

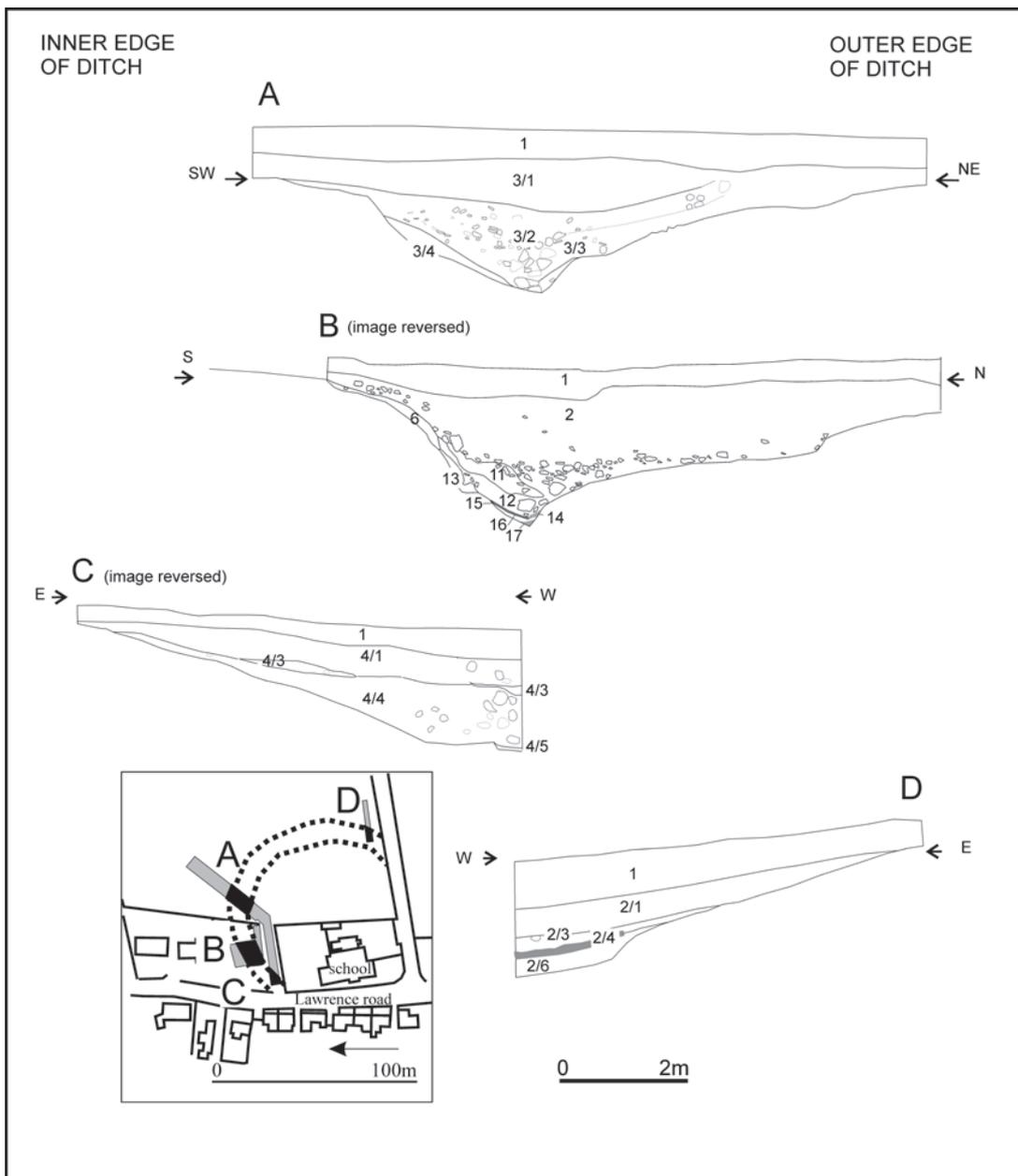
# 5 THE EXCAVATION

## 5.1 The ditch and possible palisade (illus 2, 3)

The ditch around the manor has been sectioned at four points, three during the 2008 excavations and one in the 1990 excavation (Greig & Shepherd 1990). One of the 2008 sections (illus 2: D) only cut through the outer half of the ditch as it was simply intended to locate the outer limit of the south-east line of the ditch so it could be avoided by the development. The section at the north-west (illus 2: C) has only exposed the inner half of the ditch at a slightly oblique angle,

as the outer half is under the pavement; this may be recorded when the main sewer for the development is cut through to the mains in the street.

The ditched area shown on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map of 1867 (published in 1870) is almost D-shaped, with a flat side alongside the street. The excavated plan of the ditch shows that section C, which appears to be at a fairly sharp bend in the ditch, aligns with the north corner of the straight edge shown on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map. It is possible therefore that the original ditched site



Illus 2 Sections of manor ditch with key plan to show location of sections



*Illus 3 View of ditch section A*

may indeed have had an irregular shape, aligned alongside the old Lawrence Road from Aberdeen to the north-west (NMRS No.: NJ62NE 110). Based on the excavated sections, the area enclosed by the ditch was *c* 75–80m in diameter.

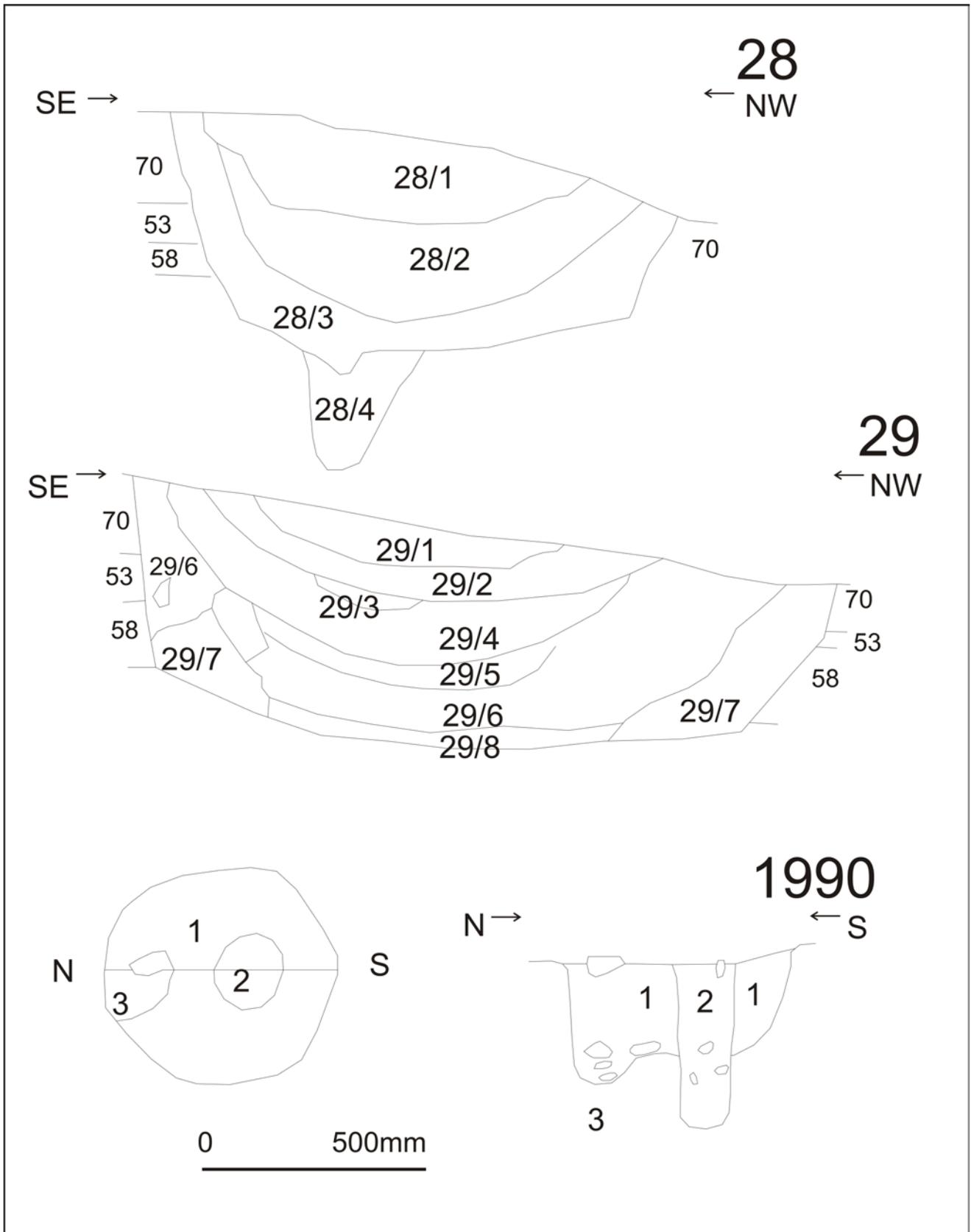
The ditch was probably dug in Phase 2, although erosion of the edges has obscured its real relationship with internal layers. It was between 7.8 and 8m wide and at least 2.0 to 2.2m deep from the contemporary ground level. It was V-shaped in section and cut partly into the underlying rock. All sections showed a small amount of natural erosion of the sides. There is no evidence that it was water-filled and environmental samples from basal fills (*illus 2*, contexts D: 2/4 and A: 3/3, 3/4) showed no evidence of waterlogging (Timpany & Masson *below*). On the inner side of section A there appeared to have been at least two stabilisation/turf layers developed on this slippage (3/4). Small quantities of degraded burnt grains from samples of 3/4 suggest fairly insignificant amounts of domestic debris slipping or getting washed into the ditch. In general, however, all sections of the ditch appear to have remained very clean and empty throughout much of the use of the manor. This may be the result of the access to the ditch from the inside of the manor enclosure having been blocked from a relatively early stage by the walls of buildings around the outer edge of the mound, thus preventing the dumping of rubbish in the ditch.

When the buildings on the north side of the manor

were demolished, the large rubble spreads on the north side of the mound surface extended down into the ditch (A: 3/2, 3/3, C: 4/4 and in section B (1990) the base of layer 2), either incidentally or as deliberate infill and levelling (Phase 6). The rubble was most extensive in the two sections nearest to Buildings 16 and 10, with rather less in section C. This gives some support to the argument that this rubble derived from these specific buildings. The partial section (D) on the south-east side of the ditch yielded very little rubble, tentatively suggesting that there may have been fewer buildings in the south-east part of the mound.

The discovery of four post-pits raised the possibility that there had once been a palisade, but the detailed evidence suggests that they are more likely to have been related to internal features. Two of the post-pits were excavated in 2008, another was visible in section in 2008 and one had been excavated in 1990, all relating to the north-east part of the mound. No comparable post-pits were found in the area inside the ditch section at the north-west side (section C) although, as this area had been severely scarped by modern levelling with only a thin skim of topsoil over natural, this is not conclusive.

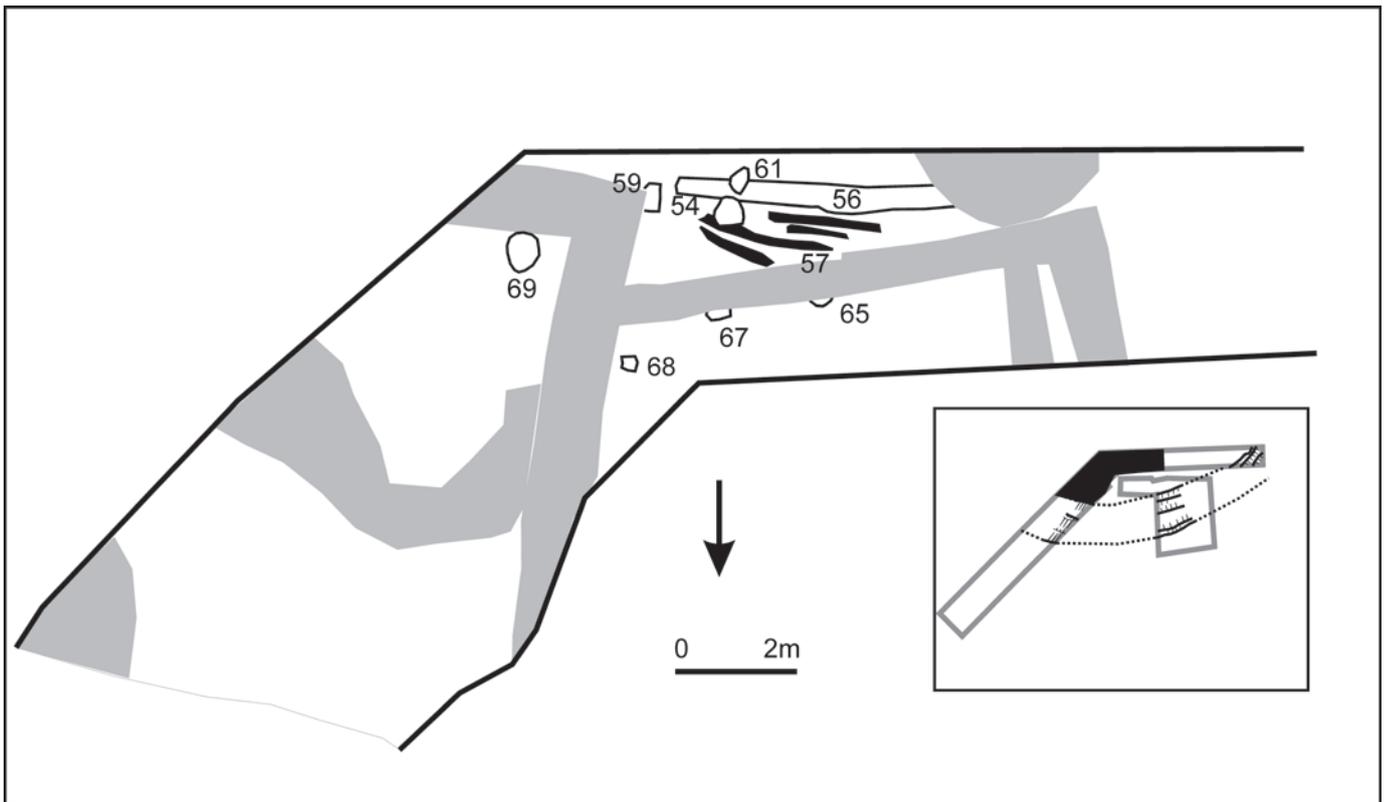
Post-pits 28 and 29 (*illus 4*) had been cut through the redeposited natural (70) thrown up over the original subsoil (58) and topsoil (53) when the ditch was dug. Each appeared to have been made to insert a post and then later recut on almost the



*Illus 4 Sections of pits 28, 29 and 1990*

same line to remove the posts. In post-pit 29 this is demonstrated by redeposited natural (29/7) which seems to be a remnant of the original post-packing.

Truncated post-holes, 0.21–0.24m in diameter, remained extending 0.25m into the natural through the base of the post-pits. Posts of this size are too



*Illus 5 Plan of Phase 1 (black) and Phase 2. Grey shading denotes later features. Key plan shows location.*

large to be hammered in so would have necessitated post-pits for insertion; the rather large size of the removal pits reflects the difficulty of extracting firmly bedded posts of this size and depth. After the removal of the posts, the pits had initially filled with humic or gritty soils with small amounts of charcoal. However, the upper fills of both pits were of heavily burnt material which may derive from the burning associated with the hearths/ovens of Phase 4. Both 28 and 29 were within Building 16, and it is possible that they had held internal fittings or structural posts associated with the building or its construction, rather than palisade posts.

Another post-pit with a smaller post, 0.12–0.15m in diameter and 0.36m deep, was found to the west in the 1990 excavation; its section suggests a recut with a removed post at one side. Although the distance from the ditch edge is similar to that of 28 and 29, this is also unlikely to have formed part of a palisade. A larger post pit (72) which extended into the section, and which was not fully exposed, was cut by 28 and was clearly earlier.

### 5.2 *The interior of the manor site. Phase 1: prehistoric activity (Illus 5)*

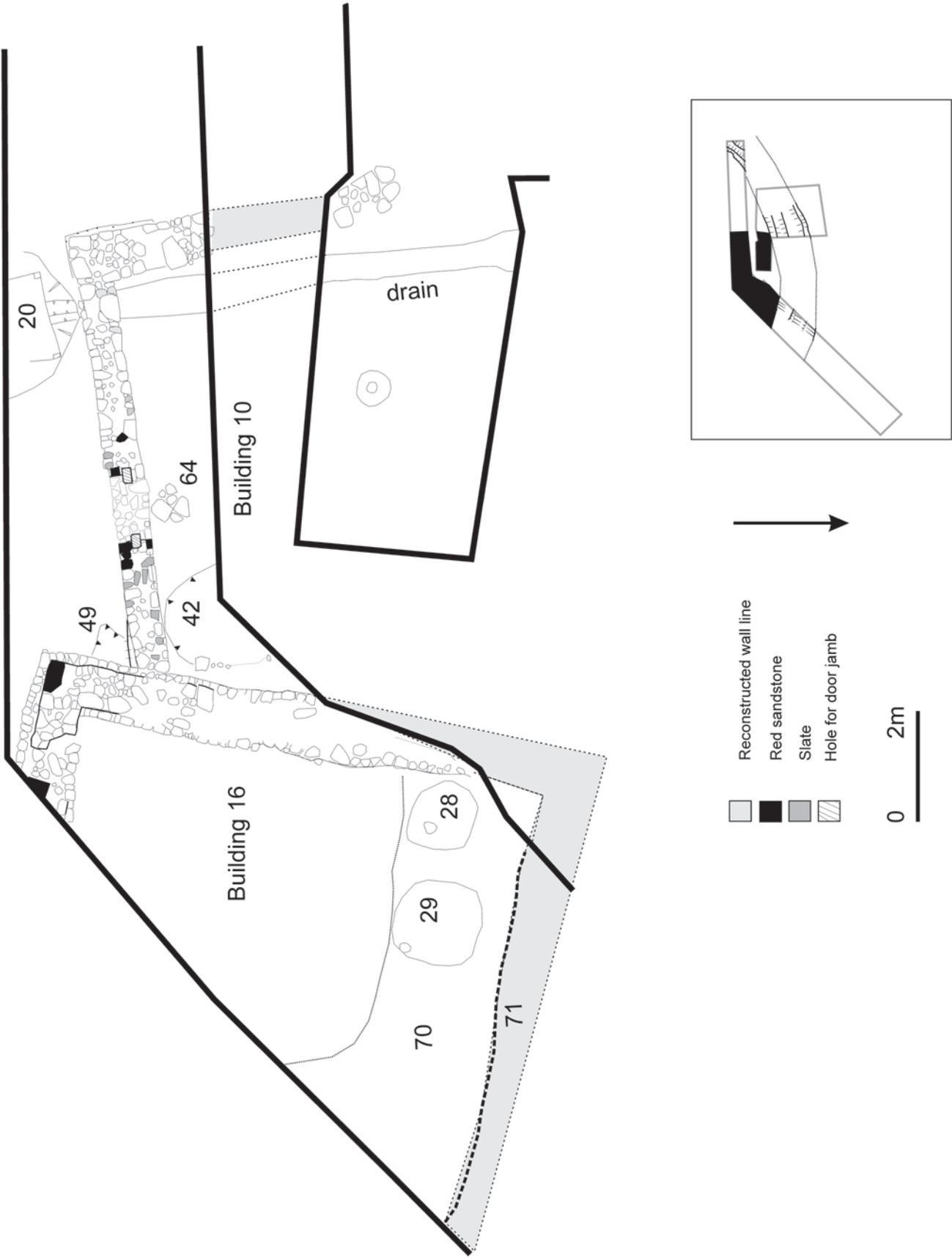
It appears probable that there had been some limited prehistoric activity on the site. The original subsoil (58) survived above natural on some areas. Four ard/plough marks (57) 0.11–0.12m wide were originally thought to have been prehistoric and there is

a small scatter of prehistoric artefacts in this area. However, it is also possible that the ard/plough marks may be evidence of medieval clearance of the site prior to building. A small number of other features were recorded cut into the subsoil. These may be the remnant of features cut from higher levels which had been truncated by later activity on the site; they are considered in Phase 2.

Apart from one flint scraper (Ballin, below) and one small undiagnostic sherd of prehistoric pottery from the subsoil (below), there were three other prehistoric sherds (contexts 20/4, 45 and 1990) and two flints (contexts 43, 51) from secondary contexts in the area near the ard marks. Another tiny flint flake was found in ditch section D (context 2/6) and two others in topsoil in the field to the east of the manor. A further prehistoric sherd was found in topsoil.

### 5.3 *The interior of the manor site. Phase 2: 13th century? (Illus 5)*

A shallow east/west slot (56) 0.4m wide and a number of truncated post-pits (54, 59, 61, 65, 69, possibly 67, 68) cut through the subsoil and preceded the construction of the stone buildings. They could relate to earlier timber structures or to temporary constructions such as scaffolding. Several of these features appear to have been burnt as they had charcoal in the fill or overlying them, or had evidence of burning on the top of the subsoil at the edge of the feature. A rim of a stone basin or mortar (catalogue no. 10)



*Illus 6 Plan of Phase 3. Key plan shows location.*

came from the fill of post-pit 54 and pre-dated the stone buildings 10 and 16.

#### 5.4 *The interior of the manor site. Phase 3: late 13th /early 14th century (Illus 6)*

Parts of two stone-walled buildings (Buildings 16, 10) were found on the north side of the mound. Both were aligned along the inner edge of the ditch and would have formed part of the perimeter of the manor enclosure. During this period Building 16 would appear to have been a building of some status, although a lack of floor levels and associated finds makes it impossible to determine its function. An elaborate cistern in the yard between the buildings may have been for domestic water for washing or other requirements or may have been related to food preparation. Building 10, which was built after Building 16, and was structurally inferior, appears to have been used as a kitchen throughout its existence. The construction of this kitchen may reflect a beginning of a change of function of this area of the manor.

##### 5.4.1 Building 16

The south-west corner, the west wall and the line of part of the robbed-out north wall of Building 16 were within the excavated area. It had been a substantial structure *c* 7m in internal width. The walls, of rubble stone with smaller stones in the core and clay bonding, were 0.75–0.8m wide over foundations *c* 1.06–1.12m wide and 0.4m deep with only a shallow trace of a foundation-cut visible in the subsoil (53). The north end of the west wall only survived as foundations and the clay-bonded core of the upper part, the more useful facing stones having been removed. The north wall had been dismantled and only the south side of its foundation/robbing trench remained, 0.18–0.28m deep, coinciding with the north end of the west wall.

A dressed block of red sandstone at the south-west corner suggests that sandstone was used for the quoins and for detailing at doors and windows. Several unassociated pieces of dressed red sandstone from later rubble may also have originated in this building. There was no evidence of any openings in the west wall but another red sandstone block in the south wall may indicate a doorway. However, as the stone extended beyond the excavation, this is uncertain. The internal floor levels of the building largely appear to have been dug out during the construction of ovens in Phase 4 with only *c* 0.1m of subsoil 53 remaining. At the north side of the building, a layer of redeposited gravel (70), probably from the excavation of the ditch, was cut by the ovens and may be part of the original floor make-up. Gravel 70 was also cut by post-pits 28 and 29 which may relate to the building or to its construction.

If, as appears probable, the Phase 6 rubble around the building and in the ditch alongside derived from

this structure, some additional details are indicated. There was a considerable quantity of stone roof slate ranging in size from 115 × 70mm to 425 × 265mm (illus 13), suggesting a roof with the slates decreasing in size towards the ridge. Two slates with opposed notches would have been from a slated valley, indicating that the building had an L- or T-shaped plan or similar to create the need for valley drainage (Coyne 2000, fig. 6). Fragments of glazed ceramic ridge-tiles, one a highly elaborate tile of Yorkshire Ware with deep green glaze (illus 15) were found, suggesting that the ridge-line was decoratively tiled. If the ridge-tile is part of its original roof, the structure was probably completed in the late 13th/early 14th century. A single fragment (catalogue no. 4) of a lead window came (the framework which held the glass) would indicate the use of window glass. The evidence suggests a building of some pretension, the strength of the foundations implying that it stood to at least two storeys. Due to the lack of primary floor levels or deposits there is no indication of its original function.

##### 5.4.2 Building 10

Building 10 was secondary, with its south wall abutting and bonded to the west wall of Building 16. Only the south and west walls survived, with the wall of Building 16 used as the east side, forming a trapezoidal plan splaying internally from 7m to 8m from south to north. The width was at least 5m but could not have been more than 7m. No evidence survived of any north wall, which would have been near the edge of the ditch within the area excavated in 1990. The walls were of rubble stone with smaller stones in the core and traces of sandy clay bonding. The west wall was 0.8–0.9m wide, but the south wall was only 0.6–0.66m wide and survived to a maximum height of 0.32m above footings 0.7m wide. The east end of the south wall was at a slight angle to the footings and the upper part may have been rebuilt at some point or may simply have been built off-line.

There was a doorway, 0.93m wide, off centre in the south wall, flanked on the outside by small red sandstone blocks and internally by stone settings for door jambs (0.27 × 0.15m) which extended through the wall footings and appeared to have been part of the primary structure. The wall footings continued across the doorway; with a small patch of flat stones (64) continuing this surface as paving just inside the building.

An oven (42: illus 6) had been dug through the original subsoil (58) in the south-east corner of Building 10. It was roughly oval, 1.75 × 1.8m and 0.3m deep, with a few small stones at one edge and very intense burning, apparently representing repeated firings. Fragments of fired clay may have been from a superstructure. Analysis of environmental samples suggests that oven 42 was used for both cooking meat and for drying grain or baking with burnt grains of oats and rare grains of barley,

rye and club/bread wheat (Timpany & Masson [below](#)). A flooring of clean gravel (46) was spread over this phase of the use of oven 42 and throughout the interior of the building, also extending through the doorway to the yard outside. Other layers in the external yard included patches of clay (47) and stony silt (48), both possibly attempts to level and dry the yard, which may have got waterlogged from the cistern beside the outside of the south wall of Building 10.

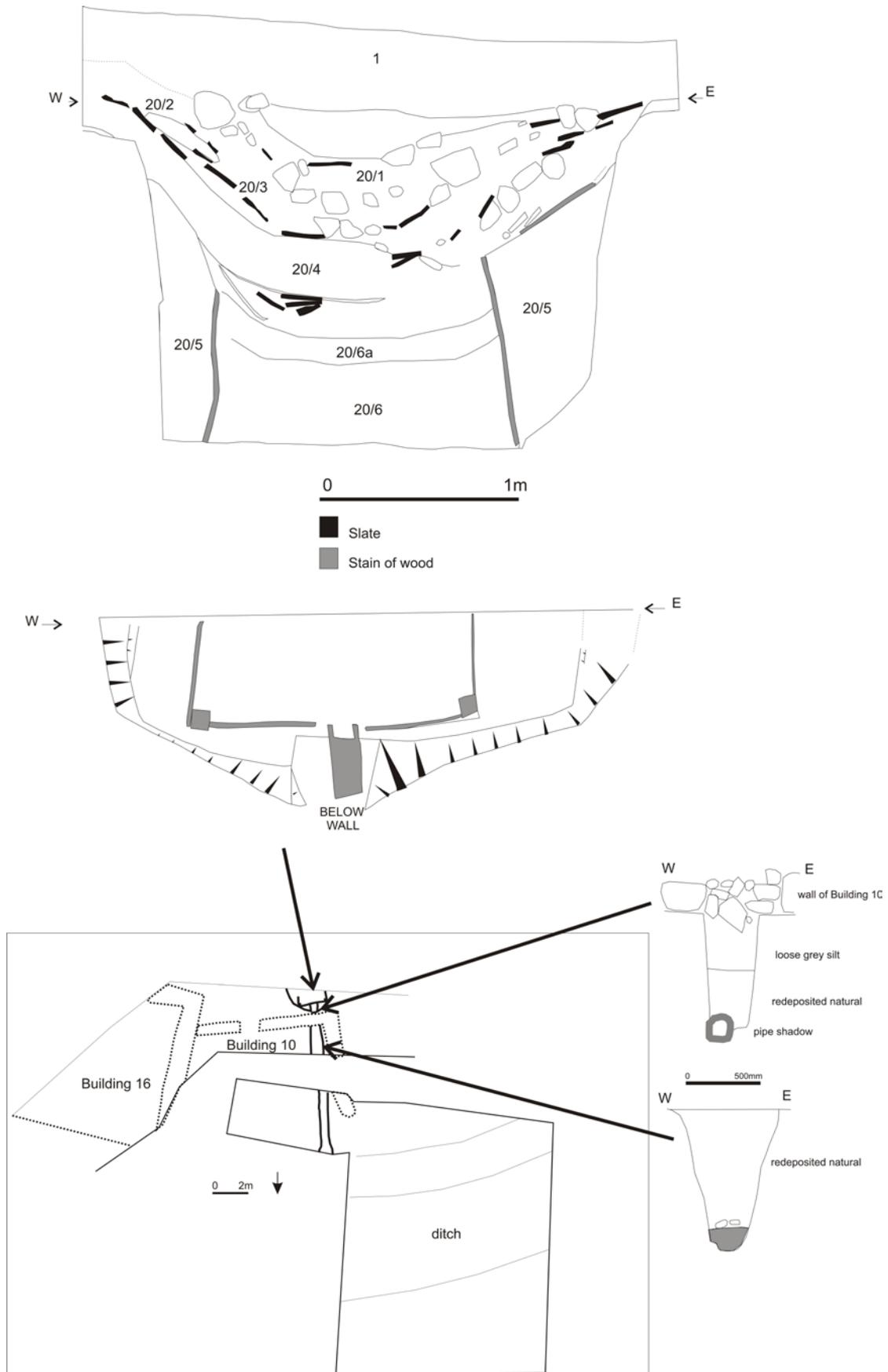
#### 5.4.3 Cistern

A cistern (20: [illus 7–9](#)) with a timber lining had been dug through the original subsoil, with an outflow pipe running from the cistern to the manor ditch, deep below the wall of Building 10 and below the gravel floor (46) of the building. The pipe trench was backfilled with clean, redeposited gravel with no mix of occupation material, suggesting that the whole water system had been installed at an early stage in the use of the manor. Most of the pipe trench did not seem to have been disturbed after the gravel floor had been laid but the section of the south wall of the building that lay directly over the line of the pipe had been disturbed and at this point the upper 0.4m of the fill of the pipe trench below the wall stones was of loose grey silt with some charcoal fragments, although the lower 0.4m was clean and apparently undisturbed redeposited gravel. It is possible that this section of wall may have been removed and rebuilt after subsidence as the pipe below rotted.

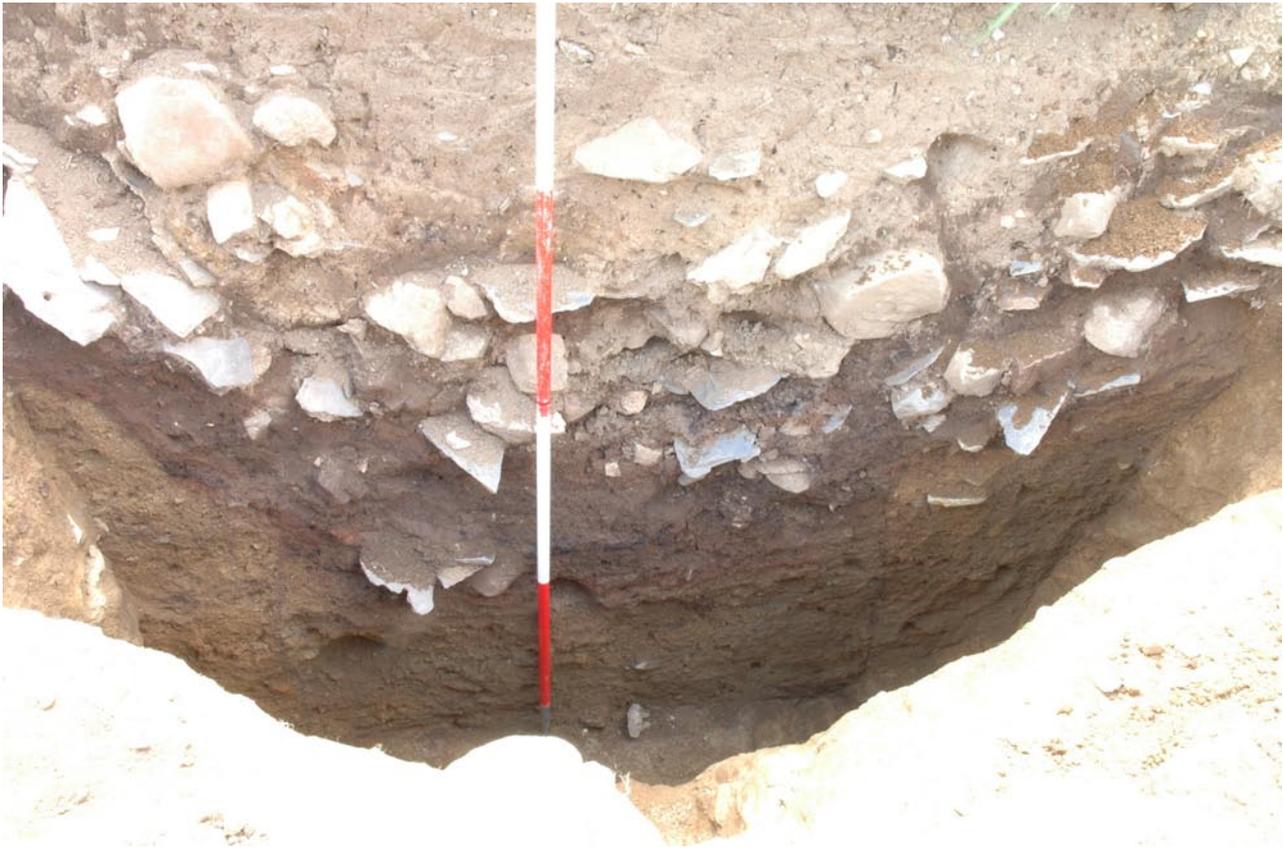
The cistern pit (20) extended into the south section and only the northern half could be excavated, the north side was *c* 2.6m wide at the top, tapering slightly to 2.2m at the base. The almost vertical sides were cut from the subsoil through natural sand to a depth of 1.4–1.6m. The base was cut into very hard clean boulder clay. A patchy, very thin, layer (20/7) of 2mm of softer clay/silt is likely to be the result of water action on the basal clay. The bottom 0.5–0.7m of the pit had been filled in with clean sand and gravel (20/6). When all the later fill layers were removed it became clear that the pit had had an inner timber lining set into it and held in position with redeposited sand (20/5) backfilled between the lining and the pit sides. Although the timber had totally rotted, the inner sand fill and the outer sand backfilling had preserved a discoloured sand-casting of the timbers. By removal of the inner sand considerable detail of the structure could be recorded. No vestiges of wood survived for species identification. The lining was 1.4m wide and square or rectangular with squared corner posts *c* 0.12 × 0.12–0.14m set *c* 0.1m below the base of the pit at the excavated north-east and north-west corners. At the base of the pit on the east and west sides, horizontal rails 0.5–0.6m wide had either abutted or been jointed to the outer edges of the vertical posts. Horizontal planks *c* 20mm thick had been set behind both the rails and the corner posts, held in position

against the posts by the backfilled sand behind them. Where sand from the outer backfilling had pressed between timbers, the width of the planks appeared to have been 0.23–0.25m. In the south section the planks could be seen to have survived vertically to almost 1m on the west side, with another 0.5m or so collapsed back against the pit side. On the north side, horizontal planks, possibly 0.3m thick, were either jointed into the corner posts or set behind them. The north planks survived to 0.6m height to just above the level of the outlet drain. The south end of the trench for the drain, which splayed from 0.16m at the base to 30mm wide at the top, ran from the edge of the cistern pit, directly below the wall of Building 10 where it was cut 0.85m deep into the natural, below the foundation of the wall. At this point the base of the drain cut was 0.55m above the base of the cistern and the soft light-grey stain of rotted timber *c* 10mm thick enclosed an oval 0.14 × 0.13m, which is interpreted as the end of a hollow wooden pipe that projected to just above the surviving planks of the cistern wall, where it was supported by small stones. This timber shadow was traced back *c* 0.35m below the wall and was also noted in a cross-section 2.5m to the north where the trench was 0.18m wide at the base and 0.58m at the top, with a depth of 1.03m below the top of natural. The north end of the same drain trench was excavated in 1990, where it was 0.32m wide and 0.65m deep, terminating 8m north of the cistern pit with an outflow into the top edge of the ditch.

This appears to have been a freshwater cistern rather than a cesspit or latrine, as there was no evidence of any organic fill, with no staining or damage of the base, which would be expected if it had been cleaned out. The lower fill of clean sand and gravel appears to have been a single deliberate filling of the pit either during use as a filter or to fill the hole after the cistern fell out of use. At the time of excavation there was no ground water entering the pit; while this may be the result of considerable changes in the surrounding drainage it seems improbable that this pit reached the water table as the considerably deeper manor ditch showed no evidence of having held water. It is a possibility that roof water may have been used to fill the cistern or that there was an inflow pipe in the unexcavated southern half of the cistern. The odd position of the outlet pipe halfway down the cistern suggests that there may have been some sort of shutter mechanism to block the outlet, possibly by the ditch, and only opened to drain the cistern. Regardless of the function, this was a fairly sophisticated system which had involved a considerable effort to construct. Very similar timber linings of wells dating between the late 12th and 14th centuries have been excavated in Elgin ([Murray, Murray & Lindsay 2009](#)) but none of these had a comparable outlet system. The cistern appears to have remained open and presumably in use throughout Phases 3 and 4 and not totally filled until the destruction of the buildings in Phase 6.



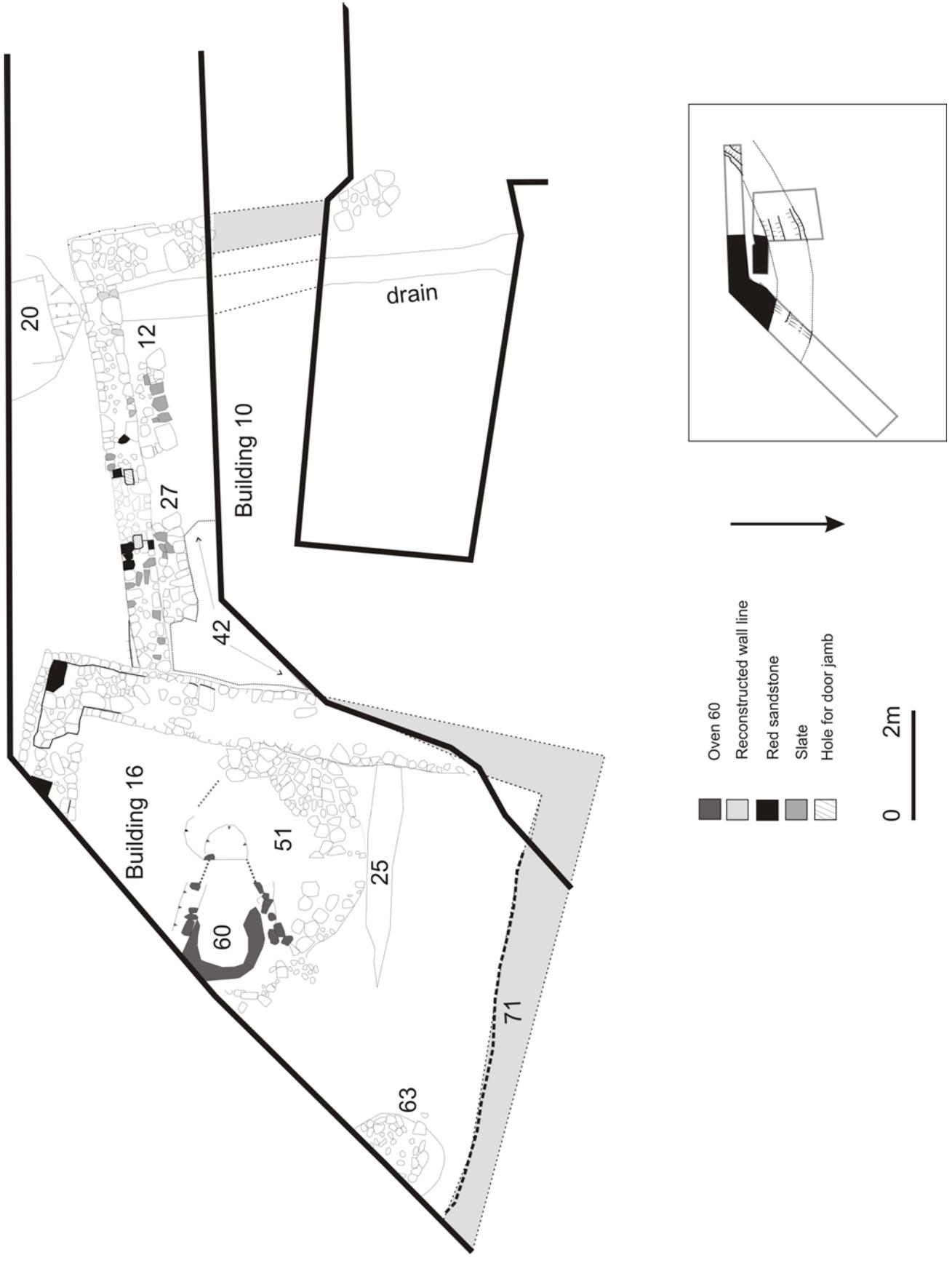
*Illus 7 Plan and section of Phase 3 cistern and outflow pipe. Key plan shows location of sections.*



*Illus 8 South section of cistern showing traces of rotted timber lining*



*Illus 9 Cistern looking north with outlet pipe trench running below wall. Traces of timber lining visible against sandy backfill (20/5)*



*Illus 10 Plan of Phase 4. Key plan shows location*



Illus 11 Ovens 51 and 60 inside Building 16, looking west

### 5.5 *The interior of the manor site. Phase 4: 14th century (Illus 10)*

During this phase a concentration of four hearths or ovens and general spreads of burning trodden out around them suggest that at this period the northern end of the manorial site was utilised for cooking, with Building 16 now also in use as a kitchen and cooking/food preparation continuing within Building 10. Towards the end of this period there was an intense fire which destroyed Building 10, and Building 16 may have become derelict.

#### Building 16

After the primary use of Building 16, its interior appears to have been partly dug out to construct a succession of three ovens or hearths (illus 11). Burning from this activity extended over most of the central and northern part of the building, extending over Phase 3 features such as the redeposited gravel 70 and sealing post-pits 28 and 29. A particularly intense linear band of burnt clay (25) was suggestive of there having been a partition at some point to the north side of oven 51. No slate was observed in the oven constructions and it is suggested that this was a secondary use of the building while it remained roofed.

The earliest oven (51) was cut into the old topsoil and built abutting the wall footings of the west wall of Building 16; it was c 3m in internal diameter, enclosed by a single-coursed arc of stones set in clay 0.6–0.9m wide. There were spreads of burnt clay, ash and charcoal both within and spreading north over the enclosing kerb. Access to the oven would appear to have been from the south or east. A secondary oven (60) was built within the east end of this oven and partly destroyed its eastern end. This later oven was keyhole-shaped, with an opening to the west. It had an internal diameter of 0.9m with a clay base and clay and stone walls c 0.2m thick. Burnt and unburnt clay and stones may derive from a collapsed, possibly domed superstructure. Samples from the burnt material in the base of the oven suggest that it had been used for the cooking (or possibly smoking) of meat and fish (Timpany & Masson below).

To the north of these two main ovens there was the base of a third possible oven or hearth (63), just inside the line of the robbed out north wall; it consisted of an ovoid area 1.1 × 1.2m baked red and black in a hollow 0.2m deep cut into original soil (53) and into redeposited gravel (70). Stones over this may be part of a collapsed oven surround or superstructure, or possibly just rubble infill of the hollow.

## Building 10

After the new floor (46) had been laid in Building 10, short sections of wall (12, 27) were built parallel to and alongside the inner faces of the south wall of the building, but not bonded to it. They were 0.6–0.65m wide and 0.23–0.28m high, built of rubble stones with a top course of slates forming a flat upper surface. They may have been benches or ‘shelves’. After these benches had been built, a new episode of intense and repeated burning took place on the site of oven/hearth 42, with burnt material extending further north and west and possibly related to burnt material in the south-east corner of the 1990 excavation. Outside the building in the yard area there was a build-up of a grey, slightly humic soil with frequent charcoal flecks (31, 45) which extended slightly through the doorway into the building. The cistern still appears to have been functional or at least open.

Later there appears to have been a fairly extensive fire with thick deposits of ash and charcoal (13, 15) extending over both the yard and the interior of Building 10, and burning and heat-cracking of some of the stones at the top of the wall. Ash and charcoal extended down into the cistern (20/4). Just outside the corner of Building 16 this burnt horizon was mixed with bone from the Phase 5 midden, suggesting that this began to develop soon after the fire.

### *5.6 The interior of the manor site. Phase 5: late 14th / possibly 15th century*

Soon after the fire which destroyed Building 10, the south end of Building 16 appears to have been used as a midden.

## Building 16

After the ovens fell out of use in Building 16, the southern end of the area within its walls was used as a midden, with a deposit mainly comprising animal and fish bone (22, 37, 38) with some charcoal in a greasy matrix. The restriction of this dumping within the walls of Building 16 suggests they were still standing, although possibly derelict, at this stage. Some bone in the upper midden layers which were mixed with some rubble (18, 21) did extend on either side of the south wall of Building 16, either through a doorway or after the wall was destroyed; it is, however, possible that this spread was caused by disturbance at the time of the levelling of the building remains or during subsequent cultivation. The midden did not extend into Building 10. The bone report (Smith [below](#)) identified burnt and unburnt bones with butchery marks indicating that they were domestic food debris. Food species identified were cattle, sheep/goat, pig, horse, roe deer, domestic fowl, domestic/greylag goose – all quite usual in a medieval context. Dog, fox and amphibian

(frog or toad) remains may be incidental. There were abundant fish bones but only two species, cod and haddock, both probably from North Sea fisheries (Cerón-Carrasco [below](#)) were identified. There were also small fragments of oyster and mussel shell. Environmental samples from the midden yielded only rare charred grains of oat and barley. The very small amount of pottery from this fairly extensive midden suggests that the dumping was to some extent selective, being almost exclusively food waste with little addition of more general domestic rubbish. This may perhaps suggest that it was specifically kitchen waste and may indicate that the manor kitchens were still on the north side of the enclosure. The build-up of the midden in an apparently abandoned building suggests that by this stage at least some parts of the manor were in decline. The small pottery assemblage from these layers is of abraded and probably residual sherds with some ploughed-in modern material and cannot be used to date the midden. The general lack of 15th- and 16th-century pottery suggests little activity on this part of the site at that period.

### *5.7 The interior of the manor site: Phase 6: late 16th / early 17th–18th centuries*

The demolition and decay of the manor buildings was almost certainly a gradual process, from the late 16th/early 17th century until at least the 18th century, with the site being used as a quarry for useful stone for other buildings and garden walls. At some point the north wall of Building 16 was systematically demolished. The lower rubble from the walls was mixed with a large number of stone slates and the remains of several ceramic roof ridge tiles crushed among them; the number of complete stone slates suggests they had less re-use value, possibly being too heavy for many roofs. The remaining rubble consisted of large quantities of fairly small field stones likely to have derived from the core of the wall. There were fewer large stones that would have been useful for other structures and few, generally fragmentary, pieces of the red sandstone used for detailing at doors, windows and corners. Layers 8, 37, 40 were all part of the demolition debris, with rubble dipping down into the partially infilled cistern (20/1, 20/2, 20/3) and filling in the ditch ([illus 2](#): D: 2/1, 2/2, 2/3, A:3/2, 3/3, 4/1, 4/4 and 1990 layer 2). Until this time the ditch appears to have remained open and empty apart from a little erosion of the sides.

The documentary and oral evidence suggests that the buildings had been totally dismantled by the 18th century and possibly earlier. The site was cultivated through most of the 19th and 20th centuries, with the exception of the areas built over by the school and school house. Cultivation continued to unearth some of the rubble as late as the 1960s, including sandstone blocks that were reused in the village.