

Llandrinio Church, Powys

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF



CPAT Report No 513

Llandrinio Church, Powys

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Report for Llandrinio Parochial Church Council

The Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust

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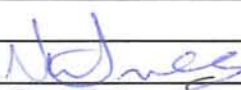
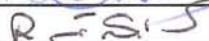
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CPAT Report Record

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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In August 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 Llandrinio, Powys, to provide a specification and quotation for a watching brief to be undertaken during repairs and alterations to the church of St Trinio. The work was the subject of a condition attached to a Faculty issued by the Chancellor of the Diocese of St Asaph.
- 1.2 The watching brief requirements had been devised by Mr M. Walters, archaeological curator for Powys at the request of the archaeological advisor to the Diocese of St Asaph, and was the subject of a design brief (CWAT 418, dated 11th April 2001), prepared by Mr Walters. The brief required the watching brief to be carried out during the raking out and repointing of the exterior walls, removal of ceiling timbers, and the removal of areas of plaster inside the west end of the church. It had also been initially proposed that a glass screen be inserted beneath the timber gallery at the west end of the church, but this was subsequently omitted from the programme.
- 1.3 The CPAT quotation was accepted by the Parochial Church Council of Llandrinio in October 2002, and the watching brief was carried out in January 2003.

2 LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

- 2.1 The church of St Trinio is located at SJ 29551707 (Fig. 1), and lies within the dispersed settlement of Llandrinio, which is itself approximately 10km to the north-east of Welshpool in Powys. The church lies within a largely grassed churchyard which is situated on the south side of the B4393, to the west of the road's crossing of the River Severn at Llandrinio Bridge.
- 2.2 The church is located on the flood plain of the River Severn at a height of approximately 60m OD. It lies only 4km upstream of the confluence with the River Vyrnwy, but is partially protected from flooding by a defensive bank (locally known as an argae), which was constructed following a Parliamentary Enclosure Act dated 1799 (Hankinson, 2000, 4).
- 2.3 The solid geology of the area is now masked by substantial deposits of fluvio-glacial drift, but is known to consist of Caradoc Series mudstone and siltstone rocks belonging to the Ordovician period (1994 British Geological Society map). The soils of the immediate area are deep, stoneless, fine silty and clayey alluvial soils belonging to the Conway Association (1983 Soil Survey of England and Wales map and legend).

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The church of St Trinio, dedicated also to Ss Peter and Paul, is a single chambered building, retaining some architectural features of the Norman period. It is believed that the church was founded by St Trinio in the 6th century, and that the existing churchyard is the surviving part of an originally larger enclosure which may represent a clas foundation of early medieval date (Frost and Silvester 1999).
- 3.2 Evidence on an early 19th-century map of the adjoining New Hall Farm (SRRC 4175/4, dated 1810) demonstrates that the church enclosure was originally ovoid, and it appears that land was lost from it when the turnpike road which passes the church was built. The map suggests that the enclosure included land which is now on the far side of the road from the church. Land has also been lost to the field on the east of the existing churchyard.
- 3.3 The structural sequence of the church suggested by Frost and Silvester (1999), and generally following that defined by Archdeacon D R Thomas, a minister of this church in the late 19th century, consists of the following interpretation, which was largely based on the visible evidence:

i) A small, probably Norman, building

ii) Later in the Norman period the old nave was converted into a chancel and a new nave added to the west. Features which belong to this phase of alteration include the priest's door, the south entrance door, and the font. An aisle was erected on the north side and part of its arcade (Plate 1) is immured in the present north wall.

iii) Part of the Norman north aisle is thought to have been converted into a Chantry Chapel at a later date on the evidence of the piscina (Plate 8) sited in the external face of the north wall at the chancel end.

iv) In the 15th century the north aisle was taken down and the arcade removed, except for the arch at its west end. The north wall of the nave was rebuilt and the arch blocked, at which time the west end (Plate 3) may have been shortened. The window at the east end of the south wall was inserted and some of the south wall may have been rebuilt.

v) The porch is thought to have been added in 1729, and at this time the gallery was inserted at the west end of the church. Some of the south wall may also have been rebuilt at this time.

vi) The present belfry was built, and the gallery enlarged, in 1829. The upper part of the north wall of the nave was also rebuilt in the 19th century and a similar date has been suggested for the west wall.

3.4 No attempt will be made in this report to provide a complete description of the church and its fittings, beyond the brief notes above. Only those features which are affected by the repairs will be examined in detail. A complete description of the church and its known history is provided by Frost and Silvester.

4 WATCHING BRIEF (See Fig 2)

4.1 The initial visit to the church followed the raking out of the majority of the mortar on the external walls by the contractors. The opportunity was taken to photograph the external features of architectural interest, prior to them being masked by scaffolding and the commencement of the re-pointing. No additional features were noted in the north, east and south walls.

4.2 Examination of the external face of the west wall of the church (Plate 3) revealed a narrow, centrally-placed, blocked window which had not previously been recognised. Examination of the interior face of this wall (Plate 4) during the second site visit, when the covering plaster had been removed, demonstrated that the window was splayed to over 0.6m in width in the interior of the church, though its internal dimensions could not be determined precisely as only its base and north side were exposed. The stones used to block the window had been bonded with lime mortar, laid on top of a plastered surface which survived on the base and the north jamb of the window. In addition, a large timber beam, which forms an integral part of the supporting structure for the gallery, was found to be inserted in the blocking of the window, approximately 0.2m above the window base.

4.3 The most readily apparent surviving feature of the Norman architecture of the church is the arch at the west end of the north wall (Plate 1). The west part of the internal face of this wall (Plate 2) was also exposed by the removal of some of its facing plaster, which provided an opportunity to examine the relationship between the arch and the west wall of the church. There was no visible joint or difference between the stonework which formed the internal face of the west wall and that which formed the respond (west side of the archway) of the arch, the implication of this being that the west wall and the jamb appear to be contemporary. This does not however mean that the west wall of the church is of Norman date.

- 4.4 The removal of plaster on internal face of the north wall should have revealed the dressed stones of the arch itself, but these had been removed. The line of the arch can now only be determined from the curved upper edge of the blocking material. The small section of visible wall above the jamb and over the arch blocking material was largely composed of brickwork, though this does appear to be of a relatively early, probably 18th-century, date.
- 4.5 The major remaining element of the repairs to the church consisted of the replacement of the ceiling over the nave and some of the chancel, which had become unsound. Examination of the roof structure demonstrated that all of the main structural roof timbers were of modern softwood; the ceiling seems to have been constructed at the same time using cut down rafters from the previous roof, resting on the inner edge of the wall-plates. The re-used timbers had carpenters' assembly marks on them which seemed to have been made with a cold chisel. None of this timber appeared to be of significance in determining the nature of the former roof; more relevant in that regard is the large beam, 7.45m long and in cross-section, 0.17m wide by 0.33m thick, which was noted by Frost and Silvester as 'a single tie-beam, visible midway along the nave'. Examination of the upper surface of this beam revealed a group of slots which confirm that it supported a roof truss. The arrangement of three slots towards the centre might suggest that the old roof could have been of 'Queen-post' type with a central strut. Although a 'Crown-post' arrangement with supporting timbers going down to the tie-beam cannot be ruled out, this is less likely as the type is restricted to a very small number of examples in north-east Wales. The tie-beam rested on the surviving timber wall-plates of the north and south walls, but did not reach the existing roof-line at its north end, suggesting that this wall may originally have been narrower than it is at present. Some damage was evident at the south end of the beam where wood had broken off on the east side of the attachment slot for a principal rafter.

5 CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 The results of the watching brief have provided a number of important further clues to the nature of the surviving church structure and its earlier architecture. These are considered below in the same order as the results of the watching brief.
- 5.2 The narrow, splayed window in the west wall of the church appears to be contemporary with the construction of this wall. The fact that one of the major supporting beams of the gallery is inserted in the blocking material of the window demonstrates that the wall predates the 18th century, as the gallery is known to have been built in 1729 (see Frost and Silvester). It could not have functioned as a window with the gallery in place.
- 5.3 The arch at the west end of the north wall is the most obvious surviving feature of the Norman architecture of the church. Following the removal of the internal facing plaster, the structural appearance of the junction between the west wall and the west respond of the arch suggests that these two features were contemporary. This could imply a Norman date for the west wall of the church, which has already been proved to predate the 18th century (see above). But it is much more likely that the whole west wall was rebuilt in the medieval period (if not later) and that this reconstruction was carried around into the north wall. The internal face of the arch itself has been partially lost and replaced by bricks of probably 18th-century date - this might be a result of structural work related to the construction of the gallery.
- 5.4 The ceiling of the church, which was removed, appears to have been a relatively recent construction, using material from an older roof. The only in-situ element of this earlier roof that was recognised was the large tie-beam, which crosses the church mid-way along the nave. It seems most likely that the tie-beam formed part of a 'Queen-post' roof, with a vertical central strut. The length of the tie-beam may indicate that the earlier roof was slightly narrower than it is at present.

6 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 6.1 The writer would like to thank the following for their assistance and co-operation: Bob Silvester of CPAT, for his comments on the architectural details of the church; and the staff of Harris and Evans, the site contractors, for their co-operation during the watching brief.

7 REFERENCES

7.1 References

Hankinson, R, 2000, *Llandrinio Argae (Domen Gastell) Excavation*, Welshpool: CPAT Report No 367.

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

Smith, P, 1988, *Houses of the Welsh Countryside*, London: HMSO.

7.2 Documentary Sources

Shropshire Records and Research Centre, Shrewsbury

4175/4 Sale particulars of estates in Llandrinio, Llandysilio, etc. (including New Hall Farm), dated 1810.

7.3 Cartographic Sources

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

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

APPENDIX 1

LLANDRINIO CHURCH, POWYS SPECIFICATION FOR AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF BY THE CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The proposed development involves a programme of repairs and alterations to Llandrinio Church. The Curatorial Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust, acting as archaeological curators for the county, have determined that a watching brief should be undertaken during the works. Accordingly, a Brief has been prepared (CWAT 418 dated 11/04/02) which details the works required.
- 1.2 Information held within the Regional Sites and Monuments Record indicates that the church was founded by St Trinio in the 6th century, and the fabric retains architectural details from the Norman period to the 20th century.

2 Objectives

- 2.1 The objectives are:
 - 2.1.1 to undertake a photographic survey of existing buildings;
 - 2.1.2 to undertake a drawn survey of existing buildings;
 - 2.1.3 to maintain an archaeological watching brief during the initial phases of construction;
 - 2.1.2 to prepare a report outlining the results of the archaeological works.

3 Methods

- 3.1 The watching brief will be maintained to monitor the works and record any new features which are revealed. Recording will be undertaken as appropriate to include: a written record; a photographic record in 35mm colour slide and black and white print; a drawn record at an appropriate scale, either by hand or digitally.
- 3.2 During raking out and re-pointing of exterior walls work will be monitored intermittently. Any new architectural detail will be recorded photographically and drawn as appropriate.
- 3.3 During the removal of ceiling timbers work will be monitored intermittently to determine whether any pre-20th century timbers survive. If so, these will be appropriately recorded.
- 3.4 During the removal of plaster at the west end of the church work will be monitored intermittently to identify any new fabric detail which may be revealed, which will be appropriately recorded.
- 3.5 During alterations to the timber gallery work will be monitored intermittently to determine whether any original features will be lost, or new features revealed. If so, these will be appropriately recorded.
- 3.6 Following the on-site work an illustrated and bound report will be prepared according to the principles laid out in the Curatorial Brief (section 8). This will be in A4 format and contain conventional sections on: Site location, Topography and Geology; Historic Background; Watching Brief; Conclusions and References, together with appropriate appendices on archives and finds.

- 3.7 The site archive will be prepared to specifications laid out in Appendix 3 in the Management of Archaeological Projects (English Heritage, 1991). The archive will be deposited with the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust, while any artefacts will be deposited with the Powysland Museum, Welshpool, subject to an agreement being reached with the landowner.

4 Resources and Programming

- 4.1 The watching brief will be undertaken by an experienced field archaeologist and overall supervision will be by Mr RJ Silvester, a senior member of CPAT's staff who is also a member of the Institute of Field Archaeologists. The duration of the watching brief will be entirely determined by the contractor's programme of work.
- 4.2 All report preparation will be completed by or with the assistance of the same field archaeologist who conducted the fieldwork.
- 4.3 Copies of the report will be deposited with the client and curator within one month of the completion of on-site works. If appropriate, a short report will be published in *Archaeology in Wales*.
- 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
29 August 2002

APPENDIX 2

SITE ARCHIVE

Photographic archive

1 colour slide films
1 black and white print films
1 colour print films

Watching brief archive

Sketch plans of architectural elements (not to scale)

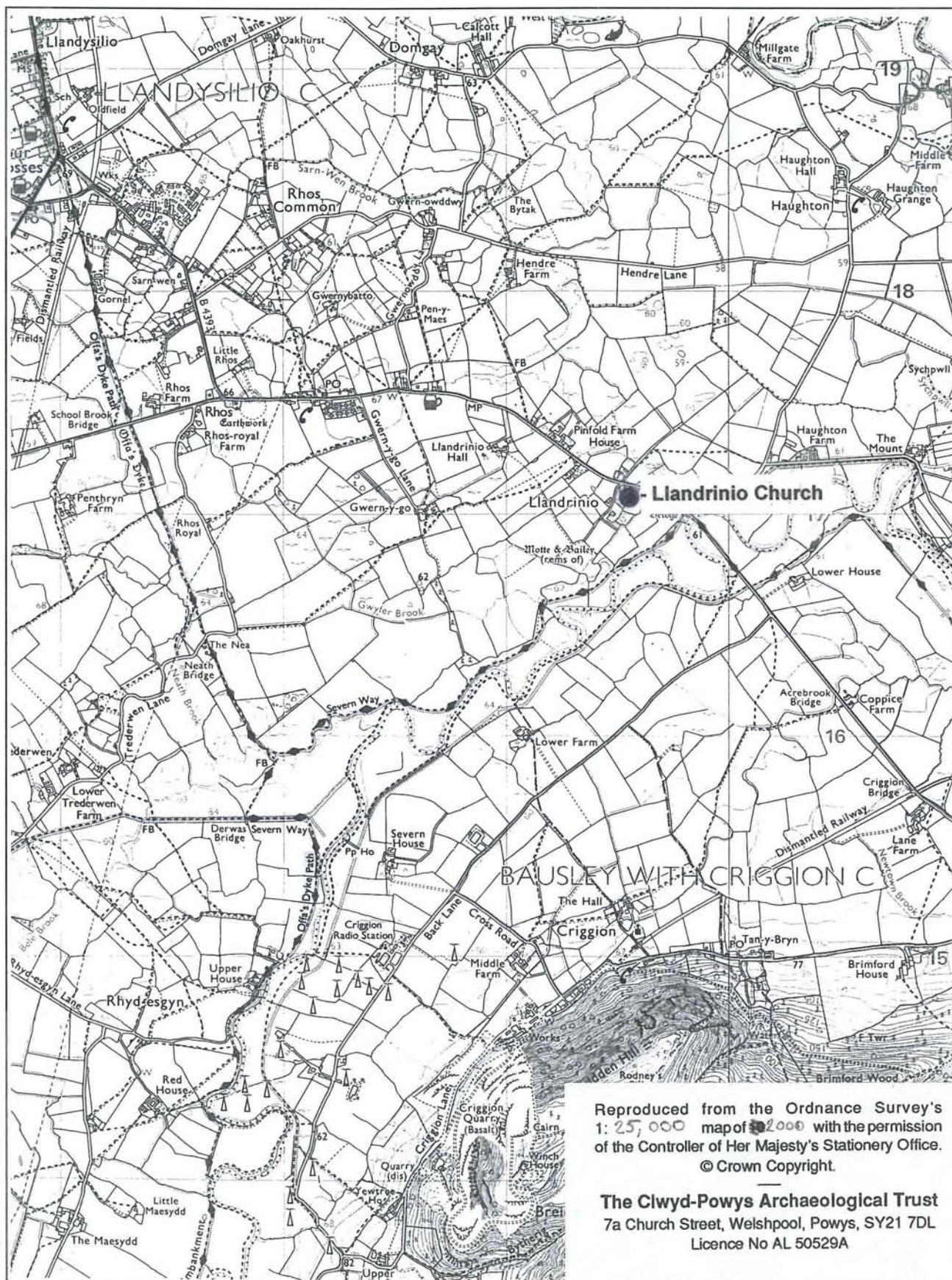


Fig. 1 Location of Llandrinio Church. Scale 1:25,000

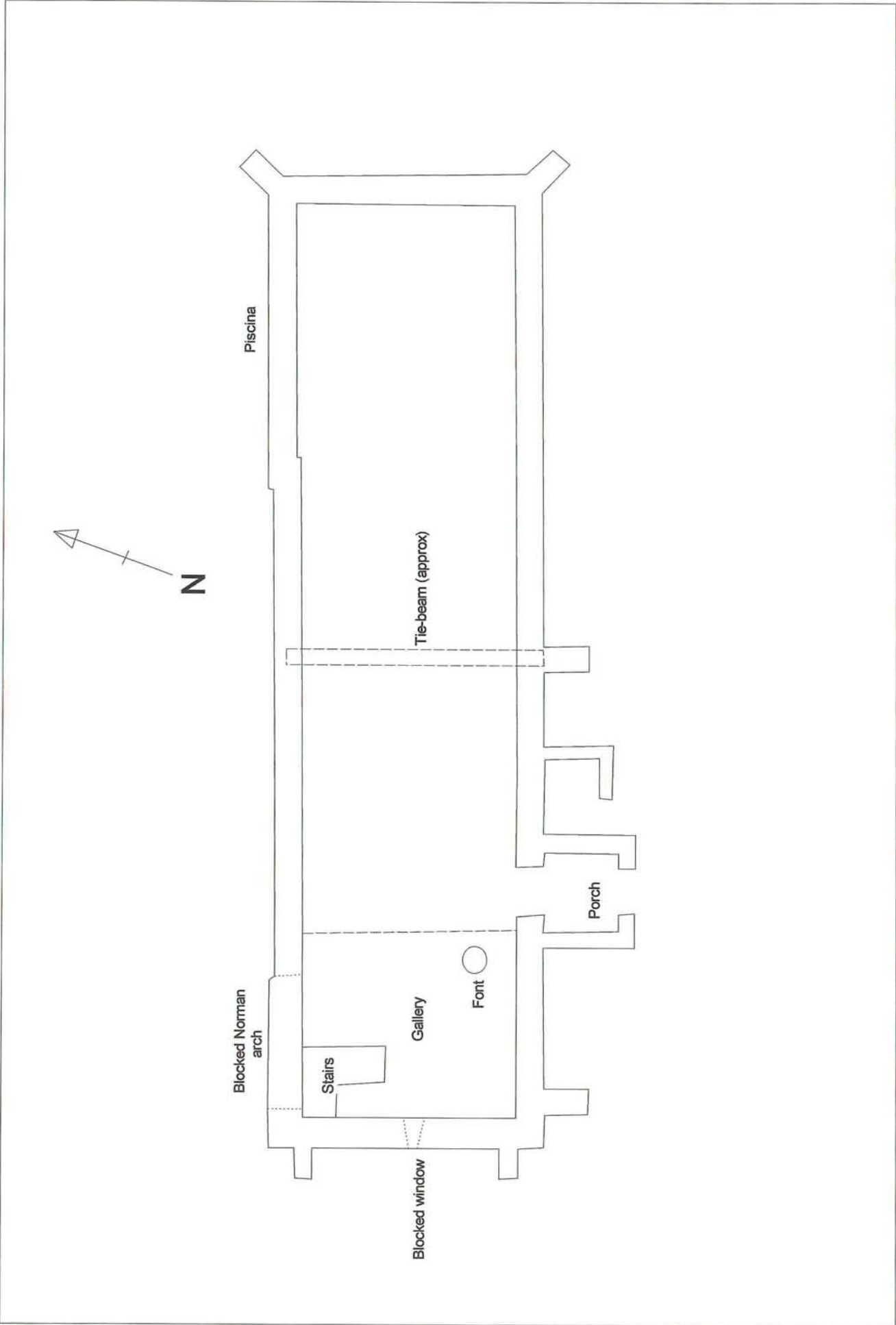


Fig. 2 Plan of the church showing the location of relevant architectural features



Plate 1 External view of the arch in the north wall of the church, from NW. Photo CPAT 1285.01.



Plate 2 Internal view of the west side of the arch, from S. Photo CPAT 1285.10



Plate 3 External view of the west wall, from W. Photo CPAT 1285.06.



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Photo CPAT 1285.08.



Plate 6 North end of the timber tie-beam which was formerly part of a roof truss, from E. Photo CPAT 1285.09



Plate 7 Close-up view of the ceiling at the east end of the church, showing carpenter's marks, from W.
Photo CPAT 1285.07.



Plate 8 External view of the piscina in the north wall of the church, from N. Photo CPAT 1285.02