

TURF SQUARE, CAERNARFON
ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING



Report No. 269

Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Gwynedd
Gwynedd Archaeological Trust

TURF SQUARE, CAERNARFON

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING (G1448)

prepared for Gwynedd County Council

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Gwynedd Archaeological Trust Report No. 269

EASTGATE STREET, CAERNARFON (G1448)

Archaeological monitoring at Turf Square, Caernarfon

1. INTRODUCTION

As part of the ongoing improvement to Caernarfon, Gwynedd County Council is in process of replacing the former railway bridge at Turf Square, where Eastgate Street crosses the course of the former Caernarfon to Afonwen railway line.

Gwynedd Archaeological Trust was asked to undertake an archaeological assessment of Eastgate Street and Turf Square, to determine the implications of the proposed enhancement of Eastgate Street, and a preliminary report was submitted in November 1995. A second report, including more detailed findings and the results of fieldwork, was submitted in April 1996. Within these reports, it was suggested that Medieval remains may be preserved underground close to the former railway line: this was based upon the recording of a section of medieval wall in 1906 prior to the building of Lloyd's Bank. Gwynedd County Council therefore decided to undertake archaeological monitoring during the demolition of the bridge at Turf Square. Gwynedd Archaeological Trust (Contracts Section) were contracted to carry out the work.

2. AIMS

The aims of the monitoring were:

- a) to understand the construction method of the Victorian bridge over the railway
- b) to identify any sub-surface features in Eastgate Street and Turf Square/Bangor Road that might be revealed in the course of the bridge's demolition.

3. METHODOLOGY

The site was visited and photographed on a number of occasions between January and May, 1997. The first visit was made before work began, and the last when the new bridge was substantially complete.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Turf Square bridge

The bridge at Turf Square was a steel and wrought iron construction, carrying what had been one of the main thoroughfares of the Medieval town of Caernarfon across the parallel tracks of the Caernarfon to Llanberis and Caernarfon to Afonwen railway lines, on which work was completed in 1870. The mouths of the bridge were each formed by a hogged-profile rivetted six-panel steel beam resting on stone pads approximately 8m apart, and supporting a course of hand-dressed stones upon which a red-brick parapet capped by dressed stone blocks was laid. Seven hogged-profile intermediate cast-iron beams supported the deck of the bridge, and a longitudinal steel girder was found to have been introduced along the centre line of the bridge to give extra support to the cross members. This was itself supported by a timber frame-work, clearly introduced after the branch to Llanberis was lifted in 1966, as part of it was positioned on the site of the rails.

The cast-iron beams were revealed to have four strengthening ribs on their upper side, and appear to be typical of the workmanship of a local foundry such as that of Messrs DeWinton in Caernarfon itself.

Following discussions with John Lister of Symonds Travers Morgan, Dr David Gwyn of the Gwynedd Archaeological Trust and A M Jones and Ms Anne Venables of the Caernarfon Maritime Museum, one of the beams was generously presented by Symonds Travers Morgan to the Maritime Museum in Caernarfon for display. The others were removed to Bangor for scrapping.

4.2 Eastgate Street

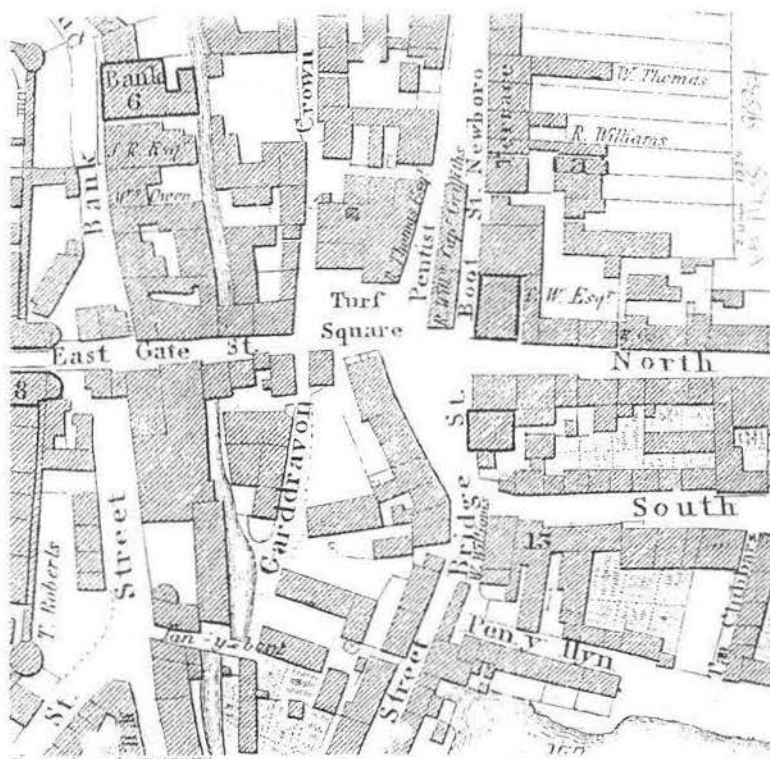
The removal of the bridge revealed a section through Turf Square on the east (Bangor Road) side of the bridge. A possible trace of cobbling was noted approximately 1m below the existing surface level of Bangor Road in the vicinity of the telephone kiosk outside Bruce Edwards Insurance Services. Nearby, ceramic service pipes of nineteenth or twentieth century date were exposed. However, no trace was observed of any other features on either side of the bridge. The cobbling could be of Medieval date, but unfortunately there is insufficient information to date it accurately. An area of ground was cleared on the west side, but no features were visible in this area.

5. SUMMARY

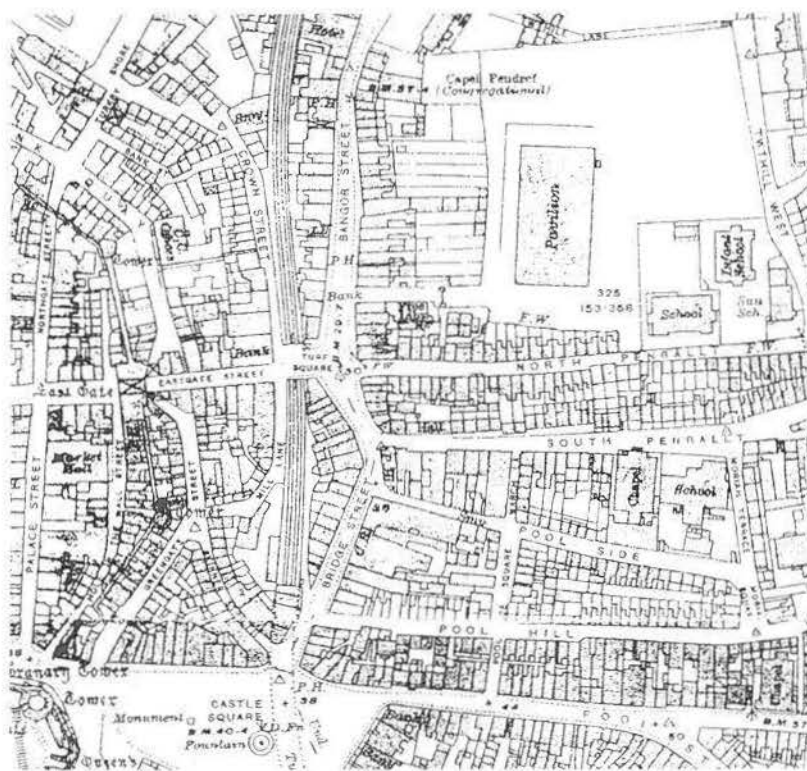
An archaeological watching brief was carried out during the replacement of the former railway bridge at Turf Square, Caernarfon. Additional details concerning the construction of the railway bridge have been recovered and recorded. A small area of cobbling was exposed, but its date and context could not be ascertained.

6. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Gwynedd Archaeological Trust, 1996, Report No. 202: Eastgate Street, Caernarfon Archaeological Assessment



Turf Square in 1834 (John Wood's map)



Turf Square in 1900 (OS 1:2500 Second edition)

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