

CPAT Report No. 1492

St Gwendoline's Church, Llyswen




Archaeological Watching Brief



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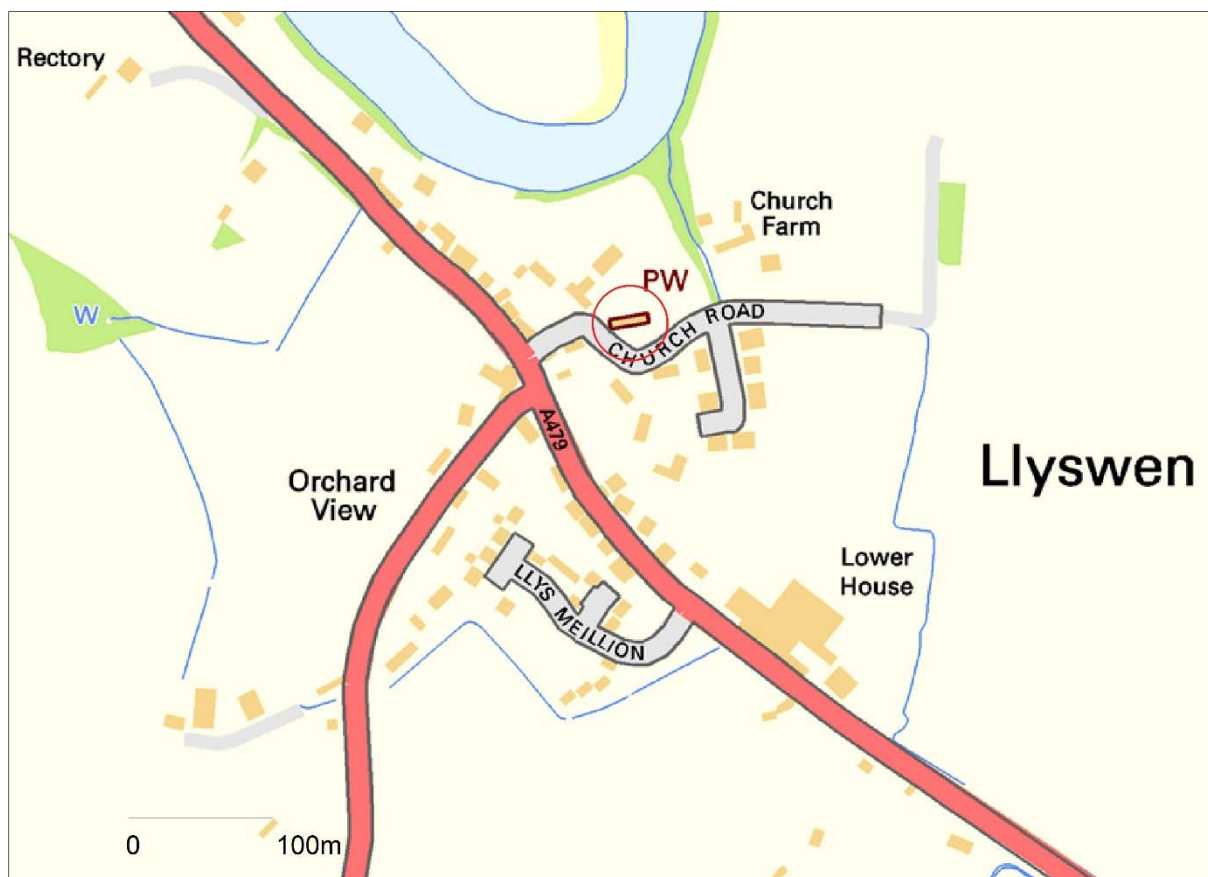
Summary

In February 2017 the Field Services Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT) carried out a watching brief during excavations for a new French drain within the churchyard of St Gwendoline's Church, Llyswen, in Powys.

Groundworks revealed two graves cut into the graveyard soils, although the depth attained by the trenching did not disturb the inhumations. Groundworks adjacent to the northern stretch of the churchyard wall disturbed a charnel pit. Disarticulated human bone was also noted from an excavated section adjacent to the north elevation of the chancel.

1 Introduction

- 1.1. The Field Services Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT) was invited by Mike Lush, Churchwarden, to undertake a watching brief during excavations for a new French drain within the churchyard of St Gwendoline's Church, Llyswen, in Powys (Fig. 1; SO 13335 38015).
- 1.2. The drain was located along the north elevation of the church and comprised two separate trench sections running into soakaways located on the north and east extent of the churchyard (Fig. 2).



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Fig. 1 Location of St Gwendoline's Church, Llyswen

- 1.3. The watching brief will be conducted according to the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' (CIfA) *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief* (2014).

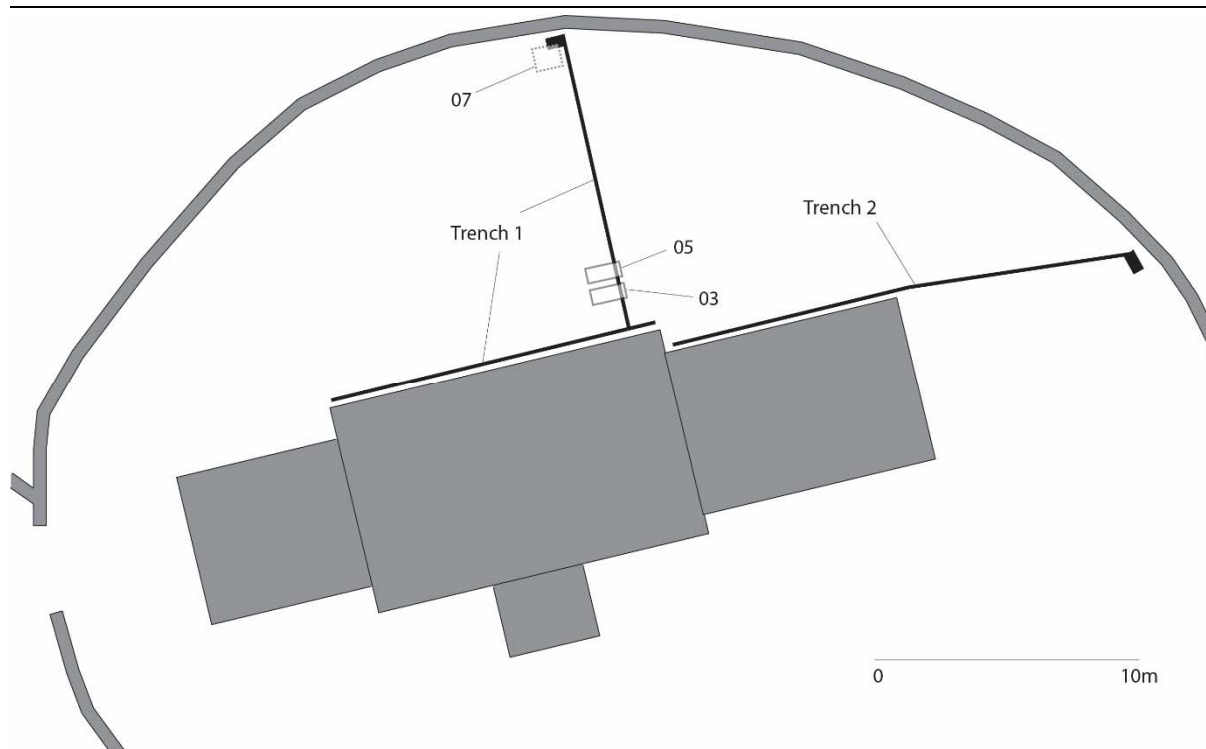


Fig. 2 Trench location plan

2 Historical Background

- 2.1. The following is taken from Silvester and Martin (2010).
- 2.2. Llyswen is reputedly focused on a clas church founded in the 6th century, and it was claimed by Theophilus Jones, the early 19th-century Brecknock antiquary, that a religious site here was granted to the see of Llandaff in about AD 560. Both of these claims need to be treated with circumspection. The site of this early centre is not known but the present sub-circular churchyard, of St Gwendoline (a local 9th-century saint who is reputedly buried at Talgarth), is almost certainly early medieval in date.
- 2.3. The name Llyswen (literally 'white court') was first recorded around 1127 as Lisewan. It reputedly derives from the palace of Rhodri Mawr, one of the great 9th-century princes of south Wales, which is said to have existed here. The site of the palace is not recorded, though local tradition has it that it was in the warren field near Dderw to the south-east of the village. Rhodri Mawr's will requested the 're-edification and adornment' of the area's religious houses and it is believed locally that Llyswen church was substantially rebuilt as a result of this, a belief that is entirely uncorroborated.
- 2.4. Little is known about the medieval history of Llyswen, although it reputedly had a 'Norman' castle and has been identified as one of the marcher lords' demenses in the 14th century. No visible remains of this period survive within the village today.

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- 2.5. St Gwendoline's Church (20179) was wholly rebuilt in 1863, and no fabric of the putative Norman church that it replaced now survives, although the simple font may be of this period. The present church retaining a medieval plan, may reflect that of its predecessor. Early prints and photographs show that the previous church comprised a simple divided chancel and nave with a barrel vaulted roof, a southern porch and a bellcote.
 - 2.6. The church lies within a raised and embanked sub-circular churchyard (2549) some 45m across. This is much smaller than other alleged *clas* churches, but there is no clear indication that it was ever any larger, though the mid-19th-century tithe map does hint at a larger curvilinear enclosure around the village.
 - 2.7. The area surrounding the church where older settlement might be expected is partially clear, and comprises the extensive gardens of Tymawr. Modern infill has encroached on the southwest and east. It is not possible to say that medieval or earlier, settlement definitely existed in this area, but appropriate archaeological investigation may give some indication.
 - 2.8. With the exception of the church, the Griffin Inn (20814), Upper House Farm (2539) and the Tymawr (2931), the last three all 18th-century, there are very few buildings of any age surviving in Llyswen, and the village now has a very modern character. This is presumably due to Llyswen's location at the junction of two main roads and reflects the increasing importance of road transport in the 19th century. A watching brief at Cross House identified some ambiguous evidence for medieval building, but at present neither the building stock in Llyswen nor archaeological interventions have shed any light on the origins and development of a medieval settlement here.
 - 2.9. An alleged motte lies some 400m to the south-west, on the fringe of the village, just beyond Upper Danyllan. This has been claimed as Llyswen's castle, but authorities differ as to its significance and authenticity. Unsubstantiated is the belief that the present Llangoed Castle, nearly two miles to the north, marks the position of a Norman castle which in its turn had been placed where Rhodri Mawr's court was situated.
 - 2.10. An extensive and complex area of strip fields is depicted on the tithe survey to the east of the village, with further, smaller areas to the north and west. It is claimed that there are surviving patches of ridge and furrow cultivation. These strip fields were the remnants of an extensive open field system belonging to the medieval settlement.

4 Watching Brief

- 4.1. The watching brief was undertaken on 14 and 16 February 2017. Trench 1 ran along the entire length of the north wall of the nave with a second section running north to a pit excavated on the line of the north wall of the churchyard (Fig. 2). Eight contexts were identified in this trench section. The trench was typically 0.45m in width and between 0.45m and 0.75m deep.



Fig. 3 Trench section along the north side of the nave CPAT 4308-0008

- 4.2. The topsoil (01) comprised a soft clayey silt, 0.12m thick, and overlying a moderately compacted reddish sandy silt (02) extending to a thickness of 0.65m. Three features were revealed cutting (02). The eastern ends of two graves (03 and 05), still visibly mounded, were exposed within the trench, although the maximum depth of excavation at this point was above the level at which the inhumations had been buried. At the north extent of Trench 1, a soakaway pit measuring approximately 1m × 1m was excavated to a depth of 1m, disturbing a charnel pit (07). Natural soils were attained at the base of the soakaway.



Fig. 4 Grave cuts [05] and [07] in section. Photo CPAT 4308-0004

- 4.3. Trench 2 was located along the north wall of the chancel and ran on a broadly eastern orientation to a pit excavated on the east wall section of the churchyard. Six contexts were assigned for this trench section.



Fig. 5 Trench 2 from the west CPAT 4308-0017 Fig. 6 Trench 2 from the east CPAT 4308-0018

- 4.4. The topsoil (09) was a continuation of that in Trench 1 (01). Underlying this was a red sandy silt (010), a continuation of (02), containing large amounts of building rubble, possibly from the 1860s church restoration, and large quantities of charnel. A modern

drain (011) truncated the north side of the trench. The soakaway pit, excavated on the east wall disturbed a large pit (13), backfilled with stone rubble (014), probably a having resulted from the removal of a tree.

5 Conclusions

- 5.1. The watching brief identified the upper part of two graves, although no *in situ* inhumations were disturbed during the course of this watching brief. The graveyard appeared to be well ordered, allowing the contractors to plot a route for the groundworks that would cause minimal disturbance to buried remains. While disarticulated bone was present within trenches, this was temporarily retained and reburied during the course of the works.

6 References

Silvester, R. J. and Martin, C. H. R., 2010. *Historic Settlements in the former Brecknock Borough*. CPAT Report 1056

7 Archive deposition Statement

- 7.1. 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 will be deposited with the regional Historic Environment Record, maintained by CPAT in Welshpool. A summary of the archive is provided in Appendix 1.

8 Site Archive

CPAT Event PRN: 140163

2 watching brief visit forms

23 digital photographs, Film No CPAT 4308

Appendix 1: CPAT WSI 1736

1 Introduction

- 1.1. The Field Services Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT) have been invited by Mike Lush, Churchwarden, to prepare a specification for undertaking a watching brief during excavations for a new French drain within the churchyard of St Gwendoline's Church, Llyswen.

2 Methodology

- 2.1. The watching brief will be conducted according to the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' (CIfA) *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief* (2014). The excavation of any archaeological features or deposits will be undertaken by hand using the conventional techniques for archaeological excavation:
 - Where features of archaeological interest are identified during the ground works they will be systematically investigated by hand with sufficient work being undertaken to determine their date, character and function, using the conventional techniques for archaeological excavation and in accordance with CIfA Standard and Guidance.
 - Should significant archaeological remains be encountered the DAC Archaeological Advisor will be informed to discuss what further action may be appropriate.
 - All features will be located as accurately as possible on an overall plan of the development at an appropriate scale, showing boundaries depicted on Ordnance Survey mapping.
 - Contexts will be recorded on individual record forms, using a continuous numbering system, and be drawn and photographed as appropriate.
 - Plans will be drawn on permatrace to a scale of 1:10, 1:20 or 1:50, as appropriate.
 - All photography will be taken using a digital SLR camera with a minimum resolution of 12 mega pixels, including a metric scale in each view, with views logged in a photographic register.
 - In the event of human burials being discovered the Ministry of Justice will be informed. The remains will initially be left *in situ*, and if removal is required, a MoJ licences will be applied for under the Burial Act 1857.
 - In the event of finding any artefacts covered by the provisions of the Treasures Act 1996, the appropriate procedures under this legislation will be followed.
- 2.2. All artefacts and environmental samples will be treated in a manner appropriate to their composition and a sampling strategy will be developed as appropriate:
 - All stratified finds will be collected by context, or where appropriate, individually recorded in three dimensions. Unstratified finds will only be collected where they contribute significantly to the project objectives or are of particular intrinsic interest.

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- All finds and samples will be collected, processed, sorted, quantified, recorded, labelled, packed, stored, marked, assessed, analysed and conserved in a manner appropriate to their composition and in line with appropriate guidance.
 - arrangements to assess and study any artefacts, assemblages and environment samples.
 - Any artefacts recovered during the evaluation will be deposited with an appropriate museum, subject to the permission of the owner.
- 2.3. Following the on-site work an illustrated report will be prepared containing conventional sections to include:
- Non-technical summary
 - Introduction
 - Site location
 - Topography and Geology
 - Archaeological Background
 - Watching brief
 - Conclusions
 - References
 - Appropriate appendices on archives and finds
- 2.4. The site archive will be prepared to specifications in English Heritage's Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE) system and the CifA *Standard and Guidance for the Creation, Compilation, Transfer and Deposition of Archaeological Archives* (2014), to be deposited with the regional Historic Environment Record (HER).

3 Resources and Programming

- 3.1. The watching brief will be undertaken by a skilled archaeologist under the overall supervision of Nigel Jones, a senior member of CPAT's staff who is also a member of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CifA). CPAT is also a CifA Registered Organisation (RAO No 6) and as such agrees to abide by their *Code of Conduct* (2014) and the *Code of Approved Practice for the Regulation of Contractual Arrangements in Field Archaeology* (2014).
- 3.2. All report preparation will be completed by or with the assistance of the same field archaeologist(s) who conducted the site work. Copies of the report will be deposited with the client, the regional Historic Environment Record and the DAC Archaeological Advisor within one month of the completion of on-site works. If appropriate, a short report will be published in *Archaeology in Wales*.
- 3.3. Requirements relating to Health and Safety regulations will be adhered to by CPAT and its staff.
- 3.4. CPAT is covered by appropriate Public and Employer's Liability insurance, as well as Professional Indemnity insurance.