

THE BRIGANTIA ARCHAEOLOGICAL PRACTICE



ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY of NORTON TOWER, RYLSTONE, CRAVEN (YORKSHIRE DALES NATIONAL PARK) and ASSOCIATED LANDSCAPE

A report to Mr J. Caygill



12th February 2012

THE BRIGANTIA ARCHAEOLOGICAL PRACTICE

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OASIS reference: thebriga1-119134

Percival Turnbull & Deborah Walsh

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EPITOME

On instructions from the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority (on behalf of Mr J. Caygill), an archaeological survey has been carried out of the remains of Norton Tower, Rylstone, and of its associated landscape. The work was undertaken in support of a Higher Level Stewardship Scheme, which will also include the preservation and interpretation of the Tower.

The archaeological and historical background is reviewed and the following features described:

Norton Tower itself, which is believed to have been built in the time of Henry VIII by Richard Norton, now a ruin but a Grade II Listed building. It is suggested that the primary functions of the Tower were concerned with hunting.

Parts of the boundary of a deer park, believed to have been created by the Earl of Cumberland in the reign of James I.

Three pillow mounds, believed to be artificial coney warrens and contemporary with the Tower.

A small cairnfield, perhaps created by land clearance but possibly including prehistoric burial activity.

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INTRODUCTION

1. On instructions from the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority (on behalf of Mr J. Caygill), an archaeological survey has been carried out of the remains of Norton Tower, Rylstone, and of its associated landscape. The work was undertaken in support of a Higher Level Stewardship Scheme, which will also include the preservation and interpretation of the Tower.
2. Work was carried out according to a Specification prepared by Y.D.N.P.A. and to detailed method statements prepared by this Practice.
3. This project has been allocated the OASIS reference thebriga1-119134.

THE SITE

4. Norton Tower occupies a prominent location on a level bench of the part of Rylstone Fell (Sun Moor) known as Norton Tower Hill, at (National Grid Reference) SD 97597 57030 and at a height of 270 m.a.O.D. (Figs 1 & 2). The ground is rough pasture, on a thin clay soil with areas of blanket peat, over the natural substrate of Carboniferous Limestone. To the east the land rises through a series of enclosed pastures to open fell at about 400 m.a.O.D.; to the west it drops to the infields of Scale Hill Farm and the valley of the Carlton Gill Beck at about 190 m.a.O.D.
5. Norton Tower is a Grade II Listed building. The Listing description reads:

Remains of tower. Probably C16 for Richard Norton. Coursed gritstone. A square structure, approximately 10 metres x 15 metres, the corners standing approximately 3 metres high but the walls slighted. Original entrance probably on the south side, remains of a fireplace and stone newel stair on east side, no windows survive. The ruin stands among extensive earthworks and is only one part of an important archaeological site which includes rabbit warrens (pillow mounds) and probably prehistoric field clearance cairns to the south. The building was a hunting lodge of the Nortons of Rylstone and Norton Conyers and was slighted after the family's involvement in the Rising of the North, 1569.

METHODOLOGY

6. The area of survey was defined by the specification provided by Y.D.N.P.A. (Fig. 3).
7. A desk-top survey was undertaken to establish the historical context of the site, using sources from the Yorkshire Dales Historic Environment Record and from published sources.

8. Fieldwork was carried out over a total of five days in November and December 2012. All work was carried out by Percival Turnbull and Deborah Walsh, of this Practice. An initial walkover survey was carried out, over the whole of the relatively flat area to the south of the Tower, as far as Nettle Hole Wood, to establish the range and extent of features to be recorded.
9. The ground-plan of the building was prepared as a tape survey at an original scale of 1:50 and measurements checked thereafter for accuracy.
10. Field drawings of elevations were made using vertical and horizontal *datum* lines established with level and plumb line. Individual stones were not recorded unless they were of particular significance. No discernible changes in material used in the walling were noted. Changes in wall thickness were recorded.
11. The pillow mounds, cairns and other relief features were surveyed using a plane table (W.D. pattern) with alidade, and 30 metre tapes, at a drawn scale of 1:500 (reduced for purposes of this report). 'Hard' datum points were established using a Hilger & Watts 20" optical theodolite.
12. A photographic record was prepared, using 35 mm Olympus Single Lens Reflex cameras with silver-based monochrome film (Ilford HP5). Wide-angle and telephoto lenses and colour filters were used as appropriate. A set of high-resolution (10 megapixel) digital images were also prepared, and will be used as the basis of illustrating the report. These digital images, in the form of .tiff files, will be stored on a CD-ROM for inclusion with the project archive. An appropriate metric scale was included in each photograph, except where physically impossible.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

13. In the mid 12th century the manor of Rylstone was held by William de Rillestone, whose family appear to have held it since the Conquest (Whitaker, 1812, 443-449). The estate remained in their possession until 1434, when it passed by marriage to the Radcliffes of Threshfield, keen partisans of the House of Lancaster during the Wars of the Roses. Anne Radcliffe, born in 1478 and sole heiress, married John Norton esq., and the Rylstone lands passed from them to their son Richard Norton, born in 1512, to whom is traditionally (and plausibly) attributed the building of Norton Tower. In 1569 he was involved in the insurrection known variously as 'The Rising in the North' and 'The Rising of the Northern Earls', a Catholic revolt against the rule of Elizabeth I (the Nortons had a connection through marriage with the Nevilles, Earls of Westmorland); for this he was attainted for high treason and his estates, which also included Norton Conyers, sequestrated to the Crown and eventually granted to Francis Clifford, Earl of Cumberland at the beginning of the reign of James I. Richard appears to have escaped execution, his death being recorded in 1588, though his son Christopher and uncle Thomas were executed at Tyburn and his butler, Richard Kitchen, at Ripon.
14. A survey of the Norton lands at Rylstone was made at the time of the attainder. It was summarised by William Wordsworth (1815) in the notes to his poem 'The White Doe of Rylstone':

'After the attainder of Richard Norton, his estates were forfeited to the crown, where they remained till the 2d or 3d of James; they were then granted to Francis Earl of Cumberland." From an accurate survey made at that time, several particulars have been extracted by Dr. W. It appears that "the mansion-house was then in decay. Immediately adjoining is a close, called the Vivery, so called, undoubtedly, from the French Vivier, or modern Latin Vivarium; for there are near the house large remains of a pleasure-ground, such as were introduced in the earlier part of Elizabeth's time, with topiary works, fish-ponds, an island, etc. The whole township was ranged by an hundred and thirty red deer, the property of the Lord, which, together with the wood, had, after the attainder of Mr. Norton, been committed to Sir Stephen Tempest'.

15. Wordsworth's poem is a long, Romantic narrative about the Rising in the North, concentrating on the tradition of the phantom white doe which appeared to comfort the grieving Emily, lover of Francis Norton, the son of Richard. Norton Tower is mentioned several times in the narrative, as their favourite place of resort:

*'High on a point of rugged ground
Among the wastes of Rylstone Fell
Above the loftiest ridge or mound
Where foresters or shepherds dwell,
An edifice of warlike frame
Stands single--Norton Tower its name--
It fronts all quarters, and looks round
O'er path and road, and plain and dell,
Dark moor, and gleam of pool and stream,
Upon a prospect without bound'.*

16. The poem also describes *'the sound of glee When there the youthful Nortons met, To practise games and archery'*: this idea has its origins in an identification (certainly spurious) of the pillow mounds near the Tower as archery butts.

17. The manor of Rylstone was associated from an early date with hunting. In 1258 a grant of free warren was made to Eustace de Rillestone 'within his demesnes at that place'. It is possible that this provides a date for the extant pillow mounds, assuming that their general identification as artificial coney garths is correct, but it seems a little early: most pillow mounds probably date from the later Middle Ages, and they were still being built in the 17th century (Reynolds, 1979, 112). The survey at the time of attainder specifies 130 red deer, which became the property of Sir Stephen Tempest of Broughton. The first John Norton was engaged in litigation with his superior lord, the Earl of Cumberland, over hunting and warrening rights, and the dispute was continued by his son. A walled park was created on the high ground to the east of the site, supposedly after the land had come into the possession of the Cliffords.

18. The Tower appears to have changed little in the last two centuries: it is described by Whitaker (1812): *"Rylstone Fell yet exhibits a monument of the old warfare between the Nortons and Cliffords. On a point of very high ground, commanding an immense prospect, and protected by two deep ravines, are the remains of a square tower, expressly said by Dodsworth to have been built by Richard Norton. The walls are of strong grout-work, about four feet thick. It seems to have been three stories high. Breaches have been industriously*

made in all the sides, almost to the ground, to render it untenable'.

DESCRIPTION of the TOWER

19. Norton Tower is a simple, rectangular structure of roughly coursed blocks of gritstone. There is no special treatment of quoins, and there are no remains of any dressings or facings of other material, or of more finely-wrought stone which might have been used for windows and other features; nor was any such material found in any of the field-walls in the vicinity of the Tower, though a search was made specifically for this reason. The construction is of inner and outer faces of the gritstone blocks, the interstices between filled with lime mortar (this is presumably what Whitaker meant by 'grout-work'). The floor area is now buried under a combination of debris and earth, but the sandstone flags which may be seen in places are probably original: photographic images in the possession of the Y.D.N.P.A. show the interior of the tower being cleared in 1981, apparently under the supervision of Arthur Raistrick (in an exercise otherwise undocumented), and at least some flagstones may be seen *in situ*. The images also show an excavated trench outside the western wall of the Tower, accounting for the distinct hollow which is still visible there, and further excavation immediately outside the Tower's entrance. The whole building is set on a basal plinth or foundation course which projects for an average of *circa* 10 cms beyond the line of the main walls. The walls are mainly unvegetated, apart from a venerable growth of lichen but some plants, including some small sycamores, have seeded themselves in the tops.

20. The condition of the Tower seems at present reasonably stable, with no real sign of recent deterioration: a single stone in the chimney area on the east side was found to have been moved during the period of fieldwork as a result of rubbing by cattle.

21. The Tower measures 7.8 metres from east to west and 9.6 metres from north to south (Fig. 4). The thickness of the walls is a constant 1.1 metres; such minor variation as was found could be attributed to localized movement or settling of the masonry.

The exterior

22. **South side.** The south side of the Tower (Figs. 5 & 6) contains the original, and apparently the only, entrance, though this survives as little more than a gap, with the remains of the left-hand jamb: to the right of the doorway the wall has been reduced to a couple of courses. There is a threshold of boulders, rather worn (Fig. 7). The right-hand jamb has a draw-bar socket (visible in Fig. 8). Outside the entrance, and parallel with the wall, lies a line of stones (Fig. 8) which at first glance appear to represent a porch or outbuilding to protect the Tower's entrance; they are in fact rounded boulders rather than the rectangular blocks used for the building and are part of a wall which runs to the east and is discussed below.

23. **East side.** The left-hand part of the eastern side (Figs 9 & 10) stands to a height of four metres, and the right-hand side to three. The central part has been leveled to the height of the low, rectangular plinth which projects from the line of the wall (Fig 11), which can only represent the base of a chimney. There is a vertical discontinuity in the coursing of the masonry of the wall above the left-hand edge of this feature (visible adjacent to the vertical scale in Fig. 11), showing the repair of an old collapse of the chimney: this is more evident in the internal elevation and is discussed below.

24. **North side.** The left-hand side of the northern side (Figs 12 & 13) stands to a height of almost four metres, though the rest has been reduced to less than half of that. At just over two metres is a string course or leveling course of thinner stone slabs, quite distinct from the squareish blocks used elsewhere; this feature does not appear on the other sides of the Tower (where the walls survive to that height). It coincides with the internal ledge for support of the timber first floor, and probably represents a recognized stage in the building of the Tower.

25. **West side.** The western side (Figs 14 & 15) has also been reduced in its central part to a height of less than two metres, though it stands higher at the corners. It contains no particular feature of note.

The interior. (Figs 16 & 17 show internal elevation profiles).

26. The most striking feature of the interior is the mutilated vestiges of a staircase in the south-east corner (Fig. 18). Little survives beyond the left-hand jamb of the stair entrance; elsewhere, facing stones have been lost and wall-core material exposed. A single block at the corner (Fig. 19) represents the only piece of worked stone to survive in the entire building; it still bears patches of what appears to be original render.

27. On the eastern side, the central area which formerly contained the fireplace has been reduced to ground level, leaving only the base projecting outwards from the wall. Fig. 20 shows the vertical discontinuity (just to the right of the scale) which may be interpreted as a rather clumsy repair after collapse of the fireplace wall; it does not represent a partial blocking or contraction of the fireplace, since it corresponds to the southern edge of the fireplace's external projection and apparently respects the full original width of the feature. At ground level, and almost entirely covered by vegetation, the area of the gap is paved by large sandstone slabs which must be the original hearth-stones.

28. Where the wall survives above a level of 2.25 metres, the ledge which formerly supported the timbers of the floor above may be seen. Fig. 21 shows it in the north wall, with a sycamore seedling sprouting from it; on the right return wall it can be seen on the eastern side, at a level some 15 cms higher than on the northern side. This may indicate the use of a lattice of crossed beams, those above supported by lower beams of a thickness of circa 15 cms.

THE LANDSCAPE

29. The area to the south of the Tower contains several historical features, occupying a relatively level bench of land to the south of the field wall which defines the eastern edge of the survey area (see Fig. 3). Walk-over survey indicated that these features did not exist beyond the wall; nor could they be found to exist on the steeper and rougher ground to the west of the survey area. Directly north of the Tower the access track down to Scale Hill and Bark Plantation is flanked by a series of deeply cut, interlaced gulleys, which resemble hollow-ways, deepened by the effects of floodwater from the fells above. More widely, the area contains two known large cairns or barrows characteristic of the Early Bronze Age: one is at Scale Hill Farm in the bottom of the valley, 700 metres south-west of the Tower; the other low on the slope of the other side of the valley of Carlton Gill Beck, about 1.25 kilometres west-north-west of the Tower.

30. The distribution of historic features is shown in Fig. 22. Immediately adjacent to the Tower is the base of a stone wall, built of large boulders and over a metre in thickness (Figs. 23 & 24). It is aligned close to the south-west corner of the Tower, but does not quite meet it; it includes the short, straight length of stones near the Tower's entrance (see 22, above). The alignment of the wall deviates at the Tower, clearly respecting a pre-existing feature. To the south-west, it peters out on the rough slope down to Scale Hill Farm. To the north-east it runs rather sinuously for 50 metres, then appears to turn to the south, following the line of the existing field wall, which is built upon a very heavy foundation and lies within a distinct cut which is an average of a metre deep.

31. It seems likely that the old wall represents the boundary of the deer park which was established in the 17th century after the estate had been acquired by the Cliffords. This is suggested by the massive scale of the wall, and by the hollow which runs along its western edge and which can be seen as the remains of a ha-ha. If this is the case, the creation of the park may be seen as the formal enclosure of an existing hunting ground, in which the Tower played an important part. It is likely that it served as a guard-house for the hunting grounds- which were, of course, the subject of considerable dispute- but it was perhaps equally important as a banqueting house, important in the complex and competitive protocols of hospitality involved in Tudor hunting.

32. Interpretation of the landscape south of the Tower as a deer park is supported by the presence of three pillow mounds. These are rectilinear features, in the form of a low, level mound, ditched on all sides. Their identification with artificial coney warrens is well-established and, in this case, is supported by an attested history of rabbit-breeding at Rylstone. The best-preserved of the three (Fig. 25) is hard against the suggested ha-ha: it is symmetrical and measures 32 metres by 21 metres across the top of the mound; this one, at least, resembles a classic pillow mound. South of it, and also hard against the supposed park boundary; less symmetrical in shape and possibly mutilated on its western side, is another which measures 28 metres by 11 metres. A third (Fig. 26) lies to the west: this is badly mutilated, the west side removed by a large crater which looks almost like a small quarry. All are considerably overgrown, but stand an average of 2.5 metres above the bottoms of their ditches. It is not clear to what extent the disturbances may be attributed to an archaeological investigation of two of them by F. Villey, in 1921; certainly, the large, quarry-like disturbance to the westernmost mound is shown on his plan. The investigation produced nothing but some charcoal.

33. Scattered across the area to the south of the Tower is a cluster of ten distinct cairns, as well as two more possible cairns, one of which is badly disturbed. All are completely vegetated, and appear as small grassy mounds; all are in the range of 2.5 to 3.5 metres in diameter and 40 to 50 cms high (Fig. 27), though the edges of most are indistinct and they may extend further under the soil. To ascribe a date or a function to these cairns is not straightforward. They are recorded in the Historic Environment Record as clearance cairns, and may well be no more than heaps of stones picked from the surface of a naturally stoney field; indeed, occasional fresh-looking, unvegetated piles of stones in the general area suggest that this practice continues today. It was not possible to identify all 30 of the *small cairns of stones, which appear to have supported posts....(which) may have been for jousting games or horsemanship* (Raistrick, 1963), and the idea is not supported by the surviving evidence. Should these indeed have originated as clearance heaps, a prehistoric date is possible, but the possibility that they relate to the preparation of land for the deer-park cannot be discounted. Finally, it is possible that at least some represent prehistoric burial cairns: the site, on a false

crest and intervisible with known burial mounds, is in some ways typical of an Early Bronze Age cremation cemetery. Recent work has suggested that the distinction between 'clearance' cairnfields and burial cairns is by no means distinct, as at Crawley Edge in Weardale where one cairn containing a cremation with a Collared Urn occurred among others with no sign of burial activity.

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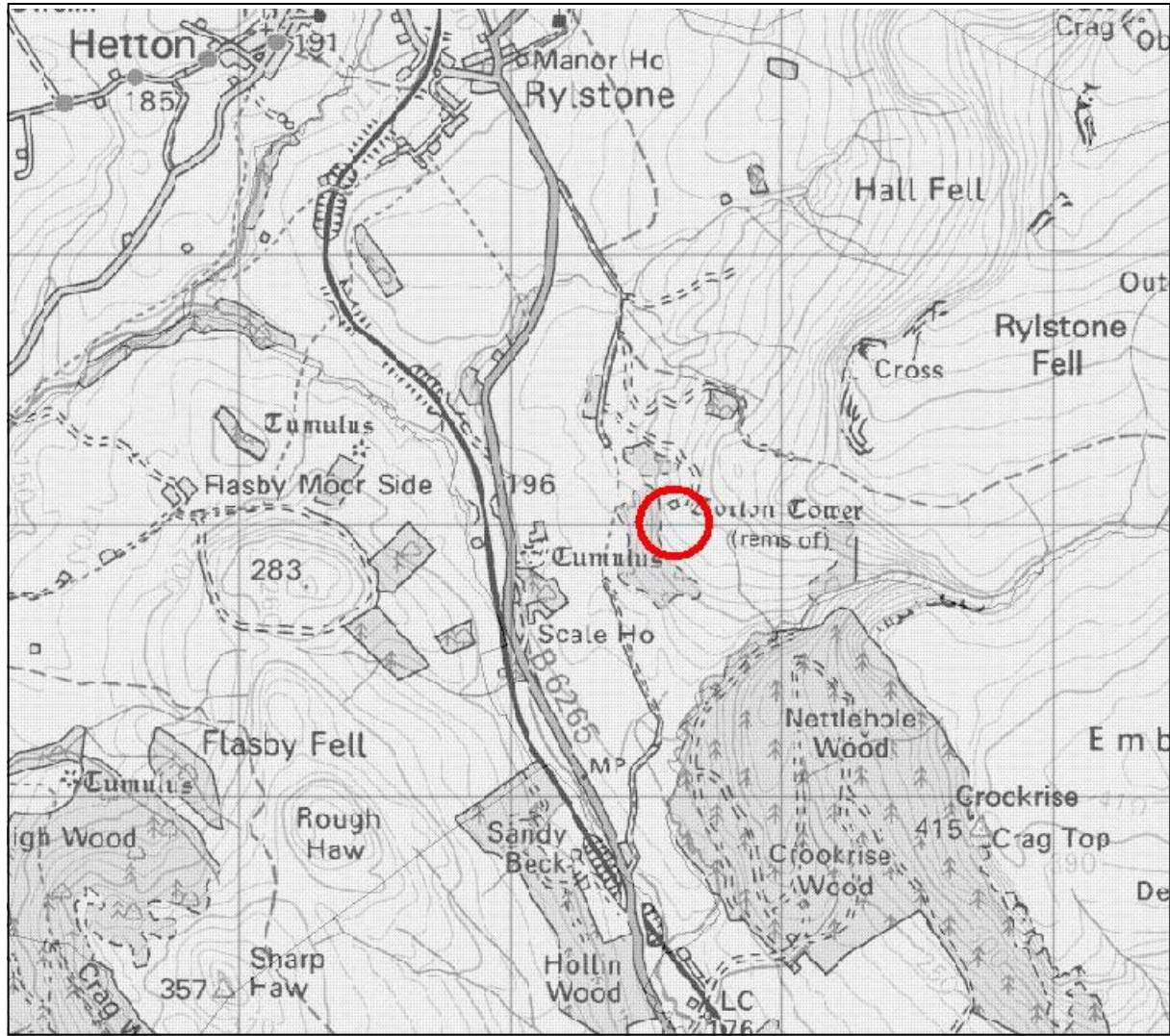
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Norton Tower

Fig. 1

Site location



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Image: Google Earth

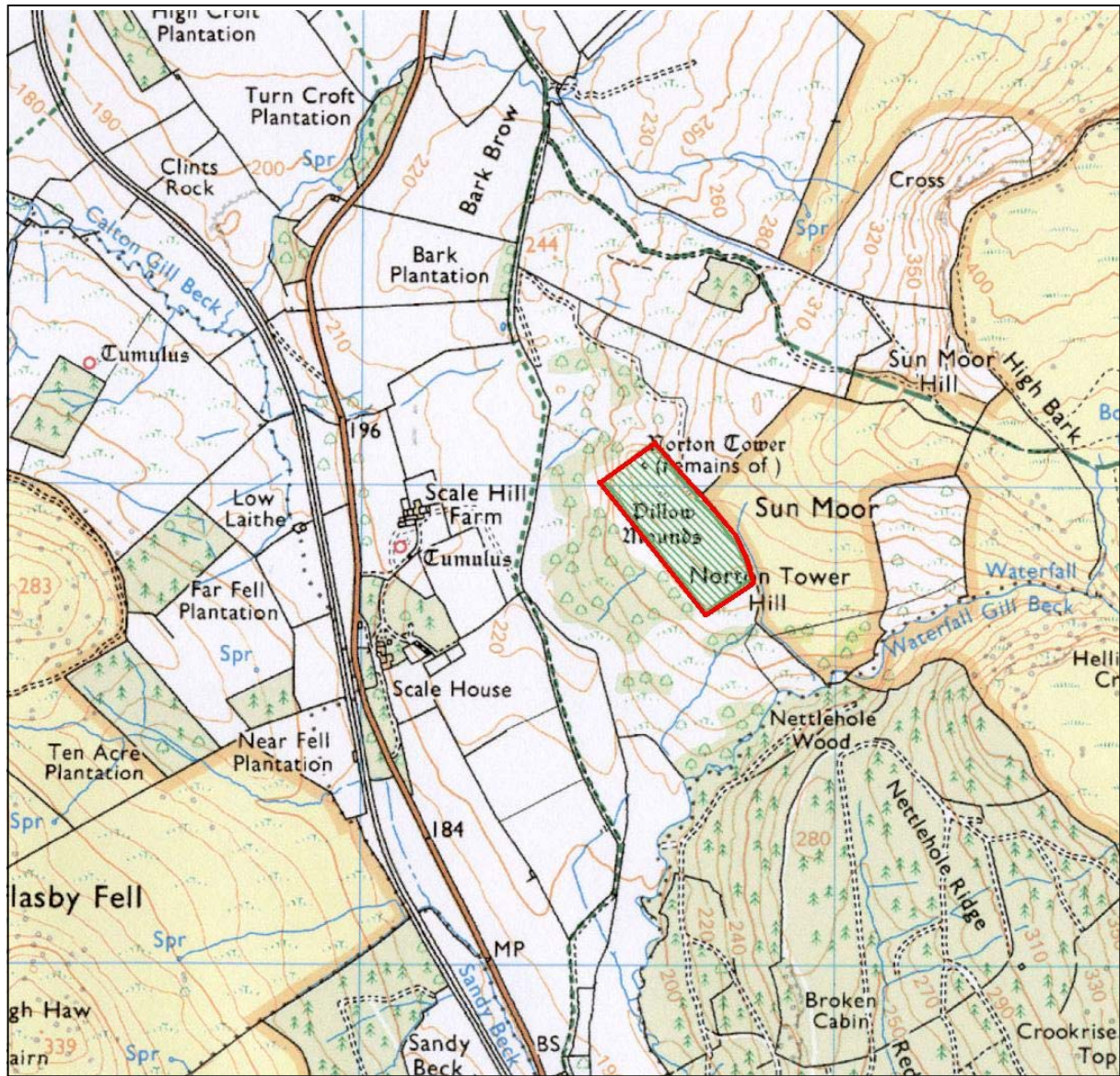
Norton Tower

Fig. 2

Aerial view: the Tower is arrowed



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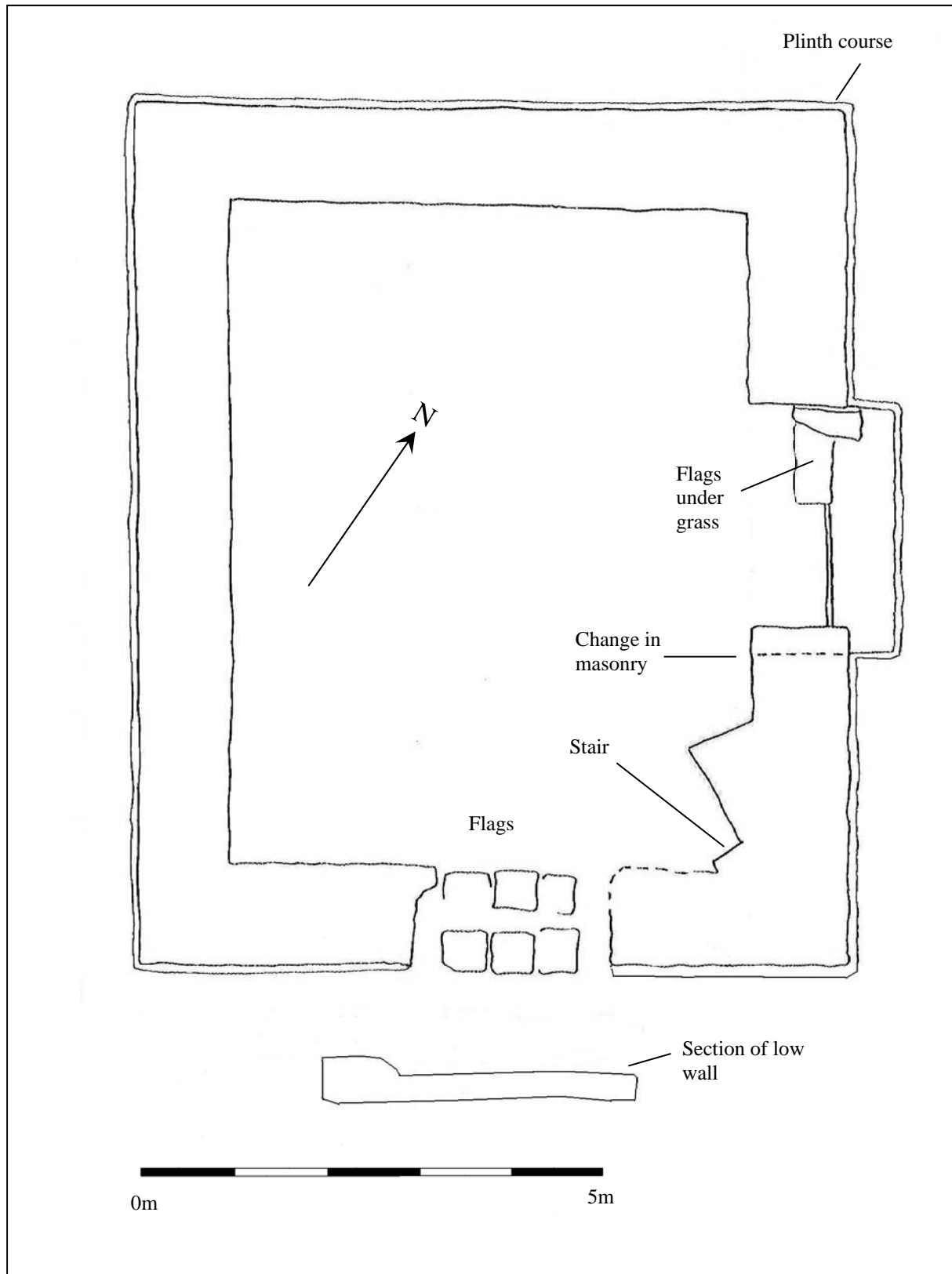
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Fig. 3

The survey area



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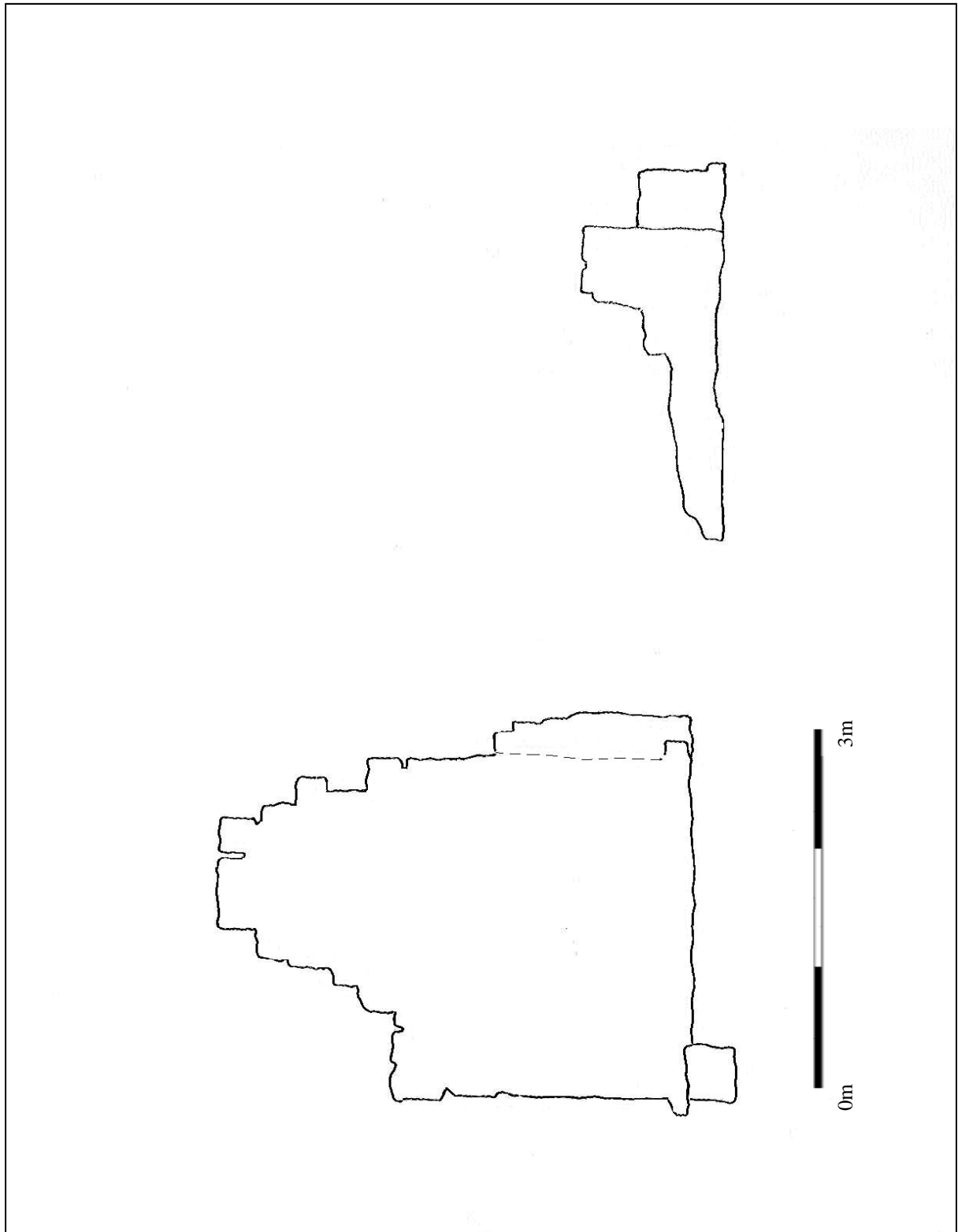


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Norton Tower

Fig. 4

Ground Plan of Tower.



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Norton Tower

Fig. 5

Southern external elevation



Norton Tower

Fig. 6

South elevation: photograph



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Norton Tower

Fig. 7

Threshold seen from interior



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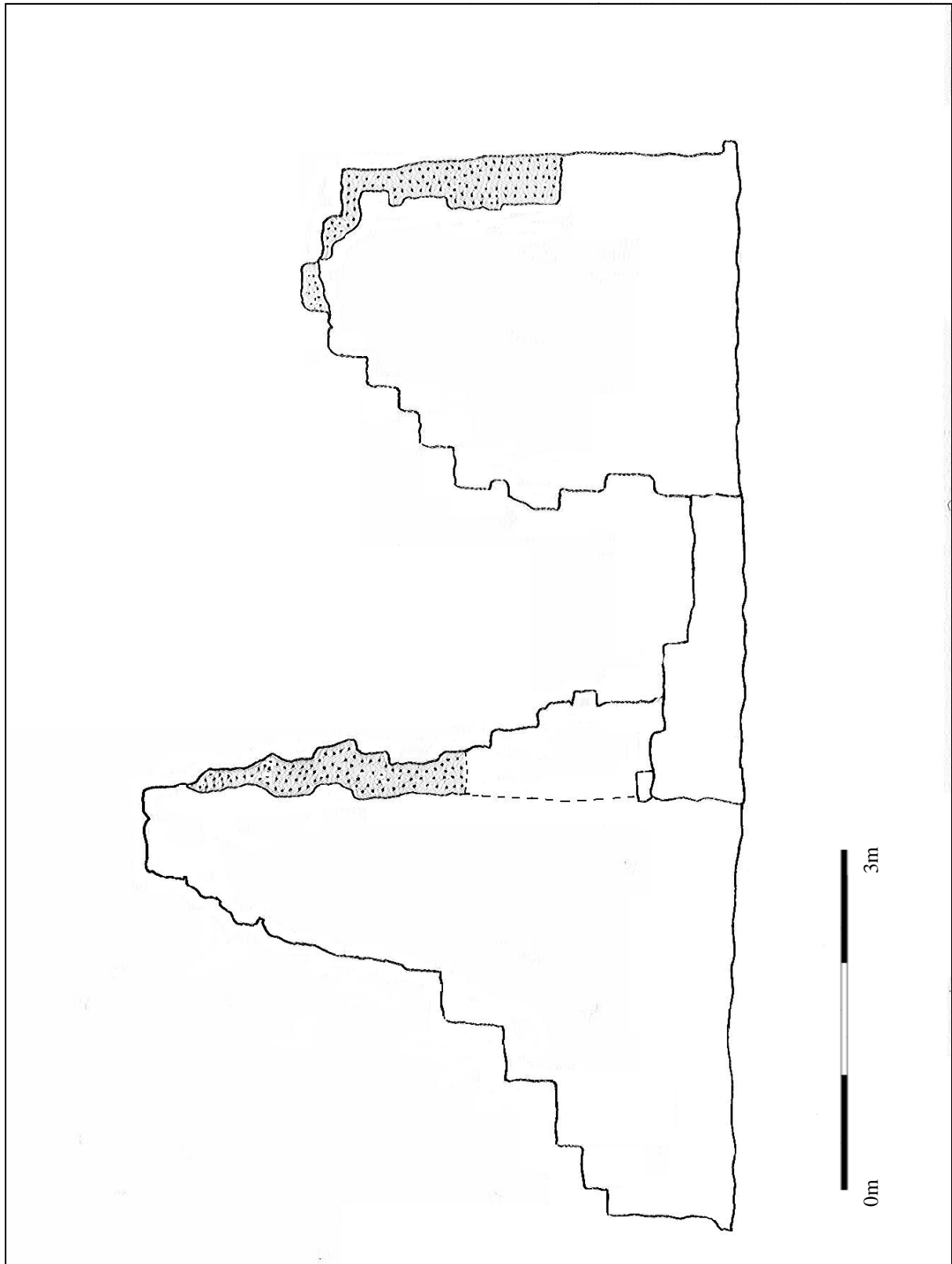
Norton Tower

Fig. 8

Wall outside door, showing also draw-bar socket



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Norton Tower

Fig. 9

Eastern external elevation (stipple
indicates exposed wall-core)



Norton Tower

Fig. 10

Eastern elevation: photograph



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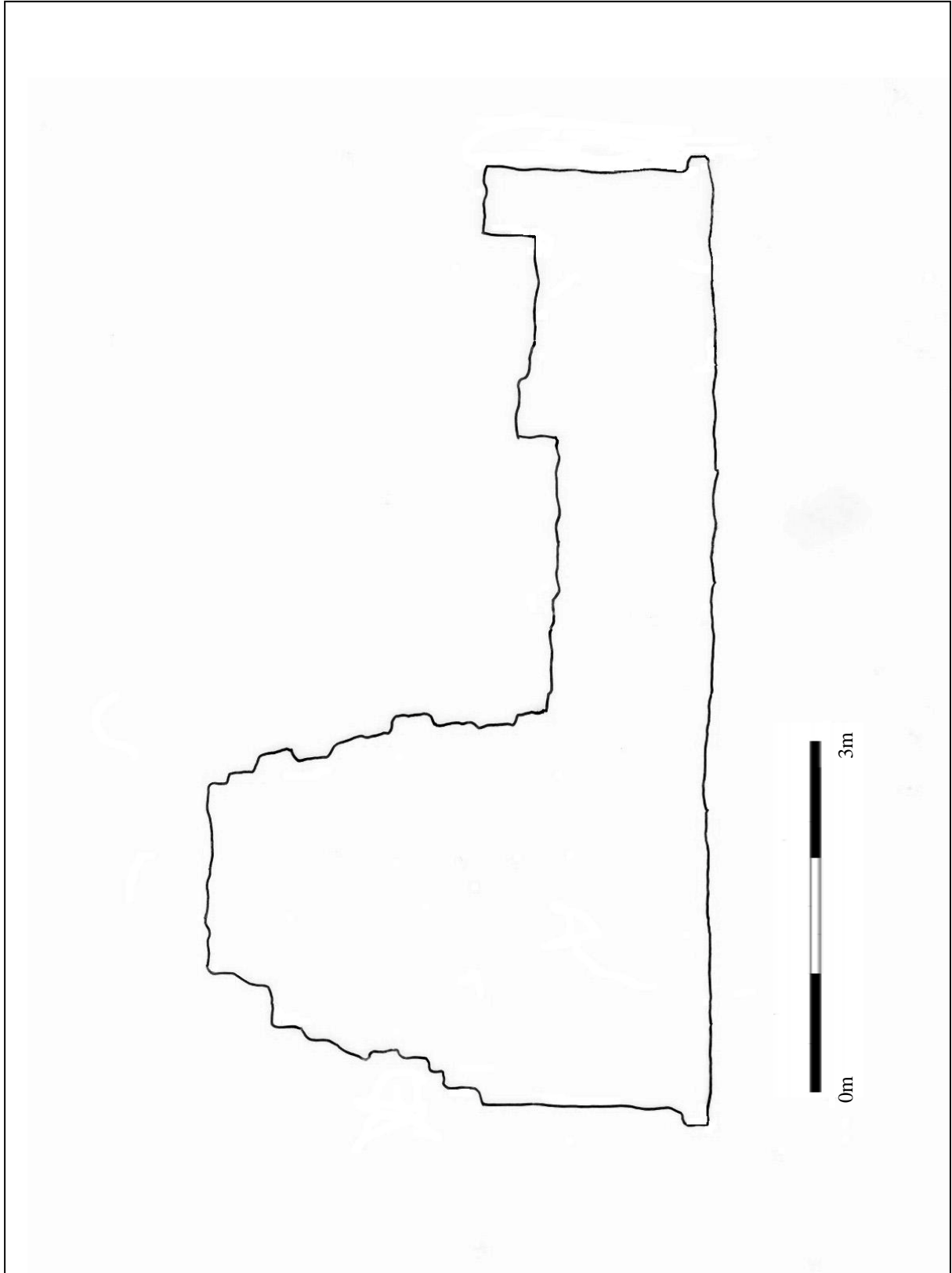
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Fig. 11

Base of chimney



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Norton Tower

Fig. 12

Northern external elevation



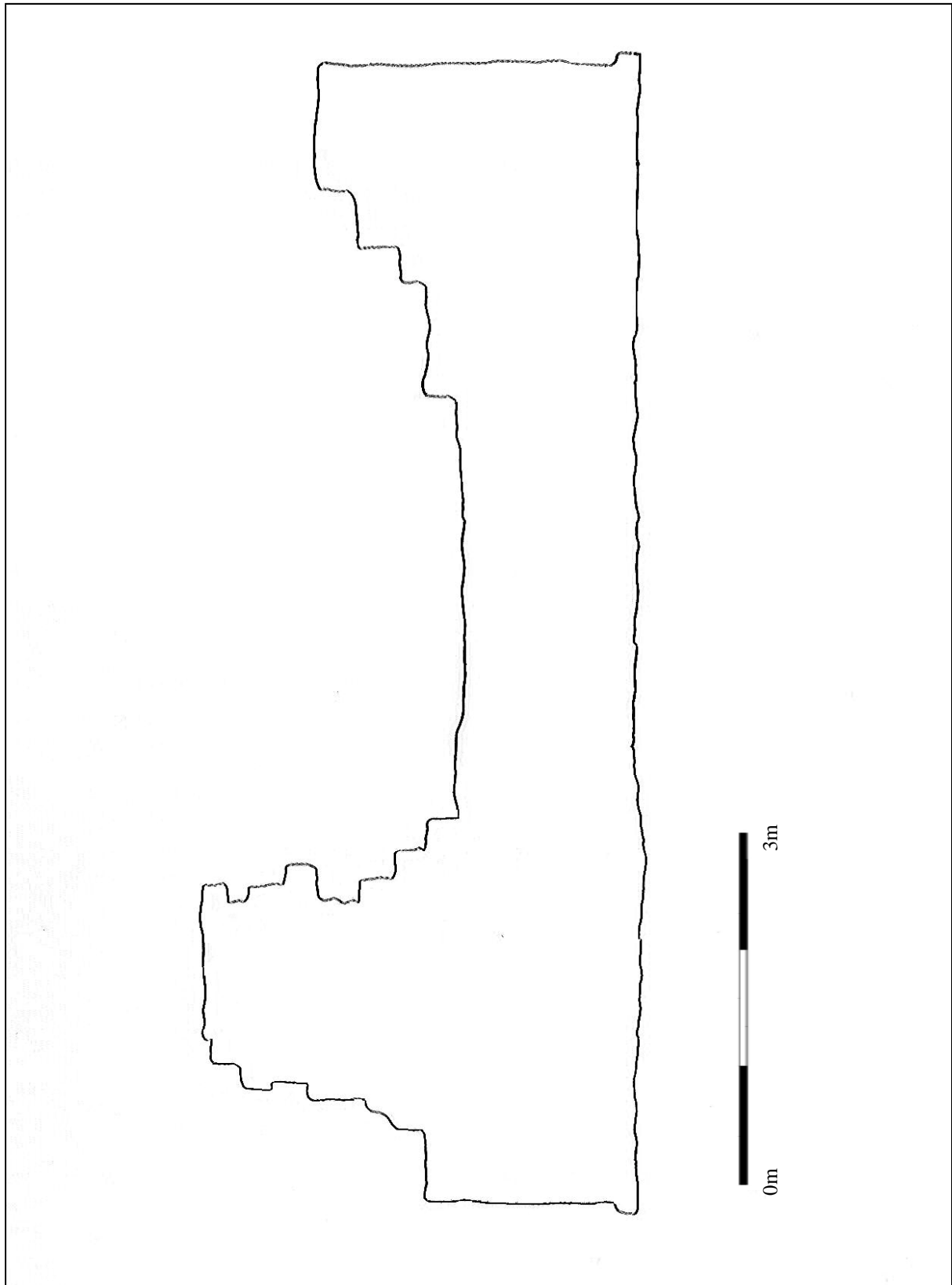
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Fig. 13

Eastern elevation: photograph



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Norton Tower

Fig. 14

Western external elevation



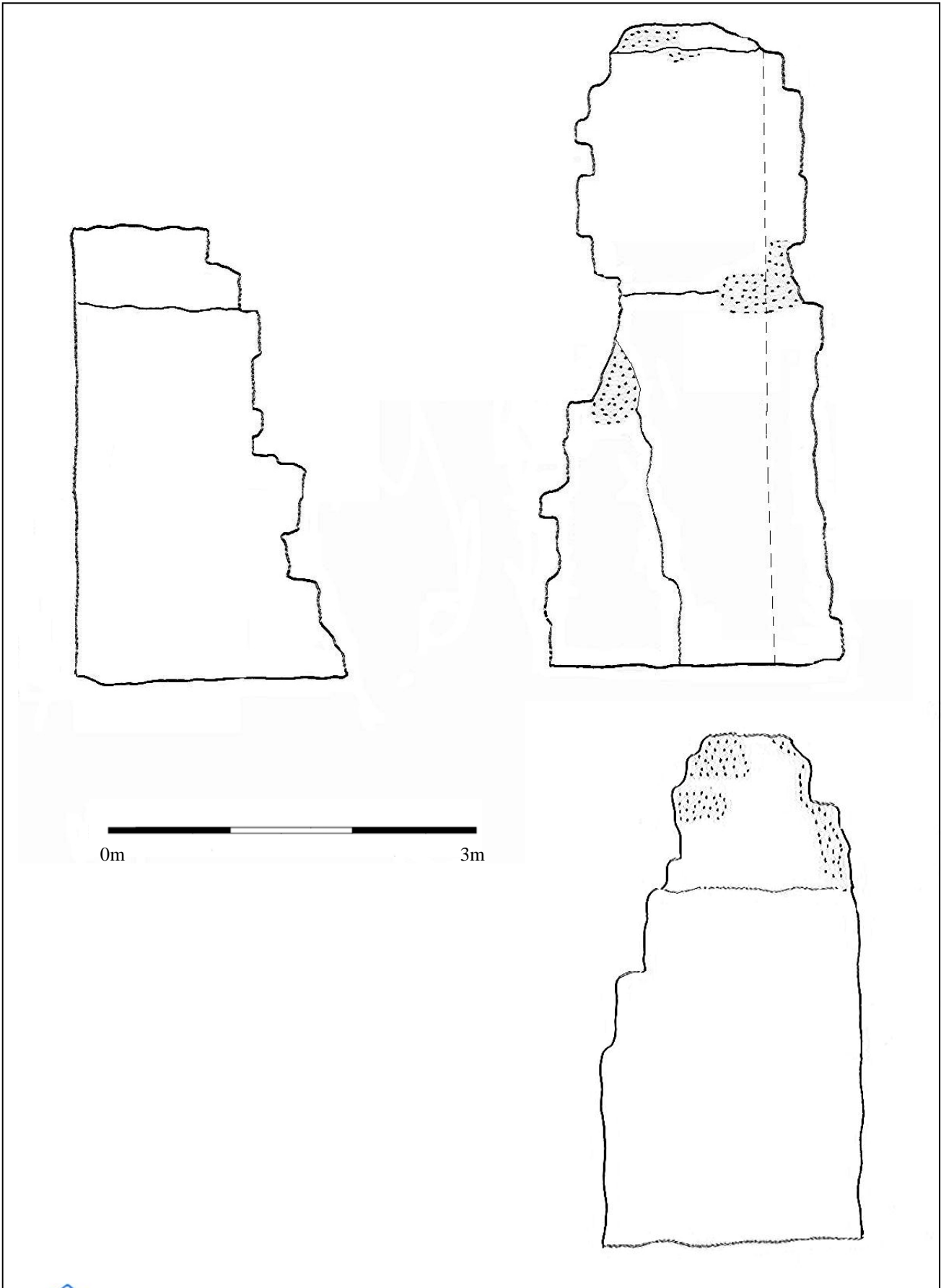
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Fig. 15

Western elevation: photograph



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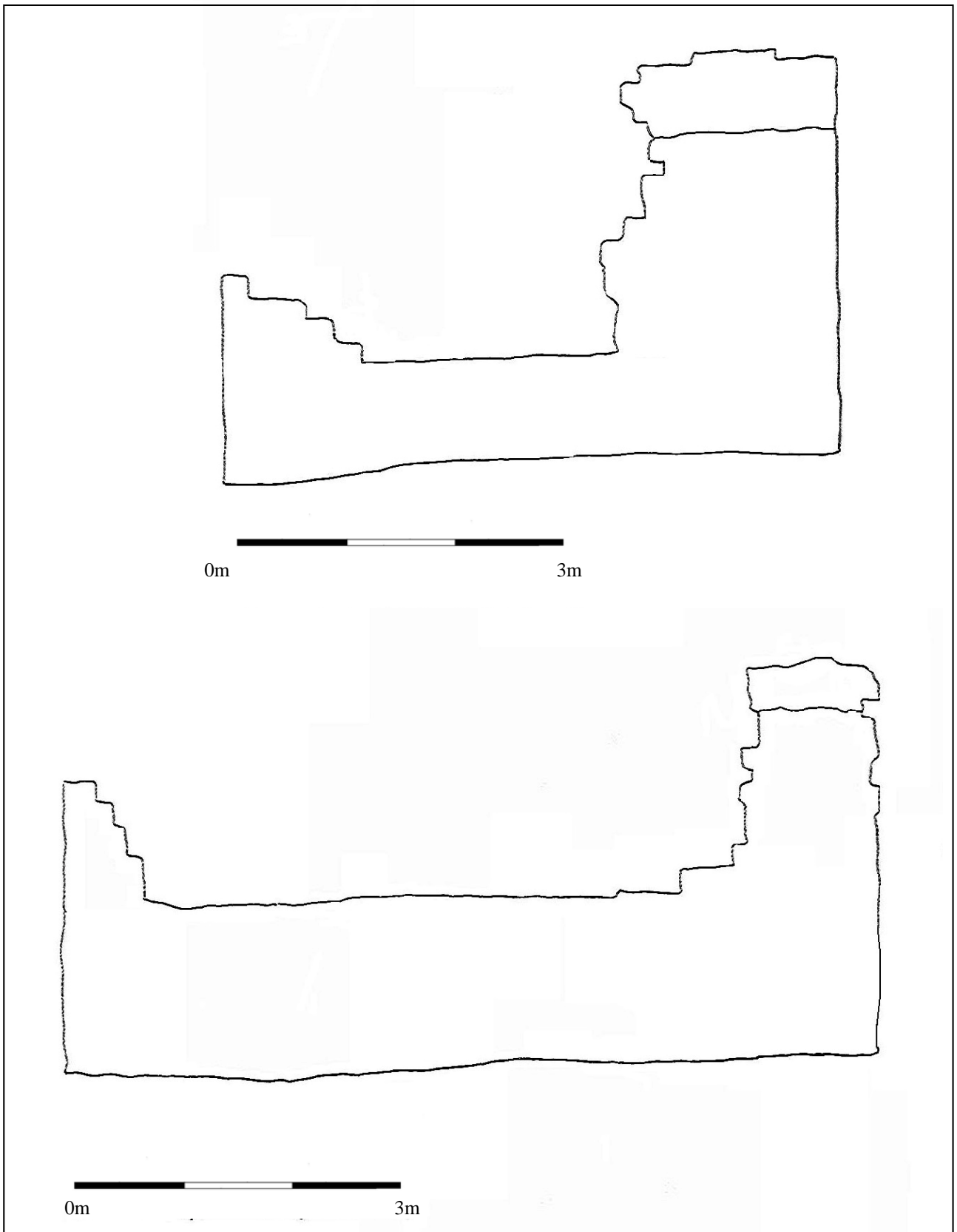


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Norton Tower

Fig. 16

East (above) and south (below) internal
elevations (stipple
indicates exposed wall-core)



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Norton Tower

Fig. 17

North (above) and west (below) internal
elevations



Norton Tower

Fig. 18

Detail of stair remains



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Norton Tower

Fig. 19

Detail of stair corner



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Norton Tower

Fig. 19

Detail of stair fireplace (internal)



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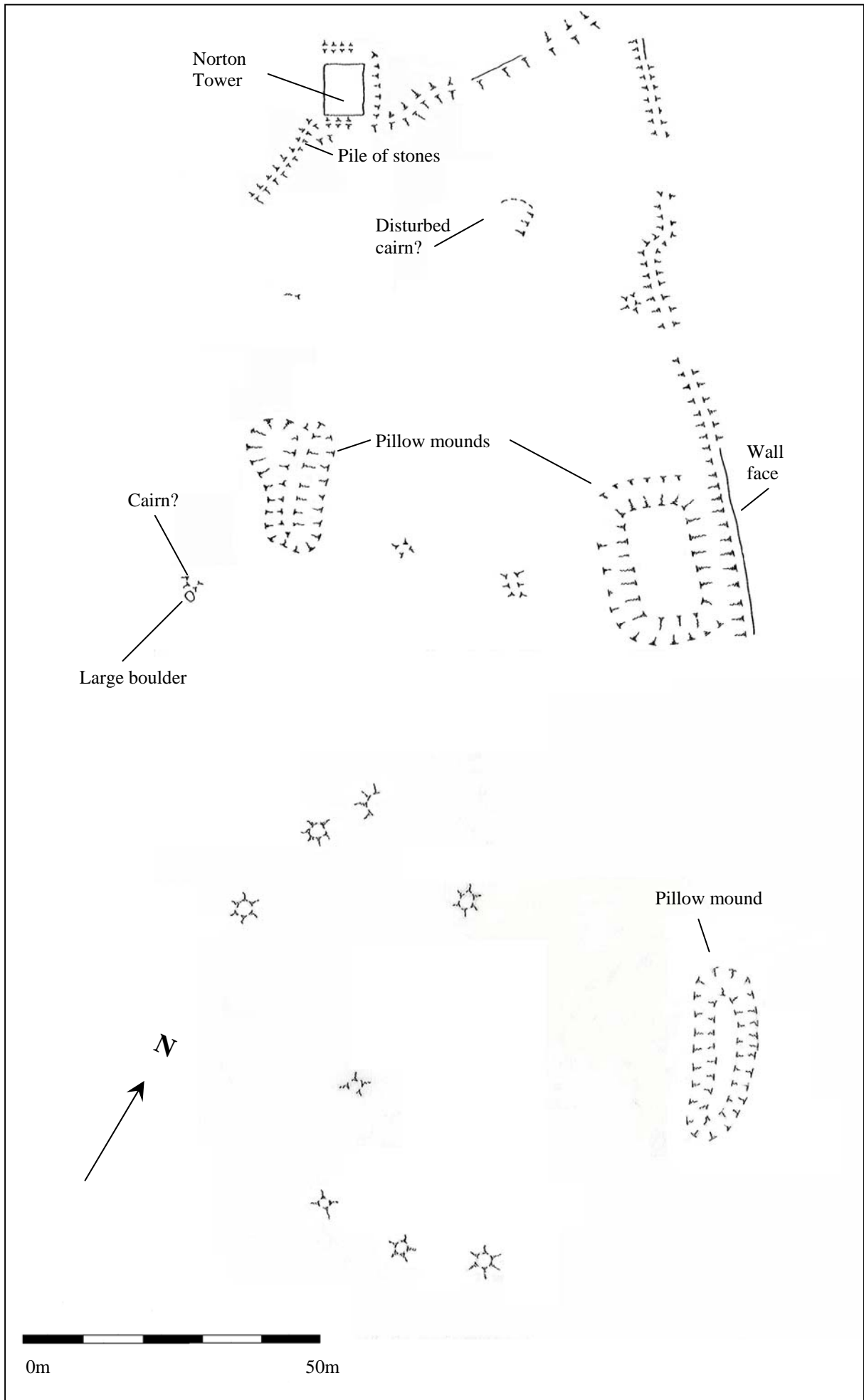
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Fig. 21

Ledge for floor timbers



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Norton Tower :Fig. 22 Plan of Earthworks



Norton Tower

Fig. 23

Old wall, looking from north-east



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Norton Tower

Fig. 24

Old wall, looking from south-west



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Norton Tower

Fig. 25

Central pillow mound



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Norton Tower

Fig. 26

Mutilated pillow mound



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Norton Tower

Fig. 27

Typical cairn



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