

## ABERYSTWYTH

- The town as it is today

Aberystwyth is now a thriving university and seaside town serving a large hinterland of mid and west Wales, with a population of some 13,000 inhabitants (2001). It is a centre of learning not only by virtue of having a long-established university but also by being home to the National Library of Wales. The layout of medieval Aberystwyth survives reasonably well in the modern townscape, particularly its street-pattern. The line of the former circuit of defences is easily picked out by the curving alignment of Mill Street, Chalybeate Terrace and Baker Street, and viewed from the air the walled town clearly sits proud, slightly raised above the lower-lying surrounding built-up area. The course of the town defences is also indicated by a change in ground surface level, most notably at the junction of Baker Street and Little Darkgate Street. No standing remains of the former defences exist however, except at the castle, which is now ruinous.<sup>31</sup> The medieval burgesses' plots are today filled with what from external appearance are mainly post-medieval buildings.<sup>32</sup> Some of the plot boundaries of properties along Great Darkgate Street are very substantial indeed, and no doubt there are some that are survivals from the time when the town was laid out. To date though, excepting the castle, little systematic archaeological excavation has taken place in Aberystwyth. Modern development has occurred in areas of the walled town away from the two main streets, in the south east quarter and western half especially. Much of it began in the mid-nineteenth century, as is evident comparing eighteenth and nineteenth century plans of the town. But despite these changes much of the physical layout of Aberystwyth's urban landscape today – especially its street pattern and series of plots along each side of the two main streets – is traceable as far back as the time of the town's foundation, in 1277.

---

<sup>31</sup> On the various discoveries of remains of the town walls see Griffiths, 'Aberystwyth', p.37, while the castle is discussed in Taylor, *Welsh Castles*, pp.7-16.

<sup>32</sup> For more details on historical monuments in Aberystwyth see [www.coflein.gov.uk](http://www.coflein.gov.uk)