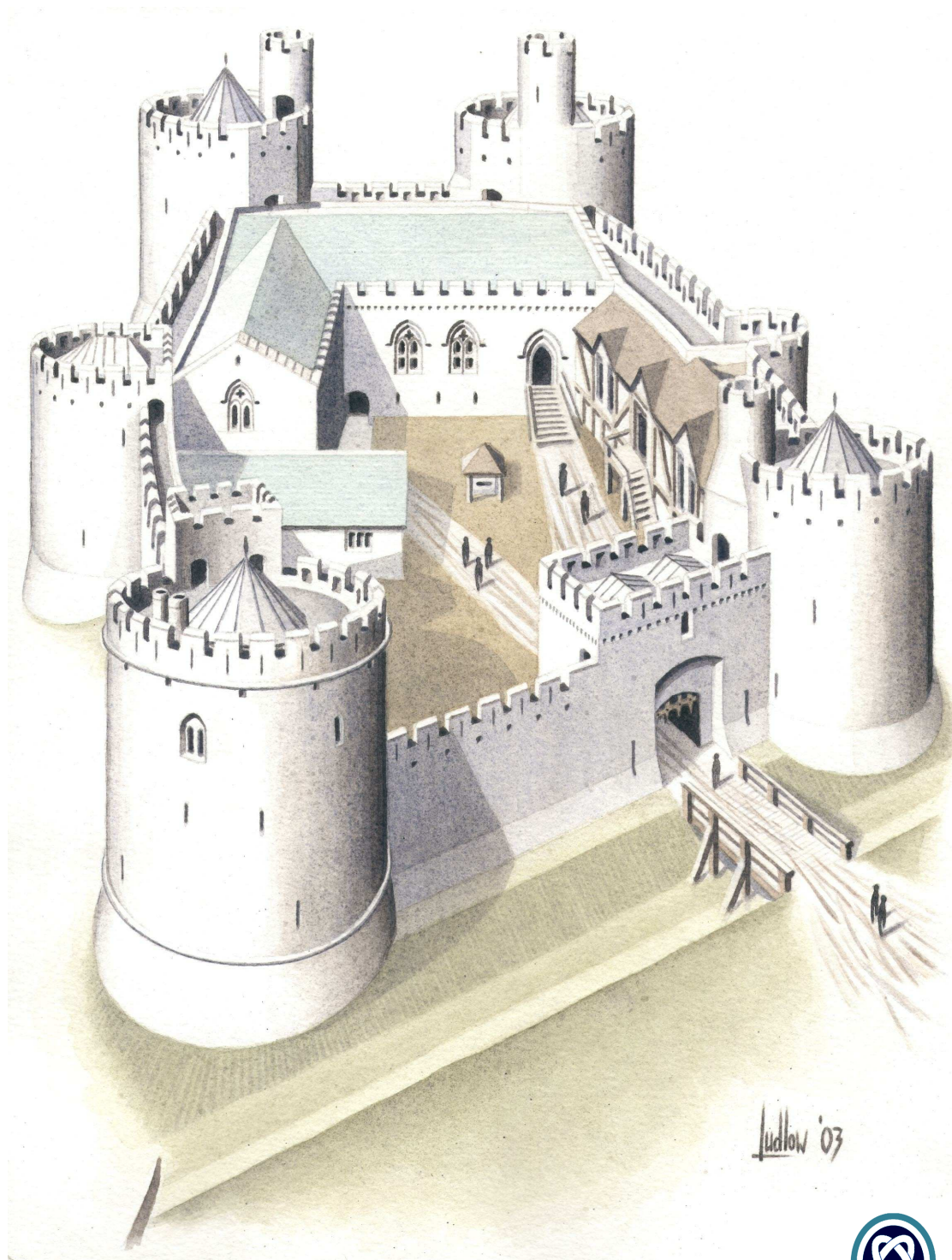


NARBERTH CASTLE

2003-2005 RECORDING



Paratowyd gan Archaeoleg Cambria
Ar gyfer Cyngor Sir Penfro
Prepared by Cambria Archaeology
For Pembrokeshire County Council



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NARBERTH CASTLE 2003-2005 RECORDING

Gan / By

Neil Ludlow

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NARBERTH CASTLE 2003-2005 RECORDING

RHIF YR ADRODDIAD / REPORT NUMBER

**Mawrth 2006
March 2006**

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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

NARBERTH CASTLE RECORDING, 2003-2005

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The full photographic record is contained on the accompanying CD

SUMMARY

A major programme of consolidation work at Narberth Castle, Pembrokeshire (NGR SN 1098 1440), was undertaken between 2003 and 2005, by Pembrokeshire County Council. The castle fabric was consolidated, underpinned where necessary, sympathetically repointed, and made safe. The work was accompanied by a full programme of archaeological recording.

Narberth castle is a subrectangular walled enclosure, with four corner towers and further towers or turrets midway along each long wall. The gatehouse lay between the two northern corner towers but has gone. A suite of domestic buildings includes a large Great Hall block, and a vaulted building at right angles to it. Both lie against the curtain walls. All standing fabric appears to belong to the 13th century. A possible outer ward, now unwall, lies to the north, while a large earthwork on the south side may be the remains of a Civil War ravelin.

Work concentrated on three of the four corner towers (The Northeast, Southeast and Southwest Towers) and the Great Hall, while the West Turret was subject to some repointing. Superficial clearance work was also undertaken in the area of the former East Tower and 'Parlour', and the Northwest Tower.

A considerable body of new information emerged from the work, casting doubt upon some previous interpretations –

- The large Northeast Tower was proved to be a four-storey structure by the discovery of a third floor window, confirming that it was in the 'keep' tradition. However, the quality of its masonry, which is a mix of materials, is very poor suggesting that it may have been erected in a hurry, in response to military (and prestige) necessity, and under tight financial constraints.*
- Part of the East Tower was revealed. The evidence suggests that it was open-backed. The rear of the tower is now occupied by a very thin north-south wall, probably secondary to the tower, belonging to a building, represented by footings, which appears to be the 'Parlour' mentioned in the 16th century.*
- The Southeast Tower may have been substantially remodelled in the later Middle Ages, and even possibly into the early post-medieval period. In its latest phase, it appears to have carried an overhanging slate roof in the style of a late medieval French chateau, possibly as a result of remodelling by Sir Rhys ap Thomas (1515-1525). A window on the second floor appears also to have been rebuilt. A feature at ground floor level, variously interpreted as a spiral stair shaft or the base of a bread oven, was shown to have been extensively rebuilt in the 1970s-80s and may not be original.*
- The structural evidence suggests that the Great Hall had a low-pitched, gabled roof lying behind a crenellated, corbelled parapet on each of the side walls. The style of its detail had suggested that the Great Hall was later than the masonry defences. However, it was seen to be of one build with the west curtain wall, and it may be that the enceinte took a longer time to complete than was previously thought; the west curtain may have been one of the last stretches to be built.*
- One of the most important findings was what appears to be conclusive proof that the earthwork to the south of the castle began as a Civil War ravelin. It was partly derived from material from the south curtain wall, which was demonstrated to have been demolished during the early post-medieval period.*

- *A number of new features were seen within the Southwest Tower itself. There appears to have been a postern in the angle with the former south curtain, below ground floor level. Above it was a garderobe, in the angle between the wall and the tower, above which the south curtain rose the full height of the tower. The second floor windows were properly exposed along with a recess, on the same floor, that may have been a fireplace. The Southwest Tower roof appears to have been a low-pitched conical affair that ran to the inside edge of a battlemented parapet, with no intervening wall-walk. The remains of glazing were seen in the second floor windows, and all windows appear to have been barred.*
- *The post-medieval bank currently leading northeast from the Northeast Tower was seen to overlie a line of mortared masonry, possibly representing a wall. This was not dated, but partly overlies the projected line of the Northeast Tower and is therefore interpreted as post-medieval.*

INTRODUCTION

A major programme of consolidation work at Narberth Castle, Pembrokeshire (NGR SN 1098 1440), was undertaken between 2003 and 2005. The work was initiated, funded and carried out by Pembrokeshire County Council (PCC) who acquired the site in the 1990s. The castle was in a poor state of repair, many areas of the standing masonry being unsafe. The fabric was consolidated, underpinned where necessary, sympathetically repointed and made good, and made safe.

Restoration of the fabric was notably sympathetic, using masonry that was, in the main, derived from tumble from the castle itself, and an approved lime putty mix that was used sparingly. Removal of unsafe masonry was kept to an absolute minimum, only two small sections requiring controlled demolition (in the Northeast and Southwest Towers). Structural necessity required the addition of two entirely new sections of masonry (to the Southeast and Southwest Towers), but their extent was kept to a minimum and they were made reversible. The structural work was accompanied, where necessary, by some intrusive archaeological investigation (Jamieson & Ludlow 2003), but ground-breaking was kept to a minimum. On completion of the restoration work, three interpretative panels were sympathetically installed within the castle, which was officially opened on 24 June 2005 with a highly successful public event.

The work was accompanied by a full programme of archaeological recording. A considerable amount of archaeological and research work had already been undertaken by Cambria Archaeology following the acquisition of the site by PCC (Ludlow 1996; Murphy & Crane 2002), the results of which were published in 2003 (Ludlow 2003, 5-44). In addition, a full drawn and photographic survey was undertaken by W S Atkins Consultants in 1997. However, their work was necessarily restricted by the ivy and other growth on the walls, and by a lack of scaffolding from which to record in detail.

The castle was fully scaffolded in 2003-5. The Atkins drawings were used as the basis for the new recording, being augmented with new detail as it came to light. In addition, new plans and elevations were drawn of selected areas, architectural detail was drawn at large scale (1:10) and a full suite of photographs were taken in digital format.

The drawings are reproduced in this report, which forms an accompanying narrative. It uses as its basis the publication report (Ludlow 2003) augmented with additional information and discussion, and a measure of re-interpretation. The photographs are reproduced in the accompanying CDs.

SITE DESCRIPTION

Narberth Castle lies on a north-south spur where it terminates, as a pronounced elevated knoll, at the southern end of Narberth town, sloping steeply to the west, east and south (Fig. 1). Its summit is a level rectangular platform which has undoubtedly been artificially enhanced to define the shape of the castle. It has been further remodelled in the recent past by the dumping of debris, producing a strong terraced effect. The underlying Ordovician shales lie close to the surface, outcropping and directly built upon at one location. The A478 runs from north to south at the foot of the western flank of the knoll. It probably follows a pre-existing routeway the control of which, and more importantly the ford over Narberth Brook to the south, was a factor in choice of the castle site. A well-worn trackway running from north to south down this western flank may lead from a former postern.

The castle is represented today by a subrectangular enclosure, which appears to represent the inner ward of a double-bailey castle. It measures 50 metres from north to south and averages 25 metres from east to west, and is defined by the very fragmentary remains of a masonry curtain wall (Fig. 2). There are four substantial, cylindrical 'drum' towers, one at each corner (herein referred to as the Northeast Tower, Southeast Tower, Southwest Tower and Northwest Tower), but only the Southeast and Southwest Towers, each of three storeys, survive to any height. All appear unvaulted. Midway along the long west side is the rather fragmentary remains of a small, 'D'-shaped turret (the West Turret). Opposite this on the east wall is the stump of a larger, 'D'-shaped tower (the East Tower). Against the south curtain wall is a large, unvaulted two-storey Great Hall, which forms an 'L'-shaped block with a two-storey vaulted building against the east curtain (probably representing a private retiring room or 'Solar', over a cellar). The walled enclosure was entered from the north but no remains of the gatehouse survive above ground. It was formerly fronted by a ditch, the silted remains of which are clearly visible in a photograph of c.1909 (Edwards 1909, 61), but which was entirely infilled later in the 20th century (Fig. 2).

The fabric is almost exclusively limestone rubble, roughly coursed, throughout the castle. Most of the facework has been lost except on the two southern towers. The little dressed stone that survives is simple, and suggests that the masonry defences are from the mid-late 13th century, and the domestic buildings are from c.1300. There is structural evidence for neither earlier nor later work, apart from the alterations undertaken during the 1970-80s which were accompanied by further dumping, and levelling of material.

To the north of the walled inner enclosure, between it and the town, is an area measuring 40 metres from north to south and 30 metres from east to west (Figs. 1 and 2). It is very level, though much-altered and truncated, and has been subject to similar dumping and remodelling. It is defined by a slight bank on the west side, and is considered to be the site of an outer ward which was probably entered, at its north end, from Market Street. A large number (over 20) of human burials, dating to the late 12th – 13th century, were excavated within this area in 2001 and 2003 (Murphy & Crane 2002; Jamieson & Ludlow 2003), and it is suggested that the enclosure was possibly the original site of Narberth's church, which moved to its present site when the outer ward was laid out in the 13th century (see Fig. 1). The outer ward may never have been walled in stone. It has remained undeveloped.

At the opposite end of the spur, south of the inner enclosure, is a large, triangular earthwork platform. It appears to be a ravelin of the sort that was constructed, as a defence against artillery, outside many Welsh castles during the Civil War (1642-48). At least part of its make-up appears to be derived from the demolition of the south curtain wall, whose debris was pushed down the slope.

In the early 1970s the castle ruins were bought by Robert Perrot, from New Zealand, who produced a scheme for restoration and promotion, and a management plan was drawn up. The plans came to nothing and by 1986 had been shelved. However, Perrot began an ambitious programme of work, including levelling the bailey, digging excavation trenches, and repointing - and in some cases rebuilding - substantial areas of the fabric, but no prior record was made. The site was subsequently acquired by South Pembrokeshire District Council, now Pembrokeshire County Council.

A fairly detailed, but unpublished account of the castle occurs in the field notebooks of the late David Cathcart King (King 1949 and 1976). A survey of the castle was taken in 1539, and is an invaluable document which describes the then structure of the castle. It is reproduced in RCAHMW *Inventory* of 1925 (pp. 247-8), and was discussed in relation to the remains in a short account published by Harrison in 1964 (Harrison 1964, 328-30). The identification of structures mentioned in the 1539 survey largely follows that of Harrison.

Fig. 1 - location plan of castle and town

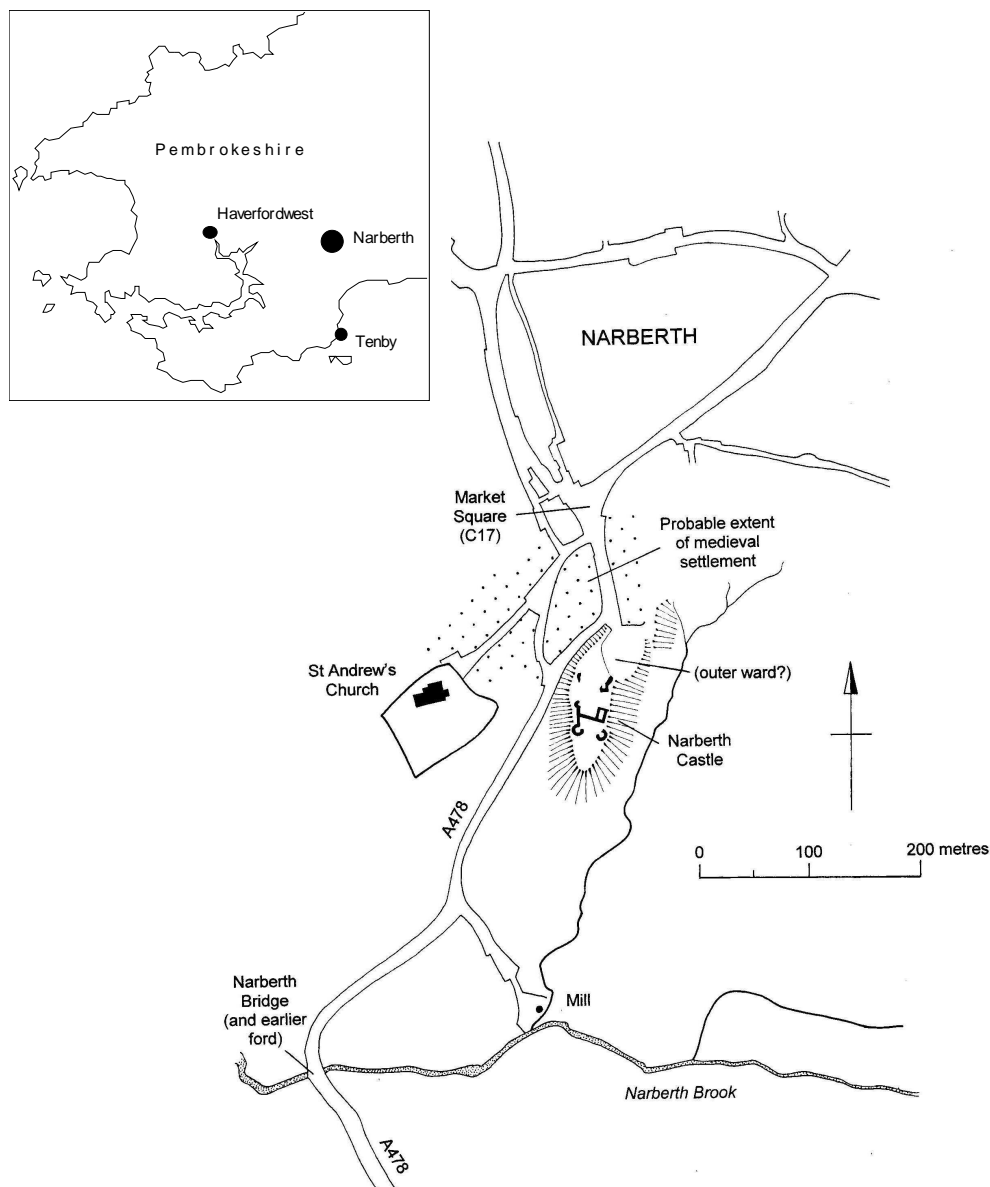
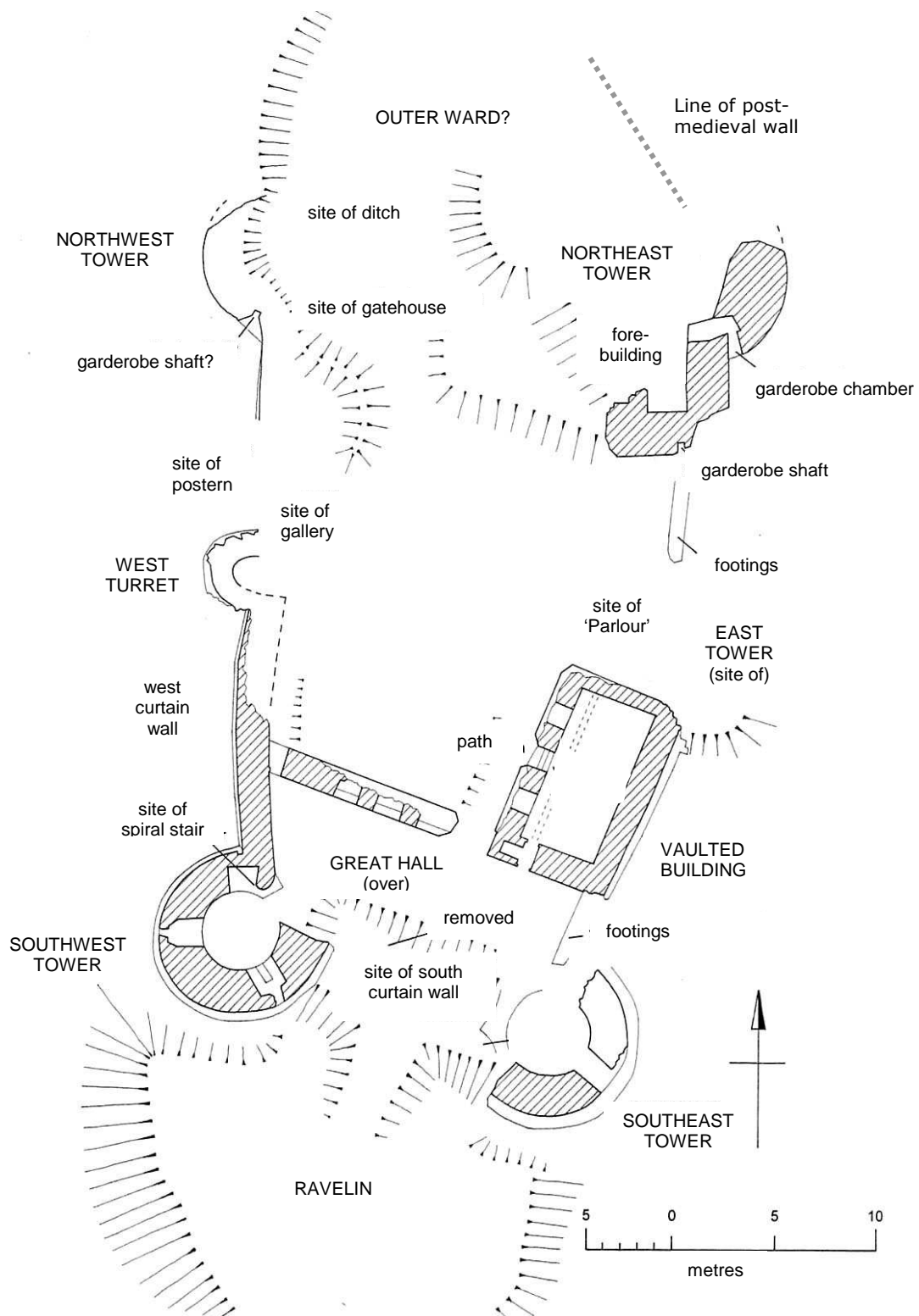


Fig. 2 - Overall plan of castle



THE 2003-5 RECORDING

The recording programme of consolidation and repair was limited to the Northeast Tower, the Southeast Tower, the Great Hall, and to the Southwest Tower, while the West Turret was subject to some repointing. Superficial clearance work was undertaken in the area of the former East Tower and the Northwest Tower. This report, like the detailed recording, is confined to these areas. The Vaulted Building and Gatehouse lay outside the scope of the work and are not described here - the reader is referred to the publication report for an account of these buildings and for a full history and description of the castle.

This report will describe each of the elements that were subject to recording in 2003-5, in a clockwise sequence, beginning with the Northeast Tower (see Fig. 2). Each description will contain a general description taken from the publication report, followed by a detailed description in the light of the recent recording.

The Northeast Tower

General description

Only the southeast quadrant of the Northeast Tower survives above ground, to a height of 13 metres, representing three storeys (Figs. 3-11; Plate 1), but in a very ruinous condition; very little internal facework survives. Though similar in plan, the tower is considerably larger than the other three, and the evidence suggested that unlike the two southern towers (and presumably the Northwest Tower), it formerly featured a third floor - the 1539 survey suggests that it contained three chambers over a dungeon, while a fourth storey appears to be shown on a print, by the Buck Brothers, of 1740. This was confirmed in 2004.

The remainder of the tower lies beneath the dump material noted above. However, a small area of exposed mortared masonry to the west, probably *in situ*, may represent part of the tower. If so, then it was also larger than the other three towers - around 13.5 metres in diameter at the base, decreasing to around 9.5 metres in the upper floors - with a correspondingly greater wall thickness. The facework is like that of the Northwest Tower. Unlike the other three surviving towers, however, the basal batter terminates at a plain string course.

The internal arrangements appear to have been more complex than in the two southern towers. A battery of three garderobe shafts descended through the wall-thickness at its junction with the forebuilding. The shafts collectively emptied into a square chamber at the foot of the wall, which now exits through a gap in the external face. This had been rebuilt prior to 2003 but was possibly original. A fireplace is present on each surviving floor, but only the backs remain and there is no evidence for the form of the hoods.

A rectangular 'forebuilding' lay against the southern face of the tower. Its east and south walls, and part of its west wall, survive to first floor height. The east wall is of one build with the tower at ground floor level, but a joint is visible between them higher up. Its internal facework continues, through a gap, into the tower suggesting the presence of a ground-floor entry. There are also two sockets here, possibly representing drawbar holes (see below), while a large, two-centred opening seems to be shown on the Buck print. However, the main entrance appears to have been on the first floor, the '29 steps from the courtyard to the Great Tower' mentioned in the 1539 survey possibly lying within the forebuilding. The southeast corner, which is built directly on a shale outcrop, contains the base of a possible further garderobe shaft (Fig. 2).

The tower is difficult to date. Few openings survive intact, and only one slit-light - and that has no dressings - nor does dressed stone survive anywhere else in the fabric, with the exception of the simply-chamfered string-course (see Discussion below).

Plate 1 - Photo of Northeast Tower from Southwest Tower in 2003 (before consolidation)



Detailed description

Prior to consolidation in 2004, the Northeast Tower was inspected from a crane (see Plate 2) to assess its condition. It was decided that 0.75 metres of masonry from the very summit of the surviving section would require removal, for safety reasons, before scaffolding could begin. The amount of fabric removed was kept to a minimum but did include the only surviving evidence for the fourth storey, in the form of the slight remains of a window embrasure (see below).

The tower was then fully scaffolded, and the fabric was repointed, with some very superficial rebuilding in a couple of areas, while a new mass of masonry was added to the base of both surviving faces, internal and external, for security. This was finished off as corework. The scaffold was erected in 5 'lifts', from which the recording was undertaken. There is no structural evidence for the precise location of any of the floors - or of their nature - so it is uncertain how closely any of the lifts corresponded with former floor levels. The accompanying plans (Figs. 5 - 10), therefore, are taken at arbitrary levels (Levels 1 - 6), but they roughly approximate to two levels per storey - Levels 6 (ground level) and 5 largely correspond to the ground floor, Levels 4 and 3 to the first floor, and Levels 2 and 1 to the second floor. Individual frame numbers, and the direction of the photographs, are marked on Figs. 5 - 10 and relate to the photographs on the accompanying CD; the drawings are reproduced on the CD for guidance. The elevations drawings (Figs. 3 & 4) are adapted from the W S Atkins drawings, with revisions and amendments; Fig. 11 is a new record.

Fig. 3

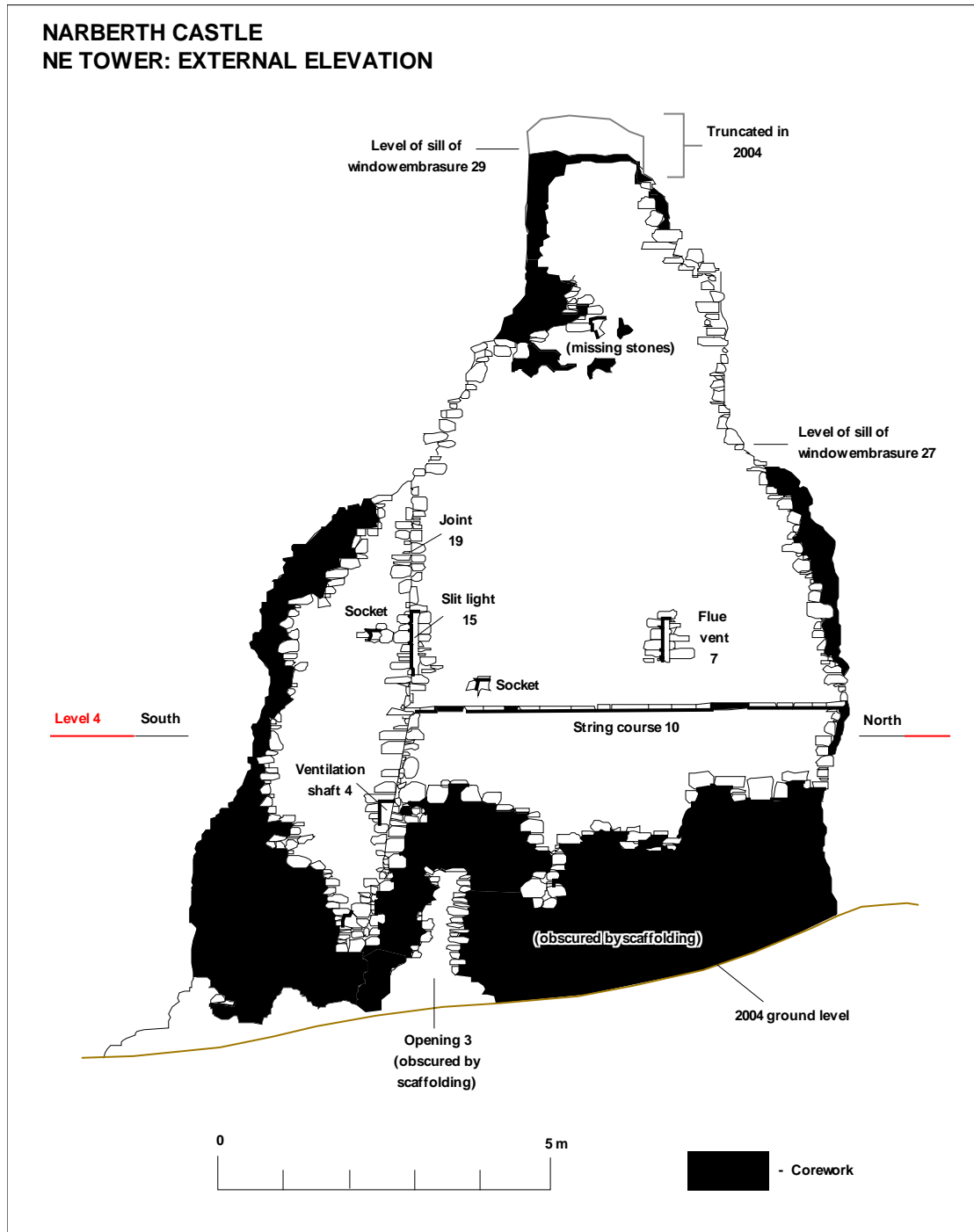
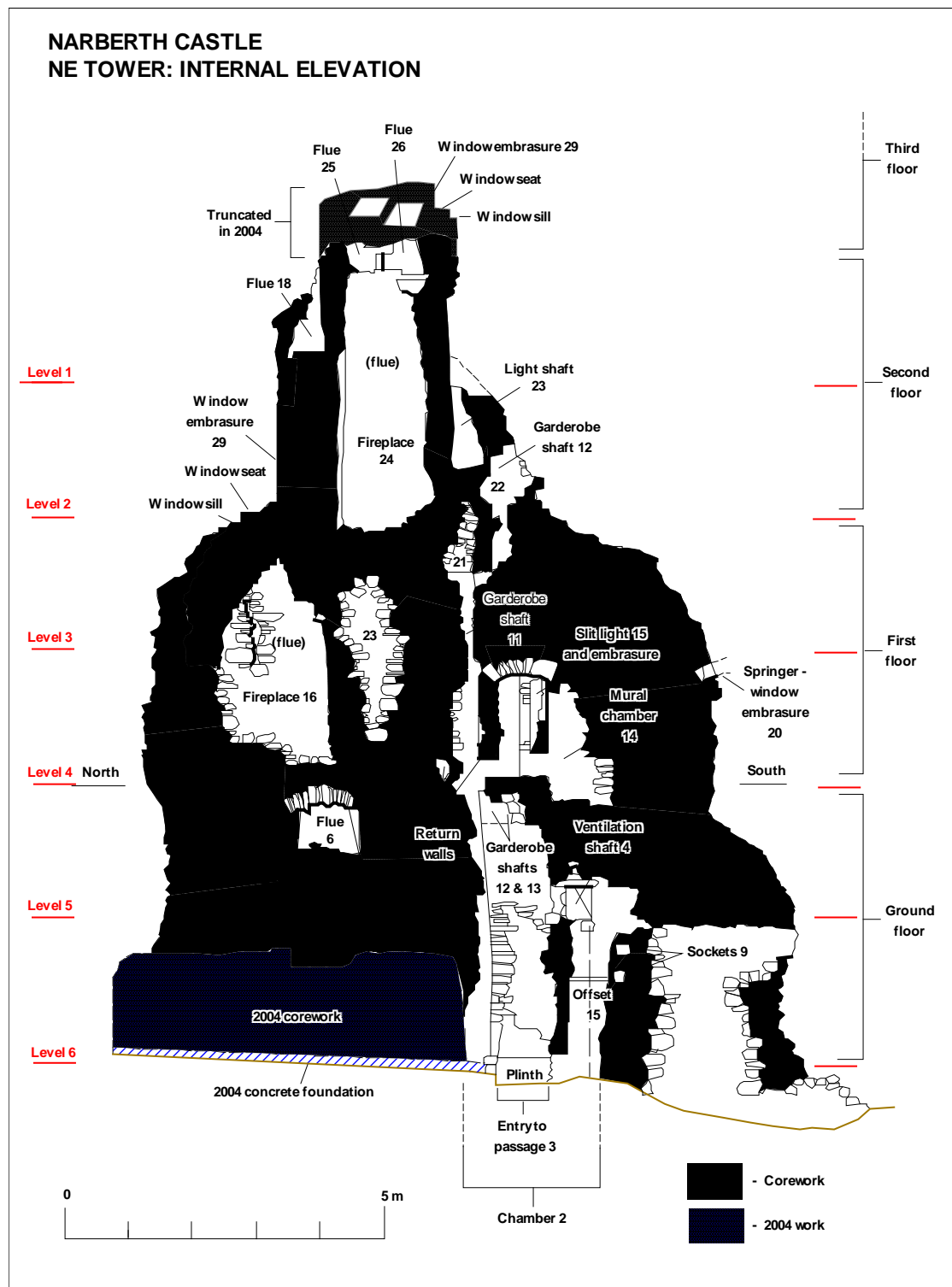


Fig. 4



Scaffolding enabled the masonry to be examined closely, and a further difference between this tower and the two southern towers was observed. Whilst the latter towers are built almost exclusively from locally-quarried Carboniferous Limestone, the Northeast Tower features a wide variety of building stone. Whilst limestone predominates, particularly externally, much of the internal facework (for the flue-backs, for example), appears to be a volcanic 'tuff' like that exposed in the cutting for the A40 between Llanddewi Velfrey and Whitland. There is also a considerable amount of conglomerate used throughout, and some Old Red Sandstone. Some of these stone-types had become friable, and were presumably always vulnerable to decay. Construction was itself rather poor, with poorly-bonded joints and imprecise coursing. This may explain why so much of the tower has been lost.

The ground floor (Figs. 5 & 6 - Levels 6 & 5)

At ground level, the original wall thickness could be seen, at the base of the batter, to be at least 4 metres, reducing to 3.2 metres at the top of the batter. Internal diameter at ground level appears to have been at most 5 metres, and it appears to have been roughly the same (c. 4.9 metres) at first floor level. The ground floor storey was at least 2.5 metres in height (from present ground level)

A mural passage or chamber (1), at present ground level, leads at an angle from the interior through the thickness of the wall at its southeast end. This passage rises nearly the full height of the ground floor (4 metres), where it opens into the bottoms of the three garderobe shafts. It therefore appears to be a cess-pit chamber which would, presumably, have been sealed off from the tower interior by walling - necessarily so if the ground floor was used as a dungeon, as suggested by the 1539 survey. A much weathered passage (2), at right-angles to the chamber, now exits to the tower exterior at its junction with the forebuilding. The external opening (3) had been restored prior to 2003, but the presence of a chamfered plinth along the base of the east side of the passage, and the presence of possible jambs or stops either side of the opening (albeit much weathered) suggest that it was an original feature, allowing waste to discharge from the chamber (and cleaning out to take place). A small, narrow splayed shaft (4) slopes steeply upwards from the top of the cess-pit chamber to the exterior and was presumably a ventilation shaft; it exits as a small square opening beneath a plain lintel. An offset (5 on Fig. 4) halfway up the south wall of the chamber is of unknown function.

The ground floor fireplace (6) lies to the north of the cess-pit chamber. It has been largely lost, including any evidence for a hood, due to the loss of the internal facework, but it appears to have been rather small. It is now represented by the back of its flue, which slopes up through the thickness of the wall to discharge to the exterior, as a vent (7 on Fig. 3), at first floor level, rather than leading to a chimney; this vent, which is a vertical slit, has a plain lintel head.

South of the cess-pit chamber, an area of facework belonging to the forebuilding east wall still survives (8 on Fig. 4). No detail is present, but two sockets (9) can be seen in the corework of the forebuilding east wall to the north of this facework. They are of unknown function, but could indicate the presence of a ground floor entry into the tower from the forebuilding, possibly representing draw-bar sockets.

Fig. 5

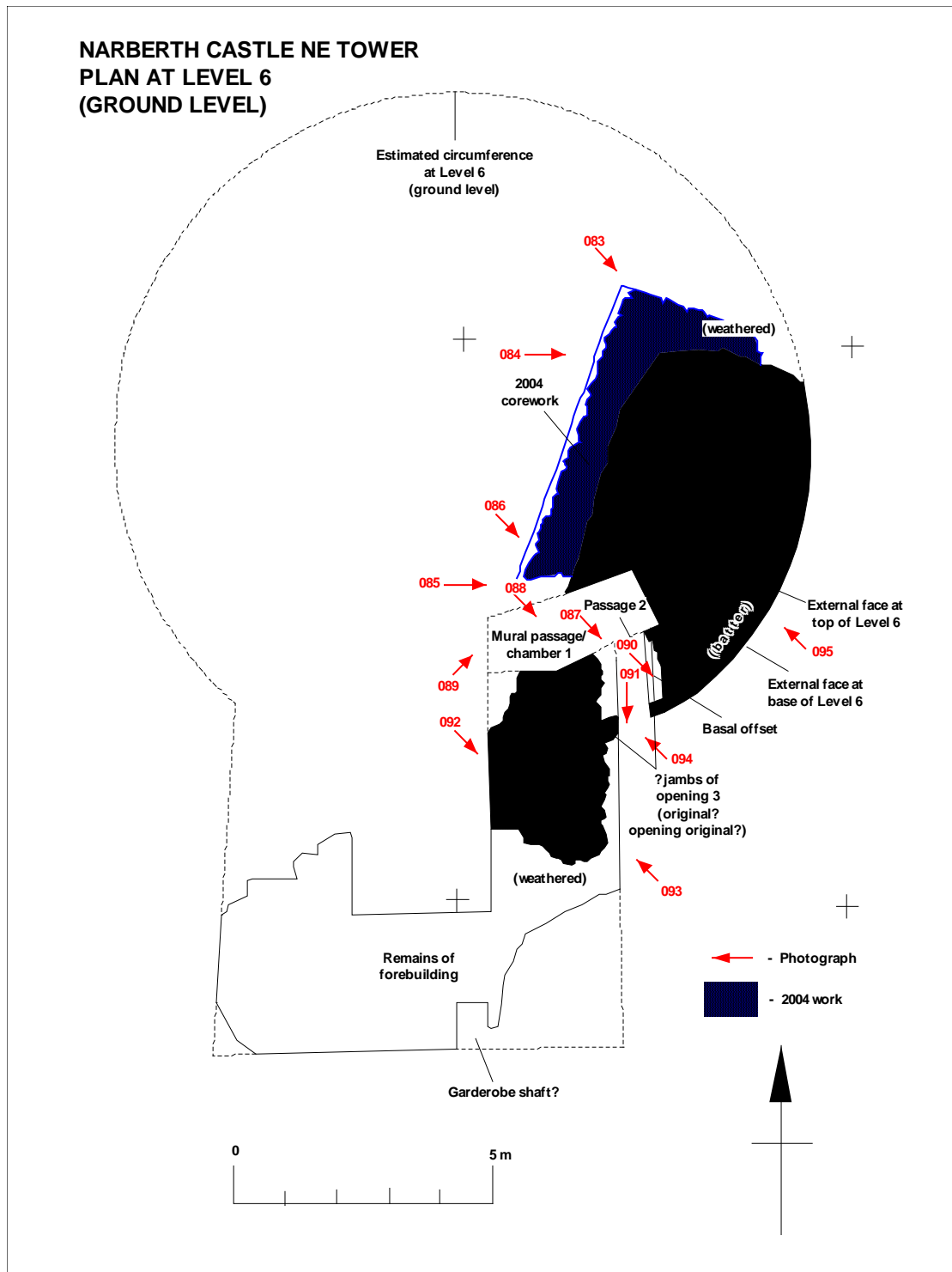


Fig. 6

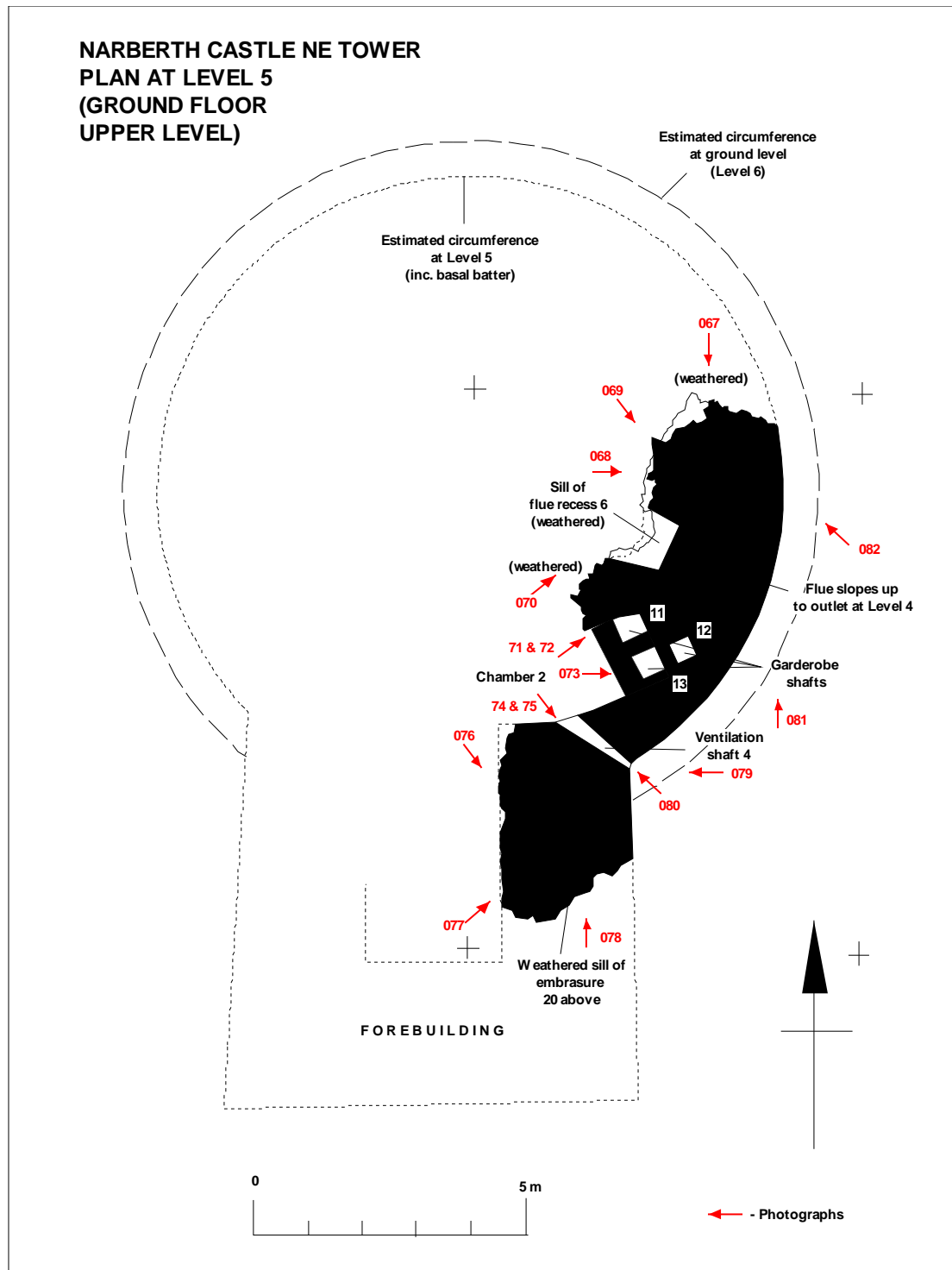


Fig. 7

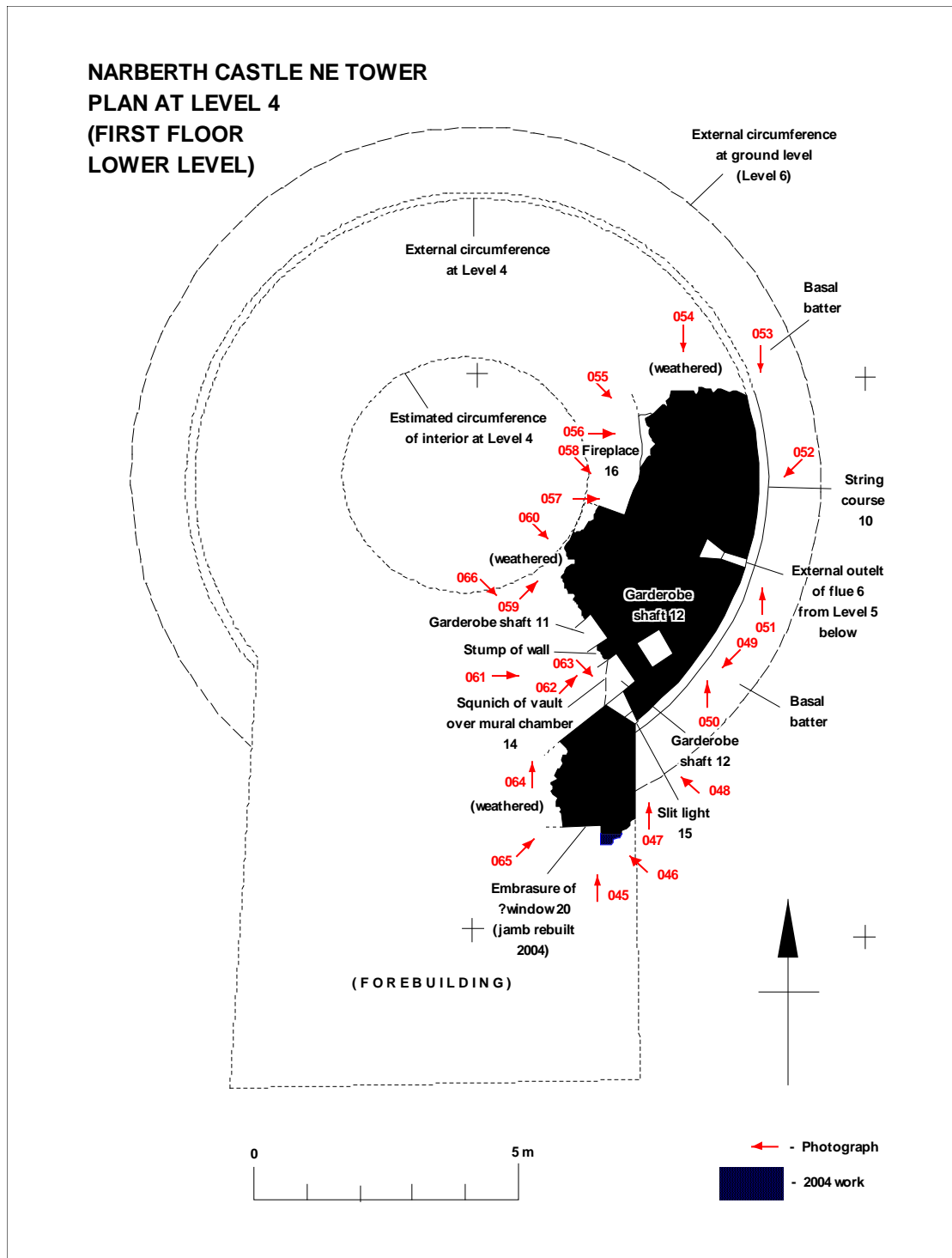
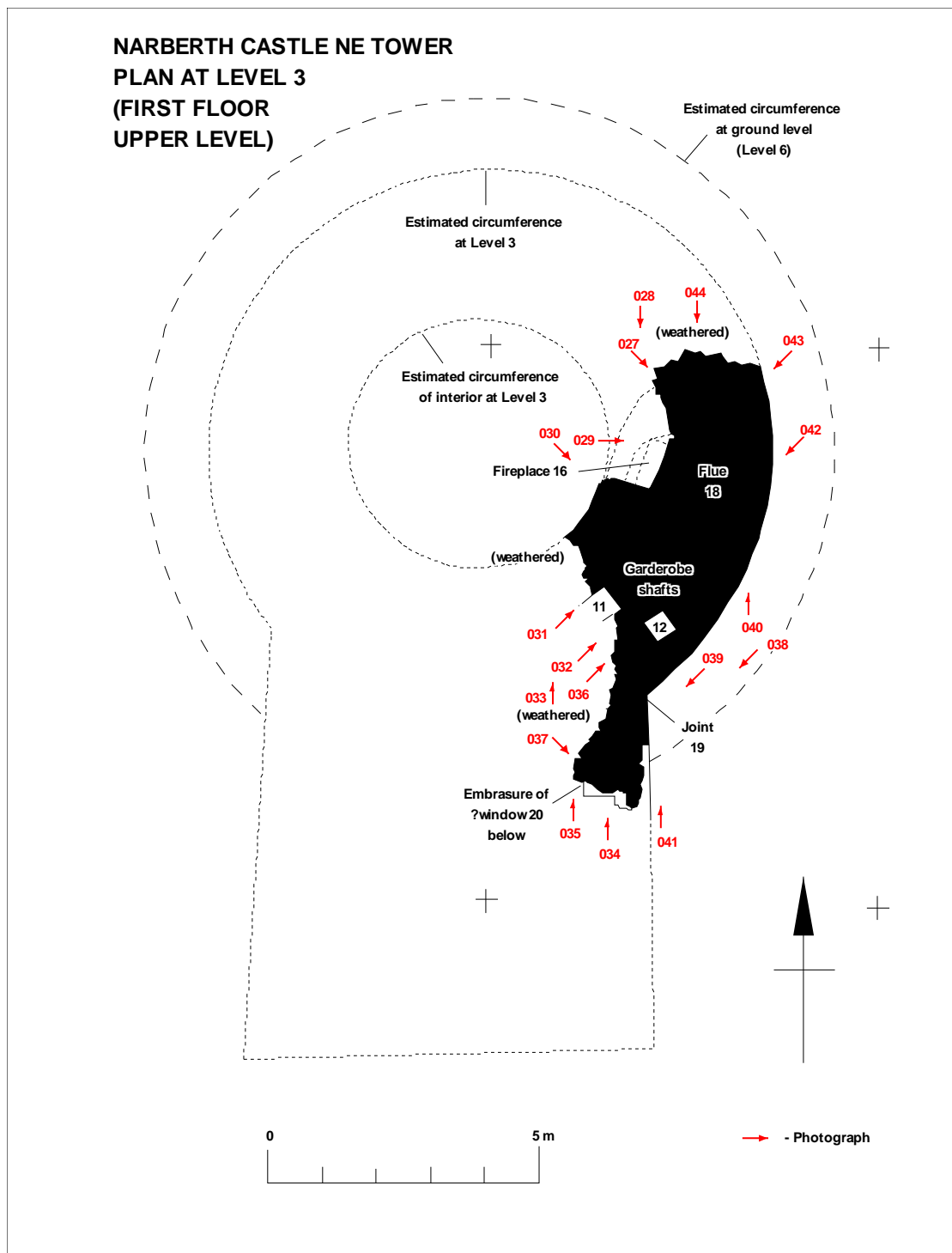


Fig. 8



The first floor (Figs. 7 & 8 - Levels 4 & 3)

Externally, first floor level is marked by the dying-back of the batter at a bold string-course (10), with a simple chamfer on the upper surface. External diameter at this level is around 9.5 metres; internally it is only around 4.9 metres, a very small internal space relative to the wall-thickness of 3.5m. Internal space may have been increased by extensive use of mural chambers, as suggested by the surviving portion of the tower.

A fireplace (16) lies to the north of a small area of facework (17 on Fig. 4) which provides the internal diameter. Although rather more of this fireplace survives than that on the ground-floor, compared with which it is much larger, it too has largely gone (including any hood) and is now represented by its curving back, and by its flue (18), which presumably led to a chimney (see below).

Two garderobe shafts (11 & 12) descend through the thickness of the wall, from the second floor to the ground floor cess-pit chamber, and have been exposed to the south, where the tower has fallen (see also Fig. 11). A third garderobe (13) is located between them at first floor level, within a mural chamber/passage (14) which lies directly above the cess-pit, and which runs from southwest to northeast. This chamber, which carries a segmental vault, is lit by a simple, splayed slit-light (15), with a plain lintel, in the angle between the tower and the forebuilding. The chamber is divided from the two second-floor shafts by slender walls to the northeast and northwest; these have now largely gone, obscuring the former arrangements.

The garderobe slit-light (15) obscures the junction between the tower and the forebuilding east wall, but above it the junction can be seen to be a joint (19). The two are bonded lower down, but from this level upwards work on one appears to have preceded the other. The remains of the northern reveal of an unsplayed embrasure (20), probably for a window, can be seen at the weathered south end of the surviving section of this wall, and the springer of its segmental head. What appeared to be the jamb for a window was also present, but it was incomplete and its form unknown; when it was part rebuilt in 2004, for structural reasons, it was left unfinished.

The second floor (Figs. 9 & 10 - Levels 1 & 2)

There is no demarcation between the first and second floors on the exterior of the tower, but the second floor chamber was slightly larger at nearly 6 metres diameter, achieved by narrowing the wall to 2.5 metres; the internal offset, however, has weathered out. The remains of the forebuilding have been truncated below this level but there is no reason to suppose that it did not continue upwards into the second, or even the third floor. The 1539 account in fact states that 'two little turrets' rose above the Northeast Tower battlements, and the forebuilding may represent one of these (or both, if turreted itself).

Garderobe shafts 11 and 12 appear to originate from this level, although little remains of the garderobes themselves except for two small areas of facework (21 and 22 on Fig. 4). Their form is therefore unknown, but they presumably occupied a mural chamber as on the first floor and, although the two shafts are offset from each other, they may have belonged to a two-seater latrine (see also Fig. 11). The steeply sloping sill, and reveal (23), of what appears to have been a slit-light (or more probably a light/ventilation shaft) lie immediately to the north, but again this area has been heavily truncated both horizontally and vertically (Fig. 11).

The second floor fireplace (24) is offset from that on the first floor, and is equally incomplete. It rises to the present summit of the tower as an open flue with a curving back. The upper half of the second floor is now represented by a slender column of masonry comprising this flue, flue 18 from the first floor, and two further shafts in the wall thickness (25 & 26). These appear to be flues but there is no indication of their origin (see Plate 2). If they were garderobe shafts, there is no indication of their destination. The northern end of this 'column' exhibits the reveal, sill, jamb and window-seat of a window embrasure (27). All are very weathered and retain no detail (see also Fig. 11).

Fig. 9

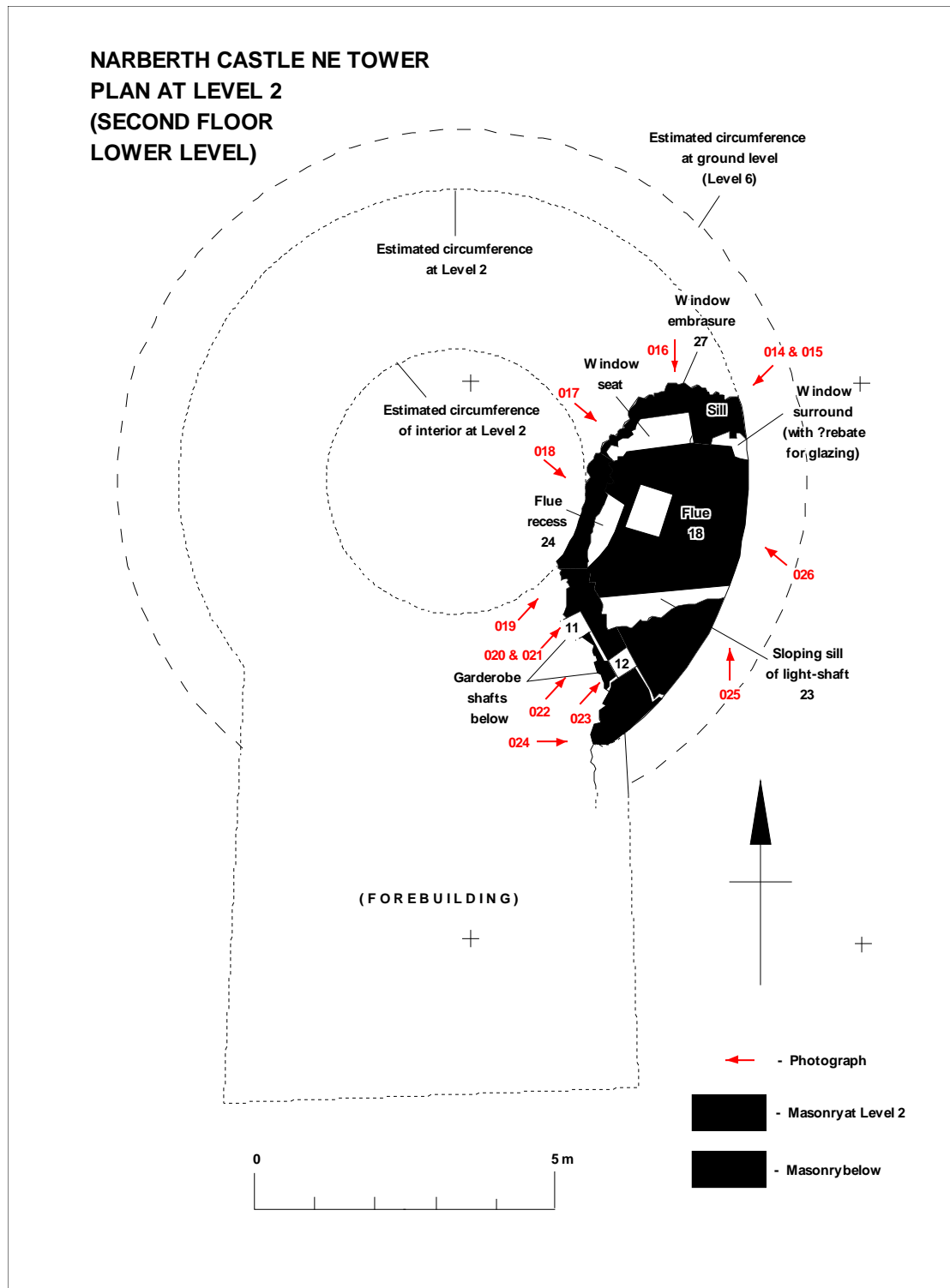


Fig. 10

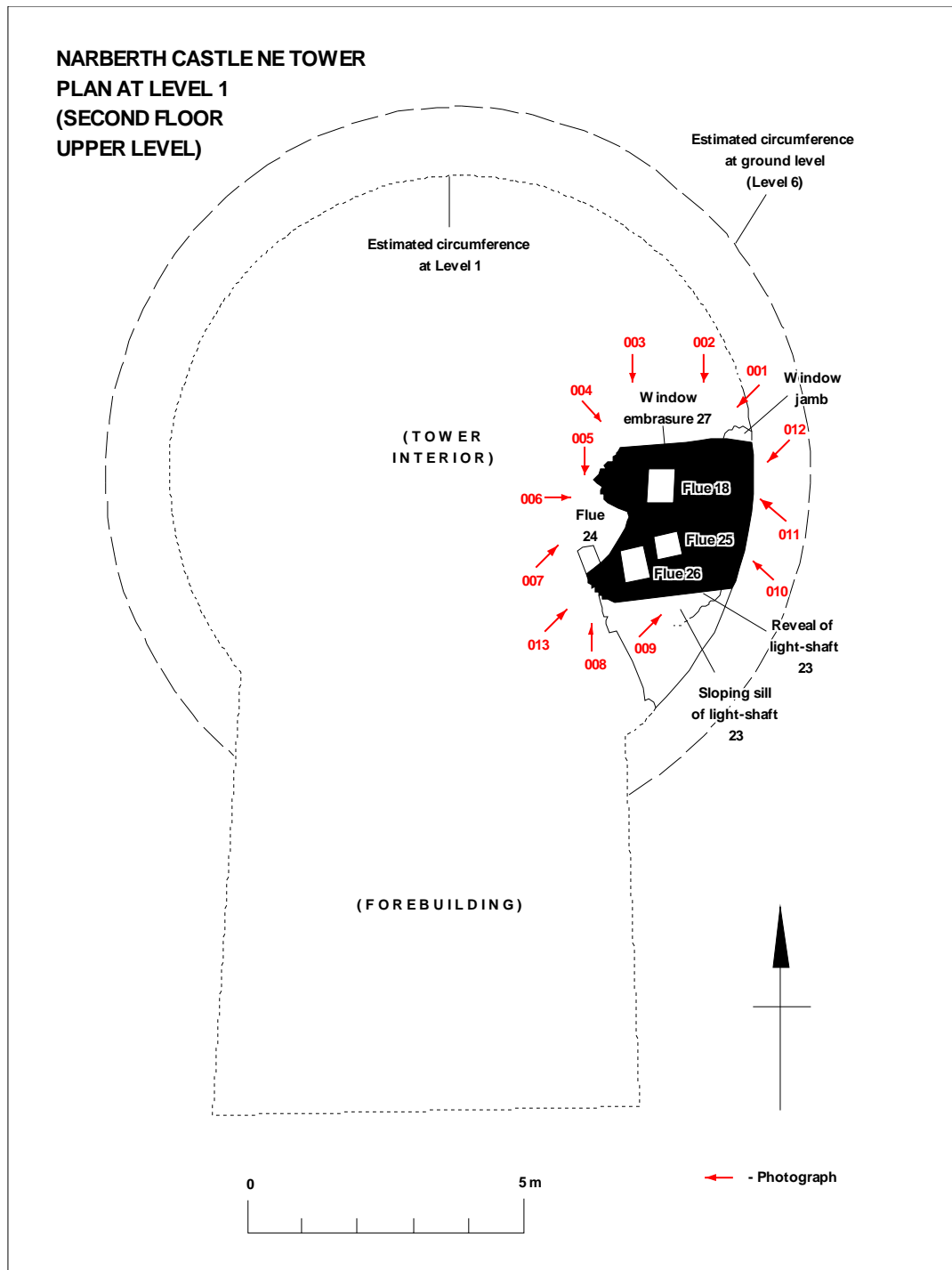
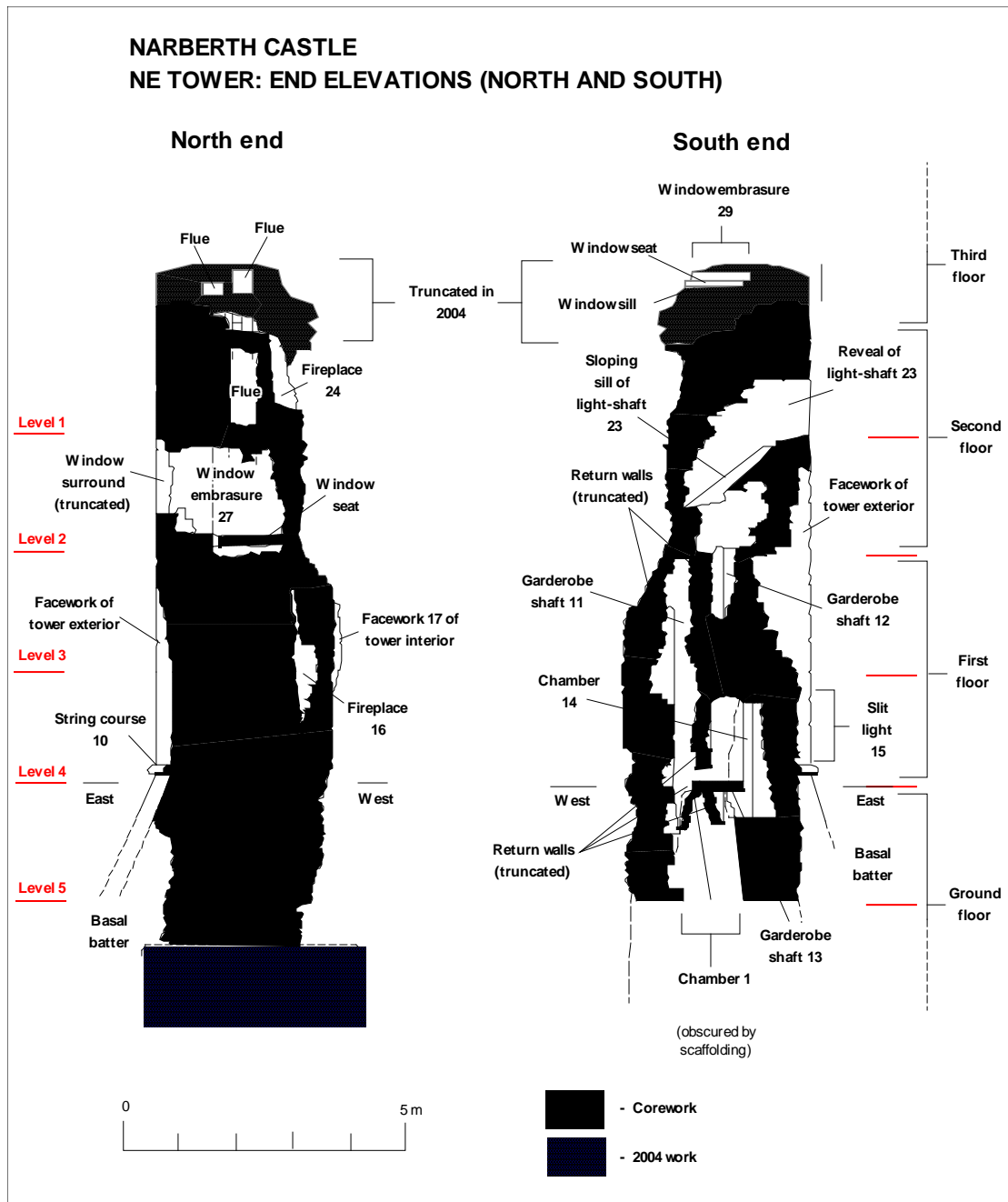


Fig. 11



The third floor (Figs. 3, 4 & 11; Plate 2)

The presence of a fourth storey, suggested by contemporary source material, was confirmed during the initial inspection of the tower from the crane. The truncated southern end of the surviving section bore the very slight remains of the seat and sill of a further window embrasure (29), 0.5 metres beneath the summit, at third floor level (Fig. 11; Plate 2). This was unfortunately part of the section that had to be removed for safety. It was photographed and sketched, with rough measurements taken from the crane. No further features associated with this floor level appeared to survive.

Plate 2 - The summit of the Northeast Tower prior to its truncation, from the southwest, showing window embrasure 29, and flues



The East Tower and 'Parlour' (Figs. 2 & 12; Plates 3 and 4)

The east curtain has not survived. A short length of masonry leading south from the forebuilding, towards the vaulted building (see above), may follow its line but appears to be the remains of a low post-medieval wall (Fig. 2). The platform occupied by the Inner Ward now extends 5 metres beyond this line to a sharp break of slope, possibly representing debris derived from the curtain.

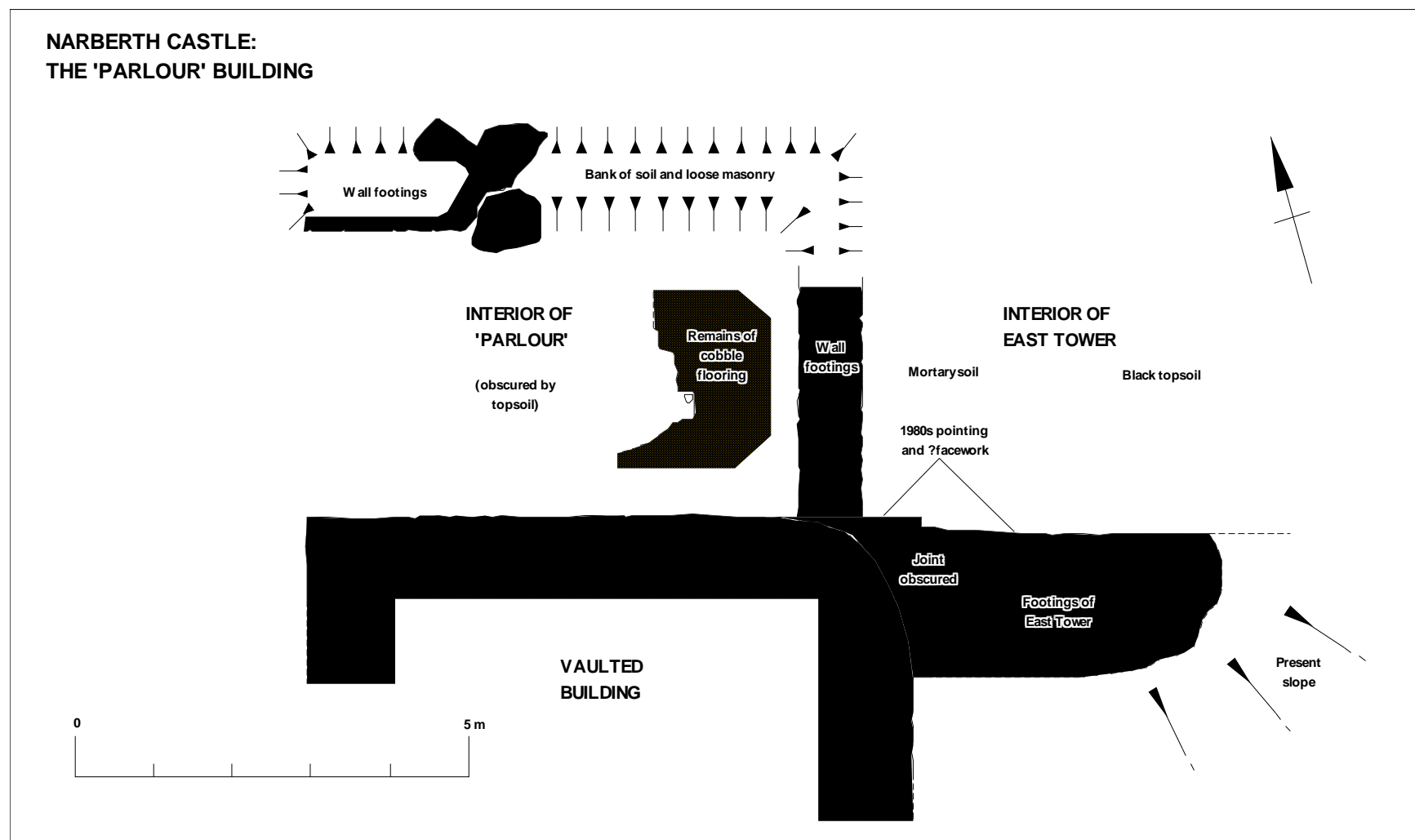
The stump of an east-west return wall, at the northeast corner of the vaulted building (see Fig. 2), represents the remains of the south wall of the former East Tower, which has otherwise been totally destroyed. The 1539 survey indicates that it was a three-storeyed tower, with a 'compass of 66 feet', comprising two chambers over a buttery. It was thus nearly as large as the Northwest, Southeast and Southwest Towers, but was presumably 'D'-shaped (Fig. 2).

Clearance work in late 2005 revealed more of this tower (Fig. 12). The footings of this south wall were exposed, leading for nearly 4 metres eastwards before petering out, having been lost beyond this point to erosion, or robbing. The former appears more likely as the present break of slope here appears to lie within what would have been the tower interior. It was not possible to gauge the thickness of the wall - a width of 1.8 metres was exposed, but the outer face of the wall-footing had been lost. Internally, the footing survived to height of nearly 0.5 metres (Plate 3). Its junction with the north wall of the vaulted building was offset, indicating that the two were probably not contemporary, but any joint here had been obscured by heavy pointing (and possibly rebuilt facework) from the 1970s-80s. Within what was the body of the tower, a clear difference in soil was noted from west to east, the former being rich in mortar, grading into black topsoil towards the east (towards the exterior of the castle); however, the mortar may have been derived from debris which would naturally slope away from the castle and become subsumed beneath topsoil.

A slender wall footing, only 0.9 metres thick, ran northwards from the vaulted building on the approximate line of the back of the tower (Fig. 12; Plate 4). It was not bonded with the vaulted building, to which it appears to have been secondary, which suggests that the east tower may originally have had an open back. Instead, this wall footing appears to belong to a building, lying east-west against the north wall of the vaulted building, which was also partly revealed during 2005. It was represented by a low bank of soil and loose masonry, leading westwards from the north end of the footing (Fig. 12), and itself including a short length of possible *in situ* footings; this wall-line was shown by both Harrison and King (Harrison *op. cit.*, 329; King 1946 and 1976).

The two footings defined a rectangular area measuring 1.5 metres east-west and 5 metres north-south, the eastern half of which was occupied by what appeared to be the remains of a much-damaged cobbled floor surface. It would appear to represent the 'house 33ft long with low parlour, closet and chamber over' mentioned in 1539, although the thickness of the footings would suggest that, if of two storeys, both must have been low. Furthermore, if it was 33ft long, it must have extended much further west than its present north wall footing would suggest; there was no evidence for the west wall, but this may have been entirely robbed out.

Fig. 12



*Plate 3 - The south wall of the former East Tower from the north,
at its junction with the vaulted building*



Plate 4 - The footings of the 'Parlour' from the west



The Southeast Tower

General description

Only the southern third of the Southeast Tower survives to any height, standing to 11 metres and comprising three storeys; the parapet has gone. The rest of the tower has been truncated to internal ground level but it can be seen to have had an external diameter of 9.5 metres, and an internal diameter of 5 metres at ground floor level with walls 2.5 metres thick (Figs. 2 and 13). The tower projects boldly beyond the line of the curtain walls. Both the fabric and the batter are the same as in the Northwest Tower although the latter is more pronounced. The internal earth floor level is slightly lower than in the enclosure, but nearly 4 metres above external levels to the southeast.

Plate 5 – The Southeast Tower before consolidation, from the Southwest Tower



Each floor level is represented by an internal offset, the walls becoming thinner with height. An internal corbel at first floor level on the south side, associated with a vertical chase, probably received a brace-post for the second floor joists; the internal sockets at ground floor level may be secondary. A large unsplayed window embrasure, its sill at ground-floor level, opens to the southeast; only its southern reveal survives. There is a similar embrasure on the first floor, opening to the east. Again, only its southern reveal survives (in line with the truncated north end of the tower), and features a two-centred, blind recess which may have been a *piscina*. The eastern reveal of a similar embrasure, opening to the southwest, survives in the truncated west end of the tower. On the third floor is a smaller, segmental embrasure, again unsplayed, with a large window opening to the southeast. All dressings - if ever present - have been lost from the tower.

The physical evidence appears to confirm the 1539 suggestion that the ground floor was a bakehouse (next to the kitchens - see below), though no demonstrable oven survives, the first floor was a chapel, and the third floor was a chamber.

Detailed description

The remains of the Southeast Tower were repointed in 2004, when the tower was fully scaffolded. Close inspection of the fabric revealed little that was not depicted in the W S Atkins drawings and photos - and no dressings are present in the surviving remains - so little new recording was undertaken. A couple of details were photographed, and a new plan of the ground floor was drawn as more of the footings were exposed by the preliminary superficial clearance, leading to a re-interpretation of the extent of medieval masonry here. Moreover, new evidence came to light as to the nature of the tower roof - at least in its final phase.

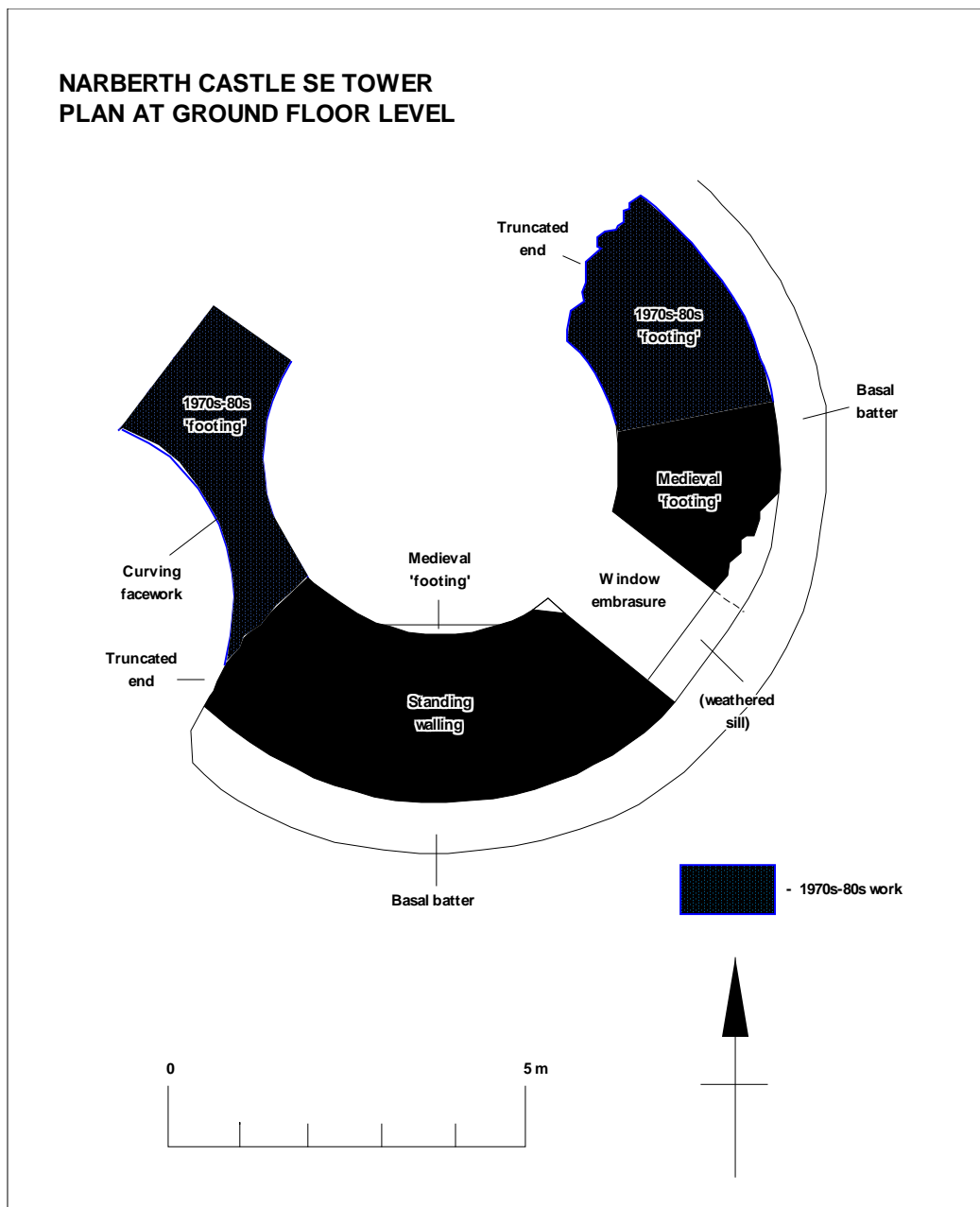
The tower was consolidated more-or-less as found with one exception. A new masonry buttress was built against the truncated northwest end, up to first floor level, for reasons of structural security.

The ground floor (Fig. 13)

Superficial clearance of the top few centimetres of earth from the present ground surface, represented by compacted earth revealed more of the tower footing beyond its truncated ends. the northern half of the footing on the east side could be seen to have been pointed during the 20th century, in much the same material as seen elsewhere in Robert Perrot's 1970s-80s work, and may have been substantially rebuilt. Similarly, a concave area of facework, descending through the thickness of the tower wall at its truncated west end, had been interpreted either as the remains of a spiral stair shaft descending to the exterior, as a postern (or sallyport), or as the base of a bread oven (although very low). However, all walling here can be seen to have been pointed in the 1970s-80s and again, the question of the extent of rebuilding here must be raised - the feature may not be original.

Prior to its superficial clearance, the internal facework of the ground floor of the tower appeared to continue downwards beneath ground level, suggesting the possibility that an open basement had been infilled. However, clearance revealed a sill or area of 'footing' at present ground level. It formed a chord across the southern circumference of the tower, suggesting that it may represent medieval ground level rather than a floor offset.

Fig. 13



The first and second floors (Plate 6)

Close inspection of the first floor revealed no new details. However, the second floor was seen to contain a couple of unusual features, including the window opening to the southeast. Its opening is unsplayed, and the window itself is a large, plain segmental-headed opening with no surround, its sill rising to halfway up the embrasure. There are no window-seats, and the embrasure is rendered throughout. While the nature of the other window openings in this tower cannot now be ascertained, this opening is unlike any of those that survive in the southwest tower and may be a product of late medieval or early post-medieval remodelling, although no joints are now visible around it.

Furthermore, there are no remains of any parapet. Whilst this may have been entirely lost, the situation is in contrast to that in the Southwest Tower where a substantial portion of the parapet still survives. Instead, there was an area of mortar bedding over the wall-top at its truncated northern end within which were two phyllite roofing-slates, apparently *in situ* (Plate 7). Moreover, the wall-top and mortar bedding lay at a level only 0.30 metres above the head of the second floor window. Taken together, the evidence suggests that the Southeast Tower may, at least in its final phase, have carried a conical slate roof with overhanging eaves, without a parapet, after the manner of French *chateaux*. This may be further evidence of substantial remodelling in the late medieval or early post-medieval periods.

Plate 6 – Southeast Tower: The roofing slates and mortar bedding, from the north



The Great Hall and west curtain wall (Figs. 14 - 17)

General description (Figs. 2 & 14)

The south curtain wall has been entirely lost, but its toothing survives on the Southwest Tower indicating that the two were contemporary. It formed the south wall of the Great Hall, a two-storey, trapezoid building averaging 20 metres from east to west by 8 metres from north to south (Figs. 2 & 14). It lies between the east and west curtain walls of which only the latter survives to any height. Its north wall, which survives to a height of 10 metres, is a westerly continuation of the south wall of the vaulted building and is of similar fabric. Traces of internal plaster, probably original, can be seen on both storeys of this wall. The building was described in 1539 as 'Kitchen, with Hall over, measuring 65ft by 26ft'. The Buck print shows a number of chimneys but no fireplace now survives.

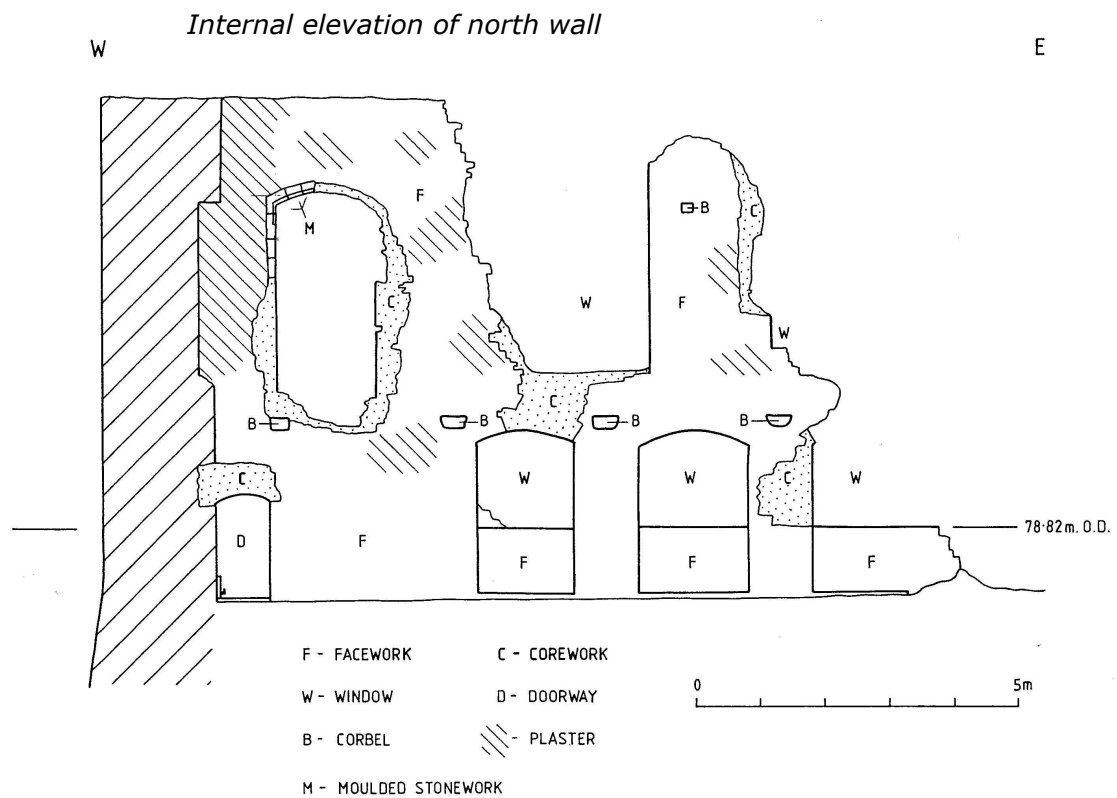
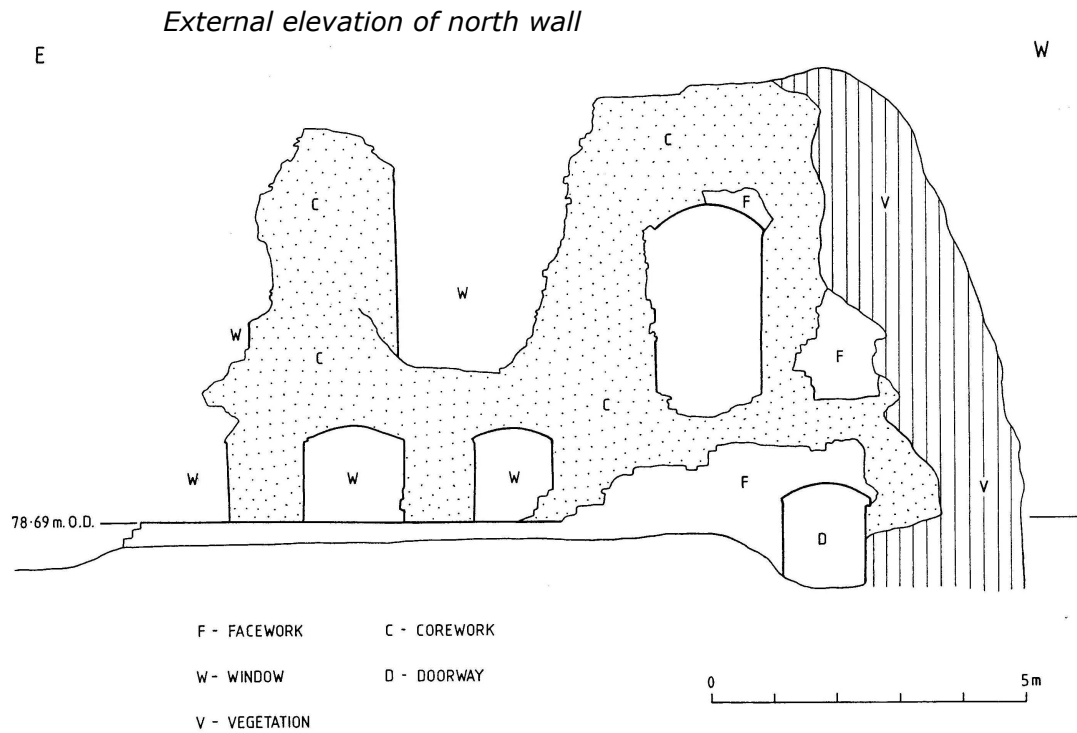
Ground floor-levels are, as in the Southeast Tower, slightly lower than the enclosure which forms a very level platform, probably established in the 1970s-80s, in this area. At this level was a large unvaulted chamber which was entered, from the enclosure, through a doorway at the east end of the north wall. This has been lost but its position is indicated by a sloping path. It was also entered from the vaulted building (see above). There is also an entry at the west end, with a low segmental head; this is discussed below. The north wall is also pierced by three embrasures at this level, with similar heads and sills at floor level, and each with a square window. Their outer halves have been lost, along with much of the facework, leaving only an external plinth. Similarly, no dressings have survived on the ground floor, but the corbels that carried the first-floor joists can be seen on the north wall.

The first floor was a large, open chamber with a lofty roof. There is no access from the ground floor and it was entered, presumably from a timber stair, via a doorway towards the west end of the north wall. This is comparatively well-preserved - although the outer half has been lost, the segmental rear-arch survives and still retains a section of its chamfered limestone surround, stylistically typical of the late 13th- or early 14th-century. Two windows also survive in the north wall although, like the entry, their outer halves have been lost. The western of the two is now represented only by the weathered jambs of its embrasure, which suggest that its sill lay 0.75 metres above floor level. Only the weathered western jamb and sill survive from the eastern window, with the remains of a window-seat. Its sill appears to have occupied a higher level - 1 metre above floor level.

The southern half of the Great Hall west wall, which is a continuation of the west curtain wall, has gone, and was replaced with a low wall in the 1970s-80s, by Robert Perrott (described along with the Southwest Tower below). A drawing made in 1849, while it was still standing, shows a large first-floor window (copy in the Historic Environment Record for Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire, Detailed Record Files, PRN 3748). Only the northern half of this wall now survives from the medieval period. At hall level (ie. first floor level) its internal face is carried out on a segmental arch, just below roof-level, as a squinch over a shallow recess, 0.35 metres deep.

At some point during the post-medieval period a 5 metre-wide strip, along the southern half of the ground floor, was excavated down to the level of the exterior (Fig. 2). This appears to be associated with the demolition, or collapse, of the southern curtain wall. The debris from both was pushed down the slope to form a large, triangular earthwork - the possible ravelin - to the south.

Fig. 14 - The Great Hall, as recorded in outline in 1996



Detailed description (Figs. 15-17)

The Great Hall building was scaffolded and repointed in 2003. Work was in the main superficial, but the preliminary vegetation strip and cleaning of the masonry at the west end of the building, in the north and west walls, revealed important new information. This was an area that had been recorded in outline in 1996 (see Fig. 14) but had not been subject to detailed recording by W S Atkins, so the fabric was fully recorded with both new drawings and new photographs. Individual frame numbers, and the direction of the photographs, are marked on Figs. 15 - 17 and relate to the photographs on the accompanying CD; the drawings are reproduced on the CD for guidance.

Cleaning down the masonry at the top of the west wall and north wall showed that the building had always been of two storeys, and that it appeared to have a low-pitched, gable roof, its northern eave probably lying behind a parapet. It also suggested that, contrary to assumptions previously made which were based on stylistic evidence (Ludlow 2003, 35-6), the Great Hall was contemporary with the inner ward curtain, rather than secondary to it.

No joint was visible between the west wall - which represents part of the west curtain wall - and the north wall of the Great Hall. Instead, the two were bonded together and were demonstrably of one build (Fig. 15). Moreover, the method of construction was identical in both walls - a skin of facework to the interior and exterior, with deliberately laid corework between them (rather than 'poured' corework), and separated from the facework by well-defined joints (Figs. 15 & 17). The west curtain is also thicker - 2 metres as opposed to 1.5 metres - where it coincides with the Great Hall west wall, reflecting the slight angle between the hall and the west curtain wall. It could be argued that the west curtain wall was replaced here when the Great Hall was built, but the curtain appears to have continued northwards beyond the hall with the same construction.

The top of the Great Hall west wall now steps up from north to south, reaching an apex at the centre of the hall, and then begins to step down before being lost (Figs. 15 and 16). The whole presents the profile of a shallow gable. But is this original? It may well be - the top of the hall north wall, which lies at eaves level to the presumed gable, exhibited mortar bedding, and one *in situ* roofing tile, which continued its downward slope (Fig. 16; Plate 7). However, the mortar stopped at a line of corework along the northern half of the north wall (Fig. 15), which may represent the base of a parapet in front of the eaves; a large stone on the external face of the wall, just above this level, appears to represent a corbel which may have carried such a parapet. The interior of the east wall showed extensive remains of a mortar finish, as in the Southwest Tower.

Little else new was noted in 2003. The low wall, built in the 1970s-80s, that replaced the southern half of the Great Hall west wall interior continues northwards as facework against the lower half of the northern, medieval section. It continues beyond the building, forming the west reveal of the ground floor entry through the west end of the north wall (Figs. 16 & 17). This entry, which lies at a lower level than the inner ward interior and is reached down a ramp in a cutting, may be recent - King states that it was converted from a reversed splay light in the 1970s-80s (King 1949, 146). However, its low segmental head lies at a considerably lower level than the other two surviving ground floor windows - only just above inner ward ground level, in fact, suggesting that it may always have been an entry and may always have been reached via a cut ramp. Moreover, it is most unlike Perrot's other work elsewhere in the castle.

Fig. 15

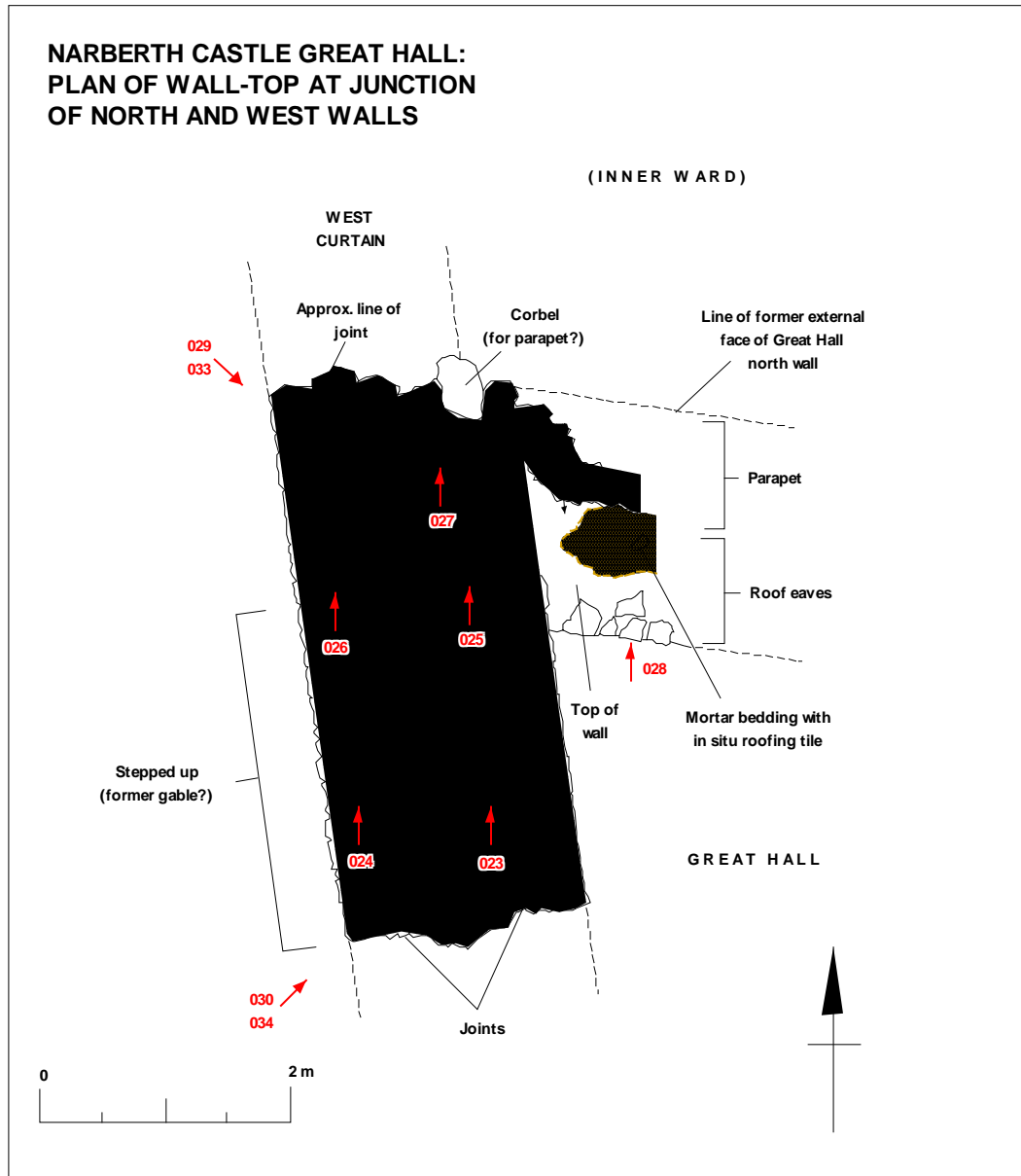


Fig. 16

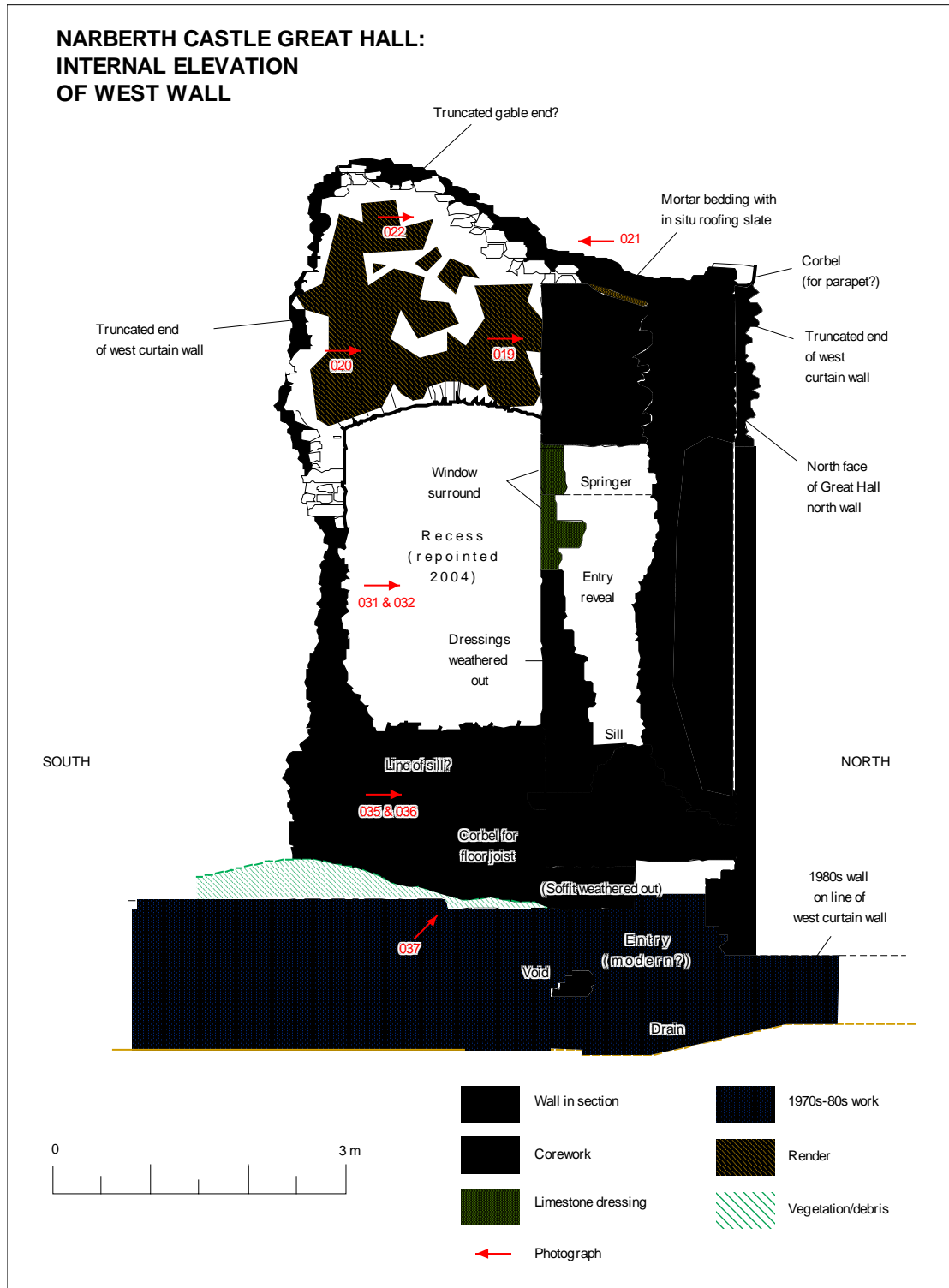


Fig. 17

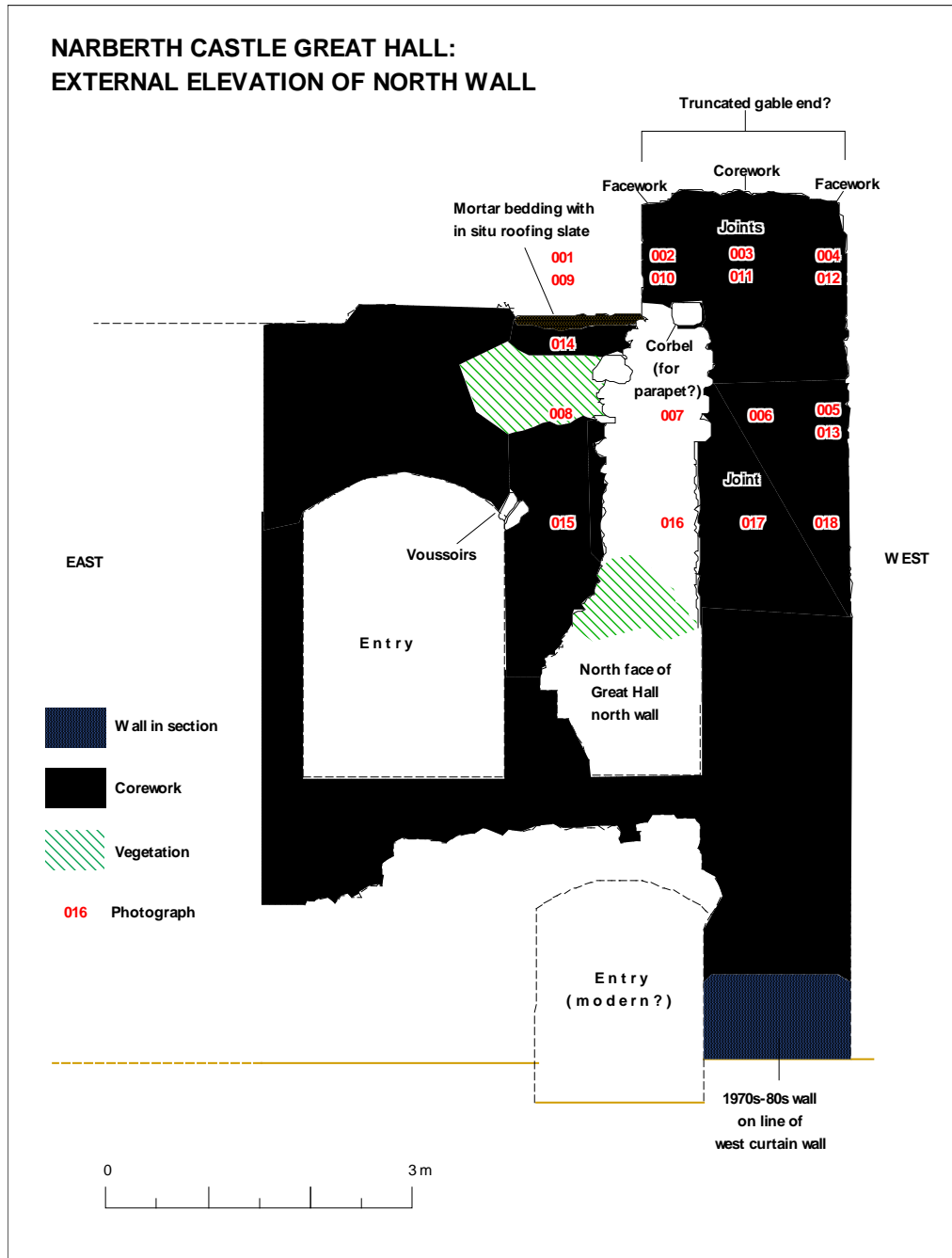


Plate 7 – The Great Hall north wall, from the south, showing mortar bedding and slates



Plate 8 – The Great Hall from the southeast after consolidation



The Ravelin (Fig. 2)

A large, triangular earthwork platform south of the Great Hall is defined by low, wide banks with scarped external faces to the south (see Fig. 2). Ditches lie between the platform and the Southeast and Southwest Towers, between them lying a ramp leading from the interior of the castle down into the platform. It appears to be a ravelin of the sort that was constructed, as a defence against artillery, outside many Welsh castles during the Civil War (1642-48). But is it?

Contemporary source material suggests that the castle saw no action during the Civil War and indeed the then owner appears not to have declared his cause (Ludlow 2003, 19). Furthermore, at least part of the platform represents a spoilheap created by Robert Perrot during his works at the castle in the 1970s and 80s (Richard Tree, works supervisor, *et al.*, *pers. comm.*). The ramp between the towers, and its current arrangement into three descending terraces, are certainly his work (*ibid.*; King, 1976, 57). But does this modern material overlie an earlier feature? As noted above, at least part of the platform make-up appears to be derived from the demolition of the former south curtain wall, whose debris was pushed down the slope. So the crucial issue for dating the platform is when this event occurred. This is discussed below, in the description of the Southwest Tower.

The Southwest Tower

General description (Fig. 2)

The Southwest Tower is the best preserved of the four corner towers, standing to 11.4 metres (three storeys) on all sides except to the northeast where it communicated with the Great Hall (Fig. 2); the junction with the Great Hall has been lost and its form is not known. It is very similar to the Southeast Tower, but the basal batter is rather less pronounced. Its junction with the west curtain wall was rebuilt in the 1970s-80s, obscuring the remains of a spiral stair shaft. Each floor level is offset, as in the Southeast Tower, and a brace-post corbel can be seen on both the ground- and first-floors. The interior is well-lit on all floors. The two square, ground-floor windows occupy large, unsplayed, segmental embrasures, of which the western has a sill at floor level. That to the east exhibits a recently inserted window seat that may reflect the original arrangement.

On the first floor are two windows, the jambs of a third, and a doorway onto a mural passage. The western window retains the original window seat, and the chamfered surround of its lancet window. The southern window has no seat and the dressings for its narrow light have been lost. The weathered remains of two more window openings can be seen at second floor level, along with a recess that may represent a fireplace.

The 1539 survey suggests that the tower contained a 'Larderhouse, with two chambers over'.

Plate 9 – Looking down on the Southwest Tower spiral stair, during consolidation, from the north



Fig. 18

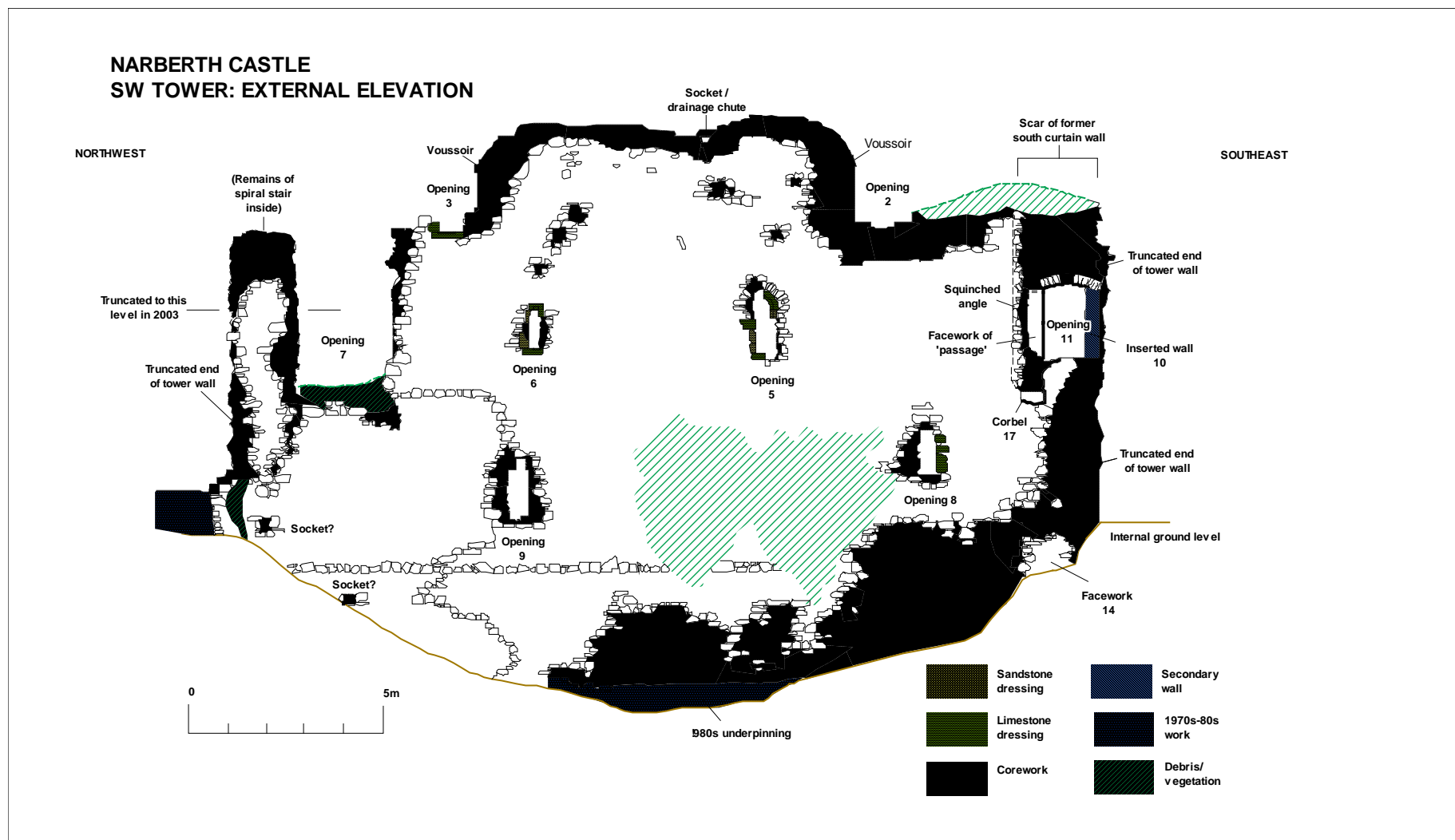


Fig. 19

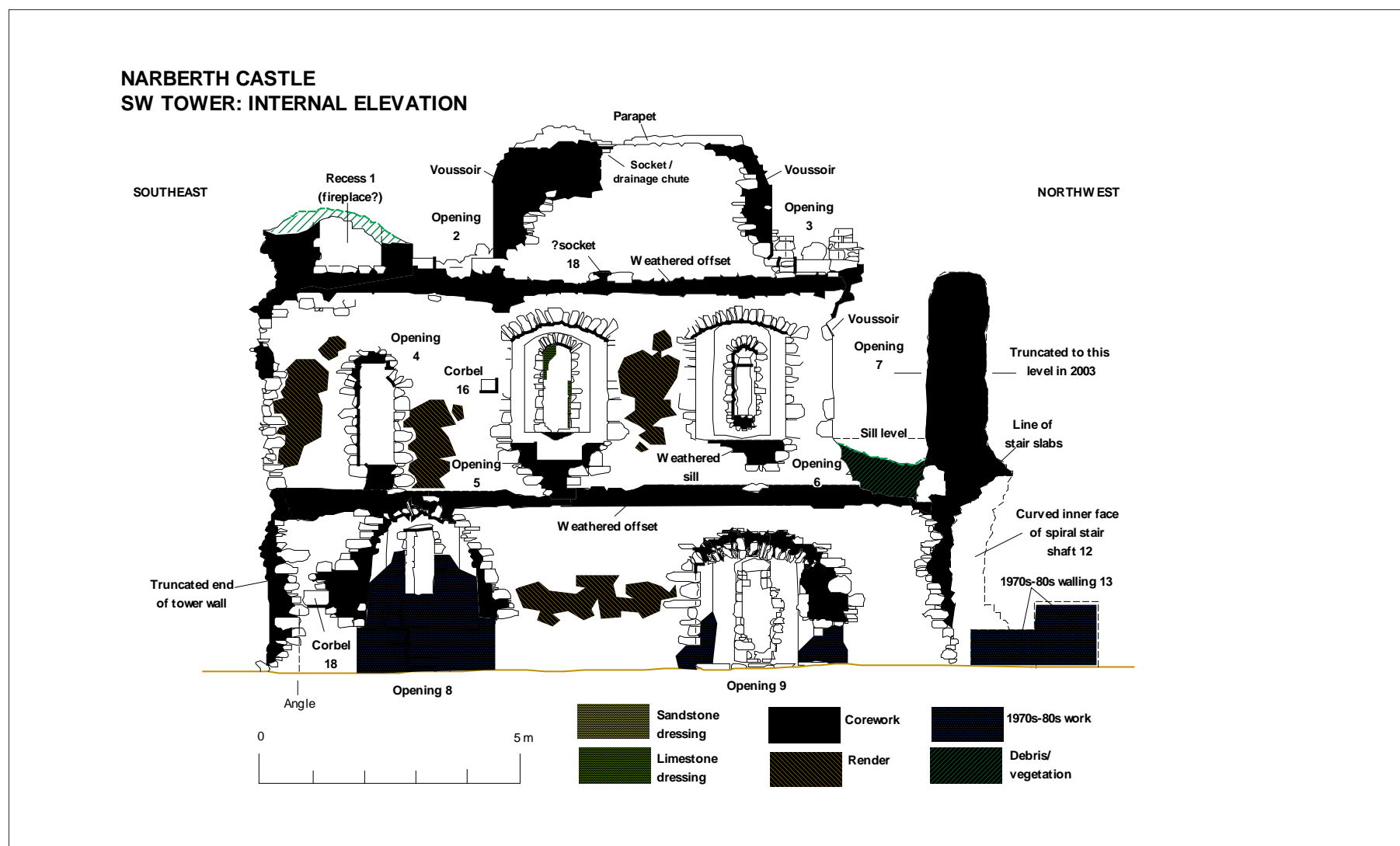
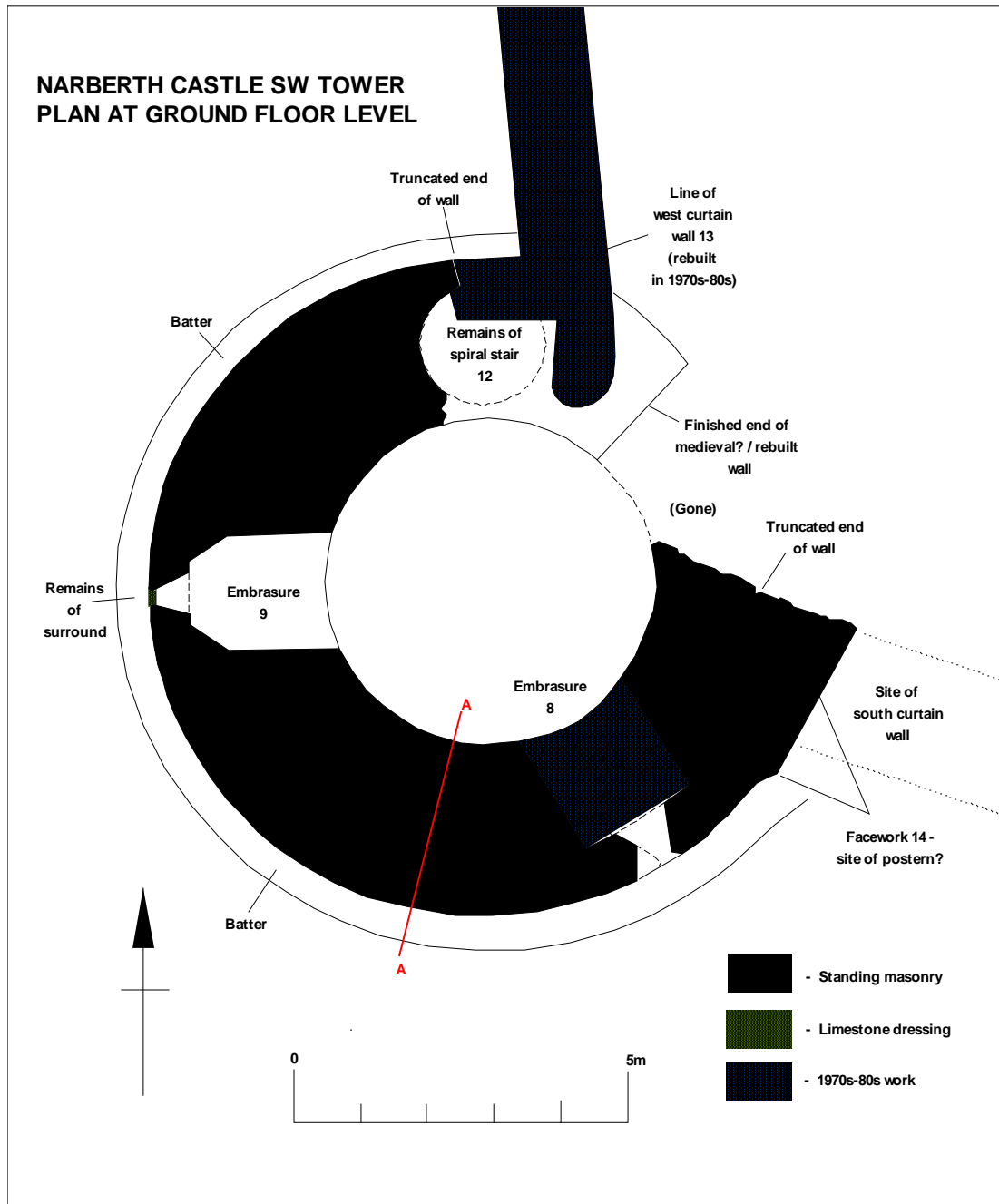


Fig. 20



Detailed description (Figs. 18 – 27)

The remains of the Southwest Tower were repointed in 2003, when the tower was fully scaffolded. Close inspection of the fabric revealed a number of details that were not depicted in the W S Atkins drawings and photos, and so the elevation drawings were amended and new plans drawn at each floor level. The tower was also re-photographed in detail. Individual frame numbers, and the direction of the photographs, are marked on the plans (Figs. 20 - 21) and relate to the photographs on the accompanying CD; the drawings are reproduced on the CD for guidance. The elevation drawings (Figs. 18 & 19) are adapted from the W S Atkins drawings, with revisions and amendments.

The tower was consolidated more-or-less as found with two exceptions. The remains of the spiral stair included a detached 'column' of masonry (Figs. 18 & 19) which was highly unstable. The upper 2 metres of this masonry were removed, for safety reasons, prior to the commencement of work. It was fully recorded prior to its removal; however, the digital photograph archive from this recording was subsequently lost in a Cambria IT re-organisation (Plate 9 shows the stair after truncation). The other alteration was the addition of a new masonry buttress, which was built against the truncated northeast end of the tower, up to first floor level, again for reasons of structural security.

The ground floor (Fig. 20)

The ground floor has an external diameter of 10 metres and an internal diameter of 5 metres, with walls 2.5 metres thick. It is reasonably complete although truncated at both inner ends, to the northwest and the southeast, finishing as corework at its junction with the former south and west curtain walls. At the latter end are the remains of a spiral stair (12), comprising a short arc of the curving facework of the shaft itself. No remains of the stair itself survived, nor of its entry from the ground floor. This area has been obscured by a low wall (13) inserted during the 1970s-80s, which continues northwards along the foot of the Great Hall west wall (described above).

Plate 10 – The Southwest Tower from the east, after consolidation, showing facework in the area of the former ?postern



At the opposite end, the junction with the former south curtain wall (Figs. 18 & 20) features a small area of facework (14). It lies just north of a slight out-turn in the east face of the tower, which leads into the angle with the external face of the south curtain wall, and therefore lies within the body of the wall itself (Plate 10). It may then be that it formed the west side of a former entry through the curtain wall, the rest of which has been lost. If so, the head of the entry must have been below the present internal ground level. It is possible that the entry represents a postern, accessed from steps in the Great Hall ground floor, and exiting at external ground level; complex subterranean posterns exist in contemporary work at other castles, eg. the late 13th century Denbigh Castle in north Wales (Kenyon 1990, 71).

Between the two present ends of the tower lie two window embrasures, both of which were subject to alteration during the 1070s-80s. To the west, embrasure (9) is an unsplayed opening with its sill at present ground level - which would therefore appear to correspond with medieval floor level. Its rear-arch has been lost but can be seen to have been segmental-headed. In addition, the outer face of the window itself, including any dressings, has been lost but it may have been square-headed like first-floor window (6). The lower half of the embrasure was repointed, and possibly refaced, in the 1970s-80s but apparently reflects original arrangements.

Embrasure (8), to the southeast, has a similar external opening but here the limestone dressings of the eastern jamb of its surround survive, though very weathered; it too appears to have been square-headed. The segmental rear-arch has similarly been largely lost. The lower half of the embrasure, whose sill also lies at ground level, was entirely rebuilt during the 1970s-80s, with window-seats; however, as the sill of the window itself lies at a higher level than that in embrasure (9), these may have been based on existing features. A large internal corbel (18) to the north of this embrasure appears to represent the support for a brace-post carrying the joist for a timber first floor.

The tower interior bears extensive traces of a mortar finish which may be medieval. Externally, two sockets at this level may be 'putlog-holes' to support scaffolding during the construction of the tower.

The first floor (Fig. 21)

First floor level is offset back 0.15 metres from the ground floor, giving an increased internal diameter of 5.3 metres from a reduced wall-thickness of 2.35 metres; the offset itself has weathered out.

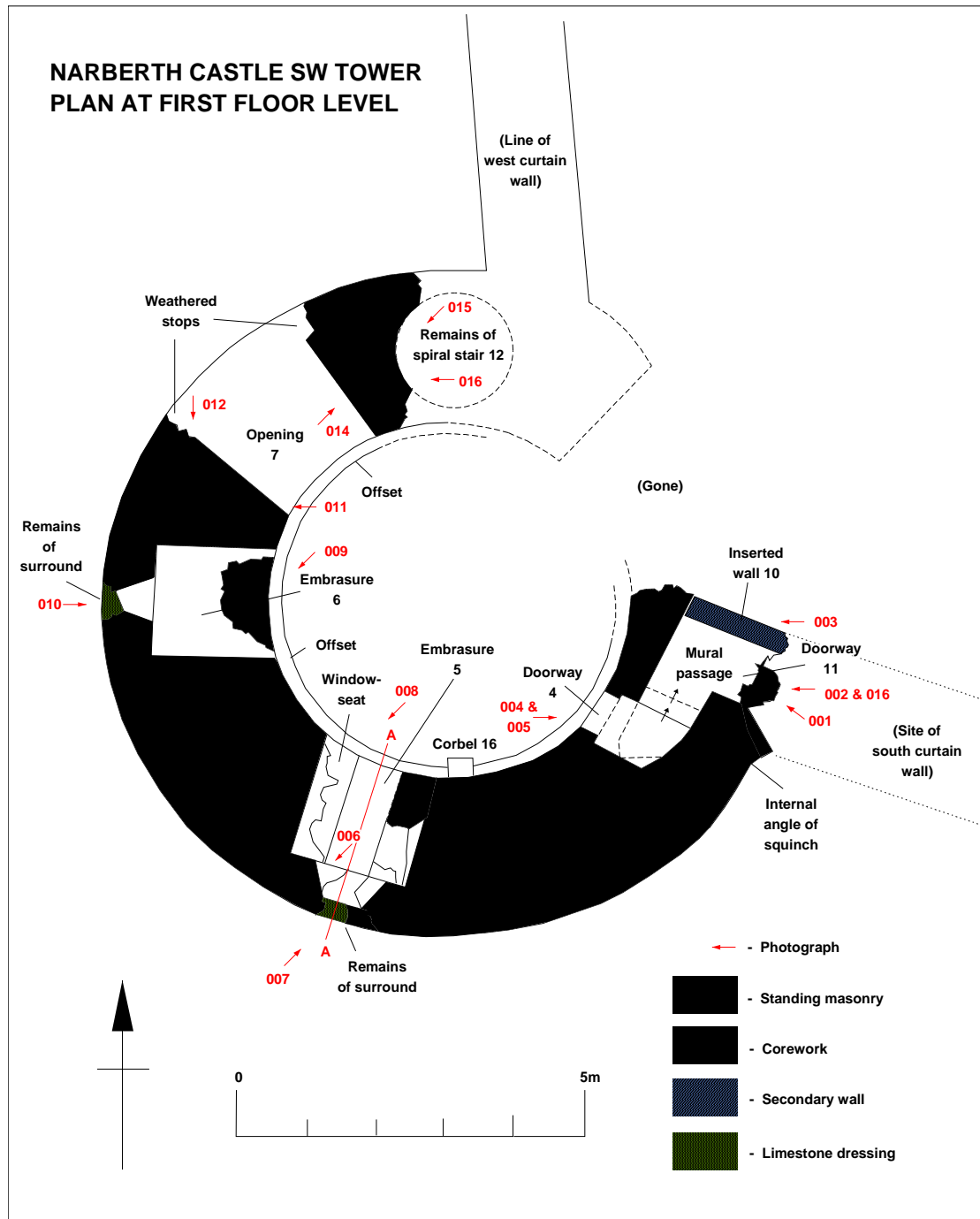
Spiral stair (12) was very weathered at this level and, as on the ground floor, both the stair and the entry to it have gone. However, the corework for the slab stair risers survives in part, curving upwards along the remaining face. A slender column of masonry divides the stair shaft from an opening (7) to the southwest; this did not survive above first floor level and was truncated by a further 2 metres in 2003.

Opening (7) is extremely weathered and, with the exception of one voussoir from the southern springer, its head has gone. It would appear to be a window-embrasure - the outline of its sill, now also lost, can be traced at the foot of the reveals and prove that it lay at the same level as the other two windows on this floor - but it has a very slight reverse splay, the embrasure being wider externally (2 metres) than internally (1.6 metres). Nevertheless, the scar from its jambs suggests that in overall form it was like the other two windows.

Only 0.5 metres lie between this opening and window embrasure (6) to the south. This is fairly well-preserved, with a sill 0.6 metres above floor level, but no evidence for a window seat. It has a segmental rear-arch, and an external opening preserving most

of its limestone surround (Fig. 18). The surround comprises both limestone and sandstone dressings, has a simple chamfer, and a square-headed window opening (shown in detail in Fig. 26).

Fig. 21



To the east lies a further window embrasure (5). It lies at the same level as (7) and (6), but its sill is cut out for a window seat (original) and the window opening itself is rather taller. It preserves much of its surround which again is in simply chamfered limestone and sandstone. However, it is a graceful lancet in form, with a two-centred head (Figs. 18, 19 & 25). The sill of surround is socketed to receive an upright central iron window bar, and a similar socket survives, in the jamb of the surround, for one of the horizontal bars (Fig. 25). It is also chamfered and/or rebated internally, presumably for glazing.

To the northwest is a narrow internal doorway, (4), leading onto a vaulted mural passage. This turns, at right-angles, to run northeast in the wall thickness, before turning at right-angles again to run southeast through to the exterior of the tower. The external opening of this passage, (11), emerges in the corework scar from the former south curtain wall, which continues above its head suggesting that the feature represents a truncated mural passage rather than an entry onto the wall-walk (Fig. 18; Plate 11). This in turn suggests that the southern curtain rose the entire three storeys of the towers.

The passage appears to have led to a garderobe. A large corbel (17), lying beneath it, is separated from the south curtain wall scar by an area of facework (presumably belonging to the garderobe shaft), and it can be seen that the curtain wall scar is wider above this level than below, suggesting that a chamber was squinched out over the angle between the tower and the curtain (Figs. 18 & 21; Plate 11). However, the garderobe shaft appears to have discharged over the presumed postern below (which could however have been subterranean - see above).

The north wall of this mural passage, (10), between it and the Great Hall, is however a later insertion. It was inserted to support the north end of the passage vault after the south curtain wall had been demolished. However the nature of both its limestone masonry, and of its mortar finish (which is almost identical to that within the tower), suggest that this prop-wall is a very early feature.

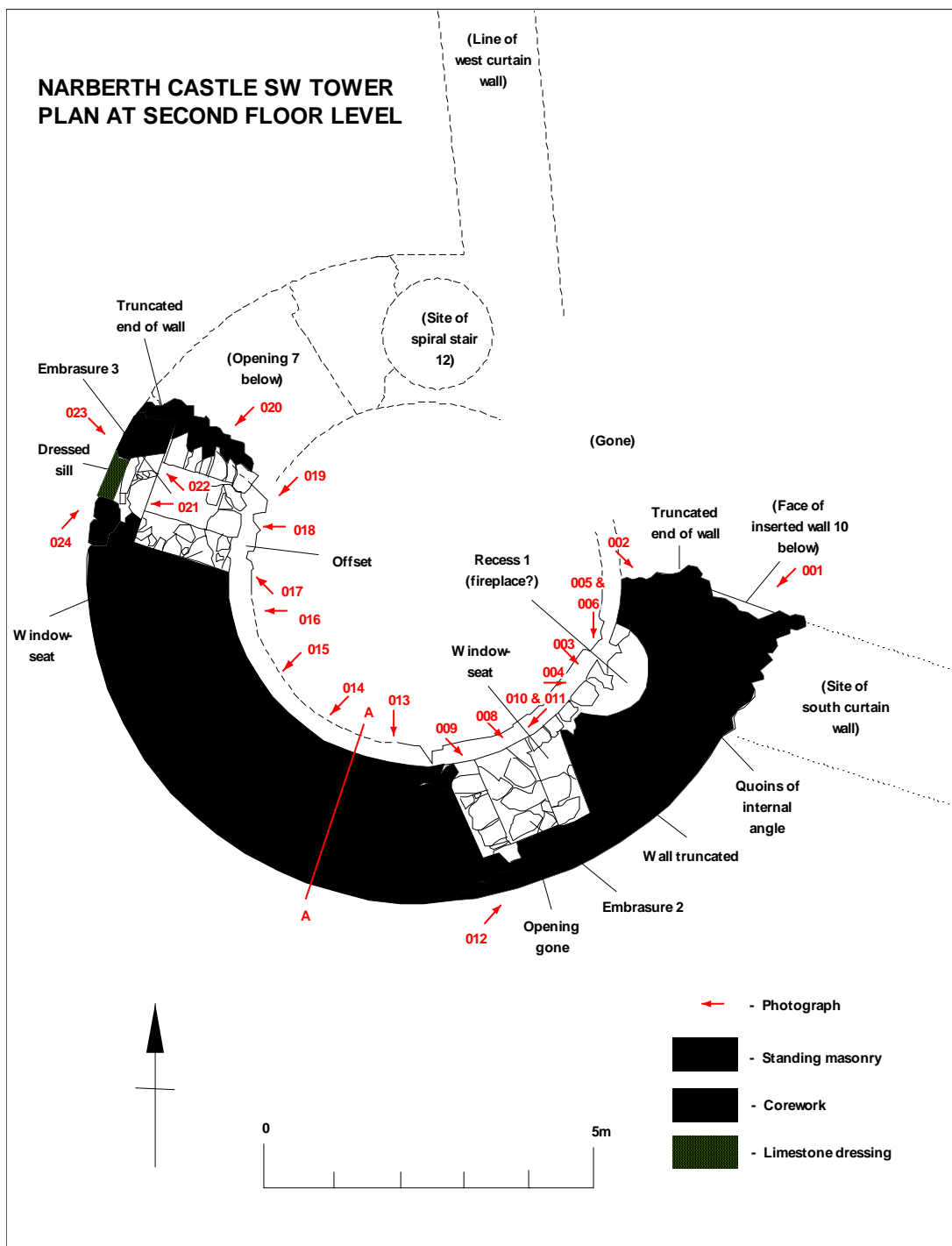
Plate 11 – The Southwest Tower from the east, after consolidation, showing entry 11, prop wall 10 and the site of the garderobe



This in turn suggests that the south curtain wall must have gone by an early date, which gives an early rather than a late date for the earthwork platform south of the castle. This short stretch of walling, then, may be proof that the platform is a Civil War ravelin.

The interior of the first floor exhibits the same finish as the ground floor, and there is a similar brace-post corbel (16), offset from that on the ground floor.

Fig. 22



The second floor (Fig. 22)

Second floor level was offset back a further 0.35 metres from the first floor, giving an increased internal diameter of 6 metres from a reduced wall-thickness of 2 metres; the offset itself has weathered out although a possible joist-socket (18) remained to the southwest. To the southwest, this level survived to its full height - which, at 2.4 metres, was much lower than the first floor which is 3.5 metres high - but much of its fabric had been lost to the northwest and southeast. In addition, the spiral stair (12) had been lost at this level.

Nevertheless, a number of features survived. They had been obscured by thick vegetation during earlier surveys, and were only fully revealed after the removal of vegetation, and cleaning, in 2003. The second floor chamber was lit by two windows, both of them incomplete. They were only represented by their inner reveals, and by their sills which were cut out for window-seats at floor level. The heads of their embrasures had gone, but one voussoir survived from each and showed that they were rather lower than on the first floor (1.7 metres as opposed to 1.9 metres), reflecting the lower height of the chamber.

Window embrasure (3), to the west, retained the sill of its surround which was chamfered externally and rebated internally, for glazing. The socket for a central, upright bar preserved part of the iron bar itself, whilst the integral northern jamb of the surround also retained the remains of the iron window frame itself, and part of the lead 'comes' which supported the window glass (Fig. 27; Plate 12). Window (2), to the southeast, was in a poorer condition having lost its outer opening.

To the north of window (2) was a semicircular recess (1), in a much truncated form. Although rather small, it may represent the remains of a fireplace.

*Plate 12 – Southwest Tower second floor window 3,
showing the sill with in situ iron bar*



Parapet level (Fig. 23)

Part of the parapet and wall-top survived to the southwest, but had been obscured by thick vegetation during earlier surveys, and only came to light after removal of vegetation, and cleaning, in 2003. The width of the wall at this level was as on the second floor, with no evidence of an offset for the roof eaves, and the evidence suggests that, rather than the wall-top representing a wall-walk behind the parapet, the roof eaves continued across the wall-top to lie against the inner face of the parapet.

The parapet itself, which was 0.80 metres wide, survived to an average height of 0.20 metres. At the base of its inner face was a slight offset, and below this, at the junction with the wall top, was a shallow horizontal chase, as if to receive the roof eaves (see Fig. 24 and Plate 13). And although the wall-top was relatively level, it showed no traces of having been paved as a wall-walk, being finished with rubble masonry, the inner half of which had been largely lost. One drainage chute survived, leading through the parapet, but only in its outer half and it is possible that the roof covering contained channels that were socketed into the chutes. The evidence suggests that - in its final form at least - the tower had a relatively low-pitched roof, sitting inside the parapet, possibly of lead and along the periphery of which it was possible to walk. This may be compared with the roof of the Southeast Tower (see above).

Plate 13 – The Southwest Tower: the inner face of the parapet, from the northwest, showing the offset and chase



Fig. 23

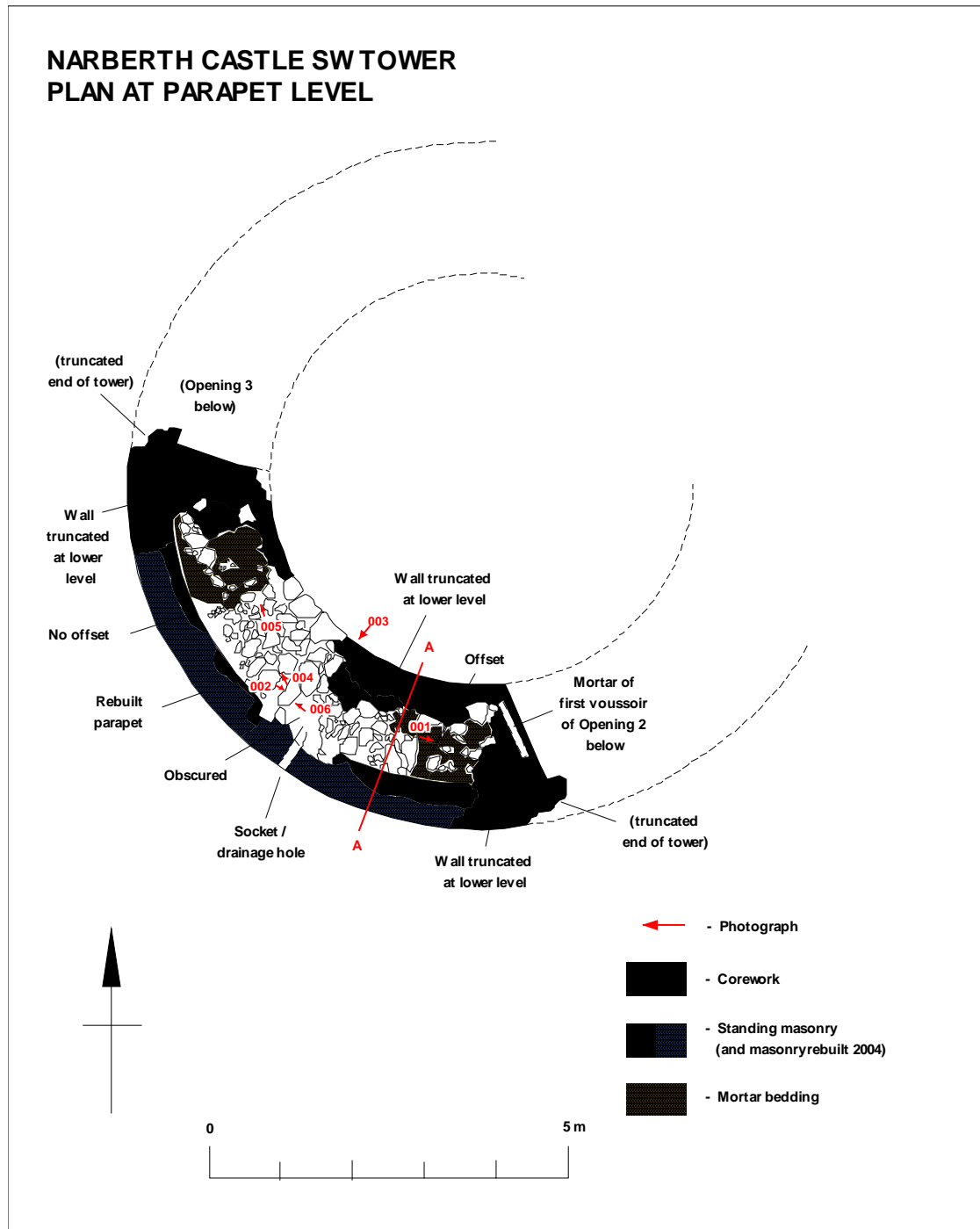


Fig. 24

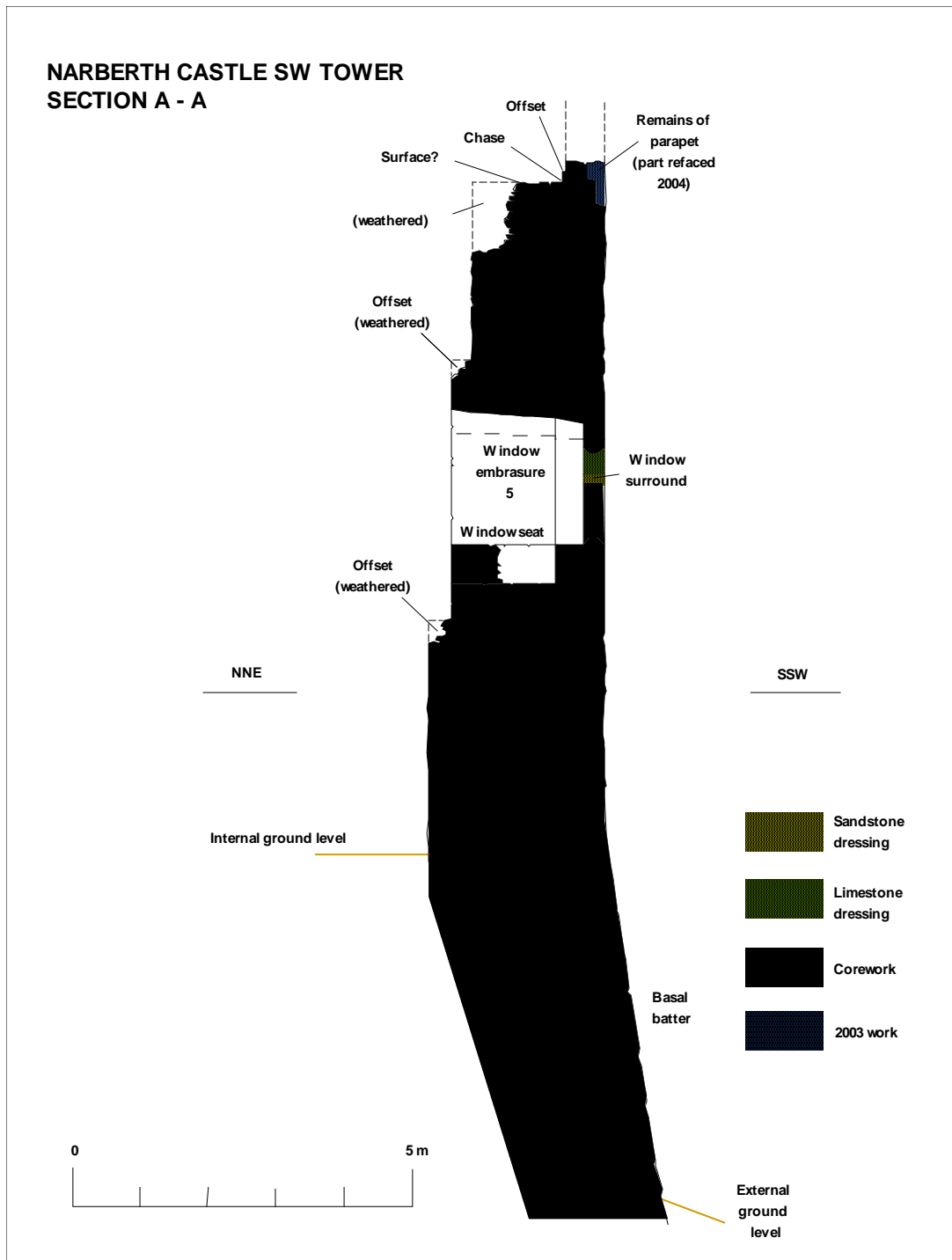


Fig. 25

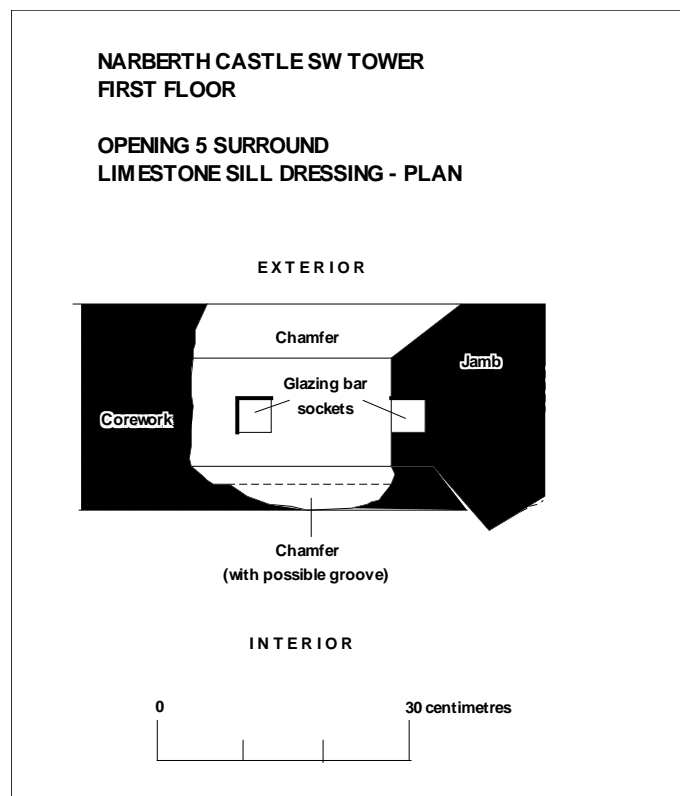
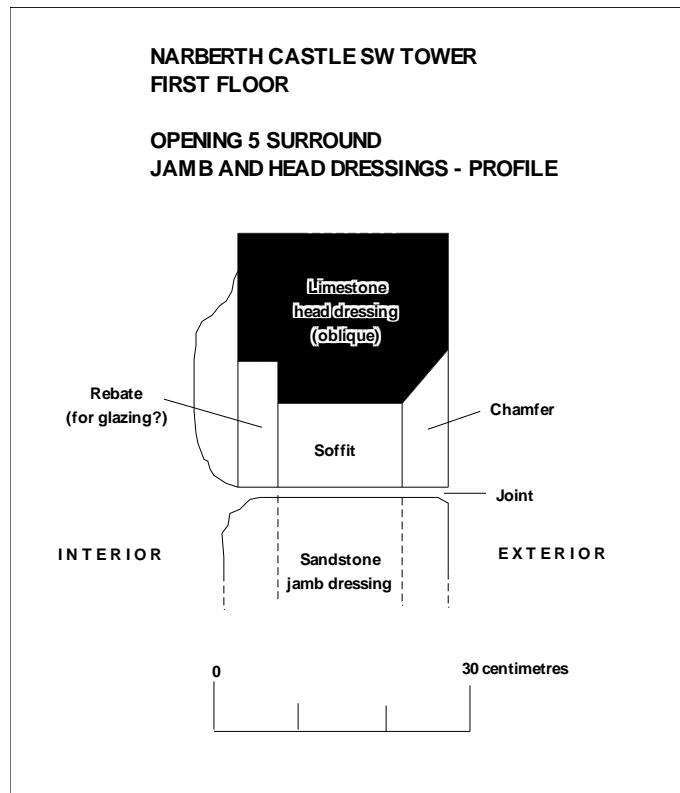


Fig. 26

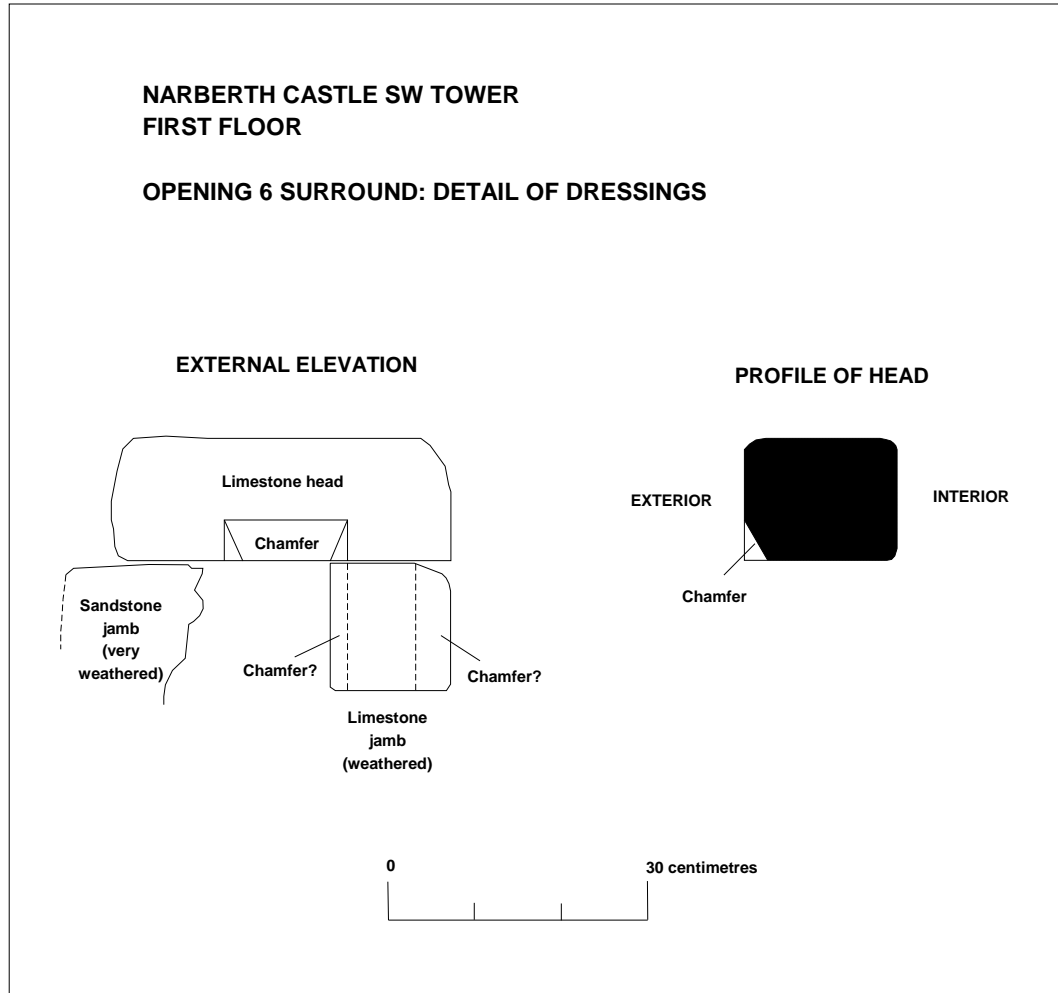
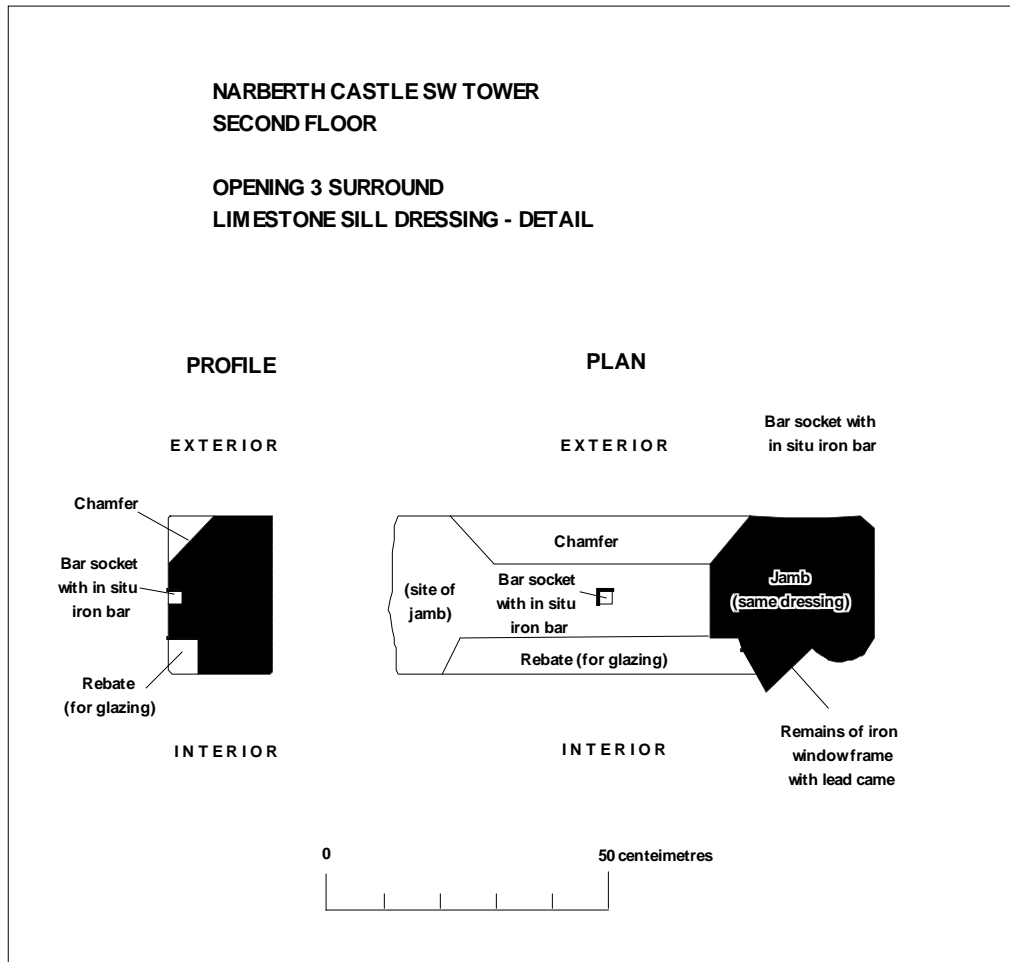


Fig. 27



The West Turret and curtain wall

Very little of the west curtain survives above ground. A section of its external face can however be discerned, running north of the Great Hall for 7 metres until interrupted by the fragmentary remains of a hollow, thin-walled 'D'-shaped turret, open to the bailey and measuring 5 metres in diameter, with walls 2m thick (Fig. 2). This was described, in 1539, as 'a larger compass than the wall for men to stand'. It now stands 2.5 metres high from the castle interior, but its original height is not known; however it appears always to have been open-backed towards the bailey and there is no evidence for any flooring. There appears to be a slight break in its external facework midway up, particularly on the northwest side, and a change in its style from larger uncoursed stonework to coursed smaller rubble. It may have been built in two stages. The turret was subject to superficial repointing in 2003 and was photographed both before and after (see Plate 14).

The sharp break of slope north of the turret appears to represent the line of the internal face of the robbed-out curtain. Harrison thought that the 'Gallery, 76ft by 10ft, with three chambers under', mentioned in 1539, lay against this section of curtain wall. This may be an early example of a 'Long Gallery', a feature of Tudor and Elizabethan houses and a space in which pictures could be exhibited, games could be played and people could be seen, and which often formed the centre of a house's social life. A slight, but well-worn pathway leads up the knoll towards a point roughly midway between the turret and the Northwest Tower - the site of a further postern?

Plate 14 – The West Turret before consolidation, from the southwest



The Northwest Tower

The Northwest Tower is the least well-preserved of the four corner towers (Fig. 2). Only the lowest courses of the southwest third can be seen, but they include the junction with the western curtain wall demonstrating that the two are of one build. The north end is heavily overgrown but appears to have been truncated. The interior lies beneath approximately 0.30 metres of debris and recent dump material.

Enough remains to demonstrate that it was a circular drum tower with a diameter of about 10 metres and with walls possibly 2.5 metres thick at basement level. Like the rest of the towers, it is faced with good quality limestone rubble, roughly squared and coursed. Also like the rest it has a marked external basal batter, in this case with no string course where it dies into the wall. The top of the footings form a plinth at the junction with the western curtain, within which is a small, roughly square chamber probably representing the bottom of a garderobe shaft.

However, clearance of vegetation and debris in 2003 demonstrated that much of present masonry is recent, belonging to the 1970s-80s work and pointed with the hard mix typical of Robert Perrot's work. The degree to which this follows the original arrangements is impossible to determine.

The tower was left more-or-less as found during the consolidation project. After clearance, in fact, earth was built up over the remains to enhance its shape and bulk as an aid to understanding the site. Little recording was therefore undertaken.

The watching brief

A small watching brief was undertaken, in the area of the suggested outer ward, in February 2005. This was in response to the removal of part of the hedgebank currently leading northeast from the Northeast Tower, in order to create access to car parking, and on the excavation of a contractor's test-pit near the entrance to the castle.

The hedgebank is assumed to be post-medieval. It would appear to overlie the burials that were excavated in 2001 and 2003 (Murphy & Crane 2002; Jamieson & Ludlow 2003), and also to lie within the circumference of the projected line of the Northeast Tower. It averages 0.30 metres in height and 2.89 metres in width, before running out at the present entrance path, and comprises an undifferentiated black soil of 'modern' appearance. However, it overlay a 9.57 metre length of loosely mortared masonry, level with the ground, which was 0.47 metres wide and may represent walling material (Fig. 2; Plate 15). This was not dated, but it too partly lies within the projected line of the Northeast Tower and is therefore interpreted as post-medieval.

No archaeological features were noted in entrance area latter test-pit, where topsoil directly overlay the natural.

*Plate 15 – The ?post-medieval walling beneath the hedgebank,
from the southeast*



DISCUSSION

A considerable body of new information emerged from the 2003-5 work, casting doubt upon some previous interpretations (including some of those in Ludlow 2003). None of the visible masonry of the castle can be attributed to a date earlier than the mid 13th century (King suggested that there might be some earlier fabric below the Northeast Tower, but was not specific; King 1976, 58). The lack of well-defined earthworks does not assist speculation as to the form of the pre-13th century castle, and the historical record is of little help. It may have remained entirely of timber until the mid 13th century.

New evidence

The large Northeast Tower was previously suspected of being a four-storey structure and this was proved by the discovery of a third floor window. However, the poor quality of the tower fabric - and its mixed nature, comprising a variety of local stone-types, not all of them suitable building materials - is curious. It was the first element of the masonry castle to be built, and was the largest of the four corner towers - in the 'keep' tradition (see below) - with a number of show features. The stone rebuilding of the castle is thought to have occurred soon after its destruction in 1257, and the poor construction of this earliest element suggests that it may have been erected in a hurry, in response to military (and prestige) necessity, but under tight financial constraints.

Part of the East Tower, known from topographic evidence and contemporary sources, was revealed. The evidence suggests that it was open-backed, like the West Turret, at least in its final phase - and may always have been. However, the West Turret is much smaller than the East Tower which approached the four corner towers in size. However, parallels do exist. The large drum tower in the northern barbican at Chepstow Castle (Monmouthshire), dating from 1219-1245, was also open-backed (Knight 1986, 38-9), although this may have been to enable it to be covered from the castle interior (like the later outer ward towers at Kidwelly, Carmarthenshire). However, all the towers at the admittedly earlier *enceinte* at Framlingham Castle (Suffolk), from the late 12th century, were open-backed and it has been suggested that they were closed off in timber; it has been suggested that the Chepstow tower too may have had a timber rear-wall (Knight *op. cit.*, 39), like that at Manorbier discussed below.

The rear of the East Tower is now occupied by a very thin north-south wall, probably secondary to the tower, belonging to an east-west building represented by footings, which appears to have been the two-storey 'Parlour' mentioned in the 16th century (RCAHMW 1925, 247). Traces of this had been seen in the mid 20th century, but had been subsequently obscured by debris.

The Southeast Tower may have been substantially remodelled in the later Middle Ages, and even possibly into the early post-medieval period. There is no parapet - instead, the wall-top exhibits mortar bedding, and *in situ* roofing slates to the periphery. This suggests that, in its latest phase, it carried an overhanging slate roof in the style of a late medieval French *chateau* (and the Victorian recreation at Castell Coch, Glamorgan). This may belong to the work known to have been undertaken at the castle by Sir Rhys ap Thomas, between 1515 and 1525, which earned it the contemporary sobriquet 'a pretty little pile' (Smith 1910, 62). The second floor window also appears to be a late remodelling and may be contemporary; however, the possibility exists that some work at the castle may have been undertaken even later, by its last known occupant Richard Castle, resident c.1657-1677 (Fenton 1811, 309). A feature at ground floor level within this

tower had variously been interpreted as a spiral stair shaft to the exterior, or the base of a bread oven, but further clearance made it apparent that it had been extensively rebuilt in the 1970s-80s and may not be original.

The publication report states with great confidence that the Great Hall and vaulted building were secondary to the walled *enceinte*, belonging to the later 13th century (Ludlow 2003, 35). This bold statement, based on stylistic evidence, was proved not to be the case. The west curtain and Great Hall were proved to be of one build, and of unusual construction within which the corework was laid, not poured. It may be that the curtain wall was rebuilt at this point, when the hall was added, but on the whole this seems unlikely. It may be that the *enceinte* took a longer time to complete than previously thought. The structural evidence suggests that the Great Hall had a low-pitched, gabled roof lying behind a crenellated parapet on each of the side walls, corbelled to the north (and represented by the south curtain wall on the opposite side) and an upstand on each end wall.

One of the most important findings was what appears to be conclusive proof that the earthwork to the south of the castle, though much enhanced by dumping during the 1970s-80s, began as a Civil War ravelin. It was partly derived from material from beneath the Great Hall and from the south curtain wall, which can be demonstrated to have been demolished during the early post-medieval period when a prop wall was inserted, in its stead, at a weak point - the entry from the wall into the Southwest Tower. This wall has finishes identical with medieval finishes seen elsewhere in the castle and was clearly an early feature. This entry led to a garderobe squinched out over the angle between the wall and the tower, above which the south curtain rose the full height of the tower. There appears to have been a postern in the same angle, below ground floor level, demonstrated by facework on the tower that appears to belong to the side of an entry or passage.

A number of new features were seen within the Southwest Tower itself. The second floor windows were properly exposed along with a recess, on the same floor, that may have been a fireplace. The Southwest Tower roof appears to have been a low-pitched conical affair, probably lead-sheeted, that ran to the inside edge of a battlemented parapet, with no intervening wall-walk. This may be contrasted with the 'normal' medieval tower roof, and with that over the Southeast Tower. The remains of glazing were seen in the second floor windows, and all windows in the tower appear to have been barred.

The post-medieval bank currently leading northeast from the Northeast Tower was seen to overlie a line of mortared masonry, possibly representing a wall. This was not dated, but partly overlies the projected line of the Northeast Tower and is therefore interpreted as post-medieval.

General discussion and dating

This section is taken from Ludlow (2003), with amendments in the light of recent discoveries. In particular, the division of the 13th century work into two phases is now seriously called into question.

Narberth's defensive *enceinte* - the curtain wall and towers - is typical of the mid-late 13th century, with a number of parallels in Wales and the Marches (Knight 1987, 75-88), and suggests that it was constructed in one main phase, between 1257 and 1282, by Roger Mortimer. This date is also suggested by the only surviving detail, in a first floor window of the Southwest Tower. The defensive elements are, in the main, stylistically consistent and visibly bonded with each other.

However, the Northeast Tower was taller, and considerably larger than the other three corner towers. It was also better appointed, with its batteries of fireplaces and garderobes, and featured external embellishment in the form of a string course, and it was clearly regarded as residential; the other three were primarily guard chambers, although in 1539 there was a buttery in the East Tower and the Southeast Tower contained a bakehouse and chapel. The construction of the Northeast Tower appears, moreover, to have preceded that of the rest of the defences, if only by a few years - it cannot be seen to bond with the curtain walls.

The tower suggests a persistence of the keep-and-bailey principle. A date of 1257 may seem rather late for the persistence of the keep tradition. However, it never entirely went away (as discussed by Knight, *op. cit.* pp. 83-4). A close parallel exists locally at Laugharne Castle (Carmarthenshire), from the 1260s, where one of the towers was similarly differentiated (Avent 1991, 177-182). King Edward I employed a round keep at Flint Castle (Flintshire) as late as the 1270s. Narberth's forebuilding, however, lacks close contemporary parallels, but a the complex entrance to the round keep at Barnard Castle (Co. Durham) can be compared.

The Great Hall building appears, stylistically, to be later. Its fabric is rather different from that seen in the towers while the one surviving dressing, in a first floor window, indicates the kind of sharp, segmental head that was very much in vogue c.1280-1300, and diagnostic at eg. Harlech and Beaumaris Castles (See, for example, Taylor 1977, 273-4). However, it has been seen above that it is of one build with the west curtain wall, so it may be that the completion of the castle was a protracted affair lasting into the 1280s. The vaulted building articulates with the hall and appears to have been contemporary. Though all detail has been lost, the surviving remains have affinities with the hall range at the nearby Llawhaden Castle, also from the 1280s (Turner 1991, 32-3).

The small West Turret is a rather different structure from the rest of the towers, though its open back appears to be paralleled by the former East Tower. It may belong to the end of this period, or have been added, as an additional defence, during the late 13th or early 14th centuries. There are no close local parallels. The hollow North Tower at Manorbier Castle (Pembrokeshire) is probably earlier and appears to have originally been given a timber rear wall, while the later Northwest Turret at the same castle is corbelled out over the curtain (King and Perks 1970, 107-109); the similar turrets seen in the outer wards of late 13th century 'concentric' castles, like Kidwelly, have a different purpose, being hollow in order to be commanded from the inner curtain wall.

Finally, the nature of the 'gallery' against the west curtain, mentioned in 1539, may be discussed. Was it a Long Gallery, a feature of great Tudor houses, particularly during the Elizabethan period? The date is an early one, but the Long Gallery at Raglan Castle (Monmouthshire) was built between 1549 and 1589 (Kenyon 1900, 17), and it is conceivable that a great magnate like Sir Rhys ap Thomas could have been innovative enough to want one at Narberth as early as 1515-1525. He appears to have been responsible for re-roofing the Southeast Tower, and perhaps a considerable body of other work - for example, the Great Hall chimneys shown on the Buck print have a markedly 'Tudor' appearance.

It must be emphasised that most of the architectural detail of the castle has now been lost, while much of the interior remains unexcavated. The below-ground remains of any number of former buildings may survive here. The 1539 survey, for example, mentions '18 chambers great and small'.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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