

CPAT Report No. 1637

St Bridget's Church, Llansantffraed- juxta-Usk

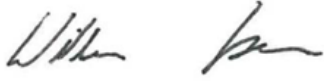


Archaeological Watching Brief



YMDDIRIEDOLAETH ARCHAEOLEGOL CLWYD-POWYS

CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

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 CPAT Project No: 2341
 Project Name: St Bridget's Church, Llansantffraed-juxta-Usk
 Grid Reference: SO 12220 23485
 County/LPA: Powys/Brecon Beacons National Park
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Summary

The Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT) conducted a watching brief during repairs to the boundary wall on the south-eastern extent of the churchyard of St Bridget's Church, Llansantffraed-juxta-Usk. A short section of the existing wall was taken down in order to rebuild it from the foundations.

The work revealed no evidence for any earlier phases of the churchyard boundary and no burials were disturbed. However, the wall did contain the remains of a building which had been demolished prior to 1832.

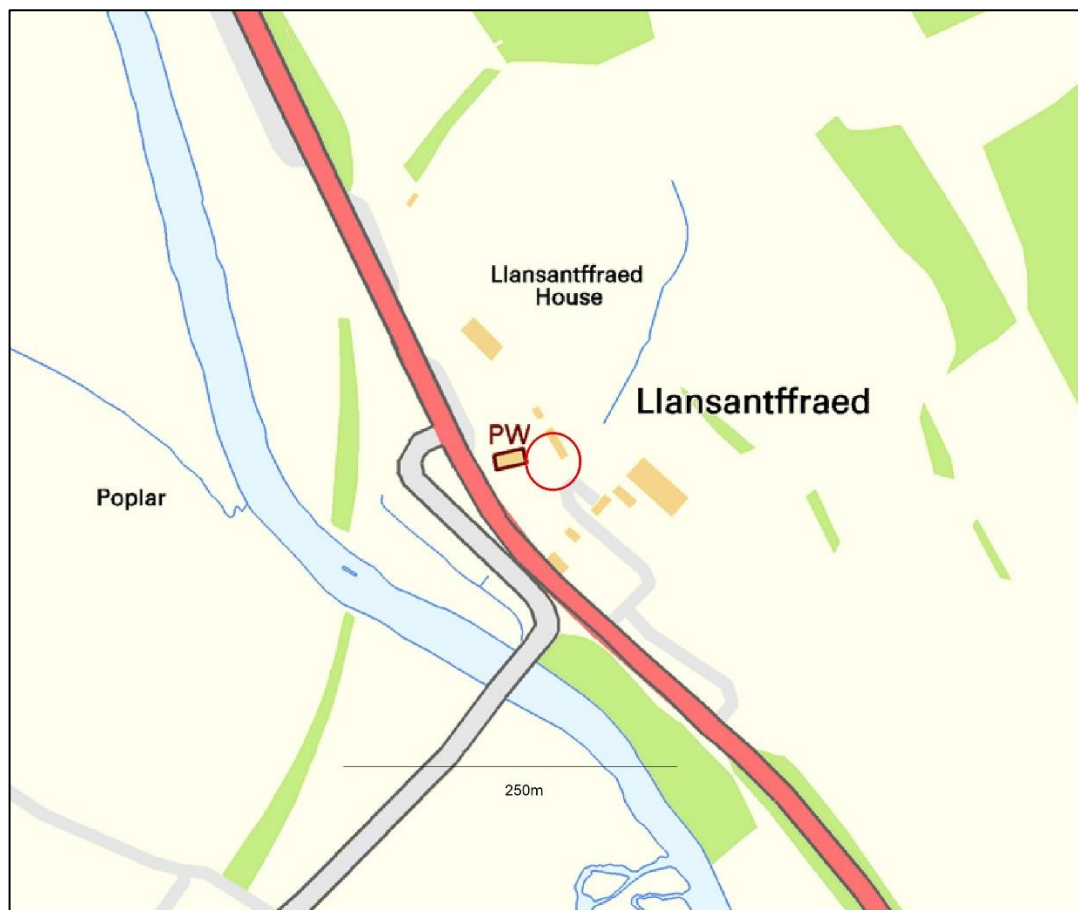
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Bu Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Clwyd-Powys (CPAT) yn cynnal briff gwylio yn ystod gwaith atgyweirio ar y mur terfyn yn rhan de-ddwyreiniol o fynwent Eglwys Santes Ffraid, Llansantffraid-ar-Wysg. Dymchwelwyd adran fer o'r mur presennol er mwyn ei hailadeiladu o'r sylfeini.

Ni ddatgelodd y gwaith unrhyw dystiolaeth o gyfnodau cynharach o ffin y fynwent ac ni aflonyddwyd ar unrhyw gladdiadau. Fodd bynnag, roedd y mur yn cynnwys gweddillion adeilad a oedd wedi'i ddymchwel cyn 1832.

1 Introduction

- 1.1. The Field Services Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT) was invited by J. L. Stephens Ltd, acting on behalf of the Parochial Church Council, to undertake a watching brief during repairs to part of the boundary wall surrounding the churchyard of St Bridget's Church, Llansantffraed-juxta-Usk (SO 12220 23485).
- 1.2. The wall section comprised a short curving stretch in the south-eastern corner of the churchyard. Soil build-up and tree root activity behind the wall required a complete rebuild, comprising a blockwork core faced with reused stone. It was noted by J. L. Stephens that an adjacent section of the boundary was formed by the remaining upstanding western elevation of a building located to the east of the church outside of the churchyard boundary. This was also subject to minor repair work, involving the removal of the loose masonry on the uppermost courses in order to clear any soil and other debris before reinstating them with lime mortar bonding.



Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2018

Fig. 1 Location of the groundworks (circled in red)

2 Historical Background

- 2.1. Llansantffraed church is dedicated to St Bride (St Bridget). It has been speculated that the first church was founded here in the early medieval (pre-Norman) period. The location though not the churchyard morphology is consistent with such a view.
- 2.2. The Taxation of 1254 contains a reference to 'Ecclesia de Sancta Brigida', while the 1535 Valor refers to it as 'Llanseyntfrede'.
- 2.3. The predecessor of the present church had medieval and earlier 17th-century features, and a 'bee-hive' bell-turret, though Theophilus Jones at the beginning of the 19th century claimed that the church had been rebuilt in 1690. In a detailed discussion Williams described the building as consisting of a nave, north aisle and chancel, and a south porch that had a pointed arch to the doorway of uncertain date. The bell-turret had circular openings and a string course, and was considered to be 18th century. The priest's door was round-headed but undatable. The interior sloped upwards towards the chancel. There was a four-bay arcade, the arches with semi-circular heads set on massive piers, and the chancel arch was similar. Williams argued that a north aisle and chancel were added in the early 16th century, and further alterations were made around 1626.



Fig. 2 1832 Ordnance Survey map showing St Bridget's Church circled in red

- 2.4. The building, which by the later 19th century was ruinous and too unsafe for use, was replaced by Stephen Williams, the Rhayader architect. He claimed late Norman/Early English dressed stone and architectural fragments, including an Early English lancet in the north wall, as well as three square-headed Perpendicular

windows. One, window head, carrying a date of 1626, was saved from the south wall of the nave and placed in the vestry, and an old stoup was retained in the porch. A series of monuments and grave slabs were also transferred. It was totally rebuilt in Gothic style by Williams in 1884-5.

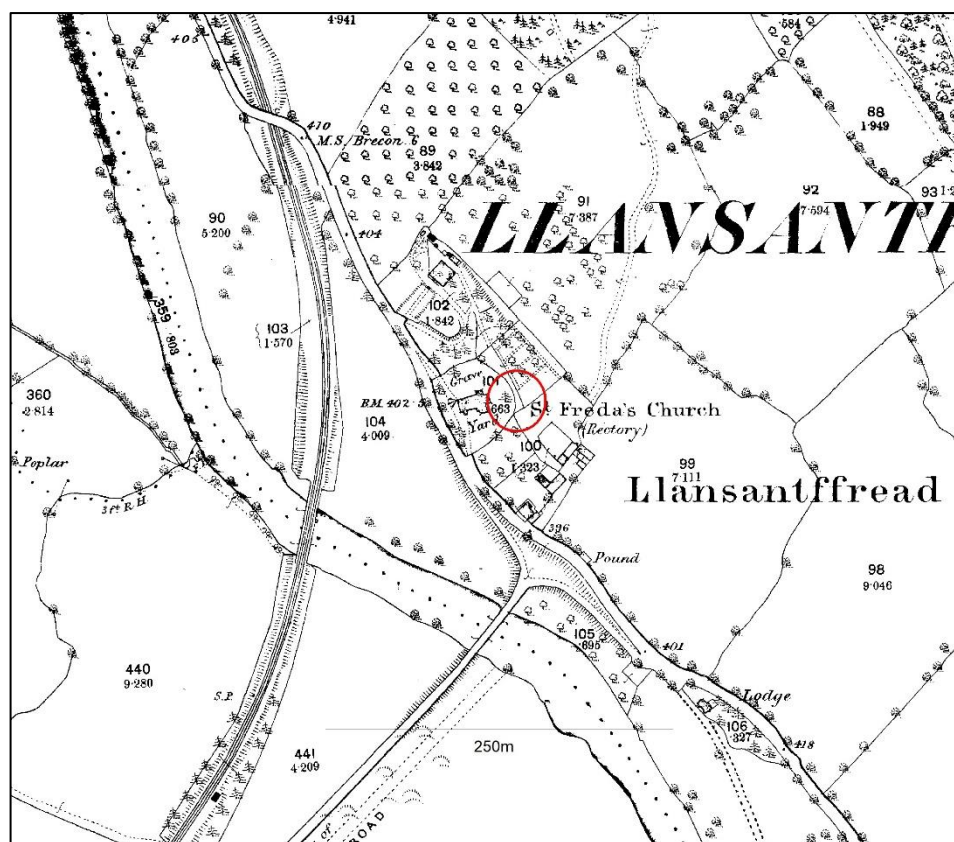


Fig. 3. 1886 Ordnance Survey 25 inch plan showing the groundworks area (circled in red)

- 2.5. The churchyard is tidy and well-maintained, and is still in use. The boundary consists of a mortared stone wall with a high revetment wall on the south-west side. The churchyard level is raised above the adjacent A40 trunk road by at least 2.5m.
- 2.6. The gravestones are well spread with some concentrations of graves on the south-east and north-west sides, but few in the north-east quadrant. Earlier stones have been cleared and leant against the south-east perimeter wall, but these are now largely covered by vegetation. A particular grouping of cleared slabs are located in the east corner, close to the grave of the 17th century poet and author Henry Vaughan. A large 19th century Neo-classical monument to the Gwynne Holford family is located to the south-west close to the church entrance.
- 2.7. There are no earthworks visible within the churchyard, however the form of the boundary has apparently been altered, notably by the construction of Llansantfraed House and the associated gardens to the north-west. The section of boundary wall in the south-east area of the churchyard is curvilinear and therefore probably follows the original medieval line of the boundary although it is unclear when the extant wall itself was constructed. A building is incorporated into the east extent of the

churchyard boundary. The building which is located outside of the churchyard to the east appears to have been demolished prior to 1832.

3 Watching Brief

- 3.1. The groundworks involved the removal of a section of the boundary wall, and the removal and remortaring of the loose stonework on the surviving west elevation of the building to the north of it (Fig. 3).



Fig. 4 Groundworks location plan

- 3.2. The removal of the churchyard boundary wall exposed the retained material behind it which comprised a soft orange silt (103), 0.65m thick, containing frequent large angular stones. Artefactual material in this deposit was predominantly modern, probably dumped detritus from the adjacent farmyard.



Fig. 5 View from the north-east of the churchyard wall foundation (105). Photo CPAT 4586-0003

- 3.3. Soil deposition within the churchyard comprised a soft mid-dark brown silt topsoil (100), to a thickness of 0.25m, containing very dense root matter from an adjacent yew tree. Underlying the topsoil was a soft dark red silt (101), 0.25m thick, which sealed a compact light reddish silt (102) excavated to >0.1m.
- 3.4. The base of the sandstone rubble boundary wall (105) was set within a foundation cut [104] and extended approximately 15m in length, measuring 0.7m wide by 0.5m thick. The foundation was not continuous, a large root bole close to the northern end having displaced the stonework at this point.
- 3.5. The boundary wall incorporated the west elevation of a building (Fig. 4), the walling for which measured 6.5m in length, 1.3m in height and >0.5m in width. Most of the elevation was obscured by a row of grave stones which had been resited against it (Fig. 7). Two infilled door or window apertures were visible in the elevation, approximately 0.75m above current ground level (Fig. 8).



Fig. 6 View from the north-west of the groundworks trenching. Photo CPAT 4586-0009



Fig. 7 West elevation of building forming part of the churchyard boundary. Photo CPAT 4586-0002

4 Conclusions

- 4.1. The dismantling and removal of the wall and wall foundation revealed no artefacts to provide a date for its construction. It was noted, however, that the wall was curvilinear which would suggest that the line of this part of the boundary was medieval in date.
- 4.2. A stone building incorporated into the churchyard boundary was not recorded on the 19th century maps consulted. The 1832 and 1886 Ordnance Survey maps both depict the area to the east of the churchyard as open garden or orchard, with the later map also depicting a lane running immediately to the east of the churchyard boundary between Llansantfraed House to the north-west and the Rectory to the south-east. It is likely that the construction of this access road resulted in the building being demolished, which probably occurred during the 18th century when both houses were built. It is unclear what purpose the building served, although the presence of door or window apertures in the elevation facing into the churchyard suggests that it formed part of the church property.

5 Sources

Unpublished sources

Silvester, R. J., 1998. *Welsh Historic Churches Project. The Historic Churches of Breconshire and Radnorshire*. CPAT Report No. 255.

Web based sources

www.britishlistedbuildings.co.uk (accessed January 2019)

Cartographic sources

1832 Old Series Ordnance Surveyors drawing No 42 SE

1886 Ordnance Survey 1st edition 25" map, Breconshire 34.08

6 Archive deposition Statement

- 6.1. The project archive has been prepared according to the CPAT Archive Policy and in line with the ClfA *Standard and guidance for the creation, compilation, transfer and deposition of archaeological archives guidance* (2014). The archive is entirely digital and will be deposited jointly with the Historic Environment Record, Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust and the National Monuments Record (RCAHMW).

Archive summary

CPAT Event PRN: 140276

15 digital photographs, CPAT film no 4586

2 watching brief visit forms

1 digital photogrammetric image JPEG/TIFF

Appendix 1: Photogrammetric image

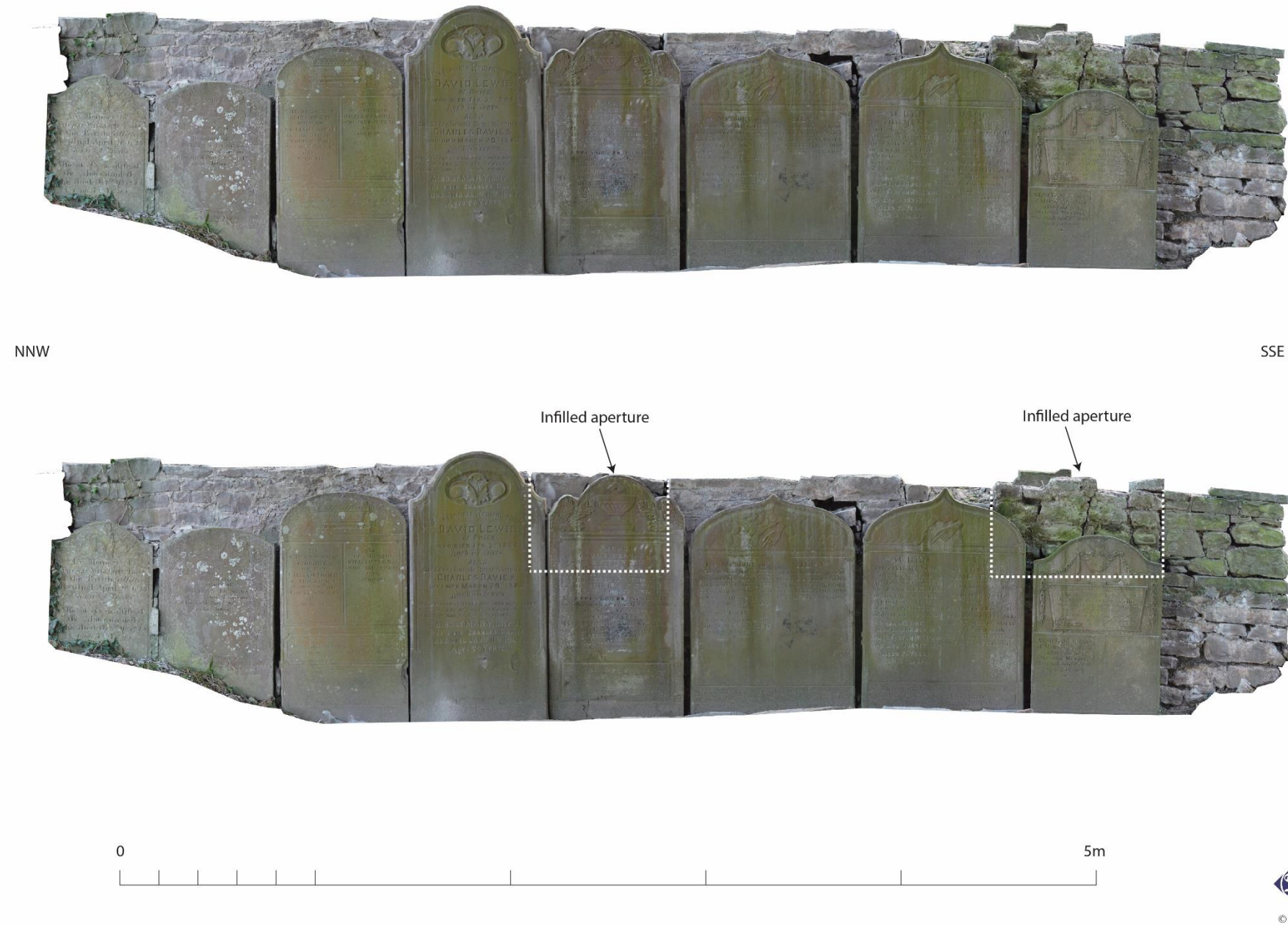


Fig. 8 South south-west facing elevation of building on eastern boundary of churchyard and grave stones