

BERRY POMEROY CASTLE
ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION AND RECORDING
DURING CONDITION SURVEY WORK



STEWART BROWN ASSOCIATES FEBRUARY 2008

BERRY POMEROY CASTLE, DEVON
ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION AND RECORDING IN ASSOCIATION WITH
CONDITION SURVEY WORK

SUMMARY

Archaeological excavations associated with condition survey work at Berry Pomeroy Castle in 2007 revealed parts of the foundations of the north range dating from c. 1600, and demolition deposits dating from after the abandonment of the castle c. 1700. Limited work on the standing structure uncovered no hitherto unseen archaeological features.

THE PROJECT

Condition survey work was undertaken at Berry Pomeroy Castle in the autumn of 2007. The work was overseen by Van der Steen Architects Limited on behalf of English Heritage. Stewart Brown was commissioned by English Heritage to undertake archaeological and photographic recording during the work.

The work comprised:

- i) Gatehouse: taking down and rebuilding rear parapet wall and return to east elevation.
- ii) Kitchen Quarter: replacing defective lintels; consolidation of east elevation window sill and cappings to wallhead; new railing; extension of decking to provide access to the former kitchen.
- iii) North Terrace: construction of new ramp across remains of north wall of north range to provide access to the north terrace; erecting new handrails/barriers.
- iv) Boundary wall extending between the gatehouse and kitchen quarter: re-pointing of part of the exterior.

DESCRIPTION

The Gatehouse

Taking down and rebuilding rear parapet wall and return to east elevation

The gatehouse was a ruinous, unroofed structure until 1982 when a new roof was erected by DoE Ancient Monuments and Historic Buildings Section (architect H.G.Slade). This was done in order to protect the wall painting which survives on the interior of its east wall. A drawn record of the late medieval remains surviving at roof level was made (by Chris Gray) before re-roofing took place. Also in 1982, missing parts of the gatehouse parapet were reconstructed using grey cement mortar.

Subsequent roof drainage problems were alleviated in 1998 when further works redirected rainwater drainage away from the front of the building to a new gutter outlet on its west side. Archaeological recording was undertaken by Stewart Brown Associates before and during the latter works (Brown 1998). The 1982 drawn record was corrected where necessary and extended to include new archaeological observations as well as the parts of the parapet reconstructed in 1982.

The parts of the parapet and adjoining areas affected by the condition survey work date from the above two phases of repair (1982 and 1998), so the rebuilding did not encroach on original fabric. No archaeological features were exposed by the work. The parapet wall before conservation work is shown in plates 1-4. Plates 5 and 6 show the parapet wall after conservation work.

The kitchen quarter

Replacement of defective lintels

Plates 7-10 show the existing 20th-century concrete lintels before their replacement. The window openings originally contained windows with stone surrounds similar to those surviving in the remains of the house on the opposite side of the courtyard. Behind the stone window head were timber lintels supporting the wall above. The new oak lintels were inserted into the sockets for the original lintels, with an additional one replacing the lost original stone window head at the front. No archaeological features were uncovered during the works apart from the sockets for the original lintels. Plates 11 and 12 show the new lintels after conservation work.

Consolidation of east elevation window sill and cappings to wallhead, and new railing

Consolidation of the window sill and wall capping uncovered no previously unrecorded archaeological features. The new railing was inserted into existing masonry joints so none of the original stonework was disturbed. Plates 13 and 14 show the window sill after conservation work and the new railing. Plate 15 shows the northeast elevation of the kitchen quarter after conservation work.

Extension of decking to provide access to the former kitchen

Plates 16 and 17 show the northeast wall of the former kitchen before and after extension of the decking. No archaeological features were uncovered during the work.

Post-holes associated with the new decking

Plate 18 shows the archaeological excavation of three post-holes for new timber railings at the northern angle of the former kitchen. Fig. 2 shows the location of the post-holes (post-holes 7-9). Section drawings of the post-holes are shown in Fig. 3.

Post-hole 7 uncovered a layer of red/brown clay containing limestone and slate fragments with mortar (6) and a deposit of broken roofing slates up to 0.25m deep with some mortar (7). Both these are clearly demolition deposits dating from after the abandonment of the castle in the late 17th century. Beneath layer 7 was a deposit of clean red/brown clay containing limestone fragments which probably represents a leveling dump dating from the construction of the north range c. 1600.

Post-hole 8 uncovered a similar series of deposits (9-11) interpreted as equivalent to that in post-hole 7.

Post-hole 9 revealed only a single deposit of loose limestone and slate rubble with mortar and red/brown clay. This is interpreted as a demolition deposit equivalent to layers 6 and 9. The

deposit is deeper in this area since it infills the remains of a stairway which once descended to a basement scullery adjoining the kitchen to the northeast.

No finds were recovered from post-holes 7-9.

The north terrace

Post-holes associated with new handrail/barrier

Six post-holes were archaeologically excavated on the north terrace for a new handrail/barrier (Figs. 2 and 3, post-holes 1-6; Plate 20).

Post-holes 1 and 2 revealed only demolition deposits (2, 3) comparable in composition to layers 6, 9, and 12 above. Post-hole 3 uncovered another similar demolition layer (4) overlying a clean red clay which is probably a natural weathering deposit overlying the limestone bedrock.

Post-holes 4 and 5 located limestone bedrock at depths of less than 0.24m, covered by only modern topsoil.

No finds were recovered apart from a fragment of 19th-century white-glazed earthenware from the topsoil in post-hole 1 (discarded).

Plate 21 shows the new rail/barrier.

Construction of new ramp across remains of north wall of north range to provide access to the north terrace

Plates 22 and 23 show the site of the new access ramp before and after the ramp was constructed. The ramp crosses the wall at a point where there was formerly a projecting window bay. Construction of the ramp required that the topsoil be removed to provide better drainage, so the site of the ramp extending to each side of the window bay was excavated archaeologically.

Excavation of the area inside the window bay uncovered a mortared stone wall footing 1m wide (Fig. 4, 13; Plate 24). This follows the line of the north wall of the north range to each side of the window bay, strongly suggesting that the wall foundations of the north range were laid out initially in simple rectangular form, and that the projecting window bays were set out subsequently. This method of construction, in which the footings are continuous across architectural openings such as window bays and doorways, is commonly found in all periods of building, even though the footings beneath the openings have no structural purpose. At large building projects such as the north range at Berry Pomeroy Castle, it may have been rough masons who laid out the primary footings whilst skilled masons set out architectural features as a separate, secondary stage in the construction.

The wall footings were built of limestone and slate rubble set in white lime mortar with gravel aggregate, mixed with red/brown clay. They clearly date from the construction of the north range c. 1600. The footings directly underlie modern topsoil 0.1m deep. The footings were left intact beneath the stone chippings used to form the new ramp.

Re-pointing of the boundary wall extending between the gatehouse and kitchen quarter

The boundary wall marking the southwest side of the outer courtyard of the castle is one of the latest walls to have been erected at the site and dates either from the late 17th century, or possibly the late 18th or 19th century when the castle was managed as a Romantic Ruin. The condition survey work included re-pointing of part of its exterior. No archaeological features were observed during the work. Plates 25 and 26 show the wall face before and after re-pointing.

Reference

Brown, S. 1998 'Berry Pomeroy Gatehouse Roof 1998: Archaeological Recording', report to English Heritage.

APPENDIX
THE SITE ARCHIVE

The site archive is to be deposited at Exeter RAM Museum (museum accession number 458/2007)

Archive Contents

- 1/ 14 context description sheets
- 2/ 1 plan of wall footing 14, pencil on film, <A4 size, scale 1:20
- 3/ 1 dvd containing 40 photos.
- 4/ index of digital photos
- 5/ 29 b/w photo. prints
- 6/ 29 b/w negs
- 7/ index of b/w photos.

No finds were retrieved from the excavations.

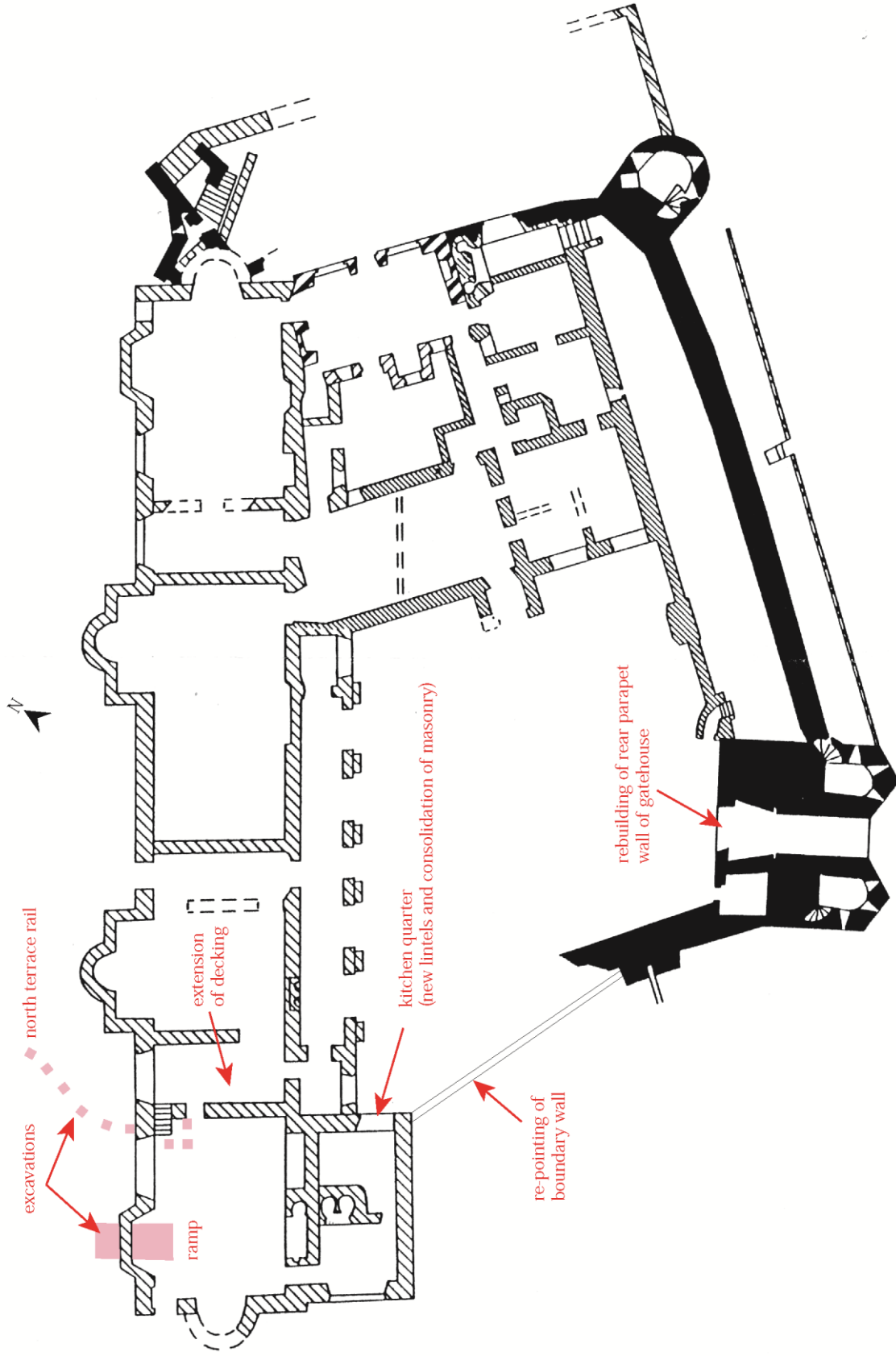


Fig. 1 Location plan showing excavations and archaeological recording associated with condition survey work 2007.

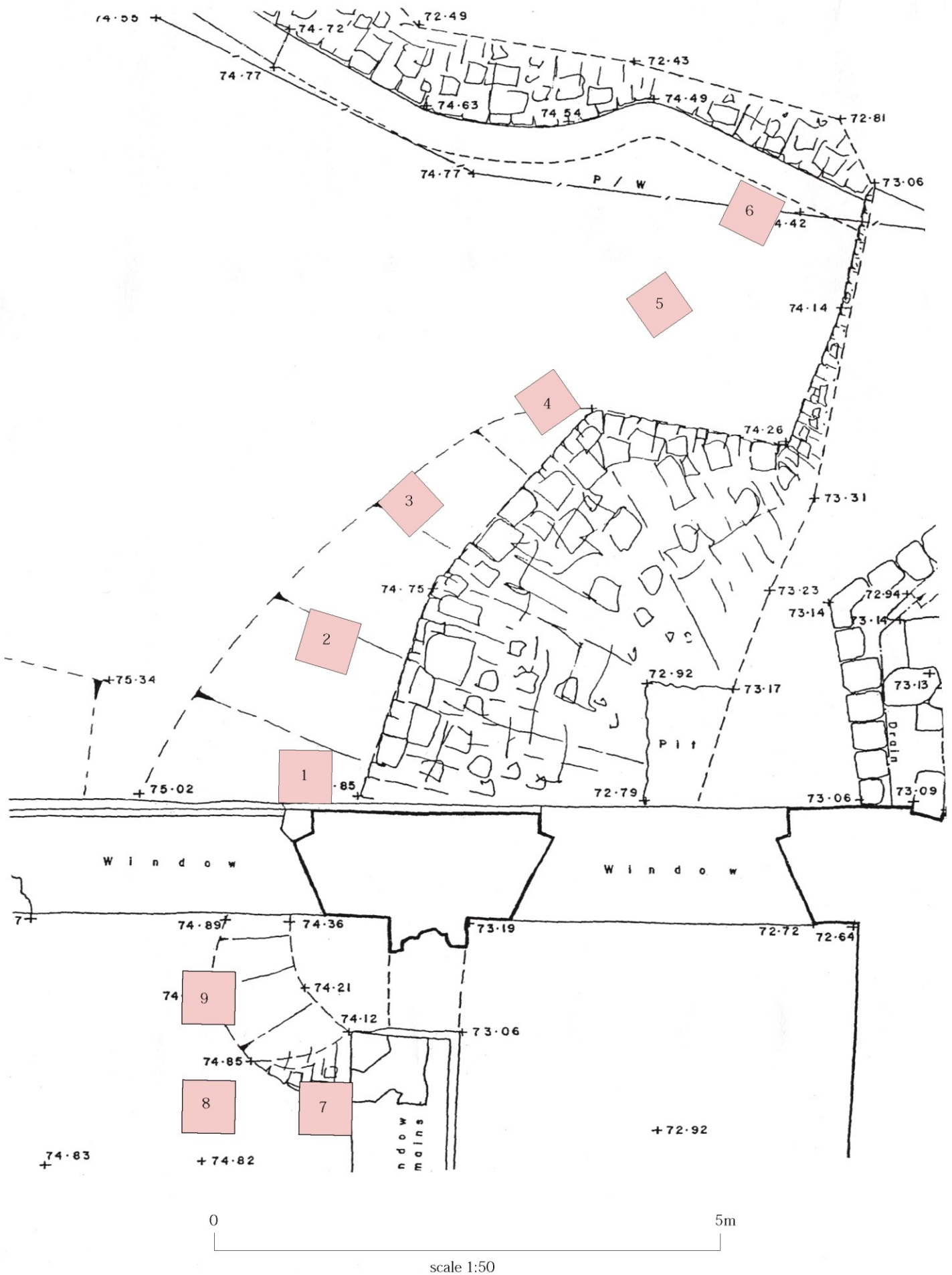


Fig. 2 Location plan of post-holes for new railings on North Terrace (using survey by Simmons Survey Partnership).

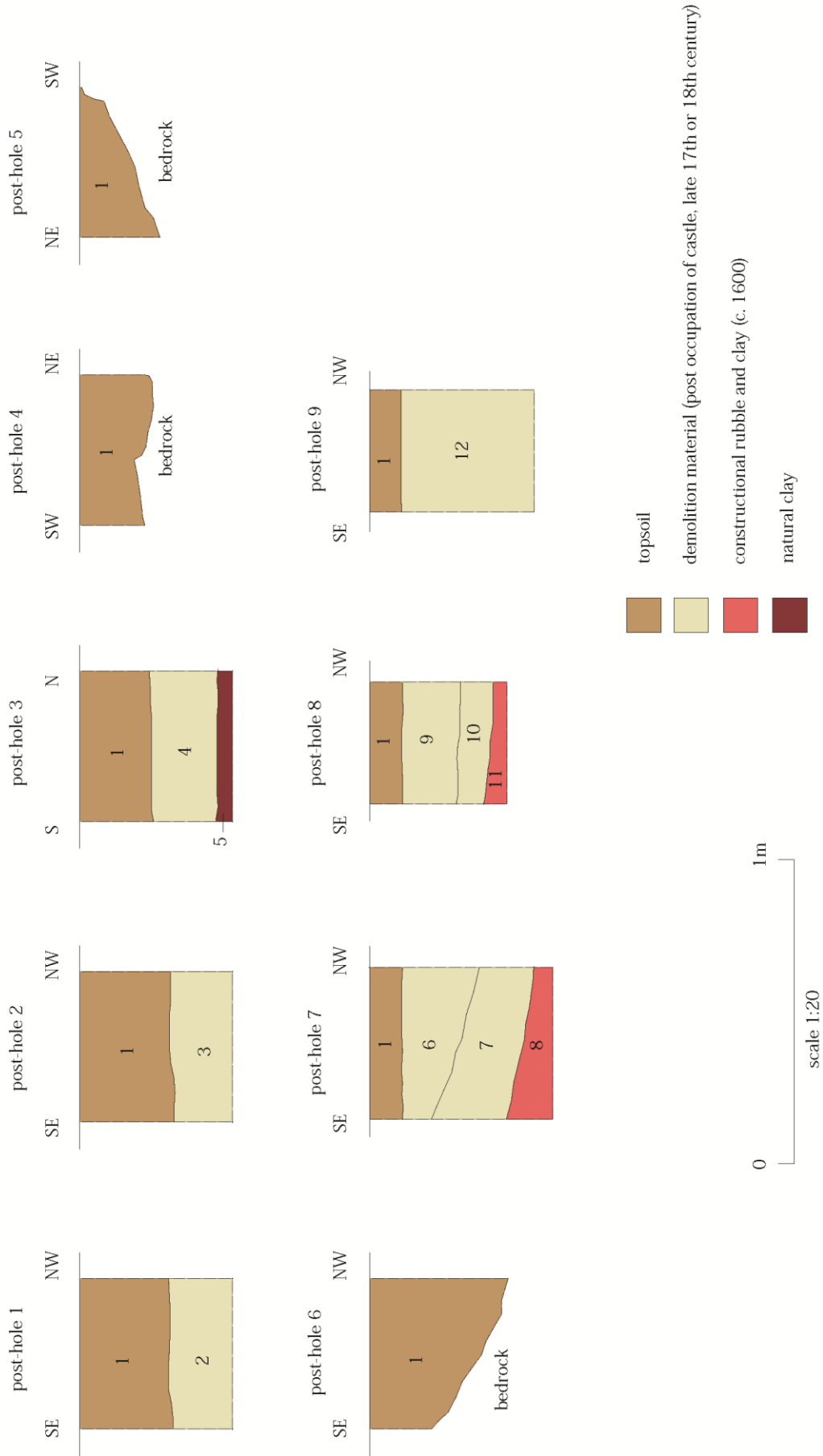


Fig. 3 Section drawings of post-holes excavated for new railings.

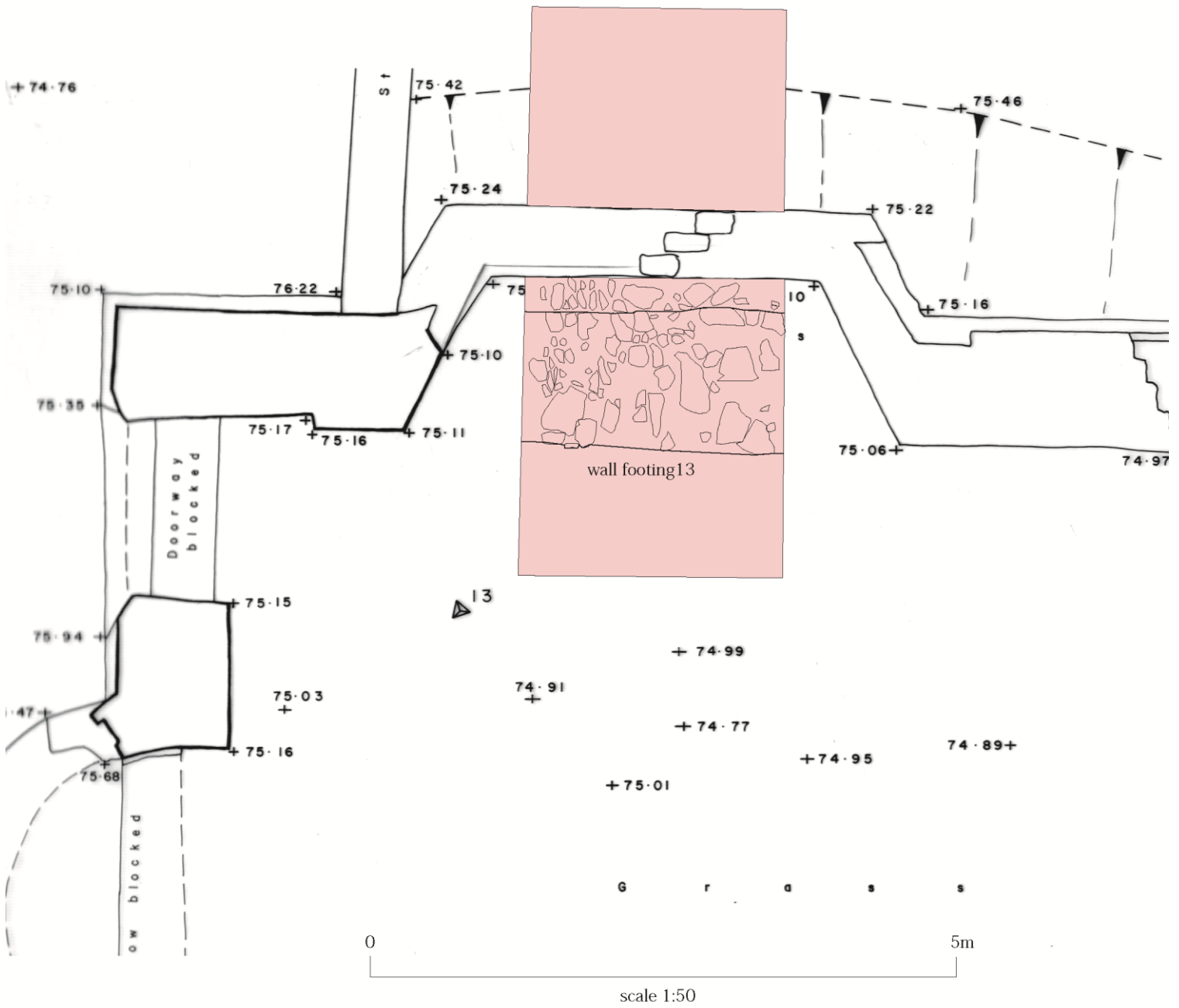


Fig. 4 Location plan showing excavations for new ramp on North Terrace (using survey by Simmons Survey Partnership)



Plate 1 The Gatehouse parapet wall before conservation work, looking east.



Plate 2 The gatehouse parapet wall before conservation work, looking south.



Plate 3 The gatehouse parapet wall, NE corner, before conservation work, looking east.



Plate 4 The gatehouse parapet wall, NE corner, before conservation work, looking southwest.



Plate 5 Detail of the gatehouse parapet wall after conservation work, looking southeast.



Plate 6 The gatehouse parapet wall after conservation work, looking southeast.



Plate 7 The kitchen quarter, first-floor concrete lintel before conservation work, looking east.



Plate 8 The kitchen quarter, first-floor concrete lintel before conservation work, looking northeast.



Plate 9 The kitchen quarter, first-floor concrete lintel before conservation work, looking west.



Plate 10 The kitchen quarter, second-floor concrete lintel before conservation work, showing previously inserted tie, looking west.



Plate 11 The kitchen quarter after conservation work, new second-floor lintels, looking northeast.



Plate 12 The kitchen quarter after conservation work, new first-floor lintels, looking northeast.



Plate 13 The kitchen quarter after conservation work, new railing and consolidation of the window sill, looking northeast.



Plate 14 The kitchen quarter after conservation work, new railing and consolidation of the window sill, looking southwest.



Plate 15 The kitchen quarter after conservation work, looking southwest.



Plate 16 The northeast wall of the kitchen before extension of decking, looking west.



Plate 17 The northeast wall of the kitchen after extension of decking, looking west.



Plate 18 Excavation of post-holes for new timber railings at the northern angle of the kitchen, looking northwest.



Plate 19 The new timber railings at the northern angle of the kitchen, looking north.



Plate 20 Excavation of post-holes for new rail across the north terrace, looking north.



Plate 21 The new rail across the north terrace, looking north.



Plate 22 The north terrace and former kitchen area before construction of new access ramp, looking southeast.



Plate 23 The new access ramp leading to the north terrace, looking west.



Plate 25 The boundary wall before re-pointing, looking east.



Plate 26 The boundary wall after re-pointing, looking north.