

Discovery and Excavation in Scotland – OASIS-type Form (2006)

LOCAL AUTHORITY:	Stirling
PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME:	The King's Knot, Stirling
PROJECT CODE:	HSCO-90288-2012-01
PARISH:	Stirling
NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR:	Gordon Ewart
NAME OF ORGANISATION:	Kirkdale Archaeology
TYPE(S) OF PROJECT:	Archaeological inspection
NMRS NO(S):	NS79SE 7
SITE/MONUMENT TYPE(S):	Earthwork, Garden
SIGNIFICANT FINDS:	None
NGR (2 letters, 8 or 10 figures)	NS 7899 9368
START DATE (this season)	22 December 2011
END DATE (this season)	22 December 2011
PREVIOUS WORK (incl. DES ref.)	
MAIN (NARRATIVE) DESCRIPTION: (May include information from other fields)	<p>An archaeological assessment was carried out on an historic hawthorn tree that had become uprooted during storms in mid-December 2011. The tree has been identified as a potential remnant of 16th-century planting/hedges, associated with a version of the King's Knot formal earthwork or mount, a unique and complex site located at the foot of Stirling Castle rock. The assessment comprised an inspection of the fallen tree and a brief walkover of the immediate environs.</p> <p>The inspection revealed that part of the bank's fabric had been exposed and it was recommended that further detailed inspection was carried out and that any remedial work should be carefully monitored.</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 2011

Blackness Castle: Watching Brief, December 2011.

HS PIC Index Number: 90288

SITE: The King's Knot, Stirling

N.G.R.: NS 7899 9368

DESCRIPTION: Assessment of the archaeological implications of a fallen hawthorn tree.

PROJECT CODE: HSCO-90288-2012-01

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INTRODUCTION

Under the terms of its Properties-In-Care (PIC) call-off contract with Historic Scotland, Kirkdale Archaeology was requested to undertake an archaeological assessment of an historic hawthorn tree that had become uprooted during storms in mid-December 2011. The tree has been identified as a potential remnant of 16th century planting/hedges, associated with a version of the Kings Knot formal earthwork or mount, a unique and complex site located at the foot of Stirling Castle rock (Fig.1). The assessment was undertaken on 22nd December 2011 and comprised an inspection of the fallen tree and a brief walkover of the immediate environs.

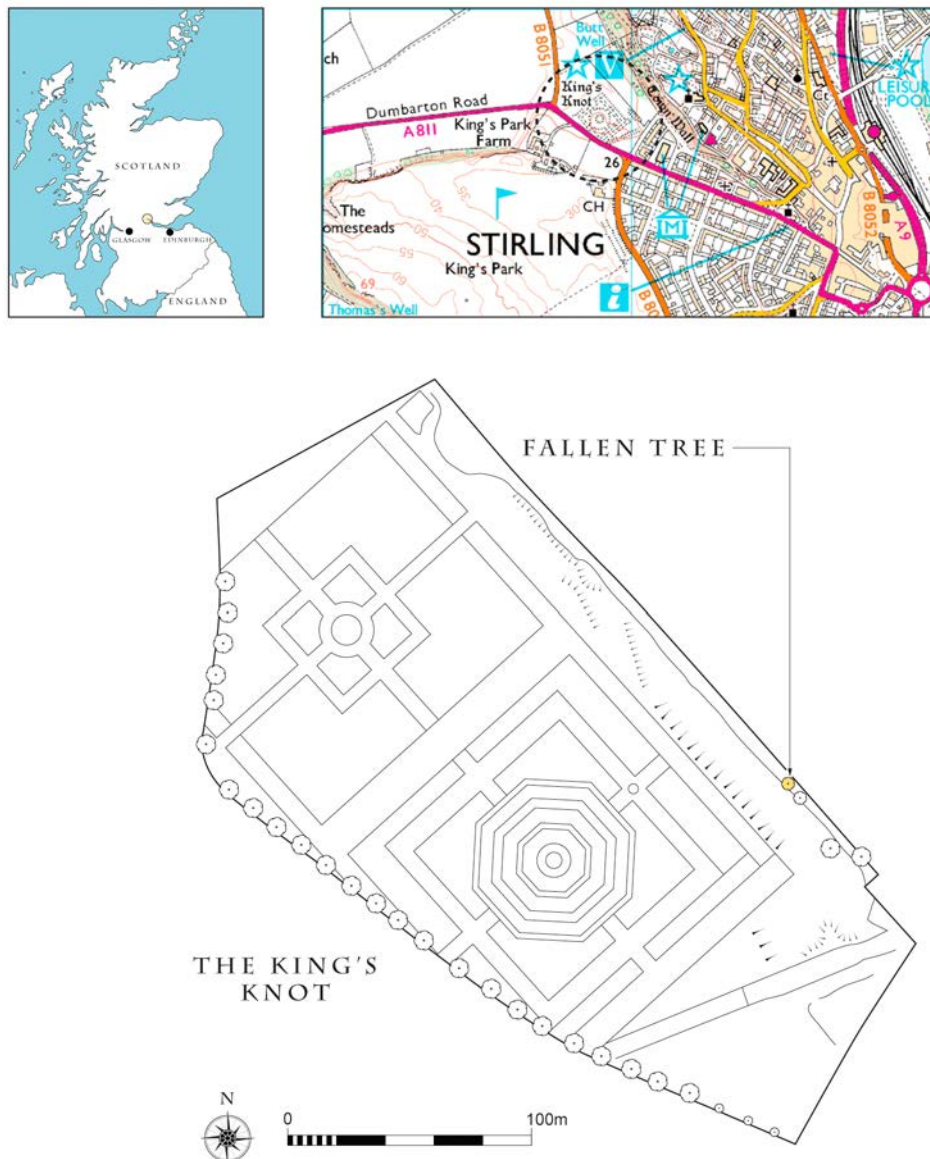


Figure 1: Plan showing the location of the King's Knot and the fallen tree.
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DESCRIPTION

The tree lies along the northern edge of a prominent slumped or degraded earth bank. The latter runs roughly parallel to a rusticated garden wall which in turn demarcates the northern edge of the earthwork complex, generally referred to as the Kings Knot. The bank is apparently associated with a wide (probable) ditch to the north, which in turn runs up to meet the garden wall. The latter is composed of two periods of building - the main (upper) build overlies a footing of large, irregular boulder.

The tree had been noted prior to its recent collapse as being weak and partially rotten (John Harrison and Stephen Digney *pers.comm.*) and consequently the hole resulting from its uprooting was only *c.* 2m in diameter and a maximum of 0.5m deep (measured against the northern edge of the denuded earth bank). The upcast fill attached to the root mass was a mixture of loamy, clay rich soils that represent redeposited material.

The tree is one of two specimens already discussed at length¹, which along with the bank and ditch, is seen as being part of the garden arrangements created in 1501 on behalf of King James IV.



Figure 2: The fallen tree from the north-west (Photo No. 1)

¹ *The King's Knot, Stirling: Geophysical and Topographic Survey Report.* Stephen Digney, Richard Jones and Adrian Maldonado. Stirling Local History Society, Stirling Field and Archaeological Society, University of Glasgow Archaeology Department. 2011.

CONCLUSIONS

The evidence from the tree hole, suggests that the bank fabric has been partially exposed .

In light of the fieldwork, the following recommendations are offered:

- The hole created by the collapsed tree is not sufficiently deep or extensive to warrant significant extension either into the bank fabric or across the ditch. The history and development of the bank and ditch is likely to be complex and would not be significantly advanced without fairly major excavation.
- The existing hole should be carefully examined and ultimately straightened to provide two sections in order to determine ideally whether the tree was cut against the already slumped bank profile, or whether the bank has slipped northwards, gradually encircling and/or displacing the *in situ* tree .
- At the very least, the sections will show evidence of the fabric of the bank, in terms of stability, sensitivity and dept , as well as construction, use of revetment *etc.*
- The fallen tree itself does offer some further potential for developing the interpretation of the site - for example, through specialist dendrochronological dating .
- The extensive research already completed on the site will inform and will be informed by, any detailed analysis of the tree and a record of the tree hole . Both could potentially shed light on the date and significance of the associated surviving specimen and its relationship with the earth bank.

LIST OF DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHS

No.	Description	From	Date
01	Fallen tree	NW	22/12/2011
02	Fallen tree with the adjacent garden wall in the background	W	22/12/2011
03	Fallen tree with detail of its root mass and tree throw	NE	22/12/2011