

# **SOUTH TURRET DINEFWR CASTLE CARMARTHENSHIRE**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION  
AND  
BUILDING RECORDING**



Report No. 2002/18

Report Prepared for:  
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**SOUTH TURRET DINEFWR CASTLE  
CARMARTHENSHIRE  
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By

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*Front Cover: South Turret from the inner ward*

## SUMMARY

*In February 2002 limited excavation and building recording took place within the south turret at Dinefwr Castle. Part of the curtain wall was uncovered and the existence of two medieval garderobe chutes was confirmed. These chutes had been capped in the post medieval period when the upper part of the turret was rebuilt at this stage to include three large windows and a tile floor laid. One window was later blocked and the others altered.*

## INTRODUCTION AND DESCRIPTION

Cadw commissioned this project on 11<sup>th</sup> February 2002 as part of their conservation work on the castle ruins.

Dinefwr Castle is strategically located on a rocky hill on the north side of the Tywi Valley. The ruins lie within mature woodland, which form part of the remains of the former parkland of Dinefwr. The estate mansion, Newton House, is 700m to the north-northeast. The town of Llandeilo lies 1.5km to the northeast. The Ordnance Survey grid reference for the medieval castle is SN61152173.

The south turret is rectangular and is situated on an exterior angle of the inner curtain wall (Figure 1; Photo front cover). It overlooks the castle's entrance passageway and a very steep slope falling to the southwest. The entrance to the turret is from the interior of the castle up a short flight of stone steps. Currently there is an iron door to the tower. The lower, exterior part of the tower is of roughly coursed and faced stone, bonded with lime mortar. Below the turret's single chamber in the exterior northwest wall face there are two round-headed apertures, with later blocking.

At chamber level on the outside east wall can be seen the remains of a blocked window, which overlooked the entrance passageway and was considered to be medieval. In the southwest and northwest walls are large window openings, both with indications of later alterations. These windows give panoramic views south across the Tywi Valley and also down the valley to Dryslwyn Castle to the west.

## SITE HISTORY

It is not intended here to go into any detail of the complex history and sequence of the castle construction. This is summarised in the Cadw guidebook to the site (Rees and Caple 1999). Little archaeological excavation has been undertaken on the castle. Where this has been done it has been limited to the clearance and small-scale excavation in conjunction with masonry conservation. Extensive standing building recording has taken place as part of the consolidation of the ruins.

## AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aim was to record all of the interior elevations, the extant tile floor and tile impressions of the turret and to section and excavate the underlying deposits within the chamber to a maximum depth of 1.2m, with further excavation as a contingency. The results to be summarised in a short written report with drawings and photographs.

## METHODOLOGIES AND RESULTS

The extant remains of the tile floor and the mortar base with tile impressions were recorded at 1:20 scale. All internal elevations of the chamber and the external doorway were drawn at 1:20 scale. Other plans were made at the same scale, and sections at 1:10. Photographs were taken in black and white prints, colour slide and digital formats of all elevations and excavated features. The black and white prints, however, appeared to be faulty (water ingress). Photography was hindered by the confined nature of the site, giving poor light conditions exacerbated by high contrast of the window apertures. A site datum of 10m was given to the outside stairway platform and quoted internal levels relate to this. Excavation was by hand.

### *Excavation*

The earliest feature encountered was a short length of wall (Figure 2, 111; Photo 1). This was constructed of large rough-faced stones, with an inner core of flat angular stones, and was bonded with a light brown sandy mortar. Only a short length of presumed exterior face, c. 0.3m high, was uncovered. Part of the southeastern section of this wall appeared to have been cut away (Figures 2, 3 and 4, 112; Photo 1). This cut was filled (113) with mid light brown sandy loam with medium to large angular stones. This fill was both firm and firm to loose in places, along with some voids between the stones.

The construction of a garderobe chute (114) appeared to post-date the fill (113) although they could be near contemporary as no construction cut was observed (Figure 5). The upper part of this chute was voided, while the exterior was blocked (Photo 2). The lower part of this blocking was of mortared construction while the upper part was un-bonded. Internally, the chute was capped by a large flat slab (110 - Photo 3) upon which was constructed the inner-face of the turret's northeastern wall (110). Above the slab was a limited deposit (106 - Photo 4) of flat stones and mortar, which appeared to post-date the wall face. This limited deposit appeared also to post-date a thin mortary construction-type layer (107) which only extended part way across the interior (Figure 3). Also post-dating this construction type layer (107) was a capping stone and some associated mortar (109) for a second garderobe chute, and a single stone slab (Figures 2 and 3, 108; Photo 5) in the south corner. All of the slabs (108, 109 and 110) extended below the wall faces and appeared to have been positioned before the wall's construction, rather than inserted.

Above the slabs in the south (108) and west (109) corners and the construction-type layer (107), there was a thin layer (105) extending over most of the chamber except possibly over the top of the curtain wall (111). This layer (105) was very similar to the layer below (113), but had smaller stones and four fragments of brick and a fragment of thin flat glass were recovered from it. Above this layer there was a limited area of slightly dispersed flat stones (Figure 4; 104), including one large slab of Bathstone type (broken) with one good dressed face and a small roll moulding (Figure 14). Between and over these flat stones (104) there was a thick layer (103), up to 150mm deep, of light grey hard lime mortar. Above this mortar there was a not dissimilar layer (102), 50mm thick, of firm white mortar (Figure 4; Photo 6). On the surface of this mortar were tile impressions (Figure 6; Photo 7) and a few remaining plain red tiles (101). One complete tile was 232 x 232 x 50mm in size. The impressions in the

mortar base indicate that all complete tiles were of similar dimensions. There was a pattern of diagonal tile impressions over the entire surviving floor base.

*Standing building recording* (Figures 7-11)

The internal elevations were drawn down to the top of the excavated levels. In all elevations it was seen that the internal faces of the walls post-dated the rubble and soil fill (113 - Photo 8)

The southeast wall (Figure 7; Photos 8 and 9) contained one side of what appears to have been a splayed window opening, the lower part of which may have been rebuilt. There were the remains of a wooden frame within this window, although whether this was a window frame or part of a cupboard or shelf structure could not be ascertained. Around this framework was masonry, now partly repointed, with plaster extending over the upper part of the masonry and the timber.

The ceiling still retains much of its plaster with the remains of plaster rib and corner mouldings. These mouldings are simple rebate and chamfers and were recorded at 1:1 scale (Figures 12 and 13). On the southwest there was a distinct line to the bottom of the plaster and the corner moulding. This can also be seen in the northeast corner of the northwest wall (Figures 9 and 10). The outer edge of the doorway had been repointed and an angled hole made to accommodate the sliding bolt for the iron door.

The southwest wall (Figure 8; Photo 10) has a large splayed opening with a wooden lintel. The sill height of this appears to have been raised at a later date, prior to the laying of the mortar floor base (103), by blocking containing brick. The splays of the window have been substantially re-pointed or rebuilt.

The northwest wall (Figure 9; Photos 1, 11 and 12) shows the remains of the curtain wall (111) that passed below it but separated by a fill layer (113). The northwest wall face, as already noted in the excavation detail, is constructed over the capping stones (109 and 110) for the garderobe chutes. The plaster remnants on the ceiling and wall continue over from the southeast wall. The window opening has been changed from an approximate 45 degree splayed opening to a lesser splay. The later, and possibly the earlier, splay contain brick construction, but in the case of the earlier it could be a later repair. The outer face of the sill is substantially built of brick (Photo 2), and is in poor condition. There are two holes in the inner wall face that appear to be modern although not for any obvious purpose.

The northeast wall (Figure 10; Photo 13) contains the original voussoirs, mostly hidden by plaster. The inner edge of the doorway has been rebuilt or repointed, although the jamb (hidden by the hinge side of the modern door) is probably original. The threshold is now lower than the inner wall face and the height of the tile floor. The iron door is modern and is hung on contemporary hinge pins inserted into the wall. There is a modern wooden door lintel on the outer side of the hinges. On the exterior northeast face (Figure 11; Photo 14 general view) the keystone, voussoirs and jamb stones have been repointed but are probably *in situ*.

## DISCUSSION

The remains of the wall top and outer face (Figure 2, 111) are almost certainly that of the castle's curtain wall and probably date from the early to mid 1200s. There was no evidence within the chamber for any internal wall face for the medieval turret structure, perhaps dating to *c.* 1280 (Rees and Caple 1999, p 6). It appeared that from below the level of the remains of the curtain wall top the interior of the medieval tower was not hollow but infilled with rubble (113). It would seem probable that before this infill took place part of the outer wall face was cut (112) or broken away; this cut or collapse most likely occurred at the time of the medieval turret's construction.

The garderobe chutes appeared to have been constructed at the same time as the (lower) outer face of the turret. It would seem probable that the turret was infilled as the tower was built. Double garderobe chutes are not uncommon and a double "latrine" chute survives within the curtain wall at the nearby castle of Dryslwyn. These are simpler in construction than those in the South Turret at Dynevor, but probably are of similar date.

Probably during the later 1600s the upper part of the turret was rebuilt as a summerhouse or gazebo. This rebuild extended from just above the garderobe arches and was of the same exterior dimensions as the medieval turret. In order to facilitate the turret's rebuilding the garderobe chutes were capped by slabs (109 and 110). A new wall was constructed partly on the slabs. The gazebo had three large splayed windows and an extant doorway with steps outside leading down to the level of the inner ward. The medieval floor level would have been at or above the floor of the gazebo and has therefore gone. However, it is possible that the capping slabs and the slabs of flat stones (104) found within the make up for the present floor were the re-deposited remains of a medieval stone floor.

The interior plaster rib and corner mouldings all appear to be of a single phase and are probably contemporary with that of the construction of the gazebo. The plaster appears always to have finished at *c.* 1.25m above floor level suggesting that there was a wainscot on the walls.

All of the three gazebo windows were altered, but not necessarily at the same time. The window to the southeast appeared to have a sill at *c.* 0.45m above floor level and was blocked, probably without other alteration. The window to the southwest had a sill height raised from floor level to *c.* 0.5m above the floor level. The northwest window was altered from a 45° splay to nearly right-angle sides. The original sill height of the northwest window is uncertain as it has been considerably rebuilt, but may well have been above floor level, as the blocked window opposite appeared to have been.

It is possible that the construction surface (107) belongs to the building of the gazebo. However, the layer above (105) is more likely to be near contemporary with that of the later window alterations. Certainly the mortar make up (103) and the base (102) for the floor tiles post-date the raising of the sill in the southwest window. The tile floor is therefore not an original feature of the gazebo.

## **CONCLUSION**

The garderobes are medieval and appear to be contemporary with the construction of the south turret, which was always infilled and did not contain any lower rooms. The chamber and upper part of the turret, including all openings are a post-medieval rebuild during conversion of the turret to a gazebo.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Duncan Schlee of Cambria Archaeology for on site building recording and excavation.

## **ARCHIVE DEPOSITION**

All of the archive material will be given to Cadw.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Moore D 1994 Artists, Views of Dynevor, *Carmarthenshire Antiquary*. Vol xxx

Rees S E and Caple 1999 *Dinefwr Castle Dryslwyn Castle*, Cadw: Cardiff



## APPENDIX 1: CATALOGUE OF WATCHING BRIEF ARCHIVE

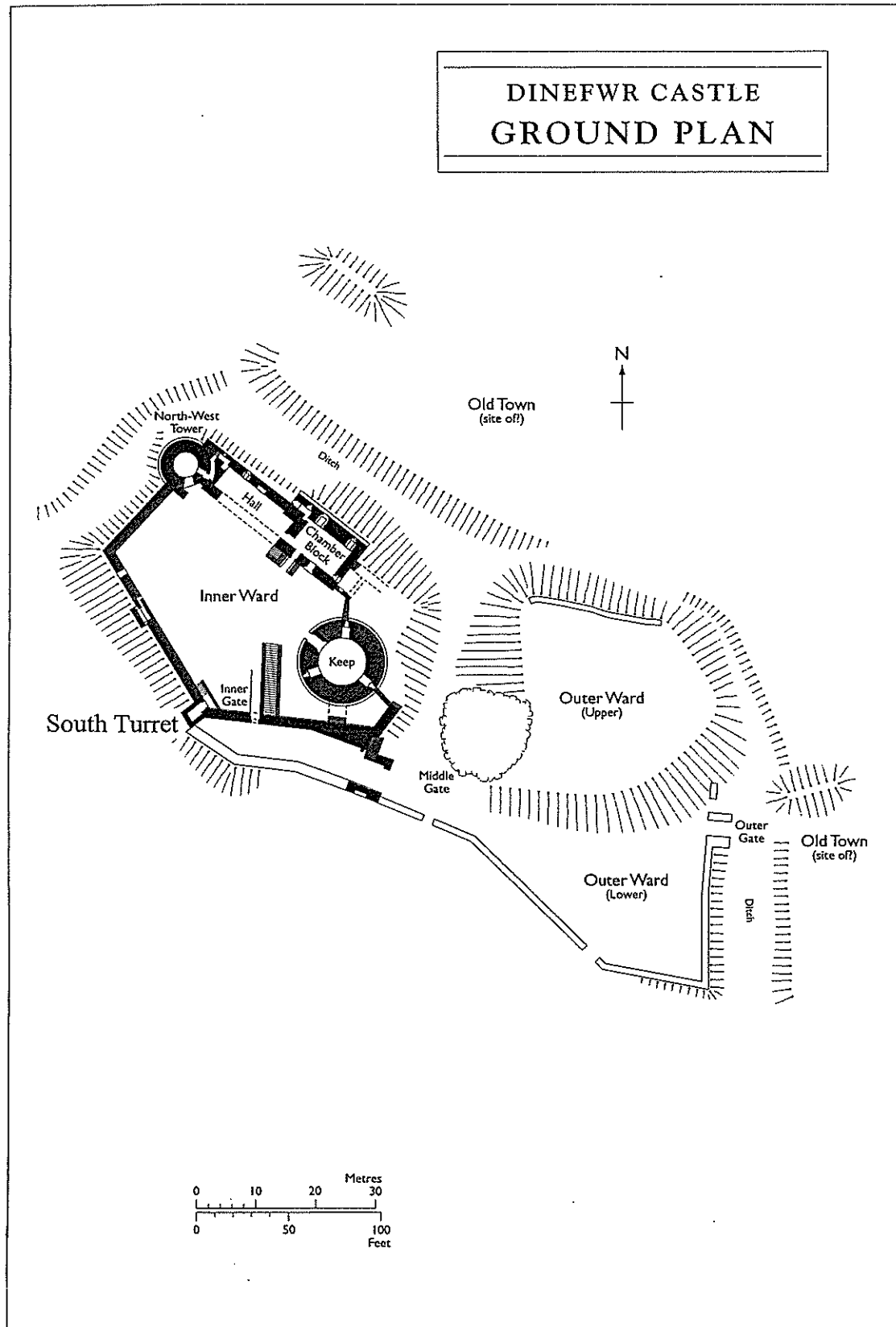
The project archive has been indexed and catalogued according to National Monument Record (NMR) categories and contains the following:

- A. Copy of final report.
- B. Site records, including context record sheets and site notebook.
- D. Site photographs - catalogue, colour slide and B/W contact sheets.
- I. Archive report and draft copies of final report.
- J. Publication drawings.
- M. Miscellaneous correspondence.

There is no material in categories C, E, G, F, H, K, L and N.

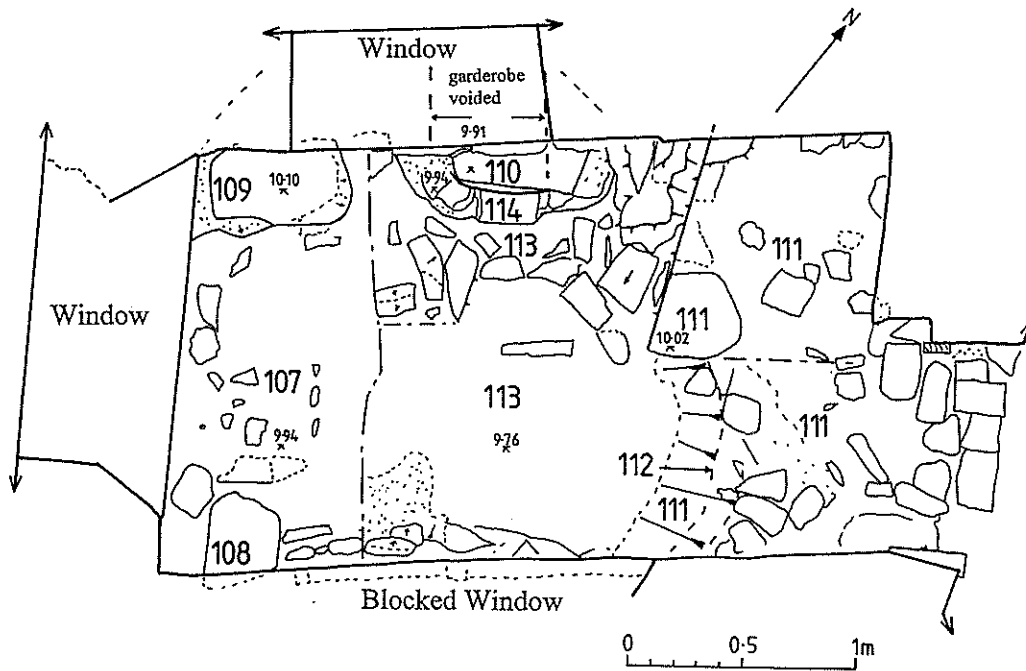
The archive is currently held by **Cambria** Archaeology Field Operations, Llandeilo, Carmarthenshire, as project number 44366.

Figure 1: Location of South Turret

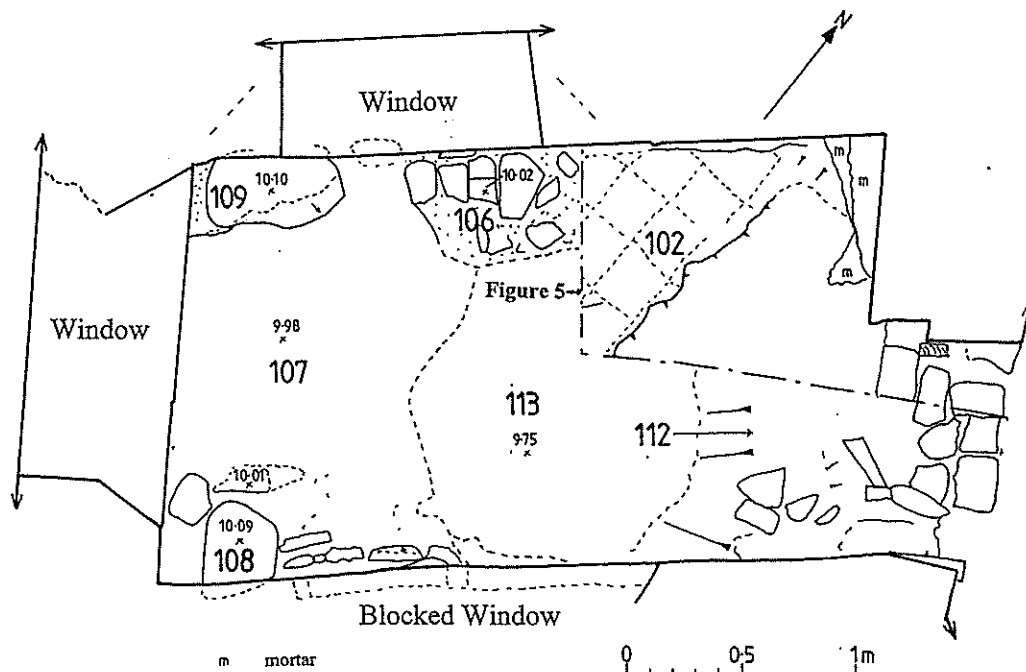


From Rees and Caple 1999

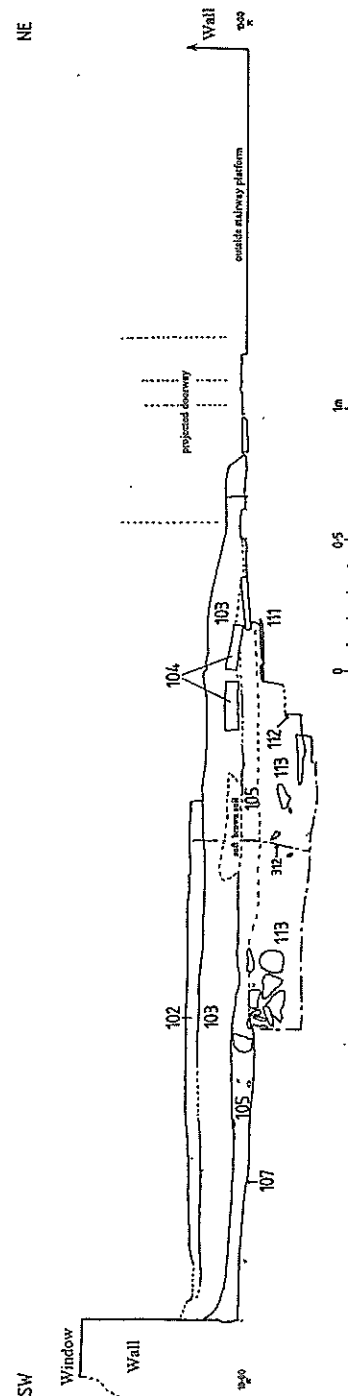
**Figure 2: Interior plan, as final excavation**



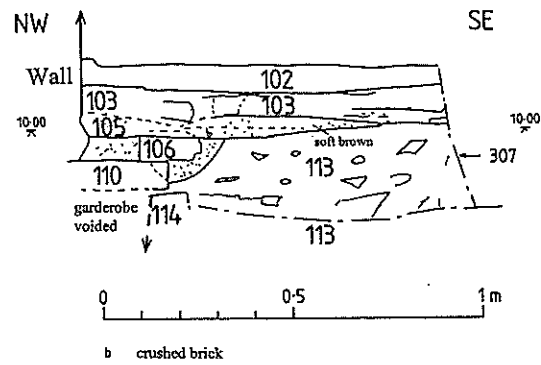
**Figure 3: Interior plan, intermediate plan**



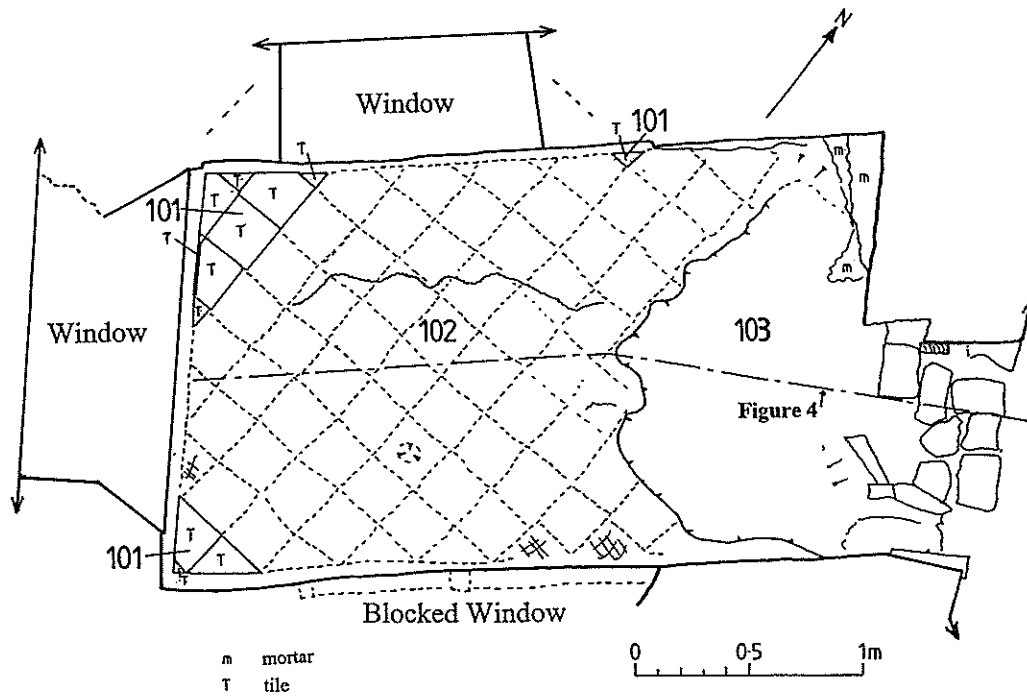
**Figure 4: Main section**



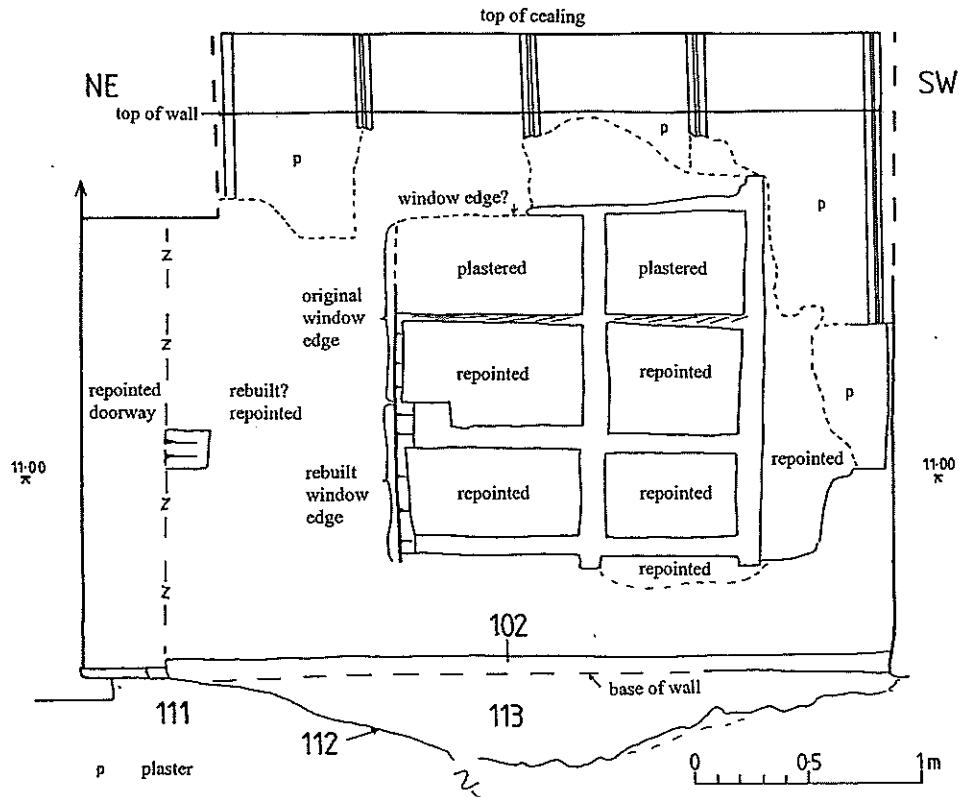
**Figure 5: Minor section**



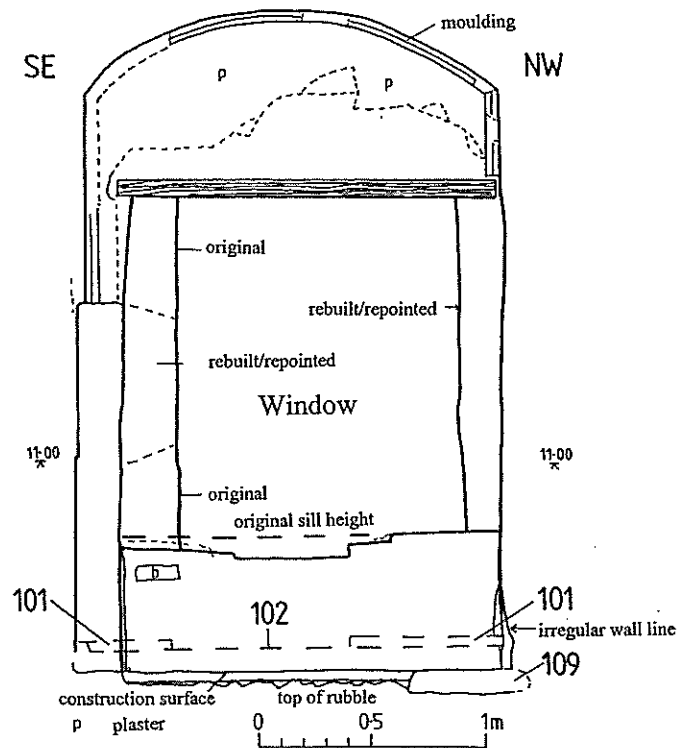
**Figure 6: Pre-excavation plan**



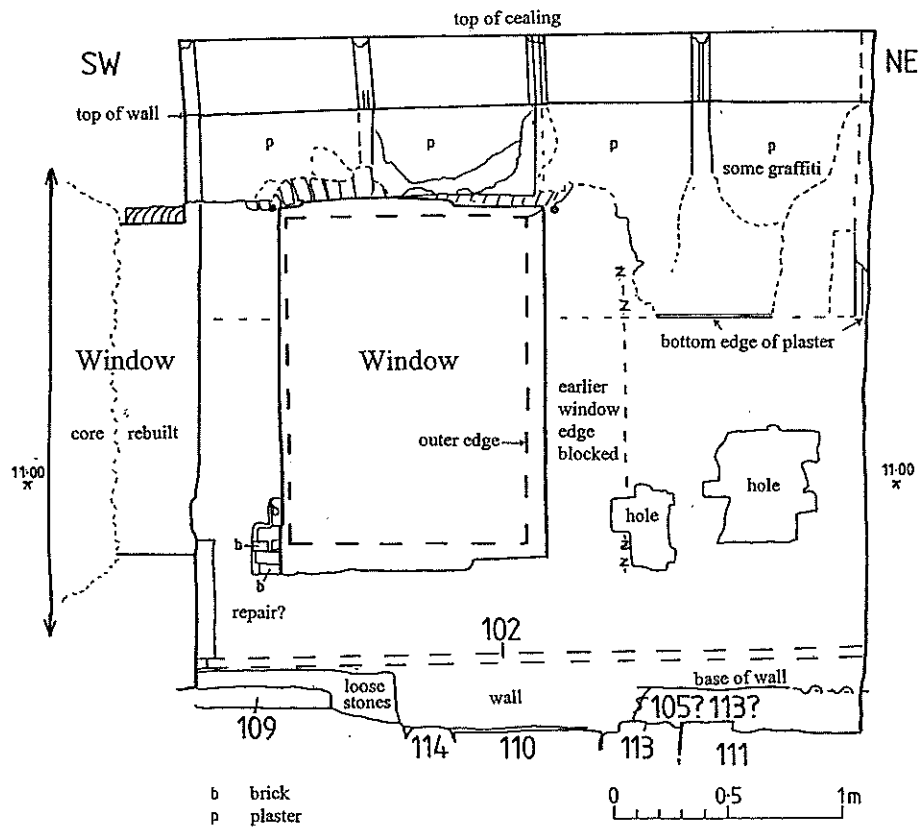
**Figure 7: Interior elevation SE wall**



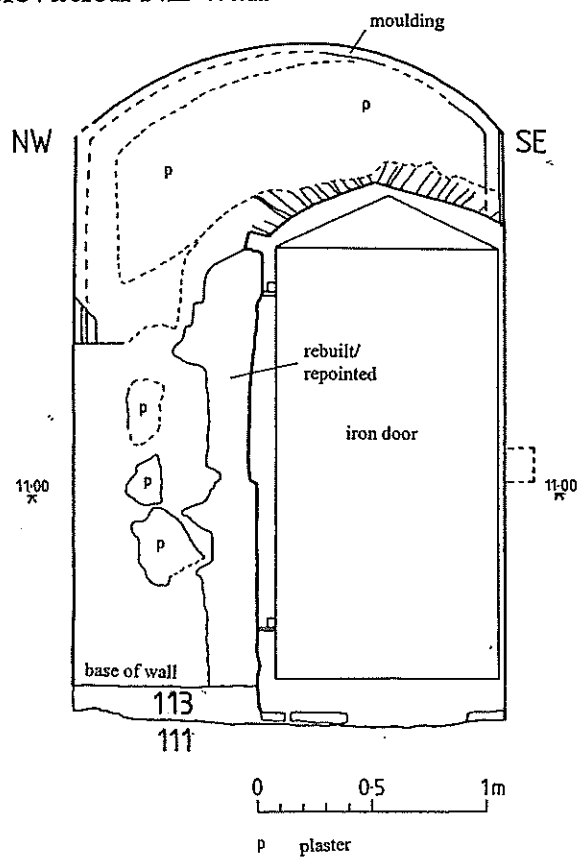
**Figure 8: Interior elevation SW wall**



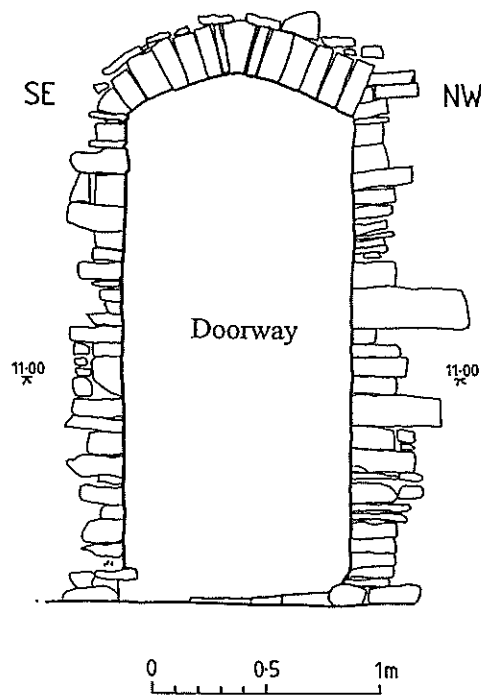
**Figure 9: Interior elevation NW wall**



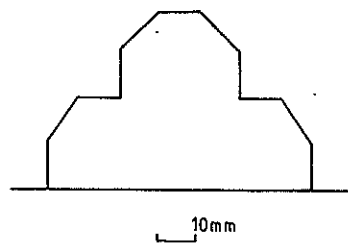
**Figure 10: Interior elevation NE wall**



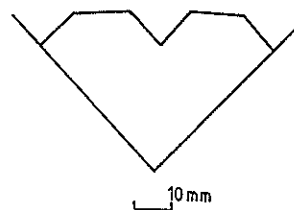
**Figure 11: Exterior elevation NE wall**



**Figure 12: Rib moulding**

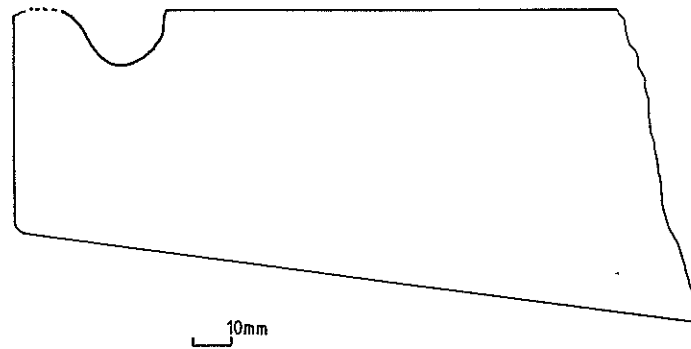


**Figure 13: Corner moulding**





**Figure 14: Bathstone moulding**



**Photo 1**



Wall 111, scale 1m, view looking NE (Archive No 217b)

**Photo 2**



NW exterior top of blocked garderobe chutes, scale 2m, view looking E  
(Archive No 212a)

**Photo 3**



Capping 110 above garderobe chute, scale 0.5m, view looking NW (Archive No 218)

**Photo 4**



Sealing deposit 106 above garderobe capping 110, scale 0.5m, view looking NW  
(Archive No 214)



**Photo 5**



Slabs 108 and 109 in corners, scale 1m, view looking WSW (Archive 213)

**Photo 6**



Main section showing mortar floor base, scales 0.5m and 1m, view looking SW (Archive No 206)

**Photo 7**



Pre-excavation, floor 101 and base 102, scale 0.5, view SW (Archive No 205)

**Photo 8**



Rubble 113 below SE wall, scale 0.5m, view E looking (Archive No 219)



**Photo 9**



SW end of SE wall, scales 1m and 2m, view looking E (Archive No 208)

**Photo 10**



SW wall, scales 1m and 2m, view looking SW (Archive 207)

**Photo 11**



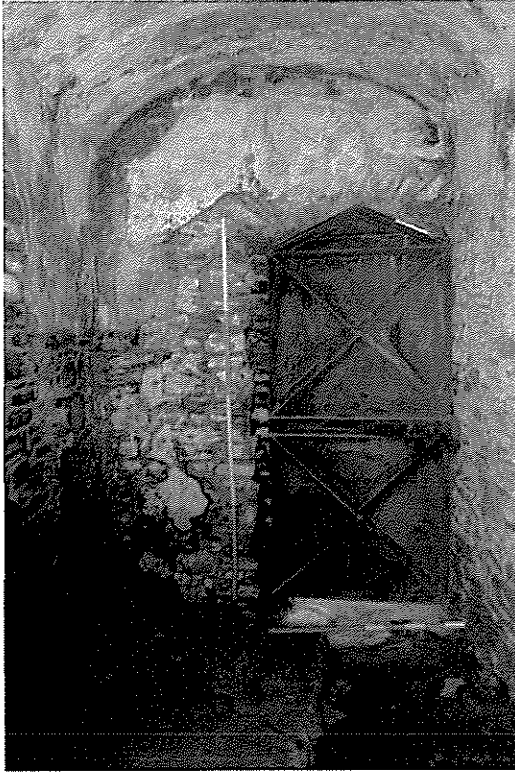
SW end of NW wall, scales 1m and 2m, view looking WSW (Archive No 211)

**Photo 12**



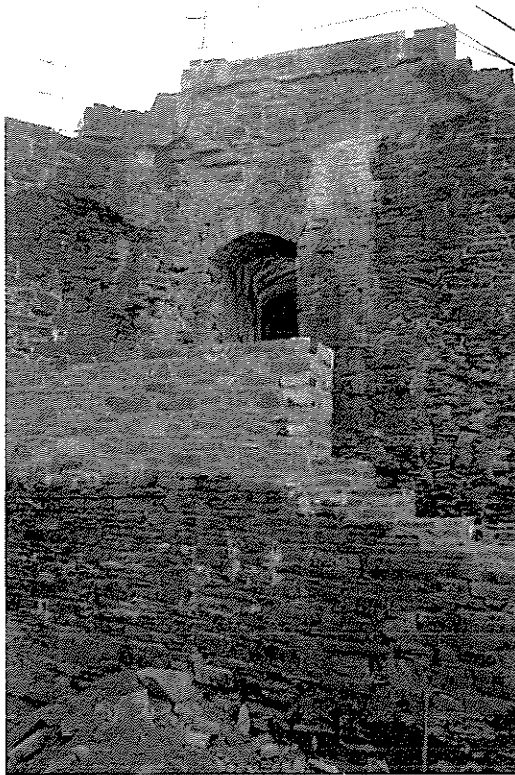
NE end of SW wall, scales 1m and 2m, view looking N (Archive No 210)

**Photo 13**



NE wall, scales 1m and 2m, view looking NE (Archive 209)

**Photo 14**



NE wall, from inner ward, view looking SSW (Archive 220)




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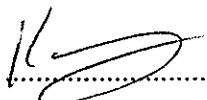
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Signature  Date 19 March 2002

This report has been checked and approved by Ken Murphy on behalf of Cambria Archaeology,  
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Signature  Date 19 March 2002

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