

HISTORIC SCOTLAND PROPERTIES IN CARE
MINOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORKS 2011

Dirleton Castle: Watching Brief, August 2011.

HS PIC Index Number: 90096

SITE: Dirleton Castle, Dirleton.

N.G.R.: NT 5160 8393; NT 5164 8392

DESCRIPTION: Watching Brief during the excavation of trenches to install new interpretation boards.

PROJECT CODE: HSCO-90096-2011-01

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4 Western Terrace, Murrayfield, Edinburgh EH12 5QF.

AUGUST 2011

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4 Western Terrace, Murrayfield, Edinburgh EH12 5QF.

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INTRODUCTION

Under the terms of its Properties In Care (PIC) call-off contract with Historic Scotland, Kirkdale Archaeology was asked to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the excavation of two small trenches designed to receive new interpretation boards. One trench was located within the castle compound, while the other was positioned adjacent to the present footbridge (Fig.1). The work was undertaken on 19th July 2011.

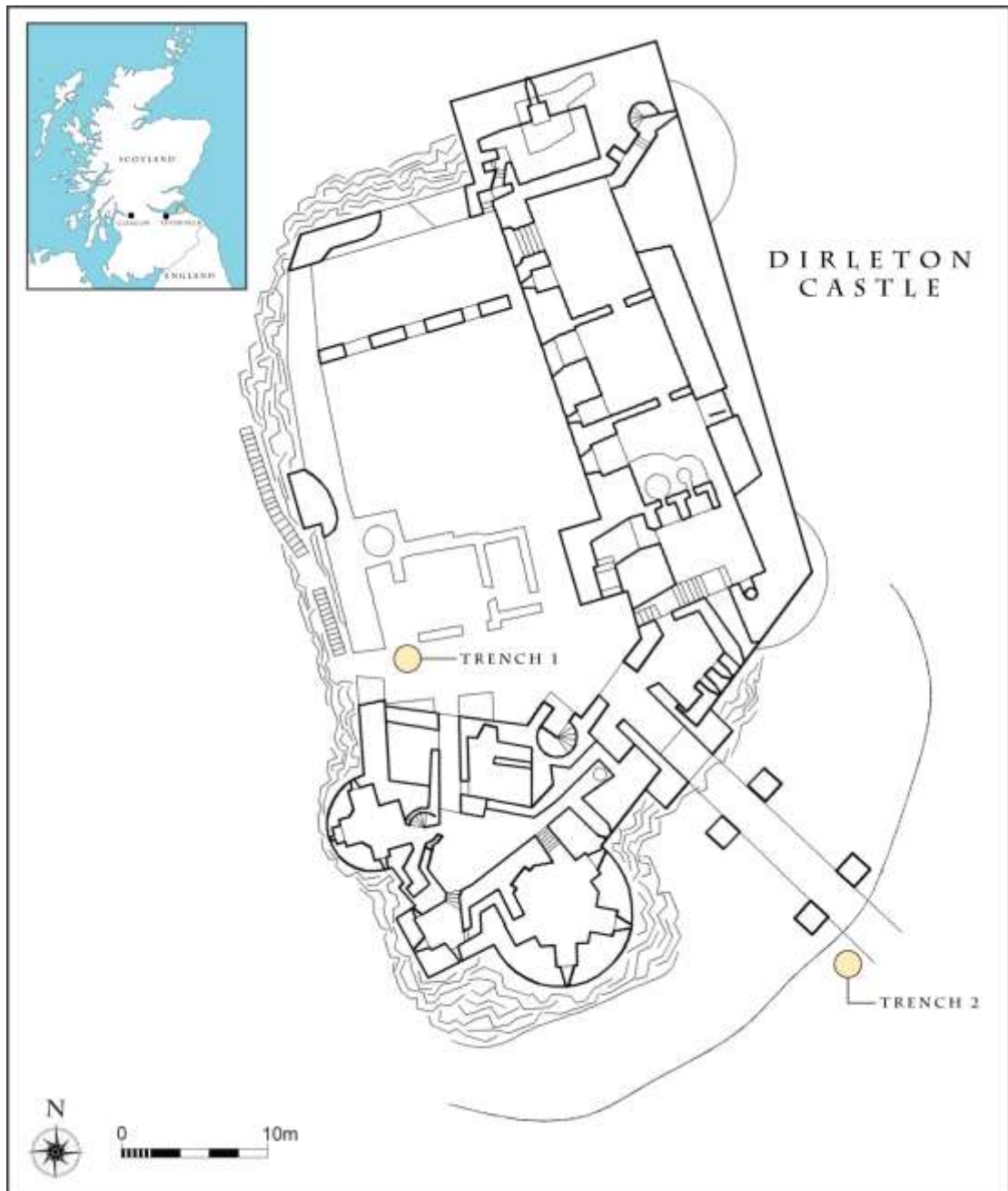


Figure 1: Plan showing the location of Dirleton Castle, along with the sites of the present works.

DESCRIPTION

TRENCH 1

Trench 1 was located 3.5m N of the W side of the ground floor entrance to the 'Ruthven Block' and was c.3.5m E of the inside face of the W curtain wall. It measured c.1m x 1m in plan. Excavation of this trench entailed the removal of an existing lectern-type interpretation board and the installation of a new board within the existing pit. The existing interpretation board was set in a concrete plinth **001** which in turn was laid directly within an informal shallow trench **002**, c.0.25m deep. This was cut through a mixture of imported chippings and dark soil **003** – straight onto bedrock. The bedrock was uneven and formed the core of the 13th century castle courtyard, and its head is a prominent natural rocky outcrop around which much of the 13th century work is built.

TRENCH 2

This trench was excavated to receive a 'cairn' type sign, angled on a stone plinth. The trench measured c.1.25m E/W x 0.85m N/S and was located W of the S end of the present wooden bridge leading into the castle. It was excavated to a depth of c.0.38m - 0.4m. The topsoil **004** extended to a depth of c.0.2m, giving way to a rubble and dark soil deposit **005** which was not fully excavated. Late medieval pottery and oyster shell were found in **005**, suggesting that this deposit has not been affected by modern landscaping.

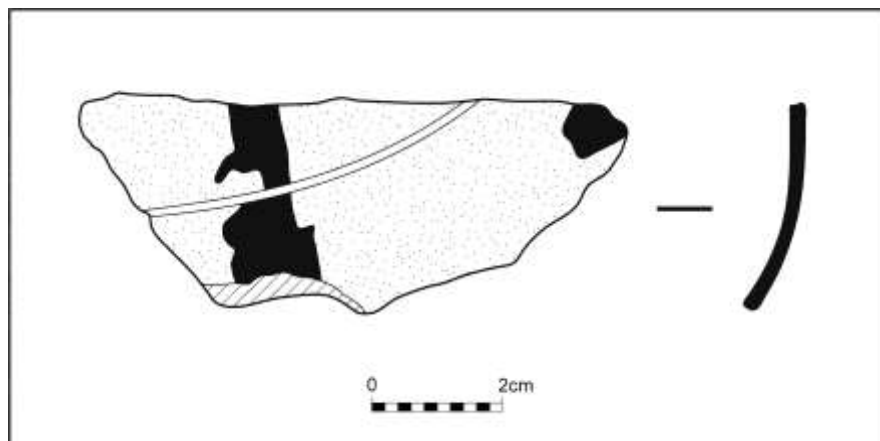


Figure 2: Pottery sherd SF001.

CONCLUSIONS

TRENCH 1

The bedrock, as exposed in the existing trench, showed no sign of weathering and was too uneven to represent the courtyard surface. The implication may be that cobbling, paving or hard standing of some description would have covered the uneven bedrock head, particularly in the vicinity of the accommodation blocks towards the S side of the castle circuit. No evidence was found of any courtyard surface pre-dating the modern chippings.

TRENCH 2

This trench appears to be cut against an artificial terrace, which presently defines the S edge of the main defensive ditch but also provides a platform for formal planting presently defined by a line of three to four yew trees aligned generally parallel to the N face of the terrace. This terrace may form part of the elaborate gardens associated with the 16th century occupation of the site, which has been found to include a central *parterre* (presently the bowling green and a series of other compartments reflected by low earthworks to the E and S). The terrace, cut by Trench 2, also serves to provide an access point to the bridge. Whether the rocky outcrop itself was ever complemented by a ditch in the 13th century is unknown; it may be that the present terrace is the rationalisation of a route leading up to an earlier bridge point, perhaps at a lower level.

LIST OF CONTEXTS

No.	Trench	Description
001	1	Topsoil.
002	1	Cut for original signage setting.
003	1	Imported chippings and dark soil.
004	2	Topsoil.
005	2	Rubble and dark soil deposit containing oyster shell and pottery sherd (SF001).

LIST OF DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHS

No.	Description	From	Date
01	View from 'Ruthven Range.'	E	19/7/2011
02	View from 'Ruthven Range.'	E	19/7/2011
03	Original information board <i>in situ</i> .	N	19/7/2011
04	Original information board <i>in situ</i> .	NW	19/7/2011
05	The Bowling Green viewed from the Courtyard.	E	19/7/2011
06	The Bowling Green viewed from the Courtyard.	NE	19/7/2011
07	Removed sign.	N/A	19/7/2011
08	Removal of original board from Ruthven Range.	S	19/7/2011
09	The Bowling Green viewed from the Courtyard.	SE	19/7/2011
10	The Bowling Green viewed from the Courtyard.	SE	19/7/2011
11	Sign in process of being removed.	N/A	19/7/2011
12	Site of Trench 2 - site during preparation.	NE	19/7/2011
13	Site of Trench 2 - site during preparation.	NE	19/7/2011
14	Site of Trench 2 - site during preparation.	NE	19/7/2011
15	Trench 1 - showing bedrock.	N/A	19/7/2011
16	Trench 1 - showing bedrock.	N/A	19/7/2011
17	Trench 1 - showing bedrock.	N/A	19/7/2011
18	Trench 1 looking SW	NE	19/7/2011
19	Trench 2 from the S	S	19/7/2011
20	Trench 2.	W	19/7/2011
21	Trench 2.	E	19/7/2011
22	Trench 2 fully excavated.	N/A	19/7/2011
23	Double avenue of yew Trees along S side of bowling green	N	19/7/2011
24	Double avenue of yew Trees along S side of bowling green	N	19/7/2011

LIST OF FINDS

No.	Type	Description
001	Ceramic	Body sherd from a jug, possibly salt glazed (imported), dating from the 15th/16th century. Retrieved from context 002.