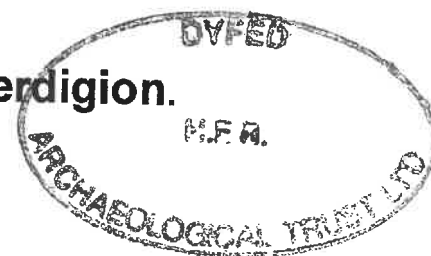


Llanwenog Church - Llanwenog, Cerdigion.

PRN 5636



Watching Brief

Trench for insertion of electric cable

26/07/04

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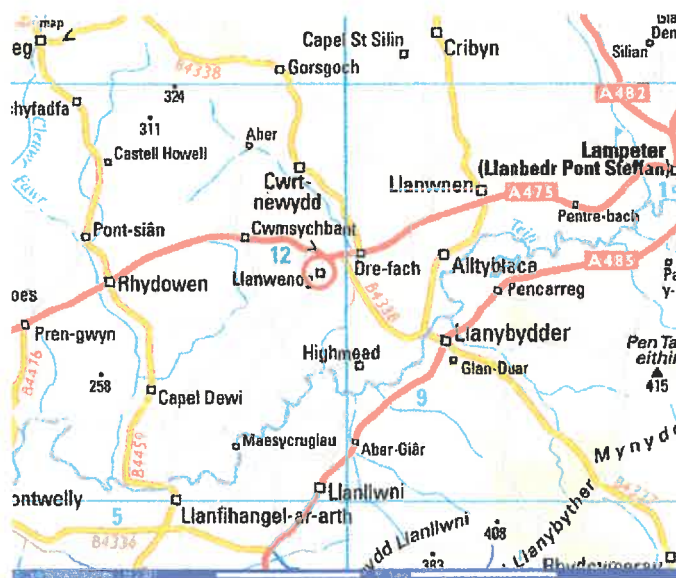
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1. Location

St. Gwenog's Church is situated in the village of Llanwenog, some 2.5 km north-west of Llanybydder and approximately 8.5 km south-west of Llanbedr Pont Steffan (Lampeter), Ceredigion.

NGR: SN49404553.



2. Background

The dedication to St. Gwenog is unique and little is known of this particular saint. It is alleged, though, in a seventeenth century manuscript that a feast day dedicated to Saint Gwenog the Virgin is recorded as January the third which, claim some eighteenth century Welsh Almanacs, was supplanted by a fair on the fourteenth of January. There is a local tradition that an attempt was made to build a church nearby at Bryn yr Eglwys. Although this is unsubstantiated, the place name remains suggestive and enigmatic.

The current church building, dated 14th–15th century with 20th century repairs, is currently being renovated. The tower (currently under scaffolding (July 2004)) may have been commissioned by Sir Rhys ap Thomas in commemoration of Henry Tudor's victory at Bosworth in 1485. It underwent major restoration work in 1981–84. The nave and chancel contain a 15th century oak plaster panelled roof. There is also a 12th/13th century stone font with 12 schematically carved faces that may possibly represent the twelve apostles. A 16th/17th century version of the 'Apostle's Creed and Decalogue' in Welsh is painted on to the north wall of the nave. This has recently been restored. Other smaller motifs, possibly of a similar date, have also been revealed recently during renovation to the south wall.

The churchyard, possibly raised and circular originally, has been expanded over the years. The ground east of the church slopes down and the circularity of the enclosure has been compromised possibly as the cemetery expanded.

3. Work required

As part of the renovation to the church a new underground electricity cable is being installed to replace the current post-wire installation into the north wall of the transept. This will require a trench to be dug from the north churchyard wall, across the cemetery, to the north transept wall.

4. Observations and excavation report

A 27m trench was machine dug from the north transept wall to the churchyard wall in front of the current electricity post, outside the church enclosure. The path chosen to dig was between some mid to late nineteenth century gravestones. The trench throughout had an average depth of 80cm and a width of 40cm. The first 5.9m straight section of the trench from the ditch surrounding the transept wall appeared undisturbed and contained nothing of archaeological importance. The soil was a dark brown loam throughout with little stone. No colour or texture changes were observed. Towards the end of this section of trench some large (30-40cm long) rocks were encountered towards the deeper part of the trench. These rocks were found in isolation and did not form part of any structure. At a point some 5.9 m from the start of the trench some 20th century rubble, comprising rocks, brick, slate and some human bone were discovered overlying a slate slab under the turf (<10cm deep). The slate slab may have related to the mid-nineteenth century grave adjacent to the trench path and so the decision was taken to divert in a westerly direction for a total of 1.8m before resuming a path parallel to the original trench.

This next 11m section, heading north towards the churchyard perimeter path, seemed as undisturbed as the first section. The only possible colour changes observed may have related to the original nineteenth century grave cuts, although these were very subtle.

The trench reached the edge of the 1.6m wide tarmac perimeter pathway circumnavigating the church enclosure. For a further 6.1m the trench diverted west to run adjacent to, and parallel with, this path. The trench was slightly wider (50cm) at this point. Some large isolated rocks were encountered towards the end of this section and a lighter, yellowish context was observed some 60cm deep in the southern section of this trench. This may have related to the edge of another nineteenth century grave adjacent to the pathway. A short 2.2m section of trench was then cut through the tarmac and a hole bored through the churchyard wall to enable cable access. No archaeology was encountered during this process.

No significant archaeological deposits were found during this watching brief.

5. Discussion

It would appear that the trench's narrow path of the northern part of the cemetery has not been significantly disturbed since the nineteenth century. The shallow depth of the area of rubble overlying a grave some 6m from the north transept wall, however, may relate to some 20th century construction work and is seemingly of no great significance. It may well be that a number of soak-aways were dug in the 1990s (?) and some bone may have been disturbed in the process. This, however, is mere speculation.

The shallow depth of the trench would explain why none of the graves were disturbed during this work.

8. Bibliography

Evans, R.E.H. 1990. *Eglwys y Plwyf, Llanwenog, The Parish Church* (2nd Ed.) Church produced literature.

Watson, K. 1991. *Corpus of Romanesque sculpture*. (Copy at RCAHMW).

Cadw listed buildings database.

7. Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to Mr. Ken Filkins, the contractor, for his sympathetic and pragmatic use of the digger. Also to the Rev. Bill Fillery for kindly providing access to the church history booklet.

8. Appendix 1. Plan

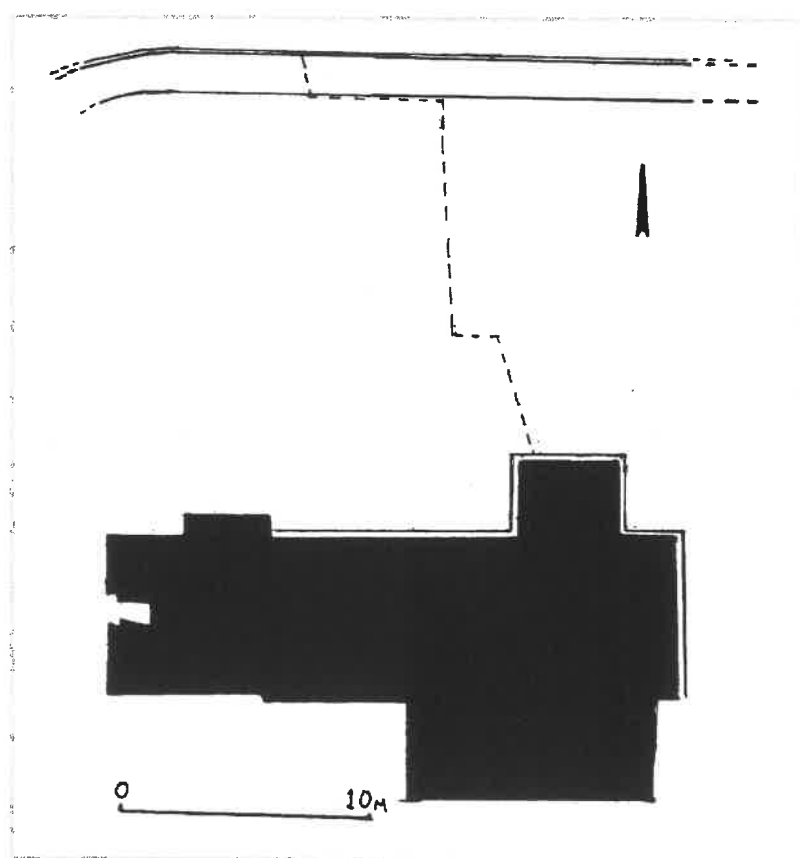


Fig.1. Plan of church (black) and the trench path (dotted line). The pathway and the churchyard wall are the features furthest north.

Appendix 2.**Photographs**

Photograph 1. View of church – looking west.



Photograph 2. View of north transept wall – showing old electrical cables and trench spoil.



Photograph 3. View of trench - looking south



Photograph 4. Looking west. View of trench running parallel to and cutting through pathway. The churchyard wall is visible on right of photograph.