

DYFED ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST LTD



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ELEPHANT & CASTLE

26, SPILMAN STREET

CARMARTHEN

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF ON THE BUILDING CONVERSION
Project Record No. 30887
MAY 1995

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ELEPHANT AND CASTLE, 26 SPILMAN STREET, CARMARTHEN

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Summary

In May 1995 Pembroke Design Ltd undertook a programme of conversion of the Elephant and Castle Public House, 26 Spilman Street, Carmarthen (DAT PRN 341). The property lies upon the proposed line of the eastern defences of the known Roman fort of Carmarthen, deposits relating to which have been recorded below nearby properties to the west. The same line was followed by the early 15th century town wall, now gone.

The conversion involved only minor intrusive work, one trench 0.45m deep being excavated in the northern half of the building. Very little archaeology was present in the trench, and it was not capable of interpretation.

1.2 Planning History

The planning application, by Pembroke Design Ltd, for the proposed conversion of the Elephant and Castle Public House, 26 Spilman Street, Carmarthen (CDC application no. D4/23673/55) was forwarded to the Development Control Officer of Dyfed Archaeological Trust's Heritage Management Section, as part of Carmarthen District Council's weekly list of planning applications, in July 1993.

Planning Permission was granted by CDC on 7 September 1993, with a condition that a programme of archaeological work should accompany the scheme.

Pembroke Design Ltd accordingly commissioned the Trust to carry out an archaeological watching brief on the scheme. The watching brief took place 25 May 1995.

1.3 Content and scope of the watching brief

An archaeological watching brief is defined by the Institute of Field Archaeologists as a formal programme of observation and investigation conducted during an operation carried out for non-archaeological reasons - normally a development or other construction project - within a specified area where archaeological deposits may be disturbed or destroyed. The programme will result in the preparation of a report.

The watching brief will be intended to allow, subject to resources, the preservation by record of archaeological deposits in advance of their disturbance or destruction and to provide an opportunity, if necessary, for the watching archaeologist to alert all interested parties to the presence of an archaeological find for which the resources allocated to the watching brief are insufficient to support satisfactory treatment.

The watching brief is not intended as a substitute for contingent excavation.

The client will be supplied with 3 copies of an archaeological report of the results of the watching brief. The report will be fully representative of all the information recovered. Normally it will be read in conjunction with a desk-top assessment for the scheme which provides the historical framework for the watching brief. A copy of the report will also be deposited with Dyfed Sites and Monuments Record.

1.4 Purpose and methodologies of the watching brief

The purpose of the watching brief is to undertake as complete a record as possible of any archaeological features affected by the client's scheme of works. In the case of larger archaeological sites it will seldom be possible or necessary to undertake a record of the entire site; the record will be undertaken only on those areas of the site that may be affected.

The primary stage of the watching brief for any scheme normally involves consultation of the desk top assessment for the scheme and/or consultation of Dyfed Sites and Monuments Record, which is maintained by Dyfed Archaeological Trust's Heritage Management Section, for those sites affected by the scheme.

The client will normally advise Dyfed Archaeological Trust's Field Operations Section of any changes in the proposed works resulting from their consultation of the desk top assessment, and of any sites which may still be affected by the scheme. The client will also provide the Field Operations Section with a proposed schedule of works in order that a full field study may be performed on any affected site prior to the commencement of the works.

Work on or around those affected sites will be subject to the watching brief. The work will be closely observed by an archaeologist from the Field Operations Section who will also undertake a full drawn, written and photographic record of any archaeological features which may be disturbed by the scheme, and any artefact or find exposed during the works. Recording will be carried out where necessary and when convenient: it is the Field Operations Section's aim to minimise any disruption to the client's schedule. However, if archaeological features may be lost during the scheme, it may be necessary for the Field Operations Section to request a postponement of the works in order that the archaeology may be recorded. Larger areas affected may require fuller excavation and/or survey.

2.0 RESULTS OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

2.1 Site location

The Elephant and Castle Public House (DAT PRN 341) lies at the east end of Spilman Street, at NGR SN 4147 2017 and at a height of 23m OD (fig. 6.1).

Spilman Street is one of the two axial E-W roads running along the summit of the ridge between Carmarthen Castle and St Peters Church. The ridge comprises fluvio-glacial gravels and compact boulder clays, both overlying Arenig shales, and is part of the low NE-SW terrace on which the core of the town stands (James, 1981, 1). The ridge here was formerly considerably more pronounced, the summit having been truncated and build-up having occurred on the slopes (Jams, 1993, 9). Immediately to the east of the site, the N-S linear depression now occupied by Church Lane and Parade Road probably represents a former stream valley, springing just east of St Peter's Church and emptying southwards into the Tywi.

2.2 Site history and description

A Roman fort (DAT PRN 39) stood on the ridge in the area now occupied by King Street and Spilman Street. Excavation of the fort site by Dyfed Archaeological Trust in 1985 and 1988 (James, 1993, 7-10) and a watching brief in 1993 (Ludlow and Brennan, 1993, 57-58), demonstrated that the fort was of two phases and gave a very clear picture of its extent (fig. 6.2). The lines of the western defences of both phases, and the northern defences of the later phase, were established. In the excavated areas the rampart comprised a truncated bank of stiff yellow clay. The southern line is represented by the steep slope down to Dan-y-banc that forms the southern edge of the terrace.

The eastern line of the fort defences has not been established with certainty but the stream valley mentioned above must have formed a physical eastward limit. The later medieval town defences (DAT PRN 74), established during the early 15th century after medieval Carmarthen had expanded eastwards from its initial defended core around Guildhall Square, along King and Spilman Streets (James, 1981, 30-31), followed a line just west of the valley along the western side of what is now Conduit Lane, which is thought to have evolved as a result (fig. 6.3). A drawing of 1610 by John Speed (reproduced in James, 1981, 48) appears to show Conduit Lane with the wall to the east and a line of buildings along the west side. The town wall, then, lay along the western property boundary of the Elephant and Castle plot.

The town wall at this point may have closely followed the line of the Roman rampart. The Roman rampart certainly, and possibly the medieval town wall, would have been fronted by ditches which may in fact have utilised the stream valley. These ditches would then lie beneath the Elephant and Castle development site.

It was demonstrated by Dyfed Archaeological Trust in 1993, in a Spilman Street property just west of the Elephant and Castle (Ludlow and Brennan, 1993a, 72-73), that the Roman deposits along the summit of the ridge lie very close to the modern ground surface in an area that has been subject to truncation. The archaeological importance of the development site is then readily apparent.

Conversely, the truncation has also had the effect of removing much of the medieval archaeology and if, as evidence from other locations within the town suggests (Ludlow and Brennan, 1993b, 72-73), the 15th century town wall was built without footings, all evidence for the wall along the western side of the plot will have been lost. However, archaeological evidence of any accompanying 15th century ditch will be deep-lying.

If no medieval ditch was present here, then the Elephant and Castle site east of the wall was doubtless occupied by a medieval 'burgage' property; the arrangement of the property boundaries between Conduit and Church Lanes closely reflects the long, narrow shape of the typical medieval 'burgage plot', and buildings are shown here in 1610 by Speed. Spilman Street is known to have been established by 1355 (James, 1981, 28) and thus the property may pre-date the construction of the town wall here, and have been rebuilt in the 15th century. All this, and, its street-side location, make the Elephant and Castle plot a site of great importance regardless of the potential degree of survival for the medieval deposits.

Superficially, the Elephant and Castle itself shows no structural evidence from any earlier period than the late 18th century. However, there existed the possibility that, like many of Carmarthen's buildings, later rebuilds may have masked fabric from earlier periods - possibly as early as the medieval period.

A map of 1834 (Carmarthen Museum, *Plan of the Town of Carmarthen by John Wood*) depicts a building on the site which probably represents the main street-side part of the present building. By 1890, at least, it was a public house (Ordnance Survey, 1:2500 First Edition, Carmarthenshire, Sheet XXXIX.7, 1890), but a pub called the Elephant and Castle figured in a song called 'The Publican's Directory', sung at Carmarthen Theatre in 1802 (Spurrell, 1934, 44) and this may indeed have been one and the same as the present building.

The building was initially allocated a number in the Dyfed Sites and Monuments Record due to its inclusion in a list of Carmarthen Public Houses published in 1934 (Spurrell, 1934, 41)

2.3 Observations during the watching brief

The conversion of the Elephant and Castle consisted of, in the main, superficial works limited to alterations to the interiors, the majority of the fabric of the building being retained. Intrusive works were represented by a single construction trench which was both short and shallow. Work was observed 25 May 1995.

2.3.1 The building (figs. 6.5 and 6.6)

26 Spilman Street, now the Elephant and Castle, comprises a main block facing the street side-on, and continuous with the attached building to the east. There is a narrow extension to the rear, of 20th century date, which will not be described further in this report.

The main block is of three bays, and three storeys over a cellar. It is of Carboniferous Limestone and Old Red Sandstone construction, now rendered, beneath a slate gable roof whose line continues that of the attached building to the west. The chimneys are of brick.

The cellar was not observed during the watching brief but has not been identified during previous surveys as being medieval in origin (James, 1981, 41), and in form represents the typical post-medieval pub cellar with an access chute from the pavement.

On the ground floor, the original arrangements have been altered in recent years and all internal partition walls are of timber/plaster. However, the layout probably always featured two rooms either side of a central passage with doorways front and rear. All original openings have been altered in the 20th century, the two rear windows having been blocked, while the two front windows have been enlarged.

A similar situation prevails on the first floor where the three bay arrangement has been effaced by the modern divisions. The three front windows betray the threefold division and are original, though rebuilt in the 20th century. The two rear windows are also 20th century, though their asymmetrical location may be original. The second floor is more or less identical to the first floor but is a half-attic storey and the openings are correspondingly smaller.

Little evidence of former divisions was furnished during the conversion, in which many finishes were retained. On the basis of the visible structural evidence and detail, there is no reason to propose a date any earlier than the later 18th-early 19th century for the construction of the building.

2.3.2 The trench (fig. 6.7)

Whilst many internal partitions were replaced during the conversion, the only new structural wall was constructed across the 20th century extension, continuing outside this building. The construction trench was 5.7m long (N-S), and 0.45m deep. The sections were recorded and photographed.

The northern 2.8m of the trench ran through the external area where the present ground level is 0.5m higher than the floor within the extension. It was cut through thick concrete and rubble hardcore was only exposed in the bottom of the trench. All material was 20th century.

The southern 2.9m was cut through very disturbed ground. A ceramic pipe ran across the north end of this section, and a further service trench apparently ran parallel to the trench. The cut section displayed entirely modern debris - rubble, large concrete fragments, brick, roofing tile, and 20th century pottery.

However, in the very bottom of the north end of this section of the trench was seen the top of a brown, organic soil with yellowish mortar spreads, charcoal and some coal fragments. In addition, directly below the ceramic pipe was exposed a small area of orange (?burnt) clay.

2.4 Conclusions

No deposits demonstrably relating to Roman occupation were observed.

The clay and organic soil in the construction trench may relate to the late medieval or, given the presence of coal fragments, the early post-medieval period. The soil is similar in nature to medieval deposits observed elsewhere in the immediate vicinity of the site. If the deposits are indeed this early, then given the level that they occur it is highly unlikely that any 15th century defensive ditch is crossing the site at this point.

The present Elephant and Castle building displays no features earlier than the late 18th-early 19th century, but may occupy the site of an earlier building.

3.0 THE FINDS

All finds encountered during the watching brief were of 20th century date. All were discarded.

4.0 THE ARCHIVE

The archive, indexed according to the National Monuments Record (NMR) material categories, is held by the Dyfed Archaeological Trust, Llandeilo, and contains the following:-

- A. Copy of the final report
- B. Field notes
- C. Copies of architects drawings and planning specs.
- D. Monochrome photographs
- G. Correspondence on archaeological matters; references
- J. Final drawings
- L. General admin. notes
- M. Project correspondence

There is no material for classes E, F, H, I, K and N.

5.0 SOURCES

Dyfed Sites and Monuments Record.

Manuscript maps

Carmarthen Museum, *Map of Carmarthen*, 1834, J. Wood.

Carmarthenshire Record Office, *Sketch Plan of Carmarthen*, 1786, T. Lewis.

Printed maps

Ordnance Survey, 1:2500 First Edition, Carmarthenshire, Sheet XXXIX.7, 1890.

Ordnance Survey, 1:2500 Second Edition, Carmarthenshire, Sheet XXXIX.7, 1907.

Published works

James, H., 1992, 'Excavations in Roman Carmarthen 1978-1990', *The Carmarthenshire Antiquary*, Vol. XXVIII.

James, T., 1980, *Carmarthen: An Archaeological and Topographical Survey*.

Lodwick, J., and Lodwick, V. G., 1972, *The Story of Carmarthen*.

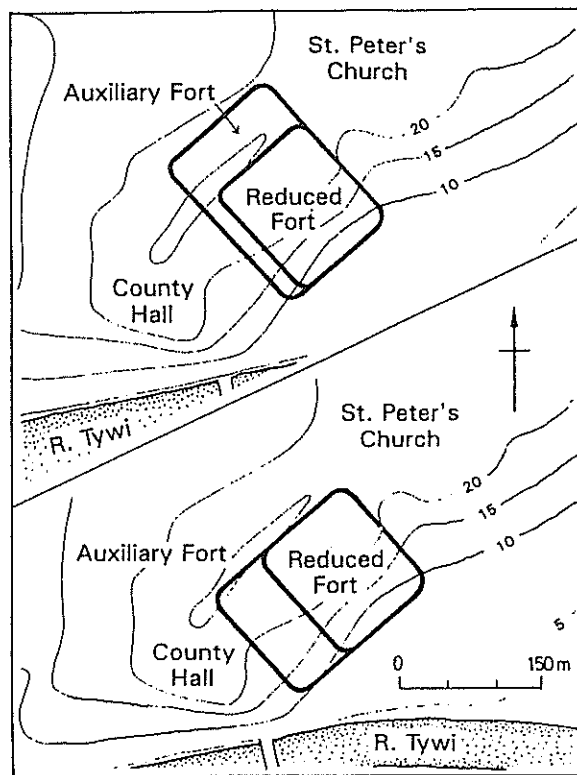
Ludlow, N., and Brennan, D., 1993a, '33 Spilman Street, Carmarthen', *Archaeol. in Wales* 33, 57-58.

Ludlow, N., and Brennan, D., 1993b, 'Jackson's Lane, Carmarthen', *Archaeol. in Wales* 33, 72-73.

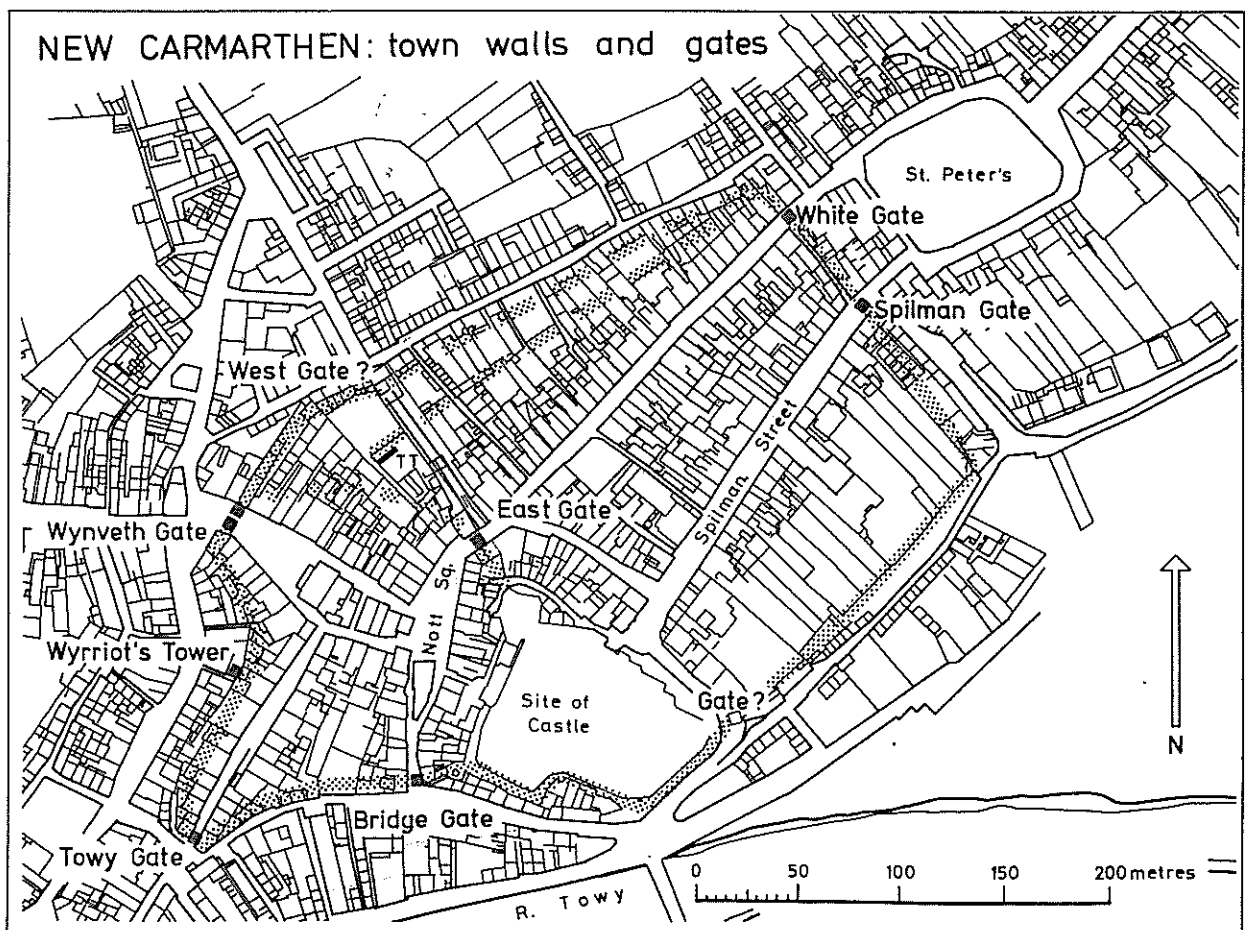
Spurrell, C., 1934, 'Carmarthen: Its Inns and Taverns', *Transactions of the Carmarthenshire Antiquarian Society and Field Club* Vol. XXV.

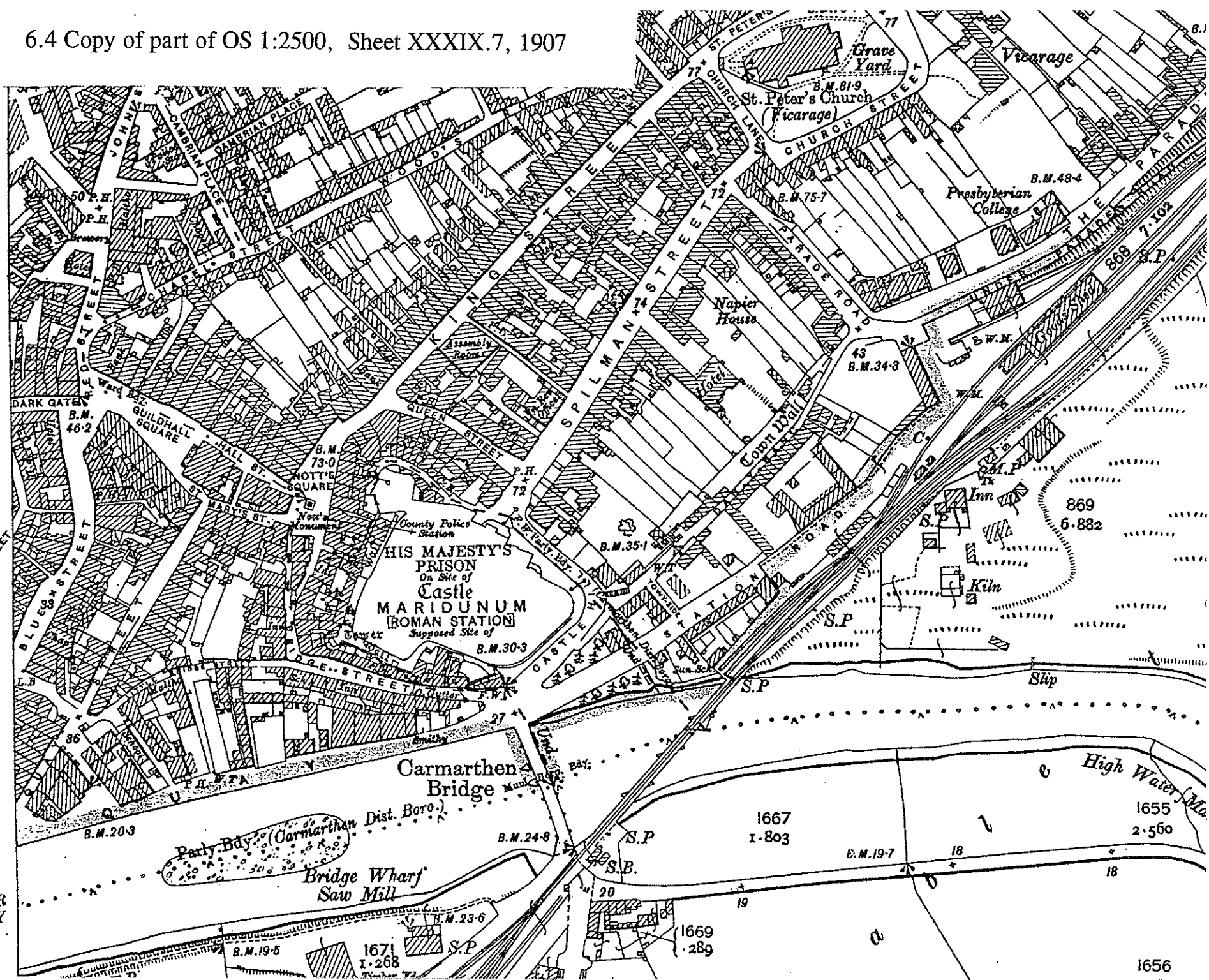
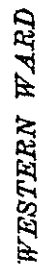
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6.2 Location map of Roman forts

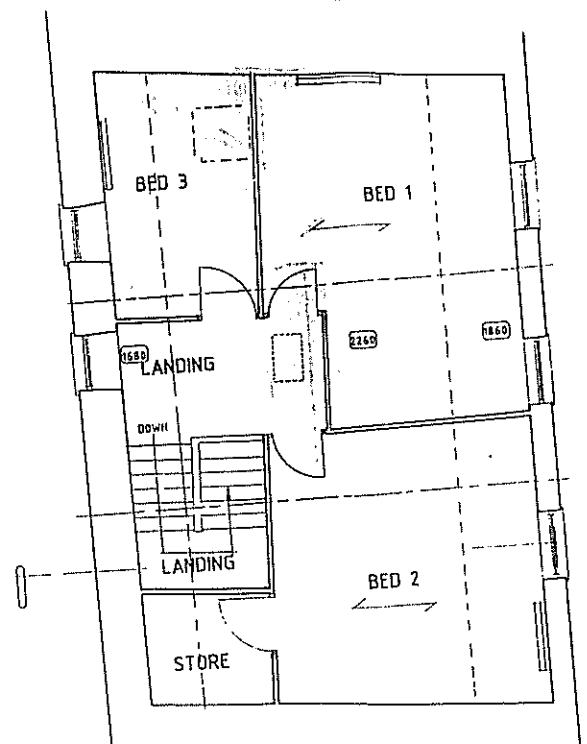
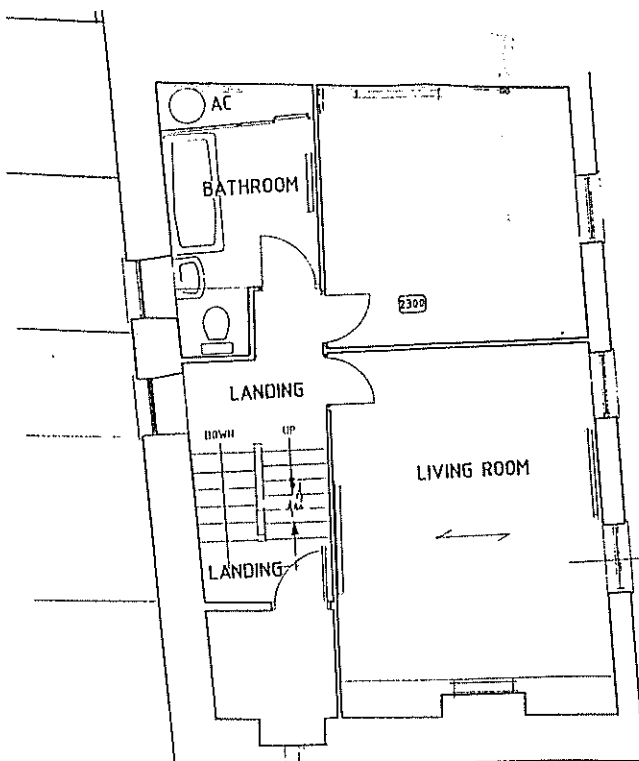
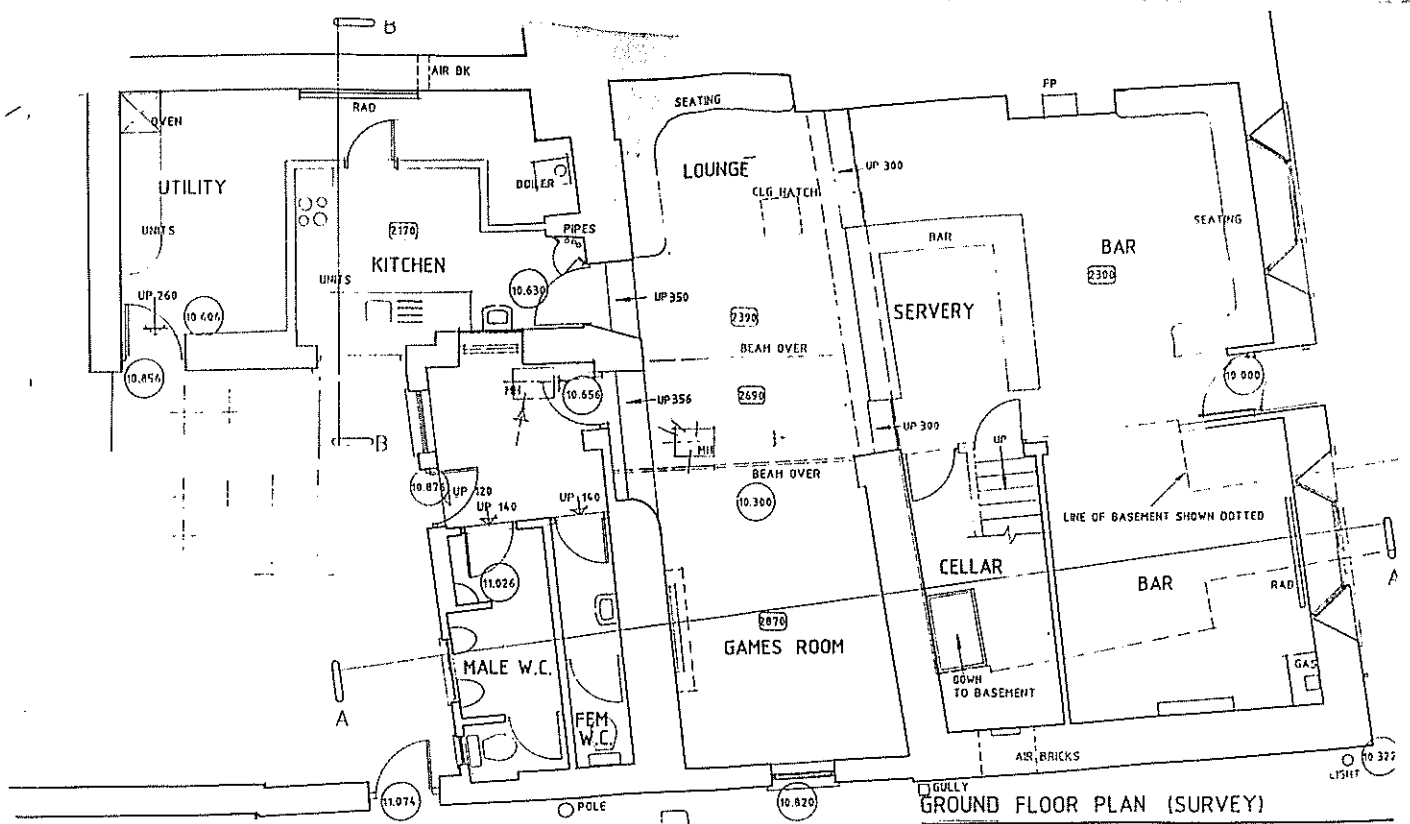


6.3 Location map of medieval town walls, based on OS 1:2500, Sheet XXXIX. 7, 1890 (after T A James)





6.5 Plans of Elephant and Castle



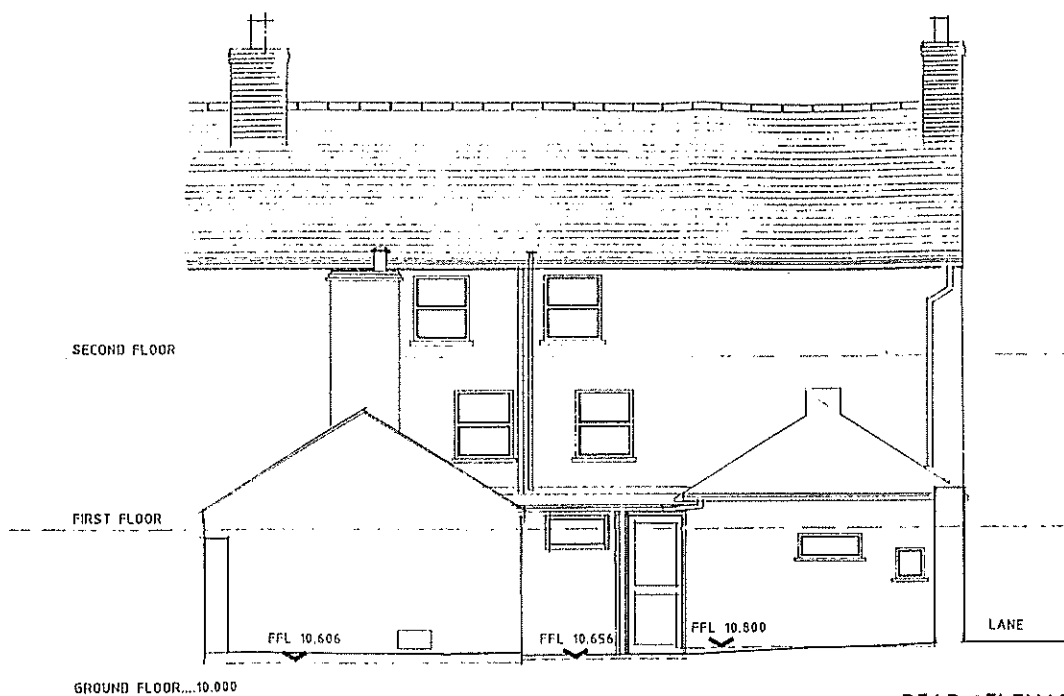
6.6 Elevations of Elephant and Castle



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DESIGNER	DATE	HAY 93	D 14 HEDDING STREET	D 8 PATTON PLACE	JOB NO.
DRAWN	SCALE	1:50	PEMBROKE DESIGN	PEMBROKE DESIGN	£120
PROPOSED CONVERSION OF EXISTING PUBLIC HOUSE INTO OFFICES & 2No FLATS, AT 26 SPILMAN ST, CARMARTHEN			W 23 HILL STREET	W 23 HILL STREET	DRAWN BY
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REAR ELEVATION (SURVEY)

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DESIGNER	DATE	JUNE 93	D 14 HEDDING STREET	D 8 PATTON PLACE	JOB NO.
DRAWN	SCALE	1:50	PEMBROKE DESIGN	PEMBROKE DESIGN	£120
PROPOSED CONVERSION OF EXISTING PUBLIC HOUSE INTO OFFICES & 2No FLATS, AT 26 SPILMAN ST, CARMARTHEN			W 23 HILL STREET	W 23 HILL STREET	DRAWN BY
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6.7 Location of construction trench

