ARCHAEOLEG CAMBRIA ARCHAEOLOGY

THE OLD LIFEBOAT STATION ANGLE, PEMBS PRN 33850

AN HISTORICAL SUMMARY AND STRUCTURAL DESCRIPTION

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Report prepared for Pembrokeshire County Council
by
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CONTENTS

THE OLD LIFEBOAT STATION, ANGLE: A HISTORICAL SUMMARY AND STRUCTURAL DESCRIPTION

INTRODUCTION

Summary

The Old Lifeboat Station at Angle (Dyfed PRN 33850) was built in 1868, to house the Milford Haven lifeboat 'Katherine', as a simple masonry structure with a timber slipway. A winch house was added in 1889 and a new, longer slipway constructed. The old station was replaced in 1928 by a lifeboat station built 400m to the west, itself replaced in 1992.

There is a good published account of the Angle lifeboats by Jeff Morris, 1994, from which this report has drawn much information; the author, the honourary archivist of the Lifeboats Enthusiasts' Society, also kindly provided a copy of the contemporary architects' drawing of the 1889 alterations.

The building itself is in fair condition and substantially intact, with the exception of the winch house annexe of which much has been lost. In addition, the sandstone used in its construction is friable. The walls are free from cracks. It is not a Scheduled Ancient Monument; neither is it listed.

Project methodologies

The brief, prepared by Pembrokeshire County Council, requested an archaeological survey of the site, comprising:

1. The undertaking of a physical measured survey including the presentation of plans and elevations of the structures and their immediate boundaries.

2. Accompanying documentary and historical research.

3. The production of a report based upon the information obtained in (1) and (2) above.

4. The production of 1 set of copy negatives of all drawings.

5. The production of 3 sets of dyeline prints of each drawing.

6. The production of a suite of photographs in colour print format

The project effectively represents the first stage of an on-going management strategy for the individual sites and buildings, to be supplemented by further investigative work.

The level of survey suggested by the client conformed broadly to Level 2, as defined by the Royal Commission for Ancient and Historic Monuments (England), *Recording Historic Monuments: A Descriptive Specification*, 1990, as *'essentally a* visual *record, supplemented by the minimum information needed to identify the buildings location, age and type.'* The visual component is represented by a full photographic record of both interiors and exteriors of the individual buildings concerned, and plans and elevations drawn to 1:50 scale and output via AUTOCAD. Stone-by-stone recording was not requested. The record also includes a topographical survey and location plan of the

structures, undertaken using an EDM theodolite and data recorder and reproduced at 1:100 scale. The above will be submitted as seperated enclosures from this report.

Further, more detailed survey is not anticipated.

PART 1: ANGLE OLD LIFEBOAT STATION - A HISTORICAL SUMMARY

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE STATION

In November 1867 the Milford Division of the Coastguard requested that the RNLI establish a station within Milford Haven (Morris, 1994, 1). The request was made partly in response to a shipwreck in the Haven in which 28 lives had been lost (Pembs. R. O., Lort-Stokes Vol. 29). A meeting of the RNLI Management Committe in December 1867 agreed that the Haven needed a lifeboat and it was decided that it should be sited at Angle (Morris, 1994, 1).

The first boat was the 'Katherine', a self-righting pulling boat measuring 33ft x 8½ft carrying 10 oars in double banks (Pembs. R. O., Lort-Stokes Vol. 29). She represented the 190th vessel procured for the RNLI, which had been founded in 1824, and was built by Woolfe of Shadwell, London, at a cost of £281 17s 6d. She was conveyed by rail to Milford Haven and christened at a ceremony held in the boatyard of Messrs Watson & Wimshurst, Hakin (Morris, 1997, 1). The formal launch was held at the Old Dockyard, Milford, in December 1868, attended by a large crowd and the band of HMS Revenge in which the boat was presented to the town of Milford by Captain Ward of the RNLI on behalf of the great benefactor Titus Salt, who had paid for its construction (Pembs. R. O., Lort-Stokes Vol. 29).

It had been left to the locality to provide a boathouse, under the local committee - according to the system that then formed the basis of local operation. The estimated total cost, to be borne chiefly by the parent institution and partly the local committee, was £200 for the construction of the boat house and £25 per annum to pay the coxswain and crew. Contributions were collected by the Collector of Customs (*ibid.*) and the construction of the boathouse was overseen by a sub-committee of Angle residents under a Mr George James Young, who had privately been responsible for saving many lives and hed received three medals for his services, one from the French Government (*ibid.*).

The boathouse at Angle Point - named the 'Milford Lifeboat Station' during these early years - was constructed by a Mr P James at an actual cost of £170 14s (Morris, 1994, 1). It operated a simple system in which the boat was winched up a timber slipway (J. S. Mirehouse, *pers. comm.*); the 'Katherine' was rowed over to Angle point the evening after the launch (Pembs. R. O., Lort-Stokes Vol. 29).

THE STATION REBUILT

The 'Katherine' remained operational until 1888, having been launched seven times saving 22 lives (Morris, 1994, 42). In 1888-89 the boathouse was extended by the addition of a new winch-house, to the designs of a Mr M Douglass (Morris, plan). A longer slipway was also built, at a cost of £610, and a new boat procured. She was the 'Henry Martin Harvey', a 33ft x 8ft, 12-oared self-righting pulling boat, built by Hansen of Cowes and the eponymous gift of H M Harvey, of Cornwall (Morris, 1994, 42). With a total of fourteen launches, she and her crew saved forty lives, one of the most famous rescues being that from the Scottish sailing ship, the 'Loch Shiel', wrecked on Thorn Island off of West Angle Bay, one stormy night in 1894. All those on board, 33 in number, were rescued by the 'Henry Martin Harvey'. A large quantity of wine and spirits were amongst the cargo, and were retrieved by the locals (*ibid.*).

The 'Henry Martin Harvey' was withdrawn in 1906 and replaced by the 'Charlotte', a temporary lifeboat (*ibid.*). She remained at Angle until 1910 but was launched only once, and then to no effect. In 1908 she was joined by the 'James Stevens No. 3', a steam-powered, screw-driven boat built in 1898 by J S White of Cowes and re-allocated to Angle from Gorleston *(ibid.)*. Too bulky to be housed in the

station building, she instead moored off the shore while, after 1910, station was itself was used to house the lifeboat tender (J. S. Mirehouse, *pers. comm.*). Before being transferred in 1915, the 'James Stevens No. 3' had answered twelve calls in which five lives were saved (Morris, 1994, 42).

She was replaced by a conventional pulling (and sailing) boat, the 'James Stevens No. 11' which had been built in 1899 for the New Romney station. After just one launch, she was in 1919 replaced by a 'Watson' Class, pulling and sailing non-self-righter, the 'Henry Dundas', also built in 1899 (*ibid.*). She was in turn replaced by a similar 'Watson' Class boat, the 'Thomas Fielden', in 1927.

However, it had been decided in 1926 to equip the Angle station with a motor lifeboat, necessitating the construction of a new boathouse (*ibid.*). The new house and slipway were completed early in 1929, 400m to the west, on a site just next to the present station house. The boats were, unusually, rehoused bow-first, and turned around on a manual turntable at the end of the slipway (J. S. Mirehouse, *pers. comm.*). The old lifeboat station was abandoned at this time.

This boathouse proved too small for the present operational lifeboats, and, when a new boat was acquired in 1987, the present station was commenced immediately next to it and completed in 1992 (RNLI, Shore Supervisor, *pers. comm.*). The two houses once operated side-by-side, the boat launching from one and reberthed in the other (J. S. Mirehouse, *pers. comm.*) but the 1928 building was finally demolished. The present boat is the 'Lady Rank', a self-righting Tyne Class boat capable of 18 knots (SPARC, 1994).

SOURCES

Manuscripts

Pembrokeshire Record Office, Lort-Stokes Vol. 29.

Manuscript maps

Morris, J., Architects' plan of extensions to old lifeboat station, 1889 - authors private collection.

Published Works

Morris, J., 1994, *The History of the Angle Lifeboats* (published by the Lifeboats Enthusiasts Society).

SPARC, 1994, Angle leaflet.

PART 2: ANGLE OLD LIFEBOAT STATION - A STRUCTURAL DESCRIPTION

LOCATION AND TOPOGRAPHY

The Old Lifeboat Station lies at NGR SM 8753 0327, at the tip of Angle Point. Immediately to the west of the building is a natural steep cliff of Old Red Sandstone 5m high, into which it is cut; the cutting is 4.5m deep. To the north, south and east are intertidal steeply bedded sandstones that have been eroded into an uneven rock shelf by wave action, and the lifeboat station lies partly upon this shelf. The tide now reaches to within 1m of the floor of the station, inundating the piers upon which the former slipway lay, a situation apparently unchanged from the time of their construction (J Morris, 1889 plan).

THE OLD LIFEBOAT STATION

The Old Lifeboat Station is a rectangular, single storeyed building, with low gables. It is aligned roughly north-south. The northern gable end-wall is open and represents the exit for the boat; from it lead northward a line of three rectangular piers for the slipway, the southernmost being a hollow abutment attached to the north wall. There is a further pier within the building. A concrete path lies outside the north-west corner, associated with a brick-built flight of steps up the cliff face. The building and associated structures appear to be of two main builds, the first represented by the main body of the boathouse and the second by the southern winch-house annexe and some of the slipway piers (Illus. 1).

The building itself is in fair condition and substantially intact, with the exception of the southern 'annexe' of which much has been lost. However, the friable nature of the Old Red Sandstone used in its construction, and its exposed location exacerbated by the corrosive qualities of the atmosphere to which it is subject, render the building vulnerable. There is some ivy on the west wall. The slipway piers are somewhat truncated.

The station building

The station building is constructed from roughly coursed Old Red Sandstone rubble; the lower 5 courses of the east wall, the quoins and window surrounds are of squared local Carboniferous Limestone freestone.

Externally it measures 6.4m east-west and 16.5m north-south; the southern 2.9m of the building is represented by the secondary and slightly narrower winch-house annexe, which measures 5.1m east-west and has a higher floor level, but is otherwise contiguous with the rest of the building. The side walls survive to their full height and are 0.6m thick; the surviving southern gable may be somewhat truncated but was always low. An internal render of thick lime mortar survives almost throughout; this is clearly secondary. There are no surviving external finishes but the exterior was repointed with a cement mortar prior to abandonment of the building in 1928.

The east (side) wall survives to a height of 4.5m and is built directly upon the rock shelf. The freestone lower courses occupy the bottom 1.2m of the external face, except in the winch-house annexe, and there is a slight offset 0.8m above, very weathered. There are two rectangular lights into the body of the building, 1.35m tall and 0.6m wide, with depressed segmental heads and surrounds of freestone as described above; a third lit the annexe but is badly weathered, its head and the walling above having been lost; the surviving southern reveal is slightly splayed, with a rebate for the fortmer frame. The

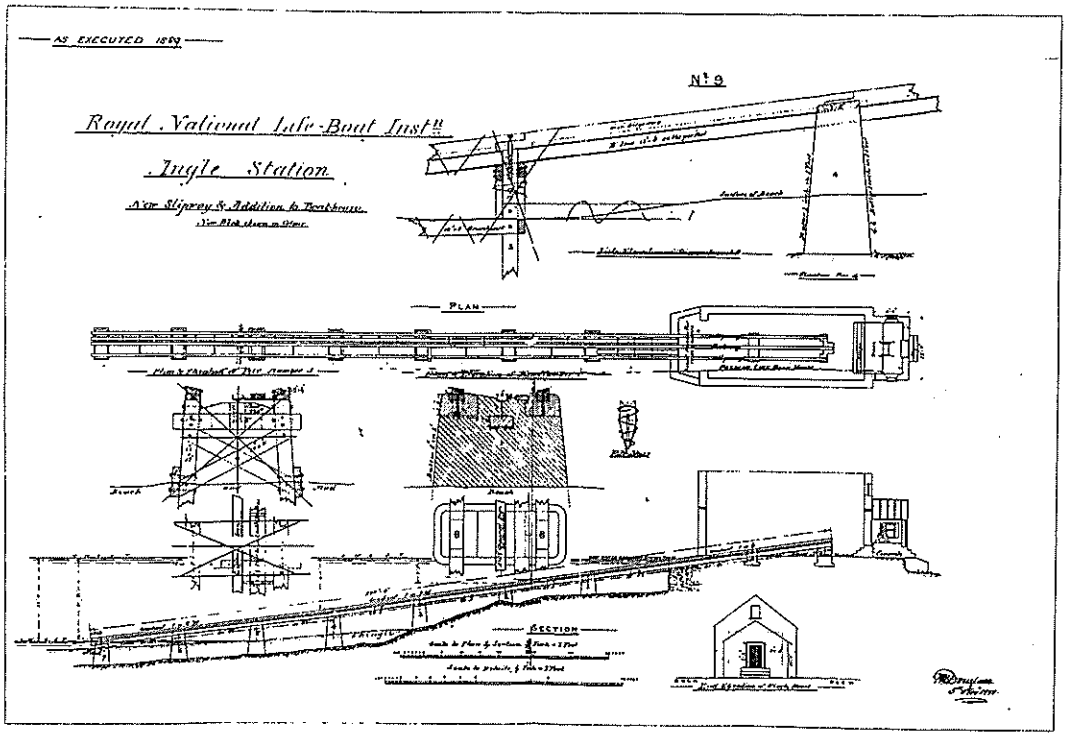
surviving windows are unsplayed, exhibit jambs and internal timber lintels and frames, and the northernmost retains one of its vertical iron bars. There are ventilators beneath each sill, and one between the two windows, whose gratings have gone. The internal finish is well-preserved and respects the level of the former floor (see below, 9), the wall continuing downwards for 1m towards the north. The finish features an interrupted horizontal chase, 0.3m tall, mid-height to the windows and with a series of narrow timber-sockets. At the north end of the chase is a similar, vertical chase, 0.8m tall, with associated iron retaining bolts; to the north of this in turn lie a vertical line of three similar bolts. In the winch-house annexe are a series of horizontal grooves in the render, associated with small circular sockets of unknown function. The render finish has weathered away in places to expose a primary limewash.

The west (side) wall is similar to the east wall but, ground level being higher on this side, has a maximum external height of 3.8m towards the north. In this wall, too, the winch-house annexe light and surrounding walling are largely gone. The openings, and the internal chases and sockets largely mirror those in the east wall, with the exception of the northernmost vertical chase which is absent from this wall and instead represented by horizontal grooves in the render with some small timber sockets. Moreover, the horizontal chase does not extend as far south as on the east wall and its associated sockets bear traces of timber and retaining bolts. Much of the internal render has weathered away from above the level of the chase exposing the depressed segmental brick rear-arches of the windows.

The building was, from at least 1889, entered through the south (end) wall and thus via the winch-house annexe (Illus. 1).. Its low gable survives but has been slightly truncated - it never rose much higher than today but the gable of the main body beyond was pierced by a simple square light (Morris, 1889 plan). The wall is fronted by a concrete plinth, 1.94m wide and secondary as it exists today, retained - where the ground surface is uneven - by a wall of large Old Red Sandstone rubble which is probably primary. Part of the plinth has been washed away. The concrete sill of the entry, 1.6m wide, lies 1.1m above plinth level and was reached up a flight of three concrete steps of the same width; both sill and steps are secondary as they exist, and the steps have become detached from the wall. The entry is 2.15m tall with freestone quoins, lying beneath an almost flat-headed outer arch of freestone with a large central voussoir. Beneath the end voussoirs are the sockets for a former external timber lintel. The depressed, segmental rear-arch is of brick. The internal face, and reveals, are rendered as the east and west walls; a large area of render has fallen away from above the door. Horizontal impressions and shallow sockets west of the door, 1.7m up from internal floor level, may represent housings for the runners of a sliding door; there is no evidence, otherwise, as to how the entry was closed.

The lifeboat entered and exited through the north (end) wall. This is now entirely open, but the entry was always represented by narrow rebated returns, just 0.5m from north-south, at the ends of the east and west walls. The sill lies 2.5m above the rock shelf at its deepest point, and 1m above the present internal ground level respecting floor level as seen on the north and south walls. The wall is offset slightly at sill level, the offset incorporating the iron runner for the former sliding door(s); the central section of the sill has gone. The entry lacks any evidence for the former presence of a head; it was probably of timber or iron as was the gable superstructure itself

Angle Old Lifeboat Station showing 1889 alterations
(J Morris, 1889 plan)



Internal features

The winch-house annexe features a concrete floor with five holding bolts, forming a rectangle 0.97m north-south by 1.14m east-west (see below, 11). The floor steps down 1m to the north, where the impressions in the side walls noted above indicate floor level. An area of this floor actually survives at the southern end of the main body of the building and is of brick, but now much weathered; it is not clear whether it represents primary 1868 work. The rest has been washed away and the ground surface in the rest of the building is represented by shingle derived from post-disuse wave action. Nevertheless, it is apparent that the brick floor never extended throughout and that the flooring, of whatever material, was restricted to passages along the side walls.

The centre of the building is occupied by piers for the slipway, both of roughly squared and coursed local Carboniferous Limestone. Both were newly built in 1889 (J Morris, 1889 plan - Illus. 1). The southern of the two measures 1.38m from north-south and 2.5m from east-west and, in plan, forms an 'E' with an offset central bar. It survives to a height of 1m but the masonry blocks for the slipway channels are missing. The northern pier is of similar dimensions but is a plain rectangle in plan. The eastern masonry block for the slipway channel survives, as does a section of the slipway runner itself, a timber 0.28m square. The pier lies 6m north of its partner, with a 0.8m drop.

The external slipway piers

Against the north wall of the lifeboat station lies a slipway abutment measuring 2.4m north-south and 6m east-west, retained from the 1868 building when the slipway was rebuilt in 1889 (J Morris, 1889 plan - Illus. 1). It is hollow, being in the form of an L-shaped wall comprising east and north limbs, the west end of the latter lying against the cliff-face; the east limb is at a slight angle to the east wall of

the building. It survives to a maximum height of 1.8m and is constructed from the same limestone freestone as the lower courses of the building's north wall. Where it survives to full height, the summit of the northern limb displays a retaining bolt for the slipway.

To the north are two piers, 5.56m apart in a north-south line, newly built in 1889 (J Morris, 1889 plan - Illus. 1). Each is rectangular, measuring 1.34m north-south and 2.58m east-west. Neither stands taller than 0.2m but as built they averaged 1.3m in height, with battered sides (J Morris, 1889 plan). 0.36m to the west of the piers is a channel in the rock shelf, rectangular in section and 0.33m square. It contains iron bolts and may represent a channel for subsidiary runners. A number of further retaining bolts and rings occur in the rock shelf, but follow no discernible pattern.

A further five piers extended northwards, at similar and regular intervals, for a further 60m (J Morris, 1889 plan - Illus. 1). None of these now survive in any form and indeed it appears from the contemporary plan, drawn up for their construction in 1889, that they were all entirely of timber.

DISCUSSION

The boathouse was constructed in 1868 as a simple rectangular building for a pulling boat, which was winched up a slipway through a large seaward opening. The slipway was rebuilt in 1889 and it is not now possible to recover the arrangements of the original slipway and winch. In 1889 a new winch-house was added to the south end of the building and a longer slipway, with new piers. These were of masonry within and closest to the boathouse, while those further from the boathouse were of timber and have not survived. This much information can be gleaned from the architects' drawing of 1889 (J Morris, 1889 plan - Illus. 1).

The internal finish may date from 1889 but may be later. It is impossible to assign a function to all the various sockets and retaining bolts present on the internal walls, but the internal horizontal chase was presumably for a timber fixture upon which equipment was hung. The vertical chase to the north, with associated iron retaining bolts may have been associated with the northern doors, the winch cable or eqipment for retaining the baoat. The function of the grooves in the render of the winch-house annexe, associated with small circular sockets, is unknown. The southern entry into the winch-house displays horizontal impressions and shallow sockets which may represent housings for the runners of a sliding door; there is no evidence, otherwise, as to how the entry was closed.

The north wall through which the boat entered and exited lacks a head and any evidence for the former presence of a head; it was probably of timber or iron as was the gable superstructure itself. The slipway entry was closed off by doors which slid on iron runners.

The 1889 slipway apparently followed an average gradient of 1 in 7 (J Morris, 1889 plan - Illus. 1) which is consistent with the sill-level on the north wall compared with the summit-level of the surviving southern pier. The slipway comprised a central keelway and two flanking bilgeways, supported on 12" x 6" 'H'-irons (J Morris, 1889 plan - Illus. 1). The bases of two masonry piers survive, but the remaining five piers to seaward appear to have been entirely of timber without masonry plinths. The channel scored into the rock shelf adjacent to the former slipway is regular in profile and appears to have been deliberately excavated as opposed to worn; it may represent a channel for subsidiary slipway runners (not shown on J Morris, 1889 plan).

The winch-house annexe floor exhibits five holding bolts, forming a rectangle, representing the mounting for the winch itself. The slipway piers occupy the centreline of the main body of the building and it is apparent that the brick floor, seen towards the south, never extended throughout. The flooring elsewhere, of an unknown material but perhaps timber, was probably restricted to passages along the side walls.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Old Lifeboat Station at Angle (Dyfed PRN 33850) was built in 1868 to house the Milford Haven lifeboat 'Katherine' as a simple masonry structure with a timber slipway. A winch-house was added in 1889 and a new, longer slipway constructed, the retaining bolts for the winch surviving as well as a number of masonry slipway piers; a sequence of further piers, of timber, have not survived. The internal finishes may date from 1889 and feature a number of chases and sockets, few of which can be identified with any function; the slipway doors were sliding. The old station was replaced in 1928 by a lifeboat station built 400m to the west, itself replaced in 1992.

The building itself is in poor-fair condition and substantially intact, with the exception of the winch-house annexe of which much has been lost. However, the friable nature of the Old Red Sandstone used in its construction, and its exposed location exacerbated by the corrosive qualities of the atmosphere to which it is subject, render the building vulnerable. There is some ivy on the west wall. The slipway piers are somewhat truncated. The walls are free from cracks. It is not a Scheduled Ancient Monument; neither is it listed.

No further recording is recommended within this report.

SOURCES

Manuscript maps

Morris, J., Architects' plan of extensions to old lifeboat station, 1889 - authors private collection.

Published Works

Morris, J., 1994, *The History of the Angle Lifeboats* (published by the Lifeboats Enthusiasts society).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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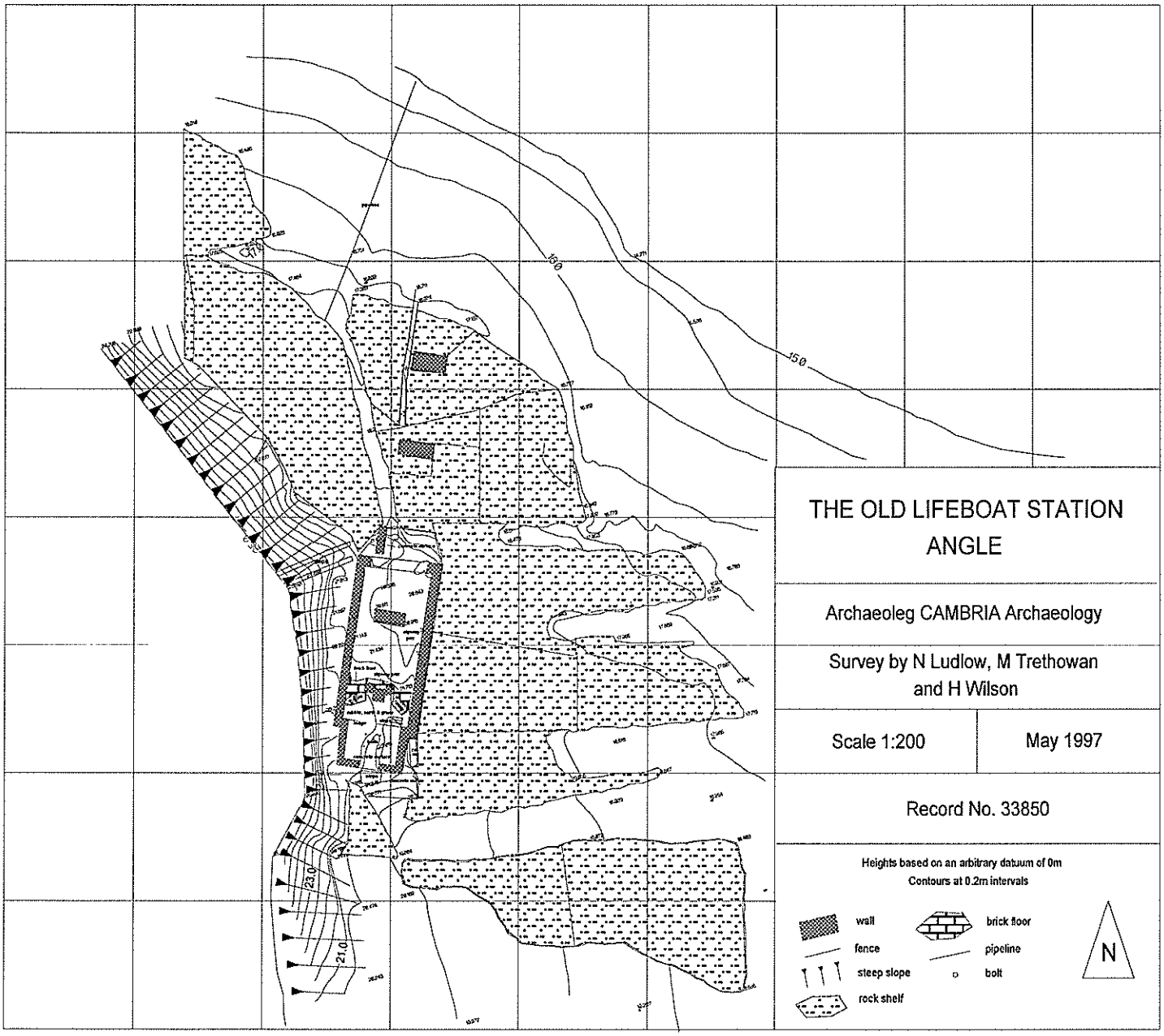


THE OLD LIFEBOAT STATION ANGLE

Archaeoleg CAMBRIA Archaeology

Survey by N Ludlow, M Trethowan and H Wilson

Scale 1:200 | May 1997

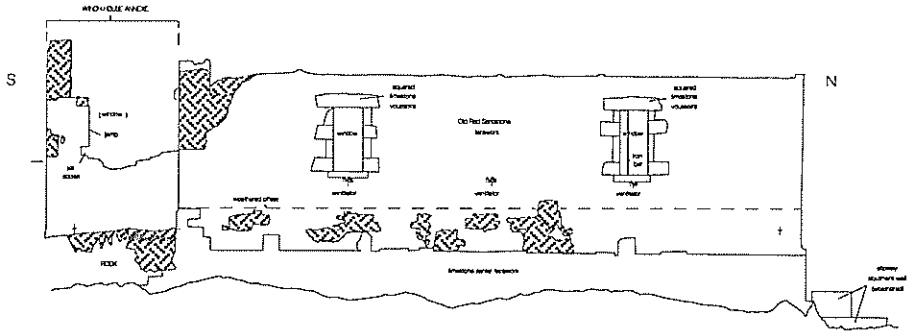
Record No. 33850

Heights based on an arbitrary datuum of 0m
Contours at 0.2m intervals

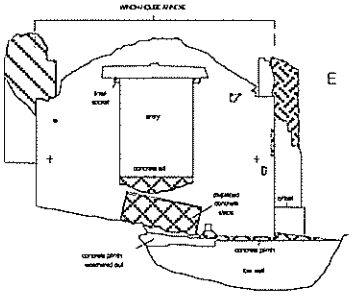
wall
brick floor
fence
pipeline
steep slope
bolt
rock shelf

N

EAST WALL



SOUTH WALL



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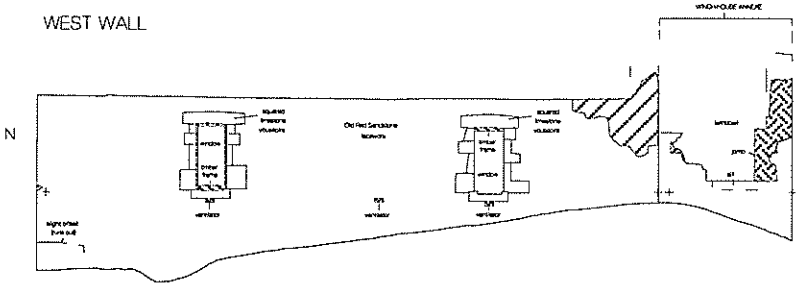
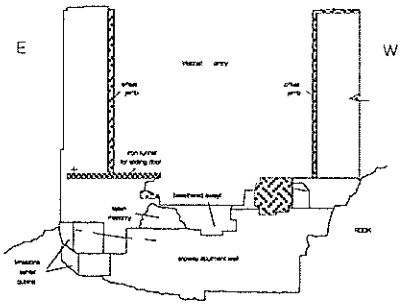


NORTH WALL



THE OLD LIFEBOAT STATION, ANGLE

EXTERNAL ELEVATIONS

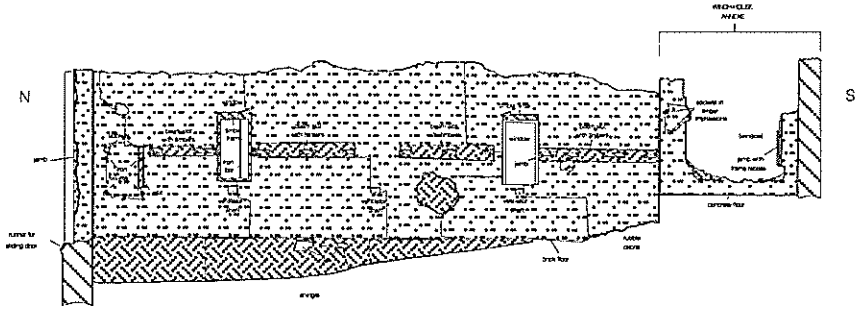
Archaeoleg CAMBRIA Archaeology

Survey by: M Trethowan & H Wilson

Scale 1:50	May 1997	Record No 33850

wall in section
timberwork
corework
metalwork
concrete
extent of vegetation
render finish
ground line (rock shelf)

EAST WALL



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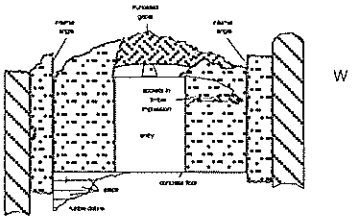
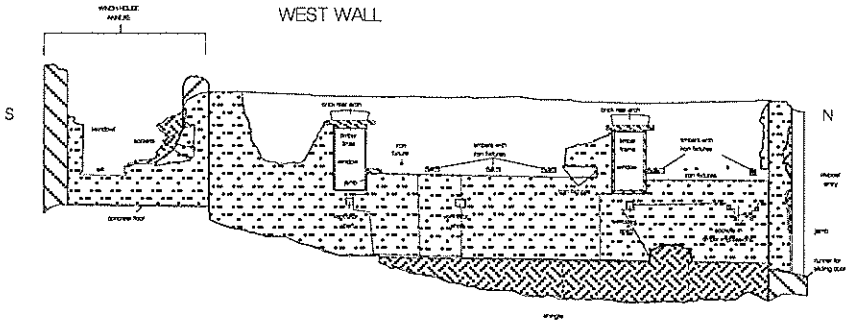
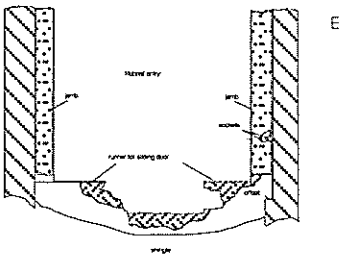


WEST WALL



NORTH WALL



THE OLD LIFEBOAT STATION, ANGLE

INTERNAL ELEVATIONS

Archaeoleg CAMBRIA Archaeology

Survey by: M Trethowan & H Wilson

Scale 1:50	May 1997	Record No. 33850

wall in section
timberwork
corework
metalwork
concrete
extent of vegetation
render finish
ground line/ brick shelf