

Discovery and Excavation in Scotland

Updated on 15/06/2007

LOCAL AUTHORITY:	Falkirk
PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME:	Blackness Castle
PROJECT CODE:	HSCO-90036-2015-01
PARISH:	Bo'ness and Carriden
NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR:	Gordon Ewart
NAME OF ORGANISATION:	Kirkdale Archaeology
TYPE(S) OF PROJECT:	Watching brief
NMRS NO(S):	NT08SE 6
SITE/MONUMENT TYPE(S):	Castle
SIGNIFICANT FINDS:	
NGR (2 letters, 8 or 10 figures)	NT 0551 8022; NT 0552 8024; NT 0555 8022
START DATE (this season)	27 July 2015
END DATE (this season)	27 July 2015
PREVIOUS WORK (incl. <i>DES</i> ref.)	
MAIN (NARRATIVE) DESCRIPTION: (May include information from other fields)	A watching brief was carried out during the installation of three lectern-style interpretation panels. Trench 1 (NT 0551 8022) exposed the remnants of a wall shown on a 17 th -century military plan; Trench 2 (NT 0552 8024) revealed evidence of gardening; Trench 3 (NT 0555 8022) revealed levelling deposits. There were no other finds or features of archaeological significance.
PROPOSED FUTURE WORK:	
CAPTION(S) FOR ILLUSTRS:	
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ARCHIVE LOCATION (intended/deposited)	Archive to be deposited with Historic Environment Scotland

**HISTORIC SCOTLAND PROPERTIES IN CARE
MINOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORKS 2015/2016**

Blackness Castle • Watching Brief • July 2015

HS PIC Index Number: 90036

SITE: Blackness Castle, near Blackness.

N.G.R.: NT 055 822

DESCRIPTION: Archaeological watching brief during the installation of three lectern-style interpretation panels.

PROJECT CODE: HSCO-90036-2015-01

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AUGUST 2015

INTRODUCTION

Under the terms of its PIC contract with Historic Scotland, Kirkdale Archaeology was asked to carry out an archaeological watching brief at Blackness Castle during the installation of three lectern-style interpretation panels BKN01¹ (Trench 1), BKN02 (Trench 2) and BKN17 (Trench 3). All three panels were located on the grassed area south of the castle, with BKN01 and BKN17 positioned in close proximity to previous signs.

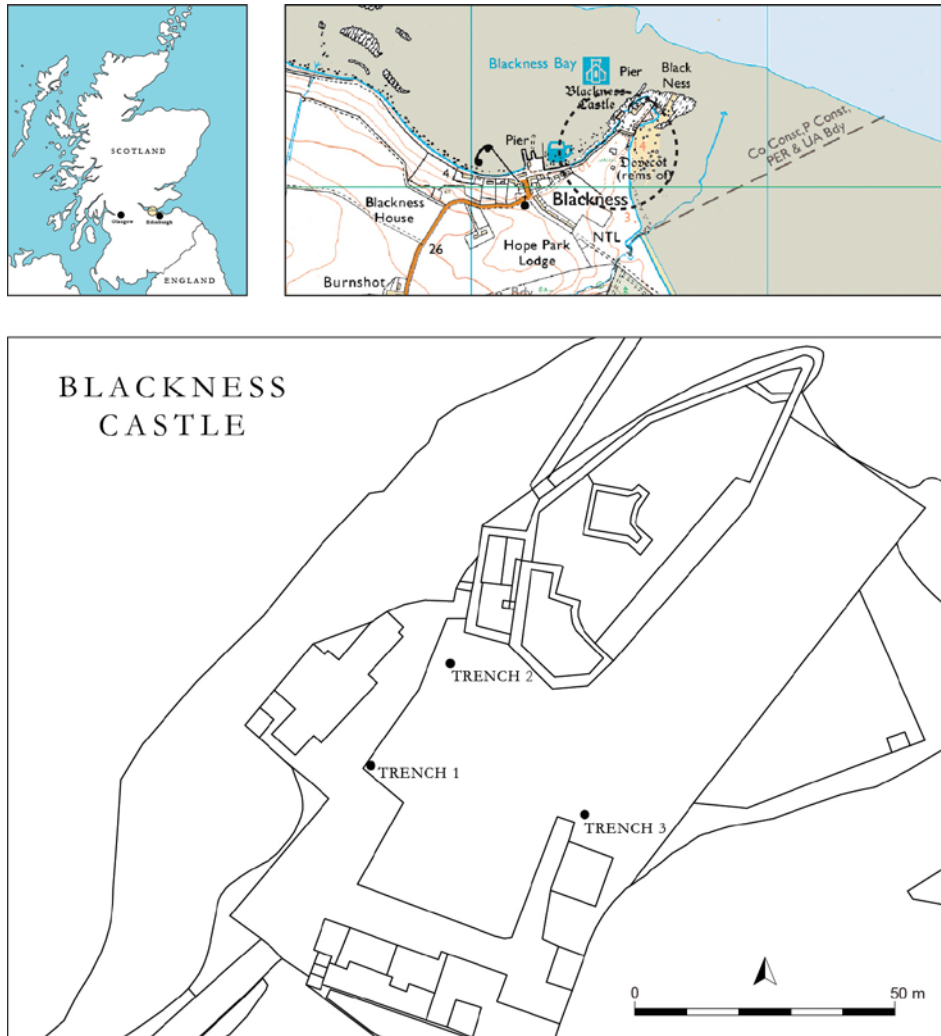


Figure 1: Plan showing the general locations of the trenches.

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Excavation was undertaken by hand, by Historic Scotland staff under archaeological supervision, and took place on 27th July, 2015.

¹ Historic Scotland references.

DESCRIPTION

Trench 1

The original location for BKN01 was towards the western corner of the grassed area to the south of the castle, in close proximity to the original information lectern. The cut for this trench was designated **011** and measured 0.99m NW/SE x 0.5m NE/SW x 0.31m. The turf and topsoil **001** was a black silty soil with small stony inclusions, 12 – 15cm in depth. Below this was a black, loose, silty-soil **009**, which may also have been part of the topsoil, but contained more stone and gravel.

The removal of deposit **009** revealed **010**, a rubble construction bonded with a cream coloured lime mortar covering the entire trench at a depth of \approx 0.31m. The material was hard-packed and structural in nature, likely the foundation of a wall. The \approx 1690 'Military Plan of the Castle of Blackness' shows the northern corner of a garden wall in this location. The presence of the wall was at a depth unsuitable for the foundations of the new lectern, so in order to protect the wall and provide a trench with adequate depth, the location of BKN01 was moved \approx 1m to the northeast; and the secondary trench's cut was designated **011**.



Plate 1: Post-excavation view of the initial Trench 1, showing the wall 010.

The cut for the repositioned trench measured 0.95m NW/SE x 0.65m NE/SW x 0.45m. The topsoil **001** was removed; it extended to a depth of 12 – 18cm across the trench. Below **001** was deposit **013**, a dark brown/black rubble filled loose silty-sandy soil 0.27m deep. This deposit contained a large amount of stone rubble (typically) measuring \approx 20cm x 15cm x 10cm, along with gravel, smaller stones and crumbling lime mortar. As this deposit was removed, a fragment of ceramic pipe (**SF007**) within the mortar was

revealed in the northwestern section. The lime mortar in deposit **013** is likely related to this, and the entire deposit may be the disturbed rubble backfill from the pipe's installation.

The excavation of **013** exposed deposit **014**, a mid-grey/brown gravel rich sandy soil. This deposit was revealed to a depth of 0.45m (at which point the limit of excavation was reached); it appeared to be a clean deposit and likely represents the natural subsoil layer.



Plate 2: Post-excavation view of the relocated Trench 1.

Trench 2

The cut for Trench 2 was designated **004** and measured 0.99m NW/SE x 0.68m NE/SW x 0.48m. The turf and topsoil **001** was removed and was revealed to be c.15cm deep. Below **001** was a dark black/brown silty-sandy soil, **006**, which closely resembled the topsoil but with a greater number of small stony inclusions.

The removal of **006** exposed a mid-grey loose sandy gravel and stone layer, **003**. This deposit was filled with stones (typically) measuring c.15cm x 10cm x 5cm, along with smaller stony inclusions and some possible lime mortar debris. The deposit's depth varied between 15 – 20cm, and it seems likely to be a levelling layer related to **007**, the natural bedrock and dark-brown gravel rich soil deposit below. This may be connected to the 19th century levelling of the area, ahead of the creation of a military parade ground.



Plate 2: Post-excitation view of Trench 2.

Trench 3

The cut for Trench 3 was designated **005** and was located close to the original lectern sign; it measured 0.99m NE/SW x 0.67m NW/SE x 0.44m. The topsoil and turf **001** measured \pm 15cm deep, and immediately below, **008** was a loose silty black soil containing fragments of bone and ceramic. This was a humic soil and thus likely to be a garden soil deposit (Trench 3 is located in an area of known gardens and the deposits revealed were in line with expectations). The cut for the trench did not reach as far as the base of **008**.



Plate 3: Post-excitation view of Trench 3.

CONCLUSIONS

Trenches 2 and 3 revealed evidence of gardening and ground levelling respectively. Trench 1 exposed the remnants of a wall known from a 17th century military plan. Due to the presence of an archaeological feature of some significance, the location of the trench was moved to the northeast. The presence of the remnants of this wall suggests that caution should be exercised should any further ground breaking works in this area be considered, especially given the shallow depth at which the archaeology was encountered (*c.*0.3m).

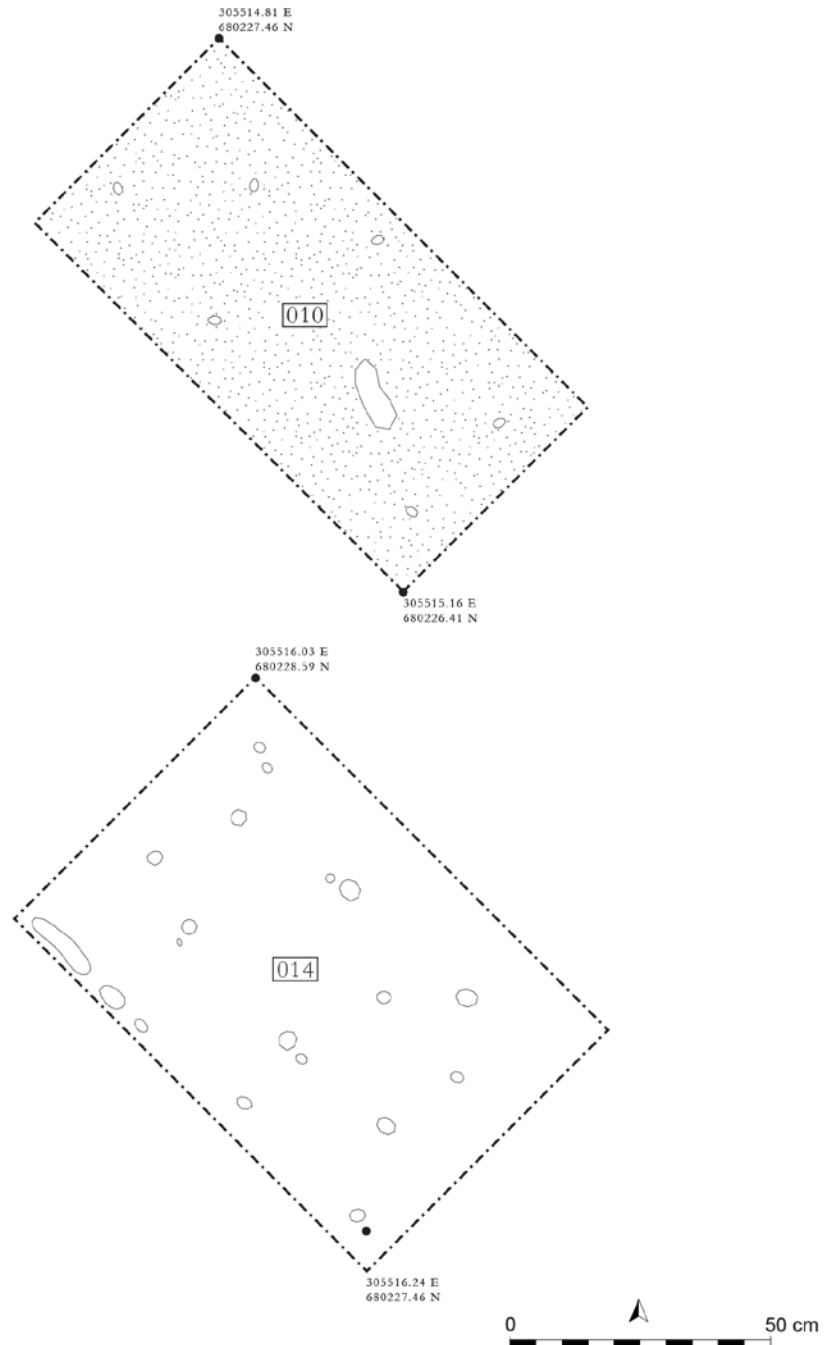


Figure 2: Post-excitation plan of Trench 1 (the plan for the initial location is at the top).

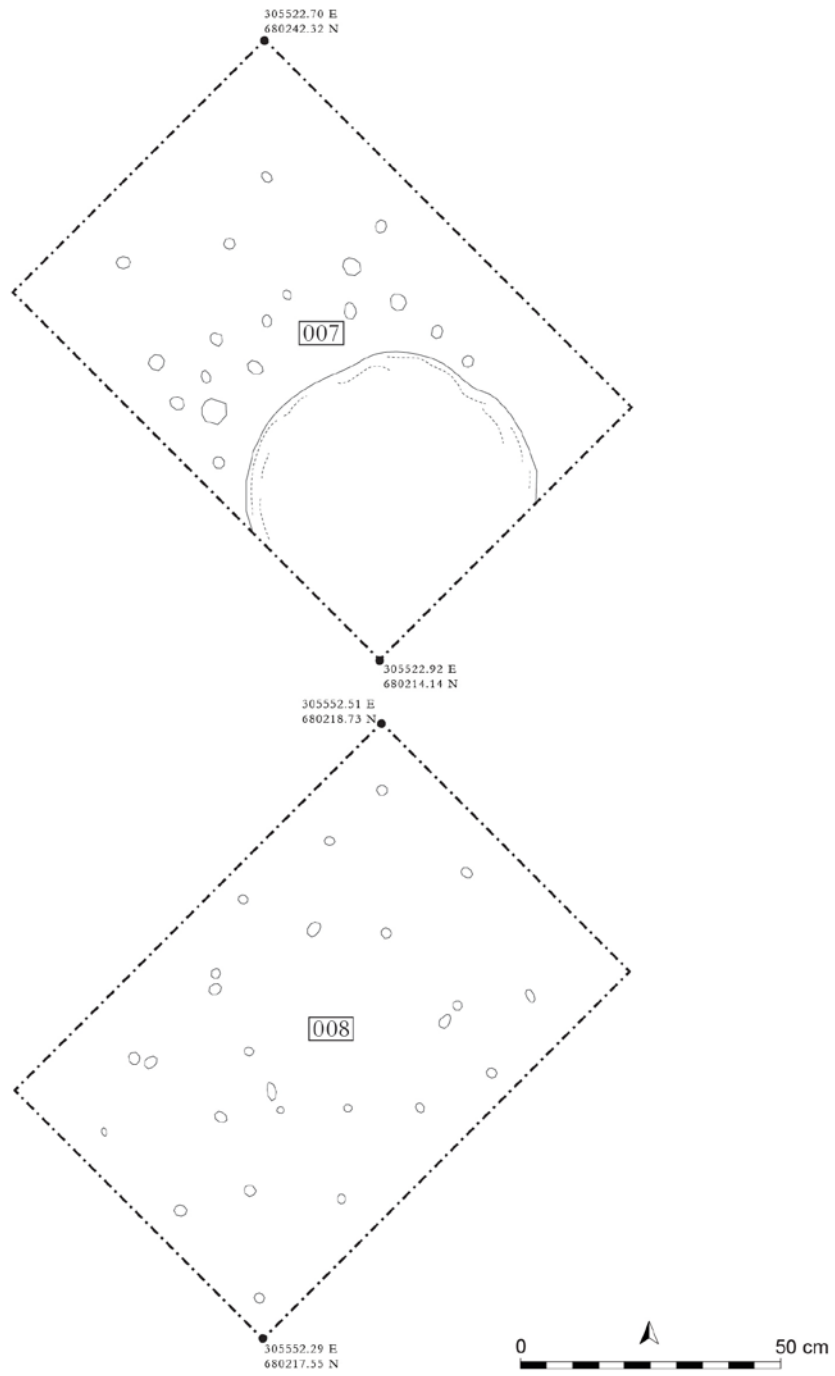


Figure 3: Post-excavation plan of Trench 2 (top) and Trench 3.

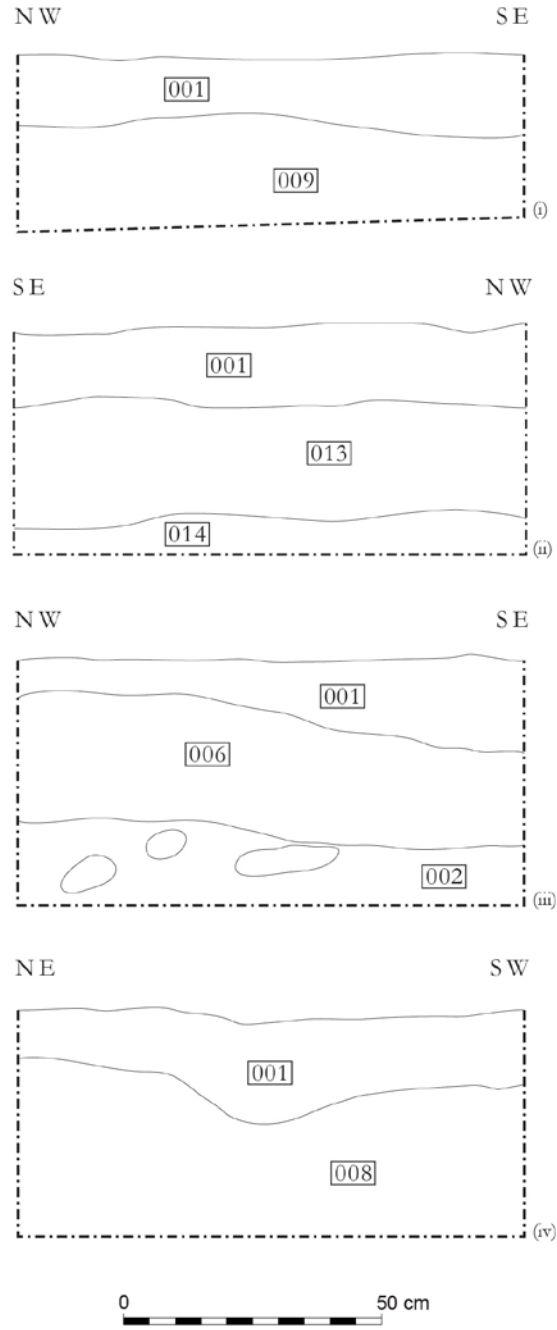


Figure 4: i) Trench 1 (initial location), SW-facing section; ii) Trench 1 (final location), NE-facing section; iii) Trench 2, SW-facing section; and, iv) Trench 3, NW-facing section.

LIST OF CONTEXTS

No	Description
001	Turf and top soil of all three trenches. A black silty soil with small stony inclusions.
002	Gravel driveway surrounding the grassed area to the south of the castle on east, west and south sides.
003	Mid-grey sandy gravel and stone layer below 001 and 006 in Trench 2. Possibly levelling for the natural 007 below. This may be related to the building of the 1870 – 1874 West Range buildings c.15m to the west of the trench, or the 19 th century parade ground.
004	Cut for Trench 2, it measured 0.99m x 0.68m x 0.48m.
005	Cut for Trench 3, it measured 0.99m x 0.67m x 0.44m.
006	Black/brown silty-sandy soil This may be top soil or subsoil in Trench 2 between 001 and 003. This deposit is very similar to the topsoil 001 with slightly more small stone inclusions.
007	Bedrock/natural in Trench 2. Included a large boulder or possible piece of bedrock towards the southern end of the trench. The surrounding soil was a dark-brown gravel rich sand surrounding large amounts of natural stone.
008	Humic garden soil below 001 in Trench 3. The deposit is a mixed black loose silty soil with fragments of bone and ceramic. The cut 005 for Trench 3 did not reach the bottom of this deposit.
009	Black loose silty humic soil with small stone and gravel inclusions; below 001 in (original) Trench 1. Similar in composition to the top soil of 001. Some 15 – 18cm deep.
010	Mortar rich structural stone feature in (original) Trench 1. Beige in colour, appears across the whole base of the trench at a depth of 0.31m. The material was a hard-packed lime mortar surrounding stone rubble, likely part of the garden wall visible in the c.1690 'Military Plan of Blackness Castle'.
011	Original cut of Trench 1. Measured 0.99m x 0.5m x 0.31m.
012	Cut of the relocated Trench 1. Measured 0.95m x 0.65m x 0.45m.
013	Dark brown/black rubble filled loose silty-sandy soil below 001 in relocated Trench 1. Large amount of stone rubble measuring c.20cm x 15cm x 10cm on average, along with gravel and smaller stones. Deposit was 0.27m deep and had mixed-in lime mortar and stone rubble which may suggest the rubble is related to the ceramic pipe and lime mortar 015 visible in the northeastern section.
014	Basal deposit of the relocated Trench 1. Mid-grey/brown soil with gravel rich sand. This deposit was exposed, but not excavated.
015	Fragment of ceramic pipe in the NE-facing section of the relocated Trench 1. Held in place by a lime mortar deposit. May be linked to the lime deposits in 013.

LIST OF DRAWINGS

No.	Type	Description	Scale
1	Plan	Trench 2, post-excavation.	1:20
2	Section	SW-facing section of Trench 2.	1:20
3	Section	NW-facing section of Trench 3.	1:20
4	Section	SW-facing section of the original Trench 1.	1:20
5	Section	NE-facing section of the relocated Trench 1.	1:20
6	Sketch	Sketch with measurements to show the location of Trench 1 (original and relocated).	NTS

LIST OF DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHS

No.	Description	From	Date
1	Trench 3, pre-excavation.	S	27/07/15
2	Trench 3, pre-excavation.	S	27/07/15
3	Trench 2, pre-excavation.	SW	27/07/15
4	Trench 1, pre-excavation, the original location.	NE	27/07/15
5	Trench 2, post-excavation.	SW	27/07/15
6	SW-facing section of Trench 2.	SW	27/07/15
7	Structural surface 010 in Trench 1 (original).	SW	27/07/15
8	Structural surface 010 in Trench 1 (original).	SE	27/07/15
9	SW-facing section of Trench 1 (original).	SW	27/07/15
10	NW-facing section of Trench 3.	NW	27/07/15
11	Trench 3, post-excavation.	SE	27/07/15
12	Location of repositioned Trench 1.	SE	27/07/15
13	NE-facing section of Trench 1 (relocated).	NE	27/07/15
14	Trench 1, post-excavation (relocated).	NE	27/07/15
15	Oyster shell finds from 003.	N/A	29/07/15
16	Bone from 003.	N/A	29/07/15
17	Iron nail from 008.	N/A	29/07/15
18	Ceramic from 008.	N/A	29/07/15
19	Bone from 008.	N/A	29/07/15
20	Iron nail from 013.	N/A	29/07/15
21	Ceramic from 013.	N/A	29/07/15

LIST OF FINDS

No.	Context	Material	Description
SF001	003	Shell	Three degraded oyster shells.
SF002	003	Bone	One fragment of pelvis, possibly CAPRA/OVIS. The bone is structurally sound, but only a small fragment is present.
SF003	008	Metal	One iron object, appears to be a nail, 5.7cm x 0.6cm x 0.4cm in size.
SF004	008	Ceramics	1) Three fragments of brown/orange sherds. Rough and unglazed. Heavily worn: 11cm x 8cm x 1.1cm with some white mortar attached; 4.5cm x 2.5cm x 1.5cm; and, 4.7cm x 4cm x 0.7cm. 2) Two sherds of white glazed ceramic, likely pottery, with a cream white internal fabric. Sherds are glazed on both sides, but heavily chipped. 4.8cm x 4.3cm x 0.4cm with a grey floral pattern on one side; and, 4.2cm x 4cm x 0.4cm.
SF005	008	Bone	Two small and fragmentary pieces of mammal bone. No visual identification possible.
SF006	013	Metal	Large iron nail, 10.1cm long; head is 1.2cm x 1.6cm.
SF007	013	Ceramics	Four fragments of ceramic. 1) Two fragments are possible CBM and may be bricks. Both have a 1.5cm wide rounded groove on one side. Brown/orange in colour with lime mortar attached: 8cm x 4.5cm x 3cm; and, 6cm x 3.8cm x 2.2cm. 2) Two fragments of ceramic with metallic orange/brown glaze on both sides. The internal fabric is a coarse grey/orange. These are likely parts of a ceramic drain pipe: 6.5cm x 3cm x 1.4cm; and, 4cm x 2cm x 1.3cm.