



Tintagel Castle Visitor Facilities, Trial Trenching, Cornwall

Archaeological Watching Brief



Report No 2014R066	Report Name Tintagel Castle Visitor Facilities, Trial Trenching, Cornwall: Archaeological Watching Brief	Report Author CM Thorpe
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Event Type Watching Brief			
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Client Organisation English Heritage	Client Contact Win Scutt
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Monuments (MonUID) 1014793					
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Fieldwork dates (From) Date) 02/09/14	(To) 03/09/14	(Created By) Carl Thorpe	(Create Date) 04/09/14
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Location (postal address; or general location and parish)

Tintagel Castle, Tintagel Parish

(Town - for urban sites)	(Postcode) PL34 0HE
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(Easting) X co-ord SX 05205	(Northing) Y co-ord 89011		
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1 Project background

Cornwall Archaeological Unit, Cornwall Council (CAU) was commissioned by Win Scutt, Assistant Properties Curator (West), English Heritage, to undertake a programme of archaeological recording during the excavation of trial trenches in advance of the development of new visitor facilities at Tintagel Castle, Cornwall (Figs 1,2 and 3).

Three individual trenches at three separate locations were to be monitored each measuring 1.6m x 0.6m covering an area of 0.9 square metres and collectively 2.8 square metres (Fig 3). The watching brief was required as a condition of Scheduled Monument Consent for the works. Win Scutt produced a brief for archaeological recording (13/08/2014). A written scheme of investigation, (WSI) outlining the methodology for archaeological recording was produced (14/08/14) by Adam Sharpe (Senior Archaeologist, CAU) in response to Win Scutt's brief.

This short report covers the results of the archaeological watching brief carried out on the 2nd and 3rd September 2014.

2 Location and setting

Tintagel Castle (MCO16987) is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (National Monument Number 1014793, first Scheduled 09th October 1981, amended 18th November 2011). It is the site of a late Roman settlement (possibly the *Durocornovio* of the Ravenna Cosmography) of the 4th and 5th centuries AD; a major fortified citadel with trading links to the Mediterranean in the post-Roman period of the 5th to 7th centuries AD; and a medieval castle dating to the 13th century.

A lead/silver mine known as King Arthur Mine (MCO12202) located at SX 05091 89052 under the island operated in the 19th century (Collins 1912), the Haven (MCO4735) was used for servicing the slate quarrying and fishing industries.

Since the 1930s the Ministry of Works and latterly English Heritage Property in Care have held in Stewardship land at Tintagel which is owned by the Duchy of Cornwall. English Heritage has Guardianship and management responsibilities over the site. Apart from the track to the village, English Heritage does not possess the freehold, but manages and maintains the historic property on behalf of the Secretary of State for Culture Media and Sport.

Two of the trial trenches lay within the valley leading to the Haven. Trial trench 1 is on the eastern side of the stream in front of the cafe (SX 05208 89009) at 22m OD, while Trial trench 2 is at the northwestern end of the current visitor centre and shop (SX 05189 89010) at 24m OD. Trial trench 3 was situated within the barbican (SX 05174 88898) at 62m OD (Fig 3).

The bedrock geology is complex (BGS sheet 322), the Tintagel Group consisting of a mixture of Upper Devonian Upper Delabole slates, Lower Carboniferous slates and siltstones and Lower Carboniferous volcanic agglomerates. The whole has undergone complex faulting and thrusting movements that has greatly influenced the topography by creating numerous lines of weakness and instability, easily exploited by the action of the sea for example along the line of the Haven, and Merlin's cave. Some of the faults have been heavily mineralised, the lodes having been worked in the past for their metalliferous (lead) content.

3 Aims and objectives

The purpose of the watching brief was:

- To investigate, identify, describe and evaluate the archaeological resource.
- To monitor the excavation of the trial trenches and to provide advice if necessary for the preservation of buried deposits.
- To record and adequately describe any features identified during the watching brief.
- To assess the significance of any features identified during the watching brief.
- To provide English Heritage with information sufficient to determine whether further archaeological excavation would be required in advance of or during the works programme proposed for the visitor facilities improvements.
- To produce a report on the findings of the watching brief and to complete an entry to the ADS/Online archaeological projects database.

4 Working methods

The fieldwork was carried out as follows. Four trial trenches were excavated (of which only three were required to be inspected archaeologically). Each pit measured 1.6m x 0.6m, and was taken down to the depth required by the structural engineer (1.2m) unless solid bedrock was encountered. All were dug by hand by the contractors (Quadron) while being monitored archaeologically. The location of each trial trench was plotted onto a site plan at a scale of 1:100. They were measured in from fixed points on the ground, which are shown on the current Ordnance Survey map, together with compass bearings (Fig 3).

The sides of the trial trenches were archaeologically inspected with pit sections (noting the nature of soil depths, layers present, etc.) being recorded (Figs 4,5, and 6) at a scale of 1:10. The sides of pits were also examined for artefacts. A photographic record was made where appropriate. Spoil from each pit was also examined for any artefacts.

Late 19th and 20th century artefacts where present, were recorded but not retained.

5 Results

Three trenches were excavated and recorded archaeologically. Two were within the valley bottom, and one in front of the gate leading into the Lower Ward on the mainland side of the castle.

Trial trench 1. Testing ground for bridge base (Figs 3, 4, 7 and 8)

Depth	Thickness	Description	Interpretation	Context
0m – 0.05m	0.05m	Grass roots and topsoil.	Topsoil.	(1)
0.05m – 0.13m	0.08m	Grey-brown clay loam.	Subsoil.	(2)
0.13m – 0.49m	0.36m	Light grey-brown clay loam with numerous shillet fragments. Contains roofing slate, modern glass bottles and fragments of plastic.	Modern dump layer.	(3)

0.49m – 1.2m	0.71m Not bottomed	Dark grey-brown clay with large shillet blocks.	Dumped layer.	(4)
?	?	Large block of slate exposed at base of dig in NE side of trench.	Possibly bedrock?	(5)

This trench was located on the eastern bank of the stream in front of the cafe at SX 05208 89009. It measured 1.6m x 0.6m and reached a maximum depth of 1.2m. The profile encountered is described in the table above. No archaeology apart from the layers was recorded. It is possible that the lowest layer with its high content of large stones may have been dumped to protect the retaining wall from erosion and undermining by the action of the stream. The trench was excavated down to the depth required by the structural engineer, so it is uncertain if the large slate exposed in the base of the NE end of the trench is the top of bedrock, or just the top of another large block of slate. Only modern artefacts were recorded (glass bottles and china ceramics) which were not retained.

Trial trench 2. Visitor Centre extension (Figs 3, 5, 9, and 10)

Depth	Thickness	Description	Interpretation	Context
0m – 0.06m	0.06m	Grass roots and topsoil.	Topsoil	(6)
0.06m – 0.15m	0.09m	Grey-brown clay loam.	Subsoil.	(7)
0.15m – 0.33m	0.18m	Light grey-brown clay loam with numerous shillet fragments. Contains roofing slate fragments, and white mortar/cement flecks.	Modern dump layer.	(8)
0.33m – 0.74m	0.41m	Grey-brown clay with some shillet blocks. Contained several broken roofing slate fragments and plastic wrappings.	Modern dump layer.	(9)
0.74m – 0.95m	0.21m	Dark grey-brown clay with large amounts of roofing slate fragments and shillet fragments.	Dump layer. Slate dressing floor waste?	(10)
0.95m – 1.25m	0.3m Not bottomed	Grey-brown clay with numerous shillet and roofing slate fragments.	Dump layer. Slate dressing floor waste?	(11)
Depth of cut [12]. 0.55m	Max width exposed 0.45m	U shaped cut only partially exposed in trench.	Cut for electrical cable.	[12]
	0.40m	Grey-brown clay loam with some shillet blocks.	Upper fill of cable trench [12].	(13)
	0.15m	White, grey-brown sand.	Lower fill of trench [12]. Bedding layer for electric cable.	(14)

This trench was located at the northwestern end of the existing visitor centre at SX 05189 89010. It measured 1.6m x 0.6m and reached a maximum depth of 1.2m. The

profile encountered is described in the table above. No archaeology apart from the dump layers and an electrical cable trench on the north eastern side of the trench were recorded. The trench was excavated to the depth required by the structural engineer (1.2m), so the lowest layer was not bottomed. Only modern artefacts were recorded (glass china and plastic) which were not retained.

Trial trench 3. Site of new custodian’s hut, Mainland, Lower Ward (Figs 3, 6, 11, and 12)

Depth	Thickness	Description	Interpretation	Context
0m – 0.05m	0.05m	Grass roots and topsoil.	Topsoil.	(15)
0.05m – 0.10m	0.05m	Grey-brown clay loam.	Subsoil.	(16)
0.10m – 0.77m	0.68m	Grey-brown clay loam with numerous shillet blocks, some up to 0.30m in size. Several tip lines observed.	Modern dump layer.	(17)
0.77m – 0.80m	0.02m	Dark grey-brown silty clay. Few stone inclusions.	Old turf line?	(18)
0.80m – 1.07m	0.27m	Greenish, grey-brown silty clay with few shillet fragments.	Layer. Decayed natural? Some silt brought down from cliff face behind?	(19)
1.07m – 1.10m	0.03m	Solid grey, green-brown shillet.	Natural bedrock	(20)
		Sawn cut slate blocks set on edge.	Surface of pathway.	(21)

This trench was located alongside the pathway through the medieval barbican leading to the main gateway into the Lower Ward on the mainland side of the castle. The trench was cut to investigate the nature of a large mound of material built up below the rocky crag of the Upper Ward, the trench being situated at SX 05174 88898.

The trench measured 1.9m x 0.6m and reached a maximum depth of 1.1m. The profile encountered is described in the table above. The trench was taken down to bedrock throughout its length. No archaeological features were recorded, and no artefacts recovered.

6 Discussion

Trial trench 1 was dug (Fig 4) to investigate the nature of the ground onto which the footings of a proposed new bridge connecting the visitor centre to the cafe were to be constructed. It demonstrated that the entire trench profile consisted of ‘made’ ground with the lowest layer containing many large shillet blocks perhaps dumped to protect the foot of the revetment wall to the terrace upon which the cafe stands from erosion and undermining by the stream. The revetment wall is already extant by the 1880 OS map with the cafe buildings acting as workshops for King Arthurs Mine. The presence of

bedrock at the base of the trench (circa 1.2m) was not confirmed though it appears in the bed of the stream which lies some 1.5m to the SW of the end of the trench.

Trial trench 2 was dug (Fig 5) to investigate the ground immediately beyond the NE gable end of the existing visitor centre with the aims of assessing the impact of extending the latter. This trench demonstrated that the entire profile down to the level required to be inspected by the structural engineer (1.2m) was of 'made' ground consisting mostly of layers of shillet and broken roofing slate fragments. This confirmed previous archaeological observations that the site of the visitor facilities seems to have been created in the 19th century for the dressing and storage of slate before its shipment from Tintagel Haven. The area was built up with material cut back from the hill slope and lain down to create a platform for the building and dressing area, and to ensure an even gradient for the trackway to the Haven (Lawson Jones A, 1994 and 1995, Dudley, 2004).

Trial trench 3 was designed to investigate the nature of the mound of material that lay on the site of the proposed custodian's hut within the Barbican below the crag in front of the gateway into the Lower Ward on the mainland (Fig 6). Taken down to bedrock throughout its length the trench again showed that the majority of the material was 'made' ground. This confirmed that this mound was a store of topsoil and other material derived from works within the Upper and Lower Wards done in 1998/9 by English Heritage (Reynolds 2006).

No other features of archaeological interest were recorded and it appears that within the areas of the trial pits any proposed future works would have very little or no impact on any significant buried remains.

7 References

7.1 Primary sources

Ordnance Survey, 2007. Mastermap Digital Mapping

British Geological Survey, 1969. 1:50000 Map. Boscastle. Sheet 322

RCHME 1985. Survey of Tintagel Island

7.2 Publications

Barrowman, R, Batey, C, and Morris, CD; 2007. *Excavations at Tintagel Castle, Cornwall, 1990-1999*. Society of Antiquaries

Collins, JH; 1912. *Observations on the West of England Mining Region* (1988 reprint by Cornish Mining Classics, Truro)

Dudley, P; 2004. Tintagel Visitor Facilities, Cornwall. Archaeological Watching Brief. CAU, Truro

Lawson Jones A; 1994 *Tintagel Castle: Proposed shop extension*. CAU (1994R029), Truro

Lawson Jones A; 1995 *Tintagel Castle: Shop extension watching brief*. CAU (195R003), Truro

Reynolds, A; 2006. *Repairs to Tintagel Castle, Cornwall. Archaeological recording*, Truro (Historic Environment Service, Cornwall County Council)

8 Project archive

The CAU project number is **146409**

The project's documentary, digital, photographic and drawn archive is maintained by Cornwall Archaeological Unit, Cornwall Council, Fal Building, County Hall, Treyew Road, Truro, TR1 3AY. The contents of this archive are as listed below:

1. Projects file containing site records and notes, project correspondence and administration (**146409**).
2. Field plans and copies of historic maps stored in an A2-size plastic envelope (GRE819/1-5).
3. Digital photographs stored in the directory: R:\Historic Environment (Images)\SITES.Q-T\TINTAGEL\Tintagel Castle Visitor Facilities Trial Trench WB Sept 2014 HEXQPR 146409
4. English Heritage/ADS OASIS online reference: cornwall2- 189401
5. This report text is held in digital form as: G:\TWE\Waste & Env\Strat Waste & Land\Historic Environment\Projects\Sites\Sites T\Tintagel Castle Visitor Facilities WB 2014 HEXQPR 146409\Report

No artefacts were recovered in the course of this project.

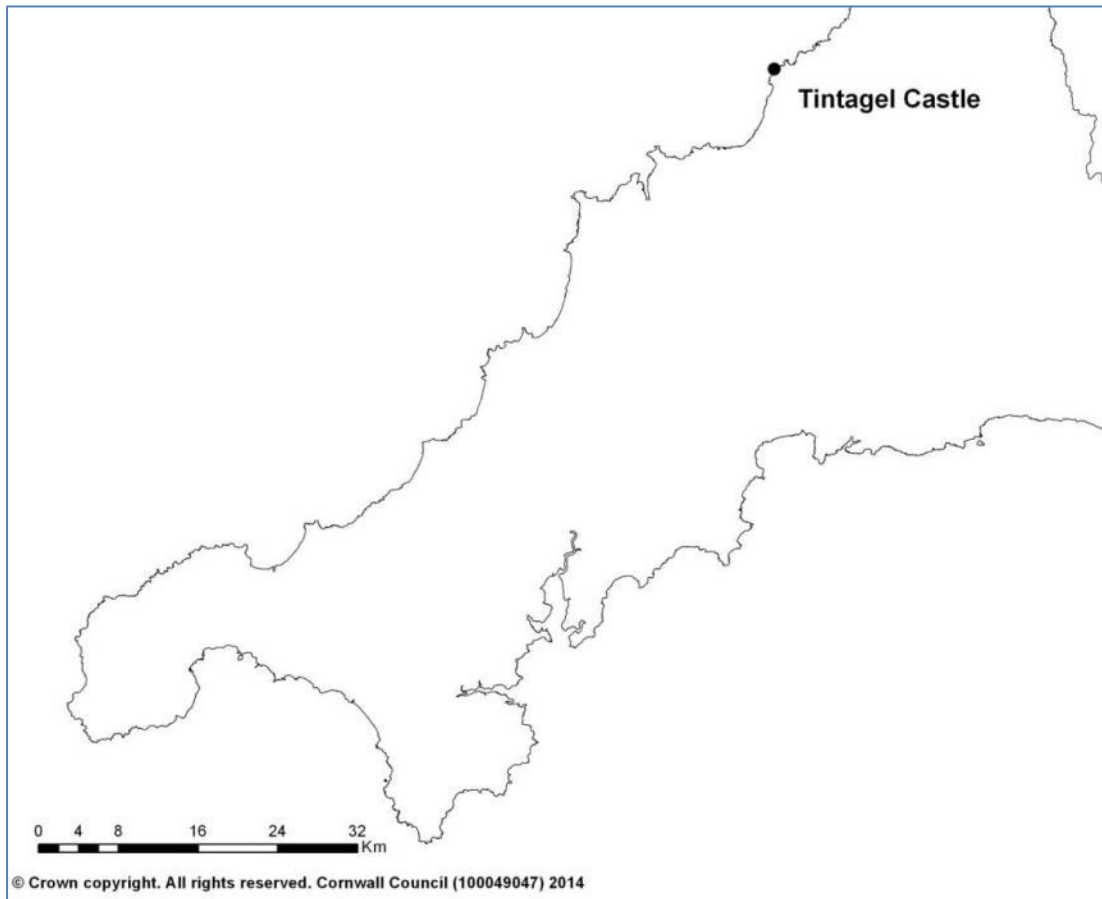


Figure 1. The location of Tintagel Castle.

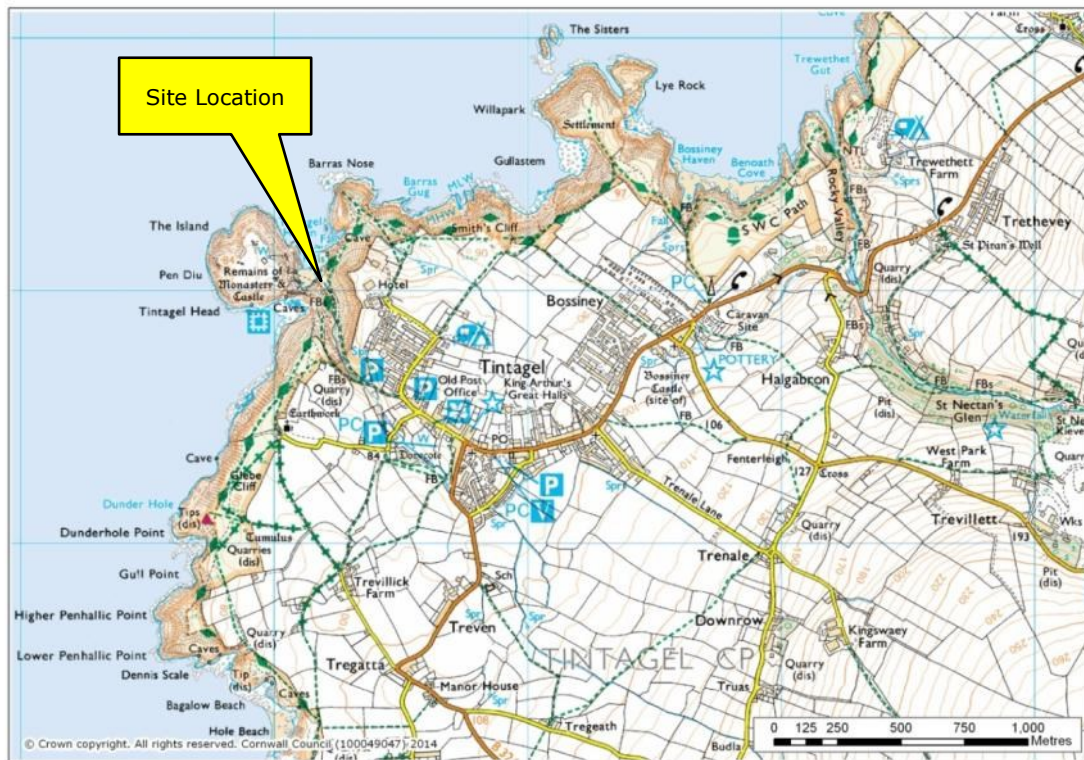


Figure 2. Site location.

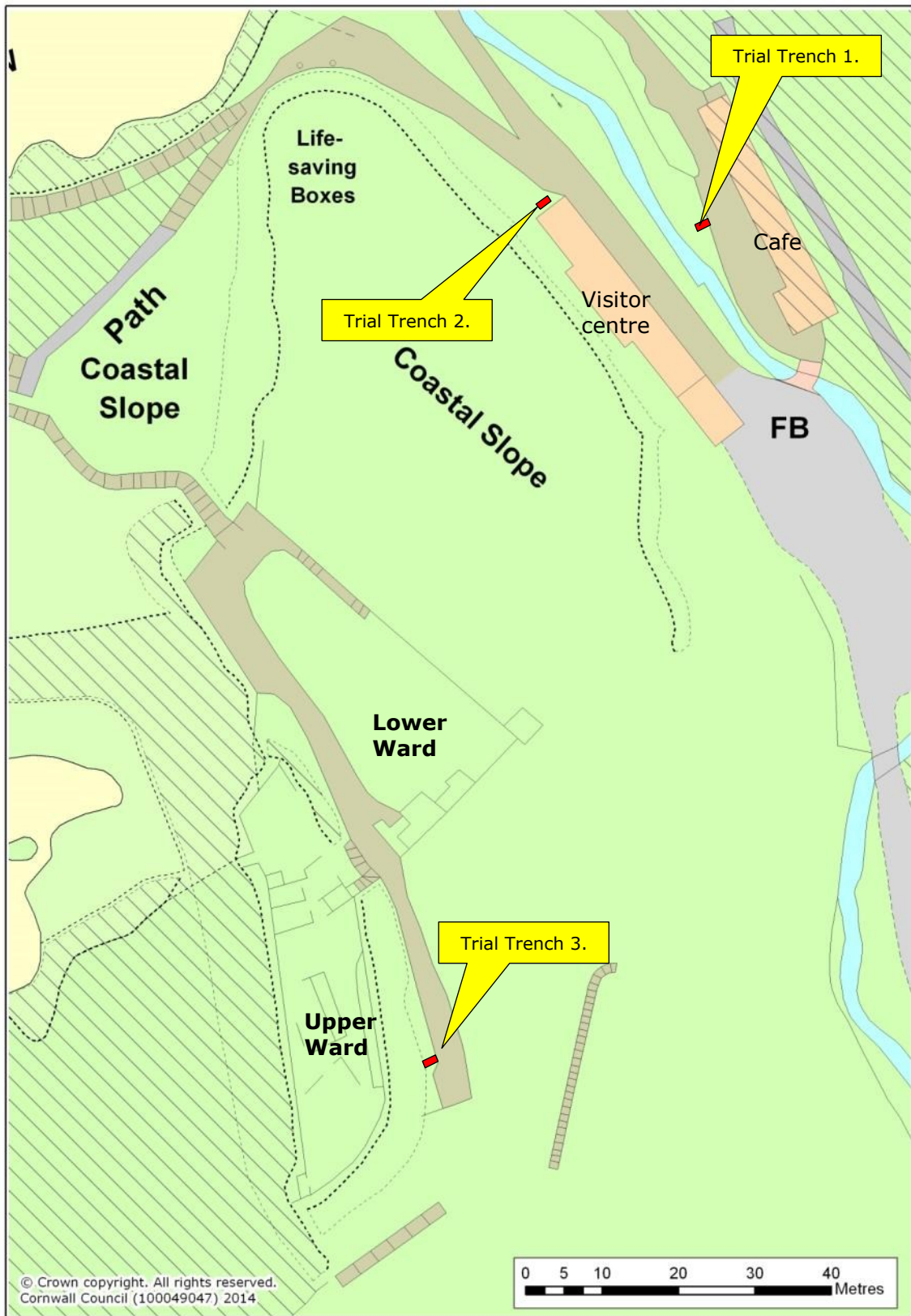


Figure 3. Site plan showing location of Trial pits.

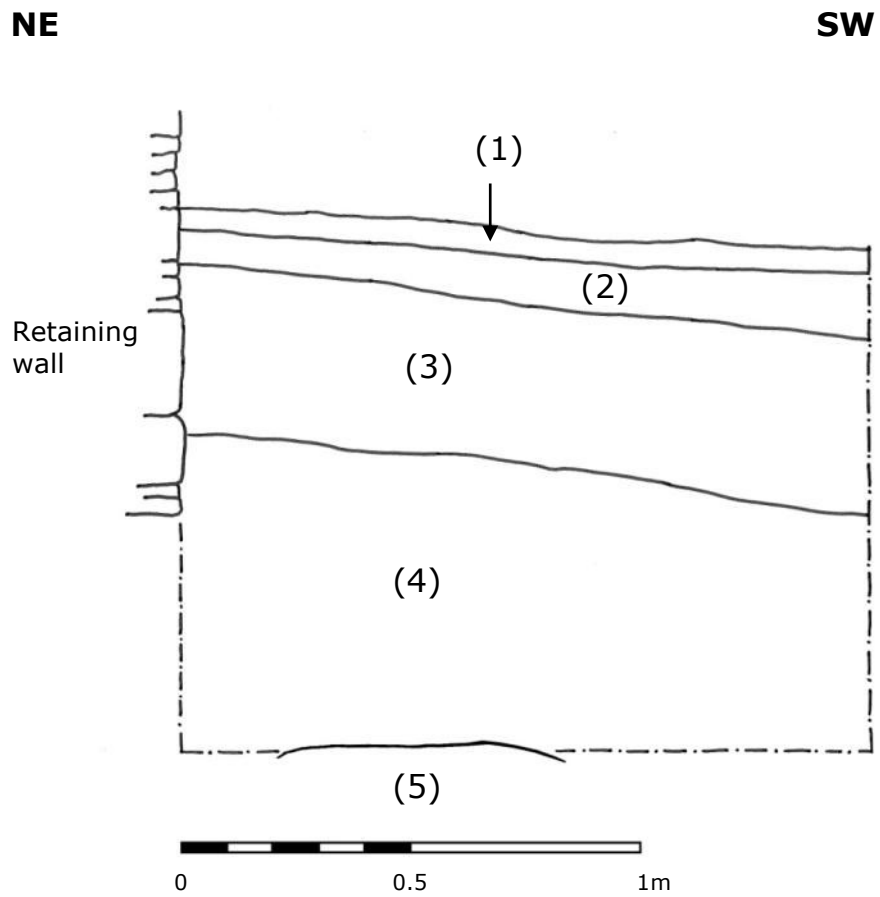


Figure 4. Trial Pit 1. Section.

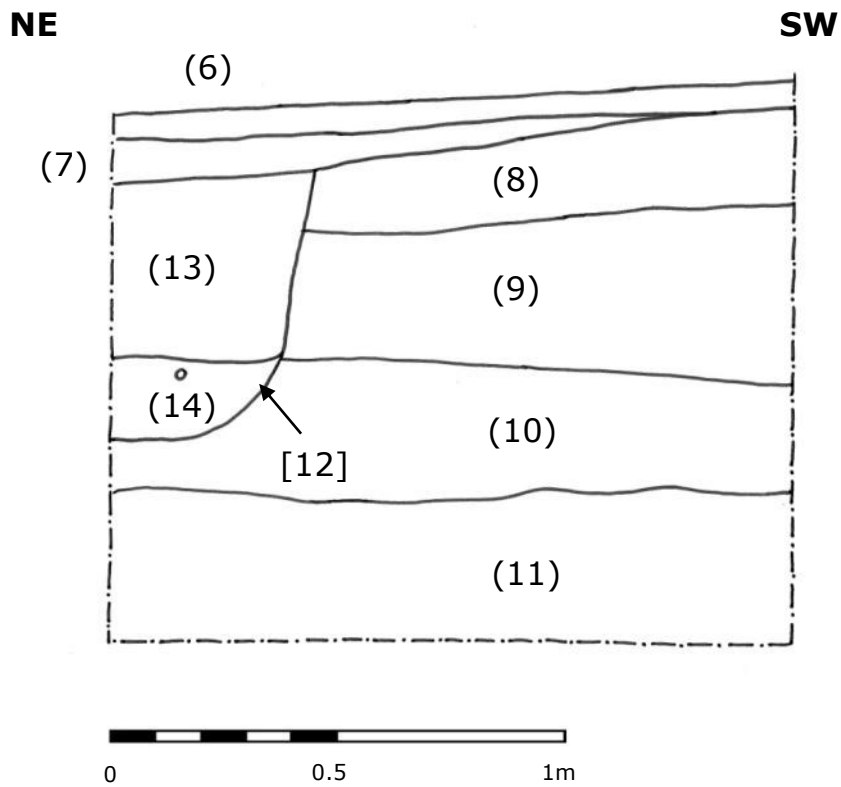


Figure 5. Trial Pit 2. Section.

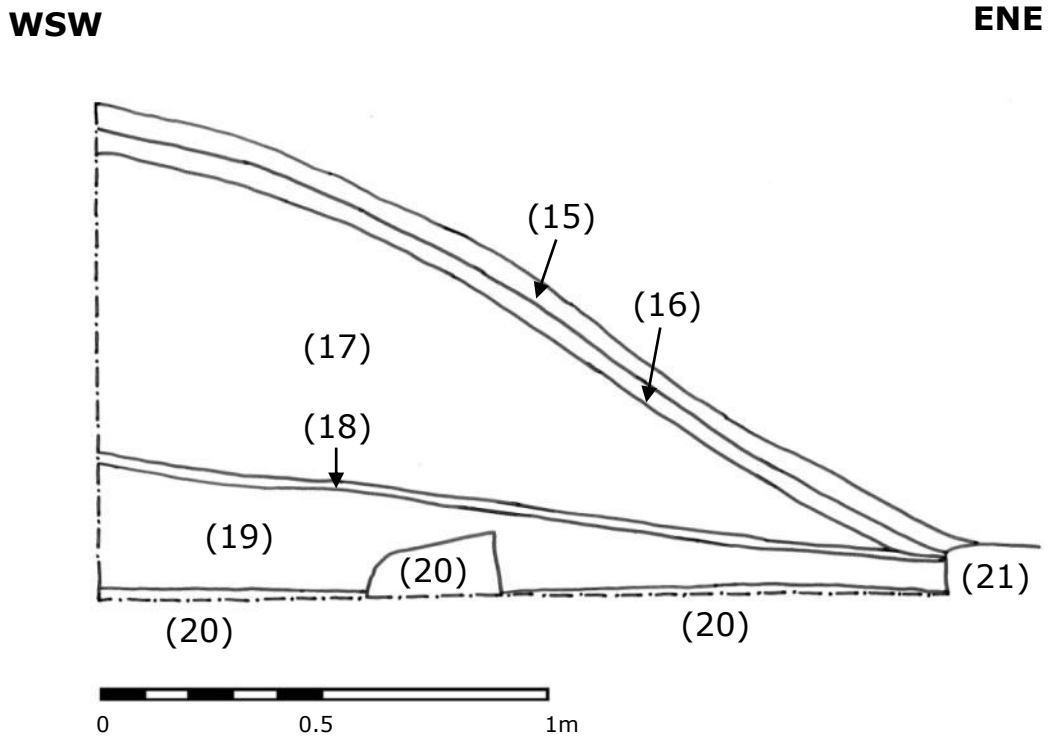


Figure 6. Trial Pit 3. Section.



Figure 7. Trial Pit 1. Excavated section looking northwest.



Figure 8. Trial Pit 1. Excavated trench showing location, looking northeast..



Figure 9. Trial Pit 2. Excavated trench (within Herras fencing) showing location, looking southwest.



Figure 10. Trial Pit 2. Excavated section looking southwest.



Figure 11. Trial Pit 3. Showing location, looking north towards the Lower Ward.



Figure 12. Trial Pit 3. Excavated section looking west.