

THE SHIRE HALL AGINCOURT SQUARE MONMOUTH

*An Archaeological Watching Brief
for
Monmouthshire County Council*
Carried out by

MONMOUTH ARCHAEOLOGY

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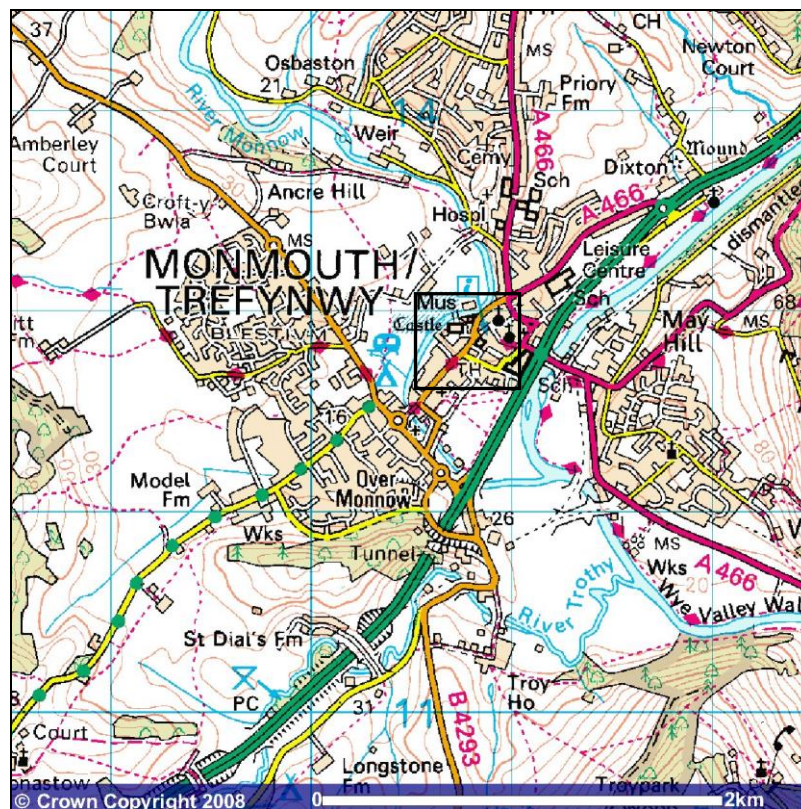
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Summary

Monmouth Archaeology carried out an Archaeological Watching Brief for Monmouthshire County Council during groundworks connected with the installation of bollards and a bicycle stand in the cobbled areas on the frontage of The Shire Hall, Monmouth (NGR SO 50765 12827).

The watching brief did not reveal any significant archaeological features. The finds dated from 18th century to the 20th century.



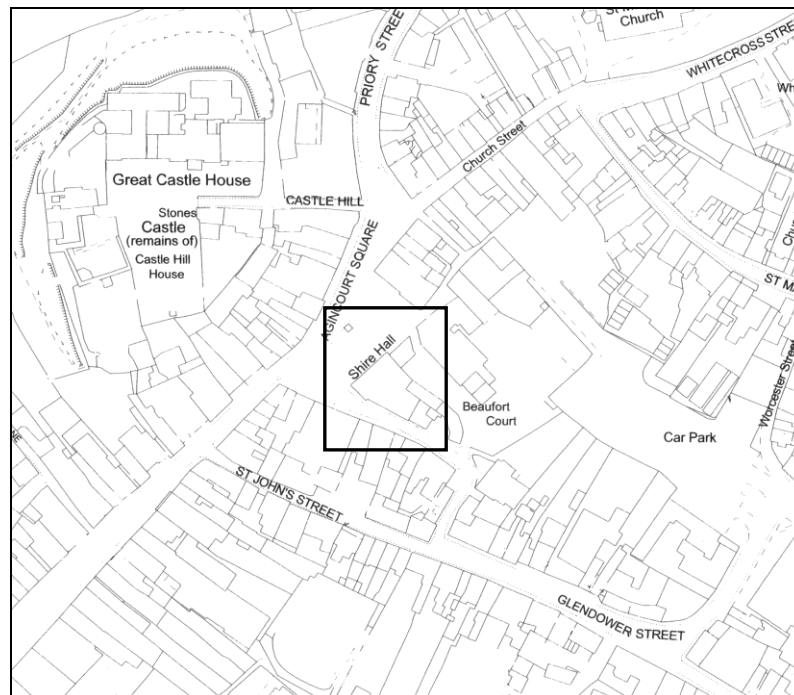


Fig. 1
The Shire Hall, Agincourt Square, Monmouth : Site Location
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Introduction

Monmouth Archaeology carried out an Archaeological Watching Brief for Monmouthshire County Council during groundworks connected with the installation of bollards and a bicycle stand in the cobbled areas on the frontage of The Shire Hall, Monmouth (NGR SO 50765 12827).

The Archaeological Watching Brief was recommended by Monmouthshire County Council's archaeological advisors, Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust which considered that a significant archaeological resource may have survived on the site.

Monmouth Archaeology wishes to acknowledge the help given by Andrew Porter and Finn Fraser on site. The unit is also grateful for the help received from Mr. Neil Maylan and the staff of Monmouthshire County Council's archaeological advisors, the Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust.

The watching brief was carried out during August and September 2013.

Objectives

The objectives of the Archaeological Watching Brief were to safeguard any archaeological remains and to understand the nature, date and extent of any archaeological features and deposits which existed on the proposed development site. All remains of potential interest were recorded and finds retained.

Methodology

The groundworks consisted of the small excavations to an average depth of 0.40m, for installation of bollards and a bicycle stand in the cobbled areas on the frontage of The Shire Hall.

Jane Bray of Monmouth Archaeology was present on the site during the groundworks and the watching brief was carried out to the Institute for Archaeologists' *'Standards for Archaeological Watching Briefs'*.

A photographic record was maintained during the excavations, while plans and sections were drawn and context records were kept in accordance with normal archaeological practice. The major feature was excavated by hand.

The finds were related to the contexts in which they originated and were examined by recognised specialists.

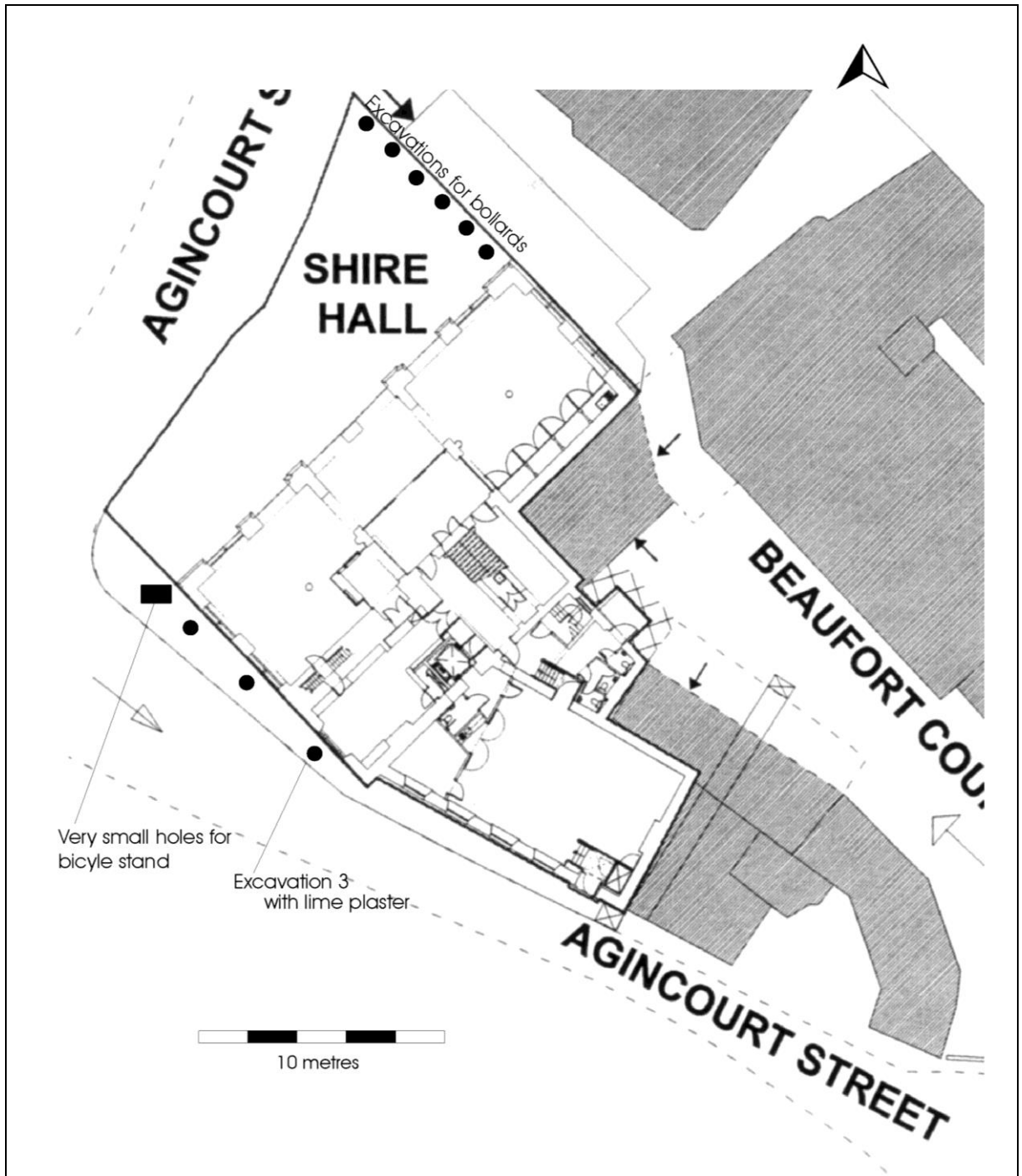


Fig. 2
The Shire Hall, Agincourt Square, Monmouth : Site plan

Historical Background

The Shire Hall is a Grade I listed building built in 1724 was formerly the centre for the Assize Courts, which were transferred here in 1725, and Quarter Sessions for Monmouthshire. In 1839-40, the court, which was situated on the first floor of the building, was the location of the trial of the Chartist leader John Frost and others for high treason for their part in the Newport Rising.

Earlier buildings have existed on the site – an Elizabethan court built in 1536, which was replaced in 1571 by a timber-framed construction. The timbers from the original building were used in the construction of the Shire Hall, which provided an open trading area on the ground floor with rooms above. The building is constructed of Bath stone ashlar and was designed by a little known architect, Philip Fisher of Bristol at a cost of £1700. The clock in the pediment was made by Richard Watkins in 1765. The interior of the building was remodelled in 1828 and Monmouth Archaeology carried out a Programme of Archaeological Work throughout the more recent refurbishment of The Shire Hall in 2008/2009 (MA48.08), a watching brief was also carried out during the excavations connected with the installation of exterior lighting in 2012 (MA14.12).

The Archaeology

Small holes were excavated in the cobbled areas to the front of The Shire Hall to an average depth of 0.40m, in preparation for the installation of bollards and a bicycle stand (*see site plan, Fig. 2, pg. 4*).



Excavations on the east

The contexts in each of the six small excavations on the east of The Shire Hall were very similar – brown soil with some gravel, brick flakes and coal fragments (002) extended to an average depth of 0.40m, beneath the modern cobbles and base (001).



Excavations on the west

In two of the small excavations on the west of The Shire Hall the contexts were very similar to each other –brown soil with some gravel, brick flakes, fragments of lime plaster and coal (004) extended to an average depth of 0.40m, beneath the modern cobbles and base (003). At 0.45m, in excavation 3 (*see plan, Fig. 2, pg. 4*) a more solid layer of broken lime plaster was recorded.

The holes for the bicycle stand were too small to produce any archaeological contexts.

The Contexts

East

001 Modern cobbled surface and cement base to 0.25m.

002 Brown soil with some gravel, brick and coal fragments to 0.40m.

West

003 Modern cobbled surface and cement base to 0.25m.

004 Brown soil with some gravel, brick, fragments of lime plaster and coal to 0.40m.

005 Excavation 3 - more solid layer of broken lime plaster at 0.45m.

The Finds Summary

The few finds included an 18th century iron glazed tankard sherd, slag, coal, brick and lime plaster fragments.

Catalogue of Finds

The finds are catalogued in the contexts from which they were recovered.

The Pottery

Context 005

Bag 3

<i>Context</i>	<i>Fabric and Form</i>	<i>Code</i>	<i>Date.</i>	<i>Sherds</i>
005	Iron glazed tankard	C4	18 th C	1

Other Finds

Context 001

Bag 1

<i>Context</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>No.</i>
001	Brick flakes	19/20 th C	3
001	Coal fragments	-	7
001	Iron slag	-	4
001	Bloomery iron slag	-	1

Context 004

Bag 2

<i>Context</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>No.</i>
004	Iron slag	-	2
004	Brick flakes	-	10
004	Coal fragments	-	5
004	Lime plaster	-	5

Context 005

Bag 3

<i>Context</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>No.</i>
005	Lime plaster	-	10+

Bones

(Not identifiable : Nid)

Context 001

Bag 1

<i>Context</i>	<i>Species</i>	<i>Bone / Teeth</i>	<i>Number</i>
001	Nids	-	2

Context 004

Bag 2

<i>Context</i>	<i>Species</i>	<i>Bone / Teeth</i>	<i>Number</i>
004	Nid	-	1

Samples

No samples were taken.

Conclusion

The watching brief did not reveal any significant archaeological features and the only datable find was a sherd of Iron glazed tankard dating to the 18th century. The fragments of lime plaster in the excavations on the south west are probably related to the remodelling works of 1828.

The Archive

The archive will be held in the depository of Monmouth Archaeology at The Town Wall, Monmouth, until it can be accessioned by Monmouth Museum. The Archive consists of CD with digital photographs, report and drawings, photographic contact sheet, contexts records, finds, finds records and other paperwork.

*This report was compiled by
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