

# THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE MEDIEVAL TOWNS OF SOUTHWEST WALES

## LLANGADOG



*1989 aerial photographs of Llangadog (DAT AP89-26.21)*

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**LLANGADOG**

By

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# **LLANGADOG**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Llangadog is unusual for southwest Wales in having probably pre-Anglo-Norman conquest origins and not having any clear Anglo-Norman influence as it developed into a town in the twelfth/thirteenth century. It was always a small town and did not grow much beyond its medieval limits until well into the nineteenth century. Archaeological investigations consist of two small watching briefs and so it is unknown what archaeological deposits survive.

## **KEY FACTS**

Status: Weekly market and annual fairs recorded. No town charter.

Size: 1326 33 burgesses.

Archaeology: Nothing of significance.

## **LOCATION**

Llangadog lies on the south side of the Towy valley, Carmarthenshire, on a tongue of flat land between the Afon Sawdde and Afon Brân (SN 706 284). The Towy valley provides easy access west to western Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire and to the north and east into mid-Wales. Llandeilo lies 9km down the valley to the southwest and Llandovery 8.5km up the valley to the northeast. The Sawdde valley provides a route over the Black Mountain to the south (Fig. 1).

## **HISTORY**

The history of Llangadog is sketchy. The church of St Cadog was probably founded prior to the Anglo-Norman conquest of southwest Wales and is generally considered to be the church referred to in the Book of Llandaff, although some authorities dispute this. The Anglo-Normans established Castell Meurig 1km to the south of the church during their conquest of southwest Wales, probably in the early twelfth century, although the earliest reference to it is in 1160. It was destroyed in 1209. It is an earth and timber motte and bailey castle that does not seem to have been converted to stone.

Unlike other towns in southwest Wales a settlement did not develop outside the castle but around the church. The reason for this is unclear, but the Black Book of St David's of 1326 records 33 burgesses all with Welsh names and it may be that Llangadog was unusual in being a pre-Anglo-Norman settlement centred on the church which developed into a Welsh town. Llangadog came under the patronage of the Bishops of St Davids. In 1281 Bishop Bek granted a right to hold a weekly market and annual fairs and in 1283 he founded a college for a precentor and 21 canons; this was short-lived and was

transferred to Abergwili in 1287; doubt has been expressed whether the intention was ever carried out. No town charter is known. Figure 6 shows Llangadog as it may have been in c.1320.

The later history of Llangadog has not been researched. The 1839 tithe map (Fig. 3) shows a small settlement of essentially one street; it is likely this was the extent of the town for much of the medieval period and into the nineteenth century. It was only in the twentieth century that development to the north and south occurred (Fig. 2).

## **MORPHOLOGY**

Prior to modest expansion from the end of the nineteenth century Llangadog consisted of one 250m-long street (Church Street), with the river crossing of the Afon Brân at the north end and Queen's Square at the south end. Church Street curves around the roughly circular churchyard of St Cadog's indicating it and the town post-date the foundation of the church. As noted above, the 1839 tithe map shows the extent of the town as it probably was from the thirteenth century to the nineteenth century. The street frontages on both sides of Church Street present an almost unbroken façade of mostly nineteenth century houses and commercial properties, including several listed buildings. It is assumed that the triangular-shaped Queen's Square was the site of the weekly market granted to the town in 1281.

## **BUILDINGS AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES AND MONUMENTS**

### **Scheduled Monuments**

There are no scheduled monuments in Llangadog. Castell Meurig (CM099) lies 1km to the south of the town.

### **Listed Buildings**

There are 19 listed buildings in Llangadog. Apart from St Cadog's Church they comprise nineteenth century houses and commercial properties and street furniture (Fig. 4).

### **Conservation Area**

The whole of the historic core of the town lies in the Llangadog conservation area (Fig. 4).

### **Registered Parks and Gardens**

There are no registered parks and gardens in Llangadog.

### **Registered Historic Landscape**

Llangadog lies in the Towy Valley Registered Historic Landscape. It has been characterised in the Llangadog character area.

## **Undesignated Historic Environment Assets**

There are approximately 28 sites and monuments on the Regional Historic Environment Record. However, many of these are duplicate records of listed buildings. Others are undesignated buildings.

## **ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS**

Included in this section are excavations, evaluation excavations and watching briefs. Building surveys and desk-top assessments are not included unless they add to the known archaeology. Individually they do not provide great insight, but collectively they begin to provide a picture of the archaeology of the town and by extension of the people who lived there (Fig. 5).

1. A watching-brief was undertaken during watermain renewal in the road close to St Cadog's Church; nothing of archaeological interest was noted. Reference: Trethowan 1997 (33552).
2. A watching brief was maintained during the dismantling and rebuilding of a short section of the churchyard wall of St Cadog's Church; nothing of archaeological interest was noted. Reference: Day 2018 (114215).

## **ARCHAEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL**

Llangadog has potential for addressing some of the key research agenda items for the medieval period, including town plantation and church building. It also has the potential to address post-medieval research theme on settlements (towns).

Only two very small archaeological interventions have taken place in the town and these returned negative results. Opportunities for investigating possible surviving archaeology are limited as the street frontage of the core of Llangadog presents an unbroken façade of domestic and commercial buildings, many of them listed, with little in way of undeveloped space. However, there is potential for archaeological deposits dating perhaps as early as the tenth/eleventh century to the modern period to survive around St Cadog's Church, on both sides of Church Street and around Queen's Square.

## **REFERENCES**

### **Published and unpublished**

Day A 2018. St Cadog's Church, Llangadog, Carmarthenshire: archaeological watching brief 2018, Dyfed Archaeological Trust unpublished report 2018-53.

Evans G 1913. The story of the ancient churches of Llandovery, *The Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion*, session 1911-12, 42-250.

Lewis S 1833. *A Topographic Dictionary of Wales* (London: S Lewis and Co.).

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Soulsby I 1983. *The Towns of Medieval Wales*, (Chichester: Phillimore).

Soulsby I and Jones D 1977. The archaeological implications of redevelopment in the historic towns of the Borough of Dinefwr, Urban Research Unit Department of Archaeology University College Cardiff unpublished report.

Trethowan M 1997. Ashfield Row – Llangadog watermain renewal scheme, Cambria Archaeology (Dyfed Archaeological Trust) unpublished report.

### **Databases and online references**

Dyfed Historic Environment Record <https://www.archwilio.org.uk/arch/>

Cof Cymru <https://cadw.gov.wales/advice-support/cof-cymru>

LiDAR <https://lle.gov.wales/catalogue/item/LidarCompositeDataset/?lang=en>

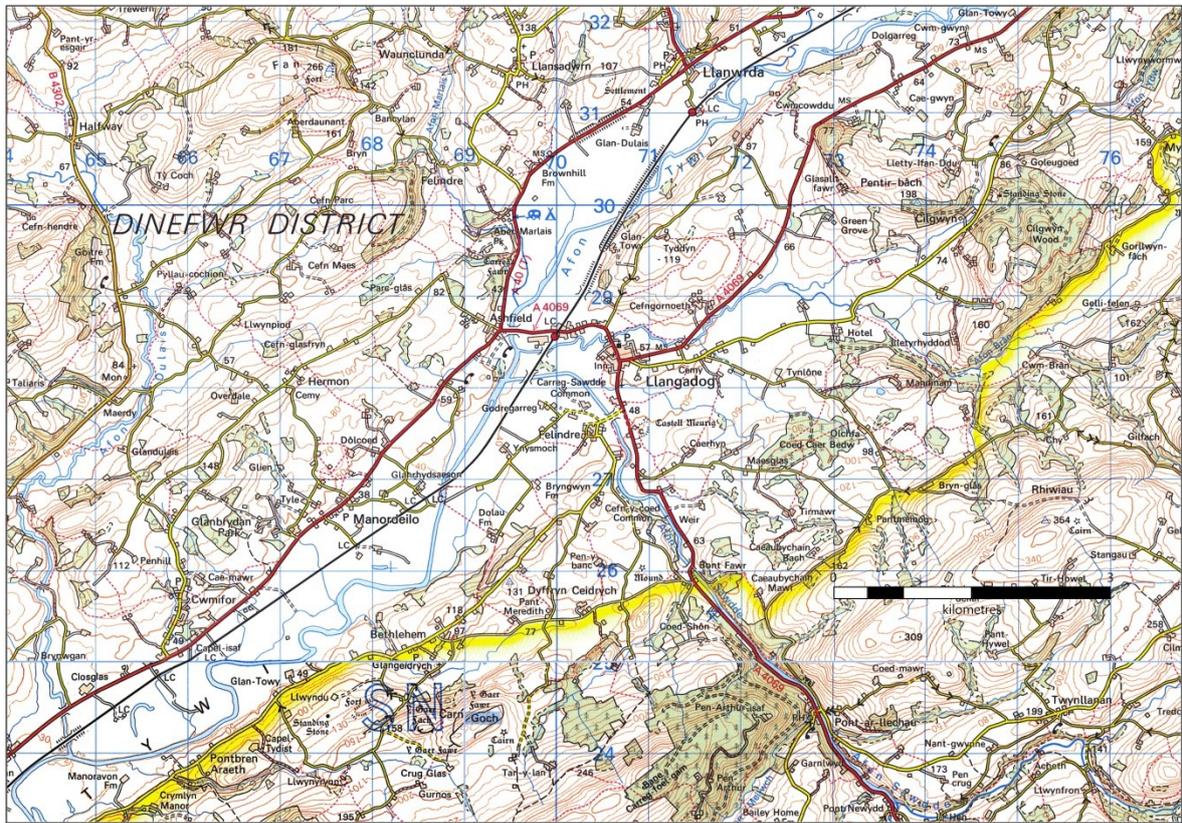


Figure 1. Location map.

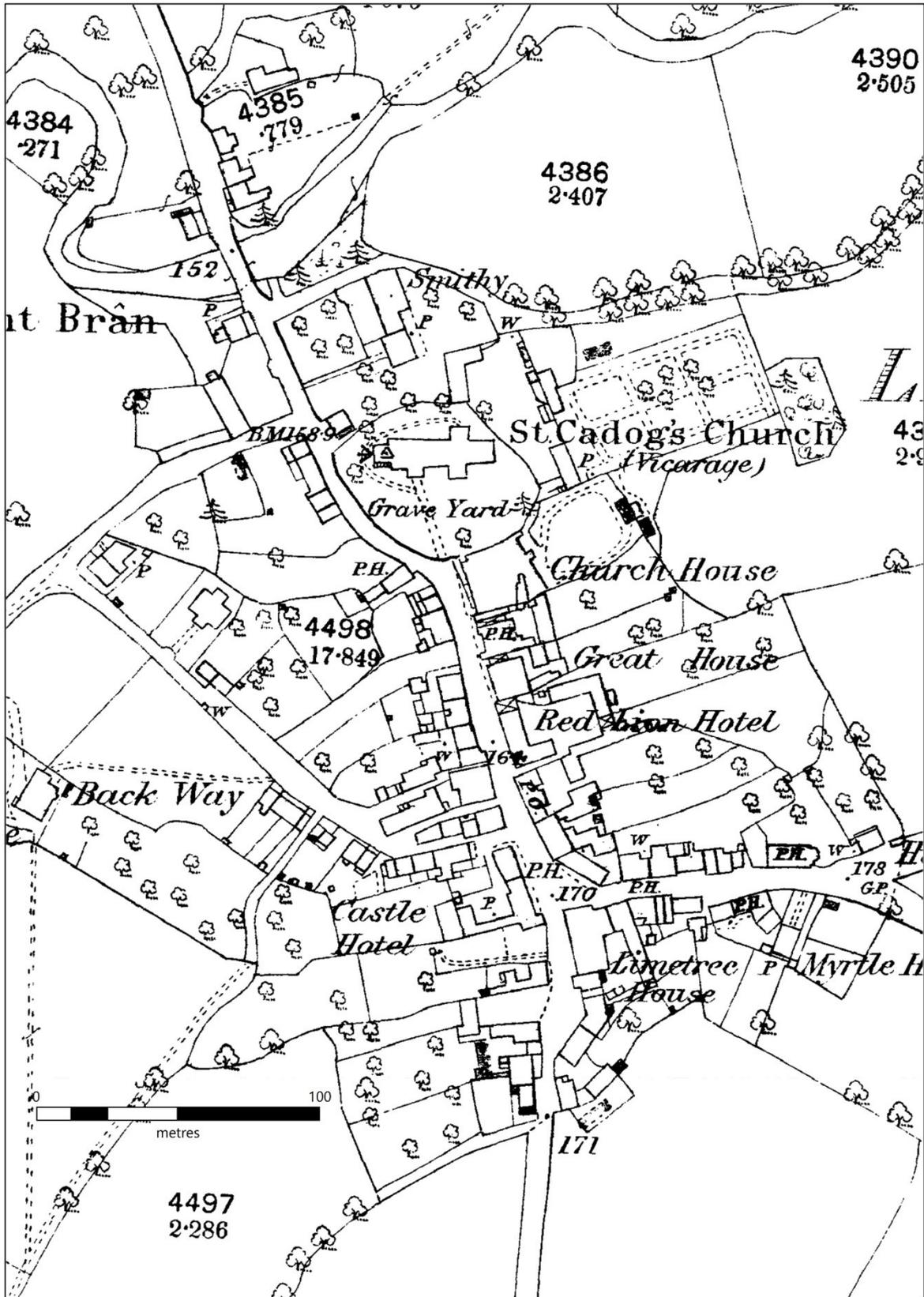


Figure 2. Extract from the Ordnance Survey 1:2500 1<sup>st</sup> edition map of 1887 (Carmarthenshire 26.15).

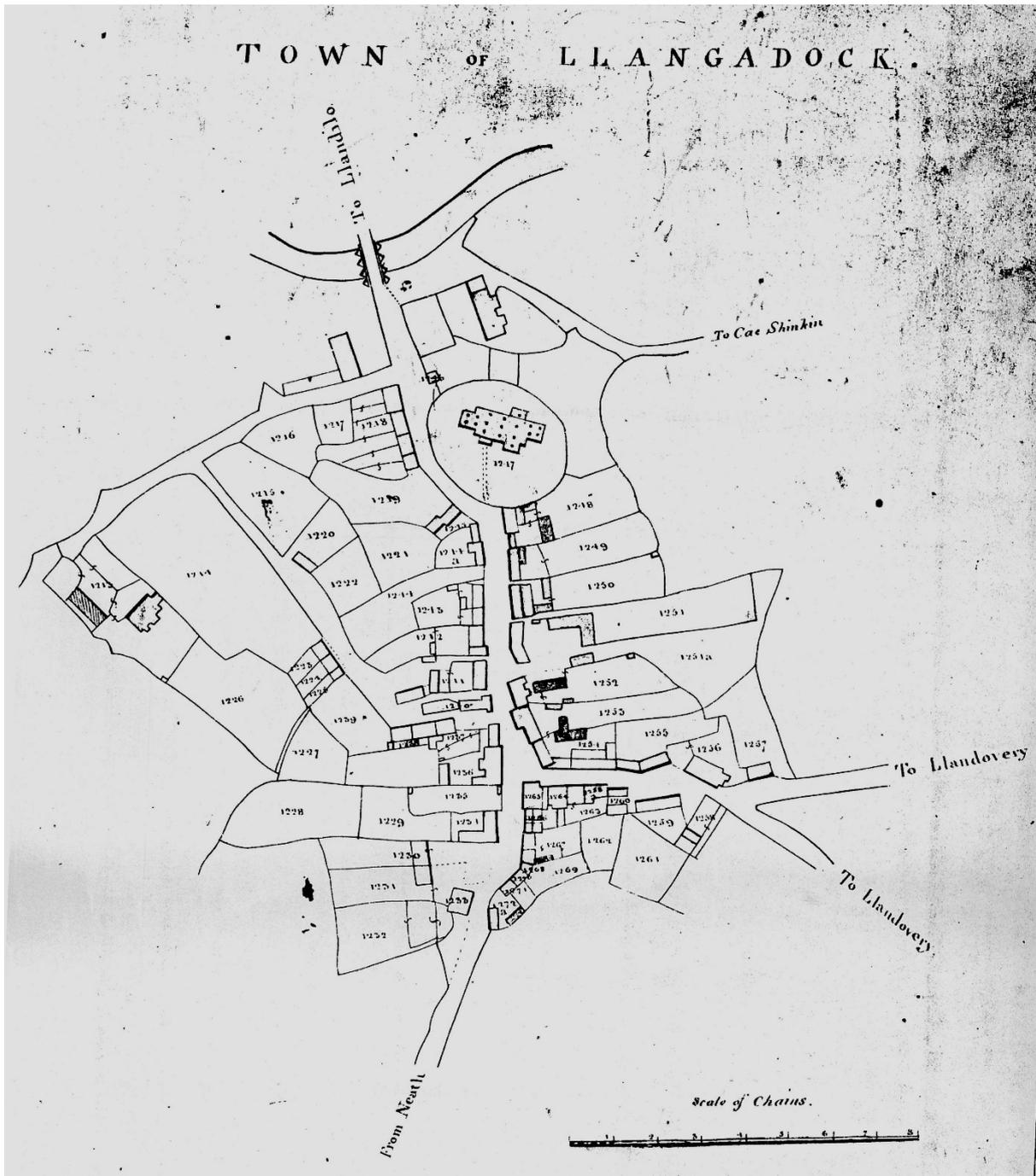


Figure 3. Extract from the 1839 tithe map of Llangadog parish.

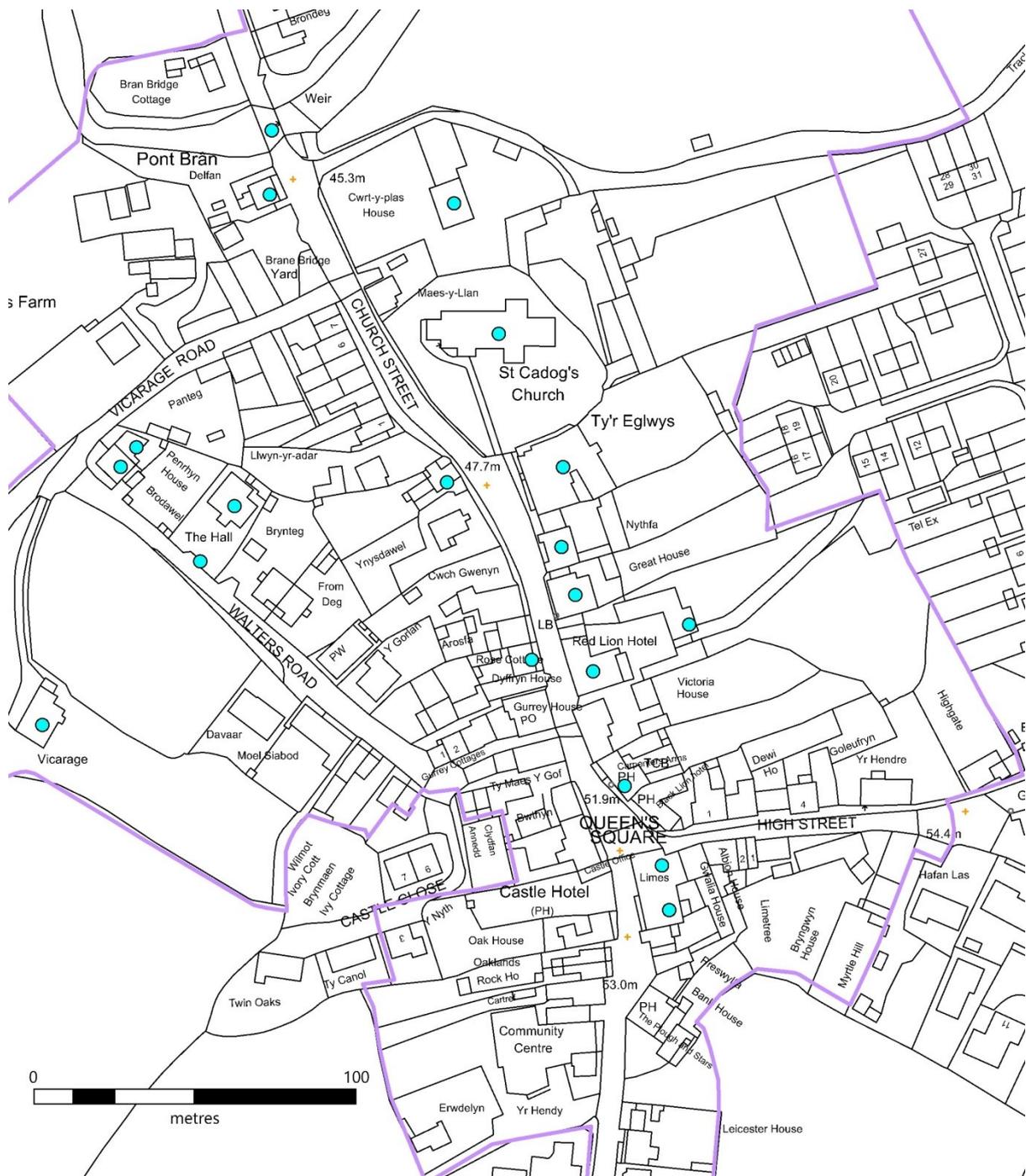


Figure 4. Listed buildings (blue circles) and the conservation area (outlined in purple).

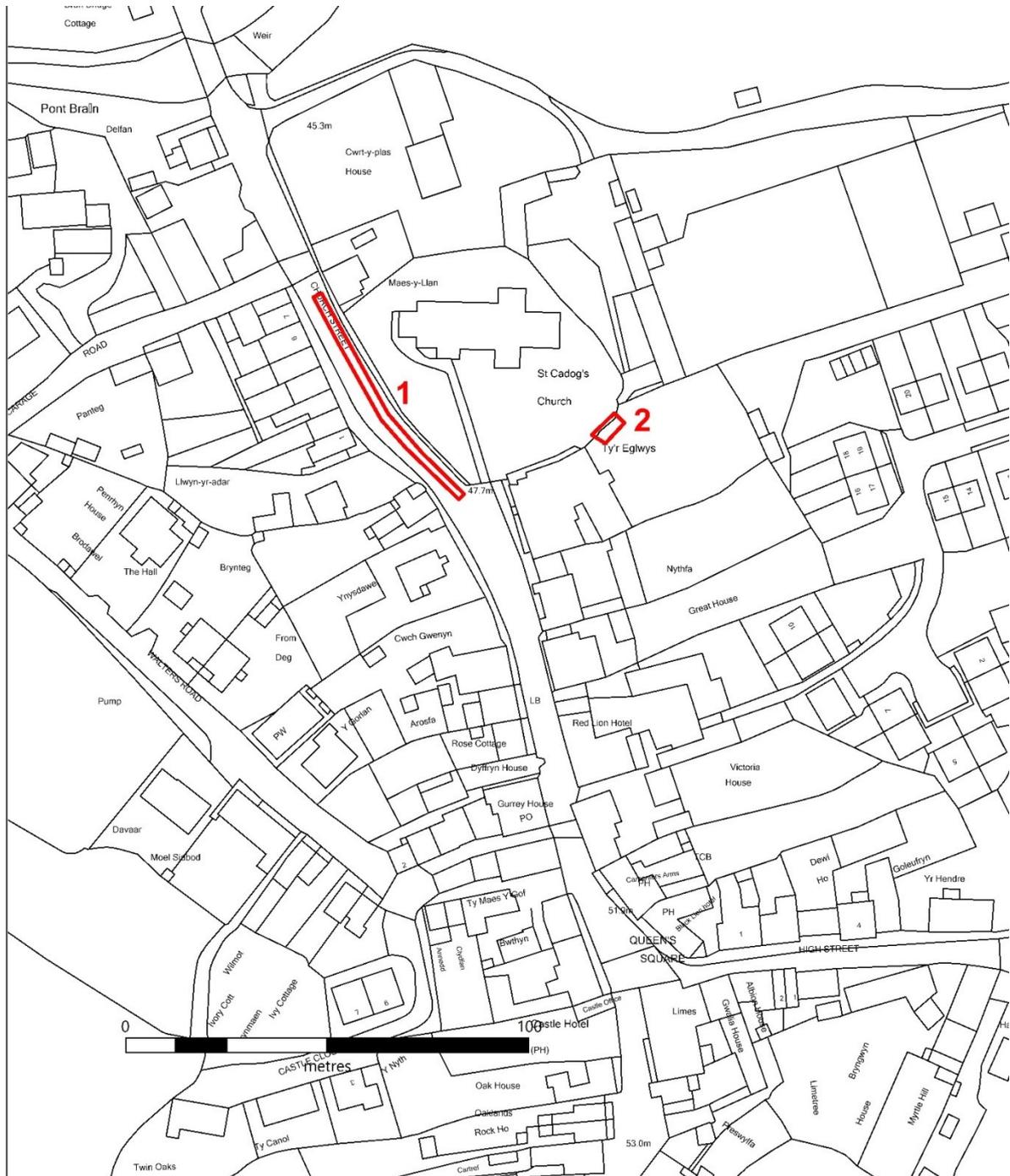
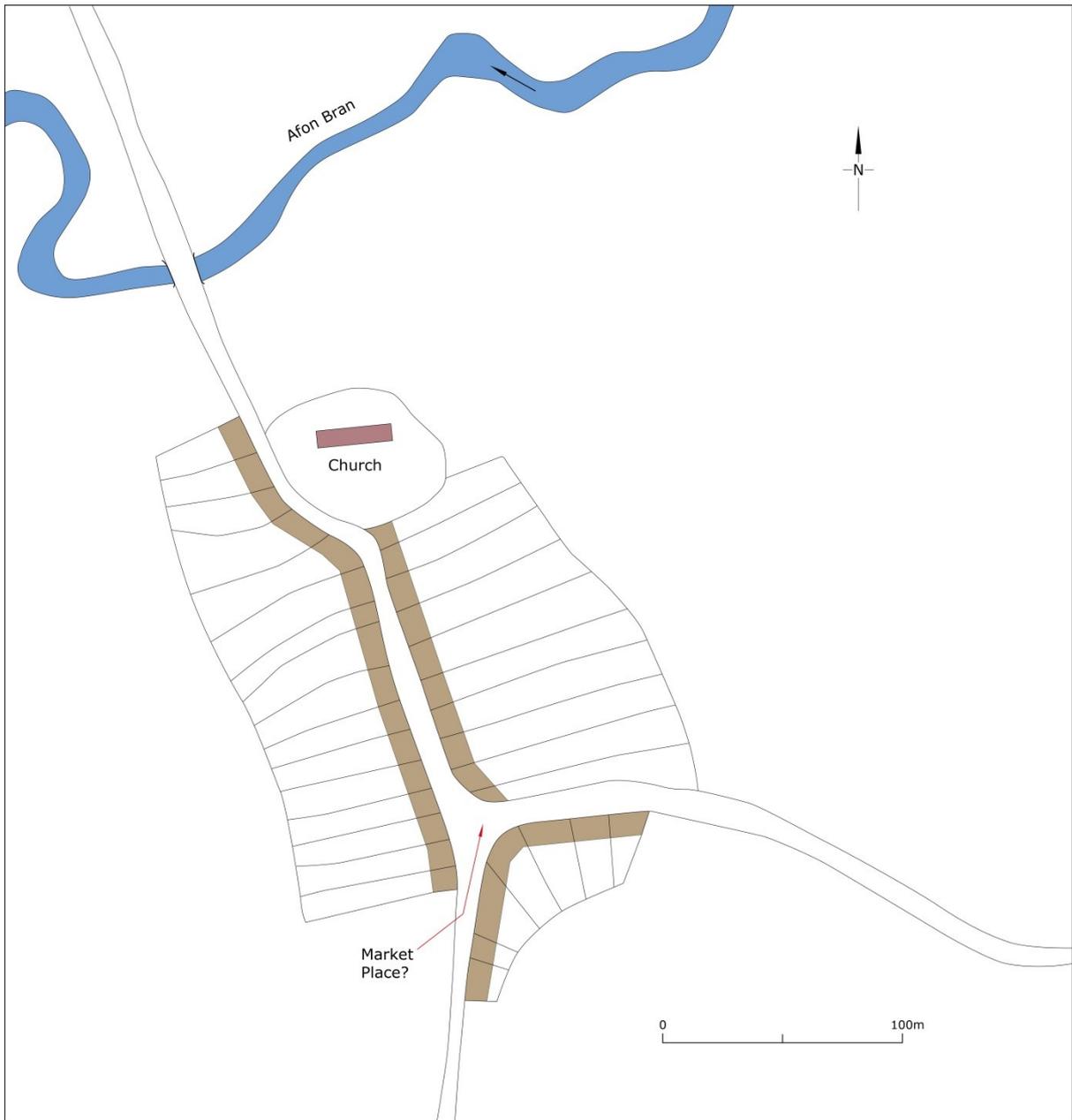


Figure 5. Location of archaeological interventions.



*Figure 6. Conjectural plan of Llangadog as it may have been c.1320.*