

CPAT Report No 1037

Old School, Llanarmon-yn-Ial

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION



THE CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

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I Grant
April 2010

Report for Revd Huw Butler

The Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust

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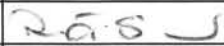

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CPAT Report Record

Report and status

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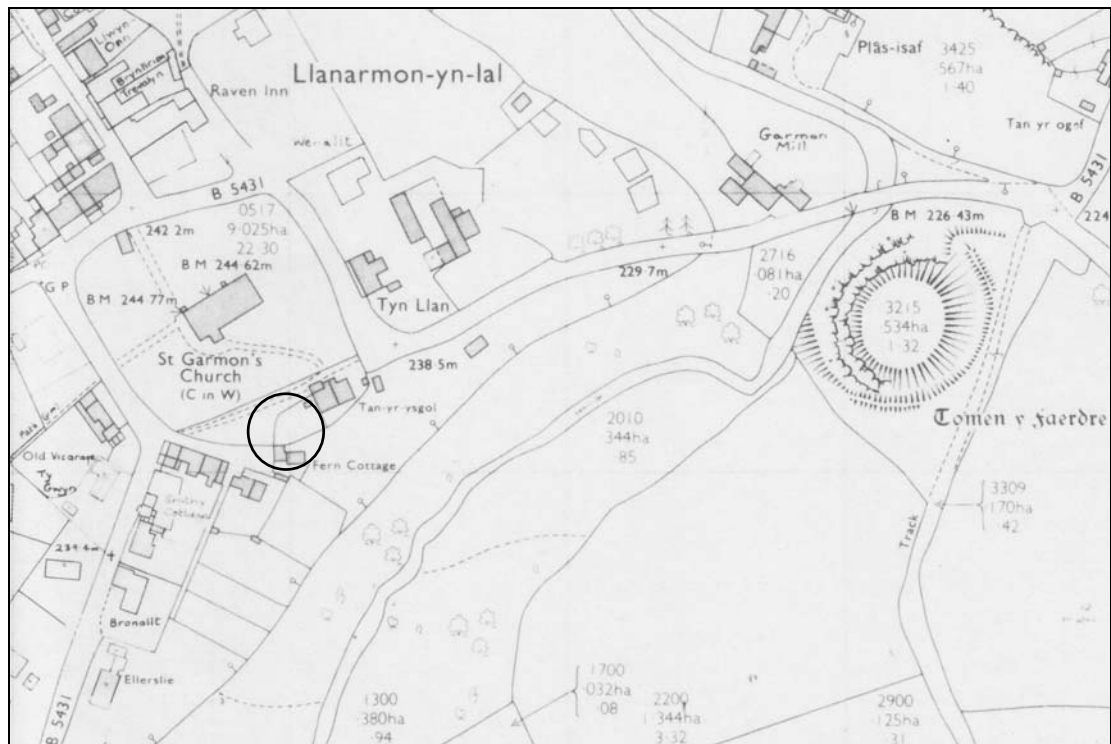
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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In August 2009 the Field Services Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT) was invited to prepare a specification and costing for an archaeological evaluation in connection with proposals for a new building extension on the west side of the Old School at Llanarmon-yn-Iâl, together with eight new parking spaces. The Curatorial Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust, in their capacity as archaeological advisors to the local authority, had determined that an archaeological evaluation was required to identify the potential impact on the archaeological resource. Accordingly, a brief was prepared which details the works required (EVB 747).
- 1.2 The development site is located immediately to the south of St Garmon's Church in Llanarmon-yn-Iâl and to the west of the old school building, now known as Tan-yr-ysgol (Fig. 1; SJ19095612).
- 1.3 Information retained within the regional Historic Environment Record indicates that the plot is located within the medieval historic core of the village and is situated within the original early medieval churchyard boundary that curves around the plot to the south. It was therefore considered likely that the area might contain medieval or later burials together with possible evidence for later use of the area.



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Fig. 1 Study area and location of evaluation

2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Llanarmon is potentially one of the most interesting settlements in the region. Set beside the little Afon Alun, it has been suggested that on the east bank of the river was not only the motte and bailey castle known as Tomen y Faerdre which was presumably established in the 12th century, but also the manorial court of the lord of Yale (Îâl) complete with its mill and demesne land which was recorded in 1315. The court at the time consisted of 'one hall, one chamber, one stable, one grange and one cattle shed'. Whether there was an earlier, pre-Conquest (and thus pre-motte) llys here has yet to be determined.
- 2.2 The late Glanville Jones argued that on the west side of the river was the maerdref or bond settlement surrounding the church in an area known as Tre'r Llan. The unfree bondmen provided the local labour on the lord's demesne. However, this appears to be an assertion, reasonable as it may seem, rather than fact.
- 2.3 The church of St Garmon has long been held to be the chief church in the commote of Yale. As such it almost certainly started as a *clas* church (or mother church) for the area. The term 'church' here is used in the sense of an institution rather than a physical structure. A *clas* community would have functioned within an enclosure, probably rather larger than the present churchyard, though almost certainly within the same general area. While no direct evidence has yet come to light to support this assumption, the presence of a clas comprised of individual clerics whose successors could claim portions of the church's revenues is attested in the early 14th century. Suggestions that the earlier church lay on the east bank of the river where the foundations of a rectangular building can be recognised at certain times of year in the valley floor field beside Plas-isaf should probably be dismissed as an unfounded speculation which at present remains unconvincing.
- 2.4 With a dedication to a known early medieval saint, St Garmon, it could be argued that the foundation of the church is certainly of early medieval origin. Attractive as this hypothesis is, it is not completely infallible, because some churches in Wales undoubtedly witnessed changes to their dedicatee over time. Nevertheless, the shape of the original churchyard, with its strong hint of curvilinearity, together with its location immediately above the river, point to an early medieval origin.

BENEFACTIONS	
Towards Building of a Schoolhouse at Llanarmon, in the Year of our Lord 1777.	
ELLIS YONGE, of Acton, Esq ^r	£ 10 10 0
WILLIAM LLOYD, of Plaff-Power, Esq ^r	4 4 0
Rev. R. CARTER THELWALL, of Bathafarn	2 2 0
Rev. HENRY LUSHINGTON, D.D. Rector.	5 5 0
Rev. JOHN VENABLES, Vicar.	7 0 0
Mr. SIMON WILLIAMS, of Bod Idris	5 5 0
Mr. DAVID DAVIES, of Plasfyny Pant	1 1 0
Miss POWELL, of Cae Dab Edward	1 1 0
Mr. JOHN JONES, of Chwyleiriog ifol	1 1 0
Mr. EVAN DAVIES, of Erryrys	10 6
Rev. ROBERT PUGH, of Garthmaelan	10 6
A PERSON Unknown.	11 0
Mr. SAMUEL DAVIES, of Erryrys.	10 6
Mr. JOHN WILLIAMS, of Trimley.	10 6
Mr. WILLIAM WILLIAMS, of Plas-y-Ward.	5 3
THE TRUSTEES of the Charity.	20 0 0
FOR OAK BARK.	2 0 3
FOR LATHS.	3 0
	62 10 6
N.B. The Trustees gave 25 Oak Trees for this Building and Parishioners Carriage.	

Plate 1: Benefaction Board in the old school room

- 2.5 Even the most cursory examination of the large-scale Ordnance Survey map reveals that the development area with the school beside it was originally part of that churchyard, as is displayed by the course of the churchyard boundary. At some point the most southerly portion of the churchyard was walled off. This was prior to the first mapping of the area in the earlier 19th century, and the most logical explanation is that it occurred when the school was built in 1777. This date is well attested with Benefaction boards within the old school providing confirmation (Plate 1). While this might be the simplest scenario, there is no certainty that it is a correct. There could have been an earlier schoolhouse on the site of which we have no knowledge and no traces remain; in this context a reference to a schoolmaster at Llanarmon in 1769 needs to be noted, and the 1746 bequest on land in Llanellidan to provide funds for educational purposes at both Llanarmon and Llandegla may also be relevant. The best that can be said at present is that the plot is likely to have been walled off from the churchyard before and certainly by 1777, and this will have been done for a community- or church-related purpose.
- 2.6 The 1777 schoolhouse was re-built in 1843, so Archdeacon Thomas tells us. The present building, erected on the edge of the sloping valley with accommodation on the ground floor and the school rooms above is thus likely to be a Victorian construction, and the rest of the plot would then have functioned as a garden or other space for the schoolmaster.

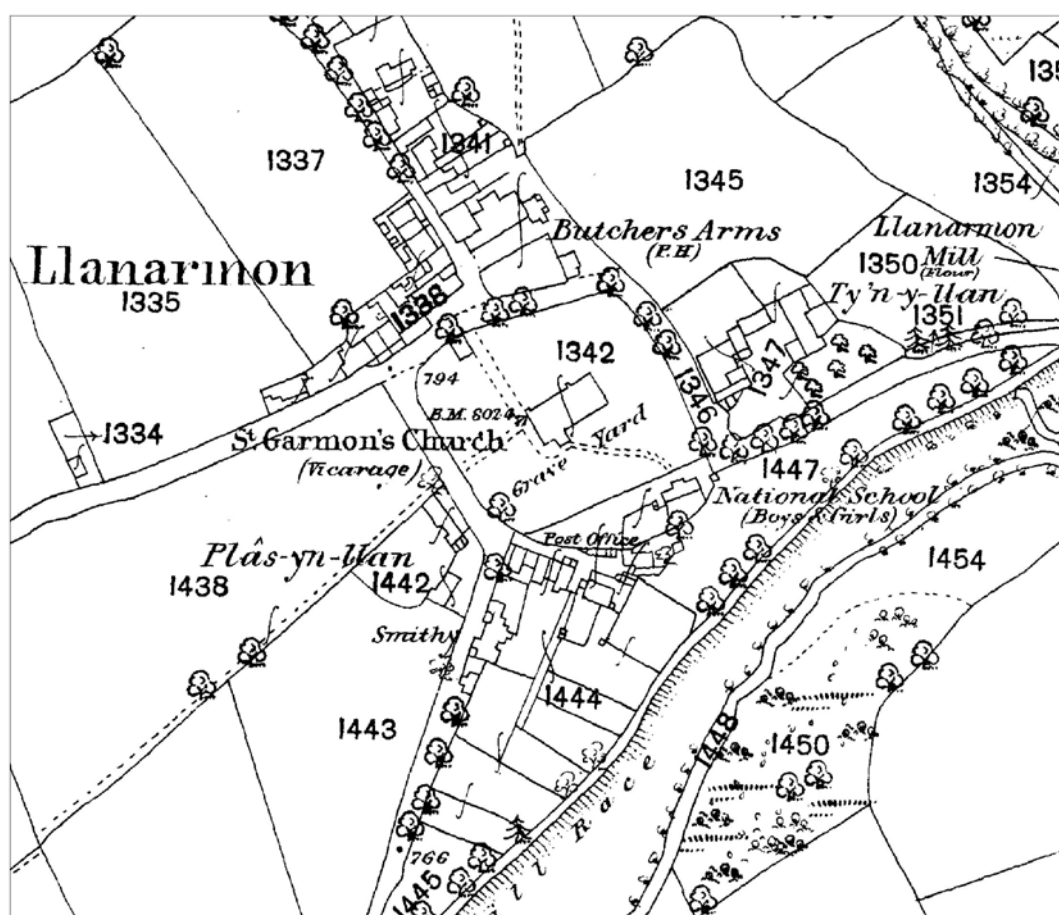


Fig. 2 Extract from the Ordnance Survey 1st edition 25'' map of 1874

3 EVALUATION

- 3.1 The excavation, conducted between 16th and 19th March 2010, consisted of a single trench (Fig. 3) 7.2m long and 2.2m wide. It was aligned almost north-west to south-east and was located immediately west of the Old School building, alongside a stone-built outbuilding believed to be the original outside water closet. The edges of the trench were kept within the perimeter of what was probably a garden bounded by a dry-stone wall, although a portion of this wall (later found to be a 1980s rebuild) had to be demolished in order to gain access for the mechanical excavator.
- 3.2 The evaluation process is essentially non-destructive and is designed to determine the depth at which any archaeologically sensitive deposits have survived, together with as much information as possible about their nature, condition and significance.

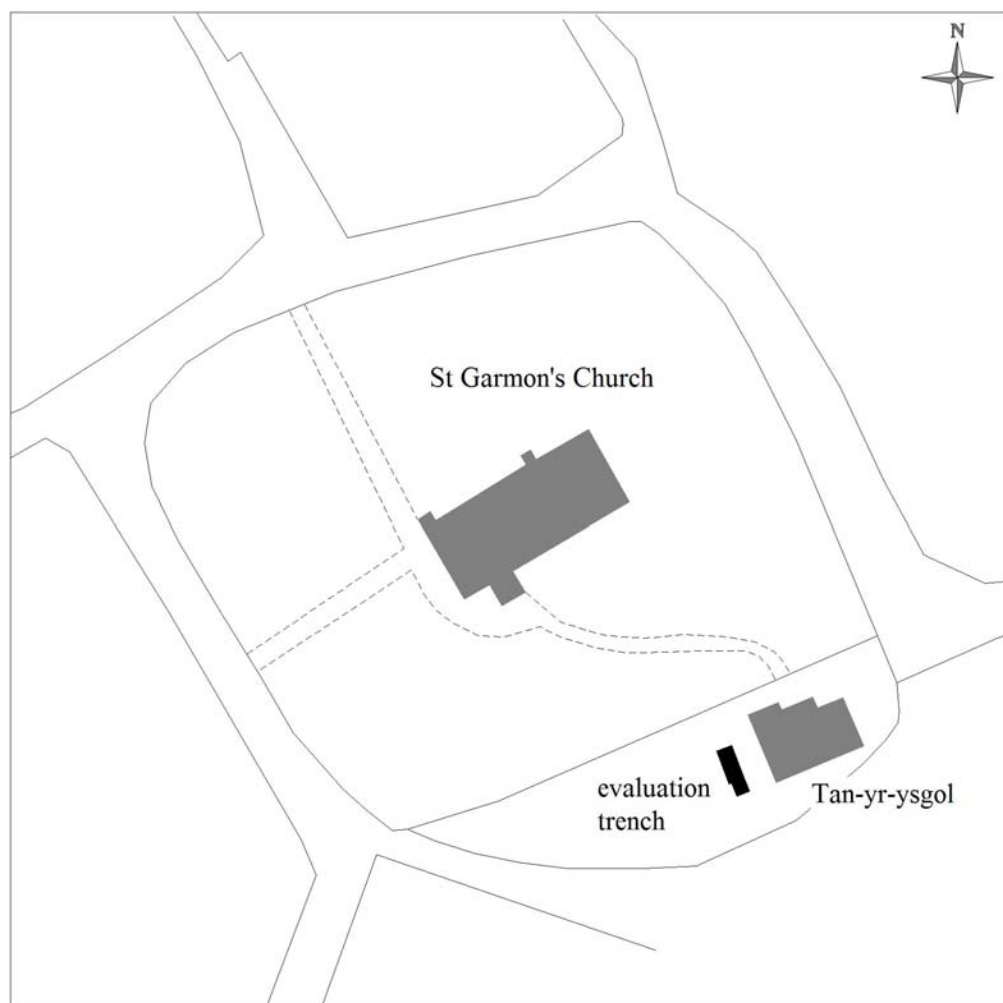


Fig. 3 Location of the excavation trench. Scale 1:1000

- 3.3 The modern overburden was removed by machine under close archaeological supervision, down to the surface of the first significant archaeological horizon. Thereafter, all excavation was undertaken by hand. During the excavation a written, drawn and photographic record was maintained, a summary of which is provided in Appendix 1. The numbers in brackets in the following text refer to individual context records that are defined and detailed in full in the site archive. The archive is to be deposited with the regional Historic Environment Record in

Welshpool, and the Parish Church of St. Garmon at Llanarmon is to take receipt of the finds assemblage. All of the disarticulated human remains carefully recovered during the excavations were deposited with the Churchwarden for re-interment within the churchyard at an appropriate time in the future.

- 3.4 Upon removing the modern overburden down onto what was initially perceived to be the natural undisturbed subsoil, a stony yellowish brown clay, the base of the trench was cleaned back revealing a gentle slope from north to south across which bands of mortar and building plaster debris could be seen intermingled with firm yellow clay and numerous fragments of disarticulated human bone (see Plate 2). Owing to the location of the evaluation trench within the bounds of the outer limits of the earlier circular churchyard there was always the strong likelihood of the presence of human burials. All of the evidence appeared to point to disturbed burials together with the remains of a previously unrecorded building. Initial exploratory hand excavation of these deposits demonstrated that what had originally been interpreted as the natural ground surface with possible disturbed inhumations cut into it was in fact a large dump of re-deposited material of unknown origin, tipping north to south down the slope.

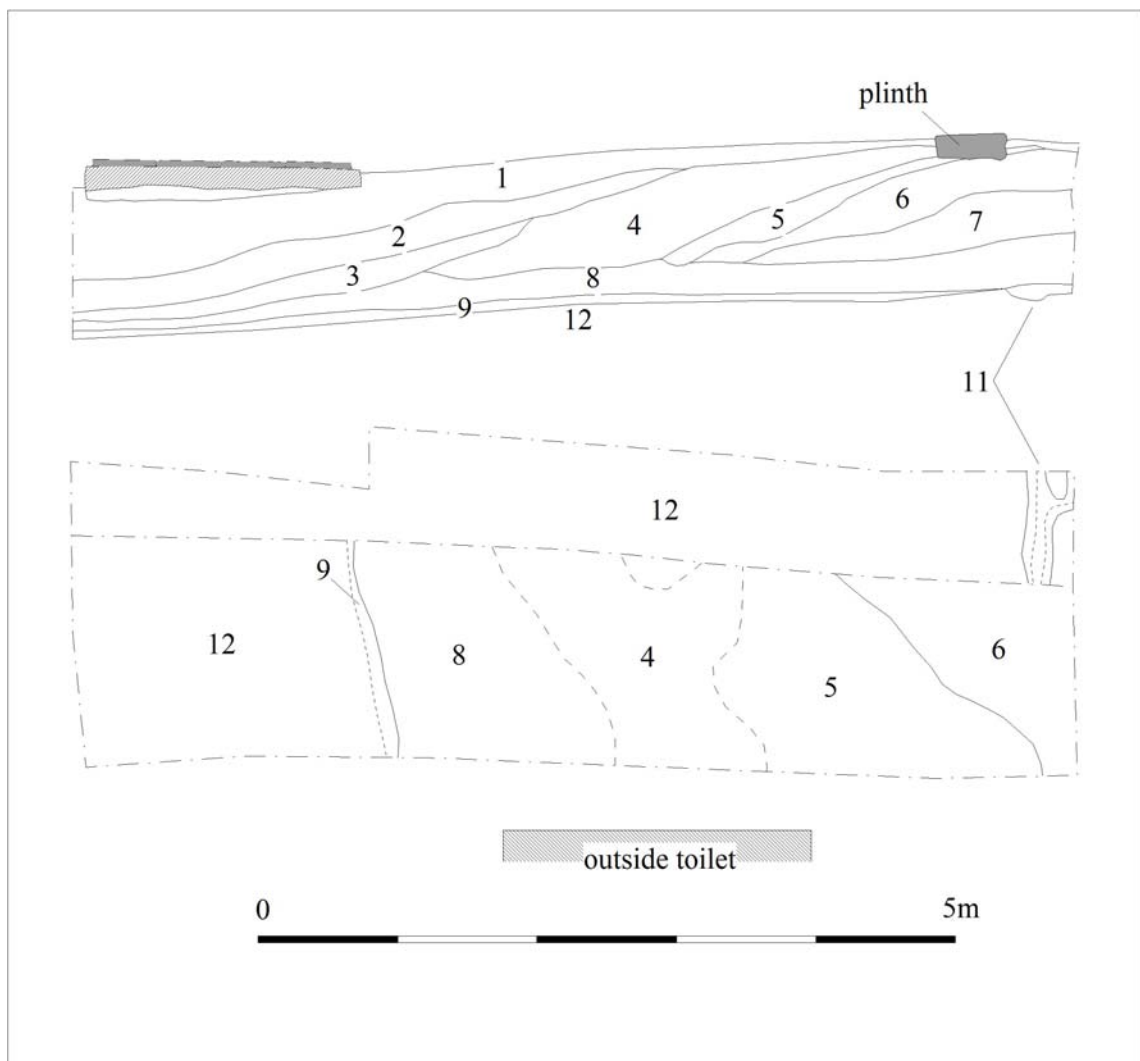


Fig. 4 Trench plan and section

- 3.5 Further extensive excavation was required in order to establish the extent and depth of the material and consequently a sondage (test trench) was excavated by hand 5m long and 0.8m

wide along the western edge of the trench. The test trench was excavated down to the undisturbed natural subsoil (12), effectively removing a further 0.8m in depth of material that consisted of numerous layers of re-deposited clay and building debris (2,3,4,5,6 & 7) overlying earlier in-situ cemetery deposits (8 and 9) (see Plates 3 and 4).



Plate 2. Location of the trench west of the outbuilding.

The trench, sloping north to south, ends 6m short of the earlier churchyard wall.

Photo CPAT 3058-0003

- 3.6 At the northern end of the trench was a narrow gully (11) orientated east to west and cut into the natural subsoil (12) (see Plate 5). At its western end the gully appeared irregular in shape, the width widening from 0.21m to 0.46m, suggesting possible disturbance from animal burrowing. The gully, containing a single fill (10) of light grey silty clay, was the only cut feature recorded within the limits of excavation. Although it remains undated, it is possible to say that it pre-dated the overlying 18th-century deposit (8). Contemporary with the gully was an adjacent deposit (9) of light grey-brown, silty clay, 0.06m thick. The deposit, which extended southwards and beyond the limit of excavation, appeared as a coarsely metallated surface of small rounded pebbles with occasional flecks of charcoal. This would appear to be the earliest surviving 'artificial' ground-surface and the only possible deposit of medieval origin. Both the gully (11) and the deposit (9), were sealed by a uniform deposit (8) of mid-yellowish brown silty clay, 0.32m thick. The deposit, which contained charcoal throughout, was well graded with little in the way of stone inclusions and was comparable with garden cultivation deposits that might be found in a village or other settlement. No human remains were recovered from the deposit which is unusual considering its location within the churchyard and this suggests that burial practice in this general area had ceased by the time this soil was deposited, or perhaps that this peripheral area had never actually been used for burial. Fragments of clay-pipe stems and sherds of Buckley/Staffordshire-type, brown-glazed pottery, recovered from the material suggest the deposit can be dated to the late 18th and early 19th centuries.



Plate 3. Excavation of the sondage along the western side of the trench.
Photo CPAT 3058-0008



Plate 4. Completed sondage, illustrating original ground surface.
The extensive tip-lines of re-deposited material can be clearly seen in the east facing section.
Photo CPAT 3058-0022



Plate 5. Narrow gully (11), located at the north-west end of the trench.
The overlying undisturbed cultivation/cemetery soil can be seen in section.
Photo CPAT 3058-0019

- 3.7 The 'garden' deposit (8) was sealed by a series of deposits consisting of layers of re-deposited clay and building debris (2,3,4,5,6 & 7) up to 0.75m thick. Two of the deposits (5 and 7), consisting of light grey silty clay, contained large quantities of building material, wall plaster and mortar in which fragments of human bone and clay pipe stems were recovered. The other deposits (2,3,4 and 6) all contained quantities of firm, re-deposited natural clay intermingled with fragmented limestone, pebbles, wall plaster and human bone. The fragments of pottery that were recovered, dating from the 17th – 19th centuries, suggest this collective of material is all part of one single event. The 'tip-lines' of debris, clearly seen in section in Plate 4, suggest the material had been dumped from north to south and could therefore be possibly associated with renovation work carried out at St Garmon's Church in the mid-19th century.
- 3.8 Finally, the whole area was sealed by a dark greyish-black silty clay (1). This topsoil deposit, ranging from 0.04m in thickness at the northern end of the trench, and up to 0.68m thick at the southern end of the trench, contained a wide range of fragmented post-medieval pottery sherds dating from the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries. It was clear that this material had been imported into the area to be used as a general levelling material and subsequently used as a garden cultivation soil.

4 CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 The evaluation has demonstrated that even though there are numerous quantities of disarticulated human remains to be found within the 'garden' deposits, there is no evidence of any medieval structural features nor any in-situ burials present within that part of the proposed development area that has been examined. It is also evident that there are no other deposits or features of significant archaeological interest of later date present.

- 4.2 The present ground surface to the west of the Old School is at least 1m above what, based on the excavated evidence, appears to be the original ground surface of the churchyard during the medieval period. The character of the undisturbed deposit (8) overlying the natural subsoil suggests that burial practice in this general area had ceased by the time the thick cultivation/cemetery soil was deposited. Whether or not this area of the churchyard had already been set aside prior to the building of the Old School house in 1777 is a matter of conjecture. The artefactual evidence gives, at best, an earliest date of the mid-18th century. The ground floor of the building was a dwelling residence and hence the cultivation deposit is probably associated with the earliest phase of this building. The building debris sealing this deposit could be either associated with the schoolhouse rebuild of 1843 (see section 2.6) or otherwise with renovation work at the church itself during the same period. The overlying garden soils demonstrate that the area continued in use as a cultivated garden for use by the residents of the schoolhouse from the mid-19th century until relatively recently.

5 ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

- 5.1 The writer would like to thank the following people for their assistance during the project: Ian Davies, Nigel Jones and Bob Silvester, CPAT; Graham Holland, Holland Associates; Rev Huw Butler; The Churchwarden of St Garmon's Church; and George Flanigan and Mini Muckshift Ltd of St Asaph.

6 REFERENCES

Maps

- 1812 D/GW/689 Book of reference only, and the working copy of the mapped survey. Covers the Llanarmon Hall estate and includes a holding called Maes y Llan (to west of church). Working copy with additions, and draft statement to the landowner (anonymous).
- 1816 DD/PL/443 Sketch of allotments made in respect of property belonging to John Hutchinson esq in Llanarmon. Shows Ffynnon Siglenydd and Pentre mwg as places, and Moel-lom. Nothing of any note.
- 1834 DD/DM/50 Bathafarn Estate. All rural across four parishes including Llanarmon. One main plan, part of what was probably a sales catalogue and a rough sketch.
- 1874 Ordnance Survey 1st edition 25" map Denbighshire 20.10

Documents

- 1746 D/M/5442 Deed regarding the establishment of a charity school. Not examined.
- 1951 *A History of Llanarmon yn Iâl*. Typescript of a paper read at a meeting of the Graeanrhyd Women's Institute in March 1951 by R E Vaughan-Roberts

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Thomas, D. R., 1908-13 *History of the Diocese of St Asaph* 3 Vols Oswestry: Caxton Press.

APPENDIX 1**PROJECT ARCHIVE****Site records**

12 context record forms

Context Register

Drawing Register

02 A3 site drawings

27 digital photographs, CPAT film 3058

Photographic register

Context	Drawing	Type	Comment
01	3	Deposit	Topsoil, garden soil 20 th century
02	3	Deposit	Yellowy brown silty clay, below 01. mid-19 th century
03	3	Deposit	Yellowy brown silty clay + building debris, below 02. mid-19 th century
04	1,2,3	Deposit	Yellow brown stoney clay (redeposited natural) below 03. mid-19 th century
05	1,2,3	Deposit	Light grey silt clay + building debris, below 04. mid-19 th century
06	1,2,3	Deposit	Yellow brown stoney clay (similar to 04), below 05. mid-19 th century
07	1,2,3	Deposit	Light grey silt clay + building debris, below 06. mid-19 th century
08	1,2,3	Deposit	Mid yellowish brown clay silt, charcoal rich cultivation/cemetery deposit, below 07. 17 th -early 19 th century
09	1,2,3	Deposit	Light grey/yellow brown clay silt and pebbles, below 08. Pre-17 th century, possibly medieval.
10	2,3	Fill	Light grey clay silt + charcoal, below 08, fill of 11. Pre-17 th century
11	2,3	Cut	Narrow gully of unknown origin, cuts natural 12 Pre-17 th century
12	1,2,3	Deposit	Yellow brown clay with occasional fragmented limestone. Undisturbed natural subsoil

Dwg	Size	Scale	Comment
1	A3	1:20	Part excavation, work-in-progress, plan of the trench
2	A3	1:20	Post excavation plan, with sondage, of the trench
3	A3	1:20	East facing section of the trench