

27 HIGH STREET, CONWY
WATCHING BRIEF

REPORT NO. 145

Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Gwynedd
Gwynedd Archaeological Trust

27 HIGH STREET, CONWY WATCHING BRIEF (G1289)

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SUMMARY

The area of the trench has obviously been heavily disturbed in recent times and little of archaeological significance could be identified. However, only a very limited area was available for inspection and recording.

1. INTRODUCTION

A planning application was made to Aberconwy Borough Council for an extension to the existing property at 27 High Street Conwy. The Gwynedd Archaeological Planning Service (GAPS), in its role as archaeological advisor to the local planning authorities) provided comment on the implications of the proposed development. GAPS indicated that, considering the location of the proposed development within the medieval walled town and only some 30m from St Mary's church, it was possible that important archaeological remains would be disturbed. However, because of the very limited extent of ground disturbance associated with this phase of the proposed development, GAPS recommended that a watching brief would be sufficient to deal with the archaeological implications in this instance.

An archaeological condition was therefore attached to the grant of planning permission by Aberconwy Borough Council. GAPS produced a project brief for the applicant defining the nature of the work required.

The applicant subsequently commissioned the Trust's Contracts Section to carry out this work.

2. METHODOLOGY

The ground disturbance at 27 High Street involved the hand excavation by the contractors of a foundation trench measuring 3.3 m long by 0.6 m wide by 0.56 m deep located at the rear of the present property. The contractor first demolished light structures in the area of the proposed development then, on Wednesday November 9, the hand excavation of the foundation trench was commenced. This work was observed by a single member of staff. Work commenced on the NE half of the trench but because of the number of services struck, the SW half had to be excavated the following day. Again this work was observed by a single member of staff.

Recording involved photography both black and white prints, and colour (transparencies) at 35 mm format, a location plan and section drawing, with written descriptions of the deposits and features encountered.

3. RESULTS

The lowest deposit revealed right across the trench was a very sandy clay, light yellowy brown in colour and very compacted, producing no finds. The top of this layer was encountered at a depth ranging between 0.30 - 0.47 m.

In the northeastern half of the trench this layer appeared to have been truncated by a large flat bottomed cut feature at least 1.2 m long NE to SW and which was not visible in the SE facing section. This feature contained what appeared to be two bands of very pure smooth clay both 0.05 m in thickness. The lowest was a brick red in colour and the one above black. Further investigation suggested that the layers in fact represented one deposit, the upper part of which had become stained. The overlying layer was a mid brown silt 0.28 m thick and highly

contaminated with rubble and 19th - 20th C rubbish. The deposits above this comprised a layer 0.04 m thick of *in situ* clay tiles sealed by 0.05 m of concrete. These two layers only extended 0.8 m along the most northeastern section of the trench, where they butted against an upstanding wall.

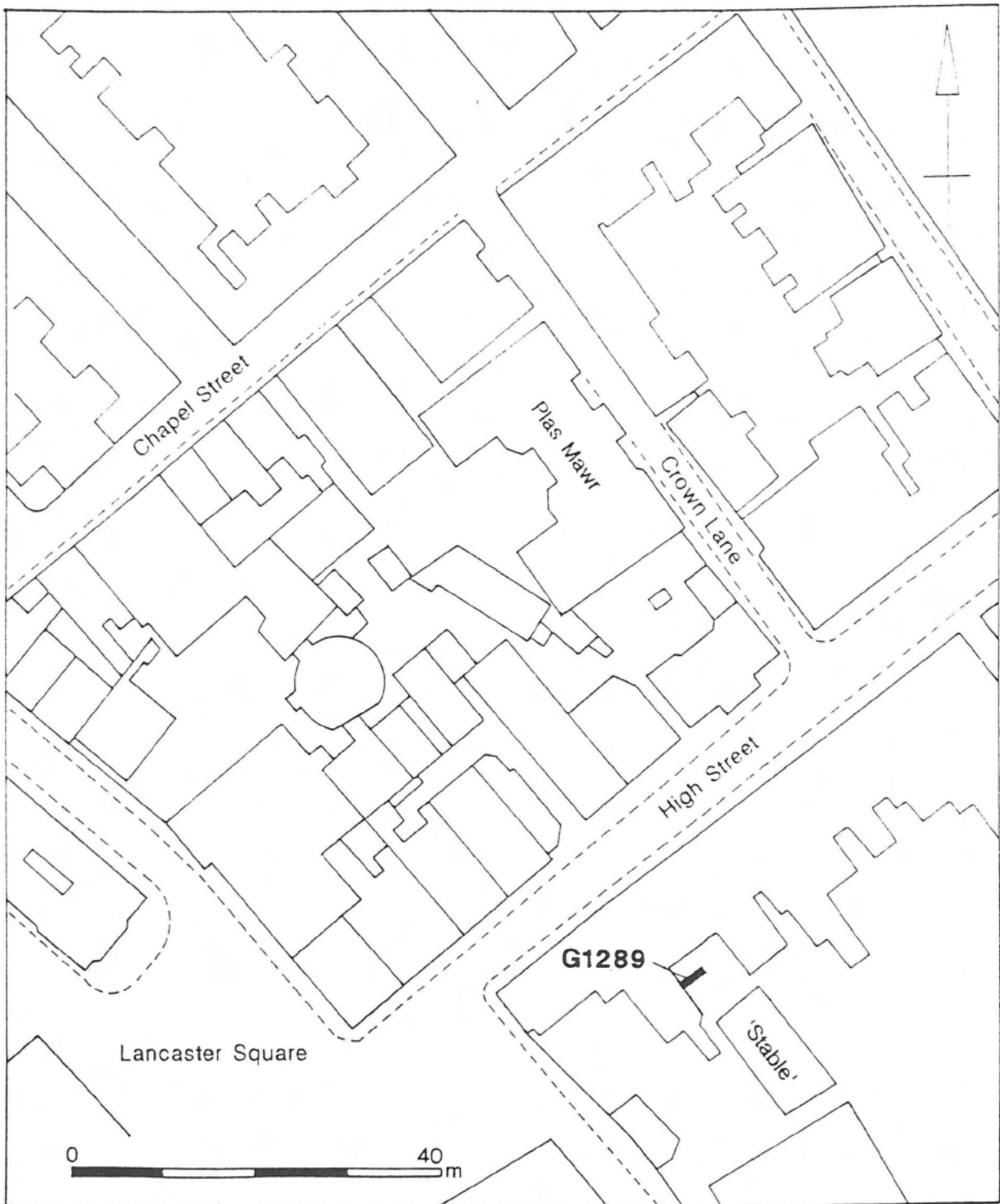
The remaining 1.7 m length of the section to the SW revealed a different sequence. In its base, the same light yellowy brown sandy clay was identified as natural geology. However, above this the sequence comprised an 0.19 m thick deposit of blackish brown sandy silt, contaminated with 19th - 20th C dumped material, sealed by a flag stone surface 0.05 m thick which in turn was topped with 0.07 m of concrete. A single cut feature was identified truncating the flag surface. It consisted of an 0.5 m wide pipe trench containing two 0.15 m diameter clay pipes and an 0.02 m diameter copper pipe. This pipe trench was some 0.33 m deep and ran across the trench at right angles 1.0 m from its SW end.

The fill for this feature was similar to the context it cut through consisting largely of a blackish brown sandy silt with 19th - 20th C dumped material but it also contained distinct bands of sand.

4. INTERPRETATION

The lowest layer identified right across the base of the trench was interpreted as natural geology. Above this the section varied greatly to NE and SW as the NE section had been truncated by a cut feature with a pure clay layer covering its bottom. The feature appeared to be no wider than the contractor's trench (0.6 m) as it did not appear in the SE facing section and did not appear in the adjacent 'Trench C' of the later watching brief carried out for 25 High St. (see GAT report 146). The function of this feature could not be determined from the limited area exposed, however, the purity of the clay and its distinctive colour would suggest that it was a deliberate deposition rather than a natural accumulation. It is possible that the clay represents some sort of lining or damp proofing. This feature subsequently fell out of use and was levelled with dumped soil and rubble. A wall was then constructed over these fills to form an outbuilding which had a tile floor later replaced with a concrete surface.

The layers in the SW half of the section are considered to be more representative of the general stratigraphy of the site. These suggest much disturbance and dumping eventually sealed by the laying of yard surfaces associated with the present buildings.



Site Location within Conwy

