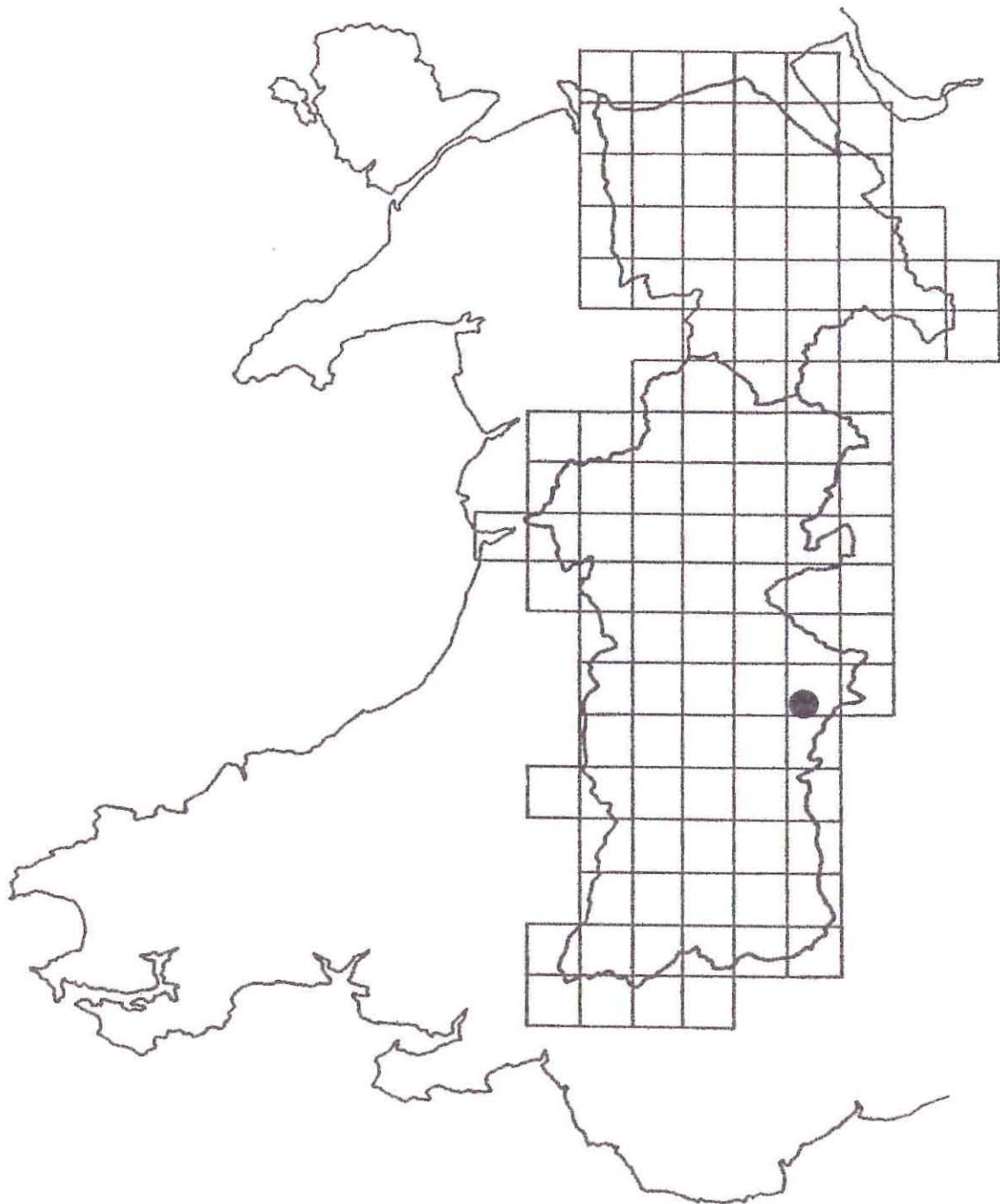


New Radnor: A Topographical Survey



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Report prepared for Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments

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New Radnor

1 Introduction

1.1 This study seeks to assess the archaeology and historic background of New Radnor, a small and demonstrably shrunken settlement on the eastern lip of the central Welsh uplands. For a brief period, early in the post-medieval period, it was the county town of Radnorshire but today it is smaller and relatively insignificant in comparison with other small towns such as Knighton and Presteigne which occupy more favourable locations in the old county.

1.2 Notwithstanding its present obscurity, it played an important strategic role in earlier centuries, and arguably its archaeological potential is greater than that of its more successful neighbours, due in no little part to the limited economic growth of more recent times.

1.3 In 1991, as a result of a planning application to develop a plot of land just within the western defences of the settlement, an excavation was conducted by the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT) with funding from Cadw/Welsh Historic Monuments (Jones 1992). The survey that forms the subject of the present report, also commissioned by Cadw, was designed as a supplementary project to assess the archaeological resource base of the town, and provide a firm and objective basis on which future decisions for preservation and excavation could be founded. That it has taken so long to appear must be laid solely at the door of the writer, who can plead only the pressure of other work.

2 Sources

2.1 The basis of this topographical survey of New Radnor was a close inspection of the town and its immediate environs through several days of fieldwork. The assessment was aided by the notes and records of previous fieldworkers including Jack Spurgeon of RCAHMW, the Ordnance Survey's field investigators and Cadw's field monument wardens.

2.2 A range of secondary sources were consulted. Beresford, Haslam and Soulsby stand out but there are others and these are all referred to in the bibliography.

2.3 New Radnor is fortunate in having a series of early maps which provide otherwise unobtainable background information. John Speed's plan of the town was published in 1611 (Fig 6), engraved a year earlier, but probably drawn by Speed himself several years previously (Skelton 1951). Two hundred years later in quick succession appeared a map to accompany the enclosure of the common lands in the parish, which incorporated, unusually, a plan of the town (1811), and Le Keux's map prepared for Jonathan Williams' abortive 'History of Radnorshire', abandoned around 1818, and not published until the middle of the century (Williams 1859). A comparison suggests that Le Keux drew heavily on the Enclosure map in preparing his own plan. Subsequently the Tithe Map of 1846 and the earliest edition of the Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map (1889) provide valuable data.

2.4 Radnor appears frequently in the Calendars of State Papers, usually with reference to the castle, less frequently to the town. There are, too, a number of medieval extents which might yield useful information. The earliest is an extent of the castle and borough in 1301 and there are later ones of 1304, 1337 and 1361. The last of these refers to a fishery at Radnor and a park with deer. These documentary sources have yet to be examined in depth.

2.5 Oblique aerial photographs of New Radnor have been taken almost annually by C. Musson since 1984. These provide information on the earthworks of the town.

2.6 Few early prints of the town have come to light and those that are available appear to be variations on a single original showing the Porth and the church and perhaps dating to the late 18th or early 19th century.

3 Location

3.1 New Radnor lies on the north side of the Summergil Brook where the stream breaks out of a narrow valley hemmed in by Radnor Forest on the north and Highgate Hill and the Smatcher on the south. Eastwards are the lower lands of the Walton Basin which open out into Herefordshire.

3.2 A spur projecting into the valley from the southern slopes of Radnor Forest was adapted for the castle earthworks which guarded the approaches to and from one of the more accessible passes into mid Wales and, according to the Royal Commission (1913, 129), the only route to the hilly district of Elvel. Subsequently the town was laid out on flatter ground below the castle, at a height ranging from c.229m OD to over 248m OD.

3.3 A river terrace on the north side of the Summergil Brook varies in height and visibility; in places it is nearly 3m above the flood plain. Its line has been utilised by the southern town defences and much of the bank on this side has the terrace at its core. Its presence also largely explains the curious earthworks mapped by the Ordnance Survey at the south-west corner of the town.

3.4 In the recent past, the course of the Summergil has been diverted south-east of the town, presumably a consequence of the construction of the sewage works. The earlier course is still visible as minor undulations in the pasture.

4 History

4.1 It has been suggested that New Radnor may have originated either as a late Saxon 'burh' (Spurgeon: unpublished notes), dating to around 1063 after Earl Harold's successful campaign against Gruffydd ap Llewelyn, or as a late Saxon motte and bailey (Howse 1989, 9, following earlier writers). Neither foundation appears particularly likely. There is no documentary evidence that points to the pre-Conquest emergence of New Radnor and recent excavations have done nothing to confirm these suggestions. More telling, at least as far as the 'burh' hypothesis is concerned, is the location of the site. It would have been in a particularly indefensible position overshadowed by the knoll now occupied by the motte: militarily, a more exposed setting could hardly have been selected.

4.2 Nevertheless, in Domesday Book (1086), it is stated that 'the king holds Radnor. Harold the Earl held it [in the time of Edward the Confessor]. Here are 15 hides, it is and was waste [i.e. devastated]'.

4.3 New Radnor first appears in the records as 'Radenore Nova' in 1277. Though it is reasonable to assume that the town was founded at an earlier date, how much earlier remains an open question as all earlier written references are to Radnor alone. Earlier this century the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments in Wales opined that New Radnor only came into existence in the early 13th century, and that earlier references were to Old Radnor with its motte and bailey castle, known as Castle Nimble (RCAHMW 1913, xviii). A century earlier Colt Hoare recorded in his diary for 1802 that the Radnor of Giraldus Cambrensis was Old Radnor (Thompson 1983, 201). This view was however dismissed by his contemporary, Jonathan Williams, in his manuscript history of Radnorshire. Spurgeon has taken the opposite viewpoint, arguing that most if not all of the post-Conquest references to Radnor actually refer to New Radnor, the 'New' element having been added on its supposed eastwards expansion across the Dingle Brook in the 13th century. The available documentary evidence is worth reiterating.

4.4 Some time before his death in 1135 Philip de Breos, Lord of Radnor, granted a burgage in Radnor to Gloucester Abbey (Cartulary of Gloucester, II, 103). The record of this gift was witnessed by many burgesses of the town, 13 of whom were named. Elsewhere this grant is ascribed to the late 12th century though this would not tie in with Philip's seigniorage.

4.5 To Radnor came Baldwin the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1188, his starting point in Wales for preaching the First Crusade. Giraldus Cambrensis recorded that he met the Welsh princes at this 'town', and recounts too a story of the castellan in the earlier part of the 12th century (Gerald of Wales 1978, 75). Giraldus also visited Castell Crugeryr, said to be 2 miles from Radnor. In fact the castle is 4 miles from New Radnor, 7 from Old Radnor.

4.6 On the basis of these comments and also its strategic location, New Radnor seems a more likely

starting place for Baldwin's mission. And the elevation of Castle Nimble at Old Radnor to the status of a strategic de Breos stronghold is altogether implausible. As to when the earthwork castle at New Radnor was constructed is also open to debate. It may have been thrown up by Philip de Breos, one of the Marcher barons as early as 1096 - the size of it would bear comparison with another slightly later de Breos motte at Builth Wells and the same family was responsible for the construction of other great earthwork castles at Colwyn and Painscastle.

4.7 Radnor Castle was captured by Rhys ap Gruffydd in 1196, and an English force sent to relieve the siege was destroyed in battle nearby. Williams claimed that Rhys 'defeated Mortimer and De Saye, with immense slaughter, in a neighbouring field, now called War-close'.

4.8 Subsequently refurbished by William de Breos, the castle was occupied by his ally, Llywelyn ab Iorweth, but captured and destroyed by King John in 1216. It was sacked by Llywelyn in 1231, rebuilt by the Earl of Cornwall in 1233 and destroyed by Llywelyn ap Gruffydd and Simon de Montfort in 1264.

4.9 A Charter Roll entry of 1235 by which the Earl of Pembroke was granted custody of the de Breos lands mentions 'Radnor Castle and the town of the castle', and the first murage grant was recorded in the Patent Roll of 1257.

4.10 The borough that emerged below the castle was undoubtedly a plantation. Spurgeon in an unpublished lecture at Carmarthen in 1980 posited that the irregular western one-third of the town was the first part to develop, followed by the foundation of the more regular eastern two-thirds late in the 13th century. As we shall see below, however, there are sound topographical reasons for the appearance of the town, which belie a chronological pattern of expansion. Initially slow to establish itself, the town underwent a rapid population expansion in the 14th century. The 97 burgesses in the returns of 1301, each paying 2s a year rent, had nearly doubled to 189 holding 262 and a half plots, in an Inquisition Post Mortem three years later. A return of £13 on rents and tolls in 1360 indicates a prosperous settlement by the standards of the day. No borough charter survives, but until the second half of the 16th century, it was a borough by prescription. Elizabeth I granted it a charter of incorporation.

4.11 The murage grant obtained in 1257 was followed by further grants in 1280, 1283 and 1290. Whether the town was protected from the beginning or had defences added subsequently is open to debate. In a border region such as this it would seem unlikely that a plantation would have been left unprotected for any length of time. Furthermore, there are places where the extremities of the street pattern mirror irregularities in the alignment of the defences, notably the curve of the most westerly street and the southern arm of Rectory Lane. As the town defences on the south side follow a natural feature (see below, para. 5.3.3), it seems probable that Rectory Lane was laid out after the town bank was thrown up.

4.12 A weekly market was operating early in the 14th century, and a charter for a yearly fair was obtained in 1306. An Inquisition Post Mortem on Edmund Mortimer in 1336 mentions a market and two fairs, the burgages and other rents at this time being worth £10. Radnor Forest was closely linked with the castle, being referred to in an Inquisition Post Mortem in c.1337, together with a park.

4.13 The castle and town were sacked by Owain Glyndwr in 1401, leaving the ruins seen by Leland. It has been suggested that skulls and headless skeletons found during the rebuilding of the church in 1843-44 were the massacred garrison. The later Middle Ages also witnessed a decline in the prosperity of the town of New Radnor.

4.14 Bishop Lee, President of the Court of the Council of Wales and the Marches, came to Radnor in 1535, and wrote to Thomas Cromwell that the castle was 'not to be repayred, but only a prison house amended, which must nedes be doon'. Leland (c.1538) noted that the 'towne was defacyd in Henry the Fowthe dayes by Owen Glindowr' and that 'the castle is in ruine'. It was 'metley well wallyd, and in the walle appere the ruines of iiij gates', 'the buildynge of the towne in some parte meatly good, in moste part but rude, many howsys beinge thakyd' (= thatched). In an Act of 1544 it was described as a 'decayed town'.

4.15 Speed's plan shows large open areas within the town, surely reflecting a considerable reduction in the number of burgage plots recorded in the early 14th century. When Ship Money was levied in 1636, the whole borough of New Radnor was taxed at only £6. Nearby Presteigne had to find £28 (Howse 1989, 18). Notwithstanding Leland's comments, it has been claimed that the castle was occupied by the Royalists during the Civil War and was successfully besieged by the Parliamentarians supposedly about 1644.

4.16 It was elevated to the rank of shire town for Radnorshire at the time of the Act of Union in 1536, perhaps Howse speculated, because it was the only place in the county that preserved the semblance of a castle, and the only one that could be used as a prison. From 1562 it had borough status, signalled by the first extant charter, but this recorded that 'the Ancient Borough of New Radnor, whose charters granted by several earls of march, formerly lords of th said borough had been destroyed in the rebellion of Owen Glendour'. The Borough covered an area of 28000 acres, had its own Recorder, coroner, receiver and sergeants-at-mace, and was governed by a corporation of 25 'Capital Burgesses'. It held its own Quarter Sessions and the Borough Gaol was in Broad Street, where the Eagle Hotel now stands, opposite the Town Hall. And from the 16th century until the 19th century there were four annual fairs.

4.17 But the town is also slipped into gradual decline, a result of its location which had little to offer the trader. The courts of Great Sessions had been transferred to Presteigne by the late 17th century and even the weekly market ceased. By 1731 only 7 burgesses were left and the charter was suspended, though seven years later a new charter of incorporation was issued. The parliamentary constituency was dissolved in 1880, the borough in 1886.

4.18 Economically it was a failure. Williams early in the 19th century noted 'its deserted streets, several of which have no buildings and others are now only footpaths, ...not more than 50 dwelling houses, and most of those of mean appearance, ...the barn-like appearance of its supreme Court of Judicature, where its chief magistrate is sworn into office, and its representative in Parliament elected,... the desolated site of its once formidable and frowning castle... of which one stone is not left upon another, ...the decrease of modern population amounting to 36 persons in the course of 77 years, viz., from the years 1734 to 1800 [sic]'. Lewis in 1833 also recorded the courses of former streets in back gardens.

5 The Archaeology of New Radnor

5.1 Prehistoric finds in the form of flints (PAR 5236) were found on the railway embankment to the south-east of the town. Their position, however, is suspect and they may have resulted from secondary deposition. Nevertheless given the town's position at the western end of Walton Basin it would be surprising if there was no evidence of prehistoric activity in the vicinity.

5.2 The Castle (Fig 2)

5.2.1 New Radnor Castle (PAR 1075; Scheduled Ancient Monument [SAM] Radnor 33) consists of a motte-like eminence sculpted from a natural hillock, overlooking the town and commanding a major route into Elvel. The hill is surmounted by an oval enclosure, defined now by a comparatively low ring bank, within which building foundations are still visible. These are primarily a rectangular earthwork on the south side of the motte with one sub-division. Less readily intelligible earthworks about the inner face of the ring bank on the north-west. Pits have been dug through the rectangular building in two places and one of these has been extended into a trench across the adjacent ring bank. Elsewhere, notably in the south-east corner, there are further disturbances. All of these disturbances may perhaps be equated with digging conducted by local people within living memory.

5.2.2 Part of the keep was visible as late as 1815 according to Thomas Rees, while Howse claims that a length of the curtain wall survived into the mid-19th century. Six or seven pointed arches were dug out in 1773, further arches and some weapons were uncovered in 1818, and in 1864 extensive excavations revealed foundation walls, arched doorways and windows, and a well in the castle dungeon. Speed in 1610 depicted a substantial stone structure with the main entrance from the High Street, but his stylised depiction must be treated with caution. There is documentary evidence that sometime after 1791 the local squire modified the earthworks to produce a 'wide promenade' and this is probably to be equated with the ledge that runs around the north and east sides of the motte just below the crest.

5.2.3 Two massive ditches defend the motte on the north and west. The inner ditch is complete, but the outer has two causeways across it on the north-west and the length of ditch between them is so shallow that this outer line of defence appears never to have been completed.

5.2.4 To the north-west of the motte is the bailey - known as Bailiglas (Beili Glas) - with dimensions of

about 154m by 60m. An ill-defined mounded platform lies adjacent to the outer motte ditch, and against the north-west defences of the bailey are earthwork traces of rectangular structures. Further earthworks cut into the back of the bailey bank are probably later in date, following the abandonment of the bailey as a functioning outer ward, and the same is almost certainly true of the faint ridge and furrow within the bailey which can be seen on aerial photographs and just at ground level.

5.2.5 Beili Glas was classed as an outer enclosure by the Royal Commission (1913, 130), who confusingly stated that 'the [inner] bailey was to the south of the castle'. Such a statement does not stand up to rigorous scrutiny!

5.2.6 A short stretch of bank beyond the northern corner of the bailey has been assumed to be part of the defences and has been scheduled as such. Conceivably, however, it is a remnant of the natural scarp above Mutton Dingle that has been modified through quarrying and is unlikely to be part of the castle earthworks.

5.2.7 The access to Radnor castle during the time that it functioned is not clear. The motte was presumably reached from the bailey by a drawbridge, but the entrance to the bailey is no longer discernible, and will probably be revealed only by excavation. Howse (1989, 9) argued that the present pathway to the church led to the original entrance and that later the main entrance was through the Newgate (see below, para 5.4.2), with a postern gate at the south-east corner. Certainly it appears that the bailey was approached from the south, and it is conceivable that with the emergence of the town a new access route to the castle was created running beneath and overlooked by the bailey defences.

5.2.8 A double-banked trackway works its way around the outer, north-western edge of the bailey. The more easterly bank of this feature could incorporate the remnants of the outer bank of the bailey. South-west of the bailey, the track skirts a large depression which contains the foundations of a recently demolished hut, and is joined by another embanked track running down up the slope from the west (the original line of Newgate Lane), before swinging south-eastwards and terminating just above a stream. The only viable interpretation is that the large depression is a quarry that was cut across the original line of Newgate Lane, presumably after the entrance to the castle which it served had fallen into disuse. Subsequently an embanked trackway was created around the castle earthworks.

5.3 The Town Defences (Fig 2)

5.3.1 The 13th-century town defences (PAR 1076; SAM Radnor 50), consisting of bank and ditch perhaps originally with a timber palisade, demarcated a sub-square area reportedly some 10.5ha in extent. At some point they were faced with a revetment wall. Howse claimed that Saxton [sic] in 1610 recorded the bank 'whereon a wall of stone was once raised, as by the remains in many places appeareth'; and Leland, too, in Henry VIII's time noted that 'New Radnor towne hath be metly well wallyd...!'

5.3.2 The defences remain in a variable state of preservation and are described here in full as existing reports are inadequate. The description follows an anti-clockwise circuit from the southern corner.

5.3.3 A substantial bank up to 2.7m high, and ditch up to 1m deep with a low, much spread outer bank survives for the first 150m of the south-eastern side. At several points, a drystone revetment is visible in a variable state of preservation, some of it badly affected by soil slippage and tree roots. The defence line on this side picks up the river terrace a little beyond the south corner, and it is the scarp of this terrace, modified by tracks and water channels that accounts for the curious earthworks shown on modern Ordnance Survey maps, just to the south of the south corner of the defences. There can be no doubt that the presence of the river terrace can also be detected in the slight change in alignment of the defences one third of the way along the south-east side. At the south corner the defences are more substantial than where the natural river terrace scarp has been adapted.

5.3.4 Of the central section on the south-east side little is visible. A gentle hollow, perhaps 3m wide and <0.7m deep is visible in OS plot 3469, from the edge of the field opposite The Monument for a distance of some 30m westwards. But immediately south of the Old Rectory - the large house to the north - the creation of a rectangular paddock or enclosure defined on early 25" Ordnance Survey maps has removed similar traces and further west in OS plot 3469 and in the eastern part of the adjacent OS plot 2268, there are few signs of the ditch. The garden of the Old Rectory is perhaps one metre higher than the field beyond: this is the sole indicator of the town bank. East of Water Street the bank runs within the

perimeter of an inaccessible private garden, emerging in the guise of a green track with an outer slope, no more than 0.5m high behind the primary school.

5.3.5 On the north-east, a low scarp bank is visible for about 150m from the turn of the eastern corner. Here, perhaps, the original bank has been spread outwards in the school playing field, east of Lewis Place. The construction of a road to serve the new houses north of Trafford (SO 2151 6088) has distorted the outer line of the bank and disguised the ditch. However, the field behind Watergate Farm is the only spot on the north-east side where an inner drop to the bank is visible, giving a width in excess of 20m. The possibility that this disguises an intra-mural lane is considered below (para 5.6.7). The inner slope is visible but less accessible in the garden boundaries to the north and south.

5.3.6 Further north, it seems probable that the low ground occupied by modern houses on the east side of Clawdd Lane reveals the line of the town ditch and a low external bank remains in the small field (OS plot 4306) to the south of the Baptist Chapel.

5.3.7 The north corner of the defences has been erased by modern development, but a narrow garden running beside the modern house called Pendree reflects the line though not the form of the ditch. Further west this gives way to the access track into a field (OS plot 3315), hollowed to a depth of up to 3m and undoubtedly betraying the course of the ditch. The field raised above it on the south (OS plot 3203) retains traces of the town bank. Inexplicably it appears that this patch has been descheduled in recent years.

5.3.8 All signs of the defences disappear as the line drops down into Mutton Dingle, but presumably they must have run up against the castle mound. Le Keux's map of New Radnor (Fig 7) shows the town wall running northwards along the upper edge of Mutton Dingle before curving round to meet the outer defences of Beili Glas. The incorporation of the lower part of Mutton Dingle into the scheduled area encompassing New Radnor castle presumably owes something to this plan. But strategically such a change in alignment in the town defences makes no sense. A town wall in this position would have been backed by a steep drop to the valley floor and would have served only to protect the mill and perhaps the mill-pond, altogether an unlikely cause for constructing upwards of an extra 200m of defensive perimeter. Le Keux's map, essentially a redaction of the New Radnor Enclosure map of 1811, must in this respect at least be treated with considerable caution.

5.3.9 For much of the north side no town defences were erected - the motte and its bailey offered sufficient protection to the settlement as Colt Hoare reported in 1802 (Thompson 1983, 201). Their line can be picked up again at the south-western corner of the bailey where the bank, briefly accompanied by the ditch, runs due south. Absent where Newgate Lane runs in from the west (Fig 3), the bank reappears as the western boundary of the churchyard.

5.3.10 Modern Ordnance Survey maps and indeed earlier maps as far back as the 1811 Enclosure map depict an outer bank looping out across the line of Newgate Lane, a hardly credible simulacrum of a hornwork protecting an entrance through the defences. In fact modern cartographic depictions of what the Enclosure map specifically termed Cwm Baily Common are incomplete and misleading. The building (now demolished) shown on the modern Ordnance Survey map lies in the bottom of a deep hollow, clearly an old but nevertheless sizeable quarry (see para 5.2.8). Another, occupying the southern segment of the churchyard lies only a few metres to the south-east. Spoil fringes the western and northern sides of this hollow and provides the inner bank of an embanked trackway which skirts the quarry having run around the outside of the bailey defences and feeds into the sunken approach of Newgate Lane as well as continuing its curvilinear course southwards. The quarry cannot be dated, though its name in 1811 points to a resource exploited in common. That it does not appear on Speed's map means little. It obviously post-dates the diversion of Newgate Lane southwards but this too cannot be attributed to a particular period, though it is surely post-medieval.

5.3.11 South of the churchyard the defences are represented by a residual bank, 8m or so wide but little more than one metre high, and outside it a ditch up to 2.5m deep, the original size of which may have been exaggerated by the erosive effect of the stream that runs along it. Activity associated with the former farm known as Porth has efficiently erased the defences closer to the road, although there is a shallow drop of less than one metre from the front garden of the house into the field to the west. Ponds are shown on early Ordnance Survey maps suggesting that portions of ditch have been filled in during this century. It seems likely too that the line of the defences on this side utilised the stream which rises two hundred metres or so to the west of the castle and follows a rather irregular course southwards to its confluence with the Summeril Brook. This would account for the slight change in alignment of the town

defences at the West Gate.

5.3.12 South of the road, the defences become visible again, the low bank gradually gaining height towards the southern corner with facing slabs evident in one or two places, and the ditch equally gradually gaining depth.

5.4 Town Gates (Fig 3)

5.4.1 There were reputedly four gates through the defences: the West Gate - also referred to as the High Gate - at the western end of Church Street, the South Gate at the bottom of Water Street, the North Gate supposedly through the castle fortifications towards Radnor Forest, and the East Gate onto the Presteigne road. The positions of these can be deduced from Le Keux's map of 1811x18, but no traces survive of any of them in the modern village.

5.4.2 What is also missing is any reference to the entrance to the town between the bailey and the churchyard. That it existed there can be little doubt and taking the name, Newgate, at face value, it should perhaps be seen as a secondary development. As suggested by Howse (see para 5.2.7 above), it may have specifically led to the castle. Not served by a major access route it seems to have fallen out of use at an early date (see above, para 5.3.10), perhaps to be equated with the decline in the use of the castle. However, a reminder of the track that led from it along the northern edge of the churchyard is apparent on Speed's plan.

5.5 The Church

5.5.1 A church at New Radnor is first documented in 1291. Leland mentioned 'that there is an olde churche stondynge now as a chapell by the castle'. The precise position of this old church (PAR 5240) is not known but at one point Leland recorded that it lay in the churchyard and elsewhere noted that it was not very far from 'the new parochie churche buildyd by one William Bachefeld and Flory his wyfe' in the 14th century. Depictions of this medieval structure appear as elevations on Speed's map and the Enclosure Map, and in plan on Le Keux's redaction, as well as on a print of the late 18th or early 19th century. From these it can be established that the building had a west tower, probably with a corner turret, a large nave with a south porch, and a smaller chancel.

5.5.2 The present church of St Mary (PAR 20112) was erected between 1843 and 1845 [but 1862 according to other sources] and consists of a west tower over a porch, a nave with small transepts and a curious chancel. Haslam classes it as 'an extreme case of unsuitable rebuilding'. There is little of significance or interest within, except for two stone effigies in the porch. Attributed to the early 13th century, they are thought to represent a captain of the castle and his wife.

5.5.3 The ground slope of the churchyard is such that any building would have required terracing into the hillside. It seems likely that the 19th-century church occupied the site of its predecessor, but assuming Leland to be correct, the earliest chapel must have been elsewhere. The only flattish ground is that now offered by the large quarry on the south side of the churchyard (see above para 5.3.10), but this seems remote for a chapel supposedly standing by the castle and the problem is currently insoluble. No evidence is available to suggest that the churchyard has been modified in any way since its original demarcation.

5.5.4 A circular cross head (PAR 5237), some 0.5m in diameter and perhaps part of a grave slab, is built into a barn wall adjacent to the Porth on the north side of High Street. The Royal Commission thought it no earlier than the late 14th century (RCAHMS 1913, 131).

5.6 The Street Pattern (Fig 3)

5.6.1 The modern street layout reveals the medieval grid plan that was imposed on gently sloping ground below the castle. Three streets ran on a west-south-west to east-north-east alignment: High Street, Hall Lane and the southern arm of Rectory Lane. Four others aligned north-north-west to south-south-east: the unnamed lane east of Porth, the western arm of Rectory Lane, Broad Street and Water

Street.

5.6.2 Some of these streets have now partly or wholly disappeared, but can still be detected on the ground. They are depicted, too, on early maps, not only that by Speed but also 19th-century plans (Fig 7). Hall Lane, continuing west of Rectory Lane and beyond Bank Buildings (SO 2117 6080), can be seen as a flat linear depression about 4m wide but no more than 0.2m deep that begins to fade behind the garden of Westfield (SO 2112 6078).

5.6.3 Similarly the east to west alignment of the southern arm of Rectory Lane continued through the garden of Ashfield (SO 2118 6074) and into OS plot 1570 where it is discernible as a broad hollow nearly 12m wide. A scarp 0.4m high on the south side is exaggerated by a build up of material on the edge of this former lane. It swings northwards (from SO 2110 6072) linking with a fenced-off hollow in OS plot 0675 which then becomes the track passing to the west of Springfield. Rectory Lane as now laid out appears to be but a fraction of the width of its predecessor.

5.6.4 The unnamed lane east of Porth originally ran north from Church Street to the church. It can still be recognised in the field access track west of Church Cottage (SO 2102 6087) but has disappeared in the field itself (OS plot 0685).

5.6.5 The sinuous line of Church Street as it curves to meet High Street represents an irregularity in the grid pattern: it is best explained by the presence of an earlier track approaching from the west and continuing on towards Presteigne and Knighton which had to link into a grid pattern on a different alignment.

5.6.6 Modifications have occurred more recently - probably in the second half of the 19th century - where Broad Street and Water Street meet. As they appear now it would have been necessary to have two gates through the southern defences. Originally, as the Enclosure and Tithe Maps reveal, they converged further to the north and it can be assumed that the alteration was effected when The Laurels (SO 2132 6078) was constructed and its gardens laid out.

5.6.7 East of Water Street the grid pattern of lanes disappears. Early in the 19th century (Fig 7) a lane led eastwards from Water Street just inside the defences, serving a farm, Clawdd (which had gone by 1846) and turning northwards to link in with the present Clawdd Lane. This has all but disappeared: the broad ridge east of Water Street Farm should define its course just inside the town bank. Otherwise the south-eastern sector within the town is unbroken by lanes suggesting perhaps that it was never subdivided for houses and tenements.

5.6.8 Puzzling is the appearance on Speed's map (Fig 6) of a fork at the northern end of Water Street. The resultant triangle completely filled with houses is such an obvious feature on the map that it is difficult to accept this as an error by the cartographer. The eastern fork would have run beneath Brookside Farm and the brook itself would have followed a different channel. Yet there is no independent evidence, either cartographic or archaeological, to confirm it, and probably only excavation can clarify this apparent dichotomy.

5.7 Earthworks within the town (Fig 2)

5.7.1 Earthworks reveal the position of former buildings in fields on the south side of the town. In OS plot 1570, a bank up to 2m wide and 0.8m high defines a sub-rectangular area 11m by 8m (SO 2118 6072) beside the former lane. Further east there are the ephemeral traces of a terraced platform at right-angles to the lane (SO 2124 6074). This coincides with a building depicted on the Enclosure Map of 1811. To the west the same field has at least two and perhaps three slight linear banks running on a north-west/south-east axis, perhaps representing old tenement boundaries.

5.7.2 The field to the north - OS plot 1576 - contains, on its southern edge, another sub-rectangular foundation bank (SO 2116 6073) against the old lane. Much of the field retains faint ridge and furrow, about 4m wide and 0.2m high, running parallel to the long axis of the field and terminating at a low bank that runs north-west/south-east.

5.7.3 An adjacent field (OS plot 0675) contains a sharply defined earthwork bank which was examined during excavations in 1991/92. It proved to be of post-medieval origin, but a precise date cannot be attributed. That it is not depicted on Speed's map cannot be taken as proof of its post-1611 erection.

5.7.4 The unnumbered field surrounding Bank Buildings on the north and west also has earthworks. Most relate to field divisions still in evidence at the beginning of this century, but one running off at right-angles from the south-western arm of the farm buildings could indicate the presence of a former structure (SO 2115 6082).

5.7.5 The unnumbered plot behind Water Street Farm contains faint earthworks under pasture (SO 2143 6090), probably but not certainly relict ridge and furrow.

5.7.6 North of Church Street, one field (OS plot 0685) contains a range of earthworks. An embanked, level platform (SO 2104 6085) lies just below the garden of Church Cottage with a small bank winding down from its lower side towards Church Street. A second small platform runs parallel to the outbuildings of Porth (SO 2104 6082) and must overlie the lane leading northwards to the church (see para 5.6.4). A third platform lies close to the north-eastern corner of the field (SO 2107 6087) and the whole area is bisected by a broad but low bank, presumably an earlier plot boundary.

5.7.7 One other excavation has taken place in recent years. In 1988, examination of a street frontage site in Hall Street (SO 2124 6084) revealed a corn-drying kiln of late medieval/early post-medieval date damaged by an ?18th-century ditch (Dorling 1988).

5.8 Housing and other Structures within the Town

5.8.1 Traces of intensive medieval usage were found during the 1991/92 excavations, fronting onto Church Street in OS plot 0675; the ground had been levelled out by later land use and no indications of this activity were revealed by geophysical survey. The partial plans of several stone and timber buildings were located, together with the residue from what may have been a medieval smithy, three small circular ovens, a corn-drying kiln and several large latrine pits (Jones 1992).

5.8.2 Despite the stylised depiction of dwellings by Speed his early 17th-century plan may be an instructive guide to the location of contemporary housing in New Radnor. Early 19th-century maps reinforce the importance of High Street, Broad Street and Water Street for housing, while the lack of properties on some back lanes was without doubt the prime reason why they fell into disuse. To what extent the early 17th-century pattern reflects the situation three hundred years earlier when the town was at the height of its prosperity is an entirely different matter. That streets were laid out does not signify that their frontages were ever occupied: open land may have been farmed. Delaney and Soulsby (1975) favour fully utilised street frontages on the basis of the surviving earthworks and also the assumption that the topography did not necessitate the inclusion within the defences of a larger area than was required for settlement purposes. The latter argument, however, is not entirely convincing in the light of some of the more detailed aspects of the local topography considered above. It can be shown too from recent excavations that at least some surviving earthworks are of post-medieval origin.

5.8.3 Many of New Radnor's surviving buildings are of 18th and 19th-century date. There are, however, a few from earlier centuries. No 8 Church Street (Swan House; PAR 16068; Grade II listing) is 15th-century in origin, the truncated remains of a high quality, late medieval, cruck-built house, resurfaced in stone in the 19th century. Nos 1 and 2 High Street (PAR 16069; Grade II listing) were formerly part of 'The Cross Inn', built in the 17th century but altered and divided in the 19th century. No 11 High Street (PAR 16070; Grade II listing) was originally timber-framed of 16th or 17th-century origin, partly rebuilt and refaced in stone. Brookside Farm (PAR 16071; Grade II listing) with its U-shaped plan is also 16th/17th in origin, its timber-framing refaced in stone in the 19th century. The south wing is mainly timber-framed and shows evidence of the re-use of earlier timbers. Most of the cottages are of 19th-century date.

5.8.4 A town hall (or Guild Hall) stood at the junction of Hall Lane and Broad Street. The date of construction is not known but as early as 1562 it was described as 'The Buthall'. Damaged during riots in 1697 and described as 'having the semblance of a barn' in 1843, the building was demolished later in the 19th century.

5.8.5 The town cross (PAR 5238; illustrated in *Archaeologia Cambrensis* 1911), shown by both Speed and Le Keux (Fig 7), was set at the junction of High Street and Broad Street. We may assume that this was removed at some point during the 19th century: certainly part of it was still standing in 1814 (Howse

1989, 19). At its western end High Street broadened out into a triangular open space utilised, on the evidence of Le Keux, for the village pound. This spot is now occupied by the war memorial.

5.8.6 The 'Old Mill Pond', east of the Castle and depicted on maps into the early 20th century, has now been infilled and partly built over. An encircling embankment is still visible, although it has been documented that the site has heavily disturbed by bulldozing when the house was constructed in the 1950s (Powys SMR). The mill leat which fed in from the north has also been largely obscured, but its eastern edge can still be recognised where it diverges from the stream. The pond served a water mill at the bottom of Mutton Dingle close to the site of the East Gate. Its age has not been established, but there was a mill called 'Heynesmyll' in the charter of 1562, and this may be equated with the mill shown by Speed beside the Dingle Brook.

5.8.7 The monument at the bottom of Broad Street was erected in 1864 to the memory of George Cornwall Lewis M.P. who died the previous year. Whether one agrees with Davies (1905) that it is 'handsome' is quite another matter.

5.9 New Radnor's Fields (Fig 2)

5.9.1 A gradually diminishing number of hedged strip fields survive to the west, south and south-east of the town. They surely reflect the medieval pattern of arable farming but the only trace of ridge and furrow in these areas is just beyond the town defences on the south side of Church Street (in OS plot 9874). More obvious ridge and furrow - the ridges about 4.25m wide - can be detected to the north-west of the castle bailey in OS plot 8200.

5.9.2 The modern field patterns, presumably maintaining the line of their medieval predecessors, highlight the fact that they were originally laid out when the town defences were already in place. On the east and west the boundaries run parallel to the town walls; on the north they adopt a slightly different alignment at right angles to the bailey defences.

5.10 Access to the Town (Fig 3)

5.10.1 The five gates to the town have been recorded above. The West Gate gave onto a track leading westwards along the valley of the Summertil Brook into increasingly hilly country. Traces of a sinuous hollowed track can be seen edging the modern road just outside the defences. The hollow on the north side is now occupied by a sheep dip and a little further on a scarp 0.6m deep survives on the opposite side of the road. Beyond this all trace has been obliterated by more recent roads.

5.10.2 Two tracks seem to have come down off Radnor Forest. It can be assumed that one lead down Mutton Dingle and that its course has been adopted in the main by the modern road. Newgate Lane, on the other hand, is a sunken trackway, 3m to 4m deep where it traverses the hillside immediately west of the town (SO 2080 6096). At the bottom of the descent it adopts a new alignment almost parallel to the town defences, but this is almost certainly a post-medieval modification designed to feed traffic into Church Street. Originally Newgate Lane ran eastwards and as a broad holloway it can be seen in pasture on the north side of OS plot 9591.

5.10.3 On the north-east side of the town the road towards Knighton - in fact a continuation of the south-west/north-east thoroughfare that preceded the establishment of New Radnor - also shows as a holloway beyond the Baptist Church (SO 2144 6110) which gradually converges with the modern B4372.

5.10.4 The South Gate must have opened onto tracks leading southwards, some if not all of which survive in the network of lanes between New Radnor and Gladestry; and in addition what is now known as School Lane must have used the South Gate. School Lane fades into a green lane running almost due eastwards and hugging the river terrace above the Summertil Brook. As a track or path it can be traced for several kilometres, in one place doubling as a parish boundary, as such its antiquity cannot be doubted.

6 Conclusions

6.1 Among the towns of Powys, New Radnor is of particular rarity and significance. It is the best example of a shrunken medieval plantation in the county, and almost certainly one of the better examples in Wales. Though not an example of total abandonment, it has clearly undergone contraction since its peak in the 14th century. Overall, it offers considerable scope for future archaeological research, enhanced through the intimate connection between town and castle.

6.2 New Radnor has the best preserved town defences in Powys. More readily intelligible than those of Montgomery, the only comparable centre in the county, they require a detailed survey and an improved system of maintenance.

6.3 Because of the 19th-century contraction, the town offers more potential than most others in Powys for the examination and understanding of the origin and development of urban roads.

6.4 A number of earthworks survive within the town, representing streets, the sites of buildings and perhaps tenement boundaries. It can be assumed that the streets date back to the medieval period and possibly so do the boundaries. The building foundations are less easily placed. Excavations in 1991/92 revealed that while medieval remains left little surface trace, their post-medieval successors were more likely to be discernible as earthworks. This holds true, too, for the platform at the east end of OS plot 1570, but is unproven for the other nearby platforms which cannot be equated with dwellings depicted by Speed or the enclosure surveyor. On balance, however, it is likely that where substantial earthworks survive they are late in date.

7 Recommendations

7.1 New Radnor has an extremely high archaeological potential. Its archaeological resource should be preserved as rigorously as possible, preferably in situ. Where this is not possible then the resource should be preserved by record through an appropriate level of excavation.

7.2 Works permitted by planning permission and listed building or conservation area consent, may all seriously effect the archaeological resource. Full consultations should be conducted by the local authority and their archaeological advisers to establish the archaeological and historical implications of any development proposals affecting the defended town or the ground immediately surrounding it.

7.3 Pre-planning evaluations, as outlined in PPG16, must be required for any proposals involving areas fronting on to present or abandoned streets within the town; around and within the churchyard; and around the castle. Such evaluations may also be necessary elsewhere depending on the scale and type of proposed developments.

7.4 Archaeological watching briefs, or other recording strategies, might be anticipated where development occurs within the remainder of the historic core, as defined on the accompanying map.

7.5 The archaeological and historical implications of works not subject to such permissions should also be assessed and similar mitigation negotiated where possible.

7.6 It is recommended that Cadw adopt a positive approach to scheduling further areas within the defended town. Fig 5 depicts areas that might be considered under this heading. Specifically it should be noted that medieval streets together with the buildings that fronted onto them probably survive in the western half of the town, and that subsequent damage is likely to have been slight, if the low density of housing shown on Speed's plan offers a true picture.

7.7 The poor state of preservation of the town defences is highlighted in this report. As these are a scheduled ancient monument it is suggested that Cadw should assess their condition based on a detailed ground survey and take appropriate steps to halt their deterioration. Most of the outstanding sections are in a single ownership and a positive approach to a management agreement on what is a rare archaeological resource is recommended.

7.8 A full analysis of the surviving documentary sources should be conducted to complement this topographic survey.

7.9 Given the history and earthwork survival at New Radnor, little is available in the way of a leaflet or booklet to inform the interested layman or tourist of the town's interest. This might be rectified by Cadw and the local authority.

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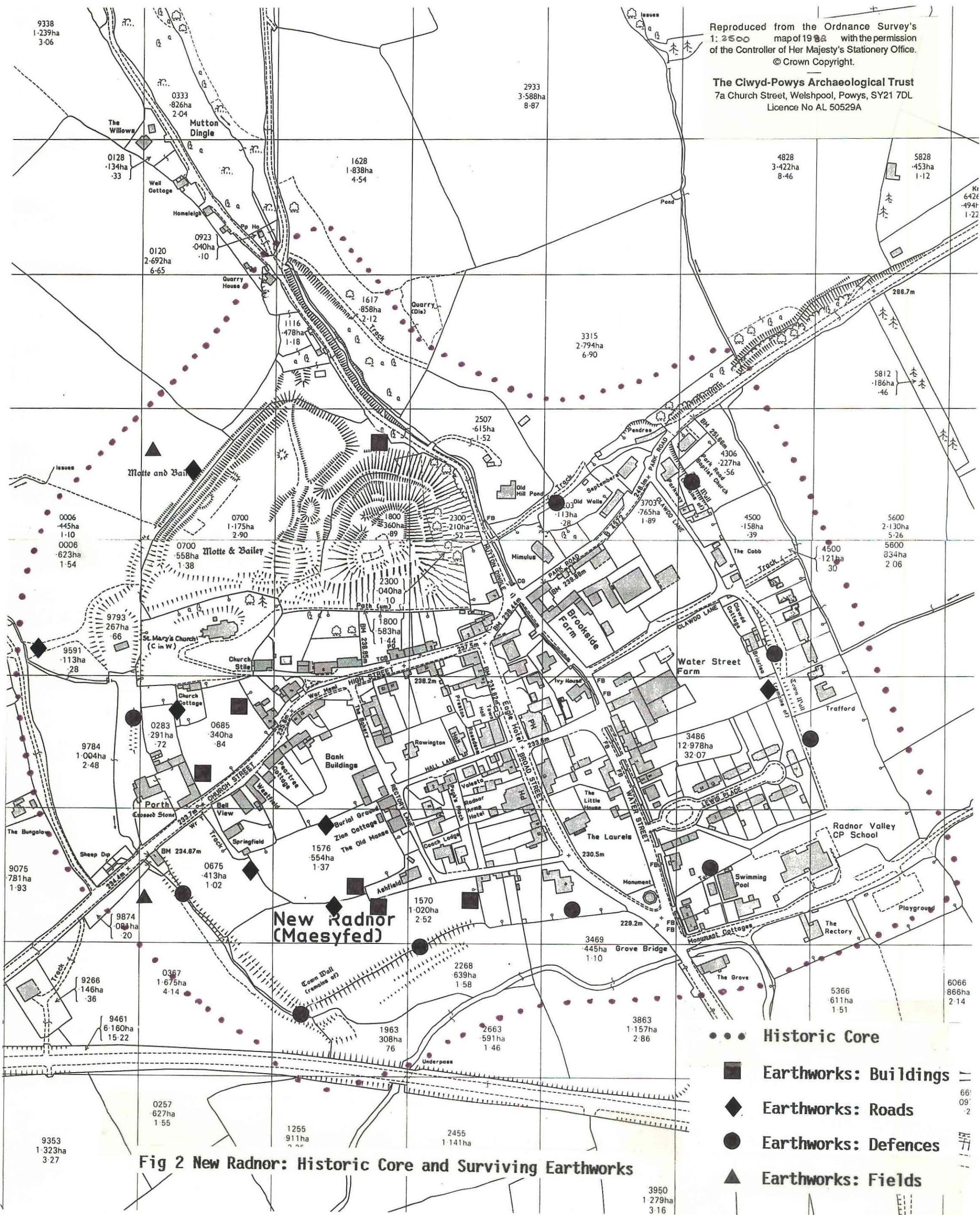
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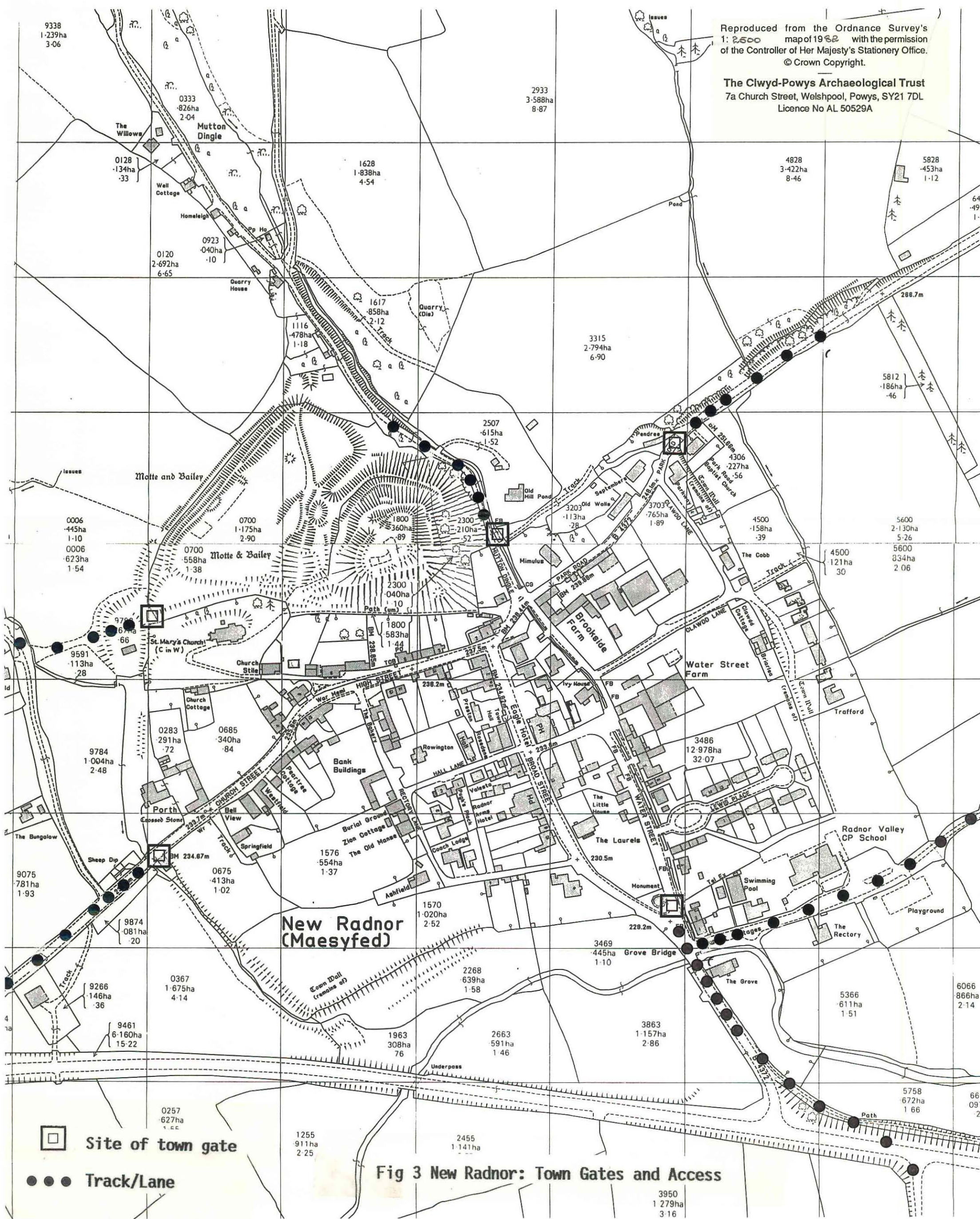
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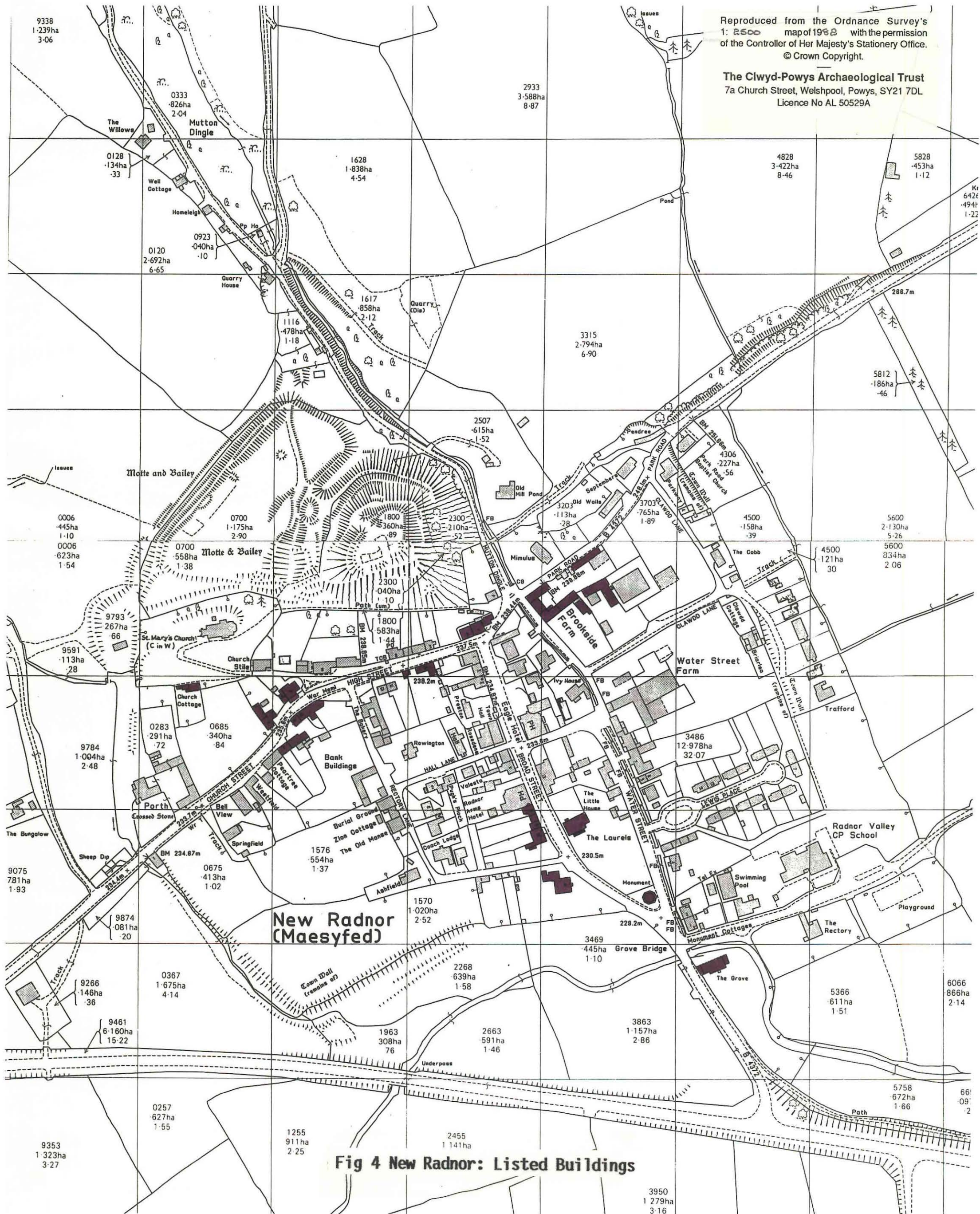
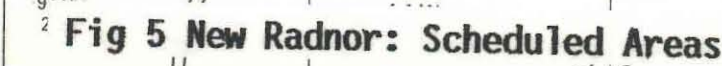


Fig 4 New Radnor: Listed Buildings

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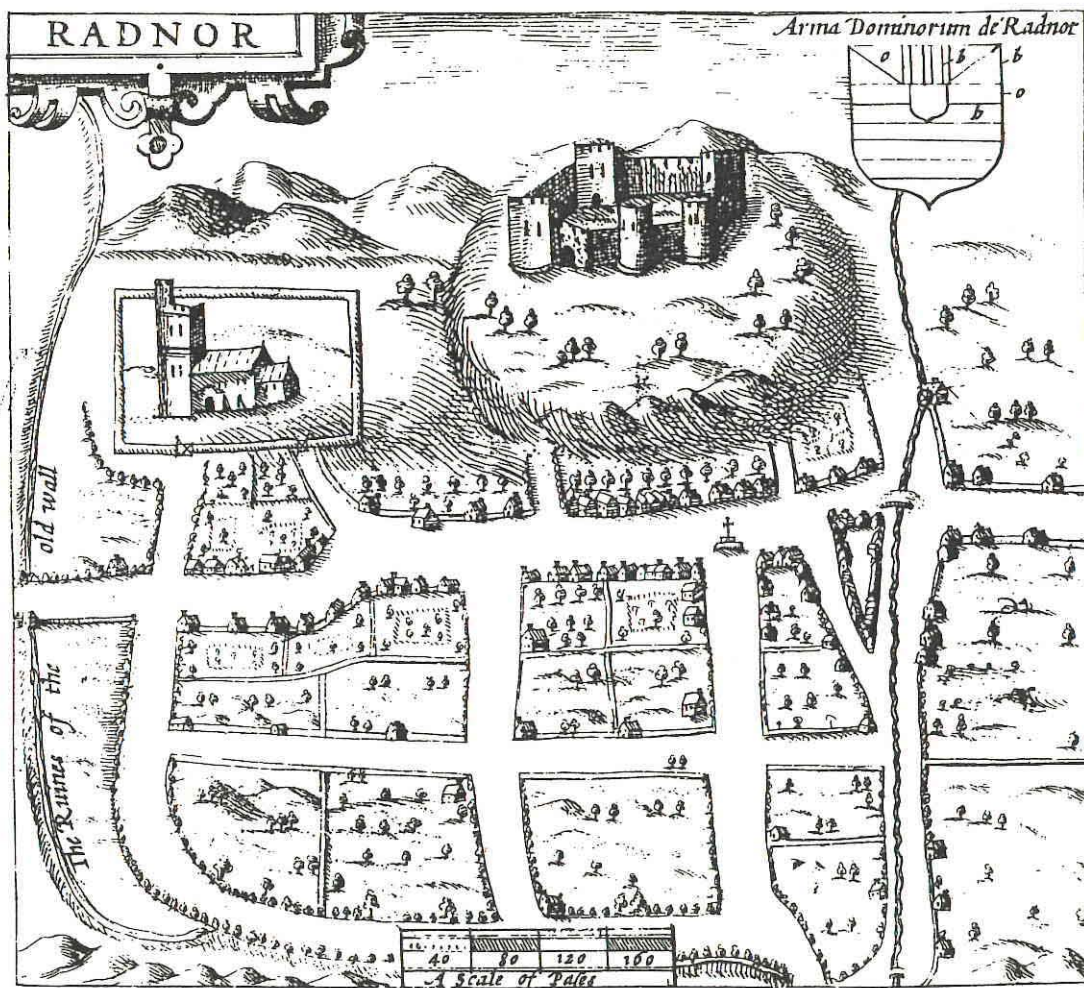
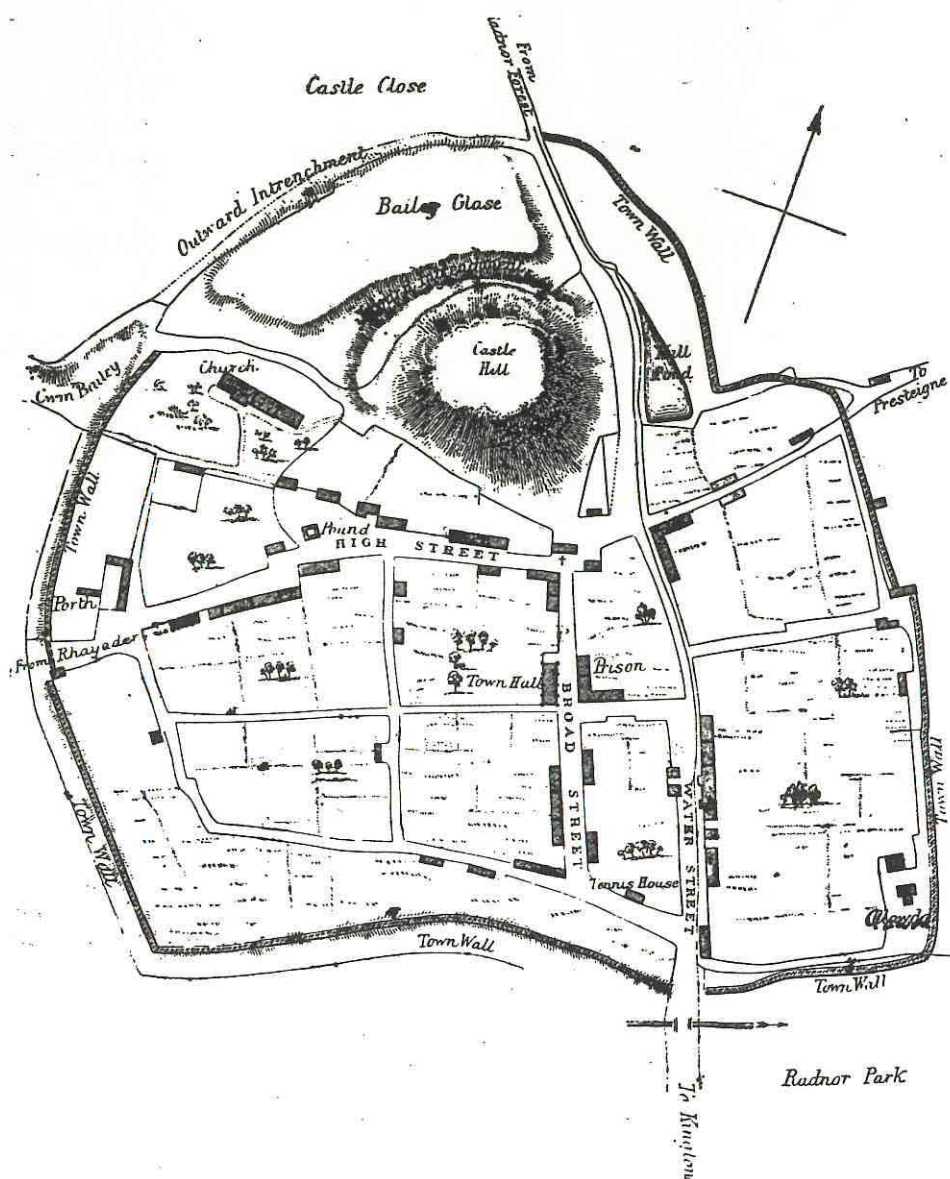


Fig 6 Speed's Plan of New Radnor



TOWN AND CASTLE OF NEW RADNOR, 1800.

Fig 7 Le Keux's Plan of New Radnor