

# CHURCH LANE, ST DOGMAELS



Watching brief for Western Power  
and Jacob Woodcraft  
December 2018

# CHURCH LANE, ST DOGMAELS, PEMBROKESHIRE

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF ON SERVICE TRENCHING, DECEMBER 2018

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### CONTENTS

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Summary</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>5</b>
	2.1 Site location	5
	2.2 Site history	6
	2.3 Site description	19
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Aims and objectives</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Methodologies and results</b>	<b>21</b>
	4.1 The groundworks	21
	4.2 Results	21
<b>5.0</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>6.0</b>	<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>7.0</b>	<b>References</b>	<b>29</b>

### Figures

Fig. 1	Site location map	5
Fig. 2	Plan of St Dogmaels village centre, showing location of Church Street, the 2018 trenches and the abbey precinct	5
Fig. 3	Detail from St Dogmaels Tithe Map, of 1838	9
Fig. 4	Detail from Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map of 1890	10
Fig. 5	Detail from Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map of 1906	10
Fig. 6	Plan of the medieval priory at Carmarthen relative to Priory Street	11
Fig. 7	Aerial views of St Dogmaels Abbey and Muchelney Abbey	13
Fig. 8	St Dogmaels Abbey in 1740, by S. and N. Buck	15
Fig. 9	Overall plan of the 2018 trenches	17
Fig. 10	Section, facing east, along Church Lane showing Trench 1	18
Fig. 11	Plan of Trench 2 and the 2015 evaluation trench	22
Fig. 12	Section, facing north, of Trench 2	23

<b>Appendix – photographs</b>	<b>33</b>
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**ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THIS REPORT**

DAT	Dyfed Archaeological Trust
HER	Historic Environment Record
NGR	National Grid reference
NLW	National Library of Wales
NMR	National Monuments Record
NPRN	National Primary Record Number
OD	Ordnance datum
OS	Ordnance Survey
PRN	Primary Record Number
SAM	Scheduled Ancient Monument

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## 1.0 SUMMARY

*In December 2018 a watching brief was undertaken, on behalf of Western Power Distribution and Jacob Woodcraft, on groundworks in the middle of St Dogmaels, Pembrokeshire. The works were located centrally along Church Lane, and in an empty plot (the 'Cwtch') immediately to the west (centering on NGR SN 1637 4596). Church Lane lies immediately north of the medieval St Dogmaels Abbey (PRN 1090; NPRN 94164) and runs north-south between the abbey and High Street, the main route through the village. An archaeological evaluation elsewhere in the 'Cwtch' plot, in 2015, revealed structures, features and deposits of probable medieval date.*

*The 2018 groundworks comprised new trenching for electric cabling, and a foul-water connection. The trenches revealed few archaeological features or deposits. However, the little that was revealed, and the negative evidence, makes possible a more nuanced interpretation of the history and archaeology of this area of St Dogmaels.*

*The settlement of St Dogmaels developed at the gates of the medieval abbey, a house of the Tironian order of reformed Benedictine monks that was founded, in the early twelfth century, on the site of a pre-existing, early medieval monastery. The northern boundary of the abbey precinct appears to survive in the line of the present boundary wall. The early medieval monastery may have occupied a large, subcircular enclosure, but it is uncertain whether the curving line of High Street follows its boundary, or results from the later development of housing along the north side of the medieval abbey precinct. No burials were encountered during the watching brief, or during evaluation in 2015, but in both cases only small areas were examined.*

*By the later Middle Ages, St Dogmaels had developed into a large market town of over 100 properties, centred on High Street, that flourished until its decline in the sixteenth century. Church Lane almost certainly represents the medieval route leading from High Street to the abbey precinct, which was accessed through a gateway on the site of the present entry. The walls, features and possible floor revealed in the 'Cwtch' plot, in 2015, appear to relate to the medieval town rather than to the abbey: this does not however diminish their archaeological importance, or alter the planning status of the site.*

*St Thomas's Church, immediately north of the abbey church, is normally thought to be a post-medieval foundation, but is here suggested to occupy the site of the medieval parish church of St Dogmaels, which may also have served the abbey as a 'gatehouse chapel' for visitors. It is possible that a walled enclosure, next to the present precinct entry, may reflect a building associated with the medieval gateway, and would reward further investigation.*

*At some point during the post-medieval period, Church Lane was levelled by terracing into the hill-slope on the west side, truncating the medieval walls and features revealed in 2015. It is not known whether this occurred before or after the cutting of a post-medieval feature, possibly linear, on the western side of the lane; the feature was revealed in section in 2018. However, it is considered likely that the terracing event formed part of the development of the eastern side of Church Lane, with housing, in the later nineteenth century.*



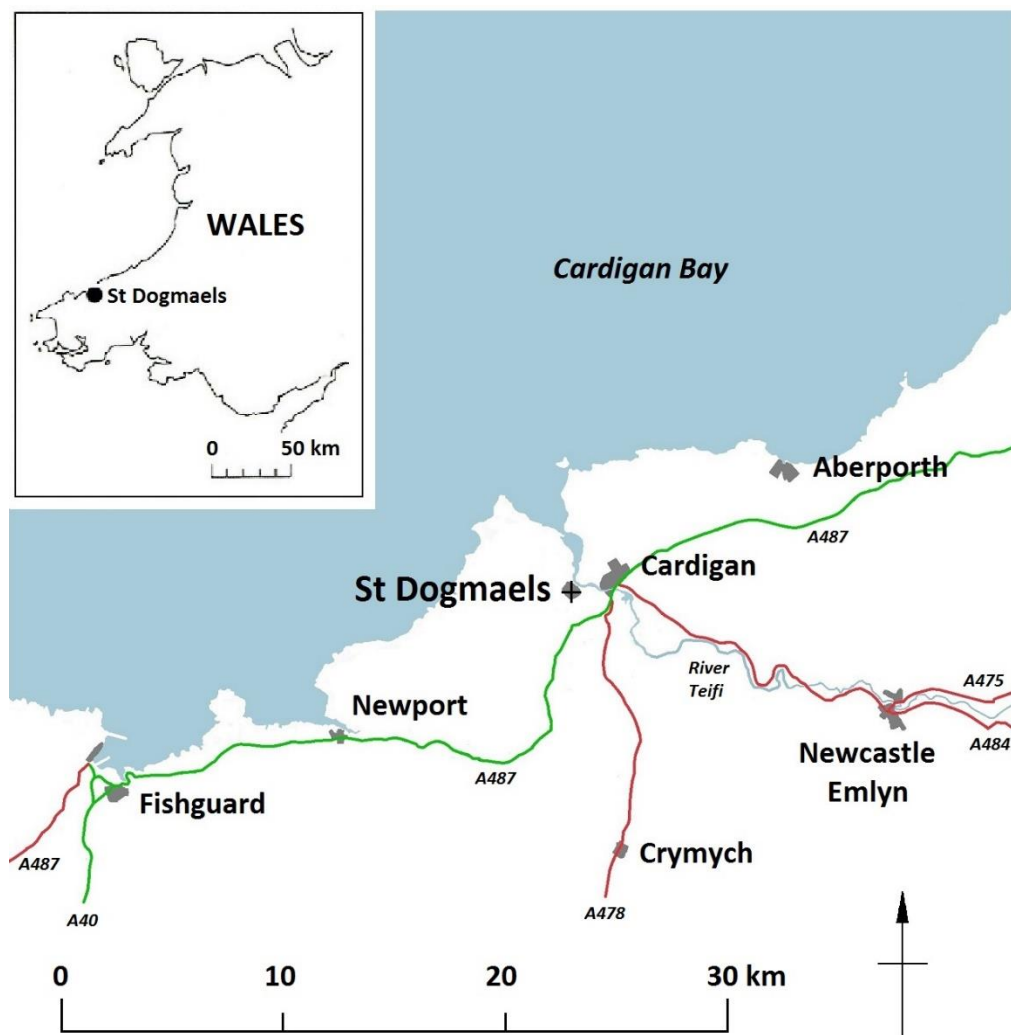
## 2.0 INTRODUCTION

### 2.1 Site location (Figs. 1 and 2)

The watching brief was undertaken on new trenching for electric cabling, and a foul-water connection, along Church Lane, in the middle of the coastal village of St Dogmaels, Pembrokeshire (centering on NGR SN 1637 4596). Church Lane lies immediately north of the medieval St Dogmaels Abbey, running north-south between the abbey and High Street, the main route through the village. An archaeological evaluation alongside Church Lane, by DAT in 2015, revealed structures, features and deposits of probable medieval date (Murphy and Enright 2015).

Nearly the whole of St Dogmaels village is a conservation area (Pembrokeshire County Council; <https://www.pembrokeshire.gov.uk/listed-buildings-and-conservation-area>), but lies just outside Pembrokeshire Coast National Park. The abbey remains are a Scheduled Ancient Monument (Pe 073) under Cadw guardianship, but part of the abbey grounds are occupied by St Thomas's Church, and churchyard, and under the care of the Church in Wales.

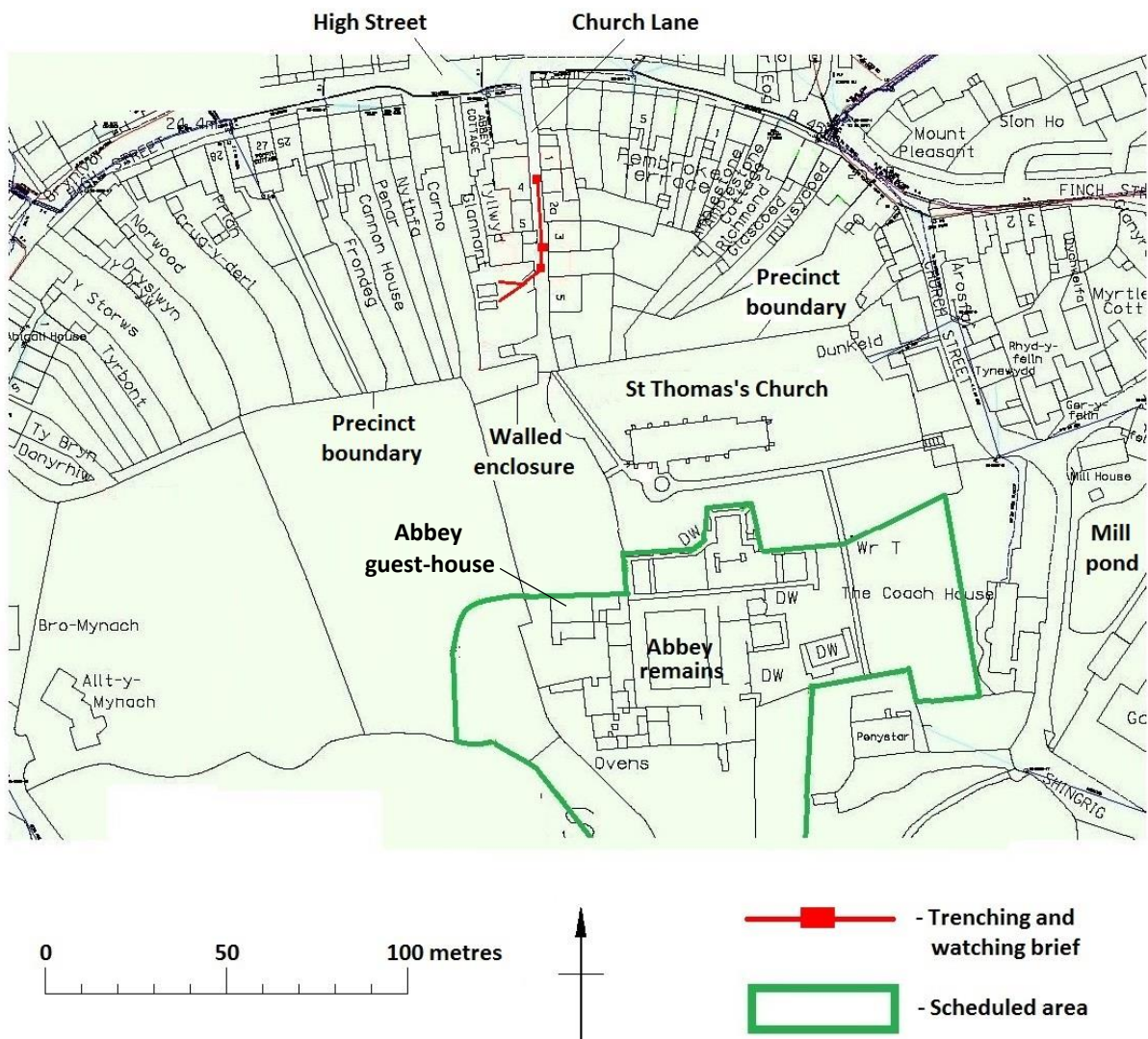
*Fig. 1 – Site location map*



## 2.2 Site history (Figs. 2-8)

St Dogmaels is dominated by the remains of its important medieval abbey (PRN 1090; NPRN 94164). The house was founded by the Norman lord Robert FitzMartin, in 1113, as a priory of the Tironian order of reformed Benedictines; it was raised to abbey status in 1120. It occupies a much earlier monastic site. The abbey was dissolved in 1536, but its remains still form the defining element of today's landscape. St Dogmaels has, since the medieval period, been a parish with a parish church. A settlement had developed outside the abbey by the later Middle Ages and was, by the sixteenth century, one of the larger towns of the region, but had grown no further by the nineteenth century by which time it was normally described as a village.

*Fig. 2 – Plan of St Dogmaels village centre, showing location of Church Street, the 2018 trenches and the abbey precinct (adapted from Western Power plan).*



### 2.2.1 The early medieval period (400-1100 AD)

Robert FitzMartin's charter to the abbey, of 1120, refers to it as 'the ancient cell of St Dogmael' (Round 1899, 353), revealing that it was a pre-existing ecclesiastical site. It appears to represent the documented monastery of 'Llandudoch', which was recorded in the tenth century (Jones 1952, 4, 10). The present abbey buildings occupy a large, regular, rectangular enclosure which would appear to represent, at least in part, the later medieval monastic precinct, but it is possible that the curving line followed by High Street (Figs. 2-5) respects the boundary of a large, circular enclosure of a kind associated with early monastic sites in Wales (Ludlow 2003, PRN 1222). These large enclosures probably saw multiple uses containing, for example, garden plots as well as monastic buildings, but burial could potentially occur anywhere within them; early stone-lined burials (or 'cists') were noted to the southeast of the abbey in 1905, at NGR 1656 4582 (Pritchard 1907, 200; see below, Sections 2.2.2 and 5.2). Continuous property boundaries to the south of the abbey remains may be a reflection of its southern boundary (James 1992, 74), but a curving bank has been recorded here, through geophysical survey, closer to the abbey buildings (Hilling 2000, 24) suggesting the enclosure may have been somewhat smaller, or perhaps representing the inner of two concentric enclosures. A later grant to the abbey mentions 'a certain immunity called *Noddfa Dogfael alias refugium*' (James 1987, 69), showing that the early monastery possessed rights of sanctuary (*nawdd*) and that a physical area of sanctuary, or *noddfa*, was defined by a boundary of some sort.

There are seven Early Christian Monuments on the abbey site (PRNs 1215-19, 1221) which, although not all may be *in situ*, suggest a continuous ecclesiastical presence from the sixth century AD onwards; a tradition that the monastery moved from a site 3 kilometres to the west, at Caerau Gaer (PRN 1054; NGR SN 1246 4548), has been current since the late sixteenth century (Charles 1948, 267), and has often been repeated (eg. Fenton 1811, 513), but lacks supporting evidence. A modern street, to the southeast of the abbey, bears the name 'Mwtshwr' and perpetuates a pre-existing place-name; *Mwtshwr/mystwyr* is an Old Welsh corruption of the Latin 'monasterium', in use from the eighth century AD, and its presence at St Dogmaels is a further indicator of a pre-Norman monastic presence there (Pierce 2000, 124-5, 130-4). The community was wealthy enough to be attacked by Vikings in 988 (Jones 1952, 10).

### 2.2.2 The medieval period (1100-1536 AD)

The abbey's history and description have been adequately summarised elsewhere (eg. Hilling 2000, 24-47; Knowles and Hadcock 1971, 106-8; Lloyd *et al.* 2004, 432-6; Murphy 2012, 12). No cartulary survives, so the abbey's history has to be pieced together from other sources. Never one of Britain's wealthier houses – valued at only £96 gross in 1535 (Caley *et al.* 1846, 132) – this source documentation mainly comprises pleas of poverty, and petitions for exemption from taxation (eg. Fryde 1974, 41, 46-8; Isaacson 1917, 795, 821, 826; Rees 1975, 231). However, they cannot be taken entirely at face value: medieval abbots were adept at concealing the wealth of their houses (see, for instance, Jones 1937, 272), and the elaborate fan-vaulting built at St Dogmaels in the early sixteenth century, though probably enabled through private benefaction, may suggest a rather more complex story.

Robert FitzMartin reconstituted the early medieval monastery along Anglo-Norman lines, rededicating the site to St Mary (Caley *et al.* 1846, 129; Round 1899, 353, 356); however, much like the FitzMartins themselves, it acquired a Welsh accent and the pre-Norman dedication continued to be sometimes used, in the form 'St Mary and St Dogmael' (Isaacson 1917, 765, 777). Fitzmartin had acquired central north Pembrokeshire – the Norman lordship of Cemais – by conquest, between 1100 and 1108 (Miles 1997, 10-11). His new foundation was colonised from the mother house of the Tironian order, at Tiron in northern France (Hilling 2000, 26); later in the twelfth century, St Dogmaels itself founded three daughter houses, at Pill and Caldey in Pembrokeshire, and Glascarrig in Ireland (Ludlow *et al.* 2002, 43).

The abbey church was planned with an aisled nave, but this was never completed and, in the early thirteenth century, was remodelled as a simple, aisleless nave with an extended chancel over a crypt (Hilling 2000, 36-7). The north transept was rebuilt in the early sixteenth century, with fan vaulting. The cloister lies south of the church, with the standard suite of conventual buildings including chapter house, refectory and cellarer's range, which were built and/or rebuilt from the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries (*ibid.*). A detached building to the southeast represents an infirmary, added in the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century. Substantial portions of the church survive, particularly the north wall and north transept, but the conventual buildings are much reduced apart from the infirmary. The mill-stream southeast of the abbey buildings supplied at least two monastic corn mills (Caley *et al.* 1846, 132; Owen 1897, 508).

### *The medieval town*

A substantial civil settlement had developed around the abbey by the later Middle Ages. It was held of the lords of Cemais (Charles 1948, 267; Owen 1897, 465-6), who were clearly keen to exploit the economic potential provided by the abbey's presence: they are recorded as having established a market here, but this had ceased operating by c.1600 (Owen 1892, 142). St Dogmaels was defined as a medieval borough in c.1600, a status that was regarded as still existing (Owen 1897, 398 n. 1, 465-6, 498, 505, 517); no charter survives, so it may have been a borough 'by prescription'. It was also one of the three corporate towns of Cemais, along with Newport and Fishguard, and was governed by a portreeve (Charles 1948, 267; Owen 1897, 517).

The town's properties, moreover, appear to have been formal 'burgage plots', ie. the narrow properties, comprising a house with a yard or garden, that were typical of medieval towns. They are specifically termed 'burgages and tenements' in a deed of 1544-5 (Caley *et al.* 1846, 130-1), and in c.1600 it was noted, based on former rents, that the medieval town had comprised 105 'burgage plots' (Charles 1948, 267). The properties comprised 71 whole burgages and 34 half-burgages (*ibid.*). This was a very respectably-sized town, lying comfortably within the second of the four ranks of Welsh medieval towns defined by Ian Soulsby, ie. those with between 100 and 200 burgages (see Soulsby 1983, 23). Not all of these plots were still occupied in c.1600: sixty householders were recorded at St Dogmaels in 1563, but it was still the largest town in Cemais and larger than the boroughs of Newport (much declined) and Fishguard, where 50 and 41 householders were respectively recorded (Howells 1977, 87).



Fig. 3 – Detail from St Dogmaels Tithe Map, of 1838.



High Street represents the main street, and centre, of the medieval town. Leading southwards from the street, and running up to the abbey precinct, is a series of long, narrow plots (matched on the north side of High Street; Figs. 2, 4 and 5). Though they are incompletely shown on the tithe map of 1838 (Fig. 3), the tithe survey recorded ownership blocs rather than individual properties (which were often occupied by tenants of the same landowner), and it is clear that the plots perpetuate the medieval burghage tenements.

#### *The monastic precinct*

The abbey buildings occupy a large, regular rectangular enclosure (Figs. 2, 4 and 5), over 4 hectares in extent and including the open space around the abbey remains. It would appear to represent, at least in part, the monastic precinct (see Section 5.2 below). The precinct boundary, along the north side of the abbey complex, appears to be followed by the present enclosure boundary: excavation elsewhere on this boundary, by Archaeology Cymru in 2014, revealed that the medieval precinct wall lay beneath it, separated by a deposit of nineteenth-century soil (Pannett 2014).

There were sixteen Tironian houses in the British Isles but little is known of the layout or plan of their precincts, of which the remains are scant (Ludlow 1994, 10; Ludlow *et al.* 2002, 75-80); it is likely however that, in general, they conformed to 'normal' Benedictine arrangements. A rare survival is at the Scottish Tironian abbey of Lindores, at Newburgh in Fife, where part of the boundary survives and much of the rest is still traceable (<http://canmore.org.uk/collection/1228177>).

Fig. 4 – Detail from Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map of 1890.

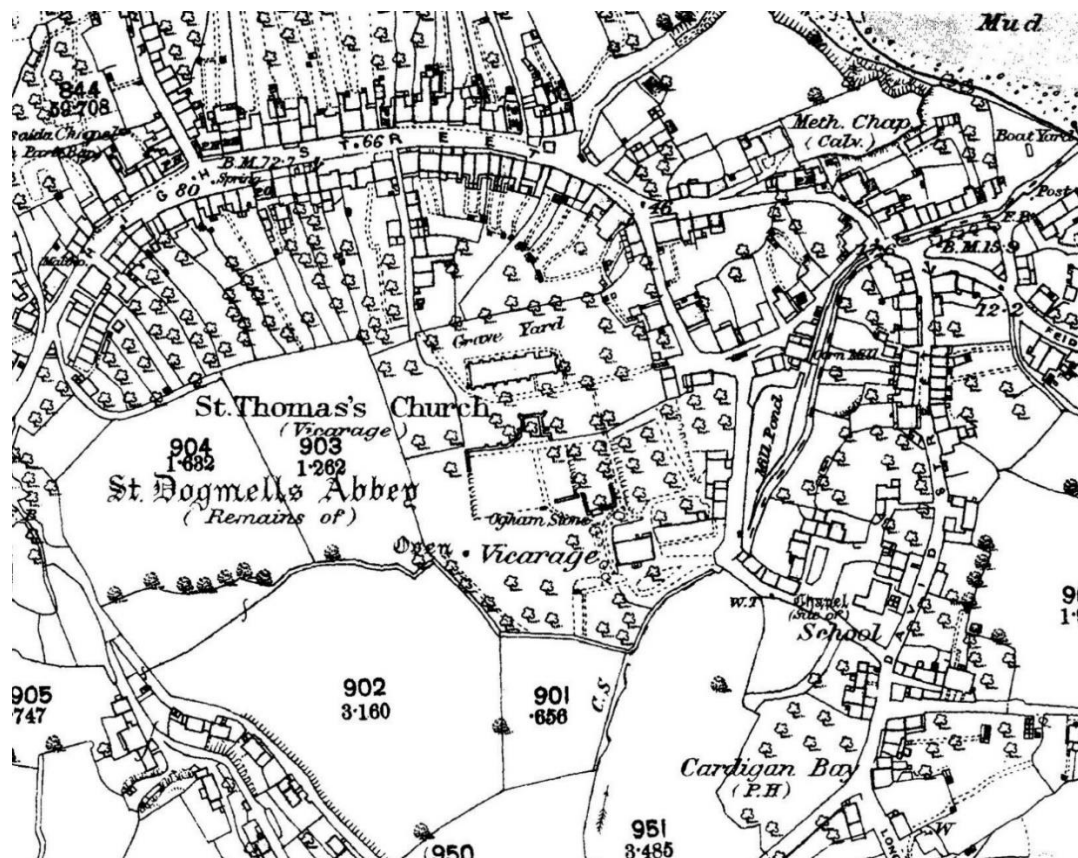
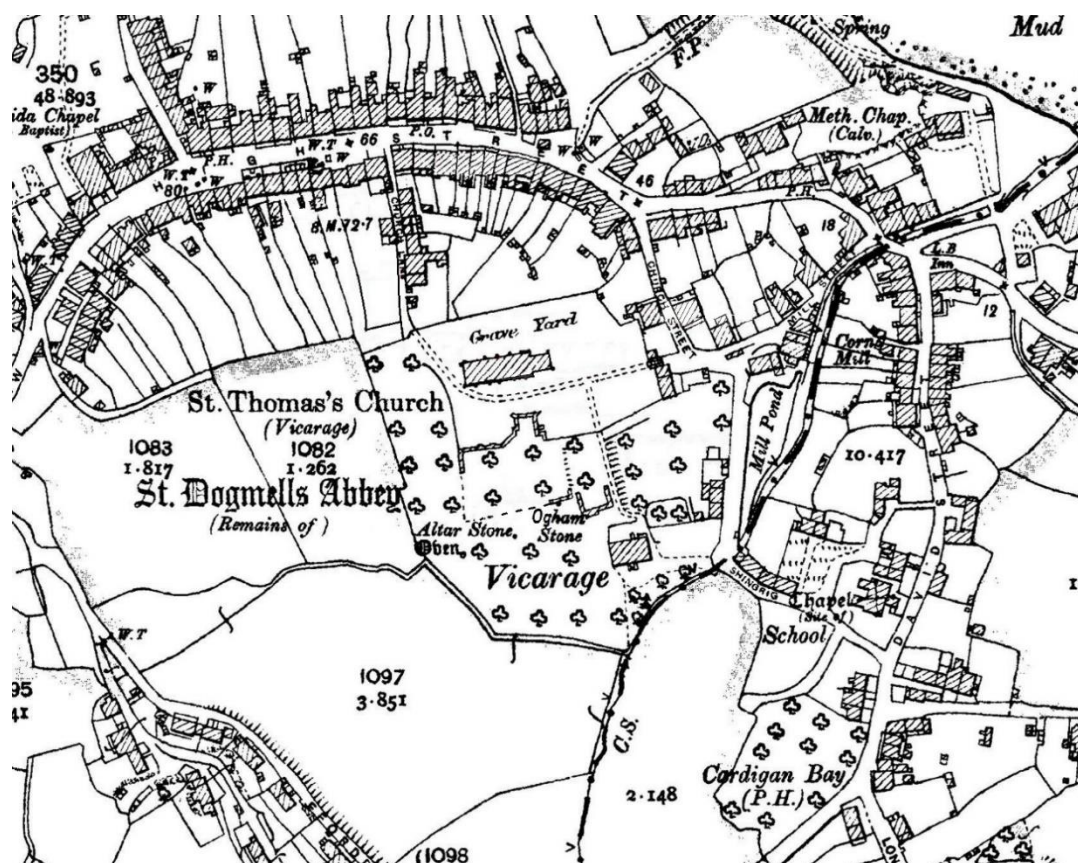
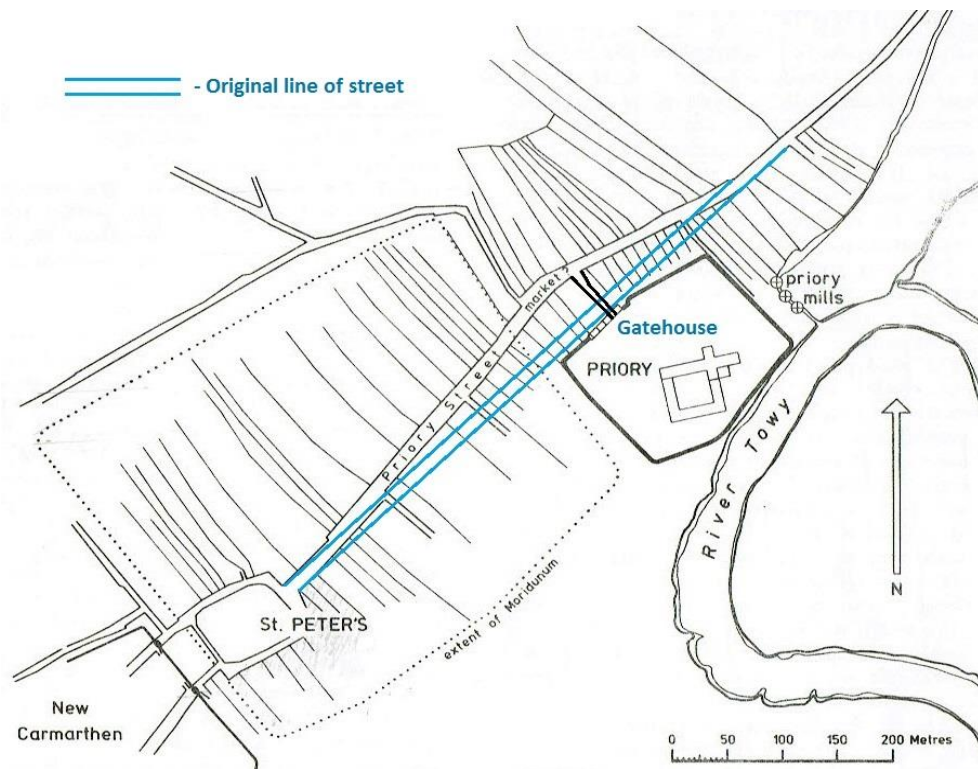


Fig. 5 – Detail from Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map of 1906.



It can be assumed that the precinct at St Dogmaels was always entered from the north: High Street represented the main street and commercial nucleus of the medieval town (see above), while the main entry into the abbey church – which is cut into the hillside, precluding a west door – was in the north wall. So it is highly likely that Church Lane perpetuates the route from High Street to the precinct gateway; elsewhere in west Wales, the access routes to, for example, Carmarthen Friary and Carmarthen Priory are both preserved as modern lanes which, as at St Dogmaels, lie between medieval burgage plots (James 1993, 23-6; James 1997, 107; Fig. 6).

*Fig. 6 – Plan of the medieval priory at Carmarthen relative to the main street (Priory Street), showing its influence on the street line, and the access lane to the gatehouse (from James 1980)*



A further comparison with Carmarthen may cast doubt on the suggestion that High Street follows a pre-Norman monastic enclosure boundary (see Section 2.2.1 above). Civil settlement outside Carmarthen Priory, with similar long burgage plots, has had the effect of pushing the main street here away from the priory gatehouse, creating a very similar 'belly' in its alignment (Fig. 6); as a Roman road, it was clearly originally straight (James 1980, 24-5; James 2003, 17). So the High Street at St Dogmaels may, at first, have run alongside the north wall of the Norman precinct, rather than following any earlier boundary.

Nothing survives from the precinct gateway at St Dogmaels. It may have stood alongside High Street, with Church Lane representing an extension of the precinct in the form of a walled alley-way, as at Carmarthen Friary and elsewhere (James 1997, 107); the tithe map may suggest a building closing off the north end of Church Lane, perhaps representing a gatehouse (Fig. 3), but this is very vague. An archaeological evaluation in 2015 revealed masonry walling immediately to the west of Church Lane which, it was suggested, may have belonged to the



precinct gatehouse (Murphy and Enright 2015; discussed below, Sections 4.0 and 5.0). Or perhaps the gateway may have occupied the same site as the present archway between Church Lane and the abbey buildings (see Appendix, photo 2). Source material is scant: Giraldus Cambrensis's brief account of his visit to the abbey in 1188 contains nothing descriptive (Thorpe 1978, 171), although he does mention the presence of a 'gateway' in his *De Invectionibus* of c.1216-18 (Brewer 1863, 33), while the 'gate or wall of the abbey' is mentioned in a will of 1692 (Pritchard 1907, 211). Nor is the precinct entry shown in any early prints and pictures (see Section 2.2.3).

Only one Tironian precinct gateway is properly known, at Lindores Abbey in Scotland. It comprises a rectangular gatehouse tower with a vaulted passage; a second entry, this time a simple archway, also survives (<http://canmore.org.uk/collection/1228177>). It is possible that St Dogmaels showed a similar gatehouse tower – though a relatively poor house, it would not have been beyond its means. Interestingly, a small walled enclosure represents the only breach in the line of the northern precinct boundary, immediately west of the present abbey entry from Church Lane (Figs. 2, 4 and 5). Now containing a garden (see Appendix, photo 13), it forms a rectangle, aligned roughly east-west and measuring 25m by 8m. Could it perpetuate the footprint of an abbey building? It will be discussed further in Section 5.2 below.

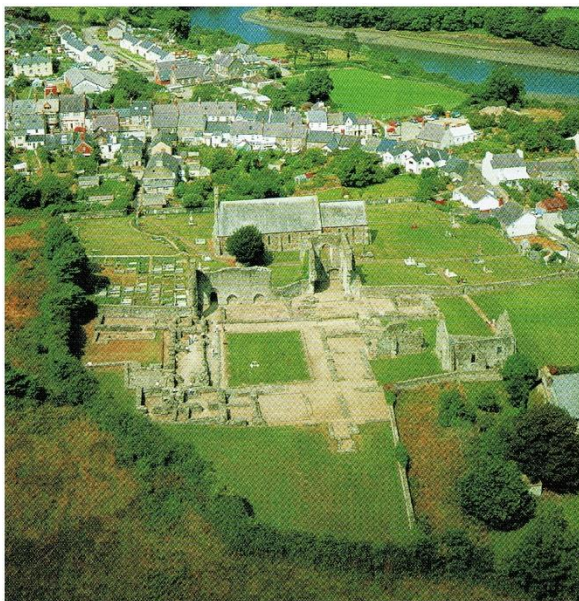
### *The parish church of St Thomas*

Lying within the precinct, immediately north of the abbey church and within its own churchyard and burial ground, is the parish church of St Dogmaels (Figs. 2, 3, 4 and 5), which is dedicated to St Thomas the Martyr. There is some confusion over the origins of this building. The present church (PRN 4998) was built in 1848-52 on the site of an existing church, with the same dedication (Lloyd *et al.* 2004, 436), which was described by Richard Fenton in 1811 as 'evidently raised from the ruins of the Abbey, as the windows of the chancel . . . exhibit remains of workmanship that could never have been meant originally to furnish such an edifice' (Fenton 1811, 512-13; the church is shown on the tithe map of 1838, Fig. 3). Fenton however believed that, during the medieval period, the parish church had stood to the southeast of the abbey buildings, at NGR 1656 4582 (where cist-graves were revealed in 1905, see above), following the local antiquarian George Owen who stated, in the 1590s, that 'the parish church in old time stood between the two mills . . . the walls yet are to be seen called *yr Hen Eglwys*' (Charles 1948, 267; marked 'Chapel (site of)' on old OS maps, see Figs. 4 and 5).

It is normally thought that St Thomas was not established on its present site until the early eighteenth century. But it is clear from Owen's account that the church he describes had become disused some considerable time before the 1590s. It is, moreover, uncertain whether the two sites are related – in 1907, it was stated that, 'according to old deeds', the church between the mills was dedicated to St. Thomas the Apostle (Pritchard 1907, 199), ie. the biblical 'Doubting Thomas', an entirely different saint from St Thomas the Martyr, ie. Thomas Becket who was murdered in 1170. And in a case heard in 1691, St Thomas the Apostle was consistently referred to as the '*old chapel*' (Pritchard 1907, 201, 205-6; my italics), implying that it was a devotional or pilgrimage chapel belonging to the abbey, rather than the parish church; it was said to have been used for the burial of monastic clergy and, apparently, had been restored for limited use within living memory.

The parish church of St Thomas the Martyr cannot have been dedicated, or perhaps even founded before Becket's canonisation in 1173, but it was in existence by 1253 (<http://www.glen-johnson.co.uk/abbey-of-st-mary/>), is mentioned again in 1357 (Pritchard 1907, 217) and throughout the medieval period (Caley *et al.* 1846, 130-2; Pritchard 1907, 101, 103, 106, 173-5, 177-8), and was still present in the 1590s (Owen 1897, 287). It was a rectory of the abbey, which appointed its vicars (Caley *et al.* 1846, 132). I suggest that it always occupied its present site, north of the abbey church. This was a favoured location for medieval parish churches attached to monasteries (see Fig. 7): they similarly lie north of the monastic church, and close to the boundary, in the abbey precincts at eg. Abingdon (Oxon.), Muchelney (Somerset), Reading (Berks.) and Westminster (Bradley and Pevsner 2003, 207-10; Ditchfield and Page 1923, 339-42; Goodall and Kelly 2004, 4-5). All, like St Dogmaels, are Benedictine or reformed Benedictine houses. Like St Thomas, their parish churches also lie very close to the precinct gatehouse, as at many other Benedictine houses eg. Bury St Edmunds Abbey. Significantly, the western (lay) half of St Thomas's Church – the half through which a church is always entered – faces the suggested precinct gatehouse and the route towards the abbey complex. Moreover, raised ground levels around the church suggest many centuries of burial: as a parish church, it will have had lay burial rights, but the cemetery appears always to have been bounded by the precinct wall discussed above.

*Fig. 7 – Aerial views of: (left) St Dogmaels Abbey (Tironian), from south; and (right) Muchelney Abbey, Somerset (Benedictine), from southwest. The relationship between the abbey church, and the parish church to its north, can be seen at both (from Hilling 2000, and Goodall and Kelly 2004).*



In this location, St Thomas's parish church could also fulfil the functions of a 'gatehouse chapel', ie. a chapel between the precinct entry, and the monastery itself, for the use of monastic guests. Hospitality, and the provision of accommodation and food to travellers and pilgrims, was fundamental to the *Rule of St Benedict*. According to the *Rule*, the guest should firstly be greeted by the porter at the precinct gate, then taken to the chapel for prayer, before being conveyed to the guest-house (Kerr 2001, 103). The guest-house at St Dogmaels lay directly opposite the suggested precinct gate, at the west end of the monastic church



(Hilling 2000, 45; see Fig. 2), and travellers would therefore have passed directly alongside St Thomas's Church on their way between the two. Chapels between the precinct gatehouse and the abbey complex were built by many orders, including the Cistercians, and could serve a variety of other purposes as well as parochial and travellers' use, including as pilgrimage chapels or patron's burial chantries (Hall 2001, 64-90).

It will be seen in Section 2.2.3 below that there is also compelling evidence (if indirect), from the post-medieval period, that the present church of St Thomas was the parish church throughout later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. All the above considerations are crucial to the interpretation of the archaeology of Church Lane (see below, Section 5.0).

### **2.2.3 The post-medieval period (1536 AD – present)**

The abbey, along with its daughters at Pill and Caldey, was dissolved on the orders of Henry VIII in 1536, along with all monastic houses valued at less than £200 (Caley *et al.* 1846, 129; Ludlow 2002, 49). The king leased the abbey site and the Manor of St Dogmaels, along with Caldey Priory, to John Bradshaw of Presteigne who, in 1543, received a grant 'in fee' of both properties for the sum of £512 (Caley *et al.* 1846, 129, 130-1; Jones 1996, 190). He converted the abbey west range, and part of the south range, into a mansion house (Hilling 2000, 37; Parkinson 1982); the Crown retained patronage of the parish church of St Thomas, but the rectorship was leased by Bradshaws who were responsible for the vicar's stipend (Owen 1897, 305 n. 7, 312; Pritchard 1907, 101, 173-4).

#### *The abbey and mansion*

Bradshaw died in 1567 and was succeeded by his sons (Pritchard 1907, 176), who were recorded by George Owen, in c.1600, as permanent residents of their mansion in the abbey (Charles 1948, 267). The house remained with the Bradshaw family until 1646, when it was sold to David Parry of Noyadd Trefawr (Pritchard 1907, 185). His descendant, Thomas Parry, held the property in 1670 when, in the 'Hearth Tax', it was assessed at six hearths (Jones 1996, 190).

Inserted walling in the abbey church is thought to belong to its conversion for use as the parish church (see eg. Hilling 2000, 37; Jones 1996, 190; Lloyd *et al.* 2004, 433). While parochial usage is known to have occurred within the disused abbey church at eg. Talley, Carm., as reported in 1710 (Griffiths 1976, 321), there appears to be no contemporary source for similar conversion at St Dogmaels. The Augmentation Rolls record that John Bradshaw was excused from responsibility for the repair of the 'chancel' in 1567, but the text of the roll is not specific as to which church is meant (reproduced in Pritchard 1907, 174-5); as we saw in Section 2.2.2 above, it is likely that the present parish church was already in existence, meaning that this is the chancel referred to. So I suggest that the new walling instead probably belongs to a later period, when much other additional masonry was inserted (see below).

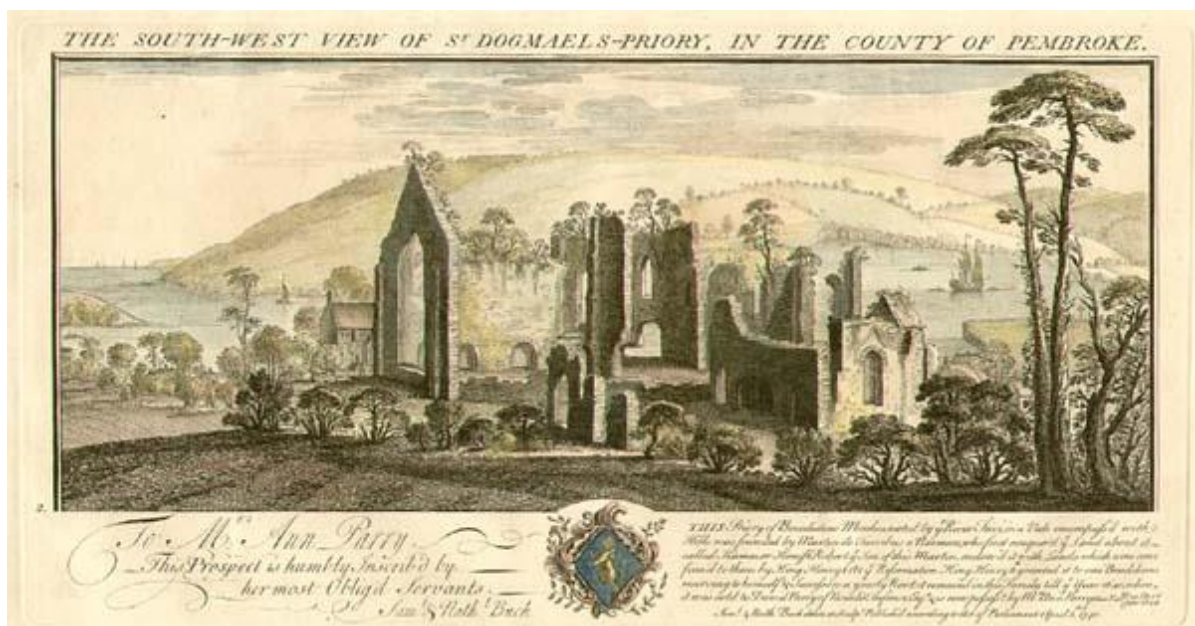
Moreover George Owen, in one of his manuscripts, described the abbey as 'ruined' (Pritchard 1907, 174). This statement has long been misread, causing much confusion – how could Bradshaw's mansion be ruinous, so soon after its construction and at a period when the family

was recorded in residence there? The confusion disappears once the statement is applied to the abbey *church* – which, as I suggest above, was not converted for parochial use, and had thus been allowed to fall into disrepair, possibly even suffering deliberate demolition – or at least robbing by Bradshaw for its finer masonry.

It is not clear when Bradshaw's mansion was abandoned. It is possible that the six hearths recorded in 1670 may relate to the house (<http://www.glen-johnson.co.uk/abbey-of-st-mary/>). However, by the early eighteenth century, it had become disused and ruinous, with a marked drop in the status of the site.

A number of antiquarian depictions, and descriptions, of the abbey site and Church Lane were consulted for this report, including the Buck print from 1740 (NLW), Henri Gastineau's engraving of c.1797 (Haverfordwest Library), the Charles Norris drawing of c.1820-40 (Cardiff Central Library) and Hugh Hughes's depiction of 1823. Contemporary descriptions of St Dogmaels by travellers and antiquarians are of variable value; they include those by Nicholas Carlisle (1811, 'Dogmael's, St'), Richard Colt Hoare (in 1804; Thompson 1983, 42), Daniel Defoe (in 1724-7; 1927 edn., not mentioned), Edward Donovan (1805, not mentioned), Richard Fenton (Fenton 1811, 512-14), Samuel Lewis (1833, 310-11) and Benjamin Heath Malkin (1804, 434).

*Fig. 8 – St Dogmaels Abbey from southwest, by Samuel and Nathaniel Buck, 1740.*



The Buck print, published only 70 years after the Hearth Tax assessment, shows the abbey remains much as they exist today, with little surviving from the Bradshaw mansion (Fig. 8). This, and later prints, however show that a number of additional walls had been inserted; they are not necessarily contemporary either with the Bradshaw mansion, or with each other. Contemporary descriptions make it plain that some, at least, relate to agricultural as well as domestic use. For example Richard Fenton records that, by 1811, the monastic refectory was being used as a barn (Fenton 1811, 512), which it may still have been in 1833 (though it is likely that Lewis was merely copying Fenton's description; Lewis 1833, 310-11).

*The village of St Dogmaels*

I have been unable to locate any antiquarian prints, or contemporary descriptions, of Church Lane itself. Overall descriptions of the settlement convey differing impressions; the medieval town was already clearly in decline by the sixteenth century, but Malkin described St Dogmaels, in 1804, as ‘a considerable town’ and a ‘sea port’ (Malkin 1804, 434). Richard Fenton may have been nearer the mark when he described it as a ‘village’, but he noted that it was ‘large and straggling, chiefly inhabited by fisherman, whose little gardens and orchards at this season of the year look very gay’ (Fenton 1811, 514).

As we saw above, in Section 2.2.2, it is difficult to ascertain the extent of development in the early nineteenth century from the 1838 tithe map. Much of the present built heritage dates from the later nineteenth century (Lloyd *et al.* 2004, 437), but clearly some of it will have replaced existing housing. It includes some fine examples of the north Pembrokeshire tradition of banded stone, in which the hard brown local stone alternates with narrower bands of blue-grey slatey marl – a tradition also seen in Cardigan and Newport, and which was first used in the medieval abbey at St Dogmaels (*ibid.*; Murphy and Ludlow 2003, Area 411). One of these houses, in High Street, is dated 1877; a similar semi-detached house in Church Lane, Nos. 4-5, is probably closely contemporary. The present buildings lining the lane, at least in their original form, had been erected by 1890 and are shown on the OS map of that year (Fig. 4).

Fig. 9 – Overall plan of the 2018 trenches

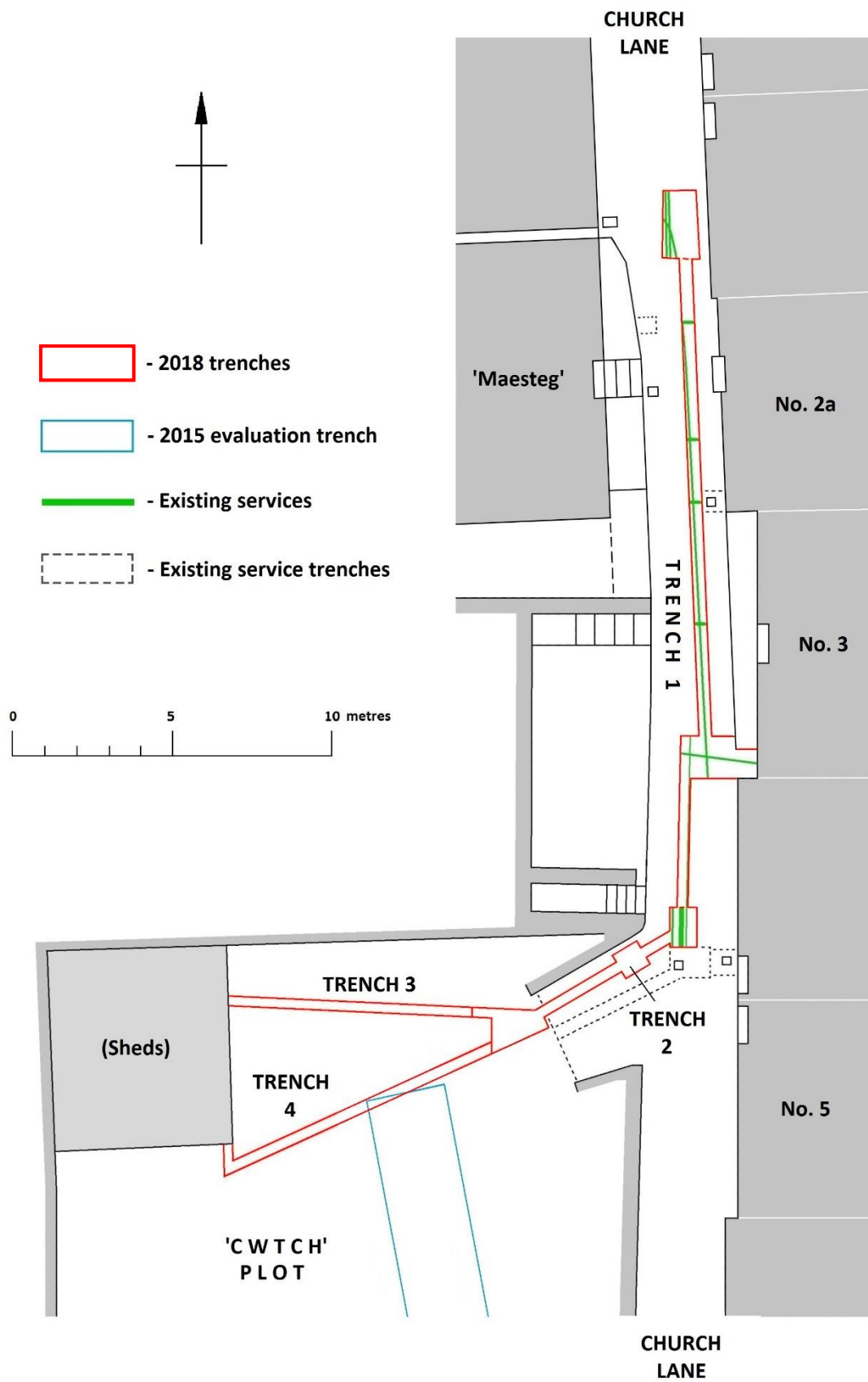
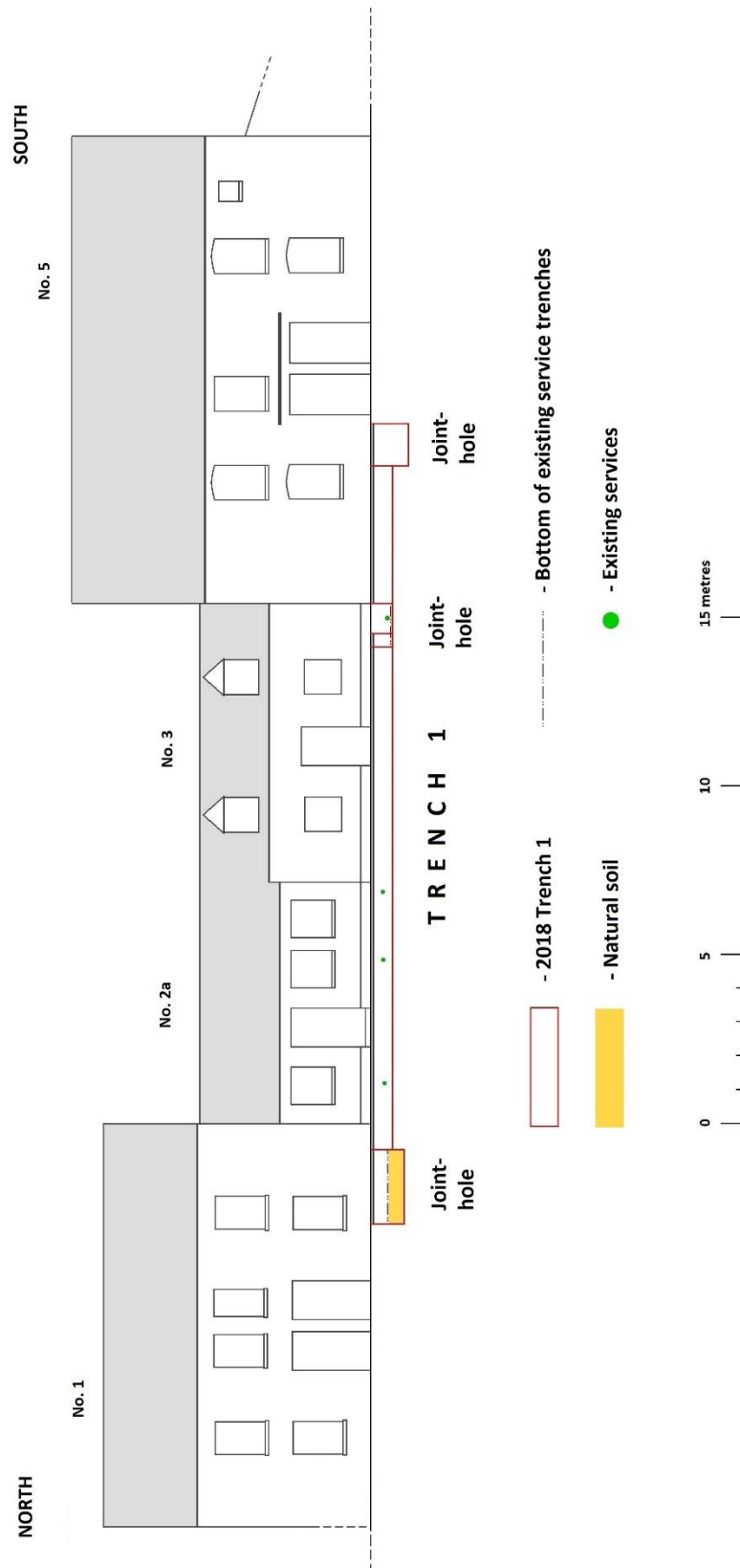


Fig. 10 – Section, facing east, along Church Lane showing the main 2018 trench (Trench 1)





### 2.3 Site description (Figs. 2, 9 and 10)

Church Lane is 70m long from north to south, and very narrow (varying between 2.5m and 3m), but just wide enough to permit vehicular access. It is more-or-less level throughout its length, and averages 19.5 metres above sea level. However, the general trend in the immediate locality is a natural downhill slope from west to east, from a height of 25m OD at the west end of High Street, to 5.5m OD by the mill-stream east of the abbey precinct. At some point, Church Lane has been terraced into this slope: present ground levels immediately west of the lane average 1.00m higher than the surface of the lane (Fig. 12). The solid geology comprises Ordovician sandstones, mudstones and shales, belonging to the Bala, Llandeilo and Arenig series (<http://www.southampton.ac.uk/~imw/jpg/South-Wales-map-1300.jpg>). They are overlain by a stiff, glacial boulder clay, which was exposed during the watching brief.

The east side of the lane is lined by housing, probably all later nineteenth-century, at the earliest, in its present form (see Section 2.2.3 above). Currently, the west side is only developed in its northern half, the southern half comprising an open plot ('Cwtch').

The lane is the only access to High Street from the parish church and Church Lane properties, and is thus the line taken by existing services. These comprise electricity, gas, mains water and sewage.

The new trenches occupied the central section of Church Lane, and also ran into the open, grass-lawned plot ('Cwtch') immediately to the west, which lies at a higher level (see above) and is accessed via a twentieth-century tarmac ramp. The 'Cwtch' plot is subject to conditional planning consent for a small domestic development; given its proximity to the abbey, it was the site of a pre-determination evaluation by DAT in 2015 (Murphy and Enright 2015). The evaluation comprised a trench running NNW-SSE through the eastern half of the plot, measuring 12 metres by 2.5 metres (Fig. 11). The remains of substantial stone-built structures were revealed in the northern half of the trench, including a well preserved stone flagged drain (*Context 109*), a linear gully (*Context 111*), the footings for at least two large stone walls (*Contexts 113 and 115*) and a possible floor surface (*Context 116*); all ran due east-west, at right angles to Church Lane. Pottery dateable to the thirteenth-sixteenth century was recovered from the fill (*Context 120*) of a part-excavated trench (*Context 114*), and it is considered that the walls and features may have been associated with a medieval gatehouse into the abbey precinct. This will be discussed alongside the results of the watching brief in Section 5.0 below.

### 3.0 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Excavation for the new service trenches ran alongside the area of the 2015 evaluation, and close to the scheduled remains of the medieval abbey. It was therefore recommended to the clients, Western Power and Jacob Woodcraft, that all intrusive groundworks should be monitored through implementation of an archaeological watching brief (Mike Ings, Senior Planning Archaeologist at DAT; email sent 14 November 2018).

The watching brief was undertaken by Neil Ludlow FSA, after the submission of a detailed specification to the archaeological curator. The aim of the watching brief was to –

- Monitor the excavation of the new cable trench.
- Minimise disturbance to any *in situ* archaeological features and deposits.
- Record the character, extent and significance of any archaeological features and deposits.
- Collate the data retrieved during the fieldwork into a structured archive.
- Prepare a report based on the results of the above.

## 4.0 METHODOLOGIES AND RESULTS

The new service trenches formed an L-shape, running between NGRs SN 1636 4595, SN 1637 4596 and SN 1637 4597 (Fig. 9). The main, north-south trench (**Trench 1**) ran down the central third of Church Lane; it was 23.5m long, 0.40m wide in its northern two-thirds and 0.30m wide in its southern third. It averaged 0.60m in depth, but three joint-holes along its length were both wider (averaging 1.00m) and deeper (averaging 1.00m). From the south end of Trench 1, a second trench ran southwest, into the undeveloped 'Cwtch' plot alongside Church Lane, for 4.5m (**Trench 2**); it was 0.30m wide and between 0.80m and 1.00m deep. Trench 2 then divided into two (**Trenches 3 and 4**), running westwards and southwestwards through the 'Cwtch' plot for 10m; both were 0.30m wide and averaged 0.45m deep.

A written, drawn and photographic archaeological record was maintained throughout. All features and deposits exposed by the trenches were recorded using a continuous, numbered context system.

### 4.1 The groundworks

Groundworks began on 10 December 2018 and lasted two days. Trench 1 – to receive the upgraded electric cabling – was excavated first, by Balfour Beatty on behalf of Western Power. Excavation of Trenches 2-4 followed, by DJM Services (Haverfordwest) and Jacob Woodcroft, on behalf of the latter; these trenches received new electric cabling and a foul-water connection.

All trench excavation was undertaken using a 360° mini-digger. Where pre-existing services were encountered, hand-tools were used around them at the bottom of the trench.

### 4.2 Results (Figs. 9-12, and appendix)

#### 4.2.1 Trench 1 (Figs. 9 and 10)

Trench 1 was excavated along the line of existing services. Church Lane has a tarmac surface which, when removed, revealed a sub-base of chippings of fairly recent deposition (**Context 001**). Their removal exposed a deposit of stiff, yellow-grey redeposited natural clay throughout which, apart from a concentration of large stones in the northern third of the trench, was largely sterile (**Context 002**). Nevertheless it clearly represented the backfill of the existing service trenches (**Context 003**): the electric cabling, and gas, water and sewage pipes lay within the deposit. In the deeper joint-holes, the top of the truncated natural soil (**Context 008**) was revealed at an average depth of 0.7m, and was a stiff yellow-orange clay.

Fig. 11 - Plan of Trench 2, relative to the 2015 evaluation trench  
(location of 2015 trench as surveyed by H. Wilson, DAT)

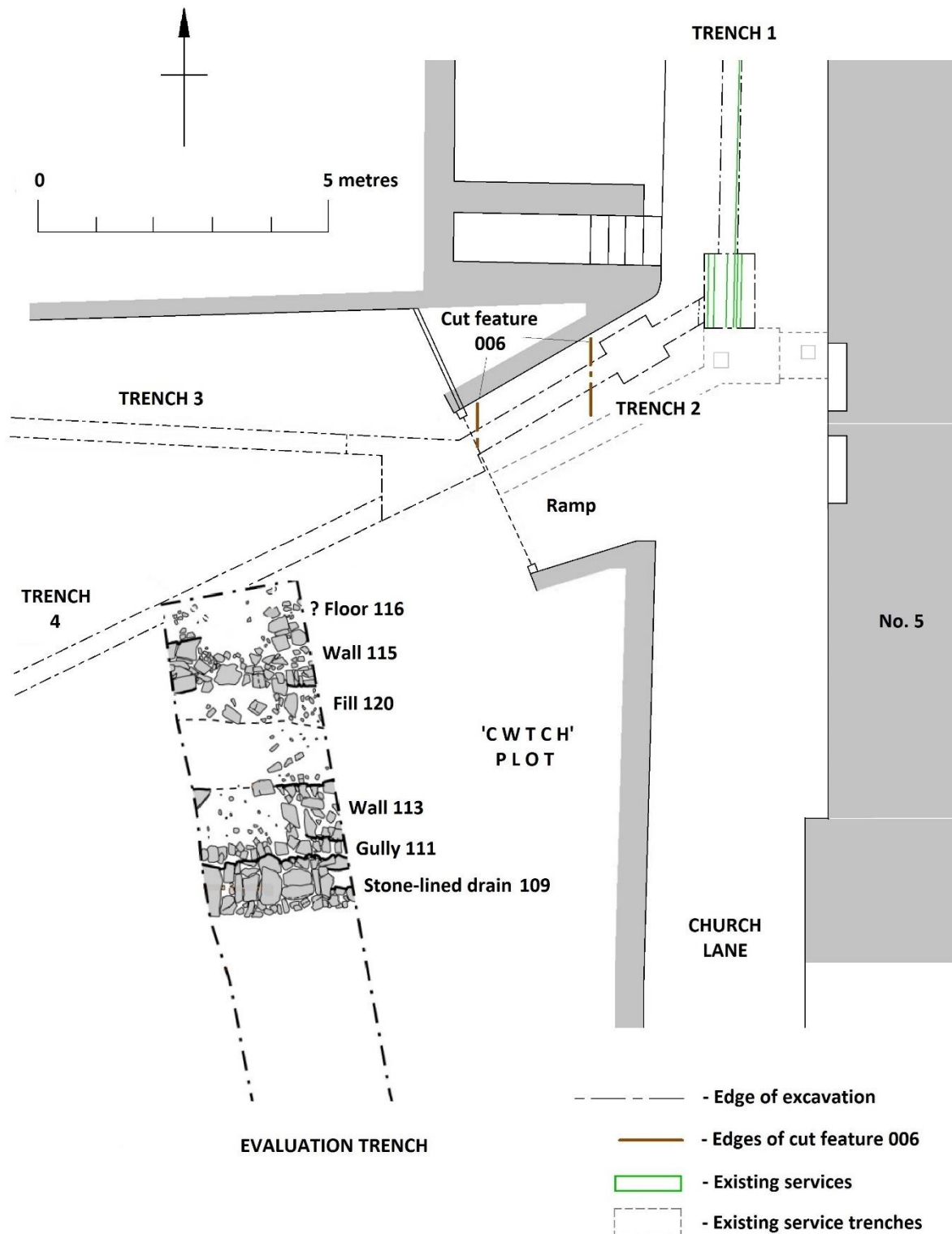
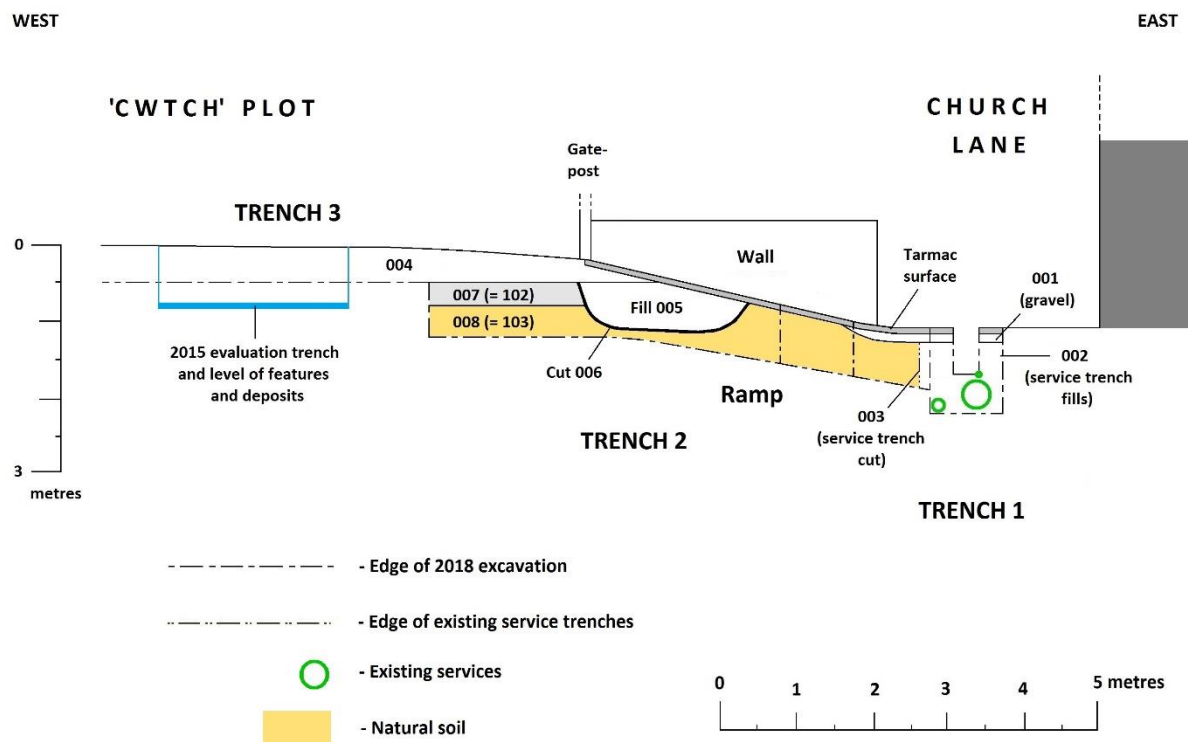


Fig. 12 – Section, facing north, of Trench 2 relative to the 2015 evaluation trench



#### 4.2.2 Trench 2 (Figs. 11 and 12)

Trench 2 cut through undisturbed deposits beneath the tarmac ramp leading from Church Lane into the 'Cwtch', alongside – but not overlapping with – an existing water main. Beneath the tarmac lay, in sequential order –

**Context 001** – Gravel make-up. See above, Trench 1.

**Context 002** – Service trench backfill. See above, Trench 1.

**Context 003** – Service trenches. See above, Trench 1. The edge of the trench for the existing services was clearly visible in Trench 2, cutting through the natural soil **008**, at the east end of the trench.

**Context 004** – A dark brown, loose loamy soil at the west end of the trench where levels are higher in the 'Cwtch' plot, lying immediately beneath the turf and representing (imported?) garden soil. It averaged 0.45m in thickness, and continued throughout Trenches 3 and 4.

**Context 005** – A deposit of mid-brown silty clay loam, with a high percentage of small/medium-sized stones, shale fragments and slatey material. Fill of cut feature **006**.



**Context 006** – A cut feature, midway along Trench 2 and thus midway down the slope between the ‘Cwtch’ plot and Church Lane. It measured 2.2m E-W and was 0.60m deep, with fairly steep sides of c.45°. It was visible in both sections of the trench (which was 0.3m wide), with no indication of running obliquely to Church Lane. Possibly a pit, or a very wide linear feature/trench; it may not however have continued all the way down Church Lane, as Fig. 11 suggests it would possibly have appeared in the south end of the 2015 evaluation trench. It is truncated by the ramp leading from Church Lane into the ‘Cwtch’.

**Context 007** – A thick deposit of friable/loose, grey-brown sandy silt, occupying the west end of the trench where levels are higher. It was of somewhat gritty texture but otherwise with few coarse components. Unstructured, with no visible stratification and apparently representing a single depositional event. It averaged 0.30m in thickness. Cut by 006.

**Context 008** – Undisturbed natural soil. See above, Trench 1. The surface of the natural soil in Trench 2 lies between 0.20m and 0.30m above the surface of Church Lane (see Fig. 12).

#### **4.2.3 Trenches 3 and 4 (Figs. 11 and 12)**

These trenches were carefully excavated by Jacob Woodcraft, within the ‘Cwtch’ plot, to cause the least disturbance to the underlying deposits. Topsoil **004** was removed to the top of context **007**, which was left undisturbed. No archaeological features were observed in the surface of **007**.

#### **4.2.4 Finds**

With the exception of one sherd of twentieth-century pottery, from topsoil **004**, no finds, artefacts or ecofacts were encountered during the groundworks. The complete absence of any clay pipe-stems, blue-and-white transfer-printed pottery, or bottle glass – finds which typify domestic plots like the ‘Cwtch’ – may be remarked upon.

## 5.0 DISCUSSION

Four main themes are considered here –

- The interpretation of features and deposits encountered in 2018 relative to those revealed in 2015.
- The date of Church Lane, changes within it, and its relationship with the abbey.
- The nature and extent of the monastic enclosure.
- The location and nature of the abbey gatehouse.

### 5.1 Excavated features

The line of Church Lane has been heavily disturbed, since the early/mid-twentieth century, by the trenches (003) for four separate services, which truncated the natural soil in Trench 1. The service trench fills (002) are, collectively, a clean, redeposited natural clay, of a purity that suggests the trenches were cut directly through the natural soil, with no intervening deposits. In the 'Cwtch' plot west of Church Lane, the surface of the undisturbed, natural clay 008 can be seen, in Trench 2, to lie between 0.20m and 0.30m above the surface of the lane (Fig. 12); it slopes uphill towards the south, with a rise of 0.25m halfway down the evaluation trench (survey by H. Wilson, DAT), while the lane is more-or-less level. It is therefore apparent that Church Lane has been cut into the natural, west-east downhill slope and that all deposits – including the top of the natural soil – have been truncated, at least in the western half of the lane. Fig. 12 also makes it clear that the archaeological features and deposits revealed in the 2015 evaluation trench will also have been truncated when Church Lane was terraced.

Two of the contexts exposed in 2015 can be equated with deposits in Trench 2. The 2018 context 007 occupied the same level, and was of the same consistency, as 2015 context 102, and like it lay beneath the topsoil. This deposit overlay the walls, drains and other features at the north end of the evaluation trench, but petered out to the south, and was interpreted as possible demolition material derived from the decay or destruction of the walls (Murphy and Enright 2015, 25). The presence of late-medieval pottery in a fill associated with the walls and features, and the absence of any later material, would tend to suggest they are of late-medieval date. So overlying context 007/102 may be assigned a broadly post-medieval date. The natural soil 008 was also exposed in 2015, and was given the context number 103.

None of the structures and features that lay between these two deposits, in the evaluation trench, were revealed in 2018 Trench 2, which lay 3m to the north. The only archaeological feature exposed in 2018 was feature 006, which cut through deposit 007/102 and is therefore post-medieval and the latest feature recorded in either trench (Fig. 12). It is impossible to interpret the feature on the basis of such limited exposure: with an E-W dimension of 2.2m it would be very wide for a linear feature or trench, and may not have extended to the south end of Church Lane, but the possibility remains that it represents a boundary feature along the west side of Church Lane. It is truncated by the ramp leading from Church Lane into the 'Cwtch', but this is a twentieth-century feature for vehicular access, and cuts through the northeast corner of the plot (Fig. 11). It is therefore also impossible to determine whether feature 006 pre- or post-dates the terracing of Church Lane into the natural slope. However, the chronology allows that it might be associated with the boundary shown along the west side of Church Lane on the Tithe Map of 1838 (Fig. 3)

The terracing of Church Lane is similarly impossible to date. It clearly post-dates the walls, features and deposits revealed in 2015, which it truncates. I suggest it may have occurred in the later nineteenth century, when the lane was formally developed with the present line of houses and cottages along the east side of the lane (see Section 2.2.3 and Fig. 4).

## **5.2 Overall interpretation**

No graves were observed in either 2015 or 2018. This may be mere chance, and does not necessarily mean that early monastic burial did not occur in the immediate environs of the site. However, the possibility that the early medieval monastic enclosure, like the later medieval precinct, was confined to the area south of Church Lane is discussed in Section 2.2.1 above.

The walls, drain and gully revealed in 2015 were regarded as having possibly been associated with the abbey gatehouse (Murphy and Enright 2015, 1, 29). However, it is difficult to envisage how this association may have worked: they run in an east-west direction, parallel with, but 20m to the north of the abbey precinct boundary. The drain and gully clearly served to drain the higher ground to the west of Church Lane and they follow the downhill slope eastwards, rather than leading to or from the abbey precinct; they were presumably culverted beneath the medieval Church Lane. Local tradition has it that they led to a well to the south of the lane, and that they are later rather than earlier having been functional within the comparatively recent past. The latter, at least, is unlikely: we have seen that the drainage features were truncated when Church Lane was terraced, probably in the later nineteenth century. Moreover, the features do appear to be medieval in origin, if probably late-medieval: some of the pottery recovered in 2015 is of Transitional form, broadly dateable to the fifteenth century (Dee Williams, pers. comm.). It is suggested that the walls and drains relate to secular, civic occupation of St Dogmaels, relating to the settlement which, as we saw in Section 2.2.2 above, was a large and flourishing town during the Middle Ages, well able to support the construction of substantial, stone-built domestic structures before its decline in the sixteenth century; the walls are associated with a possible floor surface, which may confirm that they belong to civil settlement within the burgrave plot west of Church Lane.

Moreover, the walls and drains occur mid-way along Church Lane. It was argued in Section 2.2.2 above that the line of Church Lane perpetuates the medieval route from High Street to the abbey precinct; comparison with other sites suggests that the abbey gateway would have been situated either at the High Street end of Church Lane or, more likely, astride the precinct boundary at the south end. Whether it was a simple opening in the boundary wall, or a gatehouse tower, is unknown. That it occupied the site of the present abbey entry is suggested by the association between the latter and St Thomas's Church, which was probably the medieval parish church, and possibly also a gatehouse chapel for abbey visitors (see Section 2.2.2).

The walled garden enclosure immediately west of the present abbey entry, mentioned in Section 2.2.2 above, represents the only breach in the otherwise continuous line of the northern precinct boundary as it survives (see Fig. 2). This may be significant: might it be speculated that the enclosure follows the footprint of an earlier building, standing astride the boundary wall? If so, it is unlikely to have been the abbey gatehouse – it is argued throughout

this report that Church Lane was the medieval access route from High Street, and any parallel lane to its west would be obstructed by the E-W walls revealed in 2015. The garden enclosure is correctly oriented, and sufficiently large to represent a former chapel, integral with the gateway and paralleled at other monastic houses eg. Beaulieu, Hants., Tintern, Mon. and Whalley, Lancs. (Hall 2001, 61-92). None have survived at any Tironian site, but the remains of their precincts are altogether scanty (see Section 2.2.2). Nevertheless, this interpretation is also considered unlikely: the structure lies on the western side of the precinct entry, meaning that the liturgical high end of the chapel (ie. its east end), with the altar, would lie next to the (noisy) gateway, and that it could not have had an east window. It is, moreover, argued that St Thomas's Church fulfilled the functions of a gatehouse chapel. At both Abingdon and Reading abbeys, a lay infirmary was sited just within the precinct, between the gateway and the parish church (Ditchfield and Page 1923, 339-42); the enclosure is sufficiently large to represent such a building. It is possible, however, that it may just have been a stable. It must be stressed that this is all pure speculation, but the enclosure certainly merits future examination.

## 6.0 CONCLUSION

The 2018 service trenches in Church Lane, and an adjoining plot immediately to the west, revealed few archaeological features or deposits. However, the little that was revealed, and the negative evidence, makes possible a more nuanced interpretation of the history and archaeology of this area of St Dogmaels.

The settlement of St Dogmaels developed at the gates of a medieval Tironian abbey, founded in the early twelfth century on the site of a pre-existing, early medieval monastery. The northern boundary of the abbey precinct appears to survive in the line of the present boundary wall. The early medieval monastery may have occupied a large, subcircular enclosure, but it is uncertain whether the curving line of High Street follows its boundary, or results from the later development of housing along the north side of the medieval abbey precinct. No burials were encountered during the watching brief, or during archaeological evaluation of the plot adjoining Church Street in 2015, but in both cases only small areas were examined.

By the later Middle Ages, St Dogmaels had developed into a large market town of over 100 properties, centred on High Street, that flourished until its decline in the sixteenth century. Church Lane almost certainly represents the medieval route leading from High Street to the abbey precinct, which was accessed through a gateway on the site of the present entry. Walls, drains, a possible floor and other features, revealed in the plot adjoining Church Lane in 2015, appear to relate to the medieval town rather than to the abbey: this does not however diminish their archaeological importance, or alter the planning status of the site.

St Thomas's Church, immediately north of the abbey church, is normally thought to be a post-medieval foundation, but is here suggested to occupy the site of the medieval parish church of St Dogmaels, which may also have served the abbey as a 'gatehouse chapel' for visitors. It is possible that a walled enclosure, next to the present precinct entry, may reflect a building associated with the medieval gateway, and would reward further investigation.

At some point during the post-medieval period, Church Lane was levelled by terracing into the hill-slope on the west side, truncating the medieval walls and features revealed in 2015. It is not known whether this occurred before or after the cutting of a post-medieval feature, possibly linear, on the western side of the lane; the feature was revealed in section in 2018. However, it is considered likely that the terracing event formed part of the development of the eastern side of Church Lane, with housing, in the later nineteenth century.



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## APPENDIX – PHOTOGRAPHS

*Photo 1 – View looking north along Church Lane, before excavation.*



*Photo 2 – View looking south along Church Lane, to the present abbey entry.*





Photo 3 – Looking southwest from Church Lane into the ‘Cwtch’ plot, before excavation.



Photo 4 – Trench 1: the joint-hole at the north end of the trench, after excavation, from southwest.





*Photo 5 – Trench 1 during excavation, between the north and central joint-holes, from south.*

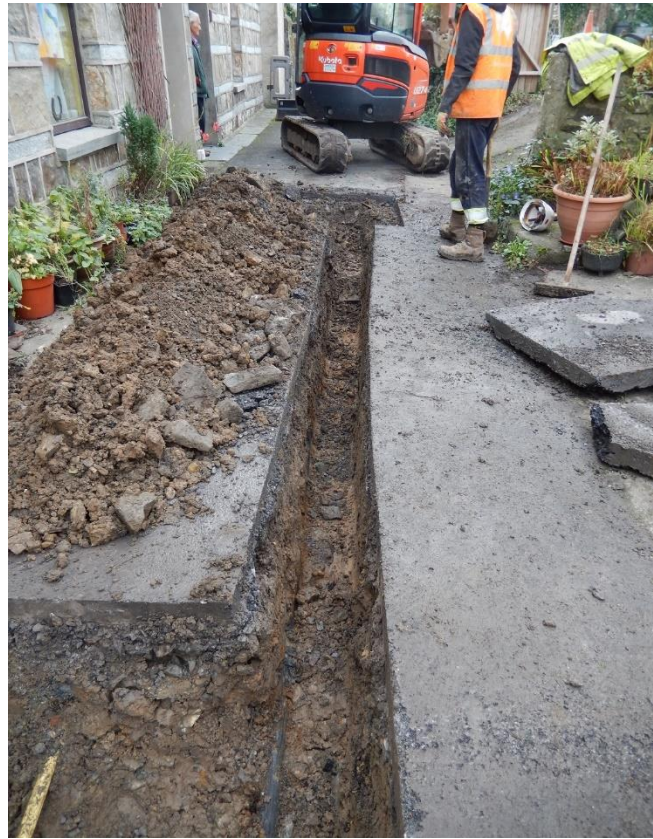


*Photo 6 – Trench 1: the central joint-hole, after excavation, from southwest.*

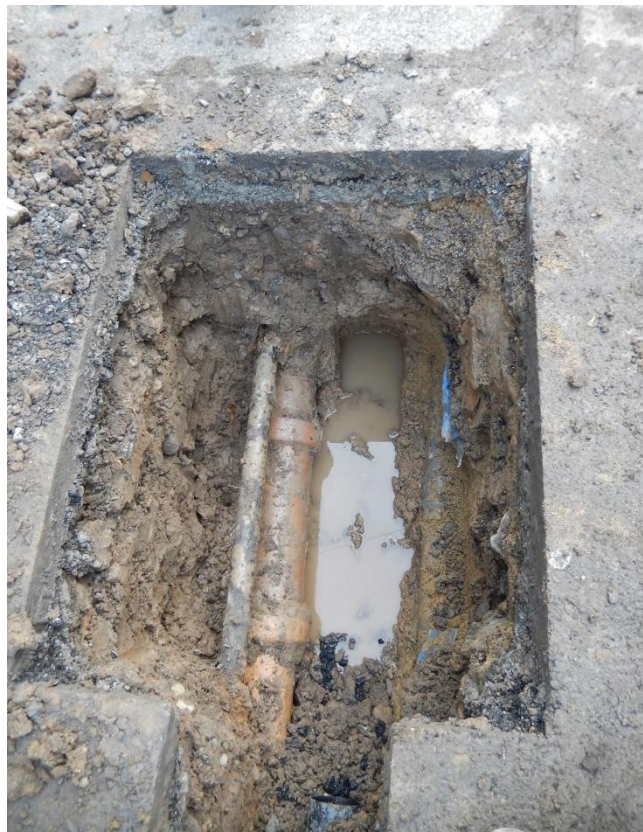




*Photo 7 – Trench 1 after excavation, between the south and central joint-holes, from north.*



*Photo 8 – Trench 1: the southern joint-hole, after excavation, from north.*





*Photo 9 – Trench 2 during excavation, from southeast.*



*Photo 10 – Trench 2 after excavation, from southwest. On the left (west) side can be seen grey-brown deposit 007/102, overlying yellow-orange natural clay 008/103. It is cut by feature 006, with a darker fill 005, which can be seen to the right (east).*





*Photo 11 – Trench 2 after excavation, from northeast. The yellow-orange natural clay 008/103 can be seen through the length of the trench, cut by feature 006, with a darker fill 005, to the right.*



*Photo 12 – Trenches 3 and 4 during excavation, in the 'Cwtch' plot, from east; the junction with Trench 2 is in the foreground. Grey-brown deposit 007/102 can be seen in the bottom of both trenches.*





*Photo 13 – The walled garden enclosure at the south end of Church Lane, west of the abbey entry, from east.*



*Photo 14 – Left: the parish church of St Thomas, and right: the remains of St Dogmaels Abbey (north transept), from west.*



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