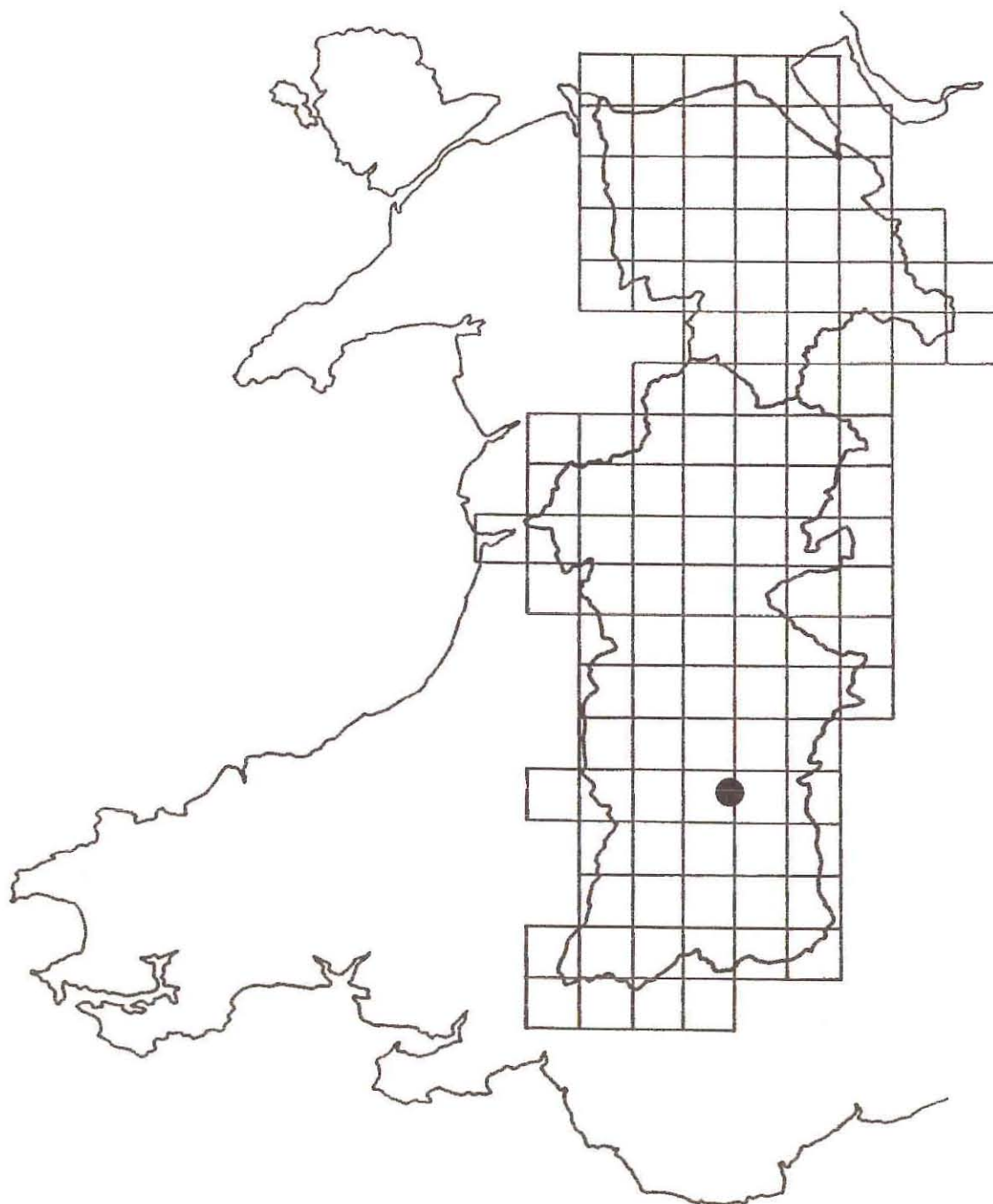


Aberedw Castle, Powys

EARTHWORK SURVEY DEC 1994



CPAT Report No 119

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EARTHWORK SURVEY DEC 1994

by NW Jones
January 1995

Report prepared for Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments

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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT) was invited by Cadw:Welsh Historic Monuments to undertake a detailed measured survey of Aberedw Castle (PRN 945; SAM Radnor 29), including a photographic survey of the standing elevations. The work was funded jointly by Cadw and Welsh Water, who own the western section of the site.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The small masonry castle is assumed to date from c.1284, for Walter Hakelutel had received a licence to crenelate by 1285. The castle replaced an earlier motte, known as Hen Castell (PRN 944; SAM Radnor 117), which lies c.275m to the SE.
- 2.2 It is traditionally assumed that the castle was taken by Rhys ab Tewdwr and later by Llywelyn ab Gruffudd, who occasionally made it his residence (Williams 1905, 315). However, since Llewelyn died in 1282, either the association is incorrect, or perhaps refers to Hen Castell, or else the masonry castle was originally constructed at an earlier date than previously assumed.

3 EARTHWORK AND STRUCTURAL SURVEY

- 3.1 The survey was conducted during December 1994 using Total Station surveying to record in detail the earthworks and standing structural remains. Ground modelling software was then employed to produce a contoured plan of the site, and the use of ACAD enabled the plotting of standing elevations as a base for information from the photographic survey.
- 3.2 **General Description (Fig 1)**
- 3.2.1 Aberedw Castle consists of a small rectangular masonry structure (c.41m x 39m) with towers at each corner. The north, south and east sides are defended by a substantial moat, with any evidence of the external defences along the western side having been completely destroyed by the construction of the now dismantled Cambrian Railways line. A counterscarp bank survives along the northern side. The main entrance is located centrally along the eastern side.
- 3.2.2 Of the defensive corner towers, little remains of the south western tower, while of the remainder, only the south eastern survives to any significant extent.
- 3.2.3 The site is generally in a poor state of preservation, with both earthworks and standing elevations actively eroding. The general survival varies significantly on either side of a modern boundary which bisects the site from north to south, the western side being the more badly preserved with a modern track having been driven through the site. Adjacent to the track is a small sunken stone structure, presumably a sheep-dip, with the remains of a concrete foundation adjacent to it. A significant number of mature trees are growing on the site, which to some degree hampered the survey, particularly with respect to the photographic record.

- 3.2.4 The main features of the site are described individually in the following sections.

3.3 The External Defences

- 3.3.1 The castle is surrounded on three sides by a substantial moat, which at its greatest extent is c.16.5m wide and up to c.3m deep. As with the general condition of the site, the moat survives best to the east of the modern boundary, having been largely infilled to the west. Rubble from the curtain walls and towers is still collapsing into the moat, the sides of which are also being eroded by grazing animals. The outer edge of the moat along the northern and eastern sides is lined by mature trees, as is the inner edge of the northern side.
- 3.3.2 A substantial counterscarp bank survives along the northern side, measuring c.11m wide and up to 2.1m high. An outer scarp at the northeast corner is likely to be associated with a pipe trench as a manhole is visible.
- 3.3.3 The original entrance to the castle existed centrally along the eastern side, and is now visible as a bank spanning the moat.

3.4 The Eastern Curtain Wall (Sections A-B and C-D)

- 3.4.1 Although the main entrance is located along this side, there is no surviving external structural evidence which may be associated with it, save for the aforementioned bank across the moat and a corresponding gap in the curtain wall. Internally, the remains of the gate towers survive as low mounds either side of the entrance, with very limited exposed masonry.
- 3.4.2 The wall itself survives to only c.1.3m north of the entrance, with little visible surviving facing. A large tree stump protrudes from the upper part of the wall, with the roots firmly embedded into the corework. The southern section is slightly better preserved, surviving to c.2.1m. Little facing stone survives and the corework is exposed along most of its length. At the southern end a short stub-wall belonging to the southeast tower remains in situ with facing still preserved.
- 3.4.3 There is no visible sign of the wall's interior face, although a bank of grassy rubble lies along the length of the wall.

3.5 The Northeast Tower (Section E-F)

- 3.5.1 Little now remains of the tower, which has largely collapsed into the moat. The surviving masonry consists of a short section attached to the end of the northern curtain wall, which stands to a height of c.1.0m, and consists almost entirely of exposed corework.

3.6 The Northern Curtain Wall (Sections E to L)

- 3.6.1 The masonry remains are now poorly preserved, consisting of a length of wall atop the inner edge of the moat. Both faces of the wall are visible for most of the surviving lengths, indicating a thickness of c.1.8m. Adjacent to the northwest tower, the wall is breached by a modern track, with a further

breach associated with the boundary fence. Externally, visible sections of the wall survive to a maximum height of c.1.6m, with much of the facing stone now missing. Such facing as still survives is in a fairly poor state, and the majority of the elevation consists of exposed corework. Internally, the wall is only visible to a maximum height of c.0.6m, with little facing surviving above ground. The lower courses of both sides are obscured by fallen rubble, behind which it is likely that the facing still survives.

3.7 The Northwest Tower (Section M-N)

- 3.7.1 Visibly, the tower appears to be in an extremely poor state with facing stone only surviving on a short section along the northern side. Elsewhere, such masonry as is evident is entirely exposed corework. The interior of the tower is filled with rubble, which also masks much of the surviving exterior, including the stub end of the north curtain wall.

3.8 The Western Curtain Wall (Section M-N)

- 3.8.1 The steep wooded scarp of the railway cutting on the exterior of the wall made a detailed examination difficult, especially with respect to the photographic survey.
- 3.8.2 The exterior face of the wall is almost entirely absent, due largely to undercutting and erosion related to the railway cutting. Several large trees are growing on and in the remaining masonry adding to the general deterioration.
- 3.8.3 The only surviving facing exists on a relatively short section of wall adjacent to the northwest tower. At this point the wall is largely covered with ivy making a detailed examination of the fabric impossible.
- 3.8.4 Addition damage to the wall is being caused by the dumping a manure and other rubbish from the interior over the edge of the wall towards the southern end.

3.9 The Southwest Tower (Section O-P)

- 3.9.1 Very little survives of the tower which has been largely destroyed by the construction of the railway and subsequent erosion. The remains of two wall stubs are still visible where the tower adjoined the south and west curtain walls. Some facing stone survives, particularly relating to the northern wall stub, but the majority of visible masonry consists of exposed corework.

3.10 The Southern Curtain Wall (Sections Q-R and R-S)

- 3.10.1 The standing remains are considerably less well preserved than those of the north and east curtain walls. Exposed masonry is only evident between the southeast tower and the modern boundary, and there is little facing stone surviving. The lower part of the wall is concealed behind collapsed rubble, while the upper portion consists largely of exposed corework. Mid way along the section, a modern path cuts through the wall from west to east, possibly of animal origin. The interior of the

wall is not visible at any point.

3.11 The Southeast Tower (Section R-S)

- 3.11.1 The Southeast Tower is currently the best preserved, with substantial sections of masonry still standing. However, its condition is such that it is unlikely to survive to any significant extent for more than a few more years.
- 3.11.2 From the surviving remains it is possible to reconstruct the ground plan of the tower, showing that it was originally D-shaped with walls c.1.8m thick. This was presumably true for the other towers also. At present, the walls stand to a maximum height of c.3.7m where the tower protrudes into the moat. A substantial section of wall is now missing along the eastern side, presumably collapsed in antiquity, and the interior is largely filled with rubble. The southern section of the tower is in a fairly precarious state, due largely to the loss of the facing stones at the base having led to serious erosion and undercutting of the wall. The masonry above is actively eroding, with one section showing signs of recent collapse.
- 3.11.3 Along the western side of the tower, at its junction with the south curtain wall, are two sections of faced masonry, the structural significance of which is uncertain.
- 3.11.4 Vegetation growing in the wall, particularly a large briar, are adding to the masonry's deterioration.

3.12 The Castle Interior

- 3.12.1 To the west of the modern boundary, little interior detail survives. The modern track and associated levelling has largely destroyed or obscured any trace of structures or other internal arrangements. A presumed sheep dip consisting of two parallel walls of reused stone and part of a concrete building foundation exist adjacent to the boundary towards the northern end.
- 3.12.2 As mentioned above, the internal gate towers are now only visible as low mounds with some exposed masonry on either side of the entrance.
- 3.12.3 Traces of two internal buildings exist along the eastern side of the castle. To the north of the entrance, a short length (c.2m) of faced masonry survives to a height of c.0.5m. At the southern end a slight stub extends c.0.45m to the west. Between the southeast tower and the entrance two short parallel lengths of facing stone survive atop a low mound with a large tree growing between them.

4 PHOTOGRAPHIC SURVEY

- 4.1 The existence of mature trees and bushes to some extent limited the photographic survey, particularly along the western exterior.
- 4.2 Where possible, a complete overlapping monochrome coverage was taken of all surviving masonry. However, it was rarely possible to maintain a constant distance from the elevations and many

views were taken at an angle to the wall face. The resulting coverage can therefore only be seen as a record of surviving masonry and is not sufficient to provide comprehensive measured detail.

5 CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 Although the state of preservation is generally extremely poor, it is still possible to determine the major components of the site. In addition, it is probable that much of the lower wall facing survives intact on both the interior and exterior of the castle, buried beneath an accumulation of collapsed rubble.
- 5.2 The earthworks and standing structures are actively eroding, and their state is such that further significant damage would seem inevitable. The condition of the masonry, and in particular the southeast tower, is now so poor that any remedial work would necessitate considerable rebuilding in order to stabilise the structural remains. It is considered likely that any such rebuilding would involve the dismantling of large sections of masonry in order to consolidate and rebuild the corework as a firm foundation before the facing stones could be replaced.
- 5.3 The loss of significant sections of facing stone has resulted in continual weathering of the exposed corework. The situation is exacerbated by the existence of mature trees, many of which are growing within the walls, and also by the action of grazing animals.
- 5.4 It is possible that changes in the management practices could significantly reduce future damage to the site. Although the removal of mature trees is impractical and might itself cause some damage, the felling and control of smaller trees and bushes would go some way to aiding the preservation of the monument. Likewise, changes in the grazing practices could also be quite significant.

6 BIBLIOGRAPHY

Williams, J., 1905 History of Radnorshire (E.Davies, Brecon Edition)

7 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

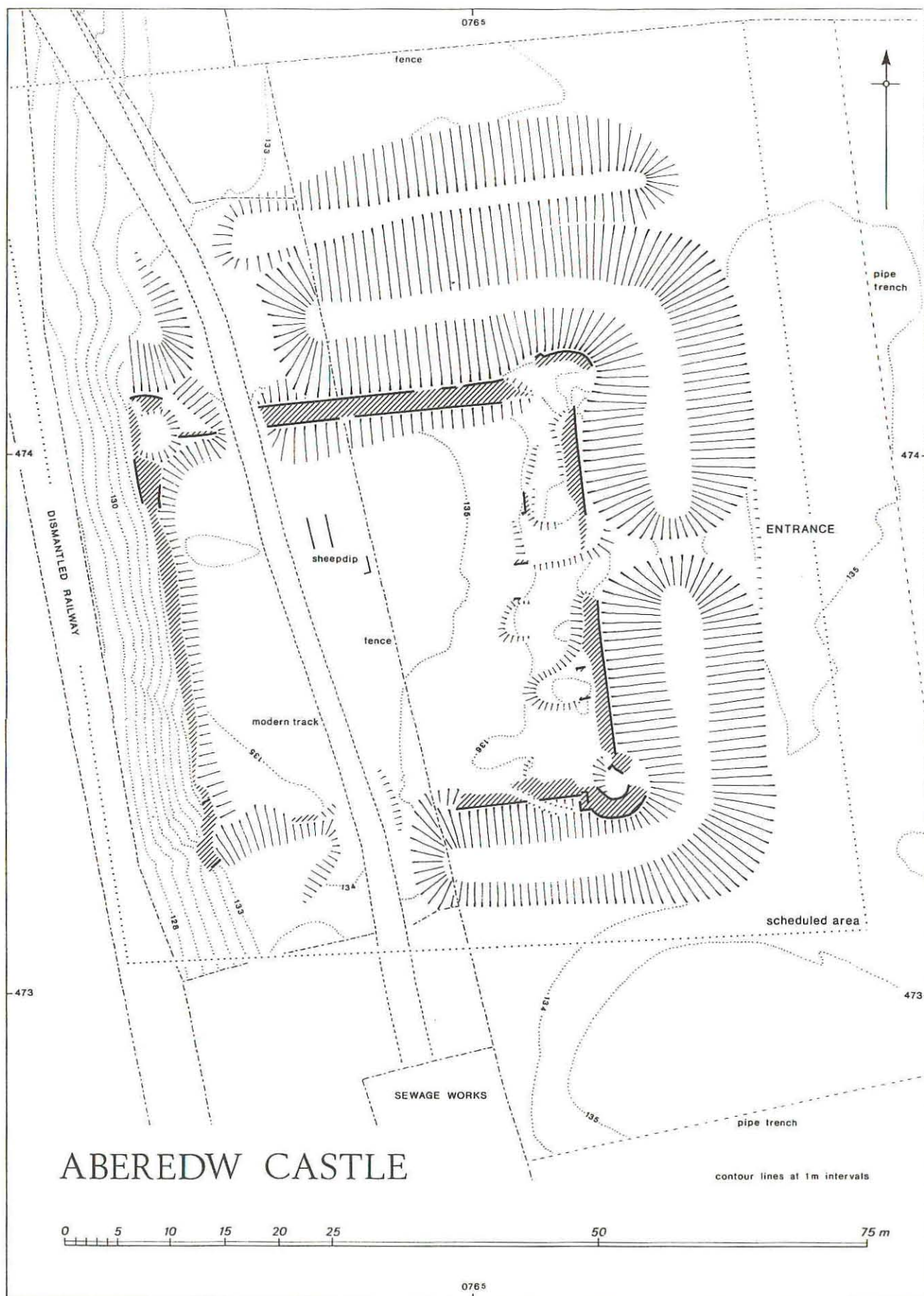
The publication plan was drawn by Brian Williams and the survey was conducted with the assistance of Pat Frost and Glyn Owen.

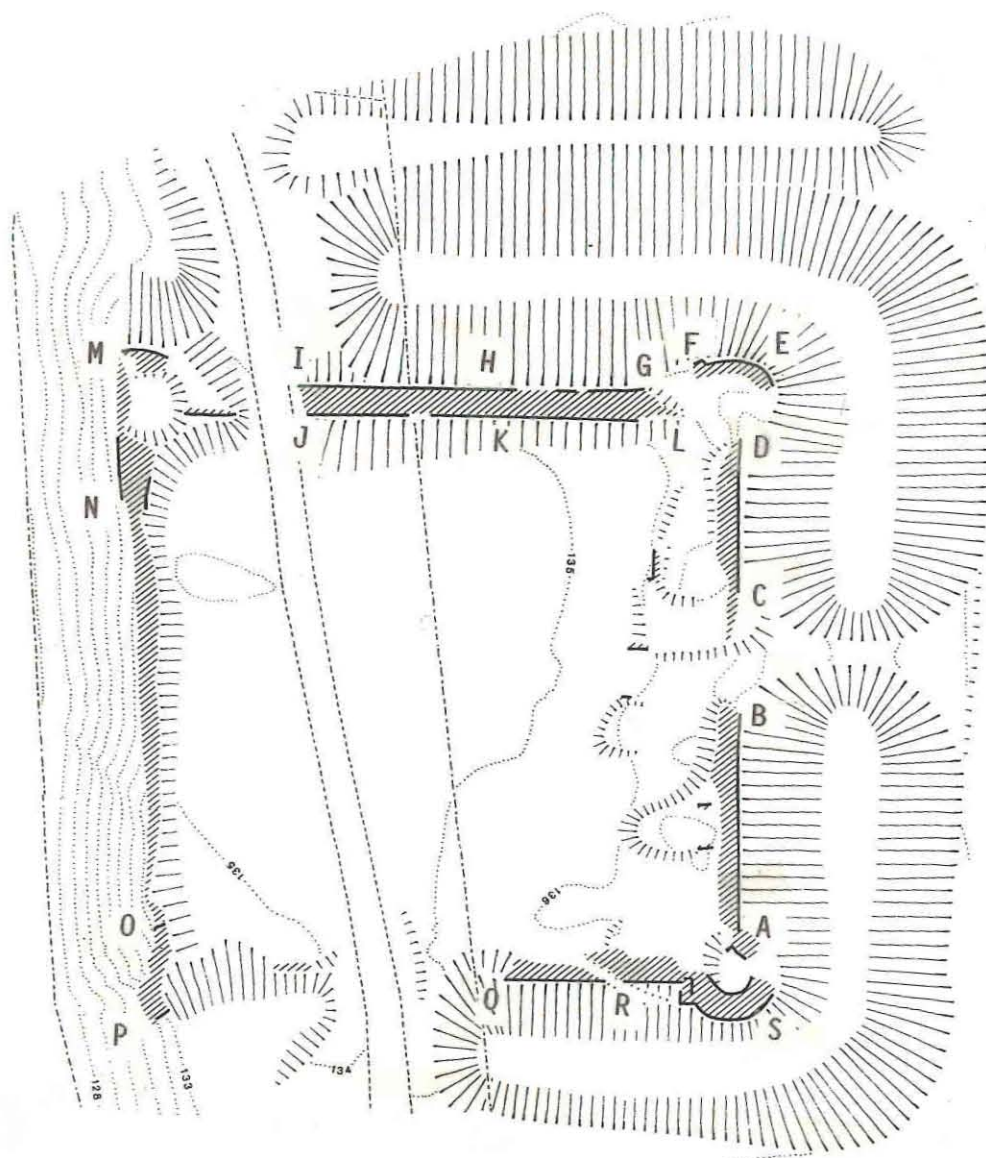
Appendix 1

SURVEY ARCHIVE

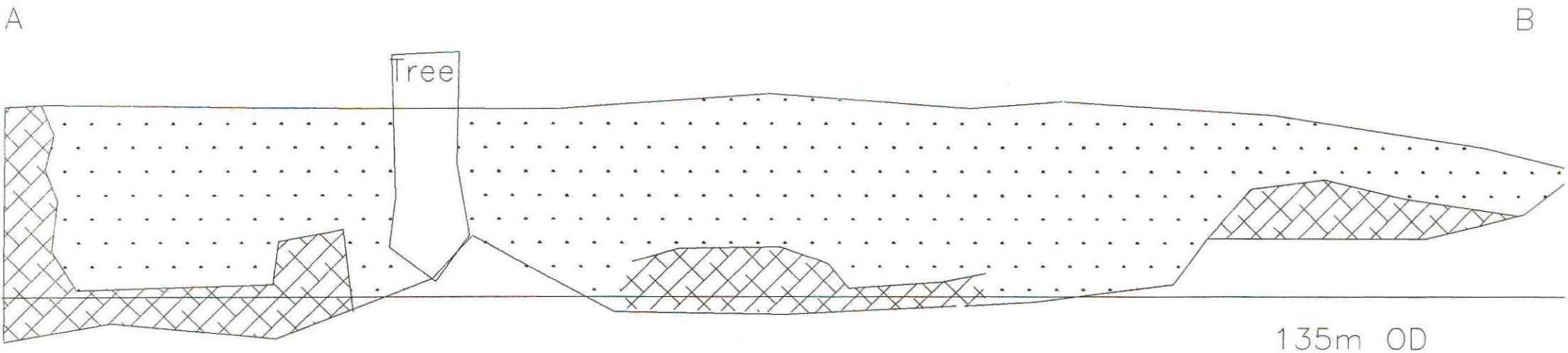
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Photographic catalogue

EDM survey digital data
ACAD Drawing files
Overall plan 1:250
11 Elevations 1:50

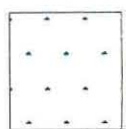




Aberedw Castle: Location of recorded elevations 1:500



Surviving Facing



Exposed Corework

CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST		
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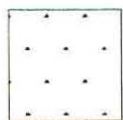
G

H

135m □ D



Surviving Facing



Exposed Corework

CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

Site ABEREDW CASTLE

File ABCNORTH

Description NORTH EXTERNAL ELEVATION

SECTION G-H

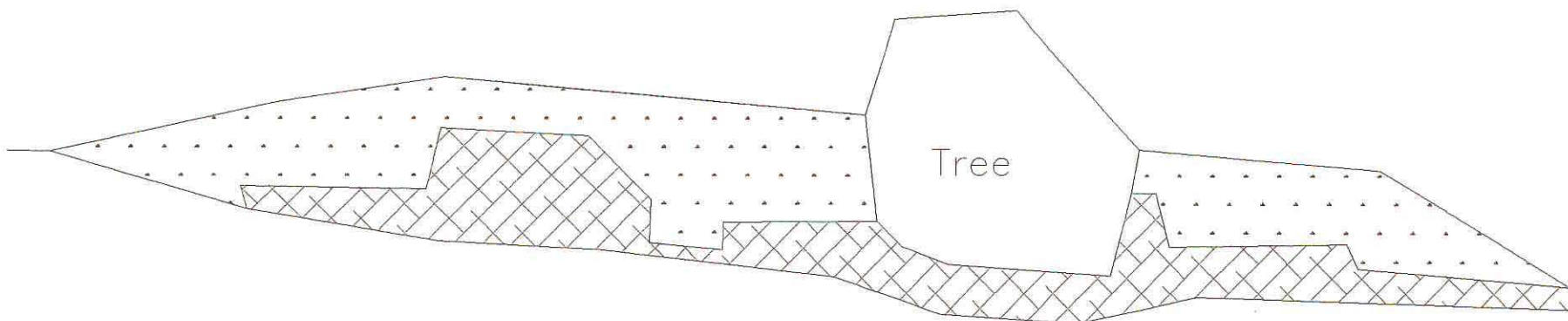
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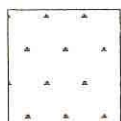
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135m OD



Surviving Facing



Exposed Corework

CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

Site ABEREDW CASTLE

File ABCEAST

Description EAST EXTERNAL ELEVATION

SECTION C-D

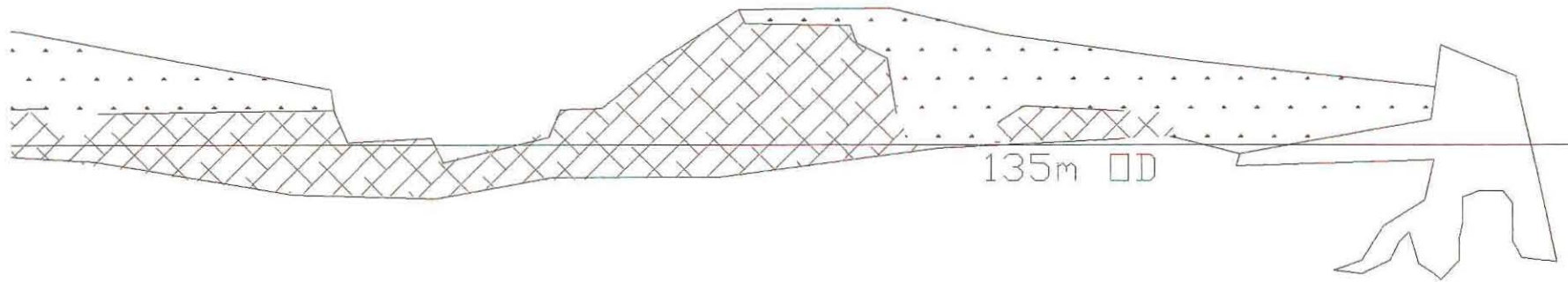
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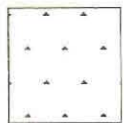
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H

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Surviving Facing



Exposed Corework

CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

Site ABEREDW CASTLE

File ABCNORTH

Description NORTH EXTERIOR ELEVATION

SECTION H-I

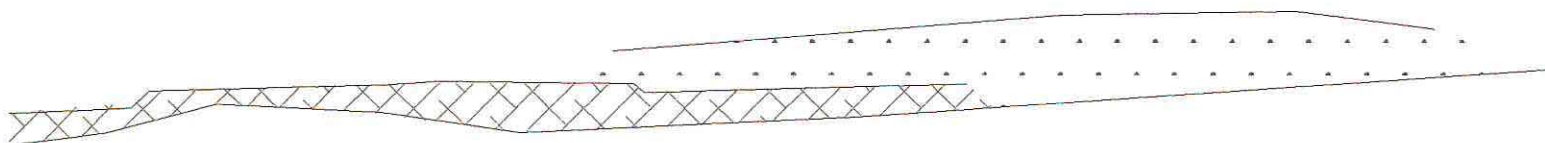
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Surviving Facing



Exposed Corework

CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

Site ABEREDW CASTLE

File ABCNORTH

Description NORTH INTERIOR ELEVATION

SECTION K-L

Date 16/12/94

Name NWJ

Scale 1:50

J

K

135m \square D

Surviving Facing



Exposed Corework

CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

Site ABEREDW CASTLE
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Description NORTH INTERIOR ELEVATION
SECTION J-K

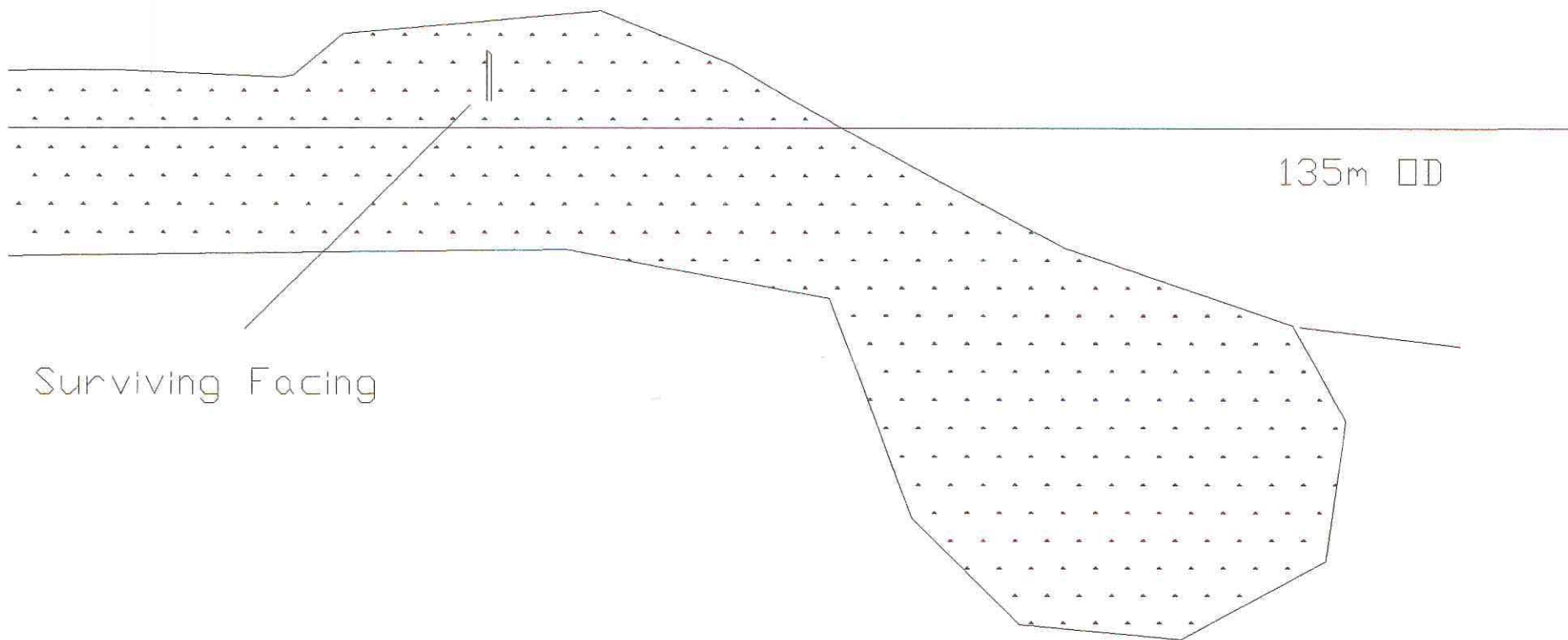
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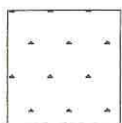
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Surviving Facing

135m □D



Exposed Corework

CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

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 Description SOUTH-WEST TOWER EXTERIOR
 SECTION D-P

Date 16/12/94

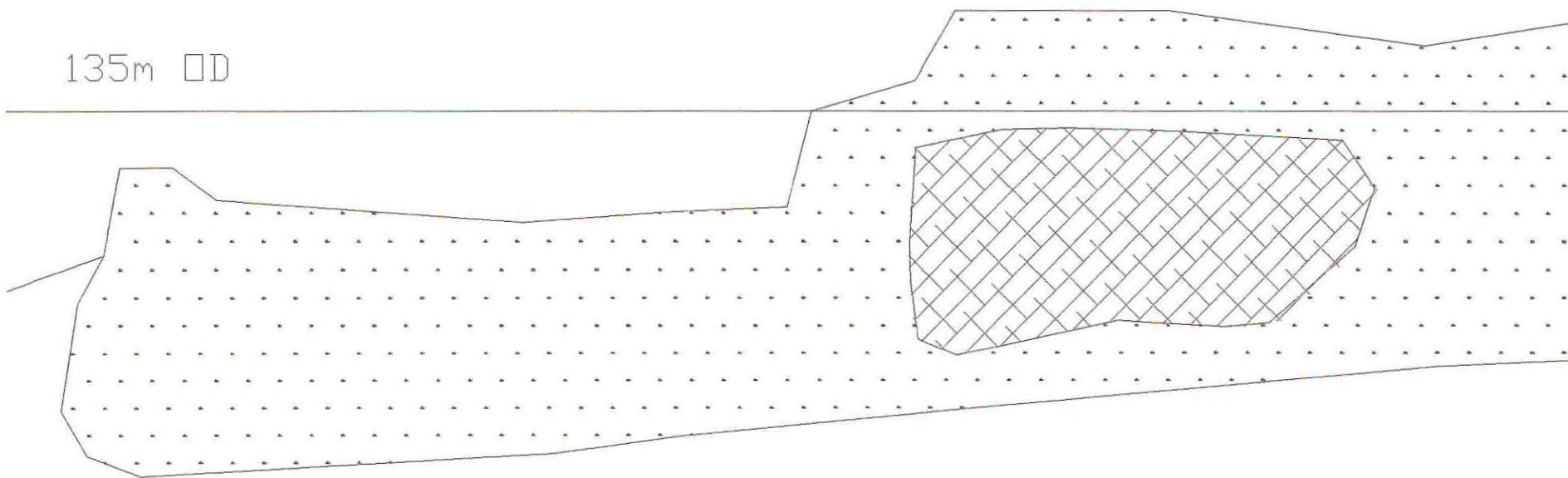
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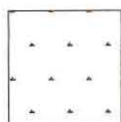
M

N

135m $\square D$



Surviving Facing



Exposed Corework

CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

Site ABEREDW CASTLE

File ABCWEST

Description WEST EXTERIOR ELEVATION

SECTION M-N

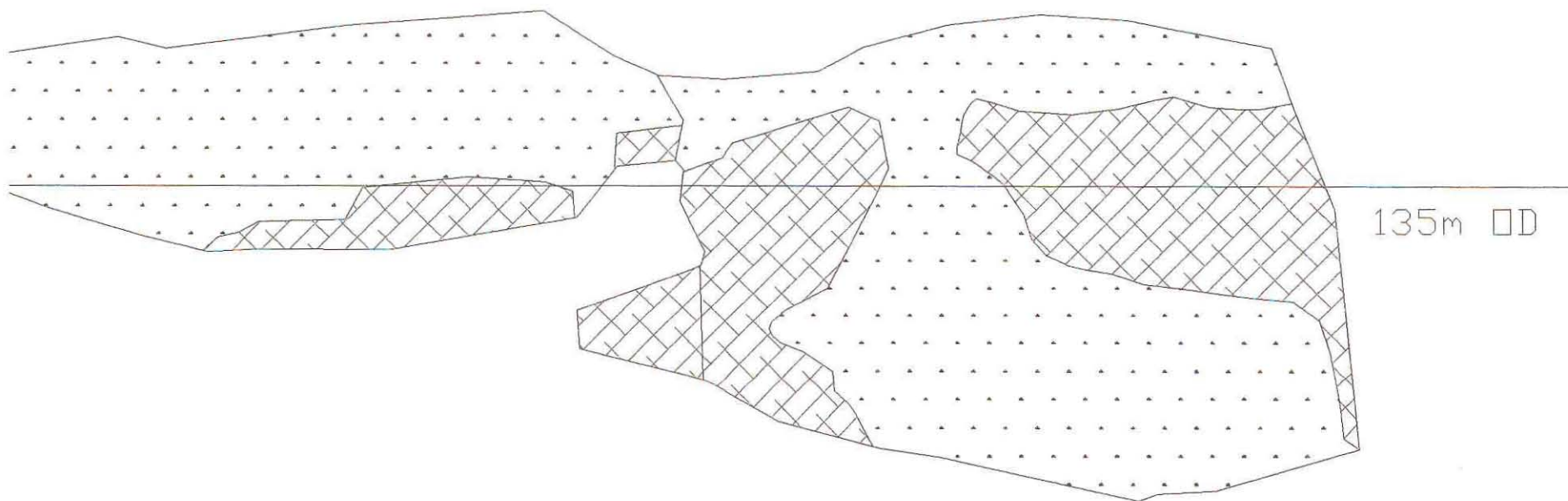
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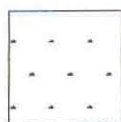
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R

S



Surviving Facing



Exposed Corework

CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

Site ABEREDW CASTLE

File ABCSOUTH

Description SOUTHEAST TOWER EXTERIOR

SECTION R-S

Date 16/12/94

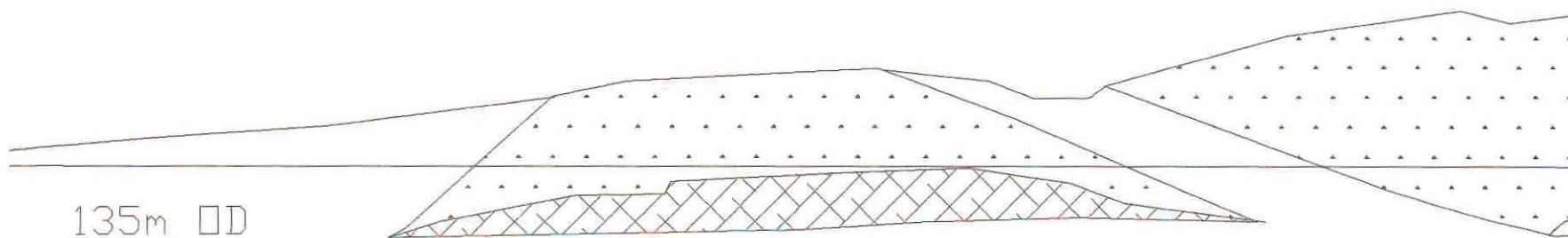
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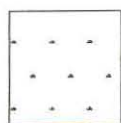
Q

R

135m OD



Surviving Facing



Exposed Corework

CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

Site ABEREDW CASTLE

File ABCSOUTH

Description SOUTH WALL EXTERIOR

SECTION Q-R

Date 16/12/94

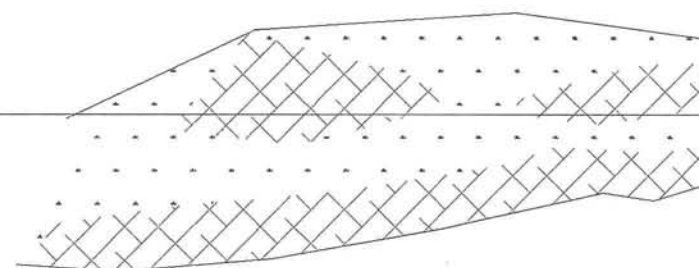
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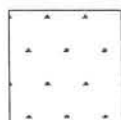
E

F

135m □D



Surviving Facing



Exposed Corework

CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

Site ABEREDW CASTLE

File ABCNORTH

Description NORTH EXTERNAL ELEVATION

SECTION E-F

Date 16/12/94

Name NWJ

Scale 1:50