

# *Marches Archaeology*

## **The Church of St Michael and All Angels Lyonshall Herefordshire**

HSM 36937

**Report on a watching brief**

November 2003

*Marches Archaeology Series 310*

**This report is produced by**

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**For:-**

**The Parochial Church Council  
The Church of St Michael and All Angels  
Lyonshall  
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**The Church of St Michael and All Angels  
Lyonshall  
Herefordshire**

**Report on a watching brief**

**NGR: SO 333 565**

**HSM 36937**

**Report by  
Richard Stone**

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*Summary*

*A watching brief on installation of electricity cables for floodlighting encountered only graveyard soils and a spread of rubble probably associated with the heightening of the west tower in the 1870s. No articulated human remains were encountered. The trenches were 500mm deep at most and significant archaeological remains could exist deeper than this level.*

## **1 Introduction**

A faculty was granted for the installation of floodlighting for the south and west elevations of the church St Michael and All Angels, Lyonshall (Fig. 1). The site is situated at NGR: SO 333 565.

The site is listed on the local Sites and Monuments Record (SMR 6930) as a site of archaeological interest. In order that the archaeological resource was adequately protected an archaeological watching brief was to be carried out by Marches Archaeology during ground works associated with the proposed development. The County Sites and Monuments Record number for this intervention HSM 36937.

No Brief for the works was prepared so the watching brief was carried out using standard procedures used for similar projects. The site work was carried out on 9 July 2003.

## **2 Scope and aims of the project**

The scope of the project was:

- { sufficient documentary research was carried out to place the results in an appropriate archaeological and historical context.
- { observation of all topsoil stripping, other earthmoving and trench excavation until natural subsoil is reached
- { the sequence of soil deposits present and all archaeological deposits and features was recorded
- { all artefacts were collected, identified and catalogued
- { if significant archaeology had been identified the archaeologist on site would have informed the client and other appropriate parties in order that appropriate action could be taken to minimise the damage to such deposits and to record them appropriately
- { Full processing of archaeological materials and the production of an appropriate report

The purpose of an archaeological watching brief is defined by the Institute of Field Archaeologists as:

‘to allow, within the resources available, the preservation by record of archaeological deposits, the presence and nature of which could not be established (or established with sufficient accuracy) in advance of development or other potentially disruptive works’

and:

‘to provide an opportunity, if needed, for the watching archaeologist to signal to all interested parties, before the destruction of the material in question, that an archaeological find has been made for which the resources allocated to the watching brief itself are not sufficient to support a treatment to a satisfactory and proper standard’.

### **3 Methodology**

#### *Documentary research*

Primary and secondary sources were consulted in order to inform the fieldwork phase. Initially the Herefordshire Sites and Monuments Record was consulted. The following sources were also consulted: Ordnance Survey maps; Tithe maps; Previous published and unpublished archaeological reports and archive work; Written non-archaeological sources; Air photographs

#### *Fieldwork*

Observations and appropriate recording was undertaken of all ground breaking activity associated with this proposed development. The archaeologist had the power to suspend work on the excavation of material for short periods of time for the purpose of investigating areas of potential archaeological interest. It was agreed that disarticulated human remains would be reburied and articulated human remains would, as far as possible, be left *in situ* by design changes.

The recording system included written, drawn and photographic data. The primary written record was by means of site notes, accompanied by sketches. Context numbers were allocated and context record sheets completed as appropriate. A site plan was prepared. The photographic record will be made using colour negative film. No samples were taken as no deposits were considered to have environmental, technological or scientific dating potential.

#### *Office work*

On completion of fieldwork a site archive was prepared. The written, drawn and photographic data was catalogued and cross-referenced and a summary produced.

An illustrated client report (this document) was produced, detailing the aims, methods, and results of the project. A non-technical summary and details of the location and size of the archive is included.

## 4 Archaeological and Historical Background

### 4.1 *Lyonshall*

Archaeological evidence for early settlement in the parish of Lyonshall shows that in both the prehistoric era (SMR 31651, 31807, 31882) and the Roman period (SMR 12207) the area was occupied by man. This evidence, however, is sporadic and no detailed picture of the land use is known. The road that runs from Spond to Rhyse Lane is a postulated Roman road (SMR 22154; Feryok, 2001, 191, citing Beryl Lewis' MS 'Boundary Landscapes', 172). Recent unpublished investigations by Dr P Guest of Cardiff University have identified Roman enclosures east of the core of the present village.

Although there is no direct archaeological evidence of settlement at Lyonshall during the Saxon period the place name Lyonshall, meaning 'nook in the district called Leen', suggests a Saxon origin (Coplestone-Crow, 1989, 138). There is an impressive Saxon monument in the form of Offa's Dyke, of which several stretches are recognisable (SMR 351, 352, 376, 5577, 8223, 8224, 8225). This, however, does not indicate occupation in the area.

The Domesday entry of 1086 (Thorn and Thorn, 1981,10/44) indicates that there was a Saxon settlement but its origins and extent are unknown.

[In Elsdon Hundred] LYONSHALL. Walter holds it from him [Roger de Lacy]. Thorkell held from Earl Harold. 5 hides which pay tax. In lordship 2 ploughs; 3 villagers, 11 smallholders and 3 riding men with 5 ploughs. 5 slaves, male and female. From some men settled there 100d are given for as long as they wish (to remain). Value before 1066, 60s, now 50s.

A marginal note in the Domesday manuscript confirms Walter as Walter Ebrois (i.e. Devereux or d'Ebroicis). This family retained the Lordship of Lyonshall to the seventeenth century, with some exceptions in the fourteenth century. In 1301 the manor was alienated to William Touchet, who styled himself Lord of Lyonshall in a letter to the Pope (Robinson, 1872, 190). The manor then passed to the de Vere family (Earls of Oxford) and reverted to the Devereux family (who had married into the de Veres) in 1390. At some time between 1418 and 1428 John Merbery, who married a Devereux, became lord of the manor (Robinson, 1869, 105). In the mid sixteenth century Leland erroneously claimed that 'the very old lords of Linshall wer the Marbires' (Toulmin-Smith, 1910, vol II, 69). Merbery's daughter married another Devereux, and the family continued to hold the manor through the Tudor period, when Leland noted at 'Leonhaults a castel of my Lord Ferrars' (a Devereux) (Toulmin-Smith, 1910, vol V, 166) and on until the extinction of the male line in 1641 on the death of Robert Devereux, third Earl of Essex (Robinson, 1872, 191). From his daughter it then passed to the future Viscount Weymouth, and the manor stayed with the family until it was sold to John Cheese of Castle Weir in the early nineteenth century.

The power base of the medieval settlement was originally around the church (SMR 6930) and castle (SMR 355). The castle doubtless existed by the mid-twelfth century, and quite possibly dates from soon after the Norman Conquest. The standing remains of the castle appear to date from the thirteenth century, which is the time of the earliest known reference to it (1209, according to Robinson, 1869, 101). Hillaby (1985) suggests that the keep may have been built around the time of the 1227 market grant (see below), though there seems no reason to connect the two.

It is believed that the population of the manor of Lyonshall settled in the area south of the church. There are several local parallels for towns having a core of castle and church with the associated lay settlement extending axially from this (e.g. Eardisley, Wigmore and Richard's Castle, all in North Herefordshire).

The earliest reference directly suggesting a settlement which might be considered a town was in 1218 when a market and fair were granted (O'Donnell, 1971, 190). The location of the market has not been established but it is thought likely that it was near the church and castle. There are at least five further references to markets and/or fairs in 1227, 1301, 1319, 1341 and 1384. This last reference is the first known contemporary reference to the settlement being then considered a town.

The frequency and duration of the fairs is abundant evidence that the town had a significant role as a central place. Fairs were usually an annual event, held over three days. Grants of two annual fairs (as in 1384) or an eight day fair (as in 1301) were not the norm.

Recent archaeological work has re-evaluated the extent of the town. Aerial photographs show rectilinear anomalies in the field south of The Wharf (SMR 31854 (SO 3310 5580)) defined as rectangular plots divided by dry ditches, some with parallel banks and interpreted in the SMR description text as either 'house platforms, or some form of small scale agriculture'. The SMR site name, however, is 'house plots'. These are almost certainly related to (or incorporate) nearby earthworks including a possible holloway recorded as SMR 22155 (SO 3320 5590). The present main road from the church to the centre of the village is also a holloway, some 2m deep for much of its length.

Further south of the area where the earthworks were found and west of the main road are the names Burgage Bank and Burgage Close. This may suggest an earlier origin than fourteenth century for this area. However, the property boundaries on old maps betray no evidence of the narrow strips one might expect in an urban burgage and no authority for this name being ancient has been found so the name could be a relatively recent creation. A recent evaluation (SMR 32837), to the rear of Ivy House (NGR: SO 3369 5557), suggested that there was no medieval occupation on that area (Kenney and Stone, 2002).

The present central core of the village, around the dog leg by the Royal George Inn is of at least late medieval date as several of the buildings here date from the fifteenth century.

A local tradition holds that the settlement moved from its original position near the church and castle to the present centre after the Black Death (SMR 22155). Notes made early in the twentieth century by G Marshall as 'Papers collected towards the History of the Hundred of Stretford' apparently towards an uncompleted volume of the Victoria County History, include reference to an entry in the Calendar of Patent Rolls recording 'the laying waste of Lyonshall' in around 1392 (15 Rich II), as well as to a grant of a manor the previous year (HRO, K38/Cd/1). It is conceivable that this was the cause of the decline of the town. Only a decade later, in 1404, the Lord of the Manor, Walter, was ordered to fortify the castle against the Welsh. This was the time when Owen Glyndwr ravaged this area of Herefordshire and it is quite possible that Lyonshall suffered at this time.

#### 4.2 *The church*

The church of St Michael and All Angels is Grade II\* listed (ref: 1566/4/11; SMR 6930). It is built of local sandstone rubble with ashlar dressings and has stone slate roof. The porch is timber-framed. The earliest fabric of the present church is of the late twelfth century, but the majority was built between 1250 and 1350. The west tower was largely rebuilt during a restoration in 1822 and heightened 4m in 1872-73 by G F Bodley. At this time the south aisle was remodelled and the porch added. The Tithe map of 1843 shows the church (parcel 310) before this restoration and it is apparent that the porch replaced an earlier one.

An archaeological watching brief was carried out in 1993 when new drainage was provided to the church (Shoosmith and Hoverd, 1993). As expected, human bone was found. All was disarticulated except at the bottom of the new soakaways south of the church. Some spreads of stone were found which were interpreted as relating to earlier drainage schemes and two areas of masonry were identified south of the church running east-west. The significance of these areas was not established, but it was stated that they do not appear to be foundations for a wall or for an early churchyard boundary.

## **5 Results of the watching brief**

All trenches were dug with a mini excavator fitted with a 200mm wide bucket after the turf was stripped (Fig. 2). Trenches were 450-500mm deep from present ground level. In areas below the existing paths the cables were laid by moling through, so no digging was done in these areas.

The stratigraphy of the material in the trenches followed a regular pattern. The dark brown humic topsoil overlay a mid brown clay loam which contained occasional fragments of mortar, brick and charcoal as well as small patches of reddish brown to strong red clay. This is interpreted as a general soil layer covering the site, which has probably been disturbed over the centuries as graves were dug. The red clay element is presumed to be natural subsoil upcast in previous digging. In the trench west of the west tower there was a layer of stone rubble directly below the topsoil. This is interpreted as debris from the heightening of the tower in the 1870s.

The only features noted in the trenches were two drainage trenches. These correspond with the new drainage added in 1993.

The only finds were small fragments of disarticulated human skeletal remains. These were seen only in three separate places in a limited area south of the south transept and chancel. The remains consisted of skull, ulna (lower arm) and tibia (lower leg) fragments and a phalange (finger bone). It was not possible to determine the number of individuals represented, nor to provide any meaningful statistical analysis of the remains. These remains are presumably upcast from burials disturbed by later burials. This is very common in graveyards. Normally, upcast bones are reburied at the same depth as the new burial. The few fragments identified here were presumably not seen by the gravediggers and were thus reburied randomly.

## **6 Conclusions**

The watching brief did not encounter any significant archaeological remains. This reflects the shallow depth of the trenches and it is very likely that burials of the medieval and post-medieval periods survive at greater depth.

## 7 Bibliography

### *Primary documents*

HRO Hereford Record Office

SMR County Sites and Monuments Record

Tithe map and apportionment (1843)

Ordnance Survey second edition 25" to 1 mile map (1904)

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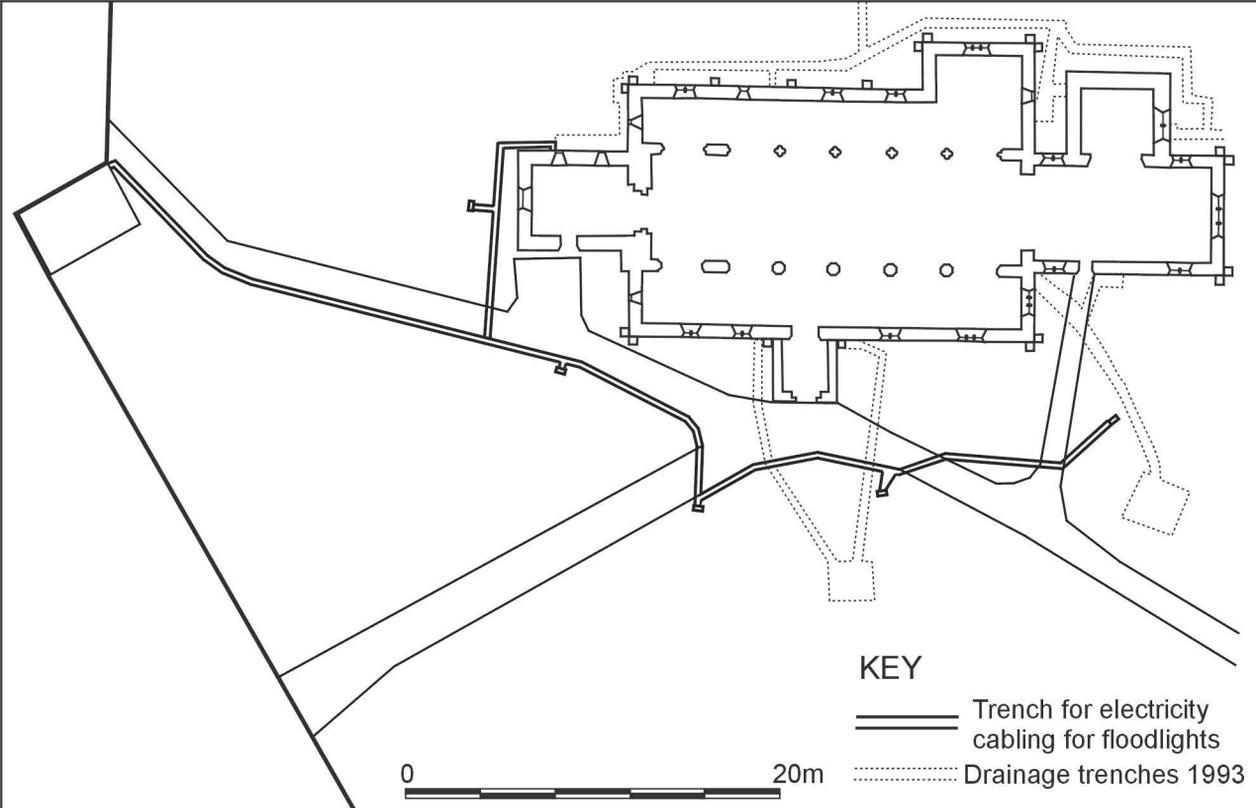
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**Fig. 2 Position of the trenches**