

7. The East Granary

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INTRODUCTION (FIGS. 7.1, 7.2A AND 7.3)

The east granary was less well preserved than the west granary and survived best at its west end (fig. 7.1). Although not all of the granary lay within the excavated areas, it is possible to estimate its overall dimensions

(fig. 7.2A). A portion of the east wall survived to its full width and there was some evidence for the west wall. Two blocks were visible in the west edge of the trench; though indicated on plans, these were uncontexted, but photographs (not reproduced here) would seem to indicate that these were part of the west wall of the granary. If the full line of a sleeper wall is

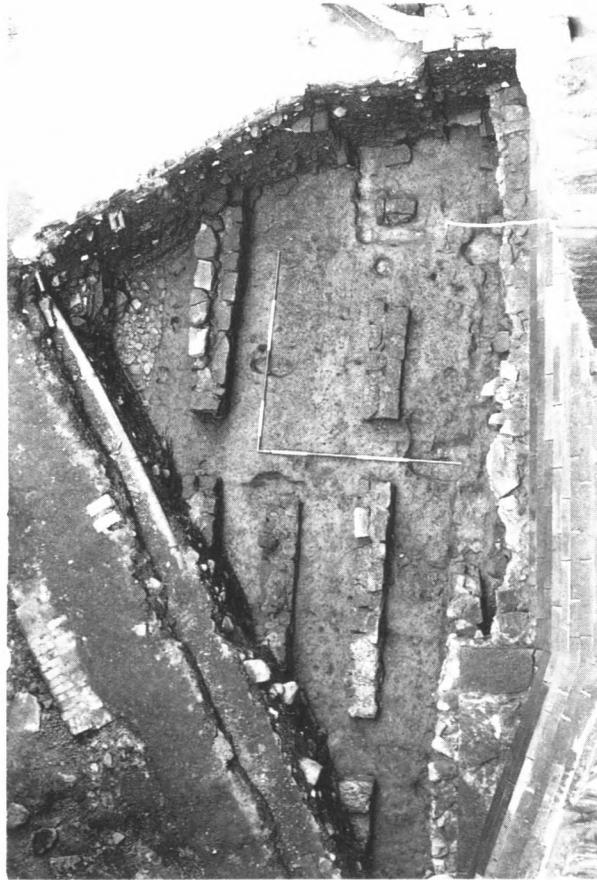


Fig. 7.1 The western portion of the east granary, excavated in 1981.

plotted out, based on the measurements of the surviving sections, the west wall should fall at the same point as the two blocks. This gives an internal length of 14.25m. Assuming that the west wall was of the same width as the east, the estimated external length of the building is 16.05m, excluding buttresses (fig. 7.3); this would bring the west end of the granary up to the east side of the *via praetoria*.

The north wall did not survive to its full width and the south wall had been destroyed by the construction of the medieval castle keep. There is no evidence to suggest that any of the east granary walls were of extra thickness to combat subsidence into earlier features, as was the case with the west granary. On the contrary, both the east wall and the rows of sleeper walls in the east granary were narrower than those of the west granary. In the conjectural reconstruction shown in fig. 7.3, it has been assumed that the north and south walls were of the same width as the surviving east wall. It is also assumed that the space between rows of sleeper walls, and between the outermost rows and the external walls, was consistent at c. 0.50m; the internal width can be estimated at 4.05m. Based on these assumptions the estimated internal width of the granary would be 4.05m and the external width, excluding buttresses, would be 5.90m. The comparable dimensions for the west granary are 4.50m and 6.25m.

At some time after its construction a coin hoard dated to the early third century was deposited beneath the raised floor of the east granary. Like its counterpart to the west, this granary underwent a change of use in its later phases, the spaces between the sleeper walls being filled, and modifications taking place in the area of the loading bay. There were only a few sherds of pottery from the east granary, so all that can be said about the date of this modification is that it took place in the late third century or later. The change of use was marked by the ritual deposition of a bronze dodecahedron in the gap between two sleeper walls. Bronze dodecahedra have been found on many sites in the northern half of the Roman Empire. There are two other examples from

North Britain; one from South Shields (Allason-Jones and Miket 1984, 217–9) and from Corbridge (*ibid.*, 219). It is not clear to what use the building was put after this modification. Analysis of deposits associated with late activity around the area of the robbed loading bay appear to suggest domestic refuse, 'foul and rotting conditions' and the presence of weeds; however the waterlogged plant remains included such imported exotics as coriander and fig pips (Part 20, p. 241).

In the post-Roman period the granary was robbed and probably deliberately levelled (see Part 12).

CONSTRUCTION OF THE GRANARY (FIG. 7.2A)

Prior to construction, levelling layers of sand, gravel and clay (3427* and 3329*) were laid down.

A portion of east wall, 1.55m in length and 0.90m in width, extended southwards from beneath probable early medieval layers which were left *in situ*. Within a foundation cut (3357*, fill 3322*) the wall survived for the most part as a single course of sandstone blocks (3325) with a rubble core (3324) (fig. 7.2A). Two stones of the second course were still *in situ*. Part of a buttress (3383), 0.50m in length and consisting of two courses of dressed sandstone blocks, also projected from beneath the early medieval layers overlying the north-east corner of the granary.

Evidence for the location of the north wall was provided by several discontinuous surviving sectors. The western half of the north wall had been destroyed, and was partially overlain by the south wall of a building (Building A), whose ecclesiastical function will be discussed in the medieval report to follow. A section drawing (not illustrated) and archive notes describe a 'hard surface' of sand, clay and stones (311R3), apparently running beneath the wall of Building A. When plotted on fig. 7.2A, the position of the 'hard surface' corresponds exactly with the predicted position of the buttress at the north-west corner of the

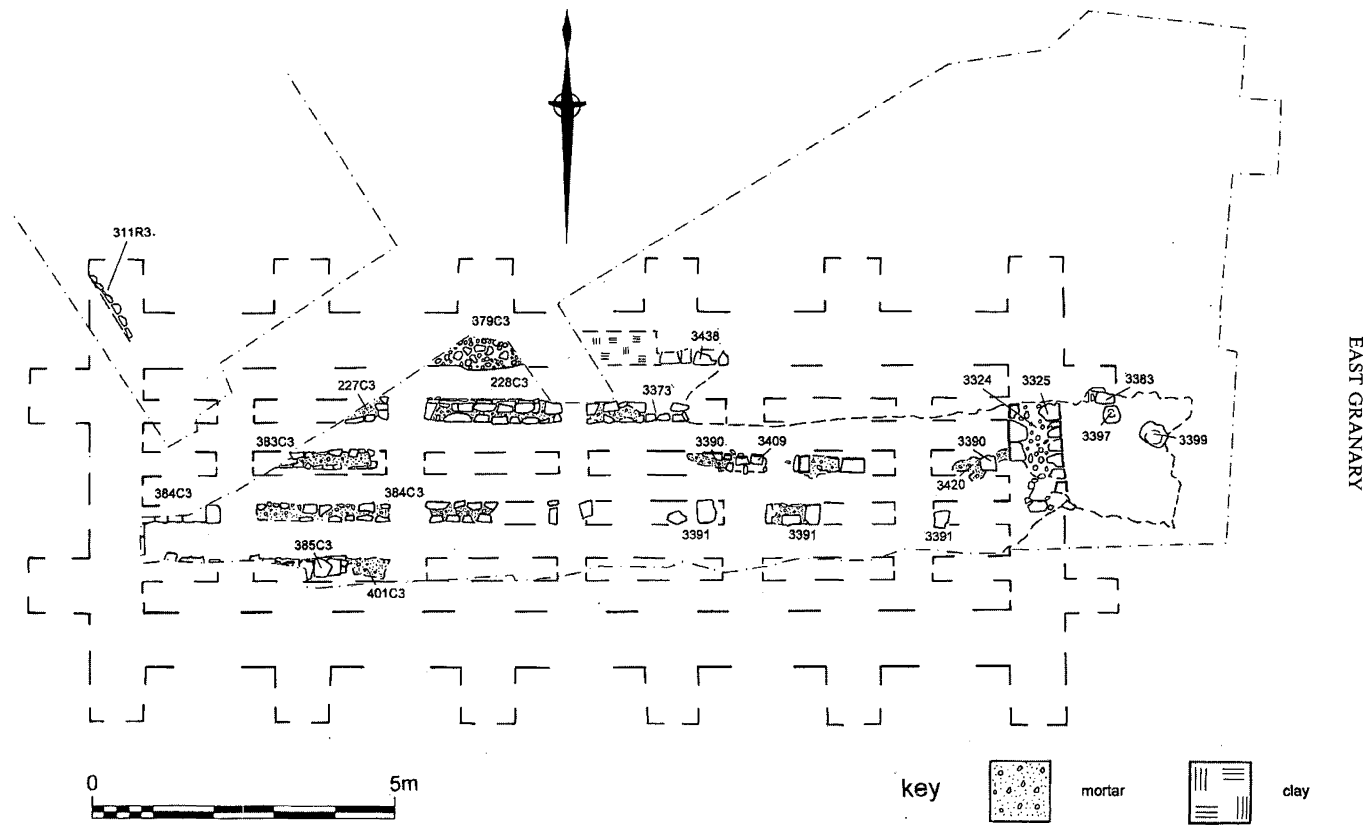


Fig. 7.2A Remains of the primary east granary. Scale 1:125.

granary. It therefore seems best interpreted as the remains of the buttress foundations.

Further east was the robber trench for the south wall of the Building A. Visible in the bottom of this trench was a portion of the granary wall foundation trench (400C3*), 1.50m in length. It contained a lower layer of cobbles (399C3*), overlain by yellow clay (398C3*), a thin band of brown clay (397C3*), and an upper layer of cobbles (379C3) (fig. 7.2A).

To the east of these cobbles was a band of yellow clay, 1–1.50m in length; it probably represents remains of the granary wall foundations. The south wall of Building A appears to have terminated somewhere in this area, and immediately to the east the only surviving part of the granary wall was found. This consisted of a row of two courses of dressed blocks (3438) of the inner face, 0.70m in length (fig. 7.2A).

Much of the eastern end of the north wall had been destroyed by post-medieval cellars, and the north-east corner was covered by flagging and lines of kerb stones of probable early medieval date, representing features associated with Building A.

Within the granary four rows of sleeper walls survived in various states of preservation. These sleeper walls were constructed of mortared sandstone blocks and averaged 0.40m in width, the northern row (227C3/228C3/3373) surviving to four or five courses in three places in the west half of the structure (fig. 7.1). The eastern part this row lay beneath probable early medieval features and was not excavated.

To the south of this lay the remains of a row (383C3, 3390), of which only one or two courses survived *in situ*, with some disturbed material (3409). The sleeper walls in the centre of the row had been totally removed by later grave cuts. There were remnants of mortar bedding (3330*) where the wall had been robbed out. At a similar distance to the south the next row (384C3, 3391) survived to one or two courses, again with its central area disrupted by grave cuts. Parts of this row were found by F.G. Simpson in 1929 but were

described as a medieval wall (Spain and Simpson 1930, p.505 and fig. opp. p.502, reproduced in Paper II as fig. 4).

The southernmost row (385C3) only survived at the western end of the granary as a portion 1.60m in length and a maximum of two courses high, with spreads of mortar bedding (401C3) continuing eastwards.

Throughout the area were mixed spreads of mortar, sand and gravel (3423*, and other contexts noted in the site archive). These spreads probably represent construction debris, as does a patch of sand and gravel (3414*).

Primary loading bay: The remains of the east end of the building suggest two buttresses widely spaced to accommodate a loading bay at the end of the granary furthest away from the *via praetoria*, a layout which has also been suggested for the west granary. The primary loading bay was constructed in timber, or had a timber porch over it, because outside the east wall of the east granary, just south of the remains of the buttress, were two post holes. One (3397) was very close to the buttress; the other (3399) was a little to the south-east, and was found with packing stones still *in situ* (fig. 7.2A).

Dating evidence

A *terminus post quem* for the construction of the granary is provided by a coin hoard deposited beneath the raised floor, and subsequently disturbed (see below). Although there are some complications regarding the dating of the hoard, the most likely interpretation is that it provides a *terminus post quem* of A.D. 210 (see Part 17, pp. 180–1).

LATE THIRD CENTURY ONWARDS CHANGE OF USE OF GRANARY (FIG. 7.3)

Modifications to the granary were associated with a possible change of use. As in the west granary, the sleeper walls were reduced to a maximum surviving height of four courses, and the spaces between them were filled in.

Before the underfloor spaces were filled in with soil, the gap in the centre of the northern row of sleeper walls (fig. 7.3) was blocked with sandstone rubble (3389*). Overlying the rubble it appeared that a small surface or platform had been constructed. This consisted of a deposit of light brown sandy silt, containing charcoal, mortar, animal bone, small sherds of pottery and sandstone fragments (3378*), on top of which were flat, irregularly-shaped pieces of sandstone. On the centre of this lay a copper alloy dodecahedron. The material overlying the dodecahedron and extending to fill in the space to the north of the sleeper wall was a sandy silt (3387*), of the same composition as the matrix of the surface (3378*) on which the dodecahedron stood. The deposition of this object was therefore part of the process of infilling, and the deliberate way in which it was laid on a specially constructed platform suggests it was a ritual deposit connected with the change of use of the granary.

There appears to be a curious parallel in the west granary, where the only known gap in the otherwise continuous sleeper walls occurs in a similar position and was also blocked during the modification of the west granary, and a stone feature built in that position. However, this could be coincidence since there could have been other blocked gaps in parts of the buildings which were destroyed or remain unexcavated. Only a portion of the west granary lay in the excavation area, and many of the sleeper walls in the east granary had been obliterated by Anglo-Saxon graves.

Elsewhere surviving upstands of material were found in the spaces between the sleeper walls. These consisted of sandy clay and mortar with sandstone fragments (388C3*, 3367* and other contexts noted in the site archive).

Inside and adjacent to the east wall of the granary was an upstand of orange/dark brown silty clay (3364*) isolated from other layers of fill by grave cuts and other intrusions. This contained 12 *denarii* which formed the core of a hoard described by R. Brickstock as representing 'a small savings hoard of the early third century' (see below). Other *denarii* of the same general date were scattered among the fills of

Anglo-Saxon graves which cut through the area. Amongst and around the coins at the core of the hoard were a large number of small iron nails or studs. Archive photographs (nos 90/60/34 and 90/60/35, not reproduced here) show a mass of these corroded together, and they could represent one or more hobnailed boots or shoes in which the hoard had been hidden. The same photographs also show some of the coins of the core of the hoard. These had not been disturbed by grave cuts, but clearly had been dispersed to some extent, away from each other and from the hobnails. It seems likely that they had been disturbed during the infilling of the underfloor spaces, having been deposited at an earlier date.

Abutting the south face of one of the northern sleeper walls (228C3) was material derived from an earlier floor surface, consisting of large fragments of *opus signinum* said to be lying upside down on 'sticky brown soil' with stones (390C3*). Between the next two rows of sleeper walls (385C3 and 384C3) was compact soil (382C3*) and a gritty layer (372C3*) also containing *opus signinum*, mortar and small stones. These deposits overlay the sandy clays filling the spaces between the sleeper walls, and may possibly represent the remains of an earth floor in use after the building was modified. The presence of *opus signinum* suggests that, as in the forecourt granary at South Shields (Bidwell and Speak 1994, 100), the flagged floor had been covered with a mortar screed.

At the east end of the building were other patches of material lying between and over sleeper walls, which may represent the remains of floors. These were a firm dark sandy loam (3400*) and a firm sandy clay (3382*). In the eastern and central part of the building, levels were c. 0.30m lower than in the west, but these were the areas most heavily disturbed by grave cuts.

Finds

Dating evidence – pottery

Of the small amount of pottery associated with this modification, most was residual or of unidentified fabric. In the small group of pottery found in the deposits between the sleeper walls there was only

one sherd of late gritty ware dated to the late third century and later (388C3* (81EZ)). Amongst disturbance which included *opus signinum* (390C3* (81FA)) there were sherds of Central Gaulish colour-coated ware and Moselkeramik.

Other finds

Copper alloy: fig. 18.2, no. 16, dodecahedron, 3378*

LATE THIRD OR FOURTH CENTURY

(FIG. 7.2B)

Activity in the area of the loading bay

In a modification presumably related to the change of use of the granary, the primary timber structure was demolished. The large post hole furthest from the granary (3399) had a fill (3398*) containing a sherd of late third- or fourth-century pottery. The post hole beside the buttress (3377) was filled with a mixture of sand and clay (3396*), possibly the same as a sandy clay deposit (3356*) which covered a wide area and also lapped over the fill of the other post hole. This deposit was itself overlain by more sandy clays (3362* and 3361, both overlain by 3331).

These layers were cut by a linear stony feature and a post hole. The former consisted of a construction cut (3358) running north/south at a distance of 0.70m from the east granary wall; it contained orange brown clay (3353, 3343*) and a layer of irregularly shaped sandstone slabs in gritty silt (3346). This may represent the robbed-out remains of a platform, or possibly the bottom of a flight of steps, the upper part having been robbed. The silty matrix in which the stone slabs were set contained clinker, cinder and charcoal, and there was a more substantial assemblage of waterlogged seeds than in any of the samples tested for plant remains (see Part 20, pp. 240–2). This was dominated by hundreds of hazel nutshell fragments; coriander was also abundant and there was a moderate number of fig pips in addition to a wide variety of other seeds (see Table 20.4). Fish bones were also quite common, which is considered unusual in a Roman context

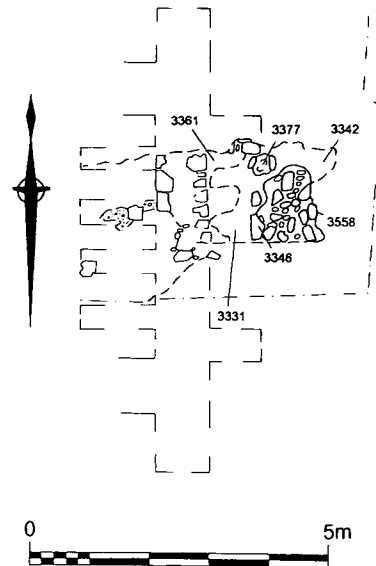


Fig. 7.2B Modifications to the loading bay of the east granary, dating from the late third to mid-fourth century. Scale 1:125.

(p. 241). Fly puparia were abundant, probably reflecting foul and rotting conditions.

A post hole (3377), containing substantial packing stones, lay at the north-west corner of the stone platform and close to the buttress. Possibly it could have carried a support for a porch, or a set of timber steps between the stone platform and the granary wall.

Finds

Dating evidence – pottery

The fill (3398*) of one of the post holes (3399) of the primary loading bay contained a rim and body sherd of a Nene Valley ware funnel necked beaker with beaded rim, dated to the late third or fourth century. Three sherds of Local Traditional Ware were found in a layer (3361) above the post holes. From the stone feature (3346, 3353) which replaced the primary loading bay there was a small group of pottery including a Nene Valley colour coated coarse ware form of fourth-century date, and sherds of calcite gritted ware and late gritty ware.

The robbing of the east granary is discussed in Part 12.

APPENDIX: NOTES ON CONJECTURAL PLANS OF EAST AND WEST GRANARIES

Fig. 7.3 shows conjectural plans for both the east and west granaries. Despite the difference in construction the internal width of each granary is roughly the same, a little over 4m. The internal length of the west granary is assumed to be the same as that of the east, 14.25m.

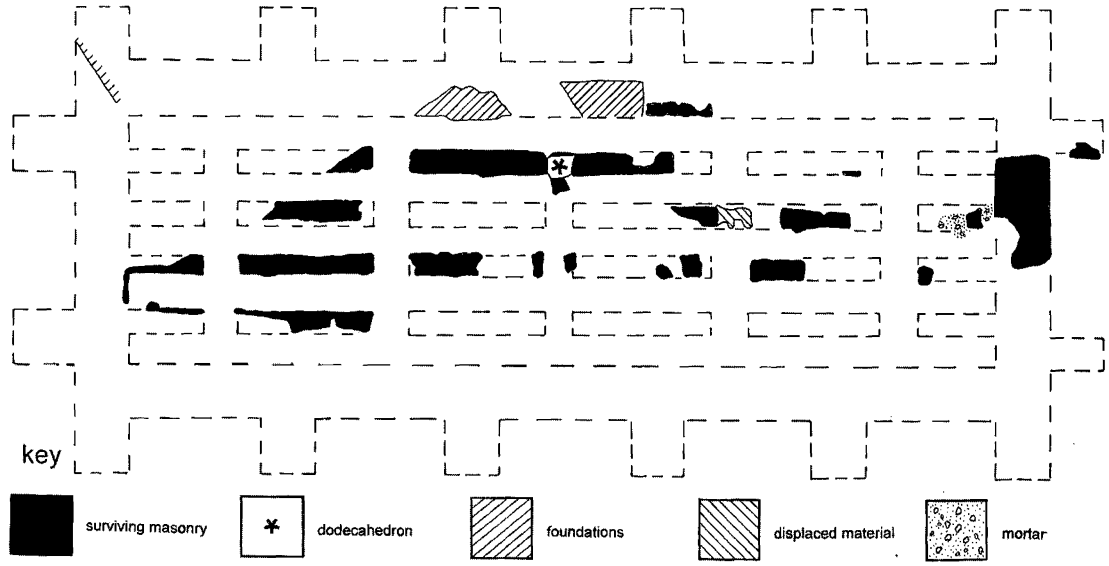
The existence of two complete sleeper walls in the east granary allows us to construct the internal layout with some certainty. Although the sleeper walls of the west granary have some gaps along their length these appear to be from later intrusions and it would seem that the more substantial walls here were of continuous construction. The wider sleeper walls of the west granary seem to be consistent with its substantial construction, although the number of rows is the same in each granary.

The proposed layout of the buttresses of the west granary is easier to justify than that of the east. The existence of the remains of four buttresses allows the spacing to be calculated with some certainty, which ties in with the proposed length calculated from the other granary. The buttresses of the east granary present more problems given the lack of physical evidence.

The plot is based on the Period 5 granaries of Type I at South Shields (Bidwell and Speak 1994, 19–24). It is assumed, therefore, that the buttresses of the north and south walls are of the same width as, and line up with, both the east and west walls. Those of the west wall are assumed to line up with the internal edge of the north and south walls. The spacing provided by these can be applied to the north and south walls with some success giving a consistent and plausible spacing. If the stony ‘hard surface’ found in Railway Arch 3 is interpreted as the remains of granary foundations, then this corresponds exactly with the position suggested for the buttress at the north-west corner of the building.

In the case of both granaries, the layout of the area of the loading bays can only be conjectured. The remnant of a buttress on the east wall of the east granary provides the basis for the plan.

Apart from the measures taken to strengthen the west granary against subsidence into earlier ditches, the conjectural plans of the two buildings are basically similar. This supports the argument that they were both part of the primary construction of the fort.



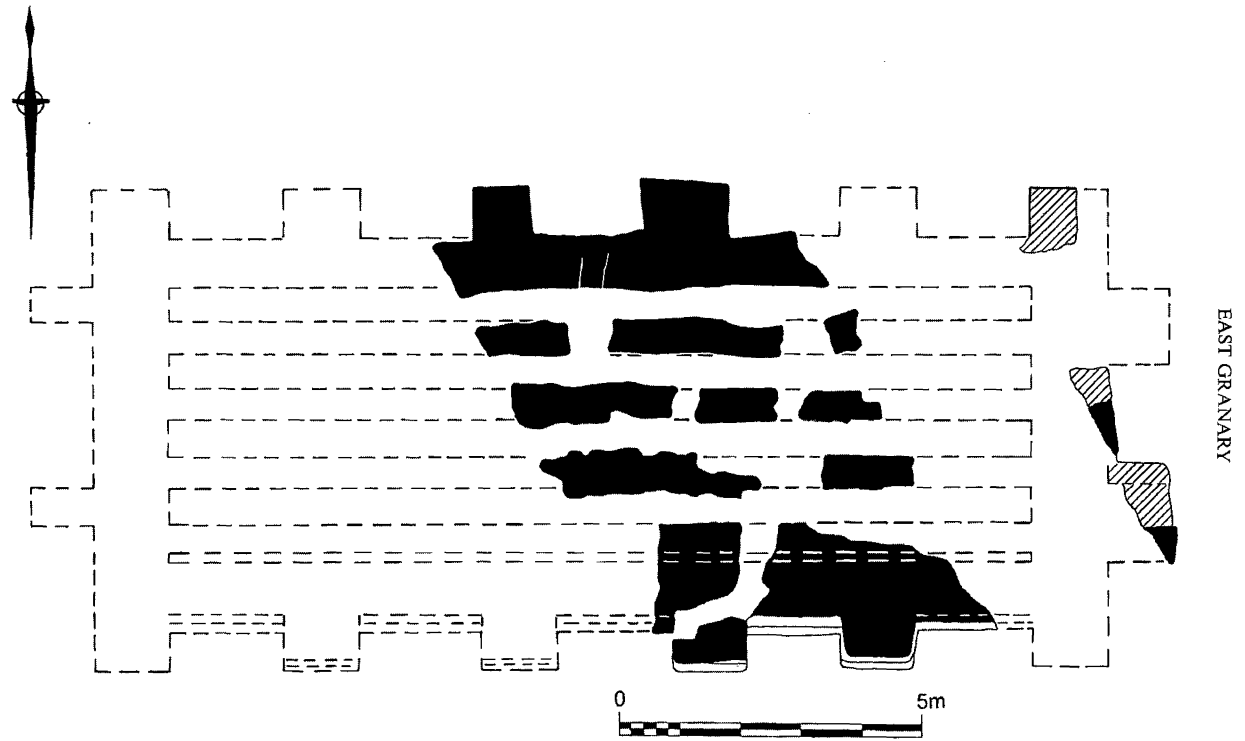


Fig. 7.3 Conjectural plans of the west granary (facing page) and east granary (this page). Scale 1:125.

