

Discovery and Excavation in Scotland

Updated on 15/06/2007

LOCAL AUTHORITY:	Orkney Islands
PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME:	Broch of Gurness (Aikerness Broch)
PROJECT CODE:	HSCO-90157-2009-01
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NAME OF ORGANISATION:	Kirkdale Archaeology
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MAIN (NARRATIVE) DESCRIPTION: (May include information from other fields)	A watching brief was maintained during the excavation of a cable trench near Broch of Gurness (Aikerness Broch), Orkney. The main trench ran parallel to the outer edge of the fence along the south edge of the guardianship area, terminating at the west side of the ticket office in a series of small trenches excavated to locate existing services. There were no finds or features of archaeological significance.
PROPOSED FUTURE WORK:	
CAPTION(S) FOR ILLUSTRS:	
SPONSOR OR FUNDING BODY:	Historic Scotland
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Historic Scotland
Properties in Care
Minor Archaeological Works 2009

Broch of Gurness (Aikerness Broch): Archaeological monitoring, April 2009

HS PIC Index number: 90157
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9 July 2009
Kirkdale Archaeology

<u>Site</u>	Broch of Gurness (Aikerness Broch)
<u>N.G.R</u>	HY 381 268
<u>Project Description</u>	Archaeological monitoring
<u>Project code</u>	HSCO-90131-2009-01

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SUMMARY

April 2009 – A watching brief was maintained during the excavation of a cable trench near Broch of Gurness (Aikerness Broch), Orkney. The main trench ran parallel to the outer edge of the fence along the south edge of the guardianship area, terminating at the west side of the ticket office in a series of small trenches excavated to locate existing services.

There were no finds or features of archaeological significance.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Under the terms of its call-off contract with Historic Scotland, Kirkdale Archaeology was asked to undertake archaeological monitoring during the excavation of a cable trench along the outer edge of the fence just south of the south edge of the guardianship area, terminating at the west side of the ticket office in a series of small trenches excavated to locate existing services.

The main cable trench was excavated by contractors using a mechanical digger under archaeological supervision. To locate various services known to exist in the area, small trenches either side of the access path near the west end of the visitor centre were hand dug by HS MCU personnel, and these were connected by a further contractor using a 'mole' to tunnel a narrow tunnel under the path.

Monitoring of this work was carried out over two visits, 3& 8 April 2009.

2.0 DESCRIPTION

2.1 Trench 1

This trench was excavated by mechanical digger and was the continuation of a cable trench running along the coast from E to W. Monitoring of this work started near the extreme SE limit of the guardianship area. The trench was dug using a tapered trenching bucket, and reached a fairly uniform depth of c 1.0 m. The top of the trench was c 800 mm wide and its base measured c 300 mm across. The course of the trench ran roughly parallel to the nearby boundary fence and wall, although ran closer as it neared its termination near the far W end, starting c 5.0 m away, finishing c 2.0 m

away.

The turf and topsoil, **101**, was a fairly loose, greyish brown silty clay, with less than 5% small stones up to 10 x 10 x 20 mm, containing occasional fragments of shell. Its depth varied between 100 and 200 mm.

Below this was friable, slightly orangey, mid-brown silty clay, **102**, with occasional charcoal flecks and a few sandstone slabs up to 80 x 120 x 400 mm. The depth of this layer varied between 200 and 400 mm.

The natural glacial till, **103**, was found at a general depth of *c* 500 mm, but in some places as shallow as 320 mm, and was a compact, mottled, brownish orange clay, with occasional large stones, with some areas very stony.

The ground level rose up towards the southernmost part of the trench, where the natural clay was encountered at its shallowest. At this point the two upper layers were barely distinguishable as separate layers, and in some places the bedrock was encountered at around 800 mm depth.

2.2 Trench 2

This trench was excavated across the line of the approaching Trench 1 in order to locate existing services. It was between 300 and 400 mm wide, up to 700 mm deep and 3.70 m long (E-W). The deposits encountered were the same as in Trench 1.

Cables were found at the E end of the trench, near the boundary wall.

2.3 Trench 3

This was a complex area of small trenches to the N of the access path close to the W side of the visitor centre, dug to both locate existing services and to allow the connection of the cable laid in Trench 1 to the conduit entering the W side of the visitor centre. This area was excavated mostly to a depth of 400-600 mm but in some places little more than turf was removed.

The deepest part of the trench was aligned with the extreme NW end of trench one and it was at this point that a compressed air-powered 'mole' was used to tunnel through under the path.

The deposits encountered here were similar to those seen in Trenches 1 and 2 but

have been much disturbed in recent times during the digging of service trenches and test pits during and after the construction of the visitor centre.

3.0 INTERPRETATION AND OBSERVATIONS

Despite the proximity to such a major, multi-phase monument, Trench 1 revealed only plough soils and natural glacial till. Ploughing may have masked any sign of pre-historic activity, but the complete lack of any finds associated with early settlement seems to suggest this is an area of archaeological sterility.

As would be expected, the ground nearest the visitor centre revealed nothing of archaeological interest and is made up of mixed and redeposited soils, much disturbed during the construction of the visitor centre and subsequent service trenches.

A1.0 APPENDIX 1: LIST OF CONTEXTS

#	Description
101	Turf and topsoil, fairly loose, greyish brown silty clay, with less than 5% small stones up to 10 x 10 x 20 mm, containing occasional fragments of shell. 100- 200 mm deep.
102	Friable, slightly orangey, mid-brown silty clay, occasional charcoal flecks, a few sandstone slabs up to 80 x 120 x 400 mm. 200-400 mm deep.
103	Natural glacial till at a general depth of c 500 mm, but in a some places as shallow as 320 mm. Compact, mottled, brownish orange clay, with occasional large stones, some areas very stony.

A2.0 APPENDIX 2: LIST OF DRAWINGS

No	Type	Scale	Description	Date
1	Plan	1:1000	Location of trench 1	3/4/2009
2	Plan	1:50	Location of trenches 2&3	3/4/2009

A3.0 APPENDIX 3: LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS

#	Description	From	Date
7228-35	General views of work in progress, Trench 1	-	3/4/2009
7236	First (E-most) leg of Trench 1	E	3/4/2009
7237	Second leg of Trench 1, from first corner to S-most point	W	3/4/2009
7238	S-most, middle part of Trench 1	E	3/4/2009
7239-40	Broch	N	3/4/2009
7241	Trench 3, partially excavated	S	3/4/2009
7242	Trench 1, from S-most point W-wards	W	3/4/2009
7243	Trench 1, near SE limit of W boundary wall	E	3/4/2009
7244	Trench 2	W	3/4/2009
7245	Far NW end of Trench 1	S	3/4/2009
7246	Trench 1, near SW corner of boundary wall	SW	3/4/2009
7255-59	Trenches 2&3 during works, setting up mole	-	8/4/2009
7260	SE end of Trench 3	W	8/4/2009
7261-2	SE end of Trench 3	E	8/4/2009

#	Description	From	Date
7263	SE end of Trench 3	SE	8/4/2009
7264	SE end of Trench 3	NW	8/4/2009
7265	General view towards site, Trenches 2&3 and far NW end of Trench 1	W	8/4/2009

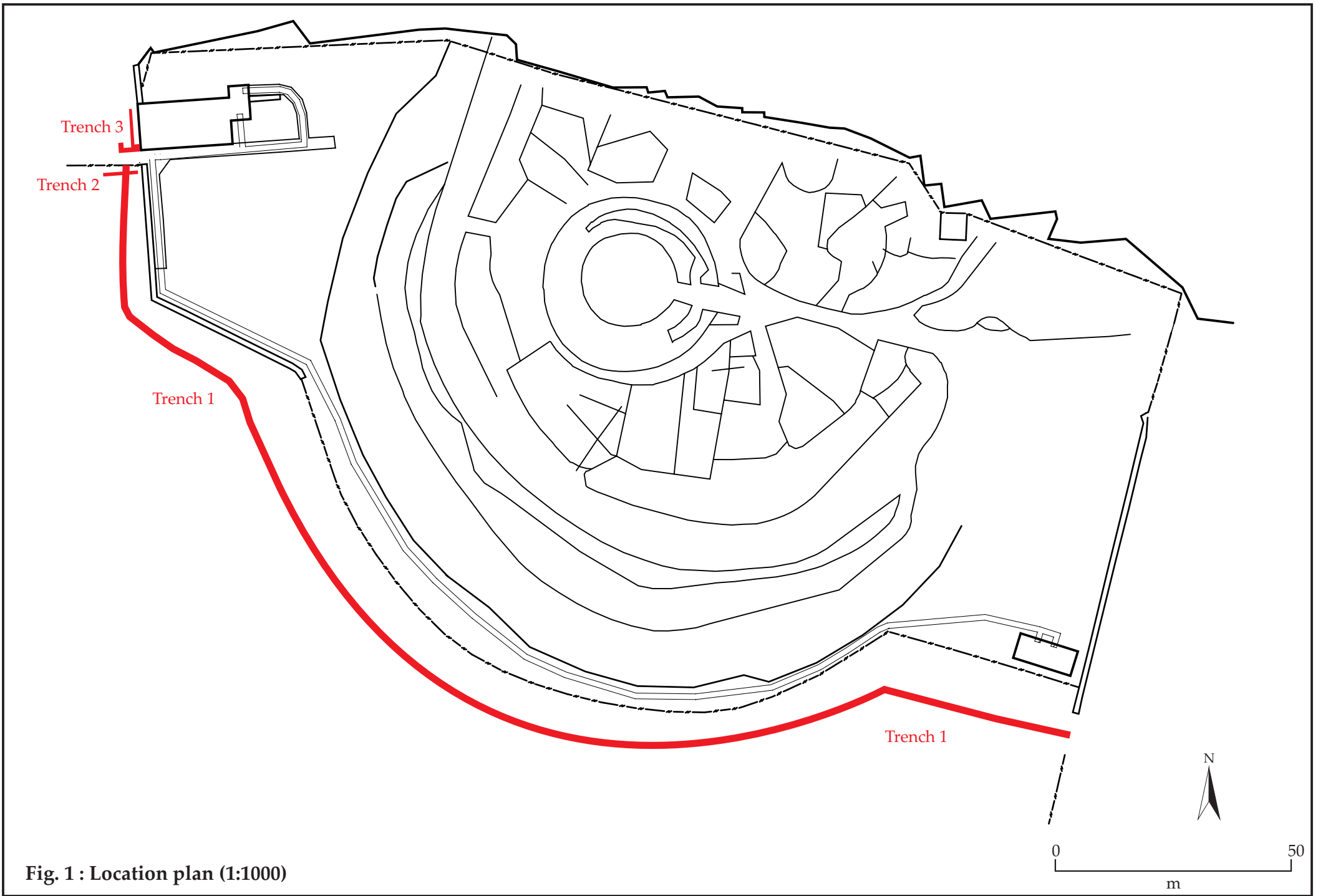


Fig. 1 : Location plan (1:1000)