

**Archaeological Recording,
Stafford Castle, Stafford, 2003**

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1.0: SUMMARY

Birmingham Archaeology carried out archaeological recording on behalf of Stafford Borough Council in October 2003, after below-ground disturbance occurred during the erection of temporary seating accommodation for dramatic performances within the Scheduled Ancient Monument of Stafford Castle. A series of shallow holes had been excavated within the inner bailey of the castle and into the upstanding earthworks. These were surveyed, recorded and the artifactual evidence recovered. Actual disturbance to archaeological stratigraphy below the turf level was minimal.

2.0: INTRODUCTION

This report outlines the results of archaeological recording at Stafford Castle (centred on NGR SJ 902222, Fig. 1), of below-ground disturbance resulting from the erection of temporary seating by a Drama Group. The work was recommended and commissioned by Stafford Borough Council. Although the castle is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (RSM 21559), Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) was not required by English Heritage, as the ground disturbances constituted a risk to public safety. The Brief Written Scheme of Investigation for the recording (Birmingham Archaeology 2003) was approved by Staffordshire County Council and English Heritage.

3.0: THE SITE

The disturbances (Fig. 2) were created by the erection of three seating stands, a central stage and a series of portacabins, within the boundaries of the earthworks that define the Inner Bailey of the castle. Further damage had been caused by the use of vehicles within this area. The disturbances constituted 16 holes of varying depths and sizes. These excavated disturbances ED1-10 were located on the slope of the northwestern rampart. A further two were located further to the north in the adjacent rampart (ED11-12). Two larger but shallower holes were located in the eastern rampart (ED13-14). A further two were located centrally within the Inner Bailey (ED 15-16). These are described below in numerical order.

4.0: ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The castle (Fig. 2) was initially constructed between 1071 and 1088 and remained in use for 550 years. It was in fact the second castle in Stafford, a further one existing in the town centre from 1070, but this had declined in importance by the 12th century. Archaeological evidence suggests initially a predominantly earthen and timber, motte and bailey castle stood on the site. In 1348 Ralph, Earl of Stafford built a stone keep on the motte. By 1521 a 'lodge built of timber' was present presumably in the inner bailey. The keep itself appeared to have fallen out of use and by the first half of the 17th century the residence was moved to the lodge. The outer castle was entirely destroyed during the civil war and the keep partially dismantled on the orders of the

parliamentarians. 18th and 19th century remodeling of the keep occurred, but by the 20th century subsidence had caused much of the stone keep to collapse.

The first archaeological work undertaken at Stafford Castle was part of the Stafford Castle Project between 1978 and 1998. This extensive project involved surveying and geophysical investigation. Excavation occurred around the castle keep and in the northwest corner of the inner bailey as well as in several locations outside the ramparts (Darlington 2002).

5.0: METHOD

Each of the 16 excavated disturbances were backfilled after excavation by the Drama Group using sawdust. These were then re-excavated and sufficient hand-cleaning was undertaken to enable recording of the sections. No excavation of intact deposits was undertaken (Birmingham Archaeology 2003).

The stratigraphy of the excavated disturbances were recorded on pro-forma forms, the profiles were drawn at a scale of 1:10 and digitally photographed. The three dimensional locations of each of the disturbances were recorded by Total Station survey. The disturbances were then backfilled using sawdust.

6.0: THE RESULTS (Fig. 2)

Archaeological disturbance within the inner bailey was of two principal forms: excavated disturbance associated with the erection of staging, seating stands and portacabins, and rutting caused by the use of vehicles within the area.

The 16 excavated disturbances were located within the boundaries of the inner bailey rampart. The results of the archaeological recording are listed below:

	Dimensions (m) N-S/E-W/max. depth	Description of stratigraphy	Artifactual evidence
ED1	0.45 x 0.25 x 0.05	Excavated only in topsoil	CBM (1)
ED2	0.25 x 0.30 x 0.12	Excavated only in topsoil	Bone frag. (1)
ED3	0.50 x 0.55 x 0.18	Excavated only in topsoil	
ED4	0.45 x 0.50 x 0.30	Deep dark brown topsoil layer, joins with ED5	CBM (1)
ED5	0.45 x 0.40 x 0.20	See above, joins with ED4	Burnt bone frag. (1)
ED6	0.43 x 0.44 x 0.20	Shallow turf layer (0.08m), narrow band of red-brown clay, over charcoal layer with decomposed daub	

ED7	0.45 x 0.40 x 0.20	Shallow turf layer (0.05m) over mixed grey-brown silt with red-brown clay patches	
ED8	0.65 x 0.40 x 0.30	Shallow turf layer (0.05m) over mixed grey-brown silt with red-brown clay patches	
ED9	0.50 x 0.40 x 0.30	Shallow turf layer (0.05m) subsoil as above but with greater clay concentrations	Bone frag. (1)
ED10	0.40 x 0.55 x 0.35	Shallow turf layer (0.05m) interfacing into a grey topsoil layer with grey-brown silt and red-brown clay below	Bone frag. (1)
ED11	N/A	Only minor disturbance	
ED12	0.25 x 0.25 x 0.05	Excavated only in topsoil	CBM (2)
ED13	0.60 x 0.45 x 0.10	Excavated only in topsoil	CBM (not recovered)
ED14	0.40 x 0.70 x 0.10	Excavated only in topsoil	
ED15	N/A	Only minor disturbance	
ED16	N/A	Only minor disturbance	

*CBM – ceramic building material

Medieval ceramics were previously noted as being located in ED 4/5. However, detailed examination of these disturbances and the re-excavated material failed to reveal their location. No archaeological features were noted in any of the disturbances.

Examination of the areas of vehicle disturbance suggested that their effect was superficial and confined to the topsoil. Their location was noted but no further recording undertaken.

7.0: DISCUSSION

The principal area of disturbance occurred in the northwestern edge of the inner bailey just within the area encompassed by excavation area B of the Stafford Castle Project (Darlington 2002). Comparison with the excavations in area B was outside the scope of this project, but the survival of upstanding earthworks would suggest that excavation was not deep in this area. A series of ten holes had been excavated (ED1-10). These were small, all less than 0.5m in diameter and no greater than 0.35m deep. They revealed a shallow turf layer overlying mixed red-brown subsoil that appeared to be the make up of the ramparts. Located in hole ED6 was a black charcoal layer. The area of charcoal burning may correspond with the destruction of the outer castle by the parliamentarians during the civil war or simply be a remnant of excavation debris.

The other areas of disturbance had been less intrusive and revealed little about the make-up of the ground in these areas.

8.0: ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Stafford Borough Council commissioned the archaeological recording. Thanks to Nick Thomas of Stafford Borough Council and the staff of Stafford Castle Visitors Centre for their cooperation and assistance. Chris Hewitson and Sally Radford of Birmingham Archaeology undertook the archaeological recording. The project was managed by Alex Jones, who also edited this report. Illustrations were prepared by Nigel Dodds.

9.0: REFERENCES

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Darlington, J, (ed.) 2001 *Stafford Castle: Survey, Excavation and Research 1978-1998, Vol 1: The Surveys*, Stafford, Stafford Borough Council, 3-19

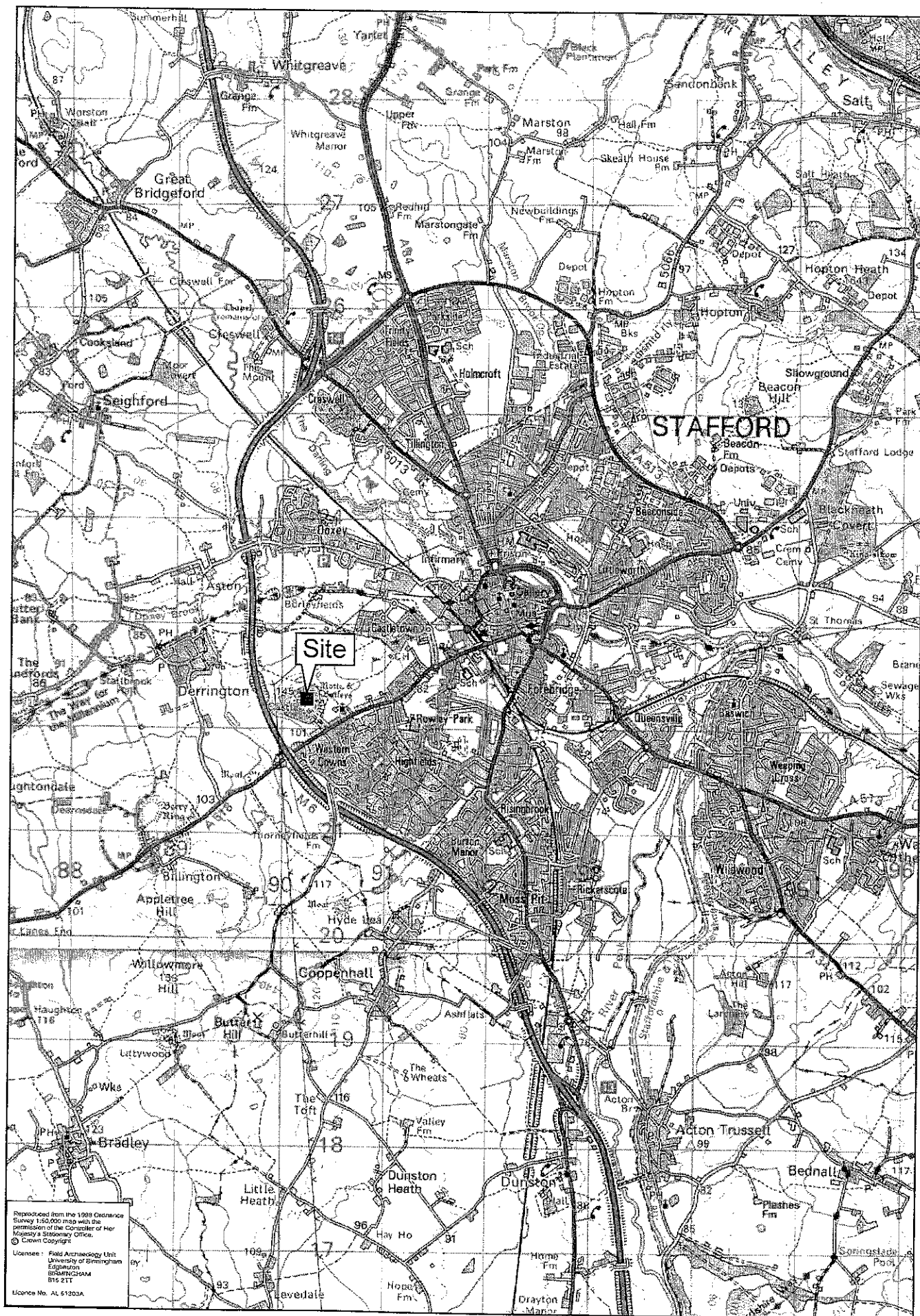


Fig.1

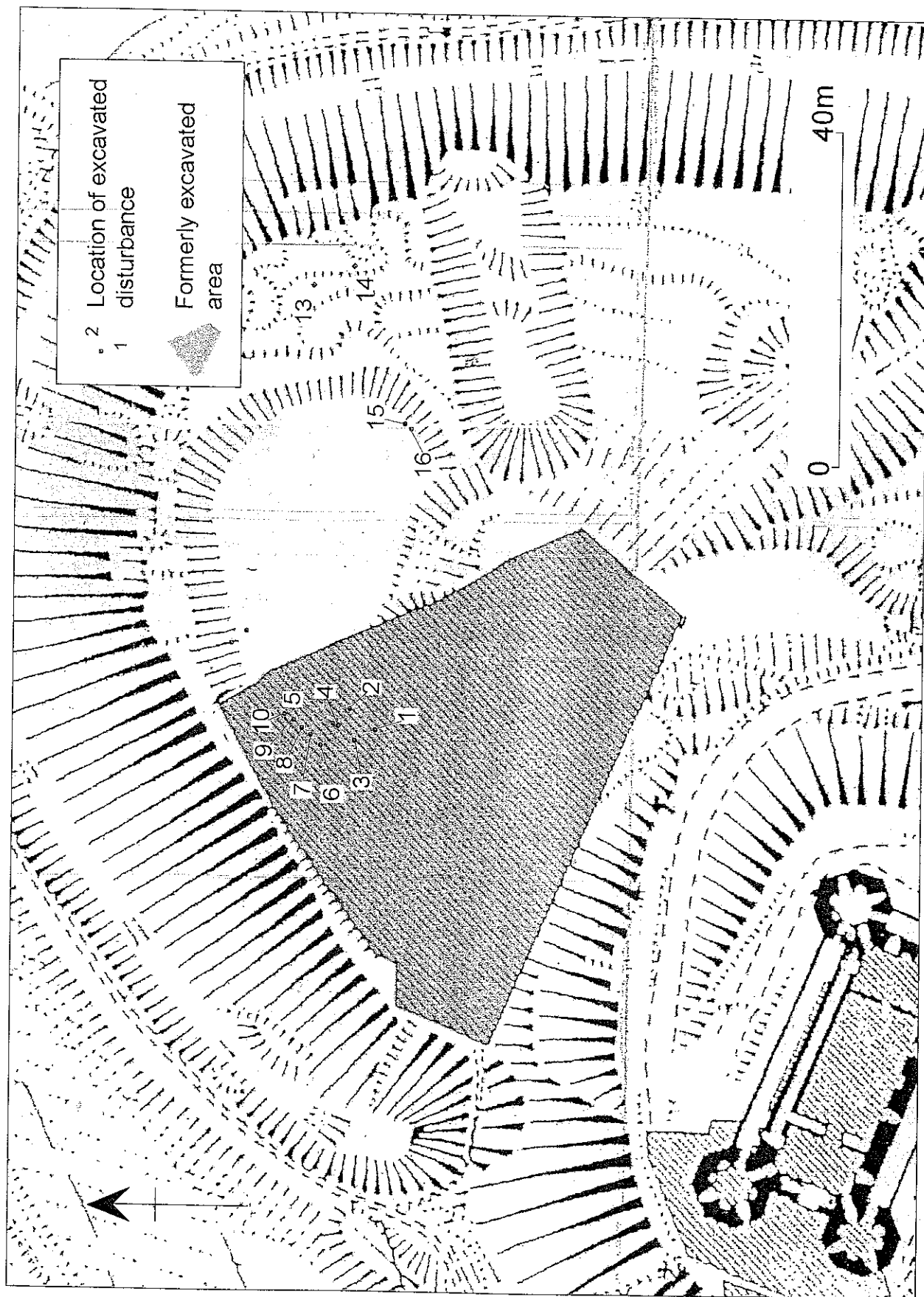


Fig.2

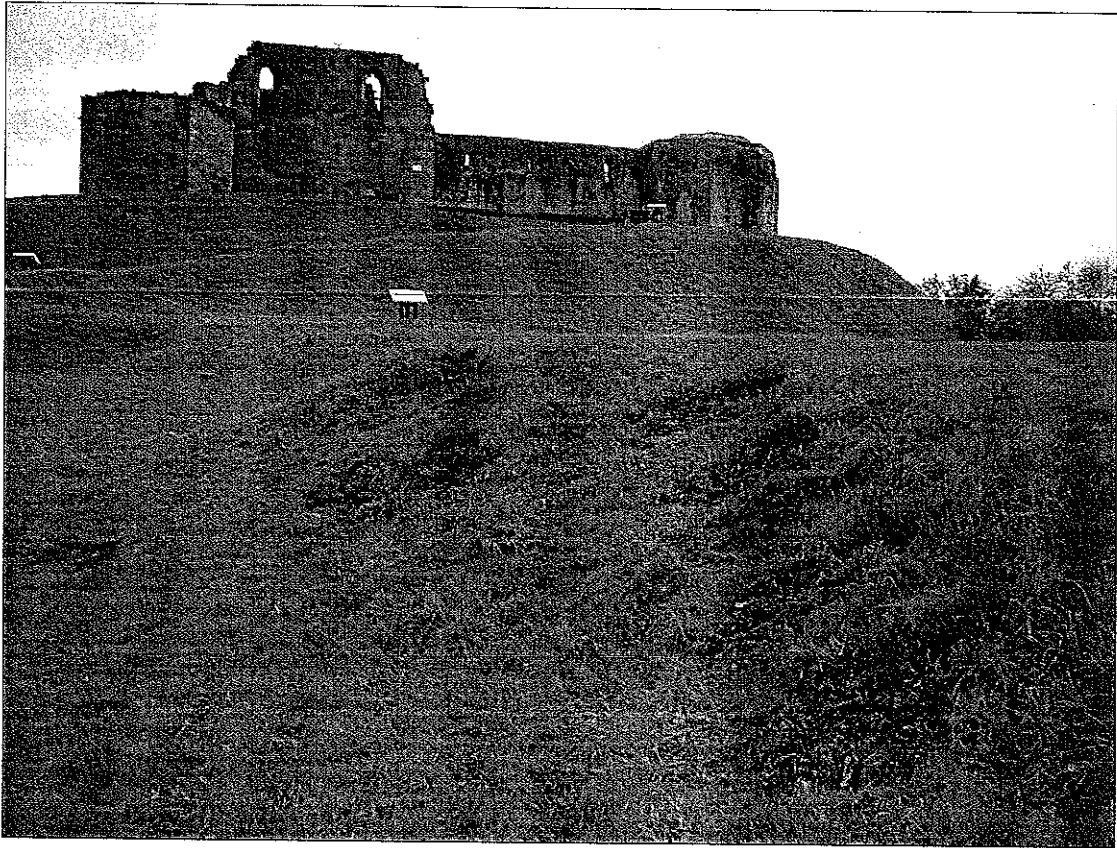


Plate 1