

# **MEDIEVAL AND EARLY POST-MEDIEVAL CHURCHES AND CHAPELS**

**A THREAT-RELATED ASSESSMENT 2010-11**



Prepared by Dyfed Archaeological Trust  
For Cadw



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### MEDIEVAL AND EARLY POST-MEDIEVAL CHURCHES AND CHAPELS

A THREAT-RELATED ASSESSMENT 2010-11

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## SUMMARY

*The medieval and early post-medieval churches and chapels project forms an element of the Cadw grant-aided medieval and early post-medieval threat related assessment project.*

*In a scoping study, churches and chapels were recognised as being under-represented on the register of scheduled ancient monuments. Recommendations made as part of this study will assist in rectifying this situation. There are almost 2000 medieval and post-medieval churches and chapels and related sites in southwest Wales. However, a large number of these are later post-medieval chapels and therefore do not form part of this study. Of the remainder, many are extant and in use buildings and fall outside the scope of this study, as only churches and chapels that are ruined buildings, earthworks or have been reduced so that no visible remains survive and therefore can be potentially designated scheduled ancient monuments were included. During this study 129 sites were assessed and field visits made to 51 of these.*

*It was discovered that there are several high quality churches and chapels in southwest Wales of medieval and early post-medieval date that current have no legal protection. In the best examples medieval masonry stands to several metres in height. Most, however, have been reduced to foundations or earthworks. The importance of many sites is strengthened by medieval and later documentation and by associated remains, such as the discovery of burials. Therefore over fifteen sites have been recommended for scheduling.*

## INTRODUCTION

In 2010, Dyfed Archaeological Trust undertook a Cadw grant-aid scoping study of medieval and post-medieval sites and landscapes (Davis 2010), part of a pan-Wales project (undertaken by all four Welsh Archaeological Trusts). The aim of the scoping project was to identify all medieval and early post-medieval (pre 1750) sites recorded on the Historic Environment Record that have not been the subject of a previous threat-related assessment and categorise them by site type. These site types were then analysed in greater detail, providing an indication of total numbers, numbers of sites represented by cropmarks, earthworks, documents or place-names, and identifying which sites are scheduled.

This scoping study recognised that almost 2000 medieval/ post medieval churches and chapels are recorded on the Dyfed Historic Environment Record (HER), broken down into following site types: medieval/post-medieval chapels (215), post-medieval chapels (959), medieval/post-medieval churches (294), post-medieval churches (384), church/chapel (11), chapelry (1), earthwork chapel (1), ecclesiastical establishment/chapel (1). Many of these records refer to extant buildings; churches and chapels still functioning as places of worship, churches and chapels standing but not used, or churches and chapels converted to other uses, and were therefore excluded from further analysis, as only sites potentially worthy of being considered as scheduled ancient monuments were included. Therefore the vast majority of the very large number of post-medieval chapels were dismissed as they are mainly of 18<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century extant buildings. Twenty-four post-medieval chapels, however, were considered worthy of further investigation as they are recorded as earthworks and through documentary evidence on the Dyfed HER and could be of pre-1750 date. A similar argument applies to post-medieval churches, with just eight possibly worthy of further investigation. Seventy-four of medieval/post-medieval churches are recorded as documentary form. These documentary sources are vague, and therefore only a few of these 74 sites were considered likely to require further investigation, plus

one site recorded as an earthwork and six as another form. The 215 medieval/post medieval chapels were the category of site requiring most attention. One hundred and forty-four of these are recorded only by documentary references and 15 as earthworks (only one of which is a SAM), and 24 as other form. Using these various filters the c.2000 sites included in the scoping study were reduced to 129 requiring further analysis.

Acting on the results of the scoping study the Trust applied to Cadw for grant-aid to undertake a threat-related assessment of the 129 churches and chapels in southwest Wales (Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire). This application was successful and the project, including fieldwork, was undertaken in late 2010 and early 2011.

## **PROJECT AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

The main aim of this project is to assess Medieval and post-medieval churches and chapels on the Dyfed HER that have not been the subject of a previous threat-related assessment.

The overall project's aims are:

- Assessment of the archaeological significance of churches and chapels in both a regional and national perspective.
- Assessment of the vulnerability of this element of the archaeological resource, review of scheduling, and recommendations for future management strategies.
- Enhancement of the regional HER and Extended National Database.

The project's objectives are:

- To identify all churches and chapels that require further assessment.
- To collate existing documentary evidence for the sites.
- To carry out a field assessment of those sites where necessary.
- To incorporate all the information into a database and enhance the Dyfed HER.
- To advise Cadw on those sites which are of national value and currently without statutory protection.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The original scoping exercise identified a list of 129 sites that required further analysis. The following methodology was used to achieve the project's objectives.

- Desk-top appraisal and compilation of site dossiers for each of the 129 sites using HER data, easily obtainable secondary sources, and data from the RCAHMW.

- Appraisal of sites to filter out those which are unlikely to be worthy of consideration as scheduled ancient monuments – e.g. sites with poor location data, near destroyed sites etc.
- Field visits to c.60 sites (c.50% of total) including a selection of the Scheduled Ancient Monuments in order to ascertain the condition and quality of surviving remains, and to take at least one photograph of each site.
- Updating and enhancing the regional HER on all 129 sites, including cataloguing of photographs.
- Production of a short report including scheduling recommendations, details of assessment, fieldwork and a site gazetteer.

## RESULTS

In total fifty-one church and chapel sites in Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire were visited and recorded during the course of the project. On occasions obtaining permission to gain access to some sites required multiple visits in order to trace owners. In several instances during fieldwork it was not possible to trace owners and obtain access, and these sites have not been included in the total of 51 sites. However, where records indicated a potentially important site every effort was made to obtain access to make a record of the site's current condition. Of the 51 sites, four are designated Scheduled Ancient Monuments and were examined as a control in order to gauge potential criteria for recommending the possible scheduling of other sites.

The sites varied from standing buildings to earthworks. Several had no visible remains but archaeological deposits potentially survive below ground. Of these, geophysical and topographic survey would assist in ascertaining the exact location and character in at least six instances. For example, in 2011 no earthworks were noted at the site of Capel Dewi (PRN 1441), Pembrokeshire, but it was recorded as a "turf-covered mound" by both the RCAHM in 1925 and during a 1966 fieldwork visit by the Ordnance Survey. And at Critchchurch (PRN 3524), also in Pembrokeshire, a neighbouring farmer pointed out what he believed to be the site of a chapel (Christ Church), where in dry weather the outline of a rectangular stone building is visible along with other stone buildings of an associated settlement. The farmer reported that the site had not been ploughed in living memory until three years ago when stone foundations were revealed. He also stated that he had always regarded the site as sacred (indeed burials have been found in an adjoining quarry) and expressed concern at the ongoing ploughing of the site.

Numerous sites that have now been reduced to earthworks were recorded, particularly in Pembrokeshire, and again topographical and geophysical survey of several of them would further our understanding. A good example is the site of Cilfowyr Chapel (PRN 2079), Pembrokeshire, where the rectilinear earthworks of the chapel can still be clearly seen within an extensive enclosure; it is possible that burials are located within the enclosure bank. The chapel was recorded in 16<sup>th</sup> century sources, including in the Survey of South Wales Chantries (1546), and was still extant by 1864. The earthworks are currently in a pasture field but the owners were aware that it had been ploughed in the past.

Many of the church and chapel sites surviving as buildings have been damaged, either deliberately to be managed as a ruin or through neglect and decay. For example, the roofless remains of Holy Cross Church (PRN 5226), in Ceredigion, have been restored by Llangoedmor Community Council and "secured as a sacred ruin". In contrast, Mouton Parish Church (PRN 3625), Pembrokeshire, is now under threat from encroaching vegetation and half of the roof has already collapsed. Particularly fine examples of buildings in Carmarthenshire include Capel Dyddgen (PRN 1700), where surviving remains include a belfry that stands to four metres in height, and Capel Erbach (PRN 646), the remains of a late-medieval chapel-of-ease where part of the altar and sherds of medieval pottery were excavated in 1970. Damaged sites that were visited ranged from the foundation footprint of a possible chapel at Cwmsymlog Lead Mine (PRN 96214), in Ceredigion, to the roofless but intact Boulston Church (PRN 3365) in Pembrokeshire.

Some of the more complete sites, including Boulston Church, are 19<sup>th</sup> century rebuilds or restorations but have been included within this survey as they are located on earlier sites and may incorporate medieval fabric within their structure. A brief summary of the results of the field survey is presented in tabular form below, followed by a gazetteer of all sites (visited and unvisited).

## **51 SITES VISITED IN TOTAL**

17 Visited sites in Carmarthenshire  
 5 Visited sites in Ceredigion  
 29 Visited sites in Pembrokeshire

### **Building - extant**

#### ***Pembrokeshire***

PRN 3174 – St Catherine's Chapel  
 PRN 3279 – Church of St. Daniel

### **Building – damaged**

#### ***Carmarthenshire***

PRN 646 – Capel Erbach  
 PRN 897 – Capel Tydist  
 PRN 1700 – Capel Dyddgen  
 PRN 2072 – Capel Berwick  
 PRN 2160 – St Michael's  
 PRN 2184 – Llanybri Church  
 PRN 5104 – Capel-y-Gors  
 PRN 16271 – Pontyates  
 PRN 21996 – Capel Aber-Bowlan  
 PRN 22086 – Penrhiwgoch Baptist Chapel  
 PRN 30173 – Glynhir

#### ***Ceredigion***

PRN 758 – Llanon Chapel; Neuadd  
 PRN 883 – St Michael's  
 PRN 5226 – Holycross Church  
 PRN 96214 – Cwmsymlog

#### ***Pembrokeshire***

PRN 1304 – Castlebythe  
 PRN 1339 – Hendy Cwrdd  
 PRN 1414 – Egremont  
 PRN 1548 – Treddafydd  
 PRN 3365 – Boulston Church  
 PRN 3462 – St Mary's

PRN 3625 – Mounton Parish Church  
PRN 5226 – Holy Cross  
PRN 13823 – St Teilo's  
PRN 58414 – Church of St. Peter

### **Earthworks**

#### ***Carmarthenshire***

PRN 829 – Capel Dewi  
PRN 4075 – Cae Capel

#### ***Ceredigion***

PRN 8082 – Capel Noyadd

#### ***Pembrokeshire***

PRN 2612 – Llandogen  
PRN 46784 – Clydau  
PRN 1571 – Capel Cynon  
PRN 2079 – Cilfowyr  
PRN 1056 – Capel Mair  
PRN 2418 – Rinaston  
PRN 2685 – Gorid Chapel  
PRN 1283 – Woodstock Chapel

### **No visible remains**

#### ***Carmarthenshire***

PRN 1899 – Capel Crist  
PRN 1900 – Capel Mihangel  
PRN 4016 – Capel yr Ywen  
PRN 16797 – Capel Sylen

#### ***Pembrokeshire***

PRN 1313 – St Brynach's  
PRN 1441 – St David's Chapel  
PRN 2444 – Old Chapel  
PRN 2547 – Parc Yr Hen  
PRN 2753 – Caerforiog  
PRN 2842 – Cwmdig  
PRN 3762 – Templeton  
PRN 4546 – St Margaret's  
PRN 46799 – Critchurch

## **REFERENCES**

Davis O, 2010, Medieval and Post-Medieval Sites and Landscapes: Scoping Report, unpublished report by Dyfed Archaeological Trust, report no. 2010/47.