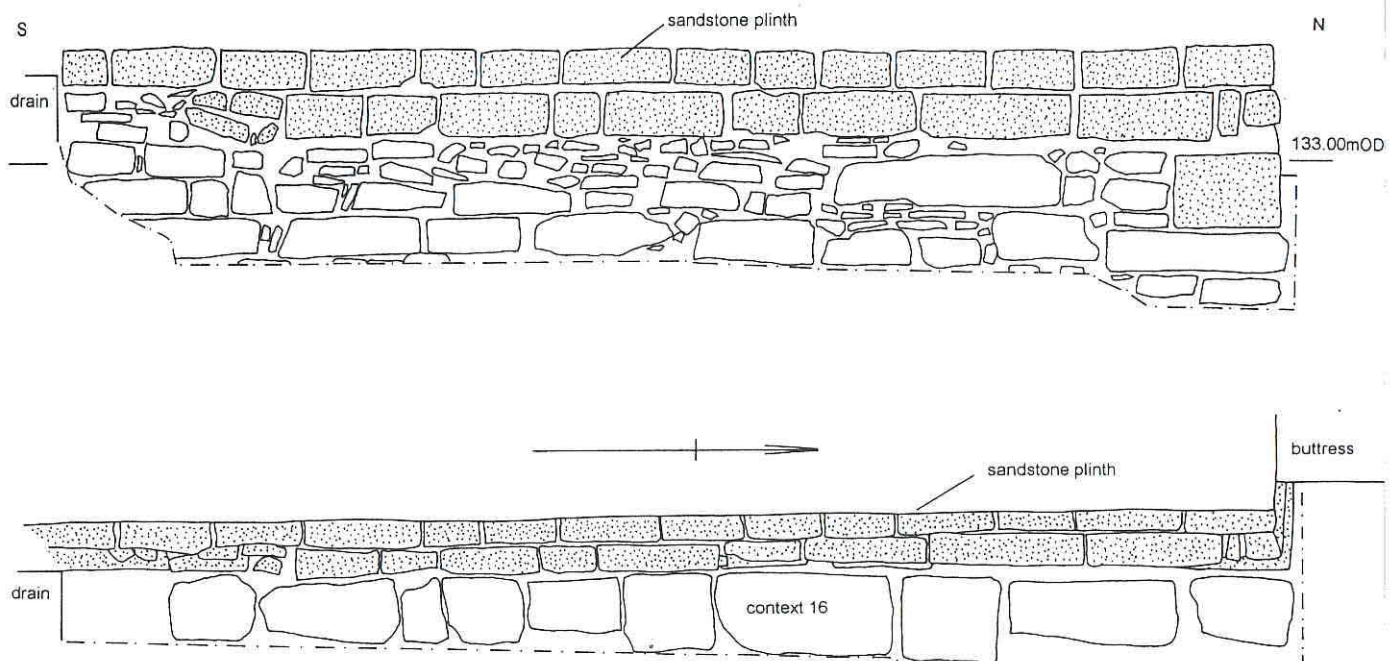


THE CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

*St Elidan's Church, Llanelidan,  
Denbighshire*  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF



**CPAT Report No 289**

*St Elidan's Church, Llanelidan,*  
*Denbighshire*  
**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

**N.W.Jones**  
August 1998

Report for Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments

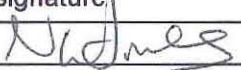
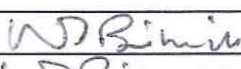
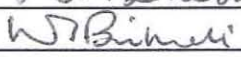
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## CPAT Report Record

### Report and status

CPAT Report Title St Elidan's Church, Llanelidan, Denbighshire: Archaeological Watching Brief	
CPAT Project Name Llanelidan	
CPAT Project No 781	CPAT Report No 289
Confidential (yes/no)	draft/final

### Internal control

	name	signature	date
prepared by	N.W.JONES		21/08/98
checked by	W.J.BRITNELL		24/08/98
approved by	W.J.BRITNELL		24/08/98

### Revisions

no	date	made by	checked by	approved by

### Internal memo


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## CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION
2	ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND
3	LOCATION AND HISTORICAL SUMMARY
4	TRIAL EXCAVATIONS
5	WATCHING BRIEF
4	CONCLUSIONS
6	ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
7	BIBLIOGRAPHY
	APPENDIX: SITE ARCHIVE



## 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 A programme of repair works to St. Elidan's Church, Llanelidan, involved ground disturbance around the north and east sides of the church, during which it was thought likely that features of archaeological significance may be revealed.
- 1.2 The bill of works prepared by the architects, TACP, states in para 10.03 that the 'Contractor is allowed within his programme of works a one week period for investigation by Archaeologist whilst this work is been undertaken'. An application to Cadw for grant aid was accepted, and CPAT were appointed as archaeological contractors.
- 1.3 Prior to any works commencing, small-scale trial excavation was undertaken to determine the nature of the archaeological deposits and assess the likely impact of the works. This was followed by a watching brief and further recording while the works were being undertaken.

## 2 LOCATION AND HISTORICAL SUMMARY

- 2.1 Llanelidan lies in the hills at the southern end of the Vale of Clwyd, 8km south of Ruthin (SJ 110506).
- 2.2 St. Elidan's Church is typical of those within the general area, consisting of a double nave, with recent vestry extension at the north-west end. Although the dedication and location suggest an early medieval origin, there is no direct evidence to support this. The earliest mention is from the Norwich Taxation of 1254, when it appears as "Ecclesia de Lanelidan". The church is supposed to have been extended and partly rebuilt in 1460, with windows of this date in the east wall, and the northern part of the church was supposedly lengthened in the early 17th century. The churchyard was extended to the south in the 19th century, although the outline of the original enclosure is still visible.

## 3 EXTERNAL FABRIC

- 3.1 The north wall has a main entrance with a two-centred arch and porch. To the east of the porch the wall is constructed of small to medium blocks of grey sedimentary stone with some limestone and red sandstone, fairly regular in shape, although accentuated by snail pointing, but irregularly coursed. The wall lies on a chamfered plinth of red sandstone. A three-light window in the nave carries the initials R.P. and a date of 1618. A two-centred arched window in the chancel is of late 13th- or early 14th-century date. From a distance of 1.1m west of the porch, the plinth ends and a rebuild is evident for the remainder of the wall, in a similar style to the eastern end. Drains run along either side of the porch, with a concrete path also along the west side of the porch.
- 3.2 The chamfered sandstone plinth of the north wall continues in two courses, with similar masonry above. The Perpendicular chancel east window has five lights. To the south of the window the lower part of the south aisle wall above the plinth is of large relatively regular blocks of pink sandstone with some grey limestone, while the upper part is more similar to that of the chancel. The window is similar to that of the chancel. A modern drain runs from the valley between the chancel and south aisle, extending along the south wall.

## 4 TRIAL EXCAVATIONS

- 4.1 Small-scale trial excavations were undertaken on 8 April 1998, consisting one trench along the east chancel wall, two along the eastern part of the north wall and one along the western part of the north wall (fig. 1). All excavations were by hand, measuring 1.0 x 0.5m, up to a maximum depth of 0.7m. A full written, drawn and photographic record was maintained throughout. Numbers in brackets refer to the individual context records contained in the site archive.

### Trench A

- 4.2 Located at the eastern end of the north wall. Beneath 0.12m of topsoil (1) a layer of very loose loam (2) extended to 0.55m below ground level, containing mortar fragments and fragments of clay tobacco pipe. The footings (4) for the wall, which were sealed beneath this layer, consisted of



irregular mortared masonry projecting up to 0.06m from the wall face at a depth of 0.40m below ground level. Layer 2 extended below the top of the footings, lying above a layer of light brown, firm silty loam with frequent small stones (3).

#### Trench B

- 4.3 Located along the north wall to the east of the porch. Removal of 0.12m of topsoil (5) revealed a layer of very loose loam (6), similar to layer 2 in Trench A, which extended to 0.50m below ground level, containing fragments of mortar, limestone and sandstone, together with fragments of clay tobacco pipe. This layer sealed the wall footing (8), which were similar to those in Trench A, at a depth of 0.32m below ground level. Beneath layer 6 was a layer of brown firm silty loam (7) extending to the base of the trench and containing frequent stones up to 0.25m across. The base of the trench at 0.70m below ground level, consisted of a layer of firm brown silty loam (9).

#### Trench C

- 4.4 Located along the north wall to the west of the porch. The area in front of the wall has been converted to a rose garden, with no gravestones remaining. The topsoil (10) extended to a depth of 0.50m, beneath which was a layer of yellow brown clay silt (12). At this point the north wall had evidently been rebuilt from a point 1.1m west of the porch. The foundation (11) for the original wall was revealed at a depth of 0.40m below ground level. However, the later wall had not utilised these foundations and was instead constructed on no real footing, extending only slightly below ground level with a gap of 0.34m between the base of the wall and the early foundation. This gap was filled with loose stone and soil. Numerous disarticulated bones present within the topsoil, probably within a pit, having been reburied following earlier reconstruction work.

#### Trench D

- 4.5 Located along the northern half of the east wall. The topsoil (15) was removed to reveal a layer of flat stones (16) sloping to the east, away from the church wall. It seemed probable that these had been laid to divert water away from the wall. None of the stones were removed during the trial excavation.

## 5 WATCHING BRIEF

- 5.1 The watching brief was maintained in two stages during the excavations for the new drains (fig. 1), initially along the north wall to the east of the porch on July 23 1998, and subsequently along the northern half of the east wall on July 28-29 1998.

#### The North Wall

- 5.2 Along the north wall the stratigraphy appeared to be the same as identified during the trial excavation, consisting generally of topsoil overlying a layer of very loose loam extending to c. 0.55m below ground level, containing mortar fragments.
- 5.3 The footings for the wall, which were sealed beneath this layer, consisted of irregular mortared masonry projecting up to 0.4m from the wall. The nature of the footings varied along the length of the wall, with the top of the footings being at a lower level at the eastern end than at the west (fig. 2), and also projecting less from the wall face towards the west (plates 1 and 2). At the eastern end the top of the footings was c. 0.75m below present ground level, with the footings projecting up to 0.12m from the wall. At a distance of 4.5m west of the buttress the footings showed a distinct step, rising by up to 0.3m, and at this point projecting up to 0.4m from the wall. However, no other difference could be detected in their construction, or that of the wall above, with the exception of a single sandstone block which was incorporated into the wall at this point.

- 5.4 No evidence was revealed for any burials or other features along the section investigated.

#### The East Wall

- 5.5 The topsoil (15) was removed along the whole length to reveal a layer of flat stones (16) sloping away from the wall at an angle of roughly 25°. The stones, which measured up to 0.8 x 0.4m, were mostly of poor quality slate, laid in a single course and bedded on a layer of lime mortar (17) up to 0.12m thick. It may be presumed that the stones were intended to divert water away from the east wall of the church, and indicate the ground level at the time of construction, which has a *terminus post quem* of 1696 (see 5.6 below).



- 5.6 Beneath the mortar layer was a layer of loose rubble (18) up to 0.15m thick, which contained a coin of William III dated 1696 as well as several fragments of clay tobacco pipe. Removal of this layer revealed a layer of loose brown loam (19) up to 0.22m thick which sealed the footings (20) for the east wall. The footings were intermittently visible along the base of the trench, and consisted of mortared stone projecting up to 0.18m from the wall. Due to the limited area investigated it was not possible to identify a construction trench for the wall footings, although this may be presumed, as indicated by a layer of compacted loam with rubble and mortar (21) which was visible in the base of the trench, butting against the wall footings.
- 5.7 The wall elevation (fig. 3) revealed a two-course chamfered sandstone plinth projecting 0.36m from the wall, beneath which the wall was of a single phase, composed of random mortared stone. At the north-east corner a single large sandstone block lay beneath the plinth, with evidence for more substantial footings visible in the base of the section in the form of a single large stone projecting 0.16m from the wall.
- 5.8 No evidence was revealed for any burials or other features along the section investigated.

## 6 FINDS

- 6.1 A number of artefacts were recovered from the trial excavations and watching brief, of which a full catalogue is presented in the Site Archive, Appendix 1. The finds have all been returned to the church.
- 6.2 The most interesting find was a halfpenny of William III, dated 1696, recovered from context 18. The obverse shows a bust of William facing right, with the legend GVLIELMVS TERTIUS. The reverse has Britannia with right hand raised, a date of 1696 under and the legend BRITAN-NIA (Mitchell and Reeds 1987, 234). Both sides are worn but legible.
- 6.3 Other finds included several fragments of clay tobacco pipe stem from contexts 1, 2 and 18, and 2 sherds of post medieval pottery and 2 iron coffin nails from context 1.

## 7 CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 The results from the watching brief have demonstrated the value of undertaking archaeological recording in conjunction with any programme of construction or repair works associated with ecclesiastical buildings. The excavations for new drains gave a unique opportunity to examine sections of the wall and foundations which previously lay buried beneath the ground surface.
- 7.2 Along the north wall, the nature and depth of the wall footings was revealed, identifying a change in their character which might indicate different phases of construction. At the east end of the church, the excavations revealed a previously unknown layer of stones intended to divert water away from the wall. A coin of William III, dated 1696, was found beneath the stones, indicating that they were laid after this date. In the base of the trench the footings for the wall were revealed and an examination of the elevation below the plinth showed no changes in build, indicating that this section of wall was constructed in a single phase.

## 8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 8.1 The writer would like to thank the following for their assistance and co-operation: Wendy Owen, CPAT; John Pugh, TACP; Revd C.N.L. Potter; Chester Stone Masons.

## 9 BIBLIOGRAPHY

Mitchell, S. & Reeds, B., 1987. *Coins of England and the United Kingdom*, 23rd edn London: Seaby.

**APPENDIX 1****SITE ARCHIVE**

21 context record forms  
4 A4 site drawings, nos 1-4  
1 A1 site drawing, no. 5  
1 A4 archive drawing, no. 6  
1 A1 archive drawing, no. 7  
2 black and white negative films 704 and 733, contacts and archive prints  
3 colour slide films, CS 98/04, CS98/15 and CS98/16  
2 colour print films, CP98/02 and 736.37  
photographic catalogue

**Finds**

Context 1  
2 iron coffin nails  
3 fragments of clay tobacco pipe stem  
2 sherds of post medieval pottery

Context 2  
3 fragments of clay tobacco pipe stem

Context 18  
1 halfpenny of William III, 1696  
10 fragments of clay tobacco pipe stem



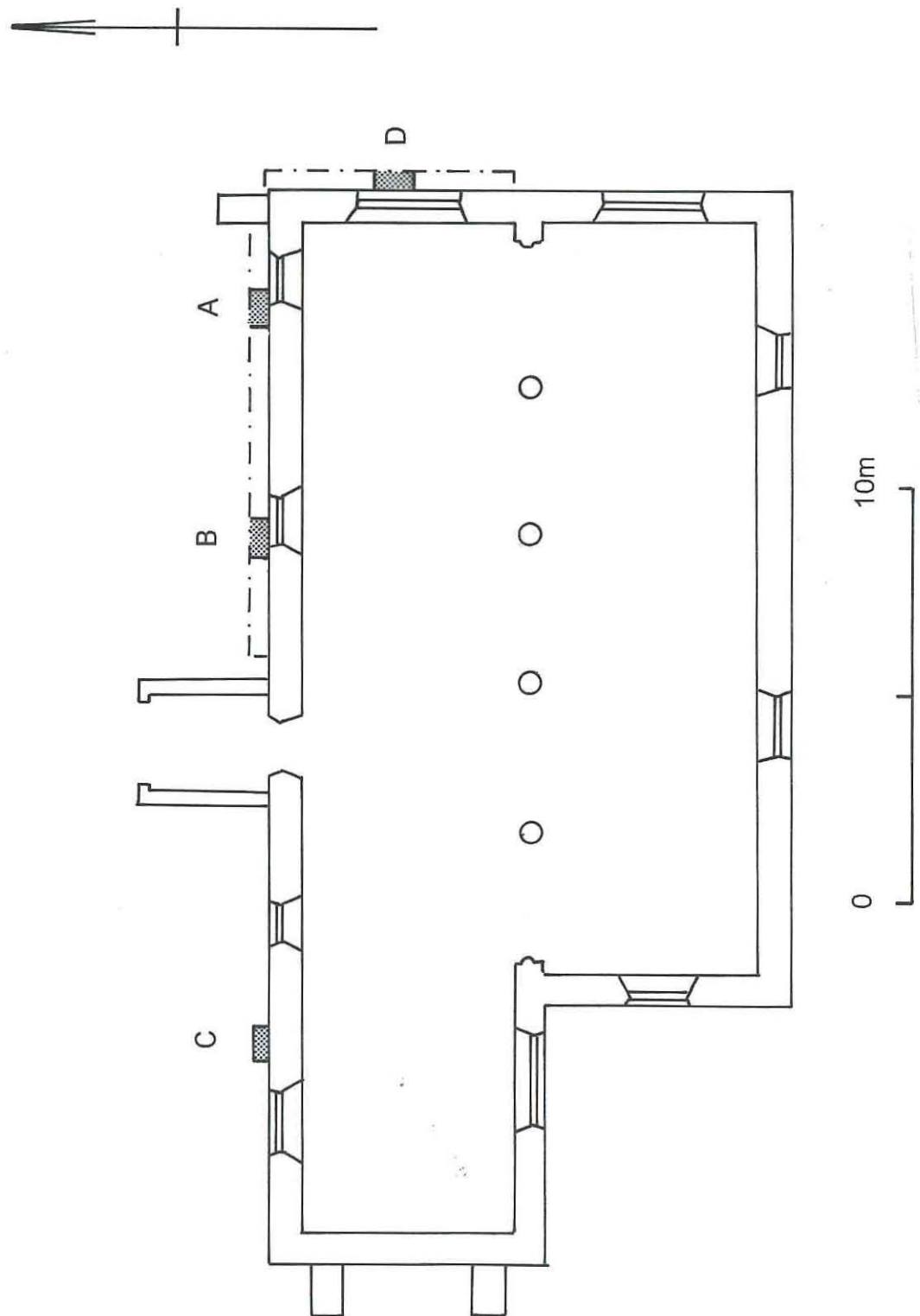


Fig. 1 Location of trenches (trial excavations A-D shaded)

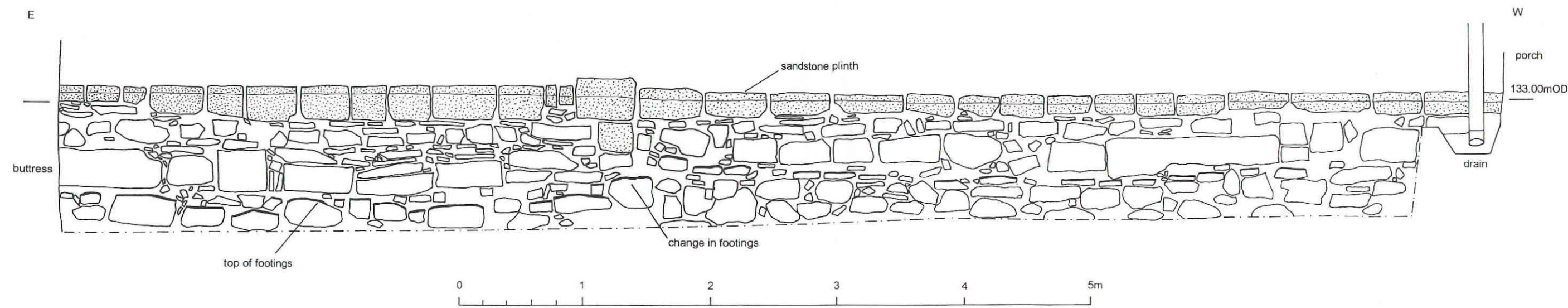


Fig. 2 Elevation of North Wall, east of porch

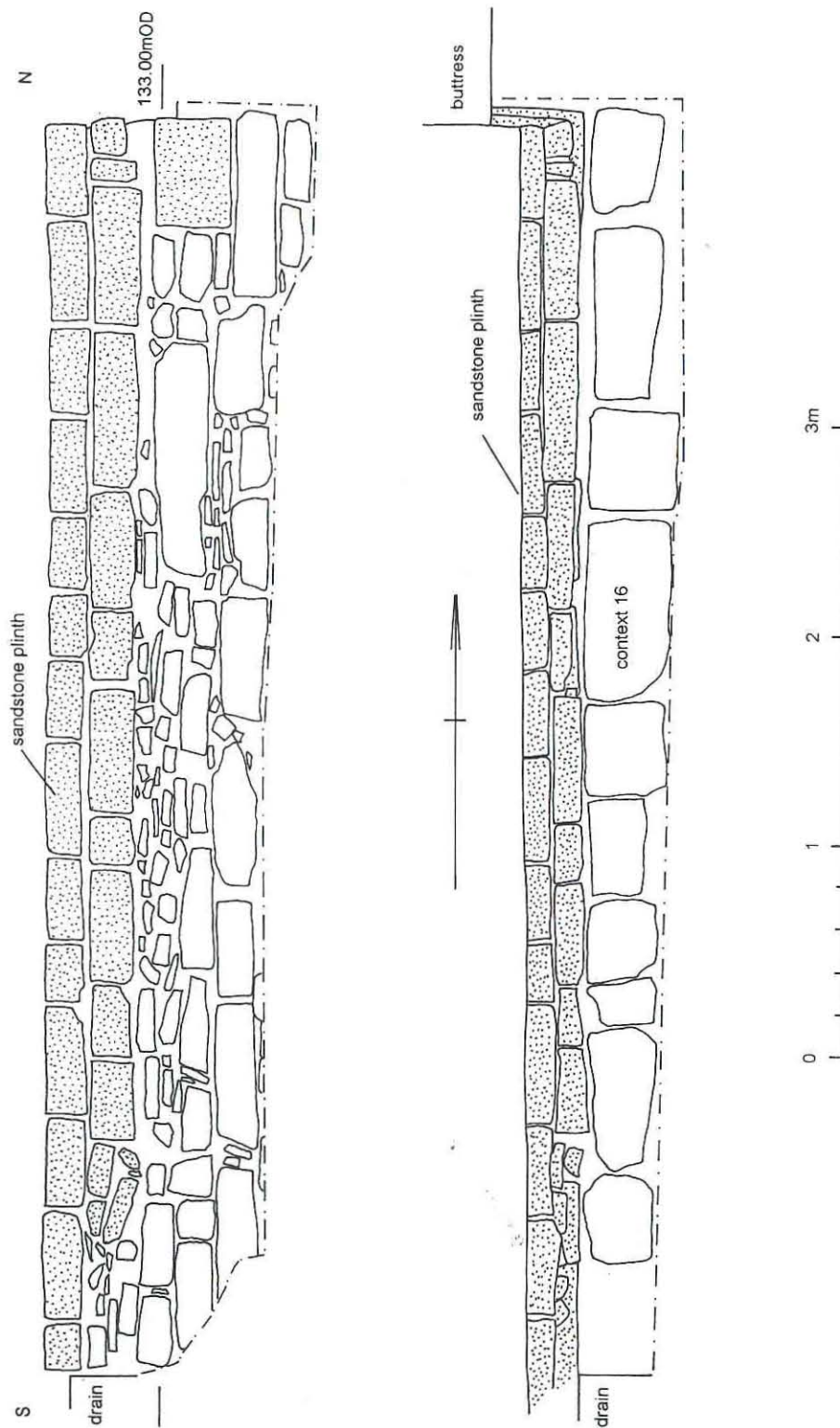


Fig. 3 Elevation and plan of excavations against east wall





Plate 1: North wall drain from W. Photo CPAT 736.11



Plate 2: North wall drain from E. Photo CPAT 736.13





Plate 3: East wall drain showing context 16 from N. Photo CPAT 736.24



Plate 4: East wall drain from N. Photo CPAT 736.33