

Discovery and Excavation in Scotland

Updated on 15/06/2007

LOCAL AUTHORITY:	Argyll & Bute
PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME:	Dunstaffnage Castle
PROJECT CODE:	HSCO-90120-2016-01
PARISH:	Kilmore & Kilbride
NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR:	Paul Fox
NAME OF ORGANISATION:	Kirkdale Archaeology
TYPE(S) OF PROJECT:	Watching brief
NMRS NO(S):	NM83SE 2
SITE/MONUMENT TYPE(S):	Defence; Residential/ Castle
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NGR (2 letters, 8 or 10 figures)	NM 8821 3437
START DATE (this season)	21 September 2016
END DATE (this season)	21 September 2016
PREVIOUS WORK (incl. <i>DES</i> ref.)	
MAIN (NARRATIVE) DESCRIPTION: (May include information from other fields)	A watching brief was maintained during the excavation of a trench to house a new sign indicating the direction of the disabled car park in the grounds of the castle. Although nothing of particular archaeological interest was uncovered, the installation of the sign has helped to establish the nature of a sequence of changes which have affected this particular area of the castle grounds since the mid-19 th century. It again shows that the area immediately outwith the scheduled area still retains high archaeological potential.
PROPOSED FUTURE WORK:	
CAPTION(S) FOR ILLUSTRS:	
SPONSOR OR FUNDING BODY:	Historic Environment Scotland
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ARCHIVE LOCATION (intended/deposited)	Archive to be deposited with Historic Environment Scotland

HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT SCOTLAND
PROPERTIES IN CARE
MINOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORKS 2016/2017

Dunstaffnage Castle • Watching Brief • September 2016

HES PIC Index Number: 90120

SITE: Dunstaffnage Castle, near Oban.

N.G.R.: NM 882 334

DESCRIPTION: Archaeological watching brief during the excavation of a trench to house a new sign indicating the direction of the disabled car park in the grounds of the castle.

PROJECT CODE: HSCO-90120-2016-01

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INTRODUCTION

Under the terms of its PIC call-off contract with Historic Environment Scotland, Kirkdale Archaeology was asked to carry out an archaeological watching brief at Dunstaffnage Castle near Oban during the installation of new signage indicating the direction of the disabled parking area within the castle grounds. Although outwith the Scheduled Area, the proposed sign location was still in the immediate environs of the castle and, therefore potentially archaeologically sensitive (Fig. 1).

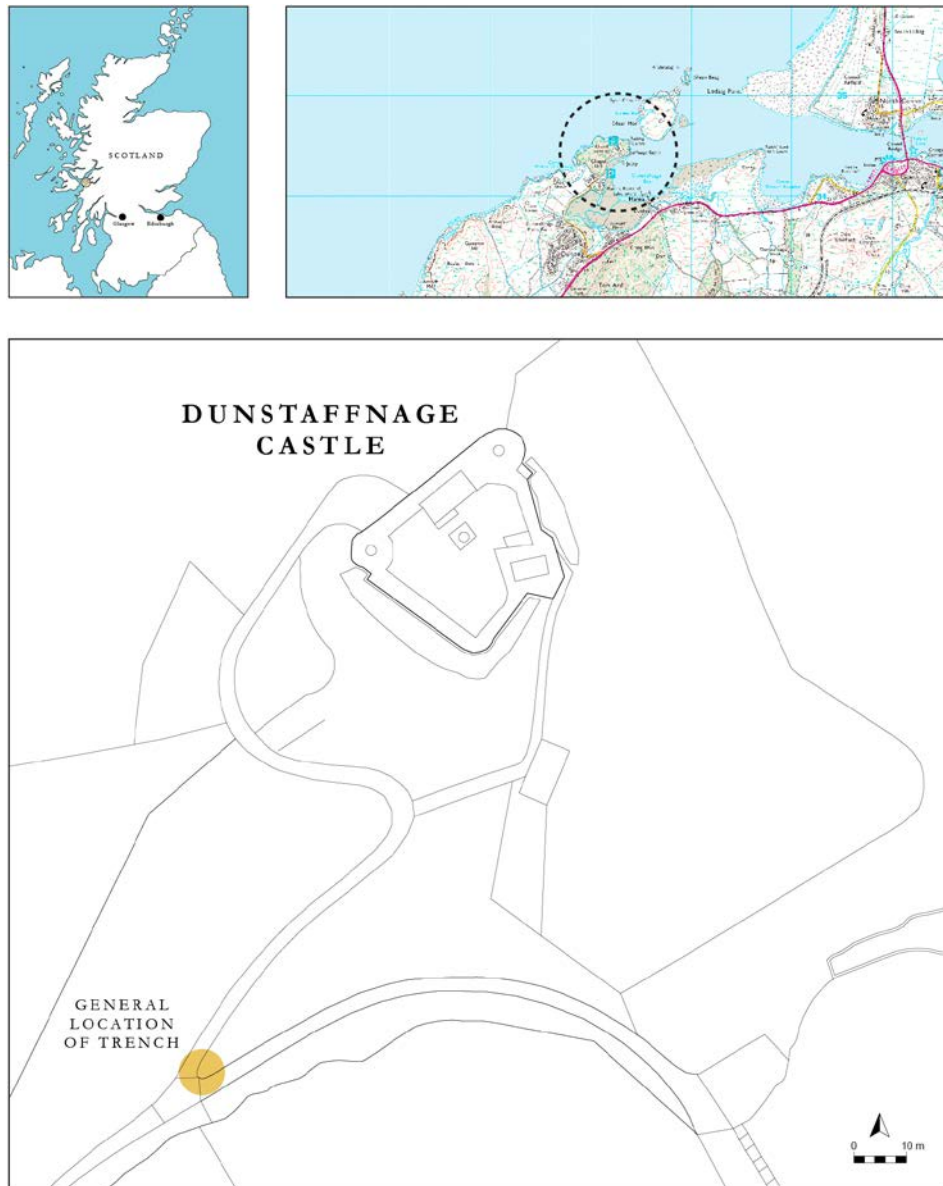


Figure 1: Plan showing the general location of the trench.

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Excavation was undertaken by hand, by Historic Environment Scotland staff under archaeological supervision, and the work took place on 21st September, 2016.

DESCRIPTION

The trench was intended to measure 45cm (L) x 45cm (W) x 45cm (D), set out in order to provide the signage with an orientation which was most favourable when viewed from an approaching vehicle.

The turf and topsoil **101** were removed to a depth of 12cm where they set over a 5 – 7cm thick bedding layer of water-rolled pebbles **102** used to provide drainage for the turf. In the north-west portion of the trench, at a depth of 17cm, a flat piece of concrete form-work **104** was uncovered with a right-angled edge to the south-east, which was 13cm deep to the base of the trench. Towards the south-east end of the trench, this concrete form-work had been truncated by an angled cut **105**. This showed that the WWII rail sidings in this area had their steel rails salvaged before they were backfilled. The concrete **104** held the rail in place. In order for the rail to have been removed, the south-east side of the concrete was broken out via cut **105**. The empty space was then backfilled with broken-out concrete and silt **103**, and the area was landscaped using a drainage layer of pebbles **102** with turf and topsoil **101** above. On the road, the sidings were backfilled with concrete after the steel rails were salvaged.

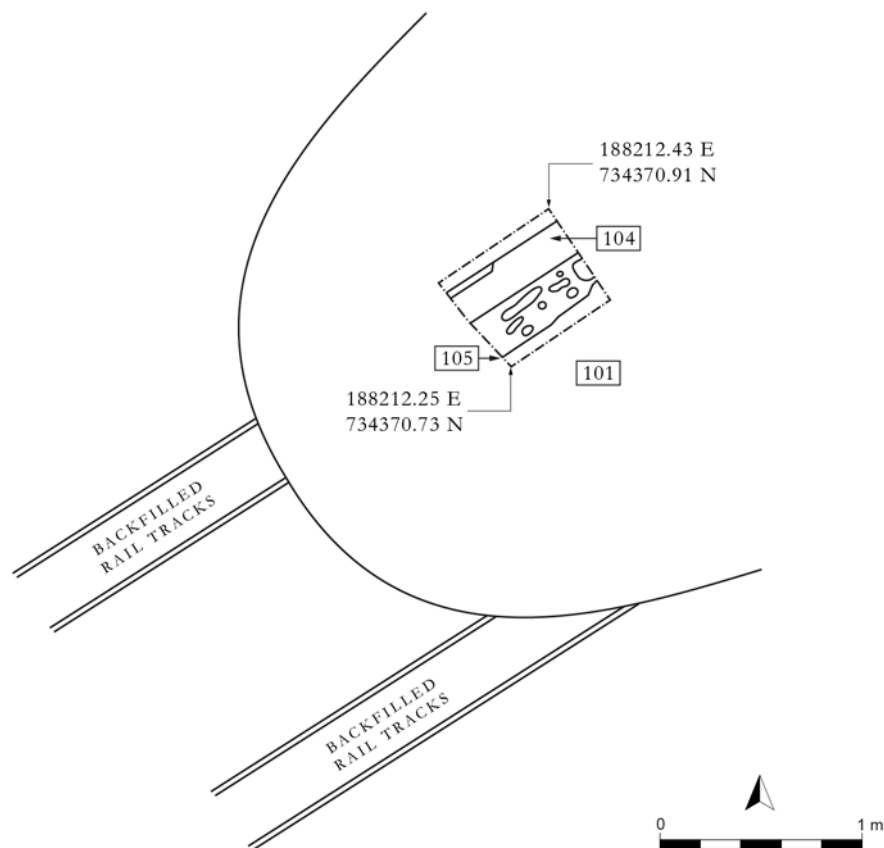


Figure 2: Post-excavation trench plan.

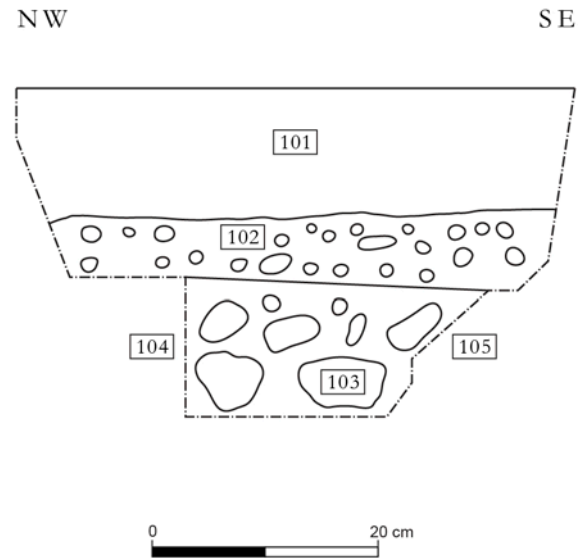


Figure 3: SW-facing section.

As there was a considerable amount of *in-situ* concrete, the MCU decided to build up the signage base rather than excavating it to the preferred depth. This meant that the WWII siding remained in place.



Plate 1: Post-excitation view of the trench.



Plate 2: Backfilled rail tracks in the vicinity of the trench (left) and *in-situ* steel rails at the pier (right).

CONCLUSIONS

Although nothing of particular archaeological interest was uncovered, the installation of the signage has helped to establish a sequence of changes which have affected this particular area of the castle grounds since the mid-19th century. It again shows that the area immediately outwith the Scheduled Area still retains high archaeological potential.

LIST OF CONTEXTS

Context	Description
101	Turf and mid-brown silty topsoil.
102	Layer of drainage pebbles below 101.
103	Mixed backfill of broken concrete and silt.
104	<i>In-situ</i> concrete from work related to the railway siding.
105	Cut through 104 in order to extract steel rails.

LIST OF DRAWINGS

No.	Type	Description	Scale
1	Plan	Post-excavation.	1:20
2	Section	SW-facing.	1:10

LIST OF DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHS

No.	Description	From	Date
1	Proposed location of new signage.	SW	21/09/2016
2	Post-excavation shot of trench showing concrete form-work.	NW	21/09/2016
3	Location shot of trench.	W	21/09/2016
4	Post-excavation shot of trench.	SW	21/09/2016
5	Post-excavation shot of trench.	NE	21/09/2016
6	SW-facing section of trench.	SW	21/09/2016
7	Backfilled railway sidings running up to the trench.	SW	21/09/2016
8	Remains of the rail sidings with <i>in-situ</i> steel rails at the pier.	N	21/09/2016