

# Archaeological Investigations Ltd

## **GREEN COTTAGE Longtown Herefordshire**

**An Archaeological Watching Brief**



**December 1997**

Hereford Archaeology Series 336

This report is produced by

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*Archaeological Investigations Ltd is a trading company wholly owned by the Hereford City and County Archaeological Trust Ltd, a registered charity founded in 1997 to further the work of the City of Hereford Archaeological Committee (founded in 1974) throughout Herefordshire. The Company has a core staff of five, and makes extensive use of specialist contract personnel. Besides dealing with the buried archaeology of Hereford and the surrounding areas, the Company specialises in geophysical survey work, historical illustration and the archaeological recording and analysis of standing buildings. Work is usually on a commission basis on behalf of organisations such as English Heritage, the National Trust, and the Landmark Trust. The Company also accepts commissions from local authorities and private developers and provides specialist consultancy advice in relation to archaeological issues in the planning process.*

*The front cover shows Green Cottage as viewed from the top of the motte bank.*

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**Green Cottage  
Longtown  
Herefordshire**

**Archaeological Watching Brief**

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**Text**

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**December 1997**

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# Green Cottage

## Longtown

## Herefordshire.

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### 1. Summary

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During the re-development of Green Cottage, a section was excavated across a visible bank. This showed that the bank, which is visible along almost the entire east side of Longtown, was a man-made feature, with a stone core, and although no finds were recovered, its stratigraphy is the same as a previously excavated section of the bank, which was positively dated to the medieval period, and is assumed to be the fourth bailey of the castle.

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### 2. Introduction.

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A planning application (SH 96 0170PF) was submitted to South Herefordshire District Council by Mr H Lane to renovate and extend Green Cottage (Figures 1, 2 and 3). Planning Permission has been granted with a condition that:

*No development shall take place until the applicant has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation that has been submitted by the applicant and approved by the Planning Authority.*

The Planning Authority was advised by the Planning Advisory Section of the County Archaeological Service that a negative condition should be applied to any permission granted.

The Planning Advisory Section issued a Brief on the 28th March 1996 recommending that salvage recording should be undertaken during the initial works on the site. Mr Lane, through his agent Peter L Everall, asked Archaeological Investigations Ltd to prepare appropriate project proposals to satisfy this condition, and these were submitted for approval.

As a consequence, Archaeological Investigations Ltd were commissioned to undertake the watching brief.

The site (Figures 2 and 3) consists of an unoccupied cottage and its associated grounds. The whole site is approximately 690 sq. m. in area and is immediately to the north of the north-eastern corner of the castle earthworks. A road leads eastwards from the village's main street, apparently on the line of the castle ditch, and turns sharply north around Green Cottage. The

cottage is on the corner with the grounds forming an L-shape to the north and west. The ground at the rear and to the west is substantially higher than the road and has been cut away to a depth of up to 1.5m. to accommodate the cottage and the extension.

Immediately to the north of the cottage grounds are traces of the medieval defensive embankment running in a northern direction (Figure 2, Plate 2). It appears to have been partly cut away on the east to form a car parking area for the Baptist Church opposite.

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### 3. Aims and Objectives.

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The project was designed to observe and record features of archaeological importance which were revealed during the ground works on the site. This was to include the collection of finds and environmental data where present

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### 4. Outline History

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Longtown (NGR SO 321 291, Figures 1 and 2), lies at the confluence of the valleys of the Monnow, the Olchon and the Escley, and is the Ewias Lacy of the Domesday Survey (Thorn and Thorn 1983). The original Lacy castle may well have been at Pont Hendre a little further down the valley. This would have been the 'motte and bailey' type of castle with timber buildings, favoured by the Normans in the early years after the Conquest, for their ease and speed of erection. It is suggested that Hugh de Lacy probably started work on the stone castle not long before his murder in 1186. The Pipe Rolls of 1187 refer to two castles, *Castelli de Ewias et Novi Castelli*, identified as Pont-Hendre and Longtown respectively. Hugh had been assassinated on the orders of Henry II, who suspected him of plotting to found an independent kingdom in de Lacy's extensive Irish holdings and it was four years before Hugh's son, Walter, gained possession of his inheritance on Henry's death. Walter had his own problems with Royalty, forfeiting his lands under both Richard I (between 1194-1198) and John (between 1210-1214).

The work of laying out the new town to the south of the castle seems to have started towards the end of the 12th century soon after Walter had regained his lands for the first time. The high point of Longtown's history may have coincided with the second re-instatement of Walter in 1214 and his appointment as Sheriff of Herefordshire in 1216. Ewias Lacy passed out of the control of the de Lacy family in 1230 on the death of Walter's son Gilbert and his widow's subsequent marriage to John Fitz Geoffrey. The first documentary reference to burgages in Longtown was around 1234, well after this event. By 1310 the settlement consisted of 100 burgesses which, assuming an average of five occupants per plot, would give a population of some 500 in addition to the castle garrison and non-burgesses. By this time there was probably additional burgage plots to the north of the castle as well as those to the south.

It was probably the 14th century Black Death that hastened the decline of this once sizeable but very remote town. In the middle of the 16th century it was referred to as 'Longa Villa' (Coplestone-Crow 1989), and by Leyland as 'Longton of Ewys'. The village

continued to decline but was still prosperous enough to re-roof the chapel in 1640 (Longtown was a chapel-of-ease to the main parish church at Clodock). Although there is no documentary evidence that the castle played any part in the Civil War, the discovery of a cannon ball by the keep in 1865 and others nearby suggests that some military activity may have taken place about that time. There is a local tradition that the castle was slighted by cannon fire during the Civil War, which may explain the finds of the shot. Longtown had an annual fair in September, and held a May Fair until the 1890s, but for the past 100 years even these have been neglected.

The castle consists of a mound at the north-western corner of massive earthworks that form a rectangle bisected by the present village road. When the old village primary school was built in the middle of the earthworks it was reported that Roman pottery was found. To the south of the castle is the chapel (now converted to a house) and the small triangular market place. An embankment and ditch can be traced around the settlement to the south of the castle.

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#### **4.1 Site specific**

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To the north of the castle is an earthwork (HWCN 21945, Figure 2, Plate 2) indicating a defended area (seen to the south of the development area as HWCN 21946, Figure 2), and it is a trench through these earthworks that is the subject of this report. The development area lies outside the scheduled area (SAM HW20) which is situated both to the north and south. This area is considered by some to be a fourth bailey of the castle. However, whatever its original function, it contained buried remains of 12th and 13th century house platforms and associated features, as identified by previous excavation, (HWCN 19470; HWCN 22005, Taylor and Woodiwiss 1988; HWCN 22008, Brown 1991).

Jarret and Jones (Hurst 1966) discovered that this earthwork consisted of a clay bank, overlying turf, with a rough stone structure on the inside. It was also noted that no ditch was present within 7m of the bank. Stonework observed in the Northeast area where the ramparts has been destroyed by modern housing (HWCN 22009) also suggests a stone revetment to the defences (Buteux 1996).

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### **5. The Salvage Recording.**

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The exposed section was aligned south/west - north/east, it measured 17.5m in length, and stood to a maximum height of 1.83m (Figure 3, Plate 1).

The core (001) had a maximum width of 4m (at the visible base), rising to a dome with a maximum height of 1.20m, and consisted of a substantial quantity of green sandstone in a matrix of stained green stiff clay. This was butted on the north east side (i.e. exterior) by a light green clay (002). This had a visible base width of 3.5m and culminated at the apex of 001. To the Southwest of 001 (i.e. interior) was 003, a band of dark red/brown clay loam (re-deposited subsoil) with an abundance of small-medium angular stones. Overlying 001, 002 and 003 was 004, a 0.37m band of gritty red clay loam, that in turn was overlain by 005. This was

evident along the whole of the excavated section and varied in height from 2.12m Southwest and Northeast of the bank, to 0.30m at the apex of the bank. This was then overlain by a band of modern topsoil (006), 0.25m thick, that was stained/burnt mainly black.

The continuation of this bank is visible in the fields to the Northwest of the development area between Green Cottage and east of the police station.

Further observations of the excavated trenches for the new foundations were carried out (Fig. 3). This was done after the top soil had been stripped so measurements of depth should be taken as being from the base of topsoil.

Natural sandstone was observed at 0.25m-0.3m below the base of topsoil. The remainder of the site was relatively sterile with the exception of a modern/Victorian cut observed adjacent to the road on the east side of the site.

The depth of foundation trenches varied from c. 0.5m in the west group of foundations to between 0.6m and 1.2m on the east side near the road.

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## 5.1 Finds

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The only finds recovered were from the modern topsoil (006) and consisted of domestic rubbish, auto parts and charcoal/coal. None of the finds were retained.

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## 6. Conclusion

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As a result of the watching brief it has been shown that the bank previously identified (Hurst 1966) was present within the development area, and that the stratigraphy is consistent with that previously identified (see 4.1). It is also noted, that like the previous excavation no finds were recovered from the bank during the course of the work, and that the medieval date given to this structure is still only implied from the excavated remains on its interior (Taylor and Woodiwiss 1988, and Brown 1991).

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## 7. List of Site Visits.

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Date	Present	Action
10/11/97	D. Rouse	Record the initial stages of soil removal.
11/11/97	D. Rouse	Monitoring the excavation.
14/11/97	D. Williams	Record the completed sections.
08/04/98	D. Williams	No further ground disturbance
05/05/98	D. Rouse	Foundation trenches

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## 8. Summary of the Site Archive.

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No finds were retained from these works.

1. Site notebook.
2. Sheet of site drawings.
3. Sheets of inked drawings.
4. Photographic films.
5. This document.

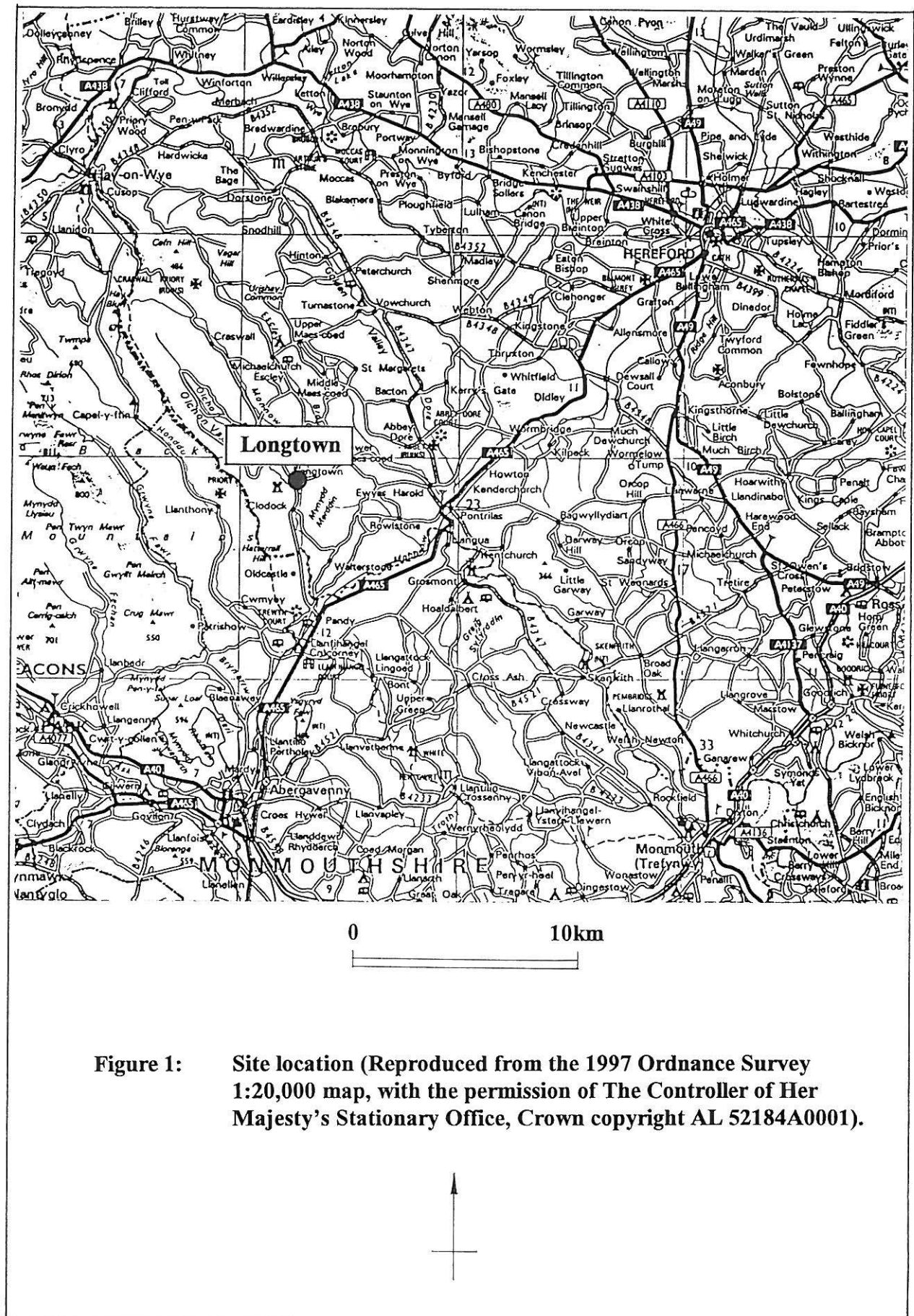
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## 9. Bibliography

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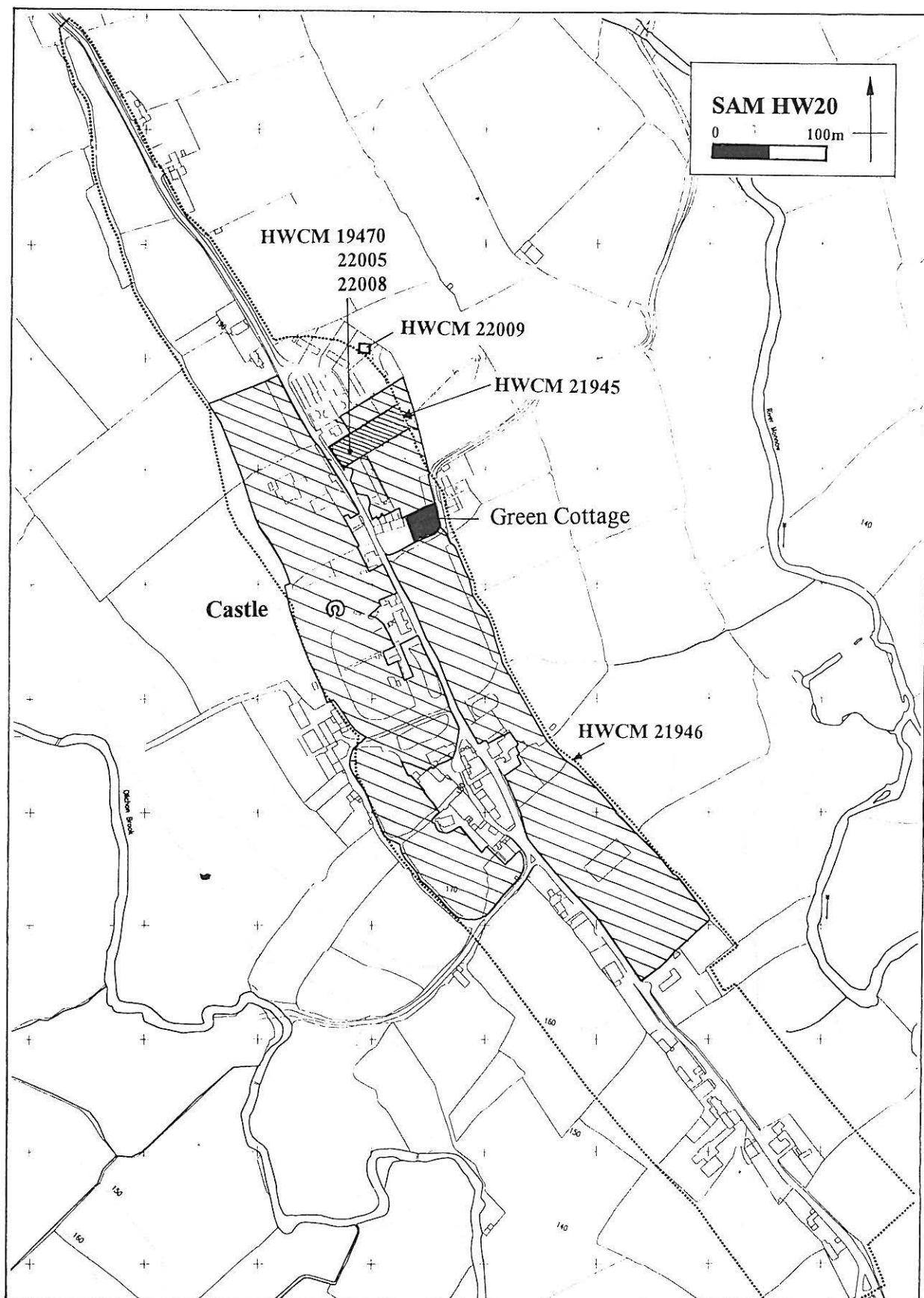
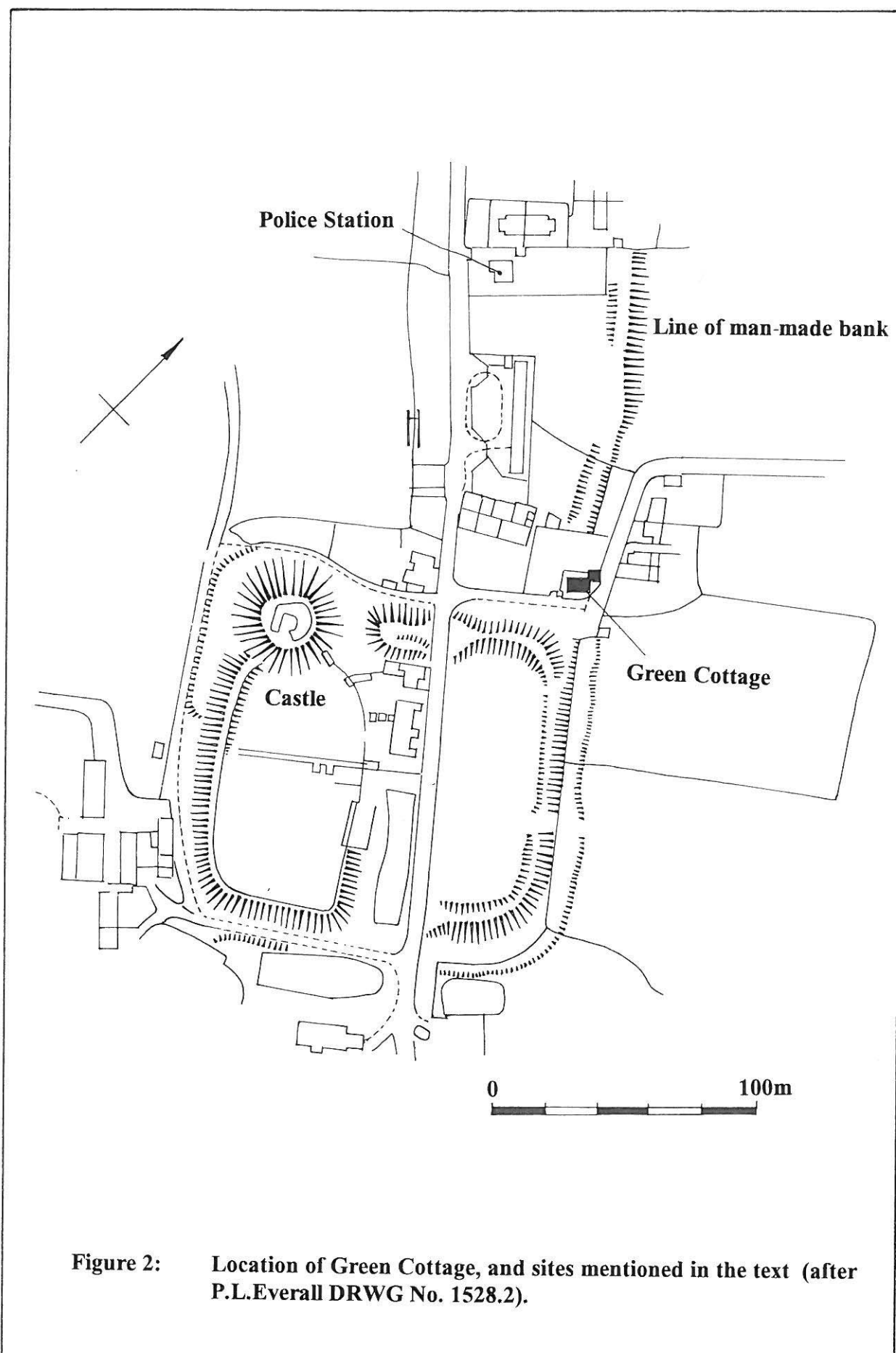


Figure 2: Site location (Reproduced from the 1988 Ordnance Survey 1:5,000 map, with the permission of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationary Office, Crown copyright AL 52184A0001).



**Figure 2:** Location of Green Cottage, and sites mentioned in the text (after P.L.Everall DRWG No. 1528.2).

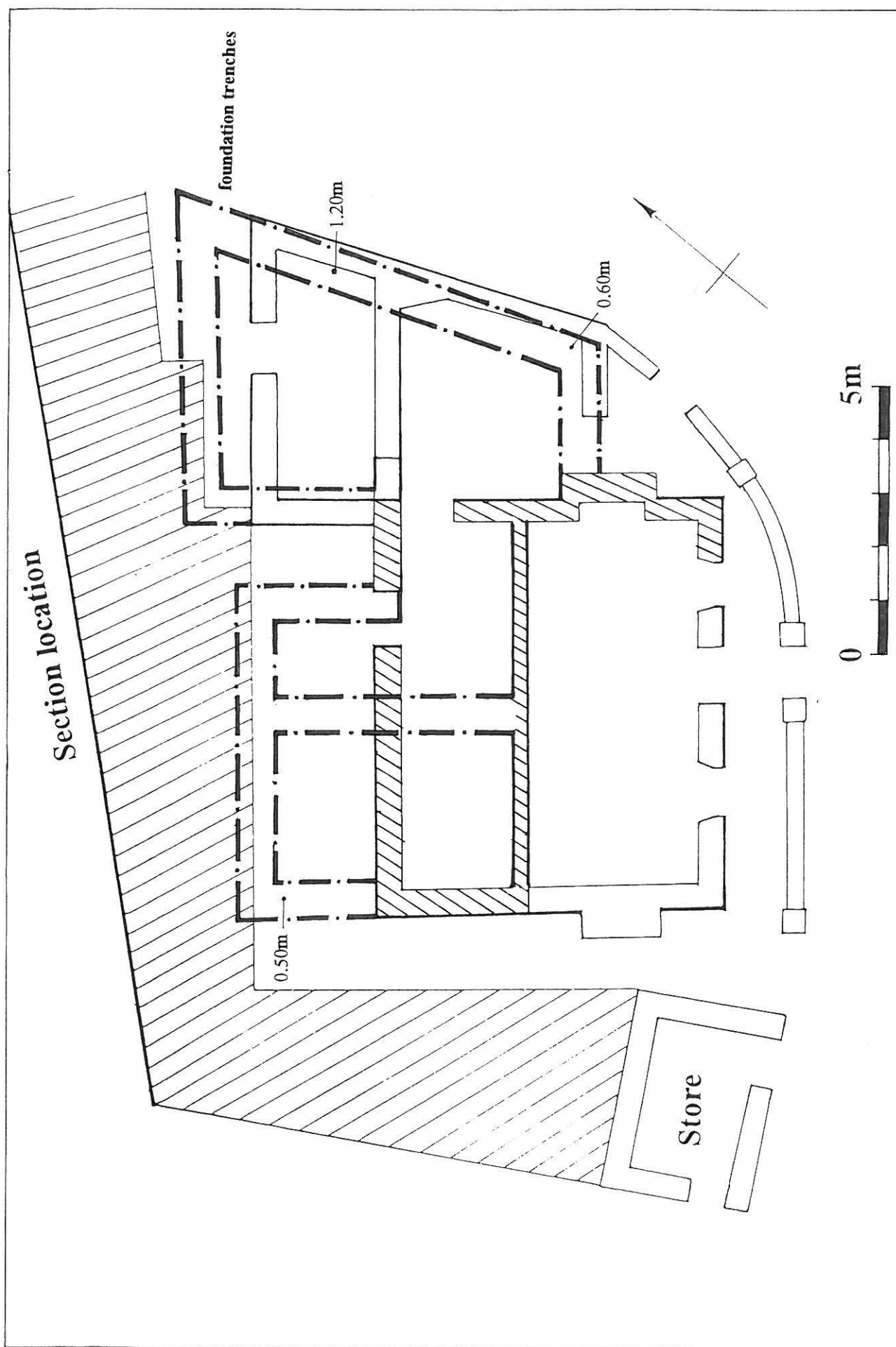
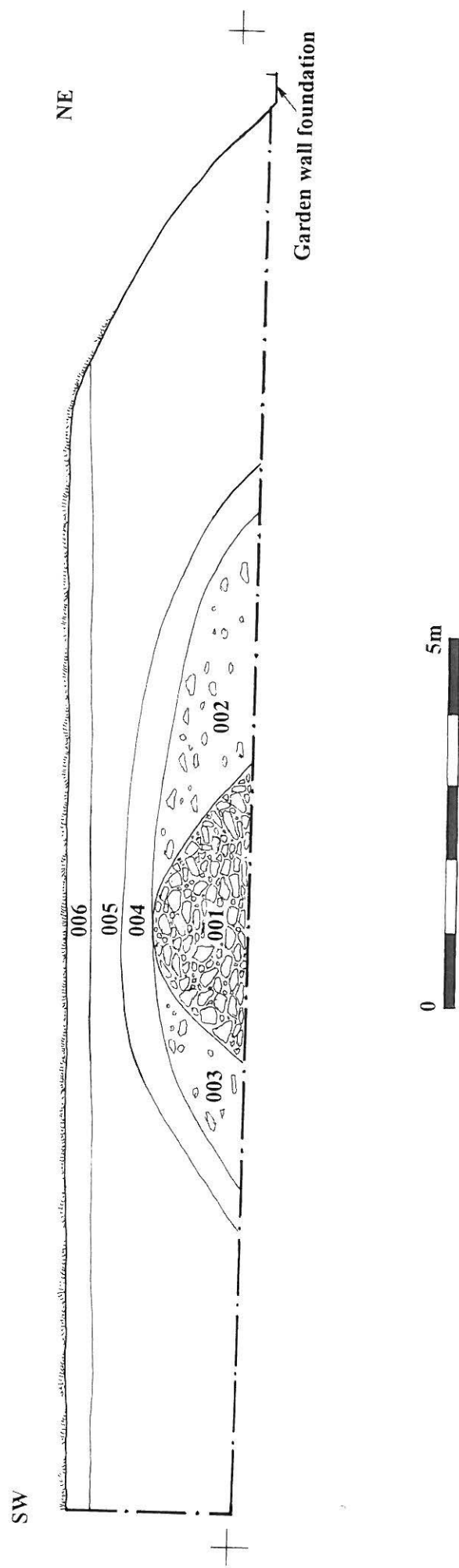


Fig. 3 Excavated area and section (Fig 4 ) location plus position of new foundations as observed.



**Figure 4:** The remaining section showing the central core and associated deposits (for location see Figure 3).