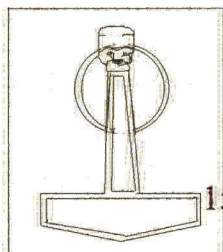


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Alison Clarke M. A.
Archaeological Consultant

15, Winton Road, Northallerton, North Yorkshire, DL6 1QQ
Tel : 01609 776501/0860 506062 Fax: 01609 779968

NYCC HER	
SNY	883
ENY	618
CNY	2010
Parish	5063
Rec'd	01/01/99

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

AT

SKIPTON CASTLE

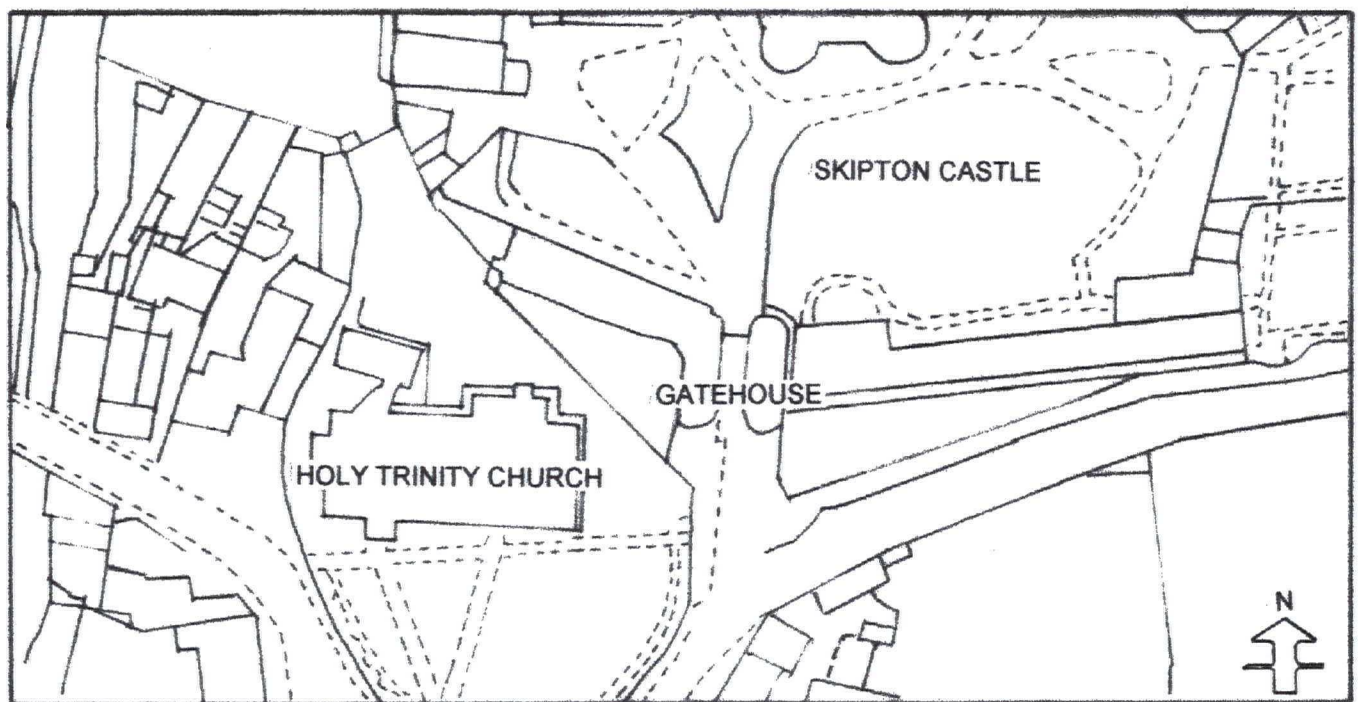
GATEHOUSE

FOR

WALES, WALES AND RAWSON

ALISON CLARKE

SEPTEMBER 1998



SCALE 1:1250

SKIPTON CASTLE GATEHOUSE PLAN 1 LOCATION

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF AT SKIPTON CASTLE GATEHOUSE FOR WALES, WALES AND RAWSON

INTRODUCTION

Skipton Castle stands at the northern end of High Street, Skipton, on a rocky promontory that has been fortified since at least the end of the eleventh century (Plan 1). The Gatehouse or Main Gate of Skipton Castle dates to the fourteenth century, but has been extensively altered over the years. A range of buildings to the west was added in the seventeenth century. The upper floors of the Gatehouse have been partly adapted to domestic use and partly left unused in recent times, with the Shell Room over the centre of the gate, added in the early seventeenth century, remaining largely untouched (Plan 2).

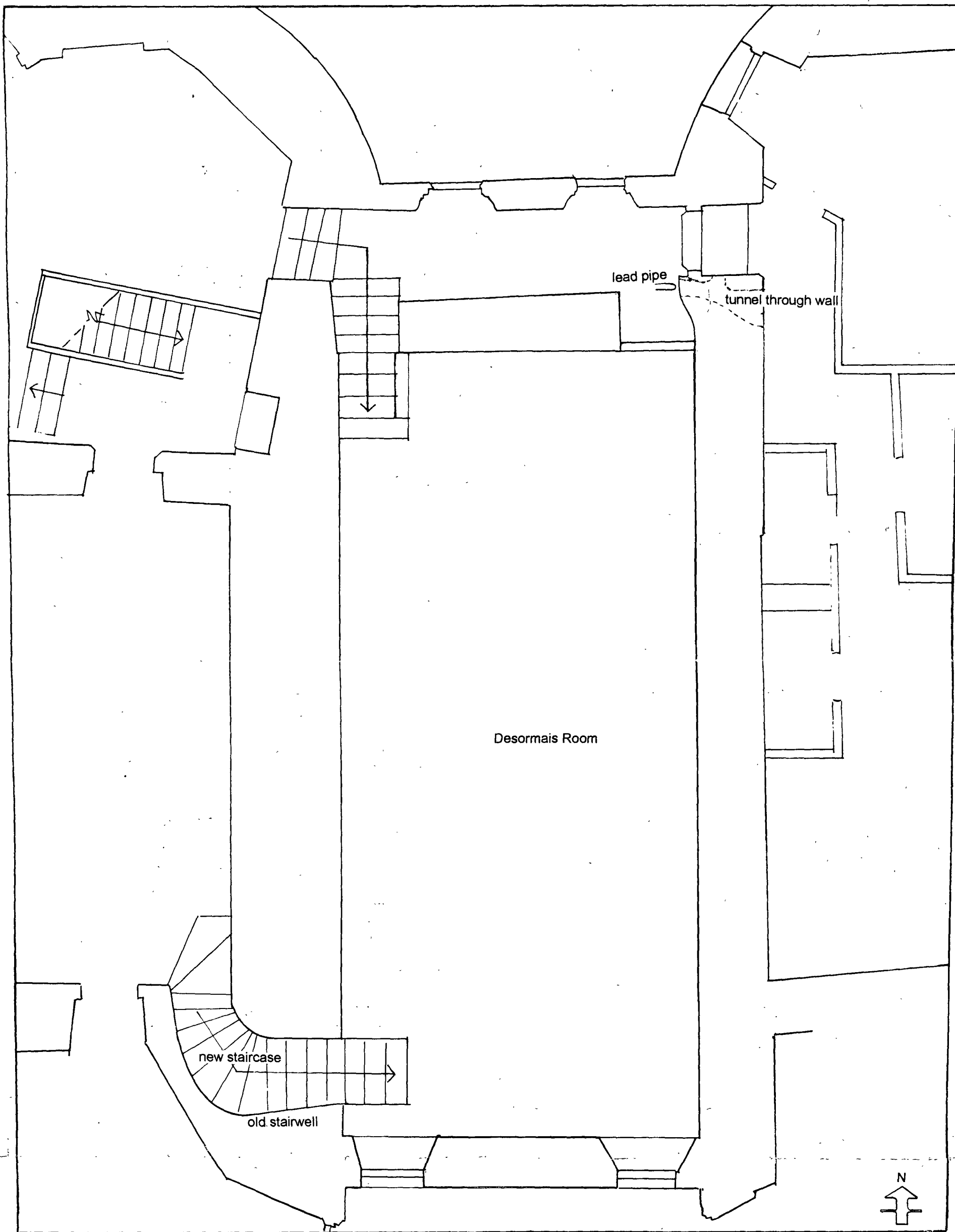
The archaeological work undertaken was in connection with alterations to the upper floors of the Gatehouse in order to accommodate the offices of Wales, Wales and Rawson, Architects. These were moved from the adjoining seventeenth century range which is to be converted to a cafeteria.

All the work was internal and mainly involved the removal of material from walls within the structure of the Gatehouse. In addition, the plaster and shell work in the central room above the gate was to be cleaned. This was photographed prior to cleaning (Plates 1-9).

The work was completed on 2 September 1998, apart from the cleaning of the Desormais shell work, which was completed at a later date.

WATCHING BRIEF

- 1.1 The first part of the work involved cutting through the inner wall of the eastern half of the gatehouse at first floor level to insert a drain (Plan 2, 4). The new drain was to connect with an existing lead drain (Plate 10) which runs down the channel of the former portcullis on the eastern side of the central opening of the gatehouse. The material was removed by electric drill and hand.
- 1.2 The channel was cut immediately above the level of the existing floorboards to avoid having to cut through joists, and adjacent to an existing doorway between the eastern half of the gatehouse and the central portion. At its eastern end the hole was 32cm high, with 7cm of this height below the level of the floorboards, and 50cm wide (Plate 11). At the western end the hole was 27cm high and 23cm wide. Its size varied along its length, and in the centre where it was cut through from the side of the doorway it was 34cm high (Plate 12). The level of the base of the hole gradually dropped from west to east by approximately 10cm relative to the floorboards.
- 1.3 The material of the wall which was removed consisted of roughly dressed stones at the outer faces of the wall, with stone rubble and mortar infill. The rubble consisted of stones up to 12cm long randomly set in a pale yellow mortar which occupied up to 50% of the space within the wall. The dressed stones at the surface were fully dressed only on their outer edges, and were up to 40cm in length. At the eastern face there were signs of some disturbance, with brick fragments and a piece of wood immediately behind the plaster of the wall. The central part where it was broken through from the doorway appeared to have a



SCALE 1:50

SKIPTON CASTLE GATEHOUSE PLAN 2 SITE

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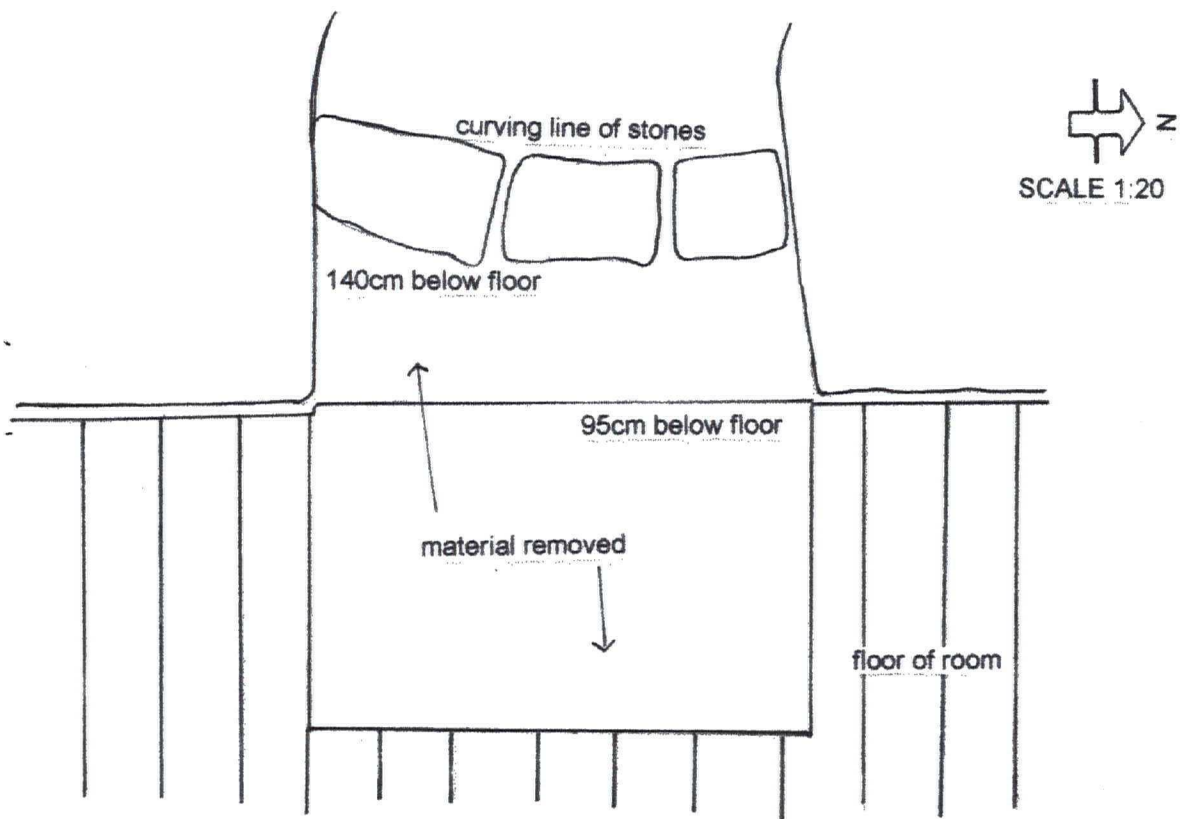
missing dressed stone at the surface, and the space was filled in with rubble and mortar.

- 1.4 The second piece of work involved the removal of material from the top of a presumed former stairwell from the first floor of the western half of the gatehouse to the south-west corner of the room over the central part of the gatehouse (Plan 2, 3). The curved shaft is to be reused as a stairway, protruding into the central room by approximately 90cm. The floorboards from this section had been previously removed, revealing the rubble fill below.
- 1.5 Work was commenced from the top, with removal by shovel and hand. The material removed was a dry sandy mortar with large angular undressed stone rubble. The dressed stone walls of the sides of the stair-shaft continued down vertically. A step 65cm below the floorboards was excavated out. At this depth a plastered edge in line with the edge of the room was revealed. This was backed by large angular stones forming a rough platform, with rubble fill behind them.
- 1.6 A second step, 33cm below the first and commencing in line with the edge of the room, was excavated. It was 60cm wide and was fronted by large stones roughly squared off at their front edge and packed with rubble behind. Below these was another line of stones which were also removed, reaching a depth of 140cm below the floorboards of the room above. Neither line of stones was tied in to the vertical sides of the shaft.
- 1.7 At this depth a further line of roughly dressed stones formed a curving edge to the shaft. These stones were tied in to the walls, and obviously formed part of the original structure of the stairwell (Plate 13). A plaster skim fronted them and continued onto the vertical side walls of the stairwell (Plate 14). The stones were left in situ.
- 1.8 Material at the base of the stairwell which was originally to have been removed was left in situ as part of the infill necessary at the bottom of the staircase.

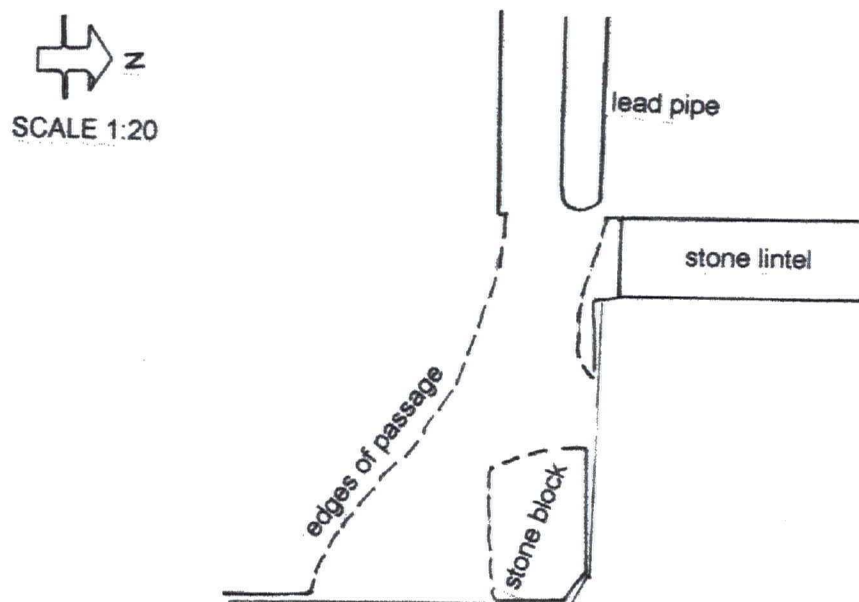
CONCLUSIONS

The damage to the wall for the insertion of the drain was limited and strictly contained. The dressed facing stones which were removed were lost, but several of these had already been damaged. The construction of the wall was found to be dressed facing stones with a coarse rubble and mortar core.

The removal of material in the stairwell revealed a possible sequence of remodelling of the feature. The curving line of stones, tied in to the walls of the shaft, were the earliest, and presumably reflect part of a stone staircase. Subsequently, stones were piled on top of this line to form a vertical face when viewed from below. The rubble infill behind, reaching up to the floor level above, appears to extend beneath the existing wooden floor. It is possible that the original staircase continued to spiral up to a higher floor or to the roof, as its levels do not quite fit the level of the existing floor. The existing room may have been formed later in the development of the building, resting on rubble infill above the arch of the gateway itself.



SKIPTON CASTLE GATEHOUSE PLAN 3 STAIRWELL



SKIPTON CASTLE GATEHOUSE PLAN 4 DRAIN



PLATE 1 DESORMAIS EAST WALL



PLATE 2 DESORMAIS EAST WALL



PLATE 3 DESORMAIS NORTH WALL



PLATE 4 DESORMAIS NORTH WALL



PLATE 5 DESORMAIS WEST WALL



PLATE 6 DESORMAIS WEST WALL



PLATE 7 DESORMAIS WEST WALL

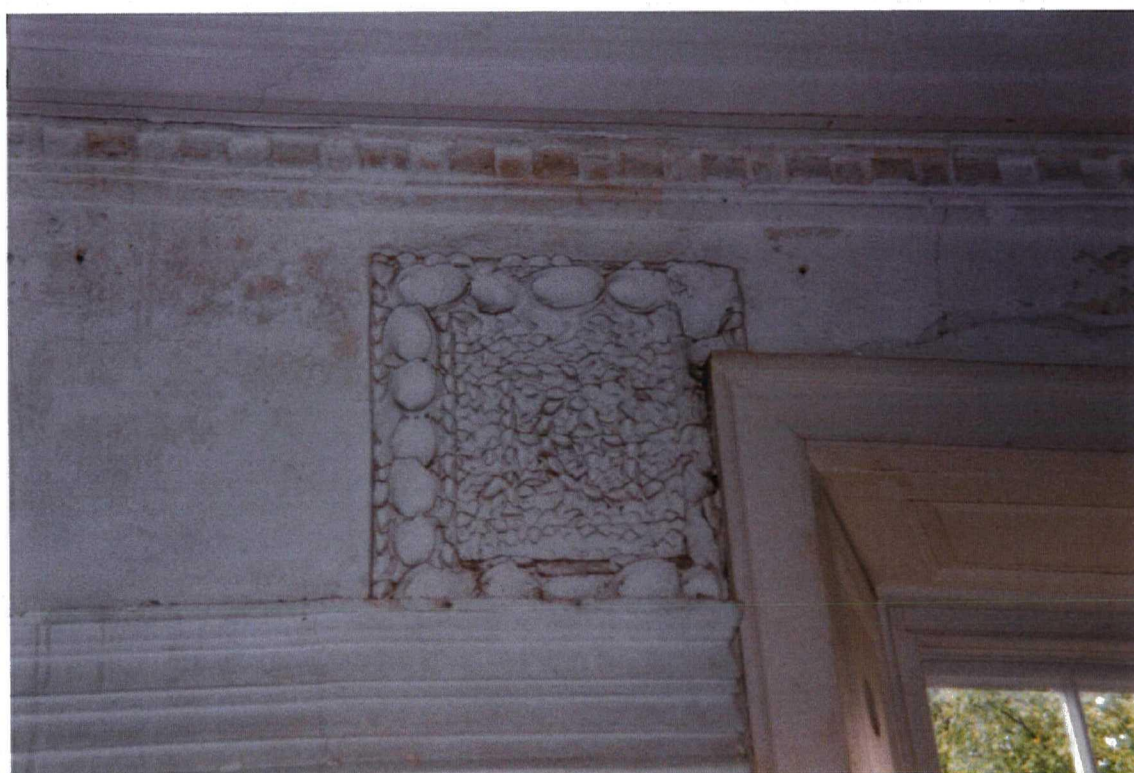


PLATE 8 DESORMAIS SOUTH WALL



PLATE 9 DESORMAIS SOUTH WALL



PLATE 10 LEAD DRAIN AT WEST END OF CHANNEL THROUGH WALL



PLATE 11 EAST END OF CHANNEL THROUGH WALL



PLATE 12 CENTRAL PART OF CHANNEL THROUGH WALL



PLATE 13 EXCAVATED STAIRWELL FROM ABOVE



PLATE 14 EXCAVATED STAIRWELL FROM BELOW