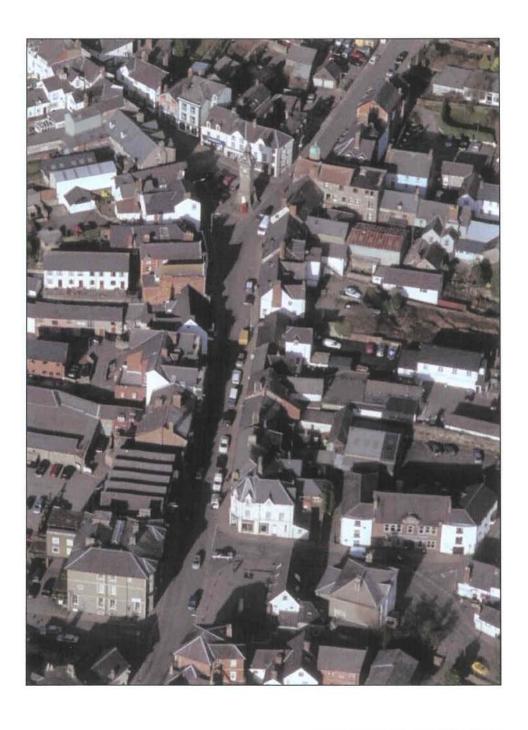
Wylcwm Street, Knighton, Powys ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION



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I Grant January 2005

Report for Mr J Mokler

The Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 In November 2004 the Field Services Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT) was invited by Mr J Mokler to prepare a specification and quotation for undertaking an archaeological evaluation on land adjacent to Wylcwm Street in Knighton, Powys. The pre-planning evaluation was the subject of a brief drawn up by Mr M Walters of the Curatorial Section of CPAT (CPAT EVB 565, dated 18th November 2004), acting in his capacity as archaeological curator for the region, which identified the need for a field evaluation in advance of any development. The specification and quotation were subsequently accepted and the evaluation was undertaken between the 13th and 17th December 2004. This report was compiled immediately thereafter.

1.2 The evaluation was necessitated on the premise that the development site lay within the bounds of the medieval town of Knighton, and it was therefore anticipated that significant buried archaeological deposits might have survived within the evaluation area.

2 LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

- 2.1 Knighton lies in eastern Radnorshire (the historic county now subsumed within the modern county of Powys) on the south side of the River Teme whose valley constitutes the boundary between England and Wales. Together with its tributary, the Wylcwm Brook which converges on it from the south-west, the river isolates a spur which drops sharply from the heights of Garth Hill to the west. The spur protrudes into the river valley, which temporarily narrows as a consequence. Knighton castle and the old town (see below) occupy a knoll on the spur, the church lying at its tip.
- 2.2 The area of the evaluation lies on the south-west side of Wylcwm Street, and towards the rear of properties fronting onto Broad Street, one of the main roads through Knighton, at SO 28667231 (see Fig. 1).
- 2.3 The solid geology of the area consists of Palaeozoic slatey mudstone and siltstone (1994 British Geological Survey map). The soils of the immediate area consist of well drained fine loam of the Denbigh 1 Soil Association (1983 Soil Survey of England and Wales map).

3 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Stage One of the evaluation, as defined by the curatorial brief, involved the examination of readily available primary and secondary documentary, cartographic and photographic sources for the area of the development and its immediate environs. The repositories that were consulted included the following: the Regional Sites and Monuments Record (SMR), held by CPAT at Welshpool; the National Monuments Record, held by the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments in Wales (RCAHMW) at Aberystwyth; the National Library of Wales in Aberystwyth; and Powys County Archives in Llandrindod Wells.
- 3.2 Prehistoric activity in the area of the development plot is revealed by the find of a flint flake (PRN 23313; NGR SO2869572318) somewhere in Wylcwm Street, near Burford House. There is also a suggestion of Roman occupation in the immediate area, indicated by the find of a jug handle in the Bus Station car park off Wylcwm Street and Broad Street, close to Station Road (PRN 1134; NGR SO28657233).
- 3.3 Knighton was one of the numerous historic settlements in Radnorshire included in a study by R J Silvester, and much of the following text is drawn from that source (Silvester 1994). According to Charles (1938) the earliest form of the place-name was Chenistetone which appeared in Domesday Book in 1086, and supposedly meant 'farm of the servants'. Other ideas have also been canvassed including the straightforward one that the name means 'the settlement of the knight', or an alternative derivation from the Welsh 'cnwch din'

meaning 'fortified juncture'. The Welsh equivalent to Knighton, Tref-y-Clawdd, of course refers to Offa's Dyke.

- 3.4 In an area conquered early after the Norman Conquest, its appearance in Domesday Book as a waste manor (or land holding) of about five hides does not necessarily indicate that there was an existing nucleated settlement here, although a pre-Conquest origin for Knighton astride Offa's Dyke has certainly been suggested, though not on the basis of any solid evidence. Possibly, however, the construction of the motte of Bryn y Castell immediately to the east of the built up area of the town, at an unknown date, signals the beginnings of Knighton on a strategic route out of England. This earthwork was superseded by a new earthwork castle, started by William de Braose, on a more prominent and naturally defensive knoll some 500m to the west, about 1191-2, although a passing mention in the official documents known as the Pipe Rolls for 1181 might put it a little earlier.
- 3.5 It is possible that people were encouraged to settle in the vicinity of the new castle but there is no firm evidence to date the establishment of the town and no foundation charter. A market grant was obtained in 1230, and documents of 1361 and 1383 confirm that it was a borough although no borough charter has survived. By 1292/3 there were 71 taxpayers. More than half were of Welsh descent which would tend to point to the organic growth of the settlement rather than an initial plantation of settlers (Soulsby 1983, 155). That this situation changed during the next decade is suggested by the extraordinary growth of the settlement by 1304 when 126 burgesses are recorded as holding 162 and a third burgages.
- 3.6 This growth in the population of Knighton highlights leads to a consideration of one of the more intractable problems in our understanding of the historical topography of the town. In geographical terms any settlement expansion may have been north-eastwards in the direction of the newly constructed church of St Edward. Haslam in the 1970s noted that the lower part of the town had a rectilinear grid of streets, rather like an Edwardian plantation, in direct contrast to the upper town which has narrow streets huddled around the motte and bailey castle (Haslam 1979, 238). Yet there is at present no convincing evidence to corroborate this early origin for the lower town, and there are no buildings in it, other than the church and the much altered Horse and Jockey Inn, that are demonstrably medieval in date. As an alternative hypothesis it has even been suggested that this regularly laid out part of the town might be no earlier than the post-medieval era. The elucidation of this matter remains one of the most significant issues to be determined in untangling Knighton's history.
- 3.7 The core of the recognisable medieval town appears to have lain on the north and east sides of Knighton Castle incorporating Market Street, High Street, Plough Road and Broad Street, a network of predominantly narrow lanes, some on the flat, other sloping downhill quite steeply. The market place originally lay to the north of the castle but was later resited at the junction of Broad Street and High Street, while Market Street may have been encroached upon at its west end.
- 3.8 Murage grants of 1260, following the town's destruction by Llywelyn ap Gruffudd in the previous year, and of 1277 suggest that the town had defences, although no convincing traces of these have come to light. Both the town and castle were seized by Glyndwr in 1402, and the latter may have been totally destroyed at this time.
- 3.9 In later centuries, Knighton functioned as an unexceptional market town, expanding only gradually, and St Edward's was no more than a chapelry attached to the church of St Michael's at Stowe on the far side of the river, until the late 16th century when Knighton parish was imposed on an existing parochial system. Further growth occurred only in the 18th and 19th centuries, in part as a result of the local woollen industry, and today in central Powys the town is surpassed only by Llandrindod Wells in terms of its size.
- 3.10 There are a number of Listed Buildings along the northeast side of Broad Street, including nos 19-25, some of which may be 17th-century structures disguised behind later frontages. The Horse and Jockey (PRN 30095), at the south-eastern end of Wylcwm Street, 30m from the development plot, is also listed and originated as a later medieval stone house.

3.11 The earliest cartographic evidence for Knighton is no earlier than the 19th century when the Tithe and Ordnance Survey maps were produced. The Ordnance Survey first edition 1:2,500 map, surveyed in the later 19th century, shows the area of the development plot much as it appears today, an undeveloped area divided into two plots, the south-western part of which was presumably associated with buildings fronting onto Broad Street. The situation remained unchanged at the time of the Ordnance Survey second edition map of 1903 (see Fig. 2).

4 EVALUATION (Figs 3 & 4, Plates 1 - 6)

- 4.1 The evaluation brief required the excavation of one L-shaped trench with a total length of 24 and a width of 2 metres. The main axis of the trench was aligned along the development plot while the shorter arm ran along the street frontage facing Wylcwm Street. Site conditions, specifically concerned with maintaining suitable vehicular access, resulted in the trench being shortened to 22 x 2 metres. However, this did not in any way compromise the conditions of the archaeological brief. The aim of the evaluation was to identify the nature and possible dating of any archaeological features within the development area, with particular emphasis placed on any evidence that might relate to former medieval and post-medieval buildings and their associated deposits.
- 4.2 The modern and late post-medieval overburden in the trench was removed by machine under close archaeological supervision, with all subsequent cleaning carried out by hand. Interpretation of the archaeological deposits within the trench is necessarily limited by the restricted area available for examination. A drawn, written and photographic record was maintained throughout (see Appendix 1). The numbers in brackets in the text that follows refer to contexts given to those features and layers which were identified during the evaluation and which, where relevant, are depicted in Fig 4.

The Trench (16m x 2m and 6m x 2m; Figs 3 & 4, Plates 1 - 6)

- 4.3 The shorter arm of the trench, aligned south-east to north-west and measuring 6m x 2m, was located along the street frontage of Wylcwm Street in the north-eastern part of the development site. At its northernmost point this trench was then excavated for a further 16m on a north-east to south-west axis, thus traversing the centre of the development plot (see Fig. 3).
- 4.4 Along the entire length of the trench was a layer of tarmac (01) and underlying stone chippings (02), with a combined thickness of up to 0.16m, which was removed by machine. The long arm of the trench (see Fig. 4, section A B) also contained further underlying modern aggregate up to 0.12m thick, consisting of a yellowish brown clay and stone matrix at the central and north-eastern part of the trench and concrete at the south-western end. Beneath this overburden was a layer of very dark grey gritty silt (05) 0.2m thick. The deposit, which is probably the residue of a late post-medieval garden soil, contained a few pottery sherds which were 19th-century in date.
- 4.5 The removal of the layer revealed a series of features in the base of the trench, all of which had been cut into the orange-brown stony silts, clay and gravels which constitute the natural subsoil in the area (07). At the central point of the long arm of the trench a broad linear feature (06), 7.2m wide, traversed the trench on a north-west to south-east alignment (see Fig. 4, section A-B; Plate 1) The feature certainly extended beyond the limits of excavation and was considered to be either a Holloway (or trackway) or perhaps a ditch, up to 0.76m in depth. The base contained a very firm, metalled surface (13), in situ, 2.4m in width and constructed from small rounded stones bonded with a grey brown clay silt (see Plates 3 and 4). The surface, only 0.08m thick, had evidently been repaired on the northern edge using similar small stones (12). This may have been necessitated by erosion through its use as a trackway. On the downslope edge of the stony surface a fine grey silty wash (14) had accumulated. This deposit, 0.12m thick, also signals the possibility that the linear feature was maintained as an open trackway.

4.6 Sealing the cobbled surface was a layer of yellowish-grey gritty silt (11), 0.12m thick, which in turn was sealed by first a lens of charcoal (10) and then by a broad band of large stones and brown silty clay (09), 0.2m thick. The final fill within the feature (06) was a 0.4m-thick deposit of loose mid-brown clay silt. This material had the appearance of a cultivation layer that possibly had been used to backfill and consequently level the holloway. A variable assemblage of glazed and unglazed pottery sherds of medieval origin (possibly mid 13th to 15th-century in date) were recovered from this deposit.

- At the easterly end of the short arm of the trench (see Fig. 4, Section D-E; Plates 2,5 and 6) a stone structure (29) of medieval origin was revealed 0.5m below the level of the tarmac ground surface (01). Excavation demonstrated that the structure, which survived as three courses of stone, 0.25m in height, was constructed from squared shale with clay bonding. Although the full extent of the structure was not revealed, as it extended to the south-west beyond the limits of the excavation, the visible construction formed a 'T'-shaped flue-like feature that had been built within a deliberate cut (30) into the natural subsoil which was 1.8m wide and 1.4m in length (where visible)). The primary fill (28) of the feature comprised a very fine, black, charcoally silt, 0.1m thick. A single sherd of 14th-century medieval pottery was recovered from this deposit. Overlying this material, but still contained with the bounds of the structure, was a fill (27), 0.21m thick, of grey-brown silty clay containing inclusions of small stones. Medieval pottery was recovered also from within the clay bonding material of the stone structure (29). It is possible that subsequent robbing/dismantling of the structure created a slight depression in the area into which a series of early post-medieval deposits (26 and 25) sealed by a mid-17th-century deposit of mid-grey gritty silt (24), 0.12m thick, had accumulated. A single residual sherd of unglazed medieval pottery was also recovered from the latter deposit.
- 4.8 Immediately to the north-east of the structure (29), two small pits (20 and 21) were cut into the natural subsoil. In section (see Fig. 4, section B-C) the two pits appeared to be part of a single event (or feature) at least 1.3m wide and containing a single fill (19) of a mid-brown silty clay, up to 0.5m in depth. It is possible, but unproven that this feature was contemporary with the medieval stone structure (29). Both features 21 and 29 had been truncated on their eastern edges by a mid-19th-century drainage cut (17), orientated north-east to south-west. The cut contained a salt glazed ceramic pipe (18) sealed by a backfill of silty ash (16).
- 4.9 In order to confirm the nature and depth of the natural subsoil an additional sondage was excavated at the northern most point of the trench, where the overall site surface level was at its lowest point. This demonstrated that no significant archaeological deposits had survived near the entrance to the site and that natural subsoil (07) occurred at a depth of between 0.2m and 0.26m.

5 FINDS

- 5.1 The majority of artefacts recovered from the evaluation consisted of post-medieval pottery, only a small sample of which was retained for dating analysis. The pottery came from the upper layers across the whole site, particularly context 24 and the fill of the pipe trench, context 16. A range of fabrics and forms were present, attributable to a period from the 18th and 19th centuries.
- 5.2 A small but significant assemblage of medieval pottery was also recovered, comprising 23 sherds dating from the mid-13th to 15th centuries. Unglazed cooking pots and glazed jugs or jars were all represented, including three cooking pot rims and two jug body sherds decorated with an applied horizontal strip, vertical combing and stamped roundels. The fabrics showed some variation but were generally sandy, micaceous wares typical of those from Herefordshire which are found along this portion of the Welsh-English border, in other medieval towns such as New Radnor (Jones 1998, 163-4). The majority of the medieval pottery was recovered from context 8, the upper fill of the linear feature 06, with sherds also from the primary fill (28) of the stone-walled structure (29) and the clay bonding within the walls of that structure.
- 5.3 Other artefacts included a single stone roofing tile of possible medieval date, a fragment of slag and three fragments of daub from context 10, small fragments of burnt bone, four clay-pipe stems and a possible iron buckle.

6 CONCLUSIONS

6.1 The evaluation has demonstrated the presence of medieval occupation, dating from at least the mid-13th century onwards, within the bounds of the proposed development site. The large linear feature (06), identified here as a Holloway (though other interpretations are perhaps possible), almost certainly traverses the central part of the site. The origin of this feature is currently unknown: an Early Medieval or even Roman origin cannot be discounted as the holloway might be a re-used boundary ditch. As all of the 13th to 14th-century pottery was recovered from the uppermost fill (08), the only dateable deposit may well be the surviving remains of a cultivation soil associated with the medieval burgage plots which lay behind Broad Street.

- 6.2 The medieval stone structure (29), located on the eastern side of the street frontage, further demonstrates the presence of medieval activity on the site. On present evidence It is not possible to determine the precise nature and purpose of this structure, but its flue-like form suggests that it was a kiln or performed some similar, local, industrial activity. It is not possible to determine the relationship between the structure and the Holloway, because of the limits of the evaluation.
- 6.3 It is evident that at some point prior to the building of the modern garage forecourt the entire site was graded down to within 0.25m and 0.3m of the natural subsoil. Consequently, very little remains of the later post-medieval, 18th and 19th-century garden deposits.

7 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

7.1 The writer would like to thank the following people for their assistance during the project: Richard Hankinson, Nigel Jones and Bob Silvester of the Field Services Section of CPAT; MR M J Walters of the Curatorial Section in CPAT and, our client, Mr J Mokler.

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Jones, N W, 1998. Excavations within the Medieval Town at New Radnor, Powys, 1991-2, Archaeological Journal 155, 134-206.

Silvester, R J, 1994. Radnorshire Historic Settlements Part One. CPAT Report No. 92.

Soulsby, I, 1983. The Towns of Medieval Wales. Chichester: Phillimore & Co. Ltd.

Maps

Ordnance Survey 1st edition 1:2,500 map, Radnorshire 11.14, published 0000

Ordnance Survey 2nd edition 1:2,500 map, Radnorshire 11.14, published 1903

1983 Soil Survey of England and Wales map (Sheet 2 - Wales) and Legend (1:250,000 scale)

1994 British Geological Survey map of Wales (Solid edition at 1:250,000 scale)

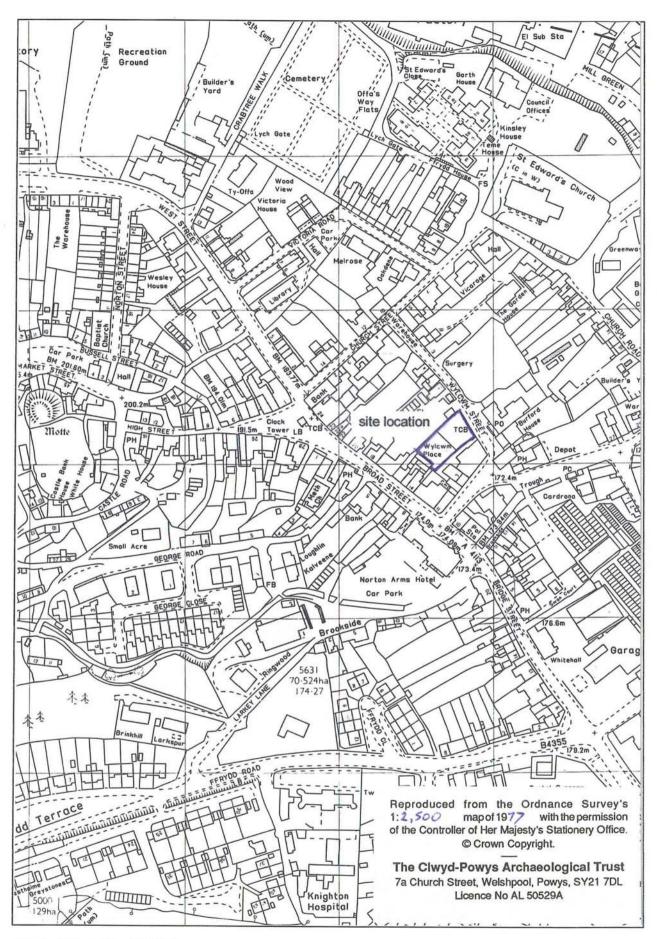


Fig. 1 Site location, 1:2,500

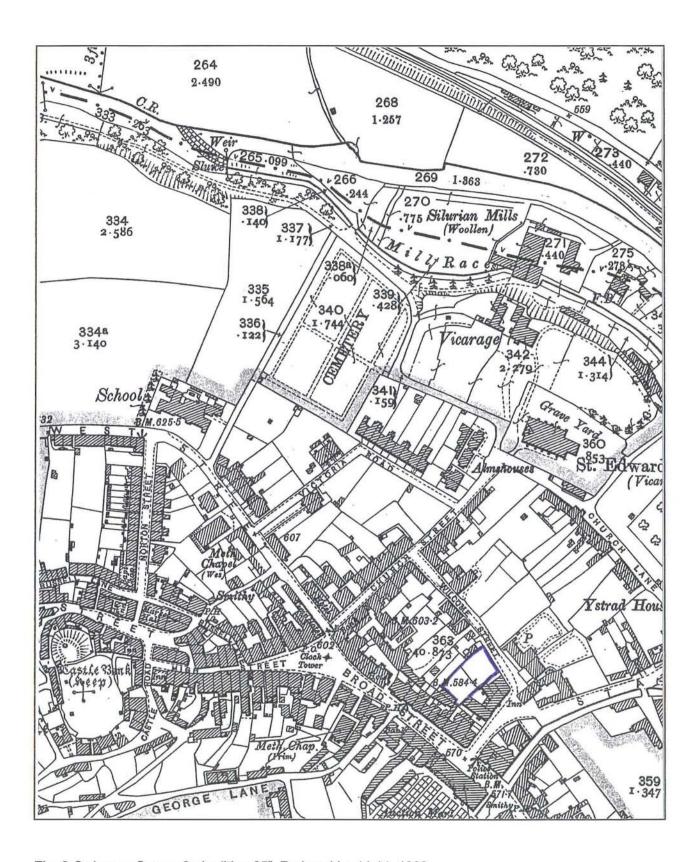


Fig. 2 Ordnance Survey 2nd edition 25", Radnorshire 11.14, 1903

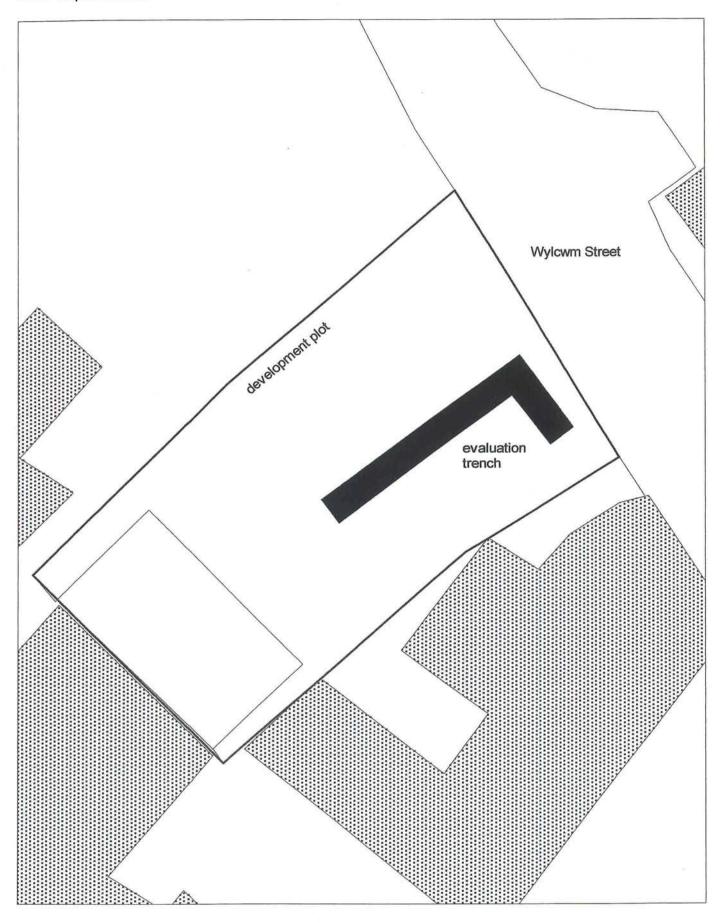


Fig. 3 Trench location, scale 1:250

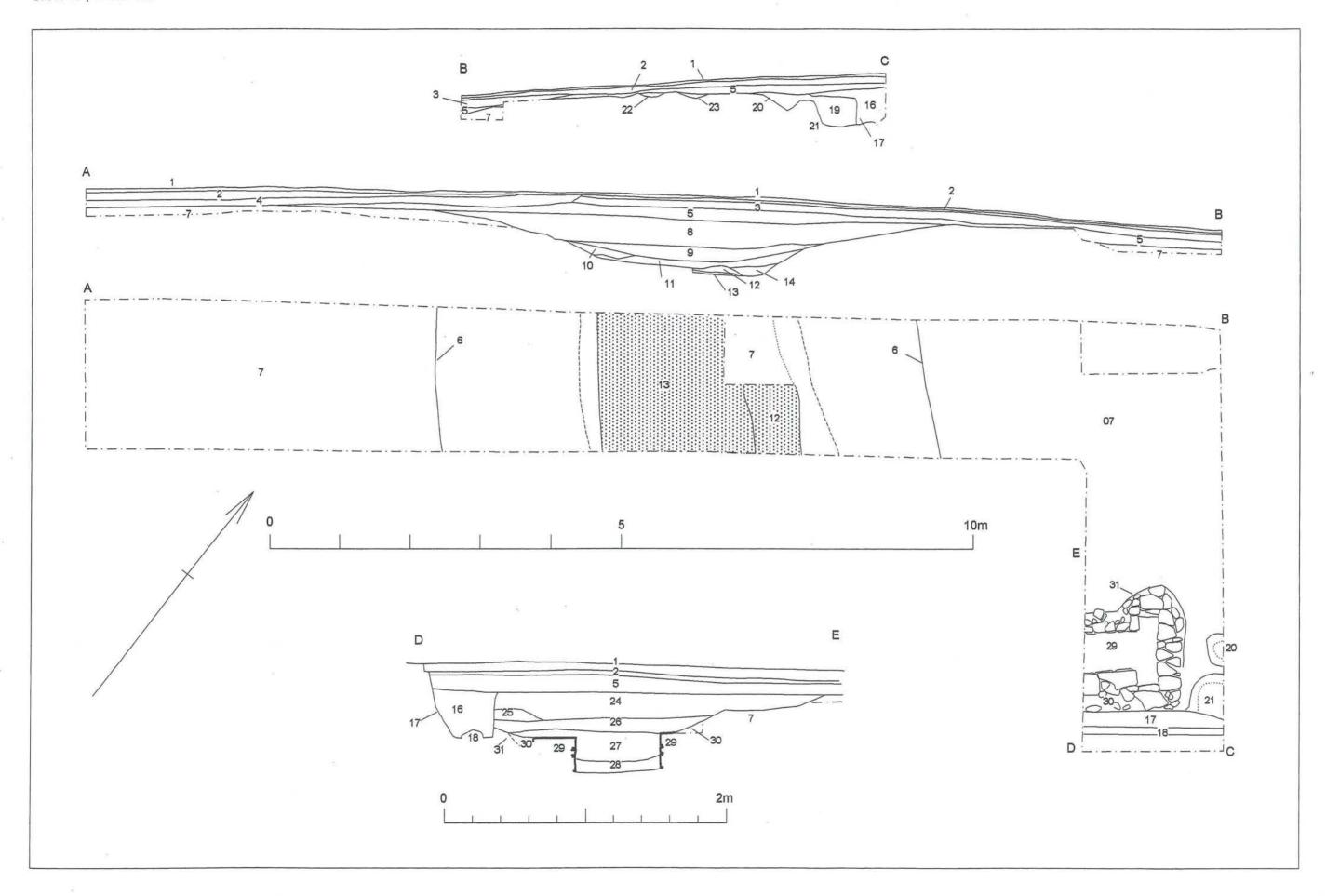


Fig. 4 Trench plan and sections



Plate 1. North-east facing arm of trench, post machining. Photo CPAT 1826.10



Plate 2. east facing arm of trench, post machining. Photo CPAT 1826.08



Plate 3. South-east facing section through holloway/ditch (06) illustrating metalled surface (13) in situ and overlying Medieval deposits in section above. Photo CPAT 1826.17



Plate 4. Excavation of holloway/ditch (06), illustrating metalled surface (13) in situ at the base. Photo CPAT 1827.10



Plate 5. Medieval structure (29), post excavation, illustrating overlying deposits in the north-east facing section. Photo CPAT 1827.16



Plate 6. Medieval structure (29), post excavation, south-east facing. Photo CPAT 1827.18

APPENDIX 1

PROJECT ARCHIVE

Site archive

31 context record forms
03 A1 site plans
01 black and white negative films
01 colour slide films
02 colour print film
photographic catalogue
context register
drawings register
4 levels record forms
Specification, brief and correspondence

Finds

Context 8

3 sherds medieval cooking pot rim
10 sherds medieval cooking pot body
3 sherds medieval glazed jug or jar body
2 sherds medieval decorated jug body
1 fragment burnt bone

Context 10

- 1 fragment slag
- 1 fragment burnt bone
- 3 fragments daub

Context 16

- 1 stone roofing tile
- 1 sherd medieval pottery
- 2 clay pipe stems
- 25 sherds of 18th-19th century pottery

Context 24

- 1 sherd medieval cooking pot base
- 6 sherds 18th-19th century pottery
- 2 clay pipe stems

Context 27

- 1 iron ?buckle
- 1 fragment burnt bone

Context 28

1 sherd medieval jug body

Context 29

- 1 sherd medieval cooking pot body
- 1 sherd medieval jug body

APPENDIX 2

SPECIFICATION

1 Introduction

1.1 The Contracting Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust has been invited to prepare a specification of works for undertaking an archaeological evaluation on land to the rear of Wylcwm Street, Knighton, Powys. The Curatorial Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust, acting as archaeological advisors to the local planning authority, have determined that an archaeological evaluation should be undertaken to assess the potential impact of the proposals on the archaeological resource.

1.2 The site lies within the historic core of the town in an area known to have formed part of the Edwardian planned town of the late 13th century. It is therefore anticipated that significant buried archaeological deposits may survive within in the area and the following specification has been designed to evaluate the depth and significance of these deposits.

2 Objectives

- 2.1 The objectives of the evaluation are:
- 2.1.1 to reveal by means of a desktop study and field evaluation, the nature, condition, significance and, where possible, the chronology of the archaeology within the area of the proposed development in so far as these aims are possible;
- 2.1.2 to record any archaeological sites identified during the field evaluation;
- 2.1.3 to prepare a report outlining the results of the assessment, incorporating sufficient information on the archaeological resource for a reasonable planning decision to be taken regarding the future management of the archaeology.

3 Methods

- 3.1 Stage one of the evaluation will involve the examination of all the readily available primary and secondary documentary, cartographic, pictorial, and photographic sources at the County Records Office, Hawarden; the County Sites and Monuments Record, Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust, Welshpool; the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth; and the National Monuments Record, Aberystwyth; and information held by Mr C Harston.
- 3.2 All cartographic sources consulted will be included within the desktop section of the report, together with transcriptions of relevant documents and copies of plans, maps and photographs containing relevant information.
- 3.3 The field evaluation will consist of a single L-shaped trench measuring 24 x 2m. The excavation will be undertaken using a machine excavator with a toothless bucket to remove modern overburden down to the level of the first recognisable archaeological horizon. Thereafter, all excavation will be conducted by hand unless otherwise agreed with the Curator in advance. The evaluation will be entirely non-destructive and designed to determine the depth at which archaeologically sensitive deposits survive, together with their nature condition and significance. The depth of natural deposits will be determined to assess the extent of any stratified deposits which may be encountered.
- 3.4 Contexts will be recorded on individual record forms and be drawn and photographed as appropriate. All photography will be in 35mm format black and white print and colour slide. All features will be located as accurately as possible with respect to buildings and boundaries identified on modern Ordnance Survey maps and levels will be related to Ordnance Datum where possible.

3.5 All artefacts will be related to their contexts from which they were derived and treated in a manner appropriate to their composition and will be processed by trained CPAT staff.

- 3.6 Following the on-site work an illustrated and bound report will be prepared in A4 format, containing conventional sections on: Site location, Topography and Geology; Archaeological Background; Evaluation; Conclusions and References, together with appropriate appendices on archives and finds.
- 3.7 The site archive will be prepared to specifications laid out in Appendix 3 in the <u>Management of Archaeological Projects</u> (English Heritage, 1991), to be deposited with the Regional Sites and Monuments Record (SMR). All artefacts will, subject to the permission of the owner, be deposited with the Powysland Museum, Welshpool.

4 Resources and Programming

- 4.1 The evaluation will be undertaken by a small team of skilled archaeologists under the overall supervision of Mr RJ Silvester, a senior member of CPAT's staff who is also a member of the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA). CPAT is an IFA Registered Organisation.
- 4.2 All report preparation will be completed by or with the assistance of the same field archaeologist who conducted the evaluation.
- 4.3 It is anticipated that the evaluation will be completed within 10 days. The report will be completed within 2 weeks of the completion of on-site works. Copies of the report will provided to the client and the Regional SMR. The Curator will be informed of the timetable in order to arrange for monitoring if required. At present, CPAT would be in a position to undertake the work during early 2005, subject to sufficient advance notice.
- 4.4 The following contingency sums have been allowed in accordance with section 10 of the curatorial brief. The need for such contingencies, and their potential cost, would be subject to discussions between CPAT, the client and the curator once the fieldwork has been completed. The following figures are therefore only for guidance and the final cost, should any of the services be required, may be more or less than the estimates provided.

Finds conservation etc £200
Dating £300
Environmental sampling £200
Museum deposition and storage £50

Publication Archaeology in Wales at no additional charge

- 4.5 Requirements relating to Health and Safety regulations will be adhered to by CPAT and its staff.
- 4.6 CPAT is covered by appropriate Public and Employer's Liability insurance.

N.W. Jones 22 November 2004