

**Historic Scotland  
Properties in Care  
Minor Archaeological Works 2008**

# **Dumbarton Castle: Governor's House**

## **Archaeological monitoring, February 2008**

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<b><u>Site</u></b>	Dumbarton Castle: Governor's House
<b><u>N.G.R</u></b>	NS400744
<b><u>Project Description</u></b>	Archaeological monitoring
<b><u>Project code</u></b>	HSCO-90107-2008-01

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*Summary: A small trench was excavated by the northwest corner of the Governor's House at Dumbarton Castle to examine and record any features of archaeological significance. This was in advance of the construction of new toilets. There were no finds or features of earlier date than the construction of the Governor's House (1735).*

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Under the terms of its call-off contract with Historic Scotland, Kirkdale Archaeology was asked to undertake a small excavation outside the NW corner of the Governor's House at Dumbarton Castle in an area where a drainage inspection box was to be constructed; this was part of the ongoing work to upgrade the toilets within the building. The trench was to follow the line of an existing drain to avoid any previously undisturbed deposits.

The trench measured 1.70m E-W, 1.25m wide and up to 1.15m deep.

The work took place on 18-19 February 2008.

## 2.0 EXCAVATION ACCOUNT

Running N-S through the trench **004** was a steep sided cut measuring 600mm in width. **004** was excavated to a depth of 1.10m but not bottomed. The fill of **004**, **014**, comprised a fairly compact mix of stones and mid brown silty clay with lumps of brick and concrete and fragments of ceramic and cast iron pipes throughout. At the base of **004**, **003** was an N-S line of concrete that sloped down to both sides from a central point. **003** measured roughly 400mm in width and continued down further from the centre on the E side.

N of the trench **012** was a step down 250mm from the main slab surface, **001**.

Extending NE from the SW corner of the trench, **002** comprised three courses of walling formed with split basalt blocks with pale grey mortar pointing between them.

The current ground surface was constructed with large (typically 600mm by 400mm and 80mm thick) slabs, **001**, that were bedded with cement. Only seen in the W

section under **001**, **017** was a deposit of pale grey silty sand with many small stones and mortar lumps.

Immediately to the N of the NE corner of the trench **005** was an N-S aligned wall measuring 250mm in width. In the NE corner of the trench **006** was a sandstone block continuing the line of **005**, the S edge of **005** was ragged.

The wall at the S limit of the excavation, **010**, was constructed with coursed rectangular yellow sandstone blocks pointed with pale grey mortar. **010** measures 2.90m high and 2.45m E-W. Located centrally within **010**, **011** was a door aperture measuring 2.10m in height and 1.05m wide. The top of **011** was slightly arched.

At the base of the W side of **010** there was an area of walling, **009**, constructed against the W wall of the Governors House. **009** extended 650mm E from the Governors House and 700mm down from **010**. The upper face of **009** was flat, the other ones very uneven.

In the NW corner of the trench **007** was an area of walling with a flat and even N face and ragged edges elsewhere. **007** was constructed with sub rectangular stone blocks and pointed with light brown mortar.

At the base of the SE part of the trench **008** was a SW-NE aligned line of red sandstone slabs laid flat and level. There were at least three slabs and they continued NE and SW under **007** and **009** respectively. The slabs measured 280mm in width and were 80mm thick.

Sealed by **008**, **015** was a fairly loose, 120mm thick, deposit of pale grey silt with roughly 20% mortar lumps.

Under **015** and only seen in the area below and W of **008**, **016** was a deposit of red brown silty clay and stones.

Immediately outside the N and W walls of the Governors House **013** was a slab surface that is approximately 800mm below the current one (**001**).

### **3.0 INTERPRETATION AND OBSERVATIONS**

#### **3.1 Phase 1**

The deposit seen under **015, 016** was not investigated.

Slabs **013** may have been part of the original surface immediately outside the Governors House. Whether this would indicate that there has been a massive change in levels in the later phases or if there was always a deeper margin around the walls is not certain.

#### **3.2 Phase 2**

Running under **007** and **009, 008** was a line of red sandstone slabs laid flat. This looked to be capping of a drain or a kerb.

**015** may have been imported to form a base for **008**.

#### **3.3 Phase 3**

Under the W side of **010, 009** looks to be an area of disturbed walling and **007** is a similar feature further N - both are built against the Governor's House. It looks like these features were part of the same N-S walling and a later feature cut away the central part of the structure, although no such feature was identified in the features below or to the W.

#### **3.4 Phase 4**

Wall **010** was constructed against the Governor's House - it was noted that it used coursed, rectangular, yellow sandstone blocks. **011** is a door aperture within **010**.

It is very clear that this structure was constructed after the Governor's House but may not be part of the same building phase and is more likely to be built at the same time as the *Phase 3* or *5* features.

#### **3.5 Phase 5**

There was no dating evidence for the current slab surface, **001**, recovered during the excavation. All of the other features, including *Phase 6*, are obviously under the slabs but the likelihood is that most of them have been lifted and replaced at least once.

**017**, the deposit of pale grey sand ought to be material imported as bottoming for

001 and perhaps the fact that it was only seen in the W part of the trench supports the suggestion that other slabs having been lifted.

It is possible that the lines of walling seen along the W edge of the trench, 002, and within and N of the NE corner of the trench, 005/006, are dwarf walls constructed to support the slabs. Another possibility is these structures were part of a base for an earlier surface.

### 3.6 Phase 6

This phase sees a large N-S drainage channel, 004, cutting through the other features. 003, at the base of the cut was a concrete sealing of the (hidden) pipe.

To the N of the trench 012 was thought to be construction covering a pipe carrying waste from one of the toilets in the Governor's House.

## 4.0 SUMMARY

As anticipated, the vast majority of the material removed was infill of the *Phase 6* cut. This meant that little of any archaeological value was disturbed but also that there was no useful dating evidence recovered.

The *Phase 1* slabs, 013, could be part of the mid 18<sup>th</sup>-century works that included the construction of the Governor's House; they certainly do not pre-date this but could be later. Deposit 015 was not investigated in detail and it is only known that it is earlier than *Phase 2*.

Perhaps the most convincing interpretation of the *Phase 2* slabs would be that they are a garden feature - and if so, they could date to soon after the construction of the Governor's House.

The *Phase 3* feature post-date *Phase 2*, although it is thought that 007 and 009 were part of the same walling – but this was not entirely clear. A likely interpretation is that there was a structure against the W side of the Governor's House at some point or that this is part of the base for an earlier surface at roughly the same level as the current one.

*Phase 4* is represented by the standing wall forming the S edge of the excavation.

The doorway within it suggests that it was in use with the present slab surface (*Phase 5*) or one at a similar level, perhaps associated with *Phase 3*. This structure is constructed over *Phase 3* but this could be within the same phase of construction. It is noted that the N gate was blocked off and there was a lot of other construction in 1795 and this may be part of that work.

The current *Phase 5* surface could be of a similar date to the *Phase 4* structure or a replacement for an earlier surface at that level. Within the trench the bottoming for this surface, **017**, had been removed and with it any dating evidence there may have been.

The lines of walling **002**, and, **005/006**, are thought to have been built to form the slab surface on, with the areas between infilled with material removed by the *Phase 6* drain. This is usually seen with an indoor surface but no other reason could be seen for such flimsy constructions.

The *Phase 6* drainage channel, **004**, was at least 1.15m deep and dominated the excavation. The concrete sealing of the pipe may suggest a date around the 1950s.

To the N of the trench **012** is thought to carry a waste pipe from the Governors House and would date to the construction of the public toilets inside.

**A1.0****APPENDIX 1: LIST OF CONTEXTS**

#	Description
001	Current slab surface.
002	Wall in the W side of the trench.
003	N-S line of concrete.
004	Sandstone block continuing the line of 005.
005	N-S aligned wall N of the NE corner of the trench.
006	Sandstone block continuing the line of 005
007	Area of walling with a flat and even N face and ragged edges elsewhere.
008	SW-NE aligned line of red sandstone slabs laid flat and level.
009	Area of walling constructed against the W wall of the Governors House.
010	Wall at the S limit of the excavation.
011	Door aperture located centrally within 010.
012	Brick and concrete construction covering a modern pipe.
013	Slab surface approximately 800mm below the current one.
014	Fill of 004, lots of modern rubbish.
015	Loose deposit of pale grey silt and mortar lumps.
016	Red brown silty clay and stones.
017	Bottoming for slabs 001.

**A2.0****APPENDIX 2: LIST OF DRAWINGS**

No	Type	Description	Scale
1	Plan	Location plan	1:200
2	Elev	N end of W wall exterior, Governor's House	1:20
3	Plan	Excavated area	1:20

**A3.0****APPENDIX 3: LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS**

#	Description	From	Date
1	Trench post excavation. 012 etc.	N	19/02/08
2	Trench post excavation. 012 etc.	N	19/02/08
3	Trench post excavation. 012 etc.	NW	19/02/08
4	Trench post excavation. 012 etc.	W	19/02/08
5	Trench post excavation. 012 etc.	W	19/02/08



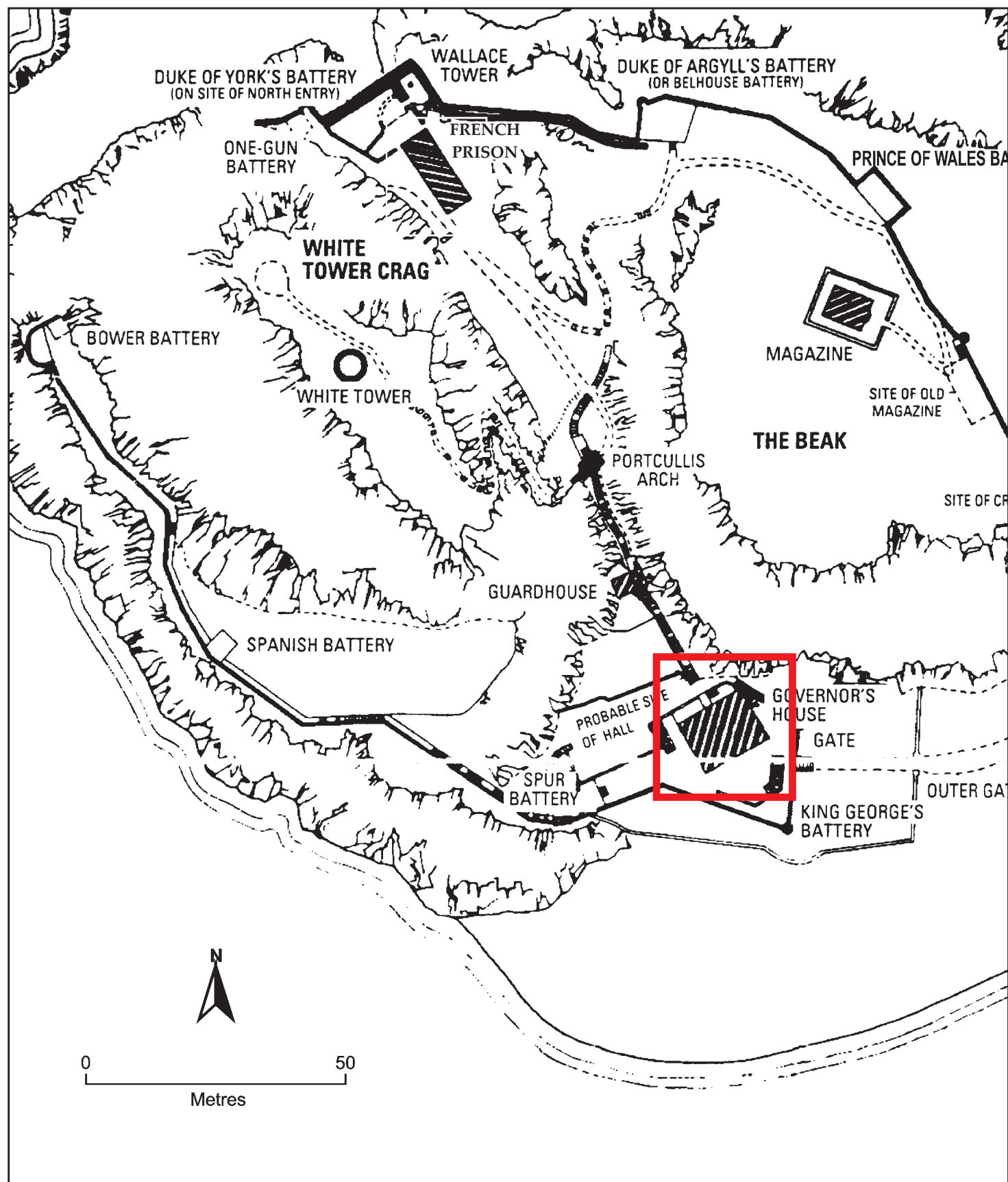
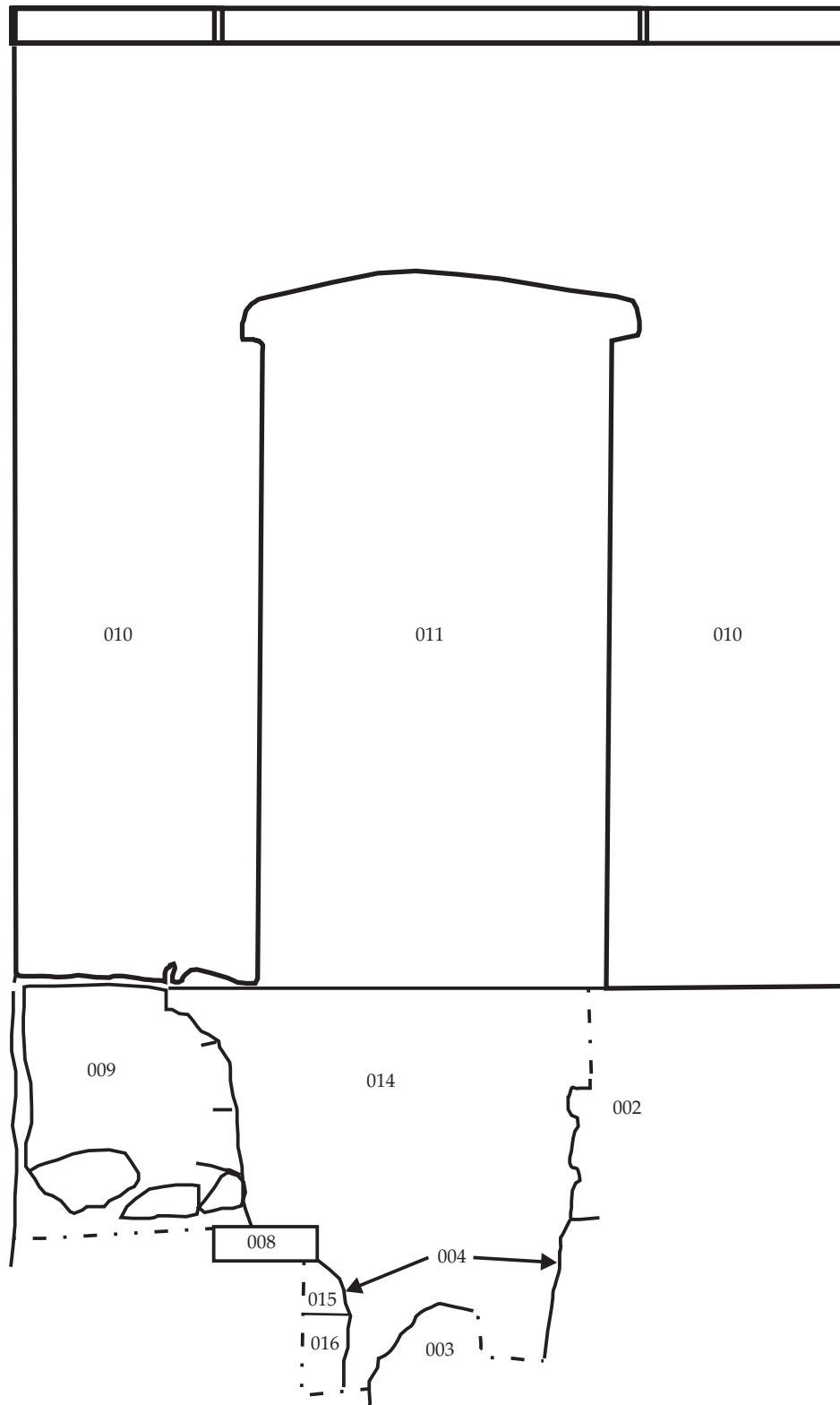


Fig. 1 : Plan of Dumbarton Castle showing location of Governor's House

N

S



0 1  
m

Fig. 2 : Elevation (1:20) at N end of W wall of Governor's House

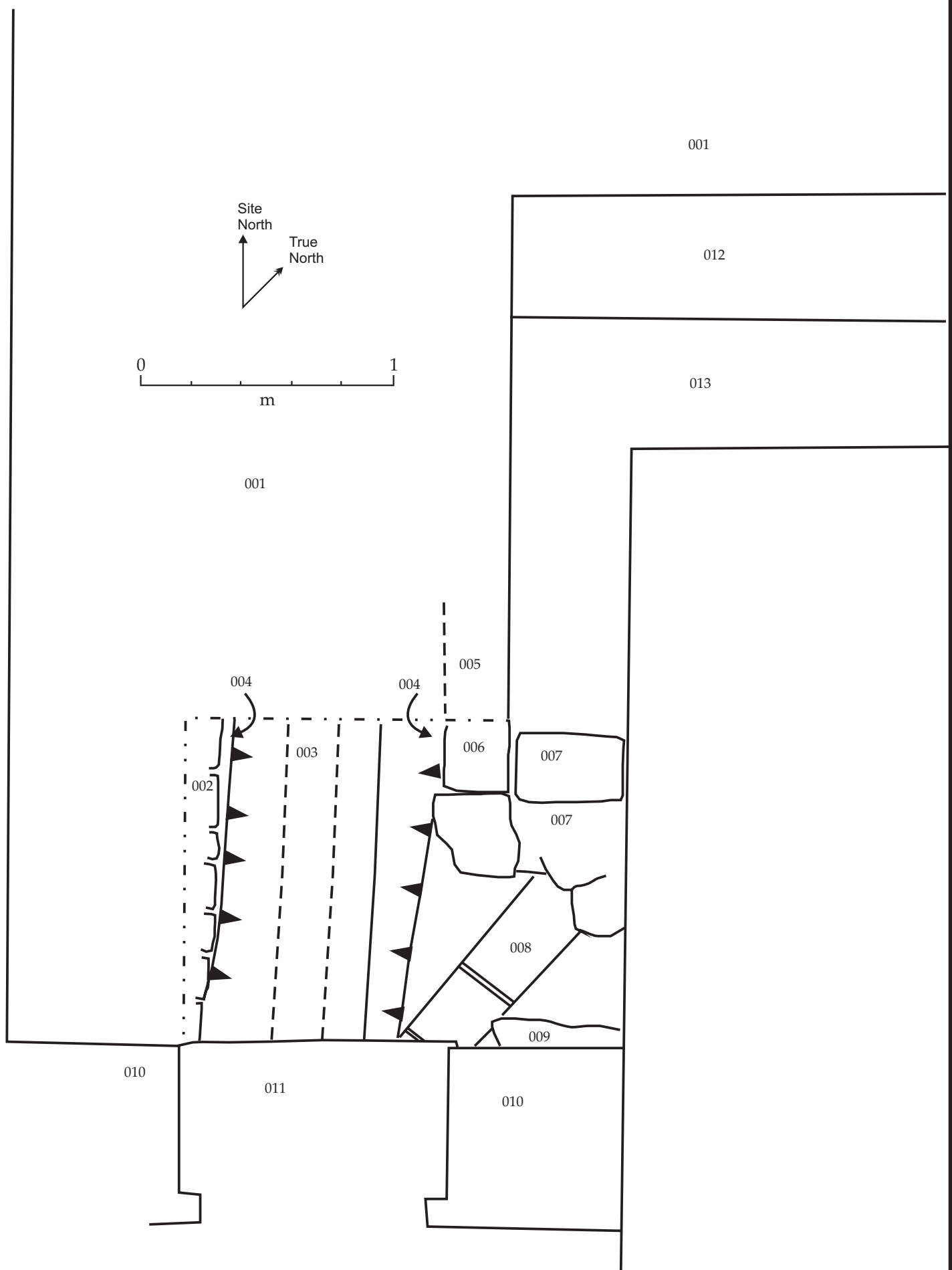


Fig. 3 : Plan (1:20) showing excavated area