

**Archaeology Wales Ltd**

**Llanelly House, Llanelli,  
Carmarthenshire.**

Summary of Archaeological Results from  
Trial Trench in Room G1a/G1b

By

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Date 26<sup>th</sup> February 2011

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## 1 Location

- 1.1 The trial trench in Room G1a/G1b was dug several years ago by another party as part of earlier preliminary investigations. However, the results from the excavation were never recorded or fully interpreted archaeologically. The following is a record and interpretation of the results from this trench following its re-opening on 24<sup>th</sup> February 2011. Since its initial excavation the trench had been used subsequently as a 'rubbish' pit, being filled with a variety of building materials, including soil, cement, resin, newspaper, timber etc.

## 2. Results of excavation

- 2.1 Following the removal of the built-up waste material from the existing trench, all of the trench sections were cleaned and straightened up as best as was possible considering the loose'ness of much of the exposed underlying deposits. Following this, the trench and its exposed sections were drawn and photographed. The following text describes and interprets the deposits exposed in the sections (numbers enclosed in () are context numbers assigned to each deposit as illustrated in Figures 2-4).
- 2.2 The existing floor surface of Room G1a/G1b is made up of various different surfaces, including modern concrete at the far west end and modern stone tiles and floor boards at the east end. Each of these surfaces appears to have been laid directly over the remains of former oak floor joists. The trial trench appears to have been sunk through a series of thin modern stone tiles (100), which appear to have been formerly laid directly over a pair of 18<sup>th</sup> century oak floor joists (101), which have unfortunately been cut through and removed to allow access to the trench for digging purposes. The trench measured approximately 1.5 x 1.4m at its upper limit and approximately 1.4m x 1m at its base. At the base of the trench a small 0.30m square investigation slot had been cut through the lowest deposit, a compact grey/orange clay with charcoal flecks (106), alongside the exposed footings of the north wall of the house (107) and its cut (108), in order to confirm that the deposit (106) was indeed the earliest deposit, which it was.

### *East facing Section A-B (see Figure 3)*

- 2.2 The oak joists were formerly lain north-south directly on top of a loose soil deposit made up of fragments of small fragments of plaster, soil, ash and charcoal fragments (102). The depth of this deposit was approximately 0.20m. This deposit lay directly over a compacted surface (103) made up of soil, ash, plaster fragments, lime and small stones. This deposit averaged approximately 0.12m in depth and was interpreted as being a former construction deposit, most likely associated with the early 18<sup>th</sup> century re-building of the house by Thomas Stepney. This deposit lay directly over what appeared to be a former demolition deposit (104) made up of large stones, large fragments of ceiling plaster, soil, ash and charcoal. This deposit averaged a depth of approximately 0.20m. This deposit was interpreted as being a former demolition deposit associated with the clearance of the earlier 17<sup>th</sup> century house prior to the early 18<sup>th</sup> century re-build. Below this deposit was a fairly loose deposit consisting of orange/beige clay with small plaster and lime fragments, with the occasional charcoal pieces (105). This deposit again averaged approximately 0.20m in depth. Directly below this deposit the base of the trench (106) is reached with a compact deposit made up of grey/orange clay with charcoal and lime flecks embedded within its upper compact surface. This implies that this compact deposit was a former exposed surface associated with the former 17<sup>th</sup> century house. The position of the top of this compact surface in the stratigraphic sequence appears to tie in with the approximate position of the threshold of a former doorway now blocked in the north wall, alongside the existing front door to the house (see south facing section in Figure 4).

### *West facing section (see photo plate)*

- 2.3 This section although similar in make up to the east facing section, was different in that the boundaries between deposits (102-104) were not as clearly defined as in the east facing section, which, which gave the impression that they were in fact one deposit and not three separate

individual deposits. Reasons for this may be that the deposits in the east facing section are positioned almost directly opposite the former late 17<sup>th</sup> century front door, a position that would have seen a lot of activity and traffic from workmen during the re-building program. However, it still reveals that in this area the underlying demolition and construction deposits used to raise the floor level are of some considerable depth, in the region of 0.50-0.60m deep before reaching the earlier 17<sup>th</sup> century floor surface (106).

*South facing section C-D (see Figure 4)*

- 2.4 This exposed section is represented by the north wall of the house. Significant features exposed here include the position of a former gas pipe, the footings for the former 17<sup>th</sup> century house north wall and the remains of a former doorway with threshold, blocked in with stonework and covered at its upper limit by a covering of wall plasterwork. This former doorway is positioned immediately below and to the right of the existing front door to the house, which was formerly, in the 1714 rebuild, utilised as one in a series of windows in the house's front façade.

*North facing section (see photo plate)*

- 2.5 This exposed section is almost identical in terms of its stratigraphic sequence to that exposed and recorded in the east facing section.

### **3 Discussion**

- 3.1 The re-opening, recording and interpretation of the trial trench in Room G1a/G1b revealed that the average depth of the overlying deposits (100-105) to the base of the earliest floor surface associated with the 17<sup>th</sup> century Llanelly House (106), is positioned approximately 0.75-0.85m from the present surface. The exposed stratigraphic sections also show that at approximately 0.50m in depth from the present surface (inclusive of oak beam floor joist and stone tiles) a compacted construction and demolition deposit is reached (103), associated with the 1714 Llanelly House rebuild. Directly below this deposit is late 17<sup>th</sup> century and earlier deposits associated with the earlier house, which hold fairly large fragments of decorative 17<sup>th</sup> century ceiling plasterwork.
- 3.2 This trial trench offers only an insight into the potential buried deposits across the entire room of G1a and G1b, essentially being only a 'keyhole'. As such the deposits encountered and their depths could vary widely across the entire room. However, judging by the character and depth of the deposits and the architectural features exposed in the north wall, including the former blocked in doorway, the depth of the buried deposits displayed in the trial trench are very likely a very good indicator as to what is likely to become exposed at the observed depths during the ground work for the floor renewal.
- 3.3 In terms of the aims and objectives for the restoration of the house, the recovery of significant decorative fragments of ceiling plasterwork and other potential artefacts associated with the earlier 17<sup>th</sup> century house, is very desirable, as these would inform a history, character and development of the pre 1714 house, which is still very scant. The removal of the overburden (contexts 100-105) to a satisfactory depth and foundation for renewal of the floor, as well as offering up the opportunity to recover significant 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century finds, could also expose further wall foundations associated with the earlier house as well.
- 3.4 Regarding the methodology employed for the removal of the floor overburden in Room G1a/G1b, an archaeologist will have to be present permanently following removal of the existing floor surfaces i.e the concrete, stone tiles and floorboards. From here it would be advisable for the contractor to remove the overburden by hand with hand shovels up to the top of context (103) across the entire room, in order to offer some consistency and ease of interpretation of the deposits. Following inspection of the exposed surface, the subsequent underlying deposits could

also be removed by hand carefully whilst recovering fragments of ceiling plasterwork and other finds, down to the lowest compact clay surface deposit (106), associated with the 17<sup>th</sup> century house. Once exposed the area will have to be inspected archaeologically and recording will have to be undertaken of all exposed features and deposits.

- 3.5 The only other option, if not feasible to remove all of the buried deposits across the entire room, would be to remove strategically positioned sections or slots of buried deposits where supporting piers could be placed for the new floor. This work would obviously still have to be done under strict watching brief conditions.

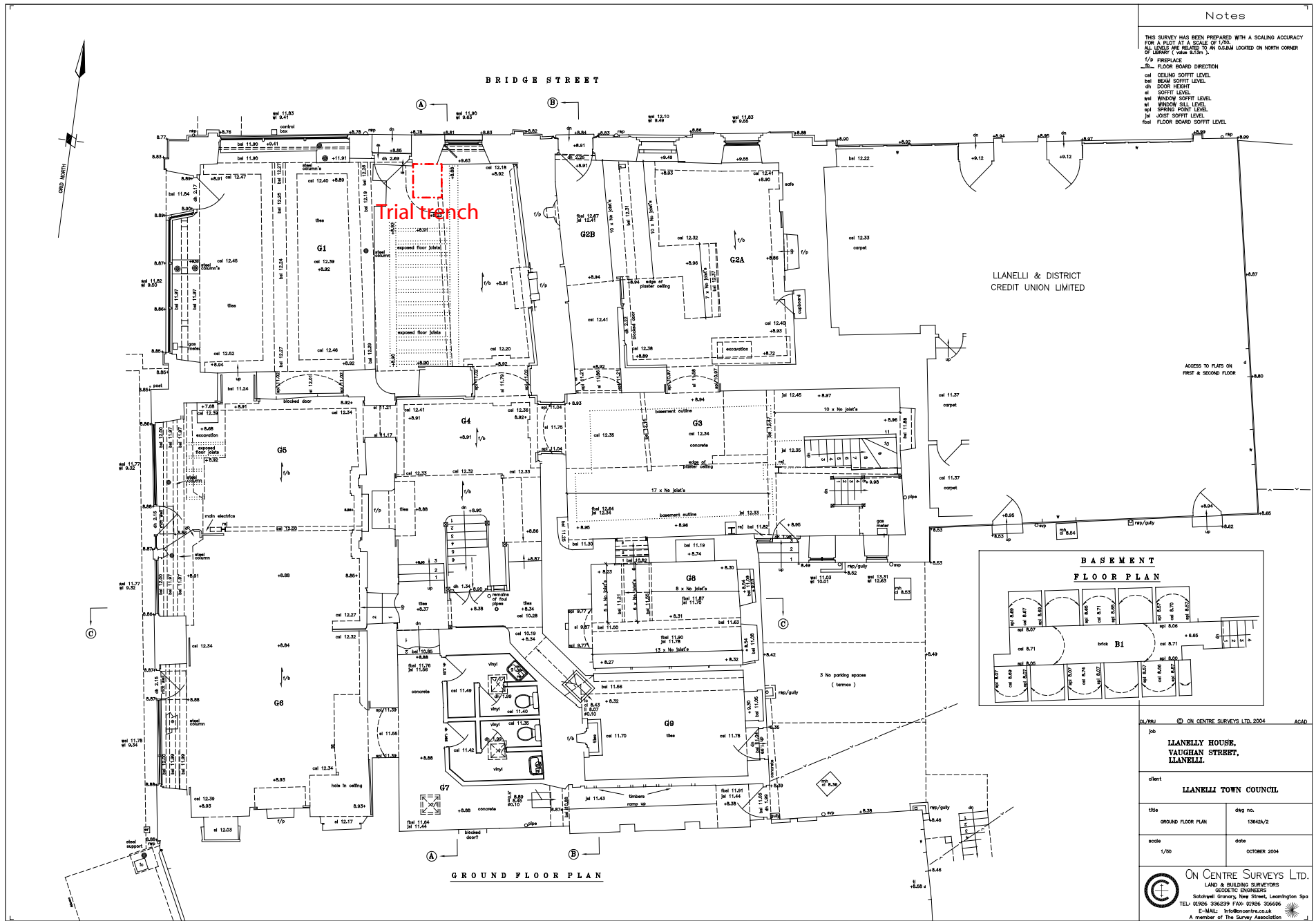
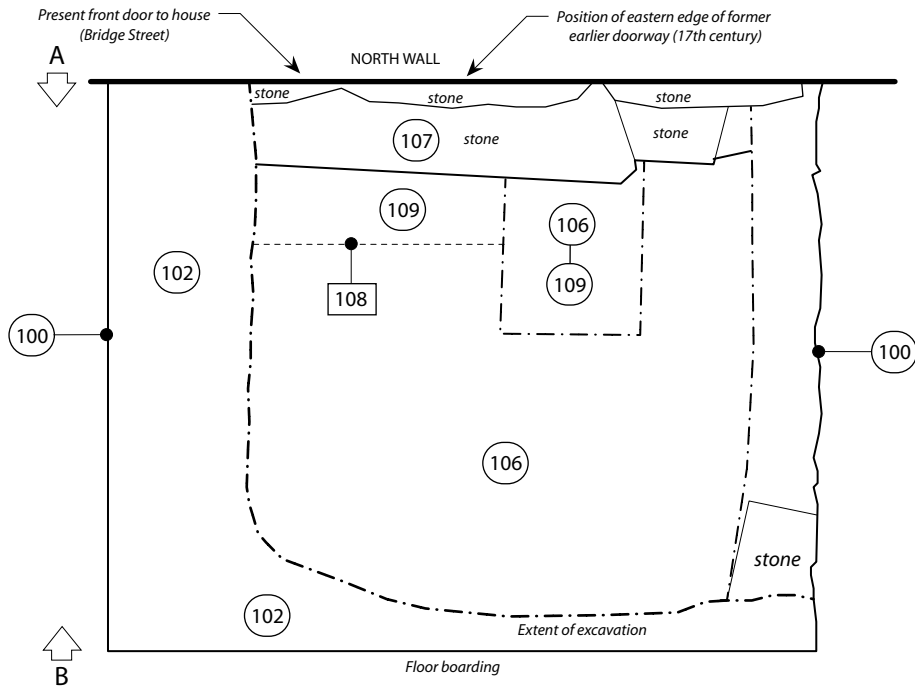
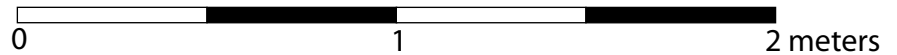


Figure 1. Location of trial trench in Room G1a/G1b



**CONTEXTS**

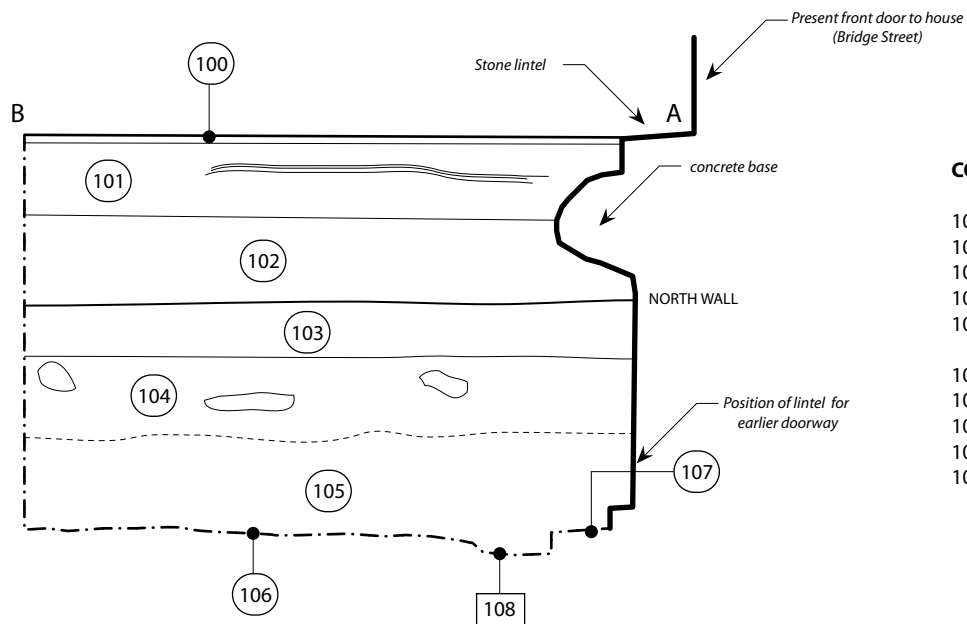
- 100 = Stone tile
- 101 = Oak beam floor joist (depth approx. 0.20m)
- 102 = Loose deposit consisting of soil, plaster fragments (small) and charcoal - depth approx. 0.20m (1710-1714)
- 103 = Compact deposit (Construction) (soil, plaster, lime, stones (small) - depth approx. 0.12m (1710-1714)
- 104 = Loose deposit (demolition), (stones (large), ceiling plaster (large fragments), soil, orange clay, charcoal fragments) - depth approx. 0.20m. (17th century)
- 105 = Loose deposit (demolition), consisting of clay, soil, plaster and charcoal fragments (17th century)
- 106 = Compact clay surface (grey/orange clay with charcoal flecks in upper regions of deposit) (17th century)
- 107 = Foundation stone of earlier house (17th century)
- 108 = Cut for foundation trench
- 109 = Fill of foundation stone cut 108 (orange clay with charcoal flecks).



*Drawn at 1:20 scale*

**GROUND PLAN** (Trial Trench in Room G1a)

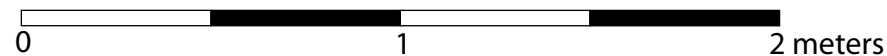
Figure 2. Ground plan of trial trench in Room G1a



**CONTEXTS**

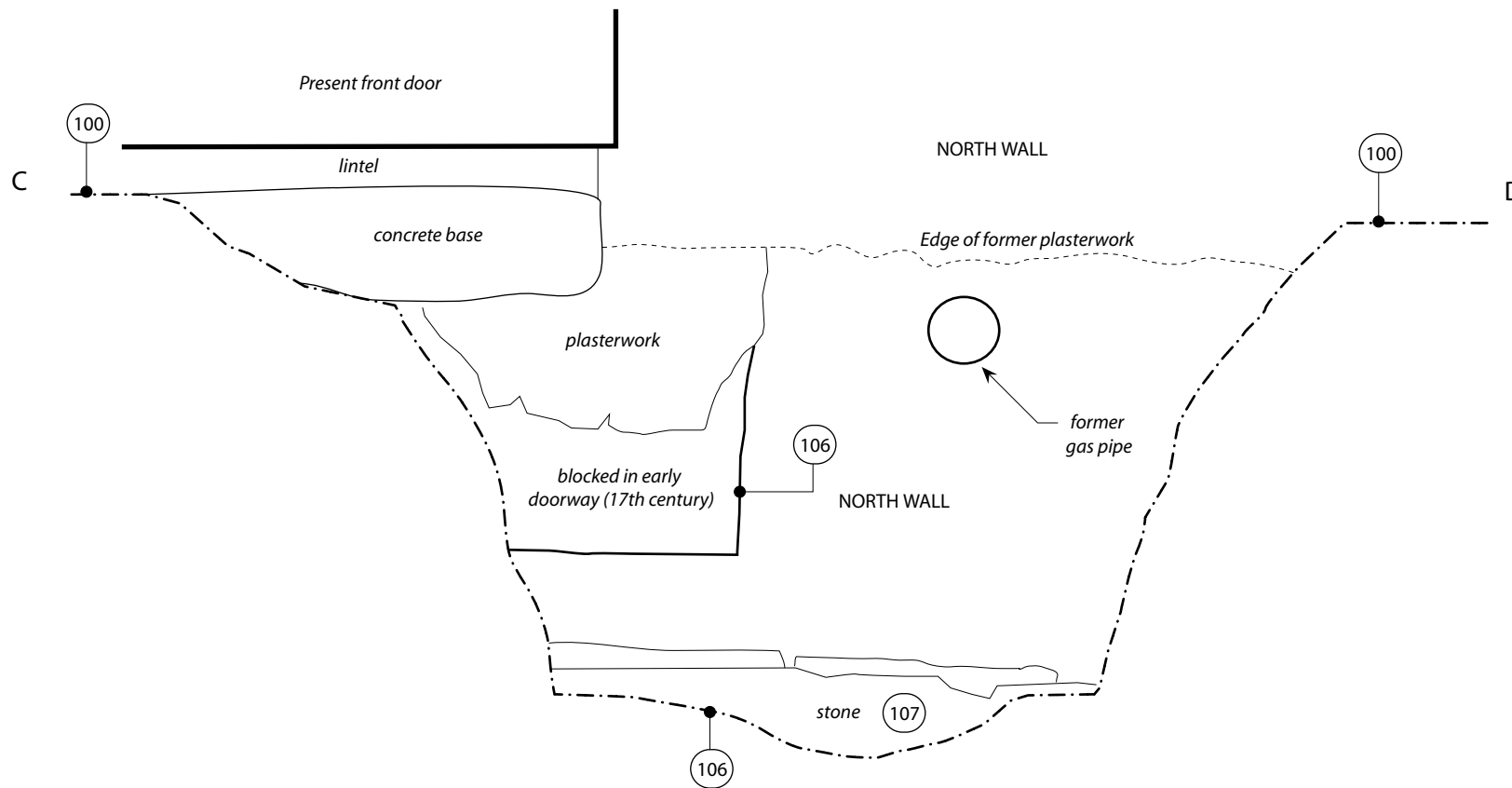
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- 105 = Loose deposit (demolition), consisting of clay, soil, plaster and charcoal fragments (17th century)
- 106 = Compact clay surface (grey/orange clay with charcoal flecks in upper regions of deposit) (17th century)
- 107 = Foundation stone of earlier house (17th century)
- 108 = Cut for foundation trench
- 109 = Fill of foundation stone cut 108 (orange clay with charcoal flecks).

**EAST FACING SECTION A-B** (Trial Trench in Room G1a)



*Drawn at 1:20 scale*

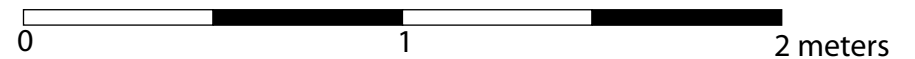
Figure 3. East Facing section of trial trench in Room G1a



**SOUTH FACING SECTION C-D (Trial Trench in Room G1a)**

**CONTEXTS**

- 100 = Stone tile
- 101 = Oak beam floor joist (depth approx. 0.20m)
- 102 = Loose deposit consisting of soil, plaster fragments (small) and charcoal - depth approx. 0.20m (1710-1714)
- 103 = Compact deposit (Construction) (soil, plaster, lime, stones (small) - depth approx. 0.12m (1710-1714)
- 104 = Loose deposit (demolition), (stones (large), ceiling plaster (large fragments), soil, orange clay, charcoal fragments) - depth approx. 0.20m. (17th century)
- 105 = Loose deposit (demolition), consisting of clay, soil, plaster and charcoal fragments (17th century)
- 106 = Compact clay surface (grey/orange clay with charcoal flecks in upper regions of deposit) (17th century)
- 107 = Foundation stone of earlier house (17th century)
- 108 = Cut for foundation trench
- 109 = Fill of foundation stone cut 108 (orange clay with charcoal flecks).
- 110 = Blocked in early doorway (17th century house)



*Drawn at 1:20 scale*

Figure 4. South Facing section of trial trench in Room G1a





Plate 1. Trial Trench in Room G1a/G1b prior to re-opening. Looking north.



Plate 2. Trial Trench in Room G1a/G1b following removal of overburden. Looking north.



Plate 3. Trial Trench in Room G1a/G1b following removal of overburden cleaning. Looking east.



Plate 4. Trial Trench in Room G1a/G1b following removal of overburden and cleaning. Looking west.