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INVESTIGATIONS AT HOLYHEAD
St. CYBI ENVIRONMENTAL
IMPROVEMENT SCHEME



Gwynedd Archaeological Trust Ltd

Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Gwynedd Cyf

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St. CYBI ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT SCHEME

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for Gwynedd Archaeological Trust 1992

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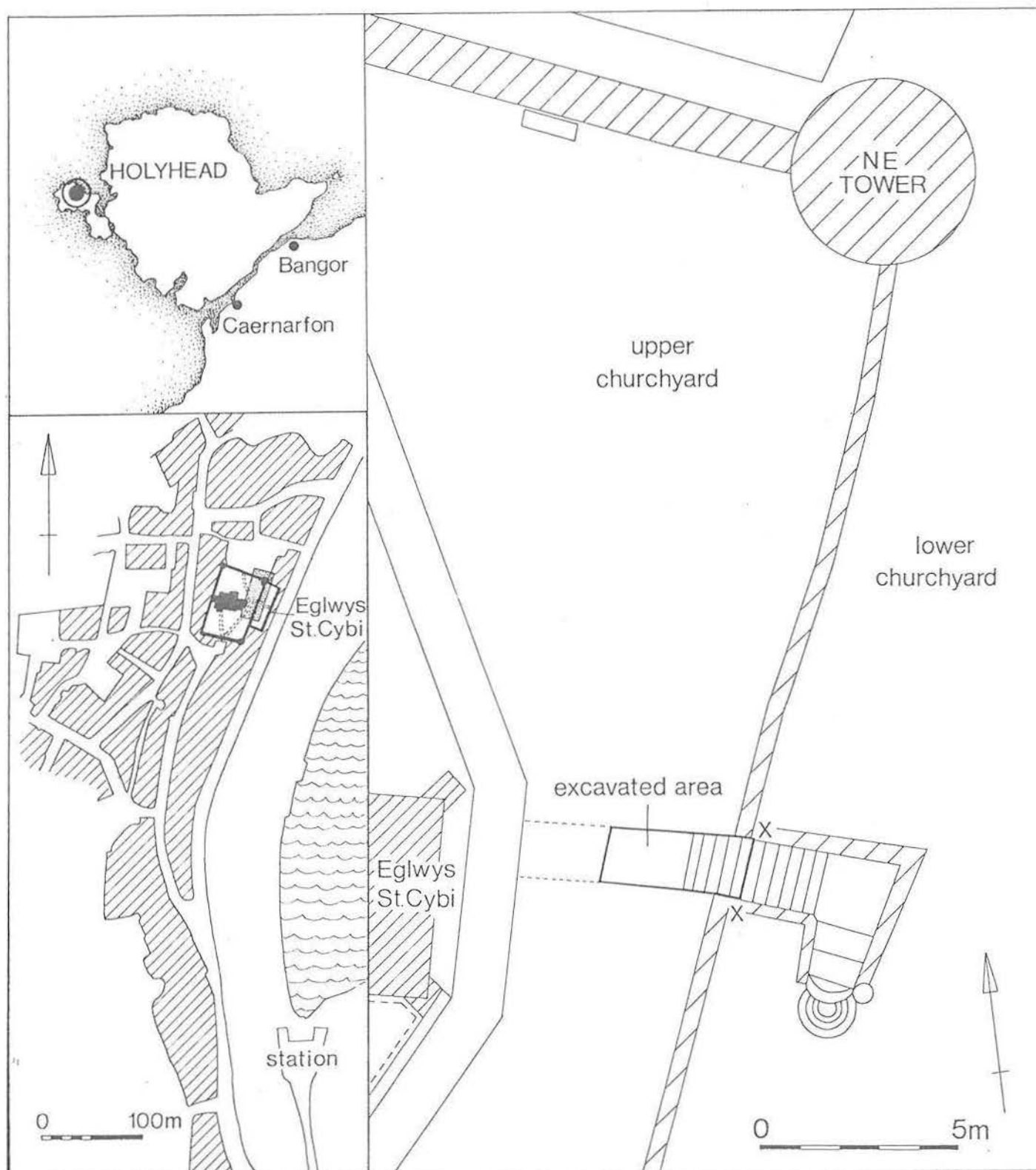


Fig.1 General Location Map of Excavated Area

Introduction

As part of the Welsh Development Agency's Town Improvement Grant scheme, an environmental upgrading / consolidation project was proposed for St. Cybi's churchyard at Holyhead. The work was sponsored by Ynys Mon Borough Council, with TACP Architects as consultants and E.W. Parry as the main contractors. The area under consideration included much of the Caer Gybi scheduled Roman fort, as well as the Mediaeval church and churchyards of St. Cybi, (fig.1). This report covers the first phase of the scheme, the second phase due to begin in June 1992.

Brief

Scheduled Monument Consent was granted by Cadw. Since it was likely that much of this work would greatly benefit the interpretation of the remains, the Scheduled Monument Consent also desired that some degree of archaeological supervision or watching brief should support the scheme. As a result, Gwynedd Archaeological Trust were asked by TACP Architects to conduct archaeological work within the churchyard. The general agreement for the archaeological programme was as follows :

(i) A watching brief was to be carried out whilst the contractors constructed a new path along the east edge of the upper churchyard.

(ii) Following the removal of the steps connecting the upper and lower churchyard, the underlying deposits were to be examined down to a depth not exceeding the foundations of the proposed new steps. Only the upper part of the flight of steps was to be examined because the lower half lay outside the scheduled area. According to the plans and information given by E.W. Parry, the depth of the new steps from present surface level was to be 0.30m at the top of the flight, increasing to 0.55m on the lowest step within the excavated area.

Procedures and Methods

The trench, which measured 5m x 2m, was hand dug no deeper than the proposed depth for the new steps. The area was planned, photographed and the south facing section was drawn to a scale of 1:10.

Results

(i) Upper churchyard path

The path ran as a one metre wide strip along the east edge of the upper churchyard. Its construction by E.W. Parry involved removing the top soil down to a depth of 0.20m. The line of the path crossed a number of 19th Century gravestones which had to be temporarily removed before later being incorporated into the path surface. After the removal of the top soil, the upper foundations of the removed gravestones were visible, but a general examination of the proposed area of the path revealed no archaeological features.

(ii) Main trench (5m x 2m)

The trench was excavated from the level plateau at the top of the removed steps, eastwards for 2.4m before the slope fell sharply down the flight reaching the limit of the excavation 2.6m further down the gradient, (figs.2 and 3). The levelled area at the top of the slope was covered by a cobbled path overgrown with grass, 001. The fill of the path was 0.15m deep on the north side and consisted of a dark brown medium silty sand, approximately 50% of well rounded cobbles (approximately 0.10m in diameter). The fill of the path also contained a small number of bone fragments and modern pottery. Context 002 was 0.05m deep deposit of

yellow / light brown clean medium sand beneath 001. The sand did not extend across the whole trench, but lay as a small patch towards the extreme west of the trench and presumably was a levelling fill for the path. The remnants of another similar patch of 002 lay approximately one metre to the east, near the point where the slope fell away sharply.

Context 001 was only 0.05m deep in the southern half of the top levelled area. This was due to a sharp cut in this part of the trench which had removed the lower levels of 001 on this side. The fill of the cut was made of a dark brown / grey silty sand, 003, 0.10m in depth and contained a spread of large, 0.20m diameter, angular stones, which had a prominent facing on the north side. The south side of the spread was not established as it extended beyond the southern limit of the trench. It was clear, however, that the stone spread was not part of a wall, because it became apparent that the stones were isolated within the fill of 003. Finds from 003 included a large amount of bone fragments (possibly human), and a large amount of 19th Century pottery.

Towards the north east corner of the top levelled area, immediately above the highest step footing, a 0.10m thick isolated patch of mid brown sandy silt was found, 004. This context was not found anywhere else within the limits of the trench and it may have functioned as a unique additional fill or levelling for part of the highest step.

Context 005 consisted of a narrow band (approx. 0.05m thick) of black clayey silt covered by thin slabs of slate. This silt overlaid a 0.05m - 0.08m thick layer of very coarse light yellow / white mortar. Contexts 005 and 006 together formed the footing over which each stone step was laid. Underneath 006 the main fill of each step (approx. 0.25m thick), consisted of a light brown, gritty silty sand, containing a small percentage of shell and bone, 007. This gritty sand was also found to be underlying 001, 002, 003 and 004 on the top levelled area.

Conclusions

The investigations at St. Cybi's churchyard failed to yield any material relating to the Mediaeval and Roman structures located at the site. All finds and general features were dated to the 19th and 20th Centuries.

Acknowledgements

Gwynedd Archaeological Trust gratefully acknowledges the co-operation of the Welsh Development Agency, Ynys Mon Borough Council, TACP Architects, and E.W. Parry for their general assistance.

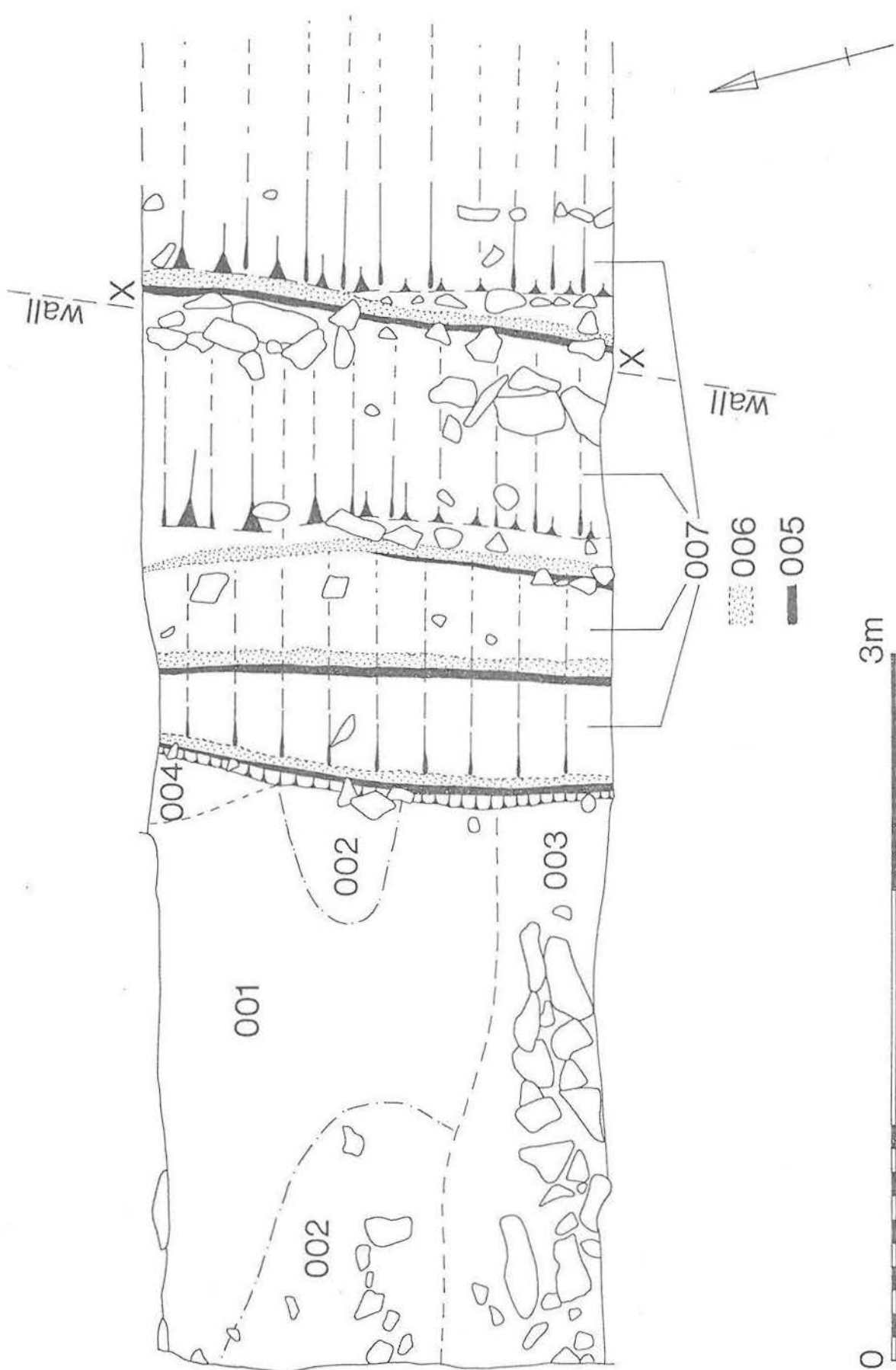


Fig.2 Plan of Excavated Area

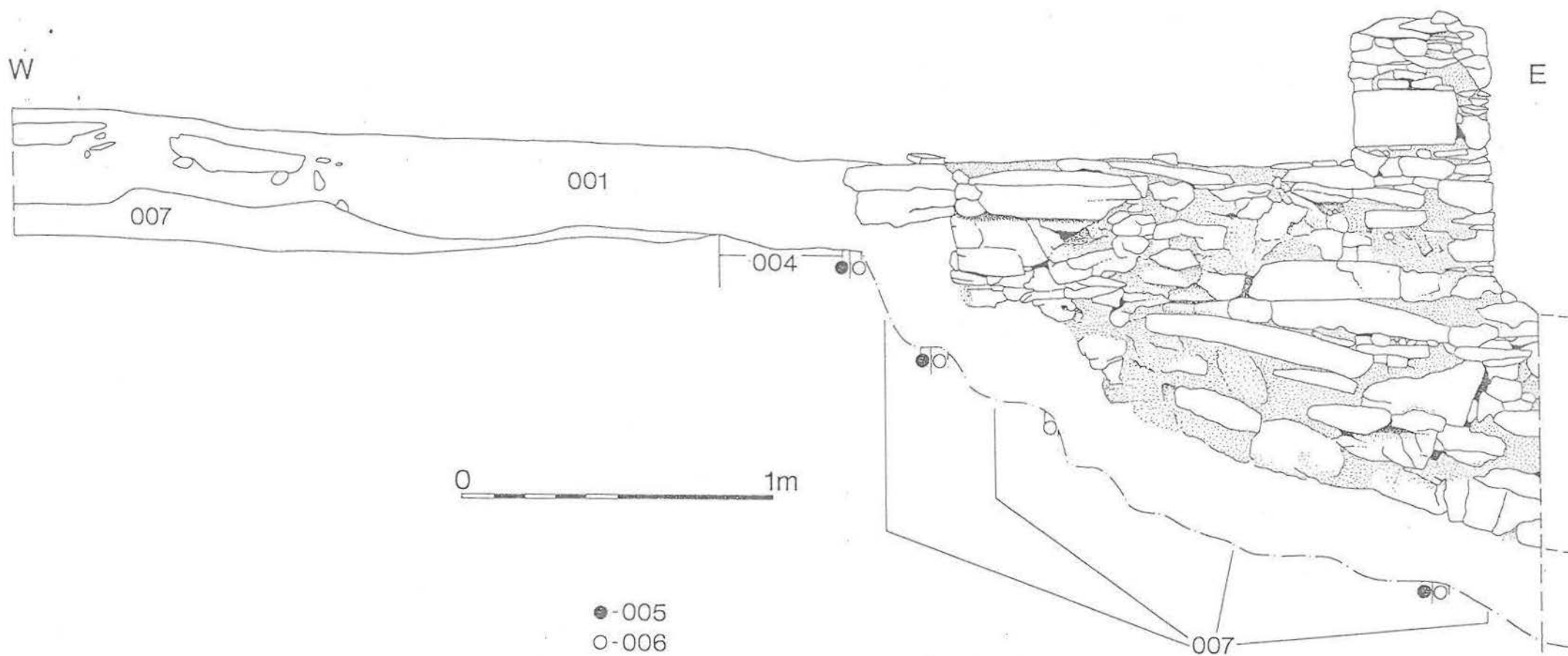


Fig.3 South Facing Section of Excavated Area



Plate 1. Upper Churchyard Path (south facing)

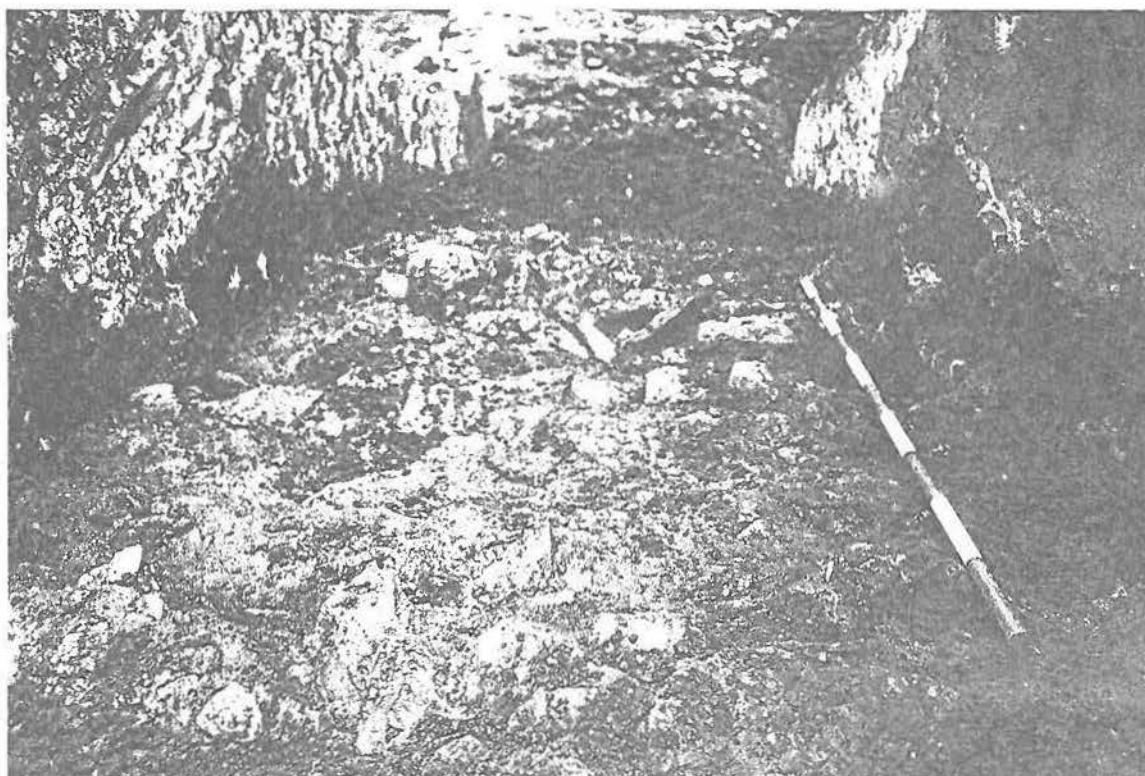


Plate 2. Easterly View Down Excavated Steps

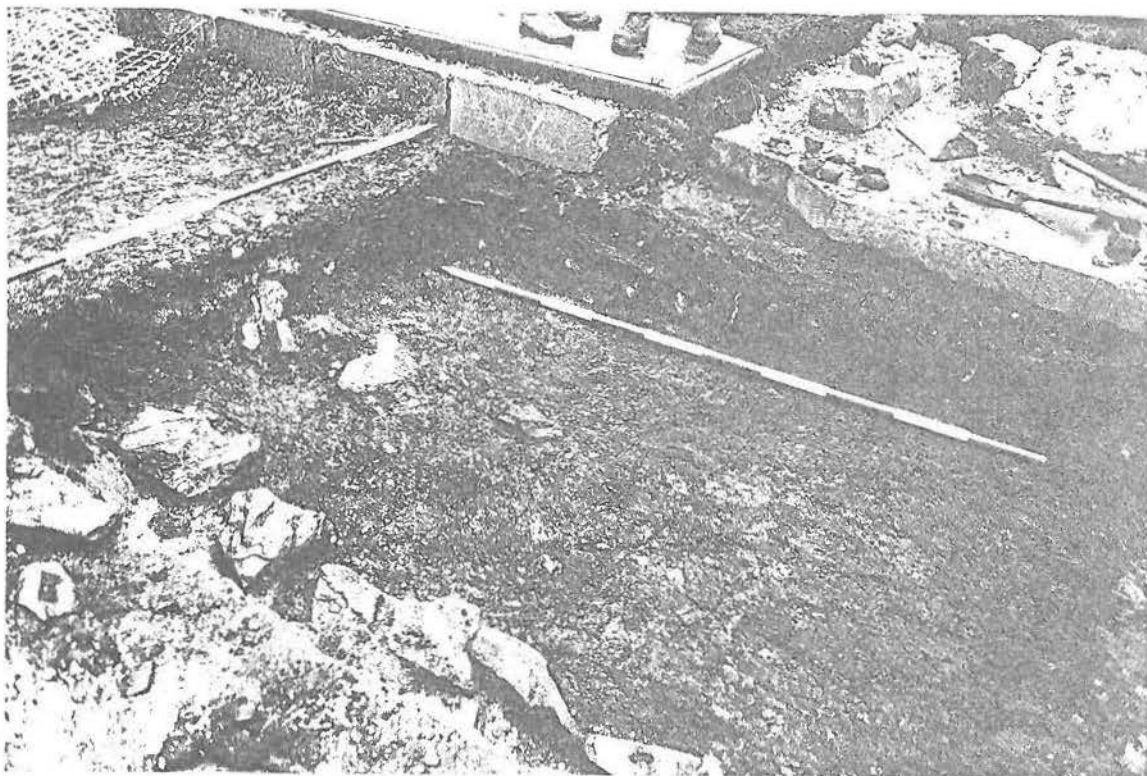


Plate 3. General View Of Level Area (north west facing)

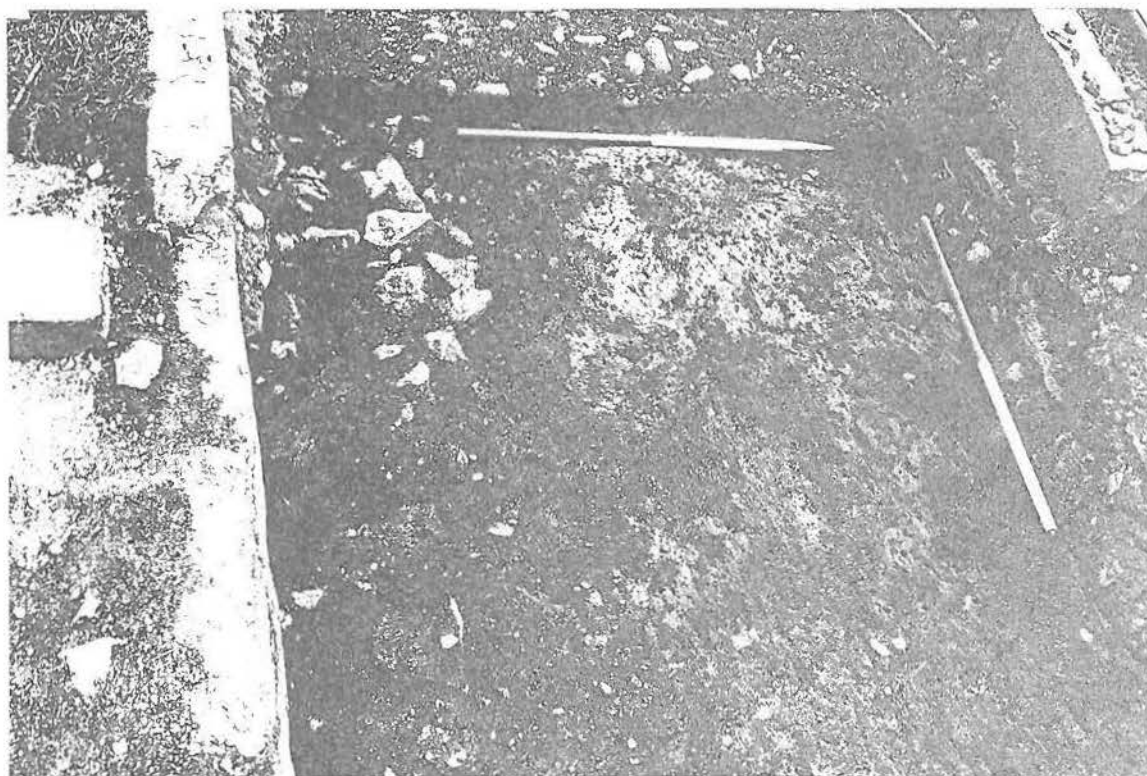


Plate 4. General View Of Level Area (west facing)



Plate 5. East Facing Section Of Level Area

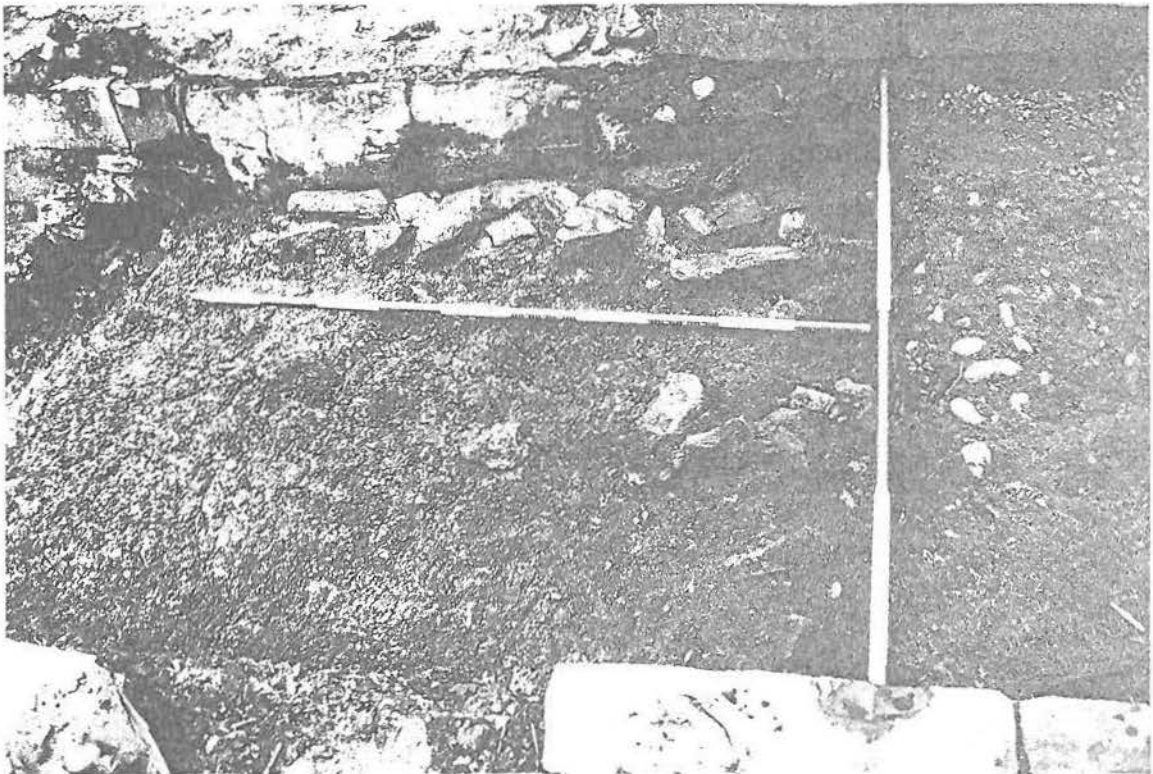


Plate 6. North Facing Section Of Level Area

