

Discovery and Excavation in Scotland

Updated on 15/06/2007

LOCAL AUTHORITY:	Stirling
PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME:	Stirling Castle: French Spur Battery
PROJECT CODE:	HSCO-90291-2015-02
PARISH:	Stirling
NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR:	Paul Fox
NAME OF ORGANISATION:	Kirkdale Archaeology
TYPE(S) OF PROJECT:	Watching brief
NMRS NO(S):	NS79SE 6.07
SITE/MONUMENT TYPE(S):	Castle
SIGNIFICANT FINDS:	None
NGR (2 letters, 8 or 10 figures)	NS 7909 9403
START DATE (this season)	16 December 2015
END DATE (this season)	16 December 2015
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 shallow (max. c. 200mm) trench to allow the installation of a new handrail at the lower level of the French Spur. Stone slabs were revealed, bedded on material which yielded 19 th -century artefacts, and it was clear that later remedial works have also been carried out.
PROPOSED FUTURE WORK:	
CAPTION(S) FOR ILLUSTRS:	
SPONSOR OR FUNDING BODY:	Historic Environment Scotland
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**HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT SCOTLAND
PROPERTIES IN CARE
MINOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORKS 2015/2016**

Stirling Castle • Monitoring • December 2015

HES PIC Index Number: 90291

SITE: Stirling Castle, Stirling.

N.G.R.: NS 7909 9403

DESCRIPTION: Watching brief during the excavation of a trench related to the replacement of a worn railing on the lower level of the French Spur.

PROJECT CODE: HSCO-90291-2015-02

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INTRODUCTION

Under the terms of its PIC call-off contract with Historic Scotland, Kirkdale Archaeology was asked to carry out an archaeological brief during the excavation of a trench intended to aid the emplacement of a new railing in the lower level of the French Spur at Stirling Castle (Fig.1).

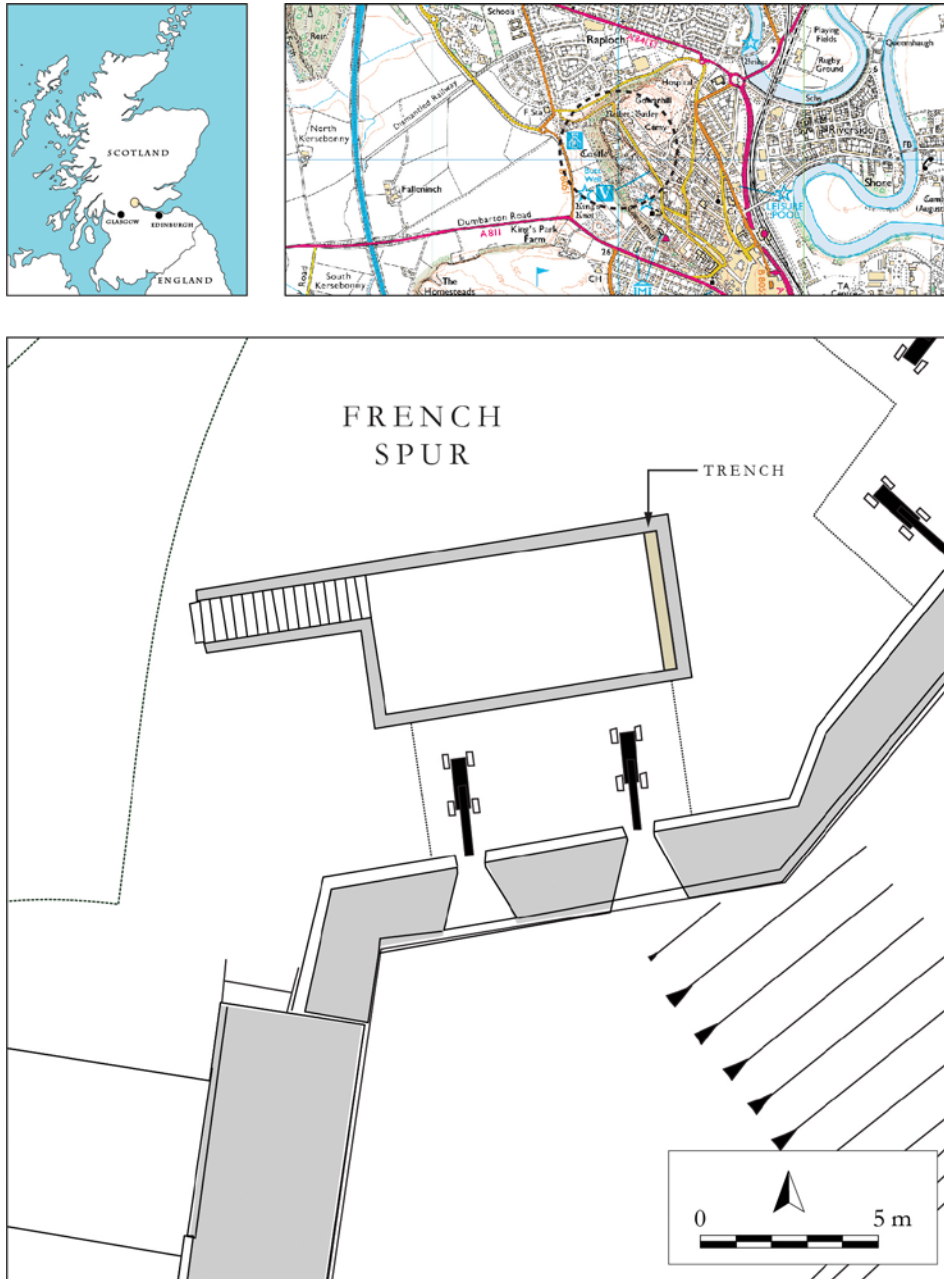


Figure 1: Plan showing the location of the trench.

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The trench was excavated manually by the MCU under archaeological supervision, and the work was carried out on the 16th December, 2015.

DESCRIPTION

The gravel **101** (c.2cm – 5cm deep) across the full length of the trench (3.80m N/S x 0.34m E/W) was removed. This cleared onto a moderately compact layer of mid-greyish brown silty sand **102**, c.5cm thick. This had been used as bedding layer for the gravel above and sat over a moderately compact mixed layer **103** of gravelly/silty clay with numerous small-to-large angular pieces of basalt, flecked with charcoal and containing modern pottery, broken pieces of machine-made red brick, glass and a pipe stem. To the east, this provided the bedding for the slabbed floor of the arched niche containing the well.

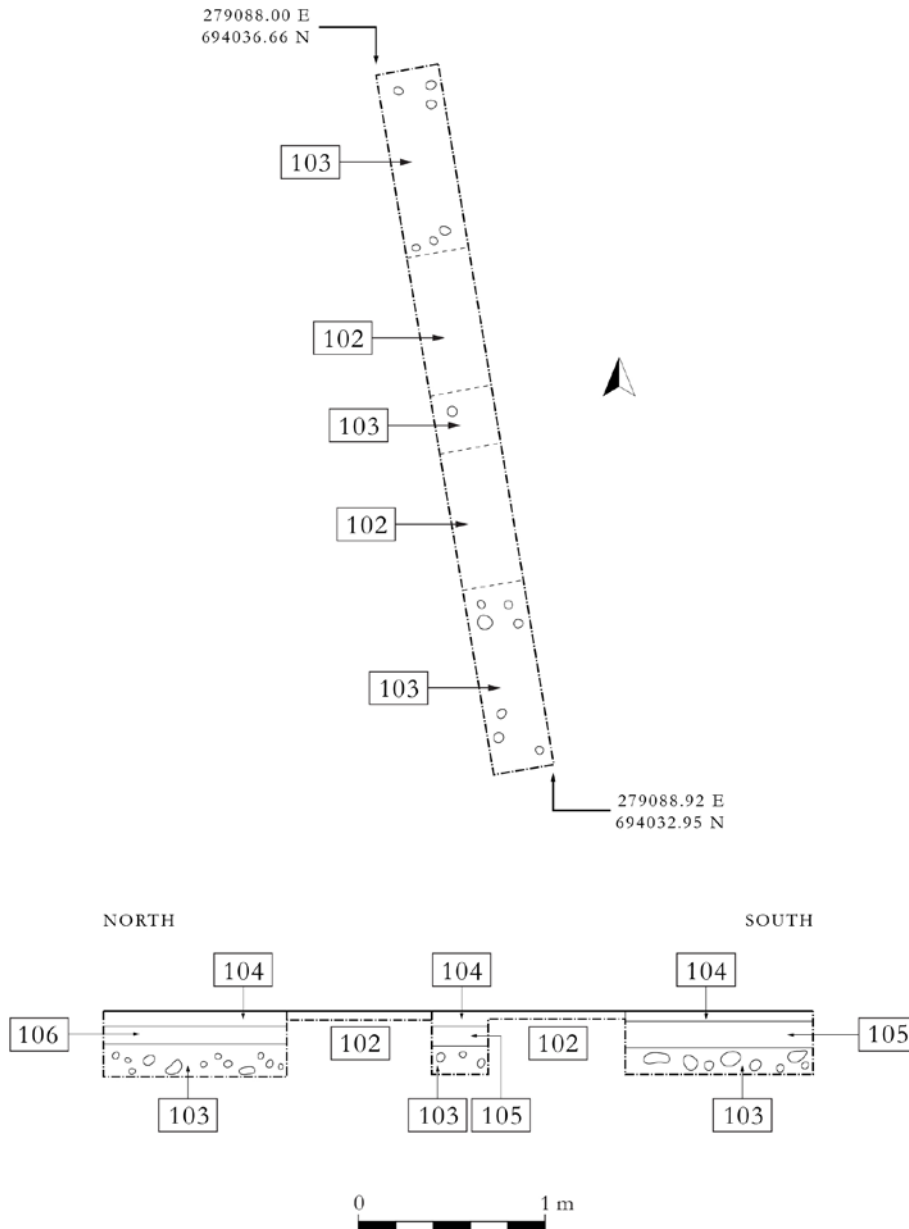


Figure 2: Post-excavation plan (top) and W-facing section.

To the south and centrally, the thin ≈ 6 cm high stone slabs **104** were bedded on thicker stone slabs **105**, ≈ 15 cm high.

To the north, the thin ≈ 8 cm high stone slabs **104** were bedded on a rubble base **105**, ≈ 12 cm high. All of the slabs were bedded on material which yielded 19th century artefacts. It is likely that the gravel floor and slabbed bed of the recess must therefore have been remodelled or re-laid in the 19th century.



Plate 1: 19th century pipe stamped with 'GL' (for Glasgow) found in layer 103.

CONCLUSIONS

Nothing of particular interest was found during these works although the required depth of excavation was minimal. The area is interesting as there are at least two clearly defined periods of building and remodelling, and it is clear that later remedial works have also been carried out. As the area is defined as being of high archaeological potential, it is recommended that future works be similarly accompanied by an archaeological watching brief.



Plate 2: Post-excavation view of the central part of the trench (contexts 102, 103, 104 and 105).

A D D E N D U M

It was noted during the works that the French Spur carries an armorial on its external eastern corner, just above the lower buttressing. The stone is broken in its lower portion (possibly due to the insertion of the buttress). The armorial consists of a central *fleur-de-lis* flanked in its upper portion by two *cinquefoils* (flowers with five petals). It could be that this is a conjoining of the *fleur-de-lis* of Mary of Guise with the two upper and single lower (now missing) *cinquefoils* of the Hamiltons. Mary of Guise's master of works from 1543 – 79 was John Hamilton of Millburn, and he would have been responsible for the construction of the French Spur.



Plate 2: The armorial on the eastern corner of the French Spur.

LIST OF CONTEXTS

Trench	Context	Description
1	101	Gravel spread on the floor of the lower level.
1	102	Moderately compact layer of mid-greyish brown silty sand.
1	103	Compact mixed layer of gravelly/silty clay with numerous small to large angular pieces of basalt, flecked with charcoal and containing modern pottery, broken pieces of machine-made red brick, glass and a pipe stem.
1	104	Slabs of the eastern recess.
1	105	Bedding slabs under the central and southern portions of 104.
1	106	Voided rubble bedding the northern portion of 104.

LIST OF DRAWINGS

No.	Trench	Type	Description	Scale
1	1	Plan	Post-excavation.	1:20
2	1	Section	W-facing.	1:20

LIST OF DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHS

No.	Description	From	Date
1	Pre-excavation shot, looking at the recess.	W	16/12/2015
2	Pre-excavation shot, looking at the recess.	W	16/12/2015
3	Pre-excavation shot, looking at the recess.	SW	16/12/2015
4	General view of the French Spur.	W	16/12/2015
5	General view of the French Spur.	E	16/12/2015
6	Post-excavation shot of the south end of the trench.	N	16/12/2015
7	Post-excavation shot of the south end of the trench.	W	16/12/2015
8	Modern finds from 103.	N/A	16/12/2015
9	Post-excavation shot of the northern end of the trench.	W	16/12/2015
10	Post-excavation shot of the northern end of the trench.	W	16/12/2015
11	Post-excavation shot of the northern end of the trench.	S	16/12/2015
12	Post-excavation shot of the central portion of the trench.	W	16/12/2015
13	Post-excavation shot of the trench.	SW	16/12/2015
14	Armorial on the eastern corner of the French Spur.	E	16/12/2015
15	Location shot for the armorial.	E	16/12/2015