

THE IMPACT OF DEVELOPMENT-DRIVEN ARCHAEOLOGY ON UNDERSTANDING LATER MEDIEVAL SETTLEMENTS IN CENTRAL AND NORTH-EAST WALES

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Introduction

Archaeology became a material consideration in spatial planning in the United Kingdom (UK) in the early 1990s. This resulted in a significant increase in the quantity of data being recovered. Concerns about how this information could be managed and understood were addressed in several ways. Regional, thematic and period-based ‘research frameworks’ were established to try and feed these data back into archaeological planning decision-making processes. Initiatives such as the Archaeological Investigations Project (AIP) and the Archaeology Data Service (ADS) enabled more ‘grey literature’ to be indexed and accessible. Several projects sought to synthesise this ‘grey literature’, highlighting the contribution made by development-driven archaeology to particular areas of scholarly interest. These included general studies of prehistoric and Roman Britain (Bradley 2006; Fulford and Holbrook 2011), specific analyses of Roman towns (Fulford and Holbrook 2015) and rural settlement (Smith *et al.* 2016), synthesis of early medieval evidence in England (Blair 2018), and transitions from Roman to medieval landscapes (Rippon *et al.* 2015).

For medieval settlements, these frameworks and syntheses inevitably contained lacunae, some of which have recently been highlighted in this journal (Rippon and Morton 2020). First, development-driven archaeology depends on non-archaeological criteria for site selection. As a result some areas become ‘hotspots’ for research, whereas others are comparatively neglected. This variation is evident both between individual settlements, and also between different parts of the United Kingdom: Scotland and Wales ‘are most in need of more research’ (Rippon and Morton 2020, 8). Second, the broad brush of synthesis inevitably simplifies local nuances, meaning that the dynamism of some rural settlements may be underestimated (Kissock and Anthony 2009). Third, the quantity of data available for later medieval and post-medieval periods creates challenges for meaningful regional understanding of settlements and their associated landscapes and hinterlands in earlier periods (Wrathmell 2020). Whilst applicable anywhere, these factors have created particular issues in rural Wales, where settlements tend to be smaller and subject to variable development pressures. Consequently ‘our understanding of site types and rural settlement patterns in Wales is underdeveloped’ (Seaman 2017, 27).

This paper describes the first attempt to assess the impact of development-driven archaeology on the understanding of medieval settlements in Wales. It specifically examines planning-led interventions in historic settlements in central and north-east Wales between 1996 and 2021. Many of these settlements are currently occupied, and some are quite ‘urban’ in character; very few are ‘deserted rural settlements’ of the type that were central to the genesis of the MSR (Dyer and Everson 2012). Nevertheless this work begins to address two of the MSR’s current Research Priorities (Wrathmell 2020), namely:

- ‘the promotion and support of syntheses ... with a particular focus on the centuries after the Norman Conquest’ (priority one); and,
- ‘the promotion and support of research in regions that have witnessed relatively few investigations of medieval settlement and landscapes’ (priority four).

Archaeology and the planning process in Wales

The story of development-driven archaeology goes back to the 1960s, but formal links with the planning process were only made from 1990–91, when England and Wales adopted *Planning Policy Guidance Note 16* (PPG16); similar guidance (PAN42) followed in Scotland in 1994. All adapted two key principles from environmental legislation: the notion that archaeology was a ‘finite and non-renewable resource’, and the concept of ‘polluter pays’ (Belford 2020).

Archaeological planning advice in Wales is provided to local planning authorities (LPAs) by the four Welsh Archaeological Trusts (WATs) (Figure 1). The WATs are independent charities which work to increase understanding and public education; they carry out a range of public functions across their respective regions, and also undertake research and contract fieldwork. The WATs developed Historic Environment Records (HERs) in the 1980s, and took on the planning advisory role from 1991. This role has remained consistent even as political frameworks have changed, notably through local government reorganisation (in 1996) and devolution (from 1998). These administrative shifts have been accompanied by regulatory ones: replacement of PPG16 by Welsh Office Circulars 60/96 (archaeology) and 61/96 (historic buildings and conservation areas); *Planning Policy Wales* from the early 2000s with its associated National Development Framework and Technical Advice Notes. Finally, the *Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2016* replaced Circulars 60/96 and 61/96 with *Technical Advice Note 24* (TAN24), along with a

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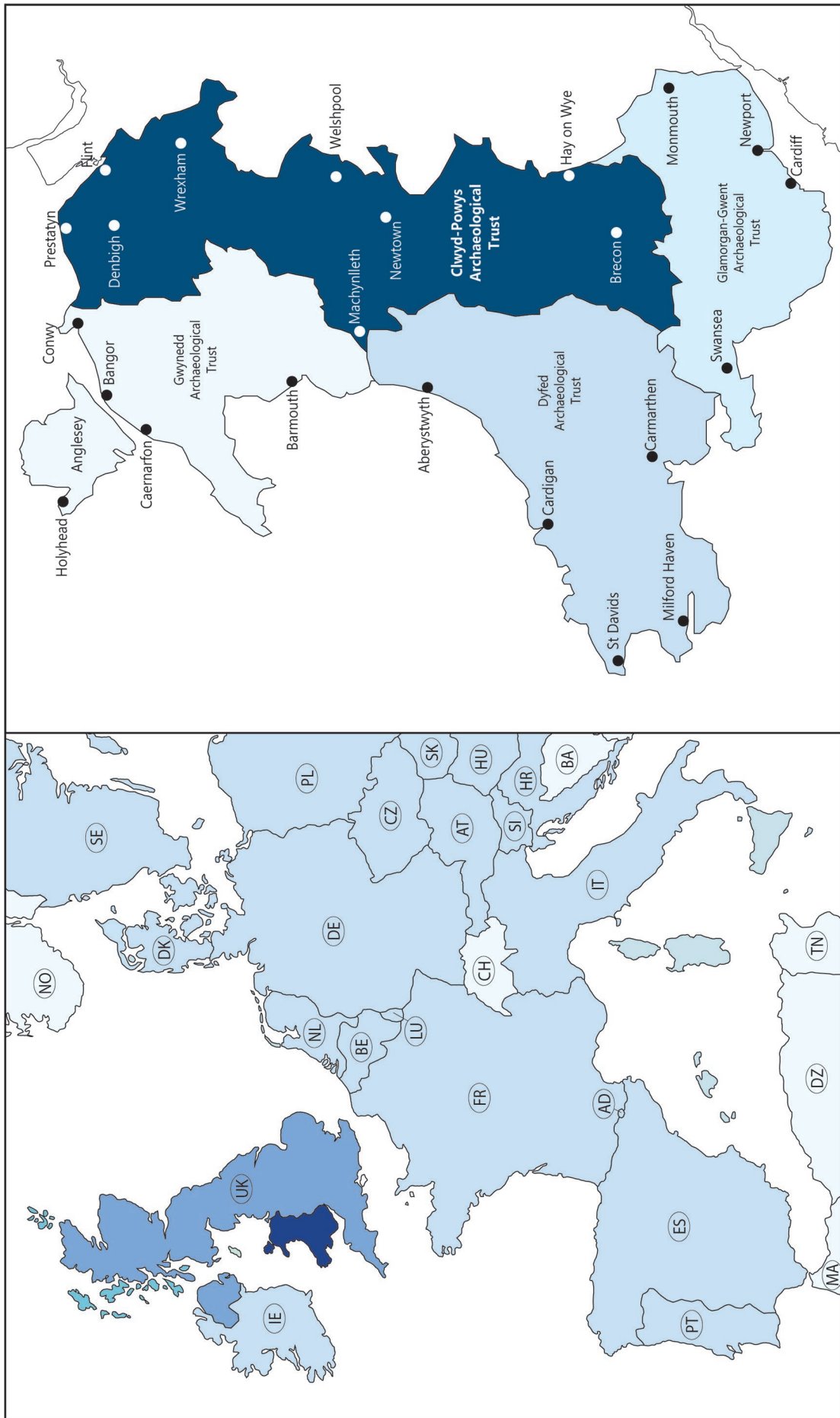


Figure 1 Location of the study area. Left: Wales (dark blue) and other European countries. Right: Wales, showing selected towns and the regions of the four Welsh Archaeological Trusts. The CPAT region is highlighted in dark blue. Drawing by Paul Belford.

‘historic environment’ chapter in *Planning Policy Wales* (Belford 2018).

Professional approaches to development-driven archaeological work also changed over this period. Earlier approaches emphasised a dichotomy between ‘preservation by record’ and ‘preservation *in situ*’; experience produced a more nuanced approach which has led to a philosophical shift from ‘mitigation’ towards ‘understanding’ (Nixon 2017; Thomas 2019). At the same time, the value of non-designated assets was being given greater prominence. Acknowledgement of the importance of archaeology in place-making stemmed from the recognition that cultural and natural heritage values were central to places’ significance.

Around 24,000 planning applications are made each year to the 25 LPAs in Wales, comprising the 22 unitary authorities plus the three National Parks (Senedd 2020, 12). These are checked by the four WATs against their HERs. Around 10–15% of these require more detailed scrutiny, of which 25–35% (so around 4% of all planning applications) result in an archaeological recommendation – a figure comparable with other parts of the UK (Rocks-Macqueen and Lewis 2019, 8–9).

Assessing potential impacts of development on historic settlements

Archaeological work undertaken in advance of development has potential to improve understanding of historic settlements. The development of medieval settlement studies – and indeed urban archaeology in general – during the 1970s and 1980s had been slower in Wales than elsewhere in the UK (Barley 1976; Soulsby 1983; Murray 1983; Dyer 1988; Barclay 1997). The formalisation of planning-led approaches in the 1990s presented an opportunity to address this imbalance.

In response, the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT) undertook a rapid assessment of ‘historic settlements’ in its region of central and north-east Wales during 1992–95, with funding from Cadw and local authorities. Historic settlements were defined as ‘nucleated groupings ... believed to have emerged during the early medieval and medieval periods ... giving rise to the hamlets, villages and towns that exist in the modern landscape’ (Owen 1994, 2). This assessment was designed to inform archaeological planning decision-making, then still in its infancy; distinctions between ‘professional’ and ‘academic’ archaeology were still very fluid at this time (Hinton 2011). Consequently the CPAT work was influenced by prevailing scholarly approaches in England (Taylor 1983; Roberts 1987; Aston *et al.* 1989; Silvester and Dorling 1993, 4–6).

The structure of the CPAT reports – a brief introduction followed by a gazetteer – reflected Ian Soulsby’s *Towns of Medieval Wales* (1983). The Clwyd-Powys region contained 35 of Soulsby’s 105 towns. The CPAT project identified 477 ‘historic settlements’, although this classification was always tentative and provisional (Silvester *et al.* 1992, 4). This work helped prioritise archaeological planning advice in the 1990s and early 2000s. Clear targets were identified to help development-driven archaeological projects to advance understanding: an ‘historic settlement core’ was delineated, together

with zones of significance (preservation *in situ* versus pre-development evaluation).

The quantity of development-driven intrusive archaeology in historic settlements subsequently increased: from 38% of all projects in 1991, to 88% by 2011 (Figure 2). This prompted revision of the assessment, funded by Cadw, between 2010 and 2013. Recommendations for zones of significance were removed: it was felt that ‘the importance of cultural heritage’ had become embedded in planning policy and practice (Silvester and Martin 2010, 3). Historic settlement areas were regularised to follow extant boundaries. As in the earlier assessment, these boundaries did not represent ‘an immutable perimeter’; rather they were ‘an estimate and a guide based on an assessment of the existing evidence’ (Silvester and Martin 2011, 3–4). There was no direct relationship with other spatial zones of cultural heritage significance such as Conservation Areas (Figure 3). This is because Conservation Areas are formal designations which encompass visual character and setting, whereas CPAT historic settlements guide the provision of archaeological planning advice. These changes reduced the number of settlements to 256.

The 2010–13 revision stayed closer to the original intention of informing planning work, and so avoided close engagement with wider research questions and frameworks. The scope of the project also excluded approaches to landscape characterisation and heritage management that were being addressed by related projects in England (Thomas 2006). Instead, the stated focus was on seeing whether development-driven fieldwork had improved ‘our knowledge and appreciation of ... historic settlements’ (Silvester and Martin 2010, 2).

In practice, the approach taken meant that the project did not consistently deliver even this narrow objective. Data from non-planning work was included, such as Cadw-funded assessments of historic churches (1995–99), early medieval ecclesiastical sites (2001–04) and deserted medieval rural settlements (1996–2001), as well as published secondary sources. Equally, not all development-driven data was included. Overall fewer than 10% of planning-led projects undertaken in historic settlements since 1991 were mentioned in the 2010–13 reports (Belford 2021, 9–14). As a result, the narrative continued to be dominated by historical, topographical and architectural elements, and the extent of the knowledge gained from development-driven archaeology was not clear.

Therefore a further two-stage review was undertaken in 2020–21 (Belford 2021). The first stage assessed the system itself, exploring the effectiveness of archaeological advice given to LPAs. The second stage assessed the extent to which understanding of historic settlements had improved. Whilst the main focus of this paper is the second stage, a brief overview of the outcomes of the first stage is necessary to provide context.

Managing development-driven archaeology in historic settlements

The study began by looking at archaeological planning recommendations and planning-led projects in historic

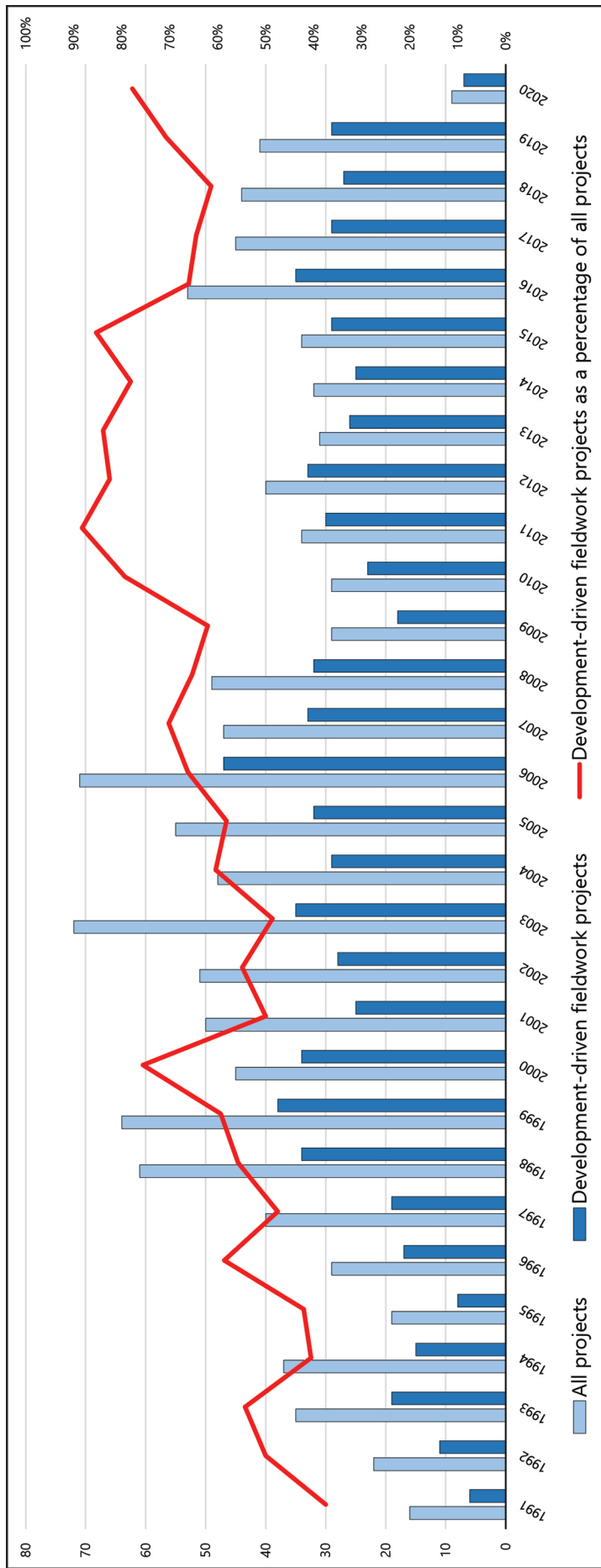


Figure 2 Increase in development-driven archaeological fieldwork projects (historic building recording, watching brief, evaluation and excavation) in historic settlements in the Clwyd-Powys region between 1991 and 2021. Left axis shows numbers of projects (bars), right axis shows percentages (line). Data for 2020 are incomplete. Drawing by Paul Belford.

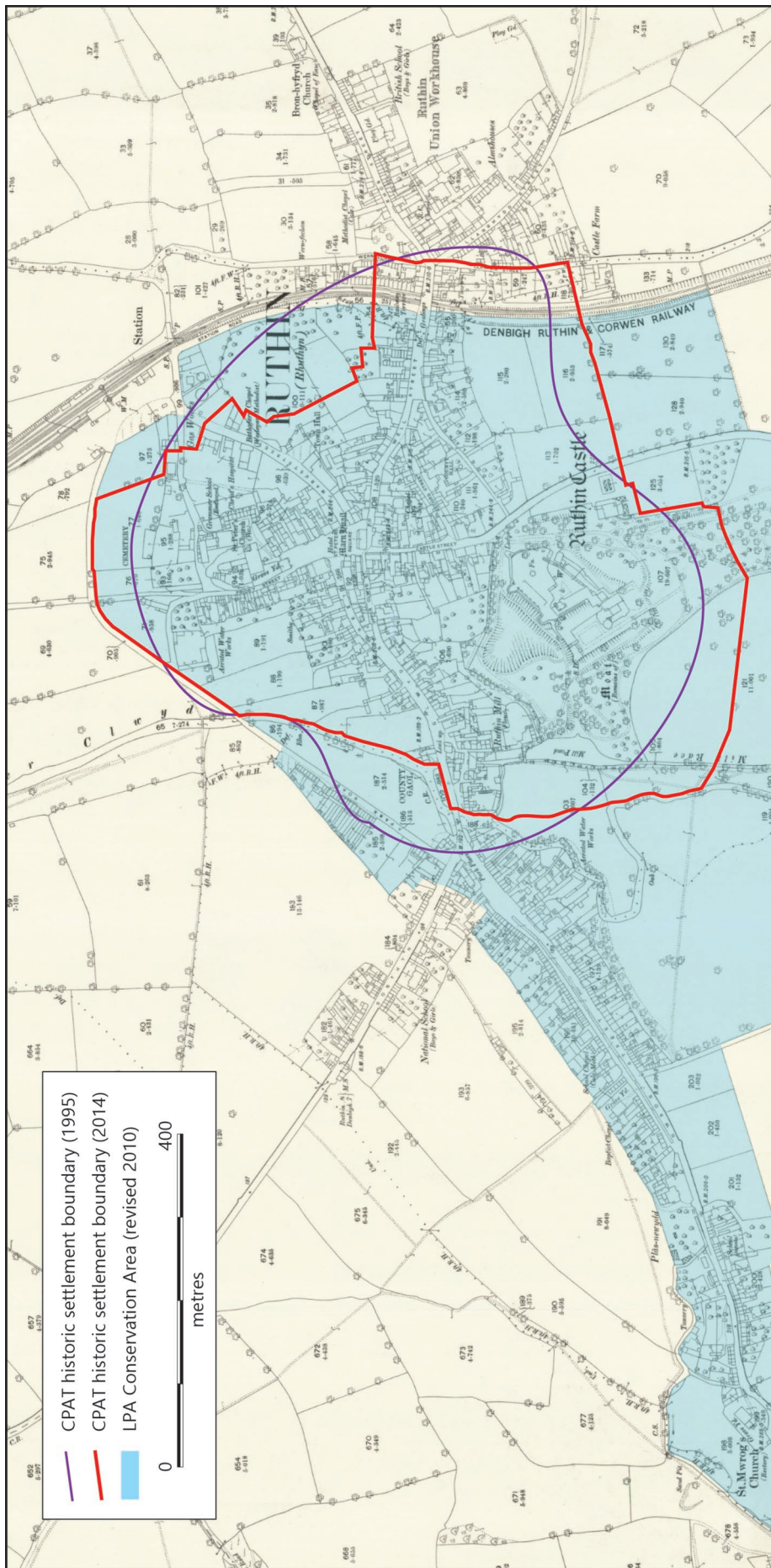


Figure 3 Different approaches to cultural heritage: the example of Ruthin (Denbighshire). The earlier and revised CPAT historic settlement boundaries, and the LPA conservation area, are superimposed on the 1875 Ordnance Survey map. Drawing by Paul Belford.

settlements across the CPAT region of central and north-east Wales since 1996. Although development-driven work had taken place before then, this date was chosen as it saw both the creation of unitary local authorities and the introduction of Welsh Office circulars 60/96 and 61/96. Data for the study were drawn from the CPAT HER. These comprised both planning data (which identified the numbers and types of recommendations), and record data from archaeological ‘events’ recorded in the HER which had generated archaeological reports.

During this period CPAT made over 8,000 recommendations against planning applications, of which 2,451 were in 208 historic settlements. Most of these (2,280, or 93%) resulted in some sort of investigation; the remainder either resulted in no archaeological work, or produced an outcome of (or equivalent to) preservation *in situ*. The majority of recommendations (2,169, or 89%) involved one of four types of field-based investigation: historic building recording, watching brief, archaeological field evaluation, or archaeological excavation.

Recommendations for archaeological fieldwork were not evenly spread across settlements (Table 1). A quarter of historic settlements attracted more than three quarters of all recommendations; more than half of recommendations (943, or 51.2%) pertained to just thirteen settlements. The remaining three quarters of historic settlements attracted fewer than ten recommendations; this ‘long tail’ accounted for less than a quarter of all recommendations.

Not all planning recommendations result in archaeological projects. Many development proposals are changed, some are withdrawn and some are rejected. Only 1,274 projects in historic settlements had produced ‘event’ records in the Clwyd-Powys regional HER. Many of these were not relevant to the study: pre-1996,

non-planning and non-fieldwork projects (such as desk-based assessments) were excluded from the dataset. This left 714 planning-led fieldwork projects which had been undertaken in 169 historic settlements, representing around one third (32.9%) of the recommendations made.

Variations in space and time

As might be expected, the ‘long tail’ observed for recommendations was reflected in project frequency (Table 2 and Figure 4). Slightly more than half (358, or 50.1%) of all projects took place in just nineteen settlements, and there was considerable variation across this group. The ‘top six’ had 175 projects between them, nearly a quarter (24.5%) of all planning-led fieldwork. In contrast, more than two thirds (69.8%) of settlements saw three or fewer projects each, these accounting for less than one third (27.6%) of all projects.

The project explored the reasons for these variations. There were obvious correlations between size of LPA territories – and the numbers of historic settlements – and the numbers of archaeological projects. A subjective impression that more development-driven archaeological work took place in relatively affluent settlements was confirmed through analysis (Belford 2021, 53–57). It was concluded that more prosperous areas are by definition places of greater economic activity, therefore more development takes place in these areas. Consequently they see more development-led archaeological activity.

Development-led archaeological project work was found to be generally consistent over time, although fluctuations inevitably occurred from year to year. Unsurprisingly, the closest correlation was between development activity and the economic cycle. Figure 5 plots the total numbers of different types of project

Table 1 Archaeological planning recommendations in historic settlements in the Clwyd-Powys region, 1996–2021. Data source: CPAT.

Recommendations per settlement	0–10	11–15	16–20	21–30	31–40	41–60	60+	
Number of settlements	154	16	7	8	7	8	8	208
Percentage of settlements	74.0%	7.7%	3.4%	3.9%	3.4%	3.9%	3.9%	
Number of recommendations	608	205	127	197	242	387	685	2541
Percentage of all recommendations	23.9%	8.1%	5.0%	7.8%	9.5%	15.2%	26.9%	
Mean recommendations per settlement	3.95	12.81	18.14	24.63	40.33	48.38	85.63	12.22

Table 2 Archaeological field projects undertaken as part of the planning process in the Clwyd-Powys region, 1996–2021. Data source: CPAT.

Projects per settlement	1–3	4–5	6–9	10–15	16–20	20+	
Number of settlements	118	21	12	6	6	6	169
Percentage of settlements	69.8%	12.4%	7.1%	3.6%	3.6%	3.6%	
Total number of projects	195	93	83	71	104	175	714
Percentage of all projects	27.3%	13.0%	11.6%	9.9%	14.6%	25.4%	
Mean projects per settlement	1.65	4.43	6.92	11.83	17.33	29.17	4.22

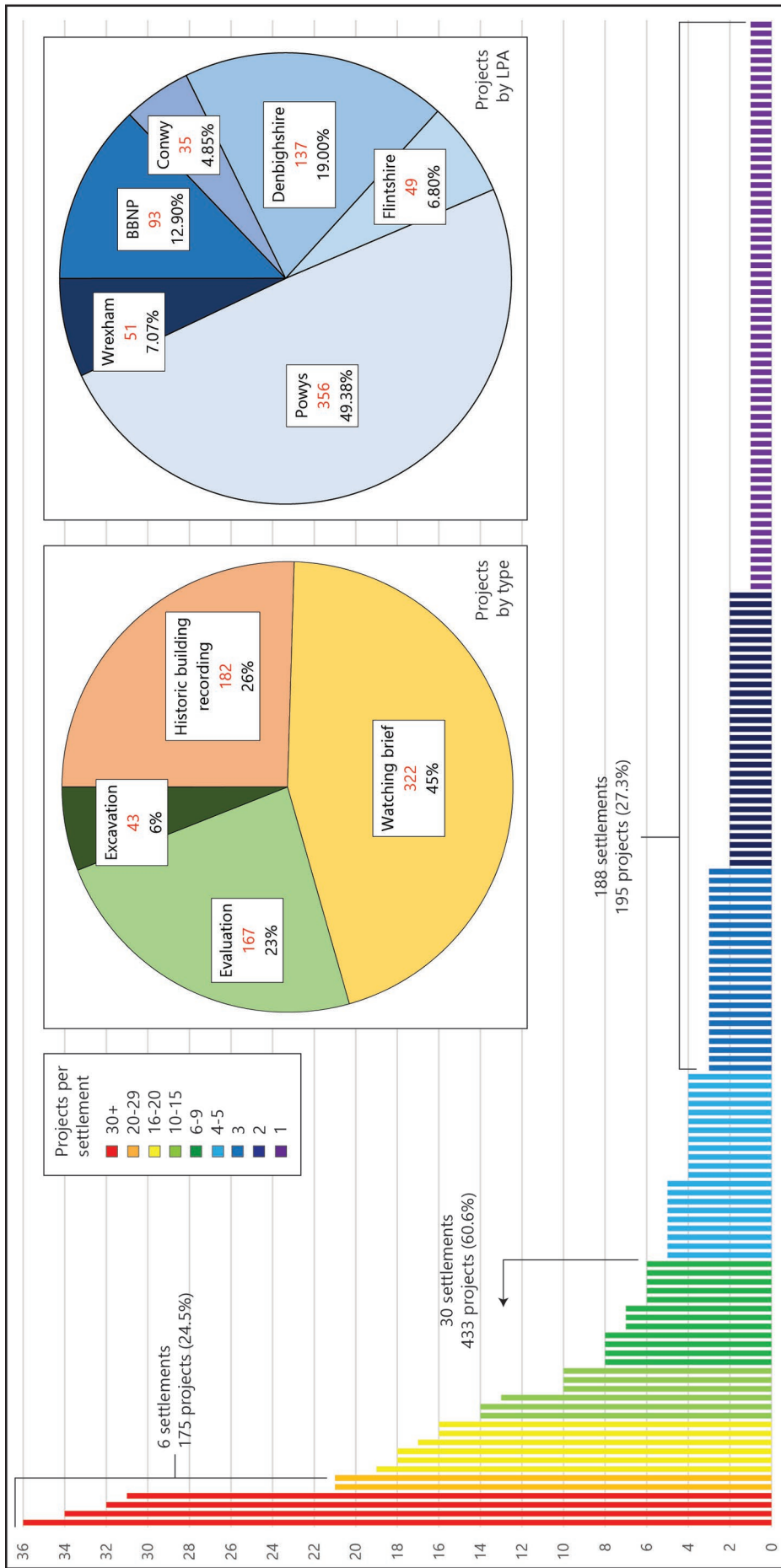


Figure 4 Variations in space. Main chart shows the number of projects for each of the 169 settlements in the Clwyd-Powys region. Pie charts show breakdown of project numbers, by type and local planning authority area. Drawing by Paul Belford.

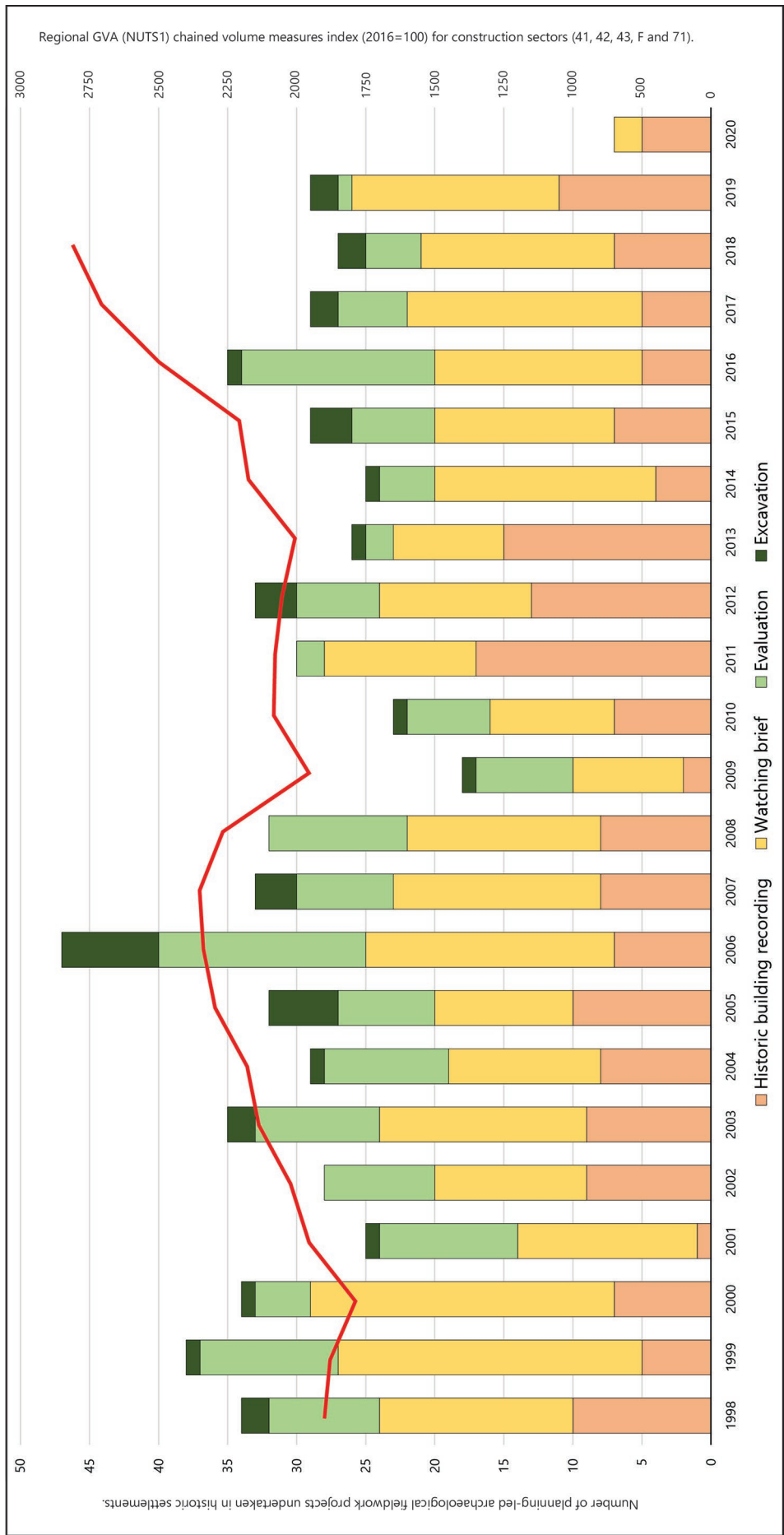


Figure 5 Variations in time. Bars show numbers of different project types for each year (left axis). Red line shows regional gross value added (GVA) for construction industry categories for all six counties in the Clwyd-Powys region (right axis). Drawing by Paul Belford.

against the value of construction sectors in the Clwyd-Powys region (ONS 2019). A steady rise through the early 2000s was followed by a sharp drop in 2009 as a result of the global financial crisis, after which levels of economic activity and archaeological work increased.

Variations by type of project

The overall proportions of different projects are shown in the left-hand pie chart in Figure 4 above. Figure 6 shows variability between settlements with the highest numbers of projects in the four categories.

Historic building recording is specified at one of four levels (CIfA 2020a; Historic England 2016). There were 189 building recording projects undertaken in 92 settlements; around half of these (94, or 49.7%) took place in just nineteen settlements. Most (146, or 76%) were the simplest 'Level 1' photographic surveys. About a quarter (43, or 24%) were at 'Level 2' or 'Level 3'. With a handful of exceptions these were found to be of limited value in understanding the development of medieval settlements.

An archaeological watching brief comprises 'observation and investigation conducted during any operation carried out for non-archaeological reasons ... where there is a possibility that archaeological deposits may be disturbed or destroyed' (CIfA 2020b). Watching briefs usually take place as a condition of planning permission (post-determination) rather than as a means of informing planning decision-making (pre-determination). They are undertaken under circumstances not of the archaeologist's choosing: there may be constraints on the ability to observe and record. The 322 archaeological watching briefs undertaken in 124 settlements represented 45% of all projects. Of these, exactly half (161) took place in seventeen settlements, and 37% (119) took place in ten settlements.

In contrast to watching briefs, archaeological field evaluations (trial trenching) and excavations are 'controlled' forms of investigation, in that their scale and resourcing are determined by archaeologists, albeit within the framework of planning reasonableness.

Archaeological evaluations define the character, extent and preservation of any remains, assess their significance, and inform management strategies as appropriate depending on the threat (CIfA 2020c). Evaluations usually occur as 'pre-determination' actions intended to inform planning decision-making. Archaeologists' approach to evaluation has changed with the professionalisation of the discipline. In the 1990s, evaluations were treated as mini-excavations; over the last two decades the focus has shifted towards obtaining the minimum information necessary to inform planning decisions. There is therefore a qualitative difference in outcomes depending on when and by whom the work was done, and under what circumstances. In total, 167 development-driven evaluations were undertaken in 77 settlements, representing 23% of all projects. Their distribution varied geographically: more took place in the protected landscape of the Brecon Beacons National Park (BBNP), and in larger settlements in north-east Wales such as Denbigh, Flint, Holt and Rhuddlan. Slightly more than half of all archaeological field

evaluation projects (85, or 51%) took place in just fourteen settlements.

Excavation is 'a programme of controlled, intrusive fieldwork with defined research objectives, which examines, records and interprets archaeological deposits, features and structures' (CIfA 2020d). In planning-led archaeology, excavations are usually a 'last resort'; they mitigate the impact of a development on significant archaeological resource when avoiding or preserving archaeology *in situ* is not possible. As a result there are fewer excavations than other types of fieldwork project: only 43 development-driven excavations (6% of all projects) took place in 29 historic settlements. More than half of these (23, or 54%) took place in just ten settlements.

Outcomes from development-driven archaeology in historic settlements

Numbers of projects and settlements only tell part of the story; the impact of development-driven archaeology can vary depending on the scale of the project and its location. The second part of the project explored the impact of development-driven archaeology on a sample of settlements. This assessed the extent to which archaeological understanding had improved, and so provided an insight into the effectiveness of different archaeological approaches.

The sample was selected from the 'top 30' settlements which had each seen more than ten projects. The mean number of projects in each settlement in this group was 14.43; the cluster of twelve settlements around this formed the core sample. Controls were then taken from outliers: one of the 'top six' settlements with many projects, three from the rest of the 'top 30', and two chosen at random from those with five or fewer projects. The resulting sample (Table 3 and Figure 7) contained eighteen settlements (10.7% of all 169 settlements). These settlements had 237 projects between them (33.2% of all 714 projects), although Table 3 only shows numbers of 'excavation' projects (total 182), which are the focus of this paper. The sample was representative across LPA areas and types of project, as well as types and sizes of settlement, although the planning-led dataset inevitably favoured larger settlements in current occupation. Even so the excavated areas represent only a tiny fraction of the historic settlement cores: an average of just 0.25% across the sample. This limitation is discussed further below.

Rather than providing a list of outcomes for each settlement, it is more useful here to explore the contribution of development-driven archaeological fieldwork to some over-arching themes relevant to medieval settlement research (Dyer 2003; Silvester and Kisson 2012; Davidson *et al.* 2017; Edwards *et al.* 2017; Rippon and Morton 2020). These are grouped here into five broad topics which have been widely discussed in the context of medieval settlement studies: origins; planning and design; defensive infrastructure; trade, industry and domestic life; and potential and actual knowledge gain through archaeological science. Of course many themes are not easily addressed by the sort of tightly-focussed planning-led work described here. This is considered further in the discussion.

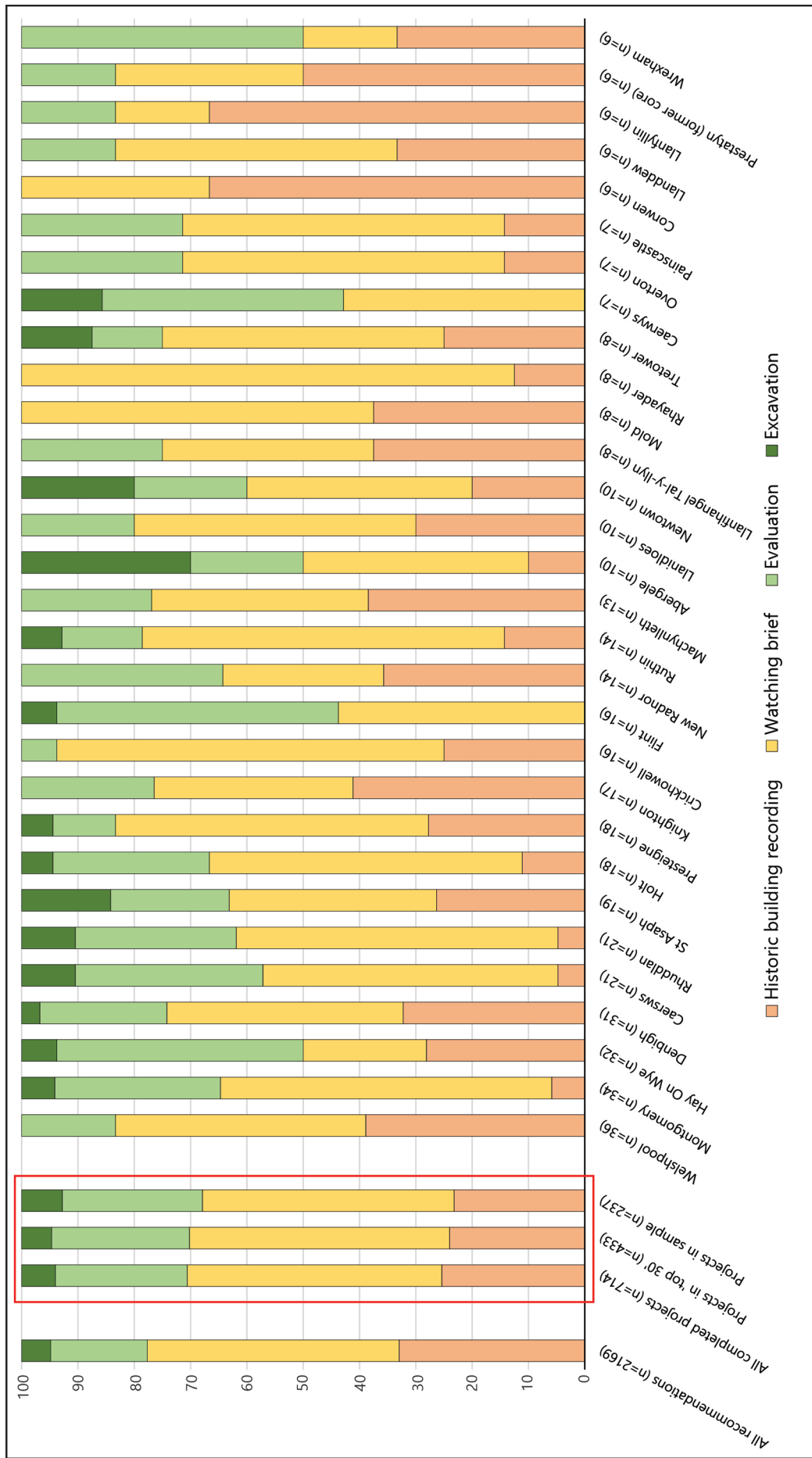


Figure 6 Variations by project type, percent. Left bar shows profile of all recommendations. Three bars in the red box show the profile of different project types – across all projects, across 'top 30' settlements and across the sample. Remaining bars show the profile of different project types for each settlement in the 'top 30'.

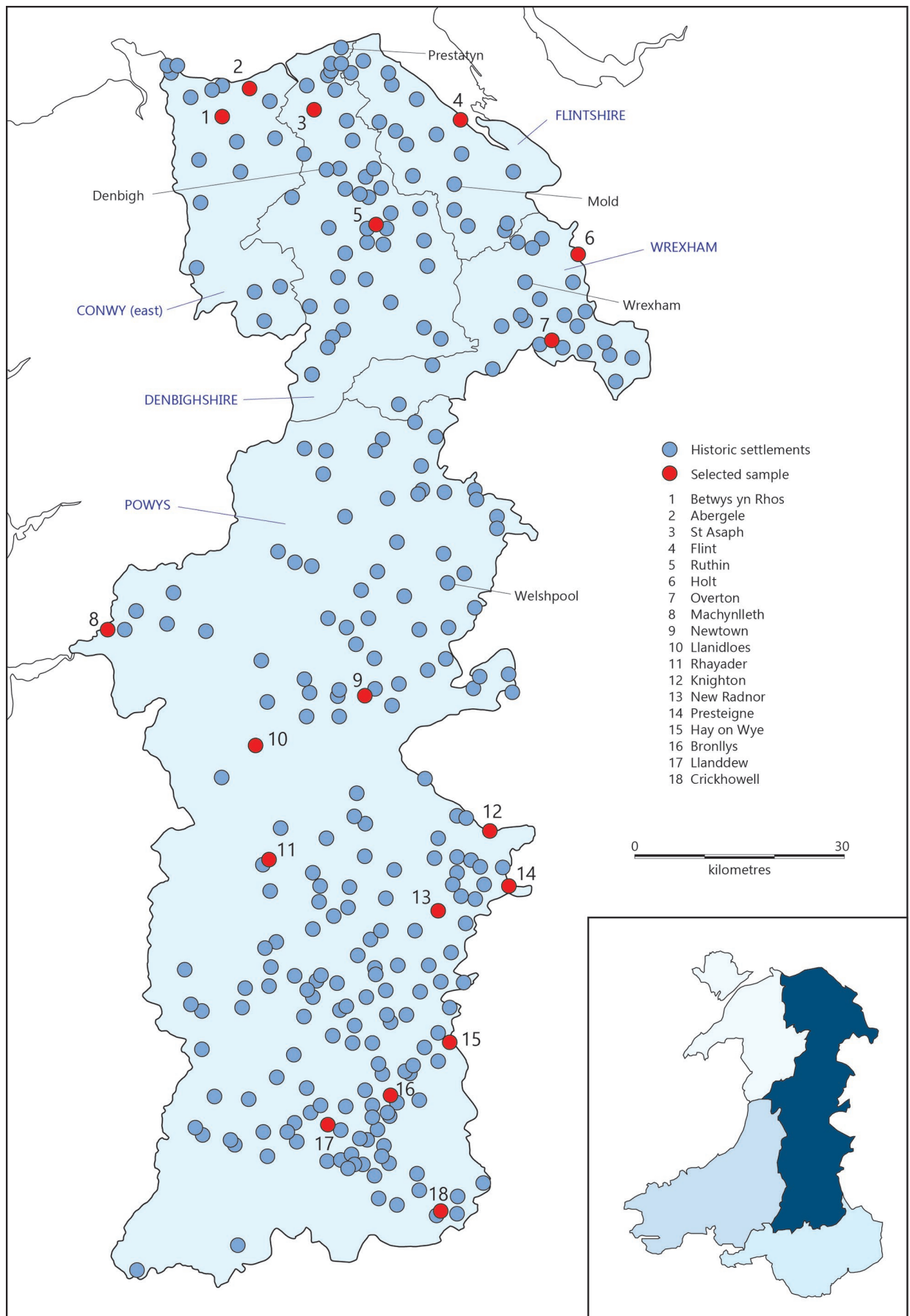


Figure 7 CPAT historic settlements. The Clwyd-Powys region with LPA areas, showing all 256 historic settlements, with the eighteen case studies highlighted in red. Drawing by Paul Belford using data supplied by Chris Martin.

Table 3 Sample of settlements selected for more detailed analysis. Note: ‘area excavated’ only includes planning-led investigations 1996–2021; ‘historic settlement’ is the area defined by the CPAT Historic Environment Record. See text for details. Data sources: CPAT, ONS.

	Probable date of first settlement	Probable origin of settlement	Modern population (2011)	Area excavated (m ²)	Excavated area as % of ‘historic settlement’	Number of excavation projects
Abergele	early C9	Welsh	9208	532	0.33	9
Betws-yn-Rhos	late C13	Welsh	1052	67	0.24	4
Bronllys	c. 1200	English	853	463	0.43	4
Crickhowell	early C13	English	1479	141	0.07	12
Flint	1277	English	12953	1431	0.40	16
Hay On Wye	early C13	English	1954	1515	0.60	23
Holt	late C13	English	3810	298	0.13	16
Knighton	C13	English	3172	342	0.26	10
Llanddew	C9?	Welsh	232	325	0.34	4
Llanidloes	mid C13	English	1536	1021	0.72	7
Machynlleth	late C13	Welsh	2235	266	0.15	8
New Radnor	mid C13	English	409	719	0.29	9
Newtown	late C13	English	11357	278	0.13	8
Overton	1279	English	1382	174	0.13	6
Presteigne	C12?	English	2710	694	0.22	13
Rhayader	early C13	Welsh	2088	218	0.13	7
Ruthin	1277	English	5461	282	0.09	12
St Asaph	C12?	Welsh	1556	164	0.09	14

Origins

Early medieval re-use of prehistoric sites, and later medieval appropriation of Roman ones, is well-attested in Wales as elsewhere in the British Isles (Semple 2013, 224–239; Waddington 2013, 115; Swallow 2019, 187–188; Taylor 2019, 51–54). However, such symbolic reinterpretations do not represent continuity of occupation. Evidence from development-driven work in the Clwyd-Powys region suggests that medieval re-occupation of prehistoric sites was entirely coincidental. Isolated finds of residual worked flint and pottery are infrequent but not uncommon – examples include Hay, Knighton, Flint and Overton. Occasionally, more substantial evidence of prehistoric occupation has been encountered, comprising larger assemblages of material in association with cut features. Lithic assemblages of Neolithic and Bronze Age date were found beneath the medieval settlement at New Radnor, although unrelated to it (Jones 1998, 138). A sequence of prehistoric features was encountered at Betws-yn-Rhos containing sherds of Neolithic pottery, together with a nearby pit group containing Early Bronze Age Beaker ware (Grant 2007, 6–9). All of these features were sealed by later alluvial silt, suggesting discontinuity between these and later phases of settlement beside this tributary of the River Dulas.

There is also no evidence for direct relationships between Roman and medieval settlement. Even at Caersws, where the late medieval planned town occupies part of the clearly visible former Roman fort and *vicus*, there was no relationship between the two. The grid plan of the medieval settlement does not align with the visible earthworks of the fort (Jones 1993, 18–21). Numerous archaeological fieldwork projects have been undertaken in the historic settlement core, and whilst the extent of the Roman *vicus* is now well-understood, no medieval evidence has ever been recovered. Holt and Flint are also close to areas of extensive and well-documented Roman industrial activity, but this was not a consideration in the location and design of these late thirteenth-century towns. Instead, these locations were chosen because of their strategic value as crossing places or vantage points or both.

The exception is Ruthin, where the possibility of a Roman antecedent emerged in the 1980s with the discovery of predominantly first- and second-century features at Brynhyfryd Park, east of the town (Waddelove *et al.* 1989, 253). The suggestion that this had been the site of a Roman fort was subsequently disproved by more detailed excavation and analysis (Jones 1992, 25–28). A later evaluation at Record Street (Figure 8) recovered evidence for first- and second-century ironworking in a

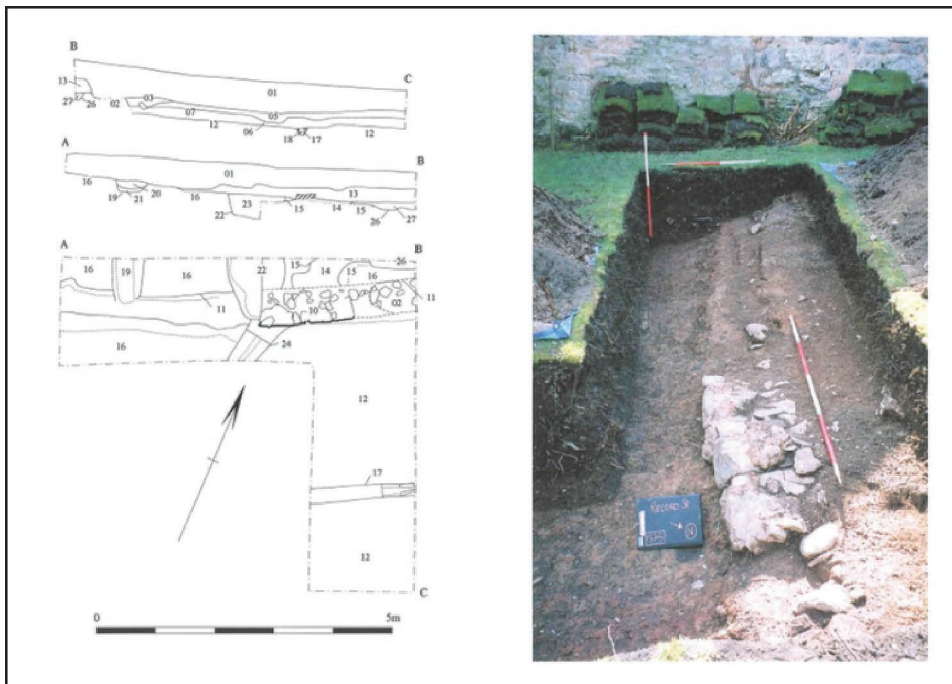


Figure 8 Ruthin, Record Street. Evaluation undertaken by CPAT in 2005 (PRN 106360), plan and west-facing view along the northern arm of the trench. Roman features include the gully (19), and sand and clay deposits (14 and 15) containing metalworking debris. Drawing and photographs © Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust.

secure context sealed by a layer containing fourteenth-century pottery (Grant 2005, 4–5). It is therefore probable that the site of the Roman fort was occupied by the Edwardian planned town of 1277.

Work elsewhere in Wales has suggested a degree of continuity between early and later medieval settlement. In north-west Wales, the complex interlinking nodes and networks of settlement and land-use appear to have persisted well into the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries – although they were not themselves static, but evolved to cope with changing political circumstances (Longley 2010, 18–21). Some later medieval settlements deliberately re-used earlier locations as symbols of hegemonic displacement, as at Caernarfon and Beaumaris (Dyer and Lilley 2012, 84–85). Rhuddlan is a key site in north-east Wales: the burh of *Cledemutha* was founded here in 921, it was later a stronghold of the princes of Gwynedd before Norman and Edwardian castles (Quinnell and Blockley 1994, 208–218). However the archaeological evidence for early medieval Rhuddlan was recovered outside the development process. This remains an under-researched subject in central and north-east Wales, and so it is difficult to put the results from development-driven work in context. The small scale of most planning-led archaeology work does not lend itself to identifying early medieval settlement, which generally requires open area excavation with comprehensive programmes of scientific dating and analysis.

Five settlements in the sample may have had early medieval ecclesiastical origins. However, development-driven fieldwork has added nothing to the already slender evidence on which these claims rest. Perhaps the most secure of these is Llanddew, a small nucleated settlement where the church contains early medieval inscribed stones (RCAHMW 1997, 286–287; Redknap *et al.* 2007). Its status was enhanced when it became the site of the Bishop's Palace in the twelfth century; extensive earthworks including house-platforms and

roads survive to south. An evaluation and watching brief on development here identified stone-built medieval structures, probably of thirteenth- or fourteenth-century date, along with associated metalworking debris and domestic artefacts (Evans and Smith 2005, 20–22). Abergele may also be of ninth-century origin, and although excavation here encountered the remains of an earlier church beneath the present building, nothing suggested a date prior to the thirteenth century (Grant 2010, 20–21).

Irregularities in the shape of the churchyard, or the relationship of the churchyard to the later settlement plan – or a combination of the two – have been cited as evidence of an early ecclesiastical foundation. Cases from the sample include Llanidloes, Machynlleth and St Asaph. However no archaeological evidence has been found to suggest an early date for these places.

Planning and design of settlements

Distinctions between 'urban' and 'rural' settlement are as much a function of the development of settlement studies as a reflection of the medieval reality. A more helpful approach is to consider places on a rural-urban spectrum with different hinterlands of influence (Dyer and Lilley 2012, 82–83). It is also important to recognise that 'planning and design' involves more than laying out a regular grid; it also includes 'additive' elements (extensions) and 'augmentative' redevelopments of existing structures (Lilley 2015, 25–26). This is particularly true in Wales, where there is a high density of smaller settlements, and the complex and shifting relationships between them – including the extent of seasonal occupation, and the impact of conquest on older places – remain poorly understood (Silvester 2006, 36–39; Longley 2006, 81–82; Silvester and Kissock 2012, 166–168).

The survival of archaeological evidence is affected by the degree of medieval decline and post-medieval revival of settlements. This is discussed in its own right below; here it is noted that archaeologists' ability to interrogate that evidence depends on the extent and nature of modern development in those settlements. Therefore, unsurprisingly, the sample assessed here consists almost entirely of planned settlements that were established (or re-established) from the thirteenth century onwards and remained more or less successful places for trade, commerce and administration.

The results from development-driven archaeology suggest that primary infrastructure – roads, paths, drains and so on – was installed when settlements, or parts of settlements, were first laid out. In Flint, drainage culverts were constructed as part of the intramural street layout in the south-western part of the medieval settlement; these appear to have been designed and built at the same time as the defences (Davies and Jones 2015, 12–14). Hay-on-Wye's triangular layout of streets (Heol y Dŵr, Lion Street and Broad Street) were also constructed as part of its establishment. Excavations at Heol y Dŵr showed that the road surface and an adjacent path were constructed in the thirteenth century, with stone plinths for buildings along the street frontage (Jones 2004a, 28–33).

Archaeological evidence also shows that burgage plots were laid out quickly in the larger planned settlements. Burgage boundaries were in place in Flint from the fourteenth century, for example, where they also served as part of the wider town drainage system noted above (Dean 2006; Smith and Pitt 2017). Some early burgage plots in Flint were delineated by stone walls, and this was also the case at Hay-on-Wye (Jones 2004b, 11–14). Delineation of property does not imply occupation: as discussed below, many settlements were not built up until well into the post-medieval period. Elsewhere plot boundaries appear not to have been formally marked, as on the outskirts of New Radnor (Jones 1998, 200); or delineation of plots was half-hearted: at Machynlleth the ditches marking burgage plot boundaries only extended a short distance away from the street frontage (Halfpenney 2007, 15).

There is some evidence for later 'augmentative' development: the redevelopment of plots, including realignment of boundaries and mergers of landholdings. In Ruthin, excavations showed that the fifteenth-century cruck-framed building forming the core of Nantclwyd y Dre had been built after the merger of two former plots (Jones 2003, 6). There is also evidence for later medieval re-alignment and modification of property boundaries at Holt, although this was relatively minor compared to early post-medieval augmentation in Hay-on-Wye (Figure 9), where the property boundary was extended into the former roadway at Heol y Dŵr (Dodd 2008; Dodd 2009; Jones 2004a). This appears exceptional, and burgage plot boundaries were generally maintained well into the post-medieval period.

There is less evidence for 'additive' development. Late medieval extensions to the historic core have been postulated for Llanidloes and, perhaps less certainly, Newtown (Silvester *et al.* 2012a, 90, 131). However no archaeological evidence has been found to support these suggestions. At Presteigne, excavations at Scottleton

Street indicated that the settlement expanded westward from the late fifteenth century (Preistley 2006, 138–140). At Knighton the regular grid-plan in the north-east of the settlement is different in character from the narrow irregular streets clustered around the castle; it has therefore been mooted as a possible medieval urban extension (Silvester and Martin 2011, 69–70). A late medieval stone house (the 'Horse and Jockey') survives at the eastern end of Wylcwm Street, and an evaluation nearby encountered medieval features (see Figure 11 below). This could reflect 'back lane' activity on Broad Street; excavations elsewhere in this area have found no evidence for medieval occupation.

Defensive infrastructure

There are a handful of Welsh settlements with impressively complete medieval defences, of which Conwy, Caernarfon, Pembroke and Chepstow are arguably the best-known examples. However in central and north-east Wales, only Denbigh – where the defences were developed from the 1280s and extended in the fourteenth century – approaches them in scale and extent of survival. This is largely because the settlement moved to a more commercially advantageous site at the bottom of the hill by the late fifteenth century, making the walled town redundant (Carter 1965, 201–205). Contraction of settlement also ensured the survival of town defences at New Radnor, described as 'an exceptionally well-preserved Welsh example' (Creighton and Higham 2005, 80).

Significant upstanding defensive features are rare elsewhere in the central and north-east Wales. Parts of the walled circuit can be traced on the ground at Hay-on-Wye, Montgomery, Brecon and Rhuddlan. Of these, the most significant new information – both positive and negative – has emerged from planning-led work in Hay-on-Wye. This confirmed the complete destruction of the walls and gateway at Black Lion Green, but also revealed that previously unrecognised stretches of the town walls had survived at Heol y Dŵr, in places associated with an intra-mural trackway (Children 2004; Clarke 2004; Jones 2004b). Elsewhere, a watching brief at Crickhowell identified evidence for a previously unknown section of the curtain wall of the thirteenth-century castle, with a circular tower (Makepeace 2000).

Probably the most important development-driven work on town defences has been at Flint. Flint was the first of several fortified settlements constructed during Edward I's conquest of North Wales (Beresford 1967, 35–51). These were designed as 'unambiguous icons of an English colonial settlement', with defensive and military characteristics working together with civic and economic functions (Creighton and Higham 2005, 100–101). The construction of the double bank and ditch in 1277–78 was well documented, involving specialist labourers from other parts of the country (Taylor 1986, 18–19).

The defences on the north side of the town had seen considerable later medieval and post-medieval disturbance (Morgan 1994, 65; Grant 2006, 3). However those on the south side had survived remarkably intact. Development-driven fieldwork at Earl Street, Colleshill

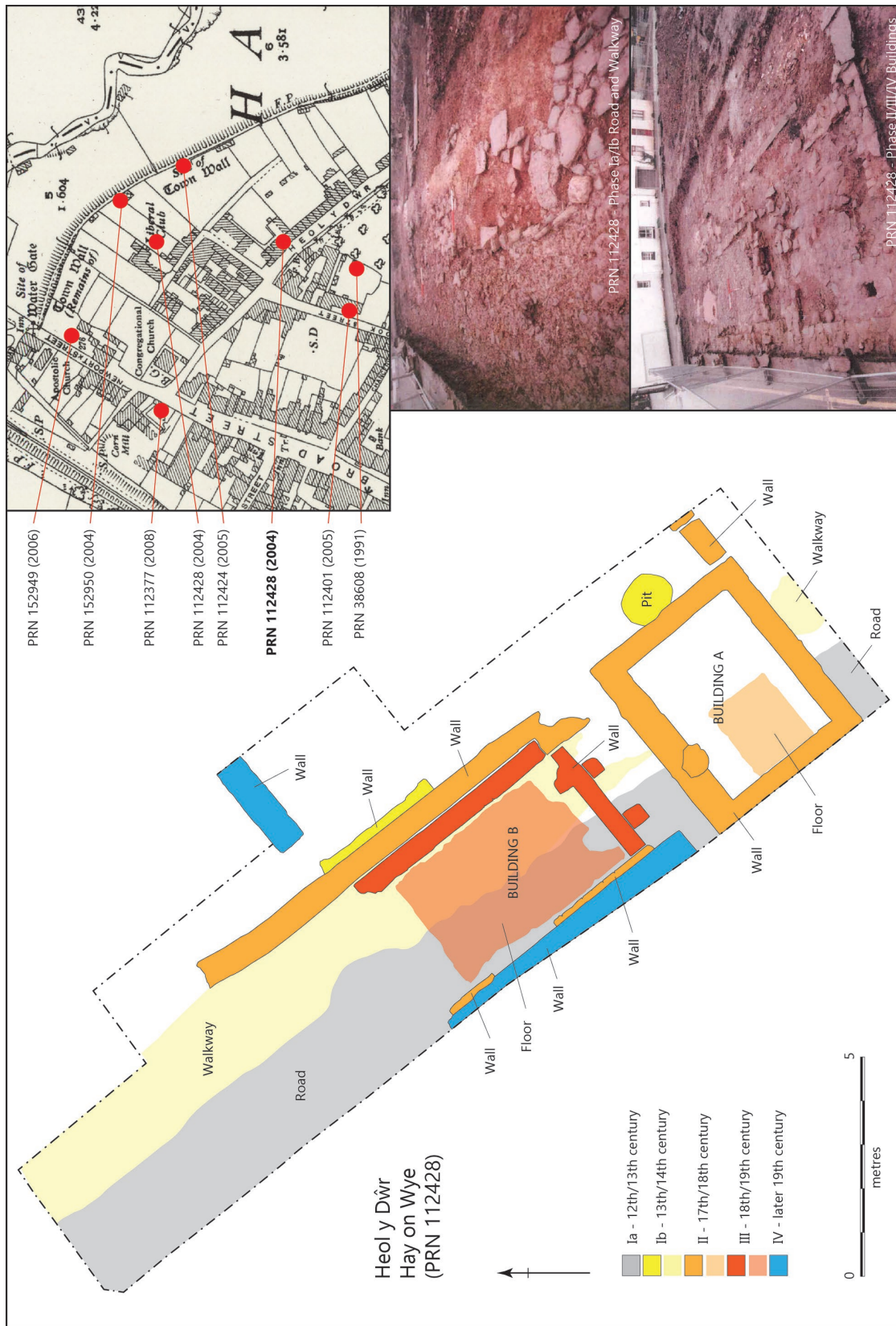


Figure 9 Hay on Wye, Heol y Dŵr. Main drawing shows simplified phase plan of excavation undertaken in 2004 by Border Archaeology (PRN 112428); photographs show features relating to Phase I (top) and Phases II–IV (bottom). Ordnance Survey 1929 extract shows north-eastern part of the town with CPAT HER events. Drawing by Paul Belford after Jones 2004a; photographs © Border Archaeology reproduced with permission.



Figure 10 Flint, Earl Street. Part of the outer defensive ditch at Flint, on the Earl Street site (PRN 152834) excavated in 2017. Photograph © Archaeology Wales. (Smith and Pitt 2017, Plate 5). Reproduced by permission of Archaeology Wales.

Street/Chapel Street and Duke Street have shown that these modern streets directly overlie the town defences (Figure 10), and that fossilisation of the outer bank as a road began in the seventeenth century (Pitt and Smith 2017, 8–9). The bank and ditch were each generally 14–15m wide; the bank had been built directly on the 1277 ground surface using material excavated from the ditch. There was no evidence for a palisade, but some sections of the lower part of the ditch – which generally survived to a depth of around 3–4m below the present street levels, and as deep at 6m in places – had been given a stone revetment (Davies and Jones 2015, 17–18; Smith and Pitt 2017, 5–10).

In other settlements an absence of evidence has proved interesting. No trace of the medieval defensive circuit has been found at Knighton, even where it partly incorporated the existing earthwork of Offa's Dyke (Creighton and Higham 2005, 128; Belford 2021, 74). The defences at Llanidloes have proved even more elusive. Their existence – and that of a motte-and-bailey castle to the south of the cruciform planned settlement – were postulated in an influential paper by B. H. St J. O'Neil (1933). However despite three planning-led interventions on or adjacent to the castle site (by three different archaeological contractors), no evidence has been found to confirm its existence (Gibson 1996; Smith

2009; Weaver 2018). Fieldwork also suggests that the town walls were never constructed.

Buildings, trade and industry

As noted above, most of the settlements in the Clwyd-Powys region occupy that 'fuzzy territory between villages and market towns' (Dyer and Lilley 2012, 88). Defensive circuits were built, streets and plots were laid out, legal and administrative frameworks established. But new boroughs did not immediately fill with residents; indeed, many burgesses were transient, described in mid-Wales as 'burgesses of the wind' (Beresford 1967, 225). Historians have conventionally emphasised the 'debilitating effects of plague and rebellion' on medieval settlements in Wales during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries (Owen 1989, 218). However, archaeological evidence from England suggests a more varied picture: some settlements prospered, and where others declined this 'was neither universal nor consistent in its effects and severity' (Jervis 2017, 213). A similar picture is beginning to emerge – albeit more tentatively – from development-driven archaeology in central and north-east Wales.

In New Radnor and Montgomery the earliest buildings appear to have been relatively flimsy timber structures,

paralleled by examples from new towns elsewhere in Wales, such as Newport (Pembrokeshire) (Jones 1998, 199–200; Murphy 1994, 66–70). At New Radnor these were gradually replaced by more substantial stone houses during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. These were long-lived with several phases of clay floors and hearth construction; they appear to have been oriented to run back from the street (Grant and Jones 2006). A domestic hearth, archaeomagnetically dated to AD 1275–1330 or AD 1400–1430, was in a building to the rear of a burgage plot at Abergele, potentially indicating dense occupation there from a relatively early date (Dodd and Walker 2003).

Excavations elsewhere have revealed much less about orientation and scale of buildings. Stone footings at least were found for street-frontage buildings at Hay-on-Wye, Knighton and Llanddew. At Betwys-yn-Rhos part of a stone-built cottage partly overlay an earlier lime kiln, radiocarbon-dated to the tenth or eleventh century and therefore pre-dating the settlement; it has been tentatively linked to the construction of the nearby church (Grant 2007, 10–12).

Some parts of some settlements saw good buildings replaced by poorer ones, or swept away altogether. For example in St Asaph, relatively high-status buildings in the vicinity of the Cathedral were extant in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, but had been entirely removed by c.1600 (Grant and Jones 2005). At New Radnor, a well-built thirteenth-century house was abandoned and allowed to collapse in the fifteenth century before being built over by a flimsier agricultural building (Grant and Jones 2006). These very local events could be explained by particular circumstances, and wider extrapolation to general decline would be unwise.

Indeed the extent of development varied even on adjacent burgages in the same town. In Hay-on-Wye, some plots were only ever used for agricultural or horticultural activity, whereas others contained sequences of pits and post-holes suggesting more intensive industrial or domestic activity (Nash and Jones 2003; Jones 2004b). Early burgages in Rhuddlan remained in continuous occupation well into the post-medieval period. Near the

castle, a series of backyard drainage ditches and rubbish pits contained significant assemblages of food waste and pottery in a continuous sequence from the thirteenth to the seventeenth centuries (Griffiths 2009; Owen and Smith 2016). Some closely stratified small assemblages, in contexts such as pit-groups, have been identified and recorded during watching briefs and evaluations. However, individually these are usually quite small; consequently little systematic synthetic work has been done on pottery or animal bones recovered during development-driven projects in historic settlements.

Evidence for industrial activity in the sample is dominated by crop processing and metalworking. Corn-drying ovens have been found at Flint, New Radnor, Newtown, and possibly Knighton (the thirteenth-century flue at Wylcwm Street is shown in Figure 11). Evidence for metalworking – principally in the form of smithing debris – has been recovered from sites in Bronllys, New Radnor and Presteigne. However, no actual smithing sites have been excavated. In most cases, the absence of open area excavation has made it difficult to determine either the extent of such activity in particular places or its relationship to the wider economic picture. An exception is recent development-driven work in Flint, which is still undergoing post-excavation assessment.

Very little development-driven archaeological work has been done on town mills. Most of the larger settlements had at least one mill, and many were evidently part of the original design: as at Ruthin, where the thirteenth-century building survives. Elsewhere – at St Asaph and Llanidloes, for example – the water supply system is still extant (Hankinson and Silvester 2012, 117–118). Development-related recording work of the mill at Llanidloes suggested medieval origins, although the limited extent of investigations meant that only post-medieval fabric was recorded (Rovira 2018, 8–9). It has not been possible, in development-driven projects, to determine the nature of the relationships between more isolated mills and the settlements they served.

Overall, very little archaeological evidence for medieval occupation has been found in nearly half the settlements examined in the sample: Abergele,



Figure 11 Two evaluations. Left: Knighton, Wylcwm Street – top: general view; bottom: thirteenth-century stone flue, potentially associated with a corn-dryer. Right: New Radnor, Rectory Lane – top: general view; bottom: oven (foreground) and open hearths (behind), all of thirteenth-century date. Photographs © Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust.

Crickhowell, Flint, Holt, Llanidloes, Machynlleth, Overton and Rhayader. Some places, like Flint and Overton, clearly never fully developed within the planned settlement until the eighteenth century; others, like Holt and Machynlleth saw significant post-medieval expansion which may have partly removed earlier features. Some of these sixteenth- and seventeenth-century developments are of considerable interest in their own right, but beyond the scope of this paper. This outcome partly reflects the location of interventions (itself a consequence of favouring preservation *in situ*). Overall, there is probably not enough evidence to draw broad conclusions about urban development in much of Wales.

Archaeological science

The role of archaeological science has largely been confined to the use of dating techniques. This is mostly a consequence of the limited scale of most of the projects, and the unsuitability of many contexts for preservation of palaeoenvironmental evidence. The exception has been the more recent large-scale work at Flint, where significant environmental samples – including those recovered from waterlogged deposits – may potentially enhance understanding about both arable agriculture in the surrounding landscape, and environmental conditions within the medieval town (Smith and Pitt 2017, 56). Publication of an excavation monograph is anticipated.

Elsewhere, successes have been noted above for radiocarbon-dating (Betws-yn-Rhos) and archaeomagnetic dating (Abergele). Only rarely has close integration between building recording and below-ground excavation been possible, and only in the context of projects where additional assistance has come from local authorities or other public bodies. However, dendrochronology in conjunction with archaeological analysis has provided detailed understanding of the sequence of construction at Nantclwyd y Dre in Ruthin, and Royal House, Machynlleth (Williams and Kightly 2007; Jones 2006). At Parliament House, Machynlleth, a pit contained ceramic ridge tile and other building debris from the predecessor building which appeared to have been demolished in the fifteenth century; the roof timbers of the current building were dendrochronologically dated to 1470, thus disproving the direct link with Owain Glyndŵr's parliament of 1404 (Jones *et al.* 2005, 7–9).

Discussion

In the early 1980s it was observed that archaeologists were yet to apply themselves 'with sufficient force to the subject of urban history in Wales' (Soulsby 1983, xi). Ten years later it was still possible for the authors of the first CPAT assessment to declare that 'Welsh settlement studies are still in their infancy' (Silvester and Dorling 1993, 4). Twenty years after that it was maintained that 'research is still at a preliminary stage' (Silvester and Kisson 2012, 156). Another decade has passed, and since 1996 over 700 development-driven archaeological fieldwork interventions have taken place in nearly 170 historic settlements across the Clwyd-Powys region. What has been their impact?

Towards synthesis?

It was never the intention of the project described here, or this paper, to produce a complete regional synthesis of development-driven work in medieval settlements. The project only explored a sample of settlements, looking specifically at fieldwork in the defined 'historic core' of those settlements, undertaken during a particular 25-year window for a specific purpose; it has not attempted to engage substantively with pre-1996 fieldwork, or non-planning work.

Nevertheless it has been possible to identify some areas where new understanding has been obtained, and some areas where gaps remain. Understanding the chronologies of creation, development, decline and renaissance has improved. Even relatively small-scale work can produce new information, as in the recognition of a Roman antecedent at Ruthin. In places with many controlled interventions – such as Flint, Hay-on-Wye and New Radnor, and perhaps also Montgomery, Denbigh and smaller settlements too – it is possible to see ebbs and flows in the development of different parts of the settlement. Understanding has therefore come a long way from a simplistic picture of an early fourteenth-century high point and subsequent decline. However, an absence of evidence has not always been sufficient to assume evidence of absence, and this is particularly the case in settlements where watching briefs have been the main (or only) form of intrusive archaeology – as at Holt, Knighton, Machynlleth, Overton and Presteigne.

The strong relationship between settlements and agriculture has been emphasised. Corn-drying ovens and pits are common features across a wide range of settlements. Other crafts such as smithing are also in evidence. Whilst some important information about building construction has been obtained, generally the scale of projects has made it difficult to detect variations in burgage plot and building sizes, whether across settlements or over time, or both. For the same reason pre-thirteenth-century evidence is rarely encountered in a way that contextualises it. Consequently, our understanding of the origins of many settlements remains obscure.

The evidence from the sample suggests that defensive features are fairly robust. Where they have existed in the past, they tend to exist in the present, even if only incompletely. Important discoveries of extant walls, banks and ditches have been made at Crickhowell, Flint and Hay-on-Wye. In this context the apparent non-existence of defensive features at Llanidloes is intriguing. The identification of the motte-and-bailey site was largely an exercise in tentative speculation 90 years ago, and the case for the 'town defences' even more so (O'Neil 1933, 49–53, 59). Yet archaeologists have never challenged O'Neil's analysis, despite three decades of empty-handed development-driven excavation on the castle site, collectively investigating an area of 540m².

Shortcomings

Increased knowledge on a micro-level has not translated into a significant contribution to the wider narrative of medieval settlement for several reasons.

First, these are very small projects. The 182 intrusive fieldwork projects in the sample of eighteen settlements

together covered an area of 8,930m². This means that an average project excavated 49m². Across all historic settlements in the Clwyd-Powys region, over 25 years, a total of 532 intrusive fieldwork projects were carried out. Extrapolating from the sample this would mean a total of approximately 2.6ha was excavated across central and north-eastern Wales – an area the size of three rugby pitches. Therefore even the cumulative sample of all settlements is tiny.

Second, the quality of the results varies with the nature of the project. Decisions about the location and type of interventions reflect pragmatic considerations in the context of what is reasonable in planning terms. Watching briefs generally take place in poor conditions with limited visibility; they tend to ‘provide poor archaeological returns and limited public benefit’ (Belford 2020, 17). More helpful results have been obtained through evaluations, where larger areas can be investigated and more resources expended on post-excavation analysis. Local experience and knowledge might also bring added value which enhances the quality of archaeological outcomes.

Third, even with fieldwork of the highest quality, the potential cumulative value of all projects is not realised in the way that it could be: by incrementally building layers of data to create interesting and useful narratives. This is not the fault of archaeological contractors, but the system within which they operate. Development-driven archaeological enquiry is designed to answer site-specific planning questions rather than archaeological ones. The scope of individual projects rarely permits them to make meaningful reference to other work, let alone try and develop wider synthesis.

Consequently, consideration of the wider environment – whether the immediate physical landscape, or broader social, economic and cultural *milieux* – is usually beyond the scope of development-driven projects. As a result, some long-standing and interesting research questions are not considered: the role of urbanisation in Edwardian colonization, for example, or the ethnic composition of medieval settlements, or even how relationships between rural and urban settlements helped create changes in consumption and material culture (Lilley 2000, 520; Stevens 2012, 155–158; Dyer 2003, 113).

Indeed, far from attempting to answer such questions, the scale of most development-driven archaeological projects in Wales is such that it is not even possible to ask them. Therefore it is difficult to create added value seen in development-driven work elsewhere, as with large (publicly-funded) infrastructure projects. In areas of relatively low economic activity – like much of Wales – this can only be achieved when development-driven fieldwork is combined with other initiatives, both community-led and publicly-funded.

For example, planning-led work at New Radnor was augmented by publicly-funded research undertaken outside the planning process, resulting in a good understanding of the layout and development of the town (Silvester 1994; 1997). Similarly, the comprehensive approach at the Parliament House, Machynlleth, was only possible because of the engagement of several heritage bodies and in the context of a publicly-funded project (Jones *et al.* 2005).

Conversely, Llanddew provides an example where this approach was only partially followed, and potential knowledge gain – and therefore public benefit – was lost. Part of the deserted settlement was surveyed as part of a Cadw-funded project; the other part was subject to a developer-funded trial trenching programme (Jones 1993, 15; Evans and Smith 2005, 20–27). Well-preserved archaeology was encountered, but there was no opportunity to relate the two pieces of work to each other, nor to refine understanding of the chronology and place it in a broader landscape context. Here, a small piece of public-funded work could have bridged that gap, transforming the value of the developer-funded project and fully capitalising on the earlier public investment.

There is not much that archaeologists can do about variable land values and economic growth in different parts of the UK. However, there is room for improvement in the way that popular interest in archaeology can be turned into political influence. Archaeologists can also try and escape some of the structures they have made for themselves. These structures are both philosophical and systemic: it has been suggested that the archaeology of medieval settlement in Wales remains ‘driven by categories and taxonomies ... with little or no demonstrable relationship to the past’ (Austin 2006, 205).

Solutions

Development-driven archaeology could make a greater contribution to the understanding of medieval settlements in Wales by being more closely integrated into wider research. Individual settlements and the motivations behind their design can only be appreciated in the context of broader geographical and political understanding; equally settlements need to be considered in their landscape contexts (Lilley *et al.* 2005; Lilley 2010; Roberts and Wrathmell 2003). Long-term multidisciplinary research elsewhere in Wales has refined understanding of a wide range of lowland, coastal and upland landscapes, using historical and archaeological sources to develop greater understanding of the relationships between settlements and their hinterlands (Austin 2016; Comeau 2012; Comeau 2019; Seaman 2019).

The grey literature produced by development-driven archaeology is not always being used to its full potential. Unlocking this potential would require additional resources and changes in mindset, in two key areas.

First, the augmentation and synthesis of individual site-based projects into the HERs – in effect bridging the gap between the high-level work described above and the individual site-specific projects funded by developers. In practical terms this would mean aggregating results to draw broader conclusions. This may mean looking at several projects in the same settlement, or taking particular types of feature or assemblages across an area or region (or even nationally) to develop a level of understanding that is only possible with larger and more varied datasets. This could be part-funded by a levy on archaeological contractors, passed to their clients.

Second, undertaking additional work – whether on site, or in developing post-excavation analyses and syntheses – in the public interest and at public expense,

where such work is beyond the reasonable impositions that LPAs can make on developers in areas of relatively low economic activity. This need not modify the ‘polluter pays’ principle, but would require public-sector nimbleness and flexibility. This would involve research initiatives that could be supported by university departments, and fitted into wider specialist or period research frameworks.

In the meantime, much can be done within the current system. Perhaps the most important is for archaeologists to challenge their own shibboleths. These include unproven assertions long taken as facts, and the related reluctance rigorously to challenge both the historical narrative and some senior colleagues. They also include the continued use of methods which are of limited value, such as watching briefs.

One significant positive step forward would be to develop deposit models, at least for larger settlements. This is a way of using known data – both from archaeological excavation and other work such as geotechnical investigations (boreholes) – to develop virtual models that can predict likely below-ground deposits. Several WATs have produced historic urban character assessments, and in places an enhanced HER database. The next step – deposit modelling – would enable localised priority to be given to particular research questions. This would also give greater weight to important negative evidence which is currently overlooked. Crickhowell provides a case in point: ten of eleven watching briefs there have found no medieval archaeology, but they have collectively contributed evidence for extensive post-medieval landscaping and remodelling along the High Street and near the River Usk.

Finally, it is worth considering developing a specifically Welsh research agenda. The process of transition from early to late medieval was much longer, more contested, and very different from that in England, yet overviews of medieval settlement research remain very Anglo-centric (Rippon and Moreton 2020, 4–8). The Archaeological Research Framework for Wales splits medieval settlement research across two periods and four categories, and consolidation might make it easier to identify and address some of the lacunae noted at the beginning of this paper (Edwards *et al.* 2017; Davison *et al.* 2017).

Conclusion

Development-driven archaeology has made a significant impact on the available data for medieval settlement in Wales. This information is used to inform archaeological planning advice, but has not yet fulfilled its potential impact on medieval settlement research. This is partly because there are limited resources to turn site-specific data into settlement-wide and regional understanding. However, it is also because archaeologists themselves have not bridged the gap to enable these data to make that wider research contribution. More could be done with existing data, and more should be done by archaeologists – whether in the public or private sector – to add value to the results of this work. Archaeology has the potential to touch on some big issues, adding its voice to the ‘unresolved debate’ about the origins, nature

and meaning of Welsh culture (Austin 2006, 199). To do so will require new approaches in philosophy and methodology.

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