

**96-108 Portland Street, Kilmarnock:
Stage 1a Archaeological Monitoring**

Data Structure Report

by Louise Turner

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Rathmell

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Quality Assurance

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Signed

Date

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Checked

Date

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Contents

Introduction	3
Background	3
Designations.....	3
Previous archaeological investigations	3
Project Works.....	7
Findings.....	7
Discussion	8
Conclusion	12
References	13
Appendix: Discovery & Excavation in Scotland	14
Contact Details	14

Introduction

1. An ongoing staged programme of archaeological works was required by Mr Morton Hannah in respect of redevelopment works to 96-108 Portland Street Site in Kilmarnock. The archaeological works were designed to mitigate the impact on the archaeological remains within the proposed development area.
2. East Ayrshire Council have required this programme of archaeological works to be undertaken as a requirement of any granted planning consent. The West of Scotland Archaeology Service (WoSAS) who advise East Ayrshire Council on archaeological matters has provided guidance on the structure of archaeological works required to inform granting consent and the mitigation of any subsequent development works. These have been agreed through a Written Scheme of Investigation (Rees & Turner 2012).
3. This Data Structure Report presents the findings of the archaeological monitoring carried out during investigative works within the shell of 96-108 Portland Street. As such it constitutes work undertaken as Stage 1a under the terms of the Written Scheme of Investigation.

Background

4. The town of Kilmarnock is thought to have its origins in a settlement that grew up in association with the medieval church that once occupied the site now occupied by the Laigh Kirk (Turner, Simpson and Stevenson, 1981). It was erected into a burgh of Barony in 1592, in favour of Thomas, 5th Lord Boyd, and its association with the Boyd family continued until William Boyd, Lord Kilmarnock, was executed for his loyalty to the Jacobite cause in the 1745 rebellion. From this point onwards, the town of Kilmarnock developed without interference from the landed classes (Close, 1992, 98).
5. From the 1780s onwards, a number of new planned streets were built in Kilmarnock town centre, transferring the focus of the town from the church to Kilmarnock Cross (Close, 1992, 100). These planned streets included Strand Street, King Street and also Portland Street, which forms the southern street for our site. This street is absent from Roy's 1747-55 survey (Figure 1) when our development area is shown to the immediate west of the confluence of Garden Street and Back Street. Portland Street can be seen on Wood's 1819 town plan striking through this junction, forming the new street frontage which has already been occupied by our main structure (96-108 Portland Street).
6. The overall character of our development site can be seen from the 1856 and 1908 Ordnance Survey maps (Figures 3 & 4). Both depict a layout comparable to that shown on Wood's, with the Garden Street and Portland Street frontages sustained. Of note, when compared to the existing plan (Figure 5) it appears that the ruins on the Garden Street frontage are the same as the furthest east roofed structure on the Ordnance Survey (Figure 3 & 4).

Designations

7. There are no Scheduled Monuments, protected under the terms of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 within the study area. There are no listed Buildings protected under the *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997*. The ground is not within a Conservation Areas are designated for special architectural or historic interest under the *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997*.

Previous archaeological investigations

8. There have been no previous interventions or assessment of the archaeological potential of this ground.



Figure 1: Roy's Military Survey of Scotland 1747-55



Figure 2: Wood's Plan of the Town of Kilmarnock 1819



Figure 3: Ordnance Survey 1856 (pub 1860)

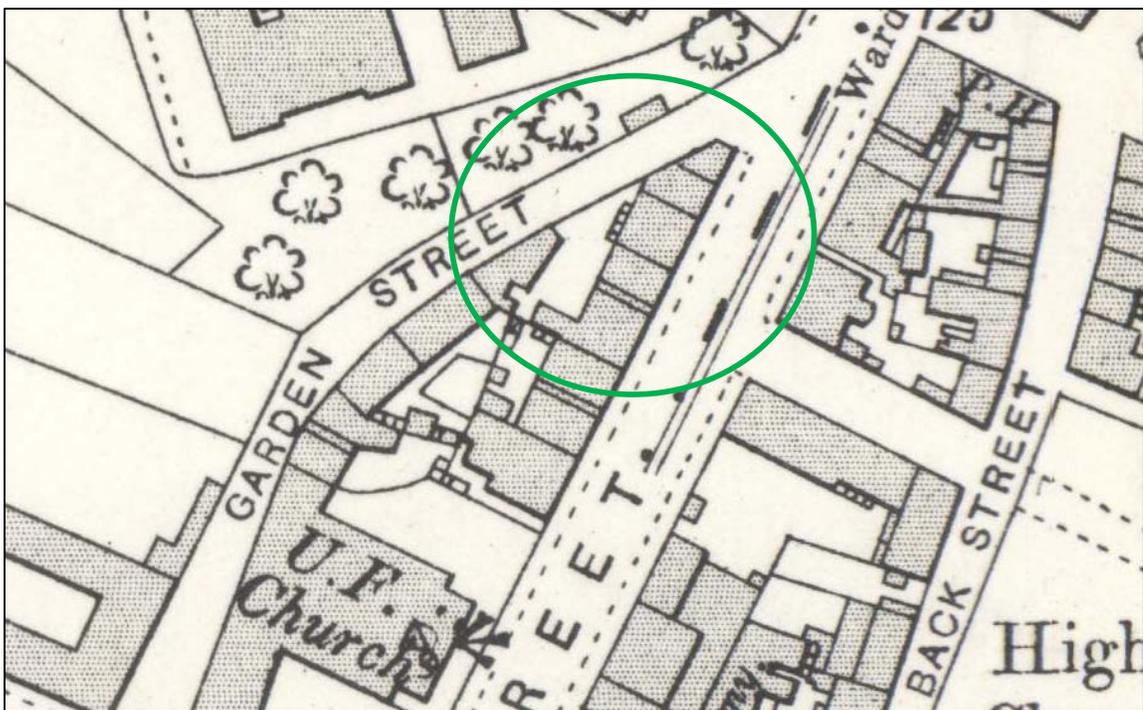


Figure 4: Ordnance Survey 1908 (pub 1910)

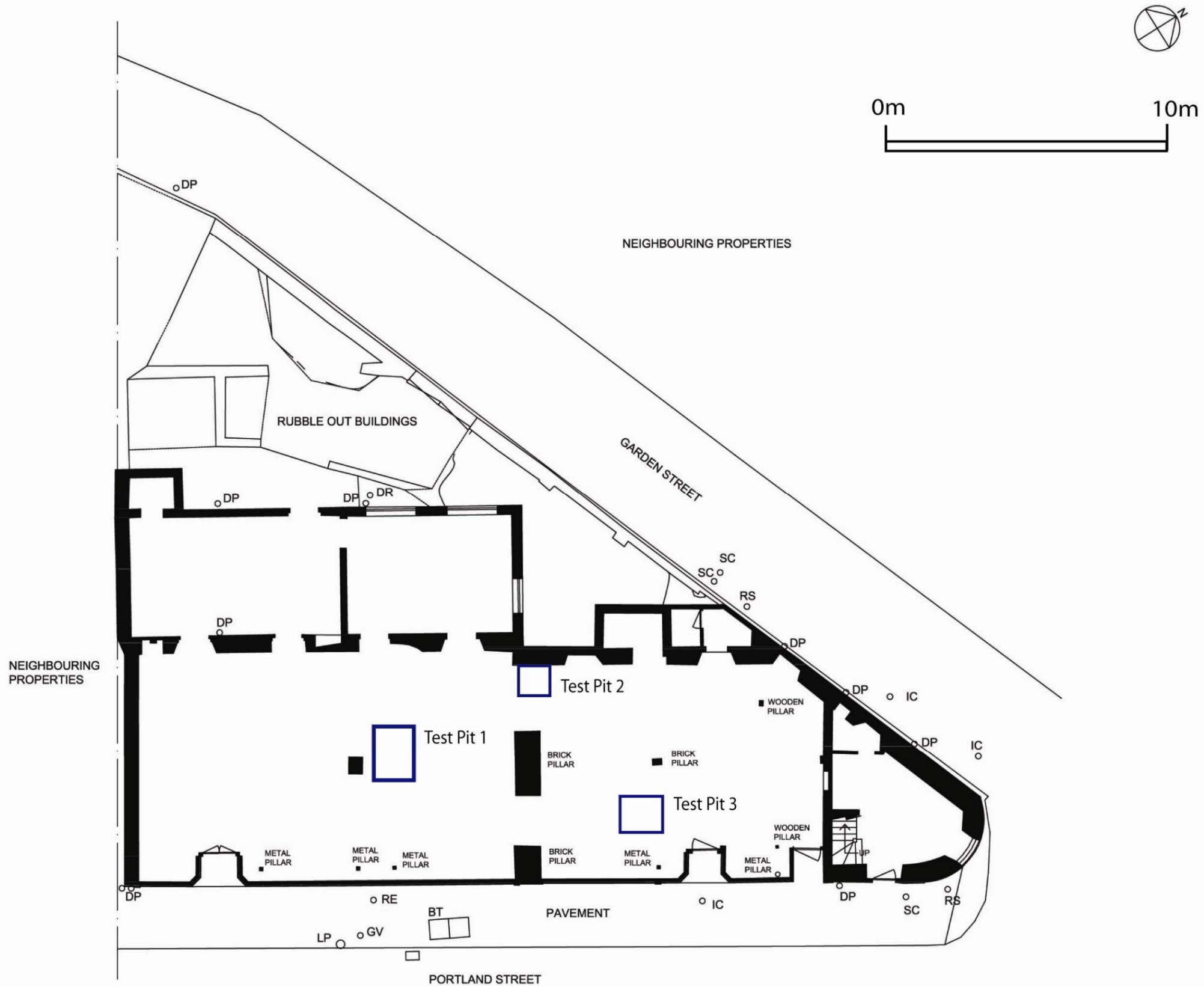


Figure 5: Existing plan of properties with Site Investigation pits noted

Project Works

9. The programme of works forming the archaeological monitoring was carried out on the 23rd March 2012. The works were carried out in keeping with the agreed Written Scheme of Investigation (Rees & Turner 2012).
10. The monitored works comprised the hand and machine excavation of three test pits: one exposed the foundations of the historic structure; one exposed the area for a new load bearing pillar in the centre of the structure, while the third was investigating the subsurface deposits near the street frontage towards the north-east end of the structure.
11. Continuous liaison was carried out with the West of Scotland Archaeology Service to keep them apprised of progress and archaeological discoveries.
12. Any exposed features were investigated to determine their archaeological significance and all works were conducted in accordance with the Institute for Archaeologists' Standards and Policy Statements and Code of Conduct and Historic Scotland Policy Statements.

Findings

13. In total three test pits were hand excavated over 23rd March 2012 (see Figure 5 for locations). A standardised description of each test pit is contained within the *Test Pit Summaries* below.

Test Pit Summaries

No.	Dimensions	Character	Features	Artefacts
1	1.9m x 1.4m in extent and 0.7m deep	A poured concrete floor (100) overlying a bedding layer of broken handmade bricks and chunks of blond sandstone (103). This directly overlay a mixed deposit (maximum depth 0.3m) of crushed blond sandstone, brick, slate and ceramic drain fragments in a yellow-brown sand matrix (101). A thin band of mid-brown silty clay with black (?coal) flecks (104) underlay (101), extending over roughly a third of the test pit in the north corner. This in turn overlay a much darker, compact dark brown-black silty clay with black flecks of manganese (102) which was excavated to a depth of 0.5m.	None	Modern glazed white earthenware, handmade brick and glass in upper layer (101), but no artefacts recovered in (102)
2	1.1m x 0.85m in extent, excavated to depth of 0.75m with sondage sunk at NW side to depth of 1.25m	A poured concrete floor (201) overlay a bedding layer of broken sandstone and handmade brick (202). This in turn overlay a mixed layer of crushed blond sandstone (203) with some lenses of black-brown clay silt within it. Underlying this was a dark brown-black compact silty clay with black flecks (204), which produced finds of modern glass and modern ceramic and featured a	Stepped foundation extending to a maximum depth of 1.15, where it appears to have stepped out. Excavation did not extend beyond 1.15m.	Finds of white glazed earthenware and modern glass recovered throughout.

		lens of crushed blond sandstone (205) at a depth of 0.6m. (204) had been cut by a shallow sloping cut [206, which had then been infilled with a lighter mid-brown compact clay flecked with coal (207).		
3	1.5m x 1.3m in extent, excavated to a depth of 0.33m.	The pre-existing poured concrete floor had already been removed at this location. The upper layer comprised fragments of crushed blond sandstone in a yellow-brown sand matrix (301) with some lenses of compact dark brown-black silty clay present. (301) directly overlay (302), a compact dark brown-black silty clay flecked with coal.	None	None

Discussion

14. Although the test pits excavated within the building were dispersed across the interior of the structure, they exhibited common characteristics which are worthy of discussion. Though no evidence of pre-modern activity was noted, the sediments can still inform us about the site's development in the modern period.
15. Of particular note was the extraordinary depth of the foundation, as exposed in Test Pit 2 (Figure 8). This was exposed to a depth of 0.75m and further exploration in the form of a narrow, hand-dug sondage revealed that it extended further, to a depth of 1.15m. This raised the possibility that the property had once been basemented – however, since the material immediately abutting the rear wall ((204), (205) and (206)) comprised soil, and not broken-up masonry and building debris, it is surmised that this was not the case, and that (204), (205) and indeed (206) instead comprised the fill of the original foundation cut, the full extent of which of which was not identified during these works.
16. The photograph of the section (Figure 7) clearly shows what appears to be the cut of an earlier foundation trench, filled with a much cleaner, contrasting mid-brown silty clay fill. It is surmised, however, that this deposit (206) is far more likely to represent a tip line within (204) and that its clean appearance indicates that it represents redeposited material from the original ground surface. Modern ceramic and glass was encountered in both (204) and (206) on an occasional basis (no finds retained), which was consistent with the building's late eighteenth/early nineteenth century date.
17. Another interesting feature encountered in Trench 2 was the layer of crushed blond sandstone (203) which clearly postdated the foundation deposits (204) and (again refer to Figure 7). A similar layer reappeared consistently across the site in Test Pits 1 and 3 ((101) and (301) respectively (Figures 6 and 9), and it can be surmised that this represents the same layer, resulting perhaps from rebuilding or repairs carried out after the building's original construction, but prior to the laying of the poured concrete floor. Alternatively, it may represent a bedding layer composed of imported material in order to level the interior prior to the pouring of the floor – though this would suggest that the material may have been introduced to the site at a very late date, and that it may have initially been derived from a different location.



Figure 6: Test Pit 1, South-West Facing Section.



Figure 7: Test Pit 2, North-East Facing Section



Figure 8: Test Pit 2, South-East Facing Section – View of Foundation



Figure 9: Test Pit 3, South-East Facing Section



Figure 10: Yard to Rear of Property, Viewed from South-West



Figure 11: Yard to Rear of Property, Viewed From North -East

18. With Test Pit 2 excepted, the underlying layers revealed in Test Pits 1 and 3 should be considered in more detail. During the excavation of Test Pit 1, it was first thought that the clean mid-brown silty clay layer (104) might have represented surviving traces of a pre-existing garden or cultivation soil (see Figure 6). However, its presence was limited to the north and west sides of the trench, and it directly overlay another layer (102) which was much more ambiguous in character. This was thought at first to represent natural subsoil, but its blackish hue and generally dirty appearance suggested that it may instead have represented redeposited subsoil. A similar deposit was encountered elsewhere across the site in Test Pit 3 (302), and it was also similar in character to the fill of the foundation trench in Test Pit 2 (204), though (204) differed in that it revealed occasional finds of glazed white earthenware, modern glass and roofing slate, and had an intrusive lens of crushed sandstone which may have represented debris from building activities on the site.
19. Referring back to (206), which comprised material derived from the original ground surface and later redeposited as a layer within the foundation cut, it should be borne in mind that it was of much cleaner appearance than (204), being a mid-brown silty clay with coal flecks. It was similar in character to the possible 'garden soil' identified in Test Pit 1 (104), which might suggest then that (104) also represented infill or even levelling, introduced to the site at a point contemporary with the cutting and filling of the foundation trench.
20. The combination of the unusually deep foundation and the blackish, dirty character of the lowermost soil horizon tends to suggest that the underlying landform on which this building stands differs markedly from that which can be seen today. There was no clear evidence of a basement, though the nature of the found suggested this: instead, it is highly possible that, rather than representing the natural subsoil, the underlying soil horizon encountered over much of the site represents redeposited material introduced in order to create a level platform for construction.
21. This possibility is further supported by evidence provided from the yard to the rear of the property (Figures 10 and 11). Here, the surface levels are virtually identical to those encountered within the building's interior, suggesting that a sloping landform was built up to form a level surface prior to construction commencing. At some point, the two surfaces (original landform and later infill) will converge and there will be the possibility of encountering archaeologically sensitive material at shallower depth, but in the area towards the street frontage, this seems unlikely to be the case – indeed, the redeposited material (as represented by (104)) extended to a depth of at least 0.65m below the modern ground surface in Test Pit 1, which was located at a central point within the building. This may also explain the unusual depth of the foundation, which was sunk through the redeposited material to the natural subsoil beneath.

Conclusion

22. An ongoing staged programme of archaeological works was required by Mr Morton Hannah in respect of redevelopment works to 96-108 Portland Street Site in Kilmarnock. The archaeological works were designed to mitigate the impact on the archaeological remains within the proposed development area.
23. The watching brief comprised the monitoring of three test pits, and revealed the rear wall of the property to be unusually deep, extending to at least 1.15m below the modern floor levels. From the depth of this foundation, and from the nature of the deposits encountered elsewhere across the site, it is inferred that the structure occupies an area of made ground, created in order to provide a level platform for the building and its yard to the rear. This possibility is supported by the modern ground levels, which are consistent between the interior and the yard.

References

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Appendix: Discovery & Excavation in Scotland

LOCAL AUTHORITY:	East Ayrshire
PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME:	96-108 Portland Street, Kilmarnock
PROJECT CODE:	RA12019
PARISH:	Kilmarnock
NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR:	Louise Turner
NAME OF ORGANISATION:	Rathmell Archaeology Limited
TYPE(S) OF PROJECT:	Archaeological Watching Brief
NMRS NO(S):	
SITE/MONUMENT TYPE(S):	
SIGNIFICANT FINDS:	
NGR (2 letters, 6 figures)	
START DATE (this season)	23 rd March 2012
END DATE (this season)	23 rd March 2012
PREVIOUS WORK (incl. DES ref.)	None
MAIN (NARRATIVE) DESCRIPTION: (may include information from other fields)	A programme of archaeological monitoring works was carried out in respect of the renewal of the historic structure at 96-108 Portland Street. While no in-situ archaeologically significant strata were observed, information was recovered to inform patterns of survival and potential on-site. Monitoring works revealed that the foundation of the rear wall of the building extended to a depth of at least 1.15m, suggesting an area of made ground had been created to form a level platform for the structure.
PROPOSED FUTURE WORK:	Unknown
CAPTION(S) FOR ILLUSTRS:	None
SPONSOR OR FUNDING BODY:	Mr Hannah
ADDRESS OF MAIN CONTRIBUTOR:	Unit 8 Ashgrove Workshops, Kilwinning, Ayrshire KA13 6PU
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ARCHIVE LOCATION (intended/deposited)	Report to West of Scotland Archaeology Service and archive to RCAHMS Collections.

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