

THE SHIRE HALL MONMOUTH

*An Archaeological Trial Excavation
for Monmouthshire County Council*

Carried out by

MONMOUTH ARCHAEOLOGY

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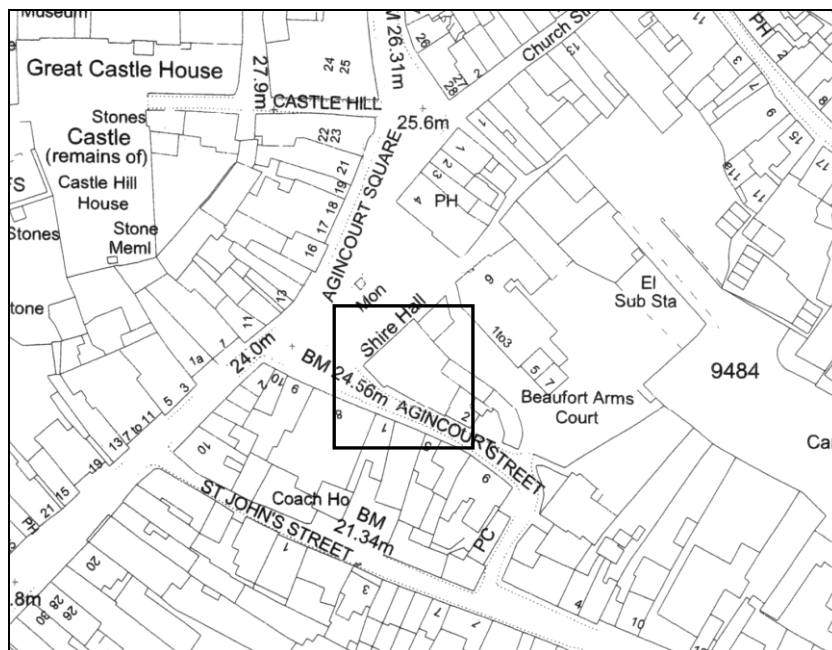
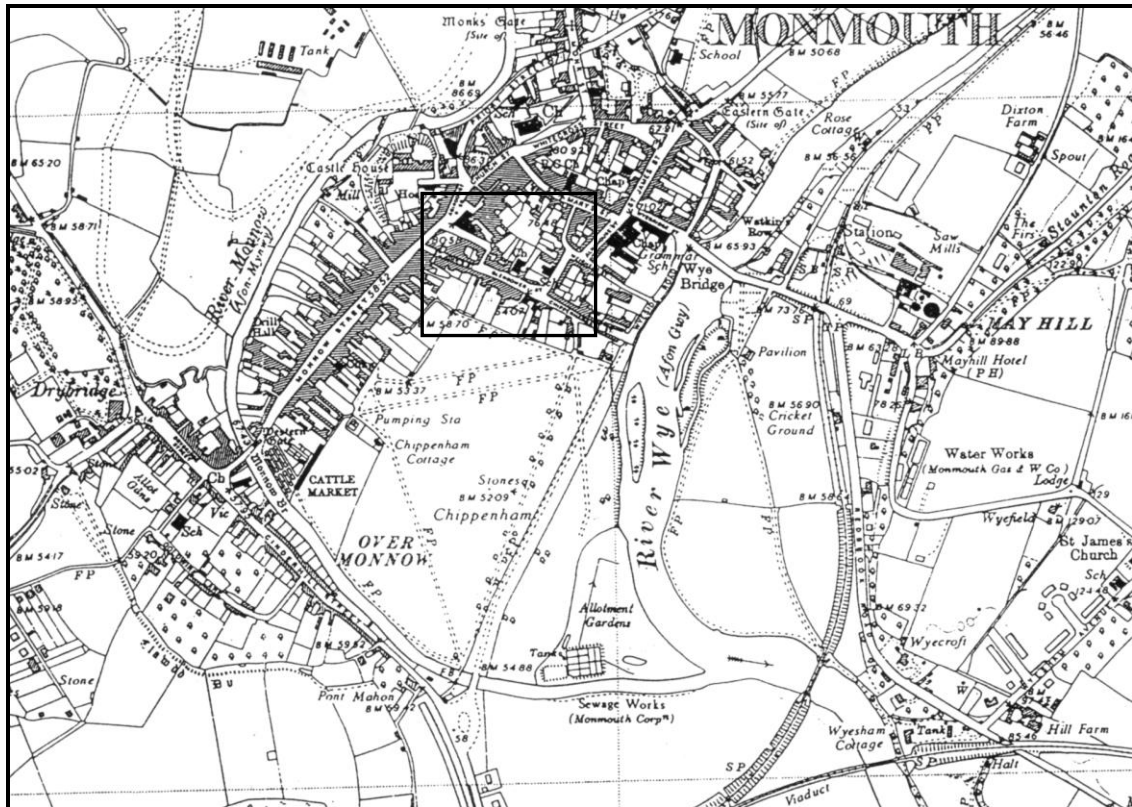
Appendix A : The Watching Brief Specification

Summary

Monmouth Archaeology carried out an archaeological trial excavation for Monmouthshire County Council in connection with a Heritage Lottery Fund Award for the installation of a lift shaft in The Shire Hall, Monmouth (NGR SO 505 125).

The trial excavations included a small area of the foundation trench of the substantial wall adjoining the site of the proposed lift shaft; this wall is thought to be an integral part of the original building. There was only one sealed find from the backfill of the foundation trench – the neck and rim of an ‘onion’ wine bottle – which is dateable to the 17th or early 18th centuries. A small sherd of an 18th century slipware plate was also recovered but as a residual find from a later context.

The structural remains directly affected by the proposed lift shaft were brick and stone wall foundations, a brick and stone drain, a later ceramic drain and an associated base and lower fragments of a ceramic lavatory bowl. All these features had been abandoned or demolished and the area given over to piping for the heating system of the building.



The Shire Hall, Monmouth : Site Location

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Introduction

Monmouth Archaeology carried out an archaeological excavation for Monmouthshire County Council in connection with a Heritage Lottery Fund award for the installation of a lift shaft in The Shire Hall, Monmouth (NGR SO 505 125).

The Archaeological investigation was required in order to comply with the Council's policy of protecting the archaeological resource.

Monmouth Archaeology wishes to acknowledge the help given by Mr. Keith Davies and the janitor of the Shire Hall. 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 and the staff of Cadw Welsh Historic Monuments.

The archaeological trial excavation was carried out during March and April 2007.

Objectives

The objectives of the trial excavations were to understand the nature, date and extent of any archaeological features and deposits which may have survived on the site. The information obtained would be used to safeguard any archaeological remains in the area of the proposed lift shaft. All archaeological remains were recorded and finds retained – the resource being preserved by record.

Methodology

All excavation work was carried out by hand.

Following the monitoring of the first stage of the trial excavations by the Council's Archaeological Advisors it was agreed that the remains in the immediate area of the proposed lift shaft should be preserved by record. This was carried out by the archaeological contractors to standards set by the Council's Archaeological Advisors and to the Institute of Field Archaeologists' *'Standards for Archaeological Watching Briefs'*.

Stephen Clarke and Jane Bray of Monmouth Archaeology carried out the trial excavations.

A photographic record was maintained during the excavations, while plans and sections were drawn and context records were kept in accordance with normal archaeological excavation practice.

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

The Archaeology

Summary. The lift shaft excavation is situated beside one of the Shire Hall main foundation walls and a section of the foundation trench for the wall was explored by the archaeological contractors.

The new lift shaft site cuts a stone and brick drain which may have been associated with a cubicle composed of two stone based brick walls of which only the foundations survive. The cubicle may originally have been the site of an early lavatory connected to the stone and brick drain but this could not be determined because of later disturbances and digging associated with a later toilet facility and the laying of areas of concrete.

A porcelain lavatory bowl and ceramic a pipe were subsequently connected to the drain but this had also been broken and disturbed while further disruption to the sequences was caused by the insertion of concrete bases for pillars for the heating system. There were also other brick wall constructions.

The structural remains.

The foundation structure of the Shire Hall is a heavily built, plastered stone wall (Context 001) which is set in a foundation trench (004) which is cut into the light brown sandy natural soil (026). The fill of the foundation trench was a mixture of soil, lime, mortar and some broken stone (003). There was only one sealed find from the backfill of the foundation trench – the neck and rim of an ‘onion’ wine bottle which is dateable to the 17th or early 18th centuries.

The earliest feature, besides the Shire Hall structure itself, was a stone and brick drain (Capping Context 015; fill 025; walls 024; cut 027) which was running roughly south to north across the development area but curving to the west on the south. This drain was constructed partly of stone but mostly of bricks which were angled above the base (below the side walls) to form a gulley which was then capped with sandstone slabs. The majority of the drain was destroyed on the south by later groundworks.

Some disturbance to this primary drain seems to have been caused when a 0.10m wide ceramic pipe (Context 021) was cut into it (cut 023 with brick and

rubble fill 022). The origins of this pipe are unknown as they were sealed beneath a modern concrete slab on the south and west.

A second ceramic pipe (Context 017) 0.20m wide (cut 019 and brick and rubble fill 018) was associated with the porcelain base of a lavatory bowl (020) which had been set in plastic red clay (030). The pipe was very crudely joined into the primary drain causing considerable disruption to the drain and the surrounding area. This final drain was damaged and truncated before reaching the lavatory bowl which had itself been smashed, leaving only jagged base sherds. The relationship of this drain to other features is also obscure but it is obviously separate to and later than the 020/021 (cut 027).

It seems likely that all of these features were constructed in the late 19th or 20th centuries and that the coal cinder is associated with an earlier heating system.

Two stone based brick walls (Context 006, stone base 033 and 014, stone base 028) appear to have formed a cubicle which has been demolished to ground level. Wall 006 was bonded to the plastered southern brick and stone wall (007) which projects from the plastered stone wall(s) 005 and 008. Wall 009 (recorded by a scar on wall 008) is probably the south west side of the cubicle. Much of the inside of the cubicle has been covered with concrete and this, together with the disturbances caused by the various drains has hindered the understanding of the sequences inside the area removed for the lift shaft.

In the disturbed and concreted area to the south-west bounded by walls 006 and 014 (the cubicle) a deposit of coal cinder and ash (031) runs under the adjoining modern concrete slab.

A small sherd of 18th century slipware was recovered from Context 022 but the only other finds were iron nails.

The Contexts

001 North wall. Part of the main Shire Hall foundations.

002 Footings for Context 001.

003 Soil/lime mortar fill of Context 004.

004 Cut for footings (002).

005 North east recessed, plastered wall.

006 Truncated brick wall – south-east of excavations.

- 007 Plastered stone wall – east of excavations.
- 008 South east recessed, plastered wall.
- 009 Scar on wall 008, from earlier wall, removed, some remaining on the west (built into wall 012).
- 010 Modern brick wall – south of excavations.
- 011 Concrete pad in floor – south of excavations.
- 012 Brick pillar – south of excavations.
- 013 Door step – south of excavations.
- 014 Remains of brick wall running north/south at right angles to wall 009.
- 015 Drain capping, 3 stone slabs visible.
- 016 Bricks to east over drain, one industrial yellow brick and Monmouth red bricks.
- 017 Ceramic pipe (0.20m diameter), truncated running roughly north/south into drain.
- 018 Rubble and brick fill of Context 019.
- 019 Cut for Context 017.
- 020 Remains of toilet bowl (yellow glazed ceramic).
- 021 Ceramic pipe (0.10m diameter) running into drain.
- 022 Brick and rubble fill of Context 023.
- 023 Cut for Context 021.
- 024 Drain - brick walls angled to form base.
- 025 Stone and brick fill of drain.
- 026 Light brown sandy natural.
- 027 Cut for drain (024).

- 028 Stone footings for Context 014.
- 029 Redeposited natural from the excavation (011).
- 030 Plastic red clay below toilet bowl (020).
- 031 Coal cinder/ash behind wall 014.
- 032 Lime mortar beneath Context 029.
- 033 Stone base to wall 006.
- 034 Redeposited natural fill of drain cut 027.

Specialist Reports

Stephen Clarke

The Pottery

A single sherd of 18th century combed slipware (plate?) from Bristol or Staffordshire.

Fragments of a Porcelain lavatory bowl; probably Victorian.

Small Finds

Iron Nails

Environmental

There were no environmental remains.

Bones

No bones were found.

Samples

Brick samples were taken.

Conclusion

The earliest context which was excavated in the proposed lift shaft area was the foundation trench for wall context 006. This is substantial wall is presumed to be contemporary with the construction of the Shire Hall. There was only one sealed find from the backfill of the foundation trench – the neck and rim of an ‘onion’ wine bottle – which is dateable to the 17th or early 18th centuries. The only other find which is likely to be contemporary with the building is a sherd of an 18th century slipware (plate?) which was recovered as a residual find from a later context (Context 022). There were no other significant ceramic or other finds.

The structural remains directly affected by the proposed lift shaft were the brick and stone walls (Context 006, stone base 033 and 014, stone base 028), which appear to have formed a cubicle; the primary brick and stone drain (Capping Context 015; fill 025; walls 024; cut 027); a later ceramic drain (Context 021, cut 023 with fill 022) and finally the drain (017) and associated fragments of a ceramic lavatory bowl (020).

All of the features were damaged and disturbed in some way or another in the past and this has reduced the understanding and interpretation of the sequences inside the area removed for the lift shaft.

In the disturbed and concreted area to the south-west bounded by walls 006 and 014 (the cubicle) a deposit of coal cinder and ash (031) runs under the adjoining modern concrete slab and must be related to an earlier central heating system.

The Finds

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

Catalogue of pottery

Context 022

Bag 2

<i>Context</i>	<i>Fabric and Form</i>	<i>Code</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Sherds</i>
022	Staffordshire or Bristol Slipware	G	18 th Century	1

Other Finds

Context 003

Bag 1

<i>Context</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>No.</i>
003	'Onion' black wine bottle shoulder and neck	17 th -18 th Century	1

Context 018

Bag 3

<i>Context</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>No.</i>
018	Iron nail	19 th /20 th C	1

Context 032

Bag 4

<i>Context</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>No.</i>
032	Iron nails	19 th /20 th C	4

Samples

Various brick samples were retained.

*This report was compiled by
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