

BERRY STREET ARCH, CONWY

WATCHING BRIEF

REPORT NO. 141

**Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Gwynedd
Gwynedd Archaeological Trust**

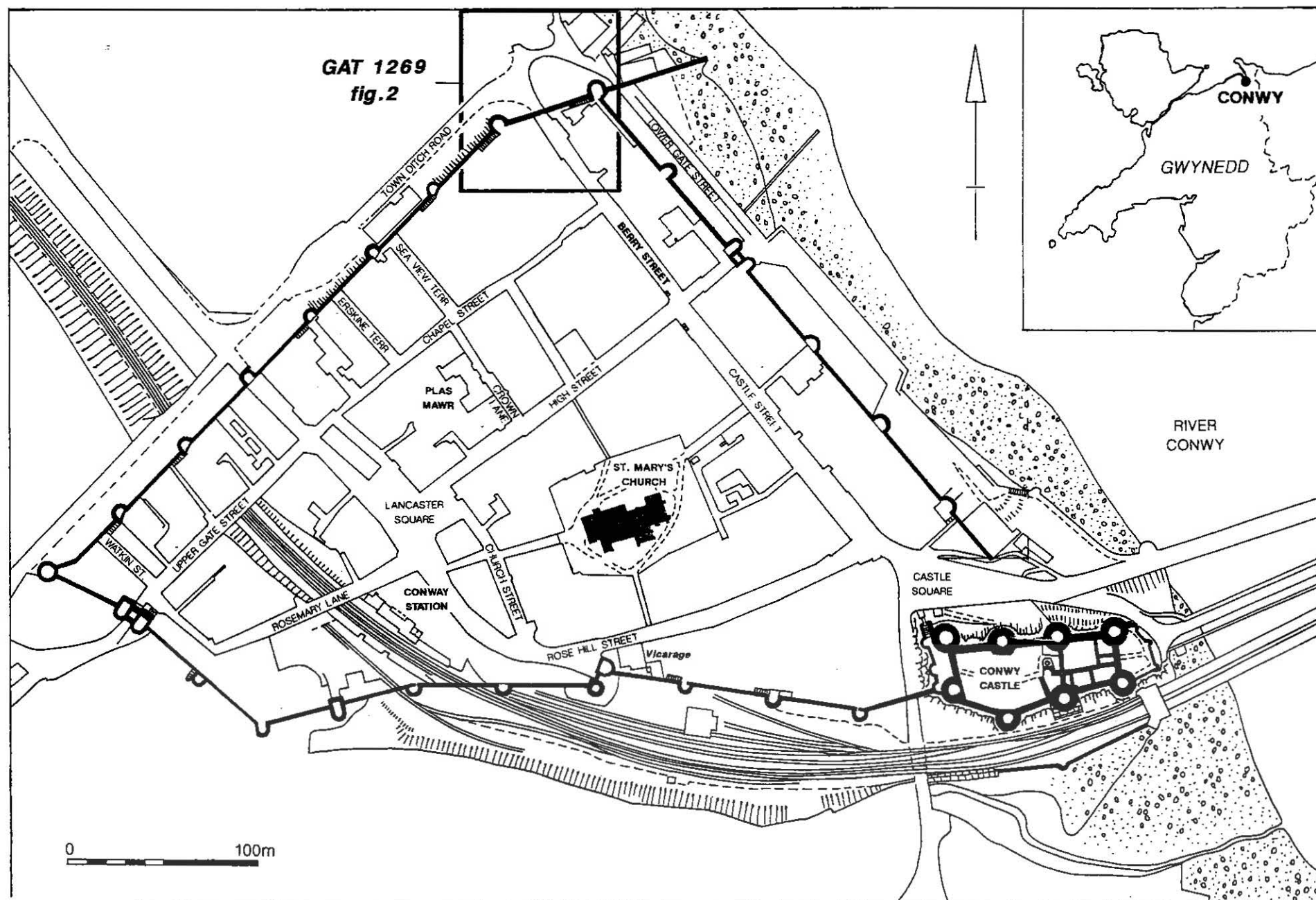
BERRY STREET ARCH, CONWY (G1269)

WATCHING BRIEF

report by S. Jones

illustrations by H. Riley

Fig. 1 General location.



BERRY STREET ARCH, CONWY G1269

SUMMARY

The partial removal of the mound adjacent to the medieval town wall at Berry Street Arch Conwy, has revealed the presence of a low stone plinth running along the foot of the wall which may represent part of the foundations for the wall.

INTRODUCTION

In September 1994, concern over the stability of a limestone retaining wall at Berry Street Arch, Conwy resulted in a proposal to reduce the pressure on the wall by removing part of the earthen mound it retained and consolidate the wall itself.

Conwy Town Walls are a Scheduled Ancient Monument and form part of a World Heritage Site. The project engineers, Mott MacDonald, were requested by Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments to engage an archaeologist to conduct a watching brief monitoring the progress of the work carried out by the contractors, Hughes and Jones. Gwynedd Archaeological Trust Contracts Section was subsequently commissioned to carry out this work.

BACKGROUND

The retaining wall is situated on the west side of Town Ditch Road where it passes through the town wall into Berry Street (SH 7810 7733). Outcropping of bedrock visible along Town Ditch Road west of the retaining wall, suggests that the bedrock in the vicinity is not far from the present ground surface. The mound itself runs in an approximately west - east direction along the base of the Town Wall. It is regularly shaped with a steep north-west side, between 2m to 3.5m high with a flat top, 2m wide. Archaeologically the bank is potentially important since it forms part of the bank which runs directly along the base of the thirteenth century town wall, forming one side of Town Ditch Road. Although originally it was thought to be post-medieval in date, at the time of the project opinion was that it may have been older. The town walls and castle, were built by Edward I in 1288.

AIMS AND METHODS

Initially it was intended that a 'wedge' of the earth bank (7.6m long by between 1.9m and 5.5m wide and 1.2m in depth at the east end) retained by the limestone wall would be removed, thereby reducing the pressure on the wall (see figure 2). The turf would be lifted by hand and set to one side for re-use. The remainder of the wedge was then to be removed by hand and disposed of off-site.

This work was to be monitored by GAT staff. If, during excavation any archaeological features were found, work could be curtailed to allow for detailed recording or abandoned if significant archaeological remains were exposed. Recording would involve: scale photographs, both black and white and colour transparencies (35mm format); scaled drawings in plan and section and corresponding written descriptions of the defined contexts. Finds would be located by context or in three dimensions if significant. In particular it was hoped that a buried ground surface of medieval date might have been revealed, allowing for environmental sampling.

Work was carried out between September and October 1994 and involved five site visits by a single member of GAT staff.

The voided deposit adjacent to the retaining wall (005) appears to relate to the construction of the present limestone retaining wall, with its voided nature aiding drainage, a concern reflected in a number of water outlets at the base of the retaining wall.

The direct relationship of the stone plinth (006) with the town wall is not clear, however, previous excavations at the base of the town wall to the west near Lower Gate Street have revealed a foundation 'platform' projecting 0.35m outwards in a northerly direction from the wall, 1.10m in depth laying on top of a rubble fill (Gruffydd 1992). This platform was nearly 3m down from the present ground surface compared to 0.3m - 0.4m for the stone plinth at Berry Street Arch. However, this may be explained by the contrasting heights above sea level, recent changes in ground levels and apparent close proximity of bedrock to the ground surface along Town Ditch Road. Therefore, the stone plinth may be a similar foundation platform for the town wall.

Examination of the interior of the town wall on both sides of the archway at Berry Street, revealed the possible remains of a corresponding stone plinth, the present ground surface inside the walls being lower than outside the walls. Here the regularly coursed stone walling becomes irregular with the stones protruding slightly, possibly representing the remains of a now removed plinth.

Bibliography

Gruffydd, A. 1992. 'Conwy Sewerage and Sewerage Disposal Scheme Re-Investigations at Lower East Gate Street', GAT Report 34

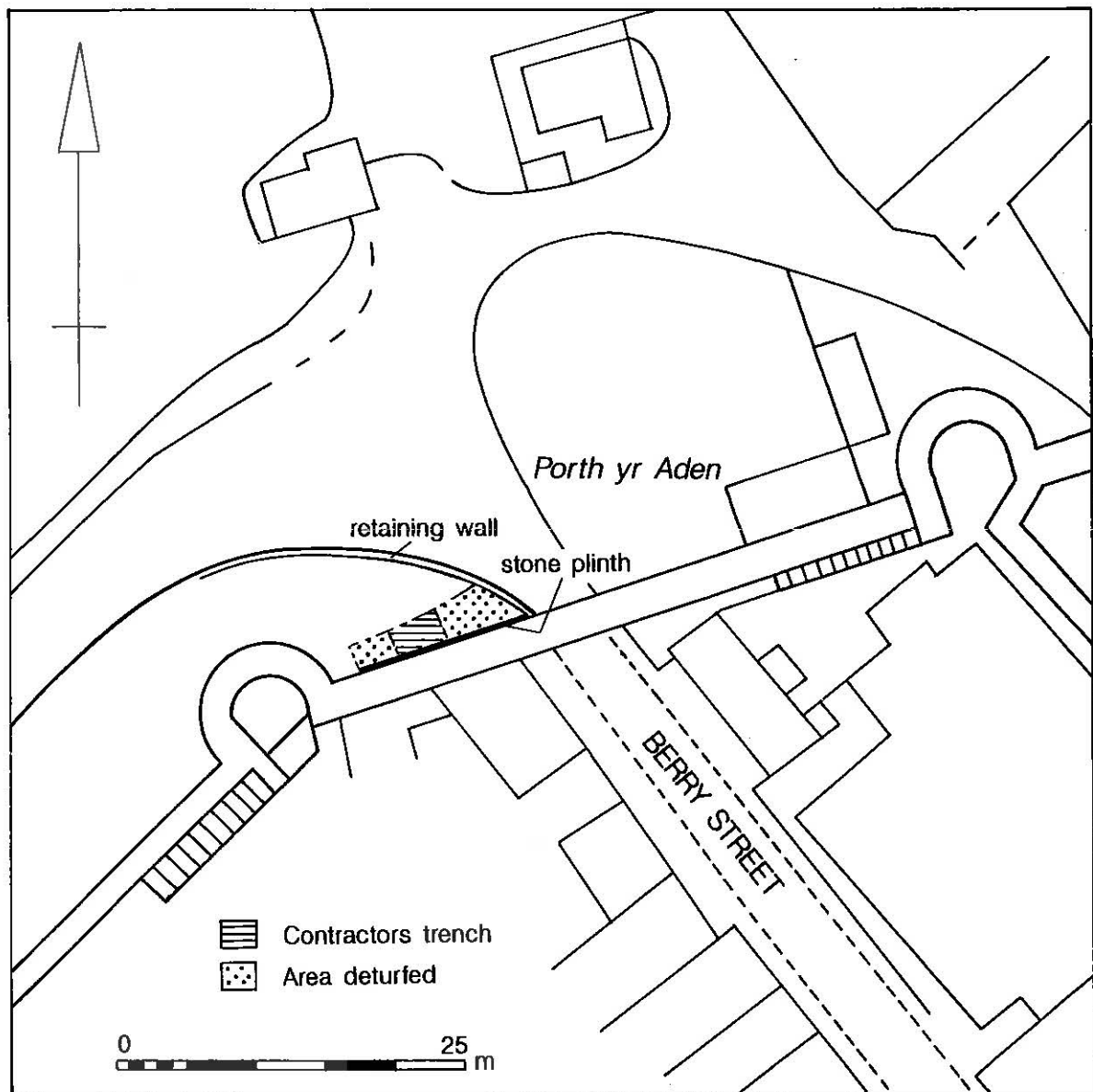


Fig.2 Location of excavation trench

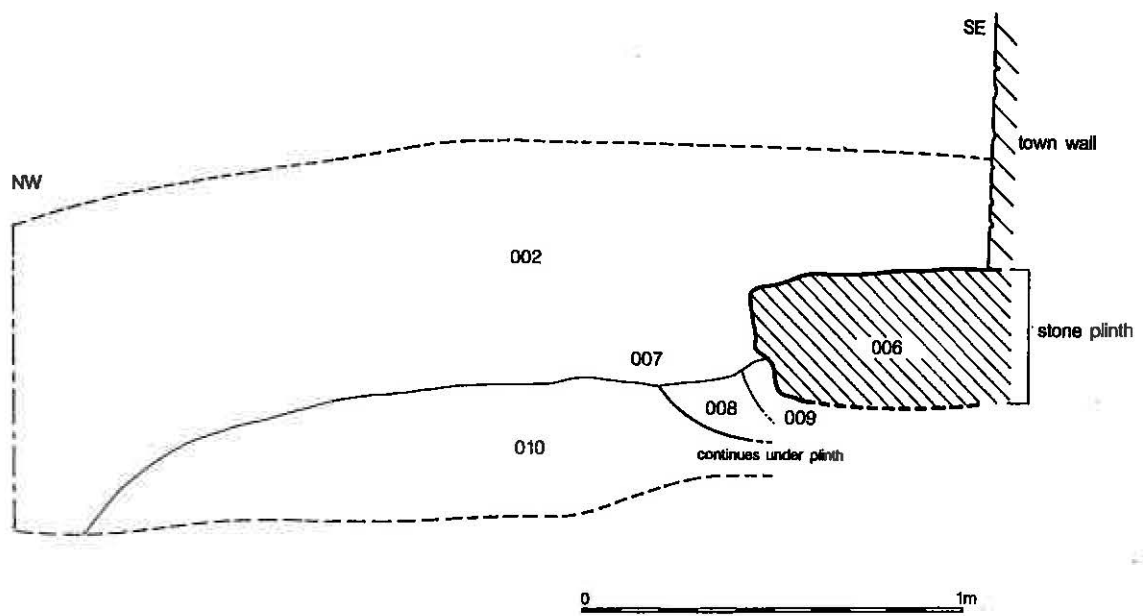


Fig.3 SW facing section, contractors trench.

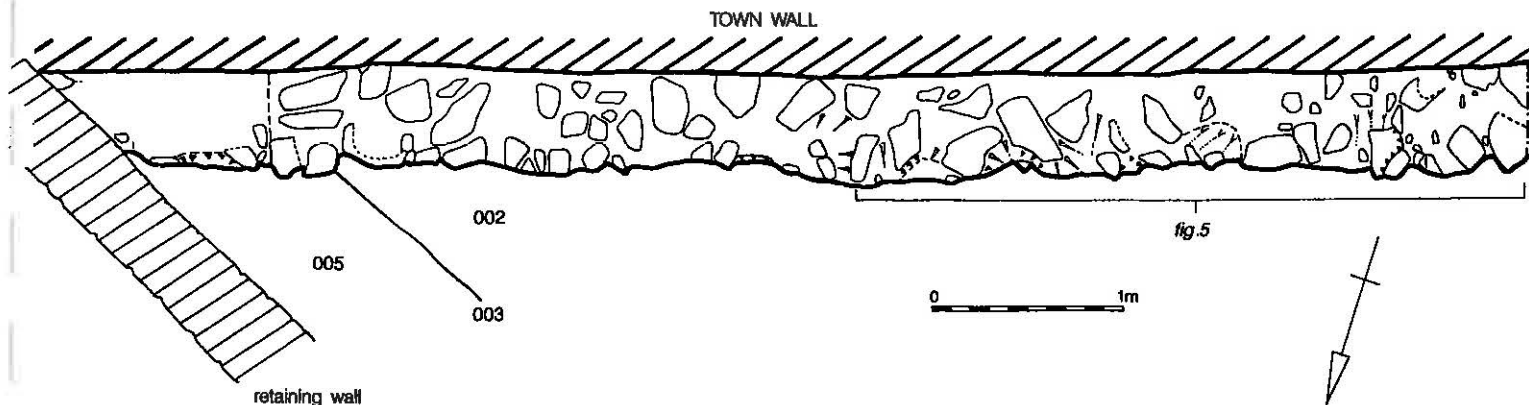


Fig.4 Plan of exposed stone plinth.

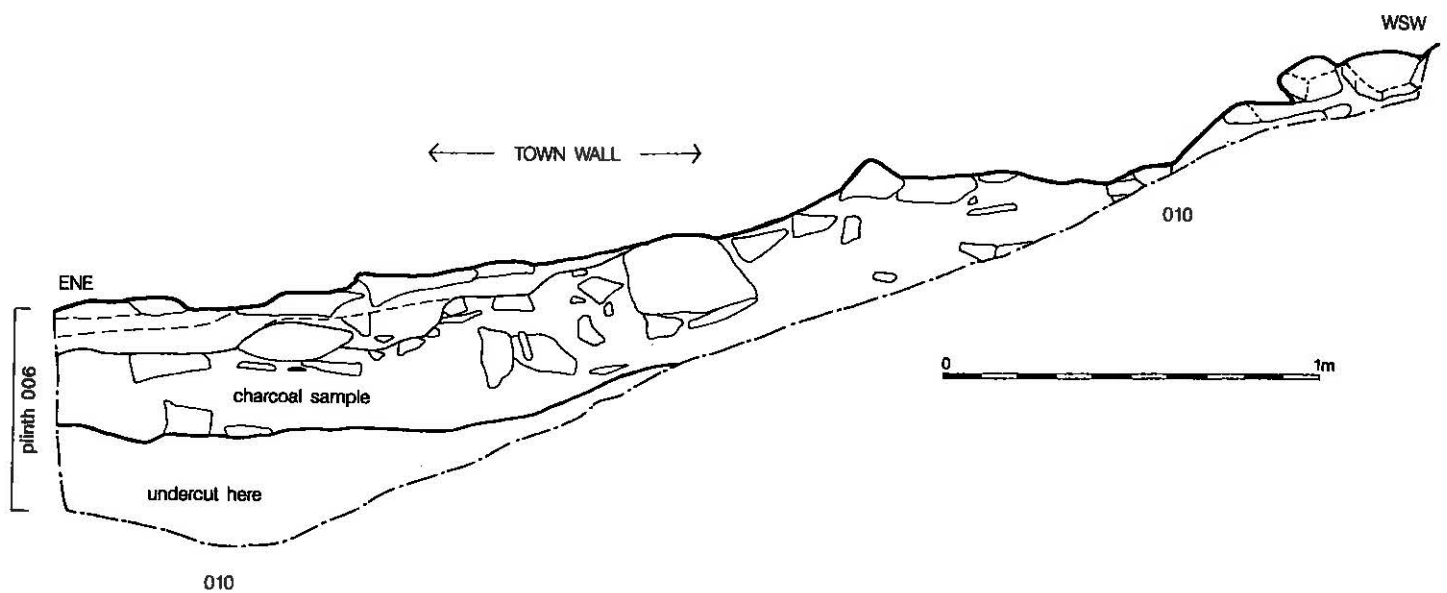


Fig.5 NW facing elevation of stone plinth.

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