

Weoley Castle – reduced archive

3.0 Post-war Excavations

3.4 Periods I-III

3.4.7 The Wooden Kitchen



Scan 297

An Archaeological Overview of Weoley Castle, Birmingham

Summary

Weoley Castle is a fortified, medieval manor-house situated four miles to the southwest of Birmingham city centre in the historic county of Worcestershire (National Grid Reference SP 02158275). The site entered into the ownership of Birmingham City Council in c.1930 and thereafter two campaigns of archaeological excavation were undertaken; between 1932 and 1940 and 1955 and 1962. More recently the site has been subject to an ambitious initiative, “*The Weoley Castle Development Project*”, joint funded by Birmingham City Council, The National Heritage Lottery Fund and English Heritage. The aims of the project were to consolidate the surviving masonry, to increase community understanding of and involvement with the monument and to re-assess the finds collection and surviving archaeological archive. The following reports form the third strand of the initiative, “*An Archaeological Overview of Weoley Castle, Birmingham*”. The project was undertaken by Barbican Research Associates, managed by Stephanie Rátkai and monitored by Birmingham City Museum and Art Gallery and was submitted in final form in August 2011, consisting of a series of reports on the archaeological archive, the ceramic finds and the small (portable) finds etc. The reports were presented in PDF format and will be available on-line, hosted by BRA (see www.barbicanra.co.uk for links). Hard and digital copies of the reports will be held by BMAG at selected museum properties. It is intended that the reports will form the basis for a synthesised monograph publication intended to bring knowledge of this important monument and the results of its past excavations to a wider audience.



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An Archaeological Overview of Weoley Castle, Birmingham consists of the following reports; the high-lighted titles indicate which section the reader is currently examining.

Archaeological Archive

Weoley Castle – an appraisal of the surviving Archaeological Archive by Stephen J. Linnane

Weoley Castle – the reduced archive, 2.0 Pre-war Excavations

Weoley Castle – the reduced archive, 3.0 Post-war Excavations, 3.1 The Trenches

Weoley Castle – the reduced archive, 3.0 Post-war Excavations, 3.2 The Moat

Weoley Castle - the reduced archive, 3.0 Post-war Excavations, 3.3 The Western Interior

Weoley Castle – the reduced archive, 3.0 Post-war Excavations, 3.4 Periods I-III

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Ceramics

Weoley Castle: A Reappraisal of and Report on the Pottery by Stephanie Rátkai

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Appendix 2: Deritend Ware

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Appendix 5: Sandy Micaceous and Micaceous wares

Appendix 6: Late Medieval Wares

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Appendix 9: Regional Imports

Appendix 10: Continental Imports

Small Finds

An appraisal of the portable finds from Weoley Castle, Birmingham by Quita Mould

Weoley Castle: small finds catalogue by Quita Mould

Structural Finds

Weoley Castle: Ceramic roofing material by Stephanie Rátkai

Weoley Castle: The loose architectural stones, an assessment by Dr. Richard K. Morris

Weoley Castle: The decorated window glass by Stephen J. Linnane

Weoley Castle: The Medieval Floor Tiles by Stephen J. Linnane

Weoley Castle – reduced archive

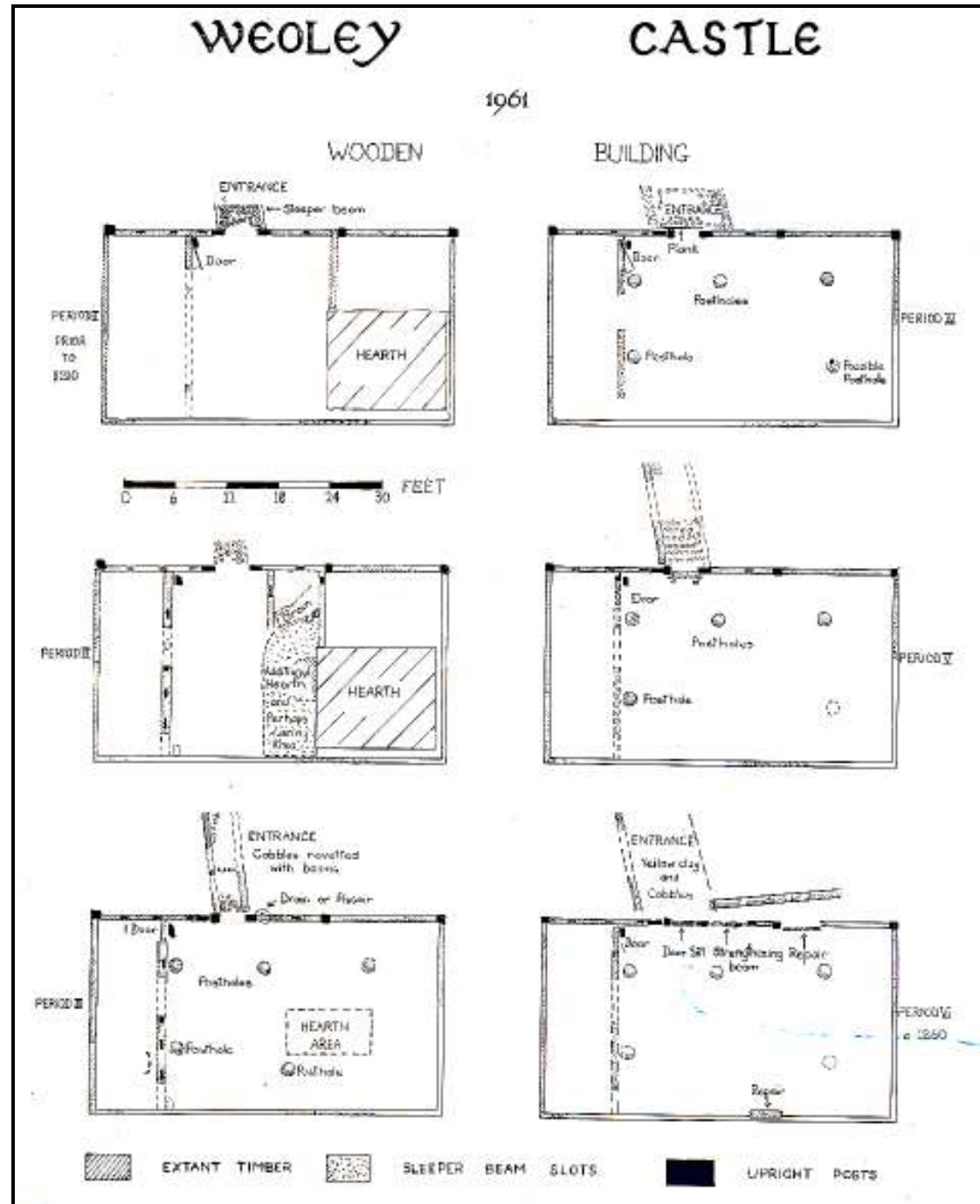
3.0 Post-war Excavations

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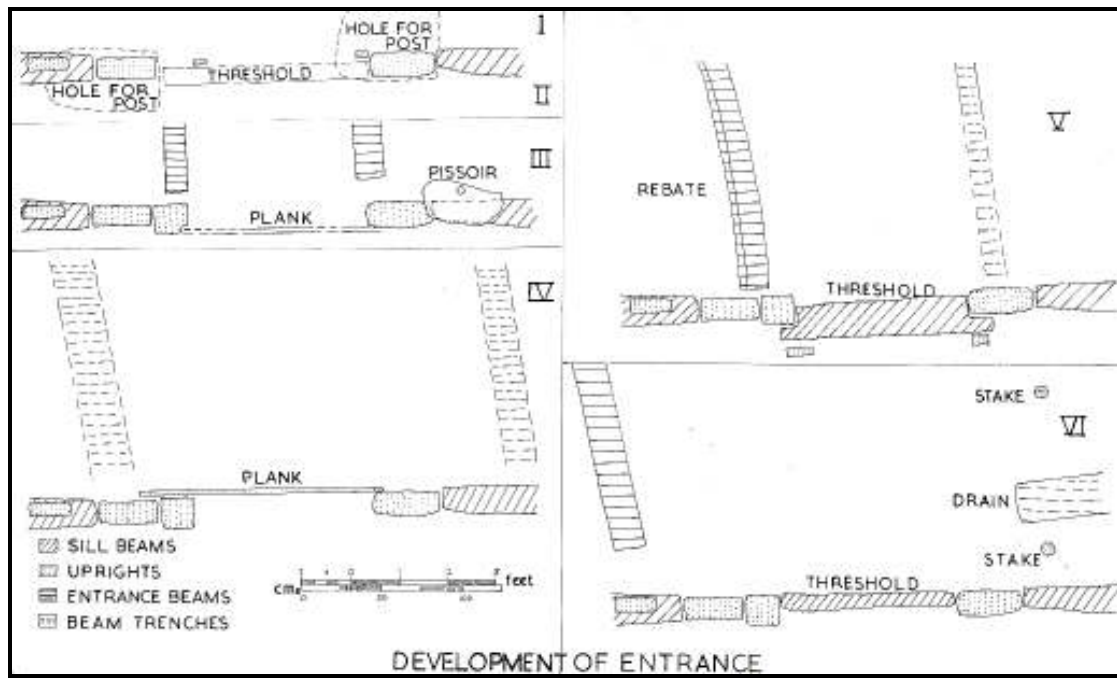
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Cover illustration: The north wall in Trench 4, looking north (Scan 297)

Plans

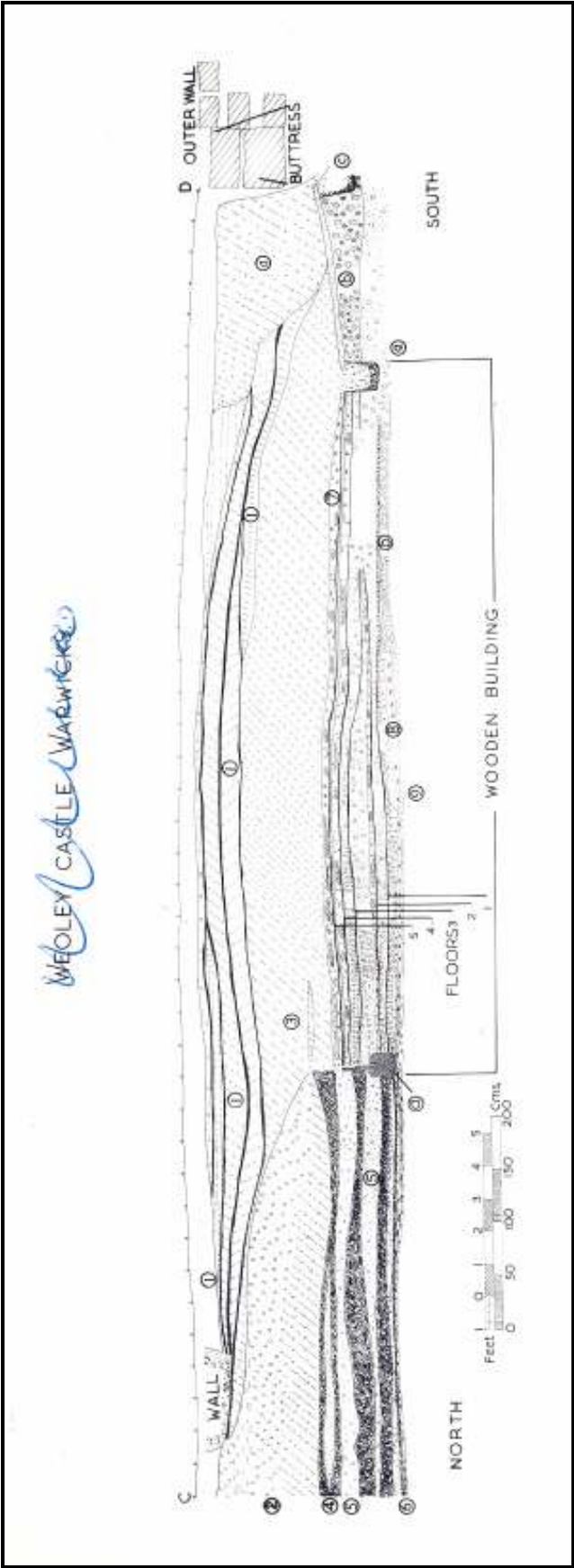




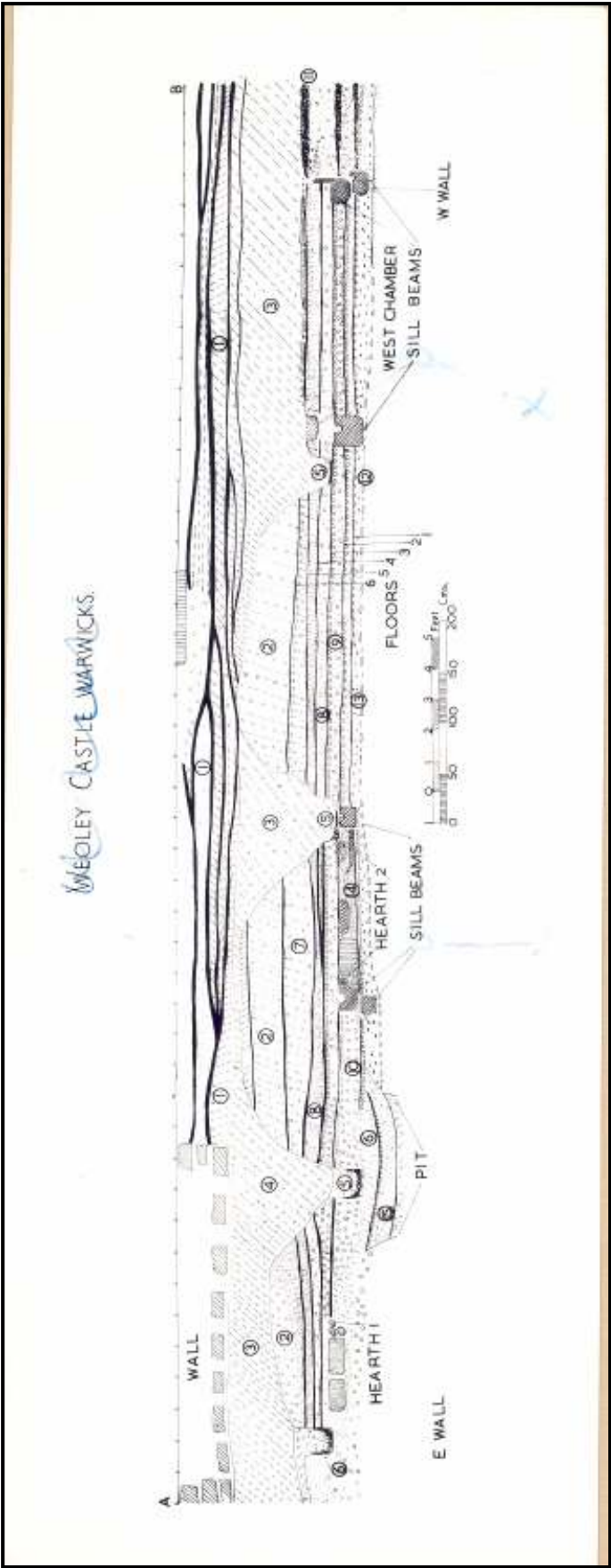


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Sections

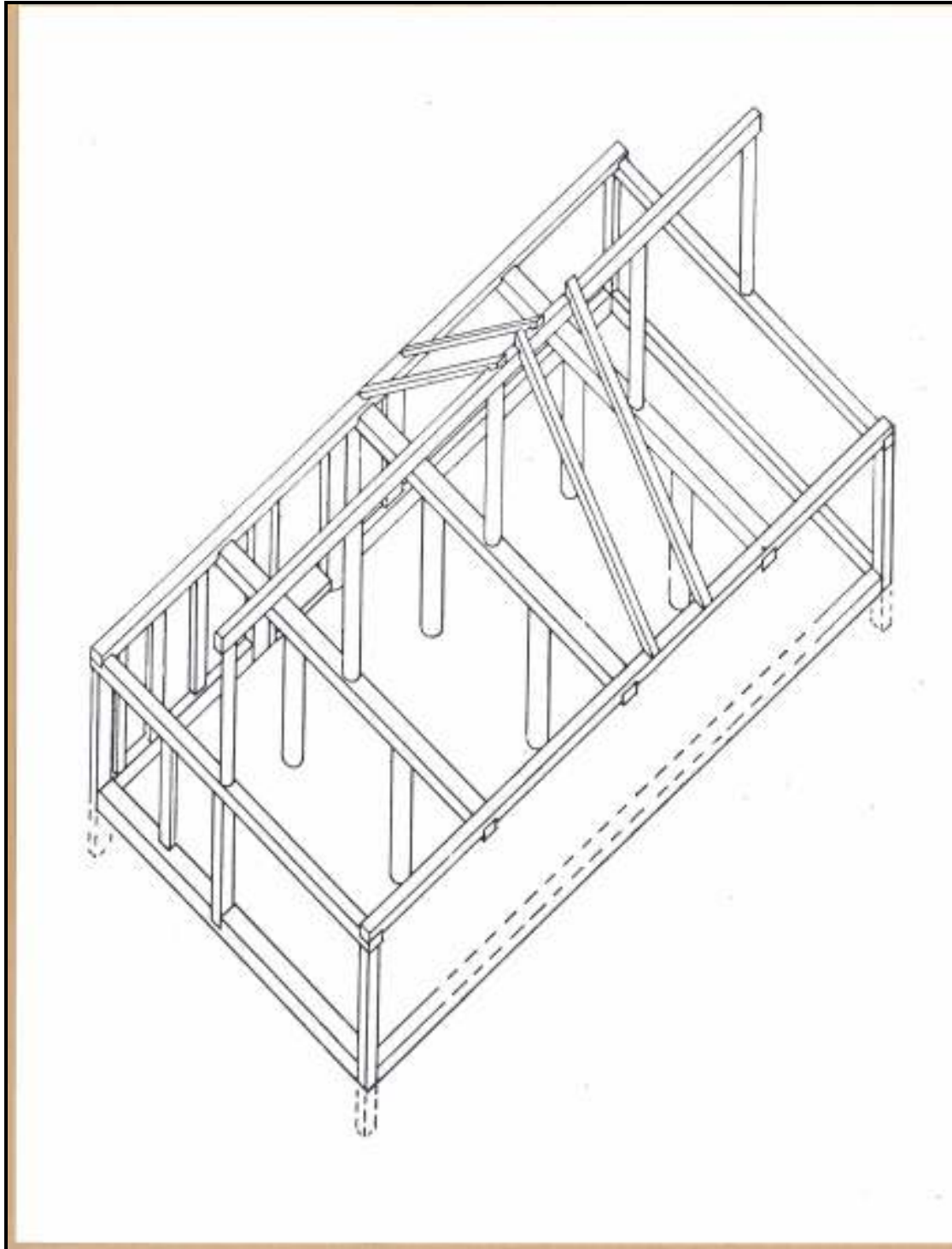


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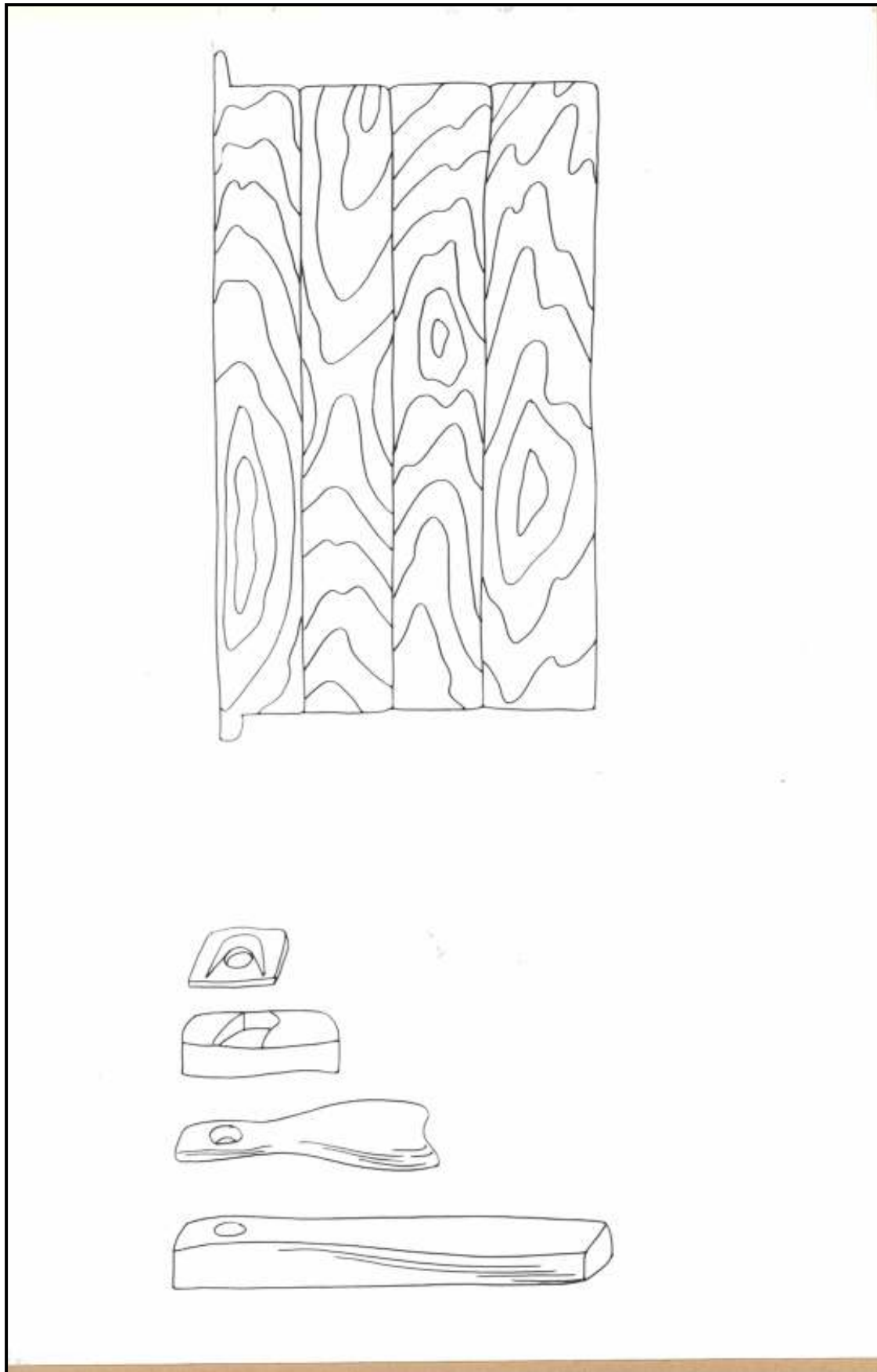


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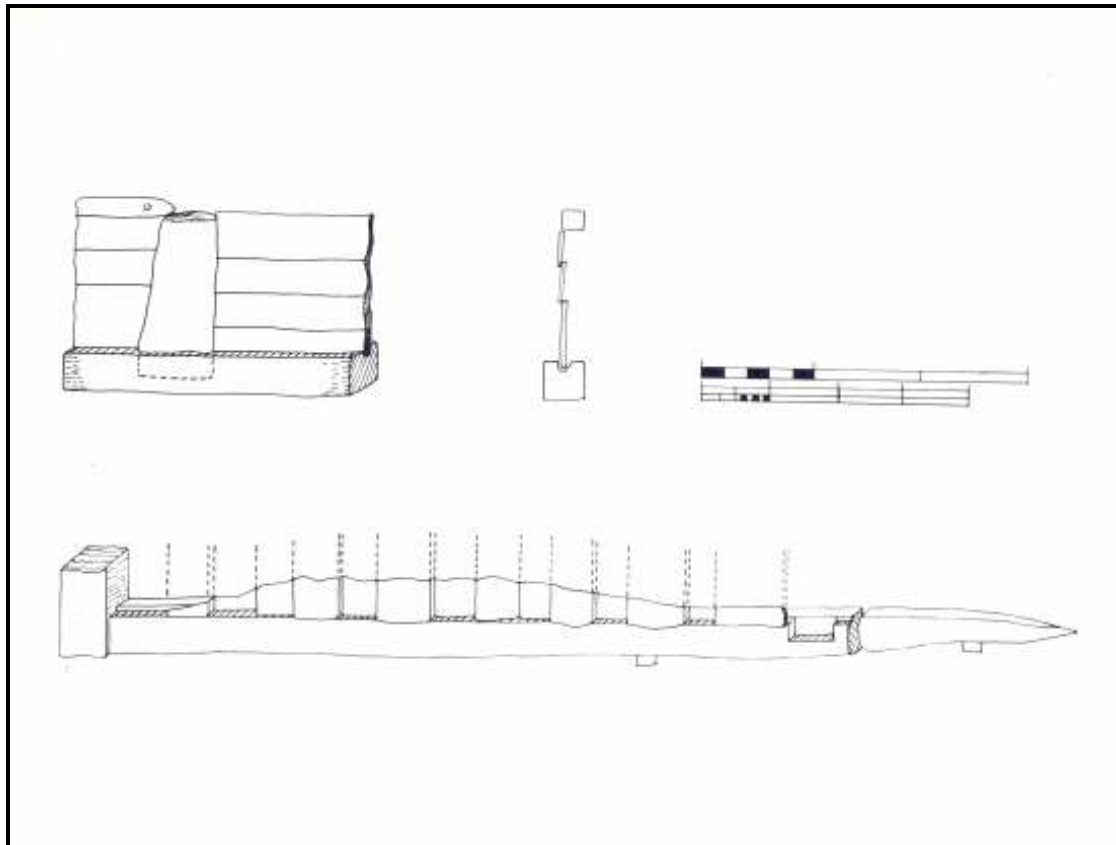
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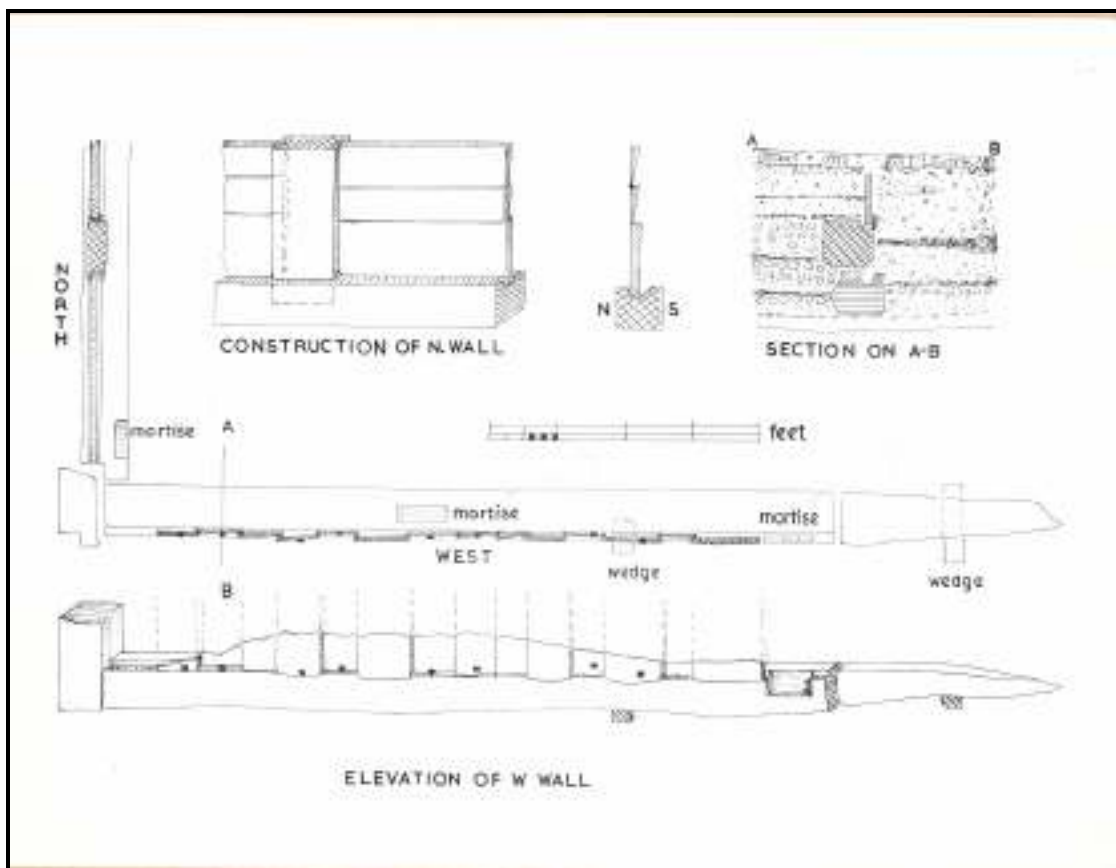
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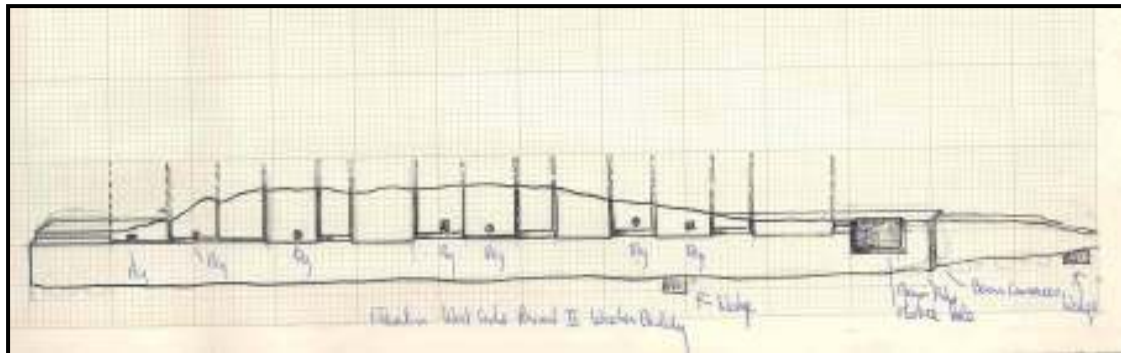
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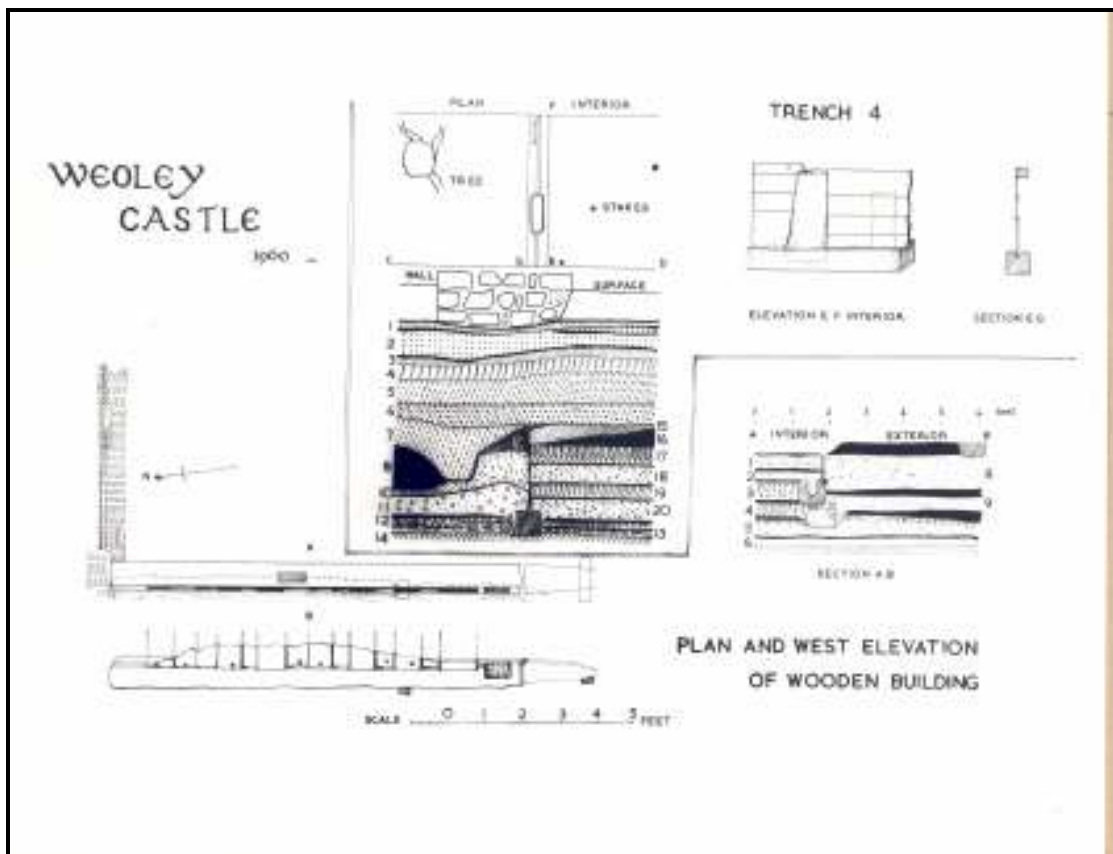
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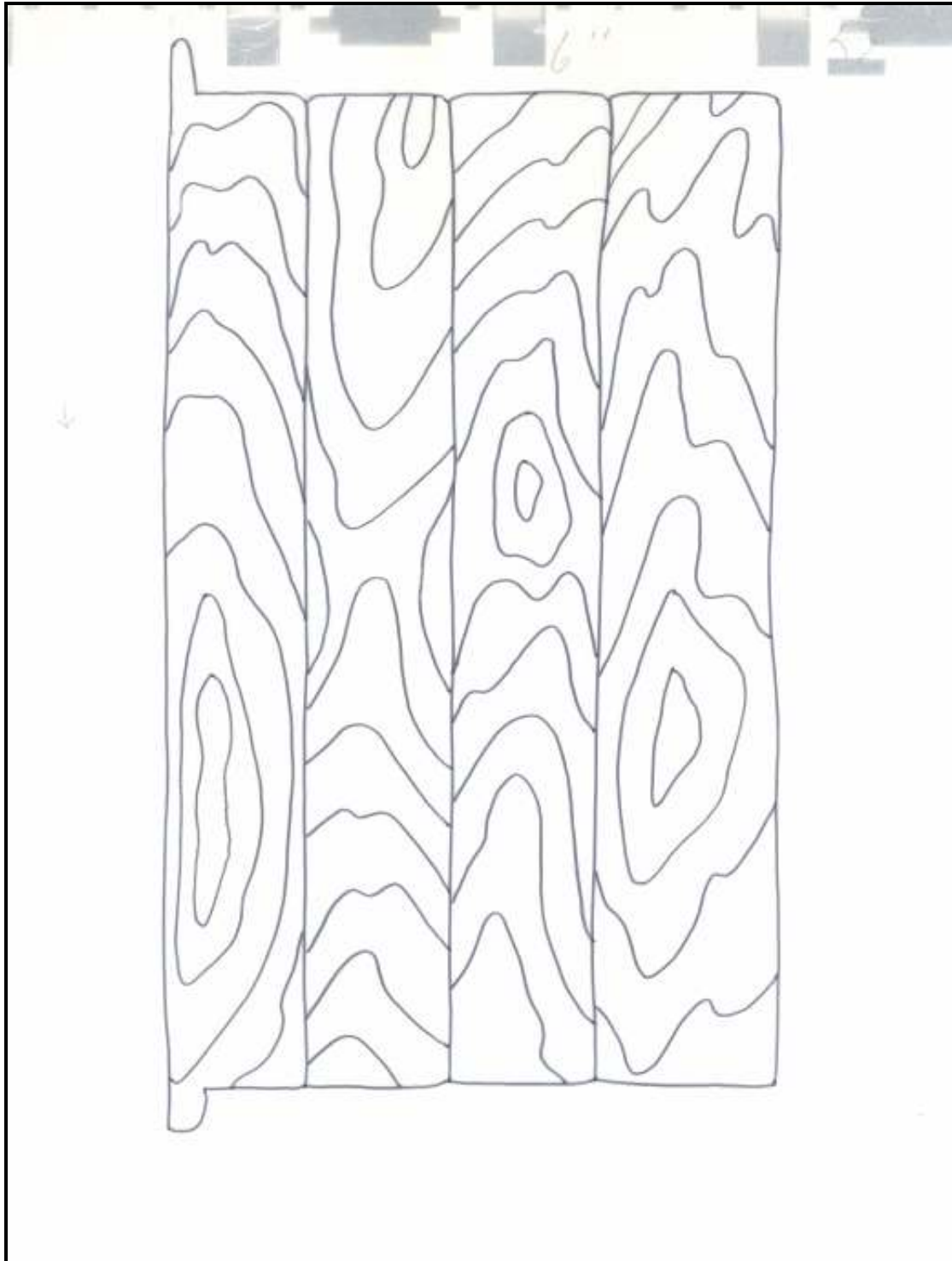
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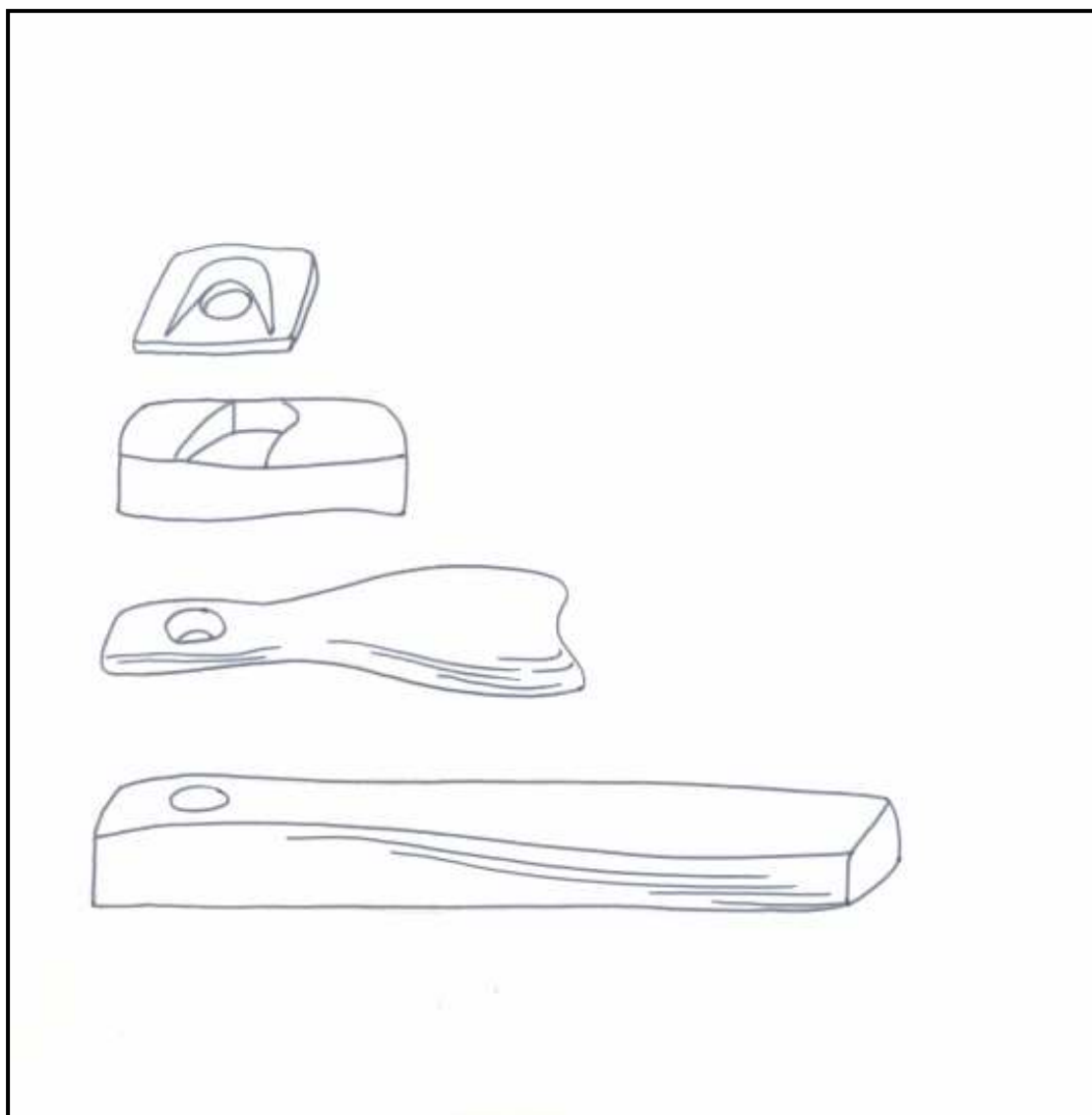
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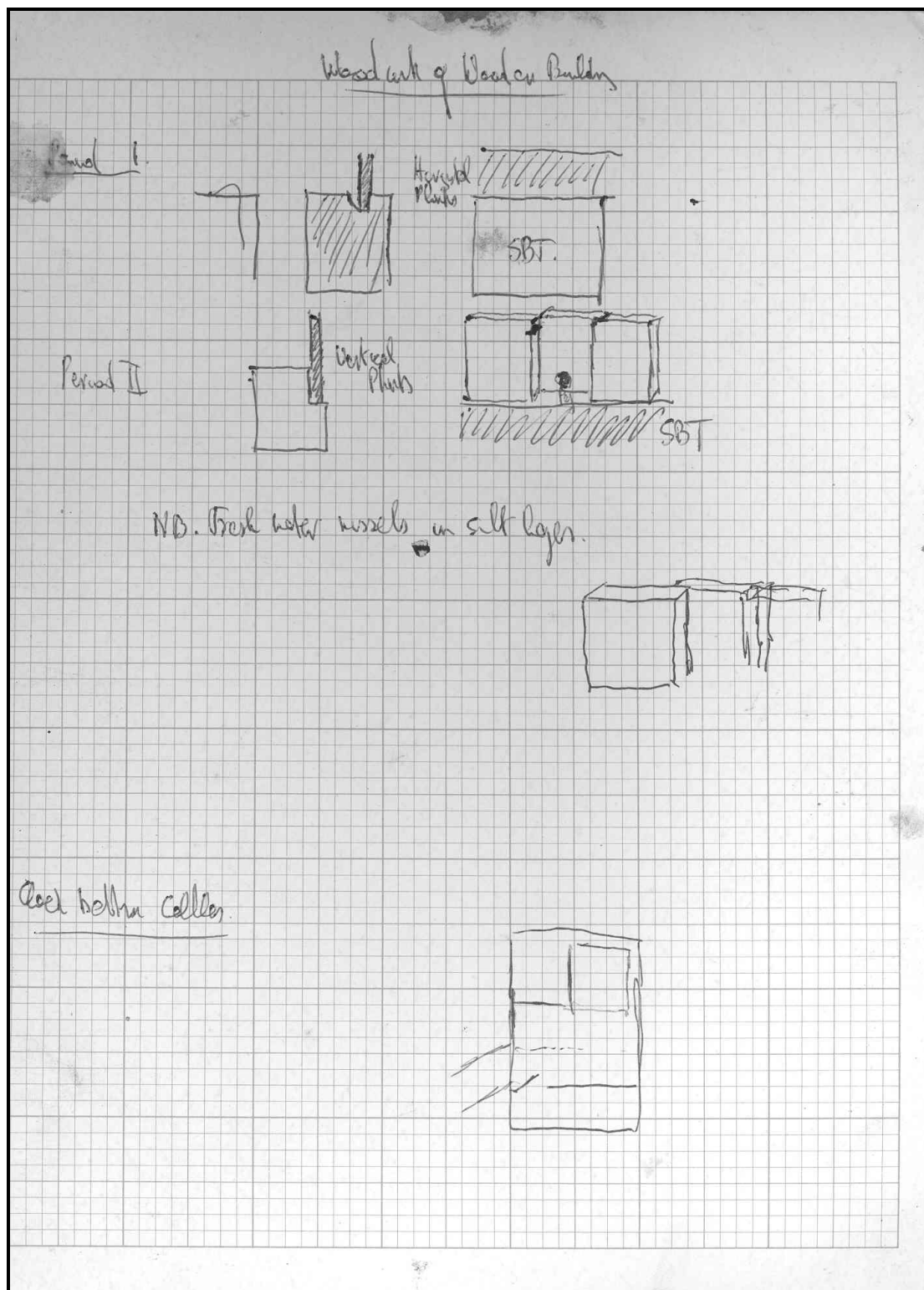
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Photos

There are numerous scanned photographic images related to the wooden kitchen within the digital archive. These are frequently copies of the same image. I am uncertain as to whether there are different photographic prints taken from the original negative or whether the images are duplicated through repeated scanning of the same prints. The main digital archive contains all the scans catalogued by scan number into a series of blocks where the scans are more or less consecutive. Only the first block of scans is reproduced below; a further search of the full archive will produce further images.

The scans can be found within the following files

Folder: Post-war excavations/wooden kitchen/photos

WK photos 094-258

WK photos 295-418

WK photos 504-516

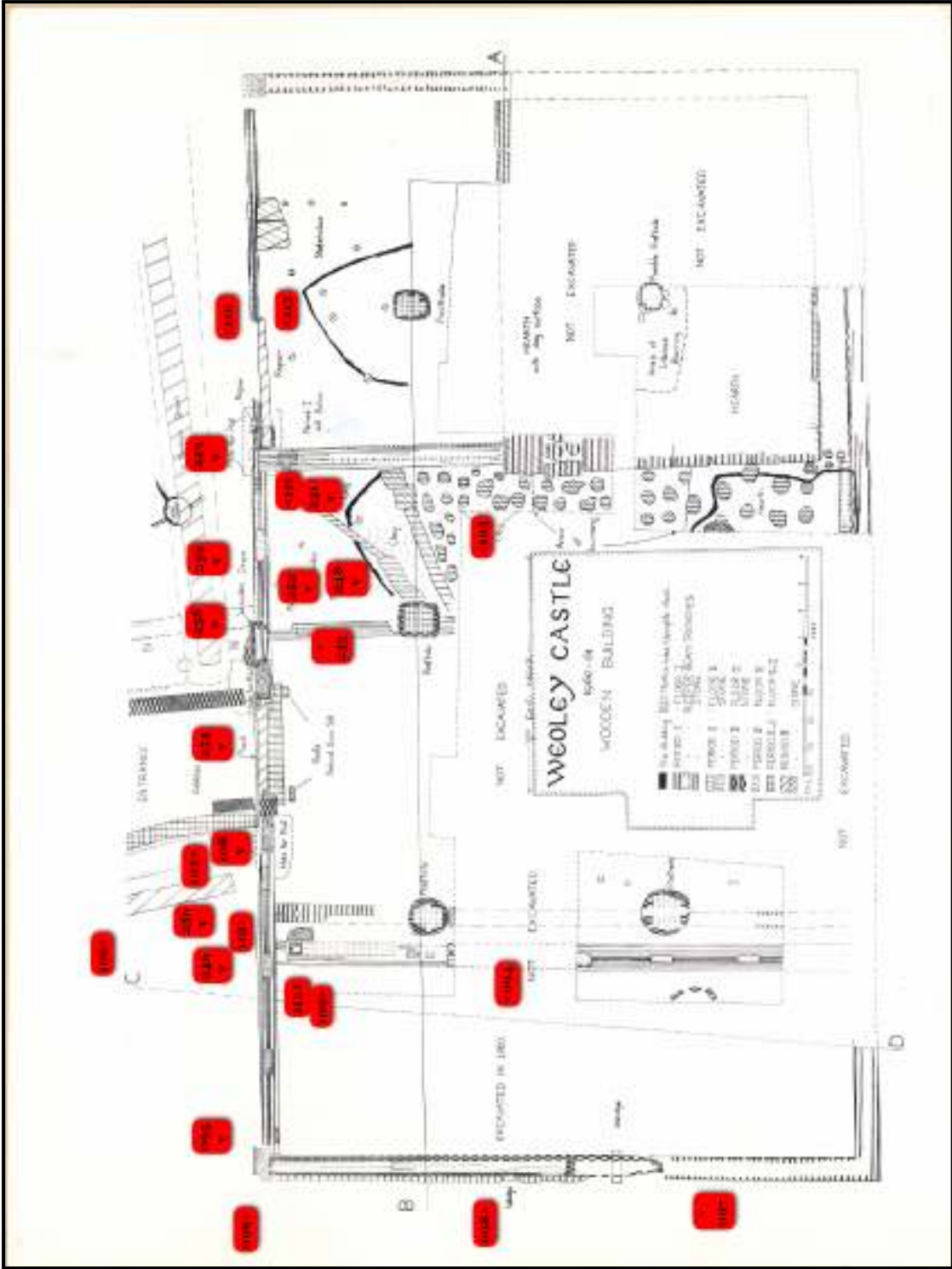
WK photos 606-664

WK photos 1069-1126

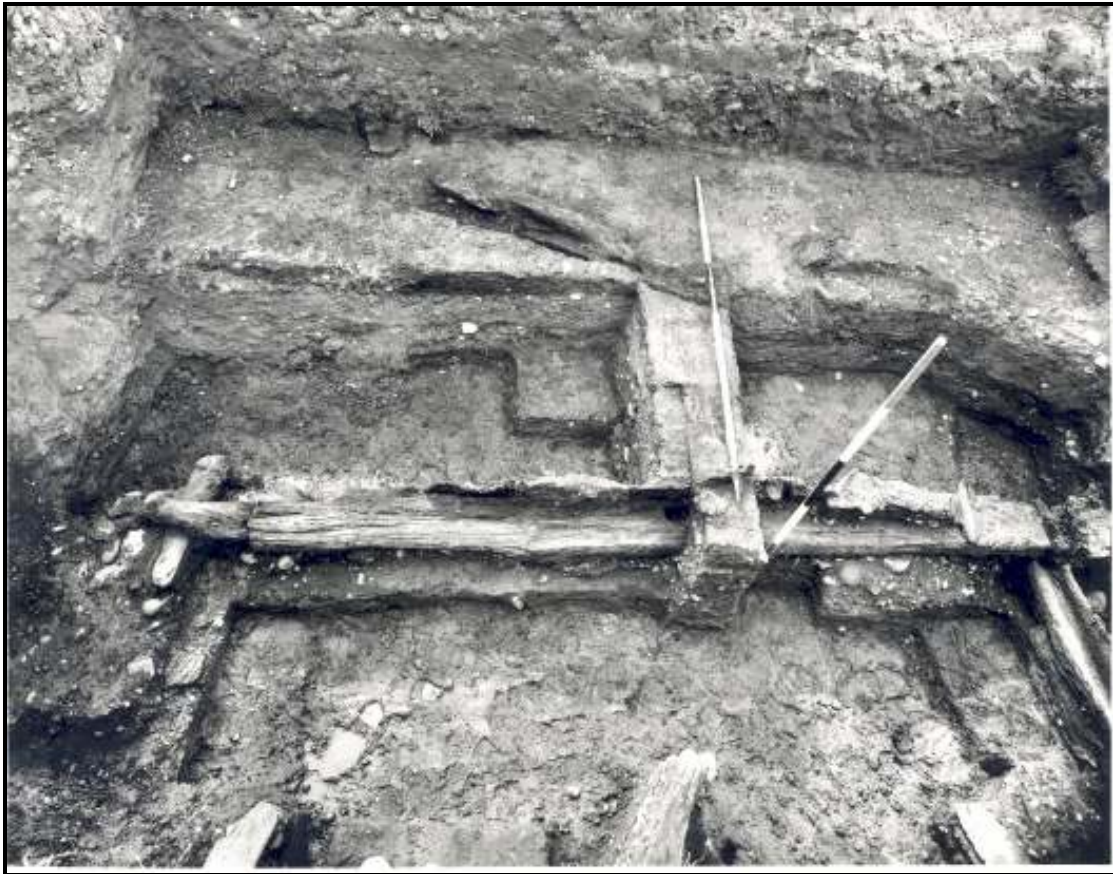
WK photos 1337-1463

WK re-catalogued photos etc.

The plan re-produced below shows only those images from folder WK photos 094-258 and indicates the approximate location and direction of each image.



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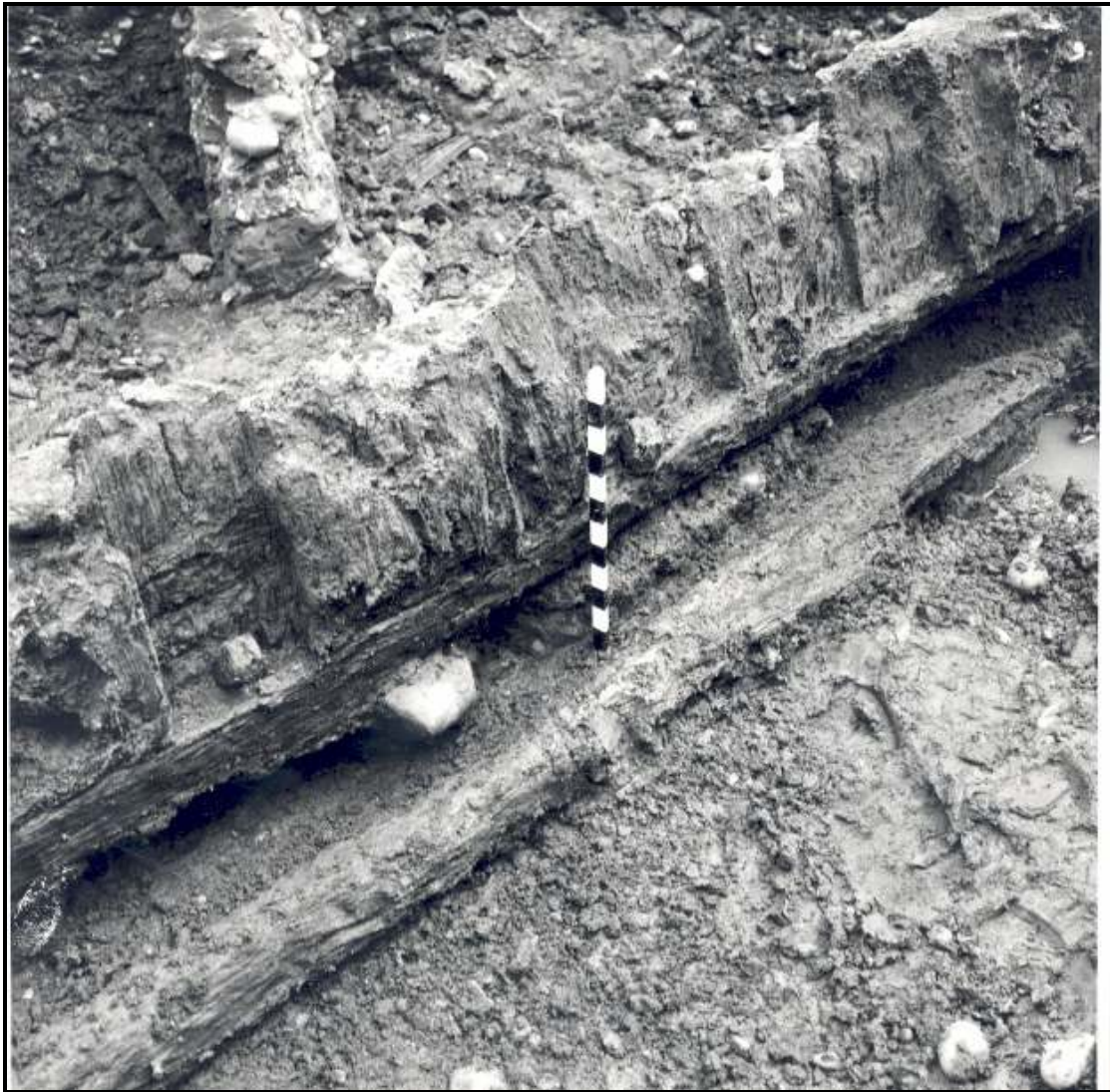
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Reports etc.

AHO/JSS.

31st August, 1960.

WEOLEY CASTLE.

The excavation at Weoley Castle in the Summer of 1960, with which great help was received from H.M. Prison at Winson Green, proved extremely successful.

The most notable discovery was a wooden building of the time of King John which had been preserved by wet conditions so that the bottom sleeper beams and some of the planking of the walls were still intact. It was a building about 30ft. long x 20ft wide with sides originally of horizontal weather boarding in oak. Soon after erection one end rotted and was replaced with vertical weather boarding. Four pebble floor levels were found in the interior. This appears to be the first weather boarded wooden building of this date discovered in the Midlands and, possibly, in England.

The finds included many soles of leather shoes, a one sided pick-axe, a handle of a coffer, a silver penny of John, much pottery and some wooden objects.

The work was carried out under very difficult weather conditions at a depth of 7 to 8 ft. It carries the history of Weoley Castle a hundred years further back than had been previously suspected.

prison letter

Found 4/7/61 to Mr. S. G. of Birmingham for
with Compton's Staff.

6th July, 1961.

WOODEN WALLS AT WOOLEY CASTLE

Adrian Oswald, M.A., F.S.A., F.H.A.

For the past month excavation has been in progress at Weoley Castle on the wooden building of c.1200 found last year.

This building measuring 40ft. x 20ft., all of oak, lies at a depth of six feet below the present surface and, owing to the wet conditions and due to the fact that four feet of the upcast from the moat constructed about 1270 was thrown over it, the timber has been preserved. The recent spell of dry weather has greatly helped the work although the timbers tend to crack.

At present the excavation is a large hole about 35ft. long x 12ft. wide and 5ft. to 7ft. deep. Standing on the edge the spectator's eye wanders downwards, first over the walls and hearth of the 15th century kitchen, then over five layers of red and black deposits representing floor levels of dwellings built and burnt down between 1270 and 1400. Below these sandwich layers is a broad wide belt of red sand and clay - the upcast from the moat of Roger de Somery dug out about 1270. Below this red deposit are layers of startling blackness; vegetation, wood and bones which accumulated under extremely wet conditions. Then the eye sees the timbers of the building, some to a height of three feet, great upright posts supporting horizontal weatherboards grooved into large sleeper beams lying in the ground. Nearly the whole of the forty foot northern wall can be seen and inside the cross members of three partitions which divided the building into four rooms. One of these cross members has a hole for a door socket. No less surprising is a drain outlet of wood shaped rather like a basin with a hole in the bottom.

Wooden Walls 1

- 2 -

Conditions in this building were always wet and the gravel floor levels were raised six times in 60 years. Many repairs too had to be effected in this time, and halfway through its life the roof needed the reinforcement of two rows of large upright posts. The entrance was on the north where a cobbled path about five feet wide ran from the stone manor house about 30 yards away. This path was flanked with great beams to keep the cobbles in position, and it too had its level raised five times and its beams renewed as often.

To see this eight hundred year old structure as it were in the round instead of merely, as usually, as slots or holes in the ground where timbers have rotted out, is something extremely rare in archaeology. Something similar has been found in Germany, but such preservation in Britain appears unique. Details of carpentry can be established and shoes and rope have been found. Iron is well preserved; witness a cleaver, a pair of shears and an armour piercing arrowhead. Even seeds and nuts are recovered.

Unfortunately preservation is impossible except of the smaller removable wooden objects and, once the rain comes, the friable walls of the excavation will collapse into the morass that has saved this structure.

Wooden Walls 2