

ST MARY'S CHURCH FOOTPATHS, KIDWELLY, CARMARTHENSHIRE: ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF (SN 4084 0675)



Prepared by DAT Archaeological Services
For: Mr Ken Denham



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**ST MARY'S CHURCH FOOTPATHS, KIDWELLY,
CARMARTHENSHIRE:
ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

Gan / By

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ST MARY'S CHURCH FOOTPATHS, KIDWELLY, CARMARTHENSHIRE: ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

SUMMARY

DAT Archaeological Services were commissioned by Mr Ken Denham, acting on behalf of the Rev Roger Morley-Jones to undertake an archaeological watching brief during excavation works associated with the renewal of footpaths within the churchyard of St Mary's Church, Kidwelly (PRN 1629).

The archaeological watching brief revealed a number of previously unrecorded archaeological features. A series of 19th century gravestones were identified within the footpath on the south side of the church which had been removed from the graveyard and reused as flag stones for the path.

Beneath the footpath on the north side of the church two burial vaults were revealed. These pre dated the pathway which was constructed between 1907 and 1915. The burial vaults potentially date to the 19th century and may be associated with two ledger stones that lay at the side of the path in very close proximity to them.

No evidence for any claustral buildings associated with the Benedictine Priory (PRN 7361) was identified during the course of the watching brief. If present they potentially lie at greater depth than that affected by the path renewal ground works. There is the possibility that the claustral buildings lie to the northeast of the church where ruined buildings are shown as 'Priory remains of' on historic Ordnance Survey mapping.

Alternatively, given that throughout its history the priory housed only a Prior and two monks who were there to administer the property of the mother house of Sherborne Abbey, it is possible that the Priory did not comprise a full range of conventual buildings but that the small community occupied a property that once stood on Causeway Street to the west of the church. The remains shown on historic OS mapping might represent barns and granaries for storing produce collected in lieu of tithes by the Priory.

Overall the works associated with the renewal of the paths at the church have caused minimal disturbance to any buried archaeological remains or former burials.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Commission

1.1.1 A planning application was submitted to Carmarthenshire County Council (planning ref: S/27730) for the upgrading of paths within St Mary's church yard Kidwelly, Carmarthenshire which would involve the removal of uneven, damaged concrete paving slabs to be replaced by tarmacadam surfacing. The application also included making good existing paths, edging kerbs and inserting kerbs where required.

1.1.2 A condition was placed upon planning permission requiring the implementation of an archaeological watching brief during the works to mitigate against any impacts from the development proposals. The condition states:

"The developer shall ensure that a professionally qualified archaeologist is present during the undertaking of any ground works in the development area, so that an archaeological watching brief can be carried out. The archaeological watching brief will be undertaken to the standards laid out by the Institute for Archaeologists. The Planning Authority will be informed in writing at least two weeks prior to the commencement of development of the name of the said archaeologist."

1.1.3 To meet the requirements of the planning condition DAT Archaeological Services were commissioned by Mr Ken Denham, acting on behalf of Rev Roger Morley-Jones, St Mary's Church, Kidwelly to undertake the archaeological watching brief.

1.2 Scope of the Project

1.2.1 The project objectives were:

- To monitor groundworks in order to identify the presence/absence of any archaeological deposits;
- To establish the character, extent and date range for any archaeological deposits to be affected by the proposed groundworks;
- To appropriately investigate and record any archaeological deposits to be affected by the groundworks; and
- To produce an archive and report of any results.

1.3 Report Outline

1.3.1 This report describes the location of the site along with its archaeological background, and provides a summary and discussion of the results of the watching brief.

1.4 Abbreviations

1.4.1 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). Written Scheme of Investigation – WSI.

¹ Held and managed by Dyfed Archaeological Trust

1.5 Illustrations

1.5.1 Photographic images are to be found at the back of the report. Printed map extracts are not necessarily reproduced to their original scale.

1.6 Timeline

1.6.1 The following timeline is used within this report to give date ranges for the various archaeological periods that may be mentioned within the text.

Period	Approximate date	
Palaeolithic –	c.450,000 – 10,000 BC	Prehistoric
Mesolithic –	c. 10,000 – 4000 BC	
Neolithic –	c.4000 – 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

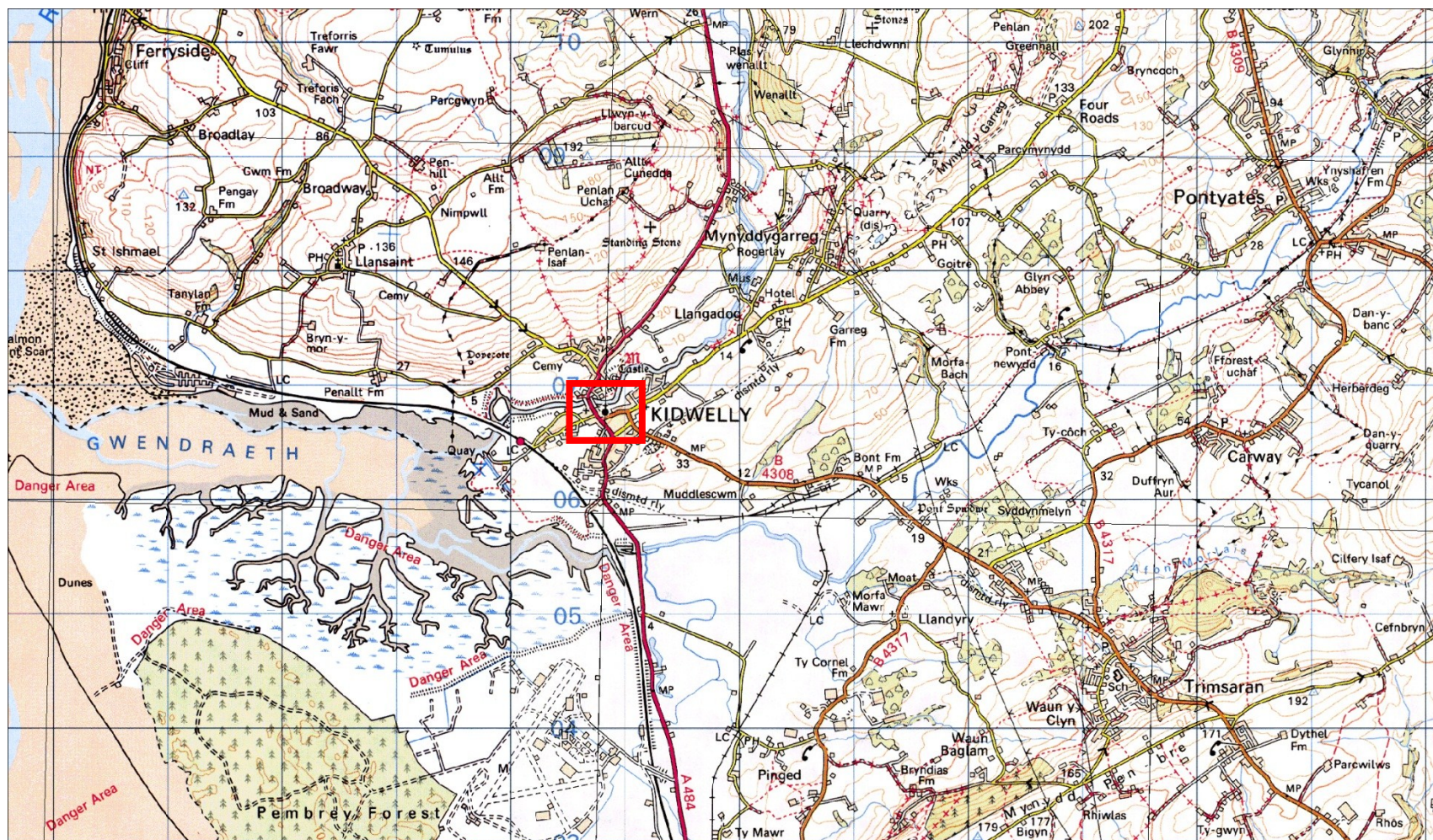


Figure 1: Site location map based on the Ordnance Survey.

Reproduced from the 2003 Ordnance Survey 1:50,000 scale Landranger Map with the permission of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office,
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2. THE SITE

2.1 Location

2.1.1 The site lies within the centre of Kidwelly at NGR SN 40842 06750 which is located c.11km to the south east of Carmarthen. Lady Street lies to the south of the site whilst to the north lies the Gwendraeth Fach River. To the east of the site lies Get y Castell while to the west are Bridge and Causeway Streets

2.2 Archaeological and Historical Background

2.2.1 The Church of St Mary is the parish church of Kidwelly. The church is recorded on the Regional Historic Environment Record (HER), held by Dyfed Archaeological Trust, which states that the church dates from the medieval period but may occupy the site of an early medieval cemetery and possible church (HER Primary Record Numbers 1629 and 49258). In the 12th century Roger, Bishop of Salisbury (founder of Kidwelly Castle), granted the church and land at Kidwelly to the Benedictines of Sherborne Abbey, Dorset to establish a dependent Priory which existed until the dissolution of the mother abbey in 1539. Throughout its history the Priory housed a small number of monks and it is unclear if it ever gained a full claustral plan. In the later medieval period a chantry chapel dedicated to St Nicholas (PRN 7360) was established within the church. The graveyard wall on the south side of the church is a designated Grade II Listed building (PRN 61049; for a full description of the church see **Appendix I**)

PRN No	Period	Site Name and Description	Grid Reference
1629	Medieval	Kidwelly Parish Church; St Mary the Virgin; St Mary's Priory - Medieval parish church which was formerly also a priory church. It is large, cruciform, and comprises chancel, nave, vestry, north and south transepts, tower (north of the nave), and south porch. The nave was formerly longer.	SN 40842 06750
7360	Medieval	Kidwelly Parish Church; St Nicholas' Chantry - A chantry chapel within Kidwelly parish church PRN 1629, dedicated to St Nicholas, was recorded in the mid-16th century.	SN 4084 0674
7361	Medieval	Kidwelly Priory - The position of the priory has been one of debate over the years. There are no indications on the usual south side of the priory church (PRN 1629) of any buildings abutting it. On the north the church lies so near the left bank of the Afon Gwendraeth that it would seem unlikely that they were there. The most likely position would appear to be that suggested by the RCAM in 1917, who suggested that the tower's original position halfway between the transept and the western end (which is where it would have been before the nave was shortened) outside the line of the northern wall of the church, would not have allowed for the usual arrangement with a square cloister. Their suggestion is that the claustral buildings were at the east end of the church connected via the existing chantry chapel. This view was strengthened by 'the existence of foundations of buildings on the north side of the church on a line with and extending beyond the	SN 40845 06783

		eastern wall, where the space between the church and the river widens sufficiently...'. This may be a reference to walls shown on the 1st edition 25" Ordnance Survey map labelled 'Priory (remains of)', and it would appear on the ground that some of these mapped walls still remain albeit in a ruined form and heavily altered to form sheds and garden retaining walls. It is also possible that the claustral buildings were quite modest, as only two or three monks were ever recorded in the priory. On the north side of Causeway St, to the west of the priory, there survived until c.1932 a medieval dwelling known as the 'Priors House'. The RCAM dated the dwelling to the end of the 13th century.	
49258	Post-medieval, Medieval, Early Medieval	Kidwelly Parish Church; St Mary the Virgin; St Mary's Priory - Early medieval B site, i.e. medium-probability early medieval origins. Churchyard occupied by the medieval Kidwelly parish church which was formerly also a priory church. It was a possession of Sherborne Abbey, Dorset, during the post-Conquest period and may represent the 'land and a cemetery' at Kidwelly, that were granted to the abbey in 1107-1115. However, there is some evidence that the grant refers to the former chapel at Llangadog, 2km northeast of Kidwelly (PRN 1632). One of them appears to have been the mother-church of Cantref Cedweli, lying lay at the head of a large parochial perhaps originally taking in the whole of Cwmwd Cydweli. The present sub rectangular churchyard is 12th-14th century in present form, associated with the priory which was established on the site soon after 1107-1115. The remains of the priory conventual buildings have gone.	SN 4084 0674
61049	Early Medieval	Wall Along S Side of Churchyard - Grade II listed churchyard wall.	SN 40847 06724

Table 2: Historic Environment Record Entries

2.2.2 The first edition Ordnance Survey map of 1889 which shows the church (Figure 2) indicates that no paths were present at that time around the northern side of the church, although a few paths were located to the south leading to Lady Street. This layout remains unaltered on the 1906 Ordnance survey map (Figure 3).



Figure 2: Extract from 1:2500 scale OS map of 1889.

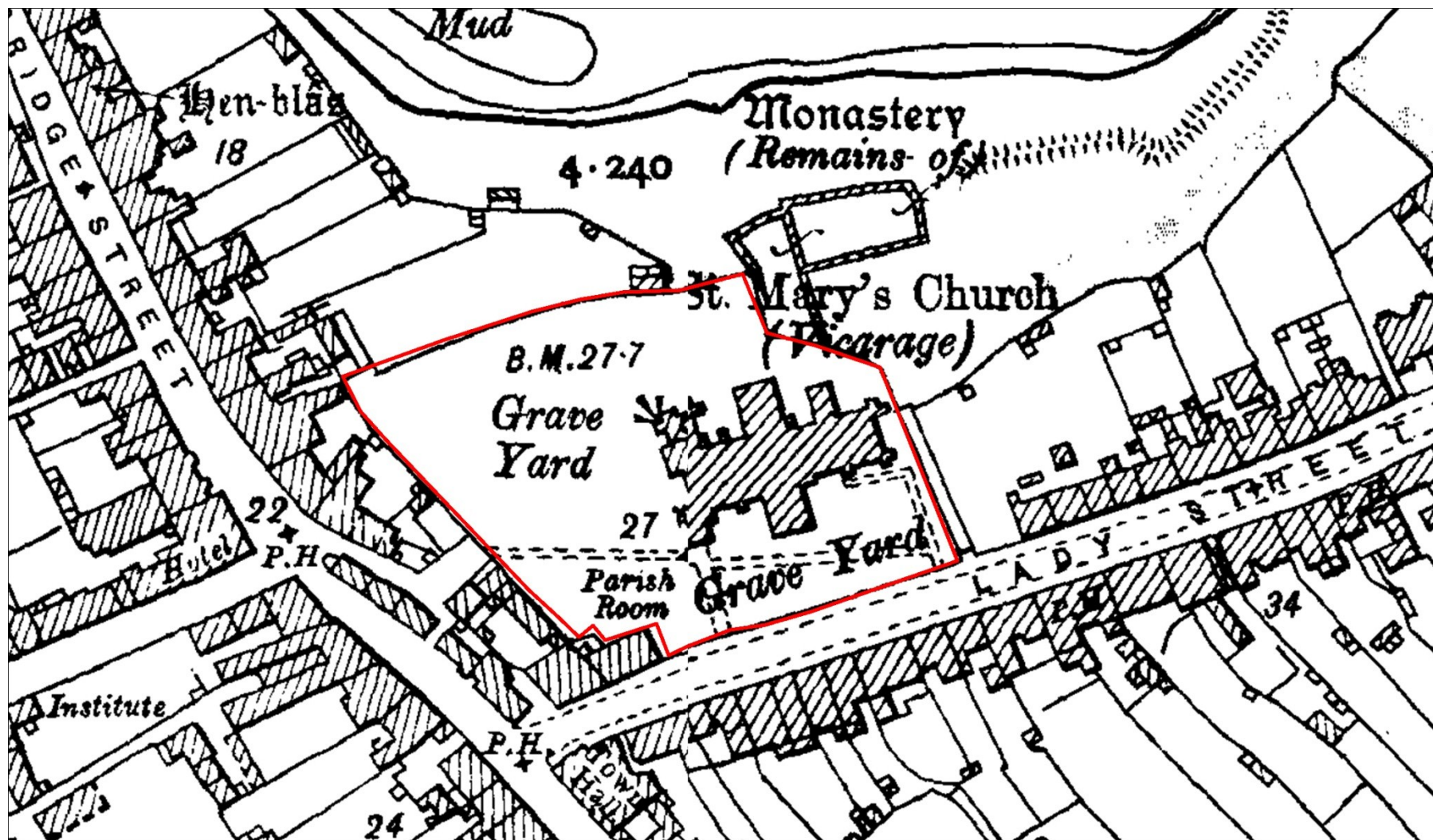


Figure 3: Extract of 1:2500 scale OS map of 1906.

3 WATCHING BRIEF METHODOLOGY

The watching brief methodology can be summarised as follows:

3.1 Fieldwork

3.1.1 A 'watching brief' was undertaken during ground level reduction works at the site which had the potential to expose, damage or destroy underlying archaeological remains.

3.1.2 All archaeological deposits revealed during the groundworks were examined and recorded to an appropriate level.

3.1.3 Recording of all archaeological features or deposits conformed to best current professional practice and was carried out in accordance with the Recording Manual³ used by DAT Archaeological Services.

3.2 Post-Fieldwork Reporting and Archiving

3.2.1 All data recovered during the fieldwork has been 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.

3.2.2 The results of the fieldwork have been assessed in local, regional and wider contexts.

3.2.3 This report is fully representative of the results of the fieldwork.

3.3 Timetabling of Fieldwork

3.3.1 The watching brief methodology involved monitoring of groundworks associated with the renewal of the footpaths within the churchyard. Site visits were made on Monday 21st, Tuesday 22nd, Wednesday 23rd, Friday 24th and Monday 28th October 2013 to monitor these works.

³ DAT Archaeological Services have adopted the Recording Manual developed by English Heritage Centre for Archaeology. A copy will be available on-site for inspection if required.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Site visits were made to monitor excavation works associated with the upgrading of the church yard paths on the 21st, 22nd, 23rd, 25th and 28th of October 2013.

4.2 The excavations revealed nine hitherto unrecorded archaeological features. The first were a series of seven 19th century grave stones that had been incorporated into a c. 40m long stretch of the footpath on the south side of the church (NGR SN 40871 06735 – SN 40834 06732). The gravestones were recorded running from east west and were numbered accordingly.

Number		1	
Alignment	E -W	Material	Slate
Dimensions	1.56m x 0.61m	Condition	Damaged
Decoration	None		
Inscription	<p style="text-align: center;">SACRED</p> <p style="text-align: center;">To The Memory of THOMAS WALTER</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Of..... in the Parish of</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Llan.... who died Feb 11th</p> <p style="text-align: center;">1866.....</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(remainder of inscription illegible)</p>		



Table 3: Grave stone 1.

Number		2	
Alignment	E -W	Material	Slate
Dimensions	1.72m x 0.70m	Condition	Damaged
Decoration	None		
Inscription	Completely illegible		



Table 4: Grave stone 2.

Number		3	
Alignment	E -W	Material	Slate
Dimensions	1.73m x 0.64m	Condition	Intact
Decoration	None		
Inscription	///// (slab lying face down)		



Table 5: Grave stone 3

Number		4	
Alignment	E -W	Material	Slate
Dimensions	1.83m x 0.84m	Condition	Intact
Decoration	Chamfered edges		
Inscription	<p>SACRED (in semi-circle) (remainder of inscription illegible)</p>		



Table 6: Grave stone 4.

Number		5	
Alignment	E -W	Material	Slate
Dimensions	1.80m x 0.81m	Condition	Damaged
Decoration	Chamfered edges		
Inscription	<p style="text-align: center;">SACRED (remainder of inscription illegible)</p>		



Table 7: Grave stone 5.

Number		6	
Alignment	E –W	Material	Slate
Dimensions	1.84m x 0.84m	Condition	Damaged
Decoration	None		
Inscription	Completely illegible		



Table 8: Grave stone 6.

Number		7	
Alignment	E – W	Material	Slate
Dimensions	1.83m x 0.84m	Condition	Damaged
Decoration	Chamfered edges		
Inscription	Completely illegible		



Table 9: Grave stone 7.

4.3 The two remaining archaeological features that were revealed during the course of the ground works associated with the path renewal were identified on the north side of the church yard (NGR SN 40811 06769; Figures 4 & 5). Both features consisted of two probable burial vaults exposed beneath the removed path surface (Photo 2).

4.4 Vault one was revealed on the south side of the path and was constructed of mortared stone on a NE – SW alignment. The vault measured 2.7m x 0.70m and continued beyond the edges of the path. Vault two was also on a NW – SE alignment and measured 2.6m x 0.80m and like vault one continued beyond the edges of the path. Vault two was of brick construction with an arched roof of stretcher bond brickwork laid on edge, with a further single course of stretcher bond brickwork laid on bed overlying this. Neither burial vault was opened as a result of the path renewal works. A ledger stone was noted c.1m to the south of Vault one with a second ledger lying c.0.50m to the north of Vault two. It is considered likely that these ledger stones relate to the vaults revealed during the ground works but have been moved from their original positions. No inscriptions were visible on either ledger.

4.5 Late 19th and early 20th century mapping does not show a path running around the north side of the church which suggests the path was constructed sometime after 1906 when the second edition Ordnance Survey map was published (Figure 3). It is likely that the ledger stones were moved during the original construction of the pathway in the post 1906 period. A path is first shown at this location on the 1915 OS map (<http://www.old-maps.co.uk>).



Photo 1: West facing view of path on S side of the church



Photo 2: Burial vaults revealed on S side of church. Possible ledger stones associated with the vaults visible to left and right.

4.9 No further archaeological features or deposits were revealed during the course of the watching brief.

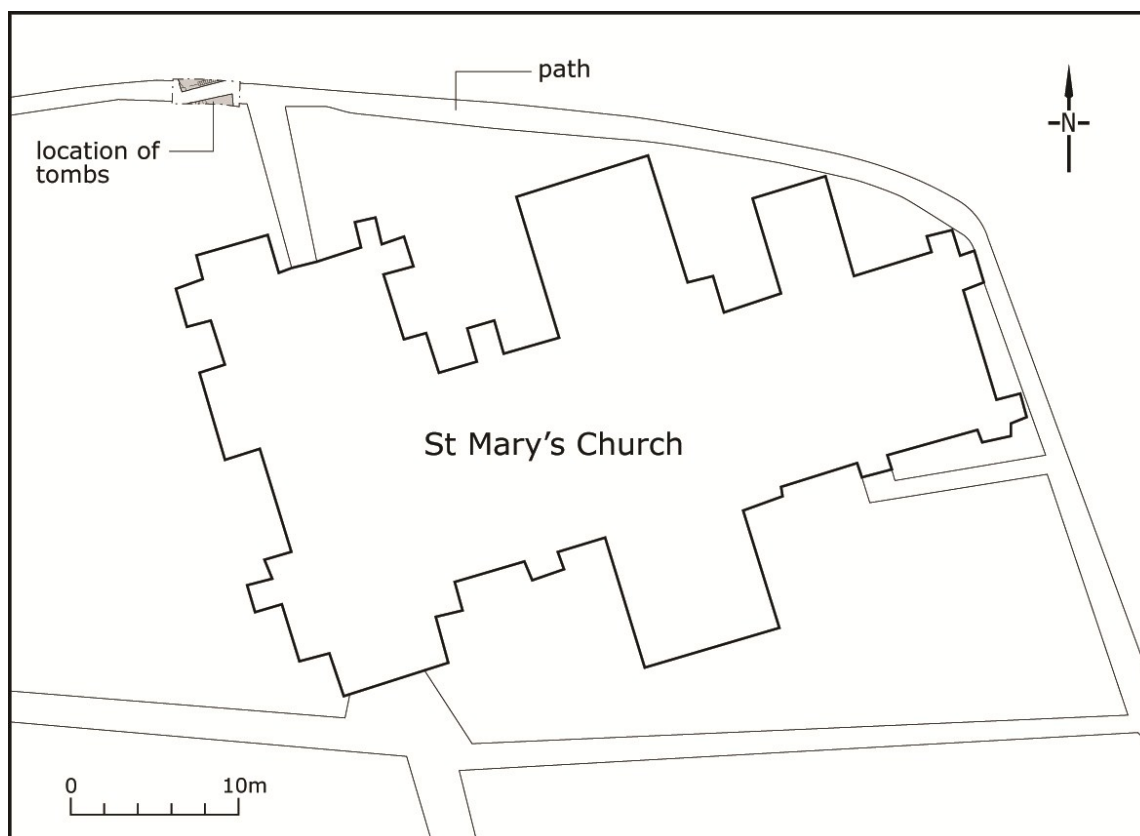


Figure 4: Location plan of burial vaults.

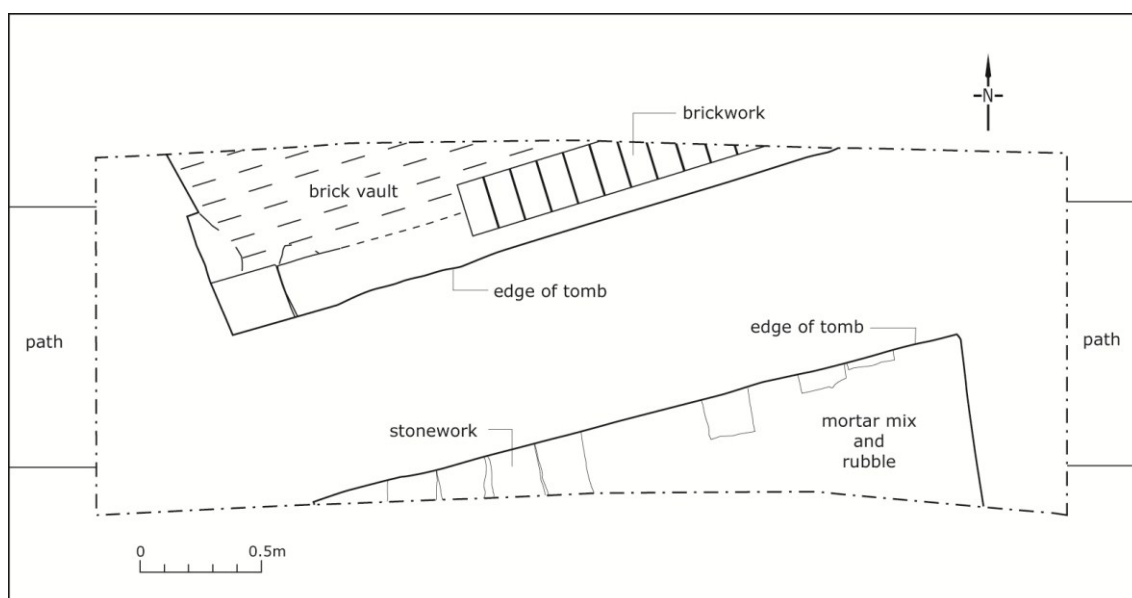


Figure 5: Plan of burial vaults

5. CONCLUSIONS

5.1 The archaeological watching brief undertaken during the course of the footpath renewal works within St Mary's Churchyard identified a number of previously unrecorded archaeological features.

5.2 Seven grave stones were identified within the path on the south side of the church which are considered to date from the 19th century. It is highly likely that these originally stood in the grave yard but were moved and incorporated into the path as 'paving slabs'. These are considered to of local interest.

5.3 On the north side of the church two burial vaults were identified. The full extent of these was unknown as they continued beneath both north and south sides of the footpath. The burial vaults pre-date the construction of the footpath which is first shown on the 1915 OS map and are likely to date from the 19th century. Two ledger stones were noted lying in close proximity to the burial vaults but unfortunately the inscriptions were illegible. It is considered possible that these originally marked the vaults and were moved during the construction of the footpath.

5.4 No archaeological evidence for claustral buildings associated with the Benedictine Priory was revealed during the course of the watching brief. It may be possible that these lie at a greater depth than that affected by the ground works or that the monastic buildings lie elsewhere. Historic Ordnance Survey maps show ruined buildings to the north east of the church which are annotated as 'Priory Remains of' (Figure 6). However, it is unclear if these buildings had monastic origins.

5.5 At its foundation it is known that a prior and two monks formed the monastic community of the Priory (Jones, 1908, 47). Numbers never increased beyond this level in subsequent years and the names of those which are known were monks from the mother Abbey of Sherborne and were possibly viewed as unwelcome outsiders (Williams, 1991, 191). It is likely that the Priory at Kidwelly was founded to administer the property of Sherborne Abbey located within the area and not introduce full conventual life (Heale, 2004, 229; Williams, 1991, 191). Given this it is possible that the full range of conventual buildings would not be required for the needs of the community

5.6 Until the 1930s a medieval dwelling known as the 'Priors House' (Figure 5) stood near the junction of Causeway Street and Lady Street and it is possible that this may have formed the residential accommodation for the prior and monks. The 'Priory' buildings shown on historic OS maps potentially indicate the position of storage structures for produce as it is known that a large proportion of the tithes collected by the Priory came in the form of wool, milk, cheese and lambs (Dugdale, 1846, 64). A lease document, dated 1544, for the temporalities of the Priory (dissolved 1539) makes specific reference to granaries (Jones, 1908, 55) which may also have been located within these buildings.

5.7 No further archaeological features or deposits were identified during the course of the watching brief and it is considered that the excavation work had a minimal impact on the buried archaeological deposits underlying the church yard.

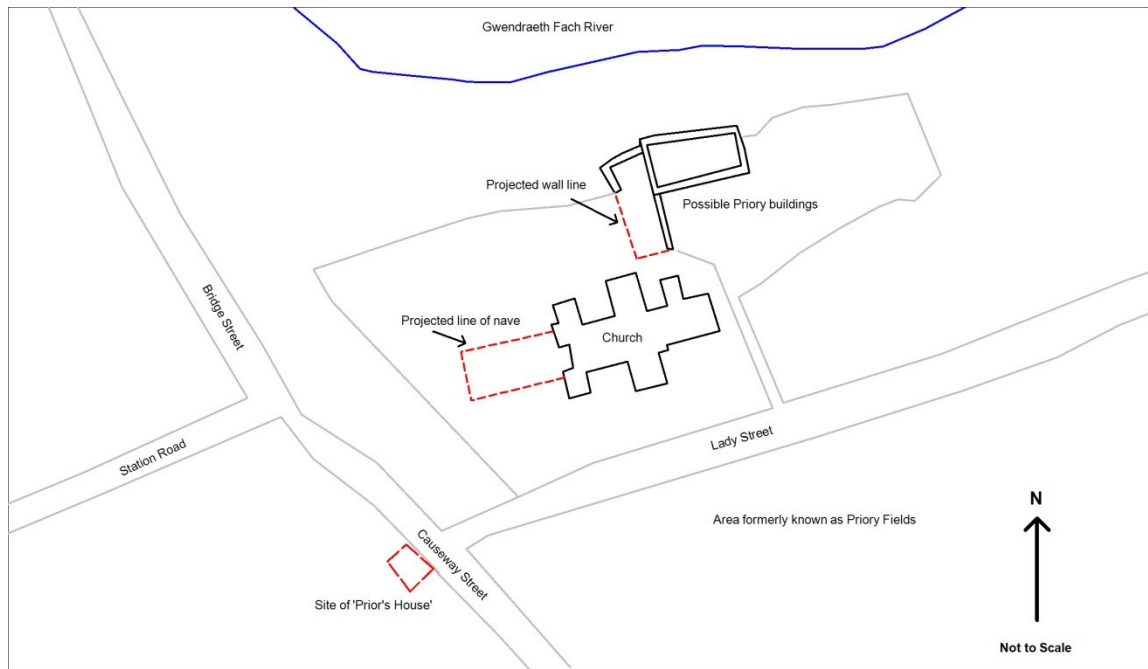


Figure 6: Postulated layout of Kidwelly Priory

6 SOURCES

6.1 Cartographic

Ordnance Survey 1813 Original Surveyors Drawings

Ordnance Survey 1889 1:2500 Carmarthenshire Sheet LIII.7

Ordnance Survey 1907 1:2500 Carmarthenshire Sheet LIII.7

Ordnance Survey 1915 1:2500 Carmarthenshire Sheet LIII.7

6.2 Published

Dugdale W 1846. *Monasticon Anglicanum: A History of the Abbeyes and Other Monasteries, Hospitals, Friaries and Cathedral and Collegiate Churches with their Dependencies in England and Wales* Vol V. Charing Cross. James Bohn

Heale M 2004. *Studies in the History of Medieval Religion 22: The Dependent Priors of Medieval English Monasteries*. Woodbridge. Boydell.

Jones D.D 1908. *A History of Kidwelly*. Carmarthen. W Spurrell and Son.

Williams g 1991. 'Kidwelly Priory' in James H (ed) 1991. *Sir Gar: Studies in Carmarthenshire History*. Carmarthen. Carmarthenshire Antiquarian Society.

6.3 Unpublished

Ludlow N 1998 *CADW Historic Churches Project: Carmarthenshire Churches*.

APPENDIX I

ARCHITECTURAL AND HISTORICAL DESCRIPTION OF ST MARY'S CHURCH KIDWELLY, CARMARTHENSHIRE

(AFTER LUDLOW, 1998)

ST MARY, KIDWELLY, CARMARTHENSHIRE

SUMMARY

Medieval church; 100% medieval core fabric, largely unrestored.

A multicell cruciform church, large. Consists of a chancel, 3 bays; nave, 4 bays; vestry (north of chancel centre bay), 1 bay; north transept, 1 bay; south transept, 1 bay; tower (north of nave west bay), 3 storeys with a spire; south porch; medieval. Nave formerly longer. Mixed rubble construction. Most internal walls with render/plaster. Slate gable roofs. Many medieval features, with yellow oolite and ORS dressings, mostly from the mid-14th century; they include the chancel arch, windows with tracery, doorways, tower openings, vault and spire, buttresses, rood-loft stair turret, 3 further rood-loft stairs, sedilia, piscinae, stoups, squint, tomb recesses, corbelling for altar beam, rood-lofts and sconces. 18th century gallery corbelling. 19th century openings nearly all restorations of the above.

Roofs: late 18th century? - 1884. Floors: 1884 and 20th century. Finishes: 18th - later 20th century.

Condition - good. Some ivy.

Archaeological potential - very good. Deep, revetted cutting around 10% of church; levels unchanged; suspended floors over heating ducts in 50% of church; below-ground boiler in 5% of church; burials and vaults beneath 60% of church?; external memorials significantly close to 100% of church.

Structural value (pre 19th century) - excellent. 100% medieval core fabric; medieval chancel arch, windows with tracery, doorways, tower openings, vault and spire, buttresses, rood-loft stair stairs, sedilia, piscinae, stoups, squint, tomb recesses and corbelling. 18th century corbelling.

Group value - high. Large, important medieval landmark church with tower and spire; central location within historic town; associated castle; large churchyard with good memorials; urban amenity value.

Phasing:

Phase 1 - Chancel, nave and transepts (and south porch?), mid C14.

Phase 2 - Vestry, late C14?

Phase 3 - Tower and spire, c.1400

Phase 4 - Nave west wall, earlier C16 (former nave west bays lost).

Phase 4 - South porch rebuilt late C18?

Phase 5 - Restored 1884, low impact.

DESCRIPTION

The present church

St Mary, Kidwelly, is a multicell cruciform church, of large size. It retains approximately 100% medieval core fabric and is largely unrestored.

The present church consists of a 3-bayed chancel, a wide, 4-bayed nave, a transeptal vestry/chapel north of the chancel centre bay, single-bayed north and south transepts, a 3-storeyed tower, with a masonry spire, north of the nave west bay, and a south porch opposite. The nave was formerly longer. Construction is in mixed rubble, mainly limestone and Old Red Sandstone, throughout. The tower ground floor is vaulted. The church displays a wealth of medieval features. There are extensive remains of late 18th - early 19th century external render, largely repointed in the 20th century; the interior is plastered except in the porch and areas within the chancel. Roofs are slated gables; the vestry has a slated lean-to roof.

External drainage is limited to a deep, revetted cutting around the south wall of the chancel east bay, the south transept east wall and the south porch east wall. There is no evidence for floor level changes. The flooring is suspended in the nave, transepts and vestry, over underfloor heating ducts. A boiler lies beneath the vestry. There are known burials in the nave and chancel including a vault at the west end of the nave, and there is a vault beneath the south transept. External memorials lie significantly close to all walls.

The Chancel

There are stepped cross-buttresses at the corners of the chancel east wall, from the mid-14th century. The 5-light east window has a 2-centred, wave moulded surround and drip-mould in yellow oolite from the mid-14th century, restored in 1884; the curvilinear tracery is all from 1884. Internal corbels either side of the window are 14th century and supported a former altar-beam, or statuary. In the north wall of the east bay is a blocked window with a moulded rear arch, and a drip-mould on ballflower stops, in yellow oolite, all from the mid-14th century; the formerly 2-light tracery is obscured by the blocking, from 1769? (see below). Internally, the north wall exhibits a plain string-course at sill level, mid-14th century, and there is a tomb recess with a 2-centred surround beneath the blocked window, now empty but with sockets from former rails. Above lie 2 internal corbels, for former roof-timbers, or a screen?. The east bay south wall has been refaced in roughly squared and coursed rubble, in 1884?. To the west is a buttress, mid-14th century like those on the east wall. It is pierced by a 3-light window with a surround like the blocked north wall window and with Decorated tracery, featuring mouchettes, from 1884 but in imitation of the original, mid-14th century tracery. There is an internal string-course as in the north wall, and beneath the window is a triple sedilia, its triangular heads with sunk spandrels featuring depressed, truncated quatrefoils and carried on hexagonal free shafts, all mid-14th century. To the east is a piscina with an ogee-headed hoodmould on moulded, human heads, and a similar surround of 3 orders containing an octagonal bowl, all mid-14th century and featuring an integral scone bracket rising from the hoodmould. West of the sedilia is a tomb recess, and internal corbels, like those in the north wall, also mid-14th century.

The internal string-courses continue westwards. The central bay features a 2-centred doorway in each side wall, representing mid-14th century 'priest's doors', that in the north wall featuring a segmental rear-arch incorporating a moulded scone bracket. The south door has a 14th century surround restored in 1884. Above the door is a 2-light window with a mid-14th century surround and drip-mould like the window to the east, and with flowing curvilinear tracery, from 1884, but in imitation of the original, mid-14th century tracery.

The west bay north wall features a blocked window, like that in the east bay but with a drip-mould on plain out-turned stops, post-14th century?, apex gone, and an ORS surround incorporating 2 lights with cusped, 4-centred heads, all weathered, post-14th century?, blocked in 1769? (see below). In the south wall is

a 2-light window like that to the east, with a mid-14th century dripmould on moulded human heads, and rebuilt tracery.

The chancel arch is 2-centred but very depressed and segmental; it has 3 main orders with shallow wave-mouldings and a similar hoodmould, all in ORS, and without impostes or bases, all mid-14th century. The east face of the wall exhibits an offset at apex level, above which it is thinner; externally, north of the arch, the wall is coped back at eaves level. To the south of the arch, the west face features a low, 2-centred doorway with a mid-14th century wave-moulded limestone surround leading onto a spiral rood-loft stair housed in a semi-circular/semi-octagonal stair turret that projects externally from the angle between the chancel south wall and the south transept; externally, the base of the turret has a cut-out or has been robbed, its summit has been truncated and it now carries a slate roof back to chancel eaves level. Internally, the rood-loft door from the turret has been blocked and its surround has been robbed; above it is a ?secondary door with a plain, square head. A plain, 2-centred niche interrupts the chancel arch surround on this wall, now empty but formerly housing the alabaster Madonna? (see below).

The softwood chancel roof appears to be entirely from 1884 and features collar-rafter trusses arch-braced from wall--plates, matchboarded above. The floor is marble-flagged in the east bay, from the later 20th century. The remainder has a slate flagged passage, also 20th century, with concrete either side in the area of former suspended floors. Burial vaults lie below the floor.

The Nave

The nave side walls each feature a central, external stepped buttress which appear to be secondary additions; that on the north wall appears to feature an arch respond that has been blocked with brick, while a further buttress lies in the angle between the nave and the south porch east wall. There are 2 windows in each side wall, without outer arches (which have been lost?); the infill, and the cusped 2-light windows with 2-centred surrounds, are from 1884, in yellow oolite, but are not copied from in situ medieval tracery. The north wall segmental rear arches have survived from the mid-14th century. Both the north and the south doors have a double wave-moulded, 2-centred surround and a hood-mould, from the mid-14th century; the north door features a draw-bar socket and now leads into the tower. Over the external face of the south door is a 2-centred recess that may be a blocked 14th century lancet but which, during the post-medieval period, housed an alabaster Madonna (see below); it is flanked by 2 corbels, also for statuary?. To the east of the south door, each wall face exhibits a stoup, represented internally by a plain square recess, and externally by a damaged hexagonal bowl in a chamfered, 2-centred recess from the mid-14th century?.

The nave was truncated in the early 16th century (see below) losing two of its western bays; the side walls continue beyond the present west wall but their truncated ends are finished as two massive raking buttresses, augmented by ?later crude stepped buttresses. The creasing for the longer nave roof can be seen on the south face of the tower. In the 16th century west wall is a large, contemporary but rather crude late Perpendicular window; it has a wide, 2-centred yellow oolite surround including a drip-mould on lozengic stops, partly rebuilt in 1884, and contains 5 lights with Perpendicular tracery, largely rebuilt in 1884.

Internally, there is an empty tomb recess in both nave side walls, like those in the chancel but badly weathered. At the east end of the south wall is a piscina with a plain, chamfered 2-centred head and a crude bowl, 14th century?. Centrally, the south wall houses a mural stair entered through a 2-centred

doorway with a chamfered surround and leading up eastwards to a blocked rood-loft doorway obscured by a memorial from 1728; the stair is lit by an external lancet with an ogee-headed, wave-moulded surround, from the mid-14th century. The north wall displays a pattern of internal sockets, date?, function?. The west bay exhibits corbelling on all 3 walls, probably to carry a former 18th century gallery.

The nave has a collar-rafter roof, from 1887 and partly concealed by a softwood 'wagon-roof' ceiling, without panels. The concrete floor is 20th century, and overlies heating ducts and burials, including a vault from 1762 at the west end.

The Vestry

The vestry occupies a medieval chancel transept, possibly originating as a sacristy or chantry chapel (see below). It was originally taller; the east wall continues as a scar up the chancel north wall. The common wall with the chancel is corbelled out to carry a stair which leads from a doorway high in the north face, with a later 14th century 2-centred surround, up towards the west, and is lit by a small later 14th century wheel-light onto the chancel - function of stair?, monastic?, secondary rood screen and loft?. Below the stair door is a plain, square squint into the chancel, also later 14th century, interrupting the head of an aumbry/stoup with a wave-moulded, mid-14th century surround. A similar aumbry/stoup may lie west of the 'priest's door' into the chancel but is now closed off.

The vestry is lit by square, late 20th century windows in the east and west walls with concrete surrounds and timber frames. To the north of the east wall can be seen the jamb and springer of the dressed rear-arch of a medieval window - later 14th century?; beneath it is a plain square medieval recess, possibly a sconce or piscina. A flue from the boiler projects internally from the north wall, terminating as a plain square chimney, all from the early 20th century.

The softwood roof is probably from 1884 and has collar-rafter trusses and plaster panels. The woodblock floor is early 20th century and overlies a boiler and heating ducts.

The Transepts

The transepts appear to have been always transeptal chapels, and the south transept is referred to as the 'Lady Chapel'. Both transepts open to the nave through mid-14th century arches very similar to the chancel arch, and feature a rood-beam socket above their eastern springers. In the western stop of the north transept arch is a stairway up to the former rood-loft; it leads up from the transept via a crude doorway with a ?secondary chamfered limestone lintel, and the loft door is a plain square opening, probably mid-14th century but partially blocked by a memorial from 1829.

The north transept is lit by a window in the north wall with a 2-centred, wave-moulded surround and a dripmould on moulded human head stops like those in the chancel south wall, weathered yellow oolite, mid-14th century; the mullion(s) have gone and the present timber frames are 20th century. A tomb recess may lie below, obscured by present furnishings. The side walls both feature a blocked window; the west wall blocking follows a 2-centred profile but the outline of the east wall blocking is amorphous.

The south wall of the south transept is pierced by a window like that in the north transept but with a 3-light window featuring reticulated tracery, in yellow oolite, from 1884 and not copied from an original; this wall featured a blind, 2-centred recess in 1854 (see below). A cusped 2-light window with sunk spandrels in a

square surround and cavetto-moulded drip-mould on lozengic stops, was inserted in the west wall in the later 16th century; it was restored in 1884. In the east wall is a blocked window that has retained part of its 2-centred ORS surround, 14th century?. The south wall features 2 empty tomb recesses like those in the chancel, mid-14th century, and a plain medieval piscina. There are a number of internal corbels, medieval and possibly sconce brackets.

The ?collar rafter roofs are concealed by plaster ceilings possibly from the earlier 20th century. The transepts are floored as the nave.

The South Porch

The south porch may also be from the mid-14th century but the upper halves of the walls were rebuilt in the post-medieval period including the south door which features a wide, 2-centred arch without a surround, later 18th century? . The 'gate-posts' were inserted in the jambs in 1884. The side walls feature plain, square internal recesses, stoups?. The softwood, collar-rafter roof is arch-braced from wall-plates; it may also be late 18th century and appears to be the same roof that is shown on a drawing of 1848 (Anon., 1912, 30). The slate-flagged floor lies directly on the substrate and is 20th century.

The Tower

The 3-storeyed tower lies on the north side of the nave west bay. It is most atypical of the region, having stepped cross-buttresses to full height, a polygonal spiral stair turret which is not full height, and carrying a contemporary masonry spire, all from c.1400. There is an external basal batter, and both faces display sockets throughout, putlog-holes?.

The ground floor has a quadripartite groined vault. It is entered from the churchyard through a doorway with a 2-centred surround of 2 chamfered orders and a drip mould on out-turned stops, all in weathered oolite, from the c.1400. The stair turret at the south-west corner is entered through a door with a segmental/2-centred surround from c.1400; it is lit by contemporary lancets and simple slit-lights, and is coped back to the cross-buttresses at the top of this stage. The interiors of all 4 walls feature a full-height, 2-centred recess, to increase the floor area. The floor is concrete, from the 20th century.

The second stage is lit by simple 2-light windows in the north, east and west walls, with independent heads and drip moulds, from c.1400.

The belfry stage has a simple, 2-light opening within a plain 2-centred surround in each of the 4 faces, again from c.1400. The summit terminates as a simple string course that formerly carried a crenellated parapet (see below); the stair turret rises from within the former parapet as a low square turret finished with a small octagonal broach spire. Surmounting the belfry stage is a tall, octagonal broach spire that is unique within the region; it is contemporary with the tower, c.1400 though much rebuilt in the 18th century and again in 1884.

Structural Development

The remarkably wide nave served as the parish church while the chancel was the monastic church for a Benedictine priory during the medieval period. The possible second rood-screen represented by steps in the chancel may reflect this dual role.

The chancel, nave and transepts display (or formerly displayed) a great stylistic unity and all appear to belong to the same building campaign. The work is predominantly Decorated, especially within the chancel even before restoration

(Freeman, 1856, 244); it includes motifs such as ballflowers, wave-mouldings and depressed, truncated quatrefoils which are typical of mid-14th century work in South-west Wales (Griffiths, 1991, 194) being a favourite of the then Bishop of St Davids, Henry Gower. The south porch was partly rebuilt within the post-medieval period but it may be contemporary.

The tower has been regarded by most authorities to be contemporary with the mid-14th century work but the only opening showing any similarity to this work is the doorway from the nave. The remainder of the tower openings are simpler and the external doorway is dateable to c.1400, suggesting that it was added against an existing nave north door. The tower is atypical of the region in every respect but it is one of the earliest, and the spire is contemporary. It formerly carried a crenellated parapet; it was described as 'embattled' in 1833 (Lewis, 1833) but by 1854 the parapet had 'nearly all gone' (Scott, 1854, 113). There were '4 bells great and small' in 1552 (Wallcott, 1871, i).

The vestry represents a chancel transept of probable later 14th century date. It may have been the site of a chantry chapel; a Chantry of St Michael had been founded within the church by 1492 (Morris, 1975, 74) and a Chantry of St Nicholas had also been founded at the church by the later medieval period (Jones, 1934, 140).

The nave was clearly originally longer, but the church was severely damaged by lightning in 1481 when its west bay(s) may have been damaged (Williams, op. cit., 194). In 1524 it was described as 'suffering from great and manifest decay' and the sequestering of tithes for the repair of the chancel at this time may indicate the abandonment of the west bay(s) and the construction of the present west wall with its fine late Perpendicular window (Williams, op. cit., 199).

The chancel was reroofed in the early 17th century (see below). The church was again struck by lightning in 1658 and in 1672 was described as 'quite destroyed and fallen down since 24 June, 1658' (Evans, 1909, 19); presumably the spire was hit, and collapsed. The situation was unchanged in 1684, but in 1705 and 1715 the church was 'in good repair' (ibid.; Evans, 1917, 51). The north transept was 'out of repair' in 1726 (Evans, 1924, 32); the south transept was known as the Mansel Chapel, while the north transept was referred to as 'Mr Brigstocke's Chapel' during the 18th and 19th centuries (ibid.). In 1787 the church and chancel were 'in good and sufficient repair' but not so the tower (Evans, 1919, 32). The roofs were currently undergoing either rebuilding or reslating, being 'newly done'. The walls were plastered and whitewashed, and the floor was flagged. The partial rebuild of the south porch may belong to this period.

The bell was still 'in pieces' in 1759 (Evans, 1917, 36) and the need for 'at least 6' bells was noted in 1769 (Evans, 1924, 32). It was not until 1820 that 4 new bells were installed in the tower, supplied by John Hudson of Bridgewater. They were recast in 1902, and had been augmented by 2 more bells by 1924 (ibid.).

At some period prior to 1820 the nave side wall windows, and the transept windows, 'which were formerly of Gothic style', were replaced with square windows (Evans, 1921, 5). In 1833 the church was described as 'an ancient cruciform structure, of which the transepts are now in ruins' (Lewis, 1833) but the extent of the ruin may have been somewhat exaggerated.

Restoration was anticipated in 1849 (Anon., 1849, 327), the condition of the roofs, inter alia, being 'lamentable' (Anon., 1855, 310). The church was accordingly surveyed, and illustrated, by (Sir) George Gilbert Scott in 1854 (Scott, 1856, 110-113). The then chancel roof was Jacobean, while the nave roof was 'probably of the last (i.e. 18th) century', possibly from 1787 (see above). The valley between the west end gable and the tower west wall was closed off with masonry. The original south wall features of the chancel - the Decorated triple

sedilia, the piscina, tomb recess, priest's door and 2- and 3-light windows with curvilinear tracery - were illustrated, and prove the 1884 restorations to be exact copies. The chancel north windows had been blocked, one of them possibly in 1769 when it was 'ruinous' (Evans, 1924, 32). All tracery had been removed from the formerly 5-light chancel east window and was 'scattered about the borough', and 'its design will with difficulty be recovered'; it may have been dismantled in 1793 when it was in 'a ruinous condition, and threatened destruction to the altar' (Evans, 1921, 5). The south-west view (Scott, op. cit.) similarly shows the church much as today, but with a full-height blind arcade in the south wall of the south transept and the present late 16th century window in the west wall of this transept. The rebuilt transept and nave side wall windows were noted, but their rear arches were medieval. The chancel transept had already been largely rebuilt as a vestry, but the medieval stair and lamp-brackets were noted.

Over the nave south door was a niche containing an alabaster figure of the Virgin, which had been placed there (from within the church?), post-1660 and was finally taken down in the late 1860s; it now lies beneath the west window (Williams, op. cit., 202).

The 'upper part of the spire' had been rebuilt by 1854, 'so badly as to destroy its symmetry (Scott, op. cit.). In 1884 it was again struck by lightning and the rebuilt section was destroyed, 'the debris falling on the nave roof doing great damage, and reducing the font to atoms' (Anon., 1884, 247-8). The long-awaited restoration was proposed to be undertaken forthwith, and was begun by Scott in the same year (Williams, op. cit., 201).

The 1884 restoration was of low impact. It mainly comprised the restoration of the existing windows and their partial rebuilding; the nave windows were new insertions, and some of the transept windows remained blocked. The church was reroofed, except the south porch, and refloored; the interior was replastered and resealed.

The boiler beneath the vestry, and the heating flues were installed in the early 20th century, when the transepts may have been given their ceilings.

The vestry windows were inserted in the later 20th century, when the north transept window was given its frame.

The oak belfry door is dated 1713 with a Latin inscription (Yates, 1974, 70-71; cf. the identical door to the south porch at Penbre, Carms., dated 1717). The organ case is from 1762 (ibid.); the organ itself (in the north transept) is late 19th century. The free-standing softwood pews are from 1884. The belfry clock is later 19th century but replaces an earlier one. The pulpit is dated 1909. The oolite, neo-Perpendicular south transept screen is earlier 20th century. The neo-Perpendicular oolite reredos is from 1932 (ibid.), as are probably the oak stalls, the altar fittings and reredoses in both transepts, and the softwood, neo-Gothic south door lobby.

The oolite and Portland stone font is from 1884; the earlier font had been shattered by falling masonry in 1658 and a font was still 'as yet wanting' in 1705 (Evans, 1917, 51).

A late medieval stone coffin-lid was uncovered on the north side of the church in 1846 (Westwood, 1847, 147-8).

The church was Grade A listed in 1998.

SITE HISTORY

There is some evidence for the pre-conquest religious use of the site:-

Former Celtic dedication?.

St Mary, Kidwelly, was a parish church during the medieval period, of the medieval Deanery of Kidwelly. Between 1107 and 1115 it was granted to the Benedictines of Sherborne Abbey by Roger, Bishop of Salisbury and Lord of Kidwelly, and became a priory (Williams, 1991, 191). The priory buildings appear to have lain to the west of the church (ibid.). In 1291 the tithes of the priory were valued at £13 6s 8d (ibid.) but it appears to have been always relatively poor; only 1 monk appears to have been present in 1377, it was exempt from tithes in 1513 and 1517 while in 1524 it was described as 'much bound in debt' and 'suffering from great and manifest decay' (ibid.). In 1536 its total income was £38 0s 0d per annum (ibid.). It was dissolved in 1539 and the patronage passed to the crown..

In 1833 the living was a discharged vicarage, rated in the king's books at £7 10s, and in the patronage of the crown (Lewis, 1833).

In 1998 St Mary, Kidwelly, was a parish church. The living was a vicarage, held with Llandyfaelog (Benefice no. 685) in the Archdeaconry of Carmarthen, Rural Deanery of Cydweli (St Davids, 1997-8).

It has been suggested (Williams, 1991, 189) that a pre-conquest church here was dedicated to St Cadog.

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ST MARY'S CHURCH FOOTPATHS, KIDWELLY, CARMARTHENSHIRE: ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

RHIF YR ADRODDIAD / REPORT NO. 2014/10

Ionawr 2015
January 2015

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

SIMON RATTY

Swydd / Position: **ARCHAEOLOGIST**

Llofnod / Signature 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 DAT ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES**

Llofnod / Signature Date

*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
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