



St Cattwgs Church, Port Eynon, Gower

Archaeological Watching Brief



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Report No 637.

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CONTENTS

Summary	1
1. Introduction	1
2. Location and Geology	1
3. Aims and Objectives	1
4. Results	1
5. Interpretation	2
6. Acknowledgements	2

ILLUSTRATIONS AND PLATES

Fig. 1	Location of the site
Fig. 2	Layout of site and location of trench and breakthrough
Plate 1	Wall breakthrough viewed from outside
Plate 2	Painted interior wall
Plate 3	Drainage trench looking west
Plate 4	Cobbles from graveyard wall in drainage trench
Plate 5	Inspection chamber at eastern end of trench showing depth of made ground and buried soils.

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Summary

In May 2010, Cambrian Archaeological Projects undertook an archaeological watching brief during demolition and drainage works at St Cattwgs Church, Port Eynon on the Gower peninsula. The work revealed that the graveyard comprised a thick deposit of made ground overlying a buried ground surface. No graves were revealed or disturbed during the works. The wall breakthrough in the boiler room exposed a section of painted plaster.

1. Introduction

In May 2010, Cambrian Archaeological Projects were commissioned by Morgan and Horowskyj Architects, The School Room, Castle Street, Abergavenny, NP7 5EE to undertake an archaeological watching brief during demolition and drainage works at St Cattwgs Church, Port Eynon on the Gower peninsula (NGR: SS 4678 8540). The work was to be carried out in two phases:

- Breakthrough of wall in boiler room
- Excavation of single trench through the graveyard to accommodate water and drainage pipes.

The work was undertaken over four days in May and June 2010 by Sikko Van de Brug (Site Assistant). The project is managed by Dr Amelia Pannett.

2. Location and Geology

St Cattwgs Church is located in the centre of the village of Port Eynon, on the southern coast of the Gower peninsula. The Church sits within a small graveyard that is raised above the surrounding area, 250m from the sea. The underlying geology is Namurian Shales (British Geological Survey 2001).

3. Aims and Objectives

The aims and objectives of the watching brief were to record any archaeological features identified during the works and mitigate against the disturbance of burials.

4. Results

4.1 Wall breakthrough

The hole broken through the boiler room wall measured approximately 0.8m wide and 2m high and was 0.5m thick. The wall was stone-built, mortared in lime with modern pointing on the exterior. Internally, the wall was plastered. The lower half of the wall was painted red with a border comprising a simple red and white abstract flower design. The painted design was faded and likely to be nineteenth or early twentieth century in date, judging from the design.

4.2 Graveyard drainage

The drainage trench begins at the exterior wall of the vestry on the northern side of the church. It runs northwards for 8m before turning 90° to the east just inside the graveyard wall. The trench continues eastwards for 34.2m until it meets the eastern graveyard wall. The trench averages 0.4m wide and 0.4-0.5m deep. It was dug deeper in three places to accommodate inspection chambers: adjacent to the vestry where it extended to 0.8m deep; at the 90° turn on the northern side of the boundary wall where it again extended to 0.8m deep; and at the far end of the trench, adjacent to the

eastern graveyard wall where it reaches 1.6m in depth. At this point the trench was sunk beneath the wall, reappearing outside the graveyard on the verge between the road and the wall.

Below the turf and topsoil, the trench cut through a dark brown organic subsoil containing small rounded pebbles and stones and occasional oyster and cockle shells. This was not bottomed along the majority of the trench but was revealed to be 1.5m deep in the inspection chamber pit at the eastern end of the trench. Here, the subsoil overlay a thin layer of darker organic soil 0.02m deep, which sat on top of a deposit of lighter brown organic soil 0.08m thick which overlay the natural. These are likely to be an old ground surface as they lie at the same height as the ground surface outside the graveyard, adjacent to the road.

Close to the northern graveyard wall, where the trench turned eastwards, five large cobble stones were found within the subsoil. These varied in size from 0.2m to 0.35m in diameter and probably derived from the adjacent boundary wall which comprises similar cobble stones and is in a poor state of repair.

Sherds of pottery were found within the subsoil, all of which were post-medieval in date. A small quantity of human bone was recovered from the trench (30 fragments). All the bones were recovered as isolated fragments with none revealed as articulated or within a grave deposit.

5. Interpretation

The excavations within St Cattwgs graveyard have revealed that the ground level within the graveyard has been raised by around 1.5m above the surrounding land. This is likely to have occurred to enable the relatively small graveyard to continue in use once it had become full in the post-medieval period. A similar situation was revealed by CAP during drainage works at Saint Tathan's Church, St Athan, Vale of Glamorgan where a thick deposit of subsoil overlay the original ground surface.

No graves were revealed, and only a few bones recovered.

The breakthrough of the wall in the boiler room exposed a section of painted plaster or probable nineteenth or early twentieth century date, a small section of which was destroyed during the works.

6. Acknowledgements

Thanks to Sikko van de Brug for carrying out the watching brief.



Fig. 1
Location of
site

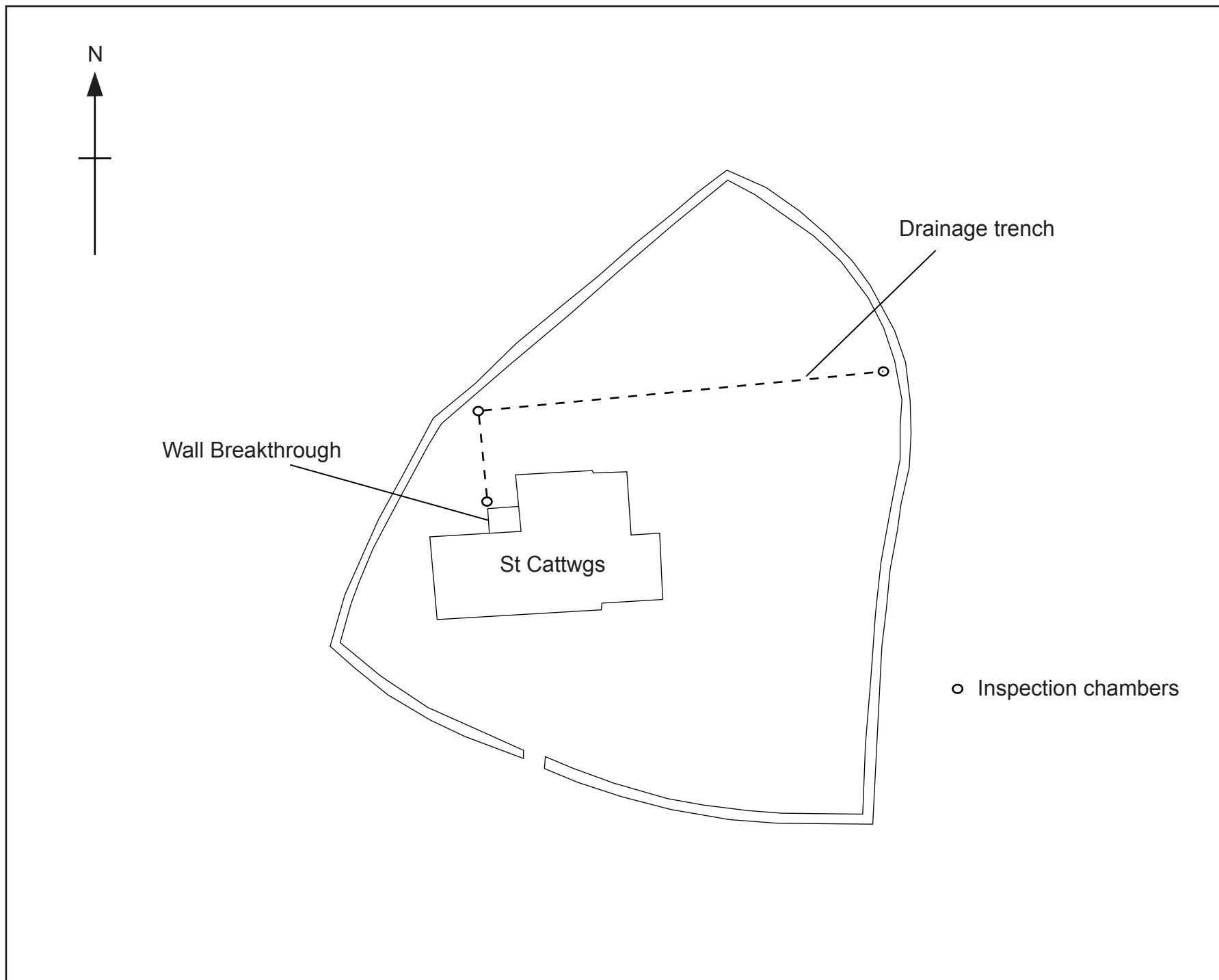


Fig. 2
Layout of site
and location of
trench and
breakthrough



Plate 1.
Wall breakthrough
viewed from
outside



Plate 2.
Painted interior
wall



Plate 3.
Drainage trench
looking west



Plate 4.
Cobbles from
graveyard wall
in drainage trench



Plate 5.
Inspection chamber
at eastern end of
trench showing
depth of made
ground and
buried soils



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