

## Great Archaeological Sites in Newport



### 5. FLOOD LEVEL MARKERS ON REDWICK CHURCH



At the beginning of the 17th century there were of course no social media, but if you wanted to follow what was going on in the world around you, you could get your fix from chapbooks, cheap booklets crudely printed on rough paper. Along with stories and ballads, their content included news of notable happenings. In 1607 one of the titles was *Lamentable News out of Monmouthshire in Wales Contayning, The wonderfull and most fearfull accidents of the great ouerflowing of waters in the said Countye*, illustrated with a woodcut of men clinging to roofs and trees whilst others drowned. They report that at around midday on 30th January the sea walls were

breached on both sides of the Bristol Channel and the water poured in miles inland, wreaking enormous damage on life and property. The low-lying Gwent Levels were among the areas most severely affected.

Although modern theories have included the idea that the Great Flood (as it came to be known) was the result of a tsunami caused by a geological disturbance off Ireland, it is now generally accepted that it was the result of a storm surge, as the eastern side of England was also affected. Such devastation was caused because a storm featuring a violent south-westerly gale coincided with the highest spring tide of the century, produced by astronomic conditions but intensified by low pressure at the centre of the storm.

There are memorials to the flood on two of the churches that were affected. One is Goldcliff church, on a plaque put up inside in 1609 to commemorate the height the water came to in '1606' (according to the custom at the time, the year 1607 did not start until 1st April). The other church is Redwick (ST 4121 8413), and when members of the Young Archaeologists' Club based in Caerleon carried out a survey in 2005 they found that there were several showing different heights! The original mark was probably the one on the south-east corner of the chancel, which is now rather difficult to make out. The second is the one on the stone that says 'Great Flood A.D.1606', and is actually a hole for the gnomon of a sundial. The third is the 'plimsoll line' on the little metal plaque mounted on the wall above. The second is at the same height as the first, so the YAC came to the conclusion that it is the 'plimsoll line' that is wrong.

Redwick church is in the middle of Redwick village (NP26 3DT), a short distance inland from the Wales Coast Path; the nearest railway station is Severn Tunnel Junction at the intersection of the railway lines between Cardiff/Newport to the west and Bristol or Cheltenham to the east. Maps: OS Landranger Series sheet 171, Explorer Series sheet 152.

### Timeline (the asterisk indicates the time-span)



You can learn more about this site, and other archaeological sites in Wales, by going to <https://www.archwilio.org.uk/arch/>. Please read and observe the Conditions of Use. Redwick church has the PRN (Primary Record Number) 00437g, and you can search for other similar sites here too. You can contact us via social media or through the methods given at the bottom of the page. You can learn more churches at [http://www.ggat.org.uk/cadw/historic\\_christian/pages/index.html](http://www.ggat.org.uk/cadw/historic_christian/pages/index.html).