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# **A WATCHING BRIEF AT ST ELIDYR'S CHURCH, LUDCHURCH**

Report No. 2001/17

Report Prepared for:  
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CAMBRIA ARCHAEOLOGY

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By

Anwen Cooper

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**REPORT NUMBER 2001/17**

**JANUARY 2001**

This report has been prepared by Anwen Cooper

Position: Project Officer

Signature .....  ..... Date 8/2/01 .....

This report has been checked and approved by Ken Murphy on behalf of Cambria Archaeology,  
Dyfed Archaeological Trust Ltd.

Position: Principal Archaeological Officer (Field Operations)

Signature ..... Date.....

As part of our desire to provide a quality service we would welcome any comments you may have  
on the content or presentation of this report

## **A Watching Brief at St Elidyr's Church, Ludchrch, January 2001.**

### **Summary**

*An archaeological watching brief was carried out by Cambria Archaeology Field Operations on 3rd October 2000 and 24th January 2001 during groundwork excavations for the installation of a new drainage pipe around the walls of St Elidyr's Church, Ludchurch. The work was commissioned by Wyn Jones, Architect & Historic Buildings Consultant. The excavation disturbed at least five separate clusters of human bone along the southern and eastern walls of the church. The fragmented and disarticulated nature of the bone suggested that all of the burials had been disturbed previously, probably during earlier construction and drainage work in this area.*

### **Introduction**

An archaeological watching brief was carried out by Cambria Archaeology Field Operations on 3rd October 2000 and 24th January 2001 during groundwork excavations for the installation of a new drainage pipe around the walls of St Elidyr's Church, Ludchurch (SN 1413 1092). The work was commissioned by Wyn Jones, Architect & Historic Buildings Consultant and took place as part of an extensive programme of restoration at the church.

The purpose of the investigation was to record any archaeological features that were disturbed during the excavation of the trenches for the drainage pipes. In particular, it was thought that the excavation might disturb burials in the area immediately alongside the church wall.

## **Site Location and Archaeological Background**

St Elidyr's Church sits at c.140m OD on a southwest facing slope, about 0.5km to the north of the village of Ludchurch in Pembrokeshire (Fig. 1). The church stands on an apparently isolated mound, which is surrounded by an area of stone quarrying and lime kilns to the south and west. This area is now wooded and has been landscaped to form lakes. It lies on an underlying geology of Carboniferous Limestone, (the material from which the church was built) which is overlain with clay.

The earliest evidence for the religious use of the site is in the form of a pre-conquest Celtic dedication. St Elidyr's Church itself was mentioned as 'Ecclesia de Loudes' in 1324 (in CADW, 1998, 15). The main fabric of the church is medieval and has been constructed in several phases, the earliest of which may date back to the thirteenth century. During the mid nineteenth-century, a porch was added to the northern side of the church and several programmes of restoration were undertaken, but no major structural changes took place. The interior is mainly of nineteenth century design although it includes a limestone font that has been dated to the twelfth century (RCAHM, 1925). The churchyard is large and contains several memorial stones, including one with Wedgwood tiles.

The church is now a Grade II Listed building and one of only forty medieval churches that survive in South Pembrokeshire that were recorded recently as part of the CADW Welsh Historic Churches Project (1998). The current programme of replastering within the church also revealed the site of an earlier entrance in the southern wall. The evidence for this entrance was fully recorded and photographed by the architect and supports the documentary evidence of nineteenth century restoration work.

## **Methodology**

The groundworks consisted of an initial hand-dug, 0.40m wide trench that ran along the eastern and southern walls of the church forming an L-shape in plan and a later, machine-dug extension to the southwest of the church (Fig. 2). These were cut to a maximum depth of 0.65m. All significant archaeological features and deposits were recorded according to the Cambria Archaeology Field Operations Manual. The trench sections that exposed these features were drawn at a scale of 1:20 and photographed in 35mm format. All human bones were immediately reburied.

## **Results**

The exposed sections of the hand-dug trench (Figs. 4 and 5) revealed several discrete clusters of fragmented and disarticulated human bone. These were not associated with any grave markers or cuts and all appeared to have been disturbed by previous groundworks around the perimeter of the church. None of the bone was associated with any dating evidence although there were occasional coffin nails in the topsoil, which presumably relate to former graves. The trench ran immediately alongside two memorial stones, but the disturbed burials that were recovered did not appear to be related to these. The gravestone in the southeastern corner of the trench was undated. The memorial stone to the south of the church was dated 1794 and dedicated to Esther, wife of William Saei(?).

The trench section along the southern wall of the church also revealed an area of disturbed ground (004) towards the western end of the wall. This disturbance could relate to the use of an earlier entrance to the church in the southern wall that was blocked in during the mid nineteenth-century restoration work. However, the disturbance was not associated with any dating material and no structural remains of the entrance were apparent in the trench. An earlier ceramic drain runs alongside the trench for its entire length and it seems more likely that the disturbance was caused by the installation of this post-medieval drain.

The machine-dug extension of the original trench encountered no additional archaeological deposits. The trench was extended to meet the line of the earlier ceramic drain to the southwest of the church and the new drain was attached at this point.

The topsoil (001) was a firm dark brown silty clay. This overlay a subsoil (002) of mid reddish brown, silty clay with fragments of degraded limestone. The geology (003) was made up of Carboniferous Limestone, overlain with beds of reddish brown clay.

## **Conclusions**

As expected, the watching brief encountered several concentrations of fragmented and disarticulated human bone around the walls of St Elidyr's Church. These clusters of bone probably represent unmarked burials of various ages that have been disturbed during previous construction work in this area. This information should assist with the planning of future groundworks around the walls of the church. There was no conclusive evidence as to the origin of the area of disturbed ground around the site of the nineteenth century entrance to the church. This disturbance was probably caused by previous drainage work around the church walls.

## **Archive Deposition**

Three copies of the report were supplied to the client, Wyn Jones, Architect and Historic Building Consultant. Further copies of the report were deposited with the regional Sites and Monuments record held by Cambria Archaeology, Llandeilo and the National Monument Record held by RCAHMW, Aberystwyth.

## **Acknowledgments**

The investigation was carried out by Anwen Cooper of Cambria Archaeology. Special thanks to Wyn Jones, and to the staff of Dorian Phillips and Partners and Julian Mousley & Sons Plant Contractors who provided some tools and excavated the trenches.

## **Sources**

Ordnance Survey (1995) Outdoor Leisure Map 36, S. Pembs, 1:2500 scale.

Ludlow, ND (1998) *South Pembrokeshire Churches* (unpublished report), CADW: Historic Churches Project.

## **Appendix**

### **Context Descriptions**

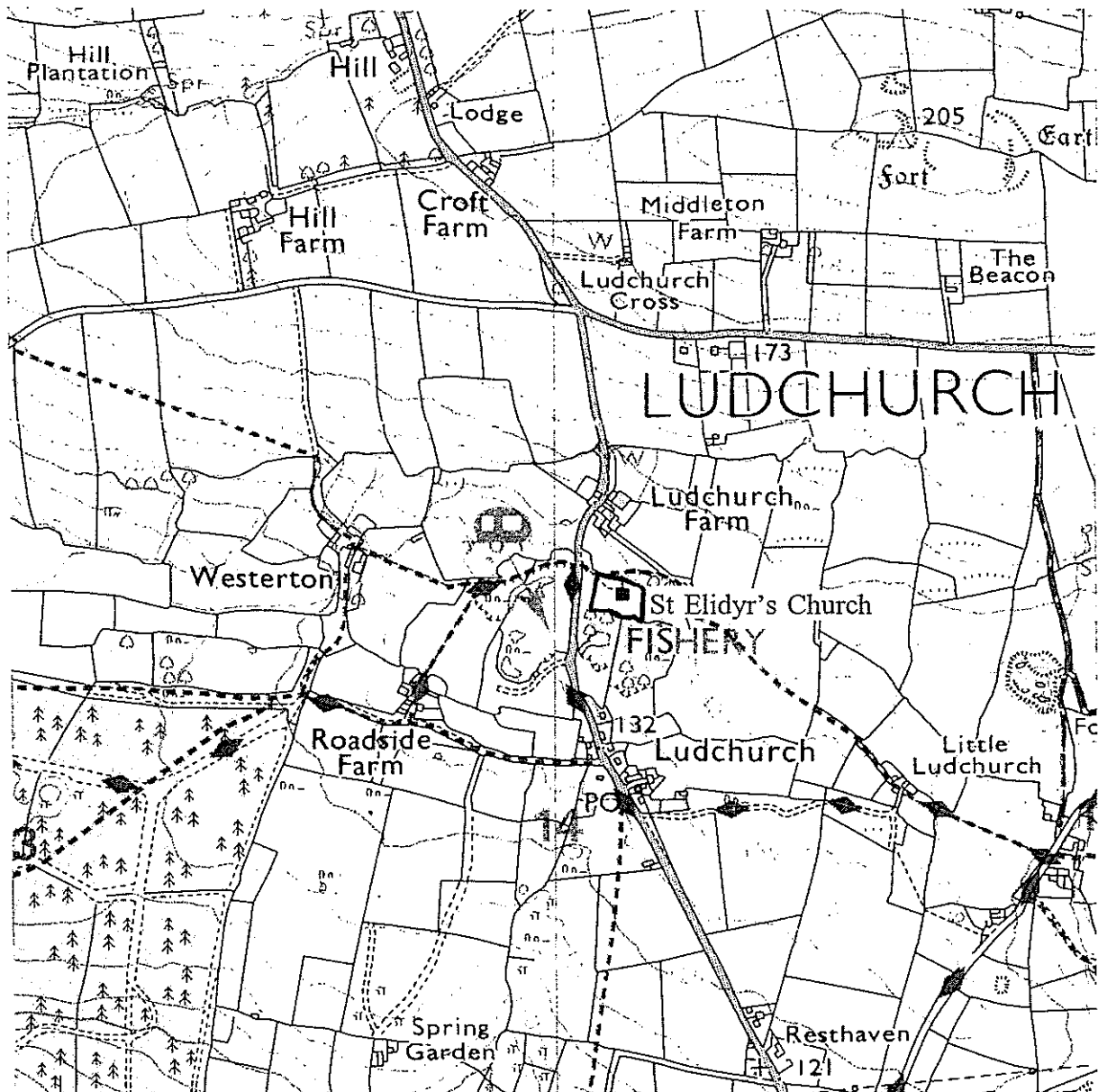
**001** – Friable, dark brown silty clay with fragments of post-medieval pottery, slate, drain pipe and occasional coffin nails. Topsoil.

**002** – Friable, mid reddish-brown silty clay with occasional lumps of limestone and fragments of degraded lime mortar. Subsoil.

**003** – Firm, rich brownish-red natural clay, overlying a bed of dark grey carboniferous limestone.

**004** - Friable mixed dark brown silty clay with pieces of limestone, degraded limestone mortar and fragments of nineteenth century debris.





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Figure 1 - site location.



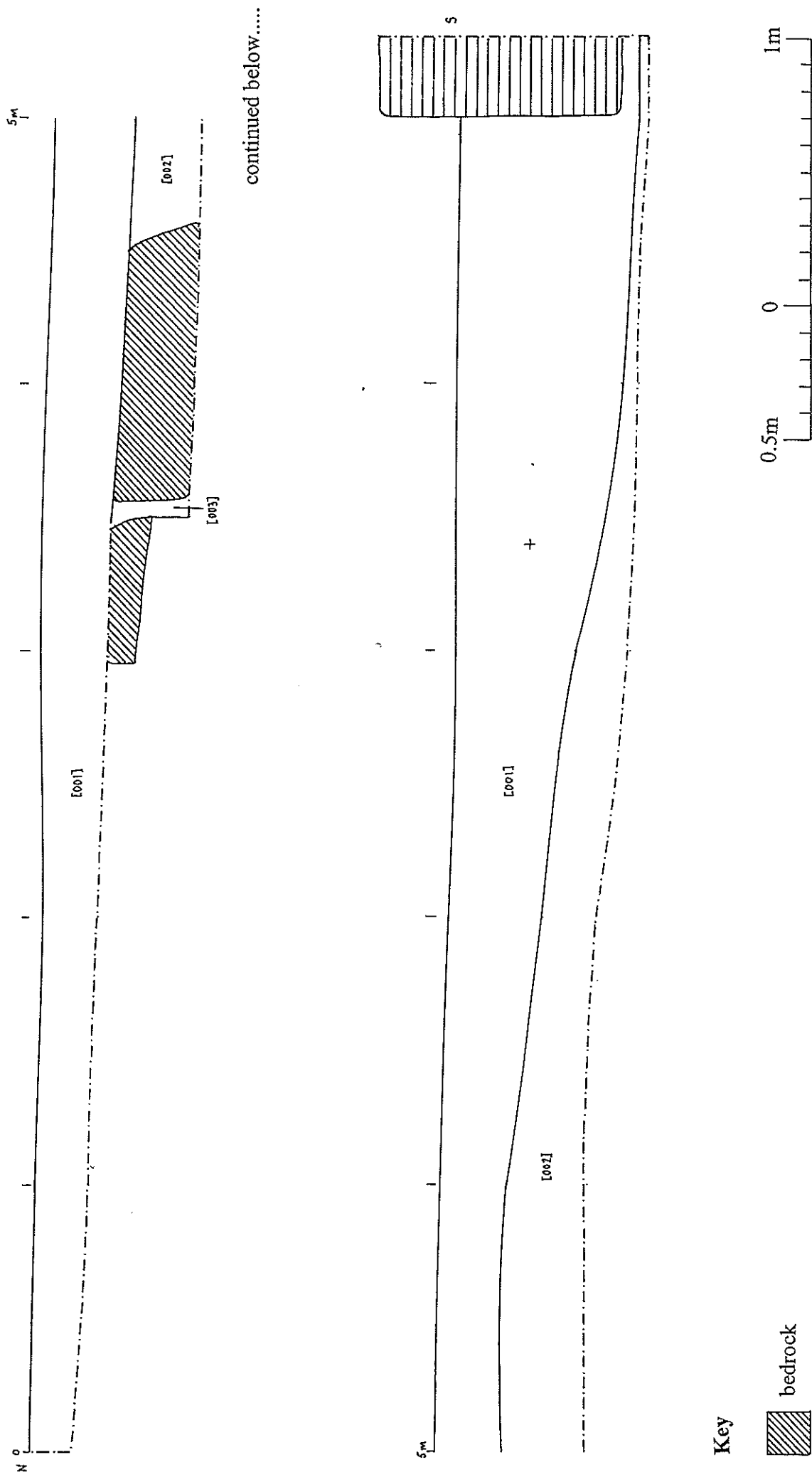
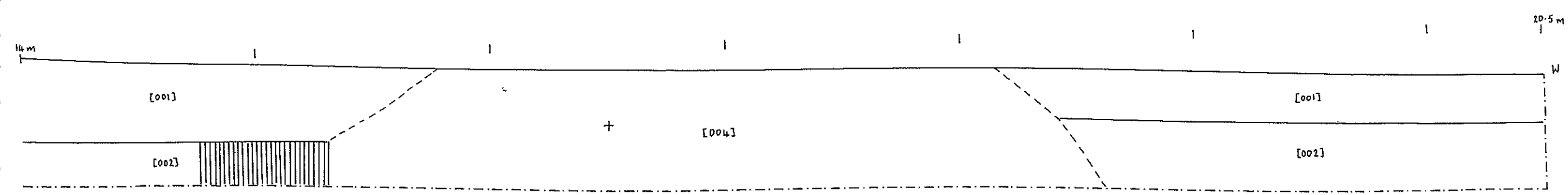
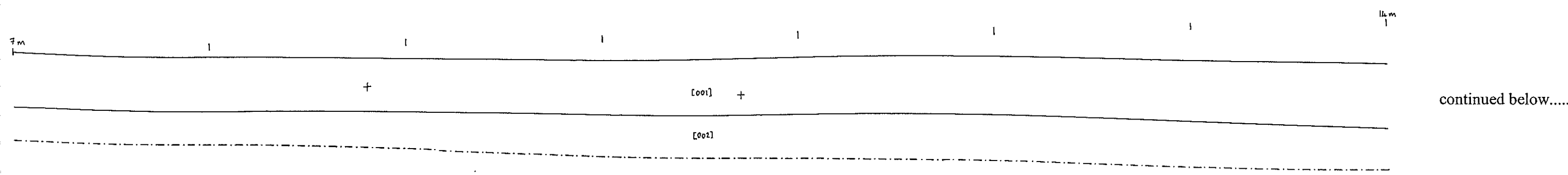
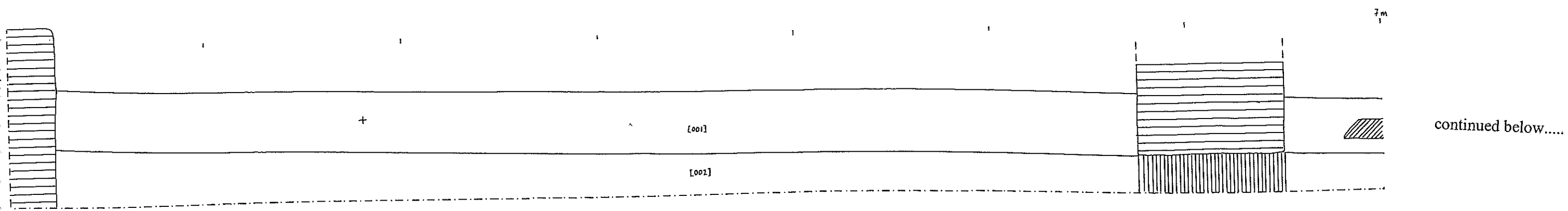





Figure 3 - section 1: west-facing section, scale 1:20.



**Key**

-  bedrock
-  memorial stone/ gravestone
-  exposed sections of ceramic drain
- + location of disarticulated human bone fragments

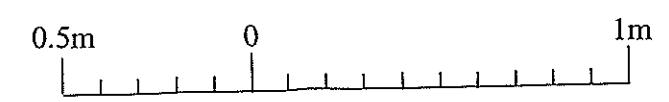


Figure 4 - section 2 - north-facing section, scale 1:20.