



## Evaluation/monitoring Report No. 169

Carrickfergus Castle  
Co. Antrim

AE/08/210

Dr Henry Welsh

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## Site Specific Information

*Site Address:* Carrickfergus Castle, Carrickfergus, Co. Antrim

*Town:* Carrickfergus

*SMR No.* ANT 052:059

*State Care* ✓ *Scheduled* *Other*

*Grid Ref:* J 4143 8725

*Excavation Licence No:* AE/08/210

*Planning Ref:* N/A

*Date of evaluation:* 8 December 2008 to 19 December 2008

*Archaeologist present:* Dr Henry Welsh

*Brief Summary:*

*Type of evaluation:*

Excavation and recording of five trenches, excavated by hand (Trenches 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5), along an area known as the Flash Room Corridor, located adjacent to the south curtain wall of the Inner Ward.

*Size of area opened:*

Trench 1: Not excavated due to presence of concrete floor

Trench 2: Not excavated due to presence of concrete floor

Trench 3: 1.0m (nw/se) by 0.9m (ne/sw)

Trench 4: 1.0m (nw/se) by 0.9m (ne/sw)

Trench 5: 1.0m (nw/se) by 0.9m (ne/sw)

## Account of the evaluation

Archaeological evaluation was undertaken on behalf of the Northern Ireland Environment Agency [NIEA], Built Heritage from 8 December 2008 to 17 December 2008 at the Flash Room Corridor within the Inner Ward of Carrickfergus Castle. The NIEA was considering bringing the Flash Room and associated corridor into use as a public access area, requiring the provision of lighting, an interpretation panel and a new floor surface. As these works would be intrusive, it was agreed that an archaeological evaluation would take place prior to their commencement.

The evaluation found that the Flash Room Corridor had been constructed to provide access to an existing ammunition store, now known as the Flash Room. This had been required due to the construction of a substantial structure within the Inner Ward of the castle, against the south curtain wall, to provide a stable gun platform level with the top of the curtain wall. This structure was built over and around the Flash Room and the Flash Room Corridor. Subsequent to the construction of this gun platform, a trench was dug into the floor of the Flash Room Corridor to accommodate a ceramic sewer pipe. This excavation disturbed a midden consisting mainly of faunal remains, which were re-deposited when the sewer pipe had been placed in position and the floor of the Flash Room Corridor re-instated.

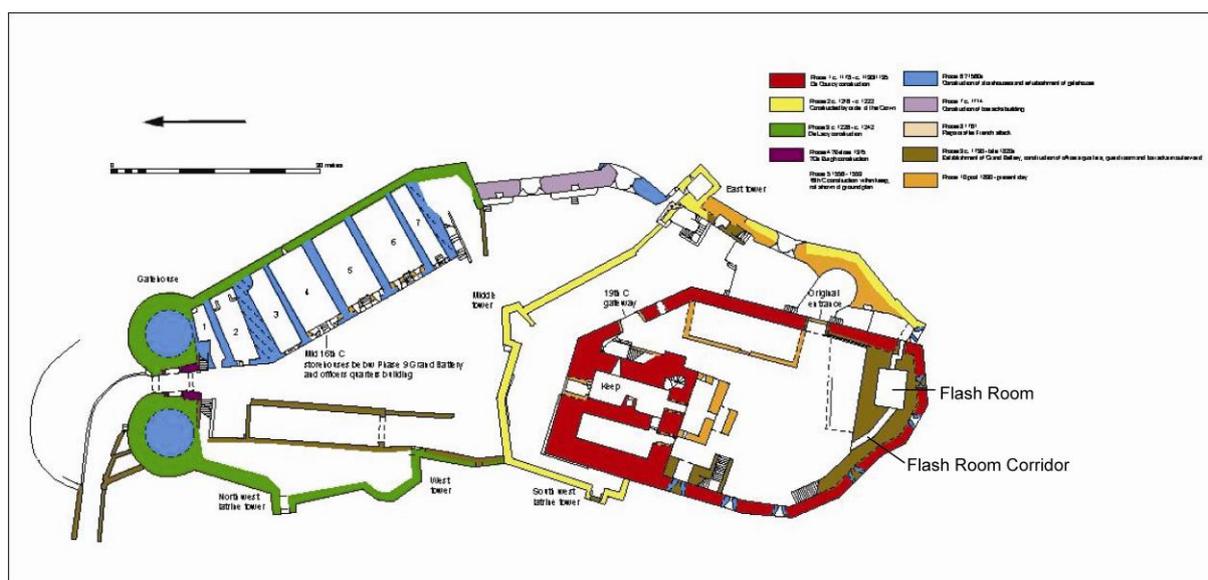


Figure 1: Ground Floor plan of Carrickfergus Castle, (after Ó Baoill 2008)

Carrickfergus Castle has been subject to much historical research and archaeological investigation and is possibly most comprehensively described by Dr T. E. McNeill in *Carrickfergus Castle, County Antrim, Northern Ireland Archaeological Monographs: No. 1*, published by the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland in 1981 and more recently by Ruairí Ó Baoill (2008) in *Carrickfergus, the Story of the Castle and Walled Town*, Belfast NIEA.

The mid-nineteenth century Flash Room Corridor is entered from the southern end of the Inner Ward, through a modern metal gate and grille (Context No. 511). The corridor here is constructed of hammer-dressed granite blocks (Contexts 503 & 504), with a brick arch (Context No. 505) over and

has a south-east/north-west alignment. At a point 1.8m into the corridor, two vertical channels (Contexts 515 & 516) have been cut into the walls to accommodate a wooden door frame, which does not survive. At a point 2.8m into the corridor, the alignment changes to east-south-east/west-north-west and continues for a further 4.5m, at which point it butts against a brick structure, interpreted as the thickness of the walls of the Flash Room itself, which is entirely constructed of brick. A section drawing was completed at this point (see Figure 3). This part of the corridor, on an east/west alignment, is 1.45m in length and consists of two brick walls (Context Nos 101 & 102) with a shallow brick arch over (Context No. 103). There are recesses (Context Nos 107, 108, 109 & 110) in these walls at the eastern and northern ends of this connecting corridor, presumably to accommodate timber door lintels, which have not survived. Their location also suggests that there were doors at both ends of this short corridor, presumably to maintain ordnance in a secure environment. The absence of wall plaster at these locations also suggests that the door frames were in position before the plaster finish (Context Nos 105, 106 & 111) was applied to the intervening brick surfaces.

The initial proposal was for the excavation of five regularly-spaced trenches along the length of the Flash Room Corridor, tentatively denoted trenches 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5. However, preliminary investigations revealed that where trenches 1 & 2 were to be situated, a concrete surface was in place. Due to time constraints, trenches 1 & 2 were therefore not excavated and efforts were directed towards the remaining three trenches, denoted trenches 3, 4 & 5 (see Figure 2). Trenches 3, 4 & 5 were spaced regularly along the rest of the corridor with Trench 5 located at the northern entrance to the corridor from the Inner Ward. The excavations were undertaken by hand and a context record for the site was created using the standard context recording method. All excavated material was dry sieved with an 8mm wire mesh sieve. Individual features and deposits were photographed and an overall plan of the Flash Room Corridor (scale 1:20) and a series of section drawings for each trench (scale 1:10) was prepared throughout the course of the investigation.

Trench 3 was 1.0m north-west/south-east by 0.9m north-east/south-west. The stratigraphically latest deposit encountered consisted of a mid-brown sandy layer (Context No. 301) which was 0.22m in depth. Immediately beneath this was a concrete surface (Context No. 302), which extended across the entire area of Trench 3. Excavation ceased at this point. It was observed that a slightly raised ridge extended centrally across the trench in a north-west/south-east alignment and this was interpreted as marking the position of a sewer pipe underneath, as this corresponded with the alignment of a sewer pipe that extended through trenches 4 and 5, as detailed below. If correctly interpreted, then the trench for the sewer pipe must have been filled in and covered with a layer of concrete (Context No. 302) at this point along the corridor. The sandy deposit (Context No. 301) contained 103 pieces of animal bone, some flint, iron items (possibly nails), 4 sherds of pottery (tentatively identified as medieval and post-medieval), 1 clay pipe fragment, pieces of slate, coal and coke and some shell.

Trench 4 was 1.0m north-west/south-east by 0.9m north-east/south-west. The stratigraphically latest deposit encountered consisted of a mid-brown sandy layer (Context No. 401) to a depth of 0.10m, where a layer of concrete (Context No. 402) was encountered on the north-east and south-west edges of the trench, with a dark-brown sandy layer (Context No. 403) in between. When this was removed to a depth of 0.22m, a ceramic sewer pipe (Context No. 408) was uncovered. This was found to extend centrally along the length of the trench and it was clear that the layer of concrete

(Context No. 402) had been cut into in order to provide a trench to accommodate this sewer pipe. The sewer pipe had a maker's stamp impressed on it at regular intervals and most letters were legible. As far as could be ascertained, these letters were [C]ERG[H][O]LIE, N BROWN, PAISLEY. The excavation of Trench 4 was terminated at a depth of 0.32m. The interpretation here was that the concrete wall foundation (Context No. 402) was cut into to provide a trench for sewer pipe (Context No. 408). After this pipe was laid, the trench was in-filled with the dark-brown sandy layer (Context No. 403) to a level flush with the top of the concrete foundation. Context No. 403 was found to contain 37 pieces of animal bone, a sherd of broken sewer pipe, 14 pieces of flint, some iron objects (possibly nails) and some shell. This part of the corridor did not receive a covering layer of concrete, but was instead covered by a mid-brown sandy layer (Context No. 401). This layer contained what appeared to be a military-style button, 2 fragments of clay pipe, metal objects, iron slag, animal bone and teeth, 6 sherds of pottery, slate, wood and paper fragments, flint and shell.

Trench 5 was 1.0m south-east/north-west by 0.9m north-east/south-west. It consisted of an upper mid-brown sandy layer (Context No. 501) to a depth of 0.22m, where a layer of concrete (Context No. 502) was encountered on the north-east and south-west edges of the trench, with dark-brown sandy layer (Context No. 507) in between. When Context No. 507 was removed to a depth of 0.15m, a ceramic sewer pipe (Context No. 508) was uncovered, extending centrally along the length of the trench with a north-west/south-east alignment. Levels taken on this sewer pipe indicate the direction of flow to be north-west, towards the Inner Ward. It was clear that the concrete layer (Context No. 502) had been cut to provide a trench to accommodate this sewer pipe. An iron channel (Context No. 509) was also uncovered at the south-east corner of the trench. It was resting on a row of red bricks, mortared together and aligned north-south, extending into the baulk on the south-east side of the trench and under the concrete layer (Context No. 502) to the north-east. The excavation of trench 5 was terminated at a depth of 0.35m. In trench 5, it appears that the concrete foundation (Context No. 502) was set down on top of the existing iron channel (Context No. 509), which does not appear to be associated with either the Flash Room or the Flash Room Corridor. The concrete foundation was itself later cut into to provide a trench for ceramic sewer pipe (Context No. 508) and subsequently in-filled with dark-brown sandy layer (Context No. 507), which contained a number of complete bricks, cobbles, metal objects and slag, a clay pipe fragment, 1 sherd of pottery, some flint and shell and a fragment of slate, pierced with a small hole. This end of the corridor did not receive a covering layer of concrete, but was instead covered by a mid-brown sandy layer (Context No. 501). This layer contained some metal objects, animal bone, slate (1 piece pierced with a small hole), flint and shell.

The large amount of animal bone (221 fragments) found during the excavation suggests that a midden was disturbed during the construction of the Flash Room Corridor and later insertion of the sewer pipe. The bone material was probably then re-deposited when the works were completed. The presence in this area of a midden containing bone material is not surprising, as in the Inner Ward 'the Pipe Roll of 1211-12...records the presence of a kitchen and a barn' (McNeill 1981, 53) in addition to the Great Hall.

The most recent works at the north-western end of the corridor included the provision of a concrete foundation (Context No. 514) on which was placed a concrete sill (Context No. 513), both to secure a path of brick pavers laid around the south-west of the Inner Ward. The entrance to the Flash Room

corridor was also provided with a metal gate and grille (Context No. 511), to provide security and keep pigeons out.

## Discussion

Following the conventions used by McNeill to denote periods of time at Carrickfergus Castle (1981, 19), there are three periods relevant to the possible construction and use of the Flash Room and associated corridor. These are Periods VIII, IX and X.

### Period VIII [1754-1792]

According to McSkimin (1823, 164), part of the south curtain wall of the castle collapsed in 1754, facilitating the French occupation in 1760 and repairs probably took place in 1761. There is a possibility that the iron channel (Context No. 509) may be associated with this repair work, providing a solid platform for bringing stone to the site.

### Period IX [1793-1854]

Construction work in the Inner Ward of the castle during this period is discussed by McNeill (1981, 49). A number of buildings 'were recorded by McSkimin as being built or rebuilt in the castle between 1793 and the winding-down of the castle as an active base between 1816, when it ceased to be an infantry barrack, to the 1830s when almost all the garrison was withdrawn'. With regard to buildings within the southern part of the inner ward, 'other buildings which McSkimin says were built in this period were...a small magazine in the inner ward'. This magazine must have served the guns of the grand battery on the eastern side of the castle, as 'the guns now lining the grand battery bear dates around 1800 and the present embrasures and height of the curtain probably date from this period...the new artillery demanded the building of the magazine which now fills the southern end of the inner ward'. This small magazine was probably the room now known as the Flash Room.

### Period X [1855-1889]

The castle 'was put back into commission as the headquarters of the Antrim Artillery in 1855, which caused a programme of rebuilding to take place, normally using hammer-dressed granite and modern three-inch pressed bricks' (McNeill 1981, 50). These are the materials used extensively in the construction of the Flash Room Corridor and external wall facings. These works also included 'a new magazine, or armourer's shop, built against the south side of the keep' and 'the two embrasures reached by the long stair at the west side of the ward, all in hammer-dressed granite, were built over the magazine at the south at this time. This new magazine is still present, although now used as public toilets and was the location for an archaeological excavation in 2002 (see Ó Néill, J. & Logue, R. 2002. *Data Structure Report No 8, Investigations at Carrickfergus Castle, Co. Antrim*).

The Flash Room and Flash Room Corridor are now entirely incorporated into a structure that has been built in the Inner Ward against the south curtain wall. On its northern side, facing the Keep, this structure is faced with hammer-dressed granite blocks and is level with the top of the south curtain wall, providing a solid platform for two gun embrasures that are still evident today. In front of this structure was a single storey building 'now removed except for its north wall whose foundations survive; in 1923 this was the armourer's shop' (McNeill 1981, 51). Wall scars on the northern face also confirm the location of this building.

### **Recommendations for further work**

This archaeological evaluation has indicated that the works proposed by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency to bring the Flash Room and associated corridor into use as a public access area should not adversely affect any existing archaeological remains. No further archaeological investigation is therefore required at the present time. However, it is recommended that a programme of post-excavation analysis of material recovered during the 2008 excavation be undertaken, in order to bring the project to completion. This material includes a military-style button, other metal objects, ceramic and bone material, as listed in Appendix 4. Further details can be found in the accompanying costed assessment.

### **Acknowledgements**

Assistance during the course of the excavation was kindly provided by June Welsh and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency staff at Carrickfergus Castle. From the Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork, the Queen's University of Belfast, Dr Philip Macdonald provided assistance with the text and Sapphire Mussen converted the field drawings into digital format.

### **Archive**

*Finds:* All finds are currently archived at the Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork, Queen's University Belfast.

*Photographs:* digital images, held by the Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork, Queen's University Belfast.

*Plans/Drawings:* digital plans and section drawings, held by the Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork, Queen's University Belfast and included with this report.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Bibliography**

McNeill, T.E. 1981. *Carrickfergus Castle, County Antrim, Northern Ireland Archaeological Monographs: No. 1*, Belfast: HMSO.

McSkimin, S. 1811. *The history and antiquities of the county of the town of Carrickfergus*, Belfast.

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Ó Néill, J. & Logue, R. 2002. *Data Structure Report No. 8, Investigations at Carrickfergus Castle, Co. Antrim*. Belfast: Queen's University, Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork.

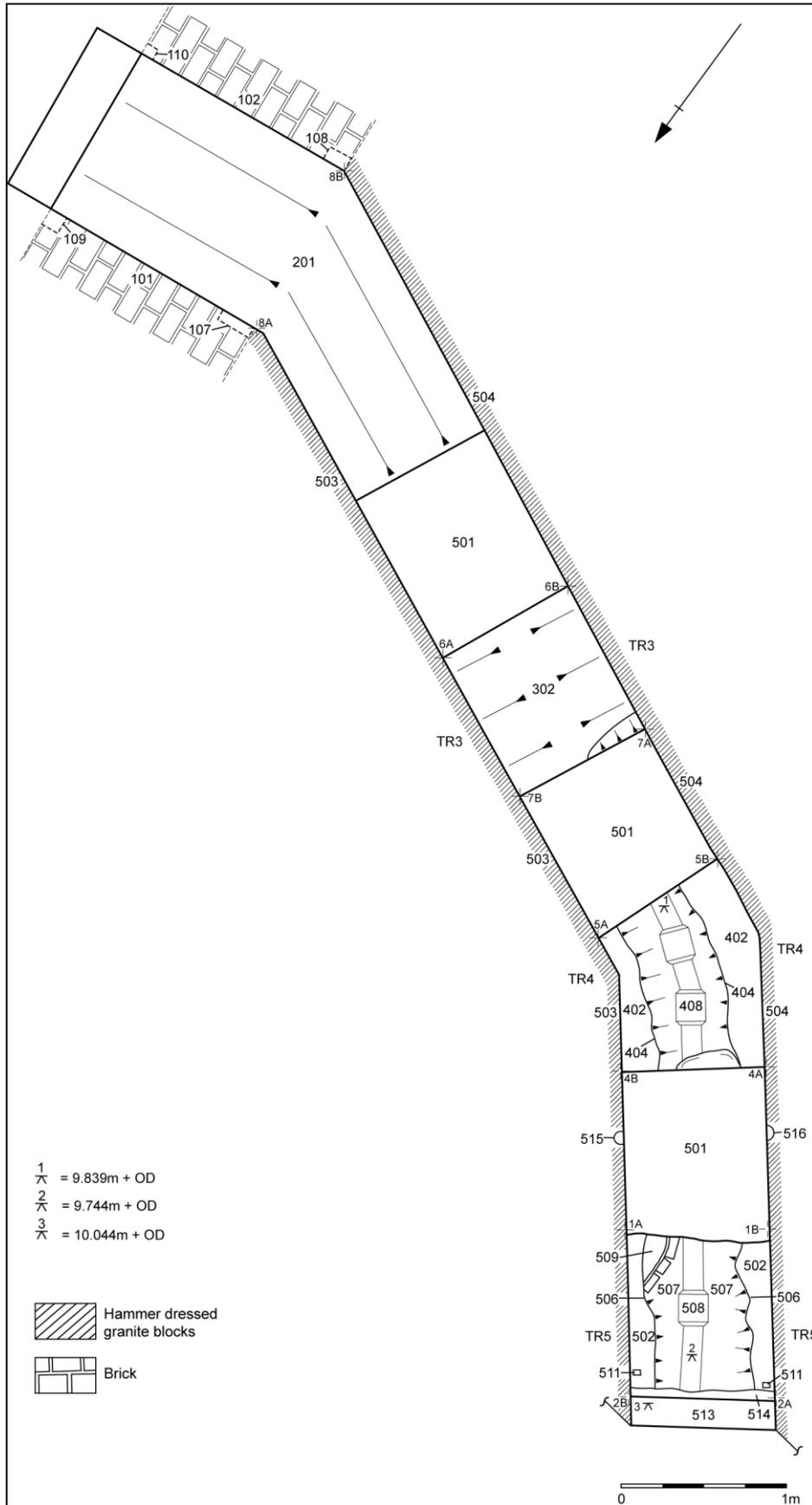


Figure 2: Plan of Flash Room Corridor, with excavation trenches

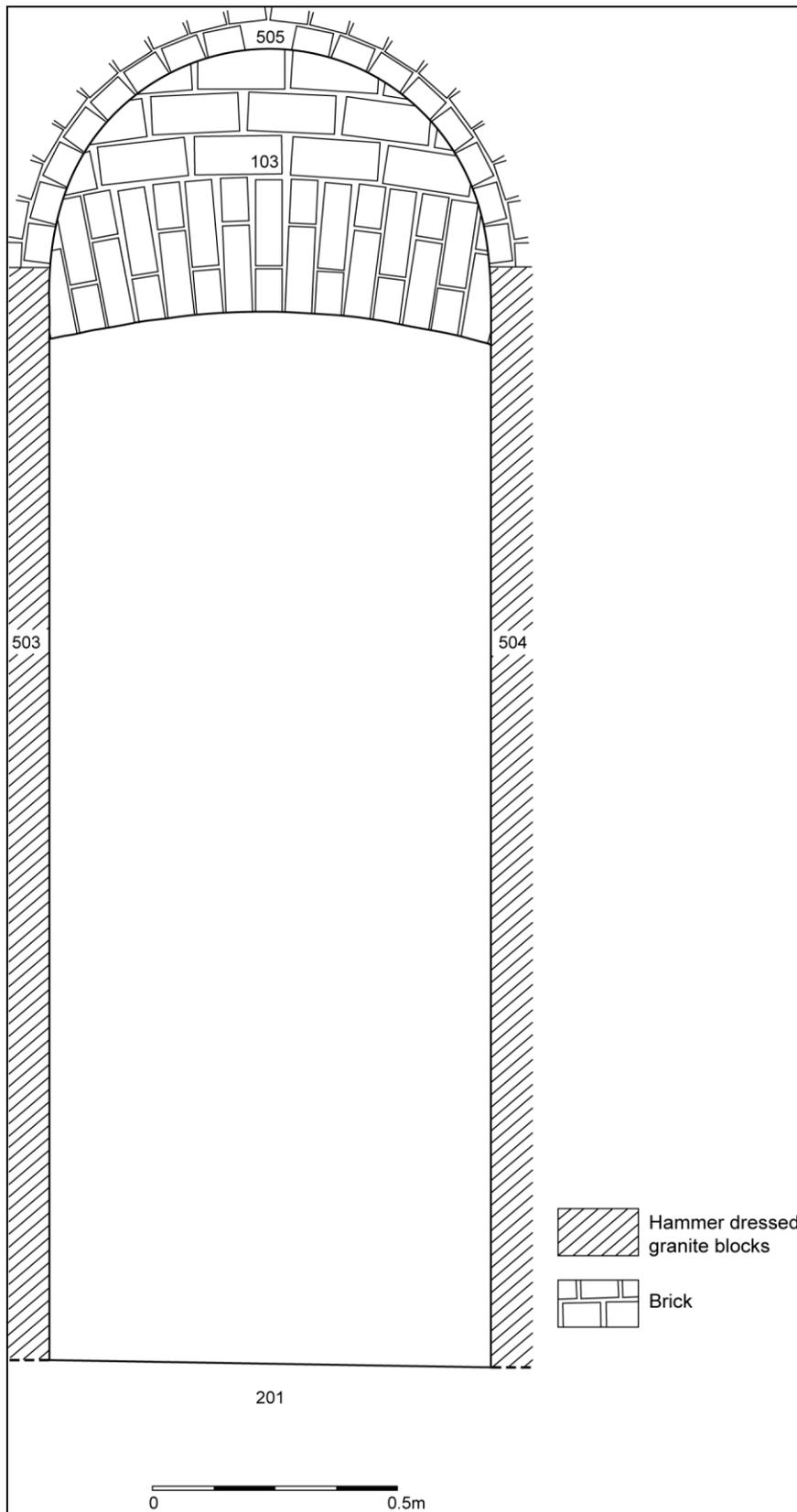


Figure 3: West-facing section at junction of Flash Room Corridor and Flash Room

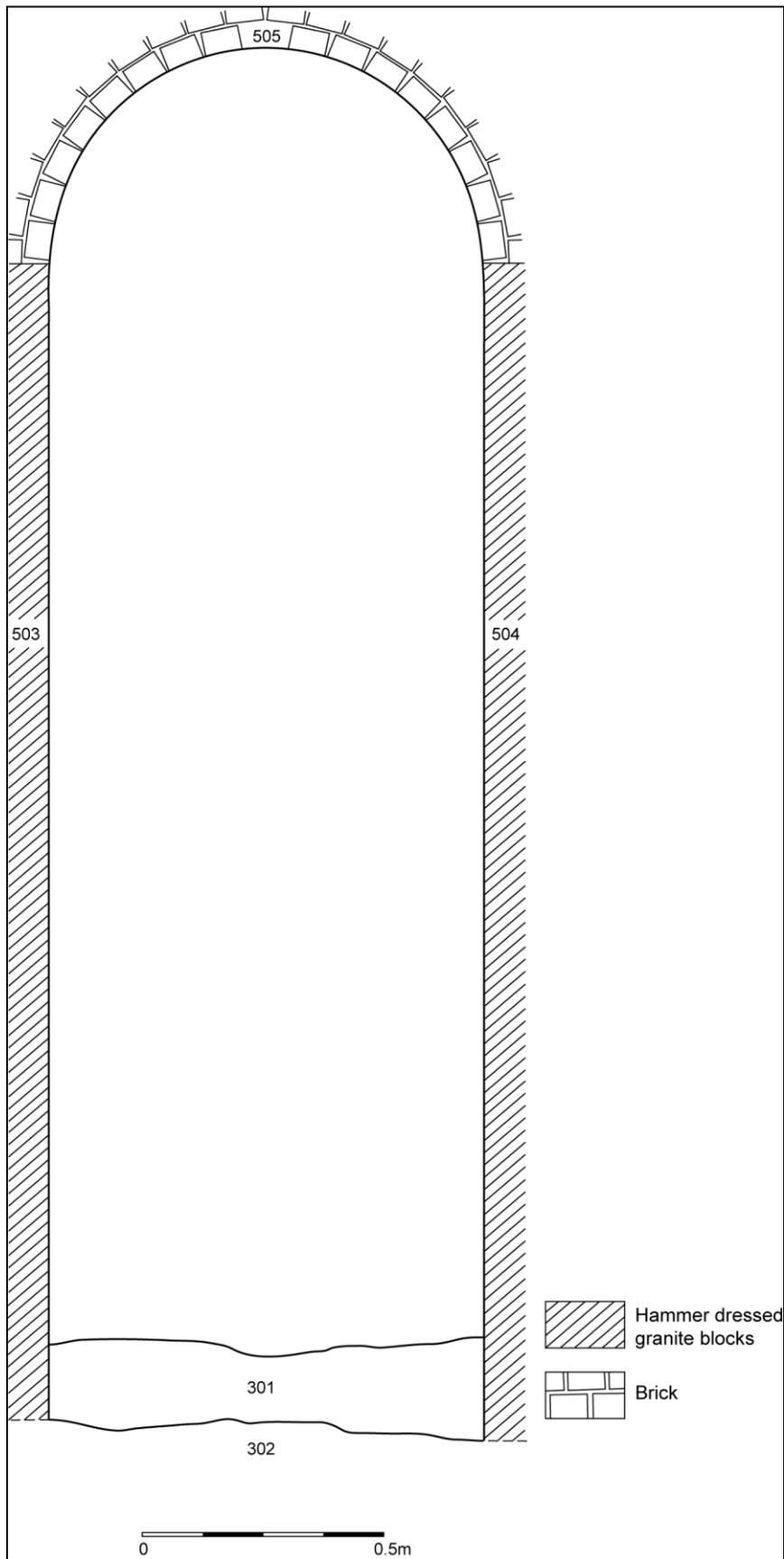


Figure 4: Trench 3 North-west facing section

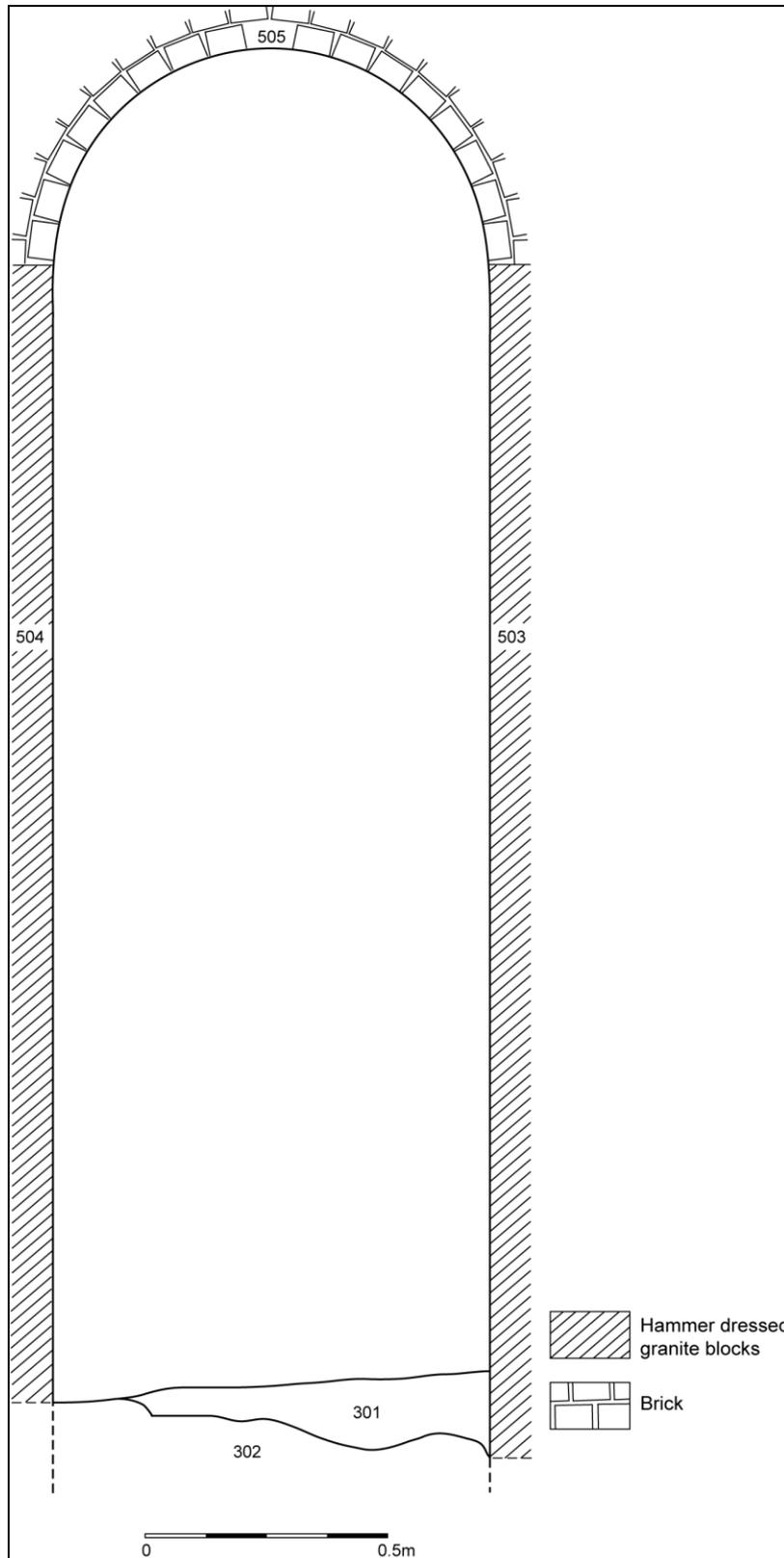


Figure 5: Trench 3 South-east facing section

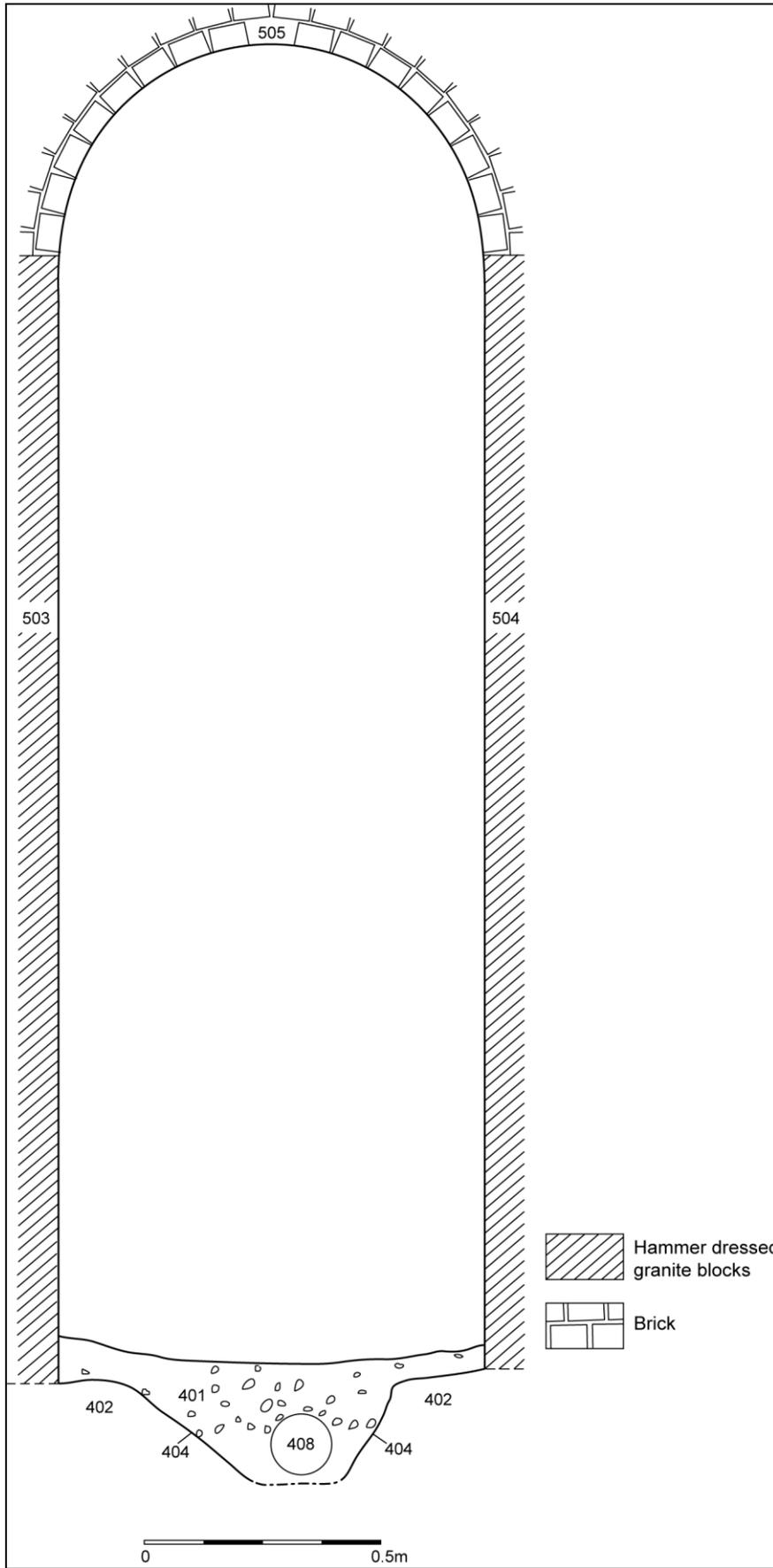


Figure 6: Trench 4 North-west facing section

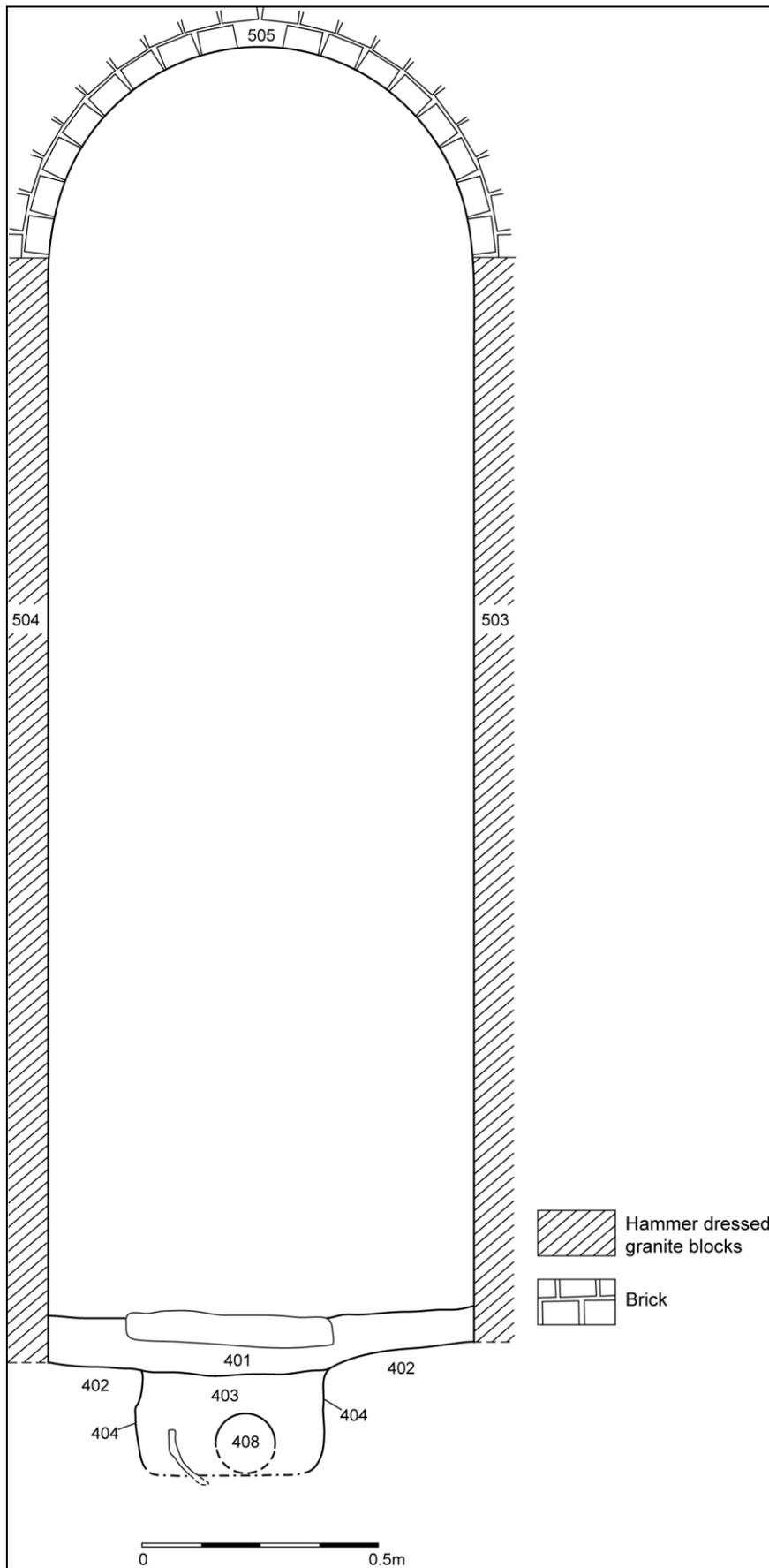


Figure 7: Trench 4 South-east facing section

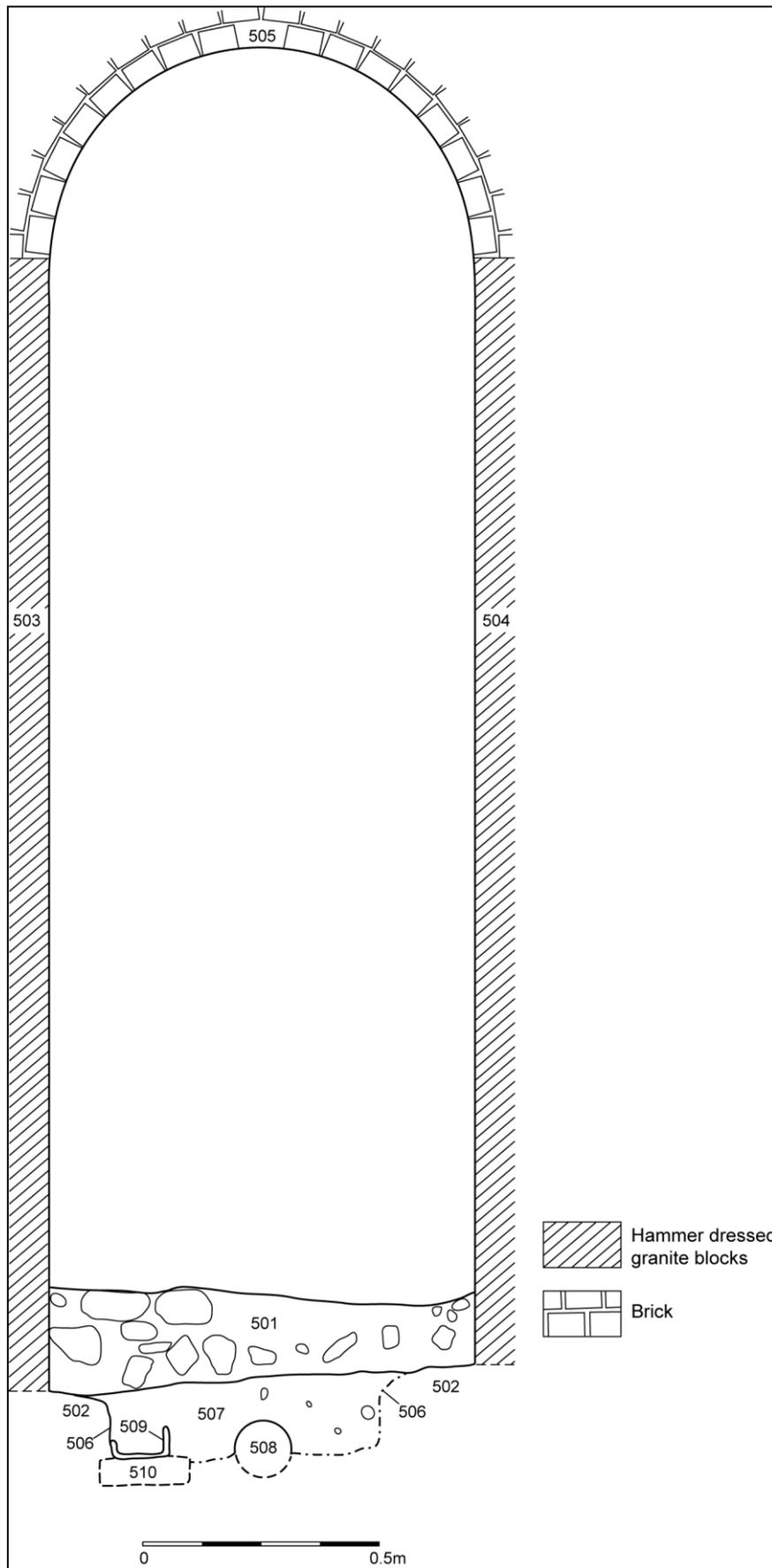


Figure 8: Trench 5 North-west facing section

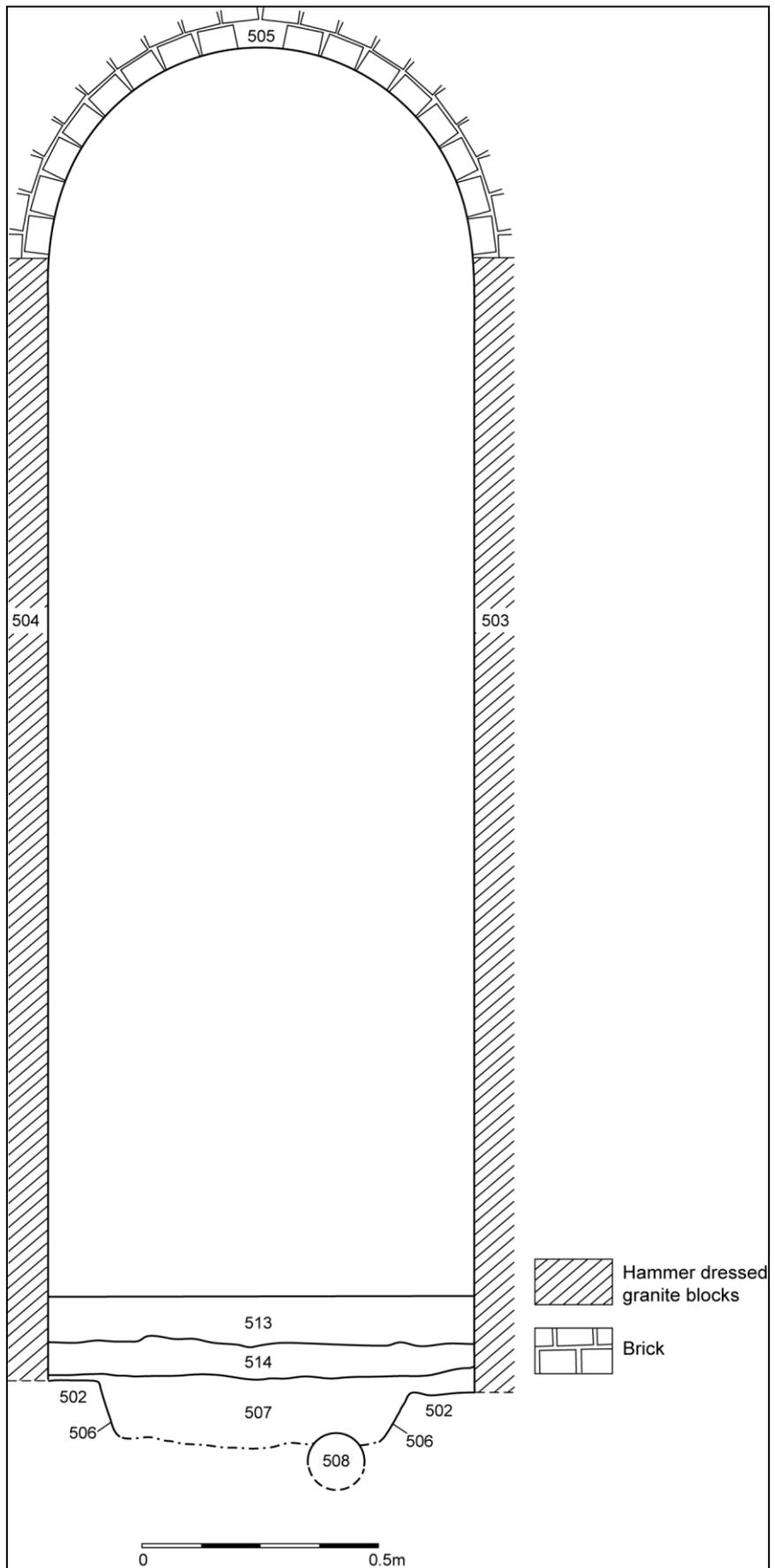
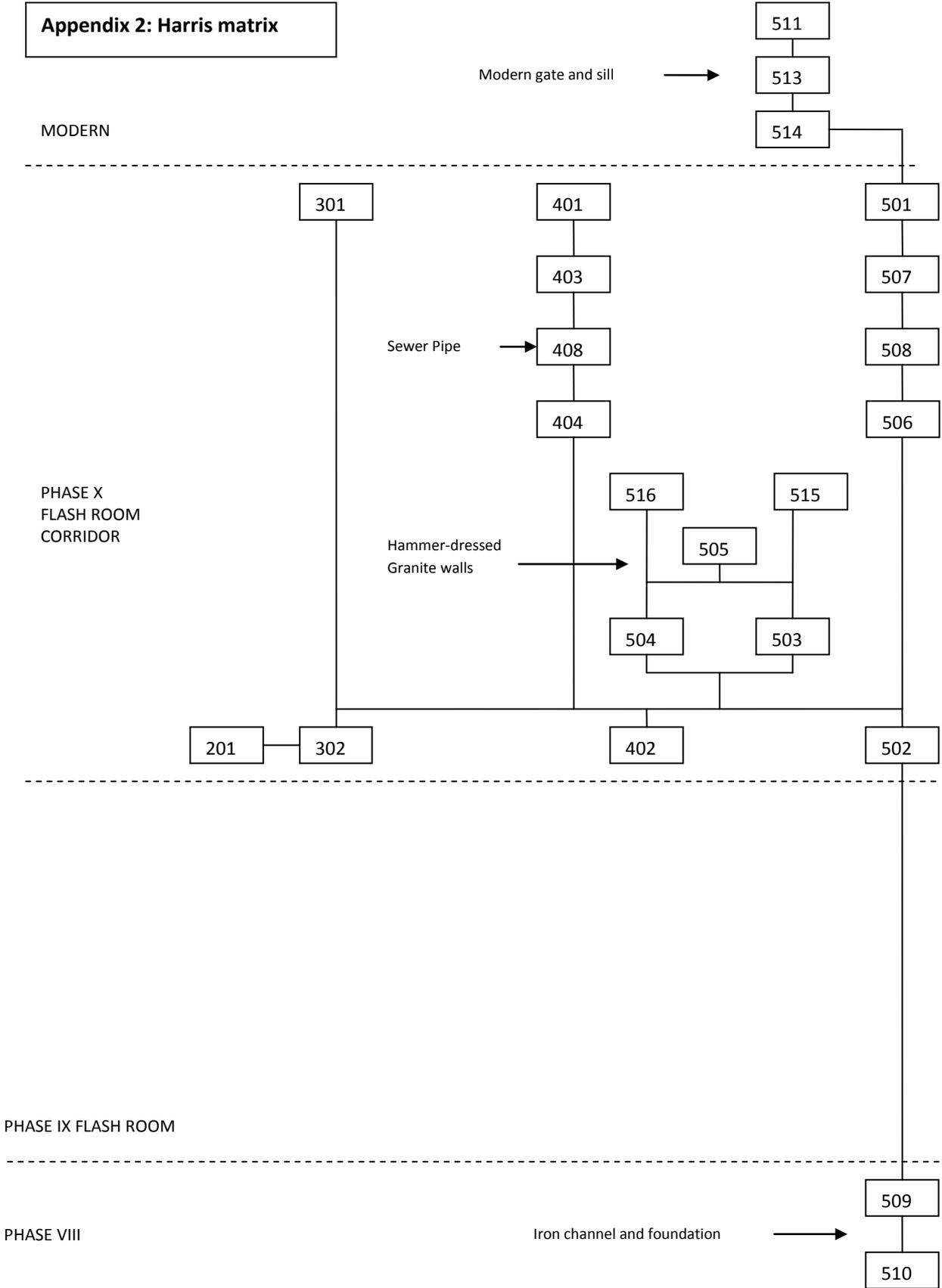


Figure 9: Trench 5 South-east facing section

## Appendix 1: Context List

Context No.	Trench No.	Description
101		Brick wall (northern) at entrance to Flash Room
102		Brick wall (southern) at entrance to Flash Room
103		Brick arch over entrance to Flash Room
104		Plaster sub-strate on brick wall C 102
105		Plaster surface on brick wall C 102
106		Plaster surface on brick wall C 101
107		Cut for door lintel in brick wall C 101
108		Cut for door lintel in brick wall C 102
109		Cut for door lintel in brick wall C 101 at Flash Room
110		Cut for door lintel in brick wall C 102 at Flash Room
111		Plaster surface on brick arch C 103
201		Concrete floor surface at south-eastern end of Flash Room Corridor
301	3	Uppermost mortar-rich layer
302	3	Concrete surface
401	4	Uppermost mortar-rich layer
402	4	Concrete foundation for walls C 503 & C 504
403	4	Fill around sewer pipe C 408
404	4	Cut for sewer pipe C 408
408	4	Sewer pipe
501	5	Gravel and mortar-rich upper fill
502	5	Concrete foundation for walls C 503 & C 504
503		Wall (northern) of dressed granite blocks
504		Wall (southern) of dressed granite blocks
505		Brick arch over walls C 503 & C 504
506	5	Cut for sewer pipe C 508
507	5	Fill around sewer pipe C 508
508	5	Sewer pipe
509	5	Iron channel
510	5	Brick foundation for metal channel C 509
511	5	Metal door and grille at entrance to Flash Room Corridor
513	5	Concrete sill at entrance to Flash Room Corridor
514	5	Concrete foundation for sill C 513
515		Cut for vertical groove into wall C 503
516		Cut for vertical groove into wall C 504

**Appendix 2: Harris matrix**



### Harris Matrix – Concordance Table

Phase	Context	Flash Room	Flash Room Corridor	Trench 3	Trench 4	Trench 5
Modern	Gate and sill					511/513/514
Phase X	Mid-brown sand			301	401	501
	Fill around sewer pipe				403	507
	Sewer pipe				408	508
	Cut for sewer pipe				404	506
	Brick arch		505			
	Door frame		515/515			
	Granite block walls		504/503			
	Concrete wall foundation	201		302	402	502
Phase IX	Plaster finish	105/106/111				
	Brick arch	103				
	Cut for door frame	107/108/109/110				
	Brick walls	101/102				
Phase VIII	Iron channel					509/510

### Appendix 3: Field Drawing Register

Drawing No.	Scale	Type	Date	Description
1	1:10	Section	9/12/08	Trench 5
2	1:10	Section	9/12/08	Trench 5
3	1:20	Plan	9/12/08	Flash Room Corridor
4	1:10	Section	11/12/08	Trench 4
5	1:10	Section	11/12/08	Trench 4
6	1:10	Section	12/12/08	Trench 3
7	1:10	Section	12/12/08	Trench 3
8	1:10	Section	15/12/08	Entrance to Flash Room

### Appendix 4: Samples Record

Sample Number	Sample Material	Context	Number of bags
1	Soil	501	1
2	Soil	507	1
3	Soil	403	1
4	Soil	301	1
5	Mortar	502	1
6	Brick	507	1
7	Brick	403	1
8	Cobbles	501	1

#### Appendix 5: Small Finds Register

Find Number	Material	Description	Context Number	Material Category
1-5	Iron	Nails?	301	Metal
6	Copper alloy?	Button	401	Metal
7	Lead	Pipe fragment	401	Metal
8-11	Iron	Flakes	401	Metal
12-13	Copper?	Decorative strip?	401	Metal
14-21	Iron slag?	Slag?	401	Slag
15	Iron	Nail	403	Metal
16-18	Iron	Nails?	403	Metal
19	Steel	Channel	501	Metal
20	Lead alloy?	Rod (15mm diameter)	501	Metal
21-23	Steel	Washers (25mm external diameter)	501	Metal
24	Steel	Rod (8mm diameter)	501	Metal

25-26	Iron	Nails	501	Metal
27-28	Iron	Fragments	501	Metal
29-131	Bone and teeth	Bag of 103 pieces	301	Bone
132-171	Bone	Bag of 40 pieces	401	Bone
172-208	Bone and teeth	Bag of 37 pieces	403	Bone
209-214	Bone	Bag of 6 pieces	501	Bone
215-249	Bone	Bag of 35 pieces	507	Bone
250	Clay	1 clay pipe fragment	301	Ceramic
251-252	Clay	2 clay pipe fragments	401	Ceramic
253	Clay	1 clay pipe fragment	507	Ceramic
254-257	Pottery	4 sherds	301	Ceramic
258-263	Pottery	6 sherds	401	Ceramic
264	Pottery	1 sherd (sewer pipe)	403	Ceramic
265	Pottery	1 sherd	507	Ceramic
266-268	Slate	3 pieces	301	Stone
269-271	Slate	3 pieces	401	Stone
272-277	Slate	6 pieces (one with nail hole)	501	Stone
278	Slate	1 piece (with nail hole)	507	Stone
279	Wood	1 bag of fragments	301	Wood
280	Paper	1 bag of fragments	301	Paper
281	Wood	1 bag of fragments	401	Wood

282	Paper	1 bag of fragments	401	Paper
283	Slag	1 piece	507	Slag
284-296	Flint	Bag of 13 pieces	301	Stone
297-309	Coal & Coke	Bag of 12 pieces	301	Stone
310-319	Flint	Bag of 10 pieces	401	Stone
320-333	Flint	Bag of 14 pieces	403	Stone
334-337	Flint	Bag of 4 pieces	501	Stone
338-342	Flint	Bag of 5 pieces	507	Stone
343-354	Shell	Bag of 12 pieces	301	Shell
355-374	Shell	Bag of 20 pieces	401	Shell
375-390	Shell	Bag of 16 pieces	403	Shell
391-392	Shell	Bag of 2 pieces	501	Shell
393-400	Shell	Bag of 8 pieces	507	Shell

## Appendix 6 Photographic Record

*Ricoh Caplio 500 G wide, 8 Megapixel*

RIMG0001	Flash Room, looking east
RIMG0008	Entrance to Flash Room Corridor from Inner Ward, looking south-east
RIMG0009	Trench 5 before excavation, looking south-east
RIMG0011	Trench 5, after removal of C 501, looking south-east
RIMG0012	Trench 5, after removal of C 501, looking north-west
RIMG0013	Trench 5, after removal of C 507, looking north-west
RIMG0015	Trench 5, with iron channel C 509, looking south-east
RIMG0019	Flash Room Corridor, cut C 516 in wall C 504, looking west

RIMG0020	Flash Room Corridor, lower part of cut C 515 in wall C 503, looking east
RIMG0021	Flash Room Corridor, upper part of cut C 515 in wall C 503, looking east
RIMG0022	Flash Room Corridor, brick arch C 503, looking south-east
RIMG0028	Trench 4, after removal of C 401, looking south-east
RIMG0029	Trench 4, after removal of C 401, looking north-west
RIMG0032	Trench 4, detail of maker's stamp on sewer pipe c 408, looking north-east
RIMG0038	Trench 4, after removal of C 403, looking north-west
RIMG0039	Trench 4, after removal of C 403, looking south-east
RIMG0042	Trench 3, after removal of C 301, looking south-east
RIMG0043	Trench 3, after removal of C 301, looking north-west
RIMG0047	Flash Room Corridor, junction between floor surfaces C 201 and C 501, looking south-east
RIMG0048	Flash Room Corridor, junction between walls C 504 and C 102, looking south-west
RIMG0057	Entrance to Flash Room, looking south-west
RIMG0058	Rear entrance to Flash Room, leading to Postern Gate, looking south-east
RIMG0071	Rear entrance to Flash Room from Postern Gate, looking north-west
RIMG0076	1885 cannon with rifled barrel, looking north-west
RIMG0080	Trench 5, view of iron channel C 509, with brick foundation C 510, looking south
RIMG0091	View of South Curtain wall, gun emplacements and entrance to Flash Room Corridor



Plate 1: Southern part of Inner Ward, looking south



Plate 2: Entrance to Flash Room Corridor, looking south-east



Plate 3: Entrance to Flash Room, looking north-west



Plate 4: Trench 3 after excavation, looking south-east



Plate 5: Trench 4 after excavation, looking south-east



Plate 6: Trench 5 after excavation, looking north-west



Plate 7: Trench 5, iron channel C 509 and brick foundation C 510, looking south-east