ENGLISH HERITAGE

The Town and Castle Earthworks at Lydford, Devon

Phil Newman

SURVEY REPORT

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The Town and Castle Earthworks at Lydford, Devon

An archaeological survey by English Heritage

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The Burghal Hidage town of Lydford has been surveyed, with the object of recording all earthworks currently visible and accessible. Both castles, the pre-conquest defences and various other features of the burh have been recorded, together with some extra-mural elements, which have been recognised and surveyed for the first time. This is the first such analytical survey of this highly important Devonshire monument. It will compliment the historical research of others and provide a context for the many archaeological excavations which have taken place here since the 1960s. The plan will also serve as an aid to future conservation and research decisions, which may affect Lydford.

Fig. 1. Location.

INTRODUCTION

Location and Topography

Lydford is situated in west Devon on the interface between the Dartmoor foothills to the east and the farmland of the Tamar and Tavy valleys to the west. The town is sited on the naturally defended promontory, formed by the confluence of the River Lyd and an unnamed tributary which meets it from the north. The precipitous slopes of both valleys, which include part of Lydford Gorge on the SE side, would have negated the need for substantial earthwork defences on all but the north-east of the town. The town lies off major route ways, in both ancient and modern times and has always been somewhat isolated. The surrounding landscape is one of farmland, and some woodland. Today the village contains a thriving rural community and is much visited by tourists.

Historical summary

Lydford has long been considered among Devonshire's most historically and archaeologically interesting settlements. The town has a documented history, extending back at least to the late 9th century, when *Llidan* is recorded in the Burghal Hidage[1]; one of four such towns in Devon (Maddicott 1989, 35). There has also been some speculation as to an even earlier 6th or 7th-century Celtic origin for the town, based around the dedication of the church to St Petrock, an early-Christian period Welsh saint. This is now viewed with some caution as such dedications are found often to be the result of a later revival in the following of a saint; dates therefore cannot always be reliably attributed (Pearce 1973; Preston-Jones, 1994). Nevertheless an earlier foundation date for the settlement could be postulated on the basis of ceramics evidence from excavations, Imported Mediterranean Ware being among the finds suggesting a post-Roman occupation (Saunders 1980). Lydford was the site of a mint in the pre-conquest period and coins dating from the reign of King Ethelred II(AD 976-1016) are known to have been minted here. For the year AD 997 the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle records that the town was the last inland point in a raid by the Danes who 'burnt and slew everything that they met' (Whitlock 1961; Garmonsway 1990, 131). Although the various translations of the document differ little, some scholars have interpreted the text to mean that the town was able to resist the attack (Hoskins 1978, 53; Radford 1970, 94; Timms 1985, 20; Todd 1987, 279).

The Domesday Survey of 1086 recorded that Lydford had 28 burgesses within the borough and 41 outside and that 40 houses had been destroyed since William's arrival in England (Thorn & Thorn 1985, 100b). The destruction of these houses has been assumed by previous writers to have been caused by the building of the Norman castle or ringwork within the burh (Hoskins 1978). The castle is believed to have had a fairly short life span, built probably soon after the conquest and abandoned by the mid-12th century (Saunders 1980, 123).

The later stone castle was built in 1195 as a gaol to hold prisoners of the king. Alterations and enlargements, documented in the late 13th century, reflect the role of Lydford as the judicial centre of the Stannaries and the site of the Stannary gaol. Lydford Castle continued in this role until the late 18th century, interrupted only briefly when it was used as a military prison by the Royalists during the Civil War (Saunders 1980). Lydford's role as a centre for justice and administration of the Forest of Dartmoor and the Stannaries is apparent in the late 12th and early 13th centuries by its association with both Hugh de Neville and William de Wrotham: both were keepers of the castle for a period and were administrators of Forest and Stannary law on behalf of the king (Saunders 1980, 135).

As to the town itself, although it retained its status as the site of the Stannary gaol, in commercial terms its importance declined after the 14th century, and although still a market town, it was eclipsed by Launceston and Okehampton and soon became something of a backwater. By 1300 only 48 burgesses are recorded at Lydford and by 1600 the number of houses had dwindled to 16 or 18. In 1795 the village was described by one observer as 'wretched remains' consisting of 'a few hovels' (Cherry and Pevsner 1989, 548). The castle had been abandoned by the early 19th century and by the time the tithe map was surveyed in the 1840s, the enclosed part of the village had more or less taken the form which it retains to this day. This period of decline and stagnation is the key to Lydford's archaeological importance today, as large areas of both the burh interior and parts of the exterior, where

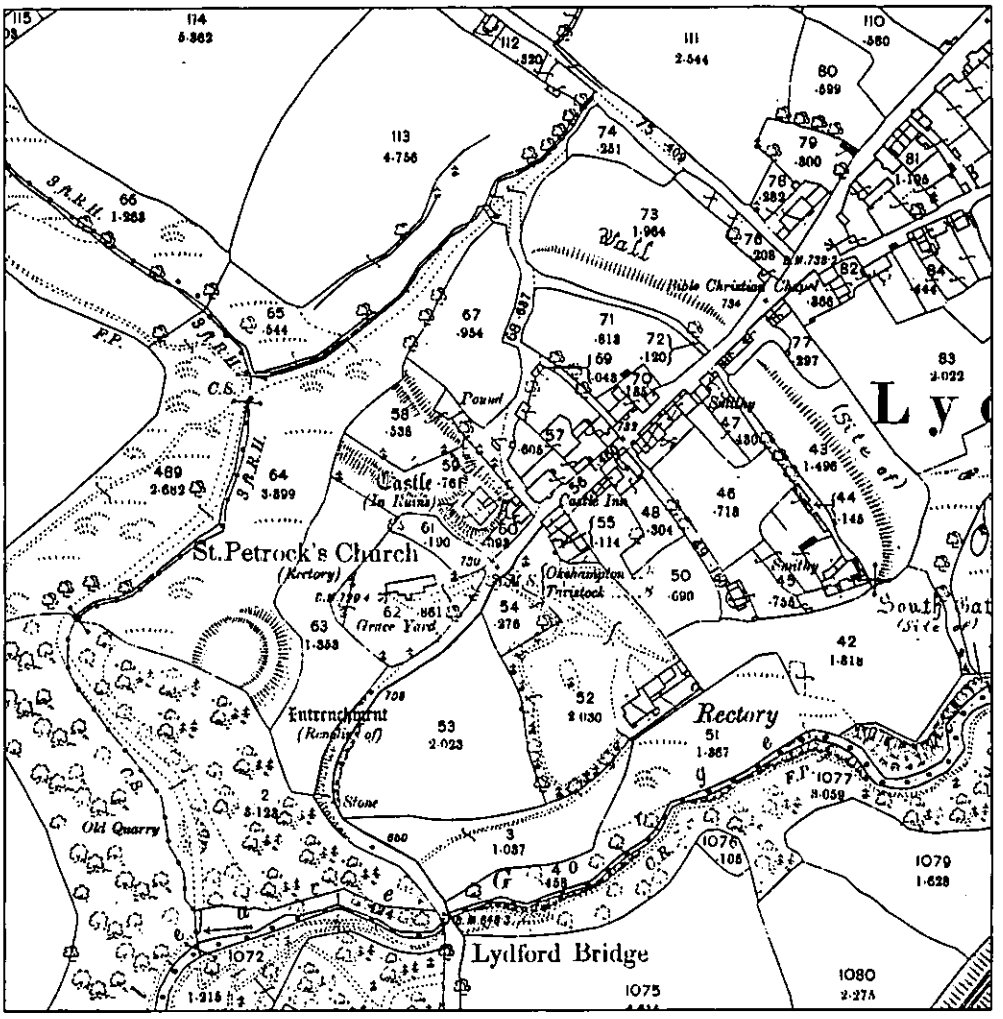


Fig.2. OS 1:2500 1st edition map (1900 reprint).

extra-mural settlement is believed to have occurred, have been undeveloped in modern times and are likely to contain informative archaeological deposits. The village did enjoy something of a revival in the 19th century when several local mines were prospering and the coming of the railway made the village more accessible to the outside world. Most of the extant domestic buildings within both the original burh and the extended settlement date to this period.

The work of previous researchers

Lydford has been a source of fascination for historians since the 19th century and histories of the town and castles have been provided by R. N. Worth (1879), G. H. Radford (1905) and A. D. Saunders (1980). More general articles, discussing the burh within the context of Anglo-Saxon Wessex are by C.A.R. Radford (1970) and J. Haslam (1984). Archaeological excavations by P.V. Addyman in the 1960s, to investigate the interior of the burh and the Norman castle are largely unpublished though short interim reports have appeared in print (Wilson & Hurst 1964, 1965, 1966, 1967, 1968). Other excavations have included those at Lydford Castle by Saunders (1980) in the 1950s and 60s and small-scale investigations at South Gate Cottage (Weddell 1981) and at the Castle Inn (Gent 1995), both in advance of building extensions and a small exploratory trench by the national Trust within Brim Close (see appendix 2). There is also an oral tradition among present day villagers that a circular structure was discovered and excavated when a septic tank was installed just to the south of

the house known as St Petrock's and was in some way associated with the Lych Way track to the church. However, this work appears to be otherwise unrecorded.

The earliest published survey of the town and its earthworks is the Ordnance Survey 1st edition 1:2500 scale of 1882 (Fig. 2). The earthwork depictions have altered little on subsequent OS revisions, and it has been adapted for all archaeological literature before the present.

The Survey

The RCHME/EH survey was carried out in three separate phases. The initial phase in 1996 included both castles and was undertaken at the request of the National Trust in advance of the construction of a trackway from the road to the sewage works on the north-west slope by South West Water. Although the track only affected the area immediately south of the castle ditch, this was seen as a good opportunity to thoroughly record all the castle earthworks and a 1:500 scale plan was produced (Fig. 6 &7). Phase two, early in 2000, was the survey of area H, including the ramparts and associated earthwork, to assist with the decision on the application for the installation of play park equipment north-west of the Nicholl's Hall. A third phase, to complete and consolidate the earthwork plan for the entire enclosed area of the village was completed in June 2000. During this phase the remainder of the earthen rampart known as the town wall was surveyed together with area B and several other plots where earthworks survive, mostly in private gardens, thus providing, for the first time, a 1:1000 plan of all accessible earthworks within the burh (Fig. 3). The co-operation of the owners of these garden plots has been much appreciated and is here acknowledged.

The survey is concerned only with earthworks and it was not considered necessary or feasible to re-survey all standing structures in the village. Hard detail is therefore based on the OS 1:2500 map, earthwork surveys being tied in to the national grid using GPS. Additional non-archaeological landscape features were then added or enhanced in the field .Although one or two minor anomalies have occurred as a result of this method, the overall fit is satisfactory. It has not been possible to produce a contour survey or digital ground model of Lydford, due to the piecemeal nature of the work undertaken and problems of accessibility and vegetation cover on the steep slopes of the gorge but this would be worth considering in future.

THE EARTHWORKS

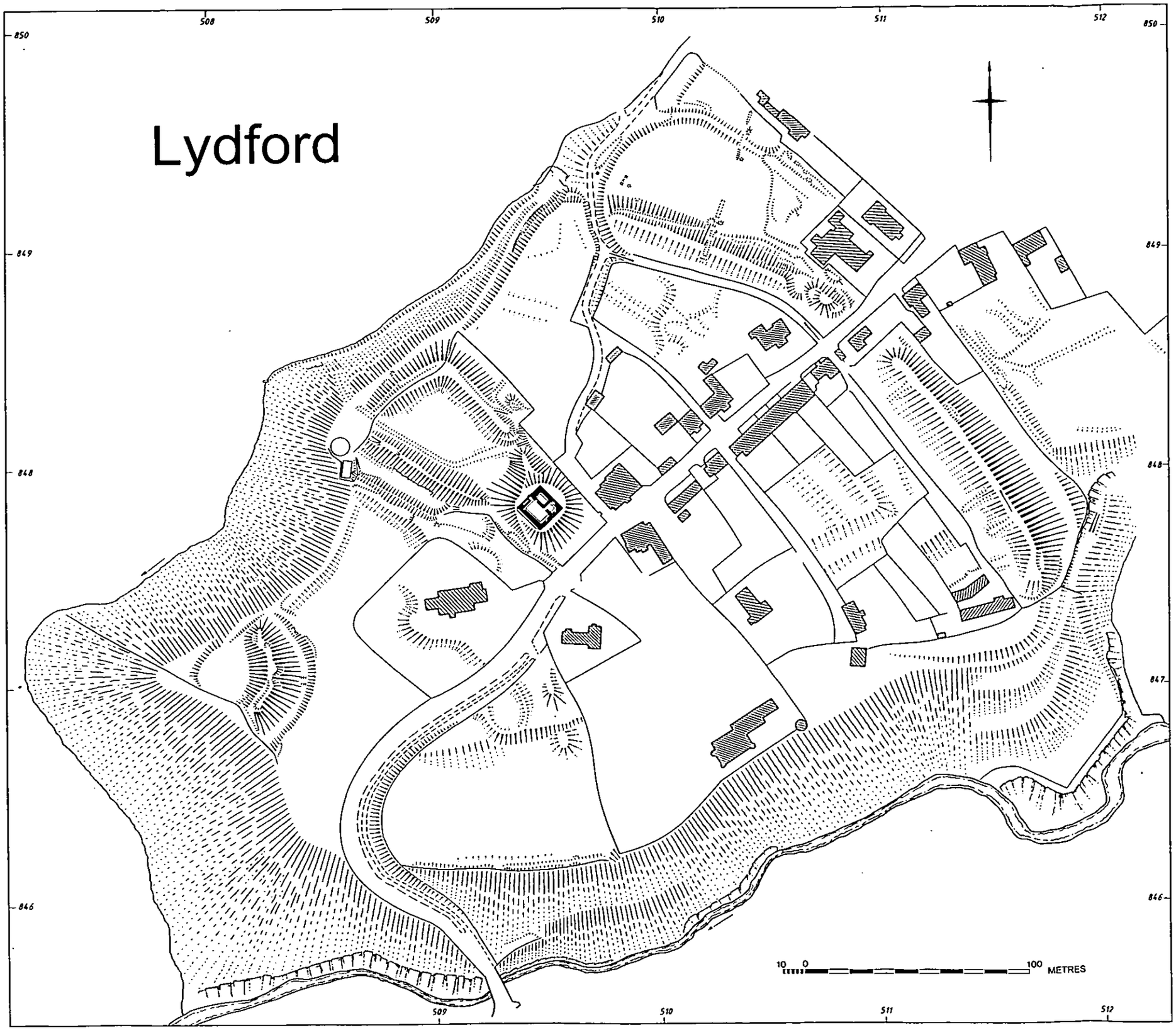
The pre-conquest town defences

The ramparts (a, b, c, Fig. 4).

The location of Lydford on a naturally defensible, south-west facing promontory meant the town required little if any artificial fortification on all but the north-east sector, where a large, curvilinear earthwork rampart truncates the promontory, effectively partitioning the steep-sided spur from the flatter land to the north-east. The rampart is now in two sections, divided centrally by a 25m gap through which the current road access for the village passes. This seems likely to represent continuity of use for what was probably an original entrance, though it would certainly have been much narrower in earlier times.

The southern section of bank (a) is the larger, measuring up to 30m wide at the base and

Lydford



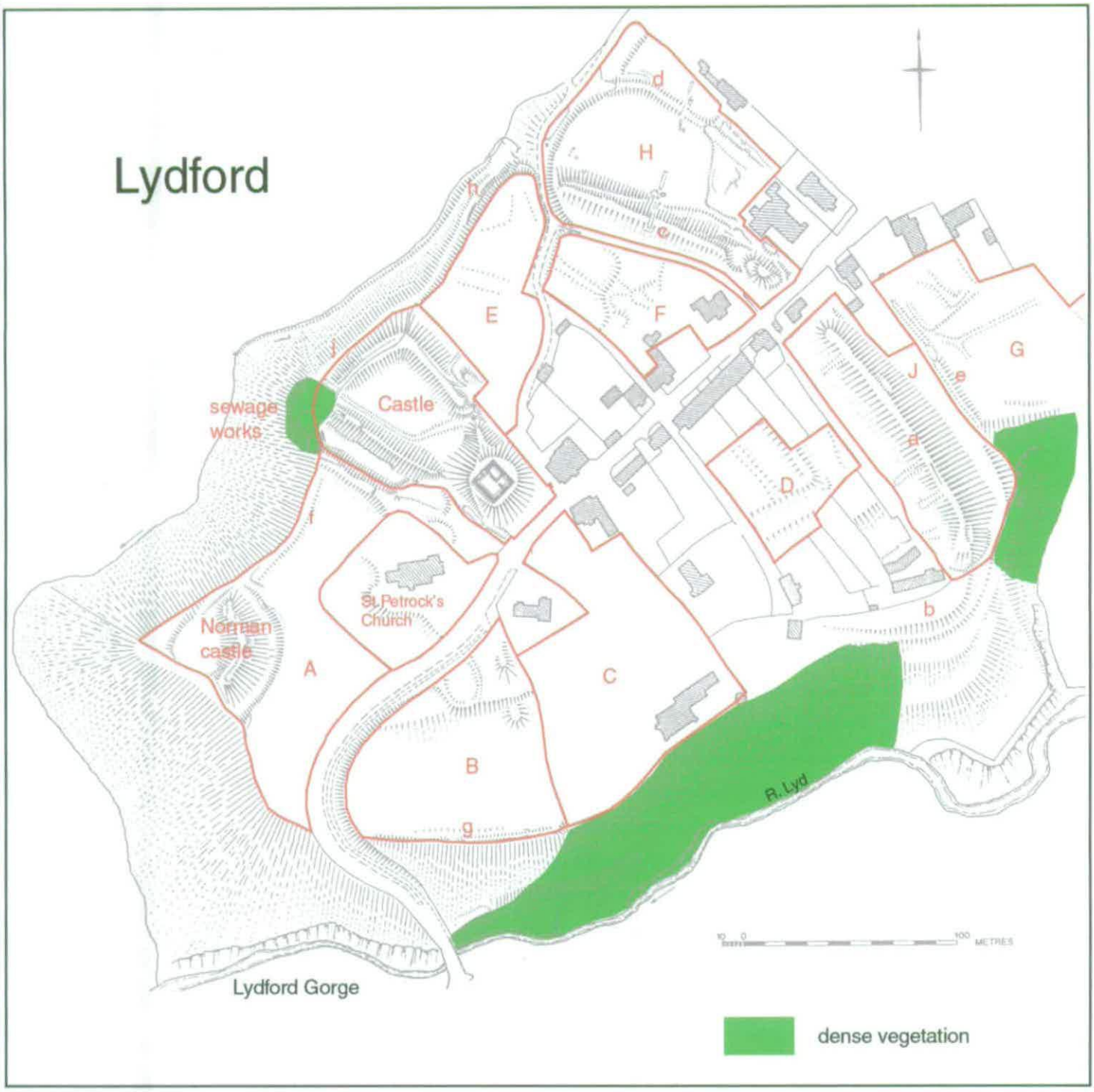


Fig. 4 Plan of Lydford showing positions of interior plots investigated as part of the survey, and areas currently inaccessible due to dense vegetation.

approximately 4m high. The outer slope is steeper than that on the inside, which has an indefinite base of slope blending into the interior ground surface. At the southern end of the bank near South Gate Cottage, the alignment is slightly curved and its height begins to level out before meeting the steep scarp on the south-east side of the promontory. At this point a modern hedge boundary crosses the bank and from here onwards to the west the defensive circuit continues as a curved earthwork terrace (b), sited just a few metres back from the lip of the precipice. This fades out after running for only 80m to the west, in an area now occupied by a private garden.

The northern section of rampart (c) is straighter than its counterpart but has suffered more interference. It also appears less substantial, but this is mainly due to the land on the exterior being level whereas that on the exterior of the southern bank slopes away giving the appearance of greater height. Like the southern section, the gradient of the bank is greater on the exterior. At the north-western end, a later hollow way has truncated it, separating it from its junction with the steep scarp of the north-west side of the promontory. However, vestiges of the bank continue in the form of a scarp, for approximately 12m beyond the hollow way, before merging with the precipice. There is no visible back scarp on this short section of rampart. Near the south-eastern end of the bank, 25m from its terminal, a large hollow, approximately 10m across has been dug where material has been removed and taken elsewhere. This interference is unlikely to be modern, judging by the smooth appearance of the earthworks. A narrow archaeological excavation trench was cut across the centre of the bank at right angles in the 1960s but the results are unpublished. The trench was not completely back-filled and survives as a rectangular hollow with spoil heaps to either side.

There is no earthwork evidence of an external ditch on any part of the rampart although a 200m long ditch has been mentioned by Todd (1987, 279) and on Haslam's map a 'zone of ditches' is depicted where two ditches are assumed (1984, Fig. 88). Biddle has also described a double ditch system for Lydford, based on a *pers com* from P. V. Addyman, who cut a trench through the defences (Biddle 1976, 129). An unpublished section drawing of the excavations across the ramparts shows two very weak ditches of up to only 1m deep and a single, broad shallow ditch to the north (Addyman 1996) but any ditch which existed here, must have been completely filled to now be so invisible on the surface. A slight hollowing just to the east of the Nicholl's Hall was caused by dumping and spreading of material when the hall was constructed in 1929.

A bank of approximately 6m in width and up to 0.8m high, runs approximately parallel with the main rampart on the north-east exterior (d & e). It is visible on both the north and south sides of the road though the line is broken for 80m where the chapel, the road and a garden plot interrupt the continuity. It was evidently constructed to conform with the alignment of the existing layout dictated by the ramparts but unfortunately the north, south and centre section have suffered later disturbance so their exact relationship with the ramparts and town wall is unclear. However, at the northernmost point of the bank, before being truncated by a trackway, it has the beginnings of a curvature which may indicate that it originally extended back to join the town wall. On the north-west section of the bank there is evidence of an archaeological excavation trench, with a spoil heap to one side: no record of any finds is available. The bank has been partially covered to the north of the Nicholls Hall, probably by earth dumped when the site for the hall was levelled. The level spread of material covers an

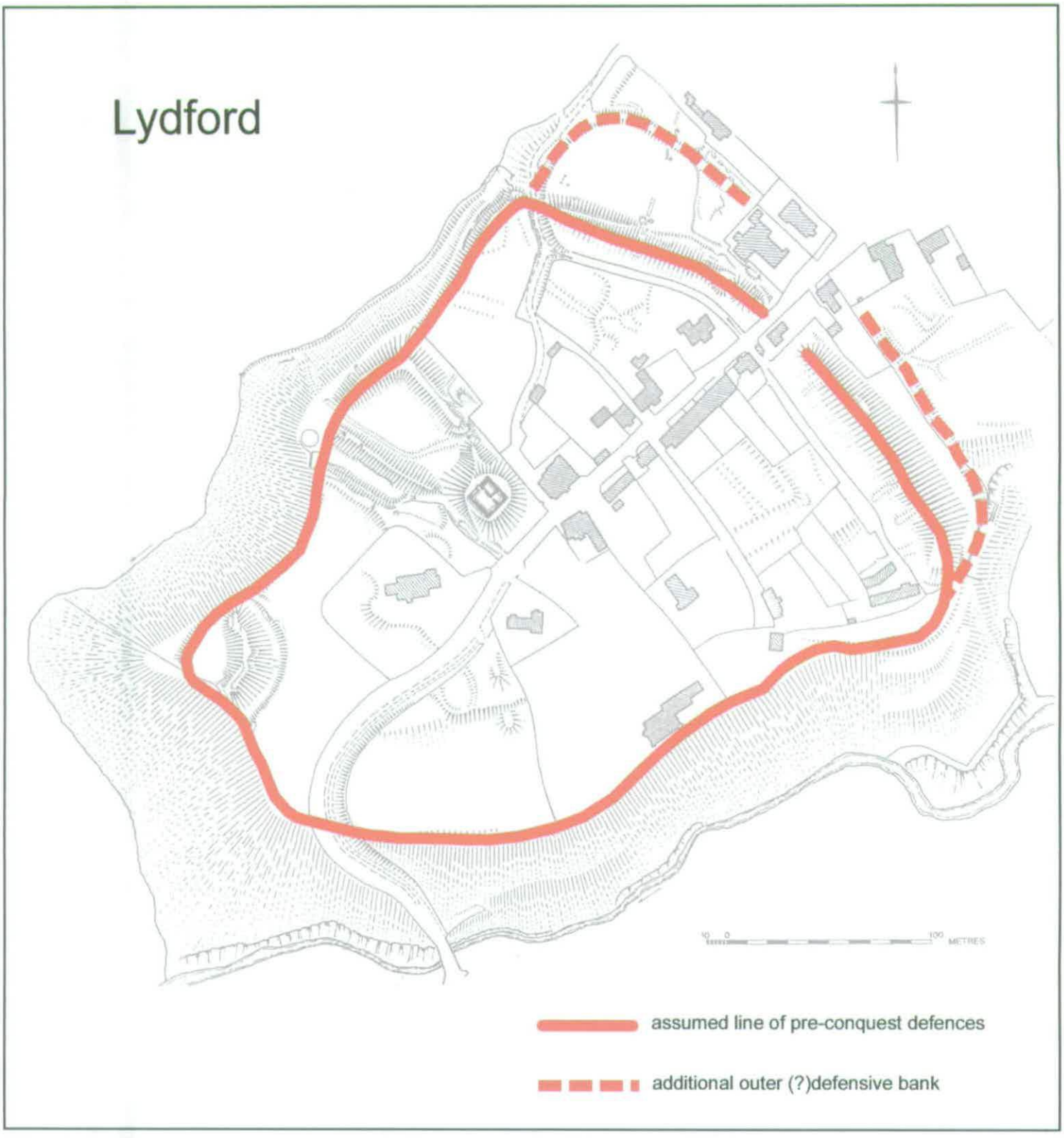


Fig. 5. Interpretation plan highlighting the assumed line of pre-conquest defences and the position of the outer (?) defensive bank.

area approximately 20m wide, between the outer bank and the rampart.

It is curious to note that a later, probably post-medieval, hedgebank which runs parallel to the south-east section of this bank, has been built adjacent to and touching the west side of it rather than being built upon it.

The town wall

The town defences are assumed to have followed the lip of the natural escarpment forming an enclosing circuit. Although Addyman's excavations remain unpublished, among the information which is available is the assertion that the town wall probably once extended around the whole town. This is based on excavated evidence recorded beneath the earthworks of the Norman castle (Wilson & Hurst 1965, 170). Also, during the excavation of Lydford Castle by Saunders in the 1960s, a narrow trench was cut across the north-west rampart of the bailey, which overlies the perimeter of the burh defences, and a section was recorded which demonstrated two earlier phases. The earliest of these, a low, spread turf bank with traces of an external stone revetment was assumed by Saunders to be the continuation of the earlier town bank (Saunders 1980, 151). If indeed there was a bank, which followed the entire course of the defensive circuit, it is likely to have been less substantial than the surviving examples on the north end of the burh, described above, as little or no earthwork evidence of it survives. Slight traces of a spread and very shallow (*c.* 0.2m high) backscarp survive between the earlier and later castles, at the edge of the natural escarpment (f) but this is the only section where such a feature could be observed and along all the other accessible sections of the circuit, no such bank is present.

The southernmost section of the assumed line of the circuit, is delineated today by a stone revetted ha ha wall, which has been completely refurbished with a granite facing in recent years (g). Surplus soil and disturbed ground is still in evidence from this work. Below the wall the natural slopes are the least precipitous for the whole of the promontory and the defences here must have relied heavily on the use of a timber palisade. A small-scale archaeological investigation by the National Trust took place here in 1990, revealing that the original rampart was north of the present boundary.

For the remainder of the circuit on the south side and for the section bounding the north-west side of plot E, there is no earthwork evidence of a bank other than the terrace near South Gate Cottages, described above.

On the north-west section of the circuit (h) a track is cut into the slope leading from the north corner of the burh, to the north-west outer end of the castle bailey, where the track widens into a level terrace at the foot of the bailey bank (j). It is difficult to pinpoint a date for this feature. It could originally have been associated with the castle, perhaps before the bailey was constructed. Alternatively it may be much more recent and built to give access to the sewage works which was in existence by 1953 (OS 1:2500). It is notable however, that parts of the bank which form the south side of the track are revetted with stone and are likely to be much earlier than 20th century.

The Norman castle

The Norman castle is sited on the south-west tip of the promontory. It consists of a substantial crescentic bank with external ditch, which annexes one corner of the pre-conquest town. This half ringwork is believed to have been erected shortly after the Norman Conquest in the late

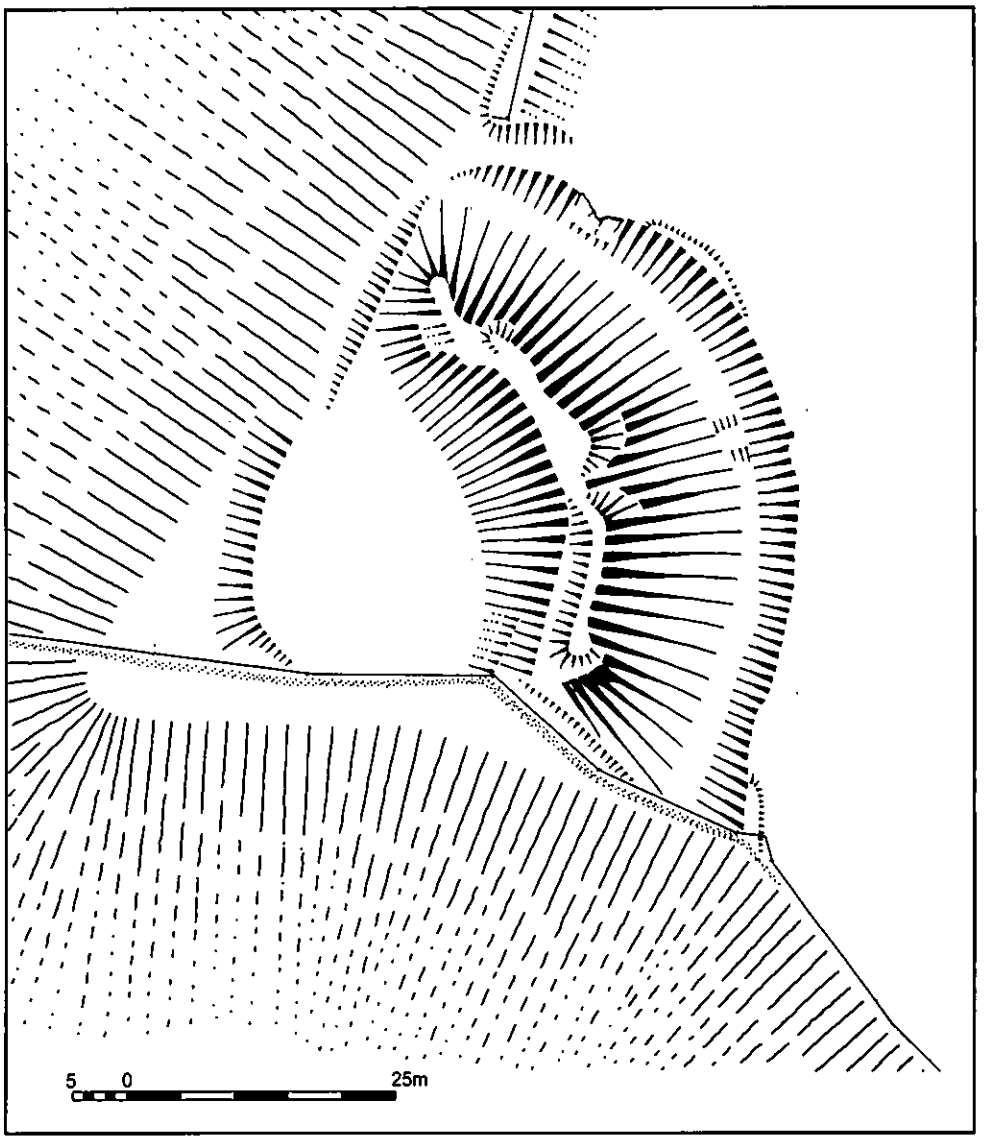


Fig. 6. 1:500 earthwork plan of the Norman castle.

1060s though was occupied only briefly, and was probably abandoned before the construction of the late 12th-century castle (Saunders 1980, 127). A transect was cut across the bank and ditch of the ringwork by Addyman in the 1960s, when a large portion of the interior was also excavated. Some of the findings were set out in a brief interim report:

> The burnt-out remains of five timber and earth buildings were revealed, set close together behind the rampart, their inward-facing ends being flanked by deeply set, rough stone paving. Charred post-stumps remained where protected by the collapsed rampart, thus allowing an unexpectedly complete plan to be recovered of four of the five buildings. The buildings, more or less rectangular, were 8ft to 12ft (2.6 – 3.9m) wide and 24ft to 25ft (7.8 - 8.1m) long, with earth, clay or shillet walls about 1ft 6in (0.48m), faced externally with wattle woven round posts. The posts, sometimes set only 6in (0.15m) apart, were usually 6in (0.15m) by 3 in (7.5cm) trunk-sectors. The buildings were subdivided internally.... The rampart was revetted internally with massive posts (post holes up to 4ft 6in (1.46m) deep), and though no external revetment-posts were located a box rampart can be presumed.

Over 5cwt (254kg) of charred grain was recovered, together with finds of an 11th – 12th century character (Wilson & Hurst 1965, 196).

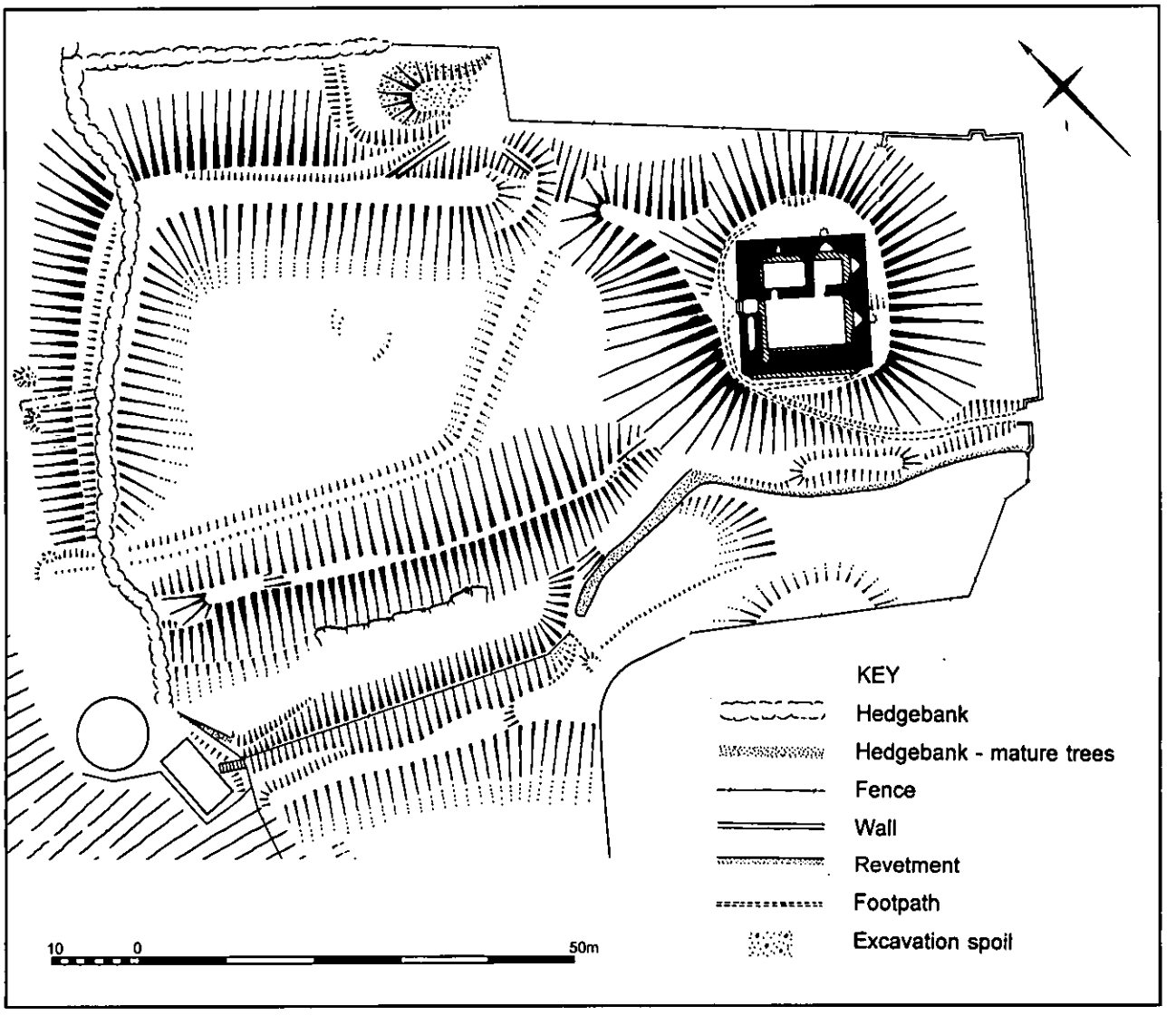


Fig. 7. EH 1:500 earthwork plan of Lydford Castle.

The earth bank is up to 25m thick at base and stands to a maximum height of 5m from the base of the ditch. The rampart is crescentic in plan measuring 55m from end to end (in a straight line). The external ditch has sharply-defined sides, rock-cut in places, and is on average 3m deep. A low, narrow bank crosses the base of the ditch in the approximate centre of the arc and this aligns with an indentation in the bank, near the summit. It is not known if this is the position of an original feature, such as a timber causeway entrance, or represents later interference, such as unrecorded excavation, or possibly it marks the erosion caused by the route of a barrow run, created during archaeological excavations.

The southern end of the bank and ditch are truncated by the modern hedge and the promontory, beyond which they do not continue, whereas that to the north has a bullnosed, terminal appearance. It seems possible that part of the southern end has slumped down the steep slope. The interior of the ringwork is approximately level, with the west, open side defined by a curved scarp, beyond which the steep slopes of the promontory fall away. It is worth noting that the 1st edition OS map (Fig. 2) depicts a more complete ringwork, though it is not known if this was due to elaboration by the OS or if the earthwork was indeed once much larger.

Lydford Castle

Historical aspects of the later castle have been outlined by Saunders, together with a report on the extensive research excavation which took place within the castle precinct in the 1960s (Saunders 1980). To summarise the structural history: the first stone tower was built in 1195 as a prison for detaining royal prisoners and consisted simply of an immensely strong square, stone tower. A second phase, attributable to the late 13th century, when the castle was gaining importance as the Stannary Gaol, involved demolishing part of the original structure and adding two more storeys to the tower then earthing up the sides of the original lower section to form a motte. A narrow, rectangular bailey was added in the remaining space between the tower and the earlier town wall. Why, what was essentially a purpose built prison had always assumed the outward appearance of a defended castle is something of an enigma and remains the subject of debate. The prison remained in use through much of the post-medieval period but according to a report of 1650, it was in a serious state of disrepair. Repairs were recorded in 1716 and 1733, and when the site is next reported on in the early 19th century its final decline was apparent (Saunders 1980, 135). Lydford Castle was given to the then Ministry of Works by the Duchy of Cornwall in 1932 and consolidation work began in the 1950s. Excavations in the late 1950s and early 1960s concentrated on the stone structure and its mound. The interior of the bailey remains unexcavated.

The tower is precisely square measuring 14.5m with extant walls of up to 2.1m thick. The earthen motte is 45m by 35m and post-dates the original stone structure, being built against the original tower. The excavations revealed that the motte was once surrounded by a ditch of approximately 4.5m deep (Saunders 1980, Fig. 4), though no trace of this survives as an earthwork. On the Tithe map of 1848 two buildings are shown built into the eastern base of the motte. One of these still existed in 1882 (OS 1st edition, Fig. 2). Neither remain though the fireplace of one is visible in the wall which now forms the northern perimeter of the motte and a blocked doorway is visible on the wall adjacent to the street. The motte must have been restored after the demolition of these buildings.

To the north-east of the motte is an roughly rectangular bailey consisting of substantial earth banks enclosing an area of approximately 60m by 40m (0.24 ha). The southern rampart has steep sides and is up to 15 m thick at base. On the southern exterior, the slope is precipitous where a deep rock cut-ditch of 9m deep and 10m wide, runs parallel to part of the bank. Some upcast from the ditch has been deposited on the southern exterior, forming a shallow ridge. This is now surmounted by a modern track. The western corner of the bailey and the continuation of the ditch has been disturbed by the imposition of a 20th century sewage works and the area is currently inaccessible due to dense vegetation. The precise relationship between the southern and western sections of rampart remains unresolved as a result.

Although a modern hedge runs along the crest of the western rampart, partially confusing the evidence, it is apparent that there is no break between the northern and western section of rampart at the northern corner and it is effectively a continuous bank with a 90° return. The bullnose appearance, recorded by Saunders, is apparently a misinterpretation (Saunders 1980, Fig. 3). The western rampart sits on the edge of the scarp, which originally formed the town wall, and the bank spreads down onto a terrace just below. This terrace could be a natural geological feature but appears to be associated with the trackway described above.

The north-west and north-east ramparts are more spread on the bailey interior than that on the southern side, being up to 21m wide at base. Before meeting with the motte there is a breach in the bank. This area was excavated by Saunders, who established that the breach was probably a later entrance and that the bailey had been built after the motte ditch. The bailey was later merged with the motte at this point when the ditch was filled in. The current earthwork evidence for the southern section of rampart where it meets the motte (not yet excavated) could similarly be interpreted in this way whereby the bailey was added to the motte.

The external ditch to the north-east is less well defined than that on the southern side and, assuming it has not been filled in, at only 4.5m is not as deep as that to the south. The external lip of the ditch is barely visible and is disguised by a modern hedge. A small rectangular plot marked on both the tithe and 1st edition OS maps, built into the ditch, survives as a single 0.4m high earthen bank bridging the ditch. Spoil from the 1960s excavations, surplus to that required for backfilling, has been dumped within this plot.

The interior of the bailey is not level and has a hollowed appearance caused partially by the slight gradient of the north-east and north-west ramparts. An old hedge line follows the interior of the southern rampart before deviating to the north-east, to meet the breach on the north-west side of the bailey. Some mature pine trees lie along the line of the hedge which was, according to Saunders, a field boundary until 1960 (Saunders 1980, 123). Today it consists of a low earthwork bank, of up to 5m wide and 0.5m high, probably representing all that remains of a demolished Devon bank.

The burh interior

The interior of the burh contains evidence of earlier street layouts, reflected both in the layout of the modern village and through earthwork evidence. Fossilised elements of the probable pre-conquest layout have long been assumed, manifest by the arrangement of a central, arterial street with secondary lanes leading off at right angles on both sides. This may represent modern survival of a planned layout from the earliest days of the settlement. It is plausible that the original entrance into the burh was, as it is now, in the centre of the rampart, aligned with the road, but whether the road continued through the southern end of the site as it does today has to be questioned as a second entrance on this side would seriously weaken the defences.

The only other surviving lane within the burh, which is a branch from the lane beside Town Farm, enters through the northern corner of the town wall, and runs diagonally to the area behind the Castle Inn. The track, which is sunken to several metres in places, seems unlikely to be part of the assumed pre-conquest planned layout: its alignment is completely at odds with any other component of the layout, and its course has slighted both the town wall rampart (c) and the smaller outer bank (d).

The eastern corner of the town is known as the South Gate and there is a tradition that a trackway entered the town at this point having ascended from a ford on the River Lyd to the north. This is quite plausible as a trackway is visible leading up from the Lyd tributary to the garden of South Gate Cottages. From here the track could have carried on along the earthwork terrace (c). What period the track and entrance may date from is uncertain, but it is unlikely to be an original feature.

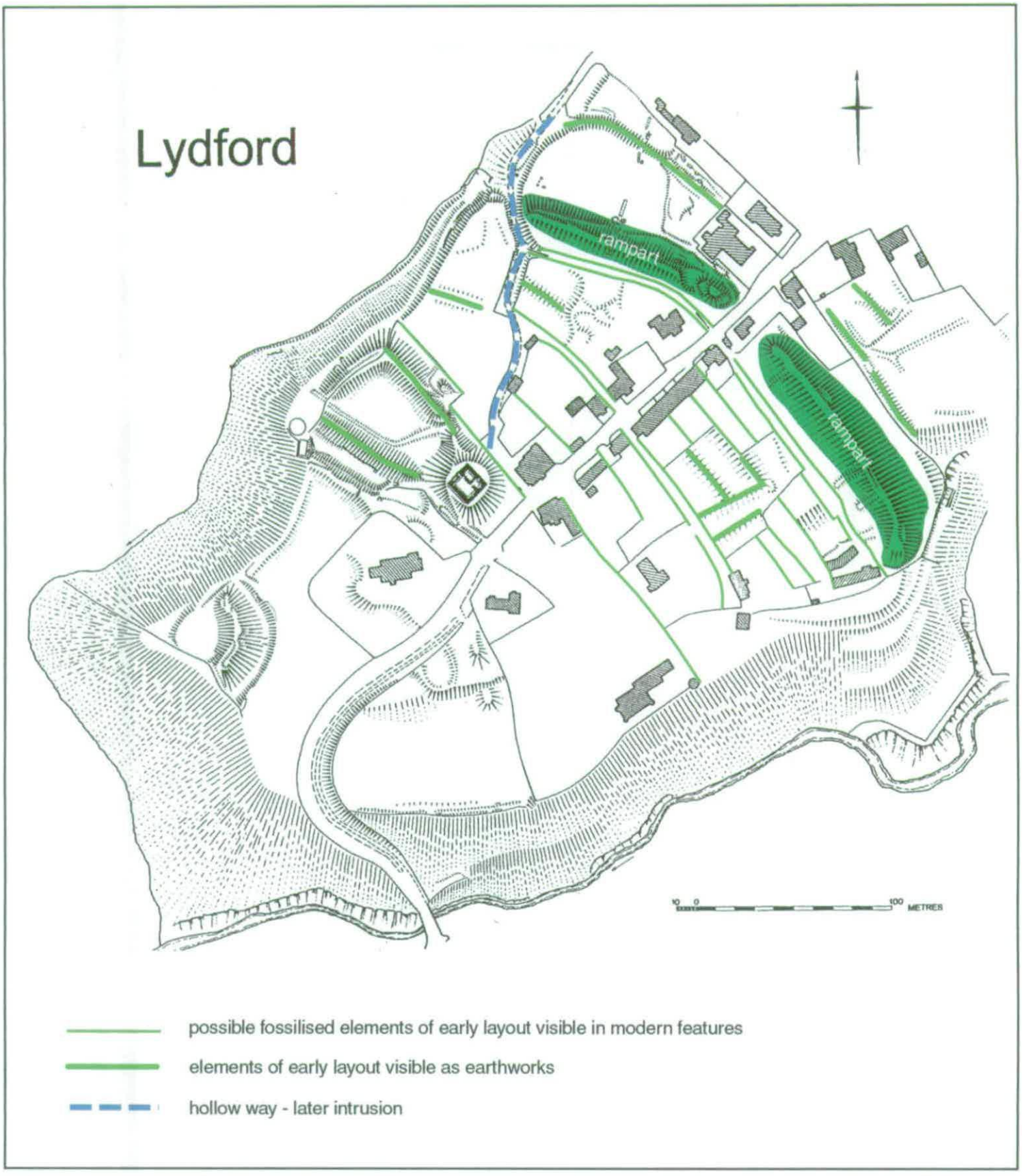


Fig. 8. 1:1000 (reduced) interpretation highlighting possible extant and fossilised elements of an earlier street layout

The plateau on which the burh was established, is not flat and the south side has a distinct slope, most marked in field B. The main street and its associated settlement is on more or less level ground, while plot F, currently occupied by the house called Olde Stone, is on a small inner rise.

Lydford's importance as a town declined sharply after the 14th century, despite the Stannary Gaol sustaining its role until much later. Although we can never be certain how densely populated the town was at its zenith, we know that in 1300 it had only 48 burgesses and by 1600 only 16 or 18 houses remained. The interior layout today has altered little since the time of the tithe map of 1848 (1839), with some buildings having been demolished while others have been erected since. It is notable that with the exception of the South Gate Cottages area, the majority of settlement to survive into the 20th century is adjacent to the main street. It seems quite plausible that the areas behind the main street now occupied by gardens have remained undisturbed since the population decline in the 17th century.

Several gardens and other parcels of land have been investigated as part of the survey, revealing additional earthworks, which have not appeared on any plan of Lydford previously published. In plots A, B, D, E, and F there has been no building development since at least the time of the tithe map, if not long before and there is every reason to believe that some of the earthworks represent elements of earlier town layout rather than modern landscaping (*nb names in brackets refer to tithe map field names*)

Plot B (Brim Close)
This field has the steepest gradient of all those within the pre-conquest town, the southern perimeter of which is defined by the east-west stone revetment half way down the slope. It is currently used for grazing. The most interesting feature, in the north corner of the field is a low, apparently circular earthwork, built into the curved section of a substantial lynchet. The diameter of the earthwork rim is 18m and the bank is approximately 7m thick by 0.4m maximum height. The position of this feature, on an artificially levelled terrace, is suggestive of a possible structure, though why the earthwork appears circular is unclear. It is likely that archaeological excavations which occurred in the 1960s, (Addyman unpublished), as part of the road widening scheme, would have encountered the northern sector of this feature. To the west of this earthwork are two, turf-covered linear mounds. These could represent dumping of material though they do not appear recent enough to be from the excavations.

Plot C, Gorge House(Parsonage Meadow)
This area is now occupied by the gardens of Gorge House. It is the area which reflects the greatest changes since the time of the tithe map in 1848; several buildings having now been demolished, with new structures in their place, and the gardens have been landscaped. Despite this a slight drop in levels may be detected running from east to west across the centre of the plot which may be a component of earlier occupation. This change of level was noted but not surveyed.

Plot D, paddock (Furzey Meadow)
This enclosed area is currently used as a paddock. It is an approximate L shape and enclosed on all sides by walls which are coaxial to the street plan. The interior is divided by a series of linear earthworks. Two terraces, approximately 12m apart run from east to west in the

southern half of the field and these are met, at right angles by two low, spread banks in the northern half. All the earthworks are coaxial to the surviving walls and lanes, and probably represent earlier plot divisions associated with properties along the main street.

Plot E, paddock (Round Plot)
This small enclosure is defined on the north-west edge by the steep scarp of the town perimeter and, to the east, by the later hollow way which cuts through the north corner of the town. The area is mainly devoid of substantial earthworks though a low, linear feature transecting the field, appears to represent a continuation of one of the north-west to south-east side streets.

Plot F, Olde Stone (Hunt's Meadow)
The dwelling known as Olde Stone, is of 20th century date though the garden to the north-west has suffered little interference other than the planting of small trees since the 1960s, when it appears as a paddock on an aerial photograph of that time (Cam. ANM 16). The major earthwork is a north-south, serpentine terrace. This is a comparatively strong earthwork 0.5m high, with a 5m spread. Meeting the terrace at approximate right angles is a low linear bank, which extends to the north-west to meet the modern garden end wall. This, like that in plot D, could be evidence of earlier occupation and plot layout. Some amorphous earthworks in the southern end of the garden could also be associated with an earlier period but must be viewed with caution as they could possibly be a result of levelling for the present dwelling.

The Churchyard
The churchyard was not surveyed in detail, as it was considered that the burial activity from the early modern and modern periods would have obliterated any earlier earthwork evidence. However, a large spread scarp to the west of the building was recorded, which represents a moderate change in levels within the churchyard. This probably is the extended construction platform created for the present stone church, of 13th to 15th century date. The present church boundary is rectangular in form and is substantially higher than the adjacent field (A). The externally revetted boundary wall has been refurbished recently when the corners were rounded.

The extended medieval village
Settlement in Lydford, both in the past and present, has not been restricted to the area contained within the boundary of the original burh. At some point occupation began to extend north-east along the ridge of the plateau and it is notable that the houses and gardens to the south of the road as it leaves the burh, have the characteristic burgage plot layout and an open field system is visible on the OS map extending north and north-east, up to the edge of Battishill Down. The most likely period for this expansion is when the town was still thriving and important in the 11th and 12th centuries when it was recorded in Domesday that there were 28 burgesses within the borough and 40 outside (Thorn & Thorn 1985, 100b). No recorded excavations have taken place outside the town wall, but an archaeological assessment was made in advance of alterations to Town Farm on the north side of the road, when the archaeological potential of this area was acknowledged (Weddell 1992).

Plot H, to the rear of Barnhayes (Bury's Meadow)
Earthwork evidence of extra-mural burgage plots survives in the field to the east of the burh

rampart. It consists of a level stance, and a right angle linear boundary which align with prevailing axis of the street plan and was clearly a croft boundary associated with houses adjacent to the road in Silver Street, an area now occupied by a pre-1848 house and its associated garden plot.

CONCLUSION

The historical account for Lydford suggests a complex story of over 1100 years continuous occupation, with early prosperity followed by centuries of decline. Surprisingly however, only a handful of documents actually mention Lydford in the period for which it is so renowned and much of what we know of the pre-conquest burh is based on scholarly interpretation of this material rather than directly from the primary sources themselves. Archaeologically we are little better off. The major evidence for the burh is the large defensive ramparts and topographically, the street layout is reminiscent of other Alfredian burhs in the Kingdom of Wessex such as Wareham and Winchester. The only research excavations designed to examine pre-conquest Lydford remain unpublished and more recent investigations have been on a very minor scale. The pre-conquest defences which are believed to have defined the edge of the promontory do not survive as earthworks and the only evidence of their existence was glimpsed during excavations.

The apparent absence of a visible ditch associated with the large rampart is puzzling. Many writers have assumed its existence and two shallow ditches were recorded on the northern section of rampart during Addyman's excavations (Addyman 1997). It may be assumed that the removal of material for the substantial rampart would have created a correspondingly sized ditch, as is normal for defensive earthworks of all ages. However, no earthwork ditch is visible and on the east side (a) in particular, it is very unlikely that one ever existed as the ground continues to slope away right down to the smaller, outer bank (e).

In all recorded excavations at Lydford, evidence of Anglo-Saxon occupation, particularly datable finds, has proved hard to identify. They have also demonstrated greater survival of evidence from the medieval and post-medieval periods than from the earliest times. It seems likely that the many subtle earthworks recorded within gardens and paddocks at Lydford, during the survey are later elements of the settlement. Some of these earthworks however, do conform to the alignment of the allegedly early street plan, while others such as the circular feature in plot B apparently do not. It is notable that this alignment has survived only at the north-west end of the village, while at the opposite end the imposition of the Norman castles and the church appear to represent a more random alignment.

The importance of Lydford in an archaeological sense has long been attributed to its decline as a town in the post-medieval period and lack of modern development, which means theoretically that evidence from all periods remains mostly undisturbed or not built over. Ironically a result of this scenario is that few modern excavations have taken place in advance of development, as has occurred in bigger pre-conquest towns where constant development has led to many such opportunities. Lydford is now a Conservation Area within a National Park and much of it is scheduled and unlikely to be developed at all in the near future with the result that only highly justifiable research excavations are now likely. These factors together with the lack of published information from excavations, means that the excavated evidence needed to understand such a town is not available. This survey has attempted where possible

to interpret earthwork remains, but until more excavated evidence becomes available, our understanding of Lydford is unlikely to progress further.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Our understanding of Lydford gained through archaeological research and our ability to confidently interpret the evidence, is still seriously hampered by the lack of published material from the 1960s excavations. Making this material available to other researchers through either an archive or preferably publication by the excavator must remain the number one priority for Lydford.

The realisation that the extended medieval settlement survives, not only as topographic evidence but also as archaeological evidence, was noted in the *Lydford Conservation Area Study*. The present survey has confirmed this and earthworks have now been recorded, close by the town walls. A useful programme of further study could assess the extent of this settlement by fieldwork and possibly geophysical survey in the area to the north-east of the village.

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NOTES

1. Although the Burghal Hidage is dated AD 919, current thinking puts the period it was discussing as pre-AD 900 (see Davis 1982).

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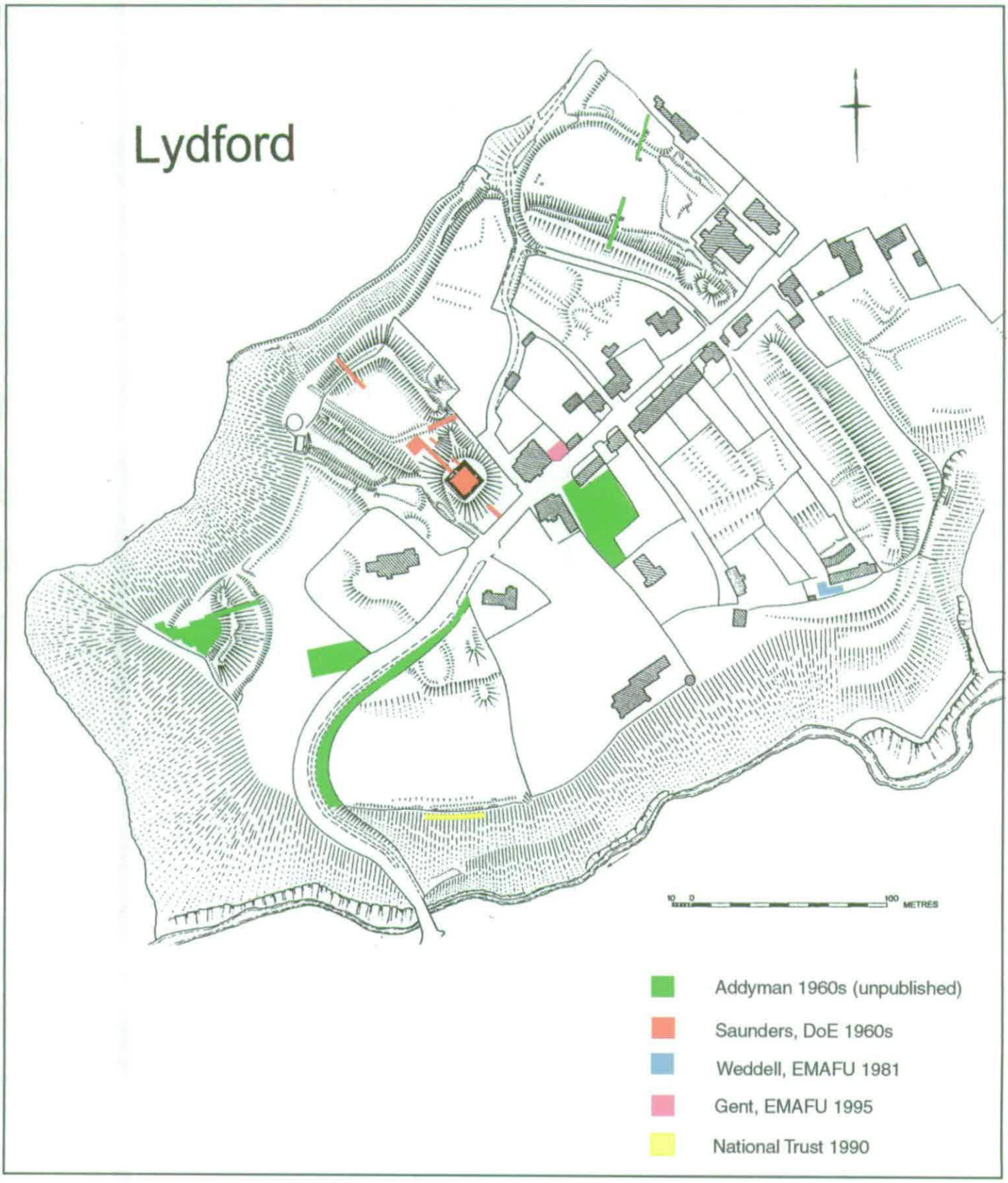
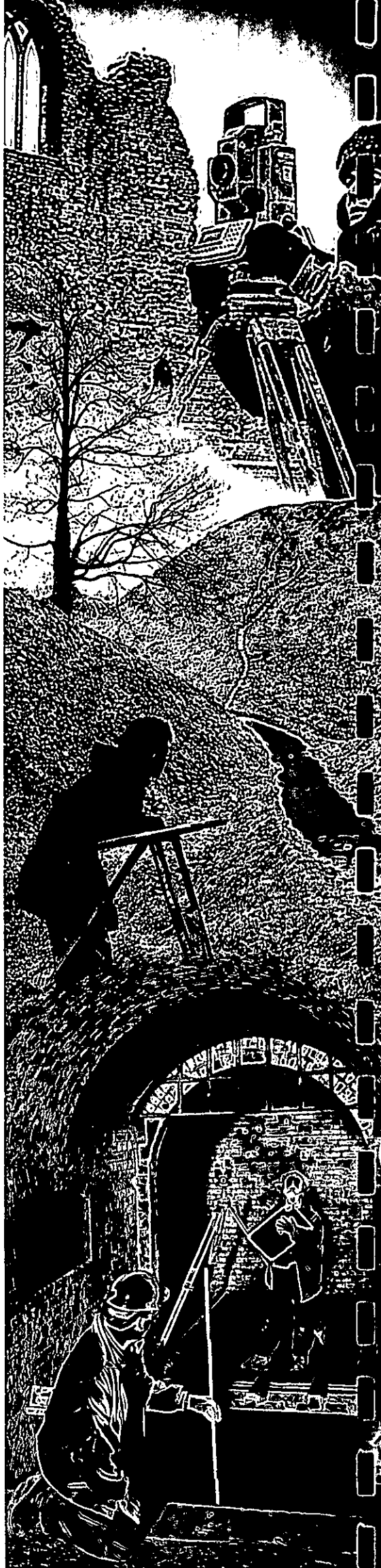
APPENDIX 1



Plan of Lydford showing position of major archaeological excavation trenches from 1960s to present (nb position and extent of trenches is approximate), (after Biddle 1976; Saunders 1980; Weddell 1981; Gent 1995)



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