

EVALUATION AT LONGTOWN
OUTDOOR EDUCATION CENTRE,
LONGTOWN, HEREFORDSHIRE

Scheduled ancient monument
Here and Worc 20

James Topping, Derek Hurst and Elizabeth Pearson.

Illustrations by
Carolyn Hunt

20th May 1998

Copyright © Archaeological Service, Worcestershire County Council

Field Section,
Archaeological Service,
Worcestershire County Council,
Tolladine Road,
Worcester WR4 9NB

Project 1571
Report 657
HSM 26824

Contents

Part 1 Project summary

1	Reasons for the project	1
2	Outline of results and significance	1
3	Conclusions	1

Part 2 Detailed report

4	Aims	2
5	Archaeological background	2
6	Methods	2
6.1	Fieldwork	
6.2	Artefacts	
6.3	Environment	
7	Analysis	4
7.1	Phase 1 Natural deposits	
7.2	Phase 2 (?) Earlier medieval deposits	
7.3	Phase 3 Medieval deposits	
7.4	Phase 4 Post-medieval and modern deposits	
8	Discussion	5
9	Significance	6
10	Impact	6
11	Academic summary	7
12	The archive	7
13	Acknowledgements	7
14	Personnel	7
15	Bibliography	8
16	Abbreviations	8

Tables

1	Quantification of artefacts	4
---	-----------------------------	---

Figures

1	Location of the site	facing page	1
2	Plan and section of trench		9
3	Plan and levels of area of extension 1		10
4	Extrapolated alignment of medieval defences		11
5	Schematic section showing location of significant medieval deposits, and probable height of built-up material		12

Evaluation at Longtown Outdoor Education Centre, Longtown

James Topping

Part 1 Project summary

1 Reasons for the project

The development of two new buildings is proposed at the Longtown Outdoor Education Centre. The site forms part of the medieval town of Longtown and is registered on the County Sites and Monuments Record. The site also lies within the scheduled ancient monument of Longtown Castle and Town (Here and Worc 20).

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken to assess the survival of archaeological deposits within the area of one of the proposed extensions.

2 Outline of results and significance

The medieval town ditch was identified within the evaluation trench, which was at least 6.00m wide and 2.40m deep. There was evidence that it was deliberately backfilled, and that this occurred no later than the 13th/14th century. Also identified was a ground surface pre-dating the ditch.

Part of the area of extension 1 lies within an area terraced into the natural slope of the land. The Evaluation trench was located in the south eastern corner of the area, in an area which will require the present ground surface to be built up to create a level ground surface.

3 Conclusions

Evidence for the medieval town defences of Longtown were identified. As a major component of the medieval town defences of the scheduled monument, Longtown Castle and Town (County Monument No. 20), this feature and its fills must be considered to be of national importance.

Part 2 Detailed report

4 Aims

The aims of the evaluation were to locate archaeological deposits and determine, if present, their extent, state of preservation, date, type, vulnerability and documentation. The purpose of this was to establish their significance, since this would make it possible to recommend an appropriate treatment which may then be integrated with the proposed development programme.

5 Archaeological background

The site of the evaluation is located at Longtown Outdoor Education Centre, Longtown (NGR SO 325 295). The site of the trench is within a field immediately adjacent to the Centre.

The archaeological background to the site is given in the desk-based assessment completed in September 1997 (Dalwood 1997). This report identified the area of proposed extensions to lie within tenement plots and close to the defences (Dalwood 1997, 9). The site lies within Longtown, which was surveyed during the Central Marches Historic Towns Survey (Buteux 1996).

The project was undertaken at the request of the client (Northamptonshire County Council) in order to evaluate a proposed extension at Longtown Outdoor Education Centre in Longtown by providing information on the nature, survival, and significance of any archaeological deposits. The site lies within the medieval town of Longtown and this intervention is registered on the County Sites and Monuments Record (HSM 26824). The site also lies within the scheduled ancient monument of Longtown Castle and Town (Here and Worc 20) and as such is subject to the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979. Also as a known archaeological site, the local plan policies for archaeology apply (South Herefordshire District Council 1994, policies C32 to C34).

The soils of the area are predominantly typical argillic brown earths of the Bromyard association (Ragg *et al* 1984, 171; Soil Survey of England and Wales 1983). The underlying geology consists of Brownstones belonging to the Old Red Sandstone (British Geological Survey 1:250,000 map, 52°N-4°N).

6 Methods

6.1 Fieldwork

6.1.1 Excavation strategy

The field evaluation took place on 30-31st March and 4 April 1998. A single trench was initially excavated using a mechanical excavator (Fig 1). The trench was 6m x 1.5m and was excavated to a depth of between 0.50m and 0.80m. Selected deposits were then excavated by hand. Recording followed

standard practice (CAS 1995). The positioning of the trench was designed so that areas of known modern disturbance were avoided. The original planned positioning of the trench was revised. Following consultation with centre staff, it was moved 2m further towards the east in order to avoid an electric cable.

6.1.2 **Structural analysis**

Structural analysis was effected through a combination of structural, artefactual and environmental evidence.

6.2 **Artefacts**

6.2.1 **Artefact recovery policy**

All artefacts from the excavated area were retained in accordance with the Service manual (CAS 1995 as amended). Palaeoenvironmental samples were taken, and artefacts from these were retained for study.

6.2.2 **Method of analysis**

All hand-retrieved artefacts were examined. They were identified, quantified, and dated to period. A *terminus post quem* date was produced for each stratified context. The date was used for determining the broad date of phases defined in the site stratigraphic sequence. All information was recorded on *pro forma* sheets.

6.3 **Environment**

6.3.1 **Sampling policy**

The environmental sampling policy was as defined in the County Archaeological Service Recording System (CAS 1995 as amended). Samples of 5 to 10 litres were taken from a ditch fill (103) and a buried soil (104) of medieval date.

6.3.2 **Method of analysis**

The samples were processed by flotation followed by wet-sieving using a Siraf tank. The flot was collected on a 500µm sieve and the residue retained on a 1mm mesh. This allows for the recovery of items such as small animal bones, molluscs and seeds.

The residues were fully sorted by eye and the abundance of each category of environmental remains estimated. The flots were fully sorted using a low-power EMT light microscope and remains identified using modern reference specimens housed at the County Archaeological Service.

7

Analysis

The results of the structural analysis are described below by period. The artefactual results are tabulated (Table 1).

Table 1

Quantification of the artefacts (hand retrieved material only).

Pottery (sherd count)

Medieval	22
Post-medieval	6
Clay pipe	2

Phase 1: Natural deposits

Natural undisturbed subsoil was identified in two places only (106: Fig 2). It was seen in a hand excavated slot excavated to test the nature of 103 (slot 102). Geological deposits were also detected in the eastern of two boreholes excavated to test the depth of deposits (Fig 2: Auger hole 2).

Phase 2: (?) Earlier medieval deposits

Natural was overlaid by a pale creamy brown silty clay (Fig 2: 105). This was clean in nature and has been interpreted as a possible hillwash deposit (colluvium). Above that was a buried topsoil layer (104). This was a grey brown silty clay layer, and contained within it were occasional flecks of charcoal and rare to occasional small lumps of fired clay. These deposits were not directly dated, but lie beneath late medieval deposits, and appeared to pre-date the ditch cut.

Phase 3: Medieval deposits

The soil layers seen in slot 102 were cut on their north eastern side by a large feature (111). Due to the considerable depth of the feature the slots excavated to test the nature of its fills were abandoned when it became clear that to continue would be dangerous. Therefore a primary fill was not identified. A hand auger was used to test the depth of deposits (Fig 2). Two excavated slots were excavated to test the nature of its two identified fills (Fig 2; 103 and 107). The lower of these two fills was a pale cream pinkish brown clay silt which was interpreted as redeposited natural. This contained within it occasional small pieces of sandstone, flecks of charcoal and rare sherds of 13th/14th century pottery. The upper fill of the feature (107), was a pale grey-brown silty clay. This contained within it moderate amounts of charcoal flecks and occasional sherds of 13th/14th century pottery. These deposits are interpreted as the late medieval backfill of the ditch. Environmental remains were recovered, though only in small amounts. Only occasional seeds of elderberry (*Sambucus nigra*) and sedge (*Carex* sp) survived (probably as a result of anaerobic conditions in the heavy clay soils) suggesting the presence of neglected overgrown shrubby land with some wet areas. However, as the seeds of these species are particularly robust and are frequently found in the poorest soil conditions, it is assumed that there is differential survival of plant remains. It is therefore not possible to make a full interpretation of the surrounding environment. A single charred grass grain from ditch fill 103 is the only evidence of domestic debris.

Phase 4: Post-medieval and modern deposits

Above the medieval deposits was a pale grey brown, silty clay, stony layer (110). This had frequent amounts of stone and charcoal within it. Above that was a dark grey-brown silty clay (109) that had quantities of charcoal and stones within it, and also had a lens of clinker ash. This has been interpreted as a buried topsoil buried by a dump of modern topsoil (108), dumped as a result of terracing into the hillside for the circa 1970s temporary classroom. A modern service trench was identified within the trench. This contained within it a plastic pipe, and was roughly aligned with a reported electricity cable.

8

Discussion

The western edge of a large feature was identified, at least 2.40m deep and over 6.00m wide. The upper fill of this feature had a *terminus post quem* of 13th/14th century. The feature is identified as the medieval town ditch. The backfill of the ditch had probably been tipped in from the uphill side, and consisted largely of material derived from local geological deposits. It is considered probable that this material had formed a defensive bank, originally constructed from material dug from the ditch. The dating evidence suggests that the defensive bank was deliberately slighted in the late medieval period. Sealed beneath the bank material was a pre-ditch soil horizon (104) and subsoil layer.

The evaluation indicates poor survival of macrofossil remains. However, buried soils have been highlighted as deposits of interest for study in Longtown (Pearson 1995) because of the information they can potentially provide on the nature of landuse before burial. Pollen and soil microscopic analyses, although not carried out for this project, are the most appropriate methods for study of deposits of this nature.

This trench locates the line of the medieval town ditch. Previous predictions of the line of the medieval town defences located them within this land parcel, although it was suspected to take the form of a truncated bank (Dalwood 1997, Fig 5).

Resistivity survey undertaken in this field in 1984 identified a slight anomaly on the predicted line of the defences, perhaps indicating buried earthworks. However, the results were inconclusive (HWCM 5302; Bartlett 1985, 2).

The apparent absence of the ditch in a service trench recorded in 1989 (Edwards 1989) may be because of the depth of modern and post-medieval build up. As a result the ditch fills may have been masked by these overlying layers. The occurrence of natural bedrock in the service trench, some 10m down slope into the field, may indicate the eastern edge of the ditch cut. There was no evidence for the date of construction of the defences, but a 12th century date is likely (Buteux 1996, 2). The evidence from this evaluation, combined with previous investigations (Edwards 1989) and the desk-based assessment (Dalwood 1997), can be used to define the alignment of the town defences in this part of Longtown (Fig 4).

9 **Significance**

The evaluation trench lies within a scheduled ancient monument and revealed deposits of medieval and later date, Identified as the medieval town ditch. It may be judged that the medieval deposits are of national significance.

The evaluation demonstrated the survival of a pre-defensive ditch buried soil. This has the potential to provide information on early medieval or earlier landuse. It may be possible to determine, for example, whether the land was under cultivation at this location prior to burial. Pollen and soil microscopic analyses of the buried soil are recommended should any further archaeological work be carried out on these deposits.

10 **Impact**

The evaluation demonstrated that significant archaeological deposits relating to the medieval defences of Longtown survive in the area of the proposed development, buried beneath relatively shallow modern deposits. It is probable that significant deposits will be disturbed during construction of the proposed extension. It is understood that the extension will be built with its floor level with that of the standing building which will require building up the ground level by over 1.0m. The probable extent of significant medieval deposits is shown in Figure 5.

11 **Academic Summary**

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at the Longtown Outdoor Education Centre. The medieval town ditch was identified within the evaluation trench.

The Service has a professional obligation to publish the results of archaeological projects within a reasonable period of time. To this end, the Service intend to use this summary as the basis for publication through local or regional journals. The Client is requested to consider the content of this section as being acceptable for such publication.

12 **The archive**

The archive consists of:

- 01 Context number catalogue AS5
- 12 Context records AS1
- 04 Fieldwork progress records AS2
- 01 Photographic records AS3
- 01 Colour transparency films
- 01 Black and white photographic films
- 03 Sample records AS17
- 02 Auger records AS 26
- 05 Scale drawings
- 01 Boxes of finds
- 01 Computer disks

It is intended that the project archive will be deposited at Herefordshire County Museum.

13 Acknowledgements

The Service would like to thank Bob Burson (Head of Centre) and Northamptonshire County Council for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project.

14 Personnel

Project leader; James Topping PIFA
On site assistance; Jeremy Bretherton BA
Artefact specialist; Derek Hurst MA
Environmental specialist; Elizabeth Pearson MSc
Illustrator; Carolyn Hunt PIFA
Project manager; Hal Dalwood BA MIFA

15 Bibliography

Bartlett, A, 1985 *Geophysical survey at Longtown, Herefordshire*, 1984 Ancient Monuments Laboratory Rep, Geophysics **5/84**

Buteux, V, 1996 *Archaeological assessment of Longtown, Hereford and Worcester*, County Archaeological Service, Hereford and Worcester County Council, internal report, **326**

CAS 1995 *Manual of Service practice: fieldwork recording manual*, County Archaeological Service, Hereford and Worcester County Council, internal report, **399**

Dalwood, H, 1997 *Desk-based assessment at the Longtown Outdoor Education Centre, Longtown*, HWCC County Archaeological Service, internal report, **587**

Edwards, R, 1989 *Watching brief at Longtown*, typescript report, Hereford and Worcester County Council Archaeology Section (copy in HWCC SMR file HWCM 22006)

Pearson, E, 1995 Environmental assessment, in H Dalwood, *Archaeological assessment of Longtown, Hereford and Worcester: interim report*, HWCC County Archaeological Service internal rep, **326**

Ragg, J M, Beard, G R, George, H, Heaven, F W, Hollis, J M, Jones, R J A, Palmer, R C, Reeve, M J, Robson, J D, and Whitfield, W A D, 1984 *Soils and their use in midland and western England*, Soils Survey of England and Wales, **12**

Abbreviations and glossary

HSM - Numbers prefixed with "HSM" are the primary reference numbers used by the Herefordshire County Sites and Monuments Record.

SMR - Sites and Monuments Record

CMHTS - Central Marches Historic Towns Survey

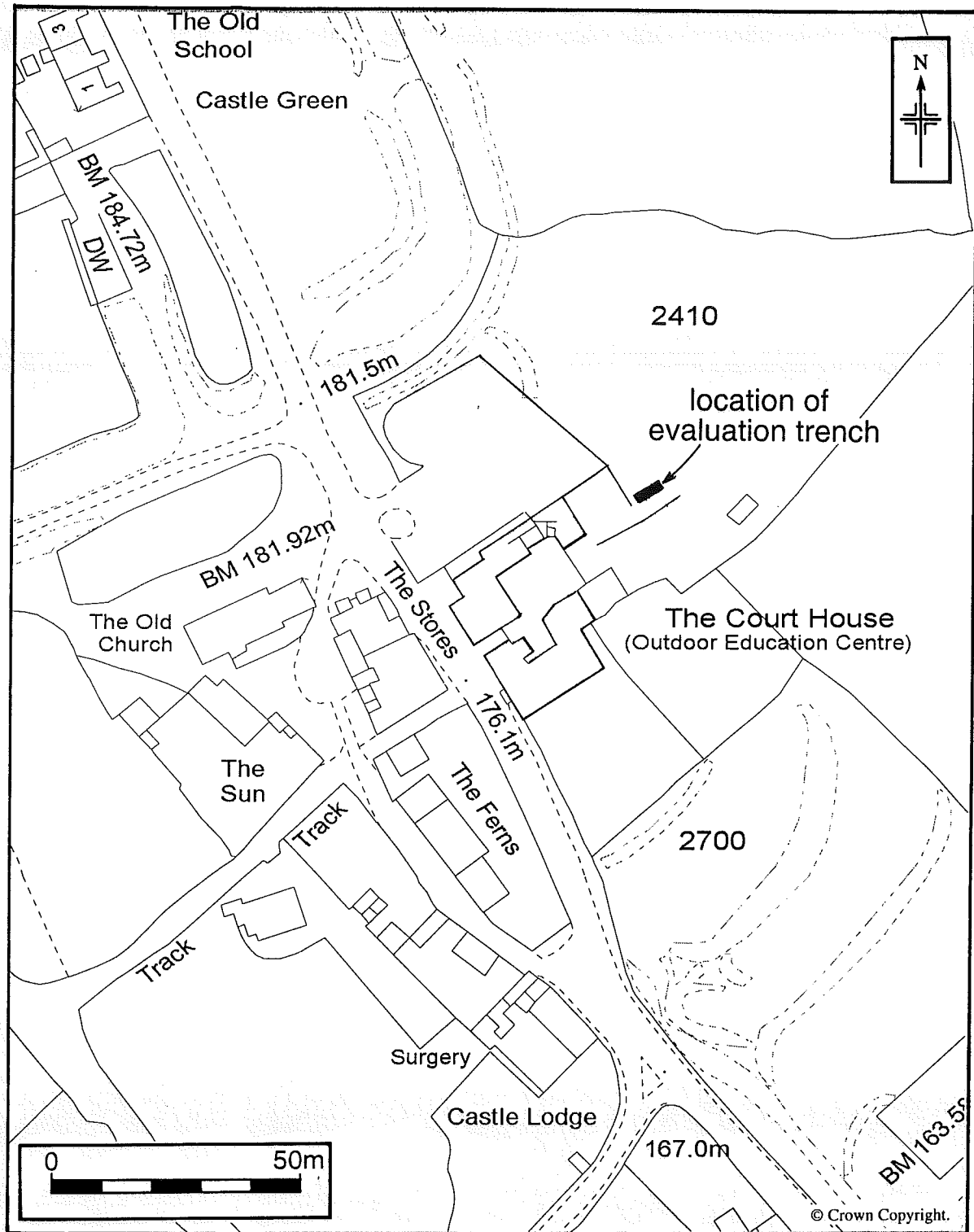
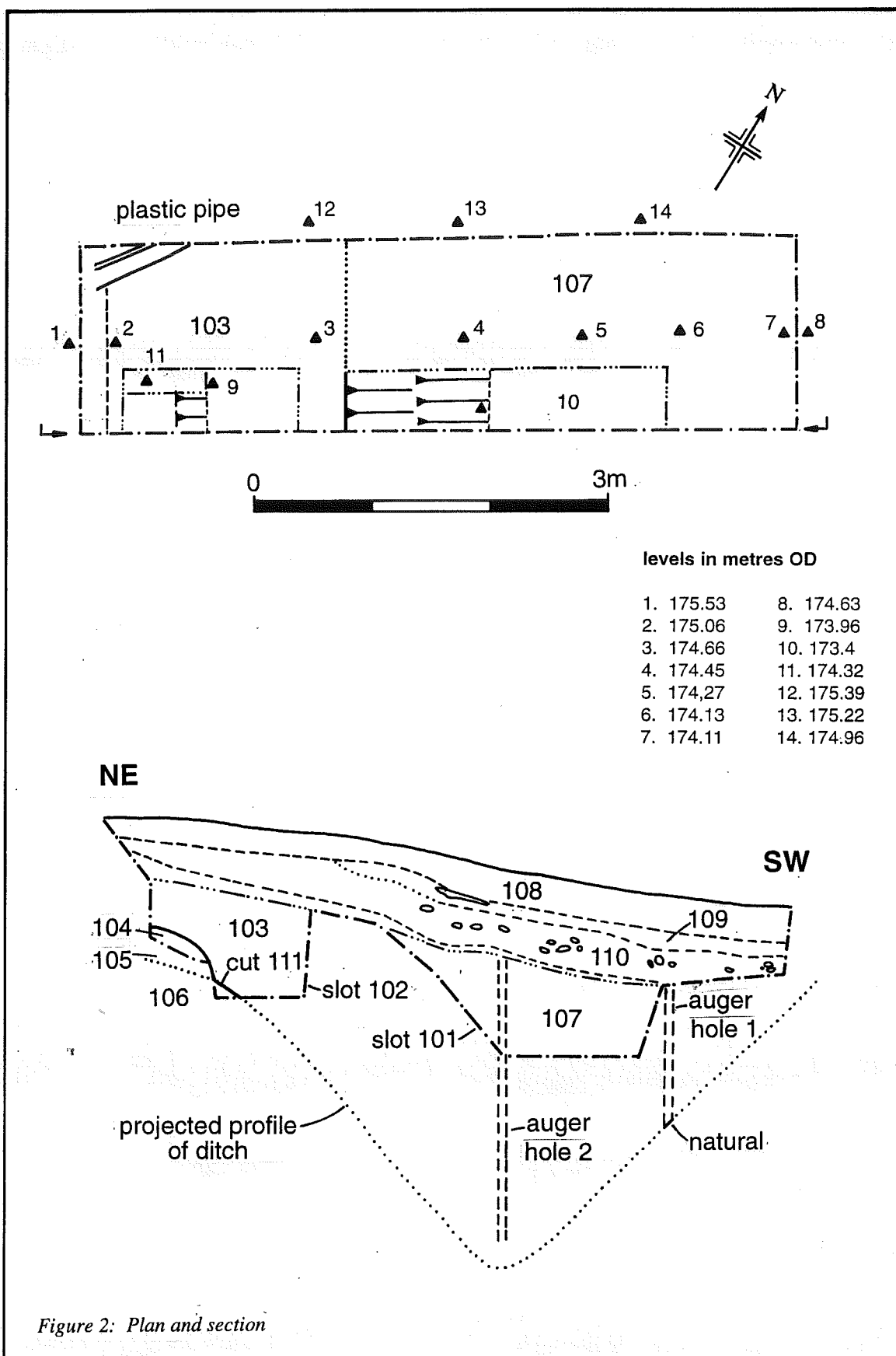


Figure 1: Location of the site



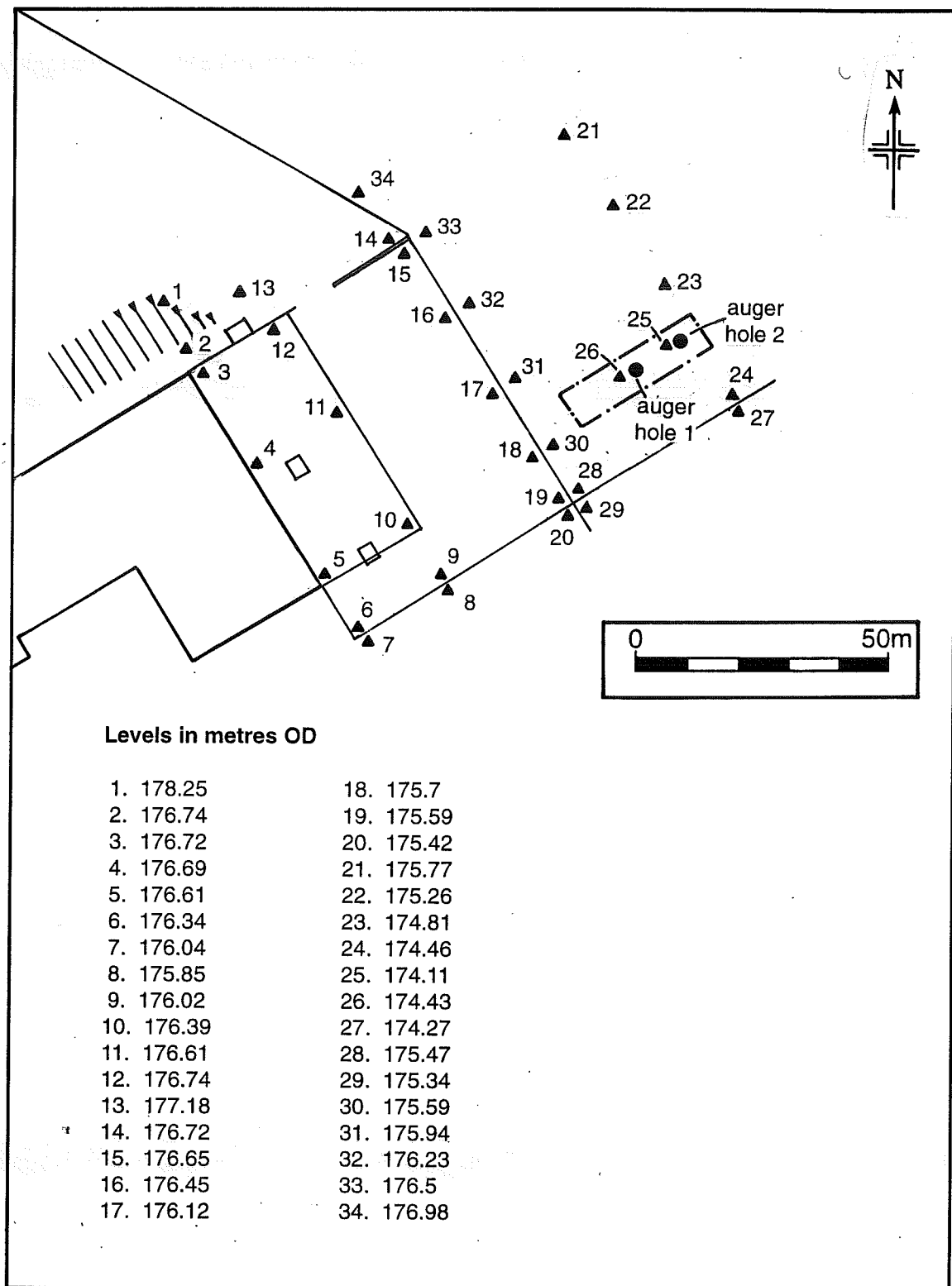


Figure 3: plan and levels of area of extension 1

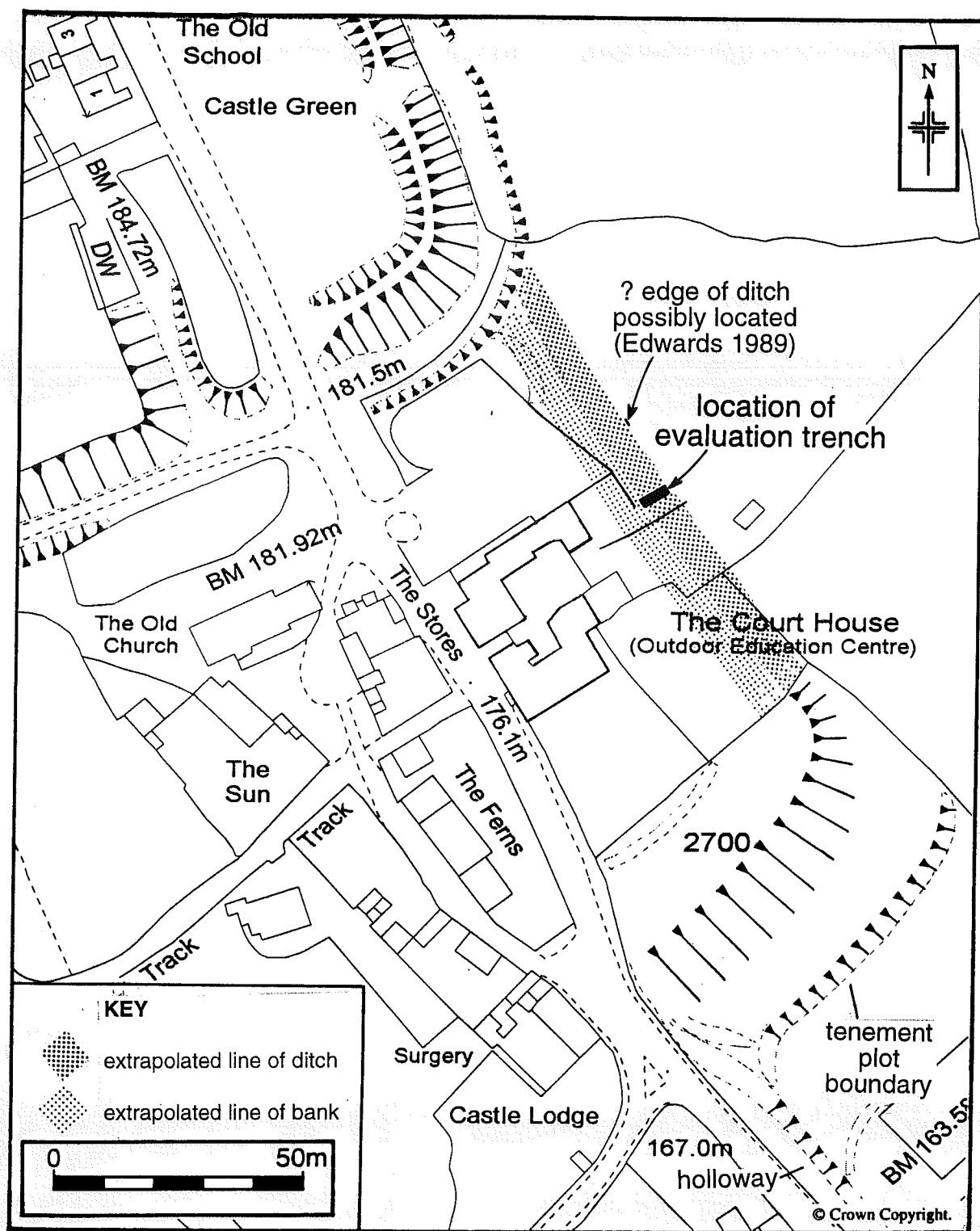


Figure 4: Extrapolated alignment of medieval defences

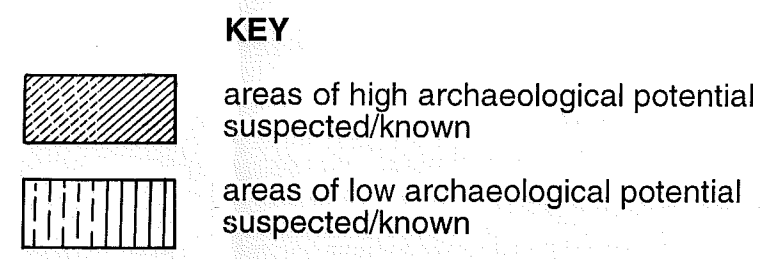
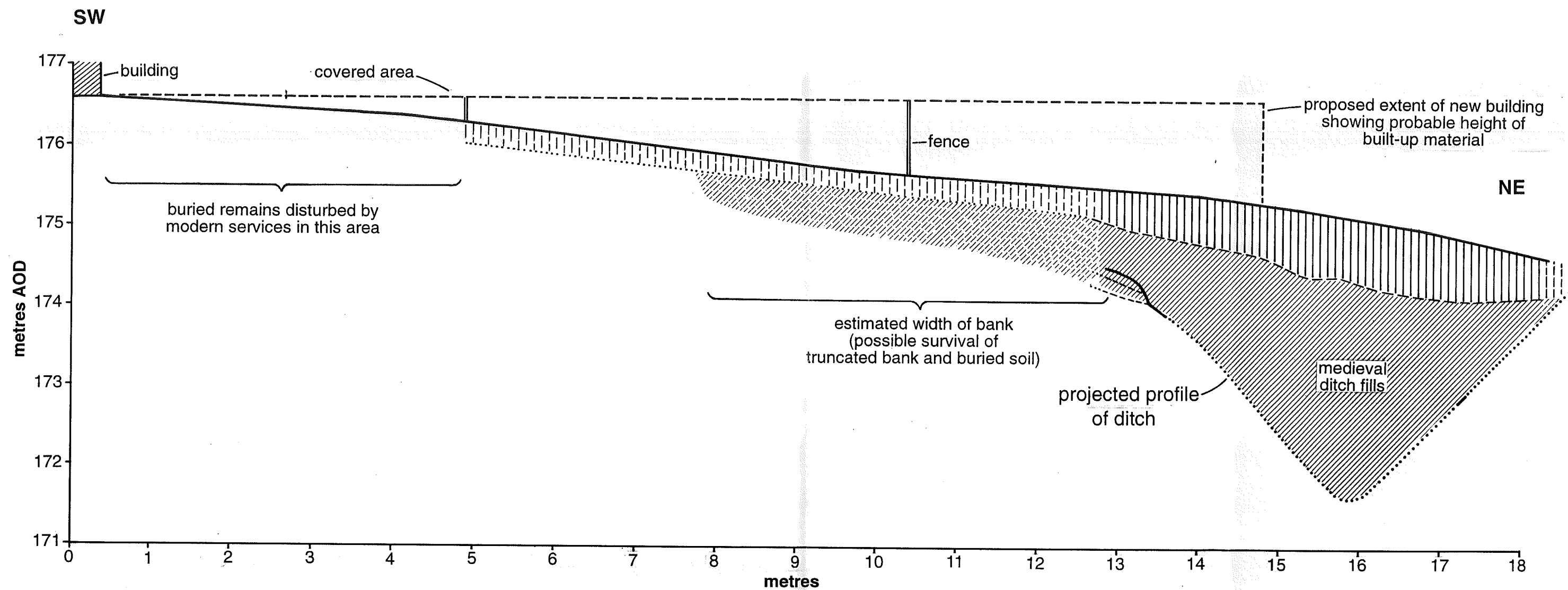


Figure 5: Schematic section showing location of significant medieval deposits and probable height of built-up material