

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/ HISTORIC 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)

				<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>
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	1404-05	Morgannwg	545701	<p>Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Chapman, 2013)</p>

Castle (siege)		Glamorgan		Documentary and historical research (Chapman, 2013)
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 Glamorgan	404856	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (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	405188	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol

		Pembrokeshire		(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	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 AND DOCUMENTARY RESEARCH

Pennal – 1472 or 1474

County: Gwynedd (formerly Merioneth)

Community: Pennal

NGR: SH70000

NPRN: 403495

Report Author: Dr Adam Chapman

Date: February 2013



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government



Pennal (1472 or 1474)

Summary

This is a remarkably obscure battle. The first narrative accounts of it occur over a century later than it must have been fought and the dating evidence is poor. Based on very limited contemporary evidence from a single poetic elegy and administrative accounts we may tentatively suggest that it happened on or shortly before 8 April 1474. The only certain participant was its only known casualty; Thomas ap Gruffudd ap Nicholas, father of Henry Tudor's principal Welsh supporter at Bosworth (1485), Sir Rhys ap Thomas. The size of his forces and the precise circumstances of the confrontation are not known but it seems unlikely to have been an opportunist act. Sixteenth and early seventeenth century accounts strongly suggest that the encounter was politically inspired at some level and should therefore be considered part of the 'Wars of the Roses' in Wales. The identities of those accompanying Thomas or those of his opponents are derived only from later accounts and speculation but broadly suggest this was a victory of Yorkist sympathisers, perhaps inspired by William Herbert, second earl of Pembroke (d. 1491) over Lancastrian sympathisers.

The location of the battle is, given the quality of the sources, equally obscure. Perhaps the most likely area is in the broad, flat valley bottom north of Afon Cwrt and west of the village of Pennal. Reports of a monument raised to Thomas ap Gruffudd ap Nicholas may accord with a substantial earthwork feature whose origins are otherwise unclear [Coflein NPRN Record 24519, Grid Reference SH6967800534].

The importance of the battle lies in the status of those believed to have been involved rather than the nature of the engagement which early modern sources suggest stem from political intrigue or possibly personal feud bound into the ineffectiveness of central authority in the second half of the fifteenth century.

Context

The conflict for control of England in the second half of the fifteenth century, termed by Sir Walter Scott 'The Wars of the Roses' was part dynastic and part pragmatic in its character. Following the loss of Henry V's conquests in Normandy in the late 1440s and the loss of Gascony in 1453, only

Calais remained of England's possessions in France. This had seismic effects on the domestic politics of England and for the stability of Henry VI's grip on power. The king's mental fragility resulted in conflict, at first political and later with armed force, for control of the king and therefore the country. Richard, duke of York (d. 1460) was at the head of one faction and the descendants of Henry V and his half-brothers, the Beauforts, on the other. The ensuing civil wars between the first battle of St Albans in 1455 and the battle of Bosworth Field in 1485 were in the main, short, sharp periods of conflict punctuating long periods of politicking and factional lawlessness.

Wales played an important part in the conflict, owing to the fact that Richard, duke of York had inherited the estates of the earldom of March which included the lordships of Denbigh, Maelienydd and Gwrtheyrnion, Caerlleon and Usk together with a number of minor lordships while one of his principal supporters, Richard Neville, earl of Warwick held the largest of the Marcher lordships, Glamorgan. The king, of course held the lands of the 'Principality'; Carmarthenshire, Cardiganshire, Merioneth, Anglesey and Caernarfonshire, together with parts of the Marcher shire of Pembroke and other estates as part of the Duchy of Lancaster.

Following the defeat of York at Ludford Bridge in 1459, York was exiled and his estates confiscated. York returned the following year but was defeated and killed at the battle of Wakefield on 30 December 1460. His son Edward, earl of march, however, defeated Lancastrian forces at Mortimer's Cross on 2 February 1461 and then decisively at Towton, Yorkshire on 29 March of the same year afterwards being crowned Edward IV.

In Wales, the prominence of local potentates, notably William ap Thomas and his son William Herbert at Raglan for York and Gruffudd ap Nicholas – father of Thomas who died at Pennal - in Carmarthenshire for Lancaster added to the importance of Wales and were to have disastrous effects on the governance of the shires and March of Wales. Herbert became a major figure on the English stage after the victory of York's son, Edward earl of March at Towton in March 1461 and his enthronement as Edward IV. From a Welsh perspective he was also the chief victim of the wars; following his defeat at Banbury in 1469 he was executed ending two decades of dominance on the Welsh stage. His death and the dominance of Warwick were among the factors which temporarily led to the exile of Edward IV and the 'readeptation' of Henry VI. Following Edward's return and Warwick's death at the battle of Barnet (17 April 1471), Edward was restored. The encounter at Pennal belongs to this second reign of Edward IV and after the period of Herbert dominance when royal government in the name of the Prince of Wales was being reasserted.

Primary Sources

In the strict sense, there are no primary accounts of the battle and its aftermath. There are a number of details from a range of sources which can provide some dating evidence but no narrative accounts exist before the sixteenth century. The closest evidence chronologically is an elegy bewailing the death of Thomas ap Gruffudd ap Nicholas by Dafydd Llwyd of Mathafarn which states that Thomas died on Good Friday. As is the way of such elegies, Dafydd went on to proclaim that the noble oak of Thomas's family was not uprooted by the slaying; some of the branches survived. There are a number of minor administrative references to the death of Thomas, but none provide a clear picture or incontrovertible date.

Secondary Sources

The key details of the career of the antecedents of Sir Rhys ap Thomas have been extensively researched and published by Professor Ralph Griffiths and this analysis borrows heavily from his work, particularly *Sir Rhys ap Thomas and his Family, A Study in the Wars of the Roses and Early Tudor Politics* (Cardiff, 1993).¹ This reproduces not only the first generation of 'secondary' accounts but analyses them and evaluates their historicity. The early secondary accounts preserve what might be termed 'traditional' narratives recording what was recalled or believed by families concerning their antecedents. The earliest of these emerges from a pedigree compiled on 1 March 1595:

Thomas ap gr proved a valiant man and fell out with the lord Herbert and fled to Harlegh Castle, and there Died... The Erle of Pembroke seised Abermarles, and as his steward was keeping Coorte at Maes gwydyn, sodainlye Thomas ap Gr Came from Harleach with 40 horse, and tooke the Stewarde and hanged him there in a wch whereof the place took the name [The nooses' field]. Whereupon the Erle sware he wold see Thomas ap Gr Hanged; and therefore when he came to Harlech and laide siege to the Castle; and heeringe that Thomas ap Gr was dead, he made inquisition where his bodie was buried, meaning to hange his bodie to save his oath. But Thomas ap Gr his ffrienes having intelligence of the Erles

¹ And see also R.A. Griffiths, 'Rhys ap Gruffudd and the Rise of the House of Dinefwr' in *King and Country, England and Wales in the Fifteenth Century* (London, 1991), 187-200 and 'Gruffudd ap Nicholas and the Fall of the House of Lancaster', 201-19.

meaning, stale awaie his body out of the grave, and conveyed yt XXX miles of and buried yt secretly.²

The account of the battle in 'The Life of Sir Rice ap Thomas' by Henry Rice (c. 1590-c. 1651) composed sometime in the 1620s.

The last combate performed was with one David Gough, a man in disposition nott unlike the former. The two mett at a place called Pennal, in the countie of Merioneth, where, after a long and bloodie fight, this David Gough fell by the sword of Thomas ap Griffith, and the place to this day is call'd Pennal Field. Thomas ap Griffith, not able to goe farre in respect of his woundes, shakes off his armes, and layes them downe flatt on his face to breath himself, after a tedious and wearisome encounter; in the meane time (woe worth the while), there comes behind him some base fellow (a servant noe doubt, or a friend of the others) and runs him through... and soe he died. In honour of his memorie, there was in the place a Cenotaph of stones and turfes erected, whether the gentlemen of the countie, upon a certaine day, for manie yeares after resorted, where they spent the time in jumping wrestling, running at the quinteine, and other manlie exercises. ... his bodie being bravelie accompanied, was conveyed to the abbey of Bardsey, in the county of Carnarvon, and there solumnie interr'd, the beholders all, with a universal conclamation, giving an assured testimonie of their hartes overflowing with sorrowe.³

Sir John Wynne of Gwydir from his *History of the Gwydir Family and Memoirs*, believed to have been compiled between 1580 and 1616:

Some affirme that John ap Maredudd to have been at a field in Pennal for Thomas Griffith, whych field was fought between Thomas ap Gruffydd ap Nicholas and Henry ap Gwilym and the erle of Penbrookes captaynes where Thomas ap Gruffydd got the field, but received there his deathes wounde.⁴

Prelude

² NLW, Llanstephan 130 D f.21, cited by Griffiths, *Sir Rhys ap Thomas and his Family*, 33.

³ Griffiths, *Sir Rhys ap Thomas and his Family*, 177-8.

⁴ Jones, *History of the Gwydir Family and Memoirs*, 27.

The immediate prelude to the encounter at Pennal starts with the execution of William, Herbert, earl of Pembroke at Northampton after the battle of Banbury/Edgecote on 24 July 1469. The fortunes of the family of Thomas ap Gruffudd ap Nicholas were raised by the incorrigible and powerful Gruffudd ap Nicholas in the 1440s and 1450s but had suffered under Herbert's rule in Wales. By 1464, Thomas and his son Rhys are believed to have gone into exile in Burgundy while Thomas's brothers remained in Wales. The brothers made varying accommodations with Edward IV, but Thomas and his son returned c. 1471 after the fall of Henry VI's regime, according to Henry Rice 'by accident'. Following the investiture of the infant prince Edward as Prince of Wales in June 1471 and the formal establishment of the Council of Wales and the Marches in 1473 new strength was granted to the governance of the lands of Wales. This is a complicated and obscure period but clearly there were tensions here both familial and political. The battle of Pennal emerged from these tensions.

Narrative

The three accounts give markedly different narratives. The first can be summarised by noting Thomas's antagonism towards 'lord Herbert', presumably William Herbert, the first earl who was executed in 1469; how the 'Erle of Pembroke', probably the second earl, also William Herbert (d. 1491), seized Thomas's house at Abermarlais, Carmarthenshire and consequently provoking Thomas in launching a retaliation from his refuge at Harlech; how Thomas died before the earl could find him and how Thomas was secretly buried. This version makes no mention of a battle.⁵ Another writer tells a similar story – and this story was one that presumably informed Henry Rice – that the secret burial was carried out on Bardsey Island.⁶ Rice's account in his *Life of Sir Rhys ap Thomas* records that Thomas was mortally wounded by Dafydd Goch, who he killed, and was finally despatched by 'some base fellow (a servant no doubt, or friend of the others)'. John Wynne's account naturally includes the supposed involvement of his ancestor, John ap Maredudd, on the side of Thomas. He names the leader of Thomas's opponents as Henry ap Gwilym and 'the erle of Pembrookes captaynes'. The implication therefore is that there was a political dimension to this action. Wynne too agrees that Thomas was not killed at the battle but only mortally wounded having won the encounter.

⁵ Griffiths, *Rhys ap Thomas and his Family*, 33, n. 20 and 178.

⁶ NLW MS 1602 D f.204 (c. 1609-30), cited in Griffiths, *Rhys ap Thomas and his Family*, 33, n. 20.

In summary, only two of these accounts provide for a battle but both name specific individuals one of whom, Henry ap Gwilym can be identified with a known historical figure. Dafydd Goch is more ambiguous. There is very little by way of contemporary documentation to confirm or refute these details. The clear implication of the limited narrative evidence, therefore is that there was a battle and that Thomas ap Gruffudd ap Nicholas died as the result of wounds inflicted there.

Dating

The only near contemporary reference to the death of Thomas comes from the elegy to Thomas composed by Dafydd Llwyd of Mathafarn. Mathafarn lies approximately 10 miles to the north west of Pennal also on the Dyfi valley. This elegy records that Thomas died on Good Friday and, furthermore, notes that although Thomas is dead, the noble oak of his family was not uprooted by this action.⁷ This detail should not be easily ignored. As Barry Lewis has recently demonstrated with reference to the battle of Edgecote/Banbury, straightforward matters such as the date of a battle or the date of someone's death were too widely known and acknowledged to be altered for the sake of poetic neatness: 'Performing an elegy for a dead patron, at the behest of his relatives, was one of the poets' most important roles. Such elegies were probably not given at funerals or in their immediate aftermath, though this is possible in some cases. More likely, they were intended for the month's mind, a ceremony of remembrance held a month after the funeral, or the year's mind, held twelve months after the funeral.'⁸

Poets performed their own work, orally, probably to the accompaniment of music and, in the case of elegies, to the family and friends of the dead patron who, in the case of a death in battle, might well have been present as a participant. To cite Lewis again, 'It is not credible that these poets could stand up in public ceremonies, before not only the dead men's families but also their retainers supporters and neighbours, men in a position to know the facts and announce that the battle was fought on a Monday... if it had actually been fought on Wednesday...'.⁹ Dafydd Llwyd's statement that Thomas died on Good Friday should cautiously be accepted in the absence of contradictory

⁷ W. Leslie Richards, *Gwaith Dafydd Llwyd o Fathafarn* (Cardiff, 1964), 132-4

⁸ B. Lewis, 'The Battle of Edgecote or Banbury (1469) Through the eyes of Contemporary Welsh Poets', *Journal of Medieval Military History*, IX (2011), 98.

⁹ Lewis, *idem.*, 105.

evidence, a view supported by the relative proximity of his residence at Mathafarn to the site of the battle. Dafydd's political sympathies were also aligned with those of Thomas and his supporters: 'Although Dafydd addressed a poem to Edward IV and enjoyed the patronage of his prominent supporter William Herbert, earl of Pembroke (*d.* 1469), he was primarily a partisan of the Lancastrian Tudors.'¹⁰ The obvious difficulty, of course, is that it is not stated that Thomas died in battle. If he died of his wounds, his death may have occurred as much as several days later.

The question that follows from this is; which year? Professor Griffiths makes a compelling case that it is likely to have occurred between 1472 and 1474. The evidence comes from a surviving handful of official documents which indicate that Thomas ap Gruffudd ap Nicholas was dead. None mention how or where Thomas died, but cumulatively they confirm that he was dead, at the very latest, by Michaelmas (29 September) 1474 when the escheator of Carmarthenshire presented his account.

- On 5 November 1472, Rhys ap Thomas, as one of his father's heirs, received a general pardon for offences, and entering his inheritance without licence and for all monies owed to the king (Edward IV), prior to 30 October. This suggests that Thomas was dead, possibly relatively recently, or had been deprived of his possessions, and that more than one of his sons was still alive.
- The escheator of Carmarthenshire (a royal officer with responsibility for organising an 'inquisition post mortem' to ascertain who the legal heir was, if any, and what was the extent of the land held and to manage it for the crown in the event of doubt or dispute) had custody of Thomas's property as 'new escheat' in 1473-4, prior to it passing to his heirs and disposed of some of it in 1474. This would indicate that Thomas had died in 1473 or 1474, though it is possible that the procedure of royal government were operating less than efficiently; the quality of royal governance in fifteenth century Wales was very poor.¹¹

In short, the evidence is contradictory but the implication that Rhys ap Thomas was able to enter his inheritance in 1472 is no more than suggestive. We may tentatively be able to assign Thomas's death to Good Friday 1472 or 1474. 1473 is unlikely since it would fall in the 1472-3 financial year (the financial year in medieval England and Wales ran from Michaelmas to Michaelmas, 29 September) so the alternative dates for Thomas' death are 27 March 1472 or 8 April 1474.

¹⁰ Gruffydd Aled Williams, 'Dafydd Llwyd o Fathafarn (*fl.* c.1400–c.1490)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/48542>, accessed 27 Jan 2013]

¹¹ TNA SC 6/1169/6 m. 9; /8 m. 10, cited by Griffiths, *Sir Rhys ap Thomas and his Family*, 178 n. 27.

It may be relevant here that the captains of the earl of Pembroke are mentioned in several of the accounts although none actually state or even imply that the earl himself was present. William Herbert (d. 1491), second earl of Pembroke was not, it must be said, a man of the same character or achievement of either his father, William Herbert, first earl of Pembroke or his grandfather, William ap Thomas of Raglan, but was nonetheless an important figure. He succeeded to his father's offices of Chamberlain and Justiciar of South Wales on 29 August 1471 at the age of sixteen. He is known to have visited west Wales in May 1471 and again in September 1480 but it is pertinent here that he may well have accompanied Anthony Wydeville, Earl Rivers, the Prince of Wales's chief counsellor, when he visited the Carmarthenshire and Cardiganshire Great Sessions in 1474.¹² Taken together, the evidence tentatively suggests that the battle at Pennal may have taken place on or shortly before 8 April 1474.

Aftermath and Remains

For a battle about which almost nothing is known with certainty, there are several details in the later accounts that must be addressed. Henry Rice, in his *Life of Sir Rhys ap Thomas*, mentions that, 'In honour of his memorie, there was in the place a Cenotaph of stones and turfes erected...' The first editor of this text in the *Cambrian Register* (published 1796 and 1811)¹³ adds a note to the effect that, 'In a meadow below the village of Pennal, in the county of Merioneth, there is, at this day, to be seen a tumulus, which in all probability is the very spot here referr'd to; but no tradition remains amongst the inhabitants of that neighbourhood, to countenance this piece of history.'¹⁴ Griffiths notes that no such cairn or mound is now known in Pennal parish from the RCAHM report for the county of Merioneth 1921.¹⁵ There is a clear assumption present in the early seventeenth century text that the festivals described were related to the battle as some form of homage to Thomas. It should be remembered, however, that Henry Rice's intention was to burnish the reputation of his family and that similar festivals and sports were by no means unparalleled in sixteenth and early seventeenth century England and Wales; the activities described may have been entirely unrelated.¹⁶

¹² Griffiths, *Sir Rhys ap Thomas and his Family*, 32.

¹³ For the background to these versions, see Griffiths, *Sir Rhys ap Thomas and his Family*, 135-47.

¹⁴ Griffiths, *Sir Rhys ap Thomas and his Family*, 177 n. 26

¹⁵ Griffiths, *Sir Rhys ap Thomas and his Family*, 177-8, 177, n. 26: *RCHAM*, vol. VI, The County of Merioneth (London, 1921), 157-60.

¹⁶ R. Suggett, 'Festivals and Social Structures in early modern Wales', *Past and Present* 152 (1996), 79-112.

Despite the RCAHM report, the first edition OS map of c. 1880 shows two possible features which may be what the editor of the *Cambrian Register* had in mind. The first, marked on this map and on modern editions as 'Tomen Las' [Coflein NPRN 302965, Grid reference SH6970600256] is unlikely to be what was meant. It is a substantial circular mound, some 26 metres across, that rises to some 3 metres in height with a level summit some 15-17 metres across, also showing remains of its ditch. It is more likely to be the undocumented remains of a minor and presumably short-lived castle of indeterminate date. The surrounding ground does answer the description, however, being situated immediately to the north of Afon Cwrt and described as 'marshy'. This, of course counts against it being the battle site though given that Pennal parish is characterised by high ground rising sharply above the land bounding the Dyfi, the site of any battle cannot have been far away.

The second feature shown on the 1880 map is situated around 250 metres to the north of Tomen Las on the other side of the A493 and is marked as a Tumulus. The Royal Commission record describes it as 'An oval mound about 32m north-south by 22m and 2.5m high. Rock outcropping has been observed at the north end of this mound and this is likely to be a natural feature, or else an adaptation of a natural feature.' [Coflein NPRN Record 24519, Grid Reference SH6967800534]. This feature is clearly visible from the road [Google Streetview] and is on the edge of an area of relatively level ground to the north of the A493 road and to the west of the village. This must be considered a plausible site for the battle and the mound a candidate for the monument allegedly erected afterwards.

Troops and Casualties

Even allowing for the obscurity of the battle, knowledge of who actually fought there is exceedingly thin. Probably the only certain participant is Thomas ap Gruffudd ap Nicholas, father of Sir Rhys ap Thomas, Henry VII's ally at Bosworth who was mortally wounded at Pennal. One source states that he was buried at the Augustinian Abbey of St Mary's on Bardsey Island/Ynys Enlli. Various accounts give a selection of names of potential participants and these are discussed below. The nature of the engagement is understandably difficult to grasp; the size of the opposing armies – if they could be called that – is completely unknown. It is probable that this was a relatively small engagement with the forces involved consisting of a number of gentry with members of their families and followings. In common with many encounters in the wars of the Roses, the number of casualties was probably relatively small, and the battle relatively short in consequence, but this is purely speculation. The fighting was most probably hand to hand and, despite the increasing prominence of cavalry in

England in the later fifteenth century, the participants most probably fought on foot. As recent examinations of a much larger battle at Bosworth have shown, archaeological evidence is likely to be limited and of a type – iron arrowheads, for example – which survive poorly in archaeological contexts.

The protagonists

- Thomas ap Gruffudd ap Nicholas. The only certain participant in the battle and the only known casualty. Acting as his father's lieutenant he was responsible for expanding the family's tentacles north of their seat at Dinefwr, Carmarthenshire into Cardiganshire. The first evidence of this expansion comes in 1439 through the first of a documented series of violent encounters; Thomas and his brothers were accustomed to the use of armed force to achieve personal and familial gain and Pennal was one of many similar small confrontations – most very obscure and poorly recorded such as one at Dryslwyn in 1464 or another, mentioned in Rice's *Life*, at Frampton, Glamorgan some time later.¹⁷
- Henry ap Gwilym of Cwrt Henry, Llangathen, Carmarthenshire was named as the chief opponent of Thomas at Pennal by John Wynn and can be readily identified as someone with a long enmity against Thomas ap Gruffudd ap Nicholas or members of his family, an enmity mentioned in Henry Rice's *Life* and marked, according that source, by 'eight to ten' episodes of hand to hand combat.¹⁸ With another Carmarthenshire man, Owain Llwyd, he appears to have been imprisoned at Harlech while it was in the hands of Lancastrian forces before 1468. Details of both the rising and the imprisonment of these two men are obscure but possibly followed a rising at Drwslwyn, Carmarthenshire, in 1464 where Henry had been co-farmer of its revenues with Thomas.¹⁹ Their plight was the subject of a poem probably composed by the Cardiganshire poet Gwilym ab Ieuan Hen [or possibly Ieuan Tew Brydydd of Cydweli]. The poem, on account of this, called upon William Herbert (d. 1469) to destroy Harlech: 'Bar dyrnod Herbard arnaw' ('may the anger of Herbert's fist strike upon it').²⁰

¹⁷ Griffiths, *Rhys ap Thomas and his Family*, 29, 177 and n. 22.

¹⁸ Griffiths, *Rhys ap Thomas and his Family*, 174-5 and 174, n. 13.

¹⁹ Griffiths, *The Principality of Wales*, 266 and idem *Sir Rhys ap Thomas and his Family*, 29 n. Both Henry and Owain clearly repaired their differences with the family later since Henry ap Gwilym's daughter and co-heir, Eva or Mabli, was the first wife of Sir Rhys ap Thomas [ap Gruffudd ap Nicholas]; Griffiths, *Sir Rhys ap Thomas and his Family*, 84

²⁰ Dylan Foster Evans 'Tŵr Dewr Gwncwerwr' ('A Brave Conqueror's Tower') citing A.E. Davies (ed.) *Gwaith Deio ab Ieuan Du a Gwilym ab Ieuan Hen* (Cardiff, 1992), 102 (xvi.64)

- Dafydd Goch. Opinions differ as to the identity of this individual. The *Cambrian Register* editor states ‘This David Gough is supposed to be a near kinsman of that Mathew Gough, a famous warrior in the times of Henry Fifth and Sixth, slain in civil tumult, raised by Jack Cade.’ Similar identifications have been made of many fifteenth century Welshmen bearing the cognomen ‘goch’ (red) which probably refers to his hair colour. Although far from impossible, the frequency of such suggestions does count against them. Evans identifies a David Gough of Maelienydd, a Yorkist lordship in the March of mid-Wales who served Edward IV and Richard III as a sergeant at arms and constable of Radnor Castle who, in addition was awarded Stapleton in Maelienydd.²¹ Griffiths offers a couple of alternatives, noting that one Dafydd Goch ap Maredudd ap Gruffudd ab Adda of Llanbadarn, Cardiganshire only a little to the south of Pennal, was addressed in a poem by Lewys Glyn Cothi.²² The other is that a note in the Dynevor muniments identifies Thomas’s adversary as Dafydd Goch ab Ieuan ab Owain who is otherwise unknown. Beverley Smith and Beverley Smith in the second volume of the *History of Merioneth* prefer the Dafydd Goch ap Maredudd addressed by Lewys Glyn Cothi though nothing more is known about him.²³

Others

The sixteenth century life of Sir Rhys ap Thomas provides only very limited detail despite the fact that it was written as a panegyric to Sir Rhys and that his father was the chief protagonist. It names only two men aside from Thomas ap Gruffudd ap Nicholas and Dafydd Goch who are discussed above but one more man is named:

- Thomas Salesbury; ‘These Salisburys were ever firmlie united to Rice and his familie, whereby they purchased to themselves the name Salisbriod y Brain, friendes to the raven, (a reference to the ravens on Thomas ap Gruffudd’s and his family’s coat of arms). Thomas Salusbury Hen (‘the old’; *d.c.*1490) was constable of Denbigh Castle in 1454. Most accounts of the family have stated that he was killed at the battle of Barnet on 14 April 1471 but contemporary poetry suggests that he died in 1490. If the poetry is correct – and this is likely – then there is every chance that he was present at Pennal.²⁴

²¹ Griffiths, *Rhys ap Thomas and his Family*, 33.

²² Griffiths, *The Principality of Wales*, 500, Johnston (ed.), *Gwaith Lewys Glyn Cothi*, nos. 173, 174.

²³ Beverley Smith and Beverley Smith, *History of Merioneth*, ii., 127.

²⁴ A. D. Carr, ‘Salusbury family (*per. c.*1454–*c.*1684)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/71882>, accessed 8 Feb 2013]

Only two further names of men who may have been present are known at the current time.

- Hywel ap Siancyn of Ynysmaengwyn, near Tywyn, Merioneth, appears to have been placed at Pennal in a poem by Tudur Penllyn.²⁵ Since most of Tudur's patrons were Lancastrian in their sympathies and Tudur himself was from Ediernion, Merioneth this possibility mentioned in a near contemporary source should be taken seriously.
- John ap Maredudd was a descendant of John Wynn of Gwydir's forebears and cousin of Owen Tudor. According to later pedigrees, he was born around 1430 and was, according to Wynn's work, a recipient of a letter from Henry Tudor encouraging him to provide soldiers in 1485, yet, as Evans notes, there seems to be no record of him being rewarded by Henry when he became king.²⁶ In 1466, he was commissioned to inquire into the outstanding revenues and rents in Caernarfonshire and Merioneth and into other disorder by Edward IV.²⁷ Clearly he played an important role in the community of North Wales in the appropriate period and it is entirely plausible – despite the conflation of events and details in Wynn's narrative – that he was the kind of man that would have been involved in a confrontation at Pennal. Wynn was convinced that John ap Maredudd was a staunch Lancastrian and such surviving evidence as can be found in his work suggests this to be the case.

Conclusions

This battle is always likely to remain obscure. The evidence is enough, however, to allow a tentative date and location. In early April 1474 and on the broad valley bottom to the west of the settlement of Pennal if only on the dubious grounds that this is the largest expanse of flat ground in the parish and flanks the road which is now the A493. The battle is chiefly notable as being the occasion where the father of one of the most important Welshmen of the period, Sir Rhys ap Thomas, was killed or received wounds which directly led to his death on Good Friday, probably in 1474. There is a clear suggestion in a source from the early seventeenth century of a monument to the battle in the form of a manmade cairn of stones and earth and there exists a mound in the area where the battle may have been fought whose origins and functions are unknown which may answer to the description given in Henry Rice's *Life*. Subject to further investigation, however, this possibility is as tentative as

²⁵ Thomas Roberts (ed.) *Gwaith Tudur Penllyn ac Ieuan ap Tudur Penllyn*, no. 40.

²⁶ Evans, *Wales and the Wars of the Roses*, 131, nn. 48, 49.

²⁷ *Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1464-1467*, 529

any other detail relating to this battle. The size of the forces, their composition and even the result of the battle are not known.

In general terms, however, this battle is representative of a type of relatively small scale elite violence that was common in Wales in the fifteenth century which often had political undercurrents. The sixteenth and seventeenth century narratives, although writing with the benefit of hindsight and the possibility of embroidering stories which may not have been clearly remembered in the first place, indicate that in broad terms, this was a battle between Lancastrian and Yorkist factions which the Yorkists appear to have had the better if only because of the death of a key member of the line of Dinefwr. This family had, through political cunning, judicial manipulation and violence come to dominate south west Wales in the middle part of the fifteenth century and whose influence and eventual destruction came under the Tudor kings of England.

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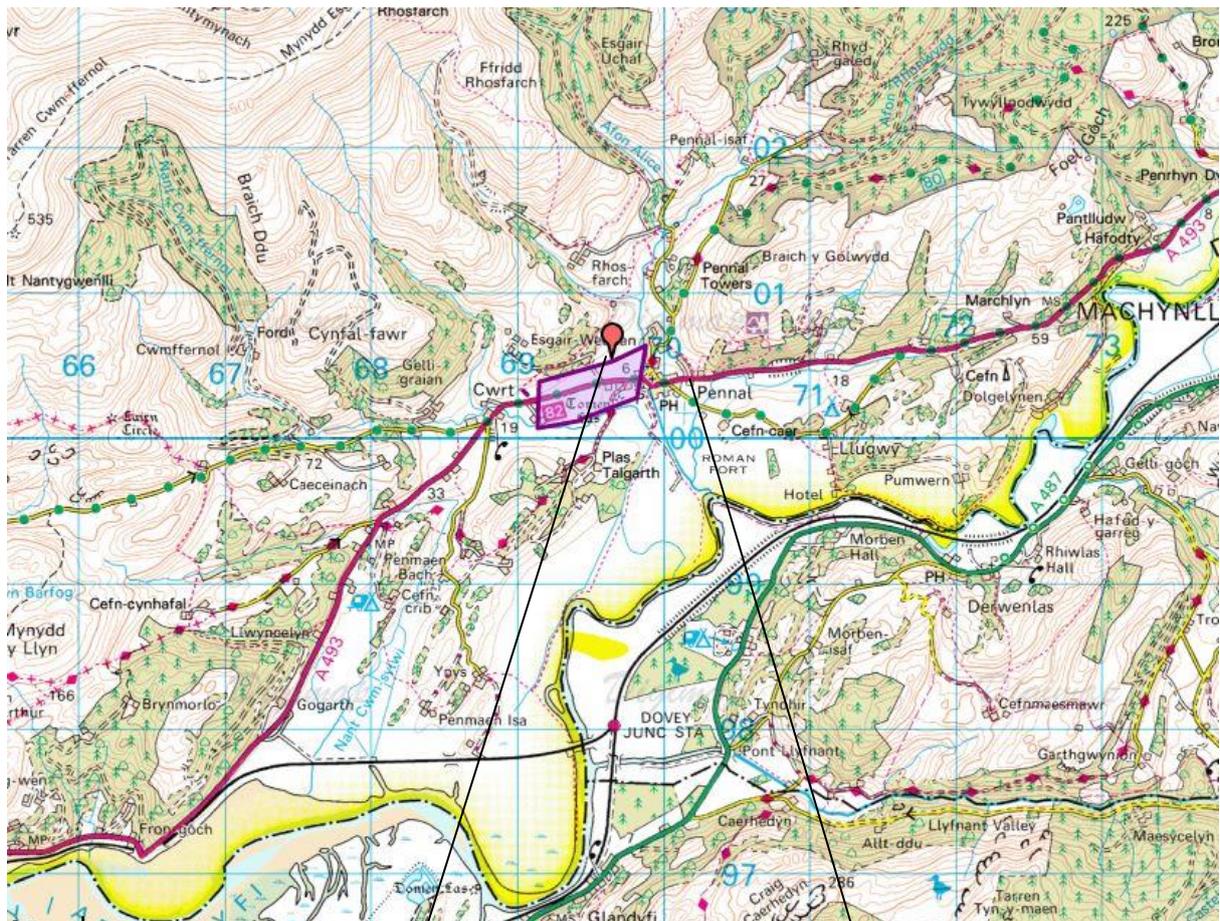
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Pennal (on or immediately before 8 April 1474): SH70000, NPRN 403495



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The marker at SH6967800534 refers to an earth mound of indeterminate origin which may relate to a monument 'a Cenotaph of stones and turfes' erected in the memory of Thomas ap Gruffudd ap Nicholas attested in the early seventeenth century.

The shaded area shows the probable site of the battlefield on the broad base of the valley to the north of Afon Cwrt