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20/09/95

THE ORCHARD NEWPORT

**REPORT ON THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF
ON THE GARAGE CONSTRUCTION**

DAT Project Record 31026

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THE ORCHARD, UPPER BRIDGE STREET, NEWPORT (PEMBS)

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF, AUGUST 1995

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Summary

Observations during a watching brief undertaken by Dyfed Archaeological Trust's Field Operations Section of the construction of a Garage at The Orchard, Upper Bridge Street, Newport, identified a number of archaeological features, some of them possibly associated with the medieval borough.

A linear ditch cut by a 19th century cess-pit may represent a north-south property boundary of possible medieval date. A second feature may be its neighbour. Features within the property defined may relate to contemporary, or earlier medieval, occupation. In addition, the underlying fluvio-glacial silica sands were observed.

1.2 Planning History

Mr G J Thomas (site owner) received full planning consent from Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority for the construction of a double garage at The Orchard, Upper Bridge Street, Newport (LPA reference no. NP/101/95).

Planning consent was granted conditional upon the applicant making provision for the recording of any archaeologically significant deposits or features likely to be disturbed as a consequence of the proposed works. Accordingly the Heritage Management Section of Dyfed Archaeological Trust, as advisors to the LPA, drew up specifications for an archaeological watching brief to accompany the development work.

Mr Thomas consequently commissioned the Trust's Field Operations Section to undertake the watching brief, which took place 30 August 1995.

1.3 Content and scope of the watching brief

The Orchard planning application area (LPA ref. no. NP/101/95) is situated within core of the former medieval borough of Newport. Any sub-surface disturbance carried out within this area has the potential to disturb archaeological deposits associated with medieval occupation and activity. Rescue recording, in the form of an archaeological watching brief, allows for the preservation by record of those features disturbed.

An archaeological watching brief is defined by the Institute of Field Archaeologists ('Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs', 1993) 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

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 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. 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 Orchard application area (NGR SN 0562 3907) lies to the rear of Market Street, between Bridge Street and Upper Bridge Street, at a height of 34m OD (fig. 6.1).

The medieval borough, and much of the present town, lies on a north-facing slope within an area contained between two northwards flowing streams, the Afon Felin and the Afon Ysgolhegion (figs. 6.1 and 6.4). The River Nevern forms the northern limit, and the knoll upon which the castle stands defines the southern end of the town. The medieval borough was thus characterised by two long north-south streets, St Mary's Street and the appropriately named Long Street which led to the castle gate. Bridge Street carried the main east-west routeway through the town, whilst Upper Bridge Street provided additional east-west access to St Mary's Church. There were two minor additional east-west roads. The street plan remains more-or-less unchanged to the present (figs. 6.1, 6.4 - 6.6).

The underlying geology is complex. The solid geology comprises Upper Ordovician shales which outcrop at many locations in and around the town. However, these are generally overlain by fluvio-glacial drift deposits of a very varied nature. In the northern part of the town they comprise 1-2m of clay lying over fine gravels of unknown depth (Murphy, 1994, 57) whilst elsewhere in the town coarse gravels, and sands, have been observed (see below, 2.4).

2.2 Site history and description

Newport is a medieval planted borough, and a relatively late foundation. The castle and town were probably founded in about 1197, after the surrounding territory - the Lordship of Cemais - had been retaken from the Welsh by the Normans under William Fitzmartin (Murphy, 1994, 58). The settlement was intended to replace Nevern as the *caput* or centre of the lordship.

Fitzmartin's first castle was situated at the north end of the town, where an earthwork still remains, and this area formed the initial nucleus of the town. The castle was not re-sited in its present location until after 1257 (Browne, Percival and Parkinson, 1992, 7). However, the new situation profoundly altered the layout of the town, the emphasis shifting to the southern half where St Mary's Church was built, a market was established and later, a Shire Hall erected. The town appears never to have been defended.

A surviving town rental of 1434 has been transcribed and published (Charles, 1951) and analysed in terms of the borough topography by Bignall, 1991. She concludes that the present street pattern had been established by 1434. From the street frontages extended back the long narrow properties - 'burgage plots' - that characterise the medieval urban landscape. The plots were from 12-18m in width, averaged 60m in length and occupied the entire area represented by the present-day town.

The nature of the buildings within these plots has been established through controlled excavation undertaken by Dyfed Archaeological Trust in 1991 (Murphy, 1994). Three houses were excavated in Long Street, all having walls of clay (the local tradition of 'clom' building which survived into the last century) and roofs of thatch, with some tile around the smoke-vents. They were first built in the early years of the 13th century and occupied until the last quarter of the 13th century, after which this area - situated in the now peripheral northern part of the borough - appears to have reverted to agricultural use.

In contrast, salvage excavations undertaken in 1985 by Dyfed Archaeological Trust, further to the north of Long Street and thus even more peripheral, revealed substantial masonry walls apparently in association with medieval pottery of local manufacture (Stenger, 1985, 43-44, see fig. 6.1). Evidence from elsewhere in the town and surrounds suggests that later medieval, as well as post-medieval building, was primarily in masonry.

2.3 Observations during the watching brief

The Orchard development site is situated behind and to the west of Market Street, the medieval marketplace and a continuation of Long Street, of one of the two main axial roads of the medieval town. The site lay, according to the reconstruction by Bignall (1991), in the backyard of one of the Market Street burgage plots, but it also lies between Bridge Street and Upper Bridge Street, two of the co-axial east-west roads through the medieval borough.

The development work included the levelling of the entire application area to a depth of 0.8m, and the excavation of foundation trenches to a further 0.8m (fig. 6.2).

2.3.1 The site levelling (fig. 6.3)

Prior to excavation, the application area was a level site, standing 0.8m higher than the area surrounding the house which lay in a cutting. The site was machine-excavated to the same level as that surrounding the house.

The eastern section revealed that a natural slope trended gently downhill from south to north. The area had subsequently been infilled to bring it up to the higher level. Thus the southern half of the site was truncated to a maximum depth of 0.5m below the surface of the natural horizon, while the northern half of the site was cleared to the level of the top of the natural.

Archaeology was visible in plan only in the northern half of the site, truncation having occurred to a depth below that of any features to the south. The features present were:-

(6) - A soilmark 1m wide extending 4.5m south-westwards from the north-east corner of the site. This was cut by

(4) - A linear soilmark containing much slate which ran down the eastern edge of the site, at a slight angle to the present-day boundary. 4 was in turn cut by

(2) - A dark soilmark with large limestone rubble lying loose within.

2.3.2 The construction trenches (fig. 6.3)

Four trenches were subsequently machine-excavated within the site forming a square plan 7.5m N-S and 8m E-W flush with the south and east edges of the property. The trenches were all 1m wide and 0.8m deeper than the levelled surface except the western trench B which was 0.6m wide. Their sections were examined, drawn and photographed.

Trench A

Trench A ran east-west for 8m from the eastern edge of the property, parallel to and 3m south of its northern edge.

The trench was cut from just beneath the natural horizon; however two features were present in the section. Linear feature 4 was seen in the east end of Trench A and comprised a mid-brown soil containing much shattered slate, including some phyllite, filling a narrow (0.7m) and shallow (0.35m) trench. It cut soilmark 6 which represented the fill of a further (and earlier) trench, 1.4m wide and 0.7m deep, with an irregular profile. Its fill was almost indistinguishable from the surrounding natural clay.

The natural horizon sloped down to the west, the difference in level being 0.3m over the length of the trench. Up to 0.6m of compact fluvio-glacial clay, containing small gravels, lay over an unknown thickness of pure silica sand in thin stratified bands. The deposit was entirely sterile

and it too is of fluvio-glacial origin.

Trench B

Trench B was only 0.6m wide. It ran north-south for 7.5m from the southern edge of the property, parallel to and 8m west of its eastern edge. The section was not drawn.

Trench B displayed no archaeological deposits being cut from beneath the natural horizon throughout its length. Natural deposits were as in Trench A.

Trench C

Trench C ran parallel to Trench B alongside the eastern edge of the property.

The dump levelling, (1), was seen to seal feature 2 which, in section, represented the side of a cut, 1.3m wide and flat-bottomed in this section, filled by a loose dark soil containing late 19th century pottery and large, loose blocks of limestone rubble. Feature 2 appeared to represent either part of a wall trench or, more likely, part of a cess pit.

Feature 2 cut feature 4, which was visible in section throughout most of the trench but ran out beneath the property boundary 6.5m from the north end of the site.

The above features were cut directly through the natural horizon with no indication of any intervening occupation layers.

The natural horizon sloped down gently to the north, the difference in level being 0.4m over the length of the trench. The natural deposits were as in Trench A.

Trench D

Trench D ran parallel to Trench A alongside the southern edge of the property.

As in Trench C dump levelling, (1), sealed all archaeological features which were likewise cut directly through the natural horizon with no indication of any intervening occupation layers.

A flat bottomed feature (3), 1m wide and 0.25m deep, contained mid-brown fill with some phyllite. A similar material filled narrow feature (5), 4.5m from the south-west corner of the site, which was 0.35m wide and 0.45m deep.

The natural deposits were as in Trench A.

2.4 Conclusions

Few features in The Orchard site can be dated securely, due to a marked lack of artefactual evidence. However, a date and function for a number can be suggested.

It has been suggested above that the partially excavated 2 probably represents the corner of a cess-pit, probably belonging to a property east on market Street. The finds, and nature of the fill, suggest a later 19th century date for its disuse. Dump levelling 1, which lies above it, may therefore be as recent as the 20th century.

The site lies, according to the reconstruction by Bignall, in the backyard of one of the medieval Market Street burgrave plots, where all burgrave plots appear to have been reconstructed as running east-west (Bignall, 1991, fig.21 - see figs. 6.5 - 6.6). However, feature 4 almost certainly represents a north-south property division, filled by demolition debris - roofing slate etc - from a building to one side. It is possible that, given its profile, feature 5 too represents part of a north-south boundary; however, the feature was lost elsewhere on the site and it is not

possible to conclude that it was linear.

Features 4 and 5 cannot be closely dated in the absence of any artefactual evidence. The only stratigraphic evidence is that they both cut the natural and that 4 is cut by the 19th century 2. The roofing slate is of a type often found in post-medieval contexts but the fill also contained some phyllite, a finer, denser slate commonly used during the middle ages. Feature 4 (and 5) may therefore be medieval, suggesting that the burgage plots between Bridge Street and Upper Bridge Street may have been aligned north-south, the site then occupying the rear of a property that probably fronted Upper Bridge Street. The boundary then would represent an alignment more-or-less followed by the present boundary with 'Ty Twt' on Market Street. Feature 3, which occupies the same horizon, may be the edge of a rubbish- or cess-pit within the back-yard of this property.

Feature 6 is cut by 4 and pre-dates it, and appears to relate to activity that preceded the laying-out of the site into formal plots. However, there is no evidence to suggest that the feature is any earlier than medieval and it may belong to the initial establishment of the town.

A characteristic of the 1991 (and 1985) excavations was the large amount of medieval pottery recovered (D F M Brennan in Murphy, 1991, 75-76), and indeed the Newport area was a production centre. In the light of this it is unusual that not a single sherd was recovered from The Orchard site.

The silica sand forming the lower part of the natural deposit is unusually pure. The fine banding within the deposit confirms that it is of fluvio-glacial origin. It has been observed at other locations within the town (in a cutting near St Mary's Church) and nearby (in foundation trenches at Dinas Cross).

3.0 THE FINDS

Many pieces of shattered slate, possibly roofing material - medieval? (discarded)

2 x pieces of phyllite, possibly roofing material - medieval? (discarded)

All other finds encountered during the watching brief were of demonstrable late 19th/20th century date and mainly comprised ceramics. 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

5.1 Dyfed Sites and Monuments Record.

5.2 Unpublished Works

Bignall, V. M., 1991, *Newport (Trefdraeth) in West Wales: An Analysis of the Origins, Planning and Development of a Norman New Town*. (Unpublished undergraduate dissertation, St David's University College, Lampeter; copy in Dyfed Sites and Monuments Record).

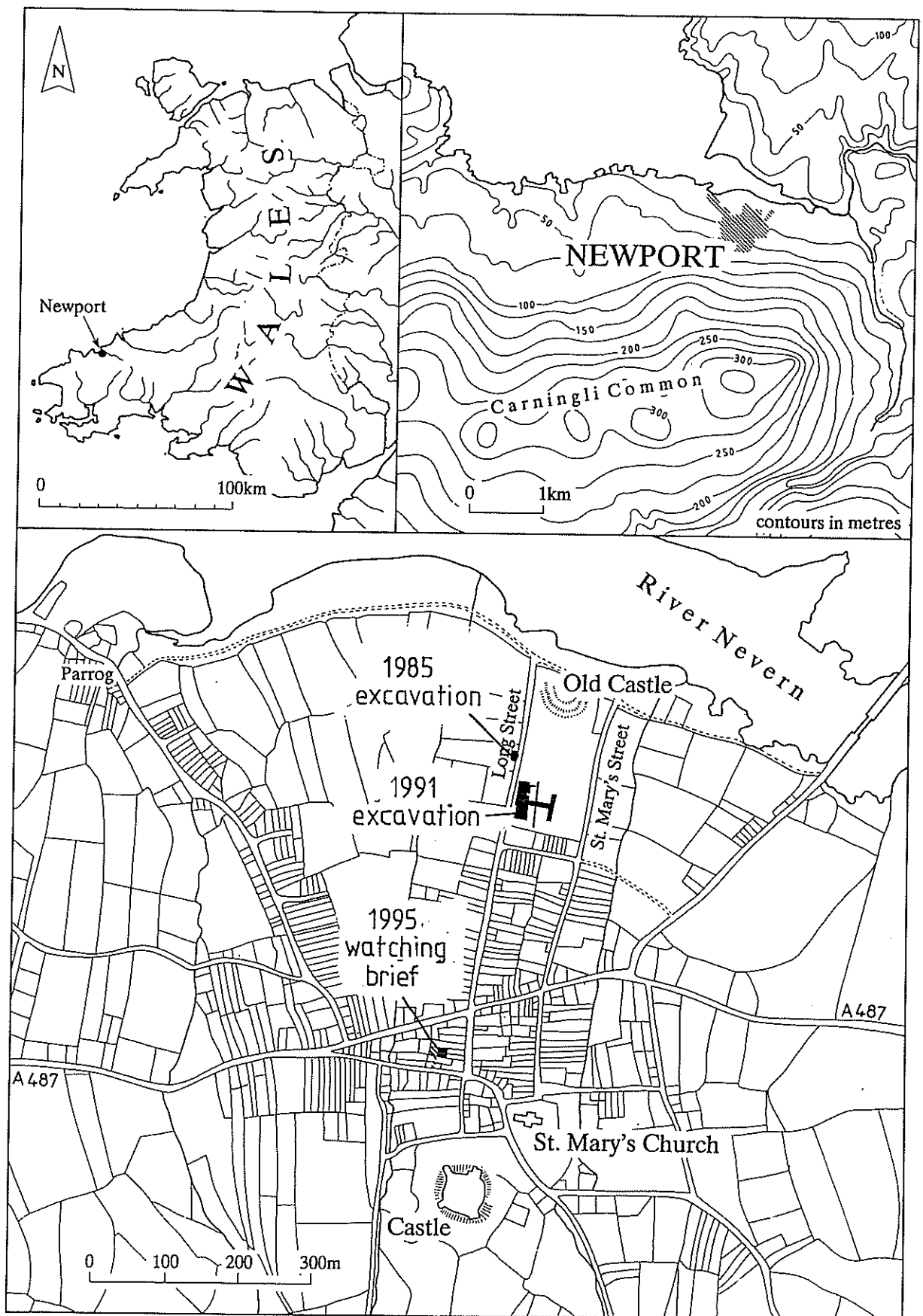
5.3 Published Works

Browne, D. M., Percival, D., and Parkinson, A. J., 1992, *Newport Castle*.

Charles, 1951, 'The Records of the Borough of Newport in Pembrokeshire', *The National Library of Wales Journal*, 7.

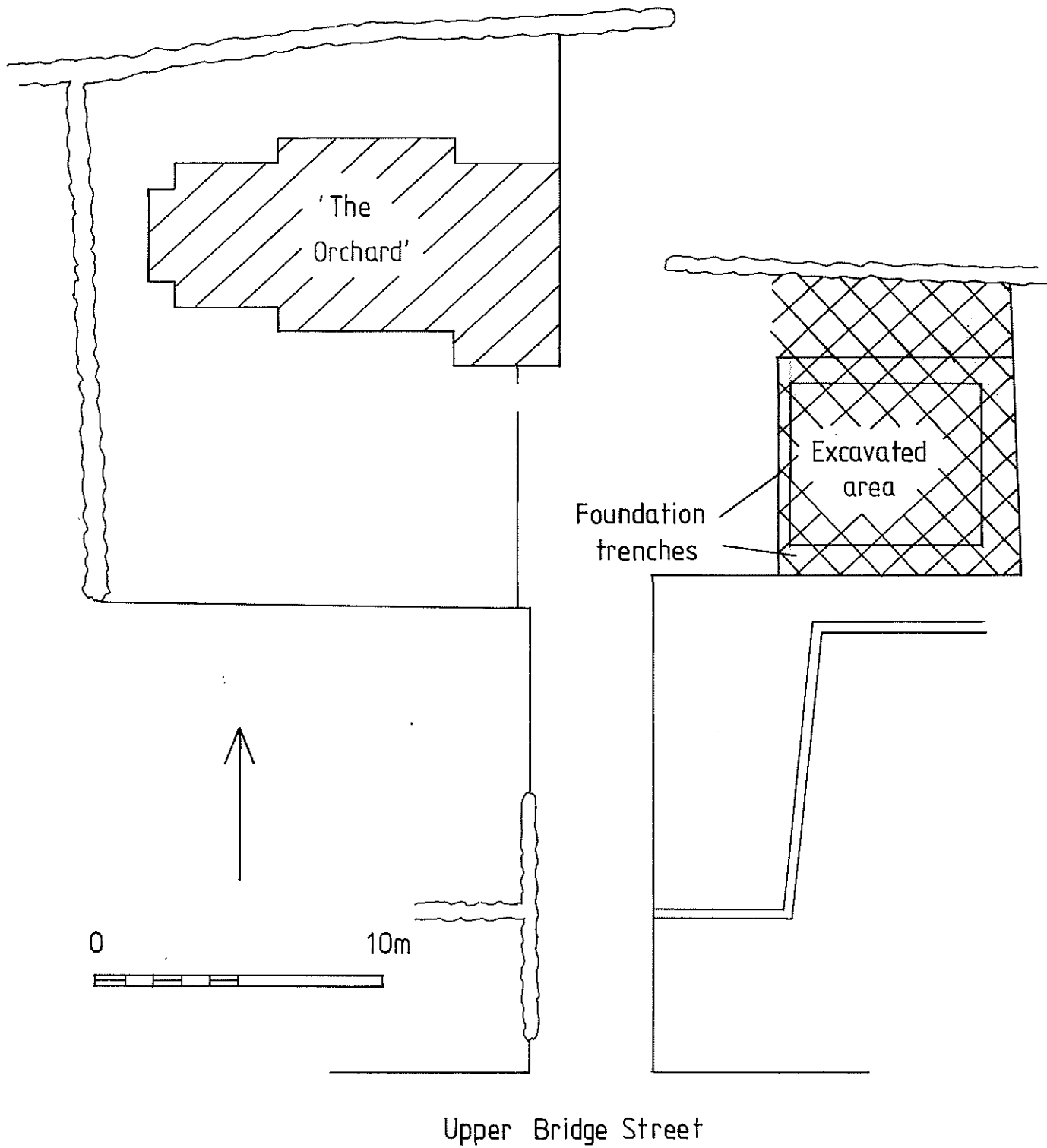
Murphy, K., 1994, 'Excavations in Three Burgage Plots in the Medieval Town of Newport', *Medieval Archaeology*, 38.

Stenger, C. M., 1985, 'Long Street, Newport', *Archaeology in Wales*, 25.

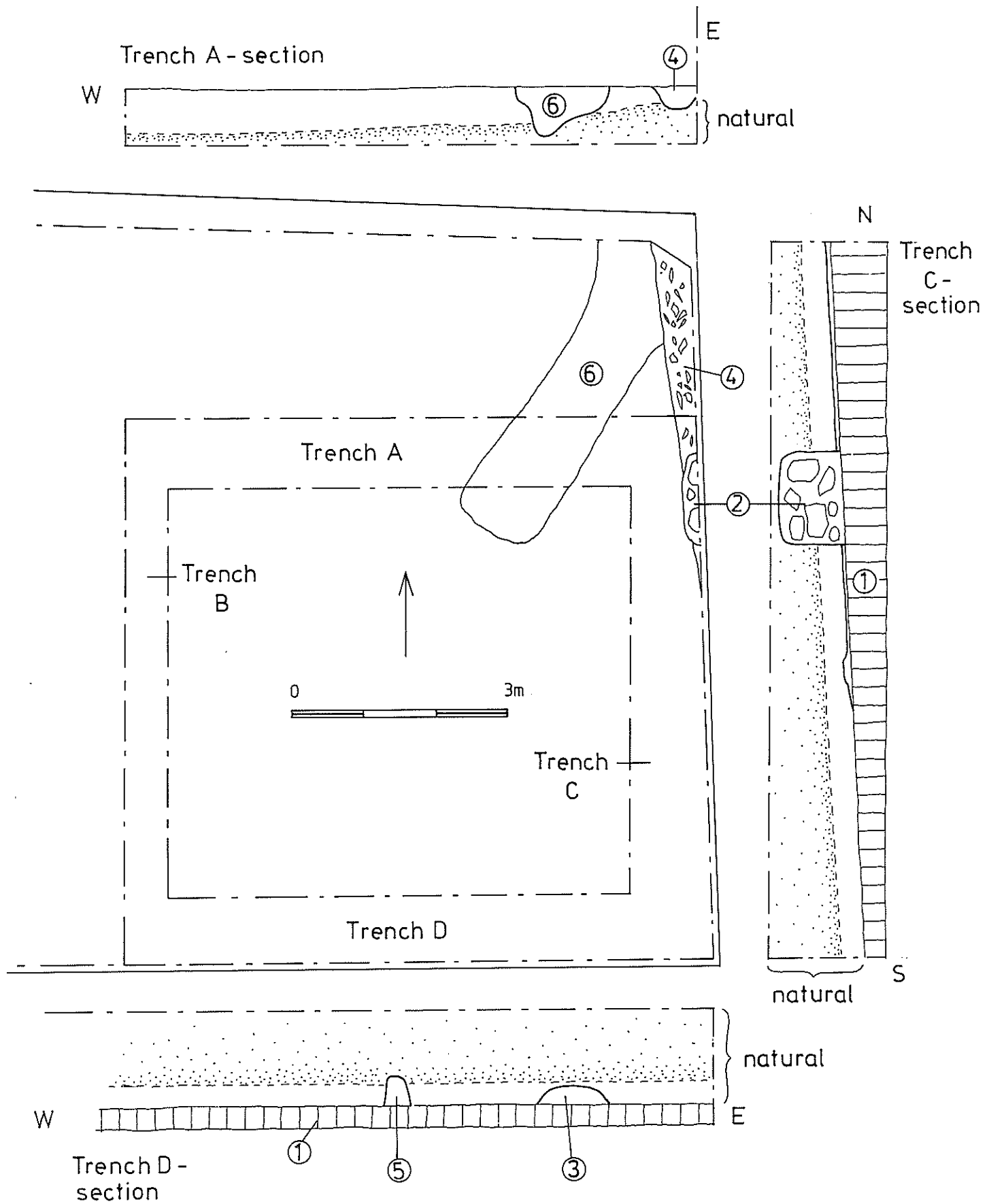


6.1 The Orchard: Site location (also showing location of 1985 and 1991 excavations)

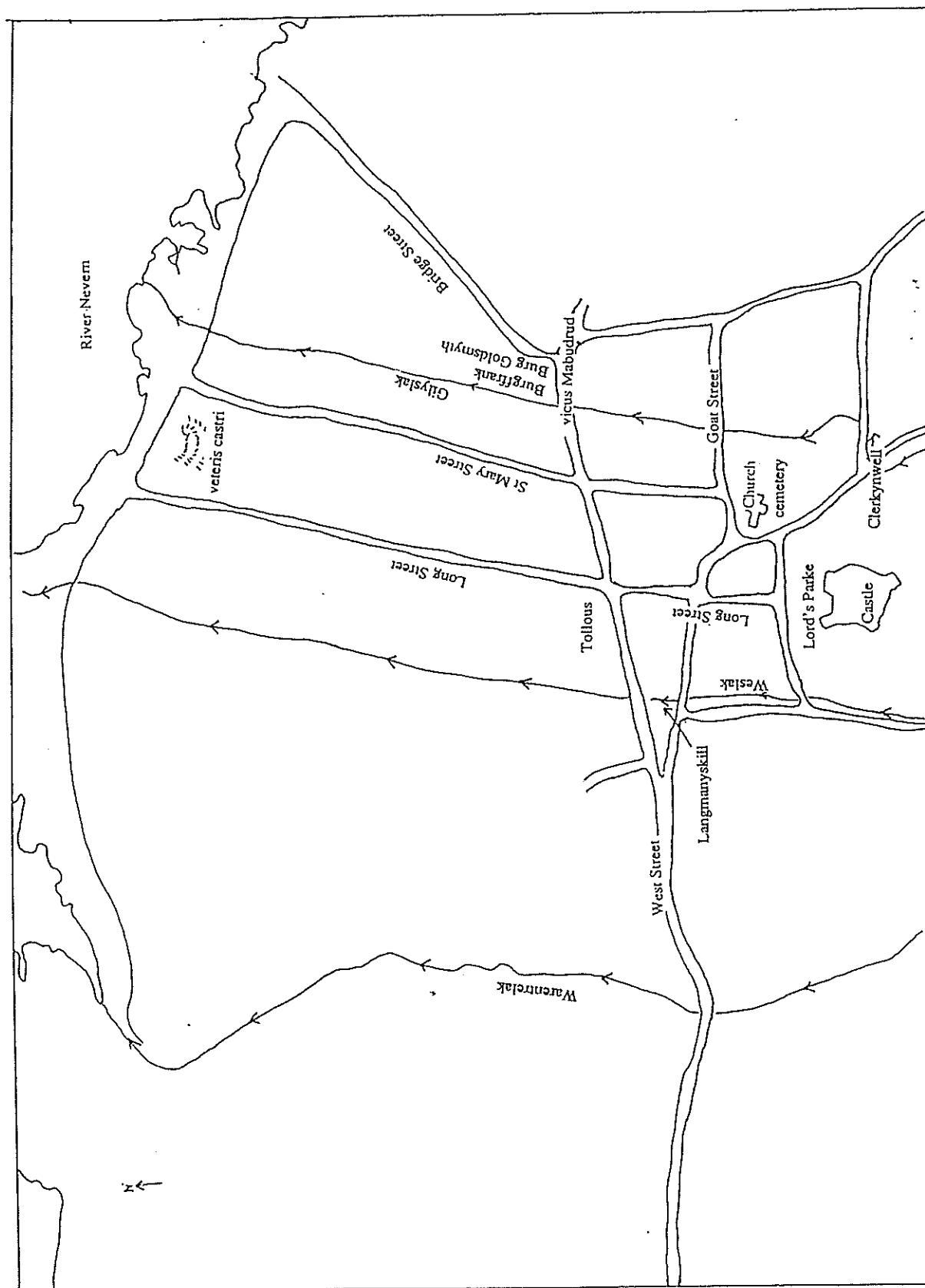
6.2 The Orchard: Location of building trenches



6.3 The Orchard: Plan and sections of all excavated features



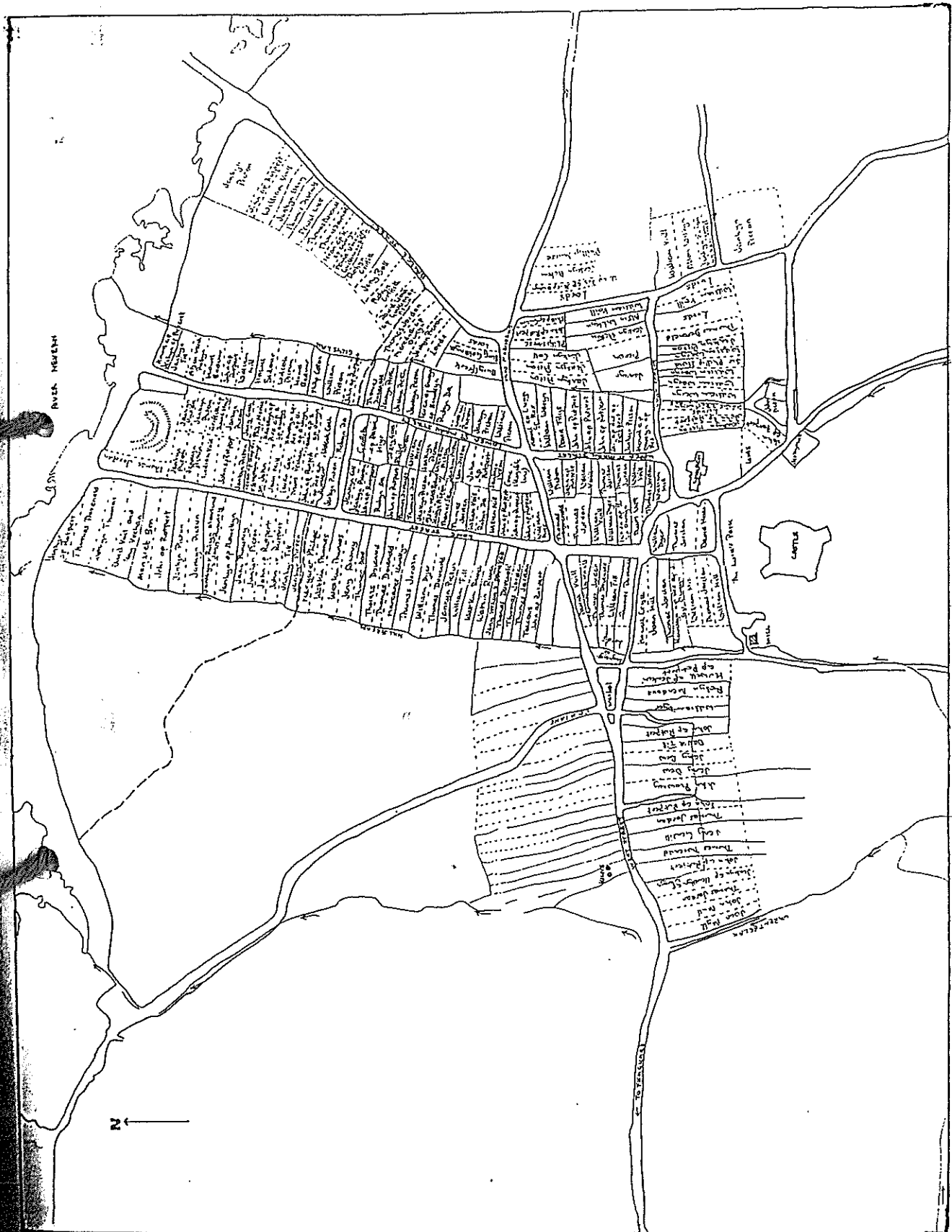
6.4 Newport: Streets and watercourses identified from 1434 rental (from V. M. Bignall, 1991)



1434

Streets and Watercourses Identified from 1434 Rental 1000 ft

6.5 Newport: Burgage plots and tenants identified from 1434 rental (from V. M. Bignall, 1991)



Newport; tenants of the
burgage plots in 1434

1000
ft



Figure 6.6 - Map showing Burgage Holders and Tenants

6.6 Newport: Streets and watercourses identified from 1595 rental (from V. M. Bignall, 1991)