

DYFED ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST LTD



DINEFWR CASTLE

CARMARTHENSHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

Project Record No. 31034

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REPORT OF A WATCH-BRIEF CARRIED OUT DURING CLEARANCE OF A BLOCKED CHIMNEY, WINDOW OR DOOR ON THE WEST SIDE OF THE HALL, DINEFWR CAS- TLE, CARMARTHENSHIRE

Dyfed Archaeological Trust Record no. 31034

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1 SUMMARY

An opening on the surface of the wall-walk on the west side of the hall in Dinefwr Castle was exposed and cleared of its soil and rubble fill by Cadw masons in 1995. The opening was found to penetrate *c.* 4.5m into the wall and was clearly the remains of a chimney, window or door, the former being the most likely. The exposed masonry was recorded and an account of it is presented here.

2 INTRODUCTION

What was considered to be a passage or chimney blocked with earth and rubble on the surface to the wall-walk on the west side of the hall, Dinefwr Castle was discovered during consolidation and conservation work by Cadw masons (Fig. 1). It was decided that as it would be necessary to empty the opening of its loose fill in order to conserve the surrounding masonry an archaeological watching-brief should be commissioned with the purpose of monitoring the emptying process and record features of interest. At a site meeting with Dr S Rees of Cadw it was agreed that Dyfed Archaeological Trust should undertake the watching-brief. A letter dated 12 May 1995 from DAT to Cadw provided an estimate of costs. This was accepted on 23 August and the watching-brief was undertaken in September 1995.

3 METHODOLOGY

The fill of the opening was carried out by Cadw's direct labour force and was monitored by occasional visits by the author. Once emptied of its fill, the surrounding revealed masonry was recorded.

4 RESULTS OF THE WATCHING-BRIEF

4.1 Soil and rubble fill

This consisted of a loose, black soil with rubble. The quantity of rubble increased with depth. Approximately 0.6m of fill remains in the base of the opening; this probably comprises mostly rubble with some soil. This portion of fill was left *in situ* as the lower courses of Wall 4 within the opening rest upon it. Presumably the fill had begun to accumulate naturally within the opening prior to the construction of Wall 4. The only artefacts from the fill were two pieces of animal bone (not retained) and two fragments of stone roofing tile.

4.2 Masonry (Figs. 2 and 3)

Several phases of masonry were revealed within the opening after it was emptied of its fill. It was not possible to obtain clear relationships between all these walls in the very confined and dark opening. Useful information was however gained:

Wall 1. On the south side of the opening. A well-built wall, bonded with white mortar and covered with white plaster with a corner and a reveal. As can be seen of Figure 3, West-Facing elevation, Wall 1 arches approximately halfway over the opening. It is butted by Wall 4, a joint that is clearly visible in the wall-face inside the hall. The lower portion of Wall 1 has been partly robbed, possible to remove dressed stone, and replaced with loose rubble.

Wall 2. The outer, west wall to the opening. A well-built wall bonded with white mortar. It appears that this wall may butt against Wall 1, and that at its northern end it may have been cut away to allow for the insertion of Wall 3, though neither of these relationships is certain. There is no evidence of butt joints on the outer wall-face of the hall, though it is suspected that the whole of this outer wall-face has been re-skinned in recent centuries.

Wall 3. This is a roughly built wall, bonded with white mortar and earth, and has the appearance of an exposed wall-core, certainly there are no facing stones present. It seems to butt up against Wall 2 and possibly against Wall 4.

Wall 4. The inner, east wall to the opening. Well built, mortar bonded. It is of one build with the parapet wall above. This is clearly a blocking wall. Within the opening, it is founded on soil and rubble similar the removed fill. It butts up against Wall 1 and possibly against Wall 3. The joint between Wall 4 and Wall 1 can clearly be seen in the inner wall-face on the west side of the hall, as can the base of Wall 4. The base of the wall was approximately level with the corbel stones which supported the first floor of the hall. No joint to indicate the northern extent of this blocking wall can be seen in the wall-face on the west side of the hall; this suggests that a large portion of this wall-face has been rebuilt, probably at the same time that the blocking took place and the outer wall-face was re-skinned.

Wall 5. A small portion of wall-face exposed within the opening on the west side. This had been conserved prior to the watching-brief, but nevertheless seems to form part of Wall 1. if this is correct, then a wall-face in such a position could only have been part of an inner face of a chimney.

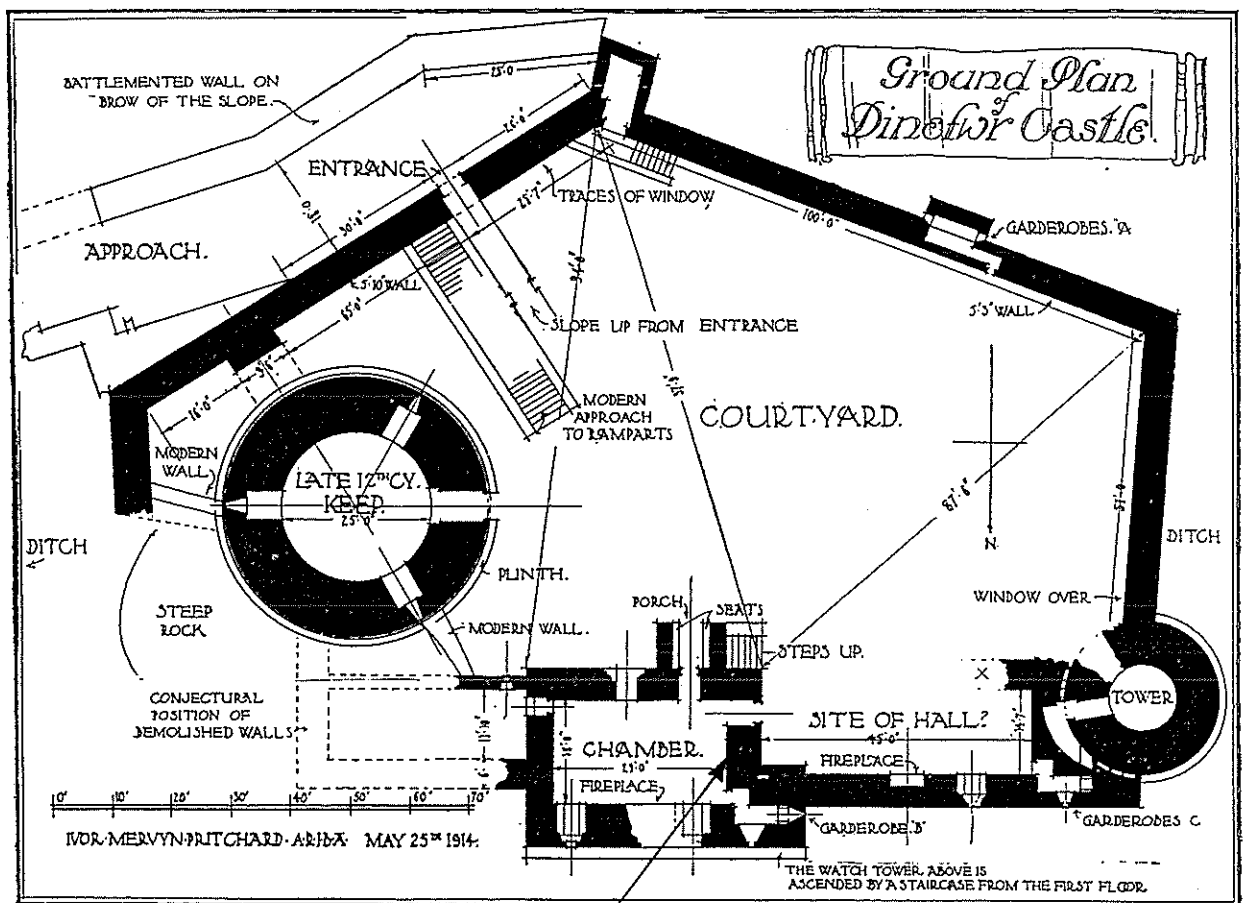
5 CONCLUSIONS

The height of the blocking, Wall 4, level with the corbel stones of the first floor level in the hall and substantially lower than the sill heights of surviving windows indicates that the opening was not a window. The absence of obvious butt joints on the outer face of the west wall of the hall cannot preclude the opening from ever being a door or window as the whole of this face has been re-skinned. The most likely interpretation is that it was a fireplace, albeit much modified. Wall 3 and Wall 4 together suggest that a large portion of the west wall of the hall to the north of the fireplace has been rebuilt. The occasion of this rebuilding together with the in-filling of the opening and the re-skinning of the outer face is unknown, but is most likely to have occurred during renovation of the castle by the Dynevor Estate in the 18th and 19th centuries.

6. INDEX TO ARCHIVE

The archive is held by Dyfed Archaeological Trust and contains the following categories of information:

- A Final Report
- C Site Drawings
- D Black and white photographs and colour slides
- M Correspondence

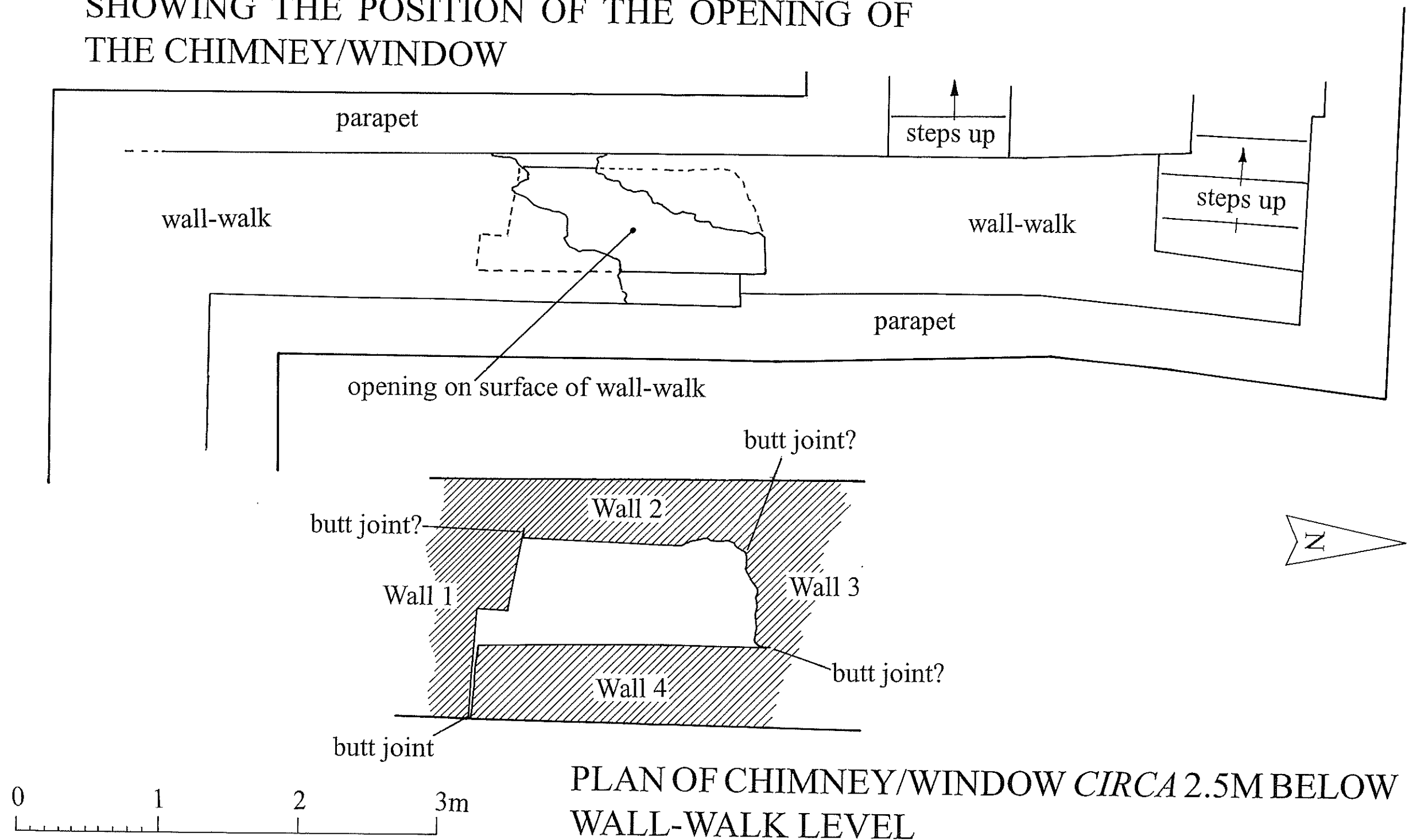


location of blocked chimney/window

Fig. 1 Location of blocked chimney/window (after RCAHWW)

DINEFWR CASTLE: BLOCKED CHIMNEY/WINDOW IN HALL

PLAN OF WALL-WALK ON WEST SIDE OF HALL
SHOWING THE POSITION OF THE OPENING OF
THE CHIMNEY/WINDOW



DINEFWR CASTLE: BLOCKED CHIMNEY/WINDOW IN HALL

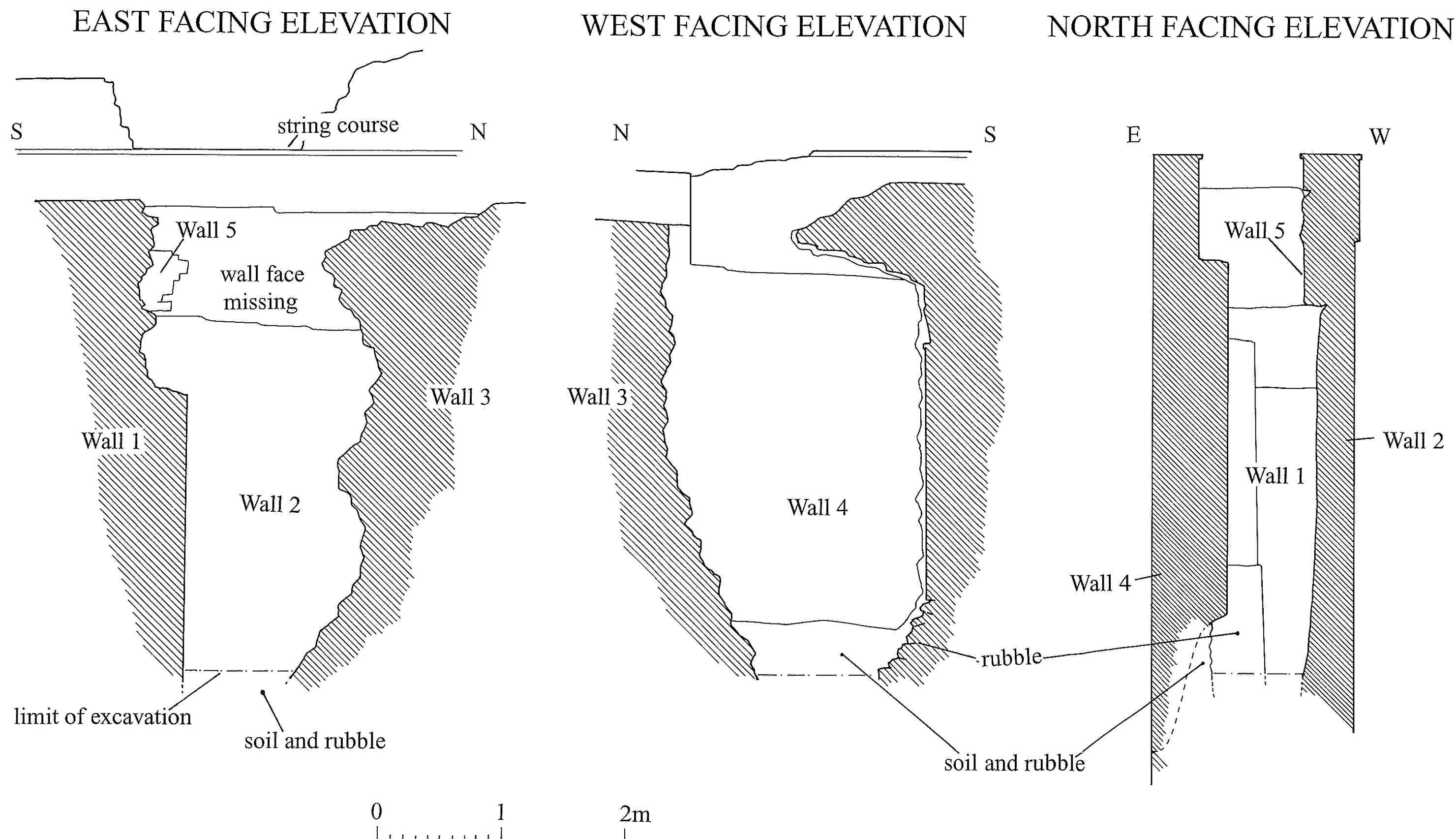


Fig. 3