

CASTLERING ARCHAEOLOGY

REPORT NO. 662

GROUNDWORKS TO THE REAR OF THE

WYNNSTAY HOTEL

BRIDGE STREET

LLANGOLLEN

DENBIGHSHIRE

NGR: SJ 21583 42029

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF
DURING GROUNDWORKS TO THE REAR
OF THE HOTEL

AUGUST 2018

Groundworks to the Rear of the Wynnstay Hotel

Llangollen

Archaeological Watching Brief

Contracted by

Knights Construction Group, Hafod y Bwch, Middle Sontley, Wrexham, LL13 OYP

Undertaken by Pat Frost, Consultant Archaeologist, MCIFA

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SYNOPSIS

This report contains the results of an archaeological watching brief maintained during ground disturbing works, undertaken in association with the demolition of existing outbuildings and the excavation of footings for the replacement new build during the refurbishment of the Wynnstay Arms Hotel, Llangollen, as a condition of Listed Building Consent.

The Wynnstay is a Grade II Listed Building within Llangollen Conservation Area, believed to be of mid to late-18th century date, which closed for trade in 2017. The watching brief monitored ground excavations in the rear yard as part of the current work to replace outbuildings with a modern kitchen block.

The most interesting structure to the rear of the hotel is the 4m high boundary wall that forms the east side of the yard. The wall consists of irregular, undressed slate blocks bonded with modern pink cement, obviously the result of recent repointing work. Further excavation showed that the original soft white lime mortar survived in the buried footings that extended 0.8m below the present ground level. The ground works exposed the foundations of a previously demolished substantial east-west wall, protruding from the boundary wall and assumed to have been contemporary with it. The short length of this wall suggests it formed part of the outbuildings recorded to the rear of the hotel on 19th century cartography. Evidence of a second east-west wall was indicated by a scar in the boundary wall nearer the hotel building. This wall may have been incorporated into later buildings that adjoined the hotel.

During hand cleaning around the east-west wall foundations, a small area of relict cultivation soil was revealed to the south of the demolished wall. Within this an assemblage of pottery fragments and a single clay pipe bowl were recovered. The finds are unstratified and the cultivation soil may have been pushed around the site on several occasions. The finds are typical of wares produced by local potters from the 16th to 20th century. The paucity of finds recovered from the site reflects the changes that have taken place to the rear of the hotel in Post-medieval to Modern times and the lack of undisturbed deposits above natural.

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Abbreviations:

<i>bpgl</i>	<i>below present ground level</i>
<i>c.</i>	<i>circa</i>
CIfA	Chartered Institute for Archaeologists
m	metre
mm	millimetre
OS	Ordnance Survey

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This report contains the results of an archaeological watching brief maintained during ground disturbing works, undertaken in association with the demolition of existing outbuildings and the excavation of footings for the replacement One new build as part of the refurbishment of the Wynnstay Arms Hotel, Bridge Street, Llangollen, LL20 8PF (Fig. 1 below).

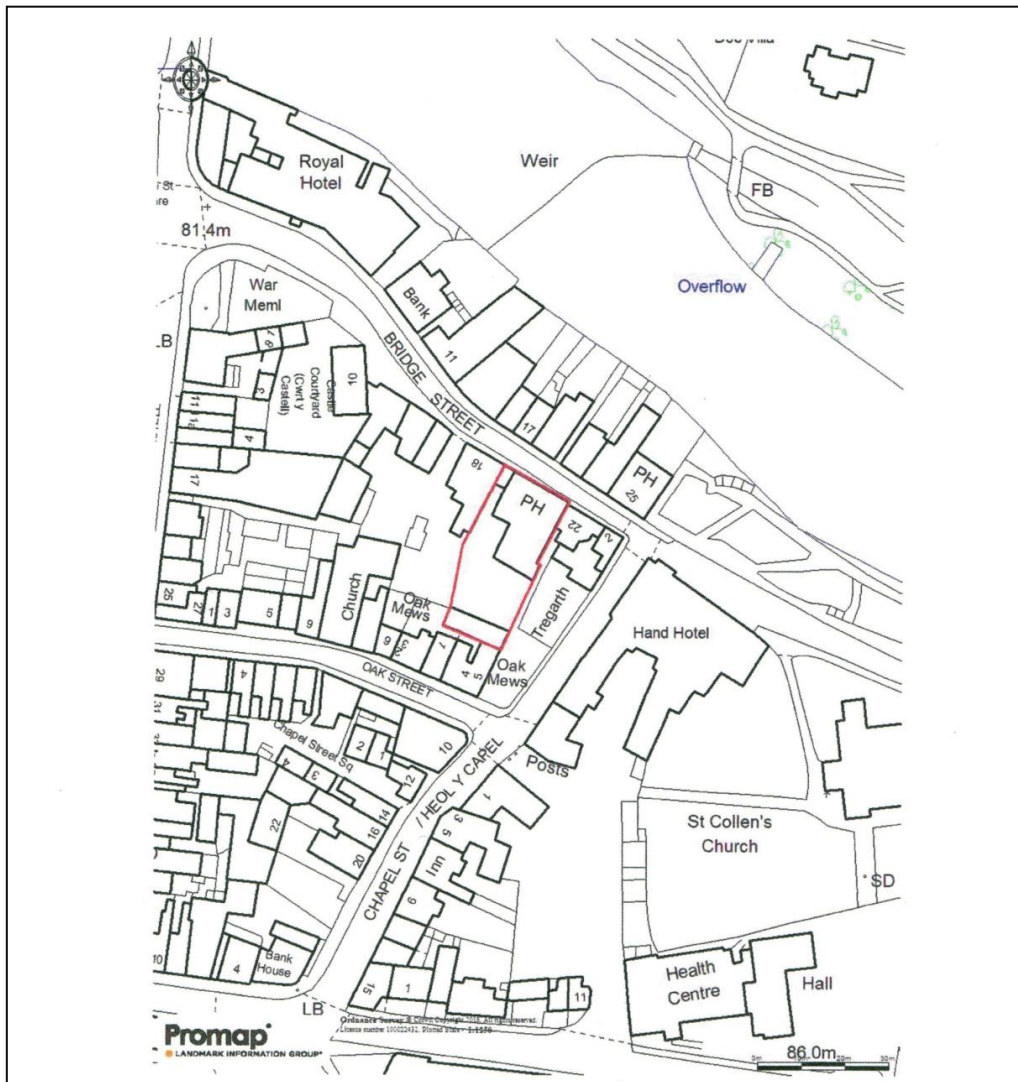
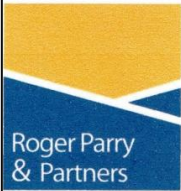


Fig. 1

	<p>www.rogerparry.net mail@rogerparry.net Tel: 01691 655334 Fax: 01691 657798 Roger Parry & Partners LLP The Property Experts</p>	JOB:	Wynnstay Arms Hotel, Llangollen
		CLIENT:	Knights Construction Ltd C/O Mavi Properties Ltd
		TITLE:	Location Plan
		LOCATION:	Wynnstay Arms Hotel, Llangollen
		SCALE:	1:1250 A4
		DATE:	May 2018
		DRAWING NO:	LP1BB
		DRAWN BY:	BB

1.2 The Wynnstay is a Grade II Listed Building believed to be of mid to late-18th century date. The inn was first mentioned in the 1750s when it was known as The Eagles, taking its name from the three eagles that appear on the coat of arms of the Wynn family of Wynnstay Estate, the original owners of the inn. The Hotel closed in 2017 and proposals for the overall refurbishment of the Hotel were submitted to Denbighshire Council as Planning Application No.03/2018/0412 and Listed Building Consent Application No.03/2018/0413.

1.3 Consultation with Mark Walters, Development Control Archaeologist at Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust and acting adviser to the planners on archaeological issues, elicited that:

Information retained within the Regional Historic Environment Record indicates that the development is located within the medieval historic core of Llangollen and to the rear of the Bridge Street frontage, which is believed to have been part of the earlier medieval layout of the town. There is a potential that the new area of foundation excavations for the rear half of the extension will reveal previously unrecorded medieval and later archaeology associated with former medieval and post medieval outbuildings, refuse pits, property boundaries, light industrial use and artefacts of all periods. We would therefore require an appropriate level of archaeological monitoring during the initial ground excavation works to identify and record any features that may be revealed.

Accordingly we would recommend that an archaeologist is contracted to be present throughout the duration of initial topsoiling, ground preparation and foundation excavation works in order that an adequate record of any archaeological features revealed by these works can be made. This advice is in accordance with the guidance set out in Welsh Government TAN 24: The Historic Environment (May 2017) Planning Policy Wales (Chapter 6, Edn. 9 Nov 2016).

In view of the above, the Development Control Archaeologist recommended a suitable planning condition to facilitate an archaeological watching brief, as follows:

The developer shall ensure that a suitably qualified archaeological contractor is present during the undertaking of any ground works in the development area so that an archaeological watching brief can be conducted in accordance with an approved written scheme of investigation. The archaeological watching brief must meet the standards laid down by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists Standard and Guidance for archaeological watching briefs. Two weeks prior notice of the commencement of the watching brief should be supplied to the Development Control Archaeologist on behalf of the LPA.

Mark Walters, Development Control Archaeologist: Comment date 05 June 2018

1.4 The above condition was not placed as a condition of planning consent for Application No. 03/2018/0412 and Knights Construction Group, the Company undertaking the Restoration, only received the information as Condition 3 of Listed Building Consent (03/2018/0413), when sitework had already commenced.

1.5 On Tuesday 14th August, Castlering Archaeology were contacted by Mr Joel Smith, Residential Development Manager at Knights Construction Group, to attend site urgently. Unfortunately demolition works had already been undertaken and some ground reduction, as part of the full planning consent.

1.6 Castlering Archaeology were therefore contracted by Knights Construction Group to monitor and report on the remaining groundworks in the rear yard undertaken on Wednesday to Friday, 15th to 17th August 2018, in the area shown on Fig. 2.3 *following*. The Development Control Archaeologist has been made aware of the situation and the inability to supply two weeks prior notice of the sitework, as stated in the consultation dated 5th June 2018.

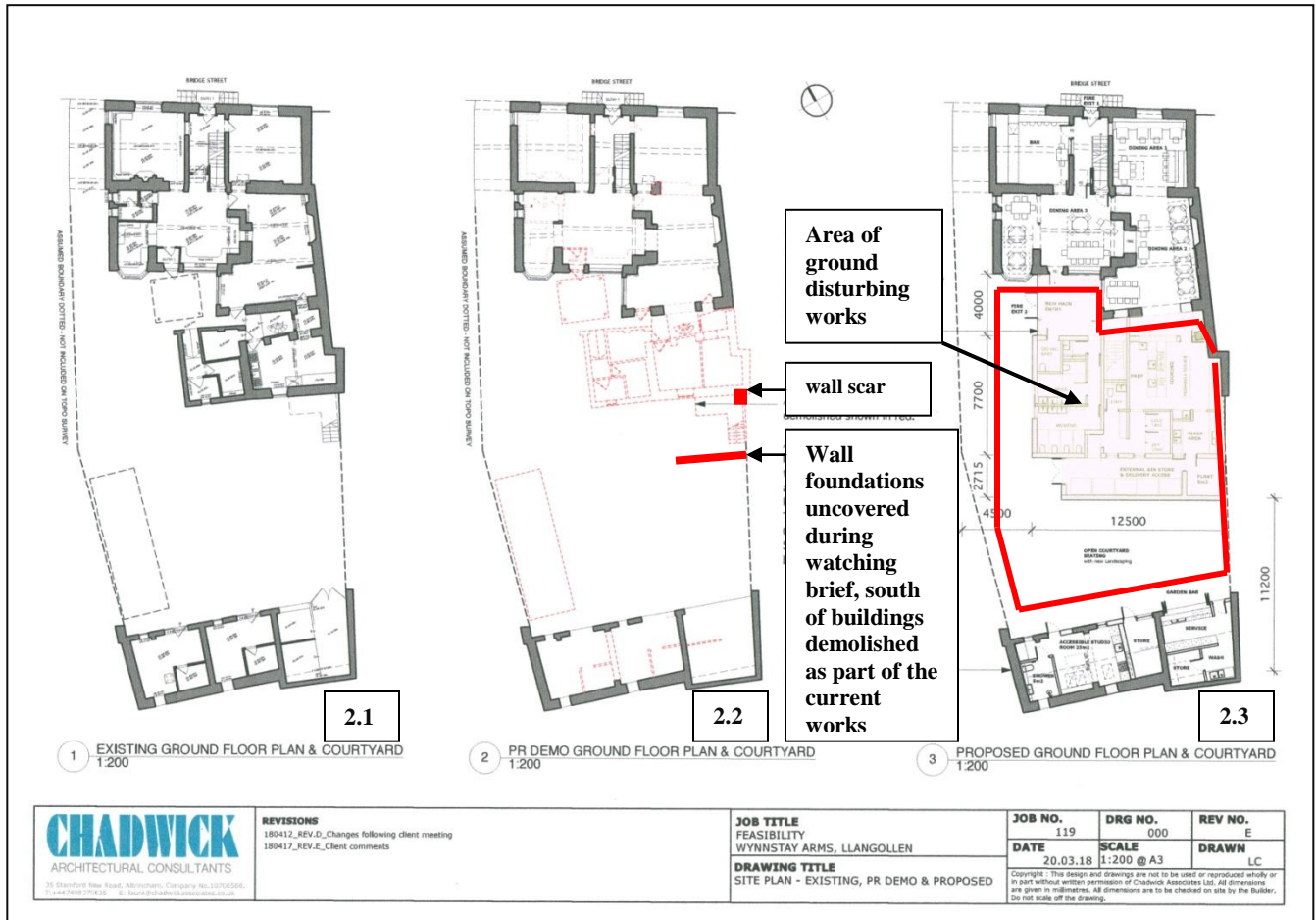


Fig. 2

2. AIMS

The aims of the watching brief were to secure:

- the preservation by record of any archaeological remains or artefacts encountered during ground disturbing works;
- the analysis, conservation and long-term storage of any artefactual/ecofactual material recovered from the site;
- the production of a report documenting the results of the watching brief.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 The site work comprised the monitoring of ground disturbing works in the rear yard of the hotel.

3.2 The watching brief was undertaken using proven archaeological techniques which comply with guidelines defined in:

- the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, 2014a, *Code of conduct*;
- the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, 2014a, *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief*
- the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, 2014c, *Code of approved practice for the regulation of contractual arrangements in field archaeology*.

3.3 All stages of the project were carried out in accordance with the guidelines of the Welsh Government TAN 24: The Historic Environment, 2017 and Planning Policy Wales, 2016 (Chapter 6, Edition. 9).

4. RESULTS OF THE WATCHING BRIEF

4.1 Some demolition work had already been undertaken prior to the commencement of the watching brief, therefore limiting the understanding of the previously existing structures on the site. The demolition work had also largely removed any existing soil deposits across the site, revealing a poorly sorted natural deposit of river cobbles, gravels and shales.

4.2 The most interesting structure to the rear of the hotel is the 4m high boundary wall that forms the east side of the yard (Plates 4-6 *following*). The wall consists of irregular, undressed largely flat faced slate, varying greatly in size up to 0.40m in length. The slates are bonded with modern pink cement, obviously the result of recent repointing work. Further excavation showed that the original soft white lime mortar survived just below current ground level (Plate 5). Although most of the wall comprised the same irregular blocks, there were a number of modern brick intrusions, suggesting either a later phase of construction or subsequent brick infills and repairs over the passage of time.

4.3 The foundations of a previously demolished substantial east-west wall, protruding west from the boundary wall, were also revealed (Plates 4, 6-8 & 11). The east-west wall was located approximately 10m to the south of the rear of the hotel, beyond the recently demolished outbuilding, in the position shown on 2.2 *previous*. The surviving wall measured 3.5m long x 0.70m wide x 0.40m deep, and comprised large and irregular undressed slate and limestone blocks up to 0.40m in size. These stones were bonded with the same soft white lime mortar as the foundations of the boundary wall. The wall scar was clearly visible in the boundary wall immediately above the remains of the demolished structure (Plates 6, 7, 9 & 11). The identical nature of the demolished wall and the existing boundary wall suggests they are contemporary. Their fabric and bonding suggests an 18th century date, if not earlier. The substantial nature of the wall and its shortness of length suggests it formed part of the outbuildings recorded to the rear of the hotel by 19th century cartography (para 5.3 *following*).

4.4 From August 15th to 17th, all remaining groundworks were monitored. The excavation work was carried out by an 8t mechanical excavator fitted with a 1m toothed bucket (Plates 11 & 12).

4.5 Excavation of the eastern footing of the new build exposed the foundation course of the existing eastern boundary wall to be 0.80m below the former ground level. The coursing comprised irregular angular undressed slate blocks varying in size up to 0.40m. The coursing was partially bonded with a soft white lime mortar and sat on a compacted mid yellowish brown stony clay silt, as seen in Plates 9 and 10.

4.6 A second wall scar 0.60m wide was revealed protruding from the boundary wall approximately 4m to the south of the rear of the hotel, also seen in Plates 9 and 10, in the position shown on Fig. 2.2 *previous*. It was apparent that this wall may have been incorporated into the modern fabric of the hotel outbuildings that had been demolished prior to the start of the watching brief.

Finds

4.7 During hand cleaning around the area of the east-west wall foundations, a small area of relict cultivation soil was revealed to the south of the demolished wall. Within this an assemblage of pottery fragments and a single clay pipe bowl were recovered. The finds are unstratified and the cultivation soil may have been pushed around the site on several occasions. Most of the material comprised examples of the robust brown to blackish lead glazed coarse earthenwares, typical of those widely produced by many rural potteries from the mid-17th to 19th century period for kitchen and dairy use. The wares most notably comprised 'pancheons', the large vessels traditionally used for soaking and washing vegetables, of which Items 1 and 2 are examples (1 & 2 *following*). The sherds were undoubtedly produced by Buckley potters.

4.8 One rim fragment of a shallow whiteware bowl was the only early 20th century vessel and the only example of a mass produced factory ware (3).

4.9 A thick 'pie-crust' rim sherd in a coarse hard fired gritty red fabric with a thick inner slip lining may have once been part of a press-moulded plate or shallow dish (4). The small part of the pattern that remains suggests a broad cream trailed slip brown. Slipware was produced at numerous sites around the country from the second half of the 17th century.

The coarse red fabric indicates that this sherd was probably also produced by Buckley potters and what can be seen of the pattern suggests a date of *c.*1700 onwards.

4.10 The production of pottery in the area of Buckley continued from medieval times into the 20th century. One potentially earlier sherd recovered from the garden soils may also have been produced at Buckley. A rim sherd of a possible wheel thrown bowl or small jug fired in a hard fired gritty red fabric with an outer dark greenish-brown glaze was recovered (5). The glaze is generally associated with medieval wares, although the rough fabric of the sample suggests it is more likely to be of 17th to early 18th century date.

4.11 The assemblage included the base and part of the side of a wheel thrown, straight sided vessel, probably a tankard or drinking cup (6). The fabric of the vessel is a very hard high-fired pale brownish earthenware with a number of small gritty inclusions. The rough metallic dark purplish-brown glaze with iron rich inclusions covers the outer and inner surfaces. The sherd resembles Cistercian wares, Blackwares or Staffordshire Brownware vessels, although the glaze on this sample is particular rough. For this reason, the sample is more likely to be of *c.*17th to early 18th century date, produced by Staffordshire potters.

4.12 One clay pipe bowl and part stem was also recovered from the garden soils (7). The sample bears no maker's marks but its shape and short heel identifies it as typical of the pipes that were being produced in Chester in the 1840s period (Davey, 1980). The pipe has a leaf decoration along the moulding joins of the bowl.





Plate 1:
Looking NE
towards the rear
elevation of the
hotel following
demolition of the
kitchen.
15.08.18



Plate 2:
Looking NNE
across the yard
towards the rear
elevation of the
hotel following
demolition of the
kitchen.
15.08.18



Plate 3:
Looking SSE
across the rear
yard
15.08.18



Plate 4:
Looking S with
the eastern
boundary wall
and exposed low
wall foundations.
1m scale bar
15.08.18



Plate 5:

**Looking EE along
the boundary wall
2m scale bar**

15.08.18



Plate 6:

**Looking SE
towards the
boundary wall
and wall
foundations.**

2m scale bar

15.08.18



Plate 7:
Looking E
2m scale bar
15.08.18



Plate 8:
Exposing
demolished wall
foundations.
16.08.18



Plate 9:
Eastern boundary wall foundations, following excavation and wall scar 4m south of hotel.
2m scale bar



Plate 10:
Looking NNE showing wall foundations resting on natural silt.
2m scale bar
17.08.18



Plate 11:
Looking SSW
during
excavations.

2m scale bar

16.08.18



Plate 12:
Looking SSW
during
excavations.

16.08.18

5. CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 The watching brief has allowed for a small insight into the composition of the rear yard.
- 5.2 The watching brief has allowed for a record to be made of the eastern boundary wall and the former cross walls that adjoined it, prior to the construction of the new addition to the rear of the hotel.
- 5.3 The extract from the 1843 Llangollen parish tithe map and 1874 OS map, included in the Heritage Impact Statement provided by Trysor (2017) which accompanied the planning application for development, indicate that the cross walls were associated with 19th century buildings on the site. It is believed that these buildings were demolished by the 1970s. The boundary wall appears to be contemporary with the 18th century hotel building, if not predating it.
- 5.4 There have undoubtedly been several changes to the rear of the hotel and the surface of the yard in Post-medieval / Modern times. The watching brief observed the removal of modern surfaces which exposed disturbed ground above natural.
- 5.5 No archaeological features were exposed during the watching brief, other than the walls previously referred to.
- 5.6 The small unstratified assemblage of pottery fragments and a single clay pipe bowl recovered from the cultivation soils give have allowed for an insight into the material culture of the site and its immediate environs in Post-medieval times.
- 5.7 The relative paucity of finds recovered from the site reflects the changes that have taken place to the rear of the hotel in Post-medieval to Modern times and the lack of undisturbed deposits above natural.

6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Castlering Archaeology would like to thank Knights Construction Group for contracting the archaeological work and the contractors on site for their co-operation.

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Cartography

Tithe Map, 1843, Plan of Llangollen Abbot Township in the Parish of Llangollen,

Ordnance Survey, 1874, 1:2500 map

Historic Environment Record

PRN 31587 & Cadw Listed building Record No. 1119
Wynnstay Arms, 20 Bridge Street, Llangollen
NGR: SJ2158642034

Grade II listed

Source: Cadw, 2016, Database of Listed Building