

Discovery and Excavation in Scotland

Updated on 15/06/2007

LOCAL AUTHORITY:	Perth and Kinross
PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME:	Elcho Castle
PROJECT CODE:	HSCO-90140-2014-01
PARISH:	Rhynd
NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR:	Paul Fox
NAME OF ORGANISATION:	Kirkdale Archaeology
TYPE(S) OF PROJECT:	Watching Brief
NMRS NO(S):	NO12SE 11
SITE/MONUMENT TYPE(S):	Tower House
SIGNIFICANT FINDS:	None
NGR (2 letters, 8 or 10 figures)	NO 1641 2103
START DATE (this season)	7 May 2014
END DATE (this season)	7 May 2014
PREVIOUS WORK (incl. <i>DES</i> ref.)	
MAIN (NARRATIVE) DESCRIPTION: (May include information from other fields)	An archaeological watching brief was undertaken during the excavation of a trench to house a new information board. The trench was located at the NE end of the visitor car park. Nothing of archaeological significance was revealed.
PROPOSED FUTURE WORK:	
CAPTION(S) FOR ILLUSTRS:	
SPONSOR OR FUNDING BODY:	Historic Scotland
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ARCHIVE LOCATION (intended/deposited)	Archive to be deposited in NMRS

**HISTORIC SCOTLAND PROPERTIES IN CARE
MINOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORKS 2012**

Elcho Castle: Watching Brief, May 2012

HS PIC Index Number: 90140

SITE: Elcho Castle, Perthshire

N.G.R.: NO 1641 2103

DESCRIPTION: Watching Brief during the excavation of a trench to house new signage on the NE side of the car park

PROJECT CODE: HSCO-90140-2012-01

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JUNE 2012

INTRODUCTION

Under the terms of its Properties-In-Care (PIC) call-off contract with Historic Scotland, Kirkdale Archaeology was asked to undertake an archaeological watching brief at Elcho Castle, near Rhynd, in Perthshire (Fig.1) during the excavation of a trench to house a new information board. The trench was located at the NE end of the visitor car park.

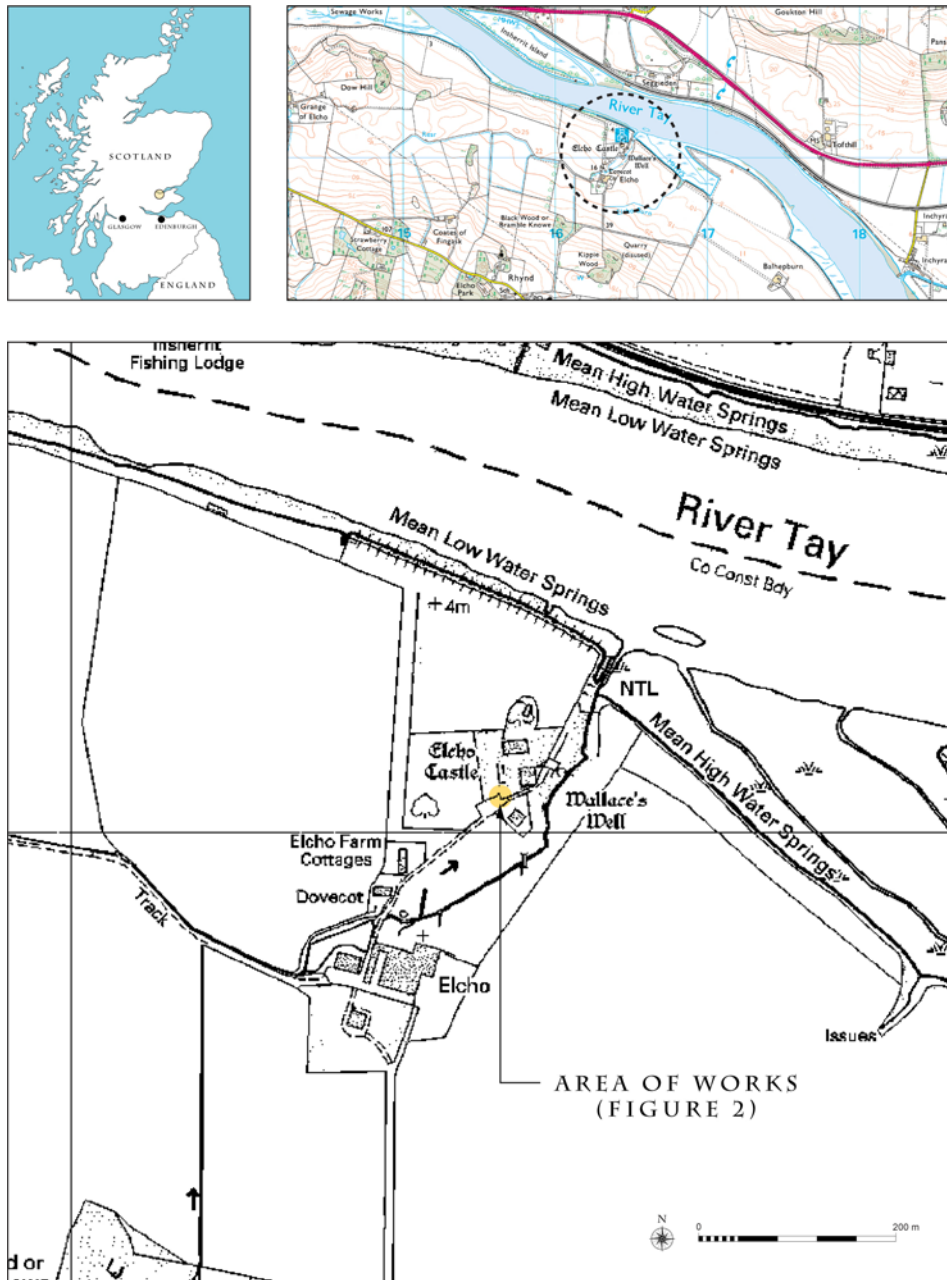


Figure 1: Plan showing the location of Elcho Castle, and the area of works.
Inset Nos. 2 and 3 © Crown copyright. All rights reserved 2012. Licence number 100036933.

Elcho Castle, in its current form, was built by the Wemyss family in the 1560s, although there is structural evidence internally to suggest that elements were absorbed from a pre-existing structure (for example, the W wall of the kitchen continued further to the S, and was clawed-back as part of the new layout).

The main tower featured a courtyard to the S with circular towers at the SW and SE angles – the SE tower still partially remains. It has been suggested that a small *castletoun* may have existed outside the courtyard to the S. This being the case, despite the fact that the new sign was to be located some distance from the tower itself, there remained the possibility that details of some of the enclosing and surrounding features could have been exposed.

The excavations were carried out manually by Historic Scotland staff under archaeological supervision, and the work took place on 25th May 2012.

D E S C R I P T I O N

The trench measured 0.6m NW/SE x 0.68m NE/SW x 0.45m deep. The car park hard standing consisted of a layer of pea gravel 101, some 0.04m thick, overlying a 0.1m thick layer of greyish Type 2 stone with finings (102). Below this layer was a layer of compact orange-brown clay (103), up to 0.25m thick to the NE. This rose to the SW to meet the upper portion of the layer below, a stony grey silty clay (104), flecked with charcoal. The presence of charcoal and the general re-deposited feel of the layers suggested that both 103 and 104 were earlier landscaping layers, possibly associated with levelling of the ground surrounding the castle courtyard. No artefacts were retrieved that may have helped to indicate a date for this levelling.

The excavation reached the required depth of 0.45m without encountering any further archaeological deposits.

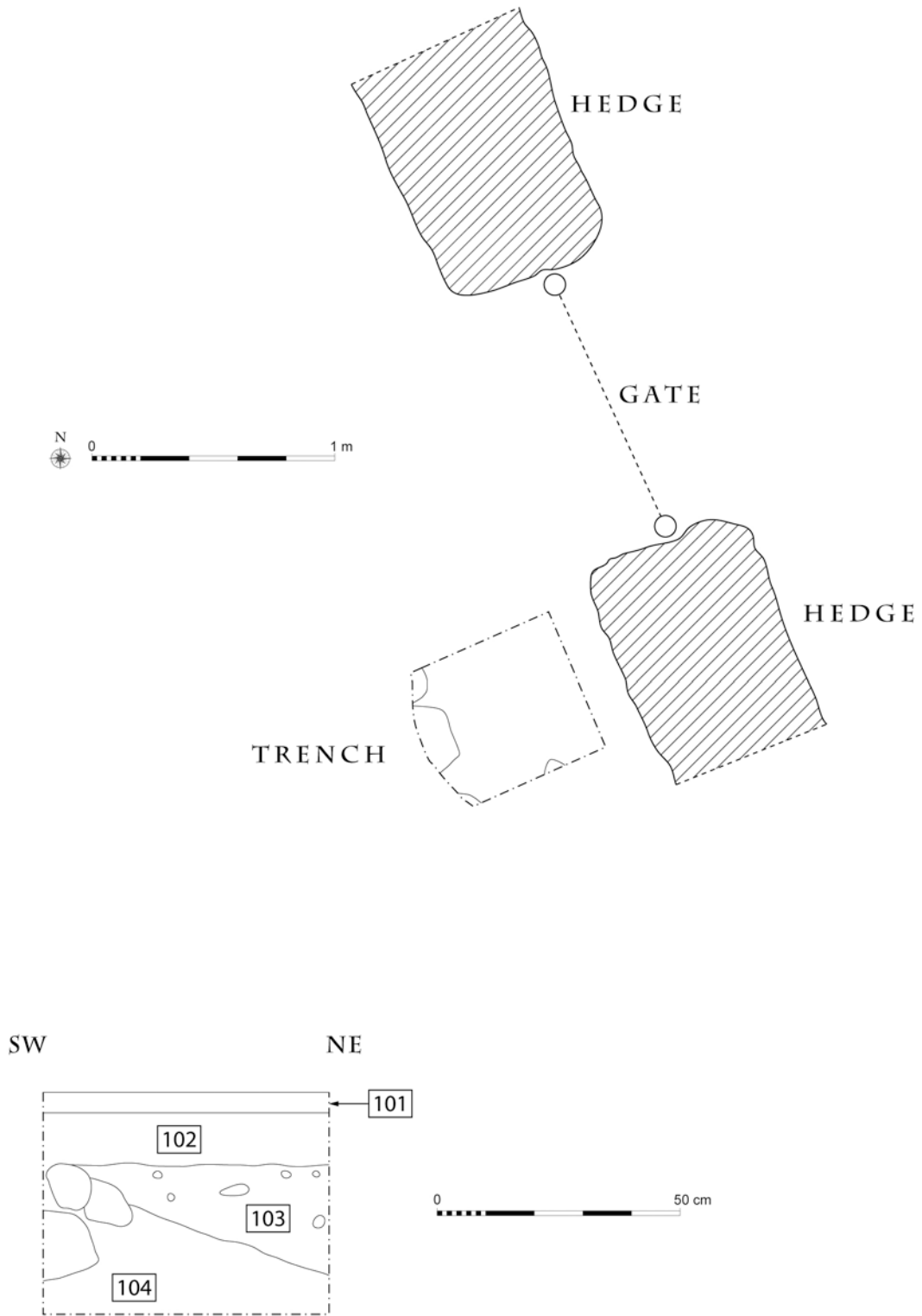


Figure 2: Post-excitation plan (top) and SE-facing section

CONCLUSIONS

Although nothing of archaeological interest was uncovered during this particular period of work, the presence of outworks and the possibility of buried external structures suggests that any further ground-breaking works should be accompanied by an archaeological watching brief.

ADDITIONAL OBSERVATIONS

A previously unrecognised carved, re-used stone, was noted on the E side of the S chimney of the entrance tower (Figs. 3 and 4). The design bore certain similarities to the *fleur-de-lis* decoration on the 16th Century plasterwork within the tower house, but was not identical. The sandstone block on which it sat was a substantial piece of masonry, and it is therefore unlikely to be part of an armorial, and was originally probably part of a larger decorative scheme. Tool marks were visible on the NE corner, where the design had been clawed-back.



Figure 3: The carved stone



Figure 4: The carved stone (close-up)

LIST OF CONTEXTS

No.	Description
101	Pea gravel
102	Crushed stone Type 2
103	Compact layer of orange-brown silty clay
104	Compact landscaping layer of mid-grey silty clay flecked with charcoal containing angular pieces of stone

LIST OF DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHS

No.	Description	From	Date
01	Pre-excavation shot	SW	25/5/2012
02	Pre-excavation shot	S	25/5/2012
03	Signboard showing reconstruction drawing	N/A	25/5/2012
04	Signboard showing reconstruction drawing	N/A	25/5/2012
05	Layer 103 exposed	SW	25/5/2012
06	Layer 103 exposed	S	25/5/2012
07	Work in progress	S	25/5/2012
08	Layer 104 exposed	SE	25/5/2012
09	Post-excavation shot of the SE-facing section	SE	25/5/2012
10	Post-excavation shot of trench	SW	25/5/2012
11	Post-excavation shot of trench	S	25/5/2012
12	The S front of Elcho Castle	S	25/5/2012
13	Re-used carved stone on the NE angle of the S chimney of the entrance tower	E	25/5/2012
14	Re-used carved stone on the NE angle of the S chimney of the entrance tower	E	25/5/2012

LIST OF DRAWINGS

No.	Type	Description	Scale
01	Plan	Post-excavation plan of trench with its location	1:50
02	Section	SE-facing section in the trench	1:10