

**HERITAGE RECORDING
SERVICES WALES**



**"No:2 Robeston Hall,
Robeston West, Milford Haven".**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF



By
Richard Scott Jones (*BA Hons, MA*)



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Prepared for:

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Milford Haven,
SA73 3TL

HRSW Report No: 105

On behalf of:

Mr & Mrs D. Harris
Kiln Park
Robeston West,
Milford Haven,
SA73 3TL

Date: 10th April 2006



**HERITAGE
RECORDING SERVICES WALES**

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Non Technical Summary

The following report is the result of archaeological work undertaken by Heritage Recording Services Wales on behalf of Mr and Mrs D Harris, owners of No:2 Robeston Hall, Robeston West, Milford Haven, Pembrokeshire. This work was part of a condition for an archaeological watching brief during the ground work for the construction of an extension to the above property.

The watching brief was designed to record any archaeological deposits that may become exposed during the groundwork pertaining to the former 18th century Robeston Hall. The hall supposedly has possible 16th century origins and is also located within an area of a former monastic grange.

The groundwork for the foundation trenches for the extension to the house exposed the remains of part of the former Robeston Hall cellar and part of the former ground floor plan of the house, which burnt down in 1921.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The following text details the archaeological work undertaken by Heritage Recording Services Wales (HRSW) on the ground work for the proposed development of an extension to the property known as 'No:2, Robeston Hall, Robeston West, Milford Haven, Pembrokeshire'.
- 1.2 HRSW submitted a project specification to Cambria Archaeology, the regional Archaeological Trust in Llandeilo detailing the schedule of works in March 2006.
- 1.3 All works were undertaken in accordance with both the IFA's *Standards and guidance: for an archaeological watching brief*, and current Health and Safety legislation.

Planning Background

- 1.4 Planning permission has been granted by Pembrokeshire County Council (*Application number NT/05314*) to D. Harris, owner of No:2, Robeston Hall, Robeston West, Milford Haven, Pembrokeshire, to extend the existing house (NGR: SM 8851 0965). The ground work entailed the digging of the foundations for the proposed extension in the driveway and garden area. A condition for an archaeological scheme of works was attached to this permission. This archaeological scheme entailed a watching brief during the ground work for the extension.

Site Description (*see Figs 2,3 & 4*)

- 1.5 The location of the proposed extension lies to the east of No:2 Robeston Hall, Robeston West, Milford Haven (NGR: SM 8851 0965). The property was formerly part of the former mansion house of Robeston Hall which was destroyed by a fire on 24th August 1921. The site lies just north of the Robeston Cross oil refinery.

The area undergoing ground work was located in an area of concrete covered drive way and garden.

Geology

- 1.6 The local geology is a sedimentary rock of Lower Devonian Old Red Sandstone.

Archaeological Background

- 1.7 Documentary sources indicate that the former 18th century house of 'Robeston Hall' was burnt down on 24th August 1921 after an accidental fire. At its peak the manor house was owned by William

Henry Scourfield of Pembrokeshire. Apparently the manor had beautiful ornamental gardens and was renowned for its glasshouses and beautiful wine/grapes. Today there is little left of the manor house but a few standing walls, arches and garden walls. The house is thought to possibly have 16th century origins and is also located within a former monastic grange.

2 Aims and Objectives

2.1 In accordance with IFA's *Standards and guidance*, the aims of an archaeological watching brief are:

- to allow, within the resources available, the preservation by record of archaeological deposits, the presence and nature of which could not be established (or established with sufficient accuracy) in advance of development or other potentially disruptive works.
- to provide an opportunity, if needed, for the watching archaeologist to signal to all interested parties, before the destruction of the material in question, that an archaeological find has been made for which the resources allocated to the watching brief itself are not sufficient to support treatment to a satisfactory and proper standard.

2.2 A watching brief is not intended to reduce the requirement for excavation or preservation of known or inferred deposits, and it is intended to guide, not replace, any requirement for contingent excavation or preservation of possible deposits.

2.3 The objective of a watching brief is to establish and make available information about the archaeological resource existing on the site. The primary objective of this assessment was to ensure that any previously unrecorded archaeological features and deposits exposed during the ground disturbance works and subsequent development of the site were adequately recorded and interpreted.

2.4 In accordance with IFA's *Standards and guidance*, the aim of an archaeological desk based assessment is to gain information about the known or potential archaeological resource within a given area or site (including presence or absence, character and extent, date, integrity, state of preservation and relative quality of the potential archaeological resource), in order to make an assessment of its merit in context, leading to one or more of the following:

- the formulation of a strategy to ensure the recording, preservation or management of the resource.
- the formulation of a strategy for further investigation, whether or not intrusive, where the character and value of the resource is not sufficiently defined to permit a mitigation strategy or other response to be devised.
- the formulation of a proposal for further archaeological investigation within a programme of research.

3 Methodology

3.1 The Watching Brief

With regards the watching brief, ground work was undertaken by the contractors using a mini-digger with a 0.50m wide ditching bucket and hand shovels.. Throughout this operation a watching brief vigil was undertaken by an experienced archaeologist.

After the ground work had been completed limited cleaning of the trenches was undertaken in order to

ascertain the existence or non existence of any archaeological features.

Where features were present limited excavation was undertaken to establish the date, depth, preservation, extent, function and relationship to other features.

Recording of the trenches was in three formats:

- i) *Photographic record* - Photographs were taken in digital format using a 6 mega-pixel camera recording TIFF files.
- ii) *Drawn record* - Site drawings, plans and sections, were produced at scales of 1:10, 1:20 or 1:50 on drafting film. Finished drawings have been related to Ordnance Survey datum and published boundaries where appropriate.
- iii) *Written record* - Written records were produced using a continuous numbering sequence for all contexts.

An environmental sampling and sampling and processing strategy was in place should the archaeological deposits warrant it. However, in this instance it was not felt that the deposits encountered required sampling.

All works were undertaken in accordance with both the IFA's *Standards and guidance: for an archaeological watching brief* and current Health and Safety legislation.

4 Results of the Watching Brief (see Figs 16, 17 & 18 and Photo plates)

- 4.1 In the following, numbers contained within brackets (), refer to context numbers allocated during the watching brief. A detailed list of all contexts is given in Appendix III of this report.

The Ground Clearance and Foundation Trench

- 4.2 The uppermost deposit that covered the entire site was modern concrete to a depth of approx. 12cm (1). This surface was jack-hammered and then removed, thereby exposing the surface below. Directly below this concrete was a modern overburden/top soil (2) which consisted of a mid-dark brown soil with sandstone/rubble inclusions along with small fragments of 20th / 19th century material (e.g sherds of pot, glass etc.). Directly below this was a demolition rubble deposit (3), which consisted of stone-work, plaster and general debris from former demolition work. This demolition deposit is the remains of the former mansion, demolished following the fire in 1921. This deposit had been cut through (15) in one place at the far east end by the insertion of a 20th century drain pipe (17).
- 4.3 Lying directly below this demolition layer a series of features associated with the former mansion house became exposed. Firstly, in the northernmost trench, a stone slab surface was exposed (4). This feature appeared to be a former floor surface, but was only apparent in the south-west facing section and only for a short length. In the eastern-most trench removal of the demolition rubble(3) exposed 4 former cross walls (18, 20, 21 and 27). Each of these had the remains of plaster on their exposed faces, indicating that they were exposed faces and such the ends of the walls. Context numbers (20) and (21) appeared to demarcate a former entrance way or else a corridor running eastward. The same was also true of context number (27) with (21), but with a much wider threshold. Between these walls at floor level, was a thin burnt deposit of soot/charcoal (22), which was likely the residue of the 1921 fire. Strangely, each of these former house features, except context number (18), were only present in the north-west facing section and did not become exposed within the foundation trench itself, which may imply that the trench was following the line of a former wall that had been robbed out at an earlier date, possibly during the demolition period. The stub of a south-west to north-east cross wall is

still evident in the surrounding stone garden wall following this alignment and such may well be the remains of a this former wall. Directly below the thin charcoal deposit (22), in both of these former *threshold* areas was a floor surface, the wider one had the remains of a red and black quarry tiled floor. It had been laid in a *diamond* or diagonal fashion to the wall face(25). The narrower of the two thresholds had a flagged sandstone floor (23). This floor surface was also evident in the opposing south-east facing section, but continued across almost two-thirds of the trench, implying that this floor surface was a room from which the threshold (23) entered.

- 4.4 In the northern-most trench, as is shown in the south-west facing section, the short length of stone slab floor (4) was lying directly over a cinder/mortar bedding deposit (5), which as well as acting as bedding for a former cobbled surface (6), was also covering the roof of a former red brick arched cellar (11). The cellar arch was only just protruding into the foundation trench by approx. 0.40m, so its character and form were plainly evident in the south-west facing section. Contemporary in date with this feature was also the stone wall (18), as shown in the north-west facing section.
- 4.5 Once the roof of the cellar feature became exposed, the ground-work for the foundation trench worked around the feature to the required depth of approx. 1m, thereby exposing its face in section. After a short time the whole front face of the arch became exposed revealing that the entire cellar area had been back-filled with demolition rubble (3). Removal of a large portion of this demolition rubble, to the required depth for the foundations of the new building, revealed that the cellar arch had been constructed directly into a cut (12) made into the natural red sandstone bedrock (14). With this removal, a void became exposed in the cellar opening. Following an investigation with a torch, it became evident that the original floor surface was very likely a further 1.75m down. From the void it was also evident that the interior of the cellar opening was rubble filled, almost up to the roof on the north-west side, with the south-east side being fairly clear. The interior walls were white lime washed and it was apparent that there was an opening in the north-west wall, which was located directly beneath the grassed area of the garden.
- 4.6 At the far north-west end of the trench, the ground work revealed the remains of a wall (18), with plaster on its surface. Further removal of demolition rubble showed that this wall had been constructed on a wider protruding base wall. Part of this lower wall had been punctured through by the insertion of a 19th century drain (19). Investigation of the lower length of this wall showed that it appeared to continue in a south-westerly direction, following the southern stretch of the continued foundation trench. After removal of further demolition rubble it became evident that this wall only continued for approx. 2m south-west and then stopped abruptly against natural red sandstone bedrock. The end of this wall implied that this was also the full extent of this cellar in this area, which in turn gave a good idea of the full volume of the demolition rubble. Because of the large amount of rubble in this area, it suggests that the cellar in this area may have had a wooden floor, which burnt following the 1921 fire.
- 4.7 Throughout the ground-work the only significant finds, all within the demolition rubble, were an old copper half-penny, sadly too corroded for dating, and the upper shoulder of a late 18th century wine *onion* bottle.
- 4.8 All of the deposits uncovered were no earlier than the initial construction of the red brick built cellar, which was likely mid-late 18th century.

5 Conclusion

- 5.1 The archaeological watching brief for the ground-works at No:2 Robeston Hall, managed to record the existence and part of the former character of the late 18th century red brick built cellar to the north east. It revealed that the remains of the cellar had been back-filled with rubble following the part

demolition of the house following the fire of 1921. Along with part of the cellar being recorded, a small part of the south-eastern part of the 20th and 19th century house layout was also recorded. The main features exposed in the house layout were two floor surfaces, one a red and black quarry tile floor that may have led to the former entrance hallway to the front of the house, which apparently faced south. Secondly, a flagged sandstone surface, which appeared to lead into a room on the west side of the house, now partly below the present No:2 Robeston Hall.

- 5.2 The watching brief managed to gain information about the known or potential archaeological resource within the immediate area of No:2 Robeston Hall, and managed to make an assessment of its merit in context with the development work. No features or finds were found during the ground-works earlier than the 18th century. All features exposed and recorded during the ground-works are preserved *in situ*.

6 Acknowledgements

Thanks to; Mr and Mrs Harris , the owners of No:2 Robeston Hall for their patience during the ground work and archaeological recording work.

7 Bibliography

LLOYD. T. 1986. 'Lost Houses in Wales'.



APPENDIX I:

Figs & Illustrations

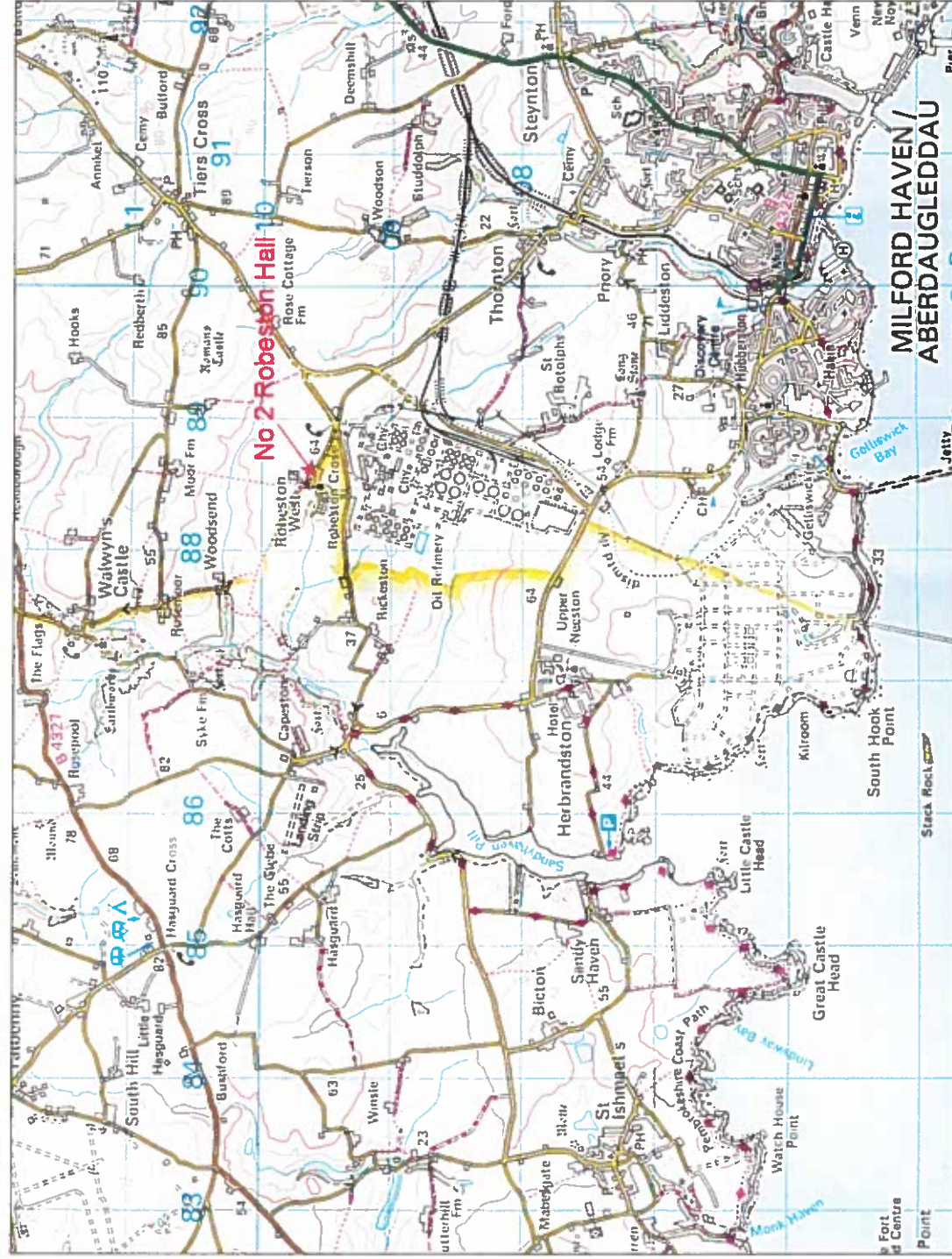


Figure 1. Location of No: 2 Robeston Hall, Robeston West, Milford Haven, Pembrokeshire.

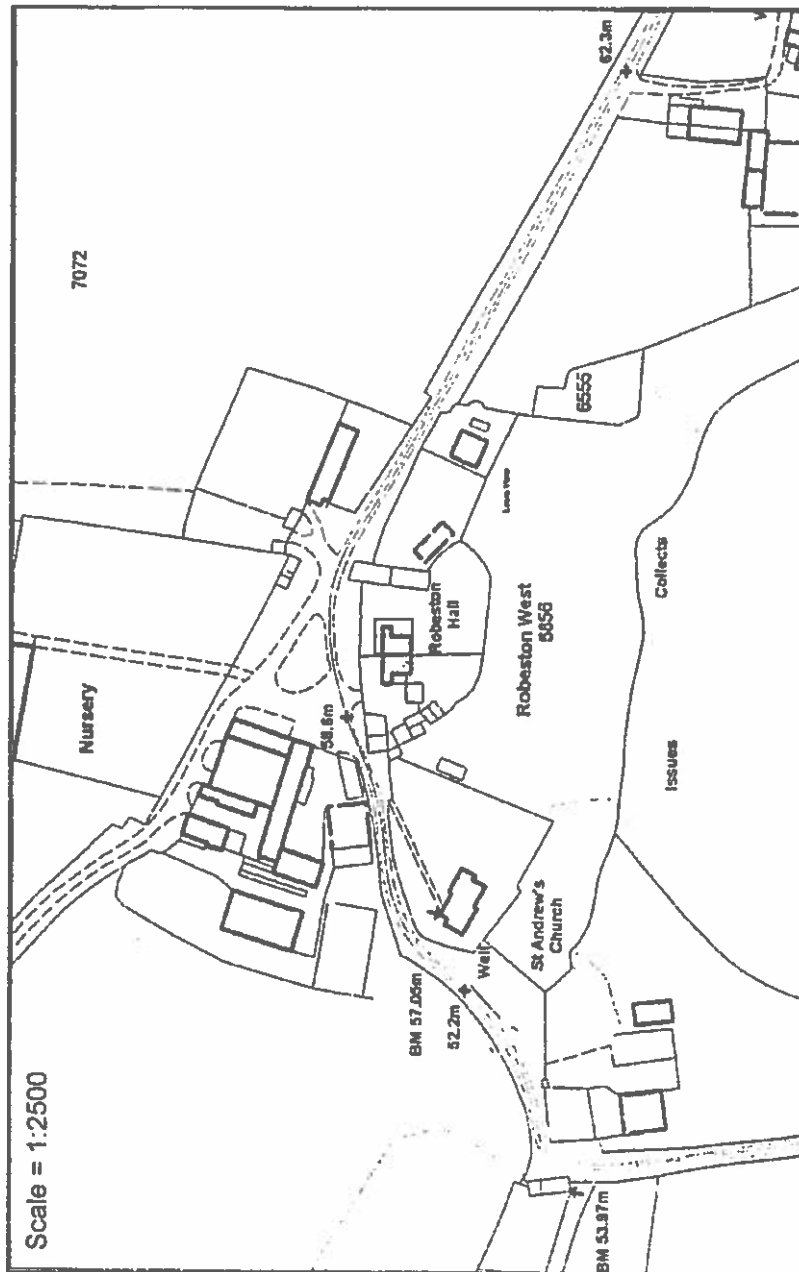
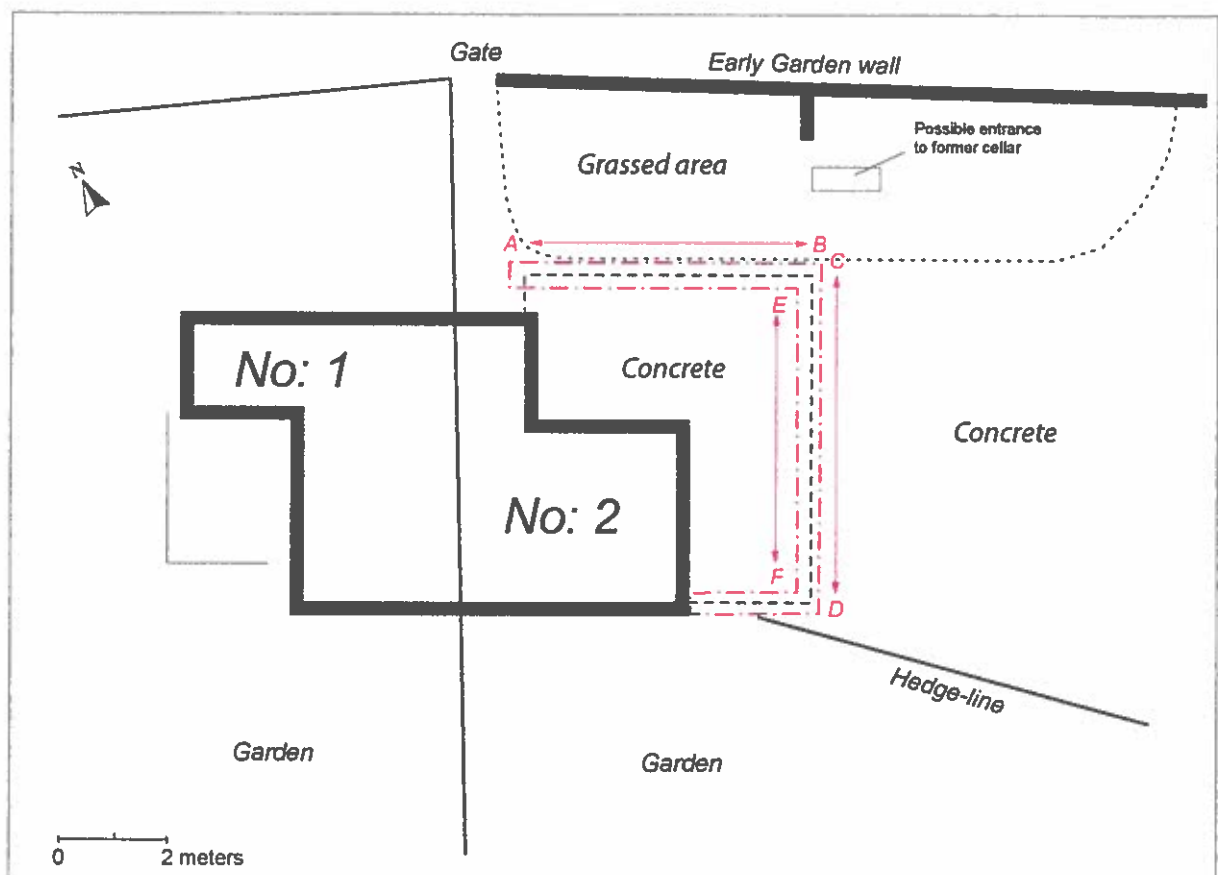
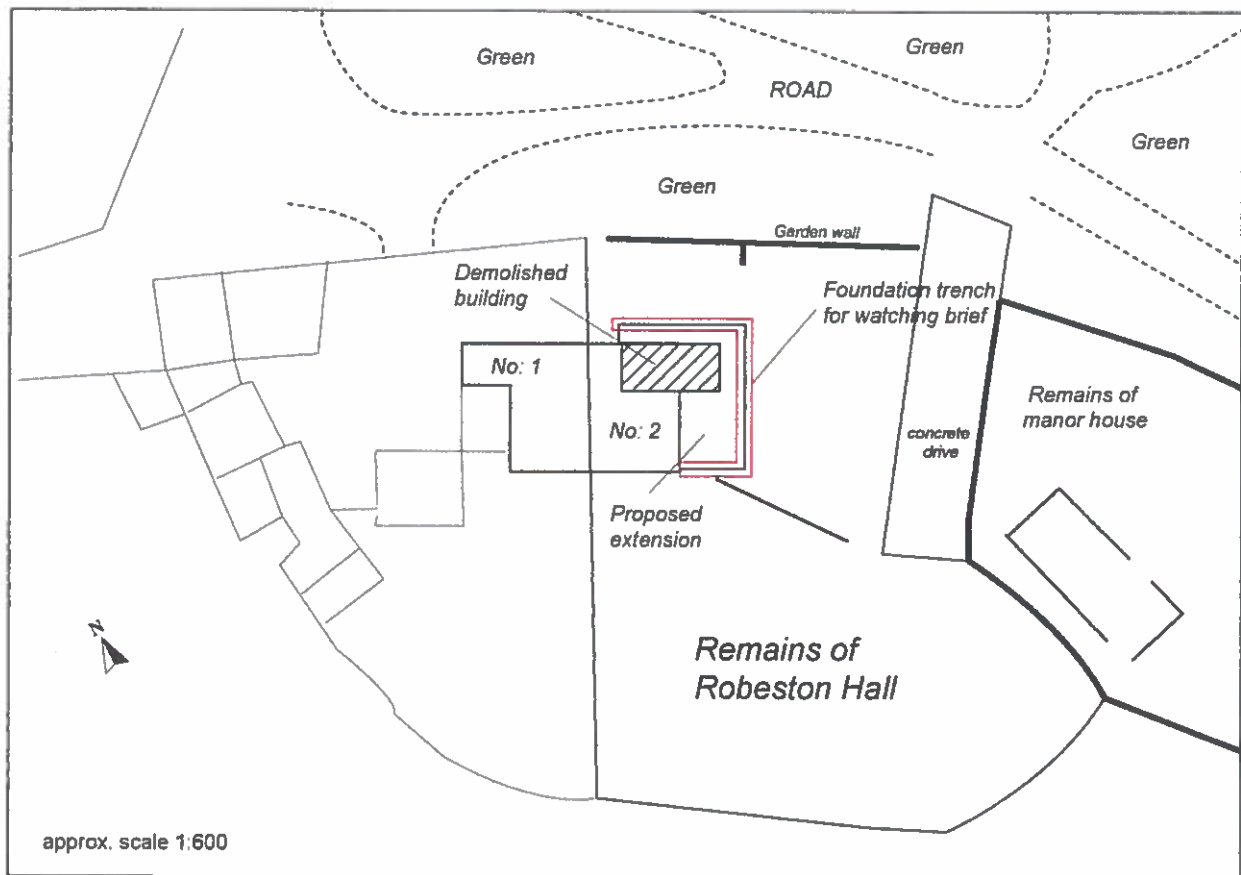
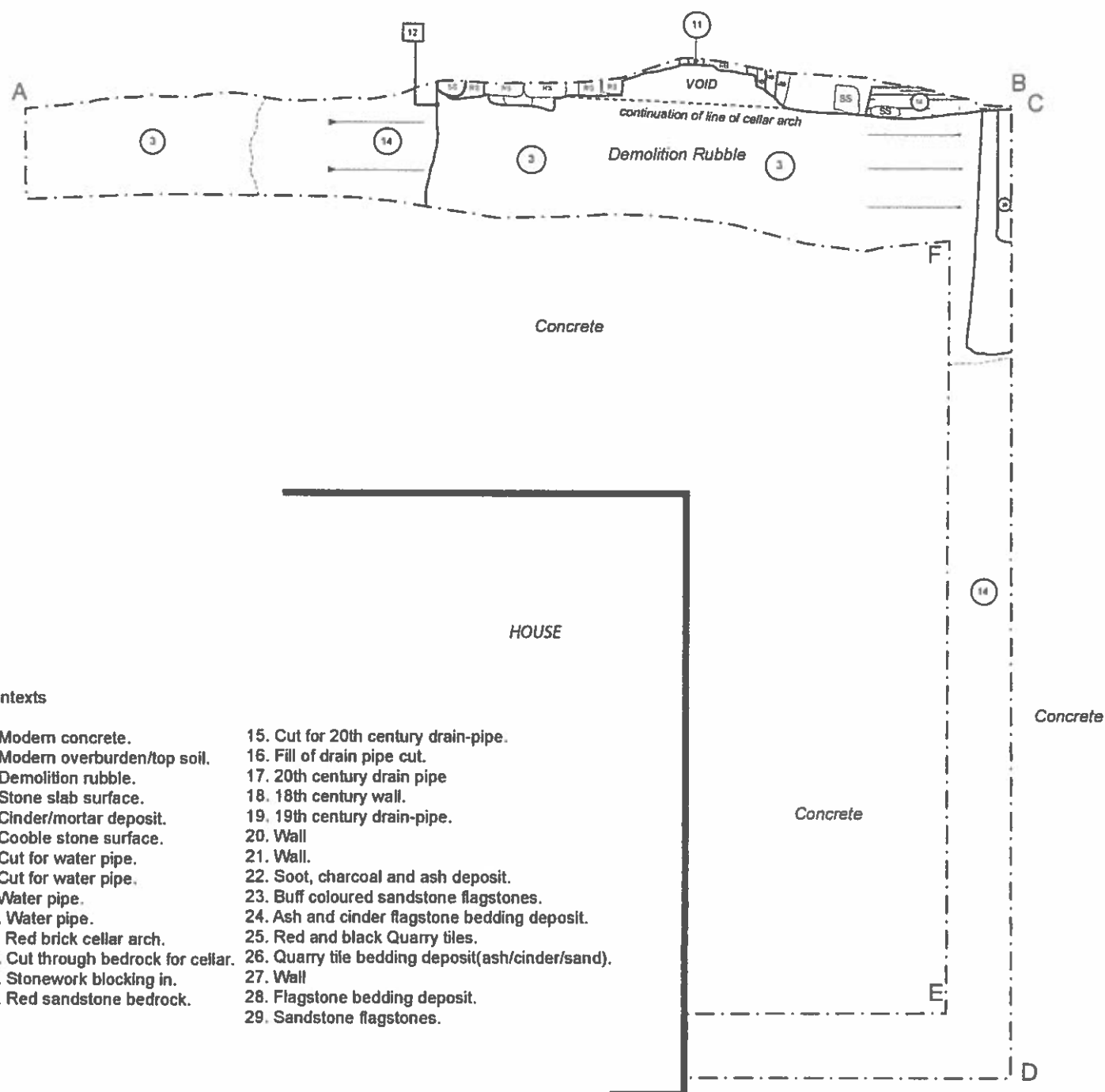


Figure 2. Location of No: 1 Robeston Hall, Robeston West, Milford Haven, Pembrokeshire.





0 2 meters

Drawn at 1:20 scale

Key

③ Context number (see Context sheet index in appendices for complete list).

RS = Red Sandstone

RB = Red Brick

SS = Sandstone

Figure 5. Ground plan of foundation trench with reference to section drawings A-B, C-D and E-F.

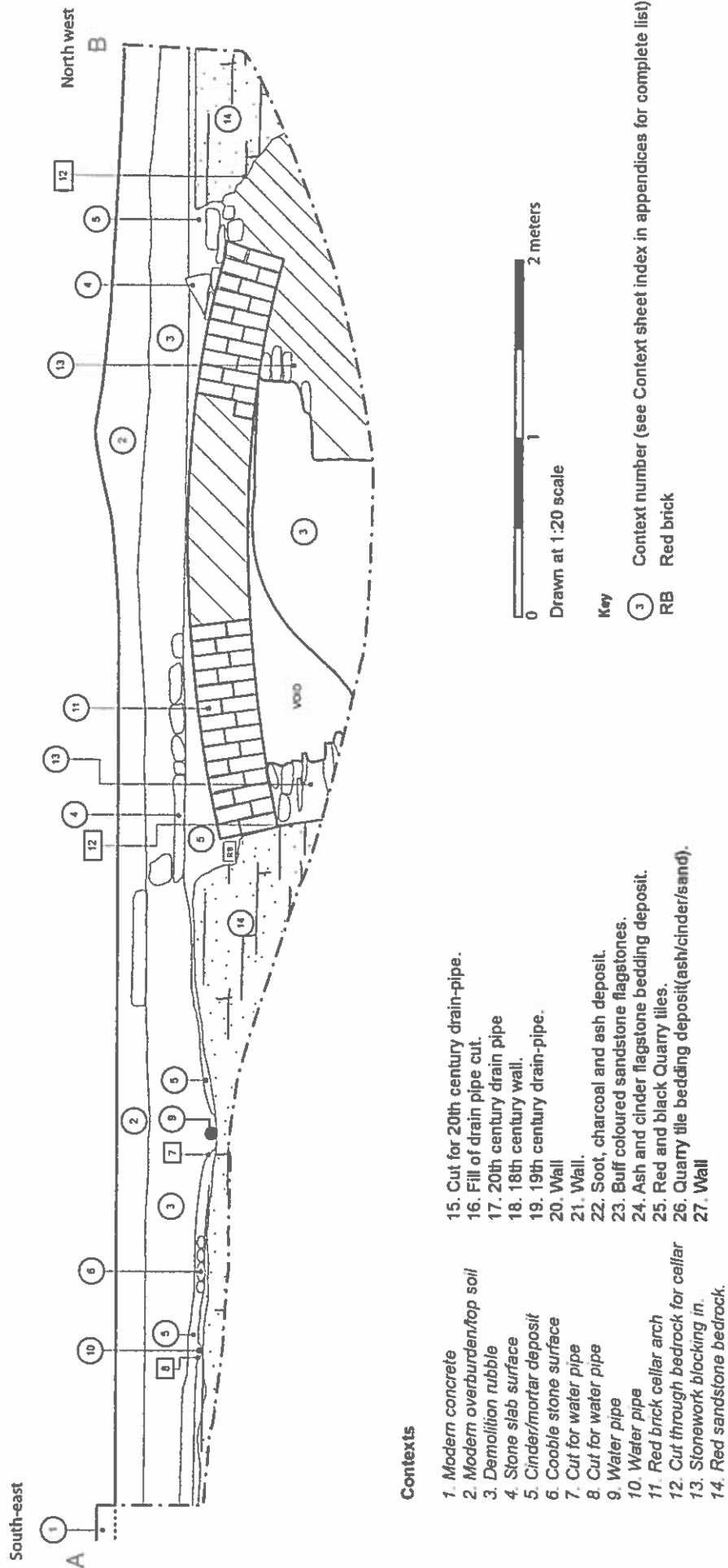
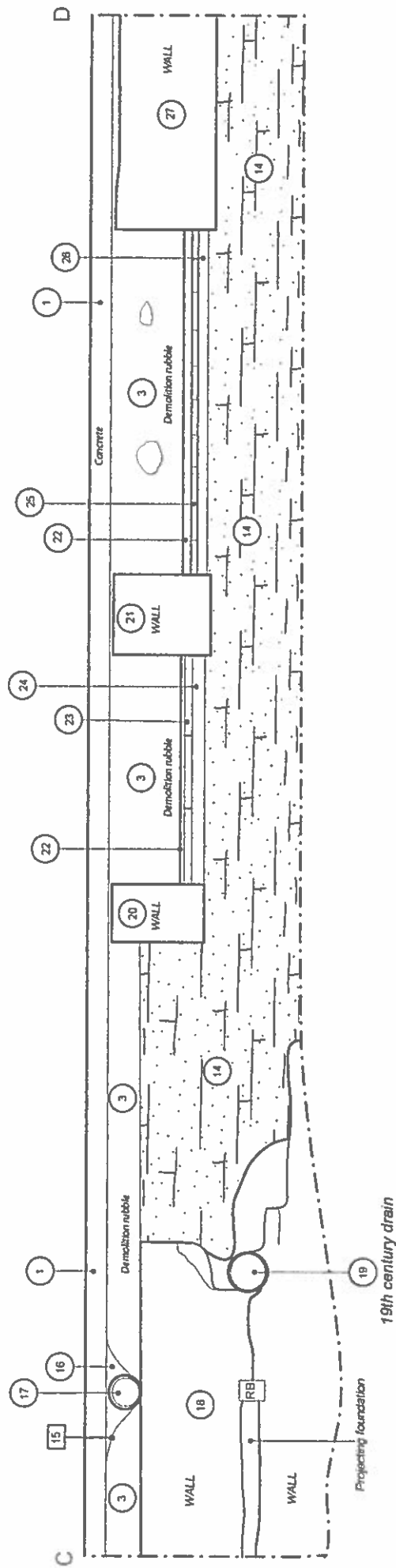


Figure 6. South-west facing section showing former 18th century cellar arch blocked by demolition rubble and spoil.



Contexts

1. Modern concrete.
2. Modern overburden/top soil.
3. Demolition rubble.
4. Stone slab surface.
5. Cinder/mortar deposit.
6. Cobble stone surface.
7. Cut for water pipe.
8. Cut for water pipe.
9. Water pipe.
10. Water pipe.
11. Red brick cellar arch.
12. Cut through bedrock for cellar.
13. Stonework blocking in.
14. Red sandstone bedrock.
15. Cut for 20th century drain-pipe.
16. Fill of drain pipe cut.
17. 20th century drain pipe.
18. 18th century wall.
19. 19th century drain-pipe.
20. Wall.
21. Wall.
22. Soil, charcoal and ash deposit.
23. Buff coloured sandstone flagstones.
24. Ash and cinder flagstone bedding deposit.
25. Red and black Quarry tiles.
26. Quarry tile bedding deposit(ash/cinder/sand).
27. Wall.

0 1 2 meters
Drawn at 1:20 scale

Key

- ③ Context number (see Context sheet index in appendices for complete list).

Figure 7. North-west facing section showing partial remains of former Robeston Hall and 18th century cellar wall.

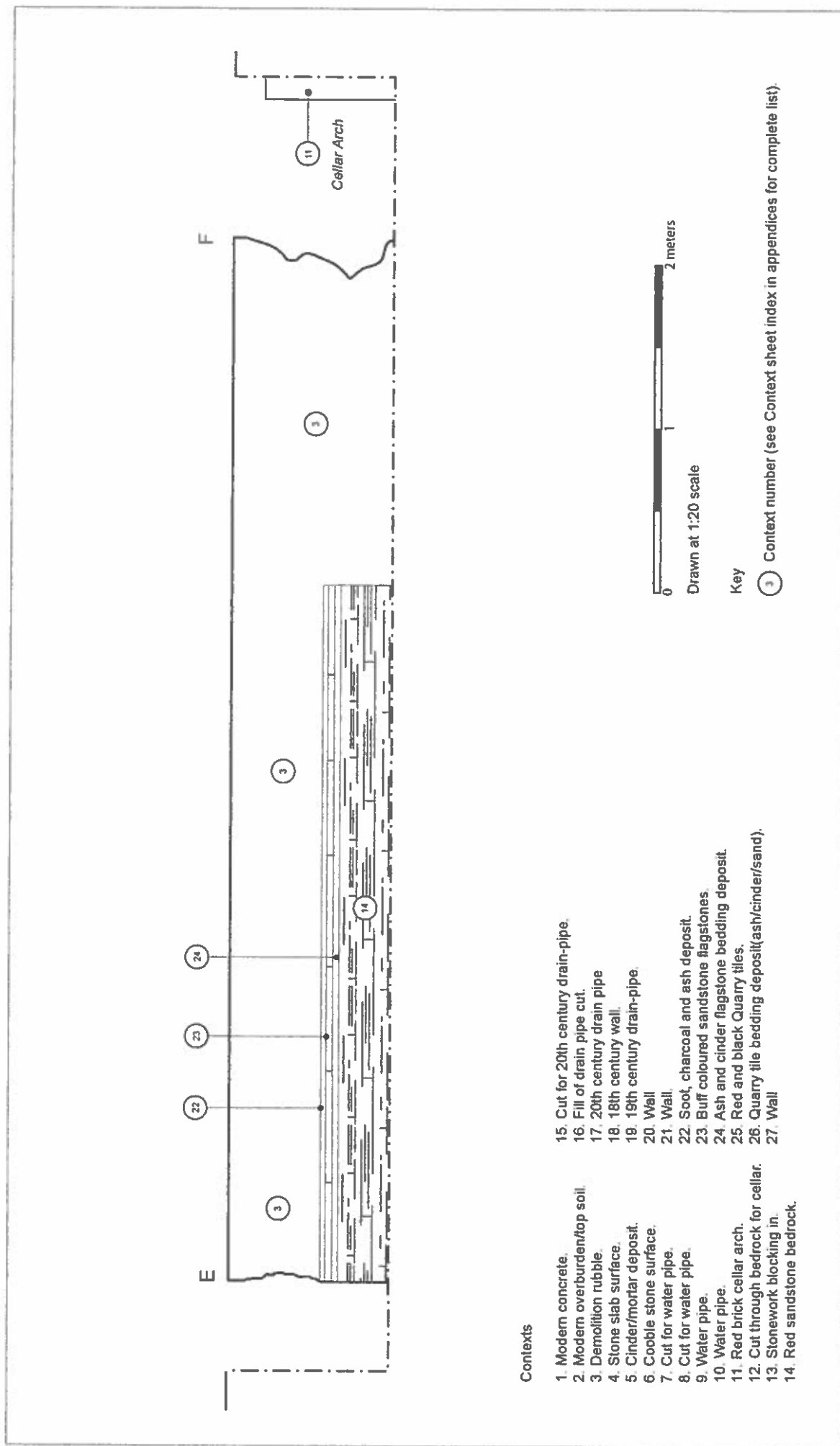


Figure 8. South-east facing section showing flagstone floor and demolition rubble



APPENDIX II:

Photo plates



Plate 1. Front of No:2 Robeston Hall. Looking west.



Plate 2. Preliminary shot prior to ground work. Shows house after demolished earlier extension. Looking west.



Plate 3. Area of excavation prior to groundwork but following removal of concrete base . Looking north-east.



Plate 4. Area of excavation prior to groundwork but following removal of concrete base . Looking south.



Plate 5. View of exposed cellar arch during initial ground work. Looking east.



Plate 6. Detail of exposed cellar arch during initial ground work. Looking North-east.



Plate 7. View of trench looking westward.



Plate 8. View of trench looking Eastward.



Plate 9. View of exposed cellar arch during initial ground work. Looking Northward.



Plate 10. Detail of wall exposed. Context No: 20. Looking south-east.



Plate 11. Wall. Context No: 20. Looking south.



Plate 12. Wall. Context No: 20. Looking south-west.

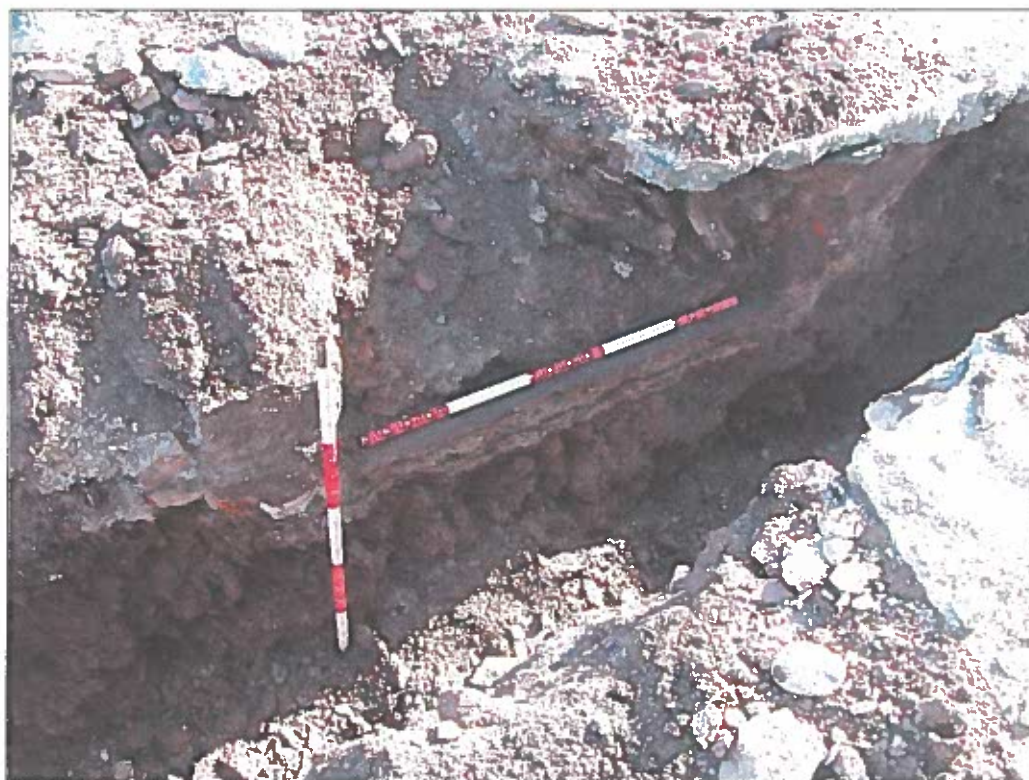


Plate 13. Detail of sandstone flagstone floor in section. Context No: 23.
Looking south oblique.



Plate 14. Detail of sandstone flagstone floor in section. Context No: 23. Looking south-west up trench.



Plate 15. Looking south-west up trench.



Plate 16. Detail of red and black quarry tiles. Context No: 25.



Plate 17. Foundation trench looking west.



Plate 18. Foundation trench at end of house. Looking northward.

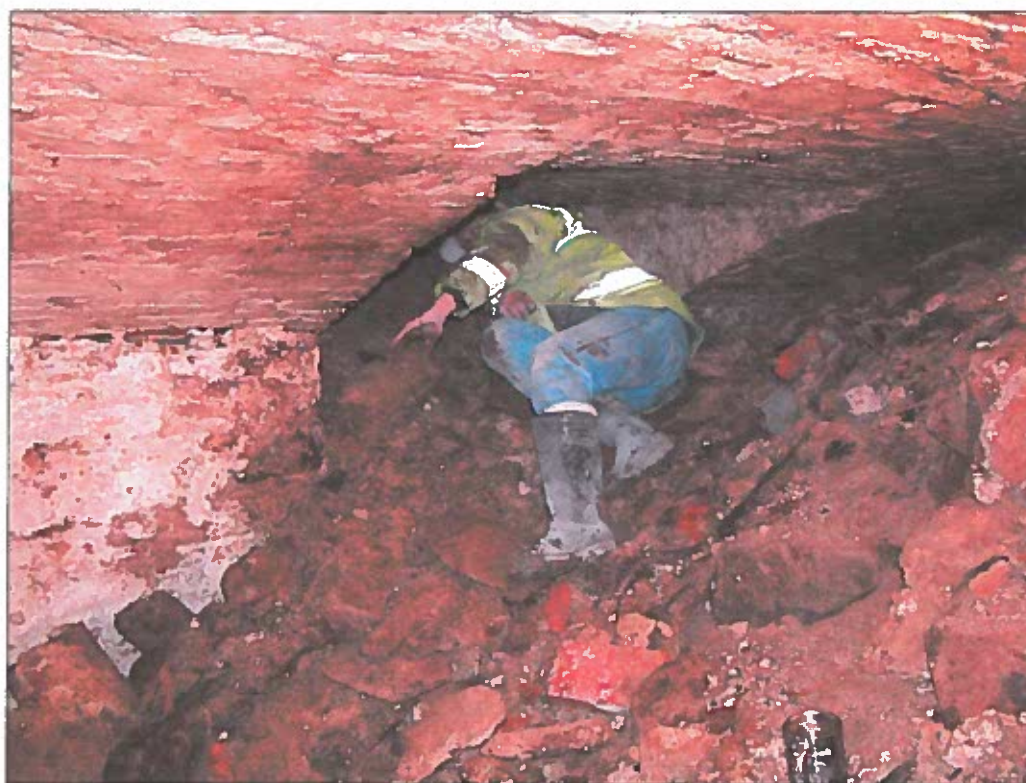


Plate 19. Interior of cellar showing access/entrance at east end beneath grass area.



APPENDIX III: Finds Summary

SUMMARY OF FINDS

No:2 Robeston Hall, Robeston West

CONTEXT 3

TYPE	NUMBER OF (e.g SHERDS)	WEIGHT (g)	DATE (CENTURY)
19th century half- penny	1		19 th century
Wine bottle (onion type)	1	10	Mid-Late 18th



APPENDIX IV: Context Register

SUMMARY OF CONTEXTS

No:2 Robeston Hall, Robeston West

CONTEXTS

1. Modern concrete.
2. Modern overburden/top soil.
3. Demolition rubble.
4. Stone slab surface.
5. Cinder/mortar deposit.
6. Cooble stone surface.
7. Cut for water pipe.
8. Cut for water pipe.
9. Water pipe.
10. Water pipe.
11. Red brick cellar arch.
12. Cut through bedrock for cellar.
13. Stonework blocking in.
14. Red sandstone bedrock.
15. Cut for 20th century drain-pipe.
16. Fill of drain pipe cut.
17. 20th century drain pipe
18. 18th century wall.
19. 19th century drain-pipe.
20. Wall
21. Wall.
22. Soot, charcoal and ash deposit.
23. Buff coloured sandstone flagstones.
24. Ash and cinder flagstone bedding deposit.
25. Red and black Quarry tiles.
26. Quarry tile bedding deposit(ash/cinder/sand).
27. Wall



APPENDIX V: Archive Cover Sheet

ARCHIVE COVER SHEET

No:2 Robeston Hall, Robeston West

ARCHIVE DESTINATION – DAT, Llandeilo

Site Name:	No:2 Robeston Hall
Site Code:	RH/101/06
PRN:	
NPRN :	N/A
SAM:	N/A
Other Ref No:	HRSW Report No. 105
NGR:	SM 8851 0965
Site Type:	House and Garden
Project Type:	Watching Brief
Project Officer:	Richard Scott Jones
Project Dates:	March 2006
Categories Present:	N/A
Location of Original Archive:	HRSW
Location of duplicate Archives:	DAT, Llandeilo
Number of Finds Boxes:	N/A
Location of Finds:	N/A
Museum Reference:	N/A
Copyright:	HRSW
Restrictions to access:	None

