

**BOUNDARY WALL  
AT  
9 MARKET STREET, CAERNARFON**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT (G1685)**

GAT Report No. 409

Prepared for Hampson Lewis, April, 2001

By

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#### **Introduction**

Gwynedd Archaeological Trust has been asked by Hampson Lewis, Chartered Building Surveyors, on behalf of the owner of the property, to examine a length of wall which forms the rear boundary of 9 Market Street, Caernarfon. The aim is to determine the date and significance of the wall.

#### **Methodology**

An examination was made of the relevant records which make up the regional Sites and Monument Record held at the offices of Gwynedd Archaeological Trust. Records were also examined at the County Archives in Caernarfon. A number of secondary sources (as listed below) were consulted.

Site visits were undertaken on 5 April and 18 April, when the wall was examined, and a basic description compiled.

The following records have been examined:

#### *Maps*

John Speed's map of Caernarvonshire, 1610  
Map of the town of Caernarvon, 1777 (ref. Vaynol 4056)  
Plan of the town of Caernarvon, c. 1810 (ref. XM/Maps/1398)  
Map of proposed water works at Caernarfon, 1826 (ref. XM/Maps/8484)  
Map of the town of Caernarvon, John Wood, 1834 (ref. XM/Maps/731)  
Map of the town of Caernarvon, 1848 (based on John Wood map by Humphreys) (ref. XM/Maps/493)  
Ordnance Survey First Edition County Series: Caernarfonshire Sheet XV 4.8, Scale: 1:500, 1888  
Ordnance Survey Second Edition County Series: Caernarfonshire Sheet XV.4, Scale: 1:2500, 1918

#### *Secondary Sources*

Cadw, Caernarvon Municipal Borough, Listed Buildings  
Hyde Hall, E., 1809-11 *A Description of Caernarvonshire* (published 1952)  
Jones, W. H., 1889 *Old Karnarvon* (reprint by Siop y Pentan 1984)  
Lewis, E. A., 1912 *The Medieval Boroughs of Snowdonia*  
RCAHMW, 1960 *Inventory of Ancient Monuments of Caernarvonshire, Volume 2*  
Soulsby, I., 1983 *The Towns of Medieval Wales*  
Taylor, A. J., 1974 *The King's Works in Wales 1277-1330*

#### *Sites and Monuments Record*

3095	Caernarfon Castle
3419	Medieval wharves, Bank Quay
3423	Watching Brief, 27 Market Street
3457	Excavation, Northgate Street
11275	3, Market Street
11276	5, Market Street
11277	7-11 Market Street
11279	13 Market Street
11280	16-24 Market Street
11508	Tower House, Market Street
11891	Conservative Club
12052	2, Church Street
12216	Plas Bowman
12218	Packet House Inn
12682	Telephone Box, Market Street
21949	Slate Quay, Caernarfon
G1221	Church Street, Caernarfon

### Historical background

Although slight evidence is available for Prehistoric occupation, the origins of settlement in the vicinity of the later borough of Caernarfon lie with the establishment of the auxiliary fort of Segontium on Llanbeblig Hill, a ridge rising to 50m OD lying between the Afon Seiont and Afon Cadnant. Although evidence for continuity of settlement has yet to be found, it is probable that settlement was continuous through to 1090, when a motte was constructed by Hugh of Avranches, Earl of Chester, on the site of an existing settlement. This site lay west of the Roman fort, and was protected by the Menai Strait to the west, Afon Seiont to the south, and Afon Cadnant to the north. Following the conquest of Wales in 1283 by Edward I, a new castle and borough were built on the site of the motte, the borough being established on a narrow plot of land between the two rivers and the Strait. The principal means of access into the town was over a bridge which crossed the Cadnant (the bridge still exists under Eastgate Street) and onto the High Street.

Construction of the town walls started in 1283, and by 1293 they were largely complete, although they were damaged in 1294 during the revolt of Madog ap Llywelyn. The streets were laid out in a grid fashion, as was typical of all Edward's new boroughs, and the spaces between divided into burgage plots. The size of the standard burgage plot at Caernarfon was 80 ft by 60 ft (Lewis 1912, 62). By 1298 there were 59 occupied burgage plots within the borough.

From medieval times to the present the town of Caernarfon has retained an administrative function for the county, and the buildings and development of the centre of the town reflect this status. The town also developed as a slate port in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. With the exception of the castle and town walls few medieval buildings remain in the town, although the street layout is preserved, and many of the boundaries of present houses reflect the original division into burgage plots.

### 9, Market Street

This house is the centre of a terrace of three constructed in 1800 (the date is cast on the down spouts of the gutters on the front of the house). The terrace fronts onto Market Street, and gardens run north towards Church Street. The wall in question forms the rear garden wall of 7-11 Market Street, behind which runs a narrow track. The length of the entire plot, from Market Street to the rear wall, is very close to 80 ft, thus reflecting the length of a medieval burgage plot. The width of the three plots is 49 ft at the rear and 56 ft at the front, the additional space at the rear being taken by the rear garden of 13 Market Street, which contains the remains of a stone built stable block.

The terrace is Listed as a building of special historic or architectural interest, Grade II (LB 3/71). The wall is not specifically mentioned within the description, but must nonetheless be considered as part of the setting of the Listed Building.

#### *Map evidence*

Speed's map of 1610 calls shows a row of houses fronting Market Street (though he calls it Castle Street). The area between Market and Church Street is shown as gardens. There are no houses fronting Church Street. There is no indication of a wall or boundary 80 ft north of Market Street.

The next detailed map is that drawn by John Wood, published in 1834. This also shows buildings fronting the full length of Market Street. Church street contains only two houses, both at the southern end. The land between Market Street and Church Street is shown divided into a grid of small plots, of which the central line lies approximately on the line of the present boundary wall.

The OS map of 1888 shows buildings lining all of Market Street and Church Street. The boundary wall behind 7-11 Market Street is clearly indicated. A small structure occupies the north end of the garden of 9 Market Street.

#### *Result of field visit*

The wall at the rear of 9 Market Street formerly ran along the full width (some 14.6m) of the rear of the three gardens of 7-11 Market Street, and continued towards the High Street. In relatively recent years parts have been removed and parts have been rebuilt on a number of occasions. The best preserved part lies behind No. 9 and No. 7. That behind No. 11 has been completely rebuilt. A stone-built structure, which incorporates the boundary wall, still lies at the end of the garden of No. 9. The interior face of the walls are all plastered, and the description below is therefore taken from the outside face of the wall.

The remaining length of wall is some 10m long, of which approximately 6m relates to No. 9. The wall is 3.9m high, and is clearly of several horizontal phases. The lowest stage, approximately 1m high, is of medium to large coursed stone (the larger stones are typically 40cm long) in a hard white mortar. The second stage (1.1 m high) consists of smaller stones, all rounded and none quarried, in a softer off-white mortar. The third stage (1.2m high) is very similar to the second, although the mortar is of a more orange colour, and the stones slightly larger. There is a very clear horizontal line between stages 2 and 3, occasionally marked by slates, which may indicate the former presence of a building against the wall. The fourth stage consists of 3-4 layers of bricks.

The three north-south walls which divide the gardens are of a different style, and abut the end wall: these are therefore considered to be of later build.

### Conclusions

The map evidence is not sufficiently clear to allow a full understanding of the history of the boundary of the wall. The 80 ft length of the plot would clearly suggest that the boundary lies on that originally marked out for medieval burgage plots. As the north-south walls are likely to date from the construction of the houses in 1800, so the construction of the rear wall to the top of stage 3 must pre-date 1800.

The style of construction of the wall is not closely dateable, though its division into four stages implies a relatively lengthy history. The masonry style does not compare favourably with known examples of medieval masonry.

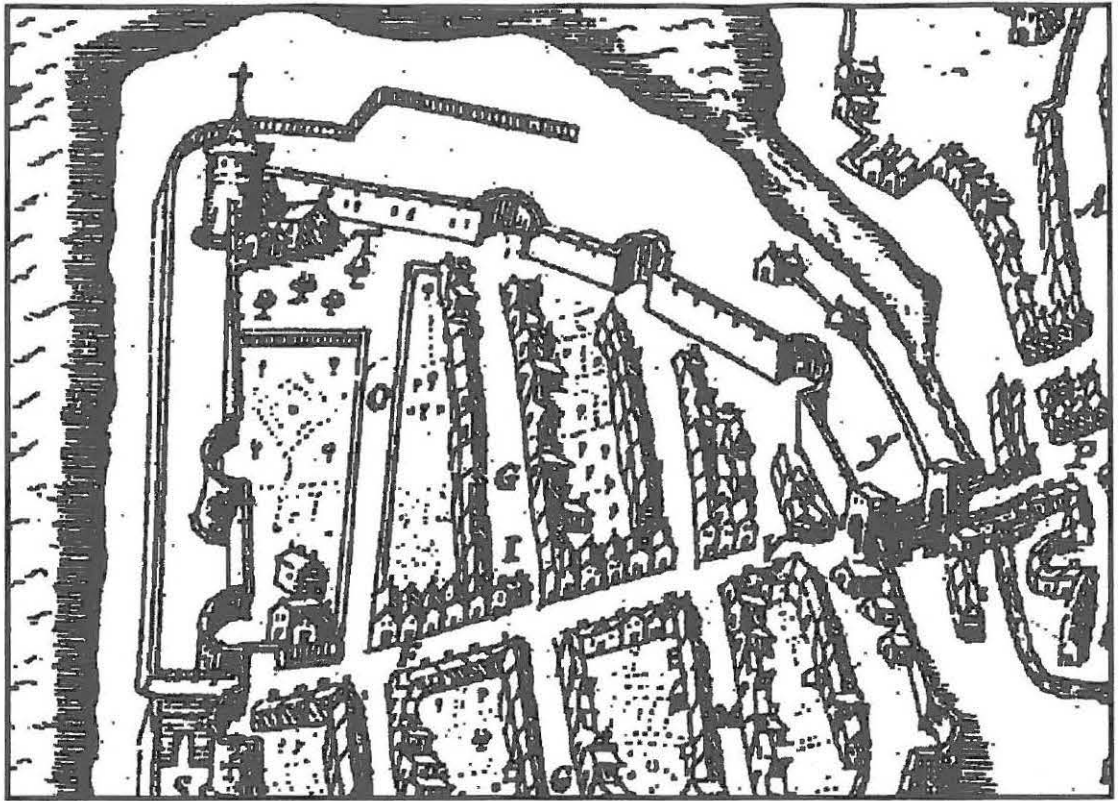
To conclude, it is probable the wall was built on the rear line of the medieval burgage plots behind Market Street at a date between the late medieval period (say after 1500), and before 1800, but probably sometime before 1750.

### Assessment of significance

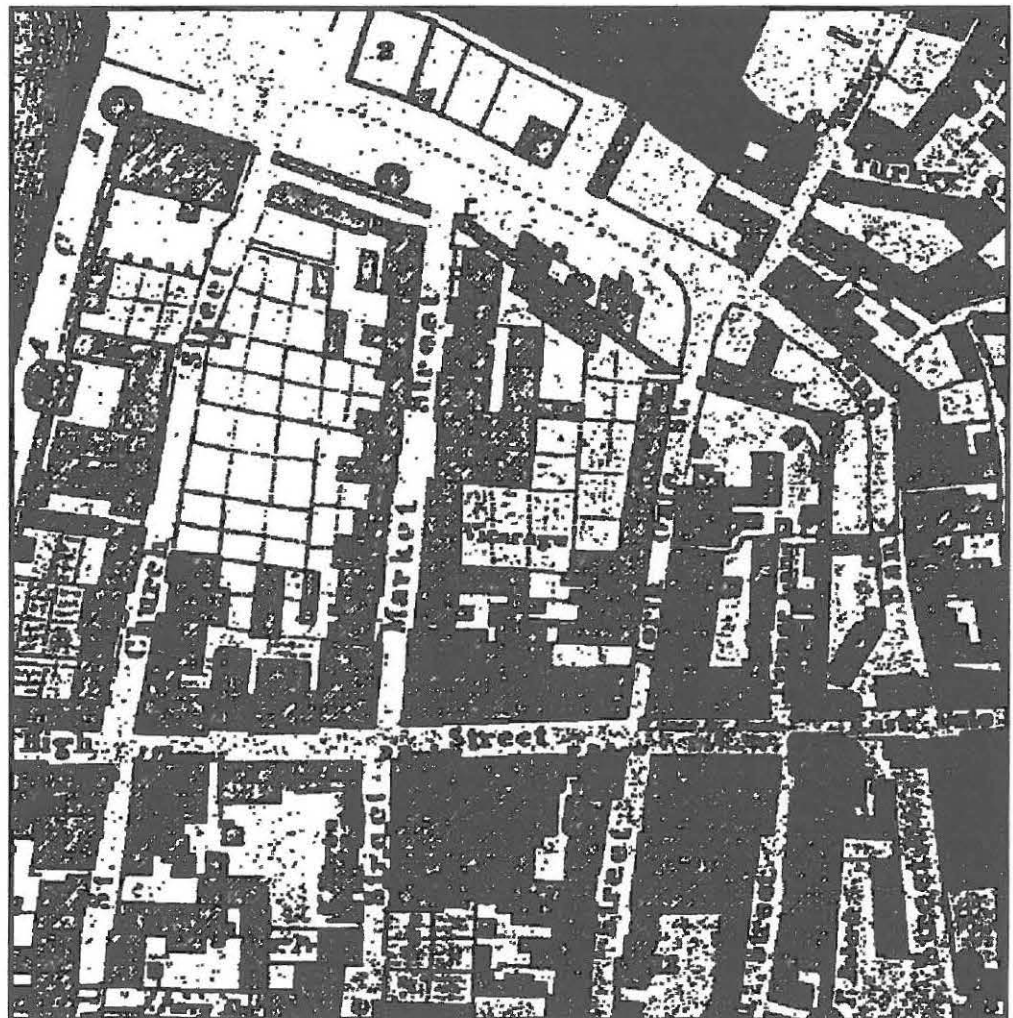
The following points have been used to assess the significance of the wall.

- i. The wall lies along the line of a probable medieval burgage plot
- ii. The wall pre-dates the construction of the existing houses
- iii. The wall forms part of a Grade II listed structure
- iv. The wall is a substantial structure and contributes to the historic environment in a part of the town where much has been rebuilt in the last 200 years.

On the basis of the above, the wall is considered to be of Regional significance. The Trust would define this as *'Those sites which would not fulfil the criteria for scheduling or Grade I Listing, but which are nevertheless of particular importance within the region. Preservation in situ is the preferred option for Category B sites, but if damage or destruction cannot be avoided, appropriate detailed recording might be an acceptable alternative.'*



Speed's Map of Caernarfon 1610



Wood's Map of Caernarfon 1834



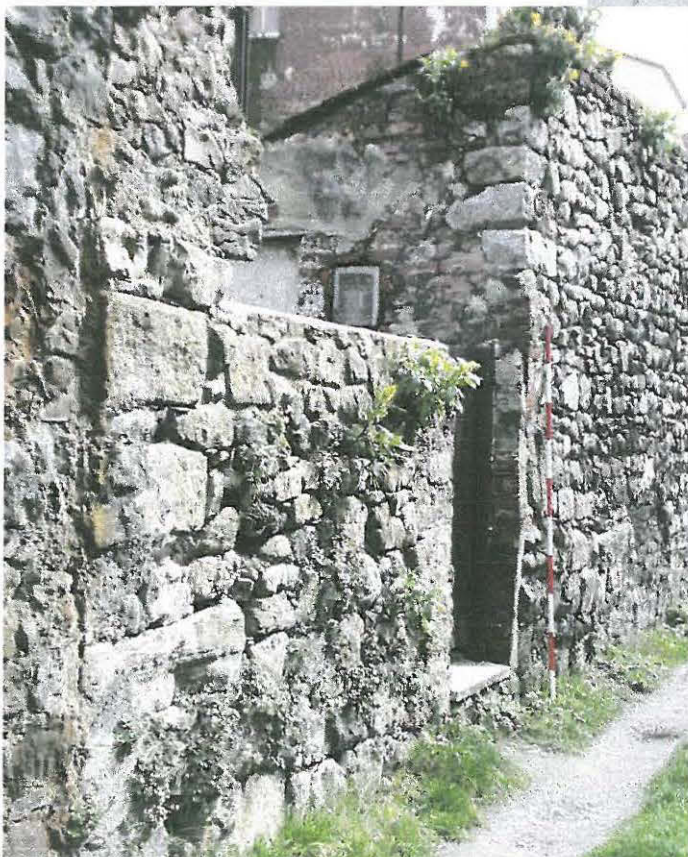






Wall from  
south end

Wall from above



Wall from north end

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