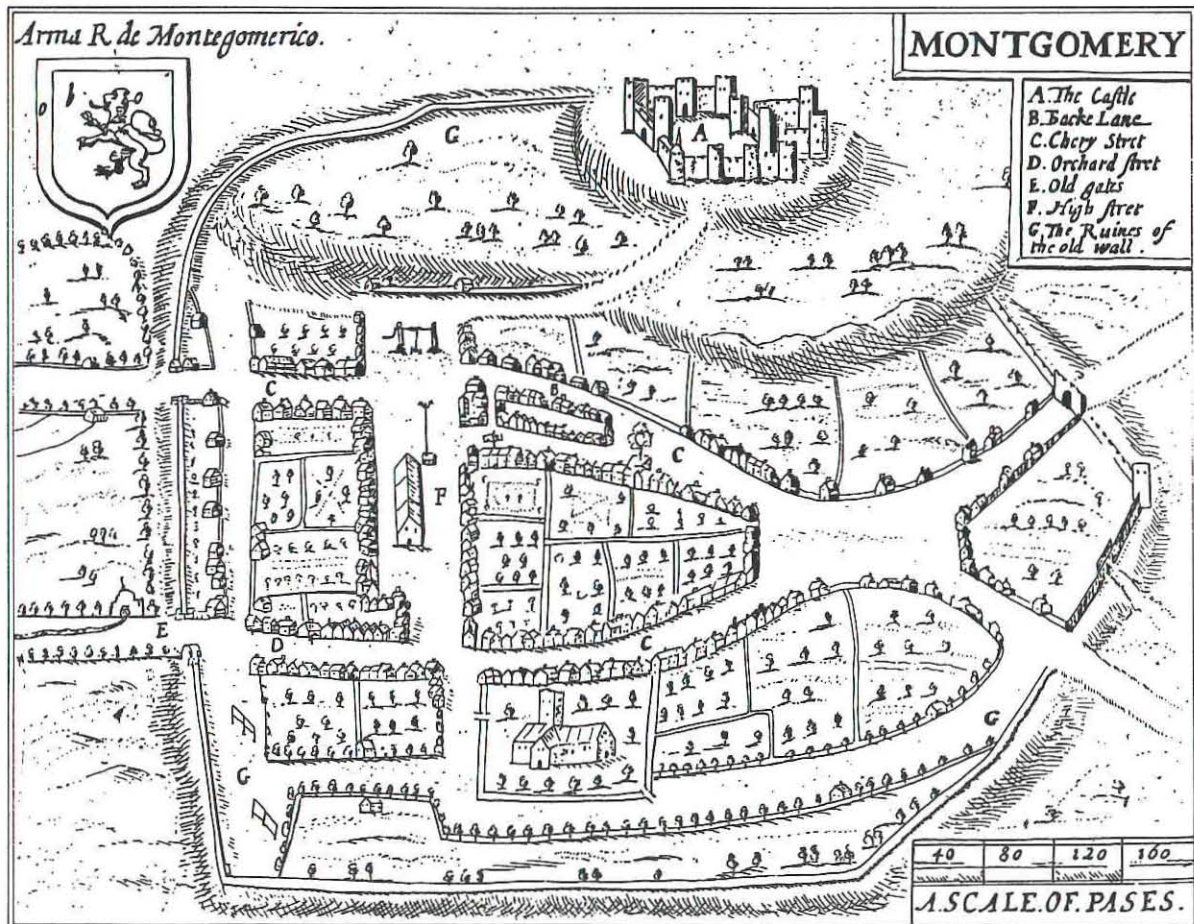


Plas Du, Montgomery, Powys

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION AND WATCHING BRIEF



CPAT Report Record

Report and status

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Plas Du, Montgomery, Powys
ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION AND WATCHING BRIEF

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November 1996

Report for Dr P. Ashton

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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report details the results from a series of small excavations and watching briefs conducted following an initial phase of investigation on the town wall and corner tower (Jones 1995). At a site meeting with Dr Sian Rees on 8th November 1995, it was decided that further field evaluation work was required in order that the archaeology of the area of the corner tower be more clearly understood. This was seen to be necessary in order that a basis for the reconstruction of the tower could be determined.
- 1.2 This followed the discovery of a line of coursed stonework on the eastern side of the tower mound by Mr Arthur Baldwin during the course of the early stages of reconstruction in November 1995. As part of the watching brief this was further investigated when it seemed possible that this represented a surviving part of the medieval tower, the base of which, at the northern end, was apparently built into the rampart bank. It was also hoped that a relationship could be established between this wall, the later tower and large foundation stones previously identified on the northern side of the tower (Jones 1995).
- 1.3 The Contracts Section of CPAT were therefore requested to submit a quotation and specification to Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments to carry out the work. Subsequently CPAT was commissioned to undertake the evaluation which commenced in June 1996.

2 THE EVALUATION

- 2.2 As discussed at the time of the site meeting (Paras. 1.1, 1.2), the eastern and south-eastern sides of the tower were investigated to establish, if possible, the extent of surviving structural elements of the earlier tower. In addition, the western side of the tower was investigated to determine whether or not elements of the medieval wall existed in this area. Also, evidence of the line of the presumed medieval town wall uncovered by Mr Arthur Baldwin was recorded in three areas (Fig. 1, A-C).

3 THE TOWER AREA (Fig. 2)

- 3.1 On the eastern side, excavation was limited by the constraints imposed by the proximity of surviving parts of the later tower. However, sufficient space was available to trace the surviving extent of the earlier tower wall and its footings, the exterior of which was excavated to its full depth by the removal of displaced stone from the later tower which was contained in a brown, loose, loamy matrix overlying the much firmer yellow-buff coloured silty clay of the bank (9). A single clay pipe stem fragment was recovered from this interface indicating that the later tower was of post-medieval origin.
- 3.2 The external surviving *in situ* masonry of the earlier tower consisted of a length of curving horizontally-coursed, clay-bonded stonework (15) with some surviving evidence that the external face had originally been rendered (A. Baldwin pers. comm.). The wall was evenly battered to its surviving height of 1.04m and extended to the north for a total length of 1.10m beyond which it did not survive except at the level of its footings. These consisted predominantly of larger stone bedded horizontally into the clay bank material and which were seen to curve along the base of the tower to the north in a discontinuous arc as far as (17). Beyond this point a clear and continuous line was not apparent. Limited excavation within the line of the basal footings demonstrated that at this level the clay bank material appeared to have been cut away to form a horizontal platform upon which the tower had been constructed. At the western corner of the tower, loose stone was removed to this level which continued to a point where bank material rose steeply up to the linear wall (18) previously exposed. No trace of *in situ* tower wall masonry similar to that at the eastern end representing the possible medieval phase of construction was seen following removal of stone in this area. This stone, from the evidence of the many voids present and the darker coloured silty matrix in which it was contained, was clearly unstructured and was interpreted as representing tumble from upper levels of the tower and the linear wall.
- 3.3 Excavation exposed approximately 5.5m of the basal courses of post-medieval boundary wall (18) which approached the tower from the south-west. The south-western half of the wall as far as the large *in situ* stone (22) was approximately 2.7m long, of maximum height 0.40m, and rested directly

on the stiff yellow clay of the bank material. Overlying this on the south of the wall, a darker, loamier soil had been dumped against the wall. Immediately adjacent to stone (21) there was a gap (22), 0.43m wide in the wall; otherwise it was continuous. There was no evidence of a foundation trench. Up to (21), the wall was slightly curved but beyond this point the remaining 2.5m which rested on platform material followed a straight course and appeared to be of a slightly different build possibly indicative either of a later phase of construction or repair (A. Baldwin pers. comm.).

- 3.4 At the south-eastern end of the tower, a short length of wall (16) extended at right angles to the east facing wall. Excavation showed this to be a structural part of the latter, of the same height, and that it did not continue beyond a distance of 0.42m to the east. It is possible that beyond this point it may have been demolished at the time of the construction of the later wall. In contrast to the east-facing wall which was battered, component stones appeared to be in a vertical line and it was clear that the wall which was one course thick was constructed against cut-away bank material.
- 3.5 Excavation to the south of this stub wall involved the removal of brown, loamy soil of recent origin which overlay a stiff buff-yellow silty clay which sloped gradually to the south. This was interpreted as representative of the upper level of the inner face of the bank. Excavation also revealed a linear stretch of uncoursed stone (19) extending 1.60m from the eastern corner of the tower to the south-west which may have defined the surviving edge of the tower in this area.
- 3.6 Excavation of the platform material within the surviving elements of the tower wall and footings was limited to a small area immediately adjacent to the east-facing wall and was carried out to determine whether or not the wall consisted of a single layer of masonry or was more substantial. It was seen that the wall was single-layered that core material (20) consisting of stone contained in a buff-coloured clay was not bonded to the wall and there appeared to be an element of layering of the core material. This appeared to be confirmed at a later stage when reconstruction work was proceeding in this area.

4 THE TOWN WALL

- 4.1 During the course of the reconstruction of the modern boundary wall to the west of the tower, the line of the medieval town wall was uncovered in three areas by Mr Arthur Baldwin (Fig. 1, areas A, B and C). This was defined by the line of the northern, external footings of the wall which consisted of single courses of unmortared stone (23-25) resting on bank material. In Area C, recent overburden and loose stone was removed from the area between the footings and the reconstructed modern wall exposing masonry which showed some evidence of coursing. No dating evidence was recovered from here but it seems likely that it represents surviving elements of the demolished medieval town wall.

5 CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 The wall exposed at the south-eastern corner of the tower (15 and 16) and the arc of footings extending from here across the front of the tower as far as 17 are regarded as representing the only remaining elements of the external wall of the medieval tower base. It would appear that the tower base was composed of a solid dump of stony clay forming a platform for the tower within the confines of the externally faced masonry. No evidence of the tower superstructure survived. In addition, although the evidence is inconclusive, the line of stone at the back of the tower (19) may represent the edge of the tower in this area. Elsewhere, the masonry of the external wall of the earlier tower appears to have been robbed. Sufficient remained, however, to propose a radius of 2.20m for the outer face of the tower reconstruction.
- 5.2 The short stub wall (16) extending from the south-east corner of the early tower was investigated but this appeared to have been demolished or robbed possibly at the time of the construction of the later wall. Its implications for the defences situated along this side could not, therefore, be determined.
- 5.3 The three lines of stone exposed along the line of the town wall are interpreted as the northern external footings of the latter and are those described by O'Neil (O'Neil and Foster-Smith 1940, 225-226).

- 5.4 The features summarised in 5.1-5.3 can reasonably be interpreted as being of medieval origin and representative of the town wall and tower depicted in Speed's map of 1610 despite the fact that no firm evidence, particularly finds from secure contexts, were discovered to confirm this.

6 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 6.1 CPAT wishes to acknowledge the kind help and valuable contributions made by Dr Peter Ashton and Mr Arthur Baldwin during the course of the project.

7 REFERENCES

Jones, N.W., 1995, *Plas Du, Montgomery, Powys: Archaeological Evaluation*. CPAT Report 153.

Nicholson, N., & Hawkyard, A., 1988 *The Counties of Britain: A Tudor Atlas* by John Speed.

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

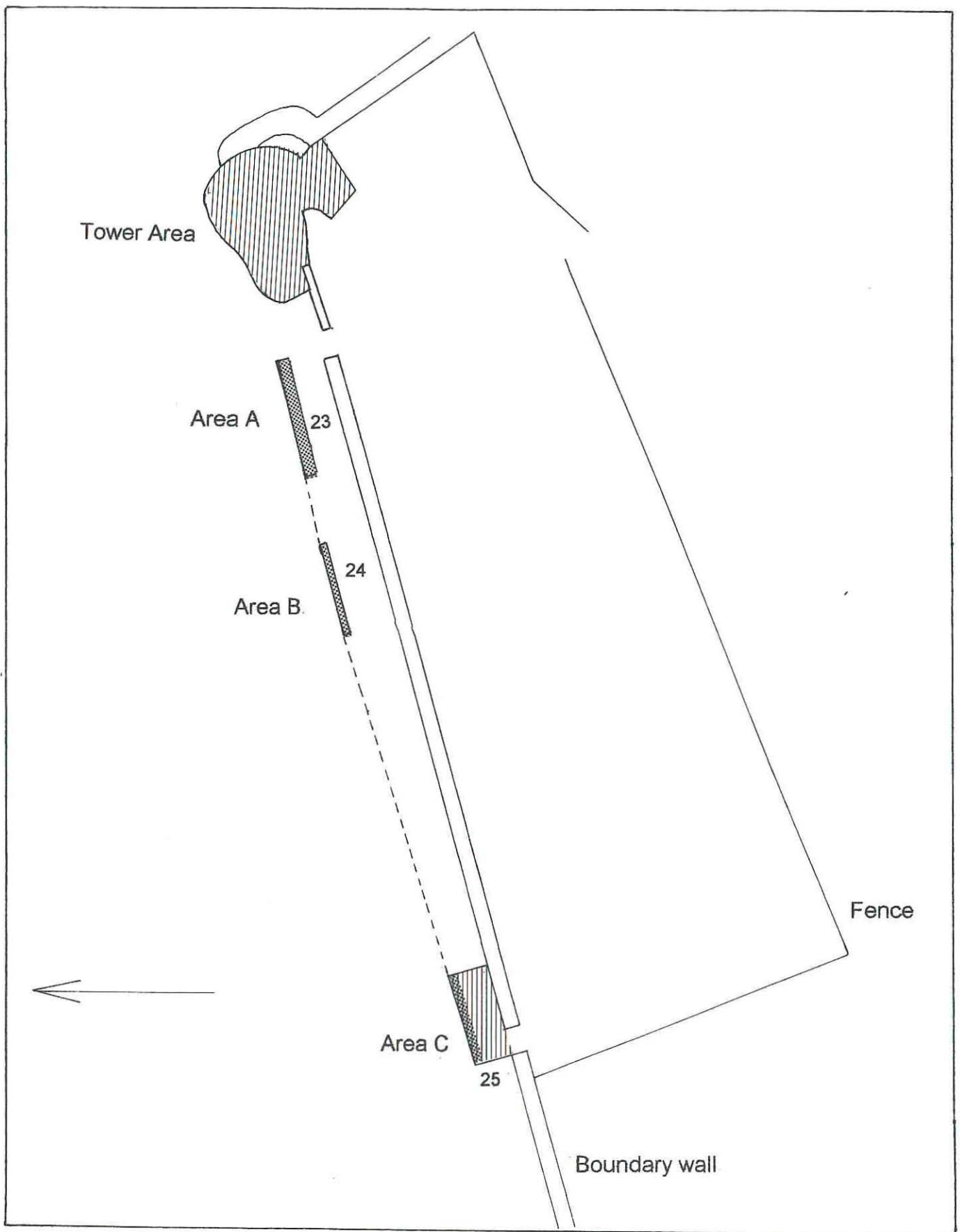


Fig 1
Site Location Plan
scale 1:200

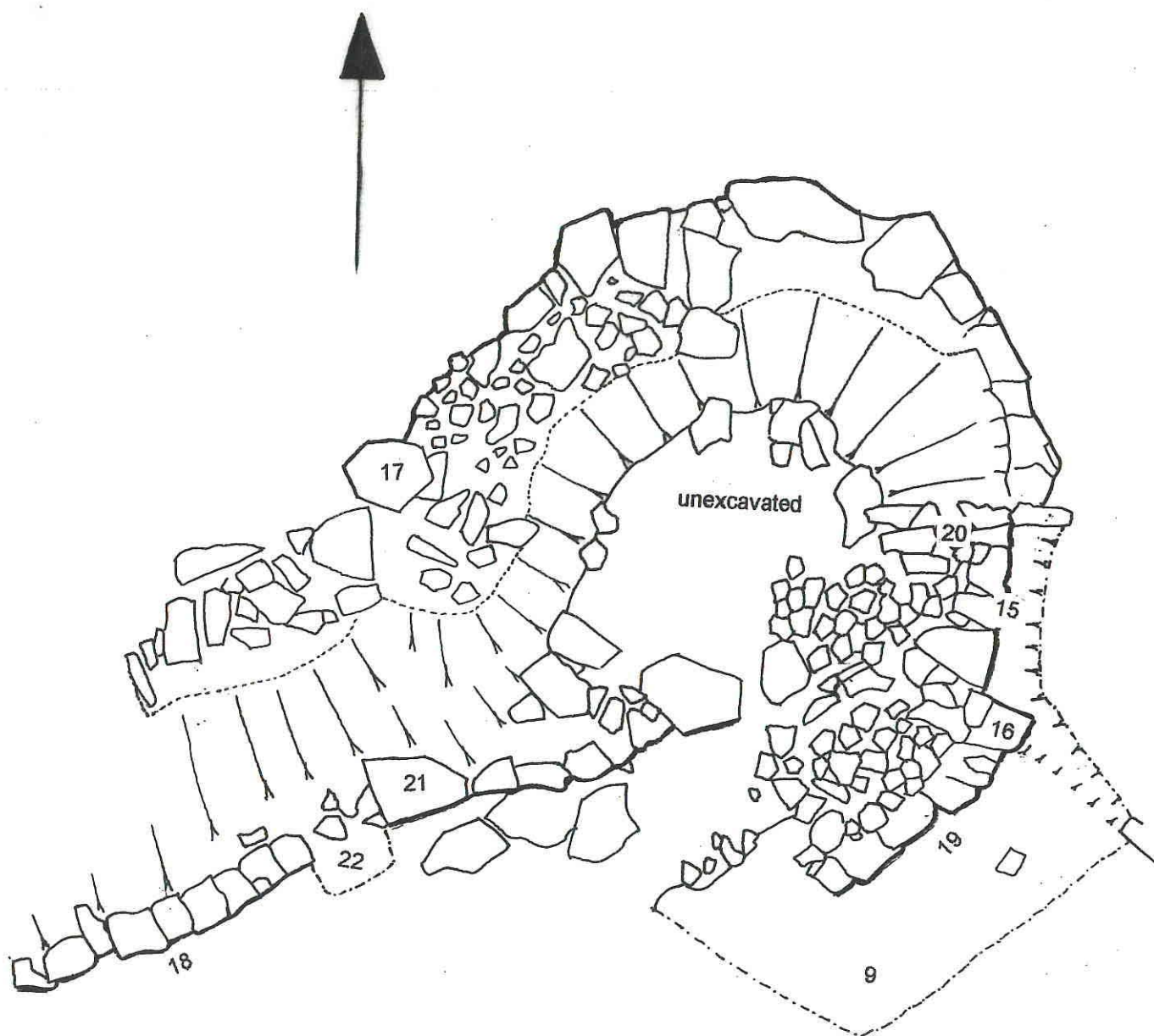


Fig 2

Plan of excavated area

Scale 1:50

APPENDIX 1
SITE ARCHIVE

Site data

25 context record forms

1 A4 site plan 1:200

1 A4 plan of excavated area 1:20

Black and white negative film, contacts and archive prints

Colour slide film

Photographic archive

Finds

7 sherds of Post-medieval pottery from contexts 2 and 5; not retained

1 clay pipe stem fragment from base of context 5

APPENDIX 2**MONTGOMERY TOWN WALLS: ARTHUR'S GATE/PLAS DU****SPECIFICATION FOR AN ADDITIONAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD EVALUATION
BY CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST****1 Introduction**

- 1.1 The proposed works on the town walls of Montgomery which currently form the boundary between Arthur's Gate and Plas Du involves renovation and reconstruction of the existing wall surmounting the rampart.
- 1.2 Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments in their capacity as archaeological advisers to the Secretary of State for Wales had determined that an archaeological assessment should be a condition of Schedule Monument Consent, and this work was undertaken by CPAT during September 1995. Following a site meeting with Dr Sian Rees on November 8th 1995, it was agreed that further work was needed to fully understand the archaeology in the area of the corner tower and provide a basis for determining the form of the tower reconstruction.

2 Objectives

- 2.1 The objectives of the evaluation are:
 - 2.1.1 to reveal by means of an extension to the existing evaluation trench the nature, condition, significance and, where possible, the chronology of the archaeology within the area of the corner tower in so far as these aims are possible;
 - 2.1.2 to record any archaeology revealed in the evaluation trenches;
 - 2.1.3 to prepare an appendix to the existing report (CPAT Report No 153) outlining the results of the field evaluation and incorporating sufficient information on the archaeological resource for a reasonable decision to be taken regarding the archaeological provision for the area affected by the proposed reconstruction.

3 Methods

- 3.1 Following the discovery of surviving medieval walling belonging to the corner tower, the exterior and interior will be further investigated in an attempt to establish the relationships between this tower, the later tower and the large foundation stones previously identified. The short stub wall attached to the east side of the medieval tower will be further investigated to examine its likely original extent and the implications for the defences along the eastern side.
- 3.2 The excavation will be undertaken using standard evaluation procedures, and will be conducted entirely by hand, as follows:
 - 3.2.1 evaluation of the archaeological deposits by hand trowelling to establish their importance and integrity, but avoiding any unnecessary disturbance of the deposits. All features encountered will be examined as fully as appropriate to fulfil the requirements of the evaluation and within the constraints imposed by time and safety considerations.
 - 3.2.2 all archaeological contexts will be recorded using the standard numbered context system employed by CPAT. All significant contexts to be planned and/or drawn in section at appropriate scales, and photographed in monochrome and colour. All drawn records will be related to control points depicted on modern maps.
 - 3.2.3 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 the appropriate local or regional museum, subject to agreement being reached with the landowner and the museum curator.

- 3.3 Following the on-site work an illustrated and bound report will be prepared. This will be in A4 format and will form and appendix to the previous report, CPAT Report No 153.
- 3.4 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 evaluation will be undertaken by a team of two skilled archaeologists. Overall supervision will be by Dr A Gibson, 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 evaluation.
- 4.3 It is anticipated that the evaluation will take no more than ten days in all and that the subsequent report would be prepared immediately thereafter. The date of commencement, at the time of writing, has yet to be agreed 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
8th November 1995