

Discovery and Excavation in Scotland

Updated on 15/06/2007

LOCAL AUTHORITY:	East Lothian
PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME:	Seton Collegiate Chapel
PROJECT CODE:	HSCO-90275-2010-01
PARISH:	Tranent
NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR:	Paul Fox
NAME OF ORGANISATION:	Kirkdale Archaeology
TYPE(S) OF PROJECT:	Watching brief
NMRS NO(S):	NT47NW 4.00
SITE/MONUMENT TYPE(S):	Funerary; Religion/ Collegiate Church
SIGNIFICANT FINDS:	None
NGR (2 letters, 8 or 10 figures)	NT 4177 7509
START DATE (this season)	16 August 2010
END DATE (this season)	16 August 2010
PREVIOUS WORK (incl. <i>DES</i> ref.)	
MAIN (NARRATIVE) DESCRIPTION: (May include information from other fields)	A watching brief was maintained during excavations for the installation of a new handrail by the steps leading down a steep slope to the visitor's toilet. This archaeological watching brief provided an opportunity to characterise the deposits on the slope, previously disturbed by the insertion of the services and stairs. A possible revetment was partially revealed but not fully excavated. A small section was examined which suggested that it may represent a collapsed revetment. Future groundbreaking works should be aware of the possibility that this structure could extend to the SE and NW of the stairs, and appropriate archaeological monitoring is therefore recommended.
PROPOSED FUTURE WORK:	
CAPTION(S) FOR ILLUSTRS:	
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ARCHIVE LOCATION (intended/deposited)	Archive to be deposited in NMRS

Historic Scotland
Properties in Care
Minor Archaeological Works 2010

**Seton Collegiate Church:
Toilet Handrail Trench
Watching Brief
August 2010**

**HS PIC Index Number:
Project Code: HSCO-90275-2010-01**



**16th August 2010
Kirkdale Archaeology**

<u>Site</u>	Seaton Collegiate Church, East Lothian.
<u>N.G.R</u>	NT 41820 75110
<u>Project Description</u>	Archaeological watching brief on the excavation of a trench ahead of the installation of a handrail to service the steps leading to the visitor's toilet.
<u>Project Code</u>	HSCO-90275-2010-01

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Under the terms of its PIC call-off contract Kirkdale Archaeology was asked to undertake an archaeological watching brief on the excavation of a series of trenches ahead of the installation of a handrail at Seton Collegiate Church in East Lothian.

Due to algal build-up, it was decided to install a handrail on the SE side of the stairs leading down a steep slope to the visitor's toilet.

The original intention was to dig eight trenches, generally 400mm x 400mm x 400mm (LxWxD) to house the uprights for the handrail. This was not possible as the HS staff (who were present to dig the trenches), knew that there was a water pipe and an electricity cable buried down the line of the planned handrail.

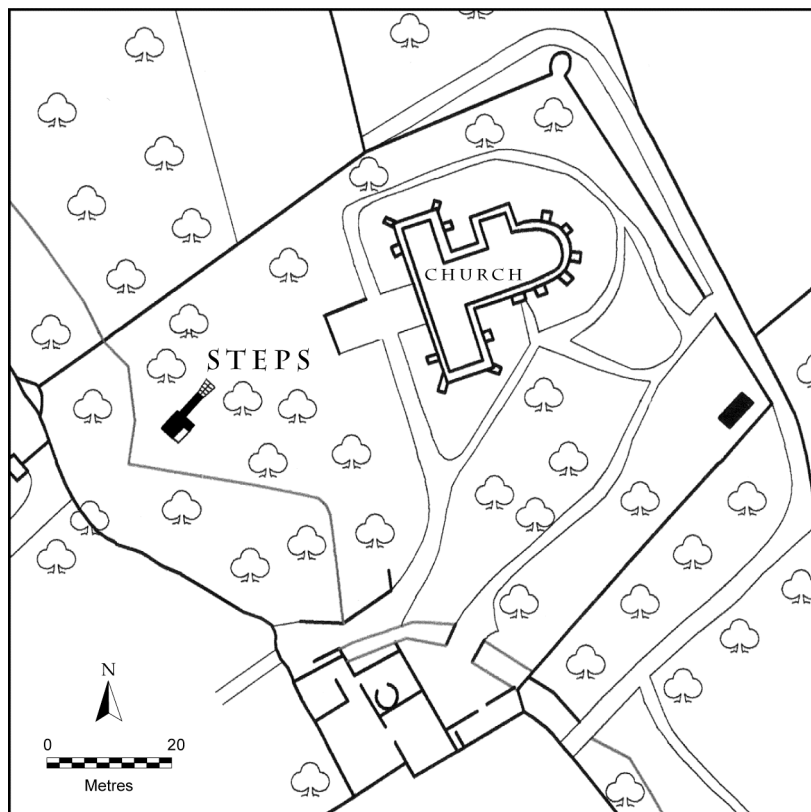


Figure 1: Location plan of the steps.

This meant that instead of digging eight discrete trenches, a single long trench had to be excavated to locate the existing services and move them ahead of the handrail installation. After the trench had been excavated it was decided to leave the services *in situ*, protected by a covering of pea gravel. The trench was completely dug through the backfill of two phases of pipe trenches.

The excavation was carried out on the churchyard slope to the SW of Seton Collegiate Church. The disparity in level between the churchyard and the adjacent field to the NW suggested that much of the churchyard heading towards the slope was made ground, possibly raised for the purposes of burial. A possible collapsed revetment encountered during the excavation may relate to this artificial landscaping.

A body piece from a green lustre glass vessel and a further shard of aquamarine lustre glass were recovered during the excavation.

The work was carried out on 16th August 2010.

2.0 DESCRIPTION AND INTERPRETATION

The trench (see Figure 2) was 0.4m wide x 0.45m deep and ran 7.60m down the SE side of the existing stairs serving the toilet block. The insertion of the stairs and services meant that the entire fill (to the required trench depth) was disturbed. This fill was comprised of (101), a compact mid-brown backfill of silt and clay containing moderate small to medium sized sub-angular stone inclusions. This layer was extremely heavily penetrated by roots. When located, the pipes were generally at a depth of 450mm. These consisted of a black flexible plastic electricity cable (102), a (probably redundant) section of copper water pipe (103), a capped copper water main (106) at the head of the slope, and a blue plastic live water pipe - only exposed near the top of the slope and probably buried beneath (102) further down slope. At a distance of 2m down slope from the head

of the stairs a concentration of un-dressed and un-jointed sandstone blocks (104) was encountered, sitting 350mm back from the SE edge of the stairs. While there was a possibility that this was simply tumble, its form suggested that it may have been a collapsed revetment related to the landscaping of the church yard for use as a burial ground. The large upper boulder was 350mm x 550mm x 350mm (LxWxD) and appeared to sit on a lower course of boulders. The stones sitting to the SW may have been part of the collapsed face.

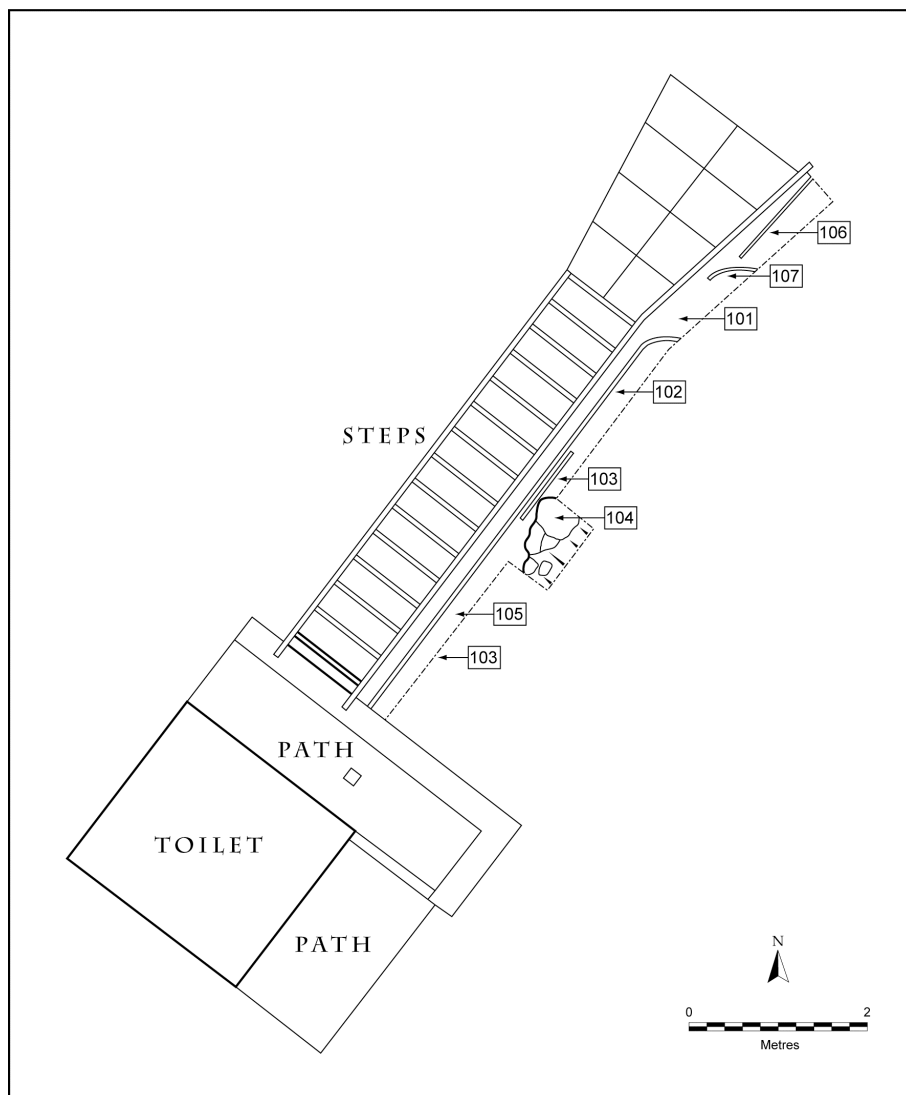


Figure 2: Post-excitation plan of the trench.

The revetment would have been at least 550mm thick (measured NE/SW) and used to hold back the artificial slope to the NE. This concentration of stone must have been encountered when the pipes were originally laid, since the pipes respected the position of the stone. The stone revetment and the pipe tracks sat on a layer of very compact mid-yellowish brown silty clay (105), though this was only exposed in a couple of places and as such could not be properly characterised. It may have been part of the landscaping of the slope, or perhaps a buried ground surface indicating the original form of the slope prior to landscaping.

After the trench was excavated and the pipes covered with pea gravel, the track was backfilled as required by the contractor. Small trenches were then excavated by the contractor within this backfill in order to shutter the concrete foundations for the handrail uprights.

Two pieces of lustre glass were found within the pipe trench backfill.

3.0 CONCLUSIONS

This archaeological watching brief provided an opportunity to characterise the deposits on the slope - largely disturbed by the insertion of the services and stairs. The discovery of a possible revetment adds to the story of the historical landscaping of the churchyard, although it was only examined partially as there was no remit to uncover it beyond the required width of the excavated track. A small section was examined which suggested that it may represent a collapsed revetment. Future groundbreaking works should be aware of the possibility that this structure could extend to the SE and NW of the stairs, and appropriate archaeological monitoring is therefore recommended.

4.0 APPENDIX 1: LIST OF SMALL FINDS

No.	Description	Type
001	1 x Green lustre glass vessel body shard.	Glass
002	1 x Aquamarine lustre glass shard.	Glass

5.0 APPENDIX 2: LIST OF CONTEXTS

No.	Description
101	Brown silt backfill of pipe trench.
102	Electricity cable.
103	Copper water pipe.
104	Possible collapsed revetment.
105	Yellowish brown silty clay below 104.
106	Capped water main.
107	Blue plastic water pipe.

6.0 APPENDIX 3: LIST OF DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHS

No.	Description	From	Date
01	Pre-excavation shot of toilet stairs and slope.	SE	16/8/2010
02	Pre-excavation shot of toilet stairs and slope.	SW	16/8/2010
03	Pre-excavation shot of toilet stairs and slope.	NE	16/8/2010
04	Pre-excavation shot of toilet stairs and slope.	NE	16/8/2010
05	Work in progress.	N	16/8/2010
06	Possible collapsed revetment.	W	16/8/2010
07	Possible collapsed revetment.	NW	16/8/2010
08	Possible collapsed revetment.	S	16/8/2010
09	Trench and possible collapsed revetment.	SW	16/8/2010
10	Possible collapsed revetment.	NW	16/8/2010
11	Electricity cable and possible collapsed revetment.	SW	16/8/2010
12	Electricity cable and possible collapsed revetment.	SW	16/8/2010
13	Post-excavation shot of trench.	NE	16/8/2010
14	Post-excavation shot of trench.	NE	16/8/2010
15	Toilet and churchyard from the church nave.	NE	16/8/2010
16	Difference in ground level between the churchyard and the adjacent field (to the NW).	NE	16/8/2010
17	Churchyard and overgrown slope.	S	16/8/2010
18	Trench with capped water main.	NE	16/8/2010
19	Trench with capped water main.	NW	16/8/2010

7.0 APPENDIX 4: LIST OF DRAWINGS

No.	Description	Scale	Date
001	Plan of Trench 1	1:50	16/8/2010