

North Worcestershire Archaeology Group



Olivers Mound, Shrawley, Worcestershire.

Metalwork Report.

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Metalwork Report.

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1. Introduction

All metalwork items found in the course of the Phases I, II, and III excavations of Olivers Mound, Shrawley (with the exception of one upholstery clout nail made of copper) were ferrous metal. The following report details the identification, analysis, and conclusion of the findings. No coins, or other dateable metal items, were found.

1.1 Acknowledgement

For archaeological advice I would like to thank Diana Huston BA. MA. AlFA.

R.D. Sproat B.Phil. MIED

Geology

2.1 Location

Olivers Mound is situated within Shrawley Wood, in the village of Shrawley, Worcestershire and is located at National Grid Reference SO 8133 6547.

2.2 Geology

The geology of the site is of a gravel bar¹ of fluvial (river transported) materials, created by the glacial flows southwards along the River Severn valley during the successive melts of the Pleistocene² in Britain, between about 110,000 years BP and 10,000 years BP, the so-called Devensian glaciations. The River Severn is considered to be a comparatively young river when Britain was joined to Europe and the river would have originally flowed north-westwards. The last and final major glacial period or ice age ended about 10,500 years ago when the great 'Lapworth Lake' in Shropshire melted sending vast volumes of melt water south-eastwards creating the River Severn as we see it today.

At least six different terraces³ of glacial deposits have been identified along the river channel and its tributaries. Olivers Mound sits on a spur of the Third Terrace on a bend on the western river bank, but the site was probably eroded away from much earlier and higher terraces. The underlying substrate of the site is of fine quartzitic sands and rounded gravels, clast⁴ size 1-5 cm, and Bunter Sandstone pebbles <15 cm with a framework of sand/humus matrix. The matrix does not appear to contain any corrosive agents that would adversely affect the composition of any metallic material found on site. Corrosion that has been detected is from natural atmospheric precipitation and soil based oxidation.

The underlying bedrock is of red and brown Lower Triassic New Red Sandstone of the Bromsgrove Series. Numerous quarries of this stone have been identified in the area.

¹ BAR – An elongate accumulation of sediment or bank within a river channel, formed where deposition occurs on a bend or a localised part of the river of low flow.

² PLEISTOCENE – The epoch between about 1.8 million to 10,000 years ago, during the Neogene Period. The Pleistocene in Great Britain was characterised by numerous glaciations interspaced with interglacials, or periods of warmer climatic stages.

³ TERRACE – A flood plain of an ancient river that has been cut through by later river channels.

⁴ CLAST – A fragment of rock or pebble that has been transported by the process of deposition, in this case by the river.

3. Methods of Identification

3.1 Retrieval of finds

All Items of metalwork were retrieved from site, placed in plastic bags, which were marked with site code, (OMS-08), Context number and Description of Find(s). After cleaning of humus material etc. and dried, they were stored in an airtight container along with a Silica Gel pack and placed in a secure location before being examined.

3.2 Identification of Finds

Each item was examined to ascertain its basic qualification as follows:

- Weight to the nearest gram of each discernable item or assemblage
- Measurement to the nearest 0.1 millimetre of length, width, breadth of each discernable item
- Artefact type e.g. nail, knife etc.

Each item or assemblage was categorised with its context location on site, description, the condition of the piece, and weight. The results were tabulated in Figure 1.

3.3. Data collection

The above data was tabulated onto a Microsoft Word Excel spreadsheet for analysis (see Figure 1).

The collections of nails in good condition were photographed and are shown in Figure 4. The Door Latch Striker(?), in context 8/003, (The Keep), was photographed and drawn, and appears in this report as Figures 7 & 8.

Site	Context	Object	Description - all dimensions in mm	Condition	Weight gms
1	1/002	unknown nails?	Small globular pieces of rusted iron - largest size 45 o/l x 20	v. poor	28
2	1/003	unknown	U shaped object. Legs 110 & 60. 15 gap. 9.5-5.7 sq sect	poor	54
3	1/003	Nail fragments	3 off - 50 o/l x 9-4.5 sq shank. 30 o/l x 6.2 sq shank. 30o/l x 5 sq shank	poor	14
4	1/003	Nail fragments	38 o/l no head. Shank 5-9-2.0 sq sect	v. poor	2
5	1/003	Nail fragments	28 o/l no head. Shank 9-6.4 sq sect	v. poor	8
6	1u/s	unknown	Small globular piece of rusted iron - 46 o/l x 13 x 8 shank	v. poor	8
7	1u/s	Brad nail	38 o/l x 5-3 head. Shank x 3 thick rect sect	poor	3
8	2/002	Slate Nail	30 o/l x 18 dia head broken in half. Shank 6.8-6.3 sq sect	good	6
9	2/002	Nail fragments	largest 60 o/l x 3 sq sect. Rust fragments	poor	8
10	2/002	Cartridge Case	4 off - Shotgun base - No. 12	poor	26
11	2/002	rust fragments	35 o/l x 5 dia - possible nails	v. poor	9
12	2/002	Nail fragments	30 o/l x 17 dia head. Broken in half. Shank 6.8-4.8 sq sect	v. poor	7
13	2/002	Nail fragments	38 o/l x 16 dia head full head. Shank 9-4.8 sq sect	v. poor	7
14	2/002	Clout Nail upholstery	37 o/l x 20.3 dia head. Curved edges. Shank 6-2.8 round sect. shank bent 45 deg to head. COPPER	good	6
15	2/003	Nail fragments	4 off fragments very degraded - largest recognisable nail 55 o/l x 19 head. Shank 9.3-2.2 dia?	v. poor	19
16	2/004	unknown	80 o/l x 10 x 5 thick straight piece of iron very degraded.	v. poor	14
17	2/004	Nail	33 o/l x (17 x 11) head. Shank 6.1-2.6	v. poor	5
18	2/004	Nail	69 o/l x 20 dia head broken in half. Shank 9.5-4.1 sq sect?	v. poor	13
19	2/004	Nail fragments	3 off fragments very degraded by rusting	v. poor	11
20	2/004	Nail fragments	Very degraded no discernable head or shank	v. poor	4
21	2/005	Nail fragments	Very degraded no discernable head or shank	v. poor	3
22	2/005	Knife Blade	2 off matching fragments - 70 o/l x 22.6 x 5 thick	poor	17
23	2/005	rust fragments	30 o/l x 8 dia - possible nails	v. poor	11
24	2/006	Nail fragments	Very degraded no discernable head or shank	v. poor	6
25	2/u/s	Nail fragments	Very degraded no discernable head or shank	v. poor	4
26	7/002	Nail	50 o/l x 20-18 round head. Shank 5-4 sq sect.	good	3
27	7/002	Nail & fragments	28 o/l x 15-9 head. Shank 5-3 sq sect	poor	3
28	7/003	Slate Nail	53 o/l x 18-14 round head. Shank 5.00 sq	good	6
29	8/003	Door Latch Striker	246 o/l x 44 high x 17 thick - see drawing D100	good	415
30	8/003	Clout Nail upholstery	23.6 o/l x 22.4 dia head. Curved edges. Shank 7.4-4.0 sq sect	good	7
31	8/003	Slate Nail	60 o/l x 28 dia head broken in half. Shank 6.8-2.8 round. slight bend	good	8
32	8/003	Slate Nail	70 o/l x 12 x 7 sq head. Shank 5.8-3 sq	good	4
33	u/s	Nail fragments	various nail fragments very degraded found by fieldwalking on site or metal detecting of spoil heaps	v. poor	52

Figure 1 - Tabulation of data.

Total weight in grams

791

4. Analysis

4.1 Nails

Analysis of the assemblage of 33 items and fragments of metalwork recovered from site show a predominance of nails and nail fragments. The nails account for 75% of the metalwork retrieved by weight. The majority were Clout Nails, though two items, 14 & 27, can be recognised as upholstery nails with peened over edges on the head.

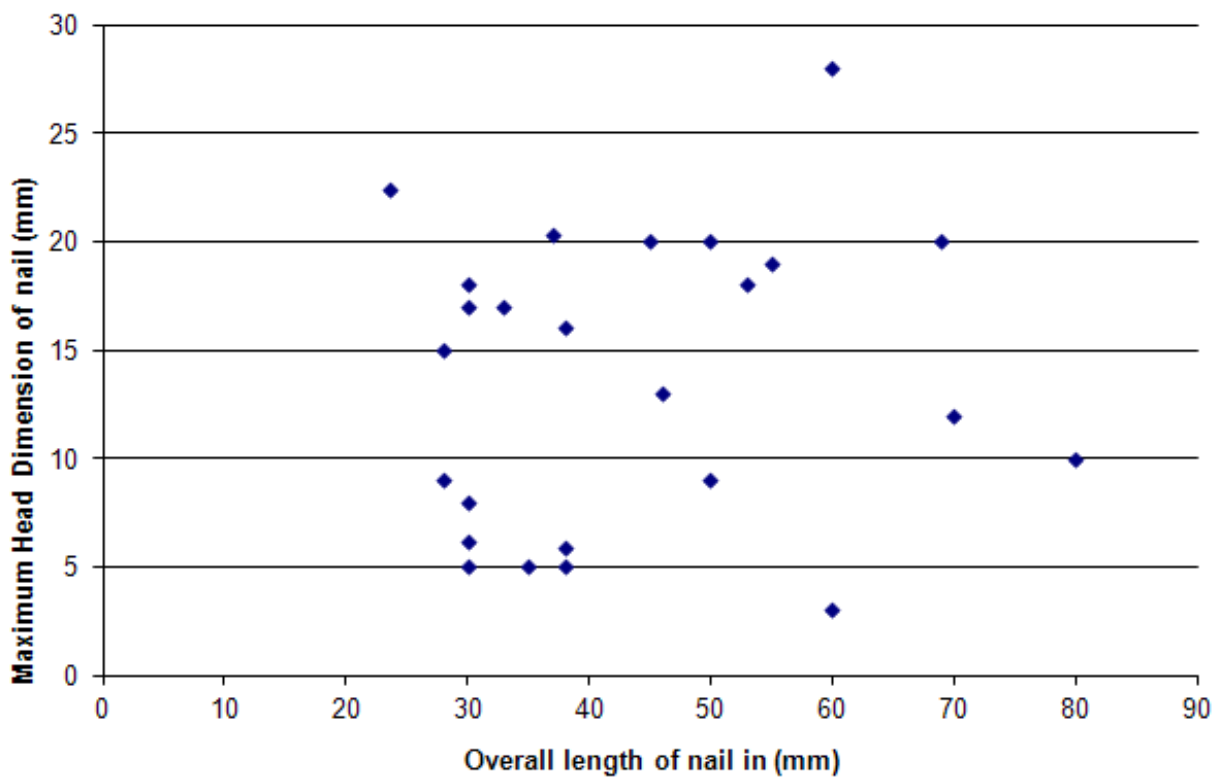


Figure 2. Graph of Overall length of nails versus head dimension.

Although the sample was small, Figure 2 shows that the majority of nail lengths were between 30 to 60 millimetres long with head diameters at about 5-20 millimetres.

Clout nails, and also slate nail used for fixing tiles and tiles to roofs, made up the majority of metal finds. Clout nails have a large head, (25mm dia.), with a short tang,

suggesting that they were used in the upholstery of a furniture pieces. Two nails of this type were found, one of which was made of copper.

Four Slate Nails were found, 60mm (2 3/8 inches) to 70mm long and would have secured fired clay slates,(see Figure 6). The holes in the sandstone roofing stones were too large for iron nails. The likelihood being that the roof stones were held on with wooden pegs, (see report NW 1003).

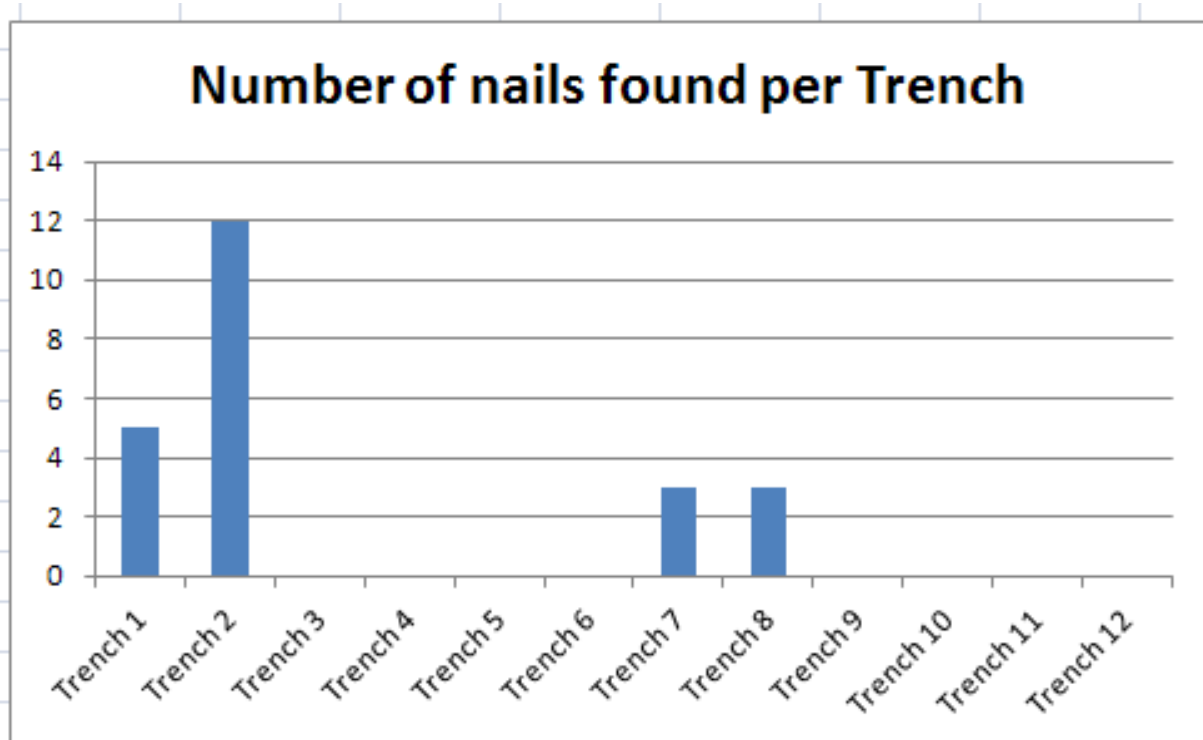


Figure 3. Distribution of nails per Trench.

The graph on Figure 3 gives the distribution of nails found, (and nail fragments), per Trench. It is shown that the greatest concentration was in Trench 2, the location of the roof stone and tile discards, with the next being Trench 1, location of the north west tower, with a few in Trench 8, The Keep. The shortness of the nails again **does not** suggest that they were used to fix the roofing stones to the roof, (see Figure 4 for assemblage of nails, and the knife blade, (bottom right).



Figure 4. Assemblage of metal finds.

Figure 5, (Drawing of Nails), shows the two types of nails that can be identified. The clout nails have large heads with relation to shank, and peened down edges on the head. The slate nails have longer shanks and radiused under the heads.

Figure 6, (Photograph of Slate Nail and Roof Tile), shows the nail positioned in a slate. Nails and fragments were found principally in Trenches 1, 2, 7, & 8. Slate nails were found positioned in many places over the site suggesting that the Main Hall and Towers were covered in the last years of the castle's life with quality made fired clay tiles. These would have been driven into roof battens.

The trapezoidal shaped sandstone roof stones were laid over the roof battens with wooden pegs and represent an earlier phase of the buildings.

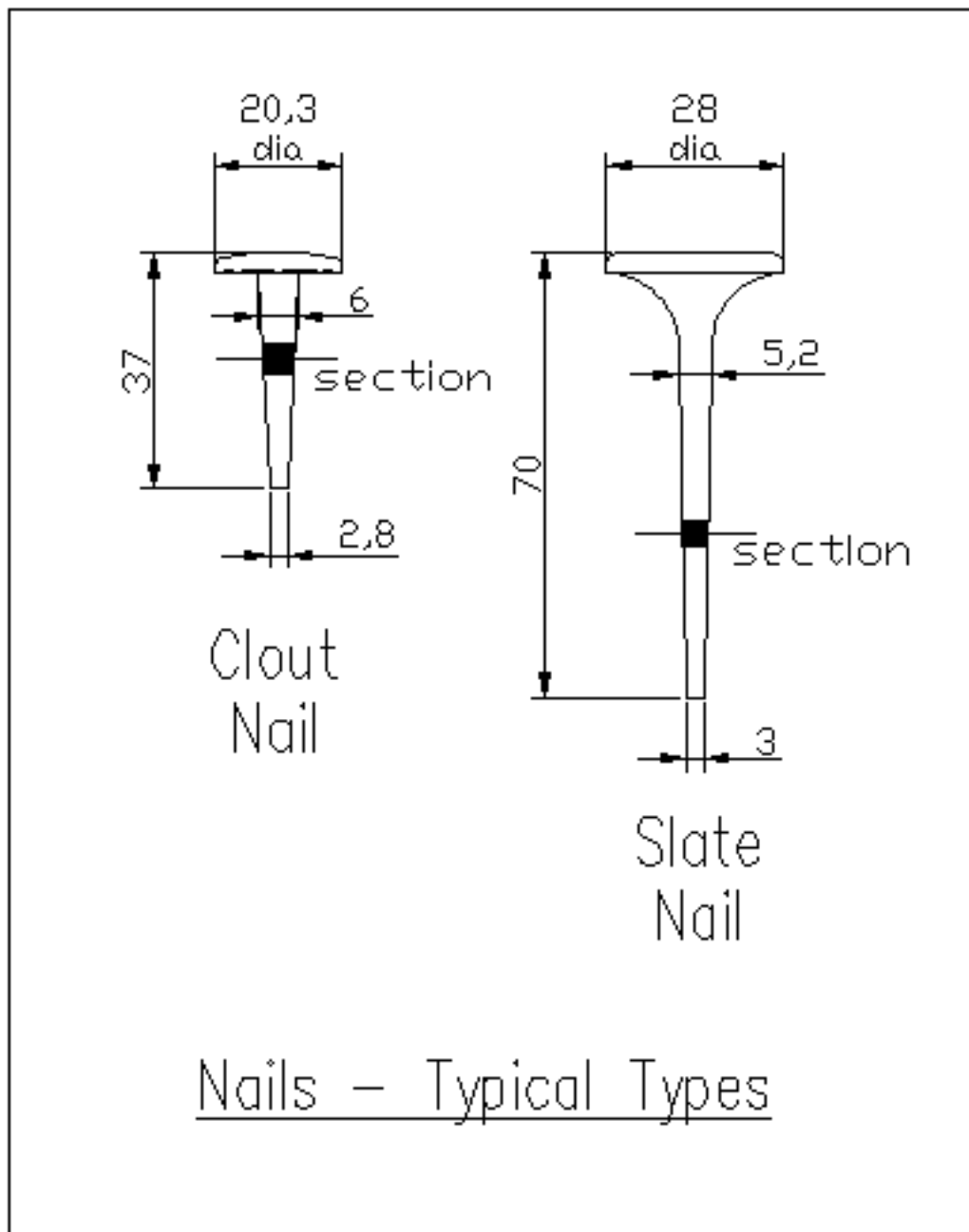


Figure 5. Drawing of Nails.



Figure 6 – Photograph of Slate Nail and Roof Tile.

4.2. Door Latch Striker?

This iron piece, (item 26 Figure 1), may have been the door latch striker to the castle and has dimensions of 242mm overall, by 46mm at the overall height, and is 17mm thick, and is made of iron. This piece was found in the vicinity of the west passage of the building, at Trench 8, where the rear door of the Keep would have been situated.

The metalwork piece has similar characteristics and dimensions to the door latch striker leading down to the crypt at Hereford Cathedral suggesting that this was the purpose of its use. The bend in the tang suggests that it was driven into the stonework, (between the sandstone block, or into a wooden post), and if so the door to the castle was 75 mm (3 inches) thick. This allows for a latch plate of 13mm (½ inches) thick; see Figures 7 & 8 for drawing and photograph.

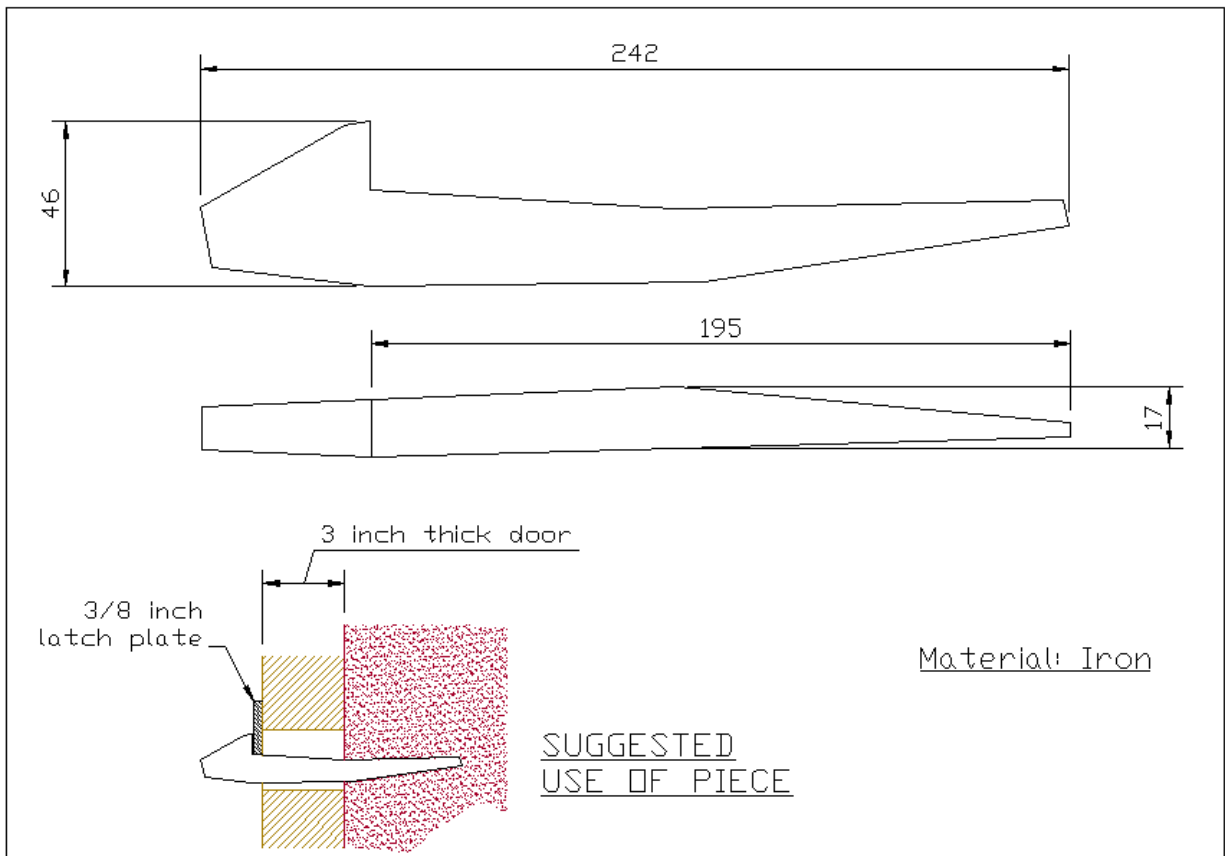


Figure 7. Drawing of Door Latch Striker?



Figure 8. Photograph of item found at the Keep entrance.

4. Conclusion

The total weight of metalwork retrieved from site during Phases I, II, & III of the excavations was 791 grams. This is a surprisingly small figure considering that the contemporary histories from antiquarians and others give the castle's life from c.1100 to early 1300s. One would have expected far more metal discards in the trench finds.

It is also noticeable that no discernable English Civil War finds, such as musket balls, buckles, items of cannon, etc., were found which questions the assertion that Olivers Mound was fortified by the Royalist during this encounter.

Although the sample is small the nails appear to be small clout nails concentrated in the areas of Trench 1, Trench 2, & Trench 8. Trench 1 is the North West Tower and represents nails from the general domestic woodwork. Nails from Trench 2 come from the area where the roof of the Great Hall and ancillary lean-to's were demolished during the early-mid 1300s, (see also North Worcestershire Archaeology Group report NW 1000). The third assemblage came from Trench 8, which had been recognised by Masterman to be the position of the castle Keep. Phases I & II had time limitations placed upon them so it was not possible to explore in full the large Masterman's excavations and his spoil heaps in this area.

The finds will be stored in due course at the Shrawley Village Hall archive room

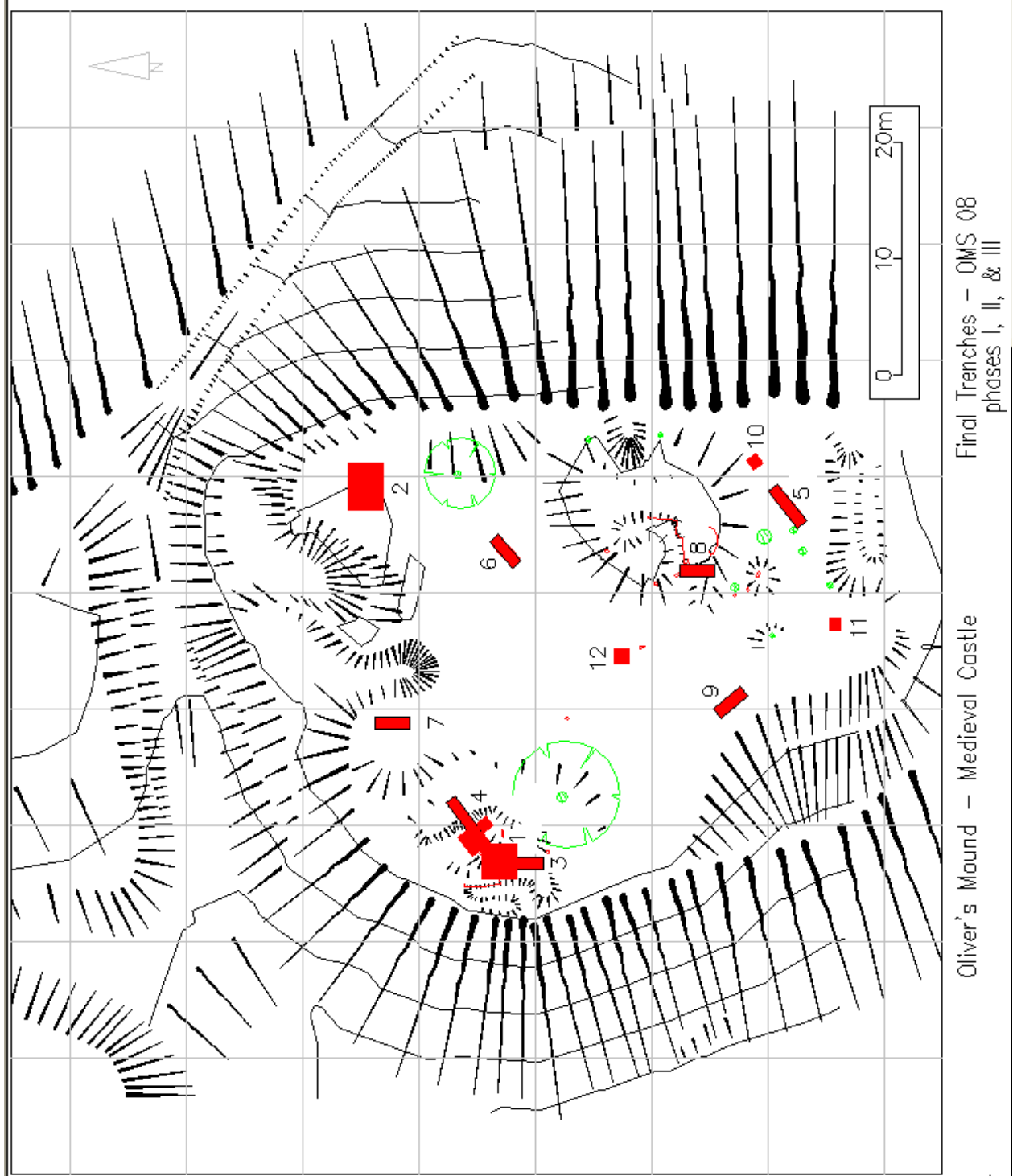


Figure 9. Final Trenches, Phases I, II, & III.