

## MEYSYDD BRWYDRO HANESYDDOL YNG NGHYMRU

Mae'r adroddiad canlynol, a gomisiynwyd gan Grŵp Llywio Meysydd Brwydro Cymru ac a ariennir gan Lywodraeth Cymru, yn ffurfio rhan o raglen archwilio fesul cam i daflu goleuni ar yr ystyriaeth o Gofrestr neu Restr o Feysydd Brwydro Hanesyddol yng Nghymru. Dechreuwyd gweithio ar hyn ym mis Rhagfyr 2007 dan gyfarwyddyd Cadw, gwasanaeth amgylchedd hanesyddol Llywodraeth Cymru, ac yr oedd yn dilyn cwblhau prosiect gan Gomisiwn Brenhinol Henebion Cymru (RCAHMW) i bennu pa feysydd brwydro yng Nghymru a allai fod yn addas i'w nodi ar fapiau'r Arolwg Ordnans. Sefydlwyd y Grŵp Llywio Meysydd Brwydro, yn cynnwys aelodau o Cadw, Comisiwn Brenhinol Henebion Cymru ac Amgueddfa Genedlaethol Cymru, a rhwng 2009 a 2014 comisiynwyd ymchwil ar 47 o frwydrau a gwarchaeau. Mae hyn yn bennaf yn cynnwys ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol, ac mewn 10 achos, gwaith maes heb fod yn ymyrryd a gwaith a oedd yn ymyrryd.

O ganlyniad i'r gwaith hwn mae **Rhestr o Feysydd Brwydro Hanesyddol yng Nghymru** (<http://meysyddbrwydro.cbhc.gov.uk/>) yn cael ei datblygu, dan arweiniad Comisiwn Brenhinol Henebion Cymru ar ran Cadw. Bydd yn adnodd deongliadol, addysgol ac ymchwil ar-lein, yn anelu at gynyddu gwybodaeth a chodi ymwybyddiaeth o feysydd brwydro yng Nghymru, yn ogystal ag ysgogi ymchwil bellach. Gobeithir ei lansio yn ystod gwanwyn 2017.

## HISTORIC BATTLEFIELDS IN WALES

The following report, commissioned by the Welsh Battlefields Steering Group and funded by Welsh Government, forms part of a phased programme of investigation undertaken to inform the consideration of a Register or Inventory of Historic Battlefields in Wales. Work on this began in December 2007 under the direction of the Welsh Government's Historic Environment Service (Cadw), and followed the completion of a Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales (RCAHMW) project to determine which battlefields in Wales might be suitable for depiction on Ordnance Survey mapping. The Battlefields Steering Group was established, drawing its membership from Cadw, RCAHMW and National Museum Wales, and between 2009 and 2014 research on 47 battles and sieges was commissioned. This principally comprised documentary and historical research, and in 10 cases both non-invasive and invasive fieldwork.

As a result of this work **The Inventory of Historic Battlefields in Wales** (<http://battlefields.rcahmw.gov.uk/>) is in development, led by the RCAHMW on behalf of Cadw. This will be an online interpretative, educational and research resource aimed at increasing knowledge and raising awareness of battlefields in Wales, as well as a prompt for further research. It is due to be launched in spring 2017.

*Mae'r tabl isod yn rhestru'r brwydrau a'r gwarchaeau a ymchwiliwyd. Bydd adroddiadau ar gael i'w llwytho i lawr o'r Rhestr ar-ein yn ogystal ag o Coflein (<http://www.coflein.gov.uk/>), y gronfa ddata ar-lein ar gyfer Cofnod Henebion Cenedlaethol Cymru (NMRW).*

*The table below lists the battles and sieges researched. Reports will be available to download from the online Inventory as well as from Coflein (<http://www.coflein.gov.uk/>), the online database for the National Monuments Record of Wales (NMRW).*

<b>ENW/NAME</b>	<b>DYDDIAD/ DATE</b>	<b>SIR HANESYDDOL/HI STORIC COUNTY</b>	<b>NPRN</b>	<b>YMCHWIL/RESEARCH</b>
<b>Aberllech</b>	1096	Sir Frycheiniog Brecknockshire	404446	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Gildas Research, 2013)  Documentary and historical research (Gildas Research, 2013)
<b>Pont Cychod (Menai ac Ynys Môn)</b> <b>Bridge of Boats (Menai and Anglesey)</b>	1282	Ynys Môn Anglesey	404319	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Chapman, 2013)  Documentary and historical research (Chapman, 2013)
<b>Bryn Derwin</b>	1255	Sir Gaernarfon Caernarfonshire	402322	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Chapman, 2013)  Gwaith ymchwil heb fod yn ymyrryd ac a oedd yn ymyrryd (Archaeoleg Cymru, 2014)  Documentary and historical research (Chapman, 2013)  Non-invasive and invasive fieldwork (Archaeology Wales, 2014)
<b>Bryn Glas (Pillth)</b>	1402	Sir Faesyfed Radnorshire	306352	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Border Archaeology, 2009)  Gwaith ymchwil heb fod yn ymyrryd ac a oedd yn ymyrryd (Archaeoleg Cymru, 2012)

				<p>Cloddfa (Archaeoleg Cymru, 2013)</p> <p>Gwaith ymchwil heb fod yn ymyrryd ac a oedd yn ymyrryd (Archaeoleg Cymru, 2014)</p> <p>Documentary and historical research (Border Archaeology, 2009)</p> <p>Non-invasive and invasive fieldwork (Archaeology Wales, 2012)</p> <p>Excavation (Archaeology Wales, 2013)</p> <p>Non-invasive and invasive fieldwork (Archaeology Wales, 2014)</p>
<b>Campston Hill</b>	1404	Sir Fynwy Monmouthshire	402328	<p>Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Border Archaeology, 2009)</p> <p>Documentary and historical research (Border Archaeology, 2009)</p>
<b>Cilgerran</b>	1258	Sir Benfro Pembrokeshire	405201	<p>Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Gildas Research, 2013)</p> <p>Documentary and historical research (Gildas Research, 2013)</p>
<b>Coed Llathan</b>	1257	Sir Gaerfyrddin Carmarthenshire	403587	<p>Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Chapman, 2013)</p> <p>Gwaith ymchwil heb fod yn ymyrryd ac a oedd yn ymyrryd (Archaeoleg Cymru, 2014)</p> <p>Documentary and historical research (Chapman, 2013)</p> <p>Non-invasive fieldwork (Archaeology Wales, 2014)</p>
<b>Castell Coety (gwarchae) /Coity</b>	1404-05	Morgannwg	545701	<p>Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Chapman, 2013)</p>

<b>Castle (siege)</b>		Glamorgan		Documentary and historical research (Chapman, 2013)
<b>Coleshill</b>	1157	Sir y Fflint Flintshire	402325	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (2009)  Documentary and historical research (2009)
<b>Craig y Dorth</b>	1404	Sir Fynwy Monmouthshire	402327	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Border Archaeology, 2009)  Gwaith ymchwil heb fod yn ymyrryd ac a oedd yn ymyrryd (Archaeoleg Cymru, 2014)  Documentary and historical research (Border Archaeology, 2009)  Non-invasive and invasive fieldwork (Archaeology Wales, 2014)
<b>Crug Mawr</b>	1136	Sir Aberteifi Cardiganshire	402323	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Border Archaeology, 2009)  Documentary and historical research (Border Archaeology, 2009)
<b>Castell Cymaron (gwarchaeau) / Cymaron Castle (sieges)</b>	1144 1179 1195 1215	Sir Faesyfed Radnorshire	545328	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Gildas Research, 2013)  Documentary and historical research (Gildas Research, 2013)
<b>Cymerau</b>	1257	Sir Gaerfyrddin Carmarthenshire	404717	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Chapman, 2013)  Gwaith ymchwil heb fod yn ymyrryd (Archaeoleg Cymru, 2014)  Documentary and historical research (Chapman, 2013)

				Non-invasive fieldwork (Archaeology Wales, 2014)
<b>Castell Dinbych (gwarchae)/ Denbigh Castle (siege)</b>	1282	Sir Ddinbych Denbighshire	545687	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Chapman, 2013)  Documentary and historical research (Chapman, 2013)
<b>Castell Dinbych (gwarchae)/ Denbigh Castle (siege)</b>	1294-5	Sir Ddinbych Denbighshire	545613	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Chapman, 2013)  Documentary and historical research (Chapman, 2013)
<b>Castell Dinbych (gwarchae)/ Denbigh Castle (siege)</b>	1460	Sir Ddinbych Denbighshire	545718	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Chapman, 2013)  Documentary and historical research (Chapman, 2013)
<b>Castell Dinbych (gwarchae)/ Denbigh Castle (siege)</b>	1468	Sir Ddinbych Denbighshire	545720	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Chapman, 2013)  Documentary and historical research (Chapman, 2013)
<b>Castell Dinbych (gwarchae)/ Denbigh Castle (siege)</b>	1646	Sir Ddinbych Denbighshire	545789	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Chapman, 2013)  Documentary and historical research (Chapman, 2013)
<b>Castell Dryslwyn (gwarchae) / Dryslwyn Castle (siege)</b>	1287	Sir Gaerfyrddin Carmarthenshire	545605	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Gildas Research, 2013)  Documentary and historical research (Gildas Research, 2013)
<b>Carregwastad - Abergwaun (ymosodiad) / Carregwastad Point – Fishguard (invasion)</b>	1797	Sir Benfro Pembrokeshire	308824	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Border Archaeology, 2009)  Documentary and historical research (Border Archaeology, 2009)

<b>Gŵyr/ Gower</b>	1136	Morgannwg Glamorgan	404856	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Gildas Research, 2013)  Documentary and historical research (Gildas Research, 2013)
<b>Grosmont</b>	1405	Sir Fynwy Monmouthshire	402333	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Border Archaeology, 2009)  Gwaith ymchwil heb fod yn ymyrryd ac a oedd yn ymyrryd (Archaeoleg Cymru, 2012)  Documentary and historical research (Border Archaeology, 2009)  Non-invasive and invasive fieldwork (Archaeology Wales, 2012)
<b>Hyddgen</b>	1401	Sir Drefaldwyn Montgomeryshire	402310	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Chapman, 2013)  Documentary and historical research (Chapman, 2013)
<b>Pont Irfon (Llanganten) / Irfon Bridge /</b>	1282	Sir Frycheiniog Brecknockshire	403411	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Chapman, 2013)  Documentary and historical research (Chapman, 2013)
<b>Cydweli / Kidwelly</b>	1258	Sir Gaerfyrddin Carmarthenshire	404729	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Gildas Research, 2013)  Documentary and historical research (Gildas Research, 2013)
<b>Castell Talacharn (gwarchae) / Laugharne Castle (sieges)</b>	1189 1215 1257-8 1644	Sir Gaerfyrddin	545245 545341 545436 545746	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Gildas Research, 2013)  Documentary and historical research (Gildas Research, 2013)

<b>Maes Gwenllian</b>	1136	Sir Gaerfyrddin Carmarthenshire	402324	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Border Archaeology, 2009)  Gwaith ymchwil heb fod yn ymyrryd ac a oedd yn ymyrryd (Archaeoleg Cymru, 2012)  Documentary and historical research (Border Archaeology, 2009)  Non-invasive and invasive fieldwork (Archaeology Wales, 2012)
<b>Maes Moydog</b>	1295	Sir Drefaldwyn Montgomeryshire	403416	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Chapman, 2013)  Gwaith ymchwil heb fod yn ymyrryd ac a oedd yn ymyrryd (Archaeoleg Cymru, 2014)  Documentary and historical research (Chapman, 2013)  Non-invasive and invasive fieldwork (Archaeology Wales, 2014)
<b>Trefaldwyn / Montgomery</b>	1644	Sir Drefaldwyn Montgomeryshire	405168	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Gildas Research, 2013)  Documentary and historical research (Gildas Research, 2013)
<b>Mynydd Carn</b>	1081	Sir Benfro Pembrokeshire	300319	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Border Archaeology, 2009)  Documentary and historical research (Border Archaeology, 2009)
<b>Castell Newydd Emlyn (gwarchae) / Newcastle Emlyn (siege)</b>	1287-8	Sir Gaerfyrddin Carmarthenshire	545606	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Chapman, 2013)  Documentary and historical

				research (Chapman, 2013)
<b>Castell Newydd Emlyn (gwarchae) / Newcastle Emlyn</b>	1645	Sir Gaerfyrddin Carmarthenshire	545768	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Chapman, 2013)  Documentary and historical research (Chapman, 2013)
<b>Gwrthryfel y Siartwyr, Casnewydd / Newport Chartist Uprising</b>	1839	Sir Fynwy Monmouthshire	405003	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Border Archaeology, 2009)  Documentary and historical research (Border Archaeology, 2009)
<b>Painscastle</b>	1198	Sir Faesyfed Radnorshire	402326	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Border Archaeology, 2009)  Gwaith ymchwil heb fod yn ymyrryd ac a oedd yn ymyrryd (Archaeoleg Cymru, 2012)  Cloddfa (Archaeoleg Cymru, 2013)  Documentary and historical research (Border Archaeology, 2009)  Non-invasive and invasive fieldwork (Archaeology Wales, 2012)  Excavation (Archaeology Wales, 2013)
<b>Pennal</b>	1472/4	Meirionnydd Merioneth	403495	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Chapman, 2013)  Documentary and historical research (Chapman, 2013)
<b>Pentraeth</b>	1170	Ynys Môn Anglesey	404315	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Gildas Research, 2013)  Documentary and historical research (Gildas Research, 2013)
<b>Pwllgwdig</b>	1078	Sir Benfro	405188	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol

		Pembrokeshire		(Gildas Research, 2013)  Documentary and historical research (Gildas Research, 2013)
<b>Pwll Melyn</b>	1405	Sir Fynwy Monmouthshire	402320	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Border Archaeology, 2009)  Gwaith ymchwil heb fod yn ymyrryd (Archaeoleg Cymru, 2014)  Documentary and historical research (Border Archaeology, 2009)  Non-invasive fieldwork (Archaeology Wales, 2014)
<b>Castell Rhaglan (gwarchae) / Raglan Castle (siege)</b>	1646	Sir Fynwy Monmouthshire	545797	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Gildas Research, 2013)  Documentary and historical research (Gildas Research, 2013)
<b>Sain Ffagan / St Fagans</b>	1648	Morgannwg Glamorgan	307776	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Border Archaeology, 2009)  Gwaith ymchwil heb fod yn ymyrryd ac a oedd yn ymyrryd (Archaeoleg Cymru, 2012)  Gwaith ymchwil heb fod yn ymyrryd ac a oedd yn ymyrryd (Archaeoleg Cymru, 2013)  Documentary and historical research (Border Archaeology, 2009)  Non-invasive and invasive fieldwork (Archaeology Wales, 2012)  Non-invasive and invasive fieldwork (Archaeology Wales, 2013)
<b>Twthill</b>	1461	Sir Gaernarfon	403421	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Border Archaeology, 2009)

		Caernarfonshire		Documentary and historical research (Border Archaeology, 2009)
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**Grŵp Llywio Meysydd Brwydro, Hydref 2016**

**Battlefields Steering Group, October 2016**



# Welsh Battlefields Historical Research:

## Mynydd Carn (1081)

(Order Number IJ/017430: November 2009)

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## **Battle Name: Mynydd Carn (1081)**

### **Site of Battle**

The site of the battlefield of Mynydd Carn remains undetermined; the available documentary evidence and modern scholarly opinion places the location of the battle somewhere in northern Pembrokeshire within the commote of Nevern (possibly in the vicinity of the range of hills between the north Pembrokeshire coast and the Afon Gwaun represented by Mynydd Carningli, Mynydd Llanllawer and Mynydd Dinas), while a completely different location was suggested by the RCAHMW Pembrokeshire Inventory in the vicinity of at North Hill Farm SW of Templeton (now occupied by the disused airfield of RAF Templeton).

### **1. Summary**

#### *Historical Context of Battle*

The battle of Mynydd Carn has been described by the author of the RCAHMW Pembrokeshire Inventory as 'unquestionably the most momentous contest waged on Welsh ground in historic times'; while this assessment may be somewhat exaggerated, it nevertheless represented a decisive event in the dynastic and political history of the Principality and in particular the kingdoms of Gwynedd and Deheubarth<sup>1</sup>.

On the one hand, it represented the culmination of a protracted struggle by the exiled heirs of Iago, Cynan ap Iago and his son Gruffudd ap Cynan to regain control of Gwynedd which had continued since the death of Iago in 1039. On the other, it resulted in the establishment of Rhys ap Tewdwr of Deheubarth as the dominant Welsh lord in South Wales, at the expense of his chief rival Caradog ap Gruffudd, lord of Gwent and Morgannwg.

### **2. Narrative of Battle**

#### *Prelude to the Battle*

No information has been found to establish the exact date of the battle, however the evidence of an elegy to Trahaearn ap Caradog reputedly composed by the Welsh bard Meilyr Brydydd (in the form of a prophecy made after the event) relates how 'on Thursday in three weeks time, towards night they (Trahaearn and his ally Meilyr ap Rhiwallon of Powys) will be killed', which would appear to place the battle on a Thursday although no further indication is given of the date of the battle.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> RCAHMW, *Inventory of Ancient and Historical Monuments in Pembrokeshire* (London, 1925), xliii-xlvi, 251-2 (No. 745). For further discussion of the significance of the battle see J.E. Lloyd, *A History of Wales from the earliest times to the Edwardian Conquest*, 2 vols (London 1939), II, 384.

<sup>2</sup> For the text of the poem (in modern Welsh orthography) with translation and detailed commentary see N. Jones 'The Mynydd Carn Prophecy', *Cambrian Medieval Studies* Vol. 36,

The chronicle sources which mention the battle, namely the 'B' and 'C' texts of the *Annales Cambriae* and the various redactions of the Welsh chronicle *Brut y Tywysogion* (namely the Peniarth MS 20, Red Book of Hergest and Brenhinedd y Saeson versions) make no explicit reference the precise date of the engagement, although they all appear to agree in placing the battle of Mynydd Carn before William I's 'pilgrimage' to St David's and meeting with Rhys ap Tewdwr, which occurred in the same year.<sup>3</sup>

The dating of William I's visit to Wales in 1081 is difficult to establish with certainty; based on the chronicle and charter evidence he is known to have held his court at Gloucester in Christmas 1080 and appears to have reached London by February 1081. It is possible that he could have made a rapid visit to St David's during that period, however it is considerably more likely that his expedition to Wales occurred after holding his Whitsun court at Winchester (23 May) and before the autumn of 1081, when charter evidence shows William had already arrived in Normandy.<sup>4</sup> Assuming the latter to be the more credible dating of William I's expedition to Wales, this would suggest that the battle of Mynydd Carn probably occurred at some time between January and October 1081, probably not much later than June of that year

Information concerning the actions of the participants prior to the battle of Mynydd Carn is almost entirely derived from a single source, the *Vita Griffini filii Conani* (*Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan*) which was originally thought only to survive in the form of a 13<sup>th</sup> century Welsh translation (*Historia Gruffudd vab Kenan*) although an early 14<sup>th</sup> century manuscript (NLW Peniarth MS 434E) which appears essentially to be a slightly abbreviated copy of the original Latin text of the *Vita* has recently been identified.<sup>5</sup> The origins of the *Vita* remain uncertain although the general scholarly consensus appears to be that the text was originally compiled in the mid to late 12<sup>th</sup> century by a cleric employed at the court of the princes of Gwynedd, possibly at the behest of Owain Gwynedd, son of Gruffudd ap Cynan (d.1170).<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> *Brut y Tywysogion: Peniarth MS. 20 Version*, ed. & trans. T. Jones (Cardiff 1952), 17; *Brut y Tywysogion: Red Book of Hergest Version*, ed. & trans. T. Jones (Cardiff 1973), 30-31; *Brenhinedd y Saeson*, ed. & trans. T. Jones (Cardiff 1971); *Annales Cambriae*, ed. J. Williams ab Ithel (London 1860), 27-8. A diplomatic edition of the text of the 'B' & 'C' versions of the *Annales* relating to Mynydd Carn was reproduced in J.E. Lloyd, 'Wales and the Coming of the Normans', *Y Cymmrodor* Vol. 13 (1899-1900), 176-7. For a translation of the *Annales* with useful notes see P.M. Remfry, *Annales Cambriae: A Translation of Harleian MS 3859, PRO E 164/1, Cottonian Domitian A.1 Exeter Cathedral Library MS 3514 and MS Exchequer DB Neath PRO E164/1* (Shrewsbury 2007).

<sup>4</sup> See D.Bates, *Regesta Regum Anglo Normannorum: The Acta of William I* (Oxford 1998), 81 for a detailed discussion of William I's itinerary in 1081.

<sup>5</sup> For a critical edition of the Latin text of the *Vita* in NLW Peniarth MS 434E with commentary see P.Russell, *Vita Griffini filii Conani* (Cardiff 2006). The most recent critical edition of the Welsh translation of the *Vita* is D. Simon Evans (ed.), *Historia Gruffud vab Kenan* (Cardiff, 1977); for the English translation of the Welsh text with commentary see D. Simon Evans (ed. & trans.), *A Medieval Prince of Wales – The Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan* (Felinfach, 1990).

<sup>6</sup> For the most recent discussion of the origins of the *Vita*, see the introduction to P. Russell, *Vita Griffini filii Conani: The Medieval Latin Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan* (Cardiff 2006) and N.A. Jones, 'The Mynydd Carn Prophecy', *Cambrian Medieval Studies* Vol. 36, 77.

The testimony of the *Vita* must be treated with caution; it is a late source, compiled nearly a century after the battle took place, and as R. Babcock points out, it is clearly 'a work of propaganda, intended to glorify Gruffudd, his son Owain and the realm of Gwynedd'.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, while the *Vita* itself does present certain problems in interpretation, it is possible to establish the basic narrative of the battle, the events leading up to it and its aftermath.

The *Vita* first describes Gruffudd ap Cynan's exile in Ireland, having 'for some years spent time at the court of King Diarmait and other nobles'; 'King Diarmait' may be identifiable with Diarmait ua Briain, son of Toirdelbach ua Briain King of Munster (d.1086). The preparations for Gruffudd's expedition to Wales are then described; Gruffudd 'drew up a fleet in the port of Porthlarg (Waterford) with the equipment necessary for a voyage', which fleet he had 'accepted as a gift from the King' (either Toirdelbach or his son Diarmait) and was 'laden with Irishmen and Britons'. From this and later statements in the *Vita* it would appear that the composition of Gruffudd's force consisted of Welsh, Irish and Scandinavians, which is not surprising in view of his strong Hiberno-Norse connections, his mother being Ragnhild daughter of Olaf of Dublin.<sup>8</sup>

The *Vita* then describes Gruffudd's sea journey to Wales, landing 'at the port of Porth Clais', an ancient harbour located approximately 2km SW of the town and bishopric seat of St David's. According to the *Vita*, Gruffudd was received at Porthclais by Rhys ap Tewdwr prince of Deheubarth, the bishop of St David's (Sulien) and 'the scholars and the whole choir of St David's, and all the clerics of St David's'. At this meeting, according to the *Vita*, Rhys ap Tewdwr, who had apparently been dispossessed of his kingdom and forced into exile in St David's by Caradog and Trahearne, appealed for help from Gruffudd in overcoming his enemies and regaining his inheritance, offering Gruffudd half his kingdom and his homage, an agreement which was apparently ratified in the cathedral church of St David.

This entire account of Gruffudd and Rhys ap Tewdwr's meeting at Porth Clais and their subsequent agreement is highly suspect. Firstly it appears from the *Vita* that Gruffudd's arrival at Porthclais and Rhys ap Tewdwr's presence at St David's were purely coincidental, whereas surely it is more probable that Gruffudd and his fleet were actually summoned by Rhys, a fact which is likely to have been omitted by the author of the *Vita* whose aim was (naturally) to magnify Gruffudd's role in the battle.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, the possibility has been suggested that Gruffudd's forces actually landed in a completely different location, at Newport (Trefdraeth) on the Nyfer

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<sup>7</sup> R.S. Babcock, 'Rhys ap Tewdwr, king of Deheubarth', *Anglo Norman Studies*, 16 (1993) 21-35 (esp. p. 26)

<sup>8</sup> For analysis of Gruffudd ap Cynan's strong Hiberno-Norse connections, see D. Wyatt, 'Gruffudd ap Cynan and the Hiberno-Norse world', *Welsh History Review*, Vol. 19 no. 4 (1999), 595-617 and R.S. Babcock, 'The Irish Sea Province and the accession of Henry I', *Haskins Society Journal*, Vol. 17 (2006), 39-62

<sup>9</sup> For an important discussion of the account of Rhys and Gruffudd ap Cynan's meeting at St David's see 'The Mynydd Carn Prophecy', *Cambrian Medieval Studies* Vol. 36, 76-77, where it is suggested that this meeting could well have been fabricated by the author, modelled on William I's meeting with Rhys at St David's which occurred later in 1081.

estuary, based on a fragment of a Welsh poem traditionally presumed to be an elegy to Trahaerne ap Caradog, which mentions 'the intractable people (who) have not yet come over the sea to Nanhyfer (Nevern)'.<sup>10</sup>

The testimony of the Peniarth MS. 20 and RBH texts of the Brut appears to support the interpretation of Gruffudd playing a supporting role (albeit an important one) to Rhys ap Tewdwr, describing how 'after him (ie. Rhys) came Gruffudd, grandson of Iago together with Irish to help him'.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, while there is good reason to believe that Rhys ap Tewdwr's position was extremely weak and under imminent threat from the forces of Caradog ap Gruffudd and Trahaearn ap Caradog which appear to have penetrated into Dyfed at this point, it appears unlikely that Gruffudd would have been powerful enough, at this point, to compel Rhys ap Tewdwr to concede half his kingdom and recognize his overlordship.<sup>12</sup>

Whatever the case, it would appear that the combined forces of Rhys ap Tewdwr and Gruffudd ap Cynan set out from St David's (or possibly Newport) soon after cementing their alliance, to seek battle with the armies of Trahaearn ap Caradog and Caradog ap Gruffudd. Information as to the movements of Trahaearn and Caradog before the battle is limited and dependent on the testimony of the *Vita*, which appears to indicate that their combined forces had already entered the kingdom of Deheubarth, presumably with the intention of gaining a decisive victory over Rhys and his allies.

### *The Battle and its Aftermath*

The principal source for the details of the engagement remains the Latin and Welsh texts of the *Vita Griffini Filii Conani*, supplemented by important references to the battle in two early Welsh poems, an elegy to Trahaearn ap Caradog (composed in the form of a prophecy after the event) and an elegy to Gruffudd ap Cynan, both apparently composed by the Welsh bard Meilyr Brydydd (although his authorship of the former poem has been disputed) and by the brief entries concerning the battle in the *Annales Cambriae* and the various texts of the *Brut y Tywysogion*. None of the English chronicles appear to make reference to the battle while the Irish annalistic sources are similarly silent.

The account of the battle given in the Latin text *Vita* is remarkably vivid and worth quoting at length, those points where the Welsh translation differs have been indicated by square brackets.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> N.A. Jones, 'The Mynydd Carn Prophecy', *Cambrian Medieval Studies* Vol. 36, 77.

<sup>11</sup> *Brut y Tywysogion: Peniarth MS. 20 Version*, ed. & trans. T. Jones (Cardiff 1952), 17; *Brut y Tywysogion: Red Book of Hergest Version*, ed. & trans. T. Jones (Cardiff 1973), 30-31

<sup>12</sup> Babcock, 'Rhys ap Tewdwr, king of Deheubarth', *Anglo Norman Studies*, 16 (1993), ; D. Moore, 'Gruffudd ap Cynan and the medieval Welsh polity' in *Gruffudd ap Cynan: a collaborative biography*, ed. K.L. Maund (Woodbridge, 1996), 47.

<sup>13</sup> P.Russell (ed. & trans.), *Vita Griffini filii Conan: The Medieval Latin Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan* (Cardiff 2006) 68-71. D. Simon Evans (ed. & trans.), *A Medieval Prince of Wales – The Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan* (Felinfach, 1990), 67-68. The Latin text of the *Vita* is reproduced in Appendix 1

'After a long journey [*a long day's journey*] near evening they reached the mountains [*mountain*] where the above mentioned kings had placed their camp. Then Rhys said to Gruffudd, 'Lord let us put off the battle until tomorrow as it is now getting dark'. 'Put it off' replied Gruffudd for as long as you like, but I shall attack with the force I have ready'. And he did so, just as he said. The kings were overcome with great terror and were stunned as they saw the fierce forces of Gruffudd, the dense columns of soldiers, the gleaming standards, the Danes armed with two headed axes and the Irish carrying iron-tipped spears [*the Irish with their lances and sharp edged iron balls (ie. war flails) and the men of Gwynedd armed with spears and shields*]. Gruffudd himself was the first to rush into battle, just like a giant or a lion laying low enemies with every blow of his sword, furiously calling forward his soldiers against the enemy and urging them not to turn their backs on the enemy. It was a savage and fierce battle in which not even a son spared his father. The shouting of the soldiers rose to the heavens; the earth seemed to resound with the thunder of horses and infantry; violent cries were heard far and wide and the crashing of weapons was terrible to hear. So great a slaughter occurred, while the army of Gruffudd was defeating his enemy, that rivers of sweat and blood was thought to have flowed down. In the end Trahaearn was pierced through spilling his entrails, lying face down on the ground and seemed as if disarmed he was eating the grass with his living teeth. Gwcharki the Irishman had preserved his body in salt like pork being turned into bacon; in this place there fell of his household twenty-five horsemen as if accompanying him and others in the front rank, many thousands in addition were killed and of the remainder soon turned and plunged in headlong flight.'

Clearly, while the Latin and Welsh texts of the *Vita* agree for the most part, they differ on a number of significant details, suggesting that the original text from which the Welsh translation was made contained certain information omitted from the Latin copy made in the early 14<sup>th</sup> century or that these details were added by the compiler of the Welsh translation from another source. The most significant of these details can be summarised thus:

1/ The Welsh translation specifically describes Gruffudd and Rhys's forces having reached the enemy position 'after a long day's journey' whereas the Latin text simply states that they reached it 'after a long journey'.

2/ The camp of Trahaearn, Caradog and their allies is placed by the Latin text of the *Vita* in 'mountains' (*montes*) whereas the Welsh translation places it on a mountain.

3/ The Welsh translation adds further details about Gruffudd's army (in particular the Irish with their lances and war-flails and reference to the men of Gwynedd 'with spears and shields') which do not appear in the Latin text of the *Vita*.

While much of this account was obviously written to enhance the importance of the role of Gruffudd and his troops and a certain amount of literary embellishment on the compiler's part must be allowed for, the vivid description of the battle suggests that it may well reflect genuine tradition, even though it may not be based on direct

first hand testimony from the participants. Moreover the reference to the battle having occurred in the evening is corroborated by an independent source, the elegy to Trahaearn ap Caradog, which specifically mentions that Trahaearn and his allies would be killed 'towards night'.<sup>14</sup> The success of Gruffudd and Rhys, who appear to have been facing a numerically superior force, may well be attributed therefore to the decision to mount a surprise attack on the enemy camp in the evening.

The accounts of the subsequent rout of the defeated forces of Trahaearn and Caradog in the Latin and Welsh texts of the *Vita*, while broadly in agreement, again differ in certain key details further indicating that the Welsh translator utilised a fuller text or incorporated details derived from another source. The account contained in the Latin text of the *Vita* is presented below with variant readings from the Welsh translation inserted in square brackets.<sup>15</sup>

'Gruffudd, as was his usual habit in victory, pursued them through forests, valleys, marshes and mountains throughout the night by the light of the moon [*and throughout the following day*] so that out of such a great number scarcely one of them returned to his own country. After this terrible battle so bravely fought by Gruffudd, Rhys withdrew from the protection and company of one so illustrious and was afterwards not seen by him [*After the battle was over, Rhys feared treachery on the part of Gruffudd. He withdrew secretly at dusk from the presence of Gruffudd and his men and he did not appear to any of them from then on*]. Gruffudd upset by his treachery decided to ravage his land, and that is also what happened. The mountains where this battle was fought are called the mountains of Carn, because a huge pile of stones was heaped up there under which they believe that treasure had once been buried [*The hill, moreover on which the battle took place the people of the country call 'Mynydd Carn', that is to say the 'Mountain of the Cairn', for a huge cairn of stones is there under which was buried a hero in olden times*].

Three important differences between the Latin and Welsh texts may be noted:

1/Gruffudd's pursuit of the defeated armies is described in the Latin text as taking place 'throughout the night' whereas the Welsh translation adds that it continued throughout the following day.

2/Rhys ap Tewdwr is specifically stated by the Welsh translation to have withdrawn his troops 'at dusk' after the battle was over, suspecting treachery on Gruffudd's part, though it is unclear whether this was on the actual day of the battle (which would suggest that the battle was of short duration) or at dusk on the following day.

3/The description of the site of the battle in the Latin and Welsh texts differs substantively; the Latin text describing the location as 'the mountains of Carn' where a huge pile of stones marked the site of hidden treasure whereas the Welsh text

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<sup>14</sup> N.A. Jones, 'The Mynydd Carn Prophecy', *Cambrian Medieval Studies* Vol. 36, 77

<sup>15</sup> See Appendix I for full transcription of the Latin text of the *Vita* relating to the battle, reproduced from P. Russell (ed.) *Vita Griffini filii Conani* (Cardiff 2006) 68-71.

clearly locates the battlefield at 'The Mountain of the Cairn' (*Menyd Carn*) describing it as an ancient burial site.

Allowing for the often significant differences in detail between the Latin and Welsh versions of the *Vita*, and its obvious bias in favour of its main protagonist, Gruffudd ap Cyнан, it is possible to reconstruct in broad terms the principal events of the battle. It would appear that the forces of Gruffudd and Rhys reached the enemy camp towards evening, after what the Welsh translation describes as a 'long day's journey' from St David's. The forces of Trahaearn ap Caradog and his allies, which are implied by the *Vita* as being numerically superior to the combined armies of Gruffudd and Rhys, were encamped at what appears to have been a strong defensive position on a hilltop site which appears to have been marked by a large cairn.

Gruffudd and Rhys (if the *Vita* can be trusted, at Gruffudd's insistence) mounted an attack on the enemy camp in the evening, presumably taking Trahaearn and his allies by surprise. The elegy to Trahaearn appears to confirm the account of the *Vita* that the attack took place in the evening. After a fierce engagement, Trahaearn and his household troop were killed (possibly together with other leaders 'in the first rank' such as Caradog and Meilyr) resulting in a general rout. The particular attention given in the *Vita* to the death of Trahaearn and his 'equites' suggests that this could have been the decisive turning point of the battle.

The battle itself may have only lasted a few hours, ending towards nightfall with the death of Trahaearn, followed by a prolonged rout and slaughter of the defeated armies (apparently led by Gruffudd) that appears to have continued throughout the night and possibly into the following day. Rhys ap Tewdwr appears to have withdrawn his forces shortly after the battle ended, apparently towards nightfall although it is not entirely clear whether this was on the night of the battle or the following day.

### *Troops and Casualties*

Information concerning the composition of the respective armies is largely derived from the Latin and Welsh texts of the *Vita* (which differ in critical points of detail), supplemented by references in the elegy to Trahaearn ap Caradog. The *Vita* provides a detailed description of Gruffudd's contingent, describing it as consisting of 'Danes, Irish and other allies to the number of one hundred and sixty', the column being headed by one Cynddelw son of Conws of Anglesey. While the precise total of Gruffudd's forces given in the *Vita* must be treated with some suspicion, it does not appear to be an overly exaggerated estimate. Later in the narrative, the *Vita* describes 'the fierce forces of Gruffudd, the dense columns of soldiers, the gleaming standards, the Danes armed with two handed axes and the Irish carrying iron tipped spears (or lances)'. The Welsh translation of the *Vita* inserts further details of Gruffudd's forces at this point, also mentioning the Irish carrying sharp edged iron balls (probably identifiable with war-flails) and 'the men of Gwynedd armed with

spears and shields'<sup>16</sup>. Little information is provided on the size and composition of Rhys ap Tewdwr's forces.

The size and composition of the armies of Trahearn, Caradog and their allies is poorly recorded, the *Vita* implies that they were probably superior in numbers to the forces of Rhys and Gruffudd. The Latin text of the *Vita* mentions that the army of Caradog ap Gruffudd included the men of Upper and Lower Gwent, the inhabitants of Morgannwg, together with the Normans', whereas the Welsh version specifically describes the Norman contingent as consisting of 'arbalisters' (crossbowmen). It is also worth noting that the Latin text of the *Vita* makes no mention of the forces from Powys led by Meilyr son of Rhiwallon in support of Trahearn and Caradog's cause, although they are specifically referred to in the Welsh version.<sup>17</sup>

The *Vita* provides one important detail concerning Trahaearn's forces, referring to twenty-five 'equites' of the household (*familia*) of Trahaearn who fell with him during the battle. The precise meaning of 'equites' in this context is unclear, it could refer literally to horsemen, perhaps suggesting that Trahaearn and his closest followers were mounted during the battle, or it could be translated as 'knights', meaning (in a general sense) household retainers who may have fought on foot or horseback.<sup>18</sup>

The account of the enemy casualties given in the *Vita* must, as with most medieval literary sources, be regarded with some scepticism; the reference to 'many thousands' being killed (*multa praeterea millia interficiuntur*) is almost certainly an exaggeration. However the account of the fall of Trahaearn and his household troop, along with others in the front rank (which may have included other leaders such as Caradog ap Gruffudd and Meilyr ap Rhiwallon) contains details suggesting it was derived from authentic tradition concerning the battle. The deaths of Trahaearn and Meilyr ap Rhiwallon at Mynydd Carn are recorded in the elegies to Trahaearn and Gruffudd ap Cynan while Caradog ap Gruffudd's death only appears in the 'B' and 'C' text of the *Annales Cambriae* and the *Brut y Tywysogion*.<sup>19</sup>

### 3. Assessment

#### *Battle Location:*

The location of the battle remains undetermined, although all the available documentary sources appear to agree that the battlefield was located on a

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<sup>16</sup> D. Simon Evans (ed. & trans.), *A Medieval Prince of Wales – The Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan* (Felinfach, 1990), 67 ('ar guydyl gaflachauc ac eu peleu haernaul kylllelauc, ar gwyndyt gleiuyauc tareanauc')

<sup>17</sup> D. Simon Evans (ed. & trans.), *A Medieval Prince of Wales – The Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan* (Felinfach, 1990), 67 ('albryswyr nordmannyeit')

<sup>18</sup> For a discussion of the role of the household troop (*teulu*) with reference to the battle of Mynydd Carn see S. Davies, *Welsh Military Institutions 633-1283* (Cardiff, 2004), 38.

<sup>19</sup> See P.M. Remfry, *Annales Cambriae: A Translation of Harleian MS 3859, PRO E 164/1, Cottonian Domitian A.1 Exeter Cathedral Library MS 3514 and MS Exchequer DB Neath PRO E164/1* (Shrewsbury 2007), 70.

hilltop/mountain site marked by a prominent cairn. The Latin and Welsh texts of the *Vita Griffini filii Conani* provide slightly differing accounts of the location of the battlefield, the former stating that 'the *mountains* where this battle was fought are called the **mountains of Carn**, because a huge pile of stones was heaped up there under which they believe that treasure had once been buried', whereas the Welsh text specifically refers to the site as 'Mynydd Carn (*Menyd Carn*) that is to say the 'Mountain of the Cairn', for a huge cairn of stones is there under which was buried a hero in olden times'.<sup>20</sup>

It is worth noting that all the other sources relating to the battle, namely the elegy to Trahearn ap Caradog, the 'B' and 'C' texts of the *Annales Cambriae* and the texts of the *Brut y Tywysogion* refer to a singular 'Mynydd Carn'. Meilyr Brydydd's elegy to Gruffudd ap Cynan, composed shortly after the latter's death in 1137, provides an alternative place name for the battlefield, describing it as 'Carn Fynydd' although again it clearly indicates that the battle site was associated with a cairn.<sup>21</sup>

Precisely where this 'Mynydd Carn' was situated remains unclear, although several possible locations have been suggested. The statement in the Welsh text of the *Vita* that Gruffudd and Rhys reached the enemy camp near evening after 'a long day's journey' from St David's would appear to suggest a probable location somewhere in Pembrokeshire. Further possible evidence regarding the general location of the battle is contained in the elegy to Trahaearn ap Caradog, which contains the statement 'now they have come over again, to Nanhyver, wild men, Irish black devils'.<sup>22</sup> Nanhyver could refer either to the village of Nevern or the surrounding commote of Uwch Nyfer, comprising an extensive block of territory in Northern Pembrokeshire between the Afon Nyfer and Fishguard, forming part of the medieval *cantref* of Cemais.

Several locations within northern Pembrokeshire have been suggested although none can be positively identified as the site of the battlefield. A. Jones in his edition of the Welsh text of the Life of Gruffudd suggested a possible location at Mynydd Carn Ingli, a steep sided hill topped by rocky outcrops, prominently situated above the town of Newport to the N and the Gwaun Valley to the S.<sup>23</sup> Carn Ingli certainly has an abundance of prehistoric monuments, including several Bronze Age cairn sites, standing stones and the Iron Age hillfort of Carn Ffoi, although no place name evidence has been identified from the documentary sources, including the 1594 extent of Cemais and the 1844 Newport tithe apportionment which can be directly associated with the battle.

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<sup>20</sup> P. Russell (ed.) *Vita Griffini filii Conani* (Cardiff 2006) 70-1; D. Simon Evans (ed. & trans.), *A Medieval Prince of Wales – The Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan* (Felinfach, 1990), 68.

<sup>21</sup> See J.E. Caerwyn-Williams, 'Meilyr Brydydd and Gruffudd ap Cynan' in K.L. Maund (ed.) *Gruffudd ap Cynan: A Collaborative Biography* (Woodbridge, 1996), 180 ('Amug a'u dragon, udd Mon, meinddydd, Men yd las Trahaearn yng Ngharn Fynydd')

<sup>22</sup> N.A. Jones, 'The Mynydd Carn Prophecy', *Cambrian Medieval Studies* Vol. 36, 77. For translation of the elegy to Trahaearn see Appendix 2.

<sup>23</sup> A. Jones (ed.), *Historia Gruffudd vab Kenan* (Manchester, 1910), 171

Another possible location, situated further to the W of Mynydd Carn Ingli but forming part of the same range of hills, was suggested by Jones and the Rev. A.W. Wade Evans to the SW of Garn Fawr, the highest point on Mynydd Llanllawer, stating that 'near by there are standing stones popularly reported to represent the site of a battle, the fugitives from which were driven over a spot called Craiginestra (which has not yet been identified) into the river Gwaun'.<sup>24</sup>

These standing stones were specifically identified by Wade-Evans with the alignment at Parc-y-Meirw (literally translated as 'The field of the dead') which are situated approximately 1km SW of Garn Fawr.<sup>25</sup> The etymology of 'Parc-y-Meirw' (which is marked on the Llanllawer tithe map and the OS 1<sup>st</sup> edition map of ) certainly suggests strong sepulchral associations although no other place name evidence has been identified from the Llanllawer tithe map that appears to refer to a battle. However, a description of the alignment at Parc-y-meirw was contributed by the antiquarian E.L. Barnwell in 1868, which mentions an ancient local tradition referring to 'an account of a desperate battle fought on this spot, among the pillar stones themselves'.<sup>26</sup>

A lengthy paper on 'The locality of the battle of Mynydd Carn' presented by Sir Evan Jones as his presidential address to the Cambrian Archaeological Association in 1922 made a case for the location of the battlefield on the plateau on the E side of Mynydd Llanllawer, to which Jones attributed the name 'Glyn-gath'.<sup>27</sup> While Jones's paper contains a useful discussion of the documentary evidence for the battle, his interpretation of the place name evidence may be challenged on several points.

In particular the claim that 'Glyn-gath' denotes the plateau extending E of Garn Fawr or that it refers to a battle site is questionable, as the etymology of the place name, literally translated as 'steep valley of the cat (*gath*)' appears to be simply describing the meandering corridor of lower-lying land between the steep slopes of Mynydd Llanllawer and Mynydd Dinas to the W and Mynydd Melyn to the E.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, Jones's interpretation of place names Llanychaer and Kilkiffeth, situated to the S of the Afon Gwaun, as being associated with the retreat of the defeated forces after the battle also appears to be suspect. The place name element '*caeth*' has been interpreted as being derived either from the Welsh term for 'captive' or a personal name such as 'Cathed'.<sup>29</sup>

While the three sites suggested by A. Jones, the Rev. Wade-Evans and E. Jones could all potentially meet the criteria for the battlefield as described in the Vita and the

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<sup>24</sup> A. Jones (ed.), *Historia Gruffudd vab Kenan* (Manchester, 1910), 171-2

<sup>25</sup> A.W. Wade Evans, 'Parochiale Wallicanum', *Y Cymmrodor*, Vol. 22 (1910), 22-125 (p. 57)

<sup>26</sup> E.L. Barnwell, 'Alignments in Wales' *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, Vol. 23, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series (1868), 169-79 (esp. p.177)

<sup>27</sup> E.D. Jones, 'The Locality of the Battle of Mynydd Carn AD 1081', *Archaeologia Cambrensis* Vol. 77 pt. 2 (1922), 181-97.

<sup>28</sup> For a detailed refutation of much of E.D. Jones's interpretation of the place name evidence see RCAHMW, *Inventory of Ancient and Historical Monuments in Pembrokeshire* (London, 1925), xlv

<sup>29</sup> For discussion of the derivation of Llanychaer and Kilkiffeth see B.G. Charles, *The Place Names of Pembrokeshire* 2 vols (Aberystwyth, 1992) I, 96-7

elegy to Trahaearn, all of which are located within the commote of Nevern, on hilltop sites with evidence of prehistoric funerary monuments in the immediate vicinity, no documentary evidence has been found which explicitly links these sites with the battle of Mynydd Carn. Nevertheless, all three sites would merit further investigation, in particular the locality of Parc-y-Meirw where the place name evidence and the evidence of local tradition appears to be strongest.

Another possible site of the battlefield was suggested by the RCAHMW Inventory for Pembrokeshire in a completely different location from those outlined above, situated in the vicinity of North Hill Farm, approximately 2km SW of Templeton, the site of which is now occupied by the now disused airfield of RAF Templeton.<sup>30</sup>

Approximately 100 yards NW of the farm was a low wide spreading mound representing the remains of a substantial, heavily disturbed round cairn of 'unusual dimensions', situated in a field marked as 'Stone Leys' on the Narberth tithe map of 1840. In 1921, the remains of a large cinerary urn of probable Bronze Age date (described by the RCAHMW Inventory as 'one of the largest urns that is known to have been discovered in Wales') together with a number of smaller urns were found by the owner of the farm who was robbing the cairn site for stone. The cairn site appears to have been levelled following the construction of the RAF airfield in 1940, no apparent evidence of the cairn or any other associated features is visible on RAF vertical photographs of the area or on later OS oblique aerial photography.

This cairn, which was undoubtedly a large, prominently sited feature, appears to have given its name to the surrounding area, which formed a discrete, raised plateau on the boundary between the parishes of Begelly and Narberth, referred to in medieval and later post-medieval documents as Carn or Carn Mountain.<sup>31</sup> The evidence presented in the RCAHMW Inventory certainly demonstrates that this area was known as 'Carn' as early as the mid-14<sup>th</sup> century (the earliest reference occurring in an *inquisition post mortem* dated 1362) and it would perhaps fit more appropriately the description in the Latin text of the *montes Carn* which appears to refer to a district rather than a specific hill or mountain. It also would not particularly conflict with the statement in the Welsh text of the *Vita* that the battle site was located 'a long day's journey' from St David's. However, the proposed location for Mynydd Carn does conflict with the evidence of the elegy to Trahaerne, which appears to indicate a location for the battle site somewhere in northern Pembrokeshire within the commote of Nevern.

Other suggested locations for the site of the battle of Mynydd Carn which have now been largely discredited include Carno in Montgomeryshire (first suggested by David Powel in his 'Historie of Cambria' written in 1584) and another location somewhere

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<sup>30</sup> RCAHMW, *Inventory of Ancient and Historical Monuments in Pembrokeshire* (London, 1925), xliii-xlvi, 251-2 (No. 745).

<sup>31</sup> RCAHMW, *Inventory of Ancient and Historical Monuments in Pembrokeshire* (London, 1925), xliii-xlv; B.G. Charles, *The Place Names of Pembrokeshire* 2 vols (Aberystwyth, 1992), II, 472

in the vicinity of Troed-yr-aur in southern Ceredigion suggested in a poem composed by the 15<sup>th</sup> century Welsh bard Lewis Glyn Cothi.<sup>32</sup>

#### *Discussion of Primary Sources:*

The battle of Mynydd Carn receives only scanty mention in the Welsh chronicle sources. Brief, somewhat garbled references to the battle occur in the 'B' and 'C' texts of the *Annales Cambriae*, both of which appear to have been compiled at the Cistercian Abbey of Strata Florida in the mid to late 13<sup>th</sup> century, while the entries contained in the Peniarth MS. 20, Red Book of Hergest and Brenhinedd y Saeson texts of the *Brut y Tywysogion* appear to be derived from a similar source to the *Annales Cambriae*.

The chief source relating to the battle is the lengthy account given in the *Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan*, a biography of Gruffudd which appears originally to have been compiled in the mid to late 12<sup>th</sup> century by a cleric employed at the court of the princes of Gwynedd, possibly during the lifetime of Owain Gwynedd, son of Gruffudd ap Cynan (d.1170).<sup>33</sup> The Life was formerly thought only to survive in the form of a 13<sup>th</sup> century Welsh translation (*Historia Gruffudd vab Kenan*) although an early 14<sup>th</sup> century copy of what appears to be a slightly abbreviated redaction of the original Latin text (*Vita Griffini filii Conani*), has recently been identified, which appears subsequently to have been annotated by a late 16<sup>th</sup> century scholar, Edward Thelwell to bring it into line with the Welsh text.<sup>34</sup>

Although the account of the battle given in the Latin and Welsh texts of the *Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan* agree for the most part, they clearly differ on a number of significant details, which leads one to conclude that the original text from which the Welsh translation was made contained information omitted from the Latin copy made in the early 14<sup>th</sup> century or that these details were added by the compiler of the Welsh translation from another source. The *Vita* must be treated with considerable caution; it is a late source, compiled nearly a century after the battle took place, and is clearly composed in the form of a panegyric, intended to glorify Gruffudd's conduct and consequently omitting any details which might detract from this impression.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> D. Powel, *Historie of Cambria* (1811 ed.), 85. For a discussion and rejection of the siting of the battle at Carno in Montgomeryshire, see J.E. Lloyd, *History of Wales* (London, 1939) II, 384n

<sup>33</sup> For a critical edition of the Latin text of the *Vita* in NLW Peniarth MS 434E with commentary see P.Russell, *Vita Griffini filii Conani: The Medieval Latin Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan* (Cardiff, 2006). The most recent critical edition of the Welsh translation of the *Vita* is D. Simon Evans (ed.) *Historia Gruffud vab Kenan* (Cardiff, 1977); for the English translation of the Welsh text with commentary see D. Simon Evans (ed. & trans.) *A Medieval Prince of Wales – The Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan* (Felinfach, 1990).

<sup>34</sup> For a detailed analysis of the annotations and corrections made to the Peniarth MS 434E text of the *Vita* by Thelwell, with particular reference to the account of the battle of Mynydd Carn, see P.Russell, *Vita Griffini filii Conani* (Cardiff, 2006), 26-29.

<sup>35</sup> R.S. Babcock, 'Rhys ap Tewdwr, king of Deheubarth', *Anglo Norman Studies*, 16 (1993) 21-35 (esp. p. 26)

Nevertheless, while allowing for these problems in interpretation, the *Vita* remains the principal source for the events of the battle and parts of the account can be corroborated by references in two Welsh poems, namely an elegy traditionally supposed to have been composed on the death of Trahaearn ap Caradog and another elegy to Gruffudd ap Cynan, both of which have been attributed to the Welsh bard Meilyr Brydydd (d. c. 1137), who served as *pencerdd* (court poet) at the court of the princes of Gwynedd.<sup>36</sup>

The earliest texts of both poems survive in the early 14<sup>th</sup> century compilation of Welsh bardic poetry contained in the Hendregadedd MS at the National Library of Wales. While the attribution of Gruffudd's elegy to Meilyr is generally accepted, his authorship of the elegy to Trahaearn (composed in the form of a prophecy after the event) has been seriously questioned by some scholars on chronological and stylistic terms, although recent studies have argued in favour of Meilyr's authorship of both works.<sup>37</sup> Indeed it has been suggested that the elegy to Trahaearn, the surviving text of which appears to be a fragment of a longer poem, may in fact have been dedicated not to Trahaearn but to Caradog ap Gruffudd who also fell at Mynydd Carn. Whatever the case, the elegy to Trahaearn contains some important references to the battle which independently corroborate details of the account given in the *Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan*, particularly concerning the battle taking place 'towards evening'.

#### *Discussion of Secondary Sources:*

Somewhat surprisingly, in view of the historic importance of the battle, there are few references to it in antiquarian accounts. The Elizabethan antiquarian George Owen in his *History of Pembrokeshire* (written in 1598) makes no reference to the battle and there is a similar dearth of information in Richard Fenton's *Historical Tour in Pembrokeshire* (1811).<sup>38</sup>

Valuable early discussions of the evidence for the location of the battle site appear in Egerton Phillimore's article on 'The Publication of Welsh Historical Records' and A. Jones's notes to his edition of the 'Historia Gruffudd vab Kenan'.<sup>39</sup> Sir Evan Jones's article on 'The locality of the battle of Mynydd Carn' contains a useful, if somewhat outdated discussion of the documentary evidence for the battle although his analysis

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<sup>36</sup> For the text of the elegy to Trahaearn with an important discussion of its origins and significance see N.A. Jones, 'The Mynydd Carn Prophecy', *Cambrian Medieval Studies* Vol. 36, 73-92. For the text of Meilyr Brydydd's elegy to Gruffudd ap Cynan (in modern Welsh orthography) with full commentary see J.E. Caerwyn-Williams, 'Meilyr Brydydd and Gruffudd ap Cynan' in K.L. Maund (ed.) *Gruffudd ap Cynan: A Collaborative Biography* (Woodbridge, 1996), 165-85

<sup>37</sup> See N.A. Jones, 'The Mynydd Carn Prophecy', *Cambrian Medieval Studies* Vol. 36 and J.E. Caerwyn-Williams, 'Meilyr Brydydd and Gruffudd ap Cynan' in K.L. Maund (ed.) *Gruffudd ap Cynan: A Collaborative Biography* (Woodbridge, 1996), 165-85

<sup>38</sup> G.Owen, *The Description of Pembrokeshire*, ed. H. Owen, 4 vols. *Cymmrodorion Record Series* (London 1897-1936); R. Fenton, *A Historical Tour through Pembrokeshire* (London 1811)

<sup>39</sup> E. Phillimore, 'The Publication of Welsh Historical Records', *Y Cymmrodor* Vol. 11 (1890-1), 133-76 (esp. p.167) A. Jones (ed.), *Historia Gruffudd vab Kenan* (Manchester, 1910), 171-3

of the place name evidence (as discussed above) must be regarded with caution.<sup>40</sup> The RCAHMW Inventory for Pembrokeshire also contains an important account of the documentary evidence for the battle and makes a plausible case for the location of the battle site at North Hill Farm, SW of Templeton, although it does conflict with the documentary evidence suggesting a site within the commote of Nevern in northern Pembrokeshire.<sup>41</sup>

Modern scholarly accounts of the battle are largely indebted to J.E. Lloyd's succinct and cautious assessment in his *History of Wales*, in which he suggested a site 'which cannot have been far from the borders of Dyfed' while admitting that a positive identification was probably not feasible.<sup>42</sup>

More recent discussions of the evidence for the battle site are contained in the notes to the recent critical editions of the *Historia Gruffudd vab Kenan* and the *Vita Griffini filii Conani*,<sup>43</sup> as well as an important discussion by N.A. Jones of the elegy to Trahaearn ap Caradog and J.E. Caerwyn Williams's analysis of the text of Meilyr Brydydd's elegy to Gruffudd ap Cynan; the two latter papers both suggest a location for the battlefield somewhere in northern Pembrokeshire, close to the border with Ceredigion.

#### *Archaeology and Historic Terrain:*

As discussed above, there are clearly problems in establishing a precise location for the battle site, based on the limited documentary and place-name evidence. A number of possible sites have been advanced, the majority located in northern Pembrokeshire with the exception of the site at Templeton suggested by the RCAHMW Inventory. Consequently it is difficult to produce a detailed assessment of the archaeological potential of a particular battle site, although it is possible to indicate broadly the archaeological potential of certain localities within which the battle site may have been situated.

The several possible sites for the battlefield which have been suggested in the vicinity of the range of hills between the north Pembrokeshire coast and the Afon Gwaun, stretching E-W from Mynydd Carn Ingli (S of Newport) to Mynydd Llanllawer (S of Fishguard) consist of remote, partially enclosed upland moor with abundant evidence of prehistoric ritual/funerary monuments and defensive enclosures, as well as remains of settlement sites and field systems of prehistoric and later medieval date. A significant proportion of this area has been covered by a detailed historic

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<sup>40</sup> E.D. Jones, 'The Locality of the Battle of Mynydd Carn AD 1081', *Archaeologia Cambrensis* Vol. 77 pt. 2 (1922), 181-97.

<sup>41</sup> RCAHMW, *Inventory of Ancient and Historical Monuments in Pembrokeshire* (London, 1925), xliii-xlvi, 251-2 (No. 745).

<sup>42</sup> J.E. Lloyd, *A History of Wales from the earliest times to the Edwardian Conquest*, 2 vols (London 1939), II, 384

<sup>43</sup> P. Russell (ed.), *Vita Griffini filii Conani: The Medieval Latin Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan* (Cardiff 2006); D. Simon Evans (ed.), *Historia Gruffud vab Kenan* (Cardiff, 1977); D. Simon Evans (ed. & trans.), *A Medieval Prince of Wales – The Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan* (Felinfach, 1990).

landscape characterisation undertaken by the Dyfed Archaeological Trust and extensive aerial reconnaissance carried out by the RCAHMW. Mynydd Carn Ingli, in particular, has recently been the focus of significant archaeological investigation, which has largely focused on the substantial prehistoric archaeology in this area. The most promising areas for further archaeological investigation appear to be located in the vicinity of the summit of Mynydd Carn Ingli and at 'Parc-y-Meirw' located to the SW of Mynydd Llanllawer.

The location proposed by the RCAHMW Pembrokeshire Inventory in 1925 at North Hill Farm, 2km SW of Templeton, is now occupied by the disused WWII airfield of RAF Templeton; the farm buildings have been completely demolished and any trace of the cairn situated approximately 100 yards NW of the farm which is described in the Inventory appears to have been levelled during the airfield's construction. In spite of this fact, there remains some potential for buried remains to be identified within the airfield site, within those areas that have not been significantly impacted by the construction of buildings or runways associated with the airfield.

#### *Assessment of the Historic Significance of the Battle:*

The battle of Mynydd Carn was described by J.E. Lloyd in his magisterial *History of Wales* as a 'memorable battle' and in many respects it certainly represented a turning point in the medieval political history of the Principality; the established order represented by Trahaearn ap Caradog in Gwynedd, Caradog ap Gruffudd in South Wales and Meilyr ap Rhiwallon in Powys had been decisively overthrown by Rhys ap Tewdwr and Gruffudd ap Cynan.<sup>44</sup>

Rhys ap Tewdwr appears to have profited most from this victory, securing his position not only as ruler of Deheubarth but also as the leading Welsh lord in South and West Wales. On the other hand, Gruffudd's attempt to regain his inheritance (ie. Gwynedd) was frustrated by the intervention of the Normans, who appear to have taken advantage of Trahaearn's death to further extend their influence and territory in North Wales; Gruffudd himself being captured and imprisoned by Hugh Earl of Chester for a lengthy period.<sup>45</sup>

Indeed it may be plausibly argued that the Normans, in fact, gained most of all from the battle of Mynydd Carn, taking advantage of the political turmoil resulting from the deaths of Trahaearn ap Caradog and Caradog ap Gruffudd, arguably the two most powerful Welsh princes at the time, to extend their lordship over North and South Wales. It can be surely no coincidence that William I's armed 'pilgrimage' to St David's, which was apparently made, if the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle can be believed,

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<sup>44</sup> J.E. Lloyd, *A History of Wales from the earliest times to the Edwardian Conquest*, 2 vols (London 1939), II, 384; S. Davies, *Welsh Military Institutions 633-1283* (Cardiff, 2004), 120-1.

<sup>45</sup> J.E. Lloyd, *A History of Wales from the earliest times to the Edwardian Conquest*, 2 vols (London 1939), II, 384-5; D. Wyatt, 'Gruffudd ap Cynan and the Hiberno-Norse world', *Welsh History Review*, Vol. 19 no. 4 (1999), 606-7

to free prisoners (presumably those Normans who had fought on the side of Caradog ap Gruffudd) followed shortly after the battle of Mynydd Carn.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> D. Whitelock (ed.) *The Anglo Saxon Chronicle* (London, 1962), 161 '1081. This year the King led an army into Wales, and there freed many hundreds of men'. For discussion of the significance of this visit, see R.S. Babcock, 'Rhys ap Tewdwr, king of Deheubarth', *Anglo Norman Studies*, 16 (1993), 25-26

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### *Cartography*

(All maps were obtained from the National Library of Wales unless otherwise stated)

Begelly tithe map 1841

Dinas tithe map - 1841

Llanllawer tithe map – 1842

Llanychaer tithe map - 1842

Narberth tithe map - 1840

Newport tithe map - 1844

OS 1<sup>st</sup> edition 25 inch map (Pembrokeshire 10.1-10, 13-14; 35.1-2) – 1889

OS 1<sup>st</sup> edition 6 inch map (Pembrokeshire 10 NW, NE, SW; 35 NW) - 1891

OS 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 25 inch map (Pembrokeshire 10.1-10, 13-14; 35.1-2)- 1907

OS 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 6 inch map (Pembrokeshire 10 NW, NE, SW; 35 NW) – 1908

OS provisional edition 6 inch map (Pembrokeshire 10 NW, NE, SW; 35 NW) - 1953

**Appendix 1: Transcription of Chapters 17 and 18 from the *Vita Griffini filii Conani* relating to the battle at Mynydd Carn (reproduced from P. Russell (ed.) *Vita fill*)**

Cum iam annis nonnullis in Hybernia Griffinus trivisset curiam apud Diermit regem et alios viros illustres, classem in portu Porthlarc rebus instruxit ad iter necessaries, quam dono Regis acceptam civibus Hybernis ac Britannis onustam duxit prosperrimo per mare cursu, adspirantibus etiam secundis ventis in portum dictum Porth Cleis non longe a sede archiepiscopali Menevensi. Ad cuius adventum Rysus ap Theodor, rex australium Cambrorum, Menevensis episcopus, doctores, chorus universus Sancti Davidis clericique omnes Menevenses, in portum sunt profecti Rysusque Griffinum sic est allocutus: 'Salve, Cambrorum regum rex, ad te confugio; tibi genua flecto supplex auxilium suppetiasque petens'. Tum Griffinus, 'Quis es tu et cuius huc advenisti causa'. Rysus inquit, 'Sum filius Theodori huius modicae ditionis dominus: nunc vero oppressus, profugos et interritus, in scro hoc delitescio loco'. 'Quis', ait Griffinus, 'te in hoc fugere coegit?' 'Domine', inquit ille, 'tres Cambriae reges praecipui, cum exercitibus suis in hunc principatum delati, cives assidue opes exhauriunt'. 'At quinam', ait Griffinus, 'tam potentes reges, qui hanc pervagantur dominationem tanta multitudinone constipati?' 'Caradocus' inquit ille, 'filius Griffini de Guenta vch coet et is coet, cum asseclis suis, incolae Morgannvc, una cum Normannis et Trahaearn rex cum habitantibus Arwystli'. Auditis vero nominibus oppressorum, ira indignationeque aestuans Griffinus quaerit quondam illi laboris praemium constitueret, si hostes eius oppugnaret. 'Dimidum' inquit 'ditionis meae tibi dabo, homagiumque tibi praestabo'. Conditionem accept Griffinus. Aedemque Divi Davidi sacram ambo petunt, cum orandi tum foederis gratia'.

Quo confirmato benedictioneque ab episcopo accepta, statim Griffinus iter accepit sequentibus eum Danis, Hybernis amicisque aliis ad numerum centum sexaginta, agmen primum ducante Kyndelw filius Monensis. Resus etiam cum perpauca australibus laetus simul proficiscitur, perbelle secum actum cogitans, quod dam opportunum auxilium est nactus.

Longo iam itinere dimenso ad vesperam in montes perveniunt, ubi castra posuissent praedicti reges. Tum resus Griffinum sic est allocutus: 'Domine, differamus bellum in crastinum, quod iam advesperascit'. 'Differ' inquit Griffinus, 'quousque tibi placuerit, ego vero cum ea, quam paratam manum habeo, in eos impetum faciam'. Quod ut dixerat, praestabat. Terrore ingenti continentur reges stupentque dum copias Griffini faeroces, constipate militum agmina, splendentia vexilla, Danos bipennibus armatos, Hybernos iacula ferries cuspidibus ferentes conspiciunt. Ipse vero Griffinus proelium primus irruit, non secus ac gigas vel leo cuncto gladio inimicos prosternens, milites suos animose in hostes provocans, et ne terga adversaries darent exhortans. Fit bellum atrox et cruentum in quo ne filius quidem patri pepercit. Clamor militum in caelum usque ascendit: resonare visa est terra fremitu equorum ac peditum: pugnaces voces longe lateque exaudiuntur, strepitus armorum ingens fuit. Tanta strages facta est, dum Griffuni exercitus hostes suos subiugarent, ut sudoris et sanguinis flumina decurrisse putarentur. Tandem Trahaern effuses visceribus transfoditur, et in terram pronus deiectus quasi herbas viventibus carpere dentibus ex armis visus est. Cuius cadaver ut carnem suillam in lardum Gucharki Hybernus sale conducerat; hoc in loco ceciderunt de familia eius equites 25 quasi eum stipantes, alii vero primo agmine multa praeterea millia interficiuntur, reliquorum nonnulli terga verterunt, in fugam se precipitarunt, Griffinus ex consueta vincendi experientia eos per sylvas, valles, palaudes et montes tota nocte, lucente luna, persequitur ut ex tanto numero vix unus aliquis in patriam sit reversus.

Ab hoc bello terribili fortiter per Griffinum confecto, Resus subduxit sese a tutela et societate uni tam illustris nec in eius conspectum se postea. Qua perfidia commotus Griffinus eius ditionem depopulari constituit, quod et factum est. Montes autem in quibus hoc bellum gestum est, incolae montes Carn appellant, quod ibi lapidum ingénues cumulus congestus sit, sub quo thesaurus absconditos olum opinantur. Postquam vero hanc regionem maxima clade depopulationeque funditus devastasset, in Arwistlensem pagum copias duxit, in quo cede et flamma desaeviens, uxoribus virginibusque eorum in captivitatem tractis Trahaerni iniurias rursus in illarum capita persolvit. Postremo in Powisiam se contulit, ubi summa crudelitate in hostes usus est, adeo ut nex ecclesiis perpercerit. Ita tandem inimicis omnibus fuis, terrae eorum in solitudinem redacta, in paternam hereditatem honorifice susceptus, regebat Venedotiaque summa tranquillitate ad aliquod spacium gavisa est.'

**Appendix 2: Text of the Elegy to Trahaearn ap Caradog (reproduced from N.A. Jones, 'The Mynydd Carn Prophecy', *Cambrian Medieval Studies* Vol. 36., 74).**

I pray to the Lord, ruler of the firmament,  
Sovereign who knows deeply of my concern.  
I am deeply concerned,  
About my lord and champion, leader of a host.  
They have not yet come over the sea  
The intractable people of Nanhyfer

(or The intractable people have not yet come over the sea to Nanhyfer)

The Irish, dark devils

Wild (or stealthy) ones, oppressive men.

There will be a battle on Mynydd Carn

And Trahaearn will be killed

And the son of Rhiwallon, ruler of the seas,

From the fight he will not return.

On Thursday in three weeks time

(Wretched night!) You will be killed!