

**HISTORIC SCOTLAND PROPERTIES IN CARE  
MINOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORKS 2014/2015**

**Balvenie Castle • Monitoring • March 2014**

**HS PIC Index Number: 90028**

**SITE:** Balvenie Castle, Banffshire

**N.G.R.:** NJ 3267 4087

**DESCRIPTION:** Watching Brief during the relocation of an existing information panel.

**PROJECT CODE:** HSCO-90028-2014-01

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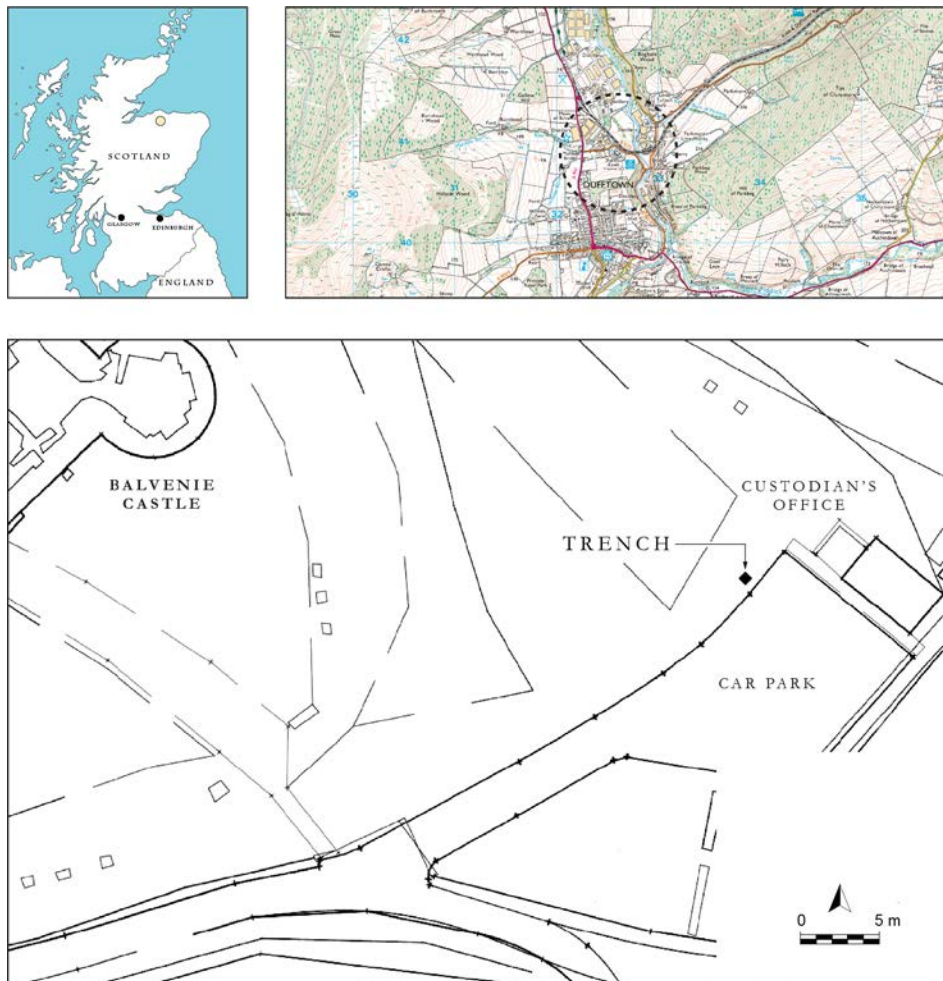


4 Western Terrace, Murrayfield, Edinburgh EH12 5QF

MAY 2014

## INTRODUCTION

Under the terms of its PIC call-off contract with Historic Scotland, Kirkdale Archaeology was asked to undertake a Watching Brief during the relocation of an information panel at Balvenie Castle near Dufftown, Banffshire (Fig.1). The information panel was situated on the S side of the bend in the access path leading to the castle and was orientated in such a way that visitors reading it were facing away from the view of the castle that it was describing. It was therefore decided that it should be relocated to the grassed area NW of the car park at the Custodian's Hut, in a position where visitors arriving on site could read it and appreciate the scene at the same time.



**Figure 1:** Location plan of the trench for the repositioned sign.  
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Balvenie Castle is an architectural composite, having its origins as a castle of enclosure in the 13<sup>th</sup> century and having been embellished and remodelled in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. The rectangular enclosure wall with a projecting round tower at its E corner is surrounded by a wide ditch to the SW, NW and NE. This circuit would originally have been completed on the SE where a drawbridge would have given access to the castle entrance. A large section of the SE ditch has been subject to infilling and now carries a road into an adjoining property, also providing access to the castle car park. The internal side of the ditch was

originally fronted by a wall, traces of which can still be seen on the SE side of the castle. The inside of the ditch is also strongly revetted in places. The original position of the information panel was shown to be in an area of made ground, part of the later infilling of the SE side of the ditch, although no artefacts were recovered which could determine when this took place. A print of the castle from the 18<sup>th</sup> century shows the castle in a ruinous state, having been abandoned by 1720. The ground clearly falls away opposite the castle entrance on the SE side and there are no signs of the wall or drawbridge which would have sat over the internal slope of the surrounding ditch.

The position for the relocation of the information panel was advised on site by Historic Scotland District Architect Mike Pendery and the excavation was carried out manually by Historic Scotland staff under archaeological supervision. The work was carried out on 20 March, 2014.

## **DESCRIPTION**

### **Original location**

The area immediately around the information panel was de-turfed and the backfill was removed in order to expose the concrete base. The panel was then rocked-out and removed. The exposed sides of the trench showed multiple layers of mixed infill, a mixture of silt, sand and stony gravel separated from the turf by a layer of stones providing drainage. The trench was c.50cm deep. No artefacts were noted. The trench was then backfilled.



**Plate 1:** Post-excavation shot of the relocated trench.

### Relocated Trench

The trench was marked out 90cm NW of the granite kerb on the NW side of the car park. The trench measured 60cm SW/NE x 60cm NW/SE and required a depth of 60cm in order to bed the base and legs of the sign. The turf **001** was 10cm thick and overlay two banded layers of modern landscaping.

Immediately below the turf was a sloping layer of mid-brown clean silt **002** containing small sub-rounded stones interrupted to the SW by a band of sand. This layer was 45cm thick to the SW and 20cm thick to the NE. Below this was a further landscaping layer of sand **003** exposed to a depth of 35cm. The area has been subject to considerable landscaping/levelling. Nothing of archaeological interest was encountered during the excavations.

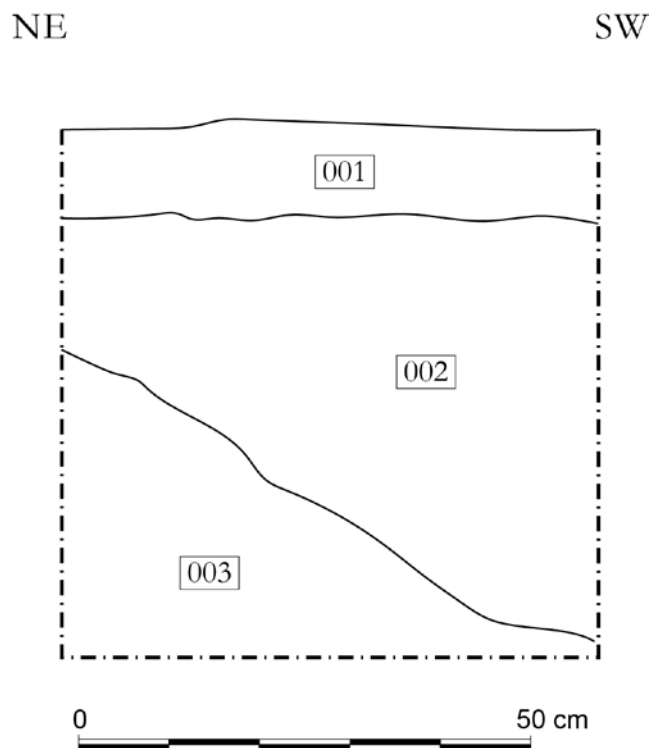


Figure 2: NW-facing section in the relocated trench.

### CONCLUSIONS

Although nothing of archaeological interest was uncovered during this particular period of work, the site still retains high archaeological potential. It is recommended that any further ground-breaking works should be similarly accompanied by an archaeological watching brief.

## LIST OF CONTEXTS

Number	Description
001	Turf
002	Mid-brown silty topsoil with clasts of sand
003	Layer of sand below 002

## LIST OF DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHS

No.	Description	From	Date
1	View of castle with information sign in original position	W	19/03/2014
2	SE front of the castle	N	19/03/2014
3	SE and SW fronts of the castle	N	19/03/2014
4	Wall fronting S corner of the castle ditch	N	19/03/2014
5	Wall traces on NE side of path to the castle entrance	SW	19/03/2014
6	Castle entrance, path and information sign	W	19/03/2014
7	Pre-excavation location shot showing the position of the new signage trench	W	19/03/2014
8	Sign removed from original position	W	19/03/2014
9	Sign removed from original position	W	19/03/2014
10	Sign removed from original position	W	19/03/2014
11	Post-excavation shot of the NW-facing section of the new signage trench	SE	19/03/2014
12	Post-excavation shot of the NE-facing section of the new signage trench	SW	19/03/2014
13	Post-excavation shot of the new signage trench in relation to the car park and Custodian's Hut	E	19/03/2014
14	Post-excavation shot of the new signage trench	W	19/03/2014
15	New signage trench with sign in position	W	19/03/2014

## LIST OF DRAWINGS

Number	Type	Description	Scale
001	Plan	Trench, post-excavation	1:50
001	Section	NW-facing	1:20