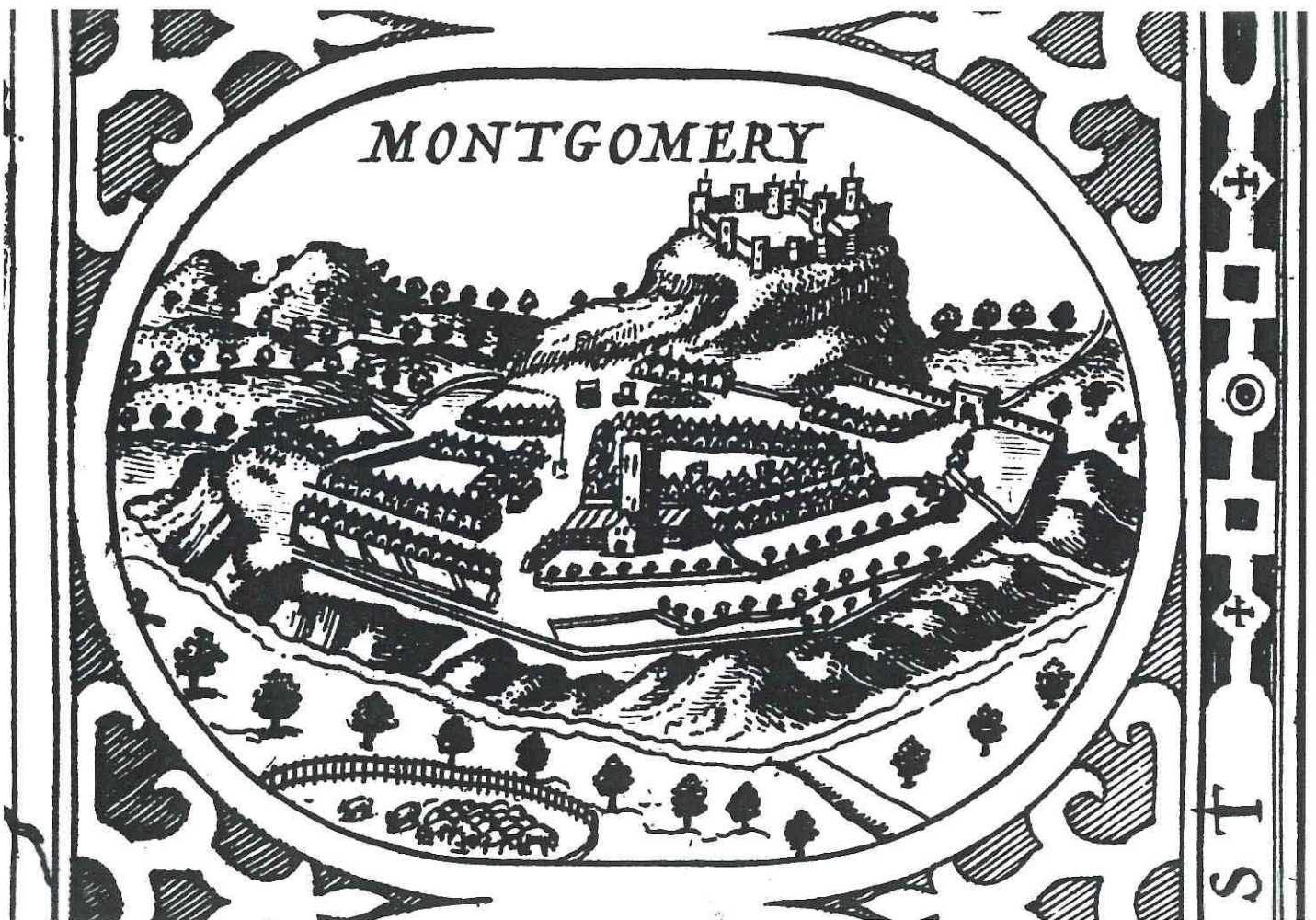


THE CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

Forden Road, Montgomery, Powys
ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF



Fordeu Road, Montgomery, Powys
ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

N.W.JONES
August 1998

Report for Powys County Council, Engineering Consultancy Services

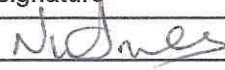
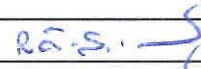

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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 At the end of July 1998, the Contracting Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT Contracts) was asked by Powys County Council, Engineering Consultancy Services to provide a quotation for a watching brief during the construction of a new footway between the Cottage Inn, Forden Road, and the Telephone Exchange, Pool Road, Montgomery, Powys (Fig. 1, SO 2226 9696). The CPAT Contracts quote was accepted and the work was subsequently carried out from 10th August 1998, with the report prepared immediately afterwards.
- 1.2 The development lies within the medieval core of the town (Silvester 1992) and its potential impact was on buried archaeological features relating to the former town defences in the area of Arthur's Gate, as well as possible medieval occupation along Forden Road and Pool Road.

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The present town of Montgomery was established below the stone castle whose construction began in 1223, the royal charter of 1227 granting a weekly market, an annual fair and the right to enclose the town with a wall and ditch (Soulsby 1983, 185-7). The defences of the town have been studied in some detail by O'Neil and Foster-Smith, but their conclusion that stone defences were built in the 1230s (O'Neil & Foster-Smith 1940, 218-9) has been questioned by Taylor who argued that the early defences of the town were almost certainly of earth and timber and only later replaced in stone. Murage grants were made for seven years in 1277 and for five years in 1292 (Knight 1992, 113-4), and an order in 1279 granted the constable of the castle payment for 'carrying to the castle a palisade which stood around the town of Montgomery and using it to make a bailey in the castle' (Taylor 1947, 281).
- 2.2 When Leland visited the town in the 1530s the defences were clearly in a state of disrepair and described by him as follows: 'great ruines of the waulle yet apere *ad vestigia* of iiii gates cawlyd, Kedewen Gate, Chyrbyry Gate, Arthur's Gate, Kery Gate (Smith 1964, 11). The survey published by John Speed in 1610 (Britnell and Jones 1989, Fig. 1) depicts several houses along the eastern side of the road which follows the approximate line of the present Pool Road, leading to Arthur's Gate at the northern edge of the town. The northern town defences are shown as a crenellated wall either side of Arthur's Gate, which itself appears as a substantial, presumably stone, structure.
- 2.3 The survey work and trial excavations carried out by O'Neil and Foster-Smith in the 1930s provides a description and reconstruction of the line of the medieval town. The earthwork defences to the east of the Cottage Inn are amongst the best preserved, the bank surviving to 3.6m above the base of the ditch which is up to 10.4m wide. A counterscarp bank survived at this point until the construction of a modern housing estate and access road. The town bank is now topped by a recently reconstructed boundary wall belonging to Plas Du which was the subject of a series of investigations revealing a substantial section of foundations for the medieval town wall as well as the remains of the medieval corner tower (Jones and Britnell 1998). The exact location of Arthur's Gate is, however, uncertain. Excavations between the B4385 and B4388 in 1982 failed to reveal any evidence of the medieval town defences (Brassil 1988). A quantity of stone is said to have been revealed when the car-park for the Cottage Inn was constructed, however, which might represent the gate or part of the adjacent town wall (A. Baldwin pers comm.).
- 2.4 Excavations on a vacant burgage plot along the eastern side of Pool Road (Fig. 1) between 1984 and 1987 (Britnell and Jones 1989) revealed evidence of two phases of timber buildings during the medieval period. Of particular relevance to the present investigations was the discovery of the medieval precursor to Pool Road, which consisted of a holloway with wheel ruts in the base which had been deliberately infilled. This road lay approximately 2m below the level of the present road, and was located further to the east, partly within the plot and partly beneath the present road. Further north, Blackhall Cottages are aligned on this old road rather than the existing Pool Road, suggesting that the location of Arthur's Gate could be further east than the position of Forden Road by the Cottage Inn.

3 WATCHING BRIEF

- 3.1 Although the scheme of works affected a length of 220m to the south of the Cottage Inn, the knowledge that the level of the medieval street frontage was considerably below the present road surface led to the decision, in conjunction with M.Walters of CPAT Curatorial, to maintain the watching brief only in the vicinity of the Cottage Inn (Fig. 1). The watching brief (Fig. 2) was carried out over three days, on August 10th, 11th and 17th 1998. Numbers in brackets refer to context records in the site archive.
- 3.2 Removal of up to 0.15m of topsoil (1) during the excavations for the new footway revealed two modern service trenches, one for telephone cables (2) and the other for electricity (4). Both trenches had been cut through a layer of very stony soil (6) containing some brick fragments, which extended below the base of the excavation for the majority of its length. The grass verge, which was removed to make way for the new footway, sloped upwards away from the road, with the result that the excavations removed up to 0.40m along the eastern edge.
- 3.3 Alongside the Inn car park a new access way was constructed, excavated to a maximum depth of 0.45m. Beneath the topsoil (1) a layer of compacted stone (7) c. 0.20m thick formed the hardcore base for the car park. This sealed a layer of compacted dark brown clay loam (8) with frequent charcoal, within which were the cut off remains of two wooden fence posts.
- 3.4 The only features of potential archaeological significance were revealed during the excavations for the new footway towards the Inn (Fig. 2). At a distance of 11.4m from the north-west corner of the Inn a layer of clean yellow stony clay (9) was revealed in the base of the excavation, cut by the service trenches. The surface of this layer, which appeared to be the natural subsoil, was seen to be dipping towards the north, where it was sealed by layer 6. The nature and position of this might suggest the inner edge of the town ditch although this could not be confirmed within the limited area investigated. A further 3.4m to the south, this clay layer was replaced by a layer of grey-yellow stony clay (10), possibly filling a feature cutting layer 9, although this could not be clearly demonstrated. The location of this layer coincided with the line of the town wall as projected from the known line further to the east. Since no evidence was revealed for surviving stone foundations for the wall at this point, this might therefore suggest that the wall had been robbed and that layer 10 was the fill of the robber trench. However, this conclusion must remain speculative due to the limited area investigated. No dating evidence was recovered.

4 CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 The majority of the excavations covered by the watching brief did not extend below the base of modern deposits and service trenches. Although no evidence was revealed for the siting of Arthur's Gate, it is possible that the inner edge of the town ditch was identified at a point where the natural clay was seen dipping to the north, adjacent to the Inn car park. It is also possible that at this point the town wall had been robbed, although evidence for the putative robber trench was identified within the investigated area. These discoveries would appear to confirm the line of the town defences projected from the surviving section 45m to the east.

5 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 5.1 The writer would like to thank Powys County Council, Engineering Consultancy Services, and the staff of G.R.E. Millington, Contractors, for their help and co-operation during the watching brief.

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7 SITE ARCHIVE

1 Colour print film
6 Colour Slides
6 Black and white negatives, contacts and archive prints
10 Context record forms
PCC Site plan
Correspondence

APPENDIX 1

COTTAGE INN AND POOL ROAD, MONTGOMERY SPECIFICATION FOR AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF BY CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The proposed development involves the construction of a new footway between the Cottage Inn car park and the Telephone Exchange, Pool Road, Montgomery (SO 22269696)
- 1.2 The development lies within the medieval core of the town and may impact on buried archaeological features relating to the former town defences in the area of Arthur's Gate, as well as possible medieval occupation along Forden Road and Pool Road.
- 1.3 The Curatorial Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust in their capacity as archaeological curators for the county and advisers to the County Council have determined that an Archaeological watching brief is necessary to record the archaeological resource during the development. Accordingly a brief has been prepared by CPAT Curatorial (No CWAT 276 dated 22nd July 1998) which describes the scheme of archaeological works required.

2 Objectives

- 2.1 The objectives of the archaeological works are:
 - 2.1.1 to maintain an archaeological watching brief during the initial topsoiling and footway excavation;
 - 2.1.2 to record the nature, condition, significance and, where possible, the chronology of any archaeological deposits and/or features revealed within the area of the proposed development during the development works in so far as these aims are possible;
- 2.1.2 to prepare a report outlining the results of the watching brief.

3 Methods

- 3.1 The watching brief will be carried out according to the guidelines submitted with the Curatorial Brief and will involve the examination of all the groundworks within the development area.
- 3.2 All archaeological deposits and/or features noted during the watching brief will be recorded by drawn plan, section and/or photography, as appropriate.
- 3.3 Following the on-site work an illustrated and bound report will be prepared according to the principles laid out in the Brief (section 8). This will be in A4 format and contain conventional sections on: Site location, Topography and Geology; Historic Background; Catalogue of sites identified with notes on their condition and significance, Conclusions and Recommendations and References, together with appropriate appendices on archives and finds.
- 3.5 The site archive will be prepared to specifications laid out in Appendix 3 in the *Management of Archaeological Projects* (English Heritage, 1991).

4 Resources and Programming

- 4.1 The watching brief will be undertaken by a skilled and experienced archaeologist. Overall supervision will be by Mr R.J.Silvester, a senior member of CPAT's staff who is also a member of the Institute of Field Archaeologists.

- 4.2 All report preparation will be completed by the same field archaeologist who conducted the watching brief.
- 4.3 The duration of the watching brief will depend on the nature and progress of the development. The subsequent report would be prepared immediately thereafter, dependent on the client's instructions and the arrangement of a suitable timetable. The archaeological curator will be informed of the detailed timetable and staffing levels when agreement has been reached with the client.
- 4.4 Requirements relating to Health and Safety regulations will be adhered to by CPAT and its staff.
- 4.5 CPAT is covered by appropriate Public and Employer's Liability insurance.

N.W.Jones
Projects Officer

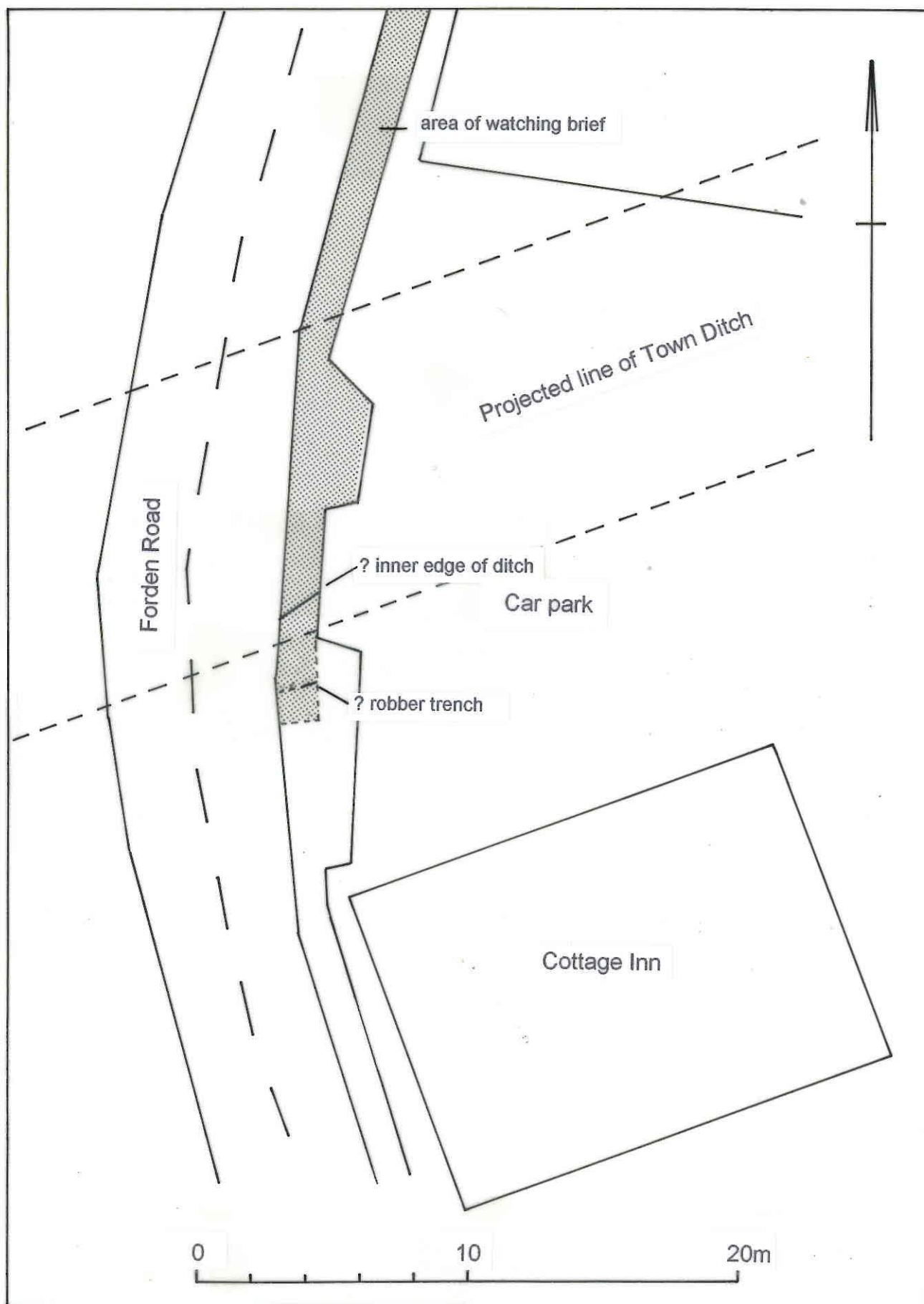


Fig. 2 The Watching Brief, scale 1:200