



***A watching brief at the
Castle Street car park, Ludlow
Shropshire, 2010***

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**A WATCHING BRIEF AT THE
CASTLE STREET CAR PARK, LUDLOW,
SHROPSHIRE, 2010**

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SUMMARY

In May 2010 Shropshire Council coordinated an investigation into the structural stability of a section of Ludlow's medieval town wall at the Castle Street car park in Ludlow. The investigations included the excavation of three trial trenches, and it was a condition of the class consent granted for this work that an archaeological watching brief accompanied the groundworks. The watching brief noted the presence of possible rampart material behind the town wall, but also recorded significant modern ground disturbance, possibly associated with the creation of the car park.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Ludlow is situated in south Shropshire, about 37km south of Shrewsbury town centre. In 2010 Shropshire Council coordinated an investigation into the structural stability of a section of Ludlow's medieval town wall (Historic Environment Record [HER] No. 01177) which retains the north side of the Castle Street car park in the centre of Ludlow.

1.2 The medieval town wall, ditch and gates of Ludlow, were built between 1233 and c1304, thus postdating the initial laying out of the planned medieval town itself. The remains are fragmentary, but the course of the defences remains visible, and still forms a component of the current townscape.

1.3 The proposed works included the excavation of a series of 4m x 0.5m trenches of various depths and a number of bore holes in the car park immediately behind the wall to establish ground conditions, and also included acquiring several core samples from the wall face.

1.4 The section of the town defences that mark the north boundary of the car park is a scheduled Ancient Monument (Town Walls, County No. Salop 147). The investigations were given class consent from English Heritage as emergency safety work with a condition that an archaeological watching brief accompanied the groundworks.

1.5 The Archaeology Service, Shropshire Council, was commissioned to undertake the archaeological watching brief on the groundworks.

1.6 The aim of the watching brief was to preserve by record any archaeological remains encountered during the groundworks.

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 The town of Ludlow was granted a licence to build defences in 1233, although these do not seem to have been completed on the south side of the town until at least the 1290s. The town defences were built to respect the topography of the hilltop, and so large parts of the town already in existence were excluded from the defended area, becoming extra-mural suburbs. This included the lower part of Old Street to the south and all but the uppermost (southern) end of the Corve Street tenements to the north. (Dalwood, 1996, 2; Lloyd and Klein 1984, 13) The town wall was fronted by a ditch, now largely in-filled. The ditch is now marked by curving property boundaries (Hannaford & Stamper, 1996) The height and thickness of Ludlow's town walls was not comparable to other fortified towns such as Shrewsbury. They appear to have acted more as features controlling access into the town than real defensive structures. The construction is usually of rubble siltstone and sandstone rather than ashlar as is generally seen elsewhere (although this may simply be due to the nature of the local building stone).

2.2 A recording exercise on the rear boundary wall of the old Museum Stores in Old Street established that the lower part of the wall might be part of the medieval town wall, though it could also be a post medieval rebuild on the same line (Fielding, 2004).

2.3 Observations were made prior to repair works on the western section of the town wall, adjacent to Camp Lane, thought to be part of the original street pattern of the 12th century. The wall here was constructed of siltstone and sandstone and was laid to rough courses with rubble infill. Bonding material used was either friable light pinkish-orange sand with occasional snail shell inclusions and moderate amounts of sandstone gravel or rough darkish grey lime ash mortar bonding with occasional snail shell inclusions. The wall showed evidence of restoration and repair, probably indicative of continuous maintenance throughout the 13th-15th centuries and possibly of repairs carried out during the 1640s in connection with the civil war. Evidence of 19th century repairs was also evident. (Cruse et al, 2005)

2.4 Excavations in the walled garden to the rear of 14 Castle Street Ludlow in advance of development as a car park (HER 06110) identified a bank running east to west 30m from inside of town wall. The bank was 2m wide, constructed of stone blocks, and identified as a garden feature. Evidence was also seen of 18th- and 19th-century dumping of imported soil. A watching brief during the development revealed no evidence of earlier occupation. (Wise, 1975)

3 THE WATCHING BRIEF

3.1 The excavation of the three test trenches was carried out by machine under archaeological supervision (for the location of the trenches see Figure 1). Because of the depth of the trenches and the instability of the deposits encountered, access was not available into the trenches themselves.

3.2 Trench A

This trench was excavated to a depth of 2m below the ground surface. The lowest deposit recorded by the excavation (see Figure 2) comprised a greenish grey silty sand mottled with reddish brown clay with a high content of angular stone fragments (7). This deposit possibly represented rampart material or a dump of redeposited natural bedrock and subsoil behind the town wall. The top of this deposit lay at a depth of 1.1m below the ground surface. The deposit was cut by a feature containing a dark reddish brown clay (6) immediately behind the wall. It was sealed by a very dark grey brown loam (3 & 5) typical of a buried garden soil, with a lens containing brick fragments and mortar (4). The stub wall separating the car park from the walkway had been cut into this deposit, and it was also cut to the south by a large feature up to 1m deep filled with deposits of dark greyish brown sandy loam with pebbles (9) and brick rubble (10).

The concrete walkway surface (1) and gravel its bedding (2) were laid over the buried garden soil on north side of the stub wall.

3.3 Trench B

Again in trench B (Figure 3) the earliest deposit recorded comprised a greenish grey silty sand mottled with reddish brown clay and angular stone fragments (13) (similar to trench A, 7); again, this deposit is likely to have been rampart material or a dumped deposit behind the town wall. It was also sealed by a buried garden soil of very dark grey brown loam (12), and a similar deposit containing charcoal and mortar fragments (11). The stub wall separating the car park from the walkway was cut into this deposit, and as in trench A it was cut to the south by a large feature up to 0.7m deep and filled with dark greyish brown sandy loam with pebbles (15) and brick rubble (16).

The concrete walkway surface (1) and gravel its bedding (2) were laid over the buried garden soil on north side of the stub wall.

3.4 Trench C

The lowest deposit in trench C (Figure 4) was a greenish grey silty sand mottled with reddish brown clay and angular stone fragments (20). This was similar to the lower deposits seen in the other 2 trenches, though it contained more stone, and these stones were horizontally aligned. It was not clear whether this represented the fragmented surface of the natural bedrock or dumped material behind the town wall. It was covered by a layer of clean, dark reddish brown silt sand (19). This in turn lay beneath a deposit of buff silty sand mottled with reddish brown clay and angular stone fragments (18); again this was possibly rampart material or a dumped deposit behind the town wall, though it was seen to lie at a higher level than similar deposits (7 & 13) in the other trenches. Again it was sealed by a very dark grey brown loam (17). The remains of the stub wall separating the car park from the walkway were again cut into this deposit, and it was also cut to the south by the same large feature as in the western two trenches;

here this cut was up to 0.8m deep and filled with dark greyish brown sandy loam with pebbles (21) and brick rubble (22).

The concrete walkway surface (1) and gravel its bedding (2) were laid over the buried garden soil on north side of the stub wall.

3.5 Discussion

The sequence of deposits seen in the three test trenches was virtually identical. Possible natural deposits (19 & 20) were seen in the eastern of the three trenches (trench C), all three trenches contained possible rampart material (7, 13, & 18). Evidence for large-scale groundworks was seen in the southern end of all three trenches, and is likely to represent site clearance for the creation of the car park.

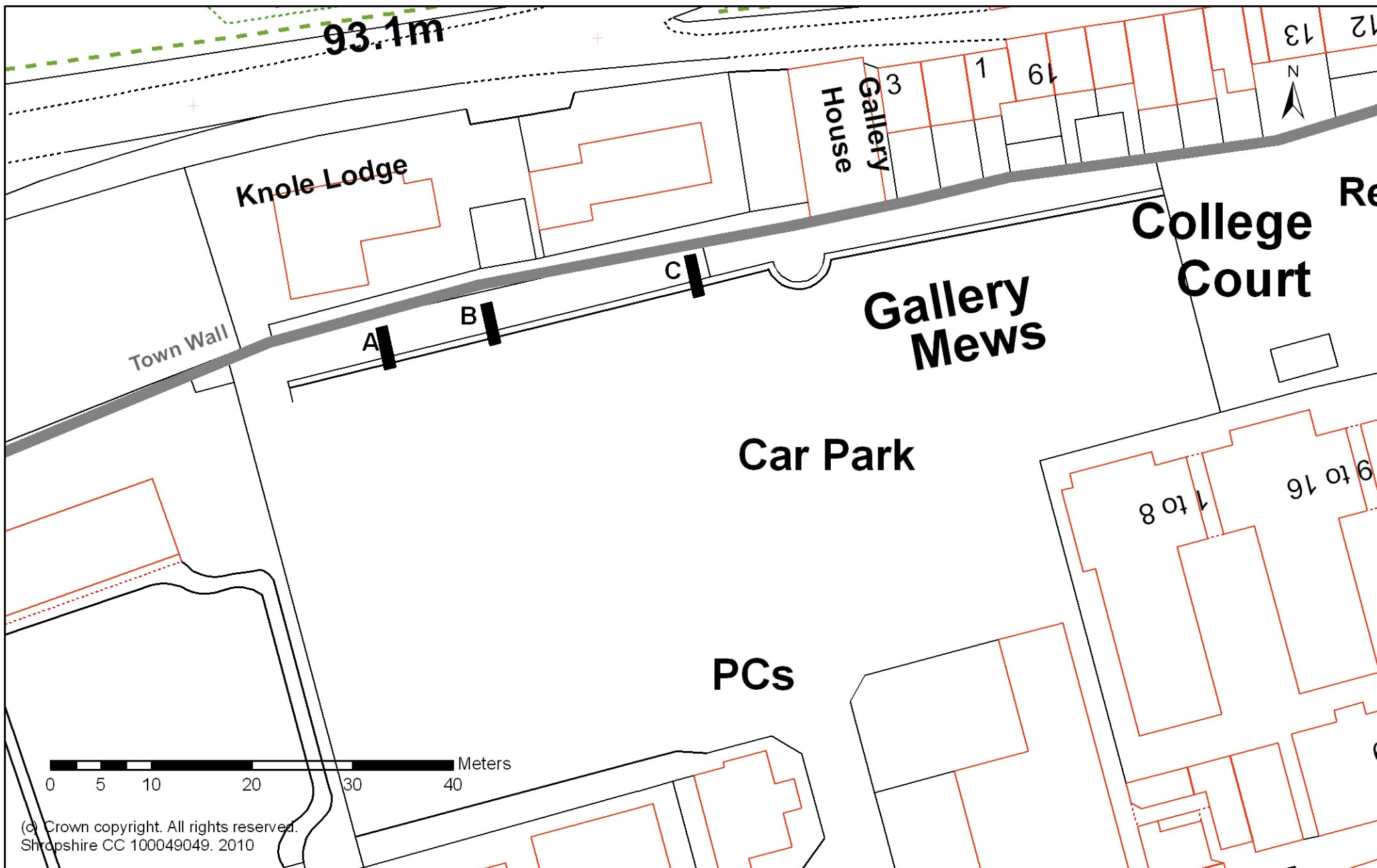
No other significant archaeological features or deposits were seen during the course of these investigations.

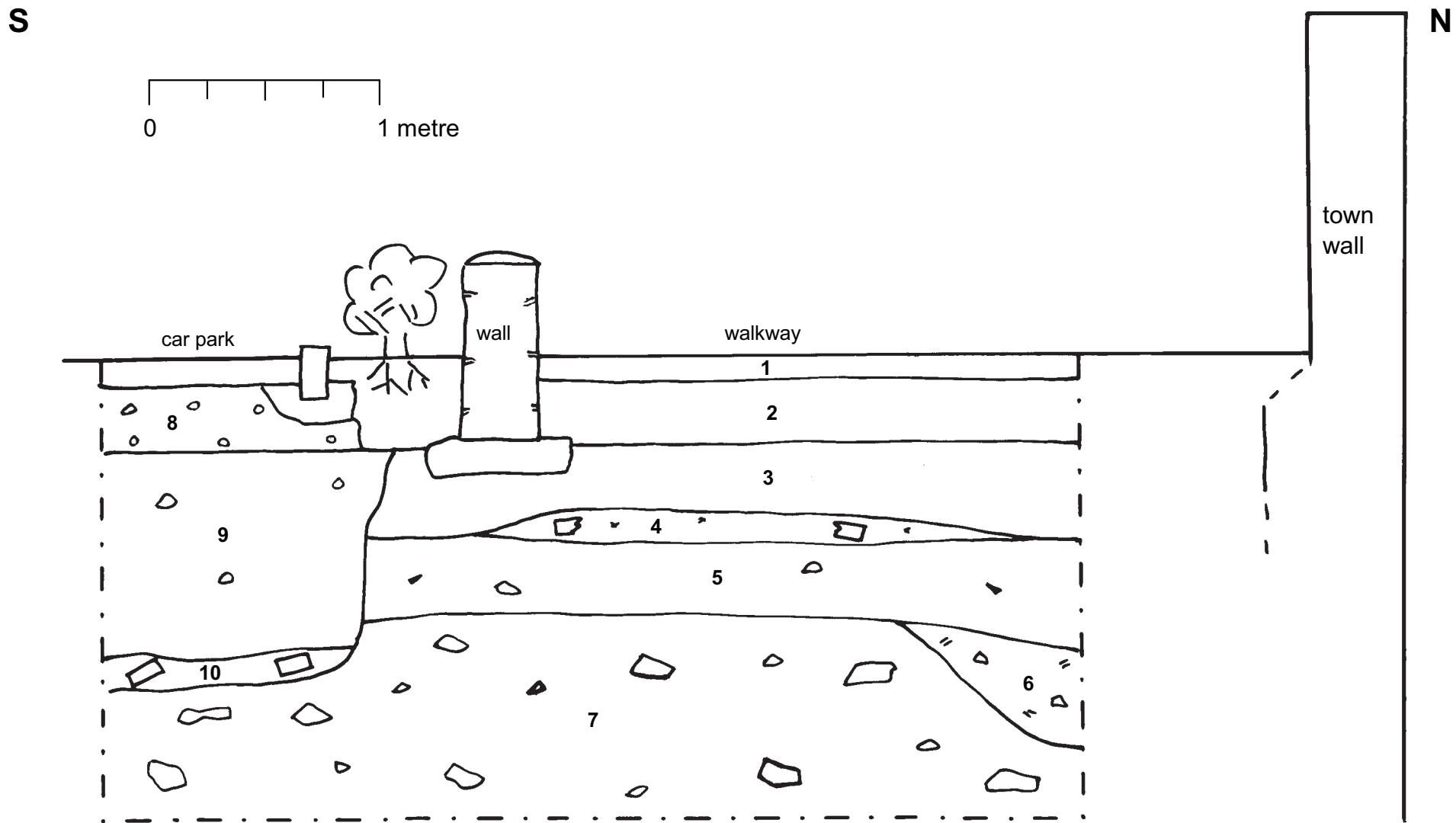
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ABBREVIATIONS

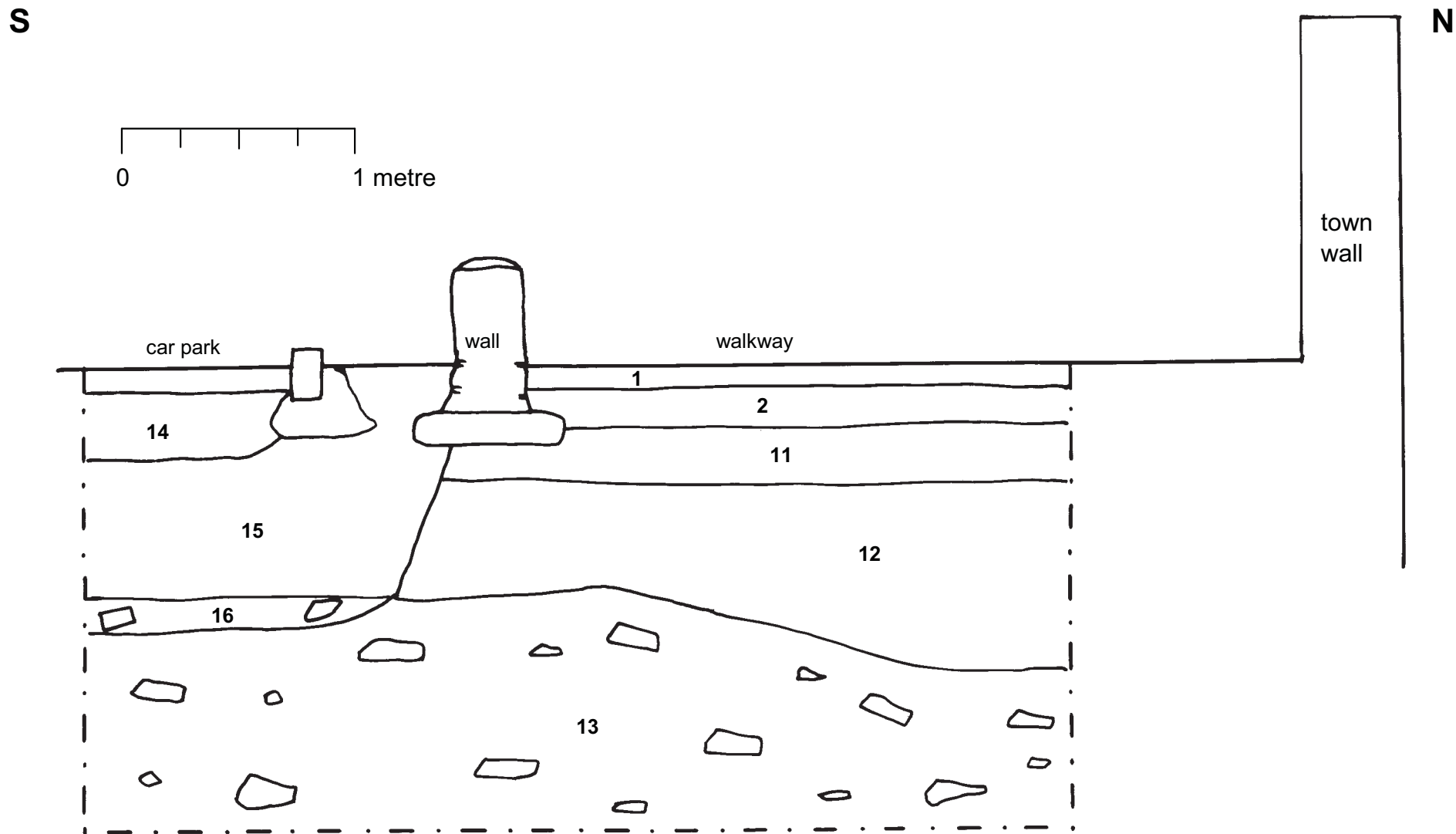
ASSC	Archaeology Service, Shropshire Council
CBA	Council for British Archaeology
HER	Historic Environment Record, Shropshire Council
OS	Ordnance Survey
PRO	Public Record Office
SA	Shropshire Archives, Castle Gates, Shrewsbury
SUERC	Scottish Universities Environmental Research Centre
TSAHS	Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological and Historical Society
TSAS	Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological Society





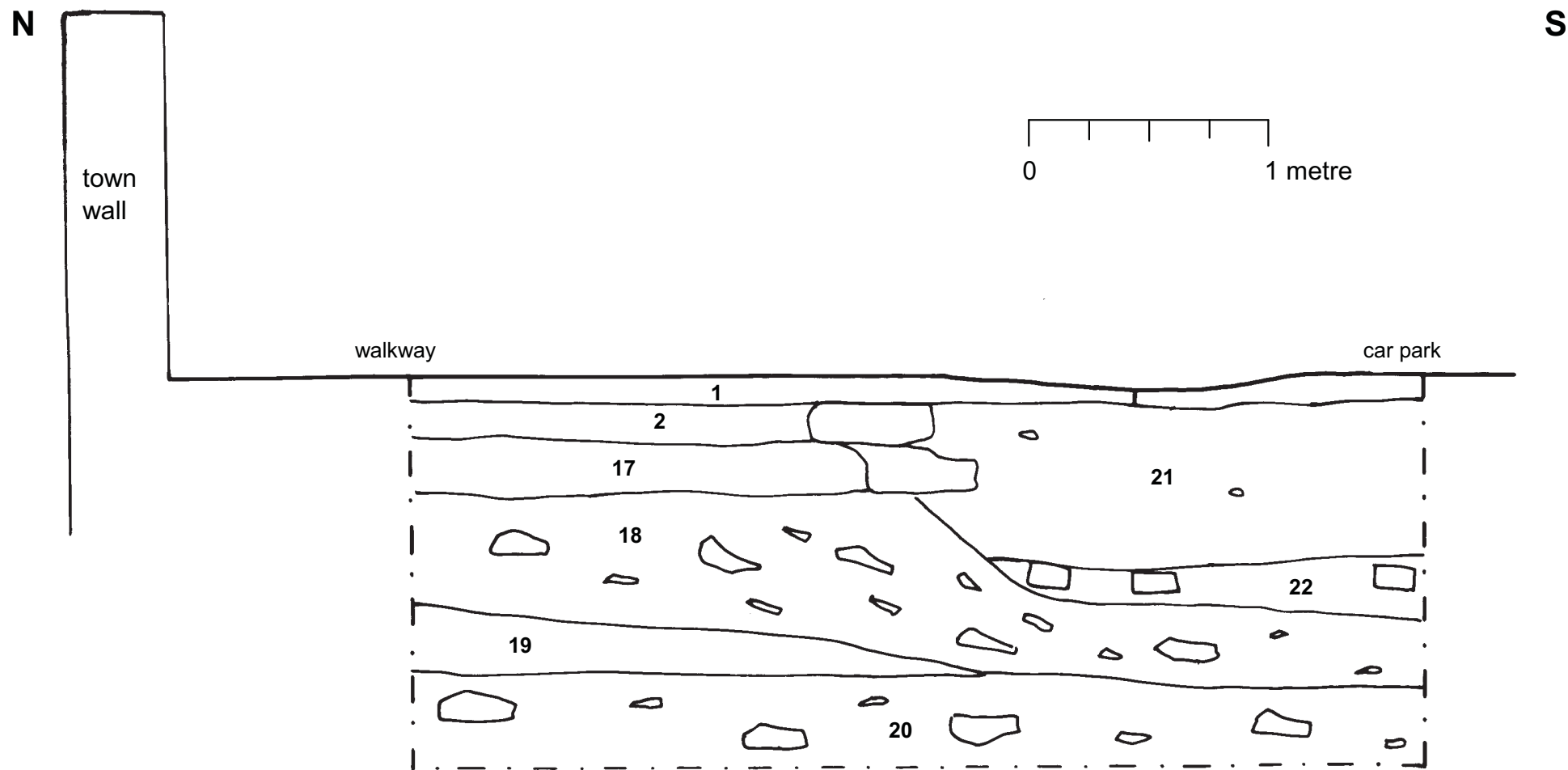
LUDLOW TOWN WALLS, CASTLE STREET CAR PARK, LUDLOW 2010

Figure 2: Trench A, east-facing section; scale 1:25



LUDLOW TOWN WALLS, CASTLE STREET CAR PARK, LUDLOW 2010

Figure 3: Trench B, east-facing section; scale 1:25



LUDLOW TOWN WALLS, CASTLE STREET CAR PARK, LUDLOW 2010
Figure 4: Trench C, west-facing section; scale 1:25

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Photo 1: The study area, looking east



Photo 2: The north end of Trench A, looking northwest



Photo 3: The north end of Trench B, looking west



Photo 4: The north end of Trench C, looking southeast

LUDLOW TOWN WALLS, CASTLE STREET CAR PARK, LUDLOW 2010