



East Tower from North after clearance of vegetation and debris

Summary

The proposed project was outlined as 'some work on the north and east towers and the wall between the fort entrance and the east tower'. This included remedial work on the north tower, partial rebuilding of the lost outer arc of the east tower, of the south east curtain wall adjoining the tower and the north east jamb of the entrance, and of repairs to the buttresses on either side of the entrance. Further to this, repairs were also carried out to the rampart where it had been eroded on the interior side of the south east curtain wall. Consent was granted by Cadw under Section 2 and Schedule 1 of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 dated the 2nd. October 2015.

Stripping of an overburden of turf and brambles confirmed the apparent displacement of the south east curtain wall from its original line and only fragmentary remains of the east tower beyond that already visible. Most of the outer arc of the tower was entirely missing but it was unclear whether this had been the result of collapse or demolition. There was some slight evidence of a shallow robber trench and it is conceivable that the stone had been reused in repairs to the remainder of the stone folly or the field wall on top of the



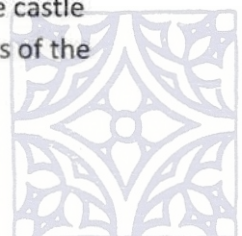
west side of the moat. The east corner within the tower had been closed off with a low retaining wall which, although it was aligned with the south east and north curtain walls, did not continue through the stumps of the east tower walls. Neither this wall nor a buttress, which appeared to be contemporary with the wall and which was built directly against the internal face of the south fragment of the tower, were not fully exposed. The material within the tower and both above and below the retaining wall was largely retained, since it provided a durable support both for the retaining wall and buttress and what may have been part of the displaced internal arc of the tower. The only finds consisted of broken roof slate, oyster shell and a modern coin recovered from the topsoil. No new information was gained from either the repairs to the north tower and the south east curtain wall at the entrance or the buttresses.

Introduction

Castell Aberlleiniog is a scheduled ancient monument An020 and the only attested surviving motte and bailey castle in Anglesey. It is located on the east bank of Afon Lleiniog and about halfway between Beaumaris and Penmon, and between the Menai Strait and the village of Llangoed. Dating to the last quarter of the 11th. century it was probably the result of a second campaign of Anglo-Norman castle building encircling Gwynedd. Little survives of the small, semicircular bailey apart from remnants of its bank and now shallow ditch, although geophysical survey undertaken by the Gwynedd Archaeological Trust in 2008 showed the original extent of both of these defensive features, the footprints of three buildings within the bailey and a gateway. This gateway was reached by a path or road terraced into the river bank leading from the Menai Strait and present house of Lleiniog. The motte is intact, although its top has been much modified by the addition of a square stone folly or fort. A timber bridge now crosses the moat and the motte is ascended by a set of step[s] to the break or entrance through the south east curtain wall. These formed part of a programme of improvements, including paths from the seashore and Llangoed, and remedial work on the stone folly, as well as the planting of woodland in former pasture land to the east and north of the castle, after its acquisition by Mneter Mon in 2004.

Documentary sources indicate that the site was reoccupied in the Civil War when it was described as 'Lady Cheadle's Fort' and this was confirmed by a small excavation on top of the motte in 2004, which recovered mid-17th. century finds and a possible cobble stoned yard. The addition of the stone folly or mock fort is not precisely dated, but seems to have been at some time in the following century, although it is unclear how this related to any surviving remains or the form of the Civil War occupation. Certain works also seem to have taken place about the middle of the 19th. century when the top was in use as a garden and the north tower was converted into a summer house.

The east tower may never have been fully completed, although visitors to the castle described it as having four 'bastions' and most of them, including the inspectors of the



Royal Commission for Ancient Monuments, assumed that it dated to the medieval period and was a genuine stone castle

Aims and Objectives

The primary aims of the project were to stabilise the existing features of the east tower and the adjoining length of the south east curtain wall and to recreate the outline of the lost outer arc of the tower. In both cases, as well as in the dismantling and rebuilding of the jamb of the entrance through the south east curtain wall and various repair and repointing work on the buttresses and north tower, the intentions were to enable them to inhibit progressive deterioration and the demands of visitor access.

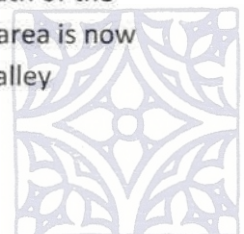
The aims of the archaeologist were to provide on-site assistance to the contractor and architect in the interpretation of those features and to gather as much information as possible on the stratigraphy and character of the east tower through a scaled digital and drawn record of the clearance of vegetation and tumble. The resulting report and archive of photographs would then be disseminated to participants in the project and to the local HER.

Methodology

The recording work was based on two sources: a set of elevation and plan drawings provided by the architect in the specification and the writer's unpublished drawings and report *Castell Aberlleiniog, Anglesey 2004-2009: Excavations and Observations*. (Copies of this report were sent to the client, Menter Mon, to Cadw and the Gwynedd Archaeological Trust in 2010). Scaled, digital colour photographs were taken at each stage of the project. Elevation drawings of the south east curtain wall next to the east tower, of the south spur of the east tower and of the retaining wall closing off the east corner of the folly, and a plan at 1:20 were produced using a one metre planning frame.

Historical Background

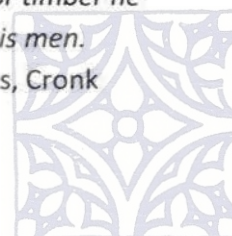
The known history of the castle has been more fully discussed in the unpublished report *Castell Aberlleiniog, Anglesey: Excavations and Observations 2004-2009* and in a précis version published in the Transactions of the Anglesey Antiquarian Society in ? The castle is located at SH616 793 and 0.7 km. south east of Llangoed and equidistant to the sites of Llanfaes Friary and Penmon Priory. It is situated on the north bank of the Lleiniog 0.5 km. upstream of its confluence with the Menai Strait. Views of the coast from the top of the motte from Gogarth to Penrhyn are seasonally obscured by trees and the mainland panorama is far less extensive and closed by undulating, wooded hills. The castle is in the modern community of Penmon, the former parish boundary with Llangoed following the course of a small stream defining the edge of the field to the west. Where this stream met the Lleiniog the river valley is flat-bottomed and over twice the width of that south of the castle. There was a curative spring at this point noted by Samuel Lewis, but this area is now occupied by a sewage works. There are some slight traces of a weir where the valley



narrows and where the new timber bridge crosses the river. At the base of the river bank below the castle site there is anecdotal evidence for a timber boat having been found during excavation for services connecting the sewage works. The right bank is followed by a public footpath and a section of the modern road from Beaumaris to Penmon, the left bank by the overgrown remnants of a path or road leading to the castle bailey from the direction of Lleiniog. The core of Lleiniog itself may date from the 15th. century and was associated with the castle in the 17th. century, when it was rebuilt and occupied by Thomas Cheadle, Deputy Constable of Beaumaris Castle, but is now alienated from the castle. A second, possible motte – there seems to be no trace of a bailey – lies beyond Lleiniog and the edge of the shore, although this appears to be at least partly natural and may be a garden mound. Lewis Morris distinguishes between this conical mound and Aberlleiniog, noting *Castell towyrch a castell lleiniog ye first with a moat; one made by Chedle of Baronhill*. This statement seems to identify Aberlleiniog as the moated castle and the mound on the shore as made of, or covered with, turves. Presumably, the *one made by Chedle* refers to the mound on the shore close to his house.

Many of the documentary sources are contradictory, but it seems that the motte and bailey castle was built during an Anglo-Norman campaign under Robert of Rhuddlan at some time before his death in 1093. More precisely, this may have been shortly after the capture of Gruffydd ap Cynan in 1081, the anonymous author of the 'History of Gruffydd ap Cynan' noting that *straightway after (Gruffydd's capture) Earl Hugh built a castle in Anglesey..*'. Aberlleiniog may thus belong to a second wave of castle building in the 1080s, which includes those at Tomen-y-mur, Caernarfon and Bangor (lost). Nefyn, Dolbenmaen, Bryn Castell (at the Tal-y-cafn crossing of the Conwy) and Abergwyngegyn, on the opposite shore of the straits, may also belong to this group. In 'Brut y Tywysogion', however, a note for 1096 (recte 1098) states: *And the French came up to the sea near Anglesey, to the place called Aber Lliennauc, and they made a castle there*. This may refer to the mound on the shore or a rebuild of the motte and bailey castle for, according to the 'History' *when Gruffydd was fighting against the castle of Aberllyenau in Anglesey, with 120 men and 14 youths, he burned and plundered it*. T.A.Glenn says that Owain ab Edwin of Tegeingl, who was Gruffydd's father-in-law and took part in the expedition against Gwynedd, held the castle on behalf of the Earl of Chester.

The denouement to Anglo-Norman aggression seems to have been the intervention of a Norwegian fleet in 1098 under Magnus Barefoot III in which the Earl of Shrewsbury was killed by an arrow fired from the shore. The withdrawal of both forces allowed Gruffydd to regain control of the north of Gwynedd either with the agreement of Earl Hugh or exploiting the rebellion of Robert of Belleme of Shrewsbury against the king after Earl Hugh's death. All of the participants in this struggle had direct or indirect interest in the Isle of Man: in 1102 *Magnus...came a second time to Anglesey...felling for himself some trees for timber he returned to Man. And there he built himself three castles and ...filled Man with his men*. Spencer Smith has drawn parallels between Aberlleiniog and one of these castles, Cronk



Howe Mooar on Man: both consist of the archetypal conical mound, respectively 8.8 and 9.1 metres high and with a distinctly small, half moon shaped bailey, but Cronk Howe Mooar having an oval rather than a circular top to its motte.

There is no evidence of Aberlleiniog having an associated settlement or church and no record of reoccupation after its burning until its refortification as a Royalist stronghold in 1642. It seems to have passed into the possession of Penmon Priory until suppression in 1536 and by the late 16th. century was in the hands of the Bulkeley family or their agents. Thomas Cheadle, having built *the house adjoining the Church of Penmon* and Lleiniog (or rebuilt it) in 1630 was implicated in the death of sir Richard Bulkeley III, shortly after which he and Richard's widow, Anne, were married. Cheadle's earlier career was in piracy and as Deputy Copnstable of Beaumaris Castel was accused of monopolistic practices, abuse of powers and depleting the arsenal of the castle. The last accusation may refer to his refortification of Aberlleiniog in 1642, when his ambivalence towards the Crown was yet to emerge. In 1646 he professes loyalty to the king's general, Lord Byron, but offers his *castle of Lleniog* to Parliamentary forces under General Mytton. Troops were said to have been landed at the dead of night *at Lleniog... to supplye that fortewith ammunition armes and other necessaryes*. Soon afterwards, Parliamentary commissioners address Colonel Richard Bulkeley from 'Lady Cheadle's Fort' which was besieged and taken by the king's forces during a short-lived rebellion under Colonel John Robinson in 1648.

Aberlleiniog probably then reverted back to the Bulkeley estate at least until 1721 when it was acquired by Hugh Hughes. The Hughes family derived their fortune through the marriage of one of Hugh's sons to Mary Lewis, coheiress of Robert Lewis, chancellor of Bangor and a resulting grandson, the Rev. Edward Hughes coming in to the possession of a part of Parys Mountain and its rich deposits of copper ore. This wealth passed on through to the later Kimmel and Dinorben estates, Lleiniog and aberlleiniog remaining under tenancy until recent times. The Hughes family appear to be the most likely candidates for adding the stone folly to the motte during their own occupancy of Lleiniog, although it has not been possible to ascribe an accurate date for this addition. Richard Fenton describes it as 'very old' in 1810, although it may only have been built in the first half of the previous century, and that it had *four round bastions with a connecting wall them and forming a square*. Pennant did not estimate its age, simply noting that *in the middle once stood a square tower* and Holme suggests a 12th. century date for the fort and that it was a shell-keep. Pennant may have been influenced by the square plan of the folly and, more specifically, by the low stone wall retaining the internal sides of the 'rampart'. A coin found in the fill of the west tower, however, was dated 1701 and certainly contradicts both antiquarian and Royal Commission assumptions that the 'fort' was medieval build, albeit with an entrance – no trace of a gate was found in previous clearance in this area – facing towards Lleiniog and the sea rather than towards the bailey.



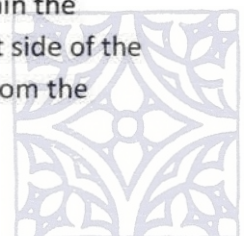
The only defensive quality possessed by Aberlleiniog is its steep sided motte and none of the architectural details of the 'fort', such as the so-called projecting 'garderobe' half way along the north west curtain wall, should be seriously considered as defensive. What seems to be clear is that the folly was altered with the addition of buttresses to the external faces of the curtain walls as the walls themselves distended inwards against the 'rampart'. These may belong to a period shortly after the building of the stone 'fort' or after Fenton's visit in the mid-19th century when the top of the motte was in use as a garden and the north tower was converted into a summer house. The east tower probably collapsed or was demolished in between 1810 and the later use. Both the north tower and part of the north east curtain include brick in their masonry, the north tower being further adapted into a Home Guard post in World War II.

Description

The 2015 project should be seen in context as the final part in the extensive programme of consolidation and reinterpretation of Castell Aberlleiniog undertaken by Menter Mon since 2004. The main focus was the east tower, which was the only part of the folly to have escaped remedial repairs or rebuilding, to which were added several other areas of the stone fabric which were showing signs of deterioration. This included repointing to the external face and more substantial repairs to the internal rendering of the north tower, partial dismantling and rebuilding of the north east jamb of the entrance and repointing of the buttresses of the south east curtain wall as well as rebuilding of a the section of the south east curtain adjoining the east tower.

After preliminary strimming and removal of vegetation obscuring both the east tower and south east curtain wall, the section of the south east curtain adjoining the tower was duly recorded and dismantled. The only parts of its facing which had remained intact were at the base of the wall, but these had been displaced forwards of their original alignment probably as a result of pressure from the bank or 'rampart' and, perhaps, the historic collapse of the east tower. The foundations of the wall was surprisingly shallow and no more than 0.2 metres below the modern level of the turf, but the bank exposed by the dismantling could not be fully cleared for health and safety reasons. What could be seen was that there was no discernible straigraphy in the make-up of the bank and, apart from including a scatter of rubble, it consisted of a homogeneous clay. It thus appeared to be the result of a single event, perhaps contemporary with the building of the curtain wall, which was built as a revetment with a single, external face. The wall was rebuilt to a height not exceeding other sections of the south east curtain and to provide support for the bank.

The upper part of the north east jamb of the entrance through the south east curtain was partially dismantled and rebuilt in order to counteract inward movement where the bank had been progressively eroded by a path ascending from immediately within the entrance. Both this eroded path and its counterpart on the opposite, south west side of the entrance were infilled to resist further erosion. The passage through the bank from the



entrance into the interior is here defined by a low kerb or lower courses of a wall terminating the bank where it meets the passage.

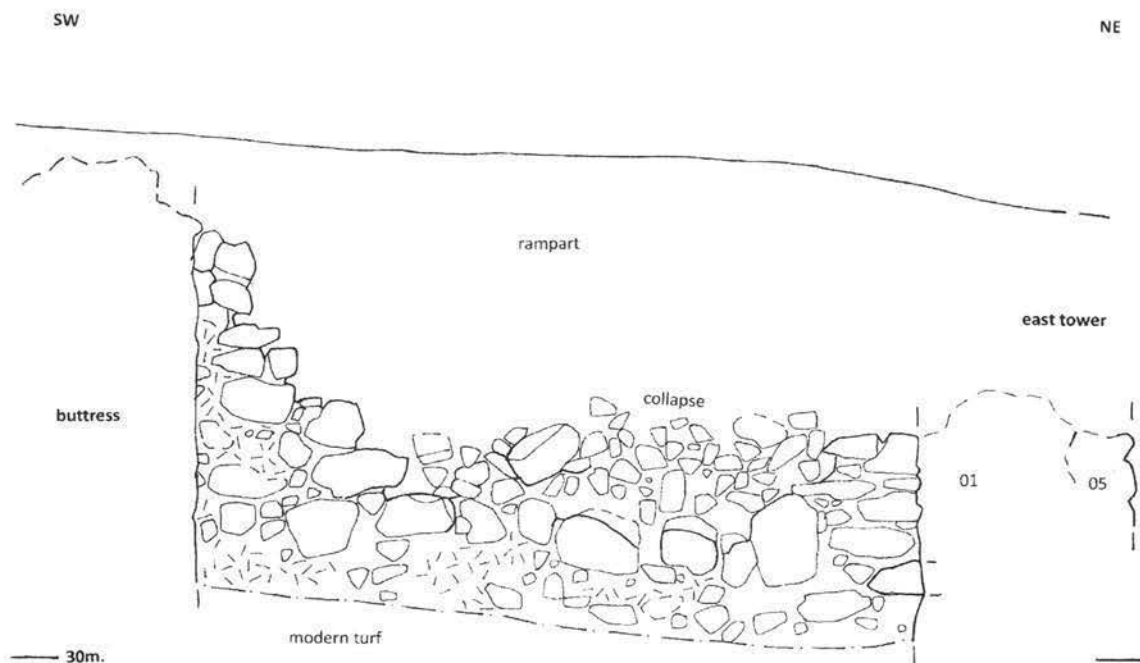


Fig.1: South East Curtain Wall

Removal of brambles, turf and debris more fully exposed the stumps of the south and north walls of the east tower 01 and 02. The lower courses of mortared walls extended, respectively, 1.85 and 1.65 metres from their junctions with the curtain walls beyond which nothing more than tumble stones and what appeared to be an appropriately curving and shallow robber trench 08. Built directly against the inner face of the south stump was a buttress 05 which was single faced and appeared to be tied into the upper part 04 of a low revetment wall 03 from which it projected 0.9 metres. The revetment wall closed off the east corner within the fill of the east tower. Although aligned with the curtain walls on each side the wall was built using distinctly small stones and did not continue through or into the core of the east tower walls, although close to the north stump of the east tower wall it had collapsed forwards over the lower fill 06 of the tower. There was no indication that a buttress had been built to support the internal angle of the east tower and north east curtain wall. The higher part 04 appeared to be bonded into the buttress and suggested that the revetment wall may once have been more than 1.1 metres in height, but it had collapsed against the upper fill 10 of the tower and could not be rebuilt. The lower part of the revetment wall was between 0.18 and 0.55 metres height; neither this nor the buttress were fully exposed since the lower fill was left in situ to support the repointed retaining wall.



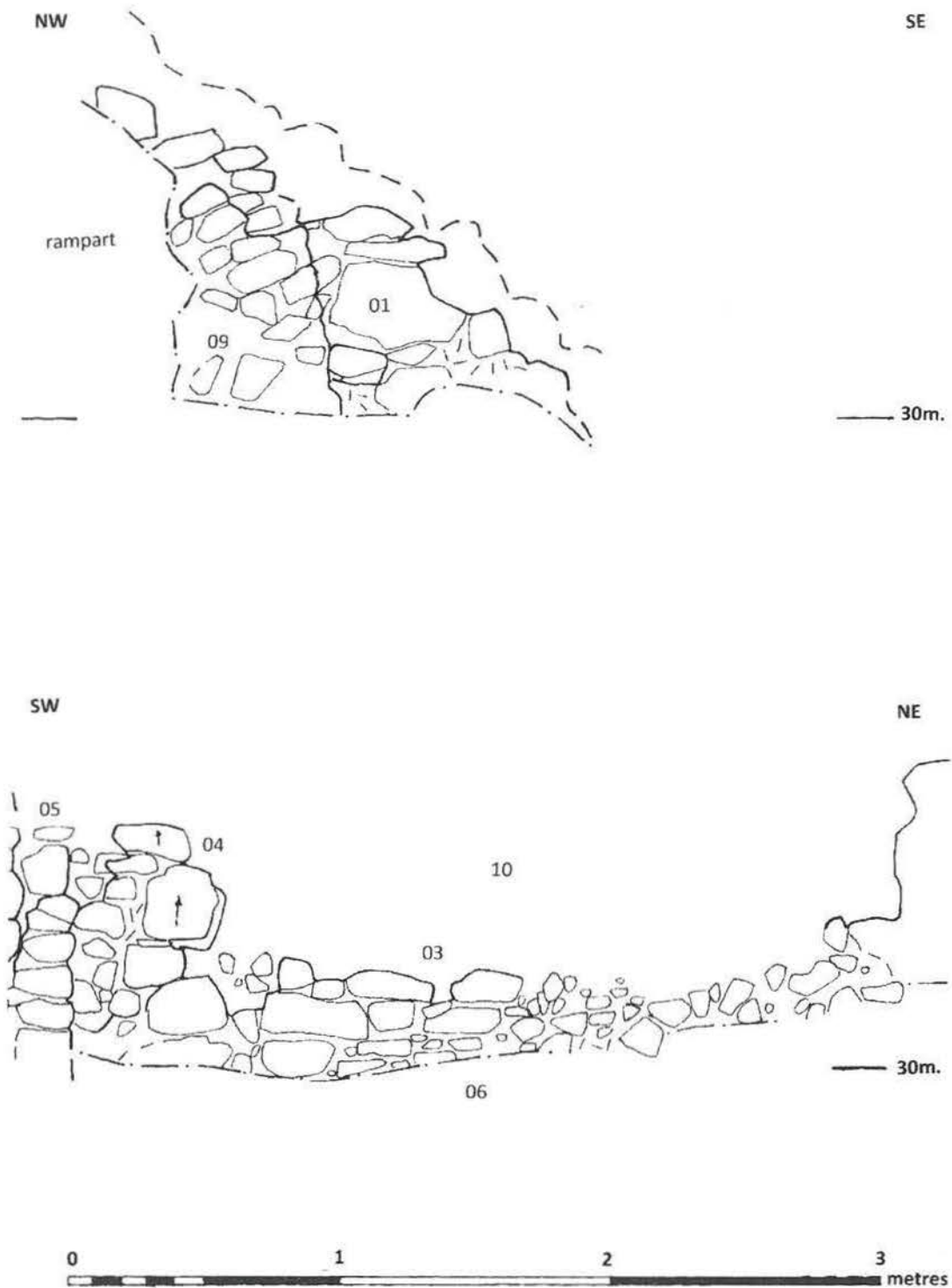
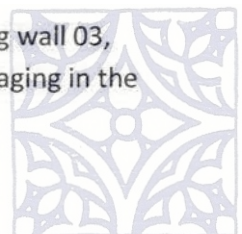


Fig.2: Elevation of the junction of East Tower South Wall 01 and South East Curtain top and revetment wall 03/04 with buttress 05 bottom

Flecks of mortar were scattered across the lower fill at the base of the retaining wall 03, but this seemed to be the product of leaching rather than as any indication of staging in the



building of either the revetment wall itself or of the tower wall. Towards the bottom of this sloping fill more reddish and cleaner clay was evident and a shallow trench in which a single pad of clean red clay 07 was set indicated the lost outer arc of the east tower. The upper fill was not quite so resilient as the lower fill and required consolidation with a combination of rubble and a dry mix. A set of four stones (Fig.3: top left), which appeared to have slipped and been displaced, were probable remnants of the inner arc of the tower. This would confirm that the tower was circular like the north and south towers in appearance rather than penannular like the west tower.

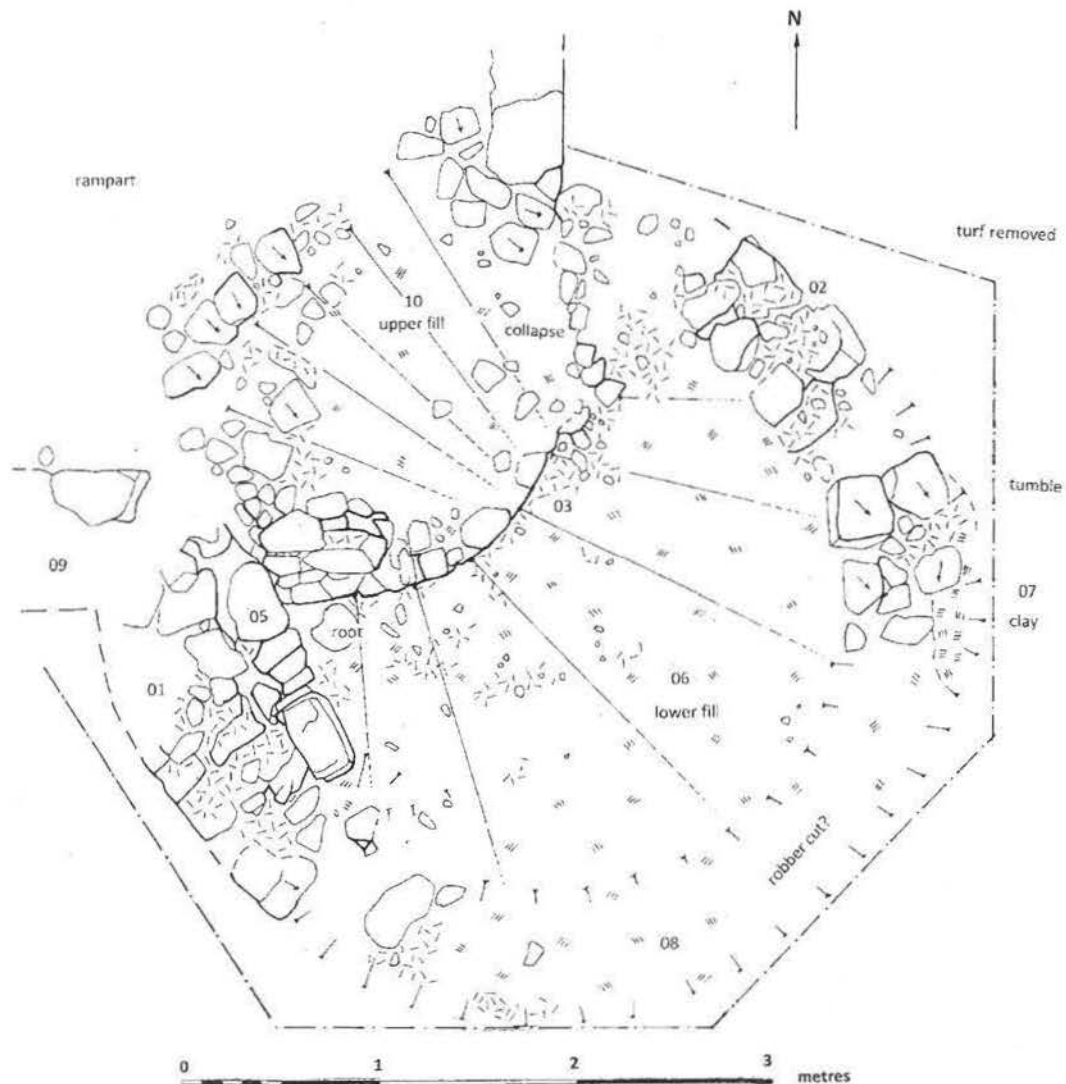


Fig.3: Plan of East Tower after clearance



Assessment

The objectives of the work were carried out as agreed, although the original intention to pin together the north tower was considered unnecessary and abandoned. This enabled infilling of the eroded paths ascending the rampart within the south east entrance in order to support the terminals of the curtain walls. The stability of the earthen material within the east tower, with repointing to the revetment wall and 'buttress', and consolidation of the upper part of the fill, proved sufficient to support both these features and the remains of the east tower walls. Excavation was thus confined to removal of vegetation and topsoil in order to partially expose these features for recording purposes. No finds or other datable material was encountered except from unstratified fragments of roof slate and oyster shell, with a single modern coin, in the turf and topsoil. Dismantling of the section of the south east curtain wall adjoining the east tower exposed the rampart in section, but this was so obscured by debris and appeared to be so unstable that little new information on its stratigraphy was gained.



View of East Tower after reconstruction of lost outer wall from north east



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