

# Totnes Castle Devon

*Programme of Archaeological Work*



for  
English Heritage

CA Project: 880124  
CA Report: 16680

December 2016



# Totnes Castle Devon

## Programme of Archaeological Work

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## SUMMARY

<b>Project Name:</b>	Totnes Castle
<b>Location:</b>	Totnes, Devon
<b>NGR:</b>	SX 8002 6049
<b>Type:</b>	Strip, Map and Sample Excavation
<b>Date:</b>	21–23 and 29 November 2016
<b>Location of Archive:</b>	To be deposited with the Royal Albert Memorial Museum (RAMM) and the Archaeology Data Service (ADS)
<b>RAMM Reference:</b>	RAMM 16/56
<b>Site Code:</b>	TCW 16

In November 2016, Cotswold Archaeology (CA) carried out a programme of archaeological work in advance of the rebuilding of a collapsed section of boundary wall at Totnes Castle, Devon. The works comprised the archaeological hand excavation of a new foundation trench for the section of wall to be rebuilt. This trench lay at the western limit of the castle grounds, at the boundary with the adjacent residential plots.

The archaeological work recorded a substantial cut feature. This was undated artefactually, but is presumed to be part of the medieval moat protecting the inner bailey, which is now dry but which survives as substantial ditched earthworks in the area of the trench. The stone-built foundation of the collapsed section of boundary wall was also recorded; this too was undated artefactually, but is believed to be post-medieval in date.



## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In November 2016, Cotswold Archaeology (CA) carried out a programme of archaeological work for English Heritage in advance of the rebuilding of a collapsed section of boundary wall at Totnes Castle, Devon (castle centred at NGR: SX 8002 6049; Fig. 1).. The works comprised the archaeological hand excavation of a new foundation trench for the section of wall to be rebuilt. This trench lay at the western limit of the castle grounds, at the boundary with the adjacent residential plots.
- 1.2 The archaeological work was carried out in accordance with a detailed Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) produced by CA (2016) and approved by English Heritage. The fieldwork also followed *Standard and guidance for archaeological excavation* (ClfA 2014), *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE) PPN 3: Archaeological Excavation* (Historic England 2015) and *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE): Project Manager's Guide* (Historic England 2015).

### ***The site***

- 1.3 Totnes Castle is situated on high ground in close proximity to the River Dart, on the western side of Totnes town. The trench which is the subject of this report lay at the western limit of the castle grounds, at the boundary with the adjacent residential plots (Fig. 2).
- 1.4 The solid geology underlying the castle site is mapped as unnamed igneous intrusion bedrock immediately beneath the castle motte, surrounded by Ashprington Volcanic Formation tuff and Nordon Formation mudstones, siltstones, limestones and sandstones. No superficial deposits are recorded (BGS 2016).

## 2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Totnes Castle is scheduled under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 (List Entry Number: 1014607). The following section is summarised from the description of the site included in the list entry.
- 2.2 Totnes Castle was first built as a motte and bailey castle by Judhael of Brittany shortly after the Norman Conquest in 1066, but there indications of earlier activity at

the site. Two Neolithic/Bronze Age worked flints were recovered from a geotechnical test pit excavated through the motte in 1999 (Devon & Dartmoor Historic Environment Record ref: MDV18247). The castle also intrudes into the earlier Saxon street plan and almost certainly overlies part of the earlier town.

- 2.3 The motte is c. 58 metres in diameter and c. 17.5m in height. A surrounding ditch now survives as a buried feature. On the summit of the motte stood a square timber tower with dry stone foundations; this was replaced with a stone shell keep around 1219. The castle was rebuilt extensively in about 1326, and most of the extant remains date from this rebuild.
- 2.4 The shell keep is nearly circular in plan and is constructed of limestone rubble with sandstone dressings. The inner bailey was attached to the north-western side of the keep, from which it was separated by a moat. The inner bailey is horseshoe-shaped in plan and is defined on three sides by a curtain wall, which probably replaced a timber palisade in the 14th century. Interior earthworks presumably mark where buildings once stood. Little remains of the outer bailey, but it is believed to have stood to the north of the moat protecting the inner bailey.
- 2.5 The trench which forms the subject of this report was excavated at the outer edge of the moat protecting the inner bailey, which is now dry but which survives as substantial ditched earthworks (Fig. 3).

### 3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 3.1 As defined by the WSI (CA 2016), the objectives of the programme of archaeological recording were to:
- record any evidence of past settlement or other land use prior to destruction by the proposed development;
  - recover artefactual evidence to date any archaeological remains that may be identified;
  - sample and analyse environmental remains to create a better understanding of past land use and economy; and
  - archive and report on the results at a level appropriate to their significance.

## 4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The archaeological fieldwork comprised the hand-excavation of the foundation trench for the section of boundary wall to be rebuilt. This trench measured 6m in length, up to 0.96m in width and 0.5m in depth.
- 4.2 The trench and the deposits therein were investigated, planned and recorded in accordance with *CA Technical Manual 1: Fieldwork Recording Manual*.
- 4.3 Deposits were assessed for their palaeoenvironmental potential in accordance with *CA Technical Manual 2: The Taking and Processing of Environmental and Other Samples from Archaeological Sites*. No deposits were identified that required sampling. All recovered artefacts were processed in accordance with *CA Technical Manual 3: Treatment of Finds Immediately after Excavation*.
- 4.4 The project archive and artefacts are currently held by CA. The artefacts (subject to the agreement of the legal landowner) and the archive will be deposited with the Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter (RAMM) (ref: RAMM 16/56). A digital archive will be prepared and deposited with the Archaeology Data Service (ADS). A summary of information from this project, as set out in Appendix C, will be entered onto the OASIS online database of archaeological projects in Britain.

## 5. RESULTS

- 5.1 This section provides an overview of the fieldwork results. Detailed summaries of the recorded contexts can be found in Appendix A. Details of the artefactual material recovered during the works are given in Section 6 and Appendix B. Figure 2 presents a plan of the excavated trench and the features recorded therein. Figures 4 and 5 present a section of the trench (Section AA) and a series of photographs of the works.
- 5.2 Natural substrate 105 comprised compact greyish yellow clay with occasional outcrops of limestone and was identified in the north-western end of the trench at a depth of 0.25m below the present ground level (bpgl). The natural substrate was truncated for almost the entire length of the trench by cut 108, which extended below the base of the trench (0.5m bpgl). This cut was filled by stony clay 104.



- 5.3 Layer 104 was cut by construction cut 101 for wall 102. This wall measured 0.3m in width; its base was not exposed in the trench. As part of the present works, wall 102 was hand-removed by the archaeologists to a depth of 0.5m bpgl. The wall was built in limestone rubble, randomly coursed and bonded with white sandy mortar. Its northern (external) face was well finished; its southern (internal) face was unfinished.
- 5.4 Stony consolidation layer 103 butted the southern face of wall 102; a single fragment of clay tobacco pipe (dating from the mid 16th to mid 19th centuries) was recovered from this layer. Modern topsoil 100 butted the northern face of wall 102.

## 6. THE FINDS

- 6.1 The artefactual material recovered during the fieldwork is listed in Appendix B and discussed below.

### *Pottery*

- 6.2 A total of six sherds (494g) of pottery was recovered from topsoil layer 100. Four sherds were in a glazed earthenware fabric (GEW), dateable to the mid 16th to 18th centuries, including one with slip-trailed decoration. Single sherds of flowerpot-type unglazed earthenware and refined white ware, both dateable to the 19th to 20th centuries, were also recovered.

### *Other Finds*

- 6.3 A single fragment of clay tobacco pipe (4g) was recovered from deposit 103 and cannot be more closely dated than from the mid 16th to mid 19th centuries.

## 7. DISCUSSION

- 7.1 The archaeological work recorded a substantial cut feature (108) and a stone wall (102).
- 7.2 Substantial cut 108 was not fully exposed in the trench and was undated artefactually, but is presumably part of the moat protecting the inner bailey, which is now dry but which survives as substantial ditched earthworks in the area of the



trench (Fig. 3). It is possible that layer 104 within cut 108 represents slumped/slighted material from a former outer bank.

- 7.3 Stone wall 102 was the foundation of the extant western boundary wall, which recently collapsed in the area of the trench. This wall foundation was undated artefactually, but is believed to be post-medieval in date.

## 8. CA PROJECT TEAM

Fieldwork was undertaken by Jonathan Orellana, assisted by Edoardo Vigo, Simon Sworn and George Gandham. This report was written by Jonathan Orellana. The finds report was written by Katie Marsden. The report illustrations were prepared by Sam O'Leary. The project archive has been compiled and prepared for deposition by Jessica Cook. The project was managed for CA by Derek Evans.

## 9. REFERENCES

BGS (British Geological Survey) 2016 *Geology of Britain Viewer* <http://www.bgs.ac.uk/discoveringGeology/geologyOfBritain/viewer.html>  
Accessed 1 June 2016

CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2016 *Totnes Castle Boundary Wall, Devon: Written Scheme of Investigation for a Programme of Archaeological Work*



**APPENDIX A: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS**

Trench No.	Context No.	Type	Context interpretation	Description	L (m)	W (m)	D (m)	Spot-date
1	100	Layer	Topsoil	Loose dark brown sandy silt with modern material			0.3	C19–C20
1	101	Cut	Construction cut	NW/SE orientated, irregular V-shaped profile	>6	0.3		
1	102	Masonry	Wall	NW/SE orientated, irregular limestone courses bonded with white sandy mortar	>6	0.3		
1	103	Layer	Wall consolidation deposit	Medium and large sub-angular stones and mid brown silty clay			0.3	mC16–mC19
1	104	Layer	Redeposited bank material?	Compact mid reddish brown clay with small stones		>1.3	0.2	
1	105	Layer	Natural substrate	Compact light greyish yellow clay with occasional outcrops of limestone				
1	106	Layer	Garden soil	Loose dark black sandy silt			0.9	
1	107	Layer	Garden soil	Loose mid brown sandy silt			1.35	
1	108	Cut	Moat	Partially exposed, curvilinear in plan, sloping to the NE	>6	>1	>0.5	

**APPENDIX B: THE FINDS**

Context	Class	Description	Ct.	Wt.(g)	Spot-date
100	post-medieval pottery	GEW	4	322	C19-C20
	modern pottery	flowerpot	1	94	
	modern pottery	Ref Wh	1	78	
103	clay tobacco pipe	stem	1	3	mC16–mC19

## APPENDIX C: OASIS REPORT FORM

<b>PROJECT DETAILS</b>		
Project Name	Totnes Castle, Devon	
Short description	<p>In November 2016, Cotswold Archaeology (CA) carried out a programme of archaeological work in advance of the rebuilding of a collapsed section of boundary wall at Totnes Castle, Devon. The works comprised the archaeological hand excavation of a new foundation trench for the section of wall to be rebuilt. This trench lay at the western limit of the castle grounds, at the boundary with the adjacent residential plots.</p> <p>The archaeological work recorded a substantial cut feature. This was undated artefactually, but is presumed to be part of the medieval moat protecting the inner bailey, which is now dry but which survives as substantial ditched earthworks in the area of the trench. The stone-built foundation of the collapsed section of boundary wall was also recorded; this too was undated artefactually, but is believed to be post-medieval in date.</p>	
Project dates	21–23 and 29 November 2016	
Project type	Strip, Map and Sample	
Previous work	Unknown	
Future work	Unknown	
<b>PROJECT LOCATION</b>		
Site Location	Totnes Castle, Devon	
Study area (m <sup>2</sup> /ha)	6m <sup>2</sup>	
Site co-ordinates	SX 8002 6049	
<b>PROJECT CREATORS</b>		
Name of organisation	Cotswold Archaeology	
Project Brief originator	N/A	
Project Design (WSI) originator	Cotswold Archaeology	
Project Manager	Derek Evans	
Project Supervisor	Jonathan Orellana	
<b>MONUMENT TYPE</b>		
	None	
<b>SIGNIFICANT FINDS</b>		
	None	
<b>PROJECT ARCHIVES</b>		
	<b>Intended final location of archive</b>	<b>Content</b>
Physical	Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter RAMM: 16/56	Ceramics, clay pipe
Paper	Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter RAMM: 16/56	Context sheets, plan and section drawings
Digital	Archaeology Data Service (ADS)	Born-digital data; scans of primary site archive
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>		
Cotswold Archaeology 2016 <i>Totnes Castle, Devon: Programme of Archaeological Work</i> CA typescript report <b>16680</b>		





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**PROJECT TITLE**  
 Totnes Castle, Devon

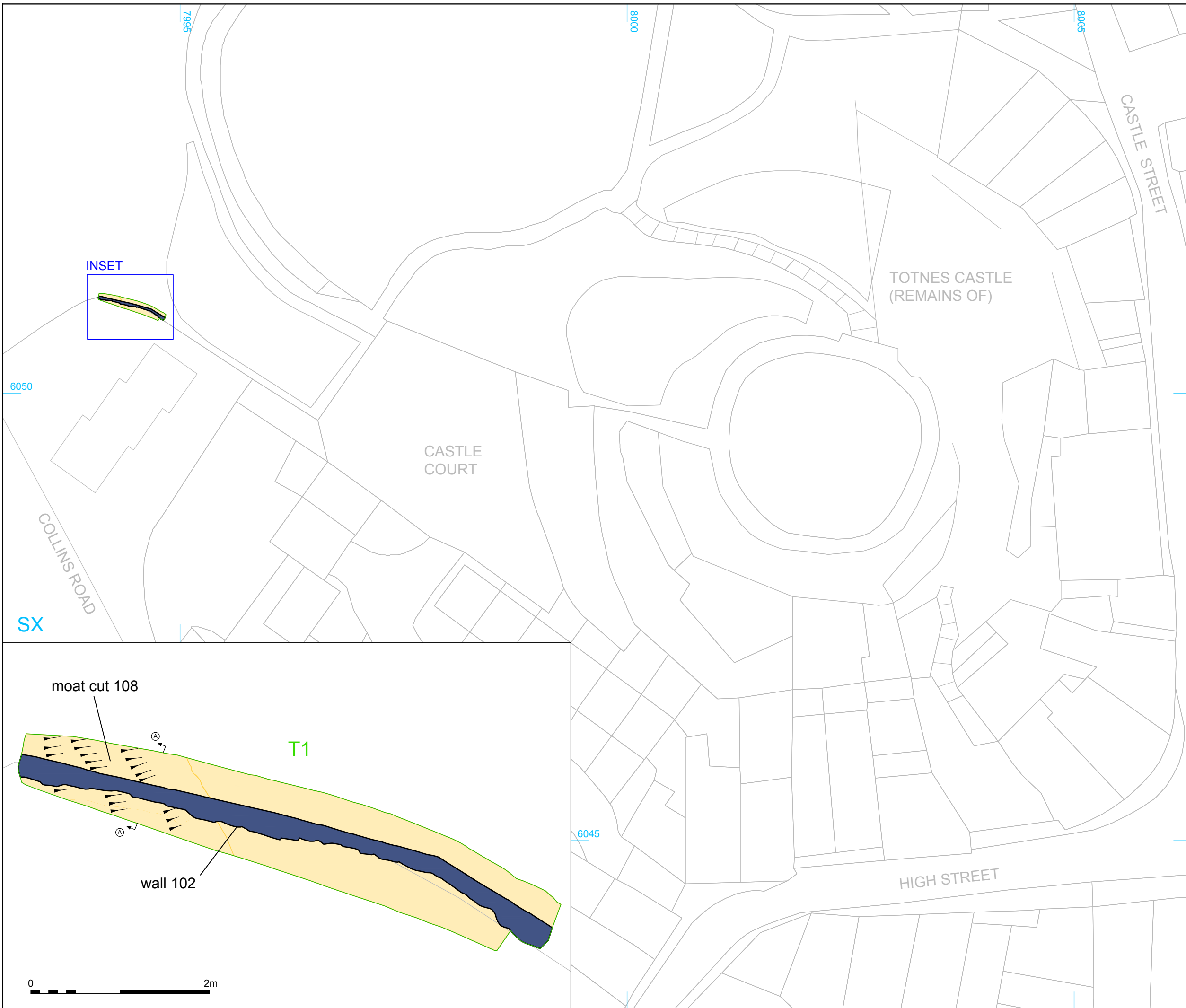
**FIGURE TITLE**  
 Site location plan

0 1km

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DRAWN BY	SO	PROJECT NO.	880124	FIGURE NO.
CHECKED BY	DJB	DATE	05/12/2016	
APPROVED BY	DE	SCALE@A4	1:25,000	<b>1</b>





- excavation area
- layer/deposit
- structural feature
- Ⓐ Ⓑ section location



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PROJECT TITLE  
Totnes Castle, Devon

FIGURE TITLE  
**The site, showing location of the excavated trench and archaeological features**

DRAWN BY	SO	PROJECT NO.	880124	FIGURE NO.
CHECKED BY	DJB	DATE	05/12/2016	<b>2</b>
APPROVED BY	DE	SCALE@A3	1:250 and 1:40 (inset)	



- excavation area
- structural feature
- moat cut



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 Totnes Castle, Devon

FIGURE TITLE  
 1904 OS Map showing the location of the  
 excavated trench and archaeological features

DRAWN BY	SO	PROJECT NO.	880124	FIGURE NO.
CHECKED BY	DJB	DATE	05/12/2016	<b>3</b>
APPROVED BY	DE	SCALE@A4	1:500	

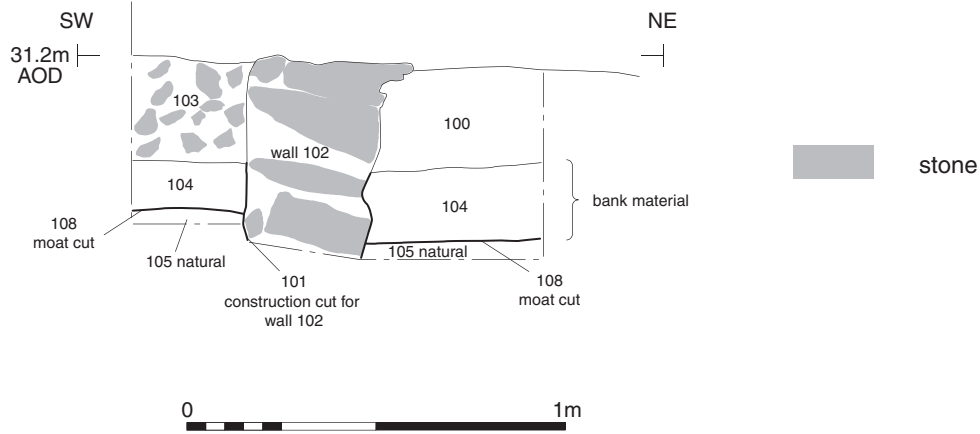
106  
garden soil

107  
garden soil



Bank material 104, and wall 102, looking north-west (scale 0.4m)

Section AA



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Totnes Castle, Devon

FIGURE TITLE

Section and photograph

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CHECKED BY	DJB	DATE	05/12/2016	
APPROVED BY	DE	SCALE@A4	1:20	<b>4</b>





Cut 108, bank material 104 and existing bank in the background, looking north-west (scales 1m)



General view of the excavated trench, looking south-west (scales 1m)



View of the excavated trench, looking south-east (scale 1m)



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PROJECT TITLE

Totnes Castle, Devon

FIGURE TITLE

Photographs

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