

Llanwrin, Machynlleth, Powys, 2011

Archaeological watching brief



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Report No. 672



CAMBRIAN
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
PROJECTS

Llanwrin Church, Machynlleth, Powys, 2011

Archaeological watching brief

Prepared for: Llanwrin PCC

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Scale 0.5m

Plate 2 Detail of Sanctuary floor after completion of excavation, and showing
base layer unexcavated, looking south

Plate 3 General view of ground reduction work adjacent to the north and west
walls, looking south

Plate 4 View of underpinning brickwork of 20th century date, looking south. Scale
in 0.5m divisions

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Non Technical Summary

This report results from work undertaken by Cambrian Archaeological Projects Ltd (CAP) on an archaeological watching brief during work on Llanwrin Church. No significant finds were made.

1 Introduction

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 The work undertaken was in two parts. Firstly an archaeological watching brief on an investigation of cracks in the sanctuary floor, and secondly an archaeological watching brief on the excavation of material against the west and north walls of the church (see Fig 1 for location of the two areas). The on site work was undertaken by a local building firm under archaeological supervision.
- 1.1.2 The site is located at grid ref SH7866203529. The surviving church dates from the 14th or 15th century (CPAT Montgomeryshire Churches Survey), with restoration in 1864. The church is noted under CPAT Historic Environment Record number 15842.
- 1.1.3 The work was undertaken on site on 30th August 2011, under a watching brief conducted by Kevin Blockley (Director, Cambrian Archaeological Projects).

1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site of the work overlies shale and slate. The natural was not located in any of the works.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The current church of St Gwrin (in the Diocese of Bangor) is of late medieval date (most likely 14th or 15th century). A western gallery added in the mid-17th century was removed when the church was restored in 1864 by Benjamin Ferry.

2 Aims and Objectives

2.1 Recording

- 2.1.1 The main scope and objectives of the watching brief were to record archaeological features and deposits within the area of the rebuild so that future work in the area can be informed.
- 2.1.2 The work was conducted in accordance with standards and guidance as laid down by the *Institute for Archaeologists*.

3 Watching Brief Methodology

3.1 Scope of Fieldwork

- 3.1.1 An area of the sanctuary was investigated where it was thought that cracking and subsidence overlay a vault. Outside the church ground levels were being reduced in a narrow area against the west wall of the church and along part of the north wall. All ground work was conducted by the site contractor by hand.
- 3.1.3 All works were undertaken in accordance with both the IFA's *Standards and Guidance: for an archaeological watching brief* and current Health and Safety legislation.

3.2 Finds

- 3.2.1 No finds were made during the course of the watching brief.

3.3 Palaeo-environmental evidence

- 3.3.1 No palaeo-environmental samples were taken from the site.

4 Watching Brief Results

4.1 Soils and ground conditions

- 4.1.1 The weather conditions were very good when the work was undertaken.

4.2 Deposits

- 4.2.1 All numbers within the text refer to context records of the watching brief. These records, along with a site location plan and digital photographs, are housed with the site archive.
- 4.2.2 An area of sanctuary floor tile was lifted carefully by hand and the underlying deposits recorded (for area of work see FIG 2). The tile floor (layer 1) is of 1864 date and this was found to have been bedded on a 1cm thick layer of red cement (layer 2). The tiles lifted cleanly off this bedding layer. Below the bedding was a 7cm thick bed of local gravel and sand (layer 3) used to level the area before the bedding mortar was laid (PLATE 1). Below the levelling layer was a make-up layer of compacted sand and gravel (layer 4), which was not excavated (PLATE 2). The cracks in the floor penetrated both the floor surface and the underlying cement bedding, but not further down. This implies that the cracking was due to water penetration and freezing of the floor over the cold winter of 2010, not (as thought originally) by subsidence into an underlying vault.
- 4.2.3 The area along the west and north walls of the church were reduced by up to 0.9m (see FIG 1 and PLATE 3). The material removed contained 20th century rubbish and had evidently already been excavated during the 1864 restoration of the church. The upper 20cm of material was of dark brown soil and stone waste

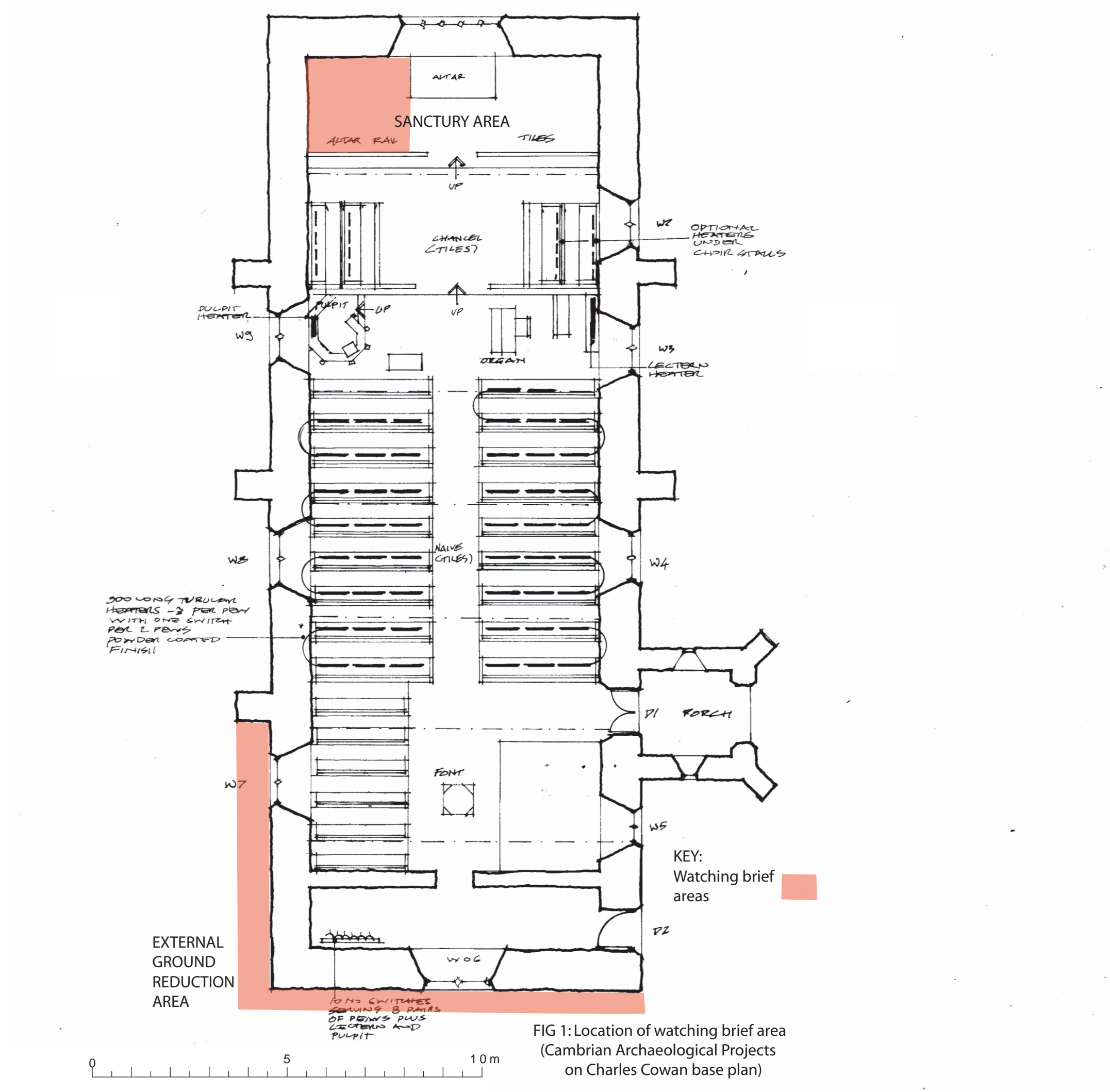
(layer 5), overlaying a cleaner stony material (layer 6) 20cm thick, which cleaned down (in the north-west corner) onto a shale and clay deposit (layer 7). All three layers were disturbed and probably post 1864 in date.

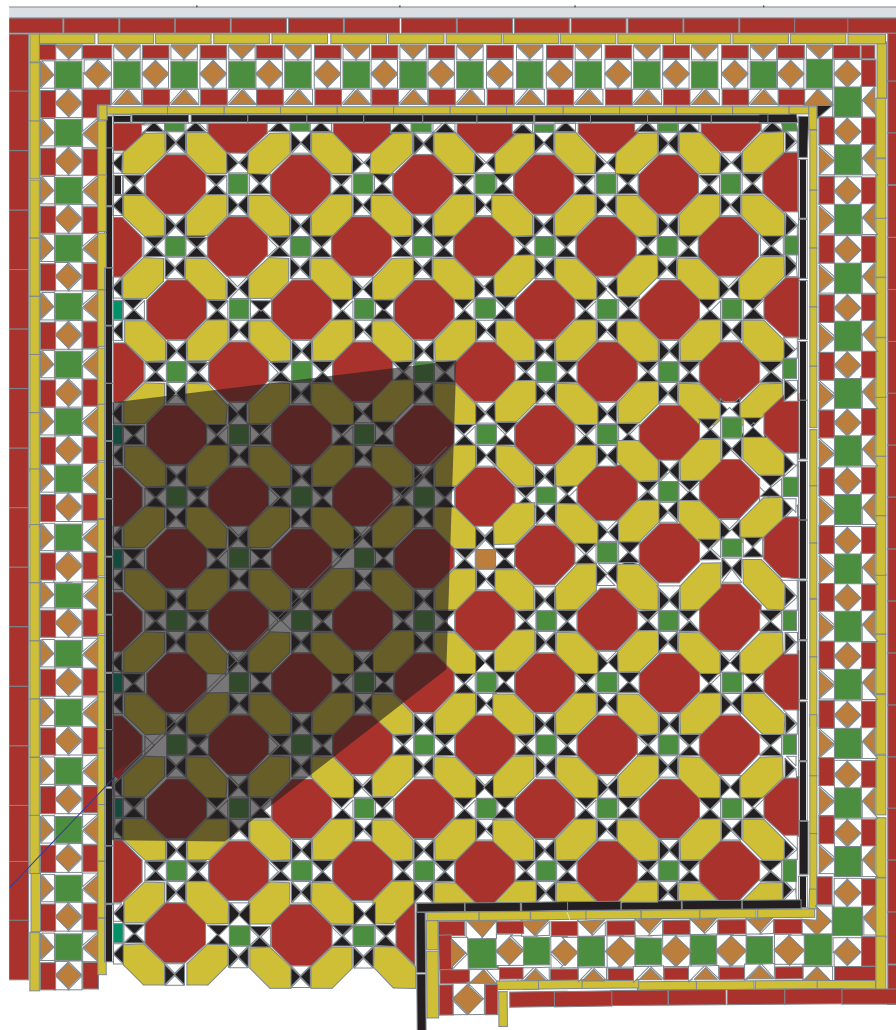
- 4.2.4 A reddish mortar on the lower face of the west wall indicates that this may relate to the 1864 work, and that the current cement render on the external face of the west wall, and some bricks at a low level below the north-west corner (PLATE 4), may relate to 20th century work on the church.

5 Discussion and Interpretation

5.1 Overall interpretation

- 5.1.1 Work on the 1864 sanctuary floor indicates that no collapsing vaults lay below the floor and that cracking was due to recent frost damage. Similar damage is also evident in the choir adjacent to the choir stalls.
- 5.1.2 The external area adjacent to the west and north walls of the church have been excavated in the past, probably when the church was restored in 1864. The current cement render on the west wall and brickwork below the north-west corner probably relate to 20th century work on the church.
- 5.1.3 Investigation of the internal render on the west wall and recording of the external face of the west wall when the render is taken off will be the subject of an additional note when this work is completed. This is not part of the originally agreed faculty watching brief, but will inform a decision about internal render replacement.





KEY:

Area of sanctuary
floor lifted



FIG 2: Location of excavated area in sanctuary
(Cambrian Archaeological Projects, on Charles Cowan base plan)



PLATE 1: Sanctuary area excavation, looking south.
Scale 0.5m



PLATE 2: Sanctuary floor after excavation below floor, looking north.



PLATE 3: Ground reduction work around west and north walls, looking south.



PLATE 4: Brick underpinning below north-west corner of church, of 20th century date, looking south.
Scale in 0.5m divisions

ARCHIVE COVER SHEET

LLANWRIN CHURCH POWYS

| | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Site Name: | Llanwrin Church, Powys |
| Site Code: | LLW/11WB |
| PRN: | N/A |
| NPRN : | N/A |
| SAM: | N/A |
| Other Ref No: | CAP project No. 1203 |
| NGR: | SH 78662 03529 |
| Site Type: | Urban |
| Project Type: | Archaeological watching brief |
| Project Officer: | Kevin Blockley |
| Project Dates: | 30 August 2011 |
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