

Limited excavations prior to the redevelopment of F. W. Woolworth Ltd., Cardigan, were undertaken by the Dyfed Archaeological Trust in July 1978. The site was bounded on the east by the presumed line of the medieval town walls, and Speed's map shows what may be a mural tower in the area (SN 17824611). The boundary ran along a clear break of slope, providing further evidence for the former course of the town wall.

Little research has been undertaken on the topography of medieval Cardigan, although the line of the town walls can be reasonably conjectured from surviving sections fossilized in present property boundaries, breaks of slope and by reference to Speed's map (Figs. 1 and 2). Using the same evidence the position of the town gates can also be placed with some confidence.

Cardigan's first grant of murage was in 1281,¹ so stone walls were probably in existence around much of the town by the beginning of the fourteenth-century. Evidence from other medieval boroughs indicates that in most instances stone defences were preceded by those of earth and timber, although they may not have enclosed precisely the same area or followed the same course. It is therefore probable that Cardigan was enclosed by earthen defences before the construction of its stone walls. Our knowledge of these walls and gates is greatly helped by an unusually full survey of the borough in the year 1300.² This manuscript lists the names of all the burgesses in the town who were at that date occupying about 130 burgages, some of which were in the extra mural suburb around the Priory Church of St. Mary—in *in vico beate Marie extra portas*.

The survey divides the town into six other areas: from the Wolf Gate to Bartholomew Gate; from the Bartholomew Gate to the town cross on the one side; the castle area from the cross to the bridge (*pontam de Cheym*) on the one side; from the bridge to the cross on the other side; from the cross to the New Gate; and an area called *[L]uttes Vennystretes*. Speed's map shows that the cross was situated just south of the junction of St. Mary Street and Market Lane in High Street, which provides a useful fixed point, along with the bridge and castle, for working out the relative positions of areas described in the survey. It has been suggested³ that the Wolf Gate stood between 9 and 43 St. Mary Street, in which case the Bartholomew Gate may have stood in High Street just south of the junction of College Row and Pwll Hai. The late Professor William Rees placed a St. Bartholomew's Chapel in the area north of this beyond the walled area, which can be taken as supporting evidence, but his authority cannot now be traced. The



Fig. ix, 23 Cardigan town defences

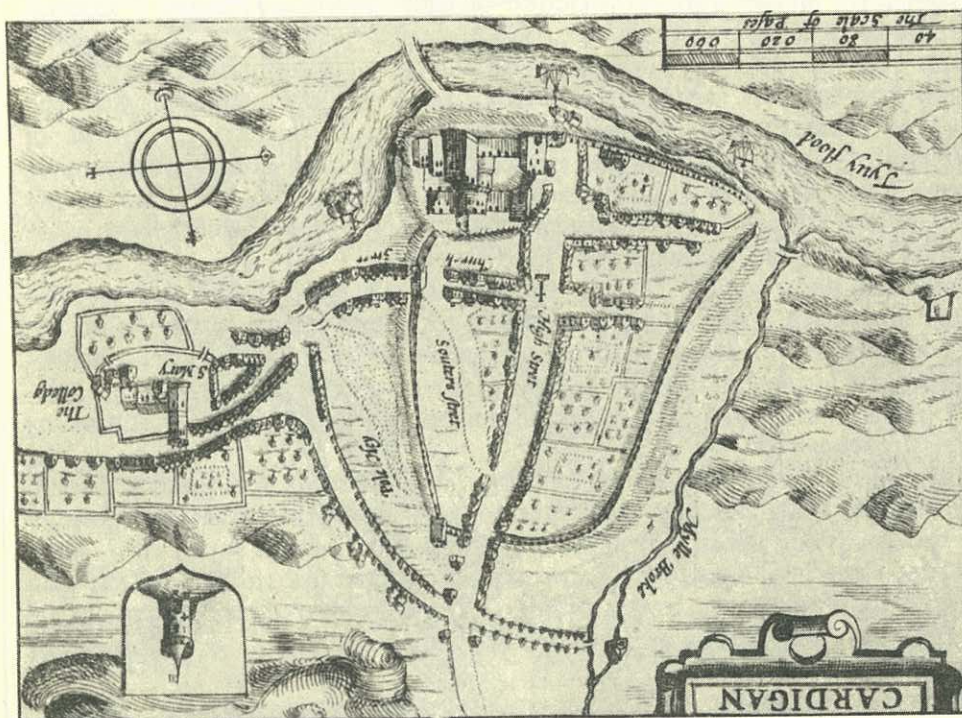


Fig. ix, 24 Speed's map of Cardigan (1610)

positions of the other gates leading to the bridge and Quay in relation to the cross and castle preclude them from being either of the gates named in the survey. The other gate named in the survey—the *novam portam*—could be the gate in Quay Street. There is, however, a possibility that other gates existed that are not shown on Speed's map. A logical position for an additional gateway could be at the junction of Market Lane and Eben's Lane where the wall line is today breached by a busy route that linked the Quay and Market.⁵ It is possible that a gate here may have been built after the construction of the walls, and this could provide an explanation for the appellation 'new'. Alternatively the walled area may have been increased in size at some date, necessitating the construction of an additional gate, or gates, thus the name 'new' would be applied. In the area beyond the walls to the west of the town were a number of mills which derived their water power from the Afon Mwldan—the name of which is derived from the medieval Latin *moleddinum* for mill.⁶

The Excavation
 With the permission of the developers, a small trial trench was machine excavated in the gardens behind F. W. Woolworth, to test the hypothesis for the line of the town walls, and look for evidence for the presumed mural tower. The trench showed that the area had undergone substantial disturbance in the twentieth-century apart from a small area immediately west of the north-south boundary wall (Fig. 3). About one metre below the surface, remains of a well-built wall foundation was encountered which provided footings for the

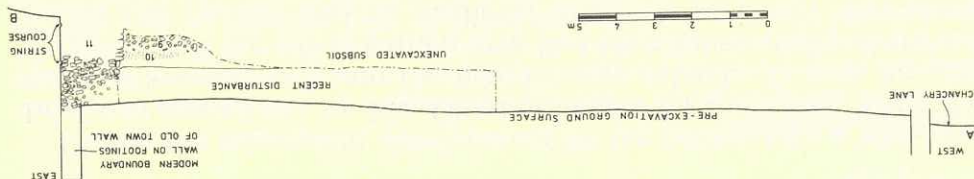
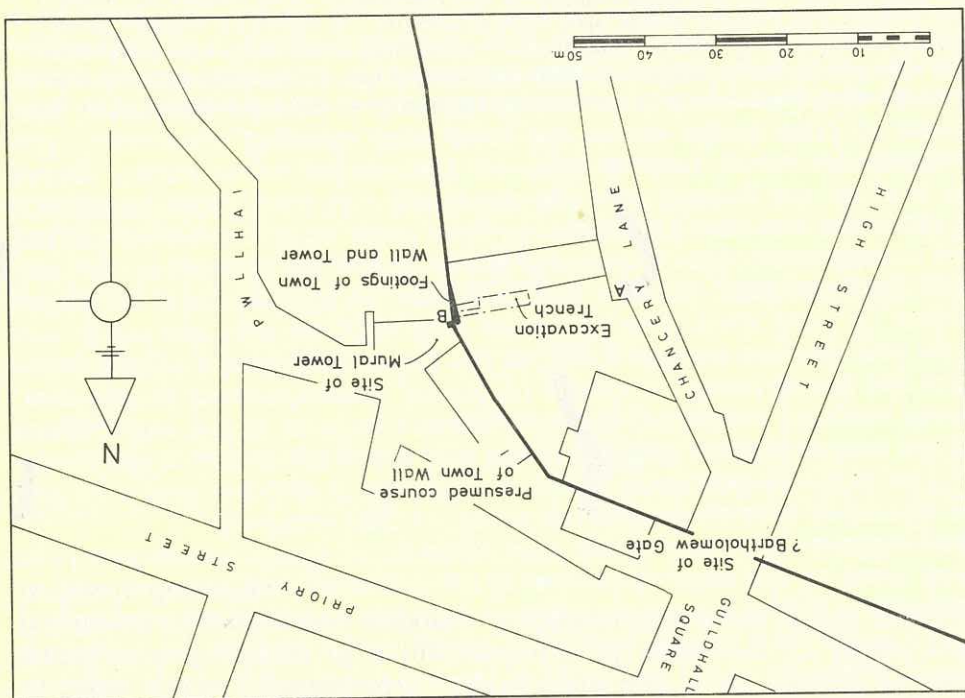


Fig. ix, 25 Location Plan and section across town wall at Woolworth's Cardigan

existing property boundary. Associated with this was a number of contemporary layers. Finds from within these contexts (9 & 10 on Fig. 3) included a large number of pottery shards, predominantly from medieval cooking pots. The bulk of this stratified (as well as unstratified) pottery was of the so-called "Gwbert" ware (Dyed Gravel Tempered ware). Pottery of this type came in quantity from a pit exposed in the eroding cliff face 1 km south of Gwbert-on-sea, which was discovered by David Maynard in September, 1975. A detailed study of this material has already been published,⁷ and it is thought that this ware was locally produced, although it has also been found at Wiston, St. Clears and Carmarthen, as well as at the site of Volk's Bakery in Cadigan.⁸ The only pottery reproduced here (Fig. 4) is of new or variant forms to those already published.⁹ There were also a few shards of finer wares including part of a jug probably of west country origin and fragments of continental imports. Unfortunately none of this material is closely dateable.

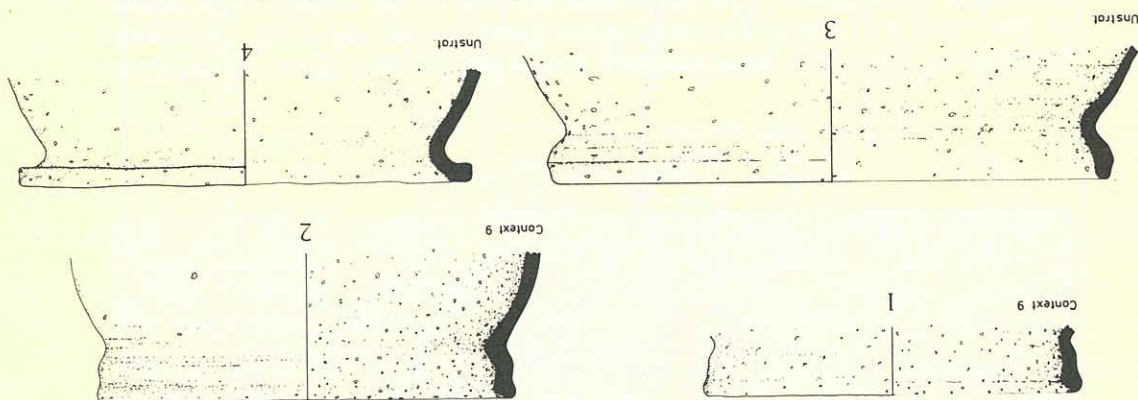


Fig. ix, 26 Examples of Gwbert ware from the excavations. 1 Cooking pot rim, simple upstanding rolled rim; 2 Cooking pot rim with globular body, hollowed and flat topped rim and slight collar, orange fabric with a grey core, well-fired with a smooth finish, heavily girted with large, rounded, 'platey' gravels; 3 Cooking pot, probably globular body, slightly everted and hollowed rim; 4 Cooking pot, globular body, squat-necked with everted flat-topped rim. (Scale 1/4)

During the subsequent development by the contractors, a watching brief was carried out by Mr. Charles Stenger for the Trust, when the site was lowered well into the boulder clay subsoil. It soon became apparent that the whole garden area had been substantially disturbed earlier this century and no medieval structures survived. But along the course of the north-south boundary wall, which was lowered to facilitate the removal of spoil, parts of the medieval wall survived

intact in its lower courses. In section it was about 1.63 metres wide and the interior was faced with ashlar. It contained little of the ubiquitous local shale used extensively throughout the town, apart from the rebuilt face on the eastern side. The core was rubble filled. Although the cutting of a cross-section through the defences into subsoil was not possible, the wall was evidently placed on a clear break of slope and followed the contours of the natural terrace. About 8.5 metres of walling survived running under the north-south boundary of the garden. The surviving northern portion of the town wall turned 90° east and ran through the base of the modern wall, terminating at the eastern face of the latter where it had been truncated (fig.3). This short length of east-west aligned wall is thought to belong to the mural tower suspected to lay in this area. It was about 80cm thick, and survived solely as a rubble mass, the facing stones having been robbed. Because of this, it was not possible to see if the two portions of medieval wall were of the same date—i.e. if the junction had been bonded or butt-jointed. The rest of the area undergoing development had been so disturbed that no further medieval features survived.

The evidence described above is sufficient to indicate that a section of the medieval town wall ran under and along the course of the north-south property boundary, and the apparent 90° turn of this wall suggests that the mural tower, as shown by Speed, formerly stood in this area. The fact that the surviving wall of the tower contained a higher proportion of local shale than the town wall suggests that the tower was of a different date, being a later addition, or alternatively, predating the construction of the defences in stone. It was not possible to establish if the tower was round or square in plan form, or if it was open backed or not, as the ground was too disturbed. It may have functioned similarly to tower number four on Caernarfon town walls¹⁰ giving cover to both flanks where the town wall changed direction. The history of this tower is unknown,¹¹ although it may be significant that the borough gaol built by John Nash in the late eighteenth-century stood close by. It may well be that this mural tower in its later years, served as the town lockup only to be replaced by the new gaol, for a similar function is recorded for one of the town gates at Carmarthen.¹²

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TERRENCE JAMES

Acknowledgements

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NOTES AND REFERENCES

- ¹C.P.R., 1281, p. 371.
- ²J. Sanders, "The Boroughs of Aberystwyth and Cardigan in the Early Fourteenth-Century", *B.B.C.S.*, XV, pp. 289-93. For a discussion on some of the content of this survey, see also I. J. Sanders "Trade and Industry in Some Cardiganshire Towns in the Middle Ages", *Ceredigion*, 1959, pp. 319-336.
- ³Sanders, *op. cit.* *B.B.C.S.*, XV, p. 284 note 1. It is evident that Sanders thought (incorrectly) that the gate at the north of the town stood at the junction of Pendre and Feldr Fair, as he wrongly placed the cross at the junction of High Street and Priory Street, which would have doubled the size of the walled area. Although this largely invalidates his arguments for placing the gate names in the positions, the present author feels that the most likely position for the Wolf Gate is in St. Mary Street.
- ⁴William Rees, map of *South Wales and the Border in the 14th Century* (1932).
- ⁵Father Cunnane has pointed out however that an early print shows this 'opening' served by a set of stone steps which would have limited it to foot traffic.
- ⁶It has been suggested by Sanders and others that it is derived from a Welsh corruption of *mill-dam*, but the Latin derivation is more likely.
- ⁷By Sian Jones in Benson, *et. al.*, *Medieval and Later Pottery in Wales*, 1, 1978, pp. 26-39.
- ⁸For the latter see D. Maynard, "Excavations in Cardigan: Volk's Bakery, 1975", *Ceredigion*, VII, 3/4, 1974-5, pp. 350-4. It is hoped to publish the Carmarthen pottery in a forthcoming issue of *Med. and Later Pottery in Wales*.
- ⁹*Ibid.* Some of the "Gwbert" ware from the Woolworth site has patchy green brown external glazing.
- ¹⁰R.C.A.H.M., *Caernarfonshire Inventory*, (1960), Vol. II, p. 152.
- ¹¹In the survey of 1300 Walter Blakeny, the constable of Cardigan Castle, held a burgage *et pro duobus capitibus domus*, for which he paid an additional 8d. The precise meaning of this is unknown, but since it follows the entry for the burgage immediately adjacent to Bartholomew gate this may refer to the mural tower, which was sited close to the town gate.
- ¹²T. James, *Carmarthen: An Archaeological and Topographical Survey* (1980) p. 53.