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# The Archaeology of Finlaggan, Islay

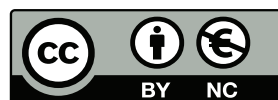
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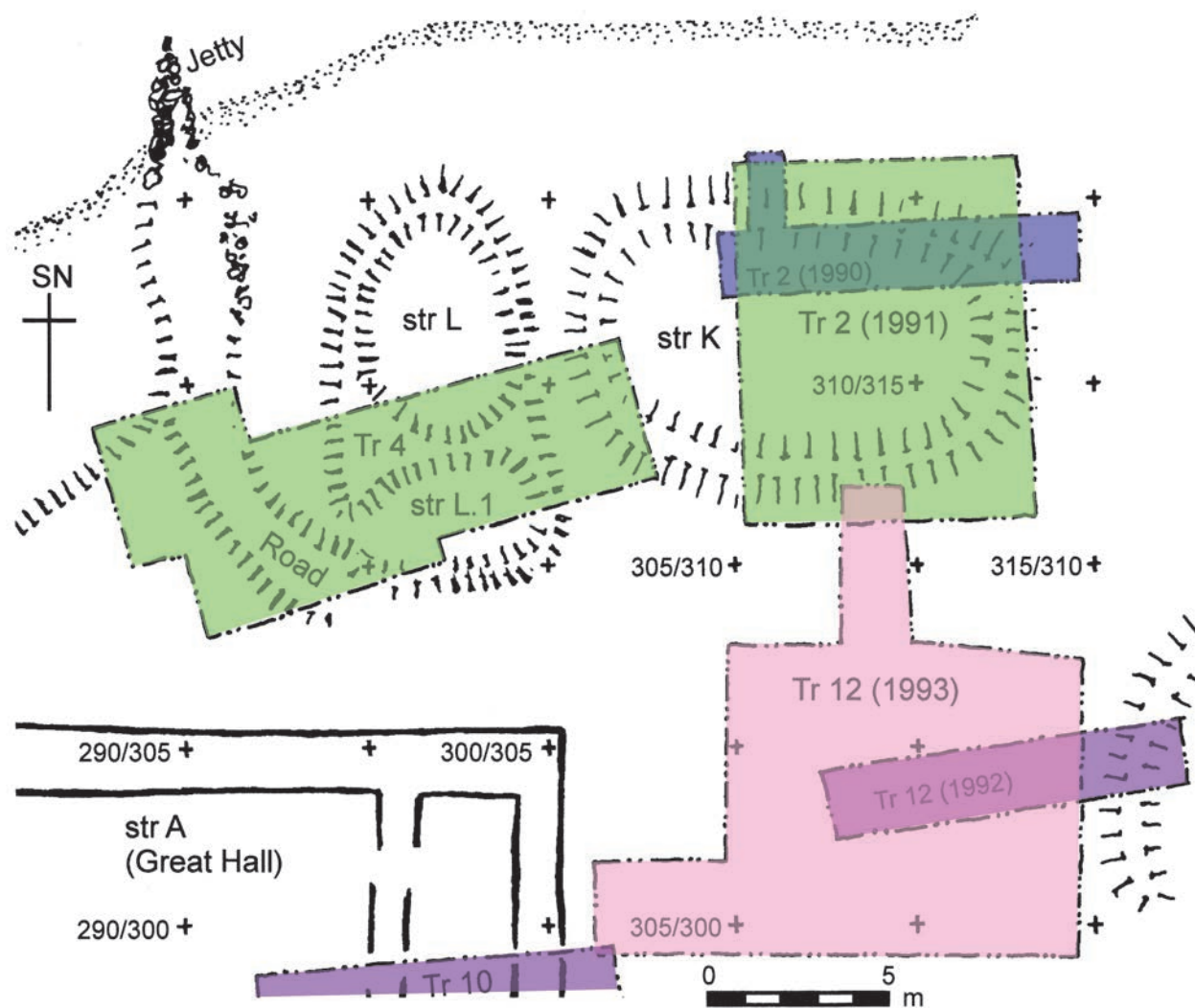


Illustration 12.1  
Location map for trenches 2, 4 and 12



Illustration 12.2  
Building K



Illustration 12.3  
The jetty

## Chapter 12

# EILEAN MÓR EXCAVATIONS OF HOUSES BY THE JETTY AND THE KITCHENS

### Trenches 2 and 4 (Illus 12.1, 12.4, Tables 12.1, 12.2)

Trenches 2 and 4 were placed to sample two houses on the north edge of Eilean Mór (Illus 6.14, 12.2). These were the ruins of drystone buildings, one at right angles to the other, building L (12 by 5m overall) apparently containing two rooms, and building K (11.9 by 7m overall). It was assumed that these formed a unit dating to the post-medieval period.

In 1990 trench 2, 10m long by 2m wide (corners A, D, E, F), was positioned to go over the end wall of structure K and just to clip one of the long walls internally (Illus 12.1). A small extension (B, C) was later dug laterally to take in an entrance through building K's north wall. It was hoped to assess the complexity of construction and also collect some dating evidence, but the results

were so promising that an enlarged version of trench 2 was excavated the following year (corners G, H, J, K). It measured 8 by 10m and took in the east end of building K. Trench 4 was laid out nearby, an irregular area 14.5m long and 4 to 6.5m wide, including the south-west corner of K, part of building L and paved roadways leading to a jetty to the west of building L (Illus 12.3, 12.4).

### Building K (Illus 12.2, 12.5–8)

Building K is of drystone rectangular construction with rounded corners. Its external walls are about 1.2 to 1.5m thick and are composed of a mixture of boulders and cut blocks of

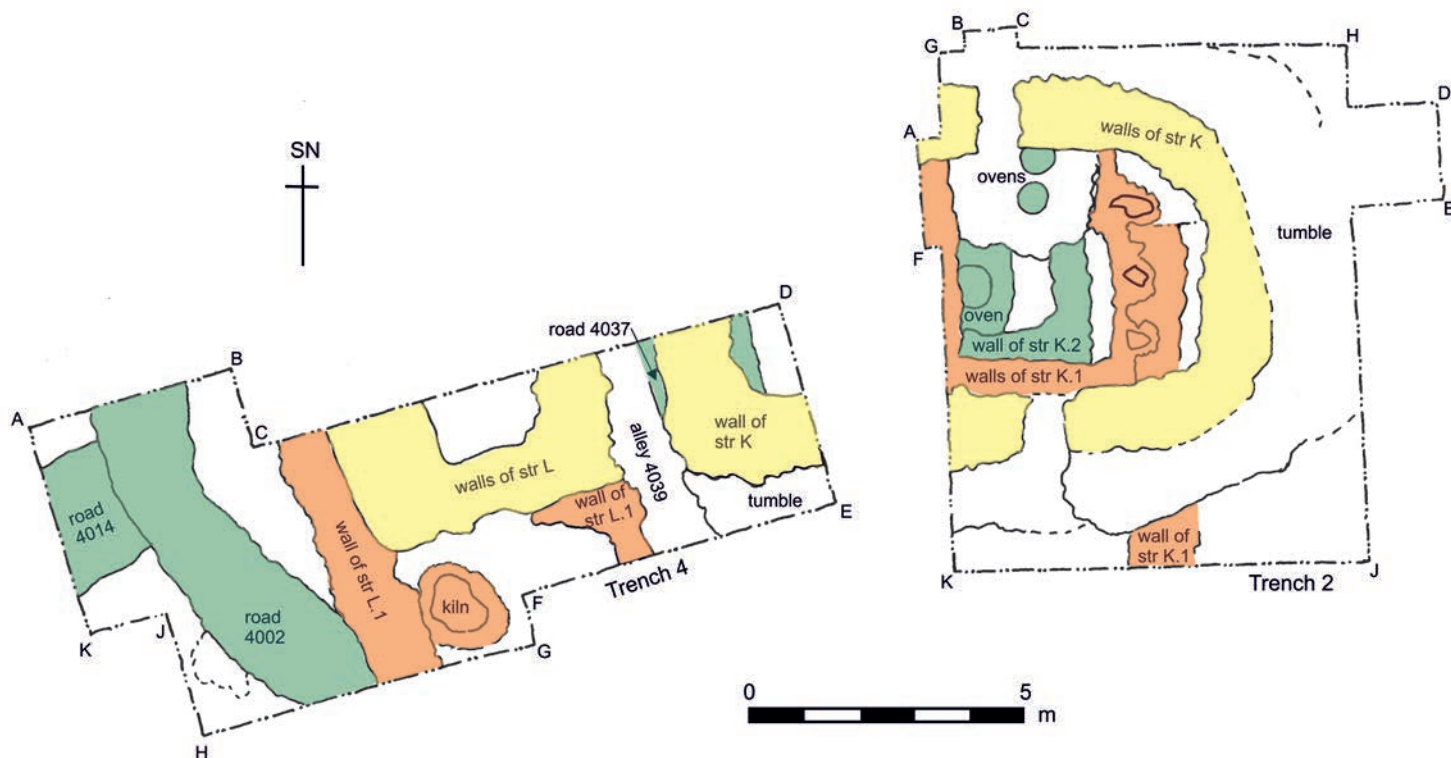


Illustration 12.4  
Interpretative plan showing the main features in trenches 2 and 4





Illustration 12.5

Trench 2 (1990), excavation of building K.1, with north wall and entrance of building K

local stone (limestone, phyllite, Port Askaig tillite, etc) laid in courses. They survive to a maximum height of three courses, about 0.5m above the internal floor surface, but in so far as the interior of the building and the immediately adjacent area are encumbered with tumbled stones [2003, 2059, 2026] must have stood rather higher when the structure was in use (Illus 12.5). Otherwise, in the excavated vicinity of building K, turf and topsoil overlie a thin layer of grey silt [2010] resting on natural sand [2011].

Two entrances were identified, one in the long north wall, 0.8m wide, and another in the south wall 1.0m wide (Illus 12.6). They are not exactly opposite each other. In the tumble [2013] filling the north entrance was found the remains of an iron barrel padlock (F124) and four nails, possibly from a door. The south entrance was not fully excavated. The floor [2005, 2033] consists of an undulating layer of brown clayey earth overlying a gravel horizon [2035] up to 5cm thick. The latter is probably the result of sorting by worms, representing the maximum depth of their activity in this area. From these layers were recovered some sherds of pottery, including handmade pieces (P81), three of reduced gritty and a base sherd of North French ware (P75). All might well be residual from earlier deposits, but P75 is probably of the 16th century, our preferred date for the construction and occupation of building K. There were also eight small pieces of iron, including two nails, and a small fragment of a pierced type A roof slate.

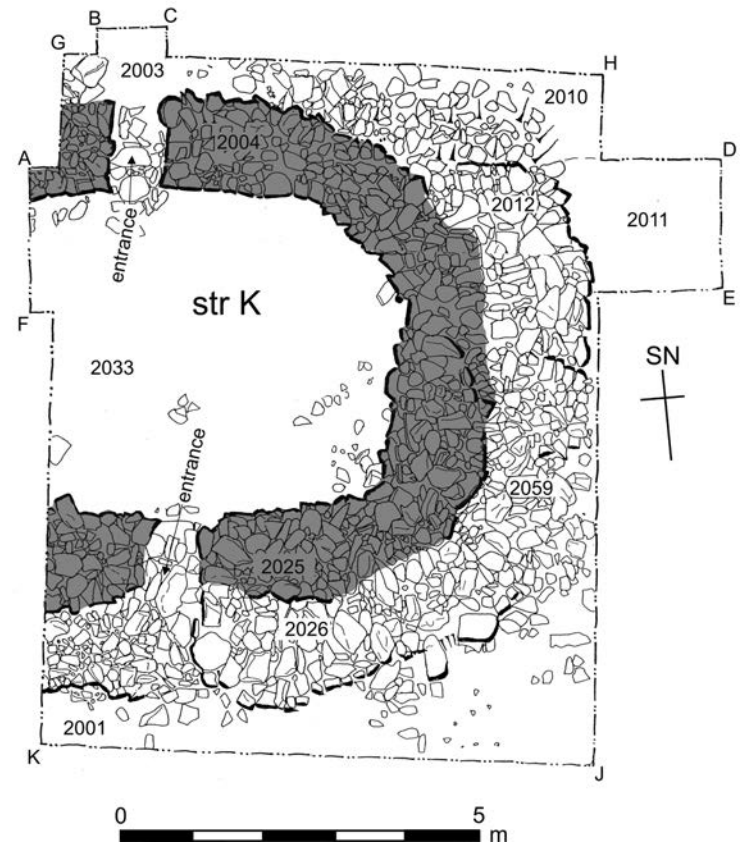


Illustration 12.6

Trench 2, plan of building K



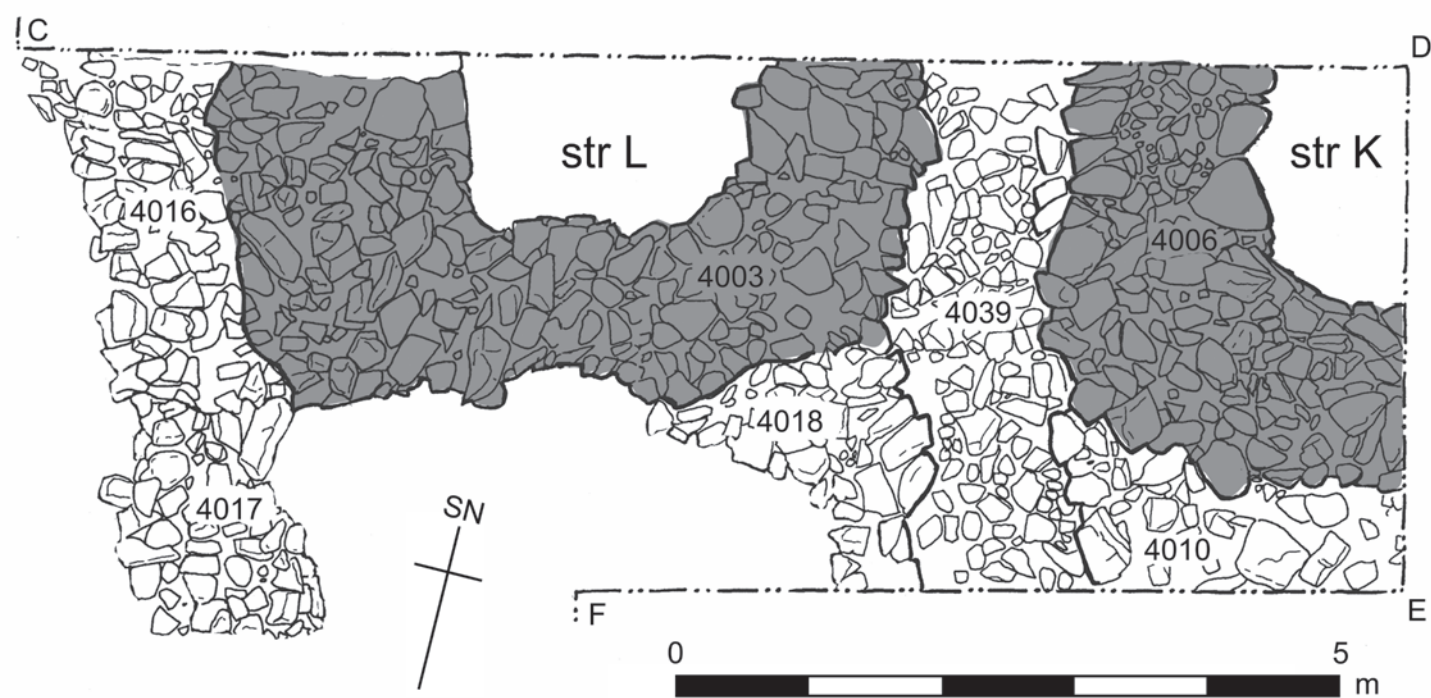


Illustration 12.7  
Trench 4, plan of excavated areas of buildings L and K



Illustration 12.8  
Trench 4, the wall of building K overlying road 4037, with the alley 4039 to the right





Illustration 12.9  
Trench 4, excavation, interior of building L in foreground

#### ***Building L (Illus 12.7–9)***

Building L is separated from building K by a narrow alley (Illus 12.8), about 1m wide, with crude cobbbling [4039]. Structure L is shaped like a reversed capital 'D' and is unicameral, about 9 by 5m overall, with walls from about 1.2 to 1.8m thick (Illus 12.9). The south room supposed by RCAHMS is the end of an earlier structure (L.1). Building L's entrance is outside the area of trench 4 but can be traced midway in the west wall.

The building is of drystone construction, with rounded boulders and rough blocks up to about half a metre across, mostly quartzite and some glacial erratics. The walls only survive to a height of about 0.5m or less, or two courses, and there was less evidence of tumble than in and around building K, perhaps indicating that stone was robbed from the site after the building had fallen out of use. Its walls are set on the reduced tumbled remains of the walls [4016, 4017, 4018] of an earlier structure (L.1).

#### ***Structure L.1 (Illus 12.10, 12.11)***

Under building L, apparently on the same alignment and extending to the south of it, is structure L.1. Its length and plan are unknown, but it is wider than building L, about 6m overall, with walls varying in thickness from about 0.6m to over 1.0m. Its west wall [4046] rides over the edge of the medieval paved road 4002. Underneath tumble [4044] and overlying the floor [4027] is a gravelly layer [4023, 4024] up to 10cm thick. On the one hand, the quantity and solidity of this indicates that it was not just the result of worm activity, but probably derived from clay or poor-quality lime mortar washed out of the building's walls. Several fragments of ironwork, including nails and rivets, were recovered from it, along with two pieces of type A roof

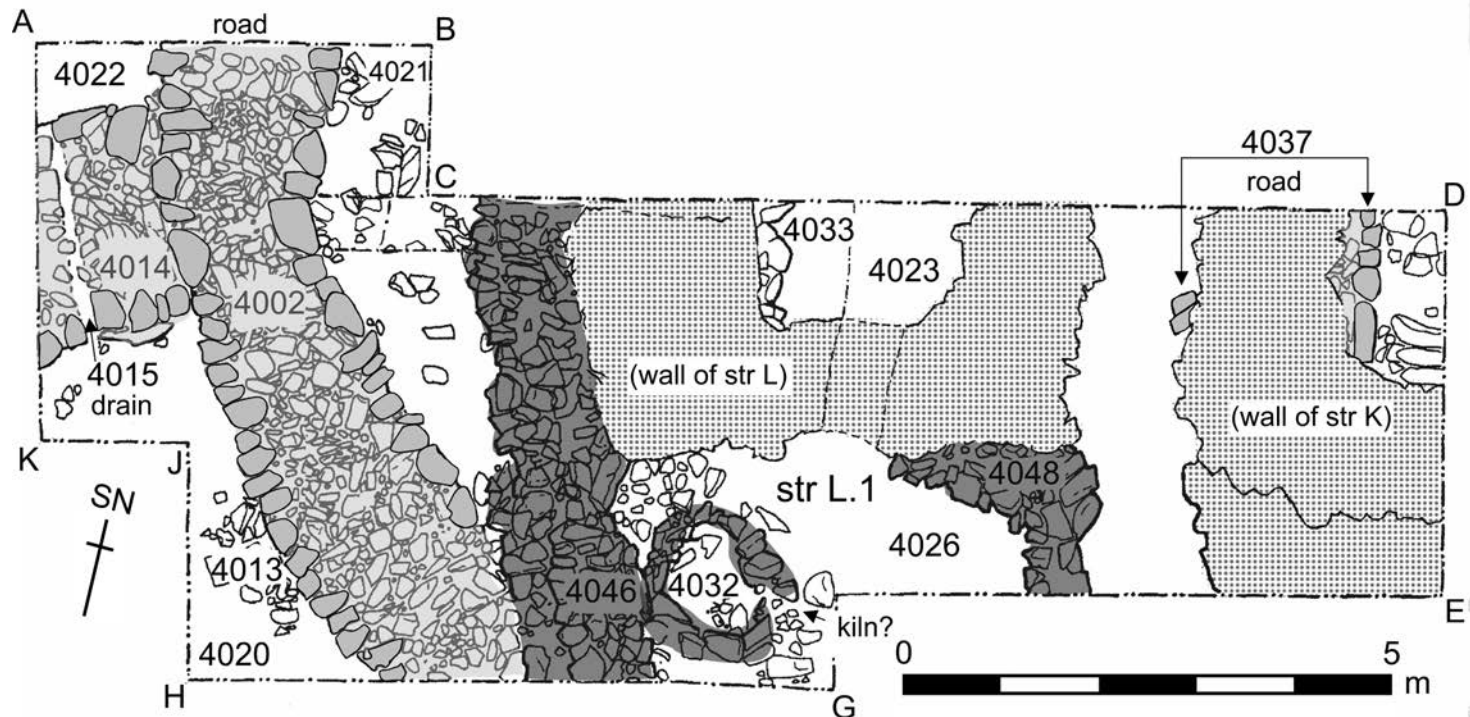


Illustration 12.10  
Trench 4, plan showing building L.1 and its kiln (?), and earlier cobbled roads 4014, 4002 and 4037





Illustration 12.11

Trench 4, the ranging rod lies in front of the kiln (?) [4032] in structure L.1

slate (SF 4040, 4055) and a sherd of North French ware (P73) datable to the 15th or 16th century. On the other hand, a fragment from a clay tobacco pipe bowl (SF 4046) was also recovered from Context 4024. It has no diagnostic features that would allow it to be closely dated. It is unlikely, on the basis of our knowledge of smoking, to be any earlier than the 17th century, but it could be as recent as the 20th century. Our preferred interpretation is not to accept it or C4024 as dating evidence for the use of building L.1.

The floor [4027], sectioned within the area of structure L, is a clay-rich soil containing ash and charcoal, on top of a layer of clay [4030]. Its walls and floor deposits were laid down on peaty soil [4031] which had developed on natural loch-side gravel [4033]. In the south-west corner of building L.1 is a circular, bowl-shaped feature lined with stone [4032], with an internal diameter of about 1.2m, not fully excavated (Illus 12.11). It is identified as a corn-drying kiln. There is an area of crude cobbling adjacent to the north of it, and a flue may have been positioned to feed hot air from the east or south-east. Small patches of burning were noted in the surface of the floor of L.1 to the east of 4032, adjacent to wall 4048.

### ***The jetty and roads (Illus 12.3, 12.10, 12.12, 12.13)***

A jetty, immediately to the north of trench 4, juts into the water at right angles to the island foreshore and is built of substantial sub-rectangular blocks of local stone, mostly Port Askaig tillite and quartzites. Extending southwards from it is a cobbled road [4002], up to 2m wide, passing just to the east of building L.1. Since the latter is partially built over it, that may be an indication that the road was not maintained when building L.1 was in use. The road then curves gently south-eastwards to avoid the east end of the great hall.

Another road [4014], 2.20m wide, branches off south-west along the edge of the island in the direction of building P and Eilean na Comhairle. Its kerb, facing the shore immediately under the vegetation, is fairly easy to trace for a distance of about 14m beyond the end of trench 4. Within the trench a drain [4015] was excavated running across it. The drain is a simple slot that has filled up with black peaty soil. A sondage excavated adjacent to the east kerb of 4002 shows that the road is only one layer of



Illustration 12.12

Trench 4, the junction between roads 4014 and 4002 in foreground



Illustration 12.13

The kerb stones of road 4014 exposed to the south-west of trench 4

stones thick, laid down on peaty soil overlying natural gravels. A patch of rubble extending from under 4002 might indicate more localised underpinning. Also in trench 4 another paved road [4037], running north-south, was partially revealed under the west wall of building K (Illus 12.8, 12.10).

### ***Structure K.1 (Illus 12.14–17)***

The gravel horizon 2035 under the floor of building K sealed a trampled surface [2042] characterised by yellowish-red and dark reddish-brown peat ash and substantial amounts of charcoal (Illus 12.14). Surface 2042 was bounded to the east, south and west by wall lines [2030, 2034, 2076] within the bounds of the later walls of K. Wall 2030, to the east, survives to a height of about 0.5m and width of about 1.5m. It has a stone face consisting of a drystone wall [2030] about 0.5m thick. It retains a wall core [2047], at least 1.5m wide. A west-looking stone face seems to be represented by some of a linear arrangement of stones [2048] located in a sondage dug into 2047 (Illus 12.16). Integral with 2030 are three stone settings for



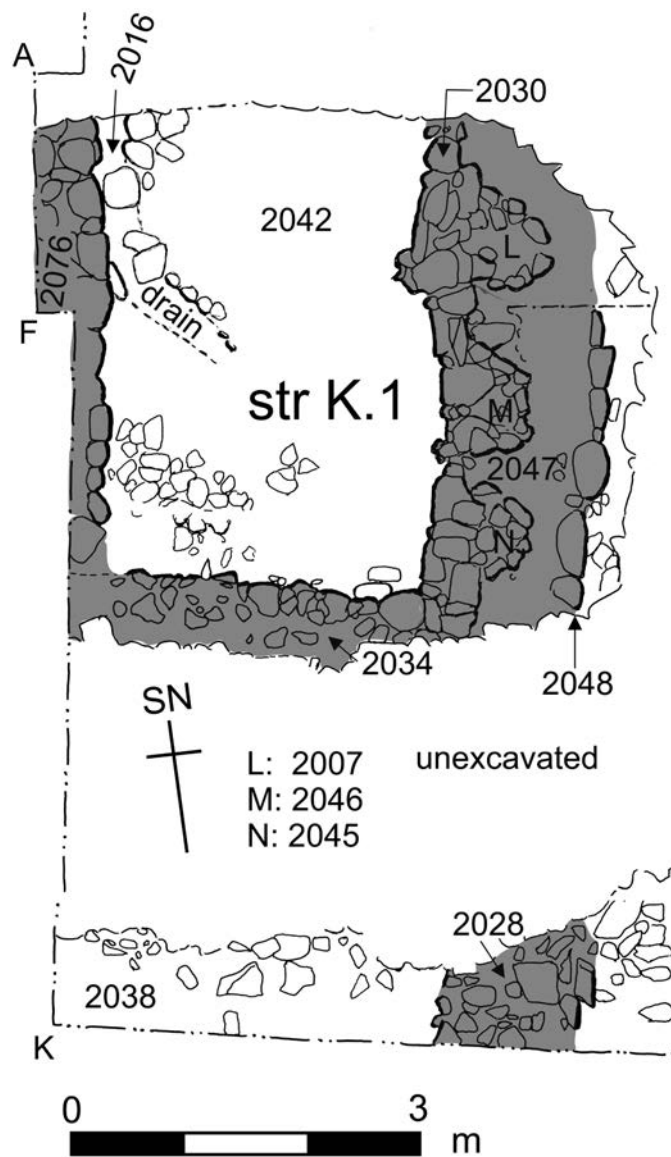


Illustration 12.14  
Trench 2, plan of structure K.1

posts containing tumble and topsoil. Two of them, 2045 and 2046, have an internal diameter of about 30 to 40cm. The only one which was full excavated, 2007, is about 40 to 50cm across internally and 28cm deep. It has a flat bottom lined with stones, underneath which was found an iron ploughshare (F85). No traces of post-pipes were identified in any of these settings. A southwards extension of this east wall of structure K.1 [2028] was detected to the south of building K but not fully excavated (Illus 12.17). It appears in the north extension of trench 12 as wall 12016. Structure K.1 may thus be the north end of a much longer building 12.5, partially excavated in trench 12. A piece of engraved slate, possibly part of a gaming board (R69), may have come from the core of wall 2047.

Within the area of building K, surface 2042 is bounded to the south by wall 2034 (Illus 12.14, 12.15). This also appears to be a



Illustration 12.15  
Trench 2, looking east. The ranging rods are positioned in front of the faces of walls 2030 and 2034 of structure K.1. Later and earlier features are also visible in this view

stone-faced wall with earth core, partially lying under the later south wall of building K. The remaining stone facing is only two courses high. The west end of the trench caught the internal face and part of the earth core of another wall [2076] running north-south and similarly reduced in height. It continues northwards under the north wall of building K. Surface 2042 also extends under the north wall of building K.

Structure K.1 thus appears to be a rectangular room of a building with an earth floor [2042], an internal width of about 2.8m and a length of over 4m. Although no trace of a north wall was detected, it is unlikely that it could have lain much to the north of building K owing to the proximity of the loch shore. Its remains may well be yet to be discovered under the later wall of structure K. A probable drain [2016], perhaps largely removed by the construction of





Illustration 12.16  
Trench 2, stonework 2048 looking north

building K, was noted along the internal face of the east wall. A type A slate (SF 2079) lying in it may be evidence for the reuse of roof slates as capstones, as in the probable continuation of this drain [12109] excavated in building 12.5 in trench 12.

Trodden into the floor deposits were a few pieces of ironwork, including a possible lock bolt (F125), a scale-tang knife (F56) and an arrowhead (F29). There were also a few small pieces of type A and B roof slates and sherds of pottery, including a rim sherd of redware (P42), a large piece from a reduced gritty jug (P51) and sherds of heavily sooted, grass-impressed handmade pot (P82).

#### ***Structure K.2 (Illus 12.18–23)***

Building K.2 was found to underlie structure K.1. More than one phase of activity in K.2 was detected, with kilns, or more probably ovens, going out of use and being replaced by others. The floor [2042] of K.1 was found to be resting on firmer deposits of similar material [2017, 2055] which also contained much evidence for the



Illustration 12.17  
Trench 2, the possible collapsed remains [2028] of the southwards extension of wall 2047 of structure K.1. The ranging rod is aligned with this wall



Illustration 12.18  
Trench 2, tumble and collapsed stone [2055], over the floor of structure K.2, levelling up for the floor of building K.1. The ranging rod is placed on wall 2056





Illustration 12.19  
Trench 2, cobbled floor [2060] of structure K.2, with oven 2053 in foreground

flattened remains of ovens, ash and stone tumble. The final levelling of the interior of building K.2 and the reduction of its walls were undertaken to create a level surface for the overlying building K.1 (Illus 12.18).

An east–west wall [2043] was detected partially underlying and supporting wall 2034 of K.1. It has a stone face and earth core, surviving to a maximum of two courses high (Illus 12.15). Associated with it is a good-quality paved surface [2060] composed mostly of small irregular quartzite and limestone slabs, tightly packed (Illus 12.19). Sitting on it is the bottommost course of wall 2056, forming a corner with 2043 and running northwards. It is only about 0.7m wide and is interpreted as an internal partition, for example the wall of a fireplace or oven. The possible remains of the east wall of structure K.2, consisting of a linear setting of stones [2075], were uncovered in a sondage dug into the core of the east wall of K.1.

As considered further below, structure K.2 appears to be the northern end of a complex or range of buildings stretching southwards, much of which was excavated in trench 12 as building 12.6. The paved road [4037] encountered in trench 4 running north–south under the later west wall of building K probably marks its western boundary, and indicates that there would have been an entrance door in this location. A further room to the east is possible. Another possible north–south wall is hinted at by a group of stones [2040] encountered in the south–east corner of the trench. A small sondage was excavated beside it revealing (under 2038 and 2039) a surface [2050] which might be the equivalent of 2017.

Sitting on the 2060 paved surface and adjacent to wall 2043 was an oven [2053], only partially within the confines of the



Illustration 12.20  
Trench 2, pit 2058 in structure K.2 filled with boulders [2020] and the kiln bases 2018 and 2021 still in place



trench and not full excavated. Collapsed stonework [2036] was incorporated in the levelling material for the floor of structure K.1 (Illus 12.15). All that was in situ was an arc of stonework, one course high, indicating that the oven may have had an overall diameter in the region of 2m. Stonework 2036 was overlying a crust of peat ash and charcoal [2054] which was on top of a semi-circular patch of burnt red clay, about 1.3m in diameter, truncated by the west baulk of the trench (Illus 12.18, 12.19, 12.21). This was the oven chamber. An earlier oven was seemingly represented by an area of burnt clay immediately to the north and included within the wall of oven 2053. It also sat on the paved floor.

A large part of the paved floor 2060 was found to have been removed by the digging of a large pit [2058] which may just have avoided making oven 2053 inoperable. It stretched east and west under the walls of K.1 and extended northwards under the later north wall of building K (Illus 12.20, 12.21). It also truncated the partition wall 2056 mentioned above. It was only partially excavated, enough to reveal a loose filling of large boulders (there were air gaps) [2019], levelled up with sand and gravel [2023]. The pit is at least 0.25m deep, and if circular might have had a diameter in the region of 3 to 3.5m. The pit also contained fragments of burnt bone, heat-affected stones and sherds of oxidised gritty ware (fabric 4.4). It was dug down to natural sand and gravel [2063].

The top of the pit was covered with deposits of ash and charcoal, including the bases of two ovens. One [2021] was represented by a green schist upper millstone, bottom side up (Illus 12.22), with a rim of baked clay, about 15cm wide, being all that survived of its



Illustration 12.22

Trench 2, millstone reused as the base of a kiln [2021] in structure K.2

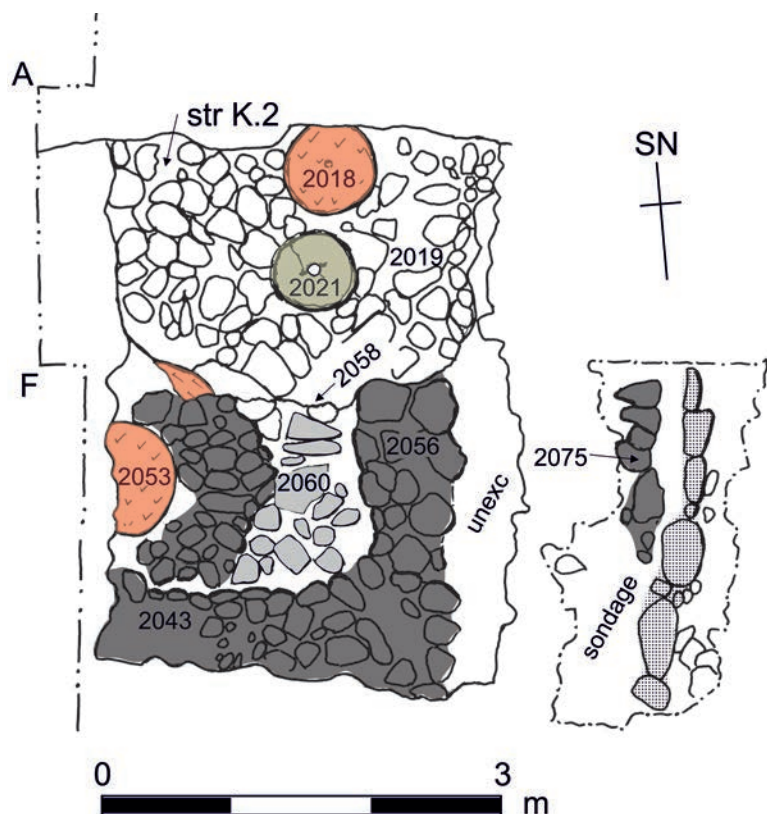


Illustration 12.21

Trench 2, plan of structure K.2



Illustration 12.23

Trench 2, ghost of millstone kiln base [2018] in structure K.2



# FINLAGGAN

Context	Description	Interpretation	Equivalent to
2001	Vegetation and topsoil	Topsoil	
2002	Stones	Tumble from wall 2004 within str K	
2003	Stones	Tumble from walls of str K	2026, 2059
2004	Blocks and boulders	North wall of str K	
2005	Brown clayey soil	Occupation/floor of str K	2033
2006	Boulders and blocks	West face of east wall of str K.1	2030, 2034, 2076
2007	Stones	Post-setting in 2047, str K.1	
2010	Silty grey deposit	Old ground surface	
2011	Grey-white sand, iron-panning	Beach deposit	
2012	Rubble	Tumble from str K and earlier structures	
2013	Rubble	Tumble in north entrance of str K	
2014	Soil and stones	Core of wall, faced by 2030	2047
2015	Surface, peat ash, charcoal	Floor of building K.1	2042
2016	Stones	Drain in str K.1	
2017	Compressed layers of peat ash	Floor deposits of str K.2	
2018	Hard red setting	Ghost of millstone oven base, str K.2	
2019	Boulders and black earth	Fill of pit 2058, str K.2	
2021	Green schist millstone	Oven base, str K.2	
2023	Greenish-grey gravel and sand	Fill of pit 2058	
2025	Boulders and blocks	Wall of building K	
2026	Rubble	Tumble from str K and earlier structures	2003, 2059
2028	Stones	Wall, probably both K.1 and K.2	
2030	Boulders and blocks	West face of wall 2047, str K.1	2006, 2034, 2076
2033	Brown layer, compact	Occupation/floor of str K	2005
2034	Stone-revetted mound under 2025	Wall of str K.1	2003, 2006, 2076
2035	Gravel horizon	Worm activity within area of str K	
2036	Stones	Tumble from oven 2053, str K.2	
2037	Brown soil with ash, charcoal	Floor of str K.1	2042
2038	Brown layer, compact	Trodden external surface?	
2039	Gravel horizon under 2038	Worm activity	
2040	Stony feature, unexcavated	Possibly wall of str K.2	
2042	Peat ash deposit	Floor of K.1	2015
2043	Stone-revetted earth bank	Wall of str K.2	
2045	Stones	Post setting in 2047, str K.1	
2046	Stones	Post setting in 2047, str K.1	
2047	Soil and stones	Core of east wall of str K.1, faced by 2030	
2048	Line of stones	East face of wall of K.1	
2050	Surface impregnated with ash	Internal floor surface, str K.2?	
2053	Stones, baked clay	Oven, str K.2	
2054	Crust of peat ash and charcoal	Rake-out from oven 2053, str K.2	
2055	Blocks, boulders, ash	Tumble in K.2, make-up for K.1	
2056	Stones	Wall in str K.2	
2058	Pit	For drainage? Str K.2	
2059	Spread of stones	Tumble from str K and earlier structures	2003, 2026
2060	Stone paving	Floor, str K.2	
2061	Peat ash deposit	Viewed in side of 2058, str K.3	
2062	Earthy deposit	Viewed in side of 2058	
2063	Gravel and sand	Disturbed shore deposits, bottom of 2058	
2068	Dark blotchy soil	In sondage under 2060, cf 2062	
2069	Sand, gravel, soil	Cf 2063	
2070	Peat ash deposit	Cf 2061	
2075	Line of stones	East face of wall of K.2	
2076	Laid stones and earth	West wall of str K.1	2006, 2034, 2076
2078	Stones	Drain in str K.1	

Table 12.1  
Trench 2 contexts

superstructure. The millstone, which was not lifted, is 0.58m in diameter, with a central hole ('eye') of 13cm with two slots, 4 by 7cm, for housing a bar (the sile, driver or rynd) which connected with the spindle which turned the stone when it was operational. It is severely heat damaged and cracked in two. Adjacent to it the other oven base [2018] is represented by a circular patch of fired clay (Illus 12.23), 0.65m in diameter with a small central hole, apparently indicating it had also had a millstone as a base. Presumably one of these ovens replaced the other, but it is not clear which came first. Other adjacent patches of fired clay suggest that these are only the two most recent and obvious of a series of similar ovens erected here, the use of which produced the deposits of ash and charcoal intermixed with clay from the oven superstructures.

Three samples of this material were submitted to the National Museum of Scotland Research Laboratory for possible evidence of industrial processes. No unusual elements, such as lead or zinc, were detected by XRF, and there was no evidence for very high temperatures, such as would have been associated with metal-working. No hammer scale was detected. These observations are consistent with our preferred interpretation that these deposits are rake-out from ovens or kilns used in brewing or baking. No reports have been received on samples submitted elsewhere, specifically for the detection of charred grain and other environmental material.

## Structure K.3

From the evidence of a small sondage cut through paving 2060 it was seen that there was earlier occupation on this part of the island. Separated from the paving by a thickness of 10cm of soil [2068] containing charcoal and fragments of burnt bone was another horizon of peat ash [2070], about 5cm thick, also seen in section in the side of pit 2058 as Context 2061. Underneath it were disturbed deposits of gravel and sand [2063, 2069]. No dating evidence was recovered from these deposits.

## Interpretation

We interpret buildings L and K as a unit, connected by a cobbled alley, and probably occupied in the 16th century. The



# EILEAN MÓR EXCAVATIONS OF HOUSES BY THE JETTY AND THE KITCHENS

Context	Description	Interpretation
4002	Laid blocks and boulders	Paved road from jetty
4003	Laid blocks and boulders	Walls of building L
4006	Laid blocks and boulders	Wall of building K
4010	Blocks and boulders	Tumble from K
4013	Stones, rubble	Sealed by 4002 road
4014	Laid blocks and boulders	Road, going west to building P
4015	Slot	Drain across 4014
4016	Blocks and boulders	Tumbled remains of 4046
4017	Blocks and boulders	Tumbled remains of 4046
4018	Blocks and boulders	Tumbled remains of 4048
4020	Sandy gravel, rock fragments	Shore deposits
4021	Sandy gravel, rock fragments	Shore deposits
4022	Sandy gravel, rock fragments	Shore deposits
4023	Gravel wash	Decomposed mortar from str L.1?
4024	Gravel wash	Decomposed mortar from str L.1?
4026	Clay and soil, charcoal, ash	Floor deposits, str L.1
4027	Clay and soil, charcoal, ash	Floor deposits, str L.1
4031	Peaty soil	Old land surface
4032	Laid stones	Kiln bowl
4033	Gravel	Natural
4037	Laid blocks and boulders	Paved road
4039	Laid blocks and boulders	Paved alley between buildings L & K
4044	Blocks and boulders	Tumble from building L
4046	Laid blocks and boulders	West wall of str L.1
4048	Laid blocks and boulders	East wall of str L.1

Table 12.2  
Trench 4 contexts

pottery and other material recovered from building K, including the padlock to fasten its north door and the substantial floor deposit of clayey earth, are all suggestive of domestic occupation. No trace was detected of a hearth, but it may be supposed that that would have been situated in the unexcavated western portion of the building. The lack of a clear or substantial floor deposit within building L is a situation which can be compared with building U in trench 7, M in trench 5 and S in trench 6. It is possible that this is an indication that they were not habitations, that they were for sheltering neither humans nor animals. They may have been for the storage of food, fodder or fuel (peat).

The substantial quantities of rubble around the outside of the walls of building K and L may be an indication that they were abandoned and allowed to fall down, largely through natural causes. The outwards pressure exerted by the collapse of their roofs, presumably covered with turf and thatch, would have encouraged the stonework of the walls to fall outwards, and there is enough of this still around to suggest that little of it has subsequently been removed.

Structure K.1 can be dated after about 1500, on the twin assumptions that the pieces of roof slate that were incorporated in its floor came from the great hall and that neither building K.1 nor other earlier structures on this part of Eilean Mór had slate roofs.

We will make the case below that K.1 appears to be the northern end of a building, more of which was excavated in trench 12 as 12.5. Its walls mostly only survive in a fragmentary



Illustration 12.24

View over apparent open area, the location of trench 12, with building C and the great hall in background

condition, much damaged by later activity, but the stretch of wall excavated in trench 2 as 2030 is very well preserved, perhaps to its full height. The post-holes suspected or cautiously identified in other such stone-faced turf or earth walls at Finlaggan can here be seen to be complete, but with no sign of the posts having rotted or burnt in position. The discovery of a ploughshare under the stone footing of the largest of the three post-holes in 2030 can hardly be regarded as coincidental. A large lump of iron slag (SF 6047) recovered from the fill of a post-hole in structure 6.1 can be explained as possible protection for a timber upright, but this does not appear to be a comparable situation. Its presence may have some ritual or magic purpose.

Structure L.1 can tentatively be identified as a kiln-barn of post-medieval date.

## Trench 12 (Illus 12.1, 12.24, 12.25, Table 12.6)

Although much of the main area of Eilean Mór seemed to be occupied by buildings, there appeared to be an open rectangular space bounded by the great hall and structures K, Y and F. It was proposed that a trench should be positioned to check if there was a courtyard here.

Excavation in 1992 of trench 12, then 2 by 10m, running approximately east–west in the area to the east of the great hall and south of building K, led to the then surprising conclusion that this part of Eilean Mór had been built up in the medieval and post-medieval period, with a sequence of several buildings, one on top of the other. We were aware that the limited area of the trench was hardly sufficient to resolve and characterise a complex stratigraphic sequence, and it therefore seemed appropriate to extend the area of trench 12 for excavation in 1993 (Illus 12.25). This was done in such a way that the new trench was linked to trenches 10 and 2 to provide direct stratigraphical relationships.

The new trench was about 10 by 8m and oriented with its longer side east–west and all but the eastern 3m of the 1992 trench



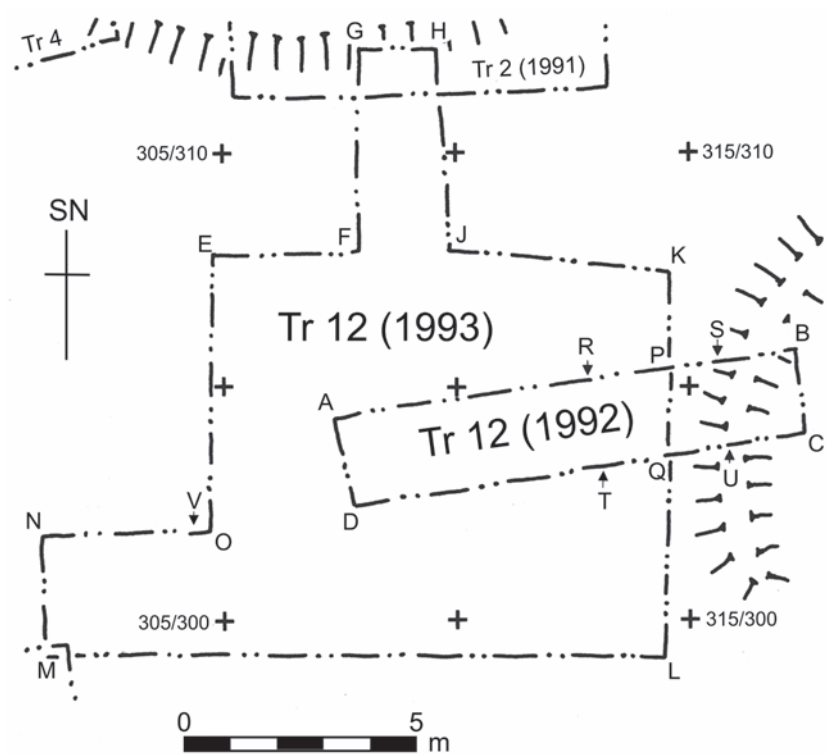


Illustration 12.25  
Trench 12, outline plan

running across the middle of it. From the north edge a 2m wide strip extended 4m to within the area of the 1991 trench 2, and another extension, 2.5 by 3.5m, connected with the north-east corner of the 1992 trench 10.

**A garden**

It is now clear that the level, empty appearance of the central area of Eilean Mór is due to its cultivation as a garden after the demise of the medieval and later buildings, perhaps sometime in the 17th century. This would explain the development of a peaty soil [12002, 12036,

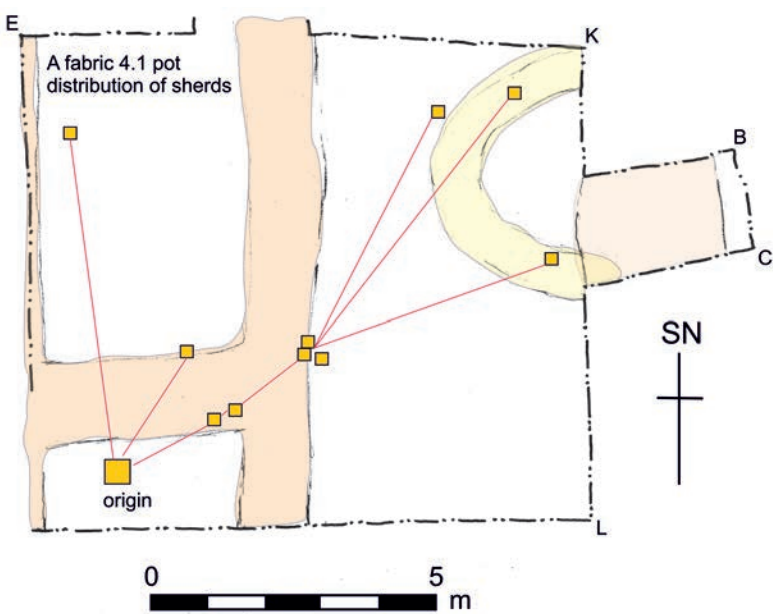


Illustration 12.26  
An oxidised gritty ware vessel: distribution of sherds

12101, 12193] under the turf and the poor survival of the walls and floor deposits immediately beneath. Unlike the post-medieval cultivation in the east end of Eilean Mór (see trench 19), there was no evidence here of rigs or lazy beds. This garden had an area of about 15 by about 15m, being bound to the west by the cobbled road [12136] along the east wall of the great hall. The road's intact surface immediately under the turf shows it was not dug into by the gardeners and may have continued to function as a path. To the north the garden was edged by building K (partially excavated in trenches 2 and 4), to the east by the ruins of structure Y1, and to the south by the cobbled road running from the great hall to the chapel. Although the present surface of this area is generally quite level, with only a slope downwards of a few centimetres from east to west and about 30cm from south to north, on excavation it appeared that more damage had been done to the ruins of the earlier built structures to the south and east than to the north and west.

Context	North French	White gritty	Redware	Reduced gritty	Oxidised gritty	Handmade
		Fabric 1	Fabric 2	Fabric 3	Fabric 4	
Topsoil, gardening [12000, 12002, 12101]			2	12	25	126
Str 12.1 [12014]				1		
Str 12.4 [12044]			1	2		
Str 12.5 [12130]				4	1	4
Str 12.6 [12134, 12138, 12110, 12145, 12133]		1	4	7	6	5
Str 12.7 [12160]					1	
Str 12.8 [12163]		1				
Pre-buildings [12030]				2	1	
Totals for all of trench	1	3	11	34	53	214

Table 12.3  
Trench 12 ceramics, contexts



# EILEAN MÓR EXCAVATIONS OF HOUSES BY THE JETTY AND THE KITCHENS

The topsoil in the excavated area of the garden contained many pieces of roof slate, mostly type A, almost certainly from the demolition of the great hall at the very end of the 15th century. There were also many sherds of medieval pottery and pieces of metalwork, no doubt mostly churned up from earlier deposits by gardening activity. Table 12.3 shows how 52% (165 out of a total of 316) of sherds of medieval and post-medieval pottery recovered from the trench 12 excavations came from the topsoil and other deposits associated with the gardening. The majority of these sherds are from local handmade vessels, and it is likely that they were originally in use in the stratigraphically uppermost buildings on the site, especially structure 12.5. We will argue below that building 12.5 dates to the 16th century, but none of the wheel-made pottery in the topsoil and related deposits is

likely to be of more recent date than the 14th century, and none of it would have remained in use for any longer than a few years at most.

The presence of so much medieval pottery in the topsoil has to be evidence for substantial damage to the deeper deposits by the gardeners, and a considerable amount of churn or redistribution of artefacts over time as a result of successive structures being built and destroyed. Table 12.3 lists sherds, a total of 13% (41 sherds), from operational areas like floors and hearths in structures 12.1, 12.4, 12.5, 12.6, 12.7, 12.8 and silt underlying the building sequence [12030]. The remaining 110 sherds (35% of the total from the trench) were recovered from walls, foundation trenches, post-holes, etc where it can reasonably be supposed that deposition was accidental and not directly linked to their use.

	Ceramic no.	Fabric	Origin	Sherd	Context	Description
Groups of joining sherds	45	3.1	Str 12.6	12341	12110	Oven debris, str 12.6
				12337	12130	Floor of str 12.5
				12101	12101	Turf and topsoil
	52	3.1	Pre-building	12305	12030	Old soil profile
				12072	12044	Hearth, str 12.4
				12559	12131	Flattened wall of 12.5
	94	Handmade	Str 12.5	12334	12130	Floor of str 12.5
				12335	12130	
				12104	12101	Turf and topsoil
				12107	12101	
				12167	12101	
				12175	12101	
				12283	12101	
				12284	12101	
				12285	12101	
	[b]	4.1	Str 12.5	12269	12101	Turf and topsoil
				12394	12134	Floor of str 12.5
	[c]	4.1	Str 12.5	12247	12101	Turf and topsoil
				12462	12145	Demolition, 12.6
Other sherds, part of [b] + [c] vessel?	[b+c?]	4.1		12408	12134	Floor of str 12.5
				12410	12134	
				12409	12134	
				12028	12015	Make-up for floor of 12.0
				12068	12036	Garden soil
				12192	12101	Turf and topsoil
				12230	12101	
				12135	12101	
				12242	12101	
				12241	12101	
				12241	12101	
				12120	12101	
				12144	12101	
				12209	12101	
				12210	12101	
				12211	12101	
				12212	12101	
				12228	12101	
				12246	12101	
				12267	12101	
				12298	12101	
				12309	12101	

Table 12.4  
Trench 12 multi-context ceramic vessels





Illustration 12.27

Trench 12 (1993), view from north-east corner over east plot

The distribution of a group of sherds supposed to be from one vessel may be instructive. The pot in question includes over 27 wheel-made body sherds of Scottish oxidised gritty ware (fabric 4.1), reckoned as representing less than 20% of one vessel, probably of 13th- or 14th-century date. The scattering of the sherds is plotted in Illus 12.26 and Table 12.4 (b+c). Only 13 of the sherds join with others, though not in one group, but we have a high degree of confidence on the basis of appearance that all are from the one vessel. Some originate from the floor deposits of the south chamber of building 12.5, although the vessel was probably long since broken by the time they got there. One sherd (SF 12028) got incorporated in the levelling-up deposits or floor [12015] for building 12.0, and 21 come from the topsoil or garden soil [12101, 12036]. Perhaps the main thing to note from the distribution as mapped in Illus 12.26 is how the sherds have been dispersed, mostly in a linear fashion over a distance of approximately 10m. This effect may be supposed to result from the sherds being dragged through the soil by gardening tools.

#### *Path and plots (Illus 12.26–32)*

The garden soil sealed the remains of two sequences of buildings on two plots (Illus 12.27–29, Table 12.5), separated by a path a metre or so in width, defined by rough cobbling, altered and repaired at different times [12105, 12157, 12158, 12159] (Illus 12.30–32).

We will describe the sequence of structures in each plot in turn, starting with the one further to the east, from top to bottom, 12.0, Y1, 12.1, 12.2, 12.3 and 12.4. Uppermost on the plot to the west was building 12.5, succeeding 12.6, and before that vestigial traces of structure 12.7. A key consideration is the



Illustration 12.28

Trench 12 (1993), view from south over west plot





Illustration 12.29  
Trench 12, interpretative plan showing the main structures and building sequence

temporal relationship of these two sequences of structures. Independent dating evidence resulting, for example, from a study of artefacts associated with them does not provide a firm or precise chronological framework. There are, however, some significant clues. First there are the type A roof slates, which we suppose can only have become available for distribution and reuse when the great hall was dismantled about 1500. On that basis, structure

Date	West plot	East plot
17th century		Garden
Late 16th/17th century		Str 12.0
16th century	Str 12.5	Str Y1
14th/15th century	Str 12.6	Str 12.1
		Str 12.2
		Str 12.3
13th century	Str 12.7	Str 12.4

Table 12.5  
Trench 12 building sequence



Illustration 12.30  
Trench 12, view from south. The ranging rods mark the path dividing the east from the west plot



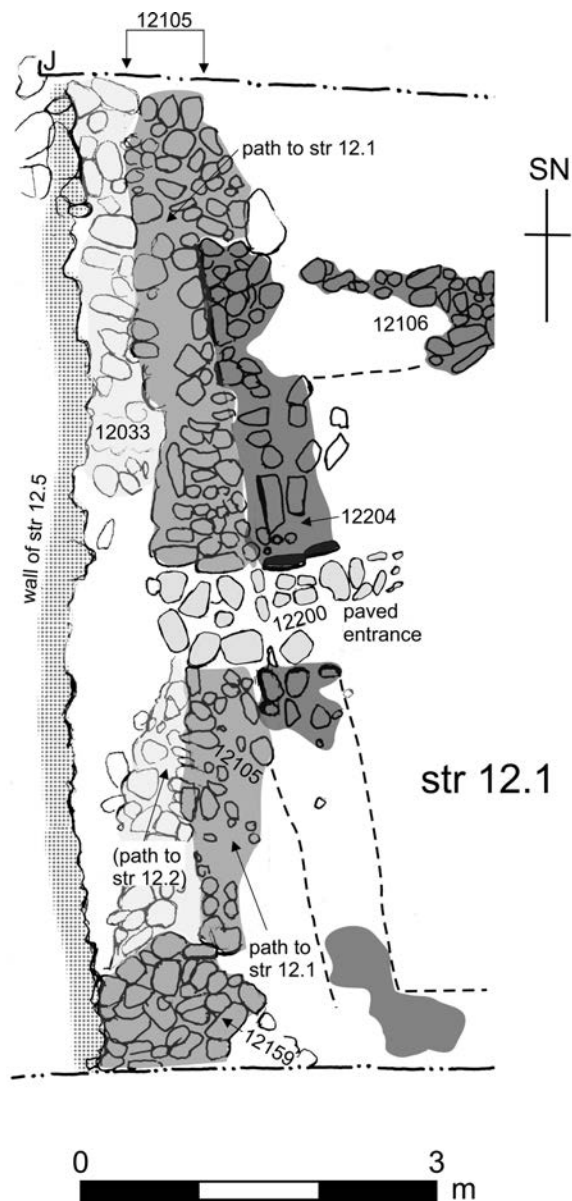


Illustration 12.31  
Trench 12 (1993), plan of path serving building 12.1

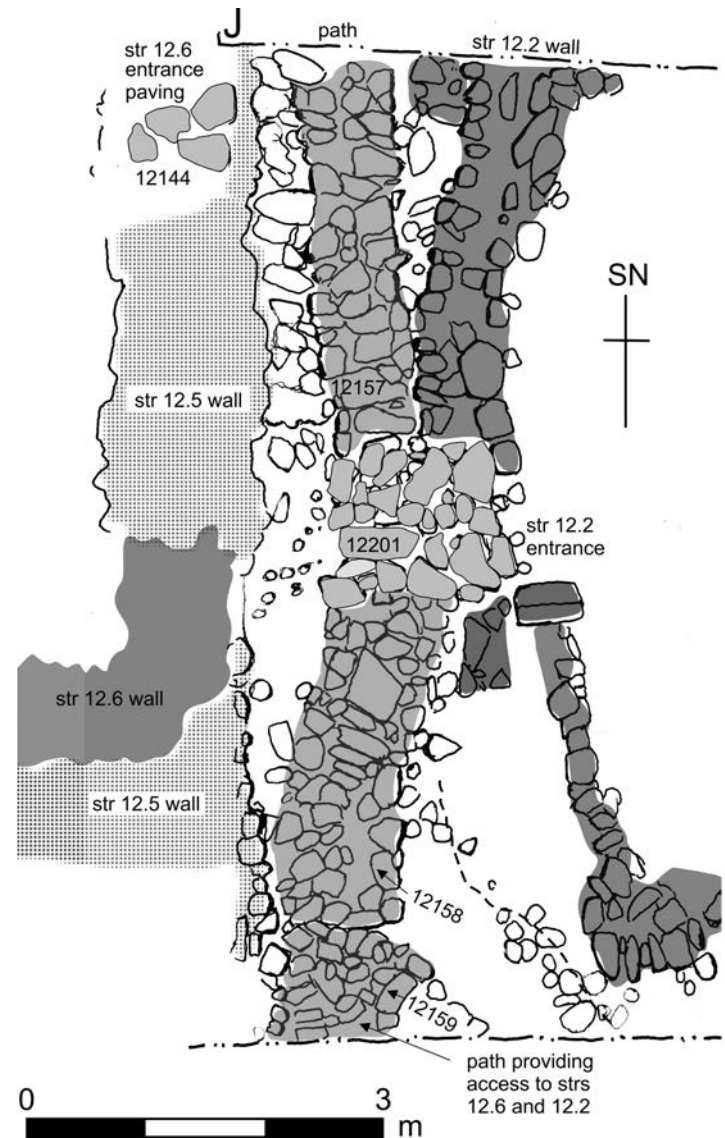


Illustration 12.32  
Trench 12 (1993), plan of path serving buildings 12.2 and 12.5

12.5 dates to the 16th century or later. Second, there is the relationship of buildings to the path up the centre of the trench. It provided access to an entrance into structure 12.5 to the west and successively structures 12.2 and 12.1 to the east. Using these observations and taking into account more general dating evidence provided by artefacts and our overall understanding of the dating evidence for features like the paved roads, our working hypothesis for a building sequence is laid out in Table 12.5 and illustration 12.29.

#### **Structure 12.0 (Illus 12.33, 12.34, 12.38, 12.40)**

The uppermost structure on the eastern of the two plots was 12.0, apparently an oval-shaped building of drystone construction, with walls about 1m wide, reduced at most to a low pile of

stonework [12107] (Illus 12.33, 12.34). This building seems to have been oriented approximately east-west with an overall width of about 4.5m and unknown length. It was erected in the flattened remains of building 12.1, extending over bank Y1 to the east. As we have noted with other post-medieval buildings on Eilean Mór, there were no obvious traces of a floor, other than the top surface of a levelling-up layer [12015], or occupation deposits, only a roughly oval setting of flat stones, 90 by 60cm [12007], identified as a possible pad for a timber upright. This may have been because either the building was a storage unit, or all traces of occupation have been removed by later garden activity.



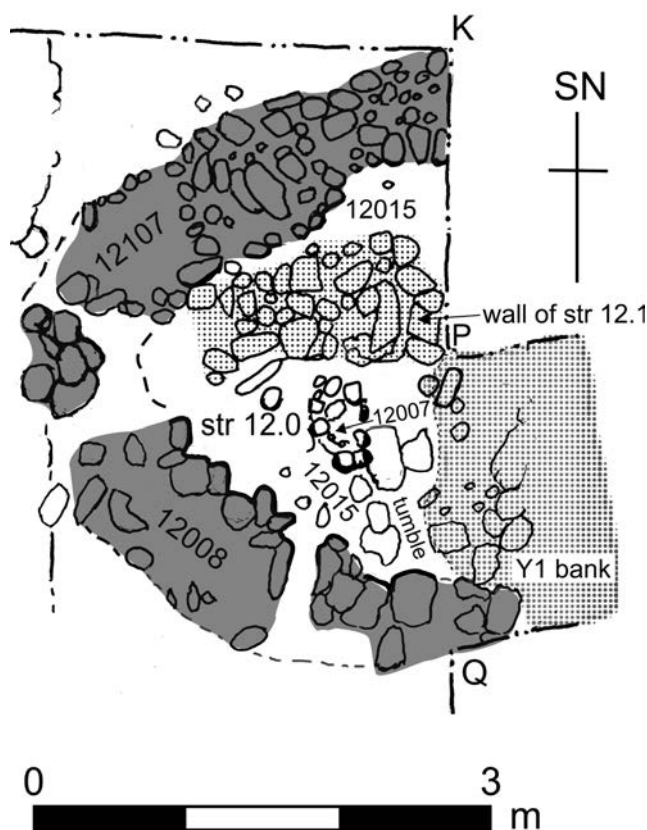


Illustration 12.33  
Trench 12, plan of structure 12.0



Illustration 12.34  
Trench 12 (1993), wall 12107 of structure 12.0 in foreground; ranging rod on wall 12106 of house 12.1

### Building 12.1 (Illus 12.34, 12.36–38, 12.40–42)

Building 12.1 was a rectangular, stone-walled structure with walls about 0.8m wide (Illus 12.41). None of the walling is preserved more than one course above floor level, and to a large extent reliance has had to be placed on the presence of foundation trenches to trace its extent. The stonework is mostly roughly dressed local material, especially pieces of quartzite and dolerite of no great size (Illus 12.34, 12.42). A spread of gritty yellow sand [12003] over the remains of the east wall is believed to be evidence for decayed lime mortar. There was only a limited amount of tumble present, presumably because of later gardening activity.

The building is 4.5m wide overall but its length could not be determined with any certainty. It is not absolutely clear that the remains of a north wall [12106] are an external wall rather than an internal partition, and while a scatter of stones in the south of the trench may be all that remains of its south wall (in which case an overall length of about 7m could be posited), it is quite likely that it was positioned beyond the south edge of our trench. Entrance was off the pre-existing cobbled path to the west by a doorway defined on the north side by kerb stones [12019] and paved with large cobbles [12200].

Foundation trenches, broad and shallow, less than half a metre deep, were detected for the walls of building 12.1, apparent in the sections through, or adjacent to, the east, west and north walls, with a fill of clayey silt [12117, 12141, 12123, 12054] (sections

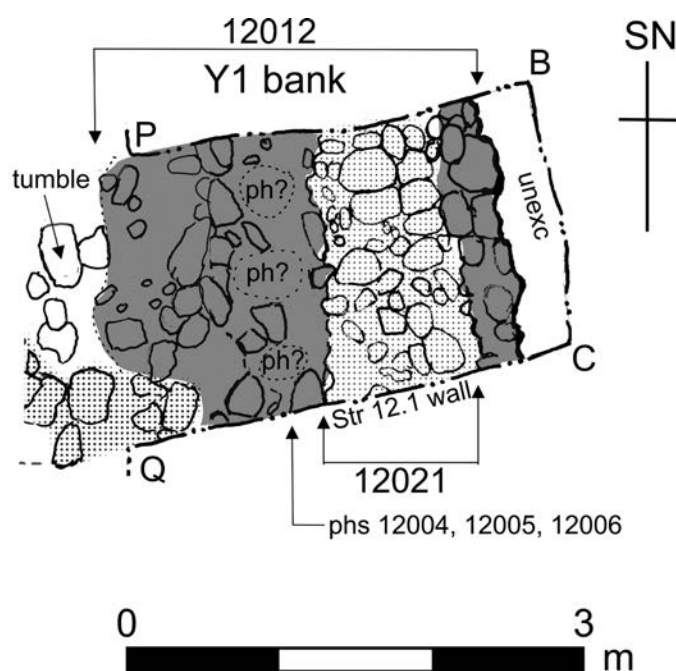


Illustration 12.35  
Trench 12 (1992), plan of Y1 bank





Illustration 12.36

Trench 12 (1992), bank Y1, incorporating wall of house 12.1, from north

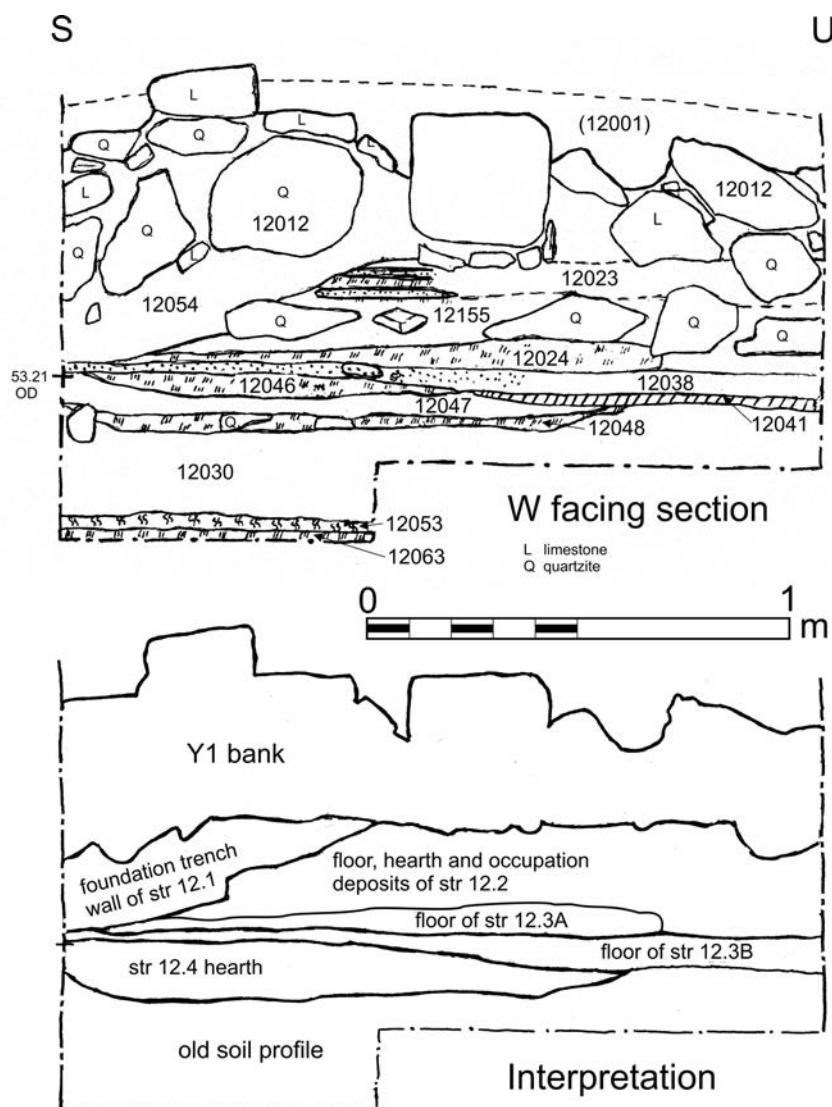


Illustration 12.37

Trench 12 (1992), section S-U

S-U, R-S, K-P; Illus 12.37, 12.38, 12.40). The foundation for the west wall appears to have been cut into the north-south path and topped up with cobbles [12010]. To create a level floor, the underlying remains of building 12.2 were flattened and the space levelled up with brown clayey silt [12124] to a depth of up to 27cm. Included in it were sherds of Scottish oxidised gritty ware. The surface of this [12014] represents the disturbed remains of an earth floor. From it were got an iron hasp or latch (F131) and sherds of pottery, including a piece of Scottish reduced gritty ware (SF 12008). At least some of the 47 nails recovered from the topsoil in trench 12 might have had a structural use in building 12.1. There is no specific evidence for how it was roofed.

#### **Building 12.2 (Illus 12.43, 12.44, 12.45)**

Building 12.2, on the same orientation as house 12.1, is represented in trench 2 by the remains of its west wall, including an entrance, some of the floor with a substantial hearth and a short stretch of its south wall (Illus 12.43, 12.44). If the entrance was centrally placed, it might be supposed that the internal length of the building was about 7m. The surviving walling is 1m or less thick and of drystone, cut into the turf bank of an earlier structure, building 12.3. There is no evidence that the exterior of building 12.2 was itself clad or banked with turf. Its side is noticeably convex, suggesting an overall barrel-shaped outline. Its internal drystone facing [12104, 12031] is composed of boulders and blocks of local stone, especially quartzite and dolerite, standing to a height of about 0.5m or two to three courses high. Stones from its upper courses have been pushed into the interior, but no more were present than would be enough for a total stone wall height of about 1m at most. At the south-west corner there is a setting of stones [12111], about 55 by 75cm, probably packers for a timber upright or roof couple. Another post-setting [12205] was detected at the supposed north-west corner. The entrance in the west wall is paved and accessed from the cobbled path [12157-59]. A large rectangular stone block [12127] slumped in the entrance was originally its south jamb.

A line of possible post-holes, at intervals of about 0.7 to 1m, was detected at the interface between the internal stone face of the west wall and the floor. They might have supported uprights. None of these were excavated. The floor deposits are a complex series of silty clay layers and lenses containing charcoal and peat ash [12023, 12142], including a central area paved with large flat stones [12026, 12155] showing signs of fire damage from use as a hearth. From these floor and hearth deposits were recovered several artefacts, a group in the surface of these deposits in the general area of the paving, including two decorated bone tablemen (B1 and B2), a woodworking bit (F91) and an iron purse mount (F14). There were also the remains of a drinking (?) horn represented by its butt mount and fragments of horn (B8), an iron buckle (F5) and a copper alloy hasp (C95), possibly from a casket. An iron hasp (F108) and other pieces of ironwork, including a handle and a hinge strap (F103 and F110), might well be from a chest (Illus 12.45). There were no sherds of pottery. A well-shaped whetstone of fine-grained siltstone (R96) was recovered from the material [12124] within structure 12.2 used to make up the floor of building 12.1. All or most of these finds may represent items in actual use at the time building 12.2 was abandoned.



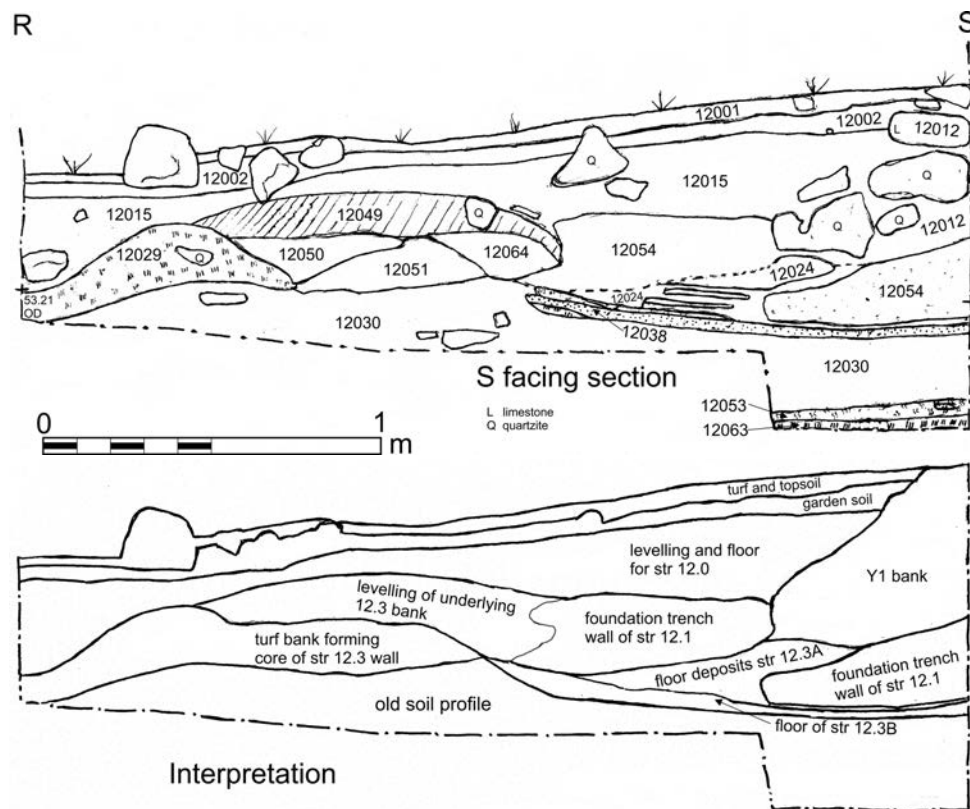


Illustration 12.38  
Trench 12 (1992), section R-S

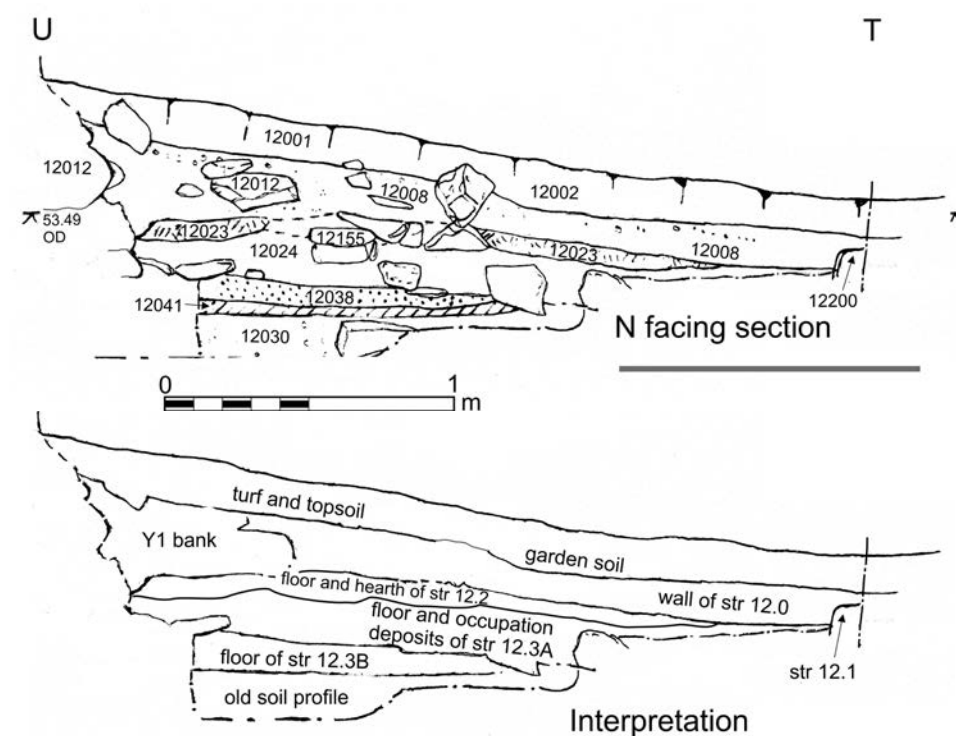


Illustration 12.39  
Trench 12 (1992), section U-T

### Building 12.3 (Illus 12.37–39, 12.46–48)

Only some of the west and north wall of building 12.3 and some of its floor was excavated. It may have been a rectangular structure with rounded corners. Neither its north nor south ends were fully excavated, nor its full width, but perhaps it was of similar length to structure 12.2. Its walling consisted of a substantial complex bank [12140, 12122, 12050, 12051] composed of compact, pale grey, silty clay, with individual turfs visible, especially in section. It appeared likely to reflect different phases of construction over a substantial period of time, and had evidently been much damaged and altered in use and final demolition. In the description that follows, two phases are recognised, 12.3A (Illus 12.46) and 12.3B (Illus 12.48), undoubtedly a simplification of reality.

The earliest recognisable floor consisted of pink sandstone [12038], 6cm thick, set in a layer of pale grey-green sand [12041]. In the north end of the building some of this has been removed by the digging of the foundation trench for the north wall of structure 12.1. The sandstone is so badly heat affected that it has almost totally disintegrated, but it may have been laid as regularly shaped slabs. The corner of such a slab of pink sandstone (R23), 42mm thick, was recovered in 1998 from the chapel ruins. This floor terminated against a wall to the west, now represented by banks 12029 and 12051 incorporated in a more complex bank structure. Together they are identified as structure 12.3A. Overlying some of the stone floor was a thin layer [12168] of occupation material, mostly silty clay, perhaps only representative of the final use or dismantling of 12.3A.

Later flattening and levelling of the 12.3A wall resulted in a thin layer of sandy silty clay [12139] being preserved under later bank material [12148]. Where 12139 was excavated for a length of about 1.5m along the internal face of the west wall, it was found to contain nine complete rivets, three of which could clench boards with a total thickness of about an inch (25.4mm). The other six were of smaller size, with space for boards with a total thickness of about 18mm. There were over 20 other roves and broken rivets. All of this may be evidence for wall cladding within building



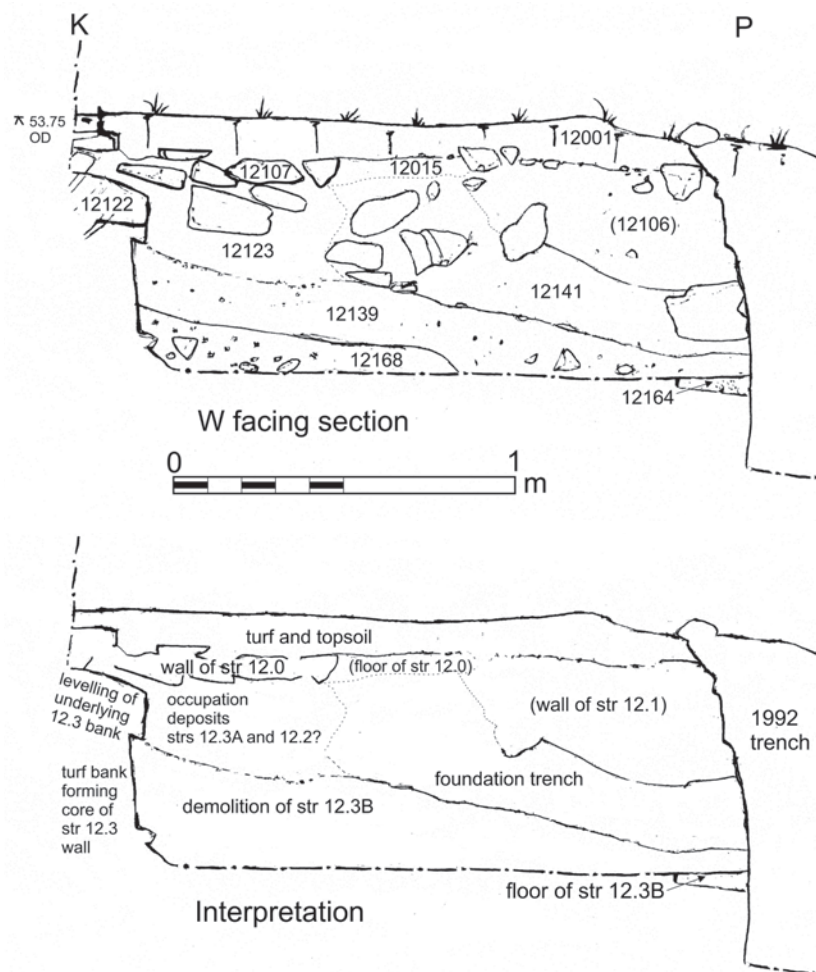


Illustration 12.40  
Trench 12 (1993), section K-P

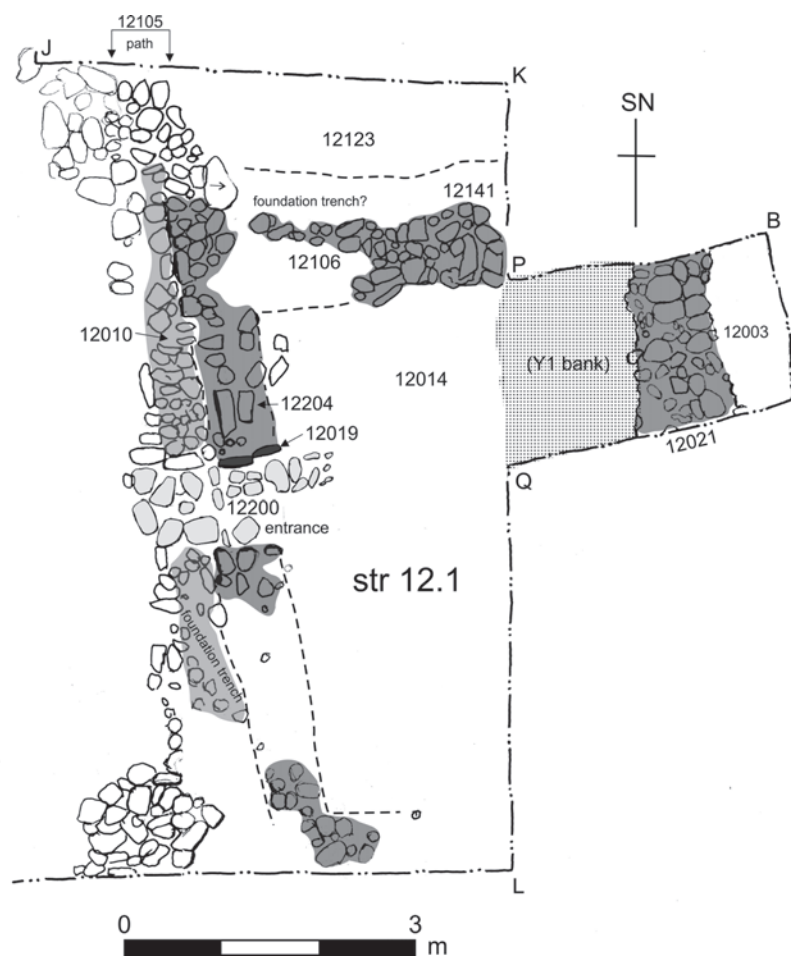


Illustration 12.41  
Trench 12, plan of structure 12.1



Illustration 12.42  
Trench 12 (1992), west wall and entrance of building 12.1 from north



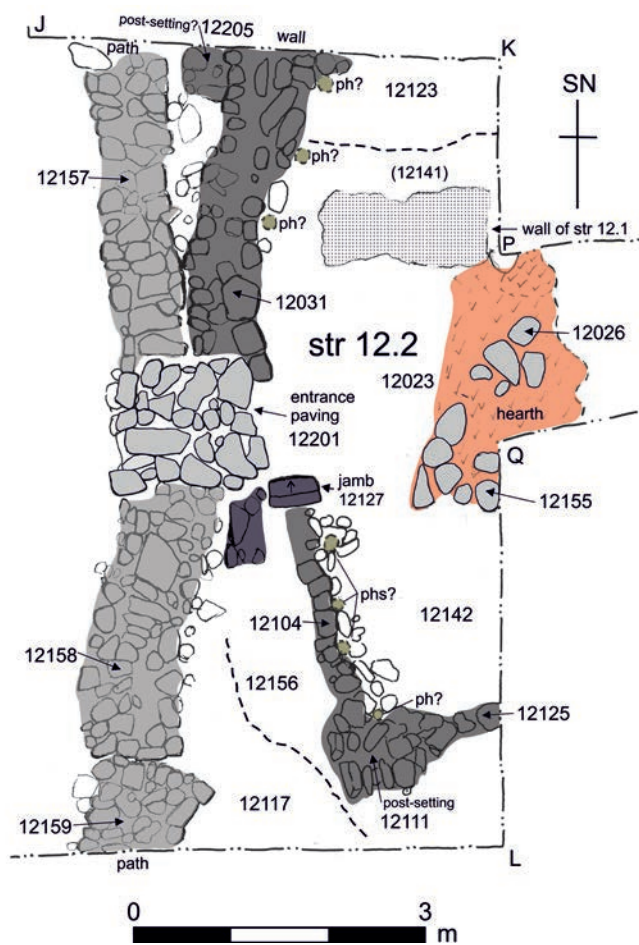


Illustration 12.43  
Trench 12, plan of structure 12.2



Illustration 12.44  
Trench 12, view from south-east with structure 12.2 in foreground

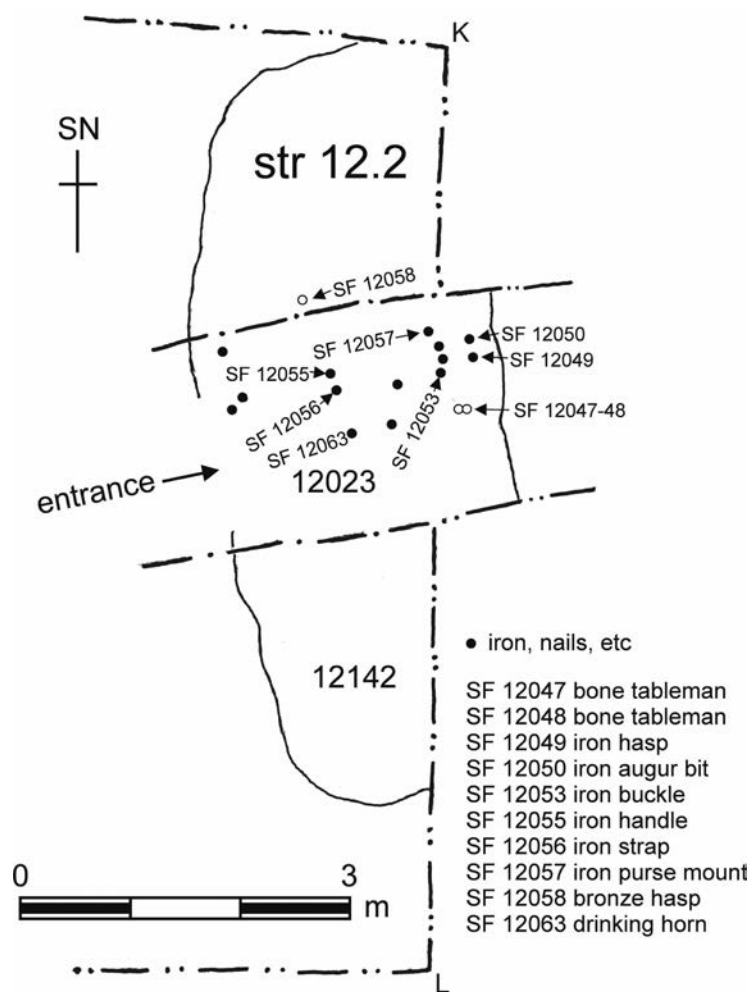


Illustration 12.45  
Trench 12, distribution of finds within structure 12.2

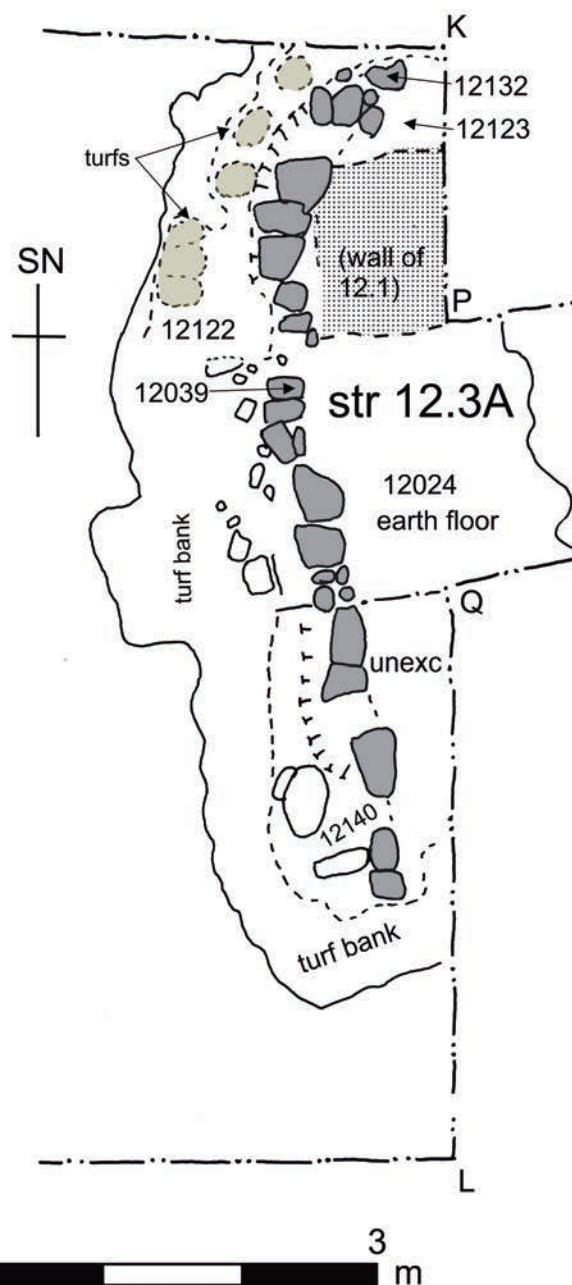


Illustration 12.46  
Trench 12, plan of structure 12.3A





Illustration 12.47  
Trench 12, view of excavated area of building 12.3A

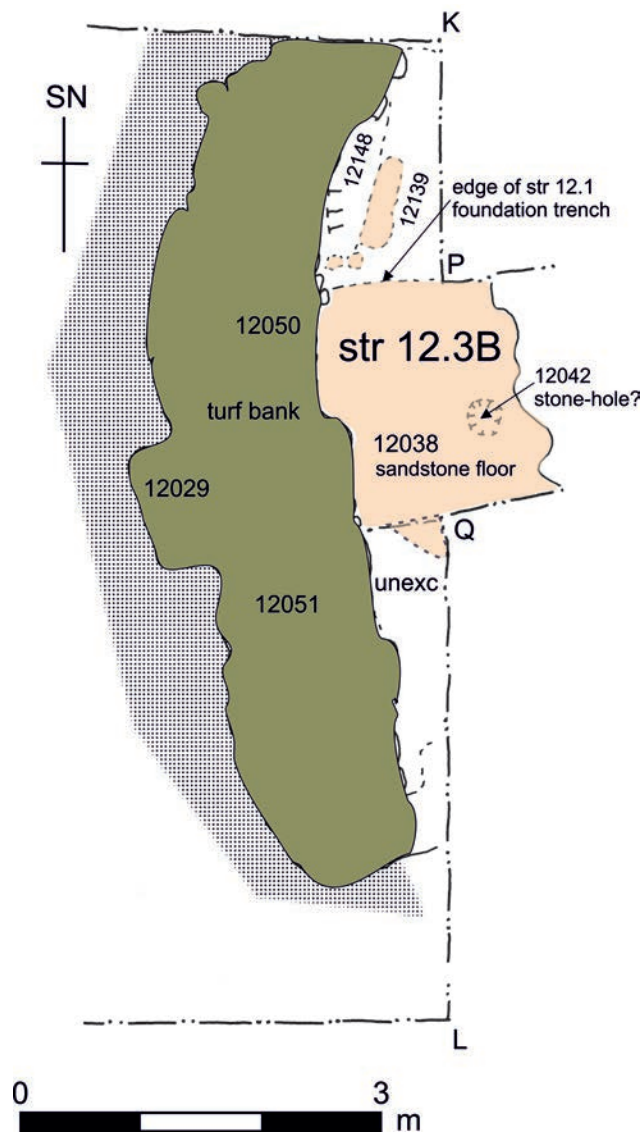


Illustration 12.48  
Trench 12, plan of structure 12.3B

12.3A. The preparation of a level space for the construction of building 12.2 involved the truncation and flattening of these walls, with not just the stone facings being dislodged but also turfs as well [12148], toppled over a thin layer of sandy silty clay [12139].

Building 12.3B probably had the same footprint as its predecessor. Now the turf bank forming its wall was augmented and faced internally with stone blocks and boulders, surviving up to two courses high [12039, 12132]. It was not possible to check whether there was also an external stone face to the wall. The floor within structure 12.3B was of clay, with layers and lenses of ash [12024].

#### **Building 12.4 (?) (Illus 12.37, 12.49)**

The evidence for this structure is a hearth excavated in the original 1992 trench immediately under the degraded sandstone floor of building 12.3A (Illus 12.37, 12.49). Neither its extent nor shape was established. A bank [12029, 12170] of dark grey silt containing a considerable amount of charcoal may also belong. It was found to be incorporated in the west bank of structure 12.3. The hearth consists of a thin spread of charcoal [12044] containing pieces of burnt bone, a sherd of redware and two of reduced gritty pottery. It overlies lenses of silt impregnated with charcoal and peat ash [12046–48], with a maximum overall thickness of 13cm, hollowed into the underlying deposit of silt [12030]. This layer of silt, 20cm and more in thickness, is essentially a natural accumulation, though sherds of pottery were recovered from it, including Scottish reduced gritty and oxidised gritty ware. Between it and natural loch-side sand and gravel is a thin layer [12053] of yellow clay, resulting from a fluctuating water table, overlying a thin layer [12063] of black silt containing fragments of charcoal.

#### **Building 12.5 (Illus 12.50–53)**

Building 12.5 is the uppermost of the structures on the western plot excavated in trench 12, its walls to a considerable extent reused from, or on the line of, those of an earlier building, structure 12.6 (Illus 12.50). Both 12.5 and 12.6 have been very badly



Illustration 12.49  
Trench 12 (1992). The ranging rod rests on hearth 12044. The sandstone floor, bedded on sand, of building 12.3 can be seen in section above it. Compare section S–U in Illus 12.37



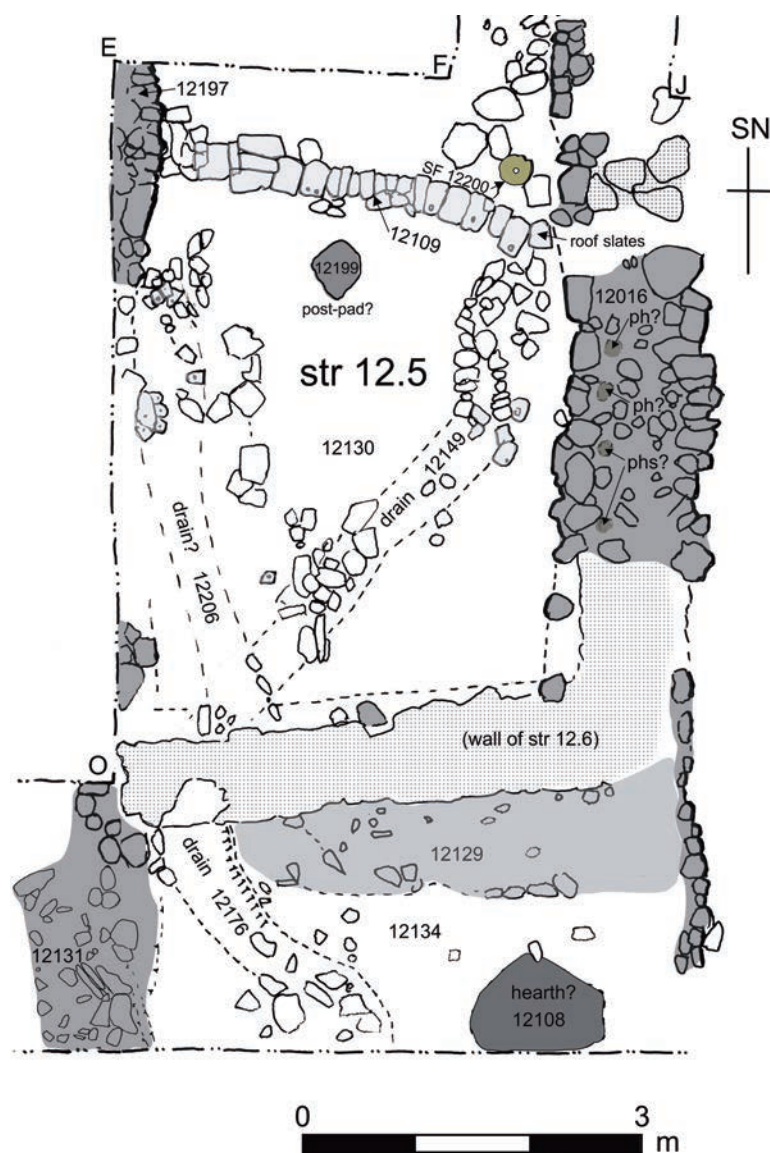


Illustration 12.50  
Trench 12, plan of building 12.5

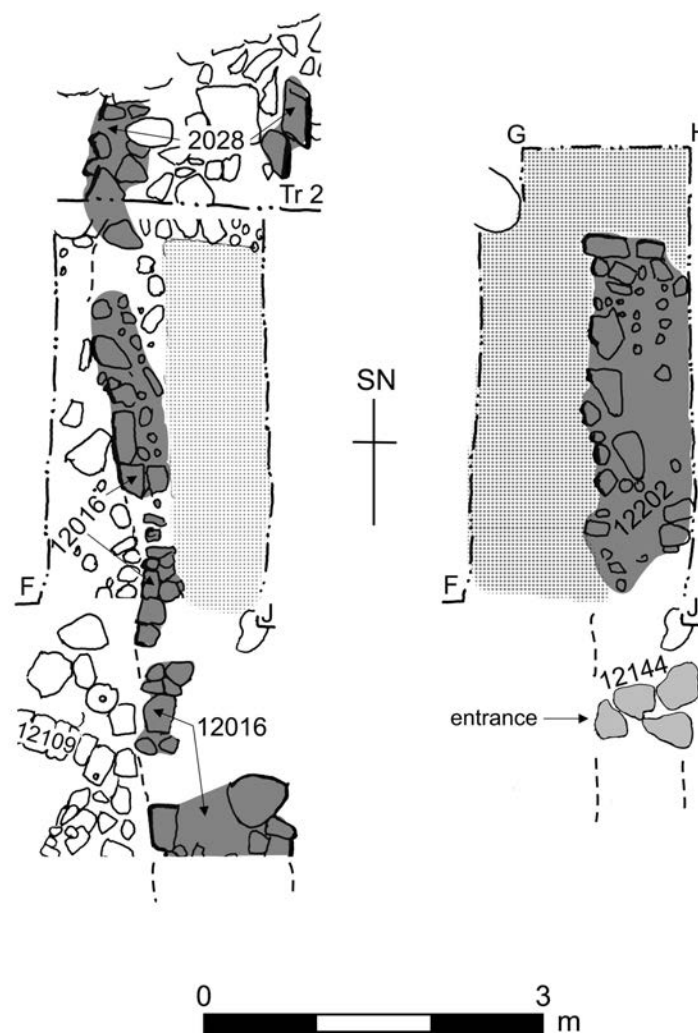


Illustration 12.51  
Trench 12 (1993), plans of north extension of trench

damaged by later gardening activity. The best-preserved segment of walling [12016] is part of the east wall which encases the stub of the east wall of building 12.6. It is of clay, stone faced, some 1.4m in width, surviving to a height of up to 0.4m or three courses. The internal stone facing included fire-reddened and cracked stones, probably recycled from earlier building on the site. Wall 12016 can be traced running northwards through the north extension of trench 12 and into trench 2 as wall 2028 and 2030 of structure K.1 (Illus 12.51). As with wall 2030, it appears to have had post-settings, defined by packing stones, adjacent to its east face and at intervals of between 1 and 0.8m. From wall 12016 itself was recovered a piece of slate engraved on both sides with representations of animals, including a heraldic lion (R84).

The internal face of the west wall [12197] appears just to have been clipped in our excavation, giving an internal width for 12.5 of about 4m. An east-west wall [12129], is erected over the stub of an earlier wall [12102] of building 12.6. Here the exterior clay and

stone thickening has largely fallen or been dug away, leaving a low, spreading bank along the south wall face. An iron rivet (SF 12490) was recovered from it (Illus 12.52). 12129 appears to have been an internal wall with building 12.5 extending for an unknown length to the south of it. To the east the outer face of the east wall [12016] can be traced extending towards the south baulk of the trench, and to the west the southward extension of wall 12197 is suggested by a low, spreading clay bank [12131] with some tumbled stones. There was thus at least a north and a south chamber. Immediately to the west was an open area [12152].

All that remained of a floor in the north chamber was a spread of stony, silty sand [12130]. Set in it, and neatly cut through underlying deposits, was a large, level, flat-topped boulder [12199], which probably served as a pad for a post supporting an upper floor (Illus 12.53). A drain [12109, 12149, 12176] has also been cut into the floor. It is about 24 to 28cm in width and of no great depth, its sides defined with smallish stones. It runs





Illustration 12.52  
Trench 12 (1993), building 12.5 from south

east–west, cutting through the rear wall of the 12.6 oven, before turning a sharp corner and heading south–west. It was then cut through the south wall of the chamber (Illus 12.50). The direction of flow was not established but is likely to have been northwards. It was capped with type A roof slates and at least one type B (SF 12595). Another drain [12206] oriented approximately north–west/south–east seems to have been dug in, perhaps at a later date, to the west of the 12.6 oven site. No capstones remained in place, but broken roof slates scattered adjacent to it probably indicate how it was covered.

Sitting on the floor deposit 12130, with other tumbled stones, was the upper stone of a rotary quern (R90). From deposit 12130 itself were recovered two sherds of a large handmade pottery vessel (P94). Several other sherds of the same pot were found in the overlying topsoil [12101]. There were also sherds of Scottish reduced



Illustration 12.53  
Trench 12, building 12.5, with roof slates covering drain 12109 in foreground. The pad-stone 12199 is immediately to the right of the blackboard

gritty and Scottish oxidised gritty ware, a small slate discoid (SF 12338) and an iron U-shaped staple (SF 12411). In the south chamber the equivalent floor deposit to 12130 is numbered as 12134 and on it is a charcoal-rich patch [12108], perhaps representing the remains of a hearth. From layer 12145, representing worm action over 12134, and the open ground to the west, and 12134 itself, came an iron staple (SF 12478), two medium-size slate discoids (SF 12441, 12442) and several sherds of pottery, including Scottish red-ware, reduced gritty and oxidised gritty ware.

#### **Building 12.6 (Illus 12.51, 12.54–57)**

The walls of building 12.6 have survived as stubs incorporated within the broader walls of structure 12.5 (Illus 12.51, 12.54). Much of its east wall [12103, 12202] can be traced, and part of the very edge of its west wall [12203] was caught within our trench.

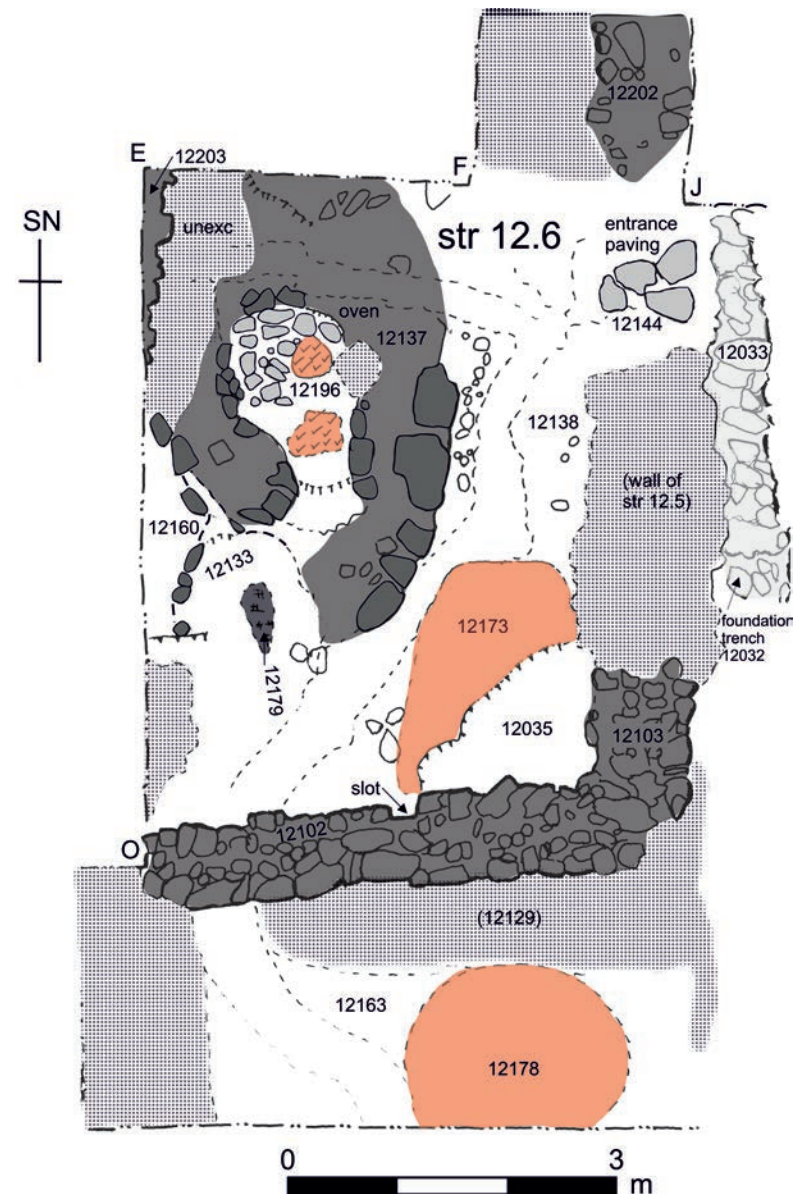


Illustration 12.54  
Trench 12, plan of building 12.6



To the south there is an east–west wall [12102] incorporated in an interior wall of building 12.5, but it appears that this was the external wall of 12.6. The walls are about 0.8 to 1m wide, of clay-bonded local stones, and survive to a maximum height of two courses. A cut, probably for a foundation trench [12194], was identified in the interior south–east corner, but its fill [12035] was not fully excavated. This foundation trench was also identified on the east side of wall 12103 as 12032, backfilled with clay loam and stones [12033].

The interior breadth of building 12.6 was about 4m, with an overall width of about 6m. Its length is less clear. If, as seems likely, structure K.2 excavated in trench 2 is its northern end, it may have had an overall length of over 20m. There was an entrance in the east wall, only about 1m wide, defined by the paving slabs [12144] buried under the later walling of structure of 12.5. There was probably another doorway at the north end of the north extension of the trench, but this was not fully excavated.

The only possible evidence of how the building was roofed is in the form of a vertical slot, extending from below floor level, in the interior face of wall 12102, perhaps for housing a cruck. The floor [12138, 12160] is of clay, with much of the area taken up with the flattened remains of an oven with a circular chamber about 1.1m in diameter (Illus 12.55, 12.56). Its walls are constructed of yellow clay [12137] with interior and exterior facings of blocks of stone, mostly less than 500 by 350mm, and an entrance on its south side. These walls survive only to a height of about 12cm above the stone cobbled floor of the oven chamber, which was about level with the surrounding floor of the room. The clay could easily have been dug up on the spot, a few centimetres down, from the band [12053] identified in trench 12 in 1992. Collapsed inside the oven were the remains of its domed clay superstructure [12196], including two large fragments of baked yellowish-red clay. The wall to the east of the oven mouth is extended to act as a baffle to redirect heat from a fire into the interior. A circular scooped patch of burnt clay floor [12133] with a deposit of charcoal [12179], just to the west, is evidence of where the oven was set.

Such an oven would be appropriate for baking bread, but that other types of food were prepared in this area is suggested by a discreet patch [12161] to the north of the oven containing much fragmentary animal bone. Two vessel legs from the floor, one of copper alloy (C141) and the other of lead alloy (L17), may be taken as evidence for culinary activity. There was also part of a reduced gritty ware jug (P45) from oven rake-out material [12110], a sherd of Scottish redware (SF 12358) and a small slate discoid (R72). Three small pieces of lead alloy (L14–L16), apparently from a vessel, were incorporated in the clay from the oven wall [12137].

About the time building 12.6 was dismantled or demolished and replaced by building 12.5, the oven was flattened with material from its superstructure, and ash and charcoal from its operation were packed into its chamber [12196, 12198] and spread across the top of its reduced walls and over the neighbouring floor [12110]. This created a level surface for the floor of 12.5.

It is not clear what lay immediately to the south of building 12.6. Immediately to the east was the cobbled path separating the two plots, and to the west was the paved road already encountered in trench 10 as 10028, and just clipped here as 12136 in the western extension of trench 12 (Illus 12.57). It is founded on a rubble



Illustration 12.55

Trench 12 (1993), building 12.6 from north-west; oven in course of excavation



Illustration 12.56

Trench 12 (1993), building 12.6 from north-east; oven excavated, with the structure 12.5 pad-stone [12199] still in situ



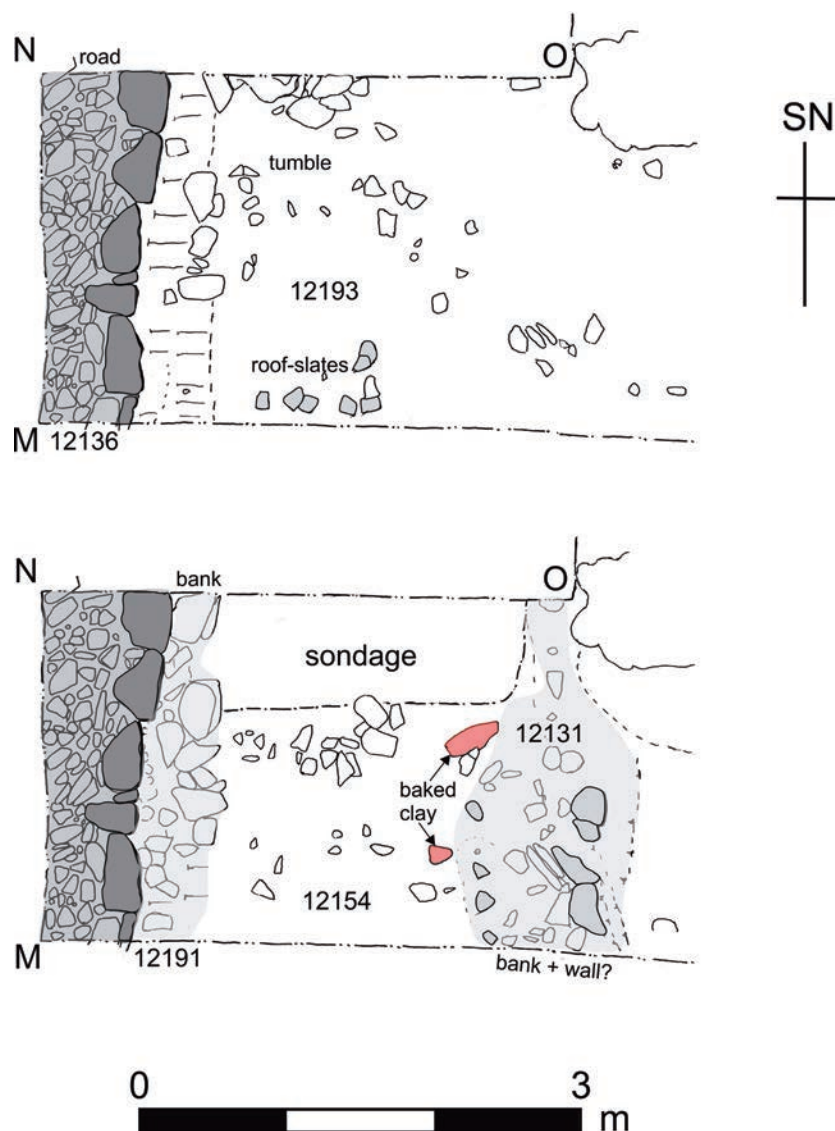


Illustration 12.57

Trench 12 (1993), plans of west extension of trench

bank [12191], perhaps an addition to the one encountered in trench 10 as 10045 and 10047, rather than part of it. It was separated from building 12.6 by a strip of open ground about 2.5m wide. A gravelly horizon with pieces of charcoal and patches of baked clay and ash [12154], representing an external trodden surface, related to the construction and use of both the road and building 12.6. It had developed over an old ground surface [12162] formed on natural grey gravels (Illus 12.58, 12.59).

#### **Building 12.7 (Illus 12.53, 12.54, 12.56)**

The foundation trench [12194] for the south-east corner of building 12.6 is cut into an earlier, dark red surface [12173] composed of a mixture of peat ash and fine sand. It was originally exposed in the 1992 excavation as 12034 and identified as a hearth of a building that preceded 12.6, here labelled as 12.7. An archaeomagnetic date on 12173 indicated either a date range of AD 1425–75 or



Illustration 12.58

Trench 12 (1993), view eastwards over west trench extension

an age centred on AD 1290. The latter date appears more likely on stratigraphic grounds. Some of the floor of 12.7 may be identified in the clay surface [12163] encountered to the south of building 12.6, from which was recovered a sherd of Scottish white gritty ware pottery (SF 12553). Set in its surface was another hearth, represented by a circular patch of burning, impregnated with pieces of charcoal [12178].

#### **Interpretation (Illus 12.29)**

The original aim in opening trench 12 in 1992 was to explain an apparent empty area adjacent to the great hall. The expectation that it might be a medieval courtyard can now be dismissed. Instead, there was a substantial area of agricultural activity, here apparently dating to the late 16th and 17th century. Whereas the agricultural activity sampled in trench 19 resulted in a system of lazy beds, there are no traces of any rigs and furrows in the area



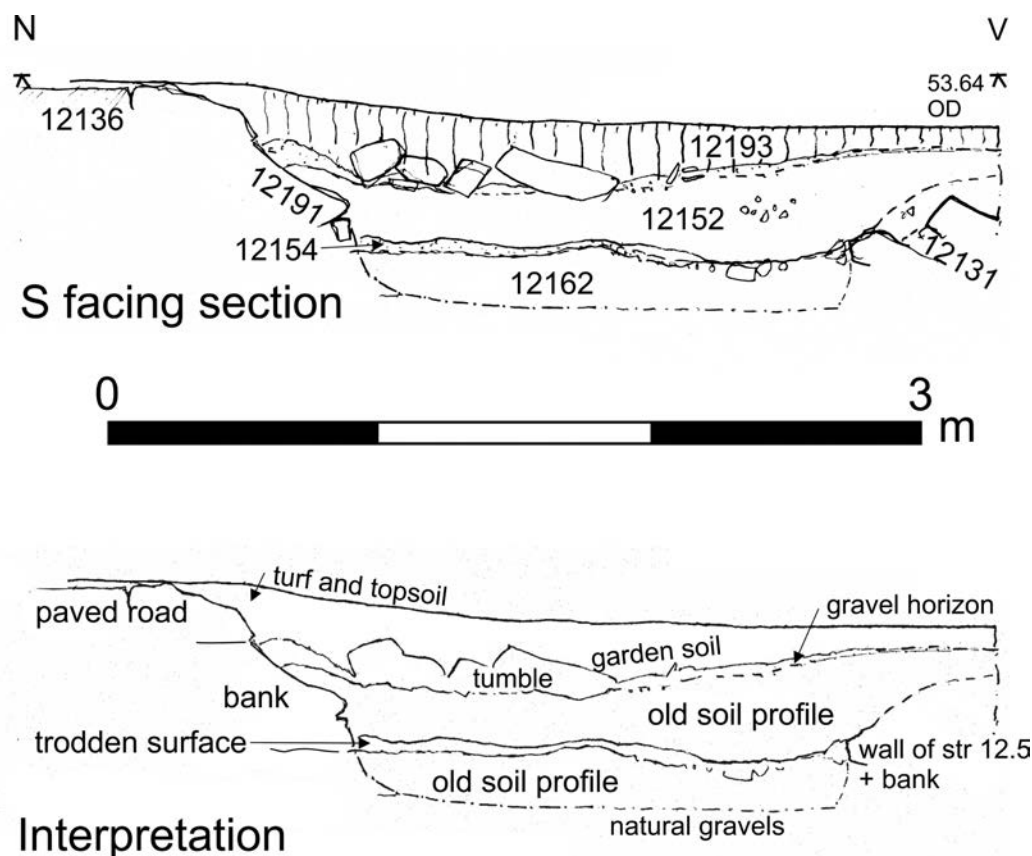


Illustration 12.59  
Trench 12 (1993), section N-V

of trench 12. Hence, we have described it as a garden, perhaps for the growing of vegetables. To the west this garden was bordered by a cobbled road of medieval origin but possibly still in use. Perhaps buildings K and L to the north, excavated in trenches 2 and 4, were the house and barn of the owner of the garden, replacing or superseding structure 12.0. It was also of post-medieval date but possibly not a dwelling house.

Building 12.0 straddled the remains of structure Y1, a bank and palisade that was part of the works that included the gatehouse in trenches 3 and 18, and the supposed wooden tower (structure 6.1) in trench 6. Judging by surface remains, structure Y1 might have been a circular bastion projecting from the palisade bank that cut off the east end of Eilean Mór.

To the west of Y1, and partially contemporary, was a substantial long, narrow building, 12.5, dated by us to after 1500, perhaps not long afterwards, on the basis of the roof slates reused in its drains. On the assumption that structure K.1 excavated in trench 2 was part of it, it had an overall length of over 22m and interior width of about 4m. It was multi-roomed and had earth floors cut by a system of drains, but no obvious signs of fireplaces or hearths, and no abundance of artefacts to suggest that it was a residential space. Its broad earth or turf walls, faced with stone, were probably of no great height, serving as supports for upright timbers with wattle work or weather boards. Given that the building's width was relatively narrow, no great challenge in terms of spanning it with roof timbers, the identification of a

substantial pad-stone [12199] for an upright might indicate a requirement to support the floor of an upper storey or loft. Alternative identifications of K.1/12.5 as a barn or barracks are considered in Chapter 14.

It appears that two large buildings stood side by side in this area of Eilean Mór in the years prior to about 1500, separated by, and accessed from, a cobbled path running north-south. To the west of the path was building 12.6, perhaps a long, narrow, rectangular multi-roomed structure, about 20 by 6m overall, the north end of which was excavated in trench 2 as structure K.2. From the evidence of several ovens, it was clearly kitchens and/or a brewhouse. Adjacent to it and to the west of the path was structure 12.1, a rectangular building with relatively thin, well-founded lime-mortared walls and a width, overall, of about 4.5m.

The kitchen building 12.6 was preceded in earlier medieval times by other structures (12.7), perhaps also connected with food preparation. Rather more information was captured on the medieval house 12.2 that was replaced by building 12.1. In size, shape and basic constructional details, 12.2 may be typical of a local building tradition that goes back at least to the 13th century, and in the case of 12.2, and building V in trench 7, continued through the 15th century. These houses, perhaps all for residential use, had barrel-shaped outlines defined by earth or turf banks, faced internally with stonework. Typically 12.2 also had evidence for an open hearth and post-pads at its corners. Its immediate predecessor, building 12.3, was evidently of similar type.



Context	Description	Interpretation	Equivalent to
12001	Turf and topsoil	Turf and topsoil	12101
12002	Peaty soil	Agricultural activity	12036, 12193
12003	Gritty yellow-brown sand	Decayed mortar? from 12021	
12004	Clay silt	Post-hole in bank Y1?	
12005	Clay silt	Post-hole in bank Y1?	
12006	Clay silt	Post-hole in bank Y1?	
12007	Laid slabs	Post-pad? in 12.0	
12008	Stones	Walls of 12.0	12107
12010	Stones	Fill of fd tr of west wall of 12.1	
12012	Clayey silt, stones	Y1 bank	
12014	Brown silty loam	Floor of 12.1	
12015	Dark brown silty loam	Make-up for floor of 12.0	
12016	Slightly silty clay	East wall of 12.5	2028, 2030
12017	Peaty, clay loam	Agricultural activity	
12019	Two orthostatic stones	Door jamb of 12.1	
12021	Linear stone feature	East wall of 12.1	
12023	Brown clay loam, charcoal	Floor deposits, 12.2	12142
12024	Orange-brown ashy clay	Floor deposits, 12.3A	
12026	Stones	Hearth in 12.2	12155
12029	Dark clay silt, charcoal	Bank incorporated in wall of 12.3	12170
12030	Grey-brown silty clay	Old soil profile	
12031	Linear stone feature	West wall of 12.2	12104, 12125
12032	Trench	Foundation trench for 12103	
12033	Clay loam and stones	Fill of 12032	
12034	Peat ash, fine sand	Floor, 12.7?	12173
12035	Mixed silt and clay	Fill of 12194	
12036	Sticky brown loamy clay	Garden soil	12002, 12193
12038	Heat-affected pink sandstone	Floor of 12.3	12164
12039	Linear stone feature	Internal stone face, wall of 12.3A	12132
12041	Pale grey-green sand	Bedding for floor of 12.3	
12042	Cut	Stone-hole? in 12038	
12044	Black silt with charcoal	Hearth, 12.4	
12046	Lenses of black silt etc	Under 12044	
12047	Very sticky black silt	Under 12046	
12048	Grey-brown sticky silty clay	Under 12047	
12049	Light blue-grey clay	Spread bank material, str 12.3	12122, 12140
12050	Brown clayey silt	Turf bank of 12.3	
12051	Brown silty sand	Turf bank of 12.3	
12053	Yellow clay	Loch-shore deposit-inundation?	
12054	Mid-brown loam	Fill of foundation trench, 12.1	
12063	Black silt, charcoal	Sealed by 12053	
12064	Mid/dark grey silt	Spread bank material, str 12.3	
12101	Turf and topsoil	Turf and topsoil	12001
12102	Clay-bonded stonework	South wall of 12.6, reused in 12.5	
12103	Clay-bonded stonework	East wall of 12.6	
12104	Linear stone feature	West wall 12.2	12031, 12125
12105	Linear spread of stones	Path associated with 12.1	
12106	Linear stone feature	North wall of 12.1	
12107	Linear stone feature	Walls of 12.0	12008
12108	Charcoal-rich soil	Circular patch – site of fire, 12.5	
12109	Line of roof slates	Drain covering, floor of 12.5	
12110	Clay and peat ash	Rake-out from oven	
12111	Pad of stones	Post-setting, corner of 12.2	
12117	Silty sand	Fill of foundation trench, 12.1	
12121	Linear stone feature	West wall of 12.2	12031
12122	Grey, compact, silty clay	Bank material, 12.3	12049, 12140
12123	Clayey silt, stones	Occupation deposits, 12.3A, 12.2	
12124	Clayey silt	Make-up for floor of 12.1	
12125	Linear stone feature	South wall of 12.2	12031, 12104

Table 12.6  
Trench 12 contexts



Context	Description	Interpretation	Equivalent to
12127	Stone block	Door jamb in 12.2 entrance	
12129	Silty clay	Collapsed wall of 12.5	
12130	Grey-brown silty sand	Floor of 12.5	
12131	Clay and stone	Flattened wall of 12.5	12197
12132	Linear stone feature	Internal stone face, wall of 12.3A	12039
12133	Dark, slumped, circular patch	Hearth associated with oven	
12134	Silty clay	Floor S room of 12.5	
12135	Linear stone feature	Kerb of road along east of hall	
12136	Linear stone feature	Road along east of great hall	10028
12137	Yellow clay	Slumped walls of oven	
12138	Yellow, brown-red clay	Floor deposit, 12.6	
12139	Sandy silty clay	Demolition of 12.3A	
12140	Silty clay	Bank forming south and west of 12.3	12049, 12122
12141	Red-brown silty clay, charcoal	Fill of foundation trench, 12.1	
12142	Red-brown silty clay, charcoal	Floor deposit, 12.2	12023
12144	Stone paving	In entrance in east wall of 12.5	
12145	Sandy loam	Demolition, 12.6	
12147	Dark clay silt	Fill of drain = 12180	
12148	Pale grey sandy silt	Slipped turfs from 12122	
12149	Stones and slates	Drain in 12.5 floor	
12150	Sandy silty clay	Debris from demolition of 12.6	
12151	Silty loam	Str 12.4?	
12152	Gritty sandy clay	Soil profile in west extension	
12154	Silty clay	Trodden external surface	
12155	Stones	Hearth stones, 12.2	12026
12156	Silty sand	Robbed-out wall of 12.2	
12157	Cobbled surface	Path between 12.6 & 12.2	
12158	Cobbled surface	Path between 12.6 & 12.2	
12159	Cobbled surface	Path between 12.6 & 12.2	
12160	Clay and peat ash	Floor deposits, 12.6	
12161	Clay and peat ash, bone rich	Discreet patch of 12110	
12162	Clay loam	Old soil profile in west extension	
12163	Clay loam?	Floor of 12.7?	
12164	Heat-affected pink sandstone	Floor of 12.3 = 12166	12038
12165	Stonework	Stonework of oven	
12168	Mixed deposit, silt, sand, clay	Demolition of 12.3A	
12170	Dark grey silty clay	Burnt? bank, 12.4	12029
12173	Red-brown silt and clay	Floor surface, str 12.7?	12034
12176	Sandy clay	Fill of drain in 12.5	
12177	Silty sand	Bank, str 12.2	
12178	Orange-brown silt, charcoal	Hearth in 12.7?	
12179	Sandy clay	Charcoal patch in 12133	
12185	Loch-side sands, gravels	Natural	
12191	Rubble bank	Support for road 12136	
12193	Turf and topsoil	Garden activity in west extension	12002, 12036
12194	Cut	Foundation trench, walls of 12.6	
12196	Mixed clay, blocks of clay	Collapsed dome of oven	
12197	Clay-rich silt and stones	West wall of 12.5	12131
12198	Mixed clay, blocks of clay	Infill in collapsed oven	
12199	Boulder	Post-pad? in 12.5	
12200	Laid stones	Paving in entrance of 12.1	
12201	Laid stones	Paving in entrance of 12.2	
12202	Stonework	East wall of 12.6 to north of entrance	
12203	Stonework	West wall of 12.6	
12204	Stonework	West wall of 12.1	
12205	Pad of stones	Post-setting, corner of 12.2	
12206	Cut	Drain within 12.5	

Table 12.6 (cont.)  
Trench 12 contexts