

Marches Archaeology

Ludlow Castle Ludlow Shropshire

A report on an archaeological watching brief

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Archaeological Consultants and Contractors

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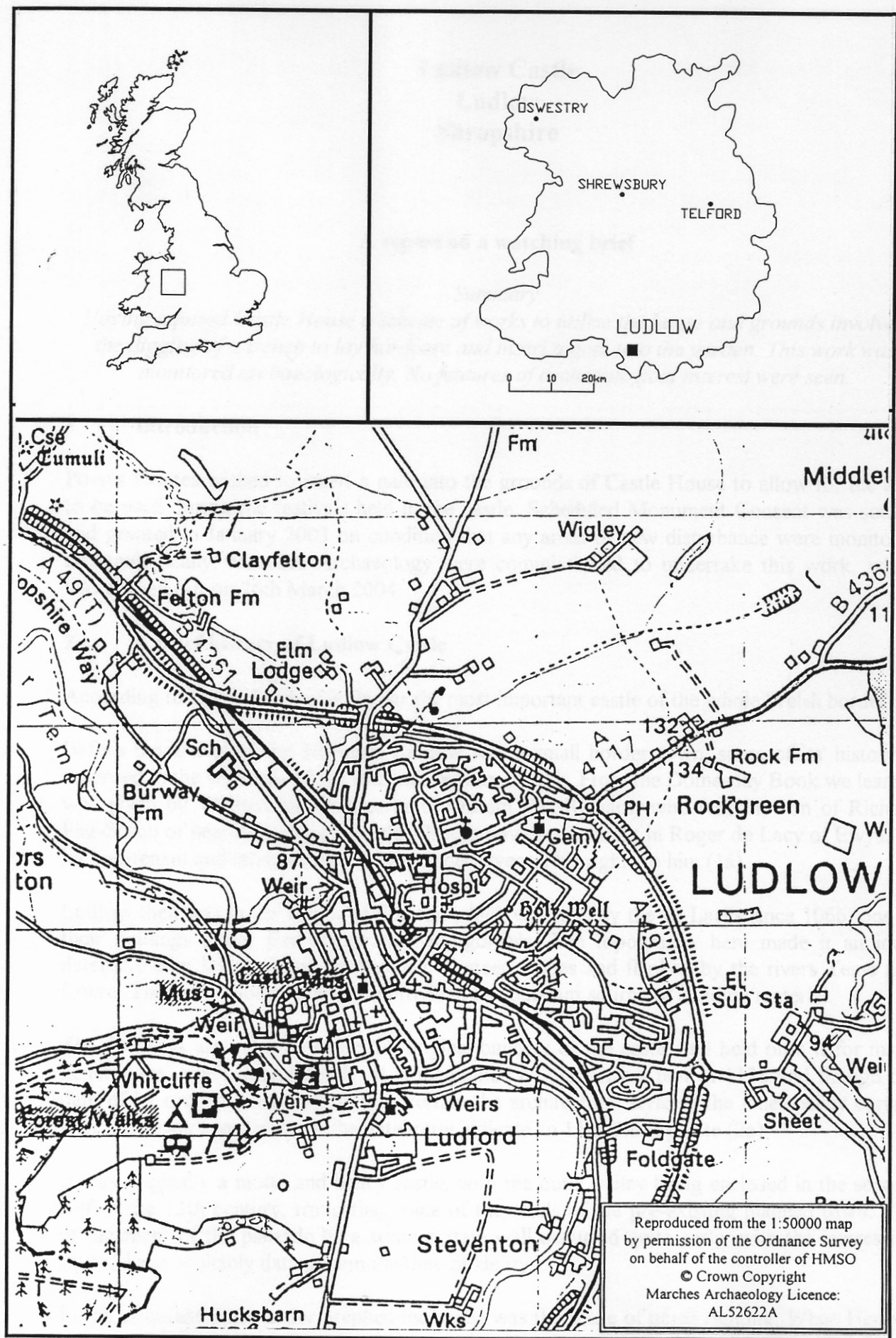


Fig 1 Location of site

**Ludlow Castle
Ludlow
Shropshire**

NGR: SO 50907460

A report on a watching brief

Report by
Nic Appleton-Fox

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Ludlow Shropshire

A report on a watching brief

Summary

Having acquired Castle House a scheme of works to utilise the house and grounds involved the digging of a trench to lay hardcore and insert a gate into the garden. This work was monitored archaeologically. No features of archaeological interest were seen.

1 Introduction

Powys Estates wished to insert a gate into the grounds of Castle House to allow for the area to be used during the festivals held in the castle. Scheduled Monument Consent was sought and granted in January 2003 on condition that any areas of new disturbance were monitored archaeologically. Marches Archaeology were commissioned to undertake this work, which was carried out on 26th March 2004.

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 Kyveillog 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, granddaughter 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 Plantagenet 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).

3Scope 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 a single trench approximately 10 metres long and 4 metres wide and the excavation of two post holes.

4The watching brief

The trench for the hardcore base for the gateway was a maximum of 300mm deep and was dug by a mechanical excavator using a toothless bucket. For the majority of its length it was 150mm deep and only disturbed the topsoil which was a very dark grey to black loam. The trench cut through a wall topped with a cast iron fence [1]. To the south of the wall this loam [2] came down to a stoney layer in a very dark grey matrix [3]. On the north side a similar layer was seen but the matrix was a paler grey [4]. Immediately to the north of the wall was an old garden bed approximately 2 metres wide and it was in this area that the trench was 300mm deep. The bed had been bounded on the north side by a wall [5] which had been demolished when the garden layout changed. Immediately north of the wall was an old gravel path 1 metre wide [6] and beyond that an area of lawn.

The post holes for the gates were positioned along the line of wall [1] and were dug to a depth of 900mm. The footings for the wall continued down for the whole depth of the post holes which fell entirely within the construction trench for the wall.

5Discussion

The footings of the demolished wall [5] contained brick rubble and mortar and probably dated to the late 19th or early 20th centuries. Unfortunately none of the available maps show garden features so it is not possible to date the feature closely. However, the nature of the finds, all modern, points to a similar date. The build up of soil to the south of the wall is consistent with the use of the of the ground for a public space with the development of a humic soil over a period of time. The extra depth immediately to the north is probably due to the prolonged use of the area as a garden bed. Whilst there is no definitive proof, this style of garden was very popular in the 1930s and may well date from then. The depth of the foundations for the wall [1] are surprising as it only stands to a height of about 300mm above

ground level. Perhaps the substantial footings were considered important because of the cast iron fence the wall was to support. Whilst no finds other than modern came from the trench, from earlier work in the castle it is known that, where they exist, archaeological deposits survive as little as 250mm below the current surface. It is possible that the pebbly layer [2] may represent an earlier surface as it is similar to a levelling layer seen outside the inner bailey (Appleton-Fox, 2000).

6References

- (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
- (3) Appleton-Fox, Nic (2000) Ludlow Castle, Ludlow, Shropshire, A report on an archaeological evaluation, Marches Archaeology Series 113

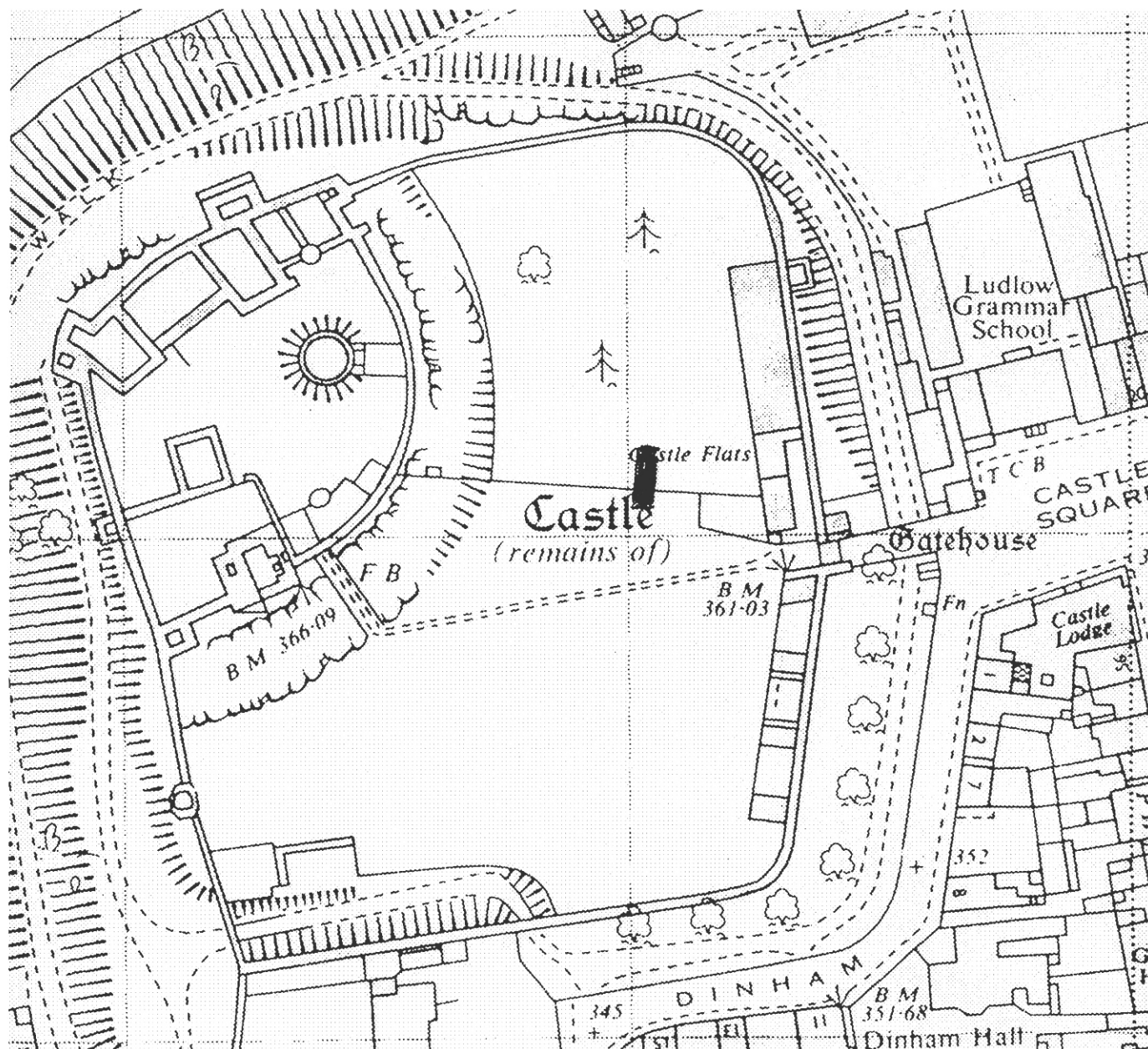


Figure 2 Location of trench



Plate 1 The site from the north



Plate 2 The east post hole showing depth of footings