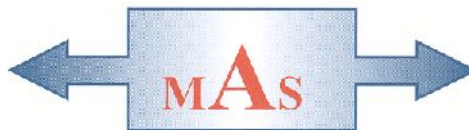


# DUNNOTAR CASTLE STONEHAVEN ABERDEENSHIRE



**Archaeological Watching Brief -**  
Carried out 14<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> January 2013  
by  
**Murray Archaeological Services Ltd**



**Report No: MAS 2013-5**  
by  
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- Archaeological Watching Brief -

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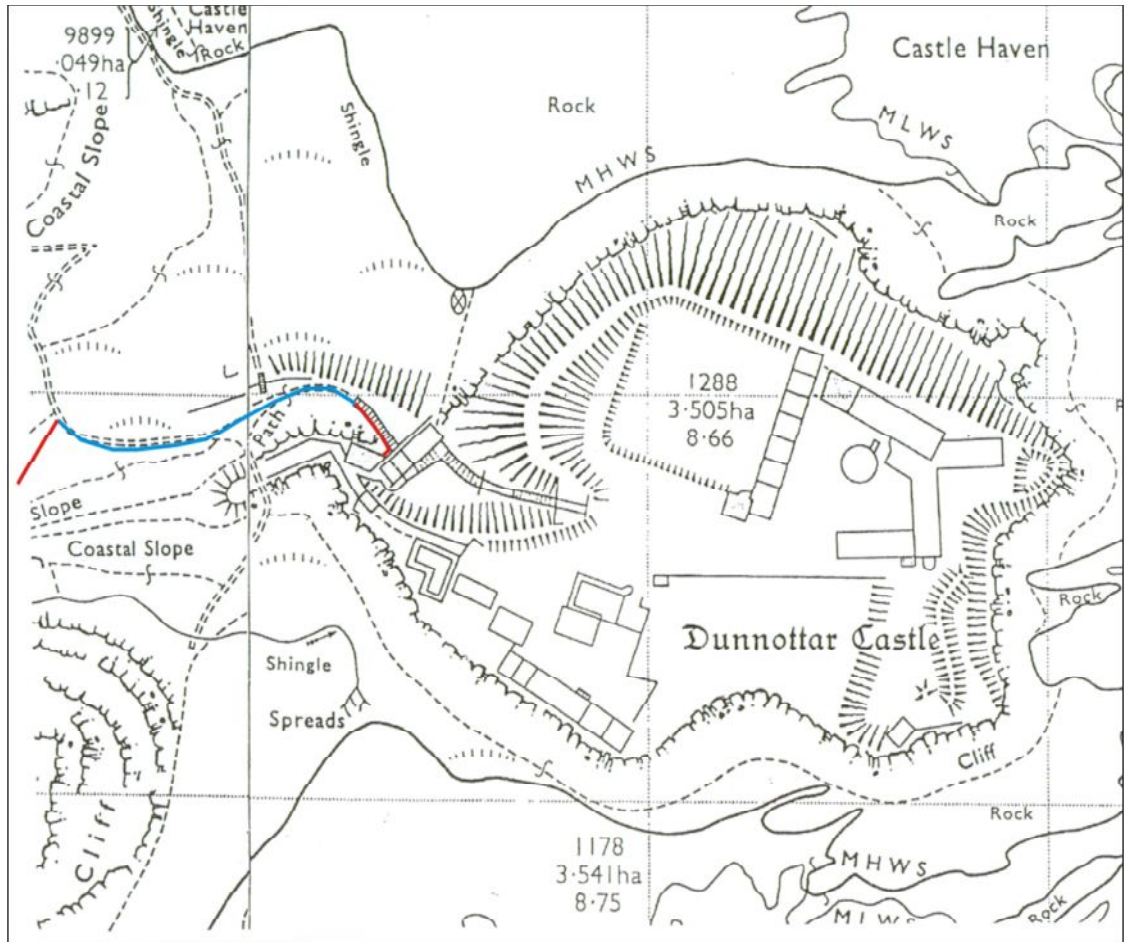
1. Background

- 1.1 In consequence of a proposal to place new safety barriers at Dunnottar Castle, Stonehaven, Aberdeenshire, an archaeological watching brief was required under the conditions of Scheduled Monument Consent.
- 1.2 Murray Archaeological Services Ltd was commissioned by Dunecht Estates to undertake the work, the field element of which was carried out on 14<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> January 2013.

2. The Site

- 2.1 Dunnottar Castle occupies a coastal promontory c.3km S of Stonehaven, protected on all sides by steep cliffs [NGR: NO 88128 83842; NMRS No: NO88SE 11; Parish: Dunnottar]. Although the castle probably occupies the site of a prehistoric fort, in its present form the remains date to various periods from the 14<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> centuries.
- 2.2 In 2009 a safety barrier consisting of 39 posts and rail was erected along the W side of the footpath running from the steps at the bottom of the slope down to the castle and along to the base of the steps leading up to the entrance to the castle complex itself. For safety reasons this barrier has now been extended to

run from the W end of the 2009 fence to run WSW to the base of the narrow isthmus linking the castle promontory to the higher ground to the W – Fence 1 (Illus 1 and 2) and from the base of the steps leading to the castle entrance to the entrance itself – Fence 2 (Illus 3).



**Illus 1: Plan showing the 2009 fence in blue and the 2013 fences in red (Fence 1 on left and Fence 2 on right).**





**Illus 2: Fence 1, looking E**



**Illus 3: Fence 2, looking towards castle entrance**

### 3. Methodology

- 3.1 All postholes were dug by hand by Dunecht Estate staff under archaeological supervision. This work was recorded and photographed.

## 4. The Work

- 4.1 Fence 1: Fence 1 consisted of 14 wooden posts placed at intervals of c.1.5m from centre to centre and extended for some 18m. The holes excavated measured on average c.400 x500mm and were c.500mm deep. The fill of each hole was homogenous, being a mix of dark soil and fairly tightly packed stone and small rock. It would appear to be made-up ground with a now disused pathway running across the line of the fence.

The finds from the holes amounted to 1 small section of clay tobacco pipe stem, 1 piece of bottle glass and 3 sherds of blue patterned china, all c.19<sup>th</sup>/early 20<sup>th</sup> century in date (not retained).



**Illus 4: Typical fill of post hole**

4.2 Fence 2: Fence 2 consisted of 12 posts beginning at the base of the steps up to the castle entrance on the SW side for a distance of c.13m (Illus 3). They were placed at intervals of 1.4m to 1.5m and were dug in hard up to the sides of the steps. The holes measured c.350 – 400mm x c.500mm and were generally 400 – 500mm deep. The fill of the postholes consisted entirely of soil mixed with stone and some mortar and was part of the material used in the construction of the stone steps.

The only finds recovered were a single new penny and 1 piece of bottle glass. (not retained).



**Illus 5: Installation of posts, looking NW**





**Illus 6: Typical posthole fill**

- 4.3 At the top of the steps the fence turned at 90 degrees towards the castle wall where two further posts were required, one of which was hard up to the wall (Illus 7-8, below).



**Illus 7: Position of posthole to the left of the central gun loop**



**Illus 8: Posthole with the foundation stones visible**

The posthole is 1.3m SW of the angle in the outer wall and measured 400mm x 450mm. At a depth of c.400mm below the surface two rectangular possible foundation stones of the castle wall were exposed (Illus 8, above). These extended c.100mm out from the wall and c.100mm of one and only 70mm of the other was exposed. The hole was extended a further 50mm out from the wall so that the post would not interfere with these stones or the castle wall. The posthole was lined with plastic to protect them from the concrete poured to fix the post in position.

## 5. Results

- 5.1 All the postholes excavated produced similar fill from made-up ground.
- 5.2 Apart from the foundation stones at the terminus of Fence 2, no archaeological features or finds were evident elsewhere.

## Appendix 1

### **Catalogue of Digital Photographs (Supplied to Archive)**



<b>Dunnottar Castle 1</b>	
1	General view of E end of Fence 1
2-3	Detail of typical posthole
4	View, looking SW, to line of Fence 1
5-7	View of Fence 1, looking NE
8-10	Detail of typical posthole
11-15	Views, looking SE and E, of line of Fence 1
<b>Dunnottar Castle 2</b>	
3-4	View, looking N, of Fence 2 and stone steps
5-8	Details of typical posthole
9-12	Views, looking SE, of Fence 2 to right of steps
13	As 3-4, above
14	View, looking SW, of position of posthole by castle wall
15-17	Foundation stones in posthole