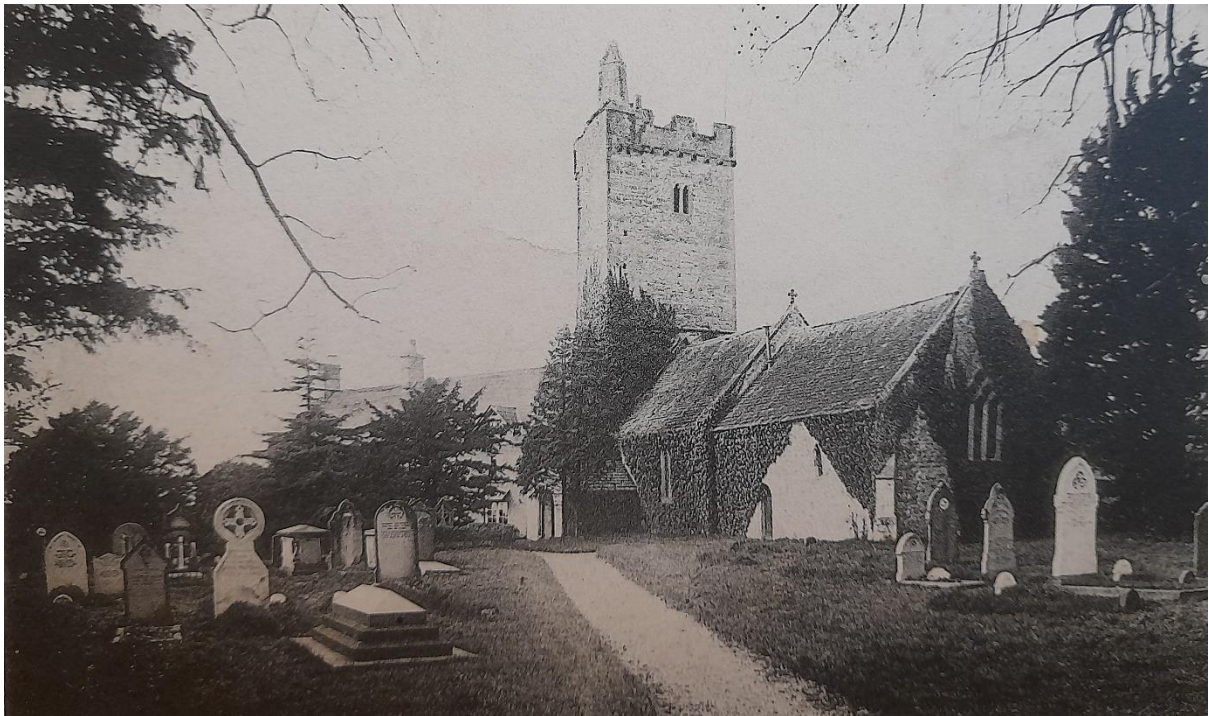


# **St Mary's Parish Church, Rogiet, Monmouthshire.**

**Watching Brief Report  
for the Installation of a new lightning conductor,  
installed 25/11/2021.**



**St Mary's parish church, Rogiet, taken from an early 20<sup>th</sup> century postcard**

by

Mark Lewis MSc, PhD, FSA

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### 1. Background

The author was asked to provide a professional archaeological presence to watch and record the digging of a hole in the polygonal churchyard of St Mary's Parish Church, Rogiet (National Primary Reference Number (NPRN): 08249g, NGR: ST45668764), located to the north of the church tower and to the west of the north aisle (Figs 1 - 3), in order to install a horizontally laid, linked double-rod, earthing arrangement for the tower's lightning conductor. The manual excavation of a shallow trench dug to lay the conductor cable was also watched.

### 2. Desk-based Assessment

The location of the trench sits within an area of multi-period archaeological interest.

#### 2.1 Iron Age - Roman

Roman archaeology has been encountered in a number of locations near to the church, especially to the north of the churchyard. During work on a housing development, a linear ditch and bank or wall with associated finds of Iron Age and Romano-British pottery were discovered (Roberts R., 1998, Rogiet Manor House Farm, **Archaeology in Wales: 38**: 121; E002386: Housing Allocation H2R01, Rogiet EVAL (1996), see National Primary Reference Number (NPRN): 05298g).

One Rogiet coin hoard (National Primary Reference Number (NPRN): 06203g, NGR: ST45488777) was found by metal detecting at c. 40cm depth, in a cut into the subsoil, with some sherds and stone nearby. Another hoard (NPRN 5296g) of the late 3rd century AD has also been recovered nearby. Quantities of broken stone, with some ceramic building material (described as tile on the HER), have been noted close to road at c. ST4535 8792. Other coins have been found on the moor to the south (NPRN 00485).

A section of a probable ditched and banked enclosure was seen during a watching brief in 1998 (National Primary Reference Number (NPRN): 08008g, NGR: ST45728777). Finds indicated a possible Iron Age origin with continued occupation into the 1st-3rd centuries AD. This complements other evidence within the area, where an adjacent Roman building to the west (NPRN 05296g), of two phases, was identified during an evaluation excavation, with finds of pottery dating from early to mid-2nd century AD. Roman pottery kilns were uncovered during work on/around farm buildings near to Llanfihangel Rogiet church c. 2016 (not yet entered onto the Monmouthshire (Gwent) HER at the time of writing), (Marvell, A. pers. comm.).

The HER states that there are indications on the tithe map of 1840 that the Rogiet parish church enclosure may have been originally a double curvilinear enclosure; about a quarter maximum survives of the outer enclosure round the northwest (National Primary Reference Number (NPRN): 08609g, NGR: ST45668764). The HER notes that

“Trial excavations identified a Roman building in the area to the north of [Rogiet] church at ST45728780, associated with pottery mainly of 2nd century date (Williams 1996, 5-7); however, most of the trenches failed to find evidence of human activity. The watching briefs identified a parallel stone bank/wall and U-shaped ditch (marked with a yellow triangle) c. 3.6m wide and 0.63m deep, associated with late 3rd-mid 4th century Black Burnished pottery (Roberts 1998b, 3, 6). It is possible that some of the features noted may have been Early Medieval, but in the absence of radiocarbon dates this cannot be tested. Given the presence of the Roman settlement (and the Iron Age predecessor implied by the presence of Iron Age pottery (Roberts 1998b, 6), it is possible that the outer ditch noted on the air photographs may be Iron Age or Roman in origin, though in this case its continuation into the 19th century implies that would have retained its importance as a boundary throughout the intervening period. The field visit carried out as part of the GGAT Early Medieval Ecclesiastical Sites Survey showed that this field had been extensively terraced, with the result that the existing earthworks do not appear to relate to anything of any antiquity. Much of its original surface in the area of the cropmarks has been removed by the balancing pond; to the south of this the ground has been banked up, with terracing down (?for a playing field) to the west of the sump). On the west side of the field, the ground falls away from the church, but the depression parallel with the boundary here appears to be caused by the banking up south of the pond. The open areas of ground around the churchyard and buildings are grassed - to the south of the church is still pasture, and nothing was noted there, looking over churchyard wall.

Edith Evans, GGAT 73 Early-Medieval Ecclesiastical Sites Project, 2003-04 (Yr1)

#### Sources

Evans, E. M., 2004, **Early Medieval Ecclesiastical sites in Southeast Wales: Rapid field survey of selected sites**

Roberts, R., 1998, **Manor House Farm, Rogiet, Newport: Archaeological Watching Brief on Balancing Pond** (© GGAT)

Williams, D. N., 1996, **Housing Allocation H2R01, Rogiet, Gwent EVAL** (© GGAT)  
<http://www.walesher1974.org/herumd.php?group=GGAT&level=3&docid=301362362>

Evans EM, 2003-04, **GGAT 73 Early Medieval Ecclesiastical Sites Project**

#### Events :

E001386: Early medieval ecclesiastical sites in Southeast Wales desk based assessment (2004)

E001441: Field visit to Rogiet (2004)”

## 2.2 Medieval

Although listed on the HER as a post-medieval farmhouse, Manor House Farmhouse, Rogiet (National Primary Reference Number (NPRN): 00488g, NGR: ST45648763), adjacent to the site of the watching brief, just a few metres to the west, was originally an E/W medieval 2 bay first floor hall, with its original first-floor nearly semi-circular arched (originally external) entrance, probably of 12<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup> century, if not of 14<sup>th</sup> century, date (given its form, location, and the Norman font in the adjacent

parish church), preserved within its original northern wall (now internal), with later C18th & C19th extensions of kitchen to W & cross wing to N, also extended later to form a separate dwelling.

The GGAT Historic Environment Record description of the church (National Primary Reference Number (NPRN): 00489g, NGR: ST4566287647) is relevant to the interpretation of the archaeology of this watching brief and includes the following extracts.

“The church at Rogiet is first mentioned in 1254 (Brook, 1988, 83). It consists of a nave, separate chancel, N aisle, W tower, S porch and vestry. All periods of medieval architecture are represented from Early English onwards. Restoration of 1903 involved construction on the N aisle and chancel.”

“The walls are constructed mainly in local red, grey and cream fine-grained limestone, with dressings of pale orange conglomerate, yellow sandstone and coarse yellow limestone ('Bath stone'), except for the chancel arch, which is in fine-grained grey limestone.”

“ The earliest feature appears to be the tower arch, possibly dating to the 13th century. The E window has a triple-ogee pointed head and reticulated tracery, as at Redwick and Caldicot, and is of 14th century date. The trefoiled lancet which forms the S window of the chancel could be contemporary or rather earlier.”

“The restoration of 1903 (architects Seddon and Carter, contractor W Clarke of Llandaff) involved the construction on the N side of an extension comprising N aisle and chancel, repairs to walls with some partial rebuilding, the replacement of the roofs, a new floor in the tower, and the reseating of the building. Alternative plans were also drawn up to provide a vestry cum organ chamber and no aisle (GRO DL/AM/P2(82), GRO D/Pa 48.11). Some structural work seems to have been carried out earlier, since the angle buttresses of the chancel appear on the 'before' plan.

#### References:

##### Documentary

GRO DL/AM/P2(82), 1903, Restoration of dilapidated church; viz - reroof chancel, nave and tower, re-floor tower, repair and restore walls, take down N wall and erect new N aisle, add a vestry, rearrange seating and generally make good

GRO D/Pa 48.11, 1886-1903, Restoration of church: plans and drawings, including detailed plan specifications, architects Middleton, Prothero and Phillott (1886); design for altar, architects Middleton, Prothero and Phillott (not dated, ?1886); detail of nave roof, architect John Seddon (1903); design for tiling chancel, Carter Johnson and Co (?1886).

##### Published

Bradney, J A, 1932, **A history of Monmouthshire. Vol 1V, pt ii, The Hundred of Caldicot (part 2)**, 267-8.

Brook, D, 1988, The early Christian church in Gwent, **Monmouthshire Antiquary 5**, 67-84.

Freeman, E A, 1851a, On architectural antiquities in Monmouthshire I, **Archaeologia Cambrensis 2 ser 2**, 99-113.

Jones, I G and Williams, D, 1976, **The religious census of 1851: A calendar of the returns relating to Wales vol 1 S Wales**, 4.

Evans 1997 **GGAT 51 Historic Churches Project**”

### **3. Summary of Watching Brief Outcomes.**

Despite the archaeological potential suggested by the desk-based assessment, no significant archaeological finds were encountered or disturbed. No in-situ structural remains were encountered. Only disturbed or redeposited contexts were exposed. All finds were securely post-medieval in date and were almost certainly deposited within these contexts during the 19<sup>th</sup> century or more recently. One (isolated) redeposited stray fragment of a shattered human long bone was noted at a depth of 0.4m and was reinterred. It is most probable, and consistent with the dating and contextual evidence uncovered, that, to the limit of excavation, all the soil and stone had been disturbed or deposited during and/or following the construction of the north aisle in 1903.

### **4. Report**

A trench measuring 1.80m long (north to south) by 0.45m wide and c. 0.70m deep was hand-dug by the electrical contractors (fig. 1).

Topsoil comprised a dark-brown/black humic turf layer (001). A single context of orange-brown, sandy, soil with extensive limestone rubble of varied sizes and occasional decayed sandstone fragments (fig. 6) lay beneath down to the limit of excavation (002).

The subsoil (002) conforms with the Esrick 1 type, a well-drained reddish coarse loamy soil described by Williams (1996), (see reference above) and was consistent with the soil upcast by moles extensively across the southern and eastern areas of the churchyard at the time of the watching brief.

Finds within, and throughout this layer (002), to the limit of excavation, included plate glass (fig. 5) and Cornish or Devon roofing slate (fig. 4), suggesting that the ground here has been disturbed, or dumped, probably at the time of the rebuilding of the north aisle, and re-roofing, in 1903 (see the HER description of the Seddon restoration and enlargement). The eastern elevation of the trench exposed the geotextile lining of an early 21<sup>st</sup> century stone chipping-filled French drain running around the church (figs 1 - 3) to a depth of c. 450mm. Although a large quantity of angular and roughly dressed limestone was encountered in (002), especially in the eastern and northern sides of the trench, no distribution pattern was observed, and the stone is interpreted (see above) as building rubble associated with building works at the church, most likely resulting from disturbance associated with the construction of the present north aisle, or as a dump of material, which materially raises the level of the churchyard (especially with respect to the west wall of the north aisle) in this area.

Sadly, photographs taken of the fully excavated trench were saved to a new SD card, purchased especially for this watching brief, and attempts to download them revealed a camera formatting incompatibility resulting in 0kb image files on the card. Consequently, the photographs taken on site during excavation could not be retrieved. The images below were taken following the backfilling of the trench in order to show its location and the extent of the excavations. The plan of the trench and its S-N, west-facing section is shown in figure 1.

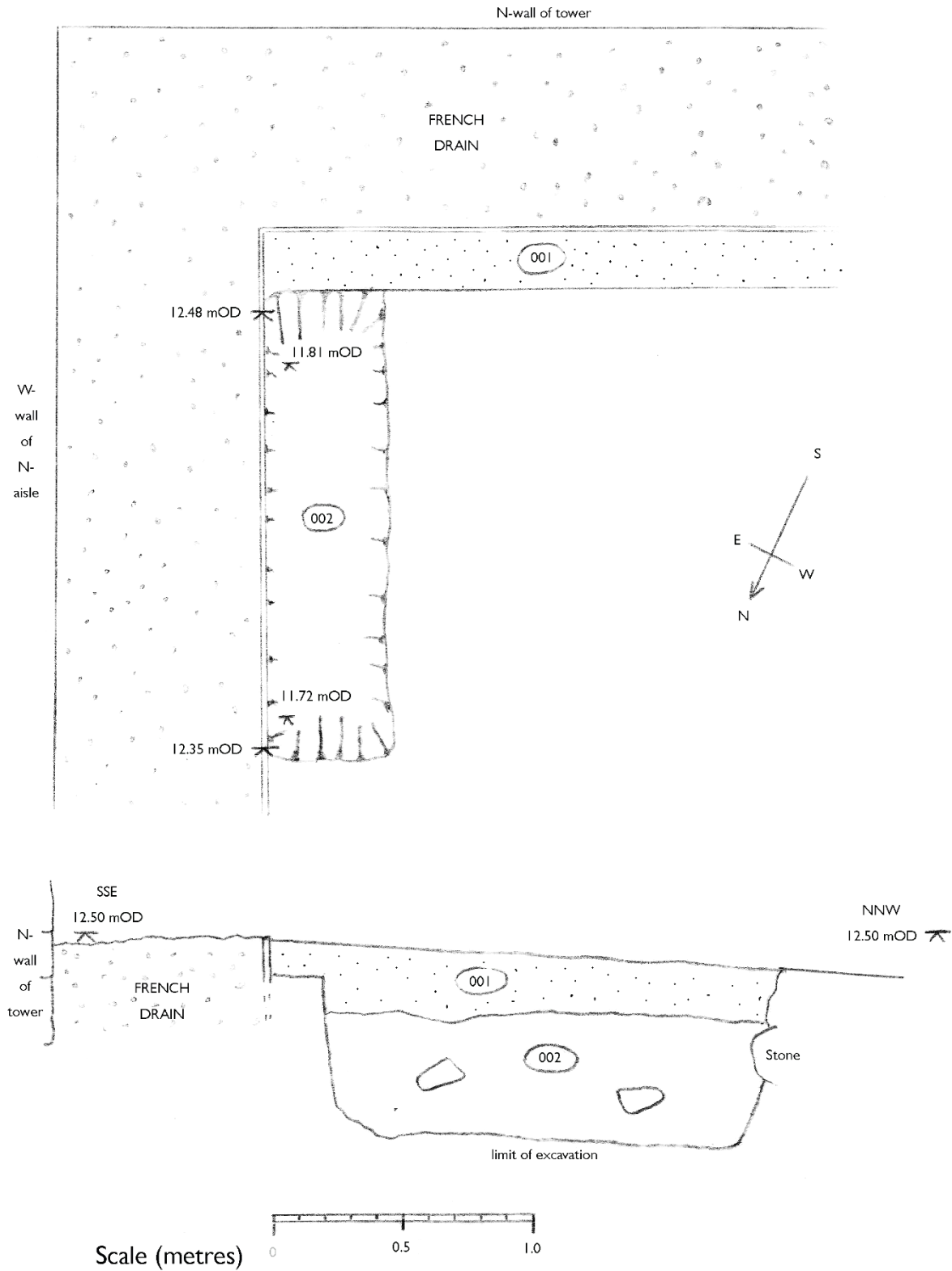


Figure 1. Plan and east-facing elevation of the Rogiet parish church lightning conductor trench, dug and backfilled 25/11/2021. Scale as per drawing.



Figure 2. The backfilled lightening conductor trench looking southwards towards the north wall of the church tower. The connecting-wire trench may be seen extending from the south end of the trench to the west (right in this photograph). The connecting wire trench was excavated to a depth of c. 200mm, within the dark/brown-black humic topsoil. 1-metre surveying pole, in 0.5m divisions, pointing grid NNE.



Figure 3. The backfilled lightning conductor trench looking eastwards towards the west wall of the north aisle. The connecting wire trench may be seen extending from the south end of the trench to the west (bottom-right in this photograph). The connecting wire trench was excavated to a depth of c. 200mm, within the dark/brown-black, humic, topsoil (001). The ground surface slopes gently downwards from south to north, from 12.48m OD to 12.35m OD (as surveyed by dumpy level from the Benchmark located on the western face of the church tower, recorded on the OS sheets as at 41.69 feet ODN or 12.71m ODN).





Figure 4. Post-medieval roof slate fragments from the excavated trench. The examples (left and, possibly, middle) probably represent remnants of a Devon (or Cornish) greenish-grey slate roof that was subsequently at least partially replaced with slate probably of North Wales origin (*possibly* the middle example, if not of West Country origin) during the 1903 renovation of the church, if not earlier. These two fragments have surviving corners that indicate that the lowermost corner angles of each complete slate were acute rather than right-angled. The fragment of grey-green slate (left) retained *possible* evidence of wet laying in the form of a very small patch of adhering mortar with sandy inclusions; but dry laying was probably more likely, the patch a possible spillage or other accidental contamination. None of the fragments were complete or large enough to suggest slate sizes or systems in their own right (e.g., derived from rivings, or from common, sized, rag, or scantle systems).

Ilfracombe and Morte slates were important in N Devon from at least medieval times and were shipped to south Wales during the 15<sup>th</sup> century. As demand outstripped production, slates were later imported into the region from Cornwall and north Wales. Within the Ilfracombe Slates Formation, Combe Martin slates are grey-green but weather to yellow-brown. The Morte Slates have a similar green-grey colour with a lustrous sheen on cleavage surfaces, and weather to a distinctive silver-grey. Grey-green slates were also produced at Trevalga quarry to the West of Boscastle in Cornwall.

See

[http://www.stoneroof.org.uk/historic/Historic\\_Roofs/West\\_Country\\_slating\\_files/West%20Country%20Slate%202.pdf](http://www.stoneroof.org.uk/historic/Historic_Roofs/West_Country_slating_files/West%20Country%20Slate%202.pdf)

One fragment of a modern composite roof-slate (right) was recovered, but this is probably derived from the adjacent farmyard building.

Grey-green fragment of slate (left): SF 01 (002) Length: right-hand edge 59mm, width: lower edge 36mm, thickness: 5.2mm. With a grey-green colour, but with yellow-brown weathered surfaces, a Combe Martin origin is possible. In Fig. 4 (above), the lower and right-hand edges are true, trimmed, edges.

Grey fragment of slate (middle): SF 02 (002) Length: left-hand edge 58mm, width: lower edge 32mm, thickness: 4mm. In Fig. 4 (above), the left and bottom edges of the fragment are true, trimmed, edges.

Modern composite fragment (right): SF03 (002) Length: right-hand edge 62mm, width: lower edge 38mm, thickness: 5mm. Probably derived from the adjacent farmyard building.



Figure 5. SF 04 (002). This fragment of decolourised (water-white) window glass shows the distinctive parallel-striated surfaces (inner and outer) characteristic of 19<sup>th</sup> - early-20<sup>th</sup> century machine-produced cylinder glass, or, *possibly*, Fourcault process glass from post AD 1900 (all pre-c.1940, when float glass became available). The striations resulting from the production process may be seen running horizontally in this image. Partial surface weathering (the darkened right-hand section in this image) suggests that this piece of glass came from a leaded light, probably derived from a former window of the church. This window was probably damaged either during the 1903 restoration or was replaced by one of the modern stained-glass windows of the north aisle; most likely the nearest, located in the west wall of the aisle. The fragment is noteworthy for the severe extent of weathering and linear abrasion on one of its two surfaces whilst it was contained by the lead came of 6mm heart depth (i.e., lead covering 6mm of the edge of the quarry, which is the undarkened, left-hand, section in this image).

SF 04 (002) Length: left-hand edge 29mm, width: 21mm, thickness: 3mm.

Unweathered edge c. 6mm.



Figure 6. Some of the excess limestone rubble left after back-filling. These stones are representative of the loose rubble encountered within the trench, and subsequently mostly backfilled. The image shows their coarseness and overall lack of any (or any surviving) mortar.

Bibliographic note:

See also

Corcos, N. 2008. **Archaeological Desk-based Assessment of land at ROGIET PRIMARY SCHOOL, MONMOUTHSHIRE. Report No. 1947/2008.** Bristol and Region Archaeological Services.

<https://coflein.gov.uk/media/293/355/667738.pdf> accessed 18/03/2022.