

# NANTLLE and CILGWYN

A character study



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for

Gwynedd Council  
&  
Snowdonia National Park Authority

May 2017



**Llechi Cymru**  
**Wales Slate**



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## Crynodeb

Paratowyd astudiaeth o nodweddion treftadaeth adeiledig Nantlle a Chilgwyn yn 2017 i ategu'r enwebiad am statws Safle Treftadaeth Byd i Ddiwydiant Llechi Cymru sydd i'w gyflwyno i Gorff Addysgol, Gwyddonol, a Diwylliannol y Cenhedloedd Unedig (UNESCO). Pentref yn nyffryn Nantlle yn Eryri yw Nantlle, ac mae Cilgwyn yn anheddiad bach ar lethrau'r mynydd cyfagos. Cododd yr aneddiadau hyn i roi cartrefi i chwarelwyr y ddwy chwarel. Cafodd Cilgwyn ei adeiladu o ddiwedd y deunawfed ganrif ymlaen i ddynion Chwarel Cilgwyn, a Nantlle yn ail hanner y bedwaredd ganrif ar bymtheg, i chwarelwyr Penyrsedd yn bennaf, oedd yn un o chwareli llechi mwyaf y Gogledd tua diwedd y bedwaredd ganrif ar bymtheg.

Mae'r adroddiad yn amlinellu hanes y gwaith chwarela yn yr ardal a hanes yr aneddiadau eu hunain. Mae'r astudiaeth nodweddion yn edrych ar y patrwm anheddu a'i berthynas â seilwaith y ffyrdd a pherchnogaeth y tir. Gan hoelio sylw ar dai diwydiannol yn bennaf, ond gan gynnwys adeiladau diwylliannol a chrefyddol hefyd, mae'n trafod dylanwad yr economi lleol, dyheadau diwylliannol, adeiledd y gymdeithas a defnydd deunyddiau adeiladu, bob un ohonynt wedi cyfrannu at gymeriad arbennig treftadaeth adeiledig yr aneddiadau. Tanlinellir amrywiaeth cymeriad hanesyddol y ddau anheddiad drwy nodi ardaloedd sydd â chymeriad gwahanol.

Dangosir bod Nantlle a Chilgwyn yn ddau anheddiad neilltuol a chyferbyniol. Datblygiad digymell gan chwarelwyr oedd Cilgwyn i raddau helaeth, a hynny ar weundir a oedd heb ei amgáu, tra cafodd Nantlle ei gynllunio'n bennaf a'i adeiladu i weithwyr a rheolwyr Chwarel Penyrsedd. Cododd Cilgwyn o glwstwr anffurfiol o dyddynnod â chaeau bach, ond datblygiad llinol oedd Nantlle ar hyd ffordd dyrpeg. Ceir rhai o'r bythynnod gweithwyr mwyaf di-nod yng Nghilgwyn, o'u cymharu â thai safonol Nantlle. Serch hynny, maen nhw'n rhannu llawer o nodweddion pendant, megis defnyddio deunyddiau adeiladu lleol, sef meini o'r maes i ddechrau ond wedyn blociau llechi gwastraff o'r chwareli. Mae tomenni gwastraff llechi wedi nesáu at ymylon y ddau bentref, ac eto i gyd mae'r ddau yn sefyll mewn tirlun naturiol dramatig.

Tynnir y themâu amrywiol at ei gilydd i ddangos bod Nantlle a Chilgwyn wedi cadw cymeriad cryf a neilltuol sy'n deillio o'r bedwaredd ganrif ar bymtheg a hynny ar sail cyfuniad unigryw o dopograffi, hanes economaidd a chymdeithasol, a'r adnoddau naturiol lleol y codwyd eu hadeiladau ohonyn nhw. Mae'r adroddiad yn gorffen gydag argymhellion ar ragoriaethau dynodi Ardal Gadwraeth.

## Summary

A character study of the built heritage of Nantlle and Cilgwyn was prepared in 2017 in support of the Wales Slate World Heritage Nomination to be submitted to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). Nantlle is a village in the Nantlle valley in Snowdonia, while Cilgwyn is a small settlement on the mountain slopes nearby. The settlements emerged to house quarrymen at their respective quarries. Cilgwyn was built from the late-eighteenth century for men at Cilgwyn Quarry, Nantlle in the second half of the nineteenth century, mainly for quarrymen at Penyrsedd, which was one of the largest slate quarries in North Wales in the late-nineteenth century.

The report outlines the history of quarrying in the locality and of the settlements themselves. The character study examines the pattern of settlement and its relationship to its existing infrastructure of roads and land ownership. Focussing mainly on industrial housing, but also encompassing cultural and religious buildings, it discusses the influence of the local economy, cultural aspirations, social structure and the use of building materials, all of which have contributed to the special character of the settlements' built heritage. The variety of historic character within the two settlements is highlighted by the identification of separate character areas.

Nantlle and Cilgwyn are shown to be contrasting and distinctive settlements. Cilgwyn was a largely spontaneous development by quarrymen on previously unenclosed moorland, whereas Nantlle was mainly planned and built for workmen and managerial staff at Penyrsedd Quarry. Whereas Cilgwyn emerged from an informal cluster of smallholdings with small fields, Nantlle was a linear development along a pre-existing turnpike road. Some of the humblest workmen's cottages are to be found in Cilgwyn, compared with housing of high quality in Nantlle. However, they share many defining characteristics, such as the use of local building materials, initially field stones but later slate blocks discarded from the quarries. Slate waste tips have encroached to the edge of both villages, and yet both villages are set in a dramatic natural landscape.

The various themes are drawn together to show that Nantlle and Cilgwyn retain strong and distinctive nineteenth-century character based on their unique combinations of topography, economic and social history, and the local natural resources with which their buildings were constructed. The report concludes with recommendations on the merits of designation of Conservation Area status.

NANTLLE and CILGWYN  
a character study

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## I Aims of the study

Historic character confers identity, creates a sense of belonging and contributes to the quality of the places where we live, work and visit. It can also be an asset for economic vitality and regeneration. Protecting and sustaining local character effectively requires a sound evidence base that can inform regeneration activity, conservation, planning and design, and support decisions about conservation, management and the accommodation of change.

Developing character studies for settlements helps provide a robust evidence-base for local planning policies and will provide a key element of support for managing these proposed settlements for the future.

The immediate purpose of this study is to provide supporting evidence for one aspect of the forthcoming Wales Slate World Heritage Site nomination. The nomination will seek to convey the important value that settlements play in the outstanding universal value of the site. Nantlle and Cilgwyn are among the settlements selected for study, because they have their own distinctive character that reveals specific aspects of the development of the slate industry and the economy, society and culture that it produced.

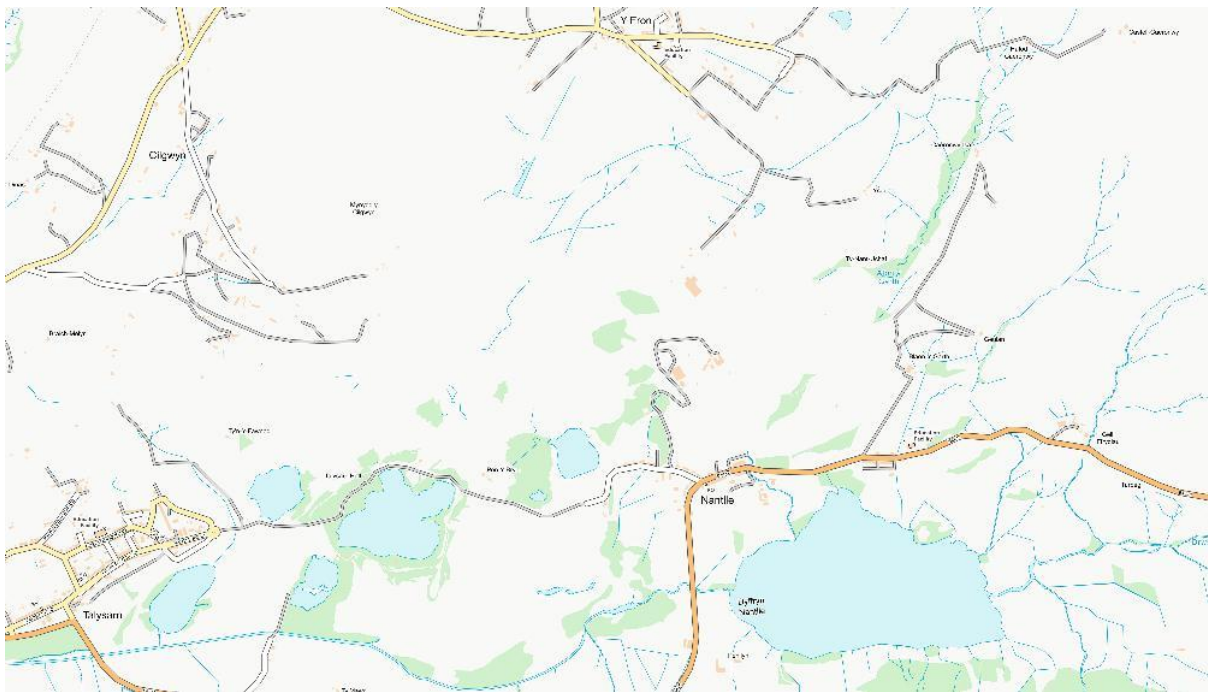


Fig 1 Location map

## 2 Introduction

Nantlle is a small village in the Nantlle valley in Snowdonia (fig 1). The village was built along the line of a road that followed the course of the valley on the north side of two natural lakes, Llyn Nantlle Uchaf and Isaf, although the lower lake, Llyn Nantlle Isaf, has been filled in. The mountains of Snowdonia, including Snowdon, form the backdrop to the east (fig 2). On the north side the ground rises steeply to the mountainous Moel Tryfan, the south-western extent of which is known as Mynydd Cilgwyn, on which the small settlement of Cilgwyn was built. From here the Irish Sea is visible less than four miles to the west (fig 3).

The topographical setting of the settlements is quite different. Nantlle occupies the valley floor, whereas Cilgwyn was built on exposed, south-west facing moorland.



*Fig 2 Nantlle village is set in a landscape of slate waste tips, on the left, and the mountains of Snowdonia, with Snowdon in the distance, shrouded in cloud.*



*Fig 3 Cilgwyn was built on moorland facing westwards toward the Irish Sea.*

Between Cilgwyn and Nantlle are several quarries – principally Cilgwyn, Cloddfa'r Lon, Dorothea and Penyrsedd – that merge into a landscape of waste tips, quarry buildings and flooded pits. At both Nantlle and Cilgwyn, the slate waste tips extend to the very edge of the village.

The boundary of Snowdonia National Park is the road through the central section of Nantlle, the consequence of which is that buildings on the south side of the road are within the National Park and buildings and the quarries on the north side are outside of it. The eastern section of the village, including Tai Victoria and Ysgol Baladeulyn, are within the National Park. Nantlle and Cilgwyn are within the Nantlle Valley Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest.

### **3 Historical development**

Slate was quarried on Mynydd Cilgwyn from an early date, but not until the late eighteenth century was the scale of operations large enough to need purpose-built quarrymen's housing. By the 1780s there were 14 separate quarry pits, employing 128 'masters' (some of them women) and boys.

After 1800 mineral rights were leased to a partnership led by John Evans, the quarries came under single management and by the 1820s the scale of operations had increased again – a horse-whim was now used to raise slates from a deep pit. Cilgwyn quarries were idle during the 1840s, when quarrymen were convicted of digging slate illegally, but the quarry opened again and by 1882 there were 300 men employed there. Cilgwyn was also briefly linked to the Braich quarry further north-east by the John Robinson tramway, which operated from 1868-c1875. The track entered the east end of the village and an inclined plane ran between the cottages to link the tramway with Talysarn Quarry and the well-established Nantlle Railway. The twentieth century was a period of economic contraction. Output declined and Cilgwyn Quarry closed in 1956. Closure of the Cilgwyn Quarry was followed in the late twentieth century by use of the site as a landfill, with an improved access road on the line of an earlier tramway. The tip is now closed and the site has been landscaped.

By the mid nineteenth century Cilgwyn was no longer the centre of the local slate industry. Cloddfa'r Lon was the first major slate quarry on the floor of the Nantlle valley. It was opened in 1808 by William Turner and remained in production until 1892, in the latter years working near an old farmstead known as Penybryn. William Turner had interests in several other local quarries. He opened Cloddfa Turner in 1829 with his son-in-law John Morgan. It was taken over in 1849 by a consortium of local quarrymen, farmers and entrepreneurs and became the Dorothea Quarry Company. Penyrsedd Quarry was also begun by Turner, c1816, and is on the north side of Nantlle village, but its greatest period of expansion occurred after it was acquired in 1863 by W.A. Darbshire.

Later in the nineteenth century the Dorothea and Penyrsedd Quarries dominated local production and were among the largest slate quarries in Wales. In 1864 Dorothea and Penyrsedd Quarries both employed 400 men, while Cloddfa'r Lon Quarry employed 200. By 1896, after Cloddfa'r Lon had closed, Penyrsedd employed 627 men and Dorothea 532 men. This was the peak year of employment, by which time most of the inhabitants of Nantlle were employed in the industry. Production declined slowly in the early twentieth century and more rapidly in the second half. Dorothea closed in 1970, Penyrsedd in 1997.



## 4 Settlement history

A settlement emerged at Cilgwyn in the final quarter of the eighteenth century. It was built on hitherto unenclosed moorland, in the form of a spontaneous patchwork of fields and cottages. Strictly speaking, these were illegal encroachments on common land, owned by the crown, but were not regarded as controversial.

An attempt was made to enclose the uplands of Moel Tryfan in 1826-27 by Lord Newborough, owner of the adjoining lowland. The cottagers at Cilgwyn, and at other affected settlements, resisted the enclosure by referring to the cottages they had built 40 years previously. They argued that the moorland had been 'cleared of stones, manured and cultivated as to make them produce potatoes, in many cases slight crops of corn and in some cases afford the means of supporting one or two cows.' By their efforts, therefore, the quarrymen had made it their own. In the event a campaign organised by John Evans, leading partner in the Cilgwyn Quarry, prevailed and Parliament rejected the enclosure. For a nominal sum the cottagers were allowed to purchase their landholdings and by 1840 Cilgwyn was a settlement of freeholders.

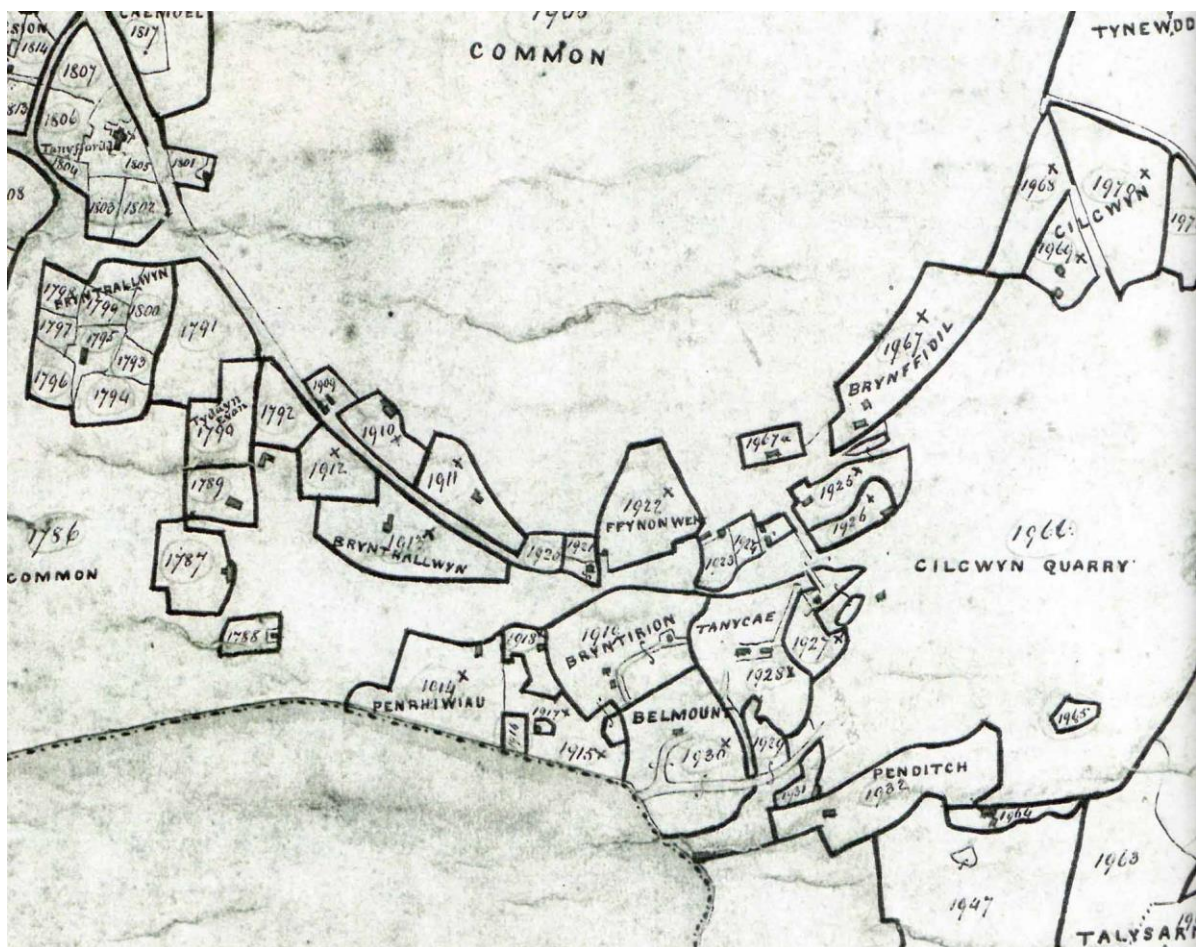


Fig 4 Detail of Llandwrog Tithe map, 1840, showing settlement at Cilgwyn.

The pattern of settlement at Cilgwyn is well conveyed by the Tithe maps for Llanllyfni and Llandwrog parishes, dated 1839 and 1840 respectively (fig 4). They show an isolated upland settlement comprised of scattered individual cottages, set in small enclosures, mostly between 1 and 5 acres, but with smallholdings such as Parc, Cae Gwyn and Hafod Las of

between 12 and 18 acres. About half of the cottages were owner-occupied, the remainder rented from different landowners. Its link to the outside world was a moorland road that joined a road on the west flank of Moel Tryfan at the village of Carmel (which was not yet in existence in 1840).

After 1840 the area of the village did not expand, but the density of settlement within it increased. New houses were built to accommodate the rising number of men employed at the quarry and they are shown on the Ordnance Survey map of 1889 (fig 5). The map also reveals a network of tracks and paths that evolved to link the various cottages. Land among the smallholdings was evidently sold off as building plots and a series of pairs, and short rows of houses were built within the existing enclosed land. From 1842 there was also an Independent chapel.

Cilgwyn suffered depopulation after the quarry closed. By the late twentieth century many of the cottages had been abandoned, but the field pattern that evolved with them has remained. Other cottages which are shown on the 1840 Tithe map were buried under encroaching waste tips, while others were replaced by new houses on the same site, leaving the old house to fall into ruin or to be used as an outbuilding.

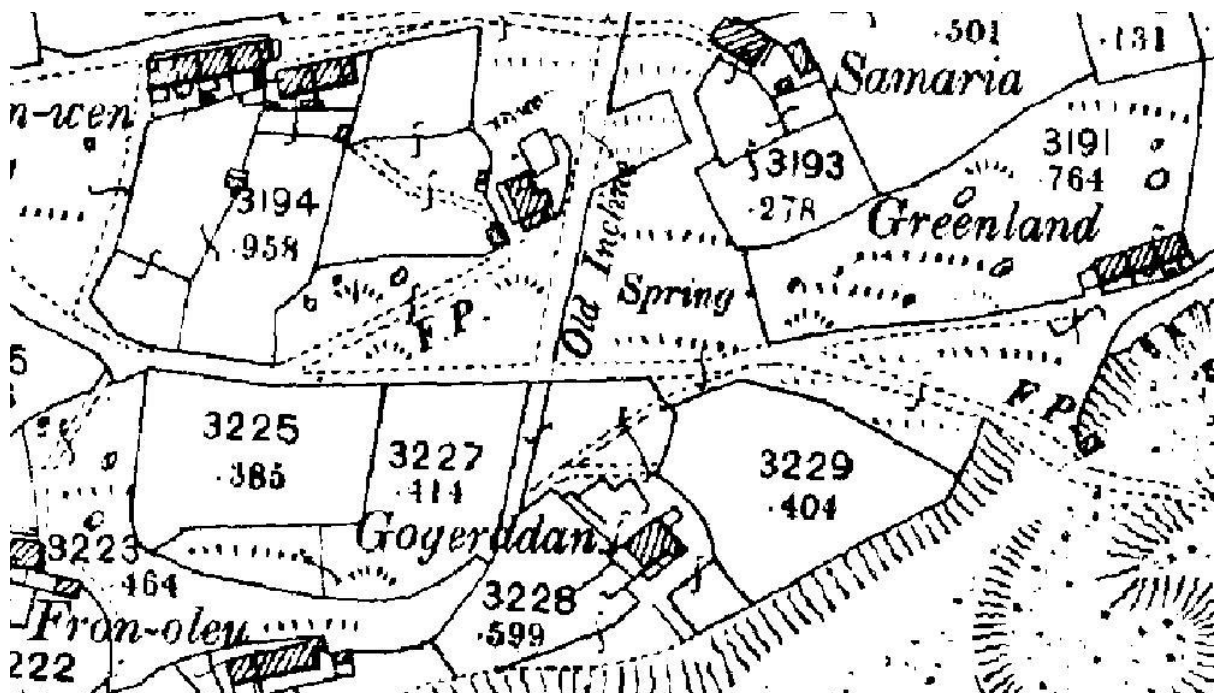


Fig 5 Detail from the 1900 Ordnance Survey map showing pre-1840 cottages (Samaria and Gogerddan), together with later short rows of houses upper left (Pen-ffynnon-wen) and Greenland to the right.

Whereas Cilgwyn was a spontaneous settlement, Nantlle was to a large extent a planned village. Settlement in Nantlle by 1840 was minimal. The Tithe plan of that date shows only a few buildings, including Nantlle farmstead (i.e. Ty Mawr), and Nantlle Mill. The latter was in existence by 1798 when estimates were prepared for rebuilding it. The buildings were sited on either side of a turnpike road which had been established in the 1820s. The road follows an east-west course on the north side of Llyn Nantlle Uchaf, from Rhyd Ddu at the foot of Snowdon to Penygroes.

Growth of the village is shown on the 1889 Ordnance Survey, and occurred largely in the period after 1863 when Darbishire bought Penyrsedd Quarry (fig 6). The village was a linear settlement along the turnpike road. The earliest developments appear to have been at the west end of the village, close to a sixteenth-century gentry house, Ty Mawr, which is the oldest surviving building in the village. Nothing survives above ground of a medieval royal court (*llys*) and its associated township (*maerdref*) that was here in the thirteenth century. A block of quarrymen's barracks was built in the village, which is the only known surviving barracks to be built in a village setting. Barracks, providing weekly lodging for workmen, and sometimes their families too, who returned home at weekends. They were more often located at the quarry itself – a block of barracks was built for Cloddfa'r Lon c1866 at the quarry itself, and another barracks survives in Penyrsedd Quarry.

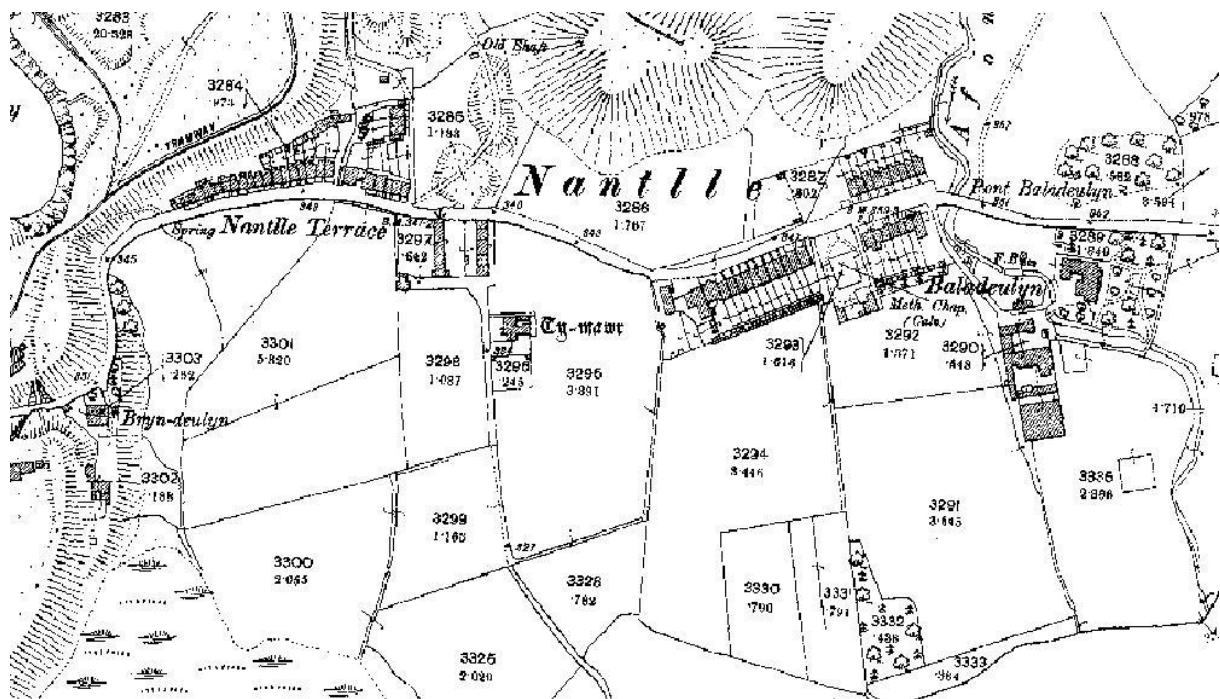


Fig 6 Ordnance Survey map, 1889, showing the development of Nantlle village

Further east were houses built by the Darbishire family for workmen at Penyrsedd, in the midst of which was Capel Baladeulyn, a Calvinistic Methodist chapel established in 1865 (fig 7). After the Elementary Education Act of 1870 the Llandwrog School Board built a school in Nantlle in 1873, designed by its chairman W.C. Williams. It comprised a school and school house, but stood originally in isolation beyond the east end of the village.

Houses were also erected for quarry managers. Plas Baladeulyn was built c1863 following the Darbishire acquisition of Penyrsedd, and Bryn Deulyn was built at the entrance to Dorothea at some time after 1853. Plas Baladeulyn had extensive gardens and a block of outbuildings, and stood beyond the east end of the village as it then existed.

The only significant development of the 1890s was Tai Victoria, built in 1897 (fig 8). The houses were designed for Penyrsedd by the Caernarfon architect Rowland Lloyd Jones, who was later the county architect for Caernarfonshire. The two rows stand at the eastern end of the village, close to the school and well apart from the earlier housing.

There was little further development after 1900. Semi-detached houses were built for managerial staff opposite Tai Victoria. The mid-late twentieth century saw only minor development, notably Glan Rhonwy between the central and western components of the village. The section of the Turnpike road between Nantlle and Talysarn had been engulfed by quarry workings, and exists now only as a public footpath. The road was diverted southwards between the two lakes, then continues westwards to Talysarn on the south side of Afon Llyfni. There have been few losses, but they include Capel Baladeulyn, demolished in 1985. The Penyrsedd war memorial was re-erected in the chapel forecourt, having originally stood at the quarry.

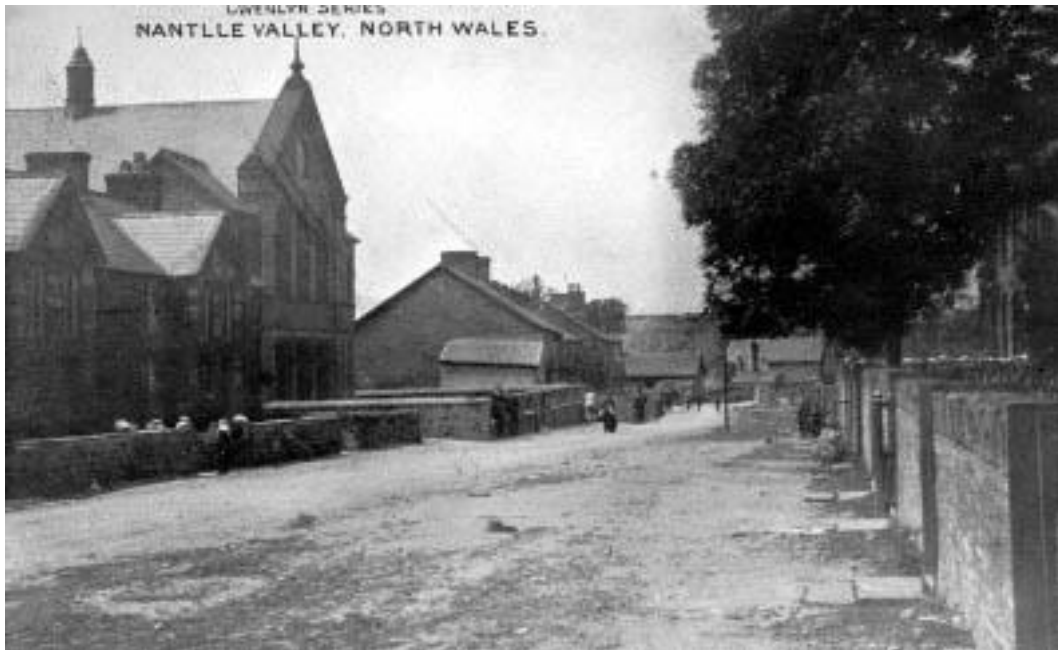


Fig 7 The road through Nantlle village, with Capel Baladeulyn on the left. (Gwynedd Archives XS/2115/86)

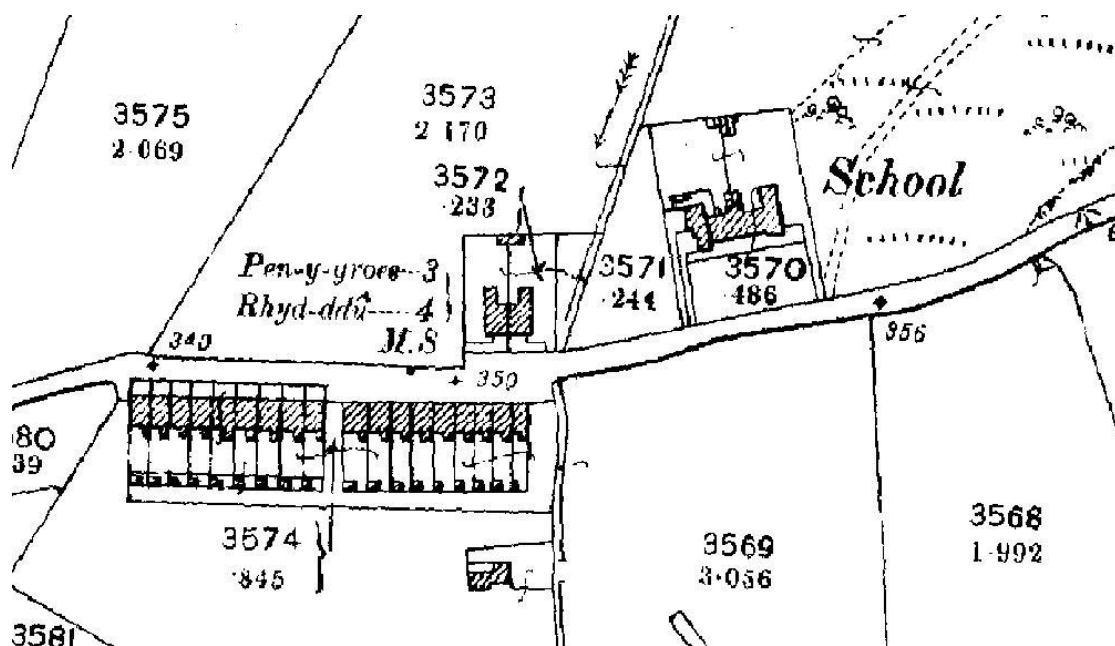


Fig 8 Detail of the 1900 Ordnance Survey map, showing Tai Victoria and Ysgol Baladeulyn.

## 5 Character of building

### 5.1 Building style and detail

Nantlle and Cilgwyn offer contrasting examples of industrial settlements, as well as contrasting building styles, even though their built heritage is broadly contemporary.

In Cilgwyn the earliest houses are single cottages, similar to the more humble dwellings in rural Caernarfonshire. They are of a single storey, divided into two heated rooms, with an attic sleeping space, or *croglofft* (fig 9). Original character is now best represented in those cottages which have been abandoned. Two of them, Parc and Pen-hafod-las, retain attached farm buildings (fig 10). Similar one-storey cottages continued to be built in the mid-late nineteenth century, many of them joined to form pairs or lines of three or four (fig 11).



*Fig 9 Samaria in Cilgwyn, built by 1840. In the far gable end is a small window that lit the croglofft.*

Two-storey houses were also built in the nineteenth century, in pairs or in short rows (fig 12). Most of these houses are single-fronted, a type that became established in other industrial settlements, such as Penygroes, in the second quarter of the nineteenth century. Outbuildings in Cilgwyn are comparatively few, but include pigsties and privies.

In the twentieth century houses were increasingly altered. Roughcast was applied to some of the houses, followed later by pebble-dashing and cement-rendering. The pace of change accelerated in the latter half of the century, during which time windows and doors were replaced with modern materials, slate roofs were replaced and extensions were added, often at the expense of their historic character.



*Fig 10 Pen-hafod-las in Cilgwyn. The house is roofless but has an additional heated unit and farm range in line with the cottage.*



*Fig 11 A row of four single-storey cottages at Pen-ffynnon-wen in Cilgwyn, built in the period 1840-1889. The steep bank is retained by a retaining wall and the cottages are offset from it, an unusual arrangement seen elsewhere in North Wales. Note that the chimney stack is constructed of large blocks, larger than the stones in the gable end below it.*



*Fig 12 Two-storey houses in Cilgwyn*

Nantlle has more variety in its nineteenth-century housing. The Barracks comprises an accommodation range which is derived from the rural tradition of the single-storey cottage (fig 13). The accommodation block faces a cow house and enclosed on the other two sides, resembling a farmyard. The quarrymen's houses are more urban in inspiration. They are built in terraces and are two-storey houses which are either single-fronted or have two-window fronts. The plainest are Tai Nantlle, two rows of two-storey houses, mostly single-fronted. The terraces built by Penyrsedd Quarry, by contrast, are each a single composition. They express a rustic aesthetic, outwardly aspiring to create an ordered, civilised environment of superior-quality workmen's housing (fig 14). A similar aesthetic concern is apparent in other Darbishire-family developments, including the quarry village of Penmaenmawr, which was developed through the second half of the nineteenth century. The houses in Nantlle are almost all set back from the street behind small front gardens.

In Cilgwyn the houses belong to a single social class. In Nantlle, however, there is a social hierarchy in its housing stock, reflecting the hierarchy within the workplace. The two manager's houses, Bryn Deulyn and Plas Baladeulyn, are the largest houses in the village and incorporate hipped roofs, distinguishing them from the quarrymen's houses. They are set apart from village, socially as well as spatially, and both of them look away from the village to the natural scenery – Bryn Deulyn to Snowdon and Plas Baladeulyn to Llyn Nantlle Uchaf.



*Fig 13 The Barracks in Nantlle, derived from the same rural tradition as the cottages in Cilgwyn.*



*Fig 14 The right-hand end of Tai Penyrsedd in Nantlle.*

There are few public buildings in the two settlements. Neither Nantlle nor Cilgwyn has a public house, in Nantlle perhaps a consequence of the Darbishire family's moral as well as economic control of the village. Nantlle has a school, but it is sited at the end of the village. The visual focal point of Nantlle village was formerly the chapel. The only public building in Cilgwyn is the chapel, a modest building rebuilt in 1877 with a gable-end façade, and round-headed windows characteristic of the period, sufficient to distinguish it from the domestic buildings (fig 15).





*Fig 15 Cilgwyn Independent chapel, rebuilt in 1877. It has a gable-end façade and round-headed windows, characteristic of nonconformist chapels of the latter half of the nineteenth century.*

## 5.2 Building materials

Building materials make a strong contribution to the character of the built heritage, and are used as subtle indicators of the status of individual buildings. The use of local materials adds to the strong regional character of the settlements.

In Cilgwyn the cottages, field walls and outbuildings are mainly built of field stone, i.e. stones that were found scattered across the moorland (fig 16). There is some use of roughly dressed stone for quoins and lintels, and one of the cottages has a timber lintel over its main fireplace. The houses are roofed in slate. Surviving cottages have mainly been re-roofed. For the original roof coverings the abandoned and disused cottages are more instructive. Bryn Tirion and Pen-hafod-las, both of which were built by 1840, have roofs of small, uneven slates that have been grouted, in lieu of replacement (fig 17). These were probably slates that could not be sold on account of their poor quality, a further indication of how the earliest cottages were built using found materials.



*Fig 16 Gable end of a cottage in Cilgwyn, built of field stone of varying sizes, with large quoins.*



*Fig 17 The old cottage at Bryn Tirion in Cilgwyn has a roof of generally poor-quality small slates, maintained by grouting.*



*Fig 18 Greenland, Cilgwyn, a row of three single-storey cottages built between 1840 and 1889, constructed mainly of roughly coursed slate blocks from the quarry.*



*Fig 19 Storm porch of slate slabs at Pen-ffynnon-wen, Cilgwyn*



*Fig 20 Slate chimney pot, Cilgwyn*



*Fig 21 Slate slabs used in a pigsty at Pen-ffynnon-wen, Cilgwyn.*

Roughly-hewn slate in thin blocks was used to build some of the later cottages in Cilgwyn, derived from quarry waste (fig 18). The later houses also display slate roofs of higher quality than the surviving early cottages. Thinner slabs were also used ingeniously in a variety of other contexts: as gate piers, cladding for chimneys, tied together with wire to form chimney pots, and as storm porches (figs 19, 20). One of the pigsties retains a roof of long slate slabs, with similar slabs set upright to form the adjoin pens (fig 21).

In Cilgwyn field walls are built of field stone and have gate piers of sawn slate. Tracks between cottages are sometimes retained by rubble-stone walls, as is the line of the quarry railway to Braich Rhydd.

Buildings in Nantlle are also built of local materials. Field stone is used for boundary walls and for the early housing, such as the Barracks. The majority of the houses, however, are constructed of roughly-hewn but thin slate blocks in rough courses, and all buildings are under slate roofs (fig 22). Slate was also used for the higher status houses: the walls of Bryn Deulyn, however, are constructed of snecked stone rather than rough courses, and for the gate piers at its entrance the stone has been dressed. Garden and other walls form an important component of the character of the village, largely on account of the materials used. These include gate piers of sawn slate slabs, and divisions between gardens of lines of rough upright slabs, which are evident in Tai Penyrsedd. These slate fences, or *crawiau*, derive from a local rural tradition – they can be seen in the fields adjacent to the village.

Toward the end of the nineteenth century brick was used increasingly for window dressings and chimney stacks. Quarried stone was reserved for buildings of higher status. The vestry at Capel Baladeulyn is built of snecked quarried stone with sandstone dressings (fig 23).



*Fig 22 Tai Penyrsedd, Nantlle, with slate garden walls and gate piers of sawn slabs. Note that the houses are articulated with pilaster strips and string course.*



Fig 23 The vestry at Capel Baladeulyn, built of snecked quarried stone with sandstone dressings.

Slate hanging is used on the higher-status buildings. Although slate cladding was traditionally used to protect buildings from the effects of the weather, in Nantlle it is used as decorative and status device. It contributes much to the character of Bryn Deulyn, Plas Baladeulyn and the semi-detached houses opposite Tai Victoria. Use of slate hanging was an architectural trend that began in estate architecture, and was therefore architect-led rather than a vernacular tradition.



Fig 24 The central panel of the Penryrsedd war memorial is the large incised slate slab.

In the twentieth century it became customary for the walls to be rendered and pebble-dashed. This can be seen in the mid twentieth-century houses in the Nantlle. However, the tradition of building with slate was revived in the twentieth century. It has been used for building garden walls and for the bus shelter in the centre of Nantlle village. Its symbolic and economic importance to the community is embodied in the Penyrsedd war memorial, decorated with quarry scenes (fig 24). Slate is easily inscribed and lends itself to memorial inscriptions and relief carving, of which this is a fine example.

## 6 Character areas

### 6.1 Tai Victoria

The eastern end of the village is detached from the main settlement (fig 25). This was the latest part of the village to be developed, and is the only part of the village where brick is conspicuous as a building material, albeit only for dressings, quoins and well-detailed chimney stacks.

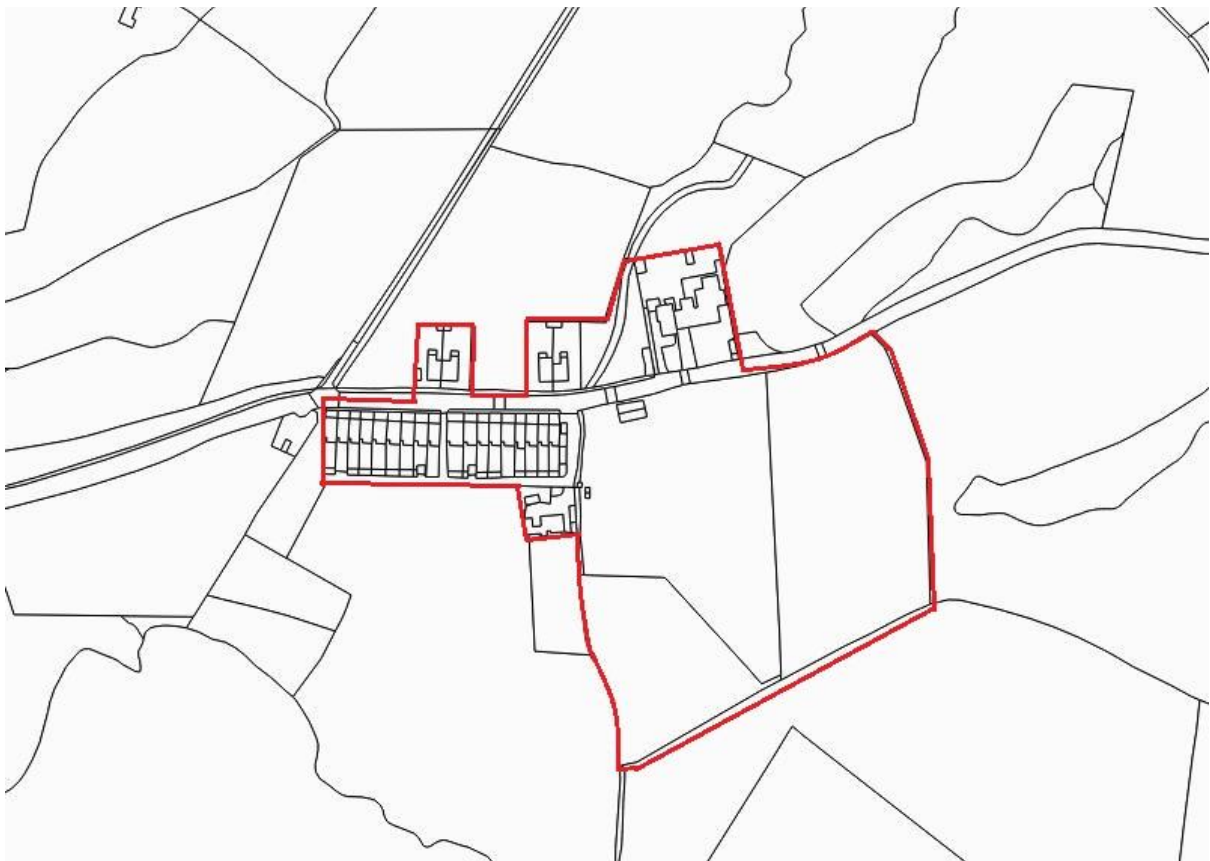


Fig 25 Tai Victoria character area.

The earliest building is Ysgol Baladeulyn, a Board School of 1873, which is typical of the period in being a tall single-storey building with large windows. The other buildings were houses built by the Penyrsedd Quarry in the last decade of nineteenth and first decade of the twentieth century. The two rows that make up Tai Victoria offer a superior standard of quarrymen's houses, in both aesthetic and practical terms (fig 26). The inner gable ends of the rows slate-hung, there are gables over the upper-storey windows, and there are bracketed canopies above the doorways, a distinguishing feature of nineteenth-century quarrymen's houses in North Wales. When built the houses had boarded doors and sash

windows (numbers 1-9 had four-pane sashes, numbers 10-18 twelve-pane sashes), the majority of which have now been replaced. Notwithstanding these alterations, the row retains its uniform character. Original character is also retained behind the street front. The houses have rear gardens with stone boundary wall and outbuildings, beyond which are a fine example of *crawiau* fences which enhance the character of this area in its rural setting.



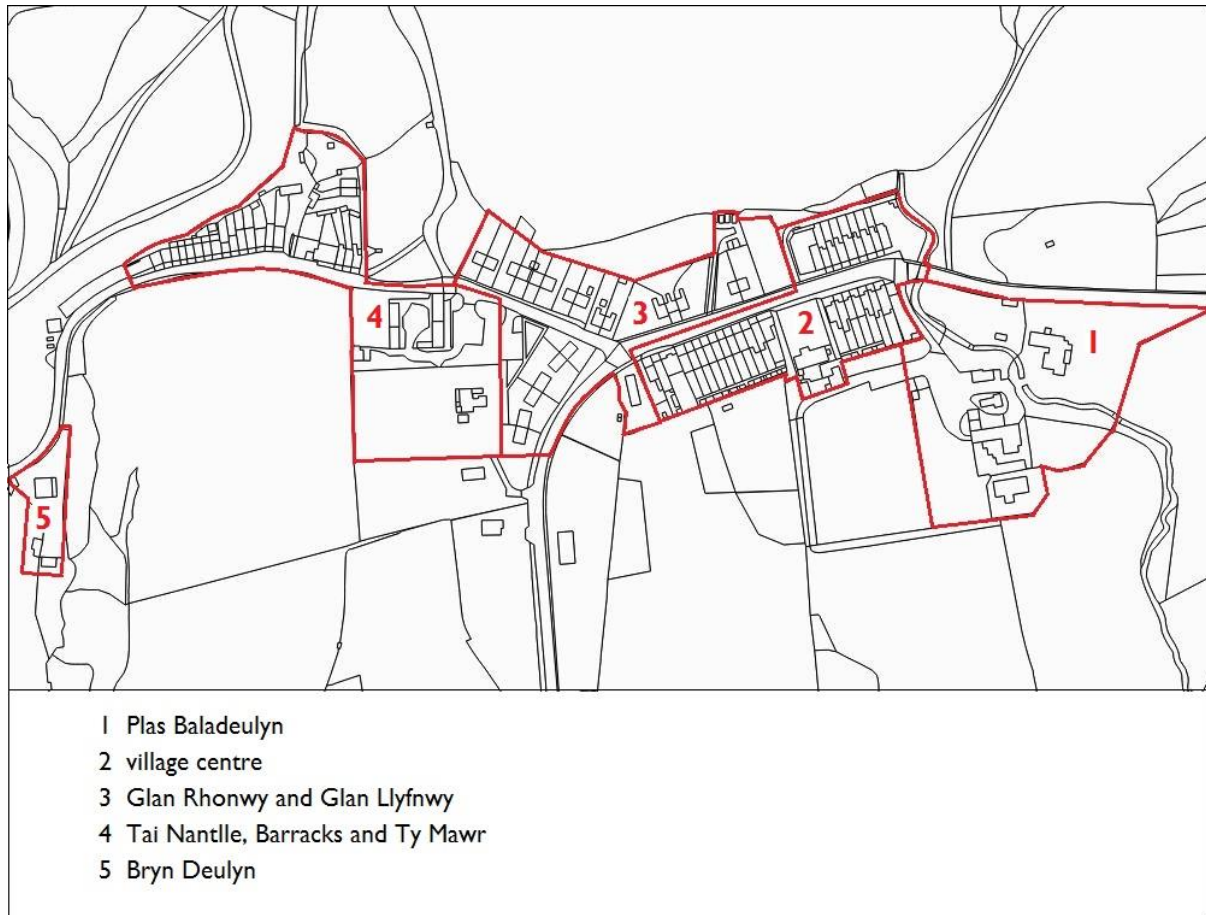
Fig 26 Tai Victoria, Nantlle. The terrace features brick dressings and stacks, and bracketed canopies above the doorways.



Fig 27 Semi-detached houses opposite Tai Victoria, clearly of superior social status to the quarrymen's houses. The houses have the most prominent display of slate hanging in the village.



Opposite Tai Victoria are two pairs of semi-detached houses (fig 27). They incorporate slate hanging as a sign of status, and are set above the level of the road and of the houses opposite, articulating a hierarchical distinction between the managerial class and the workmen.



*Fig 28 Character areas in the centre of Nantlle village.*

## *6.2 Plas Baladeulyn*

Plas Baladeulyn was built for the quarry manager after the acquisition of Penyrsedd by the Darbshire family in 1863 (fig 28). It is therefore an important component in the social hierarchy of the village, mirroring the hierarchy of the workplace. It makes only a limited visual impact, however, because it is set back from the main road in its own grounds behind a stone wall and surrounded by trees. There is an extensive range of outbuildings which had been built by 1889 and are set further away from the road, but they have been altered and extended, with a significant loss of historic character (fig 29).



*Fig 29 Plas Baladeulyn, with Llyn Nantlle Uchaf in the background.*



*Fig 30 Tai Baladeulyn, a terrace of mirrored pairs under gables with barge boards.*

### 6.3 Nantlle village centre

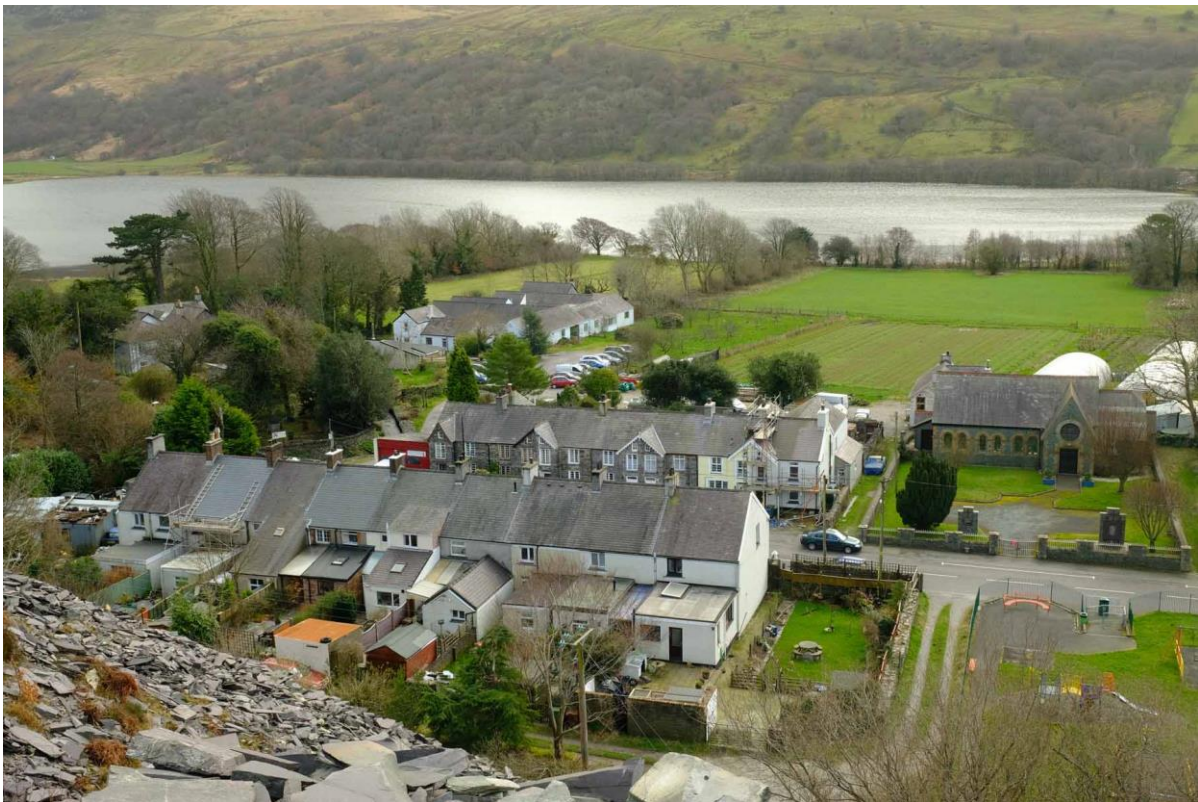
The centre of the village comprises three rows – Tai Penyrsedd, Tai Kinmel and Tai Baladeulyn – and the site of Capel Baladeulyn. All were built for the Penyrsedd Quarry in the period following its acquisition by the Darbishire family in 1863 (fig 28).

The three rows of terraced houses are all different. Tai Kinmel has the plainest houses, with gables over the upper-storey windows. Tai Penyrsedd is a row of two-storey, two-window houses, with projecting pairs at either end. The exterior is articulated with pilaster strips and string course (see fig 22). The houses originally had wood-framed cross windows, which have survived on some houses, although most have now been replaced (see fig 14). Tai Baladeulyn is the most distinctive of the rows, and the one that retains best its original unity because there has been less window and door replacement (fig 30). The two-window houses are built in mirrored pairs with shared gables over the entrance. The gables are decorated with barge boards and pendant finials, and the casement windows are constructed with horizontal panes, which is not common in the region.

All of the houses are set back from the road behind garden walls, most of which are rebuilt or rendered. Tai Penyrsedd best retains the original uniformity of these garden walls, with its sawn slabs for gate piers and subdivision by slate fences (see fig 22).

Capel Baladeulyn has been demolished but its neo-Romanesque vestry, set well back from the road, survives, although it makes much less visual impact than the chapel did (see fig 23). The slate war memorial has been re-erected in the chapel forecourt and is a notable for its carvings of quarry scenes, attributed Mary Elizabeth Thompson, an English artist who lived in Bethesda between 1936 and 1954 (see fig 24).

Quarry tips extend to the back gardens of Tai Kinmel, and here they are part of the village setting (fig 31).



*Fig 31 View from the quarry tip over Tai Kinmel, Tai Baladeulyn and the chapel vestry.*

#### 6.4 Glan Rhonwy and Glan Llyfnwy

Glan Rhonwy and Glan Llyfnwy are twentieth-century social housing built in the space between previously detached sections of the village (fig 28). In scale these buildings are comparable with the nineteenth-century village houses and therefore do not detract from the overall historic character of the village.

Twentieth-century housing extends along the north side of the main road, opposite Tai Penyrorseidd, where the modern use of slate is well demonstrated. Garden walls are of thin slate blocks, but incorporating older slate gate piers and a slate fence (fig 32). The modern bus shelter, at the bend in the road, is built of slate.



Fig 32 Slate fence in use as a garden wall on the north side of the road through the village.

#### 6.5 Tai Nantlle, Barracks and Ty Mawr (fig 28)

The western side of the village has buildings of various dates. There are developments on both sides of the former turnpike road in what is the oldest part of the village, but the pattern of building is informal.

Ty Mawr is set well back from the former turnpike road and is a well-preserved sixteenth-century house (fig 33). Close to Ty Mawr is the Barracks, which has been restored, along with the former Ty Mawr service building which stands alongside it, and which was later a stables. These have a mid-nineteenth century character. On the opposite side of the road is Tai Nantlle (fig 34). The shorter block was built in two phases, with slightly varying ridge heights, and the longer block appears also to be the result of piecemeal construction, with slightly varying orientation. Most of these houses are now rendered and the garden walls similarly rendered and/or rebuilt. Windows and doors have been replaced. By 1889 the quarry tips had already extended as far as the back gardens of Tai Nantlle, and form an important component of the setting of the village.



*Fig 33 Ty Mawr.*



*Fig 34 Tai Nantlle, a terrace built in two phases, with a mixture of rebuilt and rendered garden walls.*

## 6.6 Bryn Deulyn (fig 28)

Bryn Deulyn and its coach house area treated as a separate character area because the house is built deliberately apart from the quarrymen's houses (fig 35). The house originally looked out across the landscape toward the lake and Snowdon, although the sense of this has been compromised by the new road, and with its new houses, which cuts across its view. It stands at the entrance to Dorothea Quarry, next to a former bridge of which only the abutments survive, and it has a pronounced quarry setting rather than a village setting. Slate tips are immediately behind the house, and are an important element in its setting, especially as the rough piles of discarded slate contrasts with the refined use of material on the building.

The house, with a Georgian symmetrical style, with veranda, snecked masonry and slate-hung walls, and the hipped roof, all distinguish it architecturally, and by extension socially, from the quarrymen's houses. The two-storey coach-house and wash-house block with attached stable complements its status.



Fig 35 Bryn Deulyn, with the slate waste tips behind it.

## 6.7 Cilgwyn

Cilgwyn is an unplanned upland settlement that evolved spontaneously as a cluster of cottages and smallholdings built by workmen at Cilgwyn Quarry from the final quarter of the eighteenth century (fig 36). They have a scattered distribution and therefore lack the relative uniformity and regularity of the quarry villages such as Nantlle. This informality accounts for much of Cilgwyn's special character.

Cilgwyn is an earlier settlement than Nantlle itself, having grown up with the expansion of Cilgwyn quarry in the nineteenth century. The houses are dispersed on sloping moorland, and are typically of single storey, derived from a rural building tradition, and built either singly, in pairs, or short rows. The presence of outbuildings, in the form of cow houses and

pigsties, enhances the rural character and is valuable evidence of how quarrymen supplemented their incomes by subsistence agriculture.

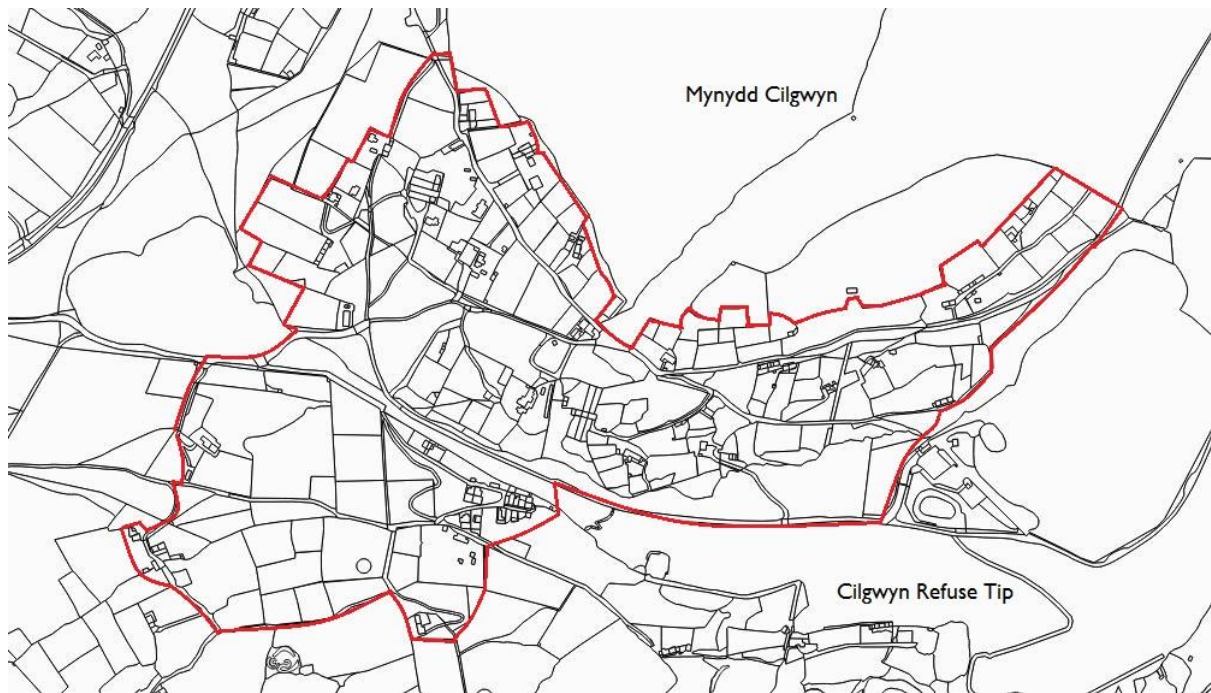


Fig 36 Cilgwyn character area.



Fig 37 Scattered cottages in Cilgwyn, with slate waste in the foreground.

Some of the cottages in Cilgwyn have been abandoned and are in various stages of ruination, although most of them retain important evidence of their construction. Houses that remain

inhabited have mostly been altered by use of render, replacement of windows and doors, often with modern materials, and extensions. Some of these changes have been unsympathetic to the original character of the buildings.

The special character of the settlement is derived as much from its field walls as its cottages, as well as the network of paths that evolved as the settlement developed (figs 38, 39, 40). Moorland surrounds the upper, northern side of the village, while slate waste dominates the south-east side where it encroached on some of the earliest settlement. Cilgwyn therefore retains much of its original upland industrial setting.



*Fig 38 The landscape of Cilgwyn, with scattered cottages and field walls, and moorland in the distance.*



*Fig 39 A typical rough track between fields in Cilgwyn.*



## 7 Statement of Significance

Nantlle and Cilgwyn are in many ways contrasting industrial settlements. Both, however, are set in an industrial landscape of slate quarries and a natural landscape of lake, moorland and mountain. The setting of the villages is therefore both distinctly industrial and Welsh.

Nantlle is a mainly planned village of the mid-late nineteenth century and many of its buildings were architect-designed, demonstrating how the influence of capitalist owners extended from the workplace to the home. It includes some of the highest-standard workmen's houses of the nineteenth century, in a village where there are also middle-class houses, whereby the hierarchy of the workplace is embodied in the buildings of the village.

The special character of both Cilgwyn Nantlle is derived from its use of local materials, specifically field stone for earlier buildings, and roughly-hewn slate blocks for the later buildings. Slate is used in distinctive ways, for example for gate piers and copings. Rough slate slabs, *crawiau*, are placed upright in rows to form 'slate fences' forming garden boundaries, a practice taken from rural use and still to be seen in the slate fences forming field boundaries on the outskirts of Nantlle. It is an example of continuity between rural and industrial traditions.

In contrast to Nantlle, Cilgwyn was to a significant extent built by its inhabitants. As the spontaneous initiative of individual quarrymen Cilgwyn represents a local entrepreneurial and independent spirit, which is an important aspect of the social history of slate quarrying. It developed from the late eighteenth century, in the form of cottages and smallholdings on common land, the sense of which has been well preserved. Its buildings and field walls are built mainly of It is a distinctly working-class village in which there is no significant social hierarchy embodied in its built heritage. The buildings of Cilgwyn are mainly single-storey cottages, some with associated farm buildings, another example of continuity between rural and industrial traditions.

In combination, Nantlle and Cilgwyn document the development of industrial housing through the nineteenth century, from individual cottages of rural tradition to the planned rows of houses which are urban in inspiration and with aesthetic pretensions. They also document a gulf in the quality of industrial housing, when it is considered that the two-storey houses of Tai Baladeulyn are contemporary with the single-storey cottages of Greenland in Cilgwyn.

## 8 Recommendations

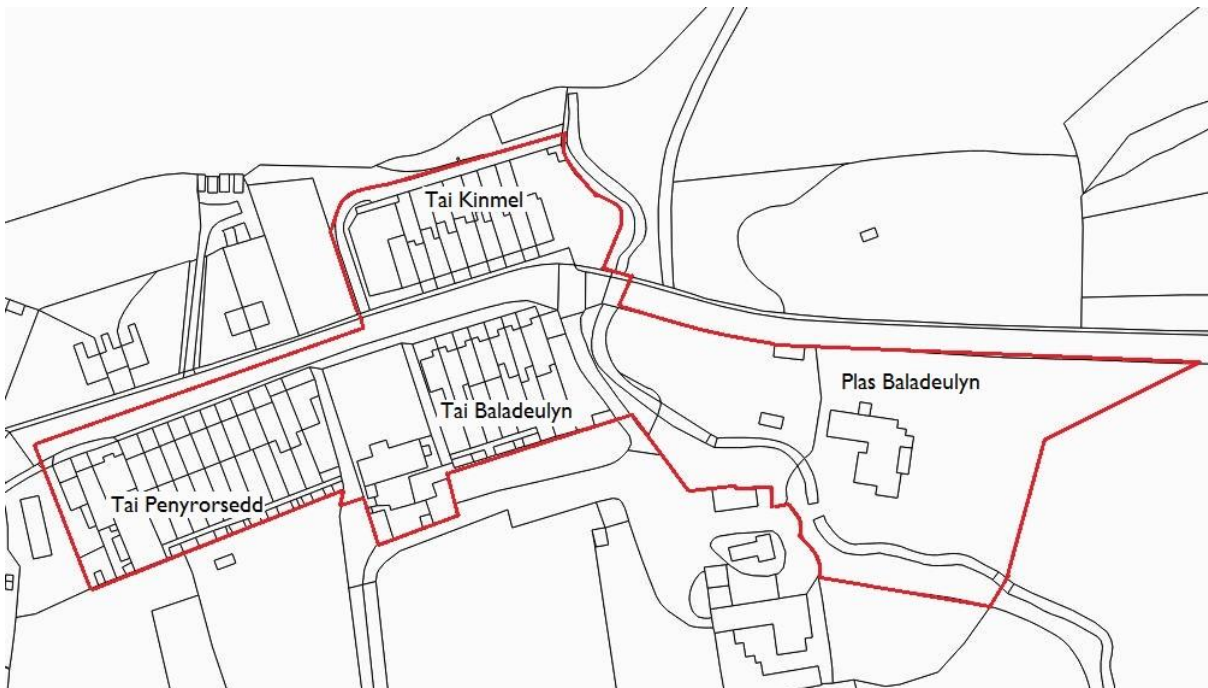
Nantlle is a well-preserved industrial village with a unique history and strong regional character. Some of its buildings are already listed, notably the Barracks, Ty Mawr and Bryn Deulyn (see Appendix 1), but there is scope for further designation in the form of Conservation Areas, in order to protect the historic character of the village. Three discrete areas within Nantlle have been identified.

Tai Nantlle comprises two terraces facing the old turnpike road, in the centre of which is the former Nantlle Mill, and houses set back from the road facing a short lane beneath the spoil tips (fig 40). Notwithstanding that modern external wall insulation has altered the character of the row, it is nevertheless an important part of the historical development of

the village, enhances the setting of neighbouring listed buildings, and contrasts with the planned terraces in the centre of the village.



*Fig 40 Proposed Tai Nantlle Conservation Area boundary.*



*Fig 41 Proposed Conservation Area for Nantlle village centre.*

The proposed area in the centre of the village encompasses Tai Kinmel, Tai Penyrsedd, Tai Baladeulyn, and the chapel (fig 41). The houses in Plas Baladeulyn are already protected by listed-building status, but the surrounding buildings have value in their own right and

contribute to the setting of the listed buildings. Plas Baladeulyn provides a social contrast in the village housing stock. However, there have been losses. The chapel, formerly the focal point of the village, has gone. Outbuildings belonging to Plas Baladeulyn have been altered, although they need not be included in the designated area. Curatorial responsibility for this proposed area is divided between Snowdonia National Park on the south side of the road, and Gwynedd Council on the north side of the road.

The proposed Tai Victoria Conservation Area corresponds to the character area described in section 6.1 (fig 42). It stands wholly within Snowdonia National Park. This area also includes *crawiau* fences in the fields adjoining to the south-east, which are a well-preserved example of the type and make a strong contribution to the rural setting of this detached area of the village (fig 43).

There have been some negative impacts to the historic integrity of the built heritage of Nantlle, some of which designation of Conservation Area status might begin to address. Some of the houses have been rendered, as noted above in the case of Tai Nantlle. Windows and doors have been replaced, often with unsympathetic modern materials, although these changes are reversible. Twentieth-century building has been modest, and has made little overall impact on the historic parts of the village.

Notwithstanding these issues, Nantlle is a well-defined area of special architectural and historical interest worthy of preservation and enhancement, and selected areas of the village would therefore qualify for Conservation Area status.

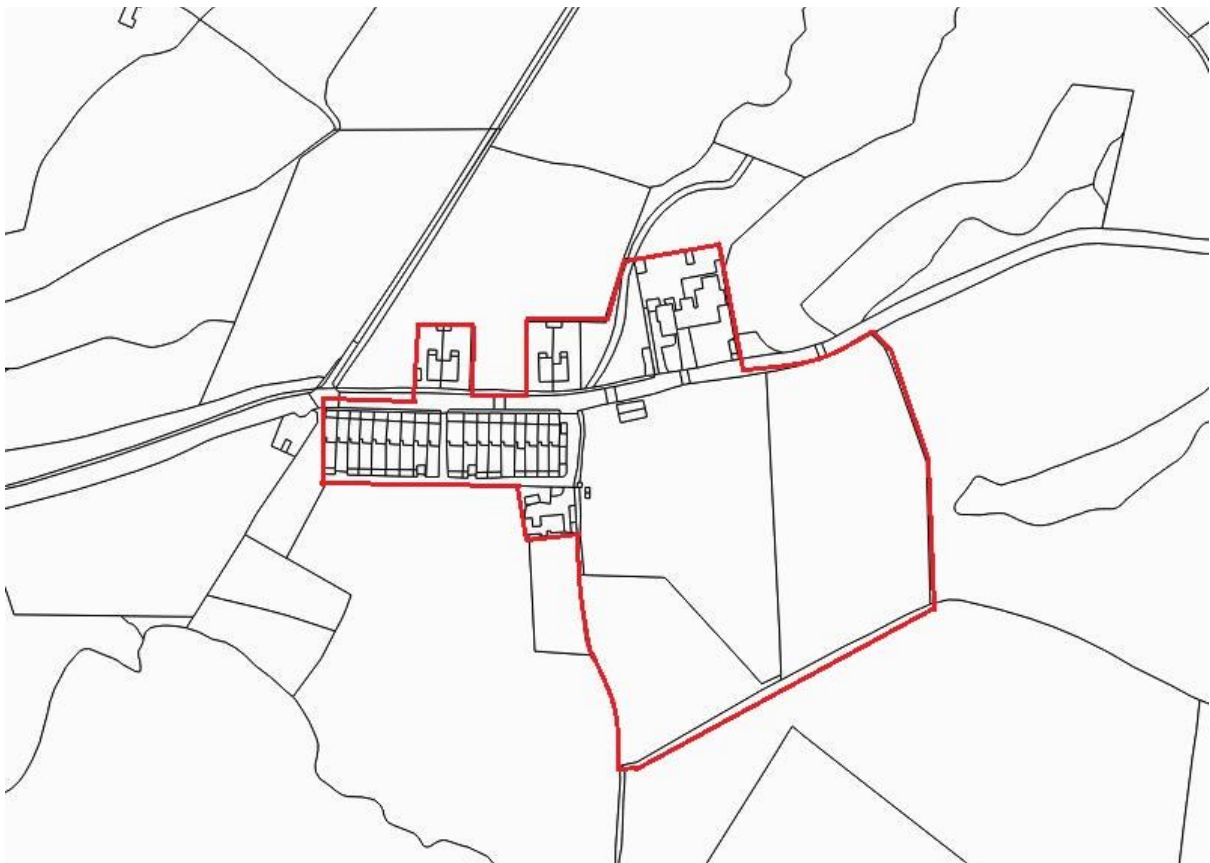
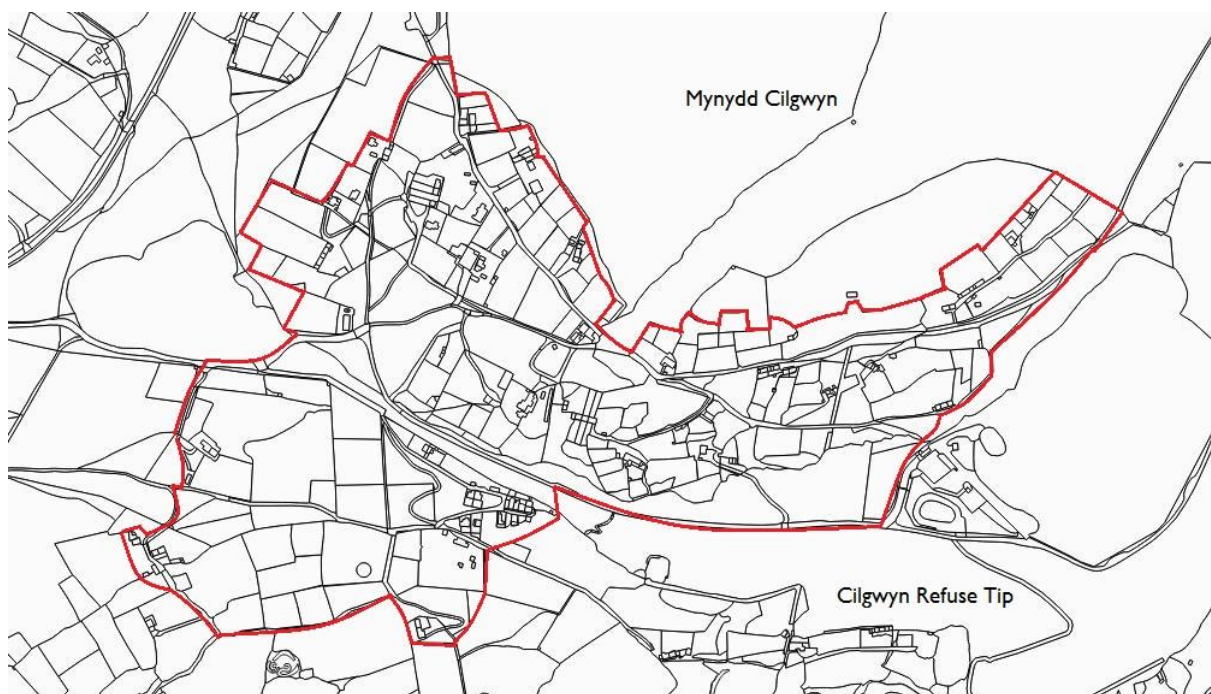


Fig 42 Proposed Tai Victoria Conservation Area.



*Fig 43 Crawiau to the south-east of Tai Victoria make a strong contribution to the rural setting of the houses and Ysgol Baladeulyn.*



*Fig 44 Proposed Cilgwyn Conservation Area boundary.*

In Cilgwyn most of the houses that remain inhabited are much altered, while many others are abandoned and in a ruinous condition. By virtue of their abandonment, however, they retain valuable original detail that has been lost on almost all surviving cottages of a similar date (see figs 19, 20, 21). Another consequence of abandonment in the twentieth century is that there has been almost no new building in the settlement, and the most negative impact

was made by the refuse tip, which is now closed. The historic pattern of settlement, incorporating small walled enclosures and rough paths, has been unusually well preserved. Cilgwyn is therefore worthy of preservation and is recommended for Conservation Area status.

In the long term the abandoned houses and ancillary structures are vulnerable to weathering and a slow diminution of the historic fabric. A programme of building recording is therefore recommended, which would be a rare opportunity to learn more about a class of building that has usually been much altered if it remains inhabited. It should be targeted toward recording plans, elevations and details.

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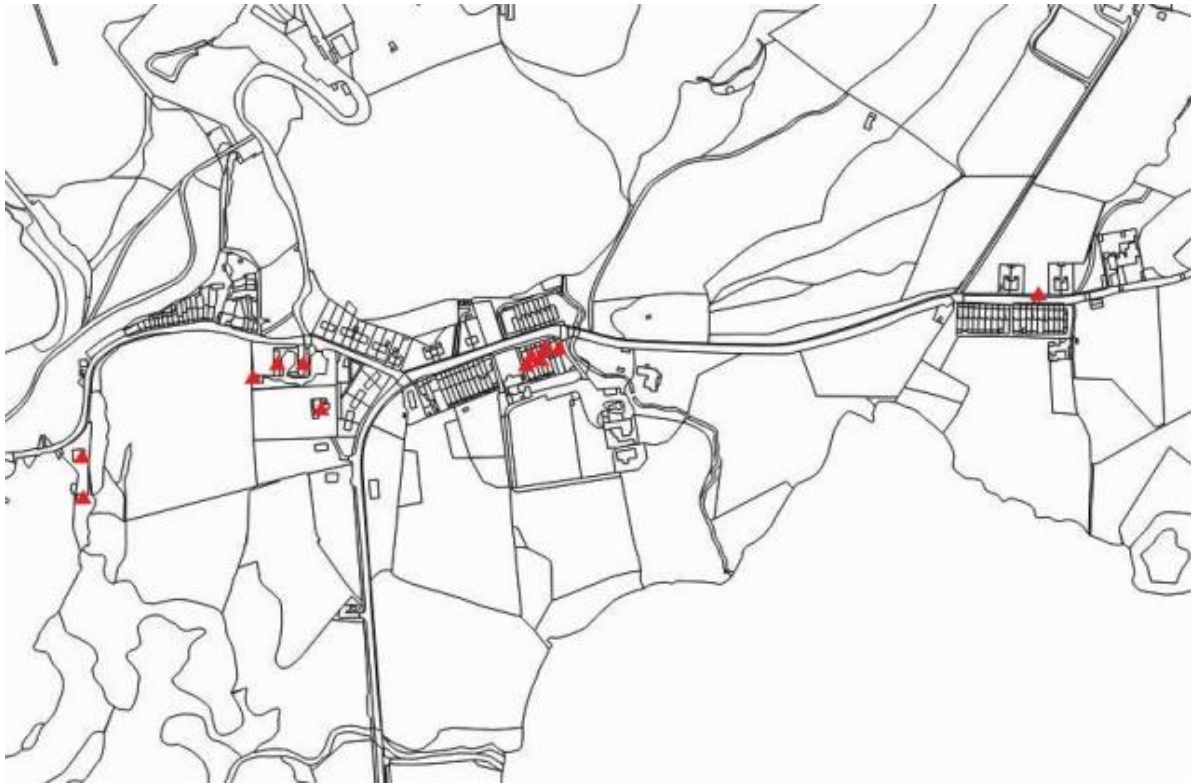
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**Appendix I: listed buildings in Nantlle and Cilgwyn**



*Fig 45 listed buildings in Nantlle.*



*Fig 46 Listed building in Cilgwyn*

|   | Listed building reference number | Grade |
|---|----------------------------------|-------|
| Parc, Cilgwyn   | 22897                            | II    |
| Bryn Deulyn   | 23679                            | II    |
| Coach house, wash house & stables at Bryn Deulyn                      | 23680                            | II    |
| W & S ranges of building at former quarrymen's barracks NW of Ty Mawr | 23748                            | II    |
| Former quarrymen's barracks to NW of Ty Mawr (E range)                | 23683                            | II    |
| Former dairy to NW of Ty Mawr   | 23682                            | II    |
| Ty Mawr   | 22899                            | II*   |
| 5 Tai Baladeulyn  | 23752                            | II    |
| 4 Tai Baladeulyn  | 23751                            | II    |
| 3 Tai Baladeulyn  | 23750                            | II    |
| 2 Tai Baladeulyn  | 23749                            | II    |
| 1 Tai Baladeulyn  | 23684                            | II    |
| Milestone   | 23685                            | II    |