



**Northamptonshire
County Council**

Northamptonshire Archaeology

Archaeological Survey of the Ice House
at Moseley Court
Northycote Farm Country Park
Wolverhampton



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ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF THE ICE HOUSE

AT MOSELEY COURT

NORTHYCOTE FARM COUNTRY PARK

WOLVERHAMPTON

Abstract

Northamptonshire Archaeology carried out an archaeological survey of the ice house at Moseley Court, Northycote Country Park Wolverhampton in February 2006. The structure was cleaned and a drawn and photographic record made. A small excavation was undertaken to expose the uppermost portion of the entrance to the Ice House.

1 INTRODUCTION

Northamptonshire Archaeology were commissioned to carry out an archaeological survey of the ice house at Moseley Court, Northycote Country Park, Wolverhampton (NGR SJ 393 303).

The survey was designed to meet the requirements of a Brief for Archaeological Survey issued by Wolverhampton City Council (Whitehouse 2006).

2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Moseley Court was built in the early 19th century and was demolished in the 1960s, although the associated lodge/gatehouse and ice house within the park still survive (Black Country Sites and Monuments Records [BCSMR] 1836, 13512 and 6033 respectively).

The geology is mapped as Soft Triassic Sandstone with pebble beds. The Drift Geology is mainly Triassic pebble beds of pebbly red sandstone and conglomerate mixed with glacial boulder clays (British Geological Survey [England and Wales] Solid and Drift Edition 1978, sheet 153).

The site slopes down from 140m AOD adjacent to Northycote Farm to 123m AOD along the northern edge of the park. The house and buildings are located on the highest point in the park at about 145m AOD.

The house and its dependent elements were the subject of a desk-based assesment and site survey in 2005 (McAree 2005).

3 METHODOLOGY

- The interior debris comprising leaves, leaf-mould and soil were hand-cleared and the surface was cleaned to expose the undamaged superstructure.
- The exterior ground surface was cleaned for a distance of up to 0.5m from the exposed brick superstructure. Cleaning followed the contours of the slope/bank.
- No originally-buried superstructure was exposed unless it provided evidence for the location of the former entrance.
- The brick superstructure was hand-cleaned of moss, algal growth, dirt and extraneous mortar to facilitate definition of bricks.
- A field plan was produced at 1:20 scale (for report reproduction at 1:50). Individual bricks were depicted.
- Two transects were drawn over the exposed superstructure at 1:20 scale (for report reproduction at 1:50).
- Brick sizes were recorded in both imperial and metric measurements and a good extraneous example was fully described for matching purposes.
- A full photographic record was kept in Colour slide, black and white negative and digital images.
- The ice house was recorded on pro-forma sheets, with a unique context number being allocated to each distinct deposit and feature.
- All records were compiled during fieldwork into a comprehensive and fully cross-referenced site archive, which will be deposited with Wolverhampton City Council

4 SURVEY RESULTS

The archaeological survey of the ice house began with the removal of the loose leaf mould and rubbish which was covering the structure and which had collected inside (Plate 1). A small excavation was carried out on the north-western side of the ice house where the presence of brickwork which did not form part of the circle of the structure suggested the location of the entrance. This area was excavated only to show the form of the entrance in plan with no unnecessary excavation being undertaken.

The ice house was covered by a surviving mound (001), measuring *c*12m northwest-southeast by *c*6m northeast-southwest and was made up of a compact orange brown sandy loam with frequent rounded quartz pebbles. The mound had a number of small scrubby trees growing on its north-western side; its south-eastern side had been eroded by its use as part of a cycle track (Plate 2).

The brick structure of the ice house was roughly circular with an external diameter of *c*3.2m and an internal diameter of *c*2.5m, the measurements were taken at the widest exposed points (Figs 3 & 4, Plates 3 & 4). It was not possible to measure the full height/depth of the structure.

The ice house superstructure [005] was constructed in handmade red/orange brick laid in stretcher bond (brick size: metric 235mm x 115mm x 68mm; imperial 9 ¼” x 4 ½” x 2 ¾”). The outer finish was roughly pointed with a dull creamy yellow mortar. The internal finish was neatly pointed, with a possible lime wash finish. The wall was *c*0.3m thick. On the north-eastern side of the structure there was a brick buttress which, at the level seen, was not bonded into the ice house (Figs 3 & 4, Plate 3).

The dome of the ice house [004] was constructed in red/orange, handmade brick. The bricks were laid in a mix of stretcher and header, with no obvious common bond. The dome of the ice house was *c*0.12m thick. It has a shallow convex curve which at its apex reaches *c*0.55m above the main super structure.

The dome of the ice house had been breached, so the relationship between it and the entrance was not clear. The surviving entrance brickwork [006] demonstrated that the entrance was *c*0.95m wide with an arch, of which only the springer brick on either side survived (Plates 4 & 5). The entrance structure was not placed centrally to the circular super structure but was offset; it is not clear whether this was part of the original design or a simple construction error.

The ice house was filled with a compact red orange brown sandy loam (003). This material may originate from the mound which still partially covers the ice house.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

McAree, D, 2005 *Archaeological desk-based assessment Moseley Court, Northcote Farm Country Park Wolverhampton December 2004*, Northamptonshire Archaeology Report

Whitehouse, S, 2006 *Brief for archaeological recording prior to consolidation of the ice house, site of Moseley Court, northcote Country Park, Wolverhampton*, Wolverhampton City Council



Plate 1 The ice house looking south prior to cleaning



Plate 2 Erosion caused by bicycles



Plate 3 The ice house looking south showing buttress



Plate 4 The ice house looking south-entrance to right



Plate 5 The entrance structure

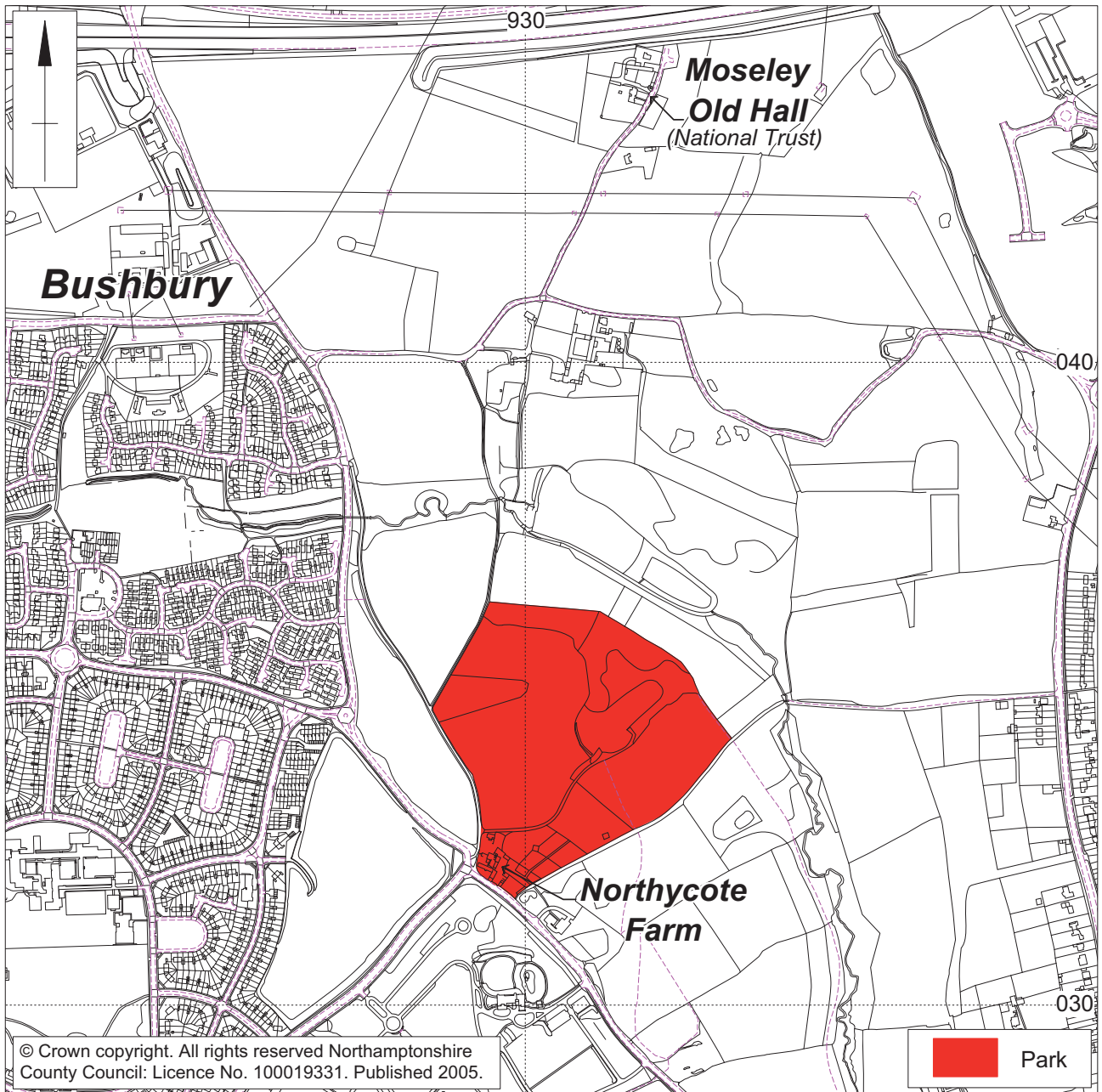
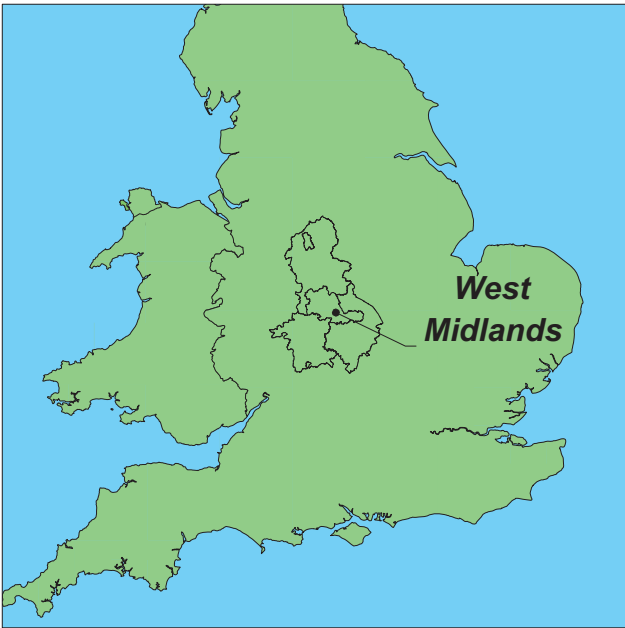


Fig 1

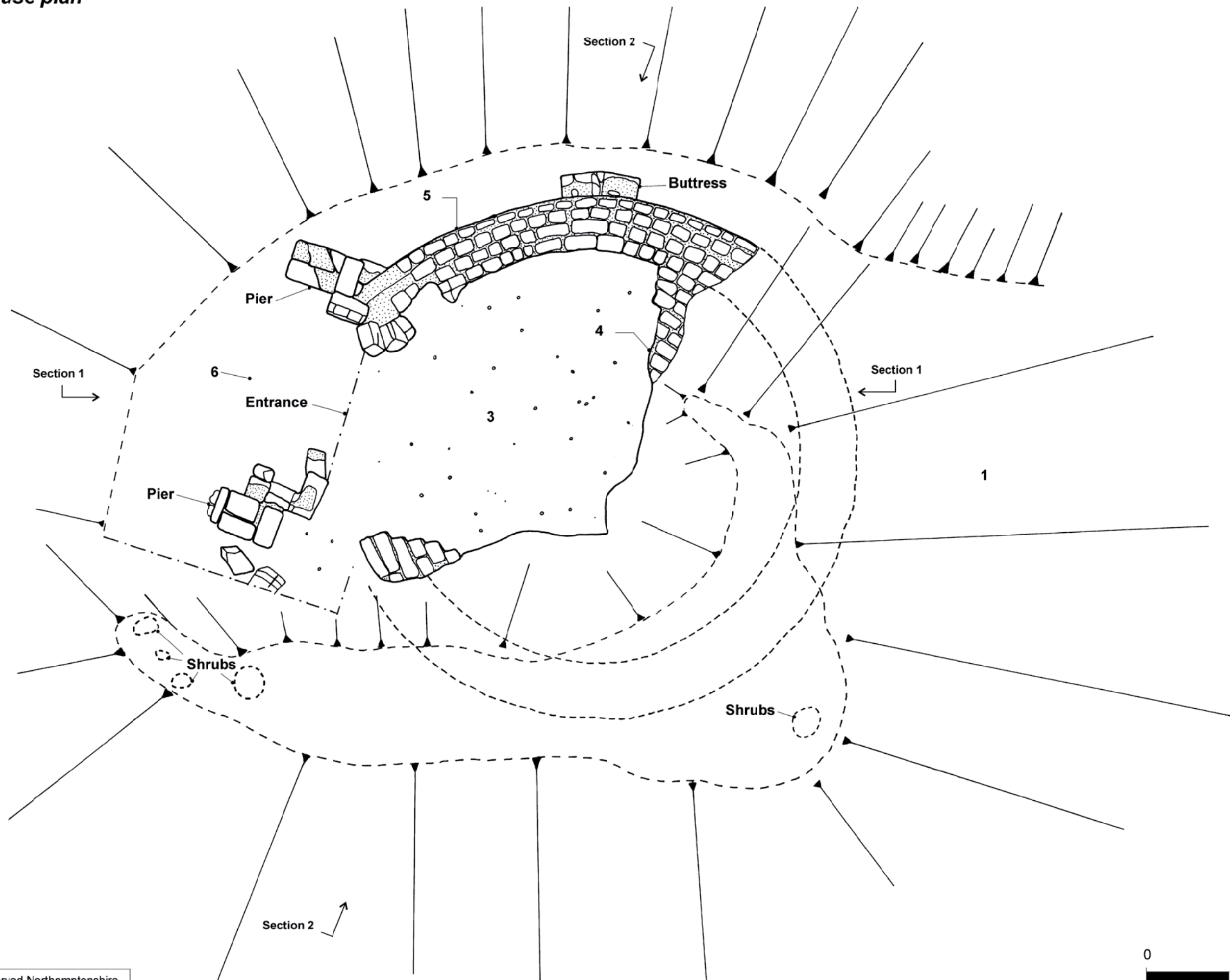


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Scale 1:2500

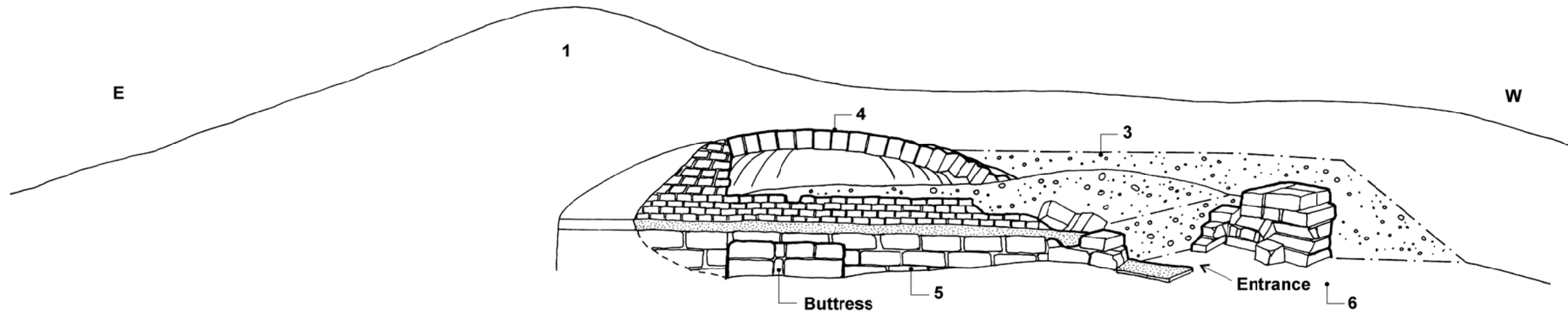
Ice House location Fig 2

Moseley Ice House plan



Moseley Ice House
Sectional elevation

Section 1



Section 2

