

Discovery and Excavation in Scotland

Updated on 15/06/2007

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| LOCAL AUTHORITY: | Aberdeenshire |
| PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME: | Huntly Castle |
| PROJECT CODE: | HSCO-90165-2017-01 |
| PARISH: | Huntly |
| NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR: | Paul Fox |
| NAME OF ORGANISATION: | Kirkdale Archaeology |
| TYPE(S) OF PROJECT: | Watching Brief |
| NMRS NO(S): | NJ54SW 9 |
| SITE/MONUMENT TYPE(S): | Castle |
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| NGR (2 letters, 8 or 10 figures) | Centred c. NJ 5322 4082 |
| START DATE (this season) | 20 February 2017 |
| END DATE (this season) | 20 February 2017 |
| PREVIOUS WORK (incl. <i>DES</i> ref.) | |
| MAIN (NARRATIVE) DESCRIPTION: (May include information from other fields) | <p>An archaeological watching brief was maintained during the excavation of a trench to house a new water treatment system serving the public toilets and mess facilities. The main NW/SE run of the trench was excavated by machine and consisted of a track 0.5m wide x 30m long x 0.6m (on average) deep, running between the service covers south-west of the HES mess building to the road.</p> <p>The excavations were notable for the archaeological sterility of the trench. No artefacts (modern or otherwise) were recovered and no horizons of archaeological interest were noted. This was despite the fact that the remains of the outer earthworks of the castle and its complex are in close proximity.</p> |
| 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 2016/2017

Huntly Castle • Monitoring • February 2017

HS PIC Index Number: 90165 (PIC247)

SITE: Huntly Castle, Aberdeenshire.

N.G.R.: Centred c. NJ 5322 4082

DESCRIPTION: Archaeological watching brief during the excavation of a trench to house a new water treatment system serving the public toilets and mess facilities.

PROJECT CODE: HSCO-90165-2017-01

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MARCH 2017

INTRODUCTION

Under the terms of its PIC call-off contract with Historic Environment Scotland, Kirkdale Archaeology were asked to carry out an archaeological watching brief during water treatment upgrade works at Huntly Castle, Aberdeenshire which required the excavation of an existing pipe trench serving the public toilets and mess facilities to the north-east of the castle (Fig. 1).

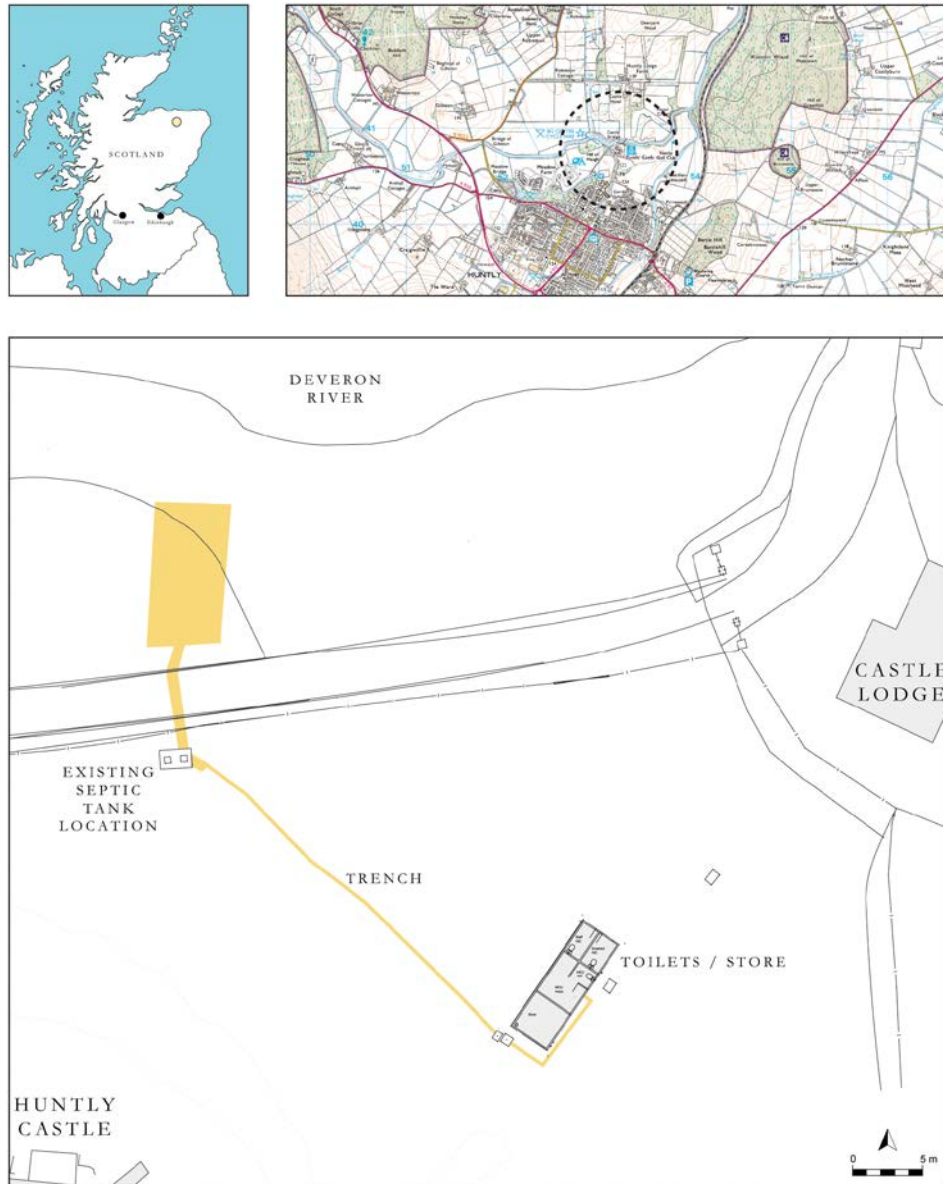


Figure 1: Plan showing the location of the trench.

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The existing pipe ran into a chamber forming the septic tank. The pipe was thought to have been of the fire clay variety and was to be replaced by a modern plastic version. In the event it was discovered that the in situ pipe was plastic and therefore did not have to be moved. The original scheme also specified that the existing chamber for the septic tank would be re-used with a new pipe track to be cut from its western side and thereafter across the existing road into a new style of septic tank which would sit a short distance from the Deveron River. As the works proceeded, this scheme became obsolete and the track across the road was amended¹ to take a more direct route bypassing the existing chamber forming the septic tank.

The area on the north side of the road had been previously test-trenched in December 2014 when six trenches revealed no deposits of archaeological significance. The north side of the road is also outwith the designated area of the SAM guardianship. The area on the south side of the road sits in close proximity to the existing upstanding remains of the later castle buildings as well as the original earthworks associated with the motte and bailey castle.

The work was carried out during February, 2017.

DESCRIPTION

The main NW/SE run of the trench was excavated by machine and consisted of a track 0.50m wide x 30m long x 0.60m (on average) deep, running between the service covers south-west of the MCU mess to the road. The trench exposed, but did not remove, the existing plastic pipe; as such there was little to note of interest in the sections, although photographs were taken to record the work.



Plate 1: A typical SW-facing section of the pipe trench with pipe at the base.

¹ The change in plan (i.e. the bypassing of the existing septic tank) which saw the new route running directly across the road was agreed and approved in a conversation between the HES architect and the HES inspectorate.

The section (see Plate 1) generally consisted of a moderately compact layer of mid-brown silty topsoil **101**, $\approx 50\text{cm}$ thick and heavily cut through by tree roots. This bedded on a greyish-brown clay subsoil **102**, exposed to $\approx 15\text{cm}$ thick. These layers had been truncated in order to install the in situ plastic pipe **103**.

The hand-excavated portion of trench (see Plate 2) to the south-west and south-east of the mess hut consisted of a trench cut with a right-angled corner. The trench measured 2.8m NW/SE x 6.05m NE/SW x 0.30m deep to the top of the pipe. The section consisted this time of a moderately compact layer of mid-brown silty topsoil **101**, at least $\approx 30\text{cm}$ thick and heavily cut through by tree roots. This layer had been truncated in order to install the in situ plastic pipe **103**.



Plate 2: Looking north-east at the hand-excavated portion of the pipe trench.

The works required a section of the road to be cut out (see Plate 3). The resultant trench measured $\approx 3.10\text{m}$ N/S x 1m wide x 0.75m deep. The section consisted of the existing road surface **104**, with a sub-base of Type 2 stone **105**, with finings within a cut **106** $\approx 35\text{cm}$ deep which had truncated the greyish-brown clay subsoil **102**, exposed to $\approx 40\text{cm}$ thick.



Plate 3: The trench as excavated through the road.

The excavation was then widened to create the necessary space for the new septic tank (see Plate 4). The trench measured 4.70m E/W x 8.80m N/S x (up to) 2.66m deep against the southern section. The section consisted of a moderately compact layer of mid-brown silty topsoil **101**, c.60cm thick heavily cut through by tree roots. This bedded on a greyish/brown clay subsoil **102**, c.50cm thick. The natural below was composed of a compact layer (c.1.1m thick, on average) of yellowish/grey sandy clay **107** containing large sub-rounded boulders which cleared in disparate patches onto the bedrock **108** below.



Plate 4: The excavation for the septic tank.

CONCLUSIONS

The excavations were notable for the archaeological sterility of the trench. No artefacts (old or modern) were recovered and no horizons of archaeological interest were noted. This was despite the fact that the remains of the outer earthworks of the castle and its complex are in close proximity.

LIST OF CONTEXTS

| Context | Description |
|---------|--|
| 101 | Moderately compact layer of mid-brown silty topsoil. |
| 102 | Greyish/brown clay subsoil. |
| 103 | Plastic pipe. |
| 104 | Existing road surface. |
| 105 | Sub-base of Type 2 stone for 104. |
| 106 | Cut through 102 for 105 and 104. |
| 107 | Yellowish/grey sandy clay containing large sub-rounded boulders. |
| 108 | Bedrock cropping below 107. |

LIST OF DRAWINGS

| No. | Type | Description | Scale |
|-----|------|-----------------------------|-------|
| 1 | Plan | Post-excavation route plan. | 1:250 |

LIST OF DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHS

| No. | Description | From | Date |
|-----|---|------|-----------|
| 1 | Pre-excavation shot. | SE | 20/2/2017 |
| 2 | Pre-excavation shot. | E | 20/2/2017 |
| 3 | Ceramic pipe uncovered. | W | 20/2/2017 |
| 4 | Work in progress. | SE | 20/2/2017 |
| 5 | SW-facing section of pipe trench. | SW | 20/2/2017 |
| 6 | SW-facing section of pipe trench. | SW | 20/2/2017 |
| 7 | SW-facing section of pipe trench. | SW | 20/2/2017 |
| 8 | Pipe trench in progress. | NW | 20/2/2017 |
| 9 | Pipe trench in progress. | NW | 20/2/2017 |
| 10 | Excavation of septic tank trench in progress. | NW | 21/2/2017 |
| 11 | Excavation of septic tank trench in progress. | S | 21/2/2017 |
| 12 | Pipe trench in progress. | SE | 21/2/2017 |
| 13 | Excavation through road. | SW | 21/2/2017 |
| 14 | Excavation through road. | NW | 21/2/2017 |
| 15 | Excavation through road. | S | 21/2/2017 |
| 16 | Post-excavation shot of septic tank trench. | N | 21/2/2017 |
| 18 | Post-excavation shot of septic tank trench. | N | 21/2/2017 |
| 17 | Post-excavation shot of W-facing section of septic tank trench. | W | 21/2/2017 |
| 19 | Post-excavation shot of E-facing section of septic tank trench. | E | 21/2/2017 |
| 20 | Post-excavation shot of E-facing section of septic tank trench. | E | 21/2/2017 |
| 21 | Hand excavation to south-east of MCU mess hut. | SW | 21/2/2017 |
| 22 | Hand excavation to south-west of MCU mess hut. | SE | 21/2/2017 |