

ST. BRYNACH'S CHURCH, LLANFYRNACH, PEMBROKESHIRE: ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF



Prepared by Dyfed Archaeological Trust
For: Dorian Phillips & Partners



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**ST. BRYNACH'S CHURCH, LLANFYRNACH,
PEMBROKESHIRE:

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

Gan / By

Andrew Shobbrook

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ST. BRYNACH'S CHURCH, LLANFYRNACH, PEMBROKESHIRE: ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

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SUMMARY

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken during ground works associated with the installation of a new drainage system at St Brynach's Church, Llanfyrnach, Pembrokeshire. An archaeological watching brief was recommended by the archaeological advisor to the Diocese as the works were likely to pass through the graveyard surrounding the church and there was considered to be the potential for archaeological remains to be exposed, damaged or destroyed.

The work was commissioned from Dyfed Archaeological Trust Field Services by Dorian Phillips & Partners.

The Church of St Brynach is the parish church of Llanfyrnach. The church is a Grade II listed building. It is recorded on the Regional Historic Environment Record, held by Dyfed Archaeological Trust, as being entirely rebuilt in the 19th century. The associated entrance gates to the churchyard are also Grade II Listed. The church replaced a former medieval structure and the church site possibly has early medieval origins. Previously an early Christian (early medieval) inscribed stone stood in the churchyard, but this has since been lost, possibly when the medieval church was demolished and rebuilt in the 19th century. The Church of St Brynach is located to the south of Llanfyrnach Castle Mound; a medieval motte and Scheduled Ancient Monument.

The works involved the excavation of rain water drainage trenches tight to the church walls on the north and south sides to discharge to a soak away on the east end.

Fragments of lime mortar, roofing slate and large amounts of disarticulated human remains were observed during the excavation of both trenches for the proposed drains positioned to the north (Drain 1) and to the south (Drain 2) of the church.

One inhumation burial was recorded in the trench excavated for Drain 1 to the east of the present church. It is difficult to date the burial but it is unlikely that it pre-dates the medieval period.

No structural features relating to the early history of the church and its environs were revealed during the ground works.

The watching brief confirms that the works have not impacted upon significant archaeological deposits but the potential for the survival of archaeological deposits at greater depth or elsewhere in the vicinity still remains.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Commission

- 1.1.1 Dyfed Archaeological Trust Field Services were commissioned by Dorian Phillips & Partners to undertake a watching brief on ground works associated with the installation of a new drainage system at St Brynach's Church, Llanfyrnach, Pembrokeshire (Figure 1).
- 1.1.2 As the works were likely to pass through the graveyard surrounding the church there was considered to be the potential for archaeological remains to be exposed, damaged or destroyed, particularly those associated with the earlier medieval church that was destroyed before the current church building was constructed. The archaeological advisor to the Diocese requested that an archaeologist be present during the works to ensure that any such remains revealed would be appropriately recorded, and a report and archive prepared. It was recommended that in order to minimise the risk of impacting upon buried deposits or features, a route was chosen that followed previously disturbed ground wherever possible. Carrying out ground works across a churchyard carries the high potential for the disturbance of human burials.
- 1.1.3 The installation of a new drainage system formed part of larger church improvement works undertaken at St Brynach's made possible through Heritage Lottery funding.

1.2 Scope of the Project

- 1.2.1 A generic written scheme of investigation (WSI) document for a watching brief was prepared by Dyfed Archaeological Trust Field Services prior to the commencement of the works. The WSI outlined methodologies for:
 - monitoring groundworks in order to identify the presence/absence of any archaeological deposits.
 - establishing the character, extent and date range for any archaeological deposits to be affected by the proposed groundworks.
 - appropriately investigating and recording any archaeological deposits to be affected by the groundworks.
 - producing an archive and report of any results.

1.3 Fieldwork Methodology

- 1.3.1 An archaeological 'watching brief' was undertaken on 05/04/2013 at the commencement of ground works that had the potential to expose, damage or destroy underlying archaeological remains.
- 1.3.2 A small tracked mechanical excavator was used to excavate two separate linear drains flanking the northern and southern sides of the church thereby exiting into two separate soak ways located in the eastern area of the church yard. Each channel was linked to the pre-existing drainage pipes which carry rain water from the building's roof. The routes of the two new drains are shown in Figure 2 and are labelled Drain 1 and Drain 2.
- 1.3.3 The excavated trenches for the two drains measured approximately 0.50m in width and did not exceed 0.48m in depth.
- 1.3.4 All archaeological deposits revealed during the ground works were examined and recorded to an appropriate level.

1.4 Post-Fieldwork Reporting and Archiving

- 1.4.1 All data recovered during the fieldwork will be collated into a site archive structured in accordance with the specifications in *Archaeological Archives: a guide to best practice in creation, compilation, transfer and curation* (Brown 2007), and the procedures recommended by the National Monuments Record, Aberystwyth.
- 1.4.2 The results of the fieldwork have been assessed in local, regional and wider contexts. The report includes a desk-based research element to ensure that the site is placed within its wider archaeological context.
- 1.4.3 A report fully representative of the results of the fieldwork has been prepared.

1.5 Report Outline

- 1.5.1 This report provides a summary and discussion of the archaeological watching brief and its results. Some archaeological background to the church is included.

1.6 Abbreviations

- 1.6.1 Sites recorded on the Regional Historic Environment Record¹ (HER) are identified by their Primary Record Number (PRN) and located by their National Grid Reference (NGR). Dyfed Archaeological Trust Field Services – DAT-FS; Dyfed Archaeological Trust Heritage Management – DAT-HM; Scheduled Ancient Monument – SAM; Written Scheme of Investigation – WSI.

1.7 Illustrations

- 1.7.1 Printed map extracts are not necessarily reproduced to their original scale.

¹ Held and managed by Dyfed Archaeological Trust, The Shire Hall, Carmarthen Street, Llandeilo SA19 6AF.

1.8 Timeline

1.8.1 The following timeline is used within this report to give date ranges for the various archaeological periods that may be mentioned within the text (Table 1).

Period	Approximate date	
Palaeolithic –	c.450,000 – 10,000 BC	Prehistoric
Mesolithic –	c. 10,000 – 4400 BC	
Neolithic –	c.4400 – 2300 BC	
Bronze Age –	c.2300 – 700 BC	
Iron Age –	c.700 BC – AD 43	
Roman (Romano-British) Period –	AD 43 – c. AD 410	Historic
Post-Roman / Early Medieval Period –	c. AD 410 – AD 1086	
Medieval Period –	1086 – 1536	
Post-Medieval Period ² –	1536 – 1750	
Industrial Period –	1750 – 1899	
Modern –	20th century onwards	

Table 1: Archaeological and Historical Timeline for Wales

² The post-medieval and industrial periods are combined as the post-medieval period on the Regional Historic Environment Record as held by Dyfed Archaeological Trust

2. THE SITE

2.1 Location

2.1.1 St Brynach's Church is located within the small village of Llanfyrnach in Pembrokeshire (SN 2200 3115), approximately 4.6km to the south-east of Crymych (Figure 1). The church lies at roughly 130m above sea level to the west of the Afon Taff.

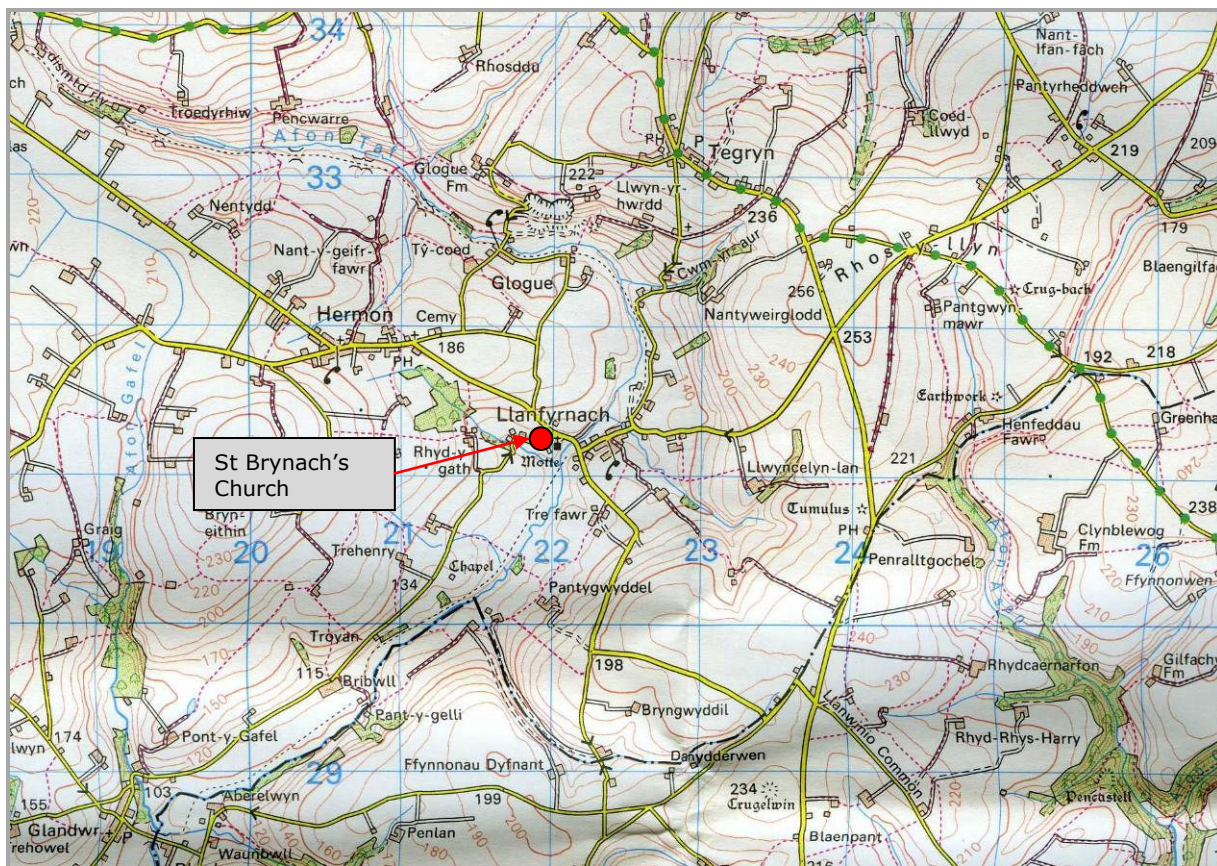


Figure 1: Site location map based upon the Ordnance Survey. The red circle shows the position of the watching brief

Reproduced from the 2003 Ordnance Survey 1:50,000 scale Landranger Map with the permission of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, © Crown Copyright
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2.2 Archaeological and Historical Background

2.2.1 The Church of St Brynach is the parish church of Llanfyrnach. The church is recorded on the Regional Historic Environment Record (HER), held by Dyfed Archaeological Trust, which states that the church was entirely rebuilt in the 19th century (HER Primary Record Number (PRN 17350 and 60442), which is a Grade II Listed building. The associated entrance gates to the churchyard are also Grade II Listed (PRN 60502). The church replaced a medieval structure (PRN 5097) and possibly an early medieval structure (PRN 46814). Formerly an early Christian (early medieval inscribed stone stood in the churchyard, but this has since been lost, possibly when the medieval church was demolished and rebuilt in the 19th century. It is located to the south of Llanfyrnach Castle Mound, a medieval motte (PRN 1075 and Scheduled Ancient Monument PE097).

PRN No	Period	Site Name and Description	Grid Reference
1075	Medieval	Llanfyrnach Castle Mound - A ring motte c.4m high with a flat top and steep sides. No bailey is visible but this may be due to the development around the site, ie a road to the east and south side and a house to the north. Scheduled Ancient Monument No PE097	SN 2196 3122
1078	Early Medieval	Tavusi Stone, Inscribed stone - Lost Group I ECM (Latin-inscribed stone), of 5th- 6th century date, recorded in 1708 when it was lying beneath the altar of Llanfyrnach parish church (PRN 5097). There appear to be no other records of the stone, which may have been lost when the medieval church was rebuilt.	SN 2200 3115
5097	Medieval	St Brynach's Church - Medieval parish church, entirely rebuilt in the 19th century, and post-medieval PRN 17350. See churchyard PRN 46814 for site description and management recommendations.	SN 2200 3115
17350	Post-medieval	St Brynach's Church - Listed as a well-preserved and little-altered early C19 building dating from before the archaeologically correct period of the Gothic Revival	SN 2200 3115
46814	Early Medieval	St Brynach's Church - Early medieval B site, ie. medium-probability early medieval origins. Suboval churchyard occupied by the medieval Llanfyrnach parish church (PRN 5097), which was entirely rebuilt in the 19th century (post-medieval PRN 17350).	SN 2200 3115
60442	Post-medieval	St Brynach's Church - Grade II listed church	SN 22008 31155
60502	Post-medieval	Entrance Gates To Churchyard Of Church Of St Brynach - Grade II listed gates and gate piers	SN 21982 31173

Table 2: Historic Environment Record Entries

2.2.2 The following more detailed description of the church is taken from 'North Pembrokeshire Churches' (Ludlow 2000):

St Brynach, Llanfyrnach, is a 3-celled church, of small-medium size. It was (re)built in 1842 in the same location as its predecessor (PRN 5097) but retaining none of the earlier fabric.

The present church consists of a 2-bayed chancel, a 3-bayed nave, and a 2-storey west tower. Construction is in medium-sized slate rubble, squared and coursed, with squared quoins; all is in early 19th century 'Estate Chapel' style, broadly neo-gothic. There is external pointing of the

19th century; the internal walls are rendered/plastered, from 1842. The church is entered through the west tower. The west tower and the gable ends are pinnaced in slate rubble, 1842. All openings are from 1842 and include the west doors and the windows. The nave and chancel windows are single lights with simple 2-centred heads, without surrounds, and with timber/UPVC frames; the chancel side windows have been blocked (in the later 19th century?). Dressings are confined to the tower which exhibits an external squared dripmould at the top of the lower stage, and 2-light mullioned windows which were blocked (in the later 19th century?). The external walls are plain-buttressed throughout. The chancel and nave have slated gable roofs; the tower roof was not seen. The board floors obscure the bases of the door openings and the font base.

There is no structural or physical evidence for the earlier church. There is no external drain or cutting around any part of the church. The internal floor levels may have been raised, but are suspended with a void below. No vault or crypt is evident. There is no evidence for former components beyond the present church walls. A large memorial is significantly close to the chancel north wall.

The form of the earlier church can be at least partly surmised from the sources. The tithe map of 1838 (NLW, Llanfyrnach, 1838) appears to depict a building with a similar size and plan to the present church, with a chancel, a nave, and a western component that may represent a porch or a turret; the map may, however, be unreliable. The church was described as 'of mean structure' in c.1811 (Fenton, 1903, 264) and as 'not remarkable for any architectural details of importance' in 1833 (Lewis, 1833). Churchwardens' accounts of the later 18th-early 19th centuries (Pembs. R. O., HPR/64/15) record the usual expenditure on maintenance, but with a little more detail. A 'little steeple' and bell is mentioned - a bellcote or bell turret. More than one bell was present and it was proposed to replace them in 1791. The church was entered through a west door. There was a chancel arch; it was wainscoted in 1786. The floor was (re)flagged in 1786 for 5s, and the seats were open benches. The windows were shuttered. The sums spent on repointing suggest that the exterior was neither rendered nor whitewashed.

The font has an octagonal bowl, of 15th century date. The octagonal stem and base are 19th century.

A 'sepulchral slab' (PRN 1078) was observed lying beneath the altar in 1708. It is of unknown form or date, but bore a Latin inscription and may possibly represent an ECM. It may have been incorporated within the fabric of the 1842 church.

2.2.3 The first edition Ordnance survey map of 1890 depicts the church and its environs within the village of Llanfynach with the remains of the medieval motte (PRN 1075) depicted to the north west of the watching brief centre (Figure 2).

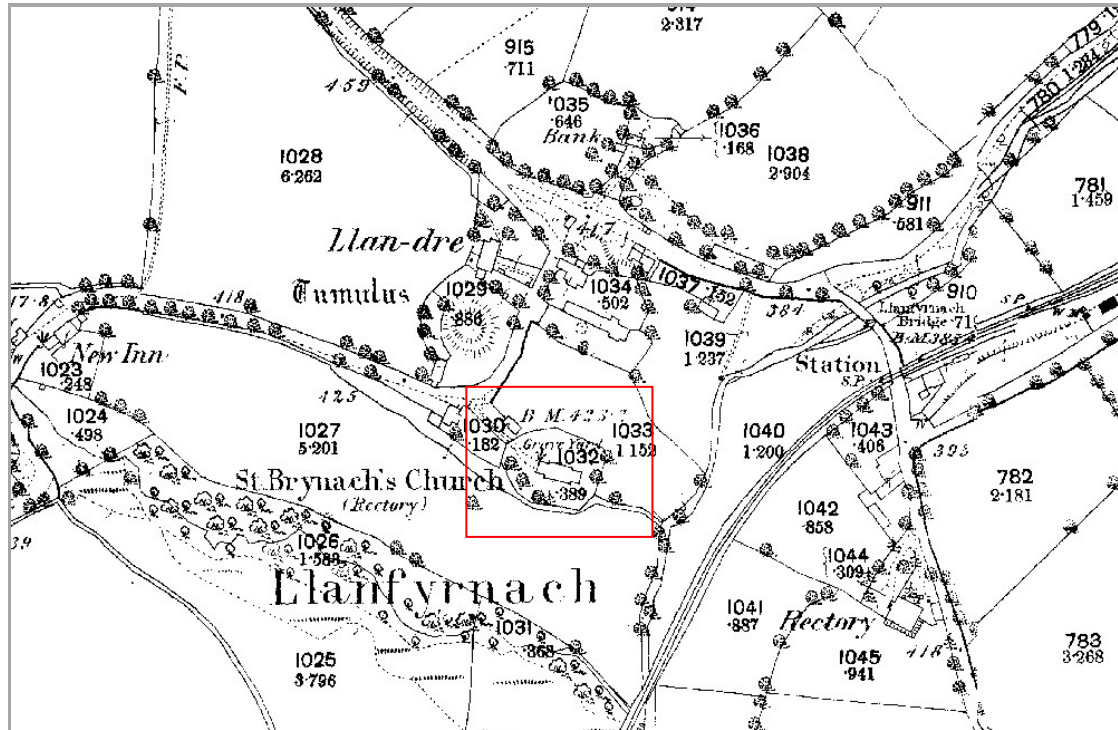


Figure 2: Extract from the first edition Ordnance Survey map of 1890 showing St Brynach's Church and its environs

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION (Figure 3 & 4, Photos 1 to 9)

- 3.1 A single site visit was made to St Brynach's Church on the 5th of April 2013 to view ground works being undertaken associated with the installation of a new drainage system.
- 3.2 Two trenches were excavated to accommodate the new drainage system. The trench for Drain 1 (Photo 1) was located on the northern side of the church building and the trench for Drain 2 was situated on the southern side (Photo 2). Both drains were designed to collect rain water from the roof of the church via the down pipes positioned on six buttresses located on either side of the main church building and eastern chancel (Figure 3).
- 3.3 All archaeological contexts recorded during the watching brief are listed in Table 3.



Photo 1: A view of the north facing side of the church before the excavation of the trench for Drain 1

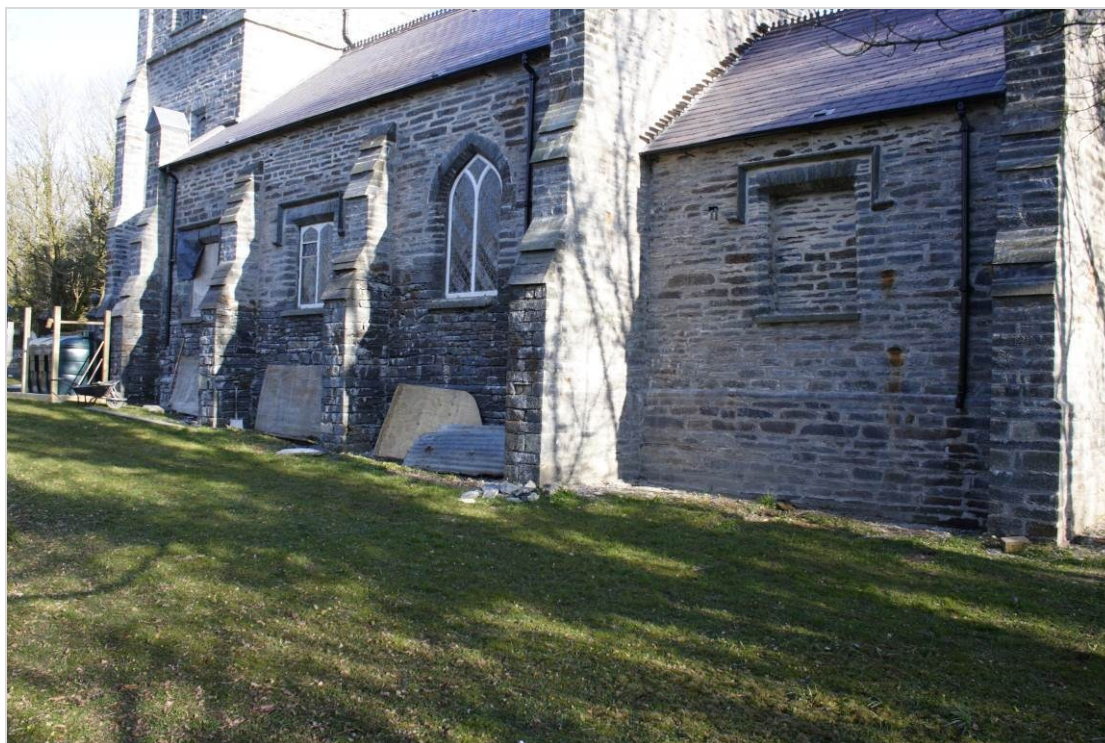


Photo 2: A view of the south facing side of the church before the excavation of the trench for Drain 2

- 3.4 Over the course of the watching brief one definite inhumation burial was located in the eastern end of the trench for Drain 1 (Figure 3, photos 7 & 8). Elsewhere in both trenches a quantity of disarticulated human bone fragments were revealed indicating a long history of burial practices within the church yard.
- 3.5 The trench for Drain 1 followed the perimeter of the north facing wall of the church for a total of 25m. Within this trench the topsoil comprised mixed dark brown silty clay [1000] which had a maximum thickness of 0.12m. Underlying the topsoil a mixed deposit of light orangey brown silty clay [1001] was encountered which in some areas contained disarticulated human remains and had a maximum thickness of 0.18m. A mixed deposit [1004] was found to underlie [1001] and consisted of a mid to dark grey silty clay which contained frequent inclusions of small sub angular slates and frequent mortar flecks. Deposit [1004] continued for 0.23m after which the base of the trench was reached. Both mixed deposits [1001] and [1004] are probably the result of past landscaping phases within the church yard.
- 3.6 The remains of a white mortar mixing pad [1003] were observed within the north facing section of Drain 1 at its western end (Figure 4) between the mixed deposits [1001] and [1004]. The plinth measured roughly 1.0m wide by 0.07m deep and was almost entirely composed of lime mortar. This feature probably relates to a renovation phase undertaken during the church history.
- 3.7 The remains of a layer of slate roofing tiles [1008] were uncovered outside the north facing wall of the chancel at 0.48m below ground level. Some of the tiles had white lime mortar adhered to them and are thought to be an indication of past repairs or refurbishment of the church's roof.

- 3.8 Near the north-eastern buttress of the church chancel (Figure 3, Photos 3-6) a large stone slab was uncovered. Initially it was thought that it might indicate a burial as the slab was lying on an east-west alignment; the alignment along which early Christian burials were normally placed and the stone slab could have been the capstone covering a grave beneath. Almost certainly it forms part of the mixed deposits together with the deposit of broken slate that lies below it [1008] that lie either side of the chancel building; a result of the rebuilding of the church in 1842.



Photo 3: Vertical view of stone slab [1007] in the trench for Drain 1



Photo 4: North facing section view of deposits [1006] overlying stone slab[1007]



Photo 5: View of western end of stone slab[1007] and the fragmented slate deposit [1008] that appears to lie underneath it



Photo 6: View looking east of stone slab [1007] and fragmented slate deposit [1008] in foreground



Photo 7: View looking east of inhumation burial [1002] found at the eastern end of Drain 1. The exposed bones are visible as lighter flecks within the surrounding soil

- 3.9 The inhumation burial [1002] was found during the excavation at the eastern end of the trench for Drain 1 (Figure 3, Photos 7-8). The top of the burial was first observed at 0.48m below present ground level and appeared to be placed on an east-west alignment.
- 3.10 No grave cut for this burial was evident within the sections of the trench or in plan. Once the grave was identified as an *in situ* burial the depth of the trench was reduced thereby preserving the remains contained within the grave and not disturbing the grave any further. The date of the burial is unknown as no dateable artefacts were visible within the exposed grave. The skeletons mid-section appeared to be located at right angles to the present line of the north-south aligned upstanding headstones suggesting that this unmarked burial [1002] is older than the marked graves visible today above ground.



Photo 8: View looking south of burial [1002] found at the eastern end of the trench for Drain 1

- 3.11 During the excavation of the soak away located at the eastern end of Drain 1 evidence of a stone drain was observed [1012] (Figure 3). The stones appeared to be randomly positioned and upon further investigation it was concluded that the feature was probably part of a stone drain of unknown date.
- 3.12 The trench for Drain 2 followed closely the south facing wall of the church building and had a total length of 21.5m (Figure 3). The overlying topsoil [1013] within this trench consisted of a mid-blackish brown silty clay containing occasional flecks of mortar. Underlying the topsoil a light greyish brown silty clay [1014] was encountered which again similarly contained occasional small flecks of mortar. The basal deposit [1015] viewed within Drain 2 trench consisted of a light brown silty clay which contained frequent small flecks of lime mortar. This deposit continued to the base of the excavated trench.

- 3.13 A possible foundation cut [1016] associated with the present Victorian church building was observed near the south-eastern facing buttress of the chancel (Figure 3). The foundation cut had a width of 0.38m and contained one visible fill [1017]; a blackish grey clay containing frequent small sub angular slates.
- 3.14 Whilst excavating the soak away for Drain 2 a second stone drain [1018] was encountered at the eastern end of the trench which was similar in construction to that discovered at the eastern end of Drain 1 (Figure 3).
- 3.15 Although no articulated human remains were found during excavation of the trench for Drain 2, a number of disarticulated remains were found again indicating the graveyards prolonged use.
- 3.16 No evidence of any structural remains indicating the presence of an earlier church predating the existing building were recorded in the trenches for either Drain 1 or 2.

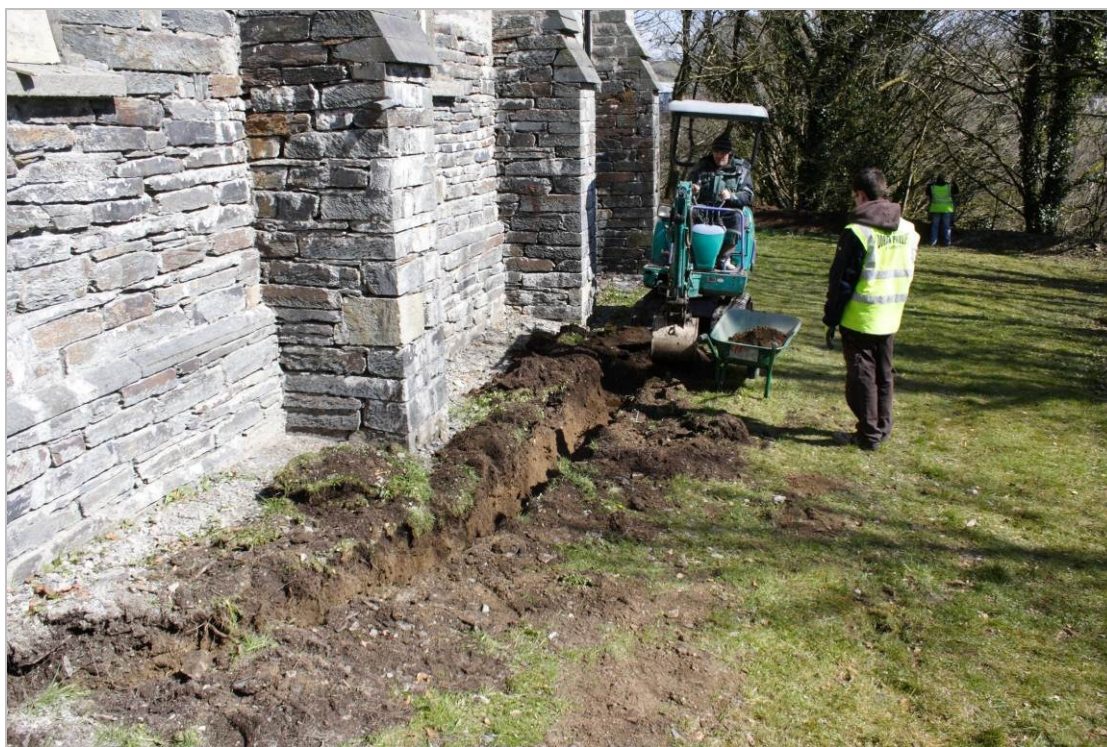


Photo 9: Working shot of the excavation for Drain 2 on the southern side of the church

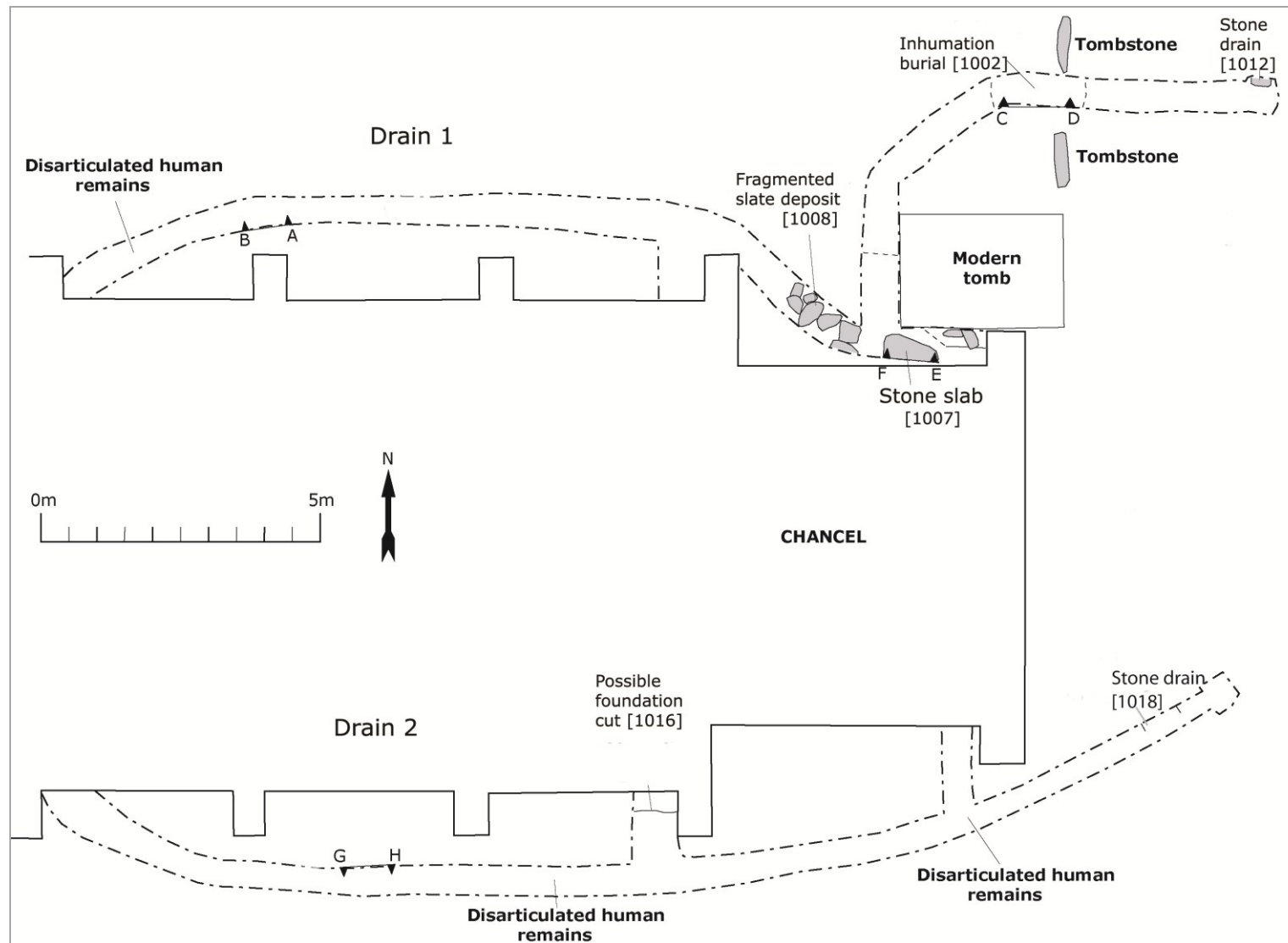


Figure 3: Plan of the two trenches excavated for Drains 1 & 2 and the location of archaeological features described in the text

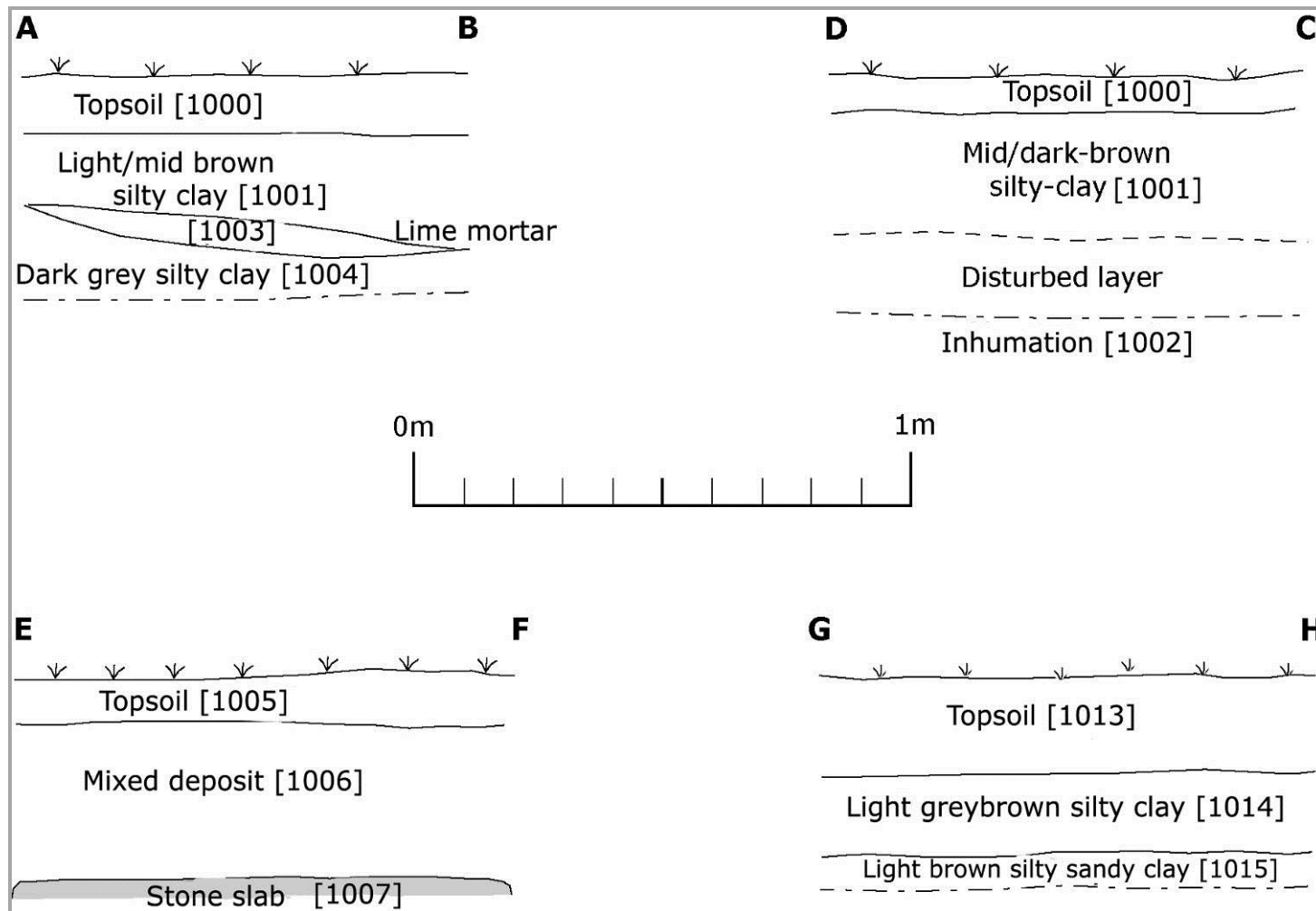


Figure 4: Sections recorded in the trenches excavated for Drains 1 & 2. Their locations are marked on Figure 3

Context	Description	Dimensions
1000	Topsoil layer (northern side of church) Dark brown silty clay	0.08m in thickness
1001	Made up ground deposit Light orangey brown silty clay	0.18m in thickness
1002	In-situ skeleton found in western end of Drain 1 trench	Skeleton first observed at 0.48m below ground level
1003	White lime mortar builders plinth	0.07m in thickness
1004	Made up ground deposit Mid to dark grey silty clay	Continued to base of excavation for 0.15m
1005	Topsoil layer Mid blackish brown silty clay containing inclusions of frequent small sub angular stones	0.09m in thickness
1006	Mixed deposit (Overlying stone slab1007) Mixed light brownish grey containing inclusions of 20% mortar flecks and frequent small sub angular slates.	0.30m in thickness
1007	Stone slab	First encountered 0.39m below ground level
1008	Fragmented slate roofing deposit encountered to the north of chancel.	0.45m below ground level
1009	Dark grey silty clay encountered to the north of chancel	First encountered 0.39m below ground level 0.45m below ground level
1010	Cut of Victorian tomb located north of chancel.	
1011	Fill of [1010]. Light yellow silty clay. Backfill of Victorian tomb	
1012	Post medieval stone drain	
1013	Topsoil layer (Southern side of church) Mid blackish brown silty clay	0.20m in thickness
1014	Light greyish brown silty cla, contains occasional small flecks of charcoal.	0.15m in thickness
1015	Basal deposits found in Drain 2 trench Light brown silty sandy clay. Contains frequent small flecks of mortar along with frequent small shale fragments.	0.41m in thickness
1016	Possible foundation cut observed along southern wall of church	
1017	Fill of above foundation cut [1017]	
1018	Possible stone drain	

Table 3: List of archaeological contexts recorded during the watching brief

4. CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 The archaeological watching brief recorded few archaeologically significant deposits or features. When archaeological features were exposed, such as burial [1002] within the trench for Drain 1, it was possible to alter slightly the depth and route of the trench to minimise the impact of the ground works on the archaeology. Large amounts of building demolition and construction material were found within both Drains 1 and 2. This is thought to be associated with the rebuilding of the church in 1842.
- 4.2 The inhumation burial [1002] found at the eastern end of the trench for Drain 1 was discovered at a relatively shallow depth and predates the more recent line of graves whose visible headstones run across this burial at right angles to it.
- 4.3 No in-situ structural remains of buildings pre-dating the existing church were recorded within either of the trenches.
- 4.4 Overall the archaeological watching brief has demonstrated that the drainage works have not impacted upon any significant archaeological deposits or features.

5. SOURCES

Regional Historic Environment Record held at the Dyfed Archaeological Trust.

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Non Published sources

Ludlow, N. 2000. '*Cadw Welsh Historic Church's Project- North Pembrokeshire churches, Dyfed*', Dyfed Archaeological Trust unpublished report, DAT Report no 48.

Cartographic sources

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Ordnance Survey 2003 1:50 Cardigan & Mynydd Preseli/ Aberteifi a Mynydd Preseli. Sheet 145.

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Ebrill 2013
April 2013

Paratowyd yr adroddiad hwn gan / This report has been prepared by

ANDREW SHOBBROOK

Swydd / Position: ARCHAEOLOGIST

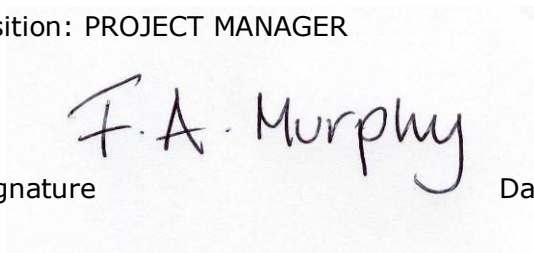
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Date

Mae'r adroddiad hwn wedi ei gael yn gywir a derbyn sêl bendith
This report has been checked and approved by Frances Murphy

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

Swydd / Position: PROJECT MANAGER



Llofnod / Signature

Date 07.05.13

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

*As part of our desire to provide a quality service we would welcome any
comments you may have on the content or presentation of this report.*

