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A silent witness? Medieval urban landscapes and unfolding their mapping histories

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This paper offers a critical reflection on the place of maps in writing medieval urban histories. Using findings from recent research on medieval Swansea, the case is made that mapping provides an interpretative space for exploring alternative narratives about past places. To do so the paper draws upon current critical debates on cartography, particularly the idea that mapping is fluid and iterative, to suggest that Swansea's medieval urban origins are open to a range of alternative interpretations. This approach to mapping differs from that often used by historians to map medieval urban landscapes, where historic maps are simply used as 'sources', and the landscapes they represent used as 'witnesses' to past events, for creating maps, both through digital and analogue media, instead opens up – or unfolds – a landscape's past. The paper uses past attempts to map medieval Swansea to highlight difficulties in interpreting its urban landscape features, and uses multiple mappings of the medieval townscape, resulting from recent research, to question how far any sources about the past really provide a coherent narrative. Instead, multiple mappings of the medieval urban landscape – reflecting different and competing perspectives – are more attuned with how places were perceived and understood during the Middle Ages.

Keywords: medieval landscapes; historic maps; urban archaeology; Geographical Information Systems (GIS); urban morphology

Documentary references to the actual operation of laying out and assigning building plots of a new town are few, but in compensation there is the dumb witness of the sites ...¹

The idea that landscapes were 'witnesses' or testimonies to their pasts was relatively new at the time Maurice Beresford was working on *New Towns of the Middle Ages*. Some 50 years ago, he was adopting an approach that would become a vibrant sub-discipline of history in its own right: 'landscape history', developed and inspired largely, in Britain at least, through the work of W. G. Hoskins.² While largely concerned then with rural landscapes, Hoskins' approach to viewing landscapes as witnesses to history was translated by Beresford to look at urban landscapes, especially the medieval urban landscape. Hoskins' *The Making of the English*

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¹Maurice Beresford, *New Towns of the Middle Ages* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1967), 145–7.

²W.G. Hoskins, *The Making of the English Landscape* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1955); Della Hooke, ed., 'Landscape, the Richest Historical Record', Special Issue, *Landscape History, Supplementary Series* 1 (2001).

Landscape devoted relatively little space to urban landscapes, but Beresford, in his *New Towns of the Middle Ages*, made much use of the principle that an urban landscape had a story – or stories – to tell about its origins and development.³ The urban landscape, in Beresford's words, is a 'dumb witness', a turn of phrase that now seems dated but by which he meant that landscapes are *silent witnesses* imprinted upon by past local events. This paper explores this idea further. It does so by focusing on the role played by mapping, for so often maps are used by historians as the mediators of a landscape's testimony, the means of giving landscapes a voice and mapping out their histories.

Focusing on new towns, Beresford was confronted with a difficulty in trying to identify those who were shaping urban landscapes on the ground. As an economic historian, the paucity of written sources on this must have frustrated Beresford, for while he could devote large parts of *New Towns of the Middle Ages* to the rise and fall in the economic fortunes of new towns through sources such as taxation records, the documentary material was largely silent on the individuals and groups who had created the towns in the first place, hence his recourse to the sites of the towns themselves referred to in the opening quotation. Even so, it is not simply the sites of towns that reveal their histories, but rather their layouts, their forms and shapes, which for new towns, as far as Beresford believed, meant identifying particular patterns on the ground, particularly those 'that have the simple rectilinear grid of streets'. To illustrate this, Beresford chose to use aerial views of particular towns, namely two bastides in south-west France.⁴ His choice of an aerial view is important, for it was the means by which a town's plan could be most readily seen and comprehended, its 'grid plan' captured and revealed: a type of plan which for Beresford equated with 'town-planning'.⁵ Spotting grid-plans and using them as signs of planning is a recurring motif in *New Towns of the Middle Ages*, with pages of not just aerial images but also topographic plans and maps of towns, used to convince the reader that even if the documentary sources were silent about a town's origins, at least their landscapes revealed, or rather witnessed, what had happened.

In the late 1960s, when Beresford was writing, a geographer, rather than a historian, was proposing a more critical and analytical use of maps in writing medieval urban histories. This was M. R. G. Conzen, whose essay on the use of town plans in the study of urban history appeared a year after the publication of Beresford's *New Towns of the Middle Ages*.⁶ Addressing a conference of urban historians, Conzen argued that mapping had a role to play in revealing how urban landscapes were shaped in the Middle Ages. Unlike Beresford, however, Conzen did not agree with the artificial distinction between 'planned' and 'organic' growth

³ See Christopher C. Taylor, introduction to *The Making of the English Landscape*, by W.G. Hoskins (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1988), 7–9; Keith D. Lilley, Chris Lloyd and Steve Trick, 'Mapping Medieval Townscapes: GIS Applications in Landscape History and Settlement Study', in *Medieval Landscapes: Landscape History After Hoskins*, vol. 2, eds. Mark Gardiner and Stephen Rippon (Oxford: Windgather Press, 2007), 27–42.

⁴ Beresford, *New Towns of the Middle Ages*, 14.

⁵ A practice influenced by Classical European archaeologists working on Roman and Greek urban planning during the mid-twentieth century: see John B. Ward-Perkins, *Cities of Ancient Greece and Italy: Planning in Classical Antiquity* (New York: G. Braziller, 1974). Beresford's familiarity with aerial archaeology is demonstrated in Maurice Beresford and J.K. St Joseph, *Medieval England: an Aerial Survey* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958).

⁶ M.R.G. Conzen, 'The Use of Town Plans in the Study of Urban History', in *The Study of Urban History*, ed. H.J. Dyos (London: Edward Arnold, 1968), 113–30. See also 146–53 for a note on the discussion arising from Conzen's (and others' contributions) on maps and urban history. The conference was held in September 1966.

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towns, and the belief that any town with an irregular layout was automatically considered to be 'unplanned'.⁷ Instead Conzen advocated a new approach which he called 'town-plan analysis' in which an urban landscape was interpreted through detailed study of large-scale maps and plans that showed not just street patterns but patterns of urban plots too.⁸ Plot patterns, Conzen argued, were critical in using a town's plan to unravel its past evolution, for their variations in form, evident only by mapping them, were the clues that could allow urban landscapes to be used as proxies to fill the gap left by otherwise rather silent written sources on matters of medieval urban growth.

It is this morphological approach to mapping medieval urban landscapes that formed the basis of the research conducted as part of the 'City Witness: Place and Perspective in Medieval Swansea' project. This aimed to create detailed maps of Swansea, as well as providing a means of exploring the town's origins and development through geospatial technologies, in particular by using a Geographical Information System (GIS).⁹ Taking inspiration from a series of witness statements of the fourteenth century, describing the hanging of William Cragh in Swansea, the project sought to reflect further on 'witnessing' as a means to provide critical insights into how urban landscapes, both in the Middle Ages as well as now, are always experienced and engaged with through personal perspectives, dependent upon a viewer's subjective place(s) in their world(s).¹⁰ Maps and mapping were fundamental to the project for two reasons: to help place those who witnessed Cragh's journeys through Swansea and around the town, and to understand the phases and processes that shaped medieval Swansea on the ground, mapping out places Cragh knew. To this end a new map was created, showing Swansea as it was in c.1300.¹¹ How Swansea was physically formed was not recorded by its contemporaries.¹² Instead the urban landscape is, as Beresford says, the silent witness to those past unrecorded events, albeit a landscape made palpable to us through mapping it. Such mapping, however, raises critical questions too, over how the maps that we use and create are always mediators of landscapes, in effect acting as their witness statements. This paper uses the idea of 'witnessing' to reflect broadly on mapping in constructing histories of medieval urban landscapes, and through using the project's experiences of digital approaches in creating new maps of medieval Swansea it argues that recent critical thinking on the multiplicity of mapping is helpful in further exploring how landscapes function as 'witnesses', or testimonies, to their past.

⁷ Conzen noted, 'careful study of individual cases and of groups of medieval towns in various parts of Europe has rather discredited the opposition of "irregular" versus "regular" plans and the unhistorical equation of these with spontaneously-grown [ie. "organic"] and "planned" towns.' 'Use of Town Plans', 119.

⁸ M.R.G. Conzen, *Alnwick, Northumberland: a Study in Town-Plan Analysis*. Institute of British Geographers Publication 27 (London: George Philip and Son, 1960); M.R.G. Conzen, 'The Plan Analysis of an English City Centre', in *The Urban Landscape: Historical Development and Management, Papers by M.R.G. Conzen*, ed. J.W.R. Whitehand (London: Academic Press, 1981), 25–53; K.D. Lilley, 'Mapping the Medieval City: Plan Analysis and Urban History', *Urban History* 27 (2000): 5–30.

⁹ The project was funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) between 2013 and 2014, directed by Professor Catherine Clarke (University of Southampton). The GIS and digital mapping of medieval Swansea was directed by Dr Keith Lilley at Queen's University Belfast, with technical support provided by Dr Gareth Dean. Details at <http://www.medievalswansea.ac.uk>

¹⁰ See the Introduction to this special issue by Catherine A.M. Clarke, 'Witnessing History: Perspectives on Medieval Swansea and Its Cultural Contexts'.

¹¹ See the map of Swansea c.1300, Figure 1, in the Introduction to this special issue.

¹² For an account of Swansea's medieval development, see W.R.B. Robinson, 'Mediaeval Swansea', in *Glamorgan County History*, vol. 3, *The Middle Ages*, ed. T.B. Pugh (Cardiff: Glamorgan County History Society, 1971), 361–77.

Maps and histories

Conzen and Beresford exchanged correspondence in the late 1960s on the use of town plans in urban history.¹³ While they shared a common interest in the planning and development of urban landscapes during the Middle Ages, their approach to the use of maps diverged. For Beresford, in *New Towns of the Middle Ages*, his selection of town plans ranges widely from small-scale schematic maps of bastide towns in France, such as Monségur and Foy La Grande, through to larger-scale topographic plans for some of his examples of English 'new towns', as with Olney and Newton Poppleford.¹⁴ Conzen, on the other hand, with his geographical and cartographic training adopted a more systematic approach to using maps to reveal medieval landscape histories, advocating the use of large-scale plans of 1:500 and 1:2500 as a basis for exploring past changes in urban form.¹⁵ For Conzen, too, the patterns and forms made visible on these plans were crucial evidence in unlocking the landscapes' silences, in using landscape as a witness to past historical events.

Conzen had spent much of his 40-year academic career as a geographer (and town planner), working in both the United Kingdom and Germany, and advocating a more analytical use of maps in urban history compared to the more descriptive approaches he saw historians using.¹⁶ He voiced this view at the Leicester conference in 1966 chaired by H. J. Dyos, who at that time was one of England's most eminent urban historians. Conzen argued that too often works on urban history used maps simply as decorative illustrations, rather than as analytical tools with the potential to open up landscape histories.¹⁷ His criticism here was levelled at those historians who saw a map of a town or a city as little more than a guide to where things were, analogous to a map in a guide book providing visitors with a means of orientating themselves to places described in the accompanying text.¹⁸ In this sense the maps often included in medieval urban histories were illustrative and passive, showing locations of churches, castles, town walls and gates, often with large 'blank' areas present between streets. These areas would have been occupied by houses and gardens in the Middle Ages, but were instead shown on the map as if voids on the ground, thus presenting a rather empty-looking landscape. However, this genre of placing maps, or geographical descriptions, as part of an historical account of a land, city or a country has a long history in itself. It is an enduring historiographical trait, evident in classical and medieval histories, from Orosius, to Bede, to Higden.¹⁹ The prefatory maps often found in modern urban histories continue in that medieval tradition, as is evident in the recent historical accounts that have appeared on individual English medieval towns and cities, such as Laughton's study of Chester and Rigby's of medieval Grimsby.²⁰ Similarly, in studies of

¹³ Beresford, *New Towns of the Middle Ages*, 470.

¹⁴ Beresford, *New Towns of the Middle Ages*, 107, 114, 144, 146.

¹⁵ Conzen, 'Use of Town Plans', 115.

¹⁶ M.R.G. Conzen, *Thinking about Urban Form: Papers on Urban Morphology, 1932–1998*, ed. Michael P. Conzen (Bern: Verlag Peter Lang, 2004), 284–92; Terry R. Slater, 'Starting Again: Recollections of an Urban Morphologist', in *The Built Form of Western Cities*, ed. T.R. Slater (Leicester: Continuum International, 1990), 23–37.

¹⁷ Conzen, 'Use of Town Plans', 113–15.

¹⁸ In response to Conzen's paper, Hoskins asserted 'to publish a town history without maps is like publishing a book without an index'. Quoted in Dyos, ed., *Study of Urban History*, 150.

¹⁹ Andrew H. Merrills, *History and Geography in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Evelyn Edson, *Mapping Time and Space: How Medieval Mapmakers Viewed Their World* (London: British Library, 1999); Kathy Lavezzo, *Angels on the Edge of the World: Geography, Literature, and English Community, 1000–1534* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2006).

²⁰ Jane Laughton, *Life in a Late Medieval City: Chester 1275–1520* (Oxford: Windgather Press, 2008); Stephen H. Rigby, *Medieval Grimsby: Growth and Decline* (Hull: University of Hull Press, 1993).

medieval towns in Wales, such as those collated in Griffiths' *Boroughs of Mediaeval Wales*, the contributors each prefaced their essays on individual Welsh towns with a map, either a facsimile of an historic map, such as one of Speed's plans of 1610, or else a small-scale modern street-map, such as 'The site of mediaeval Swansea' (preceding Robinson's contribution on mediaeval Swansea) – a reduced version of the city's Boundary Reports Plan of 1832, and just the kind of map over which Conzen had taken issue with urban historians in his paper in 1966.²¹ These examples typify the problems Conzen identified, in using maps – that clearly post-date the Middle Ages – as illustrations in urban histories, but also in using maps that show only street patterns and which over-simplify and hollow out a town's medieval plan.

The morphological and topographical details that Conzen – and others like him – see as potentially helpful in reading a landscape as evidence for its own historical evolution require larger-scale mapping that shows not just streets but patterns of plots as well. Plots – or 'lots' in American English – are the physical outlines of small units of land tenure usually marked by a cartographer as a thin black line on larger-scale plans (>1:5000), and often only made clear when mapped. Without having plots shown on a plan, an urban landscape is made more incomprehensible as testimony to its past. For not only do the plot patterns fill out the otherwise blank areas between streets, so giving a sense of the built-up area of a medieval town, but they also offer indications of how an urban landscape changed shape over time, so lifting a landscape's silence.

When Beresford studied towns for signs of regularity in form to distinguish them, in his view, as 'planned', he focused principally on the pattern of a town's streets, not their plots. Many others have done likewise and continue to do so, especially in more general works on medieval urban history and urban planning.²² Yet the larger the scale of a map, the more information on plots as well as streets is revealed, showing the greater morphological complexity of the urban landscape, including the more subtle differences in internal structure and layout of medieval towns. All of this makes maps and plans invaluable as a record of the landscape as a witness of past events. In fact, urban excavations of particular areas of English medieval towns and cities repeatedly demonstrate longevity not only for many street patterns but also for plot-patterns.²³ Since Conzen first advocated his plan-analysis approach in the 1960s, evidence has mounted to confirm his proposition that the plots and streets, shown by large-scale (1:500 and 1:2500) Victorian Ordnance Survey (OS) plans, were often inherited from the time when they were first laid out, which for many towns and cities across Britain meant during the eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth centuries.²⁴ On this basis, there is much to be gained, especially in the absence of other evidence, whether documentary or archaeological, from the interpretation of large-scale topographic plans as a proxy record for charting the origins and development of medieval urban landscapes, as Beresford had recognised. If taken together and mapped in

²¹ For example, K. Williams-Jones, 'Caernarvon', in *Boroughs of Mediaeval Wales*, ed. Ralph A. Griffiths (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1978), 72–101; W.R.B. Robinson, 'Swansea', in *Boroughs of Mediaeval Wales*, ed. Griffiths, 262–86.

²² D. Nicholas, *Urban Europe 1100–1700* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 62, 65. See also A.E.J. Morris, *A History of Urban Form Before the Industrial Revolutions* (London: George Godwin Ltd., 1994); P.M. Hohenberg and L. Hollen Lee, *The Making of Urban Europe, 1000–1950* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1985); J. Schofield and A. Vince, *Medieval Towns* (London: Leicester University Press, 2003).

²³ Patrick Ottaway, *Archaeology in British Towns: From the Emperor Claudius to the Black Death* (London: Routledge, 1992), 171–80.

²⁴ See Nigel Baker and Richard Holt, *Urban Growth and the Medieval Church: Gloucester and Worcester* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 12, 154–95, but see also Gareth Dean, 'GIS, Archaeology and Neighbourhood Assemblages in Medieval York', *Postclassical Archaeologies* 2 (2012): 7–30.

detail, the patterns of streets and plots indicate how one area of a town differed in its form from another, and these morphological variations in the layout of a town can provide an otherwise unrecorded history of urban evolution, charting phases of expansion as towns grew, as well as contraction as fortunes waned.²⁵ Maps, then, have more to offer histories if they are used analytically, not just as illustrations or locational guides. In the period since Conzen's intervention in 1968, medieval historians and archaeologists, as well as geographers, have indeed in many cases adopted his approach to using detailed town-plans as a basis for analysis and for mapping out medieval urban landscapes. It is an approach that has over the years gained in credibility as a technique among medievalists writing on medieval towns and cities in Britain and Ireland.²⁶

Yet while those interested in using maps to write urban histories were adopting more analytical approaches during the last few decades, trusting in the idea that historic large-scale plans can be used to create truthful and reliable accounts of otherwise hidden urban histories, those historians and geographers working on the histories of maps and map-making began to undermine the truthfulness and reliability of 'the map' – as the very source Conzen and Beresford had themselves trusted.²⁷ Largely inspired by the work of J. B. Harley on 'deconstructing the map', a more critical historical approach to cartography sought to examine the subjectivities and cultural values embedded in maps and the cartographic practices that created maps.²⁸ Of course, human geographers have long argued that map-making was as much an artistic as scientific enterprise, but through the 1980s and 1990s, just as Conzen's approaches were becoming more established in history, archaeology and geography, Harley's 'critical cartography', steeped in post-colonial and post-structuralist thinking, developed alongside the linguistic and theoretical 'turns' that were then shaping humanities disciplines, including cultural geography and medieval history.²⁹ It might be thought that Harley's ideas would soon have undermined the orthodox map-based work of Conzen and his followers, for if all maps are simply social and cultural constructs then what historical validity can they really hold as testimonies to past events? Yet rather than presenting a challenge and a conundrum to advocates of those seeking to use maps to map medieval urban landscapes, thinking critically about maps and map-making actually helps to sharpen our interpretation of these sources. With this strong conceptual basis, plan-analysis techniques can acknowledge that there is not just one way of mapping a medieval urban landscape, and not just one way of reading a map of an urban landscape; there are many. To explore this proposition further, this

²⁵ Keith D. Lilley, 'Urban Planning after the Black Death: Townscape Transformation in Later Medieval England (1350–1530)', *Urban History* 41 (2014): 1–21.

²⁶ For example, see essays in David M. Palliser, ed., *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, Volume 1, 600–1540 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) and Howard B. Clarke and Sarah Gearty, eds., *Maps and Texts: Exploring the Irish Historic Towns Atlas* (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 2013).

²⁷ J. Brian Harley, 'Maps, Knowledge and Power', in *The Iconography of Landscape: Essays on the Symbolic Representation, Design and Use of Past Environments*, eds. Denis Cosgrove and Stephen Daniels (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 177–211.

²⁸ J. Brian Harley, 'Deconstructing the Map', *Cartographica* 26 (1989): 1–20. See also idem, *The New Nature of Maps: Essays in the History of Cartography*, ed. Paul Laxton (Chicago: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), and Matthew Edney, *The Origins and Development of J.B. Harley's Cartographic Theories* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005).

²⁹ On geographers' cultural turns, see Ian Cook and others, eds., *Cultural Turns/Geographical Turns: Perspectives on Cultural Geography* (London: Routledge, 2000). For medievalists' engagements, see for example, Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, *The Postcolonial Middle Ages* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001); Gabrielle M. Spiegel, *The Past as Text: the Theory and Practice of Medieval Historiography* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997).

paper focuses on medieval Swansea to reflect on how mapping its landscapes through time exposes uncertainties about the town's origins, conjuring competing and sometimes conflicting and contradictory perspectives on place, depending on how the landscape's testimony is used.

Mapping uncertainty

One of the principal historical accounts of medieval Swansea is found in the canonisation proceedings for St Thomas Cantilupe, which bring together the depositions of nine witnesses attesting the hanging of William Cragh in Swansea in 1290.³⁰ The statements are, as Clarke observes, seemingly conflicting and contradictory in their description of the hanging and subsequent miraculous return to life of Cragh that some witnessed in the town at the time.³¹ Yet this multiplicity of views should not surprise or even worry us, as there are always different perspectives of places and events dependent upon the positions of the viewer(s). So it is with mapping a medieval urban landscape, through which multiple perspectives and views, some contemporary with events, some not, combine to produce an account of the past that does not always tie up neatly or reveal a single narrative. There are gaps and uncertainties, which might seem unsettling and cause for concern, and yet which make up the matrix of everyday life and urban realities and materialities. This is as true now as it was in the Middle Ages, for those inhabiting medieval Swansea and sharing William Cragh's world.

As with the Cragh story, the story of medieval Swansea is full of uncertainties and gaps. There are accepted, conventional accounts of the origins and development of the medieval town, the majority of which place particular emphasis on the arrival of the Norman lords in south Wales during the 1080s, and especially the granting of the lordship of Gower c.1110 to Henry de Beaumont, earl of Warwick.³² This is the view advanced, for example, in Robinson's essay on medieval Swansea in Griffiths' *Boroughs of Mediaeval Wales*, which depicts 'a garrison town in a frontier region' – a view repeated since then in other historical accounts such as Ian Soulsby's *Towns of Medieval Wales*.³³ The emphasis on the role of the Norman lords in Swansea's early development is not surprising, since south Wales was certainly a region that saw numerous urban foundations under Norman lordship in the late eleventh and twelfth centuries, at places such as Pembroke, Haverfordwest and Kidwelly, to the west of Swansea.³⁴ This phase of urbanisation, as a part of a broader pattern of colonisation of the new Norman March of Wales, is well attested.³⁵ The predominant scholarly view is that Swansea, with its new castle first documented in 1116, fits this same Marcher model of a Norman lord establishing a castle, and an accompanying new town, as a sign of his authority within a wider landscape of new Norman occupation in Wales. This model of Norman Swansea became further cemented through local archaeological study in the town during the 1970s and 1980s, and the gradual mapping out of its medieval urban features undertaken by local historians and

³⁰ See the article by Harriett Webster in this special issue.

³¹ See the article by Catherine A.M. Clarke, 'Place, Identity and Performance: Spatial Practices and Social Proxies in Medieval Swansea', in this special issue.

³² Robinson, 'Mediaeval Swansea'.

³³ Robinson, 'Swansea', 264; Ian Soulsby, *Towns of Medieval Wales* (Chichester: Phillimore and Co., 1983), 242–7.

³⁴ Keith D. Lilley, *The Norman Town in Dyfed: a Preliminary Study of Urban Form* (Birmingham: University of Birmingham, 1996), 23–48, 61–71.

³⁵ See Ian W. Rowlands, 'The Making of the March: Aspects of the Norman Settlement of Dyfed', *Proceedings of the Battle Conference* 3 (1980): 142–57; Rees R. Davies, *Domination and Conquest: the Experience of Ireland, Scotland and Wales, 1100–1300* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 70–95.

the city's archaeologists. One of the most detailed examples of this mapping work accompanied Edith Evans' study of Swansea Castle, in which she provided 'a conjectural plan of Swansea about 1400', complete with plot patterns and showing key medieval buildings and lines of defences.³⁶

Adopting the same principles as those proposed by urban morphologists such as Conzen, Evans' plan of medieval Swansea was based in large part on archaeological excavations carried out in the city during the 1970s and 1980s, which were beginning to reveal details of its lost medieval defences as well as urban occupation sites dating from the twelfth century.³⁷ While Evans says little about the map included in her study – about its sources and how it was made – the street and plot patterns she shows appear to derive from large-scale OS plans of Swansea which date from the 1870s. These OS plans were successively revised during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as Swansea rapidly grew and industrialised – a period during which the medieval landscape features so long visible in the townscape gradually disappeared from the surveyors' view.³⁸ Although the layouts of urban plots are not shown for the whole of the medieval town on Evans' map, she nevertheless reveals a landscape with differing patterns and forms. The historical significance of these urban forms is open to debate, of course, and indeed competing perspectives have since emerged. In her plan, Evans shows the town's castle and neighbouring streets encompassed by a circuit of defences somewhat in the shape of an elongated oval. By the time Evans was working (in 1983), large sections of the former defences of Swansea had been located archaeologically, for example along the western perimeter at Whitewalls, as well as parts of the castle defences around Goat Street.³⁹ Less than two decades later, with further excavation work in the city, a new assessment was offered by local archaeologists, which differed from Evans' interpretation.⁴⁰ This new view was based especially on excavations west of Wind Street, which had revealed a defensive ditch running close to Fisher Street at the southern end of the

³⁶ Edith Evans, *Swansea Castle and the Medieval Town* (Swansea: Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust Ltd., 1983), 23.

³⁷ For example, see B. Morris, '27–29 High Street', *Archaeology in Wales* 15 (1975): 60–1; B. Morris, 'Swansea's Medieval Defences – Some Recent Discoveries', *Gower* 26 (1975): 11–15; B. Morris, 'Swansea Castle Defences – the Western Ditch', *Gower* 27 (1976): 1–14; K. Lightfoot, 'The Medieval Town Defences of Swansea: the Whitewalls Excavation, 1978–79', *Gower* 30 (1979): 76–9; S. Sell and J. Parkhouse, 'Rutland Street, Swansea', *Archaeology in Wales* 20 (1980): 1–64; S. Sell, 'Excavations at Little Wind Street, Swansea', *Gower* 32 (1981): 71–83.

³⁸ On the industrialisation of Swansea, see Stephen Hughes, *Copperopolis: Landscapes of the Early Industrial Period in Swansea* (Aberystwyth: Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales, 2000).

³⁹ The principal observations of the town defences have been recorded near St Mary's Church and Whitewalls on the western side, and at King's Lane on the northern side of the town. In 1972–4 observations were made during development work to the west of St Mary's Church (Morris, 'Swansea's Medieval Defences'). A later more detailed examination of the western defences was made at Whitewalls: observations included a section of the town wall constructed of local sandstone bonded with clay. The surviving section of the wall stood 1 m high and was c.1.9 m in width (Lightfoot, 'Medieval Town Defences of Swansea'). For Goat Street, see Morris, 'Swansea Castle Defences'.

⁴⁰ Andrew Sherman, 'Recent Discoveries in Medieval Swansea', in *Discovery and Learning 2010*, ed. Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust (Swansea: Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust Ltd., 2010), 9–12; S. Sell and A. Sherman, 'Excavations on Land between York Street and Wind Street' (Swansea: Glamorgan and Gwent Archaeological Trust: Unpublished Report, 2006/036); A. Sherman and J. Higgins, 'Excavation at the Former David Evans Store, Princess Way, Swansea' (Gwent and Glamorgan Archaeological Trust: Unpublished Report 2009/078); R. Bowden, 'Castle Square, Swansea: Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment' (Gwent and Glamorgan Archaeological Trust: Unpublished Report 2009/051).

vn.⁴¹ The map of medieval Swansea was altered to reflect this, and instead of one single outer circuit of town defences two were now identified, one surrounding the town but on a much tighter circumference than that shown by Evans, cutting through Wind Street, and a second positioned to the south of this that seemed to protect a suburb.⁴²

It might be supposed that these successive re-mappings of medieval Swansea are only to be expected, as further archaeological evidence from new excavations is used to fill in some of the gaps evident in previous knowledge. Such successive maps are each in themselves claims to truth: a desire to present ever more accurate and attested views of the medieval town. Yet of course maps are always partial and incomplete, and to assume that one day we will ever get to a complete and truthful map of medieval Swansea, or indeed of any place, is a fallacy. Mapping is not the end point of a process but rather a means of exploring and interpreting past events, urban histories included. Mapping medieval Swansea is a case in point, this being a town with uncertain origins and with a hidden spatial history, only glimpsed through the modern maps made to represent it. This idea, of the multiplicity of maps of urban spaces, is captured by Henri Lefebvre in *The Production of Space*, when he asks: 'How many maps, in the descriptive or geographical sense, might be needed to deal exhaustively with a given space [or spaces], to encode and decode all its meanings and contents?' He continues:

It is doubtful whether a finite number can ever be given in answer to this sort of question. What we are most likely confronted with here is a sort of instant infinity, a situation reminiscent of a Mondrian painting. It is not only the codes – the map's legend, the conventional signs of map-making and map-reading – that are liable to change, but also the objects represented, the lens through which they are viewed, and the scale used.⁴³

In Lefebvre's view, then, there is no end to maps or mapping: there will not be, or indeed should not be, a final map, for no map can ever be final.

Thinking this through in relation to mapping medieval Swansea helps to reflect on the purposes of mapping medieval urban landscapes and dealing with uncertainties. The maps we make of medieval towns and cities are in a perpetual state of flux. Yet, rather than seeing this as an epistemological problem, and perhaps rejecting maps and analysis of maps as historical techniques, it is more productive to embrace the potential that mapping has for opening up landscape histories, of lifting their silences. This was the approach adopted by City Witness, of using maps and map-making as an iterative process of finding out about the town's origins and development, rather than believing that there could be at the end of the project a final, finished and complete map of Swansea's medieval urban landscape. With this approach to 'multiple mapping' in mind, one particular long-standing question relating to Swansea's early-medieval history was explored: did Swansea have Viking origins as a town, or was it simply a Norman creation?

Multiple mappings

The evidence for Swansea's Viking origins, from both archaeological and historical sources, is slight. Traditionally the case for the town's Viking heritage rested principally on toponymic

⁴¹ Sell and Sherman, 'Excavations on Land', 45–6. See also D.J. Maynard, 'Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment, Wind Street, Swansea' (Glamorgan and Gwent Archaeological Trust: Unpublished Report 95/027; 1995); D. Rouse, 'Land between Wind Street and York Street, Swansea: a Report on an Archaeological Evaluation' (Hereford Archaeology Series: Unpublished Report 484; 2004).

⁴² Sherman, 'Recent Discoveries', 9.

⁴³ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 1991), 85.

evidence, the name Swansea perhaps having derived from 'a compound of the Old Scandinavian personal name Sveinn and another Old Scandinavian element, possibly meaning "sea" or (more probably) "island"'.⁴⁴ What has not yet been considered for Swansea is the topographical evidence for the town's pre-Norman origins, and the possibility that there are characteristics evident in its urban landscape which might point to Viking antecedents. One reason why this has probably been overlooked is that it has long been assumed the medieval town dates from the early Norman period, as far as its physical structure is concerned – as a view seemingly supported by contemporary sources which really only begin to document settlement activity from the twelfth century onwards, with the creation of the lordship of Gower under de Beaumont and the presence of his castle there.⁴⁵ While the Norman castle and associated town of Swansea may have been placed overlooking the Tawe estuary for strategic reasons, elsewhere in the eleventh and twelfth centuries earlier sites of authority were taken over by Norman lords, thus making claims to lands and people by securing existing places of power.⁴⁶ At Swansea, the presence of an earlier trading settlement on the banks of the Tawe might have provided an incentive to occupy the place with a new castle and seat of colonial Norman power. Here the map evidence can be brought in, not because it offers conclusive insights one way or the other, but because through mapping the medieval urban landscape of Swansea its (silent) testimonies can be heard.

A central part of the City Witness research was the creation of a new map of the medieval town.⁴⁷ Creating this map involved using Conzen's plan-analysis technique as a basis, but undertaken digitally within a Geographical Information System (GIS). This particular approach is described in greater detail elsewhere, and involves integrating historical, archaeological and cartographic information within a GIS to locate otherwise lost medieval urban features.⁴⁸ As with any medieval-landscape mapping exercise, uncertainties abound regarding the locations of individual structures, such as town gates, buildings and defensive alignments. For despite the great contribution archaeology has made to mapping medieval townscapes, the evidence yielded is always highly localised, and from small excavated areas it is necessary to extrapolate out. This can be achieved by locating excavated features, archaeologically dated, in relation to the patterns of streets and plots gleaned from the earliest available large-scale nineteenth-century town-plans, which in Swansea's case are 1:528-scale Board of Health plans of 1852.⁴⁹ Within the GIS, archaeological plans of excavated features are located using a common geographical co-ordinate system, such that the historical, cartographic and archaeological data are all spatially aligned. This then makes possible an interpretation of the juxtaposition of excavated medieval features with those, such as plots and streets, derived from the large-scale historic town-plans (Figure 1).⁵⁰ It is a process which allows uncertainty to be

⁴⁴ Robinson, 'Medieval Swansea', 263.

⁴⁵ Evans, *Swansea Castle*, 22.

⁴⁶ Robert Liddiard, *Castles in Context: Power, Symbolism and Landscape, 1066 to 1500* (Oxford: Windgather Press, 2005).

⁴⁷ See <http://www.medievalswansea.ac.uk/en/mapping/static-map/> (Accessed 4 February 2015).

⁴⁸ For the method in general, see Keith D. Lilley, 'Urban Mappings: Visualizing Late Medieval Chester in Cartographic and Textual Form', in *Mapping the Medieval City: Space, Place and Identity in Chester, c.1200–1600*, ed. Catherine A.M. Clarke (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2011), 19–41. For the digital methods deployed in the 'City Witness' mapping of medieval Swansea, see Gareth Dean and Keith Lilley, 'Mapping Medieval Swansea', <http://www.medievalswansea.ac.uk/en/mapping-medieval-swansea/> (Accessed 4 February 2015).

⁴⁹ Swansea, West Glamorgan Archives, D/D P 856.

⁵⁰ See Lilley and others, 'Mapping Medieval Townscapes', 33–41; Dean, 'Neighbourhood Assemblages in Medieval York', 9–19.

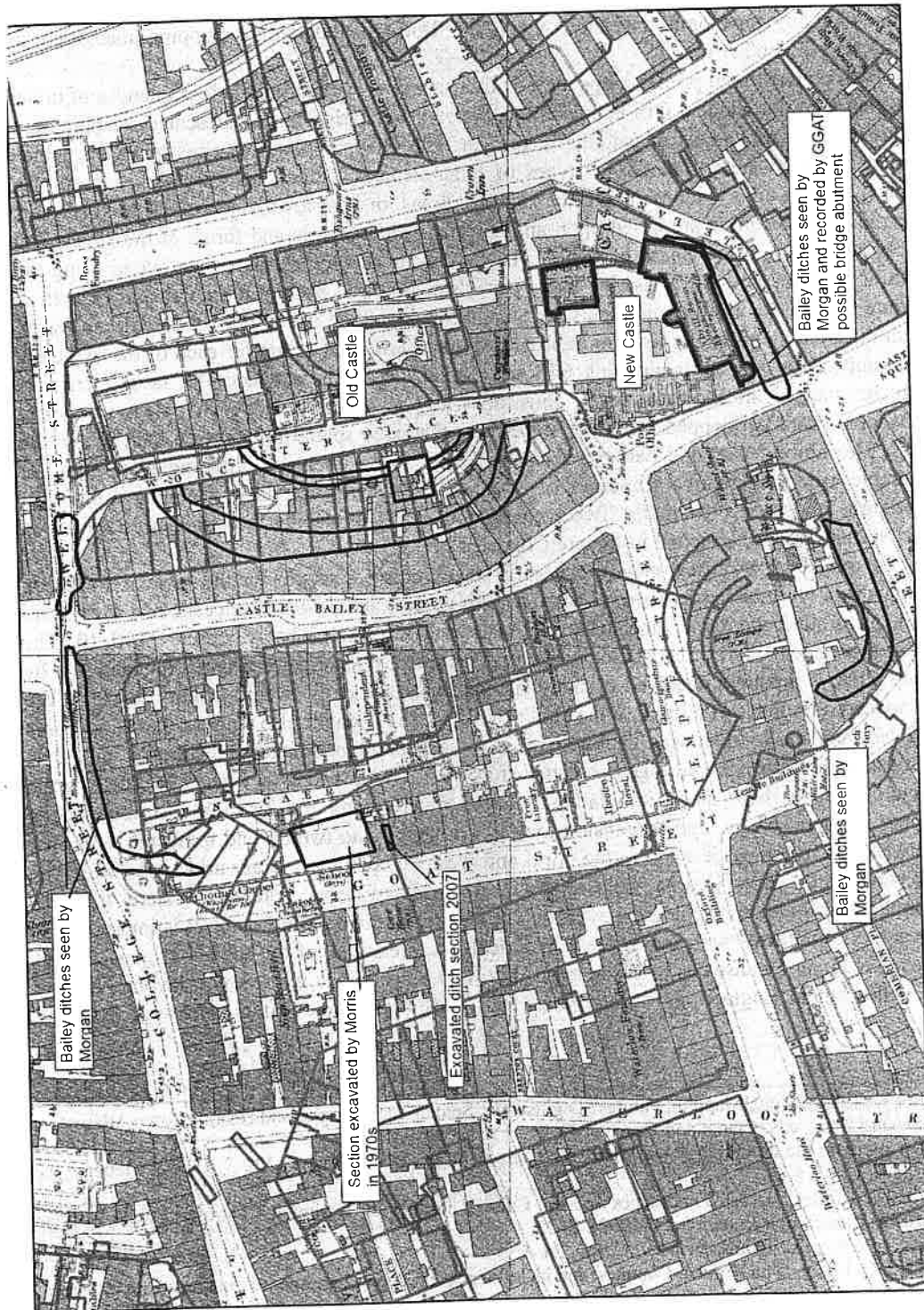


Figure 1. Extract from the 'City Witness' Geographical Information System showing the area around Goat Street, with archaeological features mapped from geo-referenced plans, shown against modern Ordnance Survey vector data and the Ordnance Survey 1:500 plan of 1879.
Source: City Witness project.

mapped, for the GIS is actually a database containing features digitised from different sources, each labelled and given attributes to record where the mapped information derives from, thus acknowledging gaps, omissions and conjecture.⁵¹ But it also allows for mapping uncertainty to be plotted in another way.

With conventional printed maps there is little scope for animating likely sequences of urban development, but since a GIS is interactive, different scenarios can be presented, mapping out alternative interpretations of patterns of growth. The GIS comprises a series of layers, which for medieval Swansea include: (1) types of 'plan-element' (street, defence, plot, and so on); and (2) 'plan-units', morphologically defined areas in the town's plan.⁵² The plan-units identified for Swansea are based upon an analysis of the patterns and forms of the streets and plots derived from the Board of Health plans. With archaeological data then added using the GIS, it becomes possible to ascribe likely periods of origin to each of these units, as evident in Figure 2. Here each of the plan-units for Swansea is identified using tools in the GIS software, with different symbologies used to indicate different periods of origin for each of the identified plan-units. However, through using GIS and digital media, the sequences of these plan-units can be viewed in multiple ways, thus allowing different scenarios of medieval urban development to be mapped using the same data, the same spatial information held within the GIS. The ability to toggle between these GIS map layers, between different plan-units, for example, offers alternative sequences of urban development, with each providing a basis for reading a landscape's testimony. Two scenarios emerge, one placing the origins of Swansea in the Norman period, a second in the pre-Conquest period.

For medieval Swansea, clearly one early development scenario for the town is to see its origins as a Norman castle-town, of early twelfth-century date, where the castle and town were laid out around the same time, under the earl of Warwick, probably around 1100–10. The long, broadened Wind Street stretching out in front of the castle gates, fronted on each side by deep plots, is a pattern observed in many late eleventh- and early twelfth-century towns.⁵³ The excavated alignment of a ditch to the south of Wind Street might also suggest that at Swansea the Norman castle-town was enclosed by a set of common defences, the castle and town enclosures plausibly linked together (labelled as plan-units 2 and 3 on Figure 2). The town in around 1100 perhaps stood in relative isolation, overlooking the Tawe and surrounded by marsh and mud-banks, until expansion took place later in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, outwards from the castle-town to the north and west, so creating a larger urban area which by the fourteenth century was enclosed by a new set of town defences.⁵⁴ Here then the morphological and archaeological evidence (as shown by the map in Figure 2) is interpreted in a way that conforms with most recent historical interpretations of the town's origins. Indeed, seeing Norman Swansea as a 'castle-town' fits with other places with similar layouts, not just in Wales but in England and in Normandy too.⁵⁵ This sequence differs somewhat from that

⁵¹ See Keith D. Lilley, 'Mapping Futures? Digitisation, Spatial Technologies and Historic Town Atlases', in *Maps and Texts*, eds. Clarke and Gearty, 278–94.

⁵² For more on the terminology used here, see Conzen, 'Use of Town Plans', 122–7; Lilley, 'Mapping the Medieval City', 8–9.

⁵³ Keith D. Lilley, 'Urban Landscapes and the Cultural Politics of Territorial Control in Anglo-Norman England', *Landscape Research* 24 (1999): 5–23.

⁵⁴ See note 41; also Evans, *Swansea Castle*, 24–5.

⁵⁵ Keith D. Lilley, 'The Norman Conquest and its Influences on Urban Landscapes', in *Transformations and Continuities in the Eleventh Century: Archaeology of the Norman Conquest*, eds. Dawn M. Hadley and Christopher C. Dyer (forthcoming, 2015); Bernard Gauthiez, *Atlas morphologique des villes de Normandie* (Lyons: Éditions du Cosmogone, 1999).

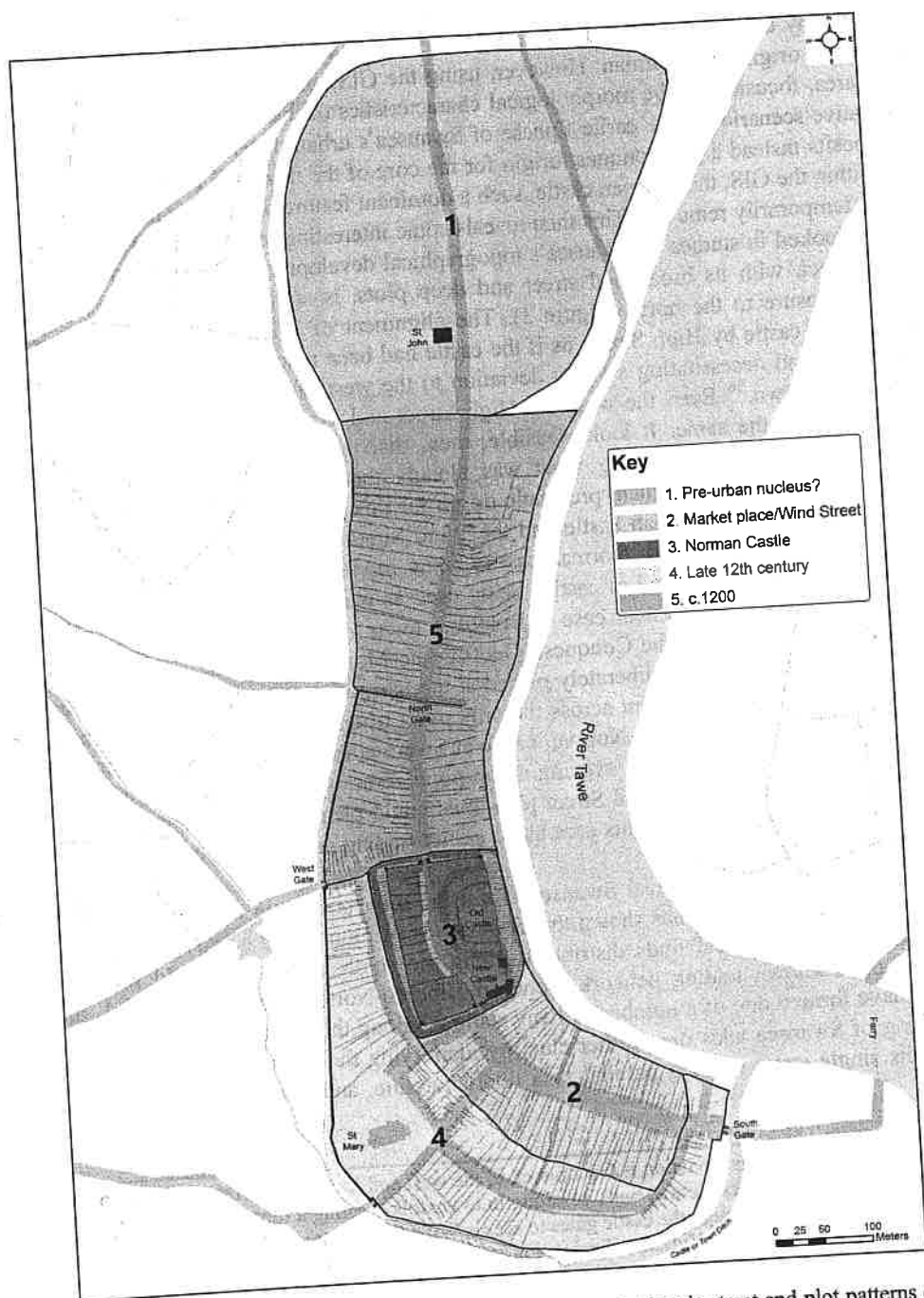


Figure 2. Plan-units identified using a plan-analysis of Swansea's historic street and plot patterns derived from the Board of Health 1852 1:528 plans, supplemented with archaeological data. Each unit indicates a stage of phased growth in the urban landscape.
Source: City Witness project.

proposed by earlier studies of medieval Swansea, such as Evans', but shares in the belief that Swansea's origins are Norman. However, using the GIS, and using the same evidence for this same area, focusing on the morphological characteristics of the castle and Wind Street area, an alternative scenario for the earliest phase of Swansea's urban development can be mapped out. This posits instead a pre-Conquest origin for the core of the medieval town.

Within the GIS, the Norman castle, such a dominant feature of the later medieval townscape, can be temporarily removed. This then reveals some interesting morphological characteristics so far overlooked in studies of Swansea's topographical development (Figure 3). The plan-unit of Wind Street, with its broadened street and deep plots, is similar in its overall width to the castle enclosure to the north (Figure 3). The alignment of Wind Street indeed is picked up north of the castle by High Street, as if the castle had been placed upon an existing route-way, blocking it and necessitating a slight deviation to the west of the main north-south street axis through the town.⁵⁶ Even the width of High Street and Wind Street, north and south of the castle gates, is the same. It looks feasible, then, that the castle was inserted into an urban landscape, effectively disrupting what was already there. Using the GIS it is possible to interpret an earlier, pre-Norman, pre-castle origin for this part of Swansea, focused on the area later occupied by the Norman castle and the Wind Street plan-unit to the south. There are of course numerous instances of Norman castles being inserted into existing urban landscapes at the time of the Conquest, and of castles being used as ways of controlling traffic into and out of existing towns.⁵⁷ A pertinent case is Bristol, a town located further up the Severn estuary from Swansea. Soon after the Conquest, Geoffrey de Montbray held the new castle at Bristol for the king, where it was deliberately placed at the narrowest point of land between the Avon and Frome to control movement across the only point of entry to the town that did not require a river crossing.⁵⁸ In effect, the Norman castle at Swansea mirrors Bristol's, and suggests, as at Bristol, an effort to dominate an existing urban population. If so, the area at Swansea reflected by the castle enclosure and Wind Street plan-units could plausibly pre-date the Conquest, and one possible scenario is to see this area as an earlier trading settlement, perhaps even one with Viking or Norse origins.

The topography of medieval Swansea is not the only pointer in this direction, for recent research (again using GIS) has shown that Swansea is surrounded by a cluster of Viking place-names and archaeological finds distributed along the south Wales coast, and moreover was located on a known trading network, between Hiberno-Norse Ireland and Bristol, and thus could have formed one of a number of 'way stations' along the route.⁵⁹ But the morphological mapping of Swansea adds one further clue, by identifying the layout of the core of the town. With its single street running parallel to a tidal shoreline, and with cross streets at intervals,

⁵⁶ The street that forms this deviation is Goat Street, to the west and just outside of the castle-enclosure, and perhaps laid out when the castle was built, resulting in townsfolk creating a route through the town that did not require them to pass through the castle gates to access Wind Street from the north. For the excavations in Goat Street, see Sherman and Higgins, 'Excavation at the Former David Evans Store'.

⁵⁷ Oliver Creighton, *Castles and Landscapes: Power, Community and Fortification in Medieval England* (London: Equinox Publishing Ltd., 2005).

⁵⁸ M.D. Lobel and E.M. Carus-Wilson, 'Bristol', in *The Atlas of Historic Towns*, vol. 2, ed. Mary D. Lobel (Oxford: Scholar Press in conjunction with Historic Towns Trust, 1975), separately paginated.

⁵⁹ For a discussion of this linguistic and archaeological evidence, see Claire Holmes and Keith Lilley, 'Viking Swansea', <http://www.medievalswansea.ac.uk/en/context/viking-swansea/> (Accessed 4 February 2015). See also H. Loyn, *The Vikings in Wales* (London: University College London Press, 1976); C. Downham, *Viking Kings of Britain and Ireland: the Dynasty of Ivarr to A.D. 1014* (Edinburgh: Dunedin Academic Press, 2007); K.L. Maund, *Ireland, Wales and England in the Eleventh Century* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1991).

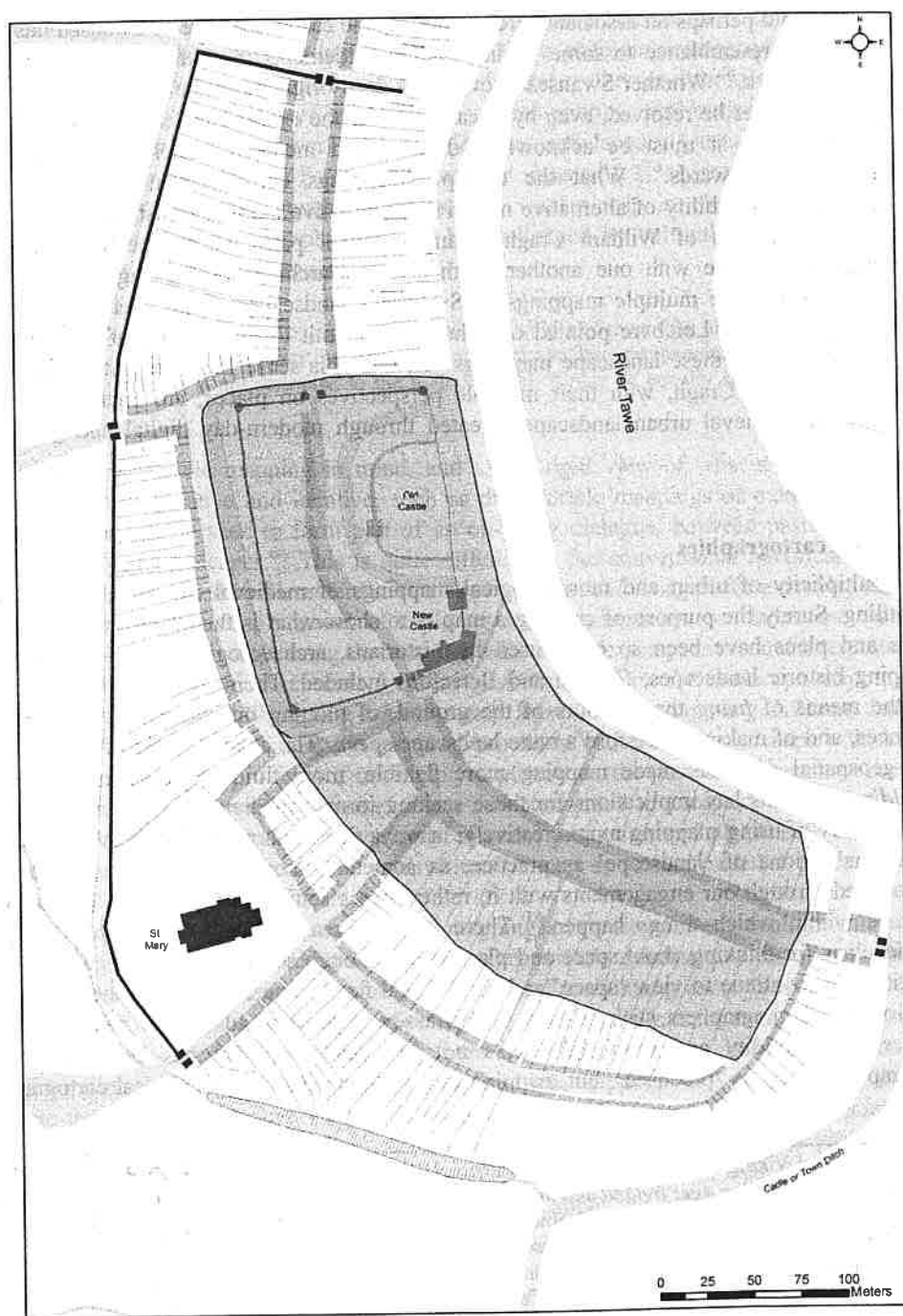


Figure 3. The central core of medieval Swansea (plan-units 2 and 3), Wind Street and the castle enclosure: an Anglo-Norman castle town or the outlines of a Viking trading settlement?
Source: City Witness project.

Wind Street, and perhaps an associated area buried by the castle, the core of Swansea has more than a passing resemblance to some Viking trading settlements in southern Ireland, such as Wexford and Cork.⁶⁰ Whether Swansea's town-plan does originate in the pre-Conquest period will probably never be resolved, even by excavation, for the excavations carried out to date in Wind Street have, it must be acknowledged, produced medieval material only from the twelfth century onwards.⁶¹ What the multiple mappings derived from the GIS reveal, however, is the possibility of alternative narratives, alternative landscape histories, which, like the witness accounts of William Cragh's hanging, posit particular perspectives on place seemingly at variance with one another. Rather than searching for the 'right' or 'wrong' version of events, the multiple mappings of Swansea's landscapes reveal alternative insights into the past and, as Lefebvre pointed out, there is no limit to the number of maps we can make, to the stories these landscape mappings yield. In this sense then, the witness accounts of the hanging of Cragh, with their multiple perspectives on places, are analogous to our mappings of medieval urban landscapes created through modern-day digital and geospatial technologies.

Unfolding cartographies

The multiplicity of urban and morphological mappings of medieval Swansea might appear unsettling. Surely the purpose of creating a map is to show what is there? This indeed is how maps and plans have been so often used by historians, archaeologists and geographers in mapping historic landscapes, Conzen and Beresford included. Theirs is a world where maps are the means of *fixing* the contours of the ground, of plotting out streets, plots and urban defences, and of making Beresford's mute landscape speak. The advent of digital technologies and geospatial data has made mapping more flexible, more fluid, more open-ended, ever *unfolding*, and this has implications for those seeking to map medieval urban landscapes.⁶² It offers a way of using mapping more creatively, in ways that tie in more closely with recent reconceptualisations of 'landscape' as practice, as something constantly being produced and reproduced through our engagements with it, rather than a static and fixed entity or container, a space within which things happen.⁶³ There is an increasing intellectual appetite among medievalists for thinking about space and place, and although some of those caught up in this 'spatial turn' continue to view 'space' as bounded and fixed, others, following the thinking of post-structural geographers such as Soja and Massey, argue instead for the permeability of spaces, their fluidity and mobility.⁶⁴ It is not just landscape that has been viewed by geographers lately as 'practised', but mapping too, and here the ideas of critical cartographers

⁶⁰ Street plans of Viking Cork and Wexford are in M.F. Hurley, 'Viking Elements in Irish Towns; Cork and Waterford', in *The Viking Age: Ireland and the West*, eds. J. Sheehan and D. O'Corrain (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2005), 154–64; J.S. Crowley and others, *Atlas of Cork City* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2005); B. Colfer, *Wexford: A Town and its Landscape* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2008).

⁶¹ For example Sell and Sherman, 'Excavations on Land'.

⁶² Keith D. Lilley, 'Mapping Truth? Spatial Technologies and the Medieval City: a Critical Cartography', *Postclassical Archaeologies* 2 (2012): 201–24.

⁶³ John Wiley, *Landscape* (London: Routledge, 2007); John Wylie, 'Depths and Folds: On Landscape and the Gazing Subject', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 24 (2006): 519–35.

⁶⁴ See for example, Julian Weiss and Sarah Salih, eds., *Locating the Middle Ages: the Spaces and Places of Medieval Culture* (London: King's College London Press, 2012); Marc Boone and Martha C. Howell, eds., *The Power of Space in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe: the Cities of Italy, Northern France and the Low Countries* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013); Meredith Cohen and Fanny Madeline, *Space in the Medieval West: Places, Territories, and Imagined Geographies* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014).

are key. However, unlike similar and related debates on 'space', medievalists have yet to engage with thinking about their mapping histories through these 'unfolding cartographies'.

The idea that maps are not static but mutable and mobile – forever 'unfolding' – has emerged through recent conceptual debates in geography on cartography, exploring its engagement by users and audiences using the work of Gilles Deleuze and Jacques Lacan.⁶⁵ It comes too in part as a critical response to the Foucauldian-inspired ideas of J. B. Harley, whose thinking on maps continued to rely very much on recognising what a map is, or is not.⁶⁶ This rather essentialist approach to cartography came to be challenged by cultural geographers such as Denis Cosgrove, who instead argued:

To map is in one way or another to take the measure of a world, and more than merely take it, to figure the measure so taken in such a way that it may be communicated between people, places or times. The measure of mapping is not restricted to the mathematical; it may be equally spiritual, political or moral.⁶⁷

With this more flexible mapping in mind, and a less rigid view of what a map should be, something that is creative and iterative, such as the multiple mappings of medieval Swansea offered earlier, can be seen to form part of an on-going dialogue, between past and present, through mapping landscapes.⁶⁸ This is quite different to the conventional historical approach to mapping, as illustrated by Beresford's *New Towns of the Middle Ages*, for example, that saw the plan or the map as simply a way of depicting a past, sometimes lost, landscape that was somehow recoverable through using the map. Instead, multiple perspectives and interpretations of the 'same map' emerge every time it is engaged with, as with the landscape mappings of medieval Swansea, through toggling between map layers, and juxtaposing different features within the GIS data. This flexibility in mapping is at odds with past uses of maps in historical research, where the map provided if not simply a picture on the past but a means to create a secure and reliable, trustworthy witness, a map that conformed to accepted, normative modes of cartography, with its standard conventions of scale, projection and planimetric accuracy.⁶⁹ Instead, these new uses and practices re-envision the map as an interpretative process, rather than a closed and fixed body of spatial data.

There is another way in which these digital mappings of medieval Swansea align with current conceptual thinking about unfolding cartographies, beyond the technical process of creating new maps with alternative scenarios of urban growth. As well as thinking about the process of map-making itself as an ever unfolding story, of potentially revealing different scenarios every time the data are mapped and configured in the GIS, there are also the thoughts, ideas and impressions gained by users of the mapped data. What these multiple mappings of Swansea also represent then are user-driven alternative views of the same historical events and locations, something that is made possible, again technically, by the City Witness project through its use of online mapping, a digital resource that serves cartographic information via the web, for all to engage with and through which to generate their own views about the origins and development of

⁶⁵ Jeremy Crampton and J. Krygier, 'An Introduction to Critical Cartography', *ACME* 4 (2006): 11–33; Rob Kitchin and Martin Dodge, 'Rethinking Maps', *Progress in Human Geography* 31 (2007): 331–44.

⁶⁶ Kitchin and Dodge, 'Rethinking Maps', 332.

⁶⁷ Denis Cosgrove, introduction to *Mappings*, ed. Denis Cosgrove (London: Reaktion Books Ltd., 1999), 1–2.

⁶⁸ James Corner, 'The Agency of Mapping: Speculation, Critique and Invention', in *Mappings*, ed. Cosgrove, 214–52.

⁶⁹ Jeremy Black, *Maps and History: Constructing Images of the Past* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 240–1.

medieval Swansea.⁷⁰ This use of web-distributed map data has enormous scope for democratising geographical and historical information, enabling users to create their own versions of maps of places, and engaging with the landscapes they represent.⁷¹

Not only then has a radical shift occurred in the production and consumption of mapping histories, through digital and geospatial technologies, the reconceptualisation of cartography as practice is also simultaneously opening up more creative spaces for mapping histories. As Kitchen and Dodge suggest:

Maps are of-the-moment, brought into being through practices (embodied, social, technical), always remade every time they are engaged with; mapping is a process of constant re-territorialisation. As such, maps are transitory and fleeting, being contingent, relational and context-dependent. Maps are practices – they are always mappings.⁷²

Unfolding the 'ontological security' of cartography, as Kitchen and Dodge propose, begins to elide the distinction between cartographic production and consumption, such that all those who work with maps are also actively (re)making maps, every time they are engaged with, viewed, used.⁷³

This rethinking of maps undermines the notion that maps reflect geographical truth or project historical reality – a position which for many might seem unsettling, or even far-fetched. But here it is again worth reflecting on the situation in medieval Swansea and the witnesses brought forward to describe events around the hanging of William Cragh. Their statements differ; their views contradict each other in so many ways that to some this might undermine their authority, their claim to truth. Yet, of course, these testimonies are always partial, capturing a fleeting moment in one place and one time, that may then be re-read and re-interpreted later, at another place and time. So it is with the multiple mappings and unfolding cartographies of medieval Swansea considered here. The contrasting and alternative perspectives on place that emerge each have their own validity as witnesses to past events, as ways of engaging with Beresford's mute landscapes. However, rather than distrusting these competing views because their stories do not align or corroborate with each other, we can instead see them along with the witnesses to Cragh's hanging as alternative mapping histories and multiple perspectives on place. Taking such an approach to medieval urban landscapes reveals something that is shared between medieval pluralism and post-modern plurality: a common thread of conjuring not just one landscape – or indeed witness – but many.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ For discussion of the complexities of creating 3D visualisations of medieval Swansea, see <http://www.medievalswansea.ac.uk/en/mapping/visualisations/> (Accessed 4 February 2015).

⁷¹ Keith D. Lilley, 'Conceptualising the City: Historical Mapping, Spatial Theory and the Production of Urban Spaces', in *Cities and Their Spaces: Concepts and their Use in Europe*, eds. Michel Pauly and Martin Scheutz (Cologne: Böhlau-Verlag GmbH, 2014), 29–40.

⁷² Kitchen and Dodge, 'Rethinking Maps', 335.

⁷³ See V. Del Casino and S. Hanna, 'Beyond the "Binaries": a Methodological Intervention for Interrogating Maps as Representational Practices', *ACME* 4 (2006): 34–56, who note: 'Thinking about map spaces in this way means neither the production nor the consumption of maps is separable from space in the most mundane of settings ... at the same time, spaces mediate people's experiences of maps ... There might be an alternative to thinking through the binaries of design and use, representation and practice, objectivity and subjectivity, that undergirds much of the critical cartography literature by suggesting how map spaces as performed "work"' (44–5).

⁷⁴ On the cultural politics of the periodisation of history, see Kathleen Davis, *Periodization and Sovereignty: How Ideas of Feudalism and Secularization Govern the Politics of Time* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 2–20.

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