

Abergavenny Town Hall Cross Street Abergavenny Monmouthshire

Archaeological Watching Brief



for
Monmouthshire County Council

CA Project: CR0010
CA Report: CR0010_1

February 2020



Abergavenny Town Hall
 Cross Street
 Abergavenny
 Monmouthshire

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Document Control Grid						
Revision	Date	Author	Checked by	Status	Reasons for revision	Approved by
A	12 February 2020	Monica Fombellida	Alex Thomson	Draft		Cliff Bateman

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SUMMARY

Project Name:	Abergavenny Town Hall
Location:	Cross Street, Abergavenny, Monmouthshire
NGR:	329942 214200
Type:	Watching Brief
Date:	June – October 2019
Planning Reference:	MCC ref: DM/2018/00466 and DM/2018/00467
Location of Archive:	To be deposited with the National Museum of Wales
Site Code:	ATHA 19

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology between June and October 2019 during groundworks associated with alterations and refurbishment at Abergavenny Town Hall, Cross Street, Abergavenny, Monmouthshire.

A series of walls were identified that most probably relate to the previous 18th-century layout of the market hall. Made-ground deposits and cobbled surfacing were recorded overlaying these walls that relate to mid-19th century alterations and to the previous flooring of the existing buildings.

Cynhaliodd Cotswold Archaeology friff gwyllo archaeolegol rhwng mis Mehefin a mis Hydref 2019 yn ystod gwaith paratoi'r pridd oedd yn gysylltiedig â newid ac adnewyddu Neuadd y Dref, Cross Street, y Fenni, Sir Fynwy.

Canfuwyd cyfres o waliau sydd yn ôl pob tebyg yn ymwneud â chynllun blaenorol neuadd y farchnad sy'n dyddio'n ôl i'r 18fed ganrif. Cofnodwyd bod dyddodion tir gwneuthuredig ac arwyneb coblog yn gorchuddio'r waliau hyn sy'n ymwneud â'r newidiadau a wnaed ganol y 19eg ganrif a hefyd â llawr blaenorol yr adeiladau presennol.



1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Between June and October 2019 Cotswold Archaeology (CA) carried out an archaeological watching brief for Monmouthshire County Council (MCC) at Abergavenny Town Hall, Cross Street, Abergavenny, Monmouthshire (centred at NGR: 329942 214200; Fig. 1). Planning permission for alteration and refurbishment of the Town Hall was granted by MCC (ref: DM/2018/00466 and DM/2018/00467). Listed Building Consent was then granted by the Welsh Government (WG, ref: qA1352276), conditional on a programme of archaeological work (Condition 14.7). The condition, which was recommended by Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust (GGAT) Curatorial, the archaeological advisors to MCC, recommended a programme of watching brief attendance during all intrusive groundworks.
- 1.2 The watching brief was carried out in accordance with a detailed *Written Scheme of Investigation* (WSI) produced by CA (2019) and approved by MCC acting on the advice of GGAT Curatorial. The fieldwork also followed *Standard and guidance: Archaeological watching brief* (ClfA 2014).

The site

- 1.3 The proposed development area, comprising the interior of Abergavenny Town Hall and Market Hall is approximately 0.25ha in extent and is located on the corner of Cross Street and Market Street. The site lies at approximately 60m AOD and comprises the three-storey Town Hall building and a basement and the covered Market Hall to the rear of the Town Hall.
- 1.4 The underlying bedrock geology of the area is mapped as interbedded Argillaceous Rocks and sandstone of the Maughans Formation, formed during the Devonian Period (BGS 2019). Superficial sand and gravel Glaciofluvial Sheet Deposits of the Quaternary Period are also recorded (*ibid.*). The natural substrate was revealed solely within the basement and consisted of sand and gravel.



2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The site has been the subject of a Heritage Impact Statement (GWPA 2018). The following is a summary of the information contained within that document.
- 2.2 Archaeological finds suggest that the area around Abergavenny was occupied during the Mesolithic and Neolithic periods. Abergavenny itself was founded in c. 55-60 AD (*ibid.*) as a Roman settlement associated with the fort of *Gobannium*, built to safeguard the road to Usk and was strategically located at the confluence of the Usk and Gavenny rivers (*ibid.*). The Roman fort lay on a topographic ridge located c. 200m to the south-west of the current site, in the area of the modern Castle Street car park, with a civilian settlement located outside of the fort (*ibid.*).
- 2.3 The current town developed during the 11th century, with a motte-and-bailey castle built c. 1087 to guard against Welsh incursions. All that currently remains of Abergavenny Castle are the defensive ditches and the ruins of the stone keep, towers, and part of the curtain wall, c. 230m to the south of the current site. A Benedictine priory was also founded by the 12th century, the remains of which now form the Scheduled Monument of St Mary's Priory (Monument Number 183), located c. 230m to the east of the site (*ibid.*).
- 2.4 The medieval town grew alongside the castle (*ibid.*). However, owing to its geographical location, it was frequently embroiled in border warfare during the 12th and 13th centuries. In response to the continued threat of attack, the town's defences were enlarged in the 13th and 14th centuries to enclose a larger area.
- 2.5 During the post-medieval period Abergavenny continued to prosper as a market town serving the agricultural populations of the surrounding area (*ibid.*). The original market place, south of Nevill Street, was replaced by a purpose built market hall in Cross Street in the early 17th century.
- 2.6 From the 18th century onwards, the coal and iron industries replaced the town's small scale manufacturing and agricultural economy, with Abergavenny occupying a central position within a network of canals and tramways, bringing wealth and prosperity to the town (*ibid.*). A railway station was opened in 1854 and by the late 19th century Abergavenny became a busy railway junction.

2.7 Following demands for improved facilities, a new market hall was opened in 1796 which was then subsequently replaced in 1871 by the present building, incorporating the covered market and Town Hall (*ibid.*). Abergavenny Town Hall is Grade II listed and is constructed of coursed, rock-faced Old Red Sandstone with Bath limestone ashlar dressings, with natural slate roofs. The building includes the market, Town Council and Social Services and also houses the Borough Theatre.

3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

3.1 The objectives of the archaeological works were:

- to monitor groundworks, and to identify, investigate and record all significant buried archaeological deposits revealed on the site during the course of the development groundworks;
- at the conclusion of the project, to produce an integrated archive for the project work and a report setting out the results of the project and the archaeological conclusions that can be drawn from the recorded data.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 The fieldwork followed the methodology set out within the WSI (CA 2019). An archaeologist was present during intrusive groundworks, which comprised the excavation of pile cap locations, service trenches and a lift pit. Two trenches were excavated within the basement level of the Town Hall, Trenches 1 and 12, with the rest being excavated at ground floor level within the Market Hall building (see Fig. 2 for location and extent).

4.2 Where archaeological deposits were encountered written, graphic and photographic records were compiled in accordance with CA Technical Manual 1: *Fieldwork Recording Manual*.

4.3 The archive is currently held by CA at their offices in Kemble. Subject to the agreement of the legal landowner, CA will make arrangements with The National Museum of Wales for the deposition of the site archive. A summary of information

from this project, set out within Appendix B, will be provided to the GGAT Historic Environment Record (HER) upon completion of the project.

5. RESULTS (FIGS 2-4)

5.1 This section provides an overview of the watching brief results. Detailed summaries of the recorded context are to be found in Appendix A. The results are divided between the trenches excavated in the Town Hall basement, Trenches 1 and 12, and those excavated at ground floor level in the Market Hall, Trenches 3, 5-11 and 13-15.

Town Hall basement (Fig. 2)

5.2 The stratigraphic sequence observed within the basement level trenches was broadly uniform. The natural geological substrate was exposed at an average depth of 0.7m below present ground level (bpgl) and was cut by the construction cuts for the upstanding walls of the basement. These were butted by a series of undated made-ground deposits, measuring c. 0.56m in thickness, which were sealed by 0.2m of surfacing.

Market Hall, ground floor (Figs 2-4)

5.3 A broadly similar stratigraphic sequence was recorded in the trenches excavated at ground floor level. Walls were identified within Trenches 7, 8 and 13 at a typical depth of 0.65m bpgl. These were sealed by undated made-ground material, averaging 0.5m in thickness, which constituted the earliest deposits in all other trenches. The made-ground deposits were sealed by cobbled surfaces in Trenches 6, 7, 14 and 15, and by c. 0.15m of bedding material and surfacing in all other trenches.

Trenches 7 and 8

5.4 North-west/south-east aligned wall footings 704 and 804 were identified within Trenches 7 and 8 respectively. They consisted of roughly coursed and hewn limestone blocks bonded by a sandy lime mortar.

Trench 13

5.5 North-east/south-west aligned wall footing 1304 was recorded at 0.67m bpgl in the north-eastern end of Trench 13 (see Fig. 3). It consisted of crudely coursed

limestone blocks bonded by a hard sandy lime mortar and extending beyond the limits of excavation. It measured at least 0.9m in length, 0.62m in width and was exposed to a height of 0.05m.

Trenches 6, 7, 14 and 15

- 5.6 Fragmentary cobbled surfaces 603, 703, 1403 and 1503 were respectively recorded within the northern extent of Trench 6, throughout the full extent of Trenches 7 and 14 and within the north-eastern end of Trench 15. The surfacing consisted of rounded cobbles laid directly on to the underlying made-ground and measured up to 0.15m in thickness. The cobbled surfacing was sealed by modern levelling and bedding materials for the current tiled floor of the Market Hall.

6. DISCUSSION

- 6.1 The stratigraphic sequence observed within both the basement and ground floor trenches most probably relate to the late 18th- and 19th-century development of the market and Town Hall site (see *Archaeological Background* above). The walls identified within Trenches 7, 8 and 13 remained artefactually undated, but could possibly relate to the earlier market hall buildings of 1796. However, this interpretation is limited due to the restricted exposure of the structures during the observed groundworks.
- 6.2 The identified walls were sealed by the made-ground deposits that were also identified throughout the ground floor trenches. The cobbled surfacing recorded in Trenches 6, 7, 14 and 15 overlay this made-ground material, suggesting that it represents the original floor of the covered market, built in 1871. This cobbled floor was subsequently replaced by the existing tiled surface.

7. CA PROJECT TEAM

- 7.1 Fieldwork was undertaken by Noel Boothroyd, Matthew Coman, Peter Busby, Marino Cardelli and Monica Fombellida. The report was written by Monica Fombellida. The illustrations were prepared by Rosanna Price. The archive has been compiled, and prepared for deposition by, Hazel O'Neill. The project was managed for CA by Alex Thomson.



8. REFERENCES

BGS (British Geological Survey) 2019 *Geology of Britain Viewer*
<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html> Accessed 29 November 2019

CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2019 *Abergavenny Town Hall, Cross Street, Abergavenny, Monmouthshire: Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief*

GWPA (GWP Architecture) 2018 *Abergavenny Hub: Heritage Impact Statement*



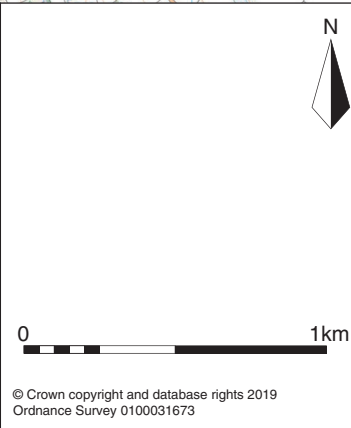
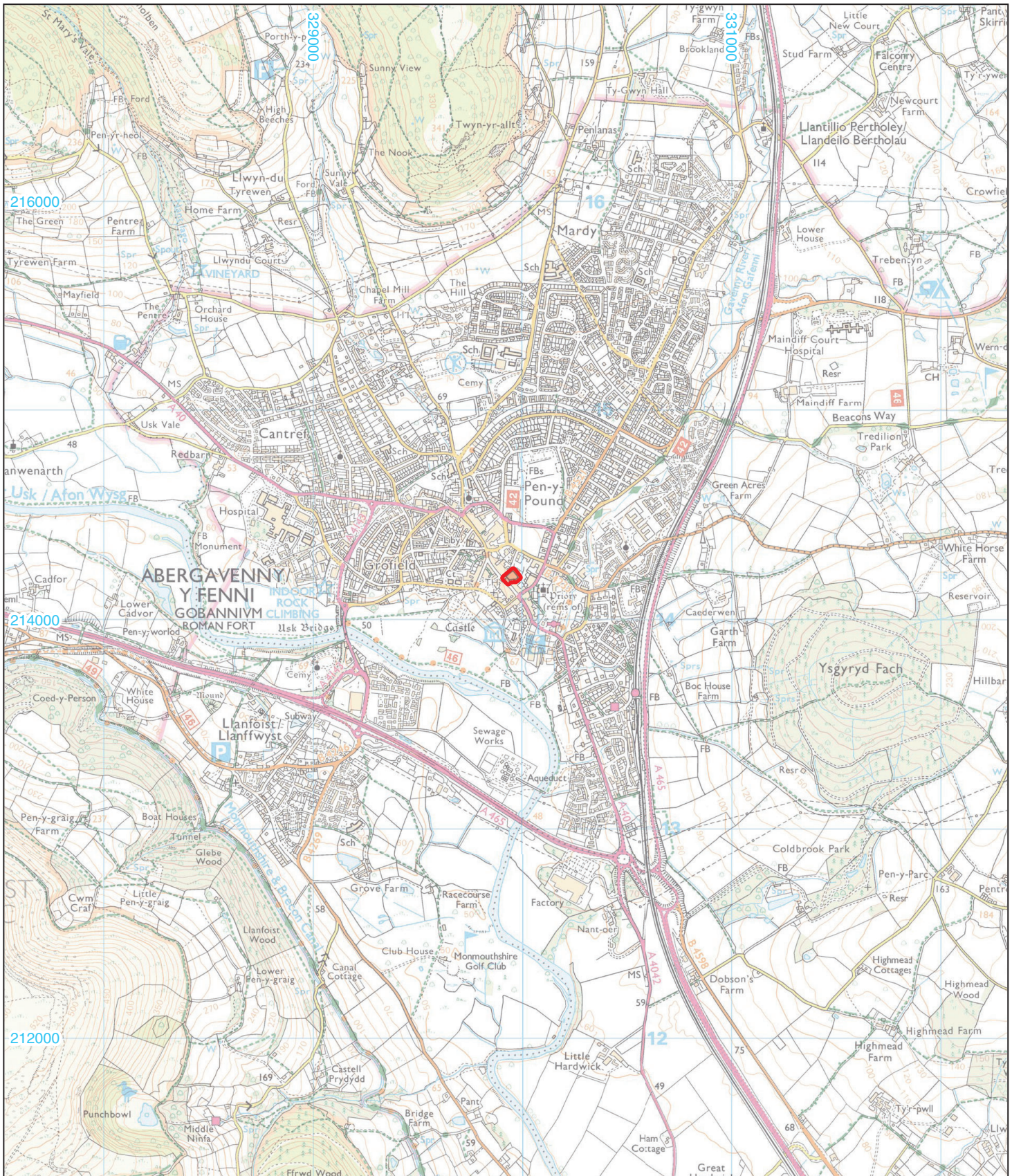
APPENDIX A: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

Trench No.	Context No.	Type	Context interpretation	Description	L (m)	W (m)	Depth/thickness (m)
1	100	Layer	Surface	Concrete floor	>0.8	>0.7	0.11
1	103	Layer	Surface	Stone slabs on mortar bedding	>0.8	>0.7	0.09
1	104	Layer	Made ground	Mortar-ash made ground	>0.8	>0.7	0.12
1	105	Layer	Made ground	Dark red-brown silt-sand with rounded gravel and pebbles	>0.8	>0.7	0.11
1	106	Layer	Made ground	Black mortar and gravel	>0.8	>0.7	0.03
1	107	Layer	Made ground	Dark red-brown silt-sand with rubble	>0.8	>0.7	0.3
1	109	Layer	Natural	Mid brown gravelly sand	>0.8	>0.7	N/A
3	300	Structure	Surface	Red and black quarry tiles and stone flags	>0.2	>0.2	0.05
3	301	Layer	Bedding	Concrete/cement bedding	>0.2	>0.2	0.13
3	302	Layer	Made ground	Dark red-brown silt-gravel with occ. CBM	>0.2	>0.2	0.52
5	500	Structure	Surface	Red and black quarry tiles and stone flags	>0.2	>0.2	0.05
5	501	Layer	Bedding	Concrete/cement bedding	>0.2	>0.2	0.13
5	502	Layer	Made ground	Dark red-brown silt-gravel with occ. CBM	>0.2	>0.2	>1
6	600	Structure	Surface	Red and black quarry tiles and stone flags	1	0.7	0.05
6	601	Layer	Bedding	Concrete/cement bedding	1	0.7	0.11
6	602	Layer	Made ground	Dark red-brown silt-gravel with occ. CBM	1	0.7	>1
6	603	Layer	Surface	Limestone cobbled surface	1	0.35	0.15
7	700	Structure	Surface	Red and black quarry tiles and stone flags	0.9	0.9	0.04
7	701	Layer	Bedding	Concrete/cement bedding	0.9	0.9	0.11
7	702	Layer	Made ground	Dark red-brown silt-gravel with occ. CBM	0.9	0.9	>1
7	703	Layer	Surface	Limestone cobbled surface	0.9	0.9	0.15
7	704	Structure	Wall	NW/SE aligned limestone wall, laid in crude horizontal courses with sandy lime mortar	0.9	0.6	>0.9
8	800	Structure	Surface	Red and black quarry tiles and stone flags	0.9	0.7	0.04
8	801	Layer	Bedding	Concrete/cement bedding	0.9	0.7	0.11
8	802	Layer	Made ground	Dark red-brown silt-gravel with occ. CBM	0.9	0.7	>1
8	804	Structure	Wall	NW/SE aligned limestone wall, laid in crude horizontal courses with sandy lime mortar	0.7	0.13	>0.9
9	900	Structure	Surface	Red and black quarry tiles and stone flags	1	0.6	0.04
9	901	Layer	Bedding	Concrete/cement bedding	1	0.6	0.11
9	902	Layer	Made ground	Dark red-brown silt-gravel with occ. CBM	1	0.6	>1
10	1000	Structure	Surface	Red and black quarry tiles and stone flags	1.6	1.3	0.05
10	1001	Layer	Bedding	Concrete/cement bedding	1.6	1.3	0.16
10	1002	Layer	Made ground	Dark red-brown silt-gravel with occ. CBM	1.6	1.3	>0.5
11	1100	Structure	Surface	Red and black quarry tiles and stone flags	1.6	1.3	0.05
11	1101	Layer	Bedding	Concrete/cement bedding	1.6	1.3	0.16
11	1102	Layer	Made ground	Dark red-brown silt-gravel with occ. CBM	1.6	1.3	>0.5

12	1200	Structure	Surface	Concrete floor	2	2	0.11
12	1201	Structure	Surface	Stone slabs on mortar bedding	2	2	0.09
12	1202	Layer	Made ground	Dark red-brown silt-sand with rounded gravel and pebbles	2	2	0.5
12	1203	Layer	Natural	Mid brown gravelly sand	2	2	N/A
13	1301	Structure	Floor	Red and black quarry tiles and stone flags	4.2	0.5	0.05
13	1302	Layer	Bedding	Concrete/cement bedding	4.2	0.5	0.2
13	1303	Layer	Made ground	Dark red-brown silt-gravel with occ. CBM	4.2	0.5	0.36
13	1304	Structure	Wall	NE/SW aligned limestone wall, laid in crude horizontal courses with sandy lime mortar	0.9	0.62	>0.05
14	1401	Structure	Floor	Red and black quarry tiles and stone flags	8.4	0.63	0.05
14	1402	Layer	Bedding	Concrete/cement bedding	8.4	0.63	0.12
14	1403	Structure	Surface	Limestone cobbled surface	8.4	0.63	0.14
14	1404	Layer	Made ground	Dark red-brown silt-gravel with occ. CBM	8.4	0.63	>0.32
15	1501	Structure	Floor	Red and black quarry tiles and stone flags	6.1	0.65	0.05
15	1502	Layer	Bedding	Concrete/cement bedding	6.1	0.65	0.12
15	1503	Structure	Surface	Limestone cobbled surface	1.45	0.65	0.15
15	1504	Layer	Made ground	Dark red-brown silt-gravel with occ. CBM	6.1	0.65	>0.29

APPENDIX B: WELSH HER INFORMATION SUBMISSION FORM

HER Field Name	Field Definition
PRN	Pending
Site Name	Abergavenny Town Hall, Cross Street, Abergavenny, Monmouthshire
Summary Welsh	<p>Cynhaliodd Cotswold Archaeology friff gwyllo archaeolegol rhwng mis Mehefin a mis Hydref 2019 yn ystod gwaith paratoi'r pridd oedd yn gysylltiedig â newid ac adnewyddu Neuadd y Dref, Cross Street, y Fenni, Sir Fynwy.</p> <p>Canfuwyd cyfres o waliau sydd yn ôl pob tebyg yn ymwneud â chynllun blaenorol neuadd y farchnad sy'n dyddio'n ôl i'r 18fed ganrif. Cofnodwyd bod dyddodion tir gwneuthuredig ac arwyneb coblog yn gorchuddio'r waliau hyn sy'n ymwneud â'r newidiadau a wnaed ganol y 19eg ganrif a hefyd â llawr blaenorol yr adeiladau presennol.</p>
Summary English	<p>An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology between June and October 2019 during groundworks associated with alterations and refurbishment at Abergavenny Town Hall, Cross Street, Abergavenny, Monmouthshire.</p> <p>A series of walls were identified that most probably relate to the previous 18th-century layout of the market hall. Made-ground deposits and cobbled surfacing were recorded overlaying these walls that relate to mid-19th century alterations and to the previous flooring of the existing buildings.</p>
Description	<p>Cotswold Archaeology was commissioned by Monmouthshire County Council to undertake an archaeological watching brief during improvement works at Abergavenny Town Hall, Cross Street, Abergavenny, Monmouthshire.</p> <p>A series of walls were identified that most probably relate to the previous 18th-century layout of the market hall. Made-ground deposits and cobbled surfacing were recorded overlaying these walls that relate to mid-19th century alterations and to the previous flooring of the existing buildings.</p>
NGR	
Easting	329942
Northing	214200
NGR Qualifier	Area Centred
NGR Derivation	Ordnance Survey Digital Mapping
Type	Watching Brief
Period	Post-medieval
Survival Condition	n/a
Condition Rating	n/a
Condition Description	n/a
Broad class	Intrusive event
Evidence	Wall. Surface.
Year	2019
References	Cotswold Archaeology 2020 <i>Abergavenny Town Hall, Cross Street, Abergavenny, Monmouthshire: Archaeological Watching Brief, CA report CR0010_1</i>
Record Compiled By	Alex Thomson
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Cotswold Archaeology

Andover 01264 347630
 Cirencester 01285 771022
 Exeter 01392 573970
 Milton Keynes 01908 564660
 Suffolk 01449 900120

www.cotswoldarchaeology.co.uk
enquiries@cotswoldarchaeology.co.uk

PROJECT TITLE

Abergavenny Town Hall, Cross Street, Abergavenny, Monmouthshire

FIGURE TITLE

Site location plan

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- Site boundary
- Basement
- Basement trenches
- Ground floor trenches
- Structure
- Surface



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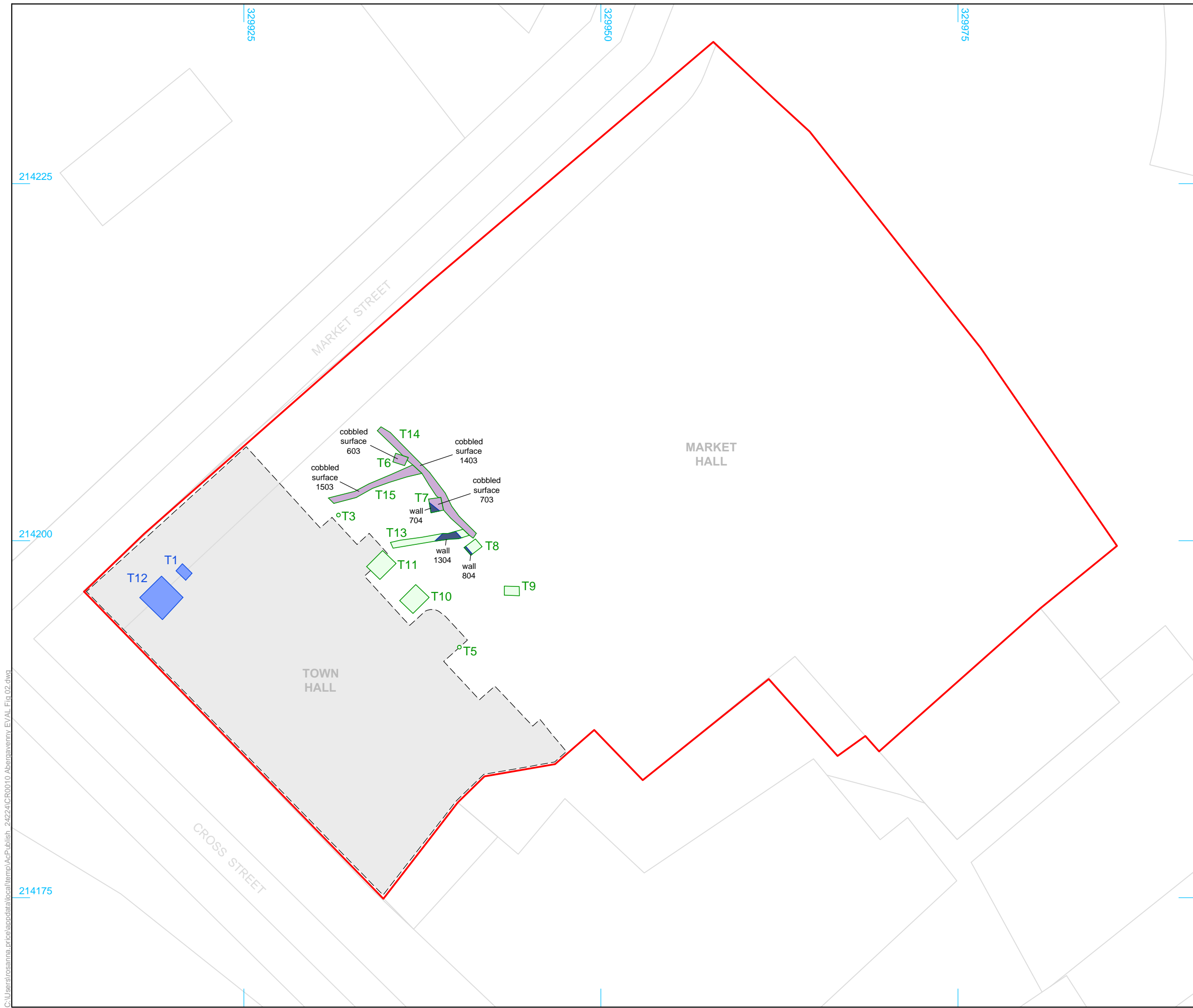
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Exeter	01392 826185
Milton Keynes	01908 564660
Suffolk	01449 900120

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e enquiries@cotswoldarchaeology.co.uk

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FIGURE TITLE
The site, showing location of observed groundworks

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C:\Users\rosanna.price\appdata\local\temp\AcPublish_24224\CR0010 Abergavenny EVAL Fig.02.dwg



Wall 1304, looking east (0.3m scale)



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Cirencester 01285 771022
Exeter 01392 573970
Milton Keynes 01908 564660
Suffolk 01449 900120
www.cotswoldarchaeology.co.uk
enquiries@cotswoldarchaeology.co.uk

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Abergavenny Town Hall, Cross Street,
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FIGURE TITLE

Photograph

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FIGURE NO.

3



Trenches 13, 14 and 15 during groundworks, looking north-west (0.5m scale)



Andover 01264 347630
 Cirencester 01285 771022
 Exeter 01392 573970
 Milton Keynes 01908 564660
 Suffolk 01449 900120
www.cotswoldarchaeology.co.uk
enquiries@cotswoldarchaeology.co.uk

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FIGURE TITLE

Photograph

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Andover Office

Stanley House
Walworth Road
Andover
Hampshire
SP10 5LH

t: 01264 347630

Cirencester Office

Building 11
Kemble Enterprise Park
Cirencester
Gloucestershire
GL7 6BQ

t: 01285 771022

Exeter Office

Unit 1, Clyst Units
Cofton Road
Marsh Barton
Exeter
EX2 8QW

t: 01392 573970

Milton Keynes Office

Unit 8 - The IO Centre
Fingle Drive, Stonebridge
Milton Keynes
Buckinghamshire
MK13 0AT

t: 01908 564660

Suffolk Office

Unit 5, Plot 11, Maitland Road
Lion Barn Industrial Estate
Needham Market
Suffolk
IP6 8NZ

t: 01449 900120

e: enquiries@cotswoldarchaeology.co.uk

