

# Castell Coch, Tongwynlais, Cardiff

## Archaeological Watching Brief

Date: February 2024

By: Issica Baron

Client: Cadw

RRA Project Code: RR1133



**Red River  
Archaeology**

---

## Castell Coch, Tongwynlais, Cardiff

### Archaeological Watching Brief

**Client** Cadw

**Project Code** RR1133

**Prepared By** Issica Baron

**Fieldwork By** Issica Baron

**Illustrated By** Matthew Smithson-Shaw

Rev Number	Description	Undertaken	Approved	Date
1.0	Draft	IB	RM-J	06/02/2024
1.0	Final	IB	RM-J	09/02/2024

## CONTENTS

1. Summary .....	1
2. Introduction .....	2
2.1 Project Background .....	2
2.2 Site Location & Description .....	2
3. Aims & Methodology .....	3
3.1 Aims of Works .....	3
3.2 Methodology of works .....	3
4. Archaeological Background .....	5
4.1 Historical and Archaeological Background .....	5
5. Results .....	7
6. Archaeological significance and mitigation .....	8
6.1 Known Heritage Resource .....	8
6.2 Potential Archaeological Resource and Significance .....	8
6.3 Impact of Development .....	8
7. References .....	9
APPENDIX 1 Archive Statement .....	10
APPENDIX 2 Context Register .....	11

## FIGURES

Figure 1	Site location
Figure 2	Site plan showing watching brief area

## PLATES

Plate 1	North end of watching brief area in west of car park
Plate 2	South end of watching brief area in west of car park
Plate 3	Southwest-facing section of groundworks for duct box, stairs to the right
Plate 4	South-facing section of northernmost ducting trench
Plate 5	Mid section of watching brief area showing duct box, ducting trenches, and cement base to wooden pillar walls

## 1. SUMMARY

This report presents the results of an archaeological watching brief undertaken at Castell Coch, Tongwynlais, Cardiff, in connection with EV car charging points installation at the site. The watching brief was conducted from 22 to 24 January 2024, and entailed the monitoring of groundworks associated with a feeder pillar, two charging bases, a duct box and ducting trenches.

Castell Coch is a Grade I listed Post Medieval building and Scheduled Monument located 120m west-southwest of the site.

The groundworks were carried out within the footprint of the current parking lot and the stratigraphy uncovered related only to modern landscaping and parking lot construction. No artefacts were encountered.

### CRYNODEB

Mae'r adroddiad hwn yn cyflwyno canlyniadau briff gwylio archaeolegol a gyflawnwyd yng Nghastell Coch, Tongwynlais, Caerdydd, mewn cysylltiad â gosod manau gwefru ceir trydan ar y safle. Cynhaliwyd y briff gwylio rhwng 22 a 24 Ionawr 2024 ac roedd yn golygu monitro gwaith paratoi'r tir gyda philer cyflenwi, dwy sylfaen wefru, blwch pibelli a ffosydd pibelli.

Mae Castell Coch yn adeilad Ôl-ganoloesol rhestredig Gradd I ac yn Heneb Gofrestredig sydd wedi'i lleoli 120m i'r gorllewin-dde-orllewin o'r safle.

Gwnaed gwaith paratoi'r tir o fewn ôl troed y maes parcio presennol ac roedd y stratigraffeg a ddatgelwyd ond yn ymwneud â gwaith tirlunio modern a gwaith a wnaed i adeiladu maes parcio. Ni ddaethpwyd ar draws unrhyw arteffactau.

---

## 2. INTRODUCTION

### 2.1 Project Background

- 2.1.1 This report presents the results of the archaeological watching brief carried out in relation to EV car charging installation points at Castell Coch, Tongwynlais, Cardiff CF15 7JS (Figure 1). Red River Archaeology Ltd. (RRA) have been contracted by Cadw to carry out an archaeological watching brief on groundworks at the site, centred on NGR 313090, 182627.
- 2.1.2 The Senior Inspector of Ancient Monuments for Cadw has advised that the development requires archaeological mitigation due to potential for the development to encounter archaeological features relating to Castell Coch, Scheduled Monument GM206.
- 2.1.3 A Written Scheme of Investigation (RRA 2023) detailing an archaeological watching brief was agreed with the Senior Inspector of Ancient Monuments for Cadw, and this report covers the work carried out accordingly.

### 2.2 Site Location & Description

- 2.2.1 The development site is located at Castell Coch, Tongwynlais, Cardiff CF15 7JS, centred on NGR 313090, 182627 (Figure 1).
- 2.2.2 Castell Coch is located on the south side of a wooded hill overlooking the village of Tongwynlais to the southeast. The site is located on the west side of the current car park c. 120m east-northeast of the castle building, 15m east of the Scheduled area, within an area of extant hardstanding terraced into the hillside at c.107m AOD.
- 2.2.3 The site is surrounded by the Castell Coch Woodlands and Road Section Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), which highlights that the site is located where two types of underlying solid geology meet - the Cwmyniscoy Mudstone Formation and the Castell Coch Limestone Formation. The mudstone is a sedimentary bedrock formed between 358.9 and 346.7 million years ago during the Carboniferous period. The limestone is a sedimentary bedrock formed between 358.9 and 346.7 million years ago during the Carboniferous period. No superficial deposits are recorded (BGS 2024). The SSSI area also has unusual outcrops of Devonian Old Red Sandstone.

---

### 3. AIMS & METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Aims of Works

3.1.1 The aims of the archaeological monitoring were to:

- Determine the extent, condition, nature, character, date and significance of any archaeological remains encountered.
- Establish the nature of the activity on the site.
- Establish the presence or absence of any Medieval activity on site.
- Identify any artefacts relating to the occupation or use of the site.
- Provide further information on the archaeology of the site from any archaeological remains encountered.
- Determine the geological and soil formation at the site and establish the depths of topsoil.
- To make available to interested parties the results of the investigation subject to any confidentiality restrictions.

#### 3.2 Methodology of works

3.2.1 The overall scope of the work was to carry out a watching brief to the satisfaction of Cadw as detailed in the Written Scheme of Investigation (RRA 2023). The archaeological works comprised a watching brief on any groundwork being undertaken during construction, including foundations and cable trenches.

3.2.2 All modern demolition rubble and other material considered of little or no archaeological significance were removed by machine under the direction of a suitably experienced archaeologist. A toothless ditching /grading bucket was used.

3.2.3 All information identified during the site works were recorded stratigraphically, with sufficient pictorial record created to identify and illustrate individual features. It should be noted that, where possible, data was collected and stored digitally and, in a format, suitable for long term storage by the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales (RCAHMW). Primary records were available for inspection at all times.

3.2.4 The investigations were undertaken in accordance with the relevant Standards and Guidance published by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CifA 2023a, CifA 2023b) and in accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation (RRA 2023) for the works.

- 
- 3.2.5 The deposition of a properly ordered and indexed project archive in an appropriate repository is considered an essential and integral element of all archaeological projects by the CIfA in that organisation's code of conduct (CIfA 2022). The archive was prepared in accordance with the guidelines published in Guidelines for the Preparation of Excavation Archives for Long-term Storage (United Kingdom Institute for Conservation 1990), National Standards for Wales for Collecting and Depositing Archaeological Archives - Welsh Museum Federation (2017) and the Archaeological Archives' Forum Archaeological Archives: a best practice in creation, compilation, transfer, and curation (Brown 2011).
- 3.2.6 The results of the archaeological work form the basis of a full archive to professional standards, in accordance with current English Heritage guidelines (English Heritage, 2008; Historic England, 2015), and comply with RCAHMW guidelines of Wales (RCAHMW, 2015) and the ADS digital records (Richards et al 2000).
- 3.2.7 Digital archives will be submitted to RCAHMW while the physical site archive will ultimately be deposited with Amgueddfa Cymru/Museum Wales (formerly National Museum Wales), which will also include a copy of the report.
- 3.2.8 A copy of the final report will be deposited with the regional Historic Environment Record in accordance with the guidelines set out in the *Guidance for the Submission of Data to the Welsh Historic Environment Records (HERs)* (2022).

---

## 4. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

### 4.1 Historical and Archaeological Background

- 4.1.1 Castell Coch originally consisted of a substantial earth and timber castle constructed after 1066 on a motte which measures c.34m diameter at the base and c.9.1m high. The castle was rebuilt in stone by Gilbert de Clare between 1267 and 1277 when the exposed sides of the motte are thought to have been clad in a masonry 'apron' as protection with the stone shell keep situated on top of the motte. The castle was likely destroyed during the Welsh rebellions of 1314-1316.
- 4.1.2 A 'strongly buttressed' limekiln is shown on the crest of the natural scarp to the east side of the castle ruins on an 1808 painting Return from the Market by Julius Caesar Ibbetson, based on an earlier 1792 watercolour.
- 4.1.3 The Plan of the parish of Eglwysilan in the County of Glamorgan, the 1841 tithe map of the area, shows the site as parcel 40 – Castle field – arable – occupied by Thomas Edmund and owned by Lewis Reverand William Price. The castle ruins lay to the west, a smaller wood to the south and a quarry to the southeast. No limekiln or track is shown or mentioned on the apportionment.
- 4.1.4 The castle ruins were recorded by G.T.Clark in 1850. He described an outer court on an eastern platform (where the site is now), with a tower thirty feet in diameter, and a second 'roadway' tower, forty foot in diameter. It is conjectured that he had misinterpreted the ruins of two earlier limekilns (RCAHMW 2000). If limestone rubble from the ruins was being burnt in the kiln, a cart-track running between them could have explained the 'branch from the moat' defining the northern side of Clark's outer court (Clark 1850: 248).
- 4.1.5 The castle ruins were owned by the Marquis of Bute, the third of whom had the ruins cleared and excavated by J. McConochie and A. Bedford in 1871 in preparation for rebuilding. A record of the ruins at this stage was written up by William Burges in 1872 (Burges 1874), but it does not mention an outer courtyard or any structures to the east of the main castle.
- 4.1.6 On the 1875 (published 1885) Ordnance Survey of the area 'Mount Pleasant Limekiln' was labelled adjacent to the quarry to the southeast, and a track through the smaller woods towards the castle to the west is shown.
- 4.1.7 The castle was rebuilt between 1875-1879 on its earlier foundations with a layout based on Burges' interpretation of the excavations but in a Gothic Revival style. The interior was not completed until 1891.
- 4.1.8 The site was placed into the care of the Ministry of Works in 1950, with Cadw taking guardianship in 1984. The present terraced parking area dates to before 2001 (Google Earth 2024).



4.1.9 The building was designated a Grade I listed building (LB 13644) in 1963 by reason of being 'one of the major historic buildings of Wales', and the castle and environs are also a Scheduled Monument (GM206) (Cadw).

---

## 5. RESULTS

- 5.1.1 The watching brief was carried out from 22 to 24 January 2024. The weather conditions ranged from sunny to heavy rain and high winds.
- 5.1.2 Excavations for a feeder pillar, two charging bases, a duct box and ducting trenches were monitored in the west of the car parking area (Figure 2; Plates 1 and 2).
- 5.1.3 A consistent stratigraphic sequence was recorded across all excavations (Plate 3). The top layer was the pink gravel hardstanding surface of the car park (001), which overlay a mid-yellow brown sandy clay with frequent pink gravel, small, rounded limestones, occasional medium limestones and charcoal (003) interpreted as a landscaping/levelling deposit from the construction of the car park (Plate 4). A cement base (002) supporting the wooden pillar walls lining the parking area, stairs and electricity cabinet enclosure was found to extend into the parking area between layers (001) and (003) (Plate 5), and a hydraulic breaker was necessary to excavate it.
- 5.1.4 Rectangular masonry stones formed a decorative pattern in the ground of the car park at the edge of one of the ducting trenches, but these were not removed (Plate 2). In the two northern excavations for the charging bases this overlay a mid-yellow brown sandy clay with moderate rounded small to medium limestones (004), interpreted as the natural geology.
- 5.1.5 All deposits encountered above the natural geology were connected with the modern car park construction, and no features or finds of archaeological significance were encountered.

## **6. ARCHAEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE AND MITIGATION**

### **6.1 Known Heritage Resource**

6.1.1 There was no previously known archaeological or heritage resource at the watching brief area, though it lies only 15 metres outside the Castell Coch scheduled monument (GM206), and within a tenuously proposed 'outer court' area to the castle.

### **6.2 Potential Archaeological Resource and Significance**

6.2.1 There were no features or finds encountered within the site during the groundworks, and no indication of surviving archaeological resource in this area.

### **6.3 Impact of Development**

6.3.1 The impact of the development on the heritage resource is therefore nil.

---

## 7. REFERENCES

- British Geological Survey (BGS) materials © UKRI. 2024. Geology Viewer.  
<https://geologyviewer.bgs.ac.uk/> (Accessed 23/01/2024)
- Brown, D.H. 2011 Archaeological Archives: a best practice in creation, compilation, transfer and curation. Archaeological Archives Forum.
- Burges, W. 1874. A Mediæval Fortress: Castle Coch. The Architect. A Weekly Illustrated Journal of Art, Civil Engineering and Building. Volume 11. pp 213-214, 225-226
- Cadw. 2023. Scheduled Monuments – Full Report <https://cadwpublic-api.azurewebsites.net/reports/sam/FullReport?lang=en&id=3377> (accessed 23/01/23)
- Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CifA). 2022. Code of Conduct
- CifA. 2023a. Standard for archaeological monitoring and recording.
- CifA. 2023b. Universal guidance for archaeological monitoring and recording.
- Clark, G.T. 1850. Archaeologia Cambrensis New Series No IV. October, 1850. pp241-50
- English Heritage. 2008. Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment: PPN 3: Archaeological Excavation.
- Historic England. 2015. Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment.
- Google Earth. Image © 2024. The GeoInformation Group. Imagery Date 1/1/2001.
- Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments in Wales (RCAHMW). 2000. An Inventory of the Ancient Monuments in Glamorgan: Volume III - Part 1b.
- Red River Archaeology. 2023. Castell Coch, Tongwynlais, Cardiff Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Watching Brief
- Richards, J.C., Richards, J., and Robinson, D., (eds). 2000. Digital Archives from Excavation and Fieldwork: Guide to Good Practice (Second Edition), Archaeology Data Service
- UKIC. 1990. Guidelines for the Preparation of Excavation Archives for Long Term Storage
- Welsh Archaeological Trusts. 2022. Guidance for the Submission of Data to the Welsh Historic Environment Records (HERs)
- Welsh Museum Federation. 2017. National Standards for Wales for Collecting and Depositing Archaeological Archives

### Cartography

- Ordnance Survey. Monmouthshire XXXII. Surveyed 1875, publ 1885.
- The Plan of the parish of Eglwysilan in the County of Glamorgan. 1841

---

## APPENDIX 1      ARCHIVE STATEMENT

The Site archive is comprised of the following materials:

Item	Quantity
Field recording sheets	3 (A4)
Digital photographs & video	16 (JPEG), 1 (MP4)
Registers (photo)	1 (A4)

The archive material is contained within one box.

The archive is currently stored in the offices of Red River Archaeology Ltd, Unit K7, Capital Point, Capital Business Park, Cardiff, CF3 2PU, Wales.

---

**APPENDIX 2      CONTEXT REGISTER***n.b. = not bottomed*

<b>Context no.</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Thickness (m)</b>	<b>Description</b>
001	Layer	0.06	Firm/crusty pink gravel hardstanding surface of parking lot
002	Foundation	0.15	Firm light white grey aggregate cement
003	Layer	0.30	Soft mid yellow brown sandy clay with frequent pink gravel, small rounded limestones, occasional medium limestones, occasional charcoal.
004	Geology - Natural	n.b.	Soft mid yellow brown sandy clay with moderate rounded small to medium (max 0.33x0.16x0.10m) limestones.