Marches Archaeology

Ludlow Castle

Archaeological Consultants and Contractors

This report is produced by

Marches Archaeology

Winton House
Lyonshall
Herefordshire
HR5 3JP

Tel: 01544 340497
Fax: 01544 340777
email: marches@archaeology.kc3.co.uk

For:-

Powis Castle Estates
Welshpool
Powys
SY21 8RG

© Marches Archaeology

Marches Archaeology is a partnership between Nic Appleton-Fox and Richard Stone, who have worked in close association since 1991. They belong to the Institute of Field Archaeologists and abide by its code of practice. The business provides a full range of archaeological services to a client base of architects, local authorities, national bodies and private individuals. Our standard services include; excavation, watching briefs, building survey, building analysis, planning advice, landscape survey, photographic recording and historical research. Specialist consultants are available to provide environmental, geophysical and finds advice and analysis.

VAT Reg. No. 656 0767 15

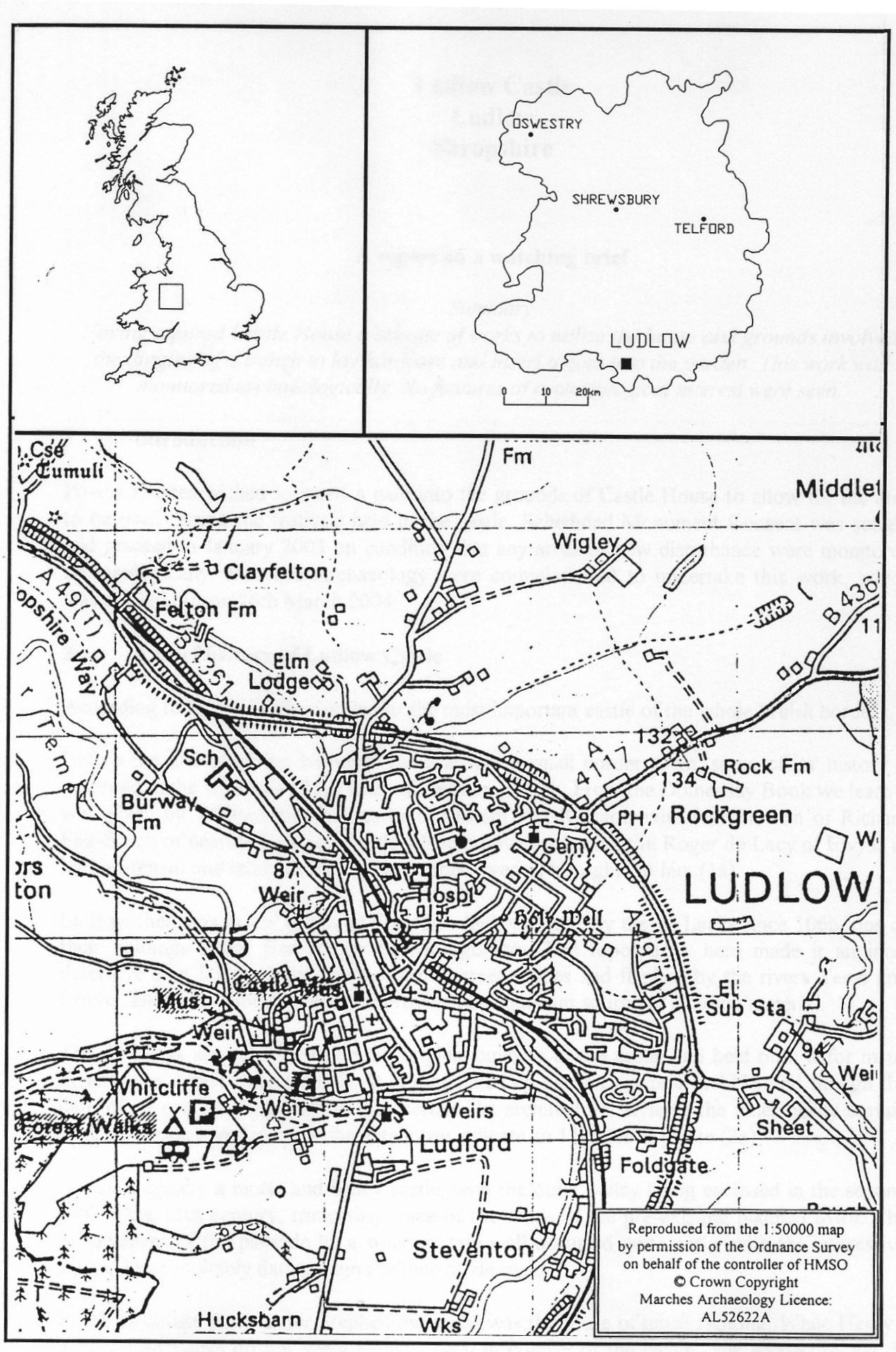

Fig 1 Location of site

Ludlow Castle
Ludlow
Shropshire

NGR: SO 50907460

A report on a watching brief

Report by
Nic Appleton-Fox

Illustrations by
Laura Bassal

Contents

February 2000

Marches Archaeology Series 113

Ludlow Castle

Ludlow
Shropshire

A report on a watching brief

Summary
A scheme of works to improve the floodlighting of the inner bailey involved the digging of a trench through an area not previously disturbed. This work was monitored archaeologically and evidence of a ramp leading to the site of the drawbridge was discovered. Subsequently the level of the outer bailey was raised disguising the ramp.

1 Introduction

Powys Estates wished to position two sets of floodlights in the dry moat below the sight line from the outer bailey. Scheduled Monument Consent was sought and granted on condition that any areas of new disturbance were monitored archaeologically. Marches Archaeology were commissioned to undertake this work, which was carried out on 11th February 2000.

2 A brief history of Ludlow Castle

According to Oman Ludlow is "by far the most important castle of the whole Welsh border".

Before the arrival of the Normans Ludlow was a small border town, some of its' history is recorded in the windows of the fifteenth century church. From the Domesday Book we learn it was given by William the Conqueror to Osbern Fitz-Richard, who was the son of Richard Fitz-Scrob of nearby Richard's Castle. Osbern however brought in Roger de Lacy of Ewyas as his sub-tenant and later seems to have handed over all his rights to him (1a).

Ludlow then was in the manor of Stanton which was held by the de Lacys since 1066, one of their holdings under Earl Roger de Montgomery. The topography here made it an ideal defensive site; level ground surrounded by steep slopes and flanked by the rivers Teme and Corve. The local Silurian limestone provided an abundant source of building material.

The de Lacys are believed to be the original builders of the castle and held onto it for many generations, albeit intermittently. It is mentioned by chroniclers first in 1138 and though the date of its original construction is uncertain the architectural style of the inner bailey curtain wall and towers, and parts of the gatehouse indicate an 11th century date (2a).

It was originally a motte and bailey castle, with the outer bailey being enclosed in the second half of the 12th century, truncating some of the roads of the pre-existing planned town. The replacement of the palisade by a stone curtain wall occurred quite early, with the impressive square keep probably dating from the time of Henry I.

In the turbulent times under Stephen the castle was the scene of much fighting. When Henry I died the de Lacys do not seem to have been in control of the castle. The second of the de Lacys had named his nephew Gilbert as his heir but the king had claimed it as his own and

installed one Pain Fitz John, to the indignation of Gilbert. From here on in the castle was the subject of much dispute as the de Lacys continually tried to regain the castle.

Fitz John was later killed by the Welsh, and soon afterwards the western barons rose up in rebellion against Stephen. In 1138 Ludlow was seized by Gervase Paganel of Dudley, a leader of the revolt (1a). In 1139 the king himself, Stephen, besieged the castle and although unsuccessful initially he later succeeded in rescuing young Prince Henry of Scotland from a grappling iron (2a). Following this success he installed one of his followers, Josse (Joyce) de Dinant (sometimes called Joce de Dinan), who may have been one of the Northamptonshire family. Until his death in 1166 Josse held off all attempts by his opponents to regain the castle, notably the de Lacys (Hugh, son of Gilbert, and Hugh's son Walter), Hugh Mortimer of Wigmore (head of the the party of Queen Maud in the area), and thirdly the Welsh. The Welsh under Owen Kyveilog of Powys and Jorwerth ap Gwynedd sought to take advantage of English civil wars in furthering their own aims.

With the death of Josse, Walter de Lacy was given control of Ludlow Castle.

In 1177 the Crown held the castle again and later the Pipe Rolls record payments 'to the keeper of Ludlow castle' indicating it continued to be under Royal control. It was the site of many meetings, for example in 1224 Henry III made a treaty here with the rebel Welsh prince Llewellyn, with Archbishop Langton present as mediator (2a).

The castle features in the chronicle of the Geste of Fulk Fitzwarine, the story of a twelfth century knight, which contains much valuable information on castle life - specifically the lives of the castle owners during the time of Stephen and the early years under Henry II (1a).

The de Lacys spent much time in Ireland where they built up large estates but Ludlow always remained their power base until the male de Lacy line died out in 1240. Then the Ludlow estate was divided between the two coheiresses: Matilda de Lacy took Ludlow into her marriage with her second husband, Geoffrey de Grenville (or Geneville) a French baron from Champagne, and a favourite of King Henry III; Margaret took Ewyas into her marriage with John de Verdun. The Grenville inheritance then passed to Geoffrey's son Peter, who may have been responsible the range of domestic buildings inside the inner bailey. These point to the change in the castles' function from military outpost to comfortable residence and seat of power (2a). Then followed a period of relative stability brought about by Edward I conquest of Wales. The Grenville line only survived two generations however and Joan, grand-daughter of Matilda de Lacy and daughter of Peter de Grenville, as sole heiress took Ludlow into her marriage with the infamous Roger Mortimer. He was the leader of a group of barons who dethroned the unpopular Edward II in 1326, and then murdered him. He was made Earl of March but his excessive ambition brought him many enemies and he was executed by his rivals in 1330 (2a).

For the next five generations Ludlow was part of the vast estates of the Mortimers, "not kings themselves, but the ancestors of many kings". Being larger and stronger then the ancestral home of Wigmore it became increasingly the focus and centre of their power. It was inhabited and kept in good repair far longer than most other castles in the Marches (1d). In 1425 the last male Mortimer died and the surviving heiress, Ann Mortimer, married Richard of Cambridge. Through this connection the lands passed to the House of York and an increase in status.

In the Wars of the Roses it was Ann's son, Richard Planagenet who was leader of the Yorkists. He mustered his troops at Ludlow for his attempted insurrection of 1459 which failed after the rout of Ludford Bridge beneath the castle walls.

In 1461 Richard's son, was crowned King Edward IV, and for the next 350 years the castle remained mainly as Crown property, with the exception of the Civil War and Commonwealth periods. Edward IV was very attached to Ludlow and his two sons, Edward and Richard, spent much time here (1e). In 1473 he sent the boys to be brought up here away from the evils of London and this was their main residence until 1483.

They were accompanied by their tutor Bishop Alcock who was also president of a 'Prince's Council', a group of nobles and gentlemen who accompanied the princes. This Council gradually assumed responsibility for the government of Wales and the borders and was the embryonic 'Council of the Marches' (2b). They were here when they learned of their father's death on April 9th 1483 and Edward assumed the title of King Edward V. It was from here, a fortnight later, that the princes began their ill-fated journey to London, only to be imprisoned and to end their short lives in the Tower. Following this their uncle became King Richard III. Although Richard had both opportunity and motive, responsibility for this crime was never proved. However his right to the Crown was contested by Henry VII and after Richard was defeated at the battle of Bosworth, Henry became king. From then on it was commonly believed that Richard was guilty of the murders, until modern analyses of the evidence have questioned that assumption.

Henry VII gave Ludlow to his eldest son Arthur who spent four months here with his new wife Catherine of Aragon, prior to his premature death in 1502 (2c). After Arthur's death Ludlow was never again to be a royal residence but it was made the site of the 'Council of the Marches' This was a local delegation of the King's own council which had charge of the March until the Civil War of 1642-46. It had a counterpart in the 'Council of the North' in York (1e).

With Arthur’s death, Catherine returned to London where she was married to Arthur's younger brother Henry to whom the line of succession now passed. In 1509 he was crowned King Henry VIII. Their only surviving child was their daughter Mary who spent three Winters at Ludlow castle between 1525-1528 (2c).

In 1534 Bishop Rowland was appointed Lord President of the 'Council of the Marches' and under him it greatly increased in authority and control. Part of this process was the reorganisation of Wales into shires in 1536. "For more than a century Ludlow was virtually the capital of Wales" and the courts were busy with civil, ecclesiastical and criminal cases. The castle became the administrative centre and this was reflected in the additions to the castle buildings (2b). The Presidency of the Council was a prestigious position and acquired an extensive entourage of officials and clerks. Many of the Presidents were bishops, but the most famous was a layman called Sir Henry Sydney. He was President from 1559-1586 and was a great favourite of Elizabeth I (1f).

Though a Royalist stronghold during the Civil War the castle escaped much of the demolition that other places saw because it was surrendered after negotiation with the besieging Parliamentary force under Colonel John Birch, though the rest of the town saw some destruction (2b). During the Commonwealth the Council was abolished as it was seen as part

of the Royalist establishment and for some years Ludlow was left as a garrison with a skeleton company and a retired colonel as governor (1f). After 1660 the council was nominally restored.

With the accession of William and Mary in 1689 the Council of the Marches was finally abolished and the castle abandoned as part of the policy of centralising control of all England and Wales to London (2b). Then in the reign of George I it was decided, possibly by Sir Robert Walpole, that the upkeep of the castle was too expensive and it was sold. From now on it began to decay. In 1768 and 1774 visitors reported that many of the roofs and floors were still extant but by 1800 all of these had fallen in. In 1811 the Earl of Powis bought the ruined remains and prevented any further deterioration (1g).

3 Scope and aims of the project

The aim of the project was to prevent any disturbance of archaeologically sensitive deposits where possible, and where not to ensure that any such disturbance was fully recorded and significant deposits avoided.

The scope of the project was limited to the observation of approximately 21 metres of trench through previously undisturbed ground.

4 The watching brief

The trench for the electricity cable for the floodlights was dug by hand. For the majority of its length it followed the line of an earlier trench supplying electricity to the inner bailey. The line of this trench was determined by using a CAT scanner. For the whole length of the trench it was 200mm wide and varied in depth between 270mm and 400mm and only disturbed the fill of the earlier trench. At a point 1.5 metres to the east of the bridge crossing the dry moat the old trench veered to the north away from the line of the new cable. The digging of the length of trench up to this point was not monitored. A spur off this trench for the insertion of the easternmost set of floodlights was monitored. This spur was 3.2 metres long and the only soil seen in the whole length was a mixed clayey silt [1] which produced pottery which was all post medieval and ranged in date from the 18th to the 20th centuries. At the north end the trench was 290mm deep and came down on to the bedrock.

For the width of the bridge the soil was similar to that seen in the spur trench and produced a similar range of pottery. Beneath the scalpings which formed the path over the bridge there was an earlier narrow tarmac path. At a point just to the west of the bridge the soil changed into a reddish brown silty clay [2], which was a redeposited natural soil and appeared to be a deliberate levelling of the outer bailey in that area. This layer was at least 340mm thick and continued down below the bottom of the trench. Just over 10 metres to the west of the bridge this red clay rose up quite sharply over a dark greyish brown silt with frequent small to medium angular stones [3]. A concentration of stones [5] at the interface between the two layers remains to suggest that a rough revetment wall was used to support the deposit of greyish brown silt. This layer continued for the rest of the length of the trench, including the spur to the floodlight position on the edge of the moat, where it was retained by a low wall of local stone [4]. This wall remained to a height of 600mm and was built directly onto the bedrock. It was 800mm wide and faced on the northern side. In the portion that fell within the trench had been pushed forward 100mm by root action. The wall ran along the edge of the

moat for a distance of 7.3 metres and was mirrored on the opposite side of the moat, beneath the blocked doorway into the keep.

5 Discussion

The wall and revetment seen to the west of the bridge would appear to have constrained the soil for a ramp leading to the drawbridge from the outer bailey side. The deposition of the reddish clay was quite localised, and would appear to have been for levelling. Although no finds were recovered to put a date on the deposition, it may well have been done when the current bridge was built at some time after the 17th century.

6 References

(1) Oman, Charles (1978) Castles (a) p.134 (b) p.136 (c) p.137 (d) p.138 (e) p.139 (f) p.140 (g) p.141

(2) Lloyd, David (not dated) Ludlow Castle - a history and a guide (a) p.2 (b) p.3 (c) p.14

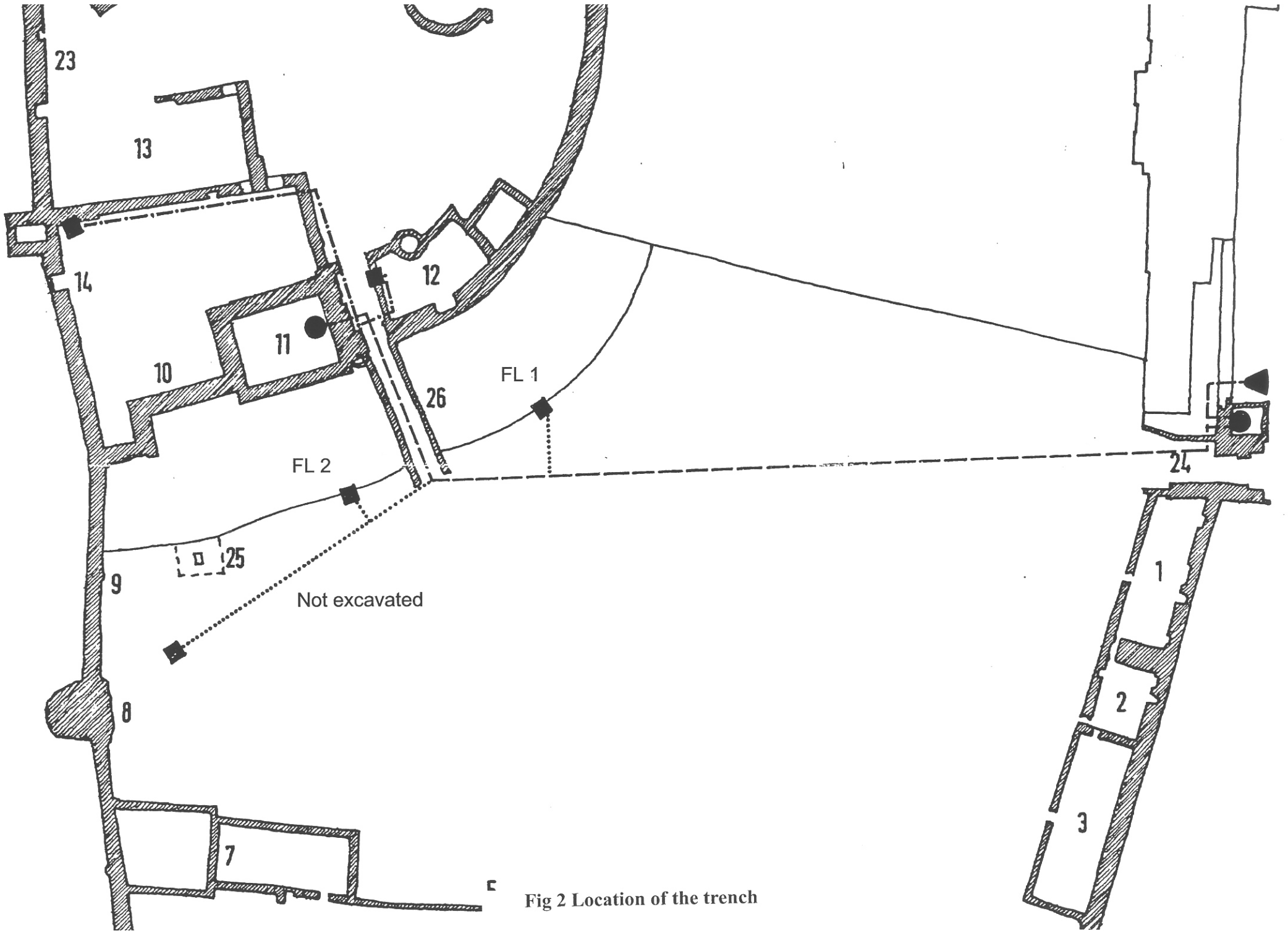

Fig 2 Location of the trench

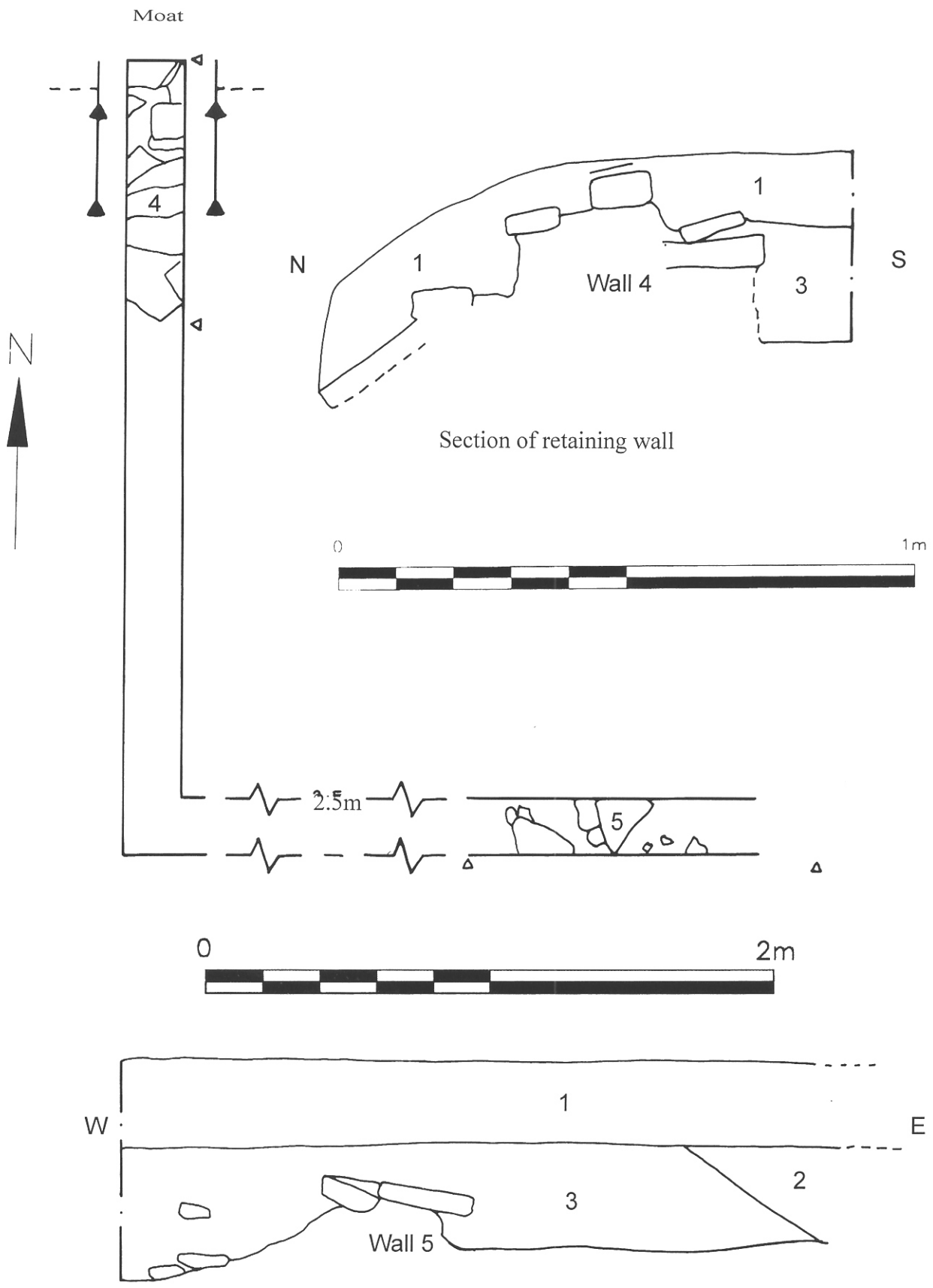

Fig 3 Plans (1:20) and sections (1:10)

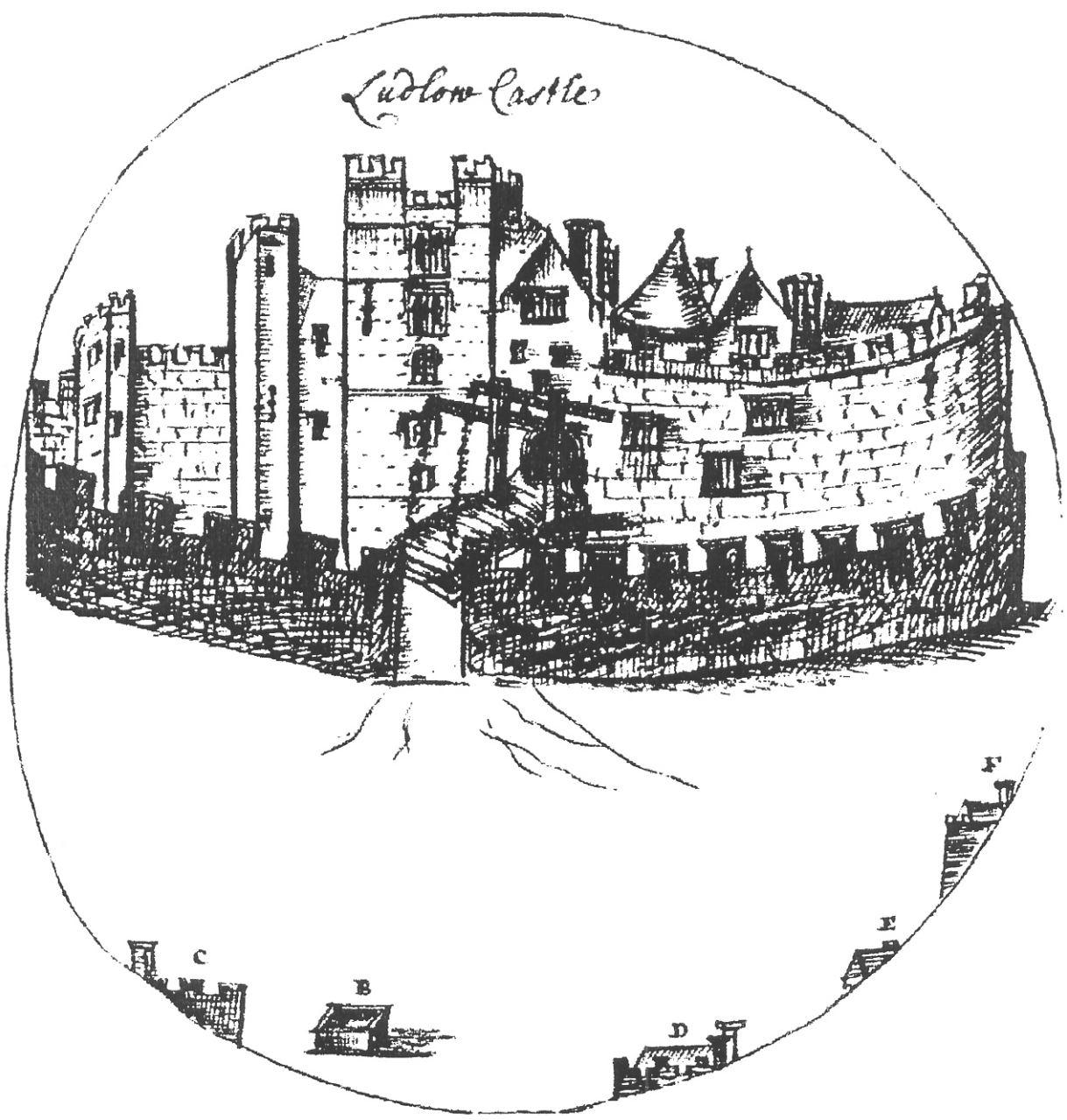

Fig 4 Dineley's drawing of 1684 showing the drawbridge into the inner bailey