

Archaeology Wales

Arthur's Gate Montgomery, Powys

Metal Detector Survey



By
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Report No. 1435

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Non-Technical Summary

This report results from work undertaken by Archaeology Wales Ltd (AW) for Mr & Mrs Davies of Penysir, Montgomery, Powys. It draws on the results of a watching brief and metal detector survey carried out at Arthur's Gate, Montgomery, Powys, during groundworks for the construction of a domestic dwelling on a previously unoccupied plot. The planning application number is P/2013/0183.

The groundworks for the development involves re-grading the site and the excavation of foundation trenches. Archaeological work has been recommended for this scheme by Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT) as previous archaeological work in the area produced finds associated with the 1644 Battle of Montgomery.

The metal detector survey at Arthur's Gate identified two artefacts of likely Civil War date; a musket ball and a fragment of scrap lead. This indicates that the 1644 battlefield potentially extended in to the development area. No archaeological deposits were identified during the watching brief.

1. Introduction

1.1 Location and Scope of Work

- 1.1.1 An archaeological watching brief and metal detector survey has been carried out by Archaeology Wales Ltd (AW) during groundworks on land at Arthurs Gate, Montgomery, Powys, (henceforth – the site). The development is situated close to the location of the 1644 Civil War Battle of Montgomery.
- 1.1.2 The scope of the development with regard to ground disturbance involves re-grading the site and the excavation of foundation trenches.
- 1.1.3 The local planning authority is Powys County Council and the planning application number is P/2013/0183 (Full Planning Permission).
- 1.1.4 Archaeological work has been recommended for this scheme by Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (henceforth - CPAT) in its capacity as archaeological adviser to the planning authority, Powys County Council. CPAT have recommended that a watching brief and a metal detector survey are carried out during groundworks in order to record any exposed archaeological features or deposits.
- 1.1.5 A Specification for the work to be undertaken was drawn up by Chris E Smith (AW). This was subsequently approved by Mark Walters (CPAT).
- 1.1.6 The archaeological investigation was carried out at the request of Mr & Mrs Davies of Penysir, Montgomery, Powys, SY15 6HZ.
- 1.1.7 The AW project number is 2265 and the site code is AGM/15/SUR. The project details are summarised on the appended Archive Cover Sheet (Appendix III).

1.2 Geology and Topography

- 1.2.1 The regional geology (British Geological Survey, 2001) indicates that the bedrock geology is composed of mudstones of the Gyfenni Wood Shale Formation. The

superficial geology consists of glacial till of Devensian Age, the most recent glacial period of the Pleistocene (*circa* 110,000 – 12,000 BCA). Overlying the solid geology, the soils are made up of slowly permeable, seasonally wet, acid, loamy and clayey deposits with impeded drainage.

- 1.2.2 The assessment area is located at an approximate altitude of 125m above Ordnance Datum (OD) and is centred at NGR 322417 297016 (SO 2242 9702).

1.3 Archaeological and Historical Background

- 1.3.1 Montgomery was established as a planted town in the early thirteenth century. The castle (PRN: 169) was built in 1223 replacing the earlier motte-and-bailey (PRN: 50101) at Hen Domen (or Old Montgomery) built between 1070 and 1074 by Roger de Montgomery, Earl of Shrewsbury. The castle construction at New Montgomery was completed in 1234.
- 1.3.2 The planted town (PRN: 15740 & 85527) was granted borough status in 1227 by Henry III. The Royal Charter included provision for the burgesses to enclose the town boundary with a ditch and wall (PRN: 170). The first defences were probably constructed around 1230 although murage grants did not commence until 1267. Towers were constructed at various points along the perimeter and the positions of four gates are known. It is generally considered that these defences had reached their final form by the end of the thirteenth century.
- 1.3.3 Montgomery flourished as a trading centre in the fourteenth and fifteenth century. The town was nonetheless the scene of frequent contests between the Crown and Llewellyn the Great, and was sacked in the early fifteenth century by Owain Glyndwr.
- 1.3.4 Montgomery went into decline in the late medieval period: the distance of the town from the River Severn appears to have hindered its commercial development in comparison to the rival market towns of Newtown and Welshpool. In around 1540 John Leland noted that town was partly ruinous and large areas of the town are depicted as devoid of buildings in 1610-11 when John Speed published his plan of the town.
- 1.3.5 What remained of the town wall and defensive towers appear to have been robbed of stone in the following centuries. Although none of the town gates remain, the town defences survive intermittently as earthworks. Buried and overgrown stone foundations remain in a few places and between 1995 and 1997 about 28m of the northern defensive wall was exposed near Arthur's Gate (PRN: 26580) and the north-west tower (PRN: 50111). The town wall is situated some 25m to the south-west of the development site.
- 1.4.6 During the English Civil War Montgomery was occupied on September 4th 1644 by Sir Thomas Myddleton commanding the Parliamentary garrison from Oswestry. A Royalist force from Shrewsbury garrison laid siege to the town between the 7th and 18th September; these were later reinforced by four to five thousand men under the overall command of Lord Byron. The Royalists were subsequently defeated by a three thousand strong Parliamentary force under the command of Sir Jon Meldrum.
- 1.3.7 Work undertaken in 1994 (Walters & Hunnisett, 1994) located finds related to the 1644 Battle of Montgomery, generally to the north of the assessment area. There are

earthworks of a possible Royalist siege encampment (PRN: 172) some 50m to the north of the development site.

- 1.3.7 Following the Civil War the castle and the town defences were comprehensively slighted, in the autumn of 1649, by order of Parliament. During this period the extent to which the town bank and wall were modified or re-built (and subsequently demolished) is uncertain.

2. Aims and Objectives

The work was undertaken to:

- Establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within the area of the proposed development with specific reference to the Civil War battle of 1644;
- Determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains present;
- Produce a record of the features/finds.

3. Methodology

3.1 Watching Brief & Metal Detector Survey

- 3.1.1 The excavations for footings and drainage were undertaken using a 3 tonne mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. Levelling of the site and excavation of foundation trenches was undertaken under close archaeological supervision.
- 3.1.2 All areas exposed during excavations to level the site and for footings were scanned with a metal detector set to non-discrimination mode.
- 3.1.3 The area re-graded measured about 10m by 12m. The total length of footings excavated was approximately 36m; the trenches were 0.8m wide, excavated to a maximum depth of 0.75m.
- 3.1.4 The archaeological work was undertaken in accordance with the CIfA's *Standards and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief* (2014) and current Health and Safety legislation.
- 3.1.5 All on-site illustrations were drawn on drafting film using recognized conventions and scales (1:10, 1:20, 1:50 and 1:100, as appropriate).
- 3.1.6 All areas were photographed using high resolution (16mp+) digital photography. The images were taken in *RAW format and converted to TIFF format for archive storage.
- 3.1.7 The fieldwork was undertaken by Chris E Smith. The project was managed by Mark Houlston.

3.2 Finds

3.2.1 The finds recovered during the fieldwork were recorded by context.

3.3 Palaeo-environmental Evidence

3.3.1 No deposits suitable for environmental sampling were encountered during the course of the excavation.

4. Results of the Watching Brief & Metal Detector Survey

4.1 Soils and Ground Conditions

4.1.1 The topsoil and overburden deposits varied across the site. In places root matter and dark silt directly overlay natural clay and gravel deposits, whilst elsewhere a mid-orange silt, up to 0.35m deep, overlay the natural.

4.1.2 The weather and ground conditions were dry during the fieldwork.

4.2 Description

Re-grading of the Site (Fig 2; Plates 1-4)

4.2.1 The area of re-graded ground measured approximately 12m x 14m. The overburden from the site (comprising discarded modern debris, concrete and a garden pond) was removed by mechanical excavator. The exposed level surface was composed of dark silt (with some root matter in places) as well as a mid-orange silt. No archaeological features were identified at this excavation level. The area was systematically scanned with a metal detector; parallel traverses aligned east-west and north-south. A large amount of modern debris (primarily nails) was recovered from this horizon. This material was not retained.

Foundation Trenches (Fig 2; Plates 5-7)

4.2.2 All spoil excavated from the foundation trenches was scanned with a metal detector before removal from site. Similarly, all trench bases and sections were both visually examined for archaeological features and scanned with the metal detector.

4.2.3 Whilst no archaeological features were noted during the course of the watching brief, two finds of likely civil war date were recovered. The finds significantly include a musket ball, found at the base of the south-eastern foundation trench, in the mid orange silt deposit immediately above the natural. A fragment of lead was also retrieved from the north-western foundation trench, also immediately above the natural and within the orange silt deposit. Scrap lead objects such as these are a common Civil War battlefield find. The finds are potentially associated with the 1644 Battle of Montgomery.

4.2.4 No further finds or features of archaeological significance were noted within the assessment area.

4.3 Finds

Musket Ball – Small Find No. 1

- 4.3.1 The musket ball (plate 8 and 9) was slightly battered though shows no definitive evidence of having been fired. An air bubble appears to have been present within the mould during its casting as one edge appears malformed.
- 4.3.2 The ball weighs 35g and was 18.5mm in diameter. The typical diameter of Civil War era musket balls ranges from 12mm to 19mm. Owing to the ball being miscast, no comparison of equivalent Civil War era musket balls is possible.
- 4.3.3 The musket ball was located at NGR 322421.71 297010.58.

Scrap Lead – Small Find No. 2

- 4.3.3 Scrap lead (plate 10 and 11) is a common find on Civil War era battlefields and relates primarily to the individual soldiers need to cast ammunition whilst in the field. Lead was typically stripped from house windows and church roofs by armies whilst on the move.
- 4.3.4 The lead recovered from the Arthur's Gate site appears to have been molten when it accumulated. This suggests it is a waste product of ball casting during the 1644 Battle of Montgomery.
- 4.3.5 The scrap lead weighs 65g. It measures 40mm in length by 32mm in width.
- 4.3.6 The scrap lead was located at NGR 322410.64 297020.02.

5. Discussion and Conclusions

- 5.1.1 Two artefacts were identified during the metal detector survey of the excavated foundation trenches. The finds comprised a musket ball and a fragment of lead scrap. The results of the survey indicate that the development site was probably located within the area of the 1644 battlefield.
- 5.1.2 No archaeological features or deposits were identified during the watching brief.

6. References

British Geological Survey, 2001. 4th Edition. *Solid Geology Map, UK South*.

Chartered Institute for Archaeologists. 2014. *Standards and Guidance for a Watching Brief*.

Walters, M. & Hunnisett, K. 1994. *The English Civil War Battlefield of Montgomery – September 18th 1644*.

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APPENDIX I: Figures



Fig 1: Map showing general location of assessment area

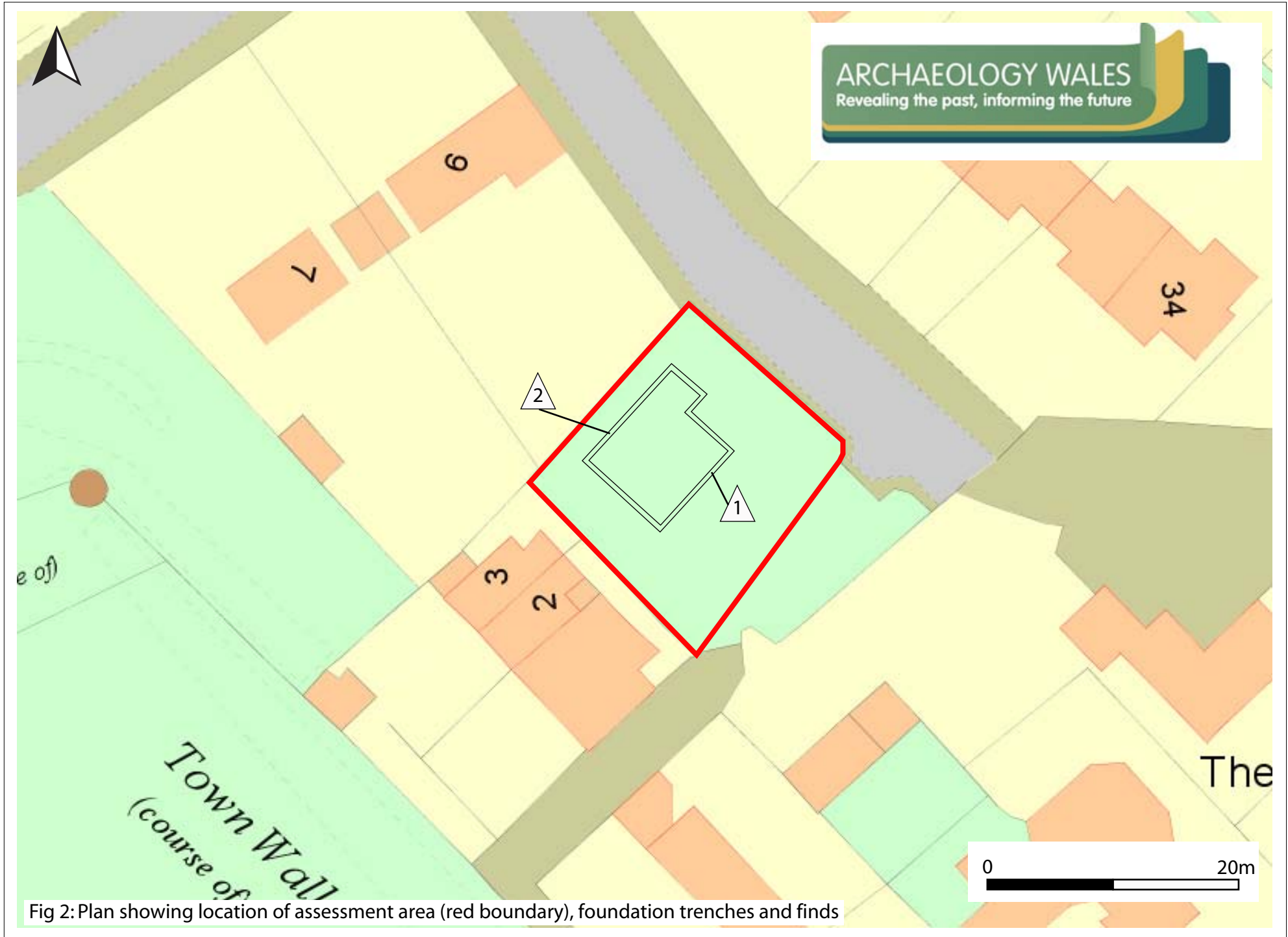


Fig 2: Plan showing location of assessment area (red boundary), foundation trenches and finds

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APPENDIX II: Plates



Plate 1: View south across assessment area after levelling fo ground



Plate 2: View south east across assessment area after levelling of ground



Plate 3: View north east across assessment area after levelling of ground



Plate 4: View north across assessment area after levelling of ground



Plate 5: View north east across assessment area after cutting of foundation trenches
Scale 1x2m



Plate 6: View north west across assessment area after cutting of foundation trenches
Scale 1x2m



Plate 7: Example view of foundation trench showing dimensions/depth, Looking north west. Scale 1x2m



Plate 8: Small Find No. 1 - Musket Ball



Plate 9: Small Find No. 1 - Musket Ball, reverse side



Plate 10: Small Find No. 2 - Scrap Lead



Plate 11: Small Find No. 2 - Scrap Lead, reverse side

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APPENDIX III: Archive Cover Sheet

ARCHIVE COVER SHEET

Arthurs Gate, Montgomery, Powys

Site Name:	Arthurs Gate
Site Code:	AGM/15/SUR
PRN:	-
NPRN:	-
SAM:	-
Other Ref No:	-
NGR:	NGR SO 22417 97016
Site Type:	Brown field
Project Type:	Metal Detector Survey
Project Manager:	Mark Houliston
Project Dates:	August 2015
Categories Present:	17 th Century
Location of Original Archive:	AW
Location of duplicate Archives:	-
Number of Finds Boxes:	NA
Location of Finds:	NA
Museum Reference:	-
Copyright:	AW
Restrictions to access:	None

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