

**THE CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST**

# **Black Boy Hotel, Newtown, Powys**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

**CPAT Report No 698**

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# **Black Boy Hotel, Newtown, Powys**

## **ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

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March 2005

Report for Jack Inns Ltd

**The Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust**

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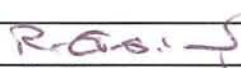
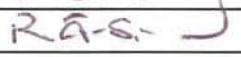
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## CPAT Report Record

### Report and status

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### Internal memo


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## **1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 In February 2005, the Field Services Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT) was asked by Douglas Hughes Architects of Broad Street, Newtown to provide a specification and quotation for a watching brief to be undertaken during groundworks associated with the construction of an extension to the rear of the Black Boy Hotel on Broad Street in Newtown, Powys.
- 1.2 The watching brief was required to fulfil the conditions of the planning consent for the extension, granted by Powys County Council (Powys CC Application M2002/0884), and was subject to a brief prepared by Mr M. Walters, of the Curatorial Section of CPAT, acting in his capacity as the archaeological curator for the region.
- 1.3 The CPAT quotation was accepted by Douglas Hughes and their clients, Jack Inns Ltd, on 14 February 2005, with the watching brief being carried out on the following day. This report was completed at the beginning of March 2005.

## **2 LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY**

- 2.1 The development consisted of an extension to the rear of the Black Boy Hotel, which forms part of the street frontage on the north-east side of Broad Street in the centre of Newtown. The development area was partly in use as a yard or parking area and was centred at National Grid Reference (NGR) SO 10809176.
- 2.2 The area lay within the historic core of medieval Newtown, only 50m to the west-south-west of the former church of St Mary's, which is now partially roofless and abandoned. Although the town now occupies much of the floor and sides of the valley, this part lies on the flood plain at an elevation of approximately 105m OD and is defined by the course of the River Severn, which describes a meander enclosing the site of the medieval town.
- 2.3 The underlying geology of this area of Newtown consists of Ludlow Series mudstones and siltstones belonging to the Silurian period (1994 British Geological Society map), although these are covered by a large amount of drift material of both fluvial and fluvio-glacial origin. Although the soils of the site are likely to have been modified by urban activity, they are probably based on alluvial silts belonging to the Teme soil association, which are typical of surface deposits of this part of the valley of the River Severn (1983 Soil Survey of England and Wales map and legend).

## **3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The scope of the watching brief was determined by the location of the development within the historic core of the medieval settlement of Newtown. The potential for medieval features and artefacts to survive within the area of groundworks, particularly due to the close proximity of the medieval church of St Mary's, gave rise to the requirement for a watching brief during this phase of work.
- 3.2 Newtown was originally known as Llanfair-yng-Nghedewain, which translates to 'St Mary's Church in Cedewain' (the medieval *cantref* in which Newtown lies), and seems to be first recorded in the 13th century. By the end of the 14th and into the 15th centuries the name 'Drenwydd', literally 'New town', became accepted (Silvester, 1992, 140). The plan of the modern town reflects the grid pattern on which the medieval town is likely to have been organised.
- 3.3 The town is believed to have grown steadily in the later medieval and post-medieval periods, with 55 taxpayers being recorded there in 1545 (*ibid*, 140).
- 3.4 In the early part of the 19th century Newtown developed rapidly as a centre for the woollen trade, with the majority of this expansion occurring outside the core of the town in an area



known as Penygloddfa, on the opposite, northern, bank of the Severn. With the arrival of the Montgomeryshire Canal in 1821, a new suburb began to develop to the east around the canal basin, eventually becoming one of the major industrial areas in the town.

- 3.5 Closure of many of the industrial sites in the 20th century led to a perceived need for redevelopment, and the subsequent designation of Newtown as a 'new town' in the 1960s. The resulting construction of new housing and industrial estates has greatly increased the population of the town, although this process has led to some degradation of the historic core.

#### **4 WATCHING BRIEF (Fig 1)**

- 4.1 The watching brief was carried out during the major phase of groundworks on 15 February, at which time, the rear part of the Black Boy Hotel was occupied by relatively modern extensions with flat or near-flat roofs. Beyond these was a yard area with garages situated in the north corner of the plot. Small workshops or outbuildings had been located along the boundary wall to the south-west of the garages, but these had been removed prior to the watching brief. Some levelling of the ground was also undertaken prior to the watching brief, but it was readily apparent that the deposits removed by this activity were no older than 19th century in date.
- 4.2 Examination of the ground prior to the commencement of machining revealed a stone foundation wall, running north-west/south-east (Plate 1), with a second wall running off this to the north-east (Plate 2), both of which are depicted as solid lines on Fig 1. These foundations were laid into dark silty deposits, which were evidently no older than the 19th century, and they appear to relate to a larger building than that which was removed prior to the watching brief. The origin and function of this earlier building is unknown, but there was evidence of its above-ground portions being constructed of brick, particularly where the north-west/south-east aligned portion met the south-west end of the boundary wall which defines the north-west side of the development area.
- 4.3 As far as could be determined the boundary wall was entirely brick-built, and it survived to over 3m in height. A horizontal line of discontinuity between the upper and lower parts of the wall made it readily apparent that the wall had originally been much lower and had then been raised to its present height, presumably to act as the rear (north-west) wall of the building mentioned above.
- 4.4 One additional feature was recognised prior to the commencement of groundworks, consisting of a timber (oak) beam (Plate 3), which had been set on end at the south-west end of the brick-built boundary wall (see Fig 1) and supported some fencing. Closer examination of the beam revealed that it had originally been part of a building and retained evidence of pegged mortice joints (Plate 4). Two joints were noted, 0.9m apart, suggesting that the beam represents a re-used section of box-framing from a half-timbered building.
- 4.5 The main part of the watching brief comprised the overview of the excavation of trenches for the concrete strip foundations of the new extension (Plates 5 and 6). Material was removed by machine excavator, with the base of the trenches being levelled and shovel cleaned by the construction contractor. The trenches were approximately 0.7m wide and up to 0.9m deep in relation to the surface of the adjoining yard.
- 4.6 The deposits revealed by the trenching were examined for features and artefacts and it rapidly became apparent that those which were cut by the trenches were of post-medieval and probably 19th-century date. The upper 0.4m of deposits were tarmac or hardstanding representing previous yard surfaces, while the lower 0.4m-0.5m were dark grey-brown silts containing post-medieval finds which may represent a garden soil in the area to the rear of the hotel.
- 4.7 Earlier deposits were actually revealed in the base of the foundation trenches, but these remain undisturbed. Although interpretation of the earlier deposits proved difficult in the restricted area available, a single sherd of possible late-medieval pottery was recovered

from their surface and some variation in the material was observed, suggesting the potential for a sequence of medieval deposits. The material varied from gravel to sticky grey clay and yellowish-brown silt, with some flecks of charcoal present in the base of the trench which passed to the south-east of the hotel.

- 4.8 Discussions with the contractor responsible for construction confirmed that the foundation trenches represented the maximum penetration of groundworks into the archaeological deposits present on the site. As these deposits were likely to be little earlier than the 19th century, it was determined that the examination of additional groundworks was unlikely to be productive and the watching brief was terminated.

## 5 CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 No significant archaeological features appear to have been disturbed by the excavation works associated with the construction of foundations for the new extension. The excavation of the trenches stopped on reaching the base of what appear to be post-medieval or 19th-century garden soil deposits and no features related to the medieval town were affected.
- 5.2 Although earlier deposits were unaffected, one sherd of possible late medieval pottery was identified resting on the underlying deposits and this was retained for examination. The variation which was noted in the surface of these underlying deposits suggested that they may represent a sequence of layers which are potentially of medieval date.
- 5.3 Evidence was revealed of a possible building on the site of the extension, in the form of two interconnecting foundation walls. However, these were set in material which is post-medieval in origin and they are unlikely to be earlier than 19th-century in date. They seem to represent a larger structure which may have had its above-ground parts constructed of brick. This could have been contemporary with the raising of the brick-built boundary wall which defines the north-west side of the land to the rear of the hotel, and preceded the more recent structure in this area which was demolished prior to the commencement of groundworks.

## 6 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 6.1 The writer would like to thank Barry Bellis, the construction contractor, for his co-operation.

## 7 SOURCES

### 7.1 References

Silvester, R J, 1992, *Montgomeryshire Historic Settlements II*, CPAT Report No 40:  
Welshpool

### 7.2 Cartographic sources

1994 British Geological Survey map of the Rocks of Wales (Solid edition)

1983 Soil Survey of England and Wales map and legend (Sheet 2 - Wales)



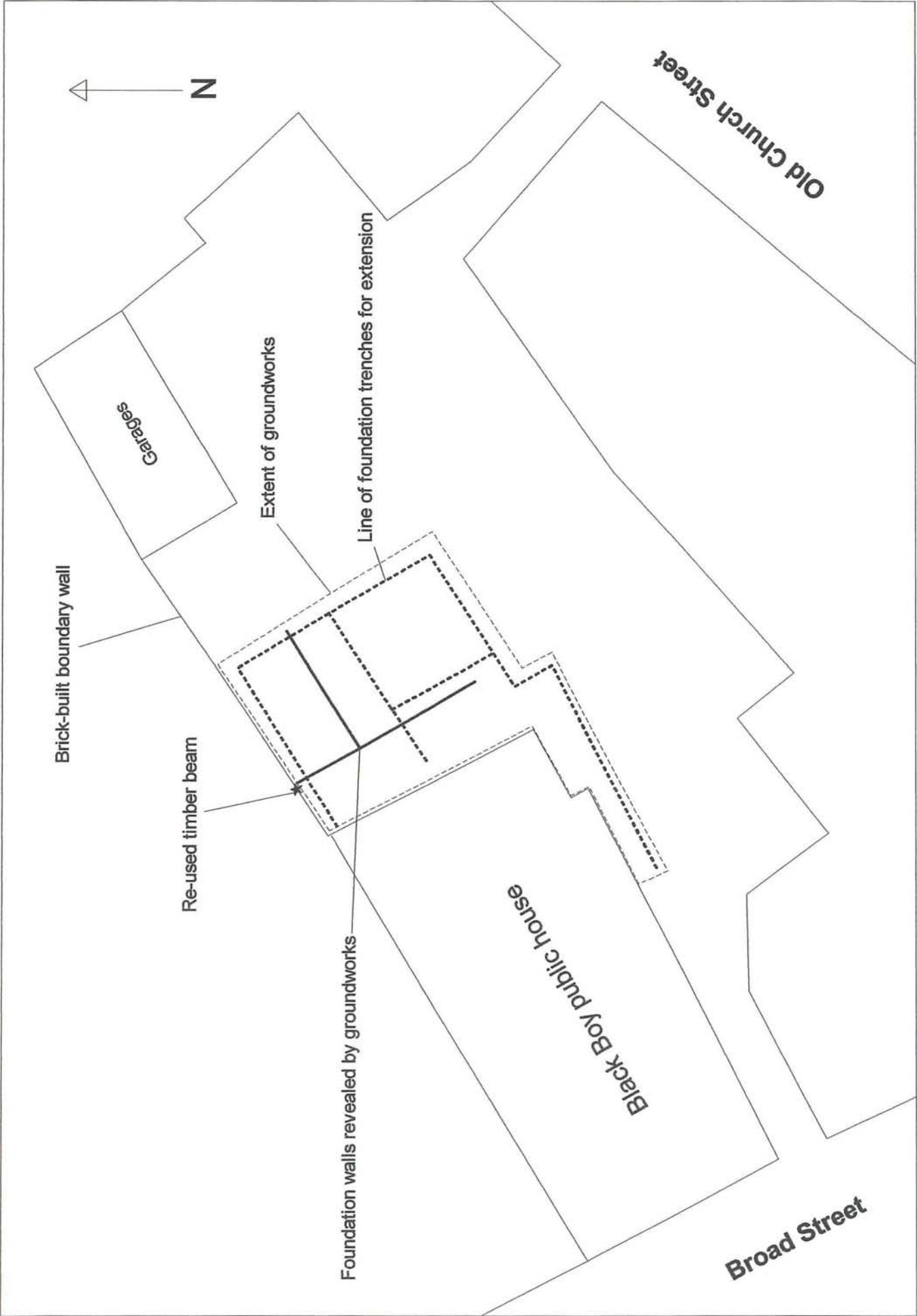


Fig 1 Plan of the development Scale 1:250





Plate 1 Remains of foundation wall running north-west/south-east, from south-east



Plate 2 Foundation wall running north-east/south-west, from south-west





Plate 3 Re-used timber beam forming part of development area boundary, from east



Plate 4 Detail of surviving joint in beam





Plate 5 Foundation trench for the extension running alongside the Black Boy Hotel, from south-west



Plate 6 Partial view of foundation trenches for the extension, from north-north-east