

5. EXCAVATION RESULTS

Initially Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) was granted for the excavation within 8 trenches (Trenches 1–8, Case ID: 300026684 and Case ID: 300033153). Trenches 1–3 were located within the Castle scheduled area (SM 276) and Trenches 5–8 were within the Burgh scheduled area (SM 3410) while Trench 4 fell within both scheduled areas (Figure 4). Consent was also given by Historic Environment Scotland under the granted SMC to examine wall relationships in three further areas (Areas A–C). In 2020, SMC was sought to explore the possibility of the existence of a gate between the two drum towers along the north wall of the Outer Bailey this area forming Trench 9 (SM276 Case ID: 300043382). The site code used during the excavation work was TAR 19 and the initial results of the excavation appeared in the subsequent Data Structure Reports (Regan 2019; 2020b).

The nomenclature employed for the main areas of the site will follow that previously employed by the RCAHMS (RCAHMS 1971); the Inner Bailey, the Outer Bailey, and the Tower House and where

possible, the results are presented in stratigraphic order from oldest to youngest.

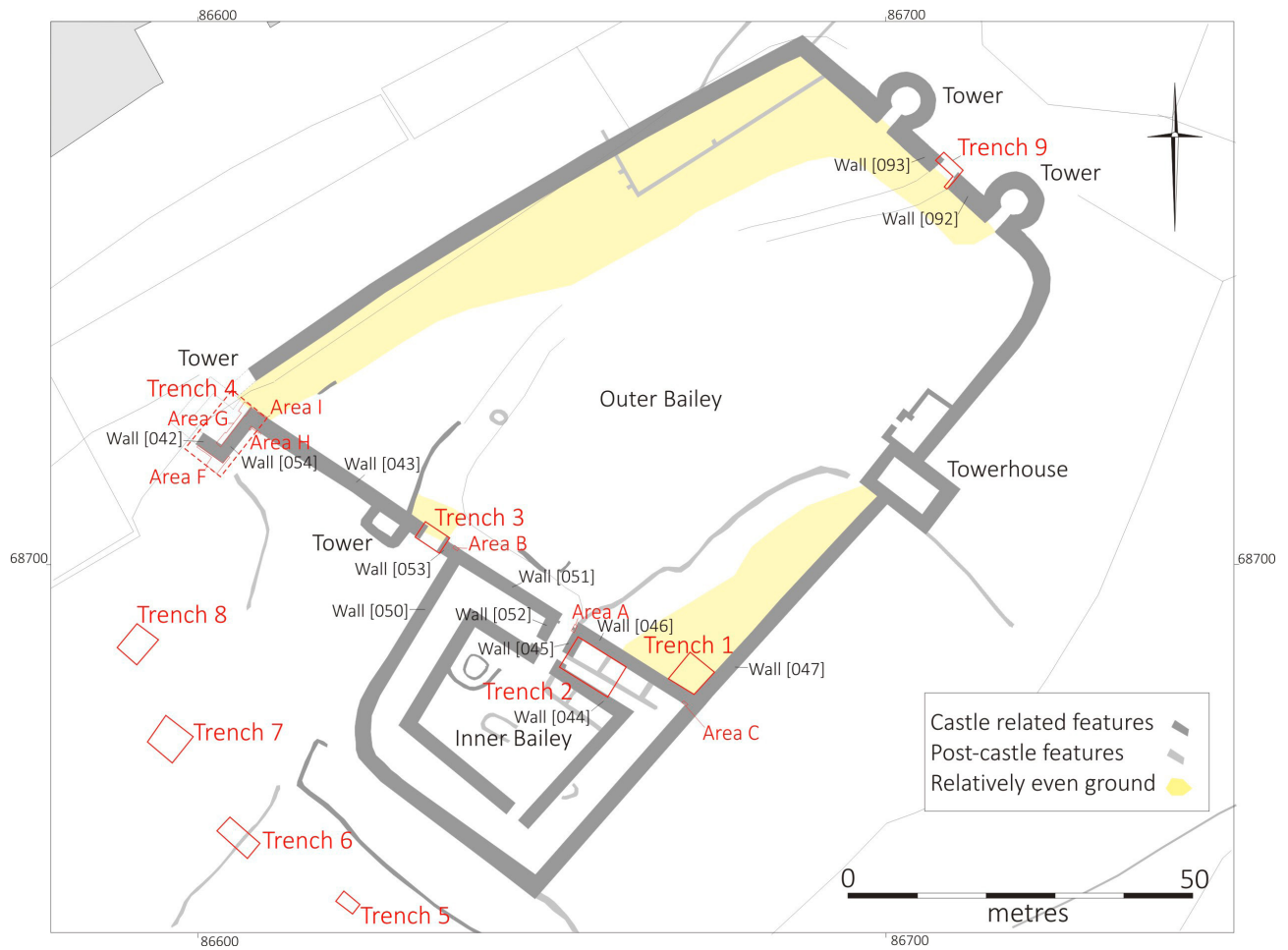
5.1 Trench 1

This trench was located on relatively flat ground at the junction of the Inner and Outer Bailey walls to examine the relationship of the walls and establish a chronology of construction while investigating the area's potential use in the medieval period (Illus 11 and 12).

Natural bedrock was encountered within the excavated trench at 33.08m OD or 1.30m below the present ground surface. Above this lay a dark grey peaty soil, C076. This soil was observed to contain organic preservation including recognisable remains of wood and plant material, which likely survived due to the anaerobic nature of the soil and it also contained carbonised hazel (Illus 18 and 19). The upper surface of this deposit was fire reddened in part, indicating burning had taken place on the ground surface although it was impossible to determine if this represented limited burning, as in a hearth area, or is representative of more widescale burning.



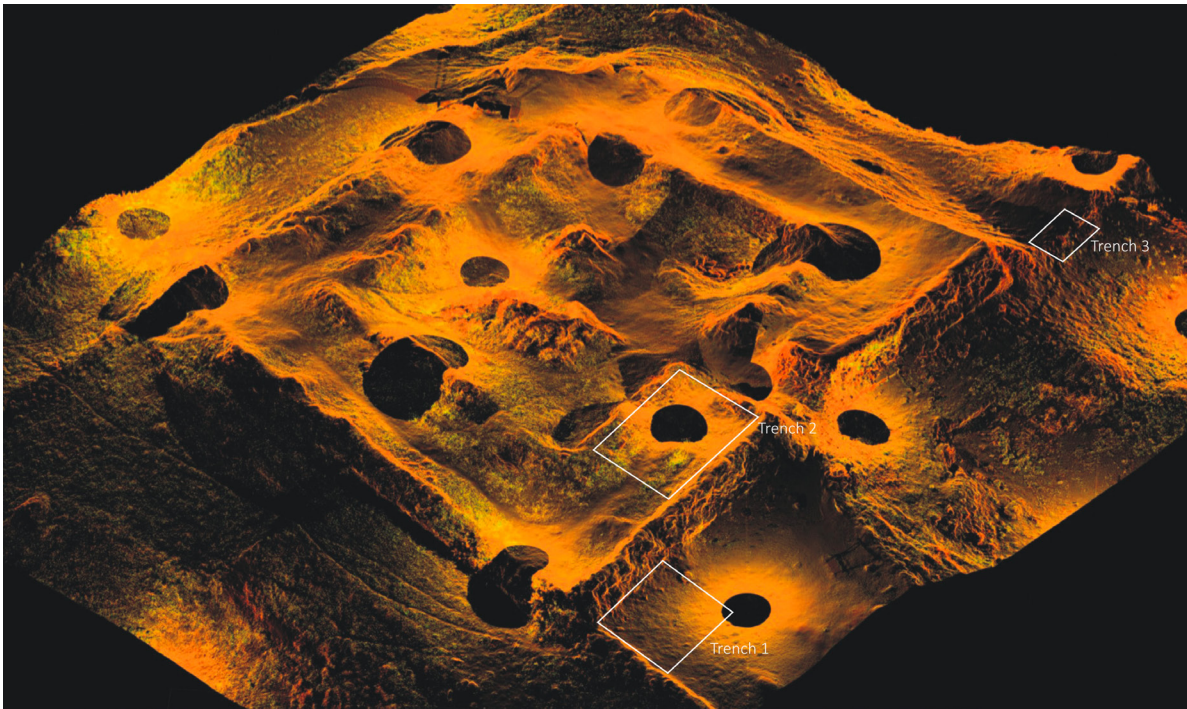
Illus 6 Tarbert Castle from above (©Tarbert Castle Trust)



Illus 7 Location of excavation trenches



Illus 8 Tarbert Castle from above showing the excavation trenches in 2019 (©Tarbert Castle Trust)



Illus 9 Laser scan of Inner Bailey showing positions of Trenches 1–3



Illus 10 Locations of Trenches 1 and 2 and Areas A and C from northwest above (©Tarbert Castle Trust)

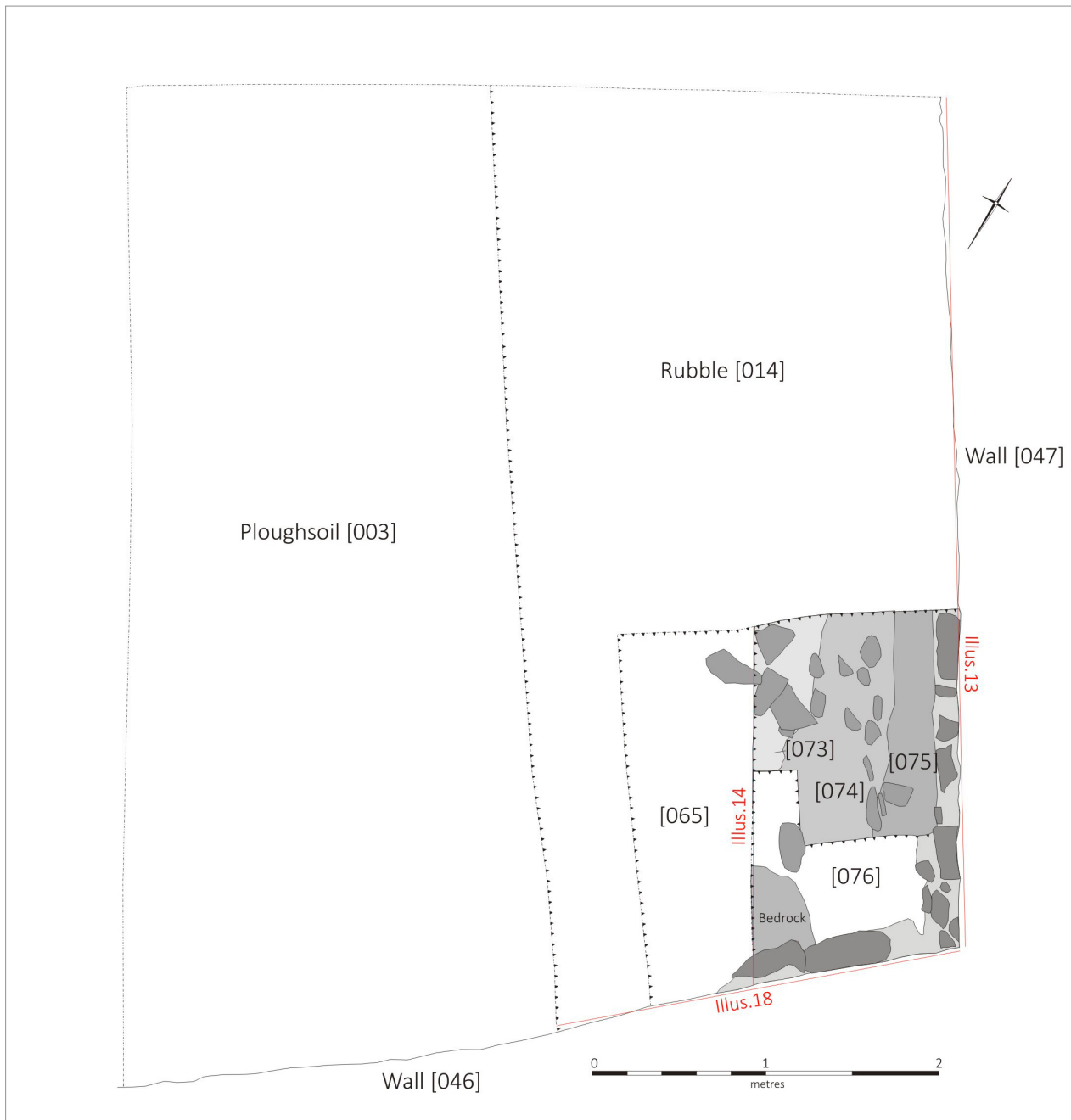


Illus 11 Area of Trench 1 pre-excavation showing junction of Inner and Outer Bailey walls from the north

Overlying this buried soil horizon were the foundations of the walls of the castle (Illus 13, 14, 16, 17, and 18). The earliest wall was that of the Outer Bailey, C047, that formed the western side of the trench. No cut or foundation trench for the wall was apparent within the trench the walls sitting directly over the subsoil mentioned above, although given the limited area of foundation that was exposed the presence of such a cut cannot be entirely discounted. Wall C047, forming the north side of the Inner Bailey, abutted wall C046 and was thus later. In no part of the trench were either of these walls observed to be founded on or built directly onto natural bedrock, although attempts may have been made by the builders to achieve this aim. In the absence of contact with the bedrock the builders had stepped out or offset the walls along their basal courses to give added support to the walls with both walls having offset scarcements dividing the vertical internal wall faces

(here surviving up to 1.6m high) from a roughly battered foundation (of approximately 450mm high). The walls were constructed from a mixture of undressed schistose rubble blocks (including slabs with faces up to 800 x 200mm) laid in informal level courses. The walls retain extensive evidence of lime-bonding. As both walls C046 and C047 lay over the same deposits and were also sealed by the same deposits, it might be inferred that the construction of the earlier wall was followed closely by the later wall, with no deposits between suggesting there was not a great time gap between their respective constructions.

The outer face of the Inner Bailey wall was coated in a firm mortar render which survived in height up to 1.5m above the wall footings at the western end of the wall, where it abutted wall C047. The render had been preserved and protected by the later deposits that had built up against the wall face. Above this, where the wall had been exposed



Illus 12 Trench 1 plan

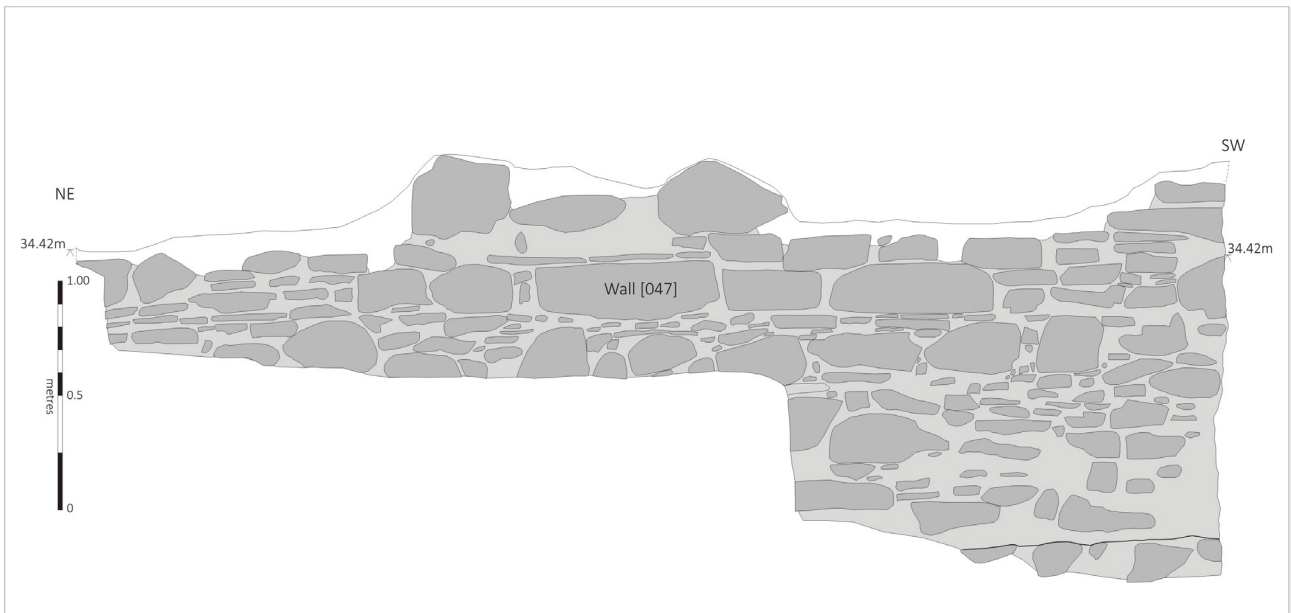
to weathering and the affects of plant growth, there was no evidence of any render or indeed any mortar pointing along the wall face.

Overlying the wall footings was a deposit of loose mortar, C075, that probably relates to the construction of the wall. Above this mortar deposit was a series of occupation deposits (C074, C073, C065, C064, and C023) that appear to represent a mixture of midden and levelling dumps, the latter possibly also utilised as floors or surfaces.

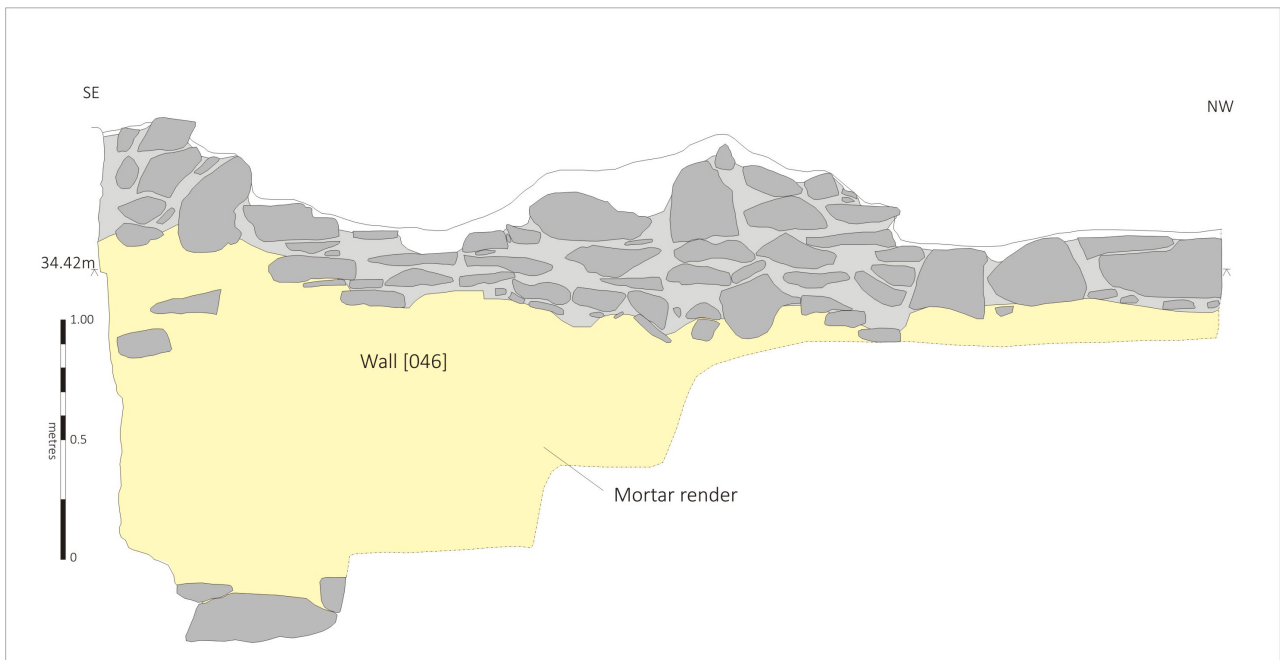
The presence of possible surfaces suggests that

this area lying against the west wall of the Outer Bailey may have contained structures although, beyond possible floor surfaces no firm evidence of structural footings for buildings were seen within the excavated area.

The earliest of these, C074, was a mixture of mortar and sand that also contained some horizontally lain stones that sloped down to the southwest, possibly indicating the presence of a runoff or drainage channel. Over C074 was a patchy layer of sandy mortar, C065, this is suggestive of



Illus 13 Trench 1 wall C047 elevation



Illus 14 Trench 1 wall C046 elevation



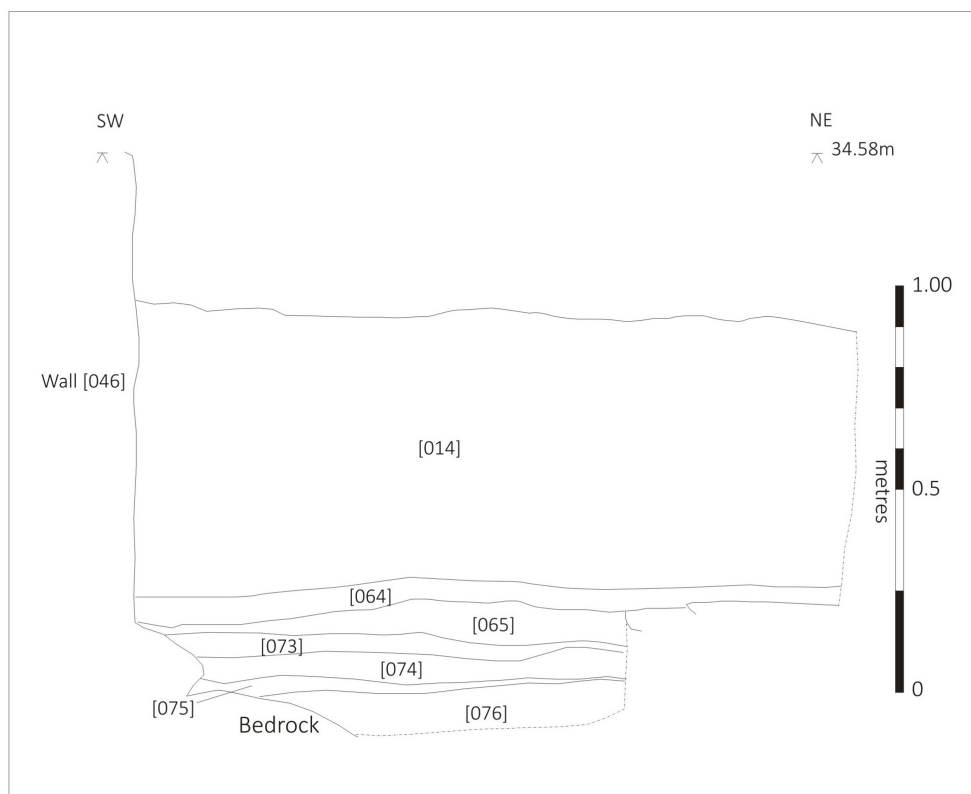
Illus 15 Trench 1 wall C047 from southwest



Illus 16 Trench 1 wall C046 from north



Illus 17 Trench 1 wall C046 abutting wall C047 from northwest



Illus 18 Trench 1 northwest facing section



Illus 19 Trench 1 deposit C076 with burning, below deposits C075, C074, C073, and C065



Illus 20 Trench1 floor/occupation deposits from above north

mixed floor repair/make up and midden material containing animal bone, pottery, charcoal, and some iron nails along with carbonised hazel and oak. When excavating this deposit, we came across surviving wood fragments and, as with deposit C076 mentioned above, given the potential fragility of this material and that the excavation budget had no contingency for dealing with preserved wood, excavation of this deposit was stopped after samples were taken.

Deposit C065 was in turn sealed by a red/yellow sandy deposit, C064, again suggestive of a floor or floor make up. The uppermost of these deposits, C023, produced animal bone, some slag, and medieval pottery (dating to the 15th–16th century), these, along with its dark colour and organic nature, suggested this was a midden accumulation. The animal bone fragments appear to be large and may be the remains of primary butchery. The layer was also very sandy in content and contained fragments of mortar, which might suggest that the walls of the

castle were either beginning to degrade or that they might have begun to be dismantled.

Above this was an extensive deposit of wall collapse/demolition, C014. This rubble deposit was up to 0.50m deep across the trench and contained some substantial masonry blocks surrounded by degraded mortar. Numerous voids between the rubble blocks suggested that this deposit formed relatively rapidly. Apart from the rubble and mortar content this deposit was relatively sterile of finds, the exception being a large fragment of slag.

Sealing the rubble dump was a dark grey soil, C003, that contained a mixture of post medieval finds throughout, although some medieval pottery sherds were also recovered. This soil has been interpreted as an agricultural/horticultural soil. A band of rubble, C008, also lay along the outer wall of the Inner Bailey. This appears to have formed at the same time as the agricultural soil was being worked.



Illus 21 Trench 1 top of rubble deposit C014 exposed in eastern side of area from the southwest

5.2 Area C

The upstanding wall remains within Trench 1 suggested that wall C047 of the Outer Bailey was earlier than the abutting wall of the Inner Bailey, C046. In order to see if this relationship still held good at their southern junction, topsoil was stripped in a small area in Area C. This revealed that wall C045 did indeed abut wall C047 and was thus later (Illus 22).

5.3 Trench 2

This trench was located in the western part of the northeast range of the Inner Bailey which also contained a series of earthworks indicative of wall lines representing three rooms or bays (Illus 23). The trench was designed to examine the last use/

occupation of the range while also investigating the presence and preservation of medieval use.

Trench 2 was primarily excavated down to the top of an extensive rubble deposit across the whole of the trench. It quickly became apparent that the earthworks, suggestive of walls, belonged to a building inserted within this wing of the Inner Bailey. The two 'rooms' of this building revealed in the trench were excavated down to their upper floor levels, as was an area to the south of the western room. Two areas, Area D and Area E, were then selected for deeper excavation in order to assess the earlier deposits within the castle (Illus 24).

5.3.1 Medieval Occupation

Excavation revealed internal wall faces on three sides of the Inner Bailey northeast range the walls



Illus 22 Area C internal face of wall C046 abutting wall C047 from the southwest



Illus 23 Northeast range of Inner Bailey pre-excavation from northwest



Illus 24 Trench 2 and Area A exposed deposits from above in prior to backfilling (©Tarbert Castle Trust)



Illus 25 Trench 2 plan of medieval deposits

all similar in character and bonded to one another with alternately bonded long stone slabs – clearly suggesting contemporaneity – although the relationship between these features and the adjacent cross-wall at the north angle was obscured by the remains of an oven-like masonry feature surviving in the north corner of the range.

In both Area D and Area E natural bedrock was exposed and above this were medieval occupation sequences (Illus 25).

5.3.2 Area D

Area D was located against the south wall of the northern range of the Inner Bailey around what appeared to be an opening or doorway through wall C044 connecting this range with the courtyard

of the Inner Bailey (Illus 26 and 30).

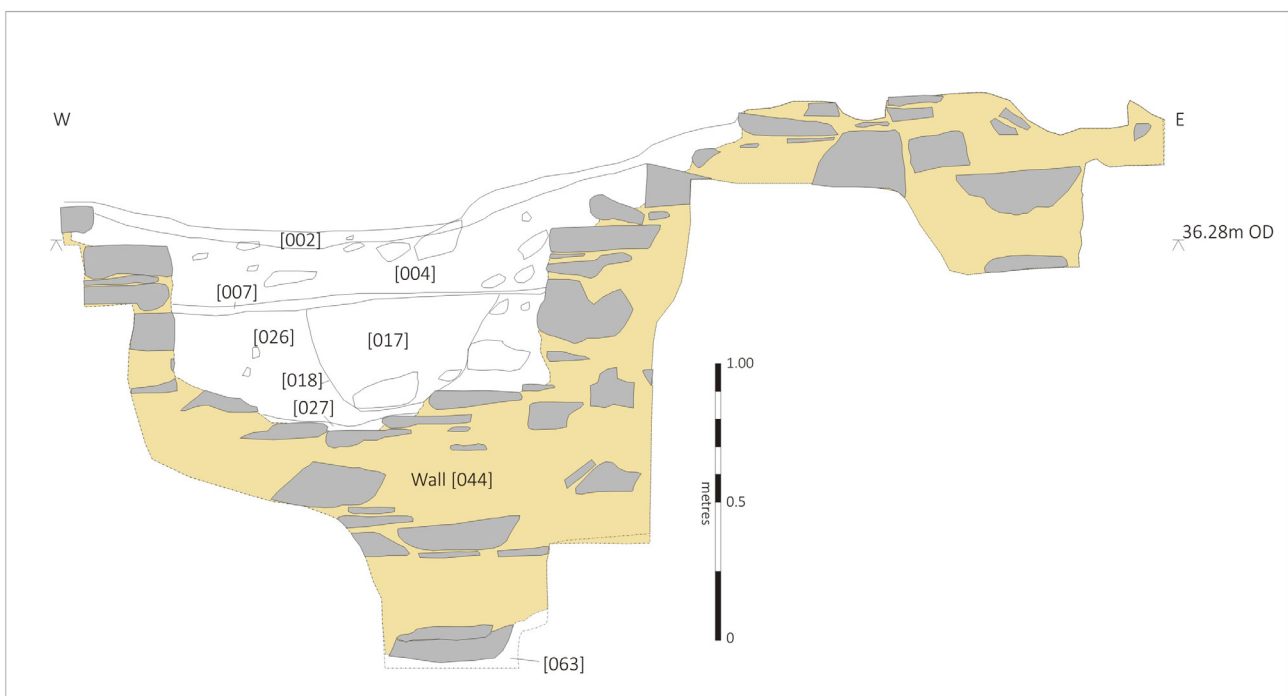
Within Area D, bedrock was encountered at a height of 34.98m OD, or 1.70m below the present ground surface, this appearing to be a ridge sloping off sharply to the east. Bedrock was sealed by a deposit of dark grey humic soil, C063, this deposit also containing birch charcoal, which suggested pre-castle activity in this part of the site and a fragment of this produced a date of 677–877 calAD (BP 1246 ±24 95% probability SUERC-96577). Constructed directly over this and natural bedrock was the southern wall of the Inner Bailey, C044. Only a small area of the wall footing was exposed in Area D, although it was built directly onto natural bedrock on the western side and stepped down to the east.

As with wall C046 in Trench 1, where the builders did not make contact with bedrock, the wall footings were wider or were offset at the basal course to the rest of the wall above. The wall in the trench stood up to 1.70m high and was bonded and coated with a firm cream/off-white coloured mortar. The wall also contained an opening, most likely a door, being 1.35m (4ft) wide. The base or threshold of this opening was 0.95m above the base of the wall below, however only 0.32m above the basal internal floor C035, indicating the opening function as a door rather than window opening.

The mortar coating the wall was similar to, if not the same as, the compact mortar deposit, C035, which also appeared to have been utilised as the primary floor surface of the castle in this area. This deposit dropped off steeply to the east and north away from both the wall and the underlying natural bedrock. This 'slumping', which was recorded as C032, appears to have been caused by the floor lying directly over soft underlying soils, rather than directly onto bedrock where the sealing deposits had little or no evidence of slumping. Above this surface was a light brown sandy gravel, C034, possibly a floor make-up, although this also contained pottery and bone and charcoal (alder, birch, hazel, and oak) suggesting some mixing with midden material which

was likely trampled into this probable floor surface. A fragment of birch from this deposit returned a date of 1299–1398 calAD (BP 622 ± 24 95% probability SUERC-96572). Above this was a more extensive deposit, or dump of stones and gravel, C033, that may have been deposited to counteract the effects of slumping and providing a rough surface in this area.

This rough surface had in turn slumped and filling the subsequent dip was a midden deposit, C027. The deposit contained over 30 metal artefacts, the presence of these perhaps suggesting they had been collected as scrap and for recycling, however these also included a cauldron or pan, a flesh hook, a knife, and possible spoon suggesting perhaps cooking/food preparation. The deposit also contained a large concentration of shells mainly edible periwinkles (*Littorina littorea*) with lesser numbers of limpets, suggesting these had also been selected and used for a specific purpose before disposal. The animal bone from this deposit (mainly cattle) suggests the dumping of table waste and/or consumption. The deposit also contained slag from metalworking, possibly indicating this process being undertaken in the immediate vicinity. Sealing this midden material in Area D was an extensive deposit of rubble and mortar, C026, which like the rubble deposit in Trench 1 contained voids, perhaps again suggesting rapid collapse/demolition.



Illus 26 Trench 2 Area D northwest facing section



Illus 27 Trench 2 Area D east facing section



Illus 28 Trench 2 Area D east facing section from southeast



Illus 29 Trench 2 Area D slumped floor deposit C033 from southeast above



Illus 30 Trench 2 Area D doorway within wall C044 from north (photograph by Mark Thacker)



Illus 31 Trench 2 Area E footings of wall C046 built over bedrock from southwest

5.3.3 Area E

This was located in the northwest of Trench 2 where bedrock was encountered within the western half of the excavated area, this lying at a height of 36.42m OD or 0.80m below the present ground surface (Illus 25 and 36). This appeared to represent the top of a ridge crossing the area from southwest to northeast and dropping off to the east and west. A small section of the footings of the northern Inner Bailey wall of the C046 was revealed at the northwest of the area and these were built directly onto the bedrock ridge, with no intervening deposits.

The upper extent of the internal junction of walls C045 and C046 suggested that wall C045 abutted wall C046 although this was not clearly established, the presence of the upstanding oven in this part of the trench preventing further investigation of this relationship. To the west of the bedrock ridge was a deposit of gravelly sand and stones, C071, that appeared to be a levelling deposit, perhaps flattening out the natural undulations caused by the sloping bedrock ridge in this area. Some horizontally lying stones were also seen at the top of this deposit,

which suggests the use of this levelling deposit as a surface. This deposit was not excavated. Lying over this at the east of the area and over natural bedrock was a dark grey deposit, C066, appearing to be an occupation accumulation containing bone, pottery, charcoal (alder, birch, hazel and oak), and slag.

At the junction of walls C046 and C045 at the northwest of the area it was noted that two stones had been discoloured by burning, suggesting the presence of a fireplace or fire installation, C072, in this corner of the range. Possibly associated with this feature were two thin deposits of charcoal, C069 and C067 (containing alder, birch, hazel and oak), separated by an equally thin deposit of mortar, C068. The lower charcoal deposit lay over a sandy gravel deposit similar and possibly the same as C033 in Area D, although this was not proven. Built over the upper charcoal deposit and possibly a replacement for the burnt feature was a small 'keyhole-shaped' hearth or boiler, C058 (Illus 25, 32, 35 and 37).

This feature was constructed from rubble and clay, the walls standing up to 0.63m in height. The internal walls of C058 and the clay floor, C039, were pink/red in colour, the effects of burning.



Illus 32 Trench 2 Area E from southwest with hearth area C058



Illus 33 Trench 2 Area E fire reddened stones C072 sealed by later hearth C058



Illus 34 Trench 2 Area E charcoal and mortar deposits running under wall of hearth C058



Illus 35 Trench 2 Area E hearth feature C058 from southeast

It is hard to see how this feature functioned as an oven as the internal floor was lower than the floor level around its mouth or entrance and there was no evidence of any collapsed roof within its internal space. While this might be explained by later robbing, it seems more likely this feature did not have a roof and if this feature was indeed open then it is possible this was used in the heating of a cauldron or vat, although this must remain speculation. Little evidence of any fuel was left in this feature as it appears to have been cleaned out after its last use.

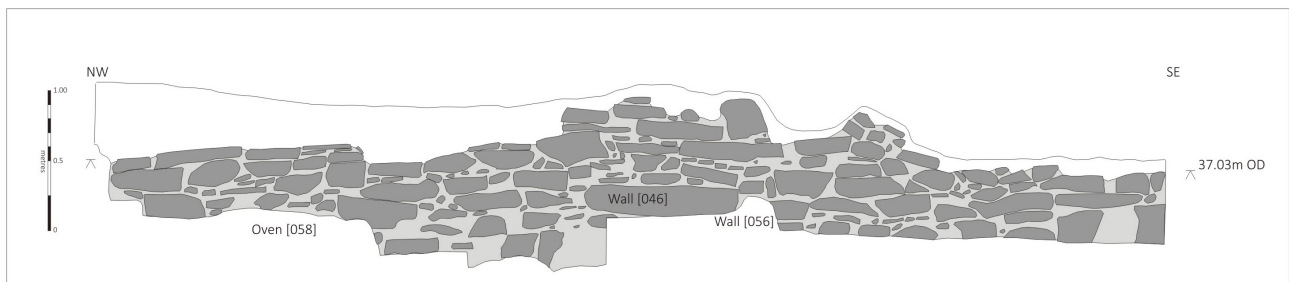
Above the floor of the hearth was a mixed deposit of grey clay, C038, that partially covered the hearth floor, but again contained little that was suggestive of its use, although the wood charcoal (birch, hazel, and oak) present perhaps represents the fuel of one of the last firings with a fragment of birch returning a date of 1282–1390 calAD (BP 622 ± 24 95% probability SUERC-96573).

Lying outside the mouth of this feature was a mixed deposit of clay and silt, C048. This contained quantities of charcoal (alder and oak) and suggests this was a trampled floor, with the charcoal representing fuel rake-out lying along the eastern outer edge of the hearth was a dark grey occupation deposit, C070, that also contained pottery and slag. Located around the upper edge of the hearth and against walls C045 and C046 was what appeared to be a deposit of midden-like material, C031, this containing pottery, bone, and slag.

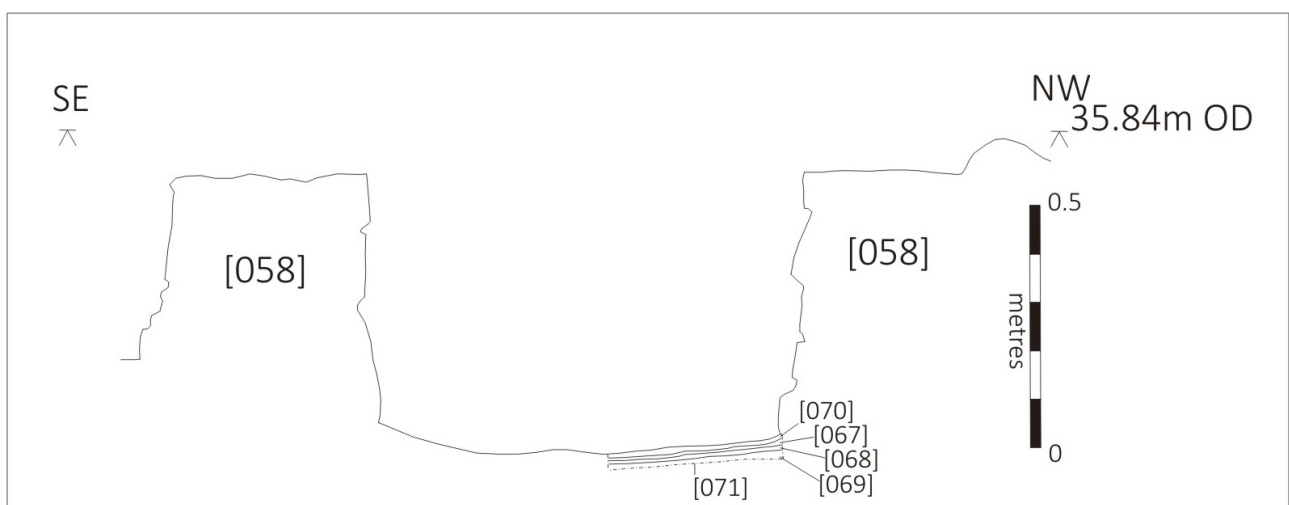
The whole of Area E was sealed by the rubble collapse or demolition of the castle walls, C030, this deposit equivalent to deposit C026 seen in Area D.

5.3.4 Later Occupation

Built directly over rubble C030/C026 was Structure 1 (Illus 39). The earliest part of Structure 1 revealed in the excavated area were walls C055 and C056,



Illus 36 Trench 2 Southwest facing elevation of wall C046



Illus 37 Trench 2 Area E profile through hearth



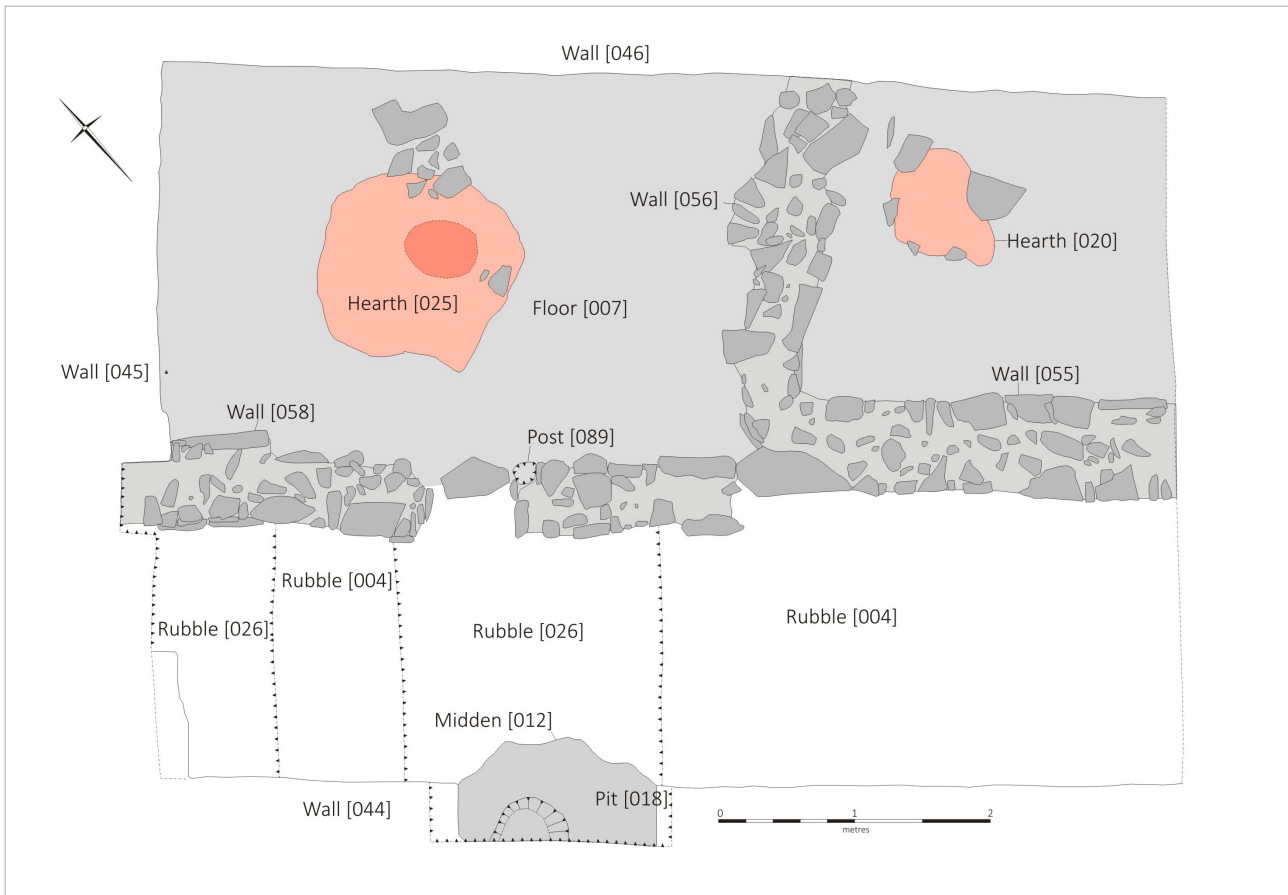
Illus 38 Trench 2 East facing cross section

which formed the western and southern walls of a room that continued beyond the excavated area to the east, with the northern wall of the Inner Bailey utilised as its northern side. The floor of the structure was very uneven, reflecting the underlying rubble, although an oval patch of fire affected clay C020 showed that this room had a hearth area. Abutting the southwest corner of this structure was wall C057 which constituted the southern wall of a northern room to this building, this again utilising the Inner Bailey wall as its northern and western sides. A gap in the wall, along with a flat threshold stone and posthole C089, indicated a doorway to the building. The wall of this building extended into what was the space of the original doorway into the castle entrance pend. Internally the floor of this western room was more even than the room to the east and perhaps some attempt had been made to level the floor area. A dark area of ash and charcoal (alder, birch, and hazel) with some scorching suggest a hearth position, C025. Retrieved from above the uneven floor of the building, C007, were five very worn/corroded coins, possibly Charles I and II two pence pieces or 'Turners'; also recovered were two knife blades, shards of bottle glass, and the upper stone of a rotary quern. Immediately south of the building threshold and situated in and around the former door/window aperture of the castle was a dark grey midden deposit, C012, sealing or contemporary with a small pit, C018, which had been cut into the underlying rubble. Metal items recovered from midden material included a possible table knife, a key, and a body fragment of a cast iron cauldron. The fill of the pit, C017, which was suggestive of cess contained some pottery fragments and animal bones, the latter perhaps food remains.

Both the internal and external areas of the building were then filled with both what appeared to be rubble from Structure 1 itself along with rubble from the original castle walls, recorded as deposits C004, C005, and C006.

5.4 Area A

As mentioned in Section 5.3.3, the upper extent of the internal junction of walls C045 and C046 suggested that wall C045 abutted C046 although this was not clearly established. To examine the



Illus 39 Trench 2 Plan of Structure 1



Illus 40 Trench 2 Structure 1 from the southeast



Illus 41 Trench 2 Structure 1 threshold stone and post hole C089 from southwest



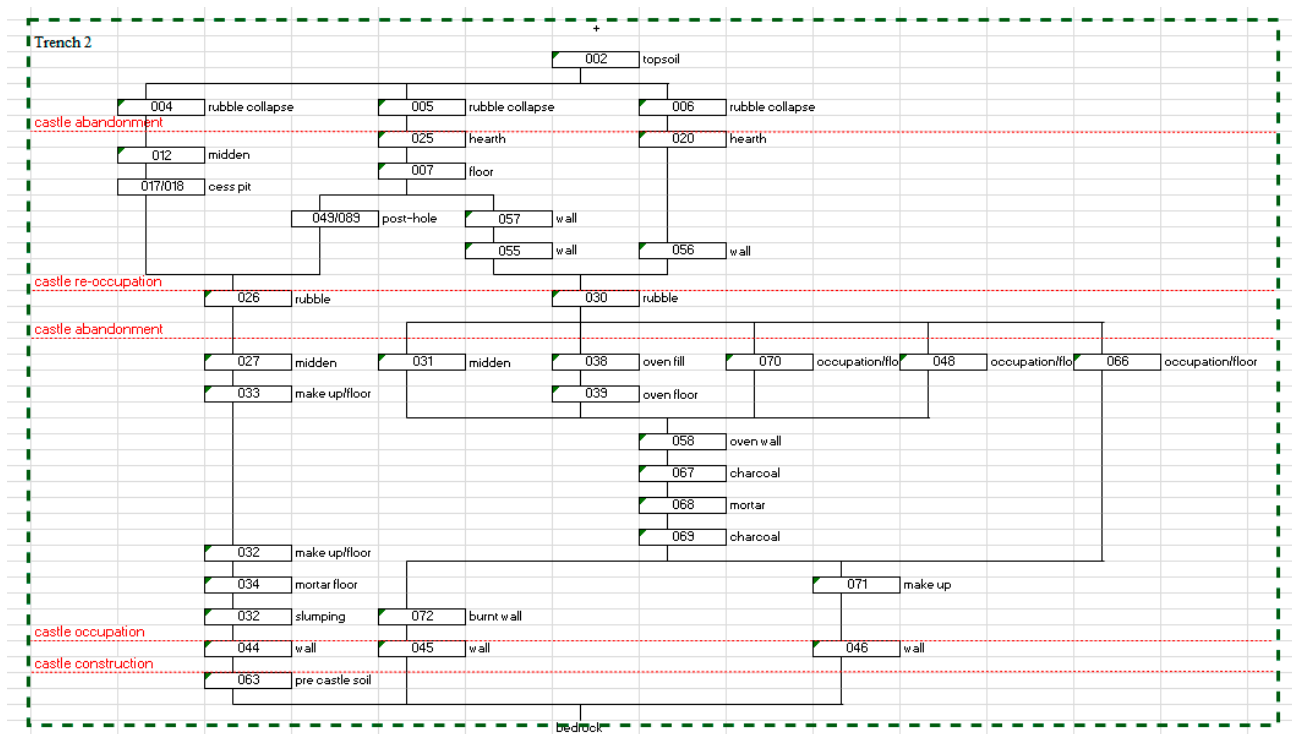
Illus 42 Trench 2 Structure 1 upper rotary quern stone in situ from northeast



Illus 43 Trench 2 Small pit C017 from north



Illus 44 Trench 2 rubble fill within Structure 1 from northeast



Illus 45 Stratigraphic Matrix of Trench 2

relationship of these walls more fully, vegetation cover was removed within Area A. Unfortunately, if anything the relationship of the walls on this side was less clear than on the inner junction. However, this small, exposed area did reveal the eastern side of the gate into the Inner Bailey (Illus 25 and 46).

This consisted of a door intake in red sandstone masonry. The red sandstone block within the internal door rebate had a curvilinear groove either carved or worn in its upper surface. If carved, then it is possible that this block was reused from an earlier building. However, it is possible that the groove comes from wear, or has been deliberately fashioned to receive a door mechanism, although what type remains unclear.

5.5 Trench 3

This trench was placed between the eastern wall of the Inner Bailey and the projecting tower situated along the southern wall of the Outer Bailey to examine whether there was a gate at this point where there was a distinct dip or 'gap' in the rubble between the tower remains and the Inner Bailey wall. This was reinforced by what appears to be a

ramp leading up from the lower ground to the south and towards this putative gap (Illus 47–49).

It became quickly apparent that the line of the Outer Bailey wall did not extend across the trench and the trench was indeed placed over a previously unrecorded southern entrance into the castle complex. The work in the trench principally involved the removal of rubble and mortar, sealing the gate remains prior to their recording.

Revealed within the gateway was a small exposure of what was likely natural bedrock at a height of 30.98m OD or 1.35m below present ground surface. Lying west and east of this possible outcropping bedrock were the remains of a substantial Outer Bailey southwestern gate, the western and eastern sides respectively recorded as C043 and C053.

Most of the facing stones on the western side of the entrance C043 had been robbed (Illus 50–4). Only at the basal level of the entrance did any facing stones of the gate survive which consisted of red-coloured dressed sandstone external reveals (square to the external wall face) with chamfered external arrises, a portcullis slot, and a doorframe intake or door-check. Internally, the wall is rubble-built and splayed, dominated by large roughly



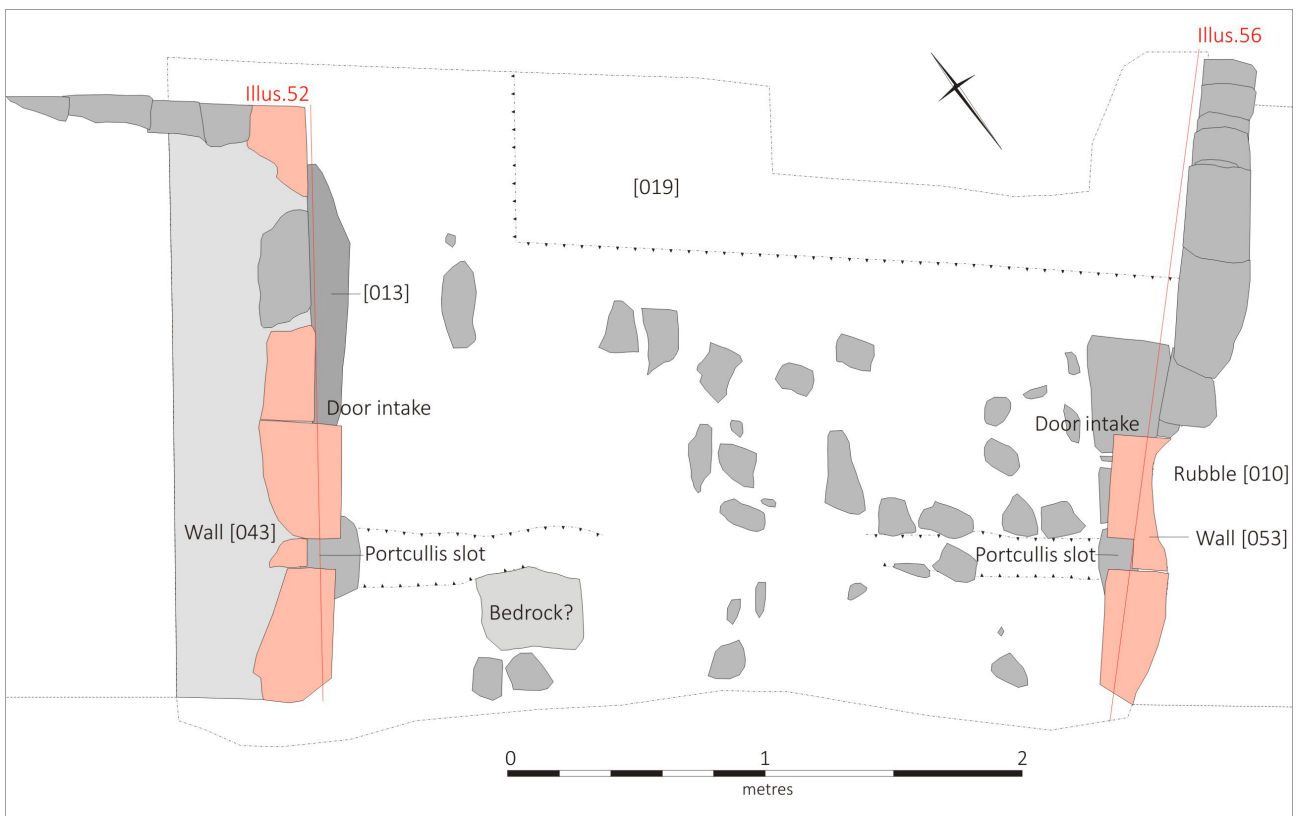
Illus 46 Area A eastern side of entrance into Inner Bailey with door intake from the southwest



Illus 47 'ramp' leading up to gap between eastern wall of the Inner Bailey and the projecting tower from the southwest



Illus 48 Rubble within 'gap' between eastern wall of the Inner Bailey and the projecting tower prior to excavation of Trench 4 from northeast above (©Tarbert Castle Trust)



Illus 49 Trench 3 plan

squared blocks and narrower slabs laid to formal courses and extending past the internal face of the curtain wall on the southeast side. A moderate concentration of red sandstone spalls was also visible in the wall core rubble close to the northwest reveal face, where extensive amounts of constructional mortar has also survived.

The western side of the gate C053 mirrored the arrangement of the eastern side of the gate with red-coloured dressed sandstone external reveals with chamfered external arrises, a portcullis slot, and a doorframe intake or door-check.

Although badly robbed, part of the wall face of the gateway survived above the basal course on the western side of the gate, here the wall standing up to 1.90m in height. Attached to this surviving masonry face was a red sandstone block which may be a surviving springer-stone for an arch, its base 1.70m above the upper surface of the entrance (Illus 47–50). It was also apparent that the wall of the western side of the gate continued north beyond

the edge of excavation and therefore exceeded the 2.3m width of the wall forming the eastern opposing gates. What this represented is unclear, possibilities being a gatehouse structure controlling access to the Inner Bailey gate, or perhaps the base of steps giving access to a portcullis chamber above the gate.

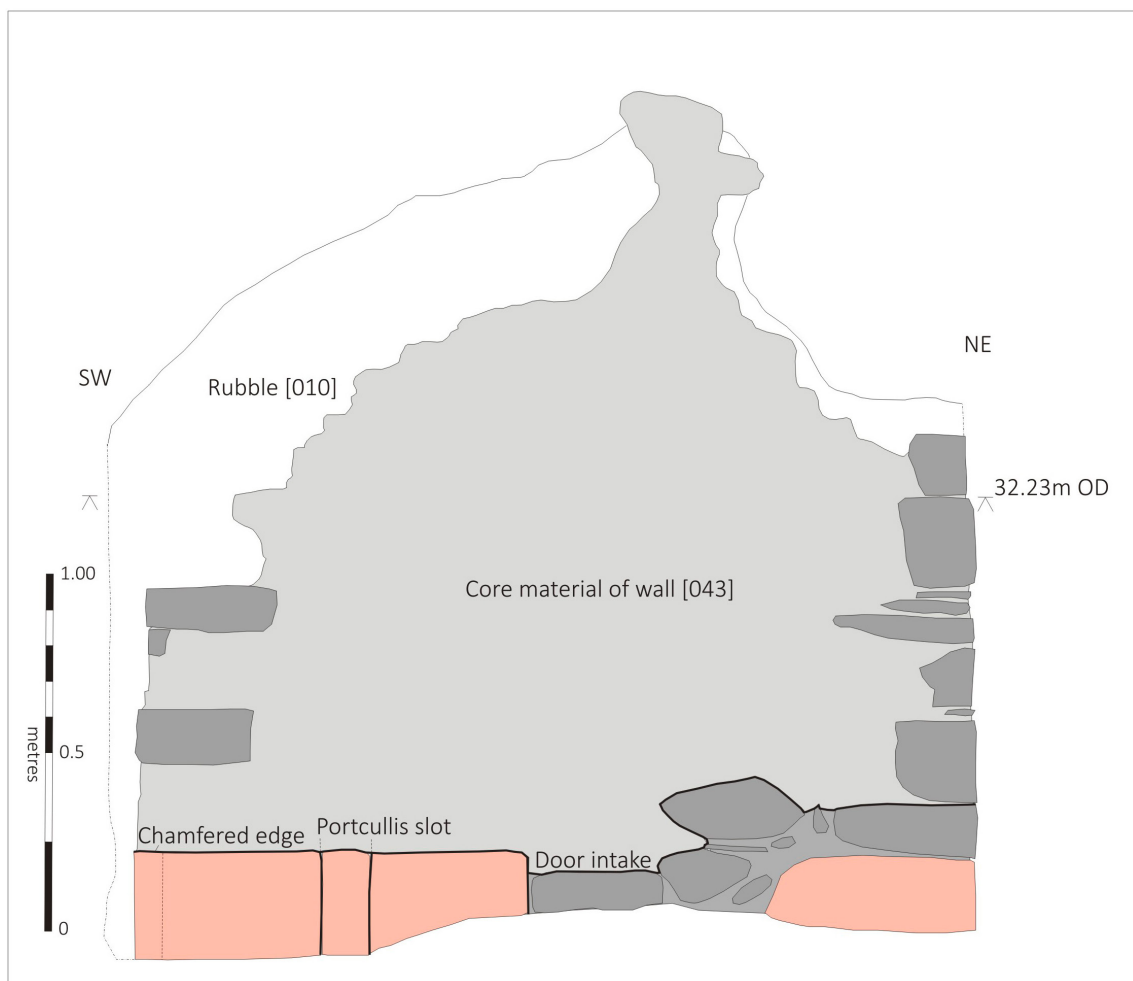
On its southern, outer extent, the entrance gap was 3m wide as was the gap between the two portcullis slots. However, the entrance widens to the north of the opposed door intakes, to 3.30m and from here both eastern and western sides to the gateway splay out to 3.50m on the northern side of the gate. Between the walls forming the sides of the gate were the remnants of a worn channel running between the portcullis slots. The channel ran through sequential layers of mortar and clay that likely represent the upper surfaces or make-up for surfaces within the entranceway. It is possible the area had been paved, with only a few surviving horizontal stones suggestive of this, the rest possibly robbed. The surfaces within the entranceway



Illus 50 Trench 3 gateway from northeast above



Illus 51 Trench 3 western side of gate from northeast



Illus 52 Trench 3 elevation of western side of gate



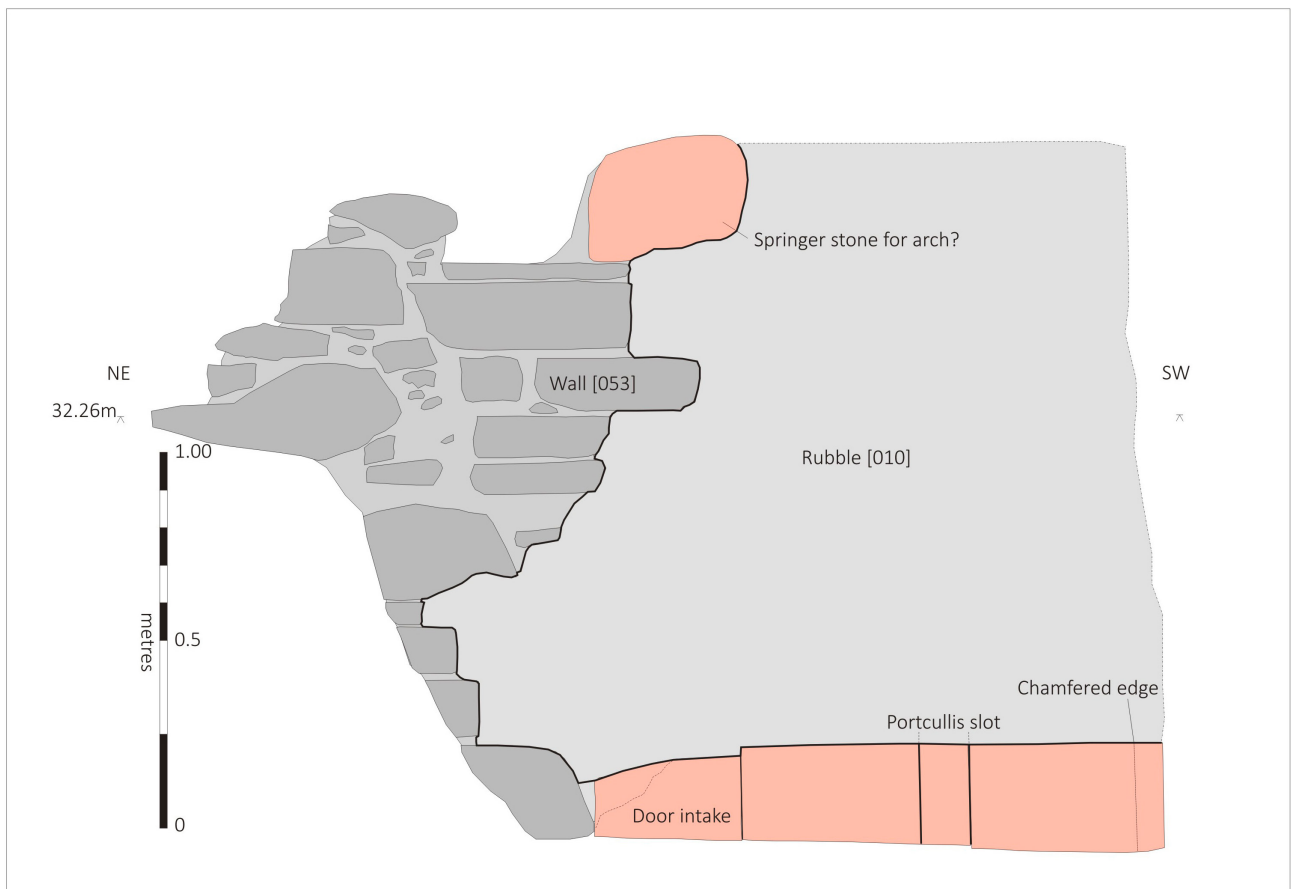
Illus 53 Trench 3 portcullis slot and door intake at western side of gate from northeast above



Illus 54 Trench 3 portcullis slot at western side of gate from northwest



Illus 55 Trench 3 eastern side of gateway from southwest



Illus 56 Trench 3 elevation of eastern side of gate



Illus 57 Trench 3 eastern gateway from northeast above



Illus 58 Trench 3 portcullis slot in eastern side of gateway from the northwest

remained unexcavated, apart from darker deposit C013 located along the base of the western gate, which produced some pottery, bone, and slag.

Most of the facing stones on both sides of the gate have been extensively robbed and the trampled mortar deposit C019 that lay in the entranceway may represent detritus from this systematic robbing. However, at some time the remnants of any upstanding gate superstructure must have collapsed into the gateway, creating the extensive rubble deposit C010. That this happened rapidly is suggested by numerous voids seen within much of the lower rubble. That demolition and robbing of the castle structure continued is suggested by the mixture of post medieval material from the upper extent of the rubble.

5.6 Area B

To examine the relationships of the walls, topsoil was removed from the external junction of walls C050/C053 and C051 within Area B. This revealed

that wall C051 was a later addition to the corner of walls C050/C053.

Previously this relationship had been misinterpreted, with the corner of wall C050/C053 being described as a later addition to wall C051. However, as can be seen from Illus 59 above C050/C053 is the more substantially built wall, although for the most part having lost most of its larger quoin blocks from robbing.

5.7 Trench 4

This trench was placed around the remains of the southwest tower of the Outer Bailey to examine the nature and preservation of the tower and establish the presence/absence of an entrance gate as suggested by earlier surveys.

Initial investigation in this area led to the decision not to fully excavate the area as proposed in the project design, but rather to expose smaller targeted areas to better understand the tower remains (Areas F–I, Illus 61).



Illus 59 Area B junction of walls C050/C053 and C051 from northeast

5.7.1 Area F

In Area F the external face of the southeast corner of the tower C042 was exposed. The area was excavated down to the basal course of the foundation of the wall (Illus 63–65). The wall survived to 1.9m in height, with the core of the wall to the north standing 0.9m higher, and was constructed to a batter of approximately 1:10, the wall face was tightly built in well-bonded rough courses of large narrow schistose slabs up to 1.15 x 0.21m. No protruding foundation plinth is apparent at the base of this wall, although the adjacent external face of wall does display a low battered plinth. The wall face was traced for a length of 4.3m from the southeast corner of the tower. No foundation trench was apparent, and the wall appears to have been founded on natural glacial till, although some extra support was added on the corner of the wall where the wall stepped out to the east. The wall face had some traces of a sandy mortar render although for the most part this appeared to have degraded from the surface.

The basal courses of the wall were then sealed by a deposit of clayey silt, C085, this was very similar to

the glacial till below the wall foundation and possibly represents redeposited soil protecting the foot of the wall after its construction. This deposit sloped away from the wall to the south and may have formed a bank along the outer face of the wall. Sealing this was an extensive deposit of rubble, C037, the upper extent producing a quantity of post medieval artefacts.

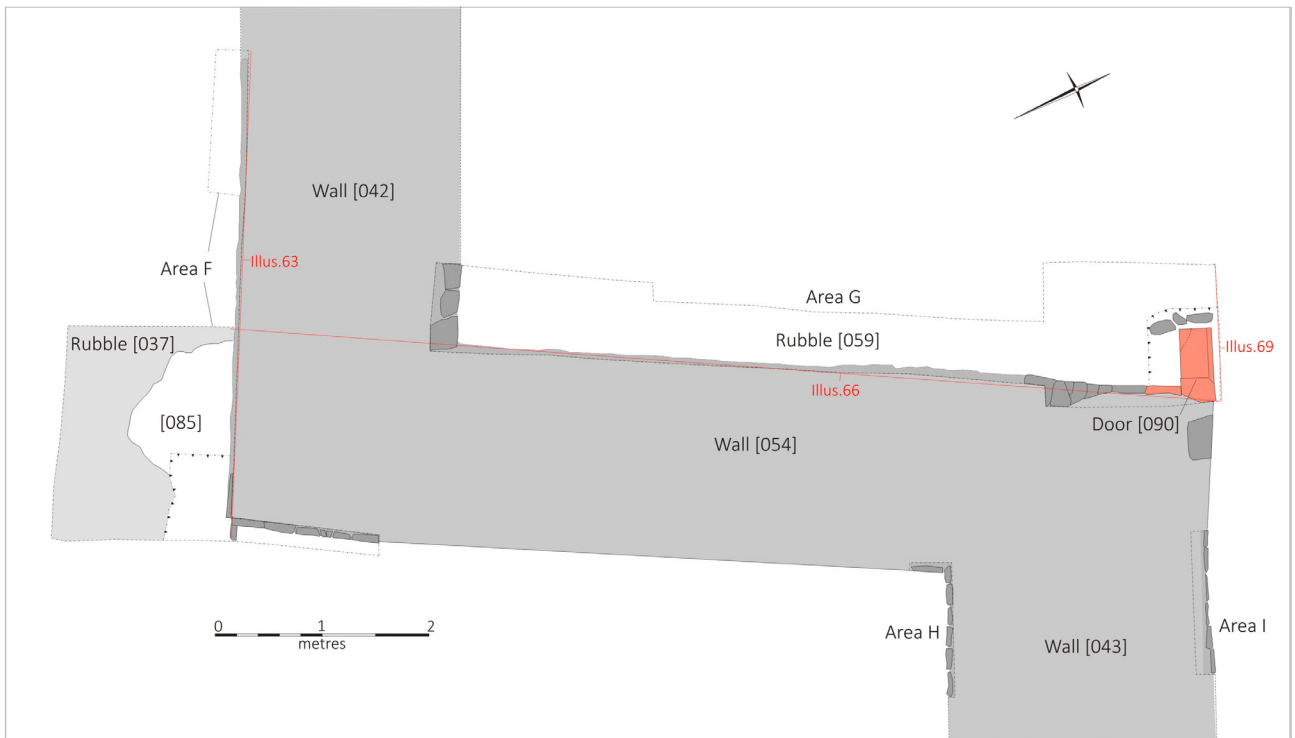
5.7.2 Area G

Area G investigated the internal arrangement of the tower, showing that the tower wall C054 was continuous along its eastern side, being 7.1m long internally with no evidence of an entrance on this side (Illus 66–69).

The wall stood up to 2.3m in height in the excavated area, the wall faces having been neatly constructed using smaller mica-schist slabs than used on the outer face. Traces of mortar render were apparent along most of the exposed wall face but best preserved at a lower level down where it had been protected from weathering and root damage. The tower wall had been badly robbed at the junction between the tower wall, C054, and



Illus 60 Remains of southwest tower (beside the telegraph pole) and Outer Bailey wall from the southeast



Illus 61 Trench 4 plan



Illus 62 Trench 4 from east above (©Tarbert Castle Trust)



Illus 63 Trench 4 Area F elevation of external face of tower wall C042



Illus 64 Trench 4 Area F southeast corner of tower wall C042 from southwest



Illus 65 Trench 4 Area F deposit 085 and rubble C037 against wall C042 from east

the Outer Bailey wall, C043. Despite this robbing activity, the remains of the eastern side of an entrance or doorway, C090, survived this framed by dressed red sandstone blocks with chamfered external arises, which gave access through what was presumably the northern wall of the tower. The remnants of the door consisted of finely dressed red sandstone blocks with the remnants of a door intake or door jamb and a threshold. Both threshold and vertical intake had chamfered outer edges. There was also evidence of a cobbled surface lying to the west and south of the threshold stone. The south facing section at the northern end of the excavated area was different from the adjacent west facing section, the difference likely explained by robbing disturbance above the eastern side of the doorway.

Sealing the doorway in the south facing section was a deposit of rubble, C062. Above this and absent from the west facing section was ash/charcoal layer C061, this sealed by a rubble and mortar deposit, C060, which had been discoloured red/pink by burning (Illus 69). Both deposits C061 and C060 suggest the burning and collapse of some of the superstructure of the tower. Sealing this burning episode was rubble and mortar deposit C059.

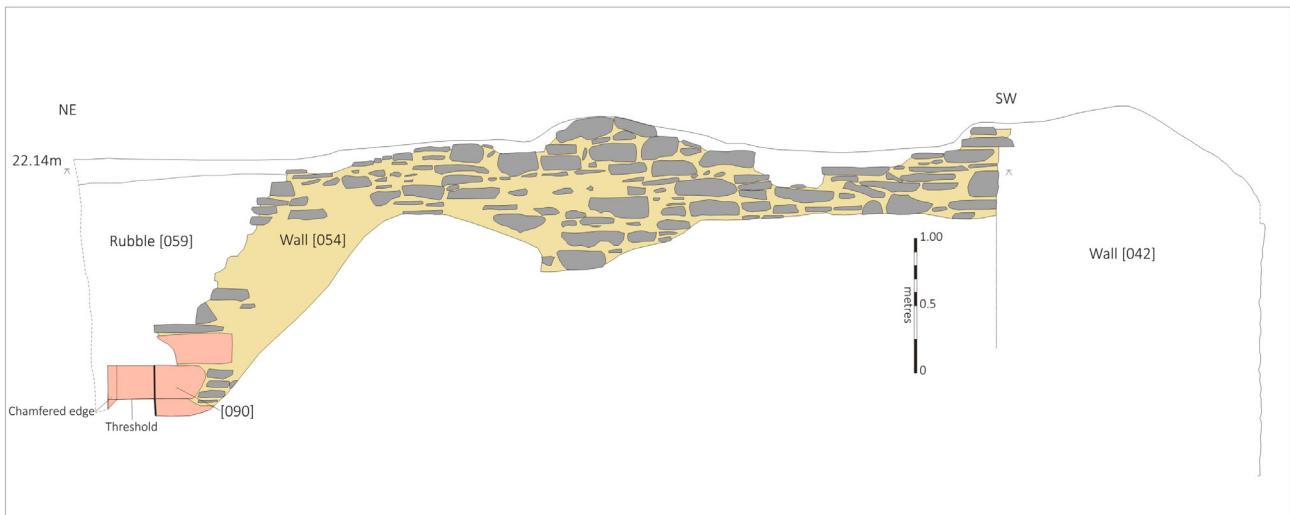
5.7.3 Areas H and I

Area H revealed the line of the wall of the Outer Enclosure, C043, while Area I revealed the junction of walls C043 and C054. Once these were established no further excavation took place in these areas.

5.8 Trench 5

This trench was placed over the remnants of a ditch system lying to the south of the Inner Bailey and berm of the castle which would examine the nature of the ditch (which was also picked up in geophysical survey) and its relationship, if any, to the castle or burgh.

The excavation quickly revealed that natural bedrock outcropped very close to the surface and lay just below the turf, C021. Because of this it was decided to limit the size of the proposed excavation area. The trench revealed that the slight linear depression which can still be seen as an earthwork was indeed a ditch or channel although very shallow in nature. The channel C029 was filled with C028 and may have functioned as a drain as it runs along a natural rock outcrop against which water still collects.



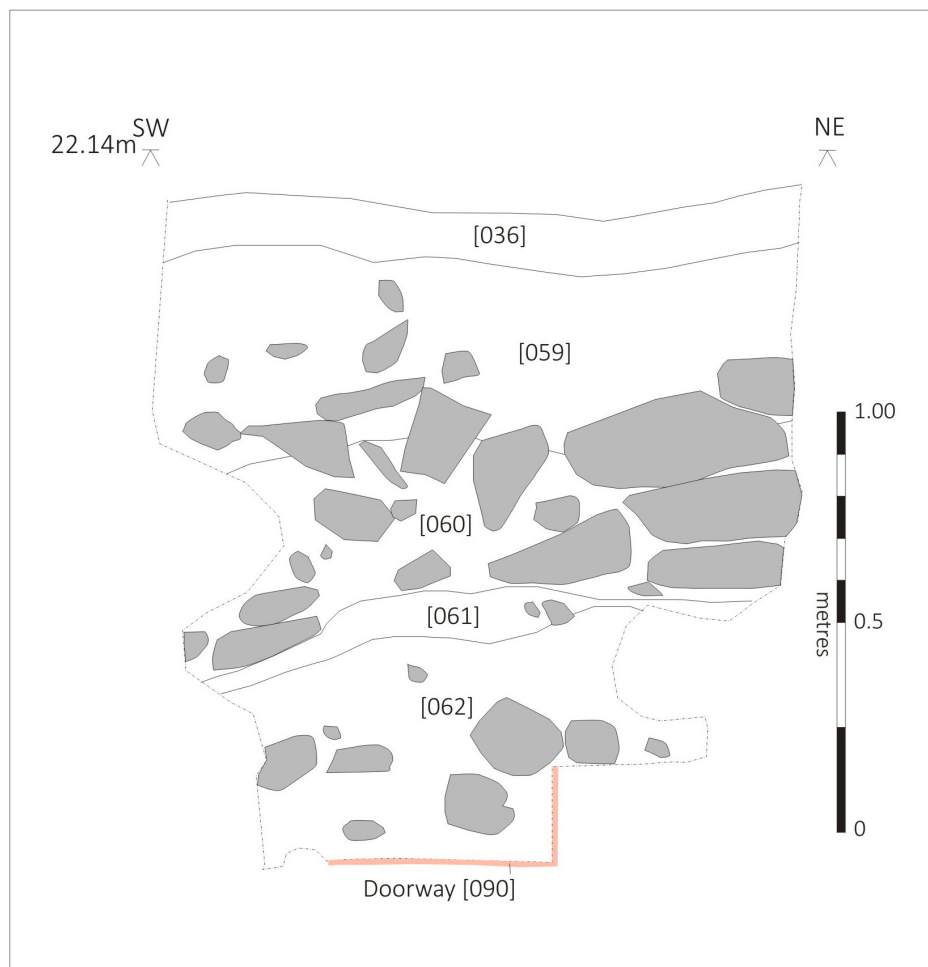
Illus 66 Trench 4 Area G internal northwest facing elevation



Illus 67 Trench 4 Area G remains of doorway C090 from northwest



Illus 68 Trench 4 Area G architectural detail of door C090 from northwest above



Illus 69 Trench 4 Area G southwest facing section



Illus 70 Trench 4 Area I Junction of walls C043 and C054 from southwest

5.9 Trench 6

This trench was placed either side of an upstanding revetment wall, C084, to examine its relationship to the medieval castle and burgh (Illus 71 and 72).

Natural bedrock was reached within the western part of the trench at a height of 23.62m OD or 1.30m below the present ground surface on the western side of the wall. Above natural bedrock was a thin spread of material, C081, that included burnt bone and charcoal, while the natural bedrock showed distinct signs of being reddened by fire, C082. It is possible that the bedrock had been burnt when it was utilised as the floor for a feature such as a kiln although no walls or superstructure were located within the excavated area.

Above this deposit was a large dump or dumps of soils C079 and C080, these both contained a relative abundance of small to medium sized, mostly angular stones. These deposits also contained medieval pottery and some very large fragments of slag, the latter likely representing the waste from smithing. The nature of these deposits

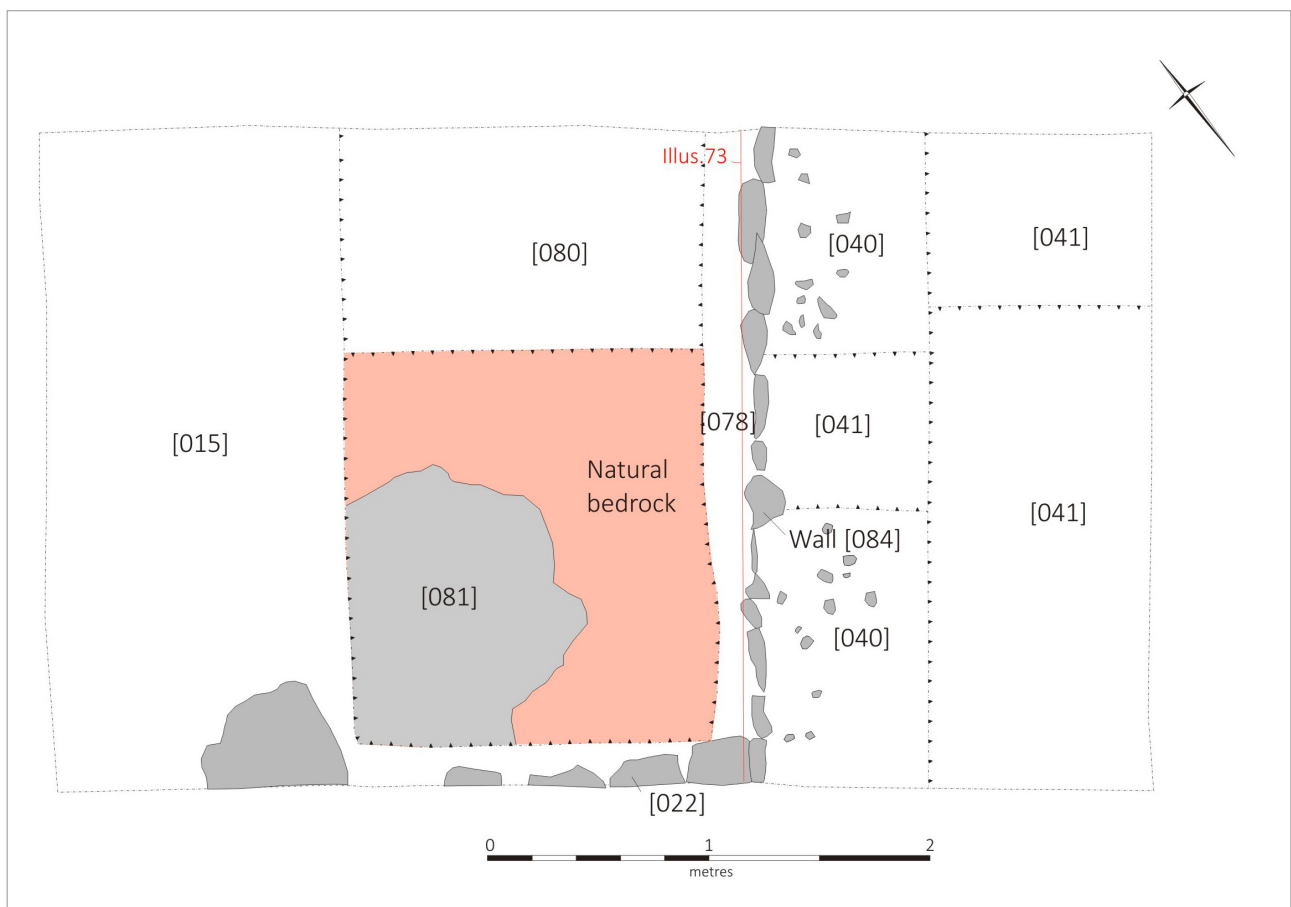
remains unclear, but they appear to be levelling deposits of medieval date and could possibly relate to a track leading up to the castle entrance, although no obvious consolidated surfaces were apparent within the make-up of these deposits so this interpretation has to remain speculative.

Above these stony deposits was a fairly uniform deposit of yellow brown silty loam, C078, containing post medieval glass and pottery. This has been interpreted as the remains of a plough soil, although one that may have collected in a natural dip over time due to weathering of soils that may have originated from the higher ground to the east.

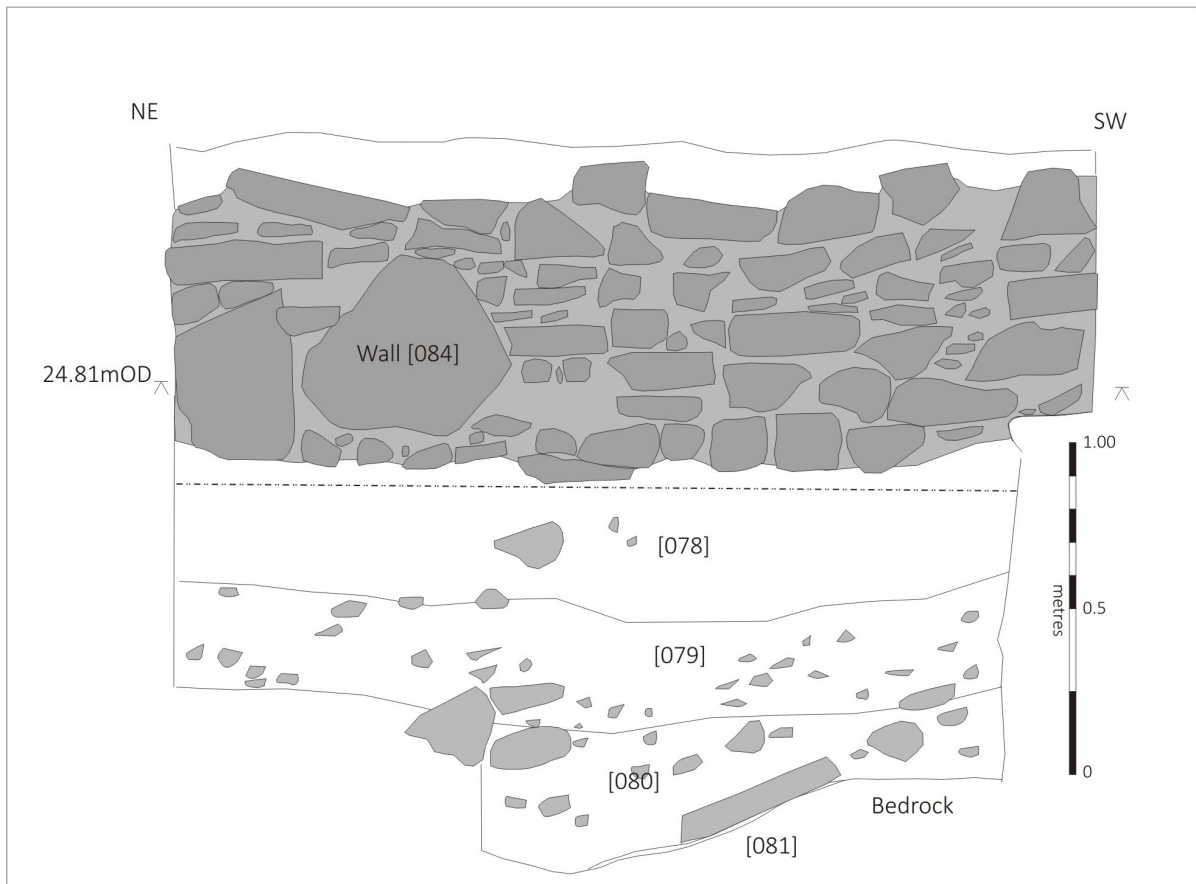
Over this soil was constructed wall C084, which must also be of post medieval date. Lying against the wall face on its western side was a heap of stones, C022, possibly deriving from field clearance, these stones in turn were sealed by deposit C015, another plough/agricultural accumulation. The nature of the revetting wall C084 is still unclear but it may have had a dual function of demarcating a property or field boundary but also constructed to counteract weathering of soil down slope.



Illus 71 Revetment wall C084 before excavation from the northwest



Illus 72 Trench 6 plan



Illus 73 Trench 6 northwest facing section



Illus 74 Trench 6 showing deposits below wall C084 from northwest

Excavation on the higher ground on the eastern side of the wall demonstrated that plough/agricultural soil, C041, had accumulated against the wall on this side, this deposit was only partially excavated. Indeed, the height of the wall may have been added to over time as suggested by a narrow band of stones/packing, C040, which coincided with the upper course of the wall, this lying over plough/horticultural soil C041. C040 in turn was then sealed by deposit C016, this another plough/agricultural accumulation.

5.10 Trench 7

This trench was placed within a relatively flat or terraced area lying to the south of the Outer Bailey and designed to investigate any potential remains relating to the putative medieval burgh (Illus 75 and 76).

Natural bedrock and glacial till lay below the present ground surface in the northeast corner of the trench. Built against/over the sloping western side of these natural deposits was rubble wall C083 which crossed the trench from northeast to southwest, beginning to turn to the south at the

southern edge of the trench. The wall stood up to 0.7m in height and was between 0.8m and 1m in width.

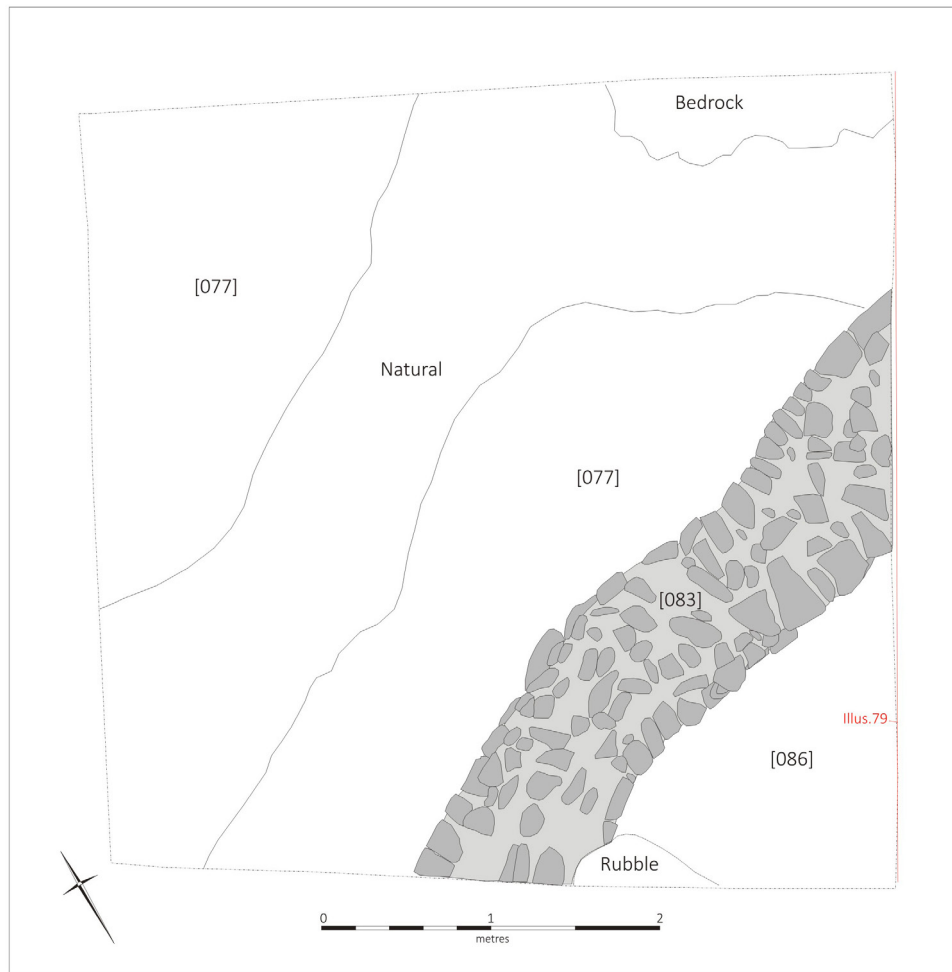
To the south of the wall was a mixed deposit of clay and stone, C086, that was only partially excavated. Given the darker colour of this deposit to the soils above and the presence of charcoal and a few sherds of pottery, this deposit likely represents floor or use deposits lying within the building.

The floor was then sealed by a mixture of rubble and red orange clay deposit, C077, over this, lying against the southern face of the wall. The northern face of the wall was sealed by subsoil deposit C088, this in turn was sealed by quite an extensive rubble deposit, C087, likely a spread of collapsed building material (Illus 79).

The rubble deposit and the rest of the trench was overlain by plough soil deposit C011 that contained pottery, glass, and fragments of clay tobacco pipe amongst mainly post medieval finds. These artefacts were generally small in size and well dispersed, suggesting midden material had been imported into these areas, which were likely field areas in the post medieval period.



Illus 75 Terraced area of Trenches 7 and 8 prior to excavation from the southwest



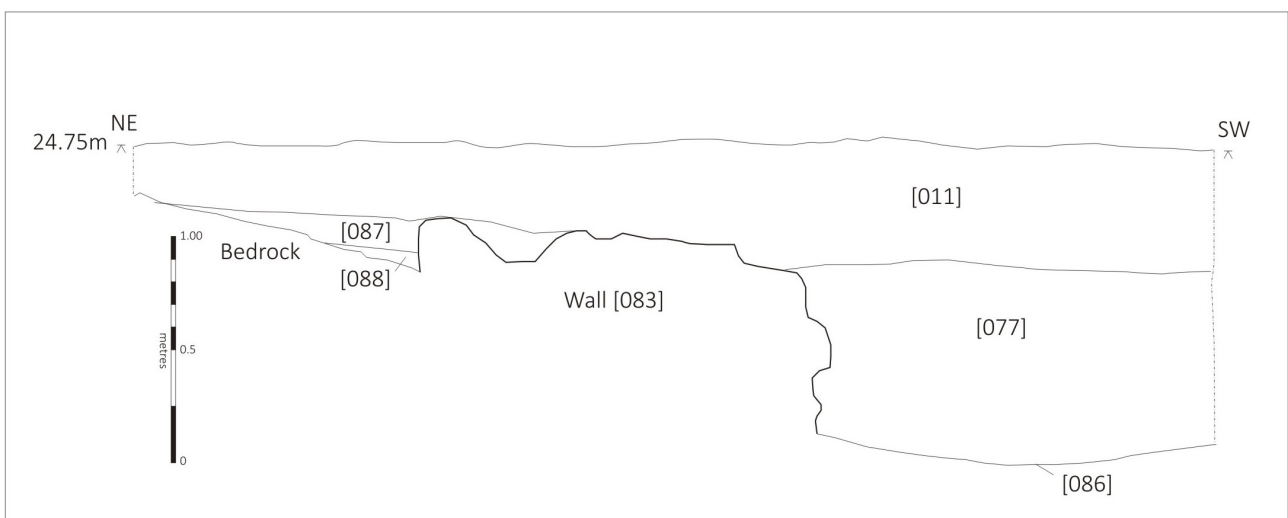
Illus 76 Trench 7 plan



Illus 77 Trench 7 and wall C083 from northeast



Illus 78 Trench 7 wall C083 with floor C086 at base of scale from west



Illus 79 Trench 7 northwest facing section



Illus 80 Trench 7 rubble spread C087 of wall C083 from southeast above

5.11 Trench 8

Like Trench 7 this trench was placed within a relatively flat or terraced area lying to the south of the Outer Bailey and designed to investigate any potential remains relating to the putative medieval burgh.

Natural glacial till was exposed along the northeast of the trench and beyond this to the west was either lower plough soil or perhaps a colluvial deposit. Cutting through both these deposits could be seen numerous plough scars. Lying above this was plough soil C024 and, like deposit C011 in Trench 7, contained mainly post medieval finds and, again like C011, some of the pottery and glass appeared to have been worn smooth by the sea, suggesting the possibility that seaweed may have been gathered from the foreshore and brought up to the fields and used as fertiliser.

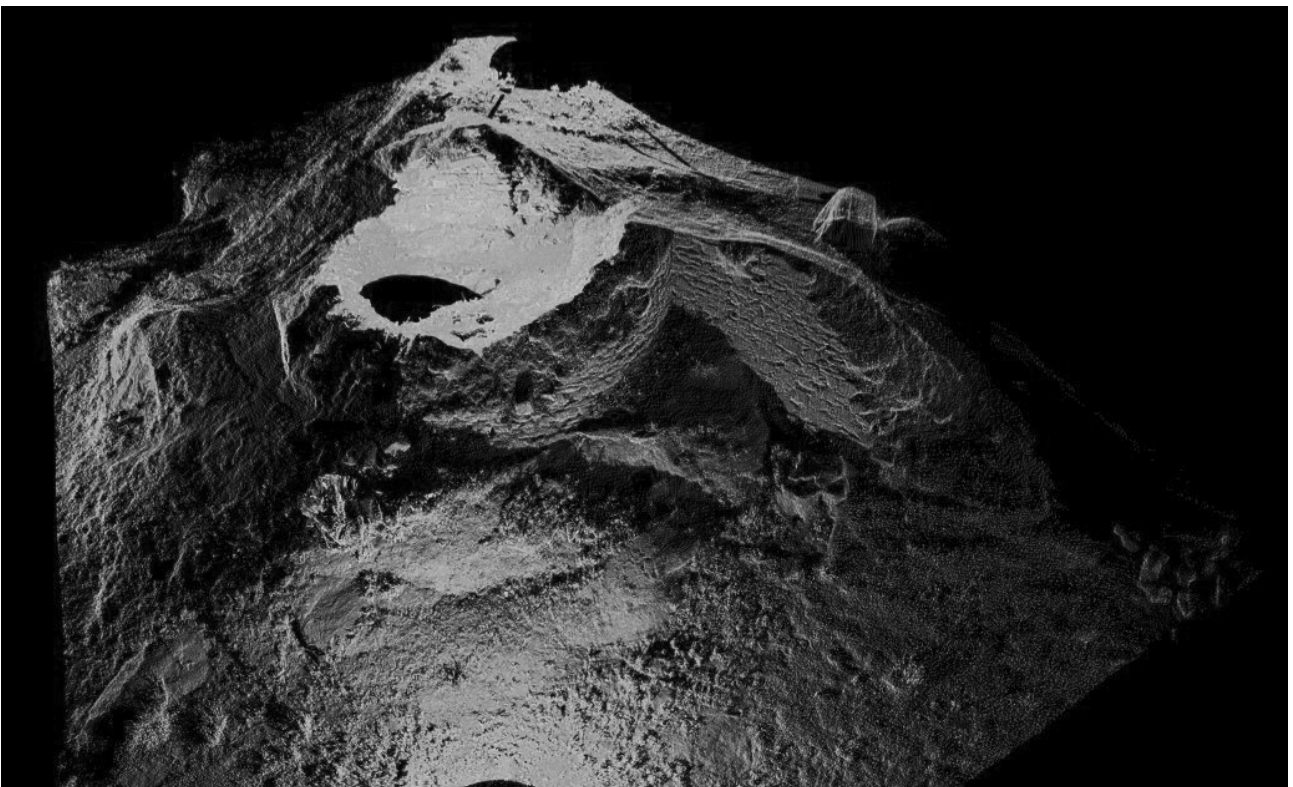
5.12 Trench 9

This trench was designed to examine a possible northern entrance into the Outer Bailey within a distinct dip in the surrounding rubble located between the two drum towers that line the northern wall of the castle. The remains of a badly robbed 3m wide portcullis gate were established although the gate was not quite centrally placed between the two towers, lying 6.9m from the western tower edge and 5.6m from the eastern tower (Illus 80–85).

Bedrock, which can be seen below the eastern drum tower, drops off in steep rounded ridges from west to east. The current ground level also falls off in a steep incline to the north. Given the natural undulating formation of the bedrock, it seems likely that the bedrock was levelled prior to the gate being constructed, as the bedrock below the eastern side of the gate was only 20mm in height above the bedrock lying below the western side of the gate.



Illus 81 'gap' between the projecting drum towers from southeast above



Illus 82 Laser scan of the eastern tower with surviving wall lying above the gate position

5.12.1 The eastern gate side C092

As mentioned above, natural bedrock was revealed lying just below the lowest course of the eastern side of the gate, which like the southern gate to the Outer Bailey, had red-coloured dressed sandstone external reveals, a portcullis slot, and a door intake. Internally, the wall is rubble-built and splayed, dominated by large roughly squared blocks and narrower slabs laid to formal courses. Thin packing/levelling stones were used to support the lowest dressed sandstone block forming the outer face of the gate. The red sandstone blocks survived in four courses standing up to 0.9m in height, the largest block measuring 0.39m x 0.30m x 0.25m. These were bonded by a hard light grey mortar. The portcullis slot lay 0.62m from the outer face, this measuring 0.13m by 0.12m. Lying 0.24m beyond the portcullis slot internally was the door intake. The upper surviving stone that formed the door intake had what appeared to be the southern edge of a carved vertical slot although any corresponding northern edge was not observed. It is possible this

slot held a vertical timber for the door surround.

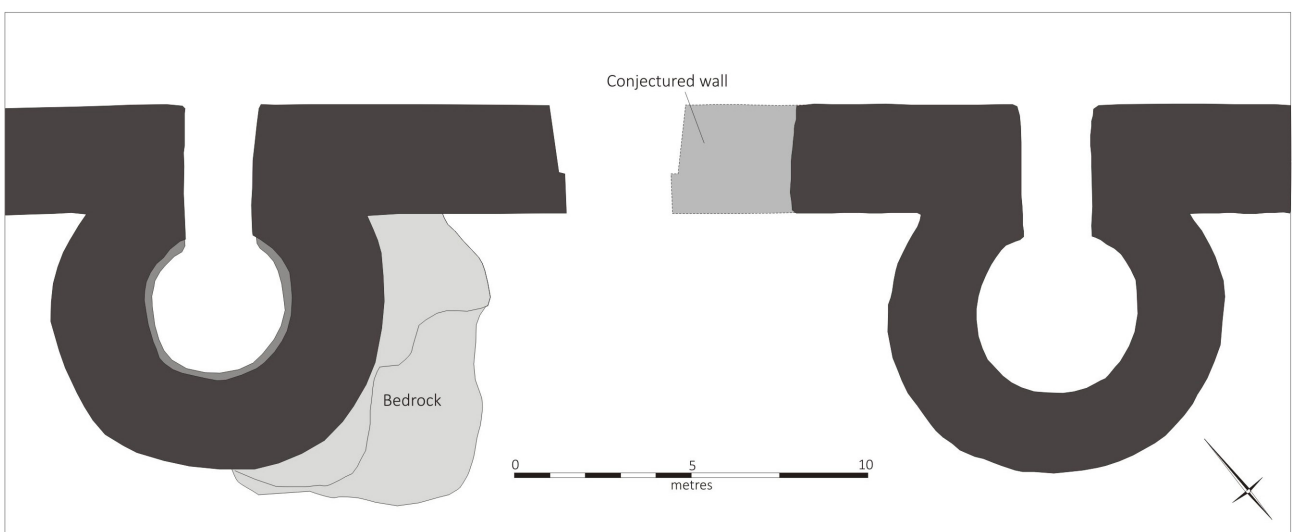
Above these red sandstone blocks, forming the door arrangement, the face stones of the entrance passage had been robbed, however above and beyond the door intake the face stones of the entrance passage survived to a height of 2.3m above the natural bedrock located on the outer face of the gate. At the northern end of these surviving face stones, some stones projected beyond the line of the inner wall face, and these also appeared to slope down from east to west. While this may have been caused by later disturbance it appears more likely these represent the basal stones of an entrance archway, while one block of red sandstone, still in situ, might be the remains of a dressed sandstone archway surround (like the stone seen on the eastern side of the southern gate). The wall forming the eastern side of the entrance passage is 3m wide which widens at its southern inner end beyond the door intake, a similar arrangement to that used in the southern gate. The wall to the east of the gate stands to a height of 5.2m (17ft) above the basal course of the gate.



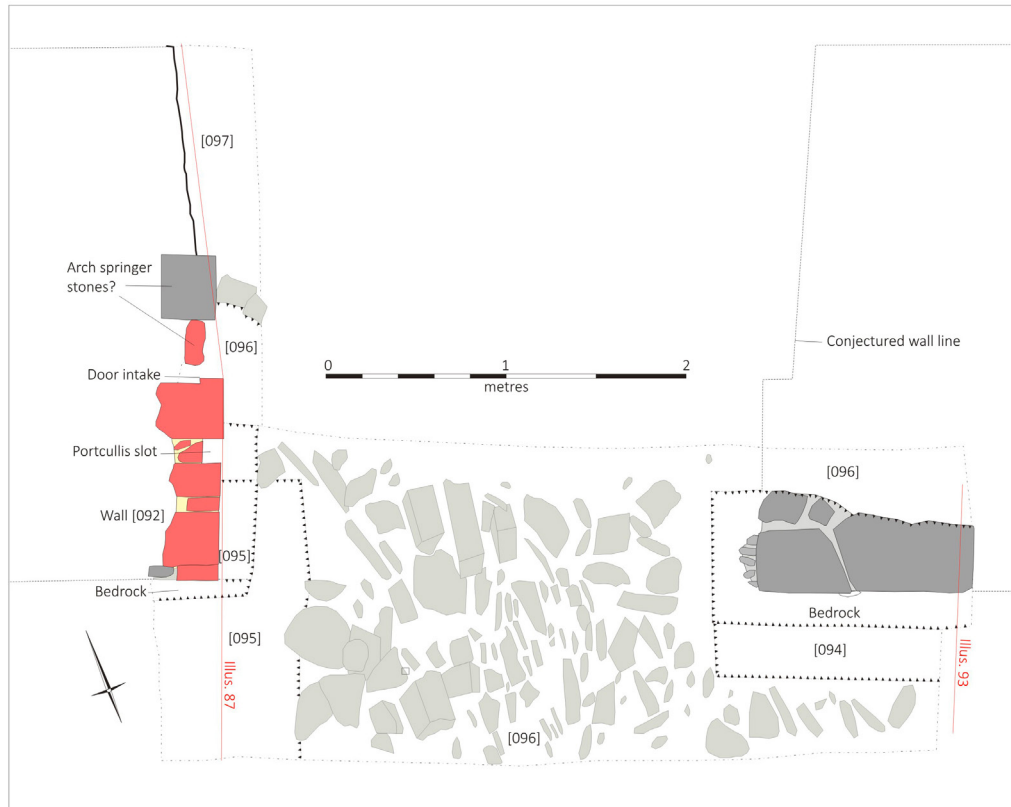
Illus 83 Surviving wall of the Outer Bailey to the east of the gate from the north (note the tree stump at bottom left of photograph)



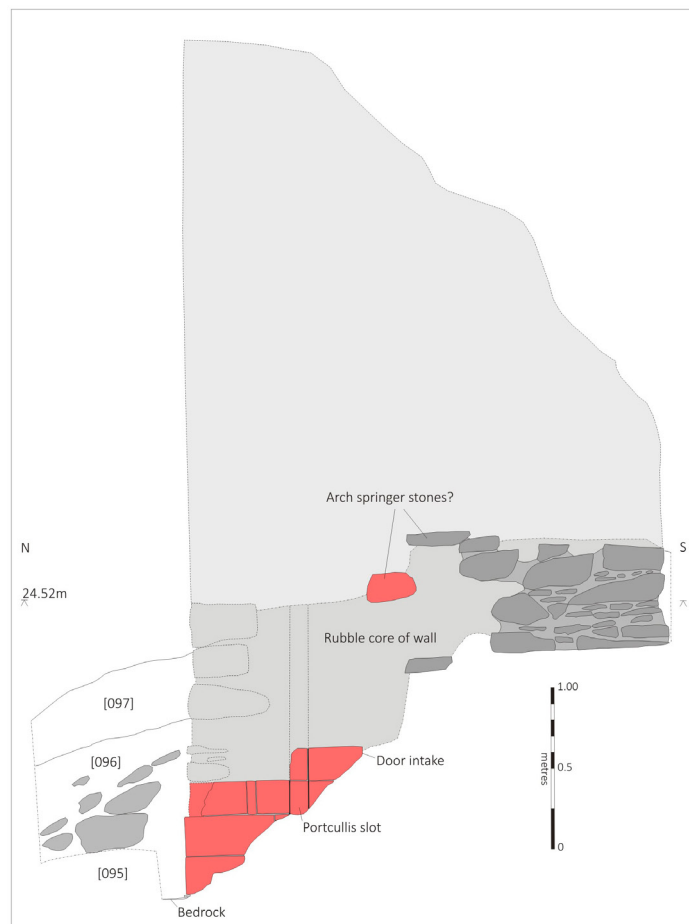
Illus 84 Eastern drum tower external face from southeast



Illus 85 Trench 9 position of the gate between the two drum towers



Illus 86 Trench 9 plan



Illus 87 Trench 9 elevation of eastern side of gate



Illus 88 Trench 9 external face of west side of gate from northwest above



Illus 89 Trench 9 basal courses of external face of eastern side of entrance from northwest



Illus 90 Trench 9 portcullis slot and door intake of eastern side of gate from northwest above



Illus 91 Trench 9 wall face of gate passage from northeast (evidence of the springer arch is at the left of the scale)



Illus 92 Trench 9 footings of the western gate from east (the remains of the western drum tower are in the background beyond the scale)

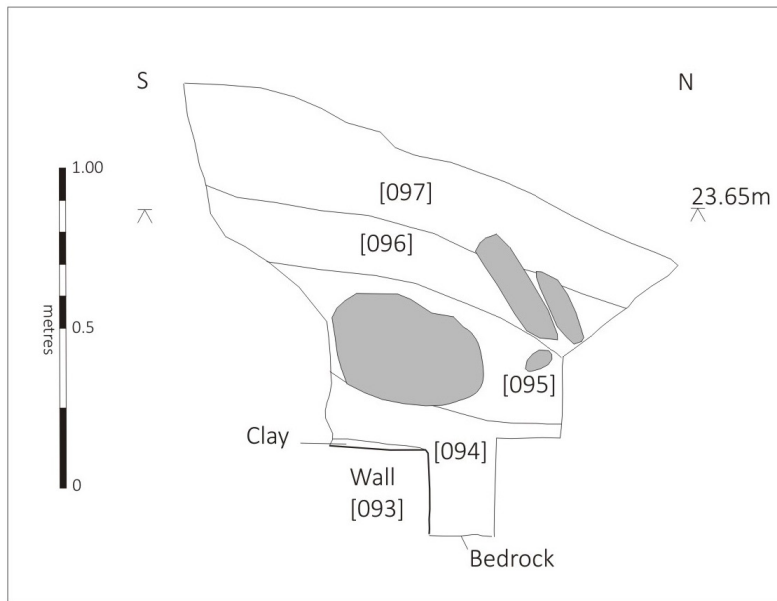
5.12.2 The western gate side C093

Only the basal course of the entrance wall survived on this side. Lying directly on natural bedrock was a deposit of small schist blocks, which was likely used as a bedding/levelling deposit. Over this deposit were laid the basal blocks of the wall, the largest observed block measuring 0.70m x 0.40m x 0.20m. Lying between and partially over these blocks were the remnants of a light yellow-brown clay deposit, this no doubt was used as a binding agent. None of these blocks had evidence of mortar bonding, suggesting this was only used within the wall above, which had been completely robbed.

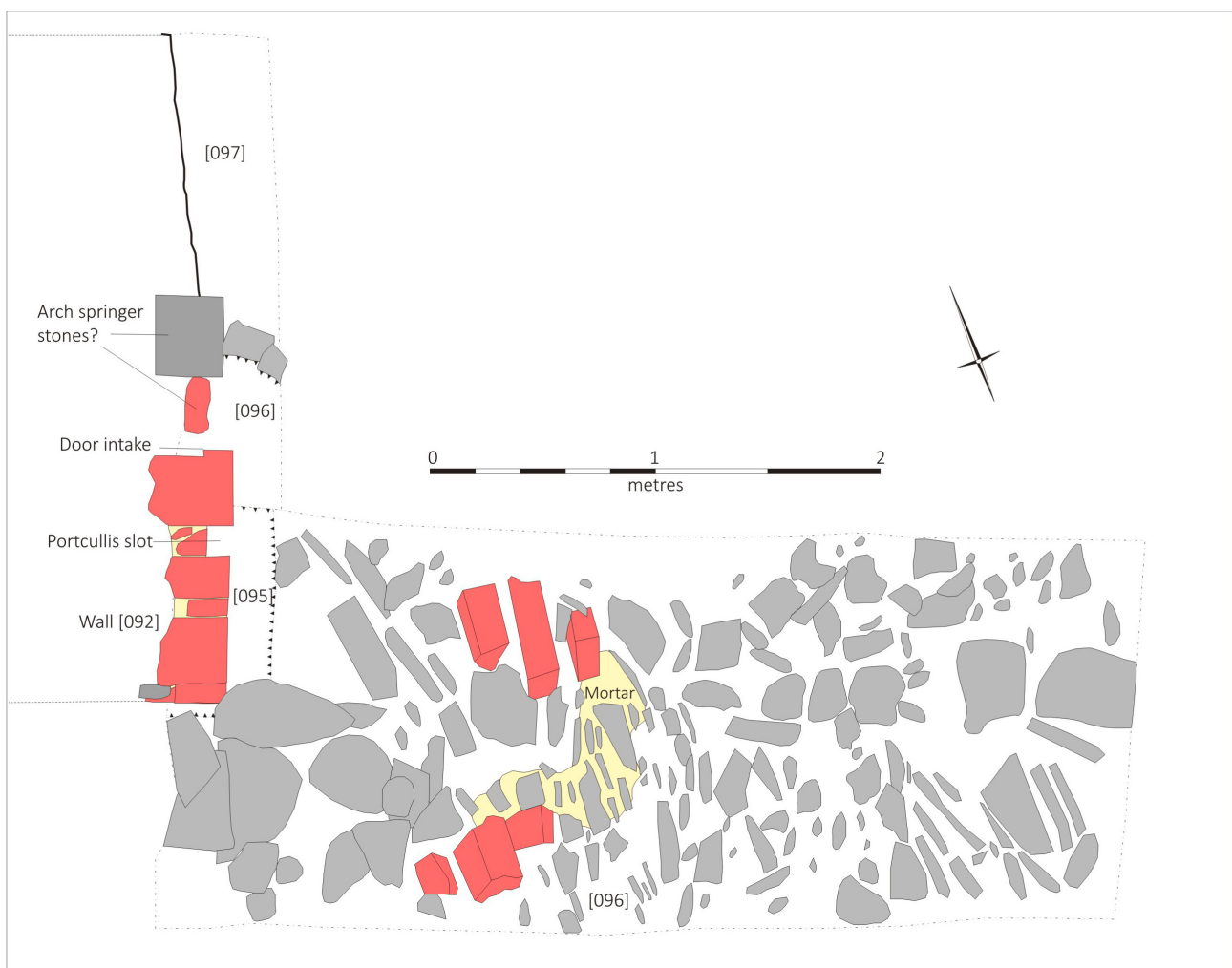
Sealing the remains of the wall on this western side of the trench was a deposit of light brown sandy silt, C094, with frequent fragments of mortar and occasional fragments of red sandstone, suggesting this deposit was the remnants of the robbing activity. A similar deposit was not observed on the eastern side of the trench where the wall had been less severely robbed.

Sealing this deposit and the remains of the eastern gate was a series of rubble/demolition deposits interspersed with more soil-like accumulations, suggesting more than one episode of robbing/collapse. The lowest of these deposits consisted of a brown sandy loam that contained some large irregular stone blocks, C095, along with some small fragments of mortar and some patches of more sandy soil. Above this was a deposit of more structured collapse, indicated by the presence of mortar bonded stones, a series of coursed stone blocks and two rows of red sandstone blocks, C096.

These red sandstone blocks might be the remains of the inner and outer arches of the entrance, these collapsing along with the surrounding blocks. This suggests that part of the eastern side of the archway continued to stand after the western side had been robbed, but eventually collapsed. This collapse was sealed by a dark grey silty loam which included some rubble, C096, supporting the vegetation cover.



Illus 93 Trench 9 section of western side of gate



Illus 94 Trench 9 plan of western gate side and collapsed rubble



Illus 95 Trench 9 collapsed red sandstone blocks from northeast



Illus 96 Trench 9 chiselled dressing on one of the collapsed sandstone blocks