

ARCHAEOLOGICAL
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DURHAM UNIVERSITY

on behalf of
G W Moore and Sons

Tarset Castle
Northumberland

archaeological evaluation

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1. Summary

The project

- 1.1 This report presents the results of an archaeological evaluation conducted as part of a programme of conservation works at Tarset Castle. A historical landslip of the northern slope of the castle and continued deterioration of this side of the monument has led to the site being placed on the 'Heritage at Risk Register'. Its condition is judged to be declining and generally unsatisfactory as a result of natural erosion from the Tarset Burn. This phase of archaeological works comprised the excavation of four trenches upon the castle mound, two trenches within the castle ditch, and one trench exterior to the castle and ditch. The objective was to assess the extent and potential significance of the surviving archaeological resource, so that an informed decision may be made regarding the nature and scope of any further scheme of works that may be required in relation to the conservation and recording of the monument.
- 1.2 The works were commissioned by G W Moore and Sons and conducted by Archaeological Services Durham University.

Results

- 1.3 In the trench excavated adjacent to the western escarpment of the castle mound, two bands of sandstone rubble were recorded, probably deriving from defensive features or walls in this area. Re-deposited natural subsoil, used to create the castle mound, was identified in the base of the trench.
- 1.4 In several trenches excavated over the structural remains of the castle the defensive outer walls were identified; those to the north exhibited signs of collapse related to the landslip. Walls forming the north-east tower of the castle were identified, with dressed facing-stones surviving at lower levels. The wall had previously been partially exposed during the 19th-century excavations. In this north-eastern area of the castle mound further walls and floor surfaces were identified, some indicating earlier phases of construction. The excavations show that there were extensive episodes of deconstruction and stone reclamation in the post-medieval period. Many of the large earthworks visible on the castle mound are spoil-heaps (mortar and stone rubble) discarded during these episodes. As a result, the upper sections of all walls identified during this phase of excavation survived as lime-mortared rubble cores, lacking facing stones and dressed masonry. However, facing stones were preserved at lower levels of the structures.
- 1.5 The original cut of the castle ditch was identified. The sequence of deposits within the ditch indicated a process of colluviation and slumping from the castle mound to fill the ditch. Metalled surfaces and overlying sandstone rubble evidenced the existence of structural remains exterior to the castle, on the upper eastern edge of the castle ditch.

2. Project background

Location (Figure 1)

- 2.1 The survey area was located at Tarset Castle, in the parish of Tarset, Northumberland (NGR centre: NY 78831 85473), within the Northumberland National Park. The castle itself occupies a roughly square mound measuring approximately 5500m². The mound is partially surrounded by a substantial ditch to the east, south and north. The ditch has been significantly truncated by erosion from the Tarset Burn on the north side and by a railway cutting on the south side. On the western side of the mound is a steep slope down to the River North Tyne floodplain. The site is surrounded by pasture fields with the Tarset Burn to the north, the line of the former Border Counties Railway to the south, Tarset Hall Farm to the west and the main road to Bellingham to the east and south.

Conservation works

- 2.2 The castle site is a Scheduled Monument and Grade II* listed building, and is also currently under a Natural England Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) agreement. A historical landslip between 1862 and 1865 of the northern slope of the castle has led to contained deterioration of this side of the monument (Tarset Archive Group 2010). The site has been on English Heritage's 'Heritage at Risk Register' (No. 1015528) since 2008 and its condition is judged to be declining and generally unsatisfactory, with major localised problems as a result of natural erosion from the Tarset Burn. The HLS agreement allocated funding to address the conservation issues of the site. A geotechnical report (2009), a laser and topographic survey (2010) and a slope stability report (2013) have been produced for the site. The geotechnical works have identified that the stabilisation of the northern slope is not financially viable and so alternative options for the preservation of the monument are being examined, which include the possibility of 'preservation by record'. As part of a scheme of archaeological works, a desk-based assessment and geophysical survey have been carried out, the results of which are summarised below.

Objective

- 2.3 The objective of the scheme of works was to assess the nature, extent and potential significance of the surviving archaeological resource at the castle site, so that an informed decision may be made regarding the nature and scope of any further scheme of archaeological works that may be required in relation to the conservation and recording of the monument.

Specification

- 2.4 The works have been undertaken in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation provided by Archaeological Services Durham University (reference DS14.404rev).

Dates

- 2.5 Fieldwork was undertaken between 5th May and 8th June 2015. This report was prepared for July 2015.

Personnel

- 2.6 Fieldwork was conducted by Tessi Loefflemann, Rosie Morris, Beverley Still, Hannah Woodrow, Jenny Richards, Patricia Voke, Jonathan Dye, Richie Villis and Benjamin Westwood (supervisor). This report was prepared by Benjamin Westwood, with illustrations by David Graham. Specialist reporting was conducted by Jennifer Jones

(artefacts), Dr Carrie Armstrong (animal bone), and Dr Charlotte O'Brien (palaeoenvironmental). Sample processing was undertaken by Dr Magdolna Szilágyi. The Project Manager was Daniel Still.

Archive/OASIS

- 2.7 The site code is **TTC15**, for **Tarset Castle 2015**. The archive is currently held by Archaeological Services Durham University and will be transferred to the Great North Museum in due course. Archaeological Services Durham University is registered with the **Online Access to the Index of archaeological investigations project (OASIS)**. The OASIS ID number for this project is **archaeol3-219223**.

3. Landuse, topography and geology

- 3.1 At the time of this assessment, the study area comprised pastureland, with the castle mound and ditch at its centre, a railway cutting and the Tarset Burn and its floodplain.
- 3.2 The study area comprises a raised spur of land, which contains ridge and furrow earthworks in the east, the castle mound in the centre, and the floodplain of the Tarset Burn in the west. To the east the land slopes down gently from the Bellingham road and then beyond the enhanced castle slope, the land falls away steeply to the north and west, down to the floodplain of the Tarset Burn. The elevation across the ridge and furrow drops from 141m OD to 134m OD and on the castle mound ranges from 131 to 129m OD, whilst the elevation alongside the river is 121m OD. The site lies within the Northumberland National Park close to the confluence of the Tarset Burn and the River North Tyne. The land directly to the north of the site has eroded away into the Tarset Burn and here the land drops down onto its floodplain. To the west and south the land again falls away to the flat floodplain of the River North Tyne. Beyond the north bank of the Tarset Burn the land rises up onto Thornyburn Common.
- 3.3 The underlying solid geology of the area comprises limestone, sandstone, siltstone and mudstone of the Tyne Limestone Formation formed in the Carboniferous Period overlain by drift deposits of Devensian Diamicton Till of the Quaternary period (BGS 2014). In place, till deposits have been moulded by ice into drumlins. It has been suggested that the castle site sits on such a drumlin, and exposed till in slip scars on site show it to comprise brown silty sandy clay with gravel, cobble and boulder inclusions (Tarset Archive Group 2014).

4. Historical and archaeological background

Previous archaeological works

- 4.1 Excavations were undertaken at the site in 1888 by Mr W.L.S Charlton. Although no plan has been found recording excavations at the castle, a plan was made at the time of an excavated underground passage. The plan contains no scale and little locational data, though it probably ran parallel to and south of the Tarset Burn. A note on the plan suggests that stone was taken from the passage for the construction of a cottage. The plan is held by the Northumberland Archives at Woodhorn. A bronze key is recorded as having been found in the passage, which may be of medieval date. As part of the current programme of archaeological works a desk-based assessment (Archaeological Services 2014a) and geophysical survey

(Archaeological Services 2014b) have been carried out over the monument. The geophysical survey identified evidence of possible structures, including remains of the curtain wall and possible annex buildings, to the south and west of the four-towered fortified house on the castle mound. The remains of the castle itself were not clearly defined in the geophysical surveys, probably due to the presence of rubble spreads and stone-robbing. Former ridge and furrow cultivation, which survives as earthworks, was geophysically recorded to the east of the castle.

The prehistoric period (up to AD 70)

- 4.2 There is no direct evidence of prehistoric activity within the study area. Evidence from the surrounding area during this period, is at present restricted mainly to burial sites. It is assumed that the area was settled with unenclosed farmsteads and associated field systems as is common elsewhere in the region at this time. However, the lack of identified sites may suggest that the area was not densely populated during this period (The Archaeological Practice 2004, 26-27). There are no indications that the site of the castle was occupied, although the later earthworks would have obscured any such evidence.

The Roman period (AD 70 to 5th century)

- 4.3 The Tynedale area came under Roman control in the latter part of the 1st century AD. However, there are as yet no Roman military sites identified within the study area, the closest site being the fort at Risingham (Habitancum), located on Dere Street some 10km to the east of the study area (The Archaeological Practice 2004, 27). There is however evidence of civilian settlement during this period in the area. At Boggle Hill, some 850m to the north-west of the site, is a Romano-British period settlement (Historic Environment Record -HER- 6996). It consists of a sub-rectangular enclosure with a low spread bank, 3.5 to 4m wide. The site has been plough-damaged but is consistent with other Romano-British farmsteads of this type in the area. Elements of the later prehistoric settlement pattern are likely to have continued in use into the Roman period. There are no indications of a Roman period site at Tarset.

The medieval period (5th century to 1540)

- 4.4 There is little evidence for early medieval activity within the study area. Archaeological evidence for occupation during this period in the wider area is similarly scant, consisting of 9th century stonework found at Falstone, 7km to the west of Tarset Castle (HER 6968). During the early medieval period the area probably retained the characteristic enclosed farmsteads typical of the Romano-British period with tenure and control of land traceable through place name evidence (The Archaeological Practice 2004, 29). Mawer (1920) suggests that the Tarset place-name is Old English in origin, coming from the combination of a personal name and farm, *tīra-soēte*. He suggests that *tīr* was a shortened version of either *tīr -weald* or *tīr -wulf* (Mawer 1920, 193).
- 4.5 The Tynedale area was probably under Scottish control during the first centuries of the medieval period. It remained free from feudalism until 1157, when the valleys of the North and South Tyne were granted by Henry II to the brother of the Scots king. In the latter part of the 12th century feudal subinfeudation continued in the area with grants of land to individuals and religious houses (The Archaeological Practice 2004, 31).

- 4.6 The Tynedale Barony differed from other English Baronys. Here the Baron was responsible for administrative and judicial duties conferred elsewhere onto royal officials and the area was denoted as the Liberty of Tynedale. The arrangement represented a way for the English Crown to have limited control over Tynedale. Although the area was held by the Kings of Scotland, the Tynedale Liberty remained English territory with the Crown retaining certain powers, such as the license to grant individual feudal tenants the right to ‘crenellate’ or fortify their manors (ibid).
- 4.7 During the 13th century Upper North Tyndale was divided between three manors, Bellingham, Tarset and Chirdon, with Tarset being the largest and Tarset Hall or Castle at its centre (ibid, 32). The castle was probably built as an earth and timber ringwork in the 12th century by Richard Comyn, when the family first acquired the lands. It is recorded in 1244, when Hugh de Bolbec, Sheriff of Northumberland was instructed to take into his keeping the ‘Castle of Tyreset’ with the lord, Walter de Comyn being allowed to remove stores and weapons (ibid). In 1267 a licence to crenellate with a stone wall and ditch was granted to John Comyn (HER 6995). The structure is likely to have been a rectangular hall-tower, with turrets at each corner and the licence states that the crenellation was undertaken in the same manner as the Camera of Adam in Jesmond. The court of John Comyn II is recorded at Tarset in 1289 and during border raids between 1308 and 1328 the manor of Tarset was ravaged by Scots under Robert the Bruce (Tarset Archive Group 2010).
- 4.8 Records of the Comyn family dating to 1326-9 note 80 acres of arable, desmesne lands, which were largely uncultivated due to a lack of tenants. It has been suggested that there was a focus of settlement at Tarset, though this may have been a collection of farms rather than a village (HER 7010). In the same document a park is also recorded located to the east of the castle. Though the actual location of the park is not recorded, the persistence of park names in the area records its approximate location (The Archaeological Practice 2004, 36). On Thorneyburn Common, a 2km long ditch and bank with the ditch to the south, suggesting it was used to keep game in, may be a remnant of the park boundary. A similar 0.5km boundary has been recorded to the west of Charlton and may demarcate the eastern limit of the park (Tarset Archive Group 2010).
- 4.9 In 1279 a mill, which processed cloth, is recorded in the manor. It is again referenced in 1326, when it is recorded as broken and unused with a former annual income of £30. The location of the mill is not recorded, though it may have been located on the Tarset Burn or the North Tyne (The Archaeological Practice 2004, 37). It has been suggested that the stone passage recorded during Charlton's excavations may have been an associated mill race. This would indicate that the mill was located in the vicinity of the present Tarset Hall Farm (Michael Money, pers. comm.)
- 4.10 The manor is recorded as having been leased to Sir William Heron between 1362 and 1392. In 1373 it was sold to Henry Percy, 1st Earl of Northumberland (Tarset Archive Group 2010).
- 4.11 The manor was probably divided in the 14th century and the castle does not appear in records again until the early 16th century, when it was recommended for use as a garrison. In 1523, Sir Ralph Fenwick was stationed at the castle with a garrison of 80 men. He was routed the next year by William Charlton of Bellingham and 200 Tynedale men. Fenwick returned in 1525 with a garrison of 100 men but was again

driven out when the castle was recaptured and burned by an alliance of Scots and 400 Tynedale men. Further bastles and fortified structures were built in the area during this period. Examples survive at Snabdough (HER 7041), where there is also a deserted medieval settlement (HER 7055), and Birks (HER 7042). The castle was not rebuilt and in 1541 was recorded as derelict in the survey of border defences (The Archaeological Practice 2004, 38).

The post-medieval period (1541 to 1899)

- 4.12 Taret appears on John Speed's map of Northumberland in 1610, depicted with a fortified house, suggesting the continued existence of the castle. The castle is recorded approximately 100 years later around 1725 with walls still of 'considerable height' though also suffering from annual deterioration (Taret Archive Group 2010).
- 4.13 The site is mapped again in 1749 by Kitchen and in 1769 by Armstrong. Although these maps provide little further detail, the presence of the site illustrates its continued importance during the 18th century.
- 4.14 The castle was sketched in 1773 as a rectangular structure with corner towers set at oblique angles to the curtain walls. The sketch is not to scale and the angle of the towers may be due to artistic license rather than factual information. However, it may be taken to indicate that the corner of the castle ditch and bank has been removed by erosion by this date. A further sketch of mid-19th century date again depicts the castle with four towers, though on a rectangular plan.
- 4.15 In 1860, the Border Counties Railway line was laid to the south of the castle mound, with the cutting truncating the south-western corner of the mound. The railway bridged the Taret Burn to the west; the structure is now Grade II listed (HER 7016). By 1865, a large landslip was recorded on the northern side of the castle mound created by erosion from the Taret Burn. The mid-19th-century sketch map and the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map of 1865 depicts the damage to the castle mound from both the railway cutting and the alluvial erosion. There is little other detail shown on the Ordnance Survey map aside from the suggestion of earthworks on top of the mound. The surrounding area is largely rural, with the outlying settlements of Redmire and Lanehead to the north and Taret Hall Farm to the west. Possible quarrying is depicted at Lanehead, a suggested site for the stone quarried for the castle structure.
- 4.16 The 2nd edition Ordnance Survey map of 1898 again depicts the damage to the castle mound and shows the presence of earthworks on top of the mound. The erosion does not appear to be substantially different from earlier maps. The surrounding area is little altered, aside from the quarries at Lanehead now labelled as Old Quarries.
- 4.17 During the 18th and 19th centuries rural settlement developed built in the surrounding area (HERs 14570-1, 14578, 15033-4, 15039, 15050-1, 15056, 15058-9, 15062-3, 15065). It is suggested that the castle site was robbed for building stone in the 18th and 19th centuries and several structures in the immediate vicinity contain distinctive large, tooled stone blocks which may be from the castle. Two of these may be Taret Lodge to the south-east of the site and the cottage directly to the south of site, which are both of 19th-century date.

The modern period (1900 to present)

- 4.18 The erosion of the site continued into the 20th century and aerial photography dating to 1974 depicts further erosion to the northern side of the castle mound. By 2007 the Taret Archive Group had been formed and the condition of the castle was brought to the attention of English Heritage. In 2008 it was placed on the Heritage at Risk register and geotechnical works were carried out the following year.

5. The evaluation trenches

Introduction

- 5.1 A total of seven evaluation trenches were excavated across the site: four trenches were excavated on the castle mound (1, 2, 3, and 6); two trenches were excavated within the base of the castle ditch (4 and 7); one trench was excavated exterior to the castle, at the upper edge of the castle ditch (5). Turf and topsoil, a deposit of grey-brown clayey-silt [01: 0.1-0.3m thick], was removed from the 2m wide trenches using a mechanical excavator where accessible, and otherwise by hand.

Trench 1 (Figure 3)

- 5.2 Trench 1 was 10m long and up to 0.85m deep. The trench was orientated east/west, and was located across a flat area to the west of the visible castle earthworks and adjacent to the steep western escarpment of the castle. Redeposited natural [2], a yellow-brown sandy-clay, was identified at a depth of between 0.3m and 0.4m and was observed extending beyond a depth of 0.85m within a small sondage excavated at the western end of the trench. This deposit was overlain by subsoil [5], a deposit of brown sandy silt, into which were set two rubble deposits [F4: 0.4, thick, 1.89m wide; F6: 0.3m thick, 1.6m wide] (Figure 5). Whilst no structural foundations relating to the rubble were identified, the rubble was present as two discrete bands extending approximately north/south across the trench. Deposit [F4] was located at the extreme west of the trench, concentrated at the apex of the steep western escarpment of the castle mound and made up of undressed stone blocks varying from small (50x20x50mm) to very large (700x400x300mm). Deposit [F6] was located 1m to the east and was again made up of undressed stone blocks varying in size from very small (20x30x25mm) to large (300x300x200mm). The rubble was overlain by 0.3m of topsoil and turf [1].

Trench 2 (Figure 3)

- 5.3 Trench 2 was 25m long and up to 0.7m deep. The trench was orientated north-west/south-east, and was located across western earthworks associated with the castle. Following the removal of turf and topsoil [1] thick layers of sandstone and mortar rubble [24: 0.7m+thick] were identified extending throughout the trench. Accordingly, two areas were identified within the trench for further investigation.
- 5.4 To the north-west a deposit of large undressed sandstone blocks (up to 600x300x250mm) and rubble [39: 0.5m+thick] was identified at a depth of 1m within a 3m by 1m sondage excavated into a large rubble mound (Figure 6). This rubble was overlain by up to 0.5m of rubble [24]. Within a 7.5m x 1m sondage excavated to the south-east, a wall [F23: 2.8m wide, 0.8m high] was identified extending approximately north/south across the trench (Figure 7). Whilst some dressed facing sandstones (up to 600x200x400mm) were observed on the west face, the majority of the preserved section comprised the inner mortared core of a wall. The presentation of the wall indicated some degree of collapse. Against the wall to

the north and south, and extending throughout the sondage, was a friable yellow-brown deposit of mortar, sand and small pebbles [22: 0.45m+ thick]. A further rubble deposit [25: 1.2m+ long, 0.6m thick] was recorded toward the south-west end of the trench, overlain by rubble deposit [24]. The trench was sealed by up to 0.2m of topsoil and turf [1].

Trench 3 (Figure 4)

- 5.5 Trench 3 was 25m long, up to 0.9m deep, and adjoined Trench 6 to the south. The trench was orientated east/west, and was located across a group of earthworks adjacent to the northern landslip. Following the removal of turf and topsoil [1] a deposit of silt, sandstone and mortar rubble [7: 0.6m+thick] was identified extending throughout the trench. Accordingly, two areas were identified within the trench for investigation.
- 5.6 To the west, a 6m by 2m sondage was excavated to investigate a large earthwork mound. A number of large dressed and faced sandstone blocks [F33] (up to 500x350x250mm) were identified in the base of the sondage at a depth of up to 0.7m, possibly deriving from wall [F31] to the south-west (Figure 8). The collapsed remains of this wall [F31: 1m long, 1.7m wide, 1m high] were identified extending from the southern edge of the trench. Almost all facing stones had been removed, leaving the mortared inner rubble core of the wall extant but not *in situ*, with the wall appearing to have collapsed eastward. To the north-east, the remains of a further, possibly collapsed, mortared inner wall core [F32: 1m long, 1.4m+wide, 0.75m high] was identified. The walls were sealed by a deposit of silt, sand and mortar rubble [30: 0.3m thick] from which a single sherd of medieval Scarborough ware pottery with external green glaze was recovered and a further rubble deposit [34: 1.5m long, 0.6m thick], in turn overlain by rubble deposit [7: up to 0.1m thick].
- 5.7 At the eastern end of the trench, a further sondage was excavated measuring 5.5m by 2m, with a smaller, deeper section excavated to the west. Within this deeper section, a metalled surface [F37: 1.1m+ long, 2m+ wide, 0.1m+ thick] was identified (Figure 9). The surface was made of small sandstone and ironstone pebbles within a matrix of grey silty-clay. Cutting the surface was shallow pit [F35: 0.6m diameter, 0.1m thick] which was filled by a deposit of dark grey sandy-silt [36]. The pit and the metalled surface were overlain by deposit of grey-yellow sandy-clay [20: 0.25m thick] containing hazel charcoal, and a deposit of grey-brown sandy-silt [19: 0.3m thick]. On to these layers a deposit of small sandstones had been laid set in a charcoal tempered lime-mortar [F12: 2m+ long, 0.2m wide, 0.1m thick]. The upper surface of the mortar had degraded and combined with sand and silt to form a further deposit [11: 2m+ long, 1.1m wide, 0.1m thick] from which several cattle and red deer bones were recovered. This was overlain by a thicker deposit of brown sandy-silt [8: 0.2m thick], from which four small incomplete iron nails were recovered and containing frequent large undressed sandstone blocks (up to 400x300x250mm), and up to 0.5m of a rubble deposit [7]. The trench was sealed by up to 0.2m of topsoil and turf [1].

Trench 4 (Figure 3)

- 5.8 Trench 4 was 5m long and up to 0.6m deep. The trench was orientated east/west, and was located in the base of the eastern castle ditch. Natural subsoil, a mottled yellow-grey clay [3], was identified at a depth of 0.6m and was cut by the very large castle ditch [F51: 100m+ long, 20m wide, 6.6m deep], which extended beyond the

edges of the trench in all directions (Figure 10). The basal deposit within the ditch, a waterlogged dark brown silt [40: 0.45m thick], was overlain to the west by a deposit of dark brown sandy-silt [50: 0.2m thick], and to the east by a deposit of reddish brown sandy-silt [41: 0.4m+ thick]. Palaeoenvironmental data from these deposits was sparse, confined mainly to uncultivated species such as nettle, hawthorn and bramble. All deposits contained a large component of large dressed sandstones, some faced, up to 900x500x300mm in size (Figure 11). The trench was sealed by up to 0.1m of topsoil and turf [1].

Trench 5 (Figure 3)

- 5.9 Trench 5 was 10m long and up to 0.7m deep. The trench was orientated east/west and was located in the proposed vicinity of a bridge abutment to the east of the castle ditch. To the west a metalled surface [21=38: 1.3m+ long, 0.7m+ wide] was identified in the base of two small sondages, comprised of small sub-rounded pebbles (up to 30x20x20mm) (Figure 13). The surface was overlain by a deposit of brown sandy-silt [10: 9m long, 0.3m thick] containing a very large component of large sandstones and from which a single sherd of unglazed earthenware pottery, possibly Romano-British in date, was recovered (Figure 12). Whilst the sandstones (up to 600x500x200mm) were not shaped or dressed it was unclear if they had been laid to form a rough surface or, more likely, derived from an adjacent demolished structure. No mortar was present within the deposit, and toward the eastern end of the trench the stones lay directly upon the natural clay subsoil [3]. This deposit was overlain by a brown sandy-silt subsoil deposit [9: 0.3m thick] which contained smaller sandstones and extended throughout the trench. The trench was sealed by up to 0.2m of topsoil and turf [1].

Trench 6 (Figure 4)

- 5.10 Trench 3 was 10m long, up to 2m deep, and adjoined Trench 3 to the north. The trench was orientated north/south, and was located across a partially exposed sandstone wall, believed to be the north-east castle tower and originally excavated during the 19th century.
- 5.11 In the base of a sondage excavated in the south-west area of the trench the upper course of a probable wall [F14: 0.6m+ long, 1.4m wide, 0.1m+ high] was identified. The wall extended east/west from the western edge of the trench, appearing to run beneath later wall [F13] (Figure 14). The wall was made of large unworked sandstones (up to 500x400mm) and, although unbonded, mortar had been applied to the upper surface. To the north a deposit of yellowish-orange clayey-sand [26: 0.6m+ long, 0.4m+ wide, 0.05m+ thick] lay against the wall. Palaeoenvironmental analysis of this deposit revealed the presence of mortar, charred heather twigs and oak charcoal. Overlying wall [F14], and located in the centre of the trench, wall [F13: 4.5m+ long, up to 3m wide, 1.6m high] was made of dressed and faced sandstones (up to 400x300x200mm) with an inner lime-mortared sandstone and rubble core. Three courses of the north face of the wall survived to a height of 0.4m, and exterior to the trench a number of chamfered sandstone blocks (up to 900x300mm) were recorded. Much of the surviving sections of the wall comprised the corner of the inner core of this tower wall, which stepped down as it extended to the south.
- 5.12 Within the sondage excavated to the west a deposit of light brown sandy-silt [27: 2.4m+ long, 1m+ wide, 0.3m+ thick] with a high component of stone rubble and mortar was encountered, partially overlying walls [F13] and [F14]. Set upon this

layer a partially surviving concrete and mortar floor surface [F15: 1.9m long, 0.2m+wide, 0.15m thick] was identified (Figure 15), extending from the western edge of the trench. This surface and deposit [26] were overlain by a sequence of mixed sand, silt, mortar and stone rubble deposits [43, 42, 29: 2.2m long, 0.5m wide, 0.7m thick] that had been tipped from the direction of wall [F13] to the north into this corner area. The final deposit sealing this sequence and the southern section of wall [F13] was an extensive layer of brown silt [17: 6.2m+ long, 0.7m thick] containing a large amount of mortar and stone rubble.

- 5.13 To the north of, and possibly extending beneath, wall [F13] was a layer of concrete and mortar [F28: 2m+ long, 1m+ wide] (Figure 16). The concrete was overlain by a thick layer of silt, mortar and stone rubble [18: 1.4m+ long, 2m+wide, 0.3m thick], in turn partially overlain by a deposit of dark brown silt [16: 2m+ long, 1m wide, 0.5m thick] which filled the 19th century excavation trench to the north of the wall [F13]. Whilst much of the trench was sealed by topsoil [1: up to 0.2m thick], the north-face of the tower wall was covered by a thin layer of turf only, and in places was partially exposed prior to excavation.

Trench 7 (Figure 3)

- 5.14 Trench 7 was 5m long and up to 1.2m deep. The trench was orientated east/west, and was located in the base of the castle ditch to the east of the castle mound (Figure 17). A deposit of light grey silty-clay [47: 2.8m+ long, 0.25m thick] was encountered at a depth of 0.7m within the trench to the west, containing a large component of sandstone rubble blocks up to 400x300x250mm in size. A single sherd of medieval buff/white ware pottery was recovered from this ditch fill. This deposit was sealed by a layer of dark brown sandy-silt [44: 1.5m+long, 0.4m thick] from which a large piece of ironworking slag (iron bloom), part of a smithing hearth base, was recovered. The deposit had slumped into the ditch from the castle mound to the west, and was partially overlain by a thin layer of yellow silty-sand [46: 1m long, 0.5m wide, 0.1m thick]. To the east, this sequence was overlain by a deposit of orange-brown sandy-silt [45: 2m+ long, 0.4m thick] which had slumped into the ditch from the east and which yielded a small fragment of yellow ochre. A further small deposit of yellow silty-sand [49: 1m+ long, 0.6m wide, 0.1m thick] was encountered, overlain by a larger deposit of light brown silty sand [48: 5m long, 0.3m thick], which extended throughout the trench. The trench was sealed by up to 0.2m of topsoil and turf [1].

6. The artefacts

Pottery assessment

Results

- 6.1 Five fragments (43g wt) were hand-recovered from three contexts. Context [01] has a fairly fresh body sherd of medieval buff/white ware with an external green/brown glaze, as well as a rim sherd of 19th-century transfer printed whiteware. A further fragment of buff/white ware came from the sample from moat fill context [47]. Context [10] has a highly abraded base sherd of unglazed earthenware, mainly oxidised but with slightly reduced areas externally. The micaceous clay is tempered with very fine grit and small (<3mm) stones. Possibly Romano-British. Context [30] has a single small body sherd of medieval Scarborough type ware with external green glaze.

Recommendation

- 6.2 No further work is recommended.

Animal bone assessment

Results

- 6.3 A small bone assemblage was recovered from contexts [2, 8 and 11]. The bone condition was overall reasonable, although some flaking and cracking of the surface was noted and the single bone from context [2] was in poorer condition than that of the other contexts. Most of the bones were fragmented, with no complete spans of long bones present. There was no visible evidence of butchery work on any of the bones, although the surface condition may in some cases have precluded identification.
- 6.4 The material recovered from context [2] comprised a single cattle metatarsal. Both epiphyses were fused, indicating an individual over the age of 2-3 years (Silver 1969). Some minor pathological changes were noted at the proximal end, and dog gnawing was present at both the proximal and distal ends.
- 6.5 A single unfused sheep/goat metapodial distal epiphysis fragment was present in context [8]. While there is some debate about the age of fusion of this articulation, generally it is understood this would fuse somewhere between one and three years (Zeder 2006), suggesting an individual younger than, or within, this age range. No butchery marks, gnawing or burning were noted. Two fragments of broken oyster shell also came from [8].
- 6.6 Five bone fragments came from context [11]. These comprise a right cattle scapula fragment, a burnt large mammal (cattle-sized) bone fragment and a right red deer calcaneum formed from two refitting fragments and a refitting unfused tuber calcanei.

Discussion

- 6.7 The assemblage is small and provides little information beyond the presence of cattle, sheep/goat, red deer and dog at the site. Such species are typical for medieval and post-medieval assemblages and the bones are indicative of domestic waste, with the presence of red deer suggesting some hunted animals were utilised. The gnawing on the metatarsal from context [2] suggests the food waste was accessible for a period of time prior to burial. The fragmentary nature of much of the bone material is again suggestive of butchery for consumption or disposal, although none of the bones exhibited any direct evidence for butchery. A single bone fragment from context [11] appears to have been heated. The recovery of relatively well-preserved bone demonstrates the potential for further bone to be recovered from the site.

Recommendation

- 6.8 No further work is recommended on this assemblage due to its small size.

Flint assessment

Results

- 6.9 Two small pieces (<20g wt) of unworked flint came from context [5].

Recommendation

- 6.10 No further work is recommended.

Building materials assessment

Results

- 6.11 Around 1167g of mortar fragments were recovered. Two hundred grams came from context [30], either grey/white in colour and tempered with small stones (up to c10mm) and charcoal, or pinkish-white and tempered with charcoal and rather larger stones up to c.40mm. Sample <8> from context [26] had 50g of small grey/white fragments similarly tempered, and context [11] produced 917g, found associated with the animal bone from that context, and similar in appearance and tempering to the rest of the mortar.
- 6.12 Context [11] also had around 410g wt of fragments of hard, friable material with an open cream/white structure, which reacted to the application of dilute hydrochloric acid, suggesting that it is lime. This may have been prepared for use in mortar-making.
- 6.13 A small piece of probable yellow ochre came from the sample from ditch fill context [45]. Ochre was used as a pigment in paint in medieval and earlier (and later) periods.

Recommendation

- 6.14 No further work is recommended.

Iron objects assessment

Results

- 6.15 Ten highly corroded iron objects came from three contexts. All were X-radiographed.
- 6.16 Context [5] had one small, incomplete, flat-topped nail. Context [8] had four small, incomplete nails, one with mineralised wood on its surface, and two unidentifiable fragments. This context also produced a piece of iron chain 138mm long. Both ends are broken, but the X-radiograph shows a linked join between sections in the centre. The links themselves appear to have 'concertinaed' together. Context [11] had one small and one substantial nail, both incomplete. The larger one is 76mm+ long with a flat head c.35mm diam and a c.13mm shank. While the nails appear from the X-radiograph to be wrought, they and the chain cannot be dated.

Recommendation

- 6.17 No further work is recommended.

Industrial residues assessment

Results

- 6.18 Moat/ditch context [44] produced a piece of ironworking slag identified as part of a smithing hearth base (SHB). It weighs 1590g and was originally c.200mm in diameter x c42-45mm deep max. The piece retains the characteristic concavo-convex shape of a SHB and has been broken up into two or more fragments. The edges of the break are worn, suggesting this was done in antiquity. The fragment exterior is corroded and uneven and the interior is dark and relatively dense and vesicular. The crystal structure of the iron in the slag is visible both inside and out, suggesting that it cooled slowly, allowing large crystals to form. There is little evidence of surface drip

formation and the homogenous appearance of the interior suggests the slag was formed in a single episode.

Discussion

- 6.19 Iron bloom which results from the smelting process is a spongy mass of metallic iron still containing a high percentage of trapped slag, and this slag must be worked (hammered) out of the bloom by smithing before objects can be forged from the metal. During smithing, the bloom is kept at a high temperature to facilitate slag expulsion, and the expelled slag forms drips and small pools around the smithing hearth, which may consolidate into irregularly shaped lumps or form into the characteristic shapes of smithing hearth bottoms, as seen here. Accumulations of smithing slag and hearth bottoms would be periodically cleared out of the smithing hearth and disposed of. As slag is heavy, it was often broken up to facilitate its disposal.
- 6.20 A single, relatively large piece of slag suggests that smithing activity was taking place somewhere in the vicinity. SHB's are found on sites of iron age and historic periods and cannot be easily dated.

Recommendation

- 6.21 No further work is recommended.

7. The palaeoenvironmental evidence

Methods

- 7.1 A palaeoenvironmental assessment was carried out on 13 bulk samples taken from the moat/castle ditch, a possible pit and several layers/deposits. The samples were manually floated and sieved through a 500 μ m mesh. The residues were examined for shells, fruitstones, nutshells, charcoal, small bones, pottery, flint, glass and industrial residues, and were scanned using a magnet for ferrous fragments. The flots were examined at up to x60 magnification using a Leica MZ7.5 stereomicroscope for waterlogged and charred botanical remains. Identification of these was undertaken by comparison with modern reference material held in the Palaeoenvironmental Laboratory at Archaeological Services Durham University. Plant nomenclature follows Stace (1997). Habitat classifications follow Preston *et al.* (2002).
- 7.2 Selected charcoal fragments were identified, in order to provide material suitable for radiocarbon dating. The transverse, radial and tangential sections were examined at up to x600 magnification using a Leica DMLM microscope. Identifications were assisted by the descriptions of Schweingruber (1990) and Hather (2000), and modern reference material held in the Palaeoenvironmental Laboratory at Archaeological Services Durham University.
- 7.3 The works were undertaken in accordance with the palaeoenvironmental research aims and objectives outlined in the regional archaeological research framework and resource agendas (Petts & Gerrard 2006; Hall & Huntley 2007; Huntley 2010).

Results

- 7.4 The few finds from the samples comprised of mortar from layer [26], a fragment of pottery from moat fill [47] and a small amount of possible yellow ochre from moat

fill [45]. Charcoal was recorded in small quantities, but was mineralised and in a poor condition which hindered identification. The fragments which could be identified were oak, birch, hazel and alder. Coal shale, and a few pre-Quaternary trilete megasporangia which derive from coal deposits, were recorded in several of the samples.

- 7.5 The moat/castle ditch fills produced large flots dominated by modern woody roots. Some also comprised small quantities of leaf litter, beetles, moss and wood. Moat fills [40] and [41] contained a few uncharred seeds, including common nettle, hawthorn, bramble and sedges. Charred plant remains were absent from all of the samples, with the exception of a single charred hazel nutshell fragment from moat fill [46].
- 7.6 The results are presented in Table 1.2. The poor condition of the charcoal may prevent radiocarbon dating of some of the contexts.

Discussion

- 7.7 The samples provide little information about the age or nature of the features, due to the limited number of diagnostic palaeoenvironmental remains. Hazel nutshells occur on a wide range of archaeological sites of all time periods. The presence of a small assemblage of uncharred seeds, beetles and wood in moat fills [40] and [41] suggests accumulation under partially waterlogged conditions, although there is no direct evidence for standing water in the feature.

Recommendations

- 7.8 No further work is recommended on the samples due to the limited number of diagnostic palaeoenvironmental remains. If additional work is undertaken at the site, the results of this assessment should be added to any further palaeoenvironmental data produced.

8. The archaeological resource

- 8.1 Whilst no structural foundations were identified in the trench excavated adjacent to the western escarpment of the castle mound, the bands of large sandstone blocks are likely to derive from defensive features or walls in this area. The re-deposited natural subsoil encountered in the base of Trench 1 is derived from material excavated from the ditch and re-deposited to form the castle mound.
- 8.2 The eastern outer defensive wall of the castle was identified to the west in Trench 2. In Trench 6 walls forming the north-east tower of the castle were identified, with dressed facing-stones surviving at lower levels, previously exposed during the 19th-century excavations. The wall identified within the base of the trench, appearing to run beneath the tower wall, is probably an earlier phase of construction or some form of internal division, overlain by a later internal concrete floor surface. This floor surface probably provided a stable base for a further floor surface, since removed. The relationship of the tower walls to the metallised surface and overlying concrete identified in the western end of Trench 3 has not been determined. However, these remains indicate structural features exist exterior to the central defensive structure of the castle. Whilst it is not clear which structures the walls identified to the east in Trench 3 relate to, the appearance of these walls indicates collapse probably related to the land-slip event in the 19th century. The lack of facing-stones on the upper

exposed sections of these walls, when considered with the facing-stones found at lower levels sealed by the collapse, may indicate that the extensive removal of dressed masonry from the site post-dates the land-slip.

- 8.3 The evidence from all trenches excavated across the structural remains of the castle indicates that there were extensive episodes of deconstruction and stone reclamation in the post-medieval period, and possibly as late as the mid-19th century. Many of the large earthworks visible on the castle mound, such as the large bank excavated at the western end of Trench 2, are spoil-heaps (mortar and stone rubble) discarded during these episodes rather than structural remains of the castle. As a result, the upper sections of all walls identified during this phase of excavation survived as lime-mortared rubble cores, lacking facing stones and dressed masonry; facing stones were preserved at lower levels of the structures only. In addition, several of the spoil-heaps, including the rubble bank located at the northern end of Trench 6, were created during the archaeological excavations in the late 19th century.
- 8.4 Within the trenches located in the eastern area of the castle ditch the original cut of the ditch was identified; the sequence of deposits excavated indicated a process of slumping and colluviation, the deposits and masonry originating from the upper area of the castle mound, which gradually filled the ditch. The palaeoenvironmental data recovered from Trench 7 was consistent with this process, and did not identify any evidence of the deposition of refuse within the ditch in this area.
- 8.5 The metallised surfaces and overlying sandstone rubble identified in Trench 5 evidence the existence of structural remains in this exterior area to the east of the castle ditch.

9. Impact assessment

- 9.1 The features and deposits present in Trenches 1, 2, 4, 5, and 7 are protected by overlying subsoils, topsoil and turf, and are located some distance from the areas at risk from further land-slip events. This, together with their location within the scheduled area, means that there is no threat of damage to extant remains related to Tarset castle in these areas.
- 9.2 The structural remains and deposits located within Trenches 3 and 6 are located in close proximity to the existing steep-edged scar created as a result of previous landslip events (Figure 18). These excavations have demonstrated that archaeological features and deposits were damaged and destroyed during this event. As a result the extant remains located within these trenches, together with others as yet unexcavated in this vicinity, are at risk should any further landslip events occur.

10. Sources

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Appendix 1: Data tables

Table 1.1: Context data

The • symbols in the columns at the right indicate the presence of artefacts of the following types: P pottery, B bone, M metals, F flint, I industrial residues, G glass, C ceramic building material, O other materials.

No	trench	Description	P	B	M	F	I	C
1	all	Topsoil and turf	•					
2	1	Redeposited natural subsoil		•				
3	all	Natural clay subsoil						
F4	1	Rubble						
5	1	Subsoil			•	•		
F6	1	Rubble						
7	3	Rubble deposit						
8	3	Rubble deposit		•	•			
9	5	Subsoil/ rubble deposit						
10	5	Silt and large stone rubble deposit	•					
11	3	Degraded mortar and silt		•	•			•
F12	3	Concrete and mortar						
F13	6	Lime-mortared wall (NE tower)						
F14	6	Unbonded wall						
F15	6	Concrete surface						
16	6	Silt in C19th exc. trench						
17	6	Rubble deposit						
18	6	Spoil from C19th exc. trench						
19	3	Sandy-silt layer (below 11)						
20	3	Sandy-clay (over F37)						
F21	5	Metalled surface						
22	2	Rubble deposit						
F23	2	Rubble core of wall						
24	2	Rubble west of F23						
25	2	Rubble at east end of Trench 2						
26	6	Silty-sand deposit, base of trench						
27	6	Rubble deposit						
28	6	Concrete and mortar						
29	6	Backfill/rubble deposit						
30	3	Rubble deposit	•					•
F31	3	Mortared wall core						
F32	3	Mortared wall core						
F33	3	Faced/dressed sandstones						
34	3	Silty-sand layer						
F35	3	pit						
36	3	Fill of pit F35						
F37	3	Metalled surface						
38	5	Metalled surface						
39	2	Rubble deposit						
40	4	Basal fill of castle ditch F51						
41	4	Fill of ditch F51						
42	6	Compacted sand and mortar layer						
43	6	Mortar/sand rubble deposit						
44	7	Fill of ditch F51					•	
45	7	Fill of ditch F51						•
46	7	Fill of ditch F51						
47	7	Fill of ditch F51	•					
48	7	Fill of ditch F51						
49	7	Fill of ditch F51						
50	4	Fill of ditch F51						
51	4/7	Cut of castle ditch						

Table 1.2: Data from palaeoenvironmental assessment

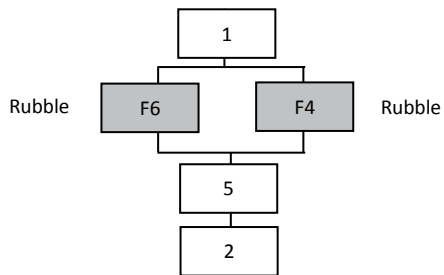
Sample	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Context	19	20	36	40	41	45	46	26	45	45	47	50	3
Feature number	-	-	35	51	51	51	51	-	51	51	51	51	-
Feature	deposit	deposit	pit	Moat	Moat	Moat	Moat	Layer	Moat	Moat	Moat	Moat	Natural?
<i>Material available for radiocarbon dating</i>	(✓)	(✓)	(✓)	(✓)	(✓)	✓	(✓)	-	(✓)	(✓)	-	✓	(✓)
<i>Volume processed (l)</i>	13	14	6	12	19	17	7	15	13	11	6	10	5
<i>Volume of flot (ml)</i>	80	80	40	1000	800	400	50	60	100	100	50	100	50
<i>Residue contents</i>													
Mortar	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	++	-	-	-	-	-
Ochre	-	-	-	-	-	(+)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pot (number of fragments)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
<i>Flot matrix</i>													
Beetle	-	-	-	+	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Charcoal	+	+	+	-	(+)	+	+	-	+	-	-	++	+
Clinker / cinder	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	+	-	-	-
Coal / coal shale	++	-	+	+	-	+	-	+	+	+	++	++	++
Heather twigs (charred)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-
Leaf litter (modern)	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	+
Moss	-	-	-	+	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pre-Quaternary trilete megasporangium	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	+	(+)	-	-	-	-
Roots (modern)	-	-	-	++++	++++	++++	+++	-	+++	+++	+++	+++	++
Wood	-	-	-	+	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Charred remains (total count)</i>													
(t) <i>Corylus avellana</i> (Hazel)								1					
	nutshell frag.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Uncharred remains (abundance)</i>													
(r) <i>Urtica dioica</i> (Common Nettle)	achene	-	-	-	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
(t) <i>Crataegus monogyna</i> (Hawthorn)	fruitstone	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
(t) <i>Rubus fruticosus</i> agg. (Bramble)	fruitstone	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
(w) <i>Carex</i> sp (Sedges)	biconvex nutlet	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
(x) <i>Cenococcum geophilum</i> (Soil fungus)	sclerotia	2	2	3	2	4	-	-	4	-	-	-	-
<i>Identified charcoal (✓ presence)</i>													
<i>Alnus glutinosa</i> (Alder)		-	-	-	-	✓	✓	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Betula</i> sp (Birches)		-	-	-	✓	-	-	-	-	-	-	✓	✓
<i>Corylus avellana</i> (Hazel)		-	✓	-	-	✓	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Diffuse-porous		✓	-	-	-	-	-	-	✓	✓	-	-	-
<i>Quercus</i> sp (Oaks)		✓	-	-	-	-	-	✓	✓	✓	-	-	-

[r-ruderal; t-tree/shrub; w-wet/damp ground; x-wide niche. (+): trace; +: rare; ++: occasional; +++: common; ++++: abundant

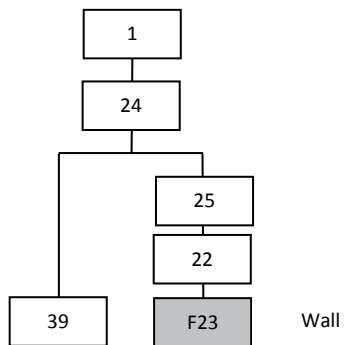
Uncharred remains are scored from 1-5 where 1: 1-2; 2: 3-10; 3: 11-40; 4: 41-200; 5: >200. (✓) may be unsuitable for dating due to size or species]

Appendix 2: Stratigraphic matrices

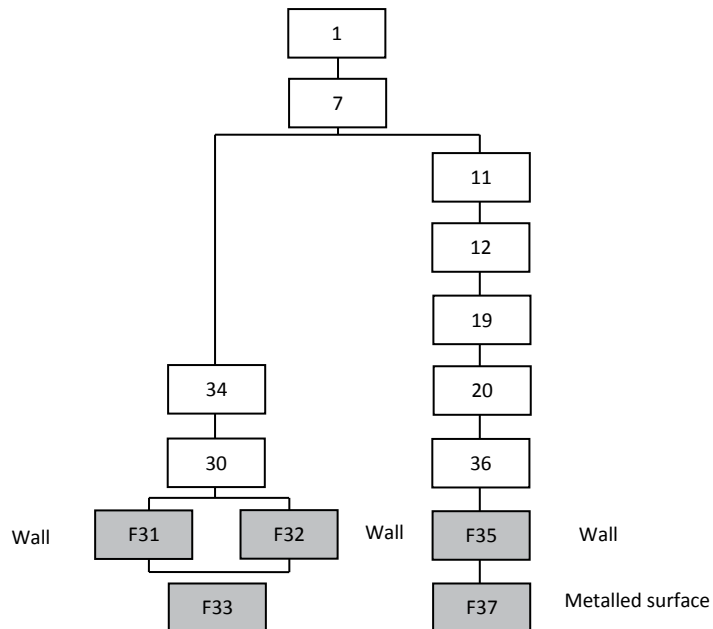
Trench 1



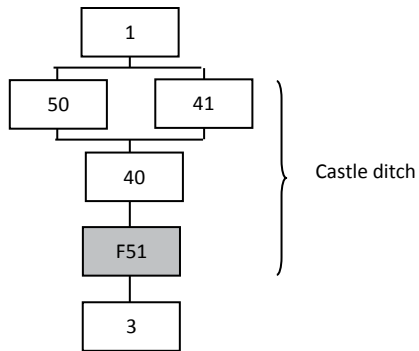
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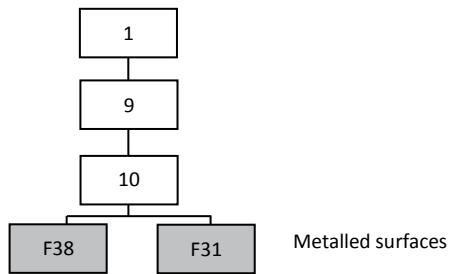
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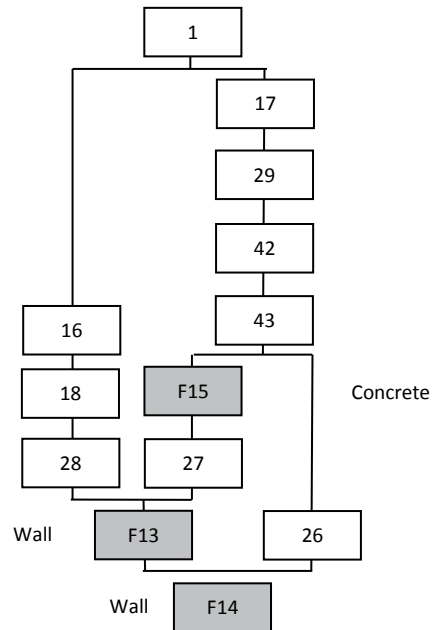
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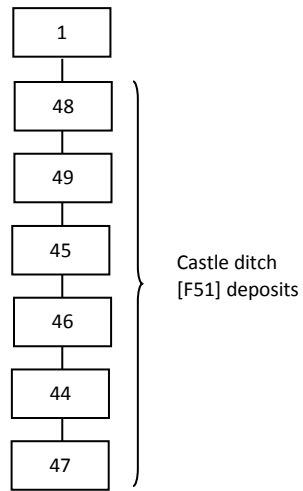
Trench 5



Trench 6

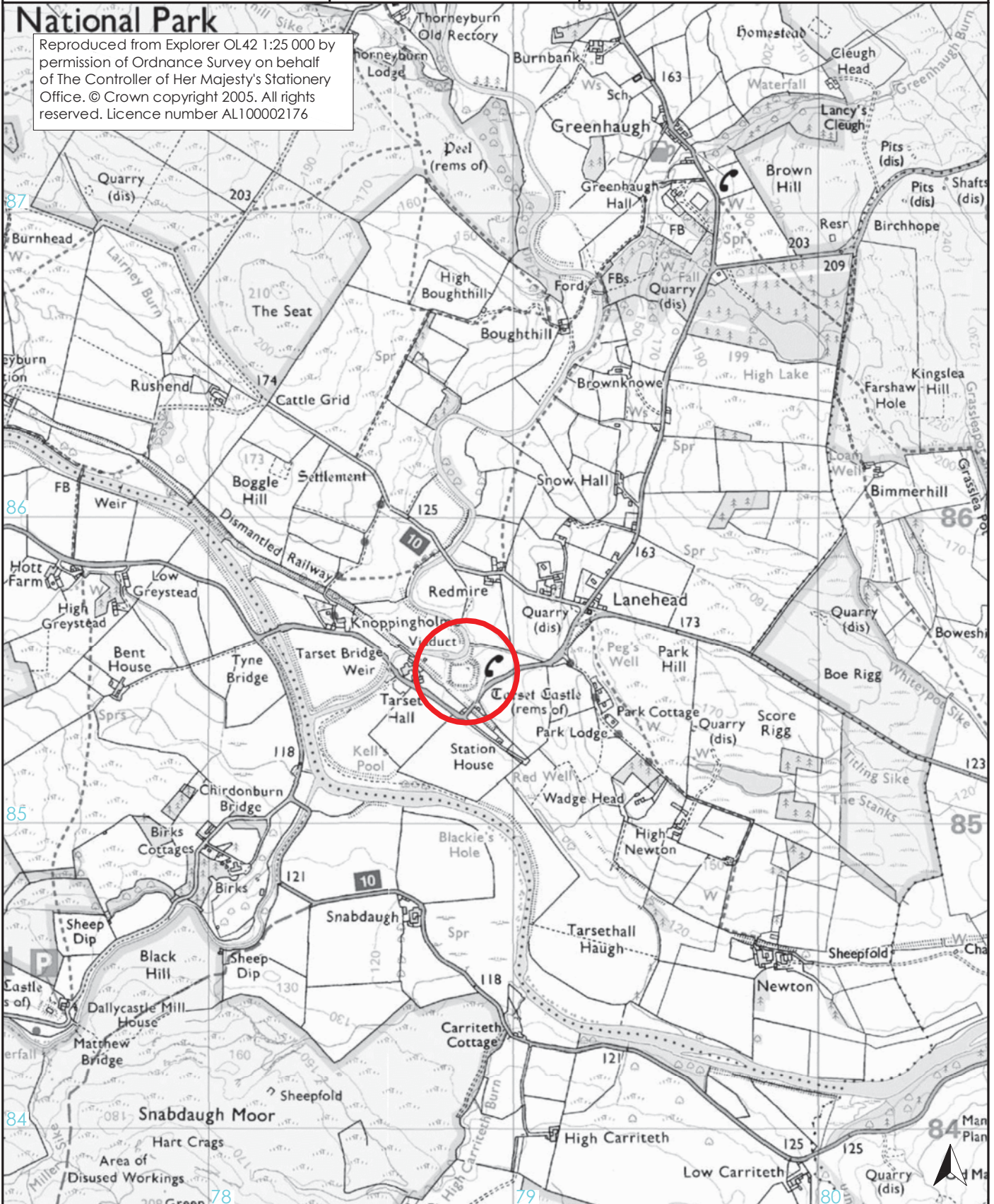


Trench 7



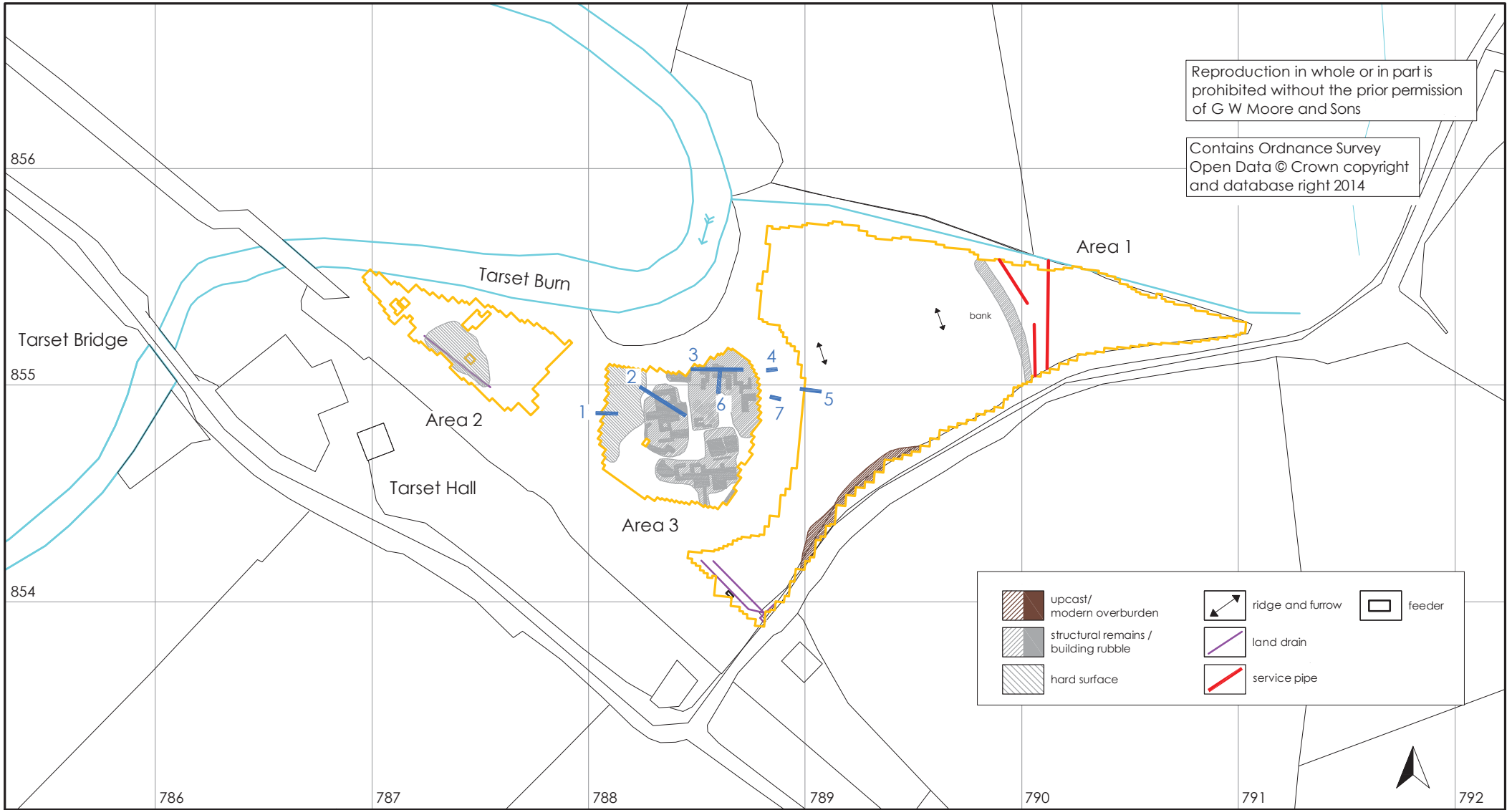
National Park

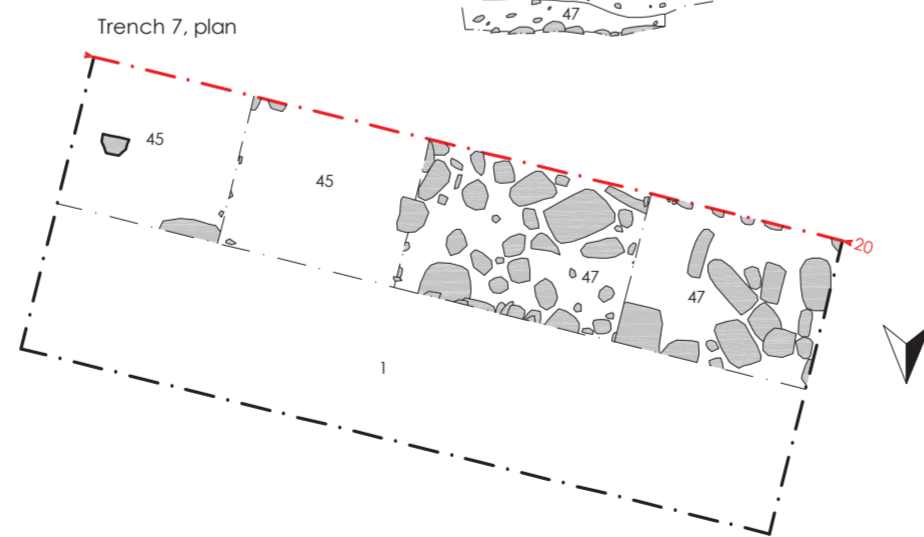
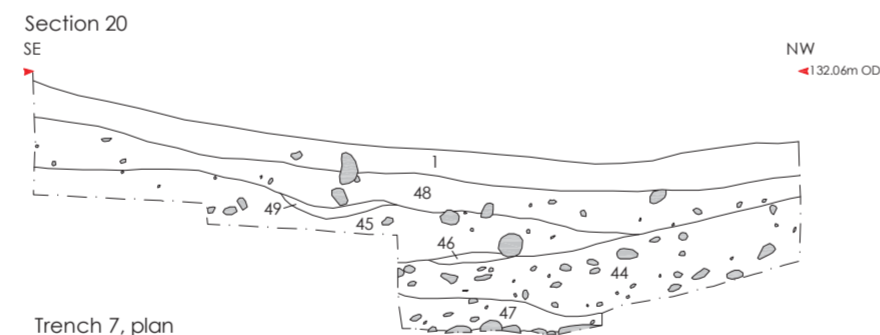
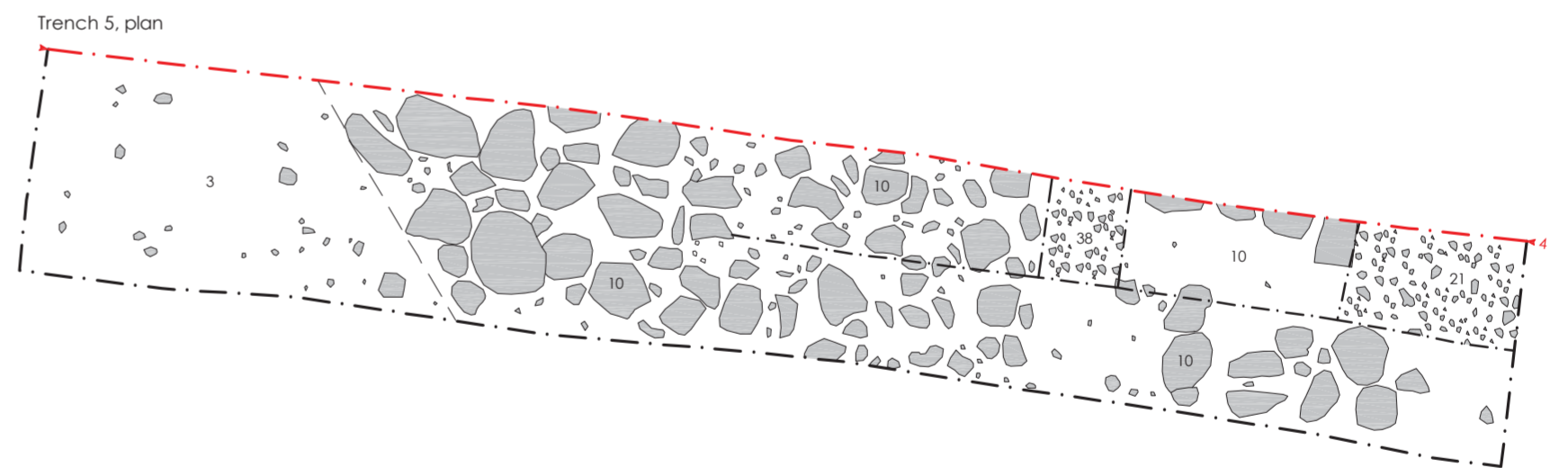
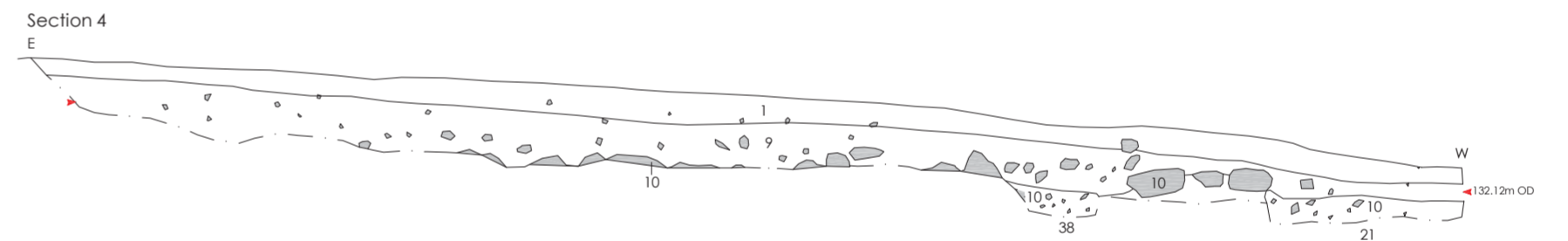
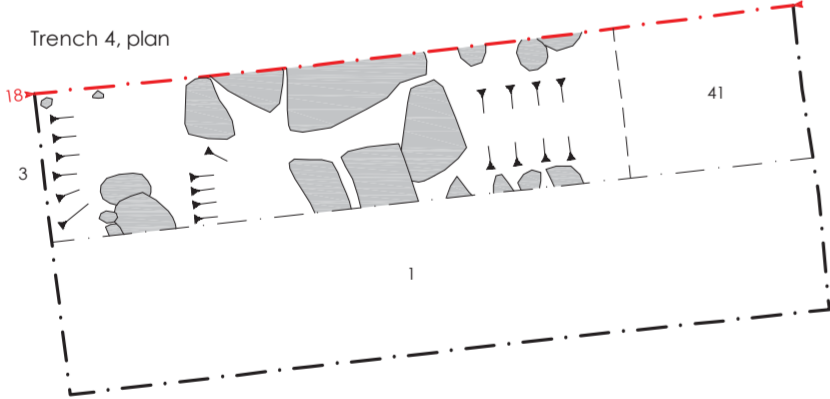
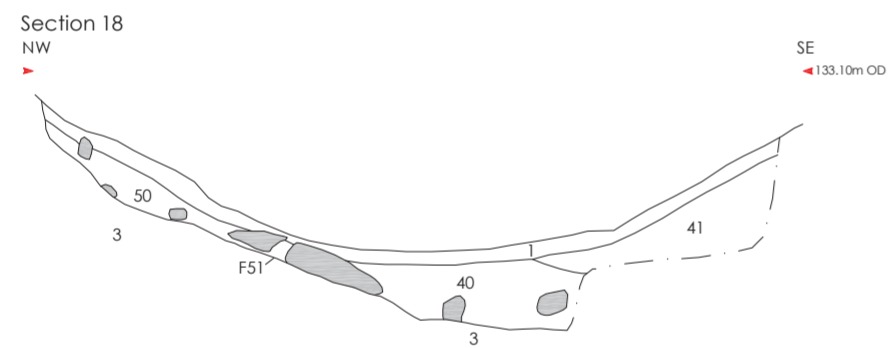
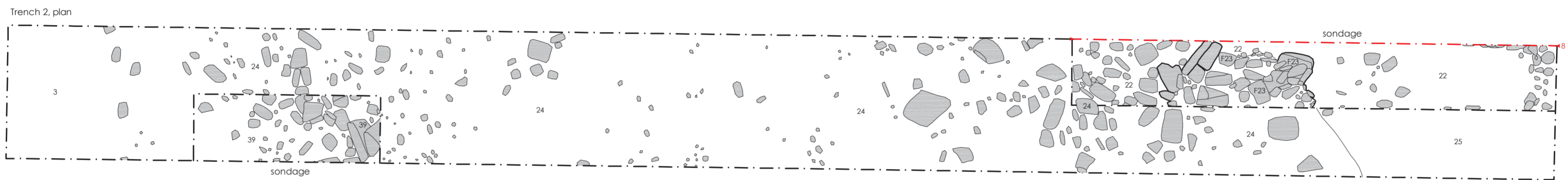
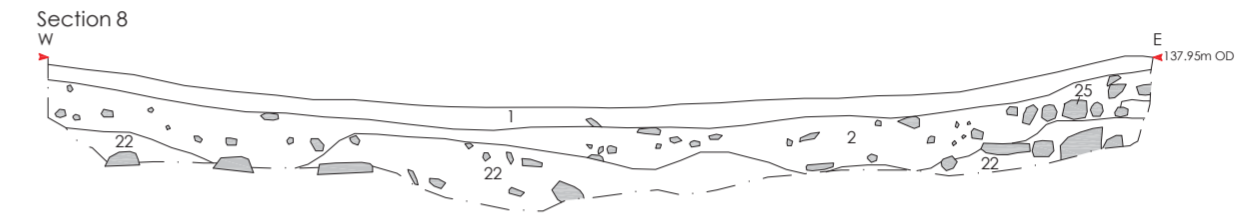
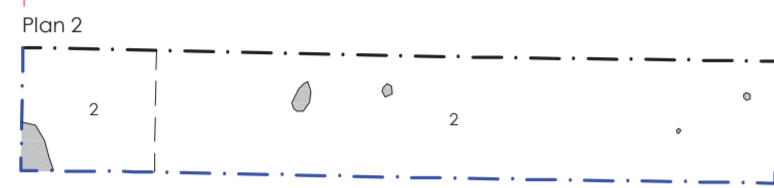
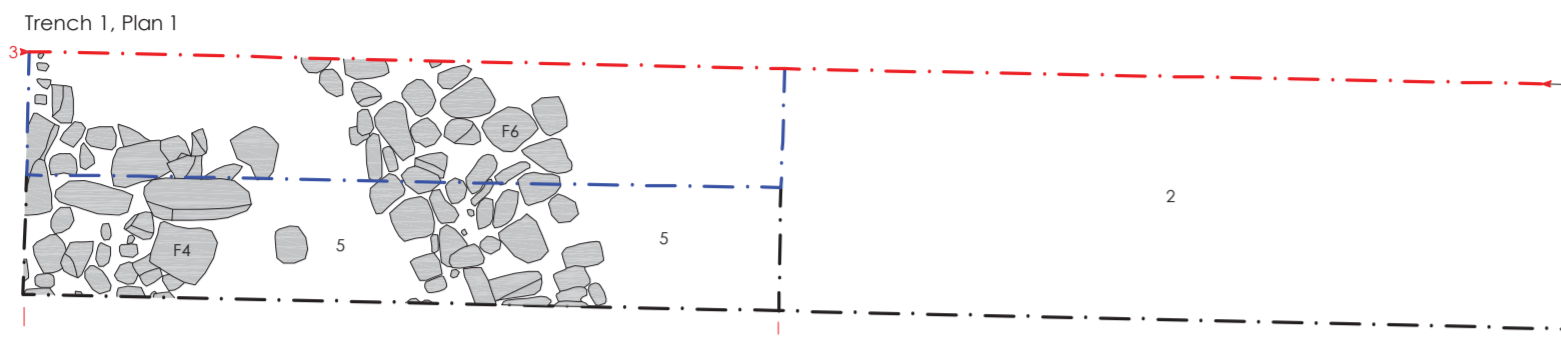
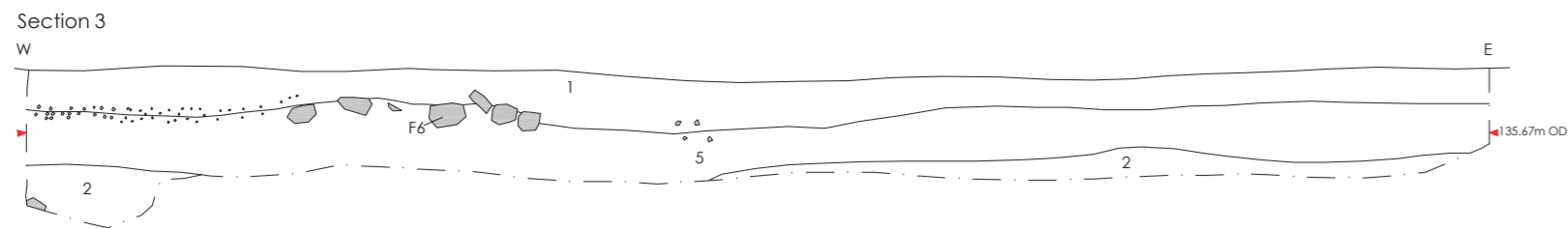
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 site location

0 800m
scale 1:17 500 for A4 plot





-  extent of excavation
-  section
-  stone



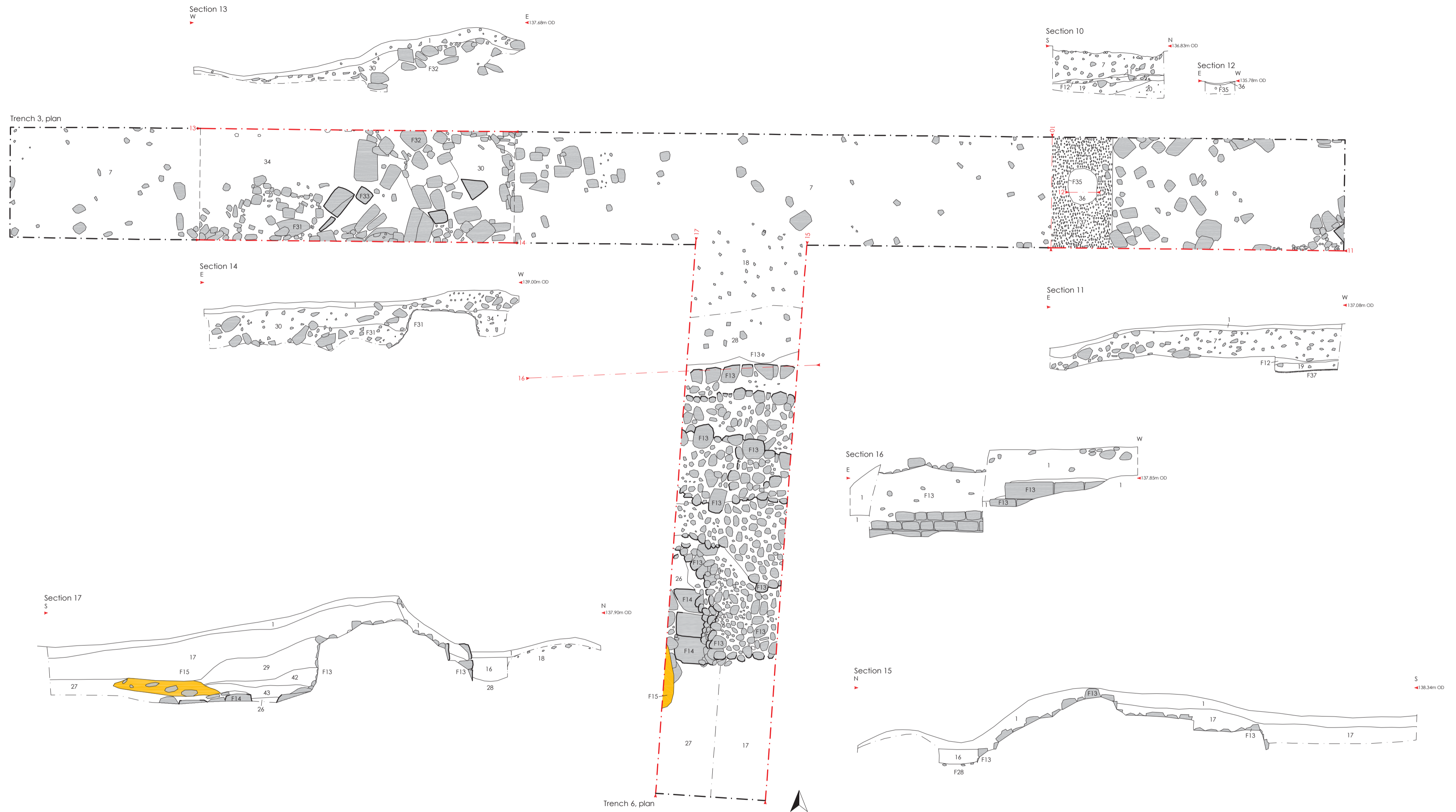
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Figure 3: Trenches 1, 2, 4, 5 and 7, plans and sections



 extent of excavation
 concrete
 section
 stone



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Figure 4: Trenches 3 and 6, plans and sections



Figure 5: Trench 1, rubble deposits F4 and F6, looking west



Figure 6: Trench 2, north-western sondage and rubble deposit 39, looking south-east



Figure 7: Trench 2, south-eastern sondage and wall F23, looking north-west



Figure 8: Trench 3, wall F31 (bottom right) and F32 (top left), looking east



Figure 9: Trench 3, metallised surface F37 cut by pit F35, looking east



Figure 10: Trench 4, castle ditch F51, looking north-west



Figure 11: Trench 4, dressed and faced masonry recovered from the trench, looking west



Figure 12: Trench 5, rubble deposit 10, looking west



Figure 13: Trench 5, metallised surface F21=F38, looking south



Figure 14: Trench 6, walls F13 and F14 (in base), looking north



Figure 15: Trench 6, concrete floor F15, looking west



Figure 16: Trench 6, north face of wall F13, looking south-west



Figure 17: Trench 6, castle ditch deposits, looking south-east



Figure 18: The castle mound and Trenches 3 and 6 during excavation, showing the landslip scar (right), looking west