

CPAT Report No. 1608

Llanspyddid Flood Alleviation Scheme, Powys




Archaeological Watching Brief



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Summary

A watching brief was undertaken by the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust in August 2018 during groundworks for a flood prevention scheme to the west of St Cattwg's Church, Llanspyddid, Powys. Previous archaeological excavations had demonstrated that the churchyard originally extended further to the west, encompassing the area of the groundworks, and also provided evidence for Roman activity in the area. However, monitoring of the present groundworks revealed no evidence for the former churchyard boundary, any associated burials or Roman activity, although the results did confirm that the field has been subject to significant levelling using imported material.

Crynodeb

Fe ymgwymerodd Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Clwyd-Powys â briff gwylio ym mis Awst 2018 yn ystod gwaith paratoi tir ar gyfer cynllun atal llifogydd i'r gorllewin o Eglwys Sant Catwg, Llanspyddid, Powys. Roedd gwaith cloddio archaeolegol blaenorol wedi dangos bod y fynwent wedi ymestyn ymhellach i'r gorllewin yn wreiddiol, gan gwmpasu ardal y gwaith paratoi tir, ac roedd yno hefyd dystiolaeth o weithgarwch Rhufeinig yn yr ardal. Fodd bynnag, wrth fonitro'r gwaith paratoi tir presennol ni ddatgelwyd unrhyw dystiolaeth o ffin yr hen fynwent, unrhyw gladdedigaethau cysylltiedig na gweithgarwch Rhufeinig, er i'r canlyniadau gadarnhau bod y cae wedi'i wastatáu'n sylweddol gan ddefnyddio deunydd wedi'i fewnforio.

1 Introduction

- 1.1. The Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT) were engaged by Powys County Council to undertake a watching brief during groundworks associated with a flood alleviation scheme in the village of Llanspyddid, in southern Powys (Fig. 1; SO 0115 2818).
- 1.2. The scheme involved the upgrading of an existing drainage channel (see Fig. 3) to the west of St Cattwg's Church, in an area known to have been part of the original churchyard. An evaluation undertaken here in 1994 revealed three grave cuts and the former churchyard boundary, as well as recovering a significant assemblage of Roman pottery.



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Fig. 1 Location of the watching brief (circled in red)

- 1.3. The scheme was not subject to a planning application and works were already underway before coming to the attention of the Heritage Officer for Brecon Beacons National Park Authority (BBNPA). Following a site visit by the Heritage Officer on 30 July 2018 Powys County Council was contacted with the request that an

archaeologist should be present to inspect exposed trench sections for archaeological remains, make any necessary records, and monitor any future groundworks within the area as part of an archaeological watching brief.

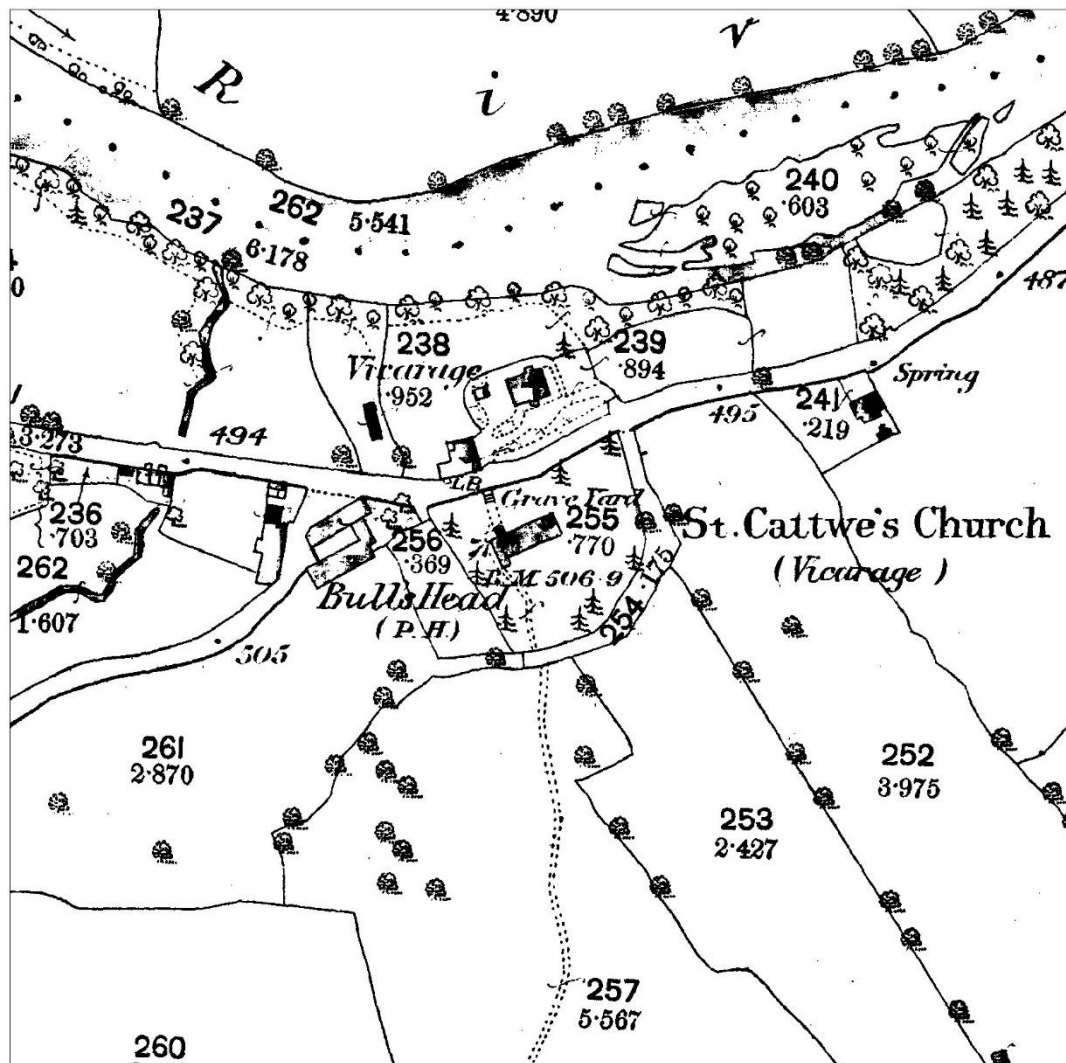


Fig. 2 Extract from the 1st edition Ordnance Survey 25'' map of 1889

2 Historical Background

- 2.1. Although there is no direct evidence, it is thought that the Church of St Cattwg was founded during the 7th or 8th century, based on a reference in the Llandaff Charters to 'Llandespetit' church (c. AD 1223-25). The present church dates to largely the 14th century, although there is a 13th-century font within the church, and a scheduled 7th to 9th-century pillar stone (SAM B121). The churchyard is presently much reduced from its postulated former extent, although parts of the earlier curvilinear boundary still survive. On the basis of shape, it has been assumed that the original churchyard enclosed the area now bounded by the road to the south of the church, encompassing the field to the west and the former Llanspyddid Farm. The curvilinearity of the churchyard, the British dedication and the pillar stone all point to an early medieval foundation, that is before the Norman conquest.

- 2.2. Little is known of the history of Llanspyddid village, which developed on the southern bank of the River Usk, presumably centred on St Cattwg's Church. The origins and early history of the settlement are likely to be closely linked with the church, and an early medieval foundation would therefore seem probable.
- 2.3. If there was a St Ysbyddyd he (or she) is otherwise unknown in early literature, although the recent authoritative volume on Welsh place-names does point out that a giant with the name Ysbyddaden appears in a medieval Welsh tale. Lannspitit is referenced as early as 1100, and even earlier from the 11th century could be Lanespetit though this the document in which it appears is later, from c. 1200. Lamdespidic is given in 1127. Tradition has it that Llanspyddid was the burial place of Anlach, Brychan's father.
- 2.4. Earthwork platforms have in the past been identified in the field to the south-west of the church, and lynchets resulting from cultivation and one such platform were built over in 1992. The tithe map of c.1839 and aerial photography hint at a slightly more complex picture that may or may not have some bearing on the nature of the structure of the earlier settlement here. To the east of the churchyard narrow but short enclosures on the south side of the road could be residual open-field strips of medieval date and these were certainly present further to the east beyond Penishapentre. They could also, however mark, tenement plots, and one, now lost, property mapped in 1839, shows as earthworks to the east of Maesyrfhaf (Silvester et al. 2013; Owen 1994).



Fig. 3 The drainage ditch along the western side of the churchyard, with Inlet 2 in the distance.

3 Watching Brief

- 3.1. The watching brief was conducted according to the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' (CIfA) *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief* (2017). Groundworks adjacent to the modern churchyard were monitored on 1-2 August 2018, while excavations within Heol Sant Cattwg, were monitored on 14 August 2018. Groundworks were observed in three areas, which are described separately below (see Fig. 12 for location).

Inlet 2

- 3.2. At the north-western end of the drainage channel the construction works had already included the excavation of a 20m-long trench, around 1.3m wide and 1.1m deep, for the insertion of a drainage pipe. The pipe had already been laid, although the trench had not been backfilled. The exposed sections of the trench were inspected at the start of the watching brief, although this revealed nothing of archaeological significance.
- 3.3. Excavations were monitored for the construction of Inlet 2, at the south-eastern end of the pipe, revealing the following stratigraphic sequence. The undisturbed natural subsoil was revealed at the base of the excavation, comprising a stiff, pink clay. This was overlain by a layer of shale (13) in a silty clay matrix, which was sealed by a succession of deposits (10-13) representing modern levelling of the area, using imported material.



Fig. 4 The location of Inlet 2 at the south-eastern end of the pipe trench



Fig. 5 The excavated pipe trench leading north-west from Inlet 2.



Fig. 6 The stratigraphic sequence observed at Inlet 2

Outlet 1

- 3.4. At the southern end of the field to the west of the churchyard the existing outlet for the drain was modified, requiring the excavation of an area measuring 5.2m by 2.4m to a depth of 0.9m (Figs 7-8). While this revealed nothing of archaeological significance the section (Fig. 9) demonstrated clearly that material had been used to level the site. The natural subsoil, a pink clay containing fragments of shale, was revealed at the base of the excavations, above which was a 0.12m-thick layer of shale in a clay silt matrix (8), sealed beneath a layer of light brown silty clay (7), representing a former ploughsoil. A sequence of deposits (1-6) above this represented material imported onto the site. Information provided by a local resident confirmed that the site was levelled relatively recently to form a playground.
- 3.5. There was no evidence for the presence of the bank and ditch associated with the former churchyard, which had been identified during excavations in 1994, suggesting that they lay further to the north.



Fig. 7 Excavations at Outlet 1, viewed from the east-south-east



Fig. 8 Excavations at Outlet 1, viewed from the north-north-east

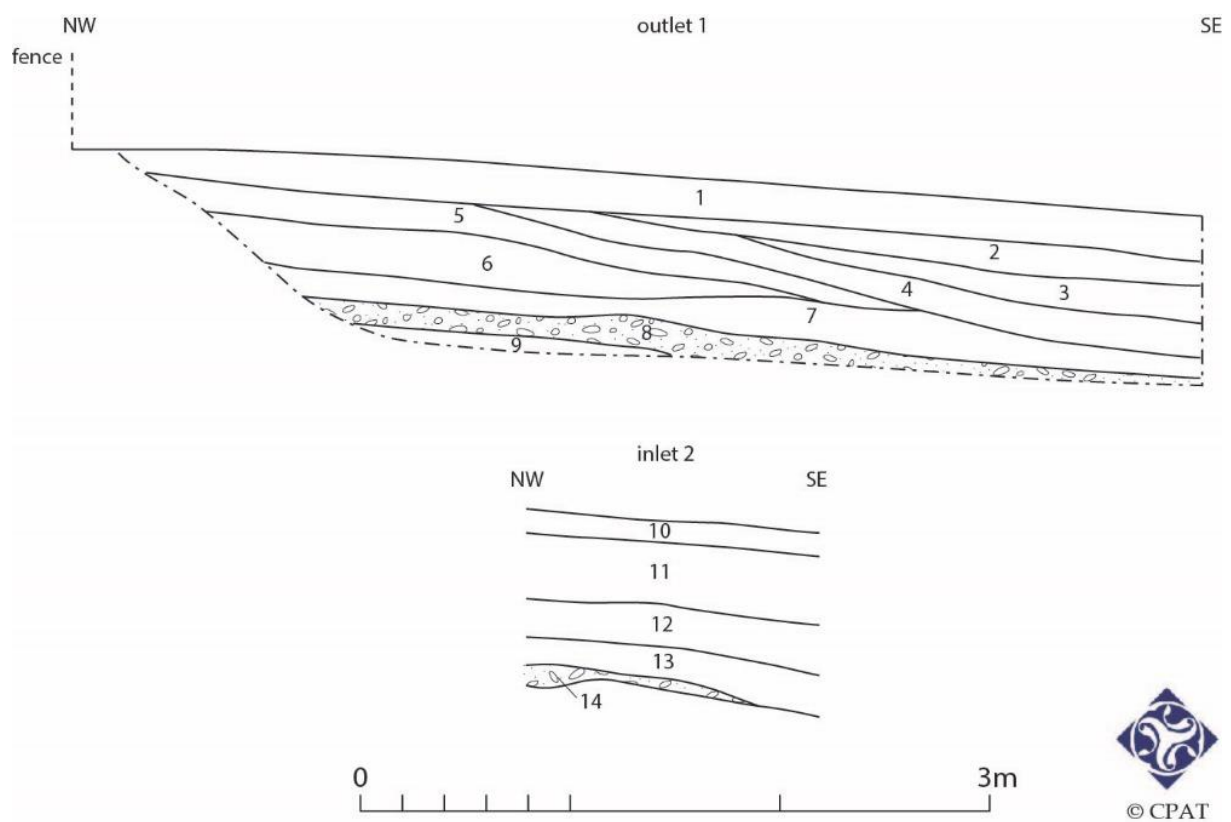


Fig. 9 sections of excavations adjacent to outlet 1 and inlet 2

Heol Sant Cattwg

- 3.6. A 24m-long section of pipe trench, 1.5m wide, was excavated in a south-westerly direction from Outlet 1, crossing Heol Sant Cattwg at an angle (Figs 10-11). The natural subsoil was revealed at a depth of 0.34-0.45m, overlain by a stoney sub-base for the road. The central section of the trench had been disturbed previously during the installation of a storm drain. No archaeological deposits or artefacts were revealed.



Fig. 10 Excavations along Heol Sant Cattwg, viewed from the east



Fig. 11 North-facing section of the trench along Heol Sant Cattwg

4 Conclusions

- 4.1. A watching brief was maintained during groundworks as part of a flood alleviation scheme on land to the west of St Cattwg's Church, Llanspyddid, in an area known to have been part of the original churchyard. An evaluation undertaken here in 1994 revealed three grave cuts and the former churchyard boundary, as well as recovering a significant assemblage of Roman pottery.
- 4.2. The excavation of a pipe trench had already been undertaken prior to the commencement of the watching brief, although the trench remained open and was inspected, revealing nothing of archaeological significance.
- 4.3. Groundworks were monitored around the inlet for the new pipe, as well as adjacent to an existing outlet at the southern end of the field, together with a section of trenching in Heol Sant Cattwg. The results provided no further evidence relating to the original churchyard or potential Roman activity, although it was evident that the majority of the area had been levelled relatively recently through the deposition of up to 0.85m of imported material.

5 Sources

Unpublished sources

Owen, W. J., 1994. *Land adjacent to Llanspyddid Church, Powys: Archaeological evaluation*. CPAT Report No. 91.

Silvester, R. J. and Dorling, P. J., 1993. *Historic Settlements in the Brecon Beacons National Park*. CPAT report. 44.

Silvester, R. J., Martin, C. H. R. and Watson, S. E., 2013. *Historic Settlements in the Brecon Beacons National Park*. CPAT Report. 1200

Cartographic Sources

1889 Ordnance Survey 1st edition 25" map, Brecknock 27.15

6 Archive deposition Statement

- 6.1. The project archive has been prepared according to the CPAT Archive Policy and in line with the ClfA *Standard and guidance for the creation, compilation, transfer and deposition of archaeological archives guidance* (2014). The digital and paper archive will be deposited with the National Monuments Record (RCAHMW), while the digital archive only will be deposited with the Historic Environment Record, Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust.

Archive summary

CPAT Event PRN: 140259

29 digital photographs, CPAT film no 4534

3 watching brief record forms (PDF)

Site drawings:

Drawing 1 - A4, 1:10, section of Inlet 2

Drawing 2 - A3, 1:20, section of Outlet 1

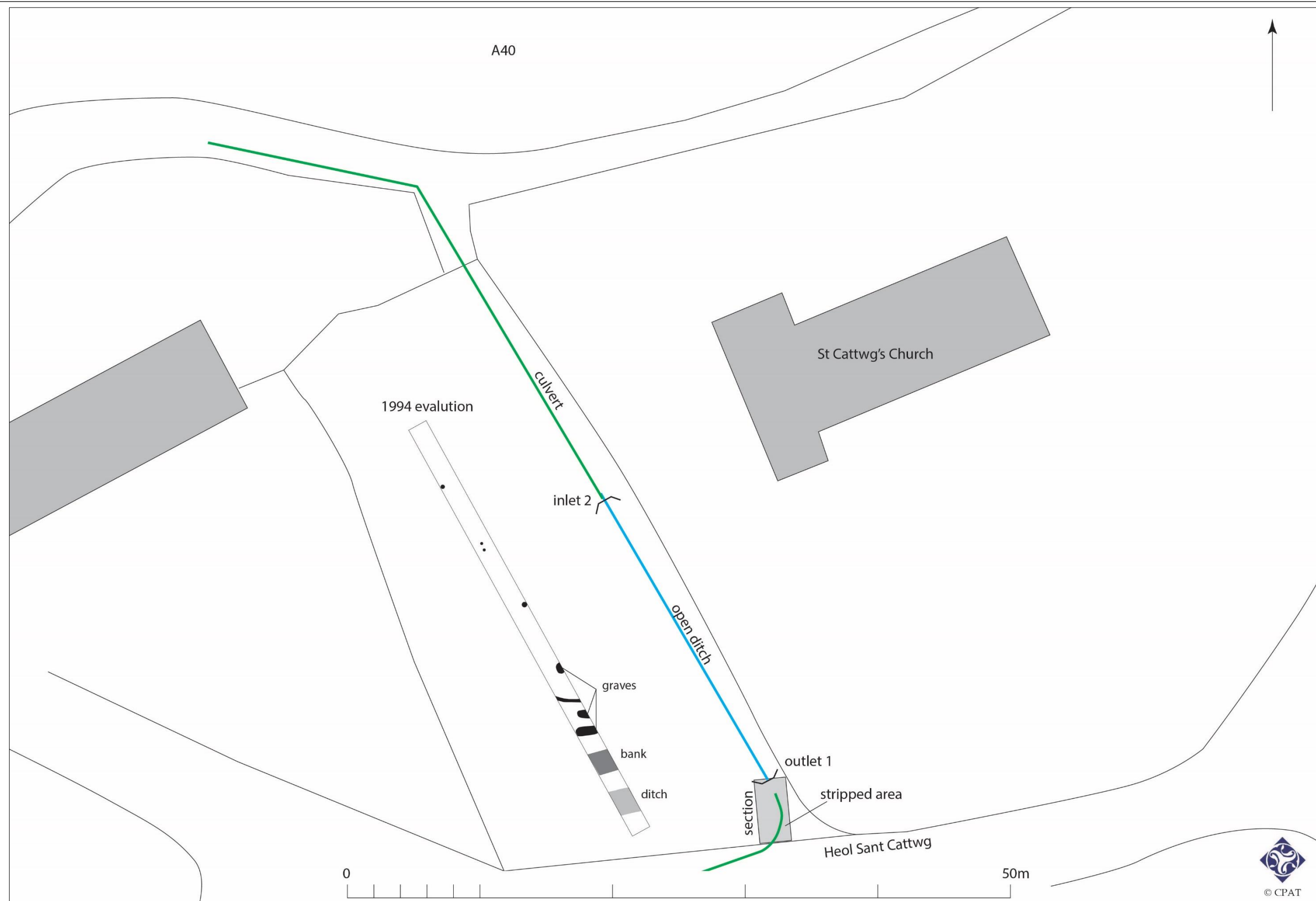


Fig. 12 The flood alleviation works in relation to the church and the 1994 evaluation trench