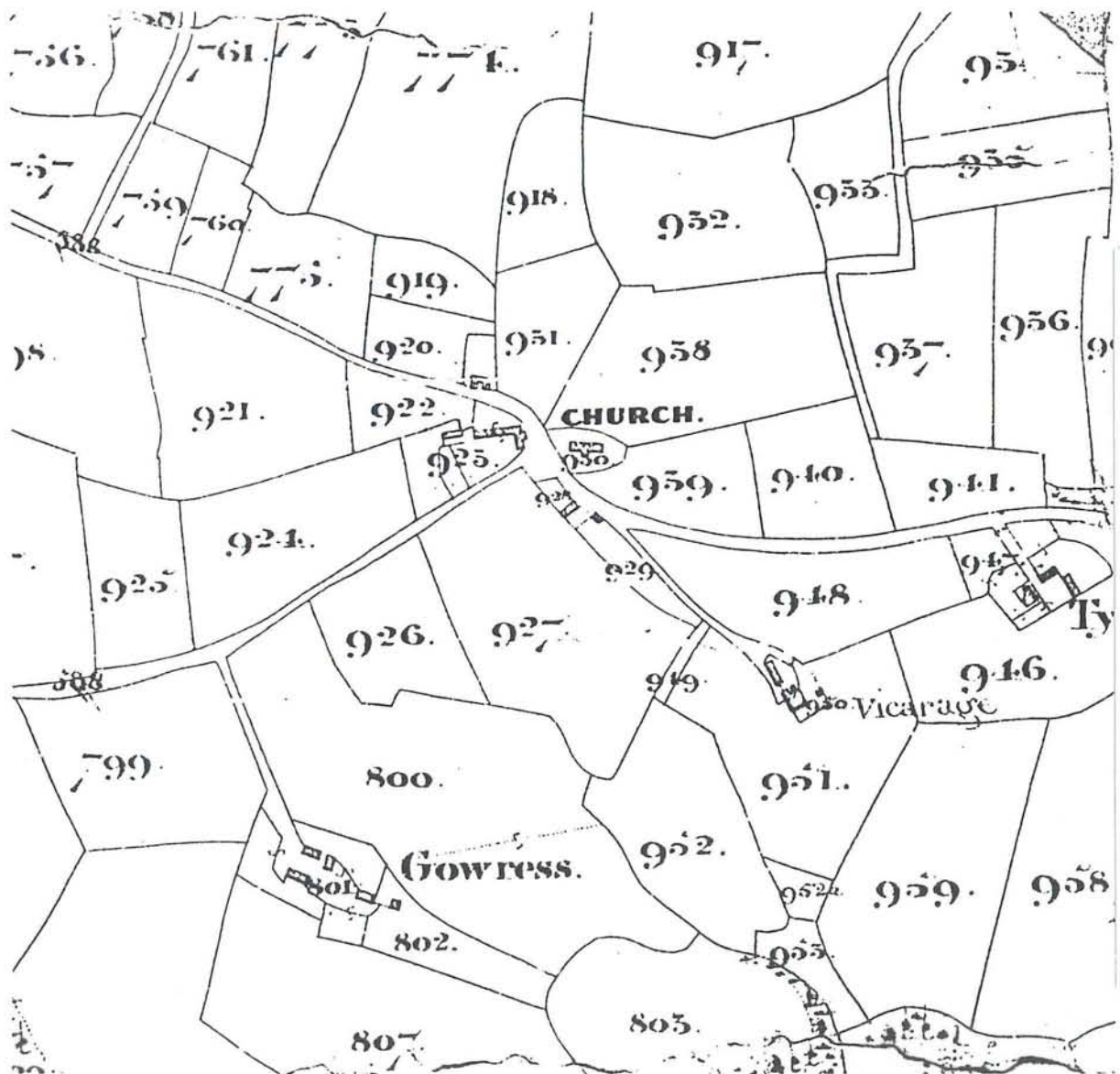


# Llanwyddelan Churchyard Wall, Powys

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF



**CPAT Report No 498**

# **Llanwyddelan Churchyard Wall, Powys**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

**R Hankinson**  
November 2002

Report for St Gwyddelan's Parochial Church Council

**The Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust**

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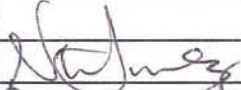
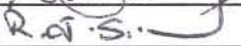
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## CPAT Report Record

### Report and status

CPAT Report Title	Llanwyddelan Churchyard Wall		
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## **1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 In January 2002, the Contracting Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT) was asked by Gwynfor Humphreys Ltd, acting on behalf of the Parochial Church Council of St Gwyddelan's Church, Llanwyddelan, Powys, to provide a specification and quotation for a watching brief to be undertaken during the rebuilding of a section of a revetment wall that forms the boundary of the churchyard. The work was the subject of a Diocesan Faculty.
- 1.2 The watching brief has been carried out at the request of Mr M. Walters on behalf of the archaeological advisor to the Diocese of St Asaph, and was the subject of a design brief (CWAT 442, dated 8th January 2002), prepared by Mr Walters. The brief required an initial photographic survey as a record of the wall prior to the commencement of work, followed by a watching brief during the groundworks to examine and record any features which were revealed.
- 1.3 The CPAT quotation was accepted by the Parochial Church Council of St Gwyddelan's in October 2002, and the watching brief was carried out in November of the same year.

## **2 LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY**

- 2.1 The church of St Gwyddelan is located at SJ 08250117 (Fig. 1), and lies within the small village of Llanwyddelan, which is itself approximately 9km to the north-north-west of Newtown in Powys. The revetment wall which required rebuilding formed part of the southern boundary of the churchyard, where it overlooks the minor road running west from the valley of the River Rhiw towards the village of Adfa.
- 2.2 The church is located on a small knoll, towards the eastern end of an interfluvial spur which lies to the south of the southern branch of the River Rhiw, at a height of about 220m OD. The spur takes the form of a broad, undulating ridge and is mainly used as agricultural pasture.
- 2.3 The underlying geology of the area consists of undivided Ludlow and Wenlock series mudstone and siltstone rocks belonging to the Silurian period (1994 British Geological Society map). The soils of the area are generally fine silty and clayey soils belonging to the Cegin soil association (1983 Soil Survey of England and Wales map and legend), and are derived from the underlying rocks.

## **3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The church of St Gwyddelan is believed to have an early medieval origin. This is largely as a result of the dedication and the form and appearance of the churchyard, but corroborative evidence is provided by a carved early medieval stone which has been incorporated in the buttress at the east corner of the present church (plate 4).
- 3.2 The existing church was built in 1865, on the site of its medieval predecessor. That earlier, medieval, church is believed to have been the subject of rebuilding work in about 1641, but otherwise very little is known about its form (Silvester and Frost, 1999).
- 3.3 The churchyard appears to have originally been oval in shape (see Fig 4), forming a raised area surrounding the church. The south-east part of the previous boundary is still visible within the churchyard, which gained its present appearance when it was extended to the south-east in 1938 (Silvester and Frost, 1999).

#### **4 WATCHING BRIEF (See Figs 2 & 3)**

- 4.1 The initial part of the work specified by the design brief consisted of a photographic survey of the existing wall, to provide a record of the structure prior to its demolition and rebuilding. This was undertaken in black and white and colour print, and colour slide formats.
- 4.2 The demolition of the wall by machine was largely completed when the works were visited, but it was apparent that the wall comprised a mortared stone revetment. The soil behind the wall was then cut back to the specified position by machine and the section which was revealed was examined. A 3.9m-long section at its east end was cleaned by hand, photographed and drawn. Context record forms were completed which described all of the visible features and layers that were revealed.
- 4.4 Examination of the section which resulted from the machining revealed an upper layer of dark grey-brown gritty loam topsoil (1), which varied in thickness from 0.1m at the west end of the demolished wall section, up to a maximum of 0.2m at the east end. Beneath the topsoil was a layer of grey-brown sticky clay silt (2) which varied from 0.2m in thickness at the west end of the section up to 0.6m in thickness at 0.8m from the east end of the section, where it coincided with the scarp which is believed to define the line of the former churchyard boundary. It was evident from the section that the line of the scarp had been cut prior to the construction of the wall, probably during an earlier widening of the road to the south of the churchyard. At this time, the south side of the churchyard would have been cut back to its present position and the wall built to prevent erosion of the exposed face.
- 4.5 Cleaning of the 3.9m-long section at the east end of the demolished wall revealed three features of interest, some of which may relate to previous churchyard boundaries. The uppermost of these consisted of a 1.4m-length of the section within layer 2, which contained a random collection of disarticulated bone and a small amount of 19th-century pottery, running west from a position directly beneath the top of the scarp (see Fig. 3). To the west of the area of disarticulated bone, three stones were exposed in the section at a lower level. These could possibly be the foundation of a former churchyard boundary wall (6), 1.1m wide and 0.35m high, which appeared to be set into the top of the underlying subsoil (3). A mortar and plaster-rich lens of material (5), within layer 2, was found immediately to the east of the possible wall. This was initially 0.25m thick, but faded out to the east after 1.0m.
- 4.6 Beneath layer 2, there were two layers of natural subsoil. The uppermost consisted of an orange sticky clay silt (3), which was 0.2m thick at the west end of the demolished wall section, thickening to a maximum of 0.55m at its east end. The underlying deposit of grey clay (4) was at least 2.0m in thickness and contained more angular stone towards its base.
- 4.7 The disarticulated bone which was revealed by the excavations could not be related to a specific burial or burials. It appeared most likely that the bone was derived from burials that had been disturbed, probably during a phase of church rebuilding, or possibly when the road to the south of the churchyard was widened. All bone which was seen during the archaeological works was retained on site in order that it could be re-deposited in consecrated ground when the new wall was completed.

#### **5 CONCLUSIONS**

- 5.1 No burials or in-situ remains were disturbed during the demolition of the old wall and the subsequent excavation of the footings for the new wall. Human bone uncovered during the works was put to one side for reburial.
- 5.2 The section through the churchyard deposits which was provided by the excavation revealed two features which might relate to an earlier churchyard boundary. The possible foundation of a former churchyard wall was recorded, outside which there was a lens of mortar and plaster-rich material, thought to represent debris from a phase of church rebuilding, probably dating to either 1641 or 1865.

- 5.3 If it is assumed that the possible wall foundation mentioned above does represent an earlier boundary, then the concentration of disarticulated bone which was revealed on its east side suggests that disturbed material built up there following its demolition; the pottery in this area suggests a 19th or 20th-century date for this activity. The existing line of the scarp which is visible in the churchyard to the north-east is slightly to the east of the putative former churchyard boundary at the point where the revetment wall was removed. Possibly material was pushed downslope as part of landscaping work when the church was rebuilt in 1865.

## **6 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

- 6.1 The writer would like to thank the following for their assistance and co-operation: Wendy Owen of CPAT, for assisting with the initial photographic survey; and the staff of Milford Construction, the site contractors, for their co-operation during the watching brief.

## **7 REFERENCES**

### **7.1 References**

Silvester, B, and Frost, P, 1999, *The Historic Churches of Montgomeryshire*, Welshpool: CPAT Report No 310.

### **7.2 Cartographic Sources**

1994 British Geological Survey map of the Rocks of Wales (Solid edition)

1983 Soil Survey of England and Wales map and legend (Sheet 2 - Wales)

## APPENDIX 1

### CHURCHYARD RETAINING WALL, ST GWYDDELAN'S CHURCH, LLANWYDDELAN, POWYS SPECIFICATION FOR A CONTRACTED ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF BY THE CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

#### 1 Introduction

- 1.1 The proposed development involves repair work to a collapsing retaining wall at St Gwyddelan's Church, Llanwyddelan, Newtown, Powys. The Curatorial section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust have determined that a watching brief should be carried out during the works. Accordingly, a Brief (CWAT 442, dated 08/01/02) has been prepared detailing the scheme of works required.
- 1.2 Information held on the County Sites and Monuments Record indicates that the church is probably of early medieval origin.

#### 2 Objectives

- 2.1 The objectives of the archaeological works are:
  - 2.1.1 to record the nature, condition, significance and, where possible, the chronology of any archaeological deposits and/or features revealed within the area of the proposed development during the development works in so far as these aims are possible;
  - 2.1.2 to prepare a report outlining the results of the watching brief.

#### 3 Methods

- 3.1 A photographic survey prior to works commencing. This will be in 35mm format black and white and colour print, and colour slide.
- 3.2 The watching brief will be undertaken during the cutting back of the existing bank and subsequent foundation trench excavation.
- 3.3 Limited excavation of all significant contexts will be undertaken where possible following negotiations with the developer. All significant archaeological deposits and/or features noted during the watching brief will be recorded by drawn plan/section and photography in 35mm black and white and colour print, and colour slide. All features will be tied in locationally to the Ordnance Survey as accurately as possible.
- 3.4 Following the on-site work an illustrated and bound report will be prepared according to the principles detailed in Section 8 of the Brief. This will be in A4 format and contain conventional sections on: Site location, Topography and Geology; Historic Background; Catalogue of sites identified with notes on their condition and significance, Conclusions and Recommendations and References, together with appropriate appendices on archives and finds. Further publication of the results in an appropriate regional or national journal will be undertaken at a later date and as considered appropriate depending on the nature of the findings.
- 3.5 The site archive will be prepared to specifications laid out in Appendix 3 in the *Management of Archaeological Projects* (English Heritage, 1991). Following agreement with the landowner, arrangements will be made for the long term conservation and storage of all artefacts in an appropriate repository.

#### **4 Resources and Programming**

- 4.1 The watching brief will be undertaken by a skilled and experienced archaeologist. Overall supervision will be by Mr R.J.Silvester, a senior member of CPAT's staff who is also a member of the Institute of Field Archaeologists.
- 4.2 All report preparation will be completed by or with the assistance of the same field archaeologist who conducted the watching brief.
- 4.3 The duration of the watching brief will depend entirely on the developers programme of work. The subsequent report will be prepared immediately following completion of on-site recording, dependent on the client's instructions and the arrangement of a suitable timetable. The date of commencement, has yet to be formalised, but is likely to be during August or September 2000. The archaeological curator will be informed of the detailed timetable and staffing levels when agreement has been reached with the client.
- 4.4 Requirements relating to Health and Safety regulations will be adhered to by CPAT and its staff.
- 4.5 CPAT is covered by appropriate Public and Employer's Liability insurance.

N.W.Jones  
Senior Project Archaeologist  
14th January 2002

## **APPENDIX 2**

### **SITE ARCHIVE**

#### **Photographic archive**

2 colour slide films  
2 black and white print films  
2 colour print films

#### **Watching brief archive**

8 context record forms  
1 A1 site drawing at 1:10 scale (Section A-B)

#### **Finds (not retained)**

Context 2  
2 sherds of developed white ware (19th-20th century)  
1 sherd of a Buckley fineware handle  
1 fragment of an iron strap hinge

Context 5  
8 small pieces of mortar and plaster

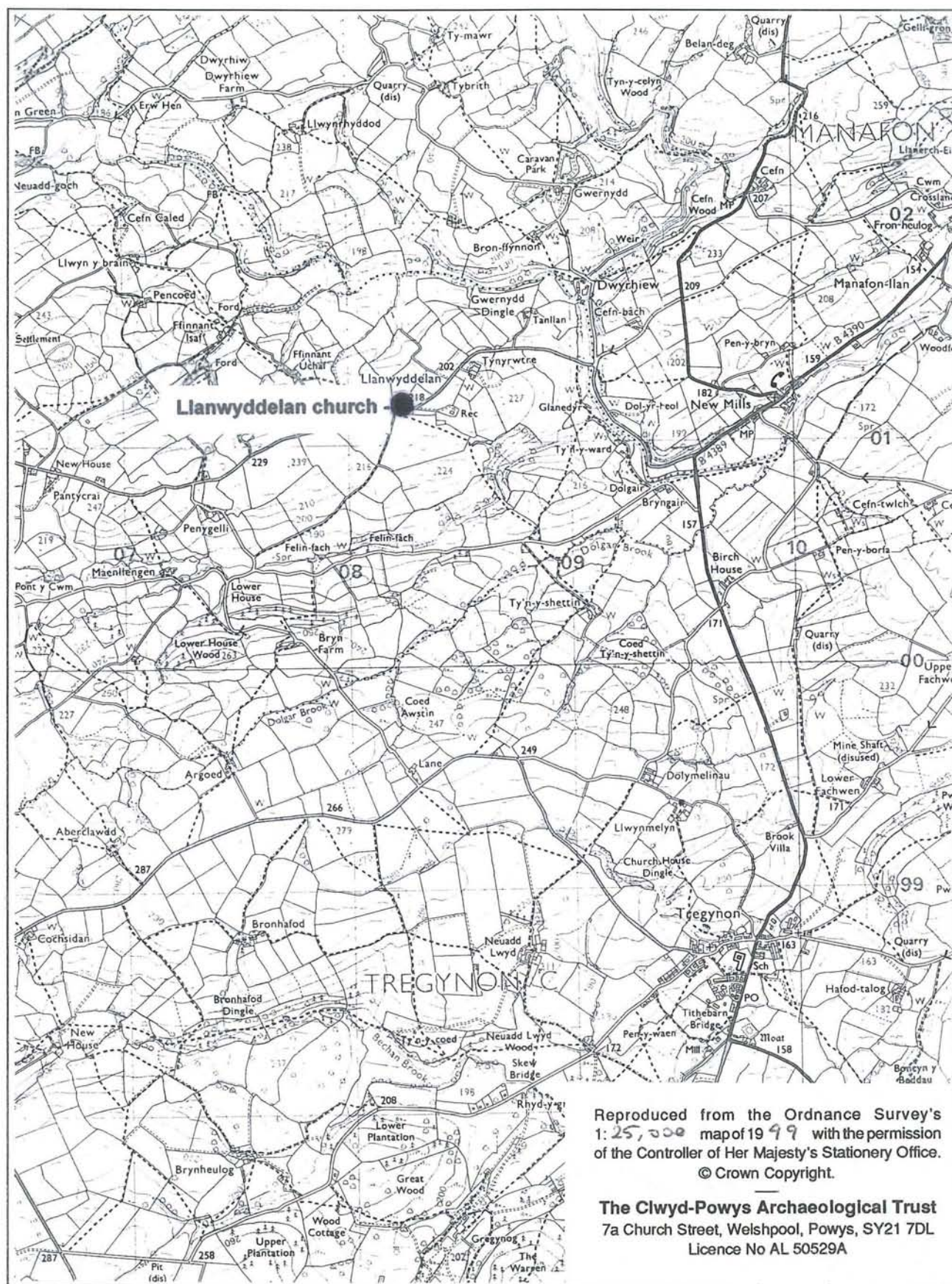


Fig. 1 Location of Llanwyddelan Church. Scale 1:25,000

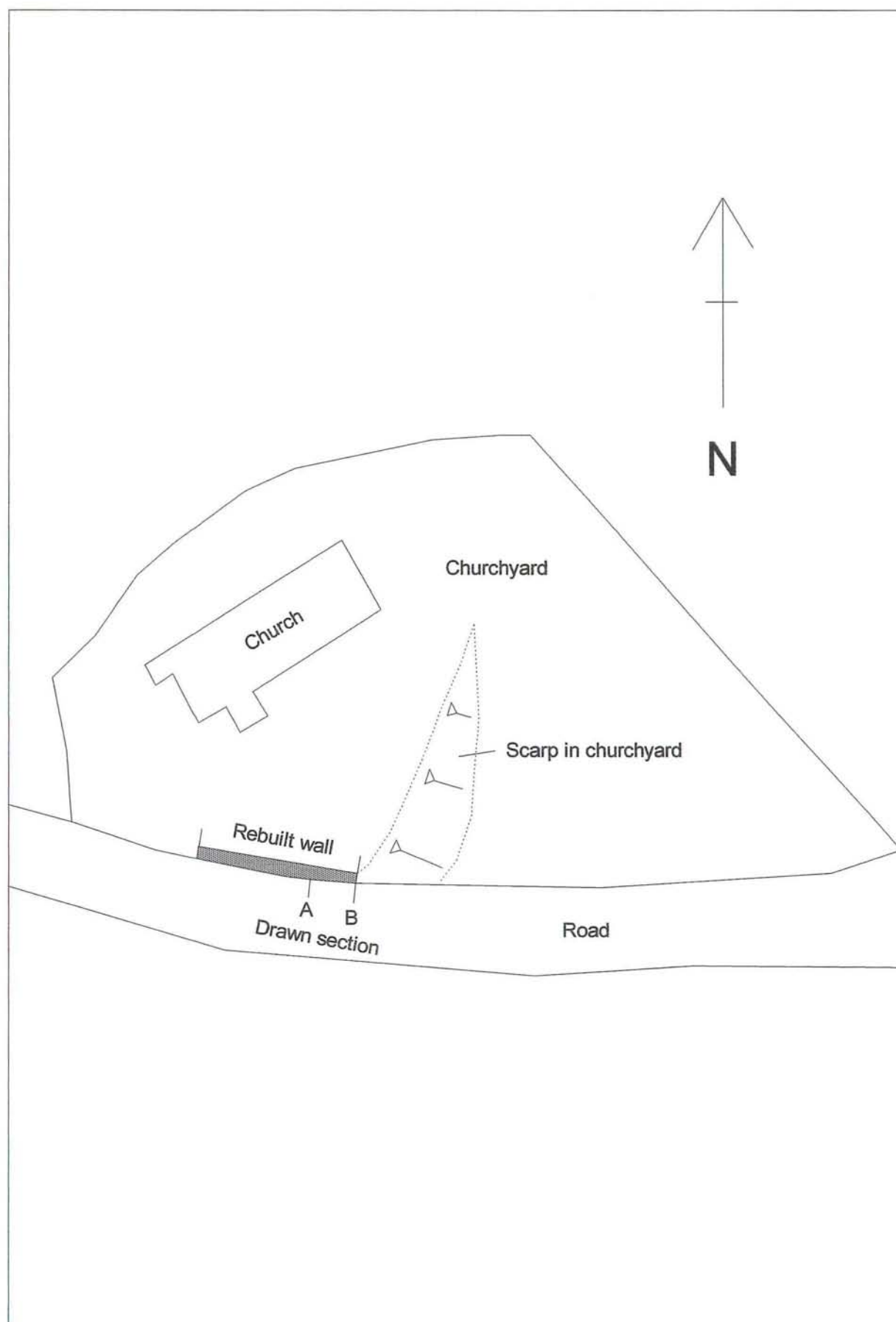


Fig 2 Location of rebuilt wall and drawn section. Scale 1:500

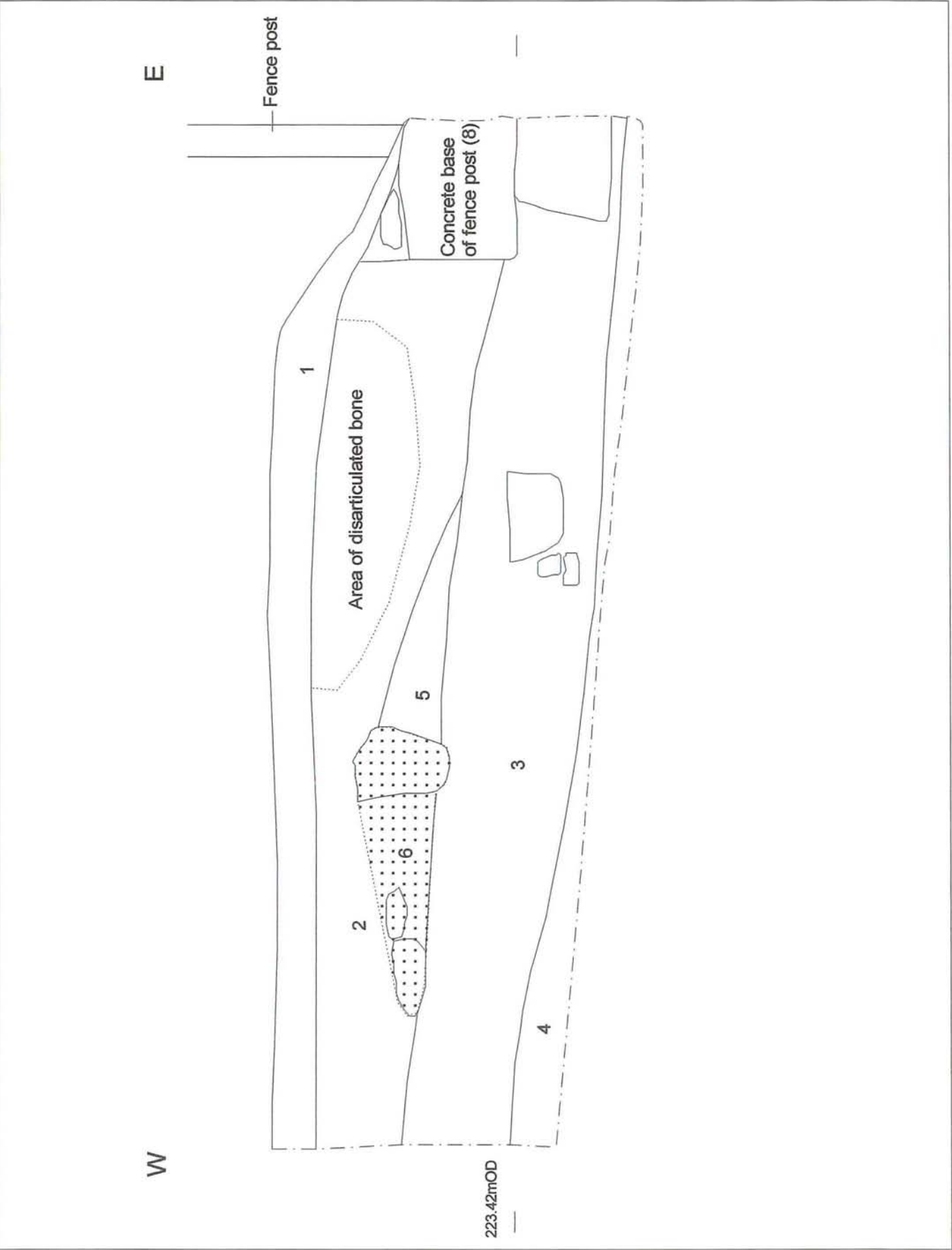


Fig 3 Section A-B after removal of revetment wall. Scale 1:20

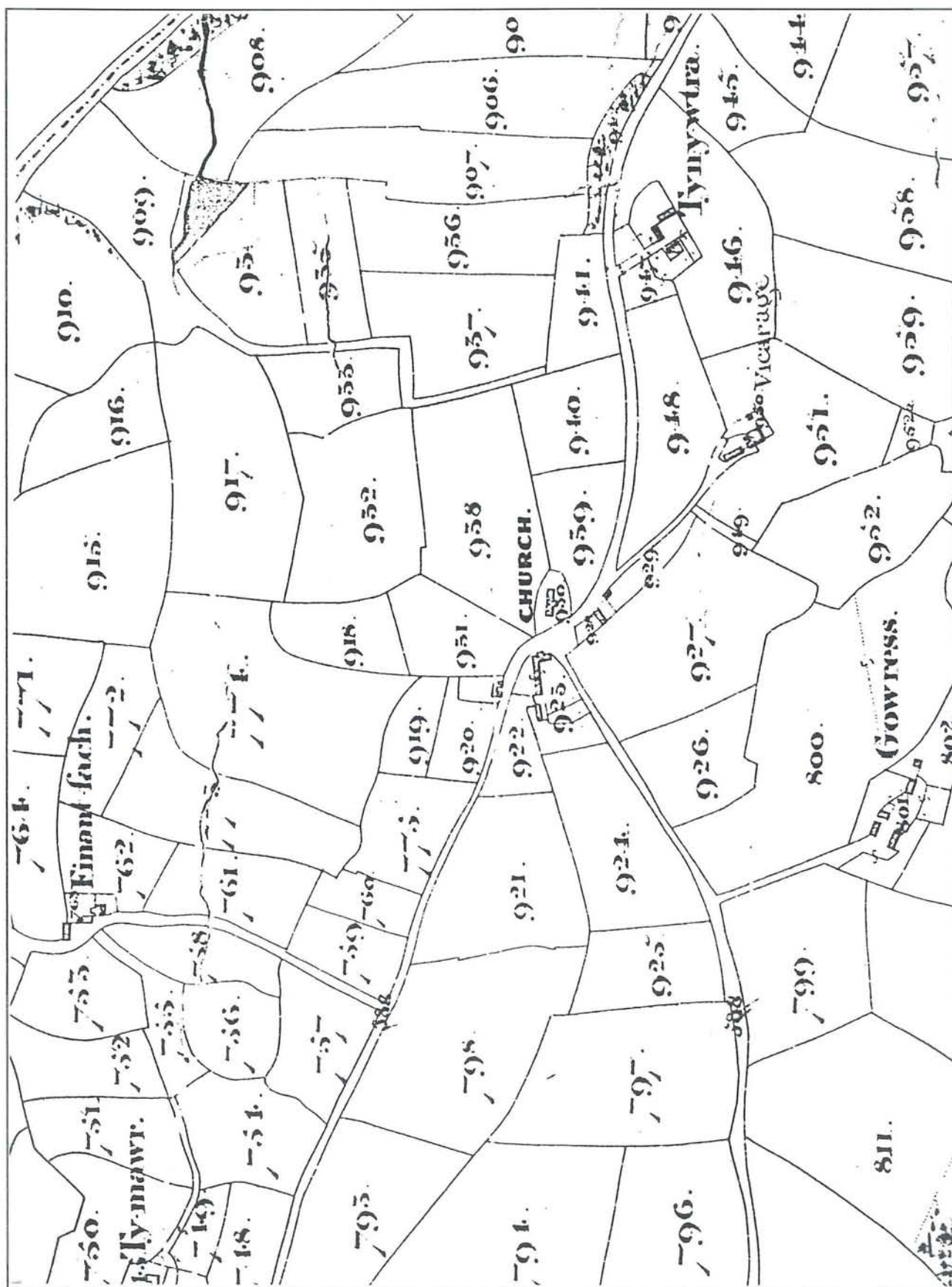


Fig. 4 1843 Llanwyddelan Tithe map.



Plate 1 View of churchyard from SE. Photo CPAT CS02/40/21.



Plate 2 Section of revetment wall prior to rebuilding, from S. Photo CPAT CS02/40/16.



Plate 3 Section A-B after removal of revetment wall. Photo CPAT 1259.02



Plate 4 Early medieval stone in east buttress of St Gwyddelan's church. Photo CPAT 1259.08