
St Rhedyw's Church

Llanllyfni



Archaeological Watching Brief

GAT Project No. 1862

Report No. 596

July 2005

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Prepared for SP Manweb

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St Rhedyw’s Church, Llanllyfni (G1862)

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

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Archaeological Watching Brief: St Rhedyn's Church, Llanllyfni (G1862)

SUMMARY

An archaeological watching brief has been undertaken in advance of the installation of an underground electrical supply in the churchyard of St Rhedyn's Church, Llanllyfni. The only archaeological activity recorded within the trench related to the nineteenth century remodelling of the churchyard.

1 INTRODUCTION

Gwynedd Archaeological Trust has been asked by SP Manweb plc to undertake an archaeological watching brief at the parish church of St Rhedyn, Llanllyfni, Gwynedd, to observe the installation of an underground electrical supply from the church gate into the west end of the church. The church is a listed building grade II* (Cadw reference 3799). It is located within the village of Llanllyfni at NGR SH47065209. The PRN within the Historic Environment Record is 7028.

St Rhedyn's is a parish church located within the former medieval township of Llanllyfni. The church stands at the southern end of modern Llanllyfni, with the major post-medieval urban sprawl concentrated several hundred metres to the north. The church is cruciform with an irregularly shaped cemetery reflecting the extensions and renovations that have taken place in the last two centuries.

2 SPECIFICATION AND PROJECT DESIGN

The basic requirement was for a watching brief of the proposed area, in order to assess the impact of the proposals on the archaeological features within the area concerned. The importance and condition of known archaeological remains were to be assessed, and areas of archaeological potential identified. Measures to mitigate the effects of the construction work on the archaeological resource were to be suggested.

Gwynedd Archaeological Trust's proposals for filling these requirements were as follows:

- Watching brief
- Report

3 METHODS AND TECHNIQUES

The watching brief was undertaken on 7 February, 2005.

The aim of the watching brief was to monitor the installation of an underground electrical supply, dug by hand, from the church gate into the west end of the church. The cable trench was orientated north to south and covered a distance of c.15.0m in length. The trench was expected to cut through an area inside the church gate that had been substantially raised during the nineteenth century restoration projects.

A subsequent report was completed that included the information from the watching brief and information derived from secondary sources.

4 TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

Llanllyfni is located within an area of Pre-Cambrian geology and is part of the Padarn Ridge that extends from Llanllyfni to Bethesda. This ridge is surrounded by an ellipse of Cambrian rock, characterised by high quality slate, that gave rise to the post-medieval slate quarrying industry.

Llanllyfni is located within a wide flood plain and is characterised by a small conurbation surrounded by enclosed pasture land leading towards a more pronounced upland environment. St. Rhedyn's Church is located close to the River Llyfni, one of a series of local tributaries flowing towards Caernarfon Bay.

5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS

5.1 Archaeological and historical background

5.1.1 Prehistory/Roman

The area surrounding St. Rhedyw's Church is relatively rich in prehistoric and Roman archaeology with evidence for Bronze Age settlement c.1.5km to the northwest (NPRN's 5037, 5071 and 5133) and an Iron Age/Roman hillfort c.800m to the northeast (PRN 577). Further evidence for Roman activity has been identified to the south of the study area, including the site of a possible signal station (NPRN 5572; SH46905163). There is currently no recorded activity within the locale of the study area.

5.1.2. Medieval/Post-Medieval

St. Rhedyw's church was originally built in the late Medieval period and includes a fourteenth century nave and a fifteenth century chancel, with transepts of sixteenth/seventeenth century date (see RCAHMS 1960, 206-7). The church was restored during two major nineteenth century restoration projects, in 1839 and 1879, when a new roof was built along with new windows and a south porch (see GAT 2000, 194 and Cadw Listed Building description).

The development of Llanllyfni during the nineteenth century is also reflected in the number of non-conformist chapels that were built at the time, with at least twelve examples still extant. Whilst Llanllyfni has always been part of a larger agrarian economy, it appears that the major developments were sponsored by the burgeoning slate quarry industry that surrounds this area.

5.2 Results of the Archaeological Watching Brief

The archive is held by GAT under the project number (**G1862**).

A 0.60m deep trench was excavated by hand across the corner of a raised area inside the church gate (see Figure 2). The trench was excavated to take an electrical conduit from the gate, under a flat threshold stone, under and behind the retaining wall of the church and across the corner of the cemetery meeting up with and utilising an old iron gas supply pipe which fed directly into the nave.

It was expected that some human remains would be unearthed during the excavation of the trench but in the event there were none. The raised area comprised building rubble and soil, with fragments of slate and gravestone. The proximity to the retaining wall suggests this area was consolidated with rubble when the wall was built. It was agreed that the former gas pipe should be breached 1.0m further towards the gate than anticipated as a large dressed slate slab lay across the trench at a depth of 0.40m in the area that the pipe was to be accessed. This slab did not appear significant but its removal might have destabilised the wall.

Where the trench ended near the gate a deeper hole was excavated to take the conduit below the level of the path. The fill in this section consisted of larger flat stone rubble with little soil. No archaeology was visible in this hole.

6 CONCLUSION

The cable trench cut a deposit of reused rubble and soil that had been brought in as part of the nineteenth century remodelling of the church, in an attempt to consolidate the raised and retained area of the churchyard. There was no evidence of earlier activity nor of human burial, but this may have been due to the shallowness of the trench. If the trench had been excavated further away from the retaining wall of the church, a more conventional churchyard fill may have been uncovered.

7 REFERENCES AND OTHER SOURCES CONSULTED

References

Bassett, T & Davies, B 1977 *Atlas of Caernarvonshire*. Gwynedd Rural Council.

Cadw Listed Building Description: St Rhedyw's church, Llanllyfni
GAT, Report no. 391, 2000 'Historic Churches of Gwynedd: Gazetteer of Churches'.
RCAHMW, 1960 *Inventory of Ancient Monuments: Caernarvonshire* Vol. 2.
British Geological Survey, Bangor: England and Wales Sheet 106, 1:50000
Soils of Wales, Soil Map Series Sheet 2, 1:250000

Figure List

Figure 1 Location of Study Area

Plates List

Plate 1 North-facing section of trench cut

Plate 2 Trench View From SE

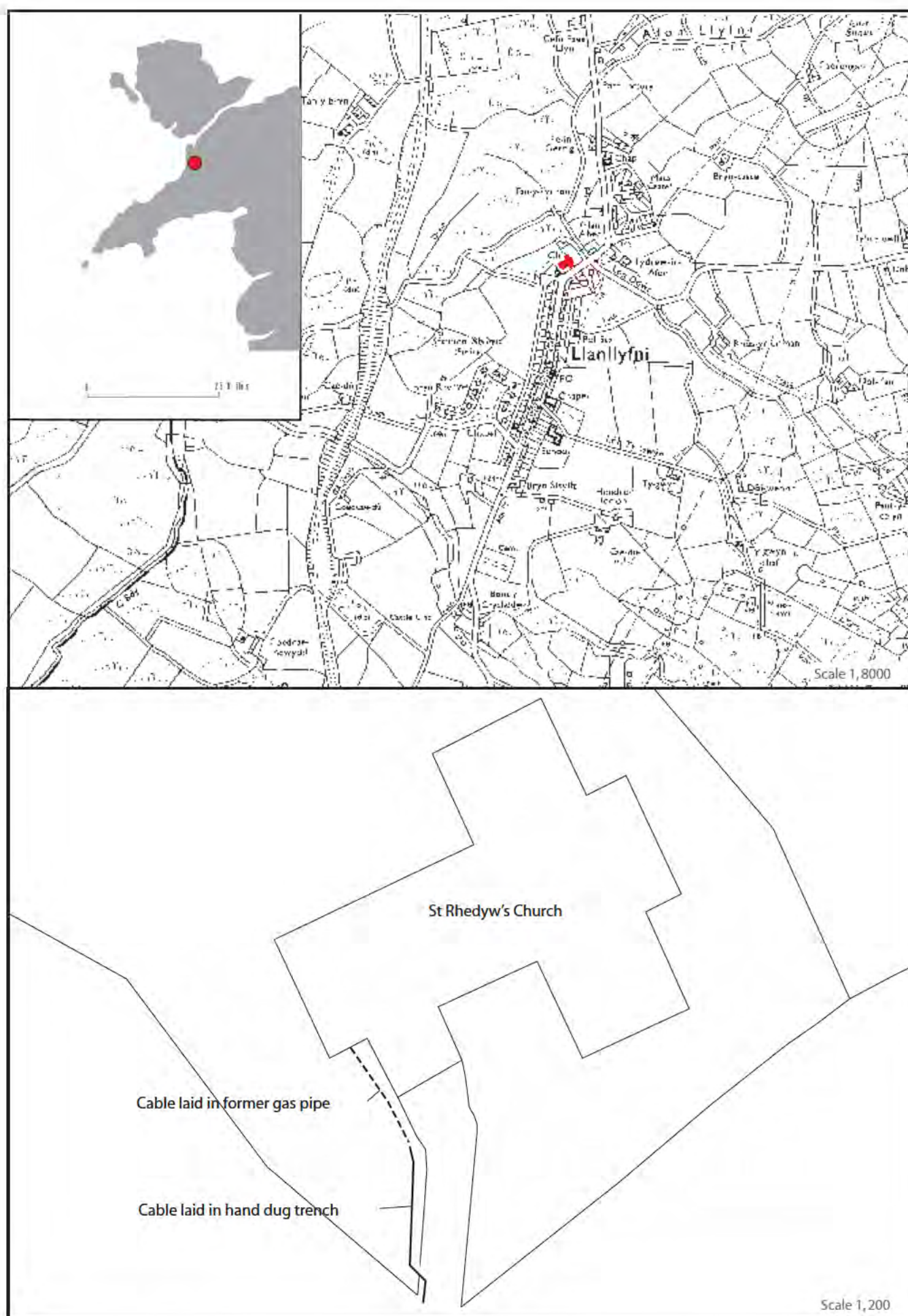


Figure 1. Location of study area.
Background map reproduced from Ordnance Survey. Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. Licence no. AL100020895.



Plate 1. North-Facing Section of Trench Cut



Plate 2. Trench. Viewed from South-East



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