



Clitheroe Castle, Clitheroe, Lancashire

Watching Brief



Oxford Archaeology North

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SUMMARY

In December 2008, Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) was commissioned by National Grid Gas Distribution, acting on behalf of Ribble Valley Borough Council, to undertake an archaeological watching brief at Clitheroe Castle, Lancashire (centred at SD 7424 4169). The work was required to monitor all earth-moving works associated with the installation of a new gas pipe along the length of the main drive to the castle museum.

The laying of the gas main comprised the excavation of a service trench, which largely followed the footprint of an earlier service trench along the main drive. Earth-moving works were restricted largely to the removal of the existing tarmac and concrete within a 56m x 0.5m wide trench, and removal of the underlying deposits to a maximum depth of 0.6m to accommodate the new pipe. The excavated deposits largely comprised a layer of compacted, mixed rubble that was present throughout the excavated trench and presumably represented a bedding layer for the modern driveway surface, although a soil horizon was also revealed, in places, at the base of the trench. No archaeological features were encountered during the course of the watching brief, and whilst two small fragments of medieval pottery were recovered from the rubble layer, the works did not have a negative impact on the archaeological resource within the site.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) would like to thank National Grid Gas Distribution for commissioning the archaeological watching brief. The watching brief was carried out by Jeremy Bradley, Vicky Bullock and Pascal Eloy. Vicky Bullock compiled the report, and Marie Rowland produced the drawings. The report was edited by Ian Miller, who was also responsible for project management.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE PROJECT

- 1.1.1 This report presents the results obtained from an archaeological watching brief that was maintained during the installation of a gas pipe at Clitheroe Castle in December 2008 and January 2009. The castle is a designated Scheduled Monument (SM 27747), which incorporates several structures, including Grade I and Grade II Listed Buildings, and is situated in both a Registered Park and Garden and Clitheroe Town Conservation Area.
- 1.1.2 The work was required as a condition of the Scheduled Monument Consent obtained from the Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS). The installation of the gas main was undertaken as part of a wider scheme of archaeological investigation associated with the installation of new drainage trenches during the redevelopment of Clitheroe Castle Museum, and associated enhancement of the site.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORDING

2.1.1 The watching brief comprised archaeological monitoring during the excavation of a single trench to accommodate a new gas pipe along the length of the drive to the castle museum. Modern surfacing was cut using a stihl saw, and all excavation work was undertaken by a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothed ditching bucket, which was operated under close archaeological supervision. Any subsoil horizons exposed during the course of the groundworks were systematically examined, and all archaeological features and horizons were recorded on OA North *pro-forma* recording sheets. The work was carried out in accordance with best practice (following current IfA guidelines).

2.2 FINDS POLICY

2.2.1 Finds' recovery was carried out in accordance with best practice (following current Institute of Field Archaeologists guidelines), and subject to expert advice in order to minimise deterioration. Artefacts were principally collected by hand from deposits, and all categories of material type were retrieved without exception.

2.3 ARCHIVE

2.3.1 The results of the fieldwork will form part of a full archive that has been prepared to professional standards, in accordance with English Heritage guidelines (*The Management of Archaeological Projects, 2nd edition, 1991*) and the *Guidelines for the Preparation of Excavation Archives for Long Term Storage* (UKIC 1990). The project archive represents the collation and indexing of all the data and material gathered during the course of the archaeological works associated with the recent redevelopment of the castle museum (OA North 2008). The archive for the archaeological work undertaken at the site will be deposited with Clitheroe Castle Museum. This archive can be provided in the English Heritage Centre for Archaeology format, both as a printed document and on computer disks as ASCii files (as appropriate). Except for items subject to the Treasure Act, all artefacts found during the course of the project will be donated to the receiving museum.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 INTRODUCTION

3.1.1 The following section provides an outline of the natural setting of the study area, its location both physically and relative to other districts within the town, and is intended to place the results obtained from the archaeological work into context. A more detailed history of the site is presented in the Clitheroe Castle Archaeological Investigation Report (OA North 2008).

3.2 SITE LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

3.2.1 The town of Clitheroe is situated on a triangle of land between the river Ribble and Mearley Brook within the Ribble Valley, Lancashire (Fig 1). The historic core of the town is centred at the foot of the castle, and developed along the main road between Preston and Skipton.



Plate 1: Aerial view of Clitheroe Castle during the development work

3.2.2 Clitheroe Castle is situated at the southern end of the town (centered at SD 7424 4169). The underlying solid geology of the area, and indeed the hill upon which the castle is built, is formed from a Waulsortian limestone mudmounds or reef knolls, which are distinctive landscape features in the area (Countryside Commission 1998, 93). The geology of the town is dominated by the Clitheroe Knoll, on which the castle is sited, forming a small highpoint in an otherwise gently undulating landscape. The knoll extends north-north-west from the grounds of the castle to the north end of the town (OA North 2008). The drift geology comprises loamy brown rankers, the typical brown earth found over limestone (Kenyon 1991, 11).

3.3 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.3.1 Clitheroe Castle is situated on top of a natural vantage point at the south end of the present town. It has been described as ‘the strongest, the oldest, and from its position one of the most remarkable of the fortresses of Lancashire’ (Clarke 1877, 397-8). In addition to the strategic value of the castle, it was also the seat of local government during the medieval period, as the seat of the honour of Clitheroe, with courts being held there and also acting as a gaol (Adams 2006, 180). The town developed around the lower ground between the castle and the church, providing an indication of the size of the medieval settlement; documentary evidence identifies 66 burgesses resident in the town by 1258 (Farrer and Brownbill 1911, 367). A market in Clitheroe was not actually documented until 1292, although it was claimed at that date that there had been a market in existence since the Conquest (*op cit*, 368).
- 3.3.2 The castle itself is first referred to in 1102, when an area of land below ‘le baille’ is mentioned. It has been argued by Whitaker, in 1872, that there was a castle on the site in the time of Domesday. He suggested that a castle mentioned under the Domesday entry for Barnoldswick was that of Clitheroe, but this castle has never been accurately placed (Adams 2006, 180; Best 1990, 2). Nevertheless, the Norman castle does appear to have been an early foundation. The extant keep is of a square plan with three storeys, and is the second smallest surviving keep in England. It was originally surrounded by a curtain wall with a gatehouse built into the south-east, although this has since been demolished. The castle yard contained the chapel of St Michael in Castro, which is likely to have been contemporary with the keep. Other buildings within the castle courtyard included a large stable block, a court house, and a dwelling house, which incorporated a dairy, a buttery, and a cellar: these buildings appear on a plan of the castle, dated 1723, but since lost (Plate 2).

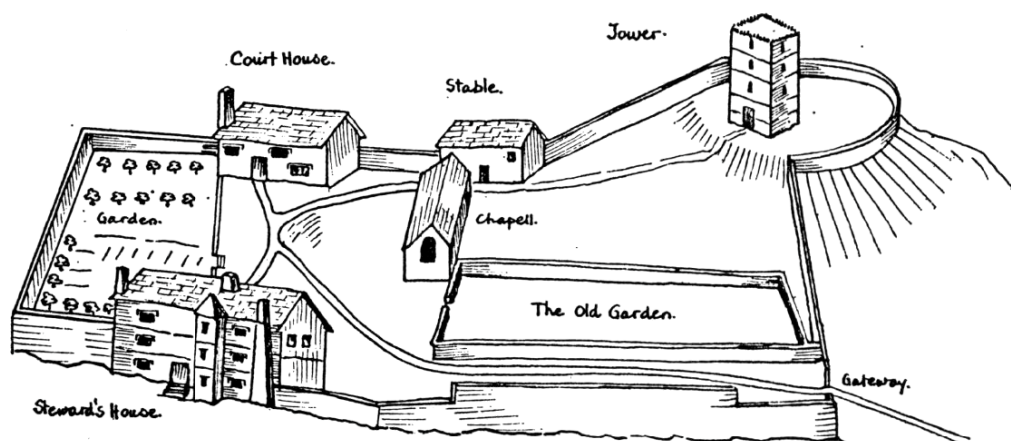


Plate 2: A drawing by Langshaw (1940) of a sketch of the castle, dated 1723, but since lost

- 3.3.3 Whilst Clitheroe experienced a period of economic growth in the sixteenth century, returning two members to the House of Commons in 1558, the castle began to decline in importance and was in need of repair. Surveys in the early

1600s described the castle as ruinous, with the cost of repairs spiralling to £177 in 1608 (Best 1990, 11).

- 3.3.4 The castle was occupied briefly during the Civil War in 1644, and again in 1649, after which it was ordered to be slighted, although there is some debate whether this was ever carried out. The chapel was certainly ruinous by 1660, and the keep and the curtain walls were in a similar parlous condition by the early eighteenth century, although roofed buildings continued to occupy the castle yard. An indication of the condition of the buildings at this time is provided by the detail of an engraving produced by Samuel and Nathaniel Buck in 1727 (Plate 3).

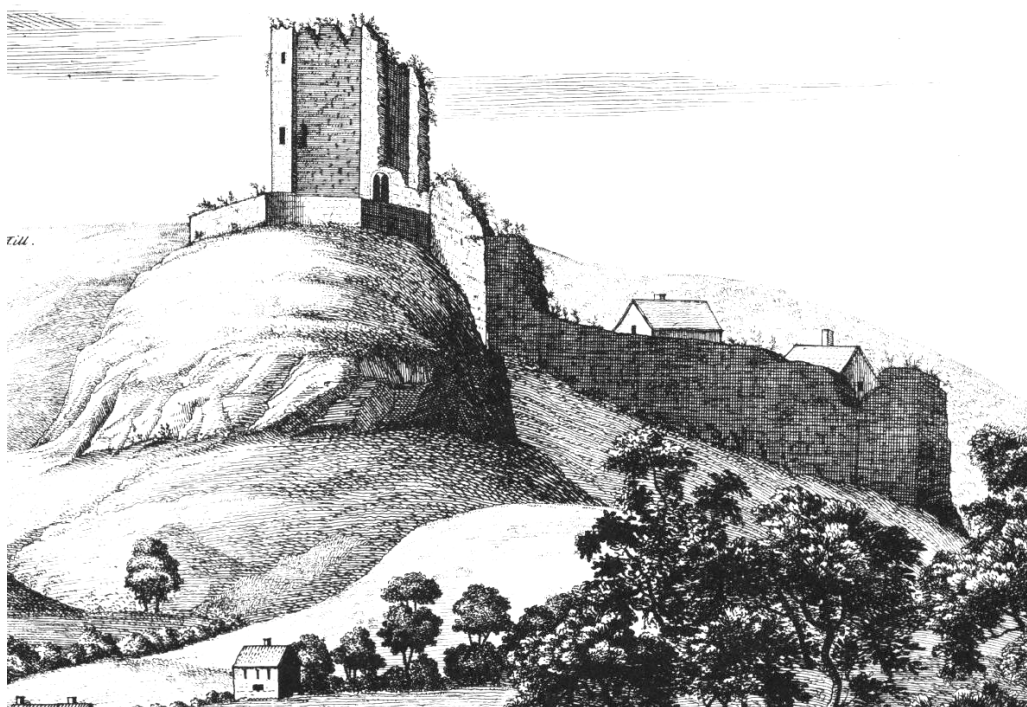


Plate 3: An engraving of the castle from the west by S and N Buck, 1727

- 3.3.5 As the castle retained its function as the administrative centre for the Blackburn Hundred until 1822, when a new town hall was begun in Church Street, considerable rebuilding was carried out in an attempt to bring the castle up to date. However, it seems that the repair work to the keep was insufficient, as it was considered to be in danger of collapse by the mid-nineteenth century. In 1848, it was decided to partially restore the keep, and buttresses were built against three corners (Farrer and Brownbill 1911, 363).
- 3.3.6 In 1919, the then owner of the castle, Lord Montague of Beaulieu, offered to sell the site to the people of Clitheroe. The funds were raised by public subscription, and the castle and its 17-acre grounds were converted into a war memorial to those who lost their lives in the Great War (Adams 2006, 180-3). The present chapter in the history of the castle dates to 1981, when a museum opened in the castle house. More recently, the North-West Sound Archive occupied the outbuildings in the castle yard.

4. RESULTS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

- 4.1.1 In December 2008 and January 2009, OA North monitored the installation of a gas main beneath the main driveway of Clitheroe Castle, as part of the wider scheme of improvements to the museum. The installation of the gas main necessitated the excavation of a trench, measuring 0.5m wide and up to 0.6m deep along the main drive to the museum (Fig 2). The excavation yielded no finds, and no archaeological features were identified.
- 4.1.2 The initial section of the trench for the new gas main was excavated along the lower part of the driveway, between the entrance to the castle grounds and the stone gateposts (Plate 4). The solid geology was exposed at the base of the excavated trench, and was overlain by a layer of mixed rubble, which presumably represented a make-up layer for the modern driveway surfacing. This comprised fragments of tarmac, lumps of concrete, sub-angular stones and occasional lenses of redeposited soil; an existing service pipe was exposed in the trench at a depth of 0.3m (Plate 5).



Plate 4: Excavation of the lower section of the drive approaching the gateposts



Plate 5: Existing service pipe visible in excavated trench at a depth of 0.3m

- 4.1.3 The second section of the service trench was opened subsequently along the upper part of the drive, from the stone gateposts close to the entrance to the castle grounds to the northern corner of the museum (Plate 6). This section of trench was 56m long and 0.5m wide, and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.6m below the modern ground surface. It similarly contained a modern service pipe, demonstrating that the new service trench lay wholly within the backfill of an earlier one. The solid geology was not exposed at the base of the trench, as the depth of the excavation was determined by the requirements of the gas services.
- 4.1.4 The earliest archaeological deposit encountered was a layer of loose, dark brown soil at a maximum depth of 0.6m. This was overlain by a 0.30m thick layer of mixed rubble, identical to that exposed in the lower part of the drive. These deposits were present along the entire length of the excavated trench, and were sealed by the tarmac surface of the driveway.



Plate 6: Excavation of upper section of driveway from gateposts to museum

4.2 FINDS

- 4.2.1 In total, two small fragments of medieval pottery were recovered from the base of the excavated trench, at a point situated approximately 10m to the south of the stone gateposts. The pottery has a date range spanning the twelfth to fourteenth centuries, but was recovered from a modern deposit, and is therefore essentially unstratified.

5. CONCLUSIONS

5.1 CONCLUSION

- 5.1.1 The monitoring of the gas main through the scheduled area of the castle revealed no new archaeological information, since it was placed entirely within an existing service trench. It is therefore concluded that the installation of the pipe did not have a negative impact on the archaeological resource of the scheduled monument.

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ILLUSTRATIONS

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Figure 1: Site location

Figure 2: Location plan of the excavated gas pipe trench

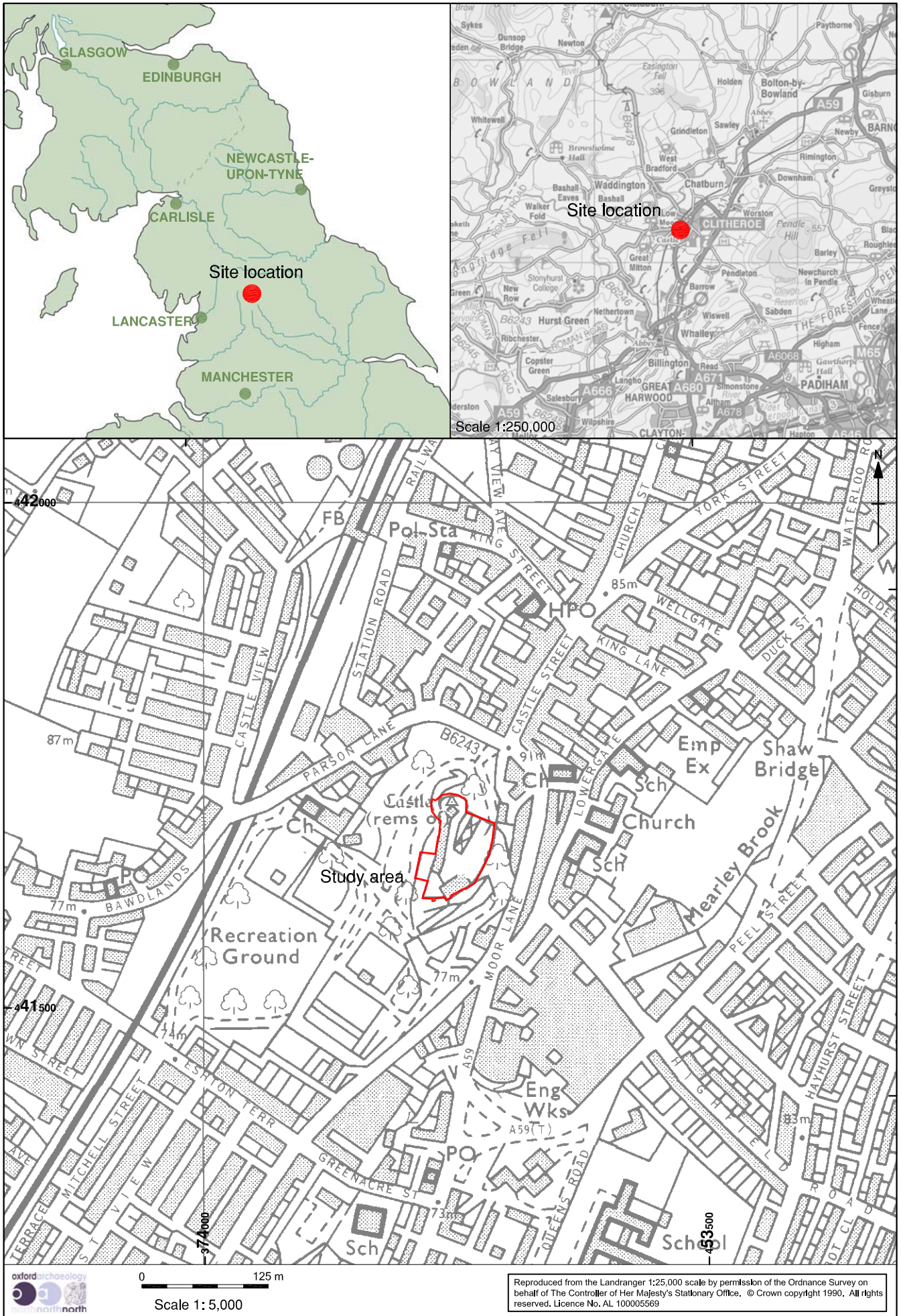


Figure 1: Site Location

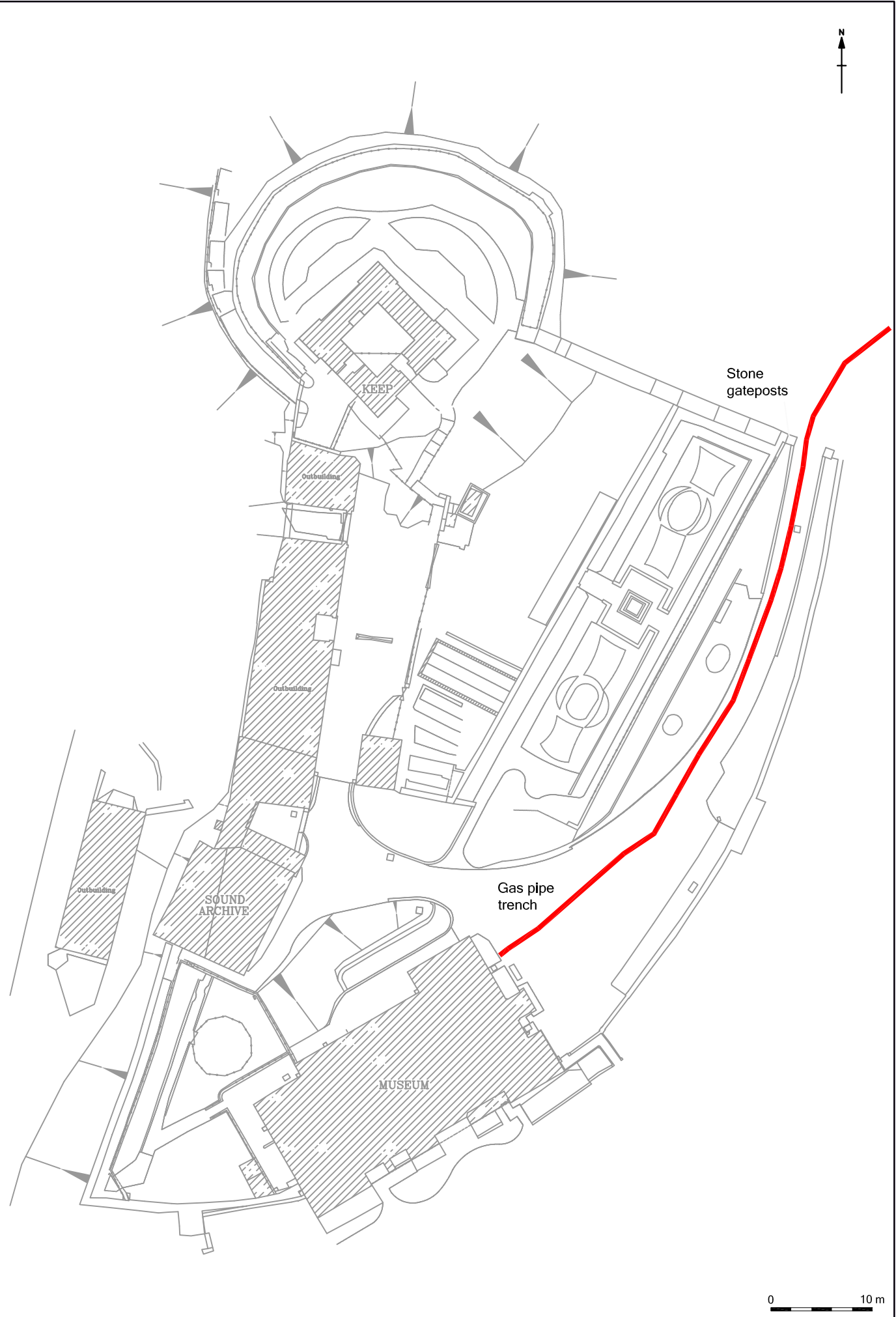


Figure 2: Location plan of the excavated gas pipe trench