

Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust
New Main, Pant-yr-Eos, Henllys, Gwent
Archaeological Watching Brief

March 1994

Report prepared for Dŵr Cymru - Welsh Water

GGAT Report No 94/022
Project No A181

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FIGURE ONE: Plan of area of Watching Brief

SUMMARY

On 28th March 1994, a watching brief was undertaken by GGAT Contracts on behalf of Dŵr Cymru - Welsh Water during the excavation of a pipe trench adjacent to St Peter's Church at Henllys in Gwent.

No archaeological deposits were revealed in the first six metres' length of trench section exposed. It was concluded that, because of the very narrow width of the trench (*c* 0.2m width), the disturbance to any potential archaeological remains in this area would be minimal, and that the opportunities for recording stratigraphic data would also be very limited. No further monitoring of the excavation of the pipe trench was considered necessary.

Acknowledgements

This report was prepared by M Lawler, and the project was managed by M Locock of the Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust (Contracts Section).

The Trust is grateful to the individuals and organisations who have assisted in the undertaking of the Archaeological Watching Brief, with particular thanks to Kate Bowen of Dŵr Cymru - Welsh Water.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 *Development proposal and commission*

Dŵr Cymru - Welsh Water have constructed a new water main between Pant-yr-Eos Reservoir, north of Risca, and Garth Fach, west of Bettws, Gwent. An Archaeological Appraisal of the development was undertaken by GGAT Contracts on behalf of Dŵr Cymru - Welsh Water¹. From the results of this study, it was recommended that an Archaeological Watching Brief should be undertaken during excavation of a limited section of the pipe trench adjacent to St Peter's Church, Henllys.

In March 1994, GGAT Contracts was commissioned by Dŵr Cymru - Welsh Water to undertake the Archaeological Watching Brief in fulfilment of this recommendation. The present report contains the results of the Watching Brief.

1.2 *Specifications for the report*

The specification for the project was drawn up in accordance with the *Standard in British Archaeology: Archaeological Watching Briefs*². A copy of the specification is presented in full as Appendix One.

1.3 *Lay-out of the report*

Section 2 of the report describes the topography of the area of the Watching Brief (Section 2.1), describes the pipe-trench and the results of the Watching Brief (Section 2.2) and draws conclusions from these results (Section 2.3).

1.4 *Abbreviations used in the report*

GGAT refers to the Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust (Contracts Section). References to documents and published works are given in the footnotes.

1.5 *Copyright notice*

The Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust holds the copyright of this report and has granted a licence to Dŵr Cymru - Welsh Water to reproduce the material it contains.

¹ *Maynard D 1994 Archaeological Appraisal New Main, Pant-yr-Eos, Henllys, Gwent Report No 94/006 prepared by Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust (Contracts) for Dŵr Cymru - Welsh Water.*

² *Institute of Field Archaeologists (September 1993).*

2.0 THE WATCHING BRIEF

2.1 *Topography*

- 2.1.1 St Peter's Church at Henllys lies on the south side of the extensive parish. The church is sited close to a narrow sunken road which follows an interfluvial ridge between the stream valleys of the Pant-yr-Eos Brook to the southwest and the Nant-y-Pandy stream to the northeast.
- 2.1.2 The area considered to be of potential archaeological sensitivity lies adjacent to St Peter's churchyard, and is defined by the churchyard on the southwest side, the access track to the Old Rectory on the southeast side and the road from Bettws on the northeast side. A former field boundary, which is no longer extant, defined the area on its northwest side. In the desk-based study (Appendix Three, Page 13), it was suggested that this small field (OS 7097) may once have been part of the graveyard, which may have been reduced in area since then.
- 2.1.3 The ground falls from west to east, following the general contour of the hillslope. A prominent ridge, possibly a lynchet, marks a break in slope about halfway down the length of the field, though its nature could not be ascertained. At the time of the trench excavation, this small field was under permanent grass, though the documentary evidence retrieved in the desk-based study, and the soil stratigraphy observed in the trench, suggested that it had been tilled or cultivated in the past.

2.2 *The pipe trench*

- 2.2.1 The trench was excavated along the length of the field from southeast to northwest, following the line of the Bettws road; a distance of some 56m. The trench width was approximately 0.2m in width, and was excavated to a depth of about 1m in the monitored section. No topsoil stripping of the flanking easement took place.
- 2.2.2 As the length of each section of the trench to be opened was determined by the number of pipe lengths which could be conveniently laid at each stage, only a short length of some six metres of trench was excavated through this particular field on the first day (March 28th). It was understood that the remaining length of the trench through this field would be excavated on the following day. Archaeological monitoring of the trench was restricted, therefore, to a short length at the southeast (lower) end of the field, close to the access track to the Old Rectory. It was felt, however, that the resulting information was sufficient to characterise the stratigraphy of the field as a whole.
- 2.2.3 The soil horizon revealed in this trench section was a distinctive reddish stoneless sandy silt loam derived from the parent Devonian shales and sandstones, and fairly typical of the better drained hillslopes in this area¹. Little soil structure was

evident in the section, though the narrow width of the trench and very gloomy lighting conditions that day made it difficult to examine the lower part of the section.

- 2.2.4 A single small sherd of 18th or early 19th century glazed earthenware recovered from the machine spoil was the only artefact noted. This may be consistent with the recorded use of the field as a garden in the last century². The proximity of the field to Church Farm on the opposite side of the road, as well as the Old Rectory to the southwest, suggests possible sources for the sherd. There was no evidence, however, of any *in-situ* archaeological deposits.

2.3 Conclusions

- 2.3.1 From the limited evidence of the short length of trench examined, it seems unlikely that there has been any intensive archaeological activity in this part of the field. It would be necessary to undertake excavations on a much larger scale to determine whether there has been any previous use of the field as a graveyard, though on present evidence this seems less likely.

- 2.3.2 The presence of the cultivated plots and farm buildings surrounding the churchyard raises some points of archaeological interest. Although great caution should be exercised in attempting to reconstruct a medieval community from its remains in a post-medieval landscape, there are features here which are likely to be of early origin. The present arrangement of fields, roads and buildings consists of the following:

050139 (a) St Peter's Church itself, which serves as the nucleus of the settlement. Its dating is uncertain, apart from the presence of a surviving 14th century bell and the octagonal base of the churchyard cross (PRN 151), which of the same date³. There is nothing, however, about the dedication itself to indicate that it has a pre-Norman origin. The church is set in a subrectangular churchyard, enclosed by a hedge and ditch, whose lay-out seems to have been defined by the road intersection.

(b) Surrounding the churchyard is a radial arrangement of field boundaries, roads and pathways. The two roads may reasonably be supposed to have been present when the churchyard was created, as medieval rural churchyards have usually tended to be strongly resistant to subsequent changes in the landscape. There is no dating evidence for the existing field boundaries (though they respect the medieval features) and there may also have been other boundaries which have been subsequently lost. Church Farm (PRN 3702) may be seen as part of the features grouped around the churchyard, though the present farmstead is post-medieval in date. The fields around the church are on better drained soils that were arable lands in the last century, and are in turn flanked by the less well-drained stream valleys. OS Field 7907 is of particular interest in that it lies

¹ *Soil Survey of England and Wales 1983 1:250,000 Soil Map of England and Wales (Sheet 2: Wales).*

² *Henllys tithe survey.*

³ *Maynard D 1994 Archaeological Appraisal, New Main, Pant-yr-eos, Henllys, Gwent GGAT Report No 94/006, 13.*

between the churchyard and the road, and thus also forms one of the defining edges of the churchyard.

(c) At a distance of more than 1.5km from the cluster represented by the church, farm and road intersection is the separate *Ilys* site of Cwrt Henllys (PRN 142g), connected to the church by the ridgetop hollow-way. There are other dispersed farmsteads in the area (such as Pant-yr-Eos (PRN 145g)) that are likely to be of late medieval or earlier date.

- 2.3.3 One possible analogy for Henllys Church are the early medieval bond hamlets (*treſi cyfrif*) of North Wales, some of which were clustered around the churches, while others (*maerdrefi*) were associated with the court (*Ilys*) of the lord. It must be emphasised that the early settlement models for North Wales are to some extent rather different to those of the south, partly because the traditional forms of society (both in the written accounts and lawbooks and in actual communities) tended to survive much later into the middle ages in the areas furthest from Norman influence. We can assume that early settlement in the southeast was organised in a similar fashion to the better documented hinterland, though there is far less evidence for this¹. At Henllys, the presence of the *Ilys* as a neighbouring focal point to the church suggests that vestiges of a traditional settlement form may be present. It should be emphasised, however, that there is no evidence that Henllys Church has ever been the centre of a larger hamlet, and that any such analogy is speculative.
- 2.3.4 At Llanynys in the vale of Clwyd, where the church was the centre of a monastic community, the nucleal lands (*tir corddlan*) surrounded the churchyard in a radial fashion, surviving as arable crofts into the 19th century². A similar arrangement can be seen in the early settlements at Aberffraw in Angelsey, including the nearby secular free hamlet of Eglwys Ailt³, where the nucleal lands surrounded the churchyard. It is possible that the field separating the churchyard at Henllys from the road was originally part of a series of nucleal gardens radiating outwards from the churchyard. Interestingly, the relict field boundary which survives as a lynchet extending across OS Field 7907 suggests a former partition of this land, extending outwards from the churchyard. Further study of the tithe survey and parish glebe records may help to elucidate this.
- 2.3.5 We stress that this model is speculative, and would require much firmer supporting evidence. If, however, the extant small enclosures adjacent to the churchyard were originally part of a band of nucleal *tir corddlan*, then this land would probably have been cultivated but not occupied by buildings.

¹ Davies W 1982 *Wales in the Early Middle Ages* Leicester University Press.

² Jones GRJ 1989 *The Dark Ages, in Huw Owen D (ed) Settlement and society in Wales, 177-98.*

³ Jones *ibid*, 185.

APPENDIX ONE: SPECIFICATIONS

Definition of Study

The project will conform to the *Standard in British Archaeology for Archaeological Watching Briefs*, issued by the Institute of Field Archaeologists in September 1993, and will be carried out in accordance with the **GGAT (Contracts) Guidelines for the Execution of Assessment Projects**.

1.0 Objectives

- 1.1 Observation and investigation of any archaeological deposits exposed by topsoil stripping.
- 1.2 Preparation of site archive.
- 1.3 Preparation of report on results of fieldwork.

2.0 Method

- 2.1 *Field Walking* - Field walking to collect surface finds and make visual observations relating to archaeological interests on areas exposed by topsoil stripping and other works.
- 2.2 *Buildings Survey* - Recording of surviving buildings or other structures of historic, architectural or archaeological importance by detailed plan, measured elevation where appropriate, and photography.
- 2.3 *Archaeological Investigation* of such features as are revealed by machining works, as work schedule allows.
- 2.4 *Recording* - The techniques employed will conform to best current professional practice. Archaeological deposits will be recorded with a single continuous context numbering system, in accordance with GGAT's *Manual of Excavation Recording Techniques*, a copy of which is deposited in the county SMR. Contexts will be drawn at a suitable scale (usually 1:20) in plan, and, where appropriate, in section. All significant contexts will be photographed in 35mm colour transparency and monochrome film. Where the nature of the deposits does not merit this level of recording, notes and photographs will be used to create a record.
- 2.5 *Finds* - All significant finds will be retained and recorded by context, and temporarily stored in stable conditions.
- 2.6 *Specialist Services* - Arrangement of appropriate specialist services, as necessary.

3.0 Post Fieldwork Phase

- 3.1 Preparation of site archive of archaeological records relating to trial excavations to the specifications as laid down in *Management of Archaeological Projects*, English Heritage 1991, Appendix 3.
- 3.2 Assessment of archaeological data.
- 3.3 *Preparation of the research archive*, to the specifications laid down in *Management of Archaeological Projects*, English Heritage 1991, Appendix 6.

- 3.4 *Deposition of the research archive* with the County SMR, should no further work be undertaken.
- 3.5 *Deposition of the site archive*, including artefacts and ecofacts, excepting those which may be subject to the laws of Treasure Trove, with an appropriate institution subject to the agreement of the site owners. (Agreement with an appropriate Institution to accept this material needs to be made in advance of the project commencing). Deposition of a copy of the site archive with the National Archaeological Record, indexed in accordance with the *Draft Guidelines for the Deposition of Excavation Records*.
- 4.0 ***Assessment***
- 4.1 Assessment of information gathered through the execution of Sections 2 - 3.
- 5.0 ***Reports***
- 5.1 *Client* - Synthesis of data gathered through the execution of 2 - 4, 5.1 & 5.2 together with inclusion of supporting evidence in appendices as appropriate.
- 5.2 *Academic* - Archaeological digest report, suitable for publication in a regional or national learned journal (eg *Archaeology in Wales*).
- 6.0 ***Staff***
- 6.1 The project will be managed by the Principal Archaeological Officer (Contracts), AG Marvell BA MIFA, and Projects Manager (Assessments), M Locock BA AIFA, and carried out by one of the Contracts Section's Project Officers, all of whom are experienced in this type of work. Field staff will be experienced archaeologists drawn from the team regularly used by GGAT Contracts
- 7.0 ***Insurance***
- 7.1 **GGAT (Contracts)** is fully insured for this type of work, and holds substantial Professional Indemnity cover. Details of policies can be supplied on request.
- 8.0 ***Health and Safety policy***
- 8.1 GGAT has prepared a Health and Safety statement, a copy of which is available on request. The Trust will not endanger the health, safety and welfare of its employees or others in the execution of its projects.

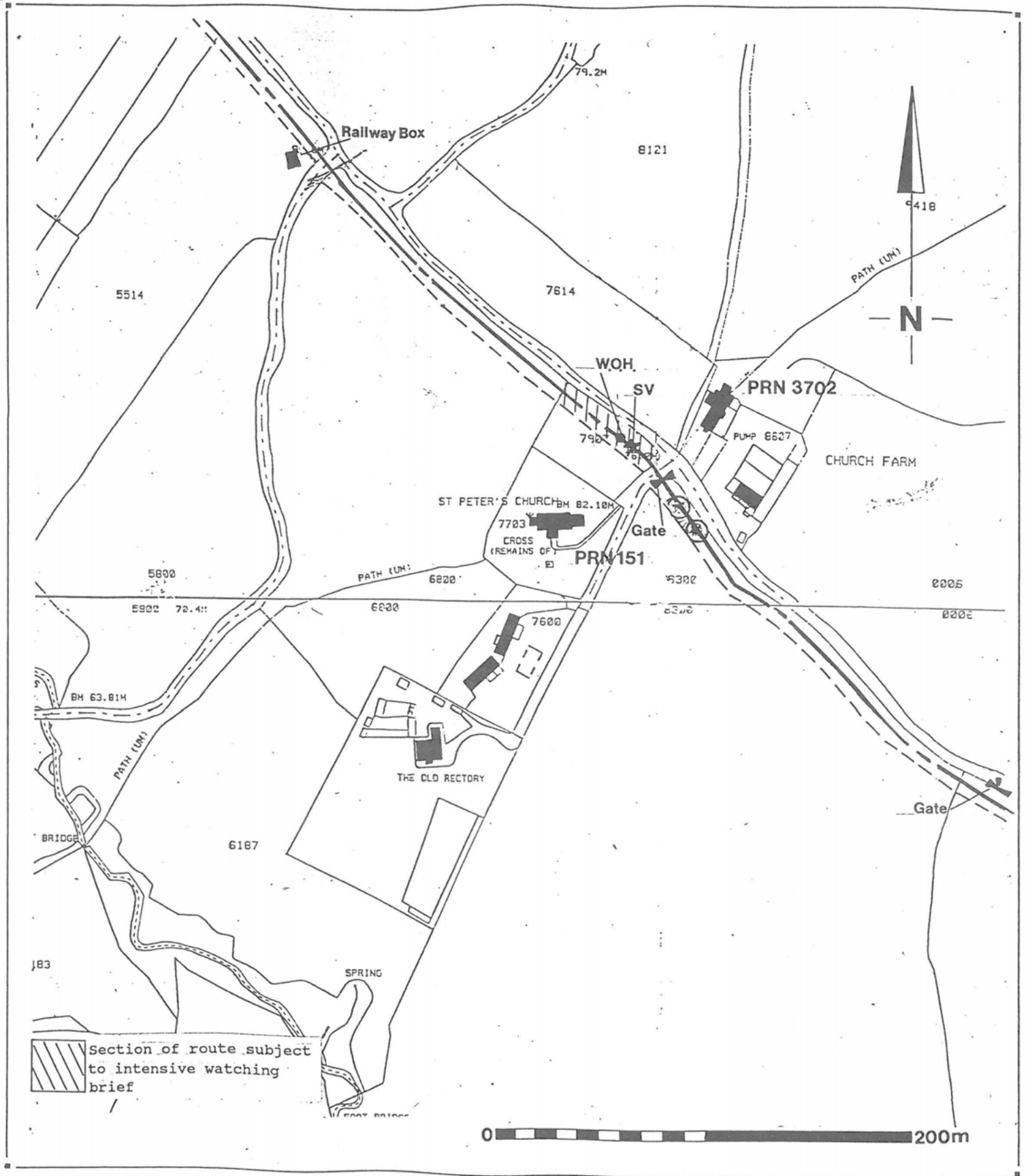


FIGURE ONE: Plan of the area of the Watching Brief