

City of Hereford Archaeology Unit

CLUN CASTLE, SHROPSHIRE



Watching Brief on Minor Excavations

December 1992

Hereford Archaeology Series 165

*Excavation * Evaluation * Building Surveys * Historical Research*

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The City of Hereford Archaeology Committee was founded in 1974 and is a registered charity. It operates through the City of Hereford Archaeology Unit, which has a permanent staff of eight people. Besides dealing with buried archaeology of Hereford - an important Saxon city dating back to seventh century - the Unit has specialised in recent years in archaeological recording and analysis of standing buildings. This work has usually been on a commission basis on behalf of English Heritage, developers and the Unit now has considerable experience in this field.

Front Cover: Shows the Interior with work in progress.

**Clun Castle,
Shropshire,
NGR SO 299809**

Watching Brief on Minor Excavations

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**December 1992
City of Hereford Archaeology Unit
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Introduction.

The City of Hereford Archaeology Unit was commissioned by English Heritage to organise a watching brief, together with all necessary recording, on groundworks associated with safety fences, lightning conductors and regrading of the internal levels of the Great Tower at Clun Castle. During the week of 26th to 31st October 1992 a series of nine postholes and six shallow trenches for lightning conductors were dug. The postholes were dug to an average depth of 0.75m whilst the lightning conductor trenches were 0.30m deep. None of the trenches penetrated significant archaeological levels and of the postholes only two produced any archaeological information. During the same period the interior of the Great Tower was graded in preparation for the laying of scalplings. This activity uncovered archaeological levels at the southern end of the Great Tower. Three more postholes were dug on the 27th November 1992.

The Postholes.

The postholes were for the main supporting posts for a protective fence around the standing monument to prevent too close an approach in case of falling debris, and to prevent people from sliding down the steeper slopes of the motte and thus causing erosion. Three holes were dug on the western side of the Great Tower, the first against the north corner of the northern Drum Tower, the second to the N-W of the north-west corner of the Great Tower with the third placed midway between (postholes 1-3). Two were dug on the eastern side, one to the S-E of the south-east corner of the Great Tower, the second halfway along its length (postholes 4 & 5). Three more were positioned against the Drum Towers, two part way down the slope between the towers where the curving wall begins (postholes 6 & 7), the third (posthole 8) against the southern end of the southern Drum Tower. The last posthole (9) was dug 16m to the south-east of the southern Drum Tower.

Three further postholes (10-12) were positioned along the north wall of the Great Tower. Two were roughly centrally placed to take a gate, the third was 2.5m to the north-east of the N-E corner of the Great Tower.

Posthole 1 was trapezoidal in shape with its wider base to the north, it was 1.25m wide at the north reducing to 0.7m at the south and 1.3m long. Footings for a wall ran north-eastwards across the hole taking up the whole width in the south and passing out in the N-E corner. The footings were 0.25m below the current surface. In the N-W portion of the hole, where there was no footings, it was excavated to a depth of 0.75m. The soil removed was a dark brown clayey silt with common medium stone, becoming redder with a mortary mix in the proximity of the wall.

Posthole 2 was 0.55m square, 0.75m deep. The top 0.65m was a relatively stone free clayey silt becoming more stony for the bottom 0.1m with common medium stone.

Posthole 3 was L shaped 1.4m long on the W and N sides, with all other sides 0.7m long. It was excavated to a depth of 0.75m through a stony clayey silt with very common medium stone. The soil was consistent with an accumulation of debris in the bottom of a ditch.

Posthole 4 was trapezoidal, 1.2m wide on the north, 0.5m wide on the south, 1.0m long. it was excavated to a depth of 0.65m through a layer of very stony clayey silt with common medium stone.

Posthole 5 was 0.65m square, 0.75m deep and was again cut through a dark brown stony soil with common medium stone.

Posthole 6 was dug against the south side of the northern Tower part way down the slope where the curving wall begins. It was 1.7m long, 0.75m wide, 0.75m deep. It cut through the usual dark brown stony clayey silt.

Posthole 7 was dug on the north side of the southern Tower, in the angle made by the curving wall with the remnant of the curtain wall. It was 1.4m long, 0.7m wide and 0.75m deep. Where it butted the curving wall it exposed three courses of face stones in the area directly beneath the large crack in the tower.

Posthole 8 was dug at the south-east corner of the southern Tower against the reconstructed straight wall. It was 1.3m long, 0.65m wide, 0.75m deep, and cut through a dark-brown clayey silt with common stone.

Posthole 9 was dug 16m to the south-east of the southern Tower, 1.8m long, 0.7m wide, 0.75m deep. For most of its depth it was cut through the usual dark brown soil, but the bottom 0.1m cut into a reddish silt with very common small to medium stone, which had the appearance of redeposited natural.

Posthole 10, the westernmost of the pair for the gate, was 1.4m long 0.6m wide for most of its length but widening towards the north to 0.75m at the eastern end. It was only 0.3m deep in the narrower portion but 0.7m deep in the west. It was cut through a dark yellowish brown silt with frequent small to medium stones.

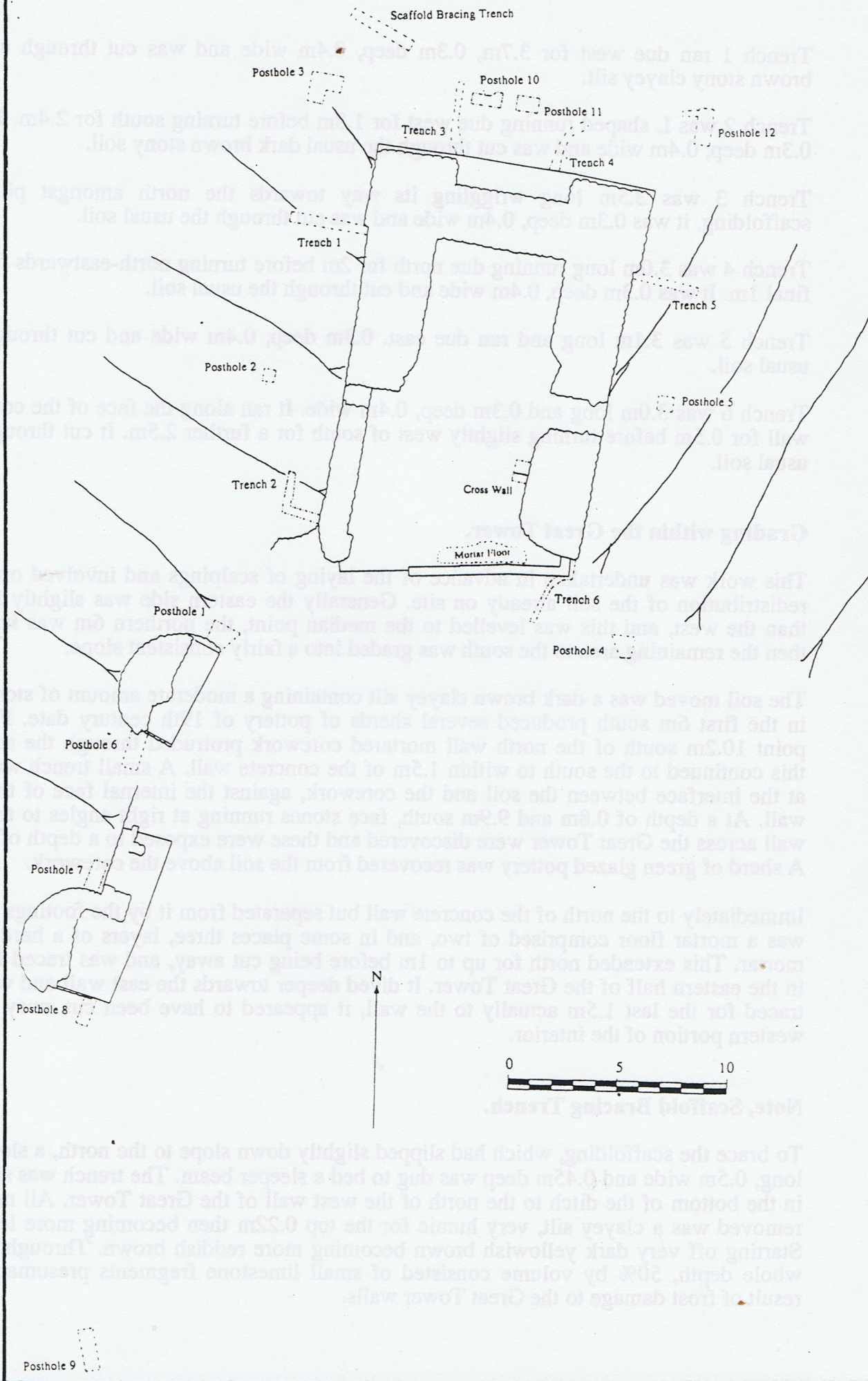
Posthole 11, was rectangular 0.65m to the east of posthole 10. 0.6m deep in the east, 0.7m deep in the west. It was cut through a dark yellowish brown silt with frequent small to medium stones.

Posthole 12, an L-shaped feature, differed from the other postholes in being almost entirely cut through a reddish soil which was virtually stone free. It was 1.2m long, 0.7m wide in the main part and was 0.75m deep at the south, 0.6m at the north. A side arm 0.3m wide and 0.6m deep ran off to the west for 0.7m at the northern end.

The Lightning Conductor Trenches.

The six trenches dug for lightning conductors were all 0.3m deep and 0.4m wide. They ran out from the base of the walls of the Great Tower to the earthing rods. Two were positioned on the west side, one just to the south of the N-W buttress (trench 1) the second immediately north of the projecting wall at the south end of the west wall (trench 2). Two more were dug on the north side (trenches 3 & 4) just inside the buttresses. One trench (5) was positioned immediately south of the buttress on the east side, and the last trench (6) ran south from the southern end of the east wall.

Clun Castle Trench Plan



Trench 1 ran due west for 3.7m, 0.3m deep, 0.4m wide and was cut through a dark brown stony clayey silt.

Trench 2 was L shaped running due west for 1.8m before turning south for 2.4m. It was 0.3m deep, 0.4m wide and was cut through the usual dark brown stony soil.

Trench 3 was 3.5m long wriggling its way towards the north amongst piles of scaffolding, it was 0.3m deep, 0.4m wide and was cut through the usual soil.

Trench 4 was 3.0m long running due north for 2m before turning north-eastwards for the final 1m. It was 0.3m deep, 0.4m wide and cut through the usual soil.

Trench 5 was 3.1m long and ran due east. 0.3m deep, 0.4m wide and cut through the usual soil.

Trench 6 was 3.0m long and 0.3m deep, 0.4m wide. It ran along the face of the concrete wall for 0.5m before turning slightly west of south for a further 2.5m. It cut through the usual soil.

Grading within the Great Tower.

This work was undertaken in advance of the laying of scalplings and involved only the redistribution of the soil already on site. Generally the eastern side was slightly higher than the west, and this was levelled to the median point, the northern 6m was laid flat then the remaining area to the south was graded into a fairly consistent slope.

The soil moved was a dark brown clayey silt containing a moderate amount of stone and in the first 6m south produced several sherds of pottery of 19th century date. From a point 10.2m south of the north wall mortared corework protruded through the surface, this continued to the south to within 1.5m of the concrete wall. A small trench was dug at the interface between the soil and the corework, against the internal face of the east wall. At a depth of 0.8m and 9.9m south, face stones running at right angles to the east wall across the Great Tower were discovered and these were exposed to a depth of 1.1m. A sherd of green glazed pottery was recovered from the soil above the corework.

Immediately to the north of the concrete wall but separated from it by the footings trench was a mortar floor comprised of two, and in some places three, layers of a hard white mortar. This extended north for up to 1m before being cut away, and was traced for 4m in the eastern half of the Great Tower. It dived deeper towards the east wall and was not traced for the last 1.5m actually to the wall, it appeared to have been cut away in the western portion of the interior.

Note, Scaffold Bracing Trench.

To brace the scaffolding, which had slipped slightly down slope to the north, a slot 3.0m long, 0.5m wide and 0.45m deep was dug to bed a sleeper beam. The trench was situated in the bottom of the ditch to the north of the west wall of the Great Tower. All material removed was a clayey silt, very humic for the top 0.22m then becoming more leached. Starting off very dark yellowish brown becoming more reddish brown. Throughout the whole depth, 50% by volume consisted of small limestone fragments presumably the result of frost damage to the Great Tower walls.