

HISTORIC SCOTLAND PROPERTIES IN CARE
MINOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORKS 2011

Stirling Castle: Watching Brief, May-June 2011.

HS PIC Index Number: 90291

SITE: Stirling Castle, Stirling.

N.G.R.: Centred c. NS 7905 9401

DESCRIPTION: Watching Brief during the excavation of trenches for the installation of five new signs at Stirling Castle.

PROJECT CODE: HSCO-90291-2011-03

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INTRODUCTION

Under the terms of its PIC call-off contract with Historic Scotland, Kirkdale Archaeology was asked to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the installation of new signage at Stirling Castle. A total of five new signs were to be installed (Fig. 1) and, where possible, these would re-use the concrete bases for the existing signs. Historic Scotland had already allotted numbers to each sign, and these cross-reference with the trench numbers assigned during the present work thus: Trench 1 = Sign 8, Trench 2 = Sign 2, Trench 3 = Sign 48, Trench 4 = Sign 13, and Trench 5 = Sign 5.

The work was carried out in two phases, from 31st May - 3rd June 2011 and 13th - 14th June 2011.

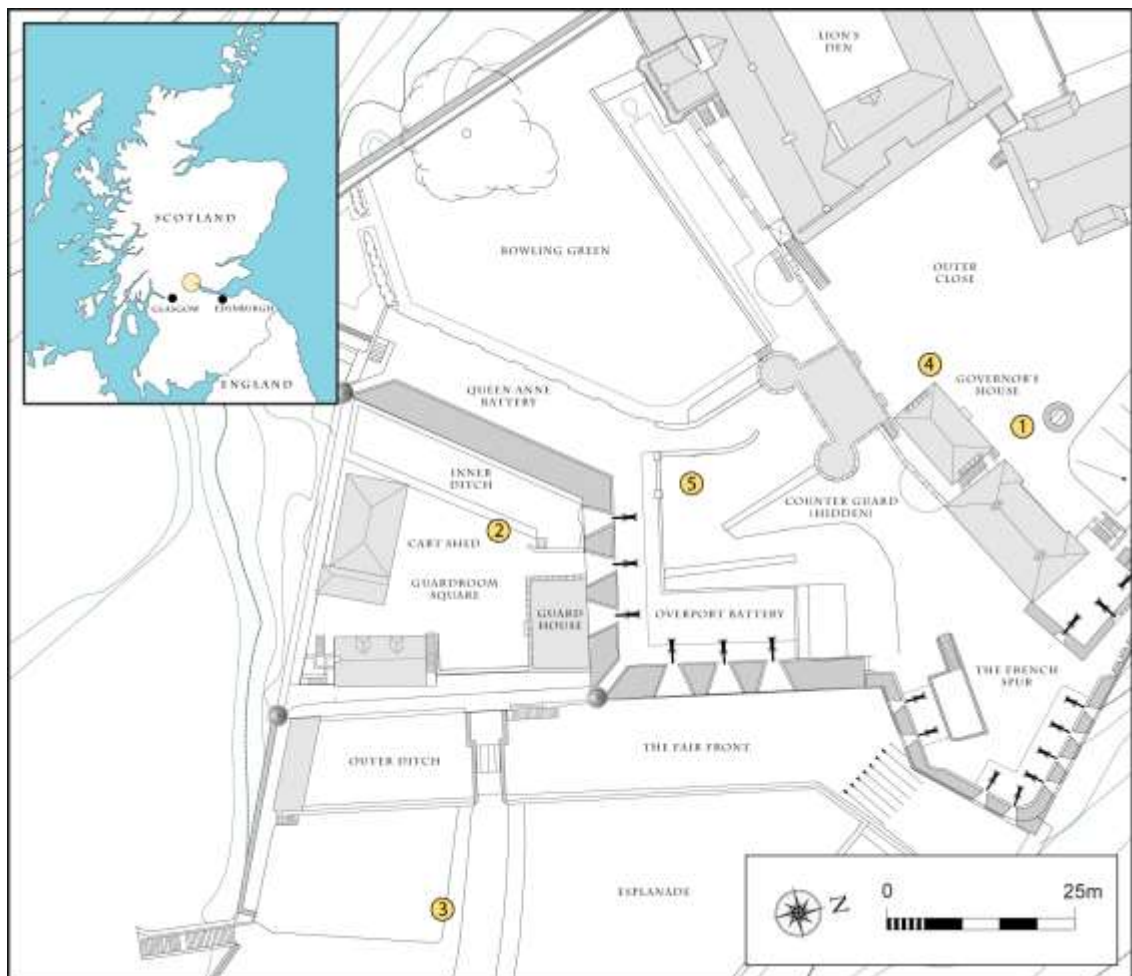


Figure 1: Locations of Trenches 1 - 5.

DESCRIPTION

TRENCH 1: SIGN 8 IN THE OUTER CLOSE

Trench 1 began with the removal of the whin setts **101**, generally 0.10m-0.16m thick and bonded in a hard concrete mix with sharp sand **102**. Upon clearance of the setts and their bedding, three compact surfaces were revealed. Context **103** was a solid platform of small <0.10m sub-angular stones bonded in lime mortar. It had been truncated to the SW and NE by contexts **104** and **105** respectively. Context **104** consisted of a flat, hard yellowish mortared surface. The interface between **103** and **104** was in line with the NE wall of the Fort Major's House. As the trench was only 1.90m NW/SE x 1.20m NE/SW (by up to 0.18m deep) it was not possible to reveal the full extent or relationship between the surfaces. To the NW, contexts **103** and **104** had been truncated by a modern drainage exercise represented by a pinkish concrete cap **105**. As an Historic Scotland inspector happened to be on site, and greater depth was needed in order to conform to the original specifications of the sign base, a compromise was suggested whereby the sign could be fixed by drilling into the platform (minimising the damage to a potentially historical surface that could not be fully understood due to the limitations of the excavation). Test drilling showed that the platform was 0.12m - 0.14m thick. It is possible that surface **103** represented the post 1690's capping of levelling material, or perhaps is associated with the main Guard House of 1708 - 25, or perhaps the later Guard House of c.1790. Context **104** may represent a truncation and re-laying of this surface during construction of the Fort Major's House, which may have had an external element to it.

TRENCH 2: SIGN 2 IN THE GUARDHOUSE SQUARE

This trench was intended to house a replacement sign on the same spot as the existing one, although they were of different types. The whin setts **201** were removed around the upright of the existing sign. The setts were 0.10m - 0.16m thick and were bonded and bedded in an extremely compact grey concrete **202**. The concrete base **203** was located at a depth of 0.16m - 0.18m. It measured 0.70m NW/SE x 0.90m NE/SW. Surrounding the concrete was another, coarser concrete **204**. It was decided by the

Figure 2: Post-excavation plan of Trench 1

Historic Scotland works manager that this arrangement would be sufficient to hold the new sign. The existing sign was removed and the holding threads were ground off. New holes were drilled into the concrete surfaces to accommodate the threads for the new sign, held in place with 'Anchor Set'. The trench measured 1.75m NW/SE x 1.25m NE/SW. Nothing of archaeological interest was encountered during the works.

Figure 3: Post-excavation plan of Trench 2

TRENCH 3: SIGN 48 ON THE ESPLANADE

This trench was located in the NE corner of the grassed area on the S side of the modern approach road to the castle. The re-deposited turf and mid-brown topsoil **301** was excavated to a depth of 0.10m where the top of the concrete base **303** for the existing sign was located. This measured 0.90m NE/SW x 0.75m NW/SE. This was set within a wide cut **302**. The sign and base were removed to reveal a further concrete sub-base **304**. This was set in a gritty orangey-brown imported topsoil **305**. Within the topsoil **301**, an 1896 one penny coin was recovered, **SF001**.

Figure 4: Post-excavation plan of Trench 3

TRENCH 4: SIGN 13 IN THE OUTER CLOSE

This trench was intended to be a like-for-like replacement for the existing one. However, this wasn't possible, since (unlike its predecessor) the sign was directional and designed to be seen from multiple angles. Instead of replacing the sign flanking the SW side of the Fort Major's House, the sign was moved to the corner, a short distance from the W angle of the Fort Major's House, thereby allowing it to be seen from different directions.

Figure 5: Post-excavation plan of Trench 4

Figure 6: Post-excavation plan of Trench 5

The trench measured 1m NE/SW x 1m NW/SE x 0.15m - 0.18m deep. The whin setts **401** were removed, generally 0.10m - 0.16m thick and bonded in a hard concrete mix with sharp sand **402**. Upon clearance of the setts and their bedding, a compact surface was revealed. Context **403** was a solid platform of small <0.1m sub-angular stones bonded in lime mortar. The prohibitive size of the trench again made it difficult to properly identify or quantify the surface, and it was again decided by the Historic Scotland works manager that the most appropriate course of action was to drill the surface to minimise impact, and to attach the sign with 'Anchor Set'.

TRENCH 5: SIGN 5 ON THE RAMP LEADING TO THE FAIR FRONT

This trench was intended to house a replacement on the same spot as the existing sign. The whin setts **501** were removed around the upright of the existing sign. The setts were 0.08m - 0.16m thick and were bonded and bedded in an extremely compact grey concrete **502**. The concrete base **503** was located at a depth of 0.09m - 0.19m, and cleared. It was decided by the Historic Scotland works manager that this arrangement would be sufficient to hold the new sign. The existing sign was removed and the holding threads were ground off. New holes were drilled into the concrete surfaces to accommodate the threads for the new sign, held in place with 'Anchor Set'. The trench measured 0.8m NW/SE x 0.8m NE/SW. Nothing of archaeological interest was encountered during the works.

CONCLUSIONS

The discovery of potentially important historical surfaces within some of the trenches necessitated a change of methodology in the anchoring of some of the signs. In

particular, the re-use of current sign bases, where practical, proved to be the most satisfactory solution, causing minimal impact on any archaeologically sensitive deposits. Due to the archaeologically sensitive nature of the site it is recommended that any future ground breaking works are similarly monitored and, if possible, the design of future replacement signs is such that they are also able to reuse the foundation pads of the previously installed signs.

Figure 7: Section drawings, Trenches 1 - 5

A D D E N D U M

During the work, a small piece of pottery was retrieved from the Queen Anne Gardens (SF002). This was hand painted with a bird motif, possibly dating from the 17th or 18th century (Figure 8).

Figure 8: The pottery sherd found in the Queen Anne Gardens (SF002).

LIST OF CONTEXTS

No.	Description
101	Whin setts.
102	Sharp sand bedding for 101.
103	Bonded hard surface below 102.
104	Bonded hard surface cut against 103.
105	Pinkish concrete cut against 103 and 104.
201	Whin setts.
202	Concrete bedding for 201.
203	Concrete base.
204	Concrete infill around 203.
301	Turf and topsoil.
302	Cut for concrete sign base.
303	Concrete base.
304	Concrete sub-base.
305	Gritty orange-brown levelling below 301.
401	Whin setts.
402	Sharp sand bedding for 401.
403	Mortared platform.
501	Whin setts.
502	Concrete bedding for 501.
503	Concrete base.

LIST OF DRAWINGS

No.	Type	Description	Scale
1	Plan	Trench 1.	1:50
2	Plan	Trench 2.	1:50
3	Plan	Trench 3.	1:50
4	Plan	Trench 4.	1:50
5	Plan	Trench 5.	1:50

LIST OF DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHS

No.	Description	From	Date
1	Pre-excavation shot of Trench 1.	SE	31/05/2011
2	Pre-excavation shot of Trench 1.	NW	31/05/2011
3	Pre-excavation shot of Trench 1.	NE	31/05/2011
4	Pre-excavation shot of Trench 1.	SW	31/05/2011

No.	Description	From	Date
5	Trench 1 work in progress.	SE	31/05/2011
6	Trench 1 work in progress.	SE	31/05/2011
7	Trench 1 work in progress.	SE	31/05/2011
8	Trench 1 surfaces 103-105.	SE	31/05/2011
9	Trench 1 surfaces 103-105.	NW	31/05/2011
10	Trench 1 surfaces 103-105.	NW	31/05/2011
11	Trench 1 surfaces 103 and 104.	E	31/05/2011
12	Trench 1 surfaces 103-105.	SE	31/05/2011
13	Reused carved stone in NE wall of Fort Major's House.	NE	31/05/2011
14	Reused carved stone in NE wall of Fort Major's House.	NE	31/05/2011
15	Reused carved stone in NE wall of Fort Major's House.	SE	31/05/2011
16	Trench 1 showing line of 104 and side of Fort Major's House.	NW	31/05/2011
17	Trench 1 showing line of 104 and side of Fort Major's House.	NW	31/05/2011
18	Trench 1 and Fort Major's House.	N	31/05/2011
19	Trench 1 from steps at Fort Major's House.	SE	31/05/2011
20	Trench 1 surfaces 103-105.	SE	31/05/2011
21	Pre-excavation shot of Trench 2.	SE	31/05/2011
22	Pre-excavation shot of Trench 2.	N	31/05/2011
23	Pre-excavation shot of Trench 2.	N	31/05/2011
24	Pre-excavation shot of Trench 2.	SE	31/05/2011
25	Trench 2 work in progress.	E	31/05/2011
26	Trench 2 work in progress.	N	31/05/2011
27	Trench 1 surfaces 103-105.	SE	01/06/2011
28	Trench 1 surfaces 103-105.	SE	01/06/2011
29	Trench 1.	NW	01/06/2011
30	Trench 1.	NW	01/06/2011
31	Trench 2, concrete pad 203.	SE	01/06/2011
32	Trench 2, location shot.	E	01/06/2011
33	Trench 2, location shot.	E	01/06/2011
34	Trench 2, concrete pad 203.	SE	01/06/2011
35	Trench 2, concrete pad 203.	E	01/06/2011
36	Test Drilling at Trench 1.	SE	01/06/2011
37	Trench 2, concrete pad 203.	N	02/06/2011
38	Trench 2, concrete pad 203.	N	02/06/2011
39	Trench 2, concrete pad 203.	S	02/06/2011
40	Trench 2, sign legs in place.	N	02/06/2011
41	Trench 2, sign legs in place.	S	02/06/2011
42	Trench 2, sign in place.	S	03/06/2011
43	Trench 2, sign in place.	E	03/06/2011
44	Trench 1, sign in place.	SW	03/06/2011
45	Pre-excavation, shot of Trench 3.	NE	03/06/2011
46	Pre-excavation, shot of Trench 3.	NE	03/06/2011

No.	Description	From	Date
47	Trench 3, de-turfing.	SE	03/06/2011
48	Trench 3, concrete base 303.	S	03/06/2011
49	Trench 3, concrete base 303.	W	03/06/2011
50	Trench 3, concrete base 303.	E	03/06/2011
51	Trench 3, concrete base 303.	S	03/06/2011
52	Trench 3, sign removed.	SE	03/06/2011
53	Trench 3, sign removed.	SE	03/06/2011
54	Trench 3, concrete sub-base 304.	N	03/06/2011
55	Trench 3, concrete sub-base 304.	W	03/06/2011
56	Trench 3, concrete sub-base 304.	E	03/06/2011
57	Trench 3, levelled for new concrete base.	E	03/06/2011
58	Existing sign in Outer Close.	SW	13/06/2011
59	Existing sign in Outer Close.	NW	13/06/2011
60	General shot of Outer Close and Fort Major's House.	W	13/06/2011
61	Pre-excavation shot of Trench 4.	SW	13/06/2011
62	Pre-excavation shot of Trench 4.	W	13/06/2011
63	Post-excavation shot of Trench 4.	SW	13/06/2011
64	Post-excavation shot of Trench 4.	SW	13/06/2011
65	Post-excavation shot of Trench 4.	SW	13/06/2011
66	Post-excavation shot of Trench 4.	SW	13/06/2011
67	Excavation to remove existing sign in Outer Close.	W	13/06/2011
68	Excavation to remove existing sign in Outer Close.	N	13/06/2011
69	Excavation to remove existing sign in Outer Close.	W	13/06/2011
70	Pre-excavation shot of Trench 5.	NW	13/06/2011
71	Pre-excavation shot of Trench 5.	S	13/06/2011
72	Pre-excavation shot of Trench 5.	E	13/06/2011
73	Trench 4, holes drilled.	SW	13/06/2011
74	Trench 5, concrete base 503.	SW	14/06/2011
75	Trench 5, concrete base 503.	SW	14/06/2011
76	Trench 5, concrete base 503.	S	14/06/2011
77	Find site of painted pottery sherd.	SE	14/06/2011

LIST OF SMALL FINDS

No.	Trench	Context	Description	Type
1	3	301	1896 One Penny	Coin
2	N/A	N/A	Stray find of a pottery sherd, retrieved from the Queen Anne Gardens. Hand painted with a bird motif. May date from the 17th or 18th century.	Pottery