

Discovery and Excavation in Scotland

Updated on 15/06/2007

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| LOCAL AUTHORITY: | Dumfries And Galloway |
| PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME: | Whithorn Priory |
| PROJECT CODE: | HSCO-90314-2016-01 |
| PARISH: | Whithorn |
| NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR: | David Murray |
| NAME OF ORGANISATION: | Kirkdale Archaeology |
| TYPE(S) OF PROJECT: | Watching brief |
| NMRS NO(S): | NX44SW 5 |
| SITE/MONUMENT TYPE(S): | Priory |
| SIGNIFICANT FINDS: | |
| NGR (2 letters, 8 or 10 figures) | NX 4447 4028 |
| 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 small trench to allow the installation of a new information panel. Below the topsoil, abundant stone and mortar fragments seen probably represent demolition debris. Considering the ruinous state of the nearby Priory this is unsurprising, and the deposits seen are likely to have been further disturbed/redeposited during grave digging. |
| 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**

Whithorn Priory • Watching Brief • September 2016

HES PIC Index Number: 90314

SITE: Whithorn Priory, Whithorn.

N.G.R.: NX 4447 4028

DESCRIPTION: Archaeological watching brief during the excavation of a trench to house a new interpretation board, replacing an existing one a few meters to the north.

PROJECT CODE: HSCO-90314-2016-01

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OCTOBER 2016

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 within Whithorn Priory's graveyard during the installation of new signage. A tarmac covered road enters this graveyard from its south side, leading to the current parish church (which lies to the north-east of the priory ruins), and the (signage) trench was located just west of this route, at a point immediately north of where a gravel path feeds off the road to the west (Fig. 1).

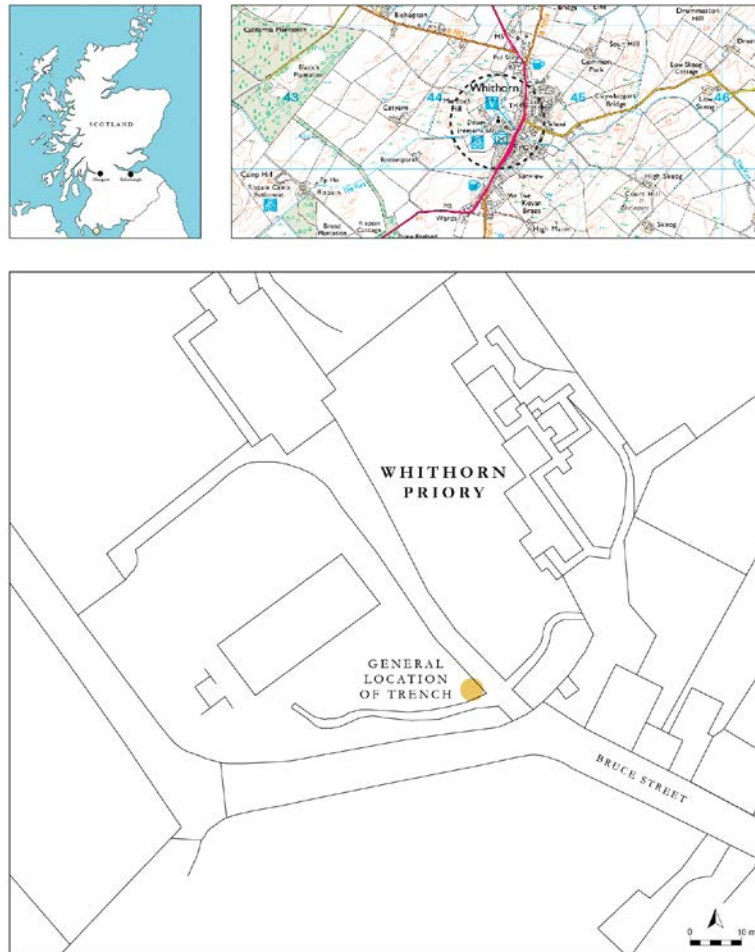


Figure 1: Plan showing the general location of the trench.

Mapping © Crown copyright. All rights reserved 2016. Licence number 100036933.

The graveyard today is under grass, with a few mature trees scattered around, and grave slabs, mostly of nineteenth and early twentieth century date, arranged throughout. More recent burials are located in the cemetery extension to the east.

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 opened up 0.3m west of the road, and measured 0.85m N/S x 0.65m E/W and reached a maximum depth of 0.1m. All excavation was carried out by hand, with the soil removed in bags.

The topsoil **100** consisted of fine loose dark brown silt and proved to be 0.1m thick. Below this only the top of **101** was excavated. This was a loose mix of greywacke stone, rounded pebbles, mortar and brown silt.

No finds were noted.

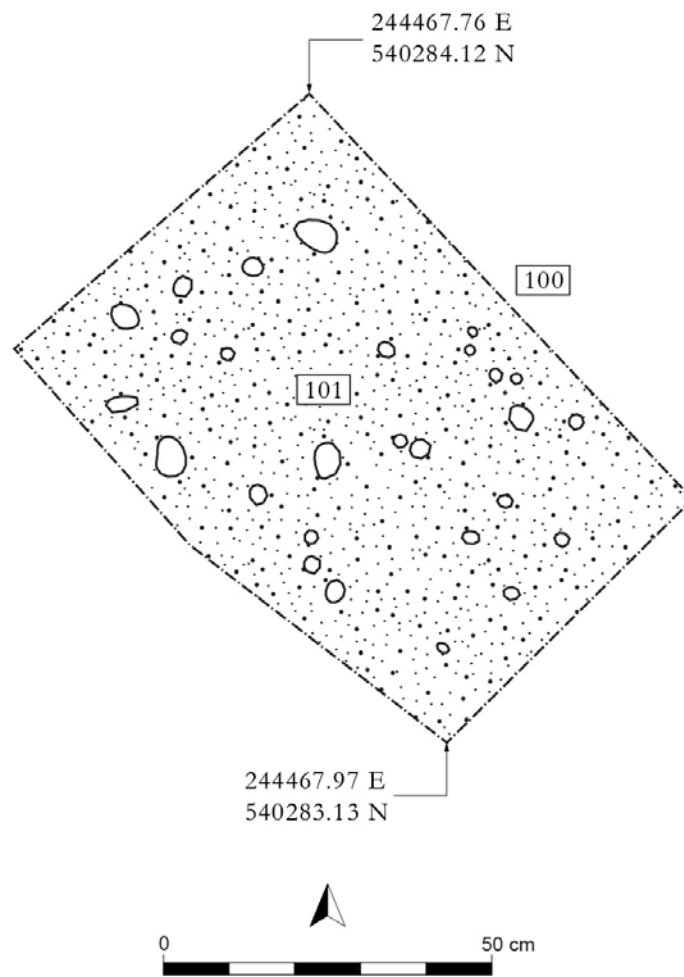


Figure 2: Post-excitation plan of the trench.



Plate 1: Post-excavation view of the trench.

CONCLUSIONS

This limited scale disturbance exposed nothing of archaeological significance. Below the topsoil, deposit **101** was noticeably full of stone and mortar suggestive of demolition debris. Considering the ruinous state of the post-Reformation Priory this is unsurprising, and the deposits seen are likely to have been further disturbed during episodes of grave digging.

LIST OF CONTEXTS

| Context | Description |
|---------|--|
| 100 | Dark brown fine silt, topsoil. |
| 101 | Loose mix of stone, mortar and fine silt, partially excavated. |

LIST OF DRAWINGS

| No. | Type | Description | Scale |
|-----|------|------------------|-------|
| 1 | Plan | Location. | 1:100 |
| 2 | Plan | Post-excavation. | 1:20 |

LIST OF DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHS

| No. | Description | From | Date |
|-----|---|------|------------|
| 1 | Area of trench, pre-excavation. | S | 21/09/2016 |
| 2 | Area of trench, pre-excavation, showing churches in the background. | S | 21/09/2016 |
| 3 | Trench as finished. | SW | 21/09/2016 |
| 4 | Trench as finished. | SW | 21/09/2016 |