
Beaumaris Drainage works: **Beaumaris Anglesey**



Archaeological Mitigation

GAT Project No. 2111

Report No. 869

September, 2010

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G2111 DRAINAGE WORKS, BEAUMARIS, ANGLESEY

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G2111 DRAINAGE WORKS, BEAUMARIS, ANGLESEY

Summary

Archaeological works were carried out by Gwynedd Archaeological Trust on behalf of Cyngor Sir Ynys Môn in conjunction with the construction of a new culvert and drainage system at Beaumaris. The route of the culvert runs from the edge of the Green (SH 608761) to the east of Beaumaris Castle and west through parkland to the north of the Castle, ending at the junction of Henllys Lane with Wexham Street (SH 603762).

The programme of works was divided into three parts: a comprehensive watching brief was carried out where the route crossed Beaumaris Green; an intermittent watching brief was undertaken in the area to the east of the Castle; and a strip and map exercise was undertaken in the open parkland to the north of the castle.

No archaeological features were recorded within the green nor to the east of the castle. Post medieval features and artefacts were identified within the open parkland north of the castle.

1. INTRODUCTION

Gwynedd Archaeological Trust was asked by Cyngor Sir Ynys Môn to carry out archaeological works on their behalf in conjunction with the construction of a new culvert and drainage system at Beaumaris Anglesey. The route of the culvert runs from the edge of the Green (SH 608761) to the east of Beaumaris Castle and then west through the parkland north of the Castle to the junction of Henllys Lane with Wexham Street (SH 603762). It covers a distance of approximately 725m.

The evaluation was undertaken between January 2010, and the end of February 2010, work was carried out using a 360 CAT JT582 excavator with a 1.8m grading bucket.

The programme of works was divided into three parts: a comprehensive watching brief was carried out where the route crossed Beaumaris Green; an intermittent watching brief was undertaken where the route ran next to the castle through a playground; and a strip and map exercise was undertaken where the route ran through the open parkland north of the castle.

2. METHODS AND TECHNIQUES

2.1 Definition of an archaeological watching brief:

A watching brief is a formal programme of observation and investigation conducted during any operation carried out for non-archaeological reasons. This will be within a specified area or site on land, inter-tidal zone or underwater, where there is a possibility that archaeological deposits may be disturbed or destroyed. The programme will result in the preparation of a report and ordered archive. (Reproduced from IFA. 2001. *Institute of Field Archaeologists 2001 Standard and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief*)

An archaeological watching brief can be one of four categories:

- comprehensive (present during all ground disturbance)
- intensive (present during sensitive ground disturbance)
- intermittent (viewing the trenches after machining)
- partial (as and when seems appropriate).

A **comprehensive** watching brief was agreed for the route across the Green.

An **intermittent or partial** watching brief was agreed for the route east of the castle across the playground.

2.2 Strip, Map and Sample

The technique of Strip, Map and Sample involves the examination of machine-stripped surfaces to identify archaeological remains. The stripping was undertaken under the supervision of an archaeologist. Stripping and removal of the overburden was undertaken in such a manner as to ensure damage did not take place to surfaces already stripped, nor to archaeological surfaces that had not been revealed.

Stripping was undertaken in as careful a manner as possible, to allow for good identification of archaeological features. A small team of archaeologists was responsible for subsequently further cleaning defined areas where necessary.

3. TOPOGRAPHICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND **(NB the following sections are partly derived from Davidson 2006)**

3.1 Topographic background

Beaumaris lies on the south coast of Anglesey on the Menai Strait, some 6.5Km south-west of Penmon Point. Beaumaris Bay is the wide mouth of the Strait, encompassing Penmaenmawr Head, Lavan Sands and Penmon Point. At the north-east end of the Strait between Penmon and Beaumaris the navigable channel lies between the Anglesey shore and the Lavan Sands. The latter are uncovered at low tide, and form a vast expanse of wet sand that was formerly crossed on foot or horseback by travellers to reach the ferry crossing at Beaumaris. The earliest sea charts show the channel close to Penmon as suitable for good anchorage. Called 'Cross Road' and later 'Outer Road', ships could anchor here to shelter from storms, though it was less comfortable when the wind was from the north-east. South of Cross Road is Friars Bay and Friars road, another good anchorage, and the location of the former harbour for Llanfaes. Beaumaris is a kilometre south-west again, where the Strait bends to the west, around a low glacial hill rising to a height of some 20m (called 'Mount' on Lewis Morris's chart of 1736), below which lies the level green fronting Beaumaris. Boats presently moor in the bay south of the town, between the pier and Gallows Point, and this is the most likely location of the medieval quay. When the castle was first built there was also access to the Castle dock, possibly along a channel or canal across the marshy area that was to become the green.

Early topographical writers agree on the excellent anchorage within Beaumaris Bay, for example Pennant says 'There is very good anchorage for ships in the bay which lies before the town; and has seven fathom water even at the lowest ebb. Vessels often find security here in hard gales. The town has no trade of any kind, yet has its custom house for the casual reception of goods' (Pennant 1781, 255). The description by Lewis Morris to accompany his chart is more practical, but still emphasises the qualities of the port 'You may run up to Beaumaris town side keeping in mid channel according to the direction of the land taking care of a sunken rock which lies off the mount; you may lie under the town on soft clay ground or come in to the channel. South south east from the town is 7 and 8 fathoms water at low water, an excellent road. The Irish frequently use Beaumaris to land their American goods, in order to pay the British duties. A vessel without cable or anchor may run ashore half a mile east and south of the town on soft clay ground at a place called Penrhyn Safnas point, by some called Gallows Point, and there lie with safety (Morris, 1736, 17).

3.2 Historic background

Beaumaris was the principal medieval port of North Wales, subordinate to that of Chester. It dates from the time of the construction of the castle, started April, 1295. It replaced, however, the former port of Llanfaes, that lay just over a kilometre to the north. The medieval town of Llanfaes, centred on the commotal *llys* and *maerdref* settlement, was the principal urban centre of the Welsh princes. The 1294 extent records a total levy of £1 6s 8d for harbour dues at 4d per ship, which suggests around 80 ships calling during the year (Carr 1982, 232). The nature of the wide bay at Llanfaes, lying protected in the Menai Strait, makes it unlikely any quays or jetties were constructed here, and boats would have discharged straight from the beach. The road leading from the shore and west of the former friary would have connected the town with the harbour. Lewis Morris says that within Friars Bay ‘you may anchor in six fathom, a stiff clay ground, or lie aground on soft mud’. The location of the earliest ferry associated with Llanfaes is uncertain, though Davies (1942, 21) suggests the same site as that used by the Beaumaris ferry, off the Green, before it was moved to Gallows Point, reasoning that if this was the best crossing place, it would have been used throughout as the most convenient site. However, a landing place within Friars Bay would be more relevant prior to 1294-5, though perhaps less practical. The ferry site off the Green is clearly indicated on Collin’s map of 1695, close to the site of a fish wear.

The construction of Beaumaris castle and town, initiated by the uprising of Madog ap Llywelyn, led to a forced decline of Llanfaes by the English authorities in favour of the new planted borough. This eventually led, in 1302-3, to the wholesale removal of the inhabitants of Llanfaes to Rhosyr, where a new borough was created east of the commotal centre, to be called Newborough. Whilst still at Llanfaes, a petition from the residents claimed they were not allowed to trade, nor were ships allowed to use the port (Carr 1982, 234). The last known reference to the port was when safe conduct was issued to the master of a ship which had loaded goods there in April 1295 (*ibid*, 234-5). It is inevitable that low-level usage continued for the Friary, and later for the inhabitants of Friars, the house established on the site, but from the late 13th century on it was eclipsed by the new harbour at Beaumaris.

As at Caernarfon and Conwy, provision was made for mooring at both the castle and the town quay. The principal trading harbour lay alongside the town, whereas the castle was provided with a more secure dock, protected by a walkway, and provided with a door through the outer curtain wall to allow passengers and goods to pass direct from ship to the castle.

The castle dock was an integral part of the original design, and this point is clearly made in the report of February 1296, by James of St George who states that a forty ton vessel fully laden could sail at high tide up to the biggest gate in the face of any Welsh enemy (Morris 1901, 268-9; Cadw 2004, 9). The length of the castle dock is just over 14m, which would be a tight fit for a forty ton vessel (see discussion and illustration in Redknap 1998, 136-150). The dock at Beaumaris is more elaborate than those at Conwy and Caernarfon, perhaps the result of the experience of the 1294 uprising, where ships played a major role in relieving the garrisons at Harlech, Criccieth and Aberystwyth, and following which Edward I found it necessary to retain a naval force in the Menai Strait in order to ensure continued delivery of stone, timber and other supplies necessary to build the castle.

The means of entry into the castle dock is not clear. Speeds map of 1610 shows the castle moat land-locked (Fig. 2). Either the sea formerly lay over the present green, or, more likely, a channel linked the sea to the moat. Whether this channel existed naturally or had to be dug out is not known, though the most likely scenario is the enhancement of an existing channel. Pennant records that ‘he [i.e. Edward I] also cut a canal, in order to permit vessels to discharge their lading beneath the walls’ quoting the Sebright Mss (unfortunately destroyed by fire in 1808). He also records that ‘the marsh was in early times of far greater extent than at present, and covered with fine bullrushes’ (Pennant 1781, 242-3). Similarly, in 1812 it is said ‘part of this canal, till very lately, was visible under the name of *Llyn y green*’ (Evans 1812, 107). Several references in the Corporation accounts refer to ‘Afon y Castell’ or ‘the old watercourse’, when referring to repairing a highway and carrying water in a gutter ‘from a place called Plas Coch to the Cross of Bewmares and thence forward to the River called Afon y Castell’ (Owen 1932, 84). There were only two natural outlets for water to the sea at Beaumaris, one was at the west end of the town, down Nant y Felin (also called Nant Meugan), and the other was across the present Green from the moat to the sea. The reference quoted above, dated June 1718, locates the problem in the east side of the town, and the name Afon y Castell must either relate to the moat itself or to a river that lay between the moat and the sea. By the 19th century this had been culverted, as revealed in a

description of the town lands undertaken in 1823 which states ‘the right of the Corporation extends over and includes the whole of the part of the Green which lies between the town and the south west side of the covered drain or water course from the castle mote to the sea shore’. However, despite these references, the evidence from Speeds map would indicate that the castle dock went out of use during the later Middle Ages, and that all shipping made use of the town quay further to the west.

The Green

Though Beaumaris did not witness the construction of stone piers and docks that we find at the industrial harbours of Amlwch, Penrhyn and Caernarfon in the late 18th and 19th centuries, developments of a different nature ensued. The increase in visitors, and the rise of the trading steamers along the north Wales coast, combined with the business interests of those serving on the Beaumaris Corporation led to several improvements in the vicinity of the town Green.

Our understanding of the early development of the Green is slight. Speed shows no development between the town wall and the coast edge, and this area was almost certainly still marshy in 1610. The town wall formed a clear division between the edge of the town and the coast from the castle to the water gate. The green was divided from north to south by the parish boundary of Llanfaes, and the Corporation would have been responsible for the western part only, and therefore only able to develop within that area. On the eastern side Speed marks a small structure towards the coast edge, which on later charts is shown as a ‘watch house’, though it had been demolished by 1895. The structure on Speed’s map may be related to the ferry crossing that went from the Llanfaes side of the Green until its transfer to the point in the 18th century. However, a custom house also stood somewhere on the Green according to Evans who states ‘The custom-house stands on the green near the water’s edge, and is the comptrolling office not only to the different ports on the island, but also to those on the Caernarfonshire side of the Menai’ (Evans 1812, 174). By 1836 it had moved to Townsend.

In 1821 it was ordered that a ‘landing quay’ be constructed at the expense of the corporation of sufficient length and depth at the Green for the accommodation of persons landing from small boats (UWB Beaumaris and Anglesey I.14, p 201). The whereabouts of this quay is not known, though it must have been close to where the pier now lies.

On the Beaumaris side of the Green there was little development before 1800, though a gaol and house for the gaoler were constructed there, outside the town walls. However, concerned that the rise in prosperity from industrial developments, visible at Penrhyn and Caernarfon, was passing them by, the Corporation of Beaumaris was determined to capitalise on its assets, and ensure that the town became a fashionable resort. A committee was formed to oversee the development of the Green in 1823, and they concluded that ‘as a means for the improvement of the town, and advancing its prosperity, as well as promoting the interest of this Corporation, the present available funds of the Corporation be laid out in building upon the Corporate ground on Beaumaris Green six new houses with suitable office and a billiard room and a public mess room As prepared by Mr Hall’ (UWB Beaumaris and Anglesey I.14 p. 222). Hall was a Bangor architect who also undertook some work at the church (Colvin 1995, 448), though later became involved with engineering projects, including the Nantlle Railway (Skempton 2002, 293). The terrace was constructed by 1825, and the Beaumaris Book Society, a society formed in 1802 primarily as a lending library but with strong maritime interests, presented its books to the Corporation, and moved its effects and meetings to No. 6 Green Edge (Fig. 4). Initially the Beaumaris News Room, it eventually became in 1885 the Royal Anglesey Yacht Club (Eames 1973, 419-30).

Further developments on the Green were hampered by the presence of the county gaol and a house alongside called Ty yn y Green. Consequently a new gaol was built 1828-9 west of the church to designs by Hansom and Welch, and the old gaol site and adjoining house purchased by the Corporation. Meanwhile, Hansom and Welch designed a new hotel for the Williams-Bulkeley family that lay in a prime position overlooking the bay. Construction of the Williams-Bulkeley hotel (now the Bulkeley Hotel) was started in 1829. In order to develop the land between the hotel and Green Edge the Corporation held a competition for a new terrace of houses. This was won by Hansom and Welch, and construction of Victoria Terrace was started in 1830 (Nottingham 1994, 26-40; UWB Beaumaris and Anglesey Mss). Victoria Terrace still dominates the Green today, though the interior of the houses

was altered during renovations undertaken by the architect Colwyn Ffoulkes in 1936-7 (Nottingham 1994, 50-53; Cadw Listed Buildings No. 5636).

The Green had been levelled in the early years of the 19th century, but was further improved immediately prior to 1830 (UWB Baron Hill 3696; Davies 1966, 241).

Area east of the castle

The area to the east of the castle is presently being used as a public playground, but all the earlier maps show this area as open ground. The 1889 (Fig 5) OS map shows a tree planted garden to the east of the pipe line route, running along the road edge. The 1900 OS map (Fig 6) describes this area as the 'Castle Pleasure grounds'. There are no structures shown associated with the area either on the OS 1900 or the OS 1919 map (Fig 7).

Parkland north of the castle

The earliest map depicting this area is the Speed map of 1610 (Fig 2). The map depicts a tower between Beaumaris and the Friary, and a stream lying between the borough and the tower. The tower is almost certainly a representation of Henllys, the former Welsh court, which lies just out of site of Beaumaris around a low hill. The stream runs into the moat of the castle, and this follows the course of a culverted stream that still runs through the park and into the moat. The 1720 (Fig 3) and 1829 (Fig 4) maps shown no activity within this area. The 1889 OS map shows a Cricket ground within the parkland close to the study area (Fig 7). The 1900 OS map shows no significant changes within this area. The only significant development shown on the 1919 OS map (Fig 6) is the marking of a well which is associated with the open water culvert still visible today. Recent activity carried out by Cadw in the 1990's involved dredging the moat and the placement of the extracted material in a large L shaped storage pit/area at the eastern end the parkland development area.

4. RESULTS

4.1 The Green (Chainage 0.00 to 100.00)

Excavation on the Green consisted of a linear pipe trench approximately 3m wide, with a depth range of 2.5 - 3 meters for a distance of approximately 110 meters on a southeast to northwest alignment. A number of mixed sand deposits were identified in the section of the pipe trench (Plates 1,2, 3, 4,5,6). Nineteenth and twentieth century pottery was recovered from within the upper layers of the sandy deposits. No archaeological features were identified. All the deposits appeared to be imported sands and gravels.

4.2 East of the castle (Chainage 140.00 to 220.00)

Excavations through the playground consisted of a linear pipe trench approximately 3m wide trench for a distance of approximately 122 meters on a roughly north-south alignment. Below the turf layer the ground was made up a soft grey/ grey brown clay alluvium with no significant inclusions. The left hand side of a pig's jaw and two leg bones (considered to be from the same animal) were recovered from within these layers (approximately 1m down from ground level). All the pieces showed signs of butchery. No archaeological features were identified (Plates 9, 10).

4.3 Open parkland north of the castle (Chainage 240.00 to 760.00)

4.3.1 (Chainage 240.00 to 300.00)

Excavation within the parkland consisted of a linear pipe trench approximately 3m wide for a distance of approximately 504.6 meters. The start of this strip was situated within the area disturbed by the Cadw works. The soils at the eastern end of the parkland were represented by alluvial clays of mixed colours and can be considered to be associated with this activity. This area was also used as the main access route into the development and was heavily rutted.

4.3.2 (Chainage, 300.00 to 440.00)

A single modern field drain was identified to the west of the open culvert. An area of heavily disturbed ground and building rubble was identified west of the open culvert (Plate 11), where there was a spread of a dark organic soil some 18m long by 14m wide which contained post-medieval pottery, building material and clay pipe stems (Plate 12). Within the excavated trench two stone built culverts were identified. Culvert A (only observed within the pipe trench section) was on a north-south alignment running towards the castle. It was 1.65m below ground level after removal of the top soil. It was constructed with a schist type stone with flat squarish pieces for the sides and for the capping with smaller broken up pieces to line its base. The internal dimensions of the culvert were approximately 0.35m deep by 0.50m wide, whereas the overall dimensions with the stone lining were approximately 0.63 deep and 0.60 wide. Culvert B lay on a north-west south-east alignment and was possibly associated with the visible open culvert (Plate 13, 14). The construction of culvert B was similar to culvert A, though it was slightly wider, the internal dimensions being approximately 0.50m high by 0.50m wide.

Both culverts were still active, and it was therefore decided to leave culvert B *in situ* by placing the new pipe over it.

4.3.3 (Chainage, 580.00 to 620.00)

A set of linear features was identified within this area. These were primarily shallow ditches, and included feature [003] (Plate 17) a straight sided ditch which ran from the northern section on a north-east to south-west alignment for 13 metres, before turning a right-angle towards the north-west for 8 metres back into the northern section (Fig. 8). Both parts of this feature measured 0.60m wide and between 0.15m and 0.10m deep. The fill (004) consisted of a firm mixed greyish brown silty clay with occasional small rounded stones. Within the area defined by [003] a second shallow linear feature was identified running on a north-east to south-west alignment from the northern edge of the northern section of a distance of 3 metres. This terminated within the angle defined by [003]. It measured 0.94m wide and 0.05m deep with uneven sides and base and was filled with (002) a firm mid brown silty clay with occasional small stones.

4.3.4 (Chainage, 620.00 to 720.00)

Two modern field drains were identified within a stony gravel fill in this length. At the western end (Chainage 720.00) there was a spread of post medieval material and a single concrete pad approximately 1m square with a single metal plate (Plate 21). There was also a spread of modern gravel leading towards the entrance way next to the lodge.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 The Green (Chainage 0.00 to 100.00)

The development of the Green is not fully understood (see historical background above). It is clearly shown on Speed's map of 1610, by which time the castle appears to be landlocked, with no access sea access to the castle. It is known that a ship of some 40 tons and up to 30ft long could get into the castle dock alongside the entrance to the castle, but this may well have been via a tidal channel through salt marsh. The deposits recorded during the watching brief revealed made ground some 2m deep from the shore to the road. This consisted mainly of sand, which produced 19th century finds from the top layers. This would be consistent with the development of salt marsh which was levelled, drained and consolidated in the 19th century.

5.2 The Play Area (Chainage 140.00 to 220.00)

It was identified before undertaking the watching brief that the trench in this area lay close to or along the line of the original moat for the castle. The watching brief confirmed this. No natural soils were identified within the depth of the trench, which revealed varying clay deposits, those lower down being blue in colour. The clay represents subsequent filling of the moat. Speed's map of 1610 indicates a moat on this side, though none of the 18th century maps or images do so, and the moat appears to have

been largely filled in during this period. In the early 19th century an archway was knocked through Gunners Walk, and a path built through it around the castle. The arch was infilled and the path removed when the west and north side of the moat (and castle dock) was excavated after the castle was taken into Guardianship in 1925. The moat was not excavated out to the full width of the original moat. On the east side the moat was not excavated out at all, and this area was used for pleasure gardens and subsequently the present playground. The animal bone from the upper levels of the moat suggests rubbish was dumped here during the silting up of the moat.

5.3 Parkland (Chainage 240.00 to 760.00)

5.3.1 (Chainage 240.00 to 300.00).

This area was too heavily disturbed to observe any archaeological activity.

5.3.2 (Chainage, 300.00 to 440.00)

An open stream is marked on Speed's map in this area. The stone built culverts are thought to reflect the culverting of this stream and the drainage of the area into the moat. The drains are open between two parallel walls, and this must have been for stock and/or maintenance of the drains, though it might also have served as a water supply for humans, as a well is marked on the 1919 OS Map (Fig 6).

5.3.3 (Chainage, 580.00 to 620.00)

Feature [003] represents a shallow ditch. The later field drain alongside is thought to have replaced the ditch.

5.3.4 (Chainage 620.00 to 720.00)

The post medieval material and loose gravel (**Chainage, 720.00**) was identified under discussion with the owner of Lodge House as material brought in as hard standing for vehicles entering and exiting the site for the sheepdog trials in the 1980's. The concrete pad was associated with a path constructed by the Bulckleys.

6. CONCLUSION

The project confirmed that the Green had been levelled and largely infilled in the 19th century. The moat on the east side of the castle was identified, and butchered animal bones were found in the upper layers of silt, suggesting they were deposited before the area was opened as 'pleasure grounds' in the 18th century. To the north of the castle the route of a culverted stream was identified. This fed into the moat, and had been used as a source of water for livestock and possibly local inhabitants.

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Ordnance Survey Maps

25inch 1st edition map of 1889 Anglesey XX.13

25inch 2nd edition map of 1900 Anglesey XX.13

25inch 3rd edition map of 1919 Anglesey XX.13

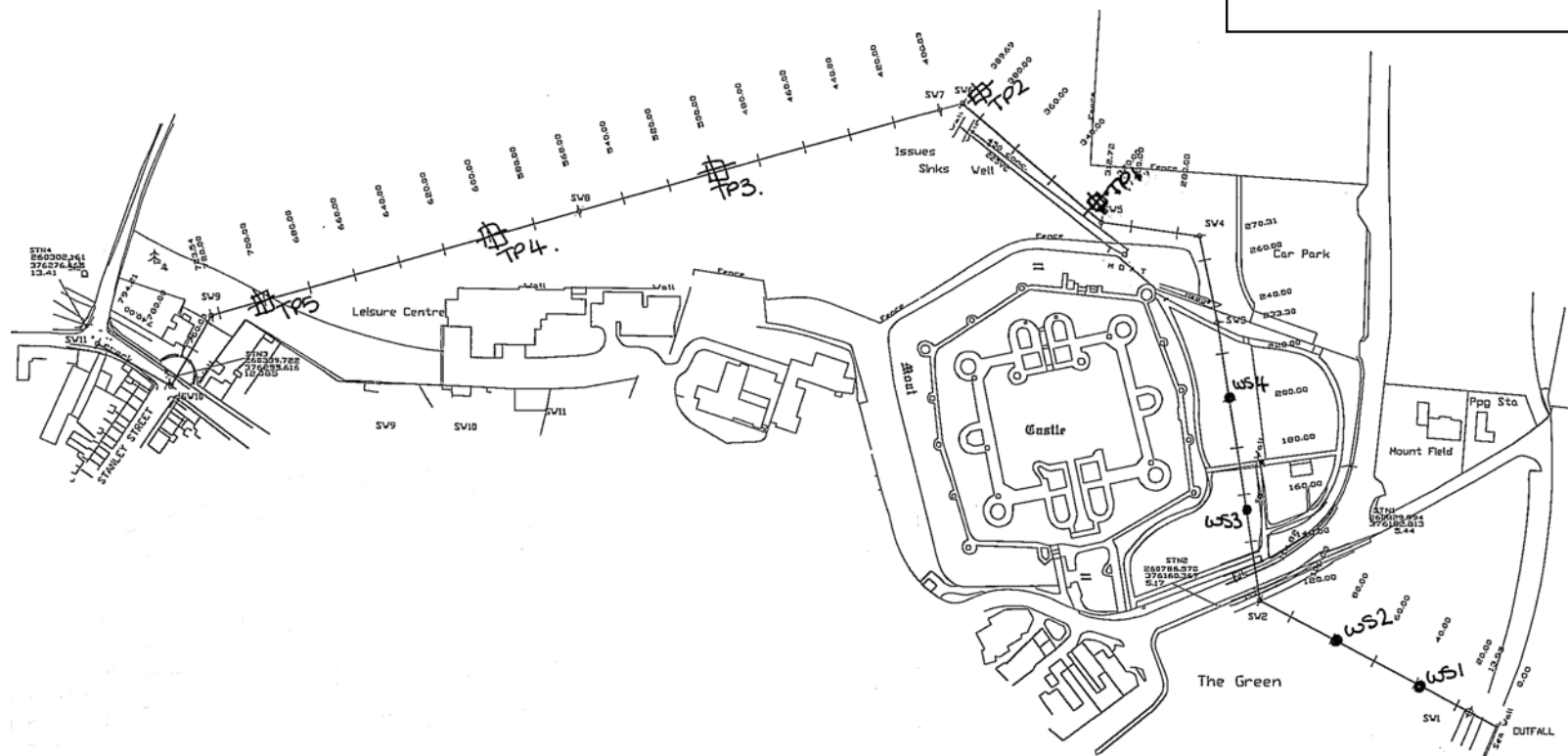


Fig. 1 Site Location, showing pipeline route with chainage noted, overlain on Cyngor Ynys Mon/Anglesey County Council Proposed Drainage Works at Beaumaris drawing dated 16th November 2009

Fig 2, John Speeds Map of Beaumaris

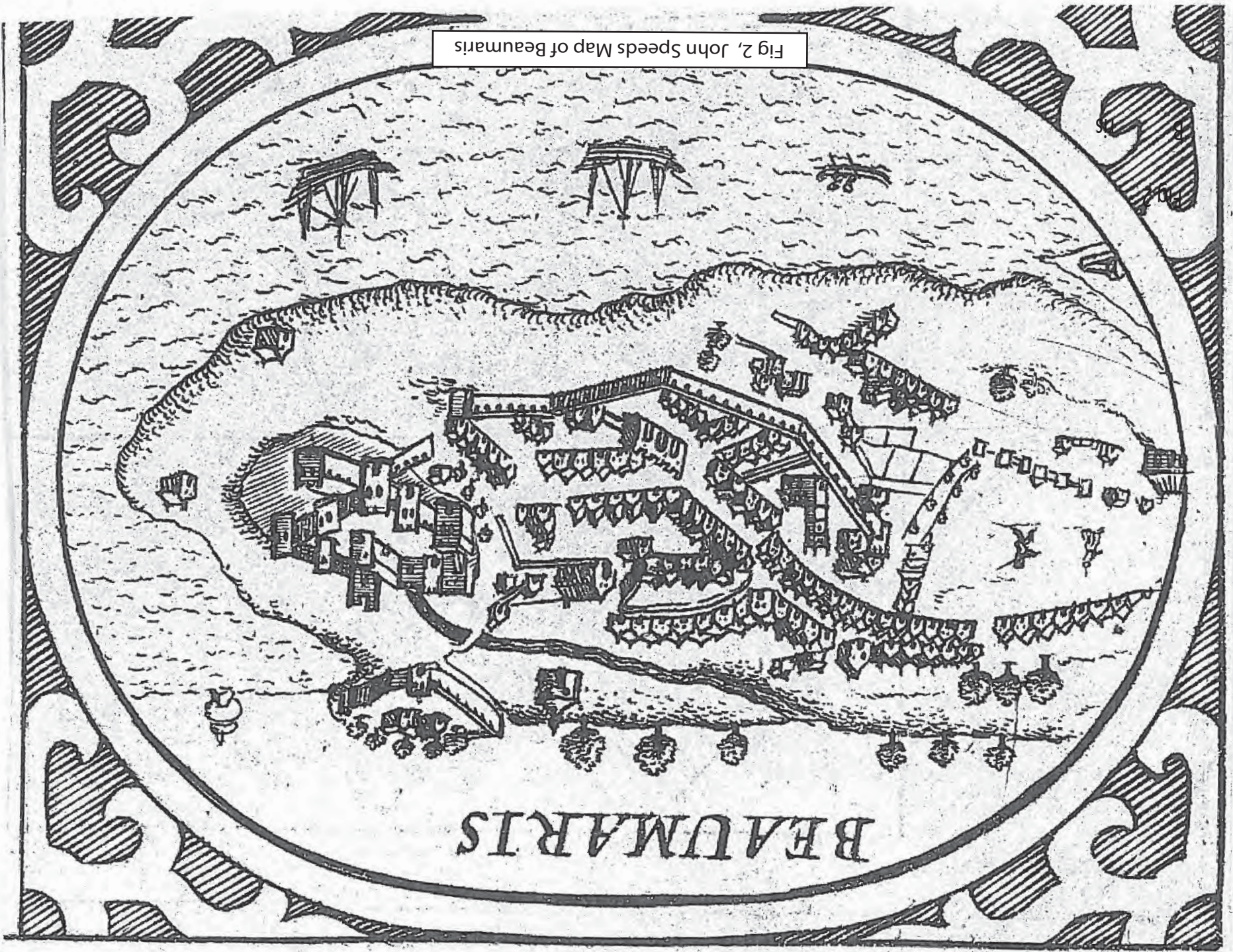




Fig 4 Detail from Yates' 1829 map of Beaumaris for the Baron Hill estate (UWB Baron Hill 6486).

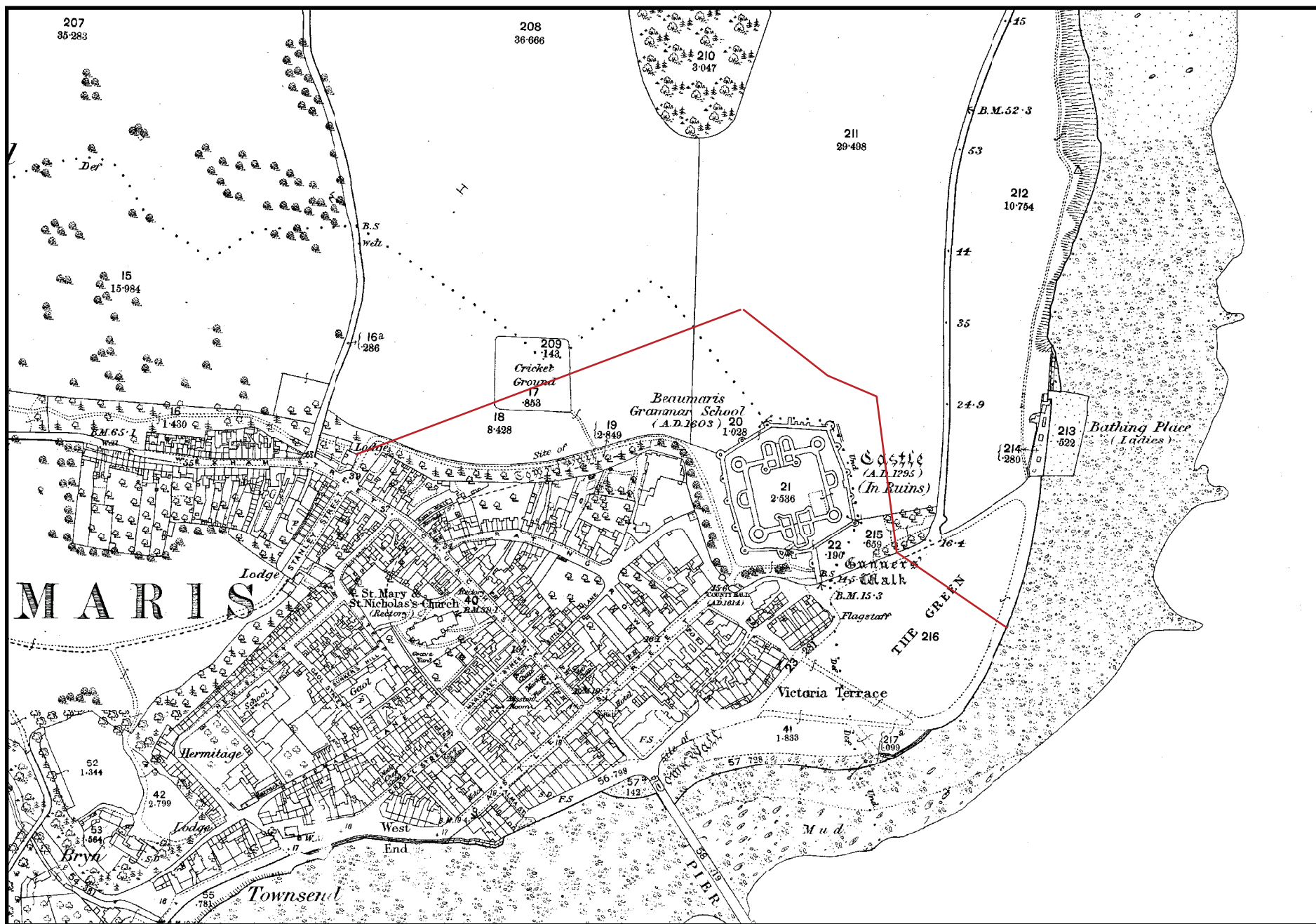


Fig. 5 Ordnance Survey 1st edition 25 inch map of Beaumaris of 1889, Anglesey Sheet XX.13. Pipeline route outlined in red



Fig. 6 Ordnance Survey 2nd edition 25 inch map of 1900 of Beaumaris, Anglesey Sheet XX.13. Pipeline route outlined in red

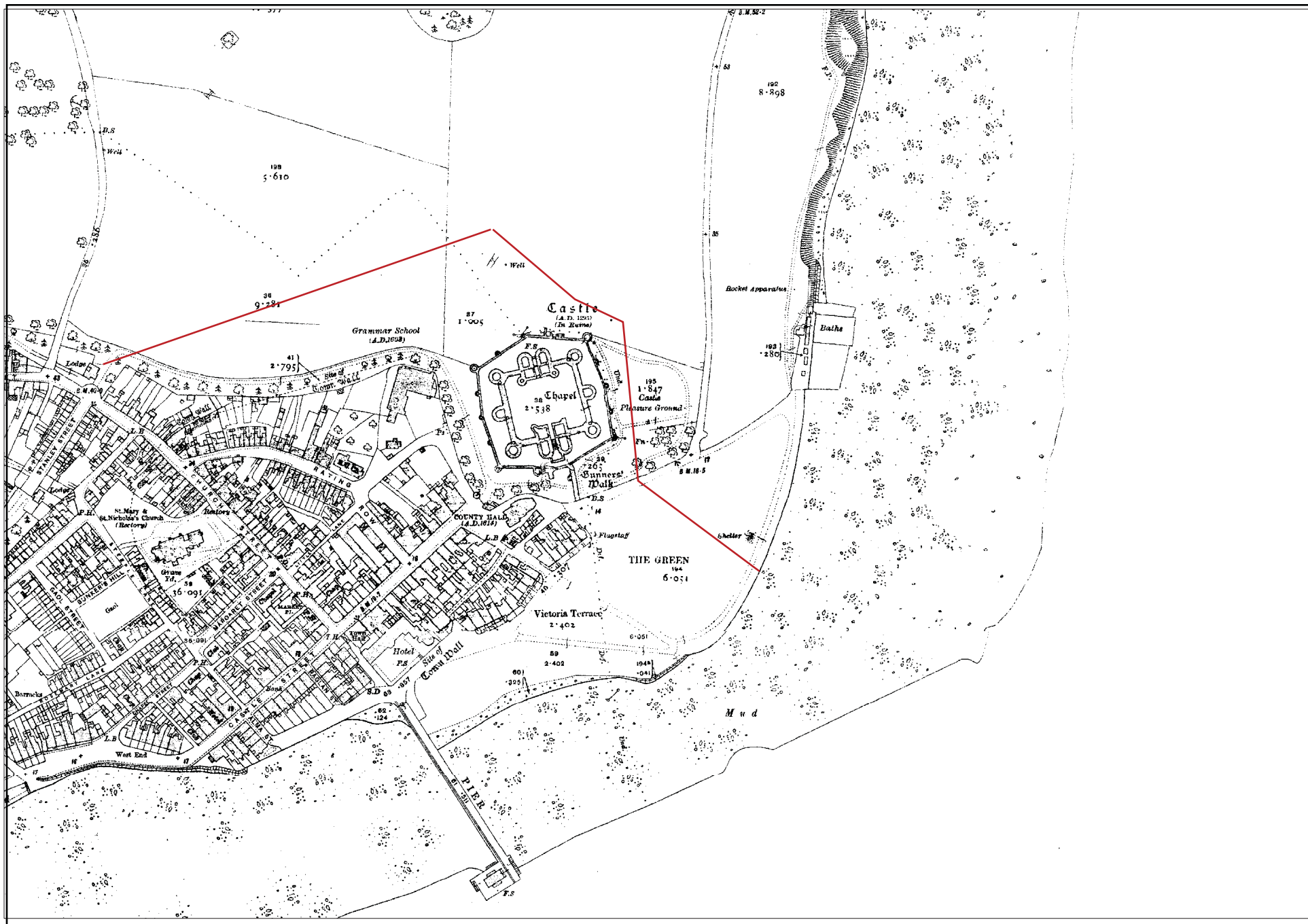


Fig. 7 Ordnance Survey 3rd edition 25 inch map of Beaumaris of 1919, Anglesey Sheet XX.13. Pipeline route outlined in red

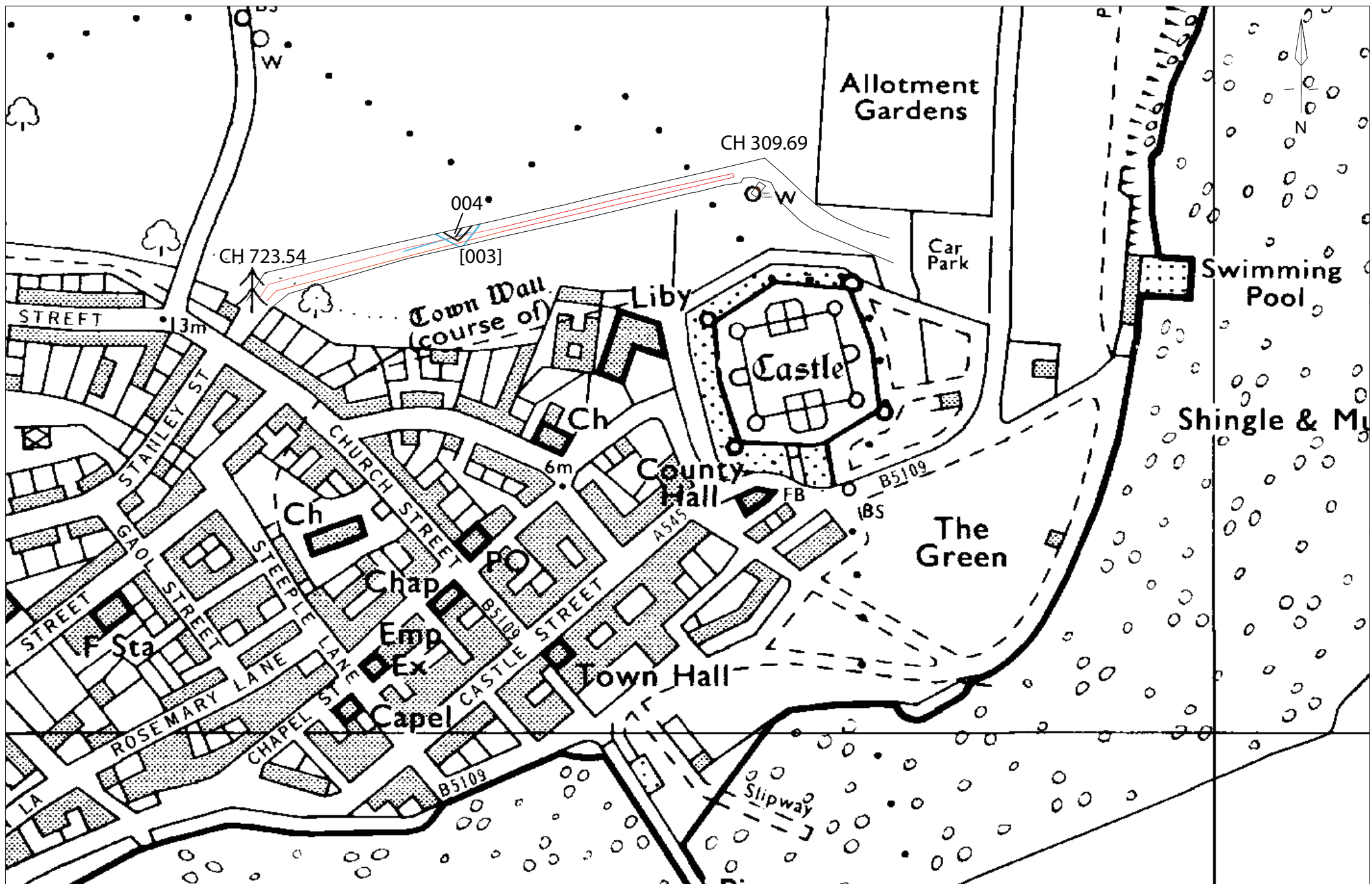


Fig. 8 Map showing location of feature [003] in parkland area. Base map taken from OS 1:10 000 series sheet SH67NW. Scale 1:10 000
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Plate 1 Sea wall within Evaluation Trench, View from NW



Plate 2, Sea wall within Evaluation Trench, View from E



Plate 3, SW Trench edge showing Sand & Gravel



Plate 4, SE Trench edgeshowing Sand & Gravel



Plate 5,Section of Road Trench



Plate 6,Section of Trench in Beach Defences



Plate 7, General View of the Green



Plate 8, General View of the Green,Top soil strip



Plate 9, General Shots of Park



Plate 10 , Section of Pipe Trench in Park



Plate 11, Feature 1, infilled well



Plate 12, Post Medieval 'dump' /spread



Plate 13, Stone Built Culvert



Plate 14, Stone Built Culvert



Plate 15, Sub-soil strip veiww from the West



Plate 16, Sub-soil strip veiww from the East



Plate 17, Linear Features view from the South



Plate 18, Complete Top soil veiw from the East



Plate 19, Subsoil strip view from the West



Plate 20, Subsoil strip view from the West



Plate 21 Concrete Pad



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