The foundation, planning and building of new towns in the 13th and 14th centuries in Europe: an architectural-historical research into urban form and its creation

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1 THE NEW TOWNS OF KING EDWARD I IN WALES

For a long time, Wales has been a relatively empty country. Until the 14th century there were relatively few towns in comparison to its direct neighbour, England, as well as the west of continental Europe, where conditions for settlement were better because of more suitable natural circumstances like topography, soil and climate. In the late 12th century Geraldus Cambrensis wrote: ‘The Welsh live as hermits in the woods, not in towns or villages or castles.’ However, over a period of about two and a half centuries, starting with the Norman invasion of England in 1066, the settlement structure and society in Wales would change considerably.

The early phases of this process will be broadly described in paragraphs 1.1 and 1.2 below. The main subject of research in this chapter, however, is the eleven towns that were founded by the English king Edward I between 1277 and 1302.

1.1 Introduction: geography and history

The country of Wales largely consists of a harsh landscape, which has been mostly uncultivated up to the present day. The elevation of about half of the land is higher than 180 m., reaching up to 1085 m. in Snowdonia in the northwest. (fig.1.1) The plains of the south and the east are best suited for agriculture, whereas the uplands of the interior, with their wet climate and ill-drained shallow soils, are only suitable as extensive pastureland. The central mountain mass stretches from north to south and forms a barrier for communication in the transverse direction. Therefore, the population has always been concentrated on the margins of the country, and it seems that the absence of a natural centre of the country has long hampered political unity. The low-lying plains of the rivers Severn and Dee in the east have always formed a natural line of division between Wales and England.

After the Roman armies first landed on the British Isles in A.D. 43, it took until A.D. 78 for them to conquer all of Wales. The Romans built a system of roads and garrison forts. Towns, however, were very rare in Roman Wales: there were only three, all in the south. As in many other parts of the former Roman Empire, Roman roads and settlements had a considerable influence on struc-

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1 Wales 1978, pp.180, 200; Butler 1985, p.469.
2 One should be aware however that great parts of the mountainous landscape, now largely bare, were still covered with woods in the period under consideration.
3 Bowen 1957, pp.73-114.
4 Rees 1972, p.2.
tures of transport and settlement in later eras, although there does not seem to have been continuity of settlement in the post-Roman period. Roman villas or rural estates were only founded in the eastern and southern margins of the country, and it seems that Roman culture hardly affected the life of its native inhabitants.

After the Roman withdrawal (circa A.D. 410), Irish and Scottish tribes invaded parts of Wales in the 5th and 6th centuries, while in other parts native rulers came to power. In the 7th and 8th centuries the Welsh lost territory to the Angles from Northumbria in the northeast and the Saxons from Mercia in the southeast. The Welsh inhabitants were slowly driven westward to the eastern foothills. The rulers of Mercia built several earthen dykes in this period, in order to strengthen the border between Mercia and Wales. The most well known of these is ‘Offa’s dyke’, in the southeast of Wales, which was probably built under King Offa of Mercia (757-796). Although these dykes marked the boundary between the countries, the Anglo-Saxons occasionally intruded into Wales much further westward. The burh of Clywdmount, in the northeast, was presumably the only Anglo-Saxon urban settlement in Wales. It was founded in 921 by the earl of Mercia. This settlement was the predecessor of present-day Rhuddlan. Not much is known about its form, since it was replaced by a Norman borough in 1073.

Despite the Anglo-Saxon incursions, there was room for fairly stable Welsh kingdoms to be established. Most important and most steady of these were Gwynedd in the northwest and Powys in the north- and middle-east. In southern Wales there were various smaller and less permanent kingdoms, of which Ceredigion, in the middle-west was most stable in the period under consideration. After invasions by Vikings in the 9th and 10th centuries, there was a first period of political unity in Wales under Grufydd ap Llewelyn (1039-63), who conquered the throne of Gwynedd and subsequently the rest of Wales.

1.1.1 Norman conquest

After his death, however, quarrels and wars between different groups of nobles and their clans brought new disunity. This made it relatively easy for new conquerors to occupy parts of Wales. The Normans successfully invaded England in 1066, after which it did not take long before they moved into Wales. The Norman king William the Conqueror (1066-1087) assigned the borderlands between Wales and England, the so-called Marches, to his barons. From their bases in Hereford, Shrewsbury and Chester, the respective earls moved westward along the coasts and through the valleys in order to occupy the lower parts of Wales. The borderlands and the coastal plains of the south were first colonised. In these regions the Normans founded manors and built castles, often with boroughs at their gates. In itself this was not much different from what they did in England or had done in Normandy before, but there the rupture with the existing structure of settlement was less abrupt than in Wales.

Whereas Norman rule brought relative unity to England, it did just the opposite to Wales. The earls of the Marches operated independently, and founded new lordships in Wales for themselves or their vassals. They exercised regalian rights to establish fairs, markets and boroughs of their own, without needing permission from the king.

Only after rebellions by the earls around the beginning of the 12th century did King Henry I (1100-35) secure a position for himself in Wales by confiscating part of the lands that had been held by the earls in southern and western Wales. Within fifty years the Normans had colonised a considerable part of Wales and had planted it with castles and boroughs. The interior, especially the higher parts, however, remained in the hands of the Welsh, for which reason it was called ‘the Welshry’, as opposed to ‘the Englishry’. This situation lasted, although not continuously and not all over, until the late 13th century. In the regions occupied by the Normans, new features were introduced into the country, notably feudal methods of land tenure, large-scale agriculture in the open-field system, regulated trade, villages and towns instead of dispersed settlements, and an ecclesiastical administration organised in dioceses.
1.1.2 Reconquest by Welsh rulers

The period from about the middle to the end of the 12th century brought success for the native Welsh rulers, who managed to reconquer large parts of their lands from the Normans, particularly in the north and west. With the outbreak of civil war in England in 1135, the Welsh lords saw their chance, and combined in a great revolt, which led to a restoration of independence for the kingdoms Gwynedd (northwest), Powys (northeast) and Deheubarth (middle-west) until the end of the 12th century.14

However, the success of the Welsh was far from stable. It was largely inspired by their rebellious leaders Rhys ap Gruffydd of Deheubarth (the Lord Rhys, 1155-1197), who conquered a large part of south Wales, and Llewelyn the Great (Llewelyn ap Iorwerth, c.1195-1240), who managed to create a common Welsh rule and an actual spirit of unity. The English king Henry III (1216-1272) once again subjugated the Welsh, formalised by the Treaty of Woodstock in 1247. He took large parts of the conquered lands into possession as royal domains.15

The deeds of Llewelyn the Great were, however, to be equalled by his grandson Llewelyn ap Gruffydd (1255-1282). In 1258 a council of Welsh rulers acclaimed him Prince of Wales, and with the Treaty of Montgomery (1267) this title was even accepted by the English king.16 These great Welsh rulers all had their victories and defeats, not only struggling against the conquerors, but often also fighting other Welsh lords.

Under Welsh rule, conservatism characterised the societal situation. As a result of this, relatively few boroughs were founded.17 Only in the final period of Welsh rule (c.1240-80) the native lords began to imitate the Anglo-Norman borough foundations.18 The most successful Welsh new town was appropriately named Welshpool. It was founded in 1241-45, and it contained 225 burgage plots in 1322, which was a relatively high number.19 Most of the Welsh boroughs were, in contrast to those of the Anglo-Normans, undefended. Apparently, their military significance was limited, and possibly they also had less need for strong defences.20 They were often smaller, less urban and more closely linked to pre-urban settlements like the mæðref, the centre of the Welsh lordship, the tref, the Welsh market centre, or ancient ecclesiastical settlements called llan.21 In large part they were founded in the heartland of the Welsh lordships, which was the upland. Obviously, economic possibilities were less favourable there than in the lowlands, where the main routes of transportation were located and where the land was more fertile.22

1.1.3 Anglo-Norman (re-)conquests

Especially after Henry III’s accession to the throne in 1216 the Anglo-Norman policy of colonisation in Wales was re-vitalised. Mainly in the west and south, the English king and the barons of the Anglo-Norman lordships in Wales founded many new castles, boroughs and villages. Together with this activity, new lines of defence were built, woodlands were cleared and peatbogs were reclaimed.23 By 1270 the Anglo-Normans had founded more than fifty towns in Wales, most of which were located in the south and in the central border area between Wales and England.24

Later on in the 13th and early 14th centuries more towns would be created in Wales, particularly by King Edward I during his conquest of northern Wales. These developments will be discussed in detail later in this chapter.

15 Rees 1972, pp.35-36.
16 Walker 1990, p.120.
17 Soulsby 1983, pp.11-12. See also Beresford’s table of the chronology of plantations (Beresford 1967, p.342) and fig.0.2. Soulsby counts 30 Welsh “towns”, out of a total of 105. (Soulsby 1983, p.16)
19 Soulsby 1983, pp.18-19.
20 Only Pwllheli, Adpar, Dolfryn, Llanddowror, Treffilan and Welshpool had castles in their direct surroundings, while, conversely, only five Anglo-Norman boroughs did not have a castle nearby. (Soulsby 1983, p.34; see also below, note 24)
1.2 Urban prelude: new town foundations before King Edward I  
(second half of the 11th century to c.1270)

In Wales, as in England, settlements in which specific inhabitants were given special privileges as a community were generally called boroughs. The most characteristic privilege was that of burgage-tenure, which meant that the burgesses, as the privileged inhabitants were called, had the right to hold house lots in free hereditary tenure from the lord. Such house lots were called burgages. The general concept of the borough, with many variations, was brought to England, Ireland and Wales by the Normans.

Many of the boroughs in Wales received a written charter containing privileges and laws. These sets of privileges and laws were often based on those of older towns. The most notable source for these were the customs of the Norman town of Breteuil. The town of Hereford in western England received these customs in the late 11th century, from its new Norman lord William Fitz Osbern, who had already been lord of Breteuil for some time. Later on, Cardiff and a number of other towns received charters which were based on that of Breteuil.

![Fig. 1.2: Locations of pre-16th-century towns in Wales. (From: Soulsby 1983, modified by the author) The names of the Edwardian towns treated in this chapter are traced out.](image)

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25 Not all burgesses, however, actually held burgages. In the late 13th and 14th centuries several towns in Wales had the odd principle of “burgage by the wind” (burgagium a vento). Burgesses enjoying this status did not actually live permanently in the town. In a rental from Abergavenny it is written that they paid for the privileges of being considered burgesses “...so that they can buy and sell as if they were of the vill’s liberties.” Apparently, they were traders who were admitted to the urban community in order to stimulate the activity in the town’s market. (Beresford 1967, p.225)

26 Platt 1976 (1), pp.125-126; Dodgshon & Butlin 1978, pp.87, 108-109; Bond 1990 p.94. One must beware, however, to take the ‘borough’ as an absolutely fixed concept. According to Reynolds (1982, pp.16-18), the term ‘borough’ has come to designate a specific concept mainly in the 15th and 16th centuries, when lawyers needed clearer general definitions. The concepts of ‘incorporation’, ‘burgess’, ‘burgage’ and ‘borough’ seem to have slowly become more regular in the preceding centuries.

27 Bartlett 1992, pp.172-173; Lilly 2002, p.78-83. Breteuil probably was a newly founded town itself. Duke William of Normandy built a castle there around the year 1060 and placed it in the hands of his cousin William Fitz Osbern, who probably founded the town and who later became Earl of Hereford. (Beresford 1967, p.199)
Hereford. Subsequently, the privileges and laws of these towns were passed on to many other ‘daughter’ boroughs in Wales.28

The towns of Wales were nearly all located in the low-lying parts of the country. Out of the 105 towns that appear in Soulsby’s map of towns created before the 16th century, about 40 are located on or very near the coast, and around 20 lie on the coastal plains, where roads roughly followed the contour of the coastline. The rest of the towns are located in the inland-reaching valleys of eight different rivers. (fig.1.2) Only ten towns were not located near the coast or on the bank of a navigable river.19

There are two main reasons for this relative concentration of towns in specific areas. The first is that in the lowlands of Wales the soil and climate were best suited for cultivation, so that is where the Normans founded manors, castles, churches and boroughs.30 The second is that the towns were sited mainly on the relatively few traffic-routes of importance: the sea, the navigable rivers, the roads through the coastal plains, and the inland roads through the valleys.

The new boroughs were mostly founded next to castles.31 These castles often already existed when the boroughs were added, but in some cases castle and borough were purposely founded simultaneously.32 The boroughs were generally sited on the most level side of the castle, preferably where they could make optimal use of the topography of the natural terrain for their defence, as long as this did not seriously hamper their prime functions.33 So, steep slopes, water and swamp were, to a certain degree, welcome obstacles to surround the towns. (see figs. 1.3, 1.4, 1.6)

Many new boroughs and castles were founded in locations with some kind of pre-existing nucleating feature.34 Thus, towns like Cardiff, Carmarthen, Loughor and Caerleon were founded on the sites of Roman forts. But only in the last of these was the street pattern influenced by the form of the Roman settlement.35 The borough of Cefnlyss in central Wales was even located on the site of an Iron Age hillfort, using the natural topography as well as the Iron Age ramparts for its defence.36 Various boroughs were founded in connection with indigenous Welsh settlement cores like a market (tref), a seigneurial seat (maerdref) or a churchyard (llan).37

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29 Soulsby 1983, p.29.
30 Rees 1972, p.28.
31 Of the Anglo-Norman foundations only Caersws, Mostyn, Newborough, Cowbridge and the bishop’s seat of St. Asaph lack the company of a castle. Soulsby mentions three more settlements, but these can not really be regarded as towns. (Soulsby 1983, p.34)
32 For the early Norman castles and their boroughs, see the table of chronology by Soulsby (1983, p.6).
34 Soulsby 1983, pp.2-4. See also pars. 1.6.
35 Soulsby 1983, p.2. Other towns, like Caerphilly, Llandover and Brecon, were created near to sites where Roman forts had been; obviously because these locations were well-sited because of the advantages offered by the geographical situation. Additional advantages of the Roman sites may have been the possibility to reuse ancient building materials and roads, for as far as they had survived the ages.
36 Rowley 1986, pp.212-213. Because of Cefnlyss’ isolated and high location, it is no wonder that the town was not very successful economically, and that it had fallen into decay already in the 14th century.
37 Butler 1985, p.89; Soulsby 1983, p.3. The churchyard-settlements mostly have an Ilan-suffix in their name and have a more or less rounded formation core, which was the churchyard itself. Similar settlement forms can be found among monastic towns in Ireland and early settlements at ecclesiastical sites in England. (Swan 1985, pp.77-103; Blair 1986, p.35-36; Bradley 1990, pp.40-47).
The layouts of the newly founded towns of Wales up to about 1270 show a great variety. Unlike the bastides of southwestern France or the Florentine terre nuove, the new towns in Wales were only rarely laid out on regular orthogonal grid plans. Of the towns from before the rule of King Edward I, Newport (Dyfed) comes closest to a regular grid plan in the layout of its streets and lots. Other town plans generally have less regular forms, but many show a clear inclination towards straightness of streets and plot boundaries, and a roughly orthogonal structure. In general, as is the case for most other parts of Europe, it can be observed that the layout of the towns became more regular and more orthogonal as they were created later in the great town-founding period of the 11th to 14th centuries. Of course, the plans are also more regular when the terrain on which they are laid out is more open and level. But most of them cannot be described in simple terms of basic geometrical figures.

The Norman town foundations of the late 11th and 12th centuries often had a simple layout, consisting of a single street, possibly with one street branching off or crossing, as for instance in Pembroke, and Laugharne. Cardiff is an example of a more complex layout focused on a main street, having more secondary streets that form an irregular grid. The market was mostly held in a widened street, in a triangular open space at a dominant position in the centre of town or in a churchyard. It was often located close to the castle, probably in order for it to be easily overseen from the castle. Indeed, a feature that is quite particular for newly founded towns in Wales is the layout of streets with consideration for perspective from the castle. Various towns have a main street, and sometimes even several streets, whose whole course can be observed from the castle walls. This is the case, for instance, in Pembroke, Newport, Laugharne and Cardiff. The main motive for such layouts seems to have been to allow for the ability to survey the streets from the castle, to observe the inhabitants of
the town or to see what was going on in case enemy forces took the town. Another motive probably was to make the castle well visible from the town, as a well-advertised symbolic representation of the lordship.42

1.3 King Edward I’s conquest of northern Wales and town foundations

In the rest of this chapter, a closer look will be taken at the towns founded by the English king Edward I, which were largely created in connection with his military campaigns against the Welsh uprisings in northern Wales. These towns are selected for closer study because they form a compact group, eleven in number, and there is more historic information about their creation compared to most other towns of the period in Wales.

King Edward I played a decisive role in the English domination over Wales. As crown prince he held territories in Wales since 1254, when he was made Earl of Chester at the age of 15. Already by that time his lands were threatened and partly taken by Llewelyn ap Gruffydd, lord of Gwynedd.43 In 1274 Edward, now as king (1272-1307), started a counter-offensive against Llewelyn and his fellow rebellious Welsh rulers, right after he had returned from crusade. This led to the campaign of 1276-77, which came to be known as the First War of Independence. The formal occasion for this offensive was Llewelyn’s refusal to do homage to the new king. Edward’s armies advanced quickly, westward along the north coast, northward along the west coast and westward into the heartland of Wales. Soon, Llewelyn was forced to agree to the treaty of Aberconwy in November 1277, with which English power in Wales was again brought back to its highest previous level.

During the campaign, the royal forces had begun to build new castles and reconstruct old ones in the re-conquered territories. (fig.1.9) Next to some of these castles new towns were created, much like the Normans had done in England and Wales two centuries before.44 The castle of Builth was reconstructed to watch over the crossing of the river Wye in eastern Wales, and at the same time Aberystwyth castle and town were newly built on the west coast. On the north coast the castles of Flint and Rhuddlan were newly built with new towns below their walls. Less effort was involved in the renovation of the existing castles of Ruthin and Hawarden.

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42 Lilley suggested the importance of surveillance over the market place from the castle. In Norwich, Bristol and Southampton in England, the Normans laid out new urban structures in which visibility of, and from, the castle seems to have been a consideration of importance. According to Lilley, this phenomenon was introduced into England by the Normans. (Paper ‘Modernizing the Medieval City’, presented at the Sixth International Seminar on Urban Form, Florence, July 1999)

43 Walker 1990, pp.112-114.

44 Nelson 1976, p.36.
After a new rebellion by Llewelyn and his brother Dafydd in 1282-83 (the so-called Second War of Independence), Edward launched a new campaign, which focused on finally conquering Gwynedd, therewith taking the heartland of the ever-returning Welsh rebellions. This campaign was successful, and the rebellious brothers were killed. Thereby, the conquest of Wales was completed and Welsh independence actually ended. Again, a number of castles and towns were founded in the newly conquered lands, which for a great part were added to the territory of the English crown.46

The subjection of conquered Wales to the crown was formally laid down in the Statute of Rhuddlan (1284). The territory under control of the crown was divided into administrative shires, just like in England. And, with the introduction of English criminal and civil law, the state was made responsible for the maintenance of law and order. All individuals were now theoretically regarded as subjects of the state.50 For the Welsh this probably was a new phenomenon, because until then their social life had been organised in clans, which were responsible for the protection of the clan members.51 The Welsh rulers who had fought on Edward’s side against Llewelyn and his allies received their lands again as vassals to the crown. The king also enfeoffed some new lordships to his English supporters.

After a last revolt, headed by Madog ap Llewelyn in 1294-95 - that is, the last one on a grand scale until the Glyndŵr revolt of 1400-1552 - Edward founded one more castle with an attached borough. This town, Beaumaris, was sited on the island of Anglesey in the northwest, where the revolt had been especially fierce.53

It seems that King Edward was not really eager to make Gwynedd his possession. Apart from the fertile island of Anglesey, the mountainous land of Gwynedd was not a country rich in economic resources. Edward was, however, more or less forced to conquer this land and make it his own territory, in order to prevent further rebellions, since these had done much damage to the English holdings in Wales and sometimes even to the lands of western England.48 Like the older English lordships in Wales, the newly conquered lands were not added to the English realm: they were not subject to English courts - although Edward introduced the same criminal law in the crown lands - nor were they represented in parliament.49 This state of affairs would last until 1536, when Wales was actually united with England.

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Cardiff was founded in the early 12th century by the Norman lord Robert Fitz Hamon. Probably, there had already been a settlement on the site. The Norman castle reused the site of a former Roman castrum.

Map of Wales with the castles of King Edward I indicated, as well as the directions of attack of Edward’s armies in ‘the second war of Welsh independence’ of 1282–83. (From: Taylor 1997)
In the last quarter of the 13th century, loyal vassals of the king also built castles and towns in northern Wales. Various existing castles were strengthened and extended as well. With all this, Edward and his vassals had more or less encircled the country of Gwynedd with a ring of castles and boroughs.

The towns founded by Edward were no doubt the most programmatic plantations among the new towns of Wales. More than the new towns founded under Edward's reign in Gascony, which will be treated in chapter 2, most of the boroughs in northern Wales were truly 'Edwardian', in the sense that the crown was directly responsible for their creation. Edward visited some of the sites during the process of planning and building, and he even lived there for a while.

The whole operation of the building of castles and towns between 1277 and 1301 was on a scale that was unprecedented in English history. The deployment of labour was gigantic and the operation formed a massive drain on royal finances: the costs of the building of castles and towns amounted to over £95,000 in total - which Taylor calculated to be about ten million pounds in 1963. The costs for the military campaigns of 1277 and 1282-83, meanwhile, can be estimated respectively at about £20,000 and £60,000.

Fortunately, many documents have been preserved regarding the Edwardian foundations, from which relatively much is known about the amounts of money that were spent. This is in contrast to many other castles and towns in Wales, the early history of which often remains obscured by a lack of relevant documentation.

It is a pity, however, that the documentation regards the castles rather than the towns, and in many cases it remains unclear whether specific data consider works on a castle or on a town. What is clear, however, is that the amount of money spent on the castles was many times larger than that spent on the towns.

54 Holt, for instance, was founded shortly after 1282 by John de Warenne, who received the land from the king as a reward for his service in the war against the Welsh. Denbigh, which is also in the northwest, was founded by Henry de Lacy shortly before 1285. (Soulsby 1983, pp.121-123, 144-147; Walker 1990, pp.133-134; Humphries 1983, pp.4-10; Taylor 1963, pp.293-395; Lilley, Lloyd & Trick 2005, s.v. Holt)


56 Beresford 1967, p.35.


58 For the Edwardian castles and towns there is especially important information in the documents of ‘the King’s Works’. This source, which mainly deals with the crown’s finances, is well preserved and gives an unusually clear insight into the building operations in northern Wales. It provides information on (among others) costs, duration of works, amounts of materials, numbers of workmen and names of persons involved. The documents have been thoroughly described and analysed by A.J. Taylor in The History of the King’s Works. (Taylor 1963)

59 In Flint a total of £7,000 was spent on the building of the castle and the town, of which only 3% can be ascribed with certainty to the building of the town defences (‘de claustura villa’). (Beresford 1967, pp.40-41) For Rhuddlan the costs of the building of the town in the period 1277-82 were at least £1,276, while the work on the castle cost about six times as much (c. £7,400) and the work on the canal was just over £750. (Beresford 1967, pp.37-39; Taylor 1987, pp.11-12) At Aberystwyth over £4,300 was spent in 12 years on the building of the castle and the town (Beverley Smith 1977, pp.19-21; Brown, Colvin & Taylor 1963, pp.307, 1039; Goronwy Edwards 1951, p.13) In Conwy the total amounted to £14,500, mainly spent in 1283-87. (Taylor 1963, p.350) In Caernarfon the building of the town wall, town quay and mill pool cost at least £2,000, out of a total of more than £12,000 up to 1292. (Taylor 1963, pp.374-377) Until 1319 a further £15,000 was spent on the town and the castle. (Taylor 1963, p.386) In Harlech the construction work of castle and town cost c. £5,500 in seven and a half years. (Taylor 1963, p.357; 358) In Criccieth about £500 was spent on the repair and strengthening of the castle during the nine years after the town foundation. (Taylor 1963, pp.365-366; Avent 1989, p.2-3) At Beaumaris the building of the castle cost £11,000 in the
Apart from castle towns, there were also two new towns that were founded by the crown with no apparent immediate military cause. The new town of Caerwys first appears in written sources in 1290. It probably replaced a village of the same name, which lay about halfway between the earlier new castle towns of Flint and Rhuddlan. Its creation seems to have been motivated mainly by economic considerations, since it was not walled and its location was of no strategic importance. The new town of Newborough was founded in 1302 on the south point of Anglesey, in order to re-settle the population of the Welsh town of Llanfaes. The crown decided that this older town had to be removed, in order to increase the chances of economic success for the nearby newly founded castle town of Beaumaris.60

1.4 Motives

1.4.1 Military motives

It is clear that military motives were the prime reason for the plantation of the new towns, apart from Caerwys and Newborough. All these new towns were laid out in the shadow of strong castles, built on strategic sites on the north and west coasts of Wales. In this way they more or less surrounded the native kingdom of Gwynedd, where many uprisings against the Anglo-Normans had started. These Edwardian towns did not grow as rapidly as other planted towns in southern Wales did in the late 13th and early 14th centuries.61 For a number of the new Edwardian castle towns this is to a large extent due to the fact that they were planned primarily as service-settlements for the castles, wherefore their locations were primarily determined by the strategic quality of the site and much less by their economic viability.

The prime functions that were foreseen for the towns when they were planned, must have been the provision of victuals, other goods and services for the garrison and administration that were housed in the castle. This is literally stated in a document of the late 14th century in which the burgesses of Beaumaris claim that their town was founded by Edward I ‘[...] for the munition of the said castle [...]’.62 It may also have been a relevant factor in the creation of the boroughs that the townsmen could be called to the defence of the town and the castle.

1.4.2 Economic motives

The economy of the native Welsh society was essentially a barter economy until the 13th century. The Anglo-Normans introduced money as a medium for trade in Wales, just as they introduced a fiscally organised taxation system, agricultural production for the market, and settlement in towns.63 As already indicated in the introduction to this study, these elements were strongly related, and they co-operatively transformed the economy, the society and the landscape of Europe, particularly in the period of about the 10th to 14th centuries.

From the previous paragraph it is already clear that one of the main functions of the castle boroughs was the provision of the castle. This function initially formed the basis of the economy of these towns.64 But apart from that, a town needed craft production and trade with the region and other market centres in order to flourish. From his experience in other lands King Edward must have known only too well that towns could be important sources of income for him, especially when the crown was the direct lord of the town.65 It seems likely, therefore, that the crown also had economic motives for the foundations of the new towns and their markets.

In 1310, the king ordered that: ‘No markets, no fairs nor any other places of trade indeed, for the selling and the buying of oxen, cows, horses, etc., excepting small articles of food shall be held elsewhere in north-west Wales than in the towns of Conwy, Beaumaris, Newborough, Carnarvon, Criccieth, Harlech and Bala.’66 Also, it was stipulated that

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60 Beresford 1967, pp.48-51.
61 See parr.1.2 and tables in Beresford 1967, pp.255-256 (IX.2) and Soulsby 1983, p.21.
64 Carter 1990, p.198.
65 Beresford 1967, pp.55-98.
66 Beresford mistakenly writes Bere instead of Bala. See Lewis 1912, pp.174-175 (Rec. of Carn. p.137).
from every house one person was to visit the market of the district every week for the purpose of buying and selling. Some years later this obligation was somewhat relieved and restricted to persons who actually had business to conduct. Aberystwyth had already received a similar market monopoly in 1303.

From documentary and archaeological evidence it is clear that there were close trade connections between towns in Wales and the nearby English towns of Chester, Shrewsbury, Gloucester, Worcester, Hereford, Bristol and other places of less significance. As might be expected from their locations, Chester was closely linked to the towns on the north coast, whereas Bristol was connected to the towns on the south and southwest coast. Ships were the main means of transportation. There was also trade with Ireland and Gascony, which were also (partly) ruled by the English king by then. Besides maritime transport and trade, the coastal towns were also engaged in the fishing industry, herrings in particular being an important victual at the time.

The importance of agriculture to the boroughs of Wales is also reflected by the fact that most towns had extensive town fields surrounding them. The new towns of northern Wales usually took over the land of the manors that were formerly held by the Welsh princes and subsequently by the English crown, largely leaving intact the old administrative spatial organisation. For instance, Beaumaris replaced the manor of Llanfaes, having 1486.5 acres (602 ha.) of borough land, for the main part arable. About 30% of its burgesses, however, held no land apart from their burgage plots, for which they appear not to have been engaged in agriculture. In 1278 new settlers at Rhuddlan were provided with fields of arable land and parcels of land to assart in ‘the king’s woods’ in addition to their burgage plots. Four years later new settlers at Flint received no less than 40 acres (16.19 ha.) of agricultural land each.

It seems that mining and metal-working were also important for the economy of many towns in Wales. Lead and copper had been mined in Wales ever since pre-historic times. The extraction of these precious metals, and especially silver and gold, may even have been one of the main reasons for the Roman colonisation of Wales. It is known that these minerals were also mined after the Romans had gone, although information on this subject is scarce before the 16th century. In 1086, Domesday Book recorded that earl Hugh of Chester, as lord of the manor of Roelent (Rhuddlan), held half the rights of every iron mine in the district. The goods traded in the urban markets were for the greatest part agricultural products. From the coastal lowlands crops were brought to the markets and from the Welsh uplands - which were only suited for pasture - came cattle, dairy products, hides and wool. The crafts that were pursued in the towns were mostly the standard occupations to be found in a town anywhere in Europe at this time: butchers, bakers, shoemakers, sawters, skinners, etc. The wealth of wool led to a considerable specialised industrial activity: by 1350 there were at least 75 fulling mills in Wales.

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new deposits.\(^8\) Also, it is known that lead was mined in Holywell and Holt in Flintshire in the 14th century. Iron for the construction of Flint castle was actually mined in nearby Ewloe and in 1284 and halfway through the 14th century special royal permissions were granted to the burgesses of Flint to collect wood to fuel their smelting furnaces.\(^3\)

From this information, it appears that the mining, processing and trading of metals were of considerable importance to the economy of the Edwardian new towns. In particular, Flint and Rhuddlan played a role in the exploitation of iron, lead and copper. Caerwys and Aberystwyth may have had similar roles of somewhat lesser importance. In view of this, it does not seem unlikely that the extraction of metals was significant in the colonising policies of the Anglo-Normans in general and of Edward I in particular.\(^4\)

Even though it was one of the main functions of most of the boroughs to serve the castles next to which most of them were founded, the towns were of particular importance for the trading economy of in northern Wales. This is true, of course, for just about all European towns in the period under consideration, because towns housed the key markets. But in areas that only relatively recently had come to know the new monetarised economy of trade, such as Scandinavia, Prussia and Wales, it was even more concentrated on the urban settlements. In the words of R.R. Davies: ‘The importance of towns in the economic life of a localized and underdeveloped society, such as that of medieval Wales, was out of all proportion to their minuscule size. They lubricated local trade and accelerated and formalized opportunities for the sale and exchange of produce and, thereby, for the circulation of money.’\(^5\)

With the emancipation of the boroughs and their populations in the 14th and 15th centuries, more and more of the lord’s privileges were farmed out. For instance, the ferry, the market tolls, or the land rents could be let out to private entrepreneurs or to the communities. Eventually whole boroughs, with about all the returns belonging with them, were granted as fee farms, usually to the communities of the towns.\(^6\) The same process can be observed in the political autonomy of the castle boroughs. Because of the military importance of these towns - and ultimately also the seigneurial nature of the foundations - it was initially found appropriate and convenient to appoint the constable of the castle, a direct agent of the lord, ex officio as the mayor of the town.\(^7\) Later, often in the 14th century, the burgesses mostly bought the right to choose the mayor themselves.

1.5 Settlers

In the first decades after the foundation of the Edwardian boroughs, the population was mainly made up of immigrants whom were mainly drawn from England, and to a lesser extent from Gascony and Ireland. Like anywhere else in Europe, settlers of new towns would be lured by the promise of several years of exemption from rents and taxes.\(^8\) A special guarantee was given by the crown to English and foreign merchants against eventual losses they would suffer during the journey, if they moved to the king’s boroughs in northern Wales.\(^9\)

The urban population, however, was not very stable: the immigrant families often only stayed for three or four generations. In the eleven years between 1295 and 1306, between a third and half of the burgages in the town of Conwy changed hands, while in Caernarfon the displacement seems to have been almost total. It seems likely, therefore, that the purchase of a burgage plot and burghal status were regarded as an investment of a temporary nature.\(^9\)

An important advisor of Edward I, the archbishop of Canterbury John Pecham, recommended urban life to Edward as a way of civilising the Welsh people: ‘First of all, sire, the savagery and other evils arise from this cause, that they do not live together but dwell far apart from each other. And so, sire if you wish to make them behave in accordance

\(^{82}\) Williams 1961, p.95.
\(^{84}\) Apart from northeastern Wales, the main mining activity in the 11th to 14th centuries took place in the southernmost parts of Wales. (see Rees 1951, plate 64a)
\(^{85}\) Davies 1991, p.68.
\(^{86}\) Lewis 1912, pp.71-92. At Aberystwyth the borough was farmed out to the community in 1314-15 for £21 18s. 8d., and in 1356 the farm was granted to the king’s constable of Cardigan castle, Gilbert de Turberville, as a part of his fee. (Griffiths 1978, p.35) At Rhuddlan the burgesses had already been granted the fee-farm in 1279, for seven years duration. (Taylor 1965, p.322; Quinell & Blockley 1994, p.9)
\(^{88}\) An important advisor of Edward I, the archbishop of Canterbury John Pecham, recommended urban life to Edward as a way of civilising the Welsh people: ‘First of all, sire, the savagery and other evils arise from this cause, that they do not live together but dwell far apart from each other. And so, sire if you wish to make them behave in accordance
with God and the world, and take away their savagery, command them to live in towns [...]’.91 It seems, however, that that was not the object of Edward’s or any of the other Anglo-Norman foundations in Wales.92 In a number of cases, the charters clearly forbid the burghal status to Welshmen. In Caernarfon this exclusively non-Welsh character seems to have lasted well into the 14th century, but probably this was a rather exceptional case. In most towns there would be some Welsh burgesses, and in Caerwys and Newborough the majority was Welsh.93 These two towns, however, were exceptional among the Edwardian foundations, as will be described in the survey below. The debarmment of the Welsh was not exclusive for the Edwardian or the Anglo-Norman towns94; even the rare town that was founded by a Welsh lord could be intended for non-Welsh immigrants. This is the case with the southern-Welsh borough of Aberaeron, the charter of which, granted by Leisian ap Morgan Fychan (1283-1314), explicitly states that the burgesses are Englishmen.95

The Welsh natives, however, were getting more and more eager to establish themselves in boroughs and to lead the lives of towns men. Their number among the total of borough-populations gradually grew as they moved upward on the social ladder in the 14th and 15th centuries. Especially Aberystwyth, Ruthin and Beaumaris seem to have had a relatively large and well-integrated Welsh population of about 50% in the late 1320’s.96 The Welsh were, however, not always welcome as urban residents. In 1345 the burgesses of (among others) Caernarfon, Conway and Denbigh complained in a petition to the king of the damage and destruction done by the Welsh rebels, who ‘seek to destroy’ them, and they declared that they ‘can not go anywhere for fear of death’. Subsequently they threatened to leave the country unless they received help from the king.97 This illustrates the terror that the borough populations must have sometimes felt: there often was a danger of attack by Welsh rebels, so life was far from secure. Apparently, the rebel attacks made it hard for the urban immigrant population to trust their Welsh neighbours fully.98

1.6 Planners

There are no sources that directly identify the planners of the Edwardian new towns. In general it is most likely that officials of the crown took care for the spatial layout.99 However, regarding the towns whose foundation was accompanied by considerable works on castles and defences (Flint, Rhuddlan, Aberystwyth, Conway, Caernarfon, Harlech, and Beaumaris), the suspicion is strong that Edward’s military engineers planned the towns as much as they planned the castles and additional defensive structures. The defences of Flint first served to encamp the army on its Welsh campaign, so initially it was really a military camp. At Rhuddlan, Aberystwyth, Conway, Caernarfon and Beaumaris too, large armies had to be encamped in first instance. Hence, it is most likely that at least the layout and form of the defences, whether built of earth or of stone, were planned by the king’s military engineers. But the form of the circuit of walls and the place of the gates therein largely determines the layout of the streets within the defences. Therefore it seems, in absence of clear sources, most sensible to give the credit for the planning of the towns to the king’s engineers, at least in the cases of the fortified castle towns.

The documentation of the King’s Works provides some information on the military engineers who mainly worked at the building and repairing of the castles. Foremost among them was a man from Savoye who played an important role in many of Edward’s military building operations, whose name was Master James of St. George. Unfortunately though, the documents are not explicit as to the question of to what extent he and his colleagues were responsible for the urban layout of the towns. This subject will be

92 Davies 1993, p.172.
94 For the ethnic division in Anglo-Norman towns in general, see Lilley 2000 (2); 2002, pp.93-99.
95 Pugh 1971, p.341. This situation can be compared with that in eastern Europe, for instance Silesia, where the dukes founded towns and issued charters exclusively for settlers from the west, who were often indicated as ‘Germans’. (Aubin 1966; Kuhn 1984, pp.1-10) The reason for this distinction along lines of ethnicity probably was that, on the one hand, the lords did not want to give up their power over their subjects, which was based on feudal law; but, on the other hand, they wanted to profit from the new economic developments. Therefore they invited foreigners, preferably those who already had capital and experience in the ‘new’ economy, to come and enjoy the privileges granted by the lords and to contribute to their income.
96 Walker 1990, p.160; Griffiths 2000, pp.708-709, 712-713.
97 Carter 1966, p.5.
98 Especially in 1345 there was a hostile atmosphere towards the Welsh in the towns of northern Wales. In Beaumaris the borough liberties of the Welsh inhabitants were suspended, on the grounds that the privileges were originally intended for Englishmen. The privileges could be bought back only for a large sum of money. This punishment was probably a reaction to the murder of the royal attorney in the principality of North Wales, Henry de Shalford, by a band of Welshmen. Similar anti-Welsh measures were taken in Criccieth, Flint and Rhuddlan. (Carr 1982, pp.249-249. See also Williams-Jones 1978, pp.95-101; Griffiths 2000, p.706)
99 The problem of the anonymity of the planners will be elaborated upon in chapter 7.

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discussed more amply in chapter 7, which deals with the question of who the planners of new towns were, in the broader context of different regions in Europe.100

1.7 Survey of the Edwardian boroughs of northern Wales

1.7.1 Flint (figs. 1.11-1.14)

In July 1277 King Edward launched his campaign against the rebellious Welsh ruler Llewelyn ap Gruffydd. From Chester, his army marched into northern Wales, along with a large workforce of about 1,850 men, consisting of masons, carpenters, woodmen and diggers.101 Their first stop was 18 km. northwest of Chester, where Edward ordered a castle and a town to be built.

The castle and town were built on a location on the estuary of the Dee that was called Le Flynt, halfway between Chester and the castle of Rhuddlan. There had been no previous settlement on the site. It seems that it was chosen because of the presence of a firm sandstone outcrop there, on which the castle was built, in the midst of more marshy grounds along the Dee estuary.102 The castle stands on a strategic site from where the traffic on the water can be controlled, whereas the town, being laid out directly land-inward from the castle, controls the road, which had been one of the main routes into northern Wales since Roman times.

The building of the castle and town started on July 21 and lasted about nine years, including substantial repairs of the damages from the war of 1282. At first, the town defences served as the protecting boundary for a military camp containing several thousand men of the king’s army. Work must have proceeded especially quickly in the first stage, in August 1277, when no less than 2,300 ditch-diggers were set to work.103 The defences consisted of a double earthen bank, protected by a ditch more than 13 m. wide. Stone walls were never built in Flint. It is suggested that the king’s workforce also constructed houses out of wood for future settlers, but this is only based on the knowledge that 291 carpenters were set to work in Flint, which is not conclusive.104 The normal practice in town plantation was to make the settlers themselves responsible for building their houses. Therefore it is safer to presume that the carpenters were rather working on palisades, towers and gates to fortify the earthen banks and on the timber parts of the castle and its outbuildings.

The town received meadowland, arable land, woodland and a mill. Permission was given to build another town mill, at a yearly rent of ten pounds.105 In February 1279 burgages were distributed to settlers. Among the settlers were the king’s tailor and several building masters who had been working on the construction of the castle. It seems that settlers were scarce, though, because in 1282 burgages were still being distributed along with agricultural land to ‘all wishing to have burgages or lands at Flynt’.106 In 1292, 74 burgages are mentioned in the tax register.107 During the rebellion of 1294, the town was burnt down when the Welsh were laying siege to the castle. Unlike many other towns, however, it was not burnt by the rebels, but by the constable of the castle, in order to deny them shelter and provision.108

Flint is one of the few towns in Wales that was built on an open and level site. Thanks to these favourable conditions of the site, the plan could be laid out as a regular orthogonal grid with a rectangular outline form. At least, it was as regular, orthogonal and rectangular as could be found in Wales: the corners of the plan were rounded off on the northwest side, the streets are not completely straight and the main transverse street is somewhat offset.109 All in all, however, there can be no doubt that orthogonality was the principle behind

100 See par.7.4.
101 Taylor 1963, p.309.
102 Goronwy Edwards 1951, pp.7-8.
103 Taylor 1963, p.310.
106 At issue was 40 acres of agricultural land for every settler and, after a ten-year exemption, the burgage rent would be six pence per year, which is half of the usual annual shilling. These attractive conditions suggest that it was quite hard to draw settlers to the new town. (Lilley, Lloyd & Trick 2005, s.v. Flint, Discussion, Early history of the town; the excellent digital atlas by these authors provides a valuable gateway to the history of the creation of the Edwardian new towns in Wales, apart from Bere, via the internet: http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/catalogue/specColl/atlas_ahrb_2005/atlas.cfm)
107 Renn & Avent 1995, p.11.
109 In the plan by John Speed of 1611 it looks as though the two parts of the transverse connection were not regarded as a through-going street; but this is unlikely since the main through-route has always passed through this street. Comparison with the 1:2500 Ordnance Survey plan of 1870 (fig.1.12) shows that Speed made the angles of the earthworks on the southern corners more rounded than they actually were, and it seems likely that this is even more so regarding the northern corners of the outline of the town. (see Goronwy Edwards 1951, figs.1. and 2)
the layout of the plan and, for that matter, the plan looks more like its continental counterparts than like other new towns in Wales or England.\textsuperscript{110}

The site on which Flint was built gently slopes down in a northeasterly direction towards the river Dee, which actually is a wide tidal sea-arm here. The axis of the town, formed by the central street blocks on the southeastern side of the main street, lies slightly higher than the other street blocks.\textsuperscript{111}

From the oldest plan of the town, made by John Speed in 1611\textsuperscript{112}, the main town square appears to be a real square, which was quite rare in Wales. (fig.1.11) But unlike many newly planned towns on the continent, the square is not really a constitutive element in the street plan; in fact it is clearly no more than a rectangular space left open by the shortening of the adjacent street blocks.\textsuperscript{113} The same holds true for the smaller longitudinal square in the central block, which is not much more than a widening of the transverse street. In Speed’s plan there is a building with a tower on the corner where the two squares meet: this probably was the shire hall, for which no dates are known. The church, which lay at the high end of the town on the main street, is first recorded in 1291, when it was a chapel dedicated to St. Mary, dependent on Northop parish. Flint was turned into a distinct parish in the 16\textsuperscript{th} century or earlier. The present church was built on the same site in the Victorian era.\textsuperscript{114}

It is difficult to reconstruct the original structure of the house lots in Flint. Speed’s plan shows that most of the lots lay largely unoccupied by that time. It seems likely that Speed drew only part of the plot boundaries that existed in his time, but it is nevertheless clear that most plots stretched from street to street. Only in the area below, to the right of the main street (southwest of the church), there were small house lots of lesser length, with an extra intermediary back street in between the parallel streets. In the 1870 Ordnance Survey plan there are more lots that lie back to back, but most lots still stretch all the way between the parallel streets. (fig.1.12) Therefore, it seems likely that originally the lots stretched from street to street, which made them about 100 ft. long (c. 30.5 m.). There is, however, quite a difference in the exact distances between the parallel streets. For instance, in 1300 a plot was sold which measured four-score feet by six-score feet (c. 24 x 36.5 m.).\textsuperscript{115} This plot must have been located in one of the outermost rows, since these rows were the widest. According to Carter, the average size of the original burgage plots was about 40 x 100 feet (12.2 x 30.5 m.).\textsuperscript{116} He deduced this from the 19\textsuperscript{th}-century plan; but this deduction is not very trustworthy regarding the width of the plots, since, according to Speed’s plan, few of the original plot boundaries survived by 1611. The 40 x 100 ft. size, however, does not seem unlikely, because it was also the official standard lot size in Beaumaris.

Between the castle and the town there was a ditch, which was traversed by a wooden bridge. From the

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{flint_plan}
\caption{Flint. Plan by John Speed, 1611. Flint castle and town were founded by King Edward I in July 1277, during his first Welsh campaign to end the First War of Independence. This plan clearly shows how many house lots, which certainly had been inhabited in the early 14\textsuperscript{th} century, had become deserted by the early 17\textsuperscript{th} century.}
\end{figure}

\begin{notes}
\item[110] More or less similar sorts of new town plans of the 12\textsuperscript{th} to 14\textsuperscript{th} centuries can be found, for example, in Nieuwpoort in Flanders, Vianen in The Netherlands, Freienstein in northeastern Germany, and many of the bastides in southwestern France or the Florentine terre nuove, which are discussed in chapters 2 and 3.
\item[111] The ditches on the longitudinal sides of the perimeter may have been sited more or less following natural depressions.
\item[112] The plan of John Speed was published in his \emph{Theatre of Great Britaine} in 1611. This work also contains the oldest cartographic sources of many other towns in Wales and England. (Beresford 1967, p.149; Conzen 1968) See also figs.1.11, 1.24, 1.29 and p.149.
\item[113] See Lavedan & Hugueney 1972, p.114, and par.g.66.
\item[115] Soulsby 1983, p.40.
\item[116] Carter 1990, p.194.
\end{notes}
castle wall and the tower of the outer gate to the castle bailey, it was possible to look through the main street of the town. This street is about twice as wide as the streets that lie parallel to it.

An interesting aspect in the topography of the landscape of Flint and its surroundings is the allotment of the lands of Flint parish, as recorded in the 1837 Tithe Award map. (fig. 1.14) The parish is relatively small (c. 610 ha.), about forty times as large as the town itself. It consists of a roughly quadrangular area between two streams that flow down the slope towards the Dee, with the town situated in the northern corner. Over half of the parish is covered by an area with enclosed fields allotted in a regularly organised pattern. The enclosed fields are of quadrangular form with fairly straight sides lying side by side in rows parallel to the shore of the Dee. Roads and footpaths tend to follow the through-going dividing lines between these rows. The most important of these is the Chester Road along the shore of the Dee, which was the main road into northern Wales and which may be regarded as a sort of baseline for the field allotment.

This allotment is clearly more regular than the field allotments in the neighbouring parishes.117 It is very interesting that the form of the town fits more or less seamlessly into this field structure. The longitudinal direction of the town plan is parallel to the longitudinal direction of the field allotment, and several of the streets and outer boundaries of the town prolong the lines of the field boundaries. When looking closely, one can observe, though, that the lines of the transverse street and the street on the southwestern side of the town have a direction slightly different from the parallels that separate the rows of fields. This difference in direction seems to stem from the layout of the town streets at right angles to one another; whereas the lines of the field boundaries are not at right angles, but diverge about ten degrees in the directly surrounding area.

The crucial question is, of course, whether or not the field pattern is older than the town, in order to be able to determine in what measure the existing landscape influenced the layout of the town or whether they...

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117 This is clearly visible in the 1:10560 Ordnance Survey plan Flintshire IX N.E. of 1914, which I have consulted in the National Library of Wales. As far as I know, such regular field structures are rare in Wales in any case.
were laid out together.118 On the basis of the layout of the town, with its transverse streets prolonging the parallels that divide the rows of fields, ‘adapted’ slightly in its direction in order to achieve rectangularity, it seems quite possible that the field structure was older than the town. Unfortunately, I have not been able to find out how old the enclosures are, nor how old the field pattern is.119 Therefore, I must leave the question to students of the local historical geography to answer.

Like many other towns in Wales, Flint was severely damaged during the Owain Glyndŵr rebellion in 1400. In the plan of 1611 (fig. 1.11) it is still possible to see how the town had a distinctly rural atmosphere, since it

fig. 1.13: Flint. Aerial photograph of c. 2000. View towards the east. (From: http://www.flint.co.uk) A large part of the town was demolished in the third quarter of the 20th century to make space for large-scale new housing developments, following the principles and style of modernist urbanism. The remains of the castle are just visible in the top left corner, and the street stretching from there to the bottom right corner, passing by the church, is the original main street of the town.

fig. 1.14: Flint parish. Tithe Award map 1837 (8 chains : 1 inch, detail, not depicted to scale. From: National Library of Wales). The plan clearly shows that the general plan of the town (below right corner) fits very well in the allotment of the agricultural fields of Flint parish, to the south and southwest of the town. If this allotment is older than the town (which is not known for certain), it is most likely that the general outline form of the town was largely modeled on the structure of the existing landscape.

118 Around the three hamlets to the south of the area (Flint Mountain), the Tithe Award map shows a more irregular field structure that seems to be older than the regular allotment.

The subject of the relation between town plans and field structures in the surrounding rural area is treated in relation to a number of new towns in southwestern France in par. 2.10.6 and more in general in par. 9.23.

119 In Britain the enclosures often stem only from the 18th and 19th centuries. In the map with ‘Parishes subject to Parliamentary Enclosure Awards’ in Wales in Huw Owen 1989 (p. 256) it seems, however, that Flint parish was not subject to parliamentary enclosure. It is not possible, however, to draw solid conclusions from this.
was largely deserted and there were only about 60 buildings extant by that time. During the course of the last two centuries the old structure of plots has been largely wiped out. In the 19th century, the railroad was laid out right through the town. Later on, terraces of worker’s cottages have been built, thereby splitting up the original burgages that had been largely deserted in 1611. In the 1960’s-80’s the transverse street was widened and small-scale housing was cleared to make way for new housing projects in massive apartment blocks and high-rise buildings.

1.7.2 Rhuddlan (figs. 1.15-1.18)

In August 1277, the king’s army moved westward from Flint, to arrive at the strategically important stronghold of Rhuddlan. Between these places, a road was cleared through the woods by no less than 1,800 axemen. At Rhuddlan in the wide and fertile valley of the river Clwyd, about 5 km. from the mouth of the river, Edward ordered the construction of a new castle with a new town attached to it. The fact that people had been living in the nearby area in different periods ever since Mesolithic times demonstrates that the site was very well suited for settlement. The town was built at the point to which the tide reached, which was also the lowest point where the river could be forded, on a terrace about 10 metres above the river. From this site naval traffic on the river, as well as land traffic along the coastal route, could be controlled.

Although there had been earlier Saxon and Norman settlements at Rhuddlan, the town founded by Edward was truly new. The 10th-century Saxon burh of Cledemutha, which certainly lay near here, may have been at the very same site, as Soulsby and others suggested, but it is also possible that the site of this burh had been lost to the sea. Around the year 1073, earl Hugh of Chester had built a 20-metre high motte, still largely present, just southeast of where Edward was to build his castle. The accompanying Norman ‘novus burgus’ had 18 burgesses recorded in Domesday Book (1086).

It is difficult to assess the original layout of the Edwardian town. The town that exists up to the present day to the north of the castle has traditionally been regarded as the initial Edwardian borough. In this view the two straight stretches of large moats and banks that can still be partly traced to the southeast of the castle, were regarded as belonging to the Saxon burh or the Norman borough. More recently, though, thorough archaeological investigation has led to the conclusion that they most probably belong to the Edwardian works. The defences of the Norman settlement were found to have lain in a much narrower circuit surrounding the motte. The town north of the Edwardian castle is, however, also from Edward I’s time, and at the northern end of it remnants of a bank and ditch of similar layout as those on the southeast are still visible.

Quinnell and Blockley, who proposed the Edwardian date for the southeastern defences, do not clearly describe what they believe to have been the original layout of the borough. They propose that the Edwardian forces, possibly around 10,000 men, were quartered within these defences in 1277 and 1282. Archaeological excavations have clearly shown that there were houses and buildings in the southeastern area in the late 13th century and that iron was worked there. In a 15th-century document this area is described as ‘le Oldtoun’, but by then it was not urban in character.

It is possible that the area southeast of the castle was originally intended as a military camp, while the area northwest of it was to become the borough. But it is also possible that the whole area was planned to be the town. Originally, the town may well have been planned on a grander scale than eventually realised (with 75 taxpayers recorded in 1292). It seems that Edward wanted to make Rhuddlan a really important central place, since he requested the pope for the transfer of the Episcopal seat of nearby St. Asaph to the new town.

1. See also the estate survey plan of 1770-71 (Peniarth deposit, Coll.II, vol.4, p.57, National Library of Wales).
3. Many artefacts of prehistoric settlement have been found during excavations in Rhuddlan. (Quinnell & Blockley 1994, pp.95-147)
5. Soulsby 1983, pp.227-228; Beresford 1967, p.37. Domesday Book is the first and last written source to refer to the Norman borough at Rhuddlan. (Quinnell & Blockley 1994, p.8)
fig. 1.15: Rhuddlan. Ordnance Survey plan of 1913. (Flintshire IV 7, 1:2500, modified by the author, not depicted to scale) Rhuddlan castle and town were founded by King Edward I in August 1277, during his first Welsh campaign to end the First War of Independence.

fig. 1.16: Rhuddlan. Plan based on a modern Ordnance Survey, with principal historic features indicated. (From: Taylor 1987, modified by the author) The earlier Norman borough lay directly southeast of the new castle and is still recognisable by the remnants of the motte and bailey.
It seems likely that if the king wanted to make Rhuddlan the main town of the bishopric, he also wanted to make it an important place in the hierarchy of secular administration. This plan, however, came to nothing, for some reason presently unknown. It seems likely that King Edward’s attention shifted to other new towns, foremost Conwy and Caernarfon. 129

An objection against the idea that the borough was planned to fill the whole area to the southeast and to the northwest of the castle lies in the siting of the castle. It is peculiar that the castle is enclosed between the areas to the northwest and to the southeast. In the other Edwardian castle towns of Wales - much as in other ones elsewhere - the castle is just about always situated on a corner or extremity of the town. The Edwardian castle towns that are located on the coast all have the castle sited on the seaward side of the town. It should also be considered that normally, when a castle has two gates, one would be directed to the town, and the other to the open country. Here in Rhuddlan, however, the situation is different. The western castle gate was obviously directed to overlook the river and the sea as well as the bridge and the road westward. The eastern gate does not look out on what would become the Edwardian borough, but on the northern edge of the southeastern moated area, and beyond that, on the road that came from Chester via Flint and Cwm. A problem here, however, is that it is unclear in which direction the bank and ditch exactly went from the point c. 600 m. east of the castle. But in Hylas lane, east of the castle, one can still find a linear depression in eastern direction, which might be a remnant of the ditch. About ten metres to its north, traces of another ditch were found by archaeological excavation. 130 This may have been a second, outer, ditch. If this is right, it would seem that the first Edwardian borough was initially planned to the southeast of the castle, re-occupying and enlarging the site of the previous Norman borough, which had seized to be a town long before. 131

The gate in the southeast of the outer castle ward was closed in 1301. This suggests that this gate did no longer function, and may indicate that no important activities, military or economic, took place to the southeast of the castle. 132 In the same period of the blocking of the gate, the church was moved from its old site in the Norman borough to its present location in the northwest corner of the town, which also indicates that the urban centre shifted to the area north of the castle.

Quinnell and Blockley suggest the possibility that in August 1277, when Edward and his army first arrived, work was first started on the new castle and the defence-works southeast of it. Within these new defences,

129 Quinnell & Blockley 1994, p.223. The plan for the transfer already existed from 1278. King Edward gave the ground for the cathedral and 1,000 marks for its construction. (see Dugdale 1830, vol.6, part 3, pp.1302-1304)
130 Quinnell & Blockley 1994, p.222
131 Quinnell & Blockley 1994, pp.8, 214-218, 220.
132 Excavations have shown, however, that there were forges directly southeast of the castle. This fits in with the theory that this area became suburban, since smithing and other industrial activities involving fire or environmental nuisance were often located outside the actual town area. (Quinnell & Blockley 1994, p.224)
existing features such as the Norman motte, the Norman church, the Dominican friary further to the southeast, and probably some auxiliary buildings were taken up. This area was intended to first serve as military camp and subsequently as site for the borough. But in November 1277 peace was signed in the treaty of Aberconwy, and it may be that it was only by then that the foundation of the borough became of primary importance in order to create a permanent royal settlement. It seems likely that after that time the site northwest of the castle was chosen as the one which was best suitable for the borough.

The first document that refers to the new borough dates from February 1278. According to Quinnell and Blockley there are no indications of a change of site after that date. In my opinion, though, there are some clues that may indicate a change of site in 1279. In March of that year the parson of the old church of Rhuddlan informed the king that settlers had occupied some of the church’s land ‘[...] in order to build burgages near the castle [...]’. It seems likely that this land was close to the Norman church, just southeast of the castle. So, by this time new settlers were occupying land that was not officially meant for them, probably to the southeast of the castle, within the large area surrounded by earthworks. Some months later, in July 1279, the clerk William of Louth was ordered by the king to make a survey of the town, ‘[...] to view the void plots of land (’placeas’) and other plots in that town, and to assess and rent burgages in the same plots and to demise the burgages at the king’s will [...]’. He also was to inspect the ditch around the town. Other officials and the townspeople were instructed to help him. This event may have marked the shift from the area southeast of the castle to the smaller area north of it. In November 1280 it is reported that the burgesses ‘[...] are now building the town and are expending and will expend great costs about making the town, building it and improving it [...]’. It is also known from the royal accounts that from 1279 to 1282 a considerable sum of money was spent on diggers and carpenters working on the town’s defences and on transportation by carts of earth and timber for the town.

So, it is not unlikely that the precise location of the borough was changed in the years 1279-82. Obvious advantages for a borough with trade functions are the presence of the bridge and the interregional road north of the castle. Also, naval traffic from the sea would easily reach the site north of the bridge, whereas it would not be easy for many ships coming in from the sea, to pass the bridge, even if it could be opened. And indeed, the town quay was built directly north of the bridge in the initial phase of the borough, before the church was built adjacent to it, around 1300.

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133 Quinnell & Blockley 1994, pp.8, 214-218. The friary was founded shortly before 1238, probably by Llewelyn ap Gruffydd. This foundation seems to indicate the presence of a town at this time, but neither material nor documentary sources have been found in support of this supposition.
135 Lilley, Lloyd & Trick 2005, s.v. Rhuddlan, Discussion, Early history
136 Lilley, Lloyd & Trick 2005, s.v. Rhuddlan, Discussion, Early history
137 According to Taylor, the bridge was initially of wood, and was rebuilt in stone in 1358. It seems likely that the wooden bridge could be raised, since it seems to have been possible for sea-going vessels to sail up to the castle. (Taylor 1987, pp.11-12)
Like Flint, Rhuddlan was never walled in stone. Instead, earthwork defences were constructed, at least partly surrounding the town, between 1279 and 1282. These defences were of a rather unique sort, with two banks 10 to 19 m. wide and a ditch in between, 14 to 16 m. wide and about 3 m. deep. In fact, it seems likely that it was an experimental type, the development of which was not followed through.\textsuperscript{139} The defences were planned to be topped with a wooden palisade. Timber was shipped in for this reason in 1282, but one year later the palisade was shipped on to Caernarfon ‘for the construction of the castle and the town there’.\textsuperscript{140} This clearly illustrates how the initial ambitious plans for Rhuddlan were moderated by the shifting interest of the crown.

The plan of the eventual Edwardian borough north of the castle was quadrangular, with the castle in the southern corner and the church in the western corner. Earthwork defences of bank and ditch were probably planned on three sides of the town, while the riverside was left open.\textsuperscript{141} On the side of the river lies a steep ridge of c. 6 (north) to 10 (south) m. height, which makes a turn to the northeast just northwest of the churchyard. North and west of the town lay the flat river-marshes, which meant that the town and the castle really lay on a tactical and well-defendable site. On the north end of the ancient town, the banks and ditch can still be seen at the point where they turned southeastward.\textsuperscript{142}

The pattern of streets is not very regular. The most important street, appropriately called High Street, crossed the town halfway, with the bridge on its southwestern end, and most likely an opening in the town defences on its northeastern end. This street formed part of the interregional road parallel to the coast. The road from Flint and Chester, so important for the Edwardian armies, would have come from the southeast though, and probably entered the town east of the castle, but it is unclear exactly where. Soulsby and Lilley, Lloyd & Trick suggest that there was another gate towards the northwest, at the end of Gwindy Street.\textsuperscript{143} Church Street / Castle Street and Gwindy Street / Parliament Street cross the High Street and run parallel to each other. Their direction was probably chosen so that they would be parallel to the canalised river. Church Street and Castle Street are for a large part directed towards the castle, for which they are easily surveyable from its walls. The whole street plan is not orthogonal: apart from High Street the streets have gentle curves, and they are not laid out at right angles. All in all, the plan had a simple grid structure of roughly parallel lines in two directions, formed by the streets and the contour of the walled area.

It is hard to reconstruct the original plot division. No original plot dimensions are known and old plans do not clearly show boundaries that can be recognised to have stemmed from the original layout.\textsuperscript{144} Most of the lots are quite irregular in form and size. This may well have been so from the outset, as it seems that the plots were not planned in advance.\textsuperscript{145}

An important feature of the building operation at Rhuddlan, was the work carried out on the canalisation of the river to create a fossa maris, in order to facilitate direct access from the town and the castle to the sea. An average of 77 men were working on the canal and dyke for three years from November 1277.\textsuperscript{146} This costly work illustrates how important naval communications were for Rhuddlan and the Edwardian castle towns in general.\textsuperscript{147}

It is interesting that the documents of ‘The King’s Works’ mention that in 1282 timber was shipped to Rhuddlan ‘in order to enclose the town and to make dwellings therein’.\textsuperscript{148} This suggests that the king’s workforce was also involved in the building of houses in the new town, or at least in providing building material. Normally though, in Wales as well as elsewhere in Europe, the building of houses in a new town would be the responsibility of the settlers themselves.\textsuperscript{149}

In 1292 the town housed 75 taxpayers. It is not known if it grew further in the 14th century, but that seems most likely, analogous to the other towns of northern Wales in the period. Rhuddlan never achieved a status

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{139} Quinnell & Blockley 1994, pp.9, 210-211, 219-220, 222-223. Remnants of these earthen defences can still be seen on the northern corner of the Edwardian town, to the southeast of the castle, as well as in Flint on the northeast side of the town.
\bibitem{140} Lilley, Lloyd & Trick 2005, s.v. Rhuddlan, Discussion, Early history.
\bibitem{141} Soulsby 1983, p.229.
\bibitem{142} It is known that they extended in a southwestern direction towards the river, but of the southeastern part no clear traces have been found. It is not impossible that the defences were not actually realised completely, but it seems likely that they extended or were intended to continue in a southeastern direction, parallel to the line of Gwindy Street / Parliament Street. Possibly, the line of Conway Court (formerly Election Row) represents the former ditch, since to the southeast it lies in a hollow, and a fossilised scarp was excavated on its southwest side. (Quinnell & Blockley 1994, pp.222, 225-226) According to the reconstruction of Lilley, Lloyd & Trick (2005, s.v. Rhuddlan, core maps 2 and 3), however, the bank and ditch lay some 20 to 60 m. further to the southwest. (see fig.1.18)
\bibitem{143} Relevant plans are the 1758 Elinor Conway estate map, the 1839 Tithe Award map (Rhuddlan parish) and the 1:2500 Ordnance Survey of 1913 (fig.1.15), all to be found in the National Library of Wales.
\bibitem{144} See Lilley, Lloyd & Trick 2005, s.v. Rhuddlan, Discussion, Design and plan.
\bibitem{145} Taylor 1963, pp.318-319; 1967, p.11.
\bibitem{146} Apart from the new borough of Bere, which was attached to an older castle on an inland location, all Edwardian castle boroughs in Wales are sited with access to the sea.
\bibitem{147} Taylor 1963, p.333; Lilley, Lloyd & Trick 2005, s.v. Rhuddlan, Discussion Early history.
\bibitem{148} See par.9.12.
\end{thebibliography}
of great importance, however. Like many other towns in Wales it suffered from the plagues of the 1340’s and was heavily damaged during the Owain Glyndŵr rebellion in 1400, after which only 37 burgages were left in 1428.\footnote{Quinnell & Blockley 1994, p.224; Soulsby 1983, p.231.} At present, Rhuddlan is no more than a sleepy small town.

\subsection*{1.7.3 Aberystwyth (figs. 1.19-1.20)}

Just as at Flint and Rhuddlan, the works at Aberystwyth started in the summer of 1277, during Edward’s first campaign in Wales. In July of that year Edward’s brother Edmund, earl of Lancaster, headed an army that penetrated northward from the royal base of Carmarthen in southwestern Wales. He also led the beginning of the works at Aberystwyth. Workmen, materials and food supplies had been assembled in Bristol in the previous months, and were shipped from there.\footnote{Griffiths 1978, p.30.} The castle of Aberystwyth replaced earlier Norman castles that lay further inland and which, in their turn, had a predecessor in an Iron Age hillfort south of the town.\footnote{Griffiths 1977.} At first the town was simply called ‘the new town of Llanbadarn’, after the older monastery and village in whose territory it was sited. The name of Aberystwyth, meaning ‘mouth of the Ystwyth’, was probably transferred from an earlier royal castle on the river Ystwyth. The new town and castle were, however, not founded at the mouth of the Ystwyth, but of the river Rheidol, which lies slightly further to the north.\footnote{Beresford 1967, p.41; Soulsby 1983, pp.69-70; Lewis 1980, p.3; Bowen 1979, pp.44-45.}

The castle town was situated centrally - to the extent that a coastal town can be central - in the newly conquered crown territory in Ceredigion, which previously had been under Welsh control.\footnote{Beverley Smith 1977, p.18.} A small region around Llanbadarn, however, had already been subject to the crown from 1247 until the 1260’s.\footnote{See Rees 1970, plates 40-43 and pp.35-39.}

The specific location that was chosen for the castle and the town was a strategically sited peninsula with a low hill, directly north of the mouth of the river Rheidol. The main land route along the coast passed just east of the site. With the sea to the west, the river to the south and marshland to the north and east, the location lay well protected and was easily defensible. Nevertheless, it was found necessary to build a stone wall surrounding the town. In the following 12 years an average of some 350 men, with a peak of 1300 men, were set to work here.\footnote{Taylor 1963, pp.301, 394.}

Just five months after the works began, on 28 December 1277, the new town was officially made a borough. It received the same rights as the older borough of Montgomery: a weekly market, two yearly fairs, a guild merchant and a hanse. Initially, the town was provided with a ditch, with the stone wall to be built later on.\footnote{Griffiths 1978, p.39.}

A mill and millpool were constructed together with the town itself, and in 1281 a weir was made in the river, all at the expense of the crown.\footnote{Taylor 1963, p.306.} Although the new town was of considerable size (c.20 ha./50 acres, with\footnote{Beverley Smith 1977, pp.19-21.} burgages taken up by the early 14\textsuperscript{th} century) Aberystwyth was not made into a separate parish. The old Celtic monastery of Llanbadarn Fawr, two kilometres east of the new town, remained the ecclesiastical centre until the 19\textsuperscript{th} century. In the town, a chapel was built just north of the castle sometime before the mid-15\textsuperscript{th} century; but it was lost to the sea by the 18\textsuperscript{th} century.\footnote{Taylor 1963, pp.301, 394.}

It seems that the town did not completely develop as it was planned, since part of its area remained empty up to the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, probably being mainly used for gardens.\footnote{Griffiths 1978, pp.20-21.} It concerns the marginal areas, particularly the western parts, towards the castle, and the southeastern corner.\footnote{Taylor 1963, pp.301, 394.} The destruction caused by Welsh rebellions in Aberystwyth’s early history may have played a part in this arrested development.\footnote{This appears in old plans and is confirmed by archaeological excavations. (Hague 1977, pp.85-86; Soulsby 1983, p.71) Griffiths 1978, p.30.} Like in other Edwardian foundations in Wales, some of the men who had worked on the building of the castle and the town stayed to become burgesses.\footnote{This can be seen in the plan of c.1800, A Map of the Borough of Aberystwyth with several Farms and Messuages of Lands (Nat. Library of Wales, Grogerddan 110).} Nevertheless, in May 1282, five years after the beginning of works, the king’s military commander of west Wales, Gilbert de Clare, was commissioned to recruit new inhabit-
The outline of the town was determined by the form of the low hill on which it was sited: the town walls were laid out following its contours. It is not certain whether the town also had a wall along the seaside, but it does seem likely. The castle lies on a rock about 15 m. above the sea on the southwestern end of the town. This is, however, not the highest point in the town, the ground level being a few metres higher some 150 m. to the east, at the crossing of Vulcan Place and Prospect Row. A number of streets, more particularly the main streets Bridge Street (to the south), Great Dark Gate Street (to the northeast), and Pier Street (to the northwest), lie somewhat deeper than the ground that borders them, for which they must have functioned as sewers for rain water.

The structure of the streets is far from geometrically regular, but there is a basic regularity of rectangular lots, within rectangular, or at least quadrangular, blocks, boarded by streets that tend towards straightness at more or less right angles. The town had two main streets, crossing in the centre and protruding in the

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163 Beresford 1967, p.255.
164 Griffiths 1978, p.32.
165 Griffiths 1978, p.46.
166 Griffiths 1978, p.44.
167 Hague 1977, p.86.
168 According to Carter (1990, p.196) the lots were about 40 ft. (c.12.2 m.) wide, but their length was not uniform, sometimes extending up to a hundred feet (c. 30.5 m.). Although it is hard to determine what may have been the initial lots from the various old plans (fig.1.19 and William Couling’s plan of 1809 and the 1:2500 Ordnance Survey plan of 1889, depicted in Carter 1990 and 1976), there are indeed some lots that appear to be relatively old, on Great Dark Gate Street and Bridge Street, that had about this width. However, most seem to have been divided in halves. As to their length, most lots seem to have measured around 120 ft., but on the southeastern side of Great Dark Gate Street they seem to have stretched all the way back to Queen Street, and a number of lots to the west of Bridge Street seem to have stretched up to High Street, having
surrounding countryside via gates. It seems that the street that connected the castle-gate in the southwest with Great Dark Gate in the northeast, was the most important one. The parallel street to the northwest, which seems to be of less importance since it is not as central, also had a gate on the northern side of the town.169 This gate is an uncommon feature because it is in a street that seems to be of minor importance, and since it is so near to the Great Dark Gate, with both streets prolonging in the same northeasterly direction from the gates. This is remarkable, because commonly the number of town gates would be reduced as much as possible. Gates were vulnerable spots in the defences, and therefore they were generally only built at the end of the main streets, more or less regularly spaced over the circumference (if the landscape was undifferentiated) and giving access to different directions.

The plan of the town can be characterised as a grid plan. Although it is clearly planned, it is not very regular. Streets are not very parallel, they do not all cross at right angles and they are not completely straight. The street most out of sync with the grid is Bridge Street, which connects the nearest bridgeable point over the river with the centre of the town. The plan of 1834 (fig.1.19) clearly shows that this street was rather irregular in its course, slightly crooked with building lines that protrude and recede, and that it did not really continue in one line into Pier Street. This is also true for the streets paralleling Great Dark Gate Street to the southeast (Vulcan Place / Princess Street / Queen Street). It seems that this is at least partly due to encroachment on the streets by the building fronts during the centuries. The result is that these streets do not look like through-going streets, but rather like separate streets that tend to end near to where the other begins.170 In the past this effect was even stronger, since the town hall stood at the crossing of Bridge Street / Pier Street and Great Dark Gate Street, actually blocking the line of the former.

This town hall was built in a small square at the crossing of the two main streets. It also functioned as a market hall, but it was demolished in the 19th century. It is not known when this hall was originally built.

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169 The gate was called Little Dark Gate or, oddly enough, East Gate. (Soulsby 1983, p.71)
170 The present building line on the west side of Pier Street towards the small square in the centre of town, for example, was changed sometime between 1809 and 1889, so that it formed one straight line; whereas in the earlier situation there had been one building that protruded into the street. By this re-alignment, however, the new street axis connected even worse to the axis of Bridge Street.
171 In the early 19th century, a new market hall was built in St. James’s Square, and a corn market hall was built in Market Street, which was a newly widened alley.
but it may have been not long after the foundation of the town. The market was held in the small square, and probably also in Great Dark Gate Street and Pier Street, which were the widest streets in the town.

Since the late 18th century, various new streets, largely with terraced houses, were added in the western half and the southeastern part of town, which had mainly been used for garden space in the previous centuries. The town also grew, first to the northeast and later eastward, into the regional centre which it presently is.

1.7.4 Conwy (figs. 1.21-1.23)

The building of the new castle and borough of Conwy was begun in March 1283, six years later than the towns discussed above, during the Second War of Independence. Just after the royal forces had secured the area of the central north coast, in the second week of March, King Edward had his camp put up at the site of the Cistercian abbey of Aberconwy. This abbey was founded in 1186, and was the burial place of Llewelyn the Great and his family. Next to the abbey stood an old lordly residence, which was referred to as ‘Llewelyn’s hall’. The king had the abbey removed to a site 15 km. further inland, for which a compensation of £427 was paid. When the activity on the construction of the castle and the town walls was at its height, in the summer of 1285, about 1,500 men were working on Conwy.

Most probably, Conwy was planned to become an administrative capital: according to a preliminary draft of the Statute of Rhuddlan the county that eventually became Caernarfonshire was to be centred not on Caernarfon but on Conwy. The town became the third largest of the Edwardian boroughs, with 124 burgages taken up in 1312.

Much like the earlier foundations, the town was sited on the coast, at the mouth of a river, the Conwy, where the traffic on the main coastal land route was ferried across. The strategic importance of the area had been acknowledged in earlier times, as is demonstrated by the fact that an Iron Age hillfort, a Roman fort and a Norman castle had already been located in the area. And even today the location is of great strategic importance, since the main rail and road routes from England to Ireland pass by the town. Until the recent motorway was built, both routes actually passed right under the castle walls, bridging the Conwy river from there. The new town was built on an eastward sloping plateau, protected by the water of the Conwy on the northeast side, and by its tributary, the Afon Gyffin, on the south side.

In June 1283 work began on the new royal residence next to the old abbey and on a palisade surrounding the site of the new town. Between 1284 and 1287 this palisade was largely replaced by impressive stone walls, with a total length of 1.3 km. and three gates and 21 towers at regular intervals of about 46 m. In the early years particularly much money and effort was spent on the building of the castle, which is one of the most impressive among the castles of Wales, standing majestically on a rocky spur that protrudes into the Conwy river. (fig.1.22)

The mill that had belonged to the abbey was also kept, and a new mill was built for the king. Llewelyn’s hall was partly restored, but it did not become the hall of the king’s wardrobe, since this was newly built north-west of the later Mill Gate (Porth y Felin). According to Taylor it seems likely that Llewelyn’s hall was meant as the residence for the Prince of Wales - a title the king had planned for his son Edward of Caernarfon to assume. This would seem quite appropriate, as Llewelyn had been the first to carry that title, and also since the Treaty of Aberconwy may have been concluded in this hall in November 1277, with which the peace was signed that ended the first phase of Edward I’s conquest of northern Wales. The hall stood in the south-west corner of the town adjacent to the town wall. (see fig.1.23)

Further east, close to the town wall between Porth y Felin and the castle, lay the office of the ‘Master of the King’s Works in Wales’, probably existing of the house of master James of St. George and other buildings.

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172 Taylor 1963, p.337. It is just possible that there also existed a settlement termed ‘the abbot’s borough’ on the east side of the abbey, but it seems more likely that this was the borough of Deganwy, below the castle on the other side of the river. (Beresford 1967, pp.42-43)
174 Tucker 1960, p.23.
175 Taylor 1966, p.3.
176 Aberystwyth became the biggest of all the Edwardian new towns in 14th-century Wales, with 157 burgages in 1308, and Beaumaris counted 154½ burgages by 1317. (Beresford 1967, pp.255; Soulsby 1983, p.111)
177 Senior 1995, pp.24, 38, 84.
Excavations have shown that no houses stood on Rose Hill Street to the south of the church until at least the 16th century. From maps and prints of the 18th and 19th centuries it appears that the area along the northwestern side of the walls was also very thinly occupied by that time. (see also fig.1.22)

Conwy’s urban form is clearly planned. The contour of the town is made up of straight stretches of stone walls with regularly spaced towers. The form may be described as a somewhat deformed quadrangle. The southern part of the wall circuit was clearly determined by the topography of the site: it is somewhat crooked, since it more or less follows the contour lines of the relief. The northeastern stretch of wall is completely straight, along the bank of the Conwy. The straight side on the northwest, on the contrary, does not parallel the contour lines but climbs the hill. An even steeper climb is made by the southwestern stretch of wall, which was laid out perpendicular to the contour lines. These two sides meet at the highest point in a corner tower which overlooks the whole town. This tower, or rather the corner of the wall circuit, was purposefully planned to be at this point, since it is the highest point in the immediate area. It is possible to survey the northwestern and southwestern stretches of the town wall from the corner tower, because the tower protrudes slightly from the alignment of these stretches. The only entry road on the landward side, which lead to the nearby Upper Gate (Porth Uchaf), could also be controlled from the corner tower. On the riverfront towards the Conwy, two spurs of wall that protruded into the water secured additional protection for the town quay, which lay in between them.

The castle stands out on a rocky outcrop of about 15 m. height, on the sharp eastern corner of the town circuit. It was separated from the town by a ditch, as was usually the case in the Welsh castle towns. Because the plan of the castle was adapted to the shape of the outcrop it was built on, it has an irregular form. Another existing feature that must have influenced the layout of the town was the 13th-century abbey church of St. Mary. It is typical of Welsh towns that the church did not get a prominent position within the new layout. Although it must have been meant to function as the parish church from the time of the town’s

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183 See the printed views by the brothers Buck of 1743 (Soulsby, 1983, pp.112-113) and J. Boydell of 1749 (Beresford 1967, frontispiece) and the manuscript Holland Estate map of 1776 (Lilley, Lloyd & Trick 2005, s.v. Conwy, Downloads, Supplementary images).
foundation, its position was nevertheless somewhat marginalised: remarkably enough, the church was more or less confined by the lots on the streets to the northeast and west of it, which turn their backs towards the church. Deliberately, so it appears, the church was not given a monumental place in the urban layout.

The original street system of the town is well preserved; only the streets laying between the northwestern stretch of wall and the street parallel to it (Upper Gate Street/Chapel Street) and the streets near the castle were created in the 13th century, just like the breaches in the town walls in the northwestern stretch and on both sides of the castle. (see fig.1.21) The town has three principal streets, which relate to one another in a rather uncommon fashion. Chapel Street/Upper Gate Street was the street that was laid out leading to the gate in the southwest, in a direction more or less parallel to the northwestern stretch of wall. High Street was laid out in a course parallel to Chapel Street, leading down to the main gate towards the quay on the Conwy. So, these parallel streets both end in a gate, on opposite sides.184

A third gate is situated towards the south and gives access to the bank of the Gyffin where the town mill was situated, wherefore it was called Mill Gate (Porth Felin). Most probably the small river could be crossed here to give access to the southward route through the Conway valley. This gate is unusually placed astride the wall instead of in alignment with it. Probably this layout was made necessary by some particular dictating condition of the site, unknown to us at present.185 Another street of greater importance was the street running towards the castle parallel to the quayside wall. The northwestern part of this street (Berry Street) is a little less wide and lies somewhat shifted northeastward in respect to the southeastern part of the street (Castle Street). The whole stretch of this street is, nevertheless, surveyable from the western tower of the castle. Castle Street was the widest street in the town, wherefore it seems as though it may have been intended as a market street. The actual market square, at the southwestern end of High Street, is not really a square: it is an open space which looks as though it was not deliberately planned in this form, even when it is considered that part of the space was occupied by buildings later on.186

The structure of the most important streets in the town is orthogonal. High Street and Castle Street/Berry Street, Chapel Street and Crown Lane are laid out at right angles and are all very straight, by the standards of the 13th-century new towns of Wales. Rosemary Lane, Church Street and Rose Hill Street clearly do not conform to this structure. Their courses are at least partly determined by the course of the wall circuit and by the presence of the older structures of the church and Llewelyn’s Hall. It is hard to determine, though, why Rosemary Lane was not just laid out in one straight line with High Street, which would have been more

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184 Conzen calls this arrangement a ‘staggered-parallel street system’. He argues that it was laid out like this in order to provide for two main streets instead of one, so that the amount of traffic-located frontages would be doubled, which was desirable as they were valuable for the shops of trades and artisans. In his analysis, Conzen breaks up the plan of Conwy into two different parts, or different ‘plan ideas’ as he calls them. Apart from the ‘staggered-parallel street system’ to the southeast of High Street, he describes the plan as if the planners deliberately composed it from these different types of street systems. (Conzen 1968, p.128) In my opinion, this way of working seems, however, to be rather improbable for the 13th-century town planners. (see par.0.4.2) It seems more likely that this layout was determined by the conditions of the site, particularly the relief, in combination with the ambition to lay out the major streets in an orthogonal structure.

186 Conzen 1968, pp.128-129.
logical and more ‘orderly’, so it seems.\(^{187}\) Along Castle Street, Berry Street, High Street and around the market place, there are house lots whose form may have originated from the town’s creation. It is not reasonably possible, though, to establish the original standard lot size. From a rent roll of 1315 it appears, however, that there must have been a standard burgage plot, although most holdings did not conform to that standard by that time.\(^{188}\)

A close look at the topography within the town shows that a number of streets lie slightly lower than the ground level of the directly surrounding area. The churchyard, for instance, is higher at its corners than in the centre, where the church stands. From here, the surface water was carried off to Castle Street along the connecting narrow lanes. Castle Street then, falls off towards the northwest, where it reaches its deepest point at the crossing with High Street, which lies in a hollow from about halfway along its length, falling to the northeast. At its end, this street reaches the lowest point of the whole town at the appropriately named Lower Gate (Porth Isaf), which must have served as a surface-water drain for the larger part of the town. As with similar hollow roads in Rhuddlan, Aberystwyth and Caernarfon, it is hard to tell whether these depressions are man-made, so the question remains as to whether the streets were laid out in depressions or whether the hollows were dug out in order to facilitate drainage along the streets.

1.7.5 Caernarfon (figs. 1.24-1.28)

In the late 11th century the earl of Chester had built a motte castle just half a mile west of the site where the ruins of a Roman fort named Segontium could still be seen. The first civil settlement on the site was probably founded in the period of Norman rule, which only lasted from the late 11th century to 1115, after which the area was re-conquered by the princes of Gwynedd, who founded a royal court (a llys) and a maenor at the site.\(^{189}\) The small commercial settlement at the site was chartered by Llewelyn ap Iorwerth in 1221.\(^{190}\)

But in July 1283 the site was hastily cleared of its older settlement, in order to make way for a new castle and town that were founded by King Edward, who had just conquered the area.\(^{191}\) The Norman motte was left standing within the bailey of the new stone castle, and the existing moat was deepened and extended. The existing civil settlement, however, was completely erased and re-planned. After an initial enclosure of the site by a timber stockade, the new town was surrounded by a stone wall probably by November 1285. Just like the castle, the town was eventually built in two phases, in 1283-1285 and in 1295-1301, following the heavy damages of the rebellion of 1294.\(^{192}\)

\(^{187}\) The old layout in the area of Rosemary Lane and Church Street in the pre-railway era is depicted in the 1776 Holland Estate map (see Lilley, Lloyd & Trick 2005, s.v. Conwy, Downloads, Supplementary images) and in a somewhat schematic town plan, presumably of around 1800, which is in the National Library of Wales (Top A 3/2 A 268).

\(^{188}\) See Lewis 1912, p.85. See also par.9.11.

\(^{189}\) Carter 1969, p.2; Taylor 1997, p.7.

\(^{190}\) Soulsby 1983, p.89; Williams-Jones 1978, p.75.

\(^{191}\) Taylor 1963, p.372.

Like Aberystwyth and Conwy, Caernarfon was laid out on a peninsular site, in this case between the sea-arm of the Menai Strait and the streams Seiont and Cadnant. (figs.1.24-1.27) The Menai Strait, which separates the island of Anglesey from the rest of Wales, was of great importance for naval traffic. From the area around Caernarfon there are several valleys that open up to the interior of northern Wales, which were important for overland traffic. The coastal road also passed by the site, for which the town lay in a highly strategic position.\textsuperscript{193}

The small peninsula on which Caernarfon lies is rather low, rising to c.14 m. at the eastern end of the castle, while just to the north and the south of the peninsula lie hilltops which are considerably higher. The situation is comparable to Aberystwyth and Conwy: apparently the presence of a harbour was more important than being sited on a high point. The land rises more gently towards the east, where the Roman fort had been, between the rather steep slopes towards the riverbeds of the Seiont and the Cadnant.

The town quay on the west, the bridge over the Cadnant and the town mill and millpool on the east were created together with the new town. The quay and the bridge were made out of wood at first, but both were to be replaced by stone structures by the early 14th century. In 1304-05 the crown even paid for the building of a swans’ nest in the middle of the millpond, which apparently was seen as a worthy feature for a royal capital. The town did not receive a parish church of its own, however, because it remained part of the existing parish of Llanbeblig, with its church about a kilometre to the southeast of the town. The chapel of St. Mary served as the town’s church, from the time it was built in 1307. It was constructed by Henry Ellerton, deputy master of the works on the castle, on his own burgage plot in the northwest corner of the wall circuit of the town, attached to the corner tower.\textsuperscript{194} (see fig.1.24)

The town had a small market place at the junction of the two main streets, and a large market place outside the town walls, directly east of the castle in the bailey of the former Norman castle, where it was

\textsuperscript{193} Carter 1969, p.1.
\textsuperscript{194} Beresford 1967, p.45; Carter 1969, p.4; Soulsby 1983, p.90.
surrounded by a moat. An agreement of 1298 stipulated that every burgess of the town was to have a place with a 30-foot frontage on this outer market place, and that shops were to be built there. Baking, brewing, granaries and granges, however, were not allowed outside the town’s walls, since that would be harmful for the food reserves in case the town was besieged.

In 1284, with the signing of the Statute of Rhuddlan, Caernarfon was made the administrative and judicial capital of the Principality of North Wales. Because of this function as a regional capital, the town had some special public buildings, such as the exchequer office over the East Gate (with an adjoining chancery) and the royal court of justice, which seems to have been located in the southwest corner of the town. As the principal town of the shire, it also had a shire hall. Around 1300 the population must have counted about 300 to 400 people. A considerable part of the burgesses were active in the administration or the service of the king. Up to about 1330, new burgesses were still recruited from the men who worked on the building of the castle.

A peculiar feature in the founding of Caernarfon castle and town is the symbolic historical reference that seems to have been an important part of its planned content. In the late 12th century, the anonymous author of *The History of Gryffud ap Cynan* explicitly referred to the antiquity of the settlement by stating that Earl Hugh of Chester had built his castle ‘[…] in the old city of the emperor Constantine, son of Constans the Great […]’. This is not completely true: the Roman fort was not a city, it was actually built under emperor Vespasian, and the Norman castle was not really built within it, but half a mile to the west. But the idea of continuity was what counted, not the exact locations. King Edward certainly was aware of the ancient tradition of the place. In 1283 he ordered the re-burying of what was thought to be the body of Magnus Maximus, the presumed father of Constantine. Most probably he would also have been acquainted with the romance of Maxen Wledig. This story relates how this legendary emperor Maximus had dreamed of journeying from Rome to a land of high mountains, where he arrived at a place where a river flowed into the sea with an island lying opposite. In this place, he had a vision of a great fortified city at the mouth of the river, within it a great fort with many great towers and many colours, and in the hall of the fort a chair of ivory with two golden eagles thereon. The town and castle that Edward started to build can be regarded as the fulfilment of this vision. The clearest reference to the story is to be found in the architectural appearance of the castle, which includes highly uncommon features in its polygonal towers and walls decorated with stone bands of different colours. With these features the castle evidently refers to the Theodosian walls of Constantinople, the great capital of Constantine, the first Roman emperor to be a Christian. The imperial symbolism is also to be seen in the so-called Eagle tower, which is crowned by three turrets, each bearing a stone eagle. (see fig. 1.27)

The design of Caernarfon castle certainly was envisaged as something special, the area within its walls

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195 Carter 1969, p.4.
196 Carter 1969, pp.4-5.
197 Williams-Jones 1978, p.83.
200 Unfortunately, the coloured bands of stone can no longer be clearly discerned at present.
being relatively large and its architecture being more impressive and more ornamented than the other royal castles in Wales. The symbolic references found in the architecture have several consequences of which it is hard to tell in what measure they were explicitly meant to make a statement, or what their relative importance was. It is obvious that the ancient tradition of the site was used as a justification of its function as a strongpoint within the structure of a larger empire. Further, the specific prestige of the site was emphasised through the legend of Maximus’ dream, the ivory throne with golden eagles hinting at its function as an imperial capital, which is also symbolised by the reference to Constantinople. And indeed, Caernarfon was planned as the capital of the three new shires of northwestern Wales, the former principality of Gwynedd.\(^{202}\)

All in all, Caernarfon castle and town heralded King Edward as the head of an empire of different nations and as the direct heir of the Roman emperors, particularly the much-revered emperor Constantine the Great, who was regarded as the first champion of Christianity.

Remarkably enough, the symbolic reference to Constantinople, through the form of the castle walls, was not extended to the town walls. The western town gate, however, was called The Golden Gate, a name which recalls the famous Golden Gate of Constantinople.\(^{203}\)

A symbolic architectural feature of a different kind was the timber-framed ‘Hall of Llewelyn’. This hall

\(^{202}\) Taylor 1997, pp.32, 38.

\(^{203}\) Carter 1969, p.3.
had been part of Llewelyn ap Gruffydd’s residence at Aberconwy and, after the foundation of Conwy by
King Edward, it was first used there as a royal residence; but in 1316 it was shipped to Caernarfon where it
was re-erected within the castle.\footnote{Taylor 1997, p.15; see also par.1.7.4. This ‘Hall of Llewelyn’ was destroyed long ago.} Apparently, the timber halls that had been the residences of the Welsh
rulers were of great symbolic and/or financial value, because such halls were also reused at Aberffraw and
Dolbadarn, and one was moved to the new castle in Harlech.\footnote{Brown, Colvin & Taylor 1963, p.407; see also par.1.7.6.} It seems that the reuse of these halls must
be taken as a symbolic gesture, representing the continuity of authority, notwithstanding the fact that the
English king had taken over from the Welsh princes.\footnote{Herbert & Jones 1995, p.6. More or less similar symbolism played a role in the imitation of forms in ancient Chinese palaces: see Wheatley 1971, p.431.}

The outline of the town is determined by the course of the walls, which in turn was determined by the topog-
raphy of the peninsula. The natural form of the landscape was optimally used to create a fortified town that
would be more easily defensible, having direct access to the sea. Like the town, the castle has an irregular
outline form: unlike the castles of Beaumaris, Harlech and Rhuddlan, which have regular geometrical plans,
it was apparently decided to adapt the form of Caernarfon castle to the circumstances of the site, as deter-
mined by the natural landscape and the pre-existing castle. The site of the castle lies somewhat higher than
the rest of the town, which gently slopes down to the west and the north. It seems that in the early stages the
castle and town were seen as a defensive unit, since the north wall of the castle, towards the town, was built
later than the walls of the castle and the town towards the exterior.\footnote{Taylor 1997, p.12.} The area covered by the town is just
10.5 acres (4.25 ha.), which is relatively small considering its importance. The length of the town walls is just
730 m., whereas at Conwy it is 1280 m.\footnote{Davies 1996, p.50.} It is no wonder then, that the town is very densely built, compared
to other towns in Wales. This is partly due to the original layout, because the streets are considerably
narrower than the average street in the other towns.\footnote{The streets are about 7-9 m. wide.} (figs.1.25, 1.28) The castle takes up an area of about a
quarter of the whole town.\footnote{Carter 1969, p.3.}

The town wall has just one straight section, which is along the quay. The north-south streets are largely
parallel to this stretch of town wall and are laid out so that they are visible (and therefore controllable)
from the towers of the castle. The course of the easternmost street is somewhat curved, since it follows the
curvature of the wall. Originally, this street was only a wall street along the back of the plots to the west of
it. The westernmost street has two slight bends near its extreme ends, which makes it hard to see down its
length from the castle tower. The southern bend is probably determined by the angle in the stretch of town
wall along the quay. The building lines of the streets, especially the north-south streets, are rather irregular, with

\footnote[204]{Taylor 1997, p.15; see also par.1.7.4. This ‘Hall of Llewelyn’ was destroyed long ago.} \footnote[205]{Brown, Colvin & Taylor 1963, p.407; see also par.1.7.6.} \footnote[206]{Herbert & Jones 1995, p.6. More or less similar symbolism played a role in the imitation of forms in ancient Chinese palaces: see Wheatley 1971, p.431.} \footnote[207]{Taylor 1997, p.12.} \footnote[208]{Davies 1996, p.50.} \footnote[209]{The streets are about 7-9 m. wide.} \footnote[210]{Carter 1969, p.3.}
protruding and receding parts. Obviously, the town authorities were not able to protect public space from being intruded on by private constructions, whereby the building lines, which most likely must have been straight originally, were distorted.

The streets show a clear hierarchical distinction. The most important one is clearly the central east-west street, which links the East Gate, the most important gate of the town on the landside, with the West Gate, giving access to the quay. The north-south streets only give access to the residential plots, as well as to the King’s Gate at the castle. The breaks in the northern stretch of the town wall, to which these streets now lead, were made in the early 19th century. The eastern wall street also gave access to the Green Gate, which was a small gate that opened up to the market area east of the castle.

The central street, the importance of which is demonstrated by the name High Street, is not at right angles to the north-south streets. It seems that the direction of the north-south streets was determined by the parallel direction of the shoreline at the west of the town, where the quay was built. The direction of High Street however, may have been determined by the place where the gates on its extreme ends had to be sited to be optimally effective for defence. Both gates are sited about halfway between the wall towers. Another element that may have determined the place and direction of the High Street is the micro-relief. Towards the west, the street lies deeper than the ground to the north and south of it. Thus, the street serves as a sewer for a large part of the walled area, leading surface water through the east gate and into the sea. Similar layouts can be found elsewhere, as in Aberystwyth and Conwy, where main streets also direct surface water towards the shore.

The standard burgage plots initially had dimensions of 60 x 80 ft. (18.29 x 24.38 m.). But in the Ordnance Survey plan of 1887-88 it is not possible to find these dimensions exactly. Along the south side of High Street I have measured the width of the blocks from east to west and found them to be c. 26, 52, 50 and 31 m. respectively. These dimensions suggest that the actual lots were not exactly laid out according to the standard burgage size. It appears though, that on the north as well as on the south side of High Street a number of plot boundaries are to be found at about 18 m. receding from the street. This probably means that the original plots along the main street were sited with their long sides parallel to it, in which case their lengths would have been a few metres longer than the official ‘standard’ size. Apart from the previously mentioned plot boundaries off the main street, I have hardly found other boundary lines that seem to be relevant; even back boundaries halfway the width of the wider blocks, where one would expect the lots to

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212 On the eastern side, the distance from the gate to the tower south of it is c. 59 m., and about 2 m. more to the tower north of it. The western gate lies c. 80 m. from the tower to the south and c. 78 m. from the one to the north. That the distances on the west side are larger than those on the east is caused by the length of the wall stretches from corner to corner: c. 120 m. on the east, parted in two, and c. 225 m. on the west, parted in three.
214 Ordnance Survey map 1:2500, Caernarvonshire XXV, 1887-8, 1st ed., in the collection of the National Library of Wales.
have lain back to back, are very rare. There is one lot, though, which has dimensions which are close to that of the original standard lot: the one where the 19th-century market hall is located east of Palace Street. (number 11 in fig.1.25) It is possible that the initial division into standard lots has been lost over the course of time, but it seems more likely that the lots were never actually laid out completely according to the ‘standard’. The diverging width of the blocks, ranging from c. 52 to 45 m. (and even less, opposite the church in the northwest corner) for the four wider central blocks and much greater divergences in the narrower blocks next to the walls, make analogous divergences in the original plot lengths necessary.

1.7.6 Harlech (figs.1.29-1.31)

The borough of Harlech lies on the west coast, about 65 km. north of Aberystwyth and 35 km. south of Caernarfon. It was founded together with its castle, which stands on a c. 60 m. high promontory that protruded into the sea. (see fig.1.31) The town and the castle overlook Tremadoc Bay and the Llyn peninsula, where the castle town of Criccieth lies. As with the other Edwardian new towns treated above, it had access to the sea and lay on the main coastal land route.

Work on the castle of Harlech began in June 1283, probably just a few days earlier than the works at Caernarfon. The site had been conquered in April by the middle army, which marched up from Castell-y-Bere in a northwesterly direction. Shortly thereafter preparations were made to start work on the castle. The nearby Welsh maenor of Estingwern was destroyed, and the wooden hall of Prince Llewelyn ap Gruffydd was moved five miles northward to be installed in the new castle as a symbol of the new dominance.

The new borough received the full privileges modelled on those of the city of Hereford (like Caernarfon and Conway) in November 1284. Nevertheless, it probably was not meant to become a town of great importance, as no defences seem to have been laid out here. Building a defensive wall for the town would probably have been rather senseless anyway, as it is located on a steep slope just above the ridge, slightly higher.

fig.1.29: Harlech. Plan by John Speed from 1611. Harlech castle and town were founded by King Edward I in July to November 1283, during his second Welsh campaign to end the Second War of Independence. The steep relief of the site is barely visible in this plan, but it clearly shows that Harlech was a very small town that was almost completely overshadowed by the castle.

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215 Already in the 14th-century rent rolls and deeds, the plot division did not conform to the standard of 60 x 80 ft. (Beresford 1979, p.234) For a general discussion of standard plots and the way they were handled, see par.9.11.
216 Lilley, Lloyd & Trick (2005, s.v. Cearnarfon, Discussion, Design and plan) suggest that all the original burgages measured about 60 x 80 feet, as far as possible. The street blocks, therefore, could have contained about 60 burgage plots in total. They take the fact that a rent-roll of 1298 mentions 55 burgages, as support for the idea. (see also the reconstruction of the original layout in their ‘Core Map 3’.
218 Lloyd 1986, p.17.
219 Beresford 1967, p.45.
than the castle but completely overlooked by the higher ground to the east. More level ground was to be found at the foot of the cliff, but the sea regularly flooded this area. There was also more level ground a few hundred metres higher up the mountain, but this was too far from the castle to enjoy its protection or to be under its control.

Harlech did not get a church of its own. The castle had two chapels, one for the ordinary soldiers and one for officers, and the town had a chapel just outside the castle gates. The inhabitants of the town seem to have used this chapel in preference to the parish church at Llandanwg, which is two miles to the south.\(^{220}\)

The region in which Harlech was founded, is a rocky area between the estuaries of the Dwyryd in the north and the Mawddach in the south. This area did not contain much fertile ground. In 1329, in a petition to the king, the burgesses stated that they ‘lived on a rock, whence no material advantage accrued to the inhabitants of the town or the castle’.\(^{221}\) Though the town’s hinterland was vast, its yields were low. Cattle and fish must have been the prime products traded in the Saturday-market and the four yearly fairs. The mill, at the foot of the cliff at the north end of the town, was probably planned together with the borough.\(^{222}\) The town had no port or quay: vessels simply landed on the sandy shore. There was a small gate there, at the bottom of the castle-rock, with a path defended by walls leading up to the back of the castle.

Because of the limited economic possibilities, it is not surprising that Harlech was very small among the Edwardian foundations, with just 12 taxpayers in 1292-93. It grew slightly, as 29¾ burgages were recorded in 1312.\(^{223}\) In John Speed’s plan of 1611 (fig. 1.29) the town consists of about 40 houses, but is still completely overshadowed by the castle. Speed’s image does not seem to be exaggerated: the town was almost completely destroyed during Owain Glyndŵr’s attack in the early 15th century: 46 houses were ruined. In the 18th century the town was still described as ‘the most forlorn, beggarly place imaginable’.\(^{224}\)

It is not easy to get a clear picture of the initial layout of the borough, as it is not entirely clear in what measure the forms depicted in the old plans have survived from the original form.\(^{225}\) As mentioned above,

\(^{220}\) Lloyd 1986, pp.20-21.

\(^{221}\) Lewis 1912, p.201. In fact, the most valuable land for cultivation would become the reclaimed land in the low-lying marshes north of the town, which the townsmen were granted by the king. (Lloyd 1986, p.20)

\(^{222}\) Soulsby 1983, p.138.

\(^{223}\) Lewis 1912, p.66; Soulsby 1983, p.138.

\(^{224}\) Soulsby 1983, p.139.

\(^{225}\) The most important plans are John Speed’s of 1611 (fig. 1.29), the Tithe Award map of 1842 (parish Llandanwg, 6 chains : 1 inch, copy in the National Library of Wales), and the 1:2500 Ordnance Survey (I have only seen the second edition of 1901, Merionethshire XIX 13, in the National Library of Wales).
the vast part of the town was destroyed during the Glyndŵr rebellion. Assuming that the town was rebuilt more or less in its original form, Speed’s plan of 1611 is the ultimate source on its early layout. A comparison of this plan with the 19th-century Tithe Award map and Ordnance Survey plan may give a rough impression of what the layout of the original borough probably looked like. Figure 1.30 contains a reconstruction of the original plan by Lilley, Lloyd & Trick.

It seems that the original layout of the borough was formed by two slightly crooked streets that crossed not far southeast of the castle. In the Tithe Award plan of 1842 an open space is depicted in front of the castle, which looks like a sort of public square. In Speed’s plan no such space is recognisable. The house lots in the town are also rather irregular. In the 1842 plan the lots in the central part of the town have more or less straight boundaries and right angles, stretching in length from the main street, while further to the periphery the lots tend to be far more irregular, with rounded outlines. The rectangular lots have no equal dimensions or surface areas. Apart from the rather obvious observation that the original burgages probably were rectangular and stretched back from the main street, nothing much can be said of the layout of the original lots. It is noteworthy, though, that no such lots stretch back from the perpendicular street running to the southeast, which may be an indication that this street was not lined with burghal plots originally.

The main street was more or less level, whereas the perpendicular street rose steeply to the southeast. Just north of the old town, the main street splits into two branches, of which the northern one descends steeply towards the foot of the cliff.

The stream that flowed between the castle and the borough, towards the waterfall above the site of the mill, may have partly been diverted northward. Looking at the topography, it seems likely that its natural course would have flowed in a westward direction from the bridge depicted in Speed’s plan. It is difficult to reconstruct the flow of the stream, since it was culverted for the greatest part by the 19th century. The pond in front of the castle was probably filled in before 1842.

The irregularity of the layout of the town may be partly ascribed to the fairly steep gradient of the slope on which it was laid out. The castle stands on a rocky outcrop. A small but very steep ravine confines the site to the northeast, and a ditch protects it on the east, southeast and to the south, where a valley steeply slopes down westward. Just southeast of the castle is the only fairly flat part of the town, from where the ground begins to rise again east of the main street. This street lies higher than the castle, and descends to the south and to the north from its highest point, about 70 m. southwest of the crossroads. It is obvious that in this rugged terrain no regular structure could be laid out without having to move many tons of earth and rock, which obviously was not what the planners wanted to do, for Harlech was most probably not planned to be a town of great importance: it was small, unwalled and had no church of its own. But even when it would have been a more important town, the analogy with the other Edwardian towns in Wales shows that regularity of the layout was not considered important enough to disregard or alter the topography of the site.
The borough of Criccieth lies just across the Tremadoc bay, about 10 km. northeast of Harlech. The castle and town of Criccieth are situated on the south coast of the Llyn peninsula, where the road along the foothills from Caernarfon, across the peninsula, reached the coast. Like Harlech, Criccieth was a small, unwalled borough, laid out on the landside of a castle. The castle at Criccieth, however, was probably built already in the 1230’s by Llewelyn the Great, being one of the relatively few castles built by Welsh lords. It was sited on a promontory about 50 m. high, which protrudes into the sea. The king’s forces captured the castle before 14 March 1283, after which it was repaired and strengthened over the next nine years.226

It is peculiar that the boroughs of Criccieth and Harlech are so close together. They are easily within sight of one another across the bay, closer than any other Edwardian castle boroughs.227 The reason for this was most probably the combination of the fact that at Criccieth there was a valuable castle at a strategic site readily available and that the most strategic site of the region between the estuaries of the Dwyryd and the Mawddach was to be found at Harlech.

It seems that the development of the borough of Criccieth was even less substantial than that at Harlech. Before the new borough was founded by Edward I, there must have already been some civil settlement at Criccieth, the castle being the maerdref (administrative centre) of the commote of Eifionydd.228 The borough charter of Criccieth was issued on the same day as those of Harlech and Bere, 22 November 1284, but their contents were slightly different. In 1295 the total civil population was counted at just 30. In the mid-14th century it must have grown considerably, as 25 burgages were recorded by that time.229 Nonetheless,
Criccieth, like Harlech, disposed of all the prerequisites necessary for a town: a weekly market, annual fairs, a mill and the right to hold court. Trade and industry, however, seem to have been meagre. No traces of town defences have been found at Criccieth. The borough was just a group of burgages along a street, like at Harlech; but here the castle really towers above it, standing on a rock which is about 20 m. higher than the ground on which the town stands.

It is not easy to get an idea of the form of the original town, since there is nothing left of its architectural mass, thanks to its thorough destruction during the rebellion of the early 15th century and its subsequent decline. An additional problem is that Criccieth is not depicted in old topographical sources, such as the maps of John Speed. The most important sources, therefore, are the 19th-century Tithe Award map and Ordnance Survey plan. (fig.1.32) In analogy to most other places of which there is more information, it may be assumed that the structure of streets and plots was rather stable and had largely survived devastation until the 19th century.

The principal street is directed northeast to southwest. This street has its highest point just northwest of the castle, where it traverses a saddle between the castle hill and the somewhat lower Dinas hill to the northwest. From there the street descends about 25 m. in both directions, towards the beach. The landing place for ships probably lay c. 250 m. to the east, where a small stream flows into the sea. From this street, the land falls further to the north, so that the topography made the borough somewhat better protected than the town of Harlech. At the highest point of the street there is a small trapezoidal place, just northwest of what is now the main street in the old town. From the western angle of this place a street starts off to the southwest, which runs along the back of the houses of the main street (Castle Street / Marine Crescent), and parallel to it. It is quite possible, however, that this secondary street had a greater significance in the past. The lots on the northwest side have their frontages on this street, but the lots on its southeast side might well have also fronted on this street in the past. According to Lewis, the borough charter mentions standard burgages of 60 x 80 ft. This size is not recognisable as a rigid standard, but the lots on both sides of this street may well have come near to it. Therefore it is not unlikely that this street was the main street, while the present Marine Crescent may have been no more than a back lane along the outer bank of the castle defences. It is possible

230 Soulsby 1983, p.118
231 Around 1540 the town was described thus: ‘At Crikith be a 2 or 3 poore houses, and there is a smaule rylle [stream]. There hath beene a franchised toune, now cleane decayed.’ (Avent 1989, p.9)
232 Tithe Award map: parish Criccieth, 1839, scale 8 chains:1 inch; Ordnance Survey 1:2500 2nd edition 1900, Carnarvonshire XXXIV 13. Both plans are in the National Library of Wales.
233 See par.0.2.3.
234 Lewis 1912, p.49. The same standard size was mentioned in the charter of Caernarfon, but, as described above, this burgage size can not have been rigidly implemented there. (see par.1.7.5)
that, with the growing importance of the view from the houses, particularly for tourism, the 19th-century houses have turned their fronts towards the sea and the castle. If this assumption is right, then the original main street was probably staggered, set off over the little square, as it is obvious that Castle Street was the old main street, given that it has house lots on both sides. It is possible that the square was somewhat larger and was partly filled in later on its southwest or northeast side. Also, it seems likely that another street went from its northern corner along the back of the lots on Castle Street, parallel to it. (fig.1.33) Along its presumable course we still find the back boundary of the lots on Castle Street - which have lengths of somewhere around 80 ft. (24.38 m.), like the original burgages would have had - where these lots are divided from others that lie behind them. It is odd that these last lots, which are not built on but have dimensions that would be more plausible for house lots than for fields (c.115 x 45 ft. / 35.05 x 13.72 m.), are not accessible by a public road or path. Since it is most likely that every plot originally had some form of public access, it may be assumed that the boundary line between them was originally a street.

1.7.8 Bere (figs.1.34-1.35)

The case of the borough of Bere is rather similar to that of Criccieth as far as its origin is concerned; its successive history is very different, however. As at Criccieth, there was a Welsh castle, Castell y Bere, which was built from 1221 on for Llewelyn the Great. It was taken by the English forces in April 1283, after being besieged by over 3,000 men. In the summer of 1284 work started on repairs to the castle. On November 22, after the king had visited the place, he granted the new town of Bere free borough status. This was on the same day as the issuance of the charters of Harlech and Criccieth; the privileges of Bere were, however, similar to those of Caernarfon and Conwy.

As at Criccieth, the existing Welsh castle, standing on a rock c. 40 m. high, was strengthened, and the new borough was laid out at its foot. The great difference is, however, that at Bere there is nothing left of the borough: there has not been a town there for hundreds of years. (fig.1.34) The ruins of the castle have been thoroughly excavated; regarding the borough, however, the form and even its exact placement are unknown. It is most likely, though, that the borough was built to the southeast of the castle. (fig.1.35) Here we find a fairly level site between the steep castle hill and the progressively steeper side of the mountain to its southeast. It is certain that the borough

![fig.1.34: Castell-y-Bere. Aerial photograph, taken from the west. (From: Avent 1989) The remains of the castle are visible on the hill in the foreground. The town was probably located along the road, which is just visible below the field to the left of the castle. Bere castle was originally built in the early 1220's. A borough was founded there by King Edward I in November 1283, during his second Welsh campaign, but it had ceased to exist before the end of the 13th century.]

235 In the 1839 Tithe Award map, this back boundary line goes all the way through to the northeast end of town, parallel to Castle Street. In 1900 this was no longer so, since the allotment had changed in the northeast part of town, with new houses built along the street that branches off northward.
236 Avent 1997.
237 Beresford suggests the possibility that the borough lay in what he calls the outer bailey of the castle, to the west of it. Actually this is not an outer bailey, but rather the slope of the hill on which the castle stands, now covered with scrub and trees. There are two or three terraces on this side of the castle, but these are certainly not large enough to accommodate the houses and lots of the 16 taxpayers in the 1292 tax list. (Beresford 1967, pp.47-48)
was not identical to the village of Llanfihangel-y-Pennant, which lies 450 m. east of the castle, at the bottom of the valley: this was an old Welsh settlement, which appeared separately in the 1292 tax list. The form of the borough of Bere probably was more or less analogous to Harlech or Criccieth: a number of burgage plots along a street that, like the present road, probably ran from northeast to southwest.

The site of Bere was different from the other Edwardian castle towns in Wales, since it lies about 10 km. from the west coast. It is sited in the relatively fertile valley of the river Dysynni, which is blocked by the majestic Cader Idris mountain just east of the site. The valley is rather isolated, and had no importance for inter-regional traffic. The castle lay in a position where it controlled the valley, and therefore the king and his advisors must have seen the site as being of strategic importance. Apart from this valley, the ‘peninsula’ between the major rivers Mawddach and Dyfi, had no other areas that needed to be controlled by Edward’s armies, since it largely consisted of bare mountainous land.

In retrospect it is not surprising that this urban venture was not successful. In 1292 there were 16 taxpayers, some of whom had Welsh names, which was still more than in Harlech or Criccieth at that time. But from 1298 the borough completely disappeared from all public records. Both the town and the castle were abandoned. The direct cause of this may have been devastation in the uprising of 1294, but it seems likely that the venture was also given up because the location appeared not to be in a strategic place, in military as well as economic terms.  

1.7.9 Caerwys (figs. 1.36-1.37)

Another odd member of the group of Edwardian new towns in Wales is Caerwys. It was founded in 1290 in northeastern Wales, about halfway between Flint and Rhuddlan. Its creation obviously had not much to do with military strategy, because, unlike all other Edwardian towns except for Newborough, it was not founded

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238 Soulsby 1983, p.105. Through archaeological excavation it became apparent that the castle was at least partly burnt before it ceased to be occupied, sometime towards the end of the 13th century. (Avent 1997)
in relation with military campaigns, nor did it have a castle or town defences. Furthermore, it seems that the site was not even chosen in view of defence. Therefore, the borough must have been conceived with motives of an economic nature. The town was not planted on a main transportation route, however. The main route from Flint to Rhuddlan lay some kilometres further north, and the Wheeler valley, which was an important artery for traffic from Chester to Denbigh and the Clwyd valley, lay just south of Caerwys. It is most likely that the foundation of the new town must rather be regarded as connected with regional development. The area experienced a phase of considerable economic development in the late 13th century, with town foundations at Flint, Rhuddlan, Ruthin, Denbigh, Overton, Holt and New Mostyn. Only the last of these towns shared with Caerwys the absence of a castle as well as town defences.

There already had been a village of Caerwys in 1242, but it is unclear where exactly it was located. The church of St. Michael in the new town certainly existed already in 1290, so it is not unlikely that the older village lay on the site of the new town. An overwhelmingly large part of the inhabitants of the new town were Welsh: in 1292, 39 out of 43 taxpayers bore Welsh names. This relative number is certainly many times higher than in the Edwardian towns described above, where the Welsh were no more than a minority in the early decades after their foundation. These indications all seem to imply that Caerwys was (re-)founded in order to attract more settlers and economic activities, probably in order to intensify land use in the immediate surroundings and to increase revenues.

The new town was sited on the southern end of a fertile plateau, about 175 m. above sea level. Close to its east and west lie small but steep wooded valleys that lead down to the Wheeler valley in the south. Since the town lies east of the hillcrest, its ground falls slightly to the east and south. As at Bere, there is no navigable water nearby but, because of the more friendly nature of the surrounding land, which is more densely populated, the site is considerably less isolated than is Bere.

Analysing the 1742 estate plan (fig. 1.36) and the 1913 Ordnance Survey plan (fig. 1.41) of the town, it is clear that its form was determined by a cross of broad streets in north-south and west-east directions. These streets, which are up to 15 m. wide, are fairly straight, but the building lines along them are quite irregular.

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239 Beresford 1967, pp.48-49. Denbigh was a new castle town, founded not long before (in 1285) by the earl of Lincoln with support of the king. (Soulsby 1983, p.121)
240 Beresford 1967, pp.48-49.
242 Maes Mynon demesne map, 1742 (Flintshire Record Office); Ordnance Survey 1:2500, Flintshire VIII 3, edition 1913 (National Library of Wales). Another interesting plan is the Tithe Award map of Caerwys parish, 1849, 5 chains : 1 inch (National Library of Wales).
The streets are not completely at right angles, the west-east street tends towards a NW-SE direction, and it bends in a more southward direction towards the east, where it descends to the site of the mill. More or less parallel to these main streets are secondary streets that make the over-all layout to form a grid plan. To the west is a road that has a somewhat more NW-SE direction than the central north-south street, more or less following the hillcrest. This road continues in a northern and, unlike the main street, in a southern direction. These features make it likely that it is older than the town’s main street. At the other end of the town there is a very irregular street, which limits the borough on its eastern end. It is clear that the irregularity of this street was at least partly caused by the progressively steeper hillside, which falls towards the stream in the east. Parallel to the main east-west street there are three more streets. At the southern end of town lies a road with a rather irregular alignment, which connects the main north-south street (North Street, respectively South Street) with roads that lead in south-east and south-west directions. No house lots face this road, but it is possible that the two large lots at its eastern end were originally divided into burgages that fronted this street. Further north, halfway between the southern road and the main east-west street there is a straight and much narrower street leading eastward from South Street. From the structure of the lot boundaries it is clear that this was not just a back street, but that lots were actually oriented on this street. For reasons of symmetry, it would seem likely that this street was originally also planned to stretch westward from South Street. But there the church was located with the glebe land belonging to it. Further north, on the other side of the main east-west street, at about the same distance from it (c. 88 m.), there is a street that is similarly straight and wide. Both streets are directed at more precise right angles to the main north-south street than the main east-west street. A significant difference between the two streets is that the northern parallel, unlike the southern, does extend westward to the western end of the town. Both streets are fronted by house lots on both sides.

243 In the Tithe Award map of 1849 the large lot to the west of South Street is indicated as ‘glebe land’, which means that this land was of old devoted to the maintenance of the incumbent of the church.

244 According to Lilley, Lloyd & Trick (2005, s.v. Caerwys, Discussion, Design and plan) the two streets may have been Edwardian additions to an original cross-structure which
The gentle curve in the eastern main street is probably caused by the micro relief in this part of the town. In its eastern part it follows a slightly deepened course, which seems to be a feature of the natural landscape, whence probably the name Water Street. South Street also lies somewhat deeper in comparison to the surrounding ground, falling towards the south. The situation is comparable to that of the main streets in, for instance, Conwy and Aberystwyth, and it is not possible to say whether this deepened course was man-made or natural.

The market was probably held in the central square, a more or less rectangular place carved out of the street block to the northeast of the central street crossing, and possibly also in the two main streets. The Maes Mynon demesne map of 1742 (fig.1.36) and the Tithe Award map of 1849 depict freestanding buildings more or less in the middle of the north-south street right next to the market place.245 These may have been permanent market stalls, shops or a small market hall. In the Ordnance Survey plan of 1913, there is a long and narrow building that seems to stand some metres further westward, but which still protrudes from the building line of the north-south street. Unlike the buildings in the earlier plans, this building is not freestanding in a public space any more, as the ground to the west consists of private lots. This seems like a typical example of ‘market colonisation’, by which market stalls were gradually turned into permanent buildings and by which public space was privatised.246

The house lots in the old plans of Caerwys are fairly regular, and for a considerable part they seem to derive from the original burgage plots of which no original standard size is recorded. They vary from 40 to 48 m. in length, and most have a width of somewhere between 10 and 20 m.

1.7.10 Beaumaris (figs.1.38-1.40)

In 1295 work began at the castle and town of Beaumaris on the island of Anglesey. The foundation of the castle must have followed from the military events in the Welsh uprising led by Madog ap Llewelyn in 1294. Probably, it was meant to command the sea arm on the shore of which it was located, the Menai Strait, and another important concern seems to have been to have a bulwark on the island of Anglesey. In contrast to the mountainous mainland of the ever rebellious country of Gwynned, Anglesey consists of lowland: a landscape of gently rolling hills, with a fertile soil highly convenient for the growing of grain. ‘For this island is incomparably more fertile than any other part of Wales (…)’, wrote Geraldus Cambrensis about Anglesey in the late 12th century. So, this island actually was of greater economic value than the mainland of Gwynedd.247

The castle and town not only controlled the sea route, but were also sited on the land route from Chester to Holyhead - and eventually Ireland - which also passed by Flint, Rhuddlan and Conwy. Travelers on this road would be ferried across the Menai Straight at Beaumaris.248

It is quite possible, though, that the plan for Beaumaris originated as early as 1283, together with the schemes for the new castles and towns of Conwy, Caernarfon and Harlech. In August of that year, King Edward spent a week in the nearby Welsh town of Llanfaes, and in the next year it was decided that the new royal dominion in the former Welsh principality of Gwynedd was to be divided into three shires: Caernarfonshire, centred on the homonomic new town; Merionethshire centred on the new town of Harlech; and Anglesey, which was first centred on Llanfaes. In analogy to other shires, it seems only logical that at least a castle would have been planned to use as a safe base for the administrative centre of the shire. So, it appears that the initial plans were put off until later, in order to be able to concentrate capital and workforce on the more pressing building operations on the mainland.249 But after the uprising of the Welsh in 1294, which was especially fierce in Anglesey, with the king’s sheriff being hanged and Llanfaes burnt down, it was apparently decided that it was time to build a fortified base at Anglesey.250

Work started at the site in December 1294. At first the operation concentrated on the accommodation of the army. Next, in March 1295, a temporary pontoon bridge was built over the Menai Straight, for which 2,300 trees were felled, in order to take across the main army of workmen and the king and his wardrobe. After that, work started on the building of a mighty castle, with two concentric rings of defences, and, right
next to it, a dock designed to accommodate a 40-ton vessel. The project was taken up with great effort, and in the building season of 1296 over 2,500 men were set to work. Apparently, the castle had to be finished as quickly as possible, for the danger of new rebellions was far from absent. In February 1296 the master of the works, James of St. George, requested more money to be sent, because work lagged behind and: ‘As to how things are in the land of Wales, we still cannot be any too sure. But, as you well know, Welshmen are Welshmen, and you need to understand them properly; if, which God forbid, there is war with France and Scotland, we shall need to watch them all the more closely.’ Apparently the situation had changed by 1300, because by that time the construction was left unfinished, and the castle even seems hardly to have been manned in the period up to 1306. In that year work was started up again at a much slower pace, until the project was completely abandoned in 1330, leaving the castle still unfinished. Evidently, the plan for this large castle, which was designed according to the latest techniques in fortification building, had been too ambitious.

The new town, however, swiftly prospered: 132 ¼ burgages were counted after ten years and 154 ¼ in 1317, making it the largest of the Edwardian boroughs. The king had ensured Beaumaris’ economic dominance by making it the obligatory port for all ships with merchandise for Anglesey. Until about the 17th century it remained a thriving trade and fishing port, after which decline set in.

The site of the castle and the attached borough was very different from the other Edwardian castle towns. It was a marshy stretch of lowland at the mouth of the Menai Strait, where the land gently slopes down towards the east into the sands of the sea-arm. The name of the new town is telling of the nature of the site: Beaumaris means ‘Beautiful Marsh’. The other (Edwardian) castle boroughs in Wales are nearly all sited on a rock, hill or knoll. The castle at Beaumaris, however, is a real water castle, deriving its protection not from the relief, but from the water in its moat, which was let in from the sea at high tide.

The small settlement of Cerrig-y-gwyddyl, which previously had been located on the site, had to give way for the new town. And, more importantly, the Welsh town of Llanfaes, c. 2 km. to the north, also had to be moved away. This is not so strange, since Llanfaes seems to have been a place with substantial trading activity, for which it was considered detrimental to Beaumaris’ economy, being sited so close to the new...
town. Presently, Llanfaes’ church still stands, but is only surrounded by some cottages. It seems that the old town had already been partly demolished at the end of the 13th century, when houses were moved to Beaumaris, trade and pasture were forbidden for the old inhabitants, and ships were denied access to the harbour.258

The town of Beaumaris was built directly southwest of the castle and received its borough charter in September 1296. Part of its inhabitants came from nearby Llanfaes.259 The land of the new borough and its parish, was cut out of a corner of the old parish of Llanfaes.260 The chapel of Ss. Mary and Nicholas was built in the early 14th century and may have been envisaged right from the outset. Shortly after 1315 the burgesses requested the king to instruct the bishop of Bangor to consecrate the chapel they had built, for they found that the parish church of Llandegfan lay too far removed from the town. The church must have already been quite an elaborate building of considerable size in the 14th century. The town quay must also have been built not long after the foundation of the town.266 A mill was built on the small stream to the west of the town (fig.1.38), and the castle got its own mill in the spur wall flanking the dock, using the tidal flow in and out of the castle moat for power.267

A stone town wall was only built after Owain Glyndŵr had taken the town in 1403, although the burgesses had previously petitioned for the building of a wall in 1315. It is probable that the town did not even have bank and ditch defences in the 14th century; it was only in 1407 that the burgesses were granted 10 marks by the king for the digging of a town ditch. It seems likely, however, that initially the town was already planned to receive defences, but that they were not executed. At the southeast end of the castle there was a projecting stretch of wall, between the dock and the outer castle gate, which seems likely to have been the point where the castle walls were meant to connect to a town wall.265

With the building of the stone wall in 1414, 30 burgages were destroyed or cut through.266 This is one of the reasons why it is hard to get a good picture of the original layout of the town.265 It is highly likely that the two main streets, Castle Street running to the castle gate, and completely surveyable from it, and Church Street perpendicular to it, were newly laid out with the foundation of the borough. These streets are wide and straight, but the building lines of the houses flanking them are not very straight, with house fronts jumping back and forth.266

In John Speed’s plan of 1611 (fig.1.38) the northern stretch of the town wall already appears to have disappeared.267 The circuit of the wall can be largely reconstructed from the combination of the Speed plan and the 1829 estate map. (figs.1.38, 1.39) Not all 154 burgages counted in 1317 lay within the wall circuit of 1414. The lots on the south side of Wexam Street, leading out of the town on the northwest, do in fact look like they are of ancient origin, long and narrow as they are. Further, it seems likely that burgages lay along the southwestward continuation of Castle Street outside the gate, and along Chapel Street and Rosemary Lane, to its west.268 The curved street called Rotten Row (later Rating Row), seems likely to have come into existence only after the town wall was built, for it more or less follows the line of the wall, and turns in towards Church Street before this last street reached the gate at its northwestern end. The curved track of Rotten Row, whose name probably refers to the state of the buildings that once flanked it, probably has to do with the relief here, for its northern part lies deeper than the ground on both sides. It seems that this micro relief is natural. The streets to the northwest and southwest of the churchyard also lie deepened, but here it is

259 Brown, Colvin & Taylor 1963, p.403.
260 Beresford 1967, p.345, fig.58.
263 Taylor 1999, pp.22, 40. According to Lilley, Lloyd & Trick, however, the town may already have been surrounded by a bank and ditch in the 14th century. The main argument for this is the fact that remnants of a shallow ditch were found by archaeological excavation west of the castle just north of the position of the former wall, with ceramics of a possible 14th-century date in its filling. They reconstruct these earlier defences as surrounding a much larger area to the southwest, more or less following the course of New Street. (Lilley, Lloyd & Trick 2005, s.v. Beaumaris, Discussion; Core map 3) This does not seem impossible, but I see no convincing argument why it should be so.
264 Carr 1982, p.244.
265 For this analysis of the town plan I have made use of the plan of 1611 (fig.1.38) and the estate map of 1829 made by Richard Yates (fig.1.39), now in the library of Bangor University, of which a copy was kindly given to me by the Jane Hopkins Estate Agency in Beaumaris. In addition, I used the 1:2500 Ordnance Survey of 1889, Anglesey XV 13 (fig.1.40), in the National Library of Wales.
266 The southeast side of Castle Street bent inward at its southern end. But this was probably only so after the town wall, which was close to the back of the house lots, was built. This is particularly clearly visible in the 1829 estate map. (fig.1.39) Castle street is about 12.5 m. wide.
267 However, at present some fragments of the stone wall probably still remain in a boundary wall just northeast of Chapel Street.
268 It is possible that Chapel Street was connected to Church Lane (later Little Lane) before the building of the town wall, by a street that lay more or less on the site of the present Margaret Street, so that it was parallel to Castle Street and also surveyable from the castle. This would fit fairly well with the original standard burgage length of 80 ft. (24.38 m., see below), since Castle Street and Church Lane (later Little Lane) lie at a distance of about 54 m. from one another, and between Castle Street and Chapel Street the distance is c. 48.5 m.
fig. 1.39: Beaumaris. Estate plan from 1829, drawn by Richard Yates. (From: Bangor University Manuscript Library)

fig. 1.40: Beaumaris. Ordnance Survey plan of 1889. (Anglesey XV 13, 1:2500, modified by the author, not depicted to scale) The two original main streets are indicated in orange, the reconstructed circuit of the town wall of the early 15th century in brown and the presumed extent of the flood plain around that same time in blue.
likely that these hollows are relics of the ditch outside the former town wall. The churchyard itself lies on an elevated platform about a metre high and, since the church is already in the higher part of town, its position marks the high-point within the formerly walled area. In Speed’s plan the churchyard is lined with houses all along Church Street; these can not have been original burgages however, since there was not enough room for them with the church lying so close behind.

The plan of 1611 also depicts a ‘Market House’ northwest of the church. This must mean that the market was held here, probably around this building and possibly along Church Street. This position of the market, eccentrically placed in the town and away from the castle, is a rather uncommon phenomenon among the old towns of Wales.

According to Lewis, the original burgages in Beaumaris measured 40 x 80 ft.269 There are, however, hardly any lots in which these dimensions can still be recognised. Only at the east end of Castle Street are there some lots of approximately this size, but it seems quite likely that many of the lots on the northwest side of Castle Street were about 80 ft. long in the past.

In conclusion, it appears that the original layout of the borough of Beaumaris consisted of at least two straight streets, perpendicular to one another, probably with rectangular lots of 40 x 80 ft. flanking them.270 It seems that later, as the borough grew larger in the early 14th century, less regular parts were added along roads to the northwest and southwest. A town wall seems to have been planned initially, but was actually built only in the early 15th century, by which 30 burgages were cut through and others were left outside the walled town.

1.7.11 Newborough (fig. 1.41)

An indirect consequence of the founding of Beaumaris was the plantation of the new town of Newborough, on the southern end of Anglesey, c. 20 km. southwest of Beaumaris. As mentioned above, the Welsh settlements of Cerrig-y-gwyddyl and Llanfaes, which were respectively at and near the site where Beaumaris was planted, were moved away.271 In 1302, the king ordered the Welsh inhabitants of Llanfaes to move to the new town of Newborough. But they were reluctant: over thirty of them were fined for not obeying the order in time.272 It seems, however, that a number of the old inhabitants of Llanfaes did not move to Newborough, but rather to Beaumaris. Compared to Caernarfon or Conwy, the element of Welsh population was considerable in Beaumaris, both in number as well as in wealth.273

The new borough was laid out at the southernmost end of Anglesey, on a gentle south-eastward slope, just below the summit of a hillcrest on which stood the buildings of a royal court and a church. The court, or llws, dated from the early 13th century and functioned as an administrative centre for the southwestern part of Anglesey for the princes of Gwynedd and subsequently the king. It also was the manor house of the royal domain of Rhosyr.274 The new town was sited about 600 m. northeast of it, and just five km. from Caernarfon, across the Menai Strait. Because Newborough lies at some height, with the church at the highest point of the hillcrest, it is within sighting distance of Caernarfon.

The total burgage rent in the new borough was set at the same level as it had been in Llanfaes, and the area of ground belonging to the borough was also equal to the old situation. The settlers that moved to Newborough found that people had been living there already in the mardref-settlement of Rhosyr. These old inhabitants were also Welsh, but were of lower status, for they were serfs of the domain of Rhosyr. Apparently, the new inhabitants of the new town did not like to be mixed in with these serfs, or to be bound in space by the lands of the demesne, because in 1305 they petitioned for the name of the borough to be changed from Rhosyr to novus burgus (which was anglicised later), for the bondmen to be moved away, and for the purchase of the demesne land. The crown granted all these requests. Half a century later, a total of 58 taxpayers was recorded. The number of house lots, however, was considerably higher, since seven taxpayers held at least six lots each. It seems that these people must have been successful tradesmen.275

No castle or defences were made at Newborough. This is self-evident, since its foundation only came

269 Lewis 1912, p.65.
270 Possibly, there was one more street, parallel to Castle Street. (see n.268)
274 Johnstone 1999.
about as a transplantation of an existing settlement that stood in the way of the new creation of Beaumaris. A windmill and a market cross were built in 1304-05 at the cost of the crown. The church of St. Peter, which originally may have been the chapel of the llys, was to serve the new settlers.

Newborough’s plan clearly has the form of a new town. Two straight streets, crossing at right angles, make up a structure that is evidently planned. The market was held at the crossing of the two main streets, for which the northeastern arm was slightly widened. In later times the town hall stood there, near the crossing in the middle of the street.

The two roads that cross in the heart of the new town continued into the surrounding area. In the Ordnance Survey plans of 1888 (fig. 1.41) and 1899 it can be observed that these roads cut through field-boundaries which must be of earlier origin, to the northeast, northwest and southwest of the town. Hence, these roads were most probably newly laid out with the building of the town, whereas the land around the town was not, or only partly, newly allotted. Another road lies to the northwest, parallel to the main NE-SW street, where it straddles the height of the hill crest. This road, now largely a footpath, led to the pre-existent church and llys, which originally may have been surrounded by the settlement of Rhosyr. Since this road does not cut through extending lines of field boundaries, it is likely that it was older than the foundation of Newborough. Normally, it would seem likely that such an existing road would be taken as the main axis for the new town, but for some reason this was not done here. Possibly, the rights over the ground were problematic, or perhaps it was thought better to put the town in a somewhat more sheltered position.

276 Brown, Colvin & Taylor 1963, p.1028.
278 Ordnance Survey plan 1:2500 of 1888 and Ordnance Survey plan 1:10000 of 1899, both in the National Library of Wales.
279 In the Tithe Award map of 1845 (in the National Library of Wales) it is visible that the fields in the area around the church are generally quite small and irregularly scattered.

In this plan there still are a number of buildings, presumably cottages or farmhouses, depicted in this area, while these are largely gone in the plans from the late 19th century.
The two intersecting central streets do not cross at exact right angles, but at an angle of c. 95°. The street in NE-SW-direction was laid out leading right up to a gate in the wall around the royal llws. There is an evident correspondence here to the castle towns where main streets lead up to the castle, such as Flint, Aberystwyth, Conwy and Beaumaris. The building lines along the streets were very irregular, which is especially well visible in the Tithe Award map of 1845.\textsuperscript{280} The streets were very wide: c. 19-22.5 m. Later, they were narrowed by the incursion of private front gardens to c. 7 m. In 1845 there already were some buildings that extended beyond the old building line, and these were followed later by more new structures, particularly near the central crossing.

The house lots in the town are quite irregular. Almost all are quadrangular and elongated, with the short side fronting the street, but they are very different in size, and in many cases are not at right angles to the street. It appears that this plot layout was partly determined by the pre-existent allotment of the fields. It seems that, with the laying out of the new town, it was not found necessary to establish an allotment with burgages of a standard size.\textsuperscript{281}

1.8 General spatial aspects of the Edwardian towns in Wales

1.8.1 Locations

The boroughs that were founded by King Edward I in Wales were all sited on or near the coast. It is clear that the main reason for this was that eight out of eleven of them were founded next to castles that were intended to control the coastal traffic routes over water and land. An additional advantage was that at those sites the castles could be manned and provisioned by ship in time of war. In the case of Rhuddlan the location of an existing castle and borough, c. 4 km. inland, was re-used, but here the king’s engineers even took the trouble to canalise the river, so that sea-going ships could reach the castle and the town.\textsuperscript{282}

The nine Edwardian towns that were sited next to castles were more or less regularly spaced along the coast. The distance between them was about 15 to 30 km., with the longest distance being that between Aberystwyth and Bere and the shortest that between Harlech and Criccieth.

But economic viability must also have played a significant role in the choice of sites for the towns. Transport routes and fertile hinterland were essential in this respect. Both were only to be found in the lower lying coastal plains and the valleys. Therefore it is no wonder that the two boroughs that had no military functions at all, Caerwys and Newborough, were sited in the same region as the other towns.

Eight out of the eleven new Edwardian towns were laid out on sites where there had been earlier settlements. At Caerwys, Beaumaris and Newborough there had been Welsh villages; at Rhuddlan Saxon and Norman boroughs preceded the Edwardian foundation; Conwy replaced an abbey; at Caernarfon there had been a Norman castle and a Welsh town; and at Criccieth and Bere there already stood Welsh castles. Only at the sites of Flint, Harlech and Aberystwyth there seem not to have been previous settlements.

Most of the towns were sited on strategic locations, largely following the choices for the locations of the castles. This could imply that the terrain was rough, as in Criccieth, Conwy and Harlech. But not necessarily so: Flint, Rhuddlan, Beaumaris and Caernarfon are all built on gently sloping, low-lying terrain. Caernarfon and Aberystwyth were intentionally built on sites that were largely surrounded by streams and swampy terrain in order to use these features of the natural landscape for defence.

\textsuperscript{280} Tithe Award map, parish Newborough, of 1845, 8 chains : 1 inch, in the National Library of Wales.

\textsuperscript{281} The contemporary records concerning Newborough use the term placeae rather than burgages. (Soulsby 1983, p.195) This may have something to do with their unequal size.

\textsuperscript{282} Beresford 1967, p.530.
1.8.2 Urban layout

The Edwardian new towns of northern Wales have very different plan forms. Obviously, a common founder, and possibly to some degree common planners, did not lead to a common type of plan.283

Compared to earlier towns that were created in Wales, the Edwardian boroughs generally have relatively regular plans. By and large, it can be observed that new urban layouts were constructed on increasingly regular plans over the period of the 12th to 14th centuries. As will be discussed in other chapters below, this tendency was not exclusive for Wales, but was also to be found elsewhere in Europe during the same period.284 Flint, Caerwys and Caernarfon have more regular plans than the newly founded towns of the preceding centuries. (figs.1.12, 1.37, 1.25) But this is no rule for all specific cases: Newport (Dyfed), for instance, shows a relatively regular layout for its date (c.1200), whereas Harlech (1283-84) has a quite irregular plan. (figs.1.5, 1.30) In general, though, over time the burgage plots became more equal in form, streets were laid out straighter and their coordination became more orthogonal, and the total layout became more closely connected to the contours of the defences, if present. Of the Edwardian towns, Harlech is the least regular, which is for a large part due to the irregular topography of the site.

As with the earlier towns in Wales, markets were mostly held in the main street. Caernarfon is an exception, in that at least part of the market was held in the old Norman bailey just southeast of the town.285 (later Castle Square, fig.1.25) Flint is another exception, actually having a spacious central market square, much like many newly created towns on the continent. (fig.1.11) Conwy, Caerwys and Aberystwyth also had central market places – in the last two cases very small - but it is unclear whether they were really originally planned in the form known from maps of the last three centuries.286

In Flint, Rhuddlan, Aberystwyth, Conwy, Caernarfon and Beaumaris important streets are laid out leading up to the castle, so that they are surveyable from the castle and the castle is well visible from the town. (see figs.1.11-1.12, 1.15, 1.20, 1.21, 1.25, 1.28, 1.39) This feature can also be found in various older towns in Wales. (see figs.1.5-1.8) At Caernarfon the three principal north-south streets are all directed towards the castle, and can be observed practically completely from it. The transverse street, on the other hand, could be observed from the towers of the town gates at either end of it. (figs.1.24-1.28) In the case of Newborough it is not a castle at which one of the two main streets was directed, but rather the pre-existent court which lay just southwest of the town. (fig.1.41)

1.8.2.1 Outline forms and relief

The outline forms of the Edwardian new towns are also very different. The towns that had no defences show no traces of communal outline boundaries of any other sort, as for instance simple ditches or fences. Caerwys may have been planned to have a more or less rectangular outline, largely bounded by roads, but that is just a hypothesis. Of the boroughs that did have defences, Flint is the only town with a regular outline, in the form of a rectangle. There is a clear relationship in its plan between the outline form and the internal grid structure of streets and plots. At Rhuddlan the outline seems to have been intended as a more or less regular rhomboidal shape, in accordance with the structure of the streets, which meet at oblique angles.

The other towns with defences appear to have been shaped largely by the form of the natural landscape of the site, particularly by the relief and the course of riverbanks and the coastline. At Aberystwyth, Conwy and Caernarfon the natural shape of the site was used to help in the defence by building the walls at least partly along the lines of such natural features. This caused the outlines to be irregular, thereby forcing the internal layout of streets structures and plots into an irregular form, particularly along the fringes. Conwy has an odd layout in which the southwest corner of the wall circuit was purposefully planned at the highest point in the immediate area, so that the town and its surroundings can be surveyed from the corner tower. This demanded that the surface in the western part of town and the southwestern and northwestern stretches of the wall circuit climb rather steeply in order to connect this high point with the low-lying northeastern area.

283 According to Lilley, Lloyd & Trick (2005, s.v. Beaumaris, Discussion, Design and plan; 2007, pp.9-12) the plans of Conwy and Beaumaris are much alike in type and shape, as both have a sort of T-form in the layout of their main streets. They even depict the plan of Beaumaris in mirrored form to make the similarity more apparent (2007, p.10), and they suggest that the corresponding elements make it likely that they had a common designer, probably Master James of St. George (see par.7.4). In my opinion, though, the correspondence is rather limited and not so much the result of a conscious choice for a specific type of plan, but rather the result of adaptation to the existing topographic situation of the site.
284 See par.10.2.2.
285 Soulsby 1983, pp.41-42.
286 See pars.1.7.1, 1.7.4 and 1.7.9.
1.8.2.2 House lots

The house lots were generally called burgages in the incorporated boroughs, and the usual rent for a burgage was one shilling a year.\(^{287}\) As in every other settlement, and the more so in newly planned towns, the house lots were mostly oblong and rectangular, with a short side along the street. The houses stood at the front, and behind it there were yards, gardens, workshops or stables.

According to Lewis, contemporary documents indicate that the official standard size of the burgages was set at 60 x 80 feet in Caernarfon and Criccieth, while in Beaumaris they were to measure 40 x 80 ft.\(^{288}\) In the case of Caernarfon it is not possible to reconstruct an originally uniform plot size from the 19th-century cadastral plan. In 1298 there were 61 burgages mentioned in a rent-roll. This just about fits with the surface of the original standard lots of 60 x 80 ft., though in the northeast and southeast chequers the lots must certainly have been shorter, as can be deduced from the plan.\(^{289}\) (fig.1.25) By 1312, however, the number of occupied burgages had risen to 124, which indicates that many plots had been subdivided by that time.\(^{290}\)

As in Caernarfon, there were many other towns in Wales where the actual plots were not laid out, or occupied, as regular in form as they may have been intended.\(^{291}\) In Beaumaris there may have been lots of the set standard of 40 x 80 ft., but documents clearly indicate that, not long after the town’s foundation, there were also many lots of other dimensions. The same holds true for Conwy: in the rent-roll of 1315, holdings of burgesses are described very accurately, even up to the inch: ‘Henry de Latham holds 1 burgage entire in breadth, but 3 ins. superfluous in length’. The high degree of accuracy of the Conwy rent-roll unfortunately is unusual, however, and, apart from that, the size of the official standard burgage at Conwy is not known. Many holdings deviated much further from the standard burgage: in Beaumaris there was even one wealthy Welsh inhabitant who held burgage ground the size of eleven burgages.\(^{292}\) In Aberystwyth the width of the plots may have been about 40 feet, but the length of the plots was clearly less uniform, extending up to 100 feet. In general, it may be expected that irregularities in the plot layout were caused by features such as the conditions of the terrain, uncleanness of the planned boundaries, unforeseen developments in the occupation by settlers, or simply by negligence.\(^{293}\)

In Newborough the lots were unequal in form from the very beginning. Existing agricultural fields along the two crossing streets were cut up into narrower house lots. The Newborough lots are also special because in the ancient rent-rolls they were not called burgagium (burgages) but placeae (places). The difference may have been that the placea had no standard size and was not necessarily located in the borough itself. The difference is not essential, however, since it seems that the burgesses of Newborough also paid their rent according to the area of their house lots.\(^{294}\)

1.8.2.3 Streets

The streets in the newly founded towns of Wales are often relatively wide. The main streets in Flint, Caerwys and Newborough, for instance, even reached up to about 15 m. or more. (see figs.1.11-1.12, 1.36-1.37, 1.41) A notable exception, however, is Caernarfon. Due to the restricted amount of space within the town walls, the street-width had to be limited to about 7 to 9 m. here. (see fig.1.25)Commonly, the width of the streets is not very constant, because building lines are only rarely really straight.

A remarkable phenomenon in the Welsh towns is that streets often lie somewhat lower than the surrounding ground. They may have been laid out in existing hollows or they may have been artificially dug. Alternatively, the hollows may have been carved out in the course of time, by erosion of the ground surface, caused by traffic and the streaming of surface water - which effect is relatively strong in Wales because of the high amount of rainfall. It is clear, however, that this lower level of the streets facilitates the draining of surface water.\(^{295}\)

\(^{287}\) Soulsby 1983, p.39; Beresford 1967, pp.62, 147, 163; Beresford 1979, p.234. In later centuries, though, the term burgage would lose its legal connotation more and more, and generally came to mean a ‘house lot in a nucleated settlement’.

\(^{288}\) Lewis 1912, p.63. For Caernarfon this size is given in an early document (Public Record Office, S.C.6/170/5); Lewis does not mention where he got these plot-dimensions for the other two towns.


\(^{290}\) Lewis 1912, p.65.


\(^{292}\) Lewis 1912, p.65.

\(^{293}\) For the ‘irregularisation’ of theoretically regular plans and lots, see par.9.6.2.

\(^{294}\) Lewis 1912, pp.65, 68, 69. In Conwy placeae are mentioned outside the town itself. (Soulsby 1983, p.111)

\(^{295}\) See pars.1.7.3, 1.7.4, 1.7.5 and 1.7.9. In general, the feature of the low-lying streets in old towns can be found relatively often in Wales and England, as compared to the
Back streets or alleys opening up to the backside of the house lots seem to have been quite rare. Flint is an exception, with house lots that reached from front to back street.

1.8.3 Architectural elements

1.8.3.1 Town defences

The boroughs that were founded in Wales by King Edward I, as well as by other English or Norman lords, were always vulnerable to attack from Welsh rebels, being centres of relatively great wealth and military power, and as symbols of the conqueror. Most of these towns therefore received defences in the form of earthworks and stone walls surrounding the built-up area. Of the eleven Edwardian boroughs, four or five seem not to have been protected by artificial defences. Caerwys and Newborough, which were both largely settled by Welsh inhabitants, seem to have had no defences at all. This also holds for Criccieth, Harlech and probably Bere, but these small boroughs were settled mainly with English colonists, and had garrisoned castles that watched over them. The other towns were also sited next to castles. Of these, Flint and Rhuddlan were provided with earthen banks with ditches, whereas Aberystwyth, Conway and Caernarfon were surrounded by stone walls and ditches. Beaumaris received a stone wall only in the early 15th century, but it seems quite likely that a stone wall and ditch were already planned at the time of the creation of the town.

Stone walls were considered the best instrument for urban defence. But, up to a certain extent, the desire for stone walls was also driven by considerations of prestige and symbolism. They stood for power, wealth, urban independence and civic pride. Especially when they were provided with of a multitude of towers, they could even serve as a reference to the heavenly Jerusalem. Stone walls were considered the best instrument for urban defence. But, up to a certain extent, the desire for stone walls was also driven by considerations of prestige and symbolism. They stood for power, wealth, urban independence and civic pride. Especially when they were provided with of a multitude of towers, they could even serve as a reference to the heavenly Jerusalem.296 In Caernarfon and Conway large parts of the walls are have survived up to the present time. The stone walls generally had towers at regular intervals of about 70 m., and were around 6 m. high and 1.8 m. thick.297 Building such stone walls was a very costly operation which could not be financed for every town.

Normally, the construction of earthen banks with ditches in front of them was much cheaper and quicker. By the late 13th century, earthen town defences were somewhat old-fashioned and generally considered as less effective than stone walls. They were not completely out of time, though, and it even seems that new types of a larger scale were developed. Flint and Rhuddlan were surrounded with formidable ditches and banks. Rhuddlan even seems to have had a double circuit of them, measuring up to 17 m. in width.298 Commonly, the earth that was dug from the ditches was used to construct the banks, which were commonly topped with wooden palisades.299 In Rhuddlan, parts of the bank and ditch defences are preserved.

1.8.3.2 Castles

The country of Wales is studded with the remnants of castles from the 11th to 14th centuries. Although often ruinous in the present day, many of these castles are impressive monuments. This holds particularly true for the royal castles of Caernarfon, Beaumaris, Conway, Harlech and Rhuddlan, which are still relatively well preserved. The castles of Criccieth, Aberystwyth and Flint are still recognisable as ruins that clearly show that they too were once very impressive buildings. The castle of Bere, however, has left hardly more than foundations. Beaumaris, Rhuddlan, Harlech, Conway and, above all, Caernarfon must have been among the strongest castles in Europe at the time. (figs.1.17, 1.22, 1.24, 1.27, 1.29-1.31, 1.38) They were at least partly planned by experienced military engineers who were recruited from England and the continent.300 The castles have been relatively well-studied and well-described in publications ever since about the 18th century.301 Compared to this, disappointingly little has been written about the subject of the new boroughs that were created next to the castles. At Caernarfon, Criccieth and Bere, existing castles of Norman or Welsh origin were reused as a nucleus. Apparently, these castles were so well-sited in military-tactical sense, that
they were retained and subsequently modified and extended by the king’s workforce. At Rhuddlan the new castle was built just downstream from the old Norman motte, on the bank of the river Clwyd.

Despite the fact that the new castles were built by the same organisation and were at least partly created under the supervision of the same engineers, they are very different in type and form. If there is one typical common characteristic, however, it must be the impressive gate-houses, which have a central porch directly flanked by two projecting towers, round, D-shaped or polygonal in plan.

The castles are commonly sited on rocky outcrops near the water. In Flint, Conwy and Aberystwyth these sites lie lower than a large part of the actual towns. Despite this, the castles must have dominated these towns anyway, as they also did in the other castle towns, because of their sheer scale.

1.8.3.3 Ecclesiastical houses

As with newly founded towns elsewhere in Europe, it was generally the wish of the founder to make a new town into a distinct parish with its own church, so that it would be a real community in a spiritual sense as well. But often it was difficult to create a new distinct parish because the existing ecclesiastical institutions were conservative. Therefore, existing parish churches became the principal town churches. This happened at Caerwys, Newborough and Criccieth, where the existing church was sited in or near to the new town. At Flint, Aberystwyth, Beaumaris, Caernarfon and Harlech the settlers found the distance to the existing parish churches too far, for which they built new chapels to serve the borough populations. At Conwy the church of Aberconwy abbey was turned into a parish church and at Rhuddlan the status of parish church was taken from the old Norman church and bestowed on the new church in the new town.

In other parts of Europe, like southern France, Prussia and Austria, churches were often built into or close to the town defences in order to aid in the latter’s military function. In the Edwardian towns of Wales, as well as in other towns in this country, however, this was a rare phenomenon. Only Caernarfon had a church built against the northwest corner of the town wall. But this was only done in 1307 and was certainly not part of the original scheme. In Beaumaris and Rhuddlan the churches seem to have been planned together with the towns. Here one finds a correspondence in siting, in the sense that the churches are located in the corner of town, just inside the perimeter, more or less at the opposite side of where the castle was built. It is not clear whether this placement followed a specific idea or not. It is obvious, though, that in a marginal corner of the town there would be more space (or cheaper space, as we would express it now) available to house a church with its yard.

While in native Welsh towns churches were often dedicated to Celtic saints, typically Anglo-Norman patronages were chosen for the new chapels or churches in the Edwardian towns. The favourite dedication by far was to St. Mary. From these dedications it may be seen how the English colonised not only the land and the people, but in a certain sense also the spiritual life of the population.

1.8.3.4 Town halls

In the first decades of the existence of the Edwardian new towns in Wales, town halls were rare. Councils with representatives of the inhabitants probably gathered in a private house or in the church or chapel. Caernarfon is the only town of which it is known that a town hall was planned initially. The town charter of 1284 already provided for it. It was built right at the central street crossing, but it is not clear when. Later on, Caernarfon, as caput of the principality of North Wales, even had a whole range of administrative buildings: a Town Hall, Shire Hall, Justice’s House and, accommodated in the East Gate, the Exchequer Office. In the centuries after their foundation, most other Edwardian towns also had specific buildings designated as town halls. Often this function was combined with that of a market hall. The creation of such a
communal edifice was often a matter of prestige and civic pride as much as it was of suitability. As in Caernarfon, these buildings commonly stood in the centre of town, preferably on the market place.\textsuperscript{313} (figs.1.12, 1.19)

1.8.3.5 Houses

Unfortunately, there seems to be no house left in any of the present-day towns that stems from the period of their foundation. However, some houses from about the 15\textsuperscript{th} century have remained, and there are traces of older houses to be found in the soil. The sparse evidence indicates that the houses were rather small: 10 x 3 and 4 x 3 m. for two wooden houses that were excavated in Rhuddlan.\textsuperscript{314} Apparently, the original houses were for the most part very basic single-storey dwellings. It seems that they were mostly built of wood or of a timber frame filled in with wattle and daub - despite the availability of different kinds of stone.\textsuperscript{315} Through the centuries the wooden buildings were gradually replaced by stone structures.\textsuperscript{316}

1.9 End of the high-period of town foundation

In 1301 Edward I granted the complete crown lands in Wales to his eldest son, Edward of Caernarfon (1284-1307, so named after his birthplace, later King Edward II), and conferred the title of Prince of Wales on him. Since then, it has become tradition to assign this title to the oldest son of the reigning monarch.

After Edward I’s reign few more towns were founded. In 1303 the borough of Newcastle Emlyn was founded next to an existing castle, and Bala was founded around 1310 to keep in check the marauding bands that pillaged the highland region of central northern Wales in that time. This was to be the last notable town plantation in Wales before the industrial revolution.\textsuperscript{317}

In the early 14\textsuperscript{th} century, the population of Wales, Welsh and English together, may have been about three times as large as in 1070, when the Normans came.\textsuperscript{110} After the period of growth of population and economy, culminating in the early 14\textsuperscript{th} century, a long period of urban decline followed.\textsuperscript{109} Some towns just lost their prime function, while the castle was abandoned because its strategic purpose was lost (e.g., Bere and Criccieth), or because naval traffic was hampered by changing conditions of the waters (at Harlech for instance). But mostly the reasons for decline were more dramatic: the Black Death in the mid- and late-14\textsuperscript{th} century, and the grand-scale urban devastations of the rebellion under Owain Glyndŵr from 1400 to c. 1410. During this rebellion, as had been the case previously, the Welsh hostilities seem to have been especially concentrated on the towns, since they were regarded as centres of colonial rule. Recovery from these crises was very slow. Sources from the 16\textsuperscript{th} and 17\textsuperscript{th} centuries still attest to the malaise, with plans showing large areas in the towns lying waste (fig.1.11) and descriptions using the adjectives ‘poor’ (Caersws) and ‘clene decayed’ (Criccieth).\textsuperscript{320} Only in the 18\textsuperscript{th} and 19\textsuperscript{th} centuries was there a new stimulus to the Welsh economy, particularly from mining and related industries.\textsuperscript{321}

1.10 Conclusion

There is not much original documentation with regard to the creation or the original form of the newly founded towns in Wales under King Edward I. Also, the towns have suffered a lot of damage through the ages and have been strongly depopulated in most cases, so relatively little is left of the buildings and allotment from the first decades of their existence. Nonetheless, the towns are still there (apart from Bere) and in many of them one can still recognise a great deal of the urban form as it must have been originally. In particular, the street plans appear to have remained pretty much the same. From these forms, as well as from

\textsuperscript{313} This was the case in Flint, Aberystwyth, Beaumaris and Newborough.
\textsuperscript{314} Butler 1985, p.486. For comparison: excavated remains of stone-built houses at Chepstow and Cardiff measured ca. 10 x 4 m., and a three-cell house in Usk, which was at least partly built of stone measured 10.8 x 4.8 m. (Webster 1977, pp.91-93; Manning 1994, p.1)
\textsuperscript{315} Davies 1996, pp.60-62.
\textsuperscript{317} Soulsby 1983, pp.16, 74, 196-197; Carter 1990, p.189.
\textsuperscript{318} Davies 1996, p.41.
\textsuperscript{319} Davies 1996, pp.55-57.
\textsuperscript{320} Soulsby 1983, pp.25-28,93, 118.
\textsuperscript{321} Soulsby 1983, pp.27-28.
archaeological excavations and written and graphic documents, much has become clear about the foundation and formation of the Edwardian new towns.

In general it may be concluded that the forms of the towns, even when they were founded in the same period and by the same founder, are very different from one another. The towns were also founded with different motives. Most foundations were motivated by a combination of military and economic aims, while Caerwys and Newborough were created solely with economic motives. This was directly related to the choice of location: whether the towns were sited next to a castle, at a strategic military location, or in open country, surrounded by fields. The shape of the landscape at the sites of the new foundations appears to have had much influence on the forms of the town plans. Therefore, no two plans are much alike.

Many of the towns in Wales were very small. Harlech for instance, counted only 12 taxpayers in 1292-93, eight years after it was founded. This town became larger, although it suffered severe crises along the way, but at present it is still only a small town with a population of about 1,250 souls.322 The new town of Bere was even completely abandoned at the end of the 13th century, never to revive again. These settlements may have been small or they may have shrunk to nothingness, but originally they were intended to take on urban functions and to serve as real centres of significant importance relative to their surroundings, in both an economic as well as an administrative sense. Over the centuries it has mainly been the development of the economic network that has caused towns to grow, shrink or shift location. At present, some towns in Wales are bigger and more important than any founder may have ever imagined (foremost the Norman plantation of Cardiff), while others serve as local urban centres more or less as they seem to have been planned, although their military function has been completely lost (like Flint, Conwy, Caernarfon and Aberystwyth); and still others (the other Edwardian new towns) hardly deserve to be called ‘urban’ nowadays, given their limited size and economy and their humble appearance. Finally, there’s also the category of towns that have ceased to exist at all, like Bere.

The towns of Wales, to a large extent, came into existence by deliberate planning in the process of colonisation by the Anglo-Normans, between the late 11th and the early 14th century.323 This colonisation has proven successful, as Wales is still a principality within the United Kingdom and, more importantly, it has become an integral part of European or Western culture (the ‘modern world’), in which urban life is the constituent factor. By 1300, Wales was almost as urbanised a country as England. Probably about 15% of the population of about 300,000 souls lived in towns, though less than one-fifth of this part was autochthonous Welsh.324 In the centuries that followed, however, the relative number of Welshmen in the towns was to grow considerably, and at present even descendants of Anglo-Norman immigrants in the towns of Wales consider themselves more Welsh than English.

322 See par.1.7.6.
323 Of the 32 towns in Wales in 1967, 26 were newly created in the 11th to 14th centuries. (Beresford 1967, p.251) Davies defines urban status according to different parameters, including towns of less political importance: out of 109 settlements with urban status in 1971, 48 were founded in the 11th to 14th centuries. (Davies 1977, p.191)
324 Griffiths 2000, p.681.