Clun Bridge and Waterloo Ford, Clun, Shropshire

An Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment, 2005

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**Clun Bridge and Waterloo Ford, Clun, Shropshire
An Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment, 2005**

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For

Moore Environment

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SUMMARY

A desk-based assessment was carried out in July 2005 on Clun Bridge, a grade II listed building, and Waterloo Ford (NGR SO 300 807), *both in Clun, Shropshire. Moore Environment commissioned the project on behalf of Shropshire County Council in advance of proposed repairs to the bridge and the construction of a temporary bridge at Waterloo Ford. The work comprised a full examination of available historic maps and other documentary sources, in addition to a walkover survey. The results suggest that the bridge occupies the site of a much earlier river crossing, dating from the Norman Conquest at the latest, and that the ford served as an additional access point to the town. The bridge is listed as sixteenth century but comprises a series of building periods and may contain medieval fabric. An archaeological survey of the fabric is recommended in order to determine the relative significance of the various phases, and a watching brief is recommended during groundworks. Information regarding the ford is lacking, but given the high incidence of prehistoric finds in the area, it potentially has very ancient origins as part of a trade route. Here too a watching brief would be appropriate.*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This desk-based assessment has been prepared by Birmingham Archaeology for Moore Environment on behalf of Shropshire County Council in advance of the proposed refurbishment of Clun Bridge and the construction of a temporary bridge at the site of Waterloo Ford (Fig 2-3). The aim of the report was to establish the archaeological potential of the sites through existing data. To that end the assessment comprised a consultation of all readily available cartographic, primary and secondary documentary sources, supplemented by a walkover survey of the site. The assessment adhered to the guidelines set down in the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Desk-Based Assessments* (Institute of Field Archaeologists 2001).

2.0 LOCATION AND GEOLOGY OF THE STUDY AREA

Clun is a small township located in the south-west of Shropshire. The nucleus of the town lies on the northern banks of the river Clun though its origins began on the south side.

The underlying geology is part of the Upper Carboniferous strata outcrop that runs in a discontinuous belt across the county and is a source of coal, brick clay and ironstone. Lower and Middle Carboniferous rocks occur locally beneath the Coal Measures sequence, and produce Lower Carboniferous dolomitic limestone. The town itself lies on boulder clay with large deposits of red marl and sandstone.

The study area comprised two sites, Clun Bridge (NGR SO 3000 8075) and Waterloo Ford (NGR SO 3025 8075) (Fig 2-3). The bridge lies to the south of the Norman town, which was focused on the Castle, and links it to the earlier, Saxon, settlement on the south side of the river, which was centred on the church.

3.0 OBJECTIVES

- To identify the likely character, extent, quality and significance of the known or potential archaeological resource.

- To recommend a mitigation strategy, or a strategy for further field evaluation, if appropriate, where the character and value of the resource is not sufficiently defined to permit a mitigation strategy or other response to be devised.

4.0 METHODOLOGY

A walk-over site survey was undertaken which involved an visual assessment of the bridge and ford due for refurbishment in order to identify any surviving earthworks and/ or other evidence which may be of archaeological significance. In addition, the effect of any later landscaping and building activities, which may have impacted on archaeological features and deposits was noted.

The Shropshire County Record Office was consulted for all relevant historic maps and other primary and secondary sources. In addition an inspection of documentary data drawn from the Shropshire Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) was undertaken, which examined the area contained within a 50m radius of the site, in order to establish the presence of relevant historical or archaeological remains in the surrounding area.

5.0 PRESENT CHARACTER OF THE SITE (Plates 1-2)

The river in the vicinity of the bridge is characterised by low grassy banks (Plate 1). The ford site is similar but the banks either side are partly wooded (Plate 2). Presently, the bridge is accessible by vehicle but is only wide enough for a single stream of traffic and the evident rebuilding of its upper courses may have suffered as a consequence. Frequent damage has meant that most of the upper bridge has been repaired several times. The ford still serves as a crossing and is accessible by road. The river was relatively shallow and slow flowing at the time of the assessment

6.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Prehistoric

 The evidence for prehistoric occupation in the area is shown by the presence of flint scatters at Rockhill and Stepple farm, to the north of Clun, uncovered by retired schoolmaster George Luff in 1877 (Willan 1966:10, Rowley 1986:18). There are various finds from the Neolithic to the Bronze Age in the form of axes, arrowheads and scrapers retrieved in the late nineteenth century from the ploughsoil of various fields around Clun; none, however, came from the study area. The concentration of finds in the vicinity of Clun is unparalleled in the county with 70 find sites within a 12-mile radius (Rowley 1986:18). Given this level of activity, the possibility should be considered that Waterloo ford may have been an established fording point during the prehistoric period and may have formed part of a regular trading route (Rowley 1986:18). There are also the remains of a Bronze Age burial mound at Pen-y-Wern with an associated stone circle that was excavated in the 1960s by an amateur group; a

broken stone axe and a partially cremated skeleton were recovered (CSVFC Vol 10 1966:19). The evidence for anything other than transient camps is scarce and it can be said that there were very low levels of permanent occupation.

The settlement pattern in the Iron Age is equally as sparse and as badly documented. There is a circular hill fort, Caer Caradoc, a few miles south of Clun, with substantial barbican style entrances to the east and west, and traces of roundhouses inside the fort in the form of earthworks (Pevsner 1958). The fort has not been excavated so any theories as to its length and date of occupation are purely speculative. Its substantial and complex arrangements of banks and ditches suggest it must have been occupied on a permanent basis for at least part of the Iron Age (VCH Vol I). The ford at Clun may have served as the original crossing of the river and remains of any ancillary structures may be preserved in the bank material of the ford. The tribe ascribed to this area is the Cornovii and this seems to have been a marginal area of their territory.

Roman

Evidence for Roman activity seems to be all but absent from the study area, despite the close proximity of the Roman town of Leintwardine and the important military supply route of Watling Street. It is possible the paucity of information for this period is more a reflection of the lack of a dedicated programme of study rather than the absence of any settlement. The area around Bishops Castle, to the north of Clun has yielded evidence for lead mining in the first half of the second century. Lead pigs with the stamp of Hadrian were recovered from a field in the nineteenth century (VCH Vol I 204).

Saxo-Norman

Evidence for the Saxon period seems to be the presence of a Saxon church (MSA12134) dedicated to St George on the south side of the river (Pevsner 1958). The main argument for this seems to the Saxon nave of the church to which the tower and aisles are Norman additions. It seems reasonable to suggest that there was an associated settlement or at the very least a manor (MSA12133) (Hindle 1981:25). The origins of the name Clun seem to be pre-English but its meaning is unclear (Gelling 1992:67). Domesday records that, at the time of the Conquest, Clun was worth four pounds, and had a mill and land for 60 ploughs (Hindle 1981: 24). It was strategically placed to control movement along the valley of traders in an area that was sparsely settled (Gelling1992:106). It was, however, frequently ravaged by the Welsh so its role as a border town, being only 4 miles from Offa's Dyke, seems to have negated its agricultural value (VCH Vol I).

Medieval

At the time of the Conquest Clun was part of the lands of Eadric the Wild, so called for his ferocious guerrilla campaign against the Normans (Baker N.D:5). After the revolt was put down the lands laid waste as punishment, along with much of Shropshire. They were then confiscated, being given to Roger Montgomery, earl of Shrewsbury.

It was during the Norman period that the first castle was constructed after the land of Clun was granted to Robert de Say who completed the castle in 1100 (Baker). The first castle would have been timber, hastily constructed on a natural mound on the north side of the river. It seems the building of the castle changed the nucleus of the settlement, which had been previously settled around the church to the south. The castle takes advantage of the natural defensive capability of the river to the west, the bridge and the ford to the south-east being the only means of crossing into the Norman settlement. There is no mention in the records of a bridge at this time but it seems highly likely that one existed, either of timber or stone, with the ford used as a crossing for vehicles too wide for the bridge. The castle was rebuilt in stone *c.* 1140 and was passed into the Fitzallan family through the marriage of Isobel de Say to William Fitzallan (CSVFC 1932:67).

During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries Clun and its castle were besieged and burned with monotonous regularity by the Welsh, including Llewelyn the Great and Prince Rhys (VCH Vol I). In the thirteenth century the King ordered that the castle should be re-fortified and a new curtain wall and two round towers were constructed to protect it from this threat. The defences held and, although the town was destroyed and possibly the bridge along with it, the castle remained protected (Suppe 1994:38).

Post-Medieval

By the time of the Civil War the castle was a ruin. The church of St George was partially destroyed by Fleetwood, one of Cromwell's generals, and was extensively rebuilt in the nineteenth century (VCH Vol I). There seems to have been very little in the way of specialised industry. By the eighteenth century the estate had been sold to Clive of India (VCH Vol I). In Bagshaw's directory of Shropshire 1851 the earl of Powis is listed as the principle landowner and the local industries seem to range from small scale tanning, brick and tile making, milling and chair making. The tithe map of 1846 shows that most of the land surrounding the bridge and ford was given over to meadow or cow pasture with no additional structures or alterations to its banks (Fig 4).

There is evidence in the records for an application to widen the bridge in 1831, which was considered 'incommodious' due to the increase of traffic on the turnpike road. Another reference to the bridge in 1873 appears to be plans and specifications for the building of a new larger bridge in Purslow, further down river.

7.0   CARTOGRAPHIC EVIDENCE

1846 Tithe map (Fig 4)

The tithe map shows that the field around the bridge and ford were given over to meadow and cow pasture. There is no evidence of any structures other than the bridge within the study area and the town appears relatively small. The course of the river remains much the same as on the present maps.

1st- 3rd edition OS (Fig 4)

The bridge, ford and the course of the river remained unchanged. The division of the town into Saxon and Norman nuclei is evident. Generally, there had been little development within the town.

8.0   BUILDING ASSESSMENT *by Malcolm Hislop*

Although the listed building description assigns a tentative sixteenth-century date to the bridge, it is evident that the existing fabric is of various dates owing to the structure having undergone a series of repairs, alterations and additions, and it is possible that parts of the structure are earlier, perhaps of medieval date. The bridge is constructed of limestone with quite a wide range in character, being at worst, rubble, and at best, approaching ashlar in quality; these differences appear to be at least partially related to phases of construction.

Clun Bridge is humpbacked and spans the river in five arches, interspersed with three triangular-plan cutwaters supporting refuges at parapet level (Plate 1). The arches vary in size in accordance with the asymmetrical humpbacked nature of the bridge, but also in structural character. Two low arches at the north end and one at the south end are plain barrel vaults, not all very distinctive in shape, owing perhaps to repair, though at least one of the northern arches is four-centred (No. 2 from the north, Plate 3), which suggests a date somewhere between the late fourteenth century and the sixteenth century. The southernmost arch has been replaced on its western side by a concrete lintel (Plate 1). The two high arches are almost semicircular, and the vaults are each carried on unmoulded ribs, not incompatible with a medieval date (eg fourteenth century). Both arches were originally of two unmoulded orders, but the larger one (No. 4 from the north) has been rebuilt on its western side, probably in the eighteenth century, in higher quality stone, and with a raised keystone (Plate 4), and the smaller one (No. 3 from the north) has been rebuilt on its eastern side (Plate 5).

There are straight joints in the masonry between the cutwaters and the bridge, suggesting that the cutwaters are later additions (Plate 6). The southernmost of these on the western side has lost its upper section. The feet of the bridge piers and abutments have been protected with concrete Much of the parapet has been rebuilt, at different times, this being particularly marked over No. 4 arch (Plate 3)

9.0   CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Clun Bridge

The proposed refurbishment of the bridge will involve general repairs including new foundations within the river bank and modifications to a pier within the watercourse. The work then has the potential to affect the ancient fabric of the bridge, and to disturb below ground archaeology related to the present and earlier bridges. Without a more detailed knowledge of the structural phasing of the present structure it would be difficult to assess the impact of the repairs. The grade II* listing masks the fact that some aspects of the bridge are more significant than others, but their relative importance could only be established by a detailed archaeological survey of the structure in order to determine its sequential development and the architectural and historic significance of its component parts. This would also serve as appropriate mitigation for the repairs. Disturbance of the ground around the piers and on the

banks of the river may reveal earlier structures that would help to establish a chronology for the bridge and its predecessors. A watching brief during the operations would be appropriate mitigation.

<u>Waterloo Ford</u>

The ford has not been subjected to dedicated study and may possibly be a prehistoric crossing or trade route. It is widely accepted that such fords contain high concentrations of finds so a watching brief during any groundworks for the temporary bridge could establish a date for the crossing and its importance in the prehistoric development of the area.

10.0   ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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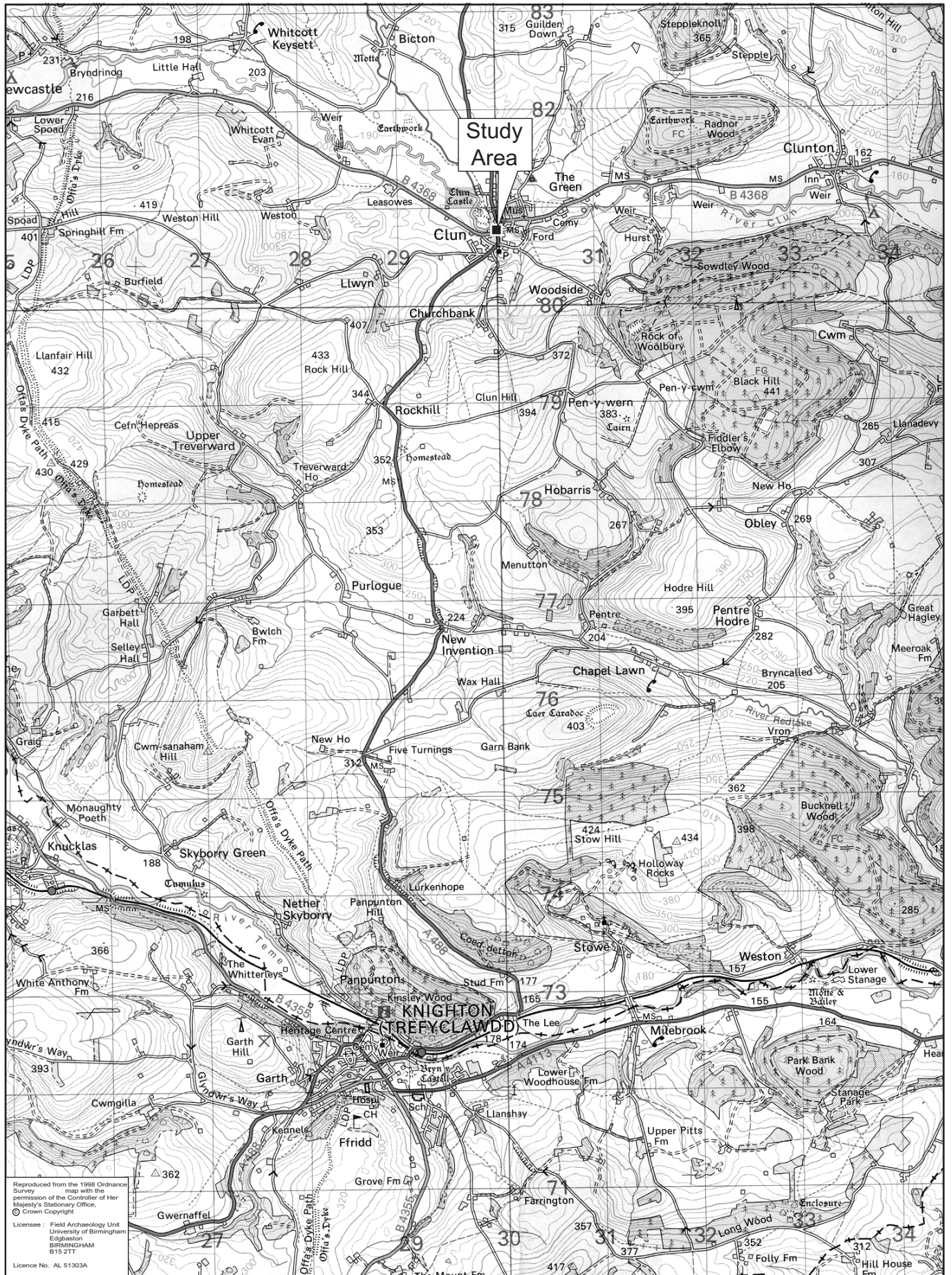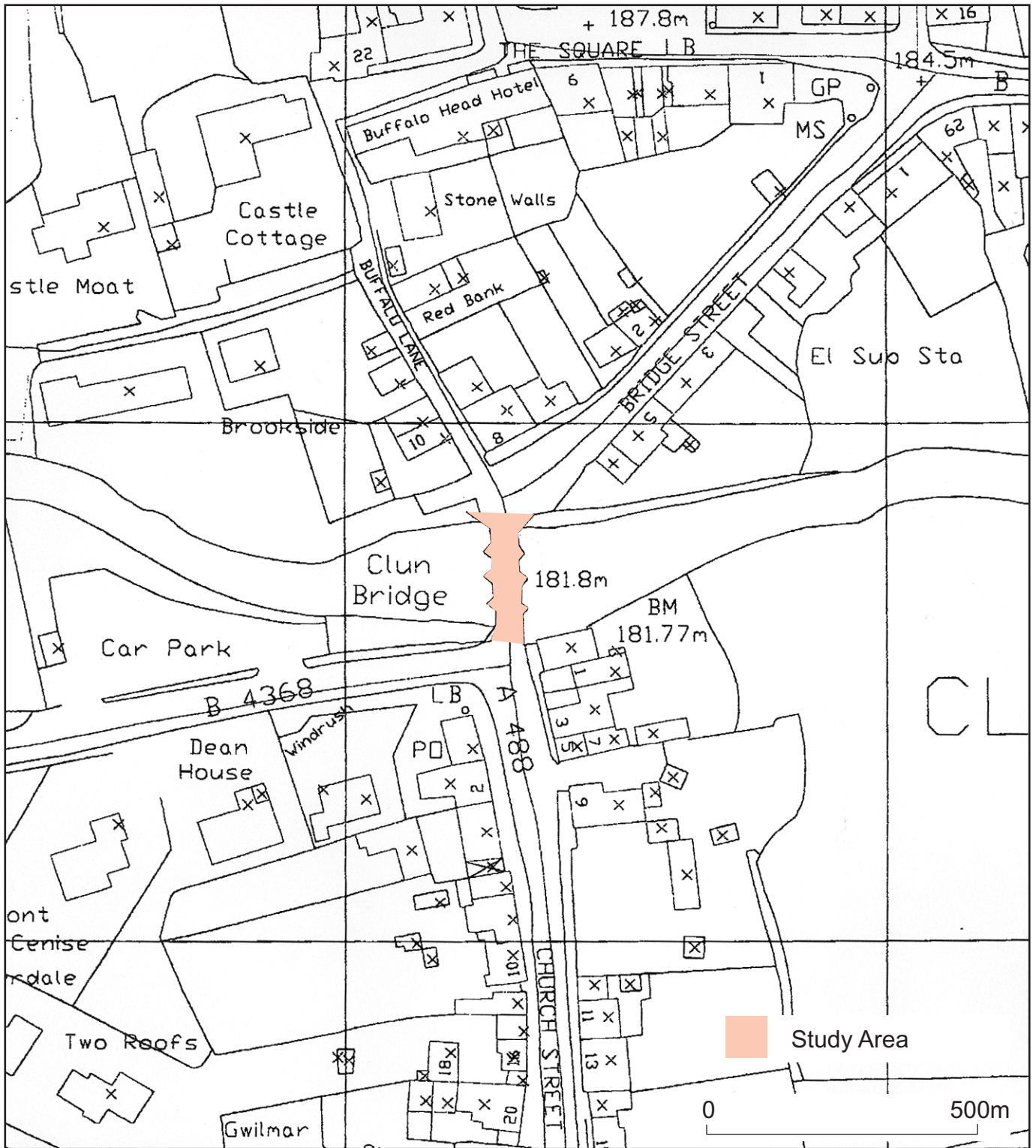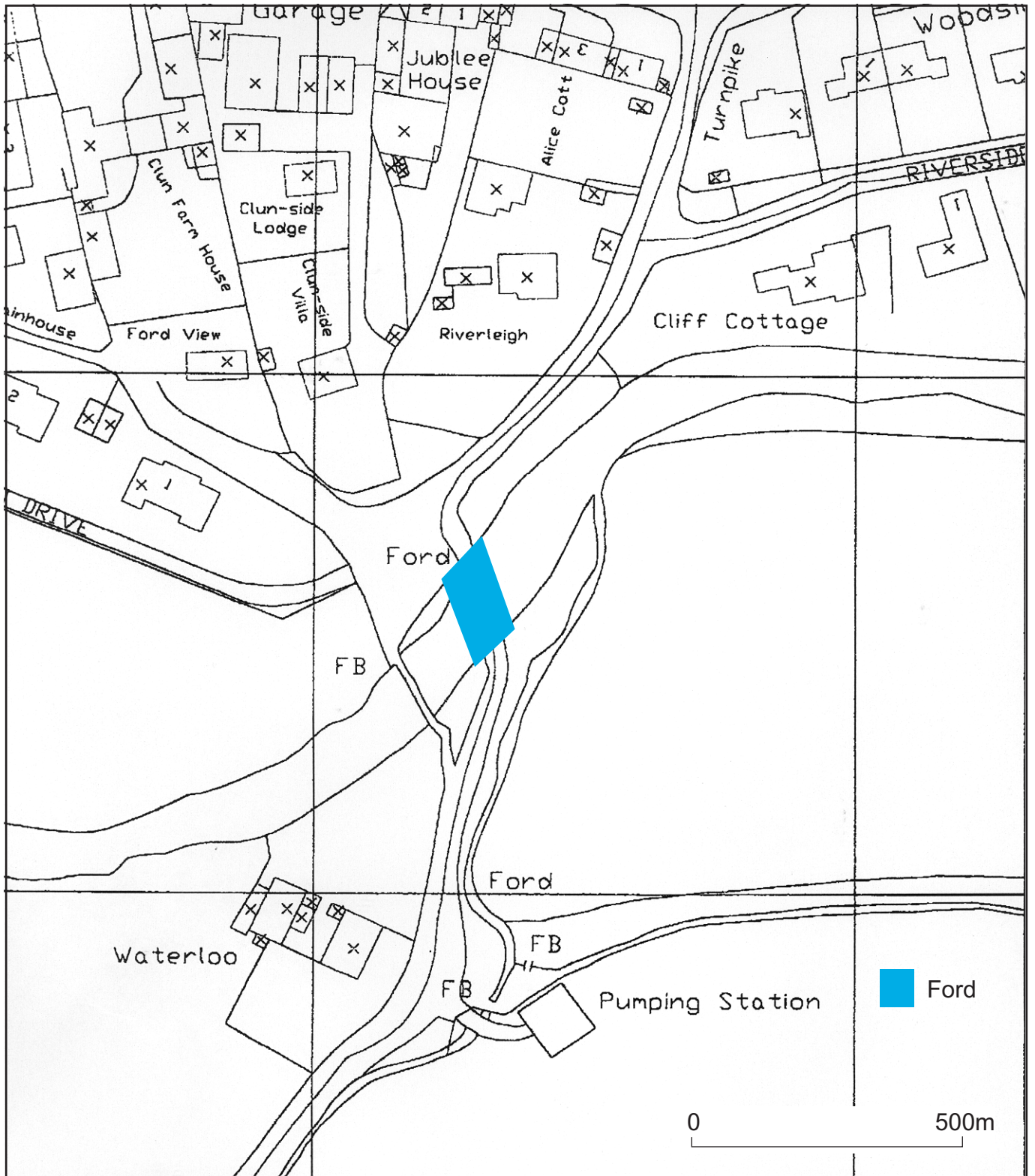
Willan, C.H 1966 *Historic Clun*

Map labels (Ordnance Survey map):

Study Area

Newcastle, Whitcott Keysett, Bicton, Little Hall, Bryndrinog, Lower Spoad, Whitcott Evan, Earthwork, Leasowes, Clun Castle, The Green, Clunton, Inn, Spoad, Weston Hill, Weston, Clun, Ford, Cemy, Hurst, Weir, River Clun, B 4368, Springhill Fm, Burfield, Llwyn, Churchbank, Woodside, Sowdley Wood, Radnor Wood, Earthwork FC, Steppleknoll, Stepple

Llanfair Hill, Rock Hill, Rockhill, Clun Hill, Pen-y-wern, Cairn, Rock of Woolbury, Black Hill, Cwm, Pen-y-cwm, Fiddler's Elbow, New Ho, Llanadevy, Cefn Hepreas, Upper Treverward, Treverward Ho, Homestead, Hobarris, Obley, Menutton, Hodre Hill, Pentre Hodre, Great Hagley, Meeroak Fm, Bryncalled, Purlogue, New Invention, Wax Hall, Chapel Lawn, Caer Caradoc, Pentre, Vron, River Redlake

Garbett Hall, Bwlch Fm, Selley Hall, Graig, Cwm-sanaham Hill, New Ho, Five Turnings, Garn Bank, Stow Hill, Holloway Rocks, Bucknell Wood, Monaughty Poeth, Knucklas, Skyborry Green, Lurkenhope, Offa's Dyke Path, Tumulus, River Teme, Nether Skyborry, Panpunton Hill, Stowe, Weston, Lower Stanage, Motte & Bailey, White Anthony Fm, The Whitterleys, Panpunton, Coed-dettan, Stud Fm, Kinsley Wood, KNIGHTON (TREFYCLAWDD), Heritage Centre, The Lee, Mitebrook, Garth Hill, Garth, Bryn Castell, Lower Woodhouse Fm, Llanshay, Park Bank Wood, Stanage Park, Upper Pitts Fm, Glyndwr's Way, Cwmgilla, Ffridd, Kennels, Hospl, CH, Sch, Weir, Grove Fm, Farrington, Gwernaffel, Long Wood, Folly Fm, Hill House Fm, Enclosure, The Mount Fm

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Fig.1

Fig.2

Garage

Jublee
House

Alice Cott

Turnpike

Woodsi

RIVERSID

Clun Farm House

Clun-side
Lodge

Clun-side
Villa

Riverleigh

Cliff Cottage

ainhouse

Ford View

DRIVE

Ford

FB

Ford

Waterloo

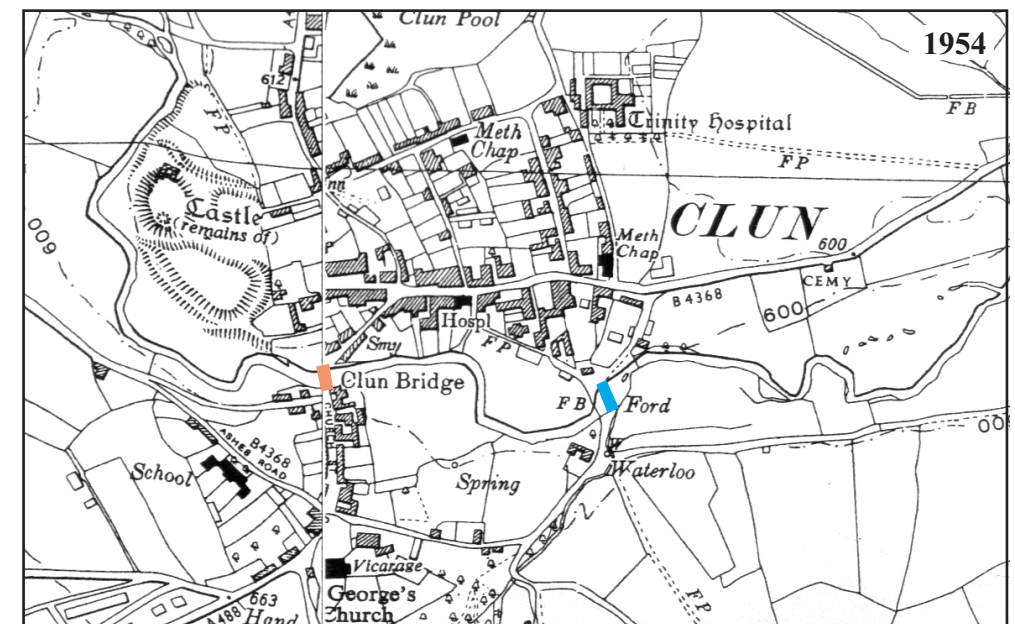FB

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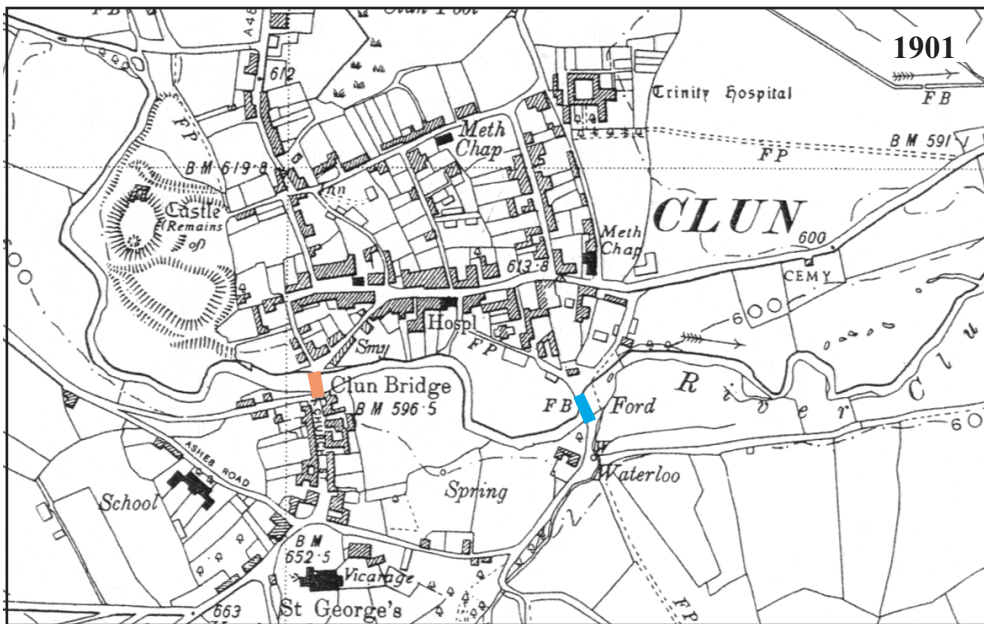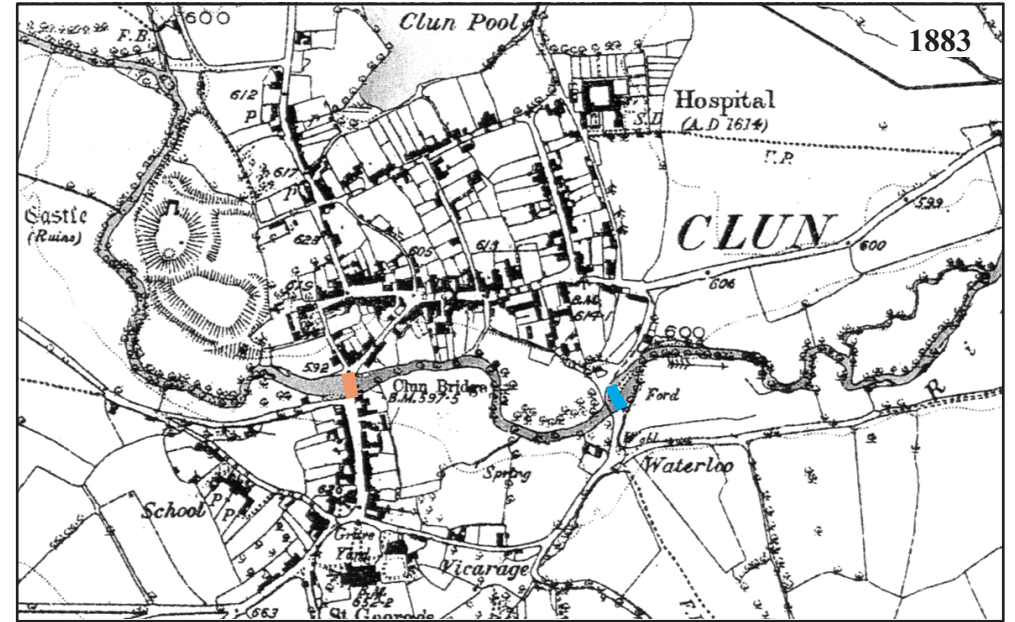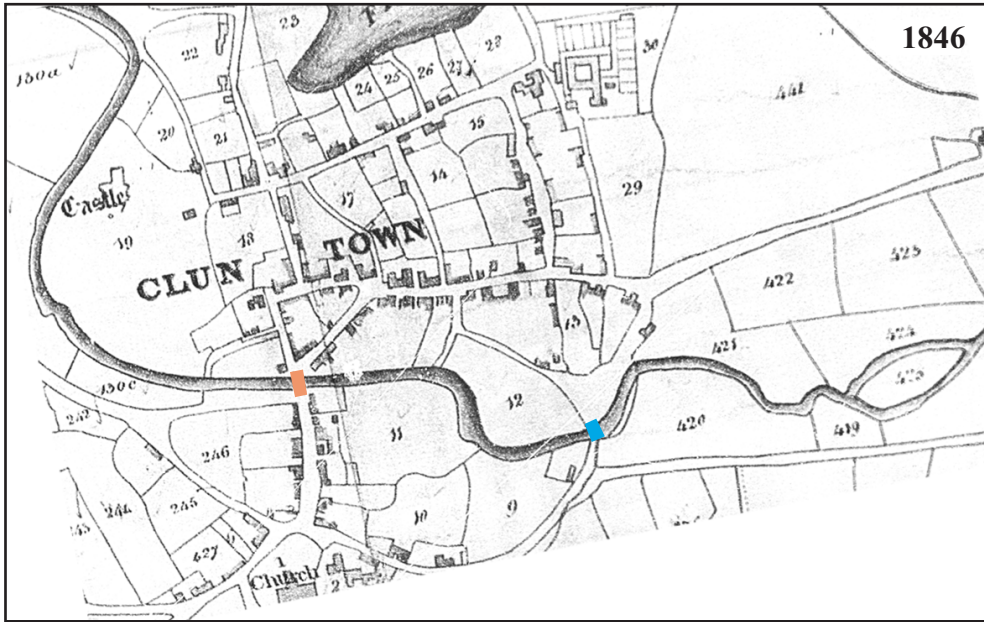Pumping Station

Ford

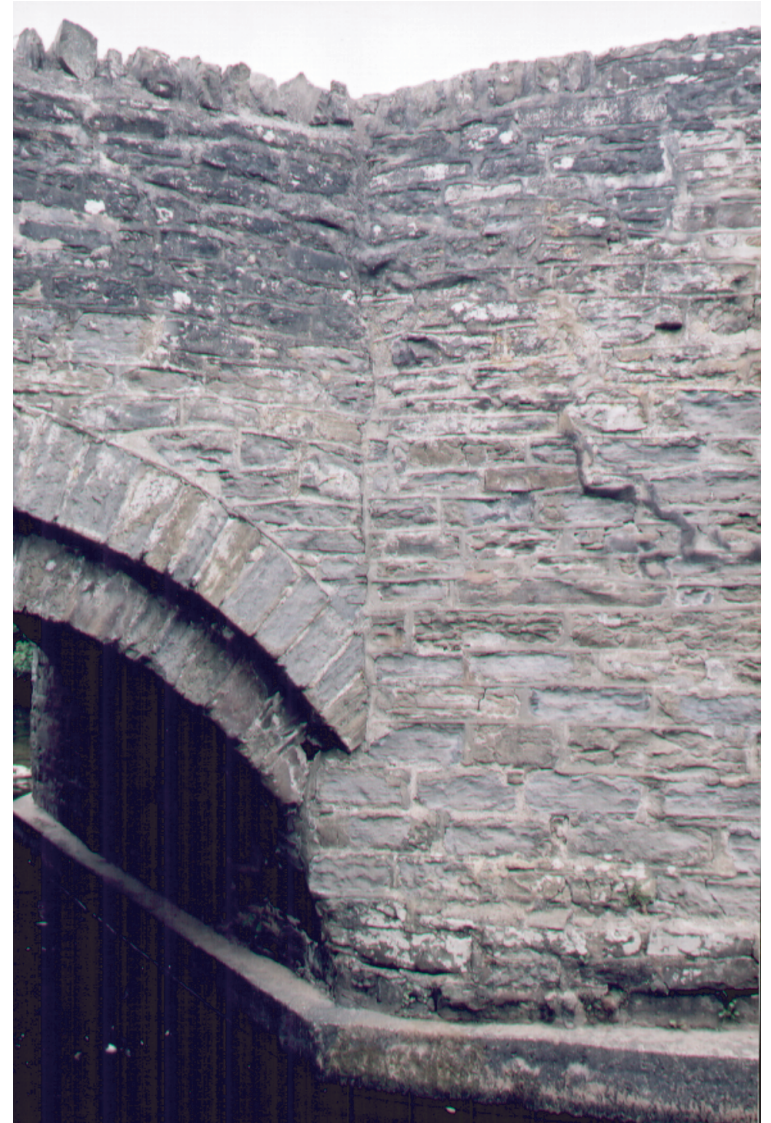0   500m

Fig.3

Fig.4

Plate 1

Plate 2

Plate 3

Plate 4

Plate 5

Plate 6