbey, the main road breaches the line of the precinct wall and the gatehouse – which stood largely intact into the nineteenth century – is long gone (Robinson 2011, 39) (Figure 8.17). Across the precinct, the cobbled slipway of the Watergate, now crossed by a causewayed path and buried by tidal mud, remained in use well into the last century (Figures 7.30 and 8.18). The gate's surviving archway connects to a section of precinct wall in the fabric of the Anchor Inn, which may have housed the ferryman (*GGAT HER*, 00717g; Mason 1987, 71). Taking the Monk's Path through the woods from Brockweir to the slipway on the eastern bank, Charles Heath (1806, unpaginated) observed how the horses and mules of the district were still transporting goods on the steep stone-pitched monastic track down Passage Hill to the ferry. By the 1920s, this river crossing was obsolete as rail traffic ceased on the nearby bridge and it became available for general use (*GGAT HER*, 00720g).

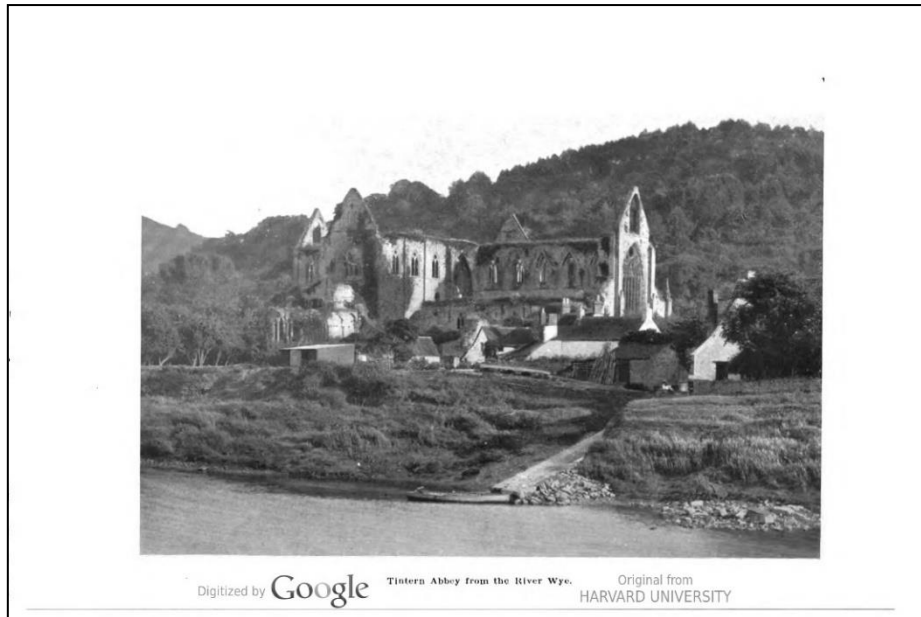


Figure 8.18: The slipway leading to the Watergate (Source: after Cram 1905, 100).

8.2.5 The Angidy Valley: a rural industrial landscape

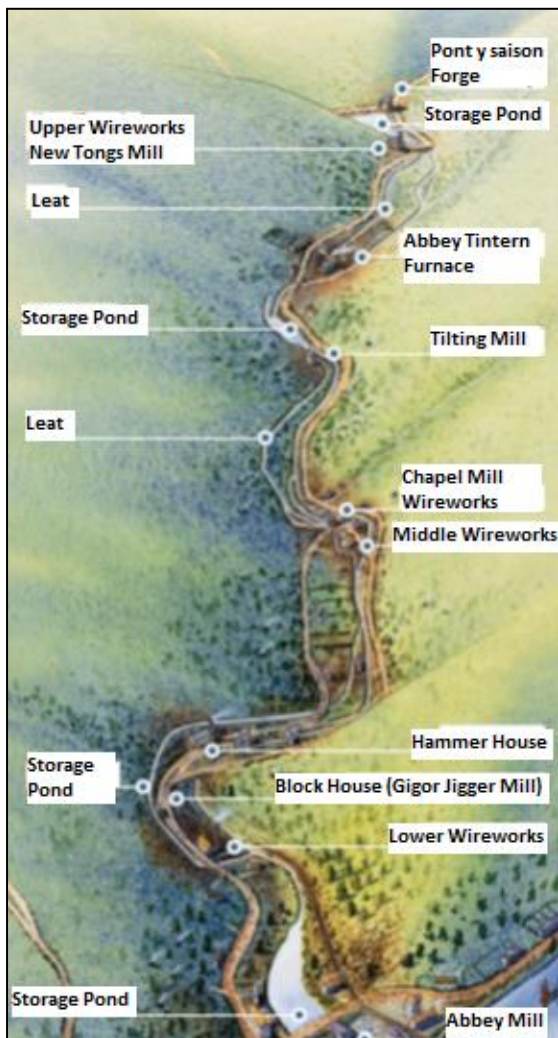


Figure 8.19: Artists impression of the industrial sites along the Angidy Valley – not all operating at the same time (Source: adapted from a drawing by Phil Kenning).

The transport evolution chronicled in the previous section were a key component of the industrial infrastructure which, somewhat counter-intuitive to the largely rural story so far observed, emerged by the late-sixteenth century to become an integral element of the Tintern and the Angidy Valley scene for the next 300 years or so.

As indicated at Figure 8.19, a chain of works, mills and associated water management systems was to descend the steep Angidy Valley from Pont-y-saison to the former abbey precinct, maximising the

power of the fast-flowing brook; an evolving landscape of production, shaped by the accommodation of industry and transport within the topographical constraints of the valley.

Given that the abbey maintained an iron-ore mine in the Forest of Dean, evidence of, admittedly non-ferrous, metal working within the precinct and Monkswood's (see below) antecedents as a Tintern grange, it is interesting to speculate as to whether the seeds for this emerging industrial activity were sown during the abbey's later years; an example of continuity through 'industrial inertia' (Williams 2001, 269). Documented activity, however, commences with a 1567 royal charter granted by Queen Elizabeth to establish a 'minerale and battery works' company to manufacture brass and iron wire at Tintern (Donald 1961, 1; *NLW*, Badminton 2445). A party of experienced German ironworkers had identified the confluence of the Angidy with the tidal Wye as a prime location, within easy reach of the required mineral deposits and plentiful woodland for charcoal (*ibid.*, 87-8; Probert 1982, 1).



Figure 8.20: A View Near Tintern Abbey, Monmouthshire, 1798 by John Hassell, thought to show the site of the Lower Ironworks (© British Library).

The first plant was probably located at what became the Abbey or Lower Ironworks (Figure 8.20). High quality osmond iron needed to produce wire was initially sourced from mine-workings and a bloomery furnace smelting the iron *in situ* in the woods of

Monkswood (previously the abbey's Pethlenny grange, see Appendix 5) owned by Richard Hanbury, iron-master at Pontypool (Bradney 1993a, 260; Donald 1961, 92, 113; Raistrick 1972, 25). Hanbury was dogged by accusations of poor quality iron-ore and disputes with the local population regarding the denudation of woodlands around Tintern and Monkswood for charcoal. A series of commissions and legal challenges attempted to improve the situation and address Hanbury's monopoly of iron production (Donald 1961, 111-129). As manufacturing progressed from brass to wire and the company sub-let the works under license, a forge and furnace were established *in situ* at Lower Forge (as described in Section 8.2.1) to integrate production (*ibid.*, 93; Probert 1982, 5). A more localised ore supply was now also secured, mine workings identified as 'Prassect' in 1673 and later as 'from this spot' may have been those described in Chapter 7 in nearby Mine Pit Wood (Donald 1961, 121; Heath 1806, unpaginated; Probert 1982, 8). Eventually, as the scale of production increased and local ore fell short of the required quality, it was sourced from larger commercial suppliers further afield at Furness in Lancashire; an industry originally established by the abbey there.



Figure 8.21: Artists impression of Abbey Tintern Furnace in the late-seventeenth century (Source: © Wye Landscape Partnership Scheme, www.overlookingthewye.org.uk).

By the 1670s, further wireworks had been established upstream and the state-of-the-art Abbey Tintern Furnace (excavated in 1979-81 and now conserved) constructed (Courtney and Gray 1991, 152) (Figures 8.21 and 8.22). At the height of industrial activity in the late-eighteenth century, the Angidy accommodated four wireworks, three blast furnaces and over 20 water wheels (Newman 2000, 557). Tintern's relatively remote situation and competition from larger complexes would, though, see demand progressively reduce thereafter. Attempt to diversify could not halt the decline and over 300 years of production largely ended with the passing of the Victorian era, the last works closing in 1901 (Bradney 1993a, 260; Millward and Robinson 1978, 169; Stanford 1991, 166). Left until recently to disappear into a returning rural setting, the remains of this 'hidden industry' are now well promoted, including a dedicated heritage trail (Wye Valley AONB 2011).



Figure 8.22: The remains of Abbey Tintern Furnace above the abbey in the Angidy Valley (Source: author).

8.3 Perceptions of the landscape

8.3.1 Local folklore

In the long years since the abbey's functioning heyday inherited elements of the monastic past have been integrated into the succeeding secular landscape. Loaded with memory and symbolism, ancient and seemingly redundant landscape constituents, their original spiritual or functional meaning shorn or shape-shifted,

have often been re-appropriated by popular culture or given new meaning and function (Whyte 2009, 165). Perhaps the clearest enduring memory of the abbey is in the named landscape and many examples of etymological relics have been identified in this and the preceding chapter. 800 years after their Cistercian high-water mark, the abbey's grange farms are still prominent markers of place, symbols of antiquity, stability and high status (Figure 8.23): Grangefield, Lower and Upper Grange, Rogerstone Grange, Trelleck Grange and Woolaston Grange.



Figure 8.23: Grange Road on the approach to Rogerstone Grange (Source: author).

An array of customs, legends and folklore stories have also emerged to embellish the abbey's long postscript. Whether the use of the abbey church for playing quoits and as a fives court by Tintern villagers (dubbed 'Abbey cowats', jackdaws, by their neighbours across the Wye at Brockweir) in the eighteenth century was a symbolic act of re-appropriation or merely functional use of a redundant space is hard to know (Palmer 1998, 240; Simpson 1976, 191). A still-practiced archaic custom is to visit the abbey at the Harvest Moon; a tradition enthusiastically taken up by early tourists to help maximise the atmospheric grandeur of the ruins (Williams 1976, 96).

Nineteenth century topographical writers would often describe arriving at 'the moonlit Abbey' on an autumn night or visits by torch-lit procession (Taylor 1839, 35-8) (Figure 8.24).⁶⁵ That staple of monastic folklore, the underground tunnel, is also

⁶⁵ More recently, a group of Japanese tourists visiting the abbey by moonlight provoked rumours of overheard chants in a strange tongue, ancient monks incanting a ghostly Mass (Mason 1987, 70).

present: tradition that a three-mile tunnel from Tintern to Trelleck was used by nuns to enable them to bathe in a medicinal pool unhindered by the fact that the abbey never hosted female inmates (Simpson 1976, 29). A subterranean story that may have more substance tells of the ruined grange chapel at Rogerstone disappearing underground one night, victim perhaps of a swallow hole along a geological fault running through the farmstead (Williams 1999, 27).

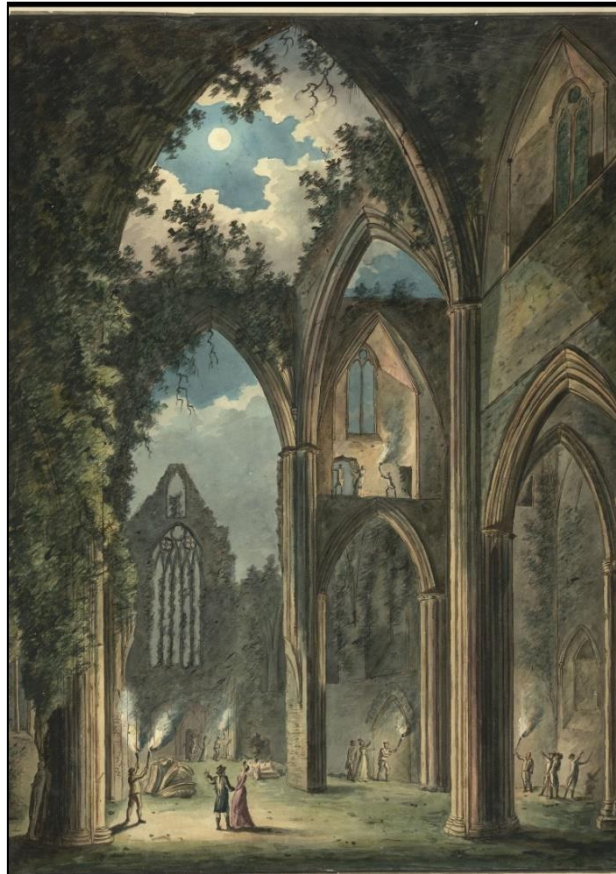


Figure 8.24: An Internal View of the Tintern Abbey seen by moon light in South Wales by Peter Van Lerberghe, 1772-3 (Source: © British Library).

Perhaps unsurprisingly, spectral and supernatural tropes abound in tales and stories attached to the abbey and its surrounds, inspiring several minor works of fiction with titles such as *The Ghost of Tintern Abbey*, *The Orphan of Tintern Abbey* and *The Troubled Spirit of Tintern* (Watt *et al* 2017, 187). Charles Heath (1806, unpaginated) relayed the story of an antiquarian who dug the churchyard and found several skeletons but was forced to abandon the excavation due to a great storm, the local inhabitants seeing the deluge as a sign of God's displeasure at disturbing the abbey's dead. Inevitably, there have been regular 'sightings' of hooded monk-like

figures, for instance, kneeling as in prayer around the abbey, and walking into the nearby Chepstow Park Woods (Palmer 1998, 84-5). Certain stretches of local roadway have reputations for phantom sightings. The old road from Tintern to Livox, the monastic Long Way described in the previous chapter, was reputed to be haunted by the apparition of a local girl murdered there in the eighteenth century (*ibid.*, 86; Thomas 1839, 18).



Figure 8.25: The Devil's Pulpit view of Tintern Abbey across the river, and its information board (Source: author).

Diabolical legend surrounds the viewpoint of the Devil's Pulpit, a prominent pillar of limestone high above the eastern bank of the Wye with a dramatic reveal of Tintern across the river far below. The story here is that the 'pulpit' was used by the devil to tempt the abbey monks away from their sanctuary and life of virtue to join him

(Mason 1987, 78-9; Wye Valley AONB, undated) (Figure 8.25). Lying on the Offa's Dyke National Trail and a popular destination for walkers visiting the abbey (via the steep groove of the Abbey Road) this was long recommended as a fine place from which to view the abbey and its encircling landscape (Heath 1793, 56; Taylor 1861, 53).

8.3.2 Tintern and the Wye Valley, the Romantics and the birth of tourism



Figure 8.26: View of Tintern Abbey, 1794 by Edward Dayes (Source: © National Library of Wales).

The Wye Valley was a relatively unknown backwater until the district, and Tintern in particular, became a popular destination and artistic focus during the late-eighteenth century (Figure 8.26). The Wye was foregrounded in a nascent tourist industry catalysed by Enlightenment ideas of the 'cult of the picturesque' and the concept of 'sublime' landscape, the abbey gaining iconic status within Romantic art and literature (Hardyment 2012, 74; Lancaster 2008, 23; Rowley 2001, 191). As the 'Grand Tour' around Europe's far-famed sights became difficult due to war with France, interest amongst the travelling classes was shifting to natural and historical sites around Britain.

As recounted in Section 8.2.1, conscious restoration commenced with the commercially-minded Duke of Beaufort's efforts to tidy-up and enhance the site in the mid-eighteenth century; valued now, perhaps for the first time since the monks left, for both its aesthetic qualities and economic worth (Newman 2000, 347). The previously overlooked and decrepit abbey became 'the jewel and highlight of the tour' through the Wye, with early visitors most commonly arriving by boat from Monmouth or Ross-on-Wye before the area was opened-up further by improved roads and the coming of the railway (Robinson 2011, 286). In M.R. James' (1926, 106) mind, 'the ideal of a monastic ruin', the abbey's substantial ivy-clad ruins amidst dramatic scenery of steep and dank-wooded slopes rising to 'everlasting hills' was the quintessential historic monument (Mee 1951, 154) (Figure 8.27). Such superlatives abounded across time: 'a state of perfection, equaled by no other desolated pile' (Manby 1802, 255); in an 'almost perfect combination of sylvan and riverine landscape' (Foord 1925, 120-1); 'Tintern now stands unsurpassed among the many beautiful ruins of this ancient land ... a perfect ruin in a perfect setting linking "the landscape with the quiet of the sky"' (Mee 1951, 154).



Figure 8.27: Tintern Abbey in its celebrated Wye Valley setting, looking north-west from Shorn Cliff (Source: author).

Tastes in landscape amongst landowners were also changing, away from a highly formalised French-nobility inspired style to an appreciation of naturalistic scenery

adorned with ancient monuments (or new approximations of): the era of Capability Brown (Kennedy 2002, 56). Thomas Whately's 1770 *Observations on Modern Gardening* featured Tintern as an example of the value of ruins and how to enhance their aesthetic appearance (Heath 1793, 130). Influenced by Whately, painter and writer William Gilpin produced his illustrated *Observations on the River Wye, de rigueur* for all travellers of taste by the end of the century and instrumental in promoting Tintern and its landscape setting (*ibid.* 35; Moore 2007, 190-1). Arriving at Tintern by river from Monmouth, Gilpin (2005, 40-3) deluged extensive commentary of the 'noble ruin' and its landscape setting 'hid in the sequestered vale', the abbey 'beautifully screened on all sides by woody hills'. In an oft-quoted passage, the author critiqued the form of the abbey church from the river approach, noting that it was 'ill-shaped' and could benefit from 'a mallet judiciously used (but who durst use it?)' and expressing disappointment that the winding valley did not afford a classical distant prospect (Pavard 2016, 34). Commenting on the ruins close-up, he wrote approvingly of the ivy and mosses that had colonised the walls providing 'the richest finishing to a ruin', though contrasted the cleared and turfed church with the surrounding scenery 'still left in all its wild and native rudeness.'

A Gilpin-esque description of an approach and reaction to the abbey comes in a county history produced by David Williams in 1796:

'Descending the steep side of the vale towards Tintern, the woods are thickened and obscured; the coppices, growing at random, rudely arch the winding paths worn in the stormy months by rapid torrents; and the imagination quivers, as the shadows deepen, and it seems to approach impenetrableness. The ruin is in a profound, narrow, and woody valley, on the banks of the Wye; the perspective of it uncommonly beautiful ... everything impressing the mind with the idea of decay; but offering shattered memorials of former grandeur' (quoted in Moore 2007, 200).

Monmouth publisher and topographer Charles Heath was also instrumental in bringing the district to a wider audience, issuing popular multi-edition guidebooks from 1791 (Robinson 2006, 286). Like Gilpin, Heath (1793, iv-v) was drawn to the abbey by 'the peculiarity of its setting' rather than any historical renown. The perennial problem of balance between naturalistic ruination and preservation that

Gilpin hinted at is apparent in Heath's (1793, 10) criticism of the orderly piles of fallen masonry and trim turf 'which gives the building more of the air of an artificial ruin in a garden, than that of an ancient decayed abbey', reflecting tension in the aesthetic fashion of the time. An advocate of the river as the most pleasing approach, Heath (1806, unpaginated) advised that a stiff climb up the Monk's Path gained the best view of the abbey from the promontory above the ferry point. River tours had commenced as early as the 1740s and by the 1800s had become more luxurious, in common with local accommodation (Matheson undated). Mr Gethen (a name already encountered), the landlord of the refurbished Beaufort Arms, held the west door key and was employed as a guide, charging visitors for tours of the site and picnic lunches in the ruins (Courtney and Gray 1991, 152) (Figure 8.28).



Figure 8.28: Interior of Tintern Abbey, Monmouthshire by Louis Haghe, circa 1840, showing visitors to the site (Source: © National Library of Wales).



Figure 8.29: The 365 Steps leading up Wyndcliff to the Eagle's Earie viewpoint (Source: author).

Another stop on the Wye Valley tour described by Gilpin, Heath and others was the landscaped park and woods of Piercefield Park, the stately residence immediately south of the Tintern Estate. Heath (1806, unpaginated) commended the extensive panorama towards the Severn from Wyndcliff, away from the 'narrow confines of the widest dell, and the secluded haunts of monastic solitude.' Gilpin (2005, 46) described the 'improvements' of the 'ingenious proprietor' at Piercefield approvingly and climbed the steep zig-zagged '365 Steps' to an 'eminence', probably the Eagle Earie, with views of the river in all directions, though even here his critical eye found the situation noble but not quite picturesque in his formal sense as the viewpoint was too high and did not offer up enough variety of character (Figure 8.29).

Coxe and Colt Hoare (1801, 352) followed the well-trodden path to Tintern on their historical tour of Monmouthshire but found that first appearances did not match expectations. The abbey 'half concealed by mean buildings', they had to pass 'a miserable row of cottages' forcing their way through a crowd of beggars (Figure 8.30). Colt Hoare grumbled that the setting 'backed by a hill covered with hanging wood and coppice' was spoiled 'by ragged cottages and orchards that half conceal the abbey ruins,' lamenting that the Duke of Beaufort's clearance efforts had not removed these carbuncles (Kennedy 2002, 58; quoted in Thompson 1983, 100-1). Their experience aptly demonstrates that the abbey's landscape setting was not unproblematic. Many commentators expressed disquiet that the surrounding poverty and squalor detracted from the impact of the wondrous ruins on first sight (Kennedy 2002, 57; Twamley 1839, 50). Even Gilpin's (2005, 43) gaze was distracted by the 'poverty and wretchedness of the inhabitants ... they occupy little huts, raised among the ruins of the monastery, and seem to have no employment but begging.' He was particularly struck by one old woman who guided visitors to 'the monks' library', a

'shattered cloister' which was her home (*ibid.*, 43-5; Heath 1793, 55). These appalled reports are a reminder that local people were still living in poor conditions within the remains of the conventual buildings, though visitors generally chose to ignore this contemporary poverty (Courtney and Gray 1991, 153; Mason 1987, 70).



Figure 8.30: Cottages, orchards and local residents crowd the abbey church in North Window, Tintern Abbey by Joseph Horner, nineteenth century (Source: © National Library of Wales).

As late as 1839, W.H. Thomas (20-2) was alarmed by the 'disgusting sight of a slaughter-house ... impiously grafted upon some sacred office of the ancient pile', with a pigsty and rude dwellings built from the stone of the abbey amidst the ruins. As the century progressed these obtrusions to aesthetic taste were declining, J.H. Clarke noting in 1869 that 'the approach to the venerable ruins is much more pleasing ... than it was some few years since, by the removal of severable miserable hovels and pigstyes' (quoted in Courtney and Gray 1991, 154). Also changing was a long-prevailing hostile opinion towards the medieval monastic community, influenced by the Reformation and the association of Catholicism with Britain's enemies in

Europe (Moore 2007, 200).⁶⁶ Reflecting on the ‘stillness and retirement’ of the scene, Robert Taylor (1861, 77) asked: ‘who is there that looks on this ruin that does not regret the wreck produced by the rapacity of the last Henry, under the pretence of religious zeal?’ As the era of institutional conservation emerged in the twentieth century there would also be laments that preservation and improvement had deprived Tintern, now cleared of ivy and post-medieval fabric, of its ‘wild picturesqueness’ (Cram 1905, 94; Foord 1925, 120-1).

A further uneasy juxtaposition lay at the heart of the Tintern landscape experience: rural sequestration and the considerable industrialisation outlined in the previous section. Again, it is worth reaching for Gilpin to gauge the prevailing aesthetic perception in the early era of Wye Valley tourism, and it is not what might be expected. Although it was noted that the ‘great iron-works’ nearby ‘introduce noise and bustle into these regions of tranquility’, Gilpin’s (2005, 27, 45) rubric of scenic beauty accommodated smoke rising from furnaces along the banks of the river (Figure 8.31). This nuanced response to manufacturing amidst the sacred and natural was shared by other early writers, for whom ‘industrial sublime’ was part of the tour’s attractions: the ‘black forges smoke, and noisy hammers beat’ of the foundries a pleasing contrast to the ‘old silences of the abbey’, heightening the feeling of melancholy (Matheson undated; Phillips 1951, 192). Charles Heath (1793, 28, 48) described the various ironworks matter-of-factly as part of the scene, quoting a poetic reference to the ‘smelting furnaces like Etna roar’; the noisy uproar and fire of the forges a new sublime element amidst the wildness (Millward and Robinson 1978, 41). Passing through in 1797, the Reverend Richard Warner, author of Gothic novel *Netley Abbey* and explorer of the relationship between ancient ruins and the natural landscape, was absorbed by the industrial spectacle, his sense of the place shaped by a combination of the ‘horrible employment’ of the furnaces and the ‘solemn majesty’ of the abbey (Kennedy 2002, 80; quoted in Matheson undated).

⁶⁶ Reflected in *Tintern Abbey: A Poem* by Frank Ribbans (1854, 6) which, anti-monastic and Catholic in tone, compared the abbey’s ruined state favorably with the ‘falsehood’ and ‘sins’ of its earlier days.



Figure 8.31: Smoke rising from the industrial settlement around the abbey in Tintern Abbey by David Cox, nineteenth century (Source: © National Library of Wales).

These commentaries may seem strange, naive or complacent to modern ears but need to be seen in the context of pre-Industrial Revolution scale and a contemporary faith in progress, in taming nature. Other regions were beginning to experience a more all-encompassing level of industrial development. On viewing the spectacle of the immense iron furnaces at Coalbrookdale in Shropshire in 1770, Arthur Young had mixed feelings. The landscape setting of ‘immense hills’ and ‘hanging woods’ was ‘too beautiful to be much in unison with that variety of horrors that has spread at the bottom’ and yet the noise and flames of the forges, furnaces and mills was ‘altogether horribly sublime’ (quoted in Hardyment 2012, 44). Philosopher Thomas Carlyle encountered the iron and coal workings of the nearby Black Country in 1824, ‘a half-frightful scene!’, the new source of ‘British power’, described by engineer James Nasmyth as ‘anything but picturesque. The earth seems to have been turned inside out ... amidst the flames as in a pandemonium’ (quoted in Jennings 2012, 165, 171). As the impact of industrial progress began to be seen through a more negative lens from the middle of the nineteenth century, the mills and forges around Tintern were beginning to see a decline, unable to compete with the economies of scale and greater connectivity of new manufacturing towns and cities. Rural

tranquility was returning to the area, visitors able to remark on the idyllic landscape with no factory or industry to spoil the scene (Cram 1905, 95).

Although rural poverty and industry were, sometimes uneasy, bedfellows beside the abbey, the wider monastic legacy in the landscape outwith the precinct rarely received mention other than unwitting and unremarked travel along the abbey's medieval routeways. W.H. Thomas (1839, 54) provides one, uncommon example, describing coming across the ruin of the monastic fish-house at Stoweir:

‘After passing through a succession of luxuriant meadows, you arrive at the humble and ivied ruin of a piscatory. The building is probably of ancient date, and was intended to supply the monastery during those numerous fasts, in which the good abbots were wont to exchange "the very best meat for the very best fish.’

Prints of painterly images, engravings and lithographs were the popular visual medium of the day. The first image of Tintern was a 1732 engraving by the Buck brothers, produced as new interest in ruins as historic relics was emerging (Robinson 2006, 5). The late-eighteenth century would be a golden age of topographical art, reaching a wider audience enraptured by historic buildings and landscapes (Moore 2007, 188). Wales was popular with artists due to its perceived wildness, a fitting alternative to European destinations denied to them by war and unrest (*ibid.*, 189). Cistercian sites delivered the ideal Gothic pile for such images, isolated and ivy-clad amidst woods and rivers, and Tintern was in the vanguard: ‘such an abbey!’ exclaimed the celebrated landscape painter Samuel Palmer (quoted in Pavard 2016, 35; Robinson 2006, 6). A 1926 catalogue of monastic prints in the National Library of Wales collection placed Tintern a long way ahead of other abbeys with 73 representations (Moore 2007, 198). Of the many images published during the high Romantic era up to the mid-nineteenth century, the river scene looking south towards the abbey was the most popular view, the artist stationed in the former abbey meadows above the Passage ferry (Figure 8.32).



Figure 8.32: Tintern Abbey by Henry Jutsum, nineteenth century (Source: © Newport Museum and Art Gallery).



Figure 8.33: Tintern Abbey, West Front by WMJ Turner, 1794 (Source: © British Museum).

Interior views of the abbey rather than wider landscape prospects have tended to become the most well-known, including watercolours by the prolific W.M.J. Turner who first visited in 1792 when just seventeen, filling a sketch book (Kennedy 2002, 59). One image displays the ‘tools of conservation – a rake, a barrow, a roller’, reflecting contemporary growth in analytical architectural and archaeological investigation (Moore 2007, 180; Williams 2001, 287) (Figure 8.33). The first accurate ground plan of Tintern was drawn by Joseph Potter in 1847, whilst a pioneering architectural study by Thomas Blashill set the baseline for modern understanding of the phasing of the main abbey buildings (Robinson 2006, 286).

Images of the abbey and its landscape often employed artistic license to exclude features that were not felt to be part of the aesthetic picture the artist wished to

portray (Courtney and Gray 1991, 154). John Byng opined in 1781 that the setting could be made more suitable as a subject for landscape painting if the surrounding untidy buildings and cottages were swept away, so that its setting could be the noble woods of the valley sides (Pavard 2016, 35). Artist John Warwick Smith observed that the scene was interrupted by a dwelling built too close to the abbey church and other everyday clutter such as a coracle and horse-drawn cart (Moore 2007, 193). An engraving by Henry Gastineau is unusual in foregrounding a local woman with a small child who appears to be begging on the wayside approach to the abbey (Figure 8.34).

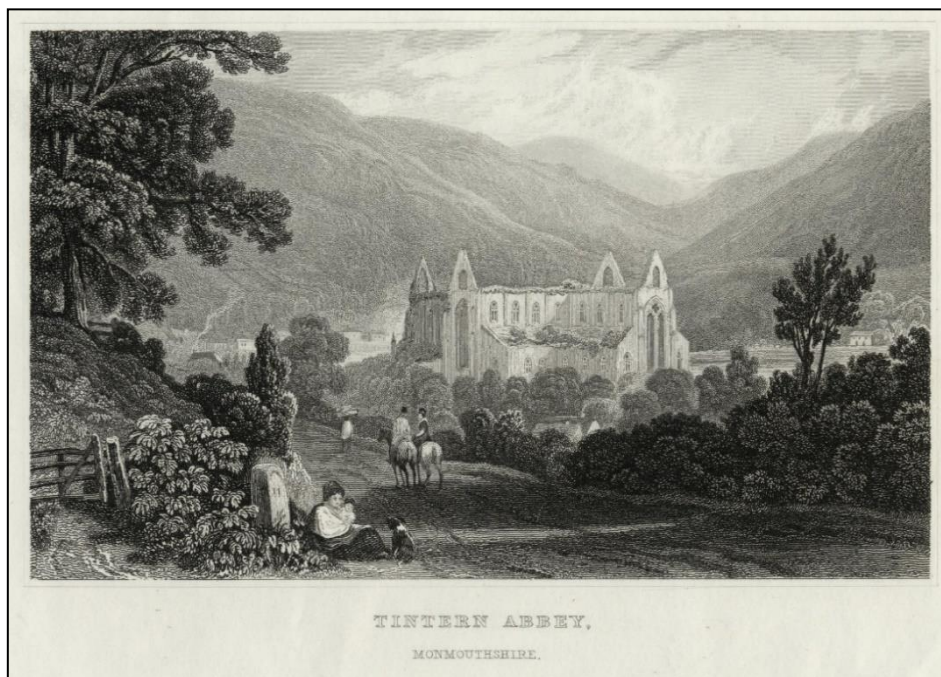


Figure 8.34: Tintern Abbey, Monmouthshire by Henry Gastineau, 1830 (Source: © National Library of Wales).

The techniques of landscape and architectural imagery practiced by Turner and others were becoming a form of ‘visual poetry’, an otherworldly style compared to William Wordsworth’s renowned poem, *Lines Written A Few Miles Above Tintern* (Kennedy 2002, 79, 83). Included in the widely-read and influential *Lyrical Ballads* collection, its verse has been subjected to much scholarly scrutiny and myriad interpretations. Celebrated as a key text in an evolving artistic understanding of landscape, the poem eulogises a remembered time and place, expressing philosophical self-reflection and a deep connection to the ‘wild green landscape’ (Andrews 1999, 8-10; Drabble 1979, 161; Ferber 2012, 61). Although in a tradition of

contemplative ‘abbey poems’, Tintern itself is only ever a liminal presence, its importance lying in the foregrounding of the landscape rather than the spirituality of the ruins themselves (Drabble 1979, 42; Kennedy 2002, 79). The geographical and psychological ‘emplacement’ of the poem has been much debated, the shortening of its cumbersome title to *Tintern Abbey* often leading to the erroneous perception that it was composed at or in view of the abbey, the base for Wordsworth’s touring of the area (Davies 2012, 20-1; Ferber 2012, 41, 45; Johnson 1993, 128). As Colin Matheson (undated) has opined, the poem is ‘less a tribute to the site than a literary tributary winding past the Abbey’s quiet stone walls.’ Written during a tour along the Wye in 1789 with his sister Dorothy, it paints a vivid picture of the surrounding countryside and topography (‘steep woods and lofty cliffs’, ‘these hedge-rows, hardly hedge-rows, little lines of sportive wood run wild’, ‘plots of cottage-ground, these orchard-tufts’, ‘this green pastoral landscape’) rather than the ruins themselves (Coleridge and Wordsworth 1924, 202-210; Knight 1999, 60).

As with Gilpin (who’s guidebook he was said to carry), Wordsworth’s emphasis on his reaction to and perception of the landscape included some of the less rustic elements of the local scene including charcoal burning, ironworks and the river trade (Johnson 1993, 126-7). Sometimes viewed as a political work, the subliminal theme of the ruined abbey has been contextualised in terms of Wordsworth’s disillusionment with the aftermath of the French Revolution and comparisons between the Reformation and the Industrial Revolution; the juxtapose of the ruins with the local inhabitants’ poverty (‘vagrant dwellers in the houseless woods’), has also been interpreted as articulating the author’s fears about social and political change (Ferber 2012, 59-60; Haas 2016, 83). Others have argued that the imagery in Wordsworth’s poem, in fact, occluded the harsh realities of life that he would have encountered around the abbey (Watt *et al* 2017, 180).

The riverine and walking routes that the Wordsworths followed roamed not only the monastic ground of the abbey’s estates but also the medieval ways discussed in this case study. Picking up on the poem’s theme of flow, Damian Davies (2012, 21-8) has highlighted its ‘borderland coordinates’, viewing it as ‘a classic text of Anglo-Welsh psychogeography’, examining the interface between geography and the mind. Specifically, the author perceives the poem as influenced by its tidal riverine location,

both literally and figuratively; providing a ‘hydrographic reading’ of its spatial ‘flow’ within which the river journey acts as a conduit revealing changing vistas and topographical complexities along the way (*ibid.*, 26-8). A musical motif or soundscape has also been identified in the poem’s aural tropes (‘still, sad music’ and references to the sound of the river, quiet of the sky *etc.*), paralleling this with the history of the abbey’s music and psalmody (Haas 2016, 82-5). The poem would inspire communal song of a different order in the form of Tintern Abbey, a short-lived 1960s psychedelic rock band.

Poets seemed to have been particularly drawn to Tintern’s atmospheric setting. Thomas Gray travelled through in 1770 and, though he left no verse, inspired many subsequent poetic sojourns, recommending the view from the meadow ‘beyond the Abbey Orchard’ (probably the Abbey Meadows south of the precinct) (quoted in Matheson undated). A passage in Alfred Lord Tennyson’s *In Memoriam* (1849) was also inspired by a stay at Tintern (Thomas 1980, 248). Many other works by less celebrated poets appeared during the Romantic era.⁶⁷ Often over-wordy and of their time, elegiac in tone and full of historical and Classical allusions, they nevertheless represent a popular response to the abbey and its surroundings. *Tintern Abbey or the Beauties of Piercefield: A poem* by Edward Collins (1825, 54) describes in long-form detail a walk:

‘Through Piercefield’s lovely bowers,
O’er Windcliff’s rugged rocks,
In Tintern’s beauteous vale,
Range through monastic gloom,
And tell of other days.’

The view from Wyndcliff including the diverse colour of arable, pasture and wood, divided by the hawthorn hedges of Livox Farm, moving to the ‘fine and picturesque display’ of the ruins, thickly covered in foliage and the ‘thundering forge’, working day

⁶⁷ Examples include: Edward Jerningham’s *An Elegy Written Among the Ruins of an Abbey* (1765), *Moonlight* and *Poetical Description of Tintern Abbey* by the Reverend Duncomb Davis and Booker’s *Sonnet Composed on Leaving Tintern Abbey* (late-eighteenth century).

and night (*ibid.*, 109). Travel guides such as those produced by Charles Heath often included such verse, carried to be read within the ruins (Matheson undated).

More contemporary or challenging art and literature reflecting Tintern and its landscape is a little thin on the ground. Expressions of English radicalism filtered through landscape embodied by Wordsworth's poem tend to be outweighed by the association of Tintern and the Wye Valley with a nostalgic interpretation of picturesque nature (Haas 2016, 83). American poet Ronald Johnson (2015, 30-2) wrote an experimental long-form poem, *The Book of the Green Man*, on journeying around Britain in the early-1960s. Passing through the Wye Valley into 'Wild Wales' from Chepstow, the poem's lines ventured 'up Wyndcliffe, wooded with huge oaks ... then descended afoot' (probably down the Stony Way) to Tintern, the abbey 'a mass of moving foliage' revealing the 'hilly horizon' through its west window, before 'leaving the river, over the hill, to St. Briavels' (along the Monk's Path via Brockweir). In the visual arts, contemporary artist Alex McKay has taken the novel approach of recording images of Tintern through a Claude mirror, an optical instrument favoured by Gilpin (who had one mounted on his carriage) and Thomas Gray. Positioning the mechanism at vantage points esteemed by generations of artists and visitors such as the Devil's Pulpit, the images produced have been streamed online via a webcam, pairing Romantic-era mechanics with modern-day surveillance technology (Matheson undated) (Figure 8.35).



Figure 8.35: A View of Tintern Abbey and the Wye from the Devil's Pulpit by Alex McKay, 2007 (Source: www.lib.umich.edu/enchanting-ruin-tintern-Abbey-romantic-tourism-wales/introduction.html).

8.3.3 Modern-day perceptions of the landscape

An online survey was developed for this research project, publicised through social media and bodies including the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and Tintern Local History Society in April 2017. The results provide a snapshot of views on the monastery and how its landscape impact is perceived today. The full results of these exercises can be found at Appendix 10 and a summary of the main outcomes is provided overleaf (an example question and responses at Figure 8.36).

Tintern and its Wye Valley landscape was typically seen by respondents as a tranquil, atmospheric place, a combination of historic, natural and mystical beauty; its sense of place shaped by the abbey story, Romantic artists and poets and the, not always sympathetic, modern touristic imprint. 56% felt that the abbey had a major impact on the landscape today, a touristic and economic figurehead drawing visitors to the Wye Valley generally, with just over 30% identifying some impact. Both blending with and dominating its immediate surroundings physically and perceptually, the abbey's somewhat hidden location within the winding topography of

river, woods and valley was thought to reduce its wider landscape impact. 72% of respondents had a general awareness of the abbey community as the main medieval landowners in the district, with the majority agreeing that the abbey was a major agent of landscape change. The abbey was perceived to have been the principal hub of human activity; a profound spiritual and economic influence, controlling and transforming the cultural and natural landscape, particularly agriculturally through arable and sheep farming on the grange farms. Whilst the ruins are the most visible and tangible legacy, respondents identified a range of other topographical features shaping the landscape, including the grange farms, stone buildings around the abbey, roadways, mills, drainage systems and wharfs on the river, although much was seen as more difficult to interpret and sometimes superseded by later developments. Some picked out the meadows in the immediate vicinity of the precinct, others suggested that the abbey's agricultural landscape would have had a wider compass during the monastic epoch.

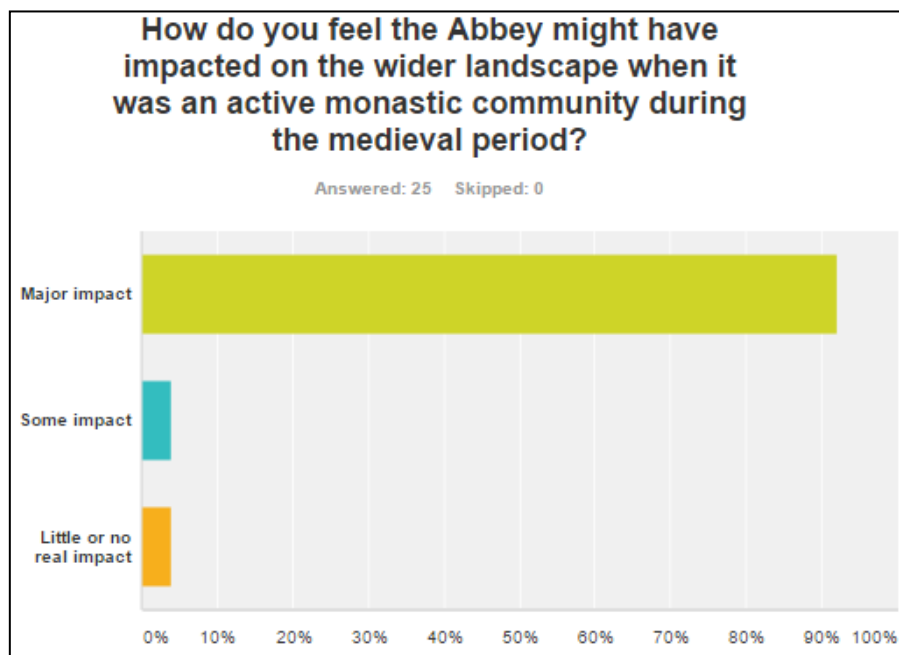


Figure 8.36: Example question and responses from the online landscape perception survey (Source: author/ www.surveymonkey.com).

Most respondents felt that a special configuration of elements coming together in the picturesque and sublime landscape centred on the abbey ruins produced a dramatic combination, resulting (along with river access) in the valley becoming a magnet for Romantic-era artists and poets and following generations: a portal into the past. This

legacy remaining today with a high proportion of artistic and creative residents in the area. Current interpretive information and promotion provided by heritage and touristic bodies such as Cadw and the Wye Valley AONB is perceived to be somewhat patchy in terms of quality and accessibility, tending to focus on the history and architecture of the abbey itself rather than its wider landscape context. There is scope for improvement but also a danger of over-interpretation.

An inspection of formal heritage responses to Tintern and the Wye Valley uncovers a general lack of explicit acknowledgement, narrative or promotion of the monastic landscape story or its legacy in the surrounding historic topography. The Wye Valley AONB Management Plan for 2015-20 identifies Tintern as one of the area's 'honey pots' under pressure due to visitor numbers, the abbey a designated feature with special qualities in the Wye Gorge Landscape Management Zone. The plan highlights the Romantic-era Wye Tour as an important element of the visitor experience, promotes new off-road cycle routes around Tintern and identifies the disused quarry at what was the monastic Livox farm as a site with potential to develop new wildlife habitats but is silent on exploiting the story of the medieval development of the abbey's monastic estate. Similarly, the recent HLF-funded *Overlooking the Wye* project promoted the history and heritage of the Wye Valley included themes of hidden industry, the Wye Tour, river connections and viewpoints but not the wider landscape impact of the abbey.

Established as a hugely popular heritage site, Tintern, like other surviving castles, country houses and monasteries in attractive rural settings, is now firmly in a 'post-Romantic phase' – a more clinical approach evident with undergrowth removed, foundations exposed and lawns mowed. Supported by the state which once destroyed it, the role of the abbey is now somewhat aligned with the originating aims of monasticism: 'a stimulus to philosophical reflection, aesthetic appreciation, architectural investigation, and even religious inspiration' (Moore 2007, 207). Some responses to the survey described above expressed unease with the volume of visitors and degree of touristic commercialism pivoted around the abbey. Writer Jim Perrin (2002, 3-6) amplified this feeling when disdainfully describing the modern day Tintern scene: referencing sixteenth century brass-making, he notes that 'Tintern's a brassy place still.' Observing various abbey-themed shops and studios selling their

wares, he asks ‘was it for this that ... the great artistic names of the Romantic Period ... came adventuring?’ (somewhat missing the point that they too often found the immediate surroundings to be problematic) (Figure 8.37). Perrin also raged against Cadw stewardship with its focus on ‘marketing’ and interpreted ‘historical re-creation’; the official heritage story too literal, edging out imagination.



Figure 8.37: The White Monk Tea Rooms, part of the touristic infrastructure around the abbey site (Source: author).

8.4 Conclusion

For several centuries after the suppression, the ruins of the once mighty Tintern Abbey folded into the surrounding rural and proto-industrial scene. Never restored or reconfigured to become a noble residence or destroyed to provide buildings materials, the main conventual structures submerged into the largely low-status dwellings, orchards and enclosures that spread across the precinct. Not until the mid-eighteenth century did the abbey shell become more valued for its aesthetic and historic qualities. By then, industrialisation had become the dominant motif of the surrounding district, an amplified echo of monastic exploitation of the area’s water power, mineral and woodland resources and riverine transport routes.

The juxtapose of cacophonous forge and furnace added to the sublime remote and arresting natural setting of the abbey ruins amidst Wordsworth’s ‘steep and lofty cliffs’, beside the ‘sylvan Wye’ (Robinson 2011, 3). In William Gilpin’s wake, a flood

of respectable excursionists transformed the forgotten backwater into a staple of nascent tourism and artistic representation, often choosing to decry or ignore the rude poverty that had become part of the post-medieval fabric of the remaining abbey buildings. Now tidied up and conserved, Tintern remains a popular destination, a heritage hub with attendant commerce and infrastructure that, for some, ignites the same opprobrium earlier visitors reserved for the cottages of the local rustics.

Eighteenth and nineteenth century visitors were loath to use the rutted and difficult byways converging on the abbey precinct when the alternatives of boat, turnpike coach and railway carriage offered themselves; ignorant of or indifferent to the monastic history of walking and riding these ways. Modern site-seers have the potential to be more attuned to this legacy as they follow the footpath trails around Tintern and its hinterland. That these routeways web across a countryside, the topographical character of which was cast by monastic estate management and grange farm operation is less a part of the area's contemporary heritage story. Remaining as a durable, complete entity within the portfolio of the Duke of Beaufort into the late-nineteenth century, the Tintern Estate and the other ancient abbey lands largely retained the inherited morphological template set by the Cistercians. Grange farms, now in the hands of aspiring yeoman farmers, continued to work the land units cleared, consolidated or improved by the abbey's *conversi* workforce. New enclosure configurations, the result of piecemeal agreement between farmers and land agents, overlaid the more ephemeral closes, fields and strips of the granges. Changing markets, estate policy, agricultural innovations or fashions would alter the land-use of fields or farms. Some of the farmland won from the woods returned to tree-cover, whilst long-standing wooded allotments are now managed for conservation or left to self-will rather than harvested for their resources. But the map of the modern historic landscape retains an essential underlying tableau of farmed blocks of fields upon the fertile soils of the high plateau, level terraces and riverside meadows set amongst the retained woodland of the steeper ground established in the centuries of monastic occupation.

Chapter 9

Case study 3: Llantarnam Abbey - the medieval monastic landscape

9.1 Introduction



Figure 9.1: The nineteenth century mansion of Llantarnam Abbey, now extended to house a nunnery, occupying the site of the medieval monastery (Source: author).

Unlike the acclaimed and frequented ruins of Llanthony Priory and Tintern Abbey, the Cistercian house of Llantarnam, in the lower Eastern Valley (otherwise Cwm Afon) of Monmouthshire between the Roman fortress of Isca at Caerleon and the new town of Cwmbrân, eludes our view. Physically, the fabric of the medieval abbey has long been supplanted by successor mansion houses taking the same name, the nineteenth century version of which – now a nunnery – remains cloistered within a hollow surrounded by low ridges, shrouded in woodland (Figure 9.1, and location map at Figure 9.2). The abbey's history is also sketchy, with contemporary documentary sources limited and fragmentary.

Although the monastery has not survived as a heritage asset, echoes of the monastic era have rung loud through its afterlife as the seat of local gentry

surrounded by the ‘extensive and diversified ... rich groves of Llantarnam Park’ occupying the old Cistercian precinct and abbot’s parkland (Coxe 1801, 118-9). Alongside the Afon Lwyd, the monastic setting has been much encroached upon over the last 50 years or so by the enveloping infrastructure of Cwmbrân new town and its suburbs. This study, therefore, seeks to unearth and understand the development of the monastic landscape within the context of this urban milieu and its rural hinterland.

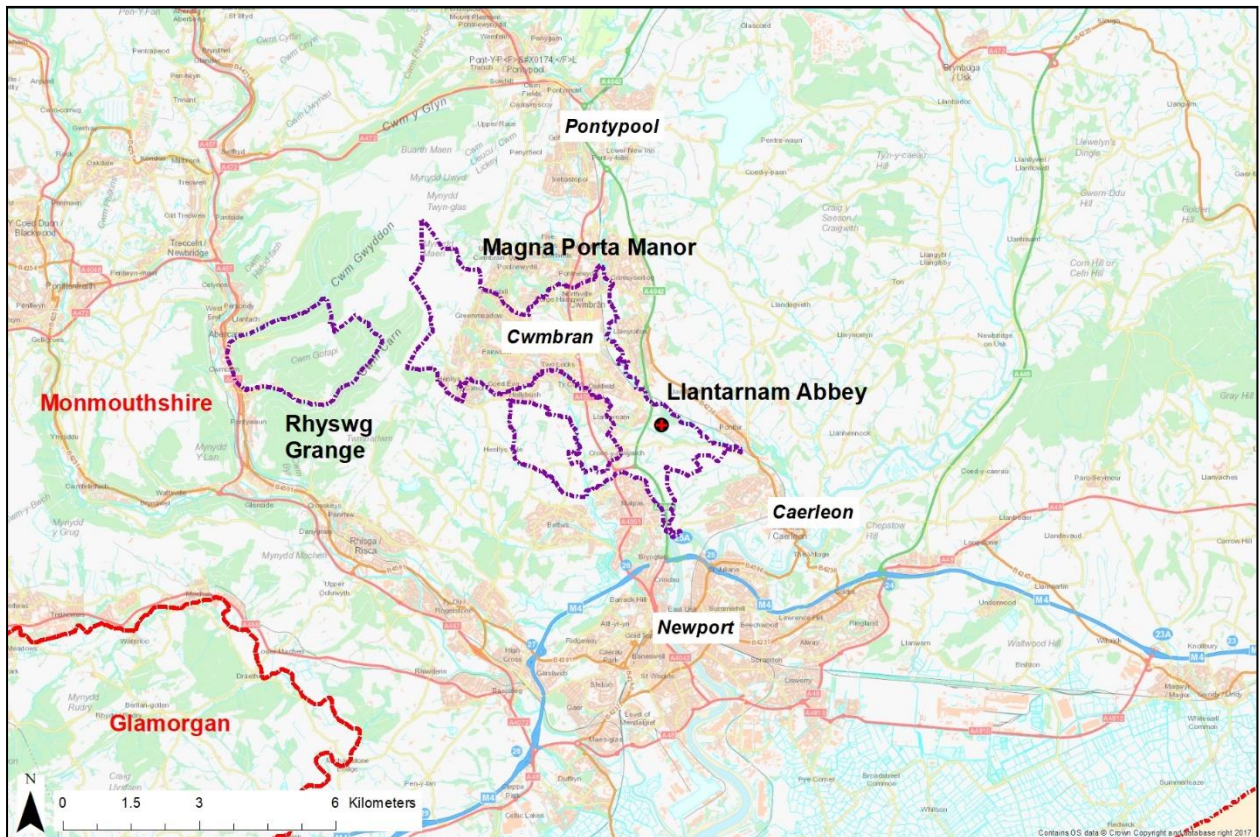


Figure 9.2: Location of Llantarnam Abbey and the case study area encompassing the Magna Porta and Rhyswg estates (Source: map drawn in ArcGIS® using Ordnance Survey Open Carto 2 and 1:5000 Historic Counties data layers, downloaded from Digimap® under licence, <http://digimap.edina.ac.uk/>), and Historic Counties Trust <http://county-borders.co.uk/>).

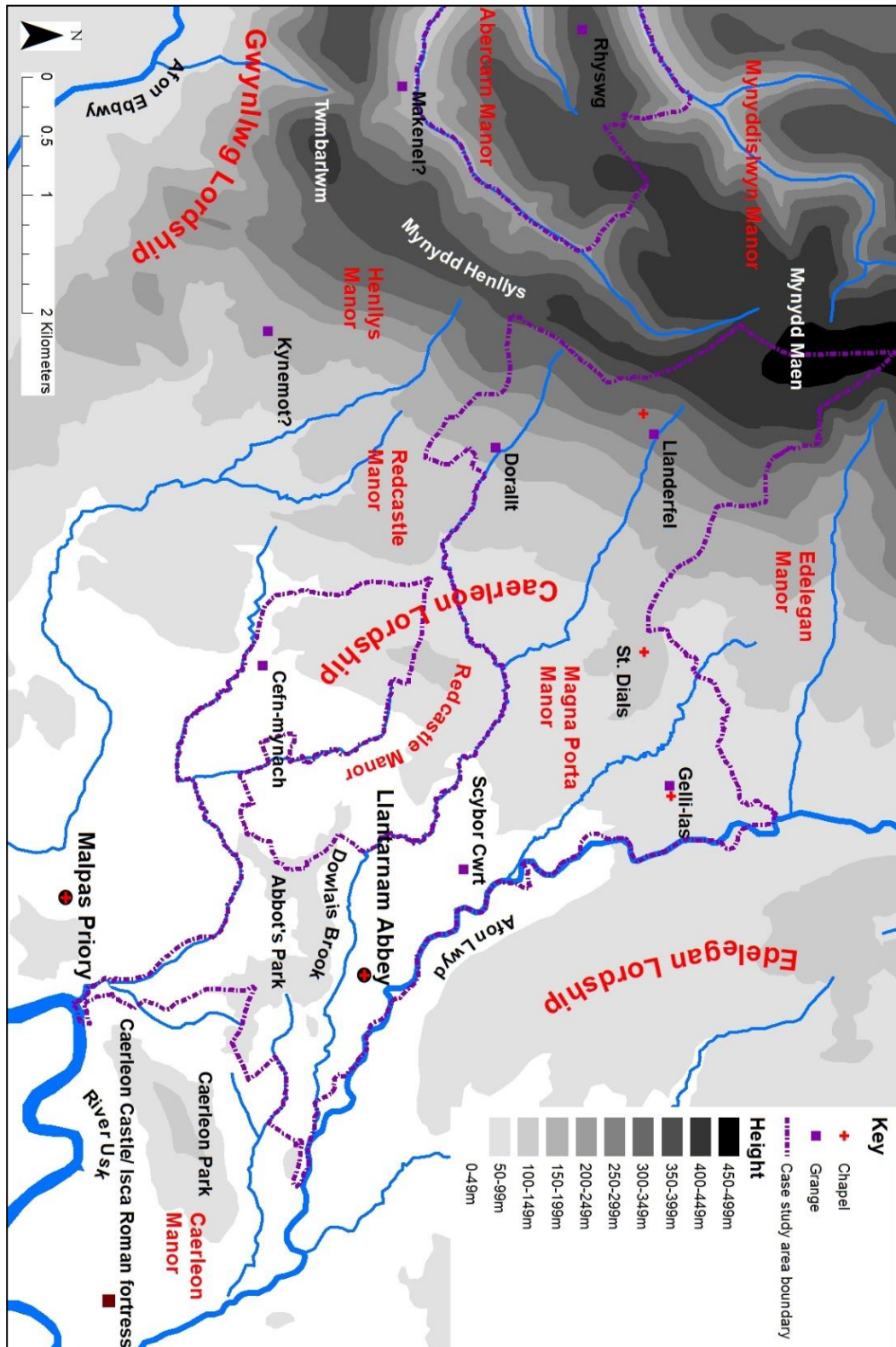


Figure 9.3: The Magna Porta and Rhyswgy estates in their medieval landscape context (Source: map drawn in ArcGIS® using Ordnance Survey 1:25,000 Scale Colour Raster data layer, downloaded from Digimap® under licence, <http://digimap.edina.ac.uk/>).

This case study concentrates on the estates immediately surrounding the abbey precinct in the home manor of Magna Porta, a diverse landscape in the shadow of Arthur Machen's (1922, 5) 'great mountain wall in the west', Mynydd Maen, adorned by several granges and not previously subjected to landscape-scale study (Figures 9.2 and 9.3). An area extended to include Rhyswg grange on a spur of the *mynydd* high above the Ebbw valley, an archetype of Llantarnam's numerous upland landholdings.

The analysis is supplemented by:

- GIS mapping of the Magna Porta and Rhyswg estates' medieval landscape context (Figure 9.3), a 'point in time' indicative map of the landscape *circa* 1300 (Figure 9.23) and other thematic GIS maps (mapping methodology and sources are detailed in Chapter 4 and Appendix 2);
- A gazetteer of medieval and monastic landscape features (Appendix 4);
- Detailed field notes of landscape walks undertaken in the case study area, fieldwork which helped to inform the analysis presented here (Appendix 6 and composite route map at Figure 9.4).

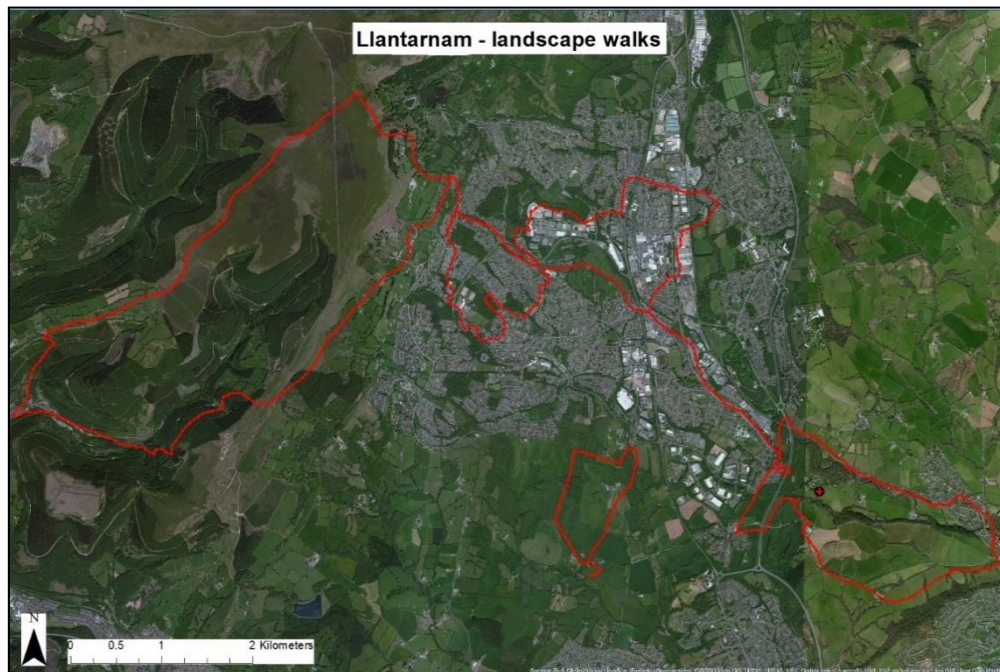


Figure 9.4: Composite map of the landscape walk routes in the Llantarnam Abbey case study (Source: map drawn in ArcGIS® using ArcGIS World Imagery data layer).

9.2 Monastic history of the abbey

Few facts are known about Llantarnam's foundation and shadowy early history. Uncertainty shrouds its initial location and even the name given to the monastery. A charter compiled at Strata Florida (Ceredigion) confirmed that the abbey was endowed in around 1179 as the first daughter house of that great mid-Wales monastery deep in the Welsh heartlands of Rhys ap Gruffudd, lord of Deheubarth (Robinson 2006, 248; Wakeman 1848, 342). The embrace of the Cistercians was part of Rhys' attempt to align his Welsh kingdom with mainstream Latin Europe (Davies 1993, 130). Llantarnam was one of a series of new foundations across Wales during a time of native aristocratic revival (Gray 1998, 20; Williams 2001, 3). Its patron, Hywel ap Iorwerth, lord of Caerleon, also supported the priories of Bassaleg and Goldcliff within his realm. Hywel gained consent to found the abbey from his father, Iorwerth, who shortly afterwards gifted him the fiefdom, recently restored to Welsh lordship by Henry II, and may have been influenced by his mother, daughter of a bishop of Llandaff, though consolidating Welsh-focused institutions in a region dominated by Anglo-Norman magnates was likely at the forefront of the decision (Cowley 1977, 47; Crouch 2008, 32; Gray 1998, 20). Surrounded by Anglo-Norman monasteries forming 'the ecclesiastical counterpart of the military conquest of the country', the abbey was unusual in that, like its mother house deep in *Pura Wallia*, it was a foundation supported by and supporting the native Welsh elite (Davies 1953, 62). It seems likely that if Tintern or another local house patronised by a Marcher lord had been the mother house then Llantarnam would have embarked on a more anglicised journey (Mahoney 1981, 11).

An abbot and 12 monks were dispatched by Strata Florida to found the new convent of St. Mary where a largely native brotherhood flourished, 'as committed in its Welshness as was Tintern in its Englishness' (Davies 2008, 235). Although the religious community was recorded as up to 60 by 1316, probably inflated by the inclusion of lay brethren as Llantarnam was never in the first rank of Welsh Cistercian houses (Burton and Ströber 2015, 126; Robinson 2006, 32). Of the known choir monks and *conversi* most had names of Welsh provenance, a rarity amongst the monastic communities of south-east Wales (Mahoney 1981, 96; Williams 1976, 82; 2001, 129). In common with the other case studies, the landscape into which

these White Monks would settle was not a place beyond cultivation and civilisation. The country in which the abbey would rise was previously recorded as paying tithes to Glastonbury Abbey, suggesting a degree of productivity (Cowley 1977, 71; Mahoney 1981, 92). Here was a seasoned countryside in which free Welsh communities lived in dispersed settlements (the traditional Welsh *tref* of the native population underpinned by collective rights), farming a largely pastoral economy.



Figure 9.5: The site of the abbey (now occupied by a nineteenth century house and modern extensions), largely concealed in a hollow between the Afon Lwyd and Dowlais Brook (Source: author).

Several different abbey names populate early references. The first recorded mention, a *circa* 1200 Hywel ap Iorwerth charter cited by Adam of Glastonbury enshrined an agreement between the new foundation ‘of Emsanternon ... where I have instituted the white monks’ and the Benedictine priory at Bassaleg (quoted in Bradney 1993a, 224; Williams 1967, 137). This is probably the root of the prevailing Llantarnam moniker, derived from a combination of *ynis* (‘island between watercourses’), *nant* (‘river’) and *ternon* (a corruption of *torfaen*, ‘breaker of stones’, the ancient naming of the Afon Lwyd bounding the abbey precinct),⁶⁸ *Nant* eventually

⁶⁸ A name now used, as Torfaen, for the administrative district in which Llantarnam and Cwmbrân are located. Joseph Bradney (1993a, 223) dismissed the suggestion that that the river ever had this name, an alternative theory is that it comes from Teyrnon, an early-medieval Gwent Iscoed lord of myth (Mahoney 1981, 20).

mutating into *llan* in colloquial rendering (Bradney 1993a, 223; Morgan 1887, 174). This was an apt toponym describing the abbey setting, conforming to the standard Cistercian model of a secluded site near the confluence of a river and tributary, with wooded, marshy land around ripe for improvement (Bond 2004, 87; Burton and Kerr 2011, 56) (Figure 9.5).

Other ancient references render the abbey as *Caerleon*, long-established as a ‘central place’ for the surrounding district, doubtless reflecting the bond with its patrons and proximity to the lordship *llys* (‘court’) there.⁶⁹ By the 1270s, the house was generally known as *Lantarnam* (*Lanterna* or other variations), though ‘*Caerleon* alias *Lantarnam*’ still sometimes occurred in later references (Burton and Ströber 2015, 125; Cowley 1977, 27). Other alternatives occasionally figure: *Vallium* (‘our lady of the valleys’), a title first registered in 1244 but later prohibited by the Cistercian General Chapter, descriptive of the abbey location with lands spread along neighbouring river valleys; and *Deuma* (in the *Strata Florida* charter and as late as 1449), which David Williams (1976, 77) read as the contemporary name of an ancient parish encompassing the abbey’s immediate locality, perhaps named from a local saint (Edwards 1976, 35; Mahoney 1981, 18-19; Wakeman 1848, 342). *Brut y Twysogian*, collected annals thought to have been authored at *Strata Florida*, offers a medley of these names simultaneously: ‘the society was established in the monastery of *Caerleon* upon *Usk*, which is called *Deuma*, in the *Glen of Teyrnnon*’ (Ward 1914, 390; Williams 1967, 131). This varied nomenclature (and paucity of sources) led early antiquarians, including William Dugdale (1846, 728), to mistakenly identify two separate monasteries: *Caerleon* and *Llantarnam* (Robinson 2006, 248).

The earliest inventory of *Llantarnam*’s portfolio of property, the *Taxatio Ecclesiastica* of 1291, listed ‘the old abbey’ as one, suggesting a change of site at some earlier date, though when and why this occurred is not known. A shadowy historical figure, Meiler – local hermit and adviser to lord Hywel – may have helped the monastic commune find a suitable site and mediated between the Cistercians and the local population when a move to a new station was required (Edwards 1976, 39). Several

⁶⁹ Gerald of Wales also identified *Caerleon* as the site of an early-medieval chapter of monks (Thorpe 1978, 115).

candidates for the first location have been advanced. An early theory, fired by the alternative naming of the abbey after the town and local lore, suggested an old house called The Priory in Caerleon itself (Dugdale *et al* 1846, 728; Kennerly 1987). There is no direct evidence to support this; such a base would be at odds with the Cistercian ethos of establishing their home ‘away from the concourse of man.’ The granges of Cefn-mynach (situated in the parish of Dewma in a sixteenth century document) and Llanderfel, housing an earlier monastic community with ‘spiritual jurisdiction’ over what would become Magna Porta according to local tradition, have also been advocated (Edwards 1976, 37-8; Mahoney 1981, 19; Phillips 1951, 102; Williams 1976, 78; 2008, 190) (Figure 9.6). Another reading of the ‘old abbey’ reference is that it simply acknowledged such a pre-Cistercian monastery, at either location (Edwards 1976, 38; Mahoney 1981, 17).



Figure 9.6: Pentre-bach farm, a postulated location for the initial abbey site (Source: author).

It can be conjectured that there was a transition from an initial placement (perhaps ill-judged or intentionally temporary at one of the above sites with long-standing religious associations) in the early years of the foundation and prior to 1200, by which the new abbey at Llantarnam seems to have been established. David Robinson (2006, 249) has argued that any such move to a new, more favourable location, may have been *circa* 1272 when the General Chapter directed the abbots of Dore and Tintern to visit the abbey and ‘order and dispose all things as they shall

see fit.’ That this would be a rare long internment at a temporary site after nearly 100 years and, therefore, likely the result of a significant rupture.

By the early-thirteenth century, Llantarnam was embroiled in various disputes with neighbouring Cistercian communities, including a particularly protracted conflict with Margam, defined in a *circa* 1203 agreement as supported by ‘the French and the English’ (in contrast to Llantarnam ‘from the Welsh’), over landholdings in the Glamorgan uplands, as outlined in more detail in Section 9.3 (Williams 1967, 137; 1976, 82; 2001, 3). Further land acquisitions and donations fed the abbey’s prosperity into the mid-1200s as Hywel’s son, Morgan, maintained active sponsorship (Mahoney 1981, 29). In 1268-9, the now regionally dominant de Clare family, overlords of much of south Wales, secured the Caerleon lordship and so became *de facto* benefactors of the abbey until Edward II granted Llantarnam to Hugh Dispenser in 1323 (Cowley 1977, 194). Formal, though less benign, patronage had now passed from the waning Welsh nobility to the ascending Anglo-Norman barons, although descendants of Morgan ap Hywel continued to maintain family links (Cowley 2005, 115).

The inherent volatility of the March now began to impinge on the abbey’s prosperity and stability, as it found itself uneasily positioned between opposing polities, both coveting monastic land and income. In 1315 Llantarnam tenants were forced to support a rebellion by Llywelyn Bren and the abbey to grant him land (*NA*, SC 8/119/5948; Williams 1976, 83). Two years later, the abbey was prey to Norman intrusion when Bartholomew de Badelesmere, keeper of the estates of Gilbert de Clare, forcibly took land from Llantarnam in a supposed exchange never reciprocated (Maxwell-Lyte 1893, 406). More generally, though undocumented, the Black Death and the slow breakdown of the manorial system in its aftermath would have added to the abbey’s challenges: a strife-ridden age of peasant and tenant revolt, one such recorded at Caerleon (Williams 1976, 107). During this time, a petition to the king claimed that ‘our abbey is so poor that it cannot there sustain except barely twenty monks where there wont to be, before the possessions were taken away, sixty’, probably reflecting decline in lay *conversi* numbers rather than ordained brethren (Maxwell-Lyte 1893, 406; *ibid.*, 83).

Papal confirmations and other sources witness attempts by late-fourteenth and early-fifteenth century abbots, in ‘the defence of the monastery’, to confirm and maintain the independence, privileges and very existence of the house as ‘an ecclesiastical republic’ in the face of sustained difficult conditions (Davies 1953, 62; McCormick 2010, 13; Williams 1967, 139; 2001, 172). Such efforts also sprang from the aftermath of a serious fire which devastated the fabric of the abbey and destroyed its collection of books and other valuables in 1398, leading to further financial problems: an event which may explain the paucity of sources for the initial phases of the abbey’s history (Mahoney 1981, vi).

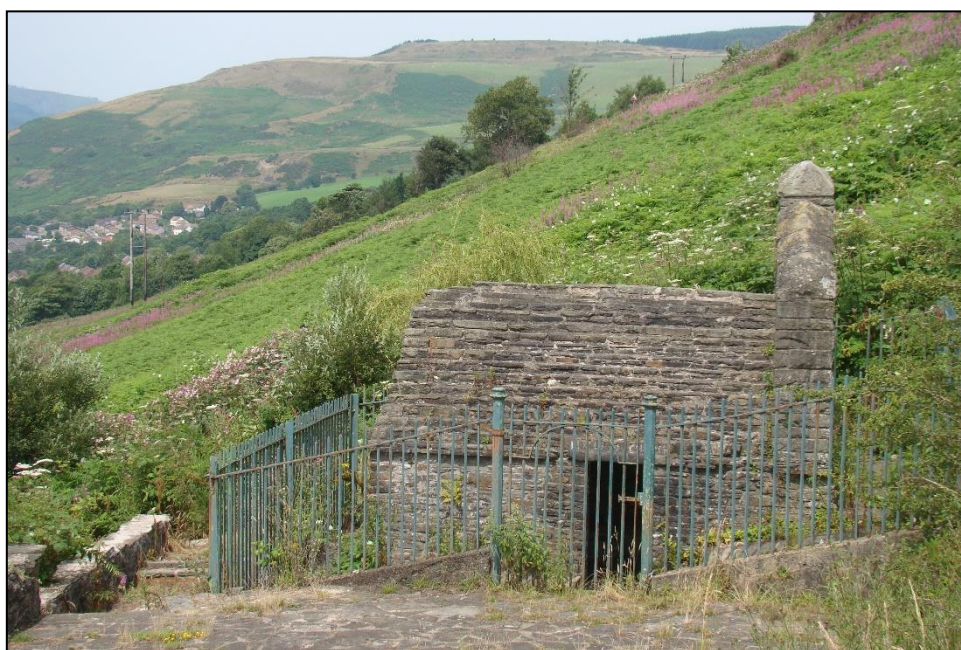


Figure 9.7: The chapel over the holy well of St. Mary’s at Penrhys (Source: author).

Following this catastrophe, the abbey petitioned for and received papal approval to seek indulgences from penitents ‘for the repair of the Cistercian monastery of St. Mary, Karleon, alias Lanternan’, after which the large numbers of pilgrims to the shrine and holy well that had – somewhat conveniently – manifested at the abbey’s Penrhys estate above the Rhondda valleys became an important source of income (Bond 2004, 233; Bliss and Twemlow 1904, 508; Gray 1997b, 18) (Figure 9.7). Abbot John ap Gruffudd (*circa* 1377-1400) is credited with overseeing the restoration of the abbey church following the fire, nothing known of the claustral ranges before this time, probably modelled on the mother church at Strata Florida (Davies 1953, 77; Robinson 2006, 102, 249). Other contemporary references speak of significant

contact with Rome and involvement in cases of dispute between other abbeys, indicated a degree of continuing prestige whatever the financial situation (Bliss and Twemlow 1904, 25, 99, 154; Mahoney 1981, 81).

Although Llantarnam had long lost the support of a native benefactor, the convent remained sympathetic to the Welsh cause due to its links with Strata Florida (Cowley 1977, 47). Spared from the ransacking by Owain Glyndŵr's forces campaigning through the region that Anglo-Norman foundations such as Llanthony and Tintern suffered in the early-fifteenth century rebellion, the corollary was risk of retribution from the authorities (Howells 2003, 17). A notable example of this political inclination was chronicled by Adam of Usk, declaring abbot John ap Hywel one of the most high-profile supporters (lone amongst Gwentian houses) of the rebels.⁷⁰ Abbot John died besieging the English-held Usk castle in 1405, eulogised as 'Savonarola of the Rising' (Burton and Ströber 2015, 126-7; Davies 1993, 201; Williams 2008, 199).

In its latter decades, the abbey experienced something of an 'Indian summer' under the stabilising leadership of abbot Morgan Blethyn (*circa* 1507-33), benefiting from an upturn in financial fortunes including several bequests funding new arches from the church into the cloister and other capital improvements (Williams 2001, 65; 2008, 200). In its last years, Llantarnam was perceived to be relatively wealthy, in part due to income received from pilgrimage. In 1512 Henry VIII demanded £66 as a contribution for war with Francis I, higher than the amount requested from other Welsh Cistercian houses (Mahoney 1981, 126). As suppression approached, however, the formal record of annual income recorded in the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* yielded a modest £71.3.2 (Caley and Hunter 1814, 365). The abbey was therefore closed in the first round of the Dissolution in February 1536 after a survey of several houses in the region, with just four monks and 17 servants in residence (Williams 1976, 87).

⁷⁰ Tradition has it that Glyndŵr held an *eisteddfod* at Penrhys, further indication of the support for the Welsh cause by the abbey (Dobbs 2002, 65; Ward 1914, 392).

9.3 An overview of Llantarnam's estates and holdings

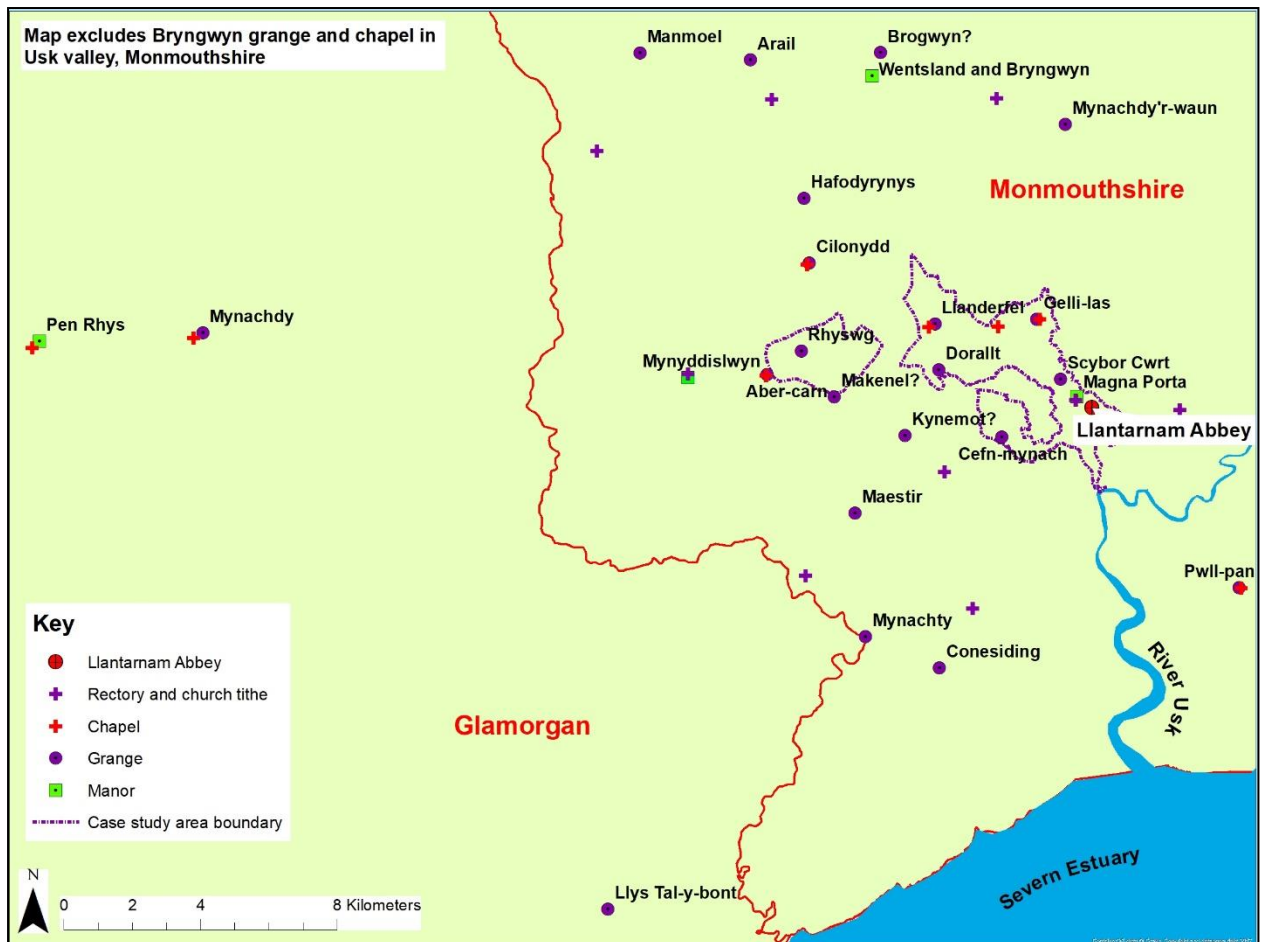


Figure 9.8: Distribution of Llantarnam Abbey estates and other holdings in South Wales (Source: map drawn in ArcGIS® using Ordnance Survey 1:25000 Scale Colour Raster and 1:5000 Historic Counties data layers, downloaded from Digimap® under licence, <http://digimap.edina.ac.uk/> and Historic Counties Trust <http://county-borders.co.uk/>).

A comprehensive gazetteer of the abbey's recorded possessions can be found at Appendix 4 and Figure 9.8 maps their distribution. Following the established Cistercian model, Llantarnam initially operated a grange system to farm its realm – particularly where agricultural production was being expanded – later evolving a more manorialised and indirect form of management (Gray 1999, 35). Many of the abbey's holdings have been placed, though their status is not always clear. David Williams (1990, 46-8) identified 13 granges though this is probably an underestimate, over 20 landholdings have either been positively identified as *grangia* or may have operated as such at some stage. This number includes known portions of land which may have been sub-units managed from another station or proto-manors, perhaps

originating as lay-brother farms before morphing into tenanted units when first recorded.



Figure 9.9: The core lands of Magna Porta manor (now partly overlain by Cwmbrân new town), looking eastwards from near the manor boundary high on Mynydd Maen (Source: author).

As the previous section made clear, no written evidence identifying the landed property initially bestowed on the abbey, or indeed the chronology and source of many of the possessions it later secured, survives. Even where sources exist, such as the chronicling of estates in Blaenau Morgannwg (upper Glamorgan) subject of dispute and then agreement with Margam Abbey, it is often unclear whether endowed land was already farmed or pioneer terrain (Donkin 1978, 108). Many of the landholdings later recited were immediately to the north and west of the abbey within the Caerleon lordship, an already established though somewhat marginal farmed landscape, the core of which would become the Magna Porta manor and its component granges (Figure 9.9). It would seem reasonable to conclude that this territory surrounding the abbey, along with the marsh-side *grangia* of Pwl-pan in the south of the lordship, formed the greater part of the initial endowment from Hywel ap Iorwerth, or in some cases later additional gifts from his family within the first 100 years or so of the foundation (Bradney 1993a, 224). Unlike much lower-lying country along the Severn shore and the highly-prized lower Usk and Wye valleys in the Norman sphere of influence worked as manors by the early-twelfth century, this hill-

bound district on the western front of Anglo-Norman expansion – in common with the mountain country beyond – was not yet managed on a manorial basis (Davies 1953, 89).

Further endowments from Hywel are attested by his *circa* 1200 charter granting the abbey the tithe-free monastic holdings of Bassaleg, a cell of Glastonbury, in the lower Ebbw valley west of Newport, with rights of timber and pasture in the woods of Rumney Moor (Burton and Stôber 2015, 52). The western lands later the subject of the Margam dispute were in the hands of the powerful Welsh lord Rhys of Deheubarth and the marriage of Hywel's grand-daughter to Rhys' son, heir to the eastern tracts of his kingdom, probably led to the gifting of some of this territory to the abbey (Cowley 1977, 24; Gray 1998, 23). Overall, as Madeleine Gray's (1997a, 172) research into the politics of the abbey's endowments has indicated, Hywel's policy would seem to have been to create a Welsh-controlled monastic bulwark. A strategy of confrontation, counterpointing remaining Benedictine lands and churches controlled by Glastonbury, used as 'a stepping stone into the hills' by the Norman lord Robert de la Hay, and a buffer against further Anglo-Norman expansion into the valleys of Glamorgan (Gray 1998, 20).

The long-running disagreement with Margam was a strategic dispute over boundaries and rights of pasture in the hill country of Blaenau Morgannwg, where Llantarnam had been granted the dominions of the failed monastery of Pendar (possibly sited at the abbey's Mynachdy or Penrhys grange), a dependent of Margam (Cowley 2005, 117; Gray 1997b, 16; 2011, 249; Williams 1976, 125). When agreement was struck, Llantarnam retained rights over the high pasture between the Rhondda Fawr and Taff valleys, worked from the distant upland grange at Penrhys and a sheep-station at Mynachdy, Margam having claim over the *mynydd* west of Rhondda Fawr (Cowley 1977, 24, 27; Ward 1914, 390-1; Williams 1976, 80-2) (Figure 9.10).



Figure 9.10: The valley of the Rhondda Fawr dividing Llantarnam (to the right) and Margam (left) territory, looking north-west from Penrhys (Source: author).

A fuller reckoning of the abbey's domain came with the *Taxatio Ecclesiastica* survey. The list of holdings reflected the portfolio of granges and other land portions that the abbey had amassed during its foundational phase, many including *caracute* or ploughland valuations indicating the importance of arable production across the estate (Ayscough and Caley 1802, 281). No mention was yet made of Magna Porta, but the granges of Court (Scybor Cwrt) and 'Apud veterem Abbathiam' ('site of old abbey', probably Cefn-mynach or Llanderfel) farming the verdant lowlands around the abbey are included. Highest valued was the six *caracutes* of 'Grange de Pelren' (Pwl-pan), the 'bread basket' of the monastic economy occupying well-drained reclaimed 'moor' on the edge of the Caldicot Levels in the parish of Christchurch at some distance south of the abbey (Bond 2004, 83; Williams 2001, 239). A series of upland granges had been established across the Mynydd Maen *massif* to the north-west at Torald (Dorallt), Russok (Rhyswg), Cadlonet (Cilonydd), likely operated as sheep *bercaries*. To the south-west, in the lower Ebbw and Rhymney valleys, the estates of Conesiding (Cwm-sidan), Kammoys (Mynachty), Mayster (Maestir) and Menestestlyn (Mynyddislewyn) incorporated the monastic lands of Bassaleg gifted to the abbey by Hywel. Lestalelond (Llys Tal-y-bont) was a grange on the Glamorgan coastal plain and another outlier at Brangwayn (Bryngwyn), later linked with lands in the more elevated Wentsland, provided arable farming on the rich Usk plain; perhaps

further examples of land grants to retain Welsh control and influence in disputed terrain (Gray 1998, 23). The hill-country of the nascent Wentsland manor is probably represented in the survey by the highly valued lease-land and tenement of 'Wenmy'. An indication, along with other demised properties such as Llys Tal-y-bont, that the abbey economy was already beginning to transition towards a manorial model (Williams 1967, 141)

The overall picture is of an institution, whilst outside the top tier of landed wealth amongst south Walean Cistercian houses based on a modest overall income, possessed of significant estates and controlling a wide network of specialist granges, supplemented by growing *rentier* income. Dominion had been established over a varied geography, the abbey's heartlands spreading out along the western flood plain of the Afon Lwyd, granges carved out of the elevated Mynydd Maen and along the Ebbw and Sirhowy valleys with further-flung properties consolidated around grange foci in both mountain and river plain settings. The farmed estate included considerable arable assets of over 1700 hectares (Burton and Stôber 2015, 126; Cowley 1977, 272). Balancing the lowland granaries, much of the abbey's lands were in hill country, a pastoral landscape that would continue to be pivotal to its sheep and cattle economy (Williams 1976, 88; 2001, 184). The Cistercians were at the forefront of a great expansion of agriculture into the highlands during the high Middle Ages and Llantarnam was amongst those houses with particularly large mountain holdings (Leighton and Silvester 2033, 33-4). Many of its granges, such as Cilonydd and Dorallt, were located at the interface of valley and upland, well-placed to extend activity to higher altitudes and exploit extensive tracts of mountainside pasture for large sheep flocks with cattle herds grazing the lush grasslands of the valleys (Figure 9.11). A 1208 papal bull exempted Llantarnam from tithes on lands which the monks had brought into production, showing that they were still actively expanding the limits of cultivation – and defending themselves from historic claims for tithe payment – at this point (Mahoney 1981, 109; Williams 1976, 90). Direct documentary evidence of assarting and enclosing new farm land is though sparse. A snippet of information glimpses the charging of a brother Jewaf with 'digging about' leased pasture *circa* 1200, whilst an exclusion from upland pasture on Hirwaun Wrgan common granted to Margam was breached when the abbey was found to

have hedged, ditched, and enclosed there, with arbitration in 1253 enabling Llantarnam to retain some of their encroachments (*ibid.*, 82, 90).



Figure 9.11: The upland hill pasture and woodland characteristic of much of the abbey's estate, looking north-west towards Ciloyndd from Rhyswg grange (Source: author).

Taxatio provides some testimony to the pastoral activity of the abbey granges with 600 sheep recorded, as well as cows, goats and horses (*ibid.*, 91). This figure, perhaps depleted by a local sheep plague in 1281, demonstrates a relatively moderate level of sheep-rearing in comparison to the major regional monastic players (Mahoney 1981, 97). Figures for wool production in the 'Pegolotti' list for 1274-96, although still modest, would suggest a flock of perhaps 3000 (Cowley 1977, 88; *ibid.*, 98). Cattle were as important to Llantarnam as sheep: although numbers were not given in 1291, their value was slightly higher, reflecting a traditional Welsh upland husbandry still practiced by a modest Cistercian economy in contrast to its great sheep-rearing neighbours (Donkin 1978, 79-81). The survival of *hafod* place-names in the abbey's estate, such as Hafod Arael in the Ebbw valley, hint at the continuation of traditional transhumance practice into the monastic era (Mahoney 1981, 98). The abbey economies of Margam and Neath, with similar mountain resources, provide evidence of such cattle transhumance, *vaccaries* established on high summer pasture in tandem with an upland sheep farming infrastructure (Locock 2006, 48).

In the early-fourteenth century pleas by Llantarnam to the king to legislate for the return of property indicate that the abbey's status as a major landowner had left it vulnerable to hostile land grabs. Since the latter part of the previous century Earl Gilbert de Clare, notionally patron of Llantarnam as lord of Caerleon, had taken over much territory in the area, including abbey properties (Williams 2001, 38). An entry in *Taxatio* for Kynemot, speculated to occupy the slopes of Mynydd Henllys, translates as 'wild animals have devoured all the land', probably a veiled reference to the actions of de Clare's men (Osborne 2008, 4). As the de Clare estates began to be broken up, the abbey petitioned the king in 1317 that Gilbert 'had received a great part of their lands from them by way of exchange' and 'had promised to grant to them lands elsewhere to the full value of the lands so received from them, but they had not done so' (Maxwell-Lyte 1893, 406). The earl was subsequently ordered to pay the abbey 10 marks per year as recompense 'out of the issues of the aforesaid lands' rather than return them (Maxwell-Lyte 1893, 406; Williams 2001, 38). It may be that Penrhys and other Glamorgan mountain territory absent from the 1291 inventory formed part of this forced exchange, although this grange would reappear as an important abbey holding in later records (Cowley 2005, 119). In the same year, the abbey was also seeking 'the return of land which they had been forced through fear to grant to Llewelyn Bren', in the aftermath of a 1314-16 rebellion during which 'the abbey's tenants in the mountains were put to ransom' (NA, SC 8/119/5948). The request was endorsed but seemingly this land was similarly never returned (Cowley 1977, 252). A busy year of petitioning also saw entreaty concerning the king's own 'foresters of Macheyn' who had cut down and sold timber from the woods of 'Glyn Ebvith' (Ebbw) and of 'Kelly Ezurnoun' (Sirhowy) in the possession of Llantarnam since 'the first foundation of the abbey' (Bradney 1993a, 225).

Llantarnam's estate management was likely to have been influenced by the general flows washing through the Cistercian *grangia* system as the fourteenth century progressed, particularly a decline in directly-managed farming due to economic depression, political uncertainty, climatic changes and the plague (Gray 1999, 35-6; Platt 1969, 94). Cistercian abbeys were rationalising and consolidating their estates, retaining only the most-productive home granges in hand to meet domestic needs (Mahoney 1981, 26). By the final monastic decades, many abbey properties were farmed out to tenants within fully or quasi-manorial units, copyhold tenancy an

important element of manor governance as demonstrated by the Dissolution-era survey data examined below (Gray 1990, 178; 1997a, 173; Williams 2001, 280). For instance, the mills and granges of Aber-carn and Maestir were leased out for 99 years between the 1480s and 1520s, favourable arrangements to attract hard-to-find tenants for these upland steadings; whilst in the Mynyddislwyn manor, a number of copyholders held tenements with ‘house and close’ and mills ‘with watercourses and fisheries’ granted by ‘the religious men the late abbot and convent of Llantarnam’ for the same term from the early-sixteenth century (quoted in Gray 1997a, 174; *NLW*, MS 17008D) (Figure 9.12). This manorialised approach required more legalistic lordship to effectively manage the estate. By 1398, the abbot was seeking to shore up Llantarnam’s authority over its expanded lease-lands through the renewal of letters of 1257 from Pope Alexander IV to Cistercian abbots (now ‘beginning to be consumed with age’) exempting their ‘farmers and tenants’ from bishopric jurisdiction (Bliss and Twemlow 1904, 164). Later, in 1476, abbot John ‘of the old abbey’ made claim to hold court baron within his lordship and uphold powers of fine and rent collection for his bailiff (Williams 1976, 85).



Figure 9.12: Approximate site of the farmed-out grange and mill of Maestir on the banks of the river Ebbw, looking north (Source: author).

As suppression dawned, the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* survey gave Llantarnam's possessions a middling valuation for a Welsh Cistercian house (Caley and Hunter 1814, 365) (Figure 9.13). Abbey lands in Aber-carn, Magna Porta (with Pwl-pan), Mynyddislwyn, Penrhys, and Wentsland and Bryngwyn were fully manorialised and returning rents, with Aber-carn valued at over three times the other estates. Within this *rentier* portfolio 'Grangia de Pulpen' (still the most productive single landed asset) and 'Grangia de Skyborcourt' remained held in *demesne*. Other farms were also still in hand at Cilonydd, Llys Tal-y-bont and Mynachdy-tir-waun. Previously directly-managed granges, though, such as Bryngwyn, Gelli-las and Maestir were now demised to tenant farmers (and probably had long been so as discussed above). Several grange farms mentioned in the 1291 survey, including Cwm-sidan, Mynachty and Rhyswg, are no longer recorded, by now sold off, exchanged or integrated into the abbey's tenanted manorial estate – their former status no longer worthy of note or remembered.

Coenobium de Lanternam, in agro Monemutensi.	
NUM. I.	
<i>Valor Ecclesiasticus, 26 Hen. VIII.</i>	
LANTERNAM.	
Valor omnium reddituum terrarum et possessionum	79l. 3s. 2d.
Deductiones annuales	8l. 0s. 0d.
Et sic remanet de claro recipiend' usui dicti monaster' Lanternen' annuatim	71l. 3s. 2d.
NUM. II.	
COMPUT' MINISTROKUM DOMINI REGIS temp. HEN. VIII.	
[Abstract of Roll, 26 Hen. VIII. Augmentation Office.]	
NUPER MONASTERIUM DE LANTERNAM INFRA EPŪT' LLANDAFF.	
Lanternam—Redd' terr' dominical'	£. s. d. 5 6 8
S. Michael, &c.—Maner, &c.	£. s. d. 25 19 0
Wentesland et Bryngwyn—Reddit' tenen' per virg' et per indentur'	18 11 10 ob.
Menahustely infra dominium de Aber-carne—Reddit' diversorum tenementorum, &c.	35 16 11 ob.
Parke Pyll—Reddit' un' mesuag'	0 10 0
Penryse infra dominium de Myskyn—Maner, &c.	14 15 0
Penryse—Le Taverne House	2 0 0
Pulpen infra dominium de Karlyon—Redd' grangie	20 0 0
Llystelabonte—Firma grangie	2 0 0
Managhtyrwyn—Redd' grangie	2 0 0
Penryse—Oblationes capelle	10 0 0
S. Darvally—Oblationes capelle	3 6 8
S. Darvally—Redd' capelle	1 0 0
Uske—Redd' piscar'	2 0 0
<small>Johanni Parker scitum nuper Monasterii de Lanternam infra episcopatum Landaven. et al. terr. habend. ei et hered. masculis de corpore suo legitime procreatis. Ro. 57.</small>	
<small>* Remiscunt. † Antedicta. ‡ Orig. 31 Hen. III. p. 1. Suthwall. Rex, xx. die Sept. concessit</small>	

Figure: 9.13: Extract from *Valor Ecclesiasticus* and *Ministers Accounts* recording Llantarnam's overall income (Source: after Dugdale et al 1846, 728).

More finely-grained detail is provided by the *Ministers Accounts* of 1536/7, which calculated a far higher total than a seemingly undervalued *Valor* (NA, SC 6/HENVIII/2497) (Figure 9.13). The accounts demonstrate that whilst a modest *demesne* operation was maintained, doubtless largely to meet domestic needs, the abbey was receiving most of its income from over 200 copyhold tenants, all

overseen by a lay steward, the Earl of Worcester who also had influential roles at Tintern and other border houses (Gray 1990, 178, 188; Williams 2001, 218). As well as rents from its manors and mills, the abbey was in receipt of the advowson and tithes of corn and hay from a wide compass of local parishes (in some cases pertaining only to their own parochial land), enabling the monastery to draw an income from much of the Afon Lwyd and Ebbw valleys and their surrounding uplands. A case at the Court of Augmentations in the early-sixteenth century confirmed that the Llantarnam monks, due to an agreement with the Bishop of Llandaff 200 years earlier, ‘were seized of all tithes of corn and grain in said parishes of Henllyse, Bassalecke, Mynethystlan and Bedwelly’ (quoted in Cowley 1977, 242-3). Although Penrhys manor had been leased (to Thomas Williams, gentleman in 1534 for 60 years), the abbey retained a small income from the tavern house serving pilgrims there, in addition to all oblations from the chapel and that at Llanderfel. Penrhys had become both one of the most well-known pilgrim destinations in Wales and a key income-generating asset, valued as a venerated site as much as an agricultural holding (Burton and Ströber 2015, 126; Ward 1914, 391).



Figure 9.14: *Cilonydd grange in its upland setting* (Source: author).

Cilonydd is the only grange specifically mentioned in the accounts as still worked in hand, at odds with the testimony in *Valor* (Figure 9.14). This perhaps reflected hasty last-minute efforts by the abbey, in common with other Cistercian houses, to protect

its assets and raise funds by leasing *demesne* land to trusted parties (Williams 1967, 140; 1976, 87). For instance, the valuable Pwl-pan grange had in fact been demised to Lewis Blethyn, a relative of the recently retired abbot Morgan Blethyn who also rented the farmed-out Cefn-y-mynach, in 1533 for 40 years to ‘uphold and maintain all manner of houses upon the said grange at his own cost’; Mynachty-tir-waun similarly leased to Hugh ap Griffith for 99 years (Bradney 1993a, 242: NA, SC 6/HENVIII/2497; Williams 1976, 89). The aforementioned leasing of Penrhys may have been an attempt by the abbey to rebuff the case for dissolution by dispensing with this Catholic holy place (Williams 2004, 13). An allegation of fraudulent leases issued by the last abbot, Jasper ap Roger, ‘to the prejudice of the demise’ to the initial recipient of the abbey’s assets, John Parker, was subsequently investigated in 1536 (Gairdner 1888, 572).

9.4 An introduction to the Magna Porta lordship

The Magna Porta and Rhyswg estates constituted a hinterland of granges and manorial landscapes around Llantarnam and the uplands of Mynydd Maen (‘the mountain of stone’), representative of the mixed lowland and hill country farmscape of the abbey’s landed interests.

The boundary of the case study area is indicated in Figure 9.3 and largely follows the Llanfihangel Llantarnam parish line: the most satisfactory approximation of the bounds of the medieval manor of Magna Porta from which the parish originated (Davies 1953, 90; Edwards 1976, 35). With no surviving archive material describing the extent of the abbey lands at foundation or during the monastic era, the earliest description of the manor bounds comes from a written survey of 1634 (*Gwent Archives*, D3105/4). This incantation of the hedges, lanes, ‘torrents’, prominent trees, closes and parcels of land (not always now readily identifiable) that formed the *meares* of the manor has been used to validate the mapped parish boundary and broadly seems to coalesce with it. Relating the wording of the survey to the modern and nineteenth century landscape is, though, not always straight-forward and the bounds described are, in some areas, hard to interpret. Territory north of the parish boundary up to the Cwm Bran stream, some of which was in the hand of the Blewitt family of Llantarnam Abbey in the mid-1800s, seems to have been included, perhaps

suggesting a shifting or disputed line of demarcation with neighbouring Edlogan manor (*Tithe Map*, Purchas 1840).⁷¹ As there is no other corroboration of this northern segment being Magna Porta or abbey land it has been excluded from the study area.

The major deviation from the parish line is the exclusion of Redcastle manor territory (focussed on the ancient gentry house of Ty Coch and not in abbey hands) between the lands of the Cefn-mynach and Sycbor Cwrt granges. The Llantarnam Abbey Estate Map of 1779 confirmed the boundaries with this manor and extends the Magna Porta and case study boundary beyond the parish in the south-east to encompass estate land in the neighbouring parish of Llangattock juxta Caerleon (*NA*, MR 1/1061). The parish boundary is also crossed to embrace the Dorallt farms from neighbouring Henllys representing this monastic grange, although the full extent of the holding may have been larger (*Tithe Map*, Jones 1842). Finally, and technically outside of Magna Porta, the Rhyswg portion of the case study area circuits the several Rhyswg farmsteads in Mynyddislwyn parish, with the natural lines of waterways forming much of the boundary to include the hill slope and woodland context surrounding the grange (*Tithe Map*, Morris 1846).

9.4.1 Cefn-mynach grange

Possibly the first abbey site and subsequently evolving into the hamlet of Pentrebach ('little village'), the grange homestead sat in the lee of a long, broad rise to the north which doubtless gave the farm its name ('monastery ridge') (Figure 9.15). The grange's land was not tithe-free and took on a long-settled valley estate rather than virgin terrain (Donkin 1978, 112; *Tithe Map*, Page 1846). A surprising low value for arable land in 1291 (from a modest one *caracute* of ploughland) suggests that it may have specialised in stock-rearing at this time (Ayscough and Caley 1802, 281).

⁷¹ As hinted at by a manor court entry of 1627 confirming the sale by Ralph Dunford of 'all land in Lanvrechva' (in Edlogan manor) to William Morgan, lord of Magna Porta, and a 1707 agreement which confirmed Edlogan extending into Llanvihangel Llantarnam parish and 'within part of the boundaries of the manor of Magna Porta' and determined that the boundary be set by a 1609 survey (Bradney 1993a, 236; *Gwent Archives*, D43 M290/ 5509).



Figure 9.15: Pentre-bach farm, previously Cefn-mynach, looking north-east (Source: author).

9.4.2 Dorallt grange



Figure 9.16: The rising ground of the Dorallt grange with the promontory after which it was named on the Mynydd Henllys hillside to the left (now clothed in plantation), looking north-west (Source: author).

Perhaps part of the original bequeathment to the abbey from Hywel ab Iorwerth, lord of Caerleon, given its position alongside the home manor of Magna Porta, the only record of the grange was a 1291 reference to two *caracutes* of land under the plough

at ‘Torald’ (Ayscough and Caley 1802, 281). It’s toponym (bulging, from *twrr*, hillside, from *allt*) is likely a reference to a promontory jutting out from slopes of Mynydd Henllys above the holding. Remembered only by the post-medieval farmsteads of Dorallt-fach and fawr (now subsumed within the Cwmbrân suburb of Henllys), the grange would seem to have farmed a strip of land rising to the mountain common suited to a mixed economy (Figure 9.16). The rill of Nant-y-mehir, named for a hermit associated with the abbey foundation (as outlined in Section 9.2), is a prominent natural feature separating the Dorallt and Llanderfel granges and later the manors of Henllys and Magna Porta (and their successor parishes) (*Gwent Archives*, D3105.4).

9.4.3 Gelli-las grange



Figure 9.17: The site of Gelli-las grange now Cwmbrân town centre, looking east from St. Dials Hill (Source: author).

Gelli-las was forged from the low-lying marsh alder woods alongside the Afon Lwyd, the character of its location reflected in a toponym meaning ‘green or marshy grove or small wood’. The grange does not appear in the historic record until a reference in the *Ministers Accounts* of 1536/7 to ‘receipts of farm, Gelli Las’ (NA, SC 6/HENVIII/2497). The walls of a possible chapel endured into the nineteenth century and the memory of the monastic farmstead was revived when its post-medieval successor was remodelled as Llantarnam Grange, now an arts centre of the same

name (Williams 1967, 135). The grange lands are now occupied by Cwmbrân town centre, only the playing fields overlying the old river meads alongside the Afon Lwyd hinting at its former agricultural status (Figure 9.17). That the grange was not listed (or identifiable) in the 1291 *Taxatio* survey suggests it was newly reclaimed and farmed land after this date. The 150 tithe-free acres (60 ha.) on the 1846 tithe apportionment and a survey plan of 1751 provide a picture of Gelli-las, bounded with and extending along the wide plain of the Afon Lwyd north from Scybor Cwrt grange (NLW, MS. MAPS VOLS. Lockwood Vol. 1 094/9/2; *Tithe Map*, Page 1846; Williams 1976, 89).

9.4.4 Llanderfel grange



Figure 9.18: Llanderfel grange on its hillside bench, looking south-west (Source: author).

Llanderfel grange occupied a broad and sheltered terrace between the steep upper slopes of Mynydd Maen and tapering hillside running down to the Afon Lwyd valley (Figure 9.18). Not cited until the *Ministers Accounts* of 1536/7, which identified ‘1 tenement, with certain lands, at Llanderfel’, the grange was overshadowed in the historical record by the chapel of St. Derfel, on the pilgrimage route to Penrhys after which it was named and an ecclesiastical site pre-dating monastic stewardship (Brook 1988, 79; NA, SC 6/HENVIII/2497). A ruined building described in Section 9.5.2 may be the remains of the grange farm or the chapel (Figure 9.19).



Figure 9.19: The remains of either the chapel or grange at Llanderfel (Source: author).

The grange was extensive, probably including significant sheep-runs as well as arable ground, bounded by the head-dyke demarcating the open commonage to the west, lanes and woodland elsewhere. The 1846 tithe apportionment confirmed that 150 acres (60 ha.) at Llanderfel had ‘never paid any kind of tithes’, representing the core of the grange, either in abbey hands before the 1215 Lateran Council or assarted by the abbey after this date (*Tithe Map*, Page 1846; Williams 1976, 89). The post-medieval hill farm of Llanderfel would be reduced to just 74 elevated acres (30 ha.). Exactly how far the grange originally extended downhill, ground now encroached upon by the upper suburbs of Cwmbrân, is unclear. Land owing tithes to the owner of Llanderfel across several adjacent post-medieval farmsteads here suggests the wider footprint of the medieval grange ultimately broken up into smaller units, perhaps also encompassing land farmed from the abbey holding of St. Dials.⁷²

⁷² An unreferenced dotted line on the Llanfihangel Llantarnam tithe map may indicate the remembered boundary of the grange (*Tithe Map*, Page 1846).

9.4.5 Magna Porta manor



Figure 9.20: The varied topographies of Magna Porta: the floodplain and low hills of the Afon Lwyd valley from the uplands of Mynydd Maen (Source: author).

As Llantarnam's home manor, Magna Porta covered a range of topographies from the flood plain of Afon Lwyd across the well-drained low escarpments along the valley and up to the high pasture of Mynydd Maen and included the abbey precinct and park (Figure 9.20). The manor name described the *demesne* beyond the abbey's main *magna porta* (sometimes documented in Welsh as Porth-mawr), reflecting the magnificence of the entrance (Bradney 1993a, 224; Edwards 1976, 39). Undocumented until the suppression, Magna Porta nevertheless probably represented the core Caerleon lordship gift to the abbey on its foundation. It has been suggested that the manor assumed the pre-existing territory of the ancient parish of St. Deuma, an early name sometimes given to the abbey as outlined in Section 9.2 (*ibid.*, 223; *ibid.*, 38).

Much of the manor was managed through the Cistercian *grangia* model, encompassing Cefn-mynach, Gelli-las, Llanderfel and Scybor Cwrt described here. The chapel of St. Dials may have been the locus of another grange, unidentified in contemporary records, exploiting the undulating countryside at the heart of the manor. The lower hill slopes here, though, suggest retained wood cover and long-

established farming communities across land optimal for pastoralism. Initially left to continue their native practices outside of the monastic granges forging new agricultural activity on the higher ground and the river-side marsh, their farmsteads would become the tenanted nodes of the emerging manor. By the suppression, the *Ministers Accounts* show that the manor was worth £25.19.0 with contributions from 43 tenants, under a bailiff, Jenkin Morgan, overseeing the operation of the abbey's *demesne* and tenancies, formally managed through bi-annual court barons (NA, SC 6/HENVIII/2497).

9.4.6 Rhyswg grange



Figure 9.21: Rhyswg-fawr farm house (Source: author).

An assarted monastic sheep-station (with just $\frac{1}{2}$ *caracute* of ploughland in 1291) set within abundant woodland and with easy access to the adjacent mountainside, Rhyswg was one of three high abbey granges strung high along protruding ridges extending westwards from Mynydd Maen divided by steep wooded *cwms* carrying tributaries flowing into the Ebbw (Ayscough and Caley 1802, 281). Unlike Ciloyndd and Llanderfel elsewhere on the *mynydd*, Rhyswg was not tithe-free, indicating either an already cultivated place when the grange was established or, more probably, that the wooded ridge was cleared by the abbey after the 1215 Lateran Council. The *grangia*, centred on the Rhyswg-fawr farmstead, was a remote, self-

contained world, approached either steeply from the Ebbw valley or via a long moorland trackway from Magna Porta to the east, an approach reflected in the farmstead's name ('moor', from *rhos*, 'track', from *wysg*) (Figure 9.21). Also included in the grange's postulated orbit is the smaller Cnwc bluff historically farmed from the now defunct Rhyswg-fach steading, perhaps an out-station of the main grange.

9.4.7 Scybor Cwrt grange



Figure 9.22: A rare image of Court Farm circa 1950 a few years before its demolition (Source: after John 2007, 130).

Scybor Cwrt ('court barn') was an arable farm holding four *caracutes* of ploughland in 1291 immediately north of the precinct, functioning as Llantarnam's home grange. Still in hand at Dissolution, the grange was the abbey's second most valuable source of crop production after Pwl-pan, helping to sustain its day-to-day needs (Ayscough and Caley 1802, 170, 281; Burton and Kerr 2011, 169). The appellation was perhaps taken from the great barn in the abbey precinct or an out-building at the grange court itself, subsequently morphing into Court Farm or Cwrt Mawr ('great court') (Figure 9.22). Its juxtaposition with the abbey and court status may suggest occupation by a bailiff or other high official of the abbey (Dovey and Waters 1956, 99).

9.5 The medieval landscape of Magna Porta

Figure 9.23 maps the postulated landscape of the Magna Porta and Rhyswg estates as they had developed *circa* 1300, a reference point for the narrative that follows. The map and accompanying analysis are based on the landscape walks and other field observation carried out for this project, contemporary and early post-medieval documents, analysis of field systems and other landscape features using map regression, aerial photography and satellite imagery, previous archaeological and historical research and clues in place- and field-names. A more detailed outline of the methodology and sources used to produce this map can be found in Appendix 2.

This was a landscape of large tracts of open high ground, flanked by steep valley slopes adorned by remnant native timber and wood-pasture descending to lower-lying ground and river-plain forming the abbey's agrarian hinterland. The map displays a pattern of consolidation, improvement and expansion of inherited agriculture supplemented by the winning of new farmland from marsh, woodland and upland wood-pasture as granges were established and developed in previously more marginal terrains under the direct management of the abbey, within a wider context of long-established tenant communities ranged across the manor. A more detailed analysis of the elements of this landscape will now be presented.

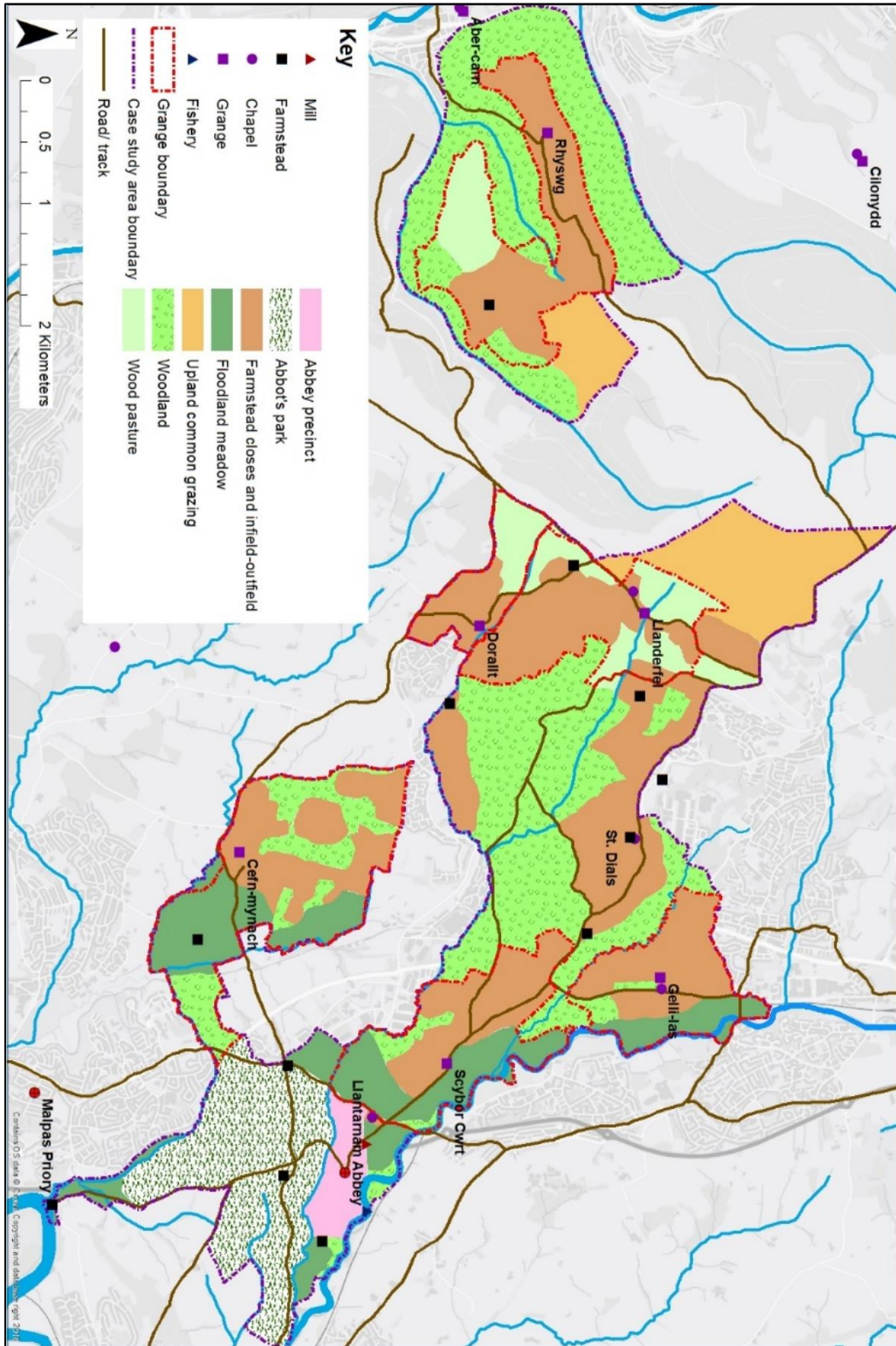


Figure 9.23: Postulated landscape and land-use of the Magna Porta and Rhyswg estates circa 1300 (Source: map drawn in ArcGIS® using Ordnance Survey 1:10560 County Series 1st edition, Monmouthshire, 1887 data layer, downloaded from Digimap® under licence, <http://digimap.edina.ac.uk/>).

9.5.1 The abbey precinct and park

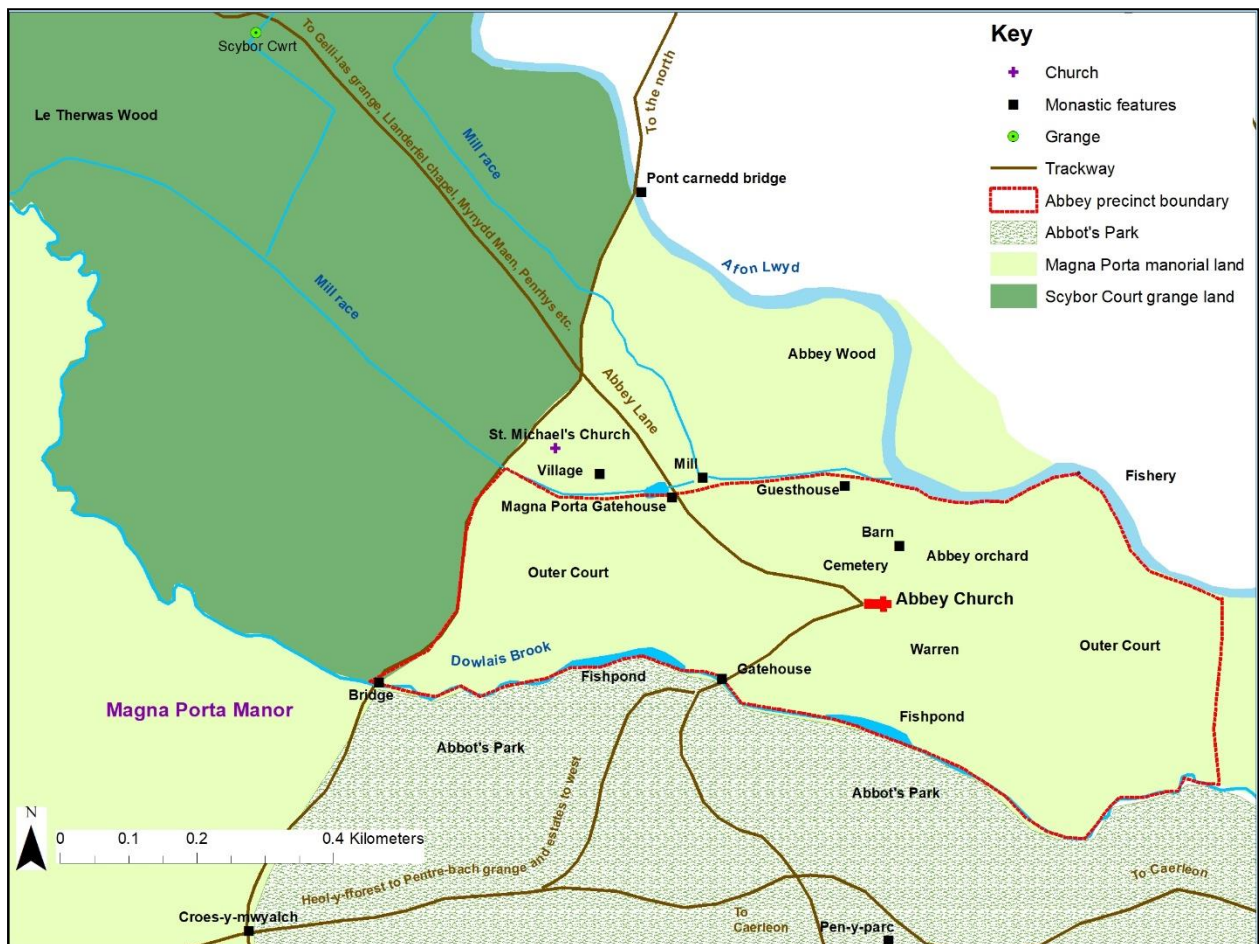


Figure 9.24: The abbey and its surrounding monastic landscape (Source: map drawn in ArcGIS® using Ordnance Survey 1:10560 County Series 1st edition, Monmouthshire, 1887 data layer, downloaded from Digimap under licence, <http://digimap.edina.ac.uk/>).

Little remains of the monastic buildings and infrastructure of Llantarnam and the abbey site and precinct has yielded few architectural or archaeological clues. None of the claustral buildings of the abbey remain in any extant form, much material probably repurposed within the Elizabethan mansion constructed on the site by William Morgan, as outlined in Chapter 10 (Newman 2002, 336; Williams 1976, 78). Visiting Morgan's still standing house, Archdeacon Coxe (1801, 118) remarked that 'the only remains of the ancient structure are the stone cells, converted into stables, the walls of the garden, and a beautiful gothic gateway, which is still called Magna Porta, and was the grand entrance', a litany also recounted in Dugdale's seventeenth century *Monasticon Anglicanum* (1846, 728). Aside from the abbey church, the various audits and surveys illuminating the suppression record a cloister

garth, lady chapel, belfry and steeple, monks' lodgings, hospice, cemetery and a stable (Bradney 1993a, 227; *GGAT HER*, 00624g; 08371g; Mahoney 1981, 150; *NA*, SC 6/HENVIII/2497). Other elements of the immediate monastic landscape have been pieced together for this project (Figure 9.24). Whether any of these lost structures were authentically monastic is now unknowable. Unpublished excavation work between 1978 and 1984 sheds some light on the configuration of the abbey church, revealing the disturbed medieval foundations of a cruciform building of unusual dimensions beneath the north-west corner of the modern house and its enclosed courtyard (*GGAT HER*, 00624g; Robinson 2006, 248-250; Williams 1967, 133; 2001, 288) (Figure 9.25).

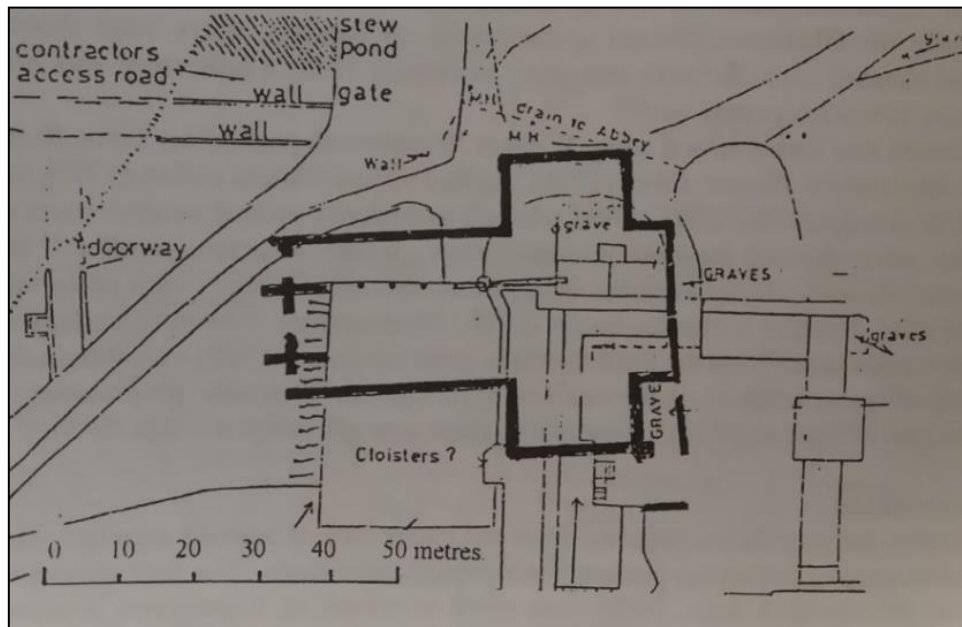


Figure 9.25: Unpublished postulated abbey church plan by A. Mein following 1978-1984 excavations, overlain by nineteenth century mansion house and modern infrastructure (Source: after Williams 2001, 288).



Figure 9.26: Aerial view of the abbey and precinct site reconfigured as a nineteenth century mansion house and park (Source: © Crown copyright, Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historic Monuments of Wales, undated, CD2005_604_014 1994).

Names of enclosures recorded on the 1779 estate map give some topographical sense of the wider monastic enclave and its surrounding context, yet to be reconfigured into newly-laid out gardens and park during the rebuilding of the Llantarnam Abbey mansion house in 1834 (Figures 9.24 and 9.26). Here are confirmed or suggested: a dovecote, fishponds, an orchard (Abbey Orchard), manor barn, a guesthouse (Cae Lletty), mill (Corn Mill), rabbit warren (The Warren), church wood (The Llangott) and the medieval park (The Old Park) discussed further below (NA, MR 1/1061).

Due to the significant reorganisation of the site since the abbey's closure, the exact boundaries of the outer precinct have not been definitively confirmed. Natural watercourses running on each side of the site would logically have been utilised, connected by lengths of wall (Bowden and Roberts 2012, 49). The postulated boundary in Figure 9.24 runs down the Afon Lwyd and the edge of Ty Isaf farm eastwards, then along Dowlais Brook to the south, striking north along the curving course of the old Newport to Pontypool road before following the mill race south of St. Michael's church back to the river. This final section may well have extended further north to encompass the abandoned village or ancillary monastic buildings and

mill examined in the next section. Mein's excavation identified the remains of a ditch which may have marked this northern limit. Such dimensions would make the precinct relatively large, comparable in area to Strata Florida (Aston 2007, 108-9; Austin 2004, 197-8). Mein also found the footings of a structure suggesting the site of the main gatehouse, the original Magna Porta, replaced and repositioned in the 1830s re-styling of house and grounds (*GGAT HER*, 00624g; Lloyd 2006, 54; Williams 1990, 20). Local archaeologist David Standing (pers. comment) has suggested a second gate at a crossing of Dowlais Brook to the south. The possibility of a further 'watergate; on the Afon Lwyd to access riverine transport, as at Tintern, cannot be discounted. The course of both waterways seems to have been altered to increase the size of the enclave – and the latter engineered to accommodate two fishponds.⁷³ Remnants of a possible precinct wall along a canalised section of the Dowlais have been investigated, whilst the south-eastern section of the boundary may be memorialised by a reference to a 'Brickwall' here in the 1634 manor survey (*Gwent Archives*, D3105.4; Standing 2011) (Figure 9.27).



Figure 9.27: Canalised section of Dowlais Brook forming part of the precinct boundary (Source: Standing, undated, www.monasticdave.wordpress.com).

The roofless remains of a great 11 bay stone barn stand within the precinct to the north of the abbey church site (Figure 9.28). Labelled as a 'Tithe barn' on the first

⁷³ The abbey fishery of Aberavon may have represented the monks' rights to take fish from the Afon Lwyd along the eastern boundary of Magna Porta (*NA*, SC 6/HENVIII/2497; Williams 1967, 142).

edition Ordnance Survey map and long-considered to be the last remaining monastic precinct building, it has been reappraised, though not definitively, as post-medieval – perhaps of the 1700s – and overlying the monks' cemetery (Bowden and Roberts 2012, 45; *GGAT HER*, 00627g; Lloyd 2007, 54; Williams 1990, 20).



Figure 9.28: The now dilapidated and at risk 'tithe barn' at Llantarnam (Source: author).

Echoes of a parkland landscape still partly visible to the south of the precinct are the legacy of the remodelling of the house and its grounds in the 1830s (*Coffein NMR*, 307898). The post-medieval phases of parkland design (examined in the next chapter), however, overlay the template of a medieval deer park beside the abbey precinct, which, in common with the district around the abbey more generally, was known as Ton-y-grose ('the glade of the cross') (Dovey and Waters 1956, 61). First referred to in the granting of the abbey site to John Parker in 1539, 'Le Park' had been 'reserved for the personal occupation of the late abbot' (quoted in Bradney 1993a, 227). The abbot's park occupied the rolling ground across the Dowlais Brook and below Pen-y-parc ('top or end of the park') farmstead, a tract referred to as the Old Park in the 1634 manor survey, a name retained by a large pasture here in 1779 (*Gwent Archives*, D3105.4; *NA*, MR 1/1061) (Figure 9.29 and 9.30).



Figure 9.29: The rolling pasture of Old Park, looking north towards the Dowlais Brook at the tree-line with the abbey precinct hidden beyond (Source: author).

References to the valley bottom near Wilderness Wood as Fawddog Vach in 1634 and the 'residue of the Park known as Rayle Ffawothoog' in 1787 hint at the beech woods that would have been prevalent across this medieval chase (*Gwent Archives*, D3105.4; *Gwent Archives*, D43 M310/4591). Cae Stocking ('field cleared of tree stumps'), south of Croes-y-mwyalch cross roads, tells of the later replacement of timbered parkland (*NA*, MR 1/1061). That this tree-scape were also oaken is inferred by the ordering of the keeper of Caerleon park to allow the selection of 300 oaks for building work at Newport castle (Mahoney 1981, 93). Tracing the extent of the medieval park is complicated by the lack of an obvious park pale in the morphology of the historic landscape, and because it was bounded by (and perhaps was originally part of) a much larger secular emparkment to the south-east: King's Park, the principal deer chase of the lords of Caerleon (Yates 1998, 5). First recorded in 1320, it may have originally been a component of more extensive hunting grounds including land endowed at the abbey's foundation. The relationship between the possible extent of the abbot's park and the concave western boundary of a postulated King's Park pale, followed by the course of the Llanfihangel Llantarnam parish boundary to the west, is indicated at Figure 9.30 (*Coflein NMR*, 419684; Yates 1998, 6).

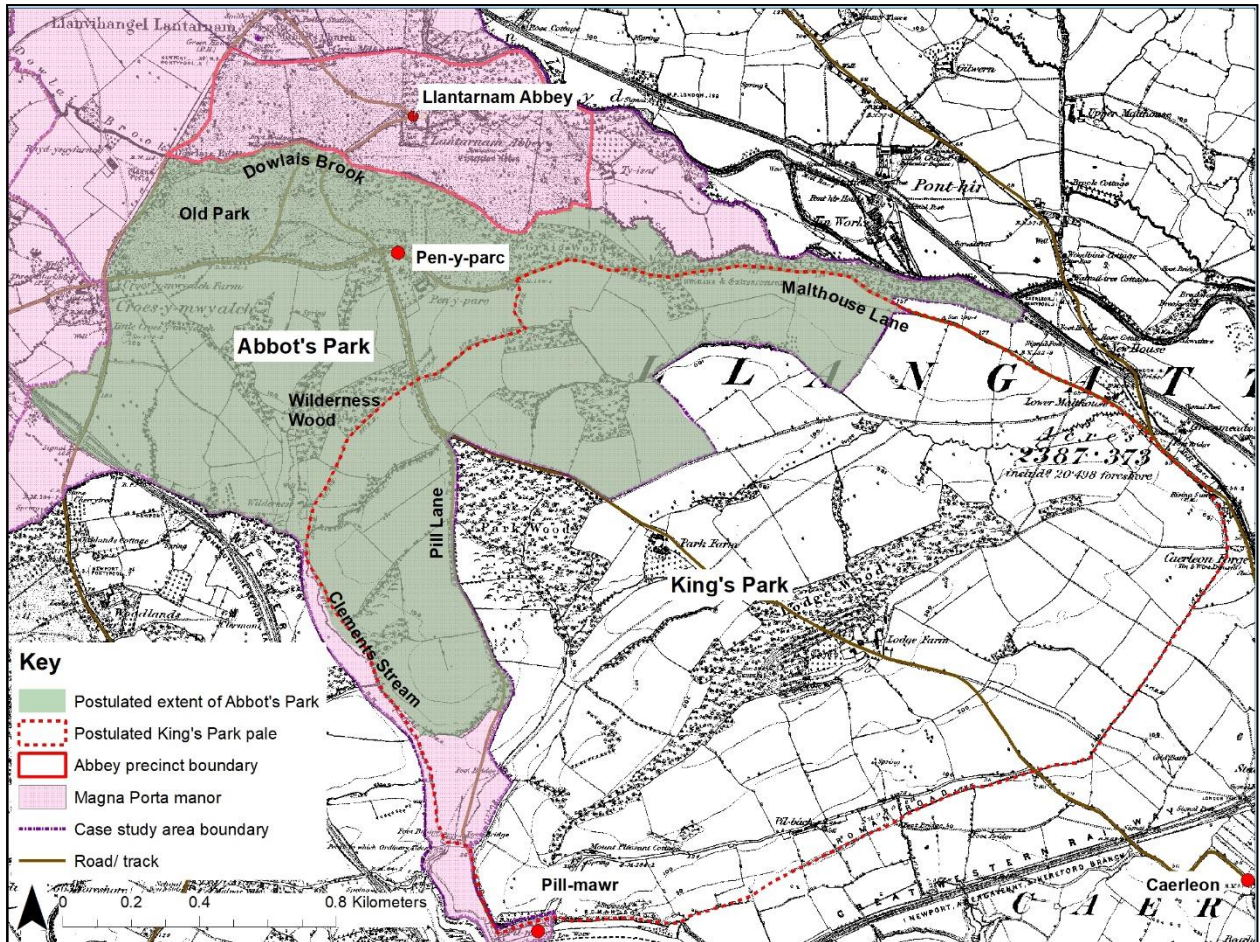


Figure 9.30: Postulated extent of Abbot's Park and Kings Park, Caerleon (Source: map drawn in ArcGIS® using Ordnance Survey 1:10560 County Series 1st edition, Monmouthshire, 1887 data layer, downloaded from Digimap under licence, <http://digimap.edina.ac.uk/>).

As the accord between the culturally and politically Welsh-focused abbey and its Norman overlords, patrons in name only, became less cordial from the later-1200s, this hunting realm perhaps operated as a buffer zone between abbey and secular lands. A short leap of imagination could interpret Coed/ Cae Ven Hallogue Vawr ('wood/ great field of the limit', from *ffin*, 'of the profamer or defiler', from *halogwr*) coppice and field-names here, together with the Hallogen stream bounding Magna Porta, as perhaps a comment on these strained relations (NA, MR 1/1061; *Tithe Map*, Morris 1840). It may be conjectured that the abbey was given land at the extremity of the larger hunting chase before the King's Park boundary was more tightly defined by a pale, which later perhaps encroached upon the abbey's park, thus setting the future line of the parish boundary cleaving Magna Porta manor land here into two parishes. The encroached area along Pill Lane and south of Malthouse

Lane forming part of Llangattock parish, leaving a thin western corridor as the abbey's important access route extending down the shallow valley of the Clements brook from Wilderness Wood to Pill-mawr on the banks of the Usk. Conversely, the encroachment may have been the other way, with the abbey manor crossing the older pale of the King's Park.

Cistercian regulations forbade hunting, so it is uncertain who would have used the game park, though it may have had multiple functions, including heightening the aesthetic appeal of the environment around the abbey and providing a symbolic transition into the wider countryside (Liddiard 2007, 4). Suggestion of a hunting culture surrounding the Cistercian house comes from a lament at the death of Sawnder Sion, an early-sixteenth century 'poet-sportsman' who was closely associated with the abbey, regretting the end of flying falcons, greyhounds and steeds at Llantarnam (Williams 2001, 226). 'Time out of mind' customary rights codified in 1634 for the lord to have all 'Realities of Haughs, Swans, Herons, Pheasants, Partridges and Cranes' found within the manor may provide more evidence of lordly hunting stretching back into monastic times (*Gwent Archives*, D3105.4).

9.5.2 Farmsteads, settlements and land-tenure



Figure 9.31: The modern settlement of Llanfihangel Llantarnam, looking east (Source: author).

The village of Llanfihangel Llantarnam (the older part of which was known locally into modern times as Y Fynachlog, ‘the monastery’) edges the abbey precinct (Bradney 1993a, 224; John 2007, 113) (Figure 9.31). Excavated archaeological features between here and the abbey have been interpreted as earlier deserted settlement phases. A site, remarkably close to the abbey, positioned on the flood plain between the Afon Lwyd and Dowlais Brook suggests a foundational settlement during the warmer conditions of the thirteenth century (Page 1994, 42) (Figure 9.32). Climatic deterioration may explain a shift to higher ground on a river deposit terrace, where traces of stone dwellings, enclosure ditches and a roadway have been found (Lloyd 2006, 61; *ibid.*, 11-14). This location was then also seemingly abandoned, perhaps during upheaval after the Dissolution, with a move further upslope to the village’s current position, clustered around the twelfth century chapel newly constituted as St. Michael’s parish church serving the population about the monastery (Bradney 1923, 246; *GGAT HER*, 00622g; Newman 2002, 335; Page 1994, 42) (Figure 9.33). The settlement may have been planned or sanctioned to house *conversi* working the home grange of Cwrt and other lay employees and servants (Gray 1990, 179). That the abandoned locations are within the surmised outer precinct suggests another interpretation: that they constituted part of the abbey’s secular infrastructure, perhaps including an industrial complex (Standing pers. comment).

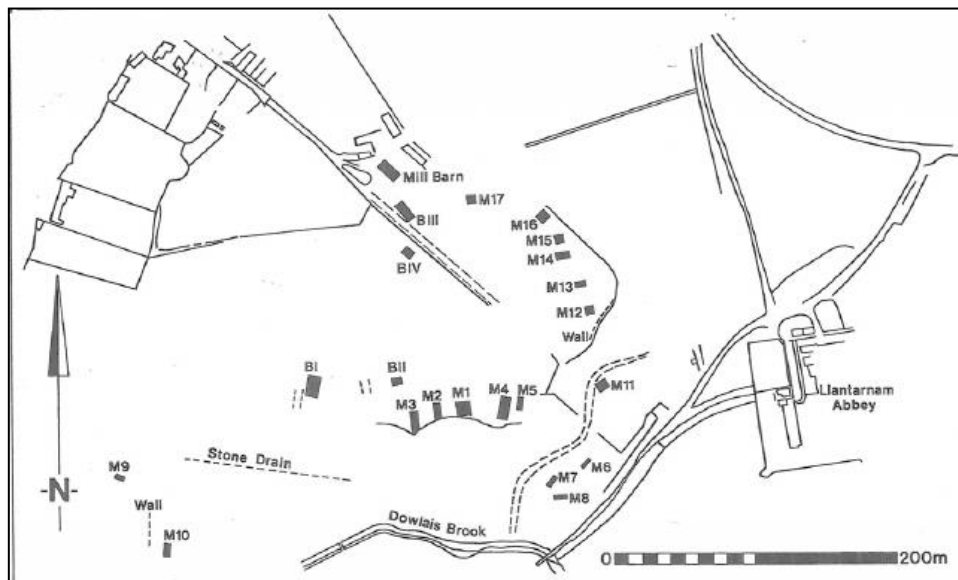


Figure 9.32: Earliest phase of deserted settlement represented by features M1-M5, second phase by M12-M16; the modern village top left and the abbey to the right (Source: after Page 1994, 98).



Figure 9.33: the south and east elevation of St. Michael's church, Llantarnam, with the Morgan family chapel to the right (Source: author).



Figure 9.34: Remains of the leat from the Dowlais Brook supplying the abbey mill pond (Source: author).

Abbey Mill, grinding corn at the convergence of the precinct and the village limits until the late-nineteenth century, succeeded the abbey's medieval home milling operation. Described in the *Ministers Accounts* of 1536/7 as: '1 grinding mill, 1 fulling mill; a stream which runs to the Abbot's mill which 'all tenants of the abbey, and all other residents adjoining the abbey, time out of mind, have used to grind their corn' (GGAT HER, 00633g; 00621g; Gwent Archives, D163.0002;

NA, SC 6/HENVIII/2497). Lacking recorded medieval fabric, this may have been a

new plant constructed on a shoulder of land providing a head of water from the pond above, replacing an earlier mill closer to one of the water-courses (Page 1994, 43). Abbey Mill itself has now been destroyed by the A4042 trunk road, but two long leats and a series of sluices drawing from the Afon Lwyd and Dowlais Brook represented on the 1779 estate plan partially remain (*Coflein NMR*, 413683; *NA*, MR 1/1061; *ibid.*, 36) (Figure 9.34).⁷⁴

Travelling out into the Magna Porta hinterland and the long-established agricultural and settlement topography of the native tenantry was largely a feature of the sweeping lower hill-slopes of the Mynydd Maen and Mynydd Henllys *massif* and the raised river terraces along the valleys. Here tenants enjoyed the same generous customary rights as those across the abbey's other manors: inheritable with no time limit on fixed rents with modest fines for entry (perhaps ancient rights inherited when the abbey took on lordship or reflecting difficulties in securing tenants) (Gray 1997a, 173; 1999, 37). In considering the 1570 survey of the abbey's Mynyddislwyn manor, Madeleine Gray (*ibid.*, 37) has noted that 'the monastic leases around the turn of the century look very much like a positive programme for tying up land which had previously been difficult to let.' 99 year copyhold tenancies here included responsibility for maintaining 'house and close', suggesting substantial farmsteads expected to last into the long term, perhaps examples of the stout stone or timber-framed farm-houses of the northern highland zone of Monmouthshire identified by Fox and Raglan (1951a, 78).

Documentary allusions to the actual farmhouses and edifices of the abbey estates are paltry. A requirement for Lewis Blethyn, renting the Cefn-mynach and Pwl-pan granges in the 1530s, to maintain grange buildings and make repairs to the farmhouse at Llanderfel hint at the estate's built environment (*NA*, SC 6/HENVIII/2497; Williams 1976, 87). Old quarry workings on Mynydd Maen and the

⁷⁴ In his examination of the abbey's water systems, David Standing (2016) has suggested that these leats were part of a wider system of watering channels for the riverside meadows of Scybor Cwrt, the water directed into the precinct via a sluice gate to flush the latrines and then back into the river. His fieldwork has identified possible relict remains including a bridge, sluice gate, fishpond weir and culvert.

fabric of older local buildings suggest that freestone was a durable house-building material used from at least Tudor times (Cadwell 1979, 7). For most of the grange farms, the built infrastructure is hard to ascertain. Any surviving evidence of the grange courts at Dorallt, Gelli-las and Scybor Cwrt would have been destroyed, unrecorded, by the coming of urban Cwmbrân, if not long before (Pannet 2011, 2). Although Archdeacon Coxe (1801, 119) believed the Pentre-bach farmhouse at Cefn-mynach to have twelfth century fabric, a Tudor origin is more likely (Morgan and Wakeman 1860, 10). Substantial earthworks in paddocks below the farmhouse may represent the remains of a moated site or the grange's fishponds (even the postulated early site of the abbey) (Dovey and Waters, 1956, 86) (Figure 9.35). Similar physical evidence can be seen across some of the abbey's wider grange network, as at Pwl-pan, where a distinct boundary to the grange complex can be observed, and a moated feature and other earthworks close to Bryngwyn (Williams 1990, 30-2).



Figure 9.35: Earthworks evidence of possible fishponds or a moat to the south of Pentre-bach (Source: author).

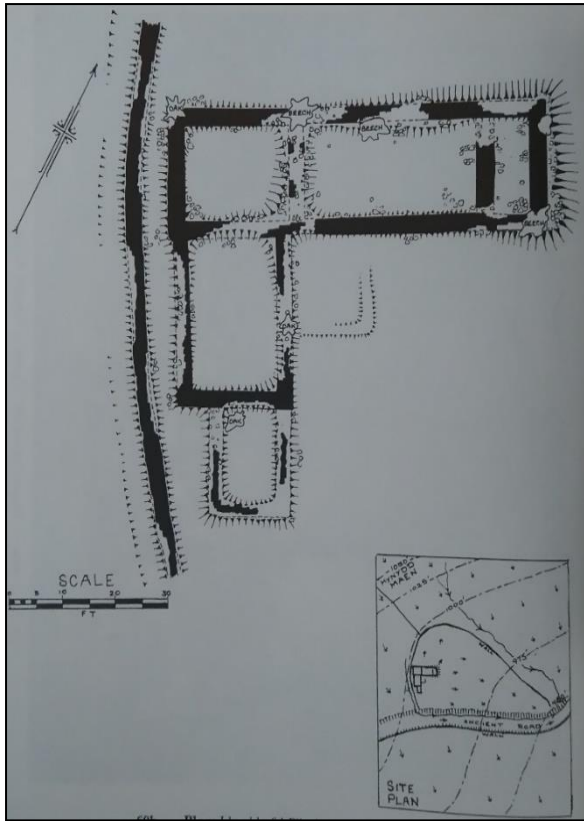


Figure 9.36: Llanderfel 'chapel' plan by R. Kay
(Source: after Williams 1990, 141).

site scheduled as a church of late-eleventh or early-twelfth century origin (*GGAT HER*, 00106g; Williams 1984, 180; 1990, 33-4; 2001, 151). The morphology of the ruins is, however, somewhat uncharacteristic of an ecclesiastical site. An alternative reading would suggest the Llanderfel grange *cwrt* itself (the chapel perhaps subsumed within), the remains similar in form to the L-shaped building at Pentrebach and Llangewi grange (Margam), though lacking the more extensive earthworks of such a model.

Sitting within a large bank and ditch pear-shaped mountain enclosure lie the footings of an 'L' shaped building above Llanderfel Farm (Figure 9.36 and 9.37). High on Mynydd Maen, beside the route to the abbey's premier pilgrimage centre at Penrhys (described in Section 9.6), local tradition and scholarly interpretation has suggested this was the site of the chapel of St. Derfel, first recorded in 1412 and an attraction for pilgrims said to hold a relic of Derfel Gadern, sixth century warrior turned monk (Edwards 1976, 36; *GGAT HER*, 00106g; Williams 1976, 81; 1990, 33). Evidence of burial has bolstered this narrative, the right-angle cells within the building plan interpreted as a tavern to accommodate pilgrims; the



Figure 9.37: Undated British Coal aerial photograph of the ruin and pear-shaped enclosure (centre) at Llanderfel (Source: after Williams 1990, 140).

A second entry for 'St Darvally' in the *Ministers Accounts* probably refers to a wayside chapel of ease at St. Dials on a foothill before pilgrims commenced the steep ascent to Llanderfel (Gray 1997, 21; NA, SC 6/HENVIII/2497). Thick foundations and an archaic arch were found in the long-demolished later gentry house here in the nineteenth century and local tradition regarded it as anciently the chief residence of the district (Bradney 1993a, 243; GGAT HER, 04516g; Williams 1967, 135; 1976, 81). Whether this was simply a staging post for pilgrims and other wayfarers before the long haul up to Llanderfel or an unidentified grange or out-farm adorned by a chapel as previously speculated is hard to gauge.



Figure 9.38: Llanderfel farmhouse (Source: author).

The upstanding farm houses of Llanderfel and neighbouring Craig Llywarch adhere to the late-medieval hill-side long-house orientated down-slope profile common in the region; the latter perhaps an out-farm or extension of the main grange (Fox and Raglan 1951a, 79) (Figure 9.38). The current house at Llanderfel, a successor to the earlier grange farm which may have been further upslope as described above, has been dated architecturally to the late-sixteenth century or early-1600s; an era of rebuilding emerging in parallel with a change from open common to enclosed fields and loosened manorial control (*Coflein NMR*, 45067; Locock 2006, 57; Parry and Logan 2010, 6). Similar long-houses and barns with late-medieval origins are extant at the Rhyswg Fawr – probable site of the Rhyswg grange court – and Ganol farmsteads (*GGAT HER*, 03658g; Williams 2001, 304) (Figure 9.39). These upland monastic farms may have adhered to a common building template, sometimes succeeding earlier steadings or seasonal transhumance settlements, in other cases an agency of new encroachment and enclosure (Leighton and Silvester 2003, 34; Locock 2006, 59).



Figure 9.39: Rhyswg Fawr farmstead (Source: © Crown copyright, Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales Coflein, www.coflein.gov.uk).

Several other ancient houses have late-medieval traces and may represent prominent tenant steadings or grange out-farms of the Magna Porta estate (Dovey and Waters 1956, 81). A tenement called ‘transemawre’ appears amongst the abbey’s tenant income in the *Ministers Accounts* (NA, SC 6/HENVIII/2497). A small copse, now colonised by modern farm sheds and a rectangular earthwork, stands out on the 1779 estate map, bypassed by a hedge boundary, in the southern fields of Pentre-bach near the nineteenth century Traws Mawr House (Figure 9.40). Here was perhaps a now vanished tenant farm, named for a great (from *mawr*) wayside cross (from *groes*) standing on the road to Cefn-mynach close-by, leasing a portion of the grange by the later monastic era.⁷⁵ This could also be the ‘Old House heretofore was adjoining to the Lands of John Morgan the Elder of Pentreback Gent.’ of 1634 (*Gwent Archives*, D3105.4).

⁷⁵ A field north of the copse called Cae Troes Mawr in 1779 spans the ground between the farmstead site and a crossroads on the lane to Pentre-bach (NA, MR 1/1061).



Figure 9.40: Cope and earthworks at Trawsmaur on the skyline (Source: author).

Further along this road towards the abbey, situated at the old crossroads atop the low rise of Blackbirds Hill at the southern extent of the precinct, Croes-y-mwalch translates as ‘monk’s, falcon’s or blackbird’s cross’, perhaps originating as a monastic tenancy (Dovey and Waters 1956, 102). Such may also be the origin of Ty Issaf, farming the low-lying peninsula between the Afon Lwyd and the Dowlais beyond the abbey enclave. Further west along the precinct perimeter, Pen-y-park, named in 1582 as ‘Park pen y beill’ (‘top of the bailiff’s park’), suggests the seat of the abbot’s park bailiff, or similar for the nearby Caerleon park (Mahoney 1981, 228). North into the heart of the undulating acreage of Magna Porta and bordering the Gelli-las and Scybor Cwrt granges lay Comondy (‘the dove house’) noted on the 1779 estate map, an early post-medieval farmhouse and perhaps the site of a monastic *columbarium* (Fox and Raglan 1954, 170; Williams 2001, 251). Greenmeadow, an ‘an old place’ in 1634 of likely late-medieval fabric had historic links with St. Dials, though, positioned north of the Magna Porta boundary, its interpretation as an abbey holding is debatable (Bradney 1993a, 287; Dovey and Waters 1956, 82; Parry and Logan 2010, 6) (Figure 9.41).



Figure 9.41: Greenmeadow, surviving as a 'City Farm' within Cwmbrân (Source: author).

9.5.3 Field systems and agricultural land-use



Figure 9.42: The rolling arable fields, pasture and coppices of Cefn-mynach grange, looking south-east towards the abbey's wooded vale in the distant top-left (Source: author).

As will be explored further in the next chapter, most of the documentary evidence relating to field systems and land-use within the case study area is post-monastic; the enclosure pattern observable today and in historic mapping largely remodelled in

the 1600s and eighteenth century (Locock 2006, 57; Week 2002, 16). Although often challenging to establish from the historic landscape, the evidence for the abbey's land division and management, including retained relict enclosure systems, will now be examined.

As has already been alluded to, Gelli-las and Llanderfel are highlighted in the 1846 Llanfihangel Llantarnam tithe apportionment as never having paid any tithes: data for individual fields that can be used to help identify the extent of grange land. However, tithes were paid across other former abbey lands in the case study area (excepting woodland), implying that they were already cultivated to some extent when taken on by the abbey or were newly-won agricultural units after the Lateran Council (*Tithe Map*, Jones 1842; Morris 1846; Page 1846). Gray's (1997a, 172) investigation of the abbey's Mynyddislwyn manor has similarly shown that Llantarnam took on already managed lands but is likely to have cleared mountain ground and introduced more concentrated and higher altitude cultivation.

Evidence of the abbey estate's crop production and pastoral farming provided in the 1291 *Taxatio* survey was outlined in Section 9.4. Although all granges would have operated as mixed farms to a degree, topography and soil type allied to abbey policy would have promoted specialisation. The lowland steadings of Gelli-las and Scybor Cwrt probably tended towards arable, with more of an emphasis on cattle and sheep across the high ground farmed by Dorallt, Llanderfel and Rhyswg and perhaps a mixed economy practiced over the varied terrain of Cefn-mynach (Figure 9.42). The corn mill constructed by lay brothers at Maestir grange in the Ebbw valley in 1204, other examples across the abbey estates and several barns with possible medieval origins indicate an infrastructure developed during the era of high medieval arable farming in the thirteenth and early-fourteenth century (*ibid.*, 173; Williams 1976, 91; 2001, 133-4). Travelling through the district as suppression approached, John Leland observed a well-tended and exploited countryside, remarking that the parish was 'very fertile of corne' but also 'men there study more to pastures ... which be well enclosed', whilst the higher ground of 'Mynydd, for the most part is hilly, better for cattle than corn', evidencing the variety of agrarian practices and topographies across the abbey economy (Toulmin-Smith 1906, 44).

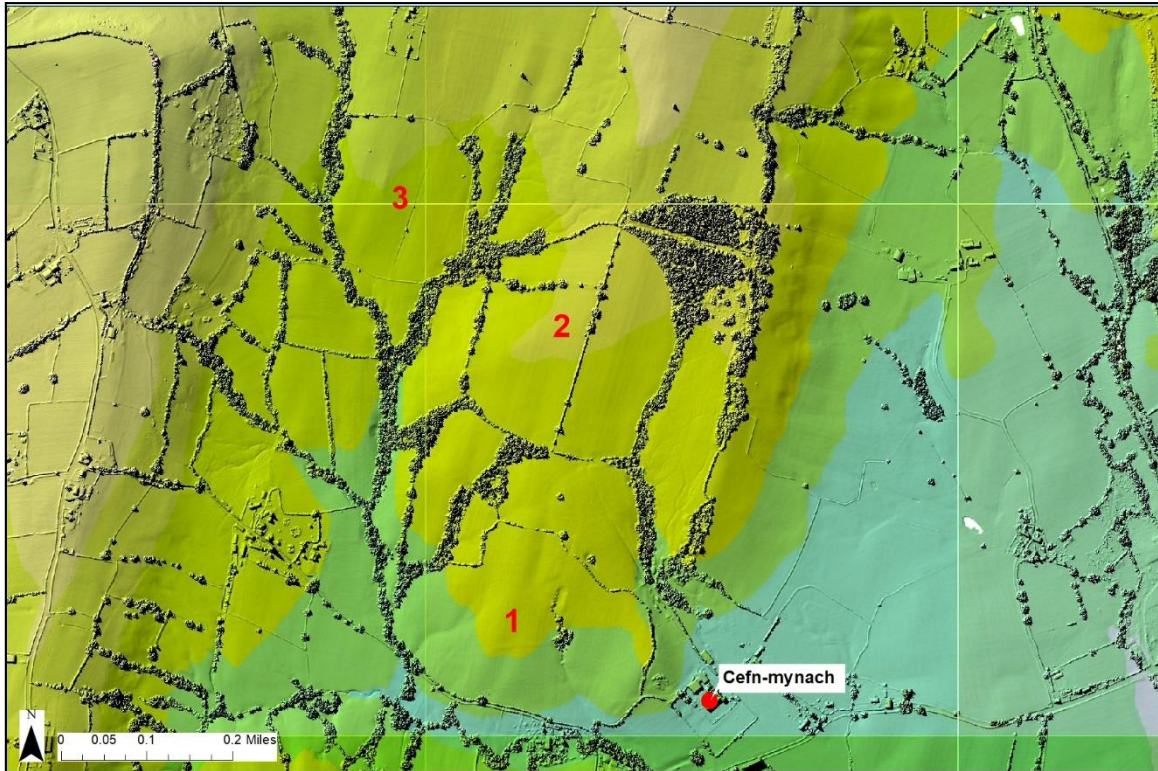


Figure 9.43: Possible grange enclosures at Cefn-mynach (Source: drawn in ArcGIS® using LiDAR 1m DSM data layer, downloaded from Natural Resources Wales under licence).

Prominent within the landscape of Cefn-mynach grange are notably large irregular curvilinear enclosures strung along the ridge above the farmstead, bounded by remnant broadleaf woodland and atypical of the surrounding field-scape (Figures 9.43 and 9.44). Enclosures 1 and 2 may represent a double enclosure often associated with arable granges, as also identified at Tintern's Pethlenny farm in the Usk valley (Platt 1969, 73). Subjected to reconfigured sub-division between the mapping of 1779 and 1846, including the splitting of enclosure 2 by a south to north hedge, field-name evidence provides no clues to the origins or historic utility of these features. 'Ton' appellations in field 3 suggest outfield ploughed and then left to grass on rotation (Bristow 2001, 109; NA, MR 1/1061; *Tithe Map*, Morris 1846). These polygons are sub-divided and less clear-cut on the 1779 estate plan and so may not represent medieval enclosures but result from nineteenth century reconfiguration.



Figure 9.44: The west (left) and east (right) sections of enclosure 2 at Cefn-mynach (Source: author).

The noticeably larger field morphology of the low-level valley granges of Cefn-mynach, Gelli-las and Scybor Cwrt included drained floodland along the Afon Lwyd and its feeders cleared of watery marsh and alder carr and ripe for grazing and hay crops. At the eastern and southern margins of Cefn-mynach, along the valleys of the Hallogen and Sant watercourses, a preponderance of ‘great meadow’ 1779 field-names suggests an area of relatively open medieval grassland later divided into smaller parcels (NA, MR 1/1061). Large enclosed meadowlands also characterise Scybor Cwrt, great riverside *gwain* and *ynis* meads ranged along the flood plain (NA, MR 1/1061).

High up on the Rhyswg ridge, a pattern of small, largely square or rectangular fields, with some signs of slight reverse ‘S’ curvature, suggests an enclosure system designed with a mixed farming regime in mind (Figures 9.45 and 9.50). Here, in common with other hill farms in the area, relict earthen hedgebanks are now topped by lines of beech trees, contorted in shape by repeated laying and pleaching (Gray 1999, 39) (Figure 9.46). These infields would enable crop rotation as well as the penning of cattle and sheep when not turned out on the common and the separation of ox-ploughed arable land from stock. Clearing the land from its previous state of wood-pasture or denser stands of beech together with the enclosure of the whole by a wall and constructing the banks, walls and beech hedges of the sub-divisions for sheep corrals and arable closes would have required the considerable resources and planning that a monastic grange and its labour force would bring to the endeavour. A similar enclosure system has been identified on land thought to have been cleared by the workforce of the abbey’s Manmoel grange at Cruglwyn on the

slopes of Mynydd Pen-y-ffan above the Sirhowy valley, with ‘worn down’ rectilinear field boundaries here possibly dating from this time (Gray 1999, 35-6). Relict medieval strips on the next ridge to the north at Ciloyndd, preserved within a post-medieval enclosure morphology, may have been used to grow crops for domestic purposes and similar arable strips or closes probably existed at neighbouring upland granges such as Rhyswg (Week 2002, 15, 19). Without definitive dating, however, it could conversely be argued that the extensive Rhyswg enclosures represent later reconfiguration, perhaps as capital-rich tenants developed new farm units out of the old grange.

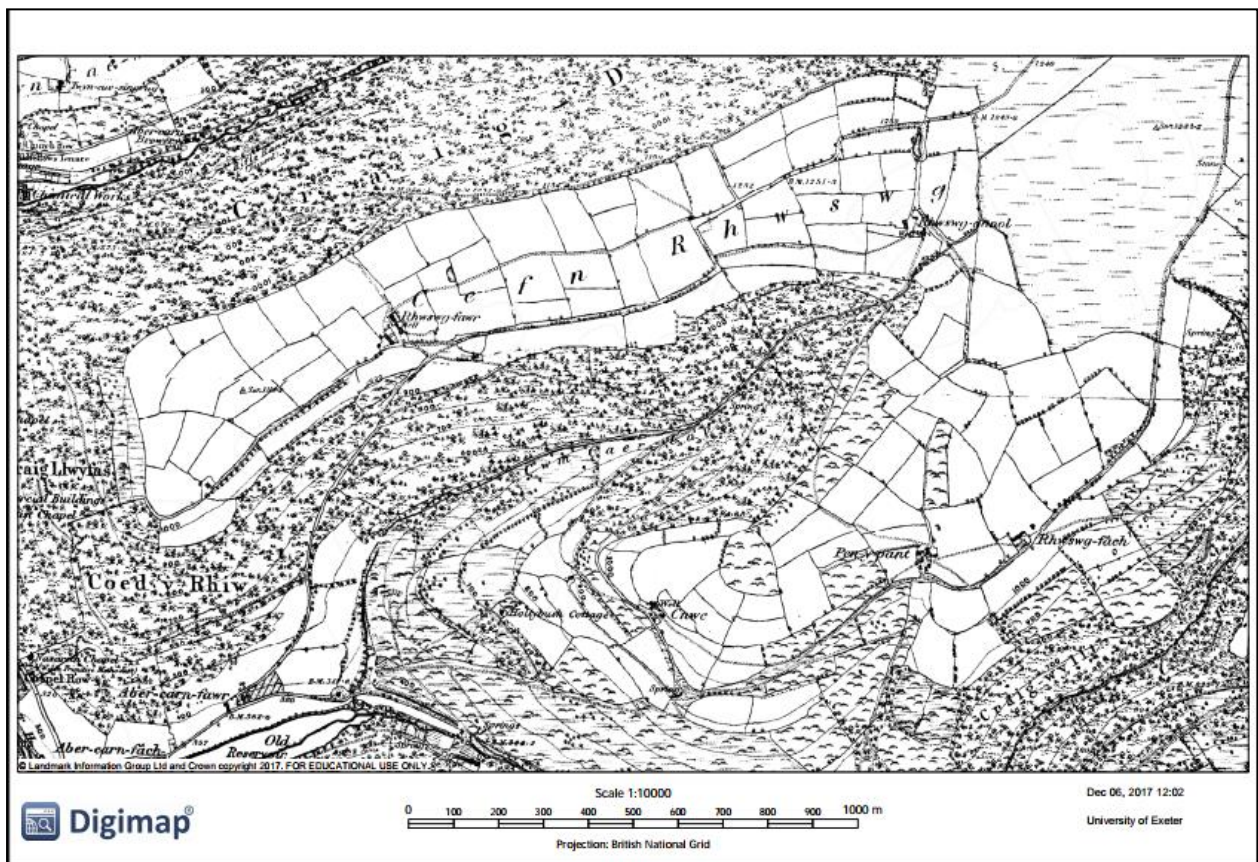


Figure 9.45: Rhyswg grange field system (Source: Ordnance Survey 1:10560 County Series 1st edition, Monmouthshire, 1887, downloaded from Digimap under licence, <http://digimap.edina.ac.uk/>).



Figure 9.46: Field bank and out-grown beech hedge at Rhyswg; the bank perhaps also topped by walling or other hedge species which have now disappeared (Source: author).

Quoting an unsourced reference to ‘coitca mynachlog’ (‘monastery enclosure or hedge’, from *coitgae*), Joseph Bradney implied a grange of this name in Magna Porta (Williams 1976, 89). David Williams (1990, 46) approximated this property on the Mynydd Maen hillside, surely a reference to the grange at Llanderfel implying a farmed landscape enclosed by the abbey here (a 1760 plan of the farmstead of Craig Llwrch in the southern portion of the grange included a large field called Coedca) (*NLW*, Tredegar Vol. 4 028/7/4). Whether the appellation attests to an enclosure circling the perimeter of the grange or to farmland parcelled within is unclear. Large tithe-free intakes from the common *ffridd* above Llanderfel farmstead, now agriculturally abandoned, represent relict features of these medieval arrangements (Williams 1976, 90) (Figure 9.18). Further along the Llanderfel shelf, the higher ground of Dorallt grange around the abandoned Henllys colliery offered rough wood-pasture for sheep grazing. Banked linear boundaries with exposed stone, lined by outgrown beech suggest divisions of medieval sheep pasture (and may include a previously lower head dyke dividing fields from the open common) (Figure 9.47).



Figure 9.47: Relict field bank dividing the medieval sheep pastures of Dorallt grange (Source: author).



Figure 9.48: Ditch along the northern boundary of the Cefn-mynach grange (Source: author).

Down in the vale-lands of Cefn-mynach, the circuit of the grange is largely marked by waterways. A constructed perimeter is also memorialised by 1779 field-names: Perthlan-vawr ('great church hedge'), both south and west of the grange steading at Pentre-bach, and Caeven-y-perthy ('the boundary or limit', from *ffin*, 'hedge'), along the linear northern bounds of the grange and manor (NA, MR 1/1061). A ditch marks this northern section of banked hedge, where stone scatters suggest a collapsed wall (Figure 9.48). A similar ditch marks the postulated boundary of the abbey's Manmoel grange at Cruglwyn (Hayman and Horton 2013, 8). Other boundary indicators populate field and coppice elsewhere along the edge of the grange, including Coed-y-caeir-bach ('the little wall wood', suggesting a

smaller wall alongside the boundary beck) and Cae-coo ('edge or border', from *cwr*)

(NA, MR 1/1061). An example of a relict grange boundary wall can also be seen above the steep track up to Rhyswg from Cwm-carn (Figure 9.49).



Figure 9.49: Relict grange boundary wall at Rhyswg (Source: author).

9.5.4 Woodland, wood-pasture, upland common and industrial activity

Leland described Llantarnam as ‘still standing in a wood’ and it would seem reasonable to assume that the immediate environs around the precinct, particularly the abbot’s park, retained a bosky complexion throughout the Cistercian occupation, helping to preserve a sequestered character still observable across Abbey Wood running along the Afon Lwyd (Toulmin-Smith 1906, 50). He also commented that the country around was ‘welle replenished with woodes’ (*ibid.*, 44). Other primary sources hint at the extent and management of medieval woodland within the wider case study area. Shortly before the suppression, 20 oaks were felled to provide timber for the navy at ‘Kellilace’ (Gelli-las), whilst 20 years after the closure of the abbey, men felled timber at Llantarnam for the king (Williams 1976, 90; 2001, 230).

The wider monastic estate provides a few more fragments of evidence for timbered resources. In Mynyddislwyn, early-1500s tenancy rights included access to ‘timber in the wood of the said monks to burn, fence and build by the decision of the bailiff

without making waste', indicating woodland management and measures to maintain stocks (Gray 1999, 37; *NLW*, MS 17008D). A late-sixteenth century manorial document for neighbouring Wentsland suggests wooded over-abundance across this upland catchment: 'wodd & tymber were soe plentifull there that yt was of noe valewe' and there were 'greate stoare of greate trees that laye a rottinge on the ground for want of any profitable use' (quoted in Gray 1999, 38). At Llystalybont, a 1509 lease included the 'right to take necessary timber from the wood of the monks ... for burning, enclosing, and building upon the said grange' (*NA*, SC 6/HENVIII/2497).



Figure 9.50: The enclosures of the grange occupying the Rhyswg and Cnwc ridges surrounding by woodland on the steep slopes, much of which is now secondary plantation reflecting the extent of nineteenth century woods, with some areas of old farmland now also encompassed by timber, particularly on the nearer Cnwc ridge. The fields of the Cilonydd grange can be seen on the hillside to the north (Source: Getmapping® downloaded from Digimap® under licence, <http://digimap.edina.ac.uk/>).

Established as new or expanded ring-fenced units, woodland, heath, marsh and wood-pasture featured heavily in the topography surrounding the bounds and peripheries of the granges in the case study area. This is most strikingly seen in the historic landscape of Rhyswg as Figures 9.45 and 9.50 clearly show. Gelli-las was probably a late example of newly-won cultivation from marginal land. The grange

toponym and old field-names on the 1751 farm plan signal establishment in a naturally wooded, marshy and lightly-exploited place in a flat riverine location, its meadowland (*waun*) and closes won from swampy alder carrs and reed beds. For example, the large enclosure of Gwern-y-gwartheg ('alder trees or swampy meadow of the cattle') and other *gwern* field-names suggest grazing land retaining something of a wooded marsh character at the farm's southern extent, whilst Cae'r-coed-ycha and Issa ('upper and lower wood field') standing in open ground tell of cleared timber (NLW, MS. MAPS VOLS. Lockwood Vol. 1 094/9/2). Similar field-names (and derivations of *cwr*, 'edge or border') at the northern end of Scybor Cwrt further reinforce the impression of a liminal tract demarcating the two granges, perhaps a 'no-man's land' of wet alder woods: a water-logged place, as perpetuated by the farm name Tyn y Pwll ('house of the pool').

More central to the Cwrt grange was its principal coppice wood, a 30 acre (16 ha) allotment named Le Therweis in 1539, probably partly represented by rough pasture at the northern end of the grange registered as Cae Thurwen in 1779, and remnant coppice subsequently known as Court Wood (NA, MR 1/1061; *Newport Ref*, QM310 900; Williams 1967, 142). A 1539 mention of this coppice as 'next to the park' suggests that it was a substantial arc of managed woodland between the northern extent of the abbot's park and the cultivated grange lands (Mahoney 1981, 150). A large extent of coppice within the Cefn-mynach grange historically known as Coed Mawr ('great wood') similarly represented another of the abbey's core wooded reserve.

Looking up to Mynydd Maen from these lowland granges, bands of remnant woodland such as Greenmeadow Wood and The Tranch and multiple isolated strips of wooded coverts can be seen adorning the lower slopes, often interspersed with cropland on nineteenth century mapping (Figure 9.51). Suggested is a much larger extent of ancient timber cover on the fertile silty soils of the valley slope subjected to medieval clearance (by the granges or the native tenantry). A more nuanced picture emerges, though, when an expansion of nineteenth century coppice to meet the needs of industry following an earlier wave of post-medieval denuding is considered (discussed in more detail in Chapter 10). Recent fieldwork by the Greenmeadow Woods Community Archaeology Project spanning the northern frontier of Magna

Porta has uncovered the remains of a possible farmstead, long and meandering dry-stone walls and cobbled trackways within coppice woodland settings that suggest an earlier more open and populated medieval wood-pasture landscape of small, long-standing farmsteads across the slanting abbey lands of Llanderfel and St. Dials, pre-dating the surrounding post-medieval field morphology and coppice allotments (Burchell 2011, 23-5; Parry and Logan 2010, 3).



Figure 9.51: The Tranch, Greenmeadow Wood and other remnant woodland across the lower slopes of Mynydd Maen, looking north-west (Source: author).

Higher up amidst the upland catchment of Mynydd Maen, long-used for pasture, transhumance and transit though not permanently settled, wood-pasture and denser stands of ash, beech and oak were the setting for assarting by the granges of Dorallt, Llanderfel and Rhyswg (Rackham 2007, 386; Williams 1976, 88). In such an environment, the preponderance of native beech signals a wood-pasture eco-system enabling dominance over other species (Rackham 2007, 396, 422). Such a realisation triggers a more nuanced view of the clearance activity of the granges. The *conversi* workforce were often working from a wood-pasture template on hillsides and ridges: already open tracts grazed by the dispersed native population, intermixed with small pockets of trees as well as denser stands of timber (Figure 9.52). This was not thick greenwood, more difficult to clear and better retained as a timber resource. In effect, monastic assarting was the logical final phase of a long-

term trend from greenwood to grazed wood-pasture to cleared land enclosed using the available beech in a distinctive vernacular hedging style.



Figure 9.52: Cleared beech wood-pasture of the Llanderfel shelf, looking north, assarted by the abbey grange (Source: author).

Dividing the cleared enclosures of Dorallt and Llanderfel from the remaining open grazing common stretching across the watershed above was the head dyke or mountain wall. Part of which, Clawdd-y-brawd ('gate of the brother'), marked the northern extent of abbey land along the open common edge at Cwm Bran (*Gwent Archives*, D3105.4). Sections of degraded wide wall above Craig Llywarch, based by large boulders evidencing their antiquity, are a further remnant of this important land-use demarcation (Figure 9.53). Above the wall, customary rights of both lord and tenant 'time out of mind', reaffirmed in 1634 included: 'Freedom of Common' on 'one common or waste Lands called Mynithmaen containing about One Hundred Acres' (*Gwent Archives*, D3105.4) (Figure 9.54). These high commons of heather, whinberry, bracken and summer grasses were an important resource for grange and abbey tenants alike, freighted with meaning as a forum for contact, cooperation and potential conflict with neighbouring secular populations (Donkin 1978, 95).



Figure 9.53: Boundary wall between open common of Mynydd Maen (left) and the enclosed rough pasture of Llanderfel (Source: author).



Figure 9.54: Open common of Mynydd Maen, looking north (Source: author).

Bountiful Pennant sandstone outcrops on Mynydd Maen are the probable source of stone for the abbey buildings (Mahoney 1981, 95). For instance, a quarry above the site of Henllys colliery with good access to the abbey via the Heol-y-fforest road. Another element of mountain geology here is an exposed strata of coal measure along the hill terrace above Llanderfel (Middleton 2011, 7). Lines of old pits on the open moorland north-west of Llanderfel Farm (as seen in the aerial photograph at Figure 9.37) may evidence monastic-era open-cast mining, although they could have been dug as recently as the 1920s Depression (Dovey and Waters 1956, 77;

Williams 1967, 135). The manorial survey of 1634 refers to ‘certain Coals in Landerval’s Farm’, which though not worked at this time had perhaps previously been exploited for heating the abbey (*Gwent Archives*, D3105.4; Lloyd 2006, 68).



Figure 9.55: Fallen boundary stone marked ‘M’ (for Mynyddislwyn), with ‘MP’ (Magna Porta) on the reverse (Source: author).

The heights of Mynydd Maen also hosted the western margins of Magna Porta, demarcated on the ground by a line of stones with the initials of the abutting manors carved on them, possibly more recent replacement for monastic markers (Williams 1990, 33-4) (Figure 9.55). The intriguing image of such abbey boundaries marked by wooden crosses comes from a 1659 survey of Llantarnam’s Wentsland manor to the north (*Gwent Archives*, D.749.62). The 1634 reciting of Magna Porta bounds names the cairns of Beadd-bach (‘little grave, tomb or boar’) and Carne-y-feen (‘the boundary cairn’), at the apex of the manor’s triangle of land on Mynydd Maen, which may be the ancient stone of Craig-llywarch (*Gwent Archives*, D3105.4). Described here are topographical features pre-dating the Cistercian period, perhaps ancient demarcations between the postulated earlier religious community of Saint Derfel and tribal lands in the hands of Llywarth ap Cadwgan to the west; signals of continuity with these antique land divisions (Edwards 1976, 37). This boundary line is also marked on the ground by an intermittent broad bank, flanked by ditches (Figure 9.56). Further lengthy linear banks at right angles to the manor boundary may have

had a role in medieval stock management and the demarcation of sheep walks. Similar features along the ridge of Cefn-yr-arail in Wentsland are thought to be mostly post-medieval (Hayman and Horton 2013, 7-9).



Figure 9.56: Large bank and ditches along the line of the western boundary of Magna Porta on the Mynydd Maen common, looking south-east (Source: author).

9.6 The abbey's communication network

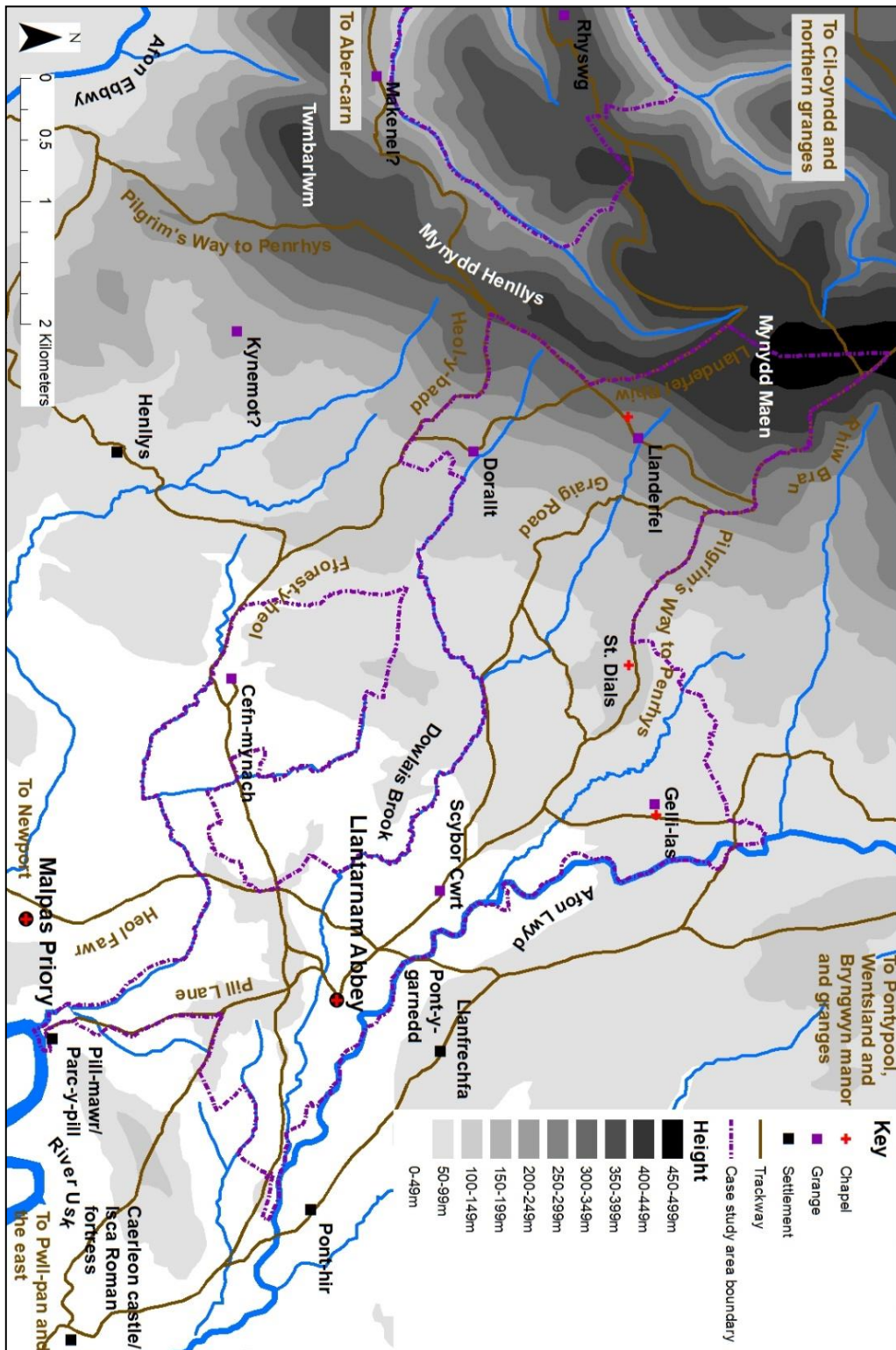


Figure 9.57: Medieval routeways around Llantarnam and Magna Porta (Source: map drawn in ArcGIS® using Ordnance Survey 1:10560 County Series 1st edition, Monmouthshire, 1887 data layer, downloaded from Digimap® under licence, <http://digimap.edina.ac.uk/>).

Figure 9.57 maps the postulated patina of medieval trackways in the case study area. The track marked as ‘Pilgrim Way’, a modern appellation, was part of a late-medieval pilgrimage route to the shrine of the Virgin Mary and healing well at the abbey’s Penrhys grange in the Rhondda via St Derfel’s chapel, high on the shoulder of Mynydd Maen.⁷⁶ The ‘Marian’ shrine at Penrhys was first recorded in 1203 but not widely popular until the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries when it became the second most revered well in Wales after Holywell (Flintshire), attracting pilgrims from ‘over sea and land’ (Hurlock 2013, 122-3; Ward 1914, 357).

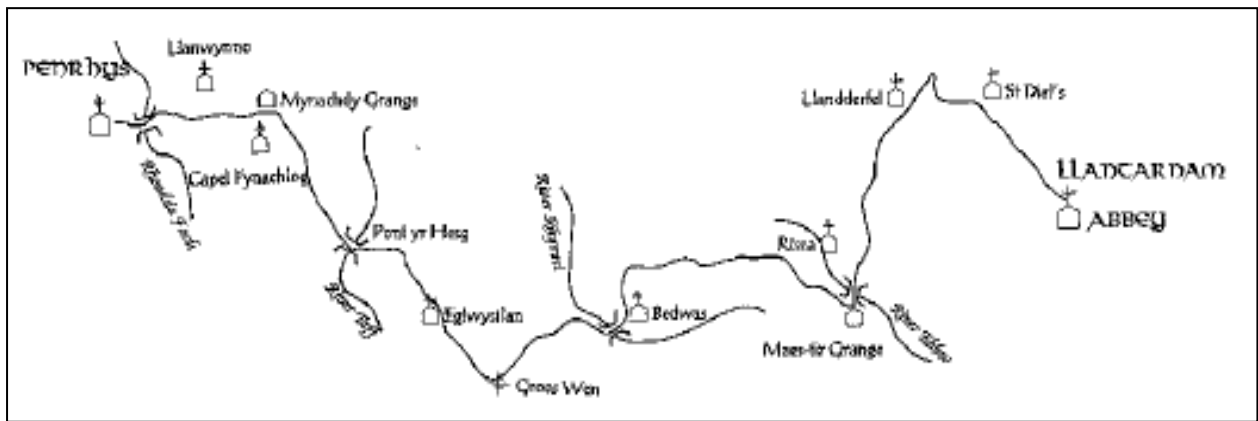


Figure 9.58: Postulated pilgrimage route from Llantarnam to Penrhys (Source: after Gray 1997b, 27).

The journey from Llantarnam to Penrhys was an arduous one across high country to reach the shrine atop a ridge known as Craig Rhiw Mynach (‘rock of the monks’ road’); such a passage furnishing the site with an added ‘aura of sacredness’ (Mahony 1981, 116; Walsham 2011, 52). Madeleine Gray (1997b, 10-11, 26) has retraced the likely itinerary – in part probably prefigured by well-established old ways contouring the hillsides to avoid the more difficult terrain of the valley floor and exposed ridge-tops – based on contemporary descriptions, local tradition, the position of wayside chapels and paths and roads in the modern historic landscape (Figure 9.58). The abbey itself was a gathering point, providing a guesthouse near the river to the north-east of the abbey (see Figure 9.24), advice and provisions for those setting out for Penrhys (*ibid.*, 11). From the original *magna porta* the route

⁷⁶ An alternative low-level and more direct initial stage, avoiding Llanderfel and the high ground of Mynydd Maen, may have passed through Cefn-mynach and Henllys on the way to Maestir grange in the Ebbw valley (Gray 1997b, 30).

passed along the old abbey approach through Llantarnam village. Its meandering line can then be traced through the modern Cwmbrân townscape and up to Llanderfel, as described in detail in the Cwmbran and Mynydd Maen and Rhyswg landscape walks at Appendix 6 (Figure 9.59).

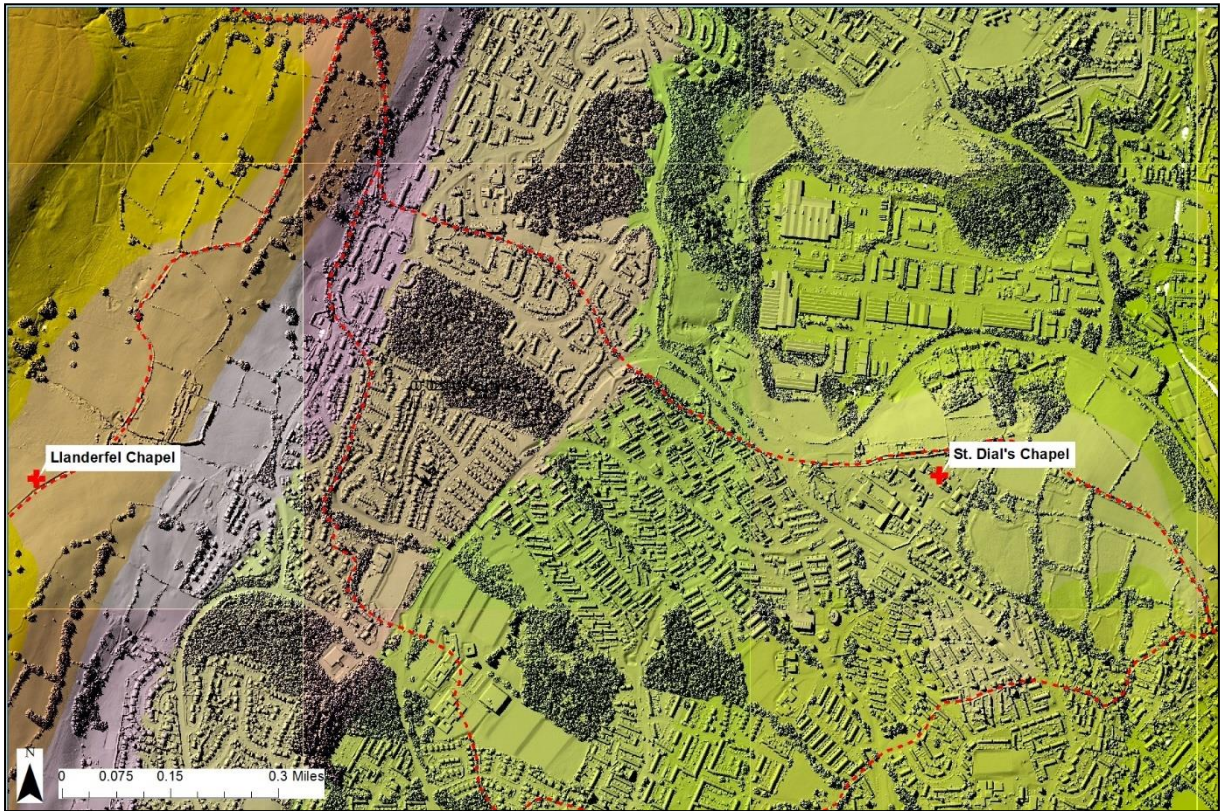


Figure 9.59: The pilgrim way to Penrhys running through the townscape of Cwmbrân to Llanderfel via St. Dials (Source: drawn in ArcGIS® using LiDAR 1m DSM data layer, downloaded from Natural Resources Wales under licence).

Passing the long-gone Scybor Cwrt along the line of the modern Llantarnam Road, pilgrims climbed a low rise to St. Dial's via a still-extant lane (*ibid.*, 25). A disused holloway, with signs of cobbling below its surface, declining to a series of footpaths and relict features through 1970s housing now carries the walker up to the Graig Road (Logan 2009, 6-7) (Figure 9.60). Here the route also formed the manor and parish boundary, demarcated by an engineered channel cut into bedrock alongside (Gray 1997b, 27-8; *ibid.*, 15). A further section of deeply sunken way, Hollow Lane,



Figure 9.60: Part of the old hollowway through Cwmbrân (Source: author).

ascends the steepening rise of Mynydd Maen, before sharply dog-legging south to follow another depressed lane to Llanderfel. A similarly old road worn deep known as Hen-rhiw, an ‘ancient force way ...which is in some parts thereof lower than the ways that are now in use’, formed part of Wentsland’s manor perambulation in 1659 (quoted in Bradney 1993d, 465-6).

Hollow Lane, overhung by outgrown beech and hawthorn, is studded with large quartz conglomerate boulders won from a band of outcropping geology, known locally as ‘pudding stones’, which, it has been suggested, were used as waymarkers and well-heads by pilgrims (Burchell 2011, 4, 33; Middleton 2011, 3) (Figure 9.61). It is

notable that such stones have been used for walling and revetments alongside many other local tracks, in buildings and field walls, perhaps cause for scepticism that they were specifically used to delineate the pilgrims’ way.

Ascending a further deep hollow above the postulated St. Derfel’s chapel site, historically known as the Slippery Way, the Pilgrim Way then traversed the Llanderfel shoulder to progress to the Ebbw valley and onward passage to Penrhys and the abbey’s more far-flung estates via a bridge at the abbey property of Maistir (Dovey and Waters 1956, 76; Gray 1997b, 21). Wayside crosses visibly symbolised the ‘economy of the sacred’, ‘Groes’ (‘cross’) place-names along the route suggesting a system of such waymarkers: remembered, for instance, by field-names alongside the roads between the abbey and Scybor Cwrt and Croes-y-Mwyalch (Gray 1997b, 26; NA, MR 1/1061; Walsham 2011, 60). Pilgrim ways rarely forged virgin trails and were never purely dedicated to this use (Gray 1997b, 24). The Llanderfel way may have been prefigured by an already well-defined easement over the *mynydd*, perhaps

linking pre-monastic religious sites, or even part of a network radiating out from Roman Caerleon (Davies 1953, 13; Week 2002, 13).

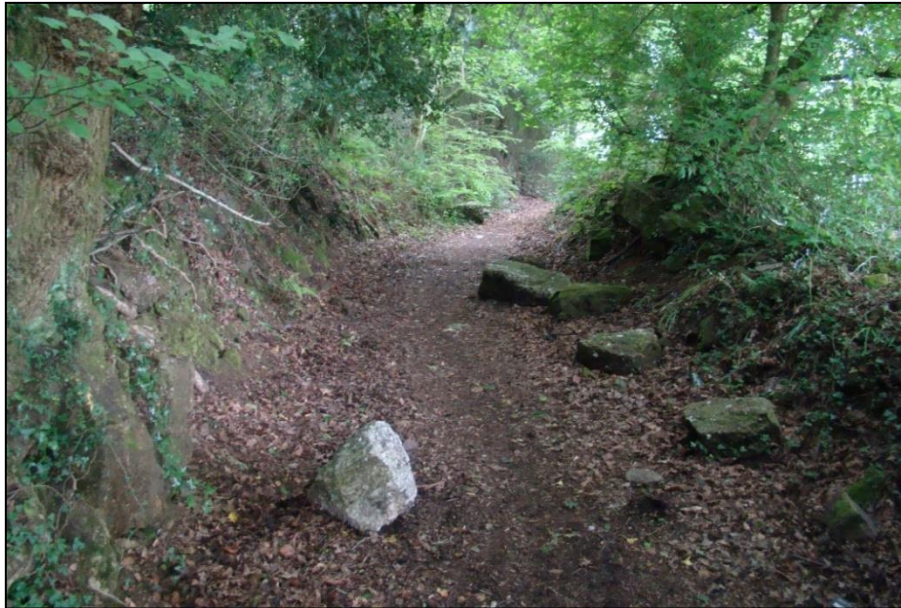


Figure 9.61: Quartz conglomerate blocks lining Hollow Lane up to Llanderfel (Source: author).



Figure 9.62: Heol-y-badd approaching Henllys Mynydd above Dorallt (Source: author).

Another important way, repeatedly mentioned in the historical record, was Heol-y-fforest ('the forest road'), a series of lanes linking Llantarnam with the upland common of Mynydd Maen and greenways across the *fforest* to Cilonydd, Rhyswg and granges further distant (Williams 1976, 88). The *heol*, cited as already ancient in 1634 and a 'horseway' in the 1720s, commenced from the crossroads at Croes-y-Mwyalch, following Pentre Lane past Cefn-mynach, then rising up through the Dorallt grange to the mountain (Gwent Archives, D3105.4; D3267.10; D3267.114). A spur off this highway, Heol-y-badd ('the grave or boar's road') bounded Dorallt land up onto Henllys Mynydd towards Heol Tablare, the road to Twmbarlwm hill-fort and *motte* occupying a

commanding position upon a knoll at the southern end of the ridge, prominent in both local sight-lines and lore (Bradney 1993a, 229; Gray 1997b, 28; *Gwent Archives*, D3105.4). A deep holloway with outgrown beech hedges and the remnants of substantial walls bounding grange land, the now rough stone surface – unbraided despite the steep climb – signals an engineered and maintained track (Figure 9.62).

Heol-y-badd connects with another manor boundary track contouring Henllys Mynydd, Heol-craig-llowarth. The manor limit then switching north uphill along a stony track named Llanderval's Rue ('hillside track', from *rhiw*) in 1634 and marked as 'old road or ditch' on the tithe map, lined by the boundary stones introduced in Section 9.5.4 and running to Beadd-bach at the head of Cwm-carn before continuing around the *cwm* over the moorland to Rhyswg (*Gwent Archives*, D3105.4; *Tithe Map*, Jones 1842) (Figure 9.63). Other sections of track forming part of the manor bounds of 1634, such as Rue Brane ('crow road') and Heol y Coed ('the wood road'), suggest that they were existing features in the landscape, conveniently used as boundaries (*Gwent Archives*, D3105.4).



Figure 9.63: 'Llanderval's Rue' approaching the head of Cwm-carn, looking north-west (Source: author).

Returning to the abbey environs, the line of the ancient pre-turnpike highway from Pontypool to Newport, Heol-fawr ('great road'), curving north of the precinct to cross the Afon Lwyd by the old bridge at Pont-y-garnedd ('bridge of the pile of stones') is

now lost to road and housing development but has previously been traced through parkland around the abbey (*Gwent Archives*, D43/M310/4600; *NA*, MR 1/1061). Unearthed during excavations at the deserted settlement site reviewed earlier, a linear earthwork interpreted as a ditched and walled road agger ran from the terminus of Abbey Lane in Llantarnam village to the abbey: the line of the old entrance-way branching off from Heol-fawr through the *magna porta* gatehouse, reduced to a field-path into the modern era (Page 1993, 25-6).



Figure 9.64: The site of the now largely silted-up tidal pool and wharf of Pill-mawr on the Usk (Source: author).

In common with other Cistercian houses in the region, the abbey traded through Bristol, where it had property and was free from toll for exporting the course wool of its sheep flocks from at least 1216 (Dugdale 1846, 727; Wakeman 1848, 342; Williams 1976, 91; 2001, 259-260). Water transport links with Bristol, and riverine fishing rights, were facilitated by the right of way forming an extended southern salient of the Magna Porta manor connecting the abbey to Pill-mawr ('great pool'), a large tidal basin on a meander in the Usk now silted up and divided from the watercourse that fed it by the A4042 trunk road (Williams 2008, 190) (Figure 9.64). On the bank of this pool, the wharf and salt-house ('Storehouse' in 1634) at Parc-y-pill (first referenced in 1536/7) still evident on the tithe map suggest an infrastructure for storage and transportation used for out-going wool and other excess produce, incoming fish, salt and perhaps grain from the abbey's main arable grange south of

the Usk at Pwl-pan (*Gwent Archives*, D3105.4; *NA*, SC 6/HENVIII/2497; *Tithe Map*, Page 1846; Williams 2001, 266).



Figure 9.65: The sunken way from the abbey to Pill-mawr, the hedge-bank to the right forming the Magna Porta manor boundary (Source: author).

The route to Pill-mawr struck south at Pen-y-Parc, initially following a green lane, which, may have formed a southerly extension of the pilgrim route discussed earlier over the large multivallate hillfort atop the scarp slope of Lodge Hill from Caerleon (Week 2002, 11). This track, 'Nac [ineligible] lane betwixt Llantarnam park and Parc-y-pil' in 1707, Pill Lane by 1779 and labelled as 'Old road' on the tithe map, branches away from the lane to Park Farm and descends as a well-defined sunken way tracking the Magna Porta boundary to the river pool (Bradney 1993a, 236; *Gwent Archives*, D3105.4; *Tithe Map*, Morris 1840; *Tithe Map*, Page 1846) (Figure 9.65). A substantial hedge-bank laden with quantities of stone and 1779 field-names along Pill Lane – Caer Hendu ('old black wall') and Cae Maen ('stone field') – hint at an ancient wall

along the road and manor boundary here (*NA*, MR 1/1061). The final section to Pill-mawr was postulated as medieval on investigation prior to the construction of the A4042 (*GGAT*, 10596g; Yates 1998, 6).

9.7 Contemporary medieval perceptions of the landscape

Caerleon was noted by Gerald of Wales as retaining 'many vestiges of its one-time splendour', the district 'surrounded by woods and meadows' when he rode between Usk and Cardiff on his journey through Wales in 1188, though no mention was made of the new abbey nearby by this fierce critic of the Cistercian Order (Burton and Kerr

2011, 187; Thorpe 1978, 114-5). At the twilight of the monastic era, John Leland, already quoted, had more to say about Llantarnam in the late-1530s, describing the route to Penrhys ‘where the pilgrimage was’ through a landscape ‘well pastured and woodi’, passing Mynachdy grange and noting timber bridges on the way (Toulmin-Smith 1906, 13-16). He described Penrhys as a village with grange farm, hospice and chapel, unusual for its upland setting (Gray 2011, 249; Hurlock 2013, 125).

Perhaps the most striking medieval dispatches on Llantarnam’s monastic landscape are found in the verses of Welsh poets. A famous sixteenth century bard already met, Sawnder Sion, ‘the lion of the monastery of Deuma’, was said to be buried at the abbey and may have been its resident poet, a feature of Welsh-leaning houses (Williams 2001, 145). This archaic abbey name also illuminates the work of Ieuan ap Huw Cae Llwyd who praised the abbey of ‘Fair Deauma’ and its shrine at Penrhys (Williams 1976, 86). In a long-form *awdl*, Lewys Glyn Cothi compared the abbey to that at Evesham (Worcestershire) in its fertility and abundance, praising the claustral buildings (Evans 2008, 296-7). Such verses perhaps recited atop Twmbarlwm, celebrated as a traditional bardic meeting-place (Mee 1951, 56).

The landscape around Penrhys in particular comes to life through surviving late-medieval poems venerating the shrine, constructing ‘a clear sense of place and the natural environment’ (Gray 2011, 251; Robinson 2006, 249; Williams 2004, 11). Contemporary poetry tells of large numbers of pilgrims making the journey to this holy place, many drawn from the poor and the sick, the shrine host to, in Gwilym Tew’s words, ‘the prayer of the labourers’ (quoted in Williams 2001, 149). Lewis Morgannwg, recalling a 1460 visit for healing of the ague, spoke of a wooded environment where ‘a miracle was discovered of yore in the woods’, elsewhere describing Penrhys as in ‘a meadow on the edge of the forest ... a moor of green trees’ on ‘the mountain’s brow’ (quoted in Ward 1914, 395, 402-4) (Figure 9.66). Later in the century, Gwilym Tew confirmed the shrine as an *ynis* (‘island’) ‘on the nose’ of a timbered tract, essaying the morphology of the high narrow ridge between deep valleys on which it stood amongst meadows (quoted in Gray 2011, 248; *ibid.*, 398; Williams 1976, 80). Llywelyn ap Hywel ab Ieuan’s similarly proclaimed ‘a goodly place is the summit and its wooded slope ... a virgin sanctuary beside the high wood’ (*ibid.*, 250).



Figure 9.66: The remains of the chapel at Penrhys and modern shrine to the Virgin Mary in its meadow setting on a ridge high above the Rhondda valleys (Source: author).

9.9 Conclusion

Established as a bulwark against further Anglo-Norman incursion into South Wales and a statement of native cultural modernity by Welsh nobles of Caerleon and the Cistercians of Strata Florida, Llantarnam Abbey was perhaps fated to languish in the shadow of more powerful neighbouring monasteries bankrolled by ascendant Norman barons. Never a particularly prosperous house, and often subject to exploitation by adjoining lords and disputes over land, the abbey, nevertheless, maintained substantial landed estates across a wide arc of territory from the plains of the lower Afon Lwyd and Ebbw valleys to the mountainous north of Glamorgan and Gwent. Across these varied contexts, Llantarnam established a diverse assemblage of colonising and transforming granges, some specialising in managing sheep and cattle, others important grain producers.

This diversity was reflected in the case study granges, set within the Magna Porta manor incorporating the abbey precinct. Along the flood-plain of the Afon Lwyd, the abbey's home granges forged well-drained productive meadows and champion fields from previously marginal marshy alder woods. Higher up, on the ridges and hillsides of Mynydd Maen, timber-lands and wood-pasture were converted into sheep and

cattle stations. Whether by design or compromise, this rich topographical and land-use brew would enable the Cistercians to reach an accommodation with their settled neighbours and tenants who largely retained their pastoral economy on the sloping lands, whilst allowing the abbey to forge ahead with a higher intensity model of farming that brought previously marginal or lightly exploited terrain into more productive use. Juxtaposed with the pioneer monastic farms, these communities managed their dispersed farmsteads probably little disturbed by abbey lordship, transforming their micro landscapes in smaller increments. What this resident population thought of their pious lords is not recorded, but the abbey provided stable work for lay brethren, servants and their families at grange and precinct, and the (largely Welsh) monks' allegiance to the native cause likely saw greater integration than more aloof Anglo-Norman establishments such as Llanthony and Tintern.

Across this network of farming units, trackways to move produce, provisions, materials, people and stock were vital arteries. Southwards to the quayside at Pill-mawr to link with the tidal Usk, enabling transportation by water to the wider world. North and westwards up and over Mynydd Maen to the upland granges, repeating and rebooting the movement along the old ways of transhumance. This flow of humanity was added to by pilgrims following the road to the mountains *en route* to the abbey's venerated, and financially valuable, shrine and holy well at Penrhys, three days across the uplands and valleys to the west. Wayside chapels along the route remain in the landscape, through the place-name of St. Dials and the built remains at Llanderfel. As late-monastic era pilgrims walked from the abbey to Llanderfel they would pass the well-tended pasture, cornfields and orchards of the granges, now mostly in the stewardship of aspiring yeoman tenants rather than directly-managed by the White Monks, but also a still well-wooded landscape with many enclosed coppices and tracts of remaining wood-pasture, the bosky environment enhanced by the considerable acres of the abbot's park south of the abbey precinct.

Chapter 10

Case study 3: Llantarnam Abbey - the post-Dissolution landscape

10.1 History of the abbey and its estates since the Dissolution



Figure 10.1: Llantarnam Abbey, seat of Sir Henry Protheroe, Bart, artist unknown, circa 1828; William Morgan's Tudor house before rebuilding in 1834 (Source: © National Library of Wales).

Llantarnam Abbey's initial fate was disuse, partly because – the church of St. Michaels, a few fields away, already serving the parish – it had no ongoing formal religious function. The old abbey lay uninhabited and partly dismantled until granted to John Parker, an esquire of the king's stables, for an annuity of £10 in 1539 (Dovey and Waters 1956, 65, 69). Parker, who probably leased the property initially then purchased the abbey site, Magna Porta and all other estates and holdings for £100.0.14 (Bradney 1993a, 227; Mahoney 1981, 150). Meanwhile, across the Glamorgan hills at Penrhys, the image of the Virgin – a magnet for pilgrims – was taken down and burnt in London with other prominent symbols of Catholic iconoclasm (Ward 1914, 392).

At Parker's death without issue in 1552 the estate reverted to the Crown. Granted to land speculators in 1554, the abbey itself and Gelli-las grange were immediately sold on to William Morgan, lord of Caerleon, MP for Monmouthshire and resident of the former abbey grange at Pentre-bach (Mahoney 1981, 150). Morgan, bailiff of Llantarnam's Abercarn and Mynyddislwyn manors, had long coveted the abbey and set about re-uniting the monastery with its former estates, purchasing Magna Porta (with neighbouring Edlogan manor) in 1558 (Bradney 1993a, 227). Granted Mynyddislwyn township and the manors of Abercarn and Wentsland with Bryngwyn in 1560, William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke soon sold these lordships on to Morgan, who, with the acquisition of the Penrhys lands, now enjoyed ownership of all former abbey property (*ibid.*, 228, 242; Ward 1914, 383; Williams 1975, 115).

With the former monastic domains coalesced intact into his hands, Morgan set about constructing a mansion at Llantarnam incorporating materials from the ruinous abbey (Figure 10.1). Moving his family seat there demonstrated wealth, local importance and commitment to the old faith; no doubt also a feeling of continuity with his ancestors, as the Morgans claimed descent from the abbey's founder, Hywel ap Iorwerth (Mahoney 1981, 154-6). An annex to St. Michael's church was also built as a family chapel using arches from the old abbey (Bradney 1993a, 243; Coxe 1801, 119; *ibid.*, 111). Old chapels and monasteries often became rallying points for recusants and Morgan's Llantarnam and the surrounding district remaining a stronghold of Catholicism after the Reformation (Mahoney 1981, 160; Walsham 2011, 202). Local tradition long maintained that a residual clandestine religious community clung on at both Llantarnam and Penrhys, the isolated former shrine high up on its wooded ridge a sanctuary in the hills (Davies 1953, 136; Williams 2007, 67). A 'full choir of monks' was recorded at Penrhys in 1550, though, in all likelihood, the estate – leased to a lay tenant after the Dissolution – was too meagre to support any ongoing monastic community (quoted in Williams 2001, 87). The volume of wayfarers soon sharply declined, to the extent that the impact on the Penrhys tavern was investigated (Hurlock 2013, 123, 127). Morgan did, though, encourage continuing visitation to the site, the well there long revered for curing ailments in local folklore (Williams 2004, 14-15) (Figure 10.2).



Figure 10.2: The holy well at Penrhys (Source: author).

William Morgan's son, Edward, inherited all the former abbey lands on his father's death in 1582, except the by now disposed of Penrhys (Bradney 1993a, 228; Ward 1914, 384). MP for the county as his father and a baronet, he was convicted of recusancy in 1605 and forfeited two-thirds of his landed rents to the Crown. By his death in 1653, Sir Edward Morgan's whole estate had been sequestered due to his Catholicism and support of the royalist cause. The second baronet, also Edward, successfully petitioned for the return of the ancestral estates in 1654, subsequently inherited by his two daughters in 1682 who partitioned the Morgan bequest in 1707: Frances taking the Llantarnam seat, Magna Porta and Wentsland and Bryngwyn; Anne, who never married, yielding Edlogan manor, Pwll-pan and other possessions (Bradney 1993a, 230-3). Frances married Edmund Bray, a member of the Gloucestershire gentry, and Llantarnam and the inherited estates passed through her daughter's line to the Blewitt's by marriage.

By the late-eighteenth century, the old Morgan pile was no longer permanently occupied, the residual Llantarnam Abbey Estate subject to dispute between members of the Blewitt family (*ibid.*, 238-9; Coxe 1801, 119). As the 1779 estate plan demonstrates, significant portions of the Magna Porta manor had by now been sold off, including the old granges of Gelli-Las and Llanderfel (NA, MR 1/1061). Indentures, leases and marriage settlements into the early-eighteen hundreds speak

of further fragmentation of the estate, with the former granges of Bryngwyn, Cilonydd and Pwll-pan also leased or disposed of and legal disputes over Magna Porta moiety (*Gwent Archives*, D43/M310; Week 2006, 8). Matters came to a head when a private Act of Parliament of 1810 partitioned the estates and manors bequeathed by Frances Bray. The manor of Wentsland and Bryngwyn divided amongst another branch of Bray's descendants, Llantarnam Abbey house and Magna Porta passed into the hands of the troubled Edward Blewitt, who instigated an arrest order for debt against the present occupier Sir Henry Protheroe in 1817 (*Gwent Archives*, D43/M310/309).



Figure 10.3: Aerial view of Blewitt's 1834 mansion and gardens (Source: Getmapping® downloaded from Digimap® under licence, <http://digimap.edina.ac.uk/>).

Fuelled by the zeal and self-confidence of the age and his class, Edward's son, Reginald, demolished the Elizabethan edifice of the old Morgan line and constructed a new Gothic mansion and grounds in the mid-1830s (Figure 10.3). By the 1850s, the Blewitt family were, though, in considerable financial difficulty, with Edward now residing in France and an 1856 indenture transferring his property to the Monmouthshire and Glamorganshire Banking Company, trustees taking over responsibility for the Llantarnam Abbey Estate; the same year as the 'lunacy of Edward Francis Blewitt' was legally confirmed (*Gwent Archives*, D43/M310/4704;

D43/M310/4597; D43/M310/4652). Estate income would now become dependent on exploitation of its lucrative mineral resources and industrial potential as outlined in Section 10.2.4.

In 1884 the once vast Llantarnam Abbey Estate, now reduced to the main house and seven farms across 600 hectares including the former granges of Court and Pentrebach, was put up for sale by the trustees, excepting mineral rights on Mynydd Maen and beyond (*Gwent Archives*, D43/M310/4646). James Williams, of nearby Crumlin Hall, purchased the house, park and Ty-isha farmstead for the modest sum of £15,000 in 1888, selling on to Sir Clifford Cory, a Cardiff coal and shipping magnet in 1895, whilst the other estate farms were broken up (Bradney 1993a, 238; Lloyd 2006, 46). Lordship rights to Magna Porta were sold separately to Richard Parfitt, a Newport iron merchant (*Gwent Archives*, D54/0292).

Now firmly in the hands of local industrialists, the estate was increasingly used for recreation rather than agriculture, as evidenced by Cory's habitation of the house as a country retreat from London, the park replete with a polo ground (Page 1994, 43). Industrialisation had progressively characterised the former abbey territory around Llantarnam since the middle nineteenth-century, with the establishment of the new town of Cwmbrân from the late 1940s increasing urban development apace (a story told in Section 10.2.4). Cory died as a recluse in 1940 and the house was then sold to the state, utilised by the Ministry of War for 'ordnance purposes', US and Indian troops stationed in the parkland around the mansion (John 2007, 120). After World War Two, the property was taken on by the Sisters of St. Joseph Annecy and the listed mansion remains a nunnery to this day, the adjacent village of Llantarnam transitioned into one of 'the half-and-half places near the big towns', a suburban dormitory between Newport and Cwmbrân (Dovey and Waters 1956, 159; Phillips 1951, 97). This echo of medieval monasticism is repeated at Penrhys, where a new statue of the Virgin, erected in 1953 amidst a revival of pilgrimage to the site, now stands in the shadow of a municipal housing estate which, having initially won praise, has since become a symbol of social deprivation in the de-industrialised South Wales valleys (Davies 1993, 659; Dodds 2002, 65).

10.2 Post-Dissolution landscape evolution

Figures 10.4 to 10.6 capture the landscape and land-use of the Magna Porta and Rhyswg estates as they had developed by the mid-nineteenth century in the finely-grained detail of tithe maps; reference points for the narrative that now follows. The map and accompanying analysis are based on the landscape walks and other field observation carried out for this project, contemporary and early post-medieval documents, analysis of field systems and other landscape features using map regression, aerial photography and satellite imagery, previous archaeological and historical research and clues in place- and field-names. A more detailed outline of the methodology and sources used to produce this map can be found in Appendix 2.

Time and again through the late-sixteenth into the nineteenth century, documents and maps demonstrate that the core units of the Magna Porta manor remained constant: the Llantarnam Abbey Estate slowly taking ascendancy as the main mechanism of estate management. Over 3500 acres (1420 ha.), the estate encompassed the ancient abbey granges of Cefn-mynach (now Pentre-bach) and Scybor Cwrt (now Court Farm), parkland around the old precinct, the abbey mill, meadow and pasture on the abbey plain farmed from Ty-issaf, the farms at Pen-y-parc and Pill-mawr wharf, around 1,500 acres (600 ha.) of arable land, 500 acres (200 ha.) of coppice woodlands and the mountain common of Mynydd Maen (*Gwent Archives*, D43/M310/4531; D43/M310/4642; MAN/E/133/0054; NA, MR 1/1061; SC 6/HENVIII/2497; *Tithe Map*, Page 1846). The 1846 tithe apportionment confirmed that Edward Blewitt retained all tithes of corn and grain and many of the rents from the other farms and small-holdings of the Llanfihangel Llantarnam parish which largely mirrored the tenanted territory of the monastic manor (*Tithe Map*, Page 1846). The less valuable holdings of Gelli-las and Llanderfel had by then been disposed of and broken-up into smaller hill-farm units respectively.

The following maps portray a countryside experiencing the first creepings of industry, dominated by often large arable fields across lower-lying ground, with the smaller – though still largely regular – fields of multiple mixed farms ranged along the hillsides and ridges. Woodland, in coppices often valuable for industrial utility, and remnant wood-pasture are still plentiful, in some cases reconfigured on previously farmed

land. On the steep slopes around Rhyswg, however, large swathes of the native woodlands have been denuded to rough pasture. Parkland trees and pasture denote a reinvented recreational designed landscape around the abbey precinct, the furthest extents of the old monastic park to the south now a mix of arable fields and cover for game.

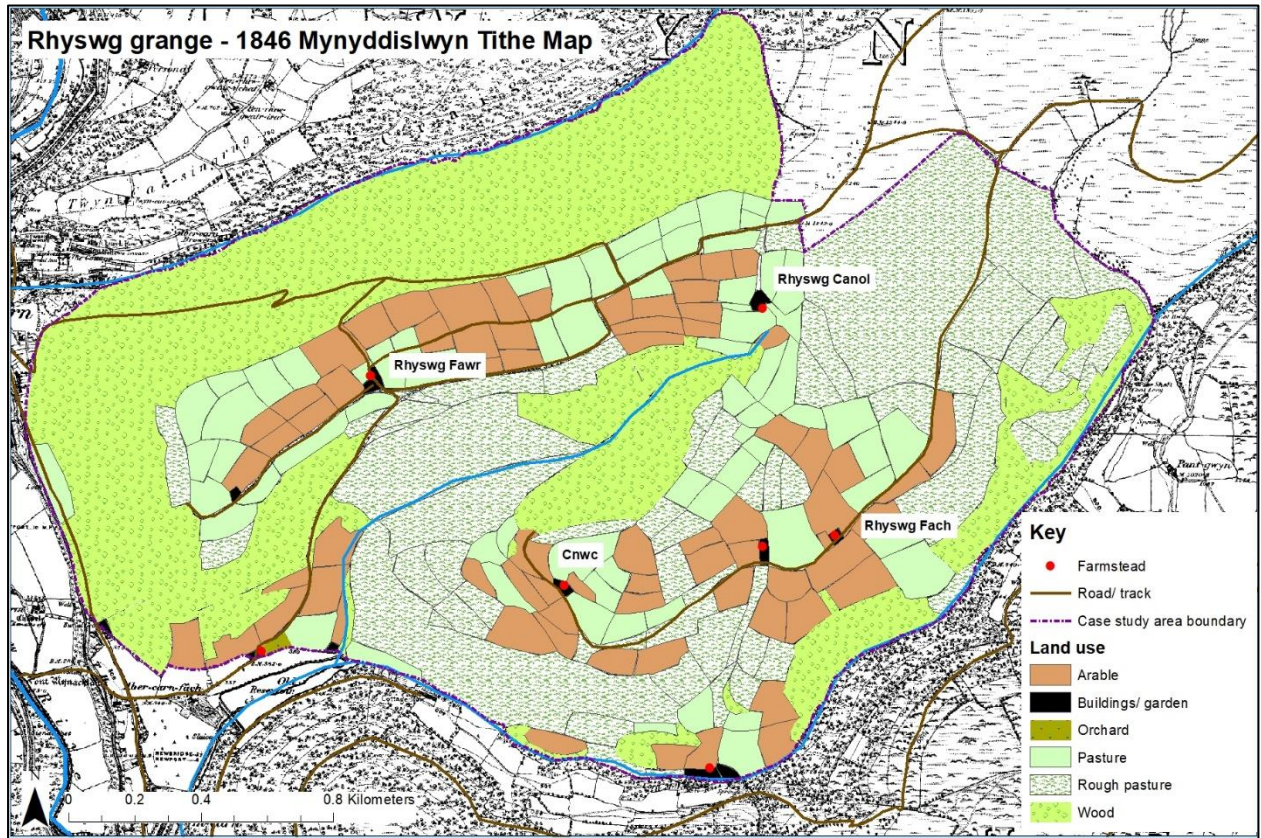


Figure 10.4: Rhyswg grange - land-use and field patterns from the 1846 Mynyddislwyn Tithe Map (Source: map drawn in ArcGIS® using Ordnance Survey 1:10560 County Series 1st edition, Monmouthshire, 1887 data layer, downloaded from Digimap® under licence, <http://digimap.edina.ac.uk/>).

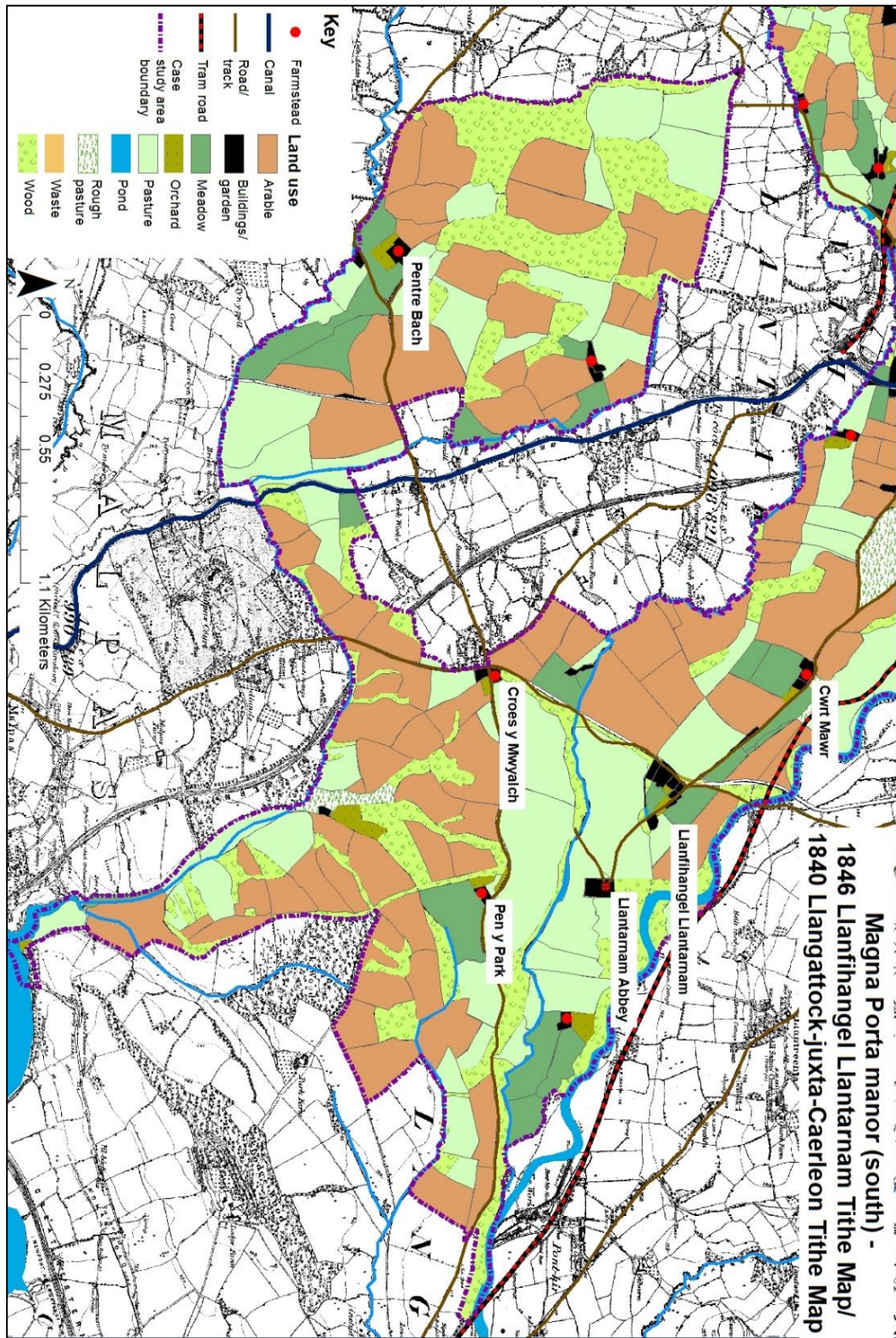


Figure 10.5: Southern part of Magna Porta manor - land-use and field patterns from the 1846 Llanfihangel Llantarnam and 1840 Llangattock-juxta-Caerleon Tithe Maps (Source: map drawn in ArcGIS® using Ordnance Survey 1:10560 County Series 1st edition, Monmouthshire, 1887 data layer, downloaded from Digimap® under licence, <http://digimap.edina.ac.uk/>).

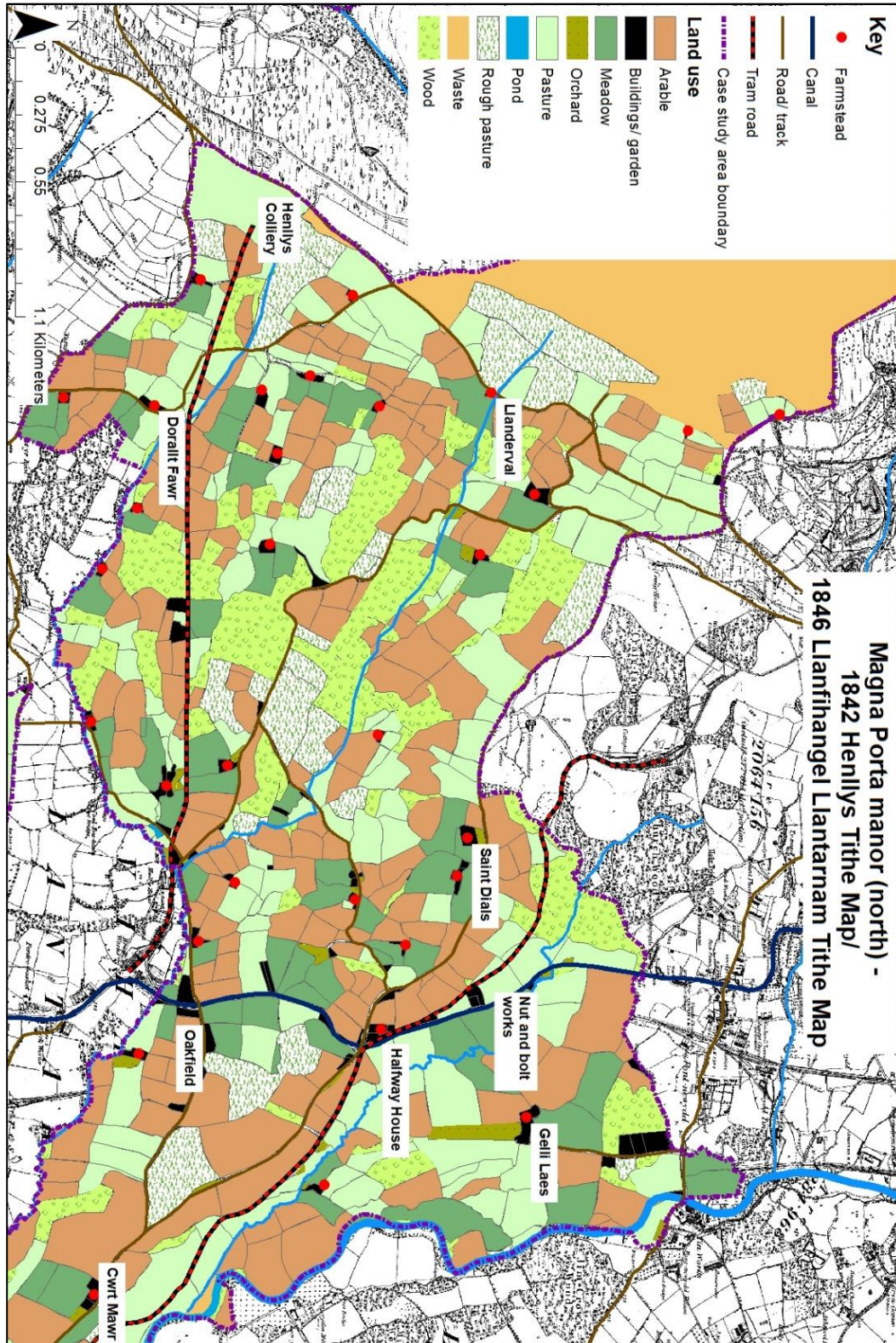


Figure 10.6: Northern part of Magna Porta manor - land-use and field patterns from the 1842 Henllys and 1846 Llanfihangel Llantarnam Tithe Maps (Source: map drawn in ArcGIS® using Ordnance Survey 1:10560 County Series 1st edition, Monmouthshire, 1887 data layer, downloaded from Digimap® under licence, <http://digimap.edina.ac.uk/>).

10.2.1 The abbey precinct and park



Figure 10.7: Lamtermham [sic] Abbey, artist unknown, circa 1830. A rare image of William Morgan's now replaced Tudor mansion (Source: © National Library of Wales).

Within months of the suppression, the dismantling of the abbey architecture commenced with bells and lead taken away, although there is no record of complete demolition or sale of stone from the buildings (Mahoney 1981, 188; Williams 1976, 87). Nearly 20 years after the abbey closed, the shell – its fabric perhaps by now robbed and much reduced – was incorporated into a new mansion raised by William Morgan (Robinson 2006, 3; *Cistercians York*) (Figure 10.7). The post-Dissolution story of Llantarnam would be one of transformation from the high-status residence of the abbot and his monks into a similarly luxurious seat of local gentry (*ibid*, 220).

This Tudor house, repurposing material and some of the architectural integrity of the medieval abbey, was constructed around a cloister garth, suggesting it replicated the footprint of the ancient church (Dugdale 1846, 728; Mahoney 1981, 154). William Morgan's *Inquisition post mortem* of 1582 implies retained physical elements and a strong memory of the medieval abbey and its core *demesne* and environs: 'late of the monastery of Lantarnem ... all the church, tower and burying ground of the same with all the houses and buildings and of and in one garden and one orchard belonging and adjacent to the same site and of and in one messuage or tenement with the appurtenances called Skyborycourt part of the demesne lands of the same

monastery of Lantarnam and of and in one parcel of pasture called the Park and of and in one parcel of wood called Letherwas' (translated in Mahoney 1981, 152-3). A stable complex, still standing in 1779, is thought to have occupied the former cloister (Bradney 1993a, 239). Edward Morgan, William's son, 'in a fayre house dwells two miles from Caerleon' commented Thomas Churchyard in 1587 (quoted in Mahoney 1981, 162). 300 years later, Archdeacon Coxe (1801, 118) visited an ancient and decayed dwelling, its gardens surrounded with high and massive walls:

'The present mansion appears to have been finished in the time of Queen Elizabeth, from the old materials of the abbey ... a large antiquated mansion, damp, dreary, and having been long un-tenanted, exhibits an appearance of gloom and decay, rendered still more melancholy by a few traces of former magnificence.'

The outer precinct and old monastic park were incorporated into a gentry-designed landscape, Llantarnam Park, surrounding Morgan's dwelling. It may be that the deserted medieval settlement or abbey infrastructure identified in Chapter 9 was cleared or moved as part of this expansion and reconfiguration (Lloyd 2006, 61; Page 1993, 23, 42). When the bounds of Magna Porta were surveyed in 1634, the area south of Pen-y-parc farm down to the valley of the Clements stream was remembered as the Old Park (*Gwent Archives*, D3105.4).⁷⁷ Later, during the 1707 partitioning of the Llantarnam estates, 81 acres of 'the park lands', 'the Lawn in the park' and 'remnant of the park' were recorded, the southern extremities of the old abbot's park outside of the parish now divided from this contemporary formalised parkland (Bradney 1993a, 233). Archdeacon Coxe (1801, 118) described a park 'swelling into gentle undulations of rich pasture, and interspersed with thick plantations and dark avenues, which make a conspicuous figure in the adjoining landscape.'

⁷⁷ The survey also referenced the neighbouring King's Park of the Caerleon lordship considered in the previous chapter. Granted to William Herbert in 1550 and indicated on Speed's Monmouthshire county map as a circular wooded enclosure, it would later become the post-medieval farmland of Park and Lodge farms (Hawkyard and Nicolson 1995, 126; Yates 1998, 5, 7).

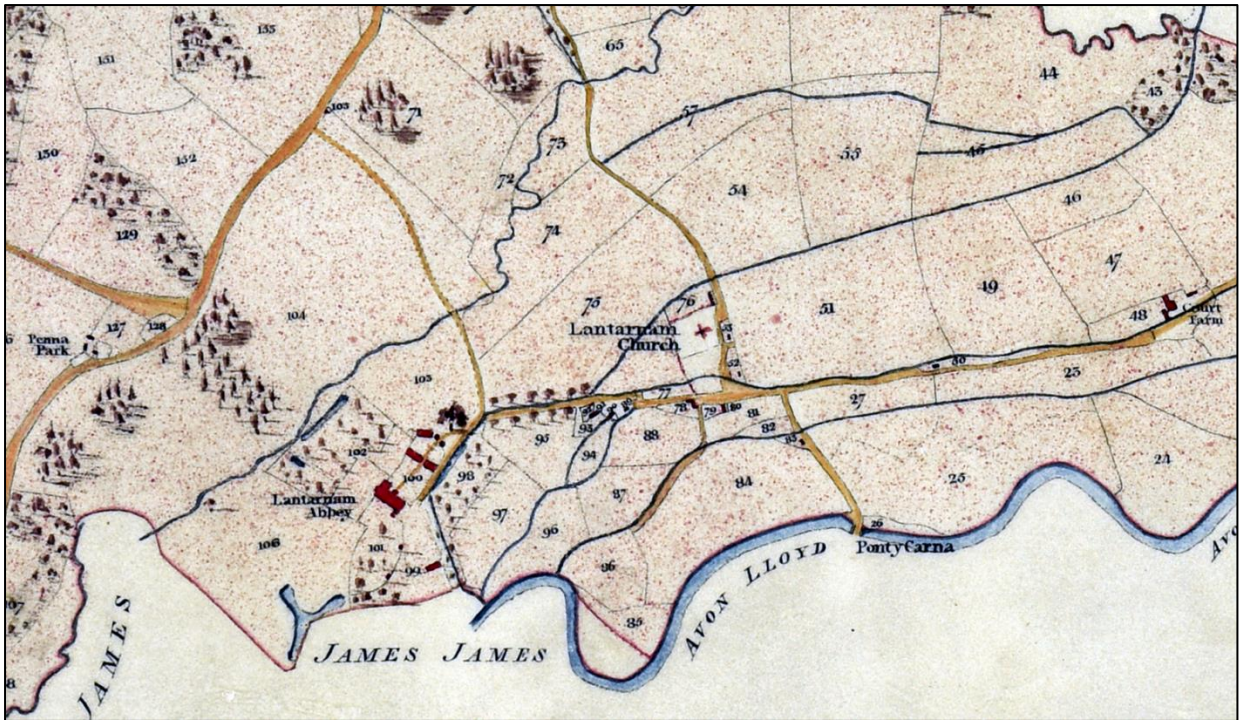


Figure 10.8: Detail of Llantarnam Abbey and its surroundings from Aram's 1779 Llantarnam Abbey Estate Map (Source: National Archives, MR 1/1061, digital copy purchased).

Former features of the abbey remained memorialised in field-names around the mansion, as depicted on the 1779 estate map (Figure 10.8) and listed in Chapter 9. The Parlour Garden and Orchard included a remnant fishpond alongside the Dowlais Brook, with a three-sided lake in The Warren perhaps the site of another monastic pond (Mahoney 1981, 101). 'Lawn' pastures to the west of the abbey flag the 'grass ground' and woodland glades indicative of William Morgan's surviving parkland (Field 1989, 272; NA, MR 1/1061). Further out into the surrounding countryside south of the abbey, abundant references to 'cover' illustrate land overgrown with shrubs to provide shelter for game: a landscape of hunting as well as agriculture, signalling continuity, however unconsciously, with the abbot's medieval park (Field, 1989, 268; NA, MR 1/1061). Set in a wooded corner of this outer parkland, a long-destroyed cottage called 'the Wilderness' constructed of hand-made bricks was probably used as a forest lodge or rustic folly (GGAT HER, 05192G/ 03646g).

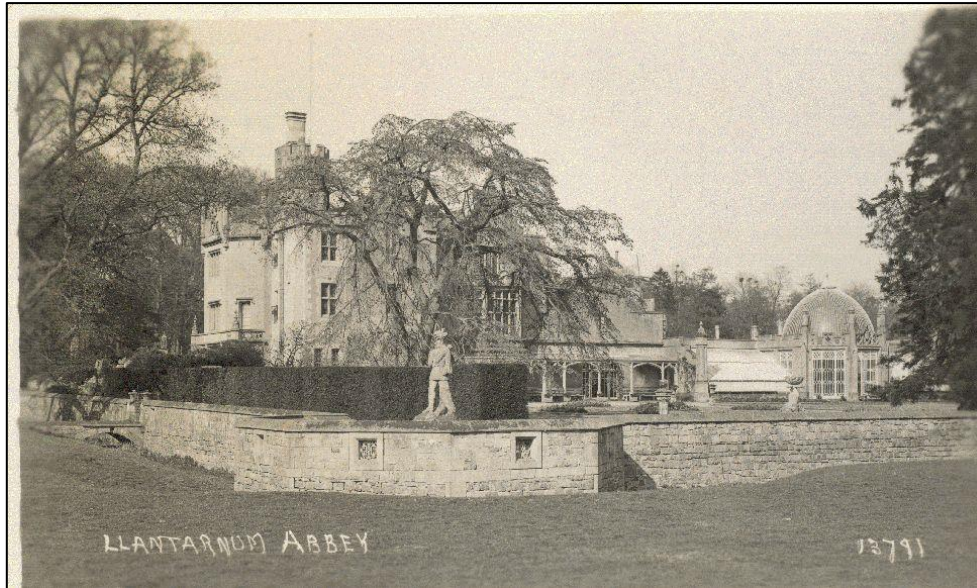


Figure 10.9: An early-twentieth century postcard of Blewitt's mansion (Source: © Crown copyright, Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales Coflein NMR, www.coflein.gov.uk).

Reginald Blewitt, MP for Newport and descended from the Morgan family, was responsible for the sweeping reconstruction of Llantarnam Abbey in the 1830s at the considerable cost of £60,000 (Cadwell 1979, 16) (Figure 10.9). Designed in an Elizabethan vernacular style by T.H. Wyatt, the still-extant Bath stone-built house is graced with notable entrance arches to off-set its 'sheer, artless bulk' and may include some original medieval remnants from the abbey in its fabric (*Coflein NMR*, 307898; *GGAT HER*, 00624g; Newman 2002, 27, 65, 337). Alongside the new edifice, the gardens, grounds and surrounding fields were also remodelled (Figure 10.10). Transformation from a rustic and functional gentry setting to a more formal designed landscape may have swept away any last vestiges of the monastic precinct's morphology: Victorian representation of the past through destruction. The most dramatic change was the demolition of the Gothic 'Magna Porta' gateway which Coxe had observed, although his noting of a porch in the gate dated 1588 suggests that this was, in fact, a feature of William Morgan's mansion, probably at the entrance to its courtyard, rather than the original abbey gatehouse (Mahoney 1981, 188; Williams 2001, 91). A new Tudor-style gate and lodge with the same name was raised in 1836 on the recently constructed Turnpike straightening the old Newport to Pontypool highway, connecting to the house by a drive that has become

the main entrance, a park wall tracking the revised line of the road (Bowden and Roberts 2012, 45; Bradney 1993a, 240; *GGAT HER*, 00624g) (Figure 10.11).

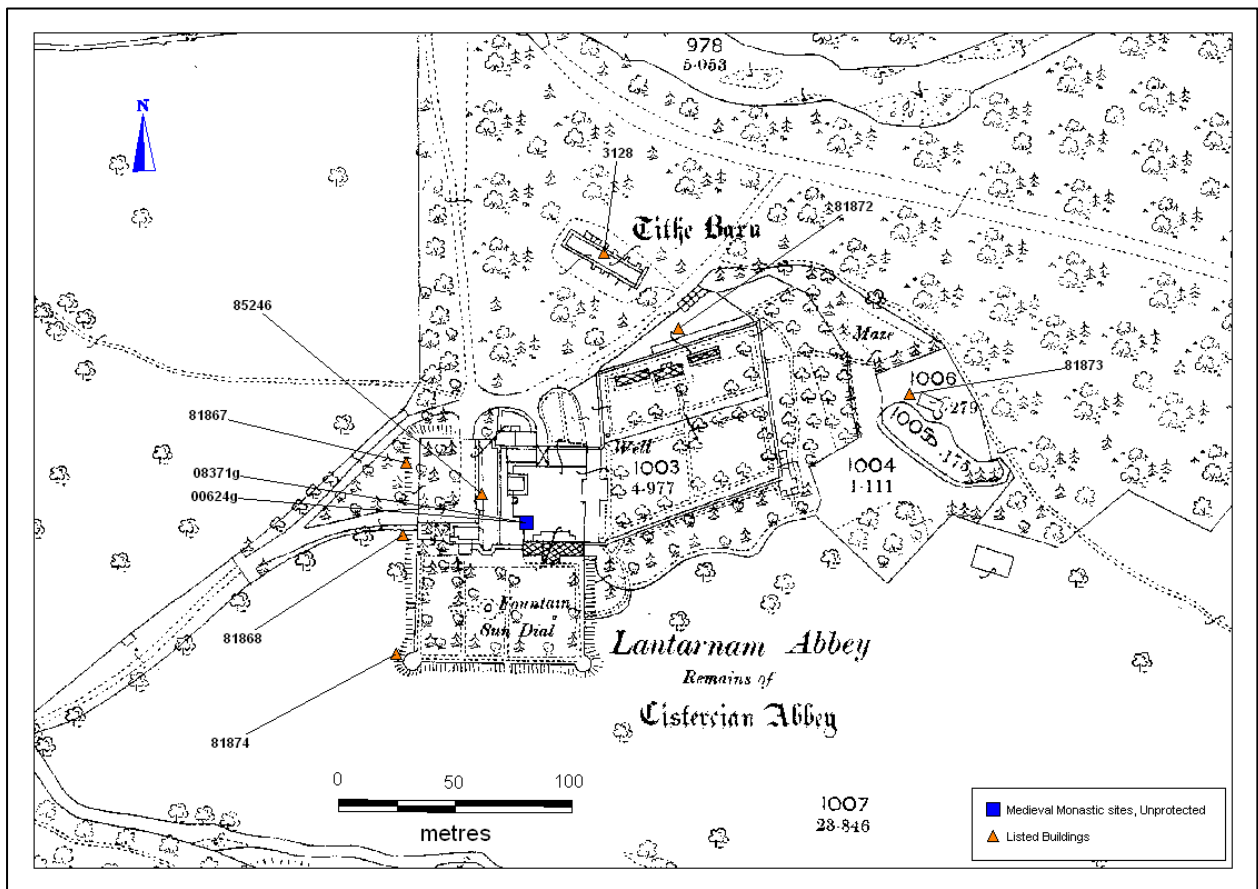


Figure 10.10: Features of the nineteenth century house and gardens recorded in the Coflein NMR and Glamorgan and Gwent Archaeological Trust HER (Source: after Bowden and Roberts 2012, 45; © Crown copyright, Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust, Landmark Information Group and Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historic Monuments of Wales).



Figure 10.11: The new and repositioned 'Magna Porta' gatehouse of 1836, through which the new driveway met the straightened Turnpike road (Source: author).

The abbey grounds laid out by Blewitt have been included in Cadw's *Register of Landscapes Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in Wales* as they retain an almost intact mid-nineteenth century garden and park of 32 hectares (Figure 10.12). Much of the garden layout and planting survives, including a walled kitchen garden laid out on a rectangular bastioned plan (Whittle 1994, 80-2). Fronting the house, the main formal garden is bounded by stone bridges, a dry moat and low walls, providing open vistas into the surrounding pastures (*GGAT HER*, 00626g). The garden incorporates stone statues (including a pilgrim) which may be of seventeenth century origin (Whittle 1994, 82). Ponds, greenhouses, a maze, pavilion, fountain and other contrived antiquity complete the scene (*Coflein NMR*, 266020).

A statue of a praying monk now found in the kitchen garden originally stood in a grotto built *circa* 1905 when Sir Clifford Cory upgraded the house and grounds (Robinson 2006, 250). Known as the Monk's Cell – a further reference to the abbey's heritage – the grotto was built on the site of a ruinous building of the same name thought to include stonework of possible monastic provenance (Bradney 1993a, 239; Newman 2002, 338) (Figure 10.13). Used as a changing room for polo and

subsequently a gardener's residence, it overlooked Swan Lake, three-sided on the 1779 plan, subsequently drained and now partly filled-in (*Coflein NMR*, 410524).



Figure 10.12: Boundary of the Cadw designated park and garden (Source: © Archwilio: Historic Environment Records of the Welsh Archaeological Trusts, www.archwilio.org.uk).

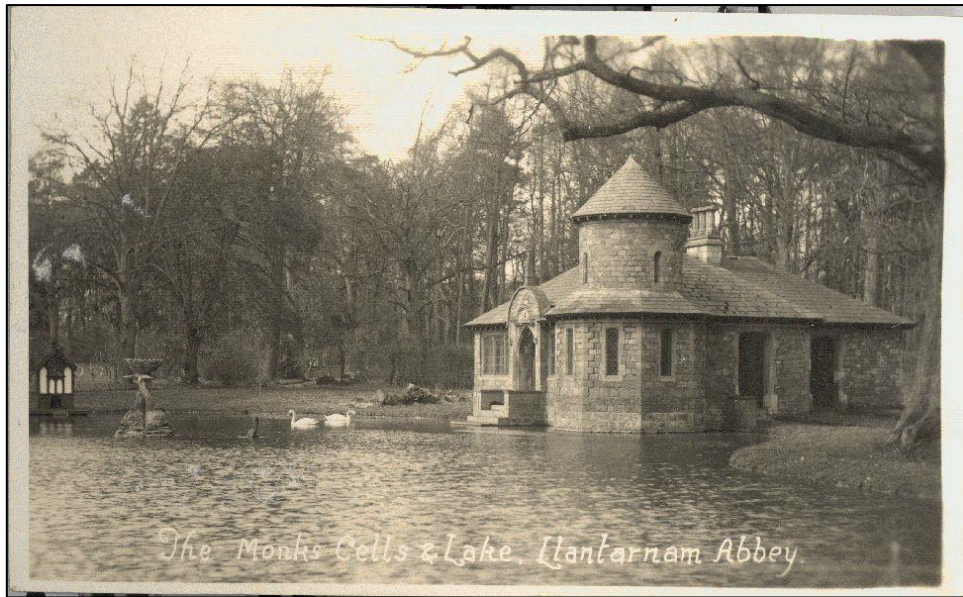


Figure 10.13: An early-twentieth century postcard view of the Monk's Cell and Swan Lake (Source: © Crown copyright, Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales Coflein NMR, www.coflein.gov.uk).

Land immediately around the abbey was maintained as parkland and woodland traversed by vista paths and avenues, 53 hectares when the estate was put up for sale in 1885 (*Gwent Archives*, D163.0002). Blewitt planted-up Abbey Wood behind the house with Scots pine to provide timber for pit props (Mahoney 1981, 179). The 1885 catalogue of sale paints a vivid picture of Llantarnam Abbey at its Victorian zenith, foregrounding the antiquity of the site and its monastic origins, describing the house, only 50 years old, with excitable marketing spin as 'on the site of the Cistercian Monastery, A.D. 1170, rebuilt after the Reformation, and restored in 1837 under Thomas Wyatt, who has reproduced the Tudor Abbey in all its external grace of outline', emphasising the 'undulated and Fertile Park, adorned with some of the most stately Oak and Beech Trees in the County' (*Gwent Archives*, D163.0002) (Figure 10.14). Mention was also made of the 'Monks' Cells, 'Morgan's Tudor Mansion built from the materials of the old Abbey', an entrance lodge retaining 'the Ancient Archway known as 'Magna Porta ... the ancient Entrance to the Estate ... reported to embrace the only relic of the Monastery', the 'Ruins of the Ancient Tithe Barn' and the 'Abbey' inn. The enveloping urbanisation of the area is reflected by the inclusion of ground rent available from over 100 houses in the expanding settlement of Cwmbrân, the vitriol works and building land desirable for 'Investment or Speculation in an Improving and Extending District.' (*ibid.*).



Figure 10.14: Lithograph from the Catalogue of Sale of Llantarnam Abbey Estate, 1885 (Source: Gwent Archives, D163.0002, photographed with permission).

10.2.2 The grange farms

Foremost of the abbey granges across the case study area, Court Farm, working 80 hectares of the fertile plain immediately north of the abbey, remained as the home farm until the break-up of the estate, residence of the notable Lawrence family from the mid-eighteenth century (Bradney 1993a, 242; Dovey and Waters 1956, 97; *Gwent Archives*, D43/M310/4535). Comparisons between the 1779 and 1846 estate and tithe maps indicate a degree of returning rough ground and woodland impinging on the farm's pasture, perhaps indicating less intensive land management (NA, MR 1/1061; *Tithe Map*, Page 1846). By the late Victorian era, industry had encroached on the farm's fields: the vitriol and wire-works of Oakfield signalling the coming urbanisation that would eventually envelop the whole farm. Demolished in 1955 due to road widening, the footprint of the farmhouse is now the grass forecourt of a housing estate (John 2007, 131).



Figure 10.15: The villa of Llantarnam Grange on the site of Gelli-las (Source: Llantarnam Grange Arts Centre, www.lgac.org.uk/history).

Further north, Gelli-las, an important farm in 1582 as recorded in William Morgan's *Inquisition post mortem* and still in the lord's hands in 1634, would become separated from the main abbey estate, perhaps when the Morgan lands were divided in 1707 (*Gwent Archives*, D3105.4; Mahoney 1981, 152). By the time of the tithe survey, the 150 acres (60 ha.) of the monastic grange had shrunk to less than 100, with its farther flung fields to the north and west taken by new farm units. As at Court Farm, industrial and urban infrastructure would replace the rural scene, land along the Cwm Bran Brook bounding the farm levelled-out and layered by the works, canal basins and railway yards of the rising Forge Hammer district. The farm's remaining fields also saw reconfiguration from the irregular pattern of the 1751 plan to more linear banks of enclosures seen by the later-nineteenth century (*NLW*, MS. MAPS VOLS. Lockwood Vol. 1 094/9/2). By the 1870s, the Lawrence family had given up the farm, the house taken down and replaced by a country villa, Llantarnam Grange – emphasising its historic links with the abbey – home to Alfred Piliner, a local JP and landowner. Surrounding paddocks were converted into formal gardens with a lake, orchard and a new driveway (Figure 10.15). The Grange remained a private house until the coming of the new town, the Cwmbrân Development Corporation

purchasing the property in 1952. Much of the gardens made way for road development and the rising town centre; the house, following varied use as office-space and postal sorting office, threatened with demolition by the early 1960s (Pannet 2011, 2). However, a reprieve came with conversion to its current function, Llantarnam Grange Arts Centre: a rare surviving older building in the town centre surrounded by a car park, multiplex cinema, dual carriage-way and supermarket.



Figure 10.16: Pentre-bach farm, looking west from its driveway approach (Source: author).

South-west of Cwibrân's townscape, Pentre-bach retains its agricultural character (Figure 10.16). Initially granted to the Earl of Bedford, the old grange was soon in the hands of William Morgan, who constructed a large-scale property there, such that it became known by its new appellation ('little village') (Bradney 1993a, 241; Morgan and Wakeman 1860, 9). Subsequently used as a dower house, an unusual 'L'-shaped gentry dwelling evolved, its seventeenth century buttressed cross-range originally of three storeys an early example of the use of brick in Monmouthshire (*Coflein NMR*, 20604; Newman 2002, 27, 338). By the late-1700s, the mansion had declined to a mere farmstead, the larger range no longer inhabited (Morgan and Wakeman 1860, 11). To this day this older wing, probably erected when the abbey grange first became a family residence, has been used as a farmhouse, the larger construct, still known as 'The Great House', long converted into a massive barn (Coxe 1801, 118; current owner, pers. comment; *ibid.*, 9) (Figure 10.17).



Figure 10.17: 'The Great House' at Pentre-bach, long converted into a massive barn (Source: author).

Up on Mynydd Maen, the chapel and grange at Llanderfel came into the possession of the Morgan family along with the rest of the Llantarnam estate. It is not known when Llanderfel chapel became obsolete, though its role as a wayside stopover on the route to Penrhys probably saw a lapsing into disuse as pilgrimage collapsed after the Reformation. Mature beech trees observed growing out of the ruined walls of the remnant building in the early 1900s suggested that it been derelict for at least 200 years (Bradney 1993a, 248-9). A legal dispute between Edward Morgan and the farm's tenant, Cadogan Williams, in 1630 addressed an allegation that the landowner had blocked the road leading from Llantarnam to the farm and enclosed land (Bradney 1993a, 248-9). At the end of the eighteenth century, Llanderfel was in the hands of Sir Mark Wood, a landowner with a prodigious portfolio of holdings in Monmouthshire including, briefly, the Llanthony Estate. By 1846, the 150 acres of the medieval grange had been reduced to just 74 (30 ha.). Disposed monastic land overspread by new hill farms paying tithes to Wood suggesting the piecemeal sale of former tithe-free grange land subject to new payments in breach of the ancient stipulation (*Tithe Map*, Page 1846). These new steadings sat amongst the old sheep runs of the grange on the hill slope below Llanderfel, now parcelled into enclosed pasture. The sheltered and level Llanderfel shelf remained a mix of arable and pasture, rougher woody ground above.



Figure 10.18: The Dorallt inn on the site of the medieval grange (Source: author).

Whilst Llanderfel retains an agricultural setting, southwards along the *mynydd* the landscape of Dorallt has seen a transformation. Dorallt Fach and Fawr, the post-medieval farmsteads thought to have evolved on the footprint of the grange complex have themselves been subsumed into the suburban village of Henllys, a well-to-do addition to an expanding Cwmbrân. Dorallt Fawr had already been converted to its contemporary function as an inn by 1846 (*Tithe Map*, Jones 1842) (Figure 10.18). Upslope from remnants of the rural landscape surviving amidst the avenues and closes of Henllys, a colliery, linked to the railway network by an inclined tramway, had dominated the grange's sheep pastures for over 100 years. Here the rural quiet has now returned and the abandoned mine, its huge spoil heaps grassed over, seems forgotten. Across the Mynydd Maen *massif*, the grange lands of Rhyswg remained isolated and agricultural despite spreading industrial and urban development in the Abercarn valley below and ownership by local ironmasters. The grange had been divided into three hill farms by the nineteenth century; one of which, Rhyswg Fach, is now abandoned and subsumed by commercial forestry thick along the *cwms* indenting the upland. An obscure reference in the 1570 Mynyddislwyn manor survey to a 'tenement or grange ... called the Waystre in Maghan (Machen)' could conceivably be a rare post-medieval reference to the old abbey farm (*NLW*, MS17008D).

Of Llantarnam's other notable property in the case study area, the site of St. Dials chapel was occupied by a gentry house, dated to at least 1673 but perhaps converted from the monastic chapelry during the Reformation (Lloyd 2006, 56). The house, uninhabitable by the 1890s, was said to have the appearance of decayed high-status, though no evidence of ecclesiastical form was seen when the last vestiges were surveyed in 1959 (*GGAT HER*, 00111g; 04516g). As at Pentre-bach, St. Dials, an example of 'the old homes of the small gentry of the borderland' often reduced to modest farm-houses by the early-nineteenth century, witnessed the 'passing of the gentry' as the fortunes of ancient provincial families such as the Morgans, Herberts and Meyricks waned (Machen 1922, 10).

10.2.3 The wider estate landscape

How the change of lordship after the suppression impacted on the abbey's many tenants across its wider estate landscape is largely unrecorded. Many, like Jankyn Morgan who rented several tenements at Llantarnam, Magna Porta and Mynyddislwyn, probably continued very much as before (Mahoney 1981, 36). There is some evidence that the disrupted times were capitalised on by some lessees, such as those who refused to pay rent and tithes to the Crown Receivers in 1540 (Williams 2001, 93). Customary tenants certainly carried comprehensive rights into the post-medieval era, as testified by the 1634 Magna Porta manor survey: to fell timber, plough land not previously tilled; to pull down and replace their houses; to 'demise, let or sell his or their Customary lands and tenements to any person' without the consent of the lord (*Gwent Archives*, D3105.4). There was, however, to be a tightening up of tenancy arrangements with higher rents and less favourable terms for new entrants, as seen in the neighbouring former abbey lordship of Mynyddislwyn (Gray 1999, 38).

A proliferation of farmsteads with houses of an early-seventeenth century building type on the hillside around Llanderfel suggests that they sprang up in this era which saw the division of some of the larger monastic land units into smaller steadings to be leased out (Fox and Raglan 1954, 169; Parry and Logan 2010, 6-7). Maes-y-rhiw ('meadow of the hillside or hill path') below the Graig Road, Pen-y-worlod ('top or end of the meadow') and Penlan-gwyn ('end of the white church', perhaps indicating

the limit of abbey lands at Llanderfel) are examples of these new farms (Figure 10.19). Farm units were proliferating but also extending into manorial commons and some of this diversification was contested: in the 1610s, Cadagon Williams and Lewis Powell were cited for encroaching out of 'Landerval's farm' (*Gwent Archives*, D3105.4). In Mynyddislwyn, the Earl of Pembroke's lordship in the later 1500s had seen 62 new small tenements, granted under less favourable leasehold arrangements and often demised from the lord's waste on Mynydd Machen (Gray 1997a, 179; 1999, 38). The 1634 survey notes similar developments within Magna Porta where Phillip David and other parishioners had 'encroached out of the Lord's Waste Lands about 24 years last past and have erected a Cottage upon the same' (*Gwent Archives*, D3105.4). Craig-y-saison ('rock of the English'), a six acre (2.4 ha.) intake by Morgan Rosser, hard on the Clwyd-y-brawd boundary of the manor high on Mynydd Maen, is another example (*Gwent Archives*, D3105.4).



Figure 10.19: The hill-side terrain around Llanderfel colonised by Maes-y-rhiw, Pen-y-worlod and other post-medieval farms, looking north-west from the Cefyn-mynach ridge above Pentre-bach (Source: author).

Encroachment was also taking place along the broad roadways of the manor. Lewis Powell taking 12 acres (4.9 ha.) 'out of the highway leading from Cardiff towards Abergavenny adjoining on both sides of the Waste Lands there called Elleine ddy' as recorded in 1634, along with other examples of cottages and gardens thrown up

alongside highway and byways (*Gwent Archives*, D3105.4). The rise of small-holdings continued apace into the later 1800s and the dawning of the industrial age, with many ‘small encroachments’ along the lanes of the 1779 estate map and later tithe maps (*NA*, MR 1/1061; *Tithe Map*, Page 1846). Outwith the historic tithe system, the rural poor dwelling here could sustain themselves from a small patch of orchard, pasture and vegetable plot (Machen 1922, 28).

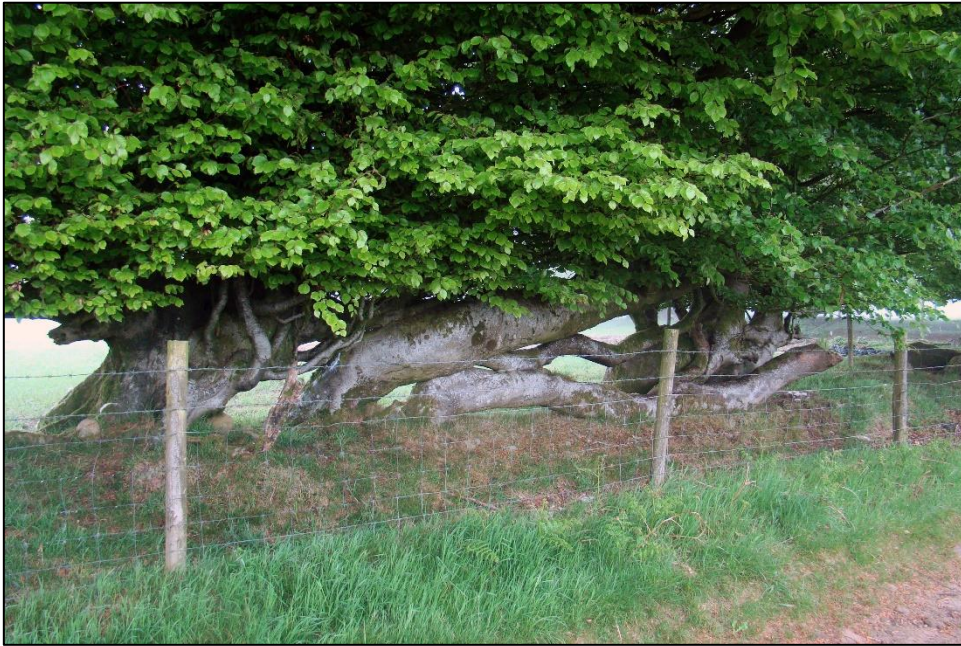


Figure 10.20: Outgrown beech hedges at Rhyswg (Source: author).

Such intakes further accelerated the increasingly enclosed agricultural landscape evolving since Tudor times. Crop price rises into the seventeenth century had been a spur to enclose land for arable farming within the intensively worked mixed farms of the copyhold tenants (Gray 1997a, 173; Week 2002, 20). This was becoming a partitioned countryside held in severalty, as witnessed in the manorial bounds of the 1634 survey, mered not only by streams, notable trees and roads but also hedges (‘along the Hedge there towards Heol Newith’) and closes (‘Wallnut Close’, ‘Close there called the Porooge’) (*Gwent Archives*, D3105.4). A 1645 survey of Abercarn manor including the upland grange farms of Ciloyndd and Rhyswg recorded efforts to regulate the previously widespread piecemeal enclosure by agreement across the manor (Week 2002, 15). Here, up on the higher ground cleared in monastic times, hedges and wood banks abounded with locally abundant beech, their shoots given time to grow by relatively low stocking levels and crop rotation, providing fodder, fuel

and shade (Gray 1999, 39). The surviving examples of these pollards have now become ‘towering gnarled beeches’, grown into ‘mighty and grotesque shapes’ (Rackham 2007, 197) (Figure 10.20).

Into the eighteenth century and the business recorded in the Magna Porta manor court rolls is peppered with references to named land units, the manifestation of this piecemeal parcelling of open ground into individual ownership blocks (*Gwent Archives*, D3267). The court rolls also witness much surrender of land, indicating an evolving active market of landed property exchanging hands between yeoman tenants (*Gwent Archives*, D3267).⁷⁸ For instance, in 1722 William Edwards surrendered ‘a messuage, granary, stable, orchards, a curtilage and 5 parcels of customary land meadow and pasture’ (*Gwent Archives*, D3267.9). By the mid-1800s, this process had seen ownership of land within the manor become somewhat diversified. The Llantarnam Abbey Estate retained the larger tenanted farms and much of the coppice woodland, but the remainder was now occupied by mid-range freehold farms of under 100 acres (40 ha.), including Gelli-las, Llanderfel and St. Dials, and a proliferation of small-holdings, many of which were in the hands of a wide spectrum of landowners, including a significant proportion of women (*Tithe Map*, Morris 1840; Page 1846). This was the dominion of the ‘numerous race of small freeholders’, observed by writer Arthur Machen (1922, 7, 28) in his memoir of a childhood in the district, the ‘pure white of the walls’ of their farms and cottages along the hillsides ‘radiant in the sunlight’ (*ibid.*, 7).

At the estate’s home farm of Court Farm, where leats and ditches had lined the flood-plain meads keeping this goodly land drained, the recording of rough and boggy ground and some fields reverting to woodland in 1779 suggests that medieval gains from clearing alder marsh were being lost (NA, MR 1/1061). The challenge of preventing water-logging was indicated by damage caused to meadows at Gelli-las from overflowing water when a neighbouring landowner, Walter Griffiths of

⁷⁸ Madelaine Gray (1997a, 178) had noted some examples of new tenants in Mynyddislwyn with no obvious connection to the previous incumbent in the manor survey of 1570, though such exchanges were still limited compared to property inheritance, often through sub-division following the ancient though technically no longer legal practice of *gevelkind* partible inheritance.

Llanyravon, erected two weirs on the Afon Llwyd, as recorded in 1634 (*Gwent Archives*, D3105.4). Elsewhere, some of the middling-scale and more recent farm units, such as Coed Eva amidst the now reduced woodland between the medieval granges and Two Locks Farm alongside the 1790s canal, display a more regular enclosure morphology in later mapping, suggesting a degree of planning and transformation of previous land-use in their development. Similarly, Scott's Farm (later Pant-glas, 'green valley') moulded a new mixed farm out of the medieval sheep runs along the eastern side of the Cefn-mynach ridge (Figure 10.21).



Figure 10.21: The post-medieval farm of Pant Glas (formerly Scott's Farm) in the distance, forging a new mixed farm out of the sheep-runs of the medieval grange at Cefn-mynach (now Pentre-bach) in the foreground (Source: author).

The morphology of this 'neat and commodious' field-scape is brought to life in the mapping of the eighteenth and nineteenth century (Fox 1796, 18; *NA*, MR 1/1061; *Ordnance Survey*, 1887; *Tithe Map*, Page 1846). Although the general pattern of the agricultural landscape had been set by this stage, there was still dynamism in field evolution through the establishment of such new farm units, changes in land-use and farm economies and small-scale reconfigurations. Historic mapping shows that land given over to crop growing was much more extensive than today, particularly on the great lowland farms such as Court and Pentre-bach. From the high-water mark of the mid-nineteenth century, arable production would slowly begin to recede,

particularly on hill farms, impacted by the long agricultural depression and foreign competition witnessed towards the end of the century. The pasture-dominated historic landscape seen in remaining rural parts of the area today preserves the field patterns of previously much more mixed farming regimes (Gray 1999, 40).

As has already been established, the heartlands of the medieval park across undulating ground south of the abbey and the adjoining belt of meadowland running down to Pill-mawr were a notable example of considerable post-medieval repurposing. Here the 1779 estate plan shows a mosaic of largely arable fields interspersed with wooded brakes, game covers and corridors of retained beech grove, remnants of the previously more extensive hunting chase: the fertile acreage of the former monastic park now configured for both crop production from Pen-y-park farm and modern hunting, shooting and fishing practice (NA, MR 1/1061). By the mid-nineteenth century, the wooded elements had increased somewhat, reflecting the ascendancy of recreation over agriculture as this corner of the estate evolved into a Victorian sporting concern (*Tithe Map*, Morris 1840; Page 1846).

Woodland also remained a prominent feature outside the old park. The monastic centuries left significant remnant woods uncleared, sometimes dictated by topography, often managed and enclosed as valuable coppices. Increasingly the coppice allotments that survived were maintained to supply fuel, pit props and other timber resources for the area's burgeoning industrial production. Extensive felling of abbey timberlands was recorded across Wentsland and Bryngwyn to the north in the later 1500s and early-seventeenth century to meet the demands of the new Pontypool ironworks (Williams 1976, 90). As at Tintern (see Chapter 8), John Hanbury, the region's premier ironmaster by the late-sixteenth century, was taken to court for felling large stands of beech for charcoal (Mahoney 1981, 93). These beechwood swathes had evolved from their traditional utility for coppicing and pollarding to become a specialist hardwood resource, an early form of modern forestry management (Rackham 2007, 133, 363).



Figure 10.22: The commercial coniferous plantations that now dominate the woodlands of Cwm Gofappy below the Rhyswg ridge to the left (Source: author).

Along the lower slopes of Mynydd Maen, the hanger woods of Fairwater, Greenmeadow and Thornhill, still held in hand by the lord of the manor, were worked to supply the colliery, forge and foundry that Reginald Blewitt had established at Cwmbrân (Parry and Logan 2010, 7). Many lots of remaining broadleaf woodland may have been reconfigured for such industrial utility, including the re-wooding of previously tilled or pastured land (Burchill 2011, 9). Further west, the slopes of the deep coombs bounding the Rhyswg ridge saw their footprint of denuded native woodland, much exhausted and encroached upon by rough pasture or the high fields of economically precarious hill farms, repopulated by largely coniferous plantations used for fuel for industry and commercial timber by the later 1800s (Week 2002, 9) (Figure 10.22). Other areas of rough woodland and orchard, such as those south of Gelli-las farmstead, had seen improvement and division into regular fields (*Tithe Map*, Page 1846).



Figure 10.23: Grassed over spoil heaps at the site of the former Henllys colliery (Source: author).

Above the woodlands, on the open commons, traditions of upland sheep farming established by the abbey's expansive granges and even older surviving elements of summer transhumance steadily declined; the *mynydd* becoming the orbit of the modest encroaching farmsteads already described. Mynydd Maen also experienced some commercial exploitation of coal, ironstone and limestone reserves and manipulation of water supply to support local mines and blast furnaces into the nineteenth century (Hayman and Horton 2003, 11, 61). This was, however, the very edge of the great South Wales coal valleys and the upland landscape character remained relatively unchanged, the high ground used mainly for forestry, quarrying, rough pasture and shooting (Gray 1999, 39; Locock 1997, undated; Maynard 1993, 6). Where more profound rupture did occur, as at Henllys colliery, the death of the coal industry has seen such sites reclaimed or left to return to a semi-rural state (Hayman and Horton 2003, 62) (Figure 10.23).

10.2.4 Cwibrân: a planned new town landscape



Figure 10.24: The nut and bolt works and railway yard at Forge Hammer, established on the edge of the lands of Gelli-las grange, with the slope up to the still rural St. Dials to the left (Source: © Crown copyright, Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historic Monuments of Wales, circa 1948, www.britainfromabove.org.uk/image/WPW032472).

Prior to the post-war emergence of Cwibrân as an urban borough with over 50,000 inhabitants, the parish of Llanfihangel Llantarnam had already evolved from a thinly populated rural district in the mid-nineteenth century into a fast-growing industrial and suburban community (Bradney 1993a, 223). The seeds of this transformation were already to be seen in the ownership of much land by the Cwm Bran Iron Company and other industrial and transportation enterprises recorded in the 1846 tithe apportionment (*Tithe Map*, Page 1846). The industrial villages of Lower and Upper Cwibrân grew out of the scattered farmsteads recounted in previous sections as the Victorian age progressed with the coming of, first an iron and wire plant established at Forge Hammer by Reginald Blewitt in the 1840s, then works for producing and processing bricks, nuts and bolts and vitriol, collieries and their associated transport infrastructure (*ibid.*, 243; Cadwell 1979, 5, 9; Newman 2002,

199) (Figure 10.24). Porthmawr colliery and tramway had been opened just north of Llanderfel in 1837 by Blewitt, named for the ‘great gate’ of the abbey (Cadwell 1979, 15).

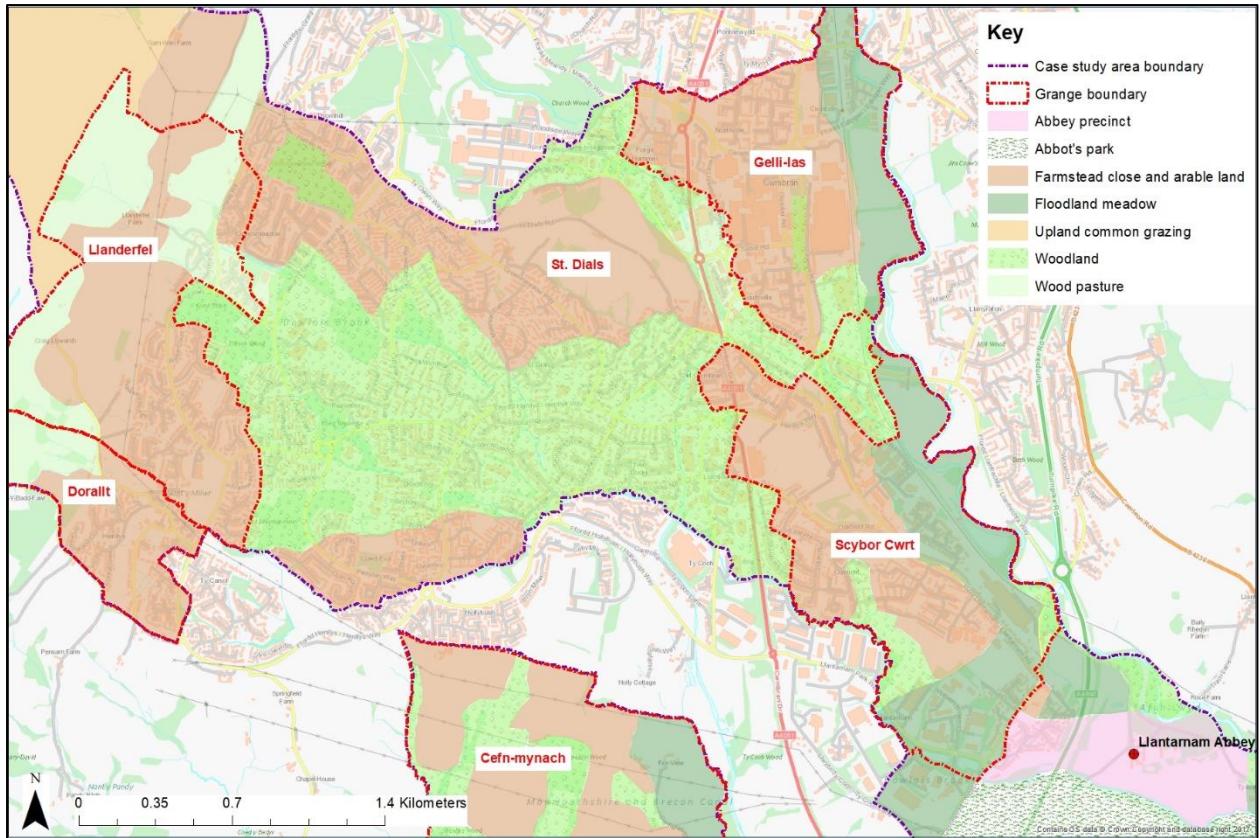


Figure 10.25: The boundaries of the Magna Porta manor, abbey granges and postulated land-use circa 1300, superimposed onto a modern map of the urban area of Cwmbrân (Source: map drawn in ArcGIS® using Ordnance Survey Open Carto 2 data layer, downloaded from Digimap® under licence, <http://digimap.edina.ac.uk/>).

This industrial expansion foreshadowed a more total urbanisation of Llantarnam’s home manor kick-started by the decision to locate Wales’ only new planned settlement in the district under the 1946 New Towns Act (this transformation illustrated in Figure 10.25). Between 1949 and its winding-up in 1988, Cwmbrân Development Corporation coordinated the forging of the new *urbis*, with major house-building phases up to the 1980s and a town centre constructed in the 1960s and early 70s (Newman 2002, 194).



Figure 10.26: Cwmbran New Town Master Plan, 1951 (Source: Gwent Archives, C/Misc.R.0184, photographed with permission).

Although the *Cwmbrân New Town Plan* of 1951 (Figure 10.26) envisioned high potential ‘in most pleasing scenery, which gives much scope for imaginative and attractive treatment’, there were difficulties to be overcome due to unplanned development in the past and many obsolete and abandoned buildings and clay pit workings (Gwent Archives, C/Misc.R.0184). The primary purpose was to provide homes near work for those employed in local industry, social and commercial facilities and preserved open spaces enabling a balanced and self-contained ‘garden city’ community. Reflecting utilitarian zonal policy of the time, the original plan included seven residential areas (later extended to 12) mirroring the design of inter-war garden communities. These new neighbourhoods, with well-proportioned gardens and grassy areas, would occupy the lower slopes above a town centre and new industrial units supplementing the existing manufacturing base covering the riverside plain lined by road and rail links (Newman 2002, 194, 204) (Figure 10.27).



Figure 10.27: 1970s housing on the still partially wooded hill-slope of Thornhill in Cwmbrân, the suburb taking its name from the woodland that historically occupied the area (Source: author).

A generous 314 hectares of the 1279 total for the new town was given over to playing fields, parks, woodland and other green space in the original plan, though reduced by subsequent phases of development which pushed higher density housing and industrial estates further southwards enveloping more former abbey land (*Gwent Archives*, C/Misc.R.0184). Although the master plan acknowledged that residential areas needed to be less built-up than in the past and retain open space and screening through existing woodland and new tree planting, there was no formal recognition of incorporating elements of the historic landscape; or indeed, any archaeological or environmental assessments carried out. With no mention of the area's heritage or pre-existing landscape, let alone the legacy of the monastery and its estates, the only reference to Llantarnam Abbey related to the nearby sewage works. The plan dismissively and perhaps conveniently contended that 'it is unfortunate that Cwmbrân's designated areas contains so few buildings which may claim to be called architecture' (*ibid.*).



Figure 10.28: Retained open space alongside housing in Greenmeadow, Cwmbrân (Source: author).

Nevertheless, the relatively high proportion of open land in the garden city design allowed for incidental relics of the historic landscape to be retained; even, to some degree, for existing topography to unconsciously dictate the form of the new settlement (Figure 10.28). For instance, a new landscaped ‘parkway’ through St. Dials connected residential areas with the new town centre, making ‘full use of existing natural features such as woods, stream or clumps of trees’ (*ibid.*). Significant remnants of Magna Porta’s ancient coppice woods were retained within hill-side residential neighbourhoods, with the old steading of Greenmeadow becoming a city farm. St. Dials became one of the residential districts, the hillock on which the monastic chapel stood remained an open corridor of urban countryside a few minutes from the town centre. The monastic granges of Gelli-las and Scybor Cwrt were more comprehensively erased. Much of the former’s open land already overlain by Victorian industrial infrastructure and housing, the remaining ‘rising ground at Little Gelli and the well-timbered land to the south’, was obliterated by the new civic, municipal and retail centre (*ibid.*). An industrial zone spread across the northern extent of the latter grange, its southern portion subsumed by the Oakfield residential neighbourhood. Aside from the surviving Llantarnam Grange Arts Centre, the layout and naming of the core buildings, roads and squares across the town centre little reflected local or abbey heritage. Court Wood, the main coppice of the home grange

was remarked upon in passing in the Cwibrân plan as a good site for a new primary school (*ibid.*).



Figure 10:29: The green suburb of Thornhill, Cwibrân centre in the distance spreading across the abbey's former Magna Porta lands from the hillside of Mynydd Maen, looking east (Source: author).

In truth, the central core of Cwibrân seems far from the hope of the original green city design, with little aesthetic or historical merit and exhibiting some of the worst elements of Victorian piecemeal industrial settlement and uninspired twentieth century planned and post-industrial development. Some of the outlying suburbs, although often fatigued both economically and architecturally, do retain a clear feeling of post-war ambition for better urban environments and, a surprisingly strong, sense of reflected rural history within the present-day landscape (Figure 10.29). Despite a lack of overt consideration in town planning, elements of the medieval abbey landscape leach through the new forms layered across it, notably the line and relict features of the pilgrimage way from the abbey to Llanderfel via St. Dials examined in the last chapter and next section (Figure 10.30). Echoes of the monastic landscape are also perpetuated by place-naming across the neighbourhoods of the new town, such as Llantarnam School, Llantarnam Industrial Estate and the road naming memories outlined in Section 10.2.5.



Figure 10.30: The old lane at St. Dials (to the right, parallel with a one of the new town's arterial roads), forming part of the pilgrim way from the abbey to Llanderfel (Source: author).

This sense of surviving heritage, however liminal, has often been considered fragile or under threat, the 'brick and concrete' of Cwmbrân 'rapidly burying the past' (Cadwell 1979, 5). An abbey history written in the new town's early years provided elegiac witness to looming encroachment and retreat of rural life, bemoaning the loss of ancient Court Farm despite local protest: 'now what is there instead of this link with the middle ages? A few brick council houses which could have been built anywhere else' (Dovey and Waters 1956, 81). Although the surrounding hillsides around Llanderfel and undulating woods and fields of Pentre-bach and south of Llantarnam remain under 'green belt' protection, parts are squeezed by development. The parkland and precinct surrounding the abbey have been particularly encroached upon by housing, roads and industry. Several archaeological watching briefs have taken place, though assessments have been fairly light-touch with little evidence of historical importance reported. This approach has been criticised for not formally recognising significant monastic landscape evidence, for instance around the former Llantarnam School on the site of Sycbor Cwrt grange recently developed for housing (Standing 2016) (Figure 10.31).



Figure 10.31: The new St. Michael's Gate housing development on the former Llantarnam School, site of the abbey's Scybor Cwrt grange (Source: author).

10.2.5 Communication routes

The main medieval ways to and from Llantarnam continue to appear in later documentary sources, with some becoming part of the modern road network, others still traceable on the ground as footpaths and farm tracks (Figure 10.32). For instance, 'the highway leading from Pont Pool towards Newport to the Highway leading from Mynydd Mane towards Lanternam House' in a 1737 Magna Porta court roll references both the ancient road from which the main abbey gate was approached and the premier driveway up to Mynydd Maen and on to the abbey's further estates (*Gwent Archives*, D3267.15). With improving roads following low-level valley routes, mountain-bound tracks such as Fforest-y-heol and the pilgrimage way over Mynydd Maen were eventually relegated to back-country byways for local traffic and stock movement. The physical footprint of the pilgrims' passage from the abbey towards the mountain was further diminished by the urban development of Cwmbrân, though it can still be tracked through the townscape by the keen-eyed; for instance, in the disused hollow section unconsciously retained in a corridor of open space between housing estates shown in Figure 10.33.



Figure 10.32: Old walling along St. Dials Lane, part of the monastic route from the abbey to Llanderfel (Source: author).



Figure 10.33: A disused hollow section of the pilgrims' route between St. Dials and Llanderfel, unconsciously retained in a corridor of open space between housing estates (Source: author).

As such, some old monastic routes have been incorporated into Cwmbrân's new town. Llantarnam Road running through the southern suburbs of the town links with St. Dials Lane, from where ancient lanes up to Llanderfel have become walkways and cycle paths in the new town morphology. Although such a network of linking greenways was a key element of the master plan, no mention was made of continuity with or the heritage of adapted existing route-ways (*Gwent Archives,*

C/Misc.R.0184). The old southern approach to Gelli-las, which appeared to be out of use in 1751 and 1846, has preserved the memory of the monastic farm in its modern nomenclature of Grange Road (*NLW, MS. MAPS VOLS. Lockwood Vol. 1 094/9/2; Tithe Map, Page 1846*). Originally proposed as part of the primary channel for north-south movement through the town centre, its prosaic survival is as an access road for a supermarket and industrial units (*Gwent Archives, C/Misc.R.0184*).



Figure 10.34: Llantarnam Road running north past the site of Scybor Cwrt grange (Source: author).

Abbey Lane, the approach road to the old *magna porta* which by the eighteenth century was lined by the estate-worker occupied Abbey Cottages, is now a dead-end, no longer a through-way to the abbey (Dovey and Waters 1956, 130; John 2007, 113). Replaced by the drive and gatehouse connecting Reginald Blewitt's mansion to the turnpike, this old road would be lost under grass as a field-path, the physical link with Llantarnam village cleaved more finally with the construction of the modern A4042 by-pass across its line. This dual-carriageway, opened in 1995 was driven through the abbey park, Blewitt's driveway accommodated by a concrete underpass. Across the turnpike, the commencement of the old way running northwards from the abbey passing Scybor Cwrt grange has, though, been retained, as Llantarnam Road, a primary artery into Cwmbrân (Figure 10.34). Pill Lane, connecting the abbey southwards with river transport on the Usk at Pill-mawr quay, continued to be an important thoroughfare into the eighteenth century. The 1707

agreement partitioning the Morgan estates confirmed that the pill should remain open to all tenants of the divided estate, with provision at Pill-mawr for storing timber to be transported by water (Bradney 1993a, 236). Monastic fishing rights at Pill-mawr were also continued into this period (*Newport Ref*, QM310 900). By the mid-1800s, the quay now redundant, the lane was disused, its line encroached by wood coverts (*Tithe Map*, Page 1846).



Figure 10.35: Part of the now disused Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal, just north of Cwmbrân town centre (Source: author).

The construction of canals and railways to support and supply expanding industry significantly contributed to the decline of many local roads. The coming impact of these new forms of transport can be seen in a 1791 letter from Reverend Collinson to Henry Phillips regarding the sale of land in Llantarnam which advised that values were likely to increase due to the arrival of the canal (*Gwent Archives*, D3267.128). At the time, significant allotments of land across the old Magna Porta manor were being bought or leased by heavily-capitalised newly-formed transport companies (*Gwent Archives*, D43M310/4734). The Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal was soon constructed to transport minerals to Newport docks (Dovey and Waters 1956, 137) (Figure 10.35). By the mid-nineteenth century, the routes of the Caerleon Tram Road and other tramways connecting coal and mineral workings with canals, blast furnaces and works were superseded by the railway to Pontypool and other branch

lines of the Monmouthshire Railway striking through the countryside (Hayman and Horton 2003, 62).

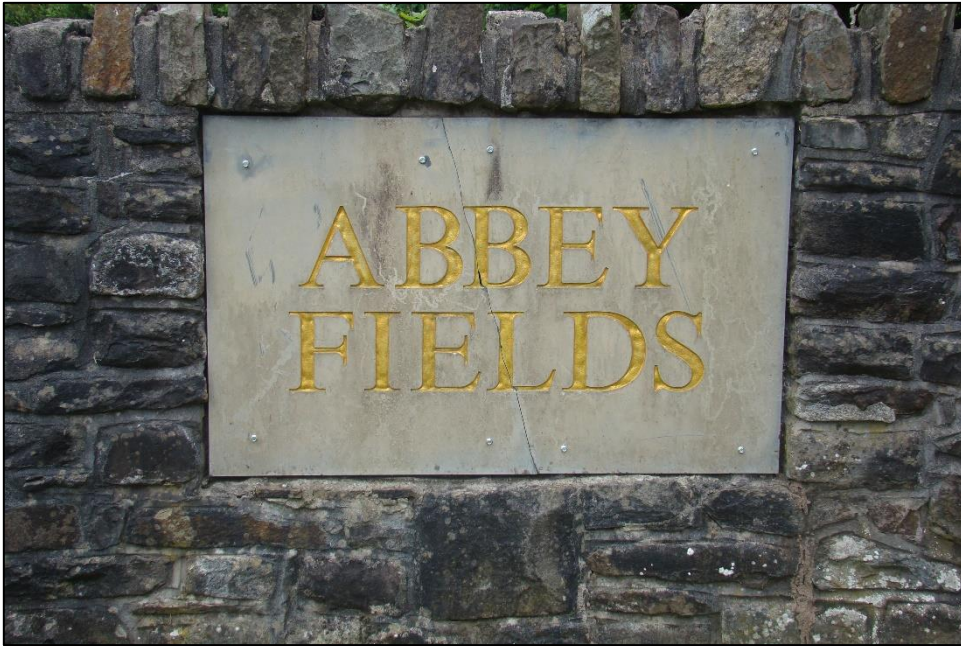


Figure 10.36: Sign at the entrance to the housing development at Abbey Fields on the old outer court (Source: author).

Several street names preserving the memory of monastic places within the townscape have been alluded to. Cwibrân's main through-ways also include Llantarnam Park Way and Dorallt Way. A new housing development on Abbey Fields, part of the convents outer court, in Llantarnam village includes Abbey Grove and Magna Porta Gardens (Figure 10.36). Scybor Cwrt may be long-gone, but the grange and abbey are remembered by Heol Cwrt and roads on the Court Farm Estate that replaced it such as Abbey Green, Court Farm Close, Plas Cwrt, and the Llantarnam Court Industrial Estate (Figure 10.37). Other roads across Cwibrân's suburbs – Abbey Road, Clomendy Road, Dorallt Close Llantarnam Close, Porth Mawr Road – similarly sustain the memory, though whether this can be claimed to be a deliberate or dominant motif amongst a welter of regional place and personal names and generic themes is debatable.



Figure 10.37: Court Farm Close, part of the estate built on the Scybor Cwrt grange (Source: author).

10.3 Perceptions of the landscape

10.3.1 Local folklore

The recurring folkloric trope of secret subterranean passages to a monastery has several variants for Llantarnam, with stories of tunnels between the abbey and Pentre-bach farm, Llanderfel and Twmbarlwm hill (probably misinterpretations of coal or limestone working entrances), as well as from The Priory in Caerleon, once claimed to be the original abbey site, to the town's Bull Inn, said to be used as the monk's kitchen (Dovey and Waters 1956, 13; Kennerly 1987; Pentre-bach owner, pers. comment).



Figure 10.38: Entrance to the 'haunted hall of Pentre-bach' (Source: author).

An old story tells of a society ball held in the massive brick-built wing of Pentre-bach in the great hall's heyday, guests fleeing in terror as the walls shook at the height of the revelry (Hando 1944, 36; Morgan and Wakeman 1860, 11) (Figure 10.38). This interruption was transposed into a local tale of poltergeist activity in the famed 'haunted hall of Pentrebach' (Dovey and Waters 1956, 85; John 2007, 128). Another supernatural tale tells of the 'Legend of The Green Lady', an apparition in emerald seen by a man walking through the abbey park one night (Dovey and Waters 1956, 167). Such ghostly convergences with the past further embellished through stories such as *The Ghost of Llantarnam Park*, telling of a hooded form, perhaps a White Monk,

abroad in the grounds of the house (Phillips 1951, 99).

10.3.2 A forgotten place? Remembering the abbey into the modern era

Lacking the focus of romantic antique ruins in a dramatic setting that saw Llanthony and Tintern come to prominence and with a more prosaic landscape and architectural history, literary and visual responses to Llantarnam and its monastic past are somewhat meagre (Figure 10.39). Aside from a handful of prints, Archdeacon William Coxe (1801, 91-2) provided the only record of the old Morgan dwelling at Llantarnam and the remnants of the medieval abbey incorporated into its fabric and grounds in any detail, as already cited. Coxe roamed widely across Monmouthshire in the 1790s, passing through abbey lands in the district: leaving the main highway at Llantarnam he rode 'under an ancient encampment near the old lodge of Llantarnam Park' (probably referring to Lodge woods and hill-fort) on the way to Caerleon. Further west, the cleric travelled from Risca to Henllys, 'through a

beautifully wooded country of hill and dale, diversified with inclosures of corn and pasture' and then 'rode up a gentle acclivity, clothed with copses and underwood, along a narrow and stony path, and in three-quarters of an hour reached the bottom of the swelling hill called Twyn Barlw m', which was then climbed to provide a view across the old abbey lands of Magna Porta (*ibid.*, 87).



Figure 10.39: Modern extension to the nineteenth century Llantarnam Abbey house (Source: author).

The prominent Twmbarlw m was also totemic to Arthur Machen (1922, 5), author of novella *The Great God Pan* (1890) and other occult stories: 'as soon as I saw anything I saw Twyn Barlw m, that mystic tumulus' (Figure 10.40). Born in 'noble, fallen Caerleon-on-Usk' in 1863, Machen spent his childhood at the rectory in Llanddewi, east over the Afon Lwyd from Llantarnam. The countryside of Magan Porta was part of his roaming territory, described with the affection of a London-based exile in his memoir, *Far Off Things*: 'hardly a house in sight in all this landscape ... here the gable of a barn, here a glint of a whitewashed farm-house, here blue wood smoke rising from an orchard grove, where an old cottage was snugly hidden' (*ibid.*, 5, 69). Poems by Newport-born W.H. Davies, most-famed for his recollection of drifting through America – *The Autobiography of a Super-Tramp* (1908), similarly recalled the district nostalgically, proclaiming in *Days That Have Been* (1905), 'Ah, when I see a leafy village now, I sigh and ask it for Llantarnam's green' (quoted in John 2007, 112-3).



Figure 10.40: Twmbarlwm hill-fort and summit, looking south from the ridgeway approach along Mynydd Henllys from Llanderfel and Llantarman (Source: author).

The war-time reminiscences of Fred Hando (1944, 30) described how ‘in gathering darkness we walked on past the ruins of St. Dials’, coming down the old way from Llanderfel but, otherwise, the history of the pilgrim route to Penrhys has until recently been little remembered (Ward 1914, 359). Penrhys had become better-known as one of Wales’ most disadvantaged housing estates, the sparse ruins of the medieval sanctuary and Virgin Mary statue juxtaposed with ‘the archetypal sink estate’ (Dodds 2002, 65) (Figure 10.41). A revival in interest in the pilgrim way has been responsible for a more recent spotlight on the abbey’s part in Cwibrân’s pre-industrial past. Contemporary interest was sparked by a community archaeology and history project, *Ancient Cwibrân and the Cistercians*; part of an attempt to harness the monastic pilgrimage tradition in local engagement with the area’s history and help tackle social exclusion given impetus by a local group’s desire to recommence the pilgrimage (Gray 1997b, 30; 1998, 23). The observation that quartz blocks along the old holloway up to Llanderfel may have been used as waymarkers by medieval pilgrims discussed in the previous chapter was made by young people from the Thornhill Community Youth Project in Cwibrân who researched the route and then embarked on a walk retracing the journey to Penrhys (Madeleine Gray, pers. comment) (Figure 10.42). An event recorded in a 2002 HTV programme, *Heaven’s Sound: Llantarman*

to *Penrhys*, in which presenter Ioio Williams accompanied young people from the project on the route.



Figure 10.41: Housing estate at Penrhys, above the pilgrimage chapel and shrine site (Source: author).

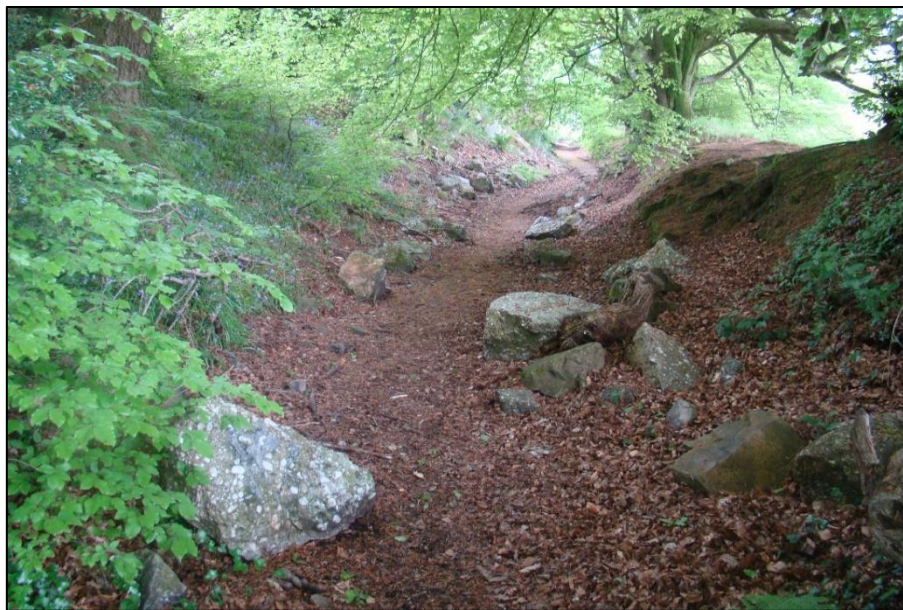


Figure 10.42: Quartz blocks on the holloway up to Llanderfel (Source: author).

10.4 Conclusion

Edward Morgan, a committed Reformation *refusenik*, may have used Llantarnam as a bastion keeping the Catholic flame alive in Monmouthshire but his construction of a new mansion on the site of the abbey levelled the physical remains of the monastery, thus limiting its future topographical and historical memory.

Within the wider landscape, however, the abbey granges emerged as post-medieval farm units, enjoying new prosperity as the seats of the ‘middling sort’ and minor local gentry, descendants of the tenants and lay workforce of the abbey. Land cultivated by the grange farms was repurposed and reconfigured to meet the demands of a rising population; wood coppices worked hard, often to exhaustion, to supply the needs of emerging industry. All part of a Llantarnam Abbey Estate that over time took on the persona of the abbey’s Magna Porta manor and largely maintained its territorial integrity into the eighteenth century, when a slow break-up commenced.

Positioned high on Mynydd Maen, the former granges of Llanderfel and Rhyswg were part of a particular upland landscape story, aloof from the more prosperous, settled farmsteads in the valleys below. Hard by the extensive grazing commons having won new agricultural space from the wooded slopes and ridges, these holdings now lacking the *raison d’être* and institutional backing of the abbey were divided into smaller farm units and encroached upon by steadings and cots forged by an increasing population hungry for land: the often economically precarious hill farms now characteristic of such country. Industrial-scale activity in the form of commercial forestry and mineral exploitation also pressed upon these highlands, later removed or reimagined into the morphology of a recreational forest-scape.

More generally across the case study area, the patina of post-medieval rural evolution, its shape and contours defined during the monastic era, was ruptured by the coming of industry; by canals, tram and rail roads, foundries and collieries, and worker hamlets. This was a sharp jolt from a sparsely populated, economically undeveloped rural society to the pandemonium of heavy industry, without the mediation of the pre-mechanical prosperity of cottage industry that other regions such as the Pennine valleys of Yorkshire experienced.

On the face of it, nineteenth century industrialisation and the more all-encompassing rise of Cwmbrân new town that followed in the second half of the twentieth century were an even more grievous blow to the surviving relics of the monastic past in the landscape than the country-house transformations of the Morgans and Blewitts. The post-medieval successors to the granges of Dorallt, Gelli-las and Scybor Cwrt were literally obliterated by the bricks and mortar of the rising brave new world. The abbey

precinct and old park, pierced and encroached by roads and industrial groundwork surrounding Reginald Blewitt's nineteenth century facsimile of a Gothic abbey, quietly housing a company of nuns, hidden away behind wooded screens. No medieval monastic ruins available here to be venerated by Romantic artists and poets, Victorian tourists and the modern heritage industry. Remaining agricultural terrains at Llanderfel and Pentre-bach have been edged out by a scene that is now largely semi-urban, post-industrial. Yet memories of the monastic past are kept alive, in road names, in remnant field, path and wood and in recreated pilgrimage walks by residents reconnecting with the landscape that preceded urbanisation.

Chapter 11

Discussion: the topographical legacy of the medieval monastery

11.1 Introduction

This thesis has explored a hypothesis that the medieval monastery, over centuries of managing and moulding its precinct and estates, has left a topographical legacy that remains a core though often unrevealed component of the historic landscape, of experienced and remembered sense of place. The aim has been to provide a coherent and comprehensive narrative of the selected case study landscapes. To this end, the detailed analysis in the central chapters of this study mapped and recorded reconstructed medieval topographical baselines. Once established, these ‘monastic landscapes’ enabled the tracking of later estate evolution, beyond the functional to dig into ‘embedded, deeper meanings’, to shape a ‘biography of place’ encompassing the perception and remembrance of the monastic legacy (Austin 2013, 9-10).

Themes and threads from this body of evidence are now brought together, providing a critical evaluation structured around the core research questions proposed in Chapter 1. The starting point is a reflective review of fieldwork methodology, particularly shining a light on the landscape walks across the case study geographies (examples at Figures 11.1 and 11.2).⁷⁹ Each research question is then examined in turn, drawing out motifs and connections, considered in the wider frame of similar monastic territories across Wales and the March and the north of England. For consistency, these discussions are addressed in the two temporal periods underscoring the case study chapters: the medieval monastic landscape and subsequent post-Dissolution trajectory; excepting considerations of landscape perception which, as a cross-cutting theme, are examined under a discreet heading.

⁷⁹ Not to be confused with ‘field walking’, the archaeological technique of systematically walking laid out grids across a designated area, most usually ploughed fields, to recover surface artefacts.

11.2 Reflective review of fieldwork methodology



Figure 11.1: Route of the Cwmbrân landscape walk, Llantarnam case study (map drawn in ArcGIS using Ordnance Survey 1:25000 Scale Colour Raster data layer, Digimap® under licence, <http://digimap.edina.ac.uk/>).

As trailed in Chapters 1, 2 and 4, this research project has sought to apply, in synthesis, field methods from both landscape archaeology and cultural geography, an underplayed *modus operandi* within historic landscape study. The findings presented in the case study chapters have been profoundly constructed and contoured by this approach. It is appropriate, therefore, to step back and reflect on how this fieldwork contributed to the research objectives; on how successfully practice from different academic disciplines blended, and what learning there can be for future research adopting such a methodology. In doing so, some of the theoretical underpinnings essayed in Chapter 2 will be returned to.

As Nicola Whyte (2015, 926) has highlighted, walking has emerged as a ‘suggestive metaphor’, practical and theoretical, in a range of disciplines, notably cultural geography, ethnography, natural history and landscape archaeology. Theories of phenomenology and dwelling underscoring such practice have much to offer in

opening-up and expanding discourse on cultural landscapes. To study landscape from this perspective involves foregrounding lived, embodied experience and perception (Wylie 2013, 62). This approach counters or – more usefully – complements landscape engagement that is often vicarious and mediated through photographs, art, maps, writing and so forth, not only ‘stripped of materiality’ but also underscored by ‘selective and partial, and often highly ideological, ways of seeing and knowing’ (Tilley and Cameron-Daum 2017, 4). It is predicated by a claim that the researcher ‘needs to be there, to experience the landscape through the sensual and sensing body’ (*ibid.*, 5). An emphasis on mobility as methodology, especially when combined with video, photography and other arts-based media, can ‘add texture to representations of place and landscape’ (Macpherson 2016, 426).

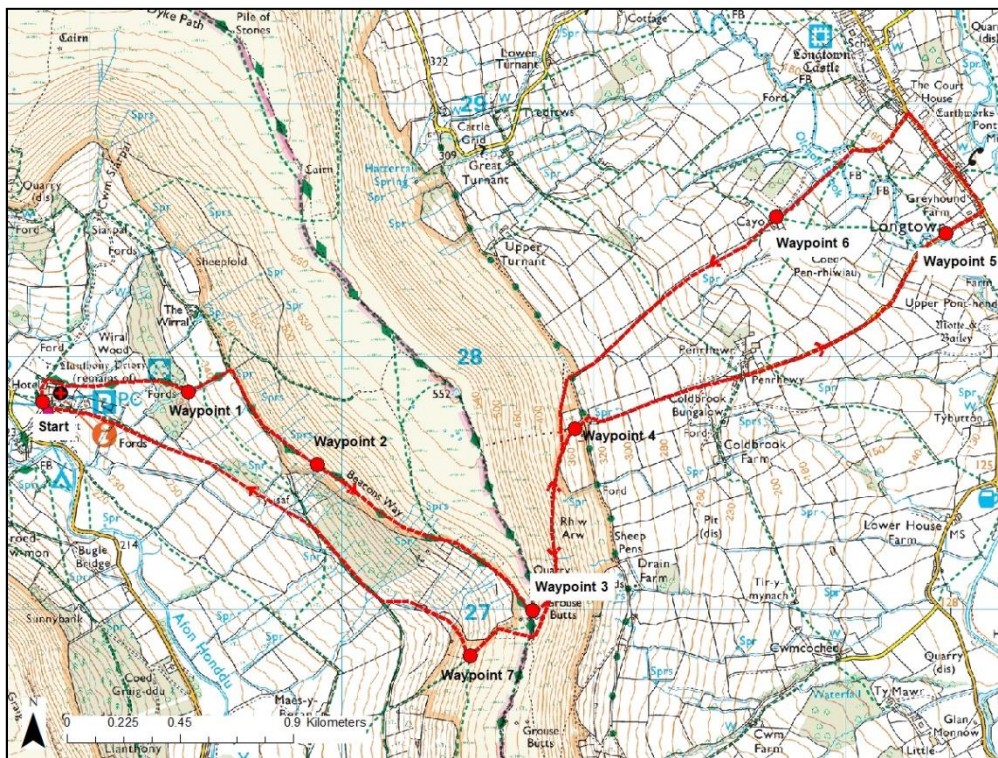


Figure 11.2: Route of the Llanthony to Longtown landscape walk, Llanthony case study (map drawn in ArcGIS using Ordnance Survey 1:25000 Scale Colour Raster data layer, Digimap® under licence, <http://digimap.edina.ac.uk/>).

The mobile practice undertaken here has been an attempt to combine methodical recording and observation with a more free-range, tactile and somewhat ephemeral engagement: an immersive ‘deep topography’. Cartographer and chronicler of west of Ireland landscapes, Tim Robinson’s (1990, 17; 2007) affirmation that ‘my favoured mode of walking is not a single-minded goal-bound linear advance but a cross-

questioning of an area', 'at an enquiring, digressive and wondering pace' has resonance here. On a practical level, the routes were pre-planned to track known or possible medieval byways connected with the case study monasteries, to pass through, photograph and gain contrasting viewpoints of former monastic country, to engage with landmarks, sites and places associated with the monks, to identify unplaced historical references. This structure was, however, leavened by a licence to drift, where physically covering the ground promised something that the preparatory map, written word or memory had not uncovered: 'Walking such paths, you might', in Robert Macfarlane's words, 'walk up strange pasts ... to flush out, to disturb what is concealed' (Macfarlane *et al* 2012, 4).



Figure 11.3: Wall remains suggested as the northern boundary of Secular Firmary grange, Tintern (Source: author).

In this way, provisional thoughts or leads on boundaries, trackways, grange farms, field systems and an array of other landscape features were ground-truthed through the wide-screen geographical vision gained during the walks. It was such rooting around that confirmed or cemented, *inter alia*, the likely location and bounds of the Llantarnam granges of Dorallt and Llanderfel, Tintern's Secular Firmary, various grange out-farms, the preponderance of surviving boundary walls across Tintern's estates, and the perimeter and nucleus of Llanthony's Redcastle manor (a fuller reckoning of finds and confirmations can be seen at Table 11.1) (Figure 11.3). The

footways followed also embody linear archaeology in themselves: the course and physical remnants of several monastic routeways have been discovered, including the Old Roadway (Llanthony) and the Long Way (Tintern). A significant number of these features may have been missed or misinterpreted without this extensive exploration on foot. Walking the hypothesised pilgrim way from Llantarnam to Penrhys, Madeleine Gray (1997b, 26) tells of similar calibrations made due to the archaeology and topography encountered *en route*. These long-form perambulations also enabled the targeting of more analytical follow-up visits and rapid surveys documented in Appendix 7, facilitating a further layer of fieldwork interpretation.

Perhaps less empirical or tangible but no less important, these all-day ramblings catalysed *in situ* thinking, reflection and quietude: valuable mental fieldwork to be taken back to the desk. The footpaths, lanes and off-the-beaten-track circuits followed became an outdoor laboratory for the crystallising of thoughts, ideas and connections, found evidence of the medieval and historic landscape and a wider appreciation of and feeling for the geography as it was passed through. As ‘deep topographer’ Nick Papadimitriou (2012, 78-9, 255) has it, such walking adds new dimensions ‘screened out’ or occluded by a too dryly scientific approach. Most profoundly, these pedestrian excursions fermented detailed three-dimensional mental mapping of the case study landscapes beyond that which could be gathered from representational ‘bird’s eye’ views from maps, photographs and satellite images, archival documents and written descriptions, site-based visits and the more constrained and peripheral moving through of driving across an area.

Fermented here is a much more nuanced, fleshed-out and fundamental understanding, literally earthed and grounded in felt morphology and topography: the aspect, relief, gradient, exposure and outlook of the land; the mud, turf, stone and tarmac of the path, track or lane followed; the smell, touch and noise of flora, soil, rock, water; of walls, tumbledown buildings and farm-yard detritus; of insect buzz, bird-call and vehicle hum. The landscape narratives in the case study chapters gained much detail and depth from this groundwork. Exploring the disused Old Roadway to Llanthony materialised a hunch sparked when a line was noticed on an aerial photograph. Following the high paths of Mynydd Maen revealed a viewing platform from which to conjure the form of Llantarnam’s Magna Porta manor

stretching out below. Walking the land corridor linking Brockweir and Modesgate granges with Tintern's Woolaston manor unveiled and added physicality to its value as communications route and additional assart (Figure 11.4).



Figure 11.4: The Old Road through the land corridor between Tintern's Brockweir grange and Woolaston manor (Source: author).

This analysis has now wandered into the phenomenological territory surveyed in Chapter 2, an approach critiqued as 'too intimate and too abstract', according insufficient weight to the wider historical, political and economic contexts within which landscape is always intertwined (Wylie 2013, 59). A focus on being present in the landscape, on 'living in the moment', can overplay spatial 'presentism' at the expense of time-depth considerations, how places were made and remade (Harvey 2015, 913; Whyte 2015, 927). Moreover, such walking practice also stands accused of following too complacently a British tradition of Romanticism in landscape discourse, overly-dependent on the 'single, white male' roaming unrestricted across the countryside, unhindered by or bypassing very real physical and psychological boundaries based on class, gender, race and so forth (Whyte 2015, 927). Allied to a preoccupation with the response of the self to the landscape, coming to it as a 'stranger' with an existential reluctance to engage with embedded memory, a somewhat narcissistic, narrow viewpoint can result, the landscape divested not only of the voices of those who worked and peopled it in the past, but also competing or

diverging contemporary narratives (Harvey 2015, 914-6). It is all too easy for the mode of engagement, *i.e.* walking, the rationale for being there, *i.e.* academic research, and ‘the socio-political position of those on the move’ to dictate or skew how a landscape is experienced and read (Macpherson 2016, 426).

These critiques and pitfalls have been at the forefront of this researcher’s mind. Oliver Rackham’s (2000, 4) grounded though perhaps reductive advice also looms: ‘before analysing people’s attitudes to landscape one must establish what it was they were attitudinising about.’ The methodology has therefore been designed to be emphatically inclusive of *both* the experiential practice discussed here and the more empirical toolkit of the landscape archaeologist and historian. So foregrounded have been these concerns that a counter-criticism of this project could be that it has underplayed the ‘cultural geographical’ elements so as not to fall into the trap of a too heavily theoretical approach lacking the groundwork of tangible evidence. By avoiding, specifically, an over reliance on phenomenological tropes (sensual responses, ‘seeing’ from the perspective of a medieval monk or lay brother *etc.*), excluding a narrative hinged by personal response, the balance has perhaps tilted decisively towards more conventional (and comfortable?) landscape history practice. A counterweight to this argument would stress that a wider analysis of landscape perception and memory, beyond fieldwork, has been central to this project, as discussed later in this chapter.

It could also be suggested that the relatively structured nature of the walks (trailing generally pre-determined map-based routes, generally traversing Public Rights of Way and Access Land) negated the degree to which this walking has fitted the psycho-geographical template laid-out in Chapter 2: a subversive challenging of official and prescribed routes, exploring the liminal and forgotten (Coverley 2006, 12). Iain Sinclair has described walking as ‘the last radical act ... you are going to take off in some impulsive direction’ (in an interview quoted in Kobek 2014, 35). Has a divergence from this type of militantly random drift been a missed opportunity? In mitigation, *ad-hoc* changes to and excursions away from the planned route were a fundamental element of the walks. Furthermore, significant portions were very much ‘off the beaten track’, following disused or difficult to access ways and detours, though sustained trespass on private land was avoided (Figure 11.5).



Figure 11.5: Scrambling off-path alongside Nant-y-ffin stream forming the steep northern boundary of Llanthony's Cwmyoy manor (Source: author).

There is no claim here that other landscape archaeologists and historians do *not* routinely walk the terrain they research. It is, though, rare to find walking foregrounded as a structured and recorded element within historic landscape fieldwork praxis (field guides such as Bowden 1999, Brown 1987, Lewis 2011 and Muir 2000 either make no mention or only reference as part of preparatory or reconnaissance visits to sites and landscapes). This project has demonstrated that walking practice incorporating, though not dominated by, an experiential dimension can be harnessed to good effect in historic landscape research when nested with more conventional techniques. Walks immersed in the landscape, structured yet flexible, can be a useful addition to a fieldwork toolkit often more reliant on relatively static, site-based investigative modes. Such an approach helps to positively conflate landscape with a sense of place, layering understanding through movement and a broader, multi-dimensional conception that merely gazing at discreet sites, views, documents or maps cannot achieve: recognition that inhabiting topography deeply requires 'an acknowledgement of the magnitude of response to landscape' (Nick Papadimitriou quoted in Coverley 2012, 223). Practice which diverges from an empirical, descriptive, classification methodology need not be uncoupled, it can be complementary. Through a thorough walking of the landscape, an archaeologist or landscape historian can become an observant 'passer-by' who not only builds on

their personal response and that of others to place, but also understands the processes of change in the landscape from a longer-term perspective, filtering such reactions through a contextual critical assessment (Schofield 2007, 110).

11.3 The medieval monastic landscape

11.3.1 How far is it possible to recreate the medieval landscapes of the monastic estates in the case study areas?

Foundational to this project has been the identification, cataloguing and mapping of discrete medieval landscapes. The list of landscape ‘discoveries’ at Table 11.1 and the more comprehensive gazetteers of topographical features compiled at Appendix 4 signify contemporary historic terrains inhabited by scatters and clusters of material relics and revenants from the centuries of monastic estate management. These archaeological clues, together with other evidence assemblages, have enabled the mapping of the landscape features in and around the monastic precinct (at Figures 5.17, 7.26 and 9.24) and the wider medieval hinterland (at Figures 5.15, 7.24 and 9.23) pivotal to the accompanying narratives. The detail of these medieval landscapes has been examined in the case study chapters, with synopses at Appendix 3. This analysis consolidates, extends, and in some cases challenges, the existing knowledge well and data-set, notably David Williams’ (1976, 1990, 2001) inventory of Welsh Cistercian estates. Most of all, it deepens previously preliminary and unconnected portraits of estate extents, economic and agricultural history and site-based testimony into a richer topographical reconstruction. Some of the key characteristics and themes will now be briefly drawn out.

Table 11.1: Summary of monastic landscape features discovered, confirmed or located in the three case studies

Llanthony	
<i>Cwmyoy manor</i>	Manor boundary confirmed, possible sites of manorial sheepcote, fish weirs and mills indicated by field-names and earthworks, field-name and earthwork evidence of arable farming
<i>Fish Path</i>	Engineered trackway up Cwm-bwchel forming part of route to Grwyne Fawr and Llangorse Lake
<i>Loxidge</i>	Possible upland sheep station
<i>Nant farmsteads</i>	System of farms established alongside 'nant' streams at spring-line to exploit hillside and open common pasture (Clydd, Cwm-bwchel, Llwygy, Nant-y-gwyddel, Noyaddllwyd, Pen-yr-heol, Ty-hwnt-y-bwlch, Vision)
<i>Oldcastle manor</i>	Possible site of manorial mill and sheepcote
<i>Old Roadway</i>	Main trackway to priory from Hatterall Hill and Longtown (now disused)
<i>Priory precinct</i>	Possible deer park to north-west of precinct indicated by field-names and topography
<i>Redcastle manor</i>	Manor boundary, manorial centre (focused on unnamed <i>motte</i>), possible location and remains of church north of Treveddw or at Kildare, Ynis-y-prior and other field-names indicating land-use
<i>Rhiw trackways</i>	System of rhiw trackways from farmsteads to upland common
<i>Valley farmsteads</i>	System of larger, core arable farms on lower valley slopes (Broadley, Court, Cwmyoy, Henllan, Llwny-celyn, Maes-y-beran, Neuadd, Stanton Manor, Trefolog, Treveddw, Wield)
<i>Wayside cross sites</i>	Indicated by field-names

Tintern	
<i>Brockweir grange</i>	Postulated grange boundary, sections of boundary wall, Abbey Ham meadows
<i>Little Meend/ Whitewalls</i>	Out-farm of Brockweir or Modesgate grange
<i>Livox</i>	Assarted secondary farm of Ruding grange
<i>Long Way</i>	Route of lower-level trackway linking abbey with Chepstow and its Monmouthshire holdings
<i>Minepit Wood</i>	Iron-ore working, possibly site of abbey iron mining
<i>Modesgate grange</i>	Postulated grange boundary, earthworks of field systems and possible site of grange chapel, sections of boundary wall
<i>Old Road to Abbey</i>	Line of trackway linking abbey with old Chepstow to Monmouth road
<i>The Old Road</i>	Line of trackway linking Brockweir and Modesgate granges with the main part of Woolaston manor and other trackways around the granges
<i>Porthcasseg manor</i>	Manor boundary, extensive earthworks north of modern farmstead possibly the remains of the medieval manorial centre, possible site of Tanhouse farm/ tannery
<i>Ruding grange</i>	Postulated grange boundary, possible site of sheepcote, field-names indicating land-use
<i>Secular Firmary grange</i>	Postulated grange boundary including assarted land at Fair oak, possible grange farmstead location at Penterry House, sections of boundary wall
<i>Worror Gasseg</i>	Possible medieval wharf near Livox
Llantarnam	
<i>Abbey precinct</i>	Postulated boundary of precinct, field-names indicating precinct infrastructure (e.g. orchard, visitor accommodation and rabbit warrens)
<i>Abbot's park</i>	Location and postulated boundary of medieval deer park
<i>Cefn-mynach grange</i>	Postulated grange boundary, boundary ditch, boundary field-names (e.g. Perthlan Vawr 'great church hedge'), large semi-oval medieval enclosures to north and west of farmstead
<i>Coed-mawr</i>	<i>Demesne</i> coppice wood around northern boundary of abbey precinct indicated by field-names and relict woodland
<i>Dorallt grange</i>	Postulated grange boundary
<i>Gelli-las grange</i>	Postulated grange boundary, land-use field-names
<i>Groes-mawr</i>	Medieval out-farm of Cefn-mynach grange

Llantarnam (continued)	
<i>Llanderfel grange</i>	Confirmation of grange and postulated boundary, suggestion of chapel remains as possible grange complex, medieval field systems
<i>Magna Porta manor</i>	Manor boundary earthworks and Clwyd-y-brawd (brother's dyke or gate) on Mynydd Maen, Nant-y-milwr boundary stream named after hermit Mieler, adviser on the abbey founding, route of Heol-y-forest road to Mynydd Maen uplands common and granges, possible site of dovecote at Colomendy
<i>Pillmawr</i>	Road from abbey to the quay, field-names indicating location of quay infrastructure
<i>Rhyswg grange</i>	Grange boundary, medieval field systems and grange boundaries
<i>Scybor Cwrt grange</i>	Postulated grange boundary, land-use and grange

At an estate boundary scale, charters and other medieval sources have offered a draft outline of the case study lands of Llanthony and Tintern, the detail of a fuller facsimile drawn from post-medieval manorial archives, map regression and field observation. In some cases, place-name continuity has enabled boundary clauses in ancient charters to be mapped; other archaic names have been lost. No such archival advantage exists for Llantarnam where, nevertheless, monastic estate bounds have been recreated with a reasonable degree of confidence using later sources and field enquiry. The Strata Florida project has shown how the perimeters of gifted lands were often not new lines in the landscape but trailed existing dykes, tracks, marker stones and other distinguished places, fossilising the extents of pre-monastic territorial units (Bezant 2013, 81-2). Such is the case high on Mynydd Maen where the bounds of Llantarnam's Magna Porta manor were meared by the Llanderfel Rhiw track and the great stones of Beadd-bach and Craig Llywarch, markers inherited from the antecedent landscape.

In common with the great swathes of monastic territory accumulated across northern England, Wales and the March more widely, these estates demonstrate a balance of underexploited country and long-established agricultural units, whether by design or circumstance. Here the early monastic communities – the Cistercians of Llantarnam and Tintern in particular – were certainly busy transforming wood-pasture, woodland,

high-country forest and marsh through clearance, drainage, new livestock practices and higher-intensity cultivation. Any apparent taming of 'blank canvas' wilderness, however, was largely allegoric, the reality more nuanced. Even in these relatively underpeopled terrains there was little wholly unsettled or unmanaged land. Economic activity had to adapt to local circumstances, constrained somewhat by existing agricultural practice and entrenched tenancy arrangements (Burton and Kerr 2011, 150, 161; Waites 2007, 61). The Cistercians were 'not so much pioneers as entrepreneurs whose successful reorganisation of fragmented estates into granges reshaped the landscape', delivering a more efficient economy (Burton and Kerr 2011, 169). This can be seen in the development of Tintern's Wye Valley estates. Backwater Porthcasseg manor transformed into the epicentre of the abbey's farming operations, the new granges of Ruding and Secular Firmary and their secondary farms carved out of abundant wooded margins. South, west and across the Wye, the established but perhaps moribund arable farms of Rogerstone, Trelleck and Modesgate expanded and worked harder by teams of lay brothers. As long-term corporations enjoying advantages of institutional and administrative continuity and the privileges, monopolies and protections of lordly patronage, the case study monasteries planned and adapted the environment to meet their economic needs, thus enabling their spiritual vocation (Waites 2007, 215-6).



Figure 11.6: Broadley farm, part of Llanthony Priory's monastic demesne in a mixed setting of meadows, pasture, woodland and open upland common (Source: author).

As with the large tracts of Yorkshire in the hands of the Cistercians, the countryside was substantially worked and moulded during the monastic centuries, creating a structure that is largely still retained (Coppack 2003, 106). Within the margins of the estate boundaries, the medieval landscape maps present a broad template mirrored in the historic environment today:

- a general land-use segmentation into sectors of woodland, farmed land and open common (Figure 11.6);
- the location of the larger farmsteads and routeways;
- relict landscape features of grange and manorial infrastructure such as fishponds, mills, deer parks, sheepcotes and fish weirs;
- and networks of chapels and churches.

Such transformations of land-use and management should not, though, be caricatured as colonisation (Austin, forthcoming). Clearing of woodland, the exploitation of previously marginal country and changes in agricultural techniques may have taken place with or without monastic stewardship and the role of local farming communities as key agents of landscape change should not be overlooked (Wade Martins 2004, 117). The scale and intensity of transition, however, speak of the planning, resources and sustained resolve displayed by monasteries and their workforce, particularly in the pioneering stage of dynamic estate management; the grange model, above all else, transforming and re-orientating a particular place and population (Waites 2007, 60). The dominant players in galvanising this landscape modification were the flourishing granges of Llantarnam and Tintern, the large valley farms of Hothneyslade.

At the grange and individual farm spatial level, the core *demesne* estates and specialist farmsteads surrounding the monastery and general land-use character progressing to adjacent upland and more marginal terrains, have been defined and mapped. More tentative has been the tracing of medieval field boundaries associated with these steadings. Here, contemporary documentary evidence has been slight. Moreover, the field systems remaining in the historic landscape, generally only marginally altered from the enclosures displayed in late-eighteenth and nineteenth century cartography, often display regular forms that suggest post-medieval re-setting of farmed land. There are some exceptions. The highland

bercary of Rhyswg, carved out of an elevated wooded ridge, is sub-divided by small enclosures, which though rectilinear are bounded by earth-banked out-grown beech hedges that suggest they are the result of the original assarting, the *conversi* workforce laying out a designed grid to enable efficient stock rearing and self-sufficiency. Field-names, particularly those of older documents and maps, sometimes also hint at ancient farming practice, the case study gazetteers cataloguing an array of examples that speak of arable and common tillage, livestock and other land-use. The partial analytical survey of the environs of Modesgate (mapped at Figure 7.32) has begun to provide a picture of the medieval grange layout. Perhaps most revealing are the occasional impressions of now vanished enclosures highlighted by LiDAR beneath the post-medieval palimpsest, such as those at Penterry and Porthcasseg. Such glimpses, though, offer-up only partial or indicative infilling amidst the more confidently drawn grange and estate boundaries and general land-use patterns.

As a comparator, the medieval field system explored at Royston grange in the Derbyshire Peak District offers a typology for monastic farms in high-country settings. Here the main function was sheep-rearing. Small banked enclosures near the grange complex represent the infield for controlling stock and growing produce to sustain the community. Several larger rectilinear fields, including traces of ridge and furrow, frame the outfield leading to an expanse of hill-country common for summer pasture (Hodges 2006, 111). A similar pattern is seen at the grange site at Cold Cam Farm, Oldstead in the Hambleton Hills (Yorkshire), a stock farm for Byland Abbey (Sutcliffe 2010, 63-4).

The evidence drawn from the case studies points to a somewhat unenclosed farmed environment across many of the hill-country granges and tenanted farming communities: picture the rolling grasslands interspersed with wood cover of the archetypal Alpine valley (Figure 11.7). Crops and livestock kept around the farmsteads certainly penned in, demarcated and protected by fence and wall (the infield), the wider outfield space encompassing (sometimes large) tracts of rotational or transient enclosures. A more open prospect across the extensive outlying ground: the ‘good pasture among the scattered trees’ of the wood-pasture hillsides and long flood meadowlands along the valley floor (Williams 1981, 217). Enclosed and ditched

lots of intensively managed coppice wood separated out, thicker tree cover in gulleys and steeper places rising to common expanses on the higher ground. This patina was only later transformed into the patchwork of individual fields so characteristic of these landscapes today and in living memory.



Figure 11.7: Open wood-pasture landscape in the Swiss Alps (Source: www.desktopdress.com).

Of the grange courts themselves, their building ranges and yards would seem, in most cases, to have been overlain by succeeding post-medieval farmsteads and the infrastructure of modern farming (or in the case of Llantarnam's closest granges, the built environment of Cwmbrân). This is a familiar monastic story: for instance, few surviving buildings have been found at the numerous granges of the well-studied Fountains Abbey (Coppack 2003, 105). As direct management of large monastic estates declined in the later Middle Ages, the monasteries becoming rentiers for most of their landed income, many granges and monastic farms reorganised to meet the more modest needs and differing farming priorities of their lay tenants (*ibid.*, 116-7; Knowles 1976, 130). The grand stone buildings of these 'miniature monasteries' often fell into disuse or were replaced with smaller wooden structures more suited to purely agricultural needs (Burton and Kerr 2011, 175; Coppack 2003, 106, 118). Such 'downsizing' and subsequent post-medieval rebuilding in stone explains the paucity of surviving grange architecture.



Figure 11.8: Llwyn-celyn farmstead, under restoration by the Landmark Trust (Source: author).

Numerous of the successor farmsteads in the case study areas have, though, been shown to include some remnant late-medieval or early post-medieval fabric, most strikingly Llwyn-celyn, south of Llanthony, where it is hoped that ongoing architectural restoration work will reveal more of its monastic history (Figure 11.8). It is certainly likely that more intensive archaeological or architectural prospection may provide further clues to the medieval building footprint, as exemplified by Tintern's Merthyrgeryn grange (Parkes and Webster 1974, 151). On reflection, the earthworks in fields beside Porthcasseg Farm (as seen in Figure 7.18) provide perhaps the most promising potential for survey and further archaeological investigation: an opportunity to reveal the plan of the farm at the centre of Tintern's home manor.

11.3.2 What similarities and differences can be observed between the monastic landscapes in the case studies?

The summarised characteristics of the case study medieval landscapes in Appendix 3 reveal parallels and contrasts which will now be examined. All three monasteries emerged from their foundation stage with a consolidated and considerable block of home estates surrounding the precinct – enhanced by exchange and purchase – which remained largely stable throughout the monastic epoch and beyond. This pattern, repeated for many similarly-sized houses, further dispels the myth that the primary goal of the new monastic communities of the twelfth century was to settle in

wild and untamed places isolated from the surrounding countryside. Although relations with the wider secular world have not been directly included in the remit of this project, that the houses and their religious and lay communities became deeply embedded in the surrounding landscape, economy and society has been highlighted. Tintern's extensive landed holdings and network of grange farms elevated the abbey to become an important regional landowner; also the case, though at a more parochial level, for Llantarnam and Llanthony (Millward and Robinson 1978, 128). At the latter, for all the evident antagonism towards the priory, the prior remained a constant, though often arms-length, lordly influence across its landed domains up to the Dissolution, facilitating the rise of the dominant cabal of Hothneyslade copyholders.

The influence of expansive monastic land management across south-east Wales on medieval life was, though, often interrupted or checked by wider events and the degree of hostility, either from the local populace or neighbouring landowners (Williams 2008, 205). David Williams (1990, 18) has suggested that without the foregrounded instability and turbulence of the medieval Welsh Marches, the impact of the Cistercians on the region would have been even more profound. The same could be said for the north of England, where rebellion and lawlessness caused significant problems for even the wealthiest houses there (Coppack 2003, 82-3). Perceived or real political loyalties in times of dispute and conflict such as the Glyndŵr revolt, whether towards the Welsh or Anglo-Normans, often had implications for the stability and financial health of the monastery (Stöber, 2008, 20). Llanthony and Tintern, founded and patronised by Anglo-Norman nobility were, moreover, heavily subject to the fortunes of their benefactors (Robinson 2011, 9). 'Part of the imagined landscape of the aristocracy', they were high-status dependents of the fiefdoms commanded from the castles at Longtown and Chepstow (Liddiard 2007, 6). Mutual dependency is perhaps the dominant characteristic here: economic and political patronage, labour and business transactions provided by the laity, the monks bringing spiritual service, stability and prestige (Stöber, 2008, 19).

Llantarnam was somewhat out of step with this prevailing Marcher hegemony (Williams 2001, 3). Its very foundation by the great Welsh house of Strata Florida and the native lords of Caerleon was as a bulwark against Norman incursion, helping

to cement relations between the rising Cistercians and an older Welsh religious and temporal establishment (Bezant 2013, 73). Like its mother abbey, the convent cultivated a long-lasting association with Welsh culture and identity (Austin 2013, 12). The monastery precinct, abbot's park and *demesne* estates interlocked with a wider native lordly countryside: the abbey conjoined with the adjacent castle and deer park of Caerleon; this communion the visible embodiment of Welsh defiance in the face of Anglo-Norman ascendancy.

Some of the resentment towards the monkish communities, their reputation for greed and rapaciousness, stemmed from the need to turn their – sometimes unpromising – situation into a going concern (McCormack 2010, 22). Initial prohibition of income from tithes and tenants and a desire for self-sufficiency meant that Cistercians had to cultivate and work their realm more intensively to both sustain themselves and provide income, the origin of the grange system (Robinson 2011, 8). Whilst often unpopular, there was also recognition of the monasteries abilities to work and transform their estates, an example to all (Williams 1990, 17). The carefully planned and centrally controlled granges of Llantarnam and Tintern, glimpsed through the detailed records surviving for the latter, profoundly influenced the provincial medieval agricultural economy, notably through the management of large sheep flocks (Williams 1984, 254; 1990, 16). Here was the radical application of highly efficient corporate planning, at odds with traditional forms of agriculture in the wider economy (Coppack 2003, 105). This was to wane in later years as granges were farmed out to tenants, though by now the overall design of the landscape had been framed as outlined in the previous section.

This methodical approach can also be seen in the shrewd selection of different terrains for Cistercian grange farming specialisation: sandy gravels and limestone – such as the plateau-lands above Tintern famed for their 'richness and fertility' – chosen for grain farms; animal husbandry dominating the steeper-pitched hillsides and high grazing exploited by Llantarnam's upland steadings; woodland stocks retained on more precipitous ground and acidic soils (Heath 1806, unpaginated; Williams 1984, 225). Such a pattern can also be observed in the placement of granges across the extensive abbey lands of north-east Yorkshire (Waites 2007, 65). A ring of home farms was forged into the landscape around the monk's enclave, self-

contained granges also diffusing the animal houses and agricultural infrastructure normally found within the precinct of other orders into the wider countryside (Coppack 2003, 114, 119). On the heights above the convent, on the roadways and along the riverbanks those working and living in this estate landscape would literally be within earshot of the chanting and bells emanating from the abbey church, as well as within sight of each other: a workscape melded through the common purpose of the monastic economy (Figure 11.9).



Figure 11.9: Ruding grange and the farmland and woods above the Tintern Abbey precinct to the right (Source: author).

To classify these plotted Cistercian landscapes as uniformly ‘monastic’, though, would be something of a caricature. Though exemplars of expansion and agrarian intensification, the home granges of Llantarnam and Tintern were not isolated within an uncultivated vacuum. The abbeys were also lords of manorial tenants peopling the wider expanses gifted in their foundation grants. Evidence is lacking as to the extent to which the existing peasantry were incorporated into the lay grange workforce or displaced by the new farming system as seen at some of the holdings of Fountains Abbey (Muir 2001, 45). Whilst the Cistercian grange model was underscoring landscape management at Llantarnam and Tintern, moreover, this is less evident for Augustinian Llanthony. The canon’s stewardship of the Hothneyslade manors was often notional as the fortunes of the priory ebbed and

flowed and it finally became a much-reduced cell of the more flourishing Gloucester house, exercising looser lordly control over its independently-minded manorial tenantry. Whether there is a correlation here with a lack of field- and place-names across Hothneyslade with monastic references in comparison to the other case studies is a question to ponder.⁸⁰ Nevertheless, here can still be seen a degree of agricultural planning and innovation that betokens a monastic influence, a working of this previously marginal topography more efficiently to support the priory and maximise income. The fertile alluvial soils of the lower and eastern side of the Vale of Ewyas exploited by the bigger arable valley farms, pastoral farming and woodland management intensified elsewhere (Figure 11.10).



Figure 11.10: The rich alluvial soils of the lower Vale of Ewyas, home to the priory's home arable farms, looking north-east between Cwmyoy and Llanthony (Source: author).

One clear thread running through the three case studies is the existence of a network of roads and trackways connecting the monastery, its geographically spread

⁸⁰ In contrast, the priory's wider holdings in English territory harvest more regular named connections, as at Canon Frome manor (Herefordshire), the settlement of Prior's Frome in the manor of Mordiford (Herefordshire), Prior's Reach and Monk Weir at Tidenham (Gloucestershire) and various Prior's Woods.

manors, granges and farmsteads and the wider world. Trade, high-status visitors, pilgrims and local traffic, the multiple catalysts for a named and marked, maintained and managed system of transit and safe passage. Spotlighting and recreating these routeways resets conventional patterns of ‘fixed’ landscape features linked simply by lines on a map, foregrounding considerations of movement and methods of communication (Reynolds 2009, 420-423). Recognition of the multiple meanings of these shared ways also dawns: to connect but also to mark and codify the landscape and people’s interaction within it: ‘the integration of key topographical points – such as boundaries, river crossings and crossroads – helped structure and give spiritual context to the ordinary aspects of everyday life’ as folk moved about the landscape (Whyte 2015, 929-2). Travelling through, for instance, the Abbey Gate before the descent to the Wye ferry to Tintern representing not just a waymark *en route* but also a passing from the open forest of Tidenham Chase into prescribed monastic land. In the hills west of Llantarnam, the difficulty of the terrain on the cross-way to the Penrhys shrine was leavened by wayside chapels such as St. Derfels, but also an important component of the spiritual journey itself (Gray 2011, 245). As such routes spread out from the monastery, they also took on a geo-political role: linking economically and strategically important places, acting as both ‘instruments of elite control’ for the ecclesiastical and political class and safe space in sometimes bleak and hostile country, exemplified by the Monks’ Trod running from Strata Florida through the abbey’s lands in western Radnorshire (Altenberg 2001, 109; Fleming 2009, 83).

Examples of constructed trackways such as the cobbled way above the Passage ferry to Tintern and the stonework on the Fish Path down to Llanthony, banked or hollowed depending on the terrain, highlight their role as multi-purpose critical infrastructure (Figure 11.11). Richard Colyer (1984, 78) has shown that the road between Strata Florida and its Nant-y-bai grange included similarly banked and stone-paved groundwork, as can also be observed in sections of paving at Neath’s Cwrt-y-betws grange and between Margam and its New Grange (Williams 1984, 231). Further north, Fountains numerous manors and granges across the Yorkshire Dales were connected by a network of lanes kept in good order by the tenants of the abbey’s farms (Raistrick 1978, 56).



Figure 11.11: Part of the constructed Fish Path at Cwm-bwchel above Llanthony (Source: author).

It is not hard to imagine that the effort, resources and planning that went into building the monastery and developing its agricultural holdings would also be channelled into these important routeways, bonding the house with these estates and the outside world to ensure safe and efficient passage. The engineered ways highlighted in the case study areas testify to this truism. As with Andrew Fleming's (2009, 2010b) findings on studying the Monks' Trod and other Strata Florida tracks, the evidence suggests an often-underestimated level of sophistication and investment in medieval road construction and maintenance. The monastery, at least in its more stable periods, providing institutional continuity, revenue, know-how and labour. Sustained and heavy use of these roads and paths during the long centuries of the monastic community and economy, even where pre-

existing ways were co-opted, would have seen significant construction, improvement, wear and repair across the network. The postulated monastic trods and track-ways introduced here help to challenge received wisdom that pre-modern roads were uniformly primitive, difficult and very much non-permanent. A transition of routes from general directions of travel into defined, maintained and named roads and footways can be heralded as a key topographical legacy of the monastic era (Colyer 1984, 61; Moorhouse 1989, 59).

11.3.3 Are there commonalities in the medieval landscapes of the case studies that can be attributed to the border character of the Welsh Marches?



Figure 11.12: The lands of Llantarnam's Magna Porta manor looking east towards the Norman Marcher realms of Monmouthshire from the heights of Mynydd Maen (Source: author).

The foundation and siting of medieval monasteries, particularly those of the Cistercian Order, was often couched in the language and metaphor of conquest, borders and frontiers. On the margins of settled countryside, the vast tracts the White Monks were granted across Wales and the north of England were 'both symbolically and physically ideal' for Cistercian foundations, outermost (if not empty) territory to be transformed by 'fruitful labour' (Menuge 2000, 28, 32). All three case studies looked at here are not only in a border region – the March, later Monmouthshire, a connecting chain-link between England and Wales – but also occupy geographically and culturally liminal locations within this frontier terrain. Llanthony and Tintern sitting astride the Hatterall ridge and River Wye respectively, natural forms marking ancient boundaries which evolved into the Anglo-Welsh border. Llantarnam bestriding the transition between upland Welshries to the west and eastward lowlands progressively colonised by Anglo-Norman lordship and settlement (Figure 11.12). Tintern was squarely within the sphere of Marcher foundations, Llantarnam and Llanthony at the brink of independent Welsh influence,

the former supported by the native hierarchy, the latter a product of Norman expansion (Bond 2005, 52-53).

Borderlands can often appear to be a ‘third country’, a distinct and set apart culture fusing elements from both sides (Mullin 2007, 2-4). More than just a geographical or administrative perimeter, the border country of the March has a particularly complex layering of history as local writers such as Arthur Machen and Raymond Williams have so well illustrated (Tomos Owen in Machen 2010, 186). Tintern perhaps exemplified this compound complexity: an Anglo-Norman establishment with a Welsh-derived though Anglicised name, its estates spread across both sides of the border with English and Welsh lay brothers and tenants. Richer in lands and income than the other case study houses, the abbey was relatively sequestered from the tribulations of the March, enjoying the protection of the nearby Chepstow castle, bastion of its benefactors, and enveloped by a landscape that evolved an Anglicised manorial structure. A named countryside in which Old English or French nomenclature – ‘riding’, ‘hay’, ‘passage’ – became entrenched amidst native Welsh place-naming: toponyms similarly familiar in the landscape of the great houses of the north of England (Figure 11.13).



Figure 11.13: Riddings Farm, on the site of one of Bolton Priory’s granges in Wensleydale, Yorkshire (Source: author).

In contrast, the manorial landscape of Llanthony seems more contested, a border terrain in which cultures clash, a place of ambiguity, instability and threat (Mullin 2007, 6-7). This reality, though, also forged the character of its landscape and

people. As Raymond Williams (1990b, 101) has articulated, ‘much of the history was disputed. Much of the topography was overlaid by late and arbitrary names...It was an invaded land and a mixed people, but it inscribed an identity.’ Flanked by the wild Black Mountains to the west, a lawless realm only notionally under Marcher Lord control, the priory became an embattled Anglo-Norman enclave. Hunkered down amongst native tenantry, monastic life was east-facing: to estates in Herefordshire and the sanctuary of Llanthony Secunda at Gloucester. One element of Llanthony’s rupture spilled over into Tintern’s quieter realm: a long-standing land dispute between the two houses and their respective tenants in the neighbouring manors of Ayleburton and Woolaston, the chapel at Alvington a source of particularly bitter conflict, Llanthony only withdrawing its claim in 1318 (Williams 2001, 277).

Llantarnam was also embroiled in geo-political territorial disputes, with the Anglo-Norman backed Margam Abbey and neighbouring lords, as chronicled in Chapter 9. The abbots and priors could work their frontier location to their advantage, seeking patronage from both sides as a stable and independent custodian for lands in disputed areas (Gray 2002, 19-20). They were, however, also prone to be ‘trapped by their own history’ as Llantarnam found; the abbey’s Welsh endowments, support and sympathies becoming a weakness as political reality transformed, native lordship declined, and estates were forcefully taken by Gilbert de Clare (*ibid.*, 18).

11.4 The post-Dissolution landscape

11.4.1 How does the legacy of monasticism manifest itself in subsequent post-Dissolution secular landscape development across the case studies?

The case study landscapes experienced a remarkable level of post-Dissolution continuity in the estate configuration developed by the monasteries: testament to the long-lasting impact of monastic management. Local gentry – the Arnolds (Llanthony), Herberts (Tintern) and Morgans (Llantarnam) – had cultivated prominent roles in the lay administration of the late-monastic estates and, no doubt, long-term ambitions to take control of monastic property when circumstances allowed. They were swift to secure the abbey and priory sites and their extensive landed possessions after the suppression (Gray 1990, 188; Knowles 1976, 283). The Dissolution had led to an

influx of such extensive estates onto the market, particularly coveted by rising dynasties seeking a prestige focus for new country seats (Johnson 1996, 136). Many manors and grange farms remained as integral working units within these high-status domains inherited or purchased from this first generation of secular landowners. It was the inexorable splintering of great landed estates from the late-nineteenth century onwards that saw this durability breached: the lost monasteries only experiencing the final ‘dissolution of their landscapes’ in the post-war decades as country estates were rapidly broken up and individual farm units sold off, a full 400 years after their religious communities were expelled (Finch 2007, 52).



Figure 11.14: The regular enclosed post-medieval fieldscape of Llanthony's Stanton Manor, looking south-west to the upland common of Bryn Arw (Source: author).

It was not only the monastic estate unit that remained imprinted on the landscape. As alluded to in the previous sections, the land-use model moulded during the monastic centuries has endured: a template for, rather than a mere staging post towards the modern landscape, though evolved further and embellished in the post-medieval era. Successor communities took on ‘extant ecologies of social and physical landscapes’ and, although they applied their own agency in adapting this inherited terrain were often much-influenced by what went before (Rotman and Fuentes 2016, 70, 77). Post-medieval farmers around Llanthony and Tintern may have rationalised their practices to reflect a more individualised and market-driven

agriculture but they did so on the back of the groundwork of their medieval predecessors in establishing the core farm units. Even the seemingly overriding modern townscape of Cwibrân retained important trace elements of the medieval Magna Porta manor and its grange farms.

Within this settled framework, though, a new fieldscape emerged, the open sheep-walks, wood-pasture and flood-meadows progressively enclosed in straight lines and the old infield-oufield closes reconfigured to reflect changing farming practice and tenancy arrangements (Figure 11.14). Manifest here was a decisive shift away from communal rights and activity towards more legalistic and individualistic behaviours underpinned by private property: an emergent ‘private, hedged landscape’ (Johnson 1996, 47). The power of the monastic corporations had been replaced by prominent secular landowners and newly cash-rich farmers of the ‘middling sort’, such as the powerful cartel of upwardly mobile provincial families who monopolised the Cwmyoy manor court. It was the piecemeal enclosure by agreement (sometimes recorded, more than often not) enacted by these enterprising and relentless proto-capitalists that fenced, hedged and walled these landscapes. Its gestation traced to independently-minded farmed-out granges and tenancies of the last decades of monastic ownership but flowering mainly from the late-sixteenth through to the early-eighteenth century. Later waves of similarly grass-rooted endeavour saw further intake from open *fforest* and waste as a rising and land-hungry populace set-up new steadings, medieval summer pasture converted to freehold hill farms, though more top-down and expansive Parliamentary Inclosure was never enacted across these commons (Bezant 2013, 83). Awkwardly-named binary ‘ancient’ and ‘planned’ historic countryside descriptors seem unhelpful in this context (Muir 2004, 3-5). Here are landscapes of negotiated, piecemeal post-medieval enclosure embedded within an overarching structure developed by monastic estate managers and their workforce.



Figure 11.15: *Llanderfel's Rhiw, bounding Magna Porta manor on Mynydd Maen (Source: author).*

Though the building ranges of the medieval granges – designed for monastic communities and practices now past – either fell into disrepair, were demolished or replaced, their names survived. Even where the physical presence had vanished, such place-names endured as prompting ‘mnemonics’, a lexicon symbolising continuity, antiquity and high status (Walsham 2011, 486). Llanderfel, the pilgrims long gone and its chapel falling into ruin, lingered as a place of local significance, perhaps particularly potent in a stronghold of recusant Catholicism where the vestiges of Llantarnam’s monastic topography retained veneration amongst the surrounding populace. Llanderfel’s

Rhiw, wending above the chapel and grange, remained part of the boundary circuit cited in manor surveys, along with Clwyd-y-brawd (‘the brother’s gate’), ‘which meareth between this Lordship and the Lordship of Edlogan’, indicating the north-western extent of the old abbey lands of Magna Porta (*Gwent Archives*, D3105.4) (Figure 11.15). In such ways, the past was not separated from the now in a linear way, it ‘was folded into the present as having potent meaning’ (Whyte 2015, 932). Such boundary markers incorporating ‘material traces of the past’ and similarly antique topographical features helped to shape parochial identity and knowledge; anchoring nodes underpinning custom and tradition – providing ‘a collective imagining of the deep past’ – as will be explored further in Section 11.5 (*ibid.*, 928, 930; *NLW*, Cardiff Central Library MS 5.15). The physical and remembered legacy of these monastic houses and their landscapes therefore transitioned into valued landmarks which helped to frame not only ‘local and regional topographies’ but also

the very 'cosmology' of a society for which 'a linear concept of history' was alien until fairly recently (Altenberg 2001, 292; Whyte 2008, 25).

11.4.2 Is there any commonality in the post-Dissolution evolution of the monastic estates studied in terms of designed and designated heritage landscapes?

All three former monasteries had in common an ongoing afterlife and renewal, transformations which retained strong echoes of medieval life, architecture and landscape. An unforeseen consequence of the seemingly decisive blotting-out of monastic society and its memory was 'a second life as a focus for a new aesthetic and intellectual experience', a 'new spirituality' having something in common with original monastic ideals (Moore 2007, 180). This post-suppression history has now lasted longer than the era of monastic corporations (Robinson 2006, 3). Although all were integrated into post-medieval secular estates, the trajectories of the abandoned cloisters and their surrounding monastic fabric varied.

The disused hulk of Llantarnam Abbey soon saw rebirth as a new gentry mansion, trading on its monastic past but also the author of the destruction of much of the old medieval fabric. The 'abbey' name was retained, such an address conferring a status and history particularly important for gentry keen to stress or promote their pedigree (Betty 1989, 148; Moore 2007, 202). A new house with ancient antecedents in place, William Morgan proceeded to further bolster his position in society by developing the precinct and former abbot's park into a contemporary Elizabethan garden and parkland landscape, retaining features such as the 'Magna Porta' gate. Monastic remnants incorporated into the grounds of a great house or estate in this way demonstrated good taste, later folded into the ideal of a picturesque landscape (Moore 2007, 201). In the mid-eighteenth century, John Aislaby remodelled the grounds of his Studley Royal estate to include the considerable ruins of Fountains Abbey as a distant vista beyond newly laid-out gardens, the formality of this landscape and his classically designed house juxtaposed with the archaic Gothic remains (Coppack 2003, 135-6) (Figure 11.16).



Figure 11.16: View of Fountains Abbey by Balthasar Nebot, 1768, showing the vista towards the abbey ruins from the grounds of Studley Royal house (Source: © National Trust).

By contrast, the claustral buildings at Llanthony and Tintern remained largely intact as coveted property but never became the permanent seats of their owners (and were long utilised for more rustic utility and partially ravaged for building materials). Curiously, given its later veneration, the dramatic wreck of the abbey at Tintern did not become the centrepiece of a gentry landscape, falling instead into backwater anonymity until Georgian resurrection. Llanthony, ‘beautiful and famous in her slow decay: possibly matchless in her site’, did witness a late attempt at transformation into a country house estate by Walter Savage Landor as recounted in Chapter 6 (Bradley 1911, 89). The old priory was to be the heart of ambitious plans to create a ‘new Llanthony’; not just a house but an ‘ideal community’ and a landscape by design, an echo of its monastic past (Hando 1944, 92) (Figure 11.17). Ultimately unfulfilled, Landor’s vision nevertheless exemplified renewed enthusiasm for historic sites during the Romantic era.



Figure 11.17: Landor's parkland vision, echoing the wood-pasture of the monastic sheep runs, looking east towards Siarpal above Llanthony (Source; author).

Llanthony was revered by the discerning aesthete and enjoyer of country pursuits, but it was Tintern that was to latterly become simultaneously 'both fashionable and commercialised', remaining one of the more visited heritage sites in the country with perhaps the most featured afterlife of any medieval monastery in the country (Robinson 2006, 3; Williams 2001, 287). As Arthur Mee (1951, 154) mused, 'in life so little known, it is in death, celebrated, like someone canonised a century or so after martyrdom.' Both survived and thrived as worthy relics of the monastic and medieval past into the modern age of heritage tourism. At Llantarnam, with little surviving fabric on which to construct a medieval narrative, the house and grounds passed through the acme and decline of the Victorian country estate era, slipping into prosaic institutional use. Even though the old abbey is long gone, though, its memory has framed successor topography and utility, from the continuation of the Catholic spirit by the Morgan family to renewed religious purpose as a post-war nunnery and local interest in the time-depth bestowed by the abbey on Cwmbrân's enveloping urbanism. How these monastic geographies have been perceived by successor generations, visitors and the artistic community, the challenges and opportunities for their future management and appreciation, will now be examined further.

11.5 Perceptions of the landscape

11.5.1 What patterns and trends emerge in historic and contemporary perceptions and reactions to the case study monastic landscapes and their transformations?

The benefits of engaging with landscape ‘as lived experience’ were considered in the review of fieldwork methodology in Section 11.2 and the ‘fault line’ often dividing tangible and perceptual reflections will now be breached (Whyte 2005, 926). Most day-to-day interactions with landscape take place within the geographical concept of the ‘life-world’, that is ‘the taken-for-granted pattern and context of everyday life’ by which people move through their surroundings without consciously and constantly thinking about this environment (Altenberg 2001, 37; Wylie 2007, 149). This pragmatic approach allows people to ‘get things done’, but the material topography within which human activity takes place – fields, roads, buildings and so forth – also has symbolic properties, even if these are often unconsciously realised (Altenberg 2001, 37). Thus, landmarks, landscape features and the stories that surround them inherited from the past are loaded with diverse memory and symbolism leeching through, even in times of great socio-economic upheaval which could be assumed to sweep away the past (Whyte 2009, 8-9). Landscapes become, in effect, the ‘imagined geographies’ as well as the practical ‘life-worlds’ of those who inhabit them (Cosgrove 2008, 3).

As the lordly inheritors of monastic estates valued and proclaimed their continuity with the past, so too did their tenants. The post-medieval copyholders of Cwmyoy controlling the manor court were busy forging new homes, lives and agricultural incomes from the old *demesne* manor of Llanthony and were descended from a community whose simmering resentment of the priory’s stewardship of their lands contributed to the difficulties it often experienced. However, their manor court books proudly foregrounded a history of ‘the Abby of Lanthony which gives name to the Lordship’, quoting the original land grants to the priory from which the manor sprung (*NLW*, 1184). This incantation confirmed not only the ancient bounds of the estate but also its pedigree as the Augustinian’s home ground, historic links to the priory still symbolically important to the forward-looking court members. One of their

number also took the trouble to adorn the entrance of his new farmhouse at Ty-hwnt-y-bwlch, seven kilometres south of the priory, with an archway appropriated from its ruins; a gesture at once both respectful and profane.

For such communities, local identity and knowledge of place were deep-rooted in an understanding of the past predicated on inhabiting and working the land, ritual and custom, meaning attached to ancient material remains, natural landmarks and remembered events (Altenberg 2001, 40; Whyte 2009, 2). These constructed senses of place operating as ‘pegs on which people hang memories, construct meanings’ (Stewart and Strathern 2003, 3). Alexandra Walsham (2011, 166, 252) has illustrated this embedding of placeness by examining how people from different strata of society continued to venerate ‘a matrix of hallowed places’ officially outlawed after the Reformation: ‘the bare ruined choirs of monasteries ... remained the focus of much covert devotion.’ Resonance here in the clandestine Catholic worshippers of Llantarnam and those attending the parish church that appropriated the monastic infirmary at Llanthony. How much the populace who ran their goats, harvested cider apples and played heathen games within the decaying fabric of Tintern Abbey venerated the former religious life within its walls is more open to question.

At a more mundane workaday level, field-names such as Ynys-y-prior (‘the prior’s water meadow’), part of the bounds of Cwmyoy recited in 1612, and roads retaining monastic monikers, such as the Monks’ Path and Stony Way out of Tintern, also reinforced this memory (*NLW*, Cardiff Central Library MS 5.15). Besides such folk-naming and snippets gleaned from manorial and legal documents, the voices of largely illiterate agricultural communities are often hard to trace. In an oral culture, folklore myths and stories articulated a sense of history and place, as seen in the tales of phantom monks and hidden tunnels recounted in the case studies: accounts sometimes favourable or critical of the monastic community depending on prevailing attitudes to Catholicism and the Reformation (Walsham 2011, 482).

The physical and perceptual landscape ‘of signposts to the destroyed monastic era’, often integral to local consciousness but unscrutinised and taken for granted or lying dormant, became the rich seam from which would spring the antiquarianism, Romantic art and literature, tourism and heritage engagement of the future (*ibid.*,

274). This new curiosity was gently satirised by Jane Austin in her *History of England* (1791), in which she declared that the rationale for the Dissolution of the monasteries was to ‘leave them to ruinous depredations of time’, thereby to become ‘of infinite use to the landscape of England’ (quoted in Hardyment 2012, 75). As examined in Chapter 8, Tintern was something of a national figurehead in the revival in interest in historical places and this is reflected in the way the abbey’s immediate surrounds became heavily adorned with layers of touristic infrastructure (Figure 11.18). As early as 1815, French traveller Louis Simond caustically remarked on being caught up in the Wye ‘tract’ of castles, abbeys and rocks with tourists, ‘each with his Gilpin or his Cambrian Guide in his hand, and each no doubt writing a journal’ (quoted in Matheson, undated).



Figure 11.18: Tintern Abbey today with its neat lawns and extensive touristic infrastructure of visitor centre, car park, public house and other commercial elements (Source: Getmapping® downloaded from Digimap® under licence, <http://digimap.edina.ac.uk/>).

Llanthony has often been perceived to be a more rewarding and authentic experience of past times and landscape, something of a hidden gem (Phillips 1951, 216). This attitude reflected in the responses to the online survey carried out for this project summarised in Chapter 6. These words from a Victorian antiquarian still

seem prescient for anyone affronted by heritage industry paraphernalia and coach parties today:

‘Tintern is nothing to Llanthony. With less actually to offend, with no actual desecration Tintern is almost too perfect, too neat, too trim. And bears palpably the stamp of a showplace. Llanthony is an utter ruin ... One can wander in and out unrestrained and the fact of being lodged in the building itself adds something to the romantic character’ (Freeman 1855, 83).

The spiritual antiquity expressed by the priory also seems to have been a magnet for free-spirited and idealistic mavericks – Landor, Father Ignatius, Eric Gill – inspired by ‘the Ewyas Valley and its mythological overload’, for whom traversing the valley was to be in the presence of the walkers of the past (Sinclair 2001, 61-4). These searchers were looking to take on the mantle of the Llanthony canons, inspired by a foundation myth of creating a new utopian community amidst the harsh ‘wilderness’ of ‘overgrown recesses of the valley ... impenetrable wood’ described by Gerald of Wales (Thorpe 1978, 100). That these ventures so often failed speaks of the need, as shown by the great Cistercian abbeys, for ‘self-sufficiency, a puritanical work ethic and good estate management’ (and the cultivation of neighbourly relations with the resident populace) to successfully make home in this ‘figurative desert’ (Menuge 2000, 34).

As one online survey respondent had it, the Llanthony valley ‘does seem to be unique in its fascination for creative visitors and inhabitants.’ A darker undertow in the work of many artists and writers who have been inspired by Llanthony and its environs is also hinted at in the diary of the Reverend Kilvert in the line ‘an angel satyr walks these hills’ (Rolt 1955, 31). By contrast, since the early visitations of Gilpin and Turner, Tintern has arguably lacked a cutting-edge, innovative artistic narrative. Where Llanthony inspired the impressionistic or challenging imagery of the likes of Edward Burra, David Jones and John Piper and the esoteric writings of Iain Sinclair and Allen Ginsberg, artistic responses to Tintern have tended to the more mainstream and conservative, often mired in Romantic-era sensibilities (Figure 11.19).



Figure 11.19: *Mysterious cowled figures (Llanthony canons?) populate Black Mountain* by Edward Burra, 1968 (Source: www.pinterest.com).

11.5.2 To what extent are the monastic topographical features across the case study areas unseen and ‘hidden in plain sight’ in the modern-day historic landscape?

The previous section could be interpreted as a somewhat narrow body of evidence: perceptual evidence hewn from the monastic past mainly relating to the ruins of the monasteries themselves and the voices of favoured or more recent commentators. Herein lie the problems and opportunities for managing these landscapes in the future that will be addressed in the final section of this chapter: much is out of sight, either literally or to those without the time, knowledge or interest to explore unaided. Landscape can evoke the past, but it can also hide and lead to forgetting, either through deliberate acts of destruction such as the Dissolution and Reformation, redundancy or the simple passage of time (Holtorf and Williams 2005, 235, 239). Although conspicuous relict markers such as chapels and farmsteads can be conduits for remembering the past, often the evidence of the impact of monastic houses on the landscape lies more covertly around us, unsuspected (*ibid.*, 240; Waites 2007, 15). These shady elements nevertheless help to form what the philosopher Edward Casey has coined ‘place memory’, the connected relationship between spatial entities and the imagination that renders a place (or landscape) ‘thick’ with resonance (quoted in Cresswell 2004, 86-7).



Figure 11.20: A footpath to Llantarnam Abbey passes through an archway in the park wall, overgrown and surrounded by fly-tipped rubbish (Source: author).

This hidden-ness is particularly striking when surveying the half-remembrance of Llantarnam Abbey in the contemporary landscape adorning its sequestered location. The expanse of the abbey precinct, low-slung on a wooded plain between two watercourses, is hardly visible from the old Caerleon to Pontypool ridgeway or other surrounding higher ground and passing roads, though its built footprint would have been more imposing and maybe less enveloped by greenwood in the abbey's monastic pomp. Although still remembered through place-naming, Llantarnam is not physically prominent amidst the surrounding district. There is no sense of the abbey site being on display, it seems an entirely hidden away place. This is partly, of course, because the medieval monastery no longer materially exists, but also perhaps due to its unremarkableness; a place that feels like any former middling country house estate and park on the edge of urban modernity, now broken-up, repurposed and largely disregarded. With no historic ruins as a draw, there has been no significant heritage conservation or promotion. An information board and permissive path have recently arisen around the perimeter of the nunnery grounds as part of a meadow restoration project, though the emphasis is on historical ecology rather than the monastic legacy. Much of the adjacent – and limited – infrastructure of public paths, stiles and signage is often in poor condition, overgrown and blighted

by fly-tipping (Figure 11.20). As the purportedly medieval barn behind the house falls into further disrepair, the precinct landscape has been remorselessly encroached upon by incremental urban development; the abbey's heritage dissipating into dwindling memories and old photographs.

Often unseen though in plain sight, even at the more visited and promoted heritage hubs of Llanthony and Tintern, is the monastic inheritance of estate and farm extents and boundaries, land-use patterns, field systems and communications networks drawn together in this study: 'a layered landscape, layered in terms of archaeological and historical temporalities, layered in terms of places within it and tracks to follow across it' (Tilley and Cameron-Daum 2017, 293). Noting how 'we have forgotten, now, the original inspiration of Tintern Abbey', the poet Ronald Johnson (2015, 71, 82) reflected that the features of the historic landscape 'have been allowed, now, to grow into ghosts of shapes they once had.' Such meta topographies litter the landscape but are paradoxically often difficult to read: it can literally be hard to see 'the wood for the trees.' Much is made of the sylvan situation of Llanthony and Tintern, but these greenwoods are so often packaged as part of the unchanging, 'unspoilt natural beauty' of the monastic setting, a realm of wilderness that first attracted the monks to settle re-emerging as the 'crumbling edifices' are once more 'swamped by nature': removing the heritage ruin from its connected and evolving landscape context (Drabble 1979, 8; Harney 2017, 275). Groves such as the Abbot's Wood or Coed Cwmyoy were not simply a pleasant or untamed place for devotional contemplation. Their real medieval value and utility is underplayed or uncharted. A carefully managed resource, they were designated to meet specific needs: coppiced, grazed or, in some cases, cleared and repurposed as agricultural land. In recent decades the woods have certainly been returning in more ragged form after a long span of denudation. As with the new growth tracts of New England inhabited by Henry David Thoreau and celebrated for their erroneous pristineness, ruined farmsteads and field walls adorn their hidden depths: the old commons of the Wye Valley around Tintern 'concealing everywhere within its woodland the signs of the old agricultural landscape' (Deakin 2007, 137).



Figure 11.21: Grange Road, once the main approach into Llantarnam's Gelli-las grange (Source: author).

Many footpaths through the woods and meadows enable the visitor to explore this gilded countryside, to obtain breath-taking vistas of the monastic ruins in their seemingly timeless frame. These very by-ways are themselves an unheralded living relic of the monkish centuries, their significance habitually unfathomed even as the walker adds to the footfall of the years. These well-trodden arteries once hummed with great waves of traffic keeping the monastic economy on the move before – like those of the Romans before them – declining into a long ‘Dark Age’ of neglected forgetting, as the realms of the monastery reverted to out-of-the-way backwaters once more; no longer pivots of travel and

commerce. As the poet Edward Thomas (2004, 96) would have it, ‘roads go on, while we forget.’ In some cases, as with the overgrown, stream-hollowed Old Roadway down from the Hatterall ridge to Llanthony and the serpentine Long Way snaking southwards from Tintern above the Wye, these routes have fallen out of the remembered landscape. Or, as with Grange Road, once the approach to Gelli-las, now a prosaic urban supermarket access road, morphed into faint memories at best, not even guide book or information board footnotes (Figure 11.21).

Individual features within this landscape patchwork are often even more forgotten, neglected or remote. A determined landscape researcher may be able to clamber and struggle through brambles and down muddy inclines to find the overgrown remains of Tintern’s Stoweir fish-house or the old walls of the lost Secular Firmary grange, but the casual passer-by is unlikely to realise that they are even there. In commenting on how a ruined abbey such as Tintern can remind the visitor ‘at every

turn of the past', Ward (1914, 359) contrasted the Edwardian scene at Llantarnam's former grange and pilgrim centre at Penrhys, where 'the stranger may pass and repass the vestiges of this pilgrim-resort without suspecting that any interest attaches to them.'



Figure 11.22: Llanthony Abbey, Monmouthshire by Dennis Constanduros, 1937 Shell poster (Source: © Shell Art Collection).

It may seem curious that in places such as Llanthony and Tintern, designated and much frequented for their historic value and scenic beauty, this wider monastic landscape inheritance can be so seemingly overlooked. It is certainly the case that they have been well represented as landmarks in touristic guides to regional identities such as the Brecon Beacons, Wye Valley, Welsh Border Country and so forth (Figure 11.22). The monastic ruins are frequently the centre-point or a thematic feature of walks, driving tours and cycle routes. Accounts of their architecture, archaeology and history often, though, seem abstracted or detached from any sense of passing through a landscape that was also deeply infused with monastic influence (often including the very lanes and paths down which the reader will travel). For instance, websites and guidebooks promoting the Wye Valley Walk and Offa's Dyke National Trail include general references to Tintern's history and commentary on the ruins as a heritage site. Descriptions are otherwise preoccupied, though, with logistics, route-finding and generic site-based context, rather than an awakening to

the overspreading landscape passed through, for which comment is generally limited to geomorphology, flora and fauna. A narrative of the enwrapping historic environment beyond the precinct walls – the web of monastic granges and agricultural estates, of forged or co-opted trackways – entirely absent.

And yet, venerable symbolism and meaning can be resurrected (Whyte 2009, 9). Once recognised and (literally or more subtly) sign-posted, the visitor walking, say, the cobbled remnants of the Stony Way to Tintern or passing the fallen masonry of Llanderfel grange chapel can experience a visceral ‘shiver of contact ... an intimation of the distant past’ (Drabble 1979, 17). There is much potential here to enrich the narrative, to invest place-experience with a more profound sense of space-time, as will now be explored.

11.5.3 What risks, challenges and opportunities exist when considering the management and presentation of these landscapes now and in the future?

Having expressed scepticism at the growing interest in monastic ruins (in the *Old Abbeys* sonnet), William Wordsworth later seems to have developed an elegiac regret, as expressed in his 1819 poem *At Furness Abbey* (quoted in Hardyment 2012, 47; Kennedy 2002, 80):

‘Among the ruins ... the long-deserted Quire
All seem to feel the spirit of the place’

This ‘spirit of the place’ fused within medieval monasteries and the memories of their pasts (monastic and afterlife) is now firmly entrenched as an enriching ingredient in the historic landscape. Much less apparent in the heritage management of these ‘theatres of memory’ to use Raphael Samuel’s phrase, is the integration of the wider topographical legacy of monasticism identified and collated in studies such as this one, so often neglected or unseen as recounted above (quoted in Holtorf and Williams 2005, 249). A liminal topography that can help fold the past into the contemporary landscape, channelling a ‘heritage sensibility’ allying the temporal with the spatial (Harvey 2015, 915).



Figure 11.23: The site of Llantarnam Abbey (right), its precinct encroached by a trunk road, housing and industrial development (Source: Getmapping® downloaded from Digimap® under licence, <http://digimap.edina.ac.uk/>).

That much of the cultural landscape advanced here so often passes under the radar is not just a question of the public missing out on opportunities to experience heritage monuments in a richer context, tapping further into the alchemic quality of place ‘to stimulate the imagination through evoking the history and culture of times past’ (Harney 2017, 295). As the case study gazetteers which accompany this analysis demonstrate, many of these landscape features are absent from historic environment records, or only appear in an unconnected and *ad-hoc* manner. This paucity of formal evidence puts unrecorded everyday elements of the landscape at risk of potential despoliation and damage. For instance, the development squeeze around Llantarnam has seen much of the historic fabric of the abbey precinct and its home granges built upon without archaeological assessment, whilst other under-recorded features nearby are also under threat or lack conservation plans (Bowden and Roberts 2012, 99; Standing 2011) (Figure 11.23). New housing currently being put up encroaches upon the archaeologically unexplored fields of St. Dials along the

old pilgrim route from the abbey, surviving green space in the middle of Cwmbryn representing the remnants of little understood Llantarnam property here.

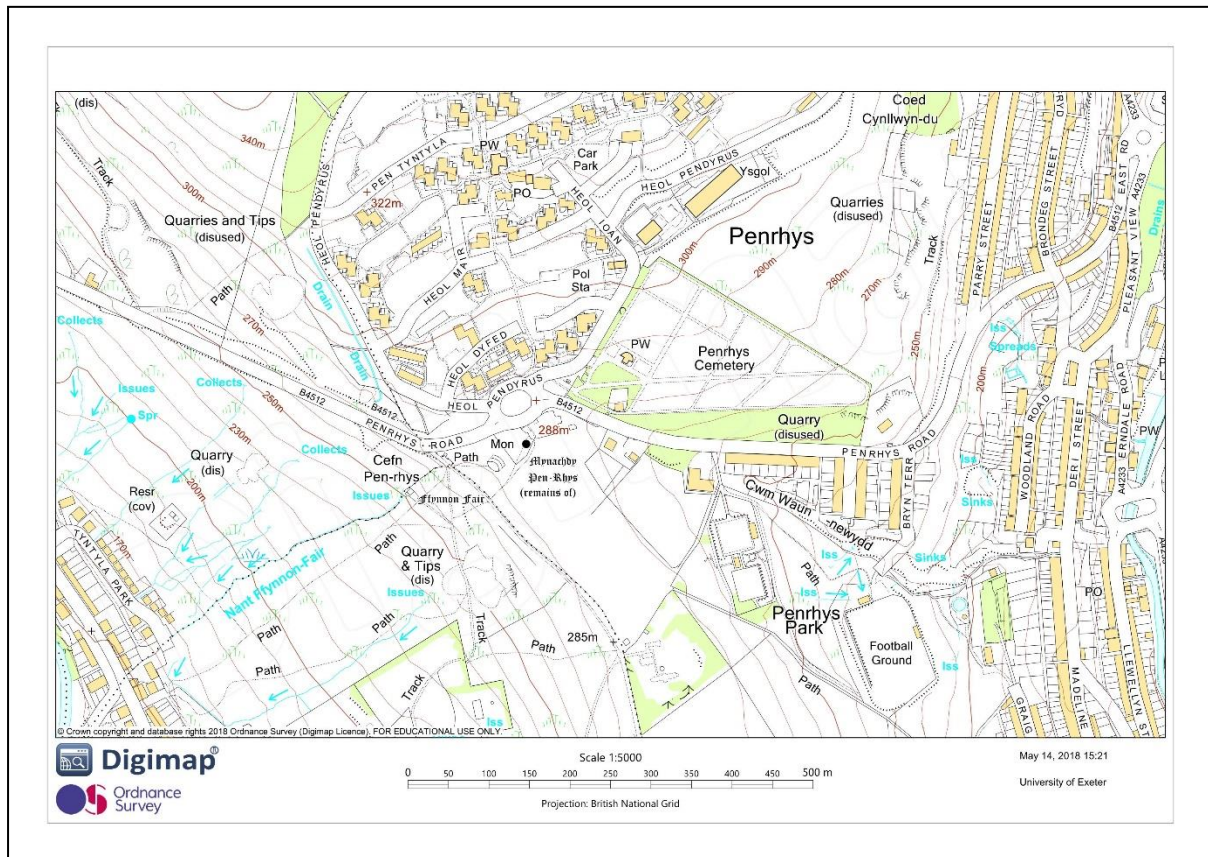


Figure 11.24: The site of Penrhys grange ('Mynachdy') and pilgrim shrine (Source: Ordnance Survey VML Raster 10k downloaded from Digimap® under licence, <http://digimap.edina.ac.uk/>).

An interesting precedent to examine is the reinvigoration of elements of this pilgrim route from Llantarnam. At Penrhys, modest trappings of revived interest adorn the site of the medieval shrine: an amphitheatre of wooden benches and a beacon, a statue of the Virgin Mary and an information board explaining the site's historical context. The chapel over the Ffynnon Fair holy well, though, is out of sight halfway down the hillside and seems forgotten: locked behind rusty railings, a weed-filled courtyard, the stream choked with vegetation and dried-up. Overall this high place on a windy promontory seems somewhat forlorn and marginalised, encroached by an isolated social housing estate, a golf course and a busy through road and roundabout (Figure 11.24). If in a more favoured location this famed medieval place would surely be more lauded, although heritage make-overs can bring their own challenges and disadvantages. More positively, interest in the pilgrim

trail in recent years has seen a coalition of residents, archaeologists and historians walking and examining the conjectured route, largely under the umbrella of the HLC-funded Ancient Cwmbrân & The Cistercians project. As a result, a linear piece of history stubbornly retaining its place in the modern-day topography of Cwmbrân has been foregrounded, chronicled in a set of films available on You Tube and a HTV television programme. Such community engagement and media exposure has also been a central motif of the Strata Florida Project, where a Trust has recently been established to manage the abbey ruins and the surrounding post-medieval farm as a long-term research and heritage enterprise.

The walking trail (and circuits for cycling or other forms of transport) is a self-evident way that the monastic biography of these landscapes can be brought to life and experienced. Obvious perhaps, but surprisingly little implemented.⁸¹ Where walks have been promoted they tend to remain very much site-focused rather than engaging with the story of the wider landscape, as has already been observed. Many echoes of the monastic landscape appear incidentally and unheralded. This is even the case with initiatives such as the Cistercian Way (a long-distance itinerary that links all the monasteries of that order across Wales) and St. Thomas Way (the recreation of a medieval pilgrimage from Swansea to Hereford) which, to this author, seem not to take full advantage of or promote the monastic trackways and geographies that they pass along and through between heritage 'sites'.

The routes followed in the landscape walks designed for this thesis provide a blueprint for more immersive guided experiences in the case study areas, anchored to the memory of monastic ways, landscapes and locations. Such walks bring people to quieter, 'out of the way' places, where perhaps a 'modest holiness still lingers' in contrast (or complementary) to brasher, more directed established heritage monuments such as Tintern Abbey itself (Perrin 2002, 8). In this spirit of public engagement, the author has helped the Llanthony Valley and District History Group and Landmark Trust to organise and lead walks with themes including the

⁸¹ The Strata Florida Project initiated a themed walk around the monastic landscape surrounding the abbey, supported by interpretive information boards and leaflets. The signage and boards are now though in disrepair, the leaflets no longer available in the Cadw shop at the abbey, demonstrating the challenges and limitations of such landscape interpretation.

boundaries of Cwmyoy and Redcastle manors, the designed landscape of Walter Savage Landor and a putative grange landscape in the Olchon Valley (Figure 11.25).



Figure 11.25: Author and members of the Llanthony Valley and District History Group on a themed walk at Siarpal, site of Walter Savage Landor's unfinished new mansion above Llanthony (Source: <http://www.llanthonyhistory.wales>).

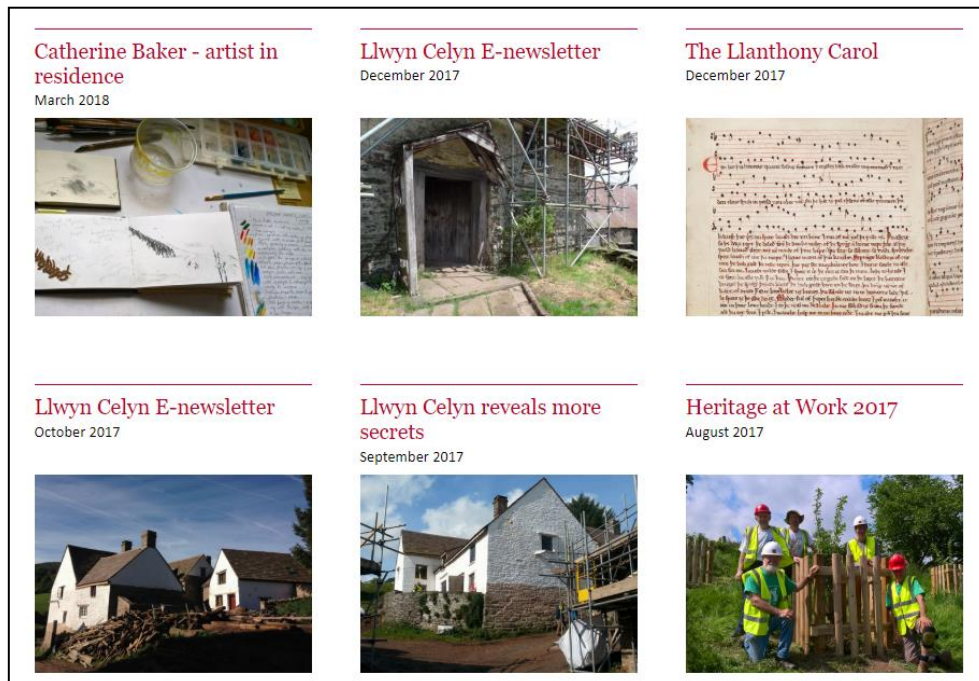


Figure 11.26: Extract from the Landmark Trust web pages for Llyn-celyn (Source: © Landmark Trust, www.landmarktrust.org.uk/Properties-list/Llyn-Celyn).

At Llanthony there are additional opportunities to integrate the monastic landscape narrative into the Landmark Trust's restoration of the late-medieval farmstead at Llwyn-celyn (where a threshing barn has become a HLF-funded visitor and education centre, a new gateway for visitors to the valley, at which a copy of the Llanthony chapters of this thesis has been deposited) (Figure 11.26). More expansively, there are opportunities to engage with the recently established Black Mountains Land-use Partnership which aims to bring greater co-ordination in the activities of the various stakeholders who manage and work the upland landscape around the priory.

Innovative techniques increasingly used in heritage management can, moreover, be harnessed to complement and enhance walking-based experiences.

Democratisation of access to GPS, high-resolution mapping, satellite imagery and aerial photography, professional quality photography and film media, even 'biomapping' to record physical responses to place, through mobile technology and social media can enable a much more immersive and participatory engagement with the archaeology of landscape (Schofield 2007, 112-6). Such technology can also be integrated into more directly performative involvement. For instance, Richard Skelton's (2010) experimental musical and literary projects in specific locations using sound, art, photography and archive research to reflect on the landscape and its inhabitants (Hudson 2015, 65-6). A coalescing of anthropology, archaeology and performance practice that has emerged primarily in prehistoric archaeology also provides inspiration (Wylie 2007, 169).⁸²

There is an opportunity here, furthermore, to blend in the voices, words and imagery of local writers such as Arthur Machen (2010, 186) crafting fiction from historical fact 'particularly well attuned to the significance of the layering of history over a specific location', the many artists who have responded to these places and, not least, those who sculptured the landscape itself. So often it is only when heritage-scapes have shed their human agency that they become acceptable: inert relics, places of history not happening. Paths and fields cleansed of their temporal reality of work, conflict

⁸² The experimental encounters with prehistoric sites, materials and landscapes in Shanks and Pearson's *Theatre/ Archaeology* (2001) being a prime example.

and untrammelled lives; reality packaged as stories, myth and lore. In making space for the experiences and memories of ordinary folk, landscape histories can serve to connect with everyday 'lifeworlds', beyond the partitioned-off heritage monuments of the elites; to 'reclaim common landscapes as heritage, and therefore to remember the agency of people in marking, claiming and making landscapes' (Whyte 2015, 935-6). And much can be learnt here from the way that past society used the relics of the past ('roofless buildings, crumbling walls, headless crosses and decaying trees') that, in their deterioration, symbolised and provided a link with the deep past (Whyte 2015, 931). Guided walks, promotion through online material and mobile apps, written guides and more immersive practice that integrate time-depth representations and rememberings could do much to raise awareness of the wider monastic legacy in the landscape.

It is worth pausing to add a postscript here to remember that landscape is a construct, a composite way of 'seeing the world' as Denis Cosgrove (1998, 13) would have it. Many visitors to what may be termed a 'historic landscape' are, in fact, attracted by the more generic feelings that such places engender. Respondents to a 2016/7 Brecon Beacons Visitors Survey (for which Llanthony was one of the interview points) were drawn to the locale primarily for the 'beautiful scenery and countryside', walking opportunities, for 'peace and quiet' and health and exercise reasons. Unpacking where the historical context sits within these motivations and interests is not always easy. The online surveys for Llanthony and Tintern (summarised in Chapters 6 and 8, with full results at Appendix 10) provide a more nuanced indication that historical depth, the landscapes of human activity and the complex entanglement of memory, nature and culture are indeed an important element in the value of place. They moreover suggest that there is often a strong feeling, particularly amongst residents and regular visitors that over-interpretation – allied to commercialisation – can detract from the very factors that attract people: to quote one Tintern respondent, 'I wouldn't want it theme-parked.'



Figure 11.27: Waste-tips at the site of Henllys colliery returning to nature (Source: author).

There is also a danger of over-compartmentalising the temporal landscape, which is, of course, an amalgam of the retained, repurposed and reimagined from many different time strata. Industrial heritage is now very much part of the landscape of Llantarnam's former Magna Porta manor, for instance; an important element in the place-story that is in danger of disappearing unmemorialised, as seen at the site of Henllys colliery occupying part of the Dorallt grange lands (Figure 11.27).

Commenting on a landscape restoration project in the Man-moel district between Ebbw Vale and the Sirhiwy valley, including country previously in the hands of Llantarnam, Madeleine Gray (1999, 50) has argued that, conversely, 'chronologically non-specific' heritage landscapes can also hinder attempts to understand and interpret pivotal periods of change. A themed approach to these landscapes therefore needs to carefully avoid such pitfalls.

A manifesto has been proposed in this section for highlighting and encountering often under-appreciated elements of the landscape and medieval life anew, their meaning rediscovered and repurposed (Knapp and Ashmore 1999, 19). A more productive reckoning with landscape through an 'intertwining of past, present and future' is advocated, moving the frame of reference away from elite site history to an engagement, immersive or more ephemeral, with the everyday elements that populate an enriched topophilia and sense of place (Harvey 2015, 918).

Chapter 12

Conclusion

Drawing on Yi-Fu Tuan's (1977, 101) observation that 'landscapes are windows onto human activity, they are places where we in the present might be connected, unsentimentally, with those of the past', this has been an opportunity to chart the pivotal development and subsequent history of heritage-rich landscapes inscribed by medieval monastic estates. Several core conclusions can be drawn from the case studies presented here and the ensuing discussion structured around the central research questions of this thesis laid out in the previous chapter.

Firstly, exploring the wider landscape of monastic estates in detail demonstrates that the topographical legacy of the medieval monastery was considerable and far-reaching. An array of documentary and field research has been mobilised to venture outside the precinct walls, beyond the site archaeology and architectural history of much previous scholarship. Monastic estate geographies of grange and manor, of marginal ground exploited and old agrarian practice reconfigured and expanded, have been recreated and mapped, the story of their evolution and management analysed, deepening understanding of the profound impact of monasteries on the medieval countryside.

Recreated and analysed here, the medieval and post-Dissolution history of these landscapes presents a fuller biography or 'geneology of place' in the *longue durée* (Cresswell 2004, 7). Space has been found for narrating stories of decline and resurrection within the precinct, various and dynamic, sometimes unexpected but seemingly always carrying some echo of monkish times. Also illuminated has been the monastic era template for and influence on later landscape character, evolution and rememberings across the more expansive geography of the former abbey or priory estates: further under-explored territory in monastic study.



Figure 12.1: The landscape of Tintern Abbey, revealed to be more than the generic riverine and woodland 'natural beauty' setting of first sight through exploring, observing and describing (Source: author).

Furthermore, many elements of the monastic landscape identified here adorn today's historic environment: embedded topographical memory often unseen or unheralded, hidden in plain sight (Figure 12.1). The formulation, consolidation or pivotal evolution of estate unit boundaries, land-use patterns, exploited marginal terrain, farmsteads, field systems, field- and place-names and many individual features layering present-day landscape character can be traced to the transformations engineered by these monastic agents of change. Perhaps most strikingly, networks of communication routes connecting the monasteries, other monastic estate nodes, pilgrim destinations and the wider trade and travel grid remain grooved into the landscape, their continued navigation a symbol of monastic durability. Once unearthed, such evidence unlocks 'landscape history' so often stranded, in Graham Fairclough's (2012, 479) words, in 'anachronistic "periods"', folding the historic dimension more clearly into the contemporary landscape.

Calls for multi-disciplinary approaches to understanding such historic landscapes, to integrate all evidence sources to create a 'thick description' of landscape have been widespread over the last decade or so (Barnwell 2007, 203; *ibid.*, 475; Finch 2007 54). Landscape archaeologists and historians have been encouraged to widen their

compass of ideas and evidence pools (Altenberg 2001, 297; Brown 2012, 12). This project has crossed that Rubicon, demonstrating how a synthesis of approaches from landscape archaeology/ history and cultural geography practice can enrich and deepen understanding of the wider landscape. Collating and analysing landscape experience and perception brings new perspectives to entwine with material and documentary evidence. A methodological framework centred on structured but flexible landscape walks (complemented by other fieldwork tools and sources) has demonstrated its value in the study and interpretation of landscape: a pathway to open-up more three-dimensional understanding, blending landscape archaeology with perception and memory. Such walking practice can also be used as a practical blue-print when considering another concern of this project, catalysing increased public engagement with the monastic legacy in the wider historic landscape.

The patterns and features, perspectives and memories curated within this thesis, important constituents of the landscapes and sense of place found at Llantarnam, Llanthony and Tintern, are often missing from formal heritage recording and designation and under-represented in heritage and touristic narratives. Not only are opportunities missed to reveal a more profound landscape story, this absence can lead to very real losses to the historic environment fabric, as the Llantarnam case study particularly highlights. The comprehensive gazetteers of monastic landscape features assembled for this project can help to address the latter, filling substantial gaps in historic environment records. As for the former, there is considerable scope and potential to complement and enrich the public's experience of medieval monastic 'heritage sites', contextualising the remains of the abbey or priory in their wider monastic (and successor) landscape setting, moving beyond a reductive presentation framing such sites within a backdrop of generic 'natural beauty'. It is hoped that this analysis can inform contemporary decisions on how these landscapes are managed and presented to the public, weaving a broader topographical story into the visitor experience alongside the 'rich visual iconography and aesthetic quality' of monastic sites and heritage assets more comprehensively (Harney 2017, 291). To which end, this thesis and its data appendices will be made available to the public in the University of Exeter's open access online repository, the gazetteer data-sets deposited with relevant historical environment records and the

author continues to engage with local history groups through walks, talks and online materials themed on the landscape stories of this project.

'We are surrounded by the greatest of free shows. Places. Most of them made by man, remade by man', proclaimed Jonathan Meades (2013, 1) in his topographical compendium, *Museum Without Walls*. This study has illuminated a rich but often ill-lit or concealed component of this treasury, landscapes shaped on the ground and in the mind by the medieval monastery.

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