

**CPAT Report No 989**

# **Bryn Awel, School Lane, Montgomery, Powys**

## **ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION**



**THE CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST**

**CPAT Report No 989**

**Bryn Awel, School Lane, Montgomery, Powys**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION**

**I Grant**  
April 2009

Report for Mr T Price

**The Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust**

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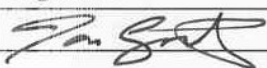
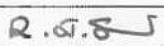

cover: Aerial view of Montgomery from the east (CPAT 04-c-083)

## CPAT Report Record

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In December 2008 the Contracts and Field Services Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT) was invited by Mr Gwynfor Humphreys, acting on behalf of Mr T Price, to provide a quotation and specification for undertaking an archaeological evaluation in connection with proposals to construct a new dwelling on land adjacent to Brynawel, School Lane, Montgomery (Application No P2008/1482). The Curatorial Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust, in their capacity as archaeological advisors to the local authority, had determined that an archaeological evaluation was required to identify the potential impact on the archaeological resource. Accordingly, a brief was prepared which detailed the works required (EVB 725).
- 1.2 Information held within the regional Historic Environment Record indicated that the application site lay within the medieval historic core of Montgomery and it was therefore anticipated that ground disturbance for the new development might impact upon medieval and later archaeology preserved as sub-surface deposits.
- 1.3 The evaluation was undertaken between 6-9 April 2009 and this report was written immediately thereafter.



Fig. 1 View of Montgomery from the east showing the development site in relation to the church and castle. Photo CPAT 04-c-083

## 2 GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The town of Montgomery is approximately equidistant from two of the major towns of mid-Wales, Newtown and Welshpool, the former lying about 10km to the west-south-west, while the latter is a similar distance to the north. It is set on the north-eastern slope of a range of hills, where they meet an area of undulating lowland bounded on the other sides by the Camlad and Caebitra rivers. The area of the evaluation lies at NGR SO 22359669, towards the northern side of the town, around 150m north of the Church of St Nicholas (Figs 1-2).
- 2.2 Geologically, Montgomery lies in a faulted area of mudstones and siltstones, where Ludlow series rocks of the Silurian period have been downthrust in relation to the adjoining Caradoc

series rocks of the preceding Ordovician period (1994 British Geological Survey map). The differences in the underlying geology are, mirrored by the overlying soils, the Silurian rocks being overlain by fine silty and loamy soils of the Denbigh 1 Association, while the Ordovician rocks are overlain by fine silty and clayey soils of the Cegin Association (1983 Soil Survey of England and Wales map).

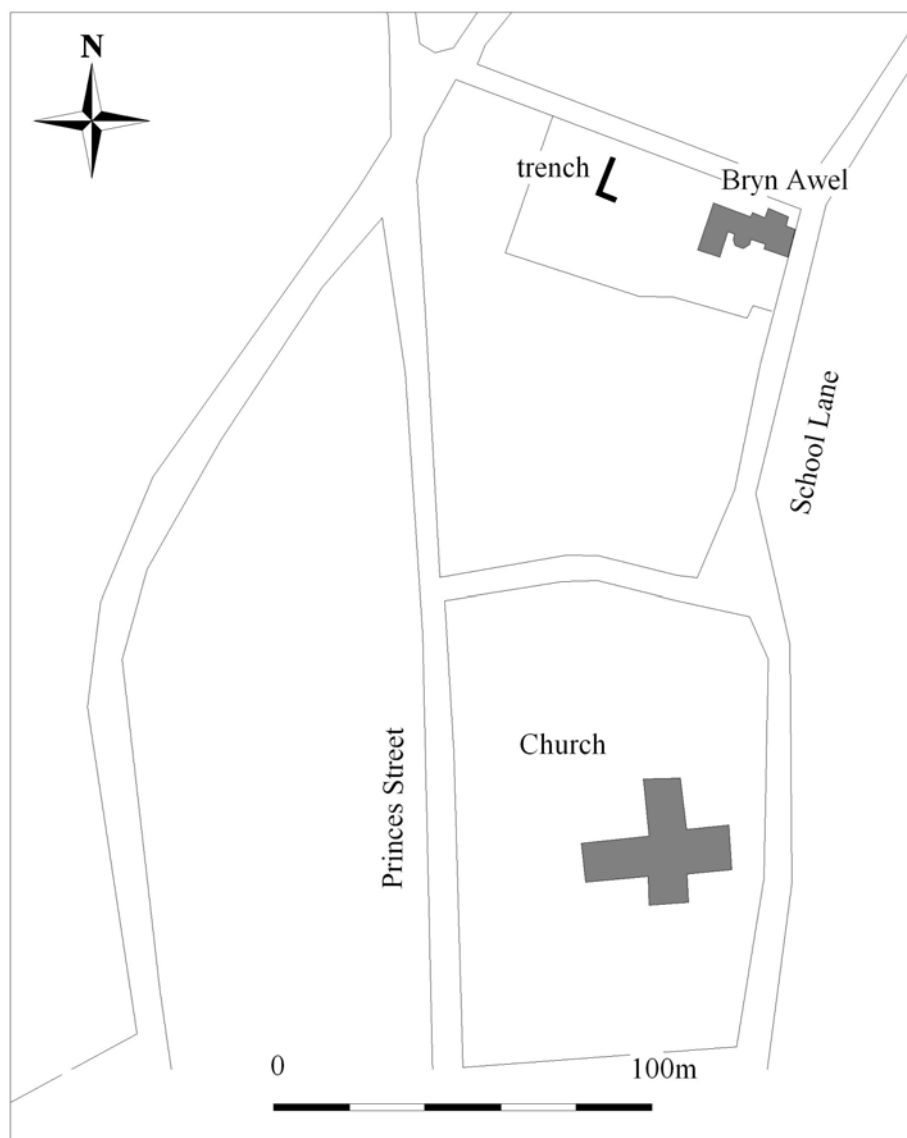


Fig. 2 Site location

### 3 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The background study involved the examination of all the readily available primary and secondary documentary, cartographic, pictorial, and photographic sources known for the immediate area. Repositories consulted included the following: the regional Historic Environment Record (HER), held by CPAT at Welshpool; the National Monuments Record, maintained by the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales (RCAHMW) in Aberystwyth; and the National Library of Wales in Aberystwyth.
- 3.2 Known in Welsh as Trefaldwyn, both this name and its English counterpart were given successively to Hen Domen (or Old Montgomery), the motte and bailey closer to the Severn, and then to the present town of Montgomery. In Domesday Book the motte was called *Castrum*



*Muntgumeri* after its lord, Roger de Montgomery, Earl of Shrewsbury, whose home across the Channel was Montgomery in Normandy. *Gastell baldwin* and hence Trefaldwyn is recorded in c.1170, a reference to Baldwin de Bollers who was granted possession of Montgomery in the early 12<sup>th</sup> century.

- 3.3 Montgomery (or New Montgomery) was developed by Henry III as a strategic and military stronghold on the Welsh border in 1223, its location commended by Mathew Paris as ideal 'for the erection of an impregnable castle'. The spot was rather less suitable for a town, however, but the king issued a safe conduct to all who would bring victuals for sale to the castle, promising the liberties enjoyed by the burgesses of the town of Shrewsbury to those who would stay and live in Montgomery. It was conceived and laid out as a planned town (or plantation) and received its charter in 1227.
- 3.4 The castle's strategic importance declined in the 14<sup>th</sup> century and it began to fall into decay, although later some of it was restored as a private residence. The town on the other hand thrived to some degree, and the population of the borough expanded throughout the 13<sup>th</sup> and into the 14<sup>th</sup> century. A weekly market was held in Broad Street and there were four annual fairs. However, its strategic location hindered its accessibility and thus its commercial development for it lay at some distance from the River Severn. The rise of Newtown and Welshpool, both on the river itself, created rival market towns in superior locations and in 1279 Welshpool's rights to hold markets and fairs were temporarily removed by royal charter because of the damage they were doing to Montgomery's prosperity.

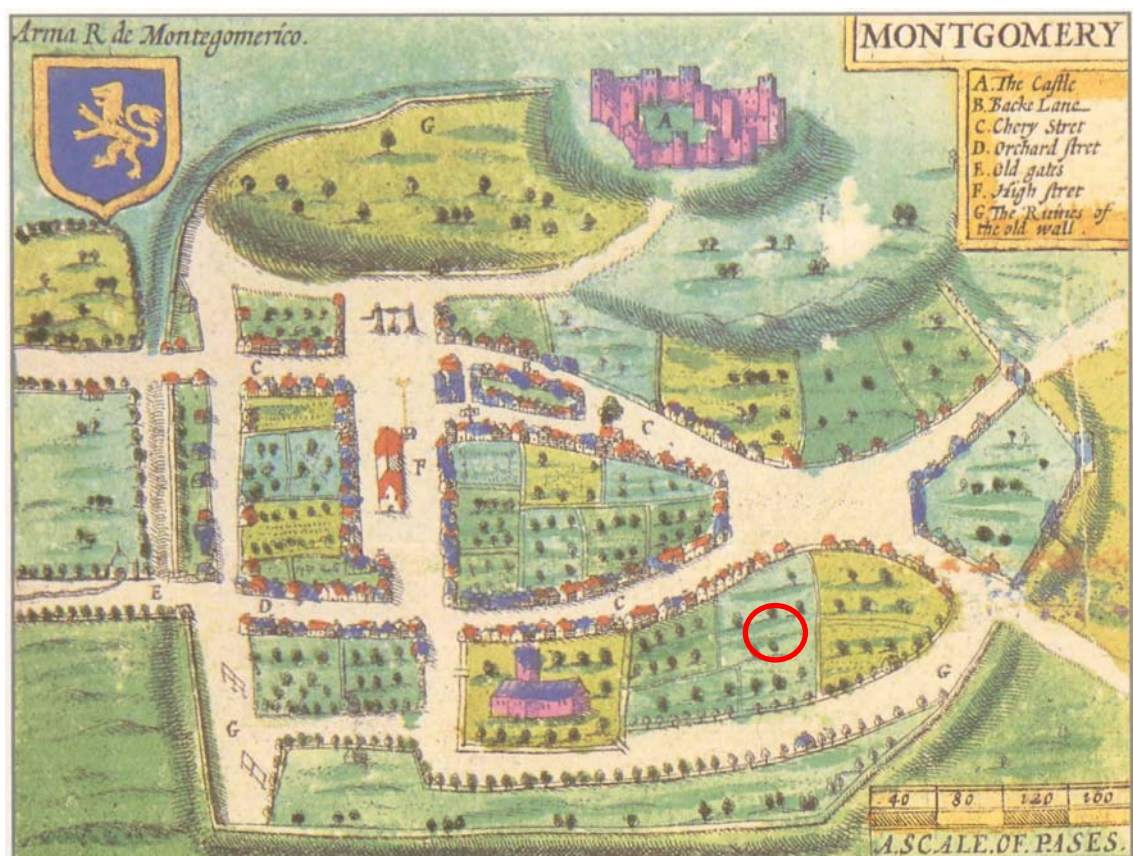


Fig. 3 John Speed's plan of Montgomery; early 17<sup>th</sup> century. North is to the right.

- 3.5 Not surprisingly, Montgomery went into decline in the late medieval period. Large areas of the town, particularly in the northern part, appeared to be devoid of buildings in 1610-11 when John Speed published his plan of the town (Fig. 3), although it was still ranked as one of the more important settlements in the Principality. This was no doubt partly because the town was

accorded the status of county town to the newly created Montgomeryshire in the Act of Union between England and Wales instituted by Henry VIII in 1536. Unlike the other towns of Montgomeryshire, however, it did not develop an industrial base during the post-medieval centuries and as a consequence its growth was stunted.

- 3.6 The grid pattern so typical in a planted town such as Newtown is recognisable only at the southern end of Montgomery in the vicinity of the church and market. Further north the natural landform necessitates a less regular layout. The nature of the medieval buildings and their accompanying plots is little known. Typically, long narrow burgage plots are still distinguishable in some parts of the town, notably off Princes Street and Broad Street. Excavations on a plot beside Pool Road in 1984 and again in 1987 revealed the superimposed plans of two timber houses with a yard behind. Occupation there began in the 13<sup>th</sup> century and seems to have ceased early in the 15<sup>th</sup> century after which the plot remained empty (Britnell and Jones 1989).

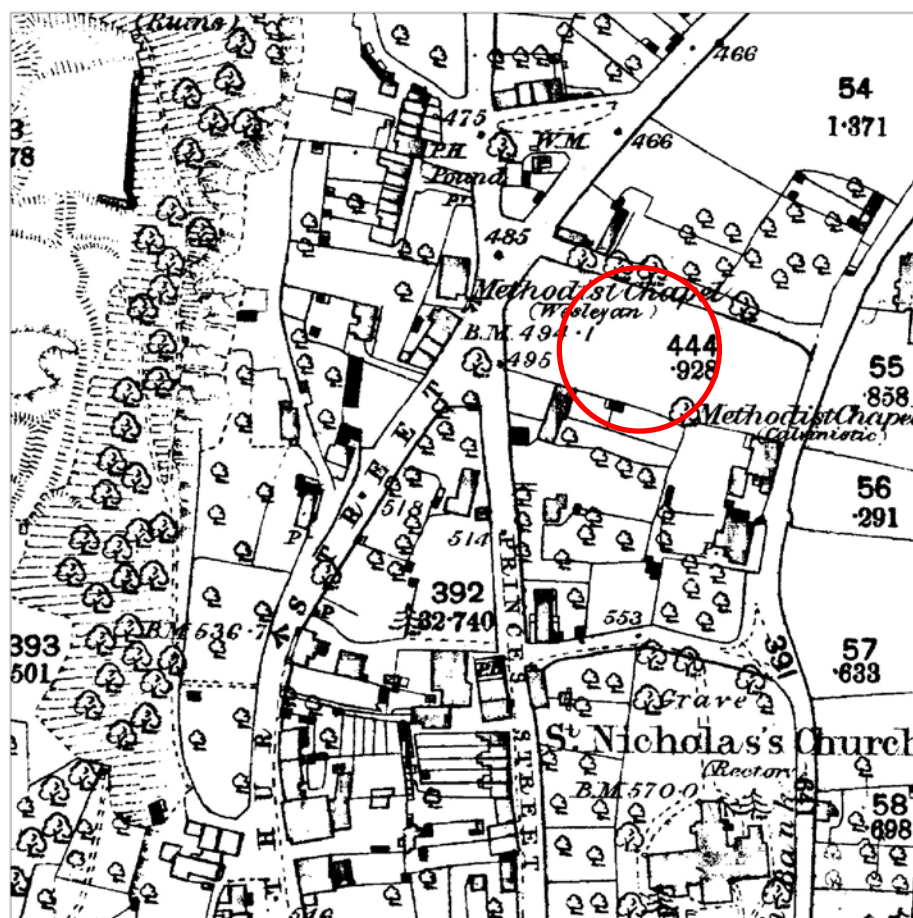


Fig. 4 Ordnance Survey 1<sup>st</sup> edition 1:2,500 map of 1886. The evaluation plot is marked by a red circle

- 3.7 Speed's map (Fig. 2) depicts the town in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, showing the evaluation site as part of a group of garden plots to the south of the church. An estate map of 1785 shows the small lane which bounds the northern side of the site, but nothing within the plot itself, and both this and 19<sup>th</sup>-century maps point to the area being used as gardens, probably related to properties fronting on to Princes Street. The Tithe map of 1839 and the 1886 Ordnance Survey map (Fig. 4) both show the site as undeveloped. It was not until much more recently that the eastern end of the plot became occupied by Bryn Awel, with the remainder forming its gardens.



#### 4 EVALUATION (Figs 5-6)

- 4.1 The evaluation consisted of a single L-shaped trench, 1.5m wide, and measuring 11m by 5.8m overall. The trench was sited with the consent of the curator within an area currently used as a vegetable garden, the size and position of the trench being restricted by the presence of concrete paths and large shrubs.

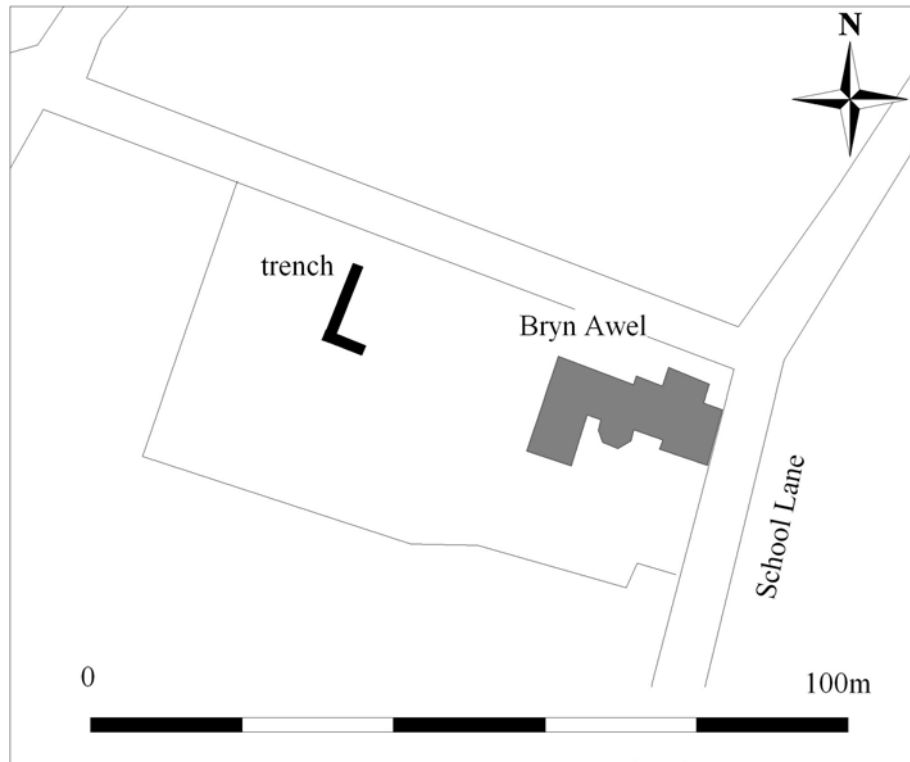


Fig. 5 Trench location

- 4.2 The evaluation process is essentially non-destructive and is designed to determine the depth at which any archaeologically sensitive deposits have survived, together with as much information as possible about their nature, condition and significance. The modern overburden was removed by machine under close archaeological supervision, down to the surface of the first significant archaeological horizon. Thereafter, all excavation was undertaken by hand. Contexts were recorded on individual record forms and drawn and photographed as appropriate. Numbers in brackets in the following text refer to individual context records in the site archive, a summary of which is provided in Appendix 1.



Plate 1. View of Trench, south-facing. Linear feature (6) in the background  
Photo CPAT 2838-002



Plate 2. View of Trench, east-facing. Medieval deposit (7) in situ. Photo CPAT 2838-011



- 4.3 Across the base of the trench the natural subsoil (9) varied from a firm yellowy orange clay to the south, giving way to a silty grey clay and shale towards the garden boundary in the north-east (see Plates 1 and 2). At a mid-point within the north-east to south-west arm of the trench a broad linear feature, orientated east to west, was recorded. The linear ditch (6) was 1.5m wide and 0.24m deep, and contained two fills (4 and 5) the latter a mixture of abraded natural shale and friable grey silt sealed by an upper fill of yellowy brown charcoal-flecked silty clay. Three small abraded bodysherds of medieval pottery were recovered from the upper fill. The shallow concave nature of the linear feature suggests that it is the remains of a burgage boundary ditch (see Plate 3) and the change in the natural subsoils appears to respect the boundary line suggesting possible differences in use between two properties.



Plate 3. West-facing section through the linear ditch (6). Photo CPAT 2838-016

- 4.4 To the north-east the natural silty grey clay was sealed by a thin band of greeny grey silt (8) 20mm thick. To the south of the 'boundary' ditch (6) the natural clay was sealed in places by a firm mottled yellow brown silty clay (7). The trampled and charcoal flecked deposit 7 appeared to be a relict ground surface. Five small body sherds of medieval pottery were recovered from the deposit. No further features or deposits of significance were observed at this level.
- 4.5 Overlying these deposits were a number of garden cultivation soils. The earliest deposit (3) consisted of a firm, mottled grey silty clay, 0.12m thick and contained numerous fragments of coal, house-brick and early 19<sup>th</sup>-century pearlware and whiteware ceramics. This, in turn, was sealed by a late 19<sup>th</sup>-century cultivation soil (2) and topsoil (1) with a combined thickness of up to 0.4m. Numerous fragments of late post medieval pottery, pipe clay and glass were recovered from these deposits, non of which was retained for the archive.

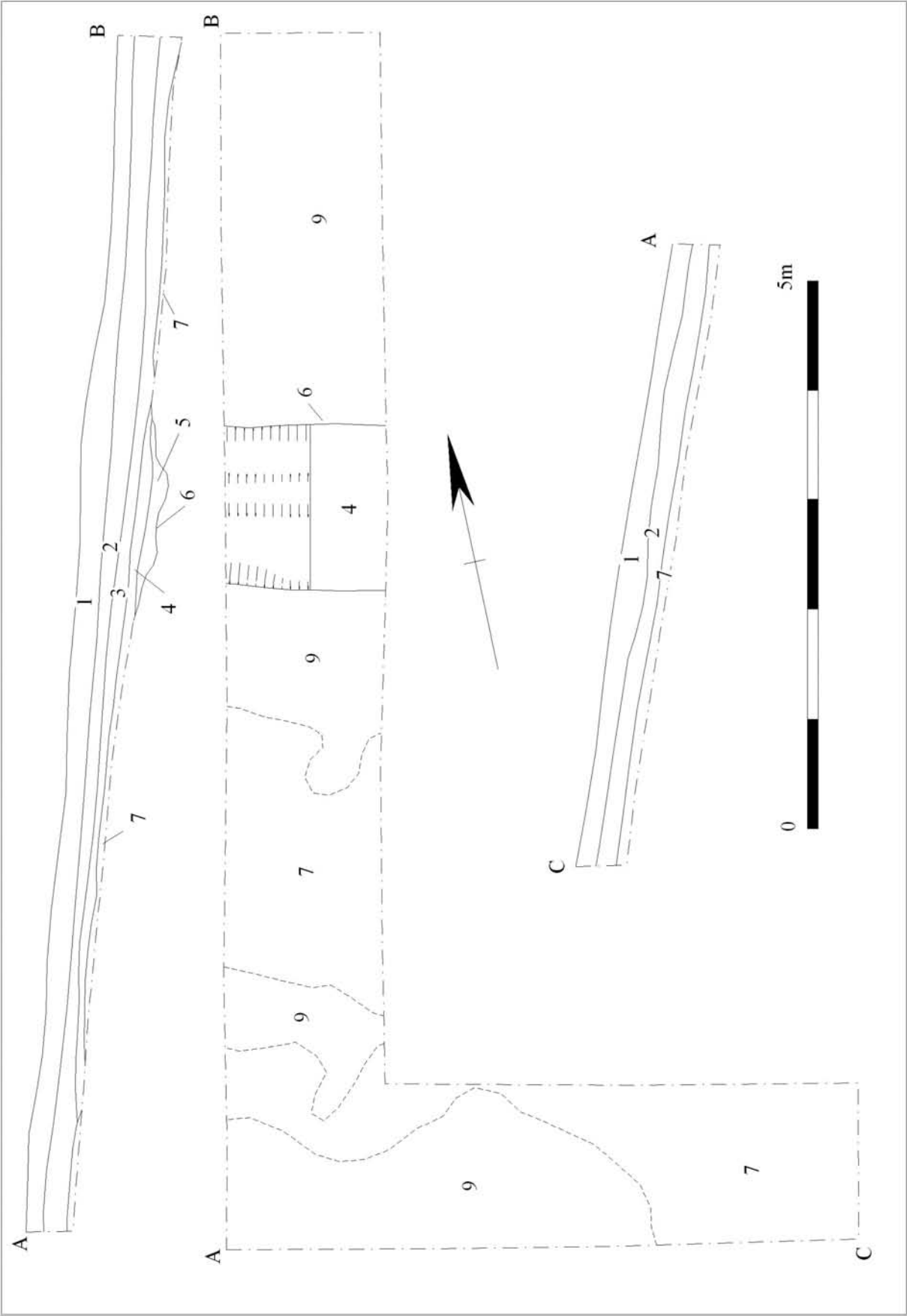


Fig. 6 Trench plan and sections



## **5 FINDS**

- 5.1 The evaluation produced eleven sherds of medieval pottery: three sherds from the upper fill (4) of ditch 5; five sherds from layer 7; two sherds from layer 8; and one sherd from layer 3. The pottery consisted of body sherds from glazed jugs and unglazed cooking pots and while the fabrics showed some variation, all were sandy micaceous wares typical of the area and probably of relatively local manufacture. None of the sherds were particularly diagnostic and are likely to be broadly 13<sup>th</sup>- to 15<sup>th</sup>-century in date.
- 5.2 A range of post-medieval pottery, pipe clay and corroded iron garden debris was also recovered from the topsoil, although this was not retained.

## **6 CONCLUSIONS**

- 6.1 The evaluation produced no direct evidence for medieval occupation within the area investigated, although the results do suggest that the site was formerly part of two medieval burgage plots, divided by a shallow ditched boundary, presumably associated with properties fronting onto Princes Street.
- 6.2 The linear ditch (06) appears to confirm some form of burgage property division traversing east to west and 9m south of the street frontage.
- 6.3 There is a possibility that more significant archaeological deposits survive elsewhere within the plot, particularly towards the eastern end which is nearest to the street frontage.

## **7 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

- 7.1 The writer would like to thank Wendy Owen of CPAT, for her help and assistance with the evaluation, as well as the staff of the following repositories: Historic Environment Record, CPAT; the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth; and the National Monuments Record, Aberystwyth.

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1610 John Speed's map of Montgomery

1785 Estate map of Montgomery, *Shropshire Archives* 4303/2

1839 Montgomery Tithe map and apportionment

1886 Ordnance Survey 1:2,500 first edition map, Montgomeryshire 37.03.

1983 Soil Survey of England and Wales map (Sheet 2 - Wales) and Legend (1:250,000 scale).

1994 British Geological Survey map of Wales (Solid edition at 1:250,000 scale).

**APPENDIX 1****PROJECT ARCHIVE****SITE ARCHIVE**

09 context record forms

01 A1 site plans

20 Digital images

Photographic catalogue

**Medieval pottery catalogue**

<b>Context</b>	<b>Sherds</b>	<b>Comment</b>
3	1	body sherd
4	3	body sherds
7	5	body sherds
8	2	body sherds