

A PRELIMINARY SURVEY
OF
HAFOD ICEHOUSE
RECORD NO. 26535

REPORT NO. 35948

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HAFOD ICEHOUSE (Hafod Archaeological Database No. 26535) A PRELIMINARY SURVEY

Introduction

A rapid survey has been undertaken of the Hafod icehouse in order to assist in the formulation of management plans for its preservation, and to provide a basic record. Because of the very dense rhododendron scrub on and to all sides of the structure, apart from the north, it was not possible to undertake an full EDM survey of the icehouse's environs as was initially intended. The chamber of the icehouse was not entered and therefore all measurements provided are approximate only.

Site Description (Figs. 1 and 2, and photographs)

Hafod icehouse (NGR SN 7592 7298) is built into the steep, south-facing valley side of the Afon Ystwyth some 250m south of the site of Hafod Mansion. A track which leads down to the walled kitchen garden passes immediately to the north of the icehouse. The structure is now an insignificant feature in the landscape and is easily overlooked by the casual visitor. On the surface it is represented by a low, vegetation covered mound on which rhododendrons and hazels have taken root. Very dense rhododendron scrub surrounds the icehouse to the west, east and south, and there is an ash tree to the south-east. Part of an original retaining wall revets the mound on the sound side. This is in fair condition and seems to stand to its full original height of c. 1.5m. On the north-west side this wall has collapsed (this is not obvious now, but is clearly visible on a photograph, possibly of the mid-1960s, in the National Monuments Record, RCAHMW), and on the north side it may have been partially buried when the track was constructed or improved (see east-west section). There is no trace of a drain out-fall from the icehouse chamber on the steep slope below the structure, but this may have either been missed due to the rhododendron cover, or is now buried.

The icehouse entrance passageway is in a very poor state of repair: the stone vaulting has collapsed apart from a c. 1m section adjoining the icehouse's dome, much dilapidation has occurred to the stone-built side walls (the north wall in particular) and rubble has accumulated in the passageway. Nevertheless, it is possible to detect the original plan. The passageway was 3.9m long, 1.1m wide, 1.9m high and built of coursed rubble. A mortar scar of a removed door jamb is visible adjoining the chamber. The walls of the passageway are butt-joined onto the masonry of the chamber, but this is probably a reflection of the building technique employed rather than of chronological significance.

The interior of the chamber and dome of the icehouse is in very good condition. There is no evidence of root penetration from the shrubs growing above. It is built of coursed rubble. The chamber is cone-shaped, 3.35m diameter at the top narrowing down to c. 2.15m at the lowest visible point. Its depth down to rubble which fills its lower levels is 3.3m. This rubble is of unknown depth and presumably fills a sump and drain. The dome is 3.7m across at its base and is estimated to be semi-hemispherical in shape (it was not possible to conduct detailed measurements). Despite the step at the junction of the chamber and dome, there is no reason to suspect that they were not of one build.

General

The size and character of the Hafod icehouse is consistent with it having been built in the latter part of the 18th-century to the mid 19th-century (Beamon and Roaf 1990, Buxbaum 1998). It is of a simple, standard form, and similar to many icehouses extant on Welsh estates (Dinefwr and Gelli Aur, both in Carmarthenshire). Originally the Hafod example would have been capped with either earth or a thatched roof for added insulation - there is no trace of either - and the passageway would have had several tight fitting doors, in addition to the position of the one noted in the survey.

Recommendations

Immediate action: the rhododendron and hazel scrub growing on and near the dome of the icehouse should be removed and killed to prevent future growth. Also a band of ground stretching *c.* 5m either side of the icehouse should be cleared of rhododendrons and the ash tree down to the river, as roots may eventually begin to penetrate through to the icehouse chamber in the made-up ground. This ground should be returned to grazing land.

Short term: to prevent further decay to the passageway, repointing of the side walls is required.

Medium term: Although the interior of the icehouse appears in good condition, the state of most of the external masonry is not known due to vegetation cover. An area of vegetation and accumulated soil should be removed using archaeological techniques from part of the icehouse mound to examine the condition of the masonry. The amount of any restoration work would depend on the condition of the uncovered masonry.

Long term: the Hafod Trust and Forest Enterprise may wish to completely restore the icehouse. This would require: the removal of all soil and overburden from the dome, repointing and restoring of all internal and external masonry, the clearing of rubble from the chamber and the uncovering and cleaning of the drain. At the time of restoration a full record of the structure should be made.

Replacement of icehouse door: two designs have been suggested: a solid door with 'letter box' for bat access and an open grill. Archaeologically there is little to choose between the two. However, a solid door will not allow visitors to view the icehouse's interior and will impede ventilation. The latter may lead to the build-up of toxic gases, particularly if there is vegetation matter mixed with the rubble in the base of the chamber.

References

Beamon, S. and Roaf, S., 1990 *The Icehouses of Britain*

Buxbaum, T., 1998 *Icehouses*

National Monuments Record, SN 77 SE, Hafod Icehouse

**HAFOD ICE HOUSE
26535
PLAN**

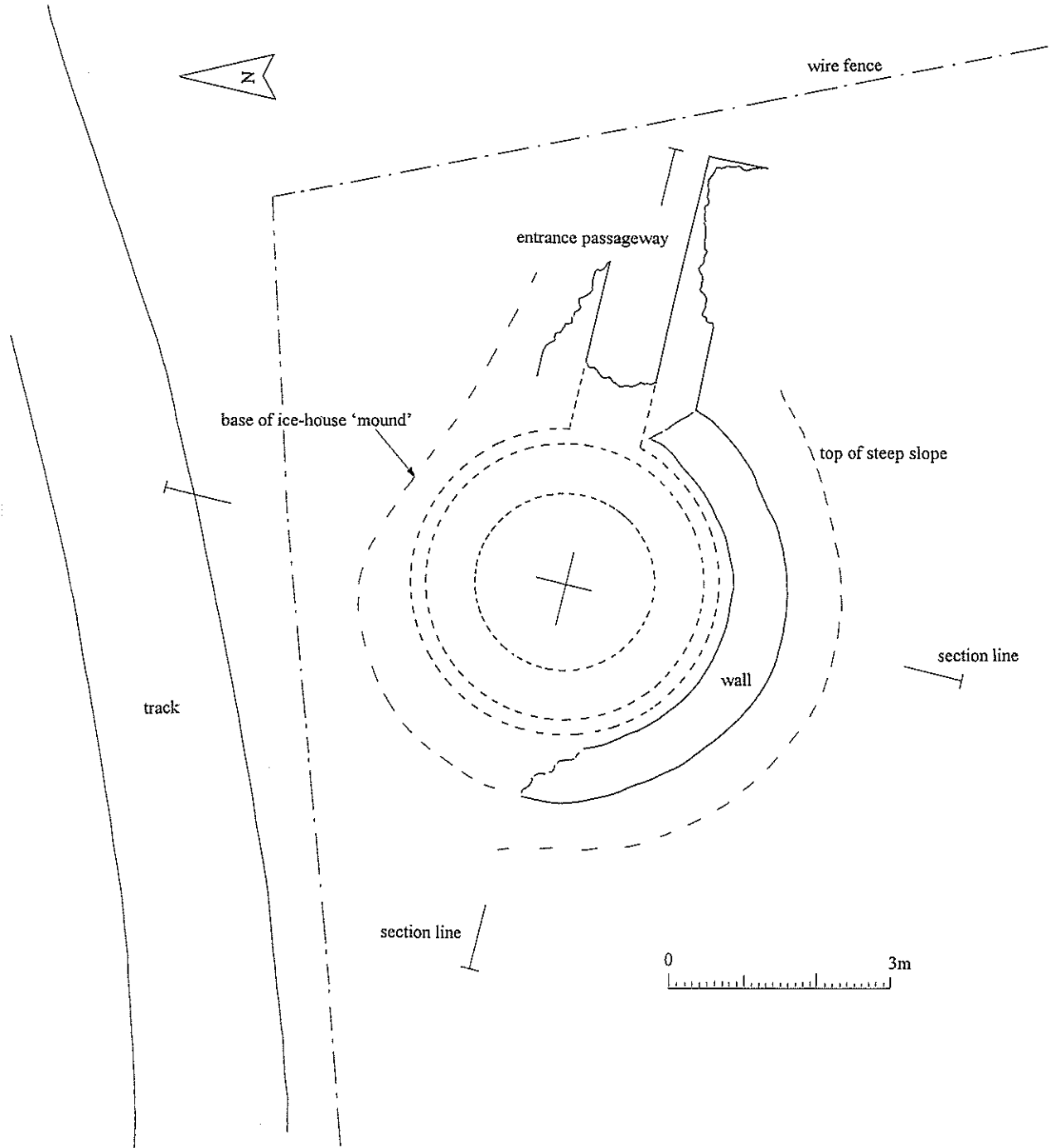


Figure 1. Plan of Hafod icehouse.

**EAST-WEST SECTION SHOWING DOORWAY
(PROJECTED)**

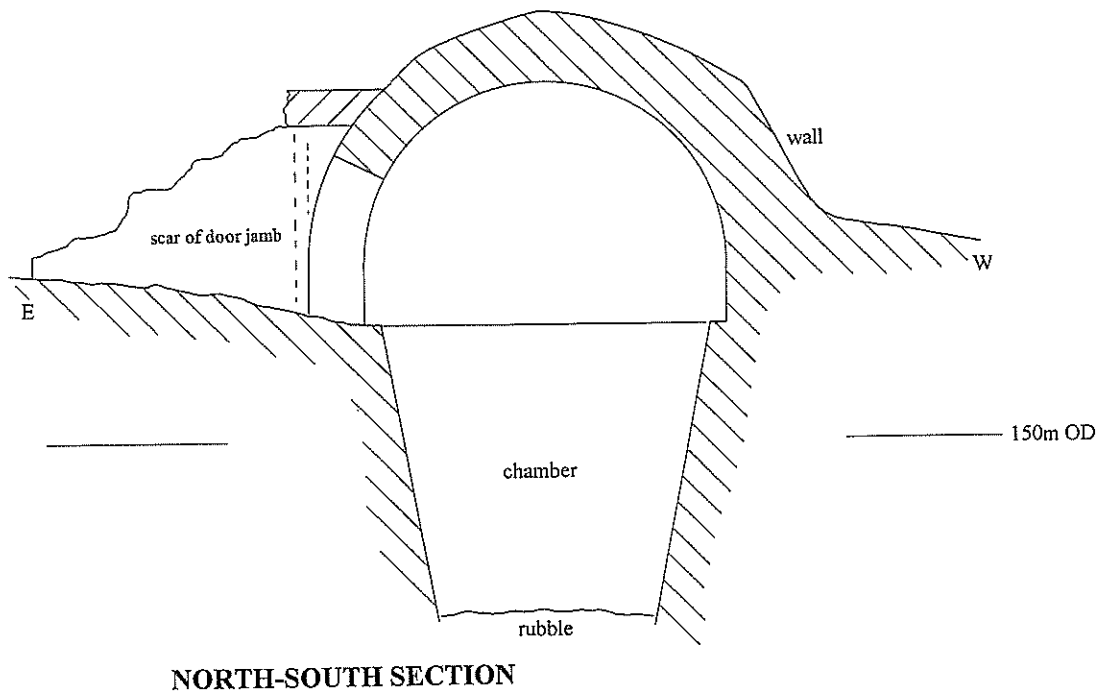
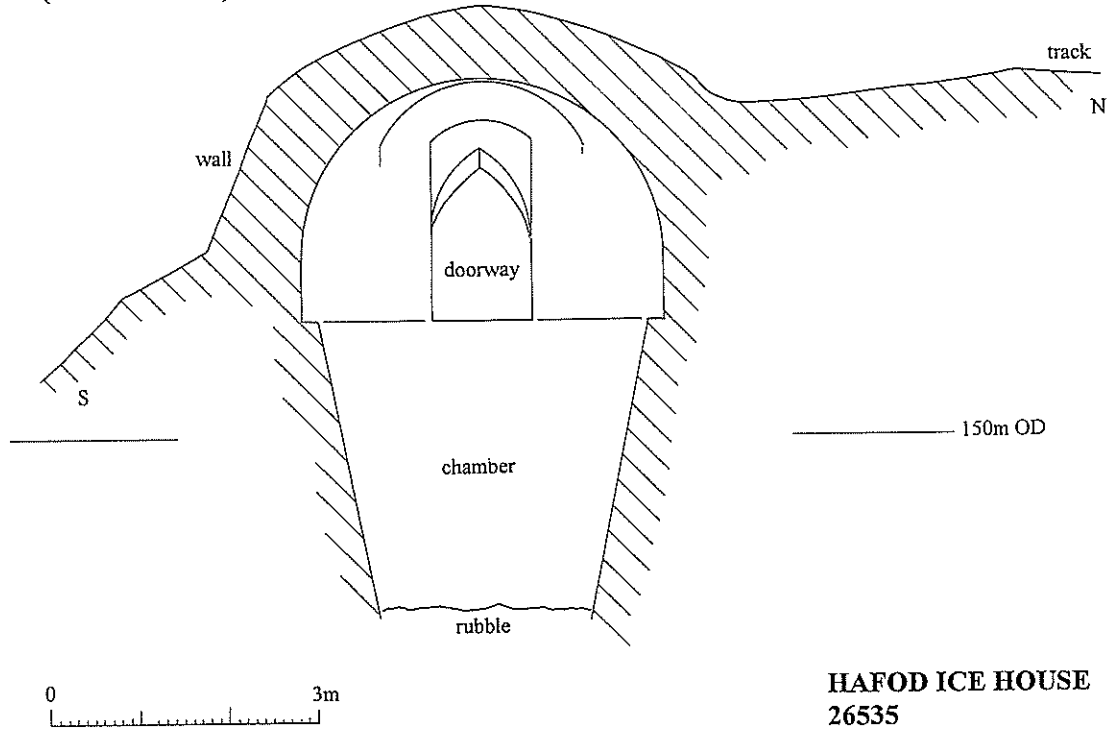


Figure 2. Sections of Hafod icehouse.

PHOTOGRAPHS



Photo 1. Icehouse from the north-east.

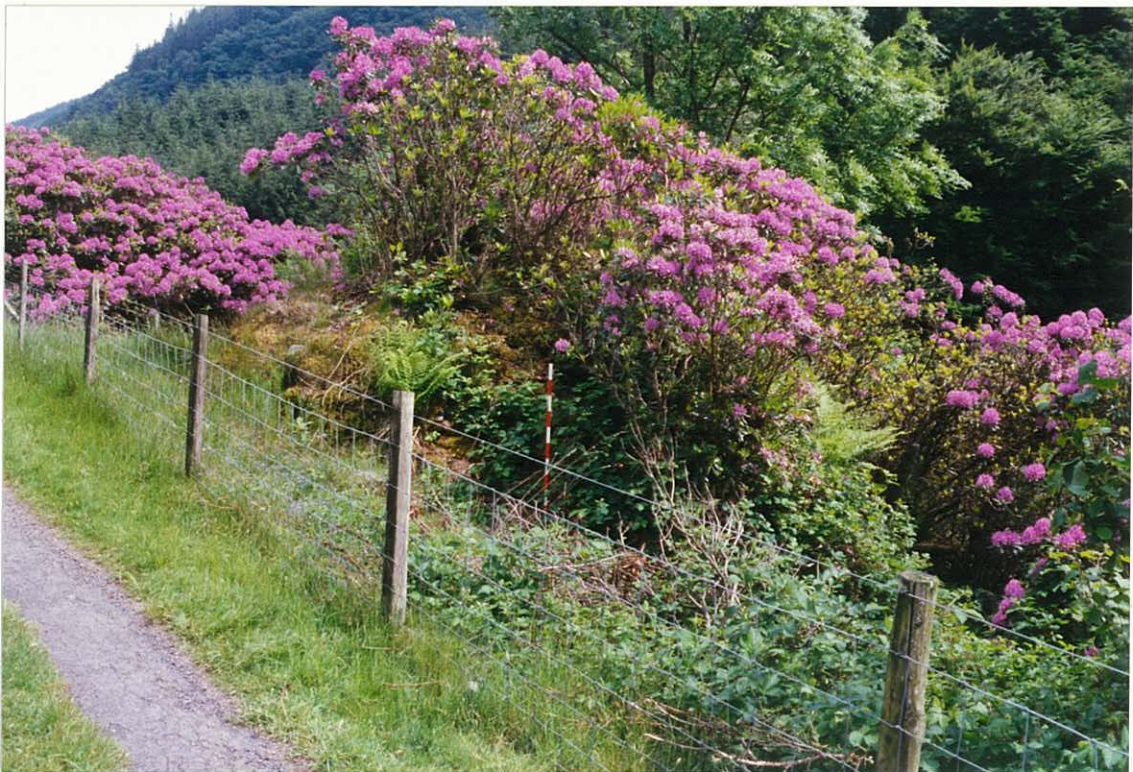


Photo 2. Icehouse from the north-west.



Photo 3. External wall on south-west side.



Photo 4. External wall on south side.



Photo 5. South passageway wall.



Photo 6. South passageway wall.



Photo 7. Entrance.

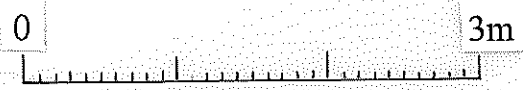
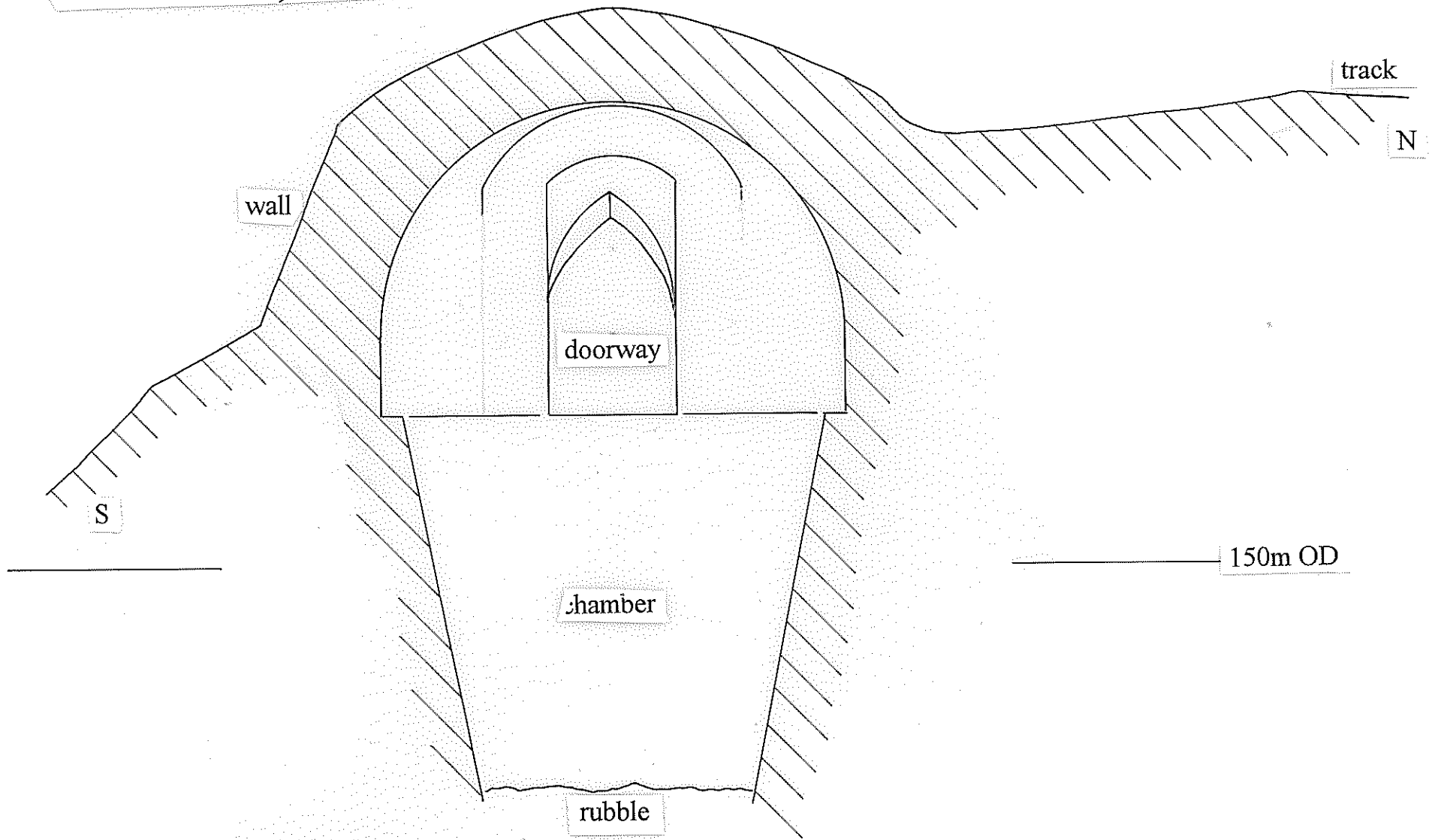


Photo 8. Entrance.

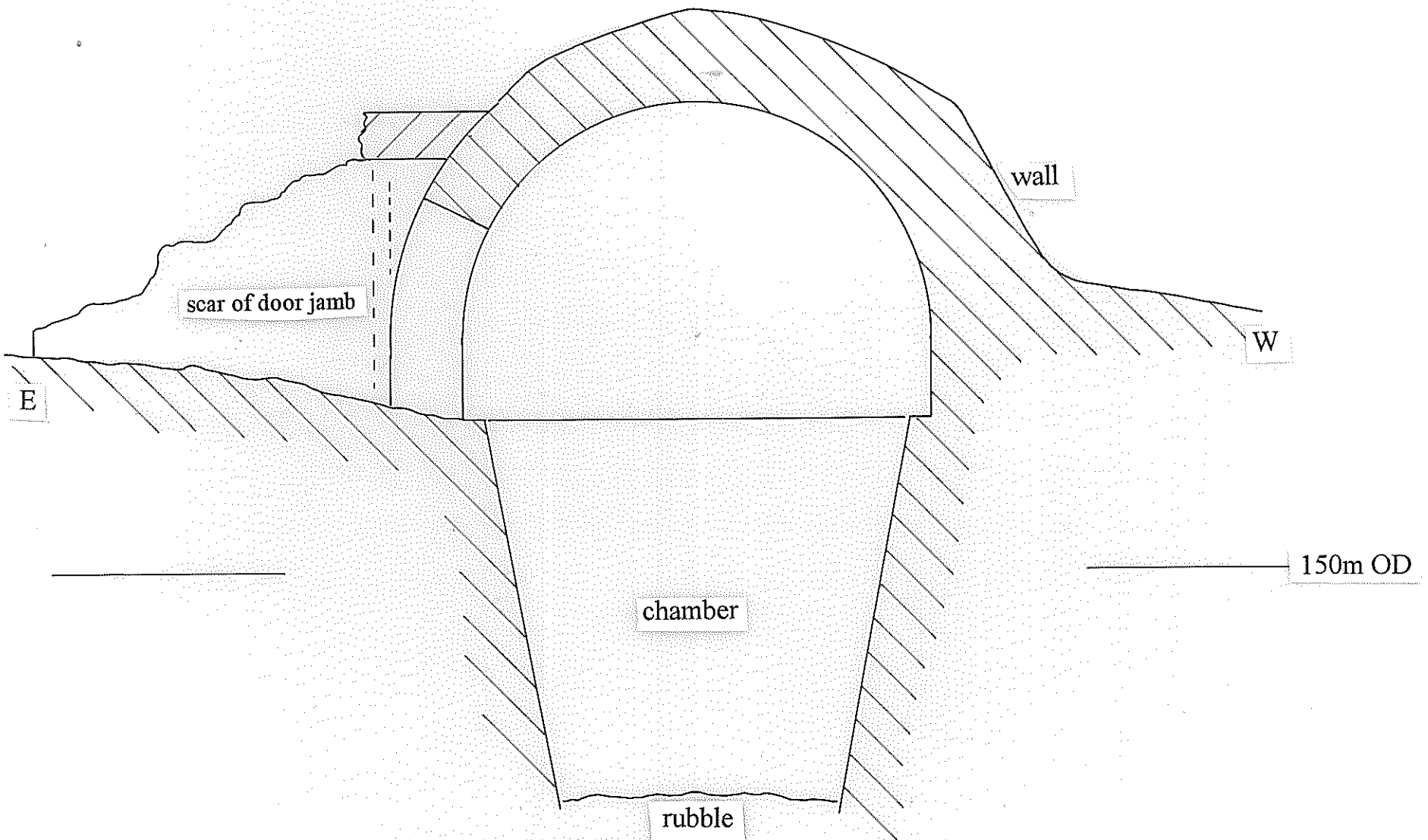


Photo 9. Interior of the icehouse

**EAST-WEST SECTION SHOWING DOORWAY
(PROJECTED)**

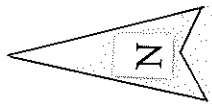


**LAFOD ICE HOUSE
16535**



NORTH-SOUTH SECTION

**HAFOD ICE HOUSE
26535
PLAN**



wire fence

entrance passageway

base of ice-house 'mound'

top of steep slope

section line

wall

track

section line

0

3m

