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Greek Warriors - their uniforms and dress
Summerlee - the new heritage museum
Walton Castle - revisited

1554

Archæology *Today*

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COVER CAPTION

Greek Warriors circa 490 B.C.: From left to right, a Spartan officer, a Samian hoplite, an Athenian hoplite of the Alkmainoid clan and an Argive hoplite.

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TODAY** is on sale February 26th

New Plan for Walton Castle

by Julian K. Hagar

The plan of the Saxon shore fort at Walton Castle has always posed a particular problem. Over two hundred years ago it vanished into the sea, but its position and aspect is known from drawings and documentary sources especially from the seventeenth century until its final disappearance in the mid to late eighteenth century.

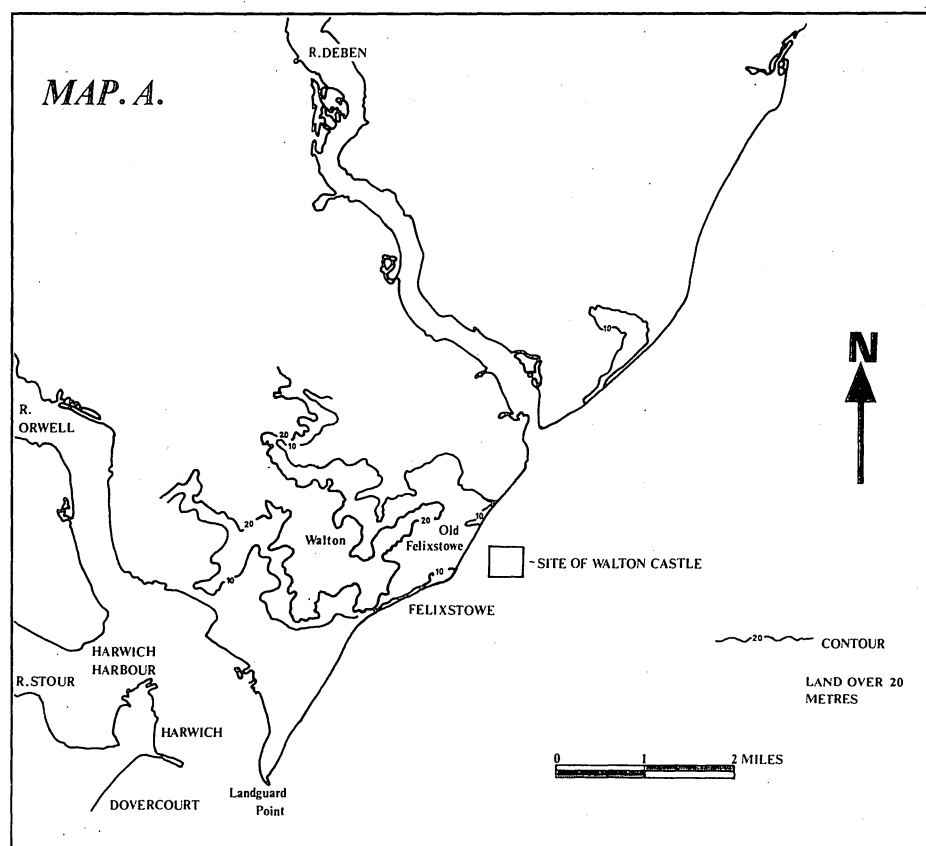
The fort is documented as being situated "one mile from the Woodbridge river (The Deben) and two miles from Orwell Haven" and perched on a cliff one hundred feet high. Its position would have been just to the east of old Felixstowe (see map).

In this article by Julian K. Hagar, an attempt has been made to reconstruct a plan of the existing remains of Walton Castle during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries using the available evidence from the drawings and the documentary sources.

THERE are two main documentary references from the eighteenth century which, when seen individually appear to give accurate measurements of the then surviving masonry. When seen together, however, they are conflicting particularly over the relatively simple matter of the dimensions of the ruins. The earliest of the two references is given in the *Minute Books of the Society of Antiquaries* by one Dr. Knight and dated 28th November 1722. It states: "Some distance East of this town (i.e. the neighbouring village of Walton) are the ruins of a Roman Wall situated on the Ridge of a cliff next to the Sea between Langward Fort and Woodbridge River (the Deben) on Bawdsey Haven. 'Tis 100 yards long, five foot above ground 12 broad at each end and turned with an angle. It's composed of Pepple and Roman bricks in three courses, all round footsteps of buildings, and several large pieces of Wall cast down upon the Strand by the Seas undermining ye Cliff all which have Roman brick. At low water mark very much of the like is visible at some distance in the Sea. There are two entire Pillars with Balls, the Cliff is 100 foot high." (i,7,2).

The other slightly later reference comes from Kirby's second edition of the *Suffolk Traveller* of 1754:

"He that would look for the Site of this Castle (i.e. of Walton) within the bounds of Walton strictly taken will never find it; but upon a high Cliff of Felixstowe, at the distance of about one mile from the mouth of Woodbridge River (the Deben) and two miles from Orwell Haven. Part of the Foundation of the West Side of it is still to be seen: being now One Hundred and Eighty seven yards in Length, and nine feet thick; it is called by the Country People, Stone-Works. How much larger it was we cannot judge. Part of the South end being washed away and the Sea, which is daily gaining upon this coast having swallowed up the ruins. Such was the condition of it about the year 1740: but since then the Sea hath washed away the remainder of the Foundation. There can be no doubt but Walton Castle was a Roman Fortification as appears from the



Map showing suggested position of the Saxon shore fort at Walton Castle.

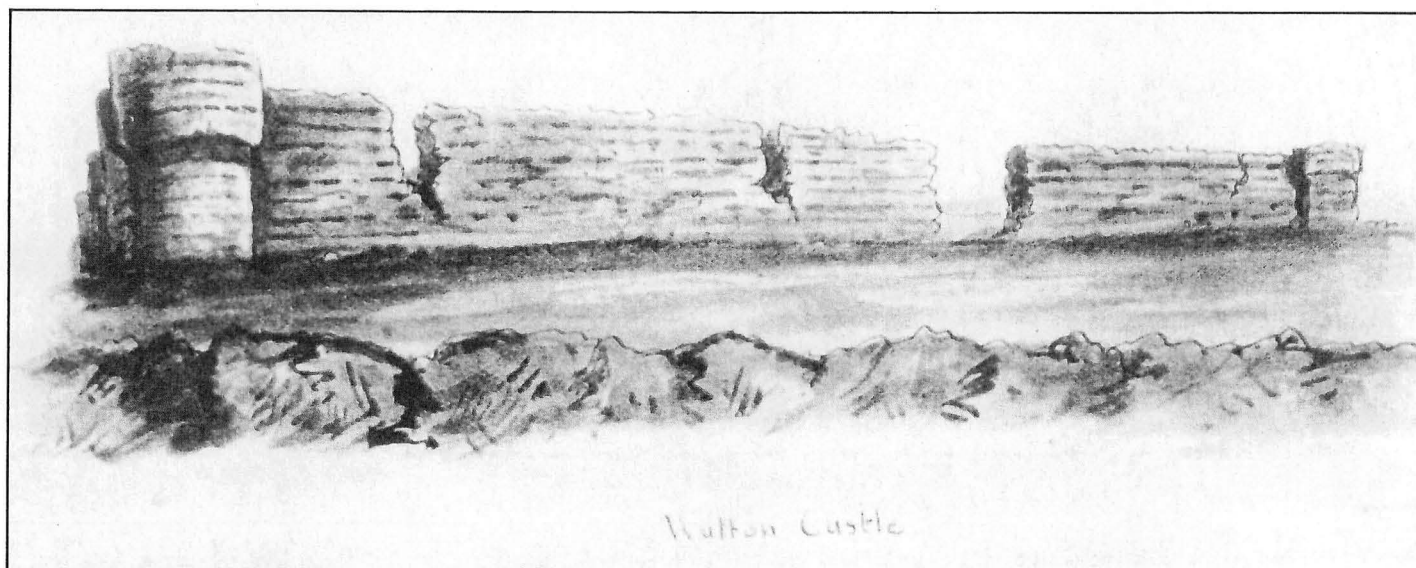


Fig. 1 shows a long length of wall with a corner bastion at each end and a large centrally placed gap which may be the remains of a gate.

great Variety of Roman Urns, Rings, Coins, etc., that have been found there, etc." (p. 81–91). The conflict of the measurements is readily apparent.

At this stage it is perhaps expedient to discuss each piece of evidence in turn. By far the most important pieces of evidence are the drawings shown in Figs. 1 and 2. There is some doubt as to the date of these two drawings as Fig. 1 has been thought to be a copy of an earlier drawing dating to the early seventeenth century, although the drawing is actually signed 1623. The style of writing seems to suggest a seventeenth century date but it is really irrelevant whether the drawing is a copy of the original. The date 1623 is there.

Fig. 1 shows a long length of wall with a corner bastion at each end and a large centrally placed gap which may be the remains of a gate. The artist's horizon line for the purposes of this picture is the sea which is visible through the "gate". The beach is, therefore, just beyond the section of wall and to the left of the picture. The artist is standing N.W. of the ruins and thus facing S.E. We are looking at the west wall and "gate" of the fort for the N.W. corner bastion in the foreground and that of the S.W. in the distance. Kirby in his *Suffolk Traveller* states "the Foundation of the West side of it" (see above). The perspective of the drawing is correct and, more importantly, the subject is not romanticised in any way. On the face of it, the drawing is nothing other than what it purports to be — a representation of a considerable length of surviving fort wall.

The bastion nearest to the viewer appears to be perched precariously on the cliff edge with a very short section of the north wall still adhering to it. The apparent cliff edge in the foreground is no more than an indentation in the coastline and merely an artistic device to add interest to the front of the picture. Fig. 3, a drawing of 1700, supports this, as it can be seen from

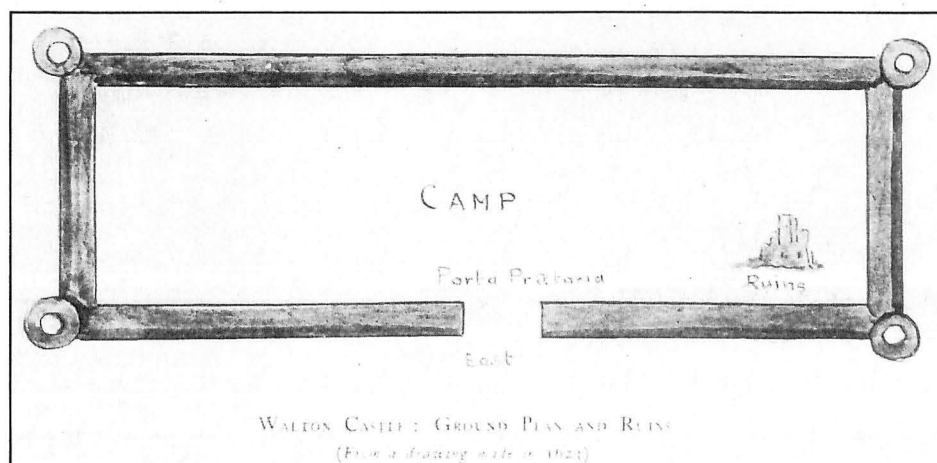
this drawing that the cliff face is heavily indented. Clearly, the erosion of the cliff is from the eastern seaward side, and the fort remains shown in Fig. 1 can only be those of the western portion of Walton Castle. We are most definitely not looking at the east wall of Walton Castle — that disappeared beneath the waves decades before the Fig. 1 drawing was made. Additionally, it would have been a physical impossibility for the artist to have drawn the remains of the east wall from the view point in Fig. 1, especially as the ruins are described as being "high on a ridge", "cliff is 100ft high" (Knight 1722), "high on a cliff" (Kirby 1754). Therefore, the logical point to draw the remains of the fort would be from the landward side looking east, i.e. the western side. One further vital point to support this is the accompanying inscription to Fig. 1. The inscription reads "E.Prosp.Walton Castel". E.Prosp is very important and means East or Eastern Prospect, i.e. looking east.

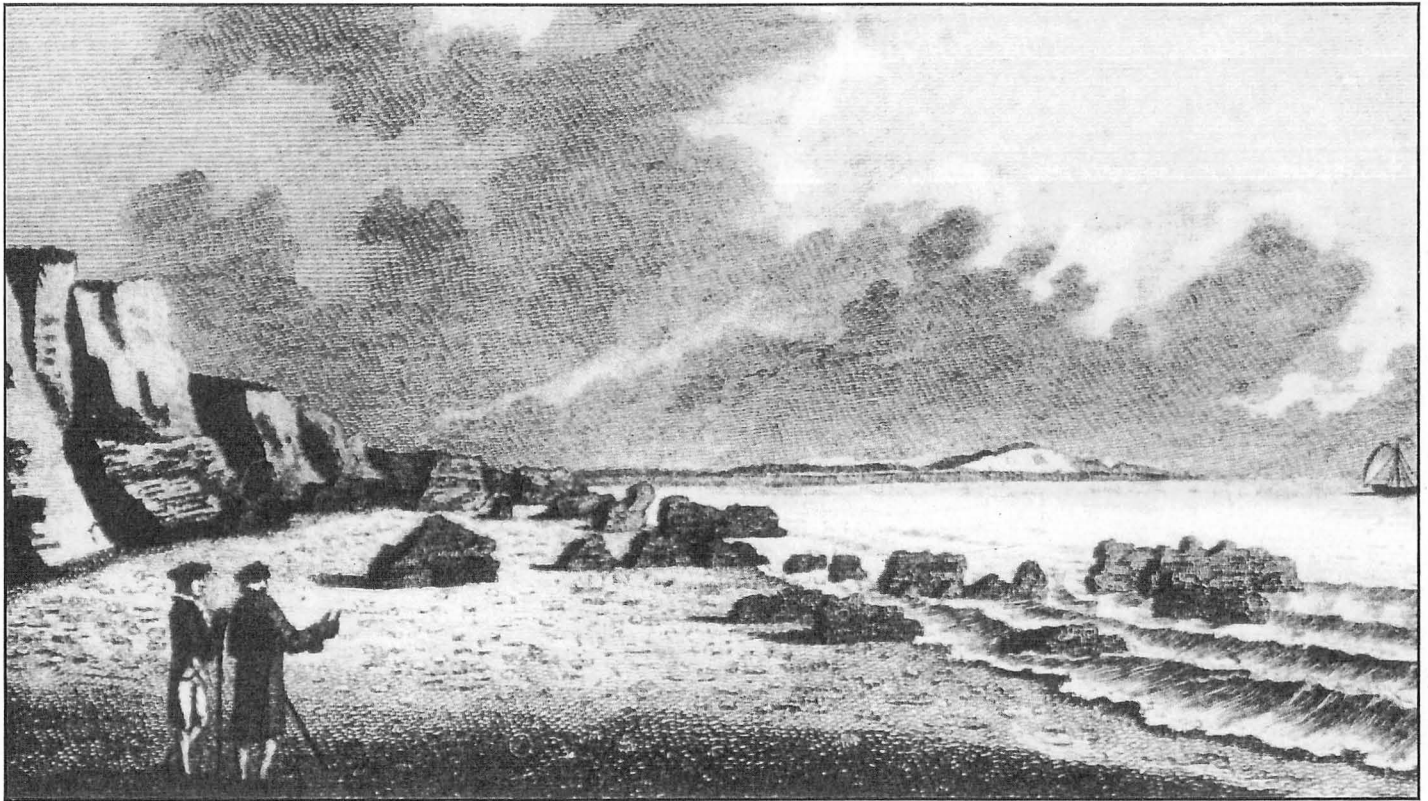
In Fig. 1 the three large cracks in the section of wall indicate the degree of subsidence and erosion which was

occurring. The Suffolk coastline has suffered considerable damage and change since the Roman period and this can be adequately demonstrated by the plight of Dunwich further north along the Suffolk coast. One further point concerning Fig. 1 is worth mentioning. It is highly likely that there was a short section of the south wall and an interval bastion surviving, although due to the artist's position in Fig. 1 it is obscured from view. This probably explains the rather odd shape of the seventeenth century plan for Walton Castle reproduced here as Fig. 2. Figures 1 and 2 should be viewed together as they are contemporary.

Fig. 2. This plan is based on a surviving long stretch of wall, a shortened section of another, and three bastions. The long stretch is the west wall and two bastions depicted in Fig. 1. The short section and the probable third bastion on the south side are obscured from view in the same drawing. The third bastion was in all probability an interval bastion on the cliff edge and mistakenly attributed by the seventeenth century draughtsman to be a

This plan is based on a surviving long stretch of wall, a shortened section of another, and three bastions.





The remains of Walton Castle c. 1700. Large chunks of masonry litter the beach.

corner bastion. The north and east walls had already been claimed by the sea at the time of the drawing and the seventeenth century observer merely added the other two walls to square off the fort plan. Hence the unusual shape. The Fig. 2 plan is also quite wrong where it states the agate is on the east side. This has already been explained above. One further drawing, not reproduced here and dating to the late seventeenth century, supports the view that the longest section of surviving wall was in fact on the west side of the fort. This drawing depicts the S.W. angle bastion with a small section of the south wall running seawards and overhanging the cliff, i.e. the same portion of the south wall invisible to the viewer and artist in Fig. 1. The ruins in the bottom right hand corner of the drawing are probably the remains of Henry Bigod's twelfth century castle destroyed by Henry II c. 1176 (*Pipe Rol* 22,1176).

Fig. 3 depicts a very different state of Walton Castle about 1700. Large chunks of masonry litter the beach and supports Knight's and Kirby's description: "At low water mark very much of the like (Roman brick) is visible at some distance in the sea"; "the Sea, which is daily gaining upon this coast having swallowed up the ruins". One particularly interesting point to note concerning Fig. 3 is that there are no ruins on the cliff top. The viewer is looking north towards the River Deben estuary with Bawdsey cliffs in the background (see map).

The discrepancies in the measurements of the documentary

sources quoted above can be readily explained. It is apparent that by 1722 Walton Castle was on the verge of being completely washed away. Considerable erosion had taken place since 1623. In the light of this article the measurements of 1722 are to be considered as correct for the date at which they were taken. If in 1623, 187 yards of west wall survived, then by 1722 it is highly probable that there was only 100 yards of wall and one bastion (that of the S.W. angle) left standing. Knight, in his account, states "turned with an angle". The measurements given in Kirby's account are at odds with all the other available pieces of evidence and were out of date when he put pen to paper. Kirby's measurements must have been taken from an earlier, now lost, account of Walton Castle. His measurements are definitely more in keeping with the state of the fort in 1623. Another reference dated 1725 shows Kirby's dimensions to be somewhat suspect. A Mr. T. Martin wrote of the state of the ruins in 1725: "About half a mile from the town (of Felixstowe) are the ruins of a Roman fortification upon the brink of the cliff (great part being already fallen down, a few years are likely to put a period to the whole), 'twas built very substantially with rock-stone and Roman brick" . . . (CHURCH NOTES i, 185) 16th September 1725.

Indeed, by 1754 the fort had completely disappeared if Kirby's account is at all reliable. Certainly by 1766 the fort had vanished as another drawing shows a mass of masonry lying scattered along the

beach, (Grose, *ANTIQ. OF ENG. & WALES SUPPLEM II*).

Fig. 4 shows a reconstructed plan of Walton Castle as it might have appeared in 1623. The length of the west wall is shown as being approximately 180 metres in total length and 3 metres wide. A portion of the south wall and its interval bastion are also included. The south wall is approximately one-third the length of the west in order to elucidate the plan shown in Fig. 2. Also, the plan has been squared off when, indeed, it might not have been so if the plans of the surviving Saxon shore forts are taken into account.

Fig. 5 shows the state of the remains in 1722.

If these new plans for Walton Castle are acceptable then the fort will have compared in size to the other surviving Saxon shore forts such as Burgh Castle, Norfolk and Bradwell, Essex, to name but two on the same stretch of coastline. Walton Castle was strategically well placed to guard the approaches to the Rivers Stour, Orwell and Deben estuaries. Very probably there was a thriving harbour area in the vicinity, but whether Walton Castle was *Portus Adurni* mentioned in the *Notitia Dignitatum* is still very much open to question.

Walton Castle c. 1623

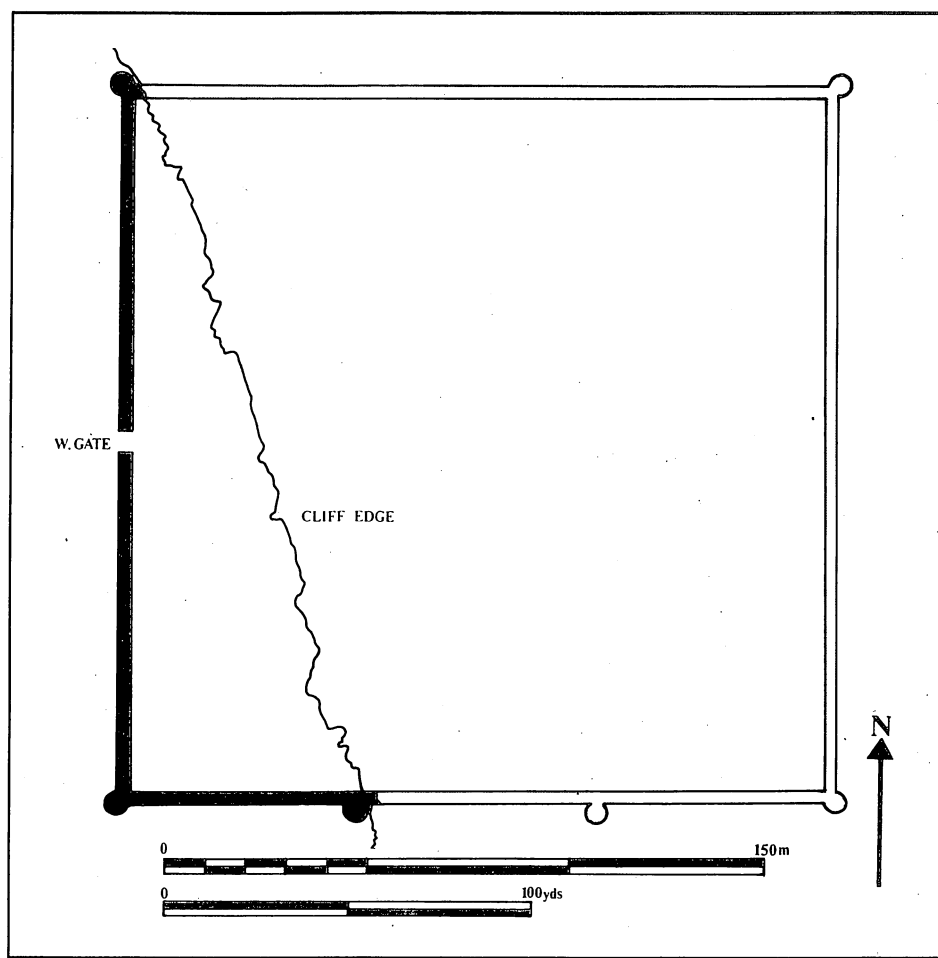


Fig. 4. A reconstructed plan of Walton Castle as it might have appeared in 1623.

Walton Castle c. 1722

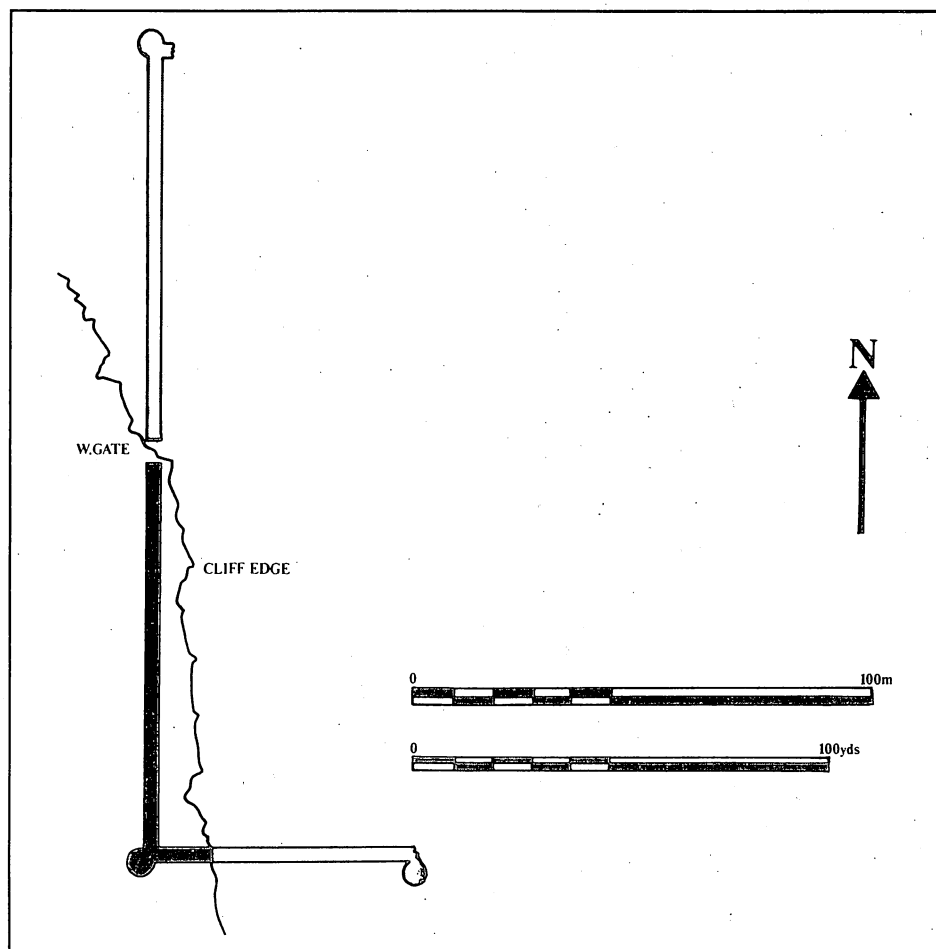


Fig. 5. The state of remains in 1722.