

Discovery and Excavation in Scotland

Updated on 15/06/2007

LOCAL AUTHORITY:	Moray
PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME:	Elgin Cathedral
PROJECT CODE:	HSCO-90142-2012-01
PARISH:	Elgin
NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR:	Paul Fox
NAME OF ORGANISATION:	Kirkdale Archaeology
TYPE(S) OF PROJECT:	Watching Brief
NMRS NO(S):	NJ26SW 1
SITE/MONUMENT TYPE(S):	Cathedral, Burial Ground
SIGNIFICANT FINDS:	None
NGR (2 letters, 8 or 10 figures)	NJ 2212 6304
START DATE (this season)	21 June 2012
END DATE (this season)	21 June 2012
PREVIOUS WORK (incl. <i>DES</i> ref.)	
MAIN (NARRATIVE) DESCRIPTION: (May include information from other fields)	<p>An archaeological watching brief was undertaken during the excavation of a trench to house a new information board. The trench was located on the east side of the path running north from the door of the ticket office on an area of made-up ground. Flanking both sides of the path is the burial ground. There was concern that disarticulated human bone or possibly even <i>in-situ</i> skeletal remains could be encountered during the excavation.</p> <p>The ground was shown to be heavily made-up and there were pieces of disarticulated human bone including part of a skull within the make-up. These were re-buried after the appropriate trench depth had been achieved.</p> <p>The excavation suggested some recycling of interments and building demolition debris within this portion of the Cathedral grounds.</p>
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**

Elgin Cathedral: Watching Brief, June 2012

HS PIC Index Number: 90142

SITE: Elgin Cathedral

N.G.R.: NJ 2212 6304

DESCRIPTION: Watching Brief during the excavation of a trench to house new signage inside the entrance gateway to the W of the cathedral

PROJECT CODE: HSCO-90142-2012-01

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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 Elgin Cathedral in Moray, during the excavation of a trench to house a new information board (Fig.1).

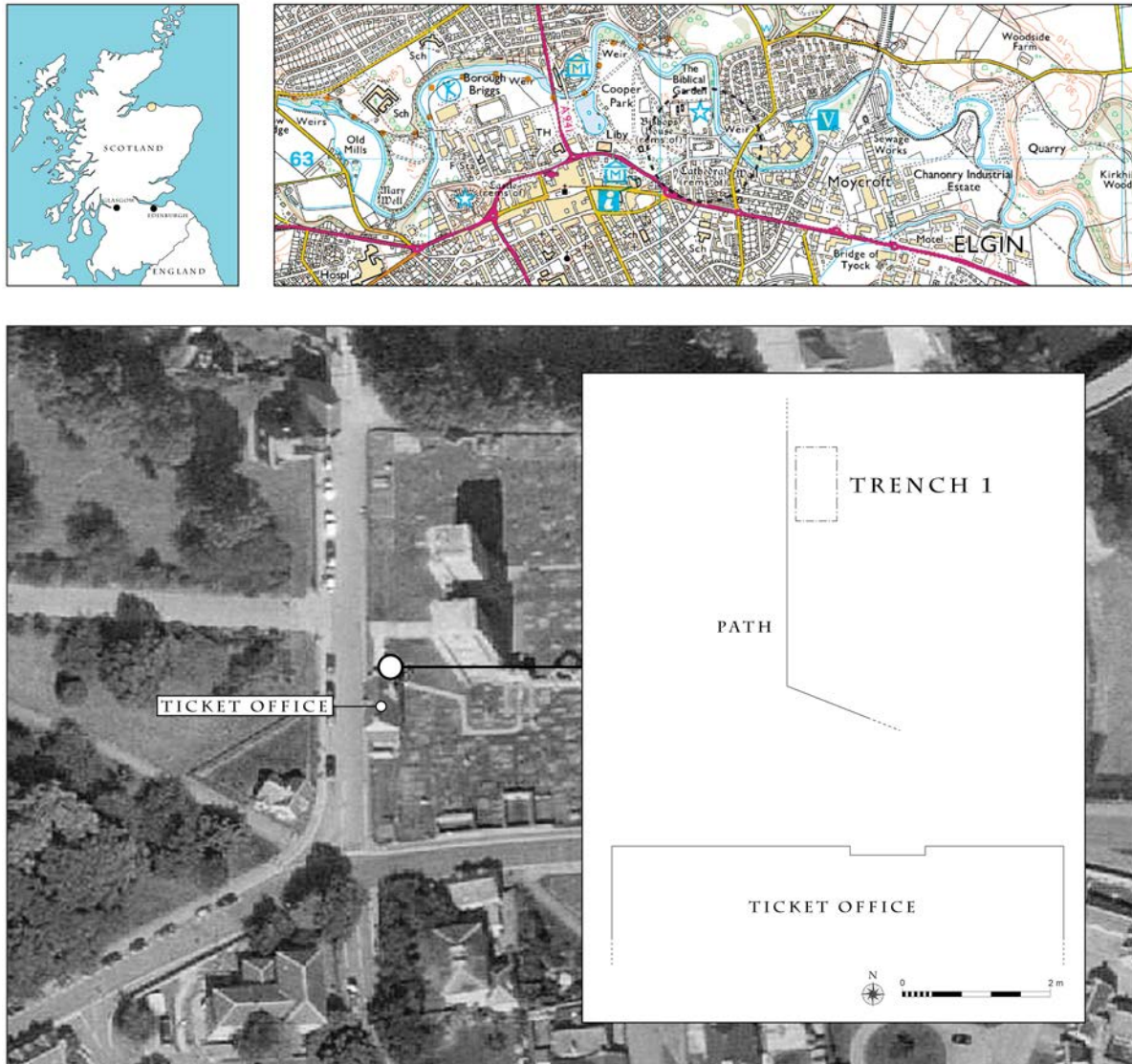


Figure 1: Plan showing the location of Elgin Cathedral, and the area of works.
Inset No. 2 © Crown copyright. All rights reserved 2012. Licence number 100036933.

The trench was located on the E side of the path running N from the door of the ticket office on an area of made-up ground. Flanking both sides of the path is the burial ground. There was concern that disarticulated human bone or possibly even *in-situ* skeletal remains could be encountered during the excavation. The ground was shown to be heavily made-up and

there were pieces of disarticulated human bone including part of a skull within the make-up. These were re-buried after the appropriate trench depth had been achieved.

The excavations were carried out manually by Historic Scotland staff under archaeological supervision, and the work took place on 21st June 2012.

DESCRIPTION

Trench 1

Trench 1 measured 1m N/S x 0.6m E/W x 0.5m deep. The S edge of the trench lay 4.5m from the N door of the ticket office, the trench itself lying on the grass verge on the E side of the path, some 0.2m in from the path edging. The turf and mid-brown silty topsoil **101** was 0.15m thick, and had been bedded on a thin base of sand **102**, some 2-3cm thick.

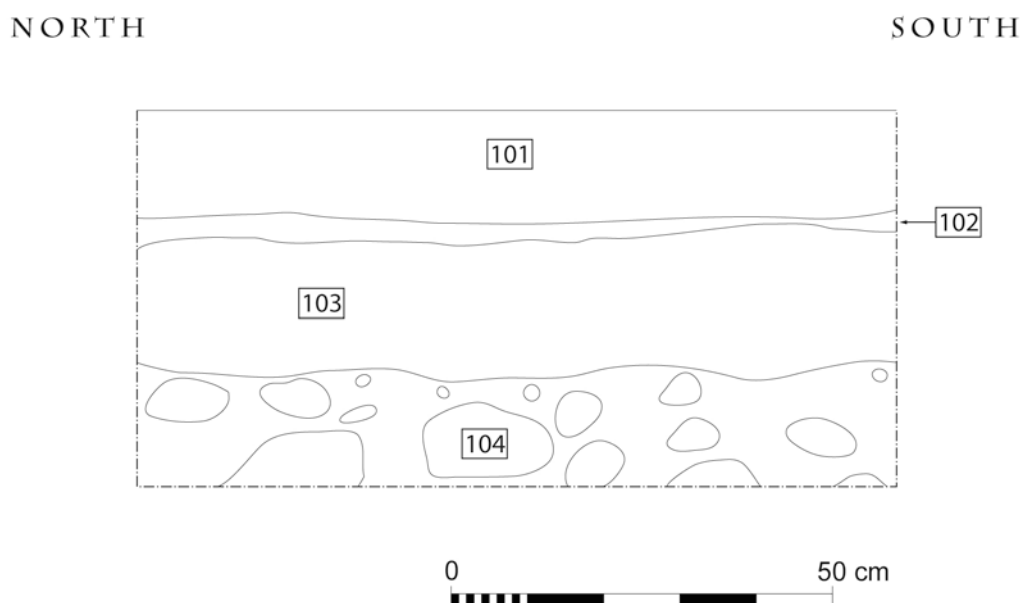


Figure 2: W-facing sections in Trench 1

Below this modern landscaping was an earlier, probably mid-19th century, capping of dark brown silt **103**, up to 15cm thick, containing white glazed transfer-printed pottery and pieces of bottle glass. This was a levelling layer over **104**, a layer of mixed make-up comprising pieces of broken sandstone in a mid-brown silty matrix, containing mortar flecks, charcoal, and pieces of disarticulated human bone. This layer seems to be associated with the general landscaping of the site and demolition of subsidiary buildings of the cathedral precinct that

took place between 1847 and 1868. The disarticulated human bone fragments (including a piece of human skull) were re-buried once the excavation had reached its required depth.

C O N C L U S I O N S

The excavation has shown there to be some recycling of interments and building demolition debris within this portion of the cathedral grounds. It is therefore recommended that any further ground-breaking works should be similarly accompanied by an archaeological watching brief.

LIST OF CONTEXTS

No.	Description
101	Turf and mid-brown silty topsoil
102	Layer of yellowish brown bedding sand
103	Mid-brown silt capping over 104
104	Mixed demolition debris in a mid-brown silty matrix

LIST OF DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHS

No.	Description	From	Date
01	Pre-excavation shot of the trench location with path and Ticket Office	N	21/6/2012
02	Pre-excavation shot of the trench location and W door of the Cathedral	SW	21/6/2012
03	Pre-excavation shot of the trench location	SE	21/6/2012
04	Skull fragment	N/A	21/6/2012
05	Work in progress	NW	21/6/2012
06	Work in progress	SW	21/6/2012
07	W door of the Cathedral	SW	21/6/2012
08	Work in progress and the Ticket Office	E	21/6/2012
09	Work in progress	SE	21/6/2012
10	Post-excavation shot of the trench	SW	21/6/2012
11	W-facing section of the trench	W	21/6/2012
12	W-facing section of the trench	W	21/6/2012
13	Post-excavation shot of the trench	S	21/6/2012
14	S-facing section of the trench	S	21/6/2012
15	Post-excavation shot of the trench	W	21/6/2012

LIST OF DRAWINGS

No.	Type	Description	Scale
01	Plan	Plan of Trench 1	1:20
02	Section	W-facing section in Trench 1	1:20