

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).

ENW/NAME	DYDDIAD/ DATE	SIR HANESYDDOL/HI STORIC COUNTY	NPRN	YMCHWIL/RESEARCH
Aberllech	1096	Sir Frycheiniog Brecknockshire	404446	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Gildas Research, 2013) Documentary and historical research (Gildas Research, 2013)
Pont Cychod (Menai ac Ynys Môn) Bridge of Boats (Menai and Anglesey)	1282	Ynys Môn Anglesey	404319	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Chapman, 2013) Documentary and historical research (Chapman, 2013)
Bryn Derwin	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)
Bryn Glas (Pillth)	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) Cloddfa (Archaeoleg Cymru, 2013) Gwaith ymchwil heb fod yn ymyrryd

				<p>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>
Campston Hill	1404	Sir Fynwy Monmouthshire	402328	<p>Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Border Archaeology, 2009)</p> <p>Documentary and historical research (Border Archaeology, 2009)</p>
Cilgerran	1258	Sir Benfro Pembrokeshire	405201	<p>Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Gildas Research, 2013)</p> <p>Documentary and historical research (Gildas Research, 2013)</p>
Coed Llathan	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>
Castell Coety (gwarchae) /Coity Castle (siege)	1404-05	Morgannwg Glamorgan	545701	<p>Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Chapman, 2013)</p> <p>Documentary and historical research (Chapman, 2013)</p>

Coleshill	1157	Sir y Fflint Flintshire	402325	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (2009) Documentary and historical research (2009)
Craig y Dorth	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)
Crug Mawr	1136	Sir Aberteifi Cardiganshire	402323	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Border Archaeology, 2009) Documentary and historical research (Border Archaeology, 2009)
Castell Cymaron (gwarchaeau) / Cymaron Castle (sieges)	1144 1179 1195 1215	Sir Faesyfed Radnorshire	545328	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Gildas Research, 2013) Documentary and historical research (Gildas Research, 2013)
Cymerau	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)

Castell Dinbych (gwarchae)/ Denbigh Castle (siege)	1282	Sir Ddinbych Denbighshire	545687	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Chapman, 2013) Documentary and historical research (Chapman, 2013)
Castell Dinbych (gwarchae)/ Denbigh Castle (siege)	1294-5	Sir Ddinbych Denbighshire	545613	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Chapman, 2013) Documentary and historical research (Chapman, 2013)
Castell Dinbych (gwarchae)/ Denbigh Castle (siege)	1460	Sir Ddinbych Denbighshire	545718	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Chapman, 2013) Documentary and historical research (Chapman, 2013)
Castell Dinbych (gwarchae)/ Denbigh Castle (siege)	1468	Sir Ddinbych Denbighshire	545720	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Chapman, 2013) Documentary and historical research (Chapman, 2013)
Castell Dinbych (gwarchae)/ Denbigh Castle (siege)	1646	Sir Ddinbych Denbighshire	545789	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Chapman, 2013) Documentary and historical research (Chapman, 2013)
Castell Dryslwyn (gwarchae) / Dryslwyn Castle (siege)	1287	Sir Gaerfyrddin Carmarthenshire	545605	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Gildas Research, 2013) Documentary and historical research (Gildas Research, 2013)
Carregwastad - Abergwaun (ymosodiad) / Carregwastad Point – Fishguard (invasion)	1797	Sir Benfro Pembrokeshire	308824	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Border Archaeology, 2009) Documentary and historical research (Border Archaeology, 2009)
Gŵyr/ Gower	1136	Morgannwg	404856	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol

		Glamorgan		(Gildas Research, 2013) Documentary and historical research (Gildas Research, 2013)
Grosmont	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)
Hyddgen	1401	Sir Drefaldwyn Montgomeryshire	402310	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Chapman, 2013) Documentary and historical research (Chapman, 2013)
Pont Irfon (Llanganten) / Irfon Bridge /	1282	Sir Frycheiniog Brecknockshire	403411	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Chapman, 2013) Documentary and historical research (Chapman, 2013)
Cydweli / Kidwelly	1258	Sir Gaerfyrddin Carmarthenshire	404729	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Gildas Research, 2013) Documentary and historical research (Gildas Research, 2013)
Castell Talacharn (gwarchae) / Laugharne Castle (sieges)	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)

Maes Gwenllian	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)
Maes Moydog	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)
Trefaldwyn / Montgomery	1644	Sir Drefaldwyn Montgomeryshire	405168	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Gildas Research, 2013) Documentary and historical research (Gildas Research, 2013)
Mynydd Carn	1081	Sir Benfro Pembrokeshire	300319	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Border Archaeology, 2009) Documentary and historical research (Border Archaeology, 2009)
Castell Newydd Emlyn (gwarchae) / Newcastle Emlyn (siege)	1287-8	Sir Gaerfyrddin Carmarthenshire	545606	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Chapman, 2013) Documentary and historical research (Chapman, 2013)

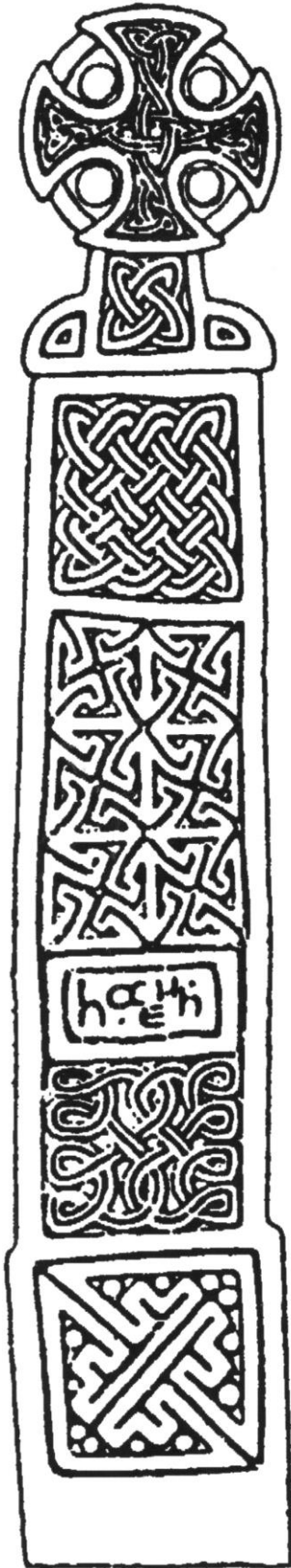
Castell Newydd Emlyn (gwarchae) / Newcastle Emlyn	1645	Sir Gaerfyrddin Carmarthenshire	545768	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Chapman, 2013) Documentary and historical research (Chapman, 2013)
Gwrthryfel y Siartwyr, Casnewydd / Newport Chartist Uprising	1839	Sir Fynwy Monmouthshire	405003	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Border Archaeology, 2009) Documentary and historical research (Border Achaeology, 2009)
Painscastle	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)
Pennal	1472/4	Meirionnydd Merioneth	403495	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Chapman, 2013) Documentary and historical research (Chapman, 2013)
Pentraeth	1170	Ynys Môn Anglesey	404315	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Gildas Research, 2013) Documentary and historical research (Gildas Research, 2013)
Pwllgwdig	1078	Sir Benfro Pembrokeshire	405188	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Gildas Research, 2013)

				Documentary and historical research (Gildas Research, 2013)
Pwll Melyn	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)
Castell Rhaglan (gwarchae) / Raglan Castle (siege)	1646	Sir Fynwy Monmouthshire	545797	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Gildas Research, 2013) Documentary and historical research (Gildas Research, 2013)
Sain Ffagan / St Fagans	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)
Twthill	1461	Sir Gaernarfon Caernarfonshire	403421	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Border Archaeology, 2009) 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:

St Fagans (1648)

(Order Number IJ/017430: November 2009)

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Battle Name: St Fagan's, (8th May, 1648)

Site of Battle

The exact location of the Battle of St Fagan's is uncertain, but appears to have taken place with each side drawn up on either side of the Nant Dowlais, a tributary of the River Ely, with the Parliamentary force with their back to the village of St Fagan's. Some of the fiercest fighting appears to have been fought near or on a bridge which spanned this stream.

1. Summary

Historical Context

The Battle of St Fagan's can be viewed against the backdrop of the Welsh Rising during the Second Civil War of 1642-48, it being the last set-piece defeat for the Royalist forces.¹ The Royalist army intended to march to and then seize Cardiff in the name of the King, and a small Parliamentary force consisting of approximately 3000 men under Colonel Thomas Horton, which had been engaged in an arduous campaign in and around Brecon, marched south in order to stop them.²

In the spring of 1648, several key Parliamentary figures defected and joined the Royalist cause; these included General Laugharne, the victor of Colby Moor, and Colonels Powell and Poyer.³ Poyer in particular had been of great service to Parliament and had, until his defection, held Pembroke Castle in their name.⁴ The reasons for their decision to join the Royalist cause at this late juncture (King Charles was already imprisoned upon the Isle of Wight) could be moral, as it has been suggested that they may have been motivated by discontent at Parliament's actions and intentions towards the King,⁵ although the chief incentive appears to have been provided by Parliament's proposed disbandment of sections of Laugharne's, Powell's and Poyer's troops without pay.⁶ Additionally, Laugharne appears to have been regarded with some suspicion by Parliament, something which may have been either a premonition, or a factor that drove him into the Royalists' arms.⁷

The exact course of events in the immediate build-up to the battle remains relatively unclear. It would appear that the Royalists' uprising was spearheaded by certain prominent members of the Glamorgan gentry (including the Stradling family of St Donat's Castle),⁸ and so it may be reasonable to suppose that the majority of the force under their command was drawn from their estates, as well as forming the base from which the march on Cardiff was

¹ C. Davies, 'They looked at Llandaff: Bishop Hugh Lloyd and the Battle of St Fagan's', *Llandaff Society Occasional Paper 7*, p.9

² P. Gaunt, *A Nation Under Siege: the Civil War in Wales, 1642-48*, p.68

³ C. Davies, 'They looked at Llandaff: Bishop Hugh Lloyd and the Battle of St Fagan's', *Llandaff Society Occasional Paper 7*, p.10

⁴ W. David, 'The Battle of St Fagan's' in *Transactions of the Cardiff Naturalists' Society*, vol. 9, p.29

⁵ C. Davies, 'They looked at Llandaff: Bishop Hugh Lloyd and the Battle of St Fagan's', *Llandaff Society Occasional Paper 7*, p.10

⁶ W. David, 'The Battle of St Fagan's' in *Transactions of the Cardiff Naturalists' Society*, vol. 9, p.29

⁷ D. Webb, *Battle at St Fagan's*, p.14

⁸ C. Davies, 'They looked at Llandaff: Bishop Hugh Lloyd and the Battle of St Fagan's', *Llandaff Society Occasional Paper 7*, p.10

launched.⁹ In addition, the force was to be joined by experienced Royalist troops under the command of Colonels Powell and Poyer, the latter marching from Pembroke Castle.¹⁰

There also appears to have been a familial connection of uncertain importance that cannot be ignored. Both Colonel Poyer and Major-General Laugharne were sons-in-law to Miles Button of Cottrell,¹¹ a local landowner who was also the patron of the neighbouring (to St Fagan's) Parish of St Nicholas, of which Hugh Lloyd was the rector,¹² and who is recorded on the list of captured Royalist officers.¹³

Word of this reached the ears of Colonel Horton who was dealing with another Welsh uprising around Brecon, suffering at the hands of guerrilla tactics designed to deprive him and his large cavalry force of fodder and the tools necessary to maintain his horses, as well as food for his men.¹⁴ Despite the low morale of the troops and sickness to the commander himself, Horton was able to instigate a forced march across the Brecon Beacons and down the Taff Valley, reaching St Fagan's on the 4th May, with Horton setting up his temporary headquarters in a farmhouse called Pentrebanne (NGR ST 1202 7852).¹⁵

The aim of the Parliamentary forces appears to have been to prevent the Royalist forces from reaching their ultimate objective – Cardiff. Scouts sent out that same day alerted the Parliamentarians that they had arrived fortuitously as the Royalists were a mere two miles away.¹⁶ The Royalists were alarmed, particularly as they themselves had just arrived that same day, and appeared to have had the same intention of quartering at St Fagan's, but instead encamped on the Downs at St Nicholas, so close to the Parliamentary camp that Horton and his men could hear the muskets fired in salute as Laugharne reviewed his troops.¹⁷

2. Narrative of Battle

Prelude to Battle

With the enemy within striking distance, Horton appears to have acted promptly; detachments were sent off to secure crossings over the River Ely and the River Llandaff in order to secure his flanks,¹⁸ and an urgent request for reinforcements was sent to Cromwell who was hurrying from Gloucester with detachments of the New Model Army.¹⁹

⁹ Ibid, p.10

¹⁰ W. David, 'The Battle of St Fagan's' in *Transactions of the Cardiff Naturalists' Society*, vol. 9, p.29

¹¹ C. Davies, 'They looked at Llandaff: Bishop Hugh Lloyd and the Battle of St Fagan's', *Llandaff Society Occasional Paper* 7, p.10

¹² Ibid, p.9

¹³ Colonel Thomas Horton to the Earl of Manchester: 8th May, 1648

¹⁴ C. Davies, 'They looked at Llandaff: Bishop Hugh Lloyd and the Battle of St Fagan's', *Llandaff Society Occasional Paper* 7, p.10

¹⁵ Ibid, p.10

¹⁶ Ibid, p.10

¹⁷ Ibid, p.10

¹⁸ D. Webb, *Battle of St Fagan's*, p.11

¹⁹ W. David, 'The Battle of St Fagan's' in *Transactions of the Cardiff Naturalists' Society*, vol. 9, p.31

By contrast, the Royalist commander Laugharne, who had earned a reputation as a daring risk-taker, appears to have been gripped by indecision, apparently retreating westward back into the Vale of Glamorgan, via Llancarvan, Penmark and Fonmon Castle on the 5th May²⁰. In the meantime, Horton appears to have been content to hold his position; the Parliamentarians knew that Laugharne's army had to pass through St Fagan's in order to meet their objective of taking Cardiff, and that every day that the Royalists either delayed or even retreated strengthened their own situation, bringing Cromwell and his reinforcements ever more closer.

The reasons for Laugharne's retreat are unclear. It is possible that Laugharne aimed to identify an alternative crossing point and, therefore, a potential way to bypass Horton's men altogether; additionally, it may be that, realising the majority of his men were both woefully underequipped and untrained, the Royalist commander sought to utilise the small amount of time available to him to attempt to instil some sort of semblance of military order and discipline to them.²¹ For that matter, Laugharne may have attempted some sort of subterfuge; it would appear that, as his official Parliamentary rank of Sergeant-Major General of South Wales had not been rescinded, he may have attempted to order Horton to stand down.²²

Whatever the reasons behind this about-turn, Laugharne eventually seems to have realised the true peril of his predicament (Cromwell was only a two day march away) and, during the night of the 7th May, he marched back to St Nicholas.²³ The Royalist forces are also recorded as having advanced to Peterston;²⁴ if this is correct (there are some inconsistencies in the contemporary accounts), then this may indicate one of the bridging points that Laugharne intended to use in order to cross the Ely.²⁵ Once Horton became aware of this, he appears to have ordered his Cavalry mounts gathered together close at hand, ready for the next day's fighting.²⁶ Local legend suggests that this was in a field to the rear of St Fagan's village leading up to the Pentrebanne ridge; the field is called *Cae Meirch* (lit. 'The Horses' Field').²⁷ However, this may be problematic as it is unlikely that 1500 horses could have been gathered in only one field,²⁸ although it may contain a grain of truth, indicating where the greatest concentration may have been situated. Certainly, the location itself is plausible.

Horton seems to have been aware of the exact nature of the situation and so fully expected the Royalists to attack the next day.²⁹ This could be the result of a victorious leader wishing to be viewed as confident, but it has been suggested that this was because Horton helped engineer the confrontation by leaking information of Cromwell's imminent

²⁰ Colonel Thomas Horton to William Lenthall: 13th May, 1648

²¹ C. Davies, 'They looked at Llandaff: Bishop Hugh Lloyd and the Battle of St Fagan's', *Llandaff Society Occasional Paper* 7, p.10

²² D. Webb, *Battle of St Fagan's*, p.15

²³ Colonel Thomas Horton to William Lenthall: 13th May, 1648

²⁴ Colonel Thomas Horton to Lord Fairfax: 8th May, 1648

²⁵ D. Webb, *Battle of St Fagan's*, p.15

²⁶ Colonel Thomas Horton to William Lenthall: 13th May, 1648

²⁷ W. David, 'The Battle of St Fagan's' in *Transactions of the Cardiff Naturalists' Society*, vol. 9, p.31

²⁸ D. Webb, *Battle of St Fagan's*, p.15

²⁹ Colonel Thomas Horton to William Lenthall: 13th May, 1648

arrival.³⁰ Whether this is true or not would hinge on Horton's faith in the quality of his troops to overcome the disparity in numbers; his overwhelming strength in Cavalry may have buoyed him, as the 3000-4000 'clubmen' would have had little protection against a charge. Additionally, Colonel Okey states that '*in divers ways, we sought an opportunity to fight them, which, until this instant [8th May], we could never doe*'.³¹

It would appear that Horton was content to remain at St Fagan's and await Cromwell's reinforcements before engaging in battle, which allowed Laugharne to take the initiative and mount an attack, perhaps hoping to trap Horton's forces in the village St Fagan's where the superior numbers of the Royalists could have offset the advantage of the Parliamentary forces in terms of training and equipment (in particular, their well-trained cavalry units would have been rendered less effective in the close confines of the village).³² It could therefore be suggested that only the turn of events of the battle (which could be construed as being an effective counter-attack rather than an out and out defensive action) allowed the Parliamentary cavalry to be deployed to such decisive effect.

Narrative of Battle

It is difficult to establish with absolute certainty the exact strategies adopted by both sides on the eve of the battle, just as it is equally difficult to discern the exact narrative of events of the engagement itself. While historians are blessed with the survival of several correspondence accounts from Colonel Horton and one from Colonel Okey, no such documentation exists to offer the Royalist version of events and so counter the natural bias of the former. However, by utilising these accounts, it is possible to tentatively chart the course of the battle.

The Royalist advance began at some time before 7 o'clock in the morning (Okey suggests it was 8 o'clock)³³ on Monday the 8th May, at which time Parliamentary scouts spotted their enemy a mile and half away marching towards St Fagan's.³⁴ Horton then ordered his men to draw up a line of battle, with him personally commanding the infantry in the centre while '*Major Bethel commanded the horse on the right wing, Major Barton on the left, and Colonel Okey and his major with the dragoons on both wings with the horse*';³⁵ to their front was deployed a 'Forlorn Hope' [*a band of soldiers picked to begin an attack, many of whom would not survive*]³⁶ of 30 Heavy Cavalry and 20 Dragoons under the command of Lieutenant Godfrey.³⁷

However, there has been some doubt cast upon the ability of the Parliamentary army to draw up so many men so quickly, with such little notice;³⁸ this is backed up by the apparent

³⁰ C. Davies, 'They looked at Llandaff: Bishop Hugh Lloyd and the Battle of St Fagan's', *Llandaff Society Occasional Paper* 7, p.11

³¹ Colonel Okey's Account: 8th May, 1648

³² D. Webb, *Battle of St Fagan's*, p.15

³³ Colonel Okey's Account: 8th May, 1648

³⁴ Colonel Thomas Horton to William Lenthall: 13th May, 1648

³⁵ *Ibid*

³⁶ J. Pearsall, *Concise Oxford English Dictionary*, p.556

³⁷ Colonel Thomas Horton to William Lenthall: 13th May, 1648

³⁸ D. Webb, *Battle of St Fagan's*, p.18

speed of the Royalist advance, which (according to Colonel Okey) appears to have caught the Parliamentarians by surprise.³⁹ However, Okey might seek to heighten the drama of the situation and, if the attack was indeed expected, there is little reason to suppose that the Parliamentary forces were not in some state of readiness. Furthermore, dawn and early morning attacks were relatively commonplace in 17th century warfare and it would seem that Horton was aware that the Royalists had returned on the 7th May, so it is possible that the surprise of the Royalist attack might be overstated.

Due to the lack of contemporary Royalist sources, the deployment of their army is impossible to state as fact; rather, it is possible to document how and where (and, to a lesser degree, when) the Parliamentary forces engaged the elements of the Royalist army. It would appear that the Royalist cavalry was positioned to the rear of their infantry, who were presumably drawn up in a line, in order to, at best, support them in their attack or, at worst, to prevent their rout.⁴⁰ To the front of their position, the Royalists also had their own 'Forlorn Hope', consisting of '*a strong forlorn of foot and about six pickering horse [cavalrymen fighting as individuals sent out in order to provoke combat]*'.⁴¹ Okey suggests that the total number was about 500.⁴²

While Horton's account (as might be expected) gives the impression of a clear and decisive strategy on his part, Okey's version suggests a somewhat different picture; upon the first encounter with the Royalists, Okey writes that '*wee, seeing his [the enemy's] numbers, and hee being upon us before we were well aware of him, quitted our present station which was at St Fagans. The enemy drew into a place of our guard, but wee, being loth to retreat upon a little hill near St Fagans, made good our ground, drew up our armie, and faced the enemy*'.⁴³ From this, it would appear that not only was Horton's strategy dictated to him by the Royalists' advance, but that he appears to have hesitated and even contemplated a temporary retreat before deciding to stand and fight.

The engagement appears to have begun when the Royalists sent forward their 'Forlorn Hope', which was met by their Parliamentary counterpart, who drove their opponents back, if not actually routing them;⁴⁴ this seems to have precipitated a general advance of the Parliamentary army.⁴⁵ It would seem that the advance of the Royalist 'Forlorn Hope' was intended as a screening manoeuvre intended to buy time for the rest of the army to cross the bridge over the Nant Dowlais. Elements of the main body of infantry must have achieved this, and became engaged with the Parliamentary cavalry (as shall be seen), although it would seem that the majority of the Royalist infantry are presumed not to have crossed the bridge.

Capitalising on the victory of the Parliamentary 'Forlorn Hope', Colonel Okey, who seems to have been positioned on the right,⁴⁶ although his men were positioned on both flanks,

³⁹ Colonel Okey's Account: 8th May, 1648

⁴⁰ Colonel Thomas Horton to William Lenthall: 13th May, 1648

⁴¹ Ibid

⁴² Colonel Okey's Account: 8th May, 1648

⁴³ Ibid

⁴⁴ Colonel Thomas Horton to William Lenthall: 13th May, 1648

⁴⁵ Ibid

⁴⁶ Colonel Okey's Account: 8th May, 1648

proceeded with his dragoons and the '200 firelocks' under Captain Garland from the right flank to support Lieutenant Godfrey, who had seen off the Royalist 'Forlorn Hope' and had entered into fighting with of the forward elements of the Royalist army.⁴⁷ It would seem that the battle raged from hedgerow to hedgerow and was primarily a cavalry action.⁴⁸ However, this in itself presented problems; Horton records that on two occasions the mixed Heavy Cavalry and Dragoon force, although supported by the '200 firelocks' and having routed their immediate opponents, had to halt and '*were constrained to stand the enemy's shot for some time before the foot (though they made great haste) could come up to them*'.⁴⁹ This undoubtedly resulted in many of the recorded casualties to the mounts.⁵⁰ The second occasion when the cavalry force halted was the more key moment, as the Royalists had been driven back over the bridge spanning the Nant Dowlais.⁵¹

From the Parliamentary version of events, it would now appear that the Royalists had lost the initiative. It would seem that, up until that point, the Royalists had been pouring as many of their infantry forward in support of their attack as possible, and that once defeated they were forced onto the defensive. However, later tradition mentions a possible Royalist flank attack by cavalry under Colonel Butler, who appear to have occupied the village of St Fagan's unopposed, but played no part in the actual battle itself;⁵² this is, however, not recorded in any of the contemporary (Parliamentary) sources, which may have chosen to ignore this damning fact in favour of presenting an unblemished military victory by competent commanders, rather than one that saw their rear threatened and their quarters taken.⁵³ On balance, it is unlikely that such an attack did take place, as it is unlikely that an experienced commander like Horton would have allowed such a potentially devastating flank attack to succeed unopposed, or that a cavalry force that arrived to the rear of the already engaged Parliamentary forces would not have charged them.

Okey and his men appear to have waited at the Bridge over the Nant Dowlais until the infantry of the 1st Division under Lieutenant Colonel Read arrived in their support, and then appeared to have held the enemy's attention,⁵⁴ the infantry presumably engaging them in a fire-fight.⁵⁵ The Royalists appear to have fallen back and begun to hold the bridge in expectation of a main Parliamentarian offensive which is unlikely to have ever come; if the Parliamentarians had attempted to cross the bridge, their casualties would have much far higher than those that were actually incurred. With the Royalists focussed on the bridge, the full Parliamentarian counterattack began in earnest.

The Parliamentarians proceeded to launch two flanking attacks, the first on the Royalists right by infantry of the 2nd Division under Major Wade and supported by the cavalry of the Parliamentary left wing under Major Barton, while the second was undertaken by the remaining cavalry and dragoons of the Parliamentary right flank on the Royalists' left and on

⁴⁷ Colonel Thomas Horton to William Lenthall: 13th May, 1648

⁴⁸ Ibid

⁴⁹ Ibid

⁵⁰ Colonel Thomas Horton to the Earl of Manchester: 8th May, 1648

⁵¹ Colonel Thomas Horton to William Lenthall: 13th May, 1648

⁵² P. Gaunt, *A Nation Under Siege: the Civil War in Wales, 1642-48*, p.68

⁵³ D. Webb, *Battle of St Fagan's*, p.13

⁵⁴ Colonel Thomas Horton to William Lenthall: 13th May, 1648

⁵⁵ D. Webb, *Battle of St Fagan's*, p.20

their rear, both of which presumably had to cross the Nant Dowlais.⁵⁶ Interestingly, their crossing does not seem to have been opposed, which suggests that, by this stage, Laugharne may have had only a tentative hold on his army and so chose to keep them close to his central headquarters; however, Major Wade's infantry were charged by a small group of Royalist cavalry, but were repulsed.⁵⁷ It has been suggested that this group of cavalry, which are recorded as being no greater than 60 men,⁵⁸ may have been led by Laugharne himself, which, if true, may be an indicator of the dire straits that he found himself in.⁵⁹

The advance of the Parliamentary right flank would have effectively sealed off all avenue of escape for the Royalist army, and so, once it became clear that they were about to be completely encircled, the Royalists broke and ran.⁶⁰ The Parliamentary cavalry moved to run down and capture as many of the fugitives as they could. The whole battle lasted no more than two hours.⁶¹

Aftermath

The Royalist army in full flight, the Parliamentary cavalry had an easy and unopposed job in rounding up the prisoners. Of the 8000 men estimated to have begun the battle, about 3000 ordinary soldiers and upwards of 400 officers were taken prisoner.⁶² In addition to this, over 2000 firearms as well as other weapons were taken.⁶³ As if this wasn't enough of an indication of the total and utter rout that the Royalists were put to, almost all (if not all) their colours were taken.⁶⁴

Among the officers taken were Laugharne, Powell and Poyer; they were taken to the Tower of London and tried for Treason, and all three were condemned to death, although only Poyer was executed with the other two sentenced to exile.⁶⁵ He was executed by firing squad in the Piazza of Covent Garden on the 21st April, 1649.⁶⁶ It has been suggested that the prisoners (at least the officers) were held at Llandaff Cathedral after the battle, from where ten of the most senior, including Major General Stradling, were taken aboard Admiral Crowther's flagship, the *Bonaventure*, standing at anchor at Cardiff and tried by court-martial;⁶⁷ they were all sentenced to death by firing squad, although only three suffered this fate, with one having his sentence commuted to hanging, Stradling imprisoned at Windsor Castle (where he died) and the others being exiled.⁶⁸

For many of the ordinary combatants, their fate was rather merciful. The majority of the 4000 'clubmen' appear to have been released as soon as they were caught, presumably on

⁵⁶ Colonel Thomas Horton to William Lenthall: 13th May, 1648

⁵⁷ Ibid

⁵⁸ Ibid

⁵⁹ D. Webb, *Battle of St Fagan's*, p.21

⁶⁰ Colonel Thomas Horton to William Lenthall: 13th May, 1648

⁶¹ Colonel Thomas Horton to the Earl of Manchester: 8th May, 1648

⁶² Colonel Thomas Horton to Lord Fairfax: 8th May, 1648

⁶³ Colonel Thomas Horton to William Lenthall: 13th May, 1648

⁶⁴ Ibid

⁶⁵ D. Webb, *Battle of St Fagan's*, p.25

⁶⁶ Ibid, p.25

⁶⁷ W. David, 'The Battle of St Fagan's' in *Transactions of the Cardiff Naturalists' Society*, vol. 9, p.35

⁶⁸ Ibid, p.35

oath not to fight against Parliament again, while the ordinary soldiers, some of whom may even have previously fought on Parliament's side under Colonels Powell and Poyer, were released not long after, having taken a similar oath.⁶⁹ However, it would appear that perhaps as many as 1000 of these soldiers were sent abroad in order to fight for King Charles' nephew, Prince Philip, in the service of Venice,⁷⁰ while 240 men were sent to Barbados.⁷¹

Troops and Combatants

The Parliamentary forces under Colonel Horton appear to have been a cohesive force of experienced soldiers under a leader with whom they were familiar; by contrast, the Royalist forces seem to have consisted of disparate elements under Major-General Rowland Laugharne, a new (but experienced) commander who had recently switched sides in their favour.⁷² It is unclear as to how this defector was received or treated by the officers (and men) under his command.⁷³

However, Laugharne was not the only high-profile Parliamentarian (formerly, Laugharne had been Sergeant-Major General for all Parliamentary forces in South Wales)⁷⁴ to defect to the Royalist cause and to fight in this battle; Colonels Powell and Poyer, while stationed in Pembrokeshire, mutinied with their troops after Parliament attempted to disband them without paying their outstanding arrears, which drove them to join the Royalists.⁷⁵

The Royalist force appears to have numbered 8000 men according to the officers taken by the Parliamentarians after the battle;⁷⁶ however, it should be taken into account that this figure, while apparently suggested by captured Royalist officers, appears in Parliamentary official correspondence (there are no contemporary Royalist sources) in the aftermath of a great victory, when it may be in the interests of the victors to exaggerate.⁷⁷ Additionally, of this force, the majority (approximately 3000-4000 men) appear to have been locally drawn 'clubmen',⁷⁸ men armed with irregular weaponry, such as Welsh bills (a farming implement similar to a scythe) and clubs.⁷⁹ Thomas Horton suggests that the Royalist army included 2500 musketeers and about 500 cavalry (although it would appear that no more than 60 were ever used as a unit);⁸⁰ from the original 8000 men, if this figure is to be believed, this would leave 1000-2000 conventional foot, which could be suggested to have been pikemen.⁸¹ It is possible that the 2500 musketeers represent at least some of the forces that

⁶⁹ D. Webb, *Battle of St Fagan's*, p.24

⁷⁰ C. F. Shepherd, *Annals of St Fagan's*, p.22

⁷¹ D. Webb, *Battle of St Fagan's*, p.24

⁷² C. F. Shepherd, *Annals of St Fagan's*, p.17

⁷³ D. Webb, *Battle of St Fagan's*, p.15

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, p.14

⁷⁵ C. Davies, 'They looked at Llandaff: Bishop Hugh Lloyd and the Battle of St Fagan's', *Llandaff Society Occasional Paper 7*, p.10

⁷⁶ Colonel Thomas Horton to Lord Fairfax: 8th May, 1648

⁷⁷ D. Webb, *Battle of St Fagan's*, 12

⁷⁸ C. Davies, 'They looked at Llandaff: Bishop Hugh Lloyd and the Battle of St Fagan's', *Llandaff Society Occasional Paper 7*, p.10

⁷⁹ D. Webb, *Battle of St Fagan's*, p.12

⁸⁰ Colonel Thomas Horton to Lord Fairfax: 8th May, 1648

⁸¹ D. Webb, *Battle of St Fagan's*, p.12

defected along with Powell and Poyer,⁸² although Powell (and therefore his men) may not have been present.⁸³

The Parliamentarian army appears to have been more battle-hardened and experienced than its Royalist counterpart, as the soldiers had recently returned from a campaign around Brecon and some of them may have previously fought in Cromwell's New Model Army.⁸⁴ At the outset, this force appears to have numbered approximately 3250 men;⁸⁵ however, when the inevitable loss of men to the rigours of an arduous campaign are taken into account along with those detachments needed to hold the Ely and Llandaff bridges, it may be that Horton could only muster c.2500 men.⁸⁶

Of the original c. 3250 men, it would appear that Horton's men numbered (approximately) 600 Dragoons (at this period, it seems that a Dragoon was primarily a mounted infantryman, who could also act as both a scout and light cavalry), 900 Heavy Cavalry and 1200 foot, of whom 200 seemed to have formed a separate detachment of musketmen, or could have been dismounted dragoons (they also appear to have fought under the direct command of Okey, the Commander of the Parliamentary Dragoons);⁸⁷ the implication of this is unclear, as the other 800 may also have been equipped with muskets, or could have been pikemen. Additionally, it is probable that this number would have included both. To this figure can be added a number of Welsh Parliamentary troops that joined with their predominantly English allies; these appear to have included four troops of Heavy Cavalry (250 men), a company of 100 Dragoons, two companies of foot (200 men) and a similar number of soldiers of the Cardiff garrison, who may or may not have actually been called upon.⁸⁸

At first glance, the armies appear vastly disproportionate, with maybe 2500 Parliamentarians opposed by approximately 8000 Royalists. However, when comparing the actual figures of the troops, a different picture emerges. In terms of conventional foot, the Parliamentarians numbered at most 1200 men, which may have been matched by as many as 3500-4500 Royalists. However, in terms of cavalry, the Parliamentary army vastly outweighed the Royalists, with 900 Heavy Cavalry and 600 Dragoons versus 500 Royalist Horse (the exact classes present are not recorded).⁸⁹ The remainder of the Royalist force appear to have been the 'clubmen', whose morale and training appear to have been inadequate if not non-existent; this is suggested by the deployment of the Royalist cavalry to the rear of the main infantry body in order to 'keep up their foot'.⁹⁰ Indeed, the Parliamentary Cavalry advantage was only increased by the Royalists never deploying more

⁸² C. Davies, 'They looked at Llandaff: Bishop Hugh Lloyd and the Battle of St Fagan's', *Llandaff Society Occasional Paper 7*, p.10

⁸³ D. Webb, *Battle of St Fagan's*, p.12

⁸⁴ C. Davies, 'They looked at Llandaff: Bishop Hugh Lloyd and the Battle of St Fagan's', *Llandaff Society Occasional Paper 7*, p.10

⁸⁵ D. Webb, *Battle of St Fagan's*, p.11

⁸⁶ *Ibid*, p.11

⁸⁷ *Ibid*, p.10

⁸⁸ *Ibid*, p.11

⁸⁹ Colonel Thomas Horton to William Lenthall: 13th May, 1648

⁹⁰ *Ibid*

than 60 men as a unit throughout the whole course of the battle.⁹¹ There do not appear to have been any artillery deployed on either side.⁹²

Armaments and Uniform

The conventional foot on both sides would have been armed and equipped in a similar fashion. The musketeers would have been equipped with matchlock, smoothbore muskets, while the rest of the (regular) foot would have been armed with pikes of indeterminate length; it is possible that they could have been anywhere from three to six metres in length. The 'clubmen' were armed with an assortment of weapons, such as Welsh Bills and clubs.⁹³ Infantry of this period, outside of the New Model Army, did not wear a uniform, and so a Parliamentary watchword of '*God is our strength*' was appointed in order to help distinguish friend from foe.⁹⁴ Additionally, the officers wore orange scarves.⁹⁵ By contrast, the Royalist soldiery had no distinguishing identifiable features, but the officers appear to have worn a blue badge of the crown and rose (playing on the initials of *Carolus Rex*) with the motto '*I long to see His Majestie*'.⁹⁶

The Dragoons were probably equipped with snaphances, a shorter and lighter firearm than the infantry matchlock (which required a stand to lean the weapon on when firing), and are unlikely to have been issued with uniforms. However, there is a possibility that Colonel Okey may have been an officer of the New Model Army, in which case his Dragoons would have worn red musketeers' uniforms. The Parliamentary Heavy Cavalry may have been equipped in a similar fashion to the 'Ironsides' of Cromwell and so may have worn uniform leather buff jackets and standardised armour of a cuirass and back-plate and helmet.⁹⁷ Specifically, Horton and his Regiment were members of the New Model Army.⁹⁸ Royalist Cavalry were typically comprised of the local gentry and would have been armed with whatever the rider could afford or owned; as such, there would have been no standardisation.

The presence (or lack of) artillery at this battle is problematic; on the one hand, a number of small cannonballs have been discovered by local farmers in the course of ploughing,⁹⁹ which undoubtedly suggests their presence, while, on the other hand, the documentary evidence makes no mention of any artillery of any kind. Webb offers a possible solution; he suggests that small artillery-pieces may have been attached to every regiment as a matter of course and were considered so commonplace as not to merit mention.¹⁰⁰ However, while attractive, this remains conjecture.

Casualties

⁹¹ Ibid

⁹² D. Webb, *Battle of St Fagan's*, p.13

⁹³ C. Davies, 'They looked at Llandaff: Bishop Hugh Lloyd and the Battle of St Fagan's', *Llandaff Society Occasional Paper* 7, p.10

⁹⁴ Ibid, p.10

⁹⁵ Ibid, p.10

⁹⁶ W. David, 'The Battle of St Fagan's' in *Transactions of the Cardiff Naturalists' Society*, vol. 9, p.30

⁹⁷ C. Davies, 'They looked at Llandaff: Bishop Hugh Lloyd and the Battle of St Fagan's', *Llandaff Society Occasional Paper* 7, p.10

⁹⁸ D. Webb, *Battle of St Fagan's*, p.9

⁹⁹ W. David, 'The Battle of St Fagan's' in *Transactions of the Cardiff Naturalists' Society*, vol. 9, p.37

¹⁰⁰ D. Webb, *Battle of St Fagan's*, p.13

Despite this being a set-piece battle (in some senses), the number of casualties on both sides appears to have been relatively minor. On the Parliamentary side, no officers were killed and a small number of soldiers killed;¹⁰¹ however, the horses of the cavalry were not so lucky and suffered a much higher casualty rate.¹⁰² Okey mentions that, while no Parliamentary officers were wounded, '*Capt. Nicholets and Col. Okey were both shot through theirs hats, but free from any other harm*'.¹⁰³ The exact number of Parliamentary dead is not recorded.

The primary sources do not specifically mention the exact number of Royalist dead, although a fair estimate appears to be approximately 200, not counting the wounded.¹⁰⁴ Okey records that a number of officers and Royalists of rank were killed, but gives no specific number, perhaps unsurprising when it is considered that he writes from the field of battle when such information may not have been collected.¹⁰⁵ It would seem that, when the list of those captured is consulted, a very high proportion of Royalist officers were captured or killed, which may tally with the narrative of the battle; in an attempt to halt the routing troops, the officers may have exposed themselves to more danger than they might otherwise.¹⁰⁶

While the numbers of dead are relatively slim, the quantity of prisoners and equipment taken eclipses this. Horton states that '*we took up the day we fought about 2000 firearms, with pikes, welsh bills, and other weapons great store, ten barrels of powder, and all the rest of their ammunition in the field, and most if not all their colours. The number of prisoners that are taken are about 3000*'.¹⁰⁷ The officers that were captured numbered well in excess of 400.¹⁰⁸

3. Assessment

Battle Location

While the exact location of the battle is not certain, and is not mentioned explicitly by any of the primary sources, there are a number of landmarks which were key to the course and out-come of the battle which can be identified. However, the land has now been much altered by subsequent agriculture and associated landscaping activity; consequently many of these landmarks are no longer visible. For example, the Nant Dowlais is now culverted and flows underground, and the coherence of the landscape has been further disrupted by the construction of the GWR railway line in the mid 19th century and a modern dual carriageway (A4232).

¹⁰¹ Colonel Thomas Horton to Lord Fairfax: 8th May, 1648

¹⁰² Ibid

¹⁰³ Okey's Account: 8th May, 1648

¹⁰⁴ D. Webb, *Battle of St Fagan's*, p.24

¹⁰⁵ Okey's Account: 8th May, 1648

¹⁰⁶ D. Webb, *Battle of St Fagan's*, p.22

¹⁰⁷ Colonel Thomas Horton to William Lenthall: 13th May, 1648

¹⁰⁸ Colonel Thomas Horton to Lord Fairfax: 8th May, 1648

It seems clear that both armies deployed on either side of a stream or river, which separated St Fagan's from St Brides and St Nicholas, as well as Peterston; it is with a degree of confidence that this stream is identified as the Nant Dowlais. It is possible that the existing bridge across the Nant Dowlais to the E of St Bride's occupies the same location as the bridge that was contested in the battle. Okey also mentions that the Parliamentary forces initially deployed themselves on a small hill outside St Fagan's,¹⁰⁹ which Webb identifies as being a small rise locally known as Mount Pleasant.¹¹⁰ Presumably, on the bank and slope on the opposite side of the river, nearer the bridge, the Royalist forces drew up.

There is another possible location for the battle further up the Nant Dowlais nearer Stockland Farm, which has been considered by some historians. However, it is unlikely that the numbers that comprised both the Royalist and Parliamentary forces could have been deployed in this area, moreover the few topographical details mentioned in Horton's and Okey's accounts do not appear to correspond with this location.¹¹¹ An alternative site has been suggested further to the S along the banks of the Ely, but, while it is a better fit in terms of topography, it would seem that the River Ely was in flood during this period, making it impossible for any sizeable force to operate.¹¹²

The 1st edition of the 6 inch and the 25 inch Ordnance Survey maps give the site of the battle as being immediately to the SW of Tre-goch-gwaed (Tregoch), with the Nant Dowlais to the W, and the bridge that crosses it, leading to St Brides, lying to the WNW. This location is matched by the 2nd and 3rd edition 6 inch and 25 inch maps, the only detail changing being the altering of the name of Tre-goch-gwaed to Tregochas.

Horton's and Okey's accounts present no direct evidence for there being any heavy fighting around Tregoch, and the St Fagan's tithe apportionment does not contain any further place-name evidence associated with the battle in this location, but the proximity to the bridge to the NW suggests that it is not unreasonable to suppose that there could have been fighting in the immediate locality. Furthermore, the place name Tregoch-gwaed, literally translated as 'blood red house' could well suggest a possible association with the events of the battle, although the source for this traditional attribution remains uncertain.¹¹³

Discussion of Primary Sources

It is unfortunate that there are no Royalist contemporary accounts of the battle. However, there are a total of four first-hand Parliamentary accounts of the battle, three by Colonel Horton, a New Model Army officer whose career appears to have begun at the very outset of the Civil War, when he fought as a Cornet in Sir Arthur Heselrige's Regiment of fully-armoured Curassiers, nicknamed 'Lobsters', after which (at Naseby) he fought as a Major in Colonel Butler's Regiment of Horse before (in 1647) becoming Colonel of that Regiment,¹¹⁴ and another by Colonel Okey, another senior Parliamentary officer, who appears also to have served as a Major under Sir Arthur Heselrige before being appointed as a Colonel of a

¹⁰⁹ Colonel Okey's Account: 8th May, 1648

¹¹⁰ D. Webb, *Battle of St Fagan's*, p.1

¹¹¹ *Ibid*, p.1

¹¹² *Ibid*, p.1

¹¹³ W. David, 'The Battle of St Fagan's' in *Transactions of the Cardiff Naturalists' Society*, vol. 9, p.36

¹¹⁴ D. Webb, *Battle of St Fagan's*, p.9

Dragoons Regiment (for which he should have a specialisation in commanding) of the New Model Army.¹¹⁵ Three of these sources (Okey's Account and two letters from Horton to Lord Fairfax and the Earl of Manchester) are ostensibly written on the same day as the victory.

The principal and most influential primary source, however, is a third account by Horton, written on the 13th May (five days after the battle) to William Lenthall, the Speaker of the House of Commons. It gives a detailed chronological account of the battle although it omits certain key details.

Of similar importance is the Colonel Okey's Account, written to a friend in London on the day of the battle. Its main importance lies in providing a different but complimentary version of events to Horton's in his letter to Lenthall, but equally it also gives differing and at times contradictory information about the *minutiae* of the battle. The bias of the account should also be noted.

The two other accounts of Colonel Horton's, to the Earl of Manchester (the Speaker of the House of Lords) and to Lord Fairfax, provide briefer descriptions than that contained in the letter to Lenthall, or in Okey's account, but both have the benefit of being written on the same day as the victory, providing an immediate insight into the aftermath of the battle. These accounts, on account of their brevity, are not as crucial as the letter to Lenthall, but appear to corroborate the information provided in the later account.

The account of Edmund Ludlow, a senior Parliamentary officer (and regicide) with an extensive military record who eventually rose to the rank of Lieutenant-General of Horse and (overall) second-in-command of all forces in Ireland, and whose work was published posthumously (possibly in the early 18th century) and heavily based upon his autobiography entitled *A Voyce from the Watch Tower* written while in exile in the late 17th century, is interesting in that it offers an alternative, but still Parliamentary version of events, but it is of lesser interest in that Ludlow, though a Parliamentary commander, was not present at the battle and ultimately it is likely that he would have derived his information from Horton or Okey.

Discussion of Secondary Sources

The most informative and descriptive modern account of the battle is that of D. Webb, which offers an insightful commentary and extensive narrative interwoven with direct reference and quotation of the primary sources. Another recent account is contained in C. Davies's 1992 paper entitled 'They looked at Llandaff: Bishop Hugh Lloyd and the Battle of St Fagan's', which provides useful information on the battle, although its main focus is on the role played by Hugh Lloyd, the rector of the parish of St Nicholas and later the Bishop of Llandaff. Older antiquarian works, specifically the article by W. David in 1877 and by J. Mullin in 1899, provide some information not contained in the more modern scholarly works, in particular the suggestion that a tumulus located to the NE of St-y-Nyll (a short

¹¹⁵ P. Gaunt, *A Nation Under Siege: the Civil War in Wales, 1642-48*, p.69

distance to the W of the presumed battlefield) might possibly be associated with the events of the battle.¹¹⁶

Archaeology and Historic Terrain Assessment

The discussion of the location of the battlefield, and a wider consultation of the primary and secondary sources, highlights some interesting possibilities for historical and archaeologically significant terrain. Tregoch in particular merits further attention in order to ascertain whether it is likely that this was the scene of some intense fighting, or whether the house-name is merely a compelling, but inaccurate, reflection of a local tradition relating to the battle.

From the primary sources, it would appear that some of the most heavy and prolonged fighting occurred in the Parliamentary cavalry counterattack starting from a position near Mount Pleasant (possibly where the majority of the Parliamentary army was drawn up) and culminating at the bridge over the Nant Dowlais, to the NW of Tregoch; this area could be investigated in order to ascertain the likelihood of any battlefield artefacts. However, it is unlikely that this will produce much as the fighting was mostly fluid and mobile, although there may have been fiercer combat (possibly between the infantry) at the bridge itself, and there has been little in the way of artefacts recovered so far.¹¹⁷

As the army appears to have dispersed in a state of utter rout, it would seem that the pursuit would have been spread over a very large area; indeed, Horton himself suggests that the cavalry ranged over 8 miles.¹¹⁸ However, due to the extraordinarily large number of prisoners taken, it may be that many were caught by the enveloping cavalry close to the point at which they broke and fled. Therefore, the area around the Royalist-held part of the bridge should be examined in order to identify whether any equipment discarded by the soldiers in their flight awaits discovery. However, the battle site is located near to several villages (St Bride's, St Fagan's, St Nicholas, to name a few) so it is likely that many of the dead and much of the battlefield might have been looted by the local farmers and villagers, if not by the Parliamentarians themselves.

In addition to a number of possible locations where the principal events of the engagement took place, there are a number of additional sites that have been traditionally associated with the battle. Colonel Horton records that he took the precaution of gathering in all his horses in preparation for the coming battle,¹¹⁹ which was located, according to local tradition, in a field to the rear of the present rectory house in St Fagan's, marked on the 1839 tithe apportionment as *Cae Meirch*, or the 'Field of the Horse/War-horses'.¹²⁰

Additionally, there is mention of a tumulus investigated by the local antiquarian W. David in 1872 to the NE of St-y-Nyll where evidence of human remains was identified, which was

¹¹⁶ Ibid, p.36-7

¹¹⁷ D. Webb, *Battle of St Fagan's*, p.1

¹¹⁸ Colonel Thomas Horton to William Lenthall: 13th May, 1648

¹¹⁹ Ibid

¹²⁰ W. David, 'The Battle of St Fagan's' in *Transactions of the Cardiff Naturalists' Society*, vol. 9, p.31

suggested as possibly representing the burial of certain individuals killed during the battle.¹²¹ It is unclear whether the tumulus investigated by David is identifiable with the barrow mound investigated by Savory in 1958 (at NGR ST 1008 7829) where cremated human remains and evidence of several huts were identified, associated with an occupation layer containing animal bones, flints and pottery.¹²²

In the general area of the potential battlefield site, the predominant soil type consists of typical brown earths of the WICK 1 series (541r) consisting of deep well-drained, coarse, loamy and sandy soils locally over gravel, with some similar soils affected by groundwater and the slight risk of water-erosion. The underlying solid geology comprises glaciofluvial or river terrace drift.¹²³ In terms of acidity/alkalinity such soils are neutral to basic (pH 5.5-7). If well-drained, as above, then preservation of bone and charcoal could be anticipated; wood will only survive in waterlogged conditions (together with a range of environmental indicators, such as fruits/seeds, molluscs and pollen/spores), while charcoal and other charred plant macrofossils may be present in intermittently wet conditions. Inorganic material is likely to survive.

Assessment of the Historic Significance of the Battle

The significance of this battle has somewhat been overlooked by many historians, as it effectively signalled the end of any realistic Royalist attempts to reinstate the full authority of Charles I. Had there been a Royalist victory, Laugharne's army would have had a clear march to Cardiff, where the small Parliamentary garrison would have had little choice to surrender, delivering a bitter blow to Parliamentary intentions in Wales. However, it should be noted that, by this stage, Charles I was already imprisoned on the Isle of Wight, but, at the very least,¹²⁴ it would have increased the King's bargaining power.

The defeat at St Fagan's effectively destroyed the last remaining field-army available to the Royalists in Wales, as well as depriving them of experienced commanders like Powell and Poyer, as well as Laugharne himself, who had previously won the (Parliamentary) victory of Colby Moor. The remaining leaders fled to Royalist strongholds like Chepstow and Pembroke, which the Parliamentary forces took with varying degrees of difficulty.¹²⁵ There was, however, no longer any field-army to stop them.

With Wales fully subdued, after the fall of the aforementioned strongholds, the main Parliamentary army under Cromwell (who took Pembroke himself) was able to march to meet and subsequently defeat a Royalist Scottish army at Preston, which spelt the definite end to Charles I's reign.

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¹²³ Silsoe, *Soil Survey of England and Wales*

¹²⁴ C. Davies, 'They looked at Llandaff: Bishop Hugh Lloyd and the Battle of St Fagan's', *Llandaff Society Occasional Paper 7*, p.9

¹²⁵ D. Webb, *Battle of St Fagan's*, p.24

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