

# *Marches Archaeology*

## **Castle House Ludlow Shropshire**

**A desk based assessment**

March 2001

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**This report is produced by**

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# Castle House Ludlow

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A desk based assessment

**Report by**  
Nic Appleton-Fox

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# Castle House, Ludlow

## A desk based assessment

### *Summary*

*Castle House, was built in a series of campaigns probably starting with the construction of a barracks in the 16th century, but not attaining its final form until around the turn of the 20th century.*

## **1 Introduction**

South Shropshire District Council intend to undertake some alterations to the Castle House in Ludlow Castle. As this work affects part of the Scheduled Monument (Shropshire Monument 7), Mr J Bryan, Head of Property Services, commissioned Marches Archaeology to carry out a desk based assessment on the building. The building stands to the north of the gateway into the outer court of Ludlow Castle (fig 1)

## **2 A brief history of Ludlow Castle**

Before the arrival of the Normans Ludlow was a small border town, some of its' history is recorded in the windows of the fifteenth century church of St Lawrence. From the Domesday Book we learn it was given by William the Conqueror to Osbern Fitz-Richard, who was the son of Richard Fitz-Scrob of nearby Richard's Castle. Osbern however brought in Roger de Lacy of Ewyas as his sub-tenant and later seems to have handed over all his rights to him (Oman, 1978).

Ludlow then was in the manor of Stanton which was held by the de Lacys since 1066, one of their holdings under Earl Roger de Montgomery. The topography here made it an ideal defensive site; level ground surrounded by steep slopes and flanked by the rivers Teme and Corve. The local Silurian limestone provided an abundant source of building material.

The de Lacys are believed to be the original builders of the castle and held onto it for many generations, albeit intermittently. It is mentioned by chroniclers first in 1138 and though the date of its original construction is uncertain the architectural style of the inner bailey curtain wall and towers, and parts of the gatehouse indicate an 11th century date (Lloyd, nd).

It was originally a motte and bailey castle, with the outer bailey being enclosed in the second half of the 12th century, truncating some of the roads of the pre-existing planned town. The replacement of the palisade by a stone curtain wall occurred quite early, with the impressive square keep probably dating from the time of Henry I.

In the turbulent times under Stephen the castle was the scene of much fighting. When Henry I died the de Lacys do not seem to have been in control of the castle. The second of the de Lacys had named his nephew Gilbert as his heir but the king had claimed it as his own and installed one Pain Fitz John, to the indignation of Gilbert. From here on in the castle was the subject of much dispute as the de Lacys continually tried to regain the castle.

Fitz John was later killed by the Welsh, and soon afterwards the western barons rose up in rebellion against Stephen. In 1138 Ludlow was seized by Gervase Paganel of Dudley, a leader of the revolt (Oman, 1978). In 1139 the king himself, Stephen, besieged the castle and

although unsuccessful initially he later succeeded in rescuing young Prince Henry of Scotland from a grappling iron (Lloyd, nd). Following this success he installed one of his followers, Josse (*Joyce*) de Dinant (sometimes called Joce de Dinan), who may have been one of the Northamptonshire family. Until his death in 1166 Josse held off all attempts by his opponents to regain the castle, notably the de Lacys (Hugh, son of Gilbert, and Hugh's son Walter), Hugh Mortimer of Wigmore (head of the the party of Queen Maud in the area), and thirdly the Welsh. The Welsh under Owen Kyveilog of Powys and Jorwerth ap Gwynedd sought to take advantage of English civil wars in furthering their own aims.

With the death of Josse, Walter de Lacy was given control of Ludlow Castle.

In 1177 the Crown held the castle again and later the Pipe Rolls record payments 'to the keeper of Ludlow castle' indicating it continued to be under Royal control. It was the site of many meetings, for example in 1224 Henry III made a treaty here with the rebel Welsh prince Llewellyn, with Archbishop Langton present as mediator (Lloyd nd).

The castle features in the chronicle of the Geste of Fulk Fitzwarine, the story of a twelfth century knight, which contains much valuable information on castle life - specifically the lives of the castle owners during the time of Stephen and the early years under Henry II (Oman, 1978).

The de Lacys spent much time in Ireland where they built up large estates but Ludlow always remained their power base until the male de Lacy line died out in 1240. Then the Ludlow estate was divided between the two coheireses: Matilda de Lacy took Ludlow into her marriage with her second husband, Geoffrey de Grenville, or Geneville, a French baron from Champagne, and a favourite of King Henry III; Margaret took Ewyas into her marriage with John de Verdun. The Grenville inheritance then passed to Geoffrey's son Peter, who may have been responsible the range of domestic buildings inside the inner bailey. These point to the change in the castles' function from military outpost to comfortable residence and seat of power (Lloyd nd). Then followed a period of relative stability brought about by Edward I conquest of Wales. The Grenville line only survived two generations however and Joan, grand-daughter of Matilda de Lacy and daughter of Peter de Grenville, as sole heiress took Ludlow into her marriage with the infamous Roger Mortimer. He was the leader of a group of barons who dethroned the unpopular Edward II in 1326, and then murdered him. He was made Earl of March but his excessive ambition brought him many enemies and he was executed by his rivals in 1330 (*op cit*).

For the next five generations Ludlow was part of the vast estates of the Mortimers, "not kings themselves, but the ancestors of many kings". Being larger and stronger than the ancestral home of Wigmore it became increasingly the focus and centre of their power. It was inhabited and kept in good repair far longer than most other castles in the Marches (Oman, 1978). In 1425 the last male Mortimer died and the surviving heiress, Ann Mortimer, married Richard of Cambridge. Through this connection the lands passed to the House of York and an increase in status.

In the Wars of the Roses it was Ann's son, Richard Planagenet who was leader of the Yorkists. He mustered his troops at Ludlow for his attempted insurrection of 1459 which failed after the rout of Ludford Bridge beneath the castle walls.

In 1461 Richard's son, was crowned King Edward IV, and for the next 350 years the castle remained mainly as Crown property, with the exception of the Civil War and Commonwealth periods. Edward IV was very attached to Ludlow and his two sons, Edward and Richard, spent much time here (*op cit*). In 1473 he sent the boys to be brought up here away from the evils of London and this was their main residence until 1483.

They were accompanied by their tutor Bishop Alcock who was also president of a 'Prince's Council', a group of nobles and gentlemen who accompanied the princes. This Council gradually assumed responsibility for the government of Wales and the borders and was the embryonic 'Council of the Marches' (Lloyd, nd). They were here when they learned of their father's death on April 9th 1483 and Edward assumed the title of King Edward V. It was from here, a fortnight later, that the princes began their ill-fated journey to London, only to be imprisoned and to end their short lives in the Tower. Following this their uncle became King Richard III. Although Richard had both opportunity and motive, responsibility for this crime was never proved. However his right to the Crown was contested by Henry VII and after Richard was defeated at the battle of Bosworth, Henry became king. From then on it was commonly believed that Richard was guilty of the murders, until modern analyses of the evidence have questioned that assumption.

Henry VII gave Ludlow to his eldest son Arthur who spent four months here with his new wife Catherine of Aragon, prior to his premature death in 1502 (Lloyd, nd). After Arthur's death Ludlow was never again to be a royal residence but it was made the site of the 'Council of the Marches' This was a local delegation of the King's own council which had charge of the March until the Civil War of 1642-46. It had a counterpart in the 'Council of the North' in York (Oman, 1978).

With Arthur's death, Catherine returned to London where she was married to Arthur's younger brother Henry to whom the line of succession now passed. In 1509 he was crowned King Henry VIII. Their only surviving child was their daughter Mary who spent three Winters at Ludlow castle between 1525-1528 (Lloyd, nd).

In 1534 Bishop Rowland was appointed Lord President of the 'Council of the Marches' and under him it greatly increased in authority and control. Part of this process was the reorganisation of Wales into shires in 1536. "For more than a century Ludlow was virtually the capital of Wales" and the courts were busy with civil, ecclesiastical and criminal cases. The castle became the administrative centre and this was reflected in the additions to the castle buildings (*op cit*). The Presidency of the Council was a prestigious position and acquired an extensive entourage of officials and clerks. Many of the Presidents were bishops, but the most famous was a layman called Sir Henry Sydney. He was President from 1559-1586 and was a great favourite of Elizabeth I (Oman, 1978).

Though a Royalist stronghold during the Civil War the castle escaped much of the demolition that other places saw because it was surrendered after negotiation with the besieging Parliamentary force under Colonel John Birch, though the rest of the town saw some destruction (Lloyd, nd). During the Commonwealth the Council was abolished as it was seen as part of the Royalist establishment and for some years Ludlow was left as a garrison with a skeleton company and a retired colonel as governor (Oman, 1978). After 1660 the council was nominally restored.

With the accession of William and Mary in 1689 the Council of the Marches was finally abolished and the castle abandoned as part of the policy of centralising control of all England and Wales to London (Lloyd, nd). Then in 1715 George I, decided, possibly by Sir Robert Walpole, that the upkeep of the castle was too expensive and it was ordered that the lead be stripped from the roof (Wright, 1826). From now on it began to decay. In 1768 and 1774 visitors reported that many of the roofs and floors were still extant but by 1800 all of these had fallen in. In 1771 the Earl of Powis rented the castle from the Crown on a lease of 31 years and put in place some repairs. When the lease expired the earl bought the castle which remains in the family until today and that has prevented any further deterioration (Hughes, 2000).

### **3 Castle House**

The earliest extant plan of the castle is that by Stukeley dating to 1721 (fig 2). Certain details of this plan are incorrect throwing some doubt on the accuracy of all details. The only building shown in the area of the Castle House is an extension to the rear of the tower. The plan does not show the barracks that stood to the right of the gatehouse as one entered the castle. These buildings are attested to in a reference by Wright in 1826 who describes them as *'On the right hand as we enter the gateway, are the remains of barracks in constant use when the castle was the Palace of the Lords President of Wales, and further on is a square tower with its entrance from the wall'* However, he makes no mention of the 'Bowling Green Inn' built from material reclaimed from the castle which is referred to in a document of the same year (SRO 552/26/2) as having been erected *'many years ago'*. Whilst there is no definite location for this building it is likely that it was near the bowling green. Just such a building appears on the next surviving plan drawn for the earl of Powis in 1765 by Thomas Pritchard (fig 3). The exact date of construction is uncertain but if Stukeley can be relied on at all it must have been between 1721 and 1765. As can be seen from the plan the building does not include the element of walling which stretches from the building towards the gate. In the notes accompanying Pritchard's plan this building is described as *'Hill the tenant's house'* and as being built of *'old materials of the castle'* (Lloyd, 1984). The plan of J Wood, drawn in 1835 (fig 4) again shows a different footprint for the building. However, the details of the plan which can be checked, the curvature of the wall of the Inner Court and the size of the tower, shows that his representation, of the castle at least, is schematic. The location of the building is correct for it to still be 'Hill's house'. By the time of the Ordnance Survey's 1st edition 1:2500 plan of 1884 (fig 5) the house is labelled 'Barracks (Remains of)'. The footprint has apparently extended towards the gateway and a conservatory or other glass roofed structure has been added to the north end of the building. As can be seen from the more detailed but incomplete 1:1250 plan (fig 6) the owner was partial to glasshouses, with three more in the garden. It is only on the Ordnance Survey resurvey of 1926 (fig 7) that the house has achieved its final form.

### **4 Discussion**

It can be seen from the above that the Castle House in their present form are the result of several centuries of changing use. Apart from the curtain wall and tower, the earliest element of the present building is the rear wall to flats A and X and the southern part of flat B. This is stylistically different from any of the rest of the building and would appear to be the only remains of the barracks still extant. No date is known for the construction of the barracks but this wall is similar in construction to the stables on the south side of the gateway. We know

that these were built by Sir Henry Sidney in 1581 (Stone, 2000) and it may be postulated that these structures were contemporary. This would be consistent with the use of the castle as the base for the Council of the Marches. However, these would be one of the first buildings to be allowed to fall into disrepair once the need for them had been removed. This is likely to have been perhaps as early as the mid 17th century with the end of the Civil War. Certainly their demise would have been hastened after the removal of roofing material in 1715. When the Bowling Green Inn was built in the early to mid 18th century it would appear that the remaining walls of these barracks were not included in the new building. This would represent the area currently occupied by the remainder of flat B. From cartographic evidence it can be deduced that further development took place in the house between 1765 and 1884. This would appear to be the front wall was built for flats A, X and part of B. From Wright's description in 1826 the barracks were still ruinous so the development must have taken place after then. Indeed, it is likely that it took place after 1835 when Wood made his plan. Even admitting that his detail of the castle is sketchy, had the house been enlarged as much as the Ordnance Survey 1st edition plan shows it must be assumed that he would have paid more attention to it. The final evolution of the house can be dated to between 1884 and 1926 when the ballroom was added to the north end and the tower finally incorporated into the building creating what is now flat C. From the stylistic evidence this is more likely to have taken place in the closing decade of the 19th century than in the early 20th.

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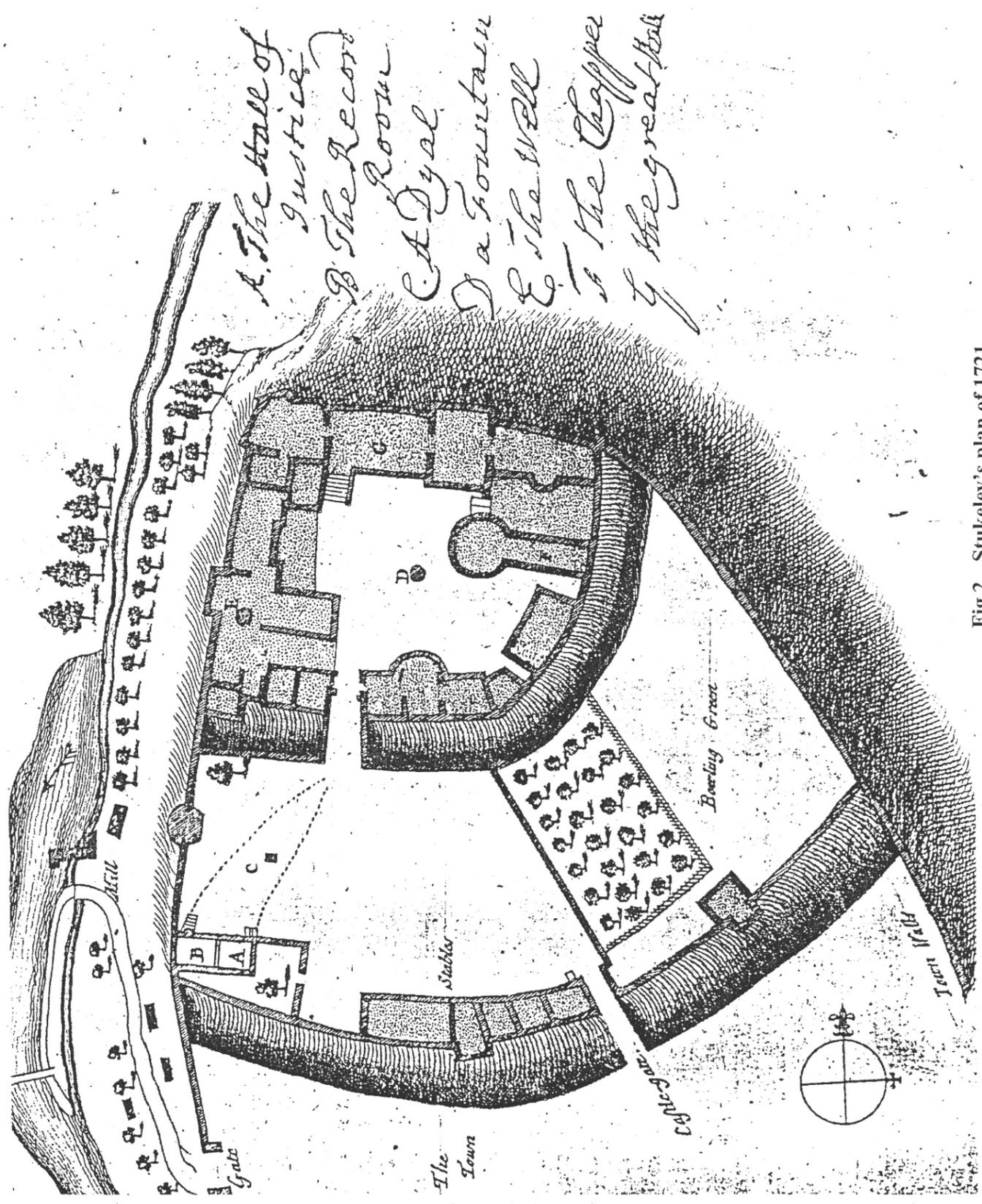


Fig 2 Stukeley's plan of 1721



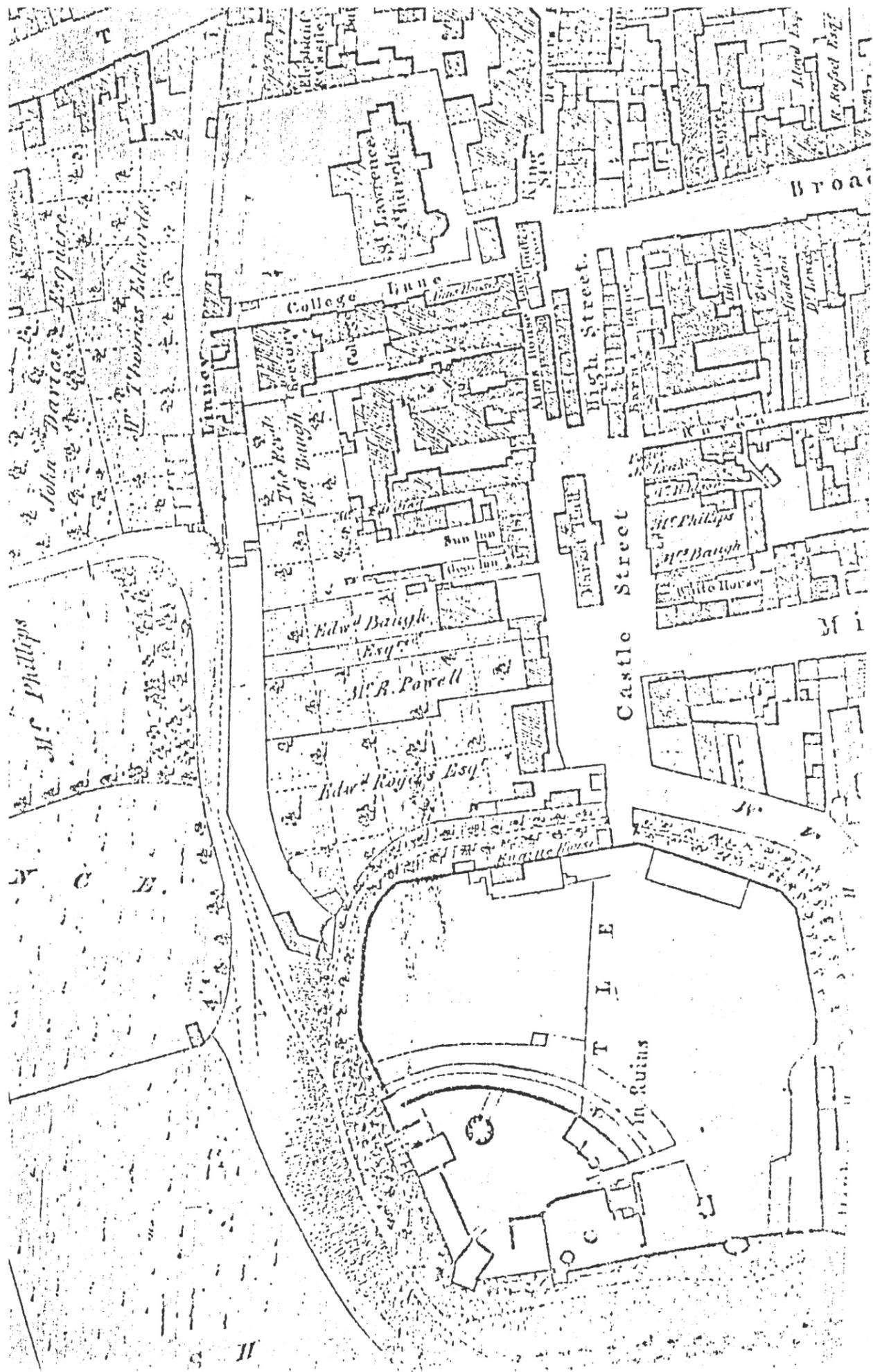


Fig 4 Wood's plan of 1835



Fig 5 Ordnance Survey 1st edition 1:2500 plan, 1886





Fig 7 Ordnance Survey 2nd edition 1:2500 plan, 1926