

**THE CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST**

**The Newtown Bowling Green  
Development Site  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT**



**CPAT Report No 819**

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**F Grant and R J Silvester**  
October 2006

Report for J.Ross Developments Ltd

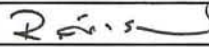
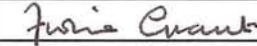


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## 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In September 2006 the Field Services Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (henceforward CPAT) was invited by J. Ross Developments to provide a quotation for a pre-determination archaeological assessment for land at Newtown Bowling Green, Powys. The assessment was requested by Mr A Jones of J Ross Developments at an early stage in the planning of the development and in advance of any requirements from the Curatorial Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust in their capacity as archaeological advisors to the planning authority for the region.
- 1.2 The CPAT quotation was accepted by J. Ross Developments in September 2006. The desk-top and field survey elements of the assessment were carried out in September and October 2006 and this report was written immediately thereafter.

## 2 LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

- 2.1 The proposed development is located in the north-western area of the town centre centred at SO 3106 2916 (Fig. 1). The site is bounded by the River Severn in the north-west and Back Lane in the east.
- 2.2 The area is currently occupied by the bowling greens, associated social club, public car-park and a turfed area with shrubberies and mature trees to the south.
- 2.3 The underlying geology of the development area consists of Silurian sedimentary rocks of the Wenlock and Ludlow series (British Geological Survey map 1994). The soils consist generally of typical brown alluvial soils, derived from the River Severn (Soil Survey of England and Wales map and legend 1983).

## 3 METHODS

- 3.1 The initial phase of the assessment consisted of a desk-based study of the readily available primary and secondary sources relating to the development area. The repositories consulted include: the regional Historic Environment Record (HER), held by the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust in Welshpool; the Powys County Archives at Llandrindod wells; the National Monuments Record (NMR), at the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments in Wales (RCAHMW), in Aberystwyth; and the National Library of Wales (NLW), also in Aberystwyth.
- 3.2 Following the desk-based study, the area was examined by a walk-over survey. Any sites that were encountered during the field survey were recorded on standard CPAT site visit forms, the data including: an accurate location using a hand-held global positioning system (GPS) receiver; a written description of character, function, condition, vulnerability, dating etc; and a sketch survey, where appropriate. Digital photography, to an appropriate resolution, has been taken of selected archaeological sites and locations.
- 3.3 In the following sections the term *PRN* precedes the primary record number of a site in the regional Historic Environment Record, and where appropriate the term *SAM* precedes the scheduled ancient monument number given to a site statutorily designated by Cadw.

## 4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

### The Town of Newtown

- 4.1 Newtown, the largest urban centre in northern Powys, lies on level ground in a bend of the River Severn. The river provided some natural protection as well as a level of definition to the medieval settlement that developed here. Like so many of the historic towns and villages of eastern Wales it is not possible to determine precisely when the earliest settlement came into existence. The surrounding area was known as Llanfair Cedewain and the valley as Dyffryn Llanfair, both of which might suggest that the church of St Mary was a foundation that predated the new town.
- 4.2 The first reference to the chapel of St Mary, which still survives as a ruin beside the river in the northern corner of the town, was in 1253 when the chapel of *Llanweyr* was dependent on the mother church of Llanllwrchaiarn just down river. When the commote of Cedewain was granted to Roger Mortimer in 1279, it took him little more than a year to acquire from Edward I the right to hold a weekly market and an annual fair in the manor, and it can be assumed that the establishment of the town went hand in hand with the implementation of these rights. By 1291 Llanfair had become independent of Llanllwrchaiarn, the implication being that Newtown was growing in importance, and had outstripped its parent settlement, which seems never to have been anything but a small village. By 1321 Newtown was well established. However, specific references to it do not appear until the second quarter of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, with a document of 1331 referring to the *Nova Villa de Kedenwywg*, while *Drenewyth*, the Welsh equivalent of Newtown, was first recorded in 1394. It seems likely that during the century Newtown acquired borough status though no confirmatory charter is known to exist.
- 4.3 Its later history is equally poorly documented. Leland in the 1530s thought it ‘meately welle buildyd after the Walche fascion’ (Smith 1964, iii, 12) and this suggests that unlike some other border towns it was not going through a phase of stagnation or decline at that time. In 1545, fifty-five taxpayers appear in the records.
- 4.4 The layout of the town reveals the classic pattern of a planned settlement, with a main axial street – Broad Street – and other lanes or roads running off it at right angles. There is an assumption that the bridge across the Severn linking Broad Street to the lands to the north was an early link in the communications network, but there is little evidence to confirm such a theory. The stone bridge was built here as late as 1826-7 and was widened in 1857; it replaced a wooden predecessor whose age is unknown. Immediately to the south-west of the planned settlement was what is usually classed as a motte and bailey earthwork castle, though if it was contemporary with the emergence of the town it is an exceptionally late example of this type of earthwork. Newtown Hall which once lay beside it and whose gardens appear to have destroyed much of the castle bailey, has now gone, but its history certainly goes back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century. A second motte, Gro Tump, lay further to the east, about 1.25km away from the medieval town.
- 4.5 How far south the original town extended is not immediately obvious, but becomes a little clearer when the former existence of Newtown Green is taken into account. This was an elongated tract of common land which was enclosed as late as 1806, its northern boundary lying immediately south of both the Newtown Hall motte and Market Street, while its southern boundary was a small stream around 100m away. By 1843 the former green was dense with housing on both sides of the new Ladywell Street, but it can reasonably be assumed that the common dated back to medieval times and that there was no real settlement development there, other than a handful of small and late in date encroachments.
- 4.6 It was only in the 19<sup>th</sup> century that Newtown really expanded as it developed into the centre of the flannel manufacturing industry in mid-Wales, with at least fifty factories established; this had a considerable impact on the spread of settlement in Penygloddfa to the north of the river.

Fulling mills, bleaching grounds, a foundry, tanneries and potteries all followed as Lewis reported in 1833, and in 1819 the Montgomeryshire canal was extended to Newtown (Dodd 1990, 107).

- 4.7 New Road was cut through the existing layout of streets in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, but prior to its creation there was a road running along the southern side of the river, through what was called St Giles, and then swinging through the old town via Market Street, before looping up to meet an existing road running besides the river to Llanidloes. This road is almost certainly on the line of the original Roman road from Caersws to Forden Gaer near Montgomery. Its line was extended by a continuous field boundary running for hundreds of metres eastwards and it is clearly discernible on 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>-century maps.
- 4.8 It is against this background of a relatively small and tightly constrained medieval settlement in the loop of the Severn, surrounded by agricultural land and with a gentry house (Newtown Hall) on its western periphery, that the Bowling Green development should be seen.

#### **The Bowling Green Area**

- 4.9 There are difficulties in determining the extent of the town of Newtown both in the Middle Ages and through until the 18<sup>th</sup> century, because of a dearth of source material. This is more than an academic question because of the hypothetical possibility that the town might have expanded westwards from its core area into that part of the loop of the Severn where Newtown Hall was later established. It is a hypothesis that cannot be wholly discounted, but it does appear unlikely. That none of the estate and other maps show anything remotely akin to a tenement pattern is not significant in itself for some tenements might conceivably have been swept away when Newtown Hall and its grounds were established, but generally there is no positive evidence to suggest that the medieval, built-up area expanded in this direction. Archaeological excavations to the rear of Wesley Place, just to the east of the development site, confirmed the presence of medieval activity there, but this simply confirms what might be assumed from the pattern of urban topography (Owen 1993).
- 4.10 Newtown Hall Castle Mound (SO 10709142) lies just to the south of the development area. It is a D-shaped mound with a surrounding ditch, the mound being 5-6m high, but its date is uncertain. Spurgeon (1966, 16) has argued cogently that it was built to provide some protection for Newtown, yet the late 13<sup>th</sup> century is a late date indeed for a motte and bailey castle. Its present, rather curious form may be the result of works in around 1641-2 when Sir John Pryce seems to have re-fortified the motte, and originally it had a conventional shape. Subsequently, it was incorporated into the grounds of Newtown Hall and utilised as a landscape feature. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century there was a summer house and a tennis court on top of it. Around 1909 or 1910 the foundations of 'a small medieval dwelling' (but probably, in reality of 17<sup>th</sup>-century date) were uncovered on the top.
- 4.11 According to an early informed source the bailey of the motte lay to the north of the motte and extended as far as the River Severn. Its eastern bank with an external ditch was said to be quite distinct, and there was also the possibility of an outer enclosure, perhaps a further bailey, with a western defensive bank. (RCAHMW 1911, 161). All this, however, does not appear to have been based on substantive evidence and is not particularly convincing. A more recent authority (Spurgeon 1966) argues for a smaller bailey on the north-east side of the motte, stating that on the south it ran along the edge of Park Street which is up to 2m lower than the ground to the north and, though partially removed by the house known as The Lodge, a scarp then runs northwards for about 12m, dropping down to the boundary wall edging the road. The scarp can then be made out faintly curving southwards back to the motte but fades out before reaching the lane from the lodge to the hall.

- 4.12 Newtown Hall (SO 10689149) was originally built in the years before 1577 by Richard Pryce, the then vicar of Kerry. The present house, now used as Council Offices, is a modern successor to Pryce's house. Few records seem to survive of Newtown Hall, but it was painted by John Ingleby in 1796, though that view adds little to what is discernible from plans of the time, other than to indicate that there was an abundance of trees planted around the house and that less substantial farm buildings lay off to one side of it. The gardens around the hall show on the 1902 Ordnance Survey map and include a wide range of features including an orangery, parterres, parkland and copses.
- 4.13 Other, unspecified earthworks which were attributed to centuries of cultivation and the impact of the river were referred to by RCAHMW, and another is shown on an estate map towards the back of a plot running off Broad Street. Spurgeon notes that there was a fairly modern flood bank or garden feature with an outer ditch to the north-west of Newtown Hall running towards the river. He wondered whether it might overlie the town defences, though this suggestion must be qualified by the fact that there is no substantive evidence for the presence of any town defences at Newtown. He also suggested, perhaps more reasonably, that the earthwork could have been constructed in 1641-2 to channel water into the motte ditch. It appears to be depicted on the plan of 1798 and the tithe map, and is clear on the later 19<sup>th</sup>-century Ordnance Survey maps. This feature still survives, stretching for *c.*72m across a currently turfed area. The bank is between 7.5-8m wide at the base with sloping 45° sides and a level top which is *c.*3m wide. Two mature lime trees are growing atop the bank.
- 4.14 The plan of 1798 shows the proposed development site to be occupied by three fields, with a linear hatched area leading from the river south towards Newtown Hall. To the west of the hall a four-sided yard and buildings are depicted. On the eastern edge the modern Back Lane is shown running only as far as Wesley Street, its extension northwards being depicted only as a field boundary at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.
- 4.15 The Tithe map of 1843 shows the largest of the three earlier fields now sub-divided into meadows and pastures, owned by the Reverend George Arthur Evors of Newtown Hall, but occupied by Thomas Drew and Richard Wigley. Adjacent to Newtown Hall were lawns and a meadow. The four-sided yard is now shown without the northern range of buildings.
- 4.16 The later 19<sup>th</sup> century saw the construction of two terraces of buildings to the east of the development area. The first of these was aligned west-south-west by east-north-east opposite the entrance to Wesley Street, and consisted of at least four rectangular buildings. The second extended southwards along the frontage of Back Hill, and fell outside the development area.
- 4.17 For much of the earlier 20<sup>th</sup> century the northern extent of the development area remained open ground. The OS map of 1963 shows a small enclosure in the far north-eastern corner, within the general open ground or park, with Newtown Hall and gardens still in place to the south. A single bowling green is depicted on the OS 1:1250 map of 1967, prior to the northern extension of Back Lane which was constructed in the mid 1970s, and which necessitated the demolition of the original club-house and construction of a new one. The subsequent demolition of Newtown Hall allowed the construction of the current town hall on the site, and finally, the construction of the public car-park.



## 5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL SUMMARY

- 5.1 Each site of archaeological interest, identified during the assessment, has been classified according to its perceived significance. The categories, with the exception of Category E, are based on those given in the Department of Environment, Transport and Regions' *Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) Volume 11 Section 3 Part 2 (1993)*. Category E is taken from the draft *Archaeology and the Trunk Road Programme in Wales: a Manual of Best Practice* prepared by Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments (n.d.) which in other respects follows the DMRB volume.

*Category A* sites are those believed by CPAT to be of primary significance, either potentially of national importance or already designated by CADW as scheduled ancient monuments or listed buildings. It is presumed that sites in this category will be preserved and protected *in situ*.

*Category B* sites are sites of regional importance. These sites are not of sufficient importance to justify scheduling, but are nevertheless important in aiding the understanding and interpretation of the archaeology of the region. Preservation *in situ* is the preferred option for these sites, but if loss or damage is unavoidable, appropriate detailed recording should be undertaken.

*Category C* sites are sites of local importance. These sites are of lesser importance, but are nevertheless useful in aiding the understanding and interpretation of the archaeology of the local area. They are not normally of sufficient importance to justify preservation if threatened, but merit adequate recording in advance of loss or damage, or if portable they should be moved.

*Category D* sites are either sites of minor importance or those which are so badly damaged that too little now remains to justify their inclusion in a higher grade. Rapid recording should be sufficient, but as with Category C sites they should be moved if this is an appropriate strategy.

*Category E* sites are sites which have been identified, but whose importance cannot be assessed from fieldwork and desk-based study alone. An archaeological evaluation would be required to categorise such a site more accurately if the proposal was likely to affect it in any way.

- 5.2 The locations of the individual archaeological sites are shown on Figure 1. Tables summarising the archaeology of the study area according to its perceived importance are provided below.

### Category A sites

- 5.3 There are no sites belonging this category in the development area, though the scheduled castle mound lies just beyond it.

### Category B sites

- 5.4 There are no sites belonging this category in the development area.

### Category C sites

- 5.5 There are no sites belonging to this category in the development area

### Category D sites

- 5.6 There is one site belonging this category in the development area

Site No	Name	Type	Condition	Category	NGR
Site 1	Bowling Green and club		Intact	D	SO31072917

**Site 1**

The site consists of two bowling greens and a modern flat-roofed, brick-built social club. The greens are of no great antiquity having been created in the 1960s-70s, and similarly the clubhouse is of no archaeological or architectural significance.

**Category E sites**

5.7 There are four sites belonging to this category in the development area

Site No	Name	Type	Condition	Category	NGR
Site 2	Newtown Hall Earthwork	Earthwork	Near intact	E	SO3106329154
Site 3	Buildings	Buildings	Destroyed	E	SO31062916
Site 4	Newtown Hall	Buildings	Destroyed	E	SO31062914
Site 5	Newtown Hall Gardens	Gardens	Near destroyed	E	SO31062915

**Site 2***Newtown Hall Earthwork*

The linear earthwork is aligned north-west to south-east and extends for approximately 72m, although it has been truncated at its northern extent during the creation of the car-park. In profile it is between 7.5-8m wide at the base, with 45° sloping sides to a 3m wide level top. The bank sits in an area of lawns with several shrubberies and mature trees, including two lime trees which are growing on the bank. The date and function of this earthwork is not known although several possibilities may be proposed, including flood defences, a raised trackway to a former crossing point of the river, civil war defences, or an earlier feature relating to the motte. Certainly either the alignment of the earthwork with the motte or its relationship with Newtown Hall appear key to understanding this feature.

**Site 3***Buildings*

Site 3 is a row of buildings is depicted on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey of 1890, lying to the west of Wesley Street and extending east-north-east to west-south-west.

**Site 4***Newtown Hall (PRN 1039)*

Site 4 is the site of Newtown Hall, a probable 16th-century house, now demolished. Although the majority of the hall itself may lie beneath the present town hall, a range of buildings is also shown on early maps lying to the west of the main hall.

**Site 5***Newtown Hall Gardens*

Site 5 is the site of Newtown Hall Gardens, extending to the north-west of the former hall. Although generally levelled, there are several mature trees in this area which may relate to the former gardens, and other garden features may remain beneath the turf.

## 6 IMPACT

- 6.1 The potential impacts of the proposal on the archaeological resource of the development area are considered in the table below.

Site No	Name	Type	Condition	Potential Impact	Category
Site 1	Bowling Green and club	Building	Intact	Loss	D
Site 2	Newtown Hall Earthwork	Earthwork	Near intact	Destruction	E
Site 3	Buildings	Buildings	Destroyed	Potential disturbance to any sub-surface remains	E
Site 4	Newtown Hall	Buildings	Destroyed	Potential disturbance to any sub-surface remains	E
Site 5	Newtown Hall Gardens	Gardens	Near destroyed	Potential disturbance to any sub-surface remains	E

- 6.2 In addition to the sites recorded above, there is the potential for further unrecorded sites that may be disturbed by the proposed development. These sites consist of those which have not been previously recorded and only remain as sub-surface features, having no extant visible traces.

## 7 CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 The assessment has identified 5 sites within the area of the proposed development.
- 7.2 Prior to the construction of the present town-hall, car-park and bowling greens the area was occupied by Newtown Hall and its associated gardens and park-land. A terrace of 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings occupied part of the eastern extent of the development site.
- 7.3 It appears likely that a programme of mitigation will need to be developed by the regional Curator on the basis of the assessment report.

## 8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 8.1 The writers would like to thank the following for their assistance during the project: the staff of the National Library of Wales in Aberystwyth; and the staff of the National Monuments Record at RCAHMW in Aberystwyth.

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*Drawings etc*

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Fig. 1 Development area and archaeological sites, scale 1:2,500



Plate 1 Site 2, Newtown Hall Earthwork from the south-west