

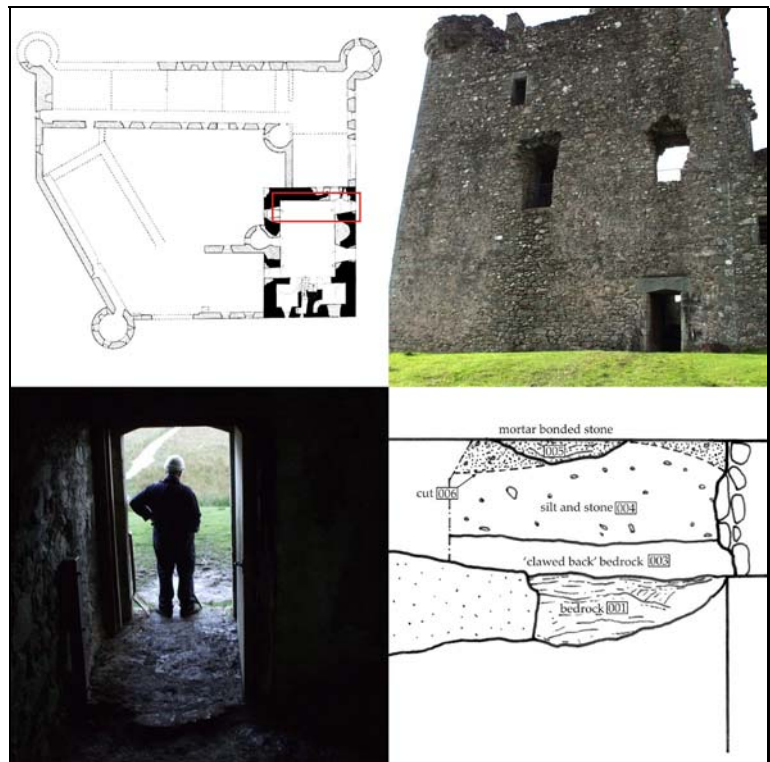
*Discovery and Excavation in Scotland – OASIS-type Form (2006)*

<b>LOCAL AUTHORITY:</b>	ARGYLL AND BUTE
<b>PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME:</b>	Kilchurn Castle
<b>PROJECT CODE:</b>	HSCO-90179-2008-01
<b>PARISH:</b>	GLENORCHY AND INISHAIL (ARGYLL AND BUTE)
<b>NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR:</b>	Paul Fox
<b>NAME OF ORGANISATION:</b>	Kirkdale Archaeology
<b>TYPE(S) OF PROJECT:</b>	Watching brief
<b>NMRS NO(S):</b>	NN12NW 5
<b>SITE/MONUMENT TYPE(S):</b>	Castle
<b>SIGNIFICANT FINDS:</b>	None
<b>NGR (2 letters, 6 figures)</b>	NN 1329 2760
<b>START DATE (this season)</b>	1 October 2008
<b>END DATE (this season)</b>	1 October 2008
<b>PREVIOUS WORK (incl. <i>DES</i> ref.)</b>	
<b>MAIN (NARRATIVE) DESCRIPTION:</b> (May include information from other fields)	<p>A watching brief was maintained within the basement of the tower house of Kilchurn Castle to supervise the removal of soft deposits from the floor ahead of the laying of a concrete skim.</p> <p>There was evidence seen to suggest that the north door was a later insertion. This would in turn suggest that the basement was originally accessed via another aperture, perhaps the southwest doorway to the courtyard. Further evidence for the insertion of the north doorway was seen after examining the main build of the exterior northeast wall of the tower – this is largely composed of sub-rounded sandstone blocks. There is a clear cut around the inserted doorway and the masonry within it comprises sub-rounded sandstone blocks spaced with slivers of schist, which is comparable to the build of the late 17<sup>th</sup>-century barracks abutting the tower to the northwest.</p>
<b>PROPOSED FUTURE WORK:</b>	
<b>CAPTION(S) FOR ILLUSTRS:</b>	
<b>SPONSOR OR FUNDING BODY:</b>	Historic Scotland
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<b>ARCHIVE LOCATION (intended/deposited)</b>	Archive to be deposited in NMRS

Historic Scotland  
Properties in Care  
Minor Archaeological Works 2008

# Kilchurn Castle: Archaeological Monitoring, October 2008

HS PIC Index number: 90179  
Project code: HSCO-90179-2008-01



15 December 2008  
Kirkdale Archaeology

<b><u>Site</u></b>	Kilchurn Castle
<b><u>N.G.R</u></b>	NN 132 276
<b><u>Project Description</u></b>	Archaeological monitoring
<b><u>Project code</u></b>	HSCO-90179-2008-01

## **Contents**

Summary	1
1.0 Introduction	1
2.0 Description	1
3.0 Conclusions and recommendations	3
A1.0 Appendix 1: List of contexts	4
A2.0 Appendix 2: List of drawings	4
A3.0 Appendix 3: List of photographs	4

*SUMMARY: October 2008: A watching brief was maintained within the basement of the tower house of Kilchurn Castle to supervise the removal of deposits from the floor ahead of the laying of a concrete skim. Evidence was seen to suggest that the door at the north corner was not part of the original build, but a later insertion, probably in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century.*

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Under the terms of its PIC call-off contract with Historic Scotland, Kirkdale Archaeology was asked to undertake an archaeological watching brief at Kilchurn Castle, Loch Awe. Water draining through the floor of the tower house basement was creating ruts and channels within the floor surface making it uneven and therefore dangerous to the public. The decision was made to remove some of the soft deposits along the NW wall and to skim the area with concrete to provide an even surface. A concrete skim had been laid ten years previously but this only serviced the courtyard doorway to the SW. The new skim would join the existing one and connect it to the doorway in the N angle of the vaulted basement (the main castle entrance). The area to be cleared was relatively small (3.25 m x 1.5 m with a maximum depth of c 150 mm) yet revealed some interesting details about the basement. The deposits were removed manually under archaeological supervision.

This tower house in its earliest form dates to the mid-15<sup>th</sup> century, although there were subsequent alterations and major rebuilds in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries.

A coin was found during the work but is too heavily corroded to be readily identified.

The work was carried out on the 1 October 2008.

## **2.0 DESCRIPTION**

The area to be cleared was bounded to the SE by **001**, a ridge of grey schist bedrock running NE-SW. To the SW, a concrete skim, **002**, up to 100 mm thick lapped over this bedrock ridge and extended back 2.8 m towards the platform for the courtyard steps. The skim was up to 1.25 m wide. To the NE was **007**, the cobbled floor of the

main doorway. Apart from these elements and some worked stones being stored there, the rest of the floor was covered in damp silt. The area to be cleared had a mixture of materials in it and had obviously been causing drainage problems. This layer, **004**, was a mix of variously sized boulders in a silty matrix mixed with pointing material from the vault and imported Type 2 stones which had been imported to fill the puddles of standing water which gathered at the bottom of the slope. The removal of this material to a maximum depth of 150 mm yielded a copper coin although its surfaces were too corroded to provide its identity. The only word that could be discerned was 'REG'.

Upon the removal of layer **004**, two things became apparent- The bedrock, **001**, to the SE had been partially clawed back on its NW face (its reduced portion is **003** on the plan) and there was a stone and yellow lime mortar bonded layer, **005**, running down the side of the NW wall. **005** was higher to the W, it then sloped down and ran under layer **004**. This layer had also been clawed back, **006**, on its SE side. It was no coincidence that the clawing back of both the bedrock and the mortared layer respected the position of the door in the N angle. The area to be cleared lay inside the current main castle entrance – a doorway with a chamfered surround carrying a carved lintel bearing the date 1693. The evidence from the internal clearance work appears to confirm that this doorway is a late 17<sup>th</sup>-century insertion.

Upon entering the doorway the floor sloped up to the SW to the steps serving the doorway to the courtyard. The first thing noted was that the floor level in the rest of the basement was considerably (600-800 mm) higher than the surface of the cobbled entrance. The floor level in the room was dictated by the height of the peaking bedrock (the castle is built on an undulating ridge of schist) however this slope did not appear to conform to this. The doorway in the S angle worked with the original floor level. It seems likely that the bonded mortar surface, **005**, is the remains of the original mid 15<sup>th</sup>-century levelling layer used to fill the clefts in the bedrock to create a flat surface. If the doorway was original then this clawed-back layer wouldn't make sense. The ground level outside the door is c.1m below the assumed original internal floor level. When the doorway was slapped out the bedrock and mortar infill would've been waist height- the deposits were therefore cut back and a slope

was formed to resolve the height difference between the internal and external ground levels. It was this slope that was causing the water run-off from the courtyard to rut the ground surface and pool at the entrance.

### **3.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Any further ground-breaking works within the basement should include a watching brief.

Several features have been pointed out that suggest the N door is an insertion. This would in turn suggest that the basement was originally accessed via another aperture – perhaps the SW doorway serving the courtyard. Further evidence for the insertion of the N doorway comes from an examination of the main build of the exterior NE wall of Tower – this is largely composed of sub-rounded sandstone blocks. There is a clear cut around the inserted doorway and the masonry within it comprises sub-rounded sandstone blocks (probably re-used after the slap-out) with many slivers of schist between. An examination at the build of the late 17<sup>th</sup>-century barracks abutting the tower house to the NW shows that is largely composed of schist slivers.

**A1.0 APPENDIX 1: LIST OF CONTEXTS**

#	Description
001	Grey Schist Bedrock
002	Concrete Skim overlapping 001
003	Clawed Back Bedrock
004	Silt and Stone Mixed Layer
005	Bonded Stone and Mortar Layer
006	Cut through 005
007	Cobbled Entrance

**A2.0 APPENDIX 2: LIST OF DRAWINGS**

#	Type	Description	Scale
1	Plan	Plan of Tower House Basement	1:50

**A3.0 APPENDIX 3: LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS**

#	Description	From	Date
1	Pre-ex shot of Entrance and layer 004	NE	1/10/08
2	Shot of Exterior of N Door	NE	1/10/08
3	Pre-ex shot of Entrance and layer 004	NE	1/10/08
4	Pre ex Shot of Layer 004 and Concrete 002	NE	1/10/08
5	Shot of Exterior of N Door and Cut	NE	1/10/08
6	Detail of N Door and Carved Lintel	NE	1/10/08
7	Layer 004 with Clawed-Back Mortar 005	NE	1/10/08
8	Work in Progress looking NW at Mortared Surface 005	SE	1/10/08
9	Work in Progress looking NE at Clearance	SW	1/10/08
10	Looking SE at bedrock 001	NW	1/10/08
11	Looking S at S Stair Door –note ground level	N	1/10/08
12	Looking W at Courtyard Stairs	E	1/10/08
13	NW wall of basement – note ground level sloping to the NE	SE	1/10/08
14	Post Ex of cleaned trench with 004 to the right	NE	1/10/08

15	Post Ex Shot looking SW	NE	1/10/08
16	Mortar Spread 004	SE	1/10/08
17	Concrete 002 and Trench Post Ex looking N	S	1/10/08
18	Post Ex of Trench looking NE	SW	1/10/08
19	Exterior NE Wall of Tower and adjoining Barracks	NE	1/10/08
20	Exterior NE Wall of Tower and adjoining Barracks	ENE	1/10/08
21	E corner of Tower with bedrock shelves below	E	1/10/08
22	Shot of internal build around N door	SW	1/10/08
23	Shot of internal build around N door	SW	1/10/08
24	Post Ex Shot looking N at Trench	S	1/10/08
25	Looking NW at N Door	SE	1/10/08
26	Post Ex Shot looking N at Trench	S	1/10/08



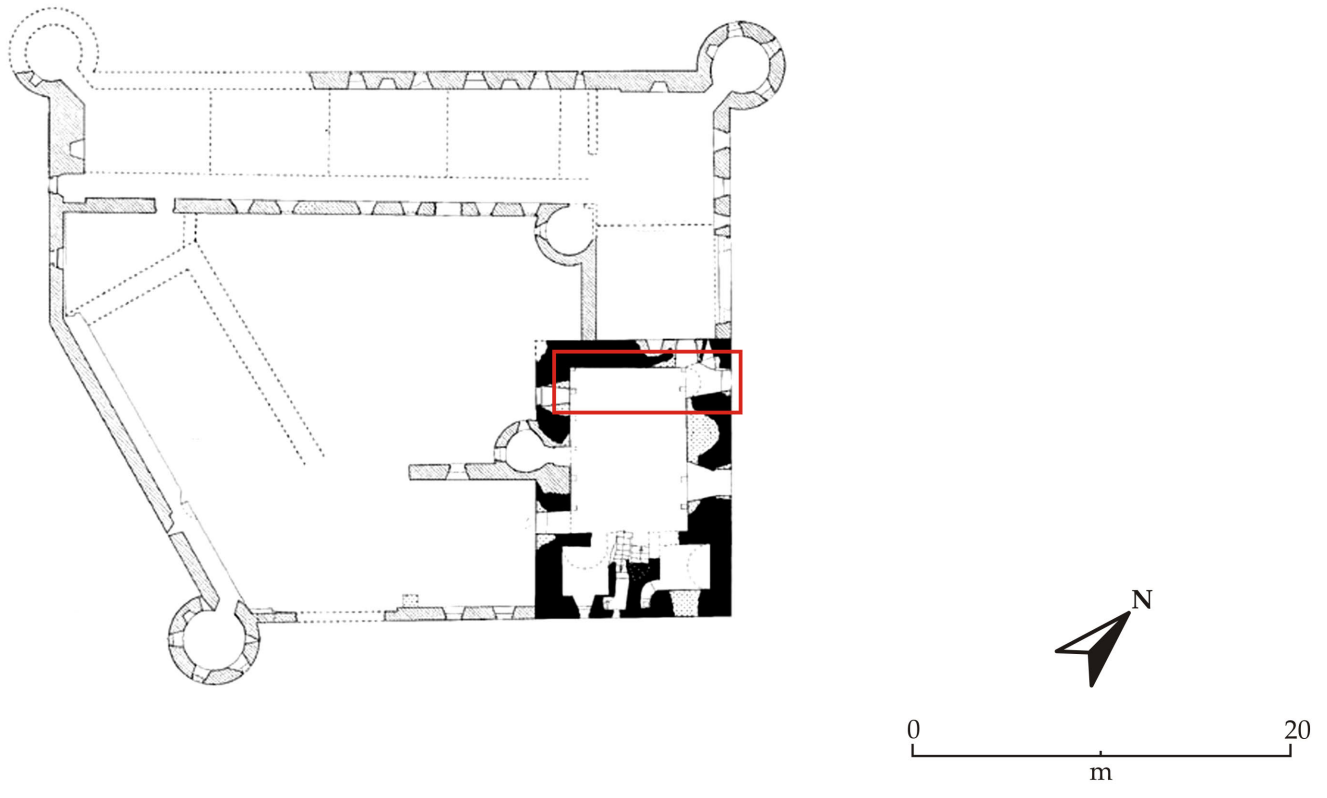


Fig. 1 : Plan (1:400) showing location of works

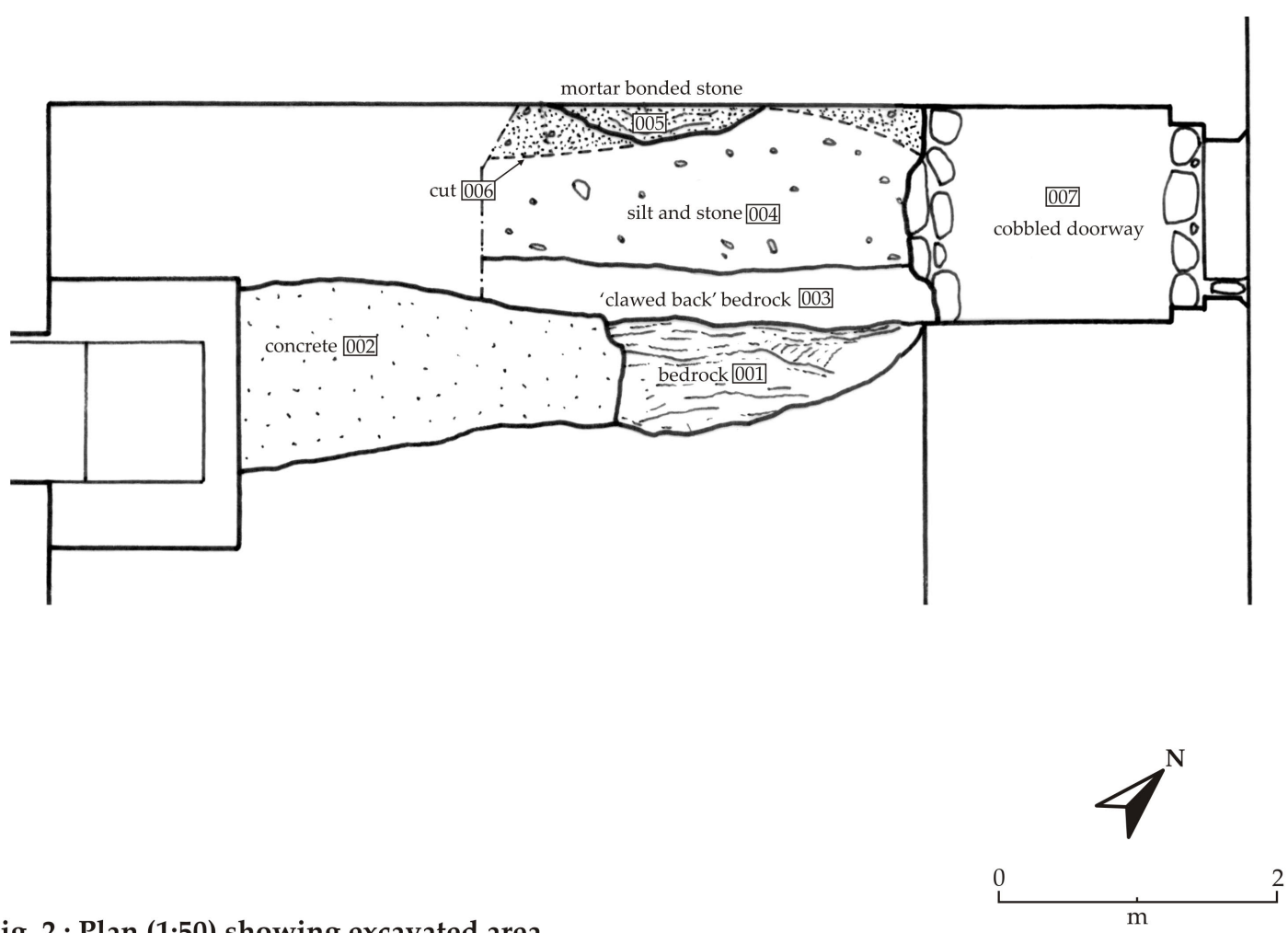


Fig. 2 : Plan (1:50) showing excavated area