



Corfe Castle, Dorset

Archaeological Observations and Recording during Restoration Works to Footpaths and Grassed Areas



Report No. 53484/3/1

March 2018

Corfe Castle, Dorset

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Table of Contents

Part 1: Introduction

1.1	Project Introduction.....	1
1.2	Project Brief and Specification	1
1.3	Site Location.....	1
1.4	Geology	1
1.5	Archaeological and Historical Background	1
1.6	Previous Archaeological Fieldwork	1
1.7	Aims and Objectives	2
1.8	Groundworks.....	2
1.9	Methods	2
1.10	Archive and Dissemination	2

Part 2: Results

2.1	Introduction	3
2.2	Trench 1	3
2.3	Trench 2	3
2.4	Trench 3	3

Part 3: Finds

3.1	Finds assemblage	3
3.2	Coin.....	3
3.3	Pottery.....	3
3.4	Clay Tobacco-Pipe	4

Part 4: Discussion and Conclusions

4.1	Discussion	4
4.2	Conclusions	4

Part 5: References	4
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Figures

1	Site Location.....	6
2	Plan of Observations.....	7
3	Plan of Observed Trenches.....	8

Plates

1	Trench 1 during excavation	9
2	West end of Trench 1 after removal of rubble infill 102 showing geotextile membrane below.....	9
3	Trench 1 fully excavated	9
4	Area of Trench 2 before excavation showing erosion	10
5	Trench 2 after excavation.....	10
6	Area of Trench 3 before excavation showing modern rubble consolidation.....	10
7	Trench 3 during removal of modern rubble consolidation	11
8	Trench 3 after excavation.....	11
9	Trench 3 after excavation showing mixed modern infill 301	11

Appendix 1: Context Summary	12
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Project Report Summary Page

Project Details			
OASIS Reference	terraina1-312101 & terraina1-312102		
Project Title	Restoration Works, Corfe Castle		
Short Description of Project	Terrain Archaeology undertook a programme of archaeological observations and recording during restoration works at Corfe Castle, specifically during the construction of new paths to the Third and Fourth Towers and the formation of a new hard standing in front of the North Tower. The works did not penetrate below previous modern consolidation deposits. No significant archaeology was exposed.		
Project Dates	Start: 26-02-2018	End: 27-02-2018	
Previous/Future Work	No/No		
Project Code	53484		
Monument Type and Period	None		
Significant Finds	None		
Project Location			
County/District/Parish	Dorset/ Purbeck/ Corfe Castle		
Site Address	Corfe Castle, The Square, Corfe Castle, Wareham, Dorset, BH20 5EZ		
Site Coordinates	SY 9592 8227		
Site Area	c. 26 m ²		
Height OD			
Project Creators			
Organisation	Terrain Archaeology		
Project Brief Originator	Martin Papworth		
Project Design Originator	Terrain Archaeology		
Project Supervisor	Peter Bellamy		
Project Manager	Peter Bellamy		
Sponsor or Funding Body	The National Trust		
Project Archive			
Archive Type	Physical	Digital	Paper
Location/Accession No	National Trust	National Trust	National Trust
Contents	Pottery, clay pipe	Photographs	Context sheets, plan

Corfe Castle, Dorset

Archaeological Observations and Recording during Restoration Works to Footpaths and Grassed Areas, February 2018

1. Introduction

1.1 Project introduction

Terrain Archaeology was commissioned by the National Trust, to undertake Archaeological Observations and Recording during restoration works to eroded areas in front of the Third, Fourth and North Towers of Corfe Castle.

The fieldwork was carried out on the 26th and 27th February 2018 by Peter Bellamy.

Terrain Archaeology wishes to acknowledge the cooperation and assistance of Rebecca Eddy and Knowle Landscapes Ltd.

1.2 Project Brief and Specification

A written brief was issued by Martin Papworth for The National Trust (Papworth 2018).

1.3 Site Location

The site lies within Corfe Castle at the northern end of the town of Corfe Castle, centred on Ordnance Survey NGR SY 9592 8227. The castle lies on a steep-sided natural mound in a break in the Purbeck Hills, which rises up to a height of over 60 m aOD.

1.4 Geology

Bedrock geology is mapped as Chalk, with no recorded superficial deposits (<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>).

1.5 Archaeological and Historical Background

The remains of a possible pre-Conquest building were found in the west bailey during excavations in 1950-52. These are thought to represent either a 'hospitium' belonging to Shaftesbury Abbey, a royal residence associated with King Edward, who was murdered at 'Corfegeat' in AD978 or the 'domus' of Queen Elfrida (RCHME 1960).

The Castle was built in the late 11th century during the reign of William I to guard a gap through the Purbeck Hills. The stone curtain wall of the inner ward was built in the late 11th century and there are the remains of a late 11th century hall in the West Bailey. The stone keep was built in the inner ward about 1105 and was used to imprison Robert Duke of Normandy during the reign of Henry I. The castle saw military action during the civil wars between Stephen and Matilda in 1138-9. Extensive building works were undertaken during the reign of King John, with the construction of the wall and towers around the West Bailey and the construction of the 'Gloriette' in the Inner Ward. The castle was used as a treasury, prison and royal residence. The Outer Bailey defences were completed during the reign of Edward I in the late 13th century. The castle was extensively repaired between 1356-77. Corfe Castle was sold by the Crown in 1572 and was acquired by the Bankes family in 1635 and was used as a high status noble residence until the Castle was captured and slighted in 1646 during the English Civil War. The castle was retained by the Bankes Estate as a romantic ruin and was bequeathed to the National Trust in 1982.

1.6 Previous Archaeological fieldwork

There was some excavation in the castle in the late 19th century. The early hall building in the West Bailey was investigated by the Royal Commission in 1960 (RCHME 1960).

The National Trust carried out a series of excavations and observations in the West Bailey, Outer Gatehouse and Inner Ward between 1986-97 (Thackray and Papworth 1988; 1989; 1990; 1991; 1992; 1993; 1994; 1995; 1996; Grace and Papworth 1997; 1998).

1.7 Aims and Objectives

The aim of the Archaeological Observations and Recording was to establish and make available information about the archaeological resource existing on the site.

Its objectives were:

- To observe and record all the *in situ* archaeological deposits and features revealed during the groundworks to an appropriate professional standard.
- To present the results in a report to the appropriate standard.

1.8 Groundworks

New gravel pathways were constructed around the entrance to the Third Tower and the Fourth Tower where there is erosion due to footfall. The made ground from previous erosion repairs was removed and a new gravel path about one metre wide constructed on terram covered with 40mm to dust limestone, topped by a layer of limestone dust. At the North Tower, the area of previous erosion repair material was removed and a layer of terram laid down covered with a layer of 40mm to dust limestone and topped with limestone dust, to join with the existing tower floor.

1.9 Methods

The methodology, scope, aims and objectives of the works was set out in a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) produced by Terrain Archaeology in January 2018 (Terrain Archaeology document no. 3484/0/1).

The observation and recording of the groundworks was undertaken to the standards of the Chartered Institute of Archaeologists (CIfA 2014), with an archaeologist in attendance during groundworks associated with the formation of new paths to the Third and Fourth Towers and the creation of a new hard-standing at the North Tower.

All features and deposits were recorded using components of Terrain Archaeology's system of complementary written, drawn and photographic records, regardless of their perceived date and archaeological significance. A photographic record of the works was maintained in digital format, which includes aspects of their setting, conduct and technical detail.

1.10 Archive and Dissemination

1.10.1 Paper Archive

The project archive, comprising written, graphic and photographic records, and appropriate background documentation, has been compiled in a stable, cross-referenced and fully indexed archive in accordance with current guidelines (Brown 2011; CIfA 2014b) and the requirements of the receiving museum. It is currently stored by Terrain Archaeology under the project code 53484. In due course, the archive will be accessioned for long-term curation and storage by the National Trust.

1.10.2 Artefacts

The artefacts retained from the site will be deposited alongside the Written Archive with the National Trust.

1.10.3 Report

A copy of this report will be lodged with the National Trust Sites and Monuments Record and with Dorset Historic Environment Record (HER). The HER is a publicly funded and accessible resource, and deposition of the report will place it, and the project results, in the public domain.

A digital summary of the archive will be placed with the OASIS project (www.oasis.ac.uk) under the reference code *terraina1-312101* and *terraina1-312102*. A digital copy of this report will be uploaded for inclusion in the Archaeological Data Service (ADS) online 'grey literature' library.

2. Results

2.1 Introduction

Three areas of repair were observed and these were numbered Trenches 1–3. Their locations are shown on Figure 2 and the context descriptions are presented in Appendix 1.

2.2 Trench 1

Trench 1 was adjacent to the Third Tower and ran from the stone paving at the edge of the tower to the modern stone cobbled path (Figure 3C; Plates 1–3). The grass had eroded away and the stone rubble from earlier consolidation works was visible. The existing turf and earlier consolidation material was removed to form a one metre wide strip between 0.1 – 0.2m deep. Adjacent to the Third Tower was an eroded surface of hard-packed clayey soil and flint gravel (101) which lay over a layer of dark reddish-brown clay loam and stone rubble (102) which lay on top of a geotextile membrane at a depth of 0.10 m. This membrane was laid on a thin layer of sand (104). In the eastern part of the trench, a thin layer of topsoil (100) overlay a sandy dark brown soil (103). Adjacent to the cobbled stone path at the east end, there was significantly more small stone in this soil (105).

2.3 Trench 2

Trench 2 was adjacent to the Fourth Tower and ran from the stone and gravel surface at the edge of the tower to the modern stone cobbled path (Figure 3B). It followed the line of an eroded path down to the tower (Plate 4). The remaining existing turf was removed to form a one metre strip 0.2 m deep (Plate 5). The thin layer of topsoil (201) lay over a dark brown sandy loam with frequent stone rubble (201) containing modern material and was part of an earlier repair.

2.4 Trench 3

Trench 3 consisted of a semi-circular area in front of the North Tower (Figure 3A; Plates 6–9). The existing modern stone rubble consolidation material and the turf and topsoil (301) was removed down to a depth of 0.2 m. The base of the trench did not penetrate below the modern mixed infill (302) from previous consolidation works.

3. Finds

3.1 Finds Assemblage

A small, assemblage of finds was recovered from the observations and these are quantified in Table 1 below.

Context	Coin	Medieval Pottery	Post-medieval pottery	Clay Tobacco Pipe
100	1/5g			
201			1/22g	1/1g
301		1/11g	2/3g	
<i>Total</i>	<i>1/5g</i>	<i>1/11g</i>	<i>3/25g</i>	<i>1/1g</i>

Table 1: Quantification of finds by context (count/weight in grams)

3.2 Coin

A single 1979 five pence coin was recovered from the topsoil in Trench 1 (context 100).

3.3 Pottery

3.3.1 Medieval Pottery

A single base sherd from a medieval jug was recovered from Trench 3 (301). It has a pale grey sandy fabric and was green glazed internally and had splashes of glaze externally. There are two small cracks in the fabric internally, which appear to have occurred during firing.

3.3.2 Post-medieval Pottery

A single sherd of a glazed earthenware jar was recovered from context 201 and one sherd of industrial whiteware and one sherd of a stoneware cup were recovered from context 301. All are nineteenth or twentieth century in date.

3.4 Clay Tobacco-Pipe

A single small fragment of clay tobacco pipe stem was recovered from the modern infill 201 in Trench 2.

4. Discussion and Conclusions

4.1 Discussion

The groundworks to construct new paths to the Third and Fourth Towers and to form the hard standing in front of the North Tower did not penetrate below the modern infill previously deposited to try to combat erosion in these areas. No significant archaeology was exposed or disturbed.

4.2 Conclusions

No significant archaeology was revealed during this project.

5. References

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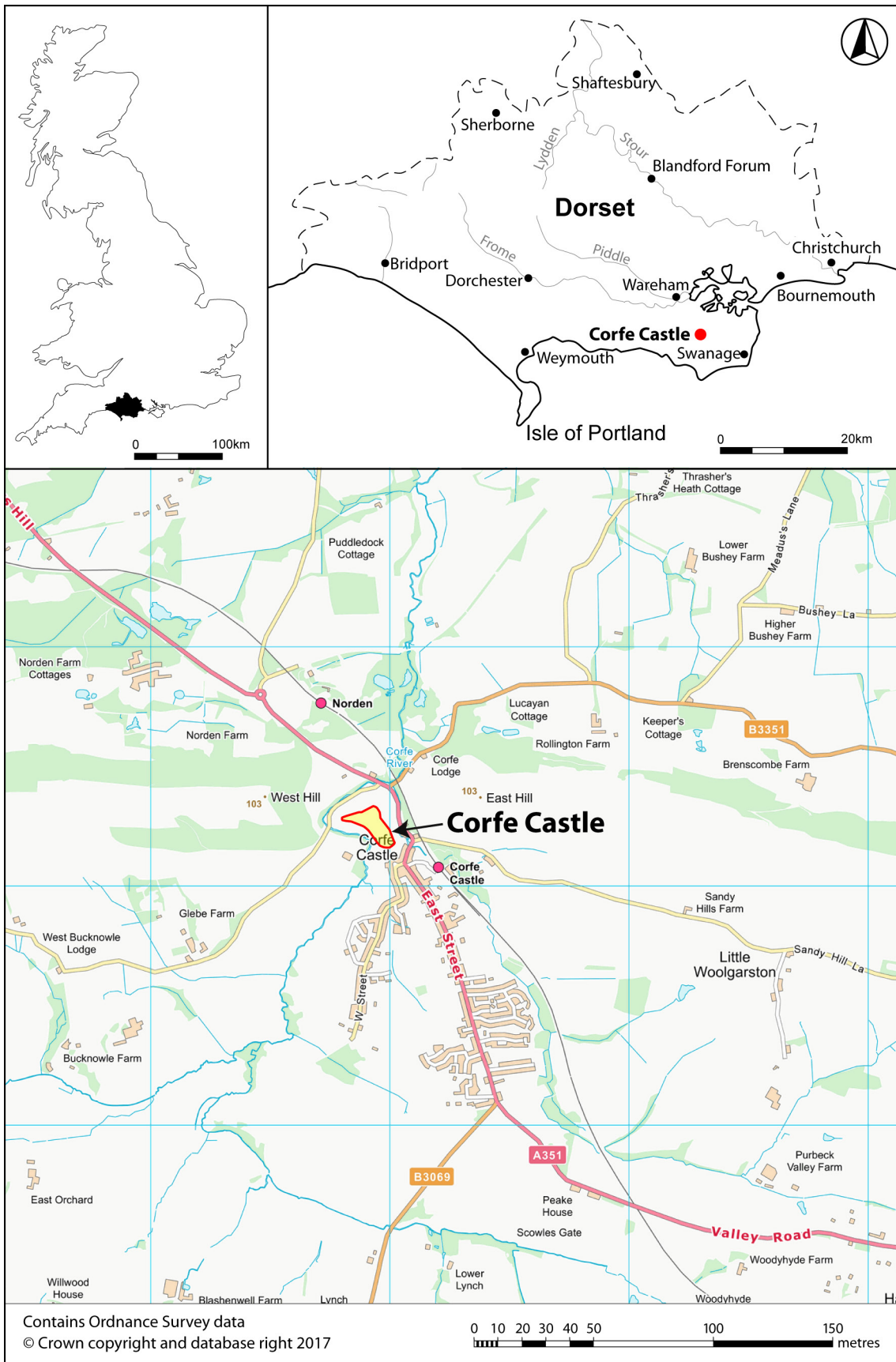


Figure 1: Site Location.

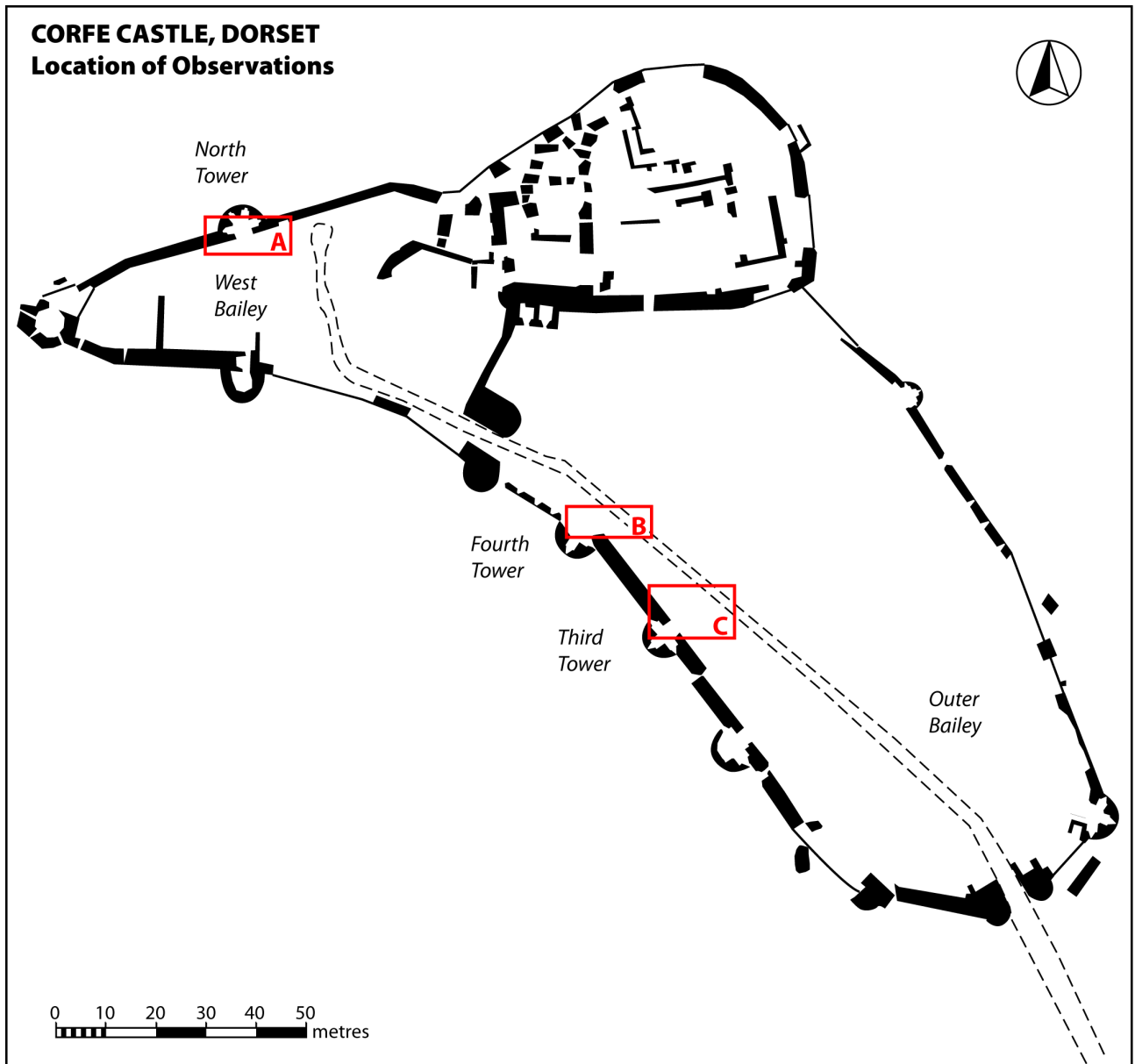


Figure 2: Plan of Observations

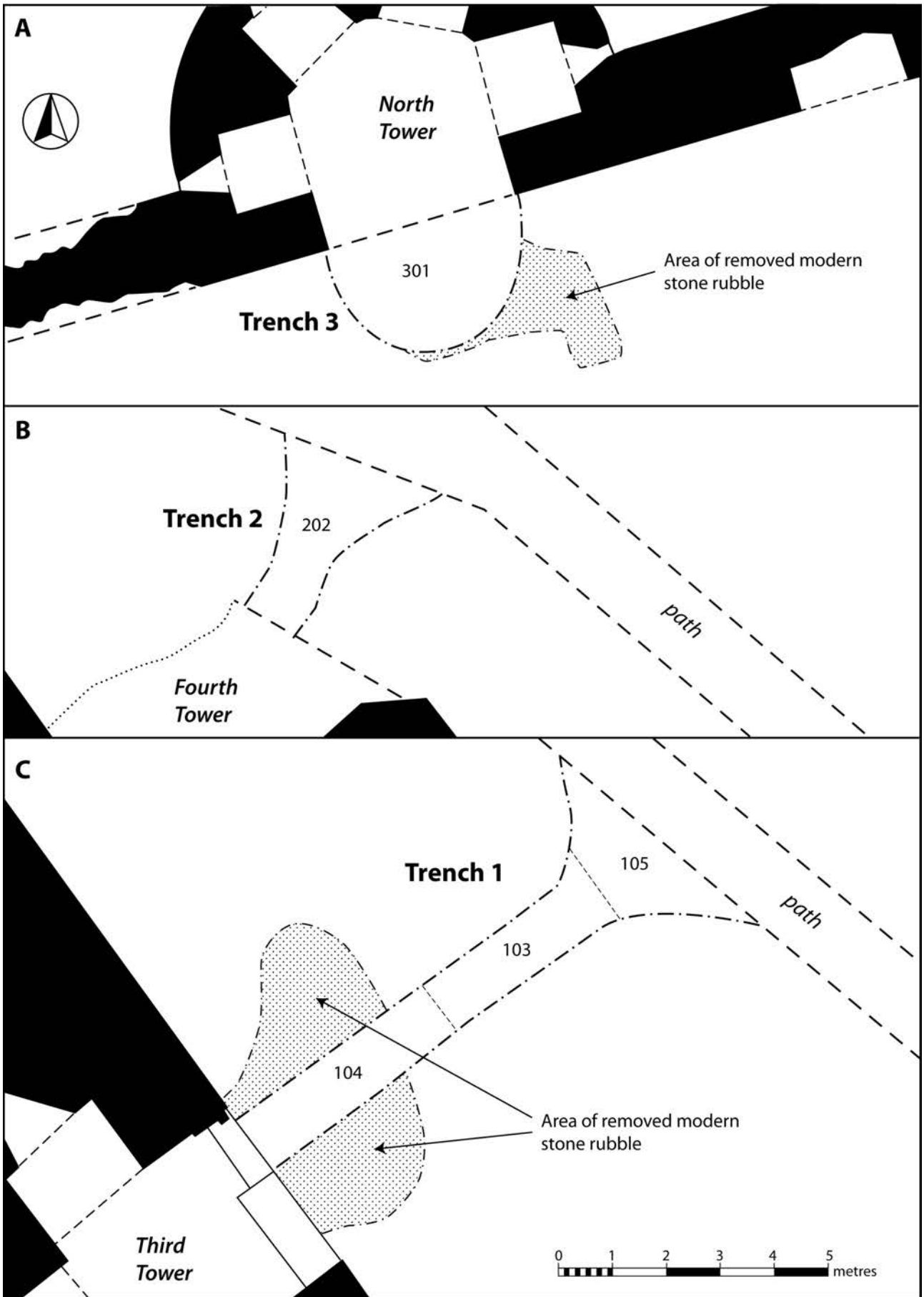


Figure 3: Plan of Observed Trenches (see Figure 2 for location)



Plate 1: Trench 1 during excavation. View from east. 1m scale.



Plate 2: West end of Trench 1 after removal of rubble infill 102 showing geotextile membrane below. Viewed from South. 1m scale.



Plate 3: Trench 1 fully excavated. View from east.



Plate 4: Area of Trench 2 before excavation showing erosion. View from northeast. 1m scale.



Plate 5: Trench 2 after excavation. View from southwest. 1m scale.



Plate 6: Area of Trench 3 before excavation showing modern rubble consolidation. View from west. 1m scale.



Plate 7: Trench 3 during removal of modern rubble consolidation. View from southeast.



Plate 8: Trench 3 after excavation. View from east. 1m scale.



Plate 9: Trench 3 after excavation showing mixed modern infill 301. View from west. 1m scale.

Appendix 1: Context Summary

Trench 1

Length: 9.3 m; Width 1.1 m; maximum depth 0.2 m.

Context	Description and Interpretation	Depth (m) below ground level
100	Topsoil: Dark brown silty loam.	0.00 – 0.10m
101	Eroded Surface: Compact dark greyish-brown clay and flint gravel. In the western end of trench over 102	0.00 – 0.05m
102	Modern Fill: Dark reddish-brown clay loam with frequent stone rubble up to 250mm across, on top of a geotextile membrane. In western 4.1m of trench.	0.05 – 0.10m
103	Soil: Friable dark brown sandy loam with occasional small stone rubble below 100 and 104.	0.10m+
104	Modern Fill: Thin layer, 5mm thick, of pale brown sand below geotextile membrane in 102.	0.10 m
105	Rubbly Soil: Friable dark brown sandy loam with frequent small stone rubble up to 70mm across. More stony part of 103 in east end of trench adjacent to stone path	0.1m+

Trench 2

Length: 3.3 m; Width 1.1 m; maximum depth 0.2m.

Context	Description and Interpretation	Depth (m) below ground level
200	Topsoil: Dark greyish-brown loam and turf	0.00 – 0.05m
201	Modern Fill: Dark brown sandy loam with frequent stone rubble	0.05m+

Trench 3

Length: 2.3 m; Width 3.6 m; maximum depth 0.15m.

Context	Description and Interpretation	Depth (m) below ground level
300	Topsoil: Friable dark brown sandy loam and turf	0.00 – 0.05m
301	Modern Fill: Hard-packed red to dark brown sandy clay with frequent stone and patches of greasy charcoal with reddish-brown mottled sand and flint gravel	0.05m+