

YSGOL TWM O'R NANT,
DENBIGH, CLWYD

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

REPORT NO. 68

1148

Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Gwynedd
Gwynedd Archaeological Trust

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DENBIGH, CLWYD

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

by M. A. Ward

illustrations by L. A. Dutton

for Clwyd County Council

Gwynedd Archaeological Report No. 68

YSGOL TWM O'R NANT, DENBIGH, CLWYD.

INTRODUCTION

Ysgol Twm o'r Nant lies off Rhyl Road on the north eastern edge of Denbigh (NGR: SJ 0595 6662), 25m to the north of the scheduled Carmelite Friary. The extension of some existing classrooms necessitated archaeological evaluation, by Gwynedd Archaeological Trust Ltd. (Contracts), in accordance with the specification (presented in outline below) prepared by Clwyd Archaeology Service, to determine the extent and nature of any archaeological deposits including human remains, noted during playground improvements, in 1985.

SPECIFICATION - see appendix B

The aim of the evaluation is to gather sufficient information to establish the extent and nature of any archaeological deposits within the area that will be affected by development to allow a second stage of work to be designed and carried out (should it prove necessary) to comply with the planning condition.

The archaeological evaluation specification is designed to comprise two stages:

- STAGE 1 - Desk Based Evaluation
- STAGE 2 - Limited Trial Trenching

As indicated by the Evaluation Specification Stages 1 & 2 are to be carried out as a single exercise to be followed by a report. In due course this may be followed by further stages of work.

RESULTS

STAGE 1 - Desk-top Evaluation

The Carmelite Friary at Denbigh was traditionally founded by the Salusbury family c.1284. However, no record of this family, who were undoubtedly associated with the friary at a later date, can be found within the list of the original burgesses of the town at such an early date. It has been suggested, quite convincingly, that the friary was probably founded by either the Bishop of St Asaph or de Lacy to cater for the spiritual needs of the lay population of the new borough. There is little record of the history of the friary in the Middle Ages. In 1375 Llewelyn ap Madog, Bishop of St Asaph left 40s to the Carmelites of Denbigh and in 1535 Bishop Henry Standish left 20 marks for the building of new cloisters. After the destruction of the Bishop's palace at St Asaph during the revolt of Owain Glyndŵr, at the beginning of the fifteenth century, it is thought that the Bishops resided at the friary in Denbigh.

At the dissolution of the friary in 1537, it was recorded that there was a Prior and six friars still in residence and that the buildings of the friary consisted of a chapel with a small vestry, a hall, a kitchen, a brewhouse, a buttery, an orchard and a small garden. The arrangement of these buildings can be seen in John Speed's plan of Denbigh in 1611. Most of these buildings were dismantled some time after the friary was sold but the hall survived until the late nineteenth century and the chapel now enjoys the protection of the state. The hall, 60 ft south of the chapel, was used as a cowhouse in 1887 and subsequently destroyed and incorporated into the building fabric of Abbey House. It is probable that this is the structure seen to the south of the chapel in a print of 1742. The chapel saw various uses in the nineteenth century. It was used as a malthouse in 1808, a barn in 1856, again as a malthouse in 1887, after which it was used as a woodstore until it was damaged by fire in 1898. Preservation work was carried out by the Inspector of Ancient Monuments for Wales, A. P. Taylor, in 1953.

There is no record of the extent of the cemetery attached to the friary although it is thought

that burials continued up to the dissolution in 1537 and possibly during the Civil War. No cemetery boundary was suggested from any of the map sources consulted.

There was a proposal to investigate the vaults within the interior of the chapel, in the second half of the nineteenth century, but it was not known whether this was ever carried out.

It was noted that human bones were recovered during the excavation of water mains in the vicinity of the chapel and it is interesting to note that these mains are situated to the west of the chapel.

Human bone was recorded during the construction of a playground wall in 1985 at the southern end of Ysgol o'r Nant 25m to the north of the friary. The analysis of these remains led J. Manley, of Clwyd Archaeology Service, to suggest that this construction trench cut through an area of closely packed inhumations and implied that the cemetery of the friary extended at least to this area. He also noted that an abrupt termination of these burials also implied either an edge to the cemetery or later disturbance. In commenting on the shallow depth at which these burials were encountered (150mm below the ground surface) he suggested that the ground level may have been artificially dropped in this area. A radiocarbon date from a sample of the bone produced a calibrated date of AD 1435 \pm 15 (GrN 14489).

STAGE 2 - Trial Trenching (see main figure)

The site of the school is surrounded with a tarmacadam playground to the west and playing fields to the south and east. An embankment drops away from the flagged pavement which surrounds the school, joining with the natural slope down southwards towards the friary. The drift geology is boulder clay (British Geological Survey Sheet 107).

Seven trenches were located in areas where new foundation trenches were to be excavated, in accordance with the specification supplied by Clwyd Archaeology Service.

Trench 1

A 1.1m sq trench was excavated within the tarmacadam playground. The tarmacadam surface together with its hardcore base had a maximum depth of 0.5m, below which was a deposit of mid brown compact clay with grey clay mottling containing pieces of brick lying above the natural mid brown compact clay. No archaeological deposits or artifacts were observed in this trench. It should be especially noted that no human bone was recovered from this trench.

Trench 2

A trench 2m x 1.1m was excavated to a depth of 0.8m. A ceramic drain, running parallel to the south wall of the school, was noted at a depth of 0.8m, with deposits of modern build-up sealing this to a depth of 0.5m. A further pipe, encased in concrete, joined this from the guttering down pipe. The ditches for these pipes cut into the natural yellow clay and red sand natural deposits observed at depths of 0.6m and 0.8m respectively. No archaeological deposits or artifacts, including human bone, was noted from this trench.

Trench 3

It was originally proposed to excavate a trench between trenches 2 and 4. However the siting of this trench, by the drain for a guttering down pipe and the observation of the drain running parallel to the south wall of the school, suggested that it would also be extensively disturbed by these recent works. A decision was made and confirmed with Clwyd Archaeology Service on site, not to excavate this trench as it was felt that no further information would be obtained.

Trench 4

A trench 3m long and 1.15m wide was excavated to a depth of 1.55m. The drain running parallel to the south wall of the school was observed, turning at right angles and running downslope to the south, in one half of the trench. A further concrete covered pipe met this from the drain of the guttering down pipe. Recent build-up material, associated with the school was observed here to a depth of 1m, with the natural sandy clay deposit at a depth of 1.5m. No archaeological deposits were noted from this trench. The few fragments of human bone which were recovered came from the recent build-up deposits.

Trench 5

A trench 4.2m long and 1.1m wide was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.4m. The north-west end of the trench revealed that a large amount of material had been deposited to form the present embankment (7, 8, 9 and 10 on section). These overlay a path (5) with associated turf line (6). These in turn lay above successive old ground surface deposits (2, 3 and 4). The natural yellow clay, which became mixed with natural red sand at the north-west end of the trench, was encountered at a depth of 1.4m beneath the embankment and 0.54m downslope. No archaeological deposits were noted from this trench although the occasional fragmentary human bone was observed in deposits 3, 4, 7, and 10.

Trench 6

A trench 7m long and 1.1m wide was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.8m. An earlier path (19) was noted to the south east and 0.5m below the present path surround of the school (26). A number of makeup deposits lay between these two paths (21, 22, 23, 24, 25 and 26). A turf line (20) associated with the earlier path was noted lying above an old topsoil horizon (18) and a stony levelling deposit (16). The early path overlay two features of archaeological interest. A deposit of fragmentary human bone within a matrix of silty clay (17) was cut by the construction cut for the earlier path (19) and lay below the deposits 16 and 18. This deposit of bone (17) lay across the trench and extended 3.2m south-east from the eastern wall of the school. All elements of the human skeleton were represented within this deposit in a thoroughly disarticulated mix. Some of the bone showed signs of having been broken prior to deposition. A sherd of green glazed medieval tile was found during the cleaning of the surface of the bone deposit. This deposit appears to be the same deposit that was disturbed during the excavation for foundations for playground walls in 1985 (J. Manley), the backfill of which was noted in the side of the trench (28). 17 became less concentrated at the north-western end of the trench where the bones were less damaged. A relationship was noted between 17 and 14 (the lower fill of cut feature 13). 17 was recorded as overlying 14, however it was unclear whether 17 was lying in its own shallow cut or represented the upper fill of a larger cut feature of which 13 is the cut edge. 13 was at least 0.35m deep and cut through the old ground surface (12) and the natural yellow clay subsoil (11). The full extent of this feature could not be determined due to the restraints on the removal of human remains at this stage of the evaluation.

It was suggested by Clwyd Archaeology Service that a trial pit be excavated by the edge of the bone deposit to attempt to determine its depth. It soon became apparent that the deposit was shallow at its edge and that any further investigation would lead to substantial disturbance of the human remains, contrary to the constraints of the brief and that a Home Office licence would be required. It was felt that any investigation of the bone deposit would best be left to a second stage of work involving the removal of the deposit. No grave cuts or any other features were observed in the south-east end of the trench. Human bone was recovered from all deposits in the trench except the fills of the cut feature (14 and 15) and the old ground surface (12).

Trench 7

A trench 1.85m long and 1.1m wide was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.95m beneath the paving surrounding the school. Much of the trench was occupied by a concrete covered drainpipe which ran from the guttering downpipe. This pipe joined a concrete capped pipe in the bottom of cut running downslope away from the school. Although this trench had been disturbed by these pipes the natural yellow clay was noted at a depth of 0.7m. No archaeological deposits or artifacts were noted other than post medieval pottery in the old ground surface deposit above the natural clay and a slither of bone, which could not be identified as either animal or human, in the build-up deposit beneath the path.

Trench 8

A trench 1.85m long and 1.1m wide was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.85m beneath the paving surrounding the school. Much of the trench was occupied by a concrete covered drainpipe which ran from the guttering downpipe. This pipe joined a concrete covered pipe in the bottom of cut running parallel to the school. Although this trench had been disturbed by these pipes the natural yellow clay was noted at a depth of 0.75m. No archaeological deposits or artifacts were noted.

SUMMARY

It is clear from this evaluation that the conclusions reached in 1985, that this area contained a cemetery of closely packed inhumation burials, can no longer be supported. This conclusion was arrived at in difficult conditions, with the bones having already been removed from the foundation trench and some confusion arose as to the extent of the bone deposit, due to the amount of bone disturbed from it and distributed throughout the subsequent build-up deposits.

The evaluation has shown that the human bone possibly lies within a single deposit and that the fragmentary and mixed nature of the bones argues strongly against there being any individual inhumations, although the possibility that these are present at a greater depth should be borne in mind. It would appear that the bones were collected together and deposited in a shallow charnel pit, to the north of the friary, but there is no evidence to suggest when this occurred. It is possible that this was carried after the friary was sold in the sixteenth century.

The report on the human bone recovered in 1985 notes that the bones were in a good state of preservation and suggested that this may indicate that they were from a narrow date range and not a secondary deposit. However, the evaluation clearly establishes these bones as a secondary deposit and a different explanation for the good state of preservation must be sought. It is known that a scheme to investigate the vaults within the friary chapel was proposed in the 1850's but it is not known whether this was carried out. Bone from within the friary chapel, which remained roofed until the fire in 1898, would have survived in a good and fairly uniform state of preservation and it is possible that a late nineteenth century investigation of the vaults was conducted with the cleared bones deposited in a shallow pit in the field to the north of the friary. Alternatively this may have occurred during the preservation works of 1953.

No graves were found in any of the other trenches, which would be expected from within a cemetery, and although human bone was noted within the build-up deposits, within these trenches, this is usual in proximity to a known cemetery. This suggests that the cemetery of the friary did not extend as far north and east as the present school buildings.

RECOMMENDATIONS

An area of archaeological interest between trenches 5 and 6 has been identified on the attached site plan. Further excavation of this area would enable the depth and southern and eastern

of the skeletal material. This second stage of investigation would also facilitate the investigation of the cut feature below the bone deposit.

A fairly high confidence rating of the evaluation for trenches 1, 5 and 6 has been achieved, however, the rating for trenches 2, 3, 4, 7 and 8, must be seen as low given their disturbance by drainage works. A moderate degree of confidence, in respect to the extent of the friary cemetery, has been achieved given the lack of graves and scarcity of human bone in these trenches. It is recommended that a watching brief element should be introduced into any second stage of work in the areas of trenches 2, 3, 4, 7 and 8.

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MAP SOURCES CONSULTED

John Speed's map of Denbigh 1611.

Tithe map 1843.

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APPENDIX A

Summary of deposits observed in the section of trench 5

1. Natural yellow clay with a sand red element becoming prominent to the north-west.
2. Reddish orange sandy clay.
3. Stony deposit in a yellowish brown silty clay matrix flecked with mortar, charcoal and shattered brick.
4. Reddish brown silty clay. Stone free.
5. Hardcore aggregate.
6. Yellow clay turf line
7. Reddish brown silty clay. Stone free.
8. Redeposited yellow clay and reddish brown silty clay.
9. Aggregate bank build-up.
10. Dark greyish black topsoil

Summary of deposits observed in the section of trench 6

11. Natural yellow clay.
12. Reddish orange sandy clay.
13. Cut feature 0.35m deep.
14. Yellowish brown silty clay.
15. Reddish brown silty clay mottled with red sand and containing large stones.
16. Stony deposit in a yellowish brown silty clay matrix flecked with mortar, charcoal and shattered brick.
17. Deposit of human bones in a reddish brown silty clay matrix.
18. Reddish brown silty clay. Stone free.
19. Modern paving slab bedded on aggregate.
20. Yellow clay turf line
21. Reddish brown silty clay. Stone free.
22. Redeposited yellow clay.
23. Redeposited yellow clay mottled with greyish brown silty clay.
24. Greyish brown silty clay mottled with yellow clay. High stone content.
25. Lower topsoil.

26. Modern paving slab bedded on aggregate.
27. Dark greyish black topsoil

APPENDIX B

CLWYD ARCHAEOLOGY SERVICE - SPECIFICATION FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELDWORK

Work to Determine the Extent of Archaeological Fieldwork Necessary to Comply with a Condition Attached to Planning Permission Granted for Extensions to Ysgol Twm O'r Nant, Denbigh

Specification prepared on behalf of Clwyd County Council.

Summary

A mixture of a desk-based assessment and archaeological fieldwork consisting of trenching, is proposed to establish the extent of the archaeological deposits that are known to lie under or close to Ysgol Twm O'r Nant, Denbigh and that will be affected by the extensions to be built to the school. A two stage programme of work will be necessary, the extent of the second stage dependent upon the results of the first stage for which this is the scope of work. This specification has been written by the Clwyd Archaeology Service (part of Clwyd County Council) and the holders of the local Clwyd Sites and Monuments Record.

Site Location & Description

(please refer to location map on attached plan)

Grid Reference: SJ 0595 6662

The site lies on the north eastern edge of modern Denbigh off Rhyl Road. The school lies surrounded by playing fields and playgrounds in grounds which it shares with two other schools. The southern corner of Ysgol Twm O'r Nant lies 25m. to the north of the scheduled Carmelite Friary, with the boundary of the scheduled area extending approximately 5m. into the school grounds. The site is approximately 50m. above sea level with the ground surface rising gradually to the north west (although this is masked to a degree by landscaping in the school grounds). The school is surrounded on its southern and eastern sides by paving slabs that extend between 2 and 3m out from the school buildings, whilst on its western side there is a concrete playground. The ground drops quite steeply from the edge of the paving slabs on the eastern side of the school to the school playing fields. The drift geology is boulder clay (British Geological Survey Sheet 107). There may be various service cables / pipes crossing the application site, the contractor to be responsible for informing himself of their presence and to avoid these in the siting of the trial trenches.

Planning Background

Clwyd County Council have granted themselves planning permission to carry out alterations and extensions to Ysgol Twm O'r Nant, Denbigh. The alterations are internal and have no archaeological sensitivity. The extensions however, are potentially archaeologically sensitive and an archaeological condition has been placed on the permission. The condition reads:

"The development hereby permitted shall not be commenced until the applicant has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted by the applicant and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority."

NOTE: THIS SPECIFICATION IS FOR AN INITIAL TRIAL INVESTIGATION - A FURTHER SPECIFICATION AND PROGRAMME OF WORK WILL BE NECESSARY AND WILL BE DEPENDENT ON THE RESULTS OF THIS FIRST STAGE

Clwyd County Council's Structure Plan (First Alteration, operative 1.12.91) Policy G10 deals with development on unscheduled archaeological sites. G10 includes the statement: "On sites where development is considered permissible, consents may nevertheless be withheld until satisfactory agreements have been made for the provision of adequate archaeological investigation before and/or during development. Such provision may also be achieved through the attachment of conditions to planning approvals." The explanatory note includes the statement "Any archaeological work arising from the granting of planning permission should be undertaken by the developer through the engagement of an approved archaeological contractor."

Planning Policy Guidance Note 16: "Archaeology and Planning" (Welsh Office, November 1991) also makes clear that archaeological remains are a material consideration in the planning process, and that whilst their physical preservation in-situ is preferable, where this is not achieved, then "planning authorities will, in such cases, need to satisfy themselves that the developer has made appropriate and satisfactory arrangements for the excavation and recording of the archaeological remains and the publication of the results." (para. 28).

This specification has been prepared by Clwyd Archaeology Service at the request of Clwyd County Council in order to provide an archaeological scope of work to allow an archaeological contractor to provide a costed project design for the post determination evaluation.

Archaeological Interest

The archaeological interest in the building of the extensions lies in the discovery of the remains of at least 28 individuals from the early fifteenth century in a foundation trench for an earlier extension in 1985. These bones were recovered from the sides and floor of an already excavated foundation trench (0.75m. wide by 0.5m. deep) dug in advance of construction of a semi-circular wall bounding a nursery play area at the southern end of the school (SJ 0596 6660). The bones were densely packed and extended from c.150mm below the surface of the trench to the full depth of the trench (0.5m.). The bones were confined to a 5m. length of trench abutting the existing school buildings. No individual graves could be seen and there was no apparent sign of articulation. No grave goods were recovered.

These bones are believed to be part of the cemetery associated with the Carmelite Friary (SJ 0594 6656), founded in about 1289 and dissolved in 1538. The Friary is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (De23). The plan of Denbigh Friary is known (it is illustrated on Speed's map of 1611 where it is called "The Abbey") and appears to be fairly orthodox. It is therefore not particularly surprising to find remains of the Friary's cemetery on its usual northern side.

Aim of Evaluation

The aim of the evaluation is to gather sufficient information to establish the extent and nature of any archaeological deposits within the area that will be affected by development to allow a second stage of work to be carried out (should it prove necessary) to comply with the planning condition.

Approach

(Please refer to attached plan)

A written project design is required of the archaeological contractor, to be submitted to the Clwyd Archaeology Service and accepted by them in writing before work commences. The submitted project design should be based upon the format for a project design contained in "The Management of Archaeological Projects" (English Heritage, 2nd edition, 1991). The archaeological contractor must comply with Clwyd Archaeology Service's "General Criteria for Archaeological Contractors in Clwyd for Work Necessitated by Development" (ref. IS/05.11.92 attached, and part of this specification).

The archaeological contractor should contact the CAS prior to producing the project design to discuss the approach to be adopted.

1. A desk-based review and assessment is required, including the detailed search of all existing / available primary and secondary records relating to the area of proposed development and its environs.

2. A limited amount of trial trenching should be undertaken: this to be carried out by excavating a series of trenches and test pits. The exact position to be agreed on site between the contractor and a representative of the Clwyd Archaeology Service, but see attached plan for approximate positions and sizes. The intention is to excavate:

- 1 trench 1m. wide x 7m. long
- 1 trench 1m. wide x 4m. long
- 4 trenches 1m. wide x 3m. long
- 1 trench 1m. wide x 2m. long
- 1 trench 1m. x 1m. (Note well, this test pit will require cutting through existing concrete and hardcore)

The trenches will be placed generally to lie along the line of the foundation trenches and should be dug to a safe working depth or until undisturbed natural is reached, whichever is reached first. The trenches to be opened and dug by hand. Trenches to be recorded according to the normal principles of stratigraphic excavation. The stratigraphy of all trial trenches should be recorded even where no archaeological deposits have been identified. Trenches to be excavated with following provisos:

This is the first stage of an excavation, the second stage, will follow almost immediately on from the first and could, in theory, involve the excavation of the entire area proposed for development (approximately 160 sq. m. in total). The intention at this stage is purely to identify which areas of the development will require further archaeological work and to gain an idea of how much work (including post-excavation) will need to be undertaken, therefore no archaeological deposit should be entirely removed unless this is unavoidable. It is not necessarily expected that

all trial trenches will be fully excavated to natural subsoil, but the depth of archaeological deposits across the whole site must be assessed. Any human remains which are excavated must initially be left in situ and if removal is necessary, this must comply with the relevant Home Office regulations.

Note: All photographic records to be at a minimum 35mm format.

All sections to be drawn at a minimum 1: 10 scale.

All plans to be at a minimum 1: 20 scale.

Artefacts recovered from the trial trenches to be related to their contexts, by three-dimensional recording when closely dateable / typologically distinct items are found.

Provision must be made for sampling deposits for environmental / technological evidence.

3. A plan drawing of the site at a suitable scale to be produced, locating its position and extent accurately and the position of the trenches in relation to Ordnance Survey datum and published boundaries where appropriate.

4. The contractor should state the period of notice (at the time of writing) required to commence the project.

5. The Clwyd Archaeology Service are responsible for monitoring progress and standards throughout the project. To facilitate this, the project design should include a projected timetable on site (indicating staff grades, numbers etc.). Provision should be made for 2 field visits by the CAS for monitoring purposes, during the trial trenching, costed at £50.00 each plus V.A.T.

6. An estimate of time and staff resources required for report production is required. The report must be produced within one week of completion of fieldwork to minimise delay to the development and to allow the second stage of the fieldwork to proceed as quickly as possible.

7. The contractor should forward their detailed project design to the Clwyd Archaeology Service for consideration and validation before any costed proposals are submitted to the applicant.

Results

1. Details of style and format are to be determined by the archaeological contractor.

2. The Report should include:

(a) a full description and interpretation of results produced to an adequate publication standard.

(b) Plans at an appropriate scale showing trench layout (as dug) and features located.

(c) Any descriptive text should include a table summarising per trench, the features classes and numbers of artefacts recovered and an interpretation.

(d) A confidence rating in the methodology used.

(e) A plan at an appropriate scale showing both actual, and where possible, predicted archaeological deposits.

(f) A full bibliography, indicating whether each reference was actually consulted.

3. The collaborative role of the Clwyd Archaeology Service in carrying out this project shall be acknowledged in all publicity (including media releases, publications etc.) arising from it.

4. A copy of the results will be supplied to the County Sites and Monuments Record held by the Clwyd Archaeology Service, on the understanding that this will become a public document after an appropriate period of time (generally not exceeding six months).

Clwyd Archaeology Service
Department Development & Tourism
Shire Hall
Mold
Clwyd
CH7 6NB

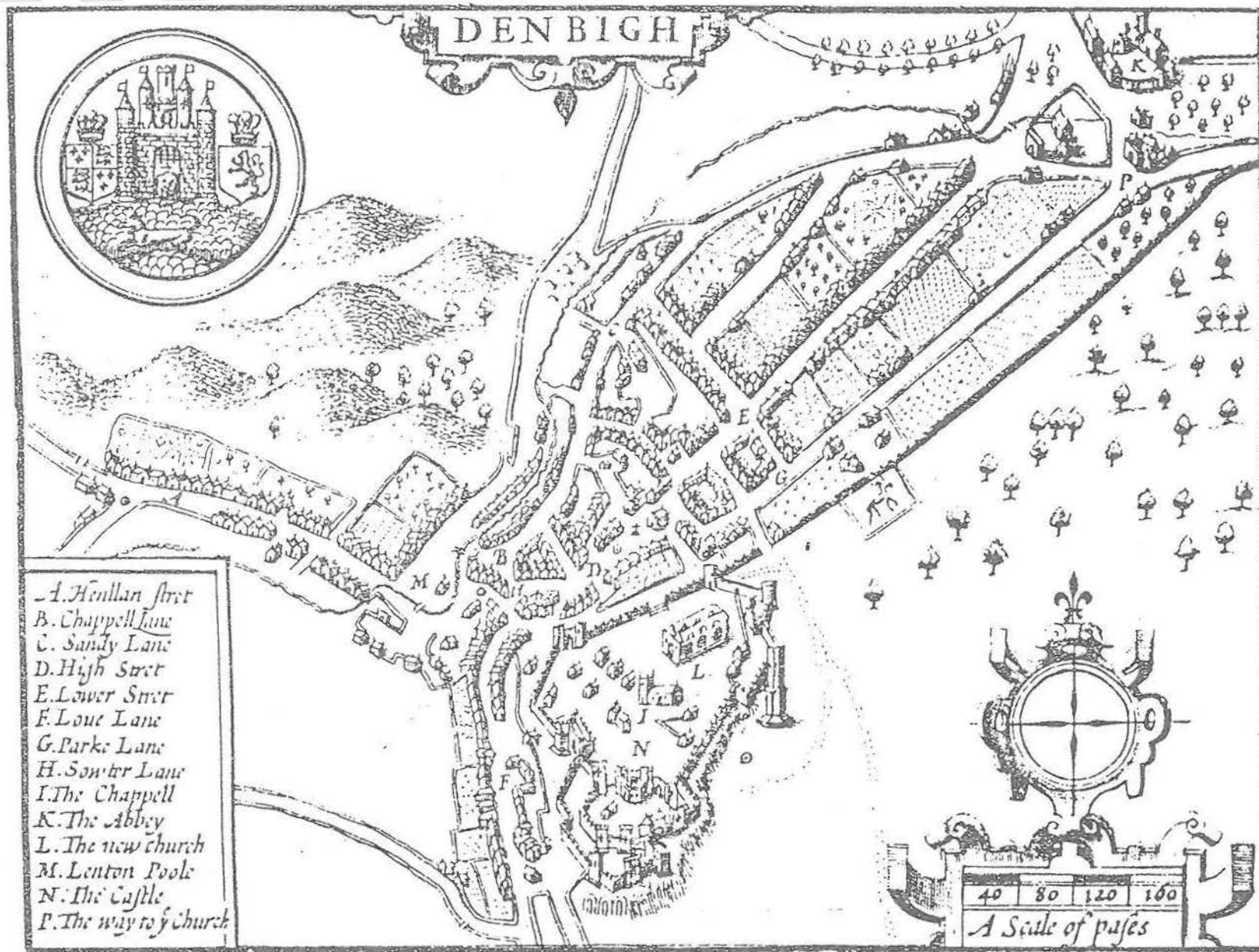
Tel. (0352) 704725

Fax. (0352) 700321

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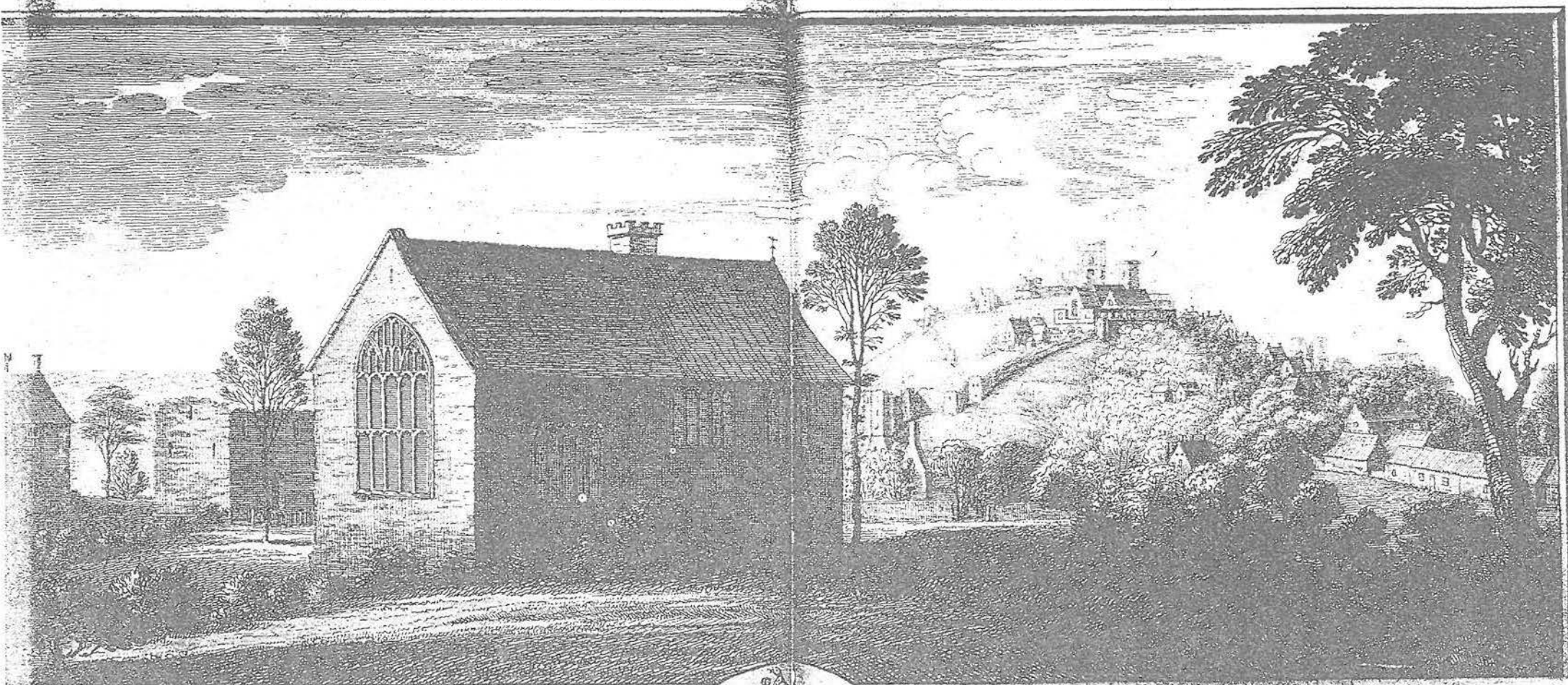
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John Speed's plan of Denbigh in 1611. The Friary is at the top right hand corner.

THE NORTH EAST VIEW OF DENBIGH ABBY.



To S^r ROBERT SALUSBURY COTTON Bar^t
 This Prospect is most gratefully Inscrib'd by
 his much Oblig'd & very humble Serv^t
 Sam^l Nath Puck.

THIS Abby of Black Monks of the Order of S^t Benedict was
 founded and endow'd by Adam Salusbury, in or about the time (as is sup-
 pos'd) of H. Hen: III. The Proprietor is S^r Rob^t Salusbury Cotton Bar^t.

Sam^l & Nath^l Buck del. et sculp^t. Publish'd according to Act of Parliament April 5th 1730.
 L. Denbigh Town & Castle.

Denbigh

This view of 1742 shows the walled town to the south all but deserted. The first borough charter was granted by Henry de Lacy in 1285 but within 20 years the extra-mural settlement was already four times greater than that within the defences.

