

THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE MEDIEVAL TOWNS OF SOUTHWEST WALES

NEW MOAT



1994 aerial photograph of New Moat (AP94-14.38)

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By

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NEW MOAT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

New Moat is now a small village in central Pembrokeshire. The bishops of St Davids founded a castle, church and town at New Moat in the twelfth century and by 1326 42 burgesses are recorded holding 89 burgages. However the town went into decline, probably during the fourteenth century. Archaeological evaluations have shown that significant medieval archaeological deposits associated with the town survive.

KEY FACTS

Status: Twice yearly fair.

Size: 1326, 42 burgesses held 89 burgages.

Archaeology: Evaluation excavations have revealed stratified medieval deposits.

LOCATION

New Moat lies at a height of 150m in central Pembrokeshire (SN 064 254) 14 km to the northeast of Haverfordwest and 11 km north of Narberth (Fig. 1). The former towns of Wiston and Llawhaden lie to the southwest and south respectively. It lies in an agricultural landscape dominated by improved pasture with little arable.

HISTORY

The name New Moat implies a pre-existing defensive site in the vicinity, but it is not known whether this was several miles away or was at the location of 'The Mote' marked on Ordnance Survey maps to the south of the church. New Moat formed part of the estates of the Bishops of St Davids and it is they who founded the castle and developed the town. The form of New Moat motte and bailey castle indicates a twelfth century date for its foundation – there are no documentary sources to support this assertion. The motte stands up to 7m high, is 20m diameter across the top and is surrounded by a wet ditch. The oval bailey, the defensive circuit of which has been levelled, lies on the west side of the motte and measures 60m east/west, 145m north/south. It is likely that the earliest settlement developed in the bailey. There is no evidence to indicate that St Nicholas's Church at New Moat had pre-Anglo-Norman foundations- the first reference was in c.1200 when it was granted to the newly founded Pill Priory in south Pembrokeshire. The same charter also granted to the priory 'in the township of New Moat a burgage by the east gate and one burgage on the north side'. The mention of an east gate could be taken as an indication that the embryonic town lay within the bailey of the castle, that the town was defended or that the burgage lay immediately outside the east gate of the castle. Whatever interpretation is made, it is clear that by c.1200

the town of New Moat was in existence or was in development. The Bishops of St Davids encouraged English settlers into their town – burgesses listed in the Black Book of St Davids are mostly English. In 1291, Bishop Bek granted New Moat a twice yearly fair. In 1326, 42 burgesses are recorded holding 89 burgages. History is quiet on the decline of New Moat but it is assumed it suffered, perhaps abandoned, during the European-wide population crash of the mid-fourteenth century.

The Scourfield family lived at The Mote from the late thirteenth century to 1780, becoming one of largest landowning families in the county. In the late eighteenth century they moved away from The Mote, but in 1830 the family moved back to New Moat and built a new mansion with extensive gardens, also called Mote, to the east of the village. The mansion is now a ruin.

John Speed listed New Moat as a principal town in Pembrokeshire in the early seventeenth century. However this listing is likely to have been due to the Scourfields attempting to enhance their status by claiming possession of a town which was by then nothing more than a small village.

MORPHOLOGY

New Moat is now a small village with little to indicate its former status. There is no evidence that the settlement was ever defended. A north/south road meets an east/west road at a T-junction. The parish church of St Nicholas lies on the west side of the north/south road and the motte and bailey castle on the east side. The bailey of the castle is not easy to define on the ground, but a LiDAR image of the village (Fig. 4) clearly shows its extent with its northern side extending into gardens and paddocks.

A series of low earthworks probably of abandoned burgages and house platforms have been noted in woodland immediately to the north of the church in Church Plantation. Two metre resolution LiDAR data hints at further house platforms/building plots on the opposite side of the road to the church, to the southeast.

The 1839 tithe map of New Moat (Fig. 2) depicts a very small village with a small cluster of buildings around the T-junction. There was little change between the tithe survey and the publication of the 1889 Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map in 1889 (Fig. 3). Indeed, almost all development in the village since the tithe survey occurred in the second half of the twentieth century. This development consists mainly of linear housing opposite the church, a small housing estate opposite the castle and modern farm buildings on the farm, Awel y Coed, to the south of the church (Fig. 5).

BUILDINGS AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES AND MONUMENTS

Scheduled Monuments

There is one scheduled monument in New Moat (Fig. 5):

New Moat motte and bailey castle (PE241).

Listed Buildings

There are two listed buildings in New Moat (Fig. 5):

The medieval and later parish church of St Nicholas and a nineteenth century lodge on the south of the village.

Conservation Area

New Moat conservation area comprises just the parish church and churchyard (Fig. 5).

Registered Parks and Gardens

There are no registered parks and gardens in New Moat.

Registered Historic Landscape

New Moat is not in a registered historic landscape.

Undesignated Historic Environment Assets

In addition to the castle and parish church there are four other undesignated assets in New Moat (Fig. 5). Three are nineteenth century buildings. The fourth is 'The Mote'. This is marked on nineteenth century Ordnance Survey maps as 'site of'. This is the site of the old house of the Scourfield family which was taken down at the end of the eighteenth century. There is no trace of the house – the site is now under modern farm buildings.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS

Included in this section are excavations, evaluation excavations and watching briefs. Building surveys and desk-top assessments are not included unless they add to the known archaeology (Fig. 6).

Numbers in parentheses below refer to records in the Dyfed Historic Environment Record.

1. A watching brief was maintained during water-main renewal through the village in 1993. Nothing of archaeological interest was noted. For most of its course the watermain cut through shale bedrock. Reference: Maynard 1994 (47261).
2. In 2006 an evaluation was carried out in Church Plantation, a parcel of woodland immediately to the north of the parish church in which burgage plot boundaries and house platforms had been noted. Four machine-excavated trenches were

opened. Evidence for stone buildings and timber buildings and plot boundaries was revealed. The archaeological remains were well preserved and included floor levels within the buildings. Artefacts included medieval and post-medieval pottery – all recovered from deposits overlying the buildings. The excavators concluded that the remains are of buildings and burgage plots of the medieval borough and are potentially of national importance. References: Smith and Jones 2006; Courtney 2006 (56988).



Church Plantation location on trenches.



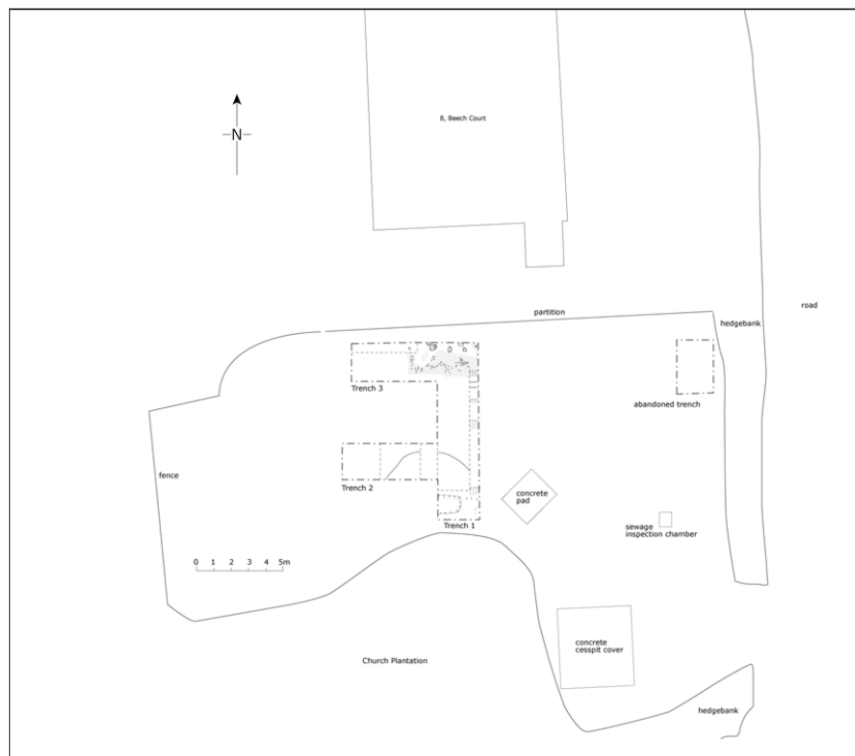
Church Plantation Trench 1 showing the raised building platform.



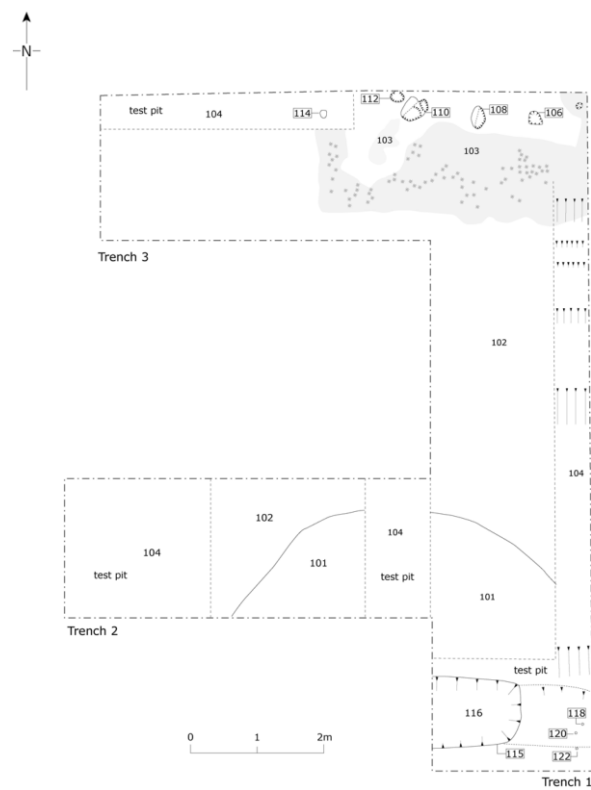
Church Plantation Trench 1 showing the wall and floor surfaces in the deeper pits.

3. An evaluation was carried out on land immediately to the south of Beech Court housing estate in 2008. The evaluation demonstrated that considerable disturbance had occurred in the area during the construction of Beech Court, particularly along the street frontage. Back from the street frontage significant

archaeological deposits survived including the remains of a possible burnt building probably dating between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. Reference: Ramsey 2008 (64764).



Plan of the excavation trenches at Beech Court.

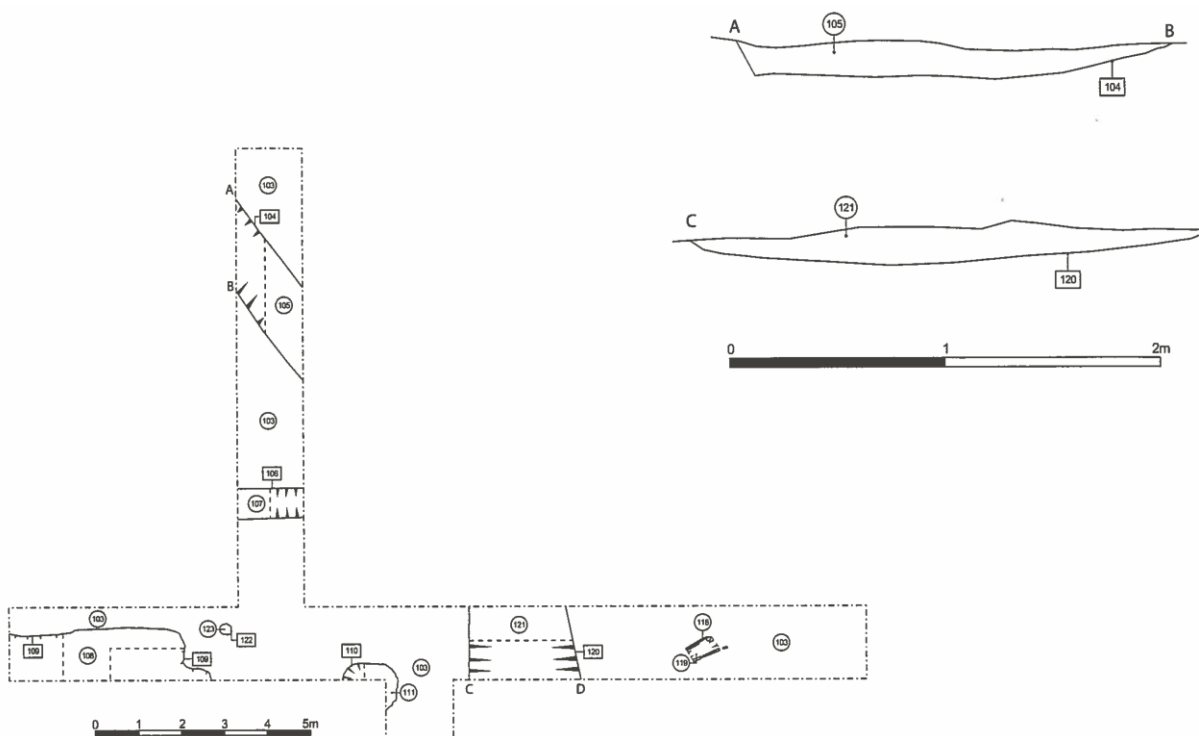


Detail of excavation trenches at Beech Court showing the possible burnt timber building on the north side.



Postholes and surfaces of the possible burnt building.

4. In 2010 an archaeological evaluation was carried out at Awel-y-Coed on a plot of land immediately to the south of the parish church. The work revealed occupation deposits including a wall associated with in situ floor deposits and several ditches. All these were considered to be medieval in date. A small cist was thought to be prehistoric in date. Reference: Smith 2010 (97157).



The Awel-y-Coed evaluation trench.



Awel-y-Coed view of the wall in the excavation trench.

5. Nothing of significant archaeological interest was recorded during a 2016 evaluation in advance of plans to build a new house, although it was noted that the plot of land had seen considerable recent disturbance. It was considered that the area of the plot was not part of New Moat medieval borough. Reference: Jones 2016 (109233).
6. Nothing of archaeological interest was noted during a watching brief carried out during construction of an extension to Picton Park house in 2007. Reference: Jones 2007 (62942).



The work at Picton Park.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL

New Moat has high potential for addressing some of the key research agenda items for the medieval period, including town plantation, castle building and church building. It also has the potential to address post-medieval research theme on settlements (towns).

The size and morphology of medieval New Moat has not been established. Figure 7 provides a possible schematic plan of the settlement at its height based on historical, archaeological and topographic evidence.

There has been considerable modern development in New Moat which has undoubtedly occurred on former burgages and most of which has not been accompanied by archaeological evaluation, excavation or a watching brief. However, two archaeological evaluations close to the church have demonstrated that significant stratified deposits relating to the medieval town survive, with, most unusually, well-preserved floor levels. There is thus considerable potential for the as yet undeveloped areas of New Moat – land that was laid out as burgages and probably abandoned during the fourteenth century – to address research themes on town plantation and town decline

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Databases and online references

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- Cof Cymru <https://cadw.gov.wales/advice-support/cof-cymru>
- Coflein <https://coflein.gov.uk/en>
- LiDAR <https://lle.gov.wales/catalogue/item/LidarCompositeDataset/?lang=en>

Research framework for the Archaeology of Wales

<https://www.archaeoleg.org.uk/areasouthwest.html>



Figure 1. Location map.

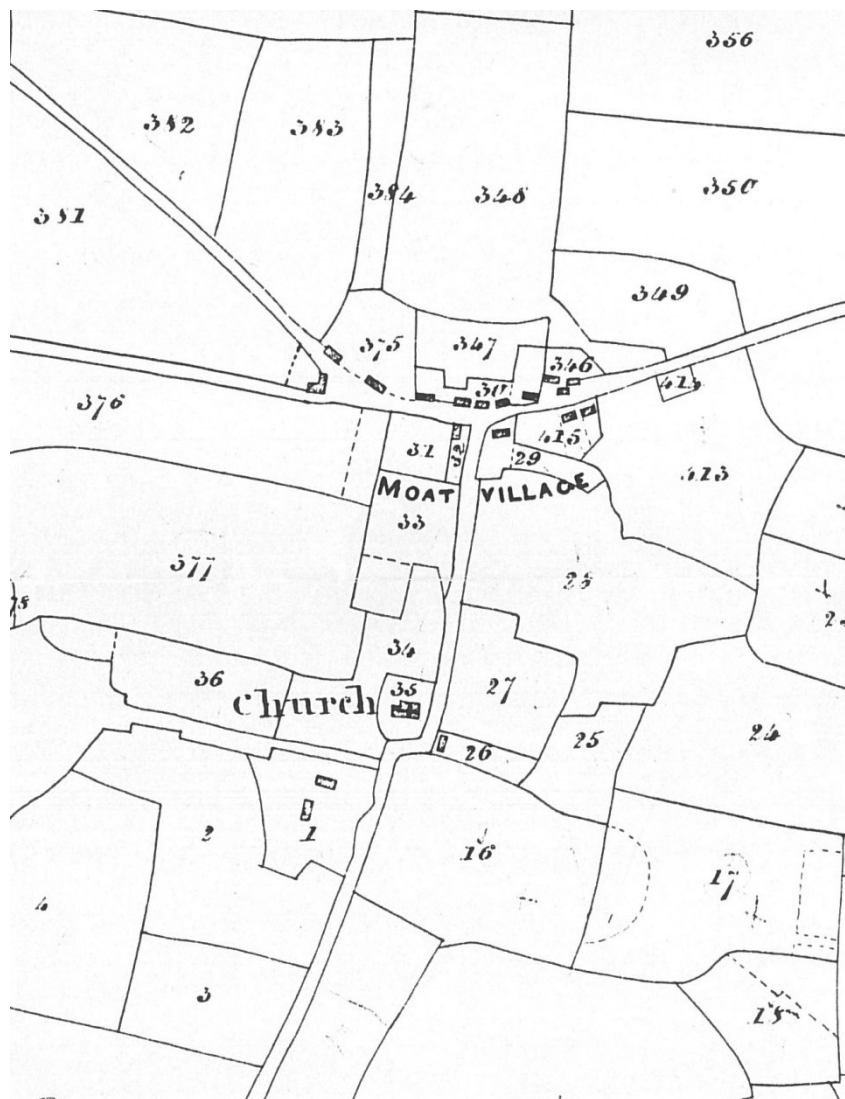


Figure 2. Extract from the 1839 New Moat parish tithe map.

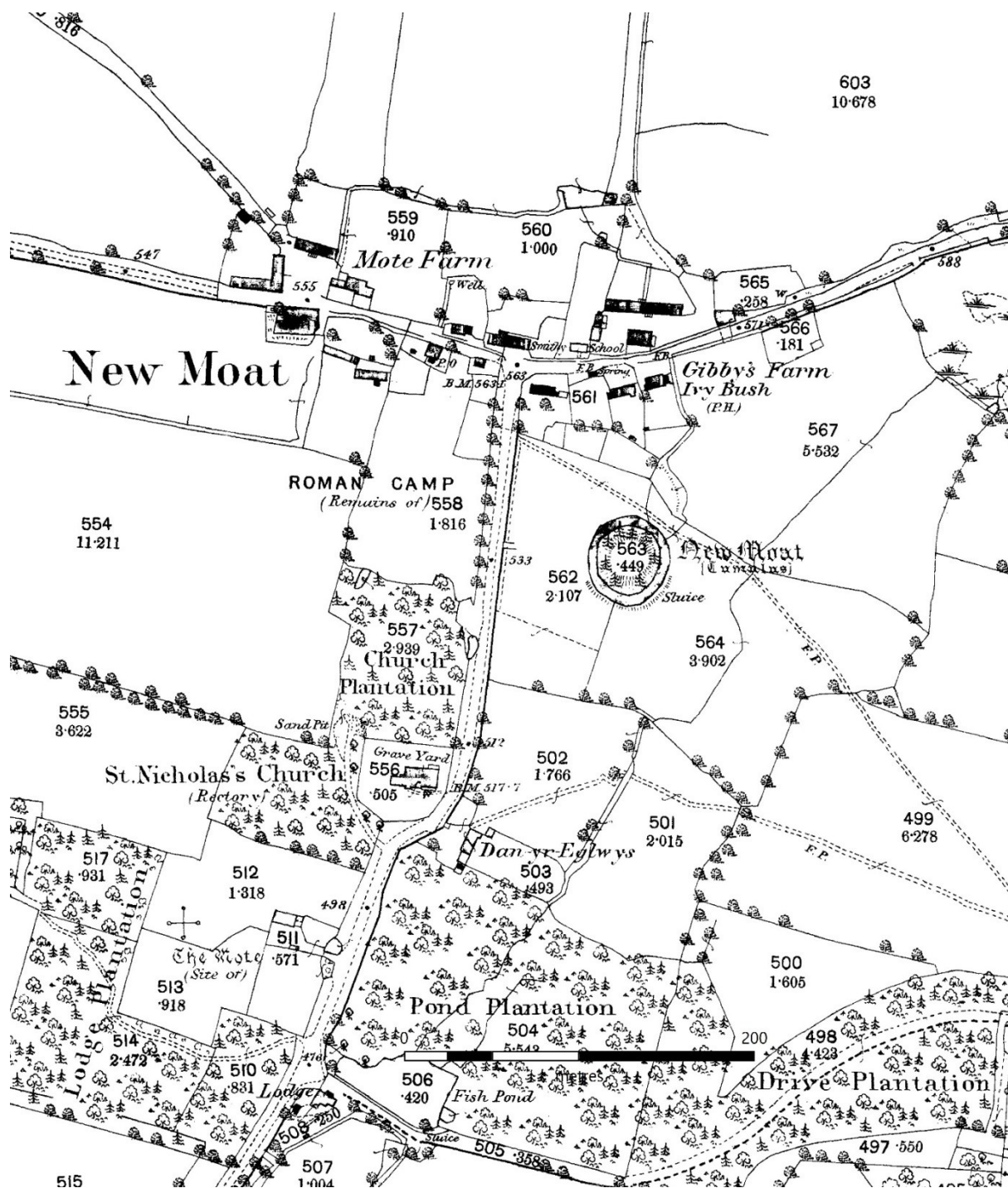


Figure 3. Extract from the 1889 Ordnance Survey 1:2500 1st Edition map (Pemb.).

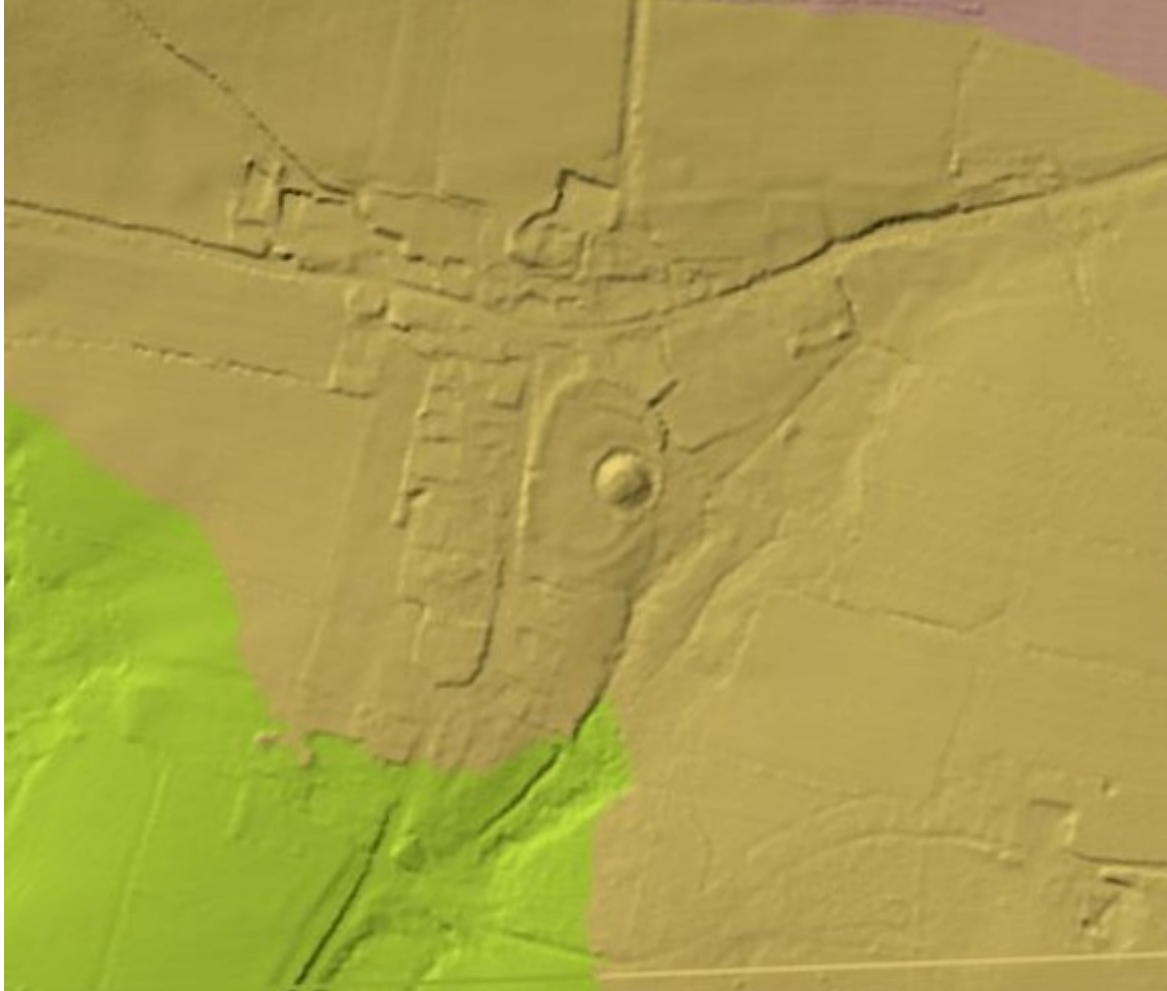


Figure 4. 2m 1m DTM LiDAR image of New Moat. Note the defensive circuit of the castle bailey (Contains Natural Resources Wales information © Natural Resources Wales and database right, © Crown Copyright and database right 2020. Ordnance Survey 100021874).

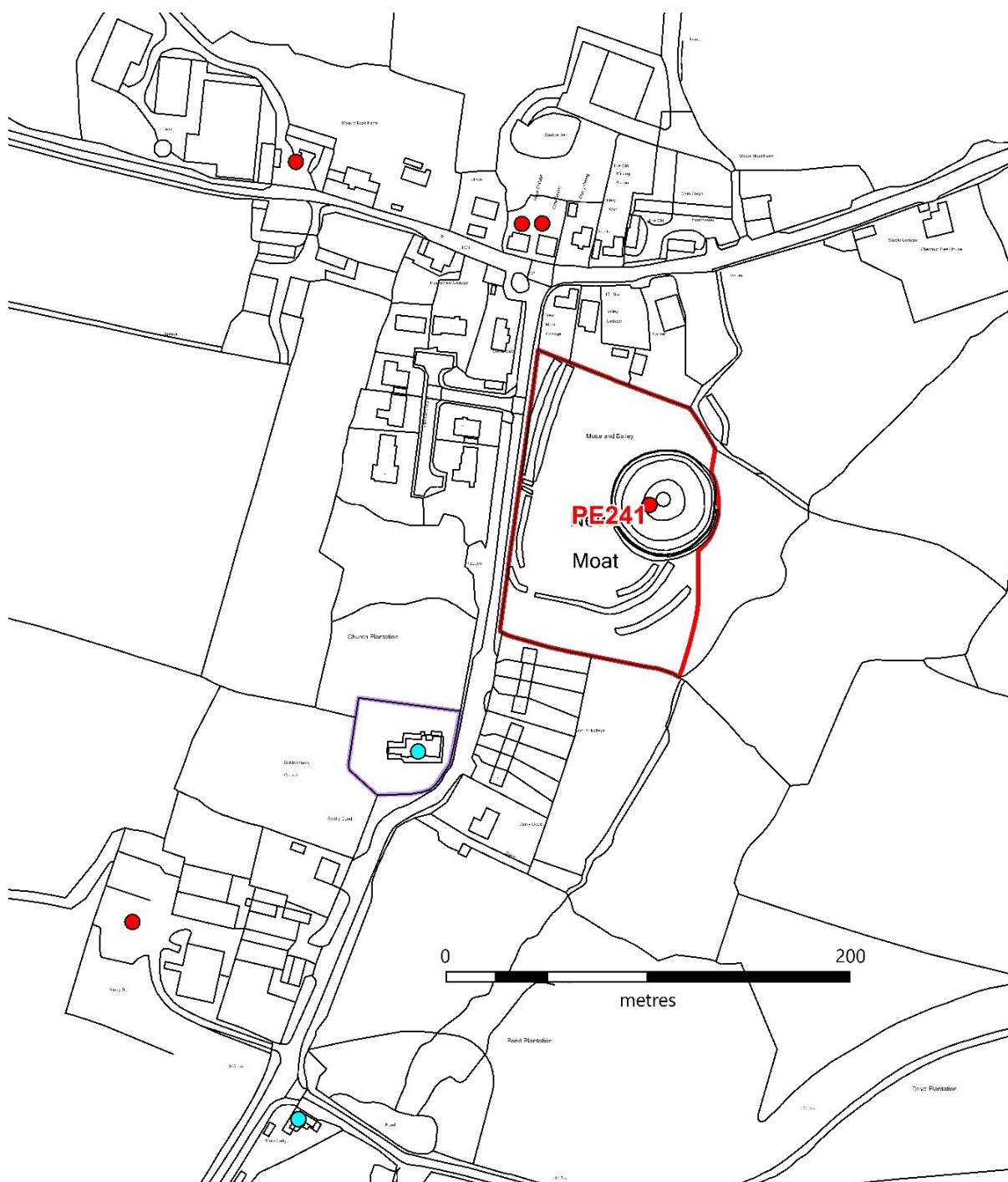


Figure 5. Listed buildings (blue circles), scheduled monuments (outlined in red), the conservation area (outlined in purple) and HER records (red circles).



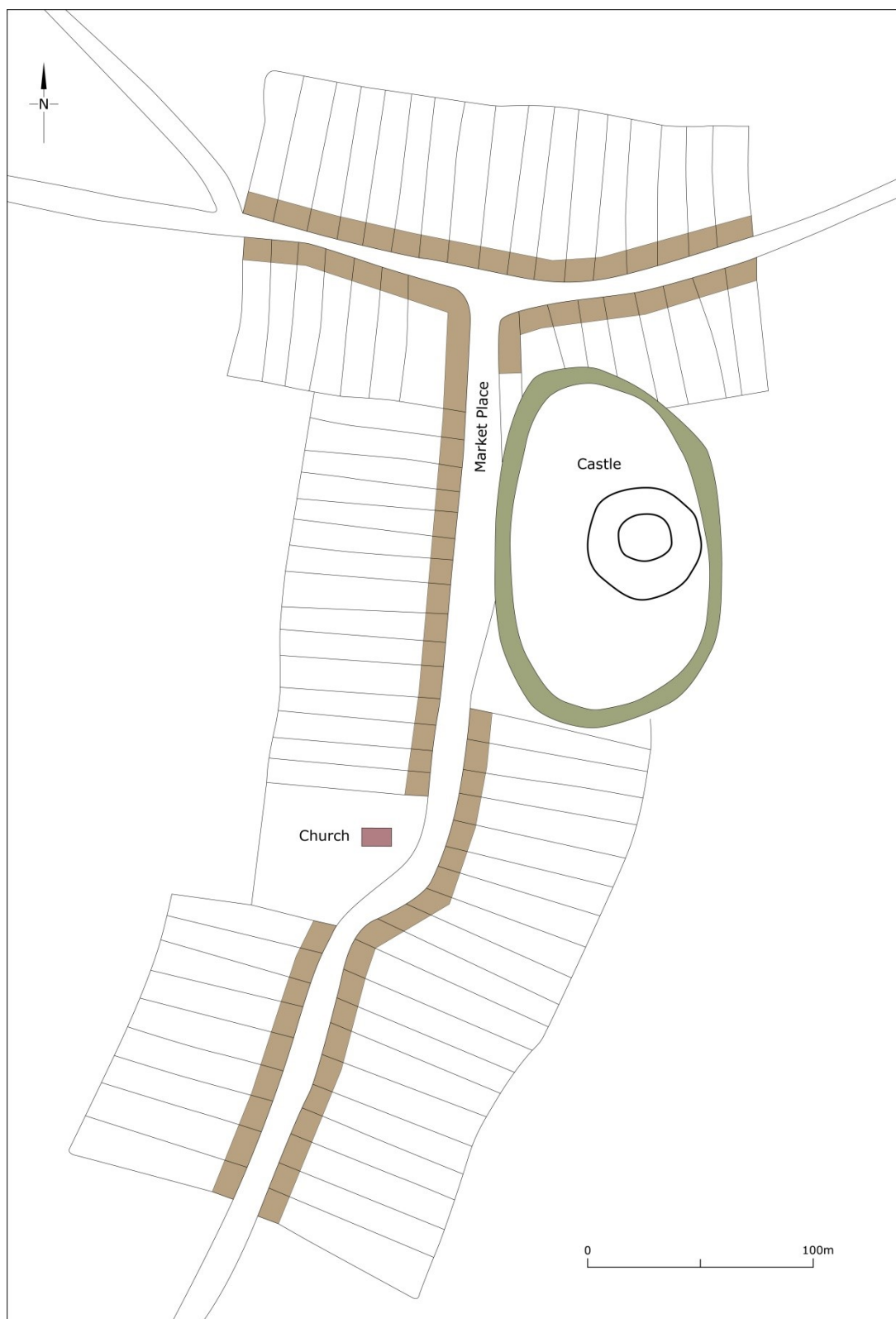


Figure 7. Schematic plan of New Moat in c.1320 showing burgages and other features. It is highly unlikely that all the burgages were occupied at this time.