

**Archaeological investigation at
Caludon Castle,
Farren Road, Coventry**



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Summary

Archaeological investigations at Caludon Park, Farren Road, Coventry revealed no evidence associated with the medieval Caludon Castle and no conclusive evidence of a water management system associated with the mill dam or fishponds. A possible ditch or pit was revealed, but as this would be unaffected by any proposed flood alleviation scheme it was not examined further. The geological natural sandy clay was overlain for the most part by layers of 20th century date. These deposits were much more extensive than anticipated and no further excavation was necessary.

1. Introduction

1.1 Coventry City Council own the recreation ground, Caludon Park, Farren Road, Coventry which includes Caludon Castle (Scheduled Ancient Monument No 21615) and a second moated site (Scheduled Ancient Monument No 21616). As part of an appraisal of the site and attempts to identify solutions to localised flooding problems affecting homes on Farren Road the City Development Directorate wanted to utilise a possible medieval water management system to reduce the risk of local flooding. It was hoped that an archaeological investigation might identify culverts or channels associated with a medieval dam and fishpond shown on early maps which could be used or mirrored by a flood alleviation scheme. The proposed area of investigation contains important archaeological remains, associated with the 12th century Caludon Castle and a possible associated mill. The proposed investigation could reveal other archaeological remains and it was therefore agreed that a programme of archaeological fieldwork be undertaken to evaluate and record archaeological deposits or finds revealed during the work.

1.2 A programme of fieldwork in accordance with a Brief prepared by Iain Soden, City Planning Archaeologist (dated February 2003) was commissioned from the Warwickshire Museum and carried out in April 2003. This report presents the result of that programme. The site archive will be stored at The Herbert Museum and Art Gallery, Coventry under the site code CC03.

2. Location

2.1 The site of Caludon Castle lies within Caludon Park recreation ground, on the south side of Farren Road, in the south-eastern suburb of the city of Coventry (Fig. 1). The site is in the former parish of Wyken and centred around national grid reference SP 3742 8024. The area of investigation is currently the grassy slopes of the embankment, which provides access from the Farren Road entrance into the middle of the park.

2.2 The underlying geology of the site is Wolston Clay (British Geological Survey 1994).

3. Aims and Methods of the Archaeological Investigation

3.1 The programme was primarily concerned with identifying the nature and position of a possible medieval mill race or channels, conduits or leats linking the mere through the dam to the fishponds. The suggested medieval water management system would have controlled the water for the mill and fishpond(s) as well as acting

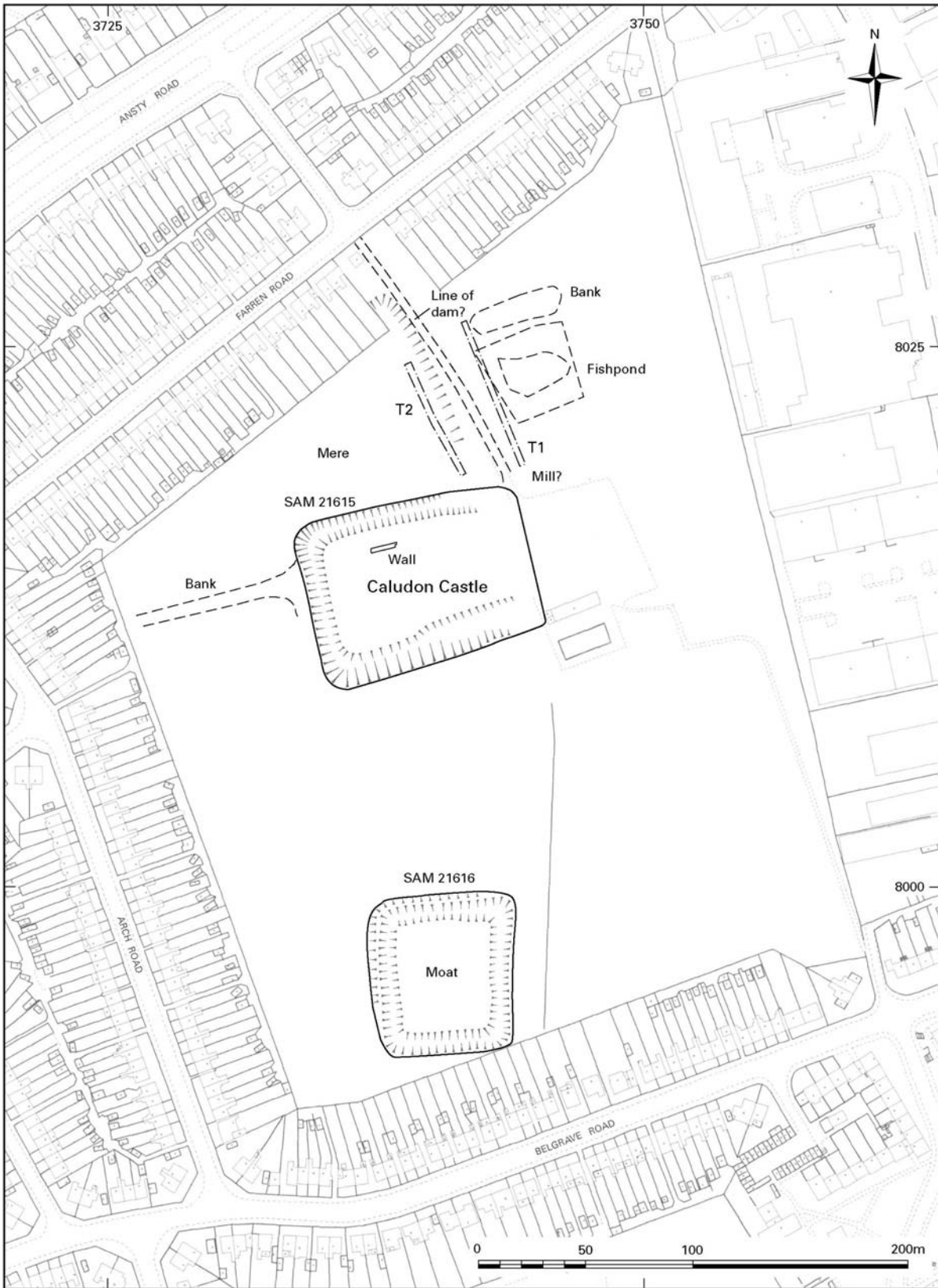


Fig. 1: Site and trench location

as an overflow. If evidence of this nature survived it was hoped that it might be utilised or mirrored in order to remove excess flood water through the existing embankment.

3.2 The archaeological investigation was to consist of two evaluation trenches towards the foot of the embankment in order to identify and record any evidence of the channels. These were to be initially 40m long, but if nothing was revealed they were to be extended by a further 40m, if agreed following liaison between CCC Leisure Division, the Planning Department and Warwickshire Museum.

3.3 Particular emphasis was placed on recording the potential line of a channel, but it was possible that other features or deposits of archaeological importance might be revealed during the work, including foundations of a bridge or possible gatehouse, but these would be subject to minimal investigation in order to establish their nature, date and character.

3.4 All archaeological remains revealed were to be recorded the Warwickshire Museum's standard archaeological recording system.

4. Brief Archaeological and Historical Background

4.1 Caludon Castle is believed to have been originally built in the late 12th century. The house was owned by the Segrave family and by 1239 it was described as a manor. The castle or house appears to be the only permanent nobleman's residence in the vicinity of Coventry (VCH 1969, 121) and was also owned by the Mowbray and Berkeley families (Dugdale 1730).

4.2 The castle buildings were probably rebuilt in 1305 when John Seagrave received a license to crenellate from Edward I. A moat enclosing an area of

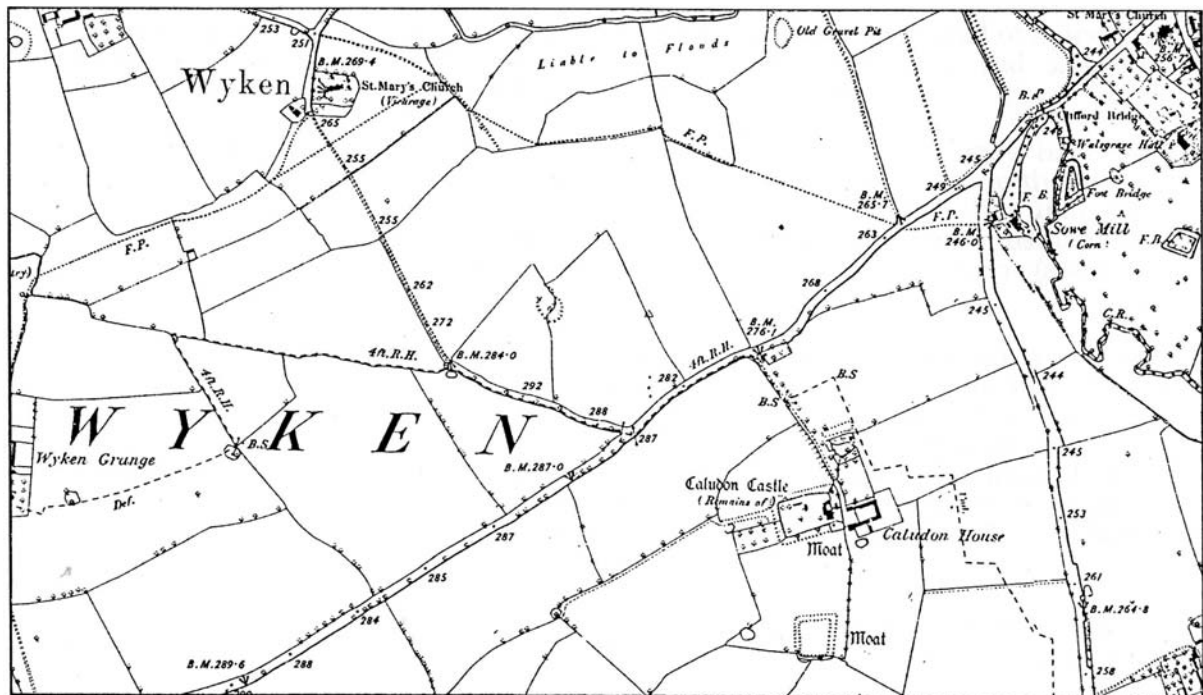


Fig. 2 Detail from 1st edition Ordnance Survey 1:10560 map of 1887

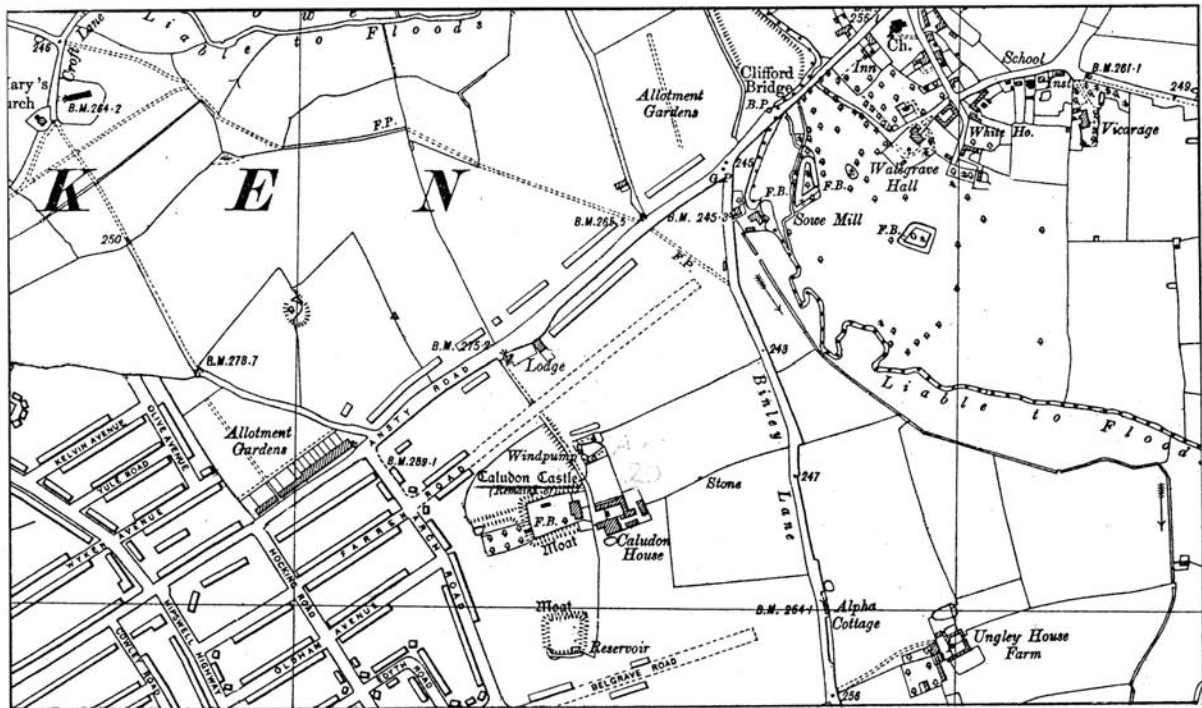


Fig. 3: Detail of Ordnance Survey 1:10560 map of 1938

approximately one acre was probably also added at this time. The moat is visible on the north, west and south sides of the castle. A further license was granted to crenellate in 1354 when rebuilding and repairs were carried out to the chapel and the castle itself.

4.3 The only visible wall of the castle, probably formed the north wall of a first floor great hall, was constructed of grey sandstone with contrasting red sandstone dressing. The wall includes two tall 14th century tracery windows.

4.4 The castle was bought by Thomas Morgan in 1631, but it may have been damaged at the end of the English Civil War during a similar period to the walls of Coventry having been largely destroyed by order of King Charles II in 1662 (VCH 1969, 23). The remainder of the castle fell into disrepair and was partly dismantled to provide stone for local buildings, including Caludon House and farm (shown on Figs. 2 and 3).

4.5 North of the moat was a mere, which may have provided water for a mill, held back by an earthen bank at the eastern end which also served as a causeway for the access route to the castle from Farren Road,. On the eastern side of the dam was a fishpond or possibly fishponds probably fed via a channel from the mere and then drained eastwards to the River Sowe. The mill may have been located at the southern end of the causeway. The positions of the mere, fishponds and possible channel are shown on the 1887 to 1948 Ordnance Survey maps (Ordnance Survey 1887, 1938, Figs. 2 and 3, and 1948).

4.6 A second moated site (SAM 21616) situated 190m south of Caludon Castle (Fig. 1) and it is likely that it was associated with the castle during the medieval period.

5. Trial Trenching

5.1 The two evaluation trenches were positioned close to the base of the slope of the existing embankment, but not at the bottom of slope. They were opened by a JCB-type machine opened the trenches timber off-cuts being used to level the machine and reduce the risk of sinkage into soft ground.

5.2 The trenches measured 1.6m wide and were excavated using a toothless ditching bucket under archaeological supervision. The trenches were initially 38-39m long, but both were extended by 34m following the initial findings and the result of a project review meeting.

Trench 1

5.3 The trench which measured 72.7m in length was aligned roughly north to south and situated on the eastern side of the embankment (Fig. 1). The original trench was 38.7m long. This was extended by approximately 34m following a meeting to agree further work in order to try and locate the possible channel or leat. No evidence of the leat was revealed in the extended trench. It was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.7m. The deeper part of the trench was partially backfilled following the collapse of part of the eastern section.

5.4 At the southern end of the trench geological grey brown natural sandy clay (104) was encountered at c. 1.4m below the existing ground surface. In the northern half of the trench the natural clay was not revealed and it had probably been truncated.

5.5 Along the full extent of the trench was a 1.2-1.4m thick deposit (103) of demolition rubble containing bricks, concrete fragments, sandstone and other domestic rubbish. The mixed layer contained late 19th and 20th century material, including house features such as fireplace surrounds and light fixtures. A further 0.20m thick layer of brick rubble (102) occurred over other demolition material (Fig. 6). The bricks were of the large factory made variety and probably dated to the later 19th and 20th century. The rubble layer also included several very large blocks, in excess of 1.2m long, of roughly faced grey sandstone. The deposit sequence continued along the length of the trench. However, the rubble deposit increased in depth at the northern end of the trench and this may coincide with the western edge of the fishponds (Fig. 1, Trench 1). However no archaeological deposits below the rubble deposit were revealed.

5.6 Sealing the demolition deposits was a layer of red clay with occasional sandstone fragments (101). Whilst it was possible to identify the three layers (103,102,101) it is highly likely that these were deposited during a single event.

Trench 1 summary

Context numbers	100-106			
	<i>Original trench</i>		<i>Extension</i>	
	<i>South end</i>	<i>North end</i>	<i>South end</i>	<i>North end</i>
	0m	38m	44m	72m
Ground surface (turf)	81.4m OD	81.25m OD	81.30m OD	80.60m OD
Top of demolition debris	81.2m OD	81.1m OD	81.15m OD	80.50m OD
Total depth of demolition deposits	1.25m	1.3m	1.3m	1.5m+
Natural	79.95m OD	79.8m OD	78.6m OD	Not revealed

5.7 Topsoil and the existing turf line (100) sealed the demolition deposits and formed the existing ground surface.

5.8 At the southern end of the trench a service trench (105) was revealed with a lead pipe and backfill (106). This pipe may have originally fed water to pre-existing buildings within the area now occupied by the park or for previous use in the park itself.

Trench 2

5.9 The 62m long trench was situated on the western side of the embankment with the southern end 4m away from the moat and the Scheduled Area of the castle. The deposits revealed in the trench were broadly similar to those in Trench 1. The original 39m long trench was extended northwards following the result of a liaison meeting. The extended trench was positioned away from the likely extent of major root systems of established trees on the embankment and in relation to a previously excavated sump.

5.10 A layer of brown sandy clay (206) was revealed at the southern end of the trench. No finds were revealed in the deposit and it is most likely to be natural. A 0.28m thick layer of dark grey silty clay (203) occurred at the southern end of the trench. No finds were recovered from this deposit of probable alluvial silts and clays.

5.11 A possible ditch or pit cut (204) was revealed at the base of the trench, some 12m from the southern end of the trench. This was 1.4m wide and extended across the width of the trench. The feature appeared to contain a grey silty clay (205). No finds were recovered from the fill and the feature was not excavated due to health and safety considerations and the fact that due to the depth it would not be affected by the proposed drainage trench or other flood scheme solution.

5.12 A deposit of reddish clay (202) was revealed in the trench. This reduced in thickness towards the western side of the trench reflecting the slope of the embankment. There was no suggestion that this formed a lining or puddled clay for the dam. It was associated with 20th century debris and appeared to be a dump similar to that recorded in Trench 1.

5.13 An extensive demolition deposit containing crushed brick rubble (201) was recorded, but this was not as thick as that in Trench 1.

Trench 2 summary

Context numbers	<i>Original trench</i>		<i>Extension</i>	
	<i>South end</i>	<i>North end</i>	<i>South end</i>	<i>North end</i>
	1m	36m	39m	58m
Ground surface (turf)	80.98m OD	80.47m OD	80.42m OD	79.94m OD
Top of demolition debris	80.83m OD	80.35m OD	80.30m OD	Not revealed
Total thickness of demolition deposits	1.27m	1.29m	1.25m	Not revealed
Natural	79.56m OD	79.06m OD	79.05m OD	Not revealed



Fig. 4: Machining of Trench 1



Fig. 5: Trench 2 and Caludon Castle

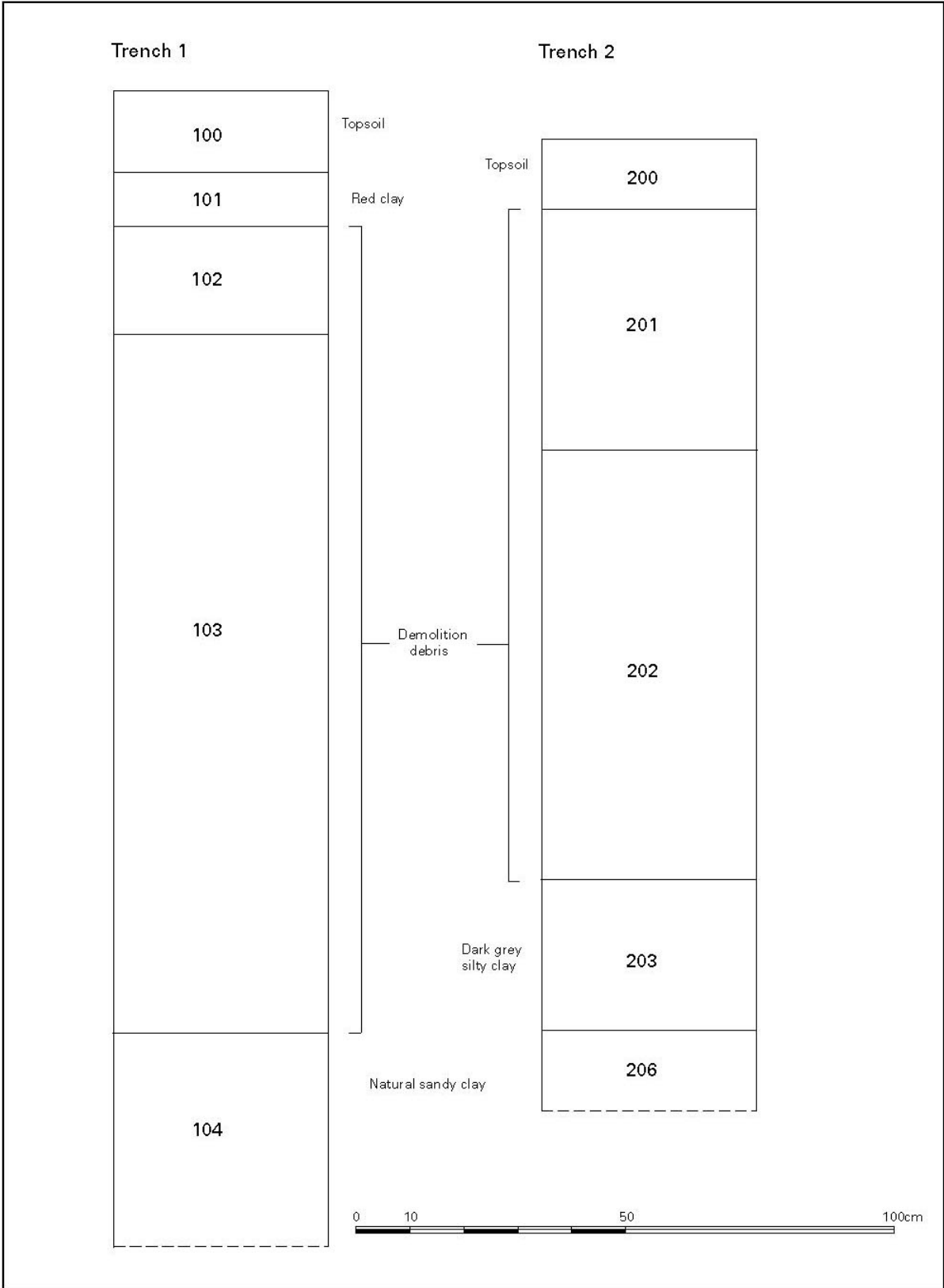


Fig. 6: Schematic section showing recorded archaeological deposits

5.14 The northern end of the trench coincided with the line of a pipe or service trench (207) and the edge of the existing sump. The edge of the sump and pipe trench were revealed, but no attempt was made to extend the trench into the sump or excavate deeper in this area in order to avoid any damage to the existing drainage system.

6. Conclusions

6.1 No evidence associated with the medieval Caludon Castle or any water management scheme linked with a mill or mill dam was revealed during the initial evaluation trenches or in the extended trenching.

6.2 However, it is possible that evidence for the south-western edge of the fishponds was revealed in Trench 1. An increased depth of demolition deposits 22m from the northern end of the trench coincided with the anticipated position of the fishpond (Fig. 1, Trench 1). It was not possible to examine the possible feature closely in order to establish its exact nature due to the depth of the trench. In Trench 2 a possible ditch fill was recorded, but only a small area was exposed in the trench and at a greater depth than was likely to be affected by a proposed flood alleviation solution. It was not possible to further examine the fills for dating evidence due to the depth of the trench.

6.3 The work revealed an unexpected depth of deposits overlying archaeological levels or geological natural and whilst no leat, culvert or channel was revealed, which could be utilised for the flood relief scheme the depth of deposits comprising rubble back fill was such that a pipe or drainage system could potentially be put in place without disturbing any archaeological deposits associated with the dam.

6.4 The rubble deposits included material from the latter part of the 20th century, such as surviving newspaper and metalwork, as well as 19th century material, such as brick and ironwork. However, it does appear to represent a single event. This is likely to have been the importing of demolition debris to widen and extend the embankment. This may have covered an earlier or original dam structure within the core of the embankment. The rubble is perhaps most likely to have been derived from the demolition of the Caludon House farm buildings, which would have formerly stood within the limits of the park. It is also possible that the rubble was derived from the clearance of WWII bomb damaged buildings in Coventry (I. Shaw *pers comm*)

6.5 Blocks of grey sandstone revealed in Trench 1 may well have been originally derived from Caludon Castle. The larger examples are probably much too large to transport considerable distance for reuse and is likely that stone from the castle was reused to build part of the farmhouse.

Acknowledgements

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Appendix: List of Contexts

<i>Context No.</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Comments</i>
Trench 1		
100	Topsoil	
101	Reddish clay	Levelling layer
102	Demolition rubble	Modern dump or levelling
103	Dark grey silty clay	Modern dump or levelling
104	Natural	
105	Service trench	Pipe
106	Fill of trench (105)	
Trench 2		
200	Topsoil	
201	Crushed brick	Levelling layer
202	Demolition rubble	Modern dump or levelling
203	Dark grey silty clay	Alluvial or flood wash
204	?Ditch cut	Possible channel
205	Fill of ?ditch (204)	
206	Natural	
207	Sump	