

***A Watching Brief at
17 East Castle Street,
Bridgnorth, 2015***

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Archaeology Service



**A WATCHING BRIEF AT
17 EAST CASTLE STREET, BRIDGNORTH, 2015**

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A report for

Old Castle Nominees Ltd

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SUMMARY

In December 2015 work commenced on the construction of an extension to 17 East Castle Street, Bridgnorth, Shropshire. East Castle Street lies within the former outer bailey of Bridgnorth Castle, and so the groundworks for the development were accompanied by a programme of archaeological work in the form of a watching brief. The watching brief recorded the remains of a former 19th century greenhouse and outhouses on the site of the extension, but no other significant archaeological features or deposits were encountered.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 In December 2015 work began on the construction of a two storey rear extension at 17 East Castle Street, Bridgnorth, Shropshire, WV16 4AN (NGR SO 7171 9289), following the demolition of an existing extension.

1.2 The development site lies within the historic medieval core of the town of Bridgnorth (Shropshire Historic Environment Record [HER] No. 06044) as defined by the Central Marches Historic Towns Survey (Buteux, 1996). It also occupies part of the known extent of Bridgnorth Castle (HER 00371), a group of tenement plots within the outer bailey of the castle (HER 05630) and a second group of tenement plots to east of East Castle Street (HER 06032). The development site lies c.115m north of the Scheduled Boundary of Bridgnorth Castle (National ref 1004783) and c.55m north of the Grade II* Church of St Mary Magdalene. (National Ref. 1177357)

1.3 Because of the potential archaeological significance of the development area it was made a condition of the planning consent that the development should be accompanied by a programme of archaeological work, to comprise a watching brief on groundworks associated with the development. The aim of the watching brief was to allow for the preservation by record of any archaeological remains that might be encountered during the groundworks. The Archaeology Service, Shropshire Council was commissioned to carry out this programme of archaeological work.

2 THE HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Bridgnorth is not listed as a separate settlement in the Domesday survey of 1086, but formed one of the 18 berewicks of the manor of Membrefelde (Morville). In 1086 it was held by Roger of Montgomery, Earl of Shrewsbury, and the site of Bridgnorth may have formed part of his demesne lands in the manor (Thorn 1986, 4.1.5). Earl Roger's son, Robert de Belleme built a castle (HER 00371) at Bridgnorth and moved the collegiate church of St Mary (HER 00389) here from the settlement at Quatford (Buteux, 1996, p2.). The town at Bridgnorth is thought to have grown up in the outer bailey of the castle. The settlement gradually superseded in importance both Morville and Quatford, no doubt because of its economically and militarily strategic location. The town's status as a borough was confirmed in 1157 by a charter of Henry II, which also granted a weekly market and an annual fair on St Mary Magdalene's day. The town rapidly outgrew its original boundaries, extending beyond the limits of the castle outer bailey, and between 1216 and 1223 new defences were built on the north and northwest sides of the town. (Phillpotts, 1995, pp5-6.)

2.2 Bridgnorth Castle was situated on a steep sided promontory overlooking the River Severn. The castle was probably built by Robert de Belleme in about 1101-1102 on the abandonment of Quatford, and was placed, according to Florence of Worcester on the site of a Saxon burh, built by Ethelflaeda in 912 AD. Belleme surrendered the castle to Henry I in 1102. It then fell into the hands of Hugh de Mortimer during Stephen's reign but was surrendered to Henry II in 1155. By Henry VIII's reign much of the castle was in ruins,

although the keep survived until the Civil War period; in 1646 it was captured and slighted by the Parliamentarians. The remains are fragmentary and unconnected and most of the site has been built over.

2.3 By 1242 the area within the outer bailey was seen as part of the town although its defences were part of the castle. An inquest of 1342 instituted by Edward III was established to discover by what right people lived in the outer bailey of the Castle. The king was informed that the burgesses held it by grant of the Earl of Belesme. In the mid-16th century Leland refers to 'dwellynge houses of timber' in the outer bailey'. The actual layout of the medieval burgage plots in the outer bailey is not known, but it contained one or more streets, burgage plots and the house of the castle governor as well as the castle well.

2.4 East Castle Street was substantially rebuilt in the 17th century as one of the most fashionable streets of the town. No 17 East Castle Street is a mid-18th century brick house, and No 17a was a wing built on at right angles in the nineteenth century. They are now separate houses, and are protected by Grade II Listing (National List Entry [NLE] No. 1376782).

3 THE WATCHING BRIEF

3.1 The watching brief on the excavations for the foundations of the new extension to 17 East Castle Street was carried out in early December 2015. The trenches were excavated by hand to a depth of up to 1.1m and a width of 0.6m.

3.2 Beneath the sandy bedding (Fig. 5a; 1) for the demolished extension and the garden soil (Fig. 5b;6) to the east, was a deposit of dark greyish brown sandy silty loam (2, 8. & 9) up to 0.5m thick, containing pebbles and fragments of brick, tile, mortar and sandstone. This deposit buried a number of brick and brick and sandstone walls of mid to late 19th century date (Fig. 4; 3, 4, 7, 10, 11, & 14). These walls were the remains of a small water tank (3), a greenhouse and outhouses that are shown on the late 19th and early 20th century OS maps on the east side of the house. These foundation walls were cut into a buried garden or yard soil (Fig. 5b; 15) up to 0.5m deep consisting of a very dark grey-brown silty loam flecked with charcoal.

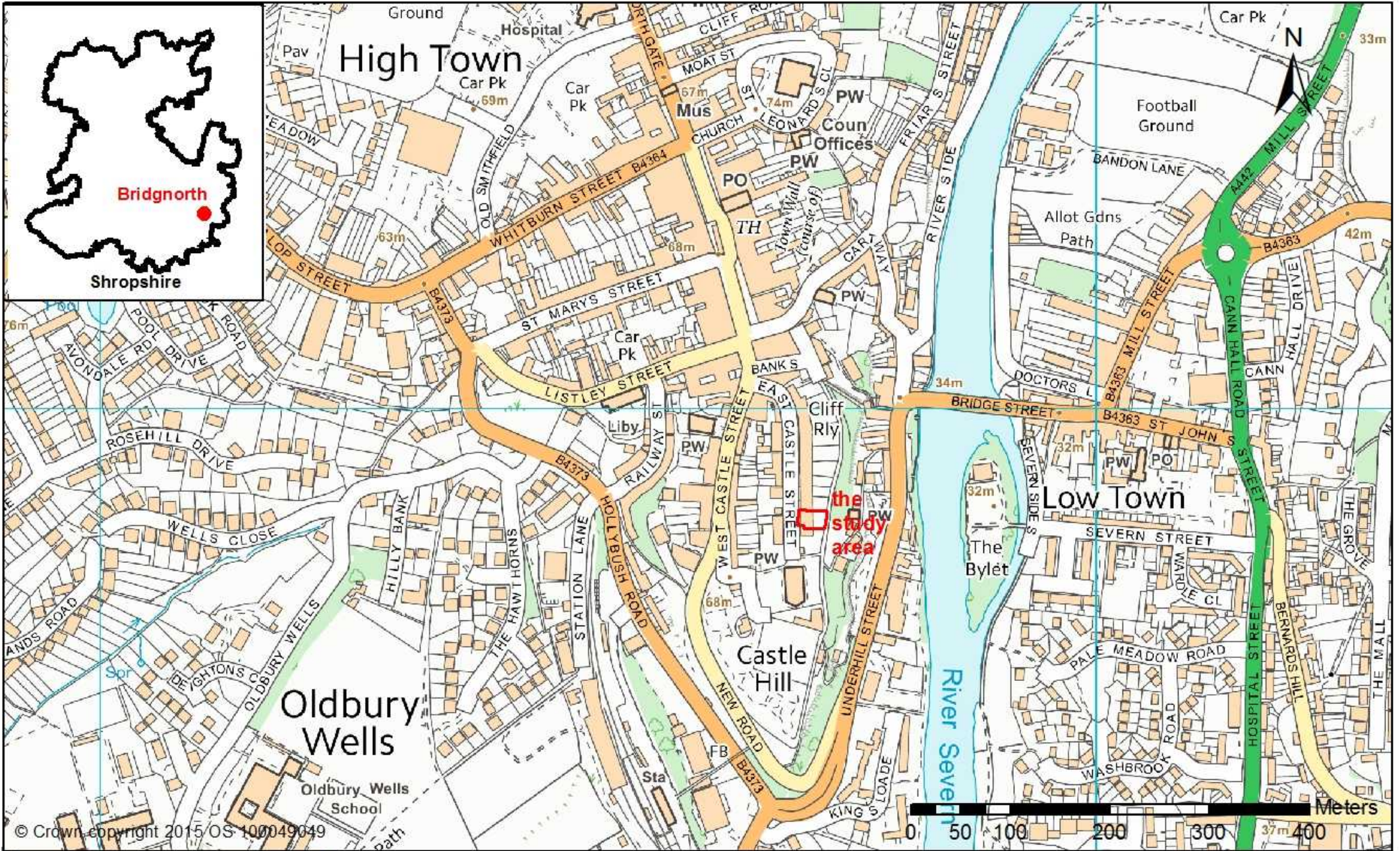
3.3 No other significant archaeological features or deposits were encountered during the watching brief.

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ABBREVIATIONS

- AOD** Above Ordnance Datum
- OS** Ordnance Survey
- HER** County Historic Environment Record, Shirehall, Shrewsbury
- NGR** National Grid Reference
- SA** Shropshire Archives, Castle Gates, Shrewsbury
- TSAHS** Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological and Historical Society
- TSAS** Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological Society



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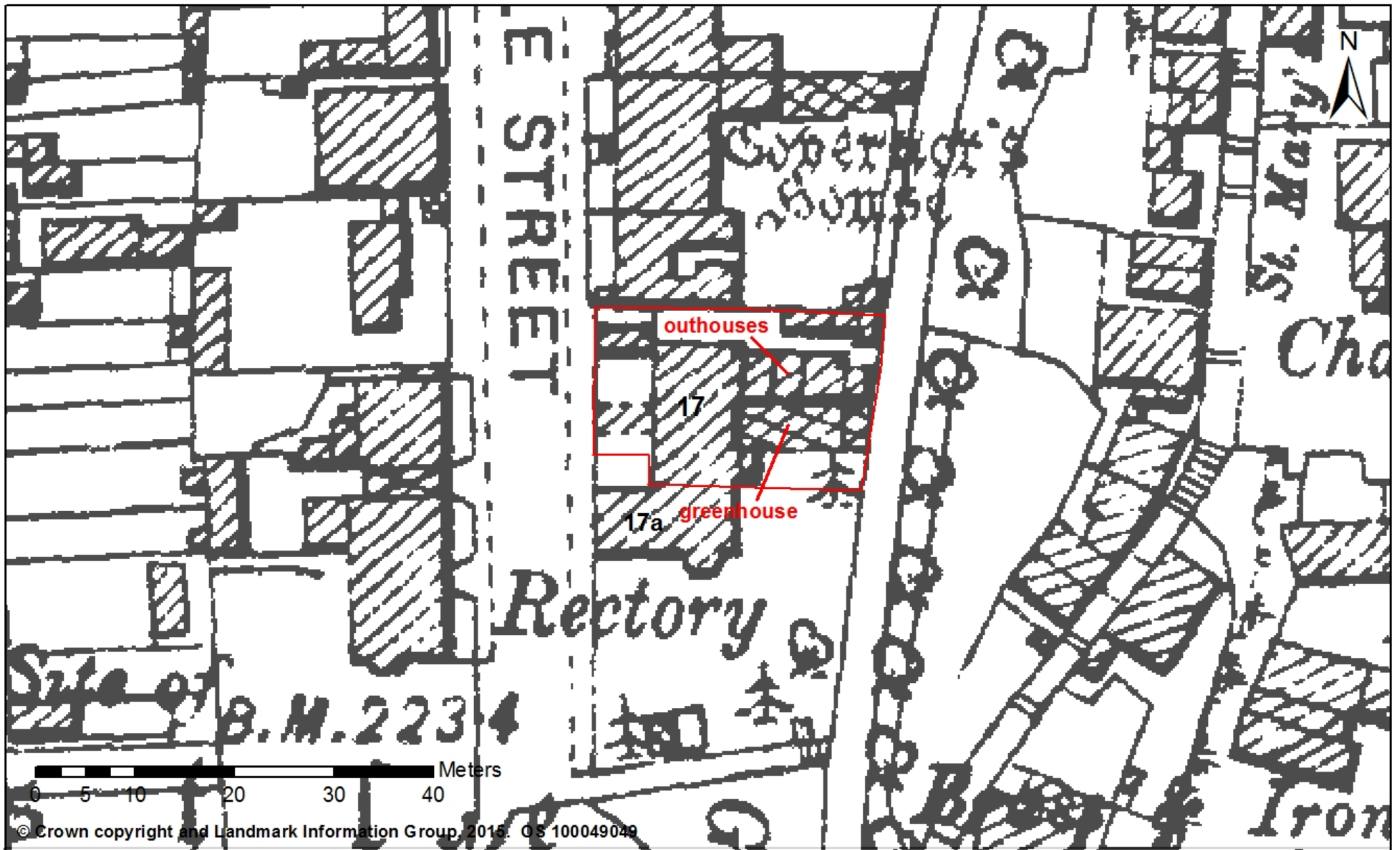


17 EAST CASTLE STREET, BRIDGNORTH 2015

Figure 1: The location of the study area

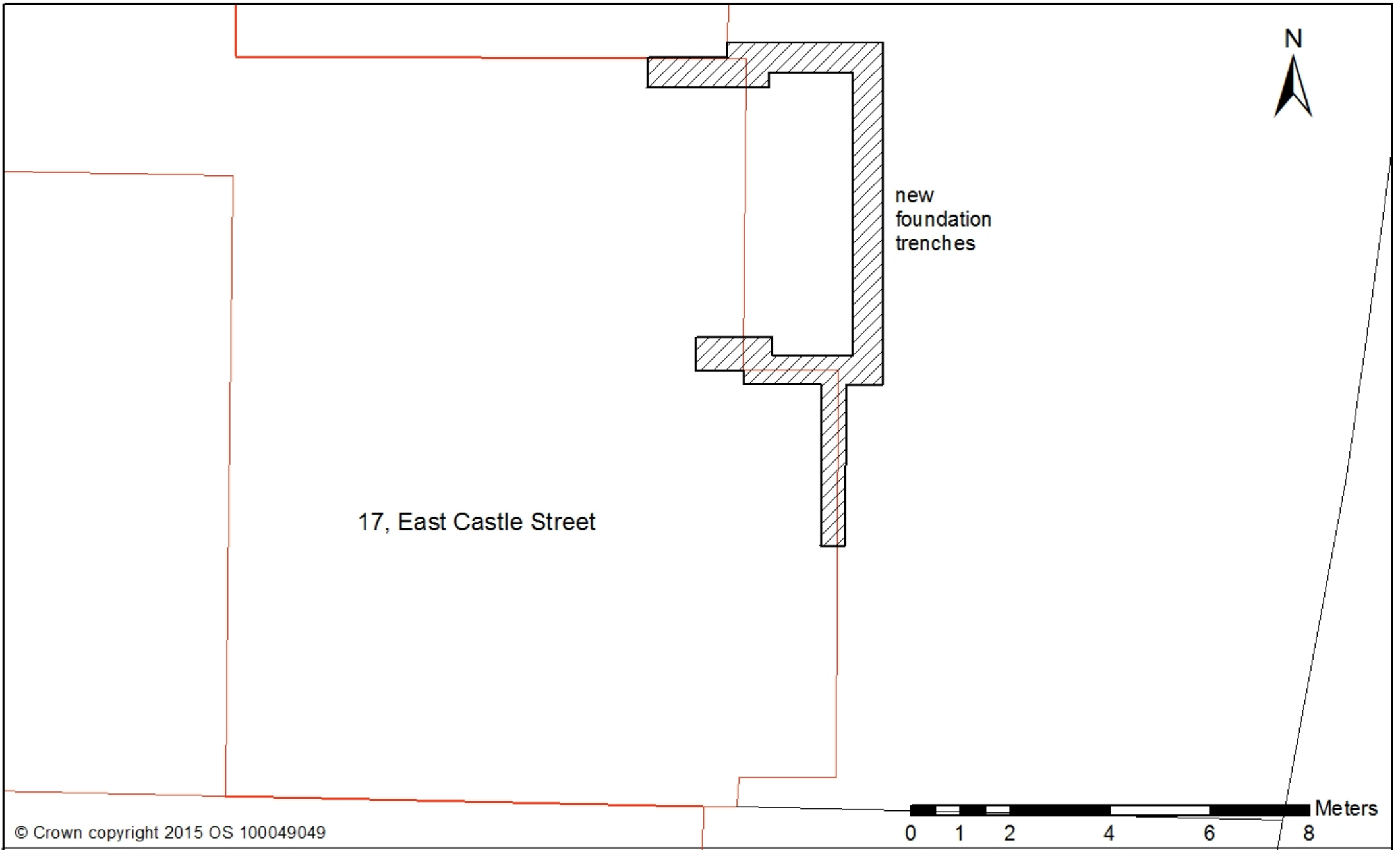
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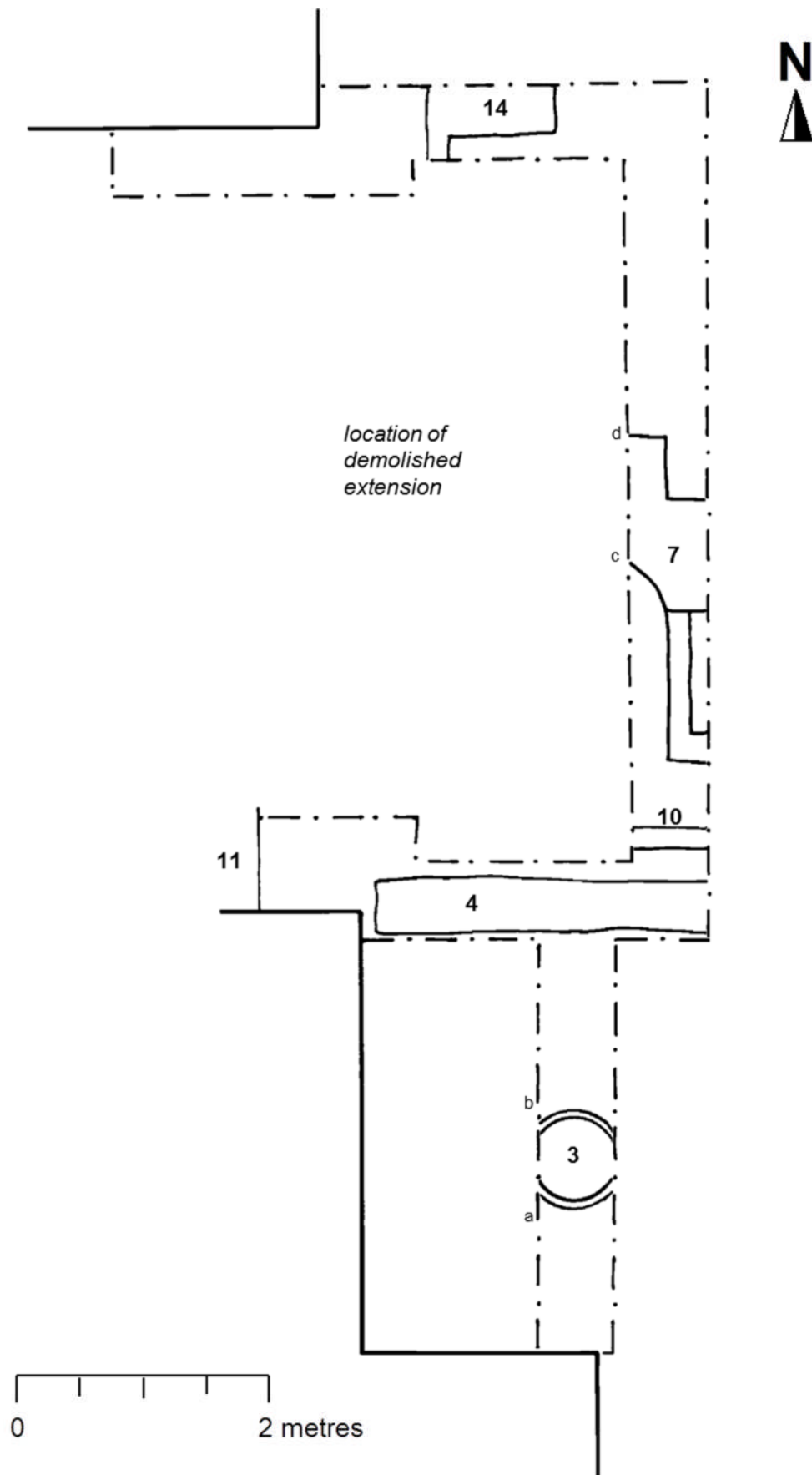
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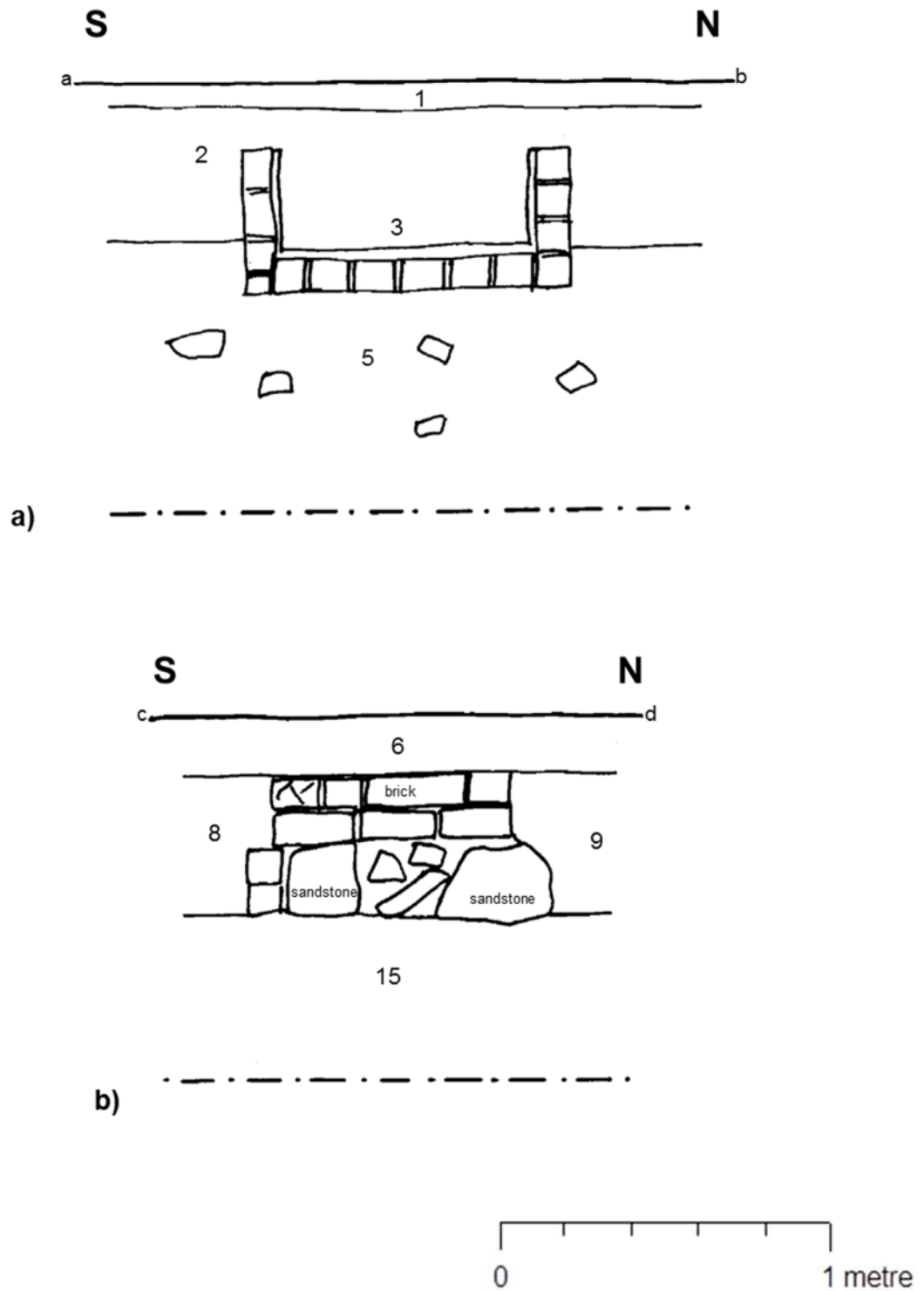
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Figure 4: The location of features noted in the text, and of Figures 5a (a-b) and 5b (c-d); scale 1:50



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