

Phase II: Rampart wall and turrets

There are three structural elements to Phase II: the stone rampart wall, the interval turret and the corner turret.

Rampart Wall

The rampart wall was inserted into the front of the earthen rampart which was cut back to accommodate it. It was built upon a foundation of river worn cobbles (width c. 1.8m, depth c. 0.5-0.6m – see fig. 8). No evidence was observed to suggest that the cobbles were set in mortar, although only a limited investigation of the foundations was possible. Boon notes the use of a lime mortar in the arguably Phase II cobble foundations of the southern corner (Boon 1963, 8).



Fig. 8.
Site D curtain wall section
showing cobble foundations

The first course of the wall sat on a faced plinth set 0.14-0.18m in front of the face of the wall (Boon 1963, 7, fig. 4). After it was completed, the area between the rear of the wall and the cut back rampart (width 0.35-0.5m) was backfilled with residual, displaced rampart material. The rear of the wall was only roughly finished, undoubtedly because it was never intended to be visible, and it is clear that it was never intended to be freestanding. Its construction sequence is illustrated in figs. 5 and 6. The facing of the wall has been badly robbed but survives in places and evidently

consisted of uneven courses (height 0.10 to 0.15m) of mainly Old Red Sandstone and some Liassic Limestone. Although no *in situ* evidence of painted plaster rendering survives on the face of the rampart wall, the fragments of plaster with so-called false jointing recovered from Phase IV contexts are considered to derive from the rampart wall¹. The rear of the wall was only roughly finished, undoubtedly because it was never intended to be visible. The rubble core generally consisted of large stones (dimensions c. 0.30 x 0.30 x 0.20m) interspersed with some smaller ones (dimensions c. 0.10 x 0.07 x 0.05m) set in a mortar of variously pink, yellow and ginger hue with small (less than 10mm) pebble inclusions. The surviving height of the rampart wall (relating to rebuild II see below p. 22) in the area of excavation was 2.70m, and its original width was c.1.5m.

Interval Turret

The construction technique employed for the interval turret (Site D see fig. 9 - internal dimensions 2.60 x 3.00m; wall thickness c. 0.95m) is similar to that of the rampart wall. A section of the rampart was removed to accommodate it and a foundation trench, filled with river worn cobbles, was cut (width 1.20m; depth c. 0.50m). No evidence was recovered to suggest that the cobble foundations were set in mortar, but as with those of the rampart wall and corner turret any mortar may have been leached out. This cobble foundation trench appeared continuous with that of the rampart wall although the walls of the turret above the level of the foundations butted against the rampart wall. Following the building of the turret walls the area between the sidewalls and the cut-back rampart was backfilled with residual, displaced rampart material (these deposits were unexcavated; fig. 10). The basement floor of the interval turret was made up of several compacted layers of construction trample, consisting of mixed deposits of mortar, clay, gravelly silt and charcoal (D9, D10, D17, D18 and D19), overlain by a paved floor and associated surface (D7).



Fig. 9. Site D. The interval tower from the north east after excavations

1 see p. 10 and 89

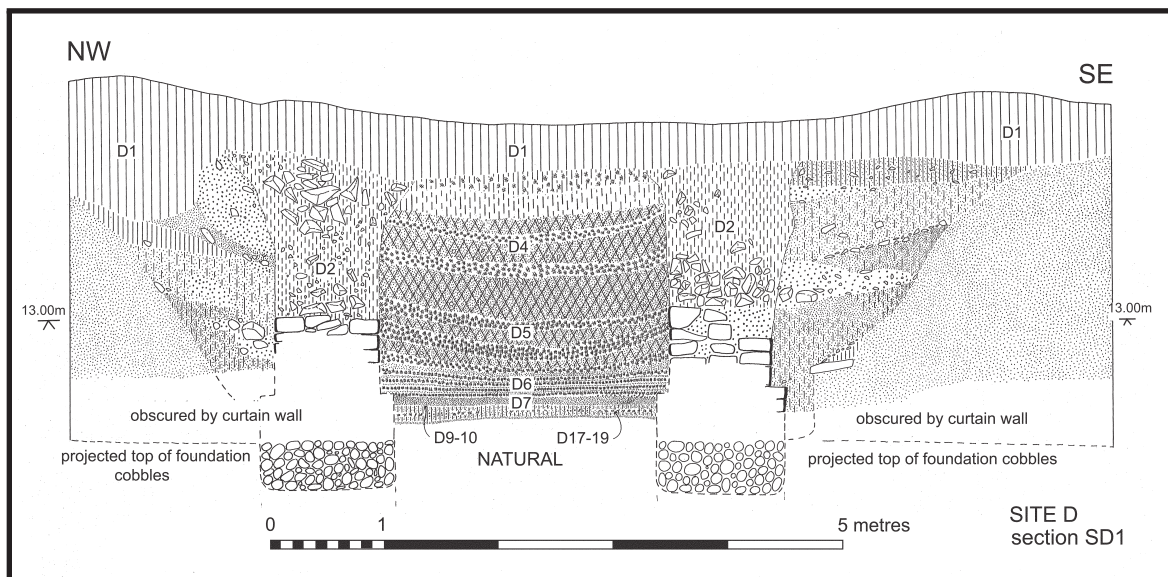


Fig. 10: Site D. Section across the front of the interval turret. (Key as fig. 5)

Corner Turret

The construction technique employed on the corner turret (Site A - fig. 11 - internal dimensions 2.50 x c. 3.70m; wall thickness c. 0.95m) was similar to that used for the interval turret. The rampart was cut back and foundation trenches, subsequently filled with river worn cobbles, were cut for the walls. As with the rampart wall and interval turret, no evidence was recovered to suggest that the cobble foundations were set in mortar. The turret walls were then built and the area between them and the cut-back rampart was filled with redeposited rampart material. The opportunity was taken to excavate this backfilled material on both the western (A17 and A23) and eastern side of the turret (A10 and A4). Despite the similarities with the construction of the interval turret there were two important differences. Firstly, the 'basement' room of the corner turret was deliberately backfilled, apparently immediately after its construction, with a mass of redeposited rampart material (A22) which was itself overlaid by deliberately backfilled heavy rubble excavated in 1909 (Boon 1963, 9). This treatment would render the basement of the corner turret unusable (fig. 13). Secondly, the lower footings of the corner turret were much deeper than those of the interval turret. A slot in the outside of the western wall (A21; fig. 12) is interpreted as relating to a misaligned pile (others would have been incorporated into the core of the walling and consequently are not visible). The possible function of this is discussed on p. 41. A number of major structural cracks were visible in the north-south walls of the corner turret (figs. 14 and 15).

On the exterior surface of the north wall of the corner turret a patch of plaster rendering (1.3m x 0.9m), previously recorded by Bosenquet and King in 1909 (1963, 49), was observed (fig. 16). A single coat (c. 30mm thick) of plaster rendering had been applied to the external face of the turret and while it was still wet, grooves were inscribed (c. 6mm wide and up to 5mm deep) in positions that replicated the course work defined by the underlying masonry. This surface was then treated to a coat of brilliant white lime wash, perhaps while the plaster was still damp to enhance bonding, and then the grooves were picked out in red paint. The plaster was visible in the recessed joints between the blocks extending onto the margins of the blocks

themselves with ragged edges. No plaster remains on the centre of the faces, but the ragged edges are consistent with plaster that had originally been applied to the whole surface rather than just to the joint areas. If the treatment was applied to all of the visible external surfaces of the turret (and perimeter wall) this would have appeared impressive and would have provided an opportunity to regularise the coursework to form true false jointing. The surviving evidence of the dressing and coursing of the facing stones in the fortress defences indicates the masonry was laid to a high degree of quality; suggesting that it was rendered for effect rather than to conceal poor workmanship. This same phenomenon was noticed on the facing stones of the arena in the amphitheatre (Wheeler and Wheeler 1928, 118, pl. XXIV.1-2), again covering well faced stones.

There is no evidence for the date of this rendering, and although it is reasonable to assume its application was contemporaneous with the construction of the turret it is just possible that it was associated with the later building behind the turret – the so-called cookhouse (see below Phase V). If so the rendered turret wall would have formed an internal wall of the ‘cookhouse’ and the rendering would not have been ubiquitous to the external surface of the turret. However, the comparable evidence from the amphitheatre suggest this is unlikely. That no render occurs on the other external walls of the turret is because these would have been covered by material deposited to make up the rampart walkway immediately after the insertion of the turret.

This *in situ* plaster was conserved in 1982 by Kate Hunter and Peter Price of the Conservation Section of the Archaeology Department, University College Cardiff (now Cardiff University). Observation in 1996 showed it to have withstood fourteen years of elemental weathering relatively undamaged. A note on the procedure used for conservation is included in the archive.

Because of the later rebuilds of the rampart wall around the corner turret (Phase IV), the only demonstrable relationship between the three Phase II structural elements was that the interval turret butted against the rampart wall. However, it is reasonable to assume that the corner turret also butted against the original rampart wall. Elsewhere at Caerleon, where the masonry survives above the level of the foundations, the turrets are found to abut the rampart wall (Zienkiewicz 1999, 130; *contra*. Nash-Williams 1931, 108; Boon 1963, 7). The fact that the cobble-filled foundation trenches of the interval turret and rampart wall appear continuous suggest that the butt joint is just a constructional technique and that all three elements of Phase II belong to the same construction episode. Although not conclusive evidence of their contemporaneity it may be noted that the mortar used in the rampart wall was similar to that used in both the interval and corner turrets. Manning has noted that timber interval towers of first century date are usually set between one to two metres into the rampart from the rampart’s toe (1981a, 82). If, as is reasonable to assume, this was the case with the Phase I earthen and timber phases at Caerleon then the timber turrets would have had to have been dismantled prior to the cutting back of the front of the rampart to insert the rampart wall. It is unlikely after this necessary demolition that the turrets would either have been rebuilt in timber or that they would have been left unbuilt in stone for any considerable time.

An important stratified find was the unworn *as* of Domitian dated to A.D. 86¹ recovered from one of the fills (A4) of the foundation trench of the corner turret. Its position means that it dates the backfill of the foundation trench after completion of the turret wall at least to the top of the basement level. This provides a terminus post quem for the construction of the corner turret and by extension the other interval turrets and the rampart wall of the fortress. Its unworn condition allows the possibility that Phase II could be dated to soon after its minting. The samian and coarse pottery from the Phase II contexts are both compatible with a late Flavian date. Two other finds recovered from the floor surface of the interval turret (D7) also support a Flavian date. They are a worn sestertius of Titus dated to A.D. 77-82², and a small body fragment of a pillar-moulded bowl of blue-green glass³. The latter a form generally out of use by the end of the first century. It is unlikely that Phase II is later in date than A.D. 100 and it is more probably ten years earlier.

1 see p. 47 no. 5.

2 see p. 47 no. 2.

3 see p. 73 no. 2.



Fig. 11: Site A. The corner turret from the north



Fig. 12: Site A. The corner turret pile slot from the north-west

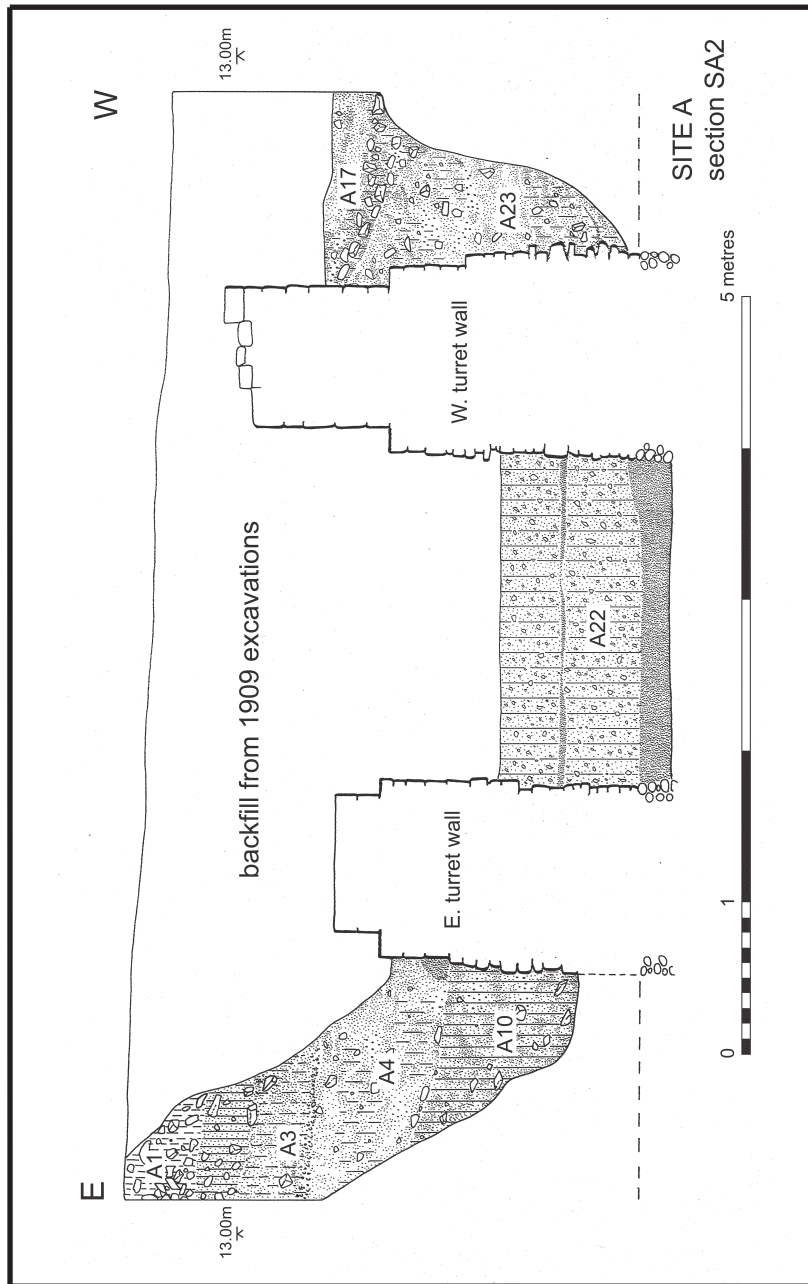


Fig. 13: Site A. Transverse section SA2 across the corner turret.
(Key as for fig. 5)

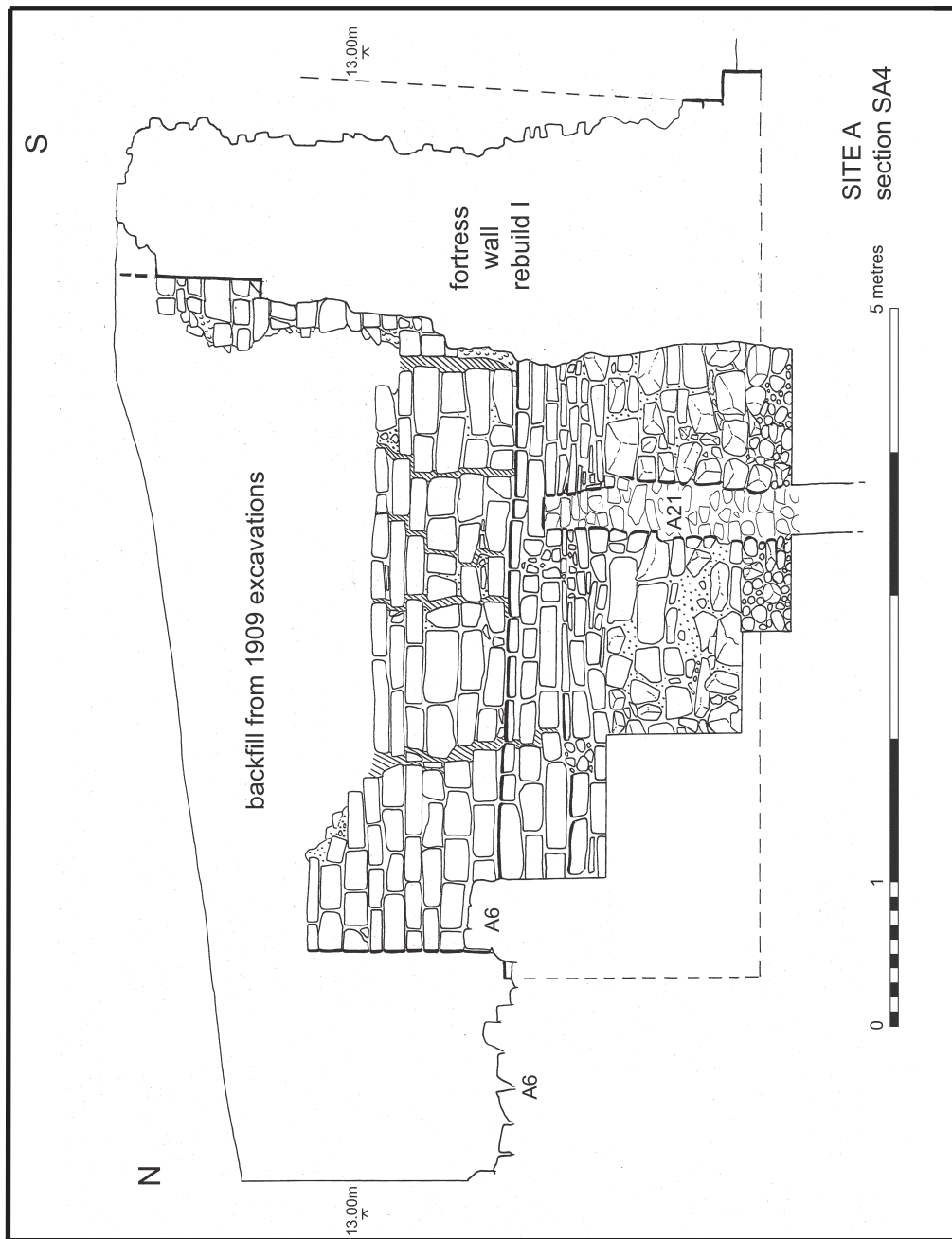


Fig. 14: Site A. Elevation of the west wall of the corner turret showing the slot for the presumed pile.

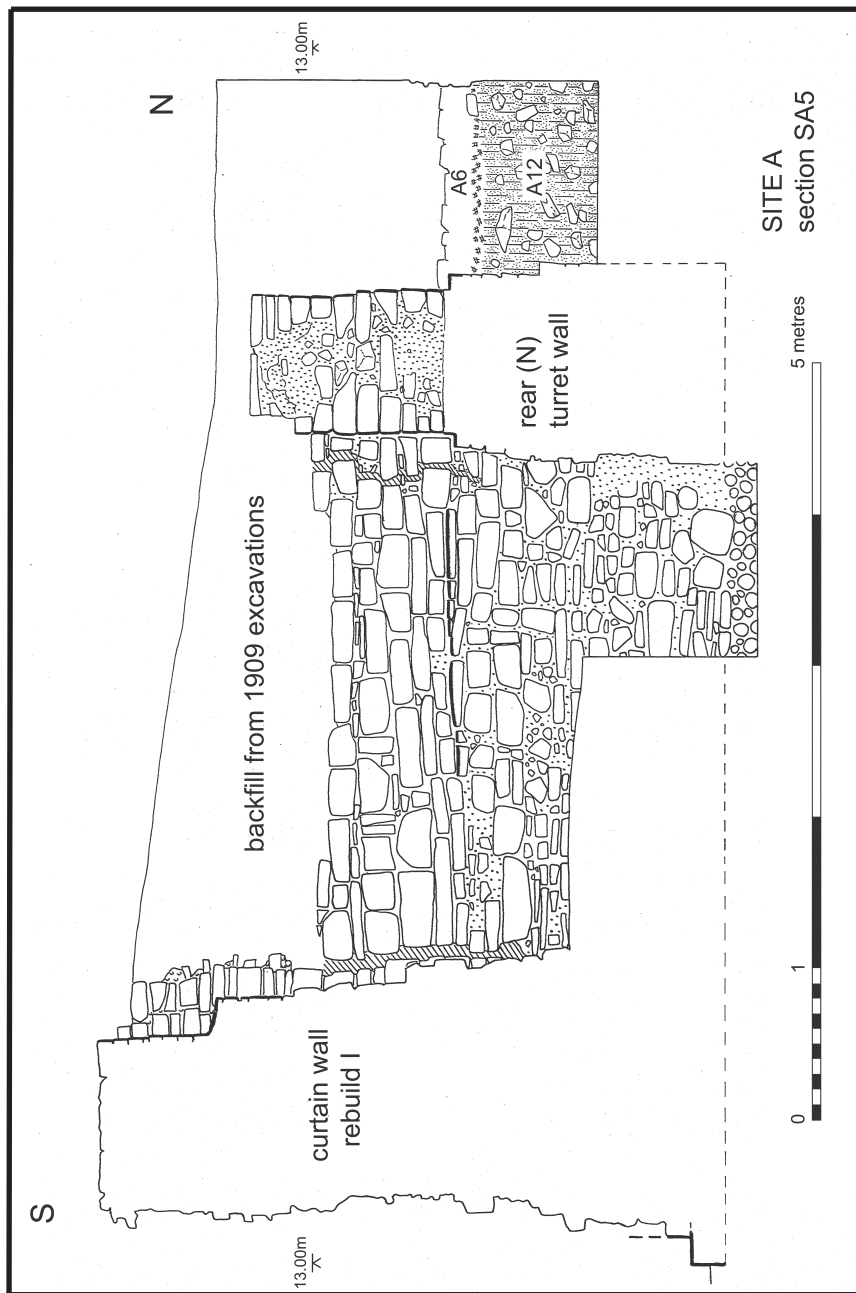


Fig. 15: Site A. Elevation of the east face of the west wall of the corner turret.

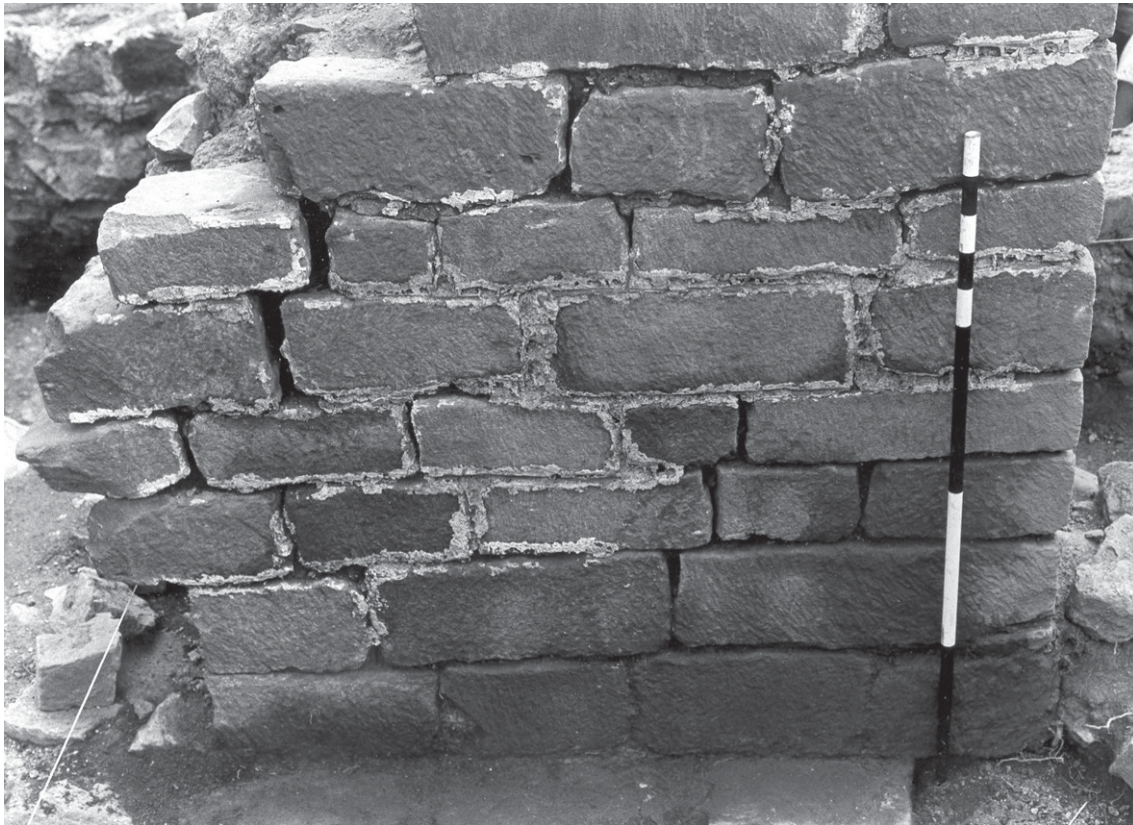


Fig. 16: Site A. the north face of the corner turret showing the 'false jointing'. The detail below shows how the grooves were picked out in red paint.