



CAMBRIAN
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St Cadog's Church, Llangadog, Carmarthenshire

Archaeological Watching Brief



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Report No. 650

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Summary

An archaeological watching brief was carried out in September 2010 at St Cadog's Church, Llangadog, during works to reconstruct a section of the graveyard wall. The work was carried out to record the extant wall prior to demolition and to monitor the removal of the wall and adjacent graveyard deposits for burials or graveyard structures. The works revealed that the ground level of the graveyard had been substantially raised, probably in the 19th century through the dumping of large quantities of soil, rubble and mortar. No in situ burials were revealed, nor any burial structures, although a number of disarticulated bones and skulls were found within the graveyard deposits.

1. Introduction

In September 2010, Cambrian Archaeological Projects carried out an archaeological watching brief during the demolition and reconstruction of a 9m long section of the graveyard wall at St Cadog's Church, Llangadog (NGR: SN 7055 2860; fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Elizabeth Walters of St Cadog's PCC following recommendations by Louise Austin of Dyfed Archaeological Trust, acting as archaeological advisor to the Diocesan Advisory Committee.

The aim of the archaeological work was to record the extant wall prior to demolition and to monitor the removal of the wall and the excavation of exposed churchyard soils to ensure any burial structures and deposits revealed were fully recorded and suitably reburied.

The watching brief was carried out by Hywel Keen.

2. Site description

St Cadog's Church lies in the centre of the village of Llangadog in Carmarthenshire. It is known to have medieval origins and was originally dedicated to St David. The Church has been rebuilt many times over the centuries, with the extant Church dating from the mid-nineteenth century. It is a Grade II* listed building.

3. Watching Brief Results

Prior to the demolition of the wall, a photographic survey was carried out to record its existing structure. Unfortunately, the eastern end of the wall had been partially demolished prior to the archaeologist being called to site by the contractor. However, as much as possible of the original wall was photographed (fig. 2 and fig. 3).

In total, 9m of existing graveyard wall was removed and rebuilt. The wall was 0.7m thick and 2m high and constructed using rounded pebbles and lime mortar. At the eastern end the wall was built directly onto the shale bedrock, however, the western 5m had been constructed on a concrete foundation.

The wall was built as a retaining wall to support the ground level of the graveyard, which is around 1.8m higher than the surrounding land. A profile was cut through the graveyard deposits immediately behind the wall during the works (fig. 4), which revealed that the ground comprised a layer of turf and topsoil (001), a thick layer of redeposited material (002). At the eastern end of the wall the redeposited material overlay a layer of disturbed natural (003), while the western end of the wall overlay the concrete foundation.

The topsoil (001) was 0.3m in depth and overlay the layer of redeposited material (002). This layer, (002), was 1.2m deep, but comprised layers and lenses of different material including mortar, rubble and redeposited natural. A single 19th century glass bottle was identified within the redeposited material (not retained). This layer was assigned a single context number as it was evidently the result of a single depositional event. Within this redeposited layer, a large number of disarticulated bones were identified, predominantly long bones, together with several skulls and skull fragments (fig. 5). None was found within a grave cut. Some of the long bones and the skulls were found within discrete pockets within the redeposited material, with the skulls seemingly deliberately collected together and buried up against the inner surface of the wall. Underlying the redeposited material at the eastern end of the wall was the disturbed natural (003). This was 0.5m thick and comprised the natural yellow clay silt intermixed with brown clay silt, frequent stones and occasional fragments of bone.

No grave cuts or structural remains were identified within the area of works. All bones revealed during the excavation were handled respectfully and reburied as close to their original position as possible.

4. Discussion

The works associated with the wall demolition and reconstruction (fig. 6) have revealed interesting details about the history of the graveyard. It is clear that the ground level on the site was artificially raised, probably during the 19th century when the Church was remodeled. The ground was probably raised to facilitate further burials within the graveyard, which is likely to have been full following its many centuries of use. Indeed, the quantity of disarticulated bone, skulls and bone fragments attests to the disturbance of burials during the digging of later graves.

5. Acknowledgements

Thanks to Hywel Keen for carrying out the watching brief.

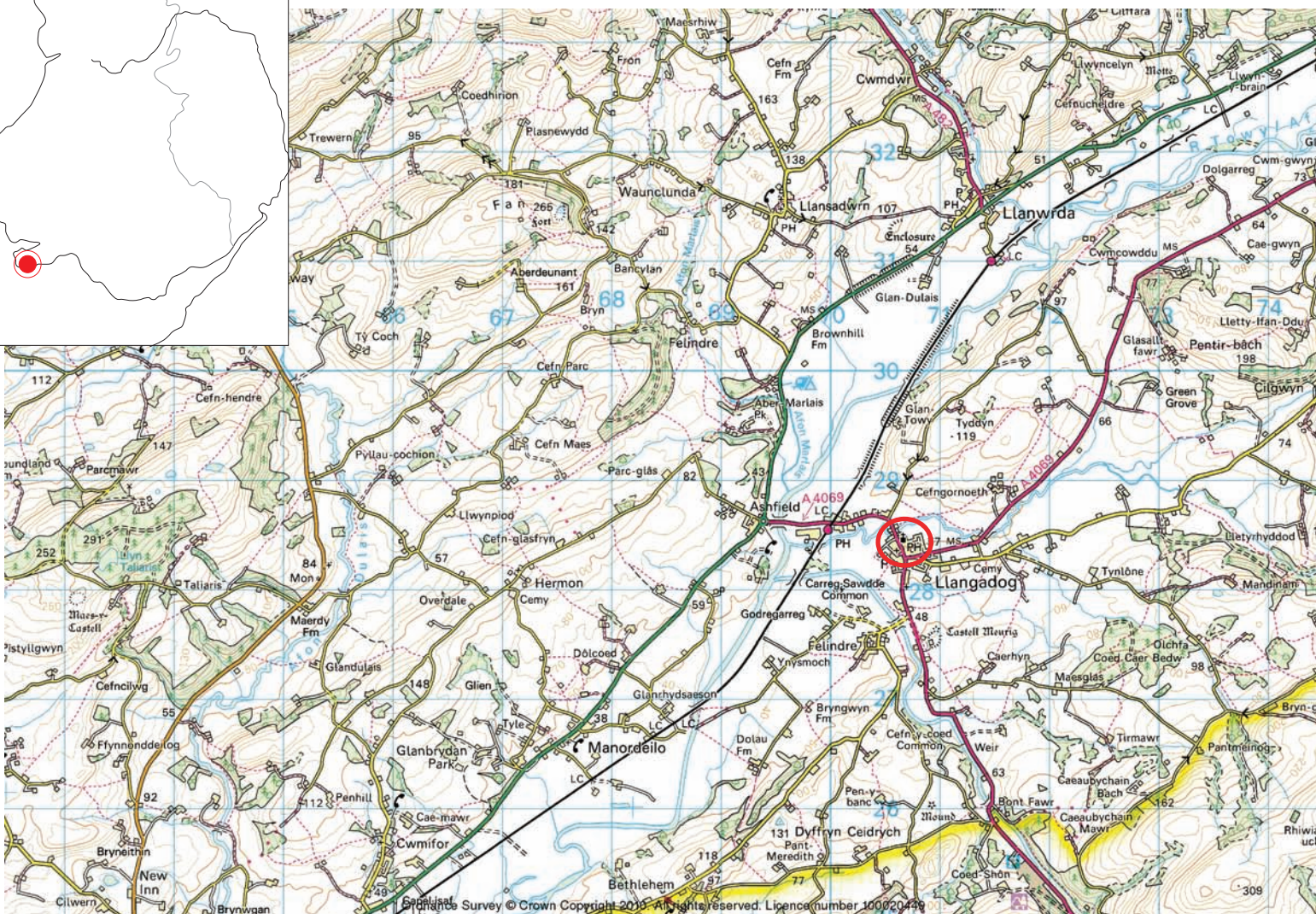
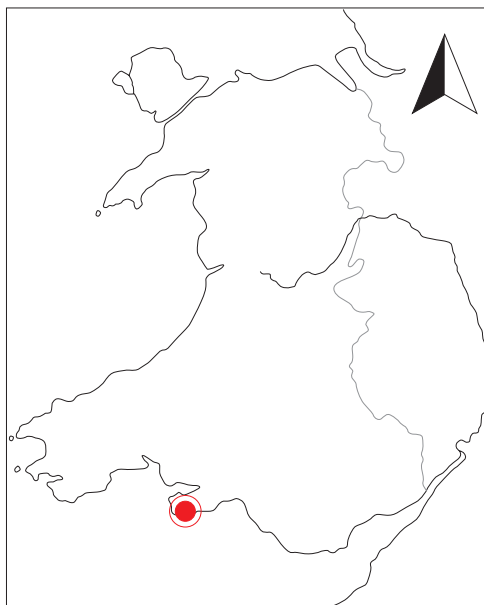


Fig. 1
Location of
site



Fig. 2
Western end of
wall prior to
demolition.

Looking East

Scale = 2m



Fig. 3
Eastern end of
wall demolished
prior to arrival of
archaeologist

Looking East

Scale = 2m



Fig. 4
Profile through
graveyard
deposits behind
eastern end of
wall

Looking West

Scale = 2m



Fig. 5
Skulls and
disarticulated bones
within the made
ground of the
graveyard



Fig. 6
Wall repair works
underway with
reconstructed
eastern end to the
left of the picture,
the groundworks
underway in the
middle and the
old wall to the right

Looking East

Scale = 2m



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