

Devon County Council Historic Environment Record

Civil Parish & District: Barnstaple, North Devon	National Grid Reference: SS 5559 3330	Number:
Subject: Archaeological monitoring and recording at Barnstaple Castle, Barnstaple, Devon.		Photo attached: Y
Scheduled Monument Consent no: S00243006	Recipient museum: n/a	
OASIS ID: oakforda1-510918	Museum Accession no: n/a	
Contractor's reference number/code: OA1944	Dates fieldwork undertaken: 24/04/2023	
<p>Description of works: An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Oakford Archaeology in April 2023 at Barnstaple Castle, Barnstaple, Devon (SS 5559 3330). The site (Fig. 1) lies in an area of high archaeological potential within Barnstaple Castle, a scheduled monument (SM 33062). The work was therefore required by Historic England (HE) as part of Scheduled Monument Consent.</p> <p>The Norman motte-and-bailey castle lies within the western corner of the earlier Anglo-Saxon burh and was probably built by the late 11th century, although it is not recorded in documents until the following century. The earth and stone motte stands to a height of c.14m with a diameter of over 60m and retains masonry fragments from a shell keep, tower and stone walls descending the slopes of the motte. A document of 1274 indicates the presence of a hall, chamber and kitchen within the keep.</p> <p>Results: A watching brief was maintained during works (Fig. 2, Pls. 1-4) during the hand-excavation of four small postholes associated with the installation of four sign-posts and repairs to the dry-stone walling previously recorded in 2015 (Steinmetzer 2015).</p> <p>The postholes were approximately 0.25m across, 0.25m wide and 0.45m deep, and revealed a largely uniform deposit sequence across the site. Posthole 1 exposed a dark blackish brown clayey silt (100) extending the full depth, while Posthole 2 revealed a dark greyish brown clayey silt (200) extending the full depth. Posthole 3 exposed a mid-yellowish brown silty clay (301) with frequent riverbed-like cobbles at a depth of 0.15m, sealed underneath a dark greyish brown clayey silt (300). Finally, the excavation of Posthole 4 revealed a mid yellowish brown clay (401) underneath a 0.15m thick dark greyish brown clayey silt (400). These deposits have been interpreted as castle mound deposits and overlying topsoil.</p> <p>The deposits behind the damaged dry-stone were recorded in detail in 2015 (Steinmetzer 2015).</p> <p>Conclusion: The small-scale work exposed the earthen core of the Norman Castle mound. No structural features were identified and there was a complete absence of dating evidence. The core material is predominantly soil-based, suggesting that it came from the surrounding motte ditch. The small nature of the works didn't permit the identification of major periods of construction, and it must therefore be assumed that the core deposits are roughly contemporary. This is the only report on these works.</p> <p>Project archive and OASIS entry Due to the limited nature of the findings a project archive will not be produced. A summary of the investigations has been submitted to the on-line archaeological database OASIS (Online Access to the Index of archaeological InterventionS).</p>		

Recorder:

M Steinmetzer and H Wootton (Oakford Archaeology)

Date sent to HER:

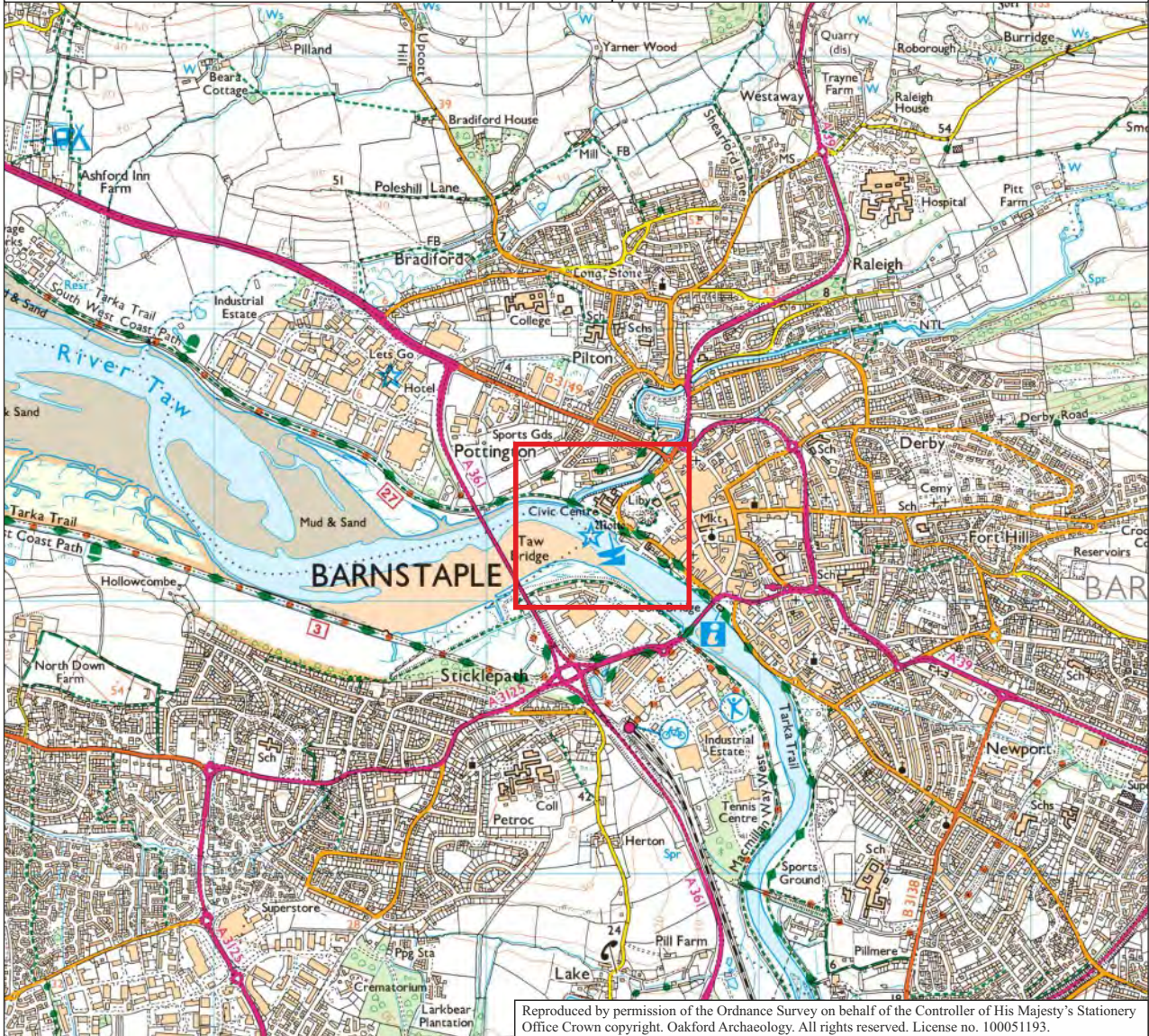
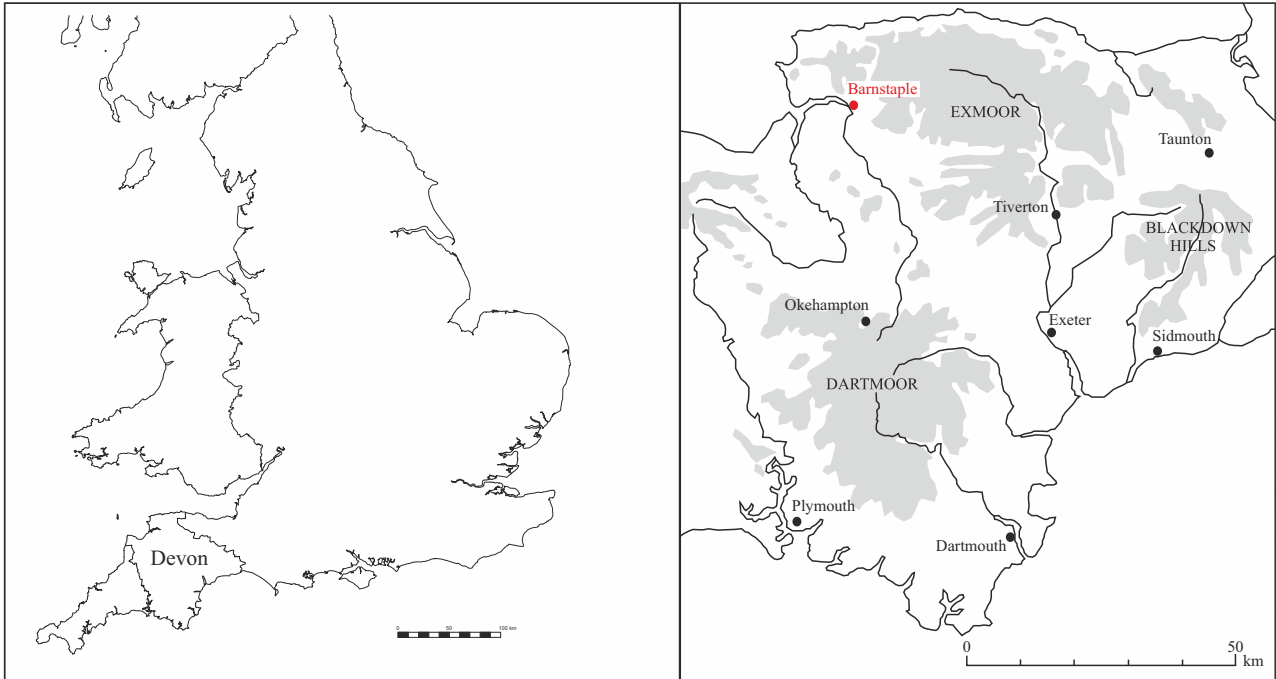


Fig. 1 Location of site.

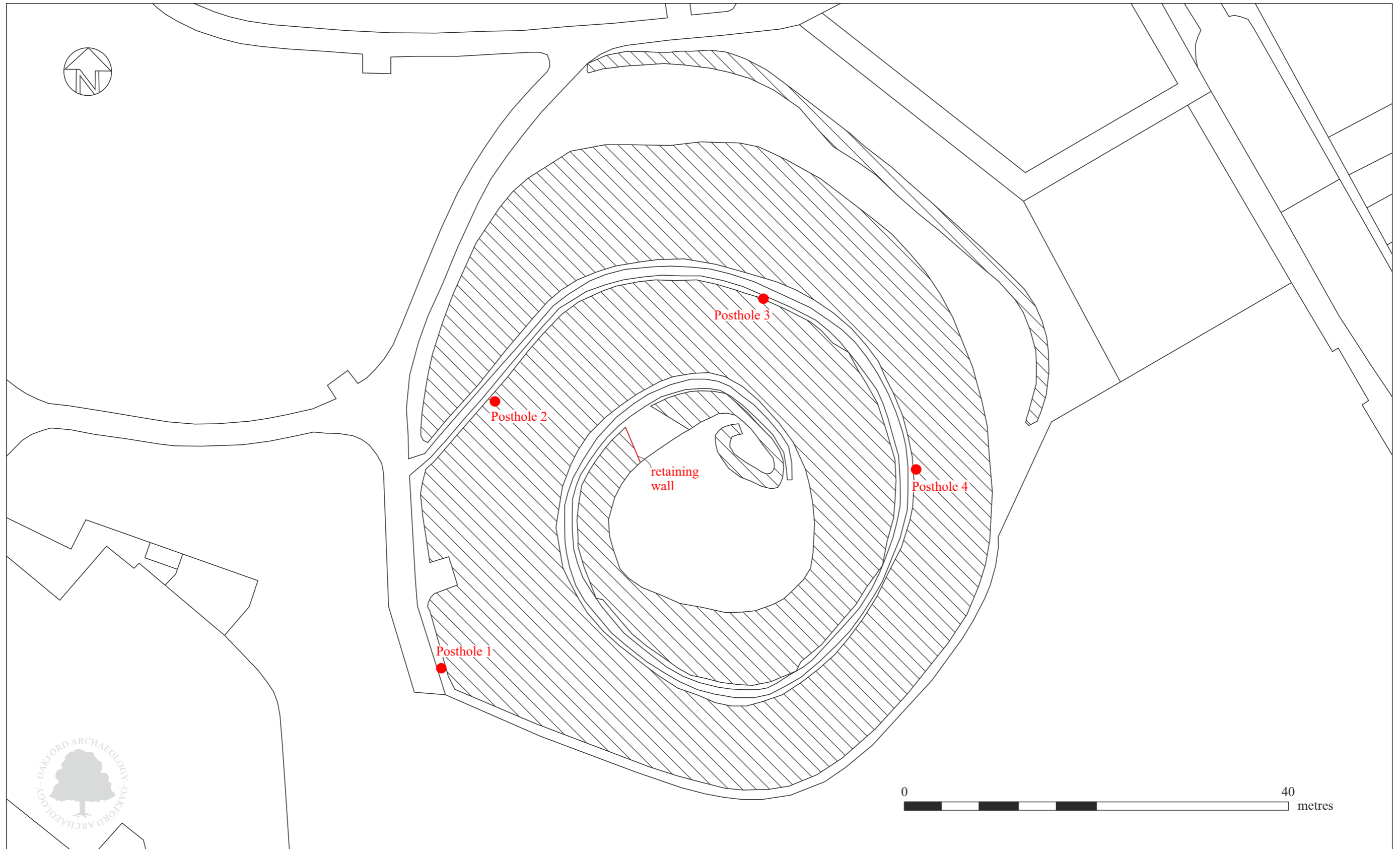


Fig. 2 Plan of Barnstaple Castle showing location of observations.



Pl. 1 General view of Posthole 1. 0.25m scale. Looking north.



Pl. 2 Section through Posthole 1 showing deposit sequence. 0.25m scale. Looking north.



Pl. 3 General view of Posthole 2. 0.25m scale. Looking northeast.



Pl. 4 Section through Posthole 2 showing deposit sequence. 0.25m scale. Looking northeast.



Pl. 5 General view of Posthole 3. 0.25m scale. Looking southwest.



Pl. 6 Section through Posthole 3 showing deposit sequence. 0.25m scale. Looking southwest.



Pl. 7 General view of Posthole 4. 0.25m scale. Looking southwest.



Pl. 8 Section through Posthole 4 showing deposit sequence. 0.25m scale. Looking southwest.



Pl. 9 General view of damaged retaining wall. 1m scale. Looking southwest.