



CAMBRIAN  
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## Croesgoch County Primary School, Pembrokeshire

Archaeological Watching Brief



By  
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Report No. 627

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### Archaeological Watching Brief

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## **Summary**

*This report presents the results of an archaeological watching brief undertaken during groundworks on the site of the extension to Croesgoch County Primary School, Pembrokeshire. It follows an archaeological evaluation undertaken in August 2009 during which a large stone-packed posthole was revealed in one evaluation trench. No archaeological features were identified during the ground works, which were located to the west of the location of the posthole.*

## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1 Location and scope of work**

The development site is located on the western side of Croesgoch Primary School in Croesgoch, Pembrokeshire and comprises an extension to the current school buildings. The development proposal was submitted by Richard Lawrence of Pembrokeshire County Council, Highways and Construction (PCC-HC).

The School is located adjacent to a known early Christian burial ground, where graves dated to AD 360 to AD 600 have been recorded (Ludlow 2003). Place name evidence points to the presence of a battle site in the vicinity of the village, and there are a number of scheduled ancient monuments in the wider landscape (RCAHMW NPRN 405248). The evaluation undertaken by CAP in August 2009 had revealed a substantial stone-packed posthole on the western side of the school, close to the line of the extension wall. This was thought to be early historic/early Christian in date, given its proximity to the burial site. As a result of the evaluation and the known local archaeology, Charles Hill of the Curatorial Section of Dyfed Archaeological Trust (DAT-HM) recommended that an archaeological watching brief be carried out during ground works associated with the construction of the extension.

The aim of the work was to elucidate the presence or absence of archaeological remains, their character, distribution, extent, condition and relative significance.

The work was undertaken by Hywel Keen (Site Supervisor).

### **1.2 Geology and Topography**

The site is located on a gentle north-west facing slope overlooking the coast at around 100m OD. It sits within an area of Ordovician shale bedrock.

## **2. Archaeological and Historical Background**

The site lies approximately 75m to the north of Parc-y-fynwent (cemetery field), the location of three recorded long-cist burials, one of which has been dated to AD 370 to 600, the late Roman/early post-Roman period (Ludlow 2003). One of the cists was revealed during development work in the 1960s, with the remaining two uncovered during groundworks for a housing development in 2000. Only one of the cists discovered in 2000 was disturbed during the development, the second preserved *in situ*. The disturbed cist had the lintel stone removed during machining, which exposed an extended inhumation, represented by the skull and some bone fragments, no long bones survived (*ibid*). This inhumation was removed by the contractors for curation by Pembrokeshire Museums Service, and the cist subsequently recorded by Dyfed Archaeological Trust (*ibid*). Examination of the burial indicated it to be a male in his 50s.

The cists were Christian in character, orientated in an E-W direction, and represent the earliest dated Christian burials in this part of Wales (Ludlow 2003). The St Davids peninsula, on which the site is located, contains one of the densest concentrations of early Christian long-cist cemeteries in west Wales, together with a number of early Christian latin-inscribed cross stones such as the one recorded at neighbouring Mesur-y-dorth.

Historical sources suggest that the village of Croes-goch provided the focus for religious activities throughout the medieval period. Medieval sources contain references to a chapel having been constructed in the village in the post-conquest period (Ludlow 2003), although its exact location is not known. The possibility that the graveyard provided the focus for this chapel has been raised (*ibid*), and it can perhaps be hypothesised that the recorded chapel had its origins in an earlier building contemporary with the graves. There is no evidence to suggest the original extent of the graveyard, however an antiquarian source describes the site as 'covered with graves marked out by stone coffins' (*ibid*) suggesting that it was an extensive site. No evidence of an enclosure surrounding the graveyard has been observed, either in modern field boundaries or in aerial photographs (*ibid*), however this may also have been obscured by development and changes in field layouts.

The evaluation undertaken in August 2009 revealed a single substantial posthole at the northern end of trench 1. This was roughly oval in shape, measured 0.74m long by 0.6m wide and 0.25m deep, with vertical sides and a flat base. The posthole contained five packing stones, four large rounded pieces of quartz and lava stone and a small angular quartz stone. Three of the stones had charcoal on their surfaces, and traces of charcoal were found in the fill of the posthole, concentrated in the areas in contact with the packing stones. There was no evidence for *in situ* burning, no finds were recovered from the posthole and it is not dated. However, given its proximity to the known burial ground it was considered possible that this posthole formed part of an associated structure. The size of the posthole and the substantial nature of the packing stones demonstrated that it was not simply the remains of a field boundary.

### **3. Aims and Objectives**

The aim of the archaeological watching brief was:

- to establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within the development area.

### **4. Archaeological Watching Brief**

The archaeological watching brief was undertaken over a period of 5 days in February 2010 in generally dry weather.

The extension to the school comprised an irregular-shaped structure approximately 22m by 20m, on the western side of the existing school building. On the southern side of the plot the building was terraced into the slope of the hill, while on the northern side it sat on levelled ground. As a result, the groundworks methodology was different in each area.

The entire footprint for the southern half of the building was stripped under

archaeological supervision down to the top of the natural, using a mechanical excavator fitted with a 1.8m wide ditching blade. No features of archaeological interest were revealed.

On the northern side of the building, the top soil was stripped off under archaeological supervision. The foundation trenches for the building were then excavated, under archaeological supervision, through the subsoil in to the natural. The trenches were 0.5m wide and excavated to a maximum depth of 0.4m. No features of archaeological interest were identified.

Trenches for drainage were also excavated under archaeological supervision. These followed the outline of the building and were excavated to a depth of 0.4m. No features of archaeological interest were observed.

## **5. Discussion and Conclusions**

The watching brief did not reveal any features of archaeological interest or significance, despite the proximity of the ground works to known archaeological features. It is surprising that no further postholes or other structural features were identified as they are considered likely to exist within or close to the northwestern end of the extension. However, only a very small area of natural ground was uncovered in the foundation trenches and so the chances of archaeological features being exposed was slim.

Unfortunately, the archaeological watching brief has shed no further light on the nature of the putative structure initially identified in the evaluation, or its date.

## **6. Acknowledgements**

Thanks to Hywel Keen for undertaking the watching brief and to Richard Lawrence of Pembrokeshire County Council for his assistance.

## **7. Bibliography**

Ludlow, N. 2003 *A Burial from the Cist Cemetery at Croesgoch, Pembrokeshire*. Cambria Archaeology, unpublished client report No. 2003/56.

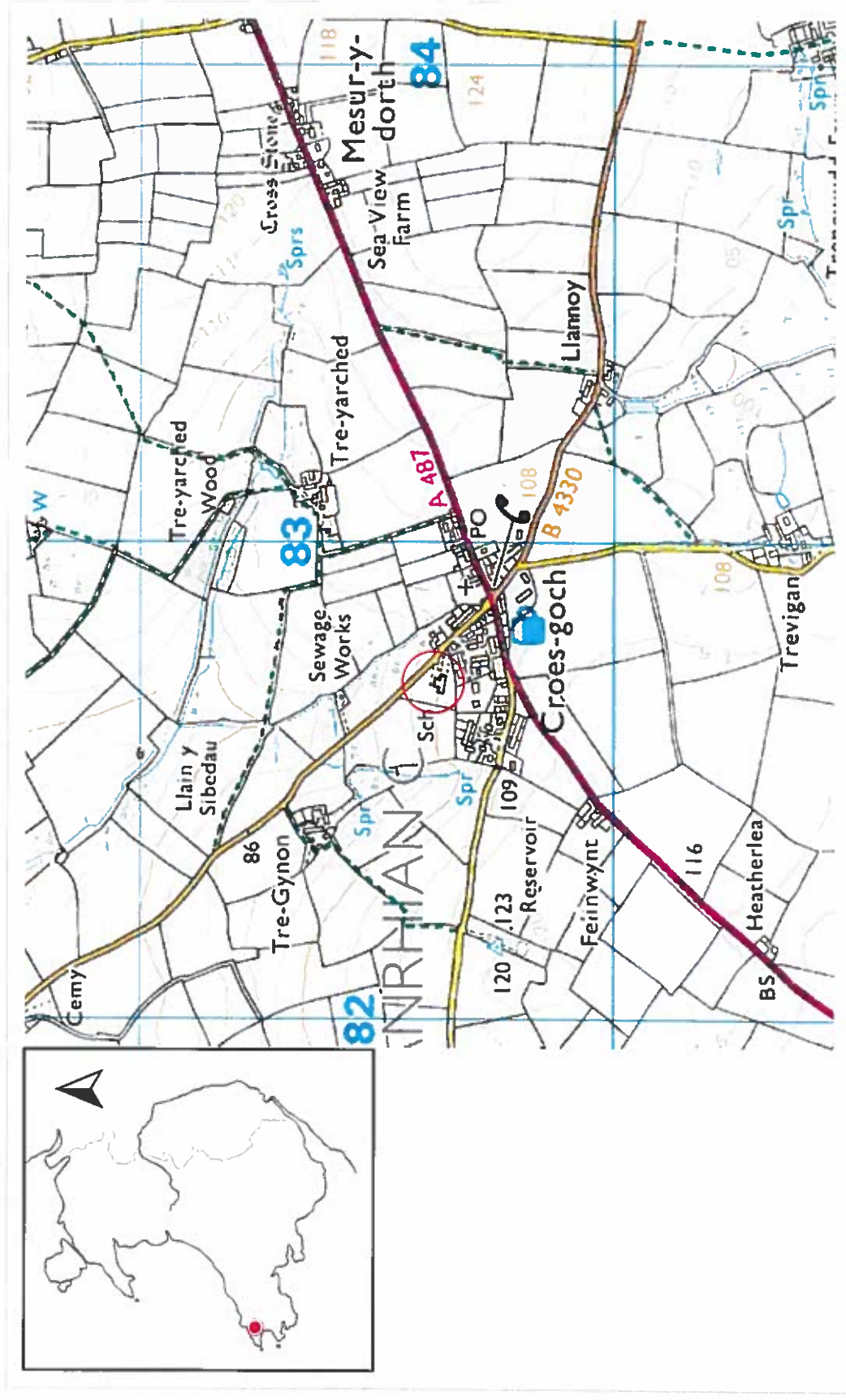


Fig 1. Location of Croesgoch Primary School





Fig. 2  
View SW up the  
site following  
the removal of  
topsoil and  
subsoil





Fig. 3  
View NE down the  
site following  
the removal of  
topsoil and  
subsoil





Fig. 4  
Foundation trench  
excavated through  
the subsoil into  
the natural.  
Looking west

