

HISTORIC SCOTLAND PROPERTIES IN CARE
MINOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORKS 2011

Newark Castle: Watching brief on a new stair-post trench, January 2011

HS PIC Index Number: 90230

Site: Newark Castle, Inverclyde
NGR: NS 3282 7452
Project Description: Archaeological watching brief on the excavation of a small trench for the installation of a new stair in the wine cellar of the North Range of Newark Castle
Project Code: HSCO-90230-2011-01

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Short Archaeological Report

31st January 2011
Kirkdale Archaeology

INTRODUCTION

Under the terms of its PIC call-off contract Kirkdale Archaeology was asked to undertake archaeological monitoring of the excavation of a single post-hole for a new stair within the wine cellar (easternmost vaulted chamber at ground level) at Newark Castle, Inverclyde (Figure 1). The work was carried out on 19th January 2011.

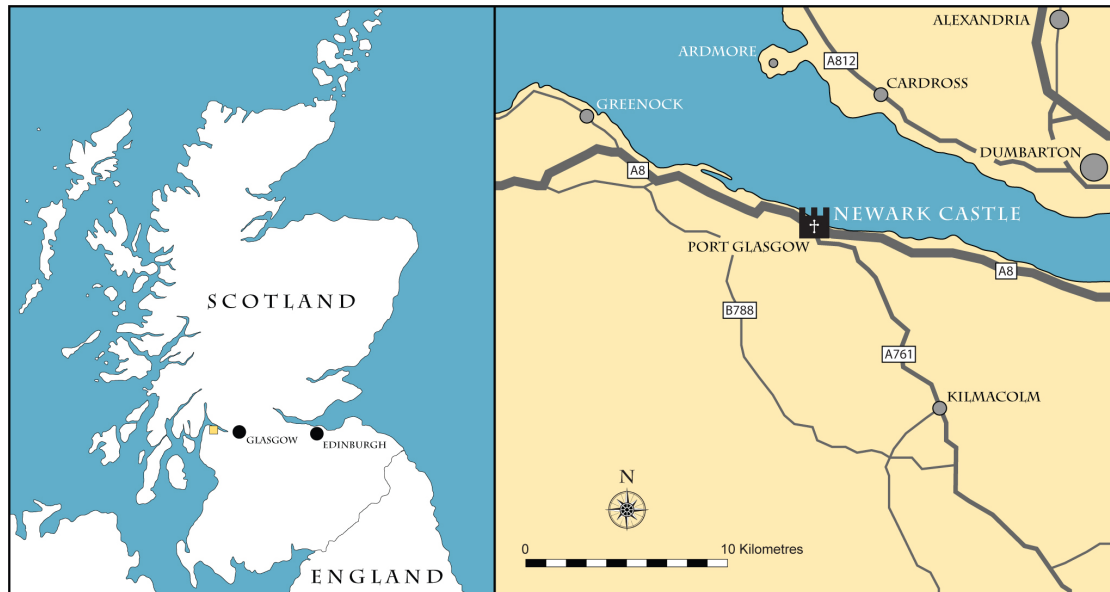


Figure 1: Location map of Newark Castle.

DESCRIPTION

A trench was excavated at the N end of the wine cellar located immediately S of the lowest step in the E-W aligned intramural stair (at the N end of the chamber leading to the Great Hall above, see Figure 2). The hole lay 2.08m W of the NE corner of the room and measured 400mm square and c.400mm deep. The work comprised the removal of a hard concrete screed (001) to a depth of 100mm. The work was completed using a jack-hammer. Below the concrete there was a spread of large rubble sandstone fragments (002) and one large rock had to be broken up in the confines of the trench prior to removal. The rubble overlay a soft grey brown silt containing animal bone, charcoal and small stones (003) which was not bottomed

and represented the limit of the required depth of 400mm. No animal bone from (003) was retained and no further finds were recovered.

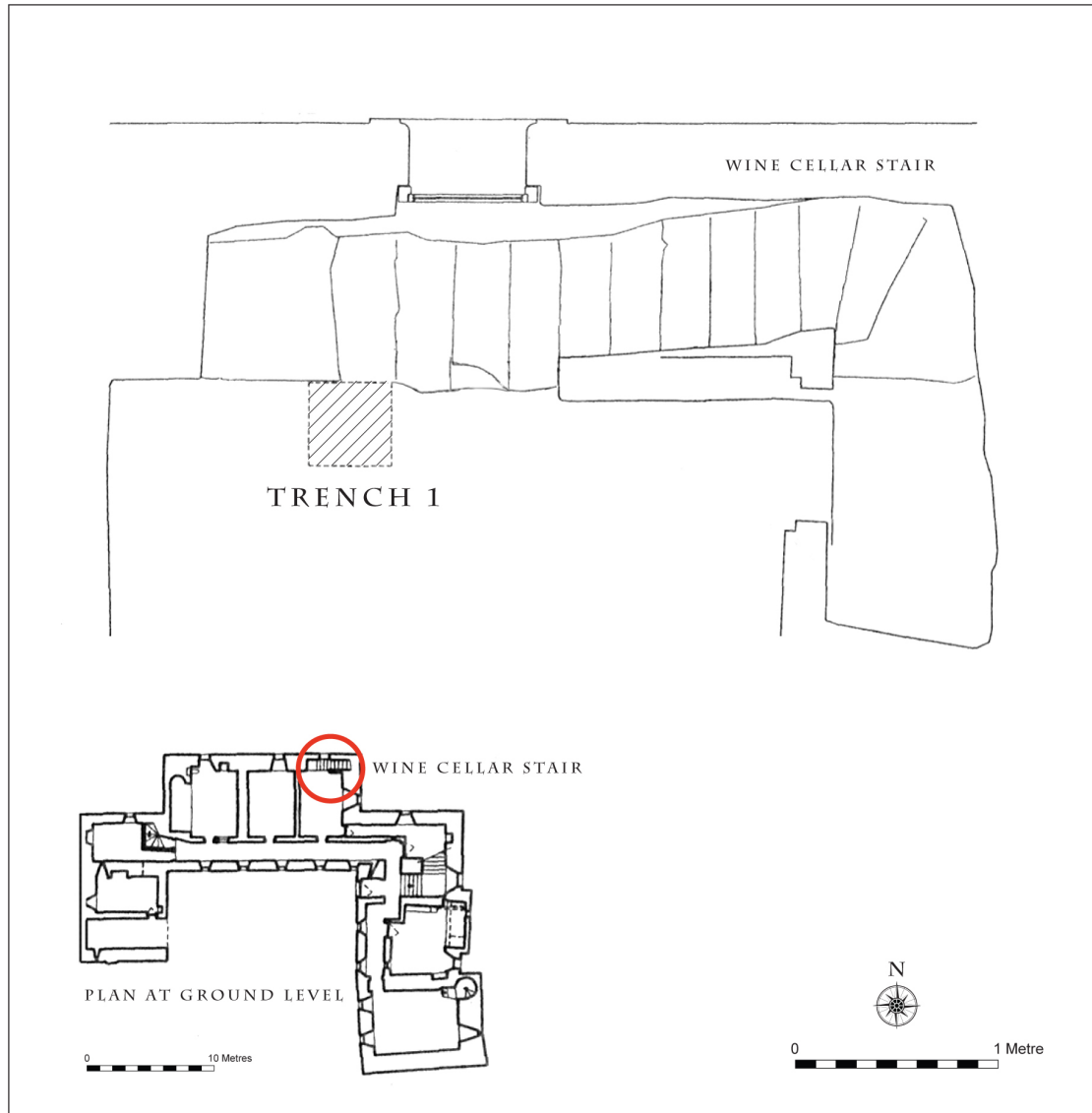


Figure 2: Trench 1, location plan.

CONCLUSIONS

This small hole confirmed that the stair at the N end of the chamber sits over at least 2 more courses of masonry. Despite the fact that this range is thought to be a late 16th century building overlying the traces of an early 15th century hall-like structure, the infill and the possibility of the stair being cut within an earlier wall suggest that the N wall of this room may pre-date the late 16th century re-working. It is difficult to see why the floor level has been so radically raised unless it was to rationalise a new general floor level for the passage and stair arrangement at ground floor level for the new developed range which incorporated parts of the hall-like structure. All thresholds respect the newly raised floor level.

LIST OF CONTEXTS

No.	Description
001	Modern concrete, very hard and abutting all elevations within the chamber.
002	Rubble dump – pale coloured sandstone and un-worked stone
003	A softer deposit sealed by 002, comprising grey-brown silt with small stones, charcoal flecks and animal bone.
004	The bottom step of the N stair.

LIST OF DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHS

No.	Description	From	Date
01	North Range	NW	19/01/2011
02	North Range	NW	19/01/2011
03	Work in progress	S	19/01/2011
04	The N range trance	W	19/01/2011
05	North Range	NE	19/01/2011
06	Shot of Trench	SW	19/01/2011
07	Shot of Trench	SW	19/01/2011
08	Shot of Trench	SW	19/01/2011
09	Shot of Trench	SW	19/01/2011
10	Shot of Trench (showing bottom step and masonry below)	S	19/01/2011
11	Shot of Trench (showing bottom step and masonry below)	SE	19/01/2011
12	Shot of Trench (showing bottom step and masonry below)	SE	19/01/2011
13	Shot of Trench (showing bottom step and masonry below)	SE	19/01/2011