

Discovery and Excavation in Scotland

Updated on 15/06/2007

LOCAL AUTHORITY:	Stirling
PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME:	Stirling Castle: Queen Anne Garden
PROJECT CODE:	HSCO-90291-2017-03
PARISH:	Stirling
NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR:	David Murray
NAME OF ORGANISATION:	Kirkdale Archaeology
TYPE(S) OF PROJECT:	Watching brief
NMRS NO(S):	NS79SE 6; NS79SE 6.19 (Queen Anne Garden: Sundial)
SITE/MONUMENT TYPE(S):	Castle
SIGNIFICANT FINDS:	None
NGR (2 letters, 8 or 10 figures)	NS 7902 9396 & NS 7903 9402
START DATE (this season)	21 February 2017
END DATE (this season)	24 February 2017
PREVIOUS WORK (incl. <i>DES</i> ref.)	
MAIN (NARRATIVE) DESCRIPTION: (May include information from other fields)	<p>A watching brief was maintained, and excavation undertaken, during small scale excavation work within the Queen Anne Garden. This is a level area, with a raised terrace at its north end occupied by grass and flower beds.</p> <p>The excavation in the south-west corner of the garden (NS 7902 9396), showed evidence for bedding material for cobbles, with no dating evidence beyond the fact that they post-date the stairs, which are presumed to be early 18th-century.</p> <p>Examination of the masonry surrounding the five test pits (NS 7903 9402) suggests that none of it dates to the 16th-century construction of the nearby wall and tower, and is unlikely to predate the late 17th-century siege, and may in fact reflect even later reworking.</p>
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 ENVIRONEMNT SCOTLAND
PROPERTIES IN CARE
MINOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORKS 2016/2017

Stirling Castle • Excavation • February 2017

HES PIC Index Number: 90291 (PIC: 111)

SITE: Stirling Castle, Stirling.

N.G.R.: NS 7902 9396 & NS 7903 9402

DESCRIPTION: Excavation of one trench and five test pits ahead of the emplacement of new hand rails in the Queen Anne Garden.

PROJECT CODE: HSCO-90291-2017-03

CONTENTS:

Introduction.....	1
Description.....	2
Conclusions.....	9
List of Contexts.....	10
List of Drawings.....	11
List of Digital Photographs.....	11



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INTRODUCTION

Under the terms of its PIC call-off contract with Historic Environment Scotland, Kirkdale Archaeology was asked to monitor, and assist in, small scale excavation work within Stirling Castle. The project involved work in two discrete areas within the area of the castle known as the Queen Anne Garden (Fig. 1). This is a flat area, with a raised terrace at its north end today occupied by grass and flower beds.

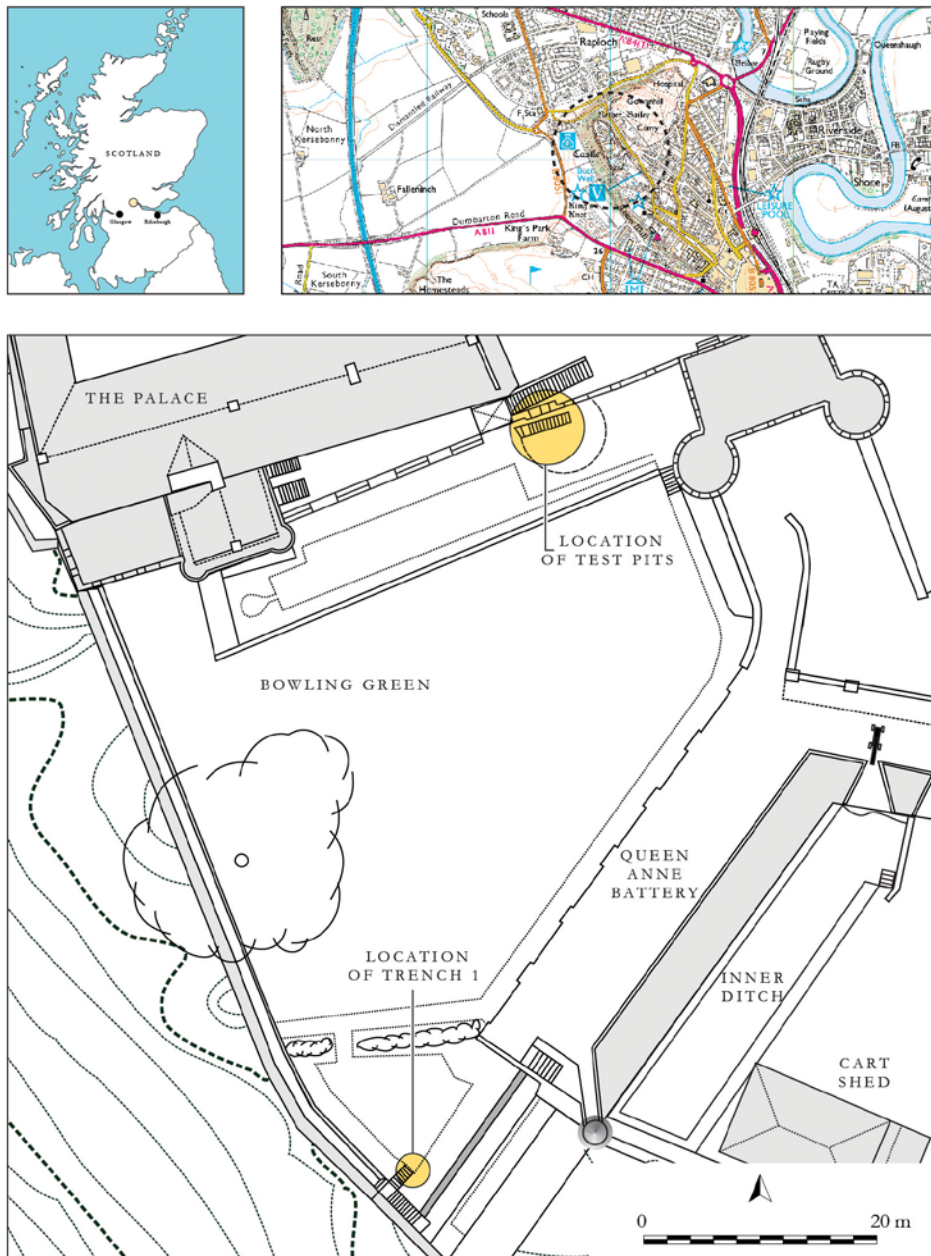


Figure 1: Plan showing the general locations of the test pits and trench.

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The gardens are bounded to the north by the early 16th century forework, thought to represent the southern limit of the medieval castle, and to the east by the ramp approaching the gatehouse to this forework. To the south and west its limits are the early-18th century outer defences. To the south this is a thick wall, with caponiers buried within it, while to the west there is a large drop, down to the exterior of the castle. Below this cliff there is a steep hillside sloping away to the west.

Both excavations related to the installation of handrails beside stairs, the first (Trench 1) was located in the south-west corner of the garden, where a flight of stone steps feeds off the outer (western) castle rampart down to the garden. The other excavation involved five small holes (test pits 1 – 5) on the top of the ruined drum shaped tower, which currently serves as an access route connecting the gardens with the inner castle to the north.

The intention was to monitor both jobs in a single visit (21/2/17), however there was a requirement to enlarge Test Pit 5, so a second visit was required (24/2/17).

All work involved manual excavation, in a combination of watching brief and archaeological excavation.

DESCRIPTION

Trench 1

Trench 1 was intended to take a post at the base of the stairs for a handrail, the other elements of which would be drilled into the stones of the steps. This flight of stairs runs away from the western rampart of the Queen Anne Garden at a right angle, giving them an orientation close to SW/NE. The area at the base of the steps is grassed, while cobbles to the immediate south-east.

The plan was to excavate at the south-eastern edge of the base of the stairway, through the grass. On lifting the turf it became apparent that there was a large flat dolerite slab (**004**) in this area, which ran below the basal step. As a consequence of this, the trench was moved to the south-east, necessitating the removal of a small area of cobbles **001**.

The trench ended up measuring 0.55m NW/SE x 0.43m NE/SW, with slab **004** projecting some 0.10m further to the south-east than the line of the steps. It was 0.33m deep. Cobbles **001** proved to be set in 002, a thin (0.05m thick) layer of fine reddish pink sand.

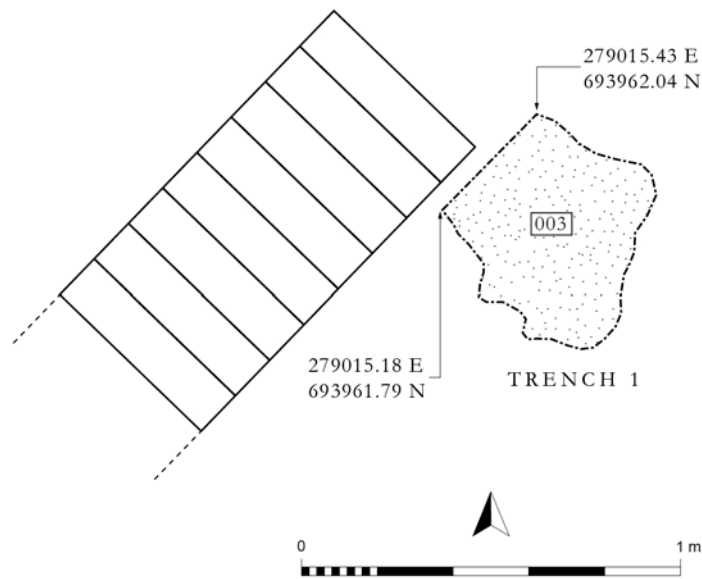


Figure 2: Trench 1, post-excitation plan.

Context **002** sealed **003**, a loose pale grey sandy silt very rich in mortar, slate and stone. Some 0.13m of **003** was removed, without reaching its base or recovering any finds. Context **003** was banked up against the south-east face of slab **004**, which was at least 0.25m thick.

The second area of excavation was located towards the north-east corner of the Queen Anne Gardens, in a raised strip that runs along much of the north edge of the gardens. Projecting into this bed is the base of a drum tower, thought to be part of the early-16th century defensive line that marks the north limit of the garden.

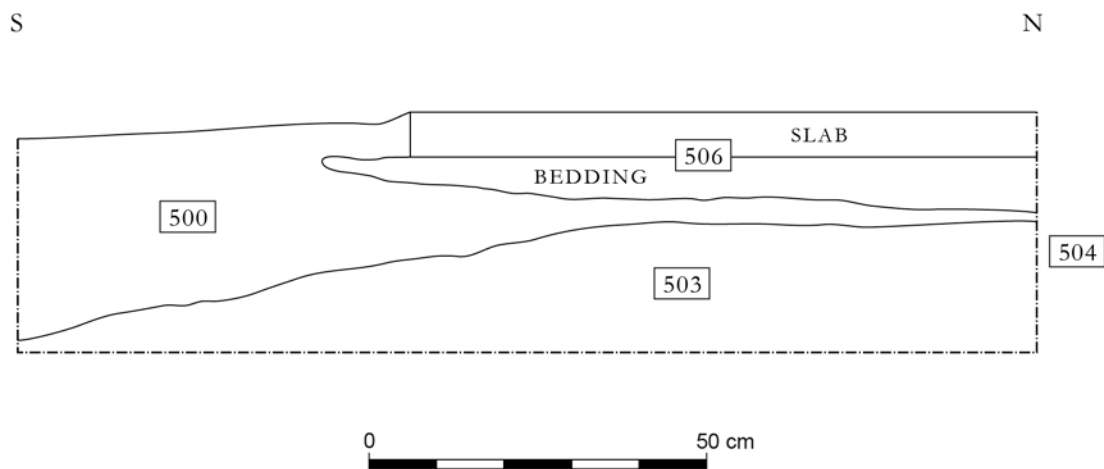


Figure 4: Trench 1, E-facing section.

Only the base of this tower survives, although standing up to 2.75m above the external ground surface. While the base of this structure appears original, it has clearly seen much rebuilding, with a set of stairs built into its north-west corner (that are surely inserted). These stairs connect the Queen Anne Garden with a walkway along the top of the tower, which in turn runs through a door in the forework wall to the north. The rest of the top of this tower is currently occupied by a flower bed.

The forework wall is clearly rebuilt at this point, changing alignment and style of build (although possibly reflecting an original alignment). This rebuild, as well as the ruinous state of the tower itself, are thought to reflect the damage caused during a late-17th century siege of the castle. It is possible that the post-siege repairs are of more than one phase, with the wall in the area of the door thickening at its base, apparently added to the masonry behind. This suggests that the doorway may be an alteration to the original repair work.



Plate 1: Trench 1, as finished.

Test Pits 1–5

Test pits 1-4 measured 0.40m square, while Test Pit 5 ended up being 1.5m N/S x 0.40m E/W. All were ~0.35m deep.

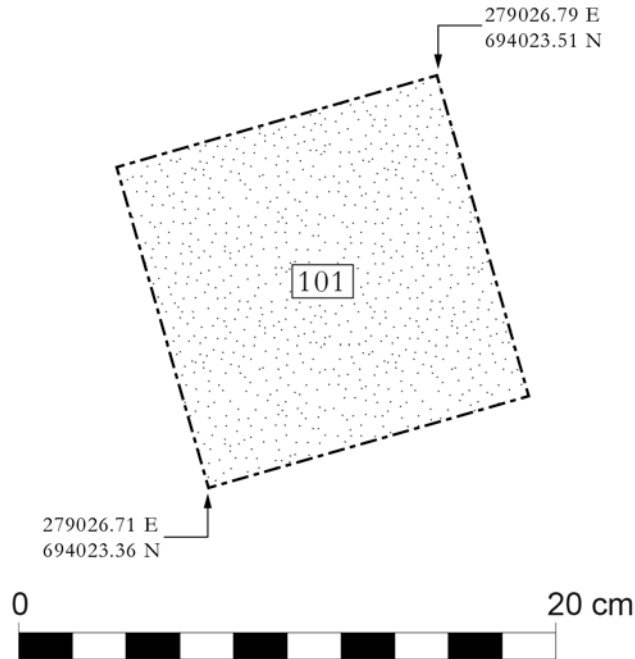


Figure 5: Test Pit 1, post-excavation plan.

A similar sequence was found in all areas excavated. The top ~0.30m consisted of dark brown slightly clayey silt rich in stone and mortar. All then bottomed onto a layer comprising loose pale grey silt rich in mortar and rubble, whose base was not reached.

Both of these soil deposits post-dated all the exposed walls, namely the wall supporting the south side of the pathway (for all test pits), and the (rebuilt) forework wall (504) and top of the north-east end of the tower's outer wall (505) for Test Pit 5. Little was seen of any of these, but the forework wall to the north was well faced, unlike the other two walls. The outer wall of the tower (at least at its top) was built against the forework wall.

A surprisingly rich finds assemblage was recovered from these relatively small trenches. The upper deposit of both Test Pit 4 (400) and Test Pit 5 (500) produced some material, with 500 producing a mix of green glazed post-medieval pottery and more recent white china.

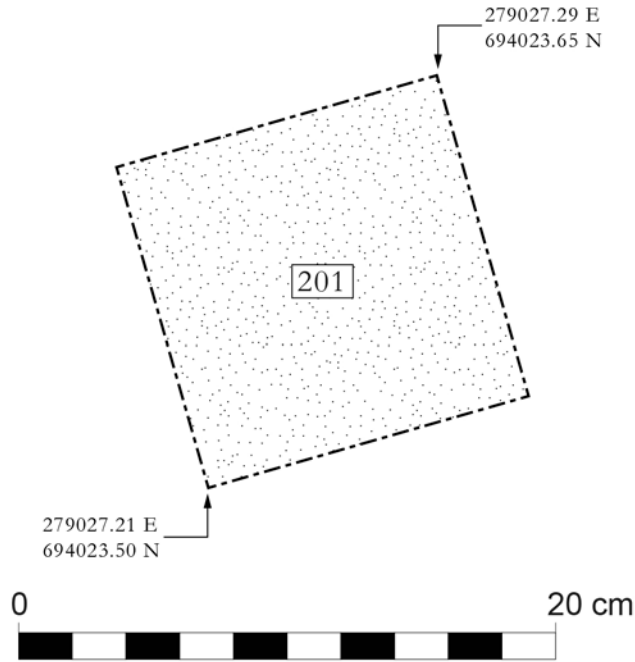


Figure 6: Test Pit 2, post-excavation plan.

Test pits 3 (**301**), 4 (**401**) and 5 (**501**) produced a number of green glazed sherds (often large fragments) and fragments of bottle glass, as well as some bone, an iron nail, a handmade brick fragment and a slate. The nine sherds from **301** may all be from a single pot, or from a large part of a pot smashed in situ.

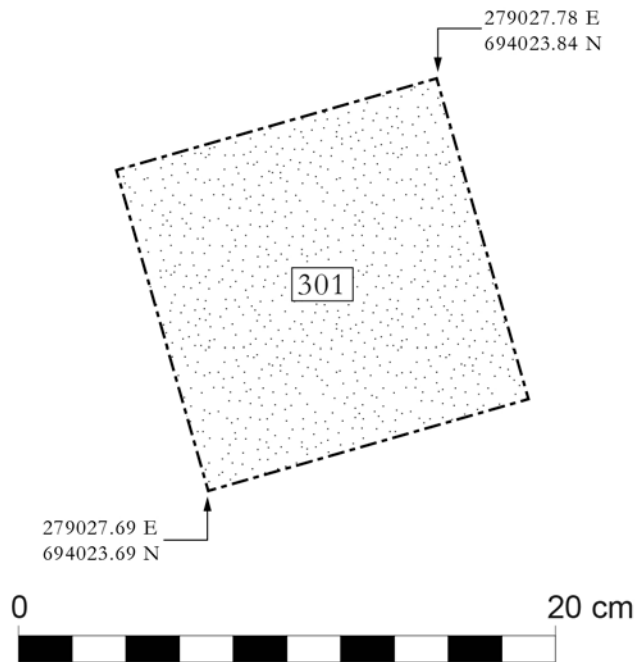


Figure 7: Test Pit 3, post-excavation plan.



Plate 2: View of the excavated test pits.

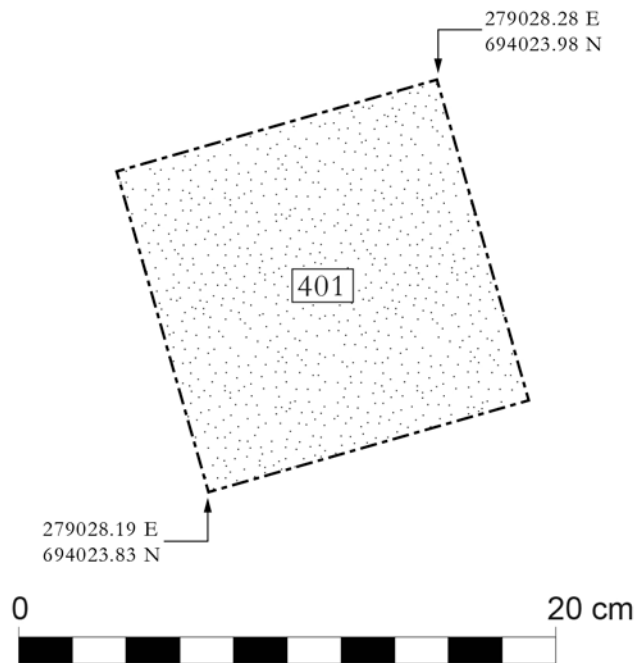


Figure 8: Test Pit 4, post-excitation plan.

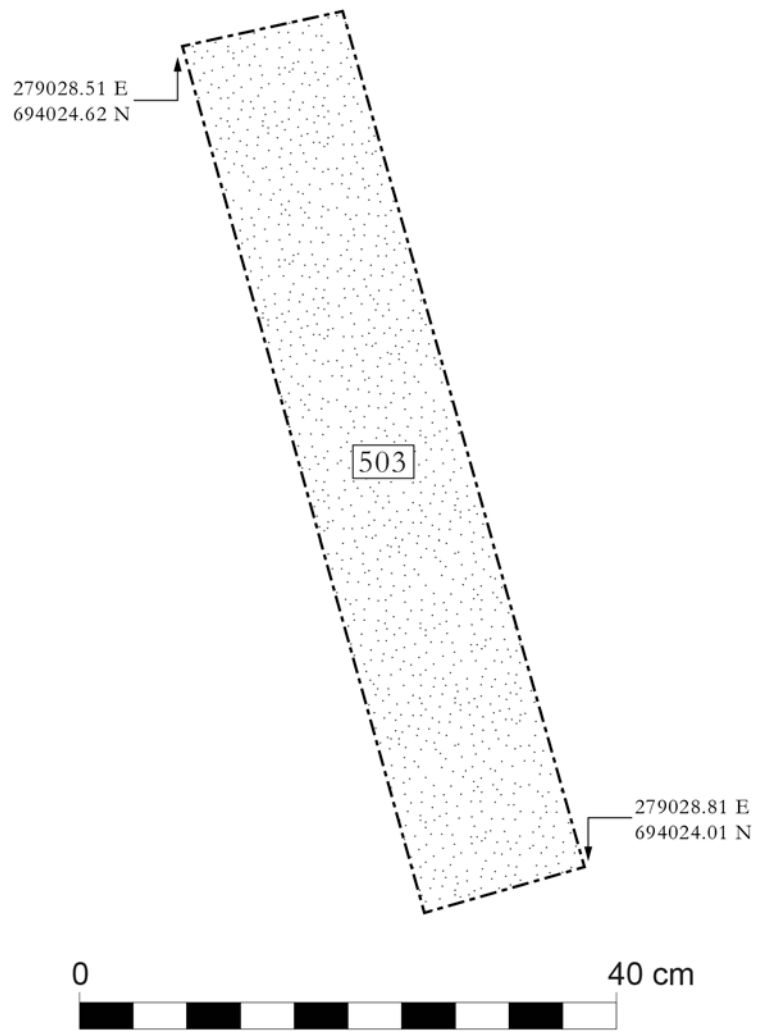


Figure 9: Test Pit 5, post-excavation plan.

CONCLUSIONS

The excavation in the south-west corner of the Queen Anne Garden, Trench 1, showed evidence for likely bedding material for the cobbles, with no dating evidence beyond the fact that they post-date the stairs, which are presumed to be early-18th century.

The stairs were seen to sit on a large foundation slab at their base. As this is wider than the steps, it presumably was not part of them, either being hidden, or being part of the contemporary ground level.

Observations of the masonry surrounding the five test pits suggests that none of it dates to the 16th century construction of the wall or the tower, and is unlikely to predate the late-17th century siege, and may in fact reflect even later reworking.

The upper soil deposit found in all trenches represents the disturbed soil of the flower bed, although clearly earlier artefacts are present in this material. The lower deposit appears to be a loose rubble and artefact rich infill, likely to date to the introduction of the stair into the tower and door through the forework wall.

While no specialist examination of the finds has taken place, they might be suggested to be of 18th century date. It is possible that the original late-17th century work involved filling the gap in the forework, with the tower left as a ruin, and only formalised later.

LIST OF CONTEXTS

Trench 1

Context	Description
001	Dolerite cobbles in pale grey cement.
002	Clean fine reddish pink sand below 001.
003	Loose pale grey sandy silt rich in mortar, slate and stone.
004	Large dolerite block running under the stairs.

Test Pit 1

Context	Description
100	Dark grey-black silt, rich in mortar and small stones.
101	Loose pale grey silt very rich in mortar and rubble.
102	Wall along south side of path.

Test Pit 2

Context	Description
200	Dark grey-black silt, rich in mortar and small stones.
201	Loose pale grey silt very rich in mortar and rubble.
202	Wall along south side of path.

Test Pit 3

Context	Description
300	Dark grey-black silt, rich in mortar and small stones.
301	Loose pale grey silt very rich in mortar and rubble.
302	Wall along south side of path.

Test Pit 4

Context	Description
400	Dark grey-black silt, rich in mortar and small stones.
401	Loose pale grey silt rich in mortar and rubble.
402	Wall along south side of path.

Test Pit 5

Context	Description
500	Dark grey-black silt, rich in mortar and small stones.
501	Electric cable and fill of 502.
502	N/S cut.
503	Loose pale grey silt very rich in mortar and rubble.
504	Forework wall to north of Test Pit 5.
505	Tower wall to east of Test Pit 5.
506	Slabs and sand bedding to west of Test Pit 5.

LIST OF DRAWINGS

No.	Type	Description	Scale
001	Section	Test Pit 5, E-facing.	1:10

LIST OF DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHS

No.	Description	From	Date
1	Trench 1, slab 004 appearing under bottom step, cobbles 001.	S	21/02/2017
2	Trench 1, slab 004 appearing under bottom step, cobbles 001.	SE	21/02/2017
3	Test pits 1–5, general pre-excavation shots showing top of tower.	NE	21/02/2017
4	Test pits 1–5, general pre-excavation shots showing top of tower.	E	21/02/2017
5	Test pits 1–5, general pre-excavation shot of tower.	S	21/02/2017
6	Test pits 1–5, general pre-excavation shot of tower.	S	21/02/2017
7	Test pits 1–5, detail of access on west side of the tower.	SW	21/02/2017
8	Test pits 1–5, detail of access on west side of the tower.	W	21/02/2017
9	Test pits 1–5, general view of tower, SW side.	SW	21/02/2017
10	Test pits 1–5 as finished.	W	21/02/2017
11	Test Pit 1 as finished.	W	21/02/2017
12	Test Pit 1 as finished, W-facing section.	W	21/02/2017
13	Test Pit 2 as finished.	W	21/02/2017
14	Test Pit 2 as finished, W-facing section.	W	21/02/2017
15	Test Pit 3 as finished.	W	21/02/2017
16	Test Pit 3 as finished, W-facing section.	W	21/02/2017
17	Test Pit 4 as finished.	W	21/02/2017
18	Test Pit 4 as finished, W-facing section.	W	21/02/2017
19	Test Pit 5 as finished.	W	21/02/2017
20	Test Pit 5 as finished, W-facing section (wall 505).	W	21/02/2017
21	Test Pit 5 as finished, E-facing section.	W	21/02/2017
22	Trench 1 as finished.	E	21/02/2017
23	Trench 1 as finished.	E	21/02/2017
24	Trench 1, E-facing section.	E	21/02/2017
25	Trench 1, S-facing section (slab 004).	S	21/02/2017
26	Trench 1, S-facing section (slab 004).	S	21/02/2017
27	Extended Test Pit 5 as finished.	S	24/02/2017
28	Extended Test Pit 5 as finished.	E	24/02/2017
29	Extended Test Pit 5 as finished, S-facing section (wall 504).	S	24/02/2017
30	Extended Test Pit 5 as finished, E-facing section.	E	24/02/2017
31	Extended Test Pit 5 as finished, E-facing section, detail of north end.	E	24/02/2017
32	Extended Test Pit 5 as finished, E-facing section, detail of south end.	E	24/02/2017
33	Extended Test Pit 5 as finished, W-facing section (wall 505).	W	24/02/2017
34	Extended Test Pit 5 as finished, W-facing section (wall 505), detail of north end.	W	24/02/2017
35	Extended Test Pit 5 as finished, W-facing section (wall 505), detail of south end.	W	24/02/2017
36	Test Pit 4, glass shards in situ in 401.	E	24/02/2017

No.	Description	From	Date
37	Extended Test Pit 4 as finished.	E	24/02/2017
38	Extended Test Pit 4 as finished, E-facing section.	E	24/02/2017
39	Extended Test Pit 4 as finished, S-facing section.	S	24/02/2017
40	Test pits 1–5; general view of tower	SW	24/02/2017
41	Test pits 1–5; general view of tower	SW	24/02/2017
42	Test pits 1–5; general view of tower	SW	24/02/2017
43	Test pits 1–5; door through wall to north of Prince's Tower.	S	24/02/2017
44	Test pits 1–5; door through wall to north of Prince's Tower.	SE	24/02/2017
45	Test pits 1–5; door through wall to north of Prince's Tower.	NE	24/02/2017
46	Test pits 1–5; door through wall to north of Prince's Tower.	NE	24/02/2017
47	Assorted finds.	N/A	24/02/2017