

Archaeological assessment of Newport, Shropshire

Victoria Buteux

with contributions by Derek Hurst, Richard Morriss, Elizabeth Pearson and Paul Stamper

Summary

The historic town of Newport was surveyed during the Central Marches Historic Towns Survey, a desk-based study of 64 smaller historic towns in Shropshire, Herefordshire and Worcestershire. Archaeological and documentary evidence relating to the historic core of Newport was carefully analysed, comprising topographic data, published and unpublished archaeological reports, museum collections, primary and secondary historical sources, historical maps, and field data recorded by the project team.

Detailed evidence is provided on the character and layout of the settlement in the medieval and post-medieval periods. For each period the available information is analysed and mapped in detail, and a model of the development of the town is proposed. In addition, the evidence for pre-urban occupation is considered, together with evidence of 19th century occupation. All archaeologically-relevant information has been recorded as part of the county Sites and Monuments Record. Specialist assessments of artefacts, ecofacts, standing buildings and documentary sources are included. A detailed archaeological research framework has been developed for Newport, which will inform future archaeological investigations as well as management decisions.

It is probable that the historic core of Newport contains buried archaeological deposits, and these are judged to have high potential. There is also moderate potential for the recovery of artefact and ecofact assemblages. Waterlogged deposits may survive in the vicinity of the settlement, and this a rare phenomenon in the region. However these assessments may require revision when archaeological deposits are recorded through fieldwork. The historic buildings constitute a complementary body of evidence, and there is judged to have low to moderate potential for detailed study and recording. The surviving documentary sources are very few in number and consequently the potential for further study is limited.

1 Introduction

1.1 Location and landuse

The urban area of Newport is located at NGR SJ 745 191 in Wrekin District. The present settlement of Newport comprises large areas of 20th century housing development around the historic core.

1.2 Topography, geology and soils

Newport lies at a height of between 65m and 75m OD. The town is aligned along a north-south route way on slightly higher ground to the south of the Strine Brook. The soils are unsurveyed but are situated in an area of well drained typical brown sands of the Newport

1 Association formed in glacio-fluvial and river terrace deposits, and peaty soils of the Adventurers 1 Association (Soil Survey of England and Wales, Ragg *et al* 1984) overlying Triassic Sherwood Sandstone (British Geological Survey 1:250,000, sheet 52°N-0.4°W).

1.3 Chronological outline

Newport was founded as a new market town by Henry I within his royal manor of Edgmond (Eyton 1859, 129). The first surviving charter dates to 1163-1166 when Henry II confirms to his burgesses of *Novus Burgus* all the liberties and customs they were granted by Henry I (Beresford and Finberg 1973, 152).

Newport lay in an area of ponds and meres and the town was famous for its viviary, the Newport Pool. The pool probably existed before the foundation of the town (see section 2) and the importance of fish to the economy of the early town is reflected in the dedication of the church to St Nicholas, the patron saint of fishermen. One of the original services of the burgesses was to convey fish from the pool to the King's Court (Eyton 1859, 132).

Henry de Audley became Lord of Edgmond and Newport in 1227 (Eyton 1859, 132). The lords of the manor do not seem to have resided at Newport, however, and by 1421 the manor house to the south of the town had become ruinous (Prentice 1986, 28).

The town prospered during the medieval period and by 1316-17 there may have been as many as 81 burgages (Prentice 1986, 25). The growing town had a problem with its water supply and in 1309 Richard Attenbruggehend of Newport gave permission for pipes to be laid from his spring to feed cisterns placed below ground level at four places along the High Street (Prentice 1986, 22).

By the middle of the 14th century the town was trading in leather and furs, cloth including linen and silk, wood, coal, peat, tin, copper, lead and foodstuffs including fish (Prentice 1986, 23, 25). Leather working in particular continued to be important to the economy of the town throughout its history.

Newport was relatively little touched by the Civil War but in 1661 an engagement took place, just to the west of the town, between the Royalist and Parliamentarian forces. In the post-medieval period Newport was one of the seven livestock markets in Shropshire specialising in cattle (Prentice 1986, 33) and in 1663 the first horse market was held in the town. Manufacturing industries at this period included tanning and the hemp processing. Hemp butts are marked on the 17th century map of the town (Hill 1981). In 1665 a fire broke out which burnt down about 152 houses along with malt houses, stables, part of the Market Hall and all the documents relating to the borough (Jones 1886, 163).

In the 17th and 18th century Newport was on the London to Holyhead Road and through traffic was important to the economy of the town. In 1760 the road was turnpiked. From the late 18th century the construction of canals in the area benefited Newport and in 1835 a branch of the Birmingham and Liverpool Junction Canal from Newport to Wappenshall was opened. This provided a convenient way of transporting bulky raw materials and a gas works, rope manufacturers, metal foundries and a brick and tile works developed as a result (Prentice 1986). In 1846 the Shropshire Union Railway and Canal Company bought the Newport canal and by 1850 a railway was running from Stafford to Wellington through Newport.

In 1801 the town had a population of 2307. By 1851 this had risen to only 2906, lower than the national average. Whilst the town seems to have been relatively prosperous in this period, perhaps because of its legal status as a corporate borough (Prentice 1986, 54), it was losing its municipal functions and was deprived of borough status in 1886.

1.4 Placename studies

The first record of Newport dates to c 1136-1139 when it is referred to as *Novoburgo*, or "new market town". In 1322 it is called *Novus Burgus* but the name *Newport* first occurs in 1221-22. The English and Latin names for Newport co-existed until the 14th century (Gelling 1990).

1.5 Syntheses of documentary and archaeological data

The documentary evidence relating to Newport has been summarised by Eyton (1859) and Jones (1854 to 1857). More recently a number of popular works on the towns history have been produced (Hartley Willan 1979; Prentice 1986). No synthesis of the archaeological data has been carried out. The present assessment was carried out by the Central Marches Historic Towns Survey in 1994. The text was revised in March 1995 to incorporate the results of fieldwork undertaken by the Survey (see section 1.7). No information published after December 1994 has been incorporated into this assessment.

1.6 Cartographic sources

The 17th century map of Newport (Hill 1681), the tithe map of 1841 (Foxall nd) and the Ordnance Survey first edition 1:2500 maps (*Shropshire sheet XXXI.5 and 9* (1881-2)) have been used to aid in the identification of remains and the definition of components.

1.7 Archaeological excavations and surveys

There have been no recorded archaeological excavations, watching briefs or surveys in the town of Newport. The only available archaeological evidence comes from the few chance finds recorded over the last century. An arrowhead was recovered from the Strine Brook (SA 811) and a medieval brass weight was found close to Lower Bar (SA 5997). An oak post was found during pipe laying at the junction of Lower Bar and Salters Lane and may be the remains of a toll-gate (SA 5998, Prentice 1986, 65).

Fieldwork was undertaken by the Central Marches Historic Towns Survey in November 1994. This identified remains, investigated and revised the extent of components, and recorded 18th and 19th century cellarage and modern developments in the urban area.

1.8 Acknowledgments and personnel

Survey fieldwork was undertaken by Victoria Buteux and Nigel Topping. Analysis and report writing were carried out by Victoria Buteux and the report was edited by Hal Dalwood.

2 Pre-urban evidence

The only evidence of prehistoric activity in the immediate area of the town are the animal bones recovered from the peat during the excavation for the canal (SA 5996) and the flint arrow head found in the Strine (SA 811). At Domesday the site of the later town was within the manor of Edgmond held by Roger, Earl of Shrewsbury. The manor was appropriated by the Crown after the revolt of his son Robert at the end of the 11th century. In 1086 Edgmond contained a fishery, presumably Newport Pool. It seems likely that a small settlement may have been associated with this fishery but there is no documentary evidence for a settlement at Newport until the 12th century.

3 Medieval archaeological evidence

3.1 Medieval remains and buildings

No medieval earthworks or buried remains are recorded at Newport although a medieval brass weight was found during roadworks at Lower Bar (SA 5997). The church of St Nicholas (SA 820), the Old Guildhall (SA 818), and the early 16th century core of 75 High Street (SA 13180) are the only standing structures of medieval date within the town. The church has been described, and the sequence of construction interpreted (SA 820; Crannage 1905, 170-2). The Guildhall (SA 818) was thought by Pevsner to be 17th century but contains the remains of a 15th century open hall. This building has been studied in some detail (Moran 1985), and in 1992 a series of samples were taken for dendrochronological dating (Baugh 1992).

3.2 Medieval urban components

Analysis of the evidence summarised above indicated the existence of 14 urban components. The characteristics of these urban components are summarised below.

Manorial enclosures (SA 812). A medieval moated site lay to the south of the town on Station Road. This may have been the manor house of the Audleys. The date of construction is not known but site was ruinous by 1421 (Prentice 1986, 25). On the 1881 Ordnance Survey map the earthworks of the moat are still clearly visible. The area is now covered by a cottage hospital but some traces of the moat can still be seen in the gardens.

Churchyard (SA 6088). The churchyard lies in the centre of the main market area. Its medieval extent is not known but in 1446 land "between the churchyard and the kings highway" was granted for the building of the almshouses (SA 810). This suggests that the churchyard was a small area directly around the church building. St Nicholas' was probably founded early in the 12th century and a priest witnessed the first town charter (Eyton 1859, 130; Beresford 1988, 482). Its location in the market place may suggest that it was originally a chapel of ease, as was the case with St Anne's, Bewdley. Initially the church, or chapel, was dependent on the mother church at Church Aston, held by Shrewsbury Abbey (Thorn and Thorn 1986; Rowley 1972, 179), but was elevated to full parish status in 1221 (Beresford 1988, 482). In 1442 Henry VI empowered the Bishop of Shrewsbury to sell the church to Thomas Draper a native of Newport. He endowed the church with St Mary's Chantry and two chaplains (Eyton 1859, 140). The present church (SA 820) was largely rebuilt and restored in the later 19th century but still contains traces of late 12th masonry (Crannage 1903).

Religious houses (SA 809, SA 815). The first religious house in Newport was the hospital of St Giles, founded before 1357 (SA 815). The location of this hospital and its dissolution date are not known.

In 1442 Thomas Draper founded St Mary's College (SA 809). This consisted of a warden, in priests orders, and four chaplains or fellows (Eyton 1859). The college was dissolved in 1547 and tenanted for the Crown from 1547 to 1581 (Jones 1885). The extent of the college is not known and no remains of the medieval buildings survive. The house on the site (22 St Mary Street, SA 14059) was rebuilt in 1700, and was used as a parsonage until 1866 (SCC SMR file SA 809; VCH 1973). This component cannot be accurately defined but has been drawn to include a group of burgage plots close to 22 St Mary Street in an effort to include the area of the medieval college.

Almshouses (SA 810). In 1446 a grant of land to the north of the churchyard was given to William Glover on condition that he built almshouses for the "most poor and impotent persons of the town" (Jones 1885).

Guildhall (SA 818). On the western side of the High Street stands a 15th century open hall which may have been the medieval Guildhall (SA 818). The building has been studied (Moran 1985) and denrochronological samples taken which provide a date for the main hall of 1486 (Baugh 1992).

Market place (SA 6091). The whole of the wide High Street could have acted as a market place. The triangular area just to the south of the churchyard contained a market cross (SA 1110) and the Booth Hall (SA 6085) and was the focus for market activity probably from the town's foundation.

Street system (SA 6093). The axis of the medieval town was the north-south road formed by Lower Bar, High Street/St Mary's Street and Upper Bar. This routeway probably predates the town although there is no archaeological or documentary evidence of its construction date. A number of minor roads lead east and west from main road. The only known medieval reference to a minor road is to a street called Swine Cross which may have been on the line of, or close to, the present New Street (Prentice 1986, 37).

Tenement plots (SA 6095, SA 6096, SA 6097). Almost all the tenement plots in Newport front the main north-south route through the town. These plots can be seen clearly on the first edition Ordnance Survey maps of 1892 and 1881. The plots, particularly in the centre of the town, are very long and on the east side of the High Street (SA 6095) stretched from main road eastwards to a stream which ran along the line of the modern Audley Road and Water Lane (SA 6056). In the post-medieval period a number of tanneries were located on this stream and such long plots were no doubt intended to maximise the potential of the tenements by providing access to water for industrial purposes at the back and the market area for commercial purposes at the front. It is possible that this was also the case to the west of the High Street (SA 6096) and that Beaumaris Road may mark the line of an early watercourse. However, no evidence for such a watercourse can be found on the 19th century tithe and Ordnance Survey maps.

Cartographic evidence suggests that the burgage plots were not laid out all at the same time. Without detailed plan analysis and excavation, however, the sequence of development is hard to determine. An area of short plots and curved boundaries between Station Road and Wellington Road (SA 6097 and the very south end of SA 6096) may indicate the location of a pre-urban settlement next to the manor house.

Bridging point (SA 6094). The bridging point of the Strine Brook at Newport also served as the dam for Newport Pool (see below). In the Domesday Survey a fishery is mentioned within the manor of Edgmond (Thorn and Thorn 1986). If this was the same as the Newport Pool than the bridge/dam pre-dates the foundation of the town. Nothing is known of the construction of the bridge/dam in the medieval period.

Fishpond (SA 814). A fishery is mentioned in the Domesday Survey and the Newport Pool may date from the 11th century or earlier. The town of Newport probably owes its foundation to the presence of the pool and one of the original services of the burgesses was to convey fish from the pool to the King's Court. This custom continued as a right due to the Audley's (Eyton 1859, 132). A special officer was in charge of the vivary. The first documented holder of this post was Reiner de Novo Burgo, who was succeeded c 1200 by his son Alexander (Eyton 1859, 137-138). The east end of the pond was formed by an embanked road leading out of the town (see above). The pool was first mapped in 1681 (Hill 1681) and its extent in the medieval period is not known.

Mill (SA 6090). A mill is mentioned in association with the fishery in Domesday

(Thorn and Thorn 1986), and in 1317 a water mill and fishpond are documented. (Eyton 1859, 135). The location of this medieval water-mill is not known but it is probable that it was situated close to Newport Pool which would have acted as a mill pond. Two leats in this area are shown on the 1681 map of the town (Hill 1681) and in the 18th and early 19th centuries a mill was situated on the southernmost of these. It is possible that this was the site of the medieval mill.

3.3 Medieval urban form

Definition and classification. The medieval urban form (SA 6107) has been defined and mapped, based on the extent of the identified urban components and in particular the tenement plot boundaries. The available evidence indicates that the medieval urban form of Newport can be classified as a small medieval market town (English Heritage 1992).

Survival. Because of the lack of any archaeological fieldwork the survival of medieval buried remains cannot be demonstrated at Newport. There has been continuous occupation in the area from at least the 12th century, however, and comparison with other similar towns suggests that medieval buried remains should exist although they will have been damaged by post-medieval and modern activity. The best preserved and deepest deposits are likely to occur in the valley of the Strine Brook where waterlogging may have preserved organic remains. Deposits may also be well preserved in ditches or pits in other parts of town. At the site of the manor house (SA 812), for example, the infilling of the moat with rubbish in the 19th century (Anon 1896) may have protected earlier deposits.

Certain components of the urban form such as the churchyard, tenement plots, market and street system can be readily identified in the modern townscape but little or no trace remains of the manorial enclosure, mill or fishpond. The medieval form is moderately well preserved in the present settlement.

4 Post-medieval archaeological evidence

4.1 Post-medieval remains and buildings

With the exception of an wooden post found at Lower Bar (SA 5998) there have been no recorded observations of buried deposits of possibly post-medieval date from Newport. The churchyard of St Nicholas's is represented by an area of raised ground in the centre of the market place (SA 6088). There are three later 16th century listed buildings, thirteen 17th century listed buildings and twenty three 18th century listed buildings within the area of the post-medieval town. Very few of these buildings have been studied in any detail.

4.2 Post-medieval urban components

Analysis of the evidence summarised above indicated the existence of twenty six urban components. The characteristics of these urban components are summarised below.

Churchyard (SA 6088). The exact boundary of the post-medieval churchyard are not known but the 17th century map of the town shows almshouses and other buildings very close to the church. This suggests that the churchyard was small and possibly little changed from the medieval period. The grave yard was extended to its present size in 1836 (Jones 1885).

Almshouses (SA 810, SA 813). The churchyard almshouses (SA 810), founded in 1446, continued in use throughout the post-medieval period. In 1836 they were demolished to make way for the graveyard extension.

In 1656 William Adams left money for the construction of almshouses in Newport (SA 813). In 1657 these were built as part of a complex with the Grammar School also endowed by Adams (Prentice 1986, 32). The almshouses were much rebuilt in 1821 (Pevsner 1958, 218).

Grammar school (SA 808). A medieval school, probably a chantry foundation, is documented at Newport (Prentice 1986, 29-32) but its location is not known. In 1548 the school was kept by Richard Robbins one of the fellows of St Mary's College. At some period prior to 1656 the school occupied the Booth Hall in the market place and when William Adams provided in his will for a new Grammar School building to the west of the High Street (SA 808) he noted that "it is being in my experience that the Booth Hall where the school for the said town was formally held was very ill convenient both for the town schoolmaster and scholars" (Prentice 1986, 30).

Market place (SA 6106). Throughout the post-medieval period markets were held in the High Street but by at least 1681 buildings had encroached on the market area to the north and west of the church (SA 6089, SA 5993) and in a triangular block to the south of the church (SA 6092) creating St Mary Street (Hill 1681). The Booth Hall and market cross still stood close to the churchyard but in the 17th century a Market Hall (SA 6058) and Buttercross (SA 5991, SA 5992) were built. These buildings were demolished in the middle of the 19th century.

Street system (SA 6105). The main roads in the town were established in the medieval period and are still used today. The main north-south road through the town was turnpiked in 1760 and Stafford Street was a new road dating to 1778 (Prentice 1986, 42). The remains of the Lower Bar toll gate were observed during pipelaying at some time prior to 1986 (SA 5998).

Tenement plots (SA 6089, SA 6092, SA 6095, SA 6096, SA 6097, SA 6098, SA 6101, SA 6102, SA 6103, SA 6104). The medieval tenement plots (SA 6095, SA 6096, SA 6097) continued to be occupied throughout the post-medieval period. Hill's map of Newport (Hill 1681) shows the town extending as far north as Chetwynd End and the area of shorter plots to the north of Slaters Lane may be post-medieval expansion (SA 6098, SA 6102, SA 6104). At the south end of the town similar short plots to the east of Upper Bar (SA 6101) were built up by 1681 and may represent late medieval or post-medieval expansion.

Blocks of houses are shown in the centre of the market place to the east of the church (SA 6092) and to the west of the church (SA 6089) on the 1681 map of Newport. These encroachments onto the market place may be medieval in date, however.

Mansion houses (SA 6059, SA 6084). To the west of the town at the end of Salters Lane was a large house owned by John Slater who became Sheriff of Shropshire in 1521 (Hartley Willan 1979, 44). The 1681 map of the town shows a block of land and house referred to as "The Grove" in this position (Hill 1681). In 1830 the post-medieval mansion house was demolished and the present Hall and Roman Catholic Chapel built (Hartley Willan 1979, 44).

A large house set back from the road is shown on the eastern side of the High Street in 1681 (Hill 1681). It is possible that this building represents the area of the medieval St Mary's College but its position in relation to the 17th century Market Hall (SA 6058) suggest that it was south of buildings thought to have been associated with the college (see section 3.2, SA 809). With the exception of the Grammar School complex it is the grandest secular building shown on the 1681 map.

Bridging point (SA 6094). The bridge/dam over the valley of the Strine Brook is shown on the 1681 map of Newport (Wills 1681). In 1750 the bridging point is referred to as "stone bridge or Pool Dam" (Prentice 1986, 44).

Fishpond (SA 814). During the post medieval period Newport Pool continued to act as a source of fish and as a mill pond for the mill or mills just to the west of Bridge Terrace (see below). In the mid 16th century the antiquarian Leland noted that less than a mile from Newport there was a "fine large mere or lake" (Chandler 1993, 396) and in 1681 the pool was mapped (Hill 1681). In 1833 the old fishpond was destroyed by the construction of the Shropshire Union Canal (Rowley 1972).

Fish house (SA 6103). The 17th century map of Newport shows a plot of land and a building beside Newport Pool. This area is joined to the town by a part of what is now Water Lane and its inclusion indicates that it was a significant structure. Its association with the fishpond, suggests that it may have been a fish house. If this is the case it may be medieval in origin.

Mills (SA 6086, SA 6090). An 18th and early 19th water mill (SA 807) is documented on the stream flowing from Newport Pool at the south end of Bridge Terrace. This may well have been the site of an earlier mill (SA 6090) as a "mill croft" is marked in this area in 1681 (Hill 1681). The 1681 map also shows a second stream flowing out of Newport Pool at the north end of Bridge Terrace and this would be a suitable place for a second mill (SA 6086). Prentice notes that there is documentary evidence of two mills in the post-medieval period (Prentice 1986, 39).

Tannery (SA 6079). Tanneries are known to have operated in Newport from the medieval period but their location is not known. In the 17th century a tannery at Tan Bank is documented (Prentice 1986, 50). This was positioned next to the stream running down what is now Water Lane and Audley Road (SA 6056). In 1751 a serious fire started near to a tan yard in this area (Hartley Willan 1979, 30) and on the 1892 Ordnance Survey map a tannery is shown next to Smithfield to the south west of Water Lane. It would seem therefore that Tan Bank was a focus for the tanning industry from at least the 17th century. The boundary of this component has been drawn to include land on either side of the stream.

Industrial area (SA 6100, SA 6103). The 17th century map of Newport shows a large open area to south of the town referred to as "Bembows Yards". This contained a long range of buildings at right angles to the street frontage and presumably served some industrial or commercial function.

4.3 Post-medieval urban form

Definition and classification. The post-medieval urban form (SA 6108) has been defined and mapped, based on the extent of the identified urban components and in particular the limits of the tenement plots. The available evidence indicates that the post-medieval urban form of Newport can be classified as a small post-medieval market town (English Heritage 1992).

Survival. Because of the lack of any archaeological fieldwork in Newport the survival of post-medieval buried remains cannot be demonstrated. The relatively large numbers of standing buildings of 16th to 18th century date are likely to have contemporary deposits associated with them, however. Any surviving post-medieval remains are likely to be close to the surface and are vulnerable to damage by modern activity. The best preserved and deepest deposits are likely to occur in the valley of the Strine Brook where waterlogging may have preserved organic remains. Deposits may also be well preserved in ditches or pits elsewhere in the town, for example in the Tan Bank area where tanning pits were located.

Certain components of the urban form such as the churchyard, tenement plots, market and street system can be readily identified in the modern townscape but little or no trace remains of other components such as the mills, fish house, fishpond, tanneries

and other industrial areas. The post-medieval form is moderately well preserved in the present settlement.

5 Post-1800 archaeological evidence

The remit of the present study has not allowed for a detailed survey and assessment of the archaeological evidence relating to Newport in the period from 1800. Further work is required before such an assessment can be carried out. Major archaeological remains have been identified, however, including the canal and canal wharves (SA 3412, SA 6062), gas works (SA 6064), ironworks and smithy (SA 6066, SA 6074, SA 6075), timberyard and sawpit (SA 6067, SA 6069), malthouses (SA 6068, SA 6076), tannery (SA 6099), schools (SA 6065, SA 6071, SA 6073), almshouses (SA 6063, SA 12965), racecourse (SA 6061) and chapels (SA 6070, SA 15083). There are 58 listed buildings dated to the 19th and 20th centuries within the study area.

6 Specialist assessments

6.1 Assessment of artefactual evidence J D Hurst

Almost no artefactual evidence is available for Newport. The earliest artefacts recorded area are a flint arrowhead (SA 811), and a neolithic axe (SA 2654), although the latter was not certainly from the study area. A medieval brass weight (SA 5997), and post-medieval cannon balls (SA 817) are the only other finds from Newport.

6.2 Assessment of environmental evidence E A Pearson

With the exception of dendrochronological samples taken from the Guildhall there has been no archaeological fieldwork in Newport to date. The only environmental remains recovered from the study area have been chance finds during construction work.

Human burials. There are documentary references to a cemetery associated with a civil war skirmish at Brookside Avenue to the west of the historic town(SA 817).

Animal bones. To the west of Newport a set of horns similar to those of gigantic Irish deer were recovered during construction for the Newport Canal in 1836 (SA 5996; Prentice 1986, 6). These came from peat deposits presumably of prehistoric date.

Timbers. The remains of an old oak post were uncovered by workmen during the excavation of a trench for water pipes at the junction of Lower Bar and Salter's Lane (SA 5998, Prentice 1986, 65). These may be the remains of a post-medieval toll gate and illustrate the potential for recovering organic remains preserved by waterlogging. Timbers from the medieval Guildhall have been sampled for dendrochronological analysis (Baugh 1992) as part of a study carried out on the building (Moran 1985). This is one of the few buildings in the survey area for which dendrochronological dates are available.

6.3 Assessment of documentary sources P A Stamper

Newport suffered a major town fire in 1665, and it seems probable that many documents perished; certainly the borough records were lost (SRO 1910). The absence of early administrative records leaves a major gap in the town's history. This is mitigated to some extent by the survival of an above average number of deeds, many relating to Lilleshall priory's holdings in the town. The quantity and quality of post-medieval documentation is below average, again in part perhaps a consequence of the 1665 fire. Principal groups of primary sources are listed in section 9. The main secondary sources that have been consulted during the archaeological assessment include Eyton (1859), Jones (1884 to 1887) and Prentice (1986). Secondary sources identified but not consulted during the

archaeological assessment include Nixon (1928-29), *Newport Parish Magazine* (copies in Shropshire Local Studies Library) and Watton (nd).

6.4 Assessment of buildings R Morrise

Newport's surviving historic buildings mainly line the long north-south routeway passing through the town, Lower and Upper Bars, High Street, and Chetwynd End. St Mary Street merely represents a swelling in the width of the routeway associated with the original market place. There are only minor scatters of historic buildings away from this principle axis.

The general look of the town is of the 19th century with a few 18th century survivals. This, as in most towns, is misleading as there is a concentration of re-faced 16th and 17th century timber-framed buildings close to the parish church of St Nicholas. In addition, some of the 18th century houses have also been refronted. There are, apart from the church, only two substantial medieval buildings. The so-called Guild Hall (1 to 3 High Street) is dated on architectural grounds to c 1400, but dendrochronological dates suggest it may be later 15th century (see section 3.2) (SA 818). The other building is the early 16th century core of 75 High Street (SA 13180).

All the buildings up until the latter part of the 17th century appear to be of timber-framed construction. The date of 1667 for 81-3 High Street (SA 13210) indicates that this technique was still considered to be adequate for a high-status building close to the middle of the town in the second half of the 17th century. Eleven years previously the Adam's School (SA 808) and flanking almshouses (SA 813) had been built in ashlar and brick, showing that different construction materials were available and could be used. There are two brick-built late 17th century houses side by side on the opposite side of the High Street, 'Ivydene' and 130A High Street (SA 12946; SA 12947).

Brick was clearly well-established by the early years of the 18th century. From that period onwards it was also used to face earlier timber-frames although, perhaps surprisingly, many such buildings were only refronted in the mid-19th century, particularly in the central part of the town near the church.

The architectural evidence indicates a fairly comprehensive redevelopment of much of the town in the first half of the 19th century, though there was little apparent expansion of the built up area until later on.

The historic buildings vary in size and grandeur in the town and it is difficult to pick out any logical patterns of changing status of different areas or of the economic fortunes of the town as a whole. If the Guildhall is really a guildhall then it would probably indicate that the town was very prosperous in the late 14th to 15th centuries as it is so far away from the market place and church. The Great Fire of Newport in 1665 would clearly have had a major impact on the surviving architectural character of the town but this needs to be analysed using both the documentary and archaeological evidence. Despite this, the spread of 16th and 17th century timber-framed buildings seems to indicate that the town's size remained fairly constant up until the mid-19th century. The two grandest mid-Georgian houses, both five bays wide and both three storeys high, stand side by side at the northern end of the High Street (125 and 127 High Street; SA 12937 and SA 12938) suggesting that this area was of high status at that date.

Apart from the clutter of quite narrow and cramped buildings immediately to the south of the parish church (SA 6092), clearly relating to market infilling, there are few very narrow frontages. Most buildings are built with roofs parallel to the street and most have three or more bays. With the exception of some 19th century examples, however, few are wider than this. Behind the frontages on the west side of the High Street are well-defined burgage plots with an exceedingly well-preserved collection of long, narrow complexes of outbuildings along them. Most of these are built of brick and are probably of 18th or 19th

century date, but represent a much older tradition. Unfortunately, many are in a very poor state, verging on dereliction and threatened with demolition. The pattern on the east side of the High Street has been more disrupted by car-park developments but there is a good collection of older rear buildings behind the premises fronting St Mary's Street.

Survey and analysis. A few buildings have been surveyed but no thematic study has been produced on the town.

Assessment of the listing details. The list dates to 1983 and is generally comprehensive in scope and detail. There are a few problems with dating, however, particularly with regard to whether a building is late 18th or early 19th century in date. There is also the usual lack of details as to the timber-framing used (close-studded or panelled) and, in one or two cases of 17th century buildings the date but not the building material is given. There are only one or two omissions, for example

timber-framing is visible in the gable of 14 St Mary Street (SA 15071) which is dated to the late 18th century.

7 Archaeological research framework

7.1 Model of urban development

A model of the medieval and post-medieval town of Newport has been produced which is predictive and capable of testing through archaeological investigation. This model has both chronological and spatial (landuse) dimensions (see sections 2 to 5) and is based on an analysis of documentary, cartographic and archaeological sources. The model is derived from the current academic understanding of urban development in Britain, and forms one element of a developing regional research framework. The model is provisional and will be subject to confirmation or revision in the future as new information becomes available, or new studies lead to changing understandings of towns in the region.

7.2 Chronological framework

The archaeological and documentary evidence indicates that urban occupation commenced in the 12th century but may have developed from the nucleus of a medieval rural settlement around the manorial enclosure to the south of the town. The town prospered in the medieval and post-medieval periods but declined in the 19th century and lost its borough status in 1886. Newport has grown in the 20th century and continues to function as a town. The broad outlines of this chronological framework are provisional and require testing through archaeological investigation. In particular the chronology of the expansion of the town in the medieval period is not understood.

7.3 Urban landuse

The medieval and post-medieval components identified here (sections 3.2 and 4.2) have been mapped and constitute a model of urban landuse for each period. These landuse models are partial and provisional and capable of testing through archaeological investigation.

None of the medieval and post-medieval urban components of Newport have been archaeologically investigated and there is potential for recovering evidence relating to the nature and extent of occupation in the various parts of the town. Of particular interest for both the medieval and post-medieval periods would be archaeological investigations of the fishpond, mills, tanneries and other industrial areas known to have existed in Newport.

7.4 Potential for survival of buried remains

No information is available on the depth of archaeological deposits in Newport but the continuous occupation of the town from at least the 12th century means that stratified deposits are likely to exist. The potential of these deposits is great. Datable artefactual and environmental assemblages from stratified deposits would not only provide information on town life, but, by providing evidence of trade and industry, would improve understanding of Newport's changing significance within the region. The area of greatest potential is probably the north end of the town in the valley of the Strine Brook where waterlogged deposits may have survived.

Fieldwork was undertaken by the Central Marches Historic Towns Survey in November 1994. The extent of 18th and 19th century cellarage was mapped, together with the extent of 20th century development (new buildings and major landscaping work). This showed that there was moderate observable cellarage along the main streets and but extensive modern redevelopment within the historic core, particularly at the back of the burgage plots fronting the main street. It is likely that evidence for more extensive cellarage has been obscured by modern refurbishment of frontages and pavements.

7.5 Potential for artefactual studies J D Hurst

No archaeological excavation has been undertaken in Newport, and so the extent of surviving artefactual evidence in buried deposits cannot yet be assessed in any detail. It is likely, however, that contexts that have not been sampled to date, for example the fishponds and any related structures, could be of significance for the survival of artefactual evidence, as they may include waterlogged finds.

Period discussion. So few artefacts have been recorded in Newport that assessment of the range of periods represented and their significance cannot be undertaken. Except for the cannon balls which are from the site of a Civil War skirmish, all the artefacts might well be stray finds, and so of little consequence for our understanding of activity in the Newport area. Even pottery is poorly represented, and only 19th-20th century pottery (HWCM 801) has so far been recorded in the town.

Comparison with documentary evidence. Documentary sources indicate the presence of a number of industrial activities in the town from the medieval period onwards. Fish farming and leather working are attested in the medieval and post-medieval periods, while in the latter period hemp processing was also undertaken. So far none of these activities has been positively identified by artefactual evidence.

7.6 Potential for environmental remains E A Pearson

The lack of archaeological fieldwork carried out in the town has meant that potential for the recovery of environmental remains and for research is largely unknown. The preservation of organic remains can be expected to be variable across the town. Where soils are sandy and well-drained good preservation of faunal remains such as animal bone and molluscs cannot be expected.

Extensive peat deposits are known to exist, however, particularly in low lying areas. These peat deposits started to form after the end of the last Ice Age (10,000 BP), when the retreat of the ice resulted in the formation of numerous pools in hollows in the alluvium (Prentice 1986, 4). The discovery of large giant deer antler demonstrates the potential for recovering animal bone from peat deposits, where waterlogging may counteract the destructive affect of the acid conditions to some degree. Peat preserves pollen and plant macrofossils and the analysis of these is particularly valuable for indicating environmental change resulting from climatic change or human activities such as forest clearance for cultivation. Where early prehistoric settlement has taken place, the scarce physical remains are more likely to be well preserved in peat than in any other types of deposit.

Whilst organic deposits within the urban area may date to periods before the town was founded, marsh land and meres including, of course Newport Pool, survived into the post-medieval period, and will contain deposits which relate to the town itself. A number of areas in the town may be identified as being of particular interest. Tenement plots may have extended down to a stream feeding Newport Pool on the east side of the town in the medieval and post-medieval periods. Industries such as tanning are likely to have been situated in such areas and industrial waste may have been preserved as a result of waterlogging. Silty and organic deposits in fish and mill ponds (SA 814 and SA 6090) may also provide useful information on the local environment and these two activities. The great fire of 1665, which destroyed most of the High Street, a malthouse and many timber buildings, and the fire of 1751 may have left fire destruction deposits. As a result, charring may preserve timber, bone and plant remains.

Because of the lack of environmental evidence from Newport to date, any environmental material would be of interest. This could provide information on past environment, diet, living conditions and agricultural or industrial economy. Future excavation should include a policy of sampling and wet-sieving deposits in order to recover plant, insect, molluscs and small animal remains in conjunction with hand-collection of larger items. Where appropriate, specialist sampling for soil and pollen analysis may be required.

7.7 Potential for the study of standing buildings R Morrise

Given the parlous nature of many of the backlands buildings on the west side of the High Street, a survey of these should be considered before more of them fall, or are pulled, down. This would create useful information about the later Georgian use of backland areas.

Newport has sufficient numbers of historic buildings to warrant a more detailed overview or enhanced list . Particular emphasis should be placed on the architectural changes in the fairly stable town through five centuries, and on the effects on the town of the Great Fire. The Great Fire occurred at a time when timber-framing was beginning to die out and when brick was becoming accepted. The varied choices of materials for the reconstruction is therefore of interest.

7.8 Summary of research potential

It is probable that the historic core of Newport contains buried archaeological deposits, and these are judged to have high potential. There is also moderate potential for the recovery of artefact and ecofact assemblages. Waterlogged deposits may survive in the vicinity of the settlement, and this a rare phenomenon in the region. However, these assessments may require revision once archaeological deposits are recorded through fieldwork. The historic buildings constitute a complementary body of evidence, and there is judged to have low to moderate potential for detailed study and recording. The surviving documentary sources are very few in number and consequently the potential for further study is limited.

8 Management framework

8.1 Urban archaeological area

The mapped extent of the medieval and post-medieval urban forms defined above indicated the extent of the urban area (Newport Urban Archaeological Area). The significance of the urban archaeological area is assessed below.

8.2 Existing protection measures

The archaeological urban area of Newport has been defined above. The different parts of

the urban area are afforded different measures of protection through legislation and the planning process. Directly relevant measures are outlined below.

Scheduled ancient monuments. There are two Scheduled Ancient Monuments in Newport, the market cross (Shropshire no 151) and the roving bridge and lock on the Shropshire Union Canal (Shropshire no 221). It is possible that following the current Monument Protection Programme English Heritage may modify the scheduled area or add other monuments in Newport to the schedule.

Listed buildings. There are a total of eighty four buildings or structures listed as of historical or architectural importance within the urban area. Although unlisted, many other buildings are of considerable historic importance. The management of all historic buildings requires special care and attention, while the management of Listed Buildings is especially important. Listed Buildings are protected under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, and unauthorised alteration is a serious offence. This protection is also likely to preserve archaeological remains under and around such buildings and it is important that archaeological and historic building matters are considered together.

In Wrekin District, specialist advice on the management of historic buildings is provided by the District Council with support from the County Council. Some grant aid is available for the repair of historic buildings and information and advice is available from the District Council Conservation Officer.

Conservation Area. A Conservation Area has been defined which entirely partially encompasses the archaeological area (Newport Local Plan 1984).

8.3 Management approach

The archaeological urban area of Newport contains some evidence of buried remains, relating to post-medieval occupation, associated with contemporary buildings. However it is probable that extensive deposits survive relating to the medieval and post-medieval periods. It is likely that buried remains will vary in complexity and depth, and may contain significant archaeological information. It is desirable that any proposed development within the urban area that has a potential impact on earthworks or buried remains should be assessed by the appropriate archaeological body.

The course of action recommended will depend upon the nature of the development and current planning legislation and frameworks. The archaeological response will be based on both the archaeological information summarised in this document and any subsequent archaeological information recorded on the County Sites and Monuments Record.

9 Principal groups of documentary sources compiled by P A Stamper

(*SRO: Shropshire Record Office; SPL: Shrewsbury Local Studies Library; Staffs RO: Staffordshire Record Office; GRO: Glamorgan Record Office, Cardiff*)

SRO 1900	Records of Newport Corporation. Include nine deeds (1247-1489); 38 grants in fee farm (1590-1750); burgesses minute book 1668-1857; 18th and 19th century deeds.
SRO 1190	The main solicitor's accumulation relating to Newport, of the firm Liddle & Heane. Mainly 18th and 19th century material.
SRO 1910	Parish records, including parish registers from 1569.
SRO 81	Survey and map of 1681-2
SRO 1981	Tithe map and apportionment 1841
SPL	Deeds collection. Over 200 deeds and other documents, about half

- medieval. Many relate to Lilleshall priory property
- Staffs RO D593 The Sutherland collection. Scattered deeds, case papers, etc
- GRO Cardiff Library Deeds: 12 deeds, 1665-1800

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11 Mapping

The illustrations for this report comprise CAD plots of the urban components for each period and a location plot of archaeological remains combined with OS digital map data (1995) at 1:5000. These plots are current at the date of the completion of this report (March 1995). After this date new information will be held by the Shropshire County Council Sites and Monuments Record.

- * Historic buildings (listed and other recorded buildings) and urban area
- * Archaeological remains and urban area
- * Medieval urban form and components
- * Post-medieval urban form and components
- * Observed cellarage and 20th century development
- * Urban area and scheduled ancient monuments