

EASTGATE STREET, CAERNARFON  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

REPORT NO. 202

Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Gwynedd  
Gwynedd Archaeological Trust

EASTGATE STREET, CAERNARFON  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT (G1368)

prepared for Gwynedd County Council  
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# **EASTGATE STREET, CAERNARFON**

## **ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT**

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

As part of the ongoing improvement to Caernarfon, Gwynedd County Council is intending to replace the distressed railway bridge at Turf Square and enhance the streetscape of Eastgate Street to tie in with the improvement within the town walls.

Gwynedd Archaeological Trust was asked to undertake archaeological assessment of the site to determine the implications of the proposed development; a preliminary report was submitted in November 1995, and the present document comprises more detailed findings and the results of further field work following on from the work carried out in the autumn of 1995.

### **2.0 AIMS**

The aims of this assessment are:

- a) to identify and record the archaeology of the areas to be affected by the proposals;
- b) to evaluate the importance of what has been identified (both as a cultural landscape and as the individual items which make up that landscape;
- c) to recommend further evaluation work if thought necessary; and
- d) to recommend ways in which any impact on the cultural heritage resulting from the proposed improvement can be avoided or minimised (preferably utilising non-destructive techniques, where identified as appropriate.)

### **3.0 METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Standard abbreviations**

Standard abbreviations as used in this report are as follows:

CRO: Caernarfon Record Office, Victoria Dock, Caernarfon  
NLW: National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth  
NRA: National Rivers Authority, Parc Menai, Bangor  
RCAHM(W): Royal Commission on Ancient and Historic Monuments (Wales)  
SMR: Sites and Monuments Record, Gwynedd Archaeological Trust  
*TCHS: Transactions of the Caernarvonshire Historical Society*

#### **3.2**

Two members of Trust staff visited the site on 11 October 1995, having previously negotiated permission with the owners or tenants of Siop y Modur, Siop y Pentan, Caernarfon Pets and Aquatic Supplies and Lloyd's Bank to visit their cellars. The tenant of Caffi Cei also volunteered information about the cellars on his premises, but he was not prepared to grant permission to visit them. On 19 March 1996, after contacting the owner, the cellar of Y Ddraig Goch was visited. On the 15 and 19 March the opportunity was taken of inspecting the culverted river where it had been exposed by Messrs Mulcair's, acting on behalf of Gwynedd County Council.

The greater part of the desk-top work was carried out in the Caernarfon Record Office. This

preserves the Borough Records, some of which were deposited by the Town Clerk and others were rescued by Kendrick Evans as he sorted through the wartime salvage. It may have been this process which re-kindled Mr Evans' own interest in the archaeology of the Afon Cadnant (see 4.3 below), as he wrote a series of articles on Eastgate Street which appeared in the *TCHS* in 1941 and 1944-45 (see 6.1 below), as well as a later series of articles entitled *A Survey of Caernarfon*, which appeared in the *TCHS* volumes 32 to 36, and were left incomplete at his death in 1976. For this reason, though the *Liber Municipii de Carnarvon*, which deals with the years 1684 onwards was read in its entirety, as were the records of Court Leet and Frankpledge (effectively the court of local administration) in the *Order Books of the Borough Court* up to 1793, comparatively little emerged that had not already entered the printed record. The deposited plans of the railways proposed for Caernarfon in the 1860s were searched, which yielded some information, as were other maps and plans of the town.

Other work was carried out in the library of the University of Wales, Bangor and in the SMR of the Gwynedd Archaeological Trust, using the resources of the Trust's library and information supplied by the RCAHM(W) at Aberystwyth, in particular a photographic survey of the area carried out in January 1956.

Michael P Davies of the NRA was consulted as to the present state of the culverted river.

## 4.0 RESULTS

### 4.1 Location

Eastgate Street runs east-west for approximately 53m, and forms an extension of Caernarfon High Street. It begins under the Eastgate (colloquially *y Cloc Mawr*) at SH47926282 in the part of the town wall which encloses the intramural settlement on its east side, and immediately crosses a road on a bridge known as Tan y Bont. This road is known as Bank Quay to the north of the bridge and as Greengate Street to the south. At its far end, Eastgate Street opens out into a rectangular area now known as Turf Square or Pendist, which measures 27m east-west, and approximately 16m north-south. At this point, Crown Street runs off to the north, and Mill Lane (formerly Gardd'rafon) to the south; both decline steeply from the junction to reach the level of the abandoned railway which passes under Turf Square. The east end of Turf Square joins Bangor Road and Bridge Street, the main route for through traffic until the construction of the flyover, opened in February 1981.

The Afon Cadnant rises near the present village of Bethel, and reaches the town by a more-or-less straight south-westerly course until it turns sharply to the north before entering the Straits. Now culverted for all of its length within the present-day town of Caernarfon, its course drops sharply a distance of 15' vertically from Bridge Street to the former railway tunnel, and thereafter drops still further to an outlet on Victoria Dock. It is tidal probably as far as the point where it flows under Eastgate Street, possibly higher. A grit trap gives access to the culvert behind Skinner Street, and a manhole on Bank Quay. These are the nearest points of access to the culvert from Eastgate Street.

### 4.2 History

#### 4.2.1 Introduction

Caernarfon was an important military site under the Roman occupation, and there is abundant documentary evidence for both a Norman and a Welsh presence before the fall of Gwynedd. Though the older part of the present town is effectively a creation of King Edward I, who established a settlement there as early as 1283, it supplanted a nucleated settlement attached to a royal *llys*; accounts survive for the demolition of its houses in July 1284 (Taylor 1986 80). The Statute of Rhuddlan in the following year confirmed Caernarfon as the administrative and judicial capital of North Wales, and it received its charter the same year.

The borough was enclosed with stone walls, which remain substantially intact. Medieval gates included the Water Gate in the south-west corner, the Green Gate, which gave access to the market at Maes Glas, and the Porth yr Aur ("Golden Gate"), at the western end of the High Street (Soulsby 88-90). It was on this axis that the main entrance to the town was situated; this was the Eastgate, which gave access to the route from Bangor.

The Eastgate crossed a narrow valley to the east of the outcrop on which the Castle was built, through which flowed the Afon Cadnant. For convenience's sake the various features on its course which appertain to Eastgate Street are here described following the flow of this river through the modern town of Caernarfon, beginning with the Medieval mill-pool on what is now a piece of waste land between Pool Street, Bridge Street, the roundabout under the flyover, and Penllyn.

#### 4.2.2 Mill-pool

Immediately to the east of the new town, the river was dammed to provide water for a mill, on a site still recalled by the names Pool Street and Penllyn. Work was under way in 1285 (Taylor 1986 83), and further work was carried out in 1304-5, when David *fossator* ("Dafydd the ditch-digger") was at work as Master of the Dam works (Colvin 1963 383). The account roll of the Chamberlain of North Wales for this period records "works on the dam and sluice of the new mill of Caernarfon .... in various expenses laid out concerning the dam at the head of the mill pond and the construction of a new mill outside the gate of Caernarfon by order of the Justiciar as by these particulars may appear: £66 9s 4¼d (*Operacionis stagni et scluse novi molendini de Caernarvan .... In diversis expensis factis citra obstructionem capitis stagni et construccionem novi molendini extra portam de Carnarvan per ordinacionem iusticiar ut patet per particulas - lxiv l. ix iiij ob. quart*) (Lewis 269).

A swan's nest was built in its middle under the supervision of Roger of Eccleshall at the same time (Colvin 1963 383). But however attractive it may have looked in the fourteenth century, it had become an eyesore in the early nineteenth, and of little practical use for water-storage; Edmund Hyde Hall in 1809-1811 describes the "small rill" which fed the mill frequently experiencing a "want of water when the ample but shallow mill pond exposes, offensively enough, both to the sight and the smell a large expanse of mud" (Hyde Hall 1811 187). The Coed Helen manuscripts in the CRO describe the leasing of land for constructing houses around its perimeter in the early decades of the nineteenth century, and though it was still open in 1840 (1" o.s. map, David and Charles reprint), but was filled in in the mid-century (Evans 1973 71); the 25" o.s. of 1887 shows that terraced houses had been constructed on its site, and that the only part still open to view was a culvert at its eastern end.

A minor puzzle is the roadway across the dam; in 1516-17 an item in the Exchequer Accounts refers to the "the works of the bridge known as the earthen bridge" (*Opera Pontis vocat[ur] Pont Prith*), and as such it was known until at least the eighteenth century (RCAHM[W] 1960 158). Speed shows it as a five-arched bridge, and an estate map of 1777 shows a two-arched structure. Whether the bridge is in fact a causeway over the dam and co-eval with it or a later structure remains uncertain.

#### 4.2.3 Culvert

An interesting feature of the dam, evident in Speed's map of 1610, is the fact that there were at that time three spillways. These are marked as Medieval features in the RCAHM(W)'s *Inventory*, where the map shows an upper mill on the northernmost spillway and a lower mill near the confluence of the three channels. Possibly the middle channel was an overflow; it is not marked in 1777 (NLW Bryn Odol map) but as late as 1826 the two spillways at each end of the dam were open and carrying water (CRO X Plans 8484). John Wood's plan of 1834 (copy on search room wall, CRO) shows that the more northerly had by then been covered. Some water still passes through this channel, and finds its way into local basements occasionally. The southernmost spillway carries the Cadnant, though its course is now largely covered over.

#### 4.2.4 Mills

Of the mills, little is known; in 1283 we read of millstones being shipped in from Conwy (Taylor 1986 80), and the references cited above to a "new mill" in 1304-5 suggest that either the original structure had been damaged or destroyed in the rebellion of 1294-5, or that two mills were thought necessary. The new one lay nearer Eastgate Street; accounts speak of payment of £1 to "a certain Welsh carpenter for sawing parts of a timber provided for a mill under the bridge without the walls of Caernarfon" (*Et cuidam Walensi carpenario pro quadam parte maeremii proviso pro uno molendino sub ponte extra portam de Caernarvon*) (Lewis 269). This suggest that the earlier mill was constructed higher up, and maps in the RCAHM(W) *Inventory* and Soulsby show it as situated approximately at SH47986277, where Rochelle's Cafe now stands.

Thereafter little is heard of them until the reign of Elizabeth I. In 1550 two mills in the franchises of Caernarfon and three weirs on the water of Saynt were demised to John Pillesdon (Puleston), and to Rowland Puleston in 1590 (Lewis and Davies 1954 275, 284) by Letters Patent of the Crown. The reference to the mills being within the franchises strongly suggests that these were the Edwardian mills, rather than on the Afon Seiont, as the reference to the "Seynt" might imply, a probability amplified by a reference to his tenancy of "two ancient water corn mills within the liberties of Caernarfon" in a legal document. He had to go to law twice to defend his monopoly of corn-milling, in 1575 and in 1597, when he complained that others had constructed mills in the locality. The second law-suit records that the then offenders were Sir John Wynn of Gwydir and Maurice Griffith of Caernarfon, who had constructed two mills in the township of "Rieg", two miles out of Caernarfon (one of them probably the Felin Wen at SH50976325), and Henry Jones and William Beake who had constructed a further mill at "Botreall" (Jones 1939 49, 65-6).

Neither mill is marked or shown as such on Speed's map of 1610, nor on the 1776 Bryn Odol map (NLW) but it is clear that the lower mill at least remained in operation - a presentment of 1769 requires Rice Thomas of Coedalun to repair the Eastgate Street bridge "by reason of his tenure of a certain mill" (RCAHM[W] *Inventory* 156). When Hyde Hall visited Caernarfon in 1809-1811 he observed that there were no less than six mills in the parish, two on the Seiont, three upon the Gwyrfaï and one in the town" (Hyde Hall 1811 187). Possibly with the improvement of the roads at the end of the eighteenth century the town mill's days were numbered. An inventory of 1816 (CRO XDS 216) carried out on behalf of the Coed Alun estate suggests a small operation, and though Pigot's *Directory* for 1828-9 still records among the millers "William Jones ... Town mill", by 1844 Pigot and Slater's *Directory* lists only the Peblig mill, the two Seiont mills and Felin Wen, on the road to Llanrug. There are hints among the Coed Helen papers that the building had become a candle manufactory by 1857 (CRO XD5/97). It appears to have stood slightly to the south of the Eastgate bridge, to judge from the alignment of the present Mill Lane. Jones, writing in 1889, observes that only the older people of the town would then remember "the tumble-down house, with its great wheel revolving with the current of the Cadnant" (Jones 1889 74, 86).

#### 4.2.5 Eastgate Street

Shortly beyond the mill site the Cadnant reaches Eastgate Street, which was probably originally carried across it on a timber construction leading to a drawbridge. This timberwork may not have survived the 1294-5 uprising, and was in any event replaced by a stone-built causeway pierced by a number of arches. One source suggests that this was built in 1301-2 (Johns 1962), others suggest that work was going on in 1306, when four bridge-layers (*cubitores Pontis*) were at work (Colvin 1963 384). However, then and much later, the final link on the town wall side was a wooden drawbridge. Accounts dated 1304-5 record the construction of two new drawbridges, one of which may have been for the Eastgate Street: "to Henry of Elreton for two new bridges made of wood in the said castle at task, £8 6s 8d. And to the said Matthew of Silkeston for a device made by him for raising up the joists and other great timbers, 20s" (*Henrico de Elreton pro ij novis pontibus ligneis faciendis in castro predicto ad tascham - viij l. vj s viij d. Et Mattheo de Silkestone predicto pro uno ingenio per*

*ipsum facto pro gistis et alio grosso maeremio sursum tractanda xx s* (Lewis 269)

The drawbridge was in existence as late as 1520, when repairs were carried out (Cadw 38), but by the time of Speed's map of ninety years later, it was a thing of the past.

Speed's map shows, immediately to the east of where the drawbridge would have been, a small battlemented gateway, where tolls were collected. This was in existence by 1309 (Taylor 385) and further moneys were expended on it between 1309 and 1312, when it is described as "a certain stone barbican without the gate" (*quedam Barbecana lapidea extra portam*) (Colvin 1963 385n). After enduring civil commotion in the time of Owain Glyndwr (RCAHM[W] *Inventory* 151), it was soon afterwards damaged by a storm (Evans 1944 11n). Nevertheless, it survived into the reign of King George II; it is shown on a print of 1750 (Evans 1944 frontispiece) but is not shown in 1776 (NLW Bryn Odol estate map). Remarkably, its demolition is not recorded in the View of Court Leet and Frankpledge in the Borough order Books for the relevant period (CRO XD1/2). The base of one of its towers may have survived to be discovered in the nineteenth century when it came to light in the construction of a cabinet maker's shop; whatever the structure was, it was so strongly built that gunpowder had to be used to shift it (Jones 1889 103).

#### 4.2.6 Guildhall

Over the Eastgate itself was constructed a building to provide the administrative centre for the new regime. From here North Wales was governed from the Statute of Rhuddlan (1284) to the Act of Union in 1536, and here the seals, charters and judicial means to facilitate the work of the Justiciar were kept. It also housed the Exchequer of North Wales, where royal revenues were sent, and possibly as early as January 1286 we read of a cloth bought for the Exchequer "over the gate of Caernarfon" accounted for by Robert of Belvoir (Colvin 1963 374n); these may have been wall-hangings, but possibly it was the exchequer itself, the *scaccarus* or checked cloth on which moneys were reckoned. Little else is known of the building; it had a lead roof, which required recasting in the early sixteenth century (Colvin 1975 172).

By the seventeenth century the building's functions had dwindled to those of a record office and as the venue of the meetings of the Borough Court. By 1749 it was in a perilous state. The *Order Book* observes:

"... that the Town Hall or Edifice Scituate & lying in and upon the Great Street there and com(m)only called the Guildhall of the saide Burrough is very ruinous and in great peril of falling into the said Street to the endangering the lives of the inhabitants passing and repassing there ... " (CRO XD1/2 fol. 75r).

In 1763 a new Guildhall was built above the gate, with which the Burgesses seemed pleased - they record their gratitude to Sir John Wynn for having demolished a tenement under the Great Gate, thereby revealing it as the "regular and uniform" structure they considered it to be (CRO XD1/2 fol. 175r). Others were less impressed; Grimston observed "all that can be said of it is that it is convenient." It had a clock, whose winder was dismissed in 1770 for failing to attend to his duty (CRO XD1/2 fol. 213r), and the dials of which were ordered to be painted in 1786 (CRO XD1/746 fol 83r).

Extensions were carried out in 1833 involving the construction of a new clock-tower and a lock-up, but it still failed to impress - "small and cramped ... a very disfiguring effect." Alterations in 1871 included the replacement of the old town clock with a four-faced timepiece of German pattern, whose mechanical inadequacies were often compounded by the force of the wind (Jones 1889 110-112, Evans 1944 4-11). Whatever the defects of this structure, it has one claim to fame in that it was from it that the Members of Parliament for the Borough constituency were proclaimed; from 1890 to 1945 this was David Lloyd George.

#### 4.2.7 Buildings in Eastgate Street and nearby

Speed's map of 1610 already shows houses alongside the south side of Eastgate Street and around Turf Square (which he calls the Oatmeal market), though as late as 1742 the total number of houses outside the town walls appears to have been no more than thirty-two, a far cry from the expanding settlement Speed depicted (Jones 1889 72).

It is only when written Borough records begin in, or survive from, 1684 that it is possible to make any judgement about who lived in these houses and what their value was. On the very first folio we hear of Mrs Dorothy Thomas as tenant not only of the "Key (*sic*) upon the River Cadnant" but also of "the Arch under the Bridge" (CRO XD1/1 fol. 1v, 2r). In 1699 Gwen verch Hugh was renting "*the house under the Bridge*" for 1/- and John Jones was renting "*the House under the Bridg*" for 10/- as well as "*an Arch Ounder the Bridge for 1/-*" (ibid., fol. 53r). He may have been the John Jones who from 1731 was renting "*the Big house upon the Town Bridge for the term of vi years*" for 5/-. The various different rents, and the use of the words "upon" and "under" suggest that Eastgate street as a whole was still recognisably a bridge. Possibly the arches were being used as storage or cellars or even as parts of dwellings. As late as the 1830s one Richard Williams was renting an "Arch and Ogo" for 11/-; Kenrick Evans's suggestion is that "Ogo" is in fact *ogof*, "cave", and represents a subterranean part of the bridge (Evans 1974 15).

Amongst the buildings in the immediate area was the "Town Ball", the ballroom, shown on the 1777 map where Siop y Modur stands now; some vouchers survive from the period 1814-28 for minor repairs, none of which particularly conjure visions of Regency elegance - for instance, 6d for a tin candlestick - and whether or not it began life in a grand way, the probability is that it ended its days as a cheap dance hall (Evans 1974 17-18).

By the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Eastgate Street had become a crowded and built-up thoroughfare; Jones, writing in 1886, relying on the memories of old inhabitants, described it as then "a very narrow lane, barely too wide to admit of a horse and cart, and if these vehicles did not get into it, the traffic was suspended until it got out" (Jones 1889 74). Turf Square he describes as "usually crowded with idlers and loungers" (Jones 1889 75), and derives its name from the sale of turf for domestic ovens before coal became common (Jones 1889 117). In 1788 it had nine houses, whose inhabitants included a smith, a doctor and a seaman, a "working shop" and a "house and shop" (Jones 1889 170). Matters may have been improved when, in 1803, the Reverend John Williams, Vicar of Llanwnda, leased premises on the north side of Porth Mawr "at 10s per annum, in consideration of his undertaking to widen the Bridge and street to full 5 yards in the clear" (Evans 1974 15).

Caernarfon's Victorian prosperity, deriving from the slate trade and connection to the national railway network in 1852, led to the construction of a number of substantial business premises in Eastgate Street and Turf Square. Caernarfon's first newspaper was published there in 1831 (Jones 1889 118-9). Around the same time the watchmaker David Griffith set up shop there; he is better known as Clwydfardd, the first Archdruid of Wales and a preacher with the Wesleyans (Griffith 1995 71-2). John Wood's map of 1834 suggests eight separate structures on the south side of Eastgate Street and six on the north side. *Slater's Directory* for 1856 lists two drapers, two public houses, two flour dealers, a bootmaker, brazier and tinsmith, a chemist, an ironmonger, a grocer's, a beer retailer, a watchmaker and a fruiterer. This suggests a fairly prosperous and developing community, but one did not have to look far for evidence of squalor; when two surgeons reported to the town council on the condition of the town in 1846, their report was considered sufficiently shocking to be printed in the *Caernarfon and Denbigh Herald* that December.

"We next inspected Mill-Lane and Greengate-Street, between Turf Square and Castle Square, the former consisting of very poor ill-ventilated houses, without any supply of water or privies, and the north side of the latter being in the same condition, as are also the houses in the Street leading to Bank Quay, the inhabitants using a hole in the wall, near the archway, for a privy ... In the Lane behind the Bank and Glanyrafon there are nineteen houses, including a

court opposite Mr David Williams the builder's, between that place and Crown-Street, most of them occupied by two families without a privy or a supply of water. This lane is filthy and very offensive, pools of stagnant water, decaying vegetable matter, and the smell from a slaughter house adjoining, must render them a most unhealthy locality."

The squalour of the area clearly took even these experienced medical men aback; they added "we have simply stated facts without any attempts at description; indeed we feel that our descriptive powers would not enable us to depict the abominations of such places as James Street, Court y Baw Ieir, the Pool and the course of the stream down to Turkey shore" (CDH 12.12.1846 3, col a-b).

Mill Lane/Gardd'rafon was soon to become notorious for its houses of ill fame until they were closed down in the early 1870s, driving the women onto the streets, or to other regions such as Tan'rallt (Lloyd 1989 163).

It was not until the mayoralty of Sir Llewelyn Turner from 1859 onwards that serious attempts were made to tackle the health problem (Lloyd 146), and it seems to have been in this period that the Cadnant was culverted. A revision of John Wood's map of 1834 made in 1852 (CRO XM/Maps/9537) shows it as still open (though it is open to question how accurate this map is in detail), but the deposited plans of the Caernarvon and Llanberis Railway of 1864 (CRO X/Plans/R/38) represent it as a dotted line, and buildings had clearly been erected over it at various points.

The construction of the Caernarfon to Llanberis railway in 1868-1870 (Bradley 1992 121) had by this time resulted in considerable engineering works under Turf Square, and the demolition of a number of buildings; the square is effectively on a bridge over the railway, supported by arched hogged-profile wrought iron girders. An earlier proposal, never built, the Caernarvon, Beddgelert and Portmadoc Railway, would have passed under Eastgate Street itself (CRO X/Plans/R/45).

By 1889-90 the area catered for a slightly wealthier and more respectable clientèle; the pubs had gone, and there were four drapers, including Messrs Pierce and Williams, whose premises spanned both sides of the street, and were briefly connected by an overhead walkway, a bootmaker, a fancy goods store, an ironmonger, a jeweller and watchmaker's, a fruiterer, a fishmonger, a chemist and two printers - though the extensive premises of William Hamer, pawnbroker, may have reminded shoppers that the tide of prosperity might turn (*Sutton's Directory*, 1889-1890, Flynn-Hughes *et al*, 1975 30). In the 1880s buildings were constructed on the Tan y Bont arch itself, demolished in the 1950s (Evans 17).

Surviving buildings within the area are no earlier than the late nineteenth century. The basement of number 14, now inhabited by Cenant Quadrant, an independent media company, was formerly the printing office of Gwenlyn Evans, who started his own business in 1884, publishing national periodicals as *Y Geninen* and *Y Llan* as well as carrying on the business of a jobbing printer. His firm pioneered monotype printing and photolithography work (Flynn-Hughes 1975 22), and it was while based there from the 1930s onwards that his son Kenrick became interested in the archaeology of Eastgate Street (Parry 1976 8). Though by 1889-90 Messrs Pierce and Williams's shop, Yr Afr Aur, was established on both sides of Eastgate Street at its junction with Turf Square (CRO: XS/628/1), the business seems to have contracted in the early twentieth century; in 1906 Lloyd's Bank erected new premises on the former site of Yr Afr Aur on the north side of the street (Evans 1941 37). Hamer's pawnbroker's establishment, on the other hand, metamorphosed into an extensive department store, selling china, jewellery and women's clothes (pers. comm., Mrs Netta Toleman). The pawn department, however, continued to function in the basement, its separate entrance discreetly located on Bank Quay - hence the name "Steps Pawn", still current in the 1970s for the steps leading down from Eastgate Street (Evans 1974 16).

In the 1950s a number of the Victorian buildings along the street were demolished, and in 1963 the old town hall of 1833 was pulled down. Two flanking towers were reconstructed in 1968

with a new clock and bell tower (Evans 1974 14).

### 4.3 Archaeology

As with section 4.2 above, this section details the features as they follow the course of the Cadnant downstream.

#### 4.3.1 Mill-pool

Archaeological excavation in the King's mill pool has yielded late-Medieval leatherwork, and a fragment of sixteenth century pottery, but little has emerged to shed light on its extent. An excavation in 1956 to build the foundations for the Nelson emporium failed to reveal any evidence of masonry for the dam or the bridge, though a watching brief in June 1988 during development of a building adjacent to the Nelson noted a culvert running North-East to South-West, dry-stone built towards its North-easterly end (GAT Further information file 4268). The dam presumably had a roadway on top of it, or was a causeway pierced by arches, possibly not unlike Eastgate Street itself. The arch which drained the dam at its southern end is still in existence, and was visible as late as the 1950s. It was then described as "plain but well-built, roughly segmental, with a span of 10' 6", and its apex and springers respectively 8' and 6' above the stream" (RCAHM[W] 156). It is no longer visible and has been internally grouted by the NRA.

#### 4.3.2 Culvert

The culvert leading from the dam continues to carry the Cadnant at this point. It drops approximately 4m from the bridge (pers. comm., Michael P. Davies of NRA), and at the time of writing (18 March 1996) is exposed within a few metres of the northern entrance to the former railway tunnel underneath Castle Square. This clearly ran only very slightly below the level of the sleepers. Persistent flooding in the cellar

#### 4.3.3 Mills

The site of the upper mill is considered to have been destroyed by the building of the railway (GAT Further Information file 3420), though nothing is shown on its supposed position on a 1777 estate map (NLW Bryn Odol). If this is the case, its approximate position may be inferred from the fact that the cellar of Roberts' bakery on Bridge Street is prone to water-seepage even in dry weather, and as such may indicate the course of the northern spillway which is considered to have supplied it (RCAHM[W] 117).

The lower mill lay between the dam (defined by the modern Bridge Street) and the Eastgate bridge, and is commemorated in Mill Lane, though the precise location is unknown. The only parameters are the drop in the course of the river down the spillway underneath Bridge Street, and the point where the Cadnant becomes tidal. This is probably below the Eastgate bridge, since Kenrick Evans's account only describes hearing water "flowing", presumably seawards (Evans 1941 38), though Evans also suggests that Ynys Lom on the Cadnant between Eastgate Street and Bridge Street was an estuarine mud bank, and that the river was tidal beyond the bridge (Evans 1941 36).

#### 4.3.4 Eastgate Street, the Guildhall and buildings in Eastgate Street

Though Jones records the discovery of what he considered to be one of the barbican towers pre-1886, a theory queried by Evans (Jones 1889 103, Evans 1940 40), archaeological investigation as such begins with the demolition of Yr Afr Aur to make way for the Lloyd's Bank building in August 1906. Harold Hughes recorded two arches under the pavement and the roadway on the north side of Eastgate Street where foundations had been dug for the bank. The sections of the two arches were different; the crown of the more westerly was depressed, which he considered to have been exaggerated, though not caused, by compression. In both cases the outer order was chamfered on the face. The ribs of the easterly arch (which he called

Arch A) were of square section while the outer rib of the other, Arch B, was double-chamfered, and its ribs were further apart. The chamfers of the outer arch of the first were stopped above the springing line. Three inner ribs were visible in both archways at the time of his survey. The foreman assured him that there was a repetition of similar features extending through the roadway, though in fact Kenrick Evans's later work identified a total of only four ribbed arches in both A and B (Evans 1941 38). The foreman, who had had to go to a depth of 18' feet to obtain a good foundation, also believed that the arches were built on made ground, though Hughes considered it might have been a river deposit and that the Cadnant formerly spread over the whole area beneath Eastgate Street (Hughes 1907 360).

From 1921 Kenrick Evans analysed the documentary and archaeological evidence and amplified Hughes's findings in a series of articles in *TCHS* published between 1941 and 1945. Evans describes the south face of Arch A, which he had seen in the cellars of the surviving part of Yr Afr Aur, on the corner of Eastgate Street and Mill Lane; since he found no trace of any further bridgework to the east, either in the cellar, in sewer excavations in Turf Square or in the railway cutting, he concluded that Hughes's easterly arch was the bridge-head (Evans 1941 37). As early as 1921 he had found the southern face of Hughes's Arch B, in the cellars of Messrs Gwenlyn Evans and Son, in 12 Eastgate Street, with the Cadnant flowing through; in 1941 he took advantage of the dry summer to examine this arch, and found that the river was only flowing through the west half, and that the east half was filled with loose stone to prevent the accumulation of debris in the part not in the direct line of flow. He describes a segmental arch of about 22' span, measuring from the spring of the first order, and 26' 6" from the spring of the internal face of the arch. The width was 14' and was supported by four massive stone ribs. He suggested that it showed two or possibly three periods of construction, as the workmanship on the north chamfered rib is inferior to the remainder, and there was evidence of a differently-aligned arch in the springing (Evans 1941 38).

A further two arches, which Evans denotes C and D, had already come to light during the reconstruction of Messrs Hamers' premises on the north side in 1931. The span of both was approximately 14' or 15'. This gave a length of 48' (29m) between D and the eastern portal of Tan y Bont (the bridge which carries Eastgate Street over Bank Quay). Within this length, Evans suggested, might be found a further arch, possibly two, and a pier for the bridge gateway, though initially he discounted the possibility that what Jones had described in 1886 was in fact the foundations of one of the gateway towers (Evans 1941 40-41), a position he subsequently altered (Evans 1974 14).

An addendum describes the discovery of a chamber beneath the Eastgate which he believed formerly housed the counterpoise for the drawbridge mechanism (Evans 1941 41-42) and which was described at greater length in a subsequent article devoted to Eastgate itself. This suggested that the archway was about 10' wide (Evans 1944). Evans' speculations about the external features were, he considered, largely confirmed by a Rowlandson print discovered in the National Library of Wales (and reproduced in Evans 1945) and a sheet metal model of the gateway by one William Rowlands, a Caernarfon brazier (Evans 1945).

Photographic recording by the Royal Commission shows the town wall along Greengate Street as having been cleared of houses by January 1956, and part at least of Messrs Hamer's premises on the north side of Eastgate Street as having been demolished. This exposed arch D (Royal Commission report, copy in SMR).

The demolition of the buildings which formerly lay between Hamer's and Eastgate on the north side of the street in 1961 revealed a causeway of solid masonry 40' from east to west between it and the eastern abutment of Tan y Bont. There was no "arch X" as posited by Evans in 1941 (Evans 1941 37-41). Instead the causeway embodied an intermediate pier of greater breadth from north to south (RCAHM[W] 1964 121). Evans in 1974 records the discovery of a multi-angled pier on Bank Quay (Evans 1974 14), which appears to be other unattested, and its location unknown, but presumably this formed part of the pier it seems highly likely that this was the base of the barbican tower.

Though the barbican is only attested from 1309, it is surely no later, and quite possibly older, than the stone Eastgate Bridge, and may be coeval with the putative timber bridge. It probably also formed one abutment of the drawbridge through the Eastgate built 1304-5. Though the width seems great for a timber drawbridge, it may be that geological considerations determined the siting of the barbican, and that perhaps a timber platform built onto it to the west formed the drawbridge pier.

Along the north side of this causeway were discovered lower courses of the revetment of the counterscarp, the outer talus of the town ditch, which may originally have reached to the same height as the causeway and formed the back of the wharf along the Cadnant which followed the course of the town walls to the north and west of the town (Johns). The area of the medieval wharfage on the north side of the town was recently (September 1994 and March 1996) the subject of a watching brief by George Smith of the Gwynedd Archaeological Trust, during the construction of a new foul water pipe by Messrs Posford Duvivier for Arfon District Council (GAT G1239 and G1398).

The Tan y Bont arch is composite, being an original arch of the sixteenth century, 15' in span and 13' wide, segmental and plain, springing from roughly rounded corbels, between later additions (Royal Commission 1960 153). The west wall shows a corbel-like undercut at street level, extending down to an unknown depth (Evans 1944 4).

Investigations by Trust officials did not reveal any direct evidence for Medieval structures in the cellars of Eastgate Street. The cellars of Lloyd's bank incorporated brick-built arches referred to in 2.3 of Messrs Travers Morgan's report (see 4.4 below); these are of modern construction, for the supply of coal. The walls of the cellars of Siop y Modur, Siop y Pentan, Caernarfon Pets and Aquatic Supplies were made up of breeze blocks or similar, obscuring whatever Medieval masonry may have lain behind them. It was not possible to gain access to the cellars of Caffi Cei, and it was only in the cellars of Y Ddraig Goch that any Medieval masonry was observed, though there had clearly been some reconstruction here.

It is understood that the river-arch may have been internally grouted in recent years by the National Rivers Authority (pers. comm., Michael P Davies).

#### **4.4 Analysis of ground probing radar survey**

A ground probing radar survey of Eastgate Street was carried out by Subsurface Geotechnical on 16 September 1994 as part of Travers Morgan's investigations into existing structures beneath Eastgate Street. The map that accompanies the report submitted by Messrs Travers Morgan to Gwynedd County Council (ref: 35262/EG/01) distinguishes between *Probable Arch Structure*, *Possible Arch Structure* and *Anomalous Ground*.

Paragraphs 2.2-4 of this report discuss other underground features which either might shed light on, or obscure, Medieval remains. It was noted here that of all the premises visited, none had cellars extending below the road, and that there was no possibility that such features had been picked up, and might be wrongly analysed as parts of the Medieval bridge. The premises not visited were 4 and 8, Y Ddraig Goch and the shop between Cafi cei and Caernarfon Pets and Aquatic Supplies.

Six parallel longitudinal lines were taken along the street, as detailed in **Appendix A 3**, and delineated on the map, which also indicates the results, within the three categories. A remarkable result of the work undertaken is the fact that a number of Probable Arch Structure were identified on the south side of Eastgate Street, none extending more than 2.5 metres northwards, and therefore registering on one or both of the two most southerly lines taken. These are nowhere picked up by the other four lines, and do not correspond to the identified locations of the Medieval arches. It is at least possible therefore that these are the remains of post-Medieval structures built against the bridge walls before Eastgate Street was widened.

The only point at which the radar survey shows a possible arch across the entire street

corresponds with the known location of the arch across the Cadnant. However, even here, there are a number of problems deciphering the archaeological evidence. The radar survey shows that on the southern side of the street the probable features are 1m below the surface, and on the northern side are 2.3m. This agrees with plans given to the Trust by the NRA (NRA unreferenced). Where the radar survey is in conflict with documentary evidence is that it shows a wider arch at the northern end. The NRA maps shows a stone arch 19' across at the southern end (NRA ref: C.S. 69). Though this plan shows the pile of stones in the eastern half of the arch described by Kenrick Evans, neither the dimensions nor the shape match those given by Evans (Evans 1941 38). At the northern end the NRA documents, instead of showing a wider aperture, as the radar survey suggests, in fact show a 9' wide channel, measuring 7' from the stream bed to the 7" timber beams which support the culvert (NRA ref: C.S. 70).

It is, however, possible that Arches A and D are also recorded, though only as Anomalous Ground, since the parameters here correspond to the known locations of these features.

## **5.0 SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 Summary of findings**

Consultation of documentary evidence and archaeological reports, and selective fieldwork, have demonstrated that the medieval stone bridge designed to carry traffic from the eastgate of the borough over the Cadnant still exists, as shown on fig. 1 (location plan). It was probably first built as a timber bridge with stone piers, and then rebuilt in stone during the first decade of the 14th century. The bridge was separated from the eastgate by a drawbridge, which was replaced with a stone arch sometime after 1520 (i.e. Tan y bont arch). The stone bridge is of four arches, originally spreading over a tidal inlet, but the river was later confined to arch B (second from east). At the west end of the bridge stood an outer embattled gateway or barbican where the tolls on merchandise were collected, visible on Speeds plan of 1610, but removed sometime after 1780.

Parts of the bridge were repaired in 1320, and again in 1507-8, and these may (as suggested above in 4.3) be visible as material changes to the fabric of the bridge.

The last known siting of the arches of the bridge was by the RCAHM(W) investigators in 1956, who were able to examine arch B. It was not possible to locate any of the arches during the present survey, but medieval walling is visible next to Tan y Bont arch, and within the cellar of Y Ddraig Goch.

### **5.2 Recommendations**

Attempts were to be made to examine arch B by walking up the culverted Cadnant, but this was not possible without full certification for working in confined spaces. Further investigation of the culvert through Eastgate Street itself would, therefore, under present Health and Safety legislation, require a trained team of no less than five persons, as well as an archaeologist; for a day's work the total cost would be in the region of £3,000 (pers. comm., Michael P Davies of NRA).

Two other approaches are possible. One would be to try and find the bridge from the top. As the bridge appears to run at a slight angle to Eastgate Street, it should be possible to find the southern edge of the bridge at the western side, and if arch B were examined, it may be possible to gain access to the underside of the arch. In addition, it is recommended that an attempt is made to locate at least one other arch, and this could also be achieved by carefully excavating down to the top of the bridge, and then down alongside it. The second approach would be to attempt to examine the bridge from the side. The most appropriate cellar of those examined would appear to be that belonging to Caernarfon Pets and Aquatic Supplies. This cellar does not appear to have a solid wall facing the bridge, and the owner would be willing to allow work to take place. This wall should open out onto arch C.

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### 6.4 Maps and plans

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NLW: Bryn Odol estate survey 1776  
CRO: XD2/8356, plan of Newborough estate, late eighteenth century?  
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CRO: Tithe map, parish of Llanbeblig, 1840 (photocopy of original in Public Record office, Kew)  
CRO: X/Plans/R/38, deposited plans of Caernarvon to Llanberis Railway  
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CRO: Ordnance survey County Series 25" 1890  
CRO: Ordnance survey County Series 25" 1900

### 6.5 Newspapers

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### 6.6 Photographs

(All CRO)

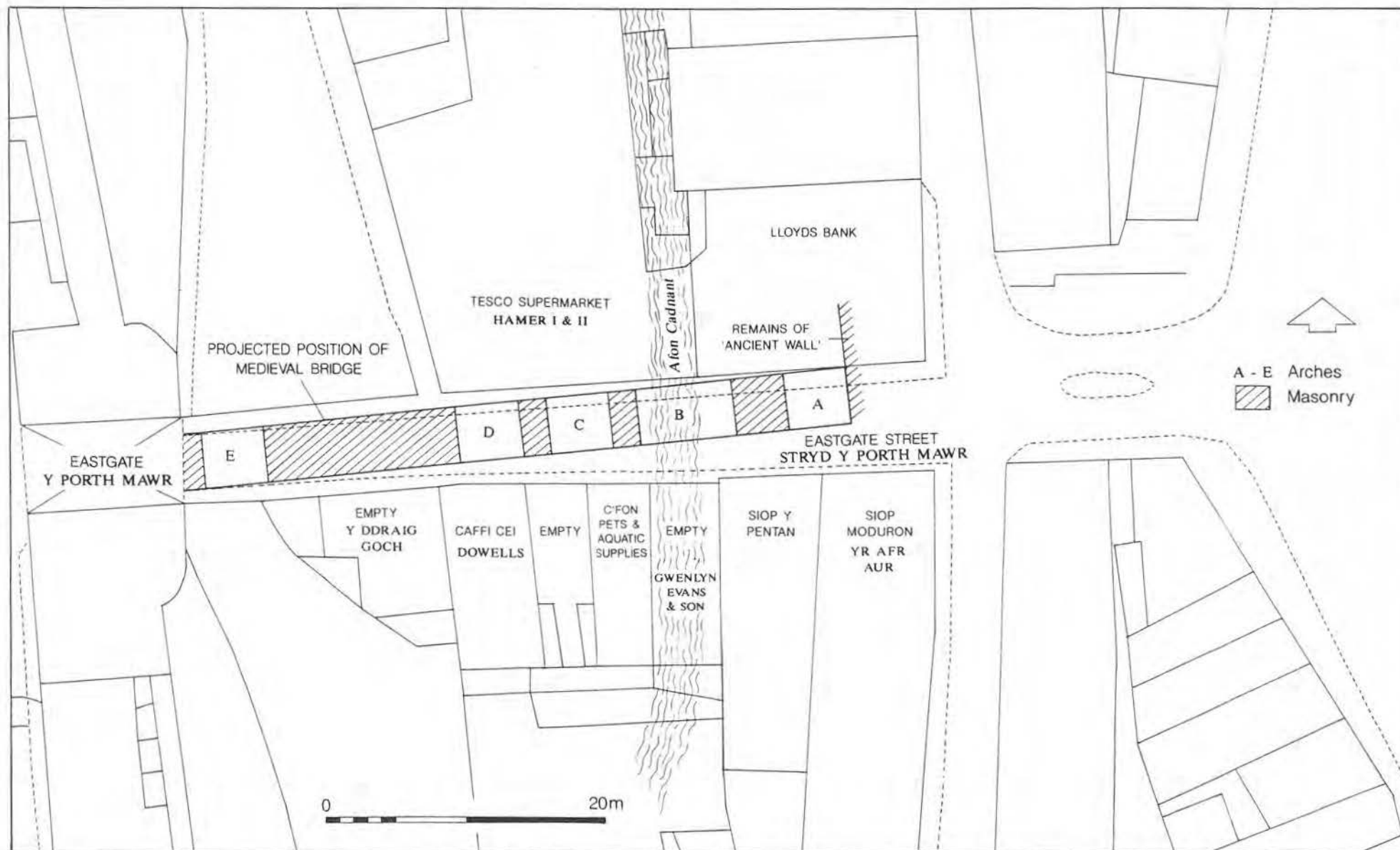
XS/1497/2/2, Eastgate from the corner of High Street and Palace Street  
XS/1086/5, Eastgate Street and Turf Square from Bangor Road  
XS/1497/9/6, Eastgate Street from Turf Square, showing soldiers on parade with colours  
XS/638/1, Eastgate Street and Turf Square from Bangor Road, pre-1906, before construction of Lloyd's Bank, showing Pierce and Williams's shop, Yr Afr Aur, on both sides of the road, with the bridge joining them.  
XS/1525/60-61, Afon Cadnant culvert.  
XS 1464  
XS 1468 1-7, 15  
XS 1540  
XS 1754 51-3

### 6.6 Paintings and prints

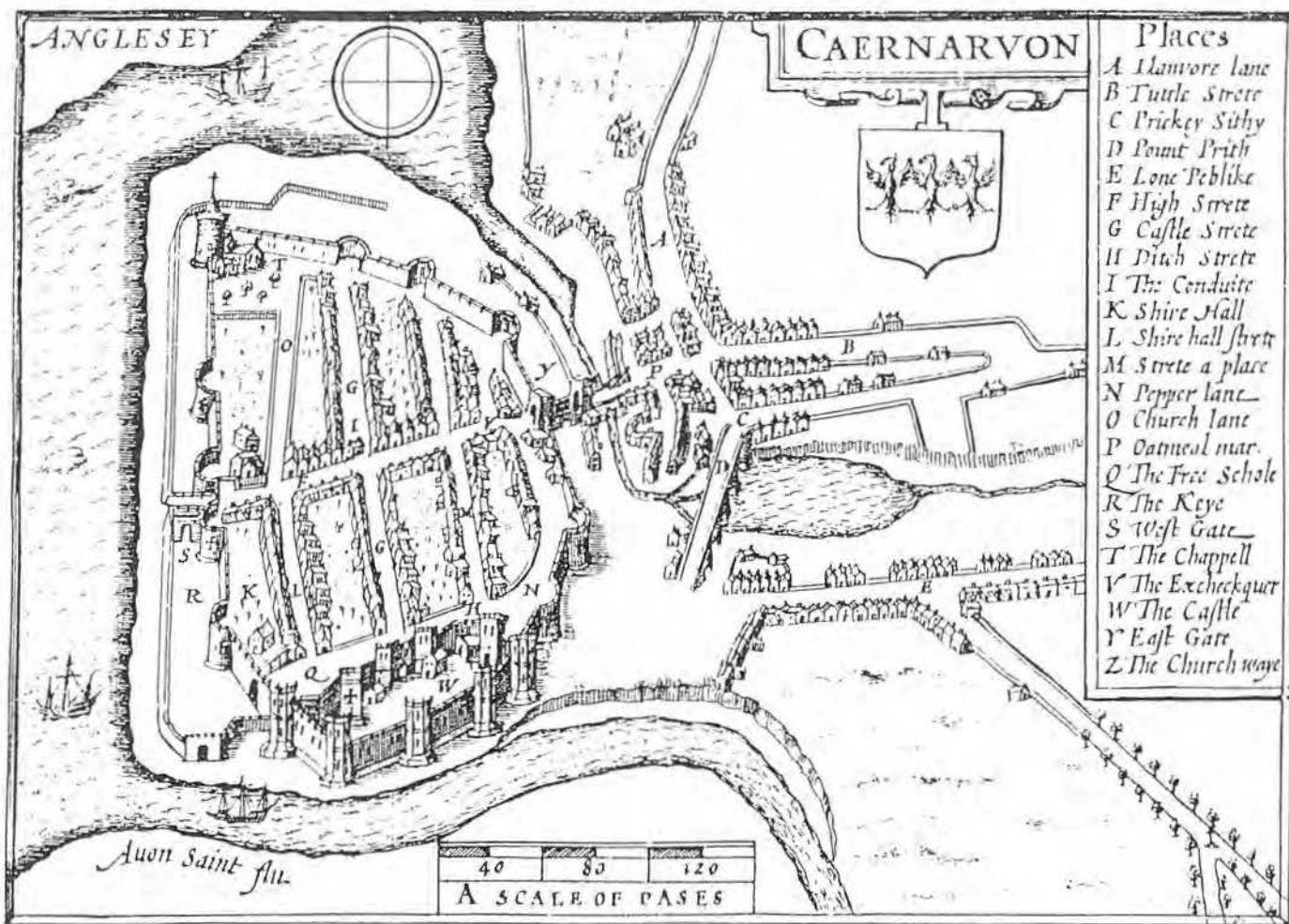
CRO: XS/1261, Watercolour, legend on reverse "ARCH B (the largest) PONT FAWR Y DREF (Eastgate Street, Caernarfon)"  
Unattributed, c. 1700: *Porth Mawr from an Old Print*, end piece to Jones 1889.  
Buck S and N, 1742: *Caernarfon castle and town*, reproduced in Cadw, 37.  
Boydell, 1750: *Prospect of Caernarvon: Taken from the East Side*, reproduced in Evans 1941, frontispiece.  
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Unknown, c. 1809: *A drawing of the East Gate*, reproduced in Cadw, 38. 0

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Location plan - Eastgate, showing projected position of medieval bridge.

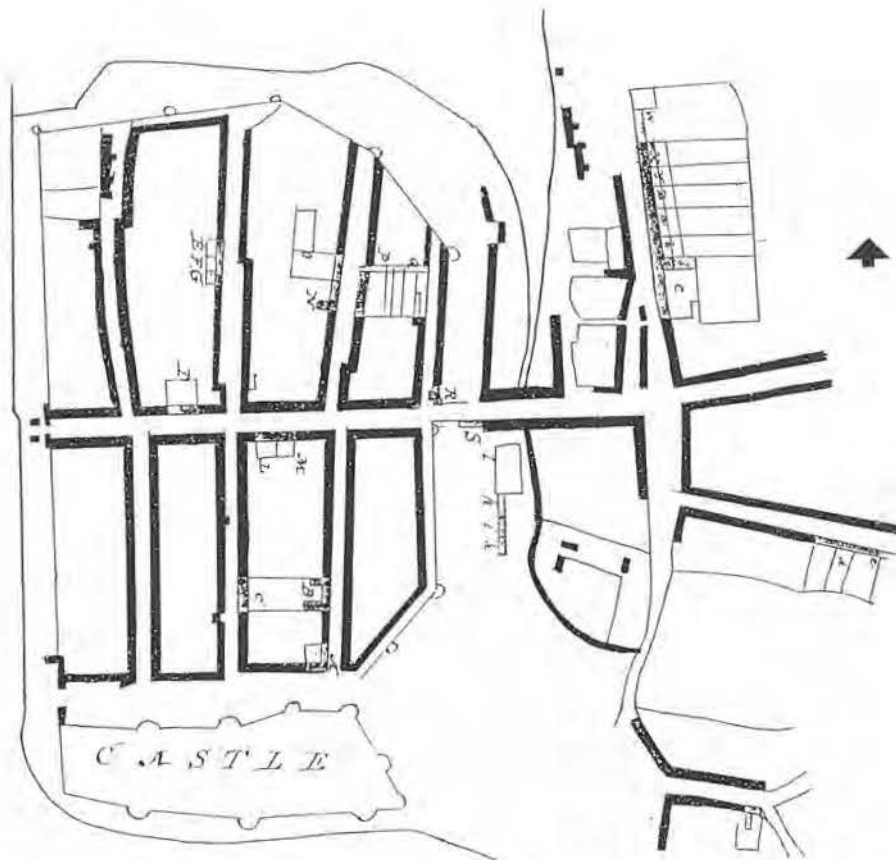


John Speed map of Caernarfon - 1610  
(Y = Eastgate)

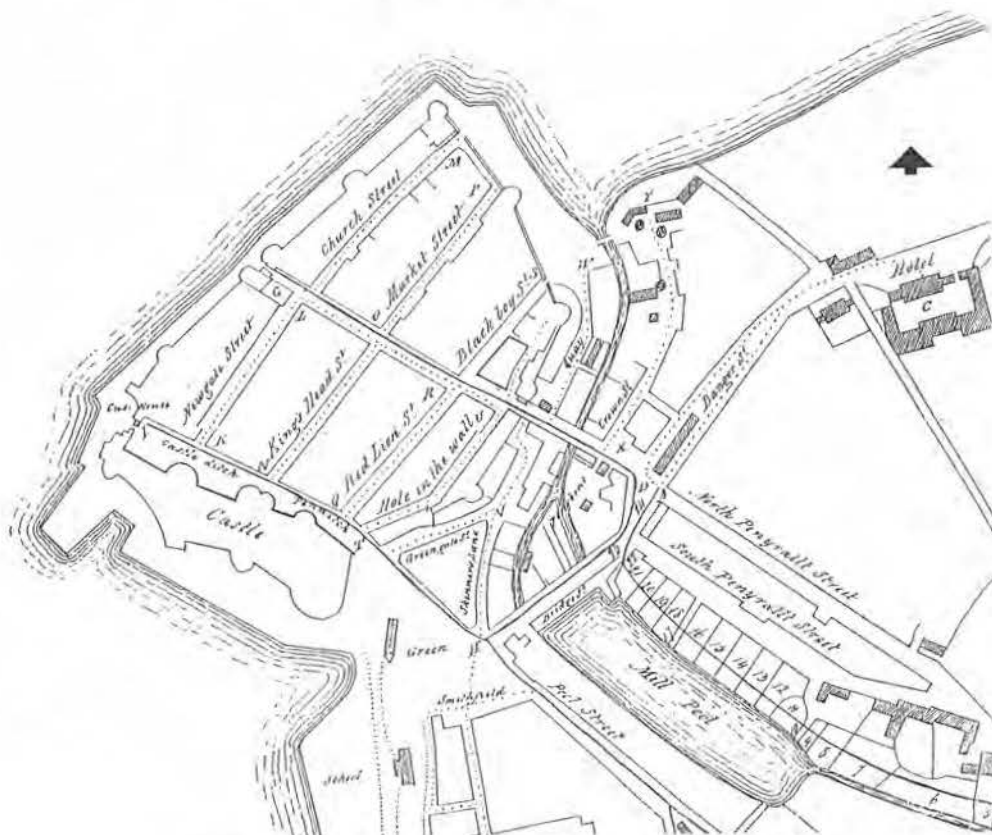


Y Porth Mawr (Eastgate) - 1809

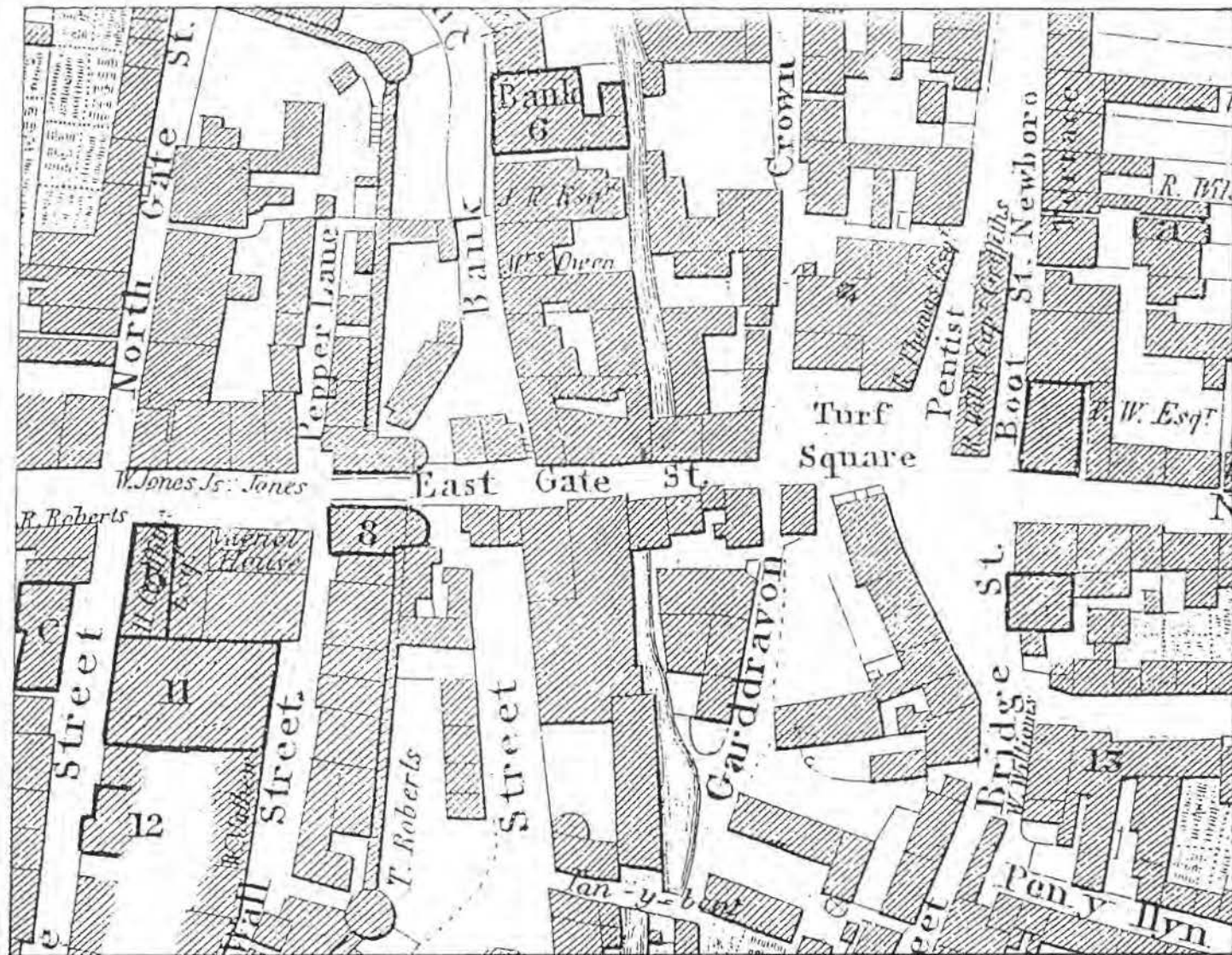




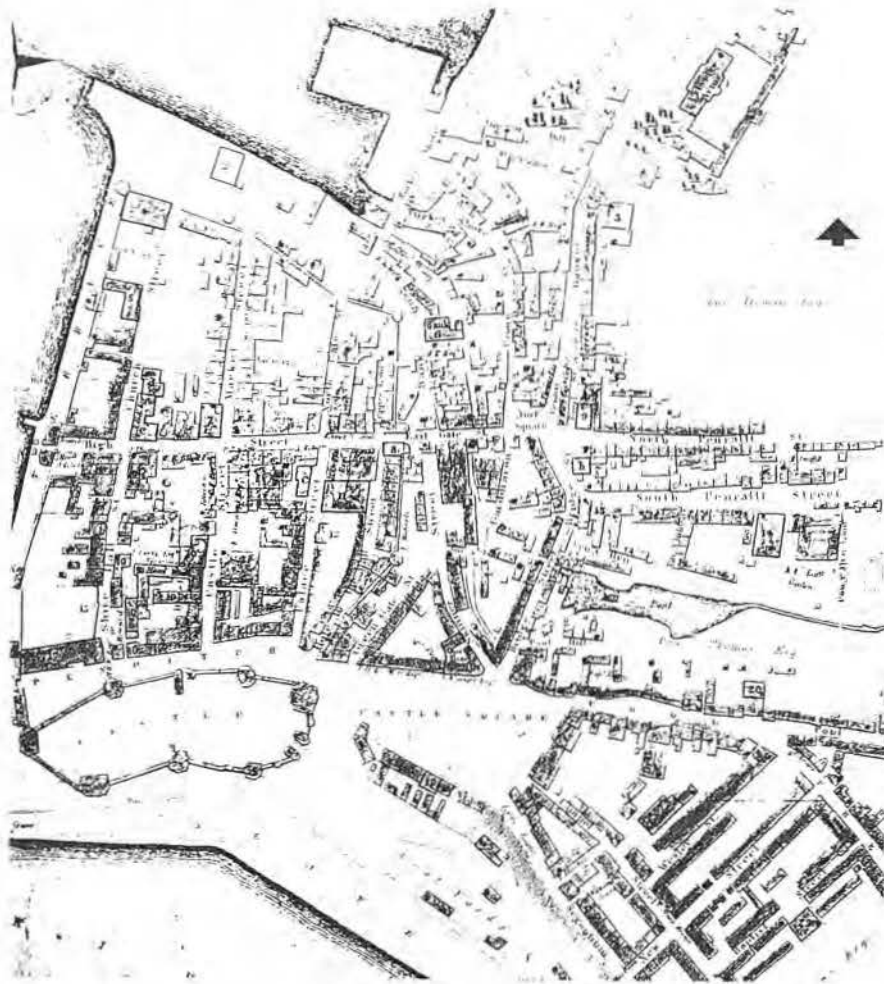
Caernarfon - map of Newborough properties,  
late eighteenth century.



Caernarfon - plan of proposed water mains, 1826.



Maps of Eastgate Street  
 Top - John Wood, 1834  
 Bottom - OS Second Edition, 1900



**Caernarfon - John Wood's map of 1834.**



**Caernarvon to Llanberis Railway  
deposited plans, 1864**

