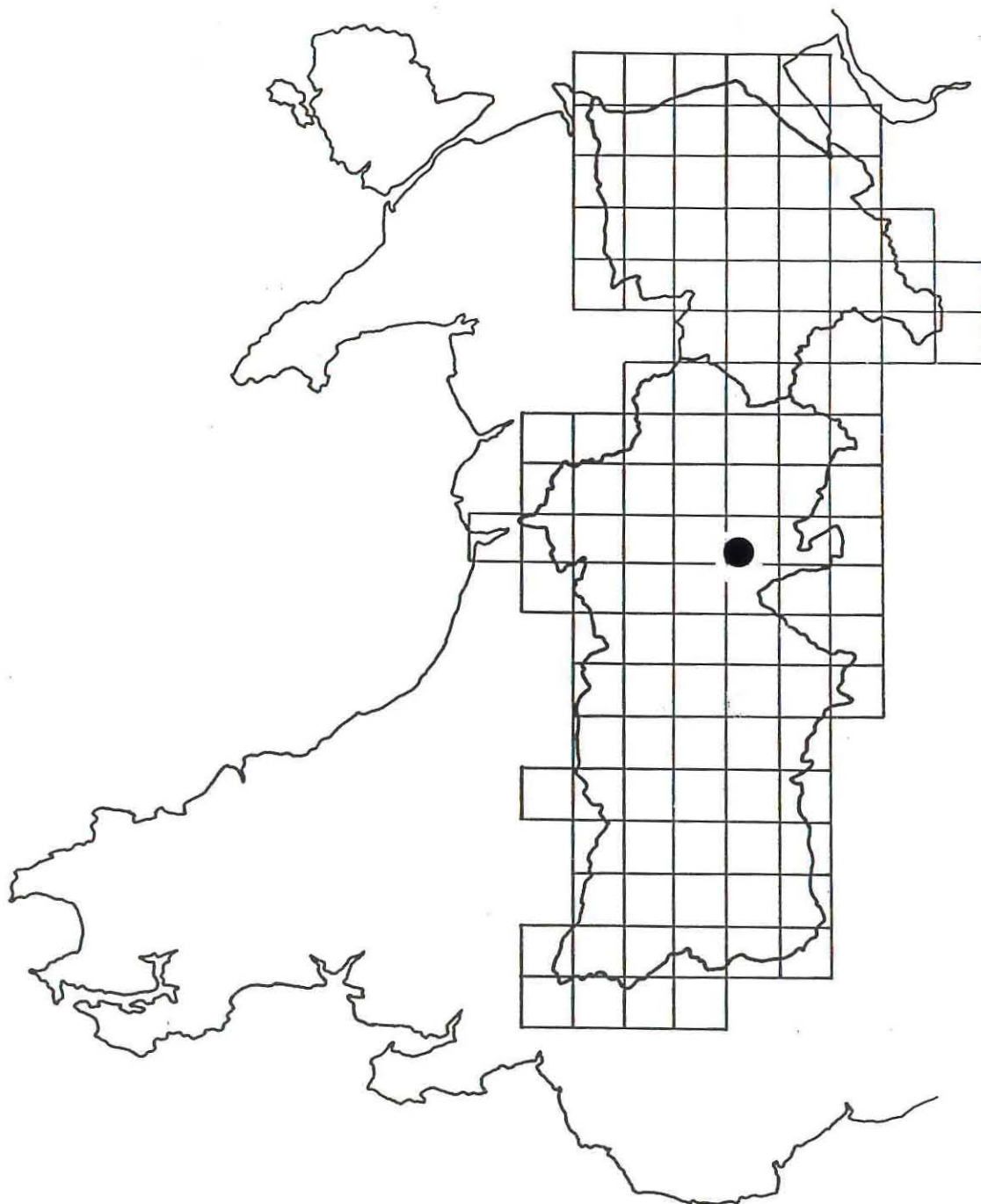


1-4 Wesley Place, Newtown, Powys

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION



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Report prepared for Frank Galliers Ltd

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1-4 WESLEY PLACE, NEWTOWN, POWYS: AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

1 Introduction

1.1 In early July 1993, the Clwyd -Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT) was commissioned by Frank Galliers Limited of Longner Street, Mountfields, Shrewsbury to carry out an archaeological evaluation of 1-4 Wesley Place, Newtown, Powys. This was in response to a planning application (Montgomeryshire District Council planning application M23374), for the proposed development of an area which, at present, consists of some 1250 square metres of derelict land on the corner of Wesley Street and Back Lane, close to the town centre of Newtown (SO1072 9169).

1.2 The Historic Settlements Survey for Montgomeryshire prepared by the Clwyd Powys Archaeological Trust (Silvester 1992) specified this area as one of particular archaeological sensitivity which would require detailed archaeological investigation in advance of any development proposed for it. Consequently, an archaeological evaluation was specified by Montgomeryshire District Council's archaeological adviser, the Curatorial Section of CPAT, as an integral part of the planning application.

1.3 This evaluation was carried out over a period of five days in mid-July by a small team of experienced excavators supervised by the writer. This report was prepared immediately afterwards.

2 Historical Background

2.1 Earliest records of a settlement at Newtown date back to the mid-thirteenth century when it was identified in 1253 as 'Llanweyr', a reference to St Mary's chapel in the town. In 1395, it was known as 'Drenewyth' by which time it would have attained borough status, although there is no known charter. It is not until 1460 that the place-name 'Newtown' was in use (Ellis 1935).

2.2 An estate map of 1798 (in the Glansevern Deposit Collection, National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth), indicates that Broad Street formed the principal axis of the town at a time prior to its marked period of expansion in the 19th century and that several lesser roads radiated from it to the east and the west including the road presently known as Wesley Street (Soulsby 1983, 209).

2.3 Positive archaeological evidence for occupation of the Old Street/Skinners Yard and Severn Square areas of Newtown in the north-eastern quarter of the town in the 13th-16th centuries derived from excavations carried out in 1979-80 by CPAT (Jones 1988, 1). It could be reasonably anticipated, therefore, that further evidence relating to this period might be forthcoming from excavations in the vicinity of Wesley Street.

2.4 Back Lane is of relatively modern origin and maps as recent as 1967 do not record its presence (Fig 1). Some buildings believed to have included garages, a warehouse and a shop are shown on these maps but these were subsequently demolished when Back Lane was constructed in the mid 1970s. It is not known, however, whether these were constructed on the foundations of earlier buildings.

2.5 There has been speculation in the past that the town had defences in the form of a town wall or bank (Spurgeon 1966, 16), although there is no

corroborative evidence either on the ground or in documents. The curatorial brief goes further suggesting that a part of these putative defences coincide with the north/south alignment of Back Lane. If this was the case, it was possible that buried remains might survive within the development area.

3 The Evaluation

3.1.1 The surface of the evaluation area consisted partly of areas of demolition rubble overlying in various places concrete and brick wall and floor foundations of former buildings (Fig.1). Where demolition rubble was thin or absent cobbled surfaces of limited extent were intermittently visible.

3.1.2 Four trenches, each 10 x 2m, were located in positions specified in the evaluation brief (Fig 2). In each case, the modern overburden and, where present, the topsoil, were removed mechanically by means of a JCB Sitemaster 3CX to a level where features of possible archaeological significance were exposed. Thereafter, each excavation trench was excavated manually and recorded in plan and, where appropriate in section. at scales of 1:20 and 1:10 respectively. A colour-slide and black-and-white photographic record was also maintained. Finds and samples recovered were related to their appropriate contexts and brought back to CPAT's headquarters for processing.

3.1.3 Numbers in brackets in the following evaluation report refer to context numbers given to excavated features, some of which are duplicated on accompanying plans.

3.2 Trench A

3.2.1 This trench was aligned parallel to the western boundary of the site and situated over an area where previous structures were recorded on modern Ordnance Survey maps. Along the south-eastern edge of the trench at a depth of some 0.40m below the present ground surface, breeze-block/concrete foundations of a recently demolished structure were revealed, set directly on a brown humic loam. To the north of these, the remains of slate-slab wall foundations butted on to them at approximately the same level. Foundation trenches for these walls were absent, the structure again having been set directly on to brown loam soil.

3.2.2 Amongst the finds recovered from this soil layer were 20 pottery fragments of 13th-14th century date but no features were recorded with which these could be directly associated.

3.3 Trench B

3.3.1 This trench was partly located over previously recorded structures but no foundations relating to these or earlier structures were revealed during the evaluation. At the level of the orange-brown subsoil, a vertically sided pit, 0.80m wide and 0.55m deep, was identified. Finds recovered from it were all of post-medieval origin.

3.4 Trench C

3.4.1 The trench was set parallel to Wesley Street in anticipation that excavation might reveal medieval structural foundations in this location. Concrete wall foundations aligned at right angles to the street frontage were

exposed at a depth of 0.25m below the ground surface at the eastern end of the trench. These partly overlay a severely truncated slate slab floor or wall foundation course similar to those recorded in Trench A, but it could not be demonstrated that it was significantly earlier than the overlying concrete foundation wall. To the east of these no further features of significance were evident within the trench.

3.4.2 Two pottery fragments of 13th-14th century date were recorded from unstratified contexts.

3.5 Trench D (Figs 3 & 4)

3.5.1 This trench was aligned at right angles to the Wesley Street frontage again in a position overlying previously recorded buildings. Within it, in a position coinciding with the former rear structural wall of 7, Wesley Street, a course of mortared wall base, c.0.55m wide (9), was uncovered extending across the trench at a depth of 0.25m below the present ground surface. This was set in a vertically sided trench, 0.25m deep (10). Finds recovered from within the latter were of post-medieval origin supporting the interpretation that this represented the foundation course of the above-mentioned building.

3.5.2 A pit approximately 2.40m wide and of maximum depth 0.52m was identified (8) immediately to the south of this, at a depth of 0.35m below the ground surface. The basal layer of its fill (5) consisted of small burnt stones and charcoal contained in a clayey matrix which also extended beyond the north-eastern edge of the trench adjacent to the pit. Two stone-built walls (6 and 7), each approximately 0.45m wide and set into the base of the pit 1.60m apart, extended from the south-western edge of the trench. Their inner edges showed evidence of burning and the fill (1) contained heat-shattered stone fragments.

3.5.3 Both this structure and the pit were clearly truncated and damaged by later activity but a sufficient number of structural features remained to offer an interpretation that the pit represented the base of an oven or kiln. The two walls extending into it represented a part of the associated flue-passage.

3.5.4 A layer of burnt stone and charcoal was visible in section in the north-eastern baulk of the trench, adjacent to the pit. This could be a part of the pit fill or represent indicate a further archaeological level beyond the limit of the evaluation.

3.5.5 Pottery sherds recovered from reasonably secure contexts within the pit suggest a 13th-14th century date.

4 Conclusions

4.1 Three of the trenches excavated (A, C and D) revealed floor/wall foundation levels and finds associated with late post-medieval activity in the area although some of the clay-pipe fragments may be of 17th-18th century origin.

4.2 Medieval pottery was recovered from Trenches A, C and D. In Trench A the context in which it was found was a truncated humic soil layer. No contemporary archaeological features were identified with which it could be associated with certainty. It is possible therefore that this assemblage represents material redeposited in post-medieval times. Alternatively, this

soil horizon may be an indicator of cultivated ground, possibly a garden of medieval origin within a tenement plot.

4.3 The structure partially excavated in Trench D which is interpreted as a truncated oven and flue-passage of 13th-14th century origin almost certainly extended beyond the limits of the excavation to the south-west of the trench. There were also indications of activity extending to the north-east. This sector of the development area may, therefore, contain further remains of medieval date.

5 Acknowledgements

5.1 The writer wishes to thank Gareth Davies, Brian Hart, Richard Hankinson and Wendy Owen for their expert assistance during the course of the excavation. Further acknowledgement is also due to Nigel W. Jones for the medieval pottery report.

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Appendix 1

7 The Finds

7.1 Trench A. Humic soil layer (02)

- 7.1.1 23 medieval pottery fragments
- 44 Post-medieval pottery fragments
- 28 clay-pipe stem fragments
- 8 clay-pipe bowl fragments
- 4 post-medieval glass fragments
- 14 iron fragments
- 1 bronze stud
- 11 animal bone fragments
- 4 calcined bone fragments
- 4 iron slag fragments

7.2 Trench B. Pit fill 06

- 7.2.1 1 post-medieval pottery fragment
- 1 post-medieval glass fragment
- 6 brick fragments

7.3 Trench C. Soil layer 02

- 7.3.1 2 medieval pottery fragments
- 2 post-medieval pottery fragments
- 2 post-medieval glass fragments
- 1 clay-pipe stamped stem/bowl fragment

7.4 Trench D. Wall foundation trench 10

- 7.4.1 1 post-medieval pottery fragment
- 1 post-medieval glass fragment
- 1 ?iron blade fragment
- 3 brick fragments
- 1 coal fragment

- 7.4.2 Fill of flue -chamber (01)
- 6 medieval pottery fragments
- 1 chert fragment
- 3 burnt stone fragments
- 12 brick fragments
- 2 calcined bone fragments
- 1 charcoal sample

- 7.4.3 Layer of fill (05)
- 1 sample

- 7.4.4. Layer of fill (02)
- 1 sample

Appendix 2

8 Medieval Pottery

8.1 A total of 31 sherds (178g) of medieval pottery were recovered from the excavation. These have been subdivided into fabrics based on petrological inclusions according to the Clwyd-Powys Medieval Pottery Fabric Series (Courtney and Jones 1988).

8.2 Table 1: Medieval Pottery quantification

Fabric	Form	No.sherds (percentages in brackets)	Weight(g)
MB12	Jug	22 (71)	121 (68)
MB16	Cook Pot	5 (16)	33 (19)
MC2	Cook Pot	1 (3)	2 (1)
MC3	Jug	2 (7)	14 (8)
MD1	Jug	1 (3)	8 (4)
TOTALS		31	178

8.3 The majority of the pottery (87%) belonged to the MB fabric group of sandy fine micaceous wares, probably of fairly local manufacture. The MC fabrics represent Herefordshire Micaceous Wares, while the single sherd of MD fabric is of Coal Measures origin, possibly South Shropshire. The forms present were mainly jugs (81%) with the remainder being cooking pots or possibly jars.

8.4 The size of the assemblage and its residual nature limit the conclusions which may be drawn. The range of fabrics present is very similar to that from earlier excavations in Newtown (Jones 1988), and also from excavations in Montgomery (Britnell and Jones 1989). Overall, the assemblage would appear to be fairly typically 13th or 14th century in date, with a notable lack of 15th or 16th century wares.

Appendix 3

LAND AT 1-4 WESLEY PLACE, NEWTOWN: SPECIFICATION FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

1.0 Introduction

1.1 A proposed office development on land on the north side of Wesley Street, Newtown is situated within the historic core of the town in an area where medieval tenements might be anticipated from the 14th-century if not earlier. It is not impossible that the town defences also lie in the vicinity of Back Lane which edges the plot on the south-west.

1.2 In its capacity as archaeological curator for the district, the County Sites and Monuments Record operated by the Curatorial Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust recommended to Montgomeryshire District Council, that an evaluation is necessary to assess the implications of the planning application on the archaeological resource in order. These can then be taken into account during the determination of the planning application. Accordingly a brief (CPAT EVB 52) has been prepared by the County Sites and Monuments Record for Powys which describes the scheme of archaeological works required.

2 Objectives

2.1 The objectives of the evaluation are:

2.1.1 to reveal by means of carefully located excavation trenches, the nature, significance and, where possible, the chronology of the archaeology within the area of the proposed development in so far as these are possible;

2.1.2 to record any archaeology so revealed;

2.1.3 to prepare a report outlining the results of the evaluation and incorporating sufficient information on the archaeological resource for the planning authority to assess the implications of the development.

3 Methods

3.1 The evaluation will take the form of four trenches, each 10m long and approximately 2m wide, as specified in the evaluation brief. The trenches will have the concrete, topsoil and any modern overburden removed mechanically, this to be followed by manual excavation of all areas deemed to be of potential archaeological significance within each trench. All features encountered will be examined as fully as appropriate within the constraints imposed by time and safety considerations.

3.2 The excavation will be undertaken using standard evaluation procedures:

3.2.1 removal of modern overburden and sterile lower levels

3.2.2 evaluation of the archaeological deposits by hand trowelling to establish their importance and integrity, but avoiding any unnecessary disturbance of the deposits.

3.2.3 all archaeological contexts recorded using the standard numbered context system employed by CPAT. All significant contexts to be planned and/or drawn in section at appropriate scales (as defined in the Evaluation Brief), and photographed in monochrome and colour. All drawn records will be related

to control points depicted on modern maps.

3.2.4 all archaeological artefacts and environmental samples recorded and processed in a manner appropriate to the material involved. Those requiring conservation or other specialist treatment will be stored in a stable environment until such times as they can be examined by a specialist. All finds, except those deemed to be Treasure Trove, are the property of the landowner. It is anticipated that they will be donated to an appropriate museum, subject to agreement being reached with the landowner and the museum curator.

3.3 Following the on-site work a report will be prepared according to the principles laid out in the Evaluation Brief.

3.4 The site archive will be prepared to specifications laid out in Appendix 3 in the Management of Archaeological Projects (English Heritage, 1991), to be deposited in the Powys County Sites and Monuments Record.

4 Resources and Programming

4.1 The evaluation will be undertaken by a small team of skilled archaeologists under the direct supervision of an experienced field archaeologist. Overall supervision will be by a senior member of CPAT's staff who will also be a member of the Institute of Field Archaeologists.

4.2 All report preparation will be completed by the same field archaeologist who conducted the evaluation.

4.3 It is anticipated that the evaluation will take over a period of approximately five working days and the subsequent report will be prepared thereafter. The date of commencement is dependent on the availability of sub-contracted plant but it is hoped that work will begin in the week beginning 12 July 1993.

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.

R. J. Silvester
6 July 1993

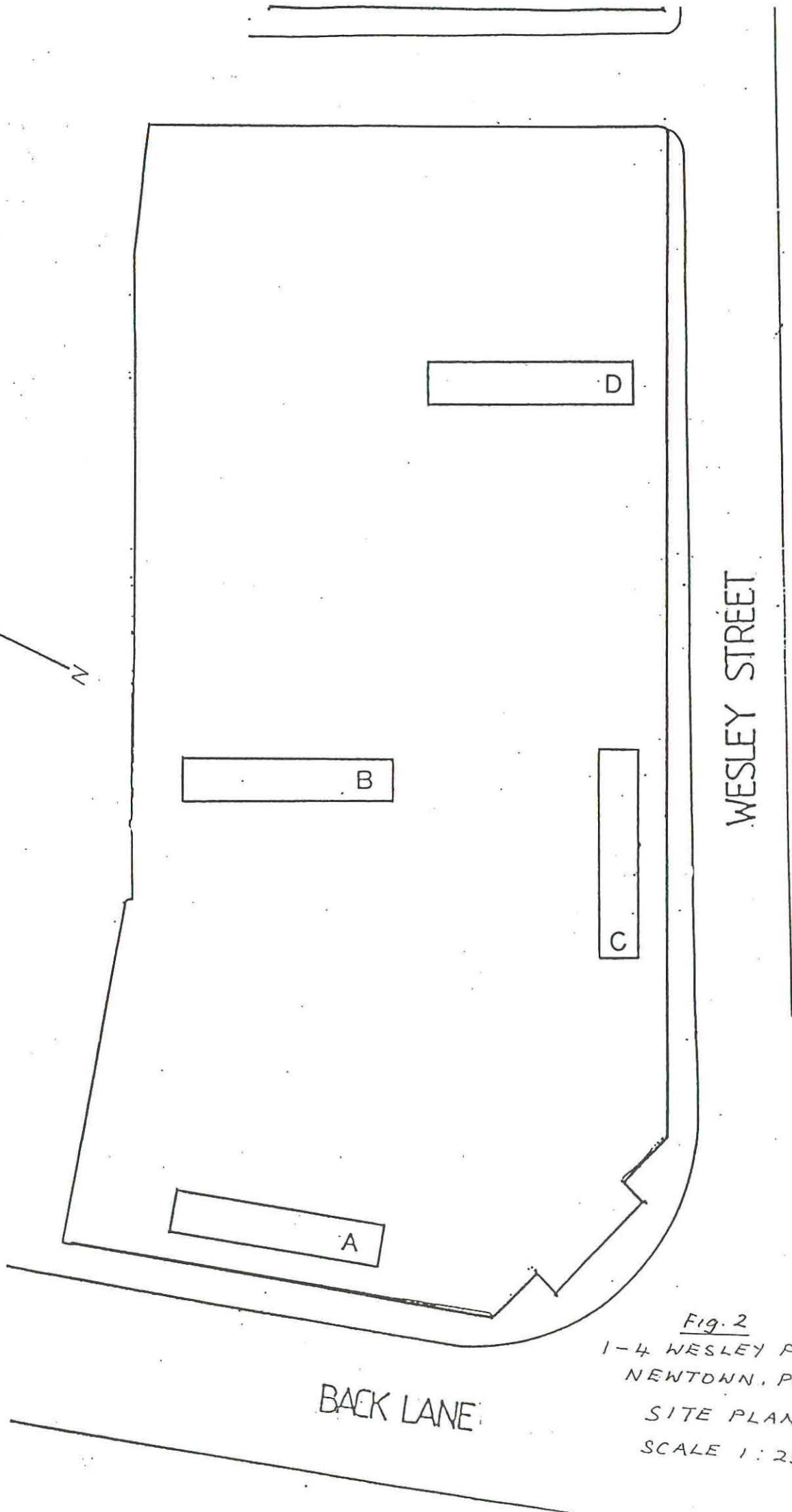


Fig. 2
1-4 WESLEY PLACE,
NEWTOWN, POWYS.
SITE PLAN
SCALE 1:250

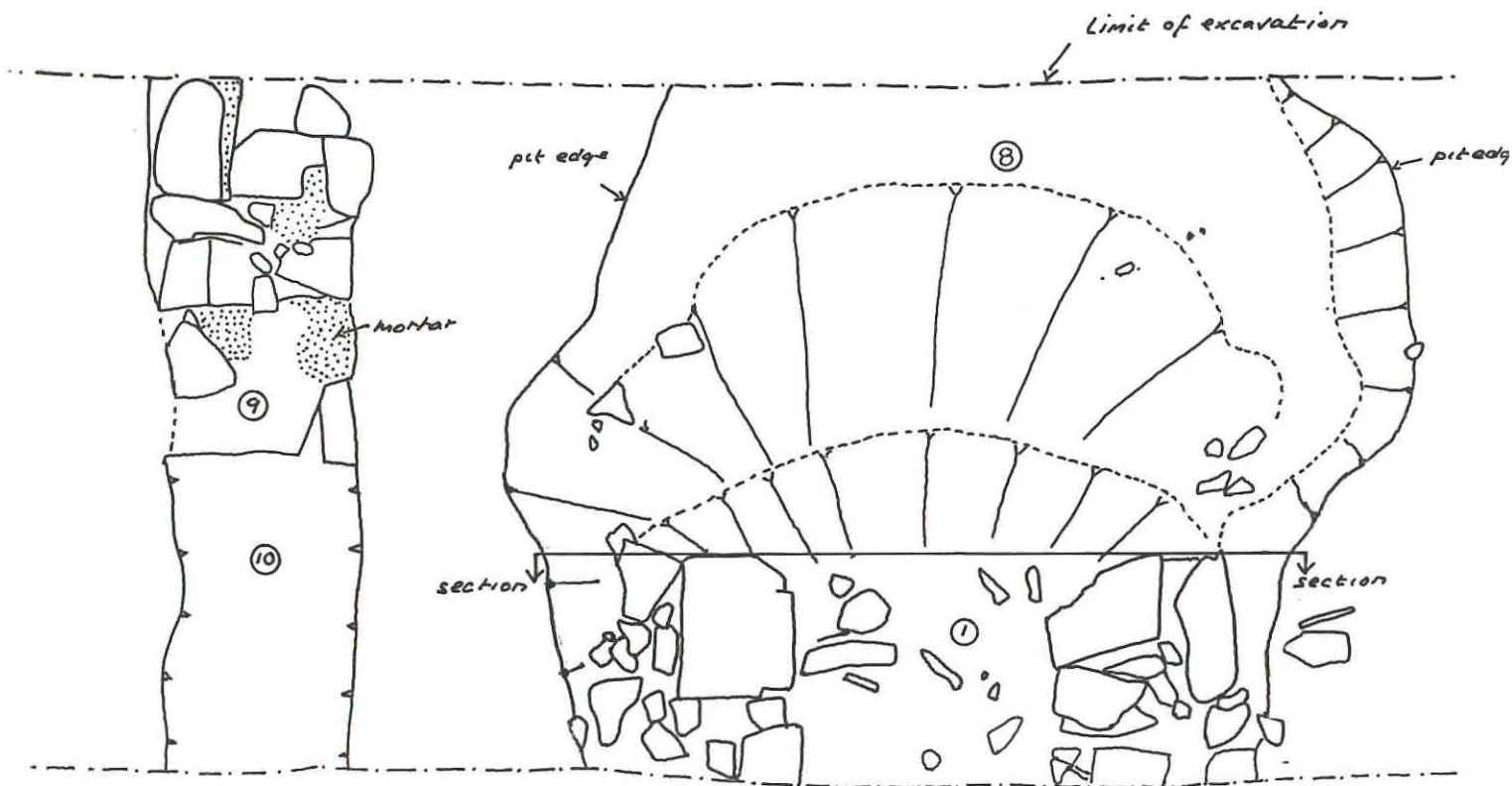


Fig. 3
Plan of part of Trench D
Scale 1:20

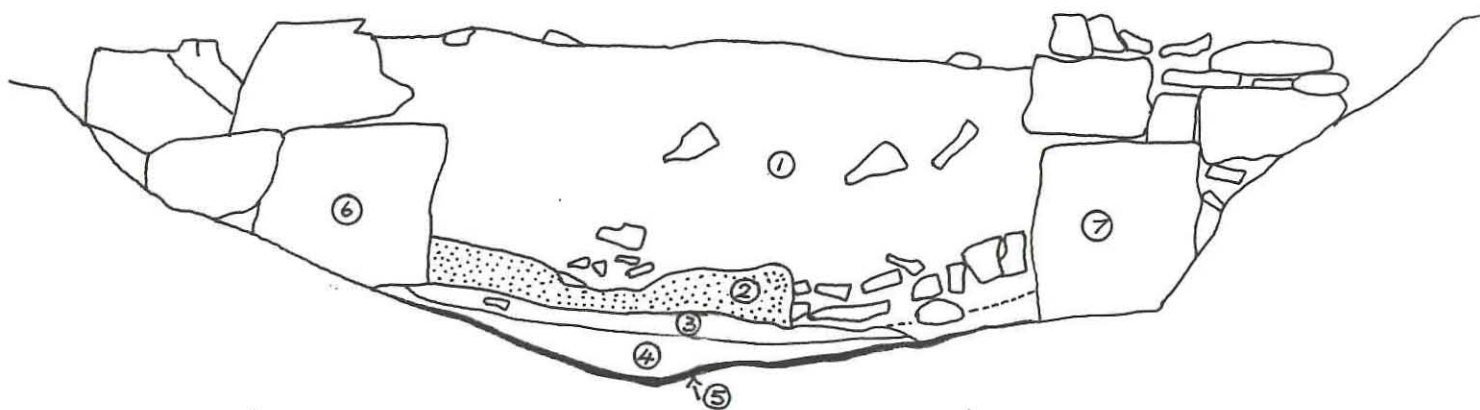


Fig. 4
Section across pit adjacent to
flue
Scale 1:10

- ① Greyish-brown loamy clay containing charcoal, brick + stone fragments
- ② Clean yellow-buff stiff clay
- ③ Greyish-brown clay containing charcoal.
- ④ Burnt clay / charcoal layer.
- ⑤ Burnt stone / charcoal layer
- ⑥ Structural stone
- ⑦ Structural stone
- ⑧ Pit
- ⑨ Foundation course of wall
- ⑩ Foundation trench