

**HISTORIC SCOTLAND PROPERTIES IN CARE
MINOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORKS 2011**

Spynie Palace: New Fence Trenches, Watching Brief, March 2011.

HS PIC Index Number: 90282

Site: Spynie Palace, near Elgin, Morayshire.

NGR: NJ 2302 6584

Project Description: Watching Brief on the excavation of four trenches to house the uprights for a new gate to the NW of the Ticket Office.

Project Code: HSCO-90282-2011-01

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Short Archaeological Report

**24th March 2011
Kirkdale Archaeology**

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 excavation of four trenches to house the uprights for a new gate to the NW of the Ticket Office to the W of Spynie Palace (see Fig. 1). The trenches were hand dug by Historic Scotland staff under archaeological supervision.

The work was carried out on 2nd March 2011.

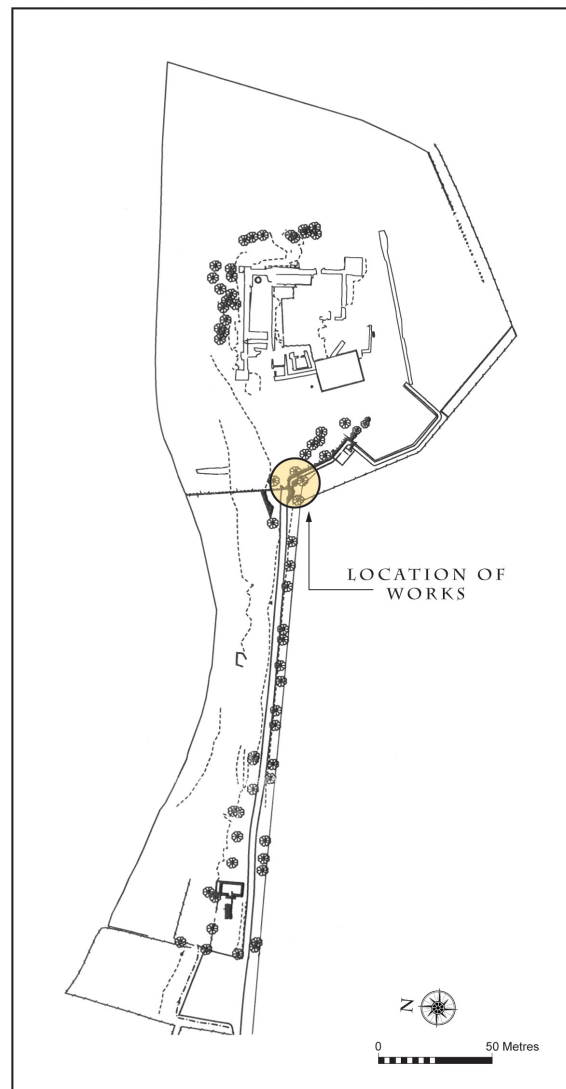


Figure 1: Location of works.

DESCRIPTION AND INTERPRETATION

Trench 1

Trench 1 measured 500mm SW/NE x 300mm SE/NW x 550mm deep (see Fig. 2 and Fig. 3). A turf and mid-brown topsoil (**101**), 150mm thick, sat over a layer of un-jointed sandstone rubble (**102**) (pieces up to 350mm x 150mm in size), possibly the remains of a dry stone dyke, or a levelling layer, c.230mm thick. The presence of a sherd of willow pattern pottery suggests a relatively late date. Beneath (**102**) was a layer of soft mid-brown clean silt - perhaps buried topsoil (**103**). This was excavated (but not bottomed) to a depth of 170mm.

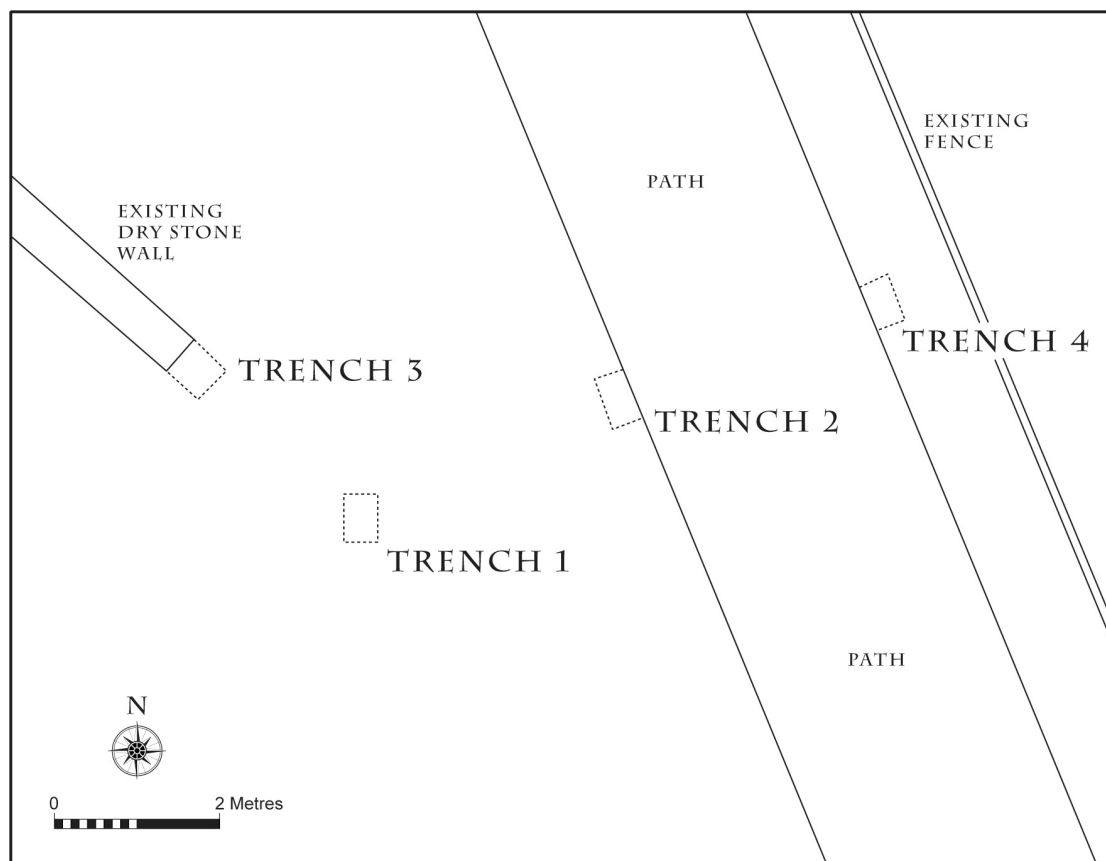


Figure 2: Plan of Trenches 1 - 4

Trench 2

Trench 2 measured 300mm SW/NE x 400mm SE/NW x 550mm deep (see Fig. 2 and Fig. 3). A turf and mid-brown topsoil (**201**), 130mm thick, sat over a layer of soft mid-

brown silt (202) containing moderate angular sandstone inclusions (<150mm). This was excavated (but not bottomed) to a depth of 420mm. Context (202) was heavily cut through with roots.

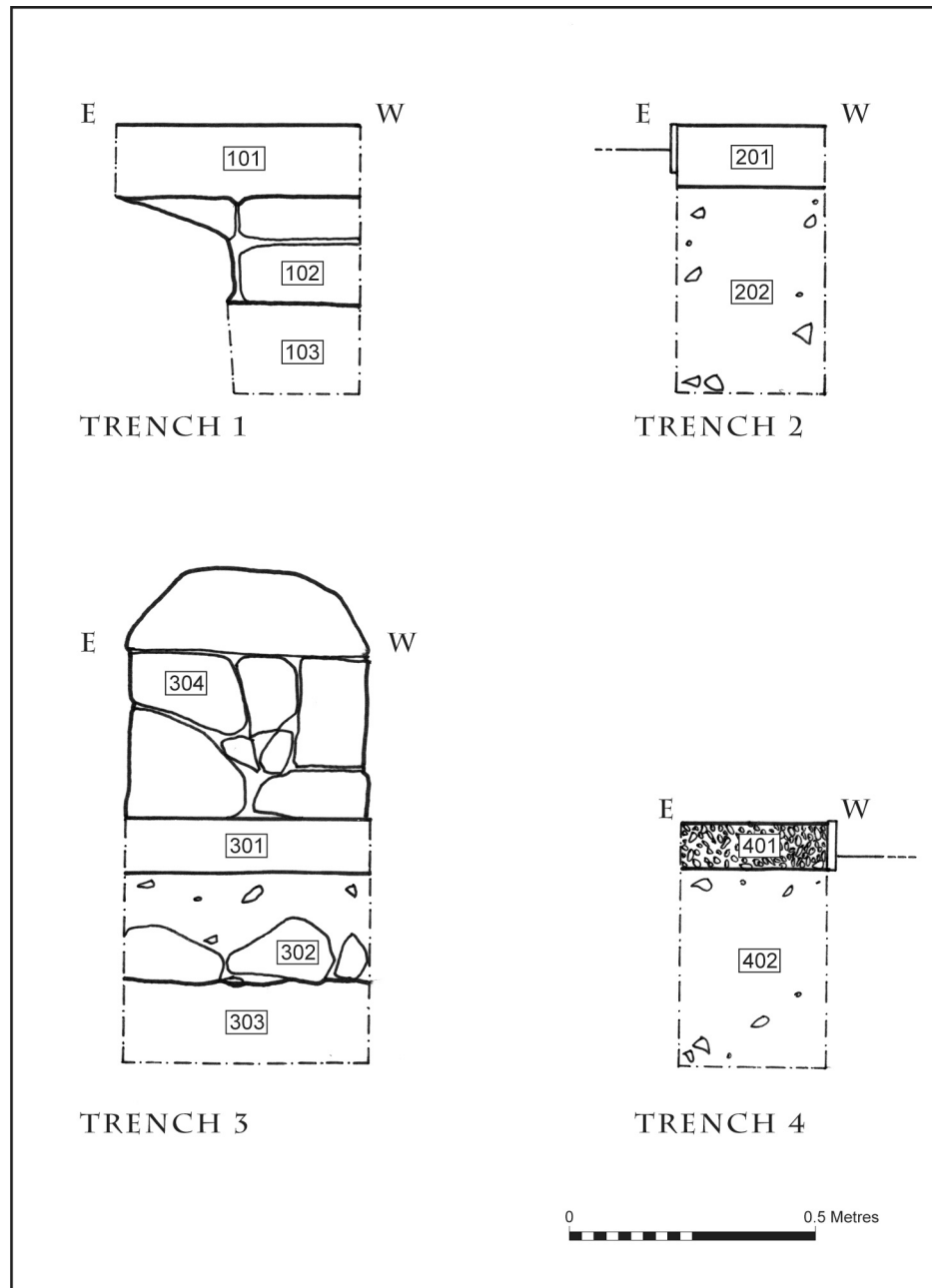


Figure 3: N-facing sections in Trenches 1 - 4

Trench 3

Trench 3 measured 500mm SW/NE x 500mm SE/NW x 500mm deep (see Fig. 2 and Fig. 3). A turf and mid-brown topsoil (301), 120mm thick, sat over a layer of unjointed sandstone rubble (<200mm) and mid-brown silt (302), possibly the remains of a dry stone dyke or a levelling layer, c.230 mm thick. Beneath (302) was a layer of soft mid-brown clean silt - perhaps a buried topsoil (303), excavated (but not bottomed) to a depth of 150mm. Within (303) were pieces of animal bone SF002 and a Red Ware body sherd SF001, from a large jug of probably 15th century date. Over the turf (301) was a modern dry stone dyke (304).

Trench 4

Trench 4 measured 300mm SW/NE x 500mm SE/NW x 500mm deep (see Fig. 2 and Fig. 3). Path edging, consisting of a layer of small pebbles 90mm thick (401), sat over a layer of soft mid-brown silt (402) containing occasional angular sandstone inclusions (<80mm). The trench was excavated (but not bottomed) to a depth of 410mm. Context (402) was heavily cut through with roots.

CONCLUSIONS

The retrieval of the 15th century pottery sherd indicates the archaeological sensitivity of the area, even at a relatively shallow depth. The excavation has also shown that the area has been subject to later landscaping but still holds high archaeological potential within the layers sealed by this later work. Because of this, further ground breaking works should similarly be accompanied by an archaeological watching brief.

LIST OF CONTEXTS

No.	Description
101	Turf and mid-brown topsoil
102	Layer of sandstone rubble
103	Soft mid-brown silt
201	Turf and mid-brown topsoil
202	Layer of silt and angular sandstone
301	Turf and mid-brown topsoil
302	Layer of sandstone rubble& mid-brown silt
303	Soft mid-brown silt
304	Upstanding dry stone dyke
401	Layer of edging pebbles
402	Layer of silt and angular sandstone

LIST OF DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHS

No.	Description	Facing	Date
1	W wall of W Range showing arched lancet windows with horizontal transoms	E	2/3/2011
2	N window in W wall of W Range	E	2/3/2011
3	Altered S window in W wall of W Range	E	2/3/2011
4	Lancet windows in S wall of E Range	N	2/3/2011
5	E window in S wall of E Range	N	2/3/2011
6	Central window in S wall of E Range	N	2/3/2011
7	Altered W window in S wall of E Range with later Ogee-Headed window within	N	2/3/2011
8	Interior view of S wall of E Range	SW	2/3/2011
9	Interior view of W wall of W Range	W	2/3/2011
10	Pre-excavation trench location shot	E	2/3/2011
11	Work in progress	SSE	2/3/2011
12	Work in progress	N	2/3/2011
13	Post-excavation shot of Trench 1 showing remains of buried dyke	S	2/3/2011
14	Post-excavation shot of Trench 1 showing upstanding dyke	NW	2/3/2011
15	Post-excavation shot of Trench 2	SSE	2/3/2011
16	Post-excavation shot of Trench 2	SSE	2/3/2011
17	Post-excavation shot of Trench 3	NW	2/3/2011
18	Post-excavation shot of Trench 3	SW	2/3/2011

No.	Description	Facing	Date
19	Post-excavation shot of Trench 4	SSE	2/3/2011
20	Post-excavation shot of Trench 4	SSE	2/3/2011
21	Post-excavation shot of Trench 4	NNE	2/3/2011

LIST OF DRAWINGS

No.	Description	Scale
001	Plan of Trenches 1-4	1:100
002	N-facing section of Trench 1	1:10
003	N-facing section of Trench 1	1:10
004	N-facing section of Trench 1	1:10
005	N-facing section of Trench 1	1:10

LIST OF SMALL FINDS

No.	Description	Type	Trench	Context
SF001	Red ware body sherd from a large jug	Pottery	3	303
SF002	Three pieces of animal bone	Bone	3	303