

Image 4: Aerial Photograph of Pen-y-Bannau Hillfort (Driver, 2006)

Mining at Strata Florida

The Abbey Consols Mine was a lead mine that overlooked the Cistercian Abbey on the other side of the Afon Teifi, with the total recorded output of the mine between 1848 and 1909 being 1,236 tons of lead and 1,765 tons of zinc (Natural Resources Wales, 2016). However, it is believed that mining took place at Strata Florida before the 18th century as “The exploitation of mineral resources has been of vital importance to the economy of Wales for thousands of years” (Sables, 2015). The close proximity to the Abbey and the Cistercian monks’ interest in lead also indicate mining could have occurred at the Abbey Consols Mine during the Cistercian Period (Natural Resources Wales, 2016). There is also documentary evidence of the Strata Florida mines supplying lead to repair Cardigan Castle in 1451 and in the 13th century after a ruinous fire at Abbey church the monks were able to reclad the entire roof suggesting there was a readily available source of lead (Sables, 2015 pp. 10 and Anguilano, Timberlake and Rehren, 2010 pp. 86). The construction and maintenance of the Abbey also required large amounts of lead as indicated by archaeological excavations at the site (Sables, 2015 pp. 10). The nearby lead mines of Cwmystwyth are thought to have been mined by the Cistercian Monks of Strata Florida Abbey or miners assigned by them. It is also believed that the Cistercian Monks were involved in the practice of cupellation because of the low silver content in the lead (Hughes, 1981 pp. 5 and Anguilano, Timberlake and Rehren, 2010 pp. 86). There is also thought to be a medieval cupellation furnace in the Abbey precinct due to “the high returns of magnetic susceptibility, phosphates, heavy metal and the fluxgate gradiometer magnetometer survey” carried out in 2013. In 2012 there was also a piece of litharge – a product of a cupellation event was found in a wall (Sables, 2015 pp. 18 and 19).

The Abbey Consol Mines were also active in the 18th, 19th and early 20th Century with the last recorded output being in 1913 (Natural Resources Wales, 2016 and Cole, 2019 pp. 3). The nearby village of Pontrhydfendigaid was built in the late 18th and 19th century in order to house mine workers (Cole, 2019 pp. 3). It has also been suggested that the felling and disposal of timber in the Abbey Woods on the opposite side of the valley to the Abbey Consols Mine, could have potentially been in response to the need for shoring in the mines towards the latter part of the First World War (Austin, Bezant and Barker, 2022 pp. 16).

Current landscape of the Abbey Consols Mine

Many of the mine's features have been destroyed by past reclamation works and the Abbey Consols Mine today is characterised by spoil heaps thought to be around 320,000 tonnes (National Resources Wales, 2016) Other features including a number of shafts, supply ponds, leats, water wheel pit, dressing floors and filter beds survived. (National Resources Wales, 2016 and Cole, 2019 pp.2) There is also the potential that some archaeological remains have survived below ground (Cole, 2019 pp.2) Image 5 shows the remain of an area of the Abbey Consols Mine in 2012. This also shows a rally track that has been built around it. Image 6 shows the spoil heaps with the Afon Teifi in the distance. Image 7 shows a water wheel pit that was used in the 18th, 19th and early 20th century. In image 8 the cart house and mine shafts are visible. Image 9 also has the cart house and beyond it is the house. Image 10 shows the same house in 2025, the roof and part of the building have fallen and been removed. Image 11 is an aerial photograph of the valley in which agricultural work is visible middle of the right-hand side of the valley. This could potentially have damaged any of the remaining archaeological remains. There is little remaining evidence of mining at the Abbey Consols Mines especially for the earlier period of the Cistercians in the 12th century.



Image 5: An aerial photograph of Strata Florida Mine taken in 2012 (Driver, 2012a)



Image 6: Digital copy of a black and white negative showing the spoil heaps at Abbey Consols Mines (Chater, 1967a)



Image 7: Digital copy of a black and white negative showing the wheel pit (Chater 1967b)



Image 8: Area of the Abbey Consols Mine showing the cart house (Driver 2012b)



Image 9: Showing the cart house and the house (Driver 2012c)



Image 10: Photograph of House at Abbey Consols Mine (Stewart 2025)



Image 11: Overview of the valley with Abbey Consols Mines to the left (Driver 2002)

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