

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

**Dumbarton Castle • Monitoring • February - April 2014**

**HS PIC Index Number: 90107**

**SITE:** Dumbarton Castle, Dumbarton

**N.G.R.:** Centred c NS 3999 7439

**DESCRIPTION:** A Watching Brief during installation of a septic tank on the shore, and excavation of a sewage pipe trench within the Mason's Yard

**PROJECT CODE:** HSCO-90107-2014-01

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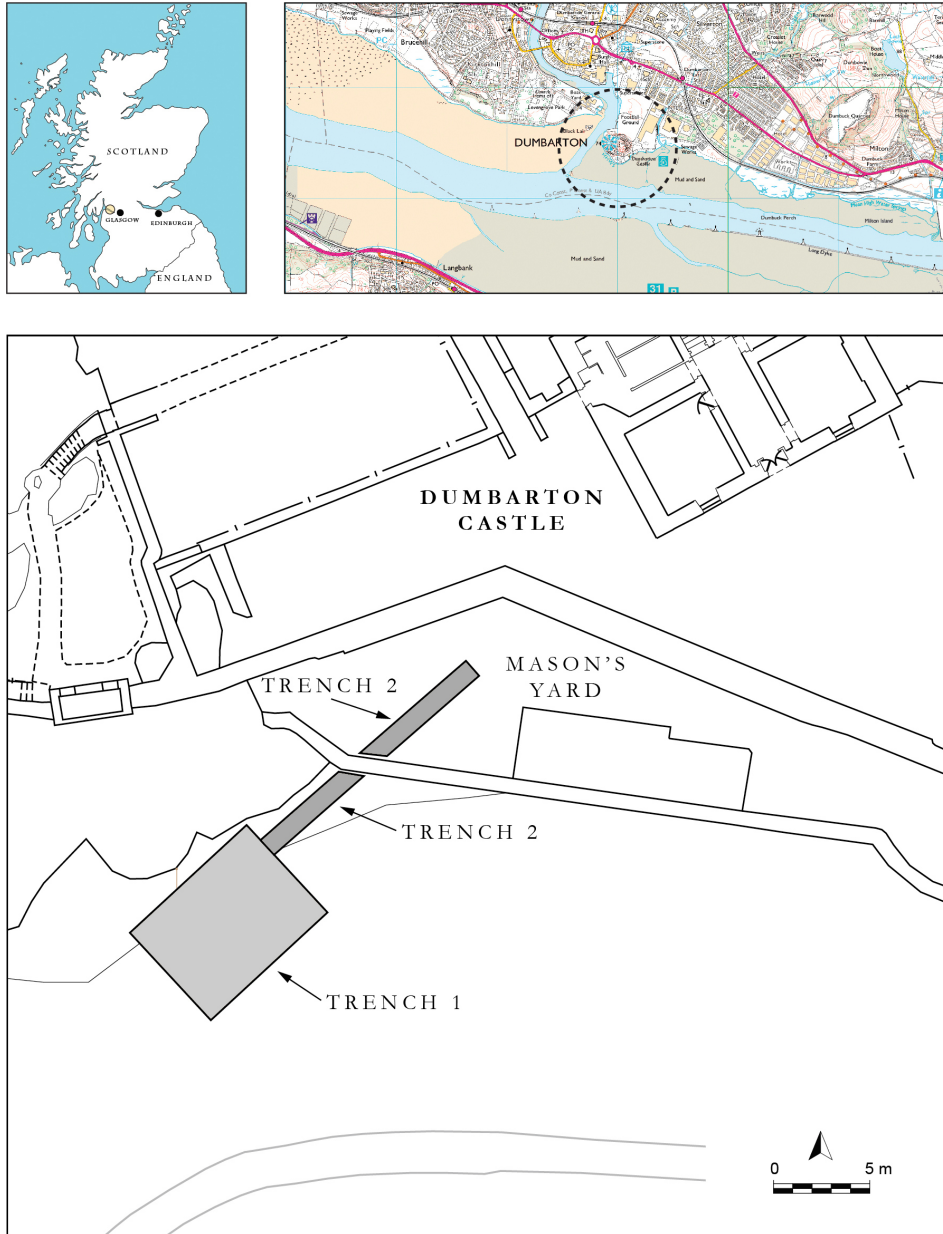


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MAY 2014

## INTRODUCTION

Under the terms of its PIC call-off contract with Historic Scotland, Kirkdale Archaeology was asked to undertake a Watching Brief at Dumbarton Castle, Dumbarton (Fig.1) during the installation of a new septic tank (Trench 1) and the cutting of a trench to receive associated sewage pipes (Trench 2).



**Figure 1:** Plan showing the location of the trenches.  
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Both parts of the work were carried out by mechanical excavator, and took place intermittently between 20 February and 2 April, 2014.

## DESCRIPTION

The site of the new septic tank lay to the S of the castle, within an area of a landscaped recreation park, which in turn was formed over the natural rocky shoreline. This part of the programme of work saw the excavation of a large irregular trench (Trench 1) measuring  $\approx$  6.0m (NW/SE) x  $\approx$  8.0m (NE/SW) and aligned approximately NE/SW. The trench revealed that there was a shallow deposit of humic soil and turf (**012**) over natural sands and gravels (**013**). Trench 1 was dug through **012/013** to final depth of  $\approx$  2.0m.

A short, shallow extension was then dug through **012** and **013** to meet the S face of the Mason's Yard S wall. This cutting was a maximum of 1.5m deep and revealed the existing waste pipe serving the castle; at its northern end this pipe lay at a depth of  $\approx$  1.0m below the present ground level. The septic tank itself was ultimately moved from its initial location, but the area of investigation remained generally the same.

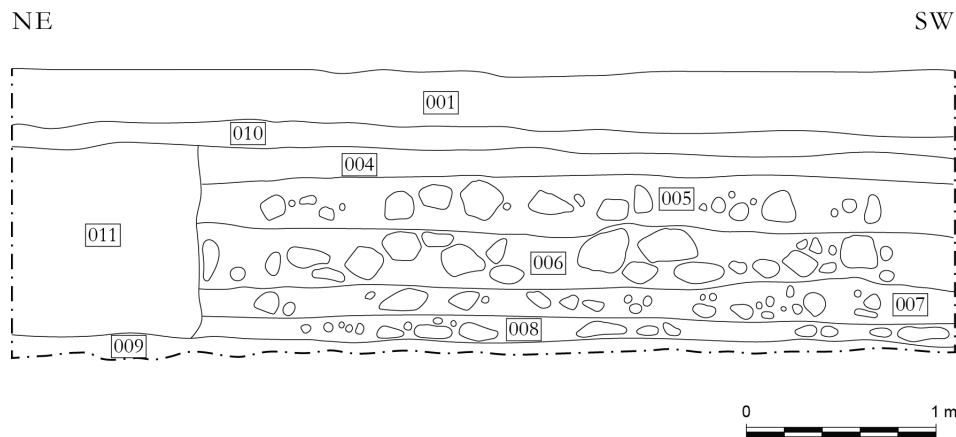


Fig.2: NW-facing section of the northern part of Trench 2 (within the Mason's Yard).

The second area of investigation comprised a trench 1m wide cut through all deposits within the castle Mason's Yard. The work saw the cutting of concrete (**001**,  $\approx$  30cm deep over modern levelling **010**). This gave way to a cobbled surface (**004**). This comprised a single course of unworked stone blocks, set in a dark silty soil, with an overall depth of  $\approx$  15cm. Thereafter, the trench was dug to a max depth of  $\approx$  2.0m (at its S end) in order to meet a new waste pipe on the shore. This exercise revealed a series of tipped deposits – **005**, **006**, **007**, **008**, and **009**, all laid against the inside (N) face of the S boundary wall / rampart of the Mason's Yard. These deposits comprised a series of stony fills mixed predominantly with re-deposited natural gravels/sands. The stones did not appear to be rubble from cleared structures.

A recent waste pipe set in concrete was revealed at the N end of Trench 2 (011), cut across cobbles 004 and all tipped deposits to a depth of *c* 1.0m. The instability of the trench sides and the overhanging nature of an electric switch box, located directly over the S end of Trench 1, prevented full recording of the exposed sections and N face of the Mason's Yard boundary wall. However it was observed that the N wall face projected northwards a distance of *c* 50cm in the form of a single stone. The stone was *c* 25cm thick and appeared to project from the wall face a distance of *c* 50cm at its upper level and 30cm at its lower level, suggesting that the boundary wall was up to 66cm thick to a depth of *c* 1.5m and was *c* 1.0m wide towards its base. This may reflect a parapet level associated with the Mason's Yard cobbling.



**Plate 1:** Context 004 (the cobbled surface) in Trench 2

## CONCLUSIONS

The results of the excavation confirmed that the original (19<sup>th</sup>-century) level of the Mason's Yard was created by simply backfilling the space between the 18<sup>th</sup>-century rampart to the N and the later enclosure to the S. There was some evidence that the upper 1.5m of the Mason's Yard boundary wall was narrower than the lower (majority) section of the wall. This may reflect a parapet level, associated with the cobbled surface 004.

A few fragments of animal bone, oyster shell and post-medieval crockery were retrieved from 004, while the bulk of the infill deposits were largely devoid of finds, again suggesting that they were largely re-deposited material, presumably from the nearby beach. No finds were retained.

## LIST OF CONTEXTS

| Number | Description   |
|--------|---|
| 001    | Concrete screed – up to 35cm deep in (Trench 2)   |
| 002    | Spread of modern gravel – bedding for 003 (Trench 2)                                    |
| 003    | Modern electricity junction box (Trench 2)  |
| 004    | Cobbled surface (Trench 2)  |
| 005    | Dark silty sand and stones - 25cm deep (Trench 2)                                       |
| 006    | Dirty sand plus large stones - 35cm deep (Trench 2)                                     |
| 007    | Stone fragments set in reddish sand - 22cm deep (Trench 2)                              |
| 008    | As above with fewer stones - 18cm deep (Trench 2)                                       |
| 009    | Reddish sand and gravel (not fully excavated) (Trench 2)                                |
| 010    | Modern infill - concrete chips, plastic sheeting 10cm deep (Trench 2)                   |
| 011    | Modern sewage pipe set in concrete - up to 1m deep - full width not revealed (Trench 2) |
| 012    | Modern landscape deposit - turf and topsoil (Trench 1)                                  |
| 014    | Natural sands and gravels (Trench 1)  |
| 015    | Concrete screed – up to 35cm deep (Trench 2)  |

## LIST OF DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHS

| No. | Description                         | From | Date       |
|-----|-------------------------------------|------|------------|
| 1   | Trench 1                            | N    | 20/02/2014 |
| 2   | Trench 1                            | S    | 20/02/2014 |
| 3   | Trench 1 - channel to boundary wall | S    | 20/02/2014 |
| 4   | Trench 1 - existing waste pipe      | N    | 20/02/2014 |
| 5   | Trench 2 under excavation           | N    | 24/03/2014 |
| 6   | Trench 2 - 004 exposed              | N    | 24/03/2014 |
| 7   | Trench 2 - 005 exposed              | N    | 02/04/2014 |
| 8   | Trench 2 - 011                      | S    | 02/04/2014 |
| 9   | Trench 2 - 003                      | N    | 02/04/2014 |