

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF
LAND ADJACENT TO ST. MARY'S CHURCH
LLANFAIR CLYDOGAU, CEREDIGION**

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SUMMARY

A proposal to construct a single timber-framed dwelling on a site adjacent to St. Mary's Church, Llanfair Clydogau Ceredigion, had potential archaeological implications. Although the site was formerly occupied by a small cottage, Ty'n-Lôn, its proximity to the present churchyard meant that there was a possibility of encountering burials. In the event, the only feature of archaeological interest noted was a low stone wall that bounded the old cottage garden plot. The wall was of dry-stone construction and it had been badly damaged in the past by several large trees growing along the edge of the garden.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 PROJECT COMMISSION

A planning application was made to construct a self-build domestic residence on a plot of land adjacent to St. Mary's Church, Llanfair Clydogau (NGR SN62445123). The application was granted with an attached condition stipulating that an archaeological watching brief should be carried out on the groundworks. In accordance with the planning condition, the contractors, Ashmere Homes Ltd, appointed ACA Field Operations to carry out the work on behalf of the client, Mr and Mrs Williams.

1.2 SCOPE OF PROJECT

The watching brief was intended to monitor the groundworks associated with a new self-build domestic property and to record any archaeological features and deposits revealed by the works. The data from the fieldwork would be collated and catalogued in accordance with accepted professional standards and a report prepared on the results.

1.3 REPORT OUTLINE

This report describes the physical environment of the site (Section 2) before summarising the watching brief results (Section 3) and the conclusions (Section 4) based on the results of Sections 2 and 3.

1.4 ABBREVIATIONS

Sites recorded on the county Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) will be identified by their Primary Record Number (PRN) and located by their National Grid Reference (NGR). Any new sites discovered during the course of the project will be allocated a new PRN and identified by their NGR.

Archaeological features and contexts will be referred to using the continuous three-figure numbering system (e.g.001) employed by Archaeoleg Cambria Archaeology Field Section.

2. THE SITE

2.1 LOCATION

The development site was a small former cottage garden plot in the northeast corner of a pasture field and immediately outside the southeast boundary of St. Mary's Church. The field sloped gently eastwards towards the Afon teifi, and the site was raised some 1m above the surface of the field.

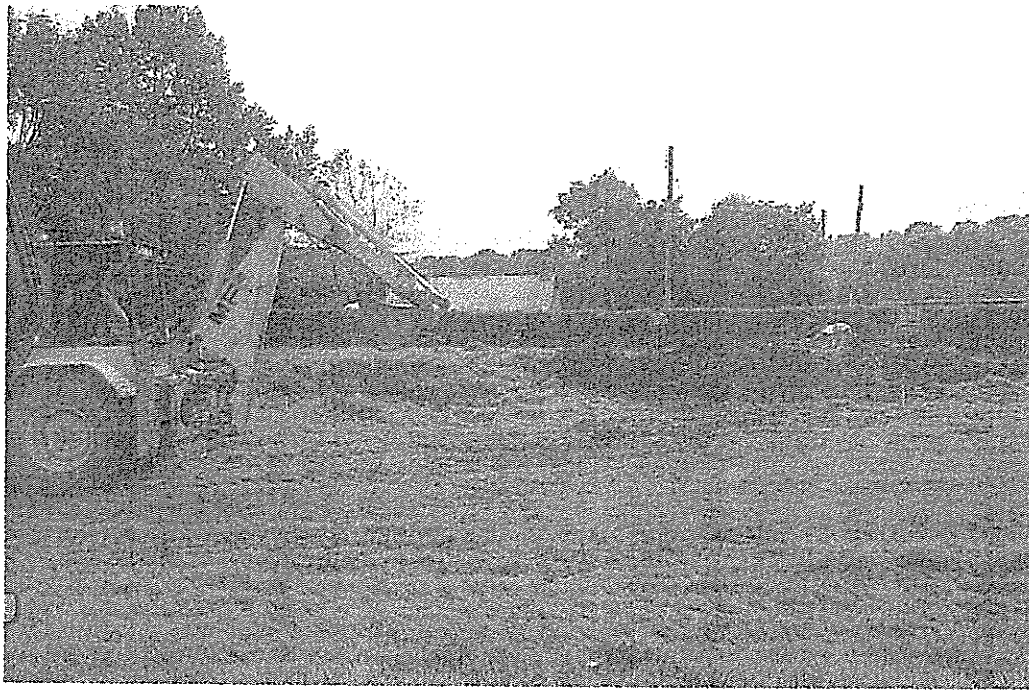


Figure 1: The raised former garden plot during initial ground preparation

3. SUMMARY OF WATCHING BRIEF RESULTS

3.1 THE HISTORY OF THE DEVELOPMENT SITE

The development site is a small plot of land immediately outside the southeastern boundary of the churchyard of St. Mary's Church. Nothing is known of the development site until the early 19th century, when a cottage appears on early Ordnance Survey maps of the area (the original OS Surveyors' Drawings, 1819, and the Old Series 1" maps, sheet 57). By the time the tithe map for Llanfair Clydogau was published in 1844 the site was marked as cottages and gardens, although in its later history there was only one cottage present. The garden enclosure was clearly marked by that time, and on the 1st edition OS 6" maps, printed in 1891, the garden is shown with a mature, and obviously notable tree present. A large Horse Chestnut tree felled and removed during this construction project stood in roughly the location of the tree marked on the OS 1st edition, and it is likely that this was the tree depicted.

The garden area was raised above the level of the surrounding field by some 0.4-0.6m, and at one time had been surrounded by a dry-stone wall, which may have acted as a revetment for the garden rather than being a free-standing wall. However, since its abandonment the garden had deteriorated and the wall had collapsed in places, so it was not possible to be certain whether it was formerly a wall or a revetment. The layout of buildings and gardens remained the same during the hundred or so years between the tithe map of 1844 until the demolition of the cottage in the 1960s when the road through the village was widened.

3.2 THE FIELDWORK RESULTS

The groundworks entailed topsoil stripping an area c.50m² and the cutting of foundation trenches for the concrete beams for the timber framed walls. The position of the house cut through the southern edge of the raised garden area and incorporated parts of the garden and the field to the southwest.

Several tree stumps were removed from the line of the garden wall, including the large Horse Chestnut tree that appeared to be marked on the 1891 OS maps. This had a severe effect on the wall, and made inspection of its construction impossible. Removal of the topsoil and grading of the site exposed the garden soil, which was a well sorted, but very stoney reddish-brown silty loam. The stones varied in size from small sub-angular cobbles, 0.05m x 0.05m x 0.05m, to large sub-angular blocks, up to 0.3m x 0.3m x 0.3m. Most of the stones were derived from the underlying subsoil, but some may have come from the demolished buildings.

The deep trenches were up to 0.9m deep and revealed a sequence of the garden soil overlying a buff/orange/brown very stoney, silty clay subsoil. There were some localised geological differences in the subsoil, but nothing to indicate any archaeological features cutting into it.

4. CONCLUSIONS

4.1 THE EARLY USE OF THE SITE

Maps of the area show that there was a dwelling on the site from at least the early 19th century, probably from the 18th century, until the 1960s. The church, St. Mary's, just to the north of the site has medieval origins and the large circular churchyard and a possible pre-conquest Latin dedication are suggestive of earlier religious use of the present church site (Ludlow 1998, 3). The churchyard is large enough to suggest that it had never been larger.

4.2 THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL OF THE SITE

The location of the development plot, hard against the medieval church boundary and alongside an ancient routeway, through the possible medieval core of the village, suggested that the site had great archaeological potential. In the event, however, the only archaeological features encountered were associated with the post-medieval cottage garden.

APPENDIX ONE: CATALOGUE OF WATCHING BRIEF ARCHIVE

The project archive has been indexed and catalogued according to National Monument Record (NMR) categories and contains the following:

- A. Copy of final report.
- B. Site records, including context record sheets and site notebook.
- D. Site photographs - catalogue, colour slide and B/W contact sheets.
- G. List of references, including primary and secondary sources.
- I. Archive report and draft copies of final report.
- J. Publication drawings.
- M. Miscellaneous correspondence.

There is no material in categories **C, E, F, H, K, L** and **N**.

The archive is currently held by Archaeoleg Cambria Archaeology Field Operations, Llandeilo, Dyfed as Project Record Number 37421.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ludlow N D 1998 St. Mary's, Llanfair Clydogau, Ceredigion. *Ceredigion Churches, 1996-7, Part 3: Llanddeiniol-Llanfihangel Ystrad*. DAT report. Llandeilo.