

# **ST DAVID'S CHURCH, HENLLAN AMGOED, CARMARTHENSHIRE: ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION (SN 1852 2072)**



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# ST DAVID'S CHURCH, HENLLAN AMGOED, CARMARTHENSHIRE: ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

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*Paratowyd yr adroddiad yma at ddefnydd y cwsmer yn unig. Ni dderbynnir cyfrifoldeb gan Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Dyfed Cyf am ei ddefnyddio gan unrhyw berson na phersonau eraill a fydd yn ei ddarllen neu ddibynnu ar y gwybodaeth y mae'n ei gynnwys*

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## **ST DAVID'S CHURCH, HENLLAN AMGOED, CARMARTHENSHIRE: ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION**

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## **ST DAVID'S CHURCH, HENLLAN AMGOED, CARMARTHENSHIRE: ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION**

### **SUMMARY**

*Dyfed Archaeological Trust Field Services were commissioned by Mr Roger Anderson of Roger Anderson and Associates, acting on behalf of their client, The Representative Body of the Church in Wales, to undertake an archaeological evaluation of a potential development area at St David's Church, Henllan Amgoed, Carmarthenshire (NGR SN 1852 2072).*

*The archaeological evaluation comprised the excavation of a single trench within the area of a proposed driveway, parking, turning area and garage associated with the proposed conversion of the church to residential use. A total of twenty-eight graves were revealed within the evaluation trench.*

*The narrow widths of the graves suggest they were intended for un-coffined burials. The graves were relatively shallow, cut through the underlying bedrock. The lack of any indications of stone lined cist burials would suggest that they are not early medieval burials. It is considered most likely that they are of medieval date, possibly from the 12th to 15th centuries based on typology and their location within the churchyard. Further evidence for a medieval date is indicated by a series of stones placed in the foot end of grave [110], a feature of burials dating between the 11th and 13th centuries. Evidence of zoning within the churchyard was indicated by the location of at least three rows of child burials within the evaluation trench. This is also suggestive of a medieval date as the practice appears to have been superseded in the post-medieval period by grouping burials into families, as opposed to separating child graves. Few of the identified graves were intercutting, which suggests that the cemetery was managed. Postholes found near the foot end of four of the adult graves also suggests the graves were marked. The alignment of groups of child burials in rows at the western end of the trench also supports this theory of management of the graveyard. The medieval population of the area may also be a factor in the lack of intercutting graves, with there being no real spatial pressures within the whole cemetery leading to constant overlaying of graves upon graves. The cemetery encompasses a large area although it has never served any specific nucleated population centres, merely dispersed hamlets and farmsteads. It is possible that by the post-medieval period, burials were concentrated in the vicinity of the church itself, particularly to the immediate south and the western side.*

*The evaluation has indicated that the cemetery enclosure around St David's Church is very likely to contain a substantial quantity of further burials of medieval and later date. Due to the later concentration of burials around the church, the majority of the churchyard is likely to be relatively undisturbed, with a good survival of burial features present. Unfortunately the evaluation has indicated that there will be little or no survival of any human bone within the graves.*

*The roughly D-shaped or potentially circular form of the churchyard within which St David's church is located, could indicate the reuse of an Iron Age enclosure or that it was first established in the early-medieval period. No evidence to indicate when the churchyard was originally constructed was revealed by the evaluation, although it is possible that further evidence to provide a date could be present within or beneath the perimeter bank.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Project Commission**

Dyfed Archaeological Trust Field Services were commissioned by Mr Roger Anderson of Roger Anderson and Associates, acting on behalf of their client, The Representative Body of the Church in Wales, to undertake an archaeological evaluation of a potential development area at St David's Church, Henllan Amgoed, Carmarthenshire (NGR SN 1852 2072; Figure 1). The church is now redundant and falling into a state of disrepair. It is intended that a planning application will be submitted to Carmarthenshire County Council for conversion of the church to residential use, with an associated driveway, parking, turning area and garage to the east of the church.

As part of pre-planning advice from the local planning authority, the need for an initial pre-determination evaluation of the area of the driveway, parking, turning area and garage was highlighted following advice from the archaeological advisors to the planning authority (Dyfed Archaeological Trust - Planning Services).

A brief for the evaluation was prepared by Dyfed Archaeological Trust - Planning Services. A written scheme of investigation, detailing the archaeological works that Dyfed Archaeological Trust Field Services proposed, in order to fulfil the brief was prepared and approved prior to the evaluation works commencing.

### **Scope of the Project**

The evaluation has been designed to provide information on the character, extent, date, state of preservation and significance of any surviving archaeological deposits within the site area, in order that an assessment of the impact from the development proposals on any remains can be determined.

The results of the evaluation will be used to inform a detailed design scheme for the proposed driveway, parking, turning area and garage in order to minimise impacts upon buried archaeological deposits. The report includes information on further proposed works that may be required at the site to support the any future planning application for the conversion of the church and associated parking, driveway and garage.

### **Report Outline**

This report describes the location of the site along with its archaeological background, summarises the potential impacts of the proposed development before providing a summary and discussion of the archaeological evaluation and its results.

Following a request from Dyfed Archaeological Trust - Planning Services, a short section on how the evaluation results can be used to address research themes raised in the Welsh Archaeological Research Agenda is also included.

### **Abbreviations**

Sites recorded on the Regional Historic Environment Record<sup>1</sup> (HER) are identified by their Primary Record Number (PRN) and located by their National Grid Reference (NGR). Levels will be expressed as above Ordnance Datum (OD).

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<sup>1</sup> Held and managed by Dyfed Archaeological Trust, The Shire Hall, Llandeilo.



## Illustrations

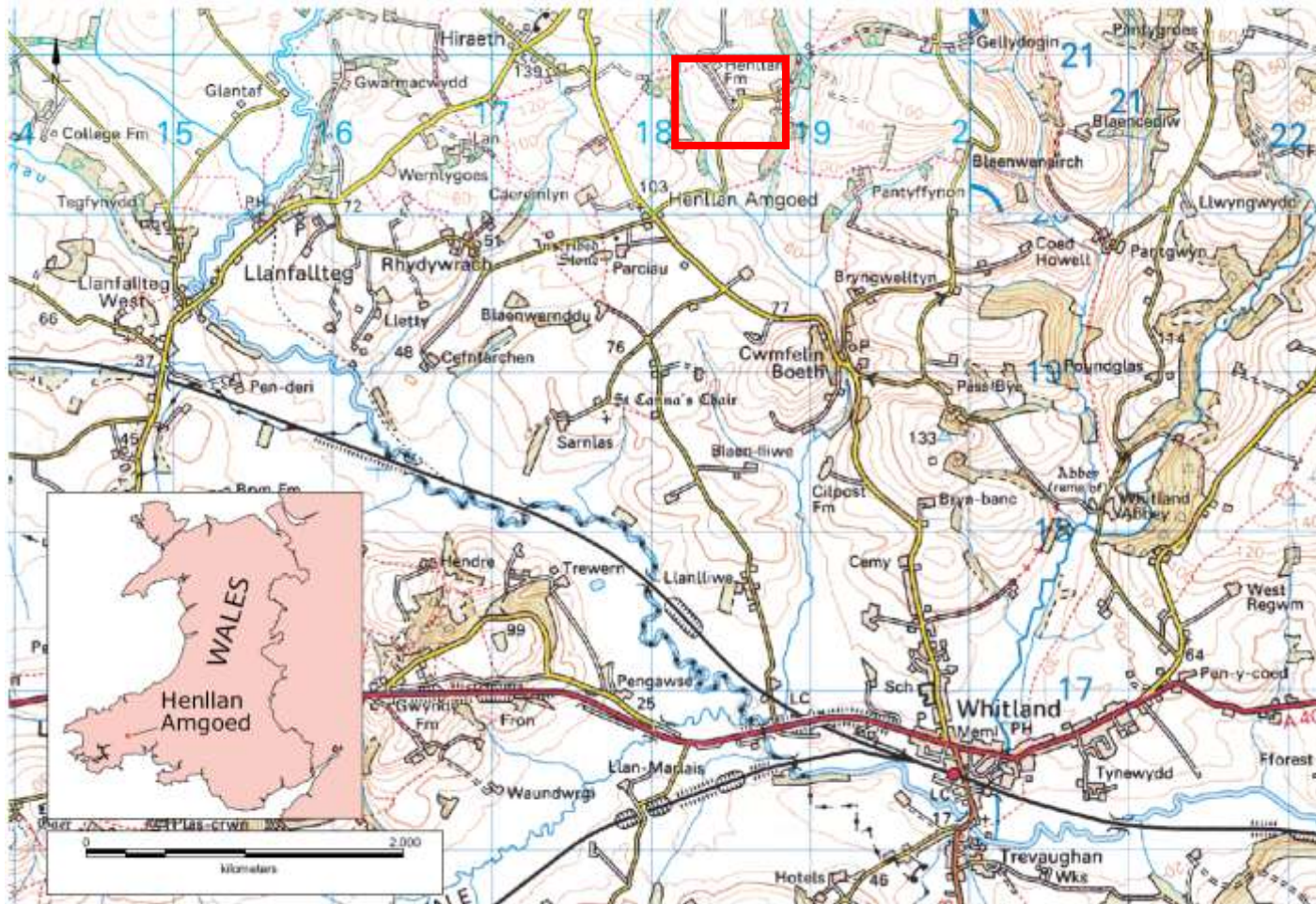
Photographic images are to be found at the back of the report. Printed map extracts are not necessarily reproduced to their original scale.

## Timeline

The following table illustrates the approximate dates for the archaeological periods discussed in this report:

Period	Approximate Date
Palaeolithic	c.120,000 BC – c.10,000 BC
Mesolithic	c.10,000 BC – c.4400 BC
Neolithic	c.4400 BC – c.2300 BC
Bronze Age	c.2300 BC – c.700 BC
Iron Age	c.700 BC – c.43 AD
Roman	c.43 AD – c.410 AD
Early Medieval	c.410 AD – c.1066
Medieval	c.1066 – c.1536
Post Medieval	c.1536 – c.1750
Industrial	c.1750 – c.1900
Modern	c.1900 onwards

**Table 1:** Archaeological and historical timeline for Wales.



**Figure 1:** Location map based on the Ordnance Survey.

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## THE SITE

### Location

The proposed driveway, parking, turning area and garage are located within the northeast corner of the church yard of the now redundant St David's Church Henllan Amgoed (NGR SN 1852 2072; Figure 1, 3 & 4).

A modern bungalow, The Beeches, lies to the north of the proposed development area with an unclassified road lying to the east. The whole grave yard is surrounding by a roughly continuous boundary bank.

Topographically the site is located on moderately sloping south-facing hill side. The underlying geology comprises Llanvirn and Arenig Ordovician sedimentary bedrock (shales).

### Archaeological and Historical Background

Nine sites are recorded on the HER within a 500m radius of the proposed driveway, parking area and garage site for St David's Church, the earliest sites being the locations of two Bronze Age standing stones. The closest of these lies within 150m to the east (PRN 10864), the other 490m to the southeast (PRN 10866). No further information is given regarding these stones.

An Iron Age enclosure is recorded as lying 400m to the north of the development site (PRN 11790), although this has been slightly mis-located and the cropmark actually lies to the further north (over 500m away). Further cropmarks beyond this enclosure indicate a large amount of probable Iron Age activity on the hills to the north of the church site.

The D-shape of the churchyard of St David's suggests it could have been established in the early medieval period (PRN 11789), although no archaeological evidence has as yet been recorded to confirm this. An aerial photograph taken during the 1980s indicates a possible continuation of the curve of the churchyard enclosure to the southeast (on the opposite side of the road). This would indicate that the enclosure was originally roughly circular. This could suggest the enclosure was possibly originally of Iron Age date and reused in the early medieval or medieval periods. The shape of the churchyard enclosure is of a similar form to dated examples of Iron Age enclosures and a number of probable Iron Age enclosures lie in the vicinity of the St David's Churchyard also giving further credence to this suggested date.

The other sites recorded on the HER relate to post-medieval sites recorded on earlier maps (quarry PRN 23327) or where earthworks or structures are still present today such as the gravel pit (PRN 19461) and the former mill of Felin Henllan Amgoed (PRN 19462).

The existing church has its origins in the medieval period (PRN 11667), although the majority of any medieval fabric of the building has been obscured following its significant rebuilding in the late 19th century. The following is taken from the church description included in the Carmarthenshire Churches report produced by Ludlow in 2000 (PRN 4967):

#### ***The present church*** (Photo 1)

*St David, Henllan Amgoed, is a 3 celled church, of small size. It may retain 50% pre-19<sup>th</sup> century core fabric.*

*The present church consists of a 2-bayed chancel, a 3-bayed nave, a south porch and a single-bayed vestry north of the chancel west bay. Construction is in limestone rubble throughout. There is some pre-Victorian pointing, but the walls were largely repointed in the later 19<sup>th</sup>*

century, obscuring the facework in areas; the interior is plastered. Openings are mainly later 19<sup>th</sup> century, with grey oolite dressings; the windows are 'Early English' lancets. Roofs are slated gables; the lean-to vestry roof is asbestos-sheeted.

The chancel was entirely rebuilt in the later 19<sup>th</sup> century in snecked limestone rubble with ashlar quoins and a plain basal external offset. The uncusped triple-lancet east window is contemporary, as are the similar single lancets in the side walls. The moulded, 2-centred chancel arch was similarly inserted in the later 19<sup>th</sup> century. The softwood chancel roof is later 19<sup>th</sup> century and is without trusses, all common rafters being scissors-braced and with a crown plate, matchboarded above. The tiled floor is also later 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The nave facework is in very randomly laid limestone rubble, with crude quoins, that is earlier than the later 19<sup>th</sup> century, but which lacks detail; the early, pinkish mortar is largely obscured by later 19<sup>th</sup> century pointing. The upper quarters of the side walls were rebuilt/heightened in the later 19<sup>th</sup> century, when low angle buttresses were added at the corners of the west wall. The south wall leans in noticeably. There are 2 single lancets in the south wall, and one in the north wall, like the chancel windows but with infill, and also later 19<sup>th</sup> century. The west window is a similar double-lancet, but with squared voussoirs and a circular port above. The south door has a 2-centred, chamfered surround from the later 19<sup>th</sup> century. The west gable was largely rebuilt in the later 19<sup>th</sup> century with a contemporary gabled single bellcote corbelled out from the wall face. The softwood roof is like that in the chancel and also later 19<sup>th</sup> century. The passages are fully carpeted but may be flagged, from c.1820?, with suspended board floors over.

The south porch is all from the later 19<sup>th</sup> century and has an external basal batter. The contemporary doorway has a 2-centred, chamfered surround, the roof is softwood, with common rafters and matchboarding and the floor has later 19<sup>th</sup> century flags laid directly on the substrate.

The vestry is somewhat later. It is entered from the chancel through a doorway with a 2-centred surround, and lit by a cusped, ogival lancet in its north wall. The lean-to roof is of corrugated asbestos sheeting, plasterboarded internally. The boarded floor is suspended over a void.

The church is surrounded by a shallow, concrete-lined drain. The flooring lies over a void only in the vestry. Some memorials lie significantly close to the south and west walls.

### **Structural development**

Jones, 1994, and RCAHM, 1917, regarded all elements of the church as being Victorian, but it is apparent from the nature of the nave fabric that earlier work is present, but not closely dateable. There was much repair work in the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries (see below), and the nave may belong to this period. The present chancel, south porch and vestry are later.

There were 2 bells in 1552 (Wallcott, 1871, 11) but only one by 1684 (Evans, 1915, 93). There is now a single bell.

The 'church wall' was out of repair in 1672 (Anon., 1919, 210), and the entire church was described as 'not in repair' in 1684 (Evans, 1915, 93). In 1705 'one side of the roof' was 'bad' and wanted 'tiling' and the bell wanted 'to be put in order' (Evans, 1921, 9). The church was 'dark' and the seats 'mean' in 1755 (Lewis, 1975, 156). The 'church, as well as the

*chancel as the body thereof', were in 'good and sufficient repair, except the floor and a pew' in 1790 (Evans, 1922, 44).*

*The church had recently been 'properly repaired, with... a new font, two new windows (and) the walls... plastered and whitewashed', in 1820 (Jones, 1937, 69). The floor had been 'newly made' and there were 'proper benches in the church'.*

*The church was again restored in the later 19<sup>th</sup> century when the chancel was rebuilt (and probably lengthened), and the south porch was (re)built; neither the date of the restoration nor the architect responsible are known. The church was refenestrated, reroofed and refloored, and the buttresses were added. The interior was reseated and replastered.*

*The vestry has different detail and was probably a later addition, of c.1900?*

*The softwood chancel fittings and the softwood pews are later 19<sup>th</sup> century. The oolite pulpit may be somewhat later.*

*The oolite font has a square bowl, stem and base, all from c.1820<sup>2</sup>.*

*The church was not listed in 1998.*

*Documentary sources for the medieval church have the separate PRN 11667.*

### **Site History**

*There is some evidence for the pre-conquest religious use of the site: Celtic dedication; 'Henllan' place-name element.*

*St David, Henllan Amgoed, was not a parish church during the medieval period (Rees, 1932), but a chapelry of the medieval Deanery of Carmarthen. The benefice appears always to have been in the patronage of the freeholders of the parish, a 'Welshry' of the Lordship of St Clears (ibid.; Lewis, 1833).*

*Henllan Amgoed had become a parish by 1790 with a chapel-of-ease, now ruined, at Eglwys Fair a Churig (Evans, 1915, 44). In 1833 the living, a discharged rectory in the patronage of the freeholders, was rated in the king's books at £6 10s 5d (Lewis, 1833).*

*In 1998 St David, Henllan Amgoed, was a parish church. The living was a vicarage, held with Whitland, Cyffig and Llangan (Benefice no. 826) in the Archdeaconry of Carmarthen, Rural Deanery of St Clears (St Davids, 1997-8).*

Observation of the church in 2012 concurs with the thoughts of Ludlow above, in that the nave contains substantial amounts of probably medieval fabric, with the upper portions, windows and buttresses rebuilt / added in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. A very large stone is present in the western end of the south wall of the church which is of interest and definitely does not fit in with the neater 19<sup>th</sup> century rebuilding, providing clear evidence of the survival of earlier fabric. On the northern wall of the nave, again towards its western end was a group of quartz blocks used in the lower plinth of the church wall. These were again very different to the neatly cut stone blocks used throughout the remainder of the plinth. An obvious difference in the material used for pointing the stonework of the upper half of the western gable end wall of the nave also provides evidence that earlier fabric survived the rebuild.

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<sup>2</sup> Observation of the font during the evaluation raises the possibility that the actual bowl is of earlier date, with a newer (1820) stem and base, although this has not been confirmed

No reference to the church is included in any of the surviving *Episcopal Acta* issued by the Bishops of St Davids between 1085 – 1280 (Barrow, 1998), nor does the church appear to have been recorded in the *Taxatio* of 1291<sup>3</sup>. Additional research has revealed the church was appropriated by the Cistercians of nearby Whitland Abbey and that it lay within the boundaries of their Iscoed Grange (Williams, 2001, 313-314).

The references used in the above section by Ludlow, regarding the fabric of the church, come from transcribed documentary references in church account books that were published in the Carmarthenshire Antiquary and Archaeologia Cambrensis in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The font and pulpit survive within the church and it is intended that they are retained as part of any future permitted conversion. The pews have unfortunately had to be removed as they were rotting where they stood against the wall, following the disuse of the church.

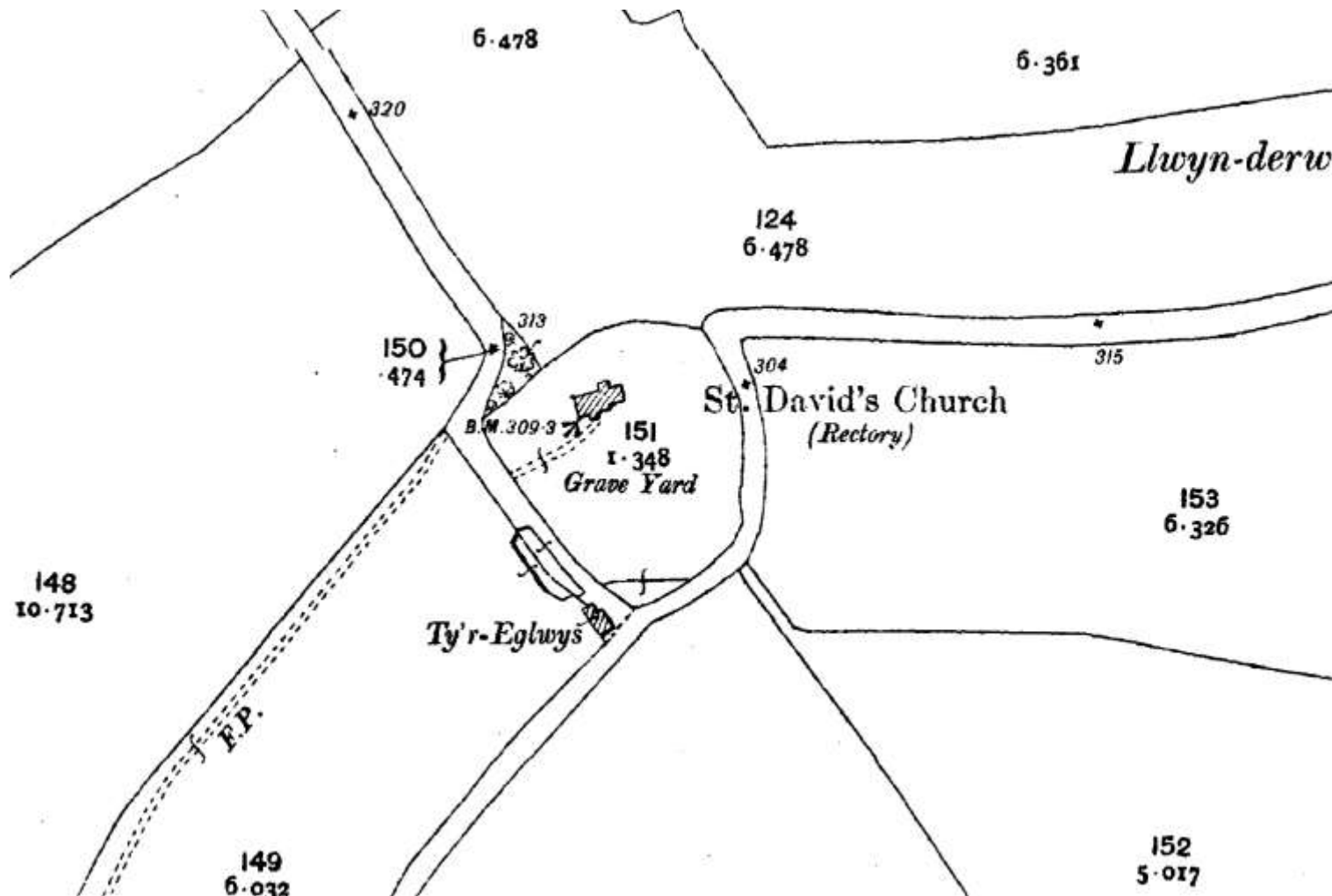
Graves from the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century are present on the western side of the church, indicating that the churchyard is still in use following the closure of the church. A number of 20<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century graves are also present to the west of the church, many of which are still visited and tended. A few 19<sup>th</sup> century graves are present close to the south of the church. An 18<sup>th</sup> century grave stone dedicated to a former priest stand alone within 5m of the eastern end of the church. Although vegetation cover did obscure much of the churchyard, there was seemingly a rise in the ground level close to the church on the eastern and southern sides, leading to a relatively level area to the west. It is considered that this is as a result of continual burial in these areas from the medieval period onwards. The small number of visible graves of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century in comparison to the densely packed cemetery associated with the Congregational Chapel graveyard in the centre of Henllan Amgoed (adjacent to the church) indicates the general change in religious preference from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The description by Ludlow also considers the pre-conquest (pre-1200) religious use of the site, as indicated firstly by the St David's dedication of the church which can in some cases indicate an early medieval foundation, and secondly by the Henllan place name (Old Church). The shape of the churchyard is also suggested to be an indication of an early foundation. At this stage no evidence to support this early foundation has been revealed. The place-name of Henllan Amgoed, is likely to roughly translate into English as "The Old Church in the Wood", although the possibility that it could mean 'the old wooden church' has been suggested. In either case the area of Henllan Amgoed covers a large area and it is possible that 'old church' lay in a different location from that of St David's (although probably unlikely).

Directly to the southwest of the churchyard enclosure lies the former site of 'T'yr-Eglwys', as shown on both the first (Figure 2) and second edition Ordnance Survey maps of the area. The date of construction of the building is not known. The western and northern walls of the main structure of the building still survive to the side of the road, with a very level area on the inside (presumably with floor levels surviving below). The association of this structure with the church is not recorded, other than in its name. The remains are presently quite overgrown and it was not possible to gain any further information regarding the structure, other than a small window opening is still visible in the north wall.

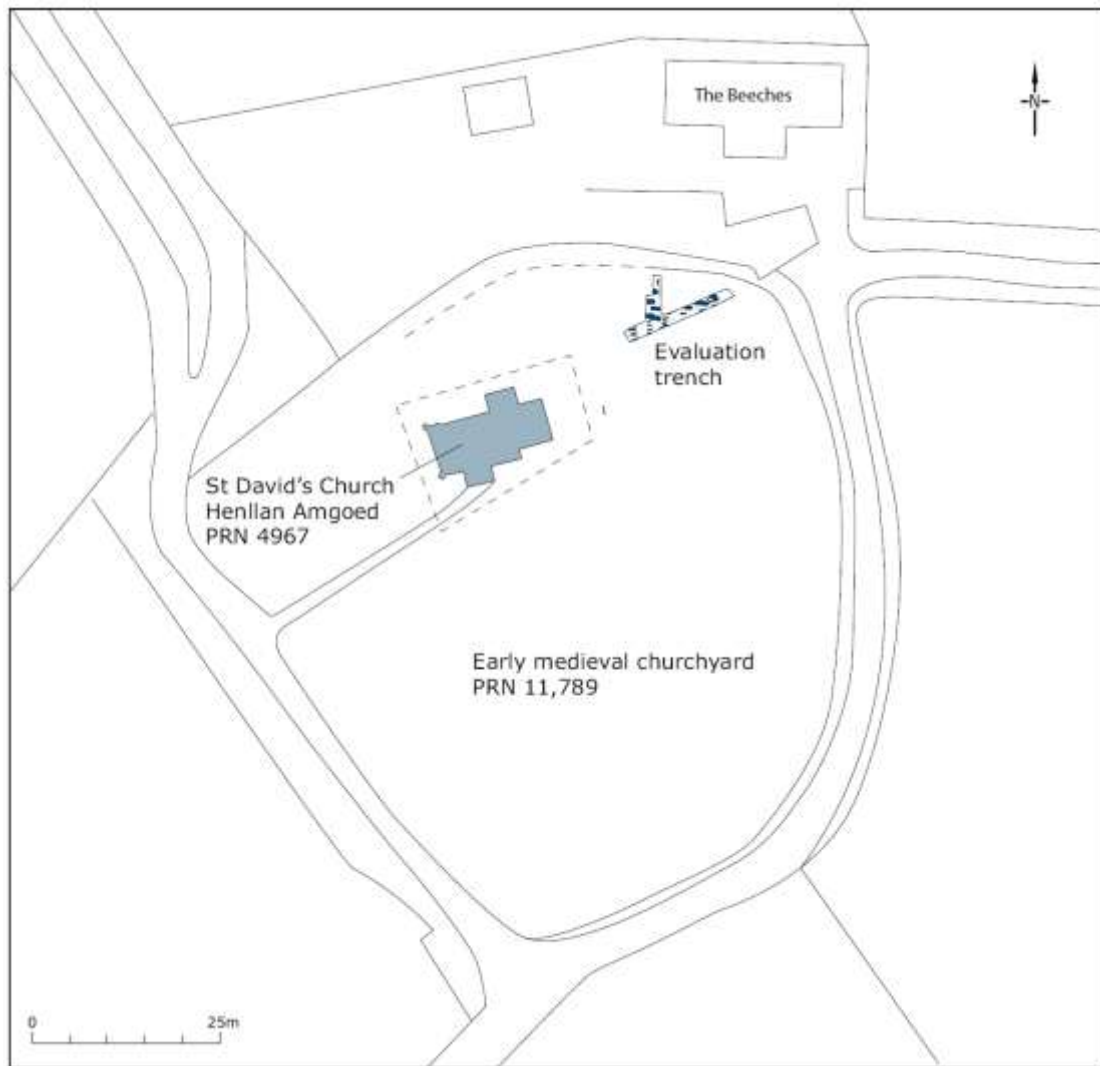
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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/taxatio/>



**Figure 2:** An extract from the first edition Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map of Carmarthenshire (c.1880).





**Figure 3:** Plan of the evaluation trench location, related to current known boundaries.



## METHODOLOGY

The proposed scheme of evaluation included the preparation of a written scheme of investigation.

A single 20m x 2m evaluation trench was proposed within the footprint of the proposed development in order to adequately ascertain the depth at which *in situ* archaeological deposits occur along the route of the proposed new driveway, parking, garage and turning area. Given the constrained nature of the proposed development site it was decided to excavate a 15m x 1.2m east – west aligned trench with a 5.7m x 1.2m north – south aligned extension forming a rough inverted 'T-shape' (Figures 3 & 4; Photos 2 & 3).

The trenches were excavated using a tracked 360° mechanical excavator fitted with a flat bladed bucket. All non-archaeologically significant overburden was removed, and the trenches were excavated down onto archaeological levels.

Following machine excavation, the trenches were hand cleaned using trowels to elucidate the character, distribution and extent of the archaeological remains. Certain areas were re-troweled a number of times to improve definition of the features. Limited sample excavation was undertaken of the archaeological features.

All deposits were recorded by archaeological context record sheet, scale drawing, photography and site notebooks. All individual deposits were numbered using the open-ended numbering system in accordance with Dyfed Archaeological Trust Field Services' Recording Manual<sup>4</sup>. Trench plans and sections were recorded by means of measured drawings, sketches and accurate surveying using an EDM. A photographic record was maintained using digital cameras.

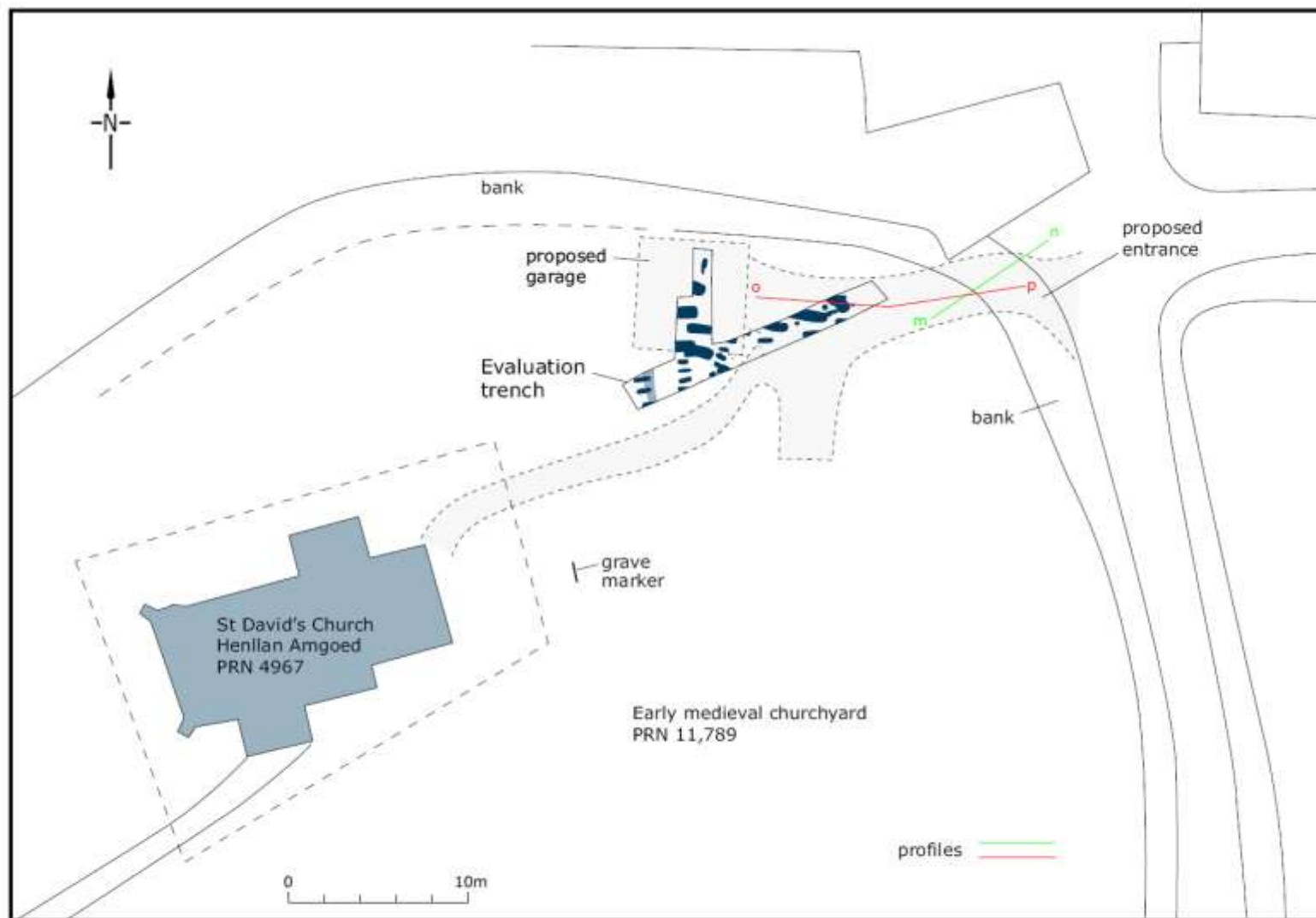
Trench locations were accurately surveyed using an EDM, related to Ordnance Datum and existing boundaries and the church. Additional survey of areas of the perimeter bank of the churchyard were also undertaken to provide additional information on the churchyard site.

As part of the preparation of the report a desk-based element has been undertaken to provide further information on the church and its archaeological and historical background. An assessment of the significance of the remains and the impact that the development proposals may have upon them is included. An indication of the how the results of the evaluation address research themes laid out in the Archaeological Research Agenda for Wales have also been included in the Conclusions section below.

The archaeological evaluation was undertaken on the 19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> April 2012.

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<sup>4</sup> Dyfed Archaeological Trust Field Services use the Recording Manual developed by English Heritage Centre for Archaeology. A copy will be available for inspection if required.



**Figure 4:** Detailed location plan of trench in relation to church and development proposals, including profiles m – n and o – p (Figure 6)

## RESULTS OF THE EVALUATION

The archaeological evaluation undertaken at the proposed development site within Henllan Amgoed churchyard revealed the presence of a large number of graves and a few other archaeological features within the trial trench. The topsoil was shallow at between 0.20m to 0.25m depth across the entire trench, with underlying bedrock and archaeological features exposed at this depth.

A total of twenty- eight probable graves were revealed within the excavation area comprising ten adult graves, thirteen infant/child burials with a further four being indeterminate just projecting into the sides of the trench (Table 3, Figure 5). Generally the graves were orientated east – west although some slight variations within alignment were identifiable (possibly some of which may have been a factor of the bedrock alignment). Feature cuts [154] and [170] were represented by small features projecting into the very edges of the trench and their classification as graves is highly speculative.

Grave Cut	Length	Width
104 / 180	1.21m min <sup>5</sup>	Indeterminate <sup>6</sup>
106	1.71m min	0.62m
110	1.20m min	0.55m
112	0.82m	0.36m
114	0.30m min	0.45m min
116	0.40m min	0.60m min
118	0.53m min	0.75m min
120	0.75m min	0.82m
122	0.52m min	0.76m
124	1.64m	0.70m
128	1.03m min	0.50m
130	1.32m min	0.57m
134	0.71m min	0.77m
140	0.90m	0.38m
142	0.83m	0.23m min
144	1.03m	0.29m
146	0.69m min	0.46m min
148	0.72m	0.34m
150	0.66m	0.32m
152	0.78m	0.22m
154	Indeterminate	Indeterminate
156	0.42m min	0.34m min
158	0.38m min	0.30m
160	0.64m	0.31m
162	0.58m	0.23m
170	Indeterminate	Indeterminate
174	1.00m min	0.53m

**Table 2:** Dimensions of graves revealed within trench.

Sample excavation of two northwest – southeast aligned adult graves was undertaken (cuts [106] and [110]), but the full extent of both graves was not visible as the eastern ends extended beyond the sides of the trench. The two graves were both vertically cut into the underlying shale bedrock. The natural striations within the bedrock were aligned roughly east to west, which were utilized to create neat vertical sides to the graves. The excavated size of grave cut [106] was 1.71m x 0.62m x 0.47 deep (profiles e – f and g – h Figure 6; Photos 4 & 5) and that of [110] 1.20m x 0.55m x 0.52m deep (profiles a – b and c – d Figure 6; Photos 6, 7 & 8). No human bone survived in either grave, nor was there any evidence of coffin fittings. The excavation of grave [110] revealed three water rounded pebbles at the eastern end of the grave (Photo 6). One of

<sup>5</sup> Min – dimension indicates that the feature extends beyond the trench edges

<sup>6</sup> Indeterminate dimensions where graves intercut, or too small an area revealed

these was an elongated pebble that had been snapped, with evidence for it having been used as a hammer stone on the surviving rounded end. The largest pebble had a small broken area at its larger end, where it would seem to have been hit against another object, although this had been weathered and so was not a recent break when it had been put into the grave. Two small linear scoring marks were present on this stone. The third stone was irregular in shape with one of its faces being very smooth, suggesting it had been used as a whetstone or similar. Again two linear scoring marks were present on the object. Two angular stones, a large piece of quartz, a lump of possible slag and four lumps of mineral concretion (possibly naturally formed manganese pan) were also found at this end of the grave. Two of the water rounded pebbles had evidence for scoring marks on them, with one also displaying a face of the stone suggesting it had been used as a whetstone.

The excavated graves, and those exposed on the surface of the trench, all had relatively uniform fills comprising redeposited shattered bedrock mixed with a brown to dark brown silty sand clay soil matrix. The edges of the unexcavated graves were very clear in a few cases, where solid bedrock was present at the surface of the trench base, but more difficult to define in areas where the bedrock was more weathered. It is likely that excavation would demonstrate that they were mostly quite squarely cut utilising the natural striations of the shale and the dimensions would probably be slightly larger than those recorded in Table 3 above.

Evidence of intercutting graves was only identifiable within six of the twenty-eight graves revealed. These comprise the two presumed adult graves [128] and [124]; child / infant graves [158] and [122]; and graves [180] and [104]. This may suggest some form of management of the cemetery, avoiding sites of pre-existing graves. Three rows of infant / baby graves were visible in the eastern half of the trench which would also suggest an ordered burial regime. This may also indicate a broad contemporaneity of these graves within each row. The line of graves [156], [158], [160], [162] and [116] (Photo 9) are on a slightly different alignment to the rows containing cuts [142], [140] and [144] (Photo 10) and those in [146], [148], [150] and [152] (Photo 11).

Four of the graves had evidence for post holes lying in close proximity to their western (foot) end (cuts [104], [106], [110] & [128]; Table 34). They are considered to be associated due to their apparent uniformity in location in relation to the adjacent graves.

Post Hole Cut	Corresponding Grave Cut
108	110
126	128
142	106
172	104

**Table 3:** Post hole cuts and corresponding grave cuts.

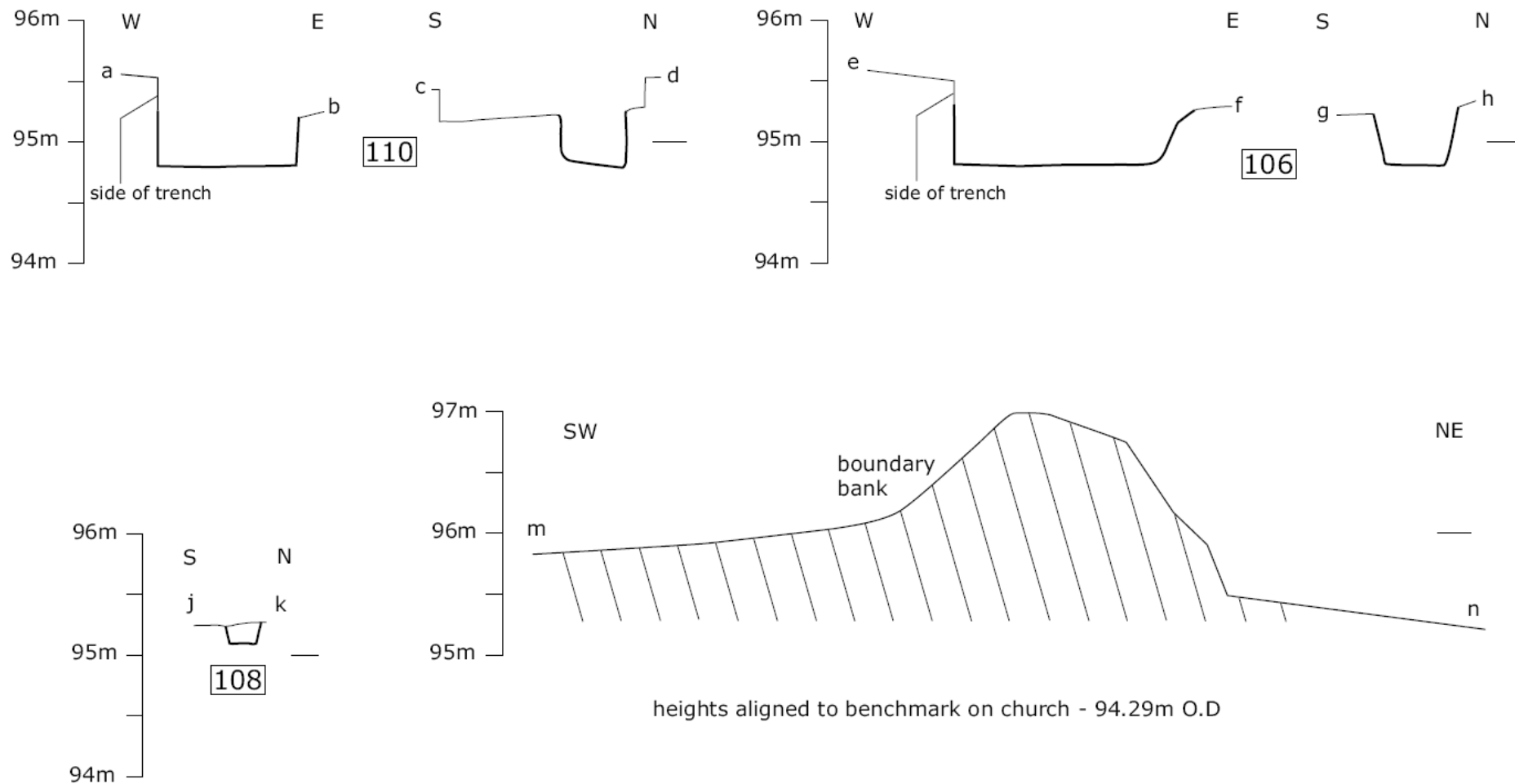
A section was excavated through posthole cut [108], thought to be associated with grave cut [110], which revealed it to be a maximum of 0.18m in depth and had a diameter of 0.29m (profile j – k Figure 6; Photos 5, 7 & 12). The posthole had evidently been cut through the bedrock onto a level surface and a post then placed within the hole. The fill was a dark brown, silt sand clay with a few small fragments of bedrock within.

A series of smaller stake holes were identified towards the western end of the evaluation trench, of which three seemed clear features [164], [166] and [168] with two other possible ones noted (marked with ? on Figure 5). The features were not excavated. They do not appear to correspond with any of the graves nor do they form any clear structural element. It is possible they were formed by roots.

At the western end of the evaluation a trench a curvilinear gully (cut [138]) was revealed. This projected beyond the northwest and southeastern sides of the trench. Partial excavation of this gully revealed that three child graves (cuts [140], [142] & [144]) were visible in its base (Photo 10). The relationship between the gully and grave cuts [140] and [144] was not ascertained, but grave cut [142] definitely truncated the gully. A single piece of green glazed tile of probable medieval date was recovered from the immediate vicinity of grave [144], although not securely associated with any specific context. A number of fragments of roofing slate were also recovered from the excavation area.

No burials were present at both the northern or eastern (Photo 13) ends of the trench. This may indicate the extent of the cemetery, as both trench ends lie closest to the perimeter bank around the churchyard where the original width of the bank or a perimeter walkway around the burials may have been present. A profile was drawn across the perimeter churchyard bank in front of the evaluation trench, in the area where the proposed driveway will access the site (profile m – n Figure 6). This profile demonstrated that the ground level of the churchyard lies less than 1m above the external road level, a smaller difference than originally anticipated. The bank itself rises c.1.10m in height with a width of c.2.40m in this area (Photos 14 and 15). Evidently this perimeter bank seems largely intact around the majority of the churchyard, although has been subject to landscaping along the boundary with The Beeches to the north. It is perhaps best seen along the road leading around the southeastern side of the churchyard (Photo 16).

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**Figure 6:** Profiles across excavated features within evaluation trench (as shown on Figure 5).

## DISCUSSION

### Archaeological Remains

*In situ* archaeological remains were recorded throughout the evaluation trench, indicating the likely survival of archaeological deposits throughout the area of proposed development. It was not possible within the scope of the works undertaken to characterise the nature of all the archaeological remains encountered. The shape of the majority of the features located within a cemetery indicates that they represent graves. The size of the graves indicates whether they were for an adult or infant / baby. The sample excavation of two of these features confirmed that they were grave cuts, excavated through the bedrock and using the general east – west trend of the alignment of geological strata within the shale to form squared edges (Photos 7 & 8) . The depth of the two graves was roughly similar, being around 0.50m deep below the top of the bedrock or around 0.70m below ground surface.

The graves are considered to be of early date (pre-1700) given the shallow nature of the two excavated examples (cuts [106] & [110]). The absence of any coffin fittings along with the narrow width of all the graves revealed suggests that the individuals were buried not buried in coffins, but most likely in simple shrouds. This may indicate that the graves date from the medieval period, but this could not be confirmed within the scope of the evaluation. No indications of imported stone linings for the graves were present, as might be expected if they were of early medieval date (stone lined cist burials).

The presence of the water rounded stones and other non-natural stone fragments at the east end of grave [110] were not positioned in a way to indicate they formed part of a stone lining. They were found in the middle of the foot end of the grave, and would have presumably overlain the feet of the deceased. If stones were also present in a similar location at the eastern, head end of the grave, this is likely to indicate that they are of medieval date. This form of burial practice dates from between the 11th and 13th centuries (Daniell, 1998, 158-159). The significance of positioning stones at the head and feet of the deceased is unclear, with one theory suggesting they represent a form of 'punishment' whereby the body would feel the cold uncomfortable stone at the head and feet at its resurrection on the Day of Judgement. Another possibly more appropriate theory is that the stones were a sign of the penitence and humility of the deceased (*ibid*). Alternatively they may have been a deliberate deposition of stones associated with the profession of the deceased, one stone seems to be a whetstone, another having been used as a hammer-stone and score marks on two of the items, although this goes somewhat against Christian principles.

A general lack of intercutting graves was identified within the trench which may indicate that the cemetery was managed and the graves marked. The apparent alignment of groups of child burials in rows at the western end of the trench also supports this theory. The medieval population of the area may also be a factor in the lack of intercutting graves, with there being no real spatial pressures within the whole cemetery leading to constant overlaying of graves upon graves. The cemetery encompasses a large area although it has never served any specific nucleated population centres, merely dispersed hamlets and farmsteads. It is possible that by the post-medieval period, burials were concentrated in the vicinity of the church itself, particularly to the immediate south and the western side of the church. A suggestion of a raised area within the graveyard was noted, indicating a far more intensive accumulation of burials.

The presence of the four postholes located on the northern side of the eastern / foot end of four adult burials suggests they are associated. It is likely they represent grave markers. The excavated posthole was fairly shallow, had been excavated through the bedrock before a post was placed within. The base



of the posthole was flat indicating that the posts had not been driven into the ground, as may be expected if they were structural. Other than their locations in relation to the graves, there was no discernible patterning between the postholes to suggest they formed part of a structure. It is known that during the medieval period many graves were marked with wooden markers that would have served a dual purpose of both commemorating the deceased and also to mark the position of the grave to prevent later disturbance by later interments (Hadley, 2001, 125).

The presence of the thirteen infant/ child graves within the excavation area is considered to represent potential zoning of the cemetery. Zoning of burials within medieval cemeteries was a relatively common practice especially in relation to infant and child burials (Daniell, 1996, 115). By the post-medieval period the segregation of burials by age becomes a rare occurrence with a greater emphasis being placed on interment close to ancestors or family members (Tarlow, 2011, 108).

The purpose and date of the gully at the western end of the evaluation trench is unclear. From partial excavation and repeated cleaning of the feature, it became apparent that the three child burials cut through the fill of the gully (and thus it is an earlier feature). No finds were recovered from its fill, although a sample of fill has been taken for possible further analysis. Similarly the stakeholes noted close to the child / infant burials were also not dated and their function remains unclear. It is possible they have been formed by root action.

It is very possible that the church and its churchyard sit within an earlier enclosure of early medieval or even Iron Age date. Aerial photographs of potential church sites with early medieval origins in Carmarthenshire indicate that many lie within enclosures of possible prehistoric date (Arnold, 2000, 182). Given that the gully is cut by graves of probable medieval date, it is possible that it date from the early-medieval or even the prehistoric period.

### **Archaeological Research Agenda of Wales**

As part of the evaluation it has been requested that the Archaeological Research Agenda of Wales is considered in light of the results of the work. As noted above, the exposed burials are considered to be of medieval date. No confirmed evidence of any early features or burials has been exposed, other than a single gully of uncertain date. In light of this the Regional Research Agenda for the Dyfed region for the medieval period has been consulted and the broad themes discussed below. The national research agenda for the early-medieval period has also been considered even though the burials revealed are considered unlikely to be of this period. The following assumptions have been made in relation to this:

*The archaeological results have been obtained from an evaluation of the proposed development, a limited programme of work and thus can only point towards how these research agenda themes can be addressed (through future work or more detailed analysis)*

*We have to make assumptions that the site is early-medieval or medieval in date, in order to use the research agenda themes*

### **MEDIEVAL RESEARCH AGENDA THEMES**

**1. Pre-Norman and surviving Welsh society in Pura Wallia (10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries):** The evaluation results are presently not dateable. The documentary evidence for the church merely confirms a medieval foundation for the church (or potentially early medieval).

**Small kingdoms:** It is possible that the enclosure indicates reuse (or even continuous use) of an Iron Age enclosure for settlement through to

religious / cemetery use. Further work looking at the bank should be undertaken to hopefully provide further information upon this

**'Clan' landscapes:** No bone survives at the site, so the potential for doing DNA analysis to try and ascertain whether kinship relationships are present amongst the deceased is very limited, especially in terms of the scope of the evaluation.

**Intimate patterns of land use:** The site is not a rural farmstead, but a religious site and thus cannot answer this question

**A Welsh monastic ('Celtic') church:** An early church is suggested by the dedication and shape of the churchyard. We have no information at present to indicate that the site is of early medieval date (no cist graves).

Conclusion – taken from research framework: *That there is virtually no contribution yet to these issues from archaeology in this region, is partly because of the invisibility of both material culture and typologically identifiable sites. Here, almost certainly, we are going to need both methodological experiment and advance, as much as concentrated, albeit speculative focus on likely sites and landscapes.* – Such issues would need to be addressed by programs of future work – where there is a chance that these themes could be considered. Whether obtaining such information would be feasible through the limitations of the current development proposals is another matter, but the wider churchyard could be subjected to future research analysis to address these issues.

## **2. Norman expansion into southwest Wales (end of 11th to later twelfth)**

The area of Henllan Amgoed is unlikely to have been subject to Norman migration/expansion.

**Conquest, domination and Normanisation:** Could the burials offer information on the origins of the deceased – provide an indication of their ethnicity? This could be possibly be addressed if areas of bone survival were revealed.

**Town plantation:** The site is not in an urban or settlement setting.

**Village plantation:** The site is not in a settlement setting.

**Castle building:** The site is not a castle.

**Church building:** Could St David's be c.1200 in foundation or at least a rebuild of that date? This is a distinct possibility, although the actual church lies outside of the evaluation area. Such information could be considered if renovation works are undertaken at the church and a scheme of concurrent archaeological recording is implemented.

**Monasteries:** Not relevant to this site.

**Welsh resistance and adaptation:** Not relevant to this site

## **3. Post 1284 –**

Unfortunately as no finds / material culture has been recovered from the site, other than a fragment of tile and some possible stone working tools/whetstone, the nature of the churchyard is unlikely to provide much evidence to help address this theme. Reference to Henllan Amgoed being a Welshry of St Clears – but without bones/DNA/material culture, how can we take this further?

**Imposition of English or anglicised jurisdiction:** This is highly unlikely to be addressed due to the nature of this site.

**Gradual formation:** Future work on a larger scale within the cemetery could address this theme, providing evidence of the layout of the burials

within the cemetery as a whole, but from the available evidence of the evaluation and the proposed development area we have only a very small part of the cemetery (less than 1% of the 0.56ha area in total).

**Slow transformation:** Again not possible to address this through the evaluation results or extent of the development proposals.

#### **4 Observations on the contemporary context of research into the Middle Ages**

This theme broadly addresses a number of themes which could be considered through further large-scale work at the site: *Modern research agendas in the understanding of the Middle Ages in Europe require us now to construct more complex and thickly textured accounts of human interaction and society. These see the Middle Ages as complex integrated matrices of human action, operating on a variety of scales from the individual to the regional. These people lived through the spaces of buildings, streets, mines, fields and woodlands without our typological distinctions between castle, field system or product.*

The regional research agenda finishes with a 'shopping list' of ideal approaches to dealing with medieval sites. These raise a number of interesting points which could be relevant to the Henllan Amgoed cemetery as a whole, but would not be possible to address with the results of the evaluation. If bone survival was present at this site then its potential to address many of these ideal themes would be exponentially improved, most specifically with the 'The people without history' theme –which states 'we know extraordinarily little from archaeology of the rural 'peasantry' of the Middle Ages'. For the cemetery as a whole zoning of the cemetery could provide indications of hierarchy / family groupings / plague or pestilence?

#### **Overall Conclusion Regarding Regional Medieval Research Framework**

The information we have gained from the evaluation is not sufficient to address the regional research framework issues. The majority are not relevant to cemetery excavation. Issues are raised on family ties, cultural identity and status – all of which would have to be addressed through larger area excavation and analysis of any survival of bones and DNA analysis (but unfortunately bone does not survive). Information regarding reuse or continuing use of an enclosure that could very well be originally of Iron Age or at least Early Medieval date would be of great interest, but would only be obtained through excavation of the bank around the cemetery in the hope of retrieving dating evidence.

#### **EARLY MEDIEVAL RESEARCH FRAMEWORK THEMES**

##### ***Settlement:***

At present we have no evidence to confirm either that the site is of early medieval date, or that any settlement evidence is present.

##### ***Economy, Land-Use and the exploitation of Landscapes and natural resources:***

Again with the data we have at present this cannot be addressed. There is one piece of possible slag and a possible whetstone in one of the excavated graves. A possibility of environmental remains within the fills of graves, posthole and gully samples exists, although due to the acidity of soil, the potential is low.

### ***Ecclesiastical Sites, Cemeteries and Sculpture:***

The evaluation does not deal with the church itself, although further work during any future conversion might address this in the event that any early medieval fabric survives. Many of the themes highlighted could be considered in the longer term (with the assumption that the archaeological evidence is of early-medieval date) with the implementation of research work throughout the churchyard.

### ***Social and Cultural Continuity, Change and Conflict***

It is not possible to address with the evidence retrieved from the evaluation. As noted in the medieval section – perhaps there will be continuity of use of an Iron Age enclosure? Such information may lie within or beneath the surrounding bank. Other than a single gully of unknown date and probable grave markers, we have no clear indication of 'settlement' at the site.

### ***An EMAP for Early Medieval Wales:***

The results of this work (if dated) and any future works would be available for inclusion on such an EMAP – but is not directly relevant to this project.

### ***Scientific Dating and Other Techniques –***

There is the potential for the samples taken from the evaluation to provide dates, as well as for any future works undertaken at the site.

### ***Overall Conclusion Regarding Early Medieval Research Framework for Wales***

Again, the information we have gained from the evaluation is not sufficient to address the research framework issues and the overall conclusions are similar. The potential of information relating to early medieval use of the site and perhaps earlier origins could survive within the perimeter bank.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The archaeological evaluation undertaken within Henllan Amgoed church yard has demonstrated that significant archaeological remains lie within the area of the proposed development. These are represented by a probable total of twenty-eight graves within the evaluation trench and thus in the general area of the proposed driveway, parking, turning area and garage as a whole. Based on a comparison of areas of the trench, with the main area of proposed development within the graveyard (the main driveway, parking, turning area and garage), which is roughly 3 times the size, then it is possible that as many as 84 burials could be present within the development footprint. The evaluation also suggests that the remainder of the cemetery area could also be filled with graves.

The narrow width of the graves and the shallow depth of the two excavated suggest they were intended for un-coffined burials. The lack of any indications of stone lined cist burials may be seen to indicate they are of medieval date, and most likely of between 12<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> century date. Further evidence for a medieval date is indicated by the stones placed in grave [110], a feature of burials dating between the 11th and 13th centuries. Evidence of zoning of child burials within this area of the cemetery is also suggestive of a medieval date as the practice appears to have been superseded by burial close to family members by the post-medieval period.

The evaluation has indicated that the cemetery enclosure around St David's Church is very likely to contain a substantial quantity of further burials of medieval and later date. Due to the later concentration of burials around the church, the majority of the churchyard is likely to be relatively undisturbed, with a good survival of burials features present. Unfortunately the evaluation has indicated that there will be little or no survival of any human bone within the graves. Samples have been taken of the fills of the two graves [106] and [110], the posthole [108] and gully [138]. There is a potential that these samples could contain organic material or charcoal which could provide dating evidence for the features and the cemetery as a whole. The need for further analysis and assessment of these samples will need to be discussed with the Planning Services section of the Trust, but it is considered very likely that this will be required.

No evidence to indicate that the perimeter bank is of early medieval or Iron Age date has been revealed by the evaluation. The area of the bank through which the proposed driveway will pass could contain further information to provide dates and other evidence for use of the original enclosure. The bank has been subject to previous disturbance, with the outer edge having been partially cut back when The Beeches house and driveway was constructed. The surviving bank has three trees growing out of it (including Beech Trees from where the adjacent cottage has been named). The large and extensive root systems of these trees are visible across the top and within the surviving bank. Using level information supplied by the client it has been possible to determine the gradient of the proposed driveway needed to provide access to the parking, turning area and garage. This is superimposed on Figure 7 to show how it would affect the archaeological remains.

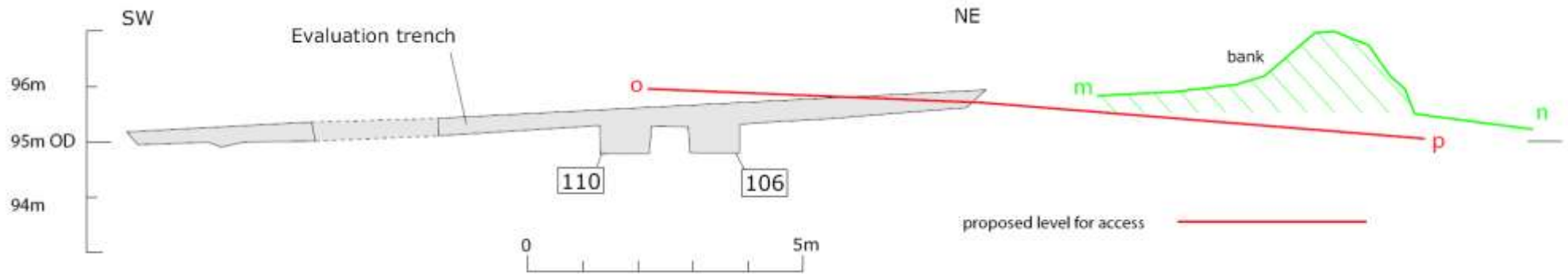
Overall the proposed driveway would lead to a 4m length of the perimeter bank being removed, which equates to roughly 1.6% of the 275m perimeter of the churchyard. As noted above, the bank has already been subject to some disturbance in this area. The proposed gradient of the access driveway would rise to a level above the visible cuts of the graves seen within the evaluation trench, cuts [106] and [108] and the furthest west group of burials [104], [180] etc. The evaluation trench suggests that no more burials are present between this group and the bank, although further work would be needed to confirm this.

In terms of mitigation, the upper driveway level could be raised slightly to ensure that a buffer of geotextile membrane and carefully laid make-up material could be placed above the burials to preserve them *in-situ*. A scheme of archaeological recording of any exposed features would need to be implemented when the area of the driveway, parking, turning area and garage is to be topsoil stripped. The lack of any bone or seemingly any other fragile material within the graves would also mean that as long as an appropriate depth of material were laid below the road, then the archaeological features would not be disturbed. It would be necessary to ensure that machinery does not drive upon any exposed surfaces until appropriately covered. If any further burials are present between the end of the trench and the bank, that would be removed by the proposed works, then these could be excavated first. It is not anticipated that many if any would be present in this area from the available evidence.

Mitigation for damage to the bank could be implemented through a programme of archaeological recording. It is possible that an initial hand excavated section could be dug into the bank to provide information on its construction and determine the presence of any dating material or other information relevant to its origins and use. The results of this work would aid in the determination of the overall significance of the structure and whether a full section should be excavated through the bank prior to or during any permitted development in the future. However, the presence of large trees on the bank indicates that it has been severely disturbed by roots and a hand excavated section may not be possible. The only way forward may be to have a programme of excavation and recording of the bank by way of a condition placed on any forthcoming planning permission for the development. This could be done through controlled machine excavation of the bank, following removal of the trees, and detailed recording undertaken of any deposits that may be revealed. Without further investigation, the bank remains undated.

The scope and suitability of any mitigation or further evaluation would need to be discussed with the Planning Services section of the Trust.

The cemetery is assumed to be of medieval date, and the evaluation suggests that large areas of the churchyard have minimal later disturbance, thus the medieval layout of the churchyard survives. The burials do not have any surviving bone as far as can be ascertained, which greatly diminishes the amount of evidence that could be obtained from the cemetery in terms of demographic, evidence for disease, diet, occupations, DNA etc. The site is not under threat of significant disturbance from future development with only minor groundworks proposed, the majority of which can be undertaken to leave remains *in-situ*. The area of the bank that will be removed if the driveway is permitted provides an opportunity to obtain further information on the nature, date and origins of the churchyard enclosure. The potential information that could be gained through further excavation of this bank is considered to outweigh the loss of the already disturbed bank in this area. The benefits of allowing the development would lead to the church building being retained and maintained and further information on the churchyard and church being obtained. Prevention of disturbance to the churchyard in the future could be implemented through the planning system, or with covenants being placed on the sale of the church by the Representative Body of the Church in Wales.



**Figure 7:** Profile of trench, with superimposed proposed levels of driveway from the road to the east, through the perimeter bank of the churchyard and into the evaluation trench area (Figure 4 shows locations of profiles)

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## **PHOTOGRAPHS**



**Photo 1:** St David's Church in 1996 facing southeast, showing evaluation area on left hand side of photograph



**Photo 2:** Evaluation trench after initial cleaning facing southwest towards church



**Photo 3:** Northern spur of trench after initial cleaning facing south



**Photo 4:** Grave cut [106] prior to excavation, facing west





**Photo 5:** Post-excavation shot of grave cut [106] also shows posthole [108], facing east



**Photo 6:** Partial excavation of grave cut [110], showing stones at eastern end, facing east



**Photo 7:** Post-excitation shot of grave cut [110] with posthole [108] eastern end (offset to north), facing east



**Photo 8:** Post-excitation shot of grave cut [110], showing clear bedrock edges and base in southeastern corner





**Photo 9:** Child / infant graves [156], [158], [160] & [162] viewing south



**Photo 10:** Child / infant graves [140], [142] & [144], cutting gully [138], viewing north



**Photo 11:** Child / infant graves  
[146], [148], [150] & [152], viewing north



**Photo 12:** Half section excavated through posthole [108], facing west





**Photo 13:** View along trench at end of excavation towards church, with absence of graves in foreground of photo (facing west)



**Photo 14:** View along trench towards perimeter bank of churchyard, facing northeast



**Photo 15:** External view of perimeter bank of churchyard, in location of proposed driveway access, with The Beeches boundary wall to right, viewing west



**Photo 16:** View along road adjacent to perimeter bank of churchyard (to right), viewing southwest



# **ST DAVID'S CHURCH, HENLLAN AMGOED CARMARTHENSHIRE: ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION**

RHIF YR ADRODDIAD / REPORT NO. 2012/37  
RHIF Y PROSIECT / PROJECT RECORD NO. 102874  
Ebrill 2012 / April 2012

Paratowyd yr adroddiad hwn gan /  
This report has been prepared by: **Simon Ratty**

Swydd / Position: **Archaeologist**

Llofnod / Signature

Dyddiad / Date 27/042012

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 27/04/2012

*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*

