

Archaeology Wales

17, St Ann Street, Chepstow

Archaeological Watching Brief



By
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Report No. 1078



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17 St Ann Street, Chepstow

Archaeological watching brief

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Non-Technical Summary

An archaeological watching brief was carried out at the rear of 17 St Ann Street, Chepstow, Gwent. A trench was excavated across the width of the narrow rear garden to provide footings for a new lean-to kitchen. Although very small sherds of pottery of post-medieval date were discovered near the base, little else of archaeological interest was encountered during the excavation of this trench.

1. Introduction

In August 2012, Archaeology Wales was commissioned by Simon Andersen to carry out an archaeological watching brief during the excavation of a footings trench for a new lean-to kitchen to the rear of 17 St Ann Street, Chepstow (NGR: ST 53691 94210; see Figs. 1 and 2). The planning application is DC/2012/00292 and the planning authority is Monmouthshire County Council.

The site lies close to the medieval Chepstow Castle, and consequently Glamorgan Gwent Archaeological Trust, in their capacity as advisors to the local council, recommended that a watching brief was carried out during all groundworks on the site.

The watching brief was carried out on the 3rd of September 2012 by Dr Iestyn Jones.

2. Historic Background

Although situated near a possible early medieval Welsh ‘Clas’, the medieval town of Chepstow, known originally as Stroguil, grew following the construction of the castle by William fitz Osbern between 1067 and 1071 (Soulsby 1983, 106-109). In the thirteenth-century a wall was constructed by Roger Bigod, enclosing and protecting the fifty-three hectares of the expanding market town. The town seem to have relatively little affected by the Glyndwr revolt or the Black Death and seems to have prospered until the first quarter of the sixteenth-century when it was reported as being fallen into ‘ruin’ and ‘decay’ (Shoemith 2006, 209).

St Ann Street, located on the eastern side of the town, appears to be associated with later ‘industrial’ developments in Chepstow, possibly connected with the nearby river port area. In addition to the port area, the 1881 Ordnance Survey map shows a bobbin factory, gas works and a saw-mill were located nearby. Number 17, appears to be one of a series of five terraced cottages, possibly built during the eighteenth and nineteenth century, for workers associated with the various industries within this part of the town.

3. Watching Brief Results

Prior to the start of the watching brief a structure described as a shed together with a small rear bathroom had been demolished at the rear of number 17. The rear garden of this terraced house was 3.62 m wide and the proposed wall for the lean-to kitchen spans the entire garden width.

A trench 3.62 m long, 0.70m deep and 0.85m wide was excavated across the garden, orientated east to west. The eastern most metre of the trench was 0.35m wider than

the remainder, giving the appearance in plan of an elongated L shape (Fig. 3). The trench was located 3.55m south of the rear wall of the house and 4.5m north of the rear garden wall.

The upper 0.28m of the fill in the north facing section appears slightly lighter in appearance than the lower 0.5m (Fig. 4). The reason for this appears to be contact with a sandy lens, possibly a base for a demolished slab pathway. Below this deposit a 0.10m deep lens of powdery light grey mortar and a loose brick may be associated with demolition of the western garden wall (see below). The lowest deposit was a dark brown clay. This was less sandy than the upper deposits, and contained some small pottery sherds of nineteenth-century appearance. Two small sherds of what appear to be eighteenth century pot were discovered at the very base of the trench in the eastern corner. A lens of white mortar was observed in the north facing section 0.8cm above the base of the eastern end of the trench. Nothing further was observed in association with this deposit and it may have resulted from construction or demolition activity associated with this or house number 18 to the east. A disused ceramic drainage pipe running north to south from a drain was also uncovered and removed at the eastern end of the trench.

At the western end of the trench a spread of light grey mortar running north to south was observed on the base of the trench (0.70m deep) with a patchy charcoal deposit immediately to its west. No further features or structures were seemingly associated with these deposits at this depth. The extreme western end had what appeared to be foundation stones (maximum 0.3 x 0.25m) embedded in a light grey mortar, supporting the base of a brick wall (Fig. 5). This brick wall base had at some stage in the past been demolished in order to build the breeze-block wall on the western side of the property. A modern concrete capping was visible on top of the brickwork near the wall overlying the older mortar from the demolition of the wall.

4. Conclusion

No features of archaeological significance were identified within the trench, with only the remains of what appeared to be an older garden wall found on the western side of the garden. The pot sherds and demolition debris discovered from the small excavation appear to relate to 18th and 19th century domestic occupation associated with the dwelling.

5. Acknowledgments

Thanks to the construction company, A and J Bricklayers, for their cooperation and assistance during this brief.

6. Bibliography

Shoesmith, R., 2006, in Turner, R. and Johnson, A. (eds), *Chepstow Castle: its history and building*, Almeley: Logaston Press.

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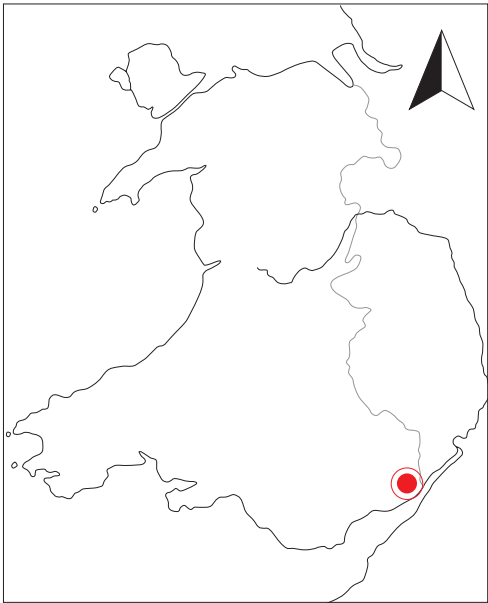


Fig. 1
Location of
site



Fig. 2
Aerial view of 17
St Ann Street

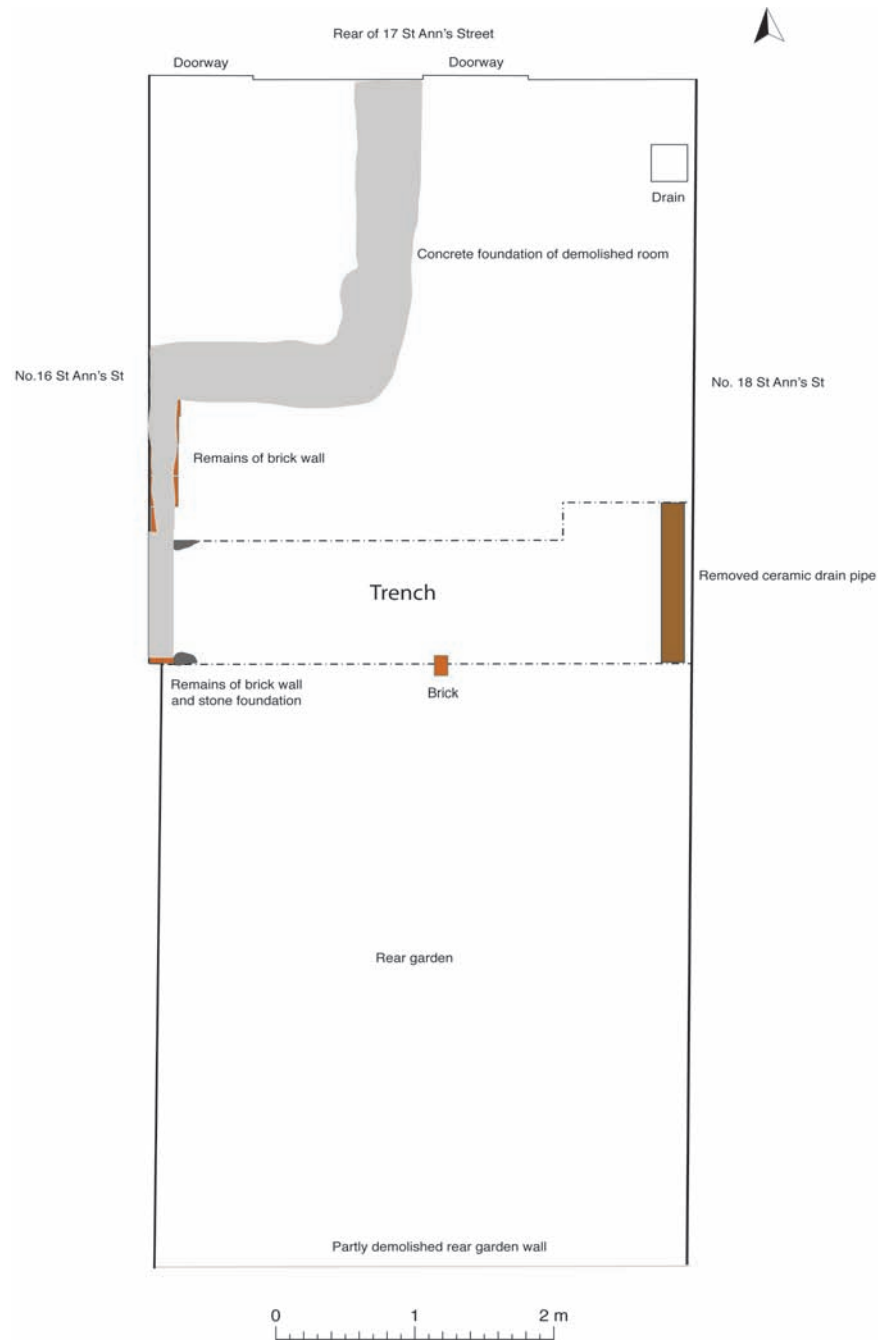


Fig. 3
 Plan of footings
 trench in relation
 to the property



Fig.4
North facing
section of trench
(view from north-
west)



Fig. 5
Western end of trench. View
from the east.

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