

MEDIEVAL TILE PROJECT PHASE 2:

Castle Acre Priory, Norfolk
Archive Report 046.03



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BUFAU

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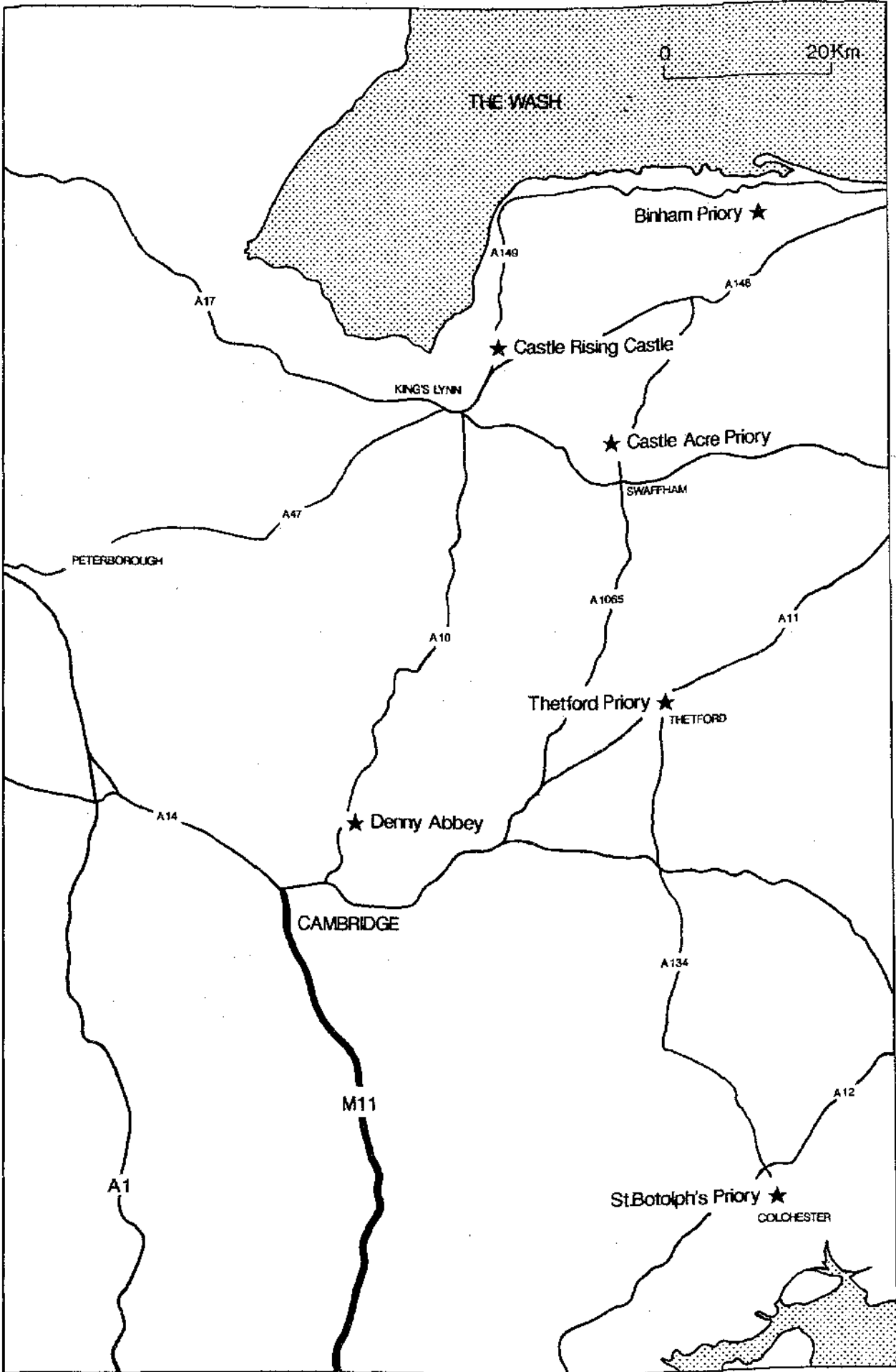
Medieval Tile Project

Phase 2 Recording

Castle Acre Priory, Norfolk

Archive Report No: 046.03

By L.Bevan & E.Newton



Medieval Tile Project, Phase 2 Recording: Castle Acre Priory, Norfolk

Introduction

There are remains of Medieval tiled floors at Castle Acre Priory in the Prior's Solar and Chapel, the Church, the Lady Chapel, South Quire Aisle, Chapter House and Cloister (Figure 1).

The site was visited by members of Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit in December 1996. All areas, including an additional small patch of tiles (Area 4b), were photographed and planned and 28 decorated tiles were identified on the altar dais in the Prior's Solar. Eighteen of these were sufficiently preserved to allow tracings to be made (see sheet of traced tiles in site archive), and six recognisable designs were recorded (Figure 15).

Summary of Areas

Area 1 is located in the Prior's Solar and Areas 2-4a which appear to be the remains of a large floor, the majority of which is now infilled with brick, are in the adjoining Prior's Chapel. Both rooms are situated over the outer parlour (Figure 2).

Area 1 is the largest area, located in the altar recess of the Prior's Solar, a raised dais beneath a window where both plain and patterned tiles have survived, with missing areas now infilled with concrete (Figure 3). The area measures 5.90m by 2.30m and consists of 371 tiles, the majority of which were originally glazed, possibly in black and yellow. Hardly any traces of glaze remain and all tiles exhibit a worn appearance. A number of larger tiles, now very worn but originally glazed and patterned, occur in this area, especially immediately below the window.

Area 2 consists of four small patches of Medieval tiles located in and around the fireplace of the Prior's Chapel (Figure 4). There are nine tiles in the left-hand corner of the fireplace and six in the right, all arranged in a pattern of alternating yellow and black glazes. A patch of 17 predominantly black tiles is located to the right of the fireplace and nine worn, red tiles are located in front of the fireplace in a triangular shape. The tiles in the back of the fireplace are in a better condition than those around it (see photographs in archive file).

Area 3 consists of 79 tiles laid out in patches along the window and wall of the Prior's Chapel, only one of which has retained traces of decoration in the form of a yellow-glazed motif (Figure 5). Of the remaining tiles, 27 have retained traces of black glaze and the others are red in colour with worn surfaces.

Area 4 consists of two patches of tiles - 83 in total - inside the doorway of the Prior's Chapel, of which a single tile has retained traces of a plain reddish-yellow glaze (Figure 6).

Area 4a is located in the centre of the Prior's Chapel and consists of a patch of 30 worn, red tiles, none of which has retained any traces of glaze (Figure 7).

Areas 5 and 6 are located in the Lady Chapel on either side of the doorway leading to the North Transept (Figures 8 and 9). Both areas of tiles are 'set square to the walls rather than diagonally, which 'may indicate that they have been re-bedded' (Davison 1995, 2). The tiles are badly eroded but appear to have had plain black and yellow

glazes. Area 5 measures 5.10m by 2.70m and comprises 480 tiles. Area 6 measures 4.60m by 1.80m and comprises 418 tiles.

Areas 7 and 8 are located in the south quire of the church (Figures 10 and 11). Their eroded surfaces were probably originally black and yellow. Area 7, on the southern side of the altar, measures 1.05m by 0.74m and comprises 51 tiles. Again, re-bedding is possible since the tiles are set square to the altar and chapel walls. Area 8, at the foot of the altar steps, measures 2.55m by 1.50m and comprises 207 tiles. Here the tiles have been arranged diagonally in panels against the altar steps.

Area 9 is located in the north-east corner of the Chapter House where it is set diagonally against the walls (Figure 12). It measures 1.86m with a maximum width of 0.38m and comprises 63 tiles.

Areas 10 and 11, both heavily eroded, are located in the Cloister Walk (Figures 13 and 14). Area 10 is near the north-east corner of the Cloister Walk. It measures 1.45m by 0.55m and comprises 16 tiles. Area 11 extends across the Cloister Walk. It measures 3.20m with a maximum width of 3.05m and comprises 132 tiles.

Decorated Tiles

With the exception of the single decorated tile beneath the window in the Prior's Chapel (Figure 5), and some tiles with traces of decoration in the Chapter House (Area 9), none of which could be traced, all decorated tiles discussed here were found on the raised dais/altar recess in the Prior's Solar (Area 1). Eighteen of these were traced and a total of six designs was identified, examples of which are shown in Figure 15:

Design/ Description	Total/Tile Nos./Fig. No.
1. Floriform with border	3 (1,2*,12)/15:1
2. Small diagonal floriform	1 (3*)/15:2
3. Two birds	4 (4,5,6*,7)/15:3
4. Cruciform	2 (13,14*)/15:4
5. Floriform without border	5 (8,9,16*,17,18)/15:5
6. Large diagonal/circles	4 (10,11*,15,19**)/15:6

*Illustrated example

**Not traced, poor visibility (see archive photograph).

Despite surface abrasion, some red and black patterning can be observed in the altar dais tiles (Figure 15, Archive Sheet 1), and it appears likely that most of the tiles were part of an original floor. The only obvious 'interlopers' were the largest decorated tiles (Figure 15:6) which, although Medieval, appear to have been a later addition to the floor (Durbin 1996). Some of these tiles which might have originated from the Cloister Walk (Durbin 1996) were recently stolen, recovered by the police, and re-set in the dais by Leslie Durbin (see photographs in archive file).

It is probable that those tiles with traces of unidentified decoration also belong to the design groups summarised above, but the degree of surface damage precludes confirmation.

Bibliography

Davison, S 1995 Castle Acre, Norfolk: Condition Report on the Medieval Floor Tiles. The Conservation Studio. Unpublished report for English Heritage.

Durbin, L. 1996 Medieval Tile Project Phase 2 Conservation: Castle Acre, Norfolk. Unpublished Report for English Heritage. The Jackfield Conservation Studio.

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to Sarah Watt and David Leigh for their assistance in recording the Castle Acre tiles. Mark Breedon was responsible for all illustrations.

Castle Acre Priory

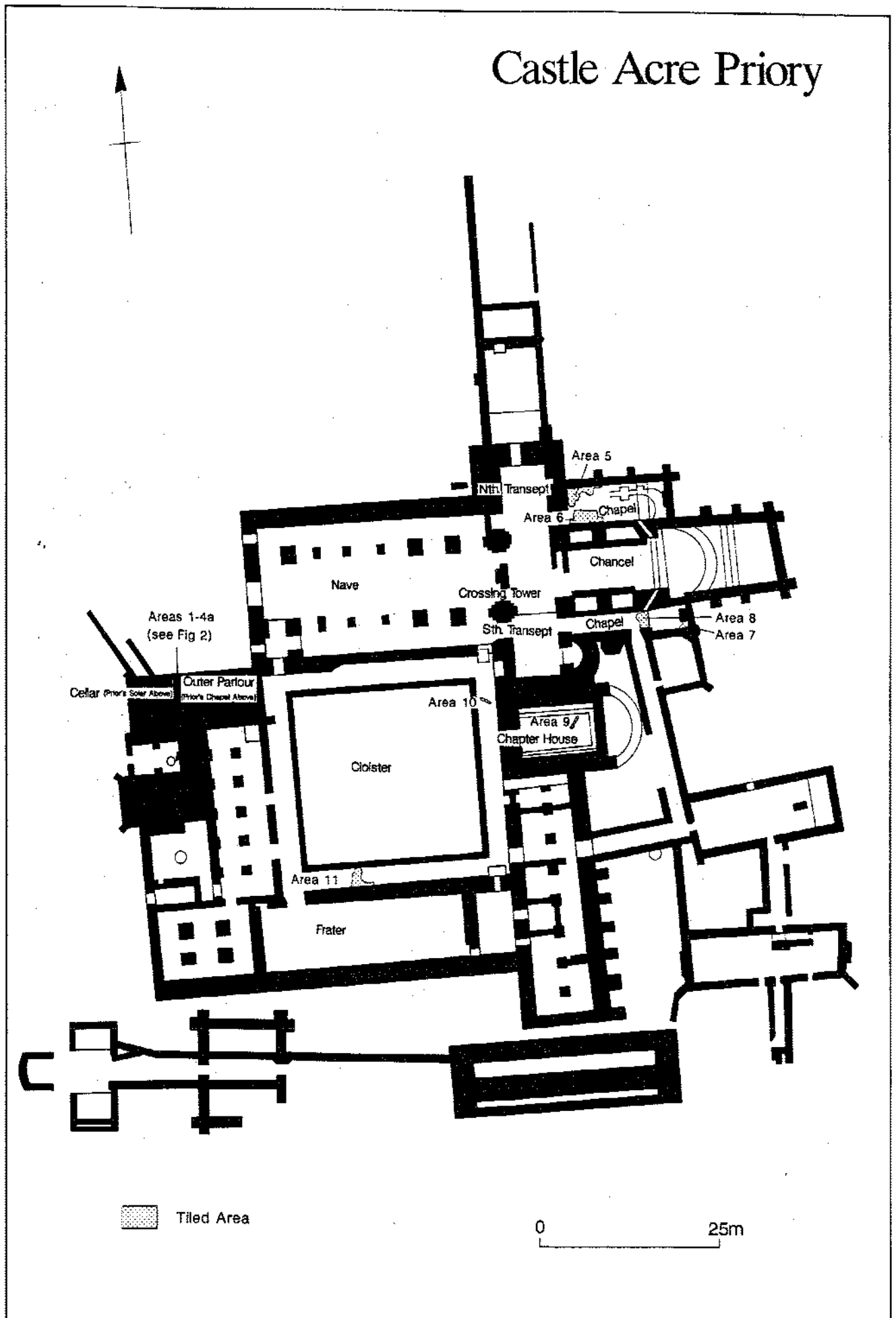


Figure 1: Plan of Location of Medieval Tile Areas

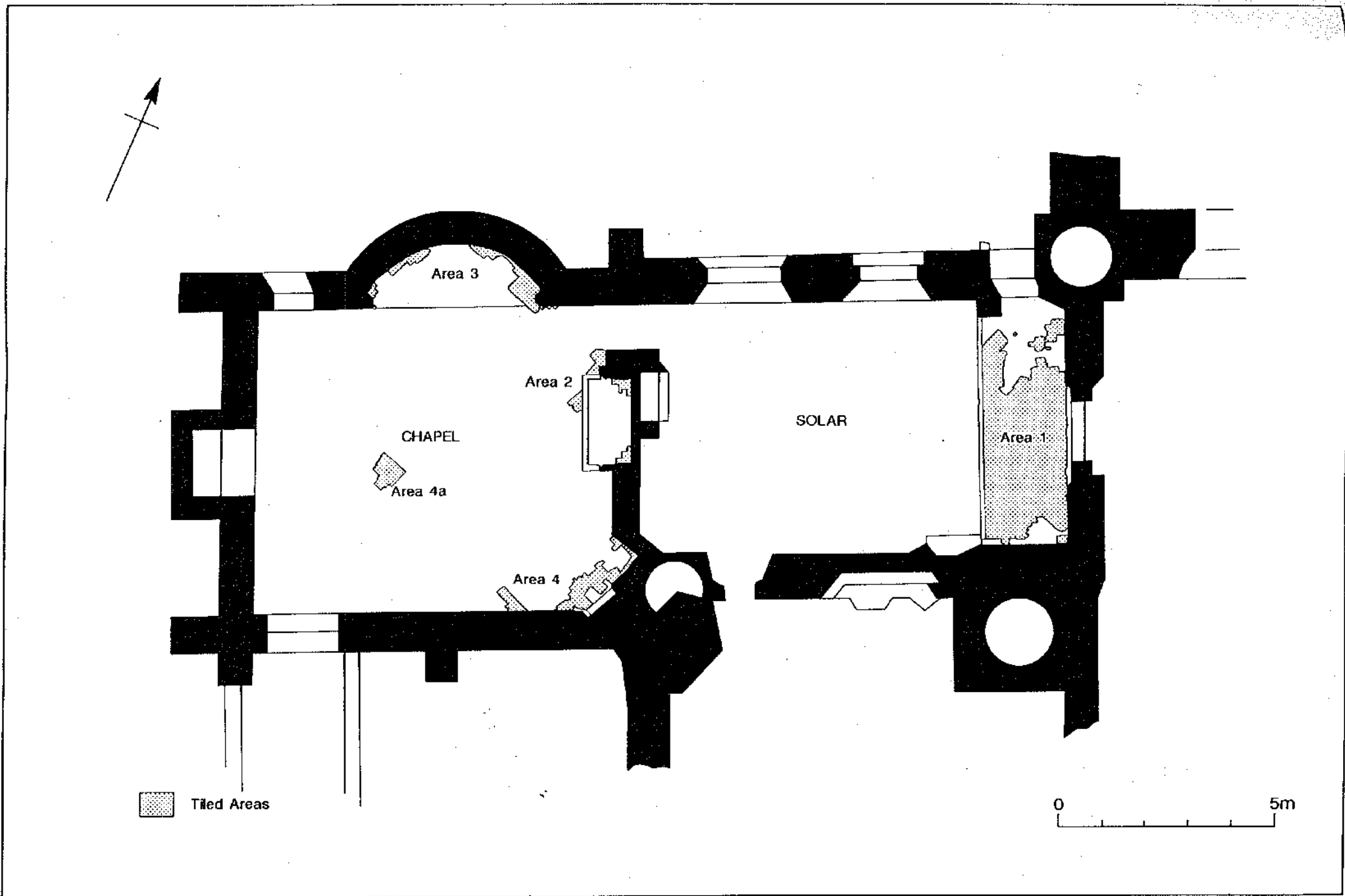


Figure 2: Tile Areas within the Prior's Solar and Chapel

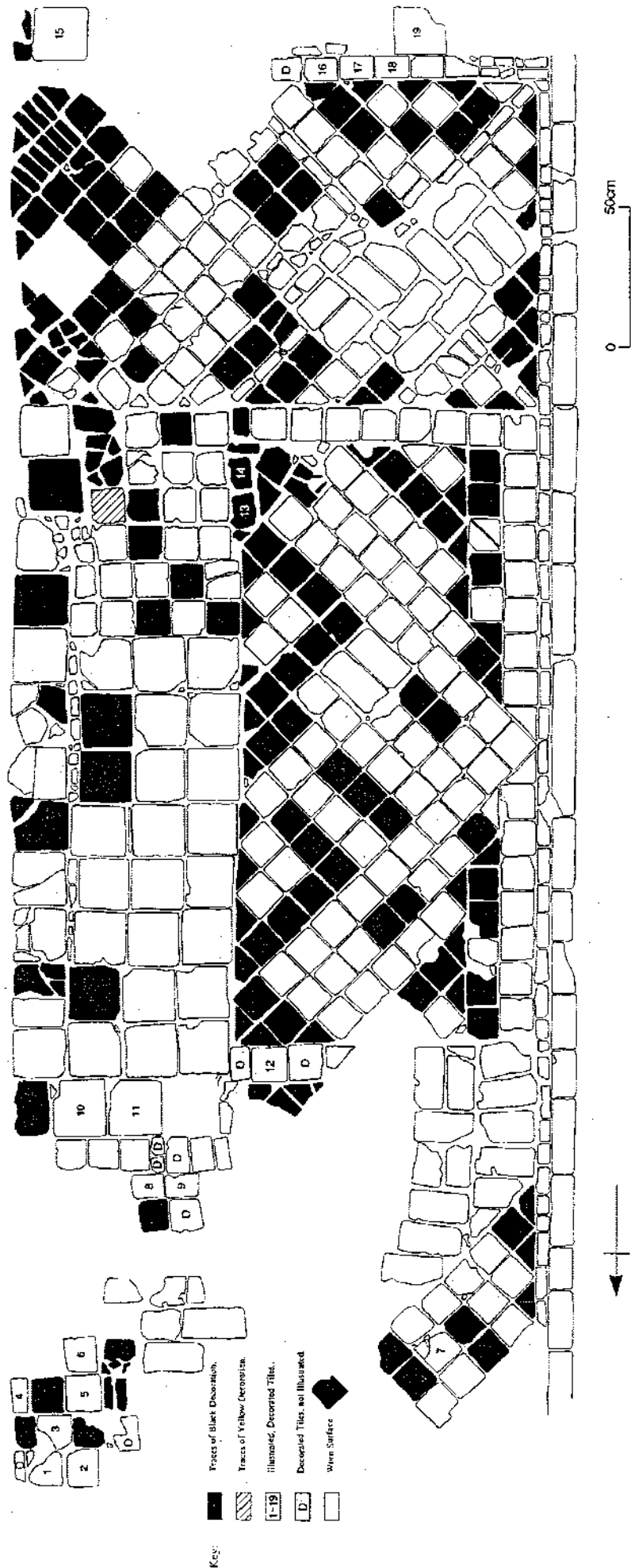


Figure 3. Area 1. Altar Recess in Pinar's Solar

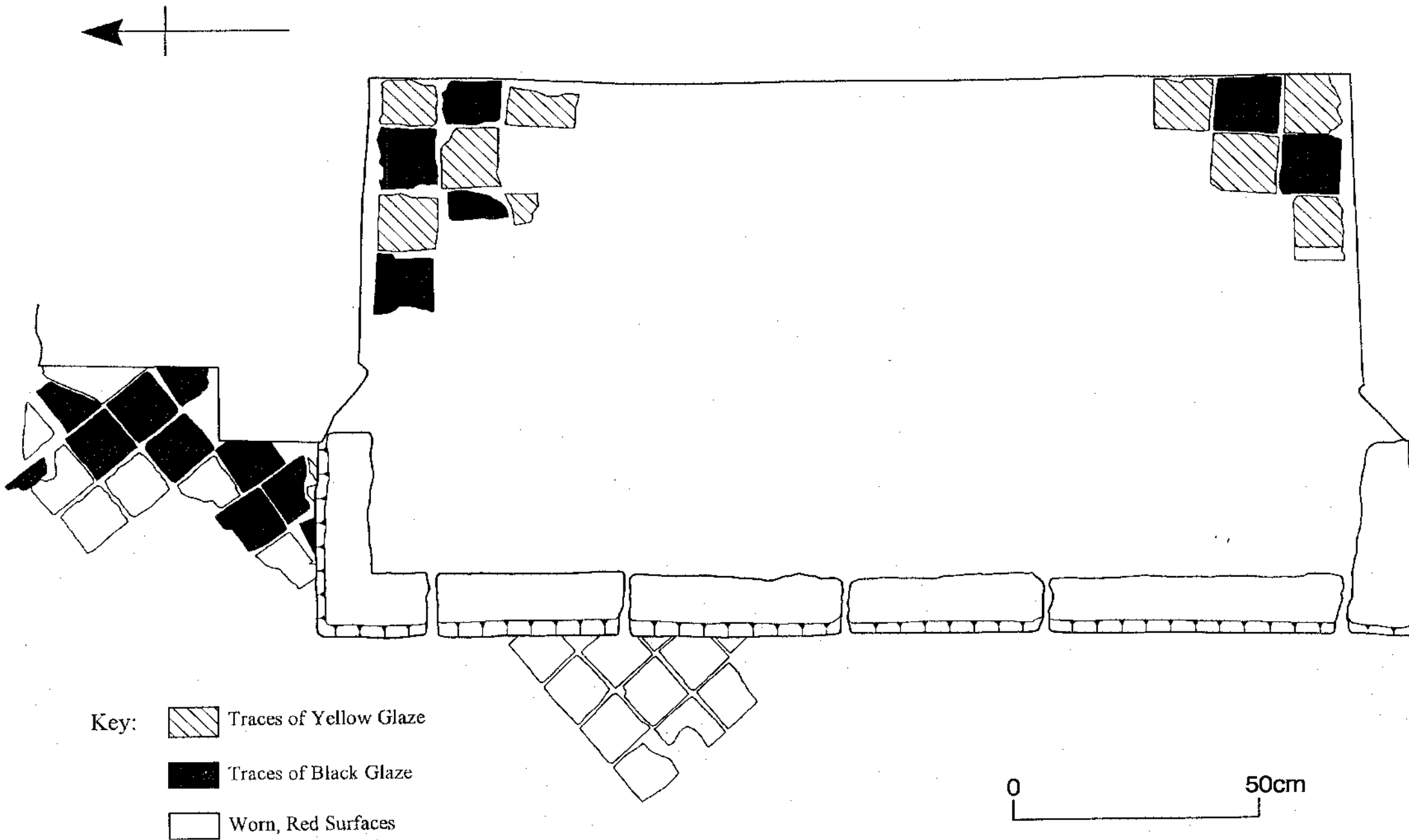


Figure 4: Tiles in the Fireplace of the Prior's Chapel

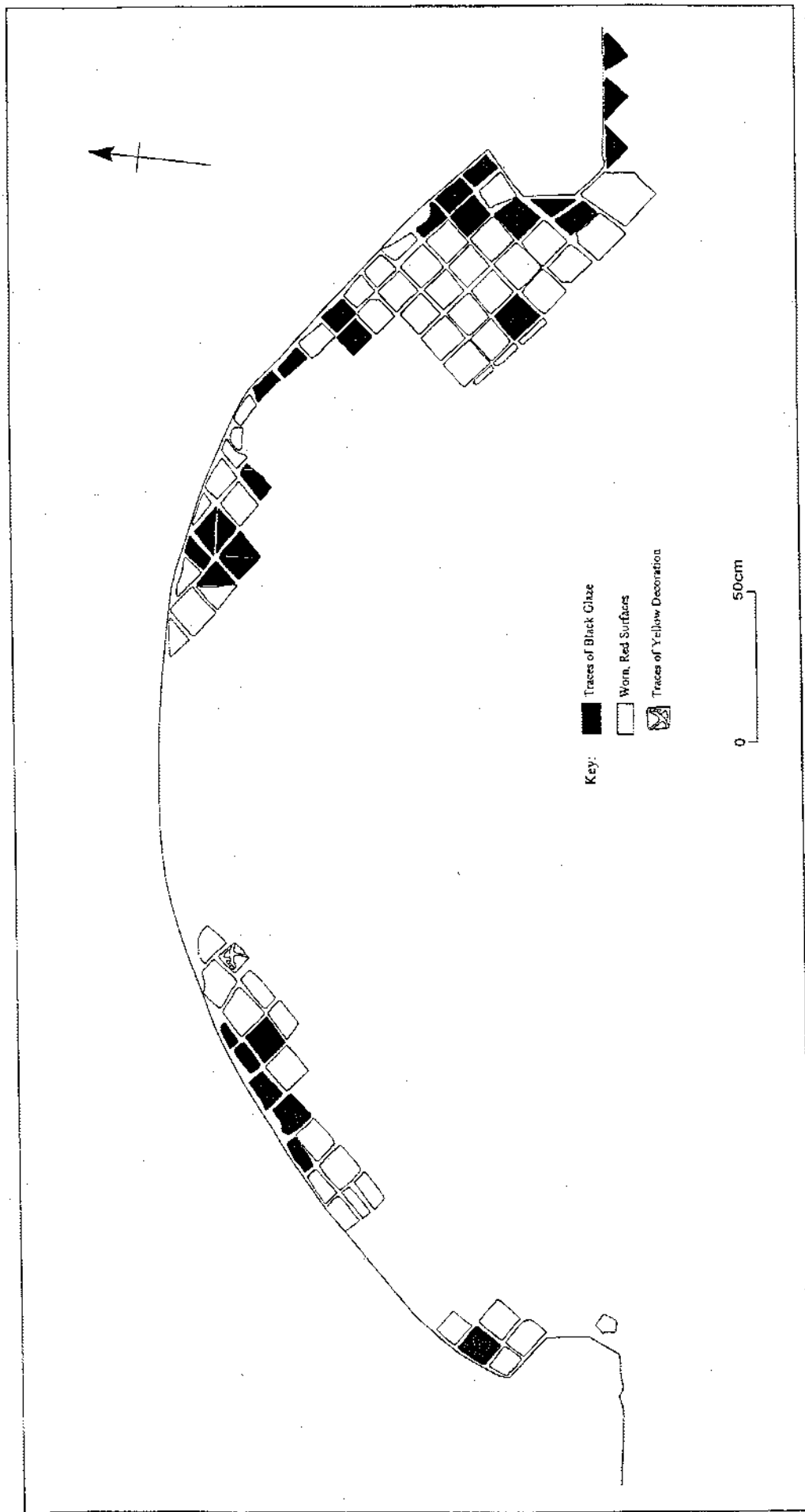


Figure 5. Tiles in the Window area of the Prim'4 Chapel

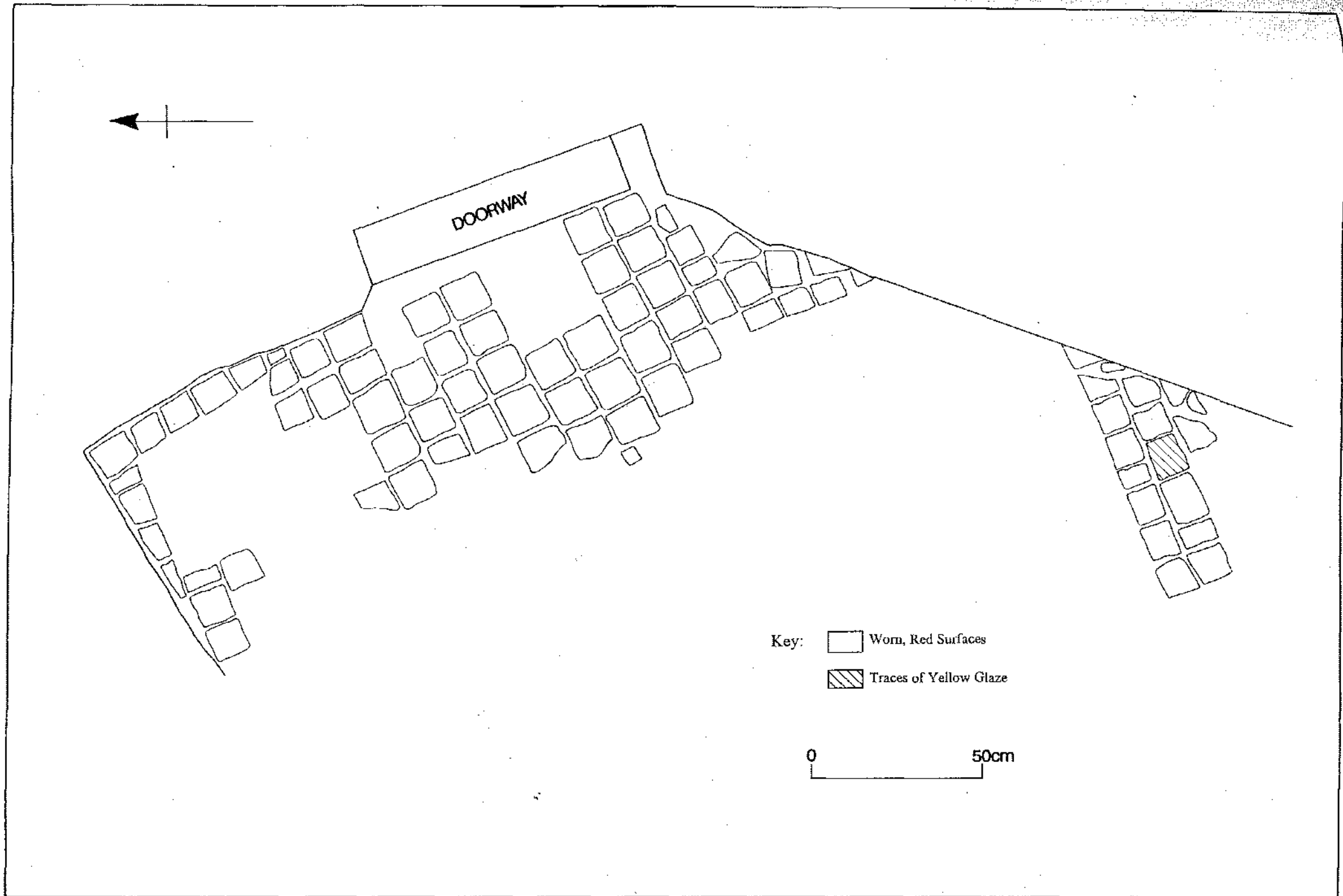


Figure 6: Area 4. Doorway of the Prior's Chapel

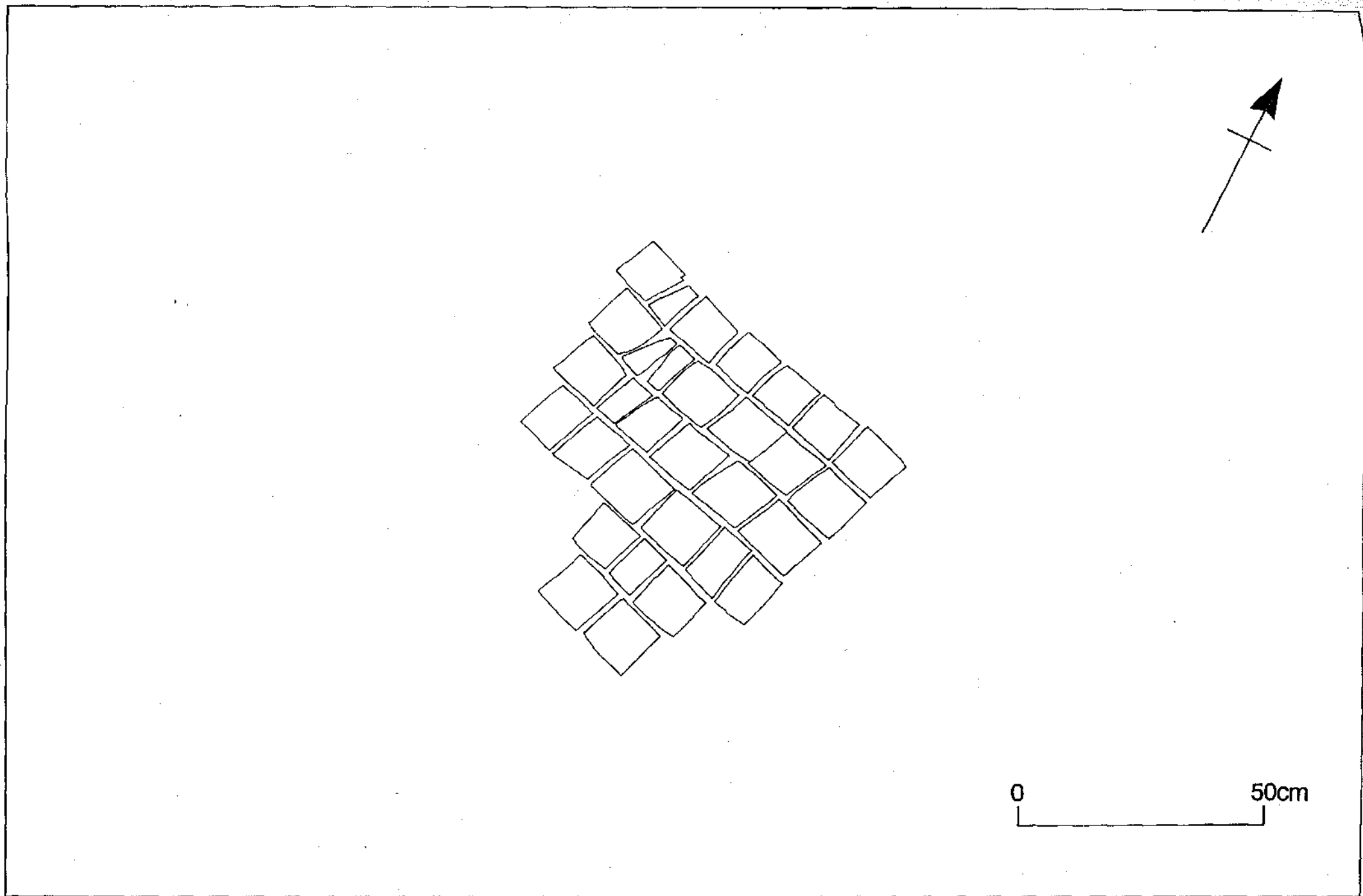


Figure 7: Tiles in central floor area of Prior's chapel. All tiles have worn, red surfaces, with no surviving glaze.

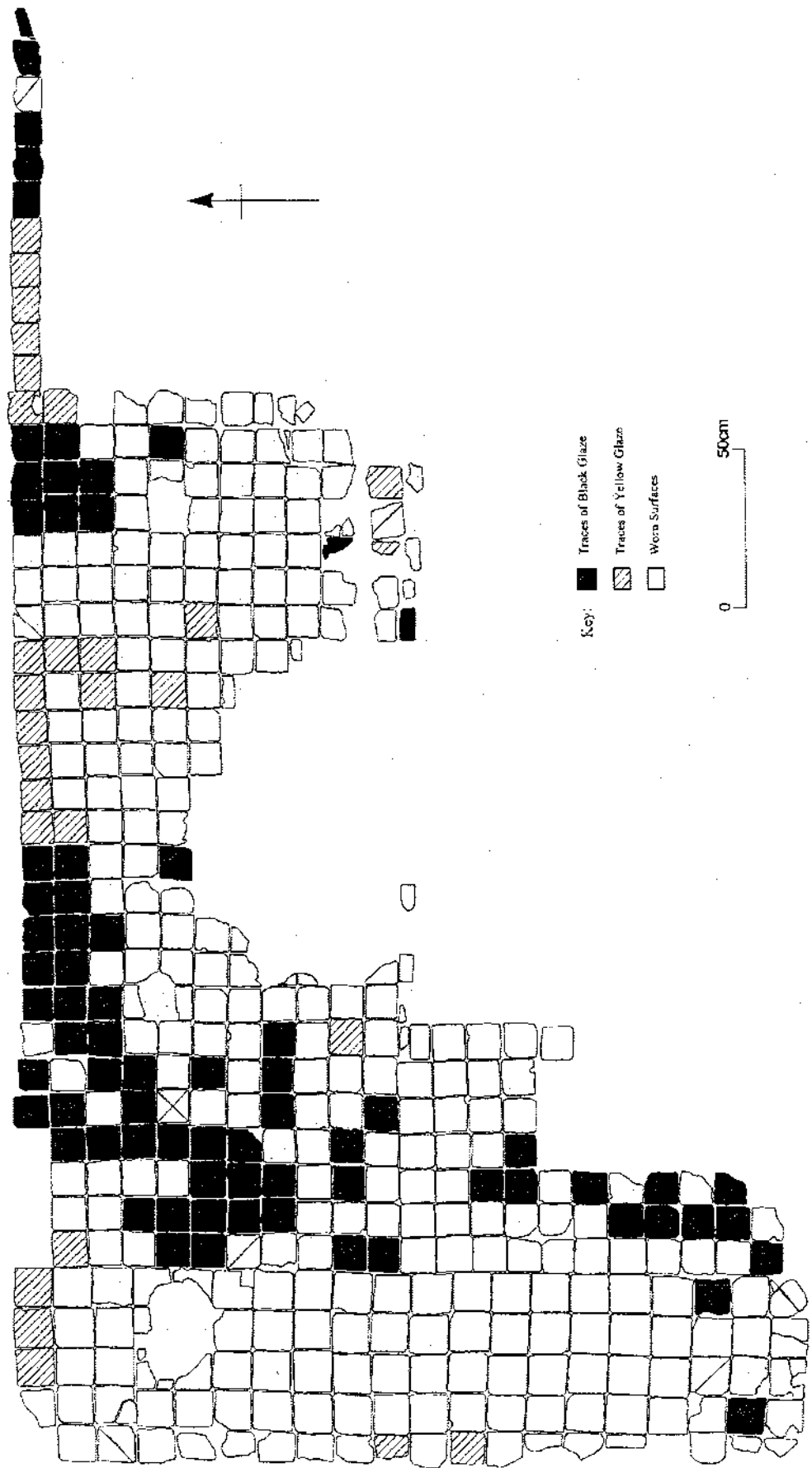


Figure 8. Area 5

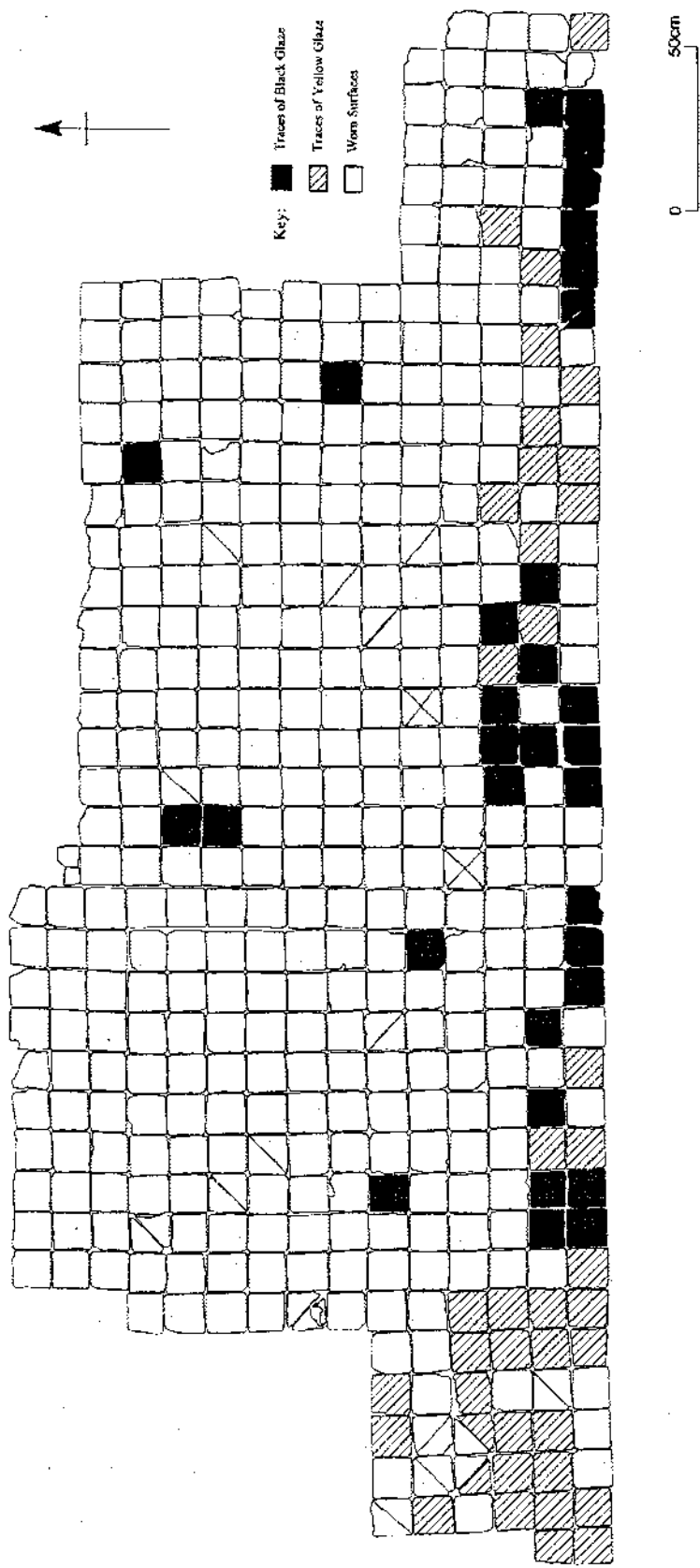
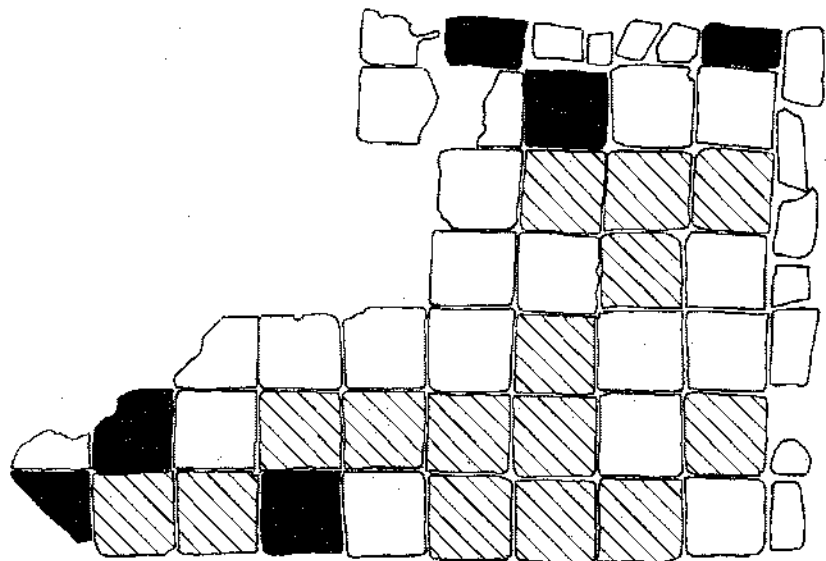





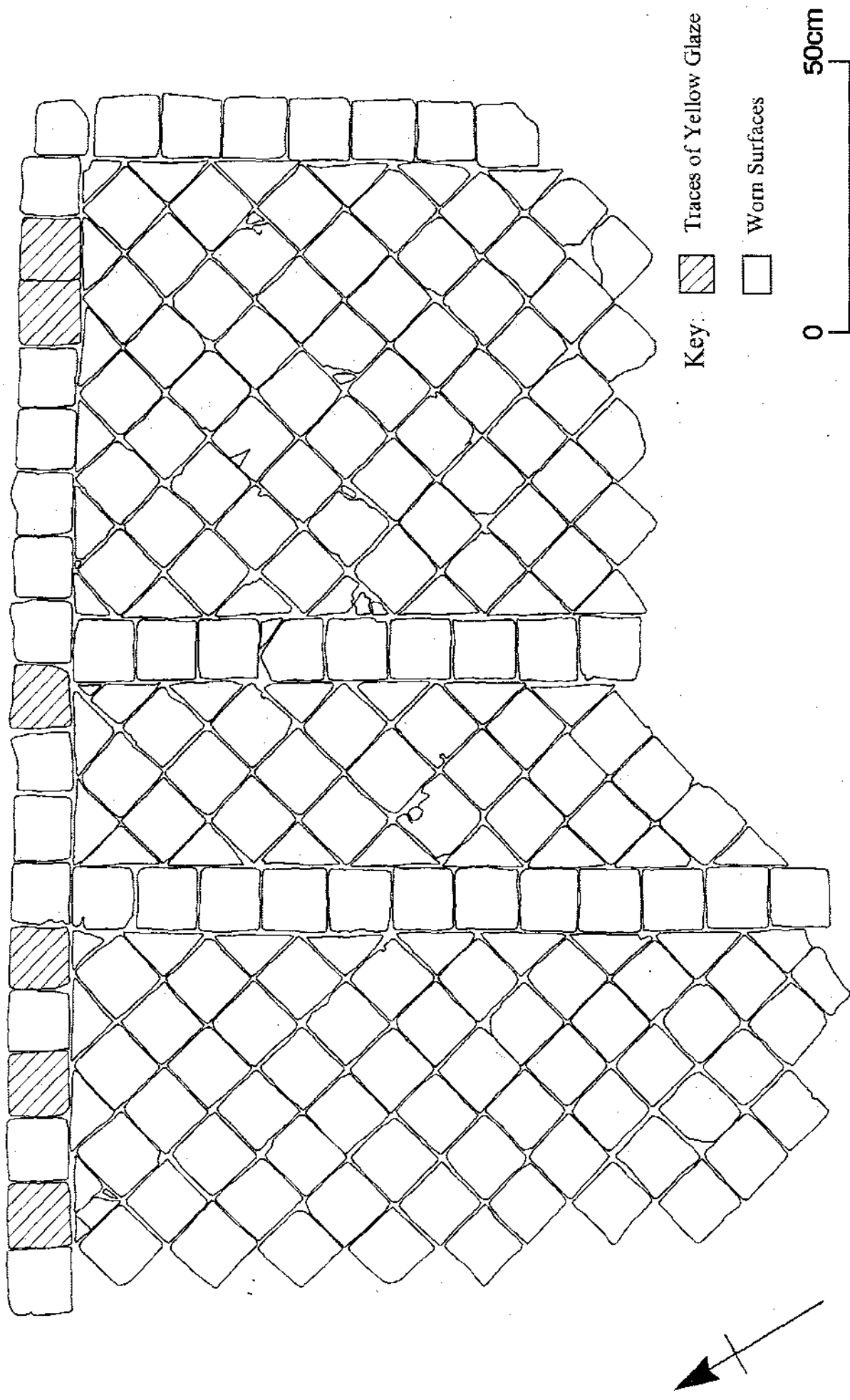
Figure 9 Area 6





- Key:
-  Possible Black Glaze
 -  Traces of Yellow Glaze
 -  Worn Surfaces

0 50cm

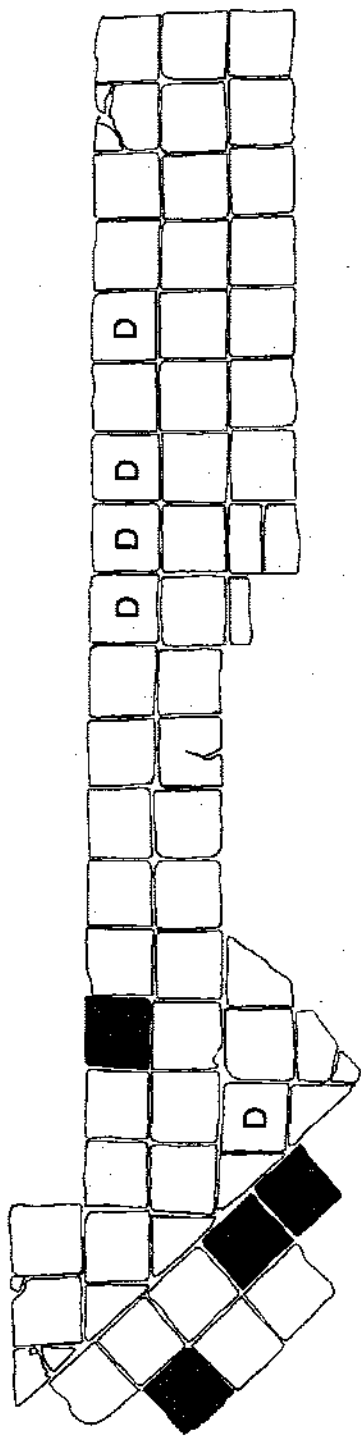
Figure 10: Area 7





Key:  Traces of Yellow Glaze
 Worn Surfaces

0 50cm

Figure 11: Area 8



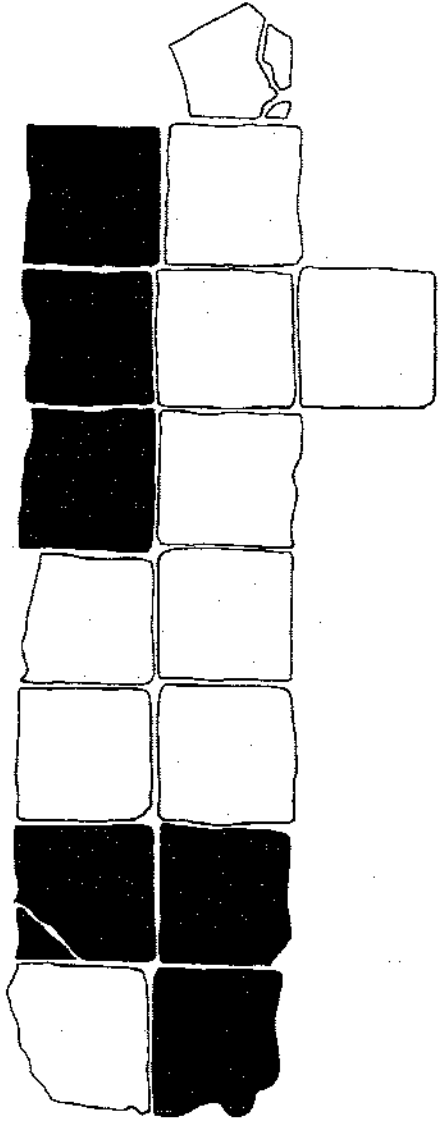
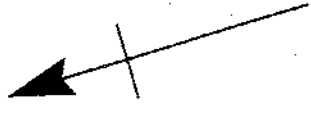
Key:  Possible Black Glaze



 Traces of Decoration

 Worn Surfaces

0 50cm

Figure 12. Area 9



Key:  Possible Black Glaze
 Worn Surfaces

0 50cm

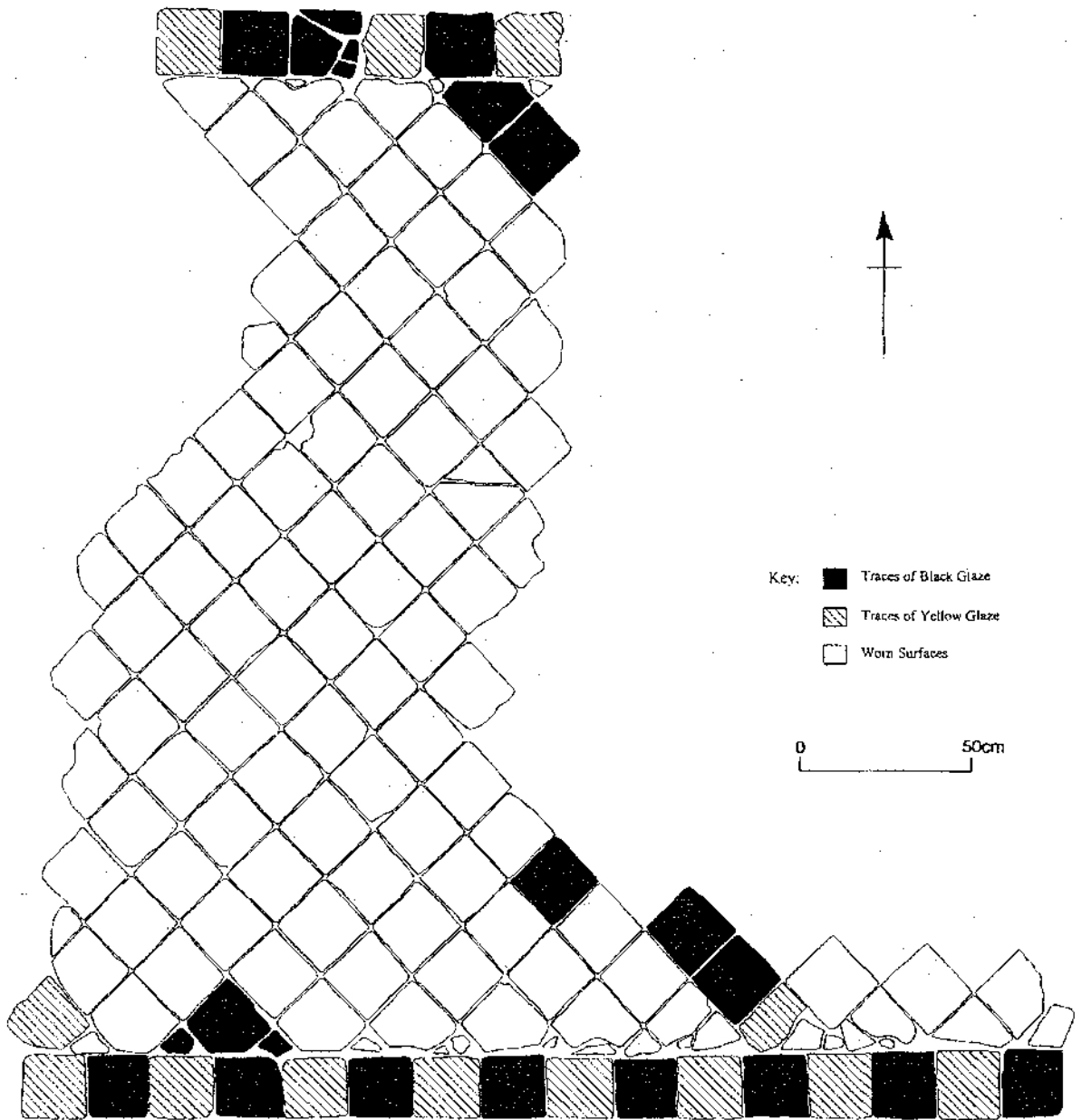


Figure 14: Area 11

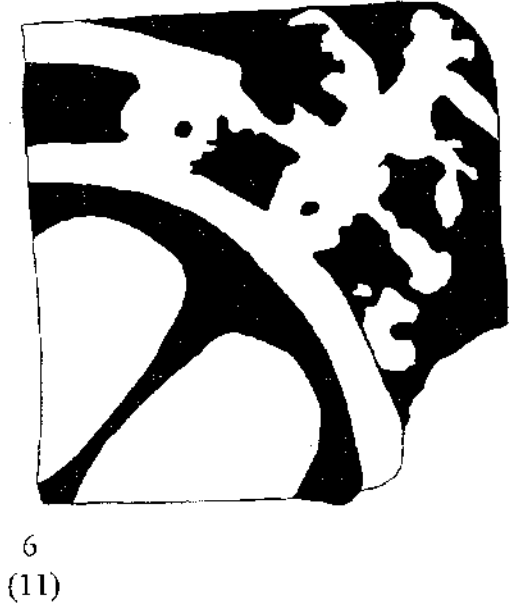
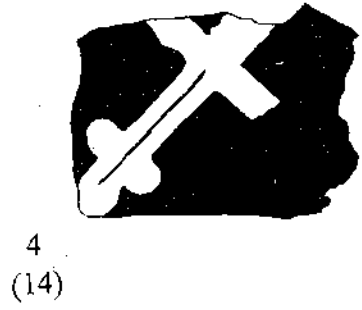
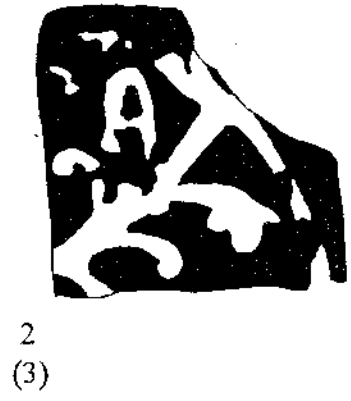
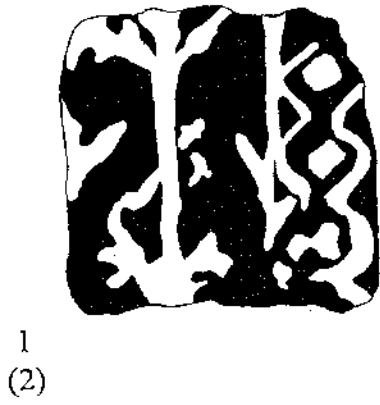
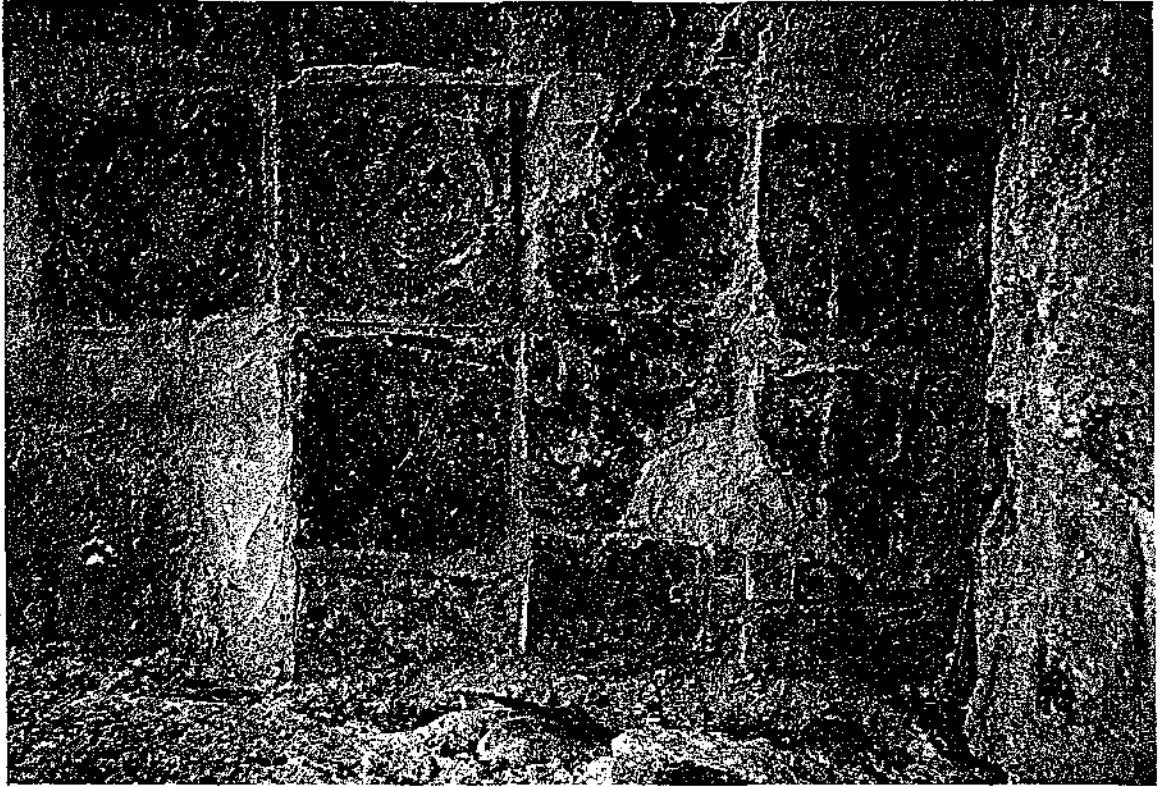


Figure 15: Prior's Chapel
Examples of Tile Designs 1-6
Individual Tile numbers are shown in Brackets

CASTLE ACRE PRIORY



AREA 1: TILES NOS. 1-6

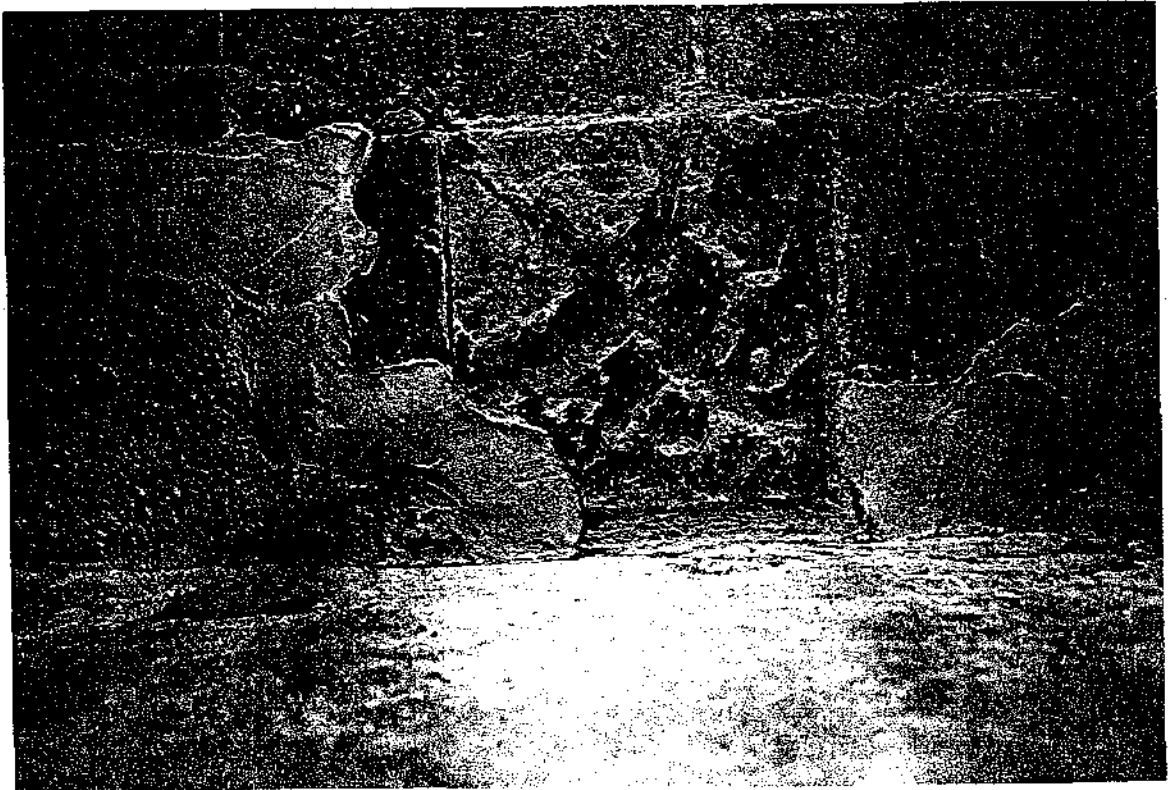


AREA 1: TILES NOS. 16-18

CASTLE ACRE PRIORY



AREA 1: TILE NO. 10



AREA 1: TILE NO. 19 (not drawn)

CASTLE ACRE PRIORY



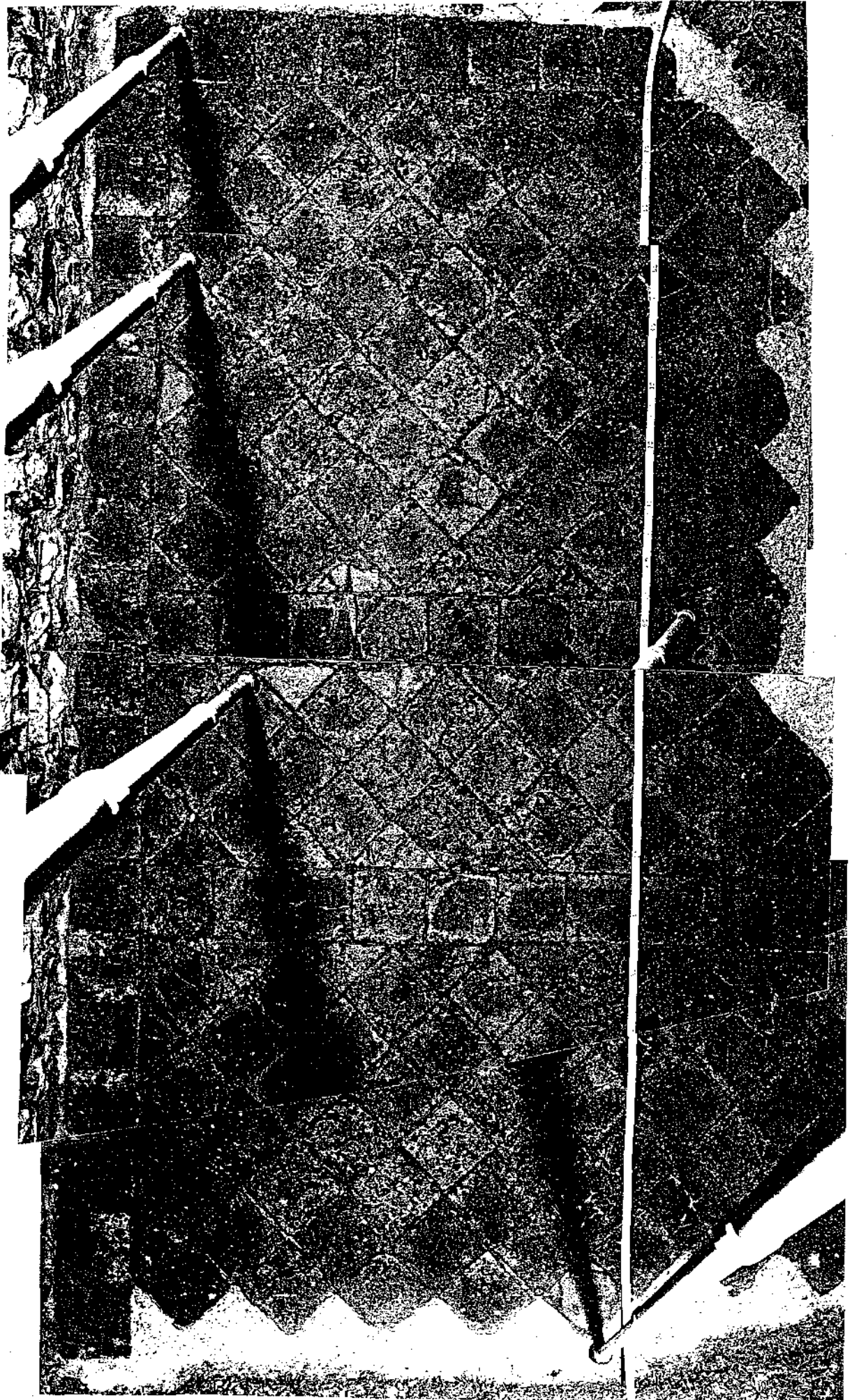
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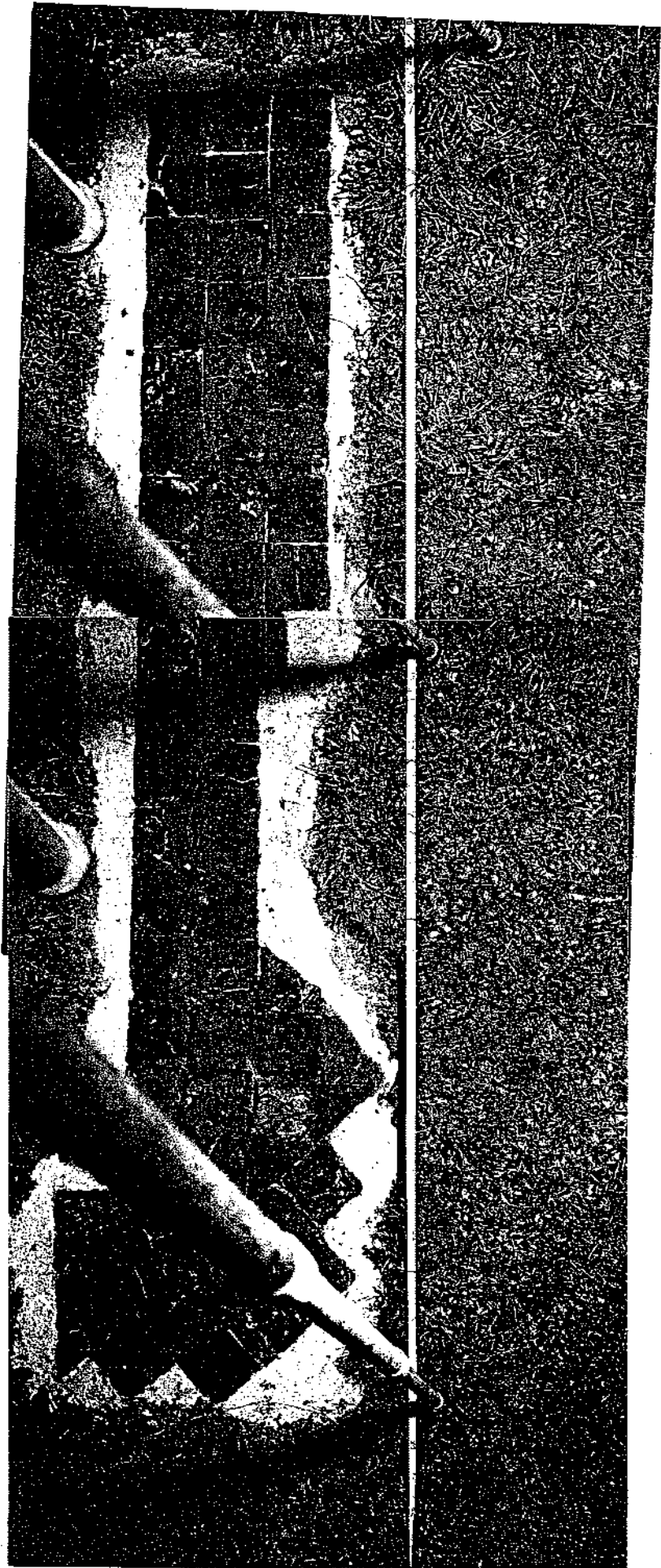
RIGHT-HAND SIDE

AREA 2: TILES IN REAR OF FIREPLACE

CASTLE ACRE PRIORY



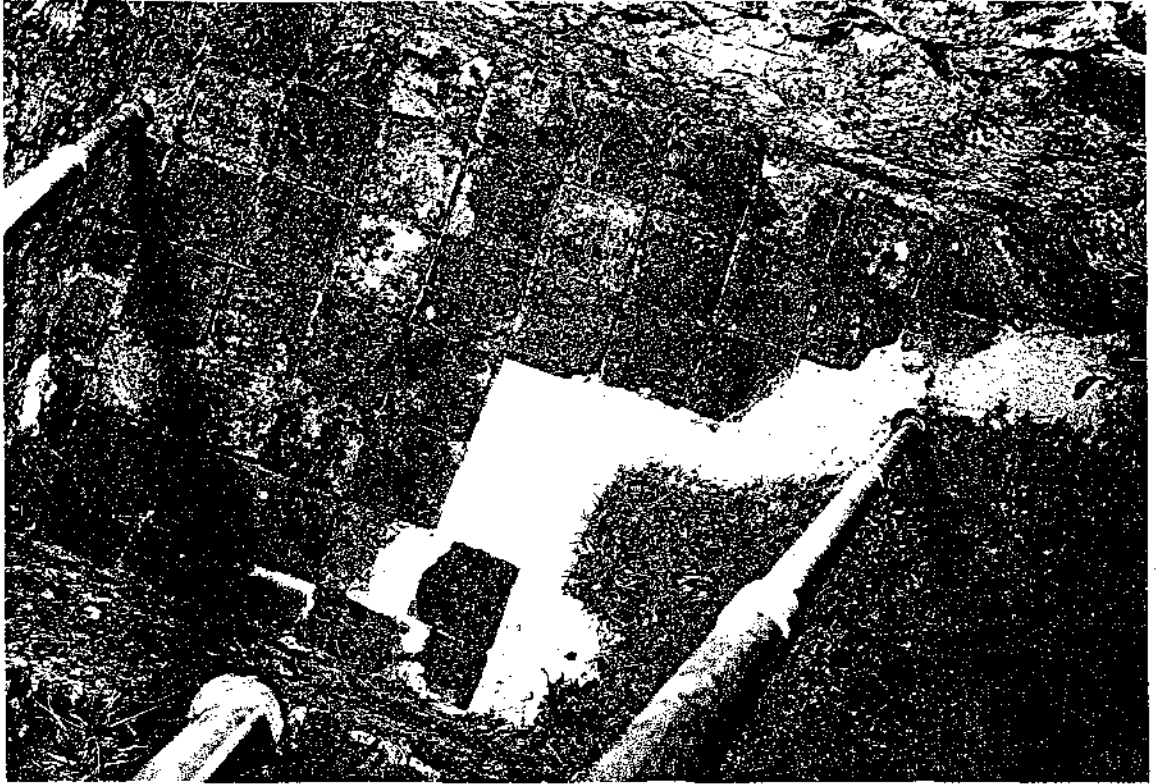
AREA 8



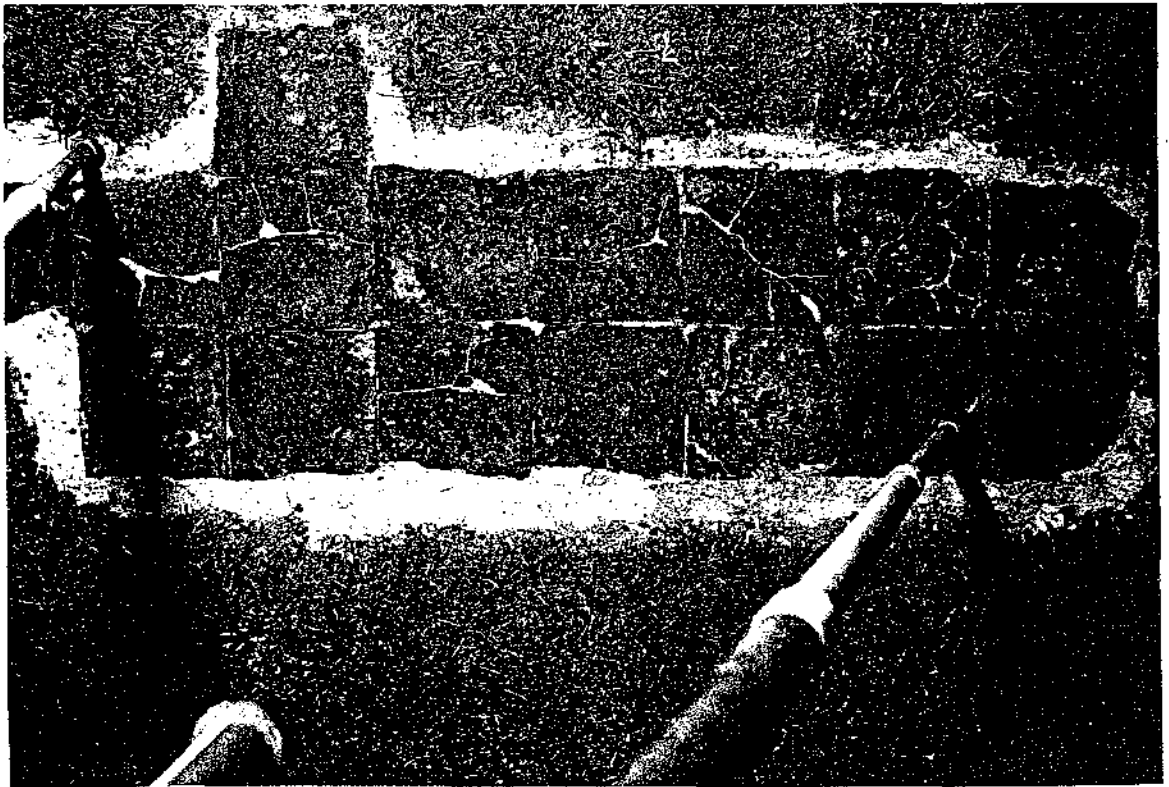
CASTLE ACRE PRIORY

AREA 9

CASTLE ACRE PRIORY



AREA 7



AREA 10

PHOTOMONTAGES OF AREAS 1, 5, 6 and 11

Large photomontages of Areas 1, 5, 6 and 11 were constructed from site photographs. Due to the large size of the areas, it was not possible to include a photographic record of these areas in this report.

Please refer to the area photomontages which have been mounted on a single board and stored with the accompanying site archive.