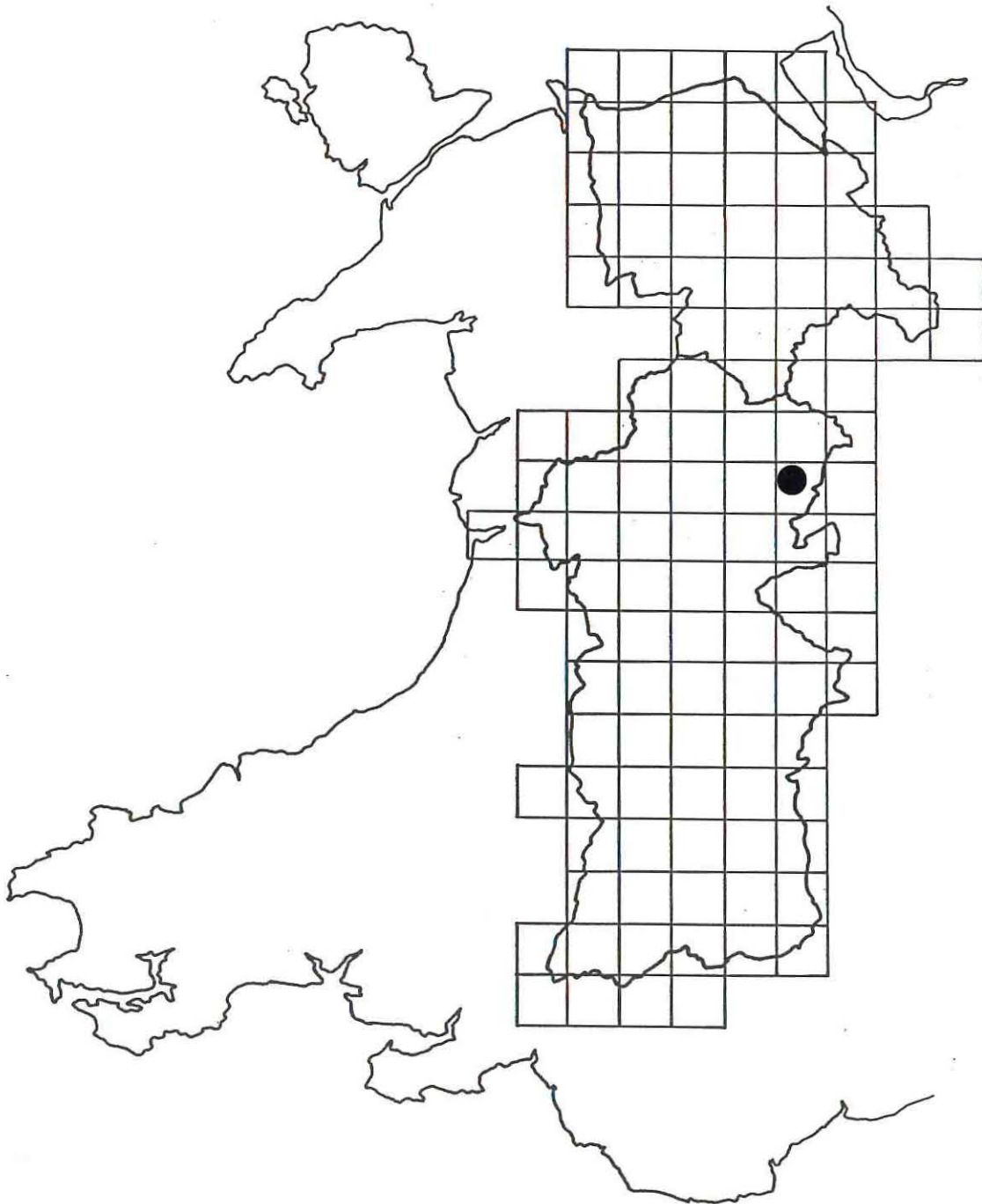


THE CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

*Water Mains Renewal, High Street,
Welshpool, Powys*

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF



CPAT Report No 74

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

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Report prepared for Severn Trent Water

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1 Introduction

1.1 The Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT) was commissioned in February 1993 by Severn Trent Water Limited to undertake a watching brief during the course of water mains renewal work in High Street and Broad Street, Welshpool, Powys. This was in response to recommendations made by the County Sites and Monuments Record, the curatorial section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust, which anticipated that the main rehabilitation trench and the side trenches emerging from it might affect buried structural features, principally relating to the location of the former Market and Town Halls which in the medieval and post-medieval periods occupied positions on Broad Street.

1.2 The watching brief was carried between late April and early July 1993 as the renewal work progressed.

2 Historical Background

2.1 Humphrey Bleaze's 1629 plan of Welshpool (Fig.2) held at the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth, appears to indicate that the Market Hall occupied a central position at the south-eastern end of Broad Street adjacent to its junction with "Llangollein" and "The Church Street" (the present-day Berriew and Church Streets respectively). In 1761, the hall had become so dangerous that it was demolished and the market removed to the Guildhall at the north-western end of Broad Street (Jones *et al*, 1881).

2.2 Bleaze's map shows that the Guildhall, which is also referred to as the Town Hall in other sources (Jones *et al* 1881), occupied a central position on Broad Street opposite the present-day Hall Street. However, this may be an inaccurate depiction as a later map of 1819 (Fig 3) shows its site to have been immediately adjacent to the frontage of the present-day Pinewood Inn and the Pinewood Restaurant, a position which the pipe-trench of the rehabilitation works would cut through.

2.3 In 1796, funds were raised for rebuilding the Town Hall on its present site on the northern side of Hall Street, and this was completed in 1804 with a later enlargement phase in 1873.

3 The Watching Brief

3.1 The pipe trench was, on average, 1.25m deep and 0.5m wide. Side trenches varied both in width and depth according to the depths and dimensions of the existing service ducts and pipes, but did not exceed 1.25m in depth.

3.1 The trench was examined at various points along approximately 240m of its length as work progressed. Particular attention was given to the section, approximately 50m long, in the vicinity of the Town Hall and also to the terminal section of the trench at the south-western end of Broad Street. In addition, some trenches which were cut across the width of Broad Street were examined as were trenches cut laterally to connect the main to existing individual supplies.

3.1 Both the excavated material and the cut sections of the trench were examined as excavation progressed and, where features of possible archaeological significance were encountered, the section was cleaned manually, photographed and a drawn record of the section made.

4 Observations (Fig.1)

4.1 A general observation made within trench sections examined throughout the length of Broad Street and in those sections examined in High Street was that the upper 0.55-0.60m consisted of c.0.20m of tarmac over a concrete and sand/coarse aggregate layer. This represented the make-up of the existing road which was reconstructed in 1975, work which at that time may have removed any existing archaeological levels to this depth.

4.2 Sections of pipe-trench examined in High Street to the north-west of the Town Hall generally appeared to consist of undisturbed subsoil layers below the road-base material. These consisted of layers of yellow or buff-coloured clays and sandy clays frequently intermixed with layers of grey water-washed gravels. No features of archaeological interest were observed in this north-western section.

4.3 In the vicinity of the Town Hall and Hall Street, discontinuous archaeological levels were encountered within the pipe-trench extending for a length of c.8.50m from a point opposite the Town Hall door to a point further to the south-east, some 4.00m beyond the southern corner of Hall and Broad Streets.

4.4 At the north-western end of this section, a 5.60m-long length of brick-based tile-drain, probably of Victorian origin, ran almost parallel to the pipe-trench. This was cut at its south-eastern end by a later pipe-trench beyond which a short length of apparently undisturbed subsoil was cut to a depth below the base of the pipe-trench by a pit or gully. This extended for approximately 2.00m along the trench. Because of the constrictions of the trench the true dimensions of this feature could not be determined. It contained brick rubble and late post-medieval pottery held in a loose, stony clay. Beyond this, from unstratified contexts immediately below the road base material, pottery sherds of 13/14th-century date and of local origin were recovered.

4.5 Further pottery sherds of medieval origin were recovered from material lying under the adjacent pavement in this area at a depth of between 0.54 and 0.70m below the surface of the pavement.

4.6 Observations made on trench sections between this point and the south-eastern end of Broad Street yielded no identifiable features of archaeological interest.

5 Conclusions

5.1 It appears probable that the 1975 road reconstruction works removed levels within which archaeological features could have survived: it is significant that medieval pottery from a reasonably secure context was recovered from a below-pavement position which was undisturbed by these works. Unfortunately, such discoveries were not repeated in other side-trenches largely because of disturbances made during the course of previous service pipe and duct-laying work.

5.2 No structural remains relating either to the medieval Market Hall or Town Hall were uncovered. Again, any surviving remains may have been removed at the time of road reconstruction works or, alternatively, the trenches that were cut did not coincide with their former positions.

5.3 It could not be established whether the pit or gully encountered at the north-western end of Broad Street was directly associated with the former Town Hall. Although it was located in a position that may have coincided with the probable former location of the Town Hall, the late post-medieval pottery sherds recovered from it indicate a later date for this feature.

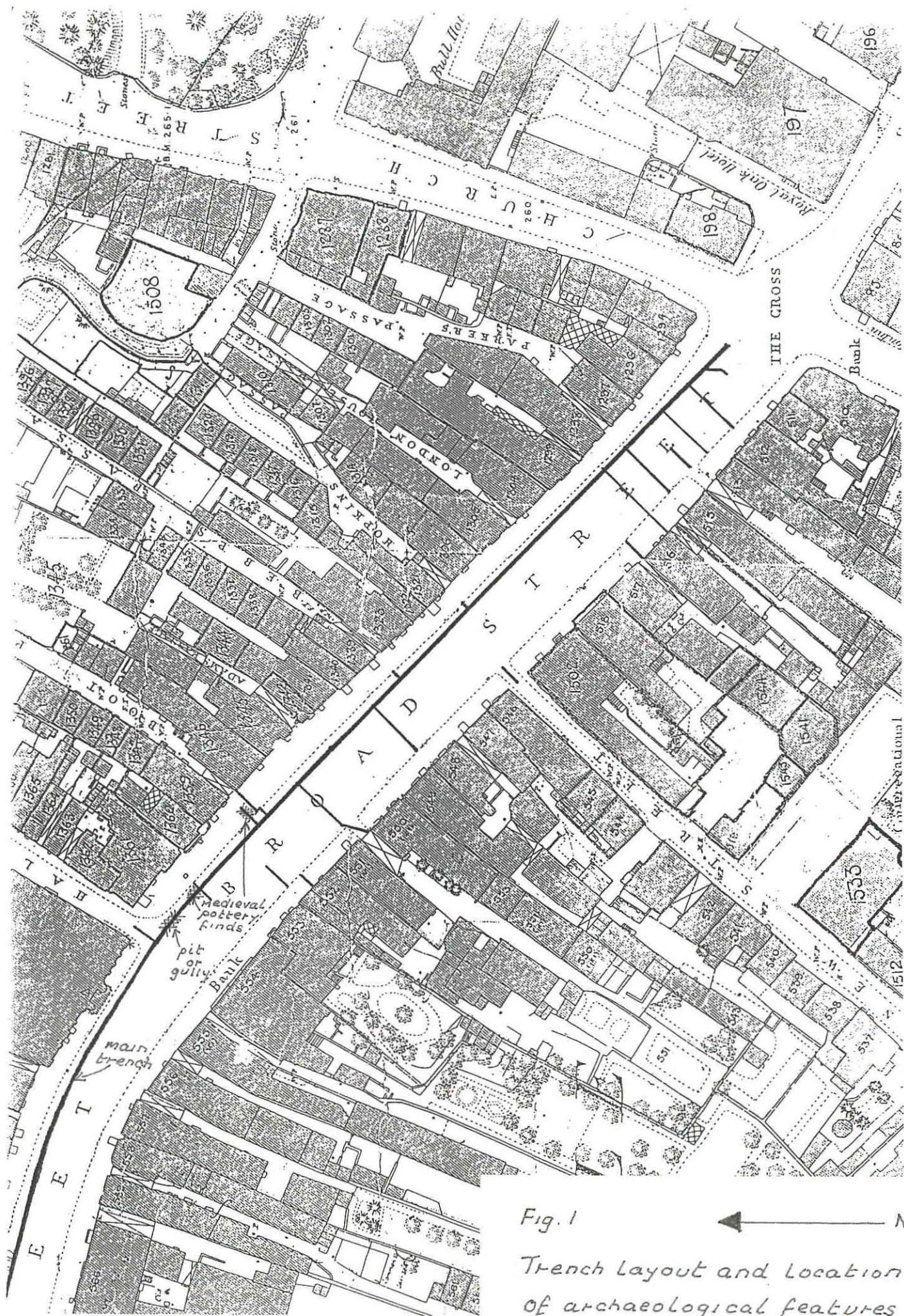
6 Bibliography

Jones, C. et al 1881, 'Welshpool: Materials for the History of the Parish and Borough' Montgomeryshire Collections 14, 172, 184-187, 204-206.

Trant, I., 1986, The Changing Face of Welshpool Powysland Club, Welshpool.

7 Acknowledgements

Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust wishes to acknowledge the assistance given during the course of the watching brief by Mr Tony Bradfield of Severn Trent Water Limited, and by Mr Norman Hine and the construction gang of Eade Pipelines Limited.

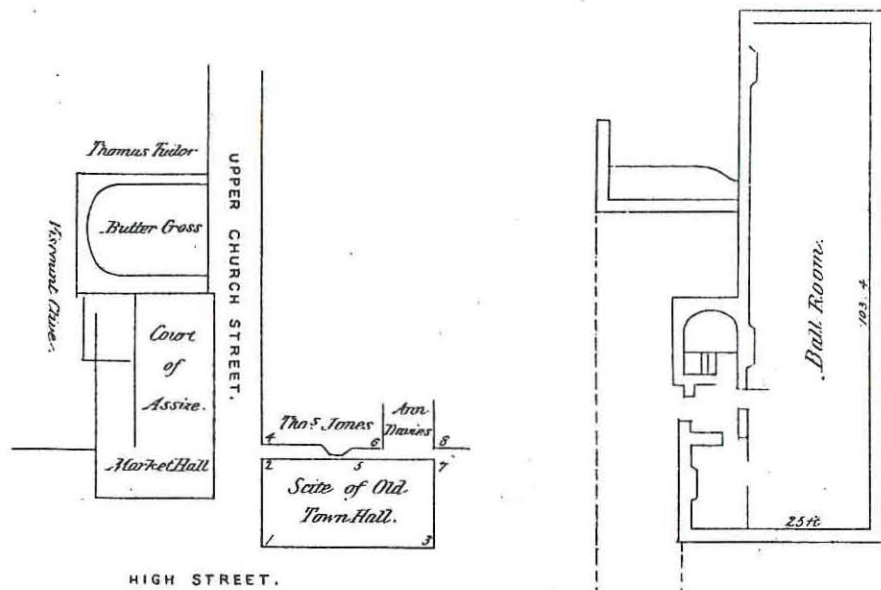


"A MAP OF THE TOWN HALL IN POOL.

WITH THE SCITE OF THE OLD TOWN HALL.

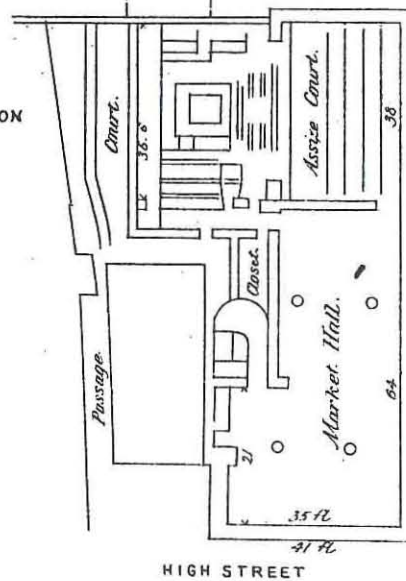
1819."

(SCALE ONE CHAIN TO AN INCH.)



TO THE ABOVE MAP THE FOLLOWING EXPLANATION
WAS ADDED IN 1852.

| | |
|-----------------------------|------|
| Length of Hall from 1. to 3 | 58 |
| Width of Hall " 1 " 2 | 30 |
| Space between 2 and 4 | 5. 5 |
| Space " 4 " 8 | 3. 3 |



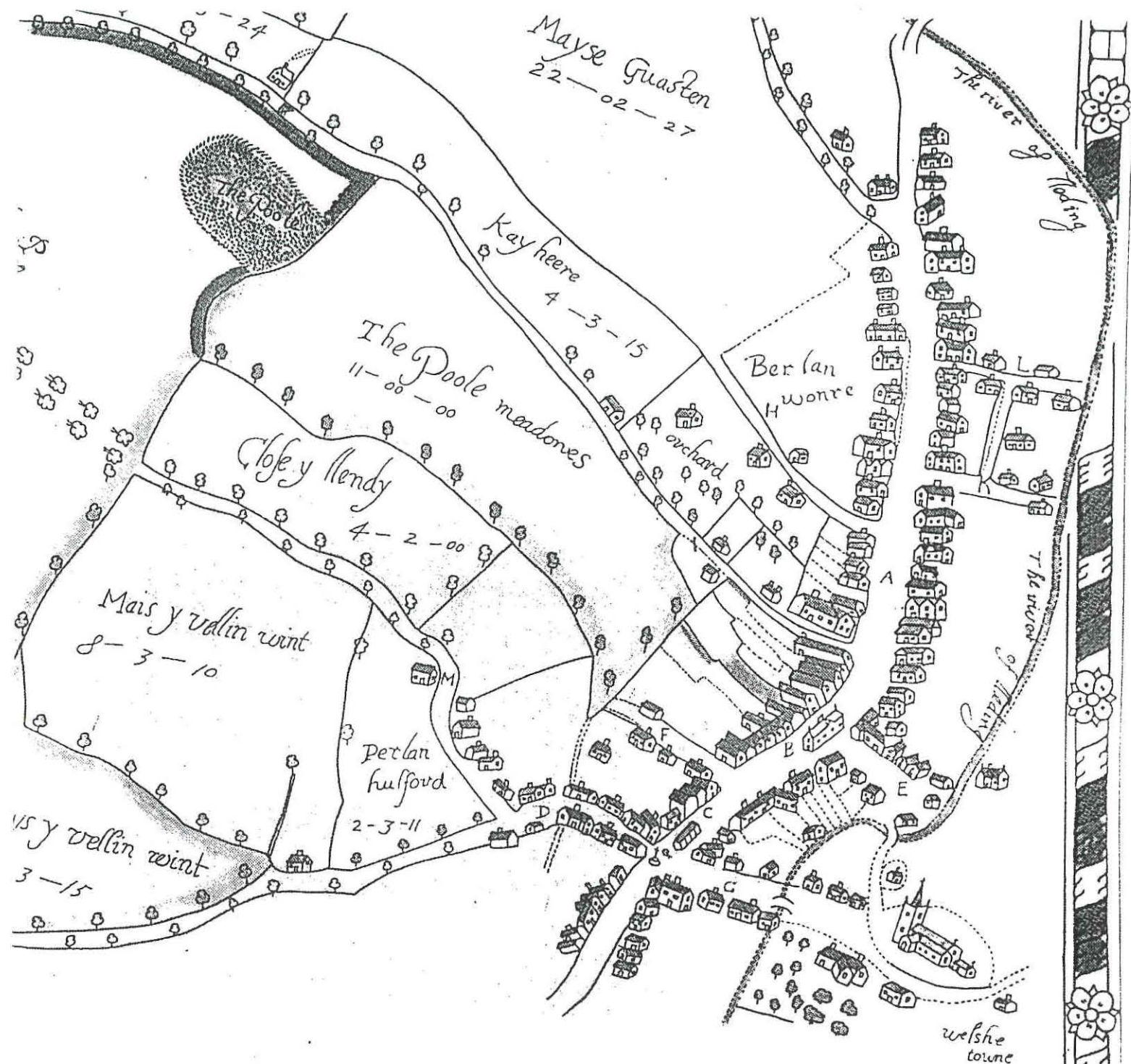


Fig. 2

Humphrey Bleaze's
plan of Welshpool
1629

- A The high street
- B The towne hall
- C The Markethouse
- D Langolline
- E The Churche Lane
- F Seales Lane
- G The Churchestreet
- H Yeokin heane Lane
- I Castle Lane
- K Groyes Lane
- L hasels Lane
- M hulfords Lane