

***An Archaeological Watching Brief at
Stokesay Castle Pool,
Shropshire, 2010***

by
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Archaeology Service Report Number 278
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May 2010

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF AT
STOKESAY CASTLE POOL, SHROPSHIRE, 2010**

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A Report for
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1 INTRODUCTION

The small village of Stokesay lies just to the west of the A49 Trunk Road 1km south of Craven Arms in south Shropshire. At the heart of the village is Stokesay Castle, one of the country's finest fortified manor houses, built in the 13th century on profits from the wool trade (Historic Environment Record No. HER 00159). The manor house is surrounded by a dry moat, ponds, and other earthworks.

1.2 The castle, ponds, and earthworks are a scheduled Ancient Monument (County Monument No Salop 8, Stokesay Castle) and the castle and gatehouse comprise a Grade 1 listed structure (No. 460272 Stokesay Castle and gatehouse including moat retaining walls).

1.3 In January 2010 a mobile crane in transit to a sewage treatment plant on the south side of the village, left the road through the village and overturned down an embankment retaining one of the castle ponds. The weight of the crane threatened to undermine the retaining embankment and accordingly Shropshire Council acted to undertake emergency reinforcement works to the bank. Permission for these works was obtained under Class 5 of the Ancient Monuments (Class Consents) Order 1994.

1.4 Because of the potential archaeological sensitivity of the site, it was considered appropriate that these groundworks should be carried out under archaeological supervision. The Archaeology Service, Shropshire Council, was commissioned to carry out this watching brief.

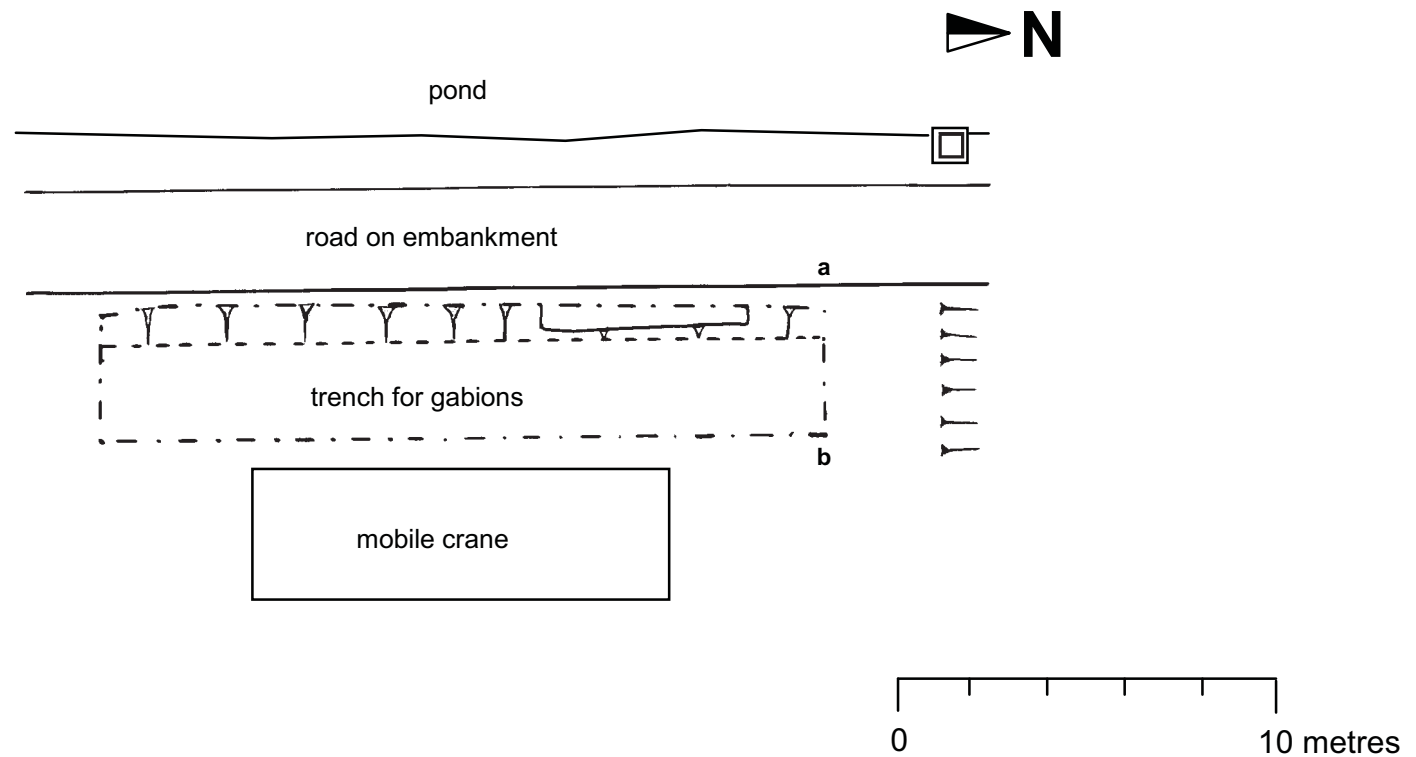
1.5 The aim of the archaeological monitoring was to allow for the preservation by record of any archaeological remains that were encountered during the works.

2 THE WATCHING BRIEF

2.1 The emergency repair works entailed the erection of stone-filled steel mesh gabions on the east side of the dam, between the dam and the overturned mobile crane (Fig. 2). The base of the gabions were to be set in a trench c. 2.15m wide by 19m long. The north end of the trench would cut into the toe of the dam by up to 1m depth, the south end by about 0.25m.

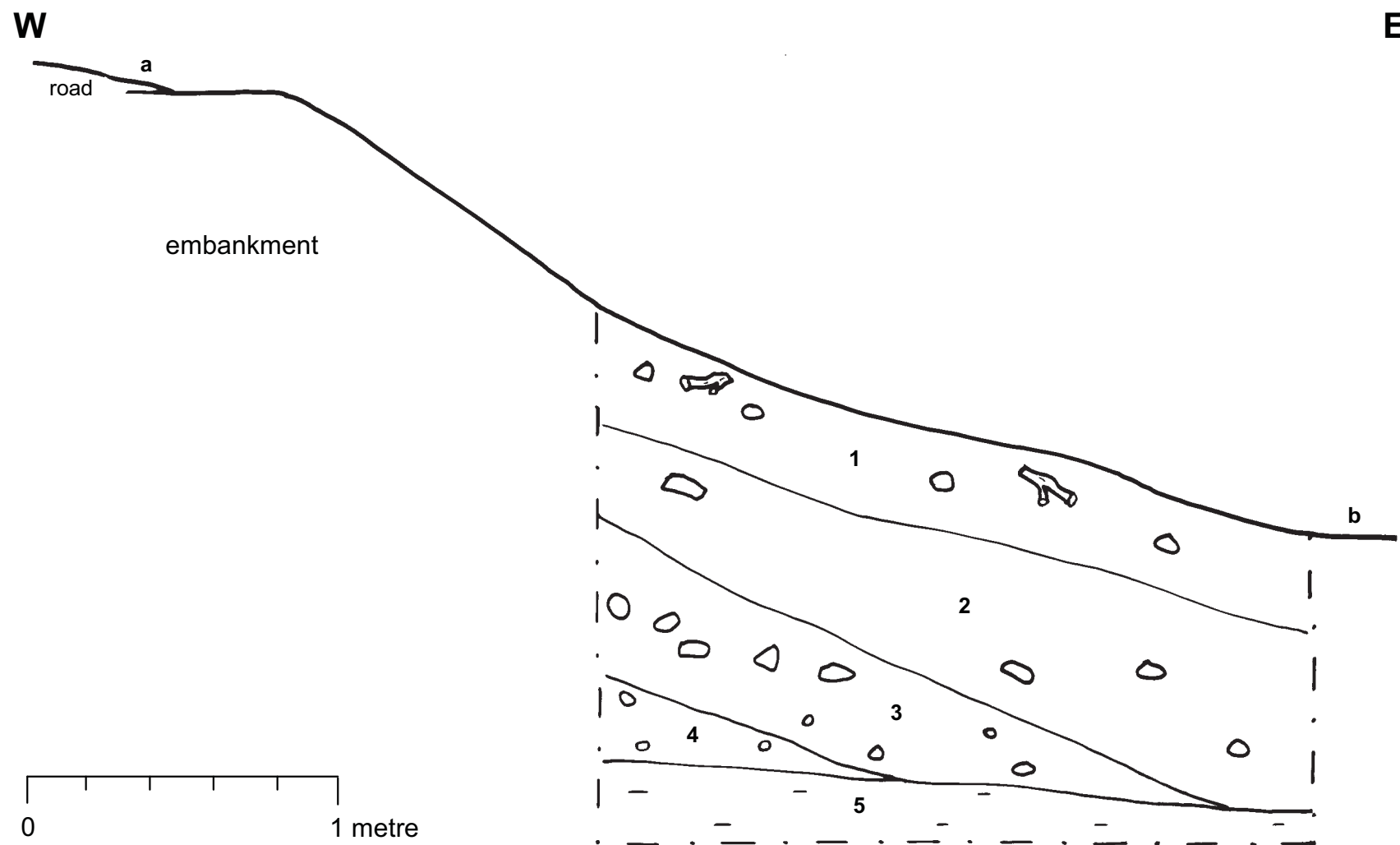
At the bottom of the trench, the excavations revealed a smooth dark grey silt (Fig. 3; 5). Along the western edge of the trench this was overlain by a deposit of dark brown silty loam mottled with buff clay (4) which may have represented eroded material from the dam core. This in turn lay beneath a deposit of dark greyish brown loam with stones (3) up to 0.4m thick. Above this was a soil layer, again of dark greyish brown humic loam (2) up to 0.6m thick, and a similar topsoil (1) 0.3m thick with stones and tree roots.

No other significant features or deposits were seen during the watching brief.



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Figure 2: Plan view of the pond embankment, showing the location of the mobile crane and the trench for the gabions; scale 1:200



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Figure 3: South-facing section through the gabion trench; scale 1:20



Photo 1: The study area, looking north



Photo 2: The trench for the gabions, looking northwest



Photo 3: The lower gabions in place