

Discovery and Excavation in Scotland

Updated on 15/06/2007

LOCAL AUTHORITY:	Aberdeenshire
PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME:	Huntly Castle
PROJECT CODE:	HSCO-90165-2014-01
PARISH:	Huntly
NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR:	Gordon Ewart, Paul Fox
NAME OF ORGANISATION:	Kirkdale Archaeology
TYPE(S) OF PROJECT:	Watching Brief
NMRS NO(S):	NJ54SW 9
SITE/MONUMENT TYPE(S):	Castle
SIGNIFICANT FINDS:	None
NGR (2 letters, 8 or 10 figures)	Four trenches, one c. NJ 5317 4073 & three c. NJ 5321 4076
START DATE (this season)	6 May 2014
END DATE (this season)	22 September 2014
PREVIOUS WORK (incl. <i>DES</i> ref.)	
MAIN (NARRATIVE) DESCRIPTION: (May include information from other fields)	An archaeological watching brief was undertaken during the excavation of four small trenches to remove existing information boards and install new ones. One trench within a small chamber in the remodelled East Range revealed what may represent a sub-floor deposit (NJ 53211 40768). Two trenches just to the east of the East Range (NJ 53219 40765; NJ 53224 40756) revealed significant infill or levelling deposit, contemporary with the present entrance to the Courtyard on its E side. The depth and overall absence of finds suggest a major revision of ground levels along the east of the Courtyard, potentially associated with the remodelling works of the 17 th century.
PROPOSED FUTURE WORK:	
CAPTION(S) FOR ILLUSTRS:	
SPONSOR OR FUNDING BODY:	Historic Scotland
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ARCHIVE LOCATION (intended/deposited)	Archive to be deposited in NMRS

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

Huntly Castle • Monitoring • May 2014

HS PIC Index Number: 90165

SITE: Huntly Castle, Aberdeenshire

N.G.R.: NJ 532 407

DESCRIPTION: A Watching Brief and assessment related to the installation and removal of signage.

PROJECT CODE: HSCO-90165-2014-01

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JUNE 2014

INTRODUCTION

Under the terms of its PIC call-off contract with Historic Scotland, Kirkdale Archaeology was asked to undertake an Archaeological Assessment at Huntly Castle, Aberdeenshire (Fig.1) of the three potential sites of two new signs (HUN 01 and HUN 02) and a Watching Brief during removal of an existing sign (HUN 03).

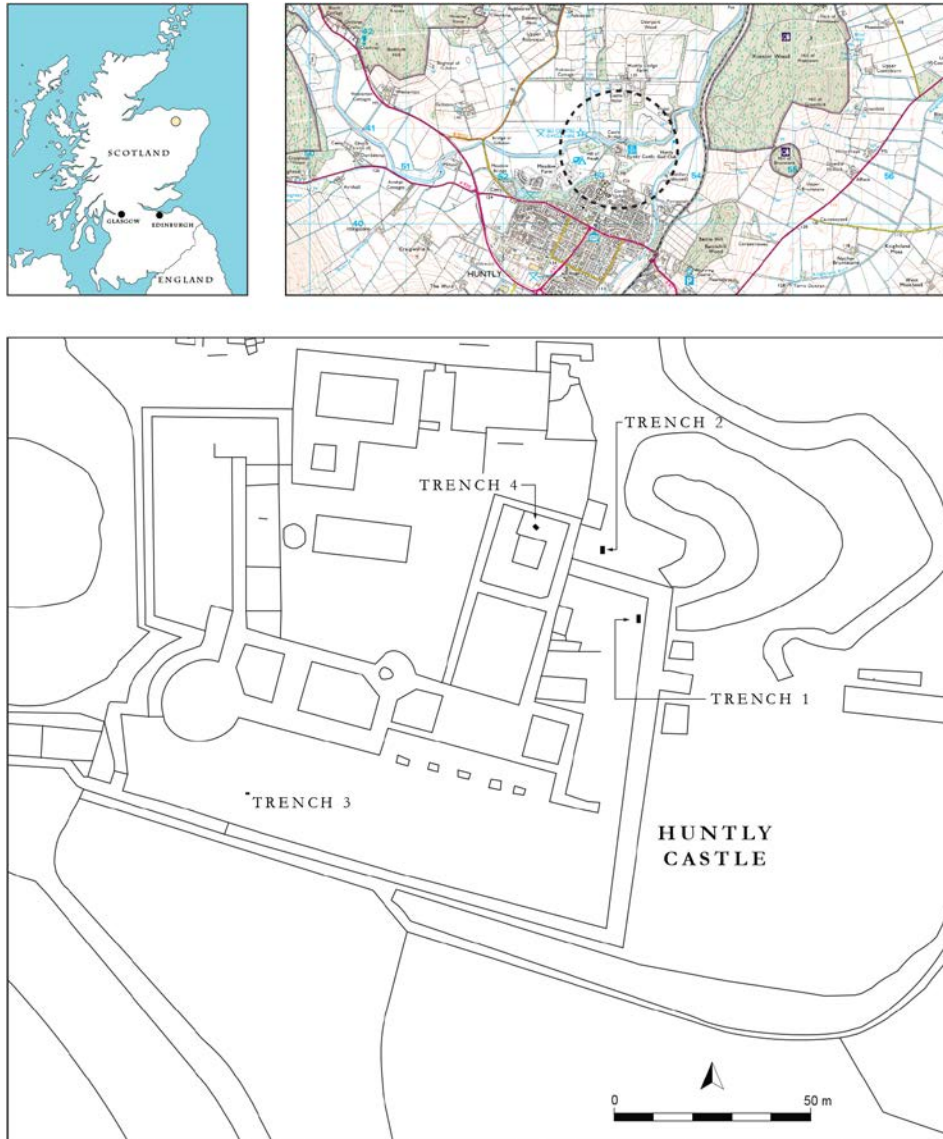


Figure 1: Plan showing the location of the trenches.
Inset No. 2 © Crown copyright. All rights reserved 2014. Licence number 100036933.

The work was carried out by hand and took place on 6th May, 2014.

DESCRIPTION

The siting of HUN 02 was addressed first, with the preferred site lying SE of the entrance to the courtyard. The excavated area measured 2m N/S x 1m E/W (Trench 1).

As soon as the turf and topsoil (**003**) were removed, evidence of a compacted surface was revealed at a depth of 150mm. The surface (**001**) was reflected by a spread of clinker and ash measuring 440mm wide (E/W) and aligned N/S. This deposit was delimited on its W side by **002** – a light brown, slightly stony soil, apparently cut to accommodate **001**.

With discovery of these features, excavation at this site was suspended and the other possible location for HUN 02 was tested. The second location lay immediately E of the existing entrance to the castle courtyard, N of the entrance pathway.

The resulting trench (Trench 2) measured 2m N/S and 1m E/W. Once the turf and topsoil were removed (**004**), a single homogenous deposit was revealed (**005**). This deposit consisted of a mid-brown gravelly silt with a few mortar flecks. It was excavated to a depth of 350mm, but not bottomed.

The proposed site for HUN 02 was then tested with Trench 3. This trench measured 1m E/W x 0.6m N/S, and when the turf and topsoil (**006**) were removed, a deposit of grey/brown plastic clay was revealed (**007**). The clay covered the entire area of the trench but was only excavated over a limited area towards its NE corner. This showed that it was 70mm thick and overlay a gravelly, dark grey brown silty soil (**008**). Excavation was suspended at this point.

Finally the old sign at location HUN 03 was removed by Historic Scotland staff. The resulting irregular pit (Trench 4) was approximately 1.4m (NW/SE) x 1m (NE/SW). The sign was found to be massively reinforced with concrete. Once cleaned, the original intervention was found to be cut against **010** – a loose dark soil and pebble/gravel-rich deposit, c.300mm deep, which overlay a clean, orange, gravel and pebble rich silt (**011**).

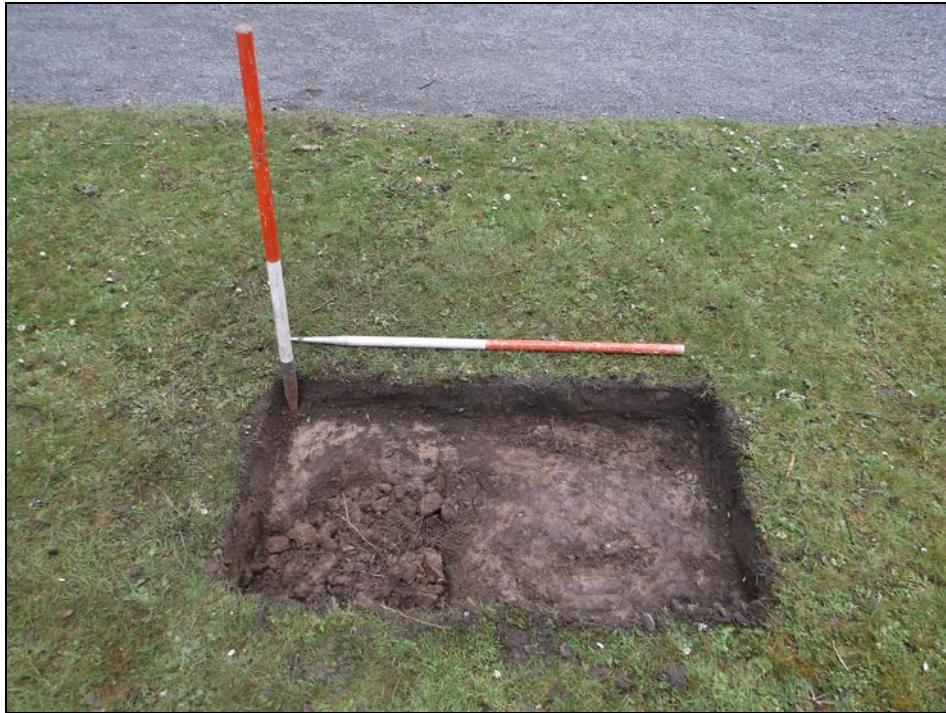


Plate 1: Post-excavation shot of Trench 3

CONCLUSIONS

Trench 1

Context **001** was a path of unknown date but most likely dated to the 19th or 20th century. It was cut against a landscaping/levelling deposit of re-deposited natural subsoil (**002**) – similar to **005**.

Trench 2

In combination with the results of Trench 1, context **005** represents a significant infill or levelling deposit, contemporary with the present entrance to the Courtyard on its E side. The depth and overall absence of finds suggest a major revision of ground levels along the E of the Courtyard, potentially associated with the remodelling works of the 17th century.

Trench 3

This excavation revealed a re-deposited clay surface of unknown date and extent. It is possible that it is associated with the clear garden terrace which, with its portico, all formed part of the highly ornamented E facade of the post-medieval castle.

Trench 4

The deposit **010** may represent a sub-floor deposit within a small chamber in the remodelled E Range. This in turn overlay either a natural subsoil (**011**) or a re-deposited natural subsoil comparable with **002** and **005**.

LIST OF CONTEXTS

Number	Description
001	Trench 1: Pathway surface of ash, clinker and small stones
002	Trench 1: Re-deposited natural gravelly silty clay cut by 001
003	Trench 1: Turf and topsoil
004	Trench 2: Turf and topsoil
005	Trench 2: Re-deposited natural gravelly silty clay
006	Trench 3: Turf and topsoil
007	Trench 3: Spread of grey brown plastic clay – 70mm thick, sealed by 006
008	Trench 3: Grey brown gravelly silt, sealed by 007
009	Trench 4: Compacted stone ‘dust’ (modern)
010	Trench 4: Loose dark stony silt, sealed by 009
011	Trench 4: Orange brown, gravelly silt, sealed by 010

LIST OF DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHS

No.	Description	From	Date
1	Trench 1	S	06/05/2014
2	Trench 2	S	06/05/2014
3	Trench 2	NE	06/05/2014
4	Trench 1 and Trench 2	NE	06/05/2014
5	Trench 3	W	06/05/2014
6	Trench 3 under excavation	NE	06/05/2014
7	Trench 4	E	06/05/2014
8	Trench 4	SE	06/05/2014