

Merchiston Castle

Colinton Road, Edinburgh

Watching Brief : August 2015

for

Edinburgh Napier University

August 2015



Merchiston Castle



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Job number 2083.00

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by Kenneth Macfadyen

Contents

Illustrations

Acknowledgements

Executive Summary

<i>1.</i>	<i>Introduction</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>2.</i>	<i>Watching Brief</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Appendix A</i>	<i>Photograph register</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Appendix B</i>	<i>Photographic contact sheets</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Appendix C</i>	<i>Discovery and Excavation Scotland (DES) entry</i>	<i>8</i>

Illustrations

List of Figures

Figure 1 site location	1
Figure 2 plan and elevation showing areas of monitoring	2

List of Plates

Plate 1 pre excavation view of foundations and junction with castle	3
Plate 2 mid excavation view of concrete within door threshold	4

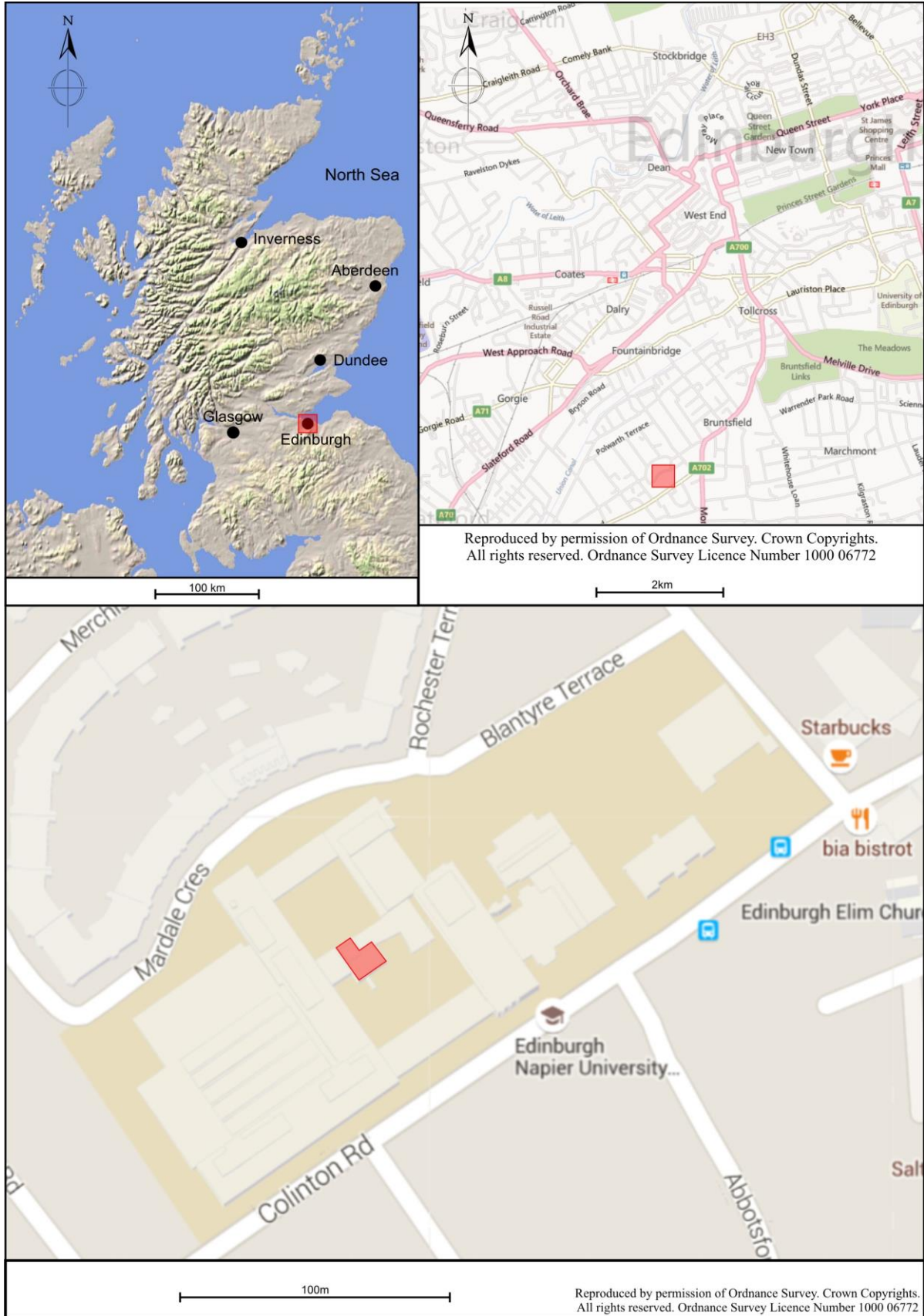


Figure 1 site location

Merchiston Castle

Colinton Road, Edinburgh

Watching Brief

Executive Summary

Addyman Archaeology was commissioned by Simpson and Brown Architects to carry out an archaeological watching brief at Merchiston Castle, Colinton Road, Edinburgh. The watching brief involved the breaking out of foundations at ground level and the removal of the reinforced concrete of the stairs built into the south frontage of the tower at 1st floor level.

Both the demolitions of the stairs at the junction with the face of the castle and the below ground removal of the foundations all terminated within reinforced concrete and no preexisting fabric or deposits predating the concrete of the mid-20th C were exposed.

1. Introduction

Addyman Archaeology was commissioned by Simpson and Brown Architects to carry out an archaeological watching brief at Merchiston Castle, Colinton Road, Edinburgh. The watching brief related to the removal of a mid-20th C concrete stair rising up to an inserted mid-20th C door at 1st floor level within the fabric of the 15th C Castle. A planning application for the work was granted on 2nd October 2014 (ref. 14/03459/LBC). A condition attached to the consent stated that an archaeological Watching brief be maintained during the works.

The archaeological watching brief was undertaken on the 14th and 18th of August 2015. The weather was a mix of dry and overcast alternating with wet weather conditions. The demolition contractors were Forth Stone (contact Paul Robinson) and the demolition was monitored by K. Macfadyen.

Both the demolitions of the stairs at the junction with the face of the castle and the below ground removal of the foundations all terminated within reinforced concrete, ie no preexisting fabric or deposits were exposed.

A record of the building recording (*OASIS ID: addyman1-221399*) has been deposited with the Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations (OASIS) website hosted by the Archaeological Data Service and with *Discovery and Excavation in Scotland* (DES), the annual publication of fieldwork by Archaeology Scotland.

2. Watching Brief

Addyman Archaeology were contracted to monitor the demolition of a mid-20th C concrete staircase built up against and into the south face of 15th C Merchiston Castle.

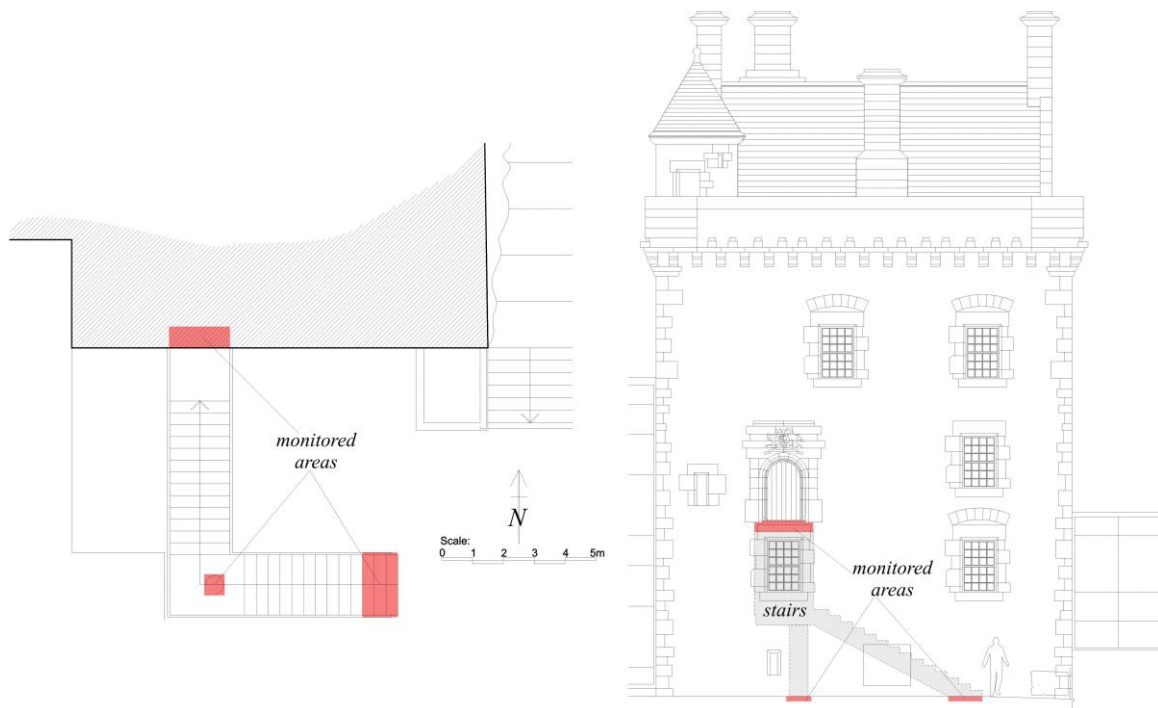


Figure 2 plan and elevation showing areas of monitoring

Prior to the start of the monitoring the bulk of the freestanding reinforced concrete stair had been demolished by a remote controlled hydraulic breaker. The last stubs of the reinforced concrete down to near ground surface or wall face were left *in situ* to be removed under archaeological supervision.

The removal of these last remnants of concrete was monitored by a qualified archaeologist and any archaeologically significant deposits or features were to be recorded by photography as well as in drawn plan, section and context description. Within the monitored removal of concrete no archaeological significant deposits or features were noted; accordingly only a basic photographic record was made of the works.

The breaking up of the upper concrete within the two small areas of foundations was initially performed by the remote control hydraulic breaker and then cleaned by hand. Within these two foundations the concrete was removed down to about 0.10 m below the ground with the intention to make good the holes by laying paving to match the surrounding. As such the concrete of the foundations was not bottomed and it was clear that the concrete continued down for some distance or was at least founded into something solid ie bedrock.

The only find of note was a plastic biro pen jammed between the foundation and the surrounding paving; this find was not retained.



Plate 1 pre excavation view of foundations and junction with castle

Removal of the concrete slab within the door threshold on the south elevation was undertaken by hand using a small electric pneumatic breaker, this was used in order to minimise potential damage to the surrounding masonry.

The concrete proved to be solid and removal was slow. It appeared to have been poured *in situ* and appeared to continue through the full width of the wall. The concrete was removed back to the line of the door in order to give enough of a tail to support the new balcony; this involved the removal of the mid-20th C sandstone threshold stone (bedded into the concrete slab). Again, as in the foundation trenches, the concrete was not bottomed; enough space was made for the proposed balcony to fit without removing all the concrete. No historically significant masonry was noted around the area of the excavation; all nearby masonry seemed to relate to the mid-20th C insertion of the door and window below.



Plate 2 mid excavation view of concrete within door threshold (0.40m scale)

Appendix A **Photograph register**

Photograph No	Aspect facing	Description
2083 (01)	S	Foundation concrete at base of stairs pre excavation
2083 (02)	S	Foundation concrete at base of stairs pre excavation
2083 (03)	SW	Foundation concrete at base of stairs excavation beginning
2083 (04)	S	Foundation concrete at base of stairs at LOE , concrete exposed
2083 (05)	N	Foundation concrete at base of stairs at LOE , concrete exposed
2083 (06)	W	Foundation concrete at base of stairs at LOE , concrete exposed
2083 (07)	W	Foundation concrete at base of stairs at LOE , concrete exposed
2083 (08)	W	Foundation concrete at base of stairs at LOE , concrete exposed
2083 (09)	N	Pre excavation view of the door threshold
2083 (10)	NE	Pre excavation view of the door threshold, detail at junction with 20 th C lintel below
2083 (11)	N	Pre excavation view of the door threshold, detail at junction with 20 th C lintel below
2083 (12)	W	Pre excavation view of the door threshold
2083 (13)	NW	Pre excavation view of the door threshold
2083 (14)	NE	Pre excavation view of the door threshold
2083 (15)	N	Mid excavation view of the door threshold, shows reinforcing
2083 (16)	NW	Mid excavation view of the door threshold, shows reinforcing
2083 (17)	NW	Foundation concrete of stair support pier
2083 (18)	NW	Foundation concrete of stair support pier
2083 (19)	N	Working shot of door threshold removal
2083 (20)	NE	Door threshold removal at LOE
2083 (21)	NE	Door threshold removal at LOE
2083 (22)	N	Door threshold removal at LOE

Appendix B Photographic contact sheets



2083 (01).JPG



2083 (02).JPG



2083 (03).JPG



2083 (04).JPG



2083 (05).JPG



2083 (06).JPG



2083 (07).JPG



2083 (08).JPG



2083 (09).JPG



2083 (10).JPG



2083 (11).JPG



2083 (12).JPG



2083 (13).JPG



2083 (14).JPG



2083 (15).JPG



2083 (16).JPG



2083 (17).JPG



2083 (18).JPG



2083 (19).JPG



2083 (20).JPG



2083 (21).JPG



2083 (22).JPG

Appendix C Discovery and Excavation Scotland (DES) entry

LOCAL AUTHORITY:	City of Edinburgh
PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME:	Merchiston Castle, Colinton Road, Edinburgh
PROJECT CODE:	AA 2083
PARISH:	Edinburgh
NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR:	Kenneth Macfadyen
NAME OF ORGANISATION:	Addyman Archaeology
TYPE(S) OF PROJECT:	Watching brief
NMRS NO(S):	NT27SW 13
SITE/MONUMENT TYPE(S):	Tower house
SIGNIFICANT FINDS:	None
NGR (2 letters, 8 or 10 figures)	NT 24259 71805
START DATE (this season)	14.08.2015
END DATE (this season)	18.08.2015
PREVIOUS WORK (incl. DES ref.)	none
MAIN (NARRATIVE) DESCRIPTION: (May include information from other fields)	<p>The removal of a mid-20th C reinforced concrete stair built against the 15th C tower house at Merchiston, Edinburgh, required an archaeological watching brief during the demolition.</p> <p>These works involved the breaking out of foundations at ground level and the removal of the reinforced concrete of the stairs built into the south frontage of the tower at 1st floor level.</p> <p>Within the areas exposed no deposits or features predating the concrete of the mid-20th C was noted.</p>
PROPOSED FUTURE WORK:	None.
CAPTION(S) FOR ILLUSTRS:	None.
SPONSOR OR FUNDING BODY:	Simpson and Brown Architects
ADDRESS OF MAIN CONTRIBUTOR:	St. Ninian's Manse, Quayside Street, Edinburgh, EH6 6EJ
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ARCHIVE LOCATION (intended/deposited)	RCAHMS