



## South Wales RIGS Group Site Record

### RIGS Description

**SECTION A**

General	South Wales
<b>Site Name:</b> Billy Wern Sulphur Spring	<b>File Number:</b> AH_69
<b>RIGS Number:</b> 753	<b>Surveyed by:</b> AJ Humpage / M Mitchell
<b>Grid Reference:</b> SN 93888 50167	<b>Date of Visit:</b> 1 September 2011
<b>RIGS Category:</b> Scientific, historical	<b>Date Registered:</b> Unknown
<b>Earth Science Category:</b> Spring	
<b>Site Nature:</b> Roadside	<b>Documentation prepared by:</b> AJH
<b>Unitary Authority:</b> Powys CC	<b>Documentation last revised:</b> 3 October 2011
<b>OS 1:50,000</b> Sheet: 147	<b>Photographic Record:</b> See images attached to this report
<b>OS 1:25,000</b> Explorer Sheet: 188	
<b>BGS 1:50,000</b> : Sheet 196 (Builth Wells)	

**RIGS Statement of Interest:** This site forms part of a network of significant mineral springs in southern mid Wales in the former county of Brecknockshire.

The human relationship with minerals springs for has long been known. Springs as religious sites have been known since antiquity, but it was in Malvern that their modern usage began in the 1620's, the waters being bottled for sale. By the start of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, mineral springs were becoming increasingly important attractions and efforts were made to locate and promote them for their health giving properties. The spring at Llanwrtyd was 'discovered' in 1732, followed by that at Builth by 1740. However, it was from the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that "taking the waters" became truly popular and a significant industry developed.

This site is perhaps the least well known of the natural springs in central Wales. Located along the A483 road between Builth Wells and Llanwrtyd Wells, a stile provides access to a small fenced area, and the spring is located in the far left corner of the fenced area. The spring issues from a brick culvert about 18 inches square. There is a strong smell of Hydrogen sulphide and the water looks slightly oily. Gas bubbles can be seen rising within the well, which is about 3ft 6in deep.

### **Geological setting/context:**

The Billy Wern Spring is within the Dulas valley, a tributary of the River Wye and is underlain by an area of outcropping Silurian age mudstones and siltstones of the Nantmel Mudstones Formation on the margins of the volcanic rocks of the Builth inlier. The spring lies along the line of a North-east to South-west trending Crychan Fault.

Edmunds *et al* (1998), considered that with the exception of Llandrindod Wells, the saline waters of central Wales probably were of meteoric origin, although acknowledging that deep groundwater circulation giving rise to their mineral properties.

The adjacent church is worthy of a visit. The site of Llanlleonfel church dates back to early Roman times when a branch of the roman road connecting Neath and Chester ran past the church. A gravestone inscribed in ancient latin is now situated in the church by the lectern. It has been suggested by Theophilus Jones, in a "History of Brecknock", that the name of the church was originally "Llan Leon Voel" which translates as "church upon the bare moor". The church is situated on a rise and would have been an obvious meeting place for worship as well as having the added attraction of an adjacent sulphur spring known as "Billy Wern". A thatched roofed rough shelter was likely to have been the original place of worship before a more substantial building was erected in the 16th century.

The most noteworthy event which happened at Llanlleonfel church was the marriage of Sally Gwynne in 1749 to the well known Methodist hymn writer, Charles Wesley. The ceremony was performed by John Wesley who established the Methodist church. The wedding party walked for half a mile across the fields from Garth House. The fortunes of the Gwynnes and the state of the church deteriorated in the following years and in 1873 the Rev. Francis Kilvert noted in his diaries "the ruined church tottered lone upon a hill in desolate silence. The only occupants being several white owls". The church was rebuilt in 1876 with the bell tower positioned in the centre of the church, but this was later rebuilt on the west wall. The three stained glass windows in the east wall are in memory of the Fuller-Maitland family who lived at Garth House after the Gwynnes and, in the south wall, by the altar rail, is a stained glass window in memory of Commander and Mrs Alec Wilson, whose family now live at Garth House.

### **References:**

Edmunds, W.M., Robins, N.S. and Shand, P. (1998). The saline waters of Llandrindod and Builth, Central Wales. *Journal of the Geological Society of London*. 155, 627-637.

Jones, J.R. (1859) Pryse's handbook to the Breconshire and Radnorshire mineral springs: with notes and excerpts illustrating the history, antiquities, and topography of many of the surrounding towns and villages. Llanidloes: Pryse, 1859.

## SECTION B

### PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS:

Please score Accessibility and Safety Red Amber or Green

#### Accessibility:



Comment: **Private Property.** Accessible from stile adjacent to main road

#### Safety:



Comment: Beware of fast moving traffic on main road., if walking from adjacent layby

#### Conservation status:

The nearby River Dulas channel is part of the River Wye (Tributaries) SSSI, otherwise there are no known designations of this location.

### OWNERSHIP/PLANNING CONTROL:

**Owner/tenant:** Unknown

**Planning Authority:** Powys County Council

**Planning status/constraints/opportunities:** There are no known planning constraints or opportunities.

### CONDITION, USE & MANAGEMENT:

**Present use:** Roadside well

**Site condition:** Generally good, some maintenance and re-fencing is advised.

**Potential threats:** Road improvements could cause the site to be lost.

**Site Management:**

### SITE DEVELOPMENT:

**Potential use (general):**

**Potential use (educational):** Could be used along with other sites to highlight the circulation and movement of groundwater.

**Other comments:**

## Photographic Record



Billy Wern Sulphur Spring - hidden in the grass