

BEAUMARIS

- The town as it is today

As future capital of the island of Anglesey, Edward had great aspirations for Beaumaris but the town's port function was later eclipsed by Holyhead, and its administrative role by Llangefni. Today, Beaumaris is a small, quiet country town, little larger in physical size than it was in the fourteenth century,⁷⁰ visited in summer by tourists who come to see the ruins of Edward's last Welsh castle which still faces across the Menai Strait to the high mountains of Snowdonia. The town's two main streets are fronted by buildings with mainly eighteenth and nineteenth century façades, but these still respect the bounds of much earlier building plots, some of which conform to the original burgage-size of forty by eighty feet.⁷¹ These plot boundaries are themselves of substantial construction, especially those visible in gardens behind buildings that front onto Castle Street. The town also has one of the oldest urban buildings surviving anywhere in Wales, a late-fourteenth century timber-framed house close to the corner of Castle Street and Church Street.⁷² No doubt there are also early internal structural elements in other buildings along these two streets, for the exterior appearance of buildings is often deceptive, concealing behind their modern façades much older fabric. Behind modern properties fronting Rating Row are the remains of the fifteenth-century town wall. Also visible is its alignment running through the west side of the churchyard, beside Steeple Street. There are some remains of it still embedded in the rear walls of properties on the south side of Castle Street. The straightness of the town's two main streets are very apparent from the ground as well as maps, and gaining access to the top of the castle's southern gatehouse gives a clear view all along the length of Castle Street, surely no accidental design and one that perhaps places us close to the vision that Master James had when he set out the town and castle in the later 1290s.

⁷⁰ Population in 2001 was around 2000 for Beaumaris ward, which covers an area slightly larger than the built-up town.

⁷¹ RCHAMW, Anglesey, pp.13-16.

⁷² Number 32 Castle Street, c.1400 date according to RCAHMW, Anglesey, pp.13-14. For more details on historical monuments in Beaumaris see www.coflein.gov.uk