

# ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT DOCUMENT

## NEWTOWN

### 1. INTRODUCTION

English Heritage has initiated a national series of Extensive Urban Surveys. Several counties have commenced such projects including Hampshire County Council who are undertaking the survey of the small towns of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. The survey is intended to provide an up-to-date view of the archaeological resource in each of the towns building on earlier surveys (e.g. Hughes, 1976; Basford, 1980) and consists of three phases: Data Collection, Data Assessment and Strategy. The first stage, Data Collection, draws together the accessible history of the town, the archaeological knowledge and historic buildings data. The Data Assessment phase of the survey leads to the production of a report which presents a brief history of the town, (this document is not intended as a definitive history) an analysis of the plan of the town, an assessment of the archaeological and buildings data and the state of modern development resulting in the identification of areas of archaeological importance. Information about the development of the town through the ages, including plan-form analysis and the identified areas of archaeological importance, is also presented in cartographic form at the end of the report. The Strategy phase of the survey, uses the information presented in the Data Assessment combined with current statutory and non-statutory constraints, and present and future planning policy to make recommendations for policies regarding the historic environment. The policies may be incorporated into Local and Unitary Development Plans, non-statutory policies, supplementary guidance and for use within development control.

### 2. LOCATION

Newtown (NGR SZ 423906) lies approximately 1.5km from the northern coast of the Island, on the eastern side of the estuary of the Newtown River. The town is some 9km to the west of Newport, the county town, and approximately 8km east of Yarmouth.

The town is located on a slightly elevated ridge at around 10m OD with the tidal Newtown River on the south and west, and salt marshes and Clamerkin Lake to the north.

### 3. BACKGROUND

#### ARCHAEOLOGY

##### Prehistoric

A few prehistoric flint tools have been recovered from the western bank of Newtown River, but no finds of prehistoric date have been recovered from the town.

##### Roman

There are no sites of Roman date around the immediate vicinity of the town.

##### Anglo-Saxon

No sites or finds of the Anglo-Saxon period are known from the area of Newtown.

##### Medieval

Some finds of medieval date were recovered from a pipe trench excavated in the centre of the town.

##### Post-medieval

There are several post-medieval salterns recorded in the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) (See B9 below).

## HISTORY

### Saxon

There are no Anglo-Saxon documents that refer to the settlement of Newtown. Traditionally, Newtown is identified as one of the towns destroyed by the Danes in 1001 (Page 1912, 265) but there is no further evidence.

The estate of Calbourne, in which Newtown lay, was granted to the Bishop of Winchester in 826 by Egbert, King of Wessex and was the only estate held by the bishops in the Island (Beresford 1967, 445; Sawyer 1968, 274). Calbourne has been possibly identified as an estate centre from the mid- to late Anglo-Saxon period (Cahill, 1980, 22-3).

### Medieval

Calbourne, as recorded in the Domesday Book, was a large estate of 32 hides and 28.5 ploughs, and a recorded population of around one hundred (Munby 1982, fol 52c). There was also a smaller estate held by William, son of Stur, where there were just under three hides, seven recorded people and a mill (*ibid.*, fol 52d). It may be that the two holdings represent the medieval manors of Swainston and Westover. The Bishops of Winchester had a manor house at Swainston, 2km to the east of Calbourne.

The first reference to the settlement of Newtown is under the name of *Francheville* (meaning 'free town') and comes from the Bishop of Winchester's Court Roll of 1254-5 where there is an entry in the account of the manor of Swainston for work at a house 'in the new borough of *Francheville*' (Beresford 1967, 445). The following year the account roll had the bold heading '*Francheville*' (sic) (Beresford 1959, 203). The same year the Bishop-elect, Aymer de Valence, obtained a grant for a market and a fair for his manor of Swainston (Page 1912, 265), and it is presumed that the market was held at the new town, which was called the Borough of Swainston in a charter issued by the Bishop in 1256. The new borough was the last of the town foundations by the Bishops of Winchester (Beresford and St Joseph 1958, 242). There were seventy-three plots in the new borough (Beresford 1967, 445). It has been suggested that Shalfleet, less than 2km to the south-east, was originally a small port but the creek on which it is located silted up in the medieval period (D. Tomalin pers comm). It is possible that Shalfleet was experiencing difficulties due to the silting-up of the river, and that Newtown was created by the Bishop to benefit from those difficulties.

It would appear that there was already a settlement called *Stretley* on the site of the borough in 1254-5, and that some of the tenants of *Stretley* were allowed to remain on the site with the town laid out around their properties (Beresford 1967, 445). The new borough was provided with a chapel that was dependent upon the parish church at Calbourne (Page 1912, 268).

In 1284, the Bishop of Winchester was forced to relinquish all his manors to King Edward I until he paid a large fine. However, the king did not return the manor of Calbourne together with the manor-house at Swainston and the borough of Newtown (Beresford 1967, 445). This 'transaction' has also been regarded as the King acquiring the town because of its strategic importance (Beresford and St Joseph 1958, 242; Lloyd 1984, 71). King Edward visited his new estate, staying at Swainston, the following year and confirmed the charter issued by the bishop (Page 1912, 265). By 1297-8 there were sixty-six people occupying seventy plots in the town (Beresford 1959, 205).

Although Newtown possessed one of the safest havens in the Island, the town was never called upon to provide ships for the king's service, although ports such as St Helen's, near Brading did have to supply a ship for a military expedition in 1302/3 (Page 1912, 189). It is probable that the town was beginning to experience economic decline in the early to mid-fourteenth century. In 1334, the inhabitants of Newtown were taxed at a fifteenth of the value of their movable wealth rather than the usual tenth levied on the inhabitants of most towns (Beresford 1959, 214).

The town is thought to have been destroyed in the French raids of 1377 which had also reduced Yarmouth to ruins (Page 1912, 266). However, Beresford has suggested that there may have been other reasons for the decline of the settlement, including the competition of the Solent ports of Southampton, Yarmouth, Lymington and Christchurch, and the depopulation of the rural hinterland in the Island as a result of the conversions from arable to pastoral farming (Beresford 1959, 205). There would have also been competition from the king's borough of Newport. It has been suggested that there was a deliberate lack of interest in the fortunes of the town of Yarmouth by the king so as to reduce the competition with his borough of Newport (Beresford, 1967, 450), and it may be that there was a similar lack of effort to improve the fortunes of Newtown. In 1379, the Lay Subsidy raised 13s. from the fifty-six inhabitants from thirty-one households who were liable to pay the tax (PRO E179/173/41).

#### Post-medieval

The extent of decline in the town is indicated by comments made by Oglander in 1559 who stated that Newtown appeared to have once been larger than Newport was at that date, but that now there was no market or any good houses standing (Page 1912, 266).

The Hearth Tax of 1674 recorded only eleven houses in the town (Beresford 1959, 214), although only three years later a new Town Hall was built (Page 1912, 265). A plan of the town produced a century later shows twelve houses (Beresford 1959, 214).

Newtown sent two representatives to parliament from 1584 until 1832 when it was disfranchised as a "rotten borough" in the Reform Act (Page 1912, 267).

## **4. ANALYSIS**

### **TOPOGRAPHY OF NEWTOWN**

#### Market, streets and bridges

##### *Market*

There is no direct evidence for the location of the site of the market-place in the town. Broad Street, the widest street in the town, would have been suitable for a market, but only in the northern part of the street as to the south of the town hall (B6) the land falls away quite steeply. As Broad Street is also the site of the town hall, this may suggest that this is where the market was held, although there is no firm evidence for a market or town hall on this site before the seventeenth century. However from available cartographic sources, there is no suggestion that Broad Street was lined with burgage properties in the medieval period. In general, market places or market streets were favoured areas for settlement and the location of shops and in smaller towns usually formed the core of the settlement, for example, Andover, New Alresford and Overton, Hampshire. It is also suggested that Church Street and the small area known as Bowling Green at the eastern end of the town functioned as market areas (Beresford and St Joseph 1958, 243).

##### *Streets (Lost Streets B1)*

The earliest detailed plan of the town available (1768) shows that the town had a simple grid plan consisting of two streets orientated east - west (Gold Street, the western part of which was formerly called Silver Street, and High Street) and one principal north - south street (Broad Street). There was one further north - south street, Church Street, which linked High Street and Gold Street, although a map of 1768 shows Church Street extending to the south between the properties on the south side of High Street. A footpath now continues the line of Church Street to the south, and a lane takes the line of the street to the north, both of which may indicate that Church Street was once more extensive. Fieldwork has shown that there was a third east - west street that ran parallel to Gold Street, and which may have functioned as a back-lane to the properties on the north side of Gold Street. This street was connected to the lane that continues the northern line of Church Street at its western end, and the suggested continuation of the line of Broad Street to the north at its eastern end (Basford 1980, 46). This street had evidently disappeared by 1768.

The properties on the southern side of High Street may have also had a back-lane along their rear boundaries. There is a slight hollow along this line that may represent a street or a ditch demarking the rear boundary of the blocks of burgage plots.

#### *Bridge B2*

Broad Street crosses Newtown Creek *via* a bridge that is thought to be of post-medieval construction. It is probable that there was a bridge on this site in the medieval period as the road to Calbourne and the mother church probably crossed the river at or near this point, although no documentary sources have been located that refer to the bridge. It is possible that there was a ford crossing the river before the construction of the bridge.

### Property plots

#### *Burgage plots B3*

There is both cartographic and earthwork evidence for burgage properties in the town but the exact extent of properties is not definitely known, especially on the eastern edge of the town, but it is suggested that they extended to Bowling Green and possibly beyond as the plan of the town appears to have been symmetrical, with Church Street reflecting Bowling Green in the western part of the town (Beresford and St Joseph 1958, 245). The 1768 map of the town shows property plots concentrated in the area of the chapel between Gold Street and High Street, and along the southern side of High Street to the west of Broad Street. There were also a few properties shown between Gold Street and High Street, and on the southern side of High Street, to the east of Broad Street. Along the northern side of Gold Street some plots were shown at both the western and eastern ends of the street with closes between them. There is no evidence, either cartographic or earthwork, for burgage properties along Broad Street. In 1768 the only building in this area was the Town Hall that stands in the middle of the street. It has been suggested that the town did extend to the south of the Town Hall (Albin 1795, 345) but the land falls quite quickly towards the river and so would have made a less favourable area for settlement than the flat top of the spur along which Gold Street and High Street run.

#### *Possible burgage plots B4*

The limit of occupation at the eastern end of the town is not definitely known. There are several long, narrow, fields at the eastern end of the old High Street that have ridge and furrow within them, which probably indicates the limit of occupation.

#### *Priest's property B5*

In 1547 it was recorded that the priest of Calbourne was to maintain a priest in Newtown who should live in a house adjoining the churchyard (Page 1912, 268). Only two plots adjoin the churchyard as it is bounded by streets to the north, west and south; one to the east, and a small plot that appears to be taken out of the north-west corner of the churchyard. This small western plot seems to be the most likely site for the priest's house.

### Buildings

Most of the buildings of the town are of eighteenth- or nineteenth-century date.

#### *Town Hall B6*

The town hall was rebuilt in 1677, possibly on the foundations of an earlier stone undercroft, and was repaired in 1812 (Page 1912, 265). The location of the town hall is somewhat unusual in that rather than being at the heart of the town, as is usual with most town halls, it is located at the entrance to the town and was probably the first building one would have seen when approaching the town from the south.

### Chapel B7

It is probable that the new borough was provided with a chapel from, or shortly after, the date of foundation of the town. As a chapel dependent upon the parish church at Calbourne, the chapel would probably not have had a burial ground, with the dead of the town being carried

to Calbourne for burial. Although there is no record of the destruction of the chapel in the French raid of 1377, it is possible that the building was, at least, damaged in the attack. In the early eighteenth century the chapel was recorded as having been dilapidated since 1663, and by 1724 the condition of the building was so bad that it was not possible to hold services in it (Page 1912, 268). In 1835 a new chapel dedicated to the Holy Ghost was built on the site of the old chapel was (Page 1912, 267).

#### Quay B8

The map of Newtown of 1768 shows an irregularly shaped field called *Key Close* on the western edge of the town along part of Newtown Creek. This area probably formed the town's quay, providing an area for the loading, unloading and storage of goods being transported through the town. *Key Close* is an irregular shaped field with projections that link to both High Street and Gold Street. Mudge's map shows High Street and Gold Street leading directly into *Key Close*. Albin states that the harbour was capable of receiving vessels of 500 tonnes burden at high water (Albin 1795, 345).

#### Salterns B9

Although there seems to be little direct evidence for the manufacture of salt at Newtown in the medieval period, it is most probable that salt was produced in this area, and that many, if not all, of the pans that are depicted on eighteenth-century maps had their origins in the medieval period.

A map of 1768 shows salt pans and a "Feeding Pond" to the north-west of the town, and salt works are shown on other later maps. When the industry declined, the salt pans found a new use as oyster beds, but that industry also declined in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Some of the salt pans have been destroyed by the sea, and have reverted to salt marsh. A salt-house survived on this site until c.1980 when the owners of the site, The National Trust, demolished it.

#### Sea Wall (not on map extent)

By the eighteenth century a sea wall had been built around the area of mud flats to the north of the town, probably in an attempt to reclaim the mud for agricultural use. However, the wall has been breached and the area remains as mud flats exposed at low tide. The area later became the site of at least two salterns. Sections of the sea wall survive.

#### Brickworks B10

The map of the town of 1768 labels a field to the north of the town as 'Brick-kiln Close' which probably indicates that brick-making was undertaken near the town, although Gale (1987) makes no reference to a brickworks in Newtown.

#### Other trades and industries

The Lay Subsidy of 1379 (PRO E179/173/41) listed six boatmen, three fishermen, four butchers, two weavers and two tailors, a smith and a baker.

#### Ridge and Furrow B11

There are extensive remains of ridge and furrow in many of the fields surrounding the town. In some closes the ridge and furrow appears to encroach into areas that are thought to have formed part of the area of burgage plots.

## 5. RECENT DEVELOPMENT

There has not been any modern development in the town. There are a few houses of early twentieth century date and another that was built in the 1960's.

## 6. IMPORTANCE AND POTENTIAL

### CRITERIA FOR THE AREAS OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE AND POTENTIAL

#### Introduction

The primary aim of the Data Collection and Data Assessment phases of the project is to enable the identification of areas of archaeological importance and potential within each town to inform the Strategy phase of the project. Four such areas of importance and potential have been defined, and the criteria for these are briefly described below. Although they are all described in this introduction, not all towns will have areas within each of these categories.

#### Levels of Archaeological Importance and Potential

The levels of importance and potential are Areas Comprising Nationally Important Remains; Areas of High Archaeological Potential; Areas of Archaeologically Potential; and Areas of Limited Archaeological Potential.

As additional archaeological information becomes available, and a greater understanding of the archaeological resource of the town is achieved, it is possible that some areas will be re-assigned to different levels of potential.

#### *Areas Comprising Nationally Important Remains*

Areas of identified nationally important archaeological remains, whose location, character and importance have been demonstrably established. These remains merit physical preservation *in situ*. The criteria used to assess national importance is set out in Annex 4 of the Secretary of State's non-statutory guidance note PPG16, and are briefly noted below.

- Period
- Rarity
- Documentation
- Group Value
- Survival/Condition
- Fragility/Vulnerability
- Diversity
- Potential

This category will include Scheduled Ancient Monuments.

#### *Areas of High Archaeological Potential*

Areas considered to include other important archaeological remains, whose location, character and importance are inferred from observation, research and interpretation. Those remains are likely to merit preservation *in situ*. Where preservation is not justified appropriate archaeological recording will be required.

Areas of High Archaeological Potential may:

- Contain well preserved, archaeological deposits which may not be of national importance, but which are of importance to the understanding of the origins and development of the town;
- Be areas where the destruction, without archaeological record, of well preserved archaeological deposits means that the last surviving elements have an increased value for the understanding of the origins and development of the town;

- Have been identified as having significant water-logged deposits;
- Have a high number of existing medieval buildings. The survival of medieval buildings may also indicate that there is well preserved stratigraphy beneath the building;
- Be areas that are thought to have High Archaeological Potential due to their proximity to other, recognised, plan elements even though there is little direct evidence to indicate high importance. For example, the area around an isolated church that may have been the focus for earlier settlement may be defined as an Area of High Archaeological Potential.

It is possible that areas of High Archaeological Potential may, through further archaeological or documentary work, be shown to include Nationally Important Remains.

#### *Areas of Archaeological Potential*

Areas considered to contain archaeological remains of some importance. Where these remains cannot be preserved *in situ*, they are likely to require appropriate archaeological recording.

Such areas:

- Are significant elements in the plan but where there has been a moderate level of modern development or cellaring;
- Have had little archaeological work undertaken within them but cartographic or documentary sources suggest that they may have been within the historic core of the town or areas of important suburban development.

Surviving archaeological deposits in Areas of Archaeological Potential will probably have a relatively high density but, due to pressures of development over many centuries, there may be a high level of fragmentation.

#### *Areas of Limited Archaeological Potential*

Areas considered to include archaeological remains of a character unlikely to provide significant information, or archaeological remains whose integrity has been severely compromised by development. These remains may require appropriate archaeological recording if threatened by development.

Areas of Limited Archaeological Potential may:

- Have a good survival of archaeological deposits, but where there is likely to be a low density of archaeological features;
- Be areas with significant modern development resulting in limited archaeological potential, either due to the scale of development or due to the limited nature of the archaeological resource before development;
- Be areas where the current hypothesis supports only a limited possibility of encountering archaeological remains.

## THE POTENTIAL OF NEWTOWN

### Areas of Archaeological Importance and Potential

#### *Areas Comprising Nationally Important Archaeological Remains*

The Town Hall is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SM IW18).

The extent of the town, its surrounding fields, boundaries and tracks, and the saltern to the north of the town is an Area Comprising Nationally Important Archaeological Remains, although currently unscheduled. Newtown was a planned new town created at the instigation of a Bishop of Winchester and was one of several foundations created by the Bishops during the thirteenth century. The town is now largely deserted and as such represents an almost unique opportunity to preserve such a foundation. In north Hampshire the Bishops created another town, also called Newtown, but at that site there is little in the way of visible physical remains, either for the property plots or field systems surrounding the town. Most of the other new-town foundations survive as small towns and so in those

places there has been a continued pressure on archaeological remains which will have led to some fragmentation of the deposits. However, at Newtown, Isle of Wight, much of the street pattern is visible, partly within the fields or as green lanes, with burgage plot boundaries within a large part of the conjectured area of burgage plots, and as many of the property plots have been deserted from the late medieval or post-medieval periods, it is probable that there will be a greater survival of medieval archaeological deposits, although gardening activities in some plots may have compromised the remains.

Around the core of the burgage plots there is evidence for the fields of the town, with ridge and furrow surviving in many of the fields. Also of importance is the actual field pattern, particularly at the south-eastern edge of the settlement where there is a series of long, narrow, fields. The boundaries of many of the fields consist of banks and ditches. Investigation of these features where they intersect may lead to an understanding of the development of the fields. The fields were intimately linked to the town and, because there appears to have been little recent alteration in the field pattern, they represent an opportunity to examine a medieval planted town with its associated agricultural landscape. As Newtown was also dependent on its agricultural output, it is probable that much of the town's rubbish was deposited on the fields in manuring and so even unstratified artefacts, particularly pottery, within the fields can be used to make statements about aspects of the economy of the town.

At the western end of the town is the probable site of the quay, the structure of which, or part of it, may survive.

It is suggested that the saltern to the north-west of the town is also of national importance and should be considered for scheduling. Salt making was undertaken on the site from the eighteenth century at least, and may have begun in the medieval period. There appears to be little knowledge, generally, about the medieval salt-making industries in the Solent area. However, it is acknowledged that little work has been done on the other salterns in the Island and so it may be shown that there are better examples.

#### *Areas of High Archaeological Potential*

The silted-up estuary to the south of the town is an Area of High Archaeological Potential. Within this area there may be the remains of abandoned vessels or timber wharfages, and evidence for goods traded through the port.

#### *Areas of Archaeological Potential*

The sea wall that was built in an attempt to reclaim the area of mud flats to the north of the town may include evidence for its date of construction, and so add to the knowledge of the land-use around the town.

#### Issues to be resolved

Newtown represents a rare opportunity to study one of the Bishop of Winchester's new towns in its entirety. All aspects of the development of the town, including building forms and sizes, burgage plot division regarding sizes and boundary forms, the streets, the quay, and the surrounding fields are available for intensive study utilising both non-intrusive and intrusive survey methods. It may also be possible to compare Newtown with another of the Bishop's new towns, Newtown in Hampshire, which is also a deserted town.

## **7. SOURCES**

### **DOCUMENTARY SOURCES**

There appear to be few medieval documentary sources relating to properties in Newtown. There may be references to the town in the archives of the Bishops of Winchester and within royal archives at the Public Record Office.

Documents referenced as PRO, for example, the 1379 Lay Subsidy (PRO E179/173/41) have been accessed through transcriptions held in the County Records Office.

## MAPS AND PLANS

- 1768 A plan of the Borough of Newtown alias Frankville by James Mallett  
1769 Andrews' map of the Isle of Wight  
1810 Mudge's map of the Isle of Wight  
1908 OS 25" map 3rd Edition Sheets 89.14 and 89.15

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## 8. ABBREVIATIONS

c.	<i>circa</i> , about
CPR	<i>Calendar of Patent Rolls</i>
Ed	Editor
IWCRO	Isle of Wight County Records Office
nd	No date of publication given
NGR	National Grid Reference
OD	Ordnance Datum
OS	Ordnance Survey
pers comm	personal communication
PPG	Planning Policy Guidance
SMR	Sites and Monuments Record