

CBC01

**THE CILLE-BHARRA CHURCH-GROUP,
EOLIGARRY, BARRA, WESTERN ISLES:
HISTORIC BUILDING SURVEY OF
ST BARR'S CHURCH & THE SOUTH CHAPEL**



Client: Benjamin Tindall Architects, on behalf of Andrew Kerr

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INTRODUCTION

The church-group at Kilbar is a Scheduled Ancient Monument. It lies within the graveyard at the foot of the north-eastern slope of Ben Eoligarry Mór, the dominant landscape feature of what is otherwise a low-lying sandy peninsula at the north end of Barra (NGR: NF 7051 0738). The site lies at roughly 23 m above OD. Three buildings survive; the site of a fourth has been recorded. For ease of reference, the buildings are numbered in this report from north to south in accordance with the scheme set out by Muir (1861, 228) whose survey of 1855 produced the earliest detailed plan of the group:

- Building No.1: site of church, possibly dedicated to St Barr (Muir 1861, 229), demolished *circa* 1834;
- Building No.2: the Macneil burial aisle (the North Chapel), restored 1976/77;
- Building No.3: the present church ruin. Although evidently dedicated to St Barr (RCAHMS 1928, 123), an alternative dedication to St Mary has also been recorded (Muir 1861, 229; Edge 1863). Interestingly, the building is described as ‘St Mary’s’ in the 1915 RCAHMS survey notebook;
- Building No.4: surviving west gable and turf-covered footings (the South Chapel).

In addition to the surviving buildings, there are in the graveyard three early medieval cross-marked stones, apparently *in situ* (Fisher 2001, 107). The ‘Kilbar stone’, a late 10th century rune-inscribed cross-slab, first recorded by Adolphus Edge in 1863, was removed to the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland in 1880 (Stephens 1881). A cast of the stone, together with three late medieval grave-slabs and a post-medieval example, are currently displayed inside the North Chapel.

OBJECTIVES

Earlier reports by Historic Scotland (Pendery 2001; Gordon 2001) have identified a number of issues that need to be addressed in advance of the formulation of a proposed package of conservation and repair work to the church-group and its associated monuments.

The principal objectives of the current survey were to provide a base-line documentary and survey record of St Barr’s church (Building No.3) and the South Chapel (Building No.4), preparatory to the formulation of a wider ranging management plan for the site and to inform the conservation process. The base-line record comprises the following:

- a stone-by-stone record of the surviving masonry, together with designations summarising the proposed consolidation works;
- a topographical plan of the church-group and related monuments;
- collation of relevant documentary references to the church-group, preparatory to constructing a ‘time-line’ of events and interventions at the site.

METHOD

DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT

Documentary sources at the National Monuments Record of Scotland (NMRS), the library of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, West Register House and the Map Library in the National Library of Scotland were consulted (Appendices 1 & 2).

SURVEY

The historic building survey was undertaken using a combination of digitally-rectified photography and a Total Station EDM, equipped with a data-logging facility. The topographical survey plan was converted into National Grid co-ordinates via a series of local reference points; no local Ordnance Survey bench-mark, however, could be identified and all levels are therefore expressed with reference to an arbitrary relative local datum. The survey was undertaken 15 – 17 April 2002.

RESULTS

DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT (Figures 1 – 3)

The antiquity and function of the various buildings which go together to make up the church-group at Kilbar are by no means clear. A late seventeenth century account, recorded in MacKenzie (1936), describes the site as ‘a ruined priory’. Macculloch (1824, 4), whilst admitting that ‘it is difficult to comprehend the nature of this establishment’, considered that it was likely that at least some of the group were votive chapels. More recent accounts have stressed the evolving nature of the site, as a medieval parish church with later additions. Building No.3 is generally assumed to date to the twelfth century; Building No.2 to the early post-medieval period (RCAHMS 1928; Macquarrie 1984, 14, 23). A table of events and interventions at the site is summarised in Appendix 3.

Although not the earliest reference to the Kilbar church-group, Macculloch’s (1824, 4) description, based on annual journeys to the Western Isles undertaken between 1811 and 1821, forms the natural starting point of any enquiry into the number of buildings at the site and their nature:

‘... there are four independent buildings, collected, or rather huddled together, within one enclosure bearing the traces of a ditch outside; all of which appear to have been chapels. None of them are large; and one is not much bigger than a good sized chest; being only six feet by ten.’

The church-group was first surveyed and described in detail by T S Muir in 1855 (Muir 1861, 228-230; 1885, 51-53, 281-283). Two significant details are recorded by Muir.

Firstly, it is clear that there was originally a small flat-headed window in the east gable of Building No.4 (Muir 1885, 53). The east gable collapsed sometime between 1855 and 1866. Secondly and more important is Muir's record of Building No.1 which is shown to have lain to the north of the North Chapel. Only the 'ground-works', presumably the turf-covered foundations of the building, survived but it is clear that there were sufficient remains then extant for them to be measured and plotted on his survey plan. The building is described as having been 36' 6" long externally and it lay apart from the other buildings, closer to the road (Muir 1861, 229; 1885, 53). According to the internal scale of Muir's drawing, the building appears to have been roughly 16' wide, or 11.1 x 5.0 m overall. According to Muir (1861, 229):

'It was pulled down a few years ago, but the site is still called the church of St Bar by the country people, who remember it as much like the others still standing, but much higher in the walls.'

The reported greater wall-height led Muir (1885, 281) to infer (perhaps erroneously) that Building No.1 was 'comparatively modern', indicating perhaps a post-medieval date for the building. He also inferred (perhaps correctly) that it 'had formed the parish church till about 1835, when the present one was erected.' Certainly the presbytery was able to meet in the church at Kilbar as late as 1825 (Andrew Kerr, pers comm). Meanwhile, papers in the Scottish Record Office record the removal of stones from Kilbar, possibly from the church site, in November 1825 (SRO SC29/64/5). Given that the new church at Cuidhir was built in 1834, it seems likely that the building was removed in the period 1825 x 1834. The antiquity of Building No.1 and its possible role within the church-group is explored further below.

The graveyard at Kilbar is described by Muir (1861, 229) as 'horribly beset by nettles ... chin deep'. Elsewhere, contrary to Macculloch's earlier observation, it is specifically described as unenclosed (Muir 1885, 52, 281). However, a curvilinear enclosure is clearly depicted on the first edition Ordnance Survey map of 1881, surveyed in 1876 (Figure 1a), and it seems likely that this is identical to the ditched enclosure seen by Macculloch. The graveyard was modified into a regular rectangular walled enclosure sometime in the latter part of the nineteenth century (Figure 1b). It was subsequently extended to the south-west in the 1950s and then to the south-east in the 1990s.

Curiously, in light of Macculloch and Muir's observations, the earliest detailed description of the site, compiled by Martin Martin around 1695, refers to only two buildings at the site; St Barr's church and a little chapel nearby 'in which Macneil and those descended of his family are usually interred' (Macleod 1994, 158). The (*Old*) *Statistical Account*, of 1794, similarly counts only two churches at the site, 'built by the monks, belonging to Icolumkill' (*OSA* 1794, 335).

It is by no means clear, however, which buildings Martin or the *OSA* intended. Although later accounts certainly identify the Macneil burial chapel with Building No.2, Martin's description of the chapel as 'little' would apply more naturally to Building No.4. Similarly, it is equally uncertain whether St Barr's should be identified with Building No.1 or No.3. Indeed, to muddy the waters even further, the 1915 RCAHMS surveyor identified St Barr's as Building No.2, St Mary's as Building

No.3. Again, although identification is unclear, the first post-Reformation Catholic missionaries on Barra in 1625 are reported to have found St Barr's church in a roofless condition (Macquarrie 1984, 25).

Martin's account is of further interest, not only for the description and traditions surrounding the wooden image of St Barr that was still preserved at the site (Macleod 1994, 158; RCAHMS 1928, 125), but also for what he has to say about other local traditions. For example, a religious circuit was made of St Barr's church on St Michael's Day and the event was celebrated in the 'village of Kilbar' by the baking and eating of 'St Michael's Cake' (Macleod 1994, 164). Martin also refers to an altar on the island dedicated to St Christopher (Macleod 1994, 162):

'There is in this island an altar dedicated to St Christopher, at which the natives perform their devotion. There is a stone set up here, about seven feet high, and when the inhabitants come near it they take a religious turn round it.'

Although the location of the 'altar' is unspecified, circumstantial evidence (discussed below) may suggest an association with the Kilbar church-group. If this is the case, then this suite of dedications, to St Barr, St Michael and St Christopher, together with the St Mary dedication, recorded by Muir (1861) and Edge (1863) in the mid-nineteenth century, may represent the various saints to whom the medieval buildings (ie excluding the apparently later North Chapel) or other cemetery features (eg crosses, altars or stations) at Kilbar were dedicated.

Little attention has previously been given to Martin's description of the 'St Christopher's altar'. Possibly it may be identified with 'the pedestal of a cross' that is referred to by the compiler of the *New Statistical Account* (1845, 206) in 1840. It is said to have been located near the church-group. These two descriptions, on their own, appear to have little in common. They may, however, be linked by a recently discovered drawing, by Adolphus Edge (1863), entitled 'an ancient cross in St Mary's Churchyard, Kilbar' (Figure 2).

Edge's drawing depicts a stone-built monument. It is roughly 5' (1.5 m) tall with sides 1' 6" (0.45 m) long and stands, somewhat precariously, over a stone base (or gable?) roughly 5' (1.5 m) wide and 3' (0.9 m) high, making the monument roughly 8' (2.4 m) high overall. In the two visible faces of the monument are niches, roughly 4" (0.1 m) wide and 12" (0.3 m) high, presumably intended for the display of religious artefacts. Although stone-built, rather than the single stone implied in Martin's account, the overall height of the monument and its apparent religious significance, as implied by the presence of the niches, may suggest that Martin's 'altar', the NSA's 'pedestal' and Edge's 'cross' are one and the same feature. The structure may have been dismantled during the course of the late-nineteenth-century reorganisation of the graveyard (Figure 1b). Interestingly, the 'cross' is still remembered in traditional accounts from the area; certainly, the monument was still resorted to in the period after the clearance of 1825 (information from Micheil a' Ghлиндich, via Andrew Kerr pers comm).

The Edge drawing also includes illustrations of the late medieval and later grave-slabs at Kilbar, as well as the earliest known illustration of the 'Kilbar stone' itself. Shown

in situ, the stone was buried up to the level of the S-scrolls below the cross-head. The cross-form itself, however, is poorly represented and the interlace is absent.

TOPOGRAPHICAL SURVEY (Figures 3 & 4; Plates 1 & 2)

The surviving elements of the church-group (Buildings Nos. 2 – 4) lie clustered together in the south half of the late nineteenth-century walled graveyard (Plate 1). Inside the enclosure but previously un-noted, are two pronounced breaks-of-slope. Clearly artificial or at least man-modified, these divide the enclosure into a series of platforms.

Transposition of Muir's survey plan onto the modern map-base indicates that Building No.1 lay on the lowest platform (Plate 2), near the north edge of the enclosure and close to the road, as indeed previously described (Muir 1885, 53, 281). Although there are no visible remains of the structure, it may be significant that cross-marked Stone B lies just to the west of the projected position of the building; Stone C, meanwhile, is located a few metres to the south. This strongly suggests that the grave-markers were positioned with reference to Building No.1, allowing perhaps a greater antiquity for that building than, for example, Muir believed.

Buildings Nos. 2 and 4 occupy the middle platform; Building No.3, on the upper platform, occupies the highest point within the enclosure, with Stone A a few metres to the south-west.

Buildings Nos. 3 and 4 are entered from the north. This is an unusual feature in church buildings. It may suggest that they were approached from a contemporary building to the north, possibly Building No.1.

The relationship of Building No.1 to the early cross-marked stones, its traditional designation as 'St Barr's', as recorded by Muir (1861, 229) and the possible northern focus predicated by Buildings Nos. 3 and 4, may combine to suggest that the lost church, Building No.1, was a contemporary element of the church-group, and possibly its original focus.

Comparison of the 1876 and 1901 Ordnance Survey maps suggests that the later rectilinear enclosure roughly overlies its curvilinear predecessor. However, parallel with, and roughly 4 m to the south-east of, the later enclosure, there is a pronounced 'grass-mark', formed by a broad swathe of lush green grass, roughly 3 m wide (Plate 1). The feature may signify the site of the external ditch recorded by Macculloch (1824, 4).

Meanwhile, outwith and to the south of the early cemetery, there is a large stone cairn (Plate 1), up to 3.5 m in diameter and 0.8 m high. On it has been recently erected a large wooden cross. The feature has not previously been recorded and it is therefore of uncertain antiquity. Speculatively, however, the cairn may represent or subsume Martin's 'altar', the NSA's 'pedestal' or Edge's 'ancient cross'. For what it is worth, the view from the cairn of the seascape of South Uist and beyond is not dissimilar to the background shown in Edge's drawing.

BUILDING RECORDING SURVEY

‘St Barr’s Church’ (Building No.3)

General Observations

Building No.3 (Figure 4) measures roughly 11.5 x 3.8 – 4 m, within walls 0.7 – 0.8 m wide and up to 2.5 m high. Clear butt joints and scars, visible in both its interior and exterior fabric, indicate that the primary structure, roughly 8.1 m long, has been extended to the west. The interior corner of the building originally lay 1.0 m to the west of the north entrance. Most of this secondary work survives only as a low, turf-covered stony bank. However, where it survives to the wall-head (at the west end of the north wall), it has preserved the original external harling of the former west gable.

The building is of random rubble construction, roughly coursed and levelled with pinnings. The masonry is bonded with shell-lime mortar. Traces of interior plaster and a rougher exterior harling survive in places.

A water-stoup is located at current ground level, immediately to the E of the entrance. Formed on a single block of stone with sides 0.47 m and 0.40 m long, the basin is 0.25 m in diameter and 0.18 m deep.

At the centre of the east gable are the rubble and turf-covered remains of an altar. Constructed of coursed, lime-mortared masonry, the altar is 1.50 x 0.90 m and up to 0.60 m high overall. The visible face on the west is 0.35 m high. Plaster survives on all faces of the altar but is best preserved on the north where it is overlain by a pile of stone tumble.

A turf-covered stony mound to the west of the building almost certainly represents the collapsed west gable of the extended church. Meanwhile, outside the east end of the church a second stony mound probably represents the apex of the collapsed east gable of the primary building.

Turf-covered stony mounds along the south exterior side of the church, and further examples at the east and west ends of the north exterior side of the building probably represent tumble from the wall-head.

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Building No.3: south wall, exterior face: condition (Figure 5a)

Wall-fabric (primary structure): large scale loss of pinnings; extant pinnings loose; deep voids between surviving stones, mortar recessed 100 – 200 mm.

Wall-fabric (secondary work): not visible externally; low turf-covered stony bank

Plaster / harling: none evident.

Vegetation: wall-head turf-covered; moderate grass-colonisation at W end of wall-face; occasional grass and weeds in wall-face to E.

Window (west): round-headed lintel split on E side; single pair of side-stones survive immediately below arch-head but sides otherwise missing; voids in masonry. Sill traceable under loose rubble (Plate 3).

Window (east): round-headed lintel supported by single stone on W, two stones on E; sides otherwise missing, with voids to E and W. Sill not traced (Plate 4).

Quoins (primary E): quoins missing; adjacent masonry loose and tipping to E.

Quoins (primary W): quoins missing, presumed robbed. Site coincident with area of collapsed rubble at W end of standing masonry.

Quoins (secondary W): condition unknown. Site of low turf-covered stony bank.

Building No.3: south wall, interior face; condition (Figure 5b)

Wall-fabric (primary structure): mortar and pinnings generally sound; mortar recessed 20 – 60 mm. Marked lean observable; W end of wall leans to N (Figure 9a). Void in fabric up to 0.5 x 0.36 x 0.30 m deep, located between the two windows. Although there are occasional loose stones around edges of void, the mortar in the exposed wall-core is generally firm and sound. Similar void is present in N wall opposite, suggesting removal of former chancel screen.

Wall-fabric (secondary work): masonry is off-set to S from line of primary structure to E. Green-slate pinnings evident, and voids between surviving stones 150 – 300 mm deep without visible mortar.

Plaster / harling: fairly extensive patches of plaster present along lower wall-face, up to 0.7 m above present ground level; occasional patches survive higher up the wall-face, particularly towards the E end, between the two windows. Plaster also survives on E side of head of westernmost window; and on E and W reveals of easternmost window. Hard pinkish plaster also survives on the secondary work, to W.

Vegetation: wall-head turf-covered; minimal growth on wall-face.

Window (west): sides and head of window intact; plaster survives on E side of window-head. Loose stones on sill (Plate 5).

Window (east): sides and head of window intact; plaster survives on E and W sides of window. Loose stones on sill. Stone forming E side of window-head is of green slate (Plate 6).

Quoins (primary E): relatively intact to wall-head (visible basal quoin loose) but destabilised by absence of exterior quoins and loose masonry in exposed wall-core behind.

Quoins (primary W): intact at base but destabilised by loose masonry in exposed wall-core behind. Site coincident with area of collapsed rubble (Plates 7 & 8).

Quoins (secondary W): condition unknown. Site of low turf-covered stony bank.

Building No.3: north wall, interior face: condition (Figure 6a)

Wall-fabric (primary structure): mortar and pinnings generally firm and sound; mortar recessed 60 – 120 mm. Occasional loose pinnings; occasional green-slate pinnings also noted. Void in fabric up to 0.8 x 0.5 x 0.25 m deep, located between entrance and window. Although there are occasional loose stones around edges of void, the mortar in the exposed wall-core is generally firm and sound. Similar void present in S wall opposite, indicative of removal of former cancel screen. Voids at W end of primary fabric represent scar of former W gable (Plate 9).

Wall-fabric (secondary work): short stub of upstanding masonry, the rest surviving only as a low turf-covered stony bank. Large stones to W of masonry scar probably represent reused quoin stones from interior NW corner of building. Mortar and pinnings generally firm and sound to E; loose masonry and wall-core to W, adjacent to reduced turf-covered bank.

Plaster / harling: little plaster survives on wall-face; confined to window reveals, area below window and NE corner of building where it is preserved behind pile of stone tumble. Head of round entrance arch also plastered. Original external harling of former W gable also visible in present interior fabric.

Vegetation: wall-head turf-covered; occasional grass and dandelion growth on wall-face and in areas of exposed wall-core in scar at W and void between entrance and window. Invasive grass and weeds in plastered sill of window.

Entrance: round arched doorway of two orders, rebated 0.3 m on either side, with later triangular-headed arch inserted (Figure 7b). Entrance 0.87 m high, from impost to present ground level; jambs are inclined, 0.60 m wide at base, 0.47 m wide at impost. Stone missing on W side of jamb below impost but sides otherwise intact. Round arch of rubble voussoirs intact, set back at the impost to accommodate temporary wooden centering. Underside of round arch plastered; smooth plaster survives *in situ* behind later rubble infill. Triangular-arch head intact, springing from impost; small rubble and green slate pinnings fill space between triangular arch-head and round arch above, sealing plastered underside of the latter. Void on E side of rubble infill (Plate 10).

Window: sides intact but E lintel has slipped; overlying masonry loose. Firm and sound shelly plaster survives on E and W reveals. Sill also partially plastered but destabilised by incursion of vegetation (Plate 11).

Quoins (primary E): lower profile intact; upper profile missing. Masonry destabilised by absence of upper exterior quoins and loose masonry in exposed wall-core behind.

Quoins (primary W): scar of former gable evident at W end of primary fabric, marked by series of voids up to 0.77 m wide overall and 0.15 – 0.2 m deep. Internal quoins survive to present wall-head (Plate 9).

Quoins (secondary W): condition unknown. Site of low turf-covered stony bank.

Building No.3: north wall, exterior face; condition (Figure 6b)

Wall-fabric (primary structure): mortar generally sound and pinnings firm; mortar recessed 40 – 60 mm. Occasional green-slate pinnings noted. Loose masonry at NE external angle of building; slippage to E, destabilising window below.

Wall-fabric (secondary work): short stub of upstanding masonry, the rest surviving only as a low turf-covered stony bank. Butt joint between fabrics clearly evident (Plate 12). Large stones to W of butt joint probably represent reused quoin stones from exterior NW corner of building. Loose and missing pinnings; deep voids (150 – 200 mm) where mortar is absent. Loose stones in turf-covered wall-head.

Plaster / harling: extensive patches of harling survive along lower wall-face, up to 0.9 m above present ground level, with occasional patches higher up. Head of round entrance arch also plastered. Original external harling of former W gable also visible in present exterior fabric; harling here is loose and has come away from former external W wall-face.

Vegetation: wall-head turf-covered; occasional grass and dandelion growth on wall-face, particularly along basal courses.

Entrance: round arched doorway with later triangular-headed opening inserted (Figure 7a). Entrance 1.10 m high, from impost to present ground level. Sides and round arch of rubble voussoirs intact, set back at the impost to accommodate temporary wooden centering. As noted on interior wall-face, underside of round arch is plastered; smooth plaster survives *in situ* behind later rubble infill (Plate 13). Triangular head intact on E but exterior face and rubble infill missing on W; slab of green slate forms W side of arch-head (behind missing facing stone).

Window: stone missing on upper E side of light; overlying masonry loose and slipped to E. Destabilised by collapse of upper quoins to E.

Quoins (primary E): lower profile intact; upper profile missing. Masonry destabilised by absence of upper exterior quoins and loose masonry in exposed wall-core behind.

Quoins (primary W): intact at base and wall-head, forming butt joint with later masonry to W. Quoining at centre of elevation removed or turned around and incorporated into coursing of secondary fabric (Plate 12).

Quoins (secondary W): condition unknown. Site of low turf-covered stony bank.

Building No.3: west wall; condition

Low, turf-covered stony bank up to 0.55 m high internally and roughly 0.9 m wide. No exterior face visible. Up to two courses of masonry visible at S end of interior face.

Building No.3: east wall; condition

Low, turf-covered stony bank up to 0.6 m high internally and 0.75 m wide. Interior face obscured by altar (Plate 14) and pile of loose stones in NE corner of building.

Exterior face (Figure 7c) generally survives up to four courses high (seven courses at NE corner). S end of wall, together with SE quoins and upper quoins at NE corner, missing. Collapsed gable evident as low stony mound to E with probable apex exposed 3.5 m from wall-face. Large-scale loss of pinnings and mortar, with voids between stones up to 150 mm deep. Occasional small patches of harling survive, particularly near NE corner of building. Extensive vegetation cover on present wall-head and in wall-face.

The South Chapel (Building No.4)

General Observations

The South Chapel measures roughly 4.25 x 2.55 m, within walls 0.5 – 0.65 m wide (Figure 4). The west gable stands up to 2.2 m high (internally), but generally only the low turf-covered stone footings of the building survive above ground. Nonetheless, it is clear that a substantial element of the building survives below ground level (Plate 15).

The building is of random rubble construction. Unlike any of the other buildings at the site, the fabric of the east and west gables has been constructed predominantly of very large slabs set on edge. Elsewhere, the masonry has been roughly coursed and levelled with pinnings. It is bonded with shell-lime mortar. Occasional traces of interior plaster and a rougher exterior harling survive. Two put-log holes are evident in the external elevation of the west gable.

A single window survives at the east end of the north wall; what may be the eastern reveal of a second window can be identified in the south wall opposite. A third window formerly existed in the east gable, prior to its collapse around the middle of the nineteenth century (Muir 1885, 53).

The west jamb of the entrance, rebated externally, can be traced at the west end of the north wall; the remains of what may be the opposing east jamb, previously unrecorded, can also be identified. Together they suggest the entrance was splayed, roughly 0.8 m wide externally and 1.0 m wide internally. A previously unrecorded aumbry or cupboard was also recorded at the east end of the south wall.

A turf-covered stony mound along the north exterior side of the building, and another against the interior of the west gable, probably represent tumble from the wall-head.

Building No.4: west wall, exterior face: condition (Figures 8a & 9b)

Wall-fabric: remains of stepped-gable survive in upper part of elevation and on N side. Lower part of gable missing on S side at interface with wall-head. Mortar generally sound but recessed 60 – 90 mm, with occasionally deeper voids. Some pinnings loose. Loose stones on N end of gable; others seemingly recently removed, leaving regular outline in mortar. Gable leans to E (Figure 9b). Two put-logs evident in exterior fabric: upper is 0.18 m high, 0.08 – 0.12 m wide and 0.19 m deep; lower 0.12 m high, 0.10 m wide and 0.23 m deep.

Plaster / harling: none evident.

Vegetation: head and exposed core of gable turf-covered; occasional growth along base of wall.

Quoins: possible single quoin evident at N side, but otherwise below existing ground level.

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Building No.4: west wall, interior face: condition (Figures 8b & 9b)

Wall-fabric: large proportion of the interior face has collapsed, leaving extensive areas of exposed wall-core and mortar. Marks of large edge-set stones up to 0.15 m thick evident in exposed mortar. Large-scale loss of mortar and pinnings; others loose; deep 'frost-crack' or similar to N. Masonry unstable, leaning to E (Figure 9b).

Plaster / harling: none evident.

Vegetation: head and exposed core of gable turf-covered; extensive growth along and over reduced base of wall.

Quoins: not visible.

Building No.4: north wall, exterior face: condition (Figure 8c)

Wall-fabric: small fragments of exterior wall-face, up to 0.5 m high, survive at E and W ends of building. Mortar and pinnings generally sound but becoming loose at surviving wall-head; mortar recessed 20 – 40 mm. Window-head loose.

Plaster / harling: small, discrete areas of harling survive at either end of wall-face.

Vegetation: wall-head turf-covered; occasional growth between stones around window.

Entrance: W jamb of externally-rebated entrance survives at W end of wall; possible E jamb only evident on plan.

Window: visible sides of external light intact; round-headed lintel carved from single stone and externally rebated. Stone is loose, having recently been replaced roughly in position (Andrew Kerr, pers comm.).

Quoins: Upper profile of E quoins absent, collapse of E gable having removed easternmost end of N wall. Single quoin exposed at W end of N wall.

Building No.4: north wall, interior face: condition (Figure 8d)

Wall-fabric: vestigial fragments of interior wall-face survive at E and W ends of building. Mortar loose and friable; occasional loose pinnings; loose stones on wall-head. Window-head loose.

Plaster / harling: none evident.

Vegetation: extensive vegetation cover throughout masonry fragment.

Entrance: see description of exterior fabric; no further information.

Window: sill of green slate visible below loose stones; W reveal essentially intact, although basal stone cracked; most of E reveal missing, former edge-set stone evident only as impress mark in surviving mortar surface.

Quoins: not visible.

Building No.4: south wall (Figure 8e)

Low, turf-covered stony bank, 0.55 m wide and up to 0.4 m high internally. No exterior face present; quoins, similarly, not evident. Mortar generally sound and surviving pinnings firm; mortar recessed 20 – 30 mm. Extensive vegetation cover on present wall-head and throughout wall-face. Plaster not evident.

E reveal of possible window traced near W end of visible wall-line; rectangular void, 0.19 m wide, 0.28 m deep and at least 0.11 m high, possibly an aumbry, recorded at E end of wall.

Building No.4: east wall (Figure 8f)

Low, turf-covered stony bank, 0.65 m wide; less than 0.2 m high internally but up to 0.6 m externally. Quoins not evident. Exterior face (Figure 8f) formed of large edge-set stones and crude horizontal coursing. Large-scale loss of pinnings and mortar, with voids between stones up to 200 mm deep. Occasional small patches of harling survive. Extensive vegetation cover on present wall-head and throughout wall-face.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Buildings Nos. 3 & 4 are in a poor condition. Although much of Building No.4 clearly survives below ground level, its W gable is in a perilous state and its surviving wall-fragments are equally vulnerable. The present condition of Building No.3 is variable; the external south wall-face has suffered a massive loss of pinnings and mortar and the west end of the wall leans markedly to north; the exposed NE and SE corners of the building are equally vulnerable to slippage. The east lintel of the window in the north wall, in particular, is in danger of complete collapse. The cracked head of the west window in the exterior fabric of the south wall is similarly unstable.

The masonry voids towards the east end of the interior, interpreted here as possibly the site of the chancel screen, should be conserved and retained; they are potentially an important feature of the building. Similarly, the scar at the west end of the primary building should remain visible after consolidation. The site of the former SW internal corner of the building, represented by loose masonry and tumble, should similarly be identifiable after consolidation.

In addition to the scheme of works recommended by Historic Scotland (Pendery 2001) and a study of the church-group within its broader setting, the following specific actions are also recommended:

AREA	RECOMMENDATION	COMMENTS
BUILDING No.3		
Altar	treat as per wall-head turf	
Interior ground level	reduce by 200 mm; lay suitable aggregate over 'Terram'-type membrane	
Wall-head	removal of wall-head turf as per Pendery 2001, 1.3, 1.4	
General	excavate collapsed masonry along N & S exterior wall-faces and in NE corner of building	to retain stones for repair / consolidation of masonry
BUILDING No.4		
Interior ground level	reduce by 200 mm; lay suitable aggregate over 'Terram'-type membrane	
Wall-head	removal of wall-head turf as per Pendery 2001, 1.3, 1.4	
General	excavate collapsed masonry along N exterior and W interior wall-faces	to retain stones for repair / consolidation of masonry
OTHER		
New cemetery extension	Geophysical survey and archaeological evaluation of possible site of enclosure ditch	to determine position of enclosure ditch & if possible clarify its chronology
Building No.1 (site of)	monitor grave-digging on site of Building No.1	to clarify position of building and its condition
Cross-marked stones	cross-marked stones B & C are loose; consideration should be given to securing them safely in situ	to prevent loss or inadvertent damage to stones

TEXT: 31 MAY 2002

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The survey was undertaken by Magnar Dalland and the author; the drawings were prepared by Mike Middleton. Thanks are due to the librarians and staff of the various libraries and archives visited during the course of the desk-based assessment and a particular thanks are due to Andrew Kerr for bringing the Adolphus Edge drawing to my attention.

APPENDIX 1: SOURCES CONSULTED

NMRS Archaeological sites

NF70NW 3 Kilbarr church, chapels and burial ground

Manuscripts (NMRS)

1876 *Ordnance Survey Object Name Book* (RH4/23/106)

1915 *RCAHMS Notebook; Barra* (MS/36/66)

1924 *RCAHMS Notebook; Barra* (MS/36/70)

Drawings (NMRS)

1863 Edge, Adolphous 'Views of Barra' [untitled] (E04501 – E04534). The original is held by the National Trust for Scotland.

Aerial photographs (Air Photo Unit, RCAHMS)

CPE/SCOT/UK 372, 4458-4459 (30.04.1948)

OS/65/89, 180-181 (13.05.1965)

Jasair 60487, 097-098 (22.05.1987)

Photographic Collection (NMRS)

[see Appendix 2]

Maps (National Library of Scotland, Map Library)

In chronological order

1654 Blaeu, W *Uistus Insula*

1703 Martin, M *A new map of the Western Isles of Scotland.*

1794 Huddart, J *A new chart of the west coast of Scotland.*

1804 Heather, W *A new and improved chart of the Hebrides.*

1881 Ordnance Survey 1st edition 1:10,560. *Inverness-shire [Hebrides, Barra etc]*, Sheet LXIII (surveyed 1876).

1904 Ordnance Survey 2nd edition 1:10,560. *Inverness-shire [Hebrides, Barra etc]*, Sheet LXIII (revised 1901).

1971 Ordnance Survey National Grid edition 1:10,000. NF70NW (surveyed 1967).

Published accounts

Fisher, I 2001 *Early Medieval sculpture in the West Highlands and Islands*, RCAHMS/SocAntScot Monograph series 1, Edinburgh.

Gordon, S 2001 *Cille-Bharra Church and Associated Monuments, Barra: Stone Conservation report*. Historic Scotland report, June 2001.

- Macculloch, J 1824 *The Highlands and Western Isles of Scotland*, 4v, London.
- Mackenzie, C 1936 *The Book of Barra*
- Macleod, D J (ed) 1994 *A Description of the Western Isles of Scotland circa 1695 by Martin Martin*.
- MacNeill, C 1977 *Cille Bharra: the story of St Barr's in the Island of Barra*.
(Typescript manuscript, Society of Antiquaries Library)
- Macquarrie, A 1984 *Cille Bharra: The Church of St Finnbarr, Barra: a short history*,
Worcestershire.
- Muir, T S 1861 *Characteristics of Old Church Architecture in the Mainland and
Western Islands of Scotland*. Edinburgh.
- Muir, T S 1885 *Ecclesiological notes on some of the islands of Scotland*, Edinburgh.
- NSA, *New Statistical Account* 1845, 'Parish of Barra', XIV, 198-217.
- OSA, *[Old] Statistical Account* 1794, 'Parish of Barra', XIII, 326-342.
- Pendery, M J 2001 *Cille-Bharra Church and Associated Monuments, Barra:
Architects report*. Historic Scotland report, April 2001.
- RCAHMS 1928 *The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments
and Constructions of Scotland. Ninth report with inventory of monuments and
constructions in the Outer Hebrides, Skye and the Small Isles*, Edinburgh.
- Stephens, G 1881 'Notice of a sculptured stone, bearing on one side an inscription in
runes, from Kilbar, Island of Barra', *Proc Soc Antiq Scot*, 15, 1880-1, 33-36.

APPENDIX 2: Photographic Collection (NMRS)

ref	Date	Subject	Detail	Reference	Comments
1	1924	church	detail, interior view of entrance in N wall, facing N; partial stone blocking evident.	IN/218	RCAHMS; Inventory fig.178
2	nd	church	detail, interior view of entrance in N wall, facing NW	IN/216	possibly 1924; cf IN/218 but partial blocking of doorway removed
3	1953	church	detail, interior view of west end of N wall, with entrance, facing NW	IN/2580A	Miss Richmond
4	1953	church	detail, interior view of entrance in N wall, facing N	IN/2580B	Miss Richmond
5	1967	church	detail, interior view of entrance in N wall, facing NE	IN/965	
6	1967	church	detail, exterior view of entrance in N wall, facing SW	IN/966	
7	1976	church	detail, interior view of entrance in N wall, facing N.	IN/2959	Mary Harman
8	1976	church	detail, interior view of entrance in N wall, facing N.	IN/2960	Mary Harman
9	1967	church	detail, interior view of easternmost window in S wall, facing S	IN/963	
10	1967	church	detail of stone basin	IN/964	
11	1976	church	detail, interior view of easternmost window in S wall, facing SE	IN/2967	Mary Harman
12	1924	church	detail, interior view of window in N wall, facing N	IN/217	RCAHMS; Inventory fig.179
13	1976	church	detail, interior view of N wall, with window, facing N	IN/2962	Mary Harman
14	1935	church	S wall, facing N	IN/2105	O G S Crawford
15	1976	church	general view, facing NW	IN/2957	Mary Harman
16	1976	church	general view, facing N	IN/2966	Mary Harman
17	1967	church	general view, facing SW	IN/961	
18	1976	church	general view, facing S	IN/2965	Mary Harman
19	1967	church	interior facing SE	IN/962	
20	1976	church	interior, facing E	IN/2958	Mary Harman
21	1976	church	general view, facing NW	IN/2964	Mary Harman
22	1976	church	interior, facing W	IN/2970	Mary Harman
23	1976	church	detail, interior view of westernmost window in S wall, facing SW	IN/2968	Mary Harman
24	1967	north chapel	general view, facing NE	IN/958	
25	1967	north chapel	general view, facing NE	IN/959	
26	1967	north chapel	detail, exterior view of easternmost window in S wall, facing N	IN/960	
27	1976	north chapel	exterior, facing N	IN/2946	Mary Harman
28	1976	north chapel	exterior, facing SE	IN/2952	Mary Harman
29	1976	north chapel	exterior, facing SSE	IN/2953	Mary Harman
30	1976	north chapel	exterior, during restoration, facing SW	IN/2954	Mary Harman

31	1976	north chapel	exterior, during restoration, facing NW	IN/2945	Mary Harman
32	1976	north chapel	interior, facing W	IN/2948	Mary Harman
33	1976	north chapel	interior, facing E	IN/2947	Mary Harman
34	1967	south chapel	general view, facing NE	IN/956	
35	1967	south chapel	detail, exterior view of window in N wall, facing S	IN/957	
36	1976	south chapel	general view of chapel, facing N, with North Chapel beyond	IN/2975	Mary Harman
37	1976	south chapel	general view of chapel, facing N, with North Chapel beyond	IN/2956	Mary Harman
38	1976	south chapel	general view, facing S	IN/2972	Mary Harman
39	1976	south chapel	general view, facing E	IN/2971	Mary Harman
40	1976	south chapel	detail, interior view of window in N wall, facing N	IN/2976	Mary Harman
41	1976	south chapel	detail, exterior view of window in N wall, facing S	IN/2977	Mary Harman
42	1976	south chapel	detail, exterior view of west gable, facing E	IN/2973	Mary Harman
43	1976	south chapel	general view, facing W	IN/2969	Mary Harman
44	1967		general view of church group, facing N	IN/954	
45	1967		general view of church group, facing NE	IN/955	
46	1976		general view of church group, facing N	IN/2955	Mary Harman

APPENDIX 3: THE CILLE-BHARRA CHURCH-GROUP.

TABLE OF EVENTS & INTERVENTIONS

1625: St Barr's church described as roofless (Macquarrie 1984, 25).

c1695: St Barr's Church and a little burial chapel (ie the North Chapel) nearby, associated with the Macneils. Wooden image of St Barr on altar of church (Macleod 1994, 158).

c1695: altar in the island dedicated to St Christopher; 'a stone ... about seven feet high and when the inhabitants come near it they take a religious turn round it.' (Macleod 1994, 162).

c1695: Anniversary of St Barr (27th September) marked by three turns around St Barr's church (Macleod 1994, 163).

c1695: a religious circuit is also made of St Barr's church on St Michael's Day; solemnities concluded by the baking and eating of 'St Michael's cake' (Macleod 1994, 164).

1697: 'a ruined priory at Cille Bharra' (MacKenzie 1936).

1794: 'two churches, built by the monks, belonging to Icolumkill' (OSA 1794, 335).

1810s: 'four independent buildings, collected, or rather huddled together, within one enclosure bearing the traces of a ditch outside; all of which appear to have been chapels' (Maculloch 1824, iii, 4, based on visits undertaken between 1811 and 1821).

1825 x 1834: demolition of northernmost building in the church-group (Building 1).

1840: 'several ruins of religious houses in Barray ... The principal ones are at Killbar. Each of these has an altar of rough stones in one end, and the pedestal of a cross stands a short distance from the buildings. These churches were dedicated to St Barr' (NSA 1845, 206).

July 1855: Muir's first recorded visit to Kilbar; survey plan and descriptions of four chapels (Muir 1861, 228-230; 1885, 51-53, 281-283):

- (No.1) 'pulled down a few years ago', groundworks only, 36' 6" long externally;
- (No.2) = present North Chapel;
- (No.3) 'said to have been dedicated to the Blessed Virgin', = present large ruin to west;
- (No.4) = present South Chapel. East gable then standing. It contained a small flat-headed window.

1855 x 1866: collapse of east gable of South Chapel (Muir 1885, 53).

May 1863: earliest illustration of the 'Kilbar stone', *in situ*, in the burial ground of St Mary's. The stone is buried up to the level of the S-scrolls below the cross-head (Edge 1863).

May 1863: only known illustration of the cross-pedestal (Edge 1863), previously referred to in 1840. Captioned: *Ancient cross in St Mary's Churchyard, Kilbarr*. Possibly the same as the 'St Christopher's altar', referred to by Martin c1695.

July 1866: Muir's second recorded visit to Kilbar (Muir 1885, 51-53, 281-283). Only remaining detail at South Chapel is a narrow window at east end of N wall.

1876: survey date of the First Edition Ordnance Survey 1:10,560 map (Inverness-shire (Hebrides), Sheet LXIII, published 1881). It depicts a cluster of three buildings (Buildings Nos. 2, 3 & 4) towards the S end of an oval enclosure. In addition to the track-way coincident with the modern road which passes around the north and east sides of the site, there is one to the SW which passes over Ben Eoligarry, and another near the SW corner of the enclosure which leads NW towards two wells at Eoligarry.

1876 x 1901: modification of graveyard enclosure from oval to rectangular. Abandonment of former track-way between Eoligarry and the SW corner of the graveyard.

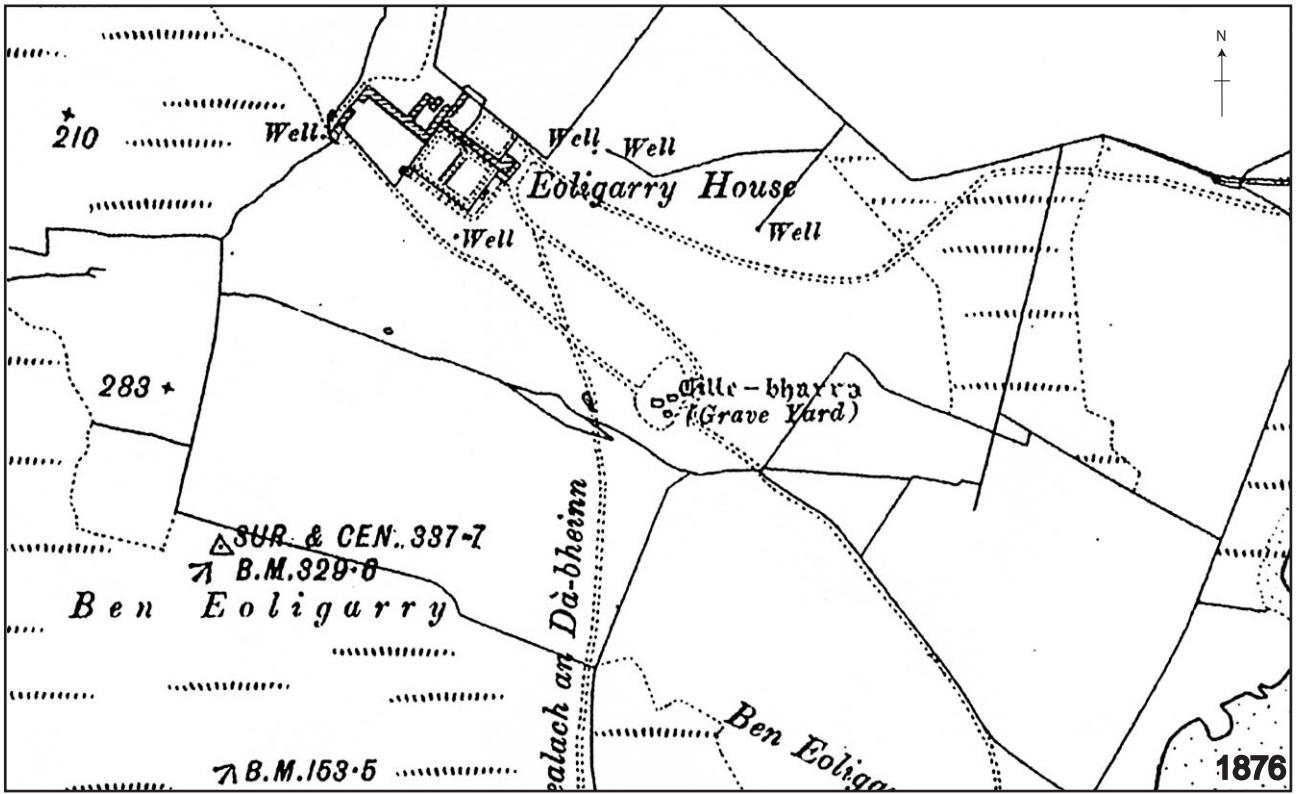
1901: revision date of the Second Edition Ordnance Survey 1:10,560 map (Inverness-shire (Hebrides), Sheet LXIII, published 1904). Buildings Nos. 2, 3 & 4 located towards the S end of a rectangular enclosure.

August 1924: survey by the RCAHMS investigators. Detailed descriptions of Buildings Nos. 2, 3 & 4; plans of Buildings Nos. 2 & 3 (RCAHMS 1928, No.436, 123-125).

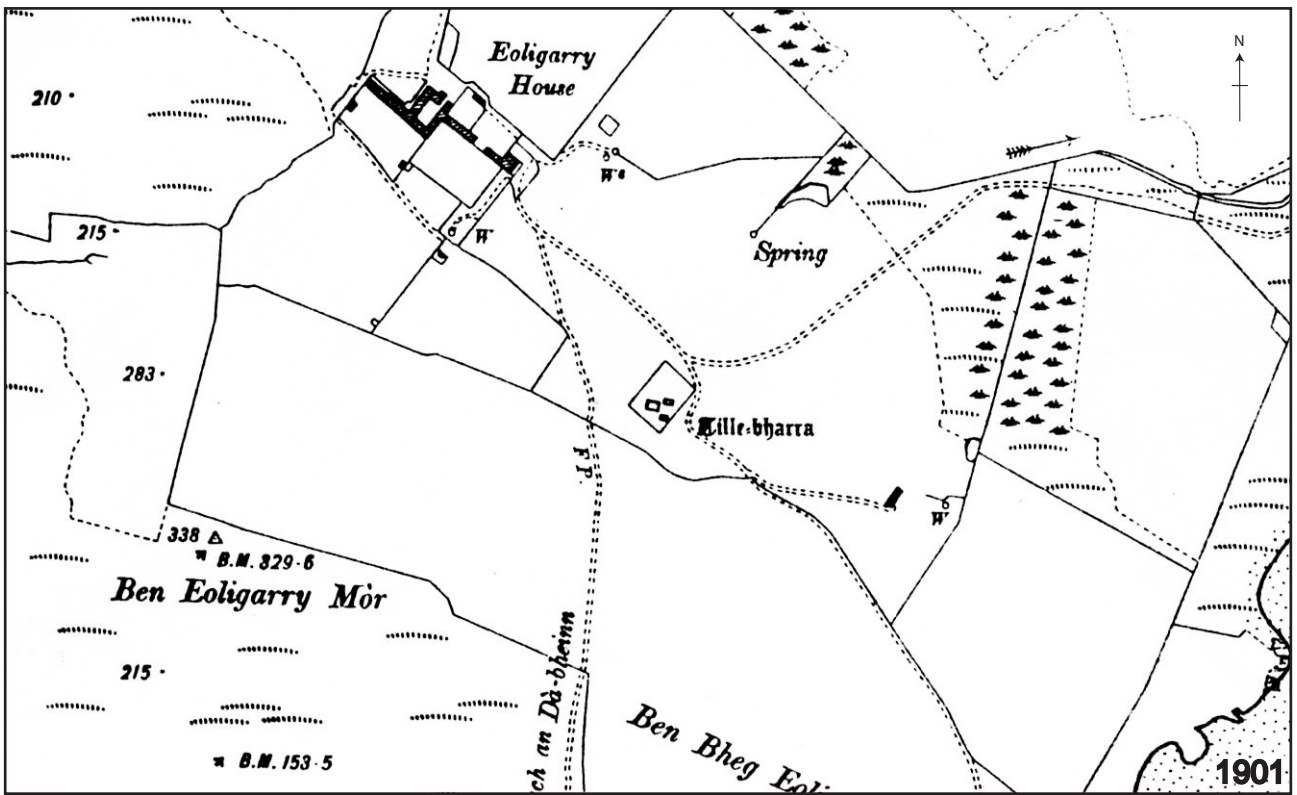
April 1948 x May 1965: extension of graveyard to SW.

1976 / 1977: refurbishment of North Chapel.

1990s: extension of graveyard to SE.

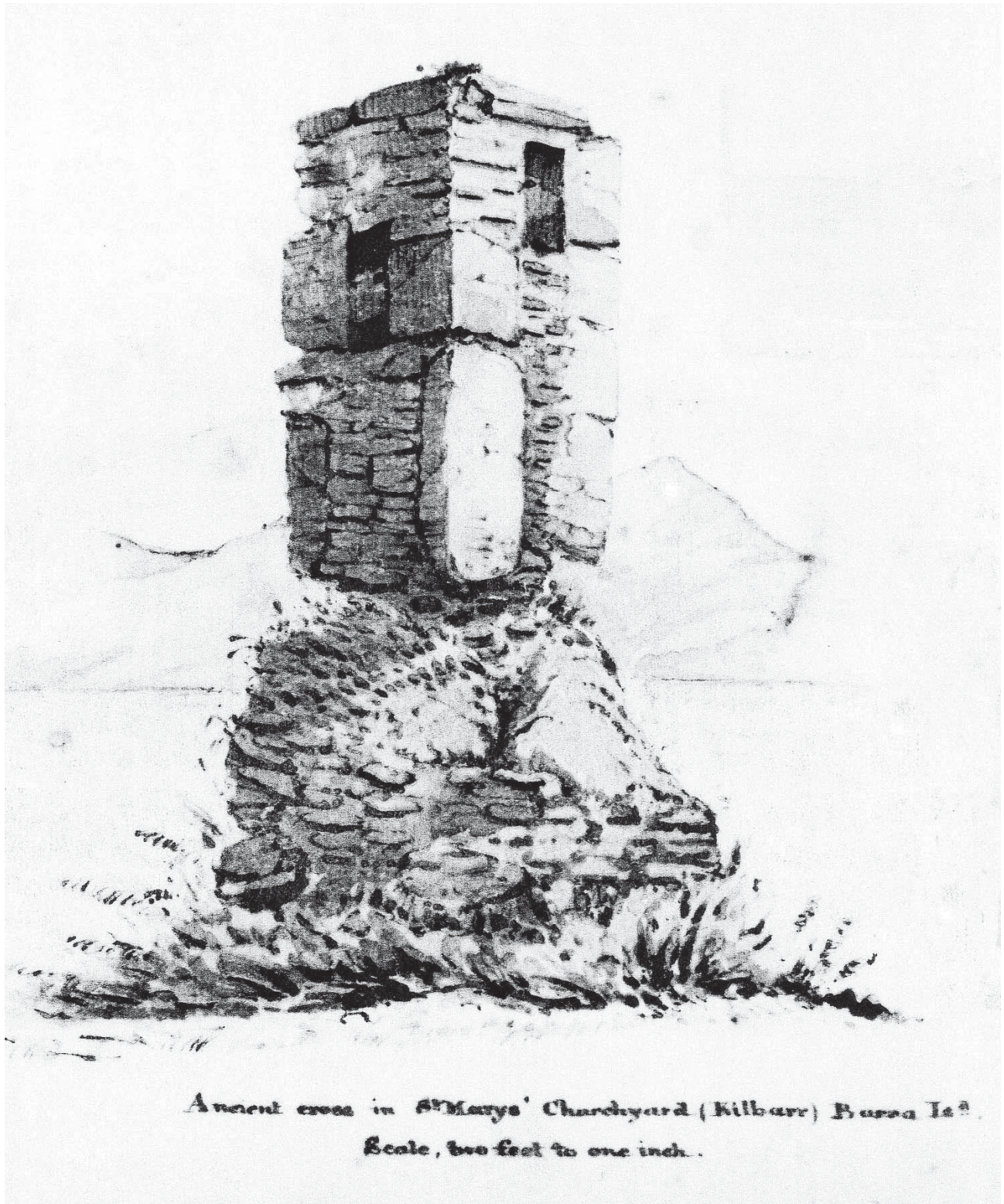


(a) Extract from Ordnance Survey 1st Edition *Inverness-shire, (Hebrides)* sheet LXIII, published 1881.



(b) Extract from Ordnance Survey Revised (1901) Edition, *Inverness-shire, (Hebrides)* sheet LXIII, published 1904.

Figure 1. Cille Bharra graveyard, 1876 - 1901.



after Edge 1863

Figure 2 - 'Ancient cross in St Mary's churchyard, Kilbarr'

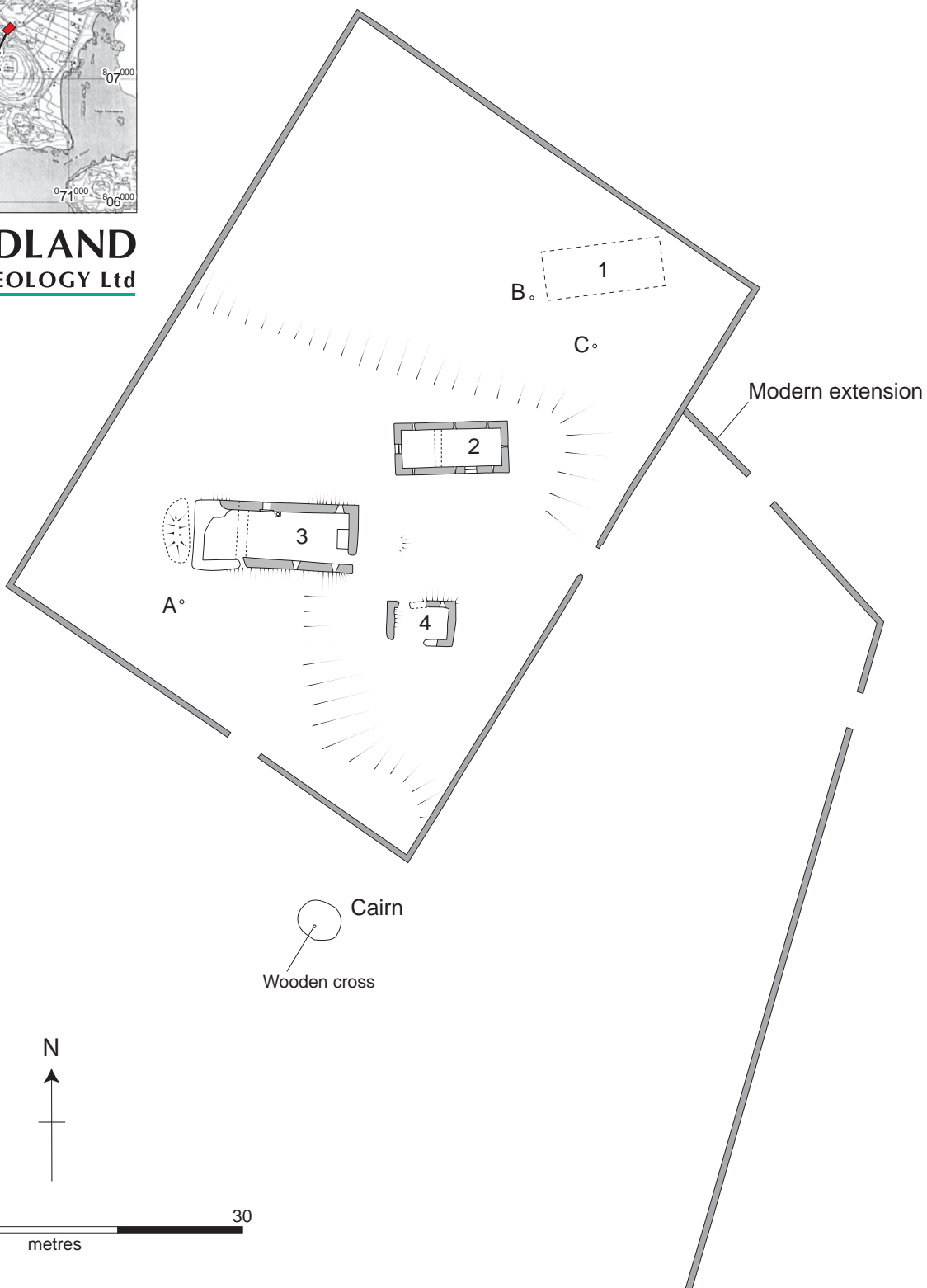


Figure 3. - Cille Bharra graveyard: Location and survey plan.
(Location of Building No 1 after Muir 1861) A - C Cross-marked stones.

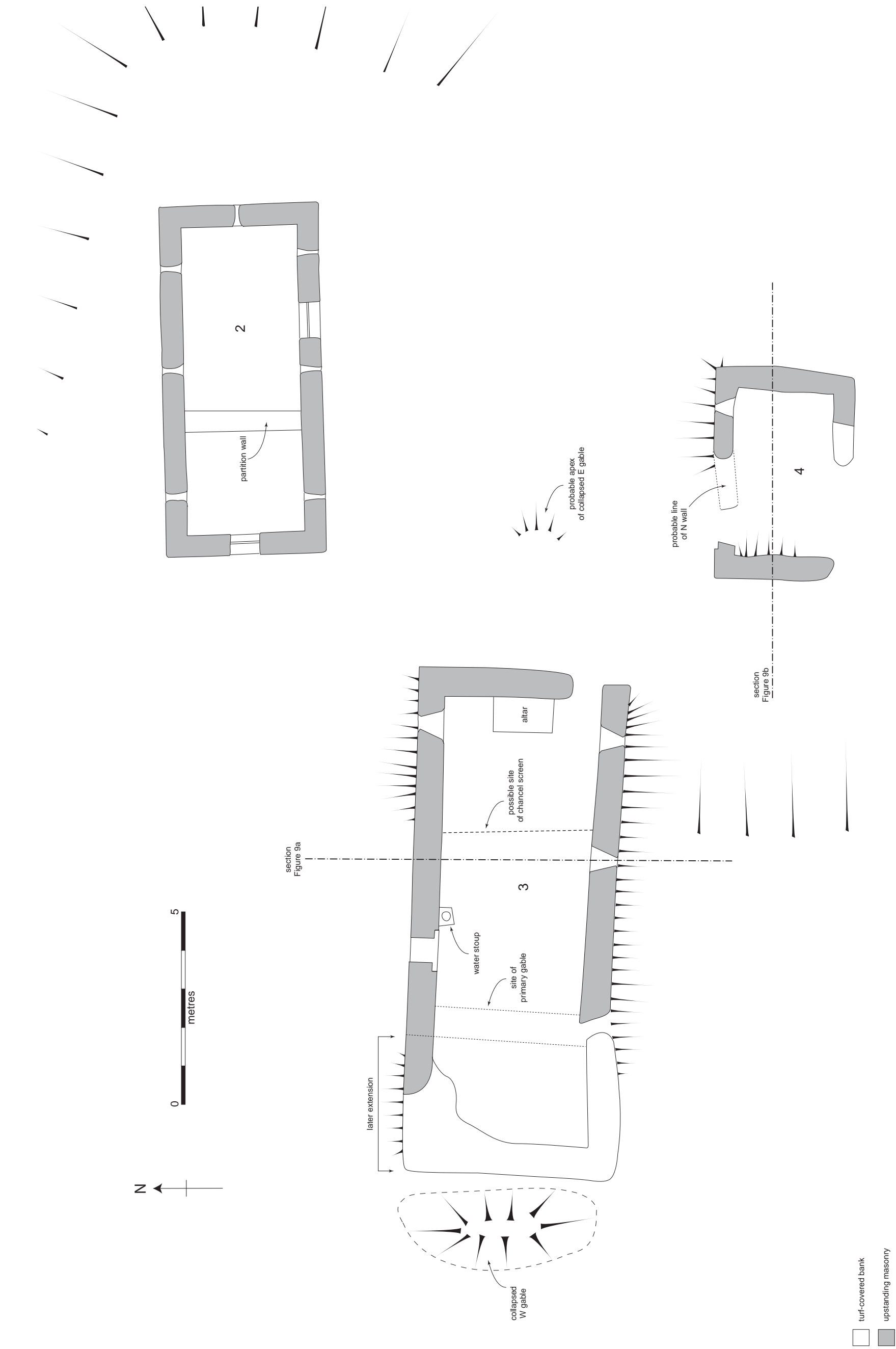
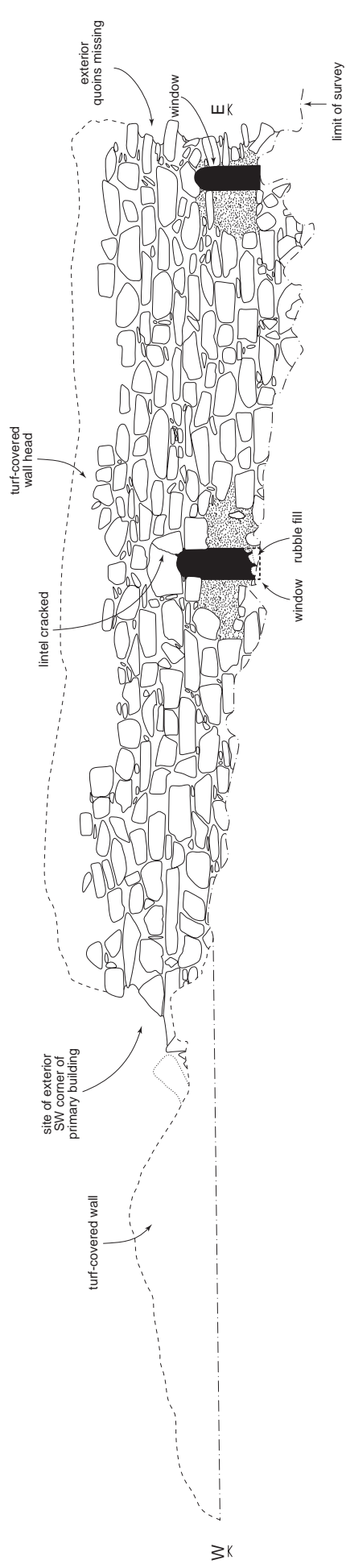
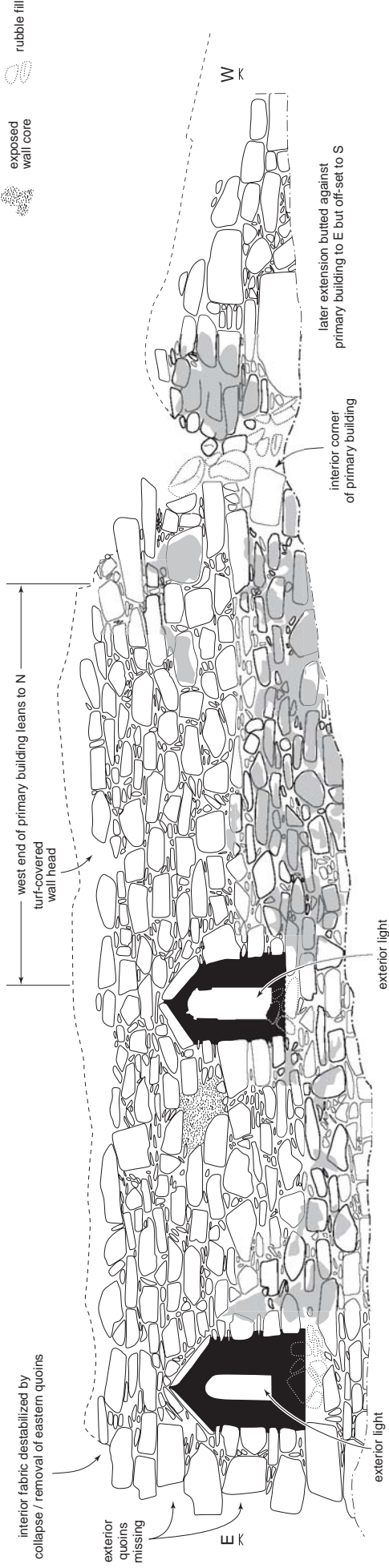


Figure 4. Cille Bharra graveyard: Detailed plan of structures.



(a) South wall: exterior.



(b) South wall: interior.



Figure 5 - Building No 3, interior & exterior elevations of south wall.

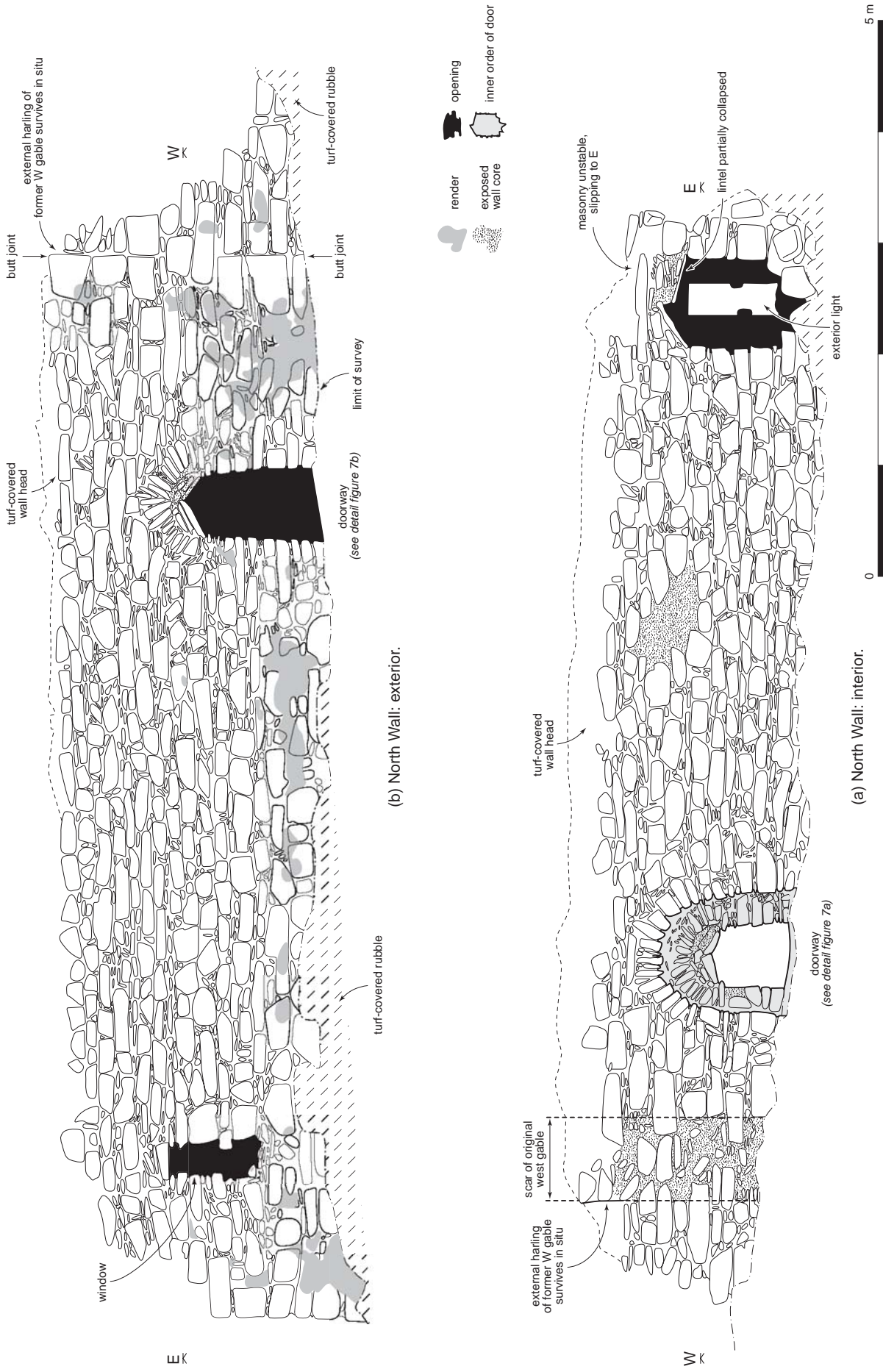


Figure 6 - Building No 3, interior & exterior elevations of North wall.

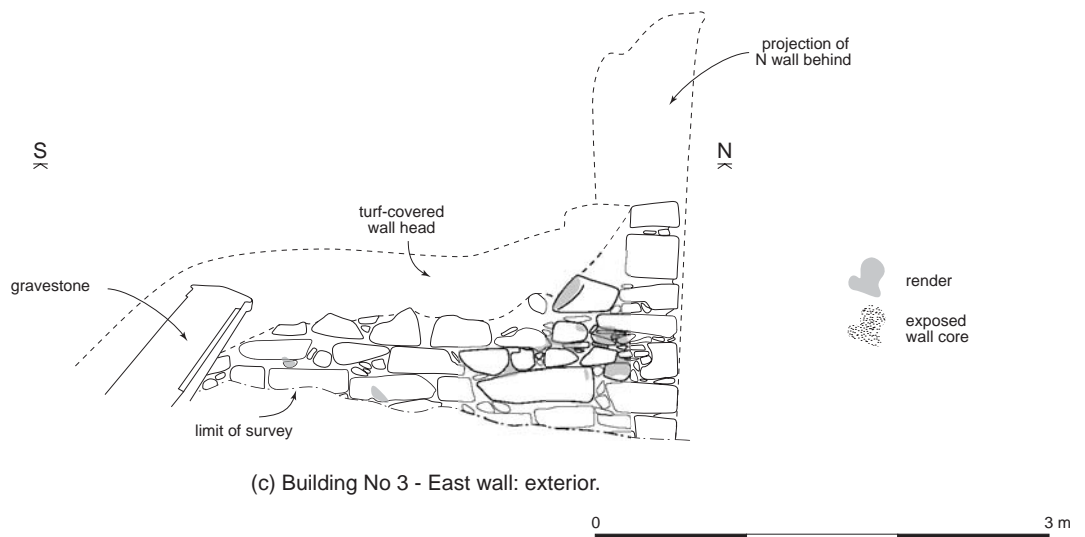
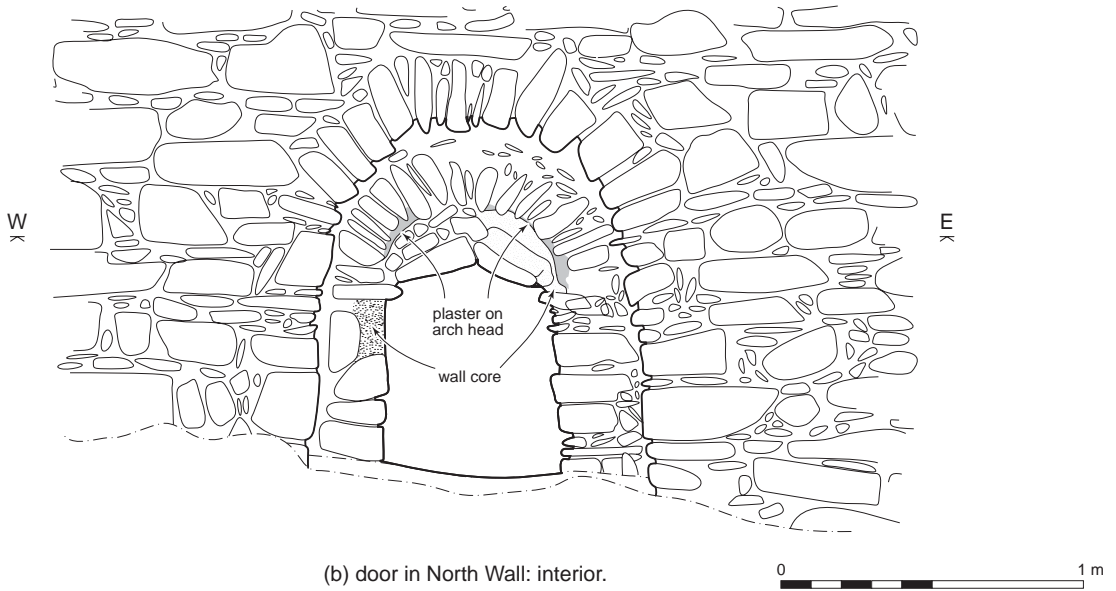
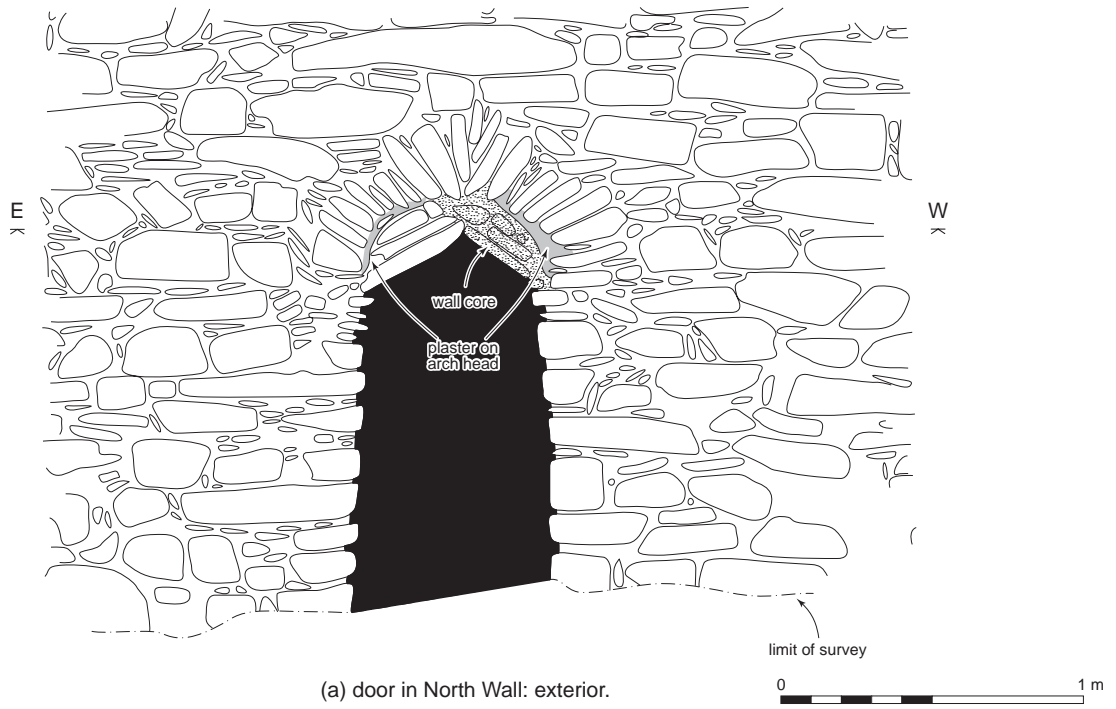
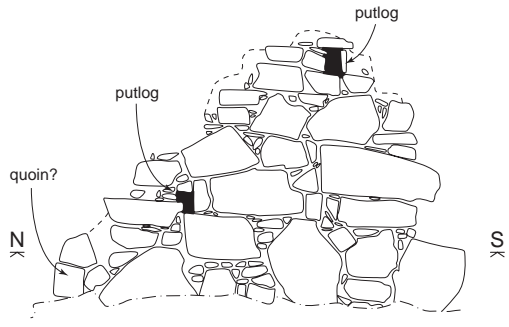
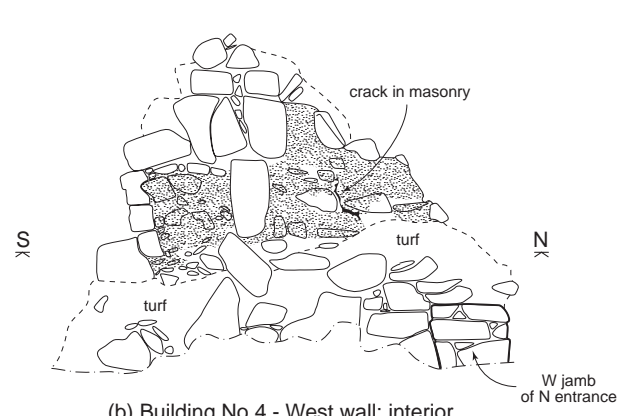


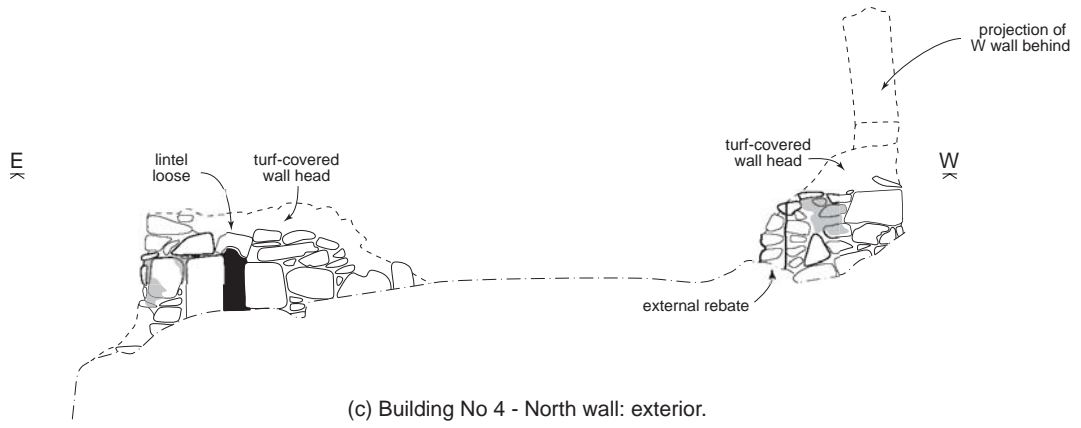
Figure 7 - Building No 3 - detail of doorway in North wall; East wall, exterior elevation.



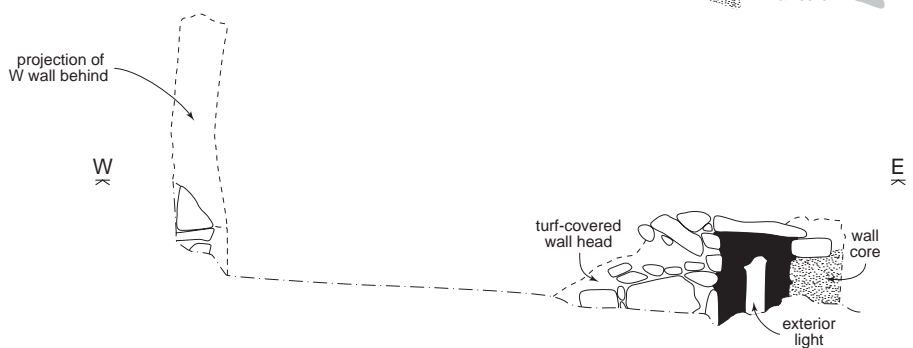
(a) Building No 4 - West wall: exterior.



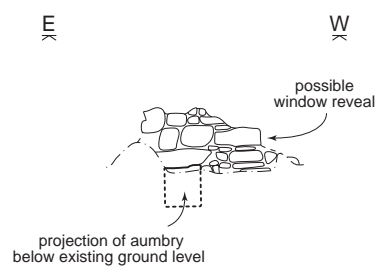
(b) Building No 4 - West wall: interior.



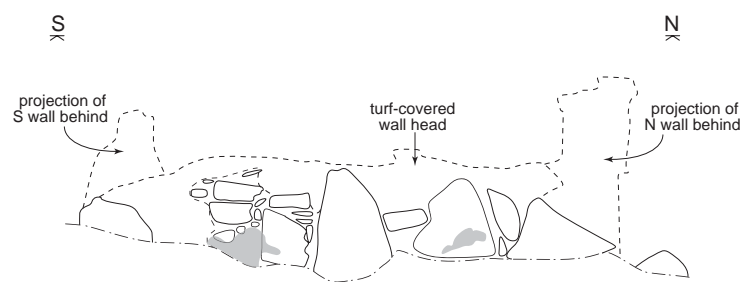
(c) Building No 4 - North wall: exterior.



(d) Building No 4 - North wall: interior.



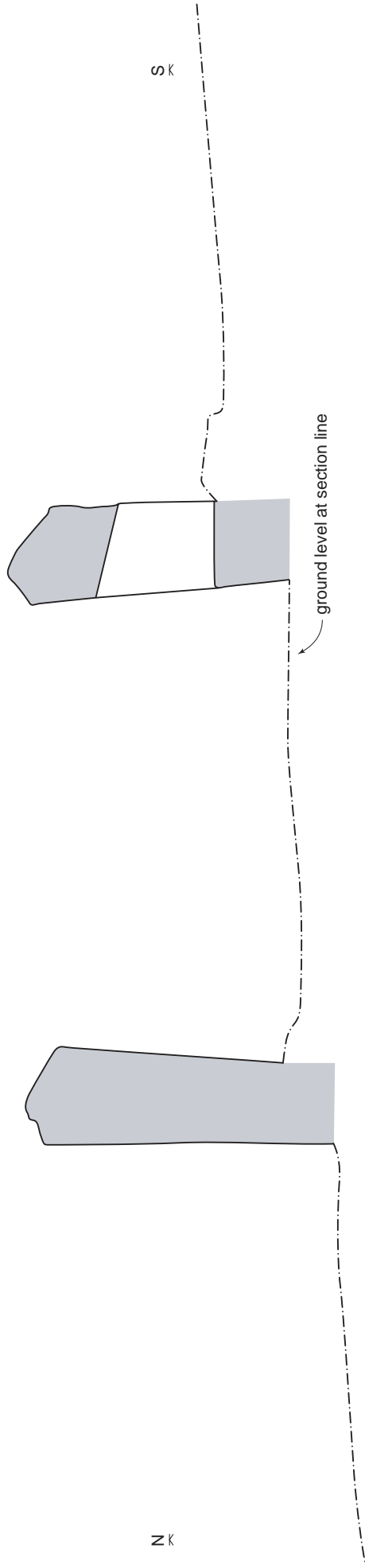
(e) Building No 4 - South wall: interior.



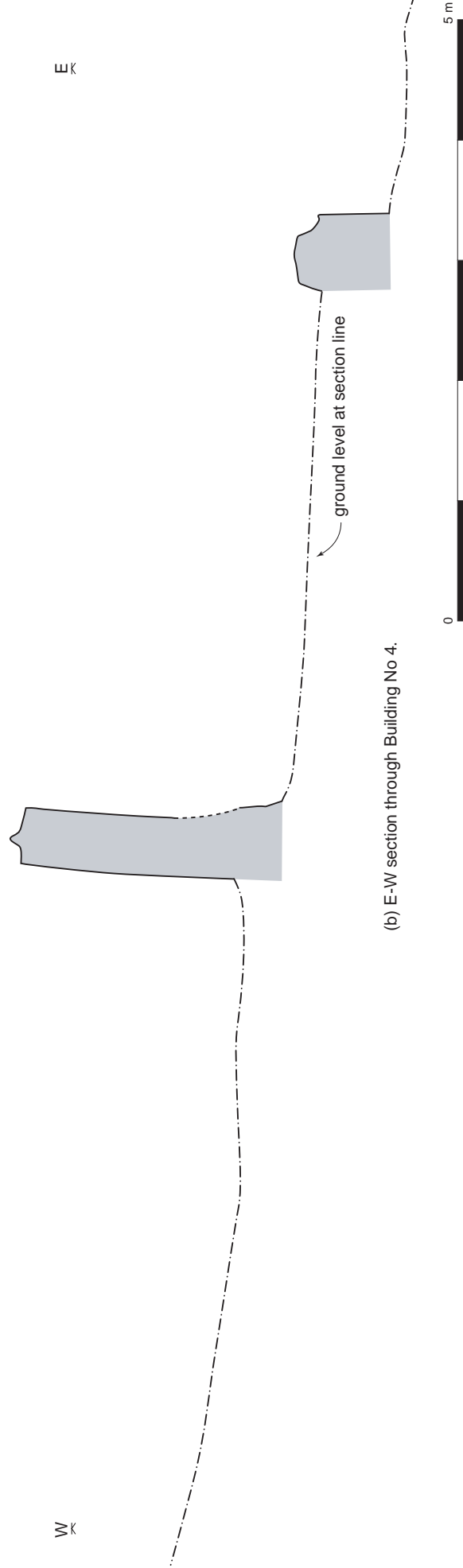
(f) Building No 4 - East wall: exterior.



Figure 8 - Building No 4 elevations.



(a) N-S section through Building No 3.



(b) E-W section through Building No 4.

Figure 9 - Cross sections of Buildings No 3 & No 4.



Plate 1: View of church group, facing N, with cairn in centre ground and possible line of enclosure ditch to E.



Plate 2: Site of Building No.1 in foreground, facing SW, with Buildings Nos. 2 & 3 in background.



Plate 3: Building No.3, South Wall exterior; detail of west window, facing N.



Plate 4: Building No.3, South Wall exterior; detail of east window, facing N.



Plate 5: Building No.3, South Wall interior;
detail of west window, facing S.



Plate 6: Building No.3, South Wall interior;
detail of east window, facing S.



Plate 7: Building No.3, South Wall interior;
collapsed masonry and internal quoins
at SW corner of primary building, facing SE.



Plate 8: Building No.3, South Wall interior;
collapsed masonry and internal quoins
at SW corner of primary building, facing NE.



Plate 9: Building No.3, North Wall interior;
site of primary W gable, facing N.



Plate 10: Building No.3, North Wall interior;
detail of entrance, facing NE.



Plate 11: Building No.3, North Wall interior;
detail of window, facing N.



Plate 12: Building No.3, North Wall exterior; detail of butt joint between primary and secondary wall fabrics, facing SE.



Plate 13: Building No.3, North Wall exterior; detail of entrance, facing SW.



Plate 14: Building No.3, interior facing E, with detail of altar.



Plate 15: Building No.4, facing SE.