

Excavation

The excavation consisted of five trenches numbered A-E (fig. 2). Site A covered the previously investigated corner turret. The backfill of the 1909 excavations was removed by machine and then the rest of the deposits were excavated by hand. Site B was a machine-cut trench across the rampart and original rampart wall, while Site C was another machine-cut trench which in part duplicated Bosanquet and Kings's section of the rampart and rebuilt rampart wall (1963, fig. 2). Site D was excavated by hand and included the interval turret whose deposits had been uncovered by the Department of the Environment masons. Finally, Site E was partly exposed by the machine removal of the Second World War fortification and was further excavated by hand in order to examine a length of the upper surface of the rampart and link Sites A and C. Howard Mason supervised the excavations of Sites A-D. Site E was supervised by David Zienkiewicz.

The excavations were conducted under three constraints. Firstly, it was not possible to fully uncover the structures inserted into the rear of the rampart, as these were not directly threatened by the consolidation of the rampart wall. Secondly, because the interval and corner turrets were to be displayed to the public it was not possible to remove their walls and excavate their foundations in order to recover further dating evidence of their construction. Finally, it was not possible to excavate the external ditch and tie its deposits in to those of the rampart, again because these deposits were not going to be disturbed by the mason's work on the rampart wall. These constraints limited the scope of the excavation and, in particular, the amount of dating evidence recovered.

The relative chronology of the site was established on stratigraphic grounds and synthesized into seven phases: the earthen rampart (Phase I), the rampart wall and turrets (Phase II), the material dumped in the ground floor of the interval turret (Phase III), the two rebuilds of the rampart wall (Phase IV), the buildings cut into the rear of the rampart (Phase V), the levelling deposits (Phase VI) and the post-Roman features (Phase VII). Dates were applied to the phases principally by study of the coinage, samian and coarse pottery recovered from them. Other artefact types were of limited use in dating the site. It should be noted that, although the separate phases are generally distinct and sequential in absolute terms there is some over-lap between them. This is particularly the case with Phase V which consists of four unrelated structures inserted into the rear of the rampart and grouped together solely for convenience. The results of the excavation are described below in seven sections which relate to the phases. In each section the structures and deposits are described and the evidence for their date is reviewed.

Phase I: Earthen Rampart

Two machine-cut trenches were excavated across the earthen rampart (Sites B and C) which was also investigated in Site E (E8). The sections on sites B and C demonstrate the structure of the rampart (figs. 3-7). Very clear evidence for revetting turf-stacks at both the front and rear of the rampart was recorded, the first time this feature has been noted at Caerleon. Although later activity at the site has largely destroyed them something of their character can be reconstructed. The turf-stack at the rear of the rampart was at least 50cm wide and sloped towards the front of the rampart at a steep angle (figs. 4 and 6). The front stack was probably wider and sloped back

at a slightly less acute angle. Both turf stacks were, at least in part, set in shallow foundation trenches cut *c.* 0.3- 0.4m below the ancient ground surfaces (fig.5). The absence of a buried turf line below the rampart suggests the ancient ground surface was deturfed prior to its construction; the turves presumably being used in the rampart revetments. Evidence for brushwood was found under the rampart lying on the deturfed surface, plausibly evidence for a brushwood platform. The rampart itself consisted of alternate layers of grey clay and orange gravelly silt. These were alluvial deposits presumably derived from the upcast of the external fortress ditch. Turves and brushwood were also employed in the internal layers of the rampart to a limited extent although the turves were probably included as general spoil rather than as deliberate construction layers.



Fig. 3: Site B. View through the rampart looking south east (Section SB1). The curtain wall is on the right



Fig. 4: Site B. View through the rampart looking north west (Section SB2). the curtain wall is on the left.

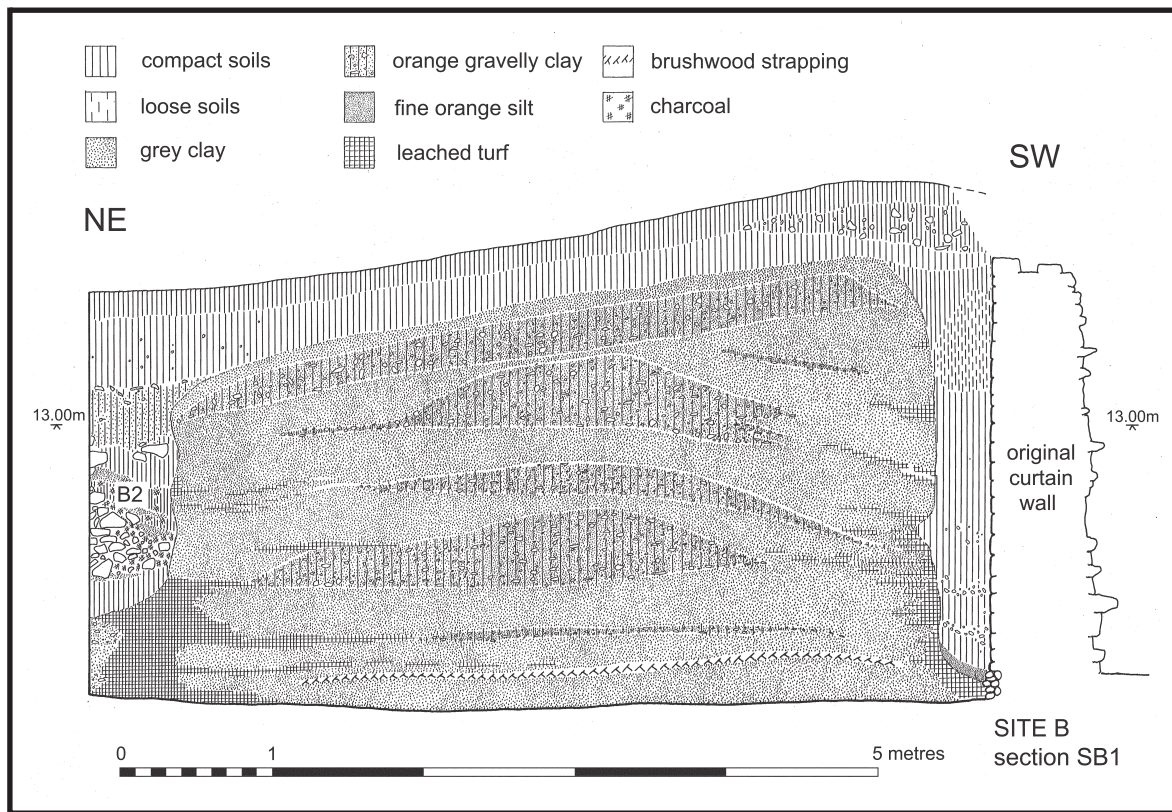


Fig. 5: Site B Section SB 1. Section through the rampart looking south.

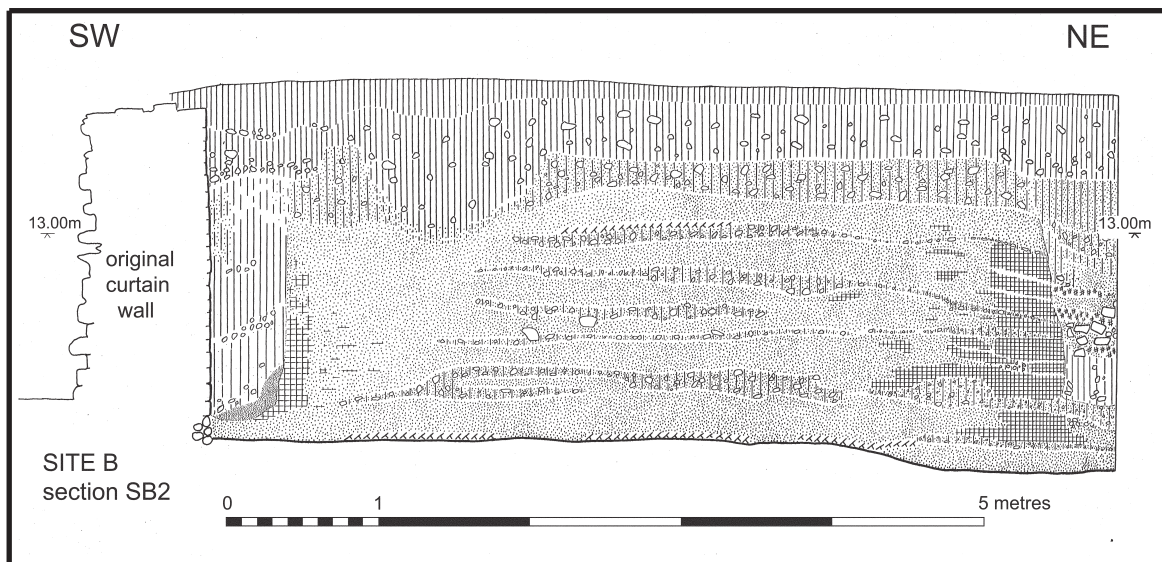


Fig. 6: Site B Section SB 2. Section through the rampart looking north.
(Key as fig. 5)

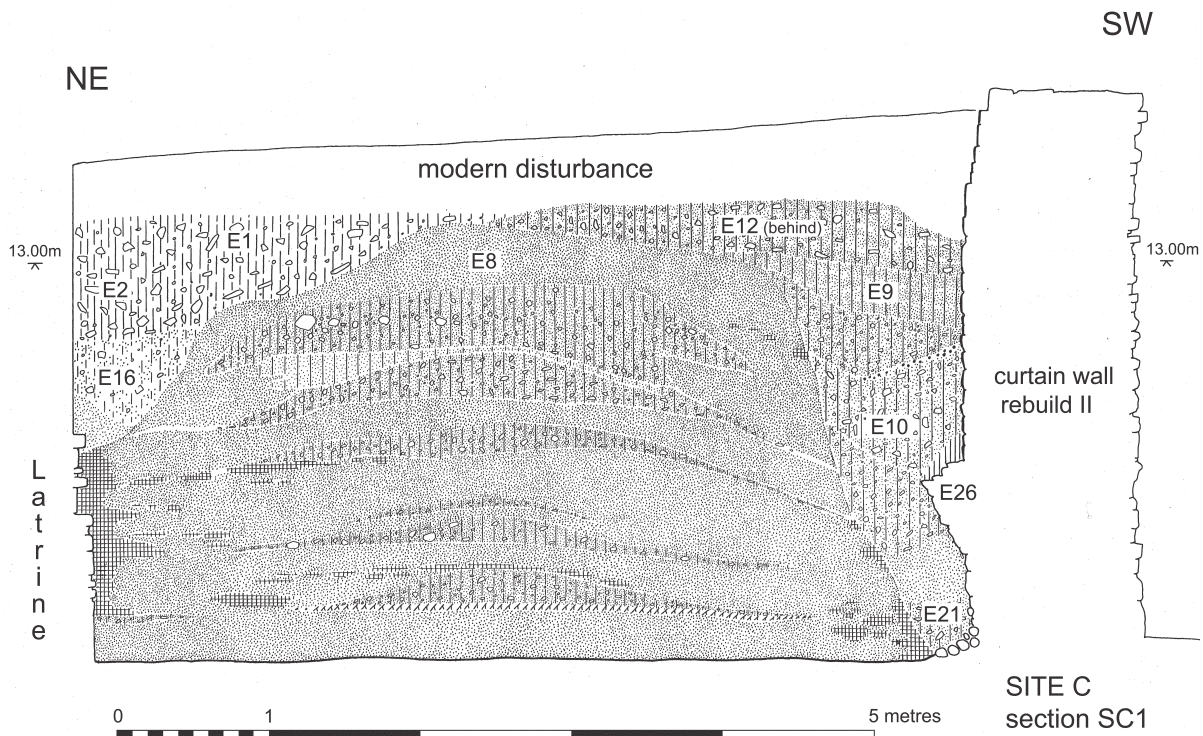


Fig. 7: Site C Section SC 1. Section through the rampart looking south.
(Key as fig. 5)

Site B provided the best evidence for estimating the original dimensions of the earthen rampart. The maximum recorded height above ancient ground surface (measured at 11.18m OD in Site B) was 2.82m. Its original width is particularly difficult to estimate as the insertion of the Phase II wall involved cutting away the turf revetting at the front. Section SB2 (fig. 6) illustrates what is probably the least disturbed part of the rear of the rampart; section SB1 (fig. 5) and SC1 (fig. 7) contain Phase V features which cut further into the turf revetment. If it is assumed that the original limit of the rampart and the external face of the Phase II rampart wall were coincidental, then the maximum recovered width of the rampart, to the limit of the visible turf at the rear, is 7.30m (fig. 6). In comparison to other recent excavations no evidence was recovered for a timber revetment to the rear of the rampart (Evans and Metcalf 1992, 7) although this may be due to destruction caused by the Phase V buildings and structures cut into the rear. No evidence was found of the presumed timber walkway, palisade or turrets which must have strengthened the earthen rampart.

Dating evidence for the construction of the earthen rampart was sparse; no samian or coins were recovered, and the coarse pottery consisted of only a few body sherds of indeterminate origin considered likely to be of Flavian date. However, it is not unreasonable to assume that the earthen rampart was one of the earliest features of the fortress to be built after its foundation, conventionally dated to A.D. 74/5 (Boon 1987, 1; Knight 1988, 2, 10), and this date is accepted here for its construction.