

ST MARY'S CHURCH, CYNGHORDY CARMARTHENSHIRE: ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF 2012



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ST MARY'S CHURCH, CYNGHORDY, CARMARTHENSHIRE: ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

Gan / By

Philip Poucher

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE
BUDDSODDWR MEWN POBL

Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Dyfed Cyf
Neuadd y Sir, Stryd Caerfyrddin, Llandeilo, Sir
Gaerfyrddin SA19 6AF
Ffon: Ymholiadau Cyffredinol 01558 823121
Adran Rheoli Treftadaeth 01558 823131
Ffacs: 01558 823133
Ebost: info@dyfedarchaeology.org.uk

Dyfed Archaeological Trust Limited
The Shire Hall, Carmarthen Street, Llandeilo,
Carmarthenshire SA19 6AF
Tel: General Enquiries 01558 823121
Heritage Management Section 01558 823131
Fax: 01558 823133
Email: info@dyfedarchaeology.org.uk
Website: www.dyfedarchaeology.org.uk

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

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ST MARY'S CHURCH, CYNGHORDY, CARMARTHENSHIRE: ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

SUMMARY

Renovation work was being undertaken on St Mary's Church, Cyngordy, Carmarthenshire (SN 8086 3976). This work included groundworks associated with drainage and demolition works. The parish church of St Mary's (PRN 5449), built in the 19th century, may have been a rebuild of an earlier church. Roman activity (PRN 6271) has also been recorded in the immediate vicinity of the church. Given the potential for further archaeological remains to be present the archaeological advisor to the Church in Wales recommended an archaeological watching brief should be carried out on associated groundworks.

Mr David Smith, of Tywi Architects Practice, on behalf of the Church in Wales, commissioned Dyfed Archaeological Trust Field Services (DAT-FS) to undertake the archaeological watching brief during groundworks at the site. This watching brief was undertaken on 23rd January 2012.

The groundworks consisted of the excavation of three drainage trenches leading from the gutter down pipes along the southeast wall of the church. These trenches ended in soakaways. The drainage trenches were at most 3.5m long, and 0.4m deep, the soakaways at most 1.4m long and 1.8m deep.

A relatively uniform topsoil deposit 0.1m thick was recorded in the excavated areas. This contained some slate roof tile and late 19th/early 20th century finds, presumably from previous renovation/repair work on the church. This overlay a series of naturally occurring subsoils and shale bedrock. The subsoil increased in thickness as the ground naturally fell away to the south.

No features or deposits of significant archaeological interest were noted within the development area during the course of these groundworks. The development therefore appears to have had a minimal impact on the archaeological resource within the area.

The style of the church building and date of the earliest graves within the churchyard would suggest that St Mary's was built in the late 19th century (which contradicts a number of earlier records and references which put it into the first half of the 19th century). The shallow depth of topsoil around the church and complete absence of any disarticulated bone contradict any suggestion that the church was a rebuilding of an earlier structure. No evidence for any earlier finds or features would also indicate a late date for the church. No finds or features of earlier date or any indications of Roman activity were found within the areas of the watching brief.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Commission

- 1.1.1 A scheme of renovation work has been undertaken on St Mary's Church, Cynghordy, Carmarthenshire (SN 8086 3976; Photo 1). This work included groundworks associated with drainage and demolition works.
- 1.1.2 The church of St Mary's is the parish church of Llanfair ar y Bryn, located to the northeast of Llandovery. The church (PRN 5449) is recorded on the Regional Historic Environment Record (HER), held by Dyfed Archaeological Trust, which states that it was built in 1833, although this date may be incorrect. This could possibly be a rebuild of an earlier church, being as it is the main parish church. There are also records of Roman activity in the immediate area (PRN 6271). Given the potential for further archaeological remains to be present the archaeological advisor to the Church in Wales recommended an archaeological watching brief should be carried out during groundworks.
- 1.1.3 Mr David Smith, of Tywi Architects Practice, on behalf of the Church in Wales, commissioned Dyfed Archaeological Trust Field Services (DAT-FS) to undertake the archaeological watching brief during groundworks at the site.
- 1.1.4 The watching brief was implemented to adequately record any significant archaeological features that may be encountered during groundworks associated with the development, thereby protecting the potential archaeological interests. A written scheme of investigation (WSI) was prepared by Dyfed Archaeological Trust Field Services prior to the works commencing.

1.2 Scope of the Project

- 1.2.1 The project objectives as laid out in the WSI 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.*
 - *To produce an archive and report of any results.*
- 1.2.2 A single site visit was undertaken during groundworks associated with drainage (23rd January 2012).

1.3 Report Outline

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

1.4 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). Dyfed Archaeological Trust Field Services – DAT-FS; Written Scheme of Investigation – WSI

1.5 Illustrations

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

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 (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 1066	
Medieval Period –	1066 – 1536	
Post-Medieval Period –	1536 – 1899	
Modern –	20th century onwards	

Table 1: Archaeological and Historical Timeline for Wales

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



Figure 1: Location map of watching brief site from 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, © Crown Copyright Dyfed Archaeological Trust, The Shire Hall, Carmarthen Street, Llandeilo, Carmarthenshire SA19 6AF. Licence No AL51842A

2. THE SITE

2.1 Location and Topography

- 2.1.1 The church of St Mary's is located adjacent to the A483 in the village of Cynghordy (NGR SN 8086 3976; Photo 1), to the northeast of Llandovery.
- 2.1.2 The church is a 19th century stone-built, slate roofed church, consisting of a nave and chancel, with a protruding porch close to its southern corner, and vestry with attached modern boiler house close to its northern corner. The church sits within a rectangular enclosure, and is surrounded by a graveyard (Photos 1 and 2). The church and graveyard are still in use.
- 2.1.3 The church sits on the edge of the floor of the Bran valley, with the land dropping away to the southwest. The river itself runs some 400m to the west. The church has been partly terraced into the falling ground (Photo 2).
- 2.1.4 The church site lies on mudstones of the Nantmel Mudstones Formation, which then becomes covered by Alluvial Fan Deposits (sands and gravels) immediately to the south.

2.2 Archaeological Background

- 2.2.1. A search of the Regional Historic Environment Record (HER – held by Dyfed Archaeological Trust) records 12 known archaeological sites within 500m of the development area, including the church itself. These are shown in Table 2 below:

PRN	Site Name	Grid Reference	Description
4151	Talgarth	SN 8070 3970	Earthwork bank of unknown significance
4155	Talgarth	SN 8057 3950	A possible "burnt mound" or prehistoric hearth site identified in the 1940s
5449	Sy Mary's	SN 8086 3976	Llanfair ar y Bryn parish church.
6269	Upper Lodge	SN 8065 3937	The site of a Roman practice camp probably associated with Llandovery fort.
6271	Tre Goch	SN 809 398	Reputed site of a Roman station, known traditionally as Tre Goch.
17332	Bethel	SN 8070 3987	Independent chapel first built in 1813. Rebuilt before 1843 and again in 1873.
19833		SN 8081 3981	A vicarage shown on the 1964 6" Ordnance Survey map.
19927	Pont-wen	SN 8090 4019	A minor road bridge shown on the 1964 6" Ordnance Survey map.
25608	Cynghordy	SN 81 40	Historic parkland associated with the mansion of Cynghordy.
29409	Cynghordy	SN805400	Dispersed hamlet or village which includes a school, several chapels, a church, railway halt and housing estate scattered over 3 square kilometres around Cynghordy mansion.
29684	Cynghordy Village Store	SN80713982	Building on NE side of chapel appears to have been a shop. Now closed and empty.
61138	Glanbran Arms Inn	SN8089339544	Grade II listed inn including former barn range to the left

Table 2: Historic Environment Record entries within a 500m radius of the site centre

- 2.2.2. The history of St Mary's church is confused. The HER states that (PRN 5449) was built in 1833, and it is thought that this may be a rebuild of an earlier structure. However, in a description of the parish in 1844 (Lewis 1844) it is stated that St Mary's church is 'an ancient edifice, consisting of one large aisle, with a tower', and is located in 'Llandingat', nearly a mile from its own parish, clearly not referring to this site. This would appear to

derive from the fact that former parish church, referred to by Lewis, was in fact St Mary's church in Llandovery. Other mentions of the church state that it was rebuilt in the mid-19th century (full description for PRN 6271), or built in the late 19th century (Murphy 1999). It would appear more likely that this parish church was built in the late 19th century. The earliest dates of the surrounding gravestones also appear to be late 19th century, and the rectangular enclosure within which the church sits may be an indication that it was a new build of this date, presumably to move the parish church from Llandovery into a new, more convenient location for the parish it served.

- 2.2.3. HER records (PRN 6271) state that St Mary's parish church is reputed to have been built on the site of a Roman fort, known locally as Tre Goch, and that numerous Roman artefacts have been recovered from the immediate area. Again records are confused, and this appears erroneous and to derive from the confusion over the location for St Mary's church. The mention of Tre Goch comes from Lewis (1844), but there he is referring to St Mary's church in Llandovery, which sits within the remains of a Roman fort (Tre Goch) and was formerly the parish church for Llanfair ar y bryn despite not being situated within the parish. The current parish church of St Mary's in Cynghordy was clearly built after Lewis was writing his Topographical Dictionary. Other Roman activity is known from this area however. The route of the A483 to the south is believed to roughly follow the line of a Roman Road towards the fort in Llandovery. This route then continues northeastwards along the line of a local road to the east of the church. A Roman practice camp (PRN 6269) is recorded on lower lying ground some 450m to the south. Such sites are believed to have been temporary forts dug as training for Roman soldiers, presumably by the garrison based at the nearby Llandovery fort.
- 2.2.4. One earlier archaeological site is also recorded within 500m of the church, namely a possible Bronze Age burnt mound (PRN 4155). An earthwork bank of unknown date (PRN 4151) is also recorded nearby.
- 2.2.5. Parkland (PRN 25608) may have extended into this area, associated with Cynghordy mansion which is known to have been in occupation since Elizabethan times. The remaining records on the HER refer to the village of Cynghordy (PRN 29409) and various late post-medieval elements within it, such as the church (PRN 5449), Bethel Chapel (PRN 17332), the vicarage (PRN 19833), shop (PRN 29684) and Glanbran Arms Inn (PRN 61138).

3. METHODOLOGY

- 3.1 The relevant methodology for the watching brief was detailed in the WSI and can be summarised as follows:
- A 'watching brief' was undertaken at the commencement of groundworks at the site that had the potential to expose, damage or destroy underlying archaeological remains.
 - All archaeological deposits revealed during the groundworks were examined and recorded to an appropriate level.
 - Recording of all archaeological features or deposits conformed to best current professional practice and was carried out in accordance with the Recording Manual² used by Dyfed Archaeological Trust Field Services.
- 3.2 The groundworks consisted of the excavation of three drainage trenches leading from the gutter down pipes along the southeast wall of the church. These trenches ended in soakaways (see Figure 2). The works also included the relaying of the floor inside the porch, but these works were not observed. The works also included the demolition of the modern boiler house, but this did not involve any below ground works and therefore did not warrant an archaeological attendance.
- 3.3 The archaeological watching brief consisted of a single site visit during the excavation of the drainage trenches and soakaways. The work was carried out on the 23rd January 2012.

² Dyfed Archaeological Trust Field Services have adopted the Recording Manual developed by English Heritage Centre for Archaeology.

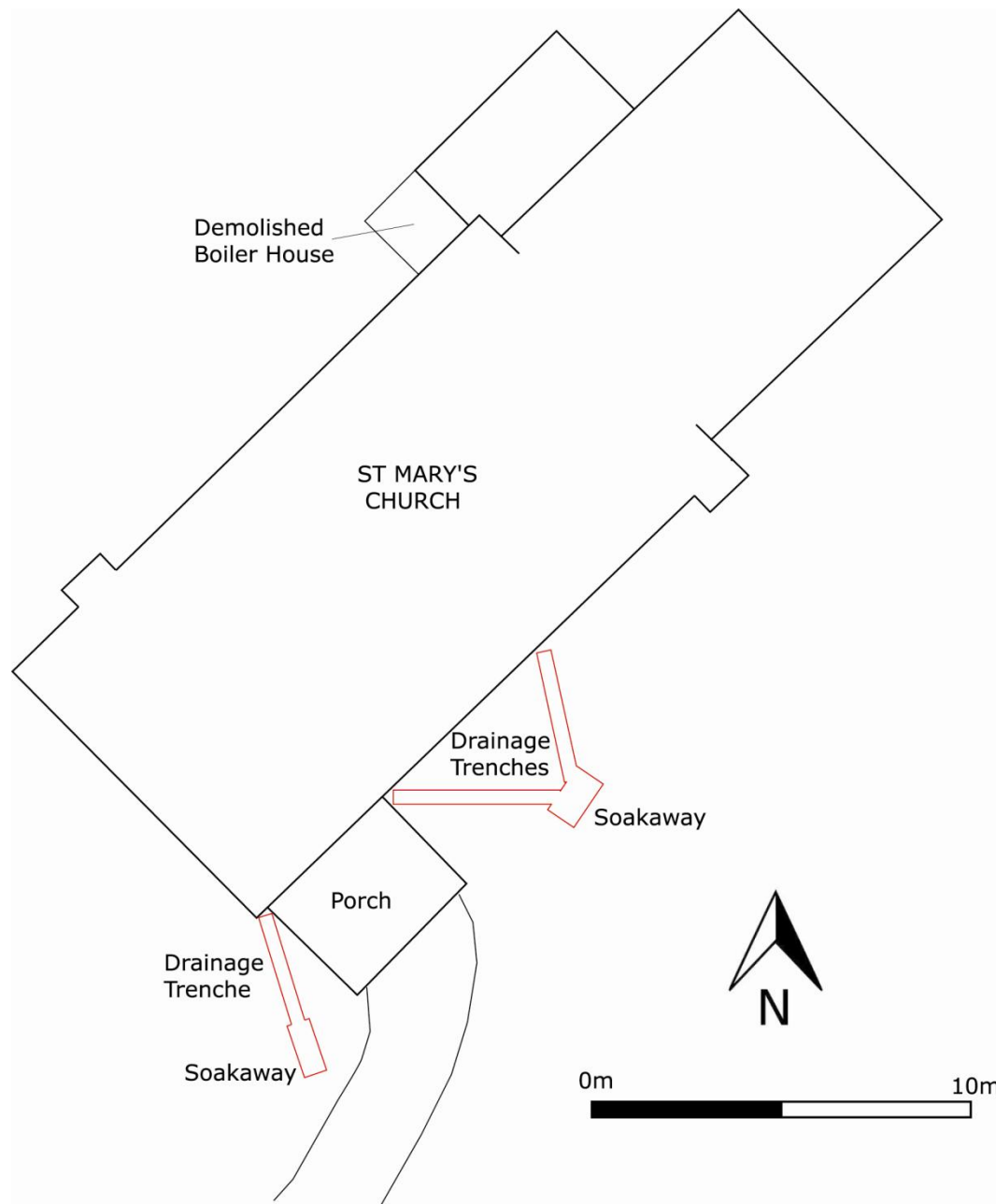


Figure 2: Sketch plan (the given scale is an approximation only) showing the main church building and rough location of the drainage trenches and soakaways.

4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF RESULTS

- 4.1 The two drainage trenches to the north of the porch (Photos 3, 4, 5 & 6) were 0.3m wide, at most 0.3m deep and between 3.2m and 3.5m long. A soakaway was excavated at the point where they intersected, measuring 1.3m by 0.9m and 1.1m deep (Photo 7). Consistent deposits were recorded throughout these groundworks.
- 4.2 The topsoil (100) comprised a dark grey-brown clayey-silt. This was typically 0.1m thick, although increased in thickness close to the church wall, where it contained a large quantity of broken slate roof tiles. Occasional fragments of floor tile and late 19th/20th century pottery were also spread throughout the topsoil.
- 4.3 Underlying the topsoil was a 0.1m thick layer of mid orange-brown clayey-sand subsoil (101), including the occasional sub-rounded stone. This appeared to be naturally occurring subsoil. Below this was mid grey clayey-sand stony subsoil (102), up to 0.2m thick. The soakaway revealed a compacted layer of fragmented shale bedrock (103) 0.4m thick underlying this, which in turn lay on top of solid bedrock (104). No finds or features of archaeological interest were noted within these deposits.
- 4.4 The drainage trench and soakaway (Photos 8 & 9) to the south of the porch revealed a slightly different arrangement of subsoils. This trench measured 2.9m long, 0.3m wide and 0.4m deep. The soakaway at the end measured 0.6m wide, 1.4m long and 1.8m deep.
- 4.5 The topsoil (200) remained similar, but with no obvious slate inclusions. Below this was a light brown-grey sandy-clay (201), 0.15m thick, with occasional sub-angular shale inclusions. Below this was a mid orange-brown sandy-clay (202), similar to the upper subsoil 101 visible to the north, this deposit however was thicker, up to 0.5m deep. The underlying subsoil (203) was also similar to deposit 102, but again much thicker, being up to 0.55m deep. Traces of compacted fragmented shale bedrock (204) were revealed below this at the base of the soakaway.
- 4.6 Other than the slate roof tiles, broken floor tiles and 19th/20th century pottery no finds or features of archaeological interest were recovered. No finds were retained.

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1 An archaeological watching brief was undertaken during groundworks associated with drainage works at St Mary's church, Cynghordy, Carmarthenshire (NGR SN 8086 3976). The drains and soakaways were machine excavated.
- 5.2 A topsoil deposit (layer 100/200) typically 0.1m thick was recorded across the area investigated. To the north of the church porch this topsoil contained quantities of roofing slate, along with some broken floor tile and fragments of late 19th or 20th century pottery. This material presumably derives from previous maintenance or restoration work on the church.
- 5.3 Underlying the topsoil were a series of naturally occurring subsoil deposits (layers 101/202, 102/203, 201). These increased in thickness to the southwest, as the natural ground levels dropped away.
- 5.4 The subsoil overlay a layer of compacted fragmented shale bedrock (103/204). This occurred at a depth of 0.4m below the current ground levels to the north of the porch, but up to 1.3m below ground level to the south of the porch. This appears to be the result of both naturally falling ground levels and the terracing of the slope during the construction of the church.
- 5.5 No gravestones pre-dating the late 19th century were noted within the churchyard. The style of the church construction suggested it was of later 19th century date. Excavations for the drainage runs and soakways did not uncover any graves and nor was any disarticulated human bone recovered from the thin topsoil. This evidence would indicate that the church was of late 19th century date. The lack of any obvious signs of earlier burials or an accumulated depth of topsoil, as would be expected in a churchyard used for hundreds of years would suggest that St Marys church at Cynghordy did not replace an earlier structure. This may confirm that the antiquarian references to the church were incorrect and refer to the church within the Roman Fort Llandovery as opposed to this one.
- 5.6 No evidence for any earlier archaeological remains or any indications of Roman activity were revealed during the watching brief.

6. SOURCES

6.1 Maps

Ordnance Survey, 1888 *1;2500 1st edition Carmarthenshire XVIII.3*

Ordnance Survey, 1905 *1;2500 2nd edition Carmarthenshire XVIII.3*

6.2 Published

Lewis, S., 1844 *Topographical Dictionary of Wales*

Murphy

6.3 Unpublished

Murphy, K & Ludlow, N 2000 *Carmarthenshire Historic Landscape*
Characterisation. DAT Report No PRN 40373

PHOTOGRAPHS



Photo 1: St Mary's church, showing renovation and drainage works in progress.



Photo 2: Looking north, showing the terracing of the hillslope and the graveyard.



Photo 3: The northernmost drainage trench. 1m & 0.5m scales.



Photo 4: Typical section of the northernmost drainage trench. 1m & 0.5m scales



Photo 5: The central drainage trench. 1m & 0.5m scales.



Photo 6: Typical section of the central drainage trench. 0.5m scale.



Photo 7: Section of the northernmost soakaway. 1m scale.



Photo 8: The southernmost drainage trench. 1m & 0.5m scale.



Photo 9: Section of the southernmost soakaway. 1m scale.

APPENDIX I: CONTEXT AND SOIL DESCRIPTIONS

Number	Description	Thickness
Layer 100	Topsoil Friable dark grey-brown clayey-silt. Occasional small-medium sub-angular stone. Finds: late 19 th – 20 th century small pottery fragments Large quantities of slate roof tile Occasional 19 th /20 th century ceramic floor tile.	0.1m
Layer 101	Subsoil Friable, mid orange-brown clayey-sand Occasional small to medium sub-rounded stone	0.1m
Layer 102	Subsoil Compact, mid grey clayey-sand Frequent small-medium sub-angular stone.	0.2m
Layer 103	Subsoil. Hard, mid grey, fragmented shale bedrock	0.4m
Layer 104	Bedrock Shale	
Layer 200	Topsoil Friable dark grey-brown clayey-silt. Occasional small-medium sub-angular stone.	0.1m
Layer 201	Subsoil Friable, light brown-grey sandy-clay Moderate, small-medium, sub-angular stone	0.15m
Layer 202	Subsoil Friable, mid orange-brown clayey-sand Occasional small to medium sub-rounded stone	0.5m
Layer 203	Subsoil Compact, mid grey clayey-sand Frequent small-medium sub-angular stone.	0.55m
Layer 204	Subsoil. Hard, mid grey, fragmented shale bedrock	

Table 3: Context and Soil Descriptions

ST MARY'S CHURCH, CYNGHORDY, CARMARTHENSHIRE: ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

RHIF YR ADRODDIAD / REPORT NUMBER 2012/9

**Chwefror 2012
February 2012**

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

Philip Poucher

Swydd / Position: Archaeologist

Llofnod / Signature



..... Dyddiad / Date 27/1/12

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

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

Swydd / Position: HEAD OF FIELD SERVICES

Llofnod / Signature



..... Dyddiad / Date 29/02/12

*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*

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