Gatehouse at Great Porthamel
Talgarth
Powys

Level 3 Historic Building Recording

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for

Paul Jones

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Summary

Richard Hayman was commissioned to undertake historic-building recording at Great Porthamel Tower, Talgarth, Powys, in April 2021. The building is listed grade I and is a Scheduled Ancient Monument. In advance of an application for Scheduled Monument Consent to carry out repairs to the structure, a historic building record was made of the building, equivalent to Historic England's Level 3.

Great Porthamel is a house of medieval origin, to which a gatehouse was added in the late-fifteenth or early-sixteenth century. The gatehouse takes the form of a two-stage embattled tower with through passage in the lower storey, and an upper stage with Tudor-Gothic mullioned windows, reached by mural stair. The gatehouse was a powerful status symbol and is a type found at several other elite houses of the period in south-east Wales, a fashion that later spread to the rest of Wales. It was probably the work of Sir William Vaughan, who in 1539 became the first Sheriff of Breconshire, and who was descended from the Vaughans of Tretower. Great Porthamel passed by marriage to the Ashburnham family in the seventeenth century, who owned it until it was sold off with the farmstead in 1913. The gatehouse originally enclosed a forecourt with attached embattled walls, but the latter were taken down in the second half of the nineteenth century and replaced by a simpler stone garden wall. The gatehouse itself has undergone remarkably little alteration since it was first built. At the end of the nineteenth or beginning of the twentieth century the passage in the lower stage was rendered and was closed by new double gates on the outer side. A new pyramidal slate roof was also constructed, possibly at the same time.

The report describes and interprets the building by reference to the surviving fabric, as well as documentary and cartographic evidence, and then considers its architectural and historical significance.

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1 Introduction

The gatehouse at Great Porthamel, also known as Porthamel Tower, stands in front of Great Porthamel Farmhouse, Talgarth, at SO 1595 3519 (fig 1). Following the recommendations made in a Conservation Management Plan for Great Porthamel Farmstead, scheduled monument consent will be sought for the repair of the gatehouse. As part of the supporting documentation for the forthcoming Scheduled Monument Consent application an appropriate level of historic building recording is required. This report and the associated photographic and measured survey archive fulfil that requirement and takes the form of a historic building record equivalent to Historic England's Level 3.
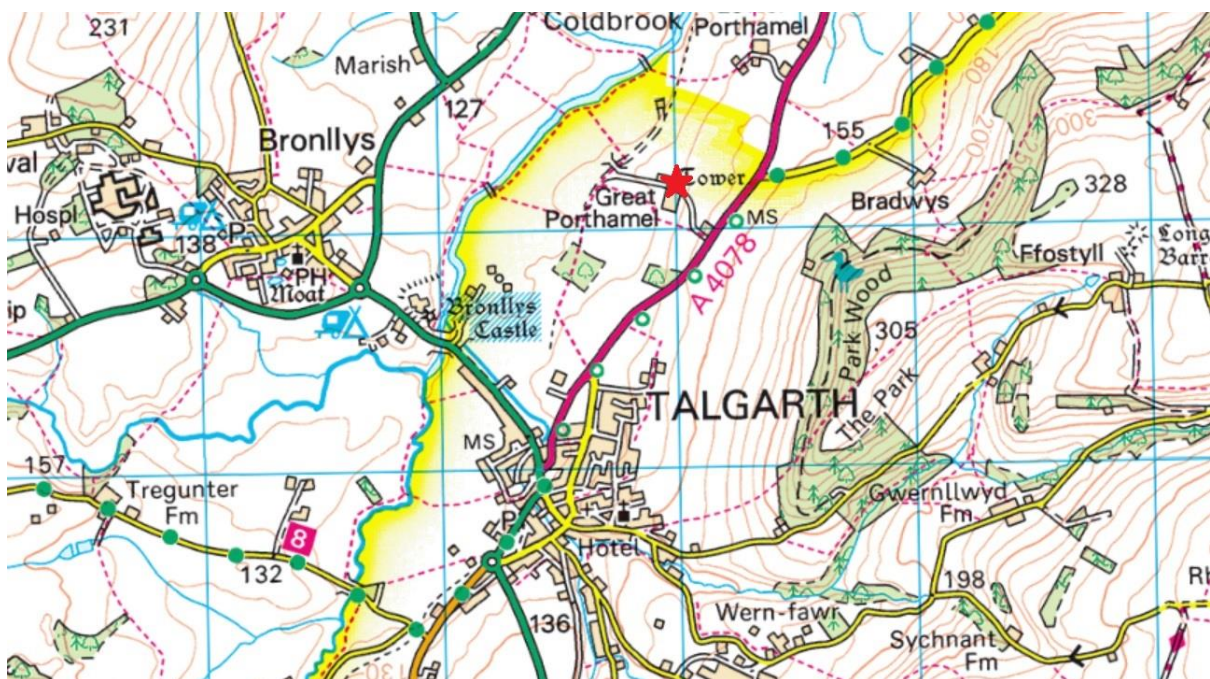
Figure 1 Location plan.

The gatehouse stands in front of the farmhouse where, along with attached stone walls, it forms the boundary of the front garden (fig 2). In front (south-east) of the gatehouse is an open yard, on the south side of which is a former farm building lately converted into a dwelling. On the south side of the gatehouse and farmhouse is another stone farm building.

The gatehouse is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (BR047) and a grade-I listed building (6641). Great Porthamel Farmhouse is listed grade-II* (6652). The farm building on its south side is listed grade II (16303) and is of special interest because it incorporates what appears to be two re-set medieval stone door heads. The farmstead is within the Brecon Beacons National Park and within the Middle Wye Valley Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest in Wales.

There has been little study of the gatehouse beyond the field notes associated with its designation as a Scheduled Ancient Monument and Listed Building. Its survival is noted in the

National Monuments Record (nprn 306018 and 16103), the Regional Historic Environment Record (prn 514 and 25073) and the study of Welsh houses published by RCAHM Wales (Smith 1988, 137). The farmhouse was surveyed in the early 1960s as part of a study of Breconshire houses (Jones & Smith 1964, 76-83), the conclusion of which was that the core of the farmhouse is contemporary with the gatehouse, although much enlarged and altered in subsequent centuries. A conservation management plan for Great Porthamel was prepared in 2016, which provided a fresh appraisal of the gatehouse and a detailed description of the building (Holland 2016).

1 Gatehouse (grade-I listed building 6641, Scheduled Ancient Monument BR047)
2 Great Porthamel Farmhouse (grade-II* listed building 6652)
3 Farm building at porthamel Farm (grade-II listed building 16303)
4 Former farm building (converted for residential use)

Figure 2. Farmstead plan.

2 Aims and Objectives

The purpose of the historic building record is to provide a written, drawn, and photographic record of the building that is to be repaired. As a Level 3 'analytical' record, it takes the form of a systematic account of the building's origins, development and use. The record includes an account of the evidence on which the analysis has been based, allowing the validity of the record to be re-examined in detail. It also includes the drawn and photographic records required to illustrate the building's appearance and structure and to support an historical analysis. The report then measures the significance of the building against established criteria for the significance of historic buildings.

3 Methodology and Standards

The work has followed the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) Code of Conduct and adheres to their Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Investigation and Recording of Standing Buildings or Structures (CIfA 2016).

Historic England's guidelines, *Understanding Historic Buildings: A guide to good recording practice* (2016), have been used as a basis for defining levels of recording. The Historic Building Record for this project is at Level 3.

The measured survey was undertaken by Midland Survey Ltd in 2019 and was checked during the fieldwork for this project. The fieldwork included written descriptions, interpretation, and photographic record, and was undertaken by Richard Hayman on 6 April 2021. Access was possible to most of the building, except for the parapet, which was overgrown with ivy at the time of survey, the north-east front and adjoining garden wall, which was also overgrown with vegetation, and the passage in the lower stage, which is partly used for storage. None of this significantly deterred the recording and interpretation of the building.

4 Historical Background

The building of the gatehouse is not documented but it has been ascribed to the late-fifteenth or early-sixteenth century on stylistic ground. The gatehouse was certainly there when John Leland visited Talgarth at some time between 1536 and 1539. Leland described Great Porthamel as the seat of William Vaughan, and: 'The howse hath a fair gate and a string waul embatelid' (Toulmin Smith 1906, 108).

The first known owner of Porthaml or Porth Hamal (the names by which it was previously known) was Sir William Vaughan, which was the squire when Leland visited in the 1530s and when Bishop Rowland Lee of Brecon visited in 1538. He was born in 1500 and was descended from the Vaughans of Tretower. In 1539 he was appointed the first Sheriff of the newly formed county of Brecknock following the Act of Union between England and Wales. His son was Sir Roger Vaughan, also a Sheriff of the county and the county's Member of Parliament. His granddaughter married Sir Robert Knollys, who had inherited Porthamel by the time he was elected MP for the county in 1588 (Williams 1895, 15). At this time there

seems to have been a deer park associated with Porthamel, extending westwards to Afon Llynfi, as depicted on John Speed's 1610 map of Breconshire, although no physical remains of it have been identified (fig 3). Porthamel came back into the Vaughan family, albeit for only one generation and with a different branch from Dunraven in Glamorgan, by the marriage of Sir Charles Vaughan (died 1630) to Frances, the daughter and heir of Sir Robert Knollys. The daughter and heir of Sir Charles was Bridget Vaughan, who married John Ashburnham, later to be First Baron Ashburnham (1656-1710), in Westminster Abbey in 1677. Porthamel thereby came into the Ashburnham family, who owned it until the early twentieth century. John Ashburnham and his wife lived at his family's ancestral home, Ashburnham Place in Sussex, and therefore made no more than occasional visits to Porthamel. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, if not considerably earlier, it was let to tenants.

Figure 3. Detail of John Speed's 1610 map of Breconshire.

Theophilus Jones, writing in the first decade of the nineteenth century, confirmed that 'The embattled wall of Porthaml still remains', but 'except the vestige just mentioned, its magnificence has vanished, and though there be plenty within its walls, the gate-way, through which issued Sir William Vaughan, the first sheriff of Breconshire, with his goodly train of yeomen and livery men, is now an entrance into a farm-yard'. (Jones 1809, 339). Porthamel is also described by Samuel Lewis in his *Topographical Dictionary of Wales* (1843): 'It is now the property of the Earl of Ashburnham, by marriage of one of his ancestors with the heiress of that family: part of the embattled wall of the old mansion, and one of the towers, are at present remaining'. The Talgarth Tithe survey of 1839 describes Porthamel as a farmstead let to Evan Prosser.

Figure 4. Detail of Talgarth Tithe map, 1839.
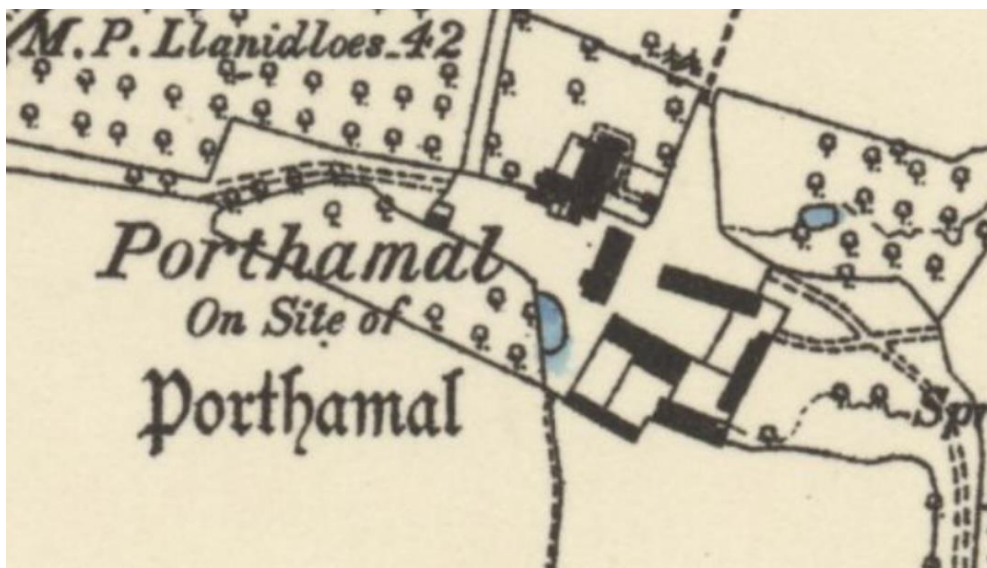
Figure 5. Ordnance Survey map, 1887.

The Tithe map does not show the gatehouse itself, but it shows the enclosing walls that defined the forecourt mentioned by Samuel Lewis (fig 4). By 1887 these walls had been taken down as the OS map of that date shows a garden wall flush with the south-east wall of the tower (the original walls were set in the middle of the tower walls, as explained below) (fig 5). The Ashburnham Estate sold Great Porthamel, with 500 acres of land, for £12,000 in 1913 (Holland 2016, 8). However, no significant changes to the gatehouse are indicated on the later Ordnance Survey maps up until 1953 (figs 6, 7).
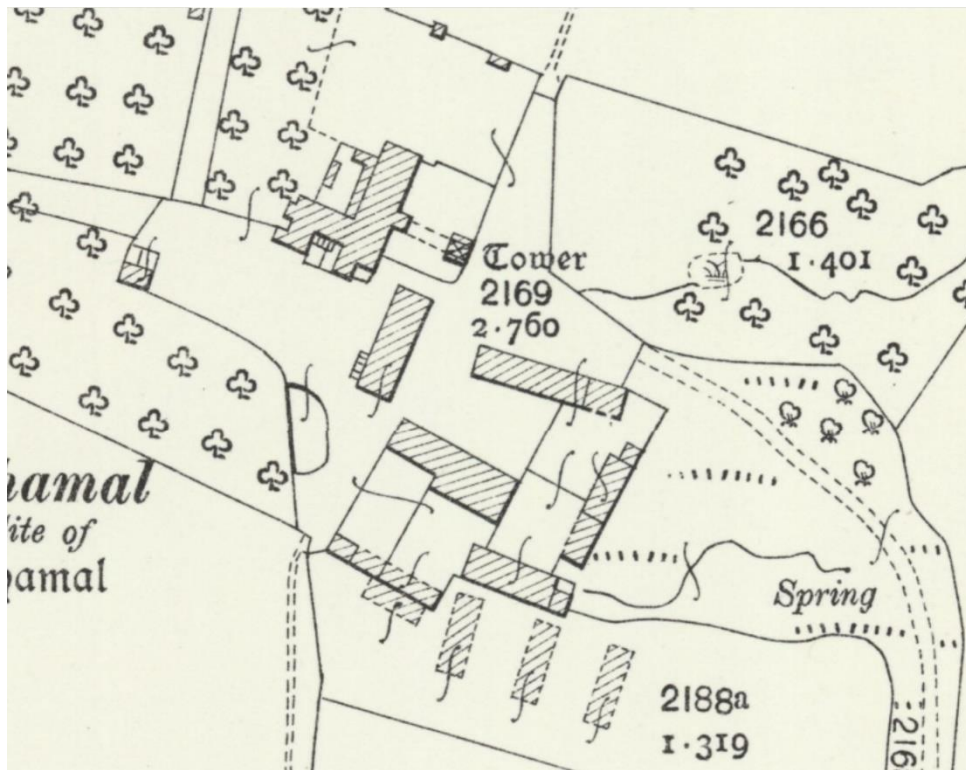
Figure 6. Ordnance Survey map, 1904.
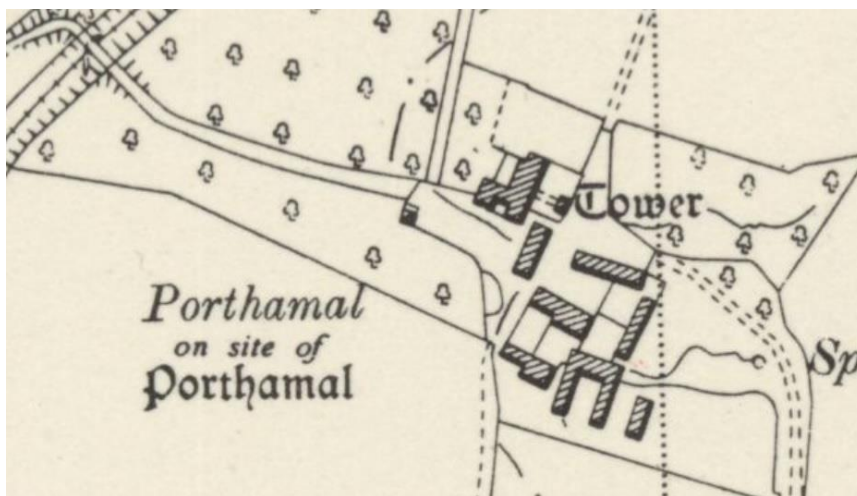
Figure 7. Ordnance Survey map, 1953.

5 Building Description

5.1 Exterior

The gatehouse is a two-stage fortified tower built of sandstone laid in thin courses, with larger quoins and dressings (fig 8). Some larger blocks of unworked stone indicate where the original fabric has been replaced and some of the parapet masonry has been replaced with a different type of stone. Traces of render suggest that the building was once

limewashed. Putlog holes in the south-east and north-west faces were probably associated with the building of the vault on the passage. The tower has a pyramidal slate roof.

Figure 8. South-east (front) and south-west fronts, with garden wall and farmhouse in the background.

Figure 9. Double gates in south-east front.

In the lower stage there is a through-passage in line with the porch of the house. The front, or south-east, face has a four-centred arch with continuous moulding, and a hood mould with stops restored in reconstituted stone. The apex of the hood mould has also been renewed in reconstituted stone. Double open-panel gates with strap hinges have replaced the original gates (fig 9). A square-headed two-light stone-mullioned window is in the upper

stage, which has round-headed lights with sunk spandrels, and a hood mould with square stops (fig 10). There is no glass, but iron ferramenta, and rebates that were designed to hold shutters. In the south-west wall is the scar of a former attached wall and parapet (fig 11).
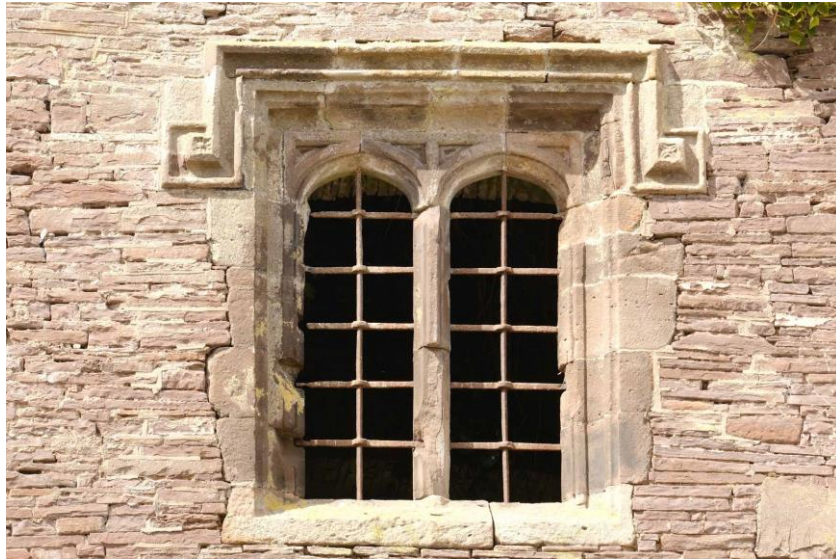
Figure 10. Upper-stage window in south-east front.

Figure 11. Scar of original forecourt wall in south-west front.

In the north-west wall is a four-centred arch, but with simpler mouldings than the south-east front, comprising merely a broad chamfer and a cavetto moulding (fig 12). The two-light window in the upper stage matches the corresponding window in the east wall. In the north-east wall, where the lower stage was largely obscured by vegetation at the time of

survey, is the scar of the former wall with parapet, and a narrow Tudor-headed doorway corbelled out (fig 13). A small stair light is upper left of this.

*Figure 12. Arch in north-west front.*

Figure 13. Doorway, stair light, and scar of original forecourt wall in north-east front.

The embattled parapet has simple moulded copings. It stands above a moulded string course, which is badly weathered and in parts entirely missing. There are two projecting gargoyles each in the south-east and north-west walls, all badly weathered except for one in the north-west wall, although its condition is too poor to determine its original form.

The moulding of the label stops is worthy of special note. These have been renewed in the arch on the south-east side, and on the porch to the farmhouse, but clearly have replicated the style of the originals on the tower. The stops in the upper-stage windows are slightly better preserved, one of which is a simple geometrical pattern of five small circles, and another with a four-leaf flower. The renewed stops are, by contrast, of no discernible pattern, perhaps because, in their weathered state before restoration, there was no discernible pattern to copy (fig 14).
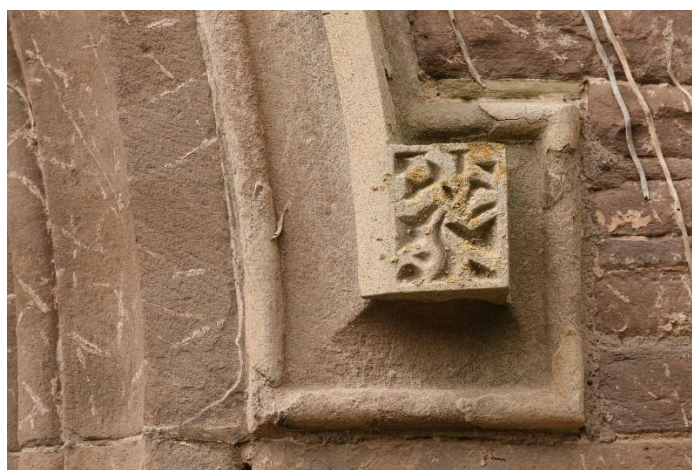
Figure 14. Restored reconstituted-stone label stop in south-east front.

Garden walls abut and are in line with the south-east front of the tower (fig 8). On the north side the wall was overgrown at the time of survey, although a photograph taken in 2016 shows that it is like the main wall on the south side, albeit less well preserved (Holland 2016, 20 and fig 21). A return on the north-east side is an overgrown bank in line with the end of the farmhouse, which might be a vestige of the original forecourt wall. On the south side of the tower the wall is mainly built of thin courses of sandstone, much like the tower itself, with flat stone copings on which random uncut stones have been laid. The rounded south-east angle, however, is a later rebuild of snecked masonry. There is a breach in the wall where it would have abutted the farmhouse at the south end.

5.2 Interior

In the lower stage is a quadripartite rib vault, with central boss, on shafted corbels. The walls and the vault have been rendered and scribed, probably dating from the late-nineteenth or early twentieth century. The passage has a cobbled floor. The Tudor-headed doorway, in a dressed stone surround, to the stairway in the north-east wall is set above floor level, and to reach it are added stone steps abutting the north-east wall. A mural stair

leads to the upper stage and a second mural stair in the north-east wall leads to the parapet, both with stone treads and corbelled stone roofs. The stair doorways in the ground and upper stages all have Tudor heads and simple broad chamfers. Evidence of pintles in the upper-stage doorways suggest that doors were added later. In the upper stage, the fireplace in the south-west wall has a surround, partly now missing, with Tudor arch and the same broad chamfer as the internal doorways, under a cambered relieving arch. The chimney breast projects slightly from the line of the south wall but there is no indication that it was a later insertion. The windows in the east and west walls have deep splays and had window seats, but the internal sills are broken up and mostly missing. Walls in the upper stage are not plastered.

Figure 15. Quadripartite vault in the passage of the lower stage.

Figure 16. Doorway to stair from upper stage to parapet.

Figure 17. Fireplace in the upper stage.

The roof has softwood trusses of the late-nineteenth century, forming an imitation rib vault, with rafters and plaster infill.

6 Interpretation

The date of the gatehouse is not firmly established. A late-fifteenth century date has been suggested, which is consistent with the rise of the Welsh gentry as the local ruling class in the latter years of the Yorkist dynasty and the subsequent Tudor dynasty (Davies 1993, 219-20). However, it seems more likely that the gatehouse was added by Willian Vaughan as a status symbol and can ultimately be explained as an expression of his personal ambition. The passage in the gatehouse is aligned with the porch of the house (and therefore its cross passage), which suggests that the gatehouse was an addition, perhaps associated with improvement of the house. However, apart from the re-made label stops there are no features in the house comparable with the dressed windows and the arches of the gatehouse.

The structure itself is almost entirely of one phase only from the ground to the parapet. Changes to the building over subsequent centuries have been modest, and most seem to have occurred at the end of the nineteenth or early twentieth century in a single programme of restoration or improvement. This includes the rendering and scribing of the passage walls and vault, the double gates in the south-east front, the pyramidal roof and the ceiling in the upper stage. The work was clearly intended to respect the original work, albeit using modern materials. It was, perhaps, at this time that evidence of the former chimney stack was removed.

Other alterations are largely concerned with repairs and renewal. The pointing is variable across the wall faces, with cement mortar prominent in the upper stage. The replacement of stones in the wall and the masonry of the parapet has been mentioned above.

The original forecourt walls, which were probably embattled and were wide enough for a wall walk, were attached to the gatehouse. They were taken down in the latter half of the nineteenth century and had been replaced by the time of the 1887 Ordnance Survey map. The thin courses used in the garden wall might have come from the same quarry as the original work, or might have been re-used from the original forecourt walls. The extant garden wall is of at least two phases, however, since the rounded south-east angle of the wall is of snecked masonry different from the otherwise regular thin sandstone courses, and is clearly therefore later. The date of the wall under the vegetation-covered bank on the north-east side of the garden is uncertain and may be earlier. It is certainly worthy of further investigation.

The farm building on the south side of the farmhouse and gatehouse has two late-medieval door surrounds that could have come from the house, or they could have been doorways in the original forecourt wall.

7 Statement of Significance

The gatehouse at Great Porthamel was built as a status symbol and is the embodiment of the rising power of the Welsh gentry from the fifteenth century onwards. Such gatehouses were a feature of such houses from the late-fifteenth century onwards, a fashion that began in south-east Wales and spread to other parts by the seventeenth century. It is also testament to the ambition and status of William Vaughan, first Sheriff of Breconshire, who probably built the gatehouse and improved the earlier farmhouse at the same time. The later history of the building, fronting first a gentry house that slowly declined in status to a farmhouse, is a pattern common to many high-status fifteenth and sixteenth-century houses and adds to the social historical value of the building. This transition is embodied by the loss of the original embattled walls of the forecourt and their replacement with the extant garden wall.

The Great Porthamel gatehouse is a work of high-quality secular architecture in the contemporary Tudor-Gothic style, characteristic of high-status buildings of the early-sixteenth century in Wales. Despite the evidence of weathering and damage to interior features such as the fireplace in the upper stage, the building is a rare example of a largely unrestored sixteenth-century building, retaining original arch and window detail, as well as the passage vault. The later features, such as the rendering of the passage walls and vault, the double gates and the pyramid roof, have not detracted from the aesthetic interest of the sixteenth-century building. They are of interest as an early example of sympathetic restoration.

The gatehouse is part an impressive farmstead group comprising the farmhouse and a farm building alongside it. The farmhouse is of medieval origin, i.e., earlier than the gatehouse, whereas the farm building, although later, incorporates two re-set medieval doorways that must have come either from the house or the forecourt walls attached to the gatehouse.

There are several surviving gatehouses in Wales from this period. Tretower Court (Powys) is probably the outstanding example because of its architectural context. It was probably built by Sir Roger Vaughan in the mid-fifteenth century, to which the fortified gatehouse was added c1480. The gatehouse still encloses the courtyard house. The gatehouse at St Pierre (Monmouthshire), also built in the early-sixteenth century, is like Great Porthamel stylistically but more ambitious: it is a three-stage rather than a two-stage tower. Its passage arches have continuous mouldings and upper stage windows have similar arched lights and hood moulds. In other important examples the gatehouse is either ruinous or the original ensemble of gatehouse and house has not survived. Porth Mawr, near Crickhowell, was built Herbert family in the late-fifteenth century, but the mansion it fronted has been demolished. Other examples such as Van (Caerphilly) and Pencoed Castle (Monmouthshire) are ruinous. Examples from elsewhere in Wales are later and often dated, such as Cors y Godol (Merionethshire) of 1630 and Cefn Amlwch (Gwynedd) of 1607.

8 References

8.1 Cartographic sources

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Ordnance Survey maps, 1887, 1904, 1953.

8.2 Printed sources

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9 Archive

The archive deposited with the National Monuments Record comprises:

42 digital photographs (tif)

Report (pdf)

Written Scheme of Investigation (pdf)

Catalogue of photographs (Excel)

3 measured survey drawings (pdf)

Field notes (to be retained by contractor)

10 Digital Photographs

GreatPorthamelGatehouse2021_
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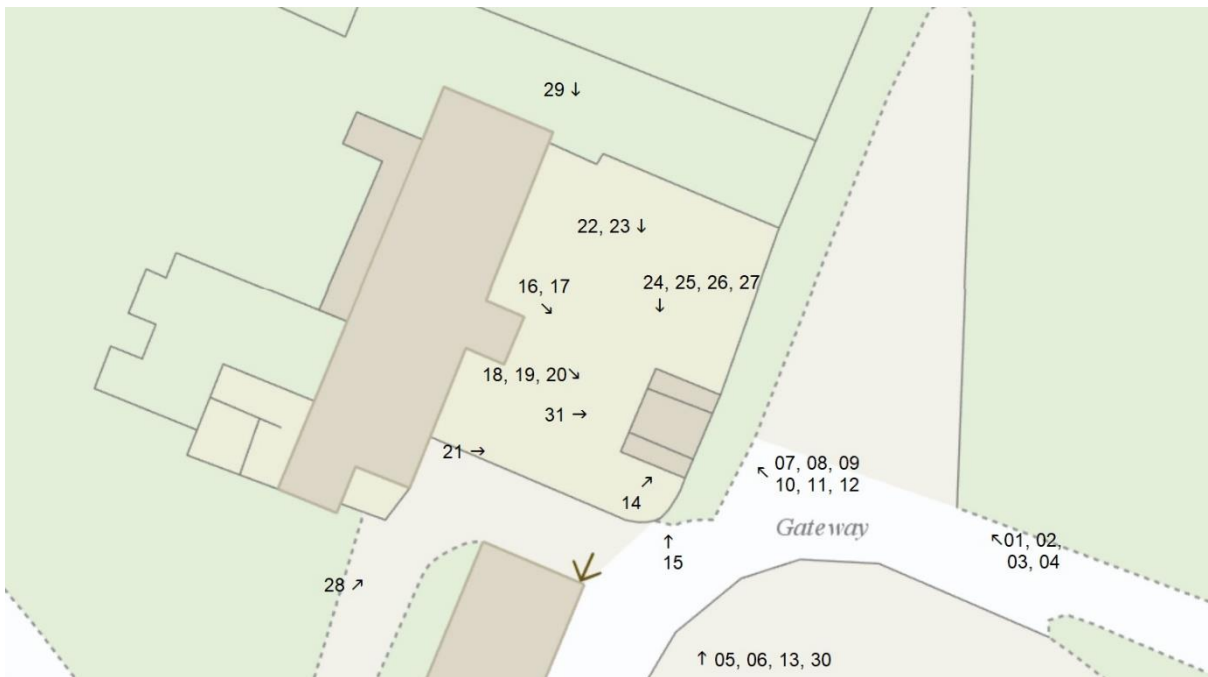GreatPorthamelGatehouse2021_
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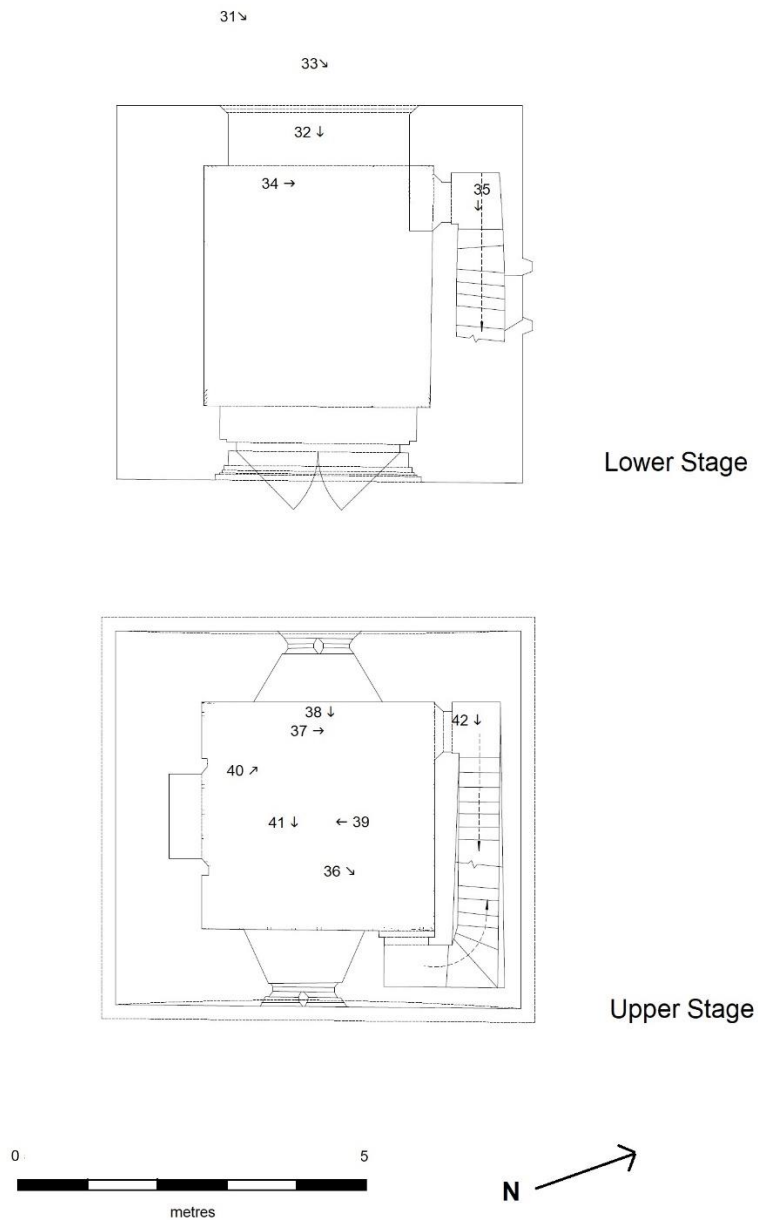*Figure 18. Plan showing direction of exterior photographs.*

Figure 19. Plan showing direction of interior photographs.

Image number	Date	Description
GreatPorthamelGatehouse2021_001	06/04/2021	In farmyard with farmhouse behind, looking NW
GreatPorthamelGatehouse2021_002	06/04/2021	In farmyard with farmhouse behind, looking W
GreatPorthamelGatehouse2021_003	06/04/2021	SE front, looking NW
GreatPorthamelGatehouse2021_004	06/04/2021	In farmyard with farmhouse and farm building, looking W
GreatPorthamelGatehouse2021_005	06/04/2021	In farmyard with farmhouse and garden wall, looking NW
GreatPorthamelGatehouse2021_006	06/04/2021	In farmyard with farmhouse and garden wall, looking NW
GreatPorthamelGatehouse2021_007	06/04/2021	Arch and gate in SE front

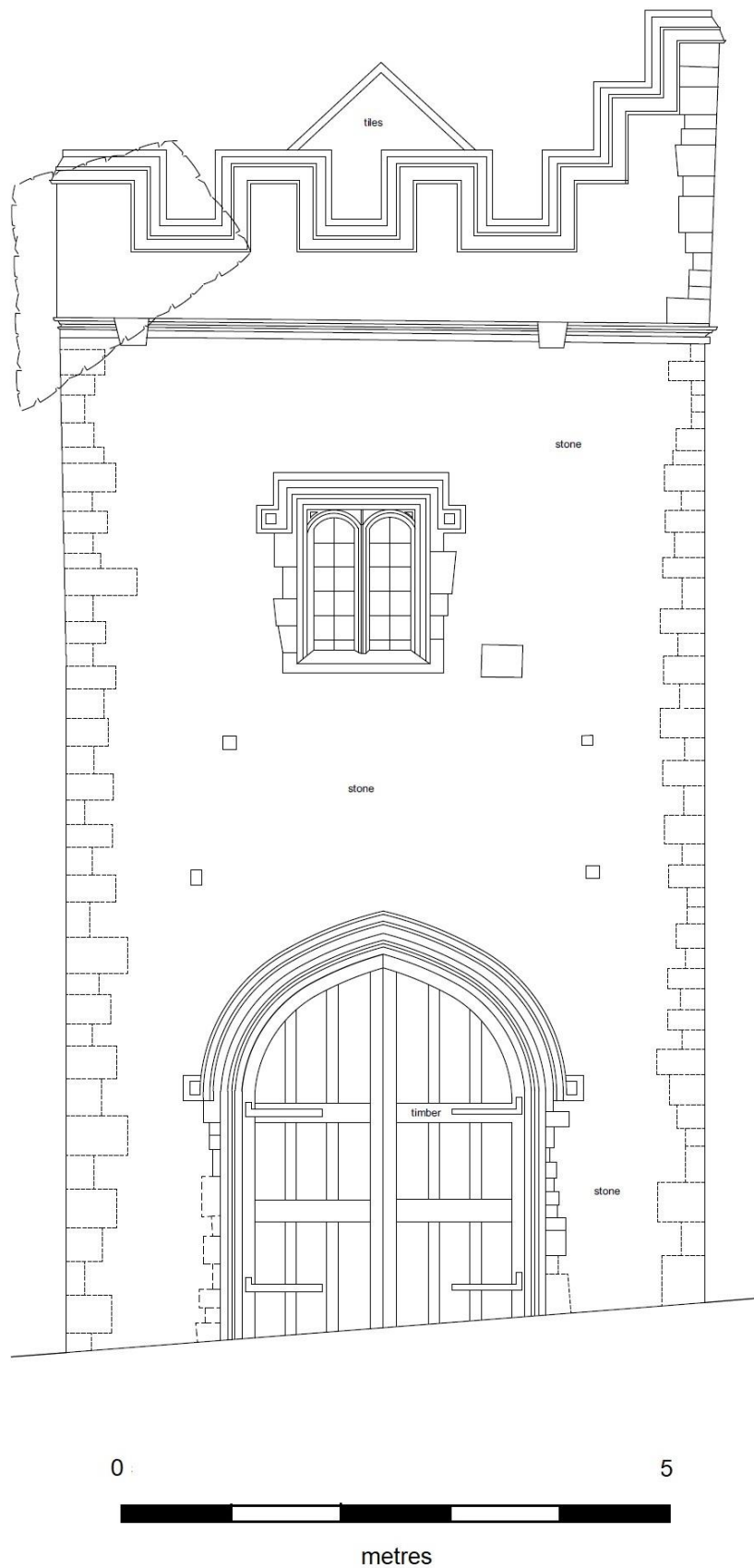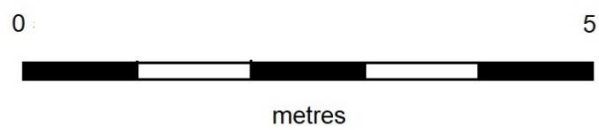|		
GreatPorthamelGatehouse2021_008	06/04/2021	Left-hand label stop in arch to SE front
GreatPorthamelGatehouse2021_009	06/04/2021	Right-hand label stop to arch in SE front
GreatPorthamelGatehouse2021_010	06/04/2021	Upper-stage window to SE front
GreatPorthamelGatehouse2021_011	06/04/2021	Hood mould to upper-stage window in SE front
GreatPorthamelGatehouse2021_012	06/04/2021	Parapet, SE front
GreatPorthamelGatehouse2021_013	06/04/2021	SW front and garden wall, looking NW
GreatPorthamelGatehouse2021_014	06/04/2021	Scar of former forecourt wall and parapet in SW front
GreatPorthamelGatehouse2021_015	06/04/2021	Parapet in SW front, looking NW
GreatPorthamelGatehouse2021_016	06/04/2021	NW front, looking SE
GreatPorthamelGatehouse2021_017	06/04/2021	NW front, looking SE
GreatPorthamelGatehouse2021_018	06/04/2021	Arch in NW front, looking E
GreatPorthamelGatehouse2021_019	06/04/2021	Upper stage window in NW front
GreatPorthamelGatehouse2021_020	06/04/2021	Left-hand label stop in upper stage window, NW front
GreatPorthamelGatehouse2021_021	06/04/2021	Parapet NW front, looking NE
GreatPorthamelGatehouse2021_022	06/04/2021	NW front,
GreatPorthamelGatehouse2021_023	06/04/2021	NE front, looking S
GreatPorthamelGatehouse2021_024	06/04/2021	NE front, scar of former forecourt wall and doorway to former wall walk, looking S
GreatPorthamelGatehouse2021_025	06/04/2021	NE front, doorway to former wall walk and stair light, looking S
GreatPorthamelGatehouse2021_026	06/04/2021	NE front, doorway to former wall walk, looking S
GreatPorthamelGatehouse2021_027	06/04/2021	Parapet, NE front, looking S
GreatPorthamelGatehouse2021_028	06/04/2021	From farmyard, looking NE with breached garden wall
GreatPorthamelGatehouse2021_029	06/04/2021	From farmhouse garden looking S with farmhouse and farm building
GreatPorthamelGatehouse2021_030	06/04/2021	With farmhouse and garden wall on S side of gatehouse, looking NW
GreatPorthamelGatehouse2021_031	06/04/2021	Through passage, with stair doorway, looking NE
GreatPorthamelGatehouse2021_032	06/04/2021	Passage vault, looking SE
GreatPorthamelGatehouse2021_033	06/04/2021	Cobbled floor in through-passage, looking NE
GreatPorthamelGatehouse2021_034	06/04/2021	Doorway to stair from passage, looking NE
GreatPorthamelGatehouse2021_035	06/04/2021	Stair to upper stage, looking SE
GreatPorthamelGatehouse2021_036	06/04/2021	Upper stage, doorway to lower stair, looking NE
GreatPorthamelGatehouse2021_037	06/04/2021	Upper stage, doorway to parapet stair, looking NW
GreatPorthamelGatehouse2021_038	06/04/2021	Upper stage roof
GreatPorthamelGatehouse2021_039	06/04/2021	Upper stage fireplace, looking SW
GreatPorthamelGatehouse2021_040	06/04/2021	Rere arch to upper stage window in NW front, looking N
GreatPorthamelGatehouse2021_041	06/04/2021	former window seat in upper stage SE window
GreatPorthamelGatehouse2021_042	06/04/2021	stair to parapet, looking SE

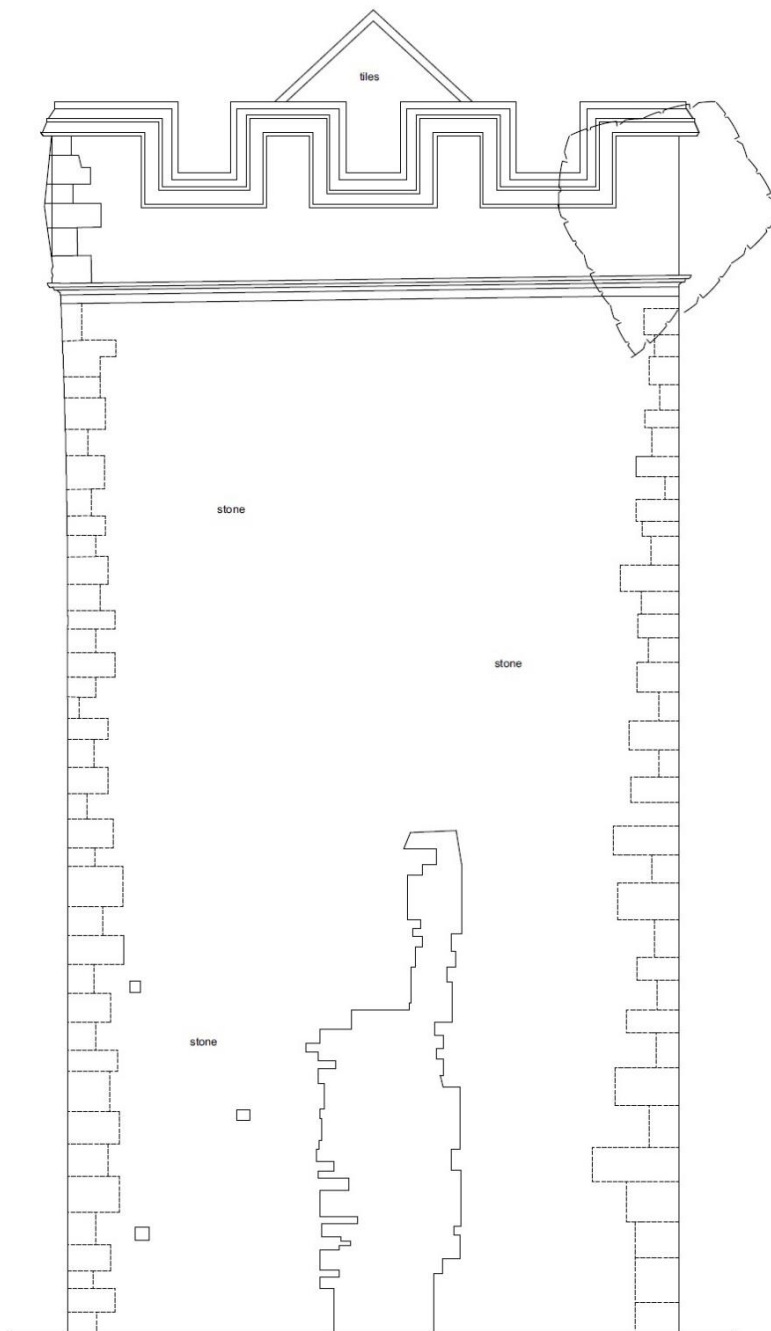# 11 Measured Survey Drawings

tiles

stone

stone

timber

stone

0   5

metres

Figure 20. South-East (front) Elevation.

tiles

stone

stone

stone

0   5

metres

Figure 21. South-West Elevation.

tiles

stone

stone

stone

open

0   5

metres
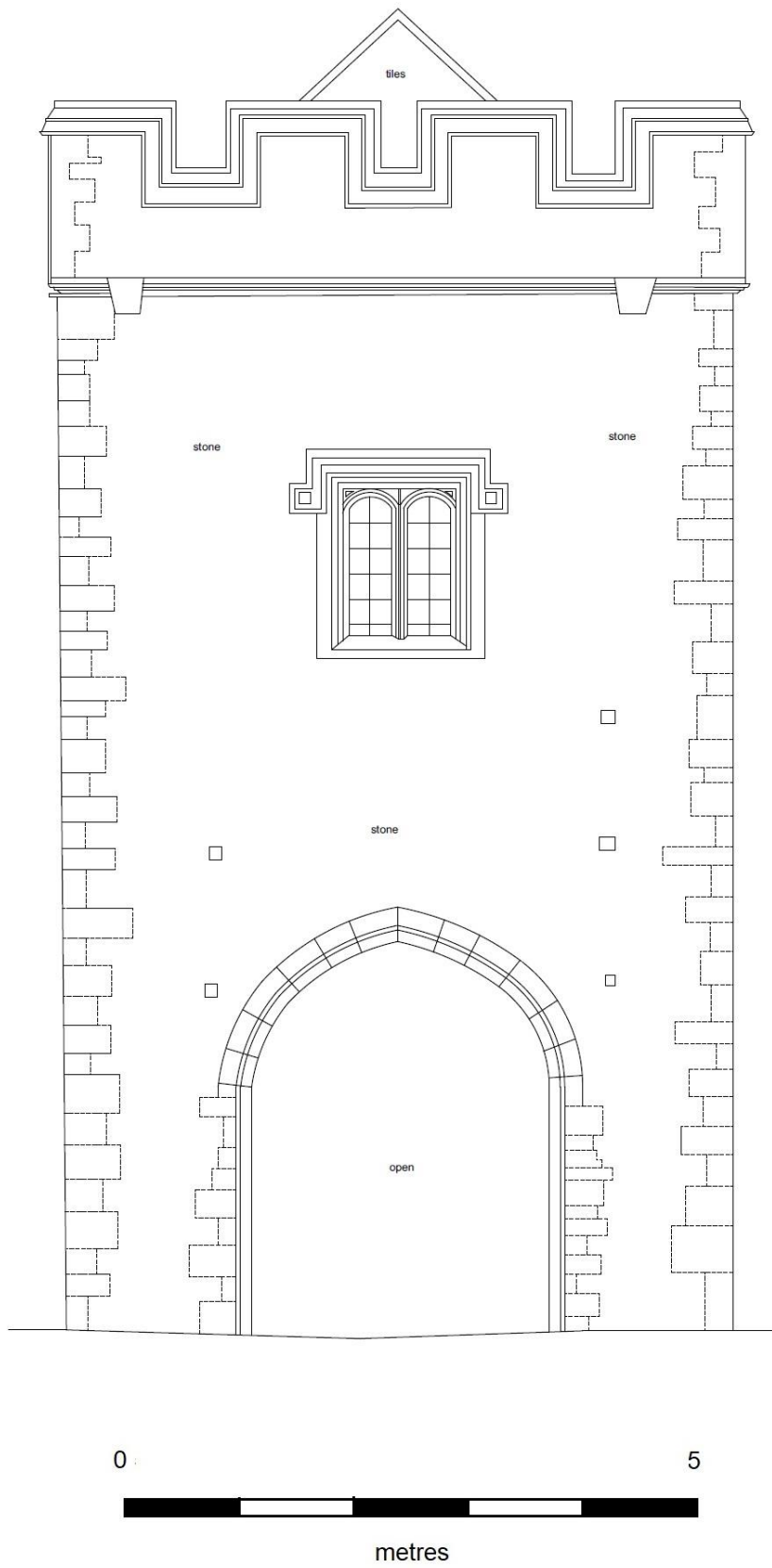
Figure 22. North-West Elevation.

tiles

stone

stone

stone

stone

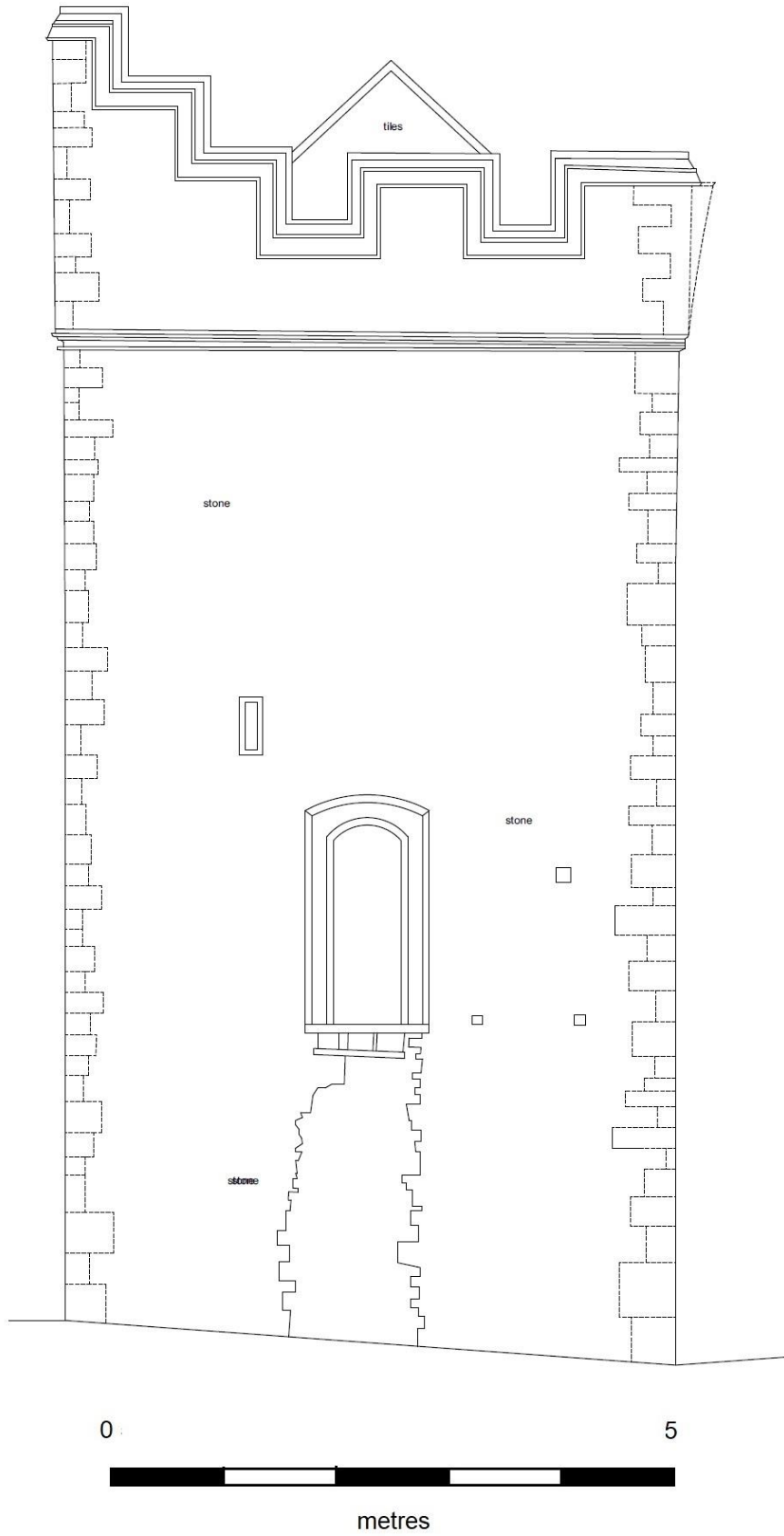0   5

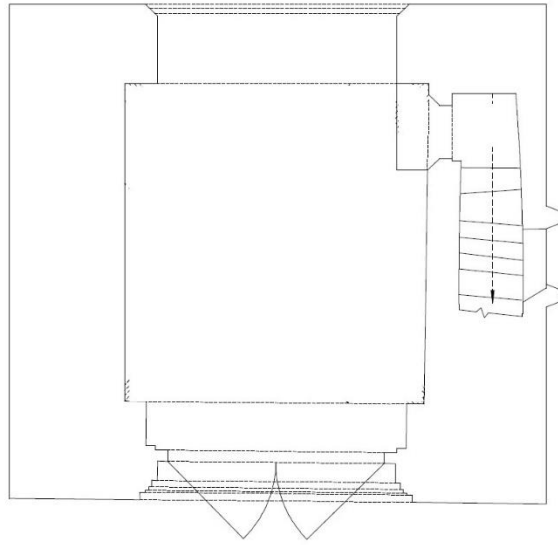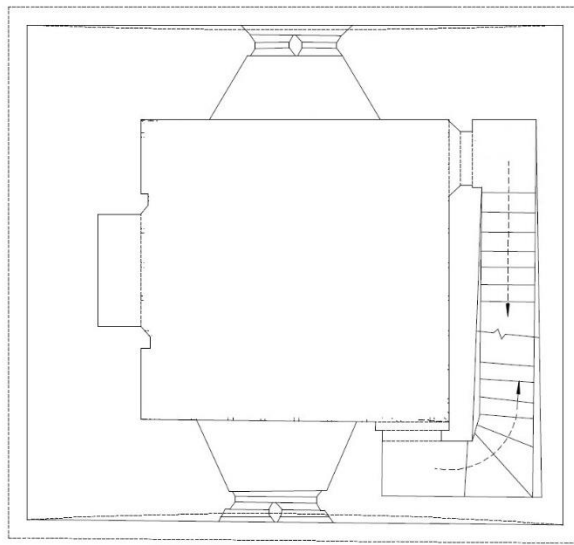metres

Figure 23. North-East Elevation.

Lower Stage

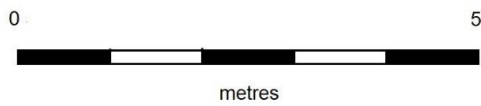Upper Stage

0   5
metres

N

Figure 24. Floor plans.

Appendix 1: Great Porthamel Gatehouse listed building and scheduled ancient monument citation

Full Report for Listed Buildings

Cadw

Summary Description of a Listed Buildings

Reference Number	Building Number	Grade	Status	Date of Designation	Date of Amendment
6641		I	Designated	28/09/1961	14/08/1995

Name of Property	Address
Gatehouse to Great Porthamel	

Location

Unitary Authority	Community	Town	Locality	Easting	Northing
Powys	Talgarth			315953	235191

Street Side	Location
NW	Located axially on the approach to Great Porthamel farmhouse, below the NW side of the main road from Talgarth to Hay.

Description

Broad Class	Period
Domestic	

History

Gatehouse to the major medieval manor house of the area, the Vaughan family seat, and providing access through what

Leland described as 'a strong wall embatteled' enclosing a precinct around the the seat of the Vaughan family, which had been largely demolished by the early C19.

Exterior

Two storey gatehouse, late C15, red sandstone with some lighter coloured stone, stone slate roof. Wide 4-centred carriage arches, similar both at front and back, with hood moulding, the outer arch having a segmental inner arch to permit the closing of gates. Ashlar sides show scars for precinct wall with wall walk and parapet, which remained as late as 1911. Large window from stair on N side, behind wall. Upper floor has 2-light windows with hood moulds. Crenellated parapet, stepping up to accommodate head of stair in NE corner. Pyramidal roof behind C19 timber gates. Carved gargoyles.

Scheduled Ancient Monument No. B47.

Interior

Within the through carriageway, the walls are rendered and the vault carried on ribs springing from stilted round-moulded corbels, the ribs having an ogee and hollow chamfer. Chamfered door to stair in N wall, rising past a large window to the first floor chamber. Chamber has 2-light windows in square heads, inset, the spandrels with outer casement mouldings. Original ferrumenta but no glazing line. A fireplace within a depressed arch set in a chimney breast slightly forward of the S wall, with a relieving arch over. Wall stair continues to the slabbed wall walk.

Reason for designation

Listed I as a rare survival of a medieval domestic gatehouse, being one of only 3 in Powys, and one including stonemasonry of the highest quality.

Cadw : Full Report for Listed Buildings   [Records 1 of 1

Scheduled Monuments- Full Report

Summary Description of a Scheduled Monument

Reference Number	Name	Date of Designation	Status
BR047	Porthamel Tower		Designated

Location

Unitary Authority	Community	Easting	Northing
Powys	Talgarth	315954	235191

Broad Class	Site Type	Period
Monument	Tower	Medieval

Description

Summary Description and Reason for Designation

The following provides a general description of the Scheduled Ancient Monument.

The monument consists of a tower erected in 1536, possibly a gate tower of a small mansion. It is a square, red sandstone, two storey tower complete up to its battlements. Most of the mouldings of the doors, windows and battlements are still in place. It is approximately 8m in height. The entrance, running east - west, is approximately 3m in height, with pointed archways at both ends. On the east side the arch has a moulded stone surround with decorated stops and the entrance is closed by wooden gates. On the west side the arch is plain with simple moulding and no decoration.

Inside there is a cobbled floor. The walls are smooth stone and the ceiling is a four-ribbed vault. There is a small door on the north side which leads to stairs to the room above. Above the entrance on the east side is a two-light window with drip moulding above and decorated stops. A string course running round the wall has the stumps of two gargoyles in it. On the west side there is also a window above the archway, similar to the archway in that it is unadorned. Above is a moulded string course below the battlements with one gargoyle at the north end and the stub of one at the south end.

The south side is featureless. In the centre of the lower part of the wall is an area of unevenness where a wall running

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southwards from the tower was originally attached. This feature is repeated on the north side. On the north side there is a small doorway c 2.5 m up the wall, with a surround of dressed stone. There is a narrow slit window above and slightly to its east. The battlements on this side step up two steps at the north-east corner.

The monument is of national importance for its potential to enhance our knowledge of construction techniques. It retains significant archaeological potential, with a strong probability of the presence of associated archaeological features and deposits. The structure itself may be expected to contain archaeological information concerning chronology and building techniques.

The scheduled area comprises the remains described and areas around them within which related evidence may be expected to survive.

Cadw : Scheduled Monuments- Full Report   [Records 1 of 1