

Crathes Castle, Banchory, Aberdeenshire, AB31 5QJ

A report on an Archaeological Watching Brief

Cable trenching for the Adventure Play-area extension



**Report prepared by:
Robert Lenfert, PhD, ACIfA
Cameron Archaeology
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Illus 2 First edition Ordnance Survey map six-inch to the mile (Kincardineshire, Sheet VI, survey date: 1864-5, Published 1868) of Crathes Castle with modern trench location overlain in red (*Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2018*) 4

Illus 3 Section of ditch adjacent to ha-ha wall after clearing..... 5

SUMMARY

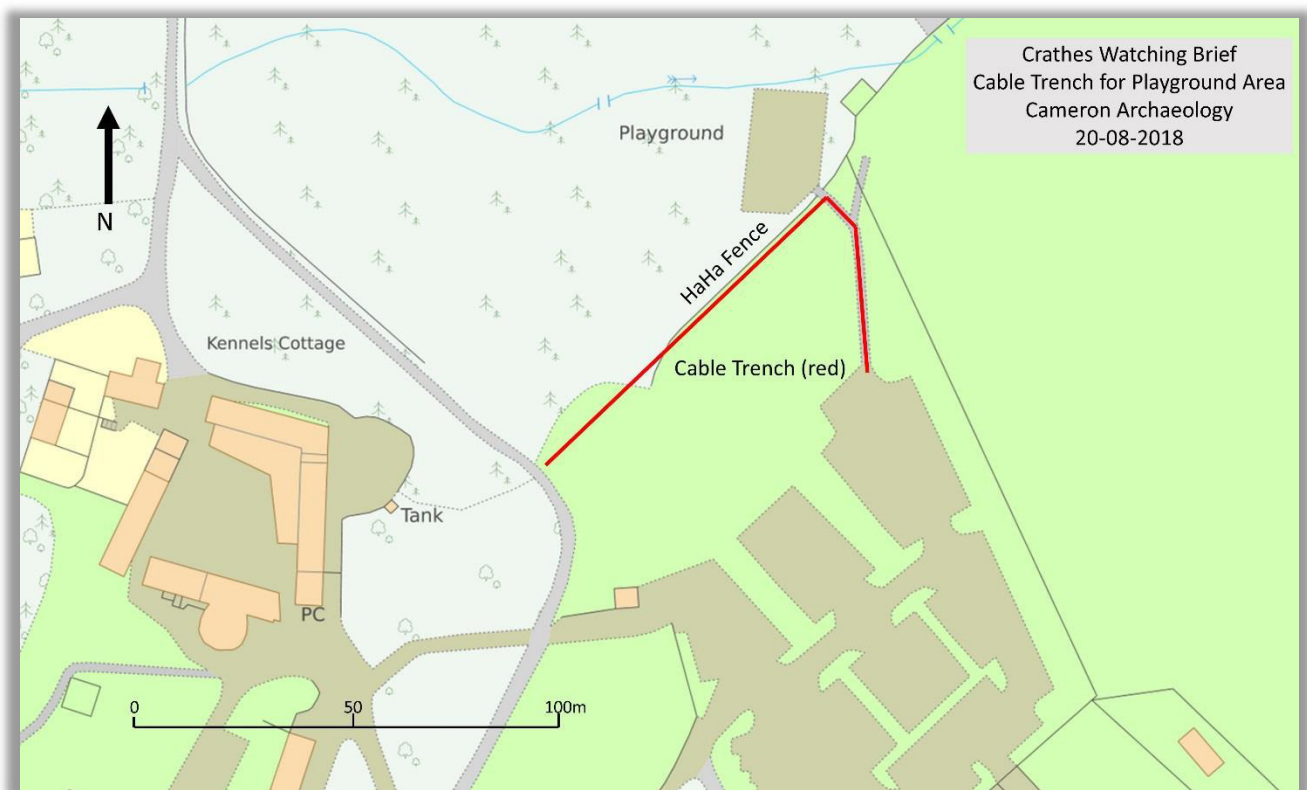
On August 20th, 2018, an archaeological watching brief was carried out by Cameron Archaeology at Crathes Castle, Aberdeenshire, on behalf of the National Trust for Scotland (NTS). Approximately 133m of trench was machine excavated, while the ditch adjacent to a section of intact ha-ha (walling) was cleared of accumulated vegetation and organic debris. No new archaeological finds or features were noted, but close examination indicates the existing section of ha-ha wall is in relatively good condition minus several sections which now stand to only two or three courses of stone. Therefore, the ha-ha may be a candidate for future restoration work to prevent ongoing damage by intrusive root action and erosion.

1 Background

An archaeological watching brief took place on August 20th, 2018, at Crathes Castle, Banchory, Aberdeenshire during excavation of a 0.5m wide by 0.75m deep and c.133m long cable trench for a water pipe, electrical cabling and fibre-optic internet services. A nearby section of intact but largely unrestored section of ha-ha, or drystone walling with ditch, was also cleared of debris which consisted of c.0.20m deep accumulations of inwashed soils and vegetation.

2 The Watching Brief

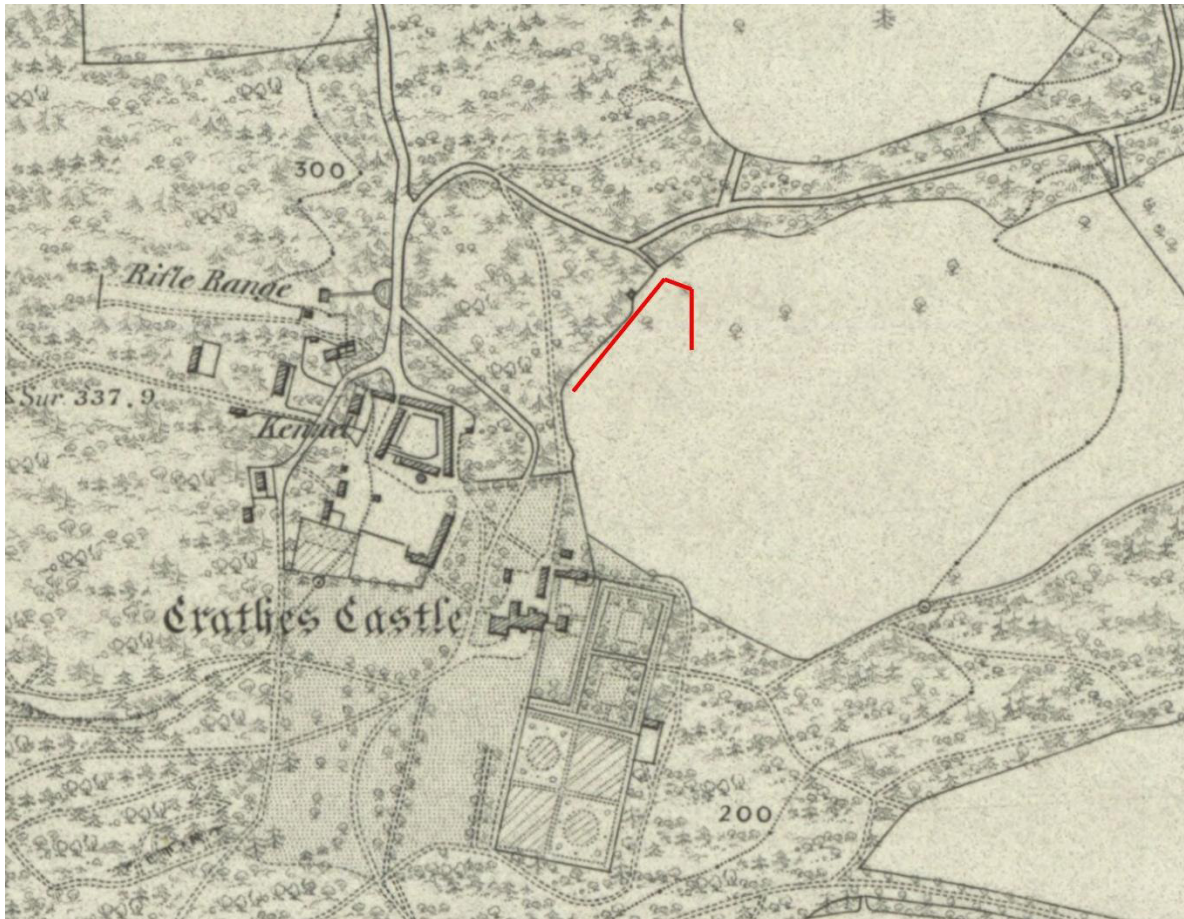
The monitoring involved the machine excavation of the aforementioned trench running for some 90m in a NE direction from NO 73434 96938 to 73497 96998, parallel with a section of ha-ha walling and ditch, then arcing due south and continuing another 43m to NO 73506 96961 until the trench reached the previously disturbed lower carpark area which had previously been heavily terraced during its construction (Illus 1).



Illus 1 Approximate location of cable trench at Crathes Castle based on start/finish GPS points (Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2018).

The initial machine work involved clearing away accumulated organic infills and vegetation from the cut of the Ha-ha ditch and the opposite bank, which had grown into a ridge of compacted vegetation and roots some 0.2m in height. Both the ditch cleaning and ridge removal were performed by a 13-ton excavator using a bladed bucket.

At this point, trenching began at the SW terminus working downslope to the planned kiosk for the new play area at the NE terminus. An additional trench of the same dimensions for an



Illus 2 First edition Ordnance Survey map six-inch to the mile (Kincardineshire, Sheet VI, survey date: 1864-5, Published 1868) of Crathes Castle with approximate trench location overlain in red (*Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2018*).

(cont. from previous page) electrical was then excavated towards the current footpath, then down the centre of the path until reaching the carpark services where it will be connected.



Illus 3 Section of ditch adjacent to ha-ha wall after clearing. Note varying levels of wall preservation in this particular section.

3 Conclusions

No new archaeological finds or features were noted. However, once the ha-ha ditch was cleared, close examination indicates the existing section of walling predating 1865 remains in surprisingly good overall condition, despite the intrusive effects of root action from nearby vegetation at the top of the wall, minus several small c.2-3m long sections which now stand to only two or three courses of stone.

Regarding a date for this construction, Ha-ha walling appears to have originated in France in the late-17th century and was likely employed in Scotland by the early- to mid-18th century. The first edition OS map (Illus 2) indicated the ha-ha may have originally extended much further SSE connecting with the NE garden area from the modern terminus at the west end. While this section may be partially obscured or most likely removed, intact sections might optimistically exist under the current landscaping. Beyond this, the existing visible ha-ha could be considered a candidate for future restoration work to prevent ongoing damage by intrusive root action and erosion along the upper areas adjacent to the forested area.

Interestingly, existing references to ha-ha walling in Aberdeenshire (HES/Canmore 2018) indicates ha-ha walling at Castle Fraser is constructed against a raised mound, rather than a sunken wall and is therefore not a 'true' ha-ha style walling. This is regarded as the standard type in Aberdeenshire. This particular section at Crathes observed during the ditch monitoring does in fact appear to be constructed in the original French style, contrasting with

the notion that ‘true’ ha-ha walling is not common in this area. As the above author suggests, this is an area for future research. The true nature of the sunken ha-ha walling at Crathes may point to early origins for this type of walling in NE Scotland.

4 References

Historic Environment Scotland/Canmore (2018) ‘NTS Recording Event 1996, Castle Fraser, Aberdeenshire, Ha-ha wall’ accessed online at <https://canmore.org.uk/event/976404> as of 26-08-2018.

5 Acknowledgements

Cameron Archaeology would like to thank the National Trust for Scotland staff at Crathes Castle for commissioning this work, and for their knowledge and assistance during this investigation.

Appendix 1 Photographs

Photo ID	Direction Facing	Comments
Crathes WB 8-2018-1	SW	Ha-ha ditch prior to machine cleaning
Crathes WB 8-2018-2	NE	Ha-ha ditch prior to machine cleaning
Crathes WB 8-2018-3	NE	Ha-ha ditch during machine cleaning
Crathes WB 8-2018-4	SW	Ha-ha ditch during machine cleaning
Crathes WB 8-2018-5	SW	Ha-ha ditch during machine cleaning
Crathes WB 8-2018-6	NE	Ha-ha ditch cleaning nearing completion
Crathes WB 8-2018-7	NW	Ha-ha wall section view approximately mid-point
Crathes WB 8-2018-8	NE	General view of lower (NE half) of intact ha-ha wall
Crathes WB 8-2018-9	NW	Ha-ha wall section view approximately 20m from NE terminus
Crathes WB 8-2018-10	NE	General view of lower area of intact ha-ha wall
Crathes WB 8-2018-11	NW	Area of poorly preserved Ha-ha showing remaining courses of stone (lower section)
Crathes WB 8-2018-12	SW	View of Ha-ha looking upslope (SW) after cleaning
Crathes WB 8-2018-13	NE	Cable trench, SW terminus near Go Ape kiosk.
Crathes WB 8-2018-14	NE	Cable trenching in progress.
Crathes WB 8-2018-15	SW	Cable trenching, general view upslope
Crathes WB 8-2018-16	SW	Cable trench making an arc as it heads due south towards lower carpark – general view
Crathes WB 8-2018-17	NNE	Lower cable trench, general view
Crathes WB 8-2018-18	NNE	Lower cable trench, general view
Crathes WB 8-2018-19	SW	Upper cable trench, general view, after excavation was completed



Crathes WB 8-2018-1.jpg



Crathes WB 8-2018-2.jpg



Crathes WB 8-2018-3.jpg



Crathes WB 8-2018-4.jpg



Crathes WB 8-2018-5.jpg



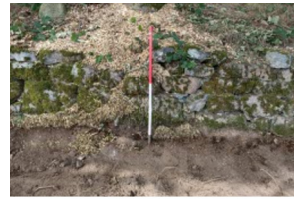
Crathes WB 8-2018-6.jpg



Crathes WB 8-2018-7.jpg



Crathes WB 8-2018-8.jpg



Crathes WB 8-2018-9.jpg



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Crathes WB 8-2018-11.jpg



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Crathes WB 8-2018-14.jpg



Crathes WB 8-2018-15.jpg



Crathes WB 8-2018-16.jpg



Crathes WB 8-2018-17.jpg



Crathes WB 8-2018-18.jpg



Crathes WB 8-2018-19.jpg