

Site Name: Figyn Blaen-brefi

Grid Ref: SN 717547

RIGS Category: Scientific

Earth Science Category: Quaternary & Geomorphology

RIGS Statement of Interest:

Figyn Blaen-brefi is an upland rain-fed mire situated in a shallow broad valley at an altitude of c. 410 m OD, on the watershed of Afon Brefi and Afon Pysgotwr Fawr. The site covers approximately 40 hectares. Pollen, radiocarbon and stratigraphic evidence from the site provides one of the most significant dated records of vegetational and environmental changes since the last glaciation, at the onset of the Holocene (c. 10,000 years Before Present (BP)) in upland Wales. It provides an important comparison site of conditions in the uplands of Central Wales, with those prevalent at the nearby lowland site of Tregaron Bog.

Pollen analysis of the deposits at Figyn Blaen-brefi has shown that c. 8700yrs BP an open birch and hazel woodland dominated the landscape during the early Holocene. This was followed shortly after by the arrival of oak and elm, and marked the beginnings of a landscape dominated by mixed deciduous woodland. The occurrence of charcoal fragments in the peat deposits reveals the first indications of small-scale clearance of the landscape by humans at c. 7600yrs BP, during the early Mesolithic. An expansion of alder c. 7200yrs BP suggests the onset of damper conditions in the vicinity of the site. This was followed by a rapid expansion in heathland c. 7280yrs BP, and a reduction in woodland cover, with increasing evidence of human activity from the late Mesolithic onwards, and includes a very clear record of the 'classical' elm decline at the onset of the Neolithic period (c. 5000yrs BP). More extensive woodland clearance is evident from the mid-late Bronze Age (c. 3275yrs BP), with an open landscape firmly established by the Iron Age (c. 2450yrs BP), and by the Roman period (c. 1965yrs BP) the pattern of vegetation probably closely resembled that of the present-day landscape.

Surveyed by: S. E. Jones