

Court Farm, Llanthony, Monmouthshire

Archaeological field evaluation

May 2008

A report for Mr and Mrs Passmore
by Rowena Hart BSc MA

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Summary

Mr Keyse (Architectural Consultant) acting on behalf of Mr and Mrs Passmore received scheduled monument consent to carry out a small trial excavation to evaluate the archaeological potential of an area on the eastern side of the farmhouse at Court Farm, Llanthony, Monmouthshire. The evaluation trench was located within the Scheduled Ancient Monument of Llanthony Priory (MM004).

Mr and Mrs Passmore commissioned the Glamorgan Gwent Archaeological Trust to carry out the archaeological evaluation between the 11th and 13th February 2008.

An east-west running wall foundation was present in the evaluation trench. The foundation was truncated by a modern north-south running water pipe. There was no evidence of the wall remaining overlying the foundations.

Acknowledgements

This project was managed by Richard Lewis BA MIFA and the fieldwork undertaken by Rowena Hart BSc MA and Alex Young BA. The photographs and report were prepared by Rowena Hart BSc MA, with illustrations by Paul Jones (GGAT Senior Illustrator).

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1. Introduction

1.1 Project background and commission

Mr Keyse (Architectural Consultant) acting on behalf of Mr and Mrs Passmore received scheduled monument consent to carry out a small trial excavation to evaluate the archaeological potential of an area on the eastern side of the farmhouse at Court Farm, Llanthony, Monmouthshire (Ref: A-CAM001-02-6331-08). The Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust (GGAT Projects) was commissioned by Mr and Mrs Passmore to undertake the archaeological evaluation. The evaluation was undertaken between 11th and 13th February 2008.

1.2 Location and Topography

Llanthony Priory is located in the Vale of Ewyas in northern Monmouthshire 10km northwest of Llanfihangel Crucorney at NGR SO 28849 27872. The Priory itself is terraced into the west-facing slope of the valley and overlooks the Afon Honddu, which is in turn overlooked by the Black Mountains. The evaluation trench was located in the courtyard at Court Farm.

1.3 Geology

The soils form part of the Oglethorpe series and consist of reddish sandy-clays overlying gravels and sandstone bedrock (Soil Survey of England and Wales: 1983).

Court Farm, Llanthony, Monmouthshire: archaeological field evaluation

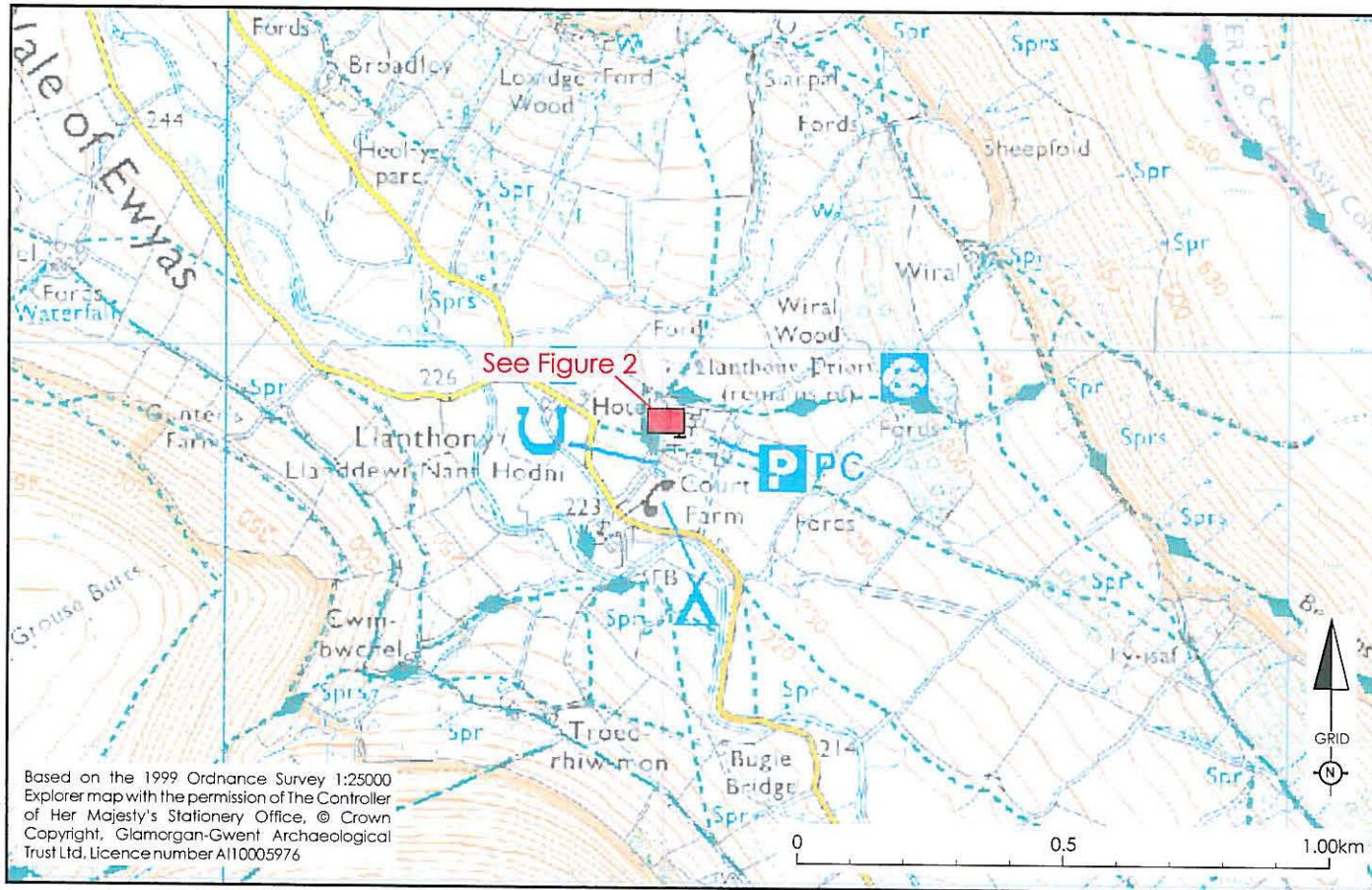


Figure 1. Plan showing Llanthony and location of Figure 2

1.4 Historical and archaeological background

The Augustinian Priory at Llanthony was founded in 1118AD following the dedication of a church at the site to St John the Baptist a decade earlier on the site of a pre-existing church (Newman 2000: 338-350). This earlier church is thought to have been erected in the 6th century by St David (Bradney 1906: 247). The establishment underwent steady expansion until 1135 when its increasing wealth had attracted the undesired attentions of their plundering local Welsh neighbours. As a result of these attacks the Constable of England at the time provided the monks a new habitation at Hyde, Gloucestershire where a cell, Llanthony Secunda was duly established. A small number of monks remained at the motherhouse and saw the fortunes of their monastery ebb and flow over the next four centuries. The early 14th century saw a brief period of prosperity at the Priory and a new building programme was established which included the building of a new gatehouse in the precincts southwest corner. Fortunes changed quickly and by the mid 15th century the priory seems to have been barely functioning and by 1481 the priory was formally amalgamated with its daughter house at Gloucestershire. In 1538 both houses fell dissolution of both houses (Newman 2000: 339).

Since the dissolution, the priory and its lands has passed through the hands of a series of owners beginning with Sir Nicholas Arnold. Perhaps the most ambitious of its owners was the gentleman Walter Savage Landor who in the early 18th century strove to improve the priory, which by now had fallen into considerable disrepair.

Numerous 18th and 19th century gentlemen travellers paid visit to Llanthony Priory, including William Coxe whom wrote about his visit in his *An Historical Tour in Monmouthshire* (Coxe 1801). A wealth of artists have also visited the priory and made important images of the monument such as Buck in 1732 and famously Turner in 1794.

Court Farm

It is thought that the building to the west of the west cloister range, today known as Court Farm, was originally built as the Priors lodging house. There are clearly medieval details to be seen especially the lower stone mouldings. The interior of the roof space of this building describes a handsome late 15th century chamber (Newman 2000: 349).

In 1951 the priory and its associated land was passed into the guardianship of the Ministry of Works and is today protected by law as an Scheduled Ancient Monument (MM004) under the guardianship of Cadw.

2. Methodology

A single L-shaped trench was hand excavated on the location of the proposed porch extension. The trench measured 4.12m along its long axis and 1m along the shorter axis. The trench maintained a consistent width of 0.8m.

A full written, drawn and photographic record was made of all archaeological contexts, in accordance with the GGAT *Manual of Excavation Recording Techniques*. Contexts were recorded using a single continuous numbering system, and are summarised in Appendix 1. All significant contexts were photographed. Finds were selected according to the GGAT *Manual of Excavation Recording Techniques* discard policy; no finds were retained as they were all identified on-site as modern.

Court Farm, Llanthony, Monmouthshire: archaeological field evaluation

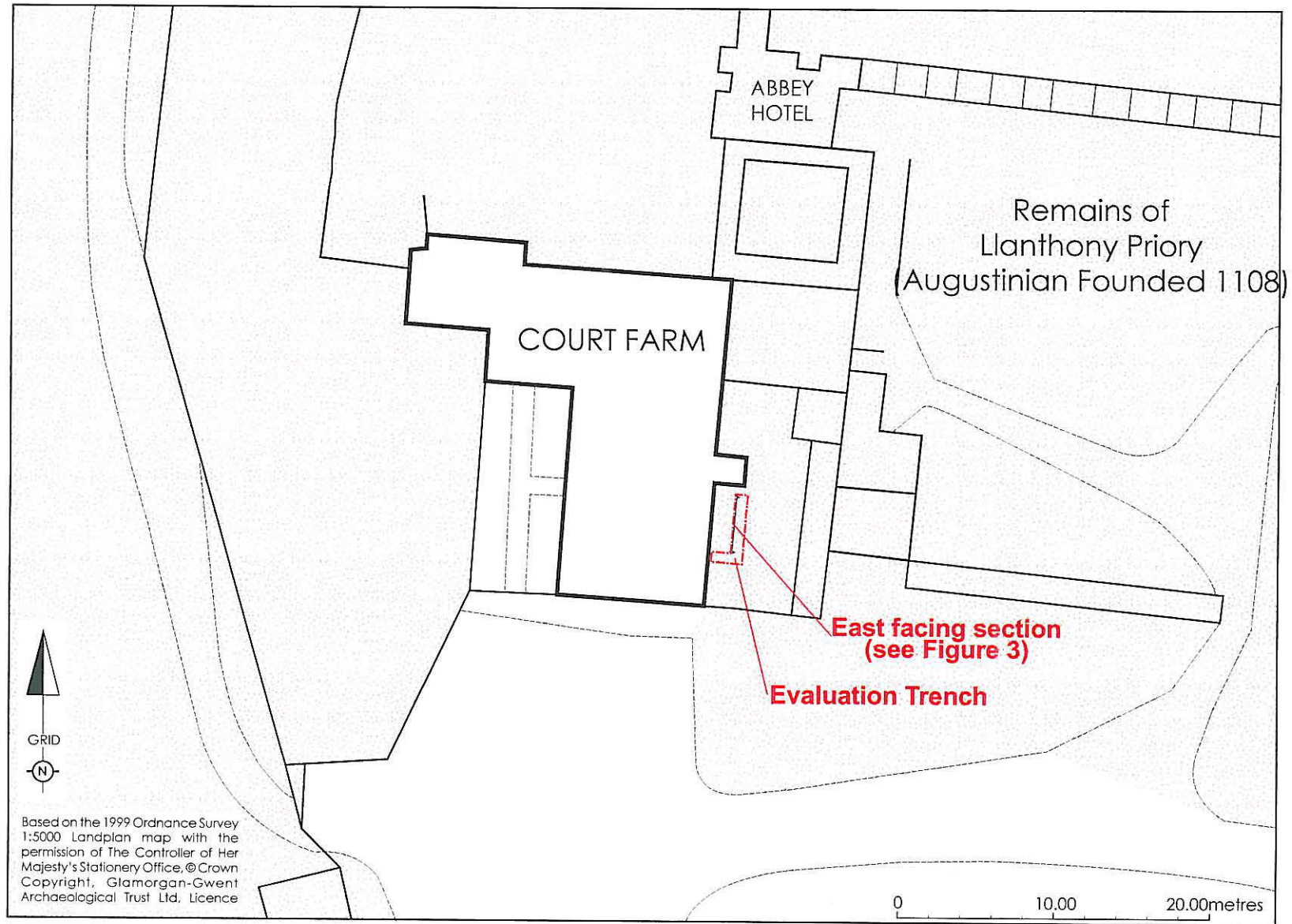


Figure 2. Plan showing Court Farm, location of evaluation trench and east facing section (scheduled area MM004 shown as brown stipple)

3. Results

The basal deposit encountered was a natural sandy-clay (015). A negative feature (019) was cut into the natural clay (015) to a depth of 0.45m and contained a sub-rounded stone foundation 017 (Plate 1 and Appendix 2).



Plate 1. Showing stone foundation 017 cut (019) through natural deposit (015)

In the longer north-south running axis of the trench the foundation was overlain by a modern deposit (008) which contained angular and sub-angular stone, coal fragments and modern ceramics. This modern deposit contained within it a small coal rich lens (004). To the north of the large foundations (017), the modern deposit (008) physically overlay the natural (015). A cut (016) measuring 0.24m in depth was made vertically through this modern deposit and a re-used dressed stone floor (009) was laid as the floor for an outside toilet (Plate 2).



Plate 2. View to the west of re-used dressed stone laid floor of outside toilet.

The modern deposit was sealed by a roughly laid cobbled surface (003) which was in turn overlain by a well laid stone surface (002). Stone surface (002) was overlain by a concrete surface (001). As the concrete was removed most of stone surface 002 became detached (Plate 3).



Plate 3. Showing remains of vertically laid stone surface 002 and more roughly laid surface 003

In the far north of the trench a wall (010) was partially exposed running east-west. This comprised of one square-cut basal course stone and a second course consisting of two decorated dressed stones, one being a capitol (laid invert) and another a column piece (Plate 4). This wall was cut on its east side by the trench cut (013) for water pipe 014.



Plate 4. View to north showing wall 010 in section

In the shorter east-west axis of the trench the natural clay was cut through in a north-south linear 018 to contain the dressed stone foundations 011 of the present eastern wall of Court Farm (Plate 5). Overlying the foundations and physically overlying the natural was a modern deposit 005, which contained large fragments of angular stone and modern ceramics and was cut through by 020 to contain water pipe 012. This deposit was capped by concrete surface 001.



Plate 5. View to west showing cut stone foundation 011 and natural deposit 015

Finds

All finds recovered from the excavation were examined on site and determined modern. They were discarded on-site.

4. Conclusion

One feature of archaeological significance was revealed during the evaluation works at Court Farm, Llanthony. A substantially sized stone wall foundation was recorded running east-west across the trench. There was no evidence of the standing wall atop the foundations remaining. It was apparent that the area had been levelled during modern times resulting in a series of modern deposits being laid directly over the natural sandy clay and sealing the remains of the wall foundation.

The wall for which the foundations were laid may be a continuation of a west running wall leading westward from the medieval Cloister Range that appears on modern plans as a truncated wall (Figure 3).

Bibliography

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Appendix 1: Context list

Context Number	Context Type	Context Description	Period
001	Deposit	Concrete capping	Modern
002	Structure	Laid stone surface	Modern
003	Structure	Lower stone surface	Modern
004	Deposit	Coal rich deposit	Modern
005	Deposit	Stoney fill/ground make-up	Modern
006	Cut	Cut for modern water pipe	Modern
007	Object	Modern water pipe	Modern
008	Deposit	Modern deposit	Modern
009	Structure	Modern outside toilet flooring/ reused dressed stone from priory	Modern
010	Structure	East-west running wall. Built from re-used dressed stone from the priory building	Unknown
011	Structure	Existing wall foundation	Post-medieval
012	Object	Modern water pipe	Modern
013	Cut	Cut for pipe [014]	Modern
014	Object	Water pipe	Modern
015	Deposit	Sandy Clay deposit	Natural
016	Cut	Cut into 008 for outside toilet floor	Modern
017	Structure	Large sub-rounded stone foundations	Medieval?
018	Cut	Cut for wall foundations [011]	Post-medieval
019	Cut	Cut for foundations [017]	Medieval?
020	Cut	Cut for pipe [012]	Modern

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Appendix II: Section Drawing

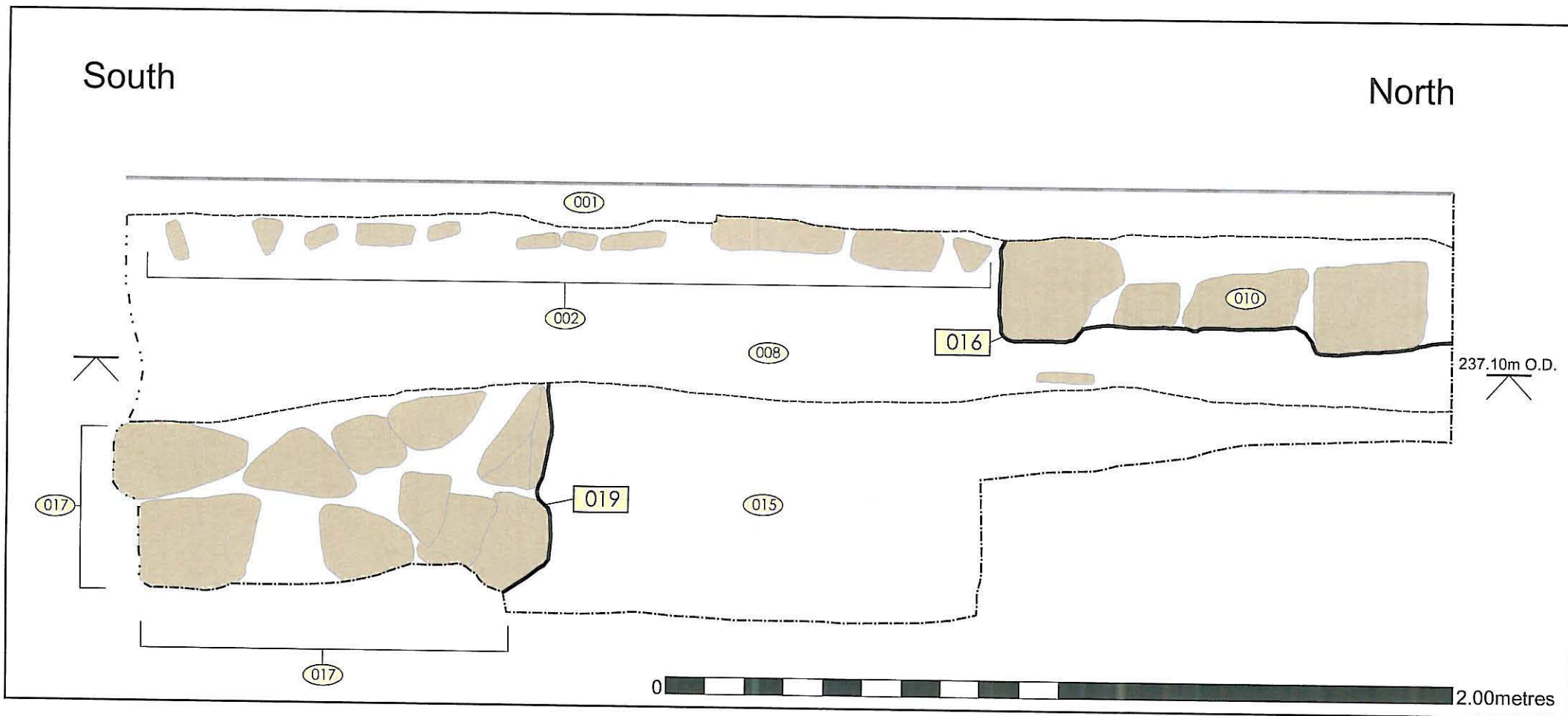


Figure 3. East facing section of evaluation trench