

## *Discovery and Excavation in Scotland*

Updated on 15/06/2007

<b>LOCAL AUTHORITY:</b>	Aberdeenshire
<b>PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME:</b>	Huntly Castle
<b>PROJECT CODE:</b>	HSCO-90165-2014-02
<b>PARISH:</b>	Huntly
<b>NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR:</b>	Alan Radley
<b>NAME OF ORGANISATION:</b>	Kirkdale Archaeology
<b>TYPE(S) OF PROJECT:</b>	Watching Brief
<b>NMRS NO(S):</b>	NJ54SW 9
<b>SITE/MONUMENT TYPE(S):</b>	Castle
<b>SIGNIFICANT FINDS:</b>	None
<b>NGR (2 letters, 8 or 10 figures)</b>	NJ 5317 4076
<b>START DATE (this season)</b>	2 June 2014
<b>END DATE (this season)</b>	3 June 2014
<b>PREVIOUS WORK (incl. <i>DES</i> ref.)</b>	
<b>MAIN (NARRATIVE) DESCRIPTION:</b> (May include information from other fields)	An archaeological watching brief was maintained during the excavation of two small trenches to allow the installation of a new handrail near the exterior of the west wall of the West Range, in an area thought to have been occupied by a 12 <sup>th</sup> -century bailey. It was thought that some features seen were associated with the bailey and these were left undisturbed. Evidence was seen of an infilled/levelled ditch, along with features associated with the foundations of the wall of the West Range, thought to have been constructed in the 15 <sup>th</sup> or 16 <sup>th</sup> century. There were signs of modern disturbance in some areas.
<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 2014/2015**

**Huntly Castle • Excavation • June 2014**

**HS PIC Index Number: 90165**

**SITE:** Huntly Castle, Aberdeenshire

**N.G.R.:** NJ 532 407

**DESCRIPTION:** Archaeological excavation prior to the replacement of a safety rail.

**PROJECT CODE:** HSCO-90165-2014-02

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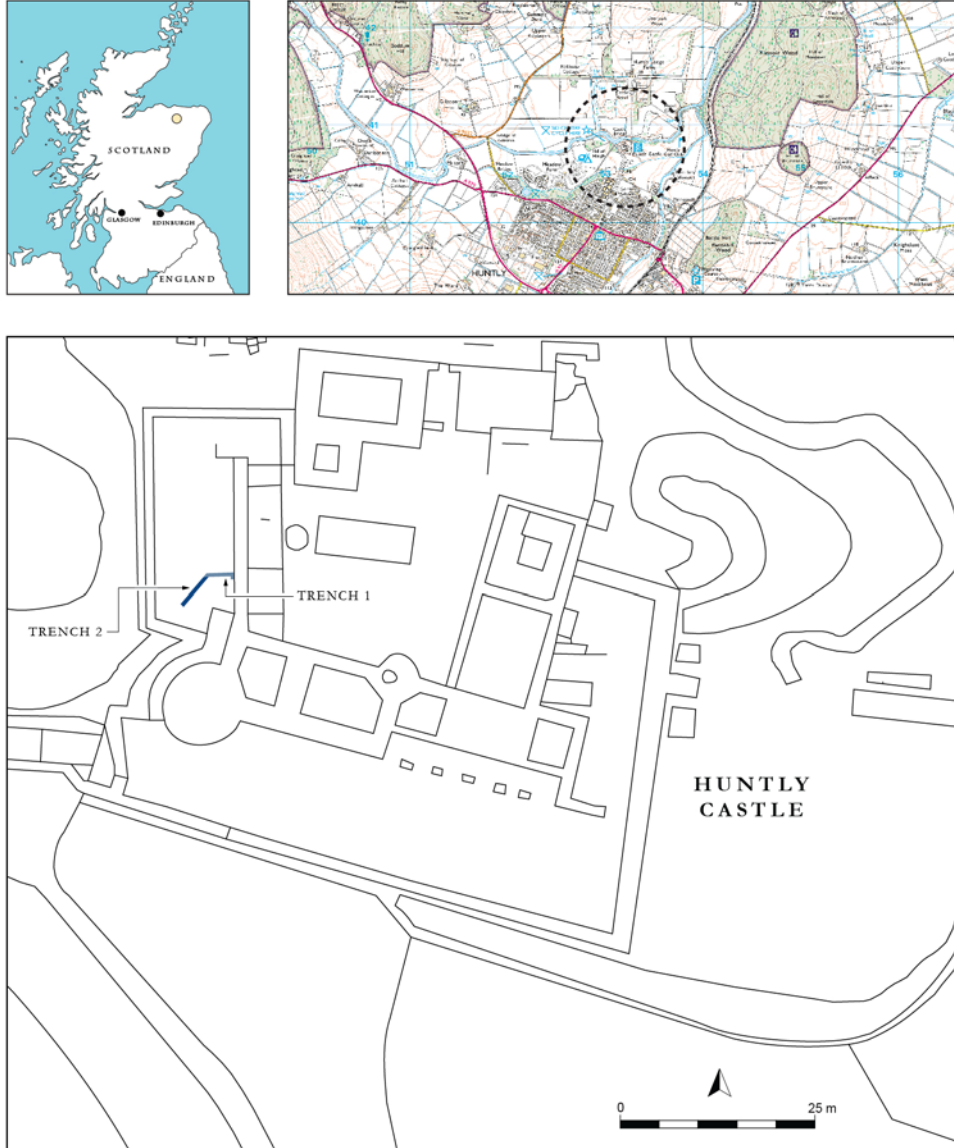


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**S E P T E M B E R 2 0 1 4**

## INTRODUCTION

Under the terms of its PIC call-off contract with Historic Scotland, Kirkdale Archaeology was asked to undertake an archaeological excavation at Huntly Castle, Aberdeenshire (Fig. 1) ahead of the replacement of a safety rail.



**Figure 1:** Plan showing the location of the trenches.

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The work was carried out by hand and took place on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> June, 2014.

## DESCRIPTION

Trench 1 was located in the general area of where the 12<sup>th</sup> century Bailey is thought to have stood. The E end of the trench was located against the W wall of the West Range and  $\approx 4.7\text{m}$  N of the nearby tower; it extended  $8.75\text{m}$  W.

The NE corner of Trench 2 joined the S baulk  $3.25\text{m}$  W of the 15<sup>th</sup>/16<sup>th</sup> century West Range, and extended roughly  $5\text{m}$  SW. Both trenches measured  $0.5\text{m}$  in width.

Due to the nature of the deposits in the eastern part of Trench 1, it was decided that the western part of the trench would not be excavated during this work. The excavated area measured  $4.60\text{m}$  E/W. The eastern  $0.5\text{m}$  of Trench 1 was extended  $\approx 0.6\text{m}$  to the S in order to check the relationship between the (Phase 1) deposit **003** and the (Phase 2) wall **001**.

Initial excavation revealed the turf and fairly compact mid-brown slightly clayed silt topsoil **002** throughout both trenches. It measured up to  $12\text{cm}$  in depth.

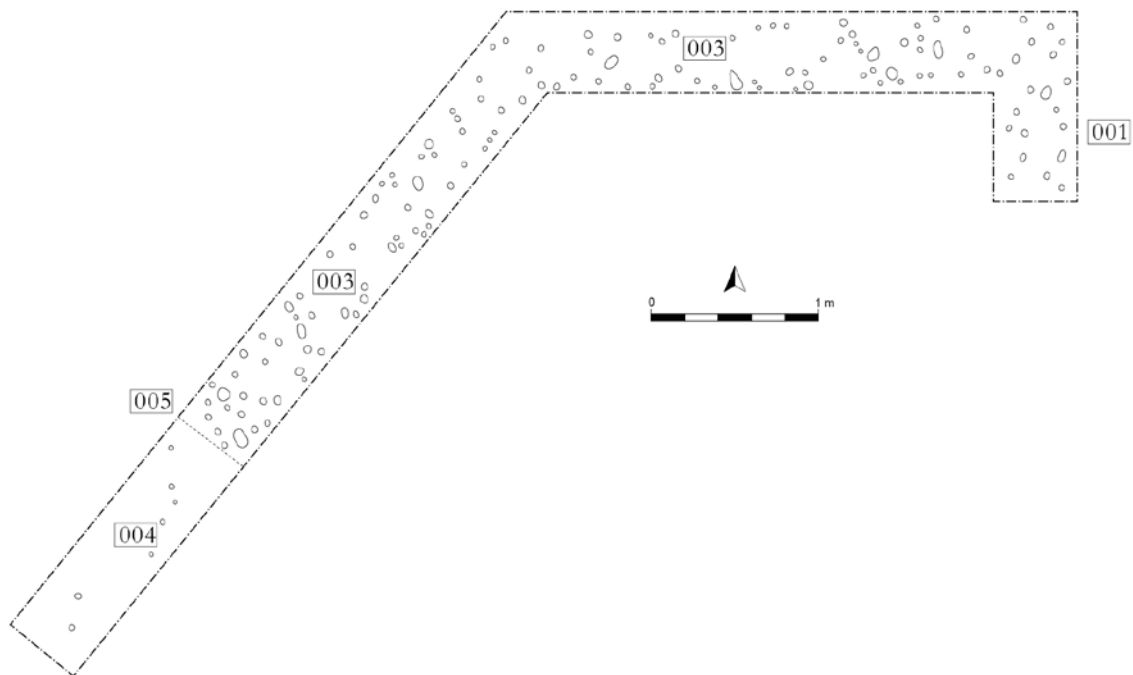


Figure 2: Post-excitation plan of the trenches.

At the E end of Trench 1, the wall **001** was constructed with sub-angular sandstone fragments and pointed with hard and gritty light-grey mortar. At what looked to be its base, **006** was noted - a band, approximately  $4\text{cm}$  thick, of hard and gritty light-grey mortar.

Seen throughout the excavated part of Trench 1 and in the NE 3m of Trench 2, context **003** was a fairly even mix of mid-brown silty clay and small (4cm in diameter on average) rounded stones. The upper face of **003** formed a fairly flat and hard surface. To the SW of **003**, context **004** was a deposit of compact grey brown silty clay with occasional charcoal flecks containing small stones and many fine roots.

The NE and SW edges of **004** were given the context number **005** and recorded as a possible feature, neither of which was investigated as the required trench dimensions had been met.

The trenches were backfilled and the turf re-laid.

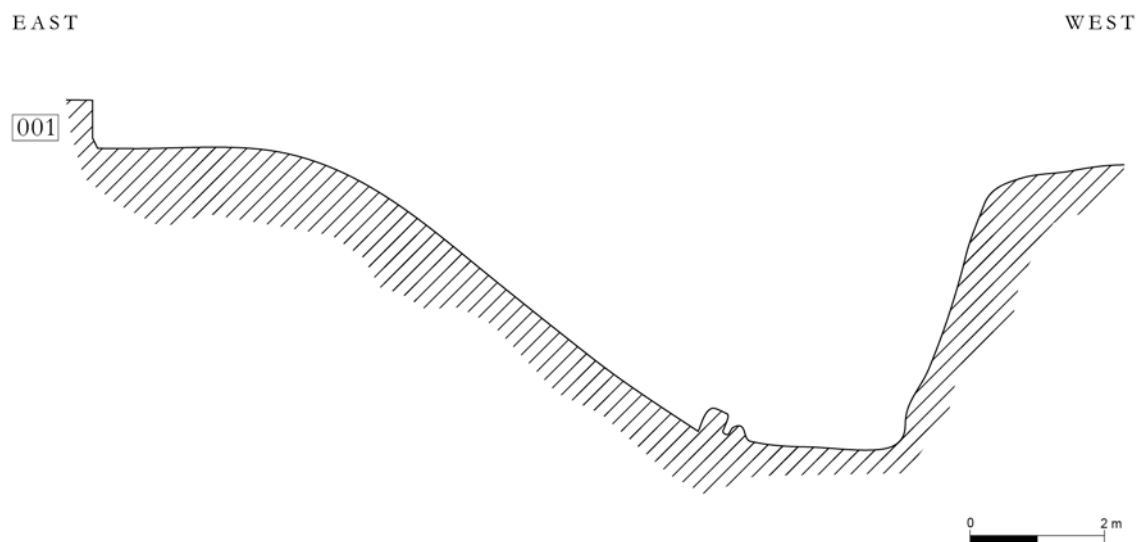


Figure 3: Ground surface profile W from 001.

## CONCLUSIONS

### Phase 1

The stone and silt feature **003** looked to have been deliberately flattened into a surface of some sort. From the small area excavated, the relationship appeared to continue under the Phase 2 feature **006**.

It is possible that **003** is part of landscaping immediately prior to the Phase 2 construction (and part of the same phase of work), or it was already *in-situ* and the later construction was simply built over it. This being the top of the 12<sup>th</sup> century Bailey is a fairly strong possibility. It is at roughly the same height as the Motte to the W of it, with the ditch between.

Contexts **004** and **005**, at the SW end of Trench 2, may have been, respectively, the fill and cut of the ditch at that side of the Bailey. Again it must be stressed there was no strong evidence for this discovered

during this excavation. When it was seen the features were under the Phase 2 structure it was decided, in consultation with Historic Scotland, not to excavate them.

Other possible interpretations of **004/005** include part of a tree hole or a trench from the 1920s, with the deposit under **003** showing through on the downslope.



**Plate 1:** Surface 003 running under the wall 001 at the E end of the trench.

### **Phase 2**

Context **001** is the foundation for the W wall of the West Range, constructed during the 15<sup>th</sup> or 16<sup>th</sup> century. Context **006** was a layer of mortar put down to bed the wall foundations **001** onto. It also appeared that **006** was laid directly onto the Phase 1 surface **003**.

### **Phase 3**

The Phase 3 turf and topsoil **002** had certainly been disturbed recently as pieces of clear plastic and a stiletto heel were noted, along with a few sherds of 20<sup>th</sup> century white earthenware. Whether this shows recent turf and topsoil being imported or recent material being redeposited as a result of animal burrowing, is not certain. If the former, this topsoil could date to the 1920s, imported as part of the work on the presentation of the monument. If the latter, there are many burrows visible in the motte, and although these were not seen on the surface in the vicinity of the present work, there is likely to be some animal disturbance. The features seen below **002** appeared to pre-date the 15<sup>th</sup>/16<sup>th</sup> century wall foundations that were seen at the E end of the trench, and were thus deemed to be archaeologically significant.

## LIST OF CONTEXTS

Number	Description
001	Trench 1: Wall foundations, W wall of the West Range.
002	Trench 1/2: Turf and fairly compact mid-brown topsoil.
003	Trench 1/2: Mix of small stones and mid-brown silty clay.
004	Trench 2: Deposit of compact grey brown silty clay. May be the fill of <b>005</b> .
005	Trench 2: Possible cut, unexcavated.
006	Trench 1: Mortar deposit seen under <b>001</b> .

## LIST OF DRAWINGS

No.	Trench	Type	Description	Scale
1	n/a	Profile	Ground surface profile W from wall <b>001</b> down into the ditch.	1:50
2	n/a	Profile	Ground surface profile W from the ditch, up the E edge of the motte.	1:50
3	1/2	Plan	Trench location plan.	1:50
4	1/2	Plan	Post-excavation plan of Trench 1 and NE end of Trench 2, showing <b>001</b> and <b>003</b> .	1:20
5	1	Plan	Post-excavation plan Trench 1 and NE end of Trench 2, showing <b>001</b> and <b>003</b> .	1:20
6	2	Plan	Post-excavation plan trench of Trench 2, showing <b>003</b> , <b>004</b> and <b>005</b> .	1:20

## LIST OF DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHS

No.	Description	From	Date
1	E end of the trench, showing surface <b>003</b> under wall <b>001</b>	W	03/06/14
2	E end of the trench, showing surface <b>003</b> under wall <b>001</b>	W	03/06/14
3	E end of the trench, showing surface <b>003</b> under wall <b>001</b>	W	03/06/14
4	E end of the trench, showing surface <b>003</b> under wall <b>001</b>	S	03/06/14
5	Surface <b>003</b>	E	03/06/14
6	Surface <b>003</b> at the E end of the trench	N	03/06/14
7	Surface <b>003</b>	N	03/06/14
8	Surface <b>003</b> and walling <b>001</b> at the E end of the trench	W	03/06/14
9	Surface <b>003</b> in Trench 2	NW	03/06/14
10	Surface <b>003</b> and possible ditch <b>004/005</b>	NW	03/06/14
11	Possible ditch <b>004/005</b>	NW	03/06/14
12	Possible ditch <b>004/005</b> with surface <b>003</b>	SW	03/06/14
13	Trenches 1 and 2 as excavated	S	03/06/14
14	Trenches 1 and 2 as excavated	S	03/06/14