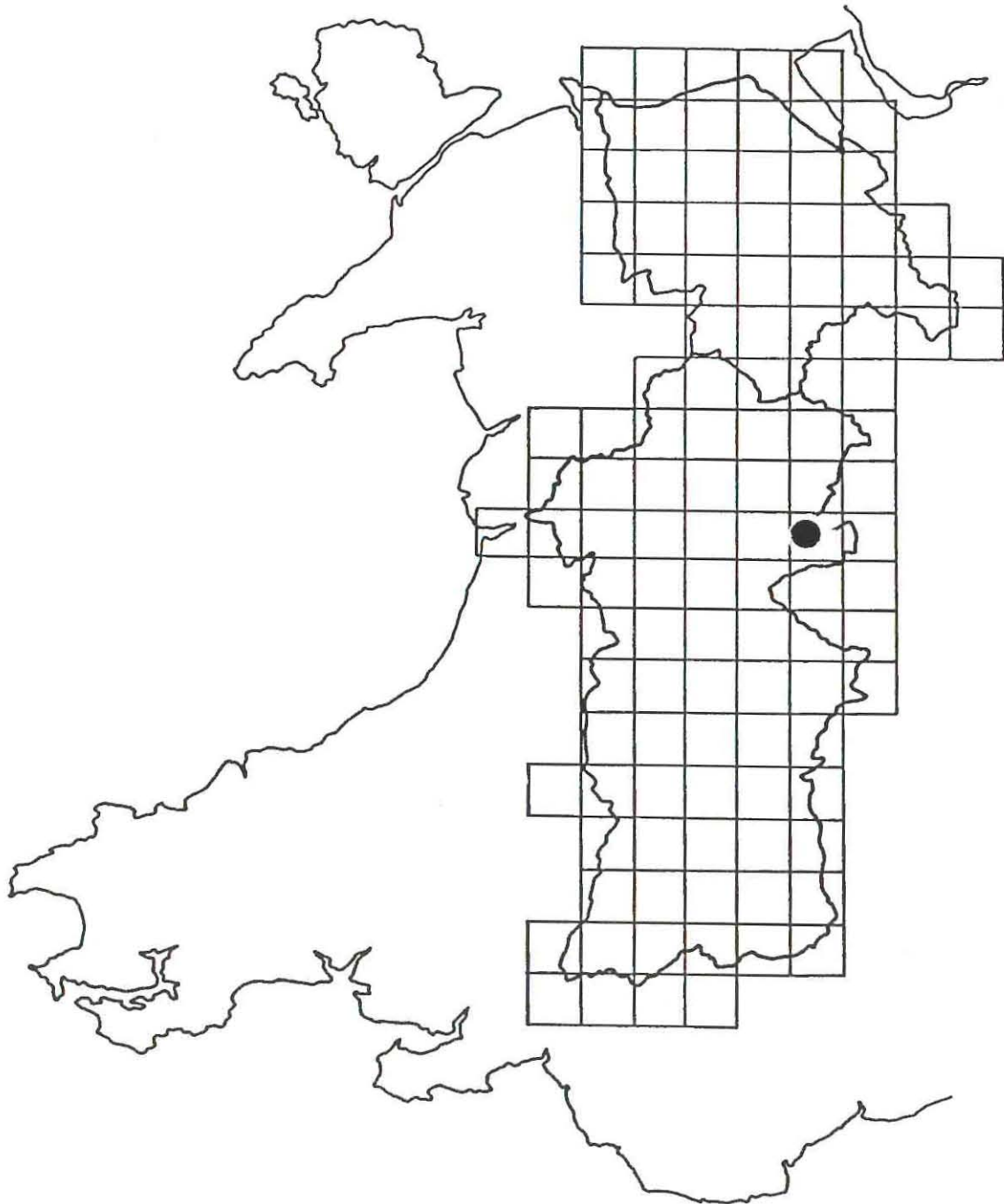


Montgomery, Powys: Electricity Supply I

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION



CPAT Report No 82

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by WG Owen

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Report prepared for Manweb plc

The Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust

7a Church Street Welshpool Powys SY21 7DL

tel (0938) 553670, fax 552179

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Powys Regional Sites and Monuments Record and Cadw/Welsh Historic Monuments were approached by Manweb plc of Sealand Road, Chester with regard to proposals to re-lay underground the majority of existing electricity supply cables in Montgomery, Powys. This was done in order that an appropriate archaeological response to these proposals could be made that reflected the recognition of the importance of the cultural heritage of historic towns in accordance with Manweb's current Schedule 9 statement.

1.2 One part of the route proposed for new cabling and where mole boring techniques would be employed, crossed the medieval defences of Montgomery at three points. Two of these were within the limits of the Scheduled Ancient Monument Mg 23 (Town Bank and Ditches) and another part of the cable route crossed a second scheduled area (Mg 221).

1.3 Cadw/Welsh Historic Monuments therefore requested Manweb plc to engage an archaeological contractor to excavate preliminary trial pits to provide data that would assist them when considering Manweb's application for Scheduled Monument Consent for work on ground subject to statutory protection.

1.4 A brief for a scheme of archaeological evaluation (CPAT EVB59), was prepared for Manweb plc by the Principal Curatorial Officer of the region. This covered the four evaluation pits (Fig 1: Pits 1, 2, 4 and 5) which were in scheduled areas and a further three pits in areas of archaeological sensitivity that were not scheduled (Fig 1: Pits 3, 6 and 7).

2 HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Montgomery was first established in 1223 by Henry III as a planted town and was granted its charter in 1227. The town defences, consisting of a continuous outer ditch and inner bank topped by a stone wall were possibly built soon after the completion of the castle in c 1230 (Soulsby 1983). It has also been proposed that a wooden palisade preceded the wall (Taylor 1947). Within these defences, the basic plan of the medieval town can still be seen in the present-day street pattern and most of the property boundaries shown on early maps such as Speed's map of 1610 can still be traced (Fig 2). This plan also shows that large areas of the town particularly in the northern half were devoid of buildings at that time, possibly indicating a period of decline in the late medieval period (Silvester 1992).

2.2 Previous excavations at three locations within the town walls have yielded valuable information about domestic habitation sites (Britnell & Jones 1989; Gibson 1991; Gibson 1992), whilst at an earlier date, excavations on the Town Wall and Ditch (O'Neil & Foster-Smith 1940) concentrated on the structure of the former defences.

3 THE EVALUATION

3.1 The Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust was commissioned by Manweb plc in October 1993 to undertake a programme of excavation in accordance with specifications submitted to them at an earlier date. This work was carried out between October 27th and November 4th 1993.

3.2 A total of seven evaluation test pits were located in three distinct areas (Fig. 1). Two of these areas were located on the line of the Town Wall

and Ditch whilst a third area was on open ground within the former defences.

3.3 Each test pit was 1.0m square and each was excavated - within the constraints imposed by the size of the pits and by safety requirements - to reveal the minimum depth necessary for mole boring beneath any archaeological deposits encountered at those positions.

3.4 Standard evaluation procedures were used during excavation and all archaeological contexts recorded during the work adopted the standard context system employed by CPAT.

3.5 Trial Pit 1 (S02246 9674; Fig 3)

3.5.1 This trial pit was located on the western side of the counterscarp bank of the former defences and approximately 2.0m south of a gap in the bank. Removal of the turf and topsoil revealed a buff to grey coloured silty clay which, at a depth of 0.60m, overlay the undisturbed, natural subsoil. No features of archaeological interest were recorded and finds retrieved, solely from the upper layers (Contexts 1-3), were all of post-medieval and recent origin.

3.6 Trial Pit 2 (S0 2245 9671; Fig 3)

3.6.1 This trial pit was situated immediately to the east of the masonry boundary wall of the School House grounds and approximately 2.50m west of the base of the counterscarp bank. Thus it was in a position where deposits of the Town Ditch could be anticipated. The uppermost layers as excavated, extending to a depth of approximately 0.35m, (Contexts 1-3) appeared to consist of layers of material deposited which possibly represented the make-up of a trackway said to have existed up to fairly recent times along the line of the ditch in this area. Finds from these layers were all of post-medieval origin.

3.6.2 Below this depth, soil layers, (Contexts 4-7), consisted of clayey silts and clays which, with greater depth, varied from being moderately friable in texture and grey in colour at the upper levels to a stiff, buff coloured clay at a depth of 1.20m. Again, with increasing depth, the stone content of the soil increased markedly and at 1.20m, the stone layer, which included large fragments up to 0.45m in length contained numerous voids in the clay matrix suggesting that this represented the top of a layer of unknown depth consisting mainly of stone rubble. For reasons of safety, excavation did not proceed beyond this depth.

3.6.3 Datable finds showed a 7:3 post-medieval:medieval bias and although there was an increase in the frequency of medieval sherds in the lower horizons (5-7) this is not considered to be significant.

3.7 Trial Pit 3 (S0 2245 9671; Fig 3)

3.7.1 This trial pit was located in the centre of the entrance to Field OS 5673 at its north-western corner. The uppermost layer removed, approximately 0.12m in depth, consisted of a brown humic loam containing quarried stone presumably deposited to make up the ground near this entrance. Immediately below this, a stony, very compact clay, buff to yellow in colour was exposed which represented the undisturbed subsoil. This extended to the lower limit of excavation at 0.50m. Finds were all of modern origin.

3.8 Trial Pit 4 (S0 2238 9675; Fig 3)

3.8.1 This trial pit was located in an open field within the medieval borough (centred at S0 2241 9677). The ground slopes steeply downwards generally from south-east to north-west; the pit was positioned on the north-western edge of a distinct platform close to the south-western boundary hedge of the field. Below the topsoil layer, a fairly homogeneous, dark grey coloured, silty clay soil (Context 2) was exposed which extended to a maximum depth of 0.96m below the ground surface.

3.8.2 Fifteen sherds of medieval pottery were recovered from within this layer. No features of archaeological significance were detected and the sherds were apparently randomly distributed throughout the soil.

3.9 Trial Pit 5 (S0 2235 9617; Fig 3)

3.9.1 This pit was located on a narrow terrace close to the western corner of the same field described in 2.8 above. The ground rose steeply to the south-east and to the north-west the pit fronted on to Chirbury Road. In such a position, it was reasonable to anticipate the presence of medieval settlement features similar to those revealed in previous excavations in this field (Gibson 1992).

3.9.2 Undisturbed, natural stony clay was exposed immediately below the topsoil layers at a maximum depth of 0.34m below the ground surface. No features of archaeological interest were revealed and finds recovered from the topsoil layers were of recent origin.

3.10 Trial Pit 6 (S0 2237 9639; Fig 3)

3.10.1 Positioned on the putative line of the Town Wall some 50m from its south-eastern corner, this trial pit was located on the grass verge on the southern side of Lions' Bank. Removal of the topsoil layer exposed an electricity supply conduit which occupied the southern quarter of the pit. Because of the possibility of damaging it, soil below it remained unexcavated. The contents of the remainder of the pit, extending to the lower limit of the excavation at a depth of 1.00m below ground surface, consisted of a compact, buff-coloured silty clay. This contained sherds of recent pottery, glass and brick fragments distributed throughout, indicating that the clay had been redeposited in recent times.

3.11 Trial Pit 7 (S0 2238 9638; Fig 3)

3.11.1 This trial pit was located on steeply sloping overgrown and derelict land again on the putative southern line of the medieval defences. For the full depth of the pit soils contained material of recent origin. No features of archaeological interest were recorded.

4 CONCLUSIONS

4.1 Two of the seven pits excavated revealed either features or finds of archaeological significance (Pits 2 and 4). Elsewhere, either the level of natural, undisturbed subsoil was encountered before the minimum depth of 0.8m was reached (Pits 1, 3 and 5), or material to this depth was evidently redeposited at a recent date (Pits 7 and 8).

4.2 It is clear that levels excavated in Pit 2 represent successive phases of infilling and silting of the Town Ditch. The lowest level reached, which contained relatively large and randomly dispersed stone perhaps represent either tumble from the adjacent Town Wall or else the demolition or robbing phase that probably occurred in later centuries (O'Neil & Foster-Smith 1940). However, owing to the constraints imposed by safety requirements and the size of the pit, it is acknowledged that this interpretation is speculative.

4.3 Trial Pit 4 was located close to the north-western edge of a distinct platform near the perimeter of the field. Although excavation exposed no archaeological features, the relatively high number of sherds recovered from Context 2 which were exclusively of medieval date, is a strong indicator of activity in that immediate area. This pottery also shows close affinity to the sequence recovered from previous excavations in this field (Gibson, 1992) indicating a 13th-14th century date for this activity.

5 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

5.1 Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust would like to acknowledge the cooperation and kind help of Mr Bob Saunders of Eve Arclive during the course of the evaluation at Montgomery.

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APPENDIX 1: ARCHIVE

1.1 Plans and Sections

Location plan of test pits including OD levels

Section drawings of Test Pits 1-7

1.2 Photographic Archive

35mm colour transparencies of Test Pits 1-7

35mm black and white negative and contact prints of Test Pits 1-7

1.3 Context Records

Record forms describing all recorded contexts.

APPENDIX 2: FINDS

Test Pit 1

Contexts 1-3: post-medieval pottery, 18 sherds
glass, 5 fragments
3 iron nails
animal bone, 2 fragments

Test Pit 2

Contexts 1-3: post-medieval pottery, 1 sherd
clay pipe, 1 stem fragment
1 iron nail
1 iron fragment
animal bone, 2 fragments

Context 4: post-medieval pottery, 1 sherd
glass, 2 fragments

Context 5: late medieval pottery, 2 sherds
1 post-medieval slate pencil

Context 6: post-medieval pottery, 1 sherd
medieval pottery, 1 sherd
glass, 1 patinated fragment
clay-pipe, 1 stem fragment
brick, 1 fragment
animal bone, 3 fragments

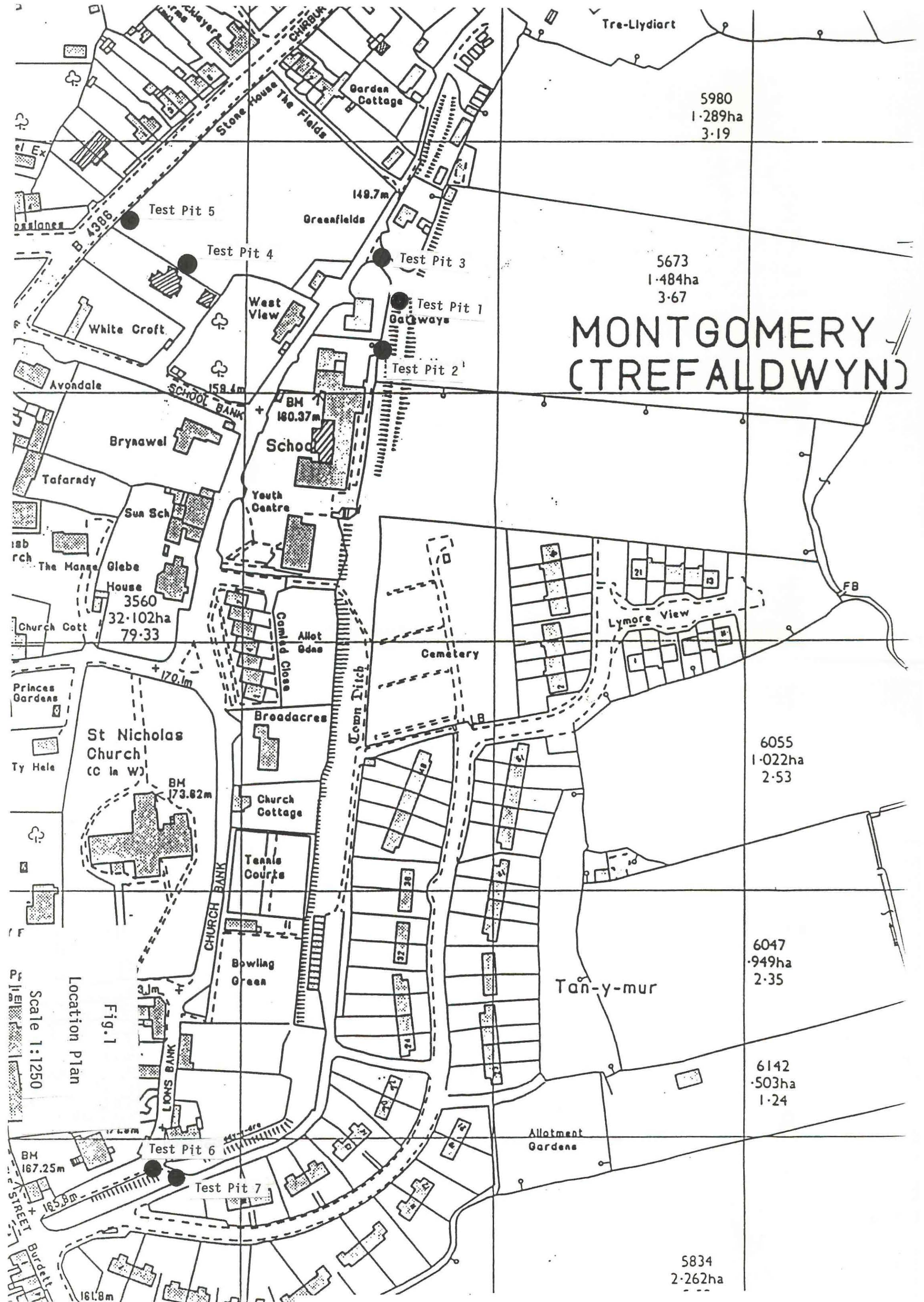
Context 7: 2 iron fragments
animal bone, 6 fragments

Test Pit 4

Context 1: post-medieval pottery, 5 sherds
?medieval pottery, 1 sherd
brick, 1 fragment

Context 2: medieval pottery, 20 sherds
2 iron fragments

N.B. Test pits 3, 5, 6 and 7 yielded only modern artifacts. These were not retained.



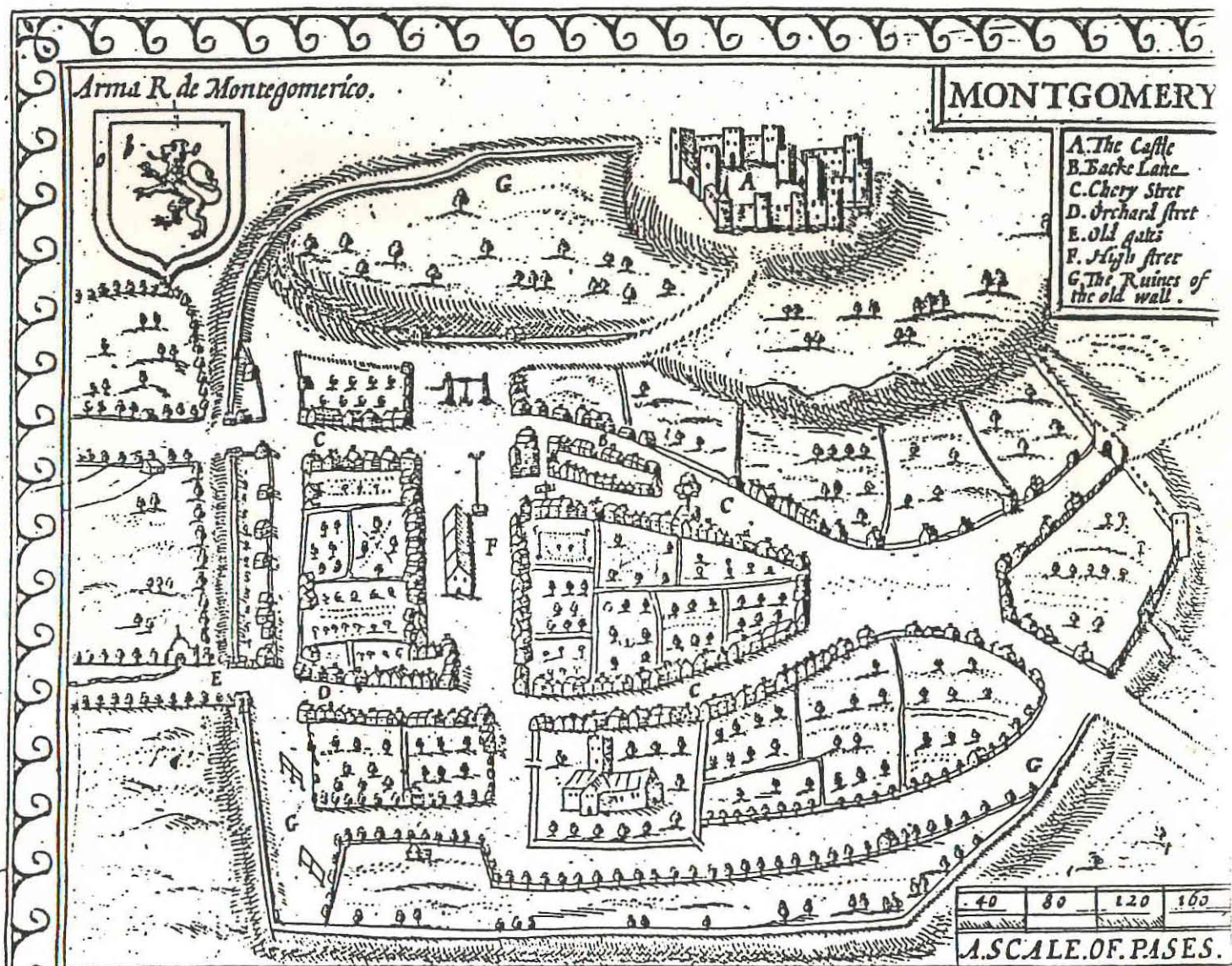
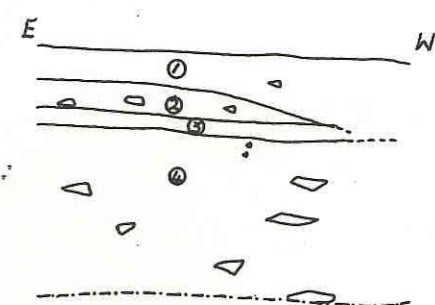
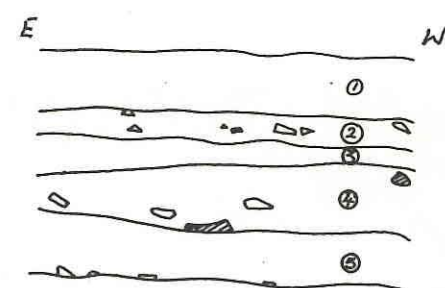


Fig.2

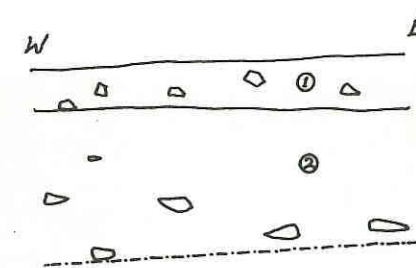
Speed's Map of Montgomery, 1610



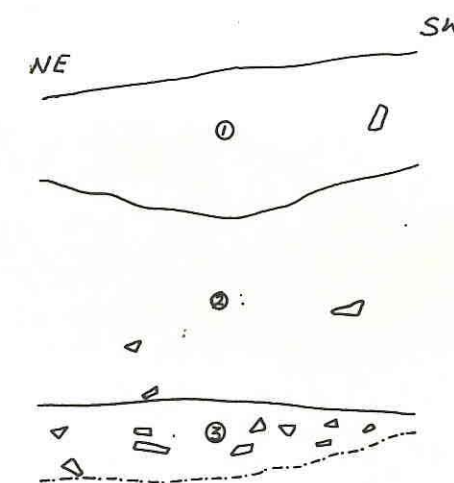
Test Pit 1



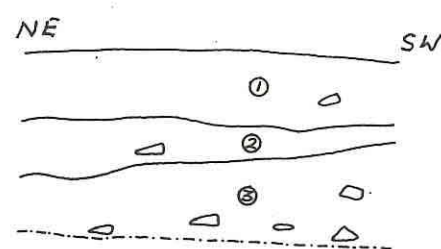
Test Pit 2



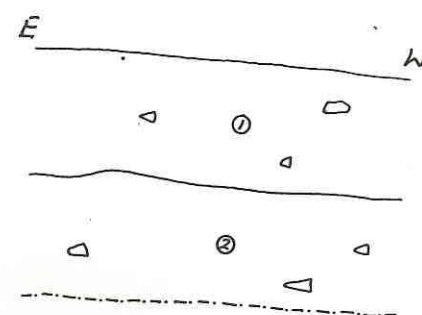
Test Pit 3



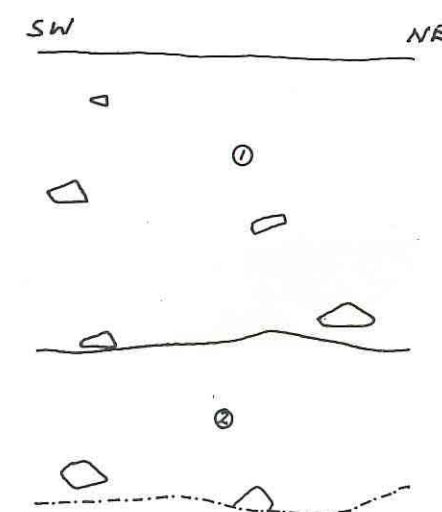
Test Pit 4



Test Pit 5



Test Pit 6



Test Pit 7



Fig.3

Trial Pit Sections 1-7

Scale 1:20