

May 2013

**ST MICHAEL'S CHURCH, CILIAU AERON,  
CEREDIGION (SN 50244 58139)  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

**JULY 2011**



Prepared by: Dyfed Archaeological  
Trust Ltd.  
For: Ken Filkins Ltd



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## DYFED ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

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# ST MICHAEL'S CHURCH, CILIAU AERON, CEREDIGION (SN 50244 58139) ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

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*Paratowyd yr adroddiad yma at ddefnydd y cwsmer yn unig. Ni dderbynnir cyfrifoldeb gan Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Dyfed Cyf am ei ddefnyddio gan unrhyw berson na phersonau eraill a fydd yn ei ddarllen neu ddibynnu ar y gwybodaeth y mae'n ei gynnwys*

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**ST MICHAEL'S CHURCH, CILIAU AERON, CEREDIGION (SN 50244 58139)**  
**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

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**ST MICHAEL'S CHURCH, CILIAU AERON, CEREDIGION (SN5024458139)  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

**SUMMARY**

*The Church of St. Michael's in Ciliau Aeron, Ceredigion (NGR SN 50244 58139), is a Grade II Listed Building. It is unclear whether it has early medieval origins. The existing church was entirely rebuilt in the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century on the same site as the earlier church, but apparently retaining none of its fabric. As part of an extensive programme of renovation works, the Diocesan Advisory Committee recommended that an archaeological watching brief should be undertaken on any intrusive groundworks to record any evidence of earlier structures or burials at the site.*

*Dyfed Archaeological Trust Field Services were commissioned to undertake the watching brief by Ken Filkins Ltd. on behalf of the PCC in August 2011.*

*The archaeological watching brief observed the excavation of a drainage trench along the base of the exterior south side wall. In addition, the machine excavation of drainage trenches running northwest from the west end of the church on either side of the tarmac was observed. At the end of these drainage ditches, two soakaways were excavated at locations in which no funerary monuments were apparent.*

*No remains of medieval or early medieval date were revealed during the watching brief. No in-situ human remains were exposed.*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Project Commission**

Renovation works have recently been undertaken at St Michael's Church, Ciliau Aeron, Ceredigion (NGR SN 50244 58139). The works included re-pointing of the exterior walls, reroofing of the entire building and the insertion of drainage around the base of the exterior church walls and leading to soakaways within the churchyard. Given that the site is located in an area of archaeological potential, an archaeological watching brief during groundworks associated with the renovation was recommended by the Diocesan Advisory Committee.

To comply with this recommendation Ken Filkins Ltd. commissioned Dyfed Archaeological Trust Field Services to undertake the archaeological watching brief in August 2011.

### **1.2 Scope of the Project**

The project was designed to record any archaeological features or deposits exposed during episodes of earth moving and ground breaking around the base of the exterior church walls and within the churchyard.

### **1.3 Report Outline**

This report describes the location of the site along with its archaeological background before summarising the watching brief results and the conclusions based on those results.

### **1.4 Illustrations**

Record photographs are included at back of the report. Printed map extracts are not necessarily reproduced to their original scale.

## **2 THE SITE**

### **2.1 Site Location**

- 2.1.1 The Church of St. Michael's is located in the small settlement of Ciliau Aeron. The original settlement was arranged around the northwest and southwest sides of the churchyard at SN 50244 58139. The focus of the modern settlement has shifted north to the A482 which runs along the Aeron valley.

### **2.2 Archaeological Background**

- 2.2.1 The church of St Michael's (PRN20737) is a medium sized church, which was entirely re-built in the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century at the expense of David Davies of Foelallt (d.1768) on the same site as an earlier church.
- 2.2.2 There is no clear evidence for pre-Norman use of the site. St. Michael's was not a parish church during the medieval period, but was a chapelry of the medieval Deanery of Sub-Aeron.
- 2.2.3 There is no surviving evidence of the medieval church (PRN4853). During the recent renovation works, a date of 1852 was revealed on the west end of the church, suggesting extensive renovations at that time. The church was further restored in 1905.
- 2.2.2 The present church has a 5-bay chancel. The openings are simple, semi-circular headed, semi-romanesque or neoclassical in style. At the east end is a 1905 triple lancate window. The porch at the west end is a 20<sup>th</sup> century addition. There are stepped angle buttresses on the west end corners, and a gabled bellcote with a semicircular headed opening. The east end of the church is cut into the hill slope and was revetted in 1905. Drainage around the exterior of the church was cut in 1905. There is no clear evidence of pre-Norman origins for the site.).
- 2.2.3 The 1st edition Ordnance Survey map of 1889 shows the church was located within an oval churchyard. Circular and oval churchyards are often associated with churches with early medieval origins, although there is little other firm evidence to suggest this is the case at Ciliau Aeron.
- 2.2.4 The second edition Ordnance Survey map of 1905 shows the churchyard in its present enlarged form.
- 2.2.5 The tithe map was also consulted, but it did not offer any additional information.

## **3 METHODOLOGY**

- 3.1 The watching brief methodology consisted of a single site visit (on 25/07/2011/0) made to monitor the machine excavation of drainage channels around the exterior wall bases of the church and along the edges of the path through the church yard leading to two soakaways.
- 3.2 A photographic record of the exterior of the church and the drainage cuts was made.

#### **4 RESULTS**

- 4.1 The soil around the base of the south wall had been previously disturbed both in the past and more recently during the re-pointing of the exterior of the church. No previously undisturbed material, burials or other features were exposed. Drainage trenches were cut deep enough to ensure a sufficient drop to allow drainage, to a maximum depth of approximately 0.40m.
- 4.2 In the light of the results on the south side of the church, it was not considered necessary to return for a second visit to observe the excavation of the drainage gully on the northern side, which was also similarly disturbed.
- 4.3 The drain runs excavated on both sides of the pathway leading from the church avoided burial monuments, and no *in-situ* human remains were exposed. Occasional fragments of disarticulated human bone were encountered. These were backfilled in the drainage trenches in the approximate locations from where they were found.
- 4.4 The two soakaways were located in areas in which no burials were apparent, to depths of approximately 1.0m. No *in-situ* human remains were encountered.
- 4.5 Soils were dry, friable, sandy silt with occasional small to medium shale fragments. At the base of the soakaways, the ratio of stone to soil matrix increased, suggesting undisturbed natural deposits in these locations.

## **5 CONCLUSIONS**

- 5.1 The archaeological watching brief undertaken during drainage works within the churchyard of St. Michael's Church in Ciliau Aeron has demonstrated that no previously undisturbed deposits were significantly affected by the drainage works.
- 5.2 No *in-situ* inhumation burials were revealed within the drainage trenches or in the footprints of the soakaways. No evidence for earlier graves was revealed in the excavated areas.
- 5.3 No evidence of earlier buildings or other structures was revealed within the drainage trenches or within the soakaways.
- 5.4 The majority of the drainage works were excavated to depths of around 0.40m below the existing ground surface. This did not penetrate below previously disturbed ground around the church walls, which had originated from renovations in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and earlier 20<sup>th</sup> century. Some debris had also accumulated from recent re-pointing work.
- 5.5 No evidence of earlier (pre 18<sup>th</sup> century) stonework was visible in the exterior walls of the church. This supports the theory that the medieval church was completely rebuilt during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, although is not conclusive.
- 5.6 The presence, extent or survival of any medieval church fabric or burials remains unknown, as they have not been exposed by the drainage works. No evidence of earlier medieval origins for the church or cemetery has been revealed.



## **6 SOURCES**

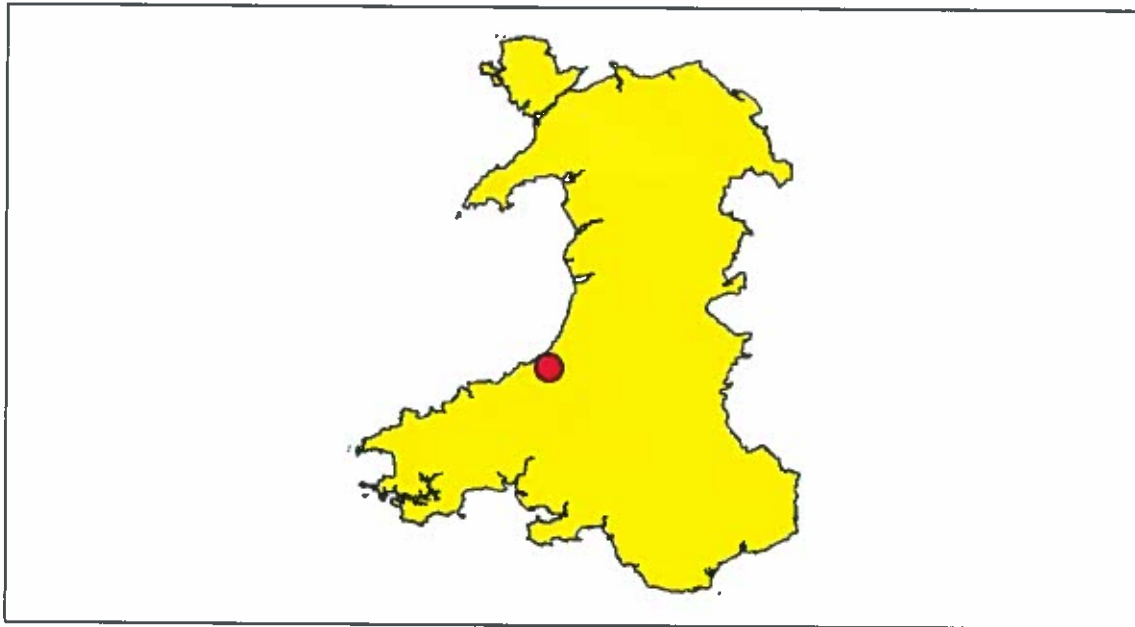
Ludlow, 2000. *Cadw: Welsh Historic Churches 'Ceredigion Churches'*. Cambria Archaeology.

### **Maps**

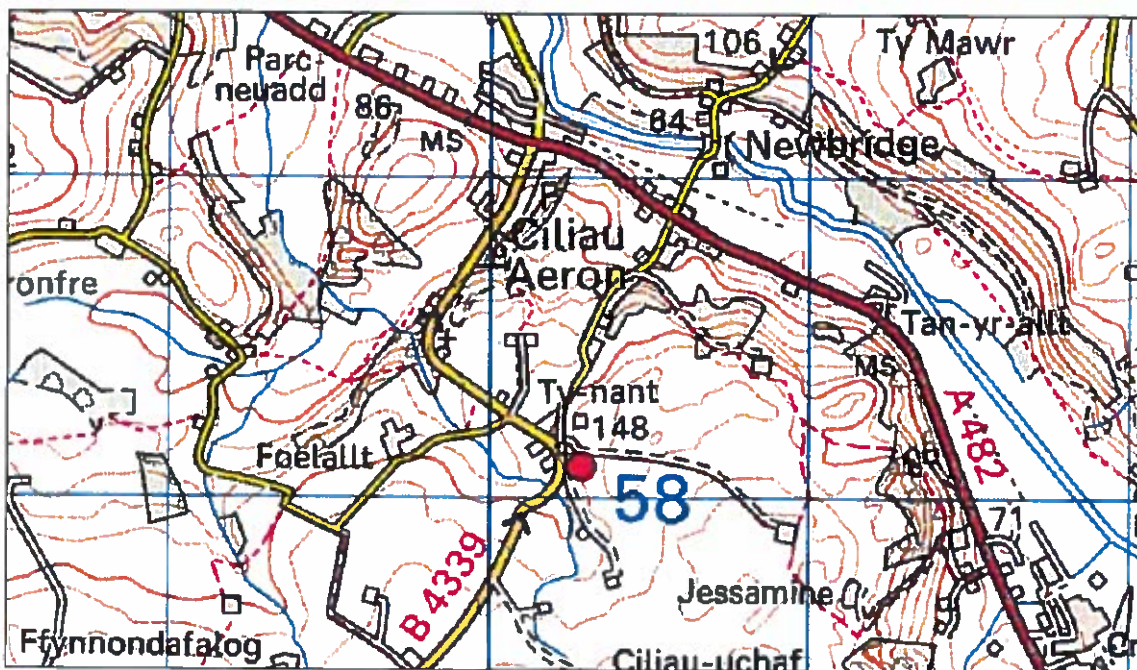
Ordnance Survey 1889 1:2500 Ceredigion Sheet XXV.1

Ordnance Survey 1905 1:2500 Ceredigion Sheet XXV.1

Ciliau Aeron tithe map, 1843



**Figure 1:** Location of Ciliau Aeron



**Figure 2:** Location map with church location. Based on the Ordnance Survey.

Reproduced from the 1995 Ordnance Survey 1:50,000 scale Landranger Map with the permission of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, © Crown Copyright Cambria Archaeology, The Shire Hall, Carmarthen Street, Llandello, Carmarthenshire SA19 6AF. Licence No AL51842A

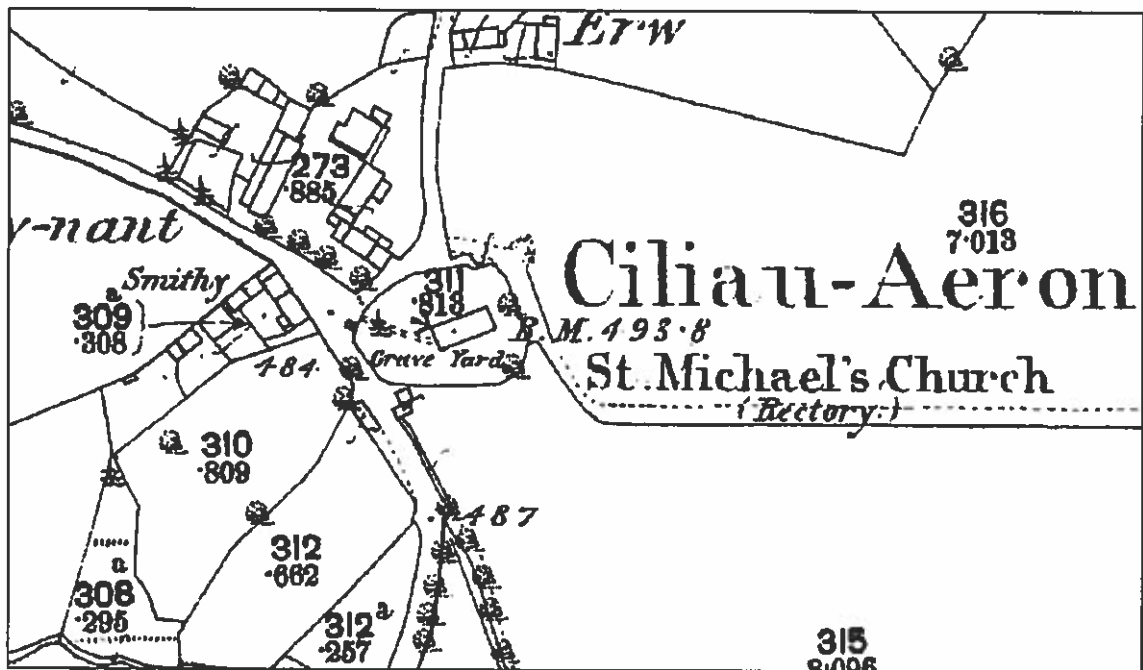


Figure 3: 1<sup>st</sup> edition OS map showing location of church within village.

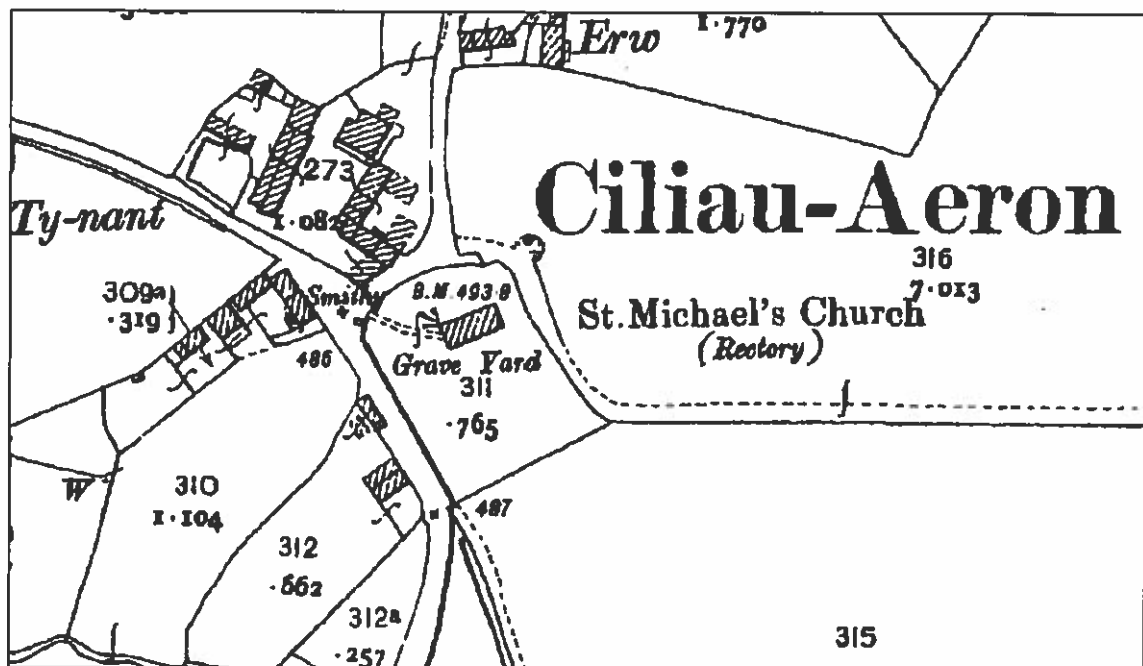
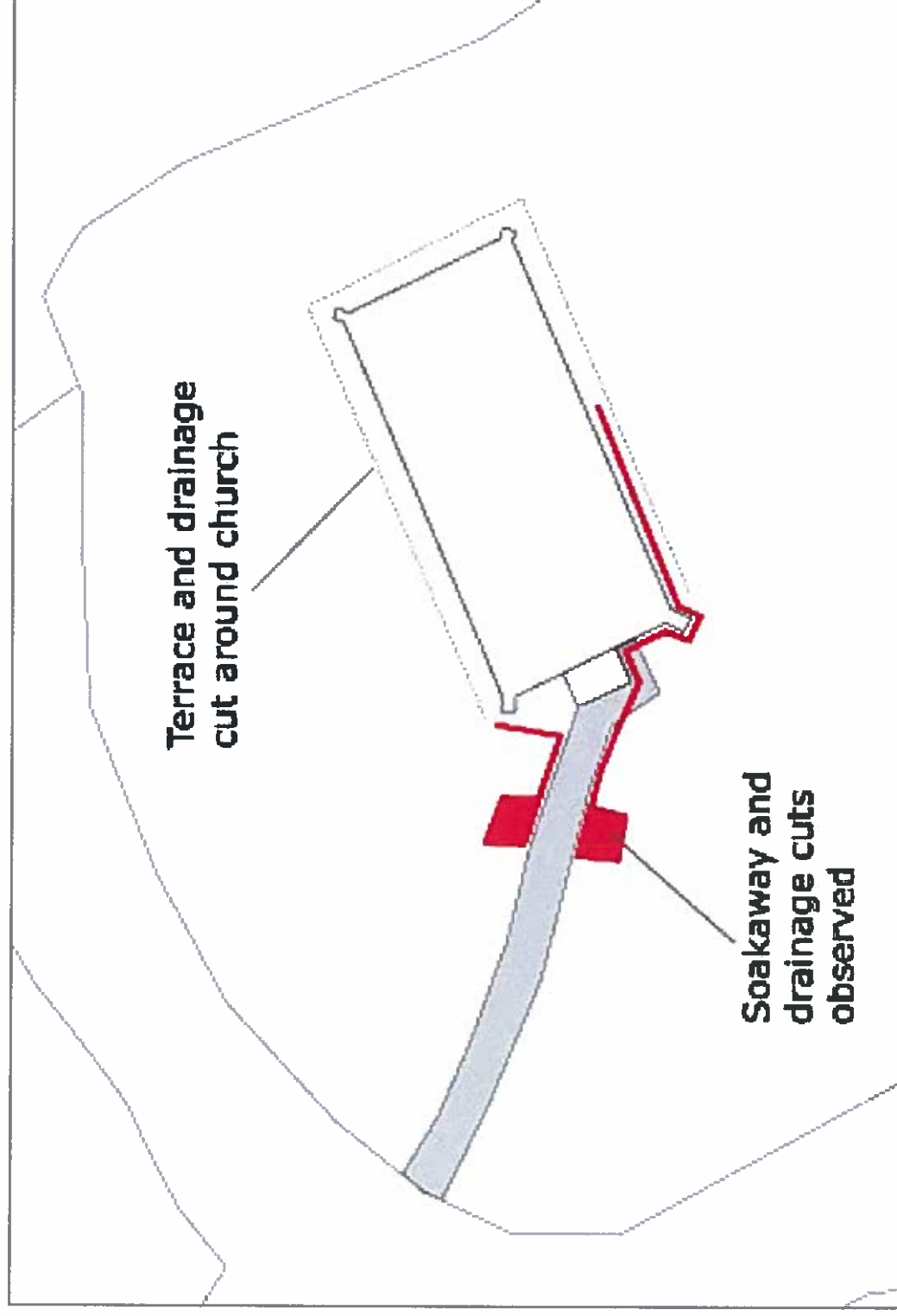


Figure 4: 2nd edition OS map showing location of church within village.



**Figure 5:** Plan showing approximate locations of drainage and soakaways observed during the watching brief (not to scale)



**Photo 1:** Exterior of church



**Photo 2:** Drainage trench along base of south wall





**Photo 3:** Drainage trench at southwest corner of the church



**Photo 4:** Drainage trench along south edge of path





**Photo 5:** Soakaway on south side of path



**Photo 6:** Drainage trench on north side of path



**Photo 7:** Soakaway on north side of path



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Paratowyd yr adroddiad hwn gan /  
This report has been prepared by: **Duncan Schlee**

Swydd / Position: **Field Services Project Manager**

Llofnod / Signature .....



..... Dyddiad / Date

Mae'r adroddiad hwn wedi ei gael yn gywir a derbyn sêl bendith /  
This report has been checked and approved by: **James Meek**

ar ran Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Dyfed Cyf. /  
on behalf of Dyfed Archaeological Trust Ltd.

Swydd / Position: **Head of Field Services**

Llofnod / Signature



Dyddiad / Date

*Yn unol â'n nôd i roddi gwasanaeth o ansawdd uchel, croesawn unrhyw sylwadau  
sydd gennych ar gynnwys neu strwythur yr adroddiad hwn*