

Archaeological Watching Brief  
at  
**ROGIET PRIMARY SCHOOL,  
MONMOUTHSHIRE.**  
for  
Willmott Dixon Construction Ltd.



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Bristol and Region Archaeological Services

Archaeological Watching Brief  
at  
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for  
Willmott Dixon Construction Ltd.

Centred on  
N.G.R. ST 459 878

Client: Willmott Dixon Construction Ltd.

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### NOTE

Notwithstanding that Bristol and Region Archaeological Services have taken reasonable care to produce a comprehensive summary of the known and recorded archaeological evidence, no responsibility can be accepted for any omissions of fact or opinion, however caused.

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## **SUMMARY**

Bristol and Region Archaeological Services were commissioned by Willmott Dixon Construction Ltd to carry out a watching brief on a series of deep geotechnical pits on land currently occupied by the Primary School at Rogiet, just west of Caldicot in Monmouthshire, South Wales. The work was carried out as part of a proposal for the removal of the present school on the site, and its replacement with a new school building, and residential housing. The requirement for a watching brief arose from a previous desk-based assessment carried out by BaRAS recently for the same site. No archaeological features or deposits were observed in any of the ten test pits which were dug during the course of the present work.

## **LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS**

### **Figures**

Fig.1 Contractors' site plan showing location of geotechnical test pits. Original scale: 1:500

### **Plates**

Cover Rogiet Primary School. View to north-west

Plate 1 Main and end section of TP 7

Plate 2 Longitudinal view into TP 6

Plate 3 Longitudinal view into TP 10

Plate 4 Spoil from TP 10, showing natural, orange sand

## 1. INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

- 1.1 The historical and archaeological background to the proposed development Rogiet Primary School, Monmouthshire, and their possible implications for it, have been examined in detail in the recent desk-based assessment already carried out by BaRAS, and need not be reiterated again here. That study also provides site location plans and other relevant material (Corcos 2008).
- 1.2 In order to test the suitability of the site geology for construction purposes, the developers, Willmott Dixon, commissioned, from Jubb Consulting Engineers Ltd, Plymouth, a geotechnical survey of the grounds, involving the excavation of ten pits at various locations around the grounds of the present school. The on-site work was conducted and supervised by Earth Science Partnership Ltd, Cardiff. Three of the pits were used to explore both the underlying geology and to conduct soakaway tests for drainage purposes. The positions of the test pits are given in the contractor's plan shown here as **Fig. 1**, which are approximately correct. As a check, however, the BaRAS staff member carrying out the watching brief used a hand-held GPS unit (a Garmin eTrex Legend HCx) to locate, in each case, a single point above the test pits which was tied straight into the OS National Grid. These readings were consistently accurate to  $\pm 3\text{m}$ , and are given in **Table 1 (Appendix 2)**, along with other basic details of each pit.
- 1.3 The test pits were dug using a 0.60m wide toothed bucket, mounted on the arm of a JCB Sitemaster. Since absolute consistency and accuracy were not a major issue, they varied in length between about 2.30 and 3.00m. Only the upper part of the pits could be examined archaeologically; no pit could be physically entered once it reached a depth of over 1.20m. The pits were dug to depths of between 1.70 (TP7) and 3.50m (TP5), depending on the judgement of the ESP staff member. In most cases this meant locating the top of the harder bedrock and digging a little into it.

## 2. RESULTS

- 2.1 As it transpired, the sequence of deposition was essentially the same in all the test pits. This was topsoil, subsoil, and then straight onto a natural, pure sand which varied in colour from bright orange to mid-dark brown. The topsoil/subsoil layer was generally about 1.0m in depth, and, as an example, the top of the bedrock in TP3, was encountered at about 2.0m below ground level. The bedrock itself consisted, at least in its upper part, of hard but brittle nodules of sandy stone. The cover picture, and **Plates 1 to 4**, give some indication of this sequence.
- 2.2 In not one of the test pits was any archaeological deposit or feature observed, or anything that could be remotely interpreted as such. The same was true in terms of finds. In the whole course of the work, a single small sherd of glazed creamware was recovered from the very upper topsoil horizon of one of the pits.

### **3. CONCLUSION**

- 3.1 If the results of this exercise are to be taken at face value, there are no archaeological implications for the progress of the planning application for the proposed new primary school at Rogiet. In coming to this view, however, there are certain caveats which perhaps ought to be borne in mind, most notably, the small size of the sample represented by the ten test pits which are the subject of this report. Allowing that each test pit was 0.60m wide and a maximum of 3.0m long (most were shorter), in total an area of 18 sq m. was tested by deep excavation. To set this figure into context, the development proposal as currently constituted, and on the basis of the developer's own figures (Corcos 2008, 1), will directly affect an area of no less than 2.73 hectares, or 27,300 sq m. That is, the area 'sampled' in the course of this watching brief represents a mere 0.066% of the proposed development area. It is possible, therefore, that the result of archaeological sterility seen here is actually more apparent than real, and that the local authority may decide that it is unsafe simply to extrapolate it across the entire development area.



#### 4. REFERENCES AND WORKS CONSULTED

##### Unpublished sources

Corcos N J, 2008 *Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment of Land at Rogiet Primary School, Monmouthshire, for Willmott Dixon Construction Ltd. B&RAS Report No. 1947/2008.*

#### 5. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Bristol and Region Archaeological Services wish to extend their thanks to Phil Webber, of Jubb Consulting Engineers Ltd, who supplied the plan upon which **Fig. 1** is based, and kindly supplied Plates 1-4 when problems with our own camera, which only became apparent when Nick Corcos returned to the office, meant that we could not include our own digital photographs here. Also, Dan Bettosi, of site contractors Earth Science Partnership, extended every help and co-operation during the course of the work. His, and Phil Webber's, understanding of the requirements of the archaeological element of the work were greatly appreciated. This report was compiled by Dr Nick Corcos, and was produced by Ann Linge. The project was managed by Bruce Williams (MIFA).

## **APPENDIX 1: Monmouthshire County Council, Archaeological Policy Statement**

### **10.13 ARCHAEOLOGY**

CH10 Proposals to develop sites where there are known archaeological remains or good reason to believe that such remains exist must incorporate appropriate measures to verify and protect the archaeological interest, including:

- the proper investigation and recording of the site; and
- a layout that, where appropriate, allows for the retention in situ of archaeological remains with adequate safeguarding of the retained features.

In designated areas of special archaeological sensitivity appropriate investigations will be necessary before the principle of developing sites can be determined. Where these requirements are not complied with or serious harm to archaeological interests would occur, planning permission may be refused.

10.13.1 Monmouthshire has a very historic character that has to be retained as much as possible. Although much of this character lies with the existing buildings which are protected by Conservation Areas and Listed Building legislation there is potentially much to be learned about the past from archaeological remains, including Scheduled Ancient Monuments.

10.13.2. Where proposals affect sites where there are indications of the existence of important archaeological remains, including designated Areas of Special Archaeological Sensitivity, the Council may, after taking professional archaeological advice, request the prospective developer to provide as part of their planning application an assessment or evaluation of the archaeological or historic importance of the site or structure and the likely impact of the proposed development upon it. The detailed proposals for the development will be expected to have full regard to the findings of the study.

10.13.3 Where development is permitted on a site of archaeological interest and it is not feasible to preserve remains, the Council will require the developer to implement prior to the commencement of the development, or as part of it, measures to mitigate the effect on them, which may include the carrying out of prior excavations and recording of the archaeological evidence.

10.13.4 Archaeological assessments, evaluations, investigations and mitigatory measures will be undertaken in accordance with a brief provided by the Glamorgan Gwent Archaeological Trust Ltd (GGAT), which is the Council's professional advisor on such matters as indicated in Welsh Office Circular 60/96. Similarly the use of agreements under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and the Code of Conduct of the British Archaeologists' and Developers' Liaison Group will be encouraged. These will allow for appropriate and satisfactory provision for the excavation and recording of archaeological remains prior to the commencement of development, in accordance with a project brief, and for the publication results.

10.13.5 The Council, in association with the Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust, has designated 13 non statutory Areas of Special Archaeological Sensitivity within its area to inform developers, at an early stage, of their archaeological potential. These cover the settlements and environs of Abergavenny, Caerwent, Caldicot, Chepstow, Grosmont, Magor with Undy, Monmouth, Raglan, Rogiet and the Gwent Levels, Skenfrith, Trellech, Whitecastle and Usk. Prospective developers within these areas are particularly advised to contact GGAT for an opinion of the archaeological potential of their sites and for advice on whether an assessment or evaluation is necessary.

### **10.14 UNSCHEDULED ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES**

CH11 Unscheduled archaeological sites and monuments listed in the County Sites and Monuments Record, which is held by the Glamorgan Gwent Archaeological Trust, will be protected wherever possible by management measures and the reasonable control of new development.

10.14.1 Unscheduled sites represent approximately 95% of the County's archaeological resources. While not all of these are of equal significance many will have local or regional importance (while some may satisfy the criteria of national importance yet remain unscheduled). Whether scheduled or not, ancient monuments are regarded by the Welsh Assembly Government as a material consideration in the planning process. In the Town and Country Planning General Development Order 1988 a 'site of archaeological interest' is taken to mean "land which is included in the schedule of monuments compiled by the Secretary of State for Wales under Section 1 of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979, or is within an area of land which is designated as an Area of Archaeological Importance under Section 33 of that Act, or which is within a site registered in any record kept by the County Council and known as the County Sites and Monuments Record. The Council has formally adopted the Glamorgan Gwent Archaeological Trust's Sites and Monuments Records for the purpose of the General Development Order.

Source: <http://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/udp/chapter10.html>.

**APPENDIX 2: Table 1**

<b>Test Pit</b>	<b>Width</b>	<b>Length</b>	<b>NGR (Accuracy: ± 3m)</b>	<b>Max. depth</b>	<b>Orientation</b>
1	0.60m	2.40m	ST 45980 87747	3.40m	NNE-SSW
2	0.60m	2.55m	ST 46031 87750	3.00m	NW-SE
3	0.60m	2.45m	ST 46074 87777	3.20m	NNW-SSE
4	0.60m	2.60m	ST 46037 87778	3.30m	E-W
5	0.60m	2.30m	ST 45994 87772	3.50m	NE-SW
6	0.60m	2.40m	ST 46019 87807	3.50m	SW-NE
7	0.60m	2.30m	ST 46056 87832	1.70m	E-W
8	0.60m	3.00m	ST 46019 87844	2.80m	NNE-SSW
9	0.60m	2.30m	ST 46032 87880	2.50m	WSW-ENE
10	0.60m	2.70m	ST 45989 87875	2.80m	SW-NE



Fig.1 Contractors' site plan showing location of geotechnical test trenches. Original scale: 1:500



Plate 1 Main and end section of TP 7



Plate 2 Longitudinal view into TP 6



Plate 3 Longitudinal view into TP 10



Plate 4 Spoil from TP 10, showing natural, orange sand