

# EXCAVATION AT ST PATRICK'S CHAPEL 2015 INTERIM REPORT



Prepared by Dyfed Archaeological Trust

For Cadw, The University of Sheffield,  
Nineveh Charitable Trust and  
Pembrokeshire Coast National Park  
Authority



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By

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# **EXCAVATION AT ST PATRICK'S CHAPEL 2015: INTERIM REPORT**

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## **SUMMARY**

*A second season of excavation was carried out at St Patrick's Chapel in May 2015, following a successful first season in 2014. The report on the 2014 work should be read in conjunction with this, the 2015, report.*

*In 2015 the 2014 Trench 1 was widened by c.3m to the east, taking in the west wall of the chapel that had been excavated in 1924. It was planned to completely excavate this extension, but this was not achieved owing to the depth and the complexity of the archaeological deposits.*

*At the end of 2014 the earliest recognised built feature of the site, the west wall (42) of a building or other structure constructed from beach boulders, had been left in situ. This was re-excavated. The wall turned to the east at its northern and southern ends and ran under the archaeological deposits exposed in 2015. To the south and to the north of this wall wind-blown sand had accumulated, eventually burying the wall, into which and through which graves had been excavated, some in cists. It would seem that these burials were placed in the ground when the wall was in a very dilapidated state, or had been completely buried by sand. To the south a dry-stone wall of beach boulders lay over this wind-blown sand; this is likely to be a wall running around the chapel yard contemporary with the medieval chapel.*

*Within the confines of wall 42 only the upper archaeological levels were excavated. Graves were the earliest excavated features, mostly cist graves, with one having a cross incised on a lintel slab. The wall by this time was completely buried by sand. Skulls visible in the sides of graves indicate that there are many more burials in this area, some potentially contemporary with the early wall. Above the excavated graves layers of rubble had been laid down from which a Hiberno-Norse ringed pin of 11<sup>th</sup> century date was found. Cist graves and other graves, almost exclusively of very young children, were cut into or lay on the rubble. It would seem that the latest use of the cemetery was for these children.*

*The west wall of the medieval chapel excavated in 1924 was of three distinct phases. It was not possible to confidently relate the chapel to the graves, but it is likely that at least its earliest phase was contemporary with the latest graves*

*Four radiocarbon dates were obtained from skeletons excavated in 2014. The dates range from the mid/late 7<sup>th</sup> century to the early 11<sup>th</sup> century.*

## **THE 2015 EXCAVATION**

The excavation took place between the 4<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2015.

### **The stratigraphic sequence**

The site was deeply stratified, and a provisional sequence based on the 2014 and 2015 excavations is as follows, although this will undoubtedly be modified as more work is done (see Fig. 9):

1. Pre wind-blown ground surface. This was not encountered with certainty, but a sondage excavated in 2015 encountered the water table at c.4.2m OD, which may be the top of the old ground surface.
2. Approximately 1.2m of wind-blown sand accumulated over the presumed old ground surface. The lower 0.25m of this sand was mottled and stained with iron and

manganese. Sand above this was homogeneous with very little evidence of banding.

3. The wind-blown sand stabilises and a 0.4m thick soil forms (45). Charcoal-rich deposits on the surface of the soil are suggestive of human activity.

4. Wind-blown sand accumulates over the soil formation to a depth of c.0.3m.

5. A substantial wall (42) composed of beach boulders (some massive) is built on the wind-blown sand.

6. Wind-blown sand accumulates around the base of the wall (42).

7. The wall (42) begins to dilapidate, and wind-blown sand (73) continues to accumulate around it. Darker bands (44, 91) within this sand are thin soil formations, indicating periods of wind-blown sand stabilisation.

8. Graves are dug in and through the wind-blown sand and through the dilapidated wall (42). Graves are intercut, indicating a lengthy period of use of this phase of the cemetery.

9. All traces of wall 42 are buried beneath wind-blown sand and material from graves. However, the area of the wall stands platform-like above its surroundings.

10. A layer of rubble is laid down over the platform, spreading out to the north.

11. A series of mostly child graves and a few other graves are dug through and into this soil and rubble.

12. The first phase of a chapel is constructed over the rubble, possibly contemporary with some of the child graves. Externally the structure measures just 2.25m north-south.

13. The chapel is extended by the addition of wall 82, creating a doorway between walls 81 and 82. The chapel now measures 4.7m north-south.

14. The doorway between walls 81 and 82 is blocked. At some point a wall (64) is built around the chapel yard

15. The chapel decays and wind-blown sand (45) accumulates in and around it to a depth of up to 0.8m.

16. Coastal erosion affects the site, the chapel is excavated in 1924, graves are excavated in 1970 and later stabilisation schemes take place.

## **Results** (Figs. 4-8)

The following describes elements of the 2014 and 2015 excavation of Trench 1 in more detail. Individual burials and graves are dealt with at the end of this section.

**Wall 42.** The western side of this wall was exposed in 2014. It was constructed after approximately 0.3m of wind-blown sand had accumulated over the soil (45). The western face of the wall was slightly convex, measured 8m long N-S, and at its southern and northern ends turned through right angles to the east. It was 0.9m wide and stood at its southern corner up to six courses high (1m), but was its western side averaged 2-3 courses high (0.5m). It was a dry-stone construction, of beach boulders, with the largest 0.9m x 0.6m x 0.6m. This boulder lay on the south side of a 0.9m wide entrance through the middle of the wall. A large, though smaller, boulder defined the north side of the entrance. Two stones in the entrance may have been deliberately placed to block the entrance. Approximately 2m of the outer face and top of the southern (east to west

aligned) section of this wall was exposed in 2015. The southern side was in better condition than the west side, and stood to a consistent 1m height. The inner wall face was not exposed, as burials and other complex stratified deposits butt up against it. Only a few of the upper stones of the northern section of this wall were revealed in 2015; lower levels remain concealed beneath archaeological deposits.

The 2015 excavation trench divided itself into three broad areas: south of wall 42, north of wall 42 and within wall 42.

**Area to the south of wall 42.** Wind-blown sand (73) accumulated against wall 42, eventually burying it. This sand layer sloped down away from the wall to the south, and contained lenses and layers of almost black sand representing soil layers that stabilised for sufficient time for vegetation to take hold. The most distinctive of these was layer 44, which had developed when only the top of wall 42 was visible.

A dry-stone wall (64) of water-worn boulders had been built over the sand layer 73. This wall had been recorded in the 2014 excavation trench. However, in the 2014 trench visitor and other erosion dating to the 1970s and earlier had reduced it to a spread of rubble and it was not recognisable as a wall.

Three graves (70, 71, 77) were cut through the sandy-soil (44) into the underlying sand, as was probably the grave containing skeleton 239. An infant's grave (58) lay in sand immediately above the sandy-soil, close to the top of the wall 42 and below three flat stones. Skeleton 205 (the upper body section of which was excavated in 2014) lay beneath wall 64, as did skeleton 201 excavated in 2014.

This area was excavated to the top of the underlying soil 41.

**Area to the north of wall 42.** Wind-blown sand (103) accumulated against and over wall 42. A dark soil layer (91) similar to 44 to the south of the wall. A grave cut through 91 was noted against the east side of the trench, but not excavated. A grave containing skeleton 230 was cut into the wind-blown sand (103), and cut through the skeletons of a double burial (231, 232).

This area was not fully excavated in 2015.

**Area to the west of wall 42.** This area was excavated in 2014. Deposits above the cist graves and other burials in this area lay beneath recently disturbed sand (13, 45) and above a sand layer (114) or sand layer 73, which lay above wall 42. Cist grave 26 also lay beneath rubble 88 (see below), which helps tie it and, by association, other graves into the stratigraphic sequence recorded in 2015. Intercutting of graves was noted, with cist grave 22 (skeleton 209) cutting through skeleton 216, which cut through skeleton 221. Cist grave 21 (skeleton 206) cut through skeleton 210, which cut through skeleton 211. Cist 48 (skeleton 214) overlay cist 52 (skeleton 219). Cist 28 overlay cist 47 (skeleton 213), and skeleton 3013 was above skeleton 212. All graves and skeletons and their relationships are shown on the stratigraphic matrix (Figure 9).

Three radiocarbon dates have been obtained from skeletons in this area: 900-1025 cal. AD from skeleton 209; 775-985 cal. AD from skeleton 216; 685-880 cal. AD from skeleton 211.

**Area within and above wall 42.** Deep stratified deposits remain unexcavated in this area. The earliest excavated features in this area include skeleton 244, cist 111 (containing skeleton 110), skeletons 243 and 242 and gravel and boulder spreads (108, 109, 113). All these were sealed by a dark sandy layer (97).

Three cist graves (26, 104, and 106 – containing skeletons 218, 241 and 245) were cut through layer 97. Grave 26 had a cross incised stone (27) erect at its head end and a smaller stone marking its foot end. A radiocarbon date of 670-865 cal. AD was obtained from skeleton 218).

A layer of rubble (88) sealed the three cist graves (26, 104 and 106). A Hiberno-Norse ring-pin dating to the early-mid 11<sup>th</sup> century was found in layer 88.

Several cist graves, in some of which skeletons had completely decayed (61, 86) or were decaying (cist 59, skeleton 225) lay above or were cut into the rubble (88). Other burials (skeletons 222, 235, 233, 234) also overlay the rubble layer. Most of these were skeletons of infants or young children.

The first phase (81) of the chapel (9) is constructed over the rubble (88). This may be contemporaneous with the child graves and other graves. Externally the structure measures just 2.25m north-south. It may be that a path (87, 93) is contemporary with this phase of the chapel. Stratigraphically this seems to be the case, although this path lines up with the blocked doorway (83) of the chapel, which is later in the stratigraphic sequence.

It is not entirely clear where the three phases of the chapel lie within the stratigraphic sequence due in part to the very loose sandy soil with boulders that constitute layer 88 and in the back-fill of the 1924 excavation trench, and also to the fact that this trench (53, 54) had been excavated to the base of the first phase of the chapel wall (81) and to the base of the blocked door (82), but not to the base of the second phase of the wall (82). It is clear that all three phases are later than the rubble 88, and it may be that all three are later than all the burials on the site.

## **Skeletons and graves from the 2014 and 2015 excavation**

*Skeleton 201.* No grave cut. Not in a cist. Below stone spread 10 and above skeleton 205. Head to the west, but with the head missing (due to erosion). The body was on its back but with the legs and arms slightly flexed. Adult.



*Skeleton 202.* No grave cut. Not in a cist. Overlies skeleton 207/cist 23. Partial skeleton, largely disarticulated with the bones in a rough heap. Articulation of some bones suggests the body was not entirely de-fleshed when deposited. Adult?



*Skeleton 203.* No grave cut. Covered by a stone spread (11). Head to west. Poorly preserved, with the upper body dissolved. Adult?



*Skeleton 204.* No grave cut. Not in a cist. Head to west. Only parts of leg bones survived. The upper part of the skeleton is likely to have been removed by recent human action.

*Skeleton 205.* 0.5m deep grave cut visible in section. Not in a cist. Head to west. Supine with left arm crossed over chest. Partly excavated in 2014, the lower part of the body was excavated in 2015. It lay beneath wall 10/64. Adult.



*Skeleton 206/Cist grave 21.* Cist grave with lintel and side slabs, no base slabs. The east end cut into the top of the wall 42, and some of the cist slabs were probably reused wall material. Directly overlay skeleton 210. Head to west. Supine with hands crossed over pelvis. Good preservation. A sherd of medieval pottery was found in the fill of this grave, possibly fallen in from overlying deposits. Adult.



*Skeleton 207/Cist grave 23.* Cist grave with lintel and side slabs, no base slabs. West end of cist missing due to coastal erosion. Head to west. Supine with hands crossed over pelvis. Fair preservation. Adult.



*Skeleton 208/Cist grave 24.* Cist grave with lintel and side slabs, no base slabs. The west end of the cist with the upper part of the body is likely to have been removed by recent human activity. Only parts of the leg bones survive. Head to the west. Adult?



*Skeleton 209/Cist grave 22.* Cist grave with lintel and side slabs, no base slabs. The east end cut into the top of the wall 42, and some of the cist slabs were probably reused wall material. Head to west. Supine with right hand crossed over pelvis, left hand by side. Good preservation. . A radiocarbon determination with a 2 sigma calibrated range of 897-1025 cal. AD was obtained from this skeleton. Adult.



*Skeleton 210.* Not in cist. Directly below skeleton 206/cist grave 21, and later than skeleton 211. Head to west, but missing due to coastal erosion. Supine with hands crossed over pelvis. Good condition. Adult.



*Skeleton 211.* Not in cist. The right side of this skeleton was cut away when skeleton 210 was inserted. Head to west but missing due to erosion. Supine. Surviving bone in good condition. . A radiocarbon determination with a 2 sigma calibrated range of 684-878 cal. AD was obtained from this skeleton. Adult.



*Skeleton 212.* Not in cist, but under a large boulder and with a boulder at the head end of the grave. NE-SW aligned with the head to the NE. Pre-dating skeleton 203. Poorly preserved with just part of the torso surviving. Adult?



*Skeleton 213/Cist grave 47.* In a small cist, 0.7m long with sides made of rounded boulders and lintel slabs. Head to west. Only part of the skull survived. A possible pottery sherd (409) came from the fill of the cist grave. Infant.



*Skeleton 214/Cist grave 48.* A rough cist grave made mostly from boulders. Cut into the top of the wall 42. Aligned roughly E-W, but a slightly different alignment to the other E-W graves. Head to the west. Supine with hand over pelvis. Variable bone preservation. Quartz stone placed over a clavicle. Adult.



*Skeleton 215/Cist 50.* Only the leg, east end survives – the remainder removed by erosion. E-W aligned with head to west. Only lower leg bones remain. Infant?



*Skeleton 216.* Not in cist. Partly below skeleton 209/cist 22. E-W aligned with head to E facing south. Arms and legs slightly flexed. Variable bone preservation. The foot bones of this skeleton may have been removed in February 2014 and included with skeleton 221. . A radiocarbon determination with a 2 sigma calibrated range of 777-987 cal. AD was obtained from this skeleton. Adult?



*Skeleton 217.* Part of ?child's skull and teeth and possible long bone in loose sand – probably from a disturbed grave.

*Skeleton 218/Cist grave 26 with grave marker 27 (Find no. 403).* Cut through wall 42, and using some of the wall stones as part of the cist. The grave was 0.7m deep, with the cist's lintel slabs 0.3m below the top of the grave cut. No base slabs. E-W aligned with head to the west. Supine with hands crossed over the pelvis. Bone in good condition, but lower legs decayed. Skull slightly damaged and distorted due to pressure from lintel slabs. The east end of the grave lay beneath the edge of the site, and some foot bones were recovered in 2015. The cist's side slabs were left *in situ* at the end of the excavation. A possible copper alloy shroud pin (411) was found amongst the hand bones. In 2015, the east end of this grave was excavated – here a small, unmarked, upright stone marked the foot end of the grave. A radiocarbon determination with a 2 sigma calibrated range of 669-866 cal. AD was obtained from this skeleton. Adult.



*Skeleton 219/Cist grave 52.* Small cist, 0.7m long, composed of rounded stones. E-W aligned with head to the W. Well-preserved skeleton of an infant, supine. Adult foot bones also in grave.



*Skeleton 220.* Not in cist. Identified and removed from the eroding sand dunes in February 2014. Only the lower leg bones survived, the remainder of the skeleton having been removed by erosion. E-W aligned with head to west. Adult?

*Skeleton 221.* The very crushed skull of a ?juvenile and other bone was removed in February 2014 from directly beneath cist grave 22. It was then assumed to be the head, western end, of a complete skeleton. However, in May 2014 no further bones of this skeleton were discovered. They may have been removed when skeleton 216 was placed in the ground, or the skull may have been loose in the foot end of the grave of skeleton 216. Some foot bones of 216 may have been mixed with those of skeleton 221.

*Skeleton 222.* Poorly preserved skeleton lying in a hollow in the top of rubble 88. It lay within an arc of stones (60), which seems to have been centred on the skeleton. Aligned E-W. The skull lay beneath large stones. Child.



*Skeleton 223.* Infant skeleton aligned E-W, supine with legs slightly flexed. Very well preserved. Three shale slabs had been placed over it and limpet shells lay in the sand over between the slabs and the skeleton.



*Skeleton 224.* Infant skull found when cleaning the section of the 2014 excavation. The remainder of the skeleton lies in the 2015 excavation area – not excavated in 2015.

*Skeleton 225/Cist grave 59.* Cist aligned E-W, 0.89m long by 0.47m wide. The vertically pitched side stones of the cist were visible after removed of sand 55. A layer of quartz pebbles had been laid on the top of the cist, below which were ten small lintel slabs. Only a few traces of the skeleton survived. A 'pillow' stone had been placed in the cist at the west end. There were no basal slabs. It seems likely that the quartz pebbles of this cist were meant to be seen. Infant?



*Skeleton 226/Cist grave 68.* Cist grave aligned E-W, with head to W. The E end lies under the E side of the trench. At least 1.5m long and 0.5m wide. Cist with lintel slabs and side slabs, no base slabs. Well preserved skeleton, supine with hands over pelvis. Side slabs of cist left *in situ*. Adult.



*Skeleton 227/Cist grave 72.* Cist grave aligned E-W with head to W end. Cist up to 0.7m wide. E of grave lies beneath the edge of the site. Well preserved skeleton, tightly confined within cist, supine, with hand crossed over pelvis. Only upper portion of the skeleton was removed. Side slabs of cist and E end of cist left *in situ*. Adult?



*Skeleton 228/Cist grave 75.* Cist grave aligned E-W, with head to W end, 1.33m long, 0.5m wide, with lintel slabs and side slabs, no basal slabs. Poorly preserved supine skeleton with arms likely to have been positioned alongside the body – some long bone and skull fragments survive. Juvenile?



*Skeleton 229.* Very poorly preserved infant burial - a few skull fragments and a part of a long bone survive.



Skeleton 230. Detected in 2014 when the skull was visible in the section edge of the site. The top of this grave was marked by two parallel lines of stones aligned SW-NE. The fairly well-preserved supine skeleton lay c.0.5m below these in wind-blown sand with the head to the SW end. The grave had cut through two earlier skeletons 231, 232), with some of bones, including the two skulls, placed over or alongside skeleton 230. Half an amber(?) bead and a possible piece of amber was found directly beneath skeleton 230. Adult.



231 and 232. A double burial. The upper portions of both these E-W aligned skeletons were disturbed by the excavation of the grave for skeleton 230 and the disturbed bones placed in the grave of 230. The bone is well preserved with an arm of 232 lying across 231. A grave cut visible only in the section retained at the E end of the grave shows that the grave was cut from c.0.4-0.5m above the skeletons. Adults.



*Skeleton 233.* The partial remains of two feet. The bones articulated, but nothing else present.

*Skeleton 234.* A collection of small bones may represent the remains of an infant burial.

*Skeleton 235.* A partial skeleton, missing the head and other bones, placed in a 'folded' or kneeling position. Placed on rubble, not in a grave. Associated with limpet shells. Adult?



*Skeleton 236/Cist grave 89.* E-W aligned cist grave 0.8m long, 0.3m wide, internally 0.65 x 0.15, with lintel slabs and side slabs/stone, containing an infant skeleton in poor condition. Head to W.



*Skeleton 238.* A concentration of bone fragments, possibly the remains of a child's skeleton.

*Skeleton 239/240.* Skeleton with grave cut visible in section edge of site. Roughly E-W aligned, head to W. Supine. Right arm straight, left resting on pelvis. Lower section of skeleton under edge of site and left *in situ*. Adult.



*Skeleton 241/Cist grave 104.* Cist grave with small lintel slabs and side slabs. No basal slabs. E-W aligned, 1.4m long, 0.6m wide. Head at W end, supine. Poorly preserved skeleton. Side slabs left *in situ*. Juvenile?



*Skeleton 242.* Skull noted at end of 2015 excavation within sand 112. Left *in situ*.

*Skeleton 243.* Remains of an infant skull and possibly other bones in sand 112.

*Skeleton 244/Cist grave 111.* Small, 0.6m x 04m E-W aligned cist with lintel slabs and a side slabs. No basal slabs. A cross had been inscribed on the top face of one of the lintel slabs (cover photograph). Skeletal remains comprised skull fragment and little else. Head to W. Side slabs left *in situ*. Infant.



*Skeleton 245/Cist grave 106.* E-W aligned cist, 1.7m x 0.65m, with lintel slabs and side slabs, no basal slabs. Very well preserved skeleton. Supine, head to W, hands crossed over pelvis. Possible infant bones present near right femur. Side slabs left *in situ*. At least five skulls of earlier burials were visible in the sides of this grave. Adult.



*Cist grave 20.* The east end of a cist grave with lintel and side slabs – the west end removed during the 1970 excavation? No bone survived – possibly removed in 1970?



*Cist grave 28.* Small E-W aligned cist grave, 0.88m long. Side slabs of slate and rounded stones. One large lintel slab surrounded by 20 small rounded quartz stones. No skeletal remains. In the photograph the emptied cist grave is shown with the excavated quartz pebbles in a pile. Infant.



*Cist grave 61(30).* Recognised in 2014 and assigned number 30. E-W aligned cist grave, 1.28m x 0.43m. No skeletal remains present. The cist comprised substantial side slabs and an upright east end slab/marker. This would have been the foot end of the grave, assuming the head was to the W. A layer of quartz pebbles was spread over the top of the cist. Child.



*Possible cist 69.* Eight boulders set on edge surrounding central area 0.5m x 0.2m may be the remains of a small cist grave. No skeletal material survived. Infant.



*Cist grave 85.* Two slabs mark (in total 0.7m E-W, 0.3m wide) what was probably the top of an infant's grave. No skeletal remains and there were no side or basal slabs.



*Cist grave 86.* Protruding from the east side of the site – not excavated. Upright side slabs of a small cist between which was a layer of limpet shells. Child?



*Cist grave 98.* Cist grave cut through by later cist grave 89. E-W aligned, 1.40m x 45m. Represented by several upright slabs that would have formed the sides of the cist. No skeletal remains. The photograph below shows the cist 89 cutting through 98, and also grave 115. Juvenile?



*Grave 115.* Shallow rectangular pit aligned NE-SW, 0.6m x 0.3m, with a small stone slab upright at it NW end. No skeletal remains, although likely to have been an infant's grave.



### **RADIOCARBON DATES**

The following radiocarbon dates have been provided by SUERC (Scottish Universities Environmental Research Council). The calibrated ranges have been determined from the University of Oxford Radiocarbon Accelerator Unit calibration programme ( OxCal v4.2.4).

Lab Code: SUERC-59871

Context: Human bone Skeleton 218

Radiocarbon Age BP: 1259±31

Calibrated range at 2 sigma (95.4% probability): 669 (83.3%) 779 cal. AD; 791 (7%) 830 cal. AD; 837 (5.1%) 866 cal. AD

Lab Code: SUERC-59872

Context: Human bone Skeleton 209

Radiocarbon Age BP: 1059±31

Calibrated range at 2 sigma (95.4% probability): 897 (14.6%) 926 cal. AD; 942 (80.8%) 1025 cal. AD

Lab Code: SUERC-59873

Context: Human bone Skeleton 211

Radiocarbon Age BP: 1239±31

Calibrated range at 2 sigma (95.4% probability): 684 (59.2%) 782 cal. AD; 787 (36.2%) 878 cal. AD

Lab Code: SUERC-59874

Context: Human bone Skeleton 216

Radiocarbon Age BP: 1133±31

Calibrated range at 2 sigma (95.4% probability): 777 (4.1%) 792 cal. AD; 803 (7.7%) 844 cal. AD; 858 (83.6%) 987 cal. AD

## ARTEFACTS

401. Roofing slate. Two roof slates, each with a single peg hole. 290mm x 180mm x 8mm and 290mm x 135mm x 8mm. Made from local slate probably from Porth Lleuog 300m to the north of the chapel.
402. Cross shaped stone, with a lightly incised cross on the face of the stone. A small panel of carved incisions below the cross could be an attempt at knot-work. Purplish coloured ?local slate/shale. 500mm x 210mm x 27mm. Found on the beach immediately below Trench 1 and also certainly eroded from one of the cist excavated cist graves during the winter storms of 2013-14.
403. Grave marker. Cross shaped stone with the lower half of a coarse ring-cross incised on the face of the stone. The upper half of the cross is missing as the upper portion of the face of the stone has flaked off at the point where the cross arm was incised. 700mm x 270mm x 45mm. Bluish-grey local slate/shale. Set upright at the head end, west, of cist grave 26.
404. Blue glass annular bead. 10mm diameter, 4mm thick. Found on beach immediately below Trench 1.
405. Rim sherd of pot. Dyfed Gravel Tempered Ware 12<sup>th</sup> -15<sup>th</sup> century. From loose fill of cist grave 21. Possible fallen into grave from overlying deposits.
406. Five sherds of medieval/post-medieval pottery. From layer 13.
407. Rim sherd of medieval pottery. Possibly Saintonge ware. From Trench 3, layer 7.
409. Possible sherd of coarse pottery from cist grave 47.
410. Sherd of jug handle. Medieval. From topsoil, Trench 1.
411. Copper alloy pin. Possible shroud pin. 30mm long, bent double, 2mm diameter. Found amongst hand bones of skeleton 218 during post-excavation cleaning.
412. Hiberno-Norse ringed pin. Bronze? Probably made in Dublin. 11<sup>th</sup> century.
413. Trench 1, rubble layer 88.
413. Worked bone. Possibly a waste piece used to make bone beads. Trench 1, layer 87.
414. Piece of worked flint. Trench 1, layer 79.
415. Half a bead. Amber? Trench 1, from below femur of skeleton 230.
416. Flint scraper. Trench 1, wind-blown sand 103.
417. Oyster shell. Trench 1, fill of grave 101.
418. Possible small piece of amber. Trench 1, from sand below skeleton 230, possibly associated with skeleton.
419. Flint core. Trench 1, layer 97.

420. Iron nail. Trench 1, fill of grave 96.
421. Crucible fragment. Trench 1, assigned to fill of grave 100. It came from a collapse into grave 100, and so pre-dates the grave.
422. Cross incised stone. Trench 1, lintel slab of cist grave 111.
413. Half a stone ring. 165mm diameter. Heavily weathered. Trench 1, sandy layer 45.
424. Plaster/daub? Possible piece of plaster or daub. Trench 1, layer 87.
425. Bottle – W.H. George and Son Haverfordwest. Trench 1, 54 – backfill of 1924 excavation trench.
426. Pin. Bronze. Modern. Trench 1, from cleaning the top of wall 9.
427. Stone. Smooth stone, 140mm x 30mm, split along its length. Trench 1, found against right tibia of skeleton 205.
428. Pot sherd. Medieval Dyfed Gravel Tempered Ware? Trench 1, towards bottom of layer 45.
429. Pot sherd. Medieval Dyfed Gravel Tempered Ware? Trench 1, from top of layer 45.
430. Shale bracelet. Part of a shale bracelet found by A David in the 1970s in eroding sand below a cist grave.

## **SAMPLES**

301. Bulk sample for flotation from layer 41.
302. Bulk sample for flotation from layer 41.
303. Column sample of soil layer 41.
304. Sample for TL dating from soil layer 41.
305. Bulk sample from layer 49 – soil and limpet shells.
306. Bulk sample, possibly for radiocarbon dating from layer 97.

## **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND OUTREACH**

Volunteers from the local community with some from further afield carried out the excavation under the supervision of staff from the Dyfed Archaeological Trust and The University of Sheffield. Twenty-eight volunteers participated on the excavation, some for the whole excavation, others giving just a day or two of their time. In total volunteers gave 1380 hours of their time to the excavation.

Katie Hemer (University of Sheffield), Rhiannon Comeau (one of our many enthusiastic volunteers), and Trust staff provided hourly tours of the excavation. During the three-week excavation approximately 1500 people – visitors and members of the local community – were directly engaged. In addition tours were provided to the Hook Peninsula County Wexford Choir (50 people), St David's Historical Society (35 people) and members of Dyfed Archaeological Trust (20 people).

Longer guided walks to St David's Head were provided on the two weekends of the excavation (four in total). Twenty people took part in these.

A bilingual 'dig diary' recording daily discoveries on the excavation was posted on Dyfed Archaeological Trust's website enabling visitors to the site and others to keep themselves informed of developments.

Funding from The University of Sheffield enabled additional outreach and promotion, including the production of a professionally-made film on the 2015 excavation in both English and Welsh. This film will be posted on the Dyfed Archaeological Trust and University of Sheffield websites. An exhibition was produced and displayed in St David's Cathedral over the summer of 2015, during which time the 78,000 visitors to the Cathedral had the opportunity to view it. It is impossible to assess how many Cathedral visitors actually viewed the exhibition, but it was a significant number as the car park attendant at Whitesands Bay reported that many visitors had come specifically to see St Patrick's Chapel after seeing the exhibition. A bilingual leaflet was produced to accompany the exhibition, and copies made available for distribution at Whitesands Bay car park. Volunteers who participated on the excavation were invited to a day of talks in St David's in late September 2015 at which the film was shown, and staff members of both Dyfed Archaeological Trust and The University of Sheffield have given talks and lectures to local groups and societies, professionals and academics. It is likely that presentations will continue to be made for several years.

**Below is feedback from some of the volunteers and others:**

Just a brief note to say how much we enjoyed the dig at Whitesands Bay again this year, and how important the opportunity offered by DAT to participate in archaeology is for us retired folk. It's not just that we are interested in the history of the area in which we live, as important as that is, but that actually doing archaeology brings us a load of other benefits. We have learnt new skills [which we hope to be able to develop even further] and have made new friendships with a wide range of people: older and younger, professional archaeologists and volunteers, native-born and incomers. So, the digs have also become a very important social activity for us, but one that, we feel, also gives us the opportunity to put something back into the area in which we live and which we love so much. Intellectual stimulation, physical activity and cheery socialising what more could anyone ask of life! Many thanks, long may it continue.

The opportunity to experience something like this does not come up very often and we feel very privileged to have been allowed to take part. The digs were quite awe inspiring when you think that what we uncovered were only seen by human eyes over a thousand years ago. To be able to put history into context by seeing the way the graves and remains were laid is invaluable. We were also impressed by the way both digs were run in such an inclusive manner, with all abilities and ages being allowed to take part, and in such a hands-on manner. It was an experience not to be missed.

Just to let you know how enjoyable it was helping you out on the dig this year. It has been an unique opportunity to learn about archaeology from true professionals, which left me in a positive state of mind. I hope to be able to help you out again next year!

Thank you for an extremely interesting (and windswept!) 3 days at Whitesands Bay. As a volunteer, and almost total amateur compared to many on site, I really enjoyed the opportunity to gain experience in a new area. The excavation of gravesites and the

correct legal and scientific procedures for the discovery and recording of human remains made it a very educational few days. I greatly appreciated the chance to participate in and observe the excavations.

Just a quick email to say how useful and enjoyable I found the weekend spent on the St. Patrick's chapel excavation at Whitesands Bay this year. It was rewarding in its own right as a unique setting to peel back the modern landscape of Pembrokeshire and look down through 1500 years of human occupation, and also as a valuable practical aid to my post graduate studies which only programmes of work like this provide. Hope to be there next year.

I feel very lucky to have been able to help at this year's St Patrick's Chapel excavation. I have been introduced to a site that, for me as an academic researcher, is both fascinating and potentially very important. It also has a much broader appeal, as a hauntingly evocative site with the capacity to tell many stories about the lives of the people buried here, the development of Christianity, and times of both peace and conflict. It evoked keen interest in the many people that I showed around: it is a site that – literally – digs deep into the shared cultural heritage of visitors from both far and near, for the Welsh with its links to St David, and more broadly with its evidence of an early Christian community in the post Roman period. Culturally it is an iconic site, and not just for the development of Christianity, being – effectively – on the front line of the creation and maintenance of Welsh identity both in the post Roman period and during the Viking incursions of the tenth and eleventh centuries. Archaeologically it is wonderfully rewarding, with (unlike many Welsh sites) very good preservation of bone and of artefacts – though further excavation is needed to reap the full benefits of the latter aspect. As someone researching early medieval Wales, it is clear to me that it has the capacity to contribute significantly to some key under-explored questions for Welsh early medieval archaeology. Firstly, it is important for the detailed picture that the analysis of the bones is already revealing. Secondly, for the high likelihood that the early structure around which the burials cluster is either an early medieval (slab) shrine or oratory, site types fundamental to the practice of early Christianity that are well known in Ireland but unknown in Wales, where until now no early medieval churches or shrines have been excavated. Thirdly, for its emerging evidence of early medieval metalworking and crafts, which is desperately rare in early medieval Welsh contexts. Fourthly, for the material evidence of Viking contact provided by the eleventh century Dublin Viking ringed pin find. And fifth and last (but by no means least) for the indications provided by the combined evidence of burials, the probable devotional site, the emerging evidence of manufacturing/ crafts and of long distance contacts, which together suggest that this was a significant early medieval focal site with a long period of occupation, where trade, exchange and key encounters between native and visiting peoples might be expected to have taken place. In brief, it is a site that merits much more investigation and excavation – many visitors to the site couldn't understand why excavation wasn't more extensive – and I, along with these visitors, very much hope that it will be possible to secure funding for further work!

I want to let you know how much the Society appreciated your in-depth tour and explanation of the dig that has been taking place at Whitesands Bay. It brought the historical background of the peninsula into sharp focus for us all, as well as giving us an insight into the lives of our ancestors. The weather could have been kinder to us on the evening, but in a way it highlighted how tough life could be without our modern

conveniences, as evidenced by the many burials of children on the site, although you did explain that may well have been a deliberate concentration.

I must thank you for the opportunity of volunteering on the St Patricks Chapel site this month. During my time on site I thoroughly enjoyed the company of like-minded enthusiasts and the important historical input provided by the professionals from Dyfed Archaeology. The site is tremendous with easier digging meaning that even the less fit can achieve a lot. Also, you carefully rotated the activities so that we experienced more of the real archaeological work. I really did find myself lost in the work with the accompaniment of the crashing waves. I am glad to hear that the site has yielded more historical information, I was fascinated by the graves that were uncovered and trust that the remains are now saved. I am naturally very interested in local history and would wish to help in future events hopefully at Whitesands and elsewhere.

I would just like to say thank you to you, Marion, Katie and Hubert for running an excellent excavation at St Patrick's Chapel. It was lovely to feel so involved with the practice of archaeology, and I think that the other volunteers felt the same and the atmosphere (helped by the scenery!) was great. I was really impressed by the respect shown to the human remains, and also by the enormous number of visitors that you gave tours of the site to. Talking to some of them, I got the sense that they were inspired by the dig and the story behind it, and the more local ones seemed really proud of the site being part of their landscape. I'm really looking forward to volunteering at future excavations with you.

I was about to write how very much I enjoyed my first dig when I received your thank you letter for our hard work. Thank you so much for allowing me to attend and the valuable instruction from yourself and all your staff. It was a very humbling moment when I realised that I had dug down to a cist grave. It was exciting to see the different walls uncovered. I am very interested in the history of the area and this dig has opened my mind to even further information. The people that I told to come and visit the dig were very impressed and look forward to further digs at the Chapel.

Thank you for allowing me to volunteer on this year's excavation at St Patrick's Chapel. I have really learned a lot from the excavation, especially in relation to archaeological drawing, and how valuable such plans are in detailing the phasing of a site. The excavation, really has broadened my understanding of archaeological recording and excavation techniques. I have also gained a greater understanding of the early Christian period in Wales. The excavation has however, piqued my interest in this period of Welsh archaeology, so much so that I intend to study it further as part of my Masters at Cardiff University. I however would most like to thank you for allowing volunteers on the excavation as it is so rare, nowadays for archaeological excavations to allow this kind of participation by members of the public. Yet I feel by doing so you created a unique sense of camaraderie, where volunteers were able to learn skills from one another and thus develop a better understanding of the site as a whole. It was especially rewarding to see the level of interest and involvement the excavation stimulated in the community.

Volunteering to assist yr Ymddiriodolaeth Archaeolegol Dyfed with the excavations was a most enjoyable and rewarding experience. It was terrific to spend time with friendly local people from the immediate vicinity and further away across south-west Wales with an interest in their heritage and history and who were willing to contribute time to a valuable and fascinating project. We shared the excitement of each new find through the period of the dig and as a novice, I was able to acquire plenty of new skills and

knowledge. It was especially pleasing to see that provision was made to allow for the full participation of for people impacted by age and/or infirmity. Even more rewarding, was the opportunity to communicate with some others on team through Welsh. It is valuable for Welsh speakers and learners to be able to use their language more wildly and equally important for non-Welsh speakers to see and appreciate that the language is very much alive.

Quite a number of our members had also visited the site during the previous days of your excavations, and again were delighted to be given a tour of the site, and to view at first hand the care given to excavating this site, where the smallest detail can be of significant interest, let alone the almost unique grave marker that you told us about. We do hope that we will see you there again to learn more about our ancestors on this 'edge of the world', albeit as you told us, it was much less isolated than we might think. Perhaps next time you could also give a talk to the Society, for the benefit of those Members who were unable to attend your tour. You have certainly made us think, and to view our location and our relationship with Ireland with different eyes. The genetic markers that you told us about were a real surprise. On with the next dig! Paul Edey (Vice-Chair, St Davids and Dewisland Historical Society).

I originally intended to work as a volunteer on the St. Patrick's Chapel excavation for seven days, but found the project so enjoyable and stimulating that I ended up volunteering for a total of ten days. Notwithstanding the shocking weather we had on some days, it was an extremely developmental experience for me as a novice volunteer archaeologist. I was keen to contribute to the project as I had dug at the same location for two days in May 2014, and in fact I was involved in my professional capacity as a Police Officer in dealing with the initial find of human remains at the site back in January 2014. One of the most significant workstreams which happened at this excavation was the education and outreach which took place. There were numerous visitors to the site - both locals and tourists - and they were welcomed by the excavation team and the project was explained to them at an appropriate level of detail. This was done both formally (by Dr Katie Hemer from The University of Sheffield) and informally (other team members actively engaging with visitors when Katie wasn't available). Many of the visitors are known to me (as I live locally), and they have commented very favourably on what a positive experience it was visiting the excavation. There is a high level of interest in this project in the St. Davids area, and special arrangements were made by you and Marion Page to facilitate a site visit by the St Davids Historical Society. This, for me, is one of the key outcomes of this project: stimulating "grass-roots" community interest in local history. Hand in hand with the educational work, visiting the site also inspired a number of these visitors to go on and volunteer to work on the excavation themselves. This was greatly facilitated by the positive attitude of all the professional team members towards we volunteers. I was also particularly impressed by the inclusivity with which this was done. A number of volunteers had medical conditions and disabilities which prevented them from participating in some of the work, but were able to carry out less physically demanding work and contribute fully to the project. I know that in due course there will be further community engagement by the team in presenting some of the findings to the public in St Davids, but I also feel that the innovative use of social media while the excavations were underway did a very great deal to stimulate interest in the project. The timely publication of the dig diary online, and the use of Twitter and Facebook maintained a high level of local awareness. People would stop me on the street to chat about how the dig was progressing, and there was a

tangible sense of "community ownership" as the project commenced.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Dyfed Archaeological Trust (DAT) and The University of Sheffield (SU) undertook the excavation, which was funded by Cadw and The University of Sheffield, with additional funding from and Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority (PCNPA) and the Nineveh Charitable Trust. An enthusiastic and dedicated crew of volunteers excavated the site under the supervision of Ken Murphy, Hubert Wilson and Marion Shiner of DAT and Katie Hemer of SU. The excavation would not have been possible without volunteer help. The smooth running of an excavation depends on numerous organisations and individuals including: PCNPA staff who fenced the site following back-filling, Gerallt Nash and John Beer and St Davids City Council for allowing the use of a field for car parking and pitching tents for a site office, Polly Groom of Cadw for facilitating Scheduled Monument Consent at short notice, and Rekha Gohil of the Ministry Justice for her help in obtaining a Burial Licence.

## FIGURES

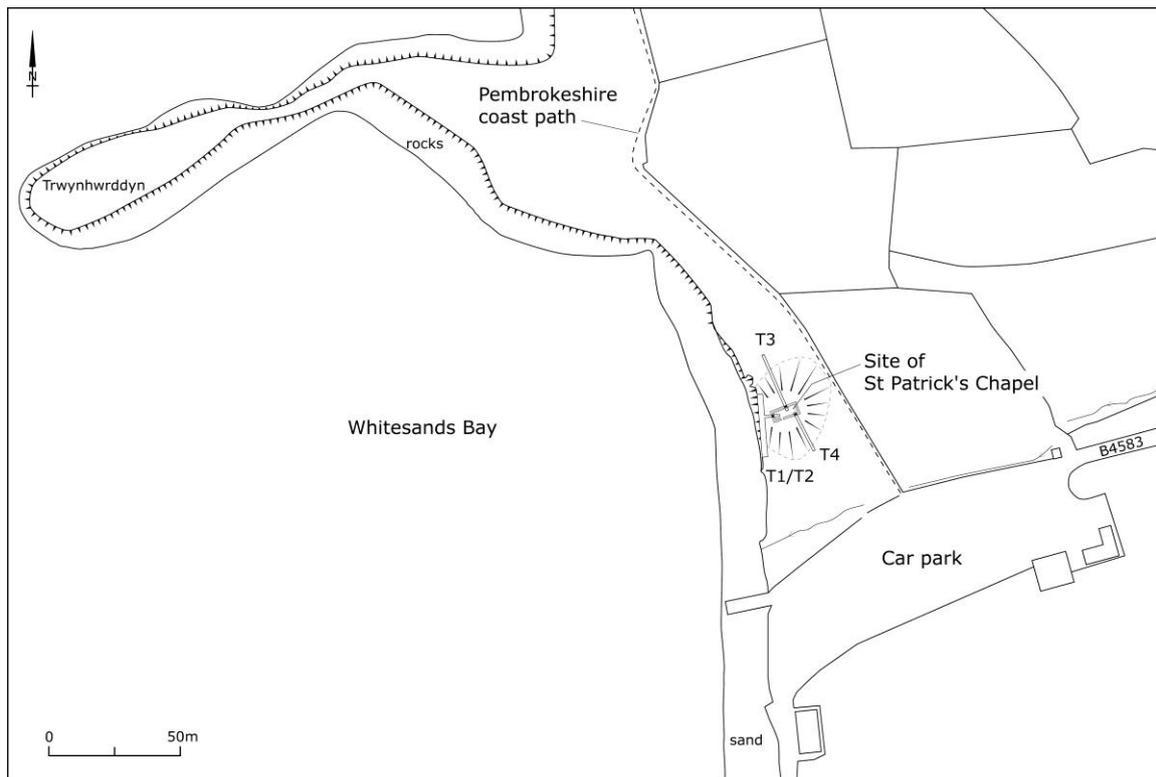


Figure 1. Location map.

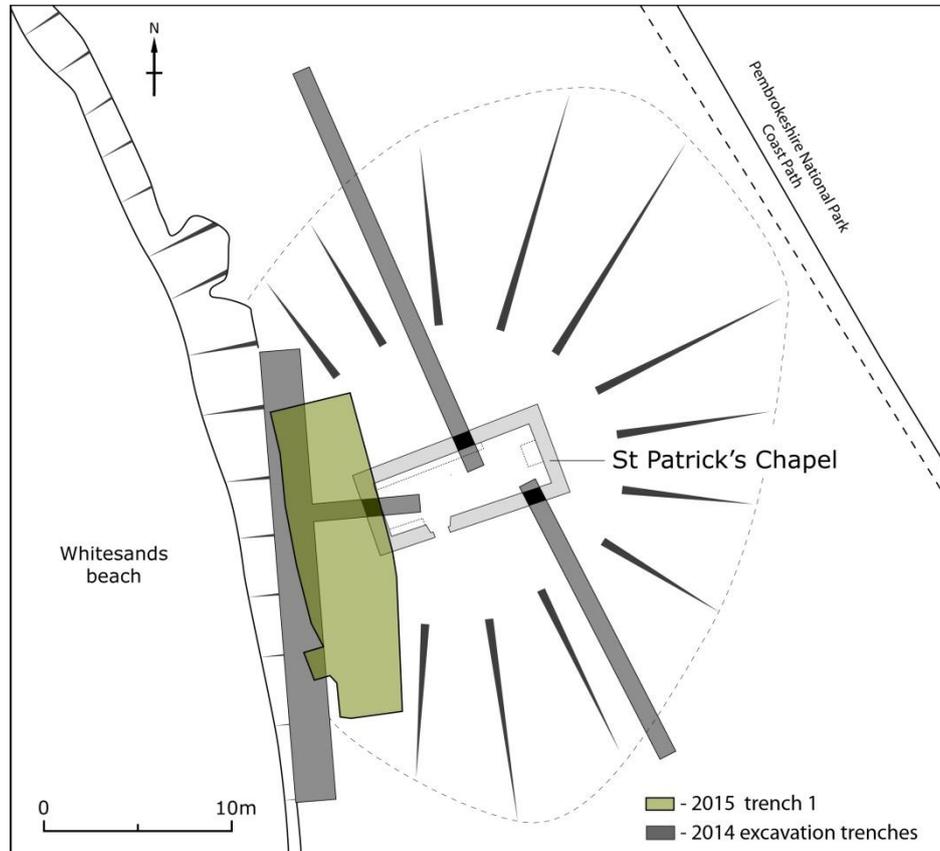


Figure 2. Location of 2014 and 2015 excavation trenches.

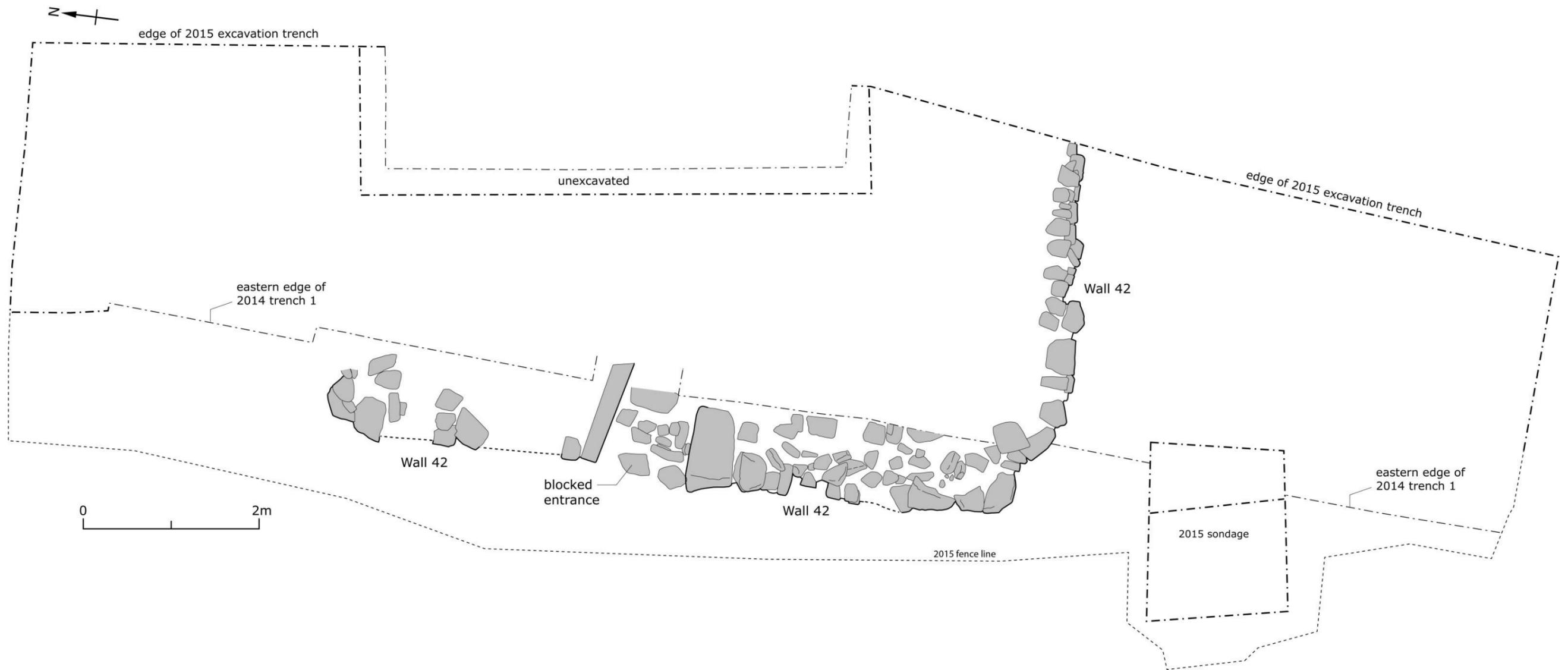


Figure 3. Wall 42 as uncovered in 2014 and 2015.

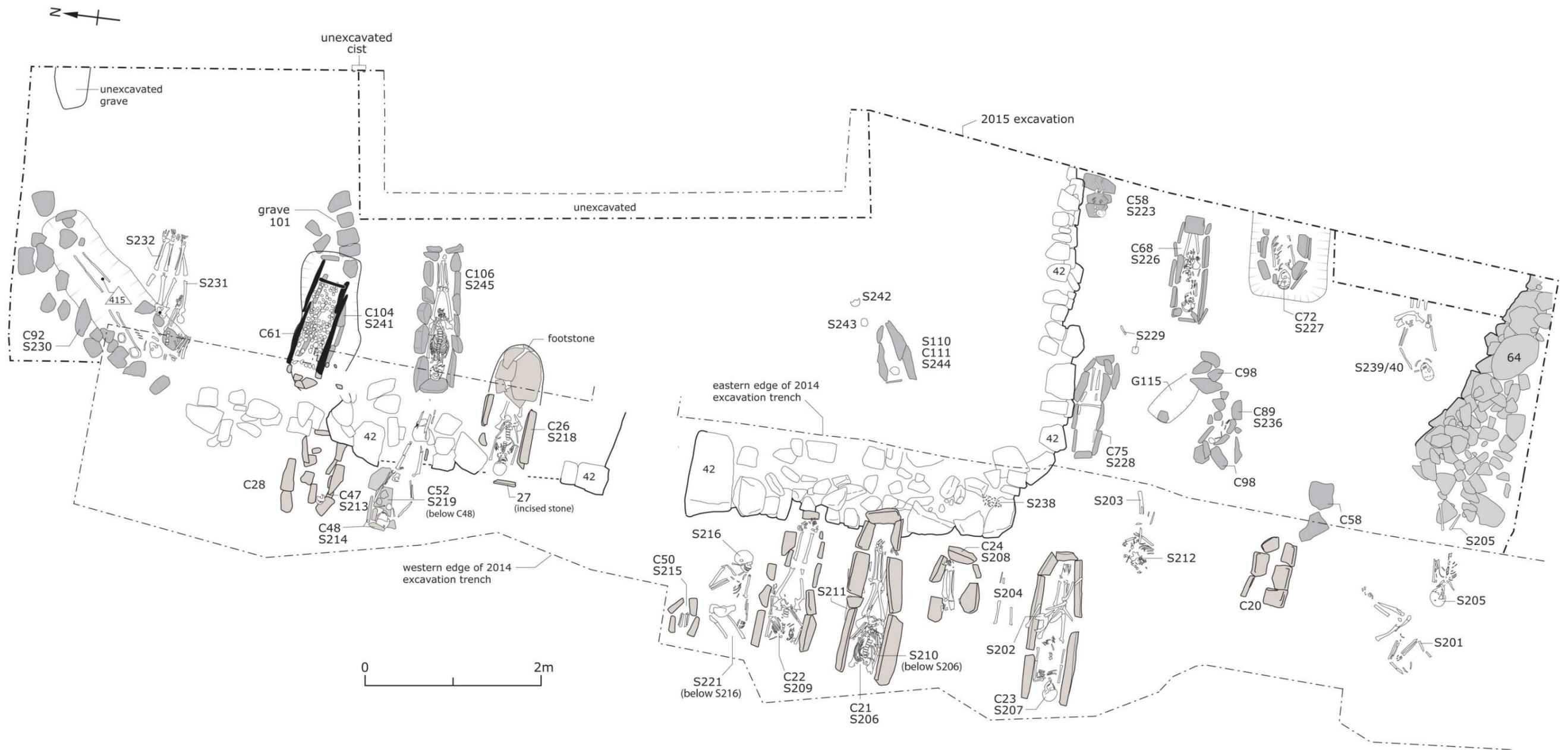


Figure 4. All burials from 2014 and 2015 later than wall 42 and below or related to rubble 88 and related rubble/stony layers.



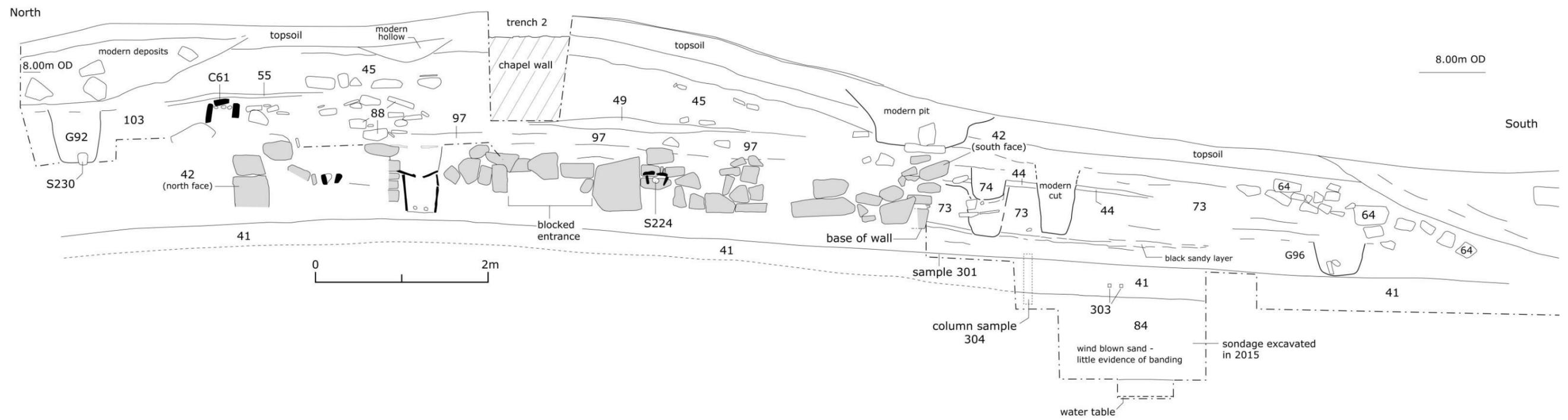


Figure 6. The west-facing section of the west side of the 2014 excavation trench revised in 2015.

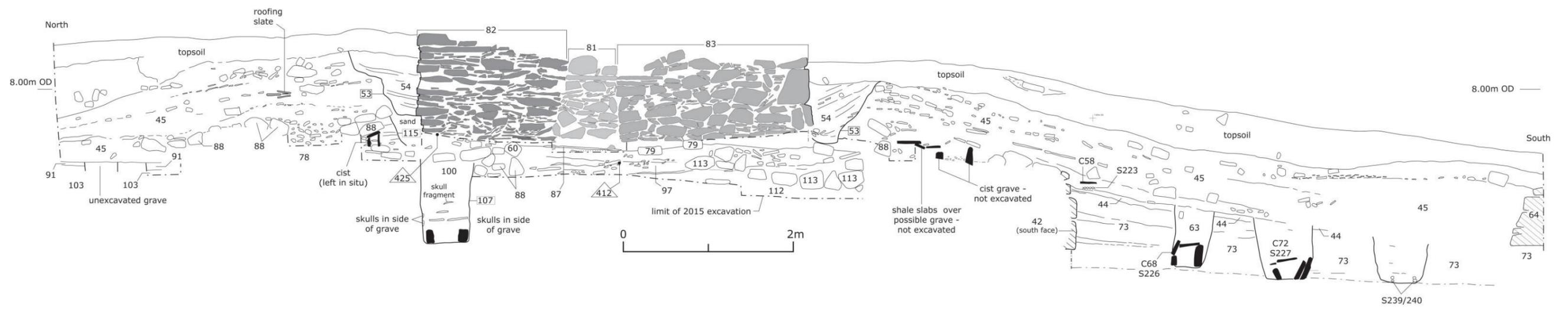


Figure 7. The west-facing section of the east side of the 2015 excavation trench.

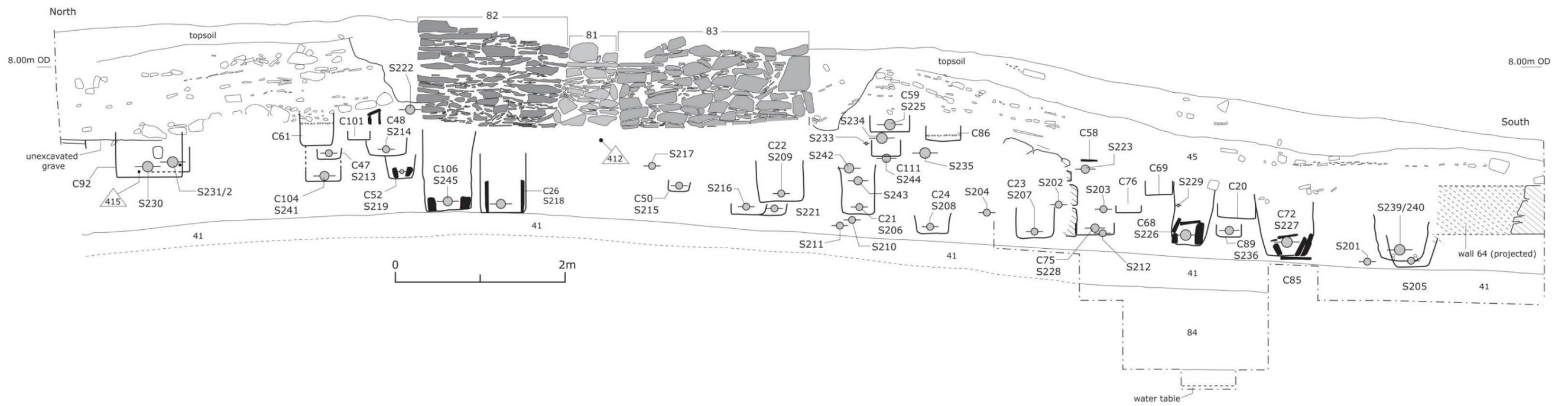


Figure 8. Combined section showing the relative height of all graves and other features.



## PHOTOGRAPHS



Photograph 1. Removing upper deposits.



Photograph 2. The site after removal of sand deposit 45.



Photograph 3. Looking south across the southern end of the site showing rubble 79.



Photograph 4. Looking north across the north end of the site after removal of sand 45.



Photograph 5. The north face of wall 64.



Photograph 6. General view of excavation looking south.



Photograph 7. The Hiberno-Norse ringed pin (412).



Photograph 8. Cist grave 75 and wall 42. Note the sand (73) through which the grave was cut and which had built up against the wall has been removed for ease of excavation.



Photograph 9. The black sandy soil layer 91 with the rectangular west end of a grave cutting it – the grave was not excavated.



Photograph 10. The west wall of the chapel showing its three distinct phases with the possible path 87 in the foreground.



Photograph 11. Looking north with the top of the soil layer 41 in the foreground and wall 42 beyond.



Photograph 12. Re-turfing the site.

# EXCAVATION AT ST PATRICK'S CHAPEL 2015 INTERIM REPORT

**REPORT NUMBER 2015/35**

**November 2015**

This report has been prepared by K Murphy

Position: Trust Director

Signature 

Date: 30 November 2015

This report has been checked and approved by J Meek

on behalf of Dyfed Archaeological Trust Ltd.

Position: Head of DAT Archaeological Services

Signature 

Date: 16 December 2015

As part of our desire to provide a quality service we would welcome any comments you may have on the content or presentation of this report

