

HISTORIC SCOTLAND PROPERTIES IN CARE
MINOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORKS 2011

Dumbarton Castle: Signage Trenches, March 2011.

HS PIC Index Number: 90107

Site: Dumbarton Castle, Dumbarton.

NGR: NS 4001 7441

Project Description: Watching Brief during the excavation of two trenches for new sign posts at the outer entrance to Dumbarton Castle.

Project Code: HSCO-90107-2011-01

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Short Archaeological Report

**24th April 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 two trenches for new signage at Dumbarton Castle (Fig. 1). The existing welcome sign and information board, located just inside the gateway through the outer wall E of King George's Battery, were to be replaced.

The Governor's House and King George's Battery were built in 1735, replacing an earlier gatehouse and nether bailey. In the mid-late 19th century an outer wall was built forming a grassy forecourt to the E of King George's Battery and a cobbled utility area to the S of the Battery. As part of this work, the area E of the Battery was levelled and landscaped.

During the present works, intact earlier ground surfaces were encountered within both trenches. No other features or artefacts were recovered

The trenches were all dug manually by Historic Scotland staff under archaeological supervision. The work was carried out on the 22nd March 2011.

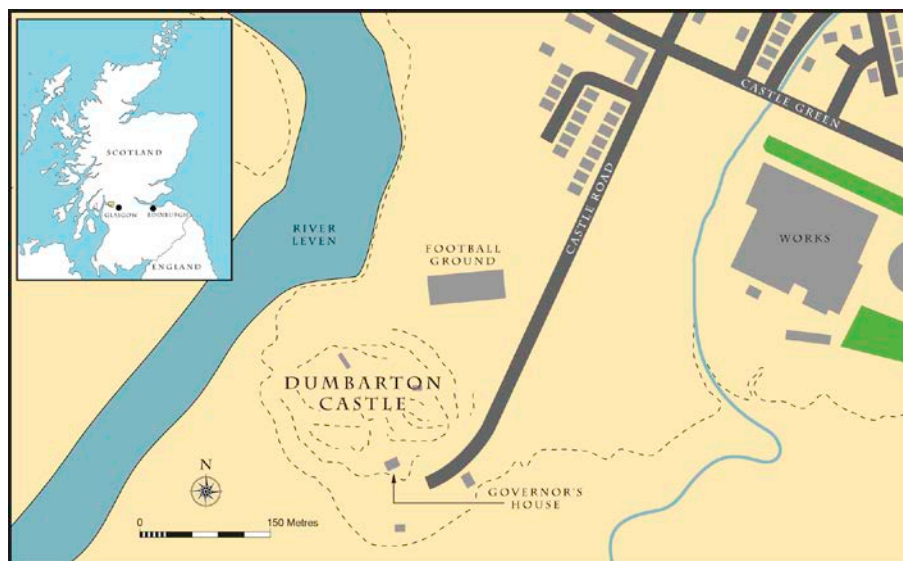


Figure 1: Location map of the Dumbarton Castle.

DESCRIPTION

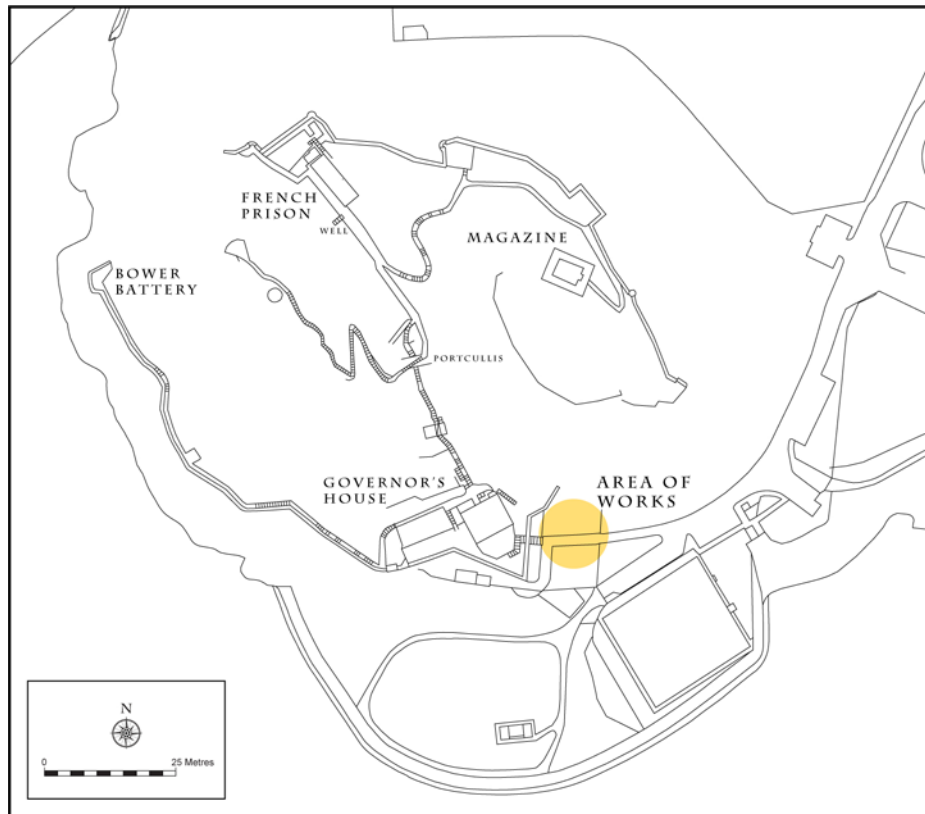


Figure 2: Location map of the works.

Trench 1

Trench 1 measured 0.45m E/W x 0.45m N/S x 0.45m deep and was centred 10.5m W of the N gate post of the outer wall. Set back 0.1m from the N edging of the path, Trench 1 had an upper fill of turf and a dark brown silty topsoil **101**, 0.16m thick. This overlay **102**, a layer of mixed mottled silt containing numerous sub-angular stones, typically <0.15m. This layer was 0.29m thick and contained a piece of bone and part of a clay pipe stem. Context **102** represented Victorian era landscaping, contemporary with the addition of the outer wall. As such, it sealed an earlier surface **103**, a compact layer of yellowish-brown silty clay flecked with charcoal containing moderate angular stone inclusions, typically <0.08m. This layer was cleared onto, but not excavated, as its surface coincided with the required trench depth. There were no finds or features visible within this layer. It was not clear whether this represented an

actual ground surface, or a surface which had been dressed or truncated prior to the mid-late 19th century landscaping.

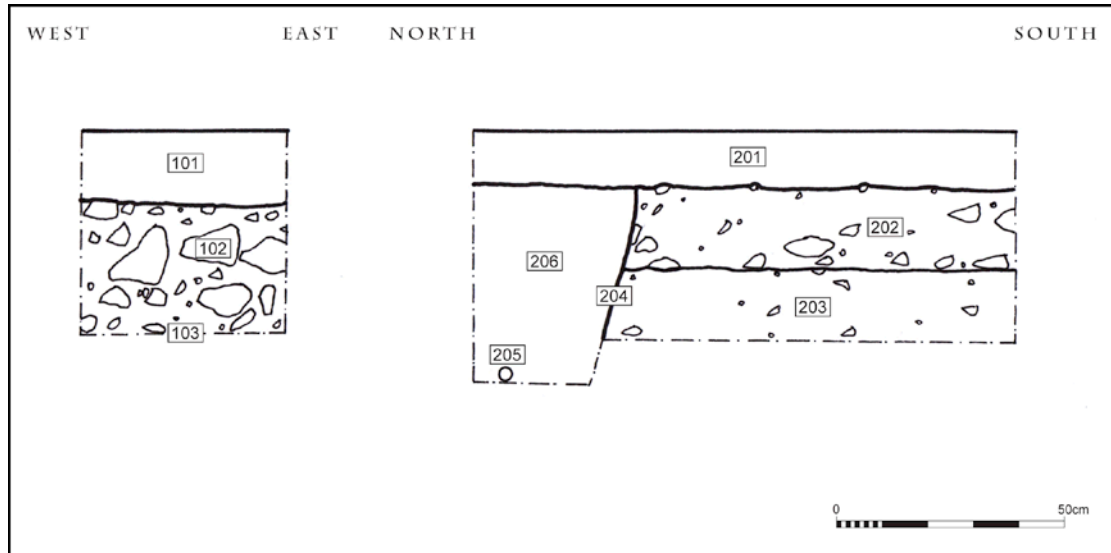


Figure 3: S-facing section in Trench 1 (left) and W-facing section in Trench 2.

Trench 2

Trench 2 measured 0.6m E/W x 1.20 m N/S x 0.45m - 0.52m deep, and was centred 4.33m W of the N gate-post of the outer wall. Set back 0.1m from the N edging of the path, Trench 2 had an upper fill of turf and dark brown silty topsoil **201**, c.0.12m thick. This overlay **202**, a layer of mixed mottled silt containing numerous sub-angular stones, typically <0.15m. This layer was 0.18m thick and contained pottery, opaque glass, a roof slate, a nail and an animal's tooth. Context **202** again represented Victorian era landscaping contemporary with the addition of the outer wall. As such, it sealed an earlier surface **203**, a compact layer of yellowish-brown silty clay flecked with charcoal containing moderate angular stone inclusions, typically <0.08m. This layer was excavated to a depth of 0.15m but no artefacts were retrieved from it. It was noted that the N portion of the trench contained small voids, and had a looser compaction than the S portion. It appeared that there was a cut running E/W. As a sign was being emplaced it was decided that it would be appropriate to identify what was in the cut. A 0.04m diameter gas pipe was located at a depth of 0.52m. The

pipe sat approximately 0.05m from the N edge of the trench and ran E/W. The sloping S end of the cut **204** for the gas pipe **205** was 0.32m S of the N edge of the trench. The trench had been backfilled with **206**, a mottled re-deposited mixture of contexts **202** and **203**. The pipe was covered over with sand prior to the installation of the sign.

CONCLUSIONS

Although nothing of particular archaeological interest was uncovered during the watching brief, the presence of an earlier surface sealed by modern landscaping suggests that there is high archaeological potential in the area. The building of the Governor's House and King George's Battery in 1735 saw the removal of the pre-existing Gatehouse and subsidiary structures, as shown on John Slezer's 'The Prospect of Ye Castle of Dumbritton from Ye East'. It is possible (and likely) that elements of these buildings, and the approaches to them, remain sealed within deposits in this area of the castle.

LIST OF CONTEXTS

No.	Description
101	Turf and dark brown silty topsoil.
102	Mixed mottled silt with numerous sub-angular stones (landscaping).
103	Compact yellowish-brown silty clay with charcoal flecks.
201	Turf and dark brown silty topsoil.
202	Mixed mottled silt containing numerous sub-angular stones (landscaping).
203	Compact yellowish-brown silty clay with charcoal flecks.
204	Sloping cut for gas pipe 205.
205	Gas pipe.
206	Backfill over 205 within cut 206.

LIST OF DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHS

No.	Description	From	Date
01	Dumbarton Castle, King George's Battery and outer wall.	SW	22/3/2011
02	Dumbarton Castle, King George's Battery and outer wall.	SW	22/3/2011
03	Existing signage.	SW	22/3/2011
04	Existing signage.	N	22/3/2011
05	Post-excavation shot of Trench 1.	S	22/3/2011
06	Post-excavation shot of Trench 1.	S	22/3/2011
07	Post-excavation shot of Trench 1.	W	22/3/2011
08	General location shot of Trenches 1 and 2.	SW	22/3/2011
09	Excavated fill of Trench 1.	S	22/3/2011
10	Post-excavation shot of Trench 1.	S	22/3/2011
11	Trench 2, work in progress.	S	22/3/2011
12	Trench 2, showing pipe cut 204.	W	22/3/2011
13	Trench 2, work in progress.	W	22/3/2011
14	Trench 2, removing pipe fill 206.	W	22/3/2011
15	Trench 2, pipe 205 exposed.	W	22/3/2011
16	Trench 2, pipe 205 exposed.	S	22/3/2011
17	Trench 2, pipe 205 exposed.	W	22/3/2011
18	Post-excavation shot of Trench 2.	W	22/3/2011
19	Post-excavation shot of Trench 2.	W	22/3/2011
20	Post-excavation shot of Trench 2.	S	22/3/2011
21	Post-excavation shot of Trench 2.	SE	22/3/2011
22	Trench 1, finds from context 102.	N/A	N/A
23	Trench ,2 finds from context 206.	N/A	N/A
24	Trench 1, finds from context 202.	N/A	N/A

LIST OF DRAWINGS

No.	Description	Scale
01	Plan of Trenches 1 and 2.	1:50
02	S-facing section in Trench 1.	1:10
03	W-facing section in Trench 2.	1:10