

Llanllyr is a farm found just outside of Talsarn, Wales, in the Ceredigion region. Being in the Aeron Valley, the Llanllyr area itself is very flat, but is surrounded by large hills that form the valley's walls. The fields are used as pasture land, with the fields being divided by irrigation and drainage ditches, as well as oak, ash, and elm trees, though there are more densely wooded areas around the farm yard. Other types of trees that are present include birch and hazel. All trees that are present in the area would have been introduced or planted at some point following the Reformation in the United Kingdom. This is the period when the Llanllyr site would have been converted from a nunnery into the farm that it is currently, and would have involved much human manipulation of the environment to make the area more suitable for this purpose (Ros Coard, pers comm.). The drainage ditches that demarcate the fields would have served the same purpose, draining the marshland so that the fields could be used as pasture (Ros Coard, pers comm.). The fields have both grass and short reeds, with the latter making up the majority of the vegetation. The areas without reeds are raised mounds of varying heights. As can be seen in Figures 1 and 2, each of these mounds can be seen both from an aerial view and from the ground. When looking from the ground, Mound 1 is the most clear.



Figure 1: An aerial view of the Llanllyr site with labels marking each of the mounds. Aerial photograph taken from Google Maps, labels added by author. Google Maps. *Talsarn*. 2026, map, [https://www.google.com/maps/@52.1834531,-4.1323476,1767m/data=!3m1!1e3!5m1!1e4?entry=ttu&g\\_ep=EgoyMDI2MDUwNi4wIKXMDS0ASAFQAw%3D%3D](https://www.google.com/maps/@52.1834531,-4.1323476,1767m/data=!3m1!1e3!5m1!1e4?entry=ttu&g_ep=EgoyMDI2MDUwNi4wIKXMDS0ASAFQAw%3D%3D)



Figure 2: Mound 1 of the Llanllyr site taken 10/05/2026. Zachary Stanger, May 10, 2026. Photograph

The mound in Figure 2 is the light green patch between the treeline and reeds in the center of the image. The reeds seen in the image are common in Llanllyr, covering most of the fields in which Mounds 1, 2, and 3 are found. The reeds end in the south in Mound 1's field, seen in Figure 3.



Figure 3: The reeds ending in the southern section of Mound 1's field. Zachary Stanger, May 9, 2026. Photograph

The reeds also come to an end just north of the field that Mound 3 is in, which can be seen in Figure 5.



Figure 5: The end of the reeds north of Mound 3's field. Zachary Stanger, May 10, 2026. Photograph

Though separated by a ditch, the reeds continue in the fields west of Mound 3, though (as seen in Figure 6) they are more sparse in the northern field section.



Figure 6: Field west of Mound 3, north section. Zachary Stanger, May 12, 2026. Photograph



Figure 7: Field west of Mound 3, south section. Zachary Stanger, May 12, 2026. Photograph

Although the current landscape may not show it, the Llanllyr area during the Mesolithic and Neolithic periods would have been covered by a large lake created by glacial movement. During this period, the dirt hills that can be found in the reeds would have formed islands in this lake, which were then used by Mesolithic and Neolithic peoples (Brummage et al. 2026, 6-7). The area where the reeds thin south of Mound 1 is the probable location of where the lake shore would have been in the Mesolithic and Neolithic periods (Martin Bates, pers comm.). The areas of thinner reeds to both the west and north may also represent the ancient lake's shore, though it is currently unknown. Farther north of the site, beyond the end of the reeds, is the River Aeron, which has disturbed the ground near its banks. It is unknown how far from the river the ground is

disturbed, and will require further excavations north of Llanyllr to determine. Until these excavations take place, it is not known if the reeds ending north of Llanyllr are because of the previously mentioned lake edge, or for another reason (Martin Bates, pers comm.).

During the Mesolithic and Neolithic periods, the Llanyllr area would not have had any vegetation in the form of trees. As already discussed, the trees were introduced after the Reformation, so Llanyllr would have been very flat, and with very little to obstruct vision (Ros Coard, pers comm.). This means Llanyllr likely would have resembled the foreground and middleground of Figure 8.



Figure 8: Photo of the Llanyllr site. Zachary Stanger, May 9, 2026. Photograph

As can be seen in Figure 8, much of Llanyllr is flat, which is likely what the site would have looked like during the Mesolithic period. Unlike today, however, the site would have been very marshy, which is only the case for one section of the site. Just to the west of Mound 1 is a section of Llanyllr that is still very marshy, likely due to a combination of a high water table and very fine grain soil (Ros Coard, pers comm.). Although it is unlike the rest of the area in the modern day, the marshiness likely would have been very similar to the environment of the area

in the Mesolithic and Neolithic periods. The marsh is the area with the brown grass seen in the middle ground of Figure 9.

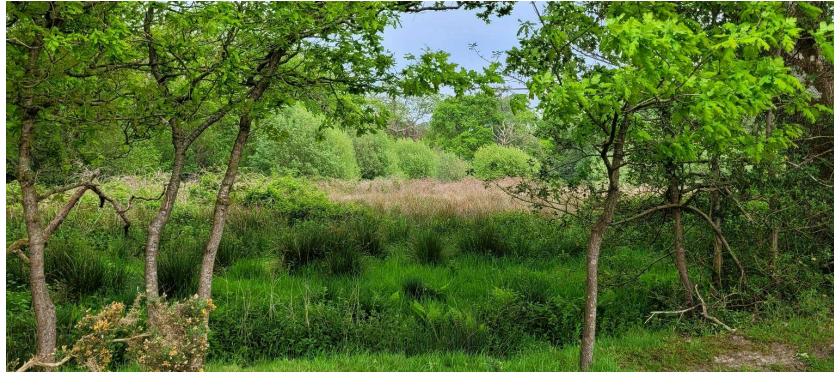


Figure 9: The marshy area west of Mound 1. Zachary Stanger, May 9, 2026. Photograph

Evidence for human use and possible occupation of these islands comes in the form of lithic artefacts and burnt patches of ground (Brummage et al. 2026, 14-17), though no evidence for a hearth has been found (Martin Bates, pers. comm.). The lack of hearths indicates that while the area was occupied by Mesolithic and Neolithic peoples, the extent of their stay would not have been long, instead using the islands to hunt, fish, and create the tools used for both activities (Martin Bates, pers comm.). The burnt areas on Mounds 1 and 2 are dated to the Neolithic (Brummage et al. 2026, 17-20). Lithic artefacts have been found in all three mounds, with Mounds 1 and 2 containing lithics from both the Mesolithic and Neolithic. The most notable find from Mound 1 is a Neolithic polished stone axehead, though there are also Mesolithic and possibly Bronze Age artefacts that have also been found (Brummage et al 2026, 17-18). Mound 2 appears to contain more Mesolithic artefacts, with the only find that can be used to create a chronology being a Mid-Late Mesolithic microlith, though there are Neolithic artefacts that have been found (Brummage et al. 2026, 20-21). Excavations in Mound 3 have also uncovered lithic artifacts, though their approximate age is as yet unknown due to the fact that the excavation is

still ongoing (Author's own). The excavations taking place on Mound 3 can be separated into Mound 3a and Mound 3b, as Mound 3 as a whole is long and snaking, which means there is no single mound site like in Mound 1 or 2. 3a is the southern excavation, which currently has uncovered no lithics, though it has found a section of a drainage ditch likely from the mid-twentieth century (Quentin Drew, pers comm.). Mound 3b is the northern excavation, which, between two trenches, has uncovered flints as well as what are possibly stone axe reduction flakes (Author's own). Though not on the mounds, lithic artefacts have also been found in the area that would have been on the edge of the lake, as well as the field that Mound 1 is found in, which would have likely been submerged or semi-submerged during the Mesolithic or Neolithic periods (Brummage et al 2026, 21).

Llanllyr is not the only Mesolithic or Neolithic aged site in Ceredigion. Discovered in 1911, and excavated in 1922, the Tanybwllch site just outside of Aberystwyth is what is known as a Mesolithic “flint factory”. Much like Llanllyr, it contains many flint artefacts including microliths and two hundred flint cores. The site is made up of two raised bluffs with a road traveling between (Brummage et al 2026, 21; Driver, 2026). The similarities between the Llanllyr and Tanybwllch sites, primarily the flint flakes and being located on raised ground, suggests that Tanybwllch may have had a similar environment during the Mesolithic period, with the raised sections becoming islands in an otherwise marshy environment. Other Mesolithic or Neolithic aged artefacts that have been found come from field collections. Two of these include the assemblage discovered in Clarach in the early twentieth century and the assemblage collected by fieldwalkers at Plas Gogerddan in the late twentieth century (Brummage et al. 2026, 22).

## Works Cited

Brummage, Samantha, Martin Bates, Wendy Carruthers, et al. 2026. "Mesolithic-Neolithic landscapes in Ceredigion: a new site at Llanllyr." In Prep.

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