

**CASTLE COMBE  
WILTSHIRE**

**PROGRAMME OF  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORDING**  
*For*  
**WILTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL  
AND ENGLISH HERITAGE**

CA PROJECT: 1928  
CA REPORT: 09034

MARCH 2009




**COTSWOLD  
ARCHAEOLOGY**

# CASTLE COMBE WILTSHIRE

## PROGRAMME OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORDING

CA PROJECT: 1928  
CA REPORT: 09034

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date	2 March 2009
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date	30 March 2009
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## SUMMARY

**Project Name:** Castle Combe  
**Location:** Wiltshire  
**NGR:** ST 8380 7781  
**Type:** Earthwork Survey and Archaeological Watching Brief/Excavation  
**Date:** March to September 2005  
**Location of Archive:** To be deposited with Wiltshire Heritage Museum, Devizes  
**Site Code:** BHT 08

A programme of archaeological recording was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology in March and September 2005 at Castle Combe, Wiltshire. An earthwork survey recorded the extant remains of a stone-built tower/keep structure, and surrounding earthwork mound, within the south-western part of the site. An archaeological watching brief and small-scale excavation partially exposed and recorded the internal faces of the structure during works to consolidate the remains. At least two medieval structural phases were recorded and the original tower appears to have been free-standing and of at least three storeys, before being modified by the addition of a surrounding earthen mound. Medieval pottery indicates an earlier medieval date for the recorded part of the tower fabric.



## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 During March and September 2005 Cotswold Archaeology (CA) carried out a programme of archaeological recording, under the Wiltshire Monument Management Scheme, for English Heritage and Wiltshire County Council within the castle at Castle Combe, Wiltshire (centred on NGR: ST 8380 7781; Fig. 1).
- 1.2 The staged programme of recording was carried out in conjunction with consolidation works to a stone tower/keep within the south-western part of the castle at Castle Combe (Fig.2). This structure, which survives in parts to a height of 3.5m, had been subject to damage from trees growing within the masonry and parts had collapsed in recent years. As part of a proactive programme of monument management, following discussions between English Heritage and Wiltshire County Council, these trees were cut down in February 2005 to remove the sources of damage and to enable emergency consolidation works to be carried out to the surviving structures to prevent further collapse (Fig. 3) and these took place between March and September 2005.
- 1.3 The programme of archaeological recording was carried out in accordance with requirements established during prior discussions between Roy Canham, former County Archaeologist, Wiltshire County Council (WCC), English Heritage (EH) and Cotswold Archaeology, and set out within a subsequent detailed Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) produced by CA (2005) and approved by Mr Canham. The fieldwork also followed *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Excavation*, *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Brief*, *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Recording of Standing Buildings or Structures* (all IFA 2001), the *Standards for Archaeological Assessment and Field Evaluation* (WCC Archaeology Service 1995), *Recording Historic Buildings: a Descriptive Specification* (Royal Commission on the Historic Monuments of England 1996) and the *Management of Archaeological Projects* (English Heritage 1991).

### ***The site***

- 1.4 The site, situated approximately 0.7km north-west of Castle Combe, occupies a promontory overlooking the Bybrook valley and comprises very well-preserved earthwork and masonry remains situated in woodland within Castle Combe Manor Golf Course. Prior to the earthwork survey these remains were heavily overgrown

with vegetation and trees. Ground level drops away steeply to the south-west of the site (Fig. 1).

- 1.5 The underlying solid geology of the area is mapped as Great Oolite Limestone of the Middle Jurassic era (OS 1965). The natural substrate was not encountered at the limit of excavation during the recording works.

### ***Archaeological background***

- 1.6 The castle consists of four baileys, with indications of approximately 17 masonry structures or buildings, and a motte (information from Wilts. CC SMR) possibly occupying the site of an Iron Age promontory fort (Fig. 2). William of Worcester recorded in an entry of 1450-60, in the cartulary of Castle Combe, that 'there was a castle in the middle of the park here, seated upon a hill, which was destroyed by the pagan people coming from the kingdom of the Danes, as invaders and enemies to King Alfred, in the year of Christ eight hundred and (seventy) eight', although there is no currently physical evidence to support the identification of Saxon occupation on the site. The castle remains have statutory protection as a Scheduled Monument (County monument no. 12285). A stone-built rectangular stone tower/keep survives within the eastern part of the upstanding earthwork motte. This tower was cleared of rubbish a few years before 1852, and the two lower storeys of the building revealed were identified as the lower parts of a keep (Scrope 1852).
- 1.7 There has been little archaeological investigation of the remains and detailed knowledge of the history and development of the castle is lacking. It has been suggested that the castle was constructed by the de Dunstanvilles during the wars of Stephen and Matilda c. 1140, but its date of abandonment is not known. A manor house which presumably replaced the castle is mentioned in 1392, and by the 14th century it appears that the seat of the Barony had transferred to the Manor House within the village of Castle Combe and a deer park had been created next to the Castle sometime before this. According to William of Worcester the "castellum" had been destroyed by the reign of Henry IV, but again there is no physical or documentary evidence to determine the validity of this.

### ***Archaeological objectives***

1.8 The academic objectives of the programme of recording were:

i) to ensure that a full and detailed archaeological record of the site was compiled.

ii) to elucidate the chronology and phasing of the archaeological remains and establish the form, function, character and status of the activity on the site thus represented.

### ***Methodology***

1.9 Trees and other vegetation were first removed to assist in the preservation of threatened parts of the structure and facilitate archaeological fieldwork designed to record the building and the immediate surrounding area prior to the consolidation works, to investigate the character of the obscured remains and to prepare the site to make it suitable for the emergency consolidation of the remaining building fabric consolidation works to be carried out by the contractor (Fig. 3). An ecological survey was also undertaken, prior to the start of works, by Chalkhill Consultants to check for the presence of any protected species.

1.10 A staged approach was undertaken to works on site:

i) A base site survey was first undertaken using electronic Total Station and hand-measurement of exposed masonry structures and the immediate setting within the motte, including an earthwork plan of the outside of the motte, supplemented by photographic survey (black and white, colour slide and digital) and a written description of the remains. This provided an essential 'point in time' picture of the site before the works began and the first detailed site survey for use in the subsequent works (Fig. 4).

ii) Hand clearance by CA of rubble piled against the interior of the south wall (presumed to date to collapse post-1852) was undertaken; the depth of removal allowing the exposure of a solid face of wall around all interior faces of the interior of the keep, which acted as a suitable base for consolidation works. This deposit was excavated in 0.1m spits to test for any variation in the composition of the deposit which might elucidate the nature of the

building's collapse. All excavated material was stored on level ground to the south of the motte, using a geotechnical membrane to separate the spoil from the existing ground surface and prevent damage or alteration to the landform. All excavated material was retained until the end of the project, with some stone re-used during consolidation works.

iii) Scaffolding of the interior was undertaken by the building contractor, in consultation with CA to allow safe working within the structure.

iv) Hand clearance of foliage and rotten tree stumps (as far as possible) from wall faces was carried out by CA.

v) Clearance of wall heads archaeologically by CA exposed the upper levels of the walls for consolidation (Figs 5–8). This was limited to removal of covering vegetation, earth and loose rubble, back to solid structural remains suitable for consolidation along upper levels of the existing wall head.

vi) Detailed archaeological recording, including digital rectified photography of exposed masonry wall faces, was undertaken to provide a record of exposed masonry. Planning and recording was undertaken of all fabrics exposed in plan.

vii) Consolidation works undertaken by Stonewood Builders of Castle Combe in accordance with a *Schedule of Works* (WCC 2005) were monitored by CA in case of need for further investigation/recording.

1.11 Archaeological deposits, where encountered, were planned and recorded in accordance with Technical Manual 1: *Fieldwork Recording Manual* (CA 2005). Each context was recorded on a pro-forma context sheet by written and measured description; with walls recorded by drawn plans (scale 1:50) and exposed masonry faces recorded by means of rectified digital photography. Photographs (monochrome print, colour transparencies and digital) were also taken of all principal deposits.

1.12 All artefacts were bagged separately, related to the context record, recovered and retained for processing in accordance with Technical Manual 3: *Treatment of Finds Immediately after Excavation* (CA 1995). All stonework removed from the wall faces

and cores during the works were carefully examined by the attendant archaeologist but no architectural stonework was encountered.

- 1.13 Due care was taken to identify deposits which might have palaeoenvironmental potential, but no deposits were identified requiring sampling in accordance with CA Technical Manual 2 *The Taking and Processing of Environmental and Other Samples from Archaeological Sites* (CA 2003).
- 1.14 The archive from the evaluation is currently held by CA at their offices in Kemble, and will be deposited with Wiltshire Heritage Museum, Devizes, Wiltshire in 2009. A summary of information from this project, set out within Appendix C, will be entered onto the OASIS online database of archaeological projects in Britain.

## **2. RESULTS (FIGS. 2-9)**

- 2.1 This section provides an overview of the results; detailed summaries of the recorded contexts are to be found in Appendix A.
- 2.2 All four internal wall faces of the north-east/south-west aligned, stone-built, rectangular tower/keep structure were exposed. For ease of reference within the project (both conservation and archaeological), the walls were designated in shorthand as the North, South, East and West walls, as shown on Figs. 4 to 8, and this nomenclature has been maintained within this report. Each wall had been constructed of coursed limestone random rubble in lime mortar as facing, with a looser rubble core with apparently degraded lime mortar bonding, where exposed. The north wall the best preserved of the four. A loose deposit of limestone rubble and clay 039, probably post-dating the 19th-century clearance and infilling the structure between the walls, was only partially removed to create a level working surface; no *in situ* floor surfaces associated with the tower were encountered.

### ***North Wall (Fig. 5)***

- 2.3 The north wall 009 was 3.6m in length and approximately 1.6m wide, with up to 20 courses surviving in good condition to a height of 1.85m above the limit of excavation to the level of a clear ledged scarcement 027 and 002, formed by the fabric of the east and west walls. Above this level frost-shattered and root-affected areas of wall face and core 011, 017, 025, 029, 031 and 033 were noted and

recorded prior to repair. The surviving wall fabric continued a further 1.5m above the scarcement and survived to approximately 15 courses, with wall core exposed above this. It was noted during recording that the face of this upper part of the north wall was set back from the face of the wall below from about three courses above the scarcement level, and it is likely that this represents a rebuild of the upper part of the structure.

- 2.4 Within the eastern part of the north wall clear quoins of roughly squared limestone 012 were identified, apparently forming the jamb of a former arched doorway, 1.3m in width and at least 1.85m in height (to scarcement level 027). The east wall apparently formed the other jamb of the door. No sill or associated floor level was encountered in the area of investigation. This doorway had been blocked with mortared limestone rubble 013. Subsequently two putlog holes were inserted in the wall, 015 within the blocking material, and 016 in the original main wall fabric 009.

#### ***East Wall (Fig. 6)***

- 2.5 The east wall 001 was 5.6m long, approximately 1.9m thick and survived to 1.75m in height from the limit of excavation to scarcement level 002 which was formed as a stepped ledge within the surviving wall fabric. Extensive areas of wall core 006, 007 and 008 were exposed. The wall face 001 itself was generally poorly preserved although twelve courses survived to a height of 0.8m to the scarcement, and a further eleven courses above this at the northern end. It contained a single sherd of medieval pottery in its matrix, and a further three sherds of 11th to 13th-century pottery were recovered from within the wall fabric around scarcement 002, together with one intrusive 19th to 20th-century glass bottle in the loose rubble. Putlogs 004 and 005, approximately 0.10m by 0.12m in size, were noted in the east wall at 0.44m and 0.5m above the limit of excavation.

#### ***South Wall (Fig. 7)***

- 2.6 The south wall 024 was 3.55m in length, approximately 1.75m in width and survived only to 1.26m above the limit of excavation. The wall was far less well-preserved than the north wall, and the surviving fabric consisted mainly of large areas of rubble wall core 040 and 041 exposed as a result of root and frost damage. No features were recorded within the fabric.

**West Wall (Fig. 8)**

- 2.7 The west wall 018/022 was 5.7m in length and 1.6-2.4m in thickness, with up to 22 courses to the scarcement 027 surviving at its northern end (1.8m above the limit of excavation). Above this, a further eight courses were recorded. The wall face was extensively damaged along its south half, where a large area of wall core 023 was exposed and a discernible bulge noted. Putlogs 042 and 043 were recorded in the fabric of the wall, at the same level as those recorded in the north wall.

**Exterior mound**

- 2.8 Only the upper surface of the earth mound enclosing the stone structure was exposed and cleaned on the north, west and east sides. It was formed of firm clay with limestone fragments but contained no artefacts, and butted against the outer faces of the walls.

**The Finds**

- 2.9 A total of four sherds (48g) of medieval pottery were recovered from within walls 001 and 002. All of the sherds consist of a local (Cotswold type) unglazed coarseware, typically of 11th to 13th-century date. An intrusive glass bottle of 19th to 20th-century date was also recovered from the loose rubble in this wall 002.

**3. DISCUSSION**

- 3.1 While limited in scope, the investigations have given an indication of the structural development of the rectangular stone tower, with at least two main structural phases, and raise intriguing questions regarding the origin of the tower and its relationship to the wider development of the castle itself.
- 3.2 The earliest recorded phase apparently had a doorway through the north wall. The sill of this doorway was not recorded but is unlikely to lie much below the limit of excavation. The scarcement recorded in the north, south and east walls in this area corresponds to the doorhead and indicates the level of the joists of the floor above. Comparison of the level of the doorway and ground level to the north of the earthwork mound suggest that this doorway would have opened at least at first floor level externally, and by implication, if this was indeed a doorway, the earth mound must be secondary to the stone tower indicating it was originally freestanding and of at least three storeys. However, the date of the structure is uncertain; while 11th to



13th-century pottery was recovered from the wall core of the east wall, the broad range of the currency of the wares recovered is of little use beyond confirming a general earlier medieval (but apparently post-conquest) date for at least this upper part of the structure.

- 3.3 The second recorded phase saw the blocking of the doorway, and the apparent remodelling of the floor levels shown by the level of the putlogs in the west, east and north walls, which could be interpreted as sockets for floor supports, although they could equally be associated with scaffolding in repairs or reconstruction of the upper levels of the tower, perhaps the apparent reconstruction of at least the north wall in its upper surviving levels which were set back from the lower wall face. At this stage the earthen mound was added to surround the lower two levels of the tower. Although wholly speculative, particularly in the absence of dating evidence, the form and small scale of the tower could perhaps pre-date the Norman conquest (Andrew Saunders pers. comm.), as part of a late Saxon complex (Reynolds 1999), with the addition of the earthen mound and reconstruction of the upper level of the tower belonging to construction of the post-conquest motte and bailey castle.

#### **4. CA PROJECT TEAM**

Fieldwork was undertaken by Allen Wright and Richard Young. The report was written by Alistair Barber and Mark Collard. The illustrations were prepared by Rachel Kershaw. The archive has been compiled by Alistair Barber, and prepared for deposition by Angela Aggujaro. The project was managed for CA by Richard Young and Mark Collard.

#### **5. REFERENCES**

CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 1995 *Technical Manual 3: Treatment of Finds Immediately after Excavation*

CA 2003 *Technical Manual 2: The Taking and Processing of Environmental and Other Samples from Archaeological Sites*

CA 2005a *Technical Manual 1: Fieldwork Recording Manual*



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WCC 2005 *Schedule of Works. Castle Keep, Manor House Golf Club, Castle Combe*

Wiltshire Monument Management Scheme 2005-6 *Report on Projects*

## APPENDIX A: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

No.	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Height (m)	Spot-date
001	Wall	Internal face of East Wall, below scarcement	5.6	1.9	1.75	C11-13
002	Wall	Upper face of East Wall at scarcement level	1.35			C11-13
003	Wall	Internal face of East Wall above scarcement			0.8	
004	Opening	Put Log	0.2		0.16	
005	Opening	Put Log	0.15		0.1	
006	Wall	Core material of East Wall	5		1.9	
007	Wall	Core material of East Wall	0.4		0.3	
008	Wall	Core material of East Wall	0.45		0.2	
009	Wall	Internal face of North Wall, below scarcement	2.4	1.6	1.9	
010	Wall	Upper face of North Wall at scarcement level	3.9			
011	Wall	Internal face of North Wall above scarcement			1.3	
012	Door Jamb	Stonework identifying former doorway (door jamb associated with wall 009)		0.25-0.4	1.8	
013	Blocking	Stonework blocking former doorway	1.3		1.8	
014	Unused					
015	Opening	Putlog. North Wall	0.15		0.12	
016	Opening	Putlog. North Wall	0.12		0.1	
017	Wall	Core material of North Wall	0.7		0.8	
018	Wall	Internal face of West Wall, below scarcement. Poorly preserved.	4.4	1.6-2.4	2.05	
019	Wall	Upper face of West Wall, above scarcement level. Poorly preserved.	1.6	1.6-2.4	0.6	
020	Wall	Internal face of West Wall, at scarcement level. Poorly preserved.				
021	?Opening	Collapsed stonework, possible put log	1.6		0.2	
022	Wall	Internal face of West Wall (south end)	1.1		0.9	
023	Wall	Core material of West Wall	3-4m		2.6	
024	Wall	Internal face of South Wall	3.6	1.75	0.6	
025	Wall	Frost shattered/damaged facing stones of North Wall	0.5		1	
026	Unused					
027	Wall	Frost shattered/damaged facing stones of North Wall	2.2		0.2	
028	Unused					
029	Wall	Frost shattered/damaged facing stones of North Wall	1.2		1	
030	Unused					
031	Wall	Frost shattered/damaged facing stones of North Wall	0.7		0.3	
032	Unused					
033	Wall	North Wall	1		1.25	
034	Unused					
035	Wall	Frost shattered/damaged facing stones of North Wall	0.6		0.2	
036	Unused					
037	Unused					
038	Wall	Frost shattered/damaged facing stones of West Wall	0.5		0.4	

039	Deposit	Unexcavated clay and fragmentary stone infill at limit of excavation	n/k	n/k	n/k	
040	Wall	Core material of South Wall	0.9		0.95	
041	Wall	Core material of South Wall	1		0.6	
042	Opening	Putlog. West Wall.	0.12		0.12	
043	Opening	Putlog. West Wall.	0.14		0.12	

## APPENDIX B: THE FINDS

### Concordance

Context	Artefact type	Count	Weight (g)	Spot-date
001	Medieval pottery: Cotswold oolitic limestone-tempered ware	1	8	C11-C13
002	Medieval pottery: Cotswold oolitic limestone-tempered Ware	3	40	C11-C13
	Glass bottle	1	146	C19-20

**APPENDIX C: OASIS REPORT FORM**

<b>PROJECT DETAILS</b>			
Project Name		Castle Combe, Wiltshire.	
Short description		A programme of archaeological recording was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology in March and September 2009 at Castle Combe, Wiltshire. An earthwork survey recorded the extant remains of a stone-built tower/keep structure, and surrounding earthwork mound, within the south-western part of the site. An archaeological watching brief and small-scale excavation partially exposed and recorded the internal faces of the structure during works to consolidate the remains. At least two medieval structural phases were recorded and the original tower appears to have been free-standing and of at least three storeys, before being modified by the addition of a surrounding earthen mound. Medieval pottery indicates an earlier medieval date for the recorded part of the tower fabric.	
Project dates		March to September 2005	
Project type		Earthwork Survey, Historic Building Recording and Archaeological Watching Brief/	
Previous work		n/a	
Future work		n/a	
<b>PROJECT LOCATION</b>			
Site Location		Castle Combe, Wiltshire	
Study area (M <sup>2</sup> /ha)		400m <sup>2</sup>	
Site co-ordinates (8 Fig Grid Reference)		ST 8380 7781	
<b>PROJECT CREATORS</b>			
Name of organisation		Cotswold Archaeology	
Project Brief originator		Wiltshire County Council	
Project Design (WSI) originator		Cotswold Archaeology	
Project Manager		Richard Young and Mark Collard	
Project Supervisor		Allen Wright	
<b>PROJECT ARCHIVES</b>		Intended final location of archive (museum/Accession no.)	Content
Physical		Wiltshire Museum Heritage	Medieval pottery, glass bottle
Paper		Wiltshire Museum Heritage	Context Sheets, Photographic Registers, Colour slide and black and white photographs
Digital		Wiltshire Museum Heritage	Digital photos
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>			
CA 2009 <i>Castle Combe, Wiltshire. Programme of Archaeological Recording.</i> CA Typescript Report No. <b>09034</b>			





COTSWOLD ARCHAEOLOGY

PROJECT TITLE

Castle Combe, Wiltshire

FIGURE TITLE

Site location plan

DRAWN BY

RK

SCALE

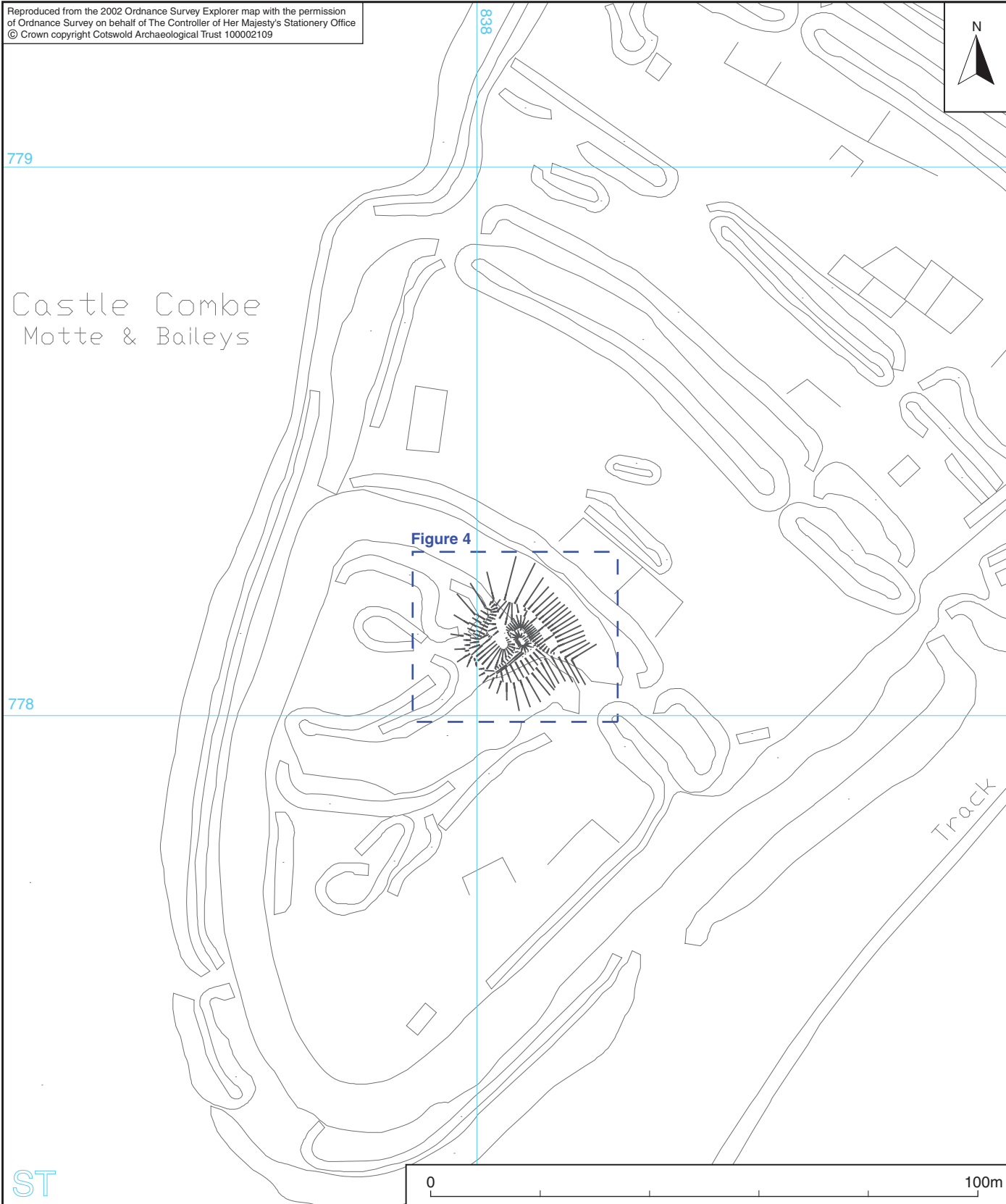
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PROJECT NO.

1928

FIGURE NO.

1



— — — area of earthwork survey  
/// earthwork/structural remains



COTSWOLD ARCHAEOLOGY

PROJECT TITLE

Castle Combe, Wiltshire

FIGURE TITLE

**Site location plan, showing area of earthwork survey and subsequent archaeological recording**

DRAWN BY

RK

SCALE

1:1000@A4

PROJECT NO.

1928

FIGURE NO.

**2**





3a



3b

3a View of earthwork mound, looking south-west

3b View of structural remains, looking north-east



COTSWOLD **ARCHAEOLOGY**

PROJECT TITLE

Castle Combe, Wiltshire

FIGURE TITLE

**Views showing earthwork mound and structural remains prior to consolidation works**

DRAWN BY

RK

SCALE

n/a

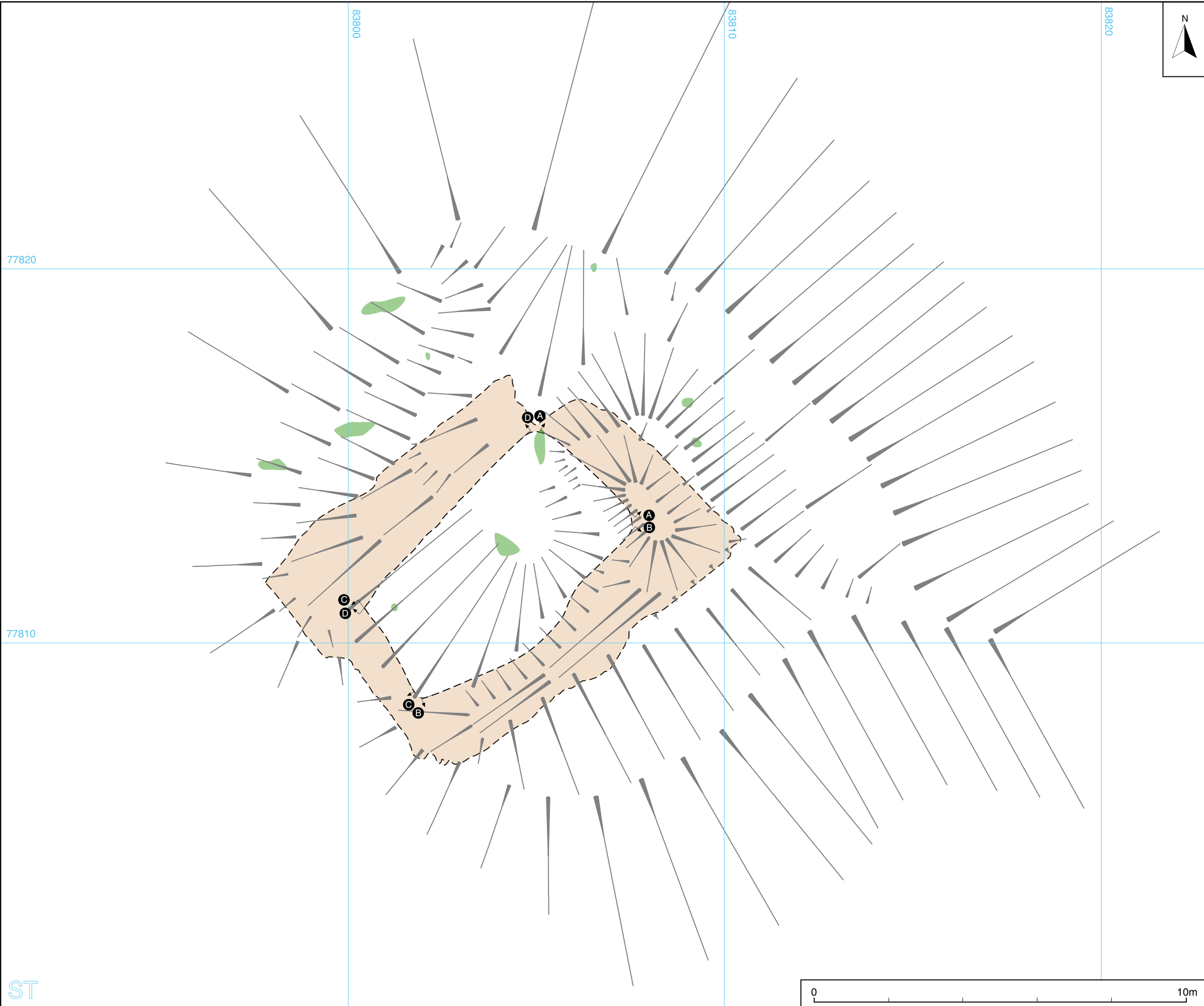
PROJECT NO.

1928

FIGURE NO.

**3**





- earthwork
- structural remains  
(below earthworks)
- roots
- elevation



PROJECT TITLE  
Castle Combe, Wiltshire

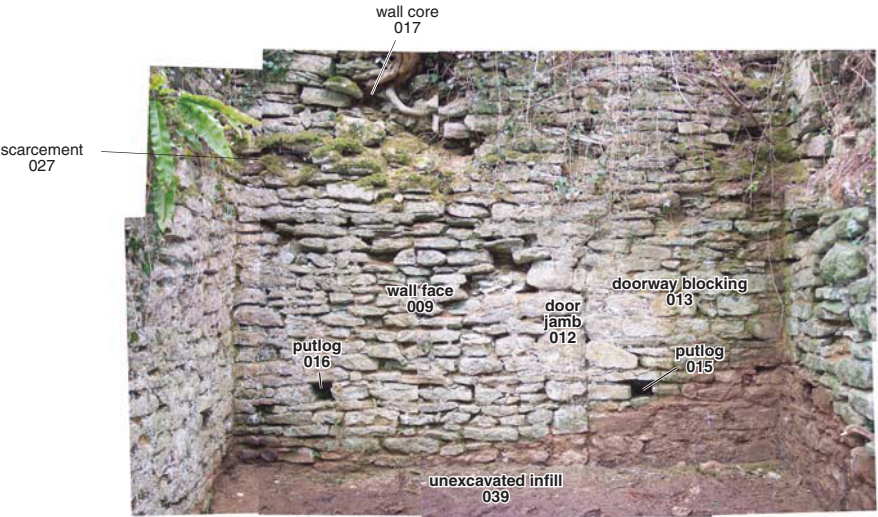
FIGURE TITLE  
**Plan showing earthwork survey  
results and position of structural  
remains**

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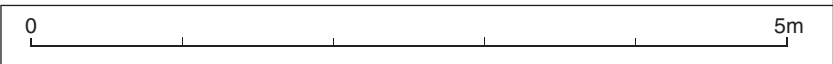
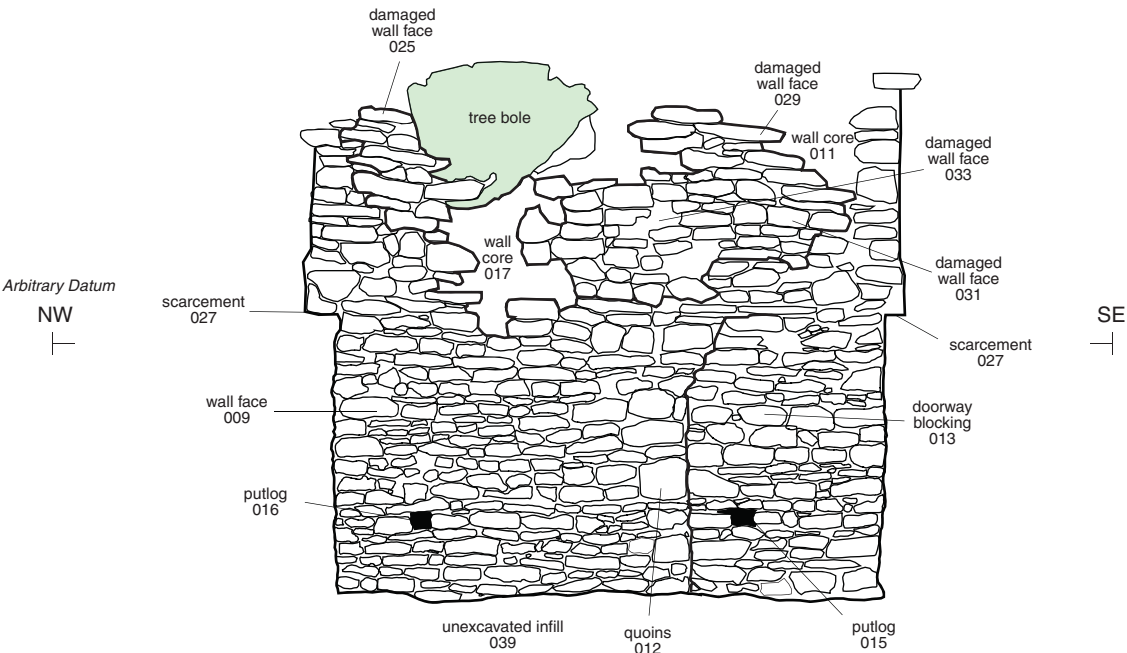
ST



North Wall photomontage, looking north-east



North wall south-west facing elevation AA



COTSWOLD ARCHAEOLOGY

PROJECT TITLE  
Castle Combe, Wiltshire

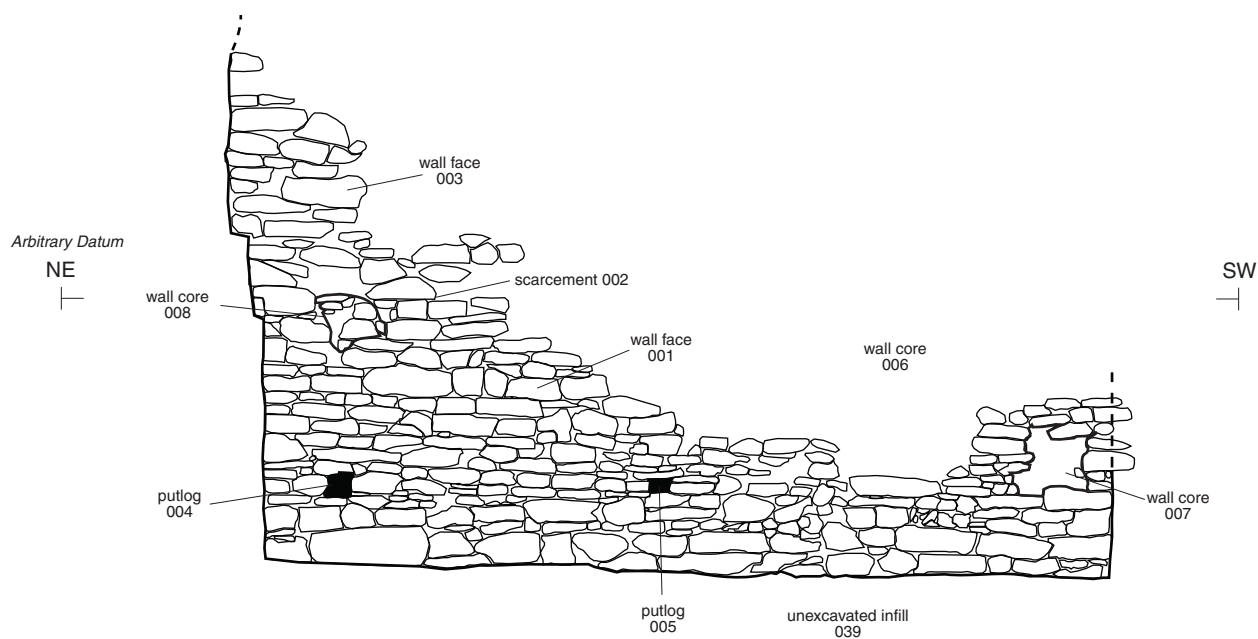
FIGURE TITLE  
**North Wall (internal): photomontage  
and south-west facing elevation**

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East Wall photomontage, looking south-east



East Wall north-west facing elevation BB



COTSWOLD ARCHAEOLOGY

PROJECT TITLE  
Castle Combe, Wiltshire

FIGURE TITLE  
**East Wall (internal): photomontage  
and north-west facing elevation**

DRAWN BY  
RK

SCALE  
1:50@A4

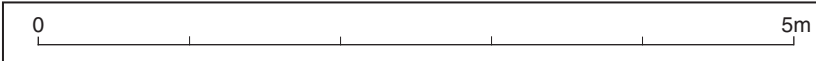
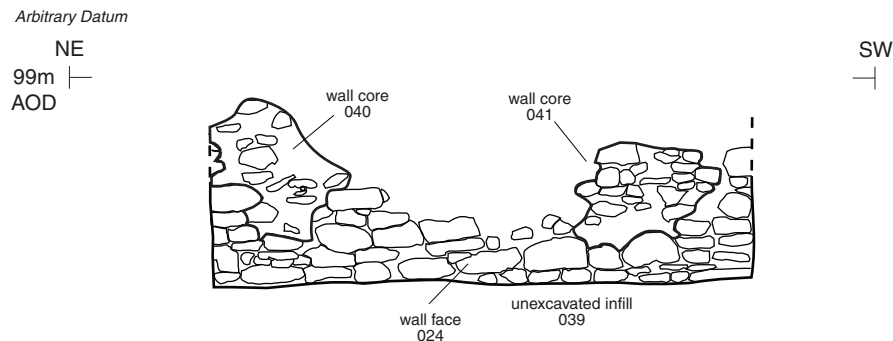
PROJECT NO.  
1928

FIGURE NO.  
**6**

South Wall photomontage, looking south-west



South Wall north-east facing elevation CC



COTSWOLD ARCHAEOLOGY

PROJECT TITLE  
Castle Combe, Wiltshire

FIGURE TITLE  
**South Wall (internal): photomontage  
and north-east facing section**

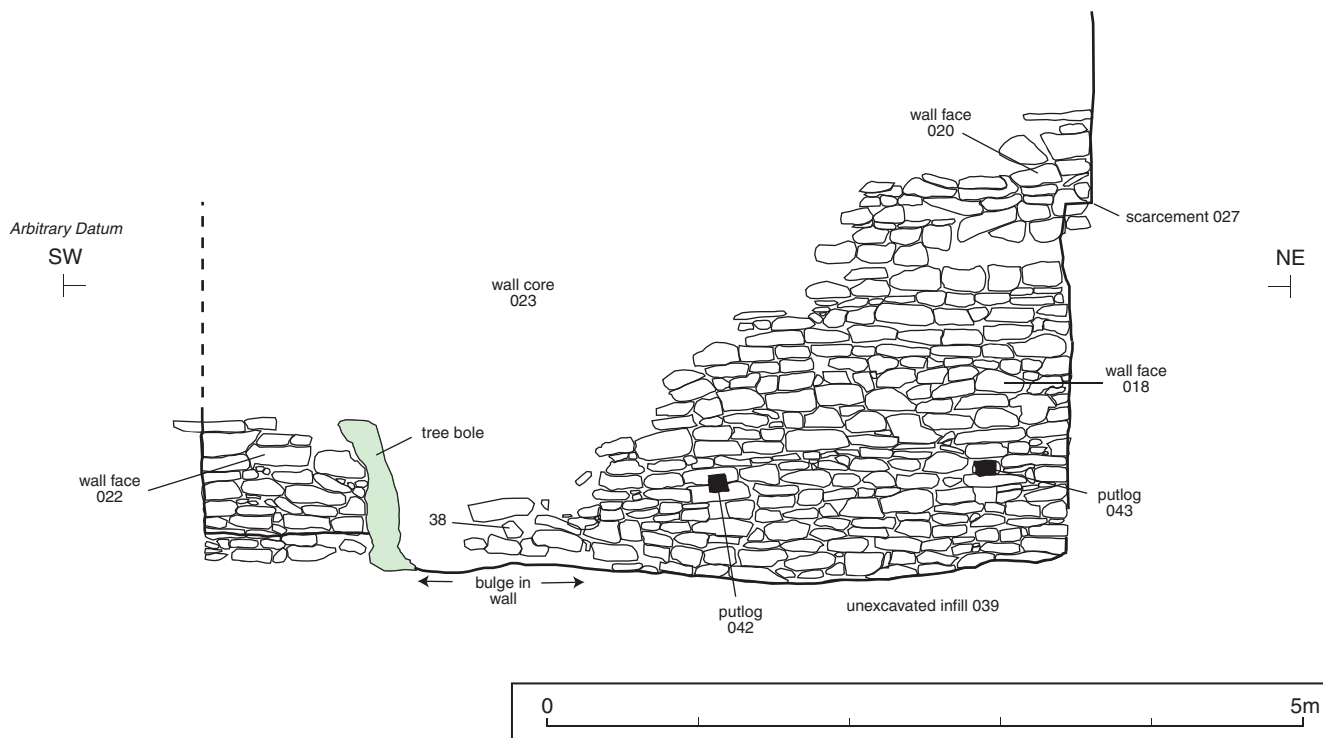
DRAWN BY	SCALE	PROJECT NO.	FIGURE NO.
RK	1:50@A4	1928	<b>7</b>



West Wall photomontage, looking north-west



West Wall south-east facing elevation DD



COTSWOLD ARCHAEOLOGY

PROJECT TITLE

Castle Combe, Wiltshire

FIGURE TITLE

**West Wall (internal): photomontage and south-east facing section**

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1:50@A4

PROJECT NO.

1928

FIGURE NO.

**8**



9

**9 View of North Wall with blocked doorway, looking north-east, showing consolidated stonework**



**COTSWOLD ARCHAEOLOGY**

PROJECT TITLE

Castle Combe, Wiltshire

FIGURE TITLE

**View of consolidated structural remains (North Wall)**

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1928

FIGURE NO.

**9**