

Shrewsbury, encountering no resistance.⁸ Only one medieval source states that Llewelyn then proceeded to take the castle of Montgomery before moving on to *Kamhawn* (usually assumed to be Cymaron).⁹

2.2 Sieges

1144

The *Brutiau* simply note that the castle was repaired, and that Maelienydd was subjugated, suggesting some sort of conflict occurred in the area, but not necessarily at Cymaron itself. There is no direct evidence that a siege took place.

1179

The only evidence for a possible siege in this year is a note of the repair of the castle in the Pipe Rolls, probably when it passed into the hands of Ralph le Poer, following the imprisonment of Roger Mortimer. There is no direct evidence of a siege taking place at the castle of Cymaron.

1195

The Pipe Rolls show that Roger had the support of the king in his attempt to conquer Maelienydd in 1195,¹⁰ with the payment of £20 to repair the castle and 30 marks for provisions at Cymaron. The Pipe Rolls also note that the Abbot of Pershore was fined for ‘not providing his knights to the army of Cymaron’, suggesting that a large army was gathered there. As Cymaron is the only site mentioned in conjunction with this campaign in both the *Brutiau* and the Pipe rolls it was almost certainly the main focus for military action. The sons of Cadwallon, who presumably were holding the site up until that point, were expelled from the Castle, although whether this was by a siege or through negotiation is unknown, the site of a large army may have aided any negotiations. This year has the best evidence for a siege to have taken place.

1215

The single reference to Llywelyn ap Iorwerth taking the castle of *Kamhawn* (usually interpreted as Cymaron) gives no details as to how that may have happened. A siege is possible, but not certain.

2.3 Details of Troops and Casualties

1144

No conflict at the actual castle is noted in the sources, only that it was repaired. If the Welsh had taken the castle at an earlier date, no evidence survives to prove this.

1179

No siege is recorded; the only conflict between Roger de Mortimer and the Welsh involves the killing of Cadwallon, by forces loyal to Roger, whilst he was under the king’s peace. The Anglo-Norman *Chronicle of Wigmore Abbey* contains an interesting note about thirteen Welshmen imprisoned in the castle of Wigmore following the death of Cadwallon, presumably some of Cadwallon’s men. This information does not appear elsewhere.

⁸ Thomas Jones, (trans.), *Brut Y Tywysogyon Peniarth MS 20 version* (Cardiff, 1955), p. 90.

⁹ Thomas Jones (ed.), *Cronica De Wallia* (1946), p. 9.

¹⁰ J. J. Crump, ‘Mortimers and the Making of the March’, *Thirteenth Century England*, 6 (Woodbridge, 1997), 119–20.

1195

The reference in the Pipe Rolls to the abbot of Pershore not supplying his knights to the army of Cymaron, and the chronicle references to Roger invading Maelienydd with a host, suggests a considerable force was mustered for this campaign. The actual number and composition of these forces is unknown and no casualties are mentioned.

1215

The sole medieval source provides no details as to the forces led by Llewelyn ap Iorwerth at the castle of *Kamhawn*.

2.4 Aftermath

1144

Hugh de Mortimer continued to expand his dominion over Maelienydd and the neighbouring cantref of Elfael, and the *Brutiau* notes that he seized Rhys ap Hywel of cantref Bychan in 1145, killed Maredudd ap Madog ab Idnerth, the prince of Maelienydd in 1146¹¹ and in 1148 finally ‘plucked out the eyes of Rhys ap Hywel in prison.’¹² He does not appear again in the chronicles and is thought to have died soon after 1148.

1179

There is only indirect evidence that any conflict took place at Cymaron in this year. The *Chronicle of Wigmore Abbey* states that thirteen Welshmen were taken in battle following the death of Cadwallon, but exactly where this took place is uncertain. The Pipe Rolls note that the castle of Cymaron was still in Mortimer hands in 1182.¹³

1195

In the year following the capture of Cymaron the Welsh continued to come into conflict with the Marcher lords. The Lord Rhys, ruler of Deheubarth, and his forces took the castle of Colwyn (SO 108540) before marching to the castle at Radnor which they took and burned to the ground. Roger Mortimer and fellow Marcher lord, Hugh de Sais, met the Lord Rhys in battle just outside the town of Radnor that same day, but were defeated. The Welsh later seized Roger’s castle at Gwerthrynion in 1202 and burnt it to the ground. He died in 1214 and was succeeded by his son Hugh Mortimer.

1215

The chronicles place Llewelyn and his forces in South Wales in early December 1215. It is not possible to say whether or not Llewelyn and his forces went directly from Shrewsbury and headed south, taking Montgomery and *Kamhawn* (probably Cymaron) on their way, or whether he returned to Gwynedd and regrouped before heading south.

¹¹ *BYT Pen 20*, pp. 53–4.

¹² Paul Remfry (trans.), *Annales Cambriae A Translation of Harleian 3859: PRO E. 164/1: Cottonian Domitian, A1: Exeter Cathedral Library MS 3514 and MS Exchequer DB Neath, PRO E. 164/1*, (2007), p. 84.

¹³ *Pipe Roll 28 Hen II*, p. 11. In perdonis per breve regis ipsi Randulfo .xxvii. l. et .xii. s. et ii. D. blancorum pro custodia castelli de Camerum et pro operatione castelli de Cnichteton.

3. Evaluation

3.1 Discussion of Primary Sources

3.1.1 1144

Although the other events from the life of Hugh Mortimer are present in the B and C text of the *Annales Cambriae*, the reference to the repair of Cymaron in 1144 is absent. The Latin chronicles, or an earlier work that underlies them both, form the basis for the later Welsh texts known as *Brut y Tywysogyon* (*ByT*). This work survives in two forms known as the Peniarth Ms 20 version and the Red Book of Hergest version, both compiled in the late thirteenth century. A third version also exists known as *Brenhinedd y Saesson* (*ByS*) that appears to have been written later and both contains less original material and interprets its Latin source differently. This lack of reference in the Latin suggests that the information was added by the author of *Brut y Tywysogyon*, perhaps from local knowledge.

Brut y Tywysogyon

Pen 20 *Yn y vlwydyn hono yr adgyweiryawd hu vab randwlff kastell y kymereu ac ydar ystygawd maelenyd.*¹⁴

In that year Hugh fitz Ranulf repaired the castle of Cymaron [Cymerau], and a second time subjugated Maelienydd.¹⁵

RB *Yn y ulwydyn honno yd atgeweirawd Hu vab Ra[nd]wlf gastell Gymaeron, ac y gweresgynnawd eilweith Uaelenyd.*

In the year Hugh fitz Ranulf repaired the castle of Cymaron, and a second time gained possession of Maelienydd.¹⁶

ByS *Ac yr atkyweriawt Hugyn vab Randawlf castell Kymaron y Maelenyd a chastell Colunwy.*

And Hugh fitz Ranulf repaired the castle of Cymaron in Maelienydd and the castle of Colunwy.¹⁷

3.1.2 1179

The Pipe Roll for the 25th year of the reign of Henry II notes the sum of £10 being given for repairs at Cymaron castle.

Et in reparation castelli de Camaron .x. l. per breve regis.
For repairs to Castle of Cymaron, £10 by writ of the king.¹⁸

The Anglo-Norman *Chronicle of Wigmore Abbey* was written in the mid-thirteenth century and is preserved in a late fourteenth century manuscript, University of Chicago Library MS

¹⁴ Thomas Jones (ed.), *Brut y Tywysogyon Peniarth MS. 20* (Cardiff, 1941), p. 91b.

¹⁵ Thomas Jones (trans.), *Brut y Tywysogyon or The Chronicle of the Princes: Peniarth MS. 20 Version*, (Cardiff, 1952), p.153.

¹⁶ Thomas Jones (ed. and trans.) *Brut y Tywysogyon or The Chronicle of the Princes: Red Book of Hergest Version*, second edition (Cardiff, 1972), p. 119.

¹⁷ Thomas Jones, (ed. and trans), *Brenhinedd y Saesson or The Kings of the Saxons*, (Cardiff, 1971), p. 149.

¹⁸ *Pipe Roll 25 Henry II*, p. 39.

224.¹⁹ It is concerned with the origins of Wigmore abbey and contains information about the Mortimer dynasty who founded the abbey. It contains the following notice of the events of 1179 and uniquely records the capture of Welsh forces.

And since Roger his son and heir, was being held prisoner by the king for the death of one Cadwallon [Sep 1179] who had killed his men, the ministers of the king took possession of the castle of Wigmore with its appurtenances at this time thirteen Welshmen were captured in battle, and were held prisoner firmly fettered in the castle of Wigmore. As their wardens were sleeping one night, they made their escape as far as the abbey, where they kindly received and refreshed with foods and drink, and the irons with which they were displayed in the church, and the Welshmen remained there in peace until they had to leave to go back to their own country without hindrance.²⁰

3.1.3 1195

The Pipe Rolls for Michaelmas 1195 provide the following information, showing Royal approval for Roger Mortimer's campaign in Maelienydd.

*xxx m. ad warnesturam castelli de Camarun per breue eiusdem . que requirende sunt á predicto Rogero.*²¹

Thirty marks to pay for provisions at the castle of Cymaron to Roger.

*Et Rogero de Mortem' xx li. De reparation castelli de Camarun.*²²

To Roger Mortier 20 pounds to help repair the castle

*Abbas de Persore [Pershore] xl s. ut sit quietus de misericordia sua quia non misit milites suos in exercitu de Camarun . sicut aummonitus fuit.*²³

The Abbot of Pershore owed 40s. that he might be quit of his amercement because he did not send his knights to the army of Cymaron as he was summoned.

Annales Cambriae

The battle is mentioned in both the B and C text versions of the Latin chronicle *Annales Cambriae* preserved in London NA E164/1 (c.1300)²⁴ and London British Library Cotton Domitian A.i. (c.1300), respectively. It is also found in the D text version of Exeter MS 3514 (c.1285) first discovered in 1939.

B-text *Rogerus de Mortuo mari castellum Cameron firmauit.*²⁵

Roger Mortimer fortified Castle Cymaron.

¹⁹ Mary E. Giffen, 'Cadwalader, Arthur and Brutus in the Wigmore Manuscript' *Speculum* 16 (1941), 109–120.

²⁰ The best edition of the Anglo-Norman text can be found in P. Ricketts, (ed.), *Three Anglo-Norman Chronicles* (Manchester, 2011). The English translation is from the earlier edition in J. C. Dickinson and P. T. Ricketts, 'The Anglo-Norman Chronicle of Wigmore Abbey' *Transactions of the Woolhope Naturalists Field Club Herefordshire*, 39 (1969), 437. A further reference to these prisoners is also found in *Pipe Rolls 25 Henry II*, p. 39.

²¹ *Pipe Rolls 7 Richard I*, p. 9.

²² *Ibid*, p. 108.

²³ *Ibid*, p. 13.

²⁴ For a detailed description of this manuscript see Daniel Huws, 'The Neath Abbey Breviate of Domesday' in R. A. Griffiths and P. R. Schofield (eds.), *Wales and the Welsh in the Middle Ages, Essays Presented to J. Beverley Smith* (Cardiff, 2011), pp. 46–55.

²⁵ John Williams Ab Ithel (ed.), *Annales Cambriae* (London, 1860), p. 59.

C-text *Rogerus de Mortun castrum Camaron firmavit.*²⁶
Roger Mortimer strengthened Castle Cymaron

D-text *Rogerus de Mortuo Mari cum exercitu ad Malenyth uenit, ihique castellum fecit expulses duobus Catwallaun.*²⁷
Roger Mortimer came with an army to Maelienydd and acquired the castle there, expelling the two sons of Cadwallon.

Brut y Tywysogyon

Pen 20 *Blwydyn wedy hyny y doeth roeffer mortmyr allu ganthaw hyt y Maelenyd ac yr edeilawd kastell nny lle aelwir Kymaron [var. Kwmaron] agyrru ymeith deu vab Kadwallawn.*²⁸
And a year after that, Roger Mortimer came with a host to Maelienydd. And he built a castle in the place called Cymaron and drove away the two sons of Cadwallon.²⁹

RB *Y vlwydyn racwyneb y deuth Rosser Mortymer a llu gantaw y Velenyd. A gwedy gwrthlad meibon Catwallawn yd adeilawd gastell y Gamaron.*
The following year Roger Mortimer came with a host to Maelienydd. And after expelling the sons of Cadwallon he built a castle at Cymaron [Gamaron].³⁰

ByS *Y doeth Rosser y Mortimer a llu ganthaw hyt yn Maylenyd, ac y gwrthladwyt deu vab Catwallawn o gastell Kymaron.*
Roger Mortimer and a host with him came to Maelienydd, and the two sons of Cadwallon were expelled from the castle of Cymaron.³¹

3.1.4 1215

The possibility of Llywelyn taking Cymaron in 1215 is only found in one medieval source, it is not mentioned in any of the Welsh *Brutiau* or poetry. The D-text of the *Annales Cambriae* is preserved in Exeter MS 3514 (written c.1285), which did not come to light until 1939 and was first published in 1946. It often provides information not found in other versions of the *Annales* and is a valuable historic source.

Annales Cambriae

D-text [1214] *Lewelinus Nortwalliae, princeps Solopiam optinuit, et castellum de Mumgumbria et de Kamhawn.*³²
Prince Llywelyn of North Wales obtained Shropshire with the castles of Montgomery and *Kamhawn* [Cymaron?].

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ *Cronica Walliae*, p. 4

²⁸ Jones, (ed.) *Brut y Tywysogyon Peniarth MS 20* (Cardiff, 1941), p. 135b.

²⁹ *ByT* (Pen 20), p. 75.

³⁰ *ByT* (RB), p. 175.

³¹ *ByS*, p. 191.

³² Jones, (ed.), *Cronica Walliae*, p. 9, under the year 1214, corrected to 1215.

The identification of *Kamhawn* with Cymaron has been tentatively accepted by most historians, primarily due to the lack of a suitable alternative.³³

3.2 Discussion of Secondary Sources

Cymaron castle is mentioned by Humphrey Llwyd in his *Cronica Wallia*, on three occasions, firstly in a general description of Maelienydd and then in his translation of *Brut y Tywysogyon* for the events of 1144 and 1195, however, it adds no new material.³⁴ The site is not mentioned in the 1586 *Britannia* of William Camden, or in the additions of Edward Lhwyd to the 1695 revision. Samuel Lewis in his *Topographical Dictionary of Wales*, published in 1833, is one of the earliest authors to describe the castle and its history at any length.

About two miles from this place formerly stood an ancient fortification, called Castell Cymaron, occupying the summit of an eminence, and supposed to have been originally built by the Anglo-Normans, to protect the territories of which they had violently possessed themselves in this part of the principality, and soon afterwards destroyed by the Welsh, in their continued efforts to repel their aggressions and recover possession of their territories. It was subsequently rebuilt by Hugh Earl of Chester, who, in 1142, obtained possession of the whole of the district of Maelienydd, in which it was included, and was constantly an object of contention between the Anglo-Normans and the Welsh, in the frequent conflicts which arose from the repeated efforts of the former to extend their encroachments, and of the latter to repel them. This castle at length fell into the hands of the Mortimers, about the year 1360, and remained for ages in the possession of their descendants. Its site, and the moat by which it was surrounded, may still be distinctly traced; but of the building itself not the slightest vestige is discernible.³⁵

In 1858 a series of articles by Jonathan Williams, appeared in *Archaeologia Cambrensis* entitled ‘The History of Radnorshire’, subsequently gathered together and published in 1859 as *The History of Radnorshire*³⁶ and again, in an enlarged edition, in 1905.³⁷ The Royal Commission *Inventory for Radnorshire*, from 1913, provides a good plan of the site and a description of the remaining earthworks. It also notes that no masonry has ever been found, probably because it was only ever a timber castle, before it was abandoned in favour of the nearby site of Castell Tinboeth (SO09007545) in the thirteenth century.³⁸ A more detailed plan and good description is given in E. A. Downman’s unpublished *Ancient Earthworks in Radnorshire* (1902–16).³⁹

J. E. Lloyd briefly mentions the events at Cymaron in his influential *A History of Wales* (1911), but most of the information is confined to a solitary footnote.⁴⁰ J. Beverley Smith

³³ D. J. Cathcart-King, *Castellarium Anglicanum* (Millwood, 1983), vol. 2, p. 563.

³⁴ Ieuan M. Williams (ed.) *Humphrey Llwyd Cronica Walliae* (Cardiff, 2002), pp. 74, 153 and 178.

³⁵ Samuel Lewis, *A Topographical Dictionary of Wales*, 2 vols (London, 1833), no page numbers, see vol. 2, under Llandewi Ystradenny.

³⁶ Jonathan Williams, *The History of Radnorshire* (Tenby, 1859).

³⁷ Idem, *The History of Radnorshire* enlarged by E. Davies, (Brecon, 1905).

³⁸ RCAHMW, *Inventory of the Ancient Monuments for the County of Radnor* (London, 1913), p. 73.

³⁹ Edward Andrews Downham ‘Ancient Earthworks in Radnorshire’, surveyed in March 1909, foreword dated 1916. Aberystwyth, Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales, C401734, p. 22.

⁴⁰ J. E. Lloyd, *A History of Wales: From the Earliest Times to the Edwardian Conquest*, (London, 1911), p. 585.

briefly discusses the site and provides a good context for events in his 1970 article, 'The middle March in the thirteenth century'.⁴¹ King gathers together references to the site in his invaluable 1983 work, *Castellarium Anglicanum* and also discusses the potential identification of *Kamhawn* with Cymaron.⁴² Paul Remfry undertook a survey of the site in 1991,⁴³ discusses the politics of twelfth century Radnorshire in his 1995 article⁴⁴ and also deals with the castle in his 2008 work *The Castles and History of Radnorshire*.⁴⁵ J. J. Crump discusses the early history of the Mortimer family in the area⁴⁶ and Hopkinson and Speight cover similar ground in their 2002 work on the dynasty.⁴⁷ John R. Kenyon provides an up to date account of the site and places it in the context of other fortifications of its type, in his 1996 article for the international castle studies journal, *Chateau Gaillard*.⁴⁸

3.3 Site of conflict

The earthworks associated with Castell Cymaron are still visible in the parish of Llanddewi Ystradenny in Radnorshire (SO 153703). It is a scheduled ancient monument and the scheduled area was extended in 1991 to cover possible siege earthworks, to the south of the main castle site, as shown on the map.

3.4 Archaeology and Historic Terrain Assessment,

A search of Archwilio and Coflein did not provide any further evidence for the potential sieges at Castell Cymaron. A search of the Portable Antiquities Scheme database also failed to provide any further information. The tithe map, Ordnance Survey drawings and early OS mapping were consulted, but they do not provide any further information. The site itself has never been subject to any major excavation and its archaeology is uncertain.

Williams, notes the discovery of a cannonball at Cymaron and associates it with the Civil war. No record of any action in this area exists and it appears to be a supposition of the then owners, who thought it was used to demolish the stone walls, however there is no evidence that stone walls ever existed on the site. The article also notes the discovery of two earthen pipes sixteen inches long and suggests they were used to get water to the site. The current location of these finds is unknown.⁴⁹

The castle has been subject to very little archaeological excavation, although plans of the earthworks have been available since the 1913 Royal Commission *Inventory*. A farm and associated outbuildings now occupy the interior of the earthworks, but are excluded from the scheduling. In 1990 the Cadw management report notes that two mounds were identified

⁴¹ J. Beverley Smith, 'The middle March in the thirteenth century', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, 24 (1970), 77–88, especially 78–83.

⁴² Cathcart-King, *Castellarium Anglicanum*, vol. 2, p. 563.

⁴³ <http://www.castles99.ukprint.com/Essays/cymaron.html> [accessed Dec 2, 2013].

⁴⁴ P. M. Remfry, 'Cadwallon ap Madog Rex de Delvain, 1140-1179 and the re-establishment of local autonomy in Cynllibiwig', *Radnorshire Society Transactions*, 65 (1995), 11–32.

⁴⁵ Paul Remfry, *The Castles and History of Radnorshire* (2008), p. 92.

⁴⁶ J. J. Crump, 'The Mortimer Family and the Making of the March' *Thirteenth Century England* 6 (1995), 117–26.

⁴⁷ Charles Hopkinson and Martin Speight, *The Mortimers, Lords of the March* (Logaston, 2002).

⁴⁸ John R. Kenyon, 'Fluctuating Frontiers: Normanno-Welsh Castle Warfare', *Château Gaillard* 17 (1996), 119–26.

⁴⁹ Jonathan Williams, 'History of Radnorshire', *Archaeologia Cambrensis* (1858), 506.

during aerial reconnaissance by Chris Musson of the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales.

He suggested that they might be siege works related to one (or more) of the recorded sieges of Castell Cwm Aran (Rebuilt in 1144, 1179, 1195; probably taken several times by the Welsh, in particular captured 1215 and 1262, Cathcart King, pp. 407–8).⁵⁰

The two mounds are located to the south of the castle on the hillside overlooking the river and the field warden report is uncertain as to the archaeological veracity of the mounds.

On the ground, the mounds are definitely not tumuli, and the interpretation as siegeworks seems justified. Both the mounds have clear views of the motte, the summit of which is about 80m from the lower mound and 130m from the upper, taking a straight line on the map. This would be well within the range of siege artillery available in the 12th and 13th centuries, as far as we at present understand them.⁵¹

No further work has been undertaken and it remains uncertain as to how old they are. Archaeological excavation of these mounds may provide dating evidence that could associate them with one of the four possible dates identified for potential sieges at this site.⁵²

3.5 Historical Significance of Sieges

Although the evidence for sieges at the site of Castell Cymaron is only slight its importance as the main fortress in Maelienydd is clear from the chronicles. From the earliest attempts to conquer the cantref of Maelienydd in the first half of the twelfth century it is clear that it was of strategic importance. This explains why it was repaired on at least three occasions and with royal money in 1179 and again in 1182. The Mortimer family played a very important role in the politics of the Welsh march in the twelfth century and their base at Wigmore is only fifteen miles away. The Mortimer dynasty focused their efforts upon Cymaron in the twelfth century, but following the possible sacking of the castle by Llywelyn in 1215 they moved their attention to Cefnlllys and Dinbod, so we hear no more of Cymaron.

The potential siegeworks at Cymaron are a rare example of this feature in Wales and further archaeological work might provide a date for their construction. The evidence from the chronicle sources suggests that the conflict of 1195, that was well funded and organised, is the most likely context for their construction.

⁵⁰ Aberystwyth, Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales C62231. File of Cadw scheduled monument records for Castell Cwm Aran; castell Cymaron (RD095) , consisting of scheduling notices, accompanied by Field Monument Warden reports, p. 1. The reference to 1262 refers to a line from the *Brutiau* which states that Llywelyn conquered Maelienydd, Cymaron is not mentioned by name. *ByT* (Pen 20), p. 112.

⁵¹ Aberystwyth, Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales C62231, p. 1.

⁵² Kenyon, 'Fluctuating Frontiers', 125.

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Aberystwyth, Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales, C401734. Edward Andrews Downham 'Ancient Earthworks in Radnorshire'.

4.3 Cartographic Sources

1817 Llandrindod (Ordnance Survey Drawing 197).

1839 Llanddewi Ystradenni Tithe Map and Schedule (#1105)

4.4 Web Resources

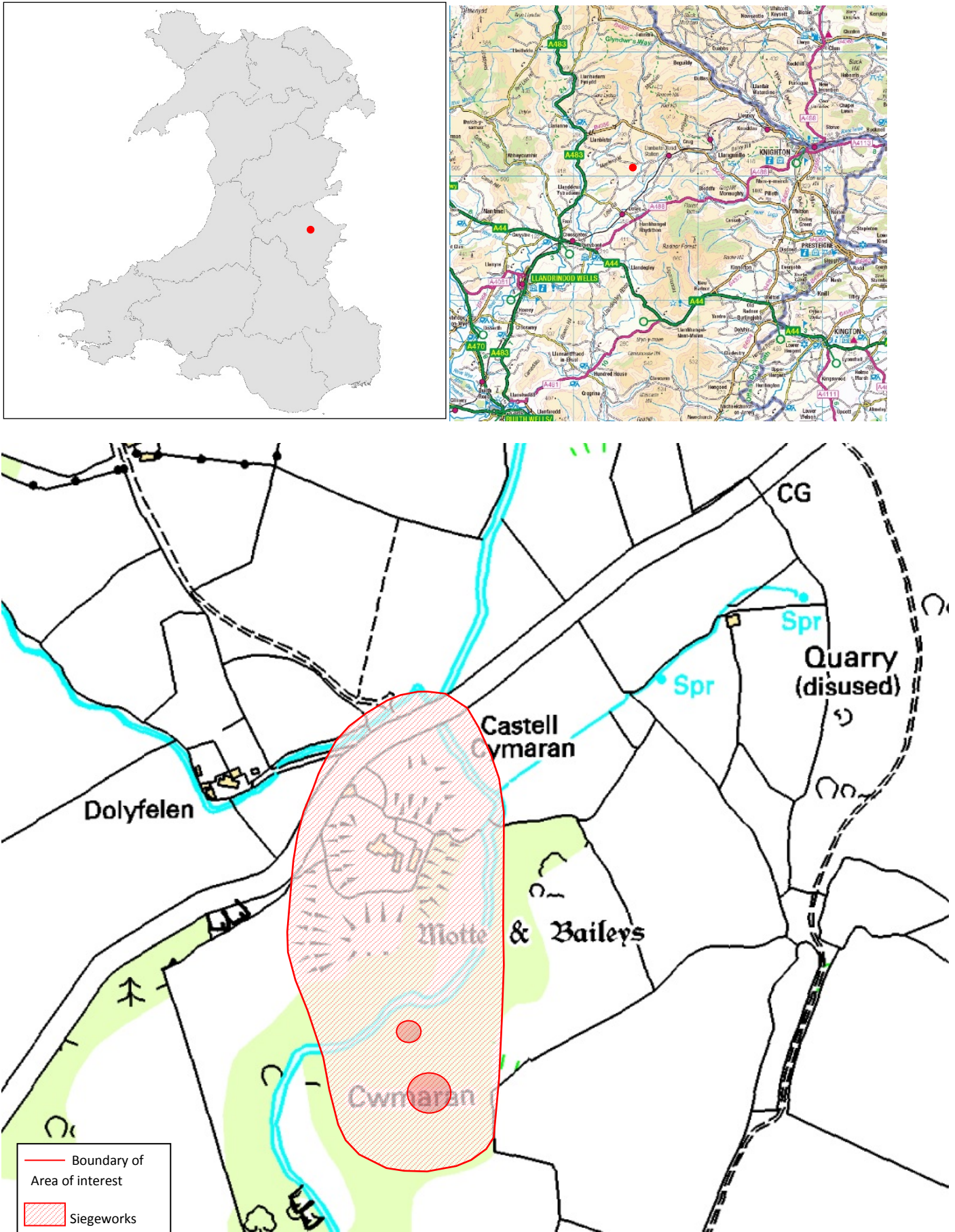
Archwilio www.archwilio.net

Coflein www.coflein.org.uk

Portable Antiquities Scheme Database <http://finds.org.uk/database/search/advanced>

Peoples Collection Wales www.peoplescollectionwales.co.uk/Places/FullMap

5. Map of Site



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Figure 1: Location Map indicating sites associated with the sieges of Cymaron Castle.