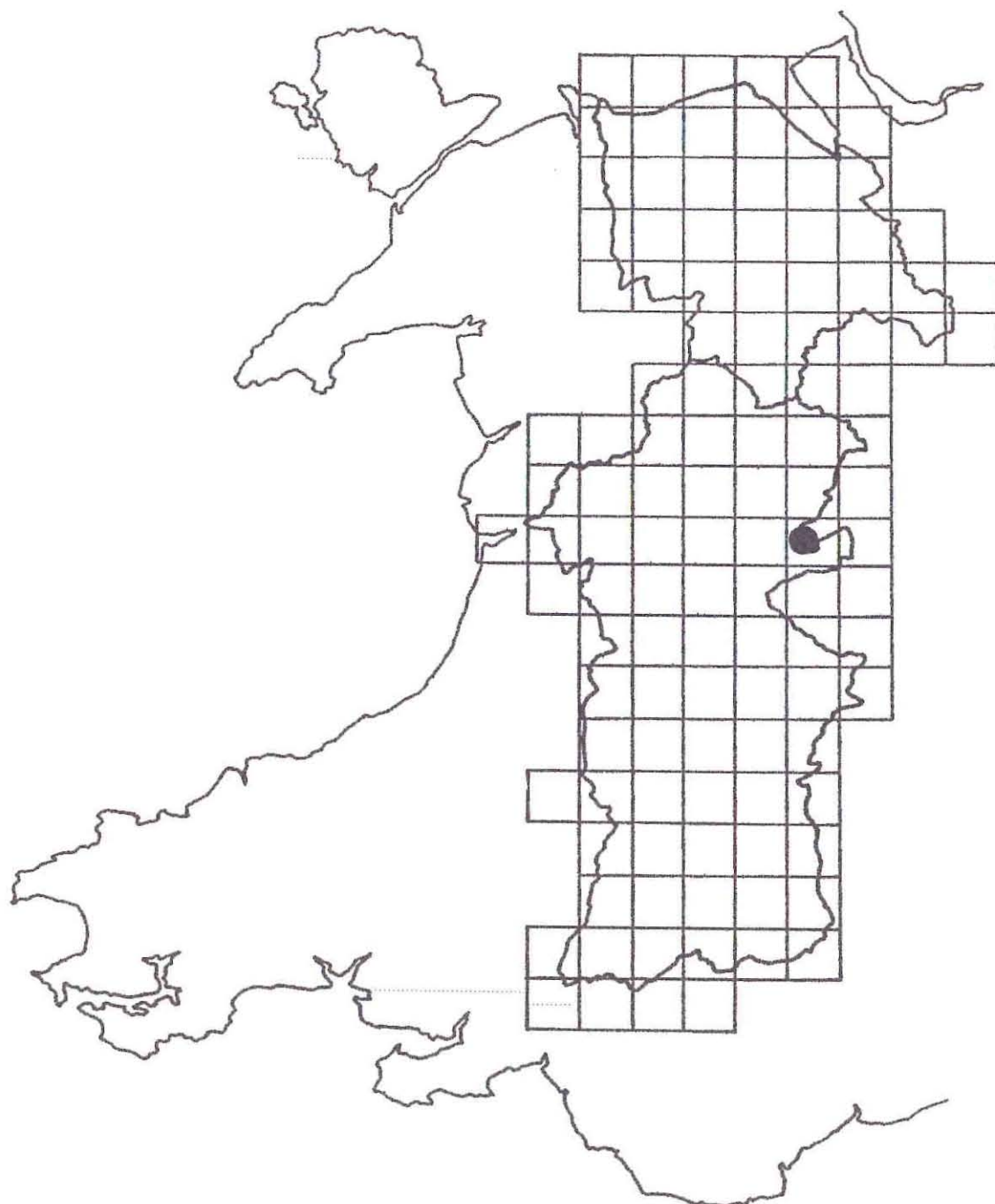


Montgomery, Powys: Electricity Supply II

WATCHING BRIEF



Montgomery, Powys: Electricity Supply II

WATCHING BRIEF

by W G Owen

April 1994

Report prepared for Manweb plc

The Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust

7a Church Street Welshpool Powys SY21 7DL

tel (0938) 553670, fax 552179

© CPAT 1994

UNDERGROUNDING OF ELECTRICITY CABLES, MONTGOMERY, POWYS

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Powys Regional Sites and Monuments Record organised by the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT) 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 reflecting the recognition of the importance of the cultural heritage of historic towns in accordance with Manweb's current Schedule 9 statement.

1.2 Where the route proposed for new cabling entered the limits of areas designated as Scheduled Ancient Monuments a brief for a scheme of archaeological evaluation was prepared by the Principal Curatorial Officer of CPAT to assist Cadw/Welsh Historic Monuments when considering Manweb's application for Scheduled Monument Consent for work on ground subject to statutory protection.

1.3 CPAT were subsequently commissioned by Manweb plc in October 1993 to undertake a programme of work to evaluate by means of trial pits, the archaeological content of locations both within scheduled areas and at other specified points outside these areas. This work was carried out in October/November 1993 and a report presented to Manweb plc (Owen 1994).

1.4 A second brief prepared by the Principal Curatorial Officer specified that a watching brief should be maintained whilst cable-laying was in progress. It was recognised that whereas a full-time presence on site might not be necessary, selective observations should be made at each trench site within the town. It was also recognised that although it was not possible to identify more or less sensitive areas in advance of the scheme, certain specified areas thought to have medieval origins should be highlighted. These areas included Chirbury Road, Arthur Street, Church Bank, Lions Bank, Bishop's Castle Street, Back Lane and the lane connecting the town with the castle. Other areas at Chirbury Gate and Gaol Road might also overlie earlier town deposits and, therefore, warranted examination.

2 HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 The basic plan of the medieval town of Montgomery is still defined in the present-day street pattern and most of the property boundaries adjacent to some of those streets as shown on early maps such as John Speed's map of 1610. Because of Speed's approach to mapping, street widths depicted on this map are, however, approximations.

2.2 Speed's map also shows the line of the Town Wall and Ditch with entrances, all probably gated, at four points along its circuit.

2.3 Apart from the evaluation excavations carried out in November 1993 (Owen 1994), excavations at seven other locations within Montgomery have taken place. Of these, four have been on, or close to, the line of the Town Wall and Ditches (O'Neill and Foster-Smith 1940; Jones & Owen 1988; Gibson 1991; Jones 1992), and three at locations within the medieval town (Britnell & Jones 1989; Gibson 1991; Gibson 1992).

3 THE WATCHING BRIEF

3.1 CPAT was commissioned by Manweb plc in October 1993 to conduct a watching brief in accordance with specifications submitted to them at an earlier date. This work was carried out between late November 1993 and mid-March 1994.

3.2 Cable trenches examined were, on average, 0.60m deep and 0.40m wide with variations according to the existence of other service ducts and pipes. Mole-boring pits examined also varied in depth for the same reasons but also were affected by to the ground contours and other factors specific to particular locations.

3.3 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 and examined in detail.

3.4 Trench sections and bore-holes were examined in the seven general areas:

- Lions Bank/Clawdd-y-Dre
- Bishops Castle Street
- Castle Lane
- Kerry Road/Llandyssil Road
- Arthur Street/Chapel Place
- Chirbury Road
- Gaul Road

4 OBSERVATIONS (Fig 1)

4.1 **Lions Bank/Clawdd-y-Dre.** A trench crossing the road at Lions Bank from a point adjacent to the south-eastern corner of the boundary wall of the Rectory grounds failed to reveal any remnant traces of the Town Wall in this area. Where undisturbed by pre-existing service trenches, apparently natural clay subsoil was cut into at a depth of approximately 0.40m. This layer continued below recently deposited material along the line of a footpath down the steep slope to the south of Lions Bank. It re-emerged below the hedge-line on the south side of the lane at the base of this bank. Where the trench was cut across this lane, material of recent origin was encountered to the full depth of the trench. It is possible to speculate that this material represents the upper horizons of the fill of the Town Ditch and that the Ditch followed the line of the lane in this area.

4.2 **Bishops Castle Street.** Observations made during the course of the excavation of a 65m -long trench extending north from the south-eastern corner of the junction of Back Lane with Bishops Castle Street, failed to reveal identifiable medieval levels. Material excavated contained finds of a late post-medieval or modern date held in extremely mixed soils. No features were observed in the vicinity of the Bishops Castle Street/Back Street junction which could be interpreted as being associated with the line of the Town Wall.

4.3 **Castle Lane.** The trench excavated on the northern side of Castle Lane and crossing the road at a point opposite Rock House revealed no medieval levels and for much of its length soils were severely disturbed by service trenches. Where apparently undisturbed, the predominantly clayey soils contained finds of recent or late post-medieval origin.

4.4 **Kerry Road/Llandyssil Road.** At some point along the length of Kerry Road it was anticipated that some remnant features associated with the Town Wall

and Ditch might be identified. The trench excavated revealed road surfaces and road base material almost to the full depth of the trench and overlying buff-grey coloured, undisturbed, shaley clay. No traces of the medieval defences were found.

4.5 **Arthur Street/Chapel Place.** Soils excavated from trenches contained exclusively post-medieval and recent material. Trench sections examined showed no features of archaeological significance.

4.6 **Chirbury Road.** Approximately 200m of trenches excavated below the pavement on the northern side of Chirbury Road were examined, and were found to follow the line of previously cut service trenches. No features associated with the Town Wall and Ditch or the Chirbury Gate were found. Similarly, the trench excavated in the road adjacent to Clive Terrace followed the line of a previous service trench and, therefore, exposed no significant features.

4.7 **Gao1 Road.** Approximately 70m of trenches were examined in this area. A 4.0m long layer of greyish coloured clay within the trench adjacent to the south-eastern corner of the grounds of Plas Du possibly represented the line of the Town Wall which is clearly visible in this area. However, no material from this layer was identified that indicated conclusively that this clay layer was redeposited and could, therefore, have been associated with the Town Wall.

5 CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Clear evidence that excavated trenches and bore-pits disturbed medieval levels within Montgomery has been notably absent during the course of the watching brief. The lines of trenches excavated and the positions of bore-holes, in many instances, were located where other services had been previously installed. Elsewhere, they were located either where other disturbances had taken place in late post-medieval or recent times, or where modern levels directly overlay undisturbed natural subsoils.

5.2 It is possible that in some areas, trenches were excavated to a depth that did not reach medieval levels that may have existed below more recently deposited material.

5.3 At one location noted above (Para. 4.1), there was indirect and inconclusive evidence of the line of the Town Ditch. Elsewhere, such as at Kerry Road, Bishops Castle Street and Chirbury Road where trenches cut across the putative line of the defences, evidence was lacking for the reasons outlined in Para. 5.1.

6 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

6.1 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 watching brief at Montgomery. Thanks are also due to Mr Arthur Baldwin, Crogbren, Montgomery for his help.

7 BIBLIOGRAPHY

Britnell, J. and Jones, N., 1989 'Pool Road, Montgomery: excavations within the medieval town', Montgomery. Collect., 77, 41-72

Gibson, A., 1991 Bunner's Yard. Montgomery. Powys, CPAT Report No 17 (Welshpool)

Gibson, A., 1991 Archaeol. in Wales 31, 49-50

Gibson, A., 1992 Westmead and adjacent plot. Montgomery. Powys, CPAT Report No 23 (Welshpool)

Jones, N. and Owen, W., 1988 Archaeol. in Wales 28, 73

Jones, N., 1992 Archaeol. in Wales 32, 84

O,Neil, B.H. St J. and Foster-Smith, A. H., 1940 'Montgomery Town Wall', Archaeol. Cambrensis 95, 217-228

Owen, W.G. 1994 Montgomery. Powys: Electricity Supply 1, CPAT Report No 82

Reproduced from the Ordnance Survey's
map of 1976 with the permission
of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office.
© Crown Copyright.

The Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust
7a Church Street, Welshpool, Powys, SY21 7DL
Licence No AL 50529A

Reproduced from the Ordnance Survey's
map of 1976 with the permission
of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office.
1:2500
© Crown Copyright.

The Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust
7a Church Street, Welshpool, Powys, SY21 7DL
Licence No AL 50529A

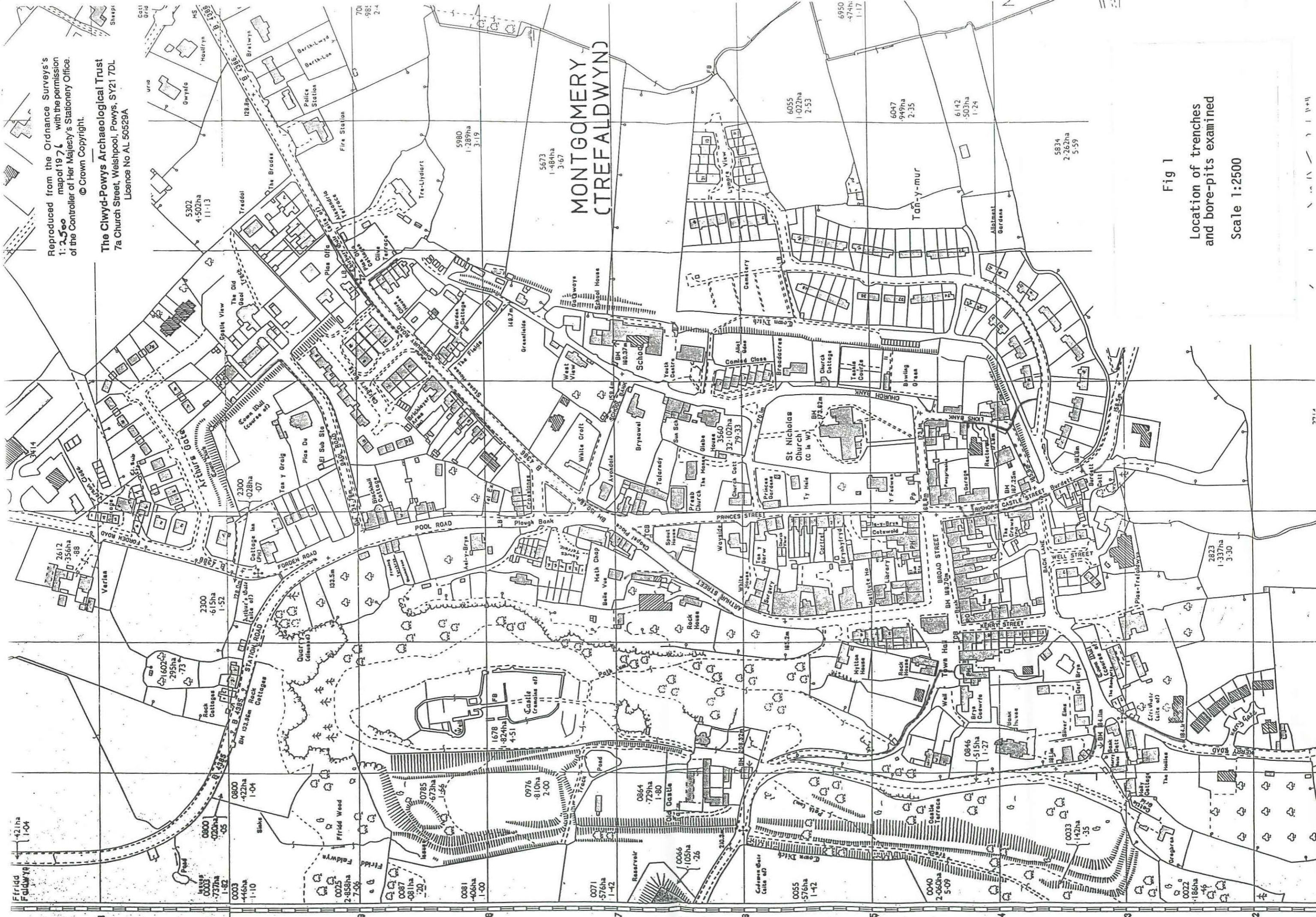


Fig 1
Location of trenches
and bore-pits examined
Scale 1:2500

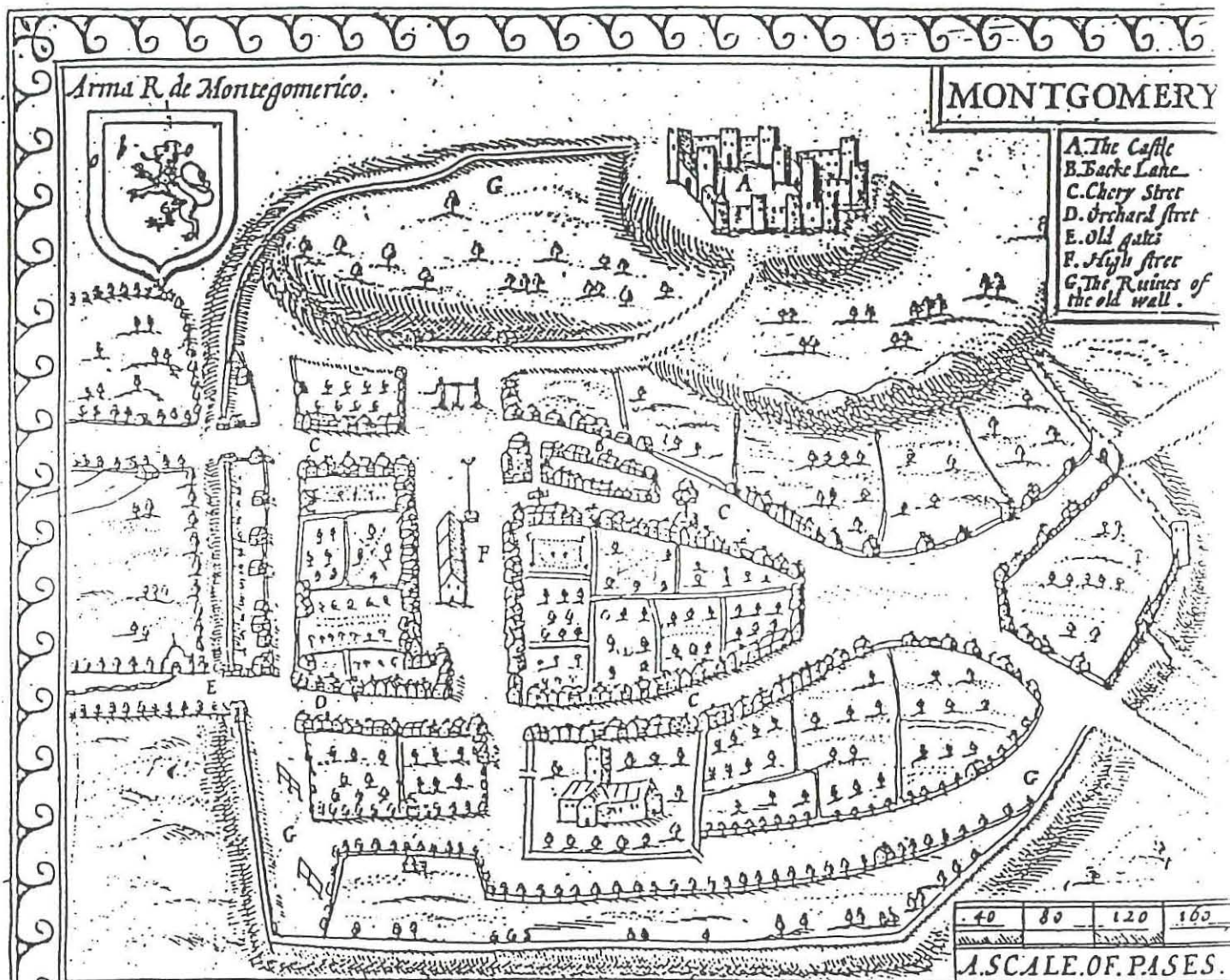


Fig.2

Speed's Map of Montgomery, 1610