

THE OLD PARISH CHURCH, LLANIDAN,  
YNYS MON

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION (G1261)

REPORT NO. 160

Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Gwynedd  
Gwynedd Archaeological Trust

# THE OLD PARISH CHURCH, LLANIDAN, YNYS MON

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION (G1261)

prepared for TACP Chartered Architects

by M.A. Ward BA

illustrations by L.A. Dutton & H. Riley

April 1995

**Gwynedd Archaeological Trust Report No. 160**

# LLANIDAN CHURCH, YNYS MON

## ABSTRACT

Evaluation excavation at the old church, Llanidan was undertaken by Gwynedd Archaeological Trust (Contracts) for TACP Chartered Architects, on behalf of their client, V. Marchant Mapp of Llanidan Hall, and Cadw (Welsh Historic Monuments), in support of an application for Scheduled Monument Consent for a programme of restoration. The work involved the excavation of four trenches, for drainage, on the western side of the churchyard, and a further four trenches within the west end of the nave and north aisle of the church. A stretch of earlier churchyard wall foundation was noted within the present western boundary of the churchyard. A series of mortar floor deposits were noted within the nave of the church, which had been extensively damaged by later burial. The foundations of the original north wall of the nave, which pre-dated the 14th century, were recorded between the respond and the western arch of the 15th-century arcade of the north aisle. Floor deposits were also noted post-dating the erection of the late-15th-century arcade and north aisle, which had been subsequently disturbed by the insertion of two infant burials into the foundations of the demolished north wall of the nave. With the exception of the floor deposits surviving around the western respond of the arcade, the deposits within the north aisle had been excavated prior to the laying of the 1844 mortar floor. The deposit of mixed material beneath the 1844 floor contained disarticulated but whole human skeletal material, although no articulated burials were encountered during the evaluation excavations. No attempt has been made within this report to provide either a comprehensive study of the surviving historical sources relating to Llanidan or a detailed description of the architecture. A survey of both the roofed and the demolished parts of the church was carried out locating the outline of the former chancel, south chapel and eastern end of the north aisle. The differing widths and alignments of the nave walls to the west of the 14th-century south doorway suggest that this part of the nave was built before the 14th century, possibly in the 13th century. The existence of a church at this site is evidenced in the 13th century by the former presence of an early 13th-century font, now located in the new church (RCAHMW 1937, 100), and a reference to Llanidan in the Norwich Valuation of 1254 (Lunt 1926, 192).

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Evaluation excavation at the old church, Llanidan (SH49496690) was undertaken between 12-21 April 1995, by Gwynedd Archaeological Trust (Contracts) for TACP Chartered Architects, on behalf of their client, V. Marchant Mapp of Llanidan Hall, and Cadw (Welsh Historic Monuments), in support of an application for Scheduled Monument Consent for a programme of restoration. The work involved the excavation of four trenches for drainage and the heating system, on the western side of the churchyard, and a further four trenches within the nave and north aisle of the church, representing a total area of 23 sq. m. A licence for the removal of human remains was obtained by Gwynedd Archaeological Trust (Licence No. 22097) in order that any skeletal material, recovered during the evaluation excavations, could be legally excavated and re-interred within the churchyard.

## 2. BRIEF

The proposed programme of restoration work involved the construction of soakaway drainage trenches from the west wall of the church. Cadw had granted SMC for this element of the restoration, on condition that a qualified archaeological organisation was engaged to carry out the proposed ground disturbance in the churchyard and to record any archaeological deposits which were revealed. Funding for the excavation of these trenches was supplied by Cadw. Application for separate Scheduled Monument Consent was sought by TACP, on behalf of their client, for further proposed works involving the insertion of windows in the Victorian east blocking wall, the re-flooring of the interior and the insertion of an internal under floor heating system within the present roofed section of the church. Gwynedd Archaeological Trust

Contract Section was engaged by TACP, on behalf of their client, to provide an archaeological evaluation, of the nature and depth of archaeological deposits within the church, in support of the proposed application for Scheduled Monument Consent.

### 3. RESULTS

#### 3.1 GROUND SURVEY (fig. 1)

A survey of the ground plan of the church and the extent of the churchyard was carried out, using a Geodimeter Total Station, in order to accurately locate the evaluation trenches and to provide a contour survey enabling the differing ground levels to be assessed in advance of any further applications for scheduled monument consent. The results of this survey are presented in fig. 1, from which a profile of the 1844 cement floor was prepared (fig. 2).

#### 3.2 ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY

A detailed description of the church can be found in the RCAHMW Inventory for Anglesey (RCAHMW 1937, 99-100). Little can be added to this description other than to note that the walls at the western end of the nave are of a different width and alignment to that of the wall around the 14th-century south doorway (fig. 1). This evidence strongly suggests that this part of the nave pre-dates the 14th century and it is possible that this church may have been that mentioned in the Norwich taxation of 1254 (Lunt 1926, 192), for which the early 13th-century font has survived (RCAHMW 1937, 100). The line of the demolished walls of the chancel, south chapel and north aisle could be traced by the survival of raised deposits within the churchyard. These deposits had been piled against the outside of the walls, when they were still standing, and which, after the demolition of the walls have formed banks on a similar alignment to that of the demolished church (fig. 1).

#### 3.3 EVALUATION EXCAVATION

##### *DRAINAGE AND SERVICE TRENCHES ON THE WESTERN SIDE OF THE CHURCHYARD*

###### *Drainage trench 1*

A trench, 0.3 m wide and 0.3 m deep, was excavated westward, for a distance of 8 m, from the south-west corner of the nave. No features of archaeological interest were noted within this trench.

###### *Drainage trench 2*

A trench, 0.3 m wide and 0.3 m deep, was excavated westward from the centre of the west wall of the church, from the straight joint between the nave and the north aisle, for a distance of 8 m. No features of archaeological interest were noted within this trench.

###### *Drainage trench 3*

A trench, 0.3 m wide and 0.3 m deep, was excavated from the north-east corner of the north-west buttress and around to the western boundary of the churchyard for a distance of 9.5 m. No features of archaeological interest were noted within this trench.

###### *Service trench 1*

A trench, 0.4 m wide and 0.5 m deep, to house the pipes for the proposed heating system, was excavated along the line of the path, from the north doorway, for a distance of 16 m, to the western wall of the churchyard. The only feature of archaeological interest noted in this trench was the remains of the mortared foundations, 0.5 m wide, for an earlier churchyard wall, within the line of the present wall (fig. 1). The earlier wall pre-dated 1887. The 1887 edition of the Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map (Caernarvonshire XI.5) shows an entrance into the

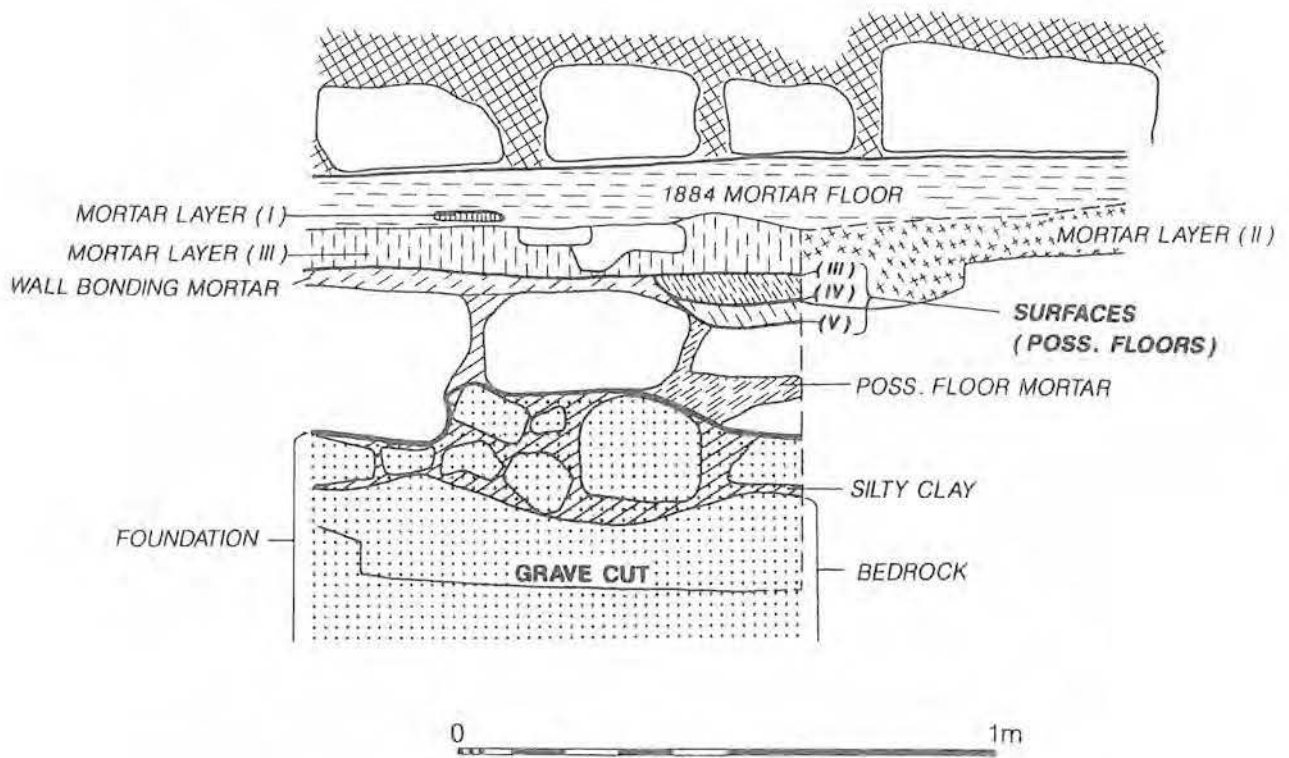


Fig. 3 Section of Trench 1.

churchyard on this side, and that the boundary here had a curvilinear form. This was in contrast to the present straightened wall, which appeared on the 1918 edition of the map. It is interesting to note that the external face of this wall was rendered with lime mortar, a similar feature was noted from recent excavations of the churchyard boundary at Aber. No further features of archaeological interest were noted within this trench.

### *EVALUATION TRENCHES WITHIN THE CHURCH*

The re-flooring of the church and the insertion of an under floor heating system around the interior walls, proposed in the second Scheduled Monument Consent application, necessitated a programme of archaeological evaluation excavation within the church. The excavation trenches for this evaluation were located with the intention of establishing the levels of earlier floor deposits, the presence of any burials, and the extent and survival of the foundations for the original north wall of the nave.

Although the proposed length and width of the trenches, as outlined in the brief, was 2 m in length and 1 m in width, the dimensions of the trenches were limited due to the presence of scaffolding for the roof restoration.

#### *Trench 1*

A trench 1.55 m long and 1 m wide was excavated along the south wall of the nave, to the west of the south doorway.

#### *Floor deposits*

Experience has shown that floor deposits within churches survive any later disturbance, by burials or floor lowering, against the walls and within the corners of a church and this proved the case at Llanidan. The nave had been floored in lime mortar, 100 mm deep, in 1844. On the removal of this flooring, a large stone slab was found extending beyond the trench at its western end. This restricted the area available for further assessment. The remaining area had been extensively disturbed by burial, destroying the majority of the original floor deposits. However, five successive mortar floor deposits were noted beneath the 1844 flooring. Floor I was noted 100 mm below the top of the 1844 flooring, Floor II, 150 mm below, Floor III, 220 mm below, Floor IV, 270 mm below, and Floor V, 320 mm below the top of the 1844 flooring. The levels are presented on the elevation drawing of this section of the wall (fig. 3) and on the interpretation section drawing (fig. 2) to facilitate comparison with the floor levels from the other evaluation trenches. A possible sixth floor deposit was noted where a patch of internal lime mortar was observed, 420 mm below the top of the 1844 flooring, at the level where the foundations met the stonework of the south wall of the nave. However, no definite floor level could be observed on the stretch of mortar exposed in this evaluation trench. In the north-east corner of the trench areas of floors II, II and IV were found which had not been disturbed by later burials. These deposits could be accurately matched to the floor deposits against the south wall, although they were at slightly lower levels, and are presented in the interpretive section drawing (fig. 2).

#### *Burial 3*

The east end of a burial had been excavated against inside of the south wall of the nave, to a depth of 0.78 m below the top of the 1844 flooring, and cut through floor deposits III, IV and V, and into the bedrock below the foundations. No grave cuts could be observed in the mixed deposit in the interior of the church.

#### *Foundations and bedrock*

The foundations were 0.1-0.25 m deep and lay above the bedrock of limestone which occurred at a depth of 0.62 m below the top of the 1844 flooring. The church had been situated on the edge of a rock dominant outcropping of limestone which resulted in the shallowness of the foundation courses.



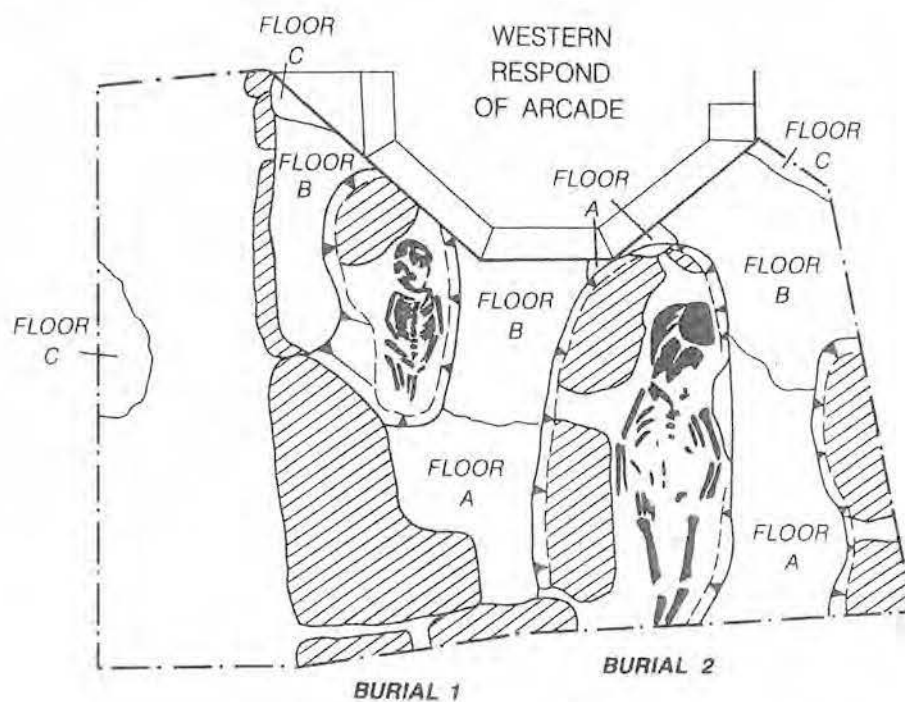
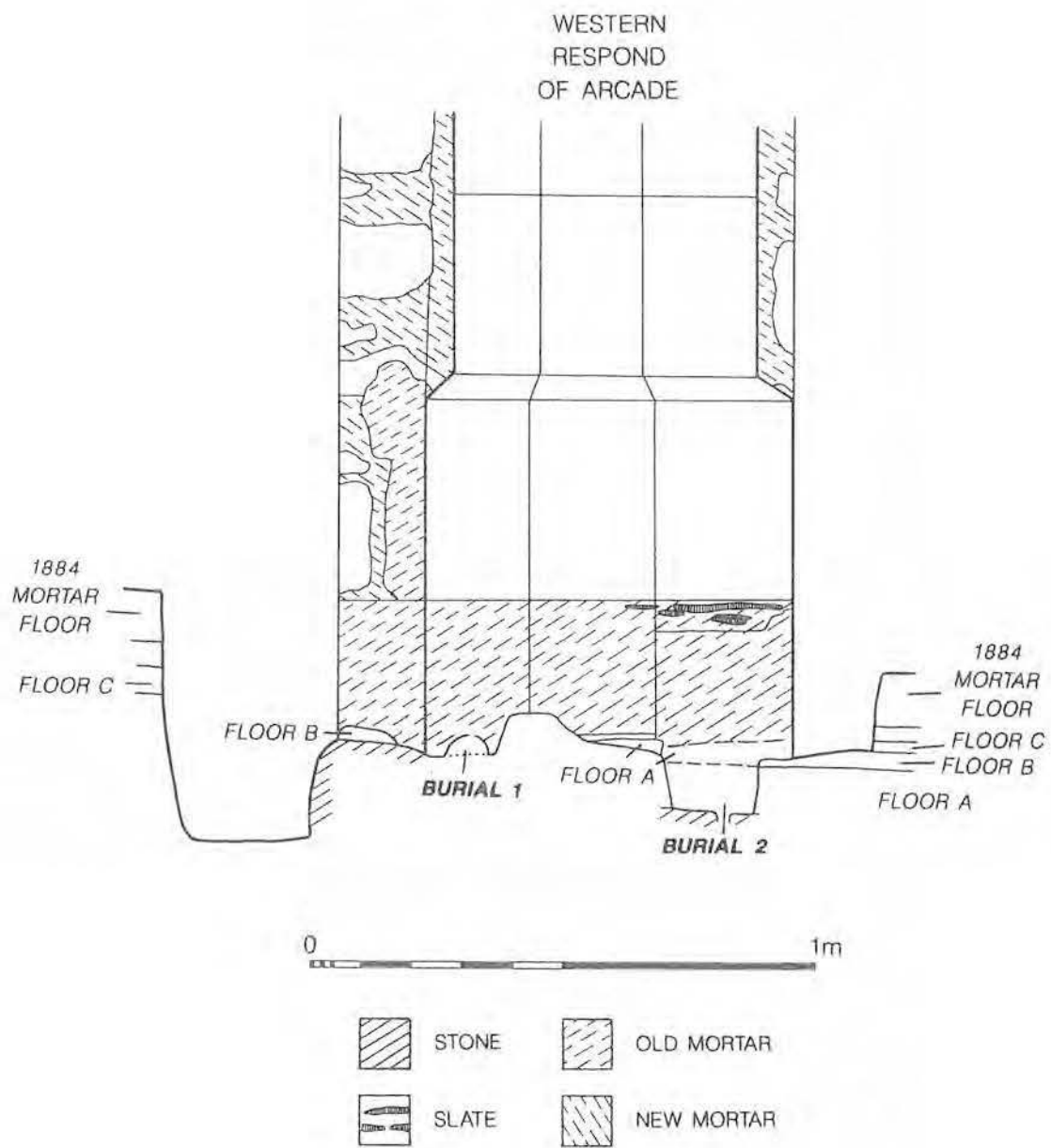


Fig. 4 Plan & section of Trench 2.

### *Trench 2*

A trench, 1.5 m long and 1 m wide, was excavated from east to west across the western opening of the north arcade, and up against the western respond.

#### *The foundations of the demolished north wall of the nave*

The stone foundations of the demolished north wall of the nave survived 0.3 m below the top of the 1844 floor surface in the nave, and 0.25 m below the 1844 floor surface in the north aisle. The western respond of the arcade lay directly on these foundations (fig. 3).

#### *Floor deposits*

The floor deposits, in this trench, survived abutting the pier of the respond and the area directly above the north wall foundations where they had not been disturbed by subsequent re-flooring or burial. Three flooring surfaces were identified. Floor A consisted of a fine degraded lime mortar overlay the foundations of the north wall of the arcade and abutted the bottom of the arcade respond. It varied considerably in thickness around the stones of the foundation and lay 0.26 m below the top of the 1844 floor surface in the nave, and 0.18 m below the 1844 floor surface in the north aisle. This was the primary floor, contemporary with the construction of the north aisle in the late 15th century. Floor B was made up of a succession of lenses of clay and burnt material. These deposits may have represented more than one floor layer. However, they have been grouped together as they may represent occupation deposits, above the mortar floor A and abutting the arcade respond. It was possibly a clay floor, which may have been strewn with rushes or straw, which had been burnt on at least two occasions in an attempt to clean out the interior of the church. This deposit of lenses of material lay 0.25 m below the top of the 1844 floor surface in the nave, and 0.18 m below the 1844 floor surface in the north aisle. A later mortar floor (C) lay above the burnt flooring deposit (B) and abutted the arcade respond. Floor C lay 0.20 m below the top of the 1844 floor surface in the nave and 0.12 m below the 1844 floor surface in the north aisle. A patch of mortar flooring, of similar material to Floor C, was noted at the southern edge of the trench (fig. 4). A mixed deposit of clay and earth lay between Floor C and the 1844 mortar floor.

#### *Burials 1 and 2*

Two infant burials, one of which appeared to be post-natal, had been inserted through the floor deposits and into the foundations of the north wall of the nave. These burials lay between 0.25 m, and 0.38 m below the top of the 1844 floor surfaces.

The destruction of the floor deposits to the south of the nave foundation implies that this area had been disturbed by burial although the evaluation trench had not been excavated to a sufficient depth to record any burials.

### *Trench 3*

A trench, 1.55 m long and 1 m wide, was excavated in the north aisle along the west wall of 1844.

#### *Floor deposits*

Only the lime mortar floor, 100 mm deep, which had been laid in 1844 had survived. This floor capped a deposit of mixed clay and earth which contained disarticulated but whole human bones. This deposit was excavated to a depth of 0.42 m and appeared to be a filling in and levelling deposit prior to the laying of the 1844 floor. This may have been necessary following the lowering of the internal floor level of the north aisle at some time in the past for a raised timber floor.



#### *Trench 4*

A trench 2 m long and 0.7 m wide was excavated in the north aisle from the north wall to the west of the north doorway.

#### *Floor deposits*

Only the lime mortar floor, 100 mm deep, which had been laid in 1844 had survived. This floor capped a deposit of mixed clay and earth, which contained disarticulated but whole human bones. This deposit was excavated to a depth of 0.5 m and appeared to be a filling in and levelling deposit prior to the laying of the 1844 floor as noted in trench 3.

### **4. SUMMARY**

#### *External drainage trenches*

The excavation of the external drainage trenches has shown that no significant archaeological deposits, with the exception of the earlier boundary wall foundation, were noted at the depth of the proposed disturbance.

#### *Internal evaluation trenches*

##### *Floor deposits in the nave and the foundations of the north wall of the nave*

The evaluation has shown that the original floor deposits have survived against the south wall and around the respond of the arcade into the north aisle. The drop in the level of these deposits on from the nave to north aisle implies that there was a step beneath the arches of the respond from their construction. Although the succession of floor deposits within the nave could not be dated, the latest lay only 100 mm below the present flooring, with the earliest at 320 mm or 420 mm below the present level. The foundations of the original north wall of the nave has survived largely intact beneath the arcade.

The proposed under floor heating system (at a depth of 400 mm, 0.5 m from the wall) may disturb the earlier floor deposits, where they have survived later disturbance and burials, and the foundations of the north wall of the nave. The evaluation has shown that, although a number of internments have taken place within the nave, some small areas of flooring had survived. It should be bourn in mind that it is possible that other larger areas of early flooring survive, in different locations to those covered by the evaluation.

The evaluation has also shown that any lowering of the present flooring, below a depth of 100 mm, may disturb any surviving floor deposits, particularly adjacent to the walls and corners within the nave, and the foundations of the north wall of the nave.

##### *Floor deposits in the north aisle*

The deposits within the north aisle had been extensively destroyed in the past, with the exception of the area adjacent to the arcade.

The proposed under floor heating system (at a depth of 400 mm, 0.5 m from the wall) may not disturb any floor deposits within the north aisle. The lack of floor deposits within the north aisle suggests that any area of earlier flooring had been destroyed during floor lowering at an unknown date. However, areas of early flooring may have survived, in different locations to those covered by the evaluation, particularly the corners, in the vicinity of the arcade, and the central aisle area, if one existed.

Any lowering of the floor deposits within the north aisle should also be considered in the light of the above findings.

### *Burials*

The results of the evaluation suggest that few burials will be encountered during the works proposed. However, further infant burials beneath the arcades should be expected and arrangements for the re-burial of disarticulated human remains should be made.

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

Lunt, W E, 1926 *The Valuation of Norwich*. Oxford

RCAHMW 1937 *Inventory of the Ancient Monuments of Anglesey*.